
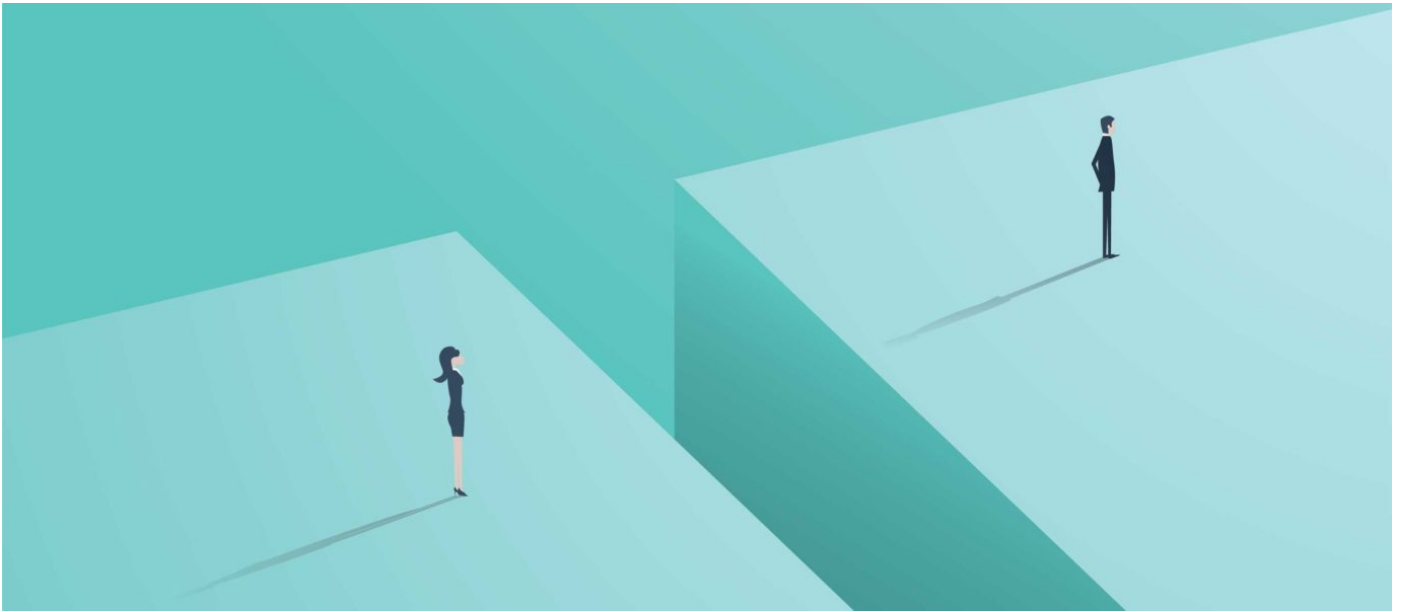


C A R E E R

Gender Pay Gap: What It Means and How to Get What You're Due

 3 M I N

BY LEAH SHEPHERD | DECEMBER 16, 2019 R E A D



How is it that we're beginning the second decade of the third millennium and research continues to show that men still get paid more than women, despite laws against gender discrimination in pay?

Yes, the gender pay gap persists.

Among full-time, year-round workers, the median annual earnings for women is 81.6 percent of the median annual earnings for men this year, according to the [Institute for Women's Policy Research \(IWPR\)](#). Emphatically, this shows the pay gap is not due to women working fewer hours, taking part-time jobs, or taking time off work to care for children or elderly parents.

Female-dominated industries and job categories are lower paying than male-dominated ones. "That's not a coincidence," says Siri Chilazi, a research fellow at the [Women and Public Policy Program at Harvard University](#). "In our society there is a systematic devaluation of women's work."

"Girls and women are more likely to be steered into lower paying fields throughout their educations and careers," says Kimberly Churches, chief executive officer for the [American Association of University Women \(AAUW\)](#).

Even among men and women with the same job title, industry, education level, location and years of experience, research confirms the pay disparity. A study from the AAUW shows there is a 7 percent wage gap between male and female college graduates one year after graduation, after controlling for college major, occupation, age, geographical region and hours worked.

*** This content is not intended to be a substitute for professional advice. Always seek the advice of your attorney or other qualified professional with any questions you may have regarding your situation.

“We often hear that women are well-positioned to benefit in the future workforce due to their increased investments in their education and training,” says Ariane Hegewisch, IWPR’s program director on employment and earnings. “But these data remind us that gender and racial inequalities in the labor market are hard-wired into the system. Policymakers, communities, and employers should address the issues underlying the wage gap to ensure that the future of work is reshaped to benefit all workers, including women of color.”

Legislative Action

The U.S. House of Representatives passed the [Paycheck Fairness Act](#) in March 2019, and now has been introduced in the U.S. Senate. It would prohibit employers from using salary history to determine future pay and retaliating against workers who discuss their wages. It would expand data collection to identify pay disparities and increase penalties for employers that violate equal pay laws.

In 1945, Massachusetts became the first state to pass an equal pay law. But after seven decades, women working full-time still earn only 84.3 percent of what men earn in the Commonwealth, according to the state Attorney General’s Civil Rights Division. Massachusetts updated its equal pay law last year to clarify that employers cannot: pay women less than men for comparable work; prohibit employees from disclosing or discussing their wages; ask the salary or wage history of job candidates; or retaliate against any employee who exercises his or her rights.

Likewise, New York State passed two bills this year to require equal pay for substantially similar work and ban employers from asking job candidates about their salary history. Illinois, Washington State and New Jersey also passed laws this year to prohibit employers from asking about job candidates’ previous salary.

