

Equal Pay Day for Unmarried Women

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53 years after the Equal Pay Act was signed into law, women are still fighting to earn the same earnings as men for equal work. This year on April 12, 2016, Equal Pay Day will symbolize how far into the year the average women must work to earn what men earned in 2015. In other words, women will have to work 15 months and 12 days to earn what men made in just 12 months – that is an extra 102 days. According to the most recent data on 2015 available from the U.S. Census Bureau, women on average make 80 cents for every dollar a man makes. Earning disparities are even greater for unmarried women, who have seen a steady three year decline on their earnings in comparison to married men. Unmarried women earn only 60 cents to every dollar a married man earns. This is a drop of 1 cent as compared to the 2014 disparity of 61 cents, a 2 cent drop compared to the 2013 disparity of 62 cents, and a decrease of 3 cents from the 63 cents earned on the dollar in 2012¹. This declining pattern highlights the ever-consistent pattern of unmarried women being left behind, even in a growing and improving economy.

In his last year in office, President Obama has announced efforts to continue to address the persistent problem of unequal pay, such as moving to require companies with 100 employees or more to report to the federal government what they pay employees by race, gender and ethnicity, and renewing his call to Congress to take up and pass the Paycheck Fairness Act, legislation that would give women additional tools to fight pay discrimination. However, because of a lack of Congressional support to end gender pay disparities or raise wages (an issue related to the wage gap since it is women who are more likely to hold low-wage jobs), Obama has had to sign an executive order to pass the first-mentioned effort and has been met with fierce resistance to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act. This makes the discussion of equal pay, or lack thereof, on the campaign trail that much more important.

While Democratic presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders have been strong proponents of equal pay efforts, Republican candidates have either said little to nothing about the issue, have dismissed the gender pay gap entirely, or have discounted Obama's and Democrats' efforts to address the issue. Former presidential candidate Carly Fiorina acknowledged the wage gap but misconstrued the issue entirely. On the campaign

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trail, Fiorina blamed the wage gap on the seniority system in the workforce, which she claimed is supported by unions and government bureaucracies. Ted Cruz has actively worked against closing the wage gap. In September 2014, Cruz was 1 of 43 Senate Republicans who unanimously voted to block the Paycheck Fairness Act. GOP frontrunner Donald Trump usually sidesteps the issue altogether and his most detailed comments to date do not reveal any policies that would support the fight for equal pay. Republicans, in general, tend to vehemently argue that the pay gap between men and women does not exist, downplay the issue, and have failed to adequately address the consequences of women earning less. 2016 is an important year for equal pay and that message needs to be delivered to the public loud and clear, as there is so much at stake here. Gender pay gaps have only been growing, especially for unmarried women, women of color and unmarried women of color. Addressing the reality of this problem is a first step for some, while coming to creative solutions to solve the problem is crucial for all.

Personal Earnings

According to the most recent 2015 wage data from the Census Bureau (figure 1), women's earnings were 80% of men's: women's median annual earnings in 2015 were \$40,010 compared to men's \$50,170. Women's comparative personal earnings remain unchanged from 2014. Women of color face wider disparities.

Figure 1: Personal Earnings among Full-Time Workers, 2015²

	Men	Women	White Women	African American Women	Latinas	Asian American Women	Native American Women	Unmarried Women with Own Children Under 18
Median Annual Income	\$50,170	\$40,010	\$44,001	\$35,000	\$30,000	\$48,100	\$30,000	\$31,200
Comparative Personal Earnings	\$1.00	80¢	88¢	70¢	60¢	96¢	60¢	62¢

Despite an improving economy, more jobs and lower unemployment, there are only a few signs of positive growth for earnings among women. White women still do better than African American women and Latinas. Their income improved from 86 cents on the dollar in 2014, to 88 cents in 2015, while African American women's and Latinas' income remained consistent at 70 cents and 60 cents, respectively. Native American women also earned just 60 cents for every dollar a man made. The most improved earnings is among Asian American women who jumped from earning 90 cents for every man's dollar in 2014, to earning 96 cents in 2015.

Marital Status

The earnings gap is even wider when examining marital status. Unmarried women make far less than married and unmarried men and even lag behind married women. Figure 2 demonstrates that in 2015, unmarried women earned \$36,005, compared to unmarried men who earned \$40,000. Unmarried women also earned \$7,880 less than married women (\$43,885) and significantly less than married men (\$60,002).

Earnings for unmarried women are a serious problem that is not improving with time. In fact, the median annual income for unmarried women has decreased since 2014, when they earned \$36,500 and 61 cents for every dollar a married man made, whereas in 2015, unmarried women made 60 cents on the dollar. This is a continuing decline from 2013, when unmarried women made 62 cents for every dollar a married man made. On the other hand, earnings among all other groups have increased in 2015. In fact, married women have rebounded from a decline – they saw a decrease in their earnings in 2014 from 2013, falling from making 71 cents for every dollar a married man made in 2013, to earning 70 cents in 2014. However, in 2015, they earned 73 cents to every dollar.

Figure 2: Personal Earnings among Full-Time Workers by Marital Status, 2015³

	Women		Men	
	Unmarried	Married	Unmarried	Married
Median Annual Income	\$36,005	\$43,885	\$40,000	\$60,002
Comparative Personal Earnings	60¢	73¢	67¢	\$1.00



Racial disparities in income are evident among unmarried women as Figure 3 highlights. Unmarried white women make 67 cents for every dollar a married man makes, while African American unmarried women make only 52 cents, unmarried Latinas make 48 cents, unmarried Asian American women make only 67 cents, and unmarried Native American women make only 47 cents. Unmarried white women are the only group to have experienced an increase – albeit a slight one – in annual income from 2014, when they earned \$40,000, though they still earn only 67% of what a married man makes.

