



**NATIONAL  
WOMEN'S  
LAW CENTER**

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# The Wage Gap Shortchanges Mothers

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Among full-time, year-round workers in 2020, mothers were typically paid 74 cents for every dollar paid to fathers. This means that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the pay gap was robbing mothers who remained working full time, year round of \$1,417 per month, or \$17,000 per year.

As large as the wage gap is between mothers and fathers working full time, year round, it doesn't reflect the reality of many mothers who lost jobs that year because of the pandemic or who were forced into part-time work, as schools went remote and child care providers closed. The massive job losses in 2020, particularly among low-paid workers, meant that substantially fewer people worked full-time, year-round that year, and those who did often had higher pay than those who lost their jobs. When comparing all mothers who worked to all fathers who worked in 2020, regardless of how many hours or weeks they worked, mothers were typically paid just 58 cents.<sup>1</sup>

**The wage gap costs mothers working full time, year round \$17,000 annually due to the wage gap, and many mothers of color lose even more.**

The wage gap coupled with the way the pandemic has been especially disruptive for mothers' jobs and economic well-being has created a recipe for disaster. Though many parents took on additional child care responsibilities during the pandemic, mothers—especially those with young children—typically took on a greater share than fathers and experienced a greater impact on their work as a result. In recent NWLC polling, nearly one in six mothers (16%)—including nearly one in four mothers with children under 5 (23%)—reported that they stop working (or looking for work) when their children are not in school or child care, compared to just 6% of fathers and 11% of fathers with children under 5. And among parents who lost or quit a job during the pandemic, only 46% of mothers say they have gotten a new job, compared to 76% of fathers.<sup>2</sup>

This loss of income means women, and especially those with children in their care, continue to struggle: in July 2022, nearly one in five women with children in their household (18.5%) reported they sometimes or often could not afford enough to eat in the past week.<sup>3</sup> An extra 26 cents on the dollar could have been

a lifeline for women and their families during this crisis. If today's median wage gap between mothers and fathers working full time, year round closed, mothers could have an extra \$17,000 this year. This gap could pay for six months of rent,<sup>4</sup> six months of their family's groceries<sup>5</sup> and six months of child care.<sup>6</sup>

Racial inequities compound the motherhood pay gap for many mothers of color.<sup>7</sup> For example, Latina mothers working full time, year round are paid just 47 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic fathers. Native American mothers and Black mothers working full time, year round are paid only 49 cents and 52 cents, respectively, for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic fathers. Many mothers of color working full time, year round, therefore, lose tens of thousands of dollars to the wage gap with Latina mothers typically losing nearly \$38,000 annually, Native American mothers losing nearly \$36,000 annually, and Black mothers losing nearly \$34,000 annually compared to white, non-Hispanic fathers.<sup>8</sup>

### HOW MUCH MOTHERS WORKING FULL TIME, YEAR ROUND LOSE TO THE WAGE GAP, BY RACE/ETHNICITY

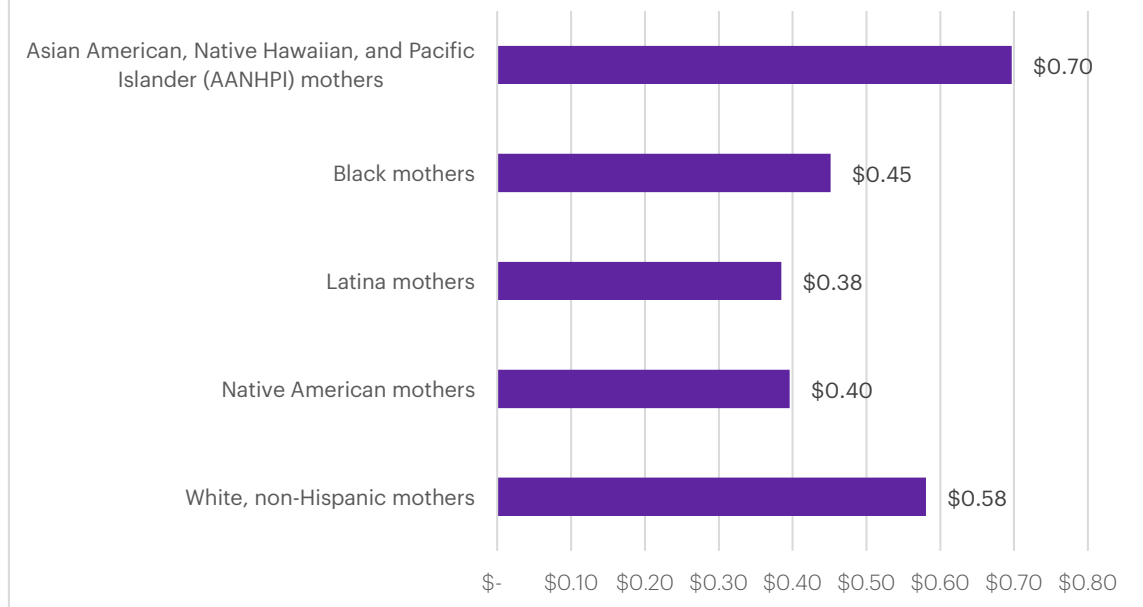
Mothers by race/ethnicity	What mothers were paid for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic fathers in 2020	Typical monthly losses	Typical annual losses
Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) mothers	\$0.90	\$579	\$6,950
Black mothers	\$0.52	\$2,825	\$33,900
Latina mothers	\$0.47	\$3,154	\$37,850
Native American mothers	\$0.49	\$2,988	\$35,850
White, non-Hispanic mothers	\$0.71	\$1,708	\$20,500

Source: NWLC calculations using 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates using IPUMS-USA. Respondents self-identify their sex as either male or female and self-identify their race, whether they are of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin, and whether they have children under 18 in their home.

