

WISDOM OF WOMEN



**GIVE TO
GAIN**

The Wage Gap

How It Hides.
What It Costs.
What We Do Next.

10 marketing & advertising women talk

Transparency.
Maternity.
Race.
Negotiation.

I want to leave something behind when I go.
I want it to be better because I was here.

— Nellie McClung

The theme for International Women's Day 2026 is *Give To Gain*, emphasizing the importance of generosity and collaboration in advancing gender equality.

In that spirit, we give you:

THE WISDOM OF WOMEN

We didn't set out to write a book about the gender wage gap.

Like many women, we believed we were entering a workforce that had already solved it. We worked hard. We raised our hands. We assumed merit would be enough. It wasn't. Nothing dramatic happened. No one announced, "You are being underpaid." The realization came the way it does for most women: slowly, subtly, and a little too late.

The wage gap isn't a mystery and it isn't random. It's a system, reinforced by silence around salary, compounded promotions, biased assumptions, and the myth that effort alone guarantees equity. Most dangerously, it convinces women the problem is personal. This book is about making that system visible.

The women in these pages represent different roles, industries, backgrounds, and career stages. Some sensed inequity early, while others discovered it after years of loyalty. Their stories are different, but the structure beneath them is not.

Many women experience the wage gap in stages, so we intentionally structured this book to reflect that progression. Not as theory, but as lived experience.

Stop the Party was founded on a simple belief: transparency is leverage.

When women trade silence for information, information becomes power. And power, when shared, compounds. If you are early in your career, we hope this shortens your learning curve. Mid-career? We hope it sharpens your strategy. And if you're in leadership, we hope it changes how you build equity for the women who come after you.

To the brilliant women we've had the privilege of working with, in our careers and on this project, thank you for your candour, vulnerability, and generosity. Your honesty is the backbone of this book.

Thank you to our photographer, Nick Nikitaras, whose talent and enthusiasm brought these stories to life. and to Crystal Lee, whose art direction shaped these pages with clarity and care.

The gap doesn't close when one woman negotiates her way out of it. It closes when it stops being a secret.

Erika Maginn & Ashleigh McEwan
Founders, Stop the Party

WISE

WOMEN

Julia Ippolito,
Creative Director



Hilary Borndahl,
Founder & CEO



Sucheta Shankar,
Creative Director



Katie Musgrave,
Client Lead



Katie Rothschild,
VP Client Services





Erika Maginn,
VP Strategy &
Stop the Party
Founder



Kereesa Wright,
Associate Creative Director



Ashleigh McEwan,
VP Accounts &
Stop the Party
Founder

Danielle Baker,
Founder & Principal



Ayushi Sah,
Marketing
Manager



**“Well-behaved
women seldom
make **history.**”**

— Laurel Thatcher Ulrich

THE EQUITY ILLUSION

Gender wage disparity hides in plain sight. In cultures where compensation conversations are taboo, merit is assumed to be rewarded, and women are told the system will work if they simply work hard enough.

“I learned early on that the system – and the world – was not designed to be equal. As a Black woman trying to get into the industry, I simply hoped my talent and reputation would help me navigate.”

— Kereesa





**“Pay disparity was never discussed.
In fact talking about or comparing
salaries was openly discouraged and
considered **taboo.**”**

— Katie

“I bought into the narrative that the gap exists because men demand what they want, so I adopted the ‘male’ playbook.

I thought if I acted like the men in the room, I’d be paid like them. I didn't realize **you can’t out-negotiate a systemic bias.”**

— Julia



**“The truth will
set you free,
but first it will
piss you off.”**

— Gloria Steinem

A BROKEN SYSTEM

The gap isn't always loud or obvious. It's embedded in hiring assumptions, appraisal timing and processes, parental leave penalties, and the quiet compounding of early salary differences.

“I realized the wage gap was real when I started hearing the same themes repeatedly through research, conversations, and industry reporting.

Even in environments where people were performing well, compensation didn't always match performance.

I realized the issue was broader than any one company or person.”

