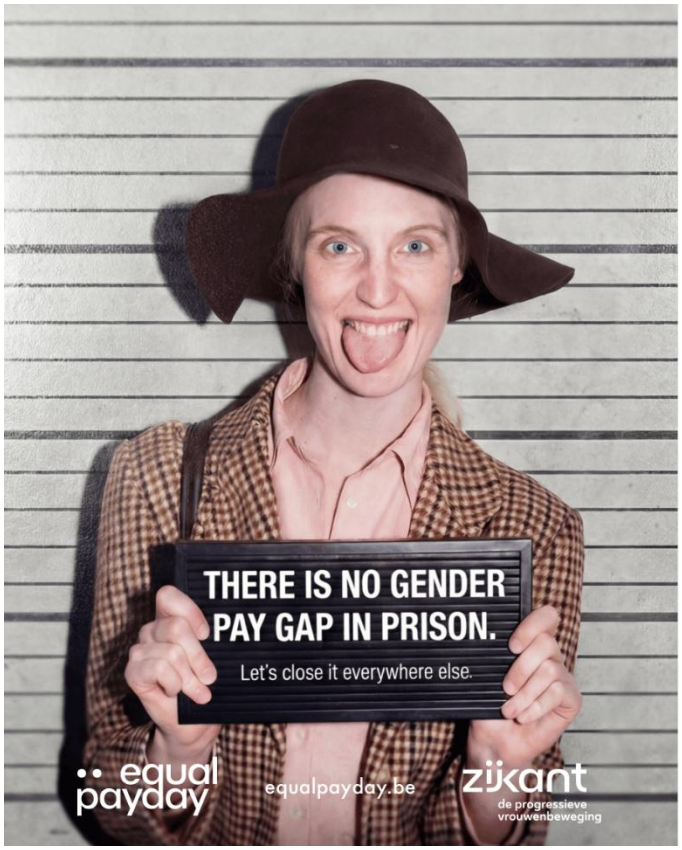
Equal Pay Day ® in Belgium
An international source of inspiration

Equal pay for women and men is still not a reality in Belgium. This is why the progressive women's rights movement **ZIJkant** organises Equal Pay Day, a day advocating equal pay for men and women.

Equal Pay Day is the day until which women must work longer in order to earn as much as men earn in a single year. To raise awareness concerning this pay gap between women and men, on this day **ZIJkant** conducts a unique public campaign with activities run by volunteers throughout the country.

Equal Pay Day takes place in March. This date is not chosen randomly: it symbolises the size of the difference in pay between women and men on the Belgian labour market. If this pay gap diminishes, Equal Pay Day shifts to an earlier date in the year. The opposite happens when the gap widens.

Campagne 2026: There is no gender pay gap in prison. Let's close it everywhere else.



On 12 March, ZIJkant will organise the 22st edition of its Equal Pay Day. The gender pay gap in Belgium is still 20 percent, the same as last year.

In prison, women don't encounter glass ceilings. No one asks about your desire to have children during a job interview or disadvantages you in promotions because you work part-time. Every prisoner who works receives a fixed allowance, which is why women in the absurd campaign video by communication agency Mortierbrigade and production company CZAR do everything they can to end up behind bars. They steal openly, notify the police that they are going to rob a jewellery shop, walk away with a painting from the museum and enthusiastically join in a bank robbery.

Of course, this message should be taken with a grain of salt. While there may be no gender discrimination in the remuneration of inmates, the prison is currently in a humanitarian crisis. The remuneration is also very low and falls outside the scope of labour law.

ZIJkant does not wish to downplay this reality in any way. However, the progressive women's movement points out that *equal pay* today is apparently only possible in a context where the free market does not play a role: remuneration is fixed and there is no room for gender stereotypical prejudices or discrimination. The difference with the pay gap outside prison shows how great the *gender bias* is in the real labour market.

Watch the video at equalpayday.be

The career gap: from head start to delay

The pay gap goes far beyond the issue of equal pay for equal work. A whole range of cultural, legal, social and economic factors mean that women earn less. For example, the pay gap narrows dramatically when part-time work is taken out of the equation: adjusted for working hours, the pay gap is still 7 per cent, the same as last year.

