



## Women's Soccer Put Equal Pay On The Agenda.

On top of winning the World Cup, the U.S. women's soccer team did something else truly amazing this month: They got the whole country talking about economics — specifically, equal pay for women. And the wage gap — the difference between what men and women earn — became the subject of conversation on sports radio and in places typically unbothered by the gender inequality.

Right now in the U.S., women are paid on average 80 cents for every dollar a man earns, and the pay gap is even worse for women of color. For Megan Rapinoe and her teammates, the path to equal pay is a huge battle. They know they are not being paid as much as their male counterparts. And their fight is taking place in court, with the help of public pressure.

Women are paid less for a few reasons — there's sexism and pay discrimination like the soccer team faces, to be sure, but there are also structural biases<sup>1</sup>. They do a disproportionate amount of child care and other kinds of care giving work — raising children, caring for elderly parents. That cuts into their ability to get the kinds of jobs that pay more.

Women who get paid time off after they have children can keep their jobs and move up their career ladder. However, things should be equal. Men should receive the same time off as women — and they should be encouraged to take advantage of it. Otherwise, men will still be able to work more and women will lose out to their male counterparts in hiring and promotion.

Then when the baby comes, access to affordable child care is critical to keeping women, mothers, in the workforce. Families have to make a difficult choice and all of those contribute to the gender pay gap.

There are also efforts underway to make it illegal to pay men more for work that is comparable to work done by women.

There is another big policy push around pay transparency. One big hurdle<sup>2</sup> for women is simply finding out how their pay compares to men's. The women's soccer team, for example, can fight for higher wages because it knows how much its male counterparts earn.

At the bottom of all this structural inequality is sexism. Women's work is undervalued. The classic example here is the job of secretary — a role once held by men. When women started doing these jobs, the pay fell precipitously. That is what we see in women's sports too. However, as the whole country celebrates the women's team's victory, that's an argument that's becoming more and more impossible to make.

By Emily Peck, adapted from *The Huffington Post*, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019

(446 words)

<sup>1</sup> biases: preferences

<sup>2</sup> a hurdle: a barrier