



Fringe Benefits and Work-Life Balance Could Help Address Black Women's Wealth Disparities

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Over the next 25 years, US Americans will transfer \$30–\$68 trillion in assets across three generations (Tucker III and Jones 2020). Households that depend on Black women's wealth remain “asset poor” compared with white households. As it now stands, the impending “Great Transfer” is poised to further the racial wealth gap unless employers and employer organizations adopt targeted interventions to mitigate the racial and gendered wealth inequities impacting Black women. Amid the growing research on Black women's wealth disparities, this brief draws attention to the relationship between fringe benefits, work-life balance—the equilibrium between the expectations and demands of one's professional life and personal or family life (Powell 2018)—and wealth accumulation.

Merely increasing Black women's earnings is not enough to amend their economic vulnerabilities. Firstly, wealth is more unequally distributed than income. Households earn much of their income in the labor market via wages and salaries, whereas wealth is generated primarily through inheritance and other intergenerational transfers of resources (Oliver and Shapiro 2013). Secondly, the Black-white racial gap is the outcome of four centuries of systemic gendered racism, the foundational intersecting racist and sexist oppression that permeates all US social institutions. Regardless of socioeconomic status, Black women and Black men experience some form of overlapping oppression in multiple social institutions, such as education, the family, government, health care, and the labor market. Consequentially, the long-standing devaluation of Black women's paid labor truncates their access to quality housing, medical resources, sociopolitical alliances, and wealth. Moreover, in their intersecting

About the Goldman Sachs-Urban Institute One Million Black Women Research Partnership

One Million Black Women: Closing the Wealth Gap is a Goldman Sachs initiative investing \$10 billion in direct capital and \$10 billion in philanthropic support over the next decade to help narrow opportunity gaps facing Black women. Grounded in research, the initiative forges partnerships with Black women-led organizations and other groups to address the disproportionate gender and racial biases that Black women have faced for generations and that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Goldman Sachs and the Urban Institute launched the One Million Black Women Research Partnership in 2022. This learning community will engage with three impact pillars—child care and early education, housing, and workforce and wages—to guide the partnership's collaborative work.

In the partnership's first year, we invited faculty and researchers from historically Black colleges and universities to develop new products addressing the persistent racial gaps in earnings and wealth that Black women experience. Each scholar selected for cohort I considers the impact of structural factors, including racism, classism, and sexism, on Black women's earnings or wealth, examining the intersections of these mutually reinforcing systems of disadvantage.

Further information about the partnership, the chosen scholars, and their research products is available at <https://www.urban.org/projects/one-million-black-women-closing-wealth-gap>.

race and gender status, Black women are expected to extend their limited resources and unpaid labor to their immediate household, extended family, and the broader community. This leaves them with fewer financial and temporal resources than white men, white women, and Black men in the United States.

Reiteratively, research establishes that women's wages are depressed compared to men's wages, resulting in gendered wealth disparities that widen across racial categories. For example, an often-reported finding is that women earn 79 cents for every dollar earned by men. However, these data veil intersecting race and gender disadvantages. If we disaggregate the data, we find that Asian women earn \$1.10 for every dollar earned by white men, whereas white women earn 79 cents, Black women earn 62 cents, and Hispanic women earn a meager 54 cents to the white male dollar (Miller and Vagins 2018). When we consider that Black men earn 87 cents for every dollar earned by white men and that in 2019 the median white family had \$184,000 in wealth compared with \$23,000 for the median Black family, it is not hard to deduct that the Great Wealth Transfer will only marginally include Black households, if at all.

Several economists, race scholars, and activists posit that cash endowments (reparations) *and* the eradication of structural racism are the only terms that will urgently and adequately close the racial wealth gap (Darity Jr. et al. 2018; Oliver and Shapiro 2013).¹ Not surprisingly, the United States is split racially on support for such an initiative, despite non-Hispanic whites' growing acknowledgment that the legacy of slavery has present-day adverse impacts on Black Americans (Horowitz 2019; Horowitz et al. 2020). Furthermore, transformative race and gender structural changes require radical legislation and regulatory enactments. We need only look to the current socio-political, racial, and gender divide on issues of abortion, affirmative action, and police brutality to ascertain that the United States is a long way off from abolishing racism and sexism (Graf 2019; Pew Research Center 2022; Schaeffer and Edwards 2022).

With state and public resistance to atonement and direct cash endowments to Black households, we turn our attention to fringe benefits and work-life balance as remediation. Like wage compensation, fringe benefits in the United States are instrumental to wealth accumulation and yet are unequally distributed across intersecting race, gender, and class statuses. In principle, if Black women increase their discretionary funds—that is, maximize the income that is not earmarked for basic needs and exigent circumstances—they may allocate earnings toward asset accrual. From our survey and interviews of Black women, we find that medical and life insurance, retirement accounts, elder and child care services, and work-life balance policies are just several of the nonwage compensations and policies that employers may offer as incremental interventions to Black women's race and gendered wealth disparities. Of course, providing Black women pathways to career advancement and equitable earnings is another option.

