MARYLAND
EQUAL PAY DAY
REPORT 2026

Closing the Wage Gap for a Stronger Maryland

Maryland
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

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Executive Summary

Each year, in the United States, Equal Pay Day symbolizes how far into the following year women must work to earn what men earned in the previous year. It is an opportunity to examine and reflect upon the gender wage gap, its causes, and its impacts. Families depend on women's earnings now more than ever; both in Maryland and nationwide, more than 40 percent of mothers are the primary or sole wage earner in their households. Even so, full-time working women continue to be paid less than their male counterparts.

In 2024, the Maryland Department of Labor released a comprehensive report examining gender and racial wage disparities across the state, covering a five-year period 2018–2022. That report found that women working full-time, year-round in Maryland were typically paid 86 cents for every dollar earned by men—a smaller wage gap than in most states, but still a persistent barrier to economic equity.

This report builds on the 2024 analysis by providing updated data on women's earnings in Maryland, including new estimates of the gender wage gap and updated information across the state's local workforce development areas. This update will help policymakers, advocates, and the public to track progress and understand where gaps remain.

The updated data show that over a five-year period from 2020 to 2024, Maryland has the fifth smallest wage gap in the country. Women who work full-time, year-round in Maryland are typically paid only **87 cents** for every dollar their male counterparts make. Women of every race and ethnicity are paid less than white, non-Hispanic men, at all education levels, and much broader disparities exist for some groups.

Across the board, in all groups except for Asian American women, the wage gap slightly increased from our prior report to this one.

In Maryland, for every dollar a white, non-Hispanic man makes[1]:

- **Hispanic women or Latinas are paid 49 cents**—a wage gap of 51 cents;
- **American Indian and Alaska Native women are paid 47 cents**—a wage gap of 53 cents;
- **Black or African American women are paid 68 cents**—a wage gap of 32 cents;
- **Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander women are paid 73 cents—**a wage gap of 27 cents;
- **White women are paid 80 cents**—a wage gap of 20 cents; and
- **Asian women are paid 87 cents**—a wage gap of 13 cents.

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[1] Wage gaps are calculated based on median full-time earnings for workers aged 16+. For more information, see the Methodology section in the appendix.

Compared with other states, the wage gap for Hispanic women or Latinas in Maryland is the 4th largest nationwide, while the wage gap for Black or African American women is the 9th smallest nationwide. While Black or African American women in Maryland experience smaller per dollar disparities than they do nationally and in several other states, they are still only paid a fraction of what white, non-Hispanic men are paid.

That said, Maryland has many high-wage jobs. This means women tend to be paid more in Maryland than in many other regions of the country, but it also means that wage gaps translate to significant income and wealth gaps over time.

Median earnings for full-time women workers in Maryland are $70,211. This is the third highest level in the nation, but over $25,000 less than the median earnings for white, non-Hispanic men ($95,404). Calculated over a career, this leads to some of the largest lifetime earnings gaps in the nation.

Compared to white, non-Hispanic men, in Maryland:

- The lifetime wage gap for **Hispanic women or Latinas is over $1.9 million**—the 4th third highest gap, when compared to other states.
- The lifetime wage gap for **American Indian and Alaska Native women is over $2.0 million**—the 3rd highest gap.
- The lifetime wage gap for **Black or African American women is over $1.2 million**—the 16th highest gap.
- The lifetime wage gap for **Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander women is over $1.0 million**—the 22nd highest gap.
- The lifetime wage gap for **white women is over $760,000**—the 9th highest gap.
- The lifetime wage gap for **Asian women is over $490,000**—the 29th highest gap.

This report also provides information about gender wage gaps in Maryland's 24 counties. The size of the overall gender pay gap varies from county to county, based on a number of factors including demographic characteristics and industry concentrations. Since Black and Latino men, in particular, also experience a wage gap when compared with white women,[2] counties with higher percentage populations in these groups tend to see smaller differences between men and women as a whole.

While this report includes data from 2020 to 2024, it is critical to note that Maryland's labor market has undergone significant change since early 2025. The state has one of the highest shares of workers employed by the federal government in the nation. Recent reductions in the federal workforce are likely to have ripple effects across Maryland's economy and labor market. Women represent a slightly over half of the

federal workforce and federal jobs have historically offered relatively strong pay equity. Shifts in federal employment could have implications for gender wage gaps in the state. At this time, the magnitude and distribution of these impacts cannot yet be quantified. Future updates to this report will explore these trends.

The Moore-Miller Administration has focused on work, wages, and wealth—and closing wage gaps addresses all three. There are many causes of the gender wage gap, including occupational crowding,[3] pay secrecy, gendered caregiving responsibilities, and the lack of quality, affordable child care, which impact the job opportunities available to women.

Addressing pay gaps—of all types—requires systematic efforts to address these issues. Policies like responsible procurement, paid leave, pay range transparency, and investments in child care and care workers can help to close gender wage gaps, as can support for collective bargaining and greater unionization, as well as strategic investments in workforce training and education. Maryland's expansion of wage transparency requirements under the Equal Pay for Equal Work Act reflects this approach, and early data show strong and growing engagement from workers and employers seeking to understand and implement these standards.

The Department hopes that publishing this report will guide policy development and resource deployment in a way that supports gender equity and benefits all workers, leading to a more competitive, inclusive, and robust state economy.

Introduction

Equal Pay Day is an annual observance established to call attention to the persistent pay disparities between men and women. Despite federal and state laws prohibiting wage discrimination on the basis of gender, race, and other protected characteristics, the gender wage gap has persisted. Nationwide, women earn 82 cents for every dollar men make according to 2020–2024 data from the US Census, a one cent improvement from 2018–2020 data.

Although this report focuses on the gender pay gap, many other groups face persistent wage gaps, including people of color, workers with disabilities, older workers, veterans, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and others. Women who belong to multiple marginalized groups often experience compounded wage gap effects.