Women encounter a series of obstacles that complicate their career path, such as the **unequal distribution of care responsibilities**. When they have children, a large part of the care work ends up on their shoulders. This is a logical consequence of maternity leave, which is three times longer than paternity leave. Afterwards, it is difficult to turn the tide: four out of ten women do not work full-time, mainly to care for children. Among men, one in ten works part-time, often to wind down at the end of their career. Moreover, employers still anticipate possible motherhood and prefer to give promotions to men, as recent research by the University of Ghent has shown. This phenomenon is called the **motherhood penalty.**

Then there are the well-known **glass ceilings**: subtle but persistent barriers that prevent women from advancing to management positions. Sexism in the workplace, gender stereotypes and the unequal distribution of men and women across sectors reinforce these dynamics. While men can often follow a relatively straight line in their careers, women's careers tend to resemble an obstacle course.

The pay gap appears to be primarily a **career gap**, and the new government measures threaten to only widen this gap. The focus is on working harder, with fewer protective measures and more sanctions, such as a lower pension for those with an interrupted career.

Besides a wage gap, other factors influence the **wealth gap** between men and women. The wealth gap also reflects the difference in assets such as real estate and inheritances. Due to a lack of data, it is difficult to put a figure on this. Women also receive lower unemployment benefits on average, have smaller pensions and earn less personal income than men, such as sickness and disability benefits, incapacity benefits, interruption benefits, subsistence allowances and allowances related to study or training. Women also earn less income from shares, claim fewer fringe benefits and have fewer savings.

When women retire, they feel the wage inequality even more strongly in their **pensions**. Recently retired women have on average 21 per cent less pension than men in the same situation.

Access to work

The gap between women themselves often remains underexposed. Women are not a homogeneous group: income differences between them are very sharp. For example, women living in poverty, with a migrant background, trans women and women with disabilities have less access to the labour market. They are overrepresented in low-paid jobs with precarious and hyper- flexible contracts or in unemployment figures. Women who do not work are at greater risk of poverty, dependency and social exclusion

To highlight the influence of (the intersection of) certain identity characteristics on the pay gap and the position of women in the labour market, ZIJkant is collaborating with Netwerk tegen Armoede, LEVL, GRIP and ella.

Almost one third of women are at risk of poverty, which is twice as high as men. For many, the adage 'work is the best way out of poverty' applies. However, the reality for thousands of women in Belgium tells a different story. An income from employment reduces certain vulnerabilities, but does not offer systematic protection against economic uncertainties

and instability. Characteristics such as working conditions, contract type, job type or occupation, alongside family characteristics, play a major role in explaining the increased risk of poverty for the working poor.

When we look at the employment gap between people of Belgian origin and people from non- EU countries, Belgium is one of the worst performers in Europe**. Women with a migrant background experience double discrimination:** on the basis of gender and origin. For example, 76 per cent of women born in Belgium are in work, compared to 66 per cent of women from EU countries and 49 per cent of women born outside the EU. There is great heterogeneity among women with a migrant background.

Due to the current labour shortage, more and more attention is being paid to so-called untapped labour potential. However, it is not easy for many women with a migrant background to find a sustainable job. They are directed towards jobs with lower wages and poorer working conditions. This creates a situation in which they regularly move in and out of different jobs, the so-called revolving door effect. Due to temporary or short-term contracts, they are excluded from parental leave and time credit.

Women with disabilities also face a **double disadvantage**. In addition to the typical gender-based obstacles, their abilities are structurally underestimated due to prejudice, and employers are often reluctant to make reasonable adjustments. The employment rate for women with a work disability is 45 per cent, while just over half of men are in work. There is still a 35 per cent gap between people with and without disabilities. Belgium scores significantly worse than its neighbouring countries in this respect. Targets in the public sector are hardly being met (an average of 1 per cent instead of the required 3 per cent) in 2024.

