



# Lifetime Losses

## The Career Wage Gap

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Jessica Arons December 2008



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# Executive summary

In 2007, Lilly Ledbetter gained attention when the Supreme Court denied her back pay and other compensation for unequal wages and sex-based discrimination at work. The Court's decision deprived her of the \$223,776 in additional wages she would have earned had she been a man.

Unfortunately, even in the absence of intentional discrimination, most women in this country also are likely to lose substantial amounts of income due to something we at the Center for American Progress Action Fund have termed the “career wage gap.”

The more commonly known gender wage gap is the annual difference in median wages between men and women who are employed full-time. The career wage gap looks at how the current annual gender wage gap accumulates over a 40-year period. It thus provides us with an estimate for lost wages over a lifetime of work.

According to our analysis:

- Women may lose \$434,000 in income, on average, due to the career wage gap.
- Women at all education levels lose significant amounts of income due to the career wage gap, but women with the most education lose the most in earnings.
  - Women with a college degree or higher lose \$713,000 over a 40-year period versus a \$270,000 loss for women who did not finish high school.
- Women in all occupations suffer from the career wage gap, but the gap ranges widely from one occupation to the next, with the widest gap in finance and management and the smallest gap in construction and maintenance.
- Women lose hundreds of thousands of dollars from the career wage gap no matter where they live.
  - The gap exceeds \$300,000 in 15 states, \$400,000 in 22 states, and \$500,000 in 11 states.

The numbers from this study demonstrate that, over a lifetime of work, women and their families face sizeable shortfalls in income as a result of the career wage gap. The study signals the urgent need for businesses and government to do much more to ensure fair pay, help women achieve economic equality, and bring increased stability to our economy.

“[T]ime and again  
I got smaller raises  
than the men,  
and, over the  
years, those little  
differences added  
up and multiplied.”  
– Lilly Ledbetter

# The career wage gap

The gender wage gap represents the difference between the median wages of all full-time working men and women. Our study looks at the annual wage gap for a series of age ranges, based on 2007 data from the American Community Survey. The gaps in each age range were then added up to model how the gap accumulates over a full career. More information about the study can be found in the methodology section below.

Women who work year-round still earn less than men in comparable jobs and at all educational levels. The wage gap increases over a woman's lifetime and is even worse for African-American and Hispanic women. While many people are aware of this gap and recognize the hit to the pocketbook it represents for women taking home a smaller paycheck every pay period, many people do not think about the long-term effects of being underpaid over a lifetime.

This lack of awareness about the lifetime impact stems in part from the fact that the gender pay gap statistic most frequently cited is the annual ratio of median earnings. Currently, the average woman earns 78 cents for every dollar a man makes over a year. This is a marked improvement over the 59 cents a woman was paid on the dollar in 1963, when the Equal Pay Act was passed. But it is clearly still too far from the 100 cents on a man's dollar that women ought to be earning if they are to achieve true economic and social equality.

This annual ratio of median earnings is a useful reference point, but it provides only a snapshot of differential earnings for one year at a time. The Center's new study, in contrast, adds up this loss of earnings from age 25 to 64. Looking at 5- and 10-year age increments, the Center was able to estimate lost earnings due to the gender wage gap over a 40-year period.

These numbers are based on current median wages and do not attempt to predict the results of past or future fluctuations in the pay gap. Nor do they intend to represent the experience of a particular woman; they are meant only to illustrate the general problem posed by the effect of the wage gap over time. The losses were determined for all full-time female workers and then broken out by education level, by occupation, and by state.

The direct loss in wages over a lifetime for a woman and her family is significant and severe. The new study shows that at current rates, the average full-time female worker loses approximately \$434,000 in wages over a 40-year period as a direct result of the gender pay gap (see graph below).

