

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

PATHWAYS

»»» TO »»»

*Accelerating
the
Possibilities*

PROGRESS



WNY WOMEN'S FOUNDATION



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Introduction

For twenty-five years the WNY Women's Foundation (WNYWF) has been transforming systems, culture and policy to create opportunities for each woman to thrive. To commemorate this silver milestone, the WNYWF is releasing the third installment of our *Pathways to Progress: Accelerating the Possibilities* series. This data-driven analysis focuses on: **child care, poverty, leadership, education, occupational segregation, and pay equity**. Our latest edition builds off of the WNYWF's 2010 and 2017 *Pathways to Progress: The Status of Women in WNY* reports and compares the state of affairs for women 25 years ago, to the current climate, with a forecasted trajectory over the next 20-25 years.

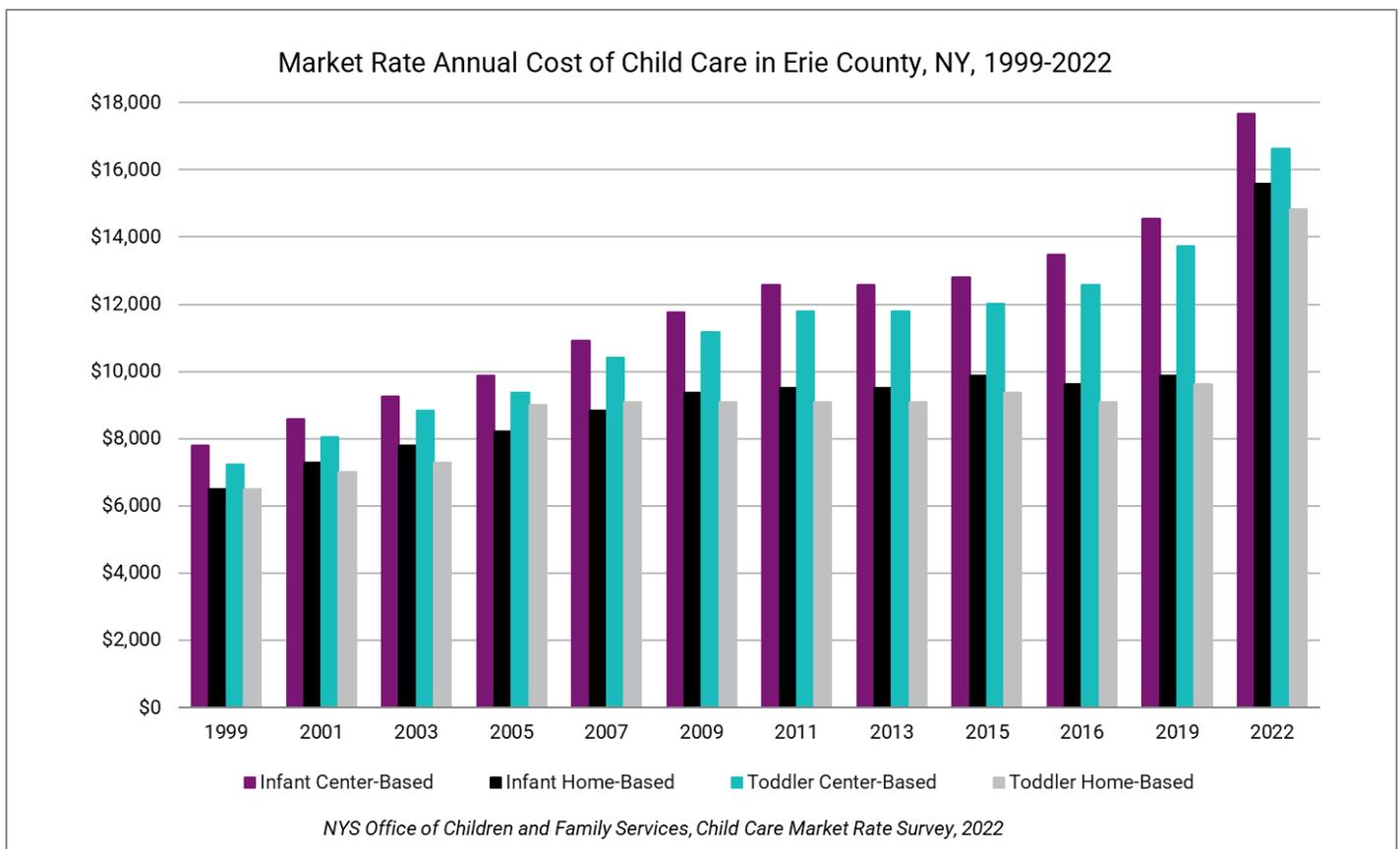
This introductory white paper is the first in a series of 7 reports that take an intersectional look at six critical areas impacting women and includes a strategic action plan to build economic equity by eliminating the barriers holding them back. It is through a comprehensive understanding of our history and goals that we can both celebrate gains and challenge hesitancy to act. We know that the price of inaction directly impacts the economic health of our neighborhoods and disproportionately affects women of color. We are proud to honor our commitment to empower the potential of all women, but that will never be possible unless our leaders and champions make urgent and necessary change.





Child Care

In 1999, the cost of infant center-based child care in Erie County stood at **\$7,800** annually, equivalent to 13% of the median family income for a family of four (NYS Office of Children & Family Services, 1999). By 2022, that figure had risen to **\$17,680** per year, constituting 14% of the median family income for the same household (NYS Office of Children & Family Services, 2022). If current trends continue, the annual cost of infant center-based child care would soar to an estimated **\$40,075** in another 23 years—a staggering 16% of the median family income. Child care is considered affordable when it costs families no more than 7% of their household income (U.S. Dept of Health & Human Services, 2016). The escalating costs paint a grim picture of the financial burden families will face. If current trends continue at the same rate, a million women could be kept out of the workforce (House et al., 2022).



Call to Action: Write or call your NYS legislators today to advocate for universal child care!

Click below to call or write your NYS legislators:

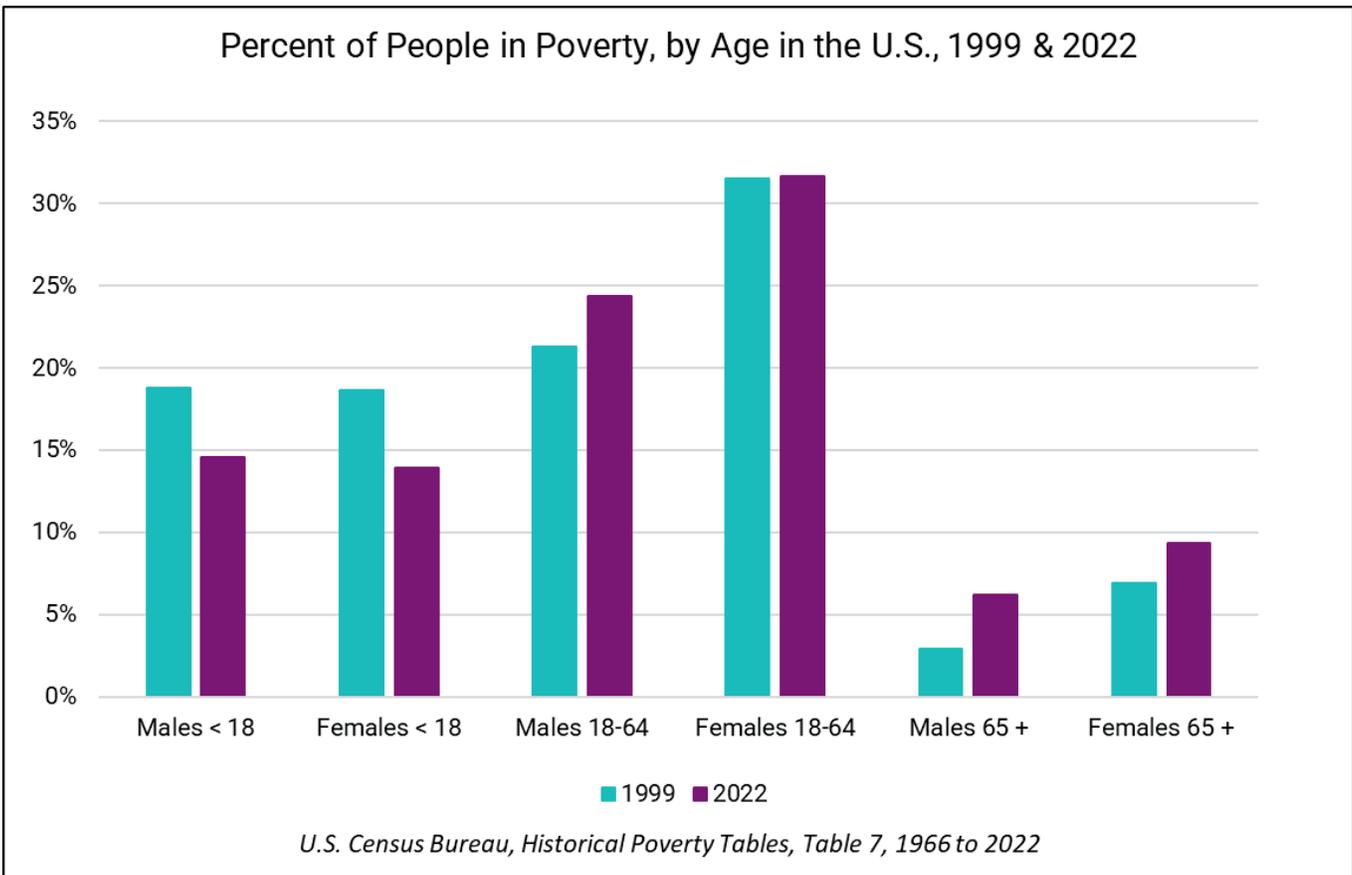
<https://www.nysenate.gov/find-my-senator>

<https://nyassembly.gov/mem/search/>



Poverty

In 1999, the poverty rate for working women was **5.9%** compared to 4.4% for men. By 2021: the rate had decreased to **4.5%** compared to 3.7% for men (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021b). Assuming a decrease by the same percentage point continues to 2046, the rate will be **3.1%**. One of the reasons that so many working women live in poverty may be that many are employed in low-wage jobs and industries. In NYS in 2021, women constituted 63% of the low-paid workforce and 15% of them lived in poverty (Tucker et al., 2023). Jobs such as child care workers, home health aides and housekeepers have typically been undervalued and underpaid, despite the importance of these occupations. For example, 94% of child care workers in NYS were women and 12% of them lived in poverty (NYS DOL, 2023). These figures highlight the ongoing need for policies and actions aimed at achieving gender equality in the workforce and addressing systemic barriers that disproportionately impact women's economic opportunities.



Call to Action: Advocate for fair wages and support education and job training programs!

Stay informed by signing up for our monthly e-newsletter:

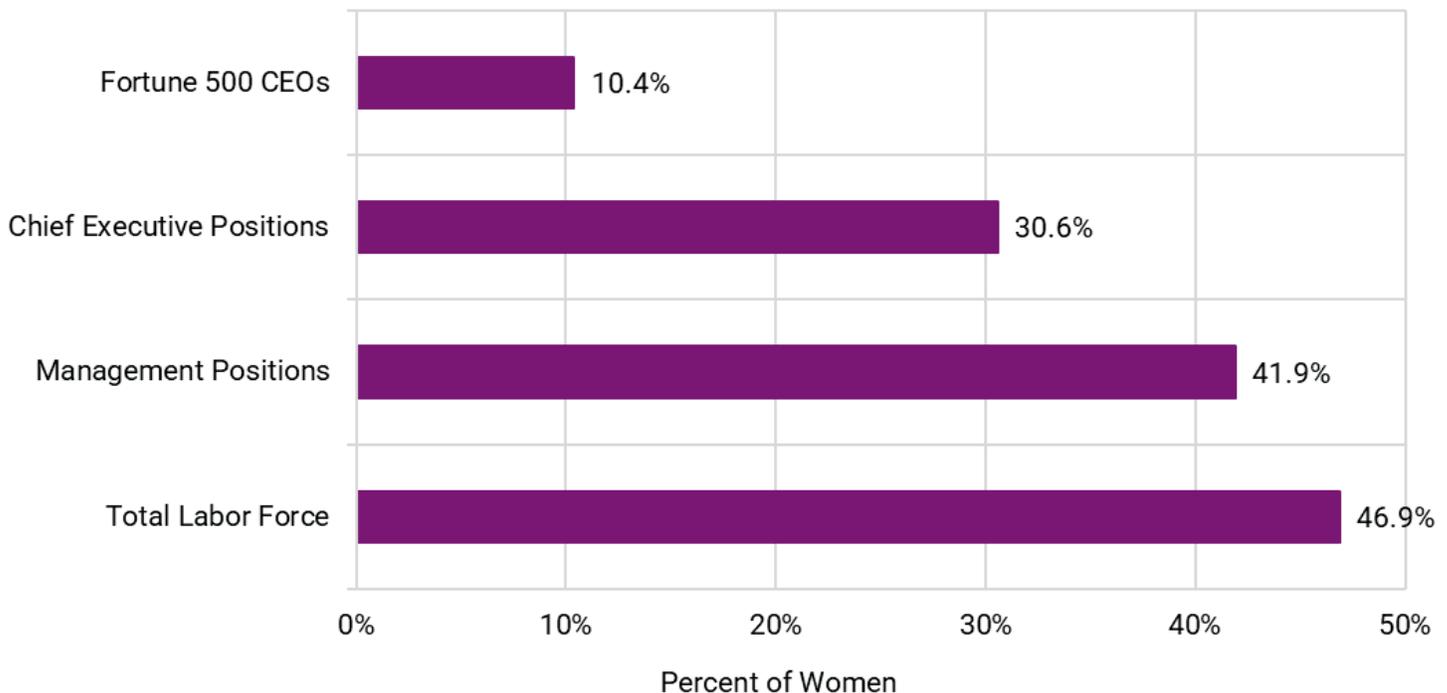
<https://wnywomensfoundation.org/subscribe/>



Leadership

In 1999, only **0.4%** of Fortune 500 company CEOs were women, but by 2023, this figure had risen to **10.6%** (Pew Research Center, 2024). If the share of women in these CEO positions increases by another 10.2 percentage points over the next 24 years, only **20.8%** of Fortune 500 company CEOs will be women by 2047. This disproportionate trend emphasizes the importance of ongoing efforts to promote gender diversity and equality in corporate leadership roles. Only 87 women are promoted from entry-level positions to manager for every 100 men promoted, which creates a gap in the pipeline to senior management (Field et al., 2023). Currently, women comprise 47% of the labor force yet only make up 31% of chief executives (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023a). If current trends continue at the same rate, women will continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions and denied equal career opportunities.

Women in Leadership 2023



U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023; Fortune 500, 2023

Call to Action: Empower, mentor, and sponsor aspiring leaders!

Click below to learn about the WNYWF's mentorship program: Ready, Set, Lead!

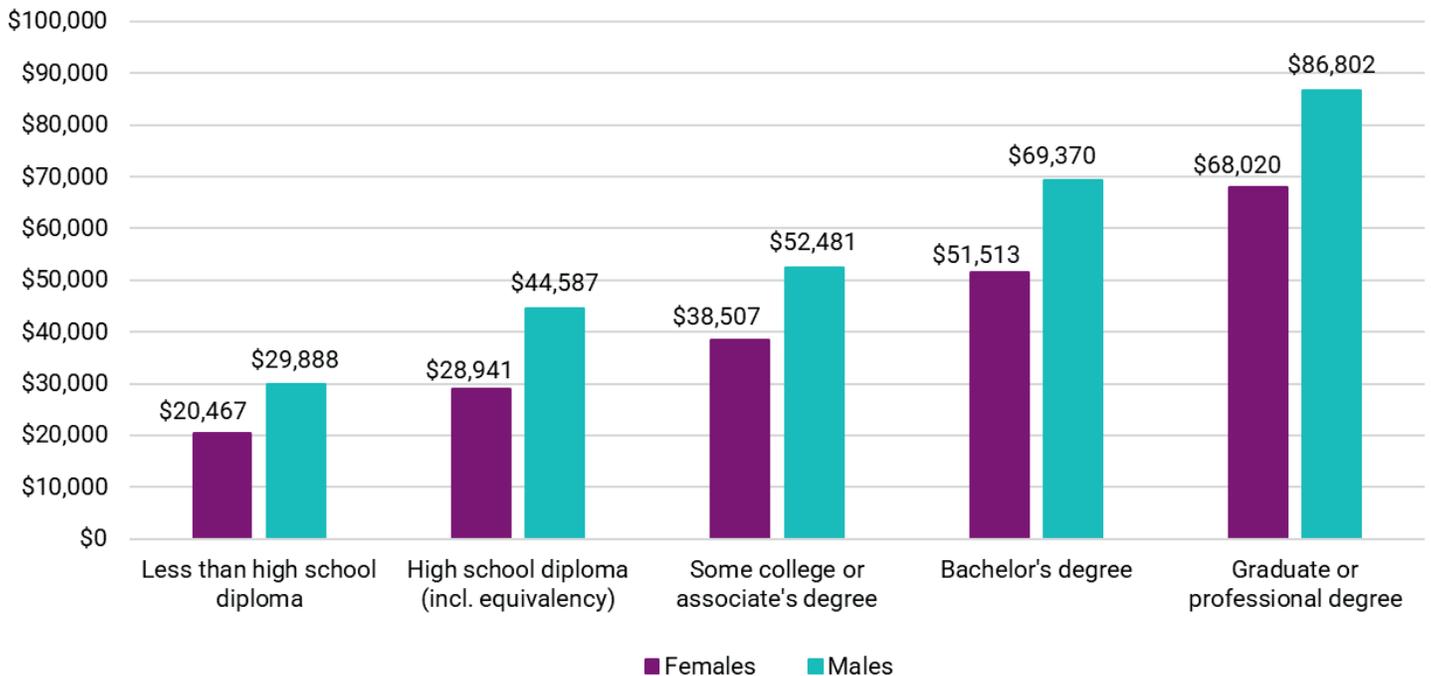
<https://allinwny.org/participate/individuals/>



Education

In 1999, **18%** of women aged 25 and older held at least a bachelor's degree, slightly trailing behind men at 19% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a). Today, the landscape has notably shifted: **31%** of women in the same age group now hold a bachelor's degree, outpacing men at 29% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). If current trends continue, in another 23 years, an estimated **56%** of women aged 25 and older will hold at least a bachelor's degree. However, the impact of educational attainment on women's employment status and earnings remains a poignant issue. As we strive for parity in compensation, it is critical to foster an environment where gender does not dictate professional advancement or earnings. Current data suggests that a woman must complete an additional degree to secure equivalent wages to a man with less education.

Median Annual Earnings of Population 25 Years +
by Educational Attainment in Erie County, NY



U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates Detailed Tables, Table B20004, 2018-2022

Call to Action: Support initiatives that provide women with supportive quality education!

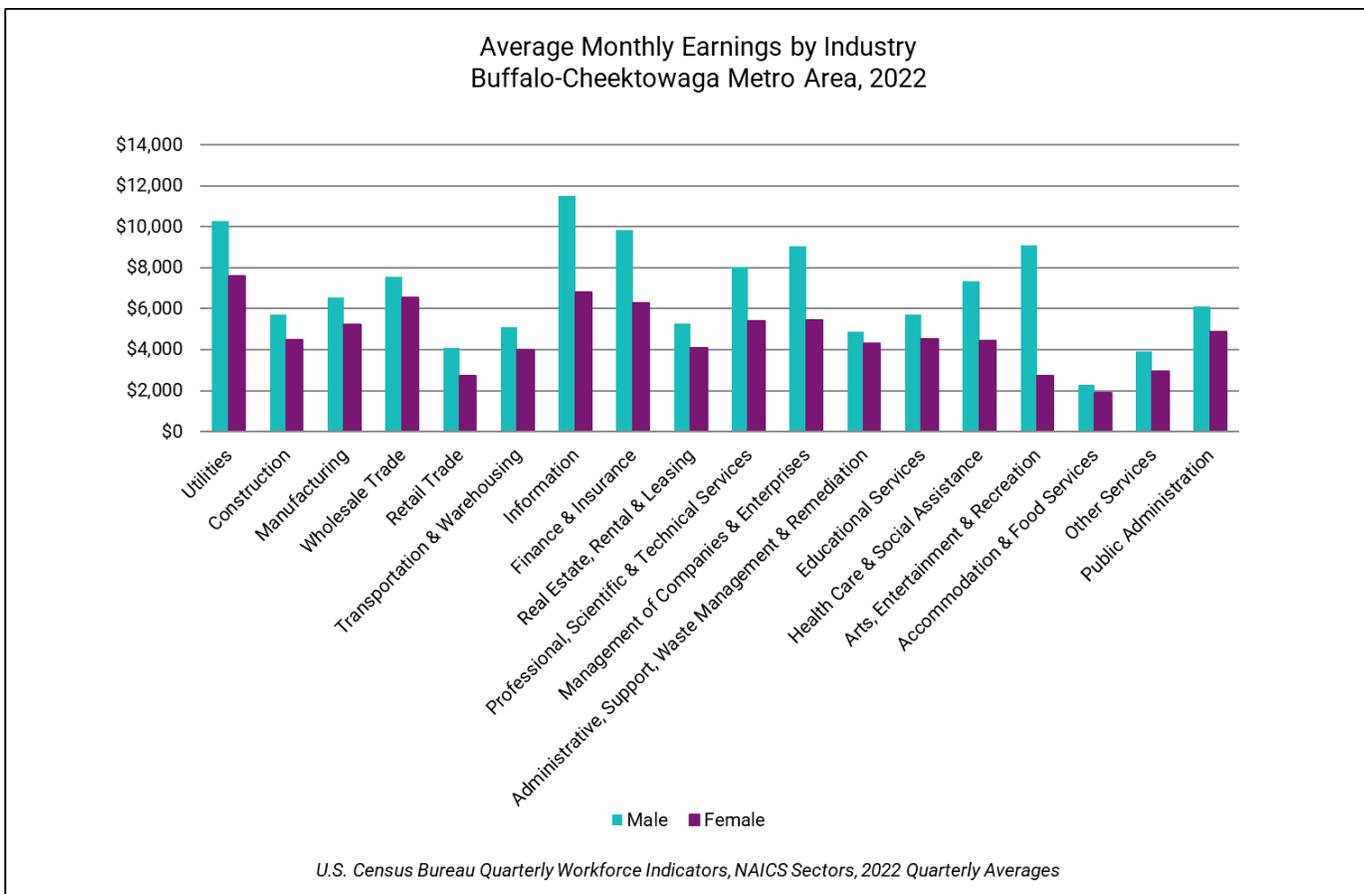
Click below to support the WNYWF's mPower education-to-employment program:

<https://wnywomensfoundation.org/womens-economic-mobility-mpower>



Occupational Segregation

Nationwide, in occupations that pay less than \$30,000 per year, **2 out of every 3** full-time workers are women (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023b). In jobs paying an average of \$100,000 or more per year, fewer than **1 in 3** full-time workers are women. This underscores the persistent issue of occupational segregation, which remains a primary cause of the gender pay gap. Even as women's representation in higher-paying occupations has grown, they are still paid less than their male counterparts. Addressing these disparities demands concerted efforts to challenge systemic barriers, promote workplace equity, and ensure all individuals have equal access to opportunities for fair compensation. Empowering women is one of the smartest investments employers can make. With financial independence, women help to stimulate economic growth and inspire others in their communities while simultaneously making their own career choices.



Call to Action: Compel employers to implement diversity and inclusion initiatives with specific intersectional gender equity priorities!

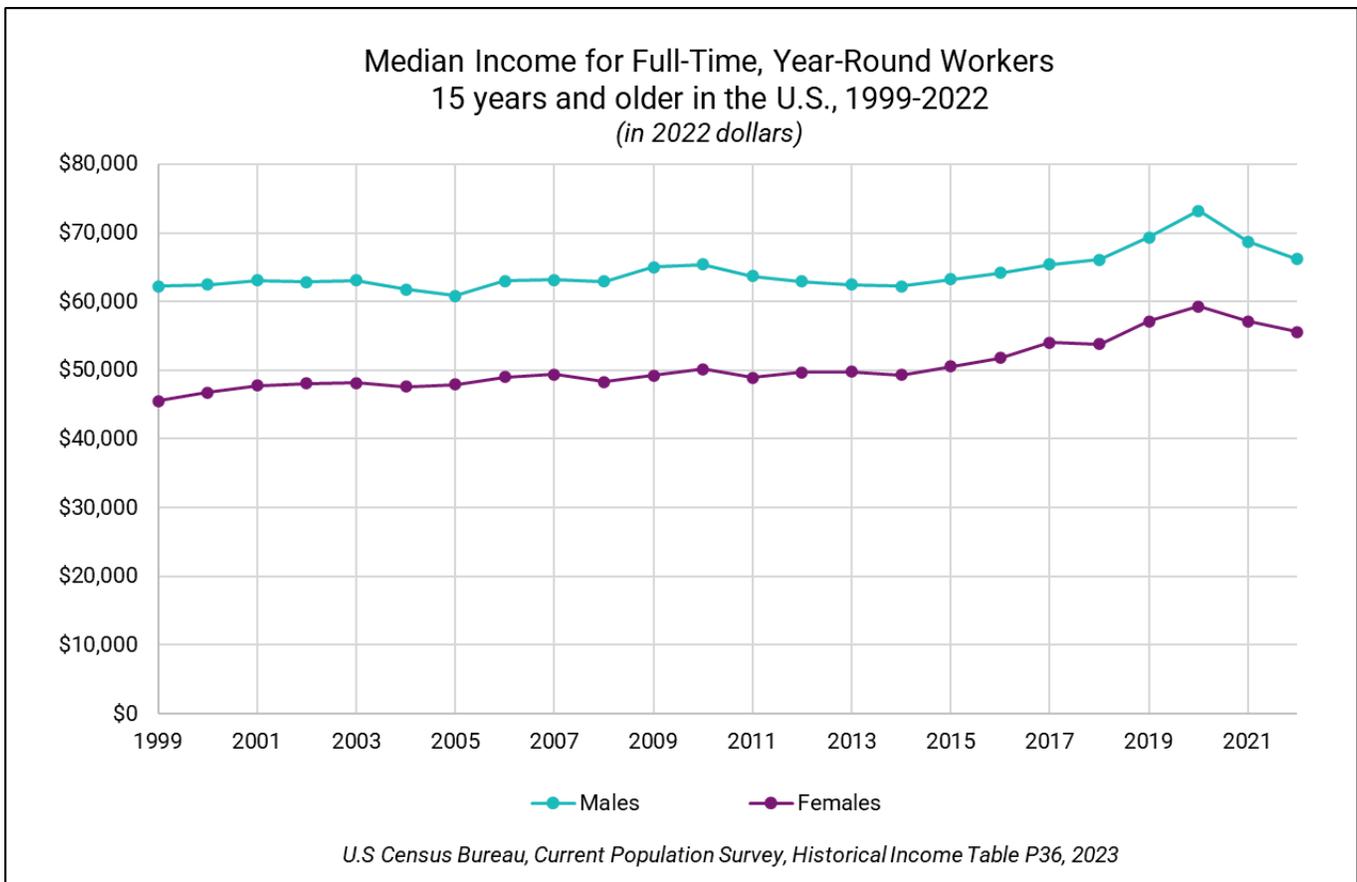
Click below to learn about WNY Women's Foundation's diversity, inclusion, and equity program: **ALL IN for employers:**

<https://allinwny.org/participate/employers/>
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Pay Gap

In 1999, the typical full-time, year-round working woman earned about **75 cents** for every dollar earned by a man (U.S. Census Bureau, 2024b). By 2022, this gap had narrowed slightly, with women earning approximately **84 cents** for every dollar earned by a man. If progress continues at the same rate as it has since 1999, women will earn approximately **90 cents** for every dollar a man earns in 2045. The pay gap for women of color is even wider. In 2022, for every dollar paid to non-Hispanic, white men, Black women are paid 69 cents, Native American women are paid 59 cents, and Latina women are paid 57 cents, which translates to annual losses of \$22,120, \$28,747, and \$30,450, respectively (Javaid, 2024). While the narrowing of the pay gap signals positive change, it underscores the need for continued advocacy and policy reforms aimed at dismantling systemic barriers to gender equality in the workforce.



Call to Action: Hold employers accountable for adhering to NYS salary transparency and history laws!

Click below to know your rights regarding NYS employment policies and benefits:

<https://dol.ny.gov/fostering-access-rights-and-equity-fare-grant>



Conclusion

The WNY Women's Foundation's milestone campaign— *Pathways to Progress: Accelerating the Possibilities*— reflects the foundation's long-term commitment to deliberately crafting change through data and storytelling. This initiative not only celebrates women's achievements but highlights the work still needed to be done to build a more equitable and inclusive WNY. Intersectional gender equity is not the root of our problems, but rather the bold solution to business and society's most complex challenges. We are empowered to continue our transformative work, knowing that every step forward brings us closer to realizing our vision of a world where success and possibility are not limited by gender, race, or place.

WOMEN *in* ACTION



Call to Action: Join Women in Action! At the end of each month, you'll receive an email from the WNYWF with timely, actionable steps you can take to make our community better for all women.



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