



**NATIONAL
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Black Women Have Been Undervalued and Underpaid for Far Too Long

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Over 60 years after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Black women continue to face racist and sexist barriers that leave them undervalued and underpaid as compared to both white, non-Hispanic men and to Black men.¹ Among full time, year-round workers in 1967, the earliest year for which data is available, Black women were paid just 43 cents for every dollar white, non-Hispanic men were paid.² By 2023, that figure had only narrowed by 23 cents, meaning Black women made 66 cents for every dollar made by white, non-Hispanic men.³ Moreover, the wage gap widens when part-time and part-year workers are included: in 2023 Black women were typically paid just 64 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.⁴ In addition, Black women working full time, year-round were paid 91 cents for every dollar paid to Black men.⁵

We need public investments and economic policies that support economic opportunity and address the problematic inequities failing Black women every day, robbing them of hundreds of thousands of dollars over their lifetimes, making it more difficult to make ends meet, and preventing them and their families from building wealth.

The wage gap robs Black women of over \$1 million dollars over a lifetime

Black women working full time, year-round lose 34 cents on the dollar to the racist and sexist wage gap, which adds up over time. Black women working full time, year-round lose \$2,123 each month—or \$25,480 each year.⁶ This annual loss could have paid for over nine months of a family's groceries,⁷ eight months of child care,⁸ and six months of rent.⁹ A Black woman starting her career today stands to lose \$1,019,200 over the course of a 40-year career if we don't close the gap. This money could be life-changing for Black women and their families, making it easier to make ends meet, and offering them opportunities to invest in their education or their children's, purchase a home, or save for retirement.

Black women experience a wage gap at every education level, including those who have earned a graduate degree

Women account for more than half of college-educated adults in the U.S. labor force.¹⁰ And Black women’s educational attainment has steadily increased in recent decades; nearly four times as many Black women received bachelor’s degrees during the 2021–22 academic year as during the 1976–77 school year. By comparison, less than 1.1 times as many white men received bachelor’s degrees in that same time frame, meaning the graduation rate hardly rose at all.¹¹ However, despite these educational gains, Black women were still typically paid less than white, non-Hispanic men with the same or even lower educational attainment:

- Black women working full time, year-round who have a high school diploma were typically paid just 70 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men with the same diploma.
- Black women working full time, year-round with a bachelor’s degree were typically paid \$59,200, which is less than what white, non-Hispanic men working full time, year-round with some college but no degree were typically paid (\$60,000).
- Black women working full time, year-round must earn a master’s degree (\$72,000) to make more than white, non-Hispanic men with an associate’s degree (\$66,000).
- Also striking is the typical difference in wages between the most educated Black women—those with professional degrees, such as juris doctorate degrees or medical doctor degrees—and their white, non-Hispanic male counterparts. Among professional degree holders, a Black woman working full time, year-round typically made 59 cents for every dollar made by a white, non-Hispanic man with the same education working full time—an annual loss of \$64,000, or nearly \$2.6 million over the course of a 40-year career.¹²

BLACK WOMEN’S WAGE GAP BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AMONG FULL TIME, YEAR-ROUND WORKERS

Educational attainment	Black Women’s Median Wage	White Non-Hispanic Men’s Median Wage	Typical Annual Loss	What Black Women Were Paid for Every Dollar Paid to White, Non-Hispanic Men
Less than 9th Grade	\$33,600	\$49,000	\$15,400	\$0.69
No high school diploma	\$30,000	\$48,000	\$18,000	\$0.63
High school diploma	\$35,000	\$50,000	\$15,000	\$0.70
Some college, no degree	\$40,000	\$60,000	\$20,000	\$0.67
Associate’s degree	\$44,500	\$66,000	\$21,500	\$0.67
Bachelor’s degree or more	\$65,000	\$100,000	\$35,000	\$0.65
Bachelor’s degree	\$59,200	\$90,000	\$30,800	\$0.66
Master’s degree	\$72,000	\$110,000	\$38,000	\$0.65
Professional degree	\$91,000	\$155,000	\$64,000	\$0.59
Doctorate degree	\$91,000	\$125,000	\$34,000	\$0.73

Source: National Women’s Law Center (NWLC) calculations using U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey (ACS), using IPUMS-USA, available at <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/sda/>. Respondents self-identify their sex as either male or female and self-identify their race, whether they are of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.

