



# UNDERSTANDING THE PAY GAP FOR SOMALI WOMEN

A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STUDY BY AYADA LEADS AND IDMAN IBRAHIM

## BACKGROUND

In Minnesota, despite high rankings for women's well-being, wage disparities persist, especially for Somali women who earn significantly less than their white male counterparts due to compounded intersectional challenges. Somali refugees, many of whom settled in Minnesota for better economic opportunities, face substantial job market barriers. Cultural norms, including traditional gender roles and familial expectations, further contribute to the severe wage gaps experienced by Somali women.

## METHODOLOGY



We surveyed Somali women in the Twin Cities on wage disparities, including age, occupation, earnings, and barriers like cultural and language challenges. The survey, available in Somali, was conducted at local events and businesses.

## SURVEY RESULTS

# 76%

of respondents felt their compensation was unfair based on their experience, education, and skills

# 42%

of respondents identified race, religion, and/or gender as a barrier to jobs with fair compensation

# 40%

of respondents identified occupational clustering as a barrier to earning higher wages

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGNS:

Our outreach revealed that many Somali women were unaware of how their intersecting identities—particularly the combination of race and gender—affect their pay.

### LEGAL ASSISTANCE AND HEALTHCARE:

Provide accessible resources for legal assistance, culturally competent healthcare, and childcare to help Somali women overcome practical barriers to employment and career advancement.

### COMMUNITY CENTERS:

Establish community centers dedicated to offering training and support in essential job skills, resume writing, and interview preparation.

### POLICY ADVOCACY:

Support legislation that aims to dismantle systemic barriers and promote economic equity for all women, particularly those from marginalized communities.