To address a lacuna in the growing body of research on Black women's wealth disparities, this brief examines the relationship between employer-provided benefits, work-life balance, and wealth accumulation in the compensation of Black women.

Data and Methods

We consider the COVID-19 pandemic a critical context for gauging Black women's evaluations of their employment securities, work-life balance, and wealth accumulation. Black women are among the millions of Americans that struggled with pandemic-related employment and income losses, savings depletion, inability to pay rent, and outstanding debt payments (Bergquist, Otten, and Sarich 2020). Their economic instabilities during the pandemic reflect exacerbations from historical and persisting disparities in wealth accumulation and occupational attainment, as well as disproportionate work and caregiving responsibilities. Relative to white men and women, the pandemic likely set numerous Black women further back in their abilities to transfer intergenerational assets. In addition, they face an outsized gap in work-life balance and community responsibilities which may have taken unexpected tolls on their wealth accumulation (Brown 2012; Toney and Hamilton 2022).

We collected data in two phases, a national survey, and one-on-one interviews with employed and unemployed Black women ages 18 years and older. In the first phase, a survey of 107 women, we assessed their perceptions of their pre-pandemic and pandemic work-life balance, financial obligations, assets, and employer-provided benefits. For our second phase, we invited 15 of the survey respondents to elaborate on the obstacles and resources they perceived as momentous to their work-life ideals and wealth-building strategies. We used intersectionality to conveniently select interview participants across varying social statuses, including age, region of residence, marital and caregiving status, occupation, and socioeconomic status. The interviews lasted approximately one hour and varied between face-to-face and video conferencing. For face-to-face interviews, we selected locations that were convenient for the interviewer and the participant.

Interview probes included questions regarding professional accomplishments, assistance and obstacles to work-life balance, community and employer support, financial security and wealth-building

strategies, and the impact of the pandemic on their work-life balance and wealth accumulation. Initially, we aimed to interview 30 participants. However, after scheduling and administrative delays, we postponed 15 of our interviews for 2023. Although the sample size will not allow us to generalize broadly, the narratives shared by our interview respondents provide context into Black women's similar and dissimilar experiences with employer-provided resources, work-life balance, and wealth accumulation. Their detailed accounts of their work, family obligations, and goals provide the relevant insight we could not capture by survey alone.

Our study aims to provide employers with organizational suggestions that will allow them to improve the work-life balance of Black women and incrementally increase their abilities to accumulate wealth. We collaborated with Deirdra Glover, owner and chief executive officer of Conserte, a Black-woman-owned consulting company focusing on growth consulting, change consulting, experiential design, and dynamic facilitation. After our analysis phase, we met with Ms. Glover to discuss our organizational suggestions. We provide Ms. Glover's insights on how to strategize policy reform and organizational change at the conclusion of our brief.

Survey Results

Demographic Profile

A cursory glance at our participants' backgrounds renders an encouraging picture of Black women's occupational and socioeconomic attainment. Our participants ranged in age from 18 to more than 75 years old with a median age range of 35–44. Whereas 1 percent of participants did not have a high school diploma and 4 percent had only completed high school, 38 percent of participants had an undergraduate degree, 22 percent had a master's degree, and 16 percent had a doctorate or terminal degree.

On average, our participants earned approximately \$75,000 to \$99,999 annually; 55 percent were single-earner households, 41 percent were dual-earner households, and 4 percent were multiple-earner households (with three or more income providers). Participants' earnings exceeded the \$45,870 median income for average Black households and met or exceeded the \$74,912 median earnings for the average white household (Shrider et al. 2021).

MARITAL AND CAREGIVING STATUS

In their caregiving roles, 20 percent of survey participants were the caregiver and/or financial provider for at least one adult family member, 42 percent were the caregiver to at least one dependent child, 3 percent provided care and/or support to both an adult family member and a dependent child, and 35 percent reported no caregiving responsibilities.

Approximately 34 percent of participants were married, 7 percent were engaged, 3 percent were in a domestic partnership or civil union, 4 percent were widowed, 10 percent were divorced, 2 percent

were separated, another 4 percent were single but living with a significant other, approximately 35 percent were single, and 1 percent reported something else.

OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION

The overrepresentation of a particular social group by race, ethnicity, gender, or age in an occupation is symbolic of occupational segregation, which may either privilege or disadvantage the group and industry. Several of our respondents were employed with government agencies, in the medical professions, the arts, or as educators; this pattern is consistent with studies on the high feminization of occupations that are characterized as extensions of nurturing and care work (Alon et al. 2020). For many women, government and medical careers yield employment security as well as gender-sensitive work cultures, such as family-friendly policies and the likelihood of same-gender mentorship. The drawbacks of occupational segregation include lower pay and benefit disparities, fewer opportunities for economic mobility and career advancement, and lower productivity (Palacios et al. 2022).