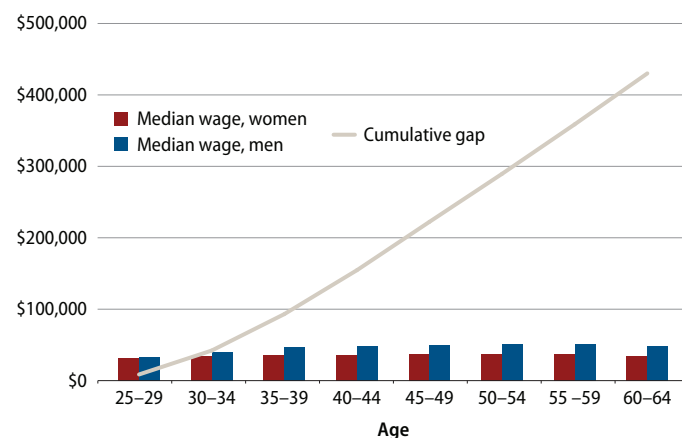
The average full-time female worker loses approximately \$434,000 in wages over a 40-year period as a direct result of the gender pay gap.

This number is strikingly consistent with the amount a jury determined was lost by Lilly Ledbetter, a Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company employee who claimed she was paid less because of her sex. The jury agreed with her and awarded her \$223,776 in back pay for her 19 years with Goodyear.<sup>1</sup> If we assume that twice as many years on the job would have resulted in double the back pay, we see that Ledbetter would be owed approximately \$447,552.

Women earn less than men virtually from the moment they enter the workforce. The American Association of University Women study “[Behind the Pay Gap](#)” found, for instance, that one year out of college, women working full-time earn only 80 percent as much as their male colleagues and that a pay gap exists across all educational majors.

### The career gender pay gap

Full-time, year-round female workers typically earn less than men at every age, and the wage gap increases at older ages.



Our study shows an average gap of \$1,702 per year among men and women ages 25 to 29. While this gap alone would add up to a considerable amount of lost income over a lifetime, the wage gap only widens at older ages. During the last five years before the typical age of retirement (ages 60 to 64), women’s median wages trail men’s by \$14,352 annually.

In addition to the direct economic loss of earning lower wages, the pay gap means that any benefits pegged to salary will be lower, on average, for women than for men. For instance, raises may be lower for women whose salary is further down on the pay scale, or the percentage of retirement savings matched by an employer may result in a smaller contribution because, again, it is based on a lower salary.

The Center’s study, however, does not try to account for such losses in benefits and savings. It simply adds up the median differences in full-time wages among a series of age groups. The study also does not attempt to account for women who work part-time or take time out of the workforce for unpaid family caregiving duties, but the fact that the gender wage gap increases over time likely reflects such workforce detachment to some extent.

Thus, the \$434,000 in lost earnings represents only a portion of the damage done by the gender pay gap over a 40-year period.

Even without compounding factors, the gender wage gap, and its impact over a lifetime, is one reason why women still struggle to gain economic equality. By a number of measures, women lag behind men in terms of economic stability: Women are more likely to live in [poverty](#), were more likely to be [laid off](#) in the last recession, and save less than men for [retirement](#).



The career pay gap represents an outrageous, unacceptable, and unjustifiable loss to women and their families, as well as to our economy. We must increase our efforts to close this gap as much as possible and as quickly as possible, in order to ensure women’s full equality, a fair workplace, and a more stable economy.

Career wage gap by education level

When the lifetime wage gap data is broken down by education level, we see significant disparities at all tiers, but a stark difference in lost earnings between those with the least amount of formal education and those with the most education.

Women who did not finish high school ultimately bring home an average of \$270,000 less than their male counterparts—a substantial loss for families who are likely already struggling to get by. On the other hand, women with a bachelor’s degree or higher lose an egregious \$713,000 on average over 40 years due to the wage gap.

Women with a high school diploma and those with some college hover closer to the overall career wage gap of \$434,000 that we found. Women with a high school diploma lag behind men by about \$392,000, while women with some college lose approximately \$452,000 over 40 years.<sup>2</sup>

Education level	Career gap
Bachelor’s or higher	\$-713,000
Some college	-452,000
High school	-392,000
Less than high school	-270,000

It is hard to know exactly what drives this trend, but it seems that the larger one’s earning potential, the more one stands to lose over time. It also is possible that as we move from minimum-wage jobs to professional occupations, we encounter more variegation among pay scales and more room for salary negotiation.

In addition, for women with college degrees, the AAUW “Behind the Pay Gap” study revealed that not all degrees are the same. A woman’s major can have a substantial effect on both her earning potential and the salary she will make, compared to a man with an equivalent educational background.

For instance, women who choose a female-dominated major may earn 95 percent of what their male peers make one year out of college. But women who major in male-dominated or mixed-gender fields may make only three-quarters of what their male counterparts make a year after graduation. And, again, these disparities increase over time. Thus the larger pay gaps we see among college-educated women and men may be attributed in part to these large variations within and among majors.

What is clear is that regardless of education level, women are not being paid their full worth when compared with similarly educated men.

## Career wage gap by occupation

The data regarding lifetime wage gaps by occupation reveal trends that are consistent with the education-related data, with occupations requiring more education showing greater gaps in earnings than those requiring less education. Women in construction and maintenance jobs average an \$80,000 lifetime pay gap, while women in management and finance may lose approximately \$706,000 over a 40-year career.<sup>3</sup>

When occupations are broken down into more detailed categories, the differences are even greater. While female installation, maintenance, and repair workers lag behind their male colleagues by \$84,000 over time, women in the legal profession may lose close to \$1.5 million in lifetime earnings compared with their male counterparts.

Aside from the extreme examples at either end of the spectrum, most women in most occupations are at risk for losing hundreds of thousands of dollars in their lifetimes due to the wage gap. And even an \$80,000 gap, averaging out to a shortfall of \$2,000 a year, can be a large hit to a family at the lower end of the economic spectrum.

It also is important to keep these numbers in perspective. For a variety of reasons, estimates for some sectors may overstate the career wage gap, while others may understate it.

For instance, the legal occupation category includes legal support workers as well as lawyers and judges. While women make up 51 percent of the overall legal category, they account for 33 percent of lawyers and 39 percent of judges but 81 percent of legal support workers. Therefore, some of the wage gap in this category is likely influenced by the gender disparity among the subcategories.

Conversely, women account for only 4 percent of installation, maintenance, and repair workers. Because the pay gap compares men and women's wages, it should be hard to have any gap when virtually no women work in a given field. The fact that a wage gap exists at all, despite being the smallest gap of the categories studied, suggests pay equity remains a large problem in that sector. Moreover, it is evident that additional effort is needed to better integrate the entire workforce.

Regardless of these important caveats, the data provide an interesting look at sectors that have been traditionally dominated by women, sometimes known as “pink-collar jobs.” These jobs have been histori-

Major occupations	Career gap
Management and finance	-\$706,000
Sales	-690,000
Professional	-673,000
Production and transportation	-486,000
Services	-377,000
Other (military and farming)	-352,000
Office support	-343,000
Construction and maintenance	-80,000

Detailed occupations	Career gap
Legal	-\$1,481,000
Health-care practitioners and technical	-89,1000
Sales	-69,0000
Management	-635,000
Business operations and financial specialists	-628,000
Architecture and engineering	-555,000
Production	-524,000
Computer and mathematical	-514,000
Personal care and service	-443,000
Transportation and material moving	-438,000
Life, physical, and social science	-416,000
Protective service	-414,000
Education, training, and library	-411,000
Office and administrative support	-343,000
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance	-309,000
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media	-238,000
Construction trades and extraction workers	-237,000
Farming, fishing, and forestry	-203,000
Food preparation and serving	-181,000
Health care support	-171,000
Community and social services	-130,000
Installation, maintenance, and repair workers	-84,000

cally undercompensated due to the large concentration of women in the field. As a result, men who work in these jobs often experience deflated wages as well. Women still trail men in these job categories—again, by hundreds of thousands of dollars over a lifetime—but the gap is indeed more narrow than in the fields that were originally male-dominated but have received a healthy and steady influx of women over the past few decades.

For instance, services and office support have the fifth and seventh smallest career pay gaps, respectively, of eight major occupations. Likewise, food preparation and serving, health care support, and community and social services rank among the detailed occupations with the most narrow pay gaps.

In contrast, women appear to fare the worst with the career pay gap in professional occupations. The top five detailed occupations where women are likely to lose the most are: legal; health care practitioners and technical; sales; management; and business operations and financial specialists. Similarly, the largest gaps arise for women in the major occupations of management and finance, sales, and professional.

A recent study of CEO pay seems to bear this out. “[The Corporate Library’s CEO Pay Survey: CEO Pay 2008](#)” shows that although female CEOs receive a higher base salary than male CEOs, when cash bonuses, perks, and stock compensation are factored in, women CEOs make only 85 percent of what men earn. Median CEO compensation was \$1,746,000 for women versus \$2,049,000 for men, resulting in a differential of \$303,000 in one year alone.

Again, it would seem that the larger a woman’s earning potential, the more she may lose in terms of real dollars over a lifetime of work. However, there may be a few additional reasons for the trend in the data showing somewhat smaller deficits from the wage gap in nonprofessional fields.

First, skilled labor typically is compensated at a lower rate than office jobs. As a result, men in construction and maintenance, for instance, may not be able to sprint too far ahead of their female colleagues simply because the pay scale for such jobs only goes so high. Second, skilled labor tends to be more unionized than professional jobs. It is possible that union contracts are more likely to set salary ranges and not provide as much room for individual discretion and negotiation in determining compensation.

Third, prevailing wage laws may control salaries in these fields more than others, again providing less opportunity for variation. Fourth, a skilled laborer may lose or be perceived to lose fewer skill and career development opportunities during time out of the workforce than when a professional woman leaves her job for an extended period of time. All of these hypotheses warrant further research.

It would seem that the larger a woman’s earning potential, the more she may lose in terms of real dollars over a lifetime of work.



The larger point remains that women across all occupations trail their male counterparts by significant margins over time. Clearly, women in all job sectors would benefit from better safeguards to ensure consistent, fair, and equitable compensation for male and female employees, as well as more protections to stay in their jobs and on their career paths while balancing work and family obligations.

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## Career wage gap by state

A significant career wage gap also exists for women in the United States no matter where they live. The smallest gap we discovered was in Vermont, where the median gap, added up across 10-year age groups, equals \$270,000. In 15 states, the disparity tops \$300,000; 22 states pass \$400,000; and 11 states have career gaps over \$500,000.<sup>4</sup>

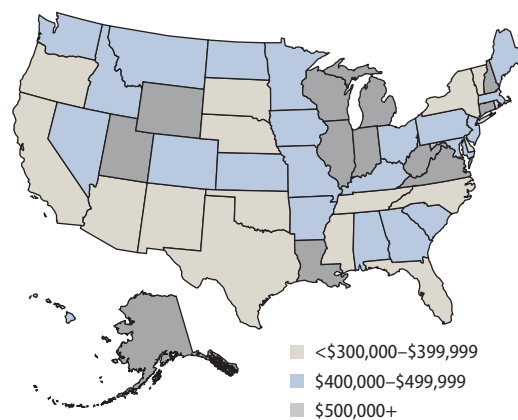
Even where the gap is at its most narrow, the news may not be that good. One [study](#) suggests that what seems like greater wage parity in Vermont may actually be the result of men's deflated wages in that state, rather than improved economic achievement for women.

When the data are broken down by region, we find numbers that are quite close to the overall career gap of \$434,000. Women seem to fare slightly better, relative to men, in the South and Northeast, with lifetime wage gaps of \$413,556 and \$428,889, respectively. They do marginally worse in the West and Midwest, with career losses of \$460,333 and \$462,083, respectively. The bottom line is that the career wage gap is substantial in every part of the country.

State-by-state comparisons may be useful to the extent they raise awareness about the causes of the gap in each state and alert states to the relative urgency of the need to take additional steps to reduce the gap, but few conclusions can be drawn from direct state comparisons given a multitude of variables at play—in particular the different combination of occupations in each state, the prevalence of women in those occupations, and the differences in pay levels overall among states.

One conclusion, however, ought to be clear: Women and their families stand to lose hundreds of thousands of dollars over a lifetime of work throughout the entire country. All states and the federal government, in partnership with the business community, need to devise more effective ways to address this problem.

Career wage gap by state



# The impact of the career wage gap

What, then, are the effects of these substantial losses to household incomes? As Lilly Ledbetter described to the Senate in her [testimony](#) earlier this year:

*What happened to me is not only an insult to my dignity, but it had real consequences for my ability to care for my family. With every paycheck I received, I got less than what I was entitled to under the law....The truth is, Goodyear continues to treat me like a second-class worker to this day because my pension and social security is based on the amount I earned while working there. Goodyear gets to keep my extra pension as a reward for breaking the law.*

*As you may know, making ends meet during retirement is not easy for a lot of seniors like me, even under the best of circumstances. It shouldn't be harder just because you are a woman who was discriminated against during your career.*

One [report](#) from the AFL-CIO and the Institute for Women's Policy Research, or IWPR, found that if women were paid fairly, the income of single women would rise by 13.4 percent, single mothers would take home 17 percent more, and married women's earnings would increase by 6 percent. These increases would lead to reductions in poverty for these groups by roughly 84 percent (from 6.3 percent to 1 percent), 50 percent (from 25.3 percent to 12.6 percent), and 62 percent (from 2.1 percent to 0.8 percent), respectively.

Lower earnings naturally make it harder for women to provide education, child care, and basic supports for their children, as well as to build assets like home ownership. And, as mentioned above, the income gap translates into a retirement gap as well. The American Association of Retired Persons estimates that unmarried women receive approximately [\\$8,000 less](#) in annual retirement income than their male counterparts. Two-thirds of this disparity can be attributed to the pay gap and occupational segregation.

As the IWPR points out, lower wages for women hurt [men and society](#) as well. American men work the longest hours in the industrialized world and have the smallest amount of leisure time, often so that their wives can increase the time they spend on family caregiving duties or in order to make up for their wives' lower wages. Society, moreover, loses out on additional tax revenue from women while having to increase spending on safety net programs for women who are not paid a living wage.

Lower earnings naturally make it harder for women to provide education, child care, and basic supports for their children, as well as to build assets like home ownership.

# Recommendations

Business and educational institutions have strong roles to play in eliminating the gender wage gap. By encouraging women and men to undertake work that is “nontraditional” for their gender, the connection between compensation and the perception of a job as “women’s” or “men’s” work may eventually be broken. Moreover, businesses can and should voluntarily take steps to review their compensation schemes and ensure pay equity for their employees.

Reliance on voluntary action by the private sector alone, however, has not achieved and will not ensure wage parity. Government needs to do more to enforce existing fair pay laws and to enact and implement additional laws to guarantee a more equal workforce. A number of bills have been introduced in Congress to achieve these goals, and the new administration and Congress should take quick action on them.

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## The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act

This bill would reverse the Supreme Court decision *Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.*, reinstate prior law, and adopt the paycheck accrual rule, which allows a victim of pay discrimination to bring a lawsuit after any discriminatory pay decision occurs or is put into practice, including each time a discriminatory paycheck is issued.

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## The Paycheck Fairness Act

This bill would strengthen the Equal Pay Act by 1) allowing victims of pay discrimination based on gender to fully recover damages, some of which are currently only available to victims of pay discrimination based on race or ethnicity; 2) making it easier to bring class-action suits; 3) improving the government’s ability to collect data about wage discrimination; 4) prohibiting retaliation against employees who share salary information; 5) closing a loophole in a legal defense that employers have exploited; 6) clarifying the category of employees who can be compared in order to prove discrimination by a business; 7) adding incentives and guidance for employers who voluntarily attempt to eliminate unfair wage disparities; and 8) increasing education, training, and research to improve enforcement of equal pay laws and eliminate pay disparities.

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## The Fair Pay Act

This bill would address occupational segregation by equalizing wages among jobs that are in separate fields but require comparable skills, responsibilities, and working conditions; expand the types of damages available and strengthen protections against retaliation; and improve requirements for employer record-keeping.

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## The Employee Free Choice Act

This bill would make it easier for employees to form unions, establish stronger penalties for employers who interfere with the right of workers to form a union, and provide mediation and arbitration when necessary to ensure that employers bargain with new unions over a first contract in good faith. Union membership increases women's weekly earnings by 38.2 percent and men's by 26.0 percent. Women of color and low-wage earners are helped even more by unionization.

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## Healthy Families Act

This bill would provide seven days of *paid* sick leave for full-time workers to care for themselves or a sick family member. It also encourages employers to provide greater leave benefits and workplace flexibility. Nearly half of all full-time, private sector employees and more than three-quarters of low-wage workers have no paid sick leave. Seventy-eight percent of people who need leave to care for themselves or a family member do not take it because it is unpaid and they cannot afford to go without pay.

# Conclusion

Women have made enormous advances toward economic equality, but gaps in income between men and women persist and only multiply over time. We need improved recovery options for discriminatory pay, better enforcement of our fair pay laws, incentives for eliminating pay disparities, easier access to union membership and protections, and more workplace flexibility. Until people are paid equally for equivalent work regardless of their gender, women, their families, and society will continue to pay the price.



# Methodology

The source of wage data used in this report is the American Community Survey, or ACS, using the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series from the Minnesota Population Center, which provides an online tool for easily accessing the ACS. The data set was limited to women and men between the ages of 25 and 64 who worked 50 to 52 weeks during 2007 and typically worked 35 or more hours per week. Workers are divided into 5- and 10-year age groups: 25- to 29-year-olds, 30- to 34-year-olds, and so on. Median wages are calculated separately for women and men within each age group. The wage gap is calculated by subtracting the male median wage from the female median wage. To illustrate the lifetime wage gap given today's wage difference, we sum the gap across age groups. Data are not presented where insufficient samples sizes do not allow for meaningful calculation of medians. The wage gap presented here is not necessarily representative of a typical woman's experience, but it is an illustration of the scope of the problem.

Occupational categories follow the Standard Occupation Classification, or SOC, which is used by the bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau to classify occupations, which are then combined into broad groups. An occupation is classified by the type of work performed and many occupations are found in multiple industries. More information on the SOC can be found at <http://www.bls.gov/soc/>.

# Appendix

## Median wages and income gap by state (10-year age intervals)

State	Female				Male				Total Gap
	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55–64	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55–64	
Alabama	26299	31188	32130	30760	32745	41640	43427	47046	-445000
Alaska	38156	40429	38239	36096	39317	53549	59559	57004	-565000
Arizona	31285	35579	37078	36494	34190	44767	49670	48405	-366000
Arkansas	24350	27619	29498	27197	30830	36740	40177	42140	-412000
California	35886	41125	42062	41795	36704	48925	51886	52174	-288000
Colorado	33126	38682	40702	36939	37247	50048	52384	52658	-429000
Connecticut	37126	44099	44588	43317	43194	59015	59901	57806	-508000
Delaware	36924	42007	40942	42224	41636	48893	53144	54562	-361000
District of Columbia	51984	52337	51648	55717	49232	71261	61040	61848	-317000
Florida	30490	32567	34950	33849	33716	42792	44929	43915	-335000
Georgia	31108	35369	35557	35078	34137	44251	49273	50080	-406000
Hawaii	32174	36194	36934	35933	38943	46695	50790	50117	-453000
Idaho	25211	28784	30874	30484	32601	40551	42163	46486	-464000
Illinois	32468	37627	37853	36625	40165	52392	53590	52241	-538000
Indiana	30211	31835	32214	31445	36403	45204	50345	48919	-552000
Iowa	28480	31556	32455	30973	35673	44230	42688	43269	-424000
Kansas	27931	31937	33944	31721	33781	44390	47248	48568	-485000
Kentucky	28450	30858	31557	30239	32362	42668	43443	44605	-420000
Louisiana	25246	30058	31360	27727	35122	42635	48153	47703	-592000
Maine	31028	30426	33257	31674	37438	41892	44014	43048	-400000
Maryland	40766	46887	49152	46136	45490	59888	61811	62693	-469000
Massachusetts	39870	46242	44940	42724	45563	60350	60424	55819	-484000
Michigan	31318	36009	37411	36754	38650	51434	53904	52107	-546000
Minnesota	33320	38592	38428	40646	40264	50739	51617	48407	-400000
Mississippi	25332	27735	28293	27370	31424	38127	37879	40974	-397000
Missouri	29440	31931	32262	30756	35013	44049	46577	45372	-466000
Montana	25386	26218	30121	26534	31296	36592	41351	42385	-434000
Nebraska	29328	31324	31373	30364	35285	40158	41353	36112	-305000
Nevada	31496	36492	36136	35226	40117	44677	46527	49663	-416000
New Hampshire	33342	37035	39039	34347	41486	54427	54423	51098	-577000
New Jersey	40701	45327	45542	44186	43115	59874	60902	56743	-449000
New Mexico	26850	31317	31859	33533	31110	40209	42419	45626	-358000
New York	36884	39920	40910	40710	38815	50085	51428	51070	-330000
North Carolina	29569	32759	33465	31731	31748	41618	44244	43201	-333000
North Dakota	28141	26857	28457	27344	32108	41751	39307	41408	-438000
Ohio	31184	34542	35425	34416	36263	47182	50269	50442	-486000
Oklahoma	26221	30252	31567	31037	30820	41065	43872	41979	-387000
Oregon	30518	32413	35708	35474	34462	44092	45989	46577	-370000
Pennsylvania	31405	35898	35070	32639	37091	46403	48763	49014	-463000
Rhode Island	32709	40027	41395	39973	37392	50153	54136	50339	-379000
South Carolina	29474	30774	31845	29610	32016	43023	44488	44181	-420000
South Dakota	26118	26656	28402	23775	34262	35708	36889	36976	-389000
Tennessee	29530	30498	31646	29856	31336	40104	42176	44509	-366000
Texas	30494	32059	35912	34903	31942	42595	47149	46333	-347000
Utah	29779	34893	35106	35365	36279	48093	52906	52067	-542000
Vermont	28828	32246	34215	36560	32339	42547	40479	43472	-270000
Virginia	35651	38184	41047	39035	39333	52255	55980	57396	-510000
Washington	32304	40232	40856	40910	40236	51903	55140	54721	-477000
West Virginia	27116	25499	27361	26934	34208	37718	45876	45192	-561000
Wisconsin	31065	32314	35084	31181	37375	46669	50052	47171	-516000
Wyoming	25141	28274	31986	30477	37066	49870	52163	49535	-728000

Median wages and income gap by major occupation (10-year age intervals)

