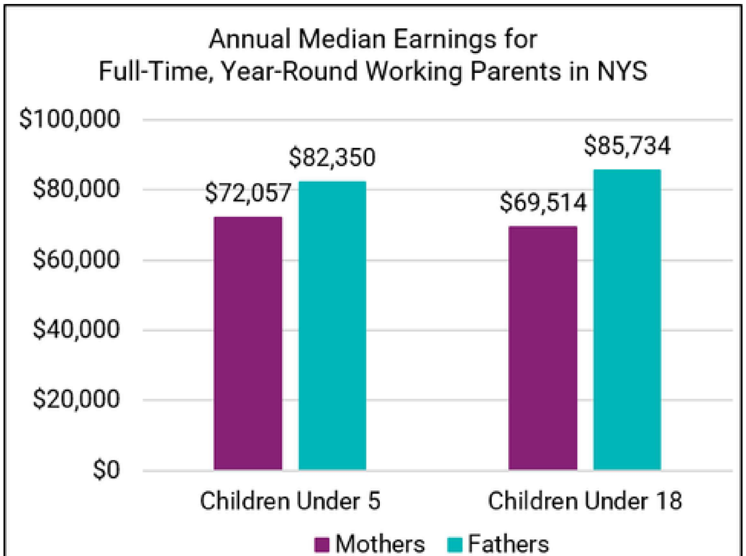
Pay Equity

Mom's Equal Pay Day

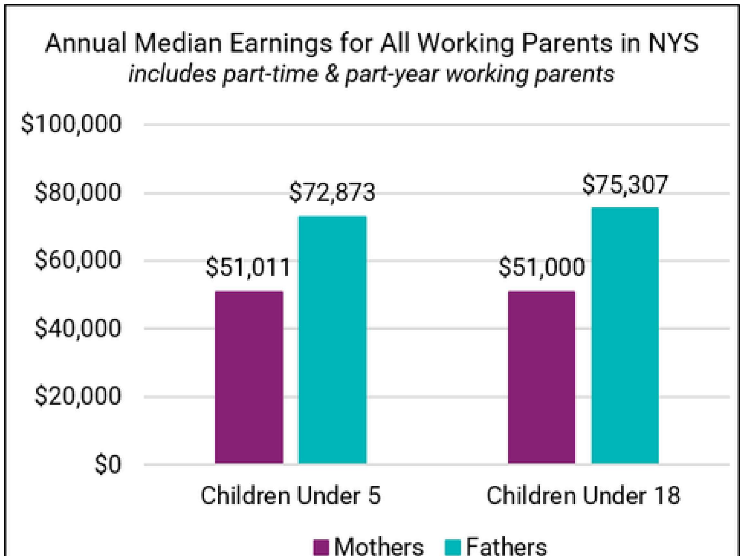
Mom's Equal Pay Day marks how far into the current year mothers must work to be paid what fathers were paid in the previous year. This year, that date falls on August 6, meaning more than 8 additional months. This gap reflects the discrimination and bias, caregiving penalties, and lack of workplace supports that undermine mothers' earnings, opportunities for advancement, retirement savings, and overall financial security.

In 2024, mothers in the U.S. working full-time, year-round were paid **74 cents** for every dollar paid to fathers. This 26 cent wage gap translates to an annual loss of approximately $20,000 *(NWLC, 2026)*. When part-time and part-year working parents are included, the gap widens to 36 cents.

The wage gap between mothers and fathers varies by geography. Mothers in New York State (NYS) experience some of the smallest wage gaps in the country *(University of Kansas Care Board, 2026)*. Women with children under 18 who work full-time, year-round are paid 81 cents for every $1 paid to men with children under 18. This 19 cent wage gap translates to **an annual loss of over $16,000**. When part-time and part-year working parents are included, the wage gap grows to 32 cents - an annual loss of over $24,000. Women with children under 5 who work full-time, year-round are paid 88 cents for every $1 paid to men with children under 5. This 12 cent wage gap translates to an annual loss of over $10,000. When part-time and part-year working parents are included, the wage gap grows to 30 cents - an annual loss of nearly $22,000.