Employer-Provided Fringe Benefits

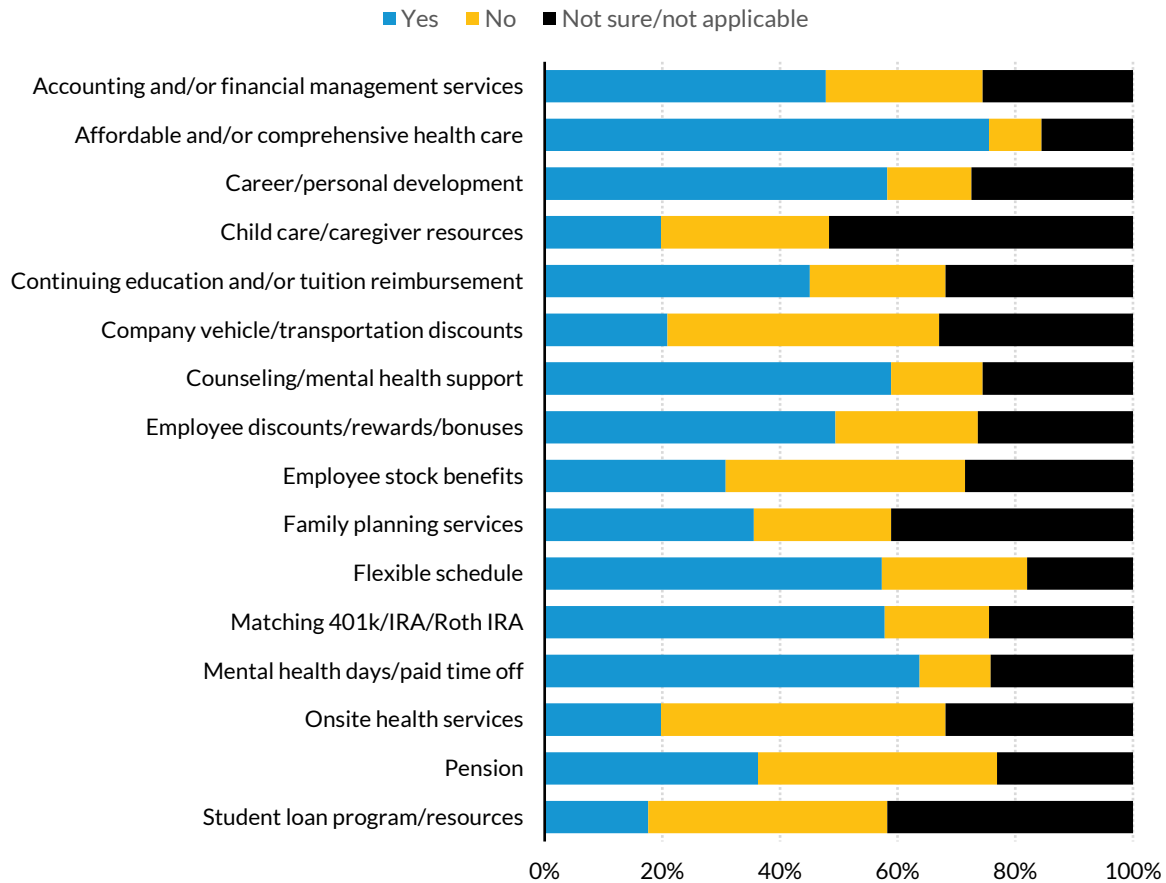
The benefits offered by respondents' employers appear to vary widely, yet we highlight several noteworthy patterns (figure 1). First, seemingly in accord with research exploring gender and fringe benefits offers and elections, many participants worked for employers/industries that offered affordable/comprehensive health care and family-friendly benefits (i.e., flexible work schedules, and paid time off). Furthermore, consistent with research, Black women are less likely to work in occupations that offer pension plans, but, broadly, employers are replacing pension plans with 401k retirement plans, which many participants report are offered by their employers.

In Lowen and Sicilian's (2009) exploration of fringe benefits and the gendered wage gap, women worked for employers/industries that were more likely to offer family-friendly benefits (i.e., flexible schedules, sick leave, and child care) than family neutral benefits (i.e., employee stock ownership and training). Our survey responses include a high percentage of career/personal development as well as accounting and financial services, all of which are categorically "family neutral." Lastly, we note a high percentage of "Not sure/not applicable" responses. Overall, participants that were retired, unemployed, worked part time, and were self-employed accounted for most of these responses. However, as we later learned with our interview participants, sometimes participants were not fully aware of the benefit packages offered by their employers because they attended to the offers that were most relevant to them. For our second phase of interviews (occurring in spring 2023), we will probe our remaining 15 participants on their benefits-election process. Our intention is to further understand the relationship between employment segregation, employer offers, and Black women's benefit preferences.

FIGURE 1

Employer-Provided Benefits Vary Widely

Responses to “My employer/profession provides the following resources and/or benefits:”



Source: Authors' survey of 107 Black women.

