

Gender pay gap in the U.S. widens for the first time in 20 years

Women's lost earnings due to pay inequality amounts to \$1.7 trillion in 2023. How will the next administration address this stark gender inequality?

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES,
September 26, 2024 /

EINPresswire.com/ -- New analysis from the National Partnership for Women and Families reveals that women in the U.S. lost \$1.7 trillion in earnings in 2023 due to the gender pay gap, underscoring the ongoing economic inequality they face.



Photo credit: ERA Coalition

With the 2024 presidential election fast approaching, what will the next administration do to close this gap and unlock the potential of trillions of dollars in economic growth by ensuring women receive equal pay for equal work?

“

The absence of constitutional safeguards means that women in the U.S. have less protection against discrimination in the workplace in relation to their gender, parental status, or pregnancy.”

*S. Mona Sinha, Equality Now,
and Zakiya Thomas, ERA
Coalition*

A major reason why this gender pay gap persists is that women are not explicitly protected against sex discrimination in the U.S. Constitution, leaving them vulnerable to systemic legal bias and its far-reaching financial and social impacts.

One transformational way to rectify this problem is for the U.S. to enshrine gender equality in its Constitution by ratifying the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). This proposed amendment would guarantee equal rights under the law by explicitly prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex or gender.

WOMEN NEED GREATER PROTECTION AGAINST

DISCRIMINATION

The U.S. has [no federal law requiring businesses to provide paid family leave](#), making it the only high-income country without mandatory paid maternity leave, according to the World Bank. This forces new mothers to return to work soon after childbirth, risking their physical and mental health while balancing work and childcare. Additionally, the absence of guaranteed paid paternity leave reinforces traditional gender roles by placing the burden of caregiving on women and forcing many to choose between their careers and family responsibilities, often resulting in professional, financial, and personal setbacks.

The World Bank has highlighted that while women's labor force participation has risen significantly in the last fifty years, they still remain overrepresented in low-paid, insecure, and unregulated jobs. Many face unequal treatment at work and limited access to career advancement opportunities.

The absence of constitutional safeguards means that women in the U.S. have less protection against discrimination in the workplace in relation to their gender, parental status, or pregnancy – making it harder for victims to access justice when they are mistreated in hiring, remuneration, promotion, and retention practices.

THE GENDER PAY GAP

According to a White House statement released on National Equal Pay Day (1), women earn less than men in more than 90% of occupations, and over a lifetime, this inequity amounts to a huge disparity in income.

In 2023, the [gender pay gap increased for the first time in 20 years](#), with women that worked full-time and year-round earning on average just \$0.75 for every dollar earned by men. The imbalance is even greater for women of color. Black women earned an average of only \$0.64 on the dollar compared to White, non-Hispanic men, while Latina women earned just \$0.51, according to the US Census Bureau (2).

Even women with strong educational credentials find themselves at a disadvantage, with research by the U.S. Census Bureau revealing the gender pay gap persists across all levels of educational attainment.

FINANCIAL SECURITY EMPOWERS WOMEN

The ramifications of this inequality are stark. Women in the U.S. are 35% more likely to live in poverty than men, with single mothers, women of color, and those with disabilities even more disproportionately represented (3).

Financial inequality leaves many women struggling to accumulate wealth, access credit, and achieve economic stability. This constrains their ability to invest in education, housing,

retirement, and healthcare for themselves and their families.

Economic security impacts a person's standard of living, physical and mental health, and family well-being. It also fosters a sense of empowerment, bolstering women's confidence to voice their opinions, take on leadership roles, and participate in decision-making.

Financial stability facilitates educational attainment and skills development and enhances women's capacity to engage in community initiatives and advocacy campaigns. At a practical level, it makes access to transport, childcare, and other necessities more affordable, enabling women to take more active roles outside the home.

THE ERA WOULD PROTECT WOMEN'S RIGHTS

For over 100 years, women's rights advocates have been calling for constitutional equality through the ERA. Drafted in 1923, the proposed 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution simply states: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

Enshrining the ERA would mean women no longer rely on a complex and inconsistent patchwork of federal and state laws to assert their rights. Instead, they could invoke the explicit prohibition of sex discrimination enshrined in the Constitution.