The total personal income – i.e. professional income and other benefits and allowances – for persons with disabilities is still significantly lower than for persons without disabilities, with a gap of 25 per cent. The pay gap (based on the average net monthly professional income in Flanders) between persons with and without disabilities is 15 per cent. Women with long-term disabilities also earn less than men with disabilities. The gender pay gap between persons with disabilities is the same as the overall Belgian pay gap, namely 20 per cent. This has a lot to do with the fact that women are twice as likely as men to work part-time. Caring for children is also a major factor here.

Close the career gap

It is high time to close the career gap. ZIJkant repeats its demand for a **shorter working week**.

Instead of focussing on workable work, the new government wants to focus on flexibilisation without compensatory measures. For the many part-time working women who would like a full-time job, this is counterproductive: they work mainly in sectors such as healthcare, the hospitality industry and cleaning, where they risk being replaced by cheaper flexi-jobbers and students. Work towards proportional and equal participation in the labour market, where there is no place for discrimination and racism.

Longer working days and irregular working hours are also impossible for women to sustain without **high-quality childcare**. The crisis in childcare shows how the sector has been underfunded: low wages and high workloads are driving up staff shortages, the child-carer ratio is too high and many parents are still unable to find childcare.

In addition, ZIJkant also advocates for **longer and compulsory paternity leave**, which would give fathers the opportunity to take on full childcare responsibilities. This is by no means guaranteed with the vague 'family credit'. Finally, ZIJkant emphasises the importance of **quotas on management committees** and the **implementation of the European pay transparency directive**.

European facts on the gender pay gap

In Europe, women earn 12% less than men (on average gross hourly income of full and part-time workers, Eurostat, 2023).

The differences between European member states are big. In Slovenia, Poland, Italy, Luxembourg and Romania, the pay gap remains below 10 per cent, but in Estonia, Switzerland, Finland, Hungary and Germany, it is close to 20 per cent. Austria tops the list with 18.3 per cent. The Netherlands (12.5 per cent) and France (12.2 per cent) perform worse than Belgium (0.7 per cent). Our country is therefore a good European pupil.

What is Equal Pay Day?

The history of Equal Pay Day

At the initiative of the progressive women's rights movement **ZIJkant**, and in collaboration with the socialist labour union ABVV, the first Equal Pay Day was held in Belgium in 2005. The campaign focused the attention of the public and of policymakers on the gender pay gap.

Equal Pay Day in the meantime has developed into a strong brand: a social and controversial campaign that yields results. The campaign put the debate about the pay gap on the map, and has resulted in recent years in a number of Belgian organisations taking a closer look at this pay gap via studies and days of action.

Other countries have also joined the cause: Equal Pay Day campaigns were organised among others in Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Luxemburg, Estonia and the Czech Republic.

Why an Equal Pay Day?

Equal pay for women and men is still not a reality in Belgium. The average pay gap today amounts to 20% (2023), based on the annual gross salaries of women and men. This can be seen in the most recent edition of the 'Pay Gap Report' of the Belgian Institute for the Equality of Women and Men.

Why a pay gap?

The pay gap is due among other things to stereotypic (pre)judgements and the traditional gender roles assigned to men and women in society and on the labour market: principles that Equal Pay Day refuses to accept.

Some causes of the pay gap:

- **Horizontal segregation**

Men in construction, women in the cleaning sector. A cliché for sure, but one that rings true. Today there are still many professions and sectors that are 'typically male' or 'typically female'. Perhaps it is a coincidence, but precisely these professions and sectors in which mostly women work have lower average pay. And these lower women's salaries increase the pay gap.

- **Vertical segregation**

Women at the top: (still) doesn't happen that often. Women are underrepresented in leadership positions, among managers and higher executives. They are blocked by the so-called 'glass ceiling', an invisible barrier created by habits and stereotypes concerning who, how or what a boss should be. The lower the position on the ladder, the less pay for women, and the wider the pay gap.

- **Part-time work**

Part-time work continues to be primarily a women's thing. In 2024, 40% of Belgian working women work part-time, versus 13% for men. Care for the children is the most important reason given by women for working part-time. Part-time work is successful in Belgium thanks to allowances for the interruption of one's career, time credits and service checks. This is often presented as a win-win situation, but it has a negative impact on one's further career and salary development; on social security rights in the case of illness, unemployment and invalidity; and in particular, on one's pension.

