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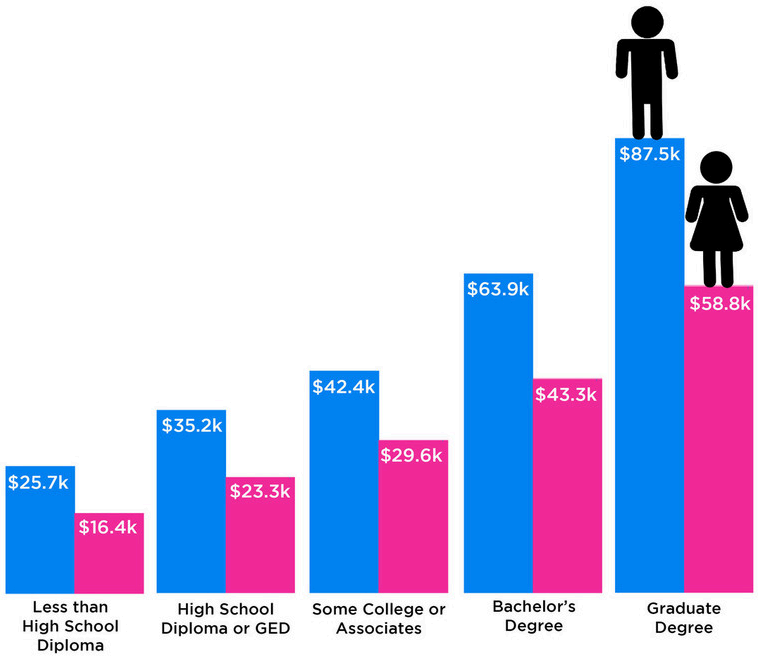
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The Gender Pay Gap in the Labor Force

By Millicent Eib and Dr. Dennis Kalob

According to the American Community Survey, men earned $12,739 more on average than women in 2017. Pay inequality between men and women is not a new problem, but one that has seen too little progress. In fact, since 2010, the gap between men and women's average earnings has only closed by about $100.



Gender pay gap by education attainment.

Women have lower earnings than men at all levels of education. In Louisiana and Mississippi, a man without a high school diploma or GED earns more annually than a woman with some college or an associate's degree. In Alabama, a woman with a bachelor's degree earns $21,621 less annually than a man with a bachelor's degree. In Florida, the average pay increase from a bachelor's degree to a graduate degree is $10,800 annually for women and $21,705 for men. And in Texas, a man with a graduate degree earns $32,823 more annually than a female with a graduate degree.

Although the issue of pay inequality between men and women is a general problem, all the more glaring is the pay gap between white men and women of color. While women overall earn 80% of what men earn, African American and Hispanic women earn only 61% and 58%, respectively, of what white men earn.

JSRI Future Activities

February 2-5
Dr. Dennis Kalob will be attending the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering in Washington, D.C.

February 4-5
Fr. Kammer will host the JVC national board meeting in New Orleans.

JSRI Recent Activities

December 15
Fr. Kammer presented JSRI's new report *Hungry at the Banquet: Food Insecurity in Louisiana 2018* on WWL-TV local evening news show.

December 26
Fr. Kammer discussed the new hunger report with Jim Engster on his Talk Louisiana program on WRKF, the NPR affiliate in Baton Rouge, and the Louisiana public radio network.

January 8
Dr. Sue Weishar participated in meeting of the Board of Directors of El Pueblo, an immigration services program serving immigrants on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

January 8
Dr. Kalob hosted a group of students from Manhattan College. They were in town to learn about New Orleans and to engage in community service. Dennis spoke with them about the city and about the work of JSRI.

January 9-13
Dr. Weishar participated in a border immersion program in the El Paso-Ciudad Juarez community organized by The Encuentro Project of El Paso, which is led by JSRI Associate Fr. Rafael Garcia, SJ.

January 11
Fr. Kammer gave an address on Catholic social thought and

immigration at St. James Parish in Tupelo, MS.

January 14, 16, & 29
Dr. Kalob attended various meetings of the activist group, Step Up Louisiana. The focus of the meeting was on economic justice issues, particularly minimum wage.

January 17
Dr. Weishar recruited students to volunteer with Café con Ingles for the spring semester at the Service Learning Fair in the St. Charles Room.

January 22
Dr. Weishar participated in a planning meeting to launch a coalition to end solitary confinement in Louisiana at the Voice of the Experienced (VOTE) headquarters in New Orleans.

January 24
Dr. Weishar participated in a meeting at Loyola Law School to plan the 2019 Ethical Policing is Courageous (EPIC) Conference.

January 25-27
Fr. Kammer and Ms. Baudouin co-directed the mid-year social justice retreat in Texas for the sixty-plus Jesuit Volunteers of the mid-America and southern states.

January 31
Dr. Mitchell attended a Death Penalty Coalition meeting in Lafayette, LA.

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Historical explanations behind gender pay inequality largely center on the notion that women had little to contribute outside of their roles in the home. Women were seen as not intellectually or emotionally capable of handling complex tasks or making difficult decisions (which led to women being denied the right to vote until 1920). Their work was devalued, because they were devalued.

Eventually, women were seen by employers as a potential source of cheap labor and were brought into some factories and offices. For example, clerical work was primarily a male occupation more than a century ago. That changed when employers realized women could do that work—particularly, they thought, the more repetitive and lower status parts of it—and could be paid less simply because they were women. And so began the low paid female world of secretarial work.[1]

While it is true that women often take time off from work to have children, in most cases this time off is only temporary, yet it can have permanent consequences for a woman's career trajectory and future earnings potential. In any case, why must women pay a professional price for having children, especially when studies show that many married men with children actually get a "fatherhood bonus" in the form of promotions and raises that increase with each subsequent child?[2]

The gender pay gap is imbedded in our culture and economy and it will take more than non-discrimination laws to address it. We as a society need to reassess how we have determined over time the value of different types of work and then take steps to correct these old calculations that have left female-dominated occupations undervalued.

We also need to stop forcing women to pay a professional price for starting families. Men and women would benefit financially and emotionally from generous paid family leave and subsidized, quality childcare. We need to support a whole array of public and corporate policies that promote gender equality, as well as a healthy work-life balance for all.

1. Wilson, R. Guerriero. Women's Work in Offices and the Preservation of Men's 'Breadwinning' Jobs in Early Twentieth-century Glasgow. Women's History Review, Vol. 10, No. 3, 2001. Gershon, Livia. Why is Clerical Work Women's Work. JSTOR Daily, December 4, 2015.
2. Budig, Michelle J. The Fatherhood Bonus and The Motherhood Penalty: Parenthood and the Gender Gap in Pay. Third Way, September 2, 2014.

Monthly articles reflect the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of Loyola University New Orleans.

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