



The Case for Equal Pay in Mississippi

Mississippi women and families are being shortchanged by substantial race and gender wage gaps

More than 55 years after the passage of the Equal Pay Act, Mississippi women are still paid less than men. When comparing all men and women who work full time, year-round in Mississippi, women are paid just 75 cents for every dollar paid to their male counterparts. But the wage gap experienced by women of color in Mississippi is even larger. Black women are paid just 56 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men. Latinas and Native women are paid just 63 cents and 59 cents, respectively, for every dollar paid to white, Non-Hispanic men. And Asian women are paid just 66 cents on the dollar.

For Black women in Mississippi, this gap amounts to a loss of \$20,770 a year and a whopping \$830,800 over a 40-year career. That means that the typical Black woman in Mississippi would have to work until the age of 91—31 more years than her male counterparts who retire at age 60—to close this lifetime wage gap. These lost wages severely reduce women's ability to save for retirement and contribute to Mississippi having one of the highest poverty rates in the country for Black women (30.4 percent).

Race and gender wage gaps persist across occupations and education levels Occupational segregation plays a role in Mississippi's large gender wage gaps, but it does not explain them away. Black women make up 37 percent of Mississippi's low-wage workforce despite accounting for only 19 percent of the state's total workforce, and only make up 9 percent of the state's high-wage workforce. But whether they work in low- or high-wage occupations, Black women are typically paid less than white, non-Hispanic men in the same occupations. While higher levels of education and training help to lift women's wages in Mississippi, they fail to close the gender wage gap, which persists across all education levels.

Discriminatory stereotypes about women, especially women of color and mothers, help fuel these wage gaps

Mississippi's substantial wage gaps exist in part because of sex and race stereotypes that continue to infect workplace decision making. Too many employers still set pay based on