- **Composition of the family**

The family situation affects the pay gap. It is probably the breadwinner model and the classic gender roles that work to the advantage of men: men are seen as breadwinners and are given more freedom to focus on their careers.

- **Professional training**

Research shows that men enjoy more additional training during their career. In general, men also enjoy longer and more expensive training. This training then is an excellent basis for promotion and thus an increase in pay.

- **Extras**

Popular employee benefits such as luncheon vouchers, mobile phone, laptop, company car, hospital insurance, etc. are given more often to men than to women.

- **Career breaks**

Time-outs for yourself or for someone in need of care are taken more by women than men. Possibilities in Belgium like time credit, parental leave, palliative leave, etc. are partially reimbursed, but have a clear impact on further career development and also result in a reduction in pay now and in the pension granted later.

Despite of all these possible causes, according to the 'Pay Gap Report', half of the pay gap in Belgium remains unexplained. Does pure discrimination also play a role? Think about individual pay negotiations and the extent to which professional experience and seniority are recognised, or the way in which positions or job responsibilities are valued and remunerated.

<u>What does Equal Pay Day aim to achieve?</u>

Equal Pay Day aims to eliminate pay inequality between women and men by:

1. **Raising awareness**

The pay gap between women and men exists, but not everyone knows about it. Equal Pay Day not only highlights the pay difference, but also its social causes, consequences and solutions. The debate on the pay gap must be kept alive in order to make progress possible and prevent resignation with respect to the status quo. **ZIJkant** not only aim to discuss pay differences, but also the salary itself. The taboo around discussing pay must be broken.

2. **Gathering facts and figures: Numbers tell the tale**

Equal Pay Day demands official and reliable figures and research to increase knowledge on the (causes and consequences of the) pay gap. Official figures and their analysis reinforce the message and give more clout during negotiations or when enforcing policy measures. At the time of the first Belgian Equal Pay Day in 2005, few figures were available to substantiate the demands of our campaign.

Thanks to our campaign and the continuing awareness raising around the theme, the first

annual pay gap report of the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men appeared in 2007 with objective statistics on the pay gap that exists on the Belgian labour market. Moreover, under the Belgian presidency of the European Union the report 'How to close the gender pay gap: Strategies and good practices of States and social Partners in Europe' and the European pay gap report 'The gender pay gap in the Member States of the European Union: Quantitative and qualitative indicators' were drafted.

3. Restoring confidence in social control and change

ZIJkant is not resigned to accepting this pay gap. Lower wages for women cannot simply be seen as the result of individual and free choices. Our choices and decisions are not as free as we might think; hence pay inequality can best be dealt with in a collective and social way.

4. Empowering and motivating social actors to act

To tackle the pay gap, politicians, governments, employers and labour unions must be held responsible. They are the ones who must take initiatives to combat the pay gap and eliminate it over time, among others via the following initiatives:

- **Measures for greater pay equality.** The pay gap must be tackled in a structural and permanent way. Laws, especially their effective enforcement, are important instruments in eliminating the wage difference between women and men.
- **Attention for gender in education.** Attention for gender needs to start early, also in education. Your choice of studies after all influences your further career, and thus also your future pay and pension as well as your opportunities for promotion and career advancement.
- **Collective care facilities.** Care for children and people in need of assistance is often a barrier to (full-time) work. This affects primarily women because they still handle a majority of the care tasks. And those who (temporarily) interrupt their career not only receive a lower income, but also have less opportunities for promotion or a pay increase, and later receive a lower pension.
- **More and better figures.** The Belgian pay gap report is a major step in the availability of pay gap statistics, but intersectional data an data on important sectors is still lacking.
- **Valuing 'women's work' more and rewarding it (financially) more fairly.** Women are overrepresented in sectors where wages are lower, such as the care and non-profit sectors. These so-called 'women's jobs' and 'women's sectors' usually pay less. In a number of cases, this is due to the lack of a gender-neutral job evaluation system.

Previous Equal Pay Day campaigns

Equal Pay Day 2025



- Equal Pay Day: 14 March 2025
- Monthly pay gap before tax: 20%
- Slogan: Working with women is a real privilege, especially when they cost you 20% less.

