



their jobs than full-time workers.<sup>11</sup>

In fact, in 2020 and 2021, for only the second and third times in 55 years, median earnings for full-time, year-round women workers were higher than median earnings of all types of men workers. This demonstrates both that, on average, women still earn

round workers tended to have more stable income

than their part-time and seasonal worker counterparts through the pandemic. [Fig. 2]

Including all workers in these calculations illuminates a variety of lived experiences that affect the gender pay gap. That data help to demonstrate that there is not just one pay gap, but rather many gaps—in earnings,

Race is an important facet impacting the disparities. There are broad differences in the average wages based on race in comparison to white, non-Hispanic men. Whether comparing full-time, year-round workers or all workers, there is no racial group of women who come close to bringing home similar wages to white, non-Hispanic men. And many subgroups of Asian women—the highest overall earners among women in comparison to white, non-Hispanic men—in fact experience some of the largest wage gaps.<sup>12</sup> [Fig.3]

But the economic security of women and their

family's assets and liabilities—protects families from unexpected expenses or temporary economic shocks, contributes to retirement, and offers security and peace of mind.<sup>13</sup> White families are much more likely to have wealth than families of color. For example, the median Black family has a mere 12.7% of the wealth that the median white family has.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, white individuals are more than four times as likely to have received an inheritance than Hispanic individuals.<sup>15</sup>

The U.S. has a long history of sexism and racism that contributes to the creation and perpetuation of these gender and racial pay gaps.<sup>16</sup> AAUW's 2021 report, *Systemic Racism and the Gender Pay Gap*<sup>17</sup>, discusses how this has led to occupational segregation and the undervaluing of women's work. Policies beyond those that affect the workforce also contribute, including

those that pertain to housing, education and criminal justice.

Structural solutions are needed to disrupt these patterns and set women and their families on a

path where employers have a role to play in closing the gender and economy.

## Government

Congress should pass the Paycheck Fairness Act, which would update and strengthen the Equal Pay Act of 1963; the Pay Equity for All Act, which would prohibit employers from using salary history to 9004 (.091 jon and the)-9

the federal minimum wage to \$15 by 2025. Women make up the majority of minimum-wage workers, and women of color are overrepresented in low-wage jobs. Moreover, two-thirds of tipped workers are women, and tipped women of color make notably less than their tipped white male and female counterparts. A \$15 minimum wage would narrow the pay gap and reduce poverty for millions of women workers and their families.

Congress should institute robust protections against sexual, racial and other forms of harassment. Racism and sexism often collide in the workplace, causing women of color to experience higher levels of harassment and discrimination, and often harming their earnings. The BE HEARD in the Workplace Act, the EMPOWER Act and the Forced Arbitration Injustice Repeal (FAIR) Act are legislative responses

jobs and earn a fairer paycheck without the threat of harassment or retaliation.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) can and should gather critical wage information based on sex, race and ethnicity from private employers and from federal contractors with 100 or more employees. This data collection could help the EEOC better identify wage discrimination and encourage voluntary compliance by companies.

As states await federal action, they should enact or reform their own pay equity laws. Nearly every state has a law prohibiting employers from paying workers

differently based solely on their gender. But many of these laws are limited in scope or not enforced. Every state has room to make its legislation stronger.

## Employers

Employers should conduct regular pay audits, post salary ranges for jobs, eliminate the use of salary history in setting wages and prohibit retaliation against employees for discussing, disclosing or inquiring about their wages. These actions will increase pay transparency and minimize pay gaps based on previous inequalities. They may also contribute positively to employers' bottom lines and employee recruitment and retention. When workers believe their employer is fair, their morale improves and they are more likely to contribute their best effort to the job.<sup>18</sup>

## Individuals

While women can't negotiate around discrimination, it is helpful to know your market value and to push for better wages. Individuals can learn to negotiate their

salary-negotiation course.

employers and governments—by writing letters to legislators and local papers, blogs and tweets. Those are just a few examples. Joining an organization like AAUW can make all of these activities easier, especially if you use our templates and resources and connect with our network of activists.

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**AAUW thanks Jessamyn Schaller, Ph.D., and Brittany Stalsburg, Ph.D.,  
for their contributions to the research and analysis in this report.**

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