University of Kansas Care Board, 2026.
(calculations based on 2020-2024 ACS 5-year estimates)



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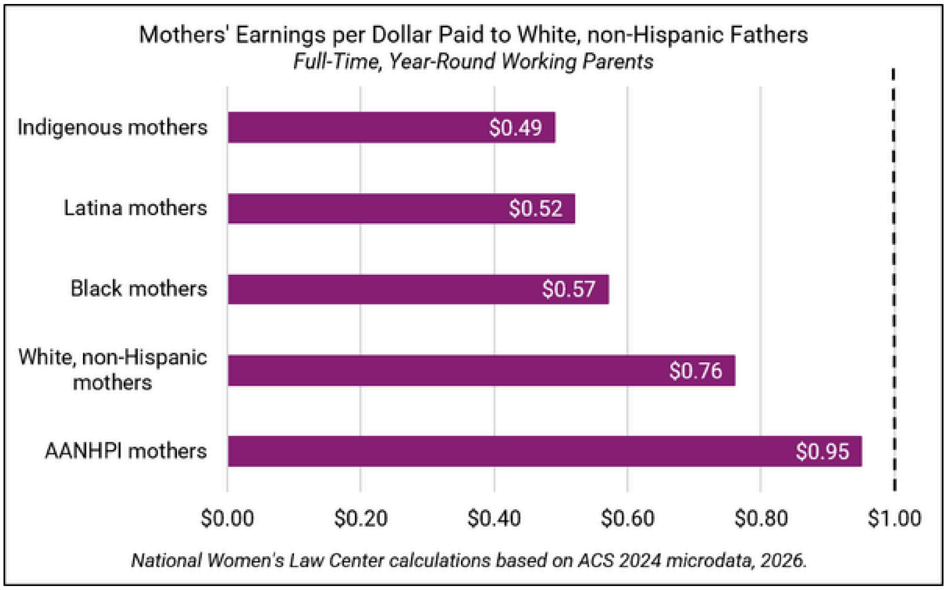
The economy depends on mothers' labor - both paid and unpaid. **Women perform $682 billion worth of unpaid caregiving per year** *(NPWF, 2026)*. Even as men are taking on a greater share of caregiving than ever before, mothers still perform the majority of unpaid family caregiving while remaining valuable members of the paid workforce. In 2025, 79% of employed mothers worked full-time *(U.S. BLS, 2026)*. Yet workplaces are often structured around an employee with no caregiving responsibilities, and cultural assumptions about who should be responsible for caregiving still shape how mothers are treated and paid.



Mothers of color face even larger wage disparities due to discrimination on the basis of gender, race, and ethnicity, in addition to motherhood.

6x

Mothers are often seen as less committed to work and are 6 times less likely to be recommended for hire than women without children.

(AAUW, 2026)

The "**Motherhood Penalty**" refers to the economic disadvantage women face in the workplace after becoming parents, including lower pay, fewer promotions, and a perceived decrease in competence. Because caregiving responsibilities fall disproportionately on women, insufficient, unaffordable child care and a lack of paid family leave frequently force mothers to reduce their hours or leave the workforce entirely. These interruptions have long-term consequences on career growth, future earnings, and retirement savings.

Even mothers who remain employed full-time without interruption often see slower wage growth and career advancement because they are perceived to be less competent or less committed. A study comparing equally qualified candidates captured this bias directly: **mothers were viewed as less competent, were offered lower starting salaries, and were less likely to be recommended for hire than women without children**, while fathers were offered higher pay and seen as more committed than men without children *(NWLC, 2026)*.

The Fatherhood Bonus

Unlike mothers, fathers tend to see their earnings rise after having children. In 2024, fathers of children under 18 in NYS earned 18.5% more than men without children *(NYS DOL, 2026)*.

Closing the wage gap starts with policy: paid family leave, affordable child care, and stronger workplace protections for caregivers. Together, these would enable mothers to stay in, and advance within, the workforce on the same terms as everyone else. Investing in these policies pays off far beyond mothers themselves: families gain financial stability, employers retain experienced workers, and the wider economy grows stronger.

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