

# Black Women and the Wage Gap

APRIL 2019

**A persistent gender-based wage gap continues to harm women, their families and the economy – and it is particularly damaging for Black women.** Black women in the United States who work full time, year-round are typically paid just 61 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.<sup>1</sup> This persistent, pervasive wage gap is driven in part by gender and racial discrimination, workplace harassment, job segregation and a lack of workplace policies that support family caregiving, which is still most often performed by women.<sup>2</sup> Overall, women employed full time, year-round are typically paid 80 cents for every dollar paid to men.<sup>3</sup>

**Even in states with large populations of Black women in the workforce, rampant wage disparities persist, with potentially devastating consequences for Black women and families.**

- In the 25 states (including the District of Columbia) with the largest numbers of Black women working full time, year-round, pay for Black women ranges from 48 to 68 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men in those states.<sup>4</sup>
- Of these 25 states, the District of Columbia and Mississippi have the largest shares of Black women working full time, year-round (as a percentage of their state's overall full-time workforce). Black women in the District of Columbia are paid 50 cents and Black women in Mississippi are paid 55 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.<sup>5</sup> In Louisiana, the District of Columbia, Mississippi and New Jersey, Black women also face the largest overall cents-on-the-dollar wage gaps; Black women in Louisiana are paid just 48 cents and in Mississippi and New Jersey, 55 cents, for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.<sup>6</sup>
- Of these 25 states, Texas and Georgia have the largest populations of Black women working full time, year-round. Black women in Texas are paid 58 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men and Black women in Georgia are paid 62 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.<sup>7</sup>
- Among these 25 states, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Tennessee have the smallest cents-on-the-dollar wage gaps, but Black women in those states still face substantial disparities. On average, Black women are paid just 68 cents in Maryland and 66 cents in Pennsylvania and Tennessee for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.<sup>8</sup>

<b>Wage Gap for Black Women by State</b>					
An analysis of the wage gap in the 25 states with the largest number of Black women who work full time, year-round					
<b>State</b>	<b>Number of Black Women Working Full Time, Year-Round</b>	<b>Median Wages for Black Women</b>	<b>Median Wages for White, Non-Hispanic Men</b>	<b>Annual Wage Gap</b>	<b>Cents on the Dollar</b>
Texas	557,720	\$36,741	\$63,176	\$26,435	\$0.58
Georgia	523,268	\$34,097	\$54,736	\$20,639	\$0.62
New York	510,697	\$41,617	\$65,987	\$24,370	\$0.63
Florida	503,756	\$30,950	\$51,136	\$20,186	\$0.61
Maryland	349,658	\$49,504	\$72,417	\$22,913	\$0.68
North Carolina	345,832	\$32,201	\$51,538	\$19,337	\$0.62
California	311,288	\$45,168	\$75,898	\$30,730	\$0.60
Virginia	277,241	\$37,269	\$63,386	\$26,117	\$0.59
Illinois	253,667	\$38,853	\$62,485	\$23,632	\$0.62
Louisiana	218,055	\$27,058	\$56,843	\$29,785	\$0.48
South Carolina	207,353	\$29,096	\$51,363	\$22,267	\$0.57
Pennsylvania	203,114	\$36,585	\$55,228	\$18,643	\$0.66
New Jersey	202,494	\$42,373	\$76,461	\$34,088	\$0.55
Ohio	202,098	\$33,222	\$52,019	\$18,797	\$0.64
Alabama	191,644	\$30,003	\$51,763	\$21,760	\$0.58
Tennessee	179,680	\$32,208	\$48,634	\$16,426	\$0.66
Michigan	176,594	\$34,237	\$53,993	\$19,756	\$0.63
Mississippi	161,348	\$27,328	\$49,925	\$22,597	\$0.55
Missouri	110,719	\$32,854	\$50,189	\$17,335	\$0.65
Indiana	86,658	\$32,245	\$51,774	\$19,529	\$0.62
Massachusetts	76,034	\$41,351	\$71,928	\$30,577	\$0.57
Arkansas	67,094	\$28,953	\$47,557	\$18,604	\$0.61
Connecticut	58,947	\$40,977	\$71,623	\$30,646	\$0.57
Kentucky	51,066	\$31,653	\$48,164	\$16,511	\$0.66

District of Columbia	49,897	\$50,206	\$100,439	\$50,233	\$0.50
----------------------	--------	----------	-----------	----------	--------

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau. (2018). *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2013-2017, Geographies: All States within United States*, Table B20017B: Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2017 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) by Sex by Work Experience in the Past 12 Months for the Population 16 Years and Over with Earnings in the Past 12 Months (Black or African American Alone); American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2013-2017, Geographies: All States within United States, Table B20017H: Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2017 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) by Sex by Work Experience in the Past 12 Months for the Population 16 Years and Over with Earnings in the Past 12 Months (White Alone, not Hispanic or Latino); and Table B20005B: Sex by Work Experience in the Past 12 Months by Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2017 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) for the Population 16 Years and Over (Black or African American Alone).

