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The older the woman, the wider the gender pay gap

It's not just about dollars. A new study says it's about opportunities too

[Beth Braverman](https://considerable.com/contributor/beth-braverman/) | 7 hours ago

What is wrong with this picture?

Women at every age earn less than men of the same age, but the gender pay gap is far wider for older working women.

New [data from PayScale](https://www.payscale.com/data/gender-pay-gap) shows that women age 45 and older earn 70¢ for every dollar that men earn, before adjusting for factors like experience and industry. By comparison,

women age 30 to 44 earn 78¢ for every dollar men earn, and women in their 20s receive 83¢.

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The older women get, the wider the pay gap becomes. Women ages 55 to 64 at-age- earn just 69¢ for every dollar earned by a man, and those 65 and older take 60/) home only 65¢ compared to men.

When researchers adjust the data to account for factors like job titles, industry, and experience, the pay gap shrinks markedly: For women over age 45, that apples-to-apples pay gap is only 97¢.

But that's not necessarily a good thing. That gulf between so-called controlled and uncontrolled pay gaps represents what PayScale calls the "Opportunity Gap"—societal and business forces that keep women in lower-paying jobs and industries while men continue to advance and earn more.

Women are opting out of—or being excluded from—some of the highest-paying industries, such as technology (https://considerable.com/age-bias-in-tech-is-even-more-rampant-than-you-think/), where women make up just 29% of workers, and they're not being promoted into management as quickly as men are.

When workers are in their 20s, the report finds that three-quarters of both men and women hold non-managerial jobs—what you'd expect early in a career. But by age 45 and above, 30% of women are managers or supervisors, while 38% of men are. In that age group, only 3% of women have become executives, vs. 8% of men.

"The gender pay gap gets talked about as if it's a single number or a single problem, but there are so many issues that contribute to why these gaps exist," says Lydia Frank, PayScale's vice president of content strategy.

In addition to earning [fewer promotions \(https://considerable.com/yes-you-can-still-get-promoted-at-age-60/\)](https://considerable.com/yes-you-can-still-get-promoted-at-age-60/) and smaller raises, women are more likely than men are to take [time off from work to care for family members \(https://considerable.com/babysit-my-grandchild/\)](https://considerable.com/babysit-my-grandchild/) throughout their careers. Over time, that absence contributes to the widening pay gap. In an [earlier study \(https://www.payscale.com/data/gender-pay-gap-2018\)](https://www.payscale.com/data/gender-pay-gap-2018), PayScale found that workers who took at least a year off from a job earned 7.3% less on average than similar employees who did not take a break.

While some of the solutions to the pay gap may have to come from company policies and regulatory changes, there are ways you can make sure you're being paid a fair wage throughout your career.

Know your value

At sites like [PayScale \(https://www.payscale.com\)](https://www.payscale.com) and [Glassdoor \(https://www.glassdoor.com/index.htm\)](https://www.glassdoor.com/index.htm), you can get hard data on the market-rate salary for your position, vital ammunition when negotiating for raise. If your manager still says no, don't let the conversation end there.

“It's okay to ask questions,” Frank says. “If it has something to do with your performance, you want to understand what you can do better, and when you can follow up on the conversation.”

Keep one foot in the workforce

Sometimes taking time off to care for a sick parent or to help with new grandchildren is unavoidable, but try not to put your career entirely on the backburner.

Continue to network and consider taking on some gig economy work while

Continue to network and consider taking on some gig economy work while you're caring for family, so that companies can see you're still up to speed when you're ready to come back.

Seek out companies dedicated to gender equity

A growing number of companies are committing to closing the pay gaps within their ranks. Look for firms that are publicly discussing their efforts to do so.

One good sign: A diverse C-suite and board of directors. "If you look at an organization, and their entire executive team is white men, run," Frank says.

About the Author

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Beth Braverman is an award-winning freelance journalist and content producer, writing mostly about personal finance, p... [Continue Reading](https://considerable.com/contributor/beth-braverman/) (<https://considerable.com/contributor/beth-braverman/>).