



CAREER

How The Gender Pay Gap Became More Than A Statistic

NOVEMBER 29 by NATALIE ZISA

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I had probably heard about the gender wage gap for years. And I definitely remember the last time Equal Pay Day was celebrated. It was spring semester of my junior year: April 12, 2016, to be specific. At the time, the average female's salary was 79% of the average male's. The date symbolized the amount of time that women had to work in order to earn what men earned the previous year. I also remember reading about the Equal Pay clock that was meant to ring every day at 3:20pm because that was 79% of the work day. 79%. That was the number that should've fuelled the fire in me.



I don't know why but despite the statistics, the gender wage gap didn't truly bother me until recently. I was reading a study published by the Indiana University School of Journalism titled, "The American Journalist in the Digital Age". I read how not only are women underrepresented in journalism, but that female journalists' average salary in 2012 was about 83% of male journalist's average salary. And ironically, the income gap only increases with more years of experience.

The study went on to explain that, "Women still represent only slightly more than one-third of all full-time journalists working for the U.S. news media, as has been true since the early 1980s. This trend persists despite the fact that more women than ever are graduating from journalism schools."

It could've been the pure fact that as a college senior this was the industry I was about to enter, but I remember reading it and taking a moment to think, 'that could be me. Why shouldn't women get equal pay?'

Based on a study conducted about 10 years ago by professors at Carnegie Mellon, Linda Babcock and Sarah Laschever, the assumption was that women didn't ask for raises and promotions as often as men did. In fact, the study found that men were asking four times more than women. But more recently, researchers at London's Cass Business School, the University of Warwick, and the University of Wisconsin published a study titled, "Do Women Ask?" and found the opposing view. In a sample of 4,600 workers across 800 employers in Australia, they found that women are asking as often as their male counterparts, but men are 25% more likely to get a raise when they ask.



The study was conducted in Australia because it's the only country in the world to collect data on employees' raise requests. They used like-for-like situations so that men and women in similar positions could be accurately compared. They found that only 16% of women were successful in getting a pay increase, while 20% of men were likely.

Using a detailed series of questions, the study also disproved two common beliefs surrounding the gender pay gap. Not only did it disprove that women aren't as "ambitious

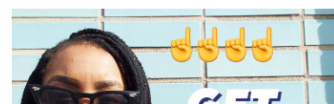


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or pushy” as men, but it also negated the belief that women are more afraid of hurting their relationships with their employers.


Dr. Amanda Goodall, coauthor of the study, noted that the results were very positive if you controlled samples for women under 40. “We found that they were asking and getting the same pay as men. But we’d have to follow up with them in a few years to see if it was a generational effect or if it was because of the stage they were at in their career.”

Dr. Goodall also acknowledged that there are several other factors to be taken into consideration. “We will be looking for other things such as patterns in job satisfaction. And might the pay differential be because women are less likely to move organizations and pay usually increases if they do so.”

In preparation for this article, I reached out to two women in the communications industry, both well established in their careers. However, both declined to go on record about any experiences they may have had with this issue. Their decline in response only made me question the subject matter even more. If they were afraid to speak about something they had experienced, in fear of whatever the consequences may be, I can only assume that the gender pay gap persists in this industry. And that like I realized a couple of weeks ago, it’s not just a number or a statistic that I have to get used to, it’s a very real scenario that I might find myself in one day.

According to *Fast Company*, based on data from the World Economic Forum, it will take 170 years at the current rates or progress worldwide to see not just the gender pay gaps close, but also gaps in education, health care, and political representation. In the meantime, I hope that as I enter the workforce I find myself a lot more like the women in the study who aren’t afraid to ask for a raise. And more importantly, that if I have something like equal pay to fight for, I will. I’ve decided that the only way the statistic will get smaller is if we continue to talk about it.

TAGS: CAREER, EQUAL PAY, FEMALE JOURNALISTS, GENDER PAY GAP, WOMEN



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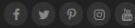
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