Women's earnings are more important than ever. More than 78 percent of Maryland women between the ages of 25 and 54 participate in paid work in the labor force,[4] and the percentage of women who are the primary or sole breadwinner in their family continues to increase.

Some analyses indicate that in Maryland and nationwide, more than 40 percent of mothers are the lead or only wage earner.[5] Yet women are more likely than men to live in poverty. Single-parent households headed by women experience a poverty rate of 16.1 percent in Maryland, compared to a rate of 6.4 percent for all Maryland families.[6] Many women and their families are struggling to make ends meet.

Wage gaps make it difficult for women to fully participate in the labor force because lower wages mean their work has less economic impact. It may be more economical for these workers to engage in unpaid work such as family care or to participate in non-traditional or informal work arrangements. Closing gender and racial wage gaps can support greater labor force participation and thus stronger economic growth for our state.

Addressing pay gaps is an important part of the Maryland Department of Labor's work. Numerous units in the Department aim to support labor force participation and expand workforce opportunity, including through job training and registered apprenticeship, professional licensing, and paid family and medical leave. In addition, the Department's Division of Labor and Industry is charged with enforcing the state's Equal Pay for Equal Work Act, which prohibits employment and wage discrimination based on gender, as well as other State laws that protect workers' pay and rights on the job, including minimum wage and overtime, paid sick days and the right to receive pay when due.

Gender Wage Gaps in the United States and Maryland

Maryland workers have historically been paid more than workers elsewhere in the country. According to data from the U.S. Census averaged over a five-year period

from 2020 to 2024, the median earnings for a full-time worker in Maryland are $75,407 compared to the median earnings for a full-time worker in the United States $61,657. Maryland has the fourth-highest median earnings in the nation.[8]

Both men and women in Maryland make more than their counterparts nationwide:
- In Maryland, median earnings for men are $80,886 relative to $67,361 nationwide. Maryland has the sixth highest median earnings for men in the nation.[9]
- Maryland women had median earnings of $70,211 relative to $55,274 nationwide. The median earnings for Maryland women working full-time are the third-highest in the nation.

Despite the fact that women in Maryland are paid more than women nationwide, women in the state are still paid $10,675 less per year than men. **This means that women who work full-time, year-round in Maryland, are typically paid 87 cents for every dollar paid to their male counterparts.** Maryland's gender wage gap is the **fifth smallest in the country;** women nationwide make 82 cents for every dollar men are paid.

Maryland's wage gap has not closed significantly in over a decade, as shown below in Figure 1.

Figure 1
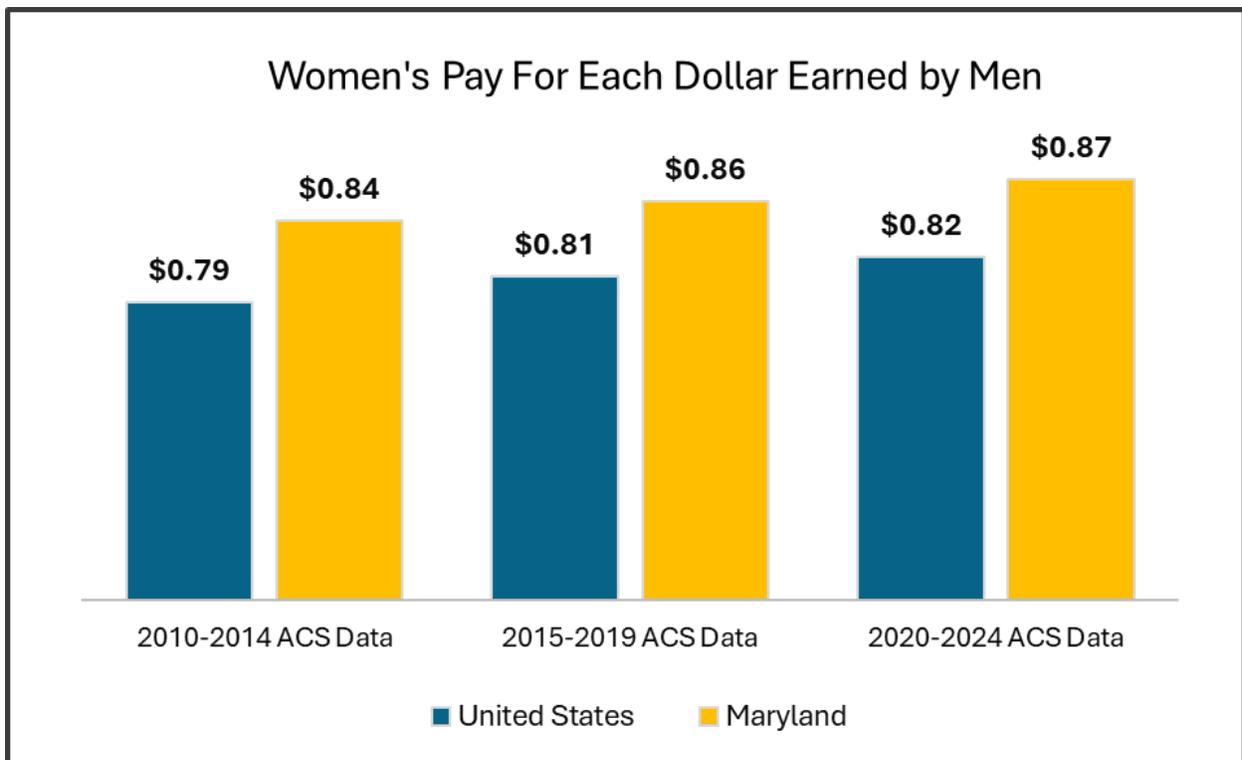
Source: MD Labor analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010–2014, 2015–2019, 2020–2024.

