

Report: Persistent wage gap contributing to poverty among women

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In 2004, the last time the Institute for Women's Policy Research released state-by-state wage gap data, Colorado's women earned a median salary of \$32,200, or 78.7 percent of their male counterparts.

More than a decade later, women are earning 80 cents for every dollar a man makes for the same work.

The "persistent" wage gap highlighted in the latest [Status of Women in the States](#) report is costing Colorado's economy more than \$9 billion a year and contributing to higher rates of poverty among working women, [Women's Foundation of Colorado](#) officials say.

In a briefing paper released Tuesday morning, the Denver-based nonprofit organization said that if progress toward pay equity continues at its current pace, Colorado's wage gap would not close until 2057.

"That is far too long to wait," said Louise Myrland, the foundation's vice president of community initiatives and investments.

The foundation estimates that without the wage gap, the state economy would grow by \$9.2 billion and the poverty rate of working women would be cut in half. More than 45,000 households headed by single mothers live below the federal poverty line of \$24,008.

Colorado is one of the better-performing states nationally in women's economic status: the state ranks 12th in an index that measures annual pay, earnings ratio to men, labor-force participation and women in management positions.

Still, the recent data were disappointing: annual earnings have fallen by \$1,390 between 1999 and 2013, fewer women are participating in the labor force and the wage gap among women of color is even more drastic, the foundation said. Hispanic and Native American women earn 53.8 cents and 55.7 cents for every dollar a white male earns, according to the report.

As it has with past reports, including [2013's "The Status of Women and Girls in Colorado,"](#) the foundation plans to share the data with organizations and policymakers in the hopes of advancing a slate of recommended actions including:

- Providing financial support for education;
- Increasing opportunities for women in higher-paying technical fields
- Monitoring public contracts to ensure that they are general neutral and equitable in pay
- Encouraging municipalities to adopt Self-Sufficiency Standards for wages

The briefing's findings also will be utilized by the foundation's newly formed [Science, Technology, Engineering and Math Initiative](#), Myrland said. The coalition, which includes businesses such as [MWH Global](#) and [CH2M](#), provides financial resources, education and support to increase the number of women in STEM fields.

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