

# GENDER PAY GAP

Women: Like Men, Only Cheaper

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“The reality is that if we do nothing it will take 75 years, or for me to be nearly a hundred before women can expect to be paid the same as men for the same work.”

–Emma Watson

# INTRODUCTION

Every worker in today's society experiences a variety of challenges unique to their position, but half of all workers, regardless of the industry, face a challenge that the other half does not. The gender pay gap is not a myth, and on average, women make 80 cents to every dollar that men make in the United States. This is true even when both parties share the same level of education, experience, and qualifications. This pay gap equates to over \$10,000 that women do not receive annually.<sup>2</sup> In order to better understand the gender pay gap and how to overcome it, it is important to study the historical context, learn about the misconceptions, and discover ways to take action and work towards equality.



"Kristen Bell Mocks The Gender Pay Gap In Hilarious Short Film" 2016

<sup>2</sup> National Partnership For Women & Families 2016

# LOOKING BACK

Historically, women have long been underpaid compared to men. Despite progressions in other areas of gender equality, the pay gap has largely remained unchanged. “In 1963, women earned 59 cents for every dollar that men earned.”<sup>3</sup> This is particularly concerning because in 53 years, women have only been able to decrease the gap by less than half. Traditionally, women stayed at home and did not work as much as they do today, but times have changed drastically. In 1963, only 35% of the workforce was comprised of women,<sup>4</sup> but today, that number has jumped to 47%.<sup>5</sup> Despite the growing presence of women in the workforce, there has been very little progression.

“In 53 years, women have only been able to decrease the gap by less than half.”



<sup>3</sup> “Did You Know That Women Are Still Paid Less Than Men?” 2016

<sup>4</sup> “Women As A Growing Percentage Of The Workforce, 1948 - 1998” 2016

<sup>5</sup> “Women’s Bureau (WB) - Quick Facts On Women In The Labor Force In 2010” 2016



# OVERCOMING MISCONCEPTIONS

## Education

There are many common misconceptions regarding the United States gender pay gap. Arguably the most prominent is the notion that education level directly correlates with pay. This misconception assumes that men are generally more educated than women. In the US, “women are almost 60 percent of the annual university graduates and more than 70 percent of 2012 high school valedictorians. Women [also] account for 60 percent of master’s degrees and 52 percent of doctorates.”<sup>6</sup>

## Occupation

Another misconception is that women are naturally drawn to occupations and industries that traditionally are not as remunerative as the careers men choose to pursue. It is true that women are more focused on “education, humanities and arts, and health and welfare,” but even within these industries, they are paid less than their male coworkers in the same field.<sup>7</sup>

## Discrimination

It is a common belief that racial discrimination does not play a defining role in perpetuating the pay gap; however, this is simply untrue. Although the pay gap seems harsh for women in general, minority women are the recipients of even greater discrimination. For every dollar that full-time, non-Hispanic men make, African American women are paid 63 cents, Latina women are paid 54 cents, and Asian women are paid 85 cents.<sup>8</sup> It is apparent that the effects of the gender pay gap are particularly marginalizing for minority women.

<sup>6</sup> Chamie 2016

<sup>7</sup> National Partnership For Women & Families 2016

<sup>8</sup> National Partnership For Women & Families 2016

# MOVING FORWARD

## Effects

The gender pay gap places severe constraints on women and their ability to maneuver through a career in today's economic system. It disproportionately affects single mothers who rely on one income to support their families, it is particularly constraining for minority women, and it discourages women from taking time away from their career to start or take care of their families. The pay gap is genuinely unfair and unjust.

## Reaction

In order to combat the gender pay gap, companies first and foremost need to be aware of the issue and examine their own practices.

Although understanding the issue is a step in the right direction, this alone will not fix the issue until action is taken. Companies must be willing to recognize that they are feeding into the pay gap by paying women less than men in a position where both candidates are equally qualified. When this occurs, they must immediately be willing to level

“We cannot all  
succeed when half  
of us are held back.”

—Malala Yousafzai

the playing field and pay women a fair and competitive wage. Once companies begin to take a stand and promote equal compensation

for equal work, a trend will likely ensue. This trend will consequently force other companies, across all industries, to follow in their footsteps. Companies also need to evaluate their policies that affect women like maternity leave and flexible hours. In order to attract top women today, it is vital that companies be aware of the needs of women.

It is proven that having diversity in the workplace equates to higher productivity, innovation, and efficiency. Diversity brings change of thought and perspective. Women deserve the right to be compensated for the work they put in and celebrated for their successes. As Malala Yousafzai explained, “We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back.”

**Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff is truly “putting his money where his mouth is.”<sup>9</sup> He evaluated the gender pay gap at Salesforce and spent \$3 million in 2015 to increase female employees’ salaries to promote equality.**

**Mr. Benioff invites you to open your eyes to the inequality surrounding you and take action so that tomorrow’s generation of women does not have to worry about hitting the glass ceiling.**

<sup>9</sup> Bellstrom 2015

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