

# Study shows racial pay gaps among early childhood educators<sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

Advocates for workers who care for children before kindergarten have repeatedly groused this mostly female workforce is underpaid. Now, they're pointing to inequities among the underpaid.

A report being released Friday says African-American female teachers who work full time in the early childhood workforce make 84 cents for every dollar earned by their white counterparts, on average. The 16% wage gap amounts to \$366 less a month and \$4,395 less a year on average, according to the study from the left-leaning Center for American Progress.

The study's authors say part of the gap for these workers, who teach millions of kids in child-care centers and preschools, is due to differences in education attained, years of experience and workplace characteristics. African-American workers are less likely to have a bachelor's degree and less likely to work for school-sponsored centers where average hourly wages are highest, for example. The authors attribute those factors at least in part to systemic barriers that hinder access to higher education and training for people of color.

But even after accounting for those differences, African-American women who teach full-time make just 93 cents for every dollar white full-time female teachers earn, on average, the study found. That amounts to \$163 less a month, or \$1,995 less a year—a meaningful difference for a workforce that averages less than \$30,000 a year, the study's authors said.

"Wages for this workforce across the board are too low," said Rebecca Ullrich, a policy analyst for CAP and a co-author of the study. That African-Americans are paid even less "points to some more implicit unseen factors that are contributing to wage differences, such as racism," she said.

Among women, white early childhood teachers working full time make \$13.86 an hour on average, while full-time African-American teachers working full time make \$11.68 on average, the study found. The authors found an even wider pay gap among part-time teachers but said they focused on full-time pay because of the clearer comparisons. They analyzed 2012 data from the Health and Human Services Department released in 2014.

Ms. Ullrich and her co-authors are calling for a substantial government investment to boost wages for all early childhood workers. CAP has called for a child-care tax credit that would give low- and middle-income families up to \$14,000 a year to buy child care. Because about 80% of child-care centers' operating costs are staff-related, and costs are already too high for many parents to manage, "We can't raise parent fees any higher but centers can't pay their teachers any more based on limited public funding," Ms. Ullrich said.

Pay gaps among workers who do the same jobs have been gaining more attention in recent years as policy makers have explored ways to boost stagnant wages. Women who work full time on average earn 79% of what men make, a disparity that has drawn attention from the White House, from corporations and on the campaign trail. In June, more than two dozen companies signed a White House pledge to conduct an annual gender pay analysis with the goal of addressing inequitable compensation.

Pay gaps between people of different races who do the same jobs have also raised eyebrows. In 2014, President Barack Obama signed an executive order directing the Labor Department to set rules requiring federal contractors to give it summary data about their employees' pay based on race and gender. And the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has made tackling pay discrimination one of its six strategic enforcement priorities, citing cases in which it found women, Hispanics and African-Americans to be underpaid relative to their counterparts of different genders or races.'

For early childhood workers, the low pay and pay inequities can create stress that can undermine quality care, people who study this workforce say.

A recent report by the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment at the University of California, Berkeley, found that early educators are among the lowest-paid U.S. workers even when their education and certifications are comparable to kindergarten teachers.

Authors of the CAP study said they think the low pay has origins in history. Caregiving was something that historically happened in the

home, often by black women, and was valued less than many other types of work, they said, adding that historically jobs dominated by women have been lower-paid.

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**Region:** United States <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** pay equity <sup>[4]</sup>

childcare workforce <sup>[5]</sup>

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