

BUSINESS

BLACK WOMEN'S EQUAL PAY DAY

An annual occasion to call for wage reform

Erica Thompson
Columbus Dispatch
USA TODAY NETWORK

The country on Wednesday recognized Black Women's Equal Pay Day, an annual occasion that is not a celebration but a call for reform, according to advocates.

Black women must work nine extra months into the new year to match what white, non-Hispanic men made the previous year, according to Equal Pay Today, a campaign by California-based or-

ganization Equal Rights Advocates.

And they make just 58 cents for every dollar made by white men.

That figure is down from 63 cents in 2021, when Equal Rights Advocates determined Black women had to work an extra eight months to catch up to the salaries of white men. As a result, Black Women's Equal Pay Day fell on Aug. 3 last year.

"I was dismayed," said Keena Smith, founder and CEO of the Women's Center for Economic Opportunity in Columbus. "We know that COVID was having a neg-



Geter



Smith

ative impact on employment for Black women, but to see (wages) down by a nickel, it just made me think of all of the

frontline workers. Those of us who are advocates for women of color, we see this and are wondering what's going on."

A change in Equal Rights Advocates' data-gathering process contributed to the shift in the reported wage gap, and more time may be required to get a clearer picture of any regressions. Still, experts say pay disparities for Black women are stark, and must be addressed with structural changes.

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OSU, Nationwide unveil ag tech hub amid climate change



Ohio State University President Kristina M. Johnson, left, shakes hands with Nationwide's President and Chief Operating Officer of Property and Casualty Mark Berven, right, while Ohio State's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences Dean Cathann Kress watches, following the announcement at the Farm Science Review of a collaboration between Ohio State and Nationwide to form an AgTech Innovation Hub. BROOKE LAVALLEY/COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Patrick Cooley
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USA TODAY NETWORK

Ohio State University announced on Tuesday the start of an agriculture innovation hub intended to protect food production in Ohio as the world grows warmer.

The hub has a number of directives, such as finding practical implications for OSU's research and building connec-

tions between scientists and business owners. Ohio State President Kristina Johnson unveiled the hub at the university's annual Farm Science Review in London.

Officials at Ohio State and Nationwide - which provided \$2 million to start the hub and pledged future funding - repeatedly cited challenges raised by climate change, which scientists say will lead to hotter and dryer growing seasons and more destructive storms.

The hub will promote research to entrepreneurs in the agriculture industry and facilitate connections between scientists.

"It's not going to be an immediate fix all, but we want to invest in the long term to find new ways to make sure that we continue to have a strong and robust food supply," said Mark Berven, president and chief operating officer for Na-

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Chair Jerome Powell said that before Federal Reserve officials would consider halting their rate hikes, they would "want to be very confident that inflation is moving back down" to their 2% inflation target. JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

Fed attacks inflation with another big hike

Rate now highest since 2008; more increases expected

Christopher Rugaber
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON - Intensifying its fight against high inflation, the Federal Reserve raised its key interest rate Wednesday by a substantial three-quarters of a point for a third straight time and signaled more large rate hikes to come - an aggressive pace that will heighten the risk of an eventual recession.

The Fed's move boosted its benchmark short-term rate, which affects many consumer and business loans, to a range of 3% to 3.25%, the highest level since early 2008.

Fed officials also forecast that they will further raise their benchmark rate to roughly 4.4% by year's end, a full percentage point higher than they had forecast as recently as June. And they expect to raise the rate further next year, to about 4.6%. That would be the highest level since 2007.

The central bank's action Wednesday followed a government report last week that showed high costs spreading more broadly through the economy. By raising borrowing rates, the Fed makes it costlier to take out a mortgage or an auto or business loan. Consumers and businesses then presumably borrow and spend less, cooling the economy and slowing inflation.

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Columbus home sales drop, but what about prices?

Jim Weiker
Columbus Dispatch
USA TODAY NETWORK

Columbus-area home sales dropped sharply in August, offering another sign that the region's housing market is cooling.

But the number that buyers and sell-

ers care most about - price - continues its historic climb.

Central Ohio home sales dropped 13% in August compared with last August, continuing the summer's sharp slide. For the year, Columbus-area sales are down more than 5%, despite the region's growing population.

Homes are also sitting longer on the

market, although they are still selling at a lightning pace: Columbus-area homes sold in an average of 15 days in August, up from 11 days a year earlier.

