



2013

# Gender Wage Gap Listening Session Report

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**DEMOGRAPHIC:** NH Legislators

**LOCATION:** Sheehan Phinney Capitol Group, Concord, NH

**HOSTED BY:** Representative Alida Milham  
Representative Marjorie Smith

**FACILITATED BY:** Mary Johanna Brown

**NOTETAKING BY:** Laura Thibault

**DATE:** October 24, 2013

## Introduction and Goal

The New Hampshire Women's Initiative (NHWI) is a new non-profit organization dedicated to continuing the legacy of success of our merging partners: the Commission on the Status of Women, the Women's Lobby and Alliance, and the Women's Policy Institute. The NHWI mission is to advance social, economic, and political opportunity and equality for women in New Hampshire.

The NHWI has a unique governance structure. Its board is supported by both a Founding Mothers' Panel, comprised of the founders of the merging partners, and a Gender Ambassadors Panel, a group of young women leaders who are interested in better understanding and re-framing the dialogue around gender equality issues in New Hampshire. This multi-generational sphere of influence will help the NHWI leverage the rich history and accomplishments surrounding women's issues in New Hampshire while crafting a new path forward for gender equality born out of contemporary thinking and needs.

The outcomes from the first round of listening sessions completed early in 2012 by NHWI helped set three strategic goals for the organization. The first of these goals to be evaluated is equal pay in New Hampshire. These rounds of listening sessions were focused on this topic with a goal of establishing outcomes that can help New Hampshire address the equal pay issue. This session will be documented by the note-taker, and the collective sessions will also help shape a policy paper to be released in the Spring of 2014.

## About the Host, Facilitator, and Note-taker:

*HOST(S): Representative Alida Millham, Representative Marjorie Smith*

*FACILITATOR: Mary Johanna Brown*

*NOTE-TAKER: Laura Thibault*

## Background Information

The location for the listening session is: Sheehan, Phinney Capitol Group

The date for the listening session was October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2013

## Methods

Using focus groups to gain insight into a community is a common approach to qualitative research. Qualitative research is a systematic approach to understanding human thoughts, behaviors, and motivations through thoughtful survey design, observation, and inquiry.

The NHWI Listening Sessions are designed like focus groups; a facilitator and note-taker work together to gain insight into participant's thoughts and feelings about contemporary gender equality issues facing young women and men in NH.

Prior to the Listening Session, the Facilitator(s) and the Note-taker(s) (NHWI Host[s]) should touch base to review this packet and their plans for the Session. The Facilitator(s) and Note-taker(s) should arrive at least fifteen minutes early to the venue to familiarize themselves with the venue and any equipment, and to complete the room set-up before the participants arrive.

## Listening Session Format

The listening session followed a traditional focus group format, which included a two to three minute allotment per question, per person. Each session was designed to last two hours that included introductions, participant feedback, a participant exercise and concluding remarks.

The Listening Session was conducted using an agenda and script provided in the facilitation packet (Appendix A: Listening Session Script). The session began promptly at 12:15 with introductions of the facilitator(s), note-taker(s) and the participants. The participants introduced themselves by first name, occupation, age, and town of residence.

## Participant Background

There were three participants. One was 78 and the other two did not disclose their ages.

These participants were current and former state representatives.

Participants were from Central New Hampshire.

## Fall 2013 NHWI Gender Wage Gap Listening Sessions Agenda

**Agenda is based on a 2 hour meeting time**

- 1) Welcome and introductions (approx. 15 min)
  - Overview of process
  - Sign release form
  - Feedback will be anonymous & published
- 2) Establish ground rules as group (approx. 5 min)
  - Confidentiality
  - There are no right or wrong responses
  - Honesty
  - Equal sharing from participants
  - Add group suggestions
- 3) **Question 1: How do you define the gender wage gap?** (approx. 15 min)
  - Are you aware of it?
  - Do you believe it exists?
  - What language do you use to describe it?
  - Do you believe the majority of your friends or associates are familiar with it?
  - Why or why not?
- 4) Sharing of statistics: **Review June issue of NHWI Gender Matters** (approx. 10 min)
  - Focus on 77 cent NH wage gap number
  - Wage gap for the same job and same qualifications
  - Compare wage gap to median earnings gap
- 5) **Question 2: What are your reactions or impressions after reviewing the gender wage gap data?** (approx. 15 min)
  - Did any of these statistics surprise you?
  - Is there other data that you wish was available?
- 6) **Question 3: Have you observed or experienced unequal pay?** (approx. 15 min)
  - Any examples of inequality?
  - Any examples of equality?
- 7) **Question 4: What steps can New Hampshire take to close the gender wage gap?** (approx. 20 min)
  - (Post it note exercise, collect and then rank best ideas)
  - Through education?
  - Through public policy?
  - Through business practices?

