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Some Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Women Lose Over \$1 Million Over a Lifetime to the Racist and Sexist Wage Gap

JASMINE TUCKER AND SARAH JAVAID

Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) women¹ who worked full-time, year-round in 2021 were typically paid just 92 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.² But figures for AANHPI women vary widely by community. For example, among full-time, year-round workers, Bhutanese women make just 48 cents while Indian and Taiwanese women each make \$1.24 for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men. However, even though some groups of AANHPI women working full time, year round make more than white, non-Hispanic men, they still make less than men in their respective communities.³ Whatever the wage gap for AANHPI women, lost earnings due to the racist and sexist wage gap has robbed them of the economic security they and their families need and adds up to substantial losses over a lifetime. Some communities of AANHPI women are losing over \$1 million over a lifetime due to the wage gap. This harms not only these women, but the families who depend on their income.

Note: The wage gaps presented here are based on data from 2021, the most recent annual data available. Note that the wage gap numbers for 2021 are affected by the massive job losses experienced in 2020 that disrupted the labor market.

Moreover, the wage gap for full-time, year-round workers does not always fully reflect the economic disparities faced by women. The full-time, year-round wage gap leaves out those who were unemployed or out of the labor force for part of 2021, or those who worked part time, including those who wanted full-time work. This is especially significant given that many workers shifted away from full-time, year-round work in 2020 because of the pandemic, the effects of which continued in 2021. When comparing the median earnings of all AANHPI women who worked in 2021 with the median earnings of all white, non-Hispanic men who worked, regardless of how many hours or weeks they worked, AANHPI women were typically paid only 80 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men in 2021.⁴

The wage gap varies widely among Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Other Pacific Islander women.

As a group, AANHPI women working full time, year round typically lose nearly \$6,700 a year to the wage gap. If this wage gap does not close, an AANHPI woman starting her career today stands to lose \$267,760 over the next 40 years compared to a white, non-Hispanic man starting his career at the same time.⁵ But those figures can be substantially larger for women of many AANHPI communities. Bhutanese women stand to lose over \$1.3 million compared to white, non-Hispanic men, Burmese women stand to lose over \$1.2 million, Nepalese women over \$1.1 million, and Hmong and Cambodian women over \$1 million dollars as a result of the wage gap over the course of their careers.⁶

Losses due to the wage gap add up to AANHPI women not only having less money in their pocket right now – but also being denied key opportunities throughout their lifetimes to build wealth and future economic security for themselves and their families.⁷ For example, homeownership is an incredibly valuable tool in building wealth for families, but the wage gap strips some women of the ability to afford a down payment. Data shows that 62.2% of single⁸ AANHPI women own their homes compared to 67.7% of single white, non-Hispanic men. Some AANHPI communities with greater pay gaps than AANHPI women overall also face greater homeownership disparities. Among single women, 56.6% of Cambodian women, 55.2% of Burmese women, and 44.9% of Nepalese women own their homes.⁹ And this is just one way the wage gap robs AANHPI women of critical moments to build wealth; they also miss chances to pay for their or their children’s education, start their own business, or save adequately for retirement.

HOW MUCH AANHPI WOMEN WORKING FULL-TIME, YEAR-ROUND LOSE TO THE WAGE GAP BY COMMUNITY

Community	AANHPI Women’s Earnings	What AANHPI women make for every dollar white, non-Hispanic men make	AANHPI women’s typical annual loss	AANHPI women’s typical losses over a 40-year career
Bangladeshi	\$46,395	\$0.72	\$18,343	\$733,720
Bhutanese	\$31,000	\$0.48	\$33,738	\$1,349,520
Burmese	\$34,095	\$0.53	\$30,643	\$1,225,720
Cambodian	\$38,728	\$0.60	\$26,010	\$1,040,400
Chinese	\$67,975	\$1.05	-	-
Fijian	\$44,211	\$0.68	\$20,527	\$821,080
Filipino	\$53,053	\$0.82	\$11,685	\$467,400
Chamorro	\$42,390	\$0.65	\$22,348	\$893,920
Hawaiian	\$40,271	\$0.62	\$24,467	\$978,680
Hmong	\$39,251	\$0.61	\$25,487	\$1,019,480
Indian	\$80,000	\$1.24	-	-
Indonesian	\$51,790	\$0.80	\$12,948	\$517,920
Japanese	\$61,466	\$0.95	\$3,272	\$130,880
Korean	\$60,000	\$0.93	\$4,738	\$189,520
Laotian	\$40,271	\$0.62	\$24,467	\$978,680
Malaysian	\$64,738	\$1.00	-	-
Mongolian	\$41,868	\$0.65	\$22,870	\$914,800
Nepalese	\$37,092	\$0.57	\$27,646	\$1,105,840
Pakistani	\$55,475	\$0.86	\$9,263	\$370,520
Samoaan	\$41,868	\$0.65	\$22,870	\$914,800
Sri Lankan	\$58,264	\$0.90	\$6,474	\$258,960
Taiwanese	\$80,000	\$1.24	-	-
Thai	\$42,390	\$0.65	\$22,348	\$893,920
Tongan	\$43,961	\$0.68	\$20,777	\$831,080
Vietnamese	\$43,158	\$0.67	\$21,580	\$863,200

Source: NWLC calculations based on 2017-2022 American Community Survey 5-year estimates using IPUMS-USA available at <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/> (IPUMS). Figures are based on women’s and men’s median earnings for full-time, year-round workers. White, non-Hispanic men typically made \$64,738. Respondents to the American Community Survey self-identify their sex as either male or female and self-identify their race or whether they are of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.