We can't wait to close the wage gap for Black women

Racism, sexism, and structural inequalities rob Black women and their families of tens of thousands of dollars every single year. We need public investments and public policies that allow Black women to succeed and thrive.

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FOOTNOTES

- 1 Data for this analysis comes from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2023 American Community Survey (ACS), and the U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2024 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS, 2024 ASEC). Respondents to this survey self-identify their sex as either male or female and their race and whether they are of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin.
- 2 National Women's Law Center (NWLC) calculations using (CPS, 2024 ASEC, Table P-38. Full Time, Year-Round Black Workers by Median Earnings and Sex: 1967 to 2023, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-income-people.html>.
- 3 NWLC calculations using CPS, 2024 ASEC, Table PINC-05. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/cps-pinc/pinc-05.html>. Figure is the ratio between median earnings for full time, year-round working Black women (\$50,470) and white, non-Hispanic men (\$75,950) in 2023.
- 4 NWLC calculations using CPS, 2024 ASEC, Table PINC-05. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/cps-pinc/pinc-05.html>. Figure is the ratio between median earnings for working Black women, including part-time and part-year, (\$40,710) and white, non-Hispanic men (\$63,210) in 2023.
- 5 NWLC calculations using CPS, 2024 ASEC, Table PINC-05. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/cps-pinc/pinc-05.html>. Figure is the ratio between median earnings for Black women working full time, year-round (\$50,470) and Black men (\$55,570) in 2023.
- 6 NWLC calculations using U.S. Census Bureau, CPS, 2024 ASEC, Table PINC-05. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/cps-pinc/pinc-05.html>. Figure assumes a median wage gap of \$25,480—the gap in median earnings between full time, year-round working Black women (\$50,470) and white, non-Hispanic men (\$75,950) in 2023—each year for 40 years. Figures are not adjusted for inflation.
- 7 U.S. Department of Agriculture, Official USDA Food Plans: Cost of Food at Home at Three Levels, U.S. Average, October, 2024 (accessed December, 2024) Official USDA Food Plans: Cost of Food at Home at Three Levels: Low, Moderate, Liberal; October 2024. Calculation is based on the USDA low-cost food plan for a family of four (two adults ages 19 to 50 and children ages 6 to 8 and 9 to 11) estimated at \$1,072.8 per month.
- 8 “Child Care at a Standstill: Price and Landscape Analysis,” Child Care Aware, <https://www.childcareaware.org/thechildcarestandstill/>. Average costs for child care for a child in the United States (including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico) is \$11,582 annually in 2023, or \$965.17 per month.
- 9 NWLC calculations using 2023 ACS, Table DP04. DP04: Selected Housing Characteristics - Census Bureau Table. Median housing costs for renters was \$1,348 per month in 2023.
- 10 “Women Now Outnumber Men in the U.S. College-Educated Labor Force” (Pew Research Center, September 2022), <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/09/26/women-now-outnumber-men-in-the-u-s-college-educated-labor-force/#:~:text=Women%20now%20outnumber%20men%20in%20the%20U.S.%20college%20educated%20labor%20force&text=Women%20have%20overtaken%20men%20and,Center%20analysis%20of%20government%20data>.
- 11 “Bachelor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity and sex of student: Selected academic years, 1976–77 through 2021–22” Table 322.20. (National Center for Education Statistics) https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d23/tables/dt23_322.20.asp. Figures were calculated by dividing the total number of Black women who received degrees in 2021–22 (130,424) by the number who received degrees in 1976–77 (33,489) and by dividing the total number of white men who received degrees in 2021–22 (479,308) by the number who received degrees in 1976–77 (438,161). As of February 2025 the data for the 2022–23 academic year is not yet available.
- 12 NWLC calculations using 2023 ACS, using IPUMS-USA, available at <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/sda/>.