

EARNING A LIVING WAGE

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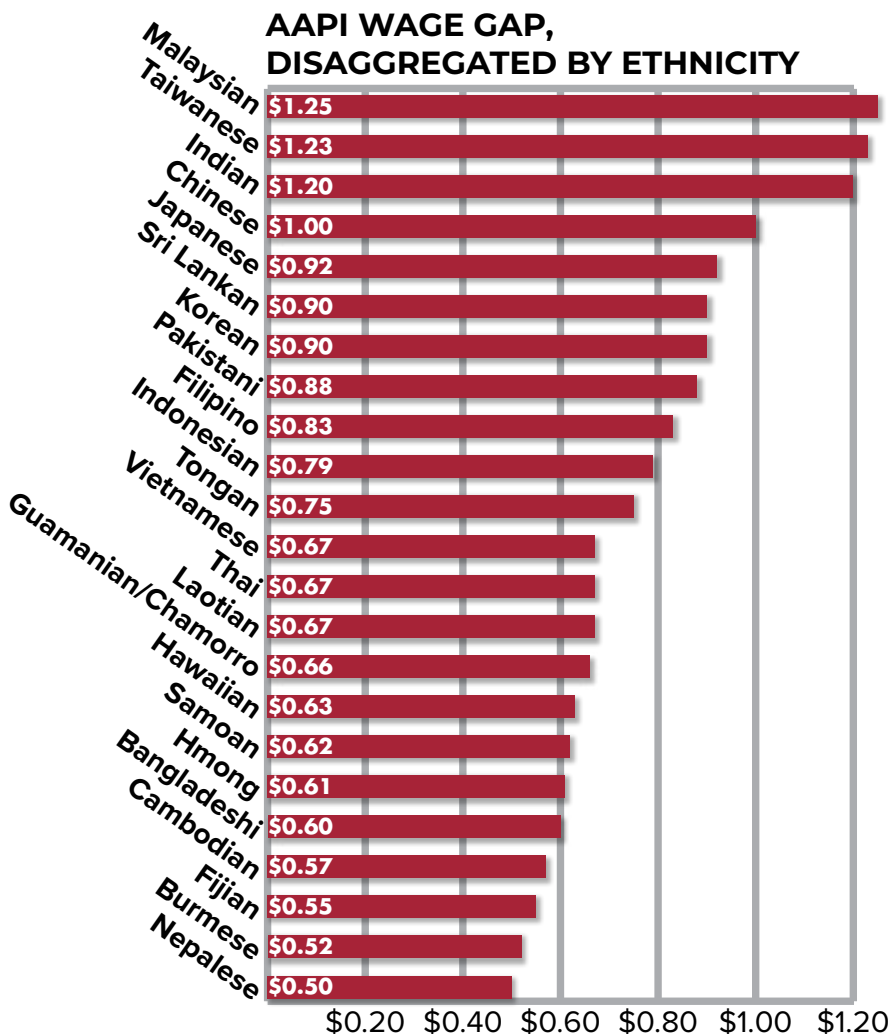


The Asian American and Pacific Islander Wage Gap

The wage gap plays a large role in hindering women's economic freedom and autonomy. On average, women working full-time in the U.S. earn about 80 cents for every dollar that a white man earns.¹ Women of color face even larger wage gaps compared to their white counterparts.

Asian women working full-time are typically paid, on average, **90 cents for every dollar** paid to their white male counterparts. **However, disaggregated data reveals that many AAPI women experience much larger wage gaps, particularly Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander women.**²

Due to the wage gap, AAPI women typically lose \$240,280 over a 40-year career. In order to make up for lost wages, they have to work longer hours, multiple jobs, and often, past retirement age. For those taking care of children, family members, and loved ones, the extra burden posed by the wage gap makes it difficult for AAPI women to provide emotional and economic support to their families and communities.



NWLC calculations based on 2018 American Community Survey 1-year estimates using IPUMS-USA available at usa.ipums.org/usa/ (IPUMS). Figures are based on women's and men's median earnings for full-time, year-round workers. White, non-Hispanic men typically made \$60,000 in 2018. Indian women represent those who self-selected "Asian Indian" as their race.