Including race and ethnicity in analysis of this data reveals that gender pay disparities are significantly higher for most women of color relative to white, non-Hispanic men, as Figure 2 makes clear. For example, **Hispanic women or Latinas in Maryland are paid forty-nine cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men in the state.** Hispanic women or Latinas in Maryland must work a little over a year and a half to make what a white, non-Hispanic man is paid.

Generally speaking, wage gaps also persist between men and women of the same racial or ethnic background.[10]

Figure 2

Wage Gaps For Maryland Women by Race and Ethnicity, Relative to White, Non-Hispanic Men

Racial/Ethnic Group	Wage Women Earn For Every Dollar a White, Non-Hispanic Man Earns	Wage Gap	Ranking Among U.S. States and D.C.
Asian	$0.87	$0.13	17
White, Non-Hispanic	$0.80	$0.20	21
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	$0.73	$0.27	24
Black or African American	$0.68	$0.32	9
Hispanic or Latina	$0.49	$0.51	48
American Indian and Alaska Native	$0.47	$0.53	48

Source: MD Labor analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey data, 2020–2024.

A comparison with other states reveals that some women of color experience larger wage gaps when compared with white, non-Hispanic men in Maryland than they do in other states. For example, **Hispanic women or Latinas experience larger disparities in Maryland** than they do nationally and in most other states—the fourth-largest wage gap nationwide.

Also notable is the wage gap for Black or African American women, which ranks 9th nationwide. While Black or African American women experience smaller disparities in Maryland than they do nationally and in several other states, they are still paid only 68 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.

As Figure 3 shows, when both race and ethnicity are taken into account, wage gaps in Maryland have remained relatively consistent over time. For example, Black or

African American women are paid $0.69 for every dollar white, non-Hispanic men made according to 2010–2014 data from the US Census. One decade later, this figure remained relatively flat at $0.68. Asian women did make strides relative to white, non-Hispanic men and saw their median pay rise from $0.82 per dollar to $0.87 per dollar. Larger changes for American Indian and Alaska Native and for Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander women are most likely due to smaller sample sizes in the underlying ACS data rather than to substantial changes in earnings.

Figure 3

Women's Pay For Every Dollar Earned by White, Non-Hispanic Men by Race and Ethnicity in Maryland
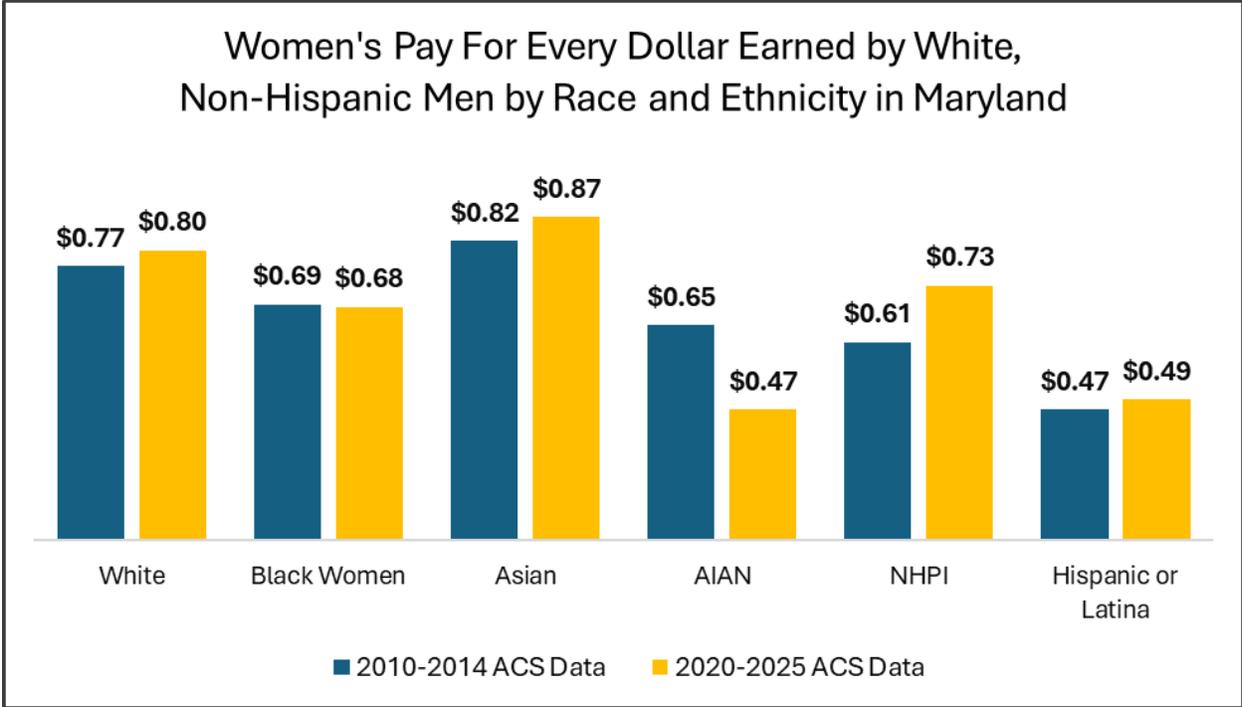
Source: MD Labor analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey data, 2010–2014, and 2020–2024. Note: Each bar represents five years of American Community Survey data. White refers to non-Hispanic white, AIAN refers to American Indian and Alaska Native, NHPI refers to Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander.

Lifetime Wage Gaps

When these wage gaps are extrapolated over the span of a whole career, the numbers provide a fuller picture of the impact facing women in Maryland. Lifetime wage gaps are determined by taking the difference in median earnings and expanding the difference over a 40-year career. Maryland women stand to lose **$427,000** over the course of a 40-year career compared to Maryland men, regardless of race/ethnicity.[11]

When taking into account race and ethnicity, the numbers are even starker. For example, the current wage gaps mean a Hispanic/Latina female Marylander would earn $1.9 million less than a white, non-Hispanic male Marylander over the course of her career. Maryland's high salaries mean that even small differences in earnings can

compound into significant differences over the course of a lifetime. For example, although Maryland's wage gap between Black or African American women and white non-Hispanic men ranked 9th smallest in the nation, the lifetime gap of $1.2 million is larger than in 35 other states.

