A woman working full time, year-round earns **$10,800 less per year** than a man, based on median annual earnings. This disparity can add up to nearly a **half million dollars** over a career.

On a percentage basis, a woman earns only **79 percent** of what a man earns. This is known as the “gender earnings ratio.” The 21-percent difference between men’s and women’s earnings means that women are paid **less than $4 for every $5** paid to men.

Although the gender pay gap has narrowed over time, at the current rate of change, it will **not close until 2059**, according to the Institute for Women’s Policy Research.

Lower career earnings result in an even greater disparity in retirement income. Median income for women ages 65 and older ($17,400) is **44 percent less** than the median income for men in the same age group ($31,200). Women 75 years and older are almost twice as likely as men to live in poverty.

The gender pay gap varies widely across states, from a **low of 10 percent** in Washington, DC, to a **high of 35 percent** in Louisiana.

Women’s median earnings are **lower at every level of education**. In fact, women are often out-earned by men with less education: the typical woman with a graduate degree earns **$5,000 less** than the typical man with a bachelor’s degree.

Women of color face even larger gender pay gaps. Compared to white men, African-American women, on average, are paid **only 60 cents on the dollar** and Latinas are paid **only 55 cents on the dollar**.

The pay gap typically grows with age. While women ages 18 to 24 earn **88 percent** of what their male counterparts earn, women over age 35 earn only **76 percent**.

Economists believe that the gender pay gap is caused by complex factors. However, even when all those factors are taken into account, **as much as 40 percent** of the pay gap may be attributed to discrimination.

American families depend on women’s earnings. In the typical (median) household with a mother working outside the home, women contribute nearly **40 percent** of their family’s total earnings.

Women’s increased participation in the paid labor force has been a major driver of economic growth in recent decades. According to the Council of Economic Advisers, the U.S. economy is **$2.0 trillion bigger today** than it would have been if women had not increased their participation and hours since 1970.

Enacting policies that would narrow the gender pay gap and help more women work full time in the paid labor force would **decrease income inequality** and **lift many women out of poverty**.