Major Occupation	Female				Male				Total Gap
	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55–64	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55–64	
Management and finance	42712	52144	54231	52851	50670	71168	75948	74747	-706000
Professional	40723	48096	50871	51068	50225	66419	71244	70206	-673000
Services	21070	20948	21395	20980	26494	32962	32250	30400	-377000
Sales	30301	32128	31580	27211	40489	51493	51215	47044	-690000
Office support	28584	31573	32596	32807	31312	40036	44045	44470	-343000
Construction and maintenance	30344	36539	41501	38718	31658	38735	42274	42465	-80000
Production and transportation	22541	24374	25858	25368	31048	36677	40183	38865	-486000
Other (military and farming)	23706	23280	20144	20951	30608	36660	30113	25941	-352000

Median wages and income gap by detailed occupation (10-year age intervals)

Detailed Occupation	Female				Male				Total Gap
	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55–64	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55–64	
Management	42304	55575	59152	57449	50614	71853	77402	78136	-635000
Business Operations and Financial Specialists	43194	49212	49646	47306	50773	67399	70360	63651	-628000
Computer and Mathematical	53062	63819	66111	63933	59777	77185	81000	80373	-514000
Architecture and Engineering	55103	60291	60213	54177	57785	71907	77903	77706	-555000
Life, Physical, and Social Science	43798	59970	60714	55131	46148	64956	74698	75424	-416000
Community and Social Services	33874	38098	40394	40998	35163	42407	44233	44520	-130000
Legal	46465	55945	53614	51086	71919	94720	97882	90735	-1481000
Education, Training, and Library	35471	41355	44673	50330	40123	50660	58944	63162	-411000
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	40473	45472	40444	39364	37442	50001	51331	50778	-238000
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	44413	51693	54233	54227	49878	72198	81325	90228	-891000
Healthcare Support	24009	25358	26163	25900	26705	30047	30627	31175	-171000
Protective Service	36298	42461	41052	34197	41306	54414	55528	44175	-414000
Food Preparation and Serving	18258	18270	19375	19097	21639	23812	24537	23149	-181000
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	16121	16824	18327	20172	21841	25648	27682	27127	-309000
Personal Care and Service	17933	15942	16766	15455	24559	31029	28543	26244	-443000
Sales	30301	32128	31580	27211	40489	51493	51215	47044	-690000
Office and Administrative Support	28584	31573	32596	32807	31312	40036	44045	44470	-343000
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	16633	18435	18445	20564	21100	23142	25406	24703	-203000
Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	26823	31459	32330	32383	30322	35595	40017	40769	-237000
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Workers	32909	40452	46117	42057	36337	42507	45785	45262	-84000
Production	22488	24555	25917	25540	31461	37314	41412	40698	-524000
Transportation and Material Moving	22718	23841	25666	24759	30608	35938	37295	36938	-438000

Median wages and income gap by education (10-year age intervals)

Education	Female				Male				Total Gap
	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55–64	Age 25–34	Age 35–44	Age 45–54	Age 55–64	
Less than high school	17636	19450	20442	20845	22448	26554	28408	27974	-270000
High school	24332	26763	28648	28253	30926	36804	40487	38951	-392000
Some college	29819	34614	36804	36413	36604	47002	50583	48693	-452000
Bachelor's or higher	43174	54102	55951	54243	51902	74892	78838	73171	-713000

# Endnotes

- 1 Unfortunately, in May 2007, the Supreme Court used a cramped and narrow reading of our antidiscrimination laws to rule against Ledbetter and take away the jury's award of back pay, as well as compensatory and punitive damages.
- 2 Estimates based on 10-year interval data; five-year data results were virtually identical.
- 3 Data based on 10-year age intervals; five-year data not available for all occupation categories.
- 4 Wyoming is off the charts with a \$728,000 gap. Although we believe this finding is accurate, we see it as an outlier. For an explanation as to why Wyoming's wage gap is so much wider than in other states, see Anne M. Alexander and others, *A Study of the Disparity in Wages and Benefits Between Men and Women in Wyoming* (The University of Wyoming, 2003), available at <http://doe.state.wy.us/lmi/WDReport.pdf>.

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## About the author

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