

— TOP TAKEAWAYS —

What Drives the Pay Gap

Women's average **weekly earnings** in full-time jobs were 83.1 percent of those for men in 2021. This raw wage gap may be misinterpreted to suggest widespread wage discrimination against women, but the data do not support that claim. The wage gap is largely driven by the choices that women and men make.

WOMEN AND MEN TAKE ON DIFFERENT ROLES IN THEIR FAMILIES

- There's almost no pay gap for single childless women, but the wage gap begins to **widen** around age 25, likely due to choices about family roles.
- Fewer **mothers** than fathers say they would rather work full time than part time.

WOMEN MORE OFTEN WORK IN LOWER-PAYING PROFESSIONS

- The **most common jobs** for women generally pay less than the most common jobs for men.

WOMEN WORK FEWER HOURS THAN MEN

- Full-time men work 8.4 hours per day on average compared to **7.8 hours** for women.
- Seventy-five percent of men work full time compared to just **65 percent** of women.

WOMEN AND MEN MAKE DIFFERENT CHOICES IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- Men are concentrated **in college majors** leading to high-paying jobs, such as in technology and engineering, while women are concentrated in majors leading to lower-paying roles in social sciences and liberal arts.
- Women consider **non-financial issues** like enjoyment of work and work-life balance when choosing a major, while men are most concerned with salaries and status.

MEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO WORK IN DANGEROUS WORK CONDITIONS

- Overwhelmingly, men work in the **most dangerous** jobs and those jobs generally pay higher wages.

The wage gap is not a measure of “equal pay for equal work” or a sign of widespread discrimination against women. In fact, wage discrimination is illegal in the U.S. The gap largely reflects individual choices about work.

Click [HERE](#) to read the policy focus and learn more about what drives the pay gap.