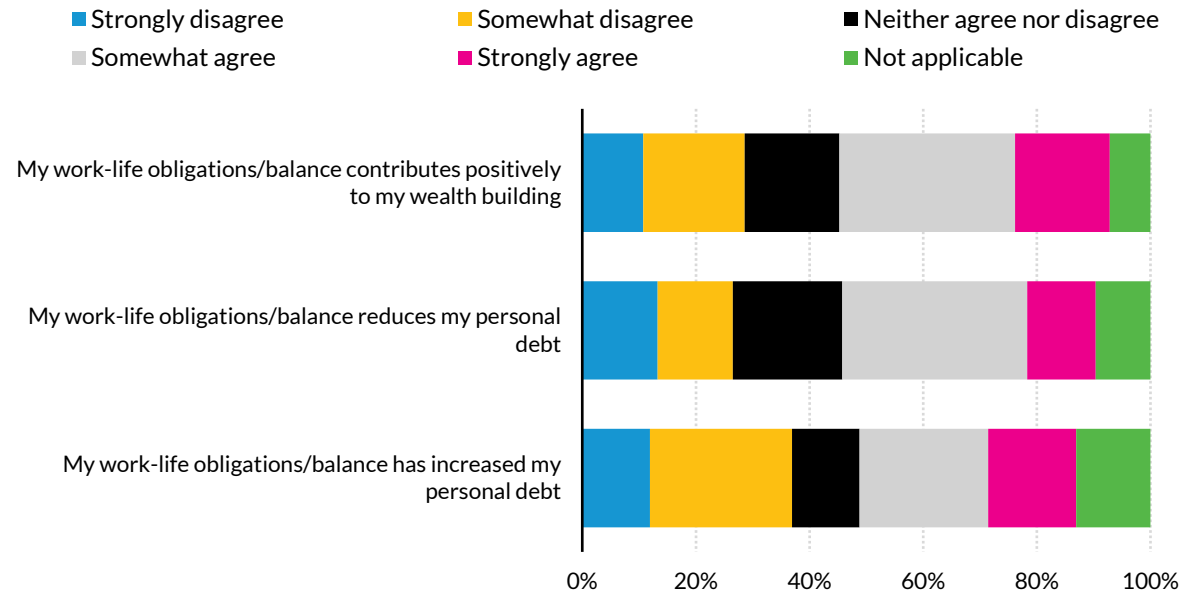
Notes: 89–91 responses were logged for each subquestion. “Family planning services” refers to adoption, surrogacy, in-vitro fertilization, and/or parental leave.

Perceptions of Work-Life Balance

Most apparently, our survey questions regarding work-life balance are inquiries about personal experiences, but they are also indicators of patterns in financial security and access to resources across social statuses. In general, our survey participants reported a positive relationship between their work-life obligations and their wealth building (figure 2). We attribute participants' positive perceptions to their access to flexible work schedules, affordable health care, counseling, and mental health support. In comparison, participants that lacked access to the aforementioned benefits and policies were likely to disagree that their work-life obligations contributed positively to their wealth building and reduced their debt.

In our efforts to further discern how career attainment, financial resources, and nonwage compensations impacted participants' perceptions, we used the work-life balance survey responses as a filter to select interview participants across variations in responses and social locations. For example, we anticipated that participants with greater income, fringe benefits, and fewer familial obligations would report that their work-life obligations/balance contributed positively to their wealth and reductions in their debt. Although most survey participants agreed that balance in their work-life obligations reduced their personal debt and/or did not increase their personal debt, we later found via interviews that participants' perceptions were heavily influenced by their age, occupation, and perception of career attainment, which further correlated to their salaries, and the likelihood of immediate and extended family obligations.

FIGURE 2
Work-Life Obligations Affect Black Women's Wealth Building
Responses to "Rate the following:"



Source: Authors' survey of 107 Black women.
Note: 83–84 responses were logged for each statement.