The gender pay gap in Belgium is still 20 percent, barely one percent less than last year. It seems as if this inequality suits employers just fine. On the day promoting equal pay, the progressive women's movement will take action in striking manager outfits. Women are not given bonuses but roses, with the cynical campaign message: 'Working with women is a real privilege, especially when they cost you 20% less'.

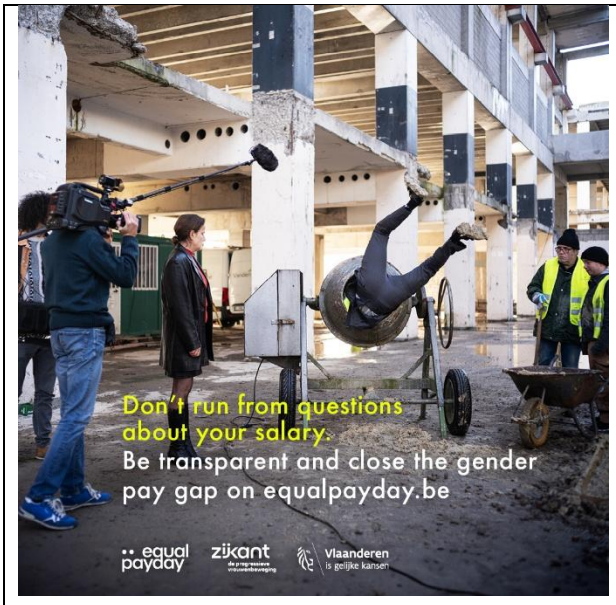
It might be a good tip for the new government: focus on maximising employment for women. After all, given the wage gap, they are still one-fifth cheaper than men. The wage gap in average gross annual wages is still **20 percent** in Belgium, an improvement of barely one percent compared to last year.

'Working with women is a real privilege, especially if they cost you 20 percent less,' is the cynical campaign message of the 21st Equal Pay Day campaign. On 14 March, ZIJkant mobilizes in eye-catching CEO outfits. These smooth managers in their tailored suits will invite female passers-by onto the red carpet and presented them a rose: **a thank you for all that cheap labour**,

	even though their deserved wage would have been better. **The career gap: from head start to delay** An almost exclusively male government team and hardly any women on the 'Manager of the Year' lists: this is no longer acceptable. However, the gender pay gap is persistent, despite the growing female potential in the labour market. After secondary education, 74 percent of girls choose to study at university, compared to 59 percent of boys. Many more women than men start studying law and medicine, and every year more girls than boys successfully graduate in a variety of fields. Women aged under 30 therefore earn more than their male peers. But this **head start gradually turns into a delay**. This causes not only the gender pay gap to grow, but also the income and wealth gap. What goes wrong along the way? Women encounter a series of obstacles that complicate their career path, such as the **unequal distribution of care responsibilities**. When they have children, a large part of the care work ends up on their shoulders. This is a logical consequence of maternity leave, which is three times longer than paternity leave. Afterwards, it is difficult to turn the tide: four out of ten women do not work full-time, mainly to care for children. Among men, one in ten works part-time, often to wind down at the end of their career. Moreover, employers still anticipate possible motherhood and prefer to give promotions to men, as recent

	research by the University of Ghent has shown. Then there are the well-known **glass ceilings**: subtle but persistent barriers that prevent women from advancing to management positions. Sexism in the workplace, gender stereotypes and the unequal distribution of men and women across sectors reinforce these dynamics. While men can often follow a relatively straight line in their careers, women's careers tend to resemble an obstacle course. The pay gap appears to be primarily a **career gap**, and the new government measures threaten to only widen this gap. The focus is on working harder, with fewer protective measures and more sanctions, such as a lower pension for those with an interrupted career. **Watch the video.**

Equal Pay Day 2024



View the clip

- Equal Pay Day: 17 March 2024
- Monthly pay gap before tax: 21%
- Slogan: Don't run from questions about your salary.

