

The Anatomy of The Gender Pay Gap

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"This is a man's world..." — but it wouldn't mean nothing without a woman or a girl. In 2025, that lyric still echoes uncomfortably. Despite monumental progress, women remain underpaid compared to men; even when we hold the same degrees, work the same hours, and deliver equal results. And yet today's gender pay gap persists. As of 2023 the American Bar Association reported that 55% of law degree holders are women and the Association of American Medical Colleges reported that 54% of medical school students were women as of 2024. These numbers prove that women are involved in high powered careers and so why are women getting paid less than when they have the same education, skills, and knowledge as a man? What is it about the male and female anatomy that is causing a woman to get 63-89 cent less to the man's dollar?

Like Madonna famously sang, "everyone comes to Hollywood;" so does the gender pay gap. In 2021, actress Jennifer Lawrence was all over the media discussing how she got paid \$5M dollars less than her co-star Leonardo DiCaprio. Although Jennifer Lawrence was the main star she got paid \$25 million while DiCaprio got \$30 million; an 83 cent to a dollar disparity. Lawrence has been bringing awareness to this gender pay gap as early as 2015 when Sony's correspondence leaked the cast's salary. Lawrence said she didn't get mad at Sony, but she got mad at herself for giving up quickly in negotiations (Bergeson, 2022). My question to male leaders is why do we need to negotiate our salary harder than men? Imposter syndrome led me to lowball my own salary; so, are we, as women, accepting less simply because we hesitate to negotiate?

Neda Shamie is a cataract, LASIK, and corneal eye surgeon and partner of the Maloney-Shamie Vision Institute in Los Angeles. She is also the co-chief editor of Ophthalmology Times. Shamie goes on to discuss in her own op-ed that she faced gender bias when she was up for a promotion. Her boss told her she didn't need that promotion because she's a mom and didn't have the time to deal with the responsibilities of the job and that her husband makes good money, so she didn't need a pay raise (Shamie, 2023). That response perpetuates inequality and undermines women's financial independence, and it sends a demoralizing message about a woman's worth and contribution to the workforce. Not every woman wants kids; I am one of them, therefore will I be passed over for a promotion because my male boss assumes I'll want kids one day and wouldn't be capable of being a professional, career-oriented woman and be a wife and a mom? To underscore how pervasive this issue is; across the U.S., every state reports that women earn less than men. In 2023, full-time, year-round working women earned just 83 cents for every dollar their male counterparts made nationwide, and in some states like Louisiana that dropped to as little as 71 cents on the dollar and even in the best-performing state, Rhode Island, it was only 89 cents per dollar. Including part-time and part-year workers, the gap widens

to 75 cents on the dollar. In no state do women out-earn men; this is a nationwide, systemic issue that affects every city and state (National Women's Law Center, 2025). I'm fortunate that my career as a flight attendant operates under a union-negotiated pay contract that is standardized and publicly accessible for all employees—regardless of gender. This model of pay transparency and equity should be the norm in every workplace. Union representation ensures clearly defined pay scales based on factors like seniority and role and mandates public disclosure of this information

Several high-powered women have already raised the alarm about pay inequity. Building on their efforts, I would explore hosting community workshops, featuring local female leaders to share their experiences and strategies. Media campaigns both traditional and on social media can spotlight transparent salary data by city and state, encouraging municipalities to commit to pay equity. A petition or open letter addressed to state and city government bodies could further pressure them to review and adjust pay scales publicly. Additionally, coordinating “Equal Pay Day” events in local schools and businesses could engage young people and community members in the conversation, helping to normalize discussions around salary transparency. By weaving together economic arguments, data-rich transparency, inclusive programming, peer networks, and pressure on policymakers, we can move beyond awareness to measurable progress and do so with unity across gender.

In conclusion, the gender pay gap not only undermines women's financial security; it hampers our entire economy. Research shows that closing this gap would reduce poverty among working women by over 40% and could add more than \$9,900 annually to the typical woman's income. Globally, removing legal and systemic barriers to pay equity could boost world gross domestic product by more than 20% a transformative opportunity we cannot ignore. We have the tools: transparent pay scales like those in my unionized workplace, community-led workshops, legislative pressure campaigns, and widespread public education through Equal Pay Day events. By embracing these strategies and sustaining collective momentum, we can dismantle outdated norms, close the pay gap, and unlock the full economic and societal potential of every person regardless of gender.