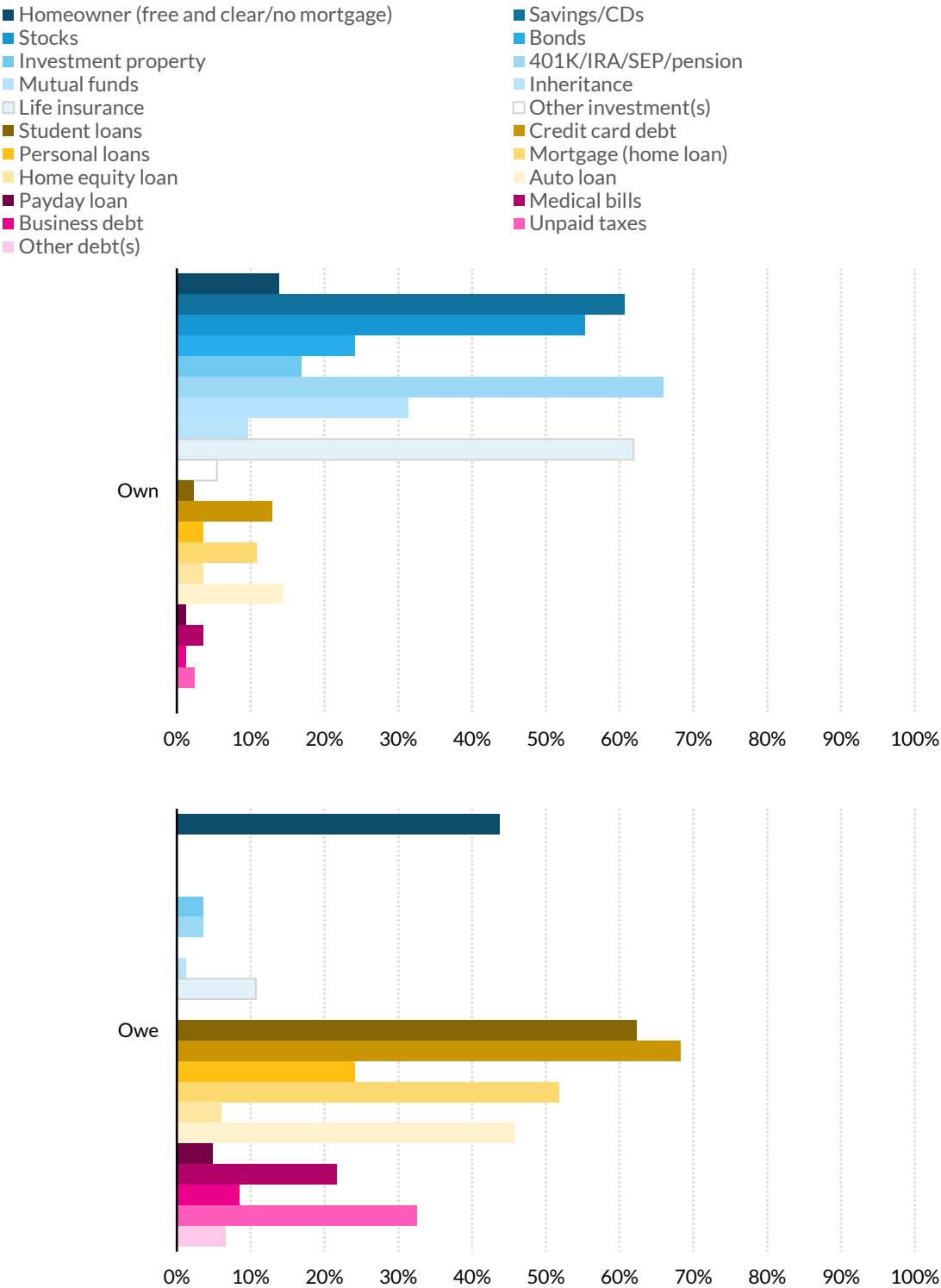
Distribution of Assets and Debts

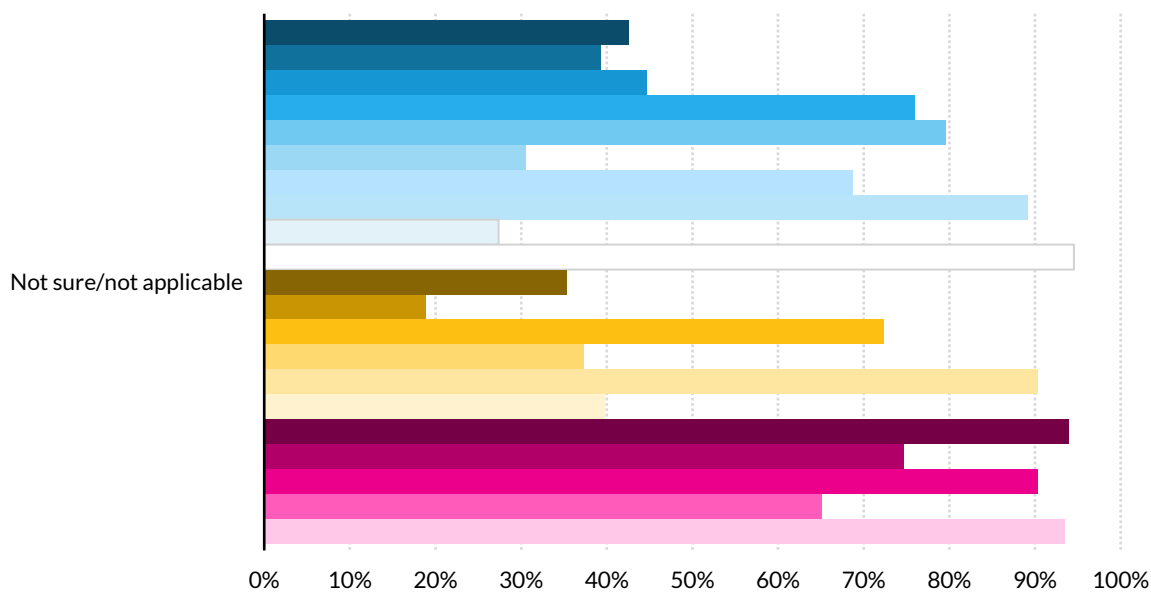
To determine our participants' accumulated wealth, we asked about which assets they owned and which debts they owed. Among the assets, approximately 66 percent of survey respondents reported owning retirement accounts, 61 percent owned savings or certificate of deposit accounts, 62 percent possessed life insurance policies, 55 percent owned stocks, and 31 percent owned mutual funds. On the lower end of assets owned, approximately 17 percent reported owning investment property, 14 percent owned their home free and clear of a mortgage, only 10 percent reported assets in the form of inheritance, and 5 percent reported "other" types of inheritance.