Figure 4

Lifetime Wage Gaps for Women in Maryland by Race/Ethnicity, Compared to Non-Hispanic White Men		
Racial/Ethnic Group	**Lifetime Wage Gap**	**Maryland RankingAmong U.S. States and D.C.**
Asian	$2,012,880	48
White, Non-Hispanic	$1,934,720	49
Black or African American	$1,204,120	36
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	$1,033,800	24
Hispanic or Latina	$754,520	45
American Indian and Alaska Native	$490,920	23

Source: MD Labor analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey data, 2020–2024.

Gender Wage Gaps by County

Gender wage gaps exist across the state, though there are significant differences by county, as displayed in Figure 5 and Figure 6 below.

While women make less than men in 23 of Maryland's 24 counties. Prince George's County is the exception. In Prince George's County, women are paid $1.09 for every dollar a man makes. This is due in part to the fact that 62 percent of the county's population identifies as Black or African American.[12] In Prince George's County, Black or African American women's median earnings are higher than Black or African American men's earnings, which impacts the overall comparison between men's and women's earnings.[13]

People of color also make up the majority of local populations in Baltimore City and Charles County, which contributes to these areas having the smallest negative wage gaps in the state. Women are paid 95 cents for every dollar a man makes in each jurisdiction.

Wage gaps are generally larger in some of the more rural counties. For example, women have a larger wage gap with men in all three counties in Western Maryland

relative to the statewide average. All three counties also have a larger gap than the nation as a whole. Wage gaps are also larger in seven of nine counties on Maryland's Eastern Shore than they are for the nation.

Figure 5: What Maryland Women Make for Every Dollar Paid to Men by County, 2020 - 2024

Source: MD Labor analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey data, 2020–2024.

Figure 6

What Maryland Women Make for Every Dollar Paid to Men by Region	
Area	**What Women Make for Every Dollar Men Make**
United States	**$0.82**
Maryland	**$0.87**
Allegany County	$0.77
Anne Arundel County	$0.83
Baltimore City	$0.95
Baltimore County	$0.85
Calvert County	$0.77
Caroline County	$0.79
Carroll County	$0.80
Cecil County	$0.78
Charles County	$0.95
Dorchester County	$0.82
Frederick County	$0.83
Garrett County	$0.81
Harford County	$0.78
Howard County	$0.81
Kent County	$0.93
Montgomery County	$0.86
Prince George's County	$1.09
Queen Anne's County	$0.77
St. Mary's County	$0.75
Somerset County	$0.93
Talbot County	$0.85
Washington County	$0.81
Wicomico County	$0.77
Worcester County	$0.83

Source: MD Labor analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey data, 2020–2024.

County-level disparities at the intersection of gender and race are similar to those seen at the state level, discussed earlier. As shown in Figure 7, at the county level, most women are paid less than their white, non-Hispanic male counterparts. One notable exception is in Washington County, where Asian women earn $1.31 for every $1 a white, non-Hispanic man earns.

- **White Women**
  - o The wage gap between white, non-Hispanic women and white, non-Hispanic men is smallest in Kent County, where white, non-Hispanic women earn virtually the same, just over one dollar, for every dollar a white, non-Hispanic man earns. Somerset County has the second smallest gap of 8 cents.
  - o The wage gap between white, non-Hispanic women and white non-Hispanic men is largest in St. Mary's County. White non-Hispanic women in St. Mary's Country are paid 73 cents for every dollar white, non-Hispanic men are paid (27 cent wage gap).

- **Black or African American Women**
  - o The wage gap between Black or African American women and white, non-Hispanic men is smallest in Charles County. Black women in Charles Country make 87 cents for every dollar white, non-Hispanic men are paid (13 cent wage gap).
  - o The wage gap between Black or African American women and white non-Hispanic men is largest in Worcester County. Black or African American women in Montgomery County make 47 cents for every dollar white, non-Hispanic men are paid (53 cent wage gap).

- **Hispanic Women or Latinas**
  - o The wage gap between Hispanic women or Latinas and white, non-Hispanic men is smallest in Dorchester County. Hispanic women or Latinas in Dorchester County make 92 cents for every dollar white, non-Hispanic men are paid (8 cent wage gap).
  - o The wage gap between Hispanic women or Latinas and white, non-Hispanic men is largest in Montgomery County. Hispanic women or Latinas in Montgomery Country make 37 cents for every dollar white, non-Hispanic men are paid (63 cent wage gap).

- **Asian Women**
  - o In Washington County, Asian women make more than white, non-Hispanic men. Asian women are paid $1.31 for every dollar white, non-Hispanic men are paid. Asian women also earn more than white, non-Hispanic men in both Harford County and Cecil County, where Asian women earn $1.01 for every dollar a white, non-Hispanic man does.
  - o The wage gap between Asian women and white, non-Hispanic men is largest in Southern Maryland. Asian women in St. Mary's County are paid 53 cents for every dollar white, non-Hispanic white men are paid (47 cent wage gap) and Asian women in Calvert County earn 57 cents for every dollar (43 cent wage gap).