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Figure 3: Personal Earnings among Full-Time Workers by Marital Status and Race, 2015⁴

	Married Men	Unmarried Women					
		Total	White	African American	Latina	Asian American	Native American
Median Annual Income	\$60,002	\$36,005	\$40,085	\$31,000	\$29,012	\$40,407	\$28,500
Comparative Personal Earnings	\$1.00	60¢	67¢	52¢	48¢	67¢	47¢

There is also a significant earnings gap among white working class women, especially for unmarried women. Married white working class women make 59 cents for every dollar a married man makes, while unmarried white working class women make only 53 cents. This is a decline from 2014, when they made 56 cents to every dollar.

Figure 4: Personal Earnings among Full-Time Workers by Marital Status, Race and Class, 2015⁵

	Married Men	Working Class White Women		
		Total	Married	Unmarried
Median Annual Income	\$60,002	\$35,000	\$35,480	\$32,001
Comparative Personal Earnings	\$1.00	58¢	59¢	53¢

Single Mothers Continue to Earn Less

In 2015, single moms earned \$28,802 less than married men; just 52 cents to every dollar, down from 54 cents in 2014 and 55 cents in 2013. Unmarried women with younger children face a more significant pay gap, earning \$32,002 less than a married man and just 47 cents to every dollar. Again, this is a drop from 2014, when they earned 49 cents to every dollar.

Single mothers (children under 18) made \$1,400 less in 2015 than they did in 2014, continuing the pattern of unequal pay affecting this demographic the most. On the other hand, married mothers saw their income rise by \$1,005. Single mothers with children under 6 years old saw their earnings decrease as well (by \$1,110). The pay gap between married mothers with children and single mothers is significantly greater than ever, further proving the fact that unmarried mothers suffer the most from unequal pay.

Figure 5: Personal Earnings by Parental Status, 2015⁶

	Married Men	Unmarried Women				Married Women			
	Total	Total	Without Own Children Under 18	With Own Children Under 18	With Own Children Under 6	Total	Without Own Children Under 18	With Own Children Under 18	With Own Children Under 6
Annual Average	\$60,002	\$36,005	\$38,179	\$31,200	\$28,000	\$43,885	\$42,097	\$45,005	\$45,060
Comparative Personal Earnings	\$1.00	60¢	64¢	52¢	47¢	73¢	70¢	75¢	75¢

Real Consequences of Unequal Pay

As the data demonstrates, the gender pay gap is real and is affecting the lives of millions across the country. Race and parental status impact earnings even further. As policy advocates continue to fight for equal pay for equal work, this evidence and data should be used to further demonstrate the severity of the issue, especially where women are concerned:

- When asked about the greatest causes of stress, having enough money to meet bills and expenses is the biggest source of stress for all Americans, but women especially. 59% of women say this compared to 48% of men.⁷
- Younger women, unmarried women and minority women are more economically stressed – 72% of Millennial women list having enough money to meet bills and expenses as their biggest worry, as do 69% of unmarried women and 76% of minority women.⁸
- Women of every demographic are also more concerned than men when it comes to a number of different areas including losing their job (62% vs. 49%), affording retirement (69% vs. 58%), and affording healthcare (62% to 47%).⁹

Some politicians and policy makers refuse to acknowledge or act on the pay gap, putting them directly at odds with a majority of Americans who not only believe such a gap exists, but want to take steps to close it. Politicians and elected leaders need to get on board with the public.

- 77% of women and 63% of men say “this country needs to continue making changes to give men and women equality in the workplace.”¹⁰
- 65% of women say their gender faces at least some discrimination in society today, as do 48% of men.¹¹

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- 4 in 10 Americans believe that there is a double standard for women seeking to climb to the highest level of either politics or business, where they have to do more than males to prove themselves¹²
- Nearly half (45%) of women report having been paid less than a man for the same job or knowing someone who has been paid less than a man¹³

So when it comes to elections, candidates' stance on the wage gap and relating issues can play a significant role in voters' choices:

- When asked which issues would impact a voter's likelihood of voting for a candidate, women elevate equal pay for equal work as the policy that would make them most likely to support a candidate for office (81%). Even a majority (64%) of men agree with this. This is a popular issue that crosses party lines.¹⁴
- A majority of people also say that they are more likely to support a candidate who supports: paid sick days (71% overall – 67% men, 75% women), paid family and medical leave (64% overall – 58% men, 69% women), and providing tax credits and subsidies to help working parents pay for childcare (61% overall – 56% men, 66% women).¹⁵

2016 candidates have made their positions on the issue of equal pay clear, and voters will need to be made known of that because when they are casting their ballots in November, there will be so much more at play. Unequal wages affects the lives of millions of families, making the fight for equal pay that much more important to bring to the spotlight.

¹ Based on median income earnings. U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey March 2015
http://thedataweb.rm.census.gov/ftp/cps_ftp.html

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research survey: telephone interviews Dec.7-10, 2015, with a random sample of 1,000 registered voters, including an oversample of 200 Millennial women .M.O.E. +/- 3.0%

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research survey: telephone interviews March 18-22, 2015, with a random sample of 1,010 adults. M.O.E. +/- 3.0%

¹⁰ Pew Research Center survey: telephone interviews Nov.20-23, 2014 with a random sample of 1,004 adults, aged 18 and older, living in the continental U.S. M.O.E. +/- 2.4%

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research survey: telephone interviews Dec.7-10, 2015, with a random sample of 1,000 registered voters, including an oversample of 200 Millennial women .M.O.E. +/- 3.0%

¹⁵ Ibid