## How Does the Wage Gap Harm Black Women?

Median wages for Black women in the United States are \$36,735 per year, compared to median wages of \$60,388 annually for white, non-Hispanic men. This amounts to a difference of \$23,653 each year.<sup>9</sup> These lost wages mean Black women have less money to support themselves and their families, save and invest for the future, and spend on goods and services. Families, businesses and the economy suffer as a result.

For example, if the wage gap were eliminated, on average, a Black woman working full time, year-round would have enough money for approximately:

- Two and a half years of child care;<sup>10</sup>
- More than 2.6 additional years of tuition and fees for a four-year public university, or the full cost of tuition and fees for a two-year community college;<sup>11</sup>
- Nearly 17 additional months of premiums for employer-based health insurance;<sup>12</sup>
- 165 more weeks of food for her family (more than three years' worth);<sup>13</sup>
- More than 15 additional months of mortgage and utilities payments;<sup>14</sup>
- Twenty-three more months of rent;<sup>15</sup>
- Nearly 20 additional years of birth control;<sup>16</sup> or
- Enough money to pay off student loan debt in just over one year.<sup>17</sup>

## Black Women and Their Families Cannot Afford Discrimination and Lower Wages

**Eliminating the wage gap would provide much-needed income to Black women whose wages sustain their households.**

- More than 80 percent of Black mothers are key breadwinners for their families, which means their households rely heavily on their wages to make ends meet and get ahead;<sup>18</sup>
- Nearly four million family households in the United States are headed by Black women<sup>19</sup> – and nearly one in three of those households live below the poverty

level.<sup>20</sup> This means that more than 1.2 million family households headed by Black women live in poverty, demonstrating the imperative to eliminate the wage gap.

## The Public Overwhelmingly Supports Fair Pay Policies

- Black women experience workplace harassment and discrimination at high rates. In a recent survey conducted by the YWCA, close to two-thirds of Black women (61 percent) reported experiencing racial discrimination, and more than one-quarter (28 percent) reported being “very worried” about sexual harassment at work.<sup>21</sup>
- Black women want Congress to act. Nearly nine in ten Black women (88 percent) strongly agree that Congress should strengthen equal pay laws, more than eight in ten (86 percent) that Congress should pass legislation to end racial profiling, nearly eight in ten (79 percent) that Congress should pass paid family and medical leave legislation.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2018). *Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic (ASEC) Supplement: Table PINC-05: Work Experience in 2017 – People 15 Years Old and Over by Total Money Earnings in 2017, Age, Race, Hispanic Origin, Sex, and Disability Status*. Retrieved 19 March 2019, from <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/cps-pinc/pinc-05.html> (Unpublished calculation based on the median earnings for all women and men who worked full time, year-round in 2017; full time is defined as 35 hours a week or more)

<sup>2</sup> Glynn, S. J. (2018, April). *Gender wage inequality: What we know and how we can fix it*. Retrieved 19 March 2019 from Washington Center for Equitable Growth website: <https://equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/gender-wage-inequality/?longform=true>

<sup>3</sup> See note 1.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2018). *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2013-2017, Geographies: All States within United States, Tables B20017B: Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2017 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) by Sex by Work Experience in the Past 12 Months for the Population 16 Years and Over with Earnings in the Past 12 Months*. Retrieved 19 March 2019, from [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_17\\_5YR\\_B20017B&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_17_5YR_B20017B&prodType=table); U.S. Census Bureau. (2018). *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2013-2017, Geographies: All States within United States, B20017H: Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2017 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) by Sex by Work Experience in the Past 12 Months for the Population 16 Years and Over with Earnings in the Past 12 Months*. Retrieved 19 March 2019, from [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_17\\_1YR\\_B20017H&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_17_1YR_B20017H&prodType=table) (This calculation is based on a comparison of the median earnings of white, non-Hispanic men working full time, year-round with that of Black women working full time, year-round.); U.S. Census Bureau. (2018). *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2013-2017, Geographies: All States within United States, Table B20005B: Sex by Work Experience in the Past 12 Months by Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2017 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) for the Population 16 Years and Over (Black or African American Alone)*. Retrieved 19 March 2019, from [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_17\\_5YR\\_B20005B&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_17_5YR_B20005B&prodType=table);

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. U.S. Census Bureau. (2018). *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017, Geographies: All States within United States, Table B20005: Sex By Work Experience in the Past 12 Months by Earnings in the Past 12 Months (in 2017 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) for the Population 16 Years and Over*. Retrieved 19 March 2019, from [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_17\\_5YR\\_B20005&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_17_5YR_B20005&prodType=table) (Black women comprise 18.2 percent of the full-time, year-round workforce in the District of Columbia and 17.9 percent of the full-time, year-round workforce in Mississippi.)

<sup>6</sup> See note 4.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> See note 1.

<sup>10</sup> Child Care Aware of America. (2018). *The U.S. and the High Cost of Child Care: A Review of Prices and Proposed Solutions for a Broken System*. Retrieved 19 March 2019, from [https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/3957809/COCreport2018\\_1.pdf](https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/3957809/COCreport2018_1.pdf). Estimate of \$9,170 based on the average cost of center-based child care for a four-year-old. This average is not representative of the mean and is an

approximation calculated by weighting state child care cost averages by the number of programs by type reported by each state. It is not to be considered a "national average."