### The wage gap for all working mothers compared to all working fathers (not just those working full-time, year-round) is even larger.

Especially given the labor market shifts of 2020, the wage gap for those who worked full time, year round in 2020 does not give a complete picture of the wage gaps experienced by working mothers. Women lost a majority of the nearly 22 million jobs lost between February and April 2020 and continue to make up a majority of net job losses.<sup>9</sup> Women are also more likely than men to work part time, and women lost all of the net part-time jobs lost between 2019 and 2021.<sup>10</sup> When comparing all mothers who worked in 2020 with all fathers who worked, regardless of how many hours or weeks they worked, mothers were typically paid just 58 cents for every dollar paid to fathers<sup>11</sup> and the gaps were even wider for many mothers of color when compared to white, non-Hispanic fathers.<sup>12</sup>

### What Women Make by Race/Ethnicity for Every Dollar White, non-Hispanic Men Make, Including Part-Time and Part-Year Workers



### Mothers need action that closes the wage gap.

Even before the COVID-19 crisis, mothers were losing thousands of dollars annually due to the wage gap, with Black, Latina, and Native American mothers suffering from the largest gaps. Couple that with the economic crisis moms and their families are still facing and mothers have been put between a rock and a hard place. The impact of the COVID-19 crisis underscores the need to close the wage gap and to continue to work to ensure a recovery that centers the needs of Black, Latina, and Native American mothers, who have been shortchanged and undervalued for too long. It is long past time to start paying mothers what they are owed and to stop robbing their families of the financial security they need.

- 1 National Women’s Law Center (NWLC) calculations using U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey (ACS), using IPUMS-USA, available at <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/sda/>. Mothers are women with at least one child under the age of 18 at home, and fathers are men with at least one child under the age of 18 at home. Respondents to the ACS self-identify as either male or female. Please refer to the ACS questionnaire for further detail: <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/methodology/questionnaires/2020/quest20.pdf>.
- 2 Brooke LePage, “Resilient But Not Recovered: Mothers in the COVID-19 Crisis,” (National Women’s Law Center, August 2022), <https://nwlc.org/resource/resilient-but-not-recovered-after-two-years-of-the-covid-19-crisis-women-are-still-struggling/>.
- 3 NWLC calculations using U.S. Census Bureau, “Measuring Household Experiences During the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic, 2020-2022 Household Pulse Survey,” Census.gov, Week 47 data, <https://www.census.gov/data/experimental-data-products/household-pulse-survey.html>.
- 4 NWLC calculations using U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey, Table DP04: Selected Housing Characteristics, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=DP04%3A%20SELECTED%20HOUSING%20CHARACTERISTICS&tid=ACSDP5Y2020.DP04>. Median gross rent in between 2016 and 2020 was \$1,096 per month.
- 5 NWLC calculations using U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA Food Plans: Cost of Food Report for June 2022, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cnpp/usda-food-plans-cost-food-reports-monthly-reports>. A month’s worth of groceries on a low-cost food plan in June 2022 for a family with two adults between 19 and 50 years of age and two young children ages 2-3 and 4-5 was \$858.00.
- 6 NWLC calculations using Appendix I from “Demanding Change: Repairing our Child Care System,” (Child Care Aware of America, 2020), <https://www.childcareaware.org/demanding-change-repairing-our-child-care-system/>. Average costs for child care in a center in Oregon for a toddler is \$10,425 annually in 2020, or \$868.75 per month. Oregon’s cost for this type of child care falls at the median of all state averages (including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico).
- 7 Respondents to the ACS self-identify their race and whether they are of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin. Latina mothers are those who self-identified as being of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin and may be of any race. Black mothers are those who self-identified as Black or African American. Native American mothers are those who self-identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native. Asian American and Pacific Islander mothers are those who self-identified as Asian and/or Pacific Islander. White, non-Hispanic mothers and fathers are those who self-identified as white and not of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin. Please refer to the ACS questionnaire for further detail.
- 8 NWLC calculations using 2016-2020 ACS, using IPUMS-USA, available at <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/sda/>.
- 9 NWLC calculations using U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), “Employees on nonfarm payrolls by industry section and selected industry detail,” Table B-1 in July 2022 Employment Situation Summary, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t17.htm> and BLS, “Employment of women on nonfarm payrolls by industry sector, seasonally adjusted,” Table B-5 in July 2022 Employment Situation Summary (Washington, DC: August 5, 2022), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t21.htm>. Historical data available at <https://www.bls.gov/ces/data/employment-situation-table-download.htm>.
- 10 Brooke LePage. “Part-Time Workers Are Facing Heightened Uncertainty During COVID—and Most Are Women.” (National Women’s Law Center, February 2022), <https://nwlc.org/resource/part-time-workers-factsheet/>.
- 11 NWLC calculations using 2020 ACS, using IPUMS-USA, available at <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/sda/>.
- 12 NWLC calculations using 2016-2020 ACS, using IPUMS-USA, available at <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/sda/>.