*Facilitator should give everyone three square yellow Post-it notes, one tiny red dot sticker, and one black Sharpie marker. Each person should write his or her top three solutions on the Post-Its in Sharpie and then stick the Post-Its on a wall, easel – one Post-It per solution. After everyone has placed his or her Post-Its, each person should place his or her red dot sticker on his or her top solution (which doesn't have to be one of his or her own ideas). Allow up to twenty minutes for this process, and encourage discussion.*
- 8) Additional thoughts (approx. 15 min)

9) Close & Thank you (approx. 5 mins)

### Summary of Notes:

The Summary of Findings is organized by each question asked at the listening session.

#### QUESTION #1: How do you define the gender wage gap?

Comment	Note-Taker Observation
<p>The idea of a gender wage gap is not a hard idea to wrap your head around. Many of us have known for years: Typically women, over the course of their working lives, tend to make less money than men, but that doesn't justify the reasons for it. Yes, I am aware of it; yes, I believe it exists. Over a typical woman's lifetime compared to a typical man, a woman is going to make less. I believe my friends are aware of it because we've been exposed to the notion of a gender wage gap really all of my working life, 40 years at least. I think there probably are a bunch of people out there who would want to discuss the reasons for it and the solutions for it.</p>	
<p>I am aware that there are groups of people, including your organization, who believe it exists. I'm aware the government has published studies and discussed it. It's true that if you look at women as a group they make less, but I'm not sure they are discriminated against. That would be sex discrimination and I don't think that's what we are talking about. Culturally, women have been forced to work in certain jobs, and typically the wages are less in those jobs. Absent these cultural issues, the wages would not have been less. Even today, certain occupations still are filled primarily by women. Most folks are aware of what I just said, but I don't think folks think there is sex discrimination in wages and where there is, it's been rooted out and punished.</p>	
<p>I think the roots are deeper as a culture than we understand. My first experience was when I was on a school board and we built a new high school and most of the teachers were women, but when we hired men at the high school level, they were eligible for food stamps based on their salary. We were forced to make changes, but the cultural situation is still there - in the places where women are dominated. I have a daughter who is an attorney in another state and she really feels there is some gender discrimination in her field.</p>	

<p>My uncle was a successful author and had books published by a major company. I don't remember the exact context but in one of his books he talks about the capacity to earn more money as a male prerogative. This was in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. It wasn't the topic of the book, but he included it and the publisher let it go; people seemed to believe and accept that it was an okay thing to say in a piece of non-fiction.</p>	
<p>A deeper cultural part of it is expectations for woman. People respond differently to an aggressive male than to an aggressive female.</p>	
<p>We have to distinguish between gender wage gap and sex discrimination. It should be discussed in a separate context.</p>	
<p>I think the pro-women groups do harm to themselves when they come up with these statistics about women earning less. Therefore, the statistics are meaningless. For example, if women are more caring than men about human services, and tend to occupy those jobs more than men, most people do not consider this a wage gap. You know what you are going into when you go into the occupation.</p>	
<p>Within an industry, let's assume that our educational system becomes more rational and let's assume teachers are paid not on years of experience but on skill/background. You would find probably that female teachers are making less than male teachers who are in chemistry, math. That would be equally laughable to say that is a gender wage gap. We need to have a common definition that is understood and more importantly accepted. Otherwise, you are talking about blue and I am talking about red.</p>	
<p>Are you saying the value of the chemistry and math teacher exceeds the value of the writing teacher?</p>	
<p>No, I'm saying the value of the skill for example in the private sector is going to be making more. Under today's system they both make the same. Under the system I'm suggesting, most of the teachers who are in science and math are male. If a preponderance of one sex chooses one profession then that's a choice and should not be considered a wage gap.</p>	
<p>I would take issue with the idea that a chemistry or science teacher is inherently able to make more in the private sector. The point is there might be fewer science or math teachers and reduce it to supply and demand and maybe pay more. I guess I'd have to have it proved to me that there are more science teachers that are men, and if that's true, then why?</p>	