Of the debt accrued, approximately 68 percent of respondents reported credit card debt, 62 percent owed student loans, 52 percent reported home mortgage loans, 46 percent owed automotive loans, 33 percent reported unpaid taxes, 24 percent owed personal loans, and 22 percent reported unpaid medical bills. On the lower end of their debt accrued, 7 percent reported other debts, 6 percent owed home equity loans, 4 percent reported loans for an investment property, and 5 percent reported payday loans. “Not sure/ not applicable” responses reflect participants' lack of access/accrual of corresponding assets and debts, uncertainty about their access/accrual of assets and debts, and, in some cases, participants' imprecise interpretation of the survey question.

To further understand survey participants' financial obligations, we also included questions about their use of resources to assist family members with personal obligations and financial crisis and their use of their social network, financial reserves, and/or debt to resolve personal obligations and/or financial crises. Approximately 87 percent of respondents reported that they had used their resources to assist family members within the past five years, and approximately 77 percent reported that they had used their social networks, financial reserves, and/or debt to resolve their personal obligations and/or financial crises within the past five years. Overall, our survey participants report above-national average earnings and access to nonwage compensations. Their survey responses also reveal economic vulnerabilities resulting from a diversity of personal debt, financial crises, and monetary assistances to extended family.

FIGURE 3
Distribution of Assets and Debts
Responses to “Which of the following do you own or owe?”





Source: Authors' survey of 107 Black women.

Notes: 55–87 responses were logged for each asset and debt. Assets appear at the top of each chart, followed by debts. The legend lists all assets and debts respondents were asked about; some items may not appear in all three charts.

Interview Findings

Despite participants' relative affluence, interview findings impart that Black women's prosperous annual earnings and career attainments obscure gendered racialized wealth disparities.² Participants shared experiences of bankruptcy, vehicle repossession, exorbitant student loan debt, serial relocations for employment opportunities, and various bouts of financial fragility from childhood to adulthood. They modified their work hours and leveraged their retirement accounts when their spouse/partner or another financial contributor's employment or income-earning status became inadequate to cover their household expenditures. They routinely shared their financial and temporal resources with their social networks of family, friends, and community (including parenting groups, neighbors, and communities of faith). They would advise their younger selves to make more assertive financial investments, seek employers and mentors that protect Black women in the workplace, ask their parents more questions about financial planning and their own financial challenges, and reconsider their professional ambitions at the sacrifice of their desires for marriage and children—or reconsider their eagerness to start a family at the forfeiture of their professional goals. Yet, as explained by Darity Jr. and colleagues (2018), although advantageous, Black women's adjustments to their habits and practices are not sufficient to improve their wealth disparities if structural sources of systemic gendered racism are left unmodified.

From our cross-analysis of participants' survey results and interview accounts, we identify three areas for intervention for employers: *universal work-life balance policies*, *dependent care resources/family discounts*, and *legacy benefits* (box 1).

BOX 1

Organizational Suggestions

The dynamics of kinship care, multigenerational socioeconomic fragilities, and variations in social positionality lead us to suggest universal work-life balance policies, procedures, and practices that improve the wealth accumulation of Black women and their households. As workers and caregivers, fringe benefits that allow Black women to devote their time and finances to their families and investment opportunities are most beneficial. Employers and employee organizations should regard such policies and practices as diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives that address the needs of their diverse workforce. In addition, companies should hire and train supportive supervisors to promote healthy, family-friendly work habits. Black women stand to benefit when they, their partners/spouses, and their extended family members all have access to the following benefits and policies:

- **Universal work-life balance policies**, including flexible work schedules, remote work options, paid time off, mental health days, and family medical leave
- **Dependent care resources and family discounts**, including free or discounted child care, adult caregiving resources, and family counseling services as well as discounts for children's entertainment venues, gym memberships, wholesale store memberships, and wellness vouchers
- **Legacy benefits** including employee-share ownership, tuition reimbursement, pension, credit union access, financial/retirement counseling, and legal counseling

Universal Work-Life Balance Policies

“Cathartic.” That is how interview participants described the opportunity to discuss their experiences with work-life balance and wealth building. Intertwined in their self-critique and advice for other Black women were rhetorical nods to supportive spouses and the occasional empathetic supervisor, along with admonishments for unequal pay and the United States’ inadequate health and child care provisions. Amidst laughter, deep sighs, and introspective pauses, our 15 interview participants relived their feats with professional trajectories and familial devotions. Their accounts indicate that Black women struggle to meet the competing demands, obligations, and desired goals within and across their professional roles when they bear sole responsibility for child care and kinship care. Although many of their employers offered fringe benefits that allowed them to attend to their caregiving duties, if their partners and other family members lacked similar resources, then respondents were disproportionately responsible for taking time off from work to attend to their family members’ needs.

- Resources such as paid time off, family medical leave, and flexible work schedules were most valuable to participants with children or adult dependents. For several participants, working from home during the pandemic helped them mitigate professional and domestic role strain and role conflict. For example, mothers reported improvements in their parent-child relationships with older children because of more family time.
- During the pandemic, married and co-parenting participants benefited from their partners’ also working from home, sharing in more egalitarian caretaking duties. This allowed participants to

complete lingering professional projects, pursue investment opportunities including additional streams of income, and commit time to their personal wellness.

- Parenting continues throughout people's lives regardless of the age of the parent and child. Participants shared that beyond maternity leave, as children mature into their teen years, they may need flexible schedules to attend to their child's needs and obligations. Three participants shared that they avoided supervisory roles during their children's earlier childhood years and preferred flexible work schedules as their children aged. A retiree shared that she continued to work part time as a traveling nurse but often assisted with after-school care for her granddaughter. Sometimes she would not accept nursing assignments if her son and ex-wife were unable to find alternative child care arrangements for her granddaughter.
- Black families are less likely to hire au pairs, nannies, and eldercare providers, due to limited financial resources. Providing universal work-life balance policies and flexible schedules are necessary for workers regardless of full-time, part-time, and precarious work status.

Dependent Care Resources and Family Discounts

Black women's experiences with racialized and gendered occupational designations equate to variances in salary, workload, employment security, promotion, and access to noncash compensations. Despite the systemic encumbrances, Black women leverage their time, student loans, and various forms of personal debt to create social stability for themselves and their families. Black women often participate in kinship care, which includes physical, emotional, and service care responsibilities for children and dependent adult or disabled family members (Barnes 2015; Glenn 2010). Financial and temporal costs are often compounded as the caregiver attends to the maintenance of the domestic space and relationships of their kin (cleaning the home, scheduling medical appointments, and escorting to events and appointments).

In many respects, kinship care is a cultural expectation grounded in communalism, but Black women's caretaking commitments are predominately responses to intergenerational and intragenerational wealth disparities that force Black families to rely heavily upon each other for resources that wealthier (white) families may otherwise outsource. Child care, elder care, and socioeconomic dependency among extended family members are outcomes of racial inequalities that impact Black Americans as a group and are not isolated to the poor financial management of random Black households. Employer-provided pre-tax benefits and discounts along with family counseling services may help Black women attend to their familial needs and conserve their limited financial resources.

- Participants employed by the government and/or in the health care sectors reported access to family-friendly benefits such as comprehensive health insurance, dependent care programs, child care subsidies, and family planning resources for elders and family members with special needs.

- Several participants shared that they saved money because of shelter-in-place mandates during the pandemic. In contrast, they also noted increases in their consumption and reliance upon delivery services, which inspires our suggestions for family discounts/vouchers for vacations, gym memberships, wholesale store memberships, and discounts for food services.
- Employers and employment organizations can improve the resources that they provide for their employees with increased access to employee assistance programs and by advocating federal and state agencies to provide similar resources for unemployed and underemployed families.

Legacy Benefits

Although the women in our study reported greater median annual earnings than most Black Americans (Miller and Vagins 2018), multiple study participants shared that they had yet to solidify an ideal wealth-building strategy or achieve their wealth goals. They marked the ability to earn passive income and pass along intergenerational wealth to their children as their milestone for satisfactory wealth accumulation. Several discussed actively saving and/or investing to safeguard their children from future debt, however, they were less assured or informed about their personal retirement strategies. They had 401(k) employee retirement plans and mutual funds but confessed to being moderately attentive to the allocation process. In addition, several were shy of their wealth goals but still managed to help extended family members in times of financial hardship and emergency. We suggest employers and employment agencies provide employee resources and nonwage compensations such as tuition reimbursement, financial and legal counseling, and employee stock ownership plans (where applicable). Employers and benefits officers should take note that race, gender, and class inform benefit selections and investing trends in several ways:

- The workplace is a site of formal and informal knowledge and resource exchange. Although most of our survey and interview participants secured “good paying jobs with good benefits,” occupational segregation by race and/or gender shaped their fringe benefit access and elections. Beyond cultural values, occupational segregation also shapes investment values and benefit knowledge. Interestingly, several interview participants were slow to invest in securities.
- Although public loan forgiveness programs exist for the public service sector, tuition loan forgiveness programs are not widespread in the private sector, especially for precarious employment. One participant experienced racial hostilities working as an administrative assistant for an investment firm. She shared that she remained with the firm because they offered tuition reimbursement benefits. She described feeling “trapped” because not many receptionist positions offered tuition reimbursement to support staff.
- Our respondents preferred owner-occupied and rental property as options for investing passive income and asset accumulation. When we probed participants about their access to stocks, bonds, and other financial securities, some participants expressed unfamiliarity and/or trepidation. For Black women, aversion to financial securities is bound up with historical, race,

gender, and class marginalization from employer share-ownership and nontaxable fringe benefits (Licht 1998; Perman and Stevens 1989) as well as intergenerational gaps in capital and accompanying financial literacy (Weissbourd et al. 2021).

- Black households' limited access to diverse transformative assets informs their investing preference. When asset-wealthy families pass along their wealth, they also pass along financial knowledge and, in some cases, trustworthy financial advisors, accountants, and management companies. Several women in our study shared losing money and time in multilevel marketing schemes and/or relying on popular cultural books on finance to improve their investment knowledge.

Conclusion

In this brief, we inquire into the role of employer organizations in narrowing a racialized and gendered financial deficit that is over 400 years in the making. We understand that employer-provided benefits will not close the wealth gap that has pilfered Black women and their families from their due measure unless systemic gendered racism and financial retributions are directly addressed. However, failure to rectify the unequal wealth distribution in some capacity will only compound the iniquity of Black households, stifle the US economy, and further the country from its assurances of social justice and democracy. As it now stands, over the next two and half decades, the US economy is set to transfer upwards of \$30 to \$68 trillion in assets. Be that as it may, between the years of 2019 and 2028, the enduring wealth gap between white and Black households is projected to cost the US economy close to \$1.5 trillion in expenditures and investments, which could account for \$3 trillion or more in losses over the period of the Great Transfer (Noel et al. 2019).

For Black women, the wealth gap will cost them countless opportunities to leave an indelible mark on their world. Occupational segregation and discriminatory gaps in Black women's wages cost them opportunities to pay their parents' efforts and sacrifices forward and restrict their ability to elevate their children beyond the plateaus of their own accomplishments (Branch 2011).³ For unmarried Black women, wealth disparities cost them an autonomous and steadfast quality of life (Zaw et al. 2017). As they work in precarious and hostile work environments, racialized and gendered wealth disparities cost Black women their self-esteem, dignity, and the value of their work (Thomas et al. 2022). In times of global health and economic crisis, wealth disparities cost Black women their livelihoods and their lives (Tucker 2021). Overall, wealth disparities cost Black women their right to a legacy.

Although the United States remains deadlocked in a racial impasse regarding reparations, we take note that the federal government funded provisional resources for millions of US households in response to the global spread of the coronavirus (Bergquist, Otten, and Sarich 2020; Daly et al. 2021). As COVID-19 destabilized economies, disrupted daily lives, and shifted population patterns in morbidity and mortality, the United States, like many nations, attempted to avert the crisis with various moratoriums, assistance programs, economic impact payments, and tax credits (Siddik 2020). In addition, employers were incentivized to respond to the labor force's health care and child care needs

with remote work options and flexible work schedules. Momentarily, families experiencing socioeconomic hardships were “not to blame” for their health risks, employment instability, housing insecurity, and food insufficiency (Kalil, Mayer, and Shah 2020). Now, two years later, some workers continue to benefit from the pandemic-provoked institutional and organizational shifts whereas others continue to suffer and remain vulnerable to pandemic-induced hardships and persisting inequities.

Many women in our study were familiar with international family and labor policies. Some of them experienced living abroad and considered moving overseas if racial hostilities and performative public reconciliations in the United States did not cease. In the era of quiet quitting, mass resignations, and the lure of international remote work options, employers can usher in progressive workplace change and avoid the fallout of a brewing labor movement. In effect, the temporary institutional and organizational shifts provoked by the pandemic addressed structural economic disparities—many of which disproportionately impact Black women. What if population-level and organizational-level responses remain indefinitely? What if employers and employment organizations commit to supporting equitable outcomes for Black women and marginalized workers? What if employers advance a proactive wealth-building agenda accompanied by supporting state and federal efforts? Our study offers several suggestions for employers to initiate incremental changes to help Black women achieve their work-life balance and wealth-building goals along with engaging in advocacy for broader social-structural change.

We conclude this brief with a quote from organizational change and growth consultant Deirdra Glover of Conserte Consulting.

Organizations and employees need to recognize that policies are not one size fits all. Policy recommendations should light your path toward designing what works for you. So in addition to the policy recommendations and findings from the study, it is really important for interested organizations to take a step back and reflect on how *not* addressing the policy suggestions hinders the pursuit of their mission and how addressing the policy suggestions can accelerate the path to their mission because they are linking it and weaving it into the fabric of their organization as opposed to relegating this to something extra that’s nice to do—that becomes expendable as priorities change. In addition, they should listen to their employees to understand real-world applications for them, deploy the changes, but listen and course correct as needed. So, it is not one size fits all nor set it and forget it. You have to also nurture to make sure the policies are yielding the outputs that they expect.

Notes

- ¹ See also Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” *The Atlantic*, June 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>.
- ² Adia Harvey Wingfield, “Women Are Advancing in the Workplace, but Women of Color Still Lag Behind,” essay, Brookings Institution, October 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/essay/women-are-advancing-in-the-workplace-but-women-of-color-still-lag-behind/>.
- ³ See also Shawn Donnan, Ann Choi, Hannah Levitt and Christopher Cannon, “Wells Fargo Rejected Half Its Black Applicants in Mortgage Refinancing Boom,” Bloomberg, March 11, 2022, <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2022-wells-fargo-black-home-loan-refinancing/#xj4y7vzkg?leadSource=uverify%20wall>.

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