How much do you earn? It remains an uncomfortable question. This is proven by a survey ZIJkant commissioned from Ipsos. Half of Belgians know nothing about the salary package of friends or colleagues, let alone that of their manager. An equally high proportion does not talk about their own salary with colleagues or their boss. Women appear to be the biggest victims of this taboo: more than six in 10 have no idea about some colleagues' pay, more than seven in 10 are in the dark about their superior's pay package. With the latter, they rarely discuss their own pay.

The lack of transparency contributes to the gender pay gap. It still stands at 21%, which is why ZIJkant is already organising an Equal Pay Day for the 20th time. This year, Equal Pay Day falls on 17 March 2024.

To break the taboo, ZIJkant will campaign at railway stations in Flanders and Brussels on 18 March: passers-by can choose which uncomfortable question they prefer to answer, the one about their sex life or the one about their pay. On 20 March, we welcome, among others, European Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli to the panel discussion 'Let's talk about money'.

	The pay gap in average gross annual earnings is still 21%, according to the latest statistics from the Institute for Gender Equality (data year 2021). The symbolic date of Equal Pay Day therefore falls on 17 March. With this, we made a small advance: the pay gap closed by 0.6 percentage points compared to 2020 figures. If we move up barely 4 percentage points in 7 years, we will have to wait at least another 37 years for equal pay. **CAMPAIGN 2024: An inconvenient question** This year we 'celebrate' the **20th edition of Equal Pay Day**, though of course there is little cause for celebration. The pay gap is tenacious, and that has a lot to do with the fact that we confess more easily about sex than about pennies. People perform crazy escapes when asked how much they earn. Communication agency mortierbrigade and production house Czar went to work for Equal Pay Day on the stress reactions that the 'inconvenient question' evokes in men and made another thought-provoking campaign spot, which will be launched on 17 March, Equal Pay Day itself. **RESEARCH IPSOS: Wages are taboo** To identify the taboo surrounding wages, research firm Ipsos conducted an **online survey of 1,000 working Belgians (18+)**, including an equal number of men and women, on behalf of ZIJkant. It probed their knowledge about the pay package of friends, colleagues (with and without a similar job) and managers. Respondents were also asked

	to what extent they talked about their own pay. Most respondents work full-time (79%). Respondents with student and flexitime jobs and sole traders were not retained. The vast majority are white-collar workers or have a management position (78%), 16% are blue-collar workers and 6% have other positions (self-employed, liberal profession...). Half work in a company of more than 200 employees. 59% are from Flanders, 11% from Brussels and 30% from Wallonia. The results confirm suspicions: 1) *We know little about the pay package of friends, colleagues and managers.* **For example, more than half of Belgians (56%) know nothing about the pay package of colleagues with different jobs**. 28% have an idea of magnitude here and only 17% know the figures. In small companies, ignorance is higher than in (medium) sized companies. **Among colleagues with a similar job, knowledge is greater, but details nevertheless remain unknown**: 35% know the pay magnitude of colleagues doing the same job, but no details. A third of respondents do not even have a clue about orders of magnitude, this rises almost to half in smaller companies. Not surprisingly, **the boss's salary package is taboo**: 66% know nothing about this. This figure is significantly higher among women (74% versus 58%, see also point 3).

	Remarkable: **even among friends, almost half (44%) are guessing about pay slips**, although 42% have an idea of magnitude here. The exception here are young people, who clearly have a better idea of what their friends earn (50% know major order, 27% also know the details). This transparency clearly disappears once people start making a career: from the age of 35, the majority do not know what friends earn. Self-employed people are best informed. 2) *We do not talk about our pay with friends, colleagues and managers.* **Towards colleagues with non-comparable jobs, half do not talk about wages (51%)**. There is more taboo in Flanders (54%) than in Brussels (43%) and Wallonia (46%). In larger companies, openness is greater than in small structures. **More than a third of Belgian workers (35%) also remain silent towards colleagues with similar jobs**. A third sometimes talks about this superficially. Here, too, there is a greater taboo in smaller companies. Younger employees are clearly less hesitant to open up than older employees. Here, too, we see that in the south of the country it is easier to talk about pay than in the north. It is also striking that **53% do not talk about their pay packet with a supervisor**, while this should be just the person with whom you bring up this subject. Only 19% do so. The fact that **young people value transparency more highly** is confirmