



Bringing awareness to and starting the conversation about:

Pay and compensation in Behavior Analysis



**Created in Partnership with Hanna Vance, Doctoral Student,
Department of Psychology, University of Florida
Translational and Applied Behavioral Science (TABSLAB) Lab**

Outside of Behavior Analysis

Gender data – U.S. Nationally

The gender pay-gap remains notable, with estimates showing that women earn approximately 82 to 84 cents for every dollar earned by men. According to the PEW Research Center, in 2022, American women earned about 82 cents for each dollar earned by men. Similarly, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) reports that full-time working women in the U.S. earned just 84 cents for every dollar earned by their male counterparts, and this disparity has long-term effects on women's financial stability.



Several factors seem to influence this gender pay gap:

- **Motherhood:** One factor is the 'fatherhood wage premium,' which means that men who stay continuously employed typically earn more than women who take time off from work for child-rearing. Additionally, family responsibilities can steer men and women toward different types of jobs, leading to gender segregation in the workforce (Information from PEW Research Center).



- **Age:** The wage gap narrows somewhat for younger women, particularly those aged 25 to 34, who have recently made strides towards equal pay. However, the gap tends to widen as women get older, with a notable increase occurring between the ages of 35 and 44 (Information from PEW Research Center).



- **Education:** Despite advances in education, the pay gap persists. By 2022, 48% of employed women held at least a bachelor's degree compared to 41% of men, but this educational attainment has not significantly narrowed the gender pay gap. The wage gap between college-educated women and men remains comparable to that between women and men without a college degree. (Information from PEW Research Center).



- **Location:** The gender pay gap varies widely by state due to factors such as the predominant industries, demographic characteristics (including race, ethnicity, age, and education), regional attitudes towards work and gender, and the effectiveness of state pay discrimination laws (Information from AAUW).



- **Industry:** Industries dominated by men generally offer higher wages compared to those predominantly occupied by women (Information from AAUW).

Outside of Behavior Analysis (cont.)

Race/ethnicity data – Nationally

The earnings gap varies significantly among different racial and ethnic groups. In 2022, Black women earned 70% of what White men made, while Hispanic women earned only 65% as much. White women earned about 83% of what White men earned, reflecting the general earnings gap, and Asian women were closer to parity with White men, earning 93% as much (Information from PEW Research Center).

Several factors may contribute to racial pay disparities.



- **Hiring and Onboarding:** Research has revealed ongoing hiring discrimination affecting various racial and ethnic groups, as well as LGBTQ+ and disabled individuals (Information from PEW Research Center). Additionally, employer practices such as using prior salary history for setting current pay and restricting wage discussions among employees exacerbate the issue (Information from AAUW).



- **Systemic Racism:** The racial wage gap is deeply rooted in the history of labor in America, with discrimination playing a major role (Information from AAUW). Wage disparities are often attributed to discrimination or differences in unmeasured skills and characteristics, alongside increasing overall earnings inequality (Information from Economic Policy Institute).



- **Education:** Like gender-based pay gaps, educational attainment does not significantly close the racial wage gap. For instance, obtaining a bachelor's degree or higher does not substantially reduce the earnings gap between Black and White workers (Information from Economic Policy Institute).



Longer-term implications; why should we care about wage gaps?



Retirement and pension affected:

Pay gaps can translate into lower lifetime earnings (including impacts to social security and pensions) and lower overall retirement income. It has been reported that in retirement, women have only 70% of what men do, in terms of savings (AAUW).



Equal pay for working women would increase their annual average earnings from \$41,402 to \$48,326, adding \$541 billion in wage and salary income to the U.S. economy. (Institute for Women's Policy Research)
Higher rates of poverty (Information from the Institute for Women's Policy Research):

Closed gender pay gaps would lower poverty rates of working women (especially single mothers).

Healthcare implications:

Structural racism in employment and wages has effects on health care access for historically minoritized groups. This is especially true for HMGs who are segregated to low-paying jobs that do not provide adequate health insurance (information from American Bar Association; Yearby, 2018)

Occupational segregation can also lead to psychosocial stressors due to HMGs being subjected to occupational environments that lead to elevated risk of exposure to injury, hardships, etc. (Williams et al., 2016).

Inside of Behavior Analysis

Academia:

Li et al., 2019

- A survey of salary data from 16 ABAI-accredited schools in the USA showed that women consistently earned less than men at every academic rank. At all levels, the highest salary reported was earned by a man, while the lowest was earned by a woman. On average, men's salaries were 13% higher than women's at the assistant professor level, 6% higher at the associate professor level, and 15% higher at the full professor level.

Applied/Clinical:

Vance et al., 2023

- A survey of BCBAs/BCBAs in Canada and the USA revealed data indicating that male practitioners generally earned higher annual salaries compared to female practitioners, with the exception of those holding a BCBA-D level in the sample. Regardless of their minority status, men earned more on average than female minorities at every certification level. Female minorities experienced the smallest salary increases across different certification levels and years of experience. While some pay differences can be attributed to certain factors, there remain unresolved discrepancies that cannot be easily explained by these variables or individual pay differences.

Baires et al., 2024

- Males generally earn higher salaries whether they work in urban areas, rural settings, or a combination of locations. However, female practitioners who primarily work with children and adolescents (ages 0–21) make \$1,167 more than their male peers in the same age group. The study identified a statistically significant annual income difference of \$7,592 between rural and urban practitioners. Female BCBAs working with children earn, on average, \$4,252 less annually than their male counterparts (this was not statistically significant). Analyzing salary disparities is complicated by varying costs of living across the U.S., which can lead to higher salaries in more expensive regions and lower salaries in less costly areas. Future research should explore whether pay inequities exist among other BACB certificants, such as RBTs and BCaBAs, who provide direct services to children.

Thoughtful questions to consider:



Did you know that gender and racial wage gaps differ based on the state you live in?

Did your employer set your current earnings based on your past earnings?

Do you think your compensation aligns with what others in similar roles within your company are earning? Why or why not?

Does your workplace have clearly defined and objective promotion and advancement guidelines?

How is pay determined at your workplace?

Are RBTs subjected to pay inequities in behavior analysis?



Check out how your state fares compared to others:

Gender:



Race:



References (in addition to hyperlinks above):

Baires, N. A., Boydston, P. S., & Redner, R. N. (2023). Pay equity among behavior-analytic practitioners who serve children. *Behavior and Social Issues*, 32(1), 274–299. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42822-022-00118-x>

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