After the housing market boomed during the pandemic, a growing number of buyers are now staying on the

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Ag hub

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tionwide Property and Casualty.

The hub will ensure that farmers are still able to grow enough food and supply chains are able to deliver that food to grocery stores, he said.

The work starts with finding practical applications for existing research, said Scott Shearer, chair of the Department of Food, Agricultural and Biological Engineering at Ohio State.

“When I look at a lot of the research going on in the laboratory, the question is, how soon will it see the light of day?” he said. “This is an opportunity for faculty members (and students) to take things they’ve learned in the laboratory and begin to think about how these discoveries are going to be commercialized.”

The first order of business is connecting researchers at different parts of Ohio State, said Cathann Kress, dean of OSU’s College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.

“How can we bring researchers working at very different parts of the university to come together and think about how they can ensure both viable agricultural production and sustainability?” she said. “We really think that that is where we’ll find the solutions.”

The university’s agricultural extension service, for example, already provides farmers with research on enhancing crop yields and adapting to a changing climate. Kress hopes the innovation hub will make that process more efficient by better promoting that research.

“We’re really good at taking the research and figuring out how to apply it quickly,” she said. “This is going to turn up that volume a little bit. We’re trying to shorten the time between us coming up with ideas and getting it into the hands of producers.”

OSU’s scientists will also connect with researchers in the agriculture industry, Kress said.

“It’s about putting people together who can expedite putting solutions into the hands of people who need it,” she said.

The work will take place at OSU’s existing labs, Kress said.

“We’ve already built a controlled environment ag research complex for 200 research projects,” she said. “That’s going to serve as part of the basis for this ag tech innovation hub.”

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Homes

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sidelines while inflation rises to 40-year highs and interest rates on a 30-year loan move above 6% for the first time since 2008 (more than double where it stood a year ago).

“The rising mortgage rate has clearly hampered the housing market,” said Lawrence Yun, chief economist with the National Association of Realtors.

Buyers hoping the sales slide will lead to a decline in prices, however, continue to be out of luck. The median price of a Columbus-area home that sold in August was \$295,000, more than 7% higher than a year ago. For the first eight months of the year, central Ohio home prices are up more than 11% compared with the same period in 2021.

“A booming local economy continues to boost a healthy housing market,” said Sue Van Woerkom, this year’s president of the Columbus Realtors trade association. “Selling a home is still going to be profitable for sellers right now.”

Nationally, home sales dropped for the seventh month in a row in August, to the slowest annual pace since May 2020, near the start of the pandemic. The national median home price jumped 7.7% in August from a year earlier to \$389,500.

Statewide, sales dropped 6.4% in August compared with a year ago while prices rose 6.9%, according to the Ohio Realtors trade group.

“Rising mortgage rates and the lingering issue of tight inventories of homes being marketed for sale are contributing to a slower level of activity across the Ohio housing marketplace,” said Ohio Realtors President John Mangas. “The continued rise in average price is a strong indication of a still-competitive market and of the strong demand that exists among consumers.”

Information from the Associated Press is included in this report.

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Stocks of local interest

Companies based in central Ohio and other major local employers. Preliminary closing figures for Wednesday, September 21, 2022

Name	Tkr	Last	Chg	%Chg	Name	Tkr	Last	Chg	%Chg	Name	Tkr	Last	Chg	%Chg
AT&T	T	16.25	-0.31	-1.9	Citigroup	C	46.33	-0.92	-1.9	Intel	INTC	28.47	-0.49	-1.7
Abbott Labs	ABT	100.65	-1.66	-1.6	Comm Vehicle Grp	CVGI	5.37	-0.06	-1.1	IBM	IBM	124.93	-1.37	-1.1
Abercrombie	ANF	15.59	-0.34	-2.1	Core Molding	CMT	11.06	+0.11	+1.0	JPMorgan Chase	JPM	112.49	-3.34	-2.9
Accenture PLC	ACN	265.42	-4.82	-1.8	Designer Brands	DBI	15.85	-0.23	-1.4	KeyCorp	KEY	17.13	-0.48	-2.7
Adv Drainage Sys	WMS	131.00	-1.61	-1.2	Diamond Hill	DHIL	167.30	-1.82	-1.1	Kroger	KR	45.27	-1.65	-3.5
Amazon	AMZN	118.54	-3.65	-3.0	Discover Fin Svcs	DFS	97.87	-2.42	-2.4	Lancaster Colony	LANC	165.84	-0.40	-0.2
AEP	AEP	98.57	-1.19	-1.2	Emerson Electric	EMR	76.52	-1.50	-1.9	M/I Homes	MHO	38.99	-0.54	-1.4
Anheuser-Busch	BUD	48.14	-1.05	-2.1	Express	EXPR	1.17	-0.02	-1.7	Macy's	M	16.45	-1.0	-6.0
Apple Inc s	AAPL	153.72	-3.18	-2.0	Fifth Third Bank	FITB	34.26	-0.88	-2.5	Marathon Petro	MPC	94.67	-2.53	-2.6
Ashland Global	ASH	97.35	-1.04	-1.1	Fiserv	FISV	99.59	-2.58	-2.5	McDonald's	MCD	251.08	-4.32	-1.7
Bath&Body Works	BBWI	37.01	-0.54	-1.4	GE	GE	65.22	-1.37	-2.1	Mettler-Toledo	MTD	1160.06	-7.49	-0.6
Big Lots	BIG	18.52	-0.15	-0.8	GEF	GEF	63.82	-0.29	-0.5	Microsoft	MSFT	238.95	-3.50	-1.4
Bread Financial	BFH	34.91	-1.19	-3.3	Honda	HMC	23.80	-0.59	-2.4	NiSource	NI	28.41	-0.45	-1.6
Cardinal Health	CAH	67.52	-0.27	-0.4	Huntington Banc	HBAN	13.72	-0.18	-1.3	Nokia	NOK	4.50	-0.09	-2.0
Charter Comm	CHTR	353.03	-9.91	-2.7	Installed Building	IBP	83.89	-0.14	-0.2	Owens Corning	OC	79.24	-1.52	-1.9
PNC Financial	PNC	158.45	-5.38	-3.3										
Park National	PRK	131.91	-1.22	-0.9										
Post Holdings	POST	86.28	+0.71	+0.8										
Rocky Brands	RCKY	22.49	-1.62	-6.7										
Scotts Miracle-Gro	SMG	51.11	-1.81	-3.4										
Target	TGT	159.03	-1.00	-0.6										
Tesla s	TSLA	300.80	-7.93	-2.6										
UPS	UPS	173.83	-1.85	-1.1										
Upstart Hldg	UPST	22.87	-0.16	-0.7										
Verizon	VZ	39.48	-1.11	-2.7										
Vertiv Holdings	VRT	11.75	-0.45	-3.7										
Victoria's Secret	VSCO	30.72	-0.63	-2.0										
Walmart	WMT	134.77	+1.22	+0.9										
Wendy's	WEN	19.52	-0.41	-2.1										
Worthington Ind	WOR	50.38	-1.14	-2.2										

52-Week			Last	Net Chg	%Chg	12-Mo %Chg
High	Low	Index				
36,952.65	29,653.29	Dow Industrials	30,183.78	-522.45	-1.70	-11.89
18,246.51	12,656.67	Dow Transportation	12,650.23	-128.49	-1.01	-9.65
1,077.08	867.90	Dow Utilities	995.14	-13.37	-1.33	+10.81
17,439.51	13,988.86	NYSE Composite	14,236.61	-238.11	-1.64	-12.94
16,212.23	10,565.13	Nasdaq Composite	11,220.19	-204.86	-1.79	-24.68
7,699.89	5,061.55	Nasdaq Global Sel	5,381.60	-98.83	-1.80	-23.68
2,227.86	1,657.86	S&P 100	1,721.39	-30.90	-1.76	-14.70
4,818.62	3,636.87	S&P 500	3,789.93	-66.00	-1.71	-13.78
2,925.93	2,187.41	S&P MidCap	2,337.85	-31.80	-1.34	-12.29
49,089.39	36,094.50	Wilshire 5000	37,915.00	-643.48	-1.67	-17.16

Rates	Last	1 Wk Ago
Prime Rate	5.50	5.50
Discount Rate	3.00	3.00
Federal Funds Rate	2.25-2.50	2.25-2.50
Treasuries		
3-month	3.33	3.04
6-month	3.90	3.55
5-year	3.75	3.48
10-year	3.56	3.59
30-year	3.57	3.33

Commodities	Exch	Exp	Settle	Chg
Gold (\$/oz)	COMX	Sep	1664.60	+4.90
Silver (cents/oz)	COMX	Sep	19.41	+0.309
Platinum (\$/oz)	NYMX	Oct	916.00	-0.80
Copper (\$/lb)	COMX	Sep	3.5120	-0.360
Crude oil (\$/bbl)	NYMX	Nov	82.94	-1.00
Natural gas (\$/mm btu)	NYMX	Oct	7.779	+0.062
Cattle (cents/lb)	CME	Oct	145.87	-0.43
Corn (cents/bu)	CBOT	Dec	685.50	-6.50
Soybeans (cents/bu)	CBOT	Nov	1461.25	-17.50
Wheat (cents/bu)	CBOT	Dec	903.75	+10

Fed

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Speaking at a news conference, Chair Jerome Powell said that before Fed officials would consider halting their rate hikes, they would “want to be very confident that inflation is moving back down” to their 2% inflation target. He noted that the strength of the job market is fueling wage gains that are helping drive up inflation.

Fed officials have said they are seeking a “soft landing,” by which they would manage to slow growth enough to tame inflation but not so much as to trigger a recession. Yet most economists say they think the Fed’s steep rate hikes will lead, over time, to job cuts, rising unemployment and a full-blown recession late this year or early next year.

“No one knows whether this process will lead to a recession, or if so, how significant that recession would be,” Powell said at his news conference. “That’s going to depend on how quickly we bring down inflation.”

In their updated economic forecasts, the Fed’s policymakers project that economic growth will remain weak for the next few years, with rising unemployment. It expects the jobless rate to reach 4.4% by the end of 2023, up from its current level of 3.7%. Historically, economists say, any time the unemployment rate has risen by a half-point over several months, a recession has always followed.

Fed officials now see the economy expanding just 0.2% this year, sharply lower than its forecast of 1.7% growth just three months ago. And it expects sluggish growth below 2% from 2023 through 2025.

And even with the steep rate hikes the Fed foresees, it still expects core inflation – which excludes the volatile

food and gas categories – to be 3.1% at the end of next year, well above its 2% target.

Powell acknowledged in a speech last month that the Fed’s moves will “bring some pain” to households and businesses. And he added that the central bank’s commitment to bringing inflation back down to its 2% target was “unconditional.”

Falling gas prices have slightly lowered headline inflation, which was a still-painful 8.3% in August compared with a year earlier. Declining gas prices might have contributed to a recent rise in President Joe Biden’s public approval ratings, which Democrats hope will boost their prospects in the November midterm elections.

Short-term rates at a level the Fed is now envisioning would make a recession likelier next year by sharply raising the costs of mortgages, car loans and business loans. The economy hasn’t seen rates as high as the Fed is projecting since before the 2008 financial crisis. Last week, the average fixed mortgage rate topped 6%, its highest point in 14 years. Credit card borrowing costs have reached their highest level since 1996, according to Bankrate.com.

Inflation now appears increasingly fueled by higher wages and by consumers’ steady desire to spend and less by the supply shortages that had bedeviled the economy during the pandemic recession. On Sunday, though, Biden said on CBS’ “60 Minutes” that he believed a soft landing for the economy was still possible, suggesting that his administration’s recent energy and health care legislation would lower prices for pharmaceuticals and health care.

Some economists are beginning to express concern that the Fed’s rapid rate hikes – the fastest since the early 1980s – will cause more economic damage than necessary to tame inflation. Mike Konczal, an economist at the Roo-

Wages

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How has the data-gathering process changed?

Equal Rights Advocates calculated the 2022 Equal Pay Days based on 2020 data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

In previous years, only wages for full-time, year-round workers were incorporated into the calculations. This year, the organization determined Equal Pay Days for Black and other non-white women by including data on median annual earnings for full-time, part-time, seasonal and gig work for all professions and levels of seniority. Their earnings were compared to the wages of white, non-Hispanic men.

Women often need part-time jobs because of caregiving responsibilities, said Jessica Ramey Stender, policy director at Equal Rights Advocates. The organization also wanted to consider seasonal migrant workers.

“Using that data better conveys the broader picture of how dire the pay situation is, especially for women of color,” Ramey Stender continued. “Because of that, the gaps were larger, and that made the Equal Pay Days fall later in the year.”

Therefore, 2022 Equal Pay Days should not necessarily be compared to 2021 dates.

“Because we’re now using this all-worker methodology, I think it will be important to look at the difference from this year into next year to gauge the effect on wages year to year,” Ramey Stender said.

Black women remain at a disadvantage

The complexities in the data do not change the reality of major gaps in earnings for women of color, whose employment was disproportionately impacted

by the pandemic.

To put this into perspective, Equal Pay Day for all women fell on March 15 this year – the earliest it has ever been. It was calculated solely based on data for full-time, year-round workers. It was reported that all women made 83 cents for every dollar made by white men – up from 82 cents the previous year.

But women’s median earnings only appeared to increase because lower-income women were not included the count, according to Ramey Stender. Many of them were forced out of work amid the pandemic.

And research shows that women of color are the most affected by occupational segregation. Black and Latina women are more likely to work in the lowest-paid occupations, according to the Institute for Women’s Policy Research. But even within those jobs, Black and Latina women make less than men and white women.

Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics suggests that weekly median wages are increasing for white men, white women and Black women. But Black women still make significantly less than others.

For the second quarter of 2022, Black women’s weekly median full-time wages were \$840, compared to \$956 for white women, and \$1,161 for white men.

Regarding median annual earnings for full-time, year-round workers in the state of Ohio, Black women earned \$34,531, while white women earned \$42,000, and white men earned \$53,955, according to the Institute for Women’s Policy Research.

“What we find for African American women is a higher rate of feeling undervalued in the workplace,” Keena Smith said. “If they want to stay in the workplace, then they’re looking for strategies to demonstrate their value and earn higher wages. But then they’re also saying, ‘I’m going to achieve my sense of agency by becoming a small business owner.’”

sevelt Institute, noted that the economy is already slowing and that wage increases – a key driver of inflation – are leveling off and by some measures even declining a bit.

Surveys also show that Americans are expecting inflation to ease significantly over the next five years. That is an important trend because inflation expectations can become self-fulfilling: If people expect inflation to ease, some will feel less pressure to accelerate their purchases. Less spending would then help moderate price increases.

Konczal said there is a case to be made for the Fed to slow its rate hikes over the next two meetings.

“Given the cooling that’s coming,” he said, “you don’t want to rush into this.”

The Fed’s rapid rate hikes mirror steps that other major central banks are taking, contributing to concerns about a potential global recession. The European Central Bank last week raised its benchmark rate by three-quarters of a percentage point. The Bank of England, the Reserve Bank of Australia and the Bank of Canada have all carried out hefty rate increases in recent weeks.

And in China, the world’s second-largest economy, growth is already suffering from the government’s repeated COVID lockdowns. If recession sweeps through most large economies, that could derail the U.S. economy, too.

Even at the Fed’s accelerated pace of rate hikes, some economists – and some Fed officials – argue that it has yet to raise rates to a level that would actually restrict borrowing and spending and slow growth.

Many economists sound convinced that widespread layoffs will be necessary to slow rising prices. Research published earlier this month under the auspices of the Brookings Institution concluded that unemployment might have to go as high as 7.5% to get inflation back to the Fed’s 2% target.

What are the solutions?

Many experts are calling for a variety of systems-level changes that also account for the racial discrimination Black women face in the workforce on top of inadequate wages.

That is a priority for Angelica Geter, chief strategy officer of the Black Women’s Health Imperative, a nonprofit based in Washington, D.C. and Atlanta, which focuses on health equity for Black women.

Geter leads BWHI’s Fair Work Initiative, a program that seeks to create more equitable workplaces.

“There has to be prioritization from our congressional leaders and current administration to address racism, not only as a public health crisis, but one of the main contributors to poor health outcomes,” she said. “Multiple companies are thinking about the level of accountability when discrimination of any kind happens in the workplace.”

Geter also said companies need to evaluate their hiring, retention and promotion policies.

Certain states have passed legislation that prevents employers from asking about past salary history, and instituting pay secrecy rules.

Experts also are pushing for women to have more access to non-traditional occupations and affordable childcare.

“One really good sweeping type of economic policy reform that would help Black women is increasing worker power at large,” said Kate Bahn, director of labor market policy and chief economist at the Washington Center for Equitable Growth.

“We know that unions have a disproportionate positive impact on Black workers and women workers. And so, painting a path towards unionization would help break down some of these structures that lead to the devaluation of Black women’s work.”

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