Figure 7

What Maryland Women Make for Every Dollar Paid to White, Non-Hispanic Men by Region				
Area	White, Non-Hispanic	Black/African American	Hispanic/Latina	Asian
United States	**$0.80**	**$0.64**	**$0.58**	**$0.96**
Maryland	**$0.80**	**$0.68**	**$0.49**	**$0.87**
Allegany County	$0.77	$0.51	N/A	$0.60
Anne Arundel County	$0.78	$0.76	$0.52	$0.66
Baltimore City	$0.89	$0.57	$0.58	$0.82
Baltimore County	$0.81	$0.66	$0.58	$0.87
Calvert County	$0.80	$0.74	$0.73	$0.57
Caroline County	$0.75	$0.59	$0.47	N/A
Carroll County	$0.79	$0.71	$0.67	$0.97
Cecil County	$0.80	$0.68	$0.56	$1.01
Charles County	$0.81	$0.87	$0.58	$0.76
Dorchester County	$0.85	$0.63	$0.92	$0.98
Frederick County	$0.82	$0.74	$0.49	$0.78
Garrett County	$0.81	N/A	$0.87	N/A
Harford County	$0.77	$0.66	$0.58	$1.01
Howard County	$0.74	$0.68	$0.40	$0.77
Kent County	$1.00	$0.65	N/A	N/A
Montgomery County	$0.80	$0.51	$0.37	$0.68
Prince George's County	$0.86	$0.79	$0.42	$0.77
Queen Anne's County	$0.78	$0.49	$0.74	N/A
St. Mary's County	$0.73	$0.51	$0.55	$0.53
Somerset County	$0.92	$0.85	$0.70	$0.84
Talbot County	$0.79	$0.57	$0.64	$0.64
Washington County	$0.79	$0.68	$0.51	$1.31
Wicomico County	$0.82	$0.62	$0.71	$0.69
Worcester County	$0.76	$0.47	$0.53	$0.94

Source: MD Labor analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey data, 2020–2024. N/A means insufficient data available.

When taken over a lifetime, these gaps compound and women across racial and ethnic lines face large losses in wages relative to white, non-Hispanic men across the majority of Maryland counties. As shown in Figure 8:

- In 19 counties, at least one racial or ethnic group experiences over $1 million in lost wages over a lifetime. The exceptions are in counties with relatively low wages.
- In Howard, Montgomery, and St. Mary's Counties, women across all racial and ethnic groups experience over $1 million in lost lifetime wages.
- In Prince George's County, Hispanic women or Latinas lose over $2 million over the course of a lifetime, and in Howard and Montgomery Counties, they lose over $3 million.
- In Montgomery County, Black or African American women experience over $2 million in lost wages over a lifetime.

Figure 8: Lifetime Wage Gaps for Women in Maryland and Each County by Race and Ethnicity, Compared to Non-Hispanic White Men, 2020–2024

Area	White, Non-Hispanic	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic/ Latina
Maryland	$754,520	$1,204,120	$490,920	$1,934,720
Allegany County	$546,200	$1,193,160	$969,000	N/A
Anne Arundel County	$868,560	$966,320	$1,333,960	$1,886,760
Baltimore City	$402,000	$1,536,560	$655,640	$1,488,760
Baltimore County	$666,200	$1,200,200	$460,240	$1,464,800
Calvert County	$770,760	$1,012,560	$1,673,760	$1,058,400
Caroline County	$671,400	$1,122,600	N/A	$1,440,280
Carroll County	$742,880	$1,044,840	$125,240	$1,195,920
Cecil County	$631,080	$1,008,400	-$33,800	$1,376,360
Charles County	$716,680	$484,360	$898,320	$1,562,760
Dorchester County	$368,360	$884,960	$54,200	$185,280
Frederick County	$701,000	$1,013,960	$857,240	$1,983,240
Garrett County	$465,560	N/A	N/A	$315,800
Harford County	$850,840	$1,249,440	-$34,080	$1,556,200
Howard County	$1,317,840	$1,646,880	$1,184,760	$3,061,960
Kent County	-$4,720	$913,320	N/A	N/A
Montgomery County	$1,106,800	$2,658,840	$1,740,360	$3,418,440
Prince George's County	$556,160	$817,560	$887,960	$2,252,800
Queen Anne's County	$778,880	$1,816,680	N/A	$913,720

Area	White, Non-Hispanic	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic/ Latina
Somerset County	$183,800	$328,320	$349,680	$656,880
St. Mary's County	$1,072,680	$1,962,200	$1,871,200	$1,823,480
Talbot County	$670,440	$1,390,320	$1,154,640	$1,166,800
Washington County	$593,840	$902,440	-$894,640	$1,383,040
Wicomico County	$476,280	$975,480	$796,640	$763,120
Worcester County	$789,080	$1,765,880	$204,880	$1,571,280

Source: MD Labor analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey data, 2020–2024. Note: Sample size is too small to estimate American Indian and Alaska Native gaps. N/A means insufficient data available.

Wage Gaps by Education

Generally, as individuals achieve higher levels of education their pay increases. According to the Census Bureau's educational attainment earnings data for workers aged 25+, the gender pay gap is greatest for Maryland women with less than a high school diploma or equivalent (35 cents) and is smallest for Maryland women with some college or an associate degree, a bachelor's degree, or a graduate or advanced degree (wage gap of 24 cents).
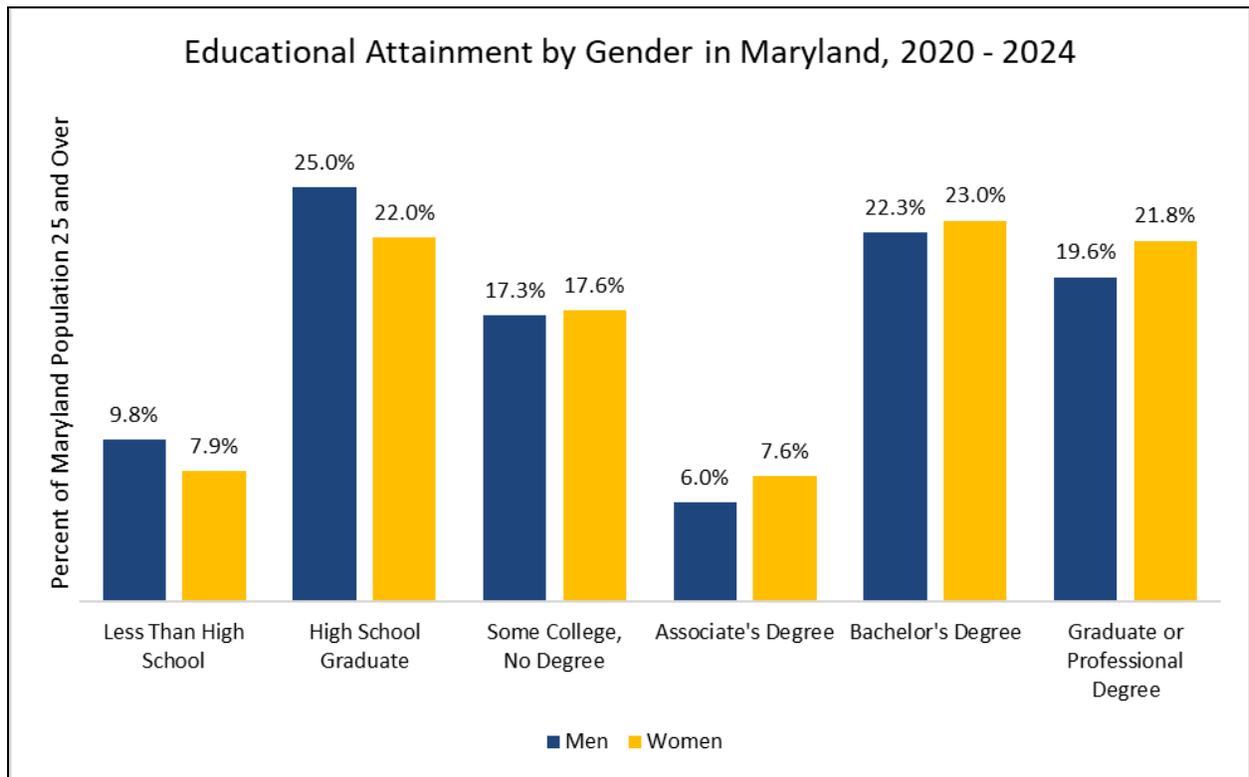
Figure 9
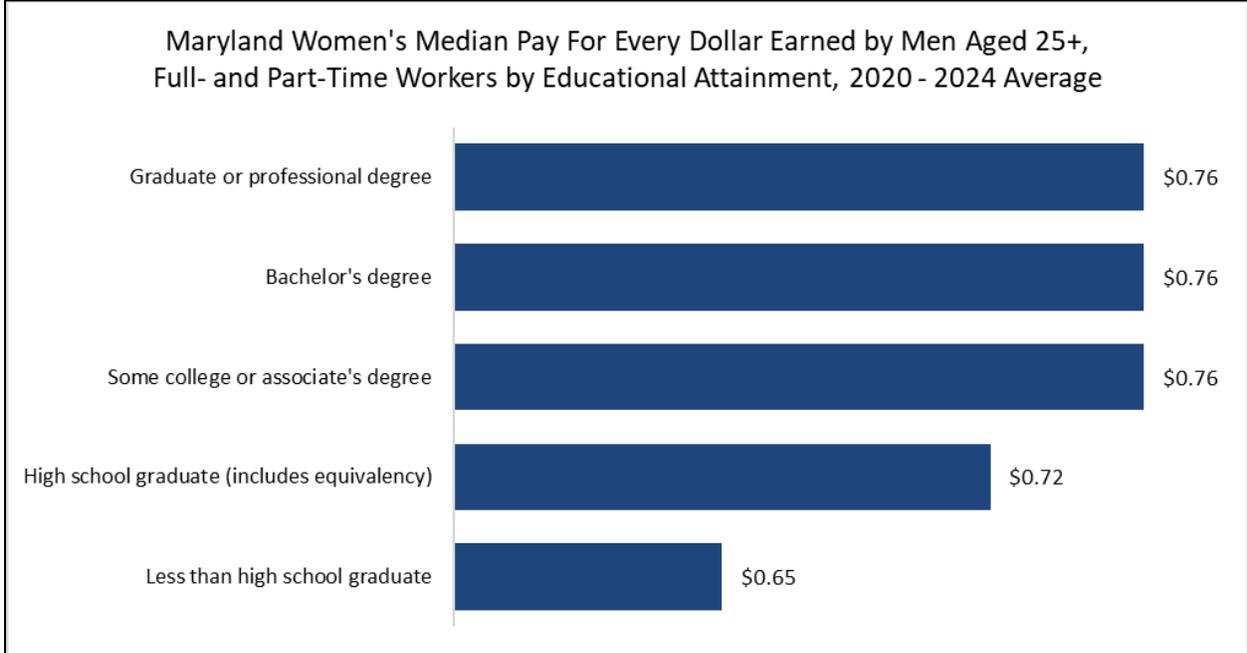
Source: MD Labor analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey data, 2020–2024.

However, disparities in educational attainment do not appear to be drivers of the gender wage gap in Maryland. As illustrated below in Figure 10, women in Maryland have slightly higher educational attainment compared to men, with 44.8 percent of Maryland women having a bachelor's degree or greater, compared to 41.9 percent of men, but Maryland's gender wage gap remains.

Figure 10

Educational Attainment by Gender in Maryland, 2020 - 2024

Source: MD Labor analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey data, 2020–2024.

Drivers of the Gender Wage Gap and Policy Solutions

There are a number of drivers of the gender wage gap, including occupational crowding, differences in caretaking responsibilities, lack of pay transparency, insufficient access to training and educational opportunities, and low unionization rates. Additional factors that impact wage disparities include misclassification of workers, workplace bias and discrimination, and trends toward gig and informal work. Below we discuss a few of these key factors.

Occupational Crowding
For a host of reasons including barriers to entry and inequities in opportunity, women—and especially women of color—are more likely to be concentrated in low-quality jobs that pay low wages, have few benefits, and have limited opportunities for advancement.

One way to measure this phenomenon is through occupational crowding. Occupational crowding measures disparities in national and state labor markets, including underrepresentation ("crowding out") of particular demographic groups in high wage occupations and overrepresentation in low-wage ones.[14]

Occupational crowding is measured through a crowding index (described in the appendix). The crowding index measures, for each occupation, whether women in Maryland are employed in that occupation proportionately to their level of education.[15] For example, a crowding index of 2 suggests that there are twice as many women employed in an occupation compared to expectations given their levels of education. Conversely, an index of 0.5 means there are half as many women as expected.

Figure 11 below shows the top ten occupations in Maryland that women are "crowded into" and that employ at least 10,000 Maryland residents.

Figure 11: Top Ten Major Occupations in Maryland that Women Are "Crowded Into"

Occupation	Crowding Ratio	Median Wages, 2024
Childcare workers	2.05	$35,150
Maids and housekeeping cleaners	2.02	$34,100
Hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists	2.02	$36,440
Nursing assistants	1.97	$40,000
Preschool and kindergarten teachers	1.96	$44,935
Secretaries and admin assistants, except legal/medical/executive	1.90	$46,800
Receptionists and information clerks	1.90	$38,000
Medical assistants	1.87	$45,060
Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks	1.80	$54,080
Teaching assistants	1.74	$35,700

Source: MD Labor analysis of 2024 OEWS data and 2020–2024 US Census ACS data using IPUMS.

As Figure 11 shows, women in Maryland are generally crowded into (overrepresented in) low-wage occupations. Median wage and salary income in these ten occupations is below the Maryland median of $58,050 as of 2024.

In contrast, Figure 12 shows the ten occupations women are most "crowded out of" (underrepresented in) and that employ at least 10,000 Maryland residents. These occupations include some of the most in-demand occupations in Maryland, including several occupations in the skilled trades. Five of these occupations have median wages above the statewide level.

Figure 12: Top Ten Occupations in Maryland that Women Are "Crowded Out of"

Occupation	Crowding Ratio	Median Wages, 2024
Automotive service technicians and mechanics	0.02	$57,560
Heating, air conditioning, and refrigeration mechanics and installers	0.03	$65,000
Plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters	0.04	$63,270
Electricians	0.06	$65,650
Carpenters	0.09	$60,130
First-line supervisors of construction trades and extraction workers	0.09	$76,800
Construction laborers	0.10	$46,320
Painters and paperhangers	0.16	$49,060
Maintenance and repair workers, general	0.16	$49,790
Driver/sales workers and truck drivers	0.17	$48,010

Source: MD Labor analysis of 2024 OEWS data and 2020–2024 US Census ACS data using IPUMS.

As the figure below illustrates, occupational crowding is present in some of Maryland's largest occupations. While women are often "crowded into" lower-paying occupations (e.g., fast food and counter workers, which has a median salary of $31,200), women are also "crowded into" the registered nursing, the occupation with the second highest median wages of any of the ten-largest jobs in Maryland.

Figure 13: Occupational Crowding for Ten Largest Occupations in Maryland

Occupation	Crowding Ratio	Median Wages, 2024
General and Operations Managers	0.87	$105,320
Retail Salespersons	1.04	$34,310
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	1.90	$46,800
Cashiers	1.50	$32,870
Registered Nurses	1.67	$96,830
Fast Food and Counter Workers	1.50	$31,200
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	0.49	$40,240

Occupation	Crowding Ratio	Median Wages, 2024
Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	0.87	$36,090
Customer Service Representatives	1.40	$40,310
Stockers and Order Fillers	0.79	$38,340

Source: MD Labor analysis of 2024 OEWS data and 2020–2024 US Census ACS data using IPUMS.

Occupational crowding reflects systemic biases in the labor market and beyond. Workers may be sorted into different occupations through disparities in access to education and training, transportation, caregiving support, as well as hiring and workplace discrimination, among other reasons. This can result in different levels of pay for men and women.

Caregiving

Due to gendered social expectations, women typically bear a disproportionate share of family caregiving responsibilities. Inadequate access to quality, affordable childcare can result in women working fewer hours than male counterparts, resulting in fewer promotions and advancement opportunities, or women choosing careers with more flexibility but lower pay.

Quality child care is unaffordable for many working families in Maryland. Recent data from the US Department of Labor suggests Maryland has the 11th most expensive infant care in the country.[16] Where paid sick leave or paid family and medical leave is not available, women may need to take unpaid time away from work to care for loved ones, leave, or be fired from a job due to caregiving needs, or be forced to leave the labor force altogether due to caregiving needs, all of which can impact wages.

These caregiving dynamics contribute, among other things, to what researchers refer to as the "motherhood wage gap." National research shows that mothers are typically paid significantly less than fathers and even less than women without children.

According to 2020–2024 ACS data, Maryland has the smallest wage gap for mothers, though large disparities remain. Mothers who are full-time, year round workers earn 76 cents for every dollar in wage and salary income that fathers earn. Including part-time and part-year workers, Maryland mothers earn 69 cents for every dollar fathers earn.

These disparities underscore how caregiving responsibilities combined with structural inequities in childcare access and workplace policies can have significant long-term impacts on women's earnings and economic security. Policies that

support quality, affordable childcare and paid leave can help women to remain in the workforce and pursue higher-paying work opportunities.

The Moore Miller administration has expanded support for childcare and provided incentives to increase the availability of affordable options. For example, in its Fiscal Year 2026 budget, the Administration proposed over $400 million dollars in childcare scholarships to serve nearly 43,000 children. In 2022, Maryland passed the Time to Care Act, which established Maryland's Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) program at the Maryland Department of Labor. Starting in 2028, Maryland's 2.5 million workers will receive up to 12 weeks of job-protected paid leave, annually, with benefits up to $1,000 a week.

Pay Standards and Pay Transparency

As referenced above, women tend to be overrepresented in lower-paying jobs, a factor that helps to drive the persistent gender wage gap. While women make up just less than half of the workforce,[17] women make up nearly two-thirds of the low-paid workforce and women of color are over represented in these jobs.[18] Increasing the pay in these jobs—such as by increasing the minimum wage or using public levers to improve the pay and benefits provided in care sector jobs—can have a positive impact on reducing wage gaps.[19]

In addition, women are likely to be crowded into low-wage, service sector, and informal economy jobs that are at particular risk for wage theft—when an employer fails to pay a worker the full wages to which they are legally entitled.[20] Requiring employers to provide clear pay statements or pay stubs that note an employee's pay rate, pay date, and benefits accrued makes it easier for employees to recognize wage theft and recoup lost wages.

Furthermore, pay transparency helps reduce the information disparity between employers and workers.[22] Requiring job postings to include wage or salary information without a specific request increases transparency and enhances employees' negotiating power.

Maryland has taken significant steps to use policy levers to raise the floor for these workers under the Moore-Miller Administration. Effective January 1, 2024, Maryland raised the minimum wage to $15.00 an hour for all workers, providing a lift for women workers in caregiving and service sector jobs. In addition, Maryland has taken concrete steps to combat wage theft by expanding pay stub requirements. The Wage Range Transparency Act of 2024 requires all job postings in Maryland to include clear wage or salary information, to help reduce wage gaps, particularly for women and people of color.

Although recent research shows that women have increasingly sought to negotiate better pay, they are still paid less than their male counterparts. Recognizing this, during the 2024 legislative session the Maryland General Assembly amended the

Equal Pay for Equal Work Act to mandate greater wage transparency. Now, all public and private employers must disclose the minimum and maximum hourly or salary pay range, a general description of benefits, and other compensation in all internal and external job postings.

There has been strong and growing engagement with resources designed to educate workers and employers about these requirements, as reflected in the data. From September 2024 through March 2026, the Employment Standards Service homepage has been viewed nearly 139,000 times by more than 101,000 users. Resources such as informational webinars, FAQs, pay stub templates, and disclosures forms combined have been viewed or downloaded more than 65,000 times. Moreover, 62 employers have received letters notifying them of their non-compliance with the law since it went into effect.

The law also makes it unlawful for employers to retaliate against workers for asking about their wages. There are civil penalties for employers who violate this provision as well as full remedies for affected workers.

Right to Organize and Workforce Training
Only 10 percent of the U.S. workforce is unionized, and women have lower unionization rates than men.[23] Hourly wages for women represented by unions are significantly higher than for nonunionized women with comparable characteristics.[24] Further, collective bargaining agreements generally have standardized and transparent wage rates for similarly skilled workers, as well as delineated processes for advancement, which help support equitable career progression. Ensuring that workers can exercise their democratic right to organize can help narrow gender and racial wage gaps.[25]

Currently, men disproportionately hold many jobs in industries that pay family-sustaining wages that do not require a college degree. For example, as Figure 12 shows, Maryland women have very low representation in the skilled trades: only 1.3 percent of Electricians in Maryland and 1.6 percent of Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters are women according to data from the US Census. Emphasizing skills-based hiring; expanding and diversifying registered apprenticeship programs, and making strategic investments in workforce training and education programs, particularly in high-growth industries, can help more women and people of color to enter high-wage occupations and thus address wage disparities.

These are only a few key drivers of the gender wage gap and policies that can help narrow these gaps; policies are needed to address additional drivers.

Conclusion

This March 2026 report builds on the Maryland Department of Labor's March 2024 Equal Pay Day Report. The data highlight structural factors that contribute to the

wage gap, including occupational crowding, caregiving responsibilities, and the persistent motherhood wage gap. The report also notes where Maryland is actively leveraging policy tools to drive more equitable outcomes.

Maryland remains a national leader in maintaining a comparatively low overall gender wage gap, but our state's gender wage gaps nonetheless remain a persistent problem, particularly impacting Black and Hispanic women. Closing these gaps will require sustained, intentional action. Advancing pay equity will strengthen our workforce and economy—especially for women, people of color, people with disabilities, veterans, older workers, and LGBTQIA+ Marylanders. The Maryland Department of Labor, in partnership with the Moore-Miller Administration, is committed to doing that work.

Methodology

Gender Wage Gap
The gender wage gap refers to the difference in earnings between women and men. It is typically measured by comparing the median earnings for full-time, year-round workers. Full-time workers are used in an attempt to reduce the variability that comes with part-time work. The estimates include workers aged 16+. Earnings are adjusted for inflation and exclude the armed forces. Median earnings are used to eliminate any outliers (the particularly low and high earners).

The Maryland Department of Labor utilized data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2020–2024 American Community Survey (ACS) to estimate gender wage gaps. Using the ACS data allows for a larger sample size for each estimate, thus allowing for a reduced margin of error.

Note that, in the prior version of this report, the Maryland Department of Labor reported data by LWDA (local workforce development area) rather than county. This change increases the granularity of the data but does mean some counties may have small sample sizes for certain demographic groups.

Occupational Crowding
One way to measure segregation within Maryland's labor market and its impact on the gender wage gap is through occupational crowding. Occupational crowding was developed in the 1970s to measure how Black or African American men were underrepresented in ("crowded out of") high wage occupations and overrepresented in ("crowded into") low-wage ones.[27] The concept has been further expanded on and researched by economists such as William Darity,[28] Michelle Holder,[29] and Darrick Hamilton[30] to measure disparities in national and state labor markets while controlling for education as an explanatory variable.

To determine occupational crowding, the Maryland Department of Labor estimated the "crowding index" for over 500 occupations in Maryland using 5-year 2020 to 2024 ACS data from the US Census.[31] The crowding index is estimated using the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{(Number of women employed in an occupation) / (Total number of workers in the occupation)}}{\text{(Number of women with necessary education for the job) / (Total number of workers with necessary education)}}$$

In other words, the crowding index measures, for each occupation, whether women in Maryland are employed in that occupation proportionately to their level of education.[32]

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