— Danielle





“I thought you had to accept the first offer that was given, and that it was fair. I didn’t realize everything is negotiable.”

— Ashleigh

“I noticed what happened after I returned from maternity leave.

Colleagues, in some cases men who had started around the same time, had overtaken me in title and compensation. It wasn't dramatic or confrontational; it was gradual.”

— Katie



“A champion is defined not by their wins, but by how they can recover when they fall.”

— Serena Williams

AWARENESS COMES AT A COST

The cost of inequity isn't just financial. It shows up in debts unpaid, milestones postponed, retirement delayed, imposter syndrome amplified, and careers that move slower than they should.

“It was difficult not to internalize pay disparity or view it as a personal reflection of my value as a professional.”

— Sucheta





“Because of the wage gap, I delayed paying off my student loans.”

— Ayushi

“What no one prepares you for when you challenge pay inequity is that it’s possible to close the gap for yourself, but you can't drag every other woman across the finish line with you.

You can win, but you might win alone.”

— Julia



**“If they don’t give
you a seat at the
table, bring a
folding chair.”**

— Shirley Chisholm

CHANGING THE GAME

When the rules aren't built for you, learning how they work becomes power.

Negotiation, sponsorship, transparency, and data aren't personality traits. They are tools that can be shared.

“I learned to become more comfortable with having direct conversations about career growth.

Ambition is not something to apologize for.”

— Kereesa





“I began to negotiate like I was a business instead of an employee.

It helped me elevate the conversation from loyalty and fairness to what I contribute to our clients’ success and the company bottom line.”

— Erika

“Standing up to correct wage gaps is a risky and thankless endeavour. For me the best thing to do was start my own company where we would ensure our compensation structure prevents gaps from the start.”

— Hilary



**“Each time a
woman stands up
for herself, without
knowing it
possibly, without
claiming it, **she
stands up for all
women.”****

— Maya Angelou

WORD TO THE WISE

When women share information – about salaries, promotions, mistakes, and momentum – individual wins become collective leverage, and knowledge becomes power.

“The wage gap is not a reflection of your worth - it's a business calculation. It means the company thinks they can get you for a discount. Don't let them.”

— Julia



“Find a place where you are supported and encouraged to be your best self instead of a place where you need to jump through hoops to overcome people’s biases.”

— Ayushi





“Pay inequity is likely to affect you at some point, but awareness changes outcomes. The more informed you are, the better positioned you are to address it.”

— Sucheta



“Learn and practice negotiation skills early. They impact your salary and so much more. It’s a skill that should be encouraged and celebrated in women.”

— Katie

“You are the driver of your career and need to be your own biggest cheerleader. Establish a strong sponsorship circle to advocate on your behalf.”

— Hilary



“One of the most powerful shifts in my life came when I stopped asking, ‘Am I ready?’ and started asking, ‘Am I willing?’ Ready is a moving target. Willing is a decision.”

— Danielle





“Do not let where you started define how far you are allowed to go. Believe in your value and don’t be afraid to outgrow a place that has stopped growing you.”

— Kereesa



“Experience has shown me that asking for clarity and fairness isn’t aggressive; it’s responsible. Today, I advocate for myself with more confidence and less apology.”

— Katie

“Advocate for yourself. Make sure your voice is heard, and come to every remuneration conversation prepared with research and data.”

— Ashleigh



“The wage gap won’t go away without women educating and advocating for themselves and others. There are good companies and good allies out there, but we have to do a lot of the heavy lifting ourselves. The good news is: we’re up for it.”

— Erika



**WISDOM OF
WOMEN**

On average, women in Canada earn 87 cents for every dollar earned by a man, and the gap is even wider for Black, Indigenous, and women of colour. Globally, the gender wage gap is 23%.

Why “Stop the Party”?

Stop the Party (STP) is a Canadian advocacy group raising awareness about pay inequity and pushing for systemic change. Through campaigns, educational resources, practical tools and public engagement, our goal is to help make wage equity not just an idea, but a reality.

Visit stoptheparty.ca to learn more, access resources, and join the movement.

A word after a word after a word is power.

— Margaret Atwood

