

2023-2024

Washington State Women's
Commission

Biennial Report



WASHINGTON STATE
WOMEN'S COMMISSION

What We Do

Our Mission

The Washington State Women's Commission improves the life of every woman by ensuring equitable opportunities and removing systemic barriers through engagement, advocacy, and public policy, while being inclusive of our diverse populations.

Our Purpose

The commission shall address issues relevant to the problems and needs of women, such as domestic violence, childcare, child support, sexual discrimination, sexual harassment, equal compensation and job pathways opportunities in employment, and the specific needs of women of color.

Chapter 43.119 RCW

Who We Are

Executive Director & Staff



Maria Sigüenza

Acting Director

Our Commission has proven to be a stalwart leader on issues that affect women. In the last two years, we were instrumental in the development of policy to ban pay discrimination against all protected classes and provide a safe and supportive work environment for women, by way of providing sanitary conditions for workers. Our data-driven areas of focus sparked the Activate 3.8 campaign, aimed at raising awareness on the economic effects of the gender wage gaps experienced by half of our state's population, 3.8 million women. Looking forward, we will advocate for policy reforms that narrow the wage gap and expand opportunity throughout the full career cycle of women. With vision and grit we take action to ensure Washington women thrive!

Staff



Erin Beck
Program Coordinator



Eliza Craig
Communications &
Outreach Coordinator



Sam Grono
Economic Initiatives
Manager



Leah White
Deputy Director



Tanzania Zenzali-Marshall
Interagency
Coordination Manager

Who We Are

Commissioners & Legislative Advisors



Vicki Lowe

Chair
Sequim
Tribal Health



Quinn Dalan

Past Chair
Yakima
Legal Aid

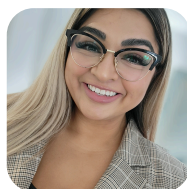
The Washington State Women's Commission continues to make incredible impacts on the lives of women and girls who call Washington State home. Through our committees - health, safety and economic opportunity, and security - we are elevating the voices of community members by engaging stakeholders, supporting legislation that addresses priorities of each committee, and creating impactful programs such as our Activate 3.8: Pay Equity Tour.

We remain committed to ensuring every woman and girl in Washington state has freedom to make decisions impacting their reproductive health as it is the intersection of health, safety and economic stability. When women thrive, Washington thrives, and we continue to work towards a future where every woman in Washington state is thriving.

Commissioners



Chris Kobdich
VICE CHAIR
Bellingham
Health Equity



Andrea Carrillo
SECRETARY
Moses Lake
Early Education Policy



Riddhi Mukhopadhyay
Tacoma
Gender-based violence
& Legal Aid



Anna Franklin
Spokane
Healthcare
Administration



Malia Razzaia
Kent
Economic Equity



Yolanda King-Lowe
Auburn
Labor Relations



Allison Ford
Seattle
Public Policy

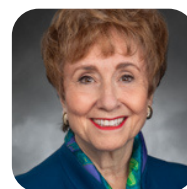
Legislative Advisors



Representative
Jamila Taylor (D)
District 30



Representative
Mary Dye (R)
District 9



Senator Lisa
Wellman (D)
District 41



Senator
Ann Rivers (R)
District 18

Economic Focus

Economic stability can lead to better health and safety outcomes for women.

The Problem

2nd

In 2022, Washington State had the **second largest gender wage gap** in the nation.¹

Washington women lost an average of

\$18,400 =



1.2 years of childcare

to the gender wage gap.²

11th

Washington ranks as the **11th** least affordable state for **childcare**.

In 2022, center-based childcare for toddlers cost an average of

\$14,400

or 39% of the median income for single mothers in WA.³

39%

Pay gaps are worse for women of color, who face additional barriers including historic oppression, persisting inequitable systems, and discrimination.

\$1.00 White, Non-Hispanic Men⁴

78¢ Asian Women⁵

65¢ White, Non-Hispanic Women

56¢ Black Women⁶

56¢ Native Hawaiian,⁷ Pacific Islander Women

51¢ American Indian,⁸ Alaska Native Women

45¢ Latina Women⁹

WA Women of color with income in 2022 earned as little as **45 cents** for every **dollar** made by a **white, non-Hispanic man**.

What is the gender wage gap?

The gender wage gap (GWG) is a measure of the difference in earnings between men and women, and the significant gap in those numbers that persists today. No matter how the data is calculated, women consistently earn less than men, both across and within career fields.

Complex Causes of Pay Inequity

The gender wage gap is a problem for all women, at every wage level. That means there is not just one cause of the gap, there are many.

Persisting social norms and practices signal which career paths women do or do not belong in.

In our survey of 41 middle and high school girls, 80% said they were aware that there are far fewer women than men working in manufacturing and construction jobs.

This suggests young women absorb messages early on in their education that can limit their view of viable career options.¹⁰



Women-dominated work is devalued.

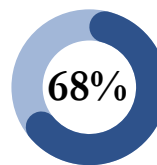
Job Title	% women in US workforce ¹¹	Annual mean wage in WA ¹²
Childcare workers	94%	\$41k
Home health & personal care aides	80%	\$42k
Aerospace Engineers	14%	\$150k
Computer Programmers	20%	\$158k

Devaluation is reflected in lower pay, fewer benefits, and limited social recognition compared to male-dominated fields.

In 2024, WSWC surveyed over 120 individuals about their experience with some of the driving factors of the GWG.

The results were consistent with national trends.¹³

Inequitable systems create an opportunity gap for historically marginalized communities, including women and especially women of color.

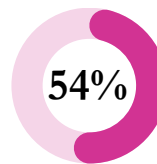


68% of respondents said they were unaware of or lacked access to training opportunities to prepare them for well-paying jobs with good benefits.



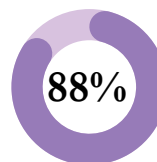
90% of respondents said they have been paid less than a male counterpart.

Family caregiving responsibilities largely fall on women's shoulders despite significant gains in labor participation.



54% of respondents said caregiving responsibilities have limited their opportunities for career advancement.

Workplace harassment and discrimination prevents women from entering and/or staying in certain fields.



88% of respondents said they they have faced discrimination and harassment in the workplace.

Our Approach

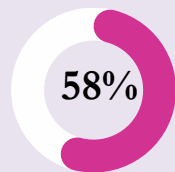
Increasing Representation in Leadership

Women on Corporate Boards Act

Research



In 2019, WSWC Economic Security & Opportunity Committee researched the gender-diversity of WA public companies' boards. This research became the catalyst for legislative action.



Out of the 64 companies analyzed, 37 reported that at least 25% of their board members identified as women.¹⁴*

Legislative Action

The 2019-2020 Legislature passed HB 6037, the "Women on Corporate Boards Act."

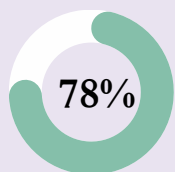


Law takes effect

Publicly traded companies headquartered in WA must have a gender-diverse board, meaning at least 25% of their board members identify as women.

Progress Report

In spring 2024, WSWC found a **20% increase** in the number of companies with gender-diverse boards.



Out of the 64 companies analyzed, 50 reported that at least 25% of their board members identified as women.*

Investing in the Next Generation

Pay Equity Messaging Tour

The Pay Equity Messaging Tour takes WSWC across the state to host events that inspire school-age girls by increasing visibility and accessibility to careers where women are underrepresented.

The program kicked off in 2024 with a launch in Seattle and tour stops in Spokane and Vancouver.

Vancouver Stop: Blueprints for Success

Careers in Manufacturing and Building connected 6th-12th grade girls from across southwest WA with inspiring women excelling in local industries.

After just one event:



Legislative Spotlight

2023



House Bill 1564 bans the sale of at-home sexual assault kits in WA, which further harm survivors seeking justice and exacerbate their trauma by impeding timely medical care and producing evidence often inadmissible in court.

Commissioners Riddhi Mukhopadhyay and Quinn Dalan testified in support of the bill. After its passage, the company filed a lawsuit against the state, and Commissioner Dalan assisted the Attorney General's office in having it dismissed.

2024



House Bill 2115 allows the use of a clinic's name instead of a prescriber's name on the label of medications used for abortion. This change is meant to help protect reproductive health providers from harassment and intimidation. Commission Chair Vicki Lowe testified in support of the bill.



Women's Commission staff consulted on language for the following bills.

Substitute House Bill 1905 expands the Equal Pay & Opportunities Act (EPOA) to ban pay discrimination against all protected classes, not just gender and sex, addressing the compounded injustices faced by individuals with multiple marginalized identities.

House Bill 2266 requires workplaces to provide sanitary conditions for workers managing menstrual and pumping needs. With Washington having the highest percentage of women construction workers in the U.S., this law helps ensure a safe and supportive work environment.

2025 Policy Agenda



Ensuring Safety for All Women

- Addressing gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and stalking.
- Establishing safe community initiatives, including safe use of technology & preventing gun violence.
- Addressing the epidemic of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.



Securing Critical Access to Women's Healthcare

- Addressing maternal health outcomes.
- Protecting access to reproductive autonomy and care.
- Establishing equitable behavioral and mental health services.



Promoting Economic Security & Economic Opportunity for All Women

- Strengthening preventative policies and practices for gender-based workplace harassment and discrimination.
- Building supportive and accessible systems for family care and education.
- Ensuring equitable employment opportunity, career advancement, and compensation.



When women thrive, Washington thrives.



Future Outlook

Activate 3.8

In 2024, the WSWC launched Activate 3.8, a statewide campaign to holistically address the layered causes of the gender wage gap. This initiative has become a cornerstone of our work, with future efforts focusing on four key pillars: Investing in the Next Generation, Expanding Workforce Development and Leadership Opportunities, Increasing Access to Wraparound Services, and Securing Comprehensive Retirement Access.

Pay Equity Model Policy for Washington State

Support for Governor's Proposed Funding for Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)

Resource Clearinghouse

This one-stop resource hub will be designed to meet the diverse needs of Washington's women and girls by increasing awareness of and access to programs and services from state, federal, and local agencies.

The clearinghouse is driven by the mission to provide comprehensive support, resources, and advocacy for every woman and girl in the state.

Constitutional Amendment Protecting the Right to Abortion and Reproductive Health Services