<p>We can blame society where in the 1800s there were certain occupations for women, there became a preponderance of females in caring professions.</p>	
<p>I could accept that if we were talking about conditions up through mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, but I think that's changing.</p>	
<p>I would need to have it proved to me that today the numbers are skewed somehow.</p>	
<p>I don't think the gender gap argument should be used when in fact the sexes might have made different career choices.</p>	

**QUESTION #2: What are your first reactions or impressions after reviewing the gender wage gap data?**

Comment	Note-Taker Observation
<p>I would toss this as soon as I got it because these are non-comparables. If it's all female surgeons and male surgeons, I should hope that the male surgeons are making more because they've been there longer. My point is that if you compare the entire profession, there are going to be inconsistencies. You aren't getting to the real issue of gender wage gap.</p>	
<p>The only data that would be interesting would be sex discrimination. I don't believe there is a gender wage gap. If you showed me that males and females at a particular stage in their career, at comparable skills, that would to me be a gender wage gap. That's sex discrimination. I expect more females are going to want more flex time.</p>	
<p>A meaningful comparison would have to be like to like. A female surgeon with 25 years experience compared with a male surgeon with 25 years experience. But the elephant in the room, is that a woman is more likely to have taken a break in her career to have children or something non-surgical, and how do you factor that in? We know there is a tremendous value to raising children in a family; typically it's fallen to women. I have three daughters, each married with two children. So, there's a cultural –or you can ask yourself if it's biological? So you've got to factor that in, maybe you'd have to compare a 25-year-male surgeon with a 35-year-old female surgeon.</p>	
<p>Why don't you give up on this Gender Wage gap and focus on what really matters? Why don't you educate people? College educated – have no competence. No graduate school.</p>	
<p>I hesitate to say this, but even women getting married. I have a friend who is in her sixties, whose husband died. She's making \$10 an hour, living off social security. She's dog food; she's going to be eating dog food the rest of her life. It's hellacious. The whole personal finance thing. We are so ignorant as a nation. People say, "I want to help people." Well, are you going to be able to put food on the table? Sorry for the passion.</p>	
<p>Get off the gender wage gap and show a chart with starting salaries, ten years out, if you take time off. This guy who dropped out of college and works at McDonalds, lifetime earnings...</p>	



<p>There are some occupations where a person’s individual qualities might hold them back. You might be a surgeon with a horrible bedside manner and nobody likes you. If you pick nursing occupation, you would do better to compare male nurses with ten years experience, with women nurses with ten years experience. In this example, the individual qualities aren’t going to affect wage as much.</p>	
<p>If you are a nurse, you have to move up in a leadership position to make more money.</p>	
<p>I don’t know why people are born differently or raised differently. You mentioned men are more aggressive and ask for better salaries. That is very important – the impact of personality. How much you want to do with educating people in this area? It’s tough to make a pussycat into a lion or vice versa.</p>	
<p>It would be fair to say that men and women have some different approaches to negotiating. It doesn’t smack me in the face that they do, but I’d have to say that you do have to prove it to me that women accept less because they don’t ask for more. But if you offer a woman something she’s not satisfied with, she might not push back; she might just take a walk away from the job, whereas the man might push back immediately.</p>	