Congress would have greater power to enact laws that ensure better legal protections for women and girls across diverse circumstances, and there would be a stronger legal foundation for preventing the rollback of existing legal rights at the state and federal levels, such as laws governing reproductive healthcare.

The ERA would provide an unambiguous constitutional basis for challenging gender-based discrimination in areas such as employment, education, healthcare, and reproductive rights. For those whose rights are violated, there would be a clearer path to obtaining legal protection and recourse.

RECOGNIZING THE ERA

For the ERA to become the 28th amendment to the Constitution, it must be ratified by three-fourths of U.S. states. In 2020, Virginia became the 38th state out of 50 to formally approve and adopt the proposed amendment, bringing it across the required threshold.

But despite this, the ERA has not yet been recognized by the federal government as the 28th Amendment - even though polling shows that 85% of Americans across party lines support the ERA (4).

In 2023, Equality Now and the ERA Coalition joined forces with other women's rights

organizations on a joint submission to the UN Human Rights Committee. America's lack of constitutional equality was highlighted alongside other ongoing human rights violations impacting women and girls in the U.S., including child marriage, female genital mutilation, and online sexual abuse and exploitation.

The Committee responded by recommending to the U.S. government, for the first time, that it "guarantee protections against sex and gender-based discrimination in its Constitution" by incorporating the ERA (5).

The gender pay gap is a stark demonstration of the inequalities women in the U.S. experience, and which continue to undermine their social and financial security. Crucially, the ERA offers the next administration a pathway to closing this gap and addressing other forms of gender discrimination. Leveling the playing field would not only advance women's social and financial empowerment but would spur economic prosperity for the benefit of all.

By S. Mona Sinha, Global Executive Director of Equality Now, and Zakiya Thomas, President and CEO of the ERA Coalition

About Equality Now: Founded in 1992, Equality Now is an international human rights organization that works to protect and promote the rights of all women and girls around the world. Our campaigns are centered on four program areas: Legal Equality, End Sexual Violence, End Harmful Practices, and End Sexual Exploitation, with a cross-cutting focus on the unique needs of adolescent girls. Equality Now combines grassroots activism with international, regional, and national legal advocacy to achieve legal and systemic change to benefit all women and girls and works to ensure that governments enact and enforce laws and policies that uphold their rights. For more details, go to www.equalitynow.org/era_explainer

About the ERA Coalition: The ERA Coalition is a movement of movements, comprised of nearly 300 partner organizations across the country, representing 80 million people. From gender, racial, economic, and reproductive justice to LGBTQ+ rights, we bring together interconnected, intergenerational, and intersectional organizations under one banner: to advance sex equality. This is what unites us all. For more details, go to www.eracoalition.org

REFERENCES:

(1) A Proclamation on National Equal Pay Day, 2024, The White House
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2024/03/11/a-proclamation-on-national-equal-pay-day-2024/#:~:text=In%20more%20than%2090%20percent,good%2Dpaying%20jobs%20and%20opportunities>.

(2) Income in the United States 2023, US Census Bureau

<https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2024/demo/p60-282.html>

(3) Women and Poverty in America, The Women's Legal Defense and Education Fund

[https://www.legalmomentum.org/women-and-poverty-](https://www.legalmomentum.org/women-and-poverty-america#:~:text=70%25%20of%20the%20Nation%27s%20Poor,mothers%20facing%20the%20highest%20risk.)

[america#:~:text=70%25%20of%20the%20Nation%27s%20Poor,mothers%20facing%20the%20highest%20risk.](https://www.legalmomentum.org/women-and-poverty-america#:~:text=70%25%20of%20the%20Nation%27s%20Poor,mothers%20facing%20the%20highest%20risk.)

(4) Fifty Years Later, Voters Support Passing the Equal Rights Amendment, Data For Progress

<https://www.dataforprogress.org/blog/2022/6/2/fifty-years-later-voters-support-passing-the-equal-rights-amendment>

(5) UNHRC Adopts Our Recommendations to the US, Equality Now

https://equalitynow.org/news_and_insights/unhrc-adopts-our-recommendations-to-the-us/

Mel Bailey

Equality Now

221781610884

[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

[X](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

[Instagram](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/746698878>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2024 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.