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2018, November). *Digest of Education Statistics: 2018* (Table 330.10, Average undergraduate tuition and fees and room and board rates charged for full-time students in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by level and control of institution: 1963-64 through 2017-18), Chapter 3. Retrieved 19 March 2019, from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18\\_330.10.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_330.10.asp) (The average total annual cost of undergraduate tuition and required fees is \$9,037 for a four-year public college or university or \$3,243 for a two-year college.)

<sup>12</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation. (n.d.) Average Annual Single Premium per Enrolled Employee For Employer-Based Health Insurance, 2017. Retrieved 19 March 2019, from <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/single-coverage/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Employee%20Contribution%22,%22sort%22:%22desc%22%7D>

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2018, September). *Consumer Expenditure Survey, Table 1800. Region of residence: Average annual expenditures and characteristics, 2016-2017*. Retrieved 20 March 2019, from <https://www.bls.gov/cex/2017/region/region.pdf> (Calculation uses overall average "food" cost.)

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2018). *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2017, Table GCT2511: Median Monthly Housing Costs for Owner-Occupied Housing Units with a Mortgage (Dollars)*. Retrieved 20 March 2019, from [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_17\\_1YR\\_GCT2511.US01PR&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_17_1YR_GCT2511.US01PR&prodType=table) (Calculation uses median monthly housing costs for owner-occupied housing units with a mortgage)

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2018). *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2017, Table GCT2514: Median Monthly Housing Costs for Renter-Occupied Housing Units (Dollars)*. Retrieved 20 March 2019, from [http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_17\\_1YR\\_GCT2514.US01PR&prodType=table](http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_17_1YR_GCT2514.US01PR&prodType=table) (Calculation uses median gross rent)

<sup>16</sup> Center for American Progress. (2012, February 15). *The High Costs of Birth Control: It's Not As Affordable As You Think*. Retrieved 19 March 2019, from [https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2012/02/pdf/BC\\_costs.pdf](https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2012/02/pdf/BC_costs.pdf) (Calculated from a survey of retail costs of oral contraceptives for the uninsured and average copays, combined with the average cost of doctor visits to obtain the prescription. While the Affordable Care Act greatly advanced access to birth control by requiring coverage of contraceptives without cost sharing, many women still must pay out of pocket because they lack insurance, because their plan is grandfathered and does not cover contraceptives without a copay, or because their plan only covers generics.)

<sup>17</sup> Siegel Bernard, T., & Russell, K. (2018, July 11). "The New Toll of American Student Debt in 3 Charts." *The New York Times*. Retrieved 19 March 2019, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/11/your-money/student-loan-debt-parents.html> (The average debt load at graduation for a student receiving a bachelor's degree was \$30,301 in 2015-2016.)

<sup>18</sup> Anderson, J. (2016, September 8). *Breadwinner Mothers by Race/Ethnicity and State*. Retrieved 19 March 2019 from Institute for Women's Policy Research website: <https://iwpr.org/publications/breadwinner-mothers-by-raceethnicity-and-state/>

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2018). *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2017, Table B11001B: Household Type (Including Living Alone) (Black or African American Alone)*. Retrieved 19 March 2019, from [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_17\\_1YR\\_B11001B&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_17_1YR_B11001B&prodType=table) (Calculation uses family households headed by females living in a household with family and no husband. A family household includes a householder, one or more people living in the same household who are related to the householder, and anyone else living in the same household.)

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2018). *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates 2017, Table S0201: Selected Population Profile in the United States (Black or African American alone)*. Retrieved 19 March 2019, from [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_17\\_1YR\\_S0201&prodType=table](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_17_1YR_S0201&prodType=table) (To determine whether a household falls below the poverty level, the U.S. Census Bureau considers the income of the householder, size of family, number of related children, and, for one- and two-person families, age of householder. The poverty threshold in 2018 was \$20,231 for a single householder and two children under 18.)

<sup>21</sup> YWCA USA (2018, September). *What Women Want 2018*. Retrieved 19 March 2019, from [https://www.ywca.org/wp-content/uploads/WhatWomenWant2018\\_final.pdf](https://www.ywca.org/wp-content/uploads/WhatWomenWant2018_final.pdf) (Lake Research Partners and American Viewpoint conducted a national survey, commissioned by the YWCA USA, among 1,038 adult women with oversamples of 100 Black women, 100 Latinas, 100 Asian/Pacific Islander women, and 100 Native American women. The survey was conducted from Aug. 27 – Sept. 6, 2018. The margin of error for the sample as a whole is plus or minus 3.1 percentage points but was higher for subgroups.)

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

The National Partnership for Women & Families is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy group dedicated to promoting fairness in the workplace, reproductive health and rights, access to quality, affordable health care and policies that help all people meet the dual demands of work and family. More information is available at [NationalPartnership.org](http://NationalPartnership.org).

© 2019 National Partnership for Women & Families. All rights reserved.