Churches says, “Momentum is building toward closing the gap, and that can and will accelerate change if we keep pushing it forward.”

Activate and Advocate

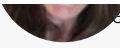
What can you do to help close the pay gap? This.

- Don’t accept any job offer without negotiating well. Prepare for salary negotiations by researching salary ranges for the job. Negotiate for benefits that affect your finances, such as telework and parking access.
- Seek promotions and let supervisors know when you have accomplished a goal or performed very well.
- If you discover you earn significantly less than male colleagues for the same work, discuss it with your human resources representative or consult a lawyer. If the HR department doesn’t resolve the problem, contact the [U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission](#).
- If you suspect there is widespread pay discrimination, ask your employer to conduct an equal pay audit.
- Talk with colleagues and friends about gender discrimination.
- Vote for candidates who support laws to close the gender pay gap. Contact your elected officials about equal pay legislation and paid family leave.
- Consider an industry or field that’s traditionally male-dominated.



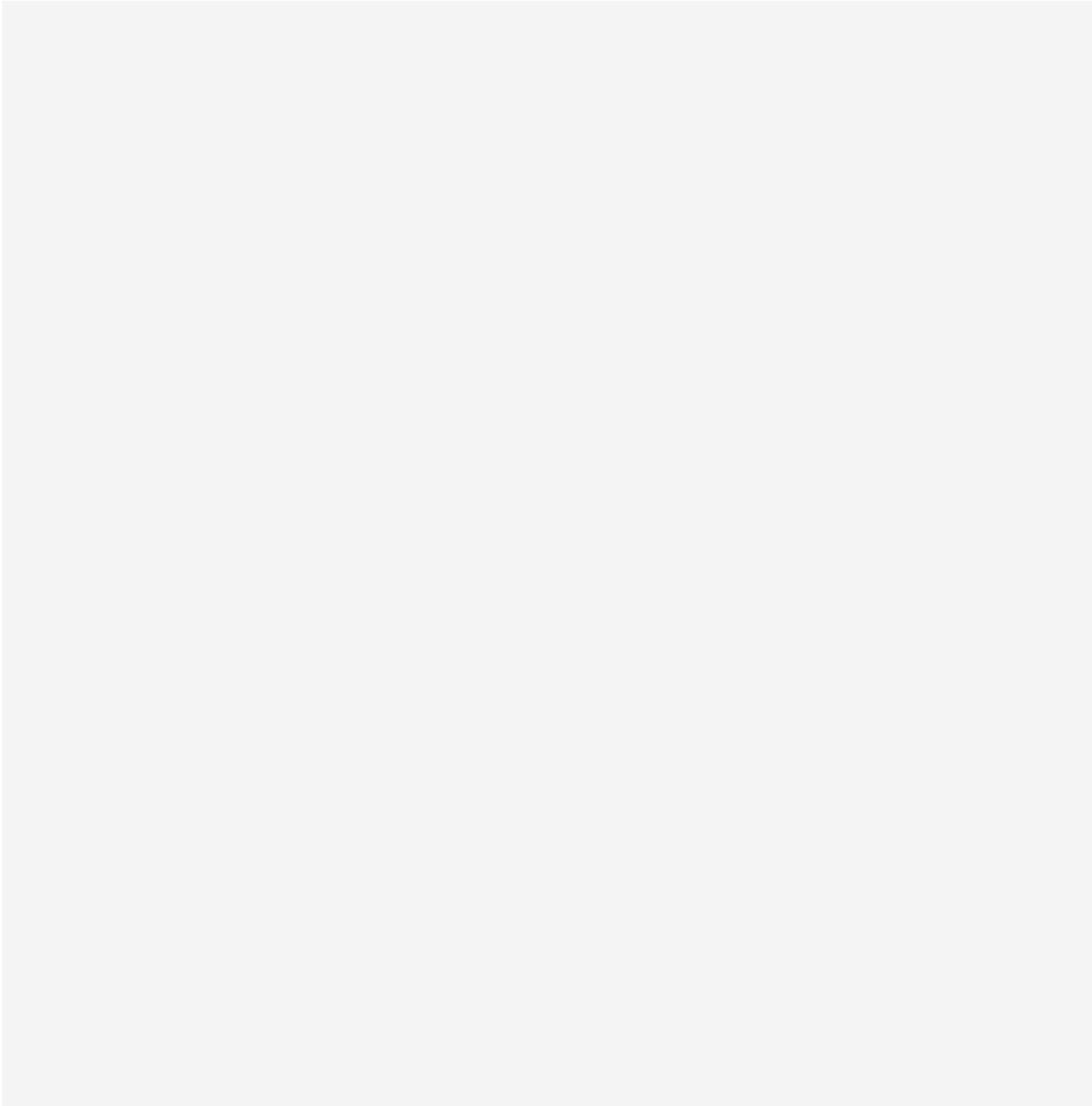
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leah Shepherd



Shepherd is a freelance writer who lives near Baltimore with her husband and two sons. She has been writing about workplace and HR topics for 15 years.

[Career Advice](#), [Money Management](#), [Winter 2020](#)



More Stories









TAKE A MOMENT TO EXHALE.
A breath of fresh air for your inbox.

First Name

Email Address

GO →

EXHALE



[ABOUT US](#)

[EXHALE EVENTS](#)

[WOMEN IN CONVERSATION](#)

[MARKETPLACE](#)

[CONTACT US](#)

[MEMBERSHIP](#)

[LOGIN](#)

SIGN IN →

© 2019 CMD Media Group, LLC. All Rights Reserved. [Terms](#) [Privacy Policy](#)