And while four groups of AANHPI women working full time, year round make more than white, non-Hispanic men (Chinese women, Indian women, Malaysian women, and Taiwanese women), these women still make less than men in their respective communities. For example, among full-time year-round workers, while Chinese women make \$1.05 for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men, they make just 83 cents for every dollar paid to Chinese men and while Indian women make \$1.24 for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men, they make just 76 cents for every dollar paid to Indian men.¹⁰

When comparing the median earnings of all AANHPI women who worked in 2021 with the median earnings of all white, non-Hispanic men who worked, regardless of how many hours or weeks they worked, AANHPI women were typically paid only 80 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men in 2021. These figures similarly varied widely between groups of AANHPI women compared to white, non-Hispanic men. Among all workers with earnings, Bangladeshi and Nepalese women made just 48 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men. Meanwhile, among all workers with earnings, Indian women made \$1.07 and Taiwanese women made \$1.08 for every dollar white, non-Hispanic men made. However, among all workers with earnings, Indian women make just 60 cents for every dollar paid to Indian men and Taiwanese women make just 63 cents for every dollar paid to Taiwanese men.¹¹

What All Working AANHPI Women (Including Part-Time and Part-Year Workers) Make For Every Dollar White, Non-Hispanic Men Make



Source: NWLC calculations based on 2017-2022 American Community Survey 5-year estimates using IPUMS-USA available at <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/> (IPUMS). Figures are based on women's and men's median earnings for all workers with earnings. White, non-Hispanic men typically made \$51,790. Respondents to the American Community Survey self-identify their sex as either male or female and self-identify their race or whether they are of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.

Losses due to gender and racial wage gaps are devastating for AANHPI women and their families, many of whom lose tens of thousands of dollars annually to the wage gap. This harms not only AANHPI women, but the families who depend on their income. AANHPI women cannot afford to wait for action on the wage gap.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Data in this analysis comes from the American Community Survey (ACS), where people self-identify their sex as either male or female and their race and ethnicity.
- 2 Brooke LePage and Jasmine Tucker, "A Window Into the Wage Gap: What's Behind It and How to Close it," (National Women's Law Center, Jan. 2023), <https://nwlc.org/resource/wage-gap-explainer/>.
- 3 NWLC calculations based on 2017-2021 American Community Survey (ACS), 5-year estimates, using Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Matthew Sobek, Danika Brockman, Grace Cooper, Stephanie Richards, and Megan Schouweiler. IPUMS USA, Version 13.0 [dataset]. University of Minnesota, 2023, www.ipums.org.
- 4 Brooke LePage and Jasmine Tucker, "A Window Into the Wage Gap: What's Behind It and How to Close it," (National Women's Law Center, Jan. 2023), <https://nwlc.org/resource/wage-gap-explainer/>.
- 5 Jasmine Tucker, "The Wage Gap Robs Women Working Full Time, Year Round of Hundreds of Thousands of Dollars Over a Lifetime," <https://nwlc.org/resource/the-wage-gap-robs-women-working-full-time-year-round-of-hundreds-of-thousands-of-dollars-over-a-lifetime/>.
- 6 NWLC calculations based on 2017-2021 American Community Survey (ACS), 5-year estimates, using Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Matthew Sobek, Danika Brockman, Grace Cooper, Stephanie Richards, and Megan Schouweiler. IPUMS USA, Version 13.0 [dataset]. University of Minnesota, 2023, www.ipums.org.
- 7 Laurie Goodman and Jun Zhu, "The Future of Headship and Homeownership," (Urban Institute, January 2021). <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/103501/the-future-of-headship-and-homeownership.pdf>
- 8 Single adults includes separated, divorced, widowed, and never married adults.
- 9 National Women's Law Center's calculations based on 2017-2021 American Community Survey (ACS), 5-year estimates, using Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Matthew Sobek, Danika Brockman, Grace Cooper, Stephanie Richards, and Megan Schouweiler. IPUMS USA, Version 13.0 [dataset]. University of Minnesota, 2023, www.ipums.org. Homes may be owned with or without a mortgage.
- 10 NWLC calculations based on 2017-2021 American Community Survey (ACS), 5-year estimates, using Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Matthew Sobek, Danika Brockman, Grace Cooper, Stephanie Richards, and Megan Schouweiler. IPUMS USA, Version 13.0 [dataset]. University of Minnesota, 2023, www.ipums.org.
- 11 NWLC calculations based on 2017-2021 American Community Survey (ACS), 5-year estimates, using Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Matthew Sobek, Danika Brockman, Grace Cooper, Stephanie Richards, and Megan Schouweiler. IPUMS USA, Version 13.0 [dataset]. University of Minnesota, 2023, www.ipums.org.