**QUESTION #3: Have you observed or experienced unequal pay?**

Comment	Note-Taker Observation
<p>I've worked with women who were in the same position as me, but was taught not to discuss salary. It was a fireable offense. But I do have some experience as a town selectman for years, and we've hired plenty of women and plenty of men but hardly ever for the same positions. I can't say at the end of the day that there was unequal pay even though I supervised plenty of these hiring. I'm going to plead ignorance on that.</p>	
<p>The answer to number three is No.</p>	
<p>The example of the teachers is they had to raise all the salaries, because they couldn't have teachers on food stamps. The town supervisor was making a good salary, but a woman in a similar position was thought to be making too much money. But they won't do anything about it. They are saying the woman is making too much; they would like her salary reduced.</p>	
<p>We were successful as part of a budget reduction to reduce someone's salary, but it wasn't a gender issue.</p>	
<p>Isn't the real issue how long you are going to be with the firm?</p>	<p>In response to facilitator relaying situations of interviewer asking questions about marriage, pregnancy</p>
<p>That may be bias, but it's rational.</p>	
<p>How can you not make that assumption?</p>	
<p>I'm sorry that God made you a woman, but you aren't going to be there as much, you aren't going to make the overtime hours because you are going to leave at five, because you are the soccer mom. When it turns out that those kinds of dads become part of the workforce, it's not sex discrimination, it's that you have other interests. If I detect as an HR employer..</p>	

<p>I admit to sexism on that point, I'd give the women a pass</p>	<p>In response to asking should employers look at men and women differently when asking someone to stay late on a project</p>
<p>When a person is able to have a normal life, charity work, if employers had that mindset, we'd be better off. In 1984, during the last constitutional convention this state has had, I ran for it and was elected. As luck would have it I got a very good job offer that I wanted to take, I had to tell the interviewer that I would have a hard time for a couple of months because I had to be in Concord. He was cheerful about doing it and supporting it, but I think a lot of other employers would not have been so understanding. But to educate employers on the value to society to having a contented, efficient, responsible employee, they would cut more slack to employees to having time they need.</p>	
<p>I think these are nice ideas, but for the next 100 years, let's worry about economics. You can't afford to let someone take six weeks off to do charitable work - that applies to whether it's time off to have a child or to do work.</p>	
<p>My husband's law firm has subsidized two lawyers, one to become a state senator and one for.... And everyone in the firm supported it. One was a male and one was a female, and no one in the firm complains about it.</p>	
<p>Gender is one perspective, but not the most important. Balance is important. Different perspectives are important.</p>	
<p>There was a lot of talk when Chief Justice Linda Gelinas was appointed, that it was because she was a woman. It has turned out that she is a wonderful Justice, but this might be an example of discrimination.</p>	
<p>That's affirmative action.</p>	
<p>There is a reason why we should be doing it and there was a reason why Governor Gallen did what he did.</p>	

<p>I'm not concerned as to why you won't dedicate your life to my business, but I know if you are a female of child bearing age that you aren't as committed as you need to be. Or if you are a dad that is wants to stay at home because your wife is a doctor, I know you are not going to be dedicated to my business.</p>	
<p>I would question that being a parent is a liability to a business. You may have a more stable employee with a family than an employee without a family.</p>	
<p>A lot depends on how the company looks at itself. Two different companies: One that says I can't afford the benefits, my duties are to the stockholders; the other company says I have a moral obligation to my employees, the stockholders can lump it. Can business be expected to transcend the bottom line of the stockholder's dividend?</p>	
<p>Some people are short-term oriented and some people are longer-term oriented.</p>	
<p>Why can't this hypothetical woman negotiate?</p>	
<p>It's always helpful to help people negotiate. Whether male or female. But with limited resources and time, how important is educating people about this? Putting out this stuff (gender matters), this is very 1980s; the subject and the content are irrelevant.</p>	
<p>How can I look at some of these issues with an eye to the future?</p>	
<p>We've gone about as far as we can go. Let's move on and work on something else. Let's go and do something. Discrimination isn't happening (in small cases). Women have to understand the consequences of having a sociology degree. You better figure out a sugar mama or a sugar daddy, or you are going to be dog food.</p>	
<p>Figure out a mechanism to figure out commitment to a business. There must be assessments for HR people to get to that. "How can I determine how to get people to stay?"</p>	
<p>There is a whole segment of the population that isn't going anywhere. How do you, at that early level, create an atmosphere for people to have self worth? I watch the Circle Program that mentors young girls, they are having some success but it doesn't always work. There's a whole population that have no idea of where they want to go and they think they can't go anywhere. In the old days, you went into the army. These people will end up with two or three children with two or three different fathers...how do you get them to have some desire to be a productive citizen?</p>	