As Asian American women age and advance in their careers, the wage gap increases. Older AAPI women ages 45-64 typically make 71 cents for every dollar made by their white, non-Hispanic male counterparts.³

The wage gap increases for AAPI women who are also mothers working full-time, making 86 cents for every dollar paid to a white, non-Hispanic father.⁴

The wage gap has a significant toll on AAPI women who are the sole wage earner in their family. For these women, sacrificing a work shift to care for sick family members affect their economic stability. Additionally, a significant portion of AAPI communities live and work in states such as California, Hawaii, New Jersey, and New York, all of which have higher costs of living.⁵

Economic insecurity impacts the safety and well-being of already marginalized people, including immigrants, LGBTQ workers, and workers of color who are often in low-wage occupations and prone to workplace violations, employer retaliation, and compensation violations.⁶

Minimum Wage

In addition to occupational segregation and unequal pay for equal work, current minimum wage rates make it difficult for AAPI women to be financially secure. Over the past 40 years, American wages have remained stagnant while basic living costs have skyrocketed.

Minimum wage policies have the greatest impact for the lowest-paid workers. These occupations include, but are not limited to, restaurant workers, retail workers, and personal care aides⁷—occupations disproportionately filled by AAPI women.⁸ **These job sectors have some of the highest proportions of workers earning less than \$15 an hour:** 64.3 percent in retail, 85.3 percent in food and beverage service, and 77.9 percent in

personal care and service.⁹

The majority of these workers earning less than \$15 an hour are adults of reproductive age.¹⁰ They are women who are not financially prepared to have a child or who have a child/children and are struggling to provide for them with low wages. Additionally, many minimum wage jobs, particularly retail, restaurant, and other service sectors, do not have set working schedules and instead workers are scheduled to “just-in-time” scheduling. This type of work practice gives employers the power to dismiss staff early and without pay during slow periods. It also makes it challenging for low-wage workers to pick up a second job to help contribute to their economic stability or seek out educational or training programs that could help them be hired for higher paying jobs.¹¹ Lastly, unreliable work schedules that come with minimum wage jobs make it difficult for mothers to plan childcare and transportation, forcing workers and their families to choose between earning a wage and being able to care for their families.¹²

Increasing the minimum wage would help AAPI women earn a living wage to support themselves and their families. For immigrant women who have had family members deported, bringing home a consistent paycheck allows them to visit their loved ones in detention centers, pay for health care services if they had been covered by their spouse’s employer, or pay for legal fees to seek justice for their families. Without fair wages, AAPI women not only struggle financially but are robbed of their agency to do what is best for themselves and their families.

Endnotes

- 1 The National Women’s Law Center, “Fact Sheet: Equal Pay for Asian American and Pacific Islander Women” (Jan 2020). <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/AAPI-EPD-1.30.2020.pdf>
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 CNBC, “America’s Most Expensive States to Live in 2016” (July 12, 2016), <https://www.cNBC.com/2016/07/12/americas-most-expensive-states-to-live-in-2016.html>
- 6 Annette Bernhardt et al., “Broken Laws, Unprotected Workers: Violations of Employment and Labor Laws in America’s Cities,” National Employment Law Project (September 21, 2009), <https://www.russellsage.org/awarded-project/broken-laws-unprotected-workers-violations-employment-and-labor-laws-americas-cities>
- 7 Marcus Smith, “Fact Sheet: The State of Asian American Women in the United States,” Center for American Progress (November 7, 2013), <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/reports/2013/11/07/79182/fact-sheet-the-state-of-asian-american-women-in-the-united-states/>
- 8 NAPAWF Calculations based on the U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey, Table C24010.
- 9 The National Employment Law Project, “Table 1.1 and 1.2, NELP, The Growing Movement for 15 Dollars” (November 2015).
- 10 Irene Tung, Yannet Lathrop, and Paul Sonn, Growing Movement for \$15 (Nov 2015). <https://www.nelp.org/wp-content/uploads/Growing-Movement-for-15-Dollars.pdf>
- 11 Bridget Ansel, “Reforms to ‘just-in-time’ scheduling practices now before Congress,” Washington Center for Equitable Growth (July 16, 2015), <https://equitablegrowth.org/reforms-just-time-scheduling-practices-now-congress/>
- 12 Nancy Cauthen, “Scheduling Hourly Workers: How Last Minute, ‘Just-in-Time’ Scheduling Practices Are Bad for Workers, Families, and Business,” Demos (2011), https://www.demos.org/sites/default/files/publications/Scheduling_Hourly_Workers_Demos.pdf