<p>I think you have to show them there's a future. Beefing up your educational system. That's one way you have a chance. Improving the educational system, perhaps by having a longer day. To have programs with some real content. Demand something from your students.</p>	
<p>If you want to change the educational system, you have to start early, and start with the parents, particularly the mothers. The importance of the role that you need to force the mother to require the children to meet certain standards to earn their love. The standard in the family is to earn, then you provide honor to the family. If we want to raise a smarter generation, we have to get to poor mothers. We don't have to worry about other mothers; their kids are coming to school and like school.</p>	
<p>I have to agree with you on the role of the mother, but it's not very useful to not know how.</p>	
<p>It's the granny core, older women who would volunteer in our state who would visit women in the hospitals after childbirth, and meet with them weekly. Each granny would have two to three new mothers. And they would help each mother with standards, like reading and talking to your children.</p>	
<p>It costs money to manage the program and that's the problem.</p>	
<p>Maybe that's something we have to do as part of our education requirements.</p>	
<p>A huge benefit to me was having been in the workplace. Every one can and should benefit from being in the workplace, to have a working career. It's better for everyone.</p>	<p>Should all opportunities be open to both genders?</p>
<p>Everyone should have a choice, but if too many females exercise that choice and go into the workforce, it's going to have a very negative effect on the education of children in our society. These are choices that I will support but collectively if women decide to go into workforce, our society will suffer and we are seeing this already. Rarely can a father fulfill that role as successfully. Historically, women are vulnerable at that time; they bond with child more successfully than the father. If the child doesn't get that, it's not right. We can't toss off 10,000 years of history and toss off nurturing.</p>	

<p>You'd have to prove to me that mothers are inherently better than fathers, grandmothers, etc. There is too much human variability. In some societies, mothers are raised as cultural icons, but I'm not sure that would hold up across a broad spectrum.</p>	
<p>The traditional nurturing role of the mother is integral to a child's development.</p>	
<p>I think the world has turned. We expect welfare mothers to work. Both parents have to work. We have to value the fact that children exist and accommodations have to be made. There is a certain expectation that parents have to assume responsibility. If they come home and watch TV, that's not doing the child any favors. There's a cultural shift going on.</p>	
<p>One of the tragedies of Obamacare is all the part-time jobs that will be created from full-time jobs.</p>	
<p>This is not new. We've thought about this for a long time.</p>	

**QUESTION #4: What steps can NH take to close the gender wage gap?**

Comment	Note-Taker Observation
<p>Educating students. Change your organization's name. Get off gender equity. No one cares, it's already there. The fact that you think it's there doesn't matter. You have to get to kids in high school. Forget about whether male or females have higher income.</p>	
<p>Education. We need to talk to business leaders, whether that's CEOs or HR folks and get them to understand the benefits overall of perhaps a more enlightened, liberal personnel policy and differences and people who might have care giving duties and people who don't seem to have those duties. Whether there are flagrant examples, people should know about them.</p>	
<p>I don't think this is irrelevant. I've been struggling with the term "gender wage gap" a little, we need to clarify the language. Where the trends are and where we are going needs to be clarified. I'm appalled with all the people with all the tattoos everywhere. That's where we are, but things are different. So we need to look at what it is and then design whatever initiative we want to do based on that. I'm not sure what that is at this point.</p>	
<p>I'm reminded where we are in the struggle for racial equality. We've done it. There might be some clean up. The only people pushing it are the activists, like Sharpton. That's a very cynical view. You guys should be 21<sup>st</sup> century. OK, you didn't get the ERA but you got everything else. Let's go on and do something. You've won the war, why fight the last battle?</p>	

## Closing remarks from participants:

Comment	Note-Taker Observation

## Post-It Activity:

*(Each \* represents a red dot that was placed on a post-it)*

- \* Expose violations publicly
- How to share information about gender realities productivity
- Educate HR folks on use of assessments for “commitment” to business/jobs (and not use pre-required names)
- \*\*\*\* Work closely with high school guidance staff
- \* Clarify language of gender gap
- Stop focus on gender gap; focus on sex discrimination (if not being done by others in NH)
- \* Change name and focus on 21<sup>st</sup> century issues
- Educate high school (9-12) children on economic consequence of job choices
- Education priorities for adequate life/career skills
- How people make career/education choices
- \*\* Contact one-on-one CEOs
- Support political candidates willing to face the issue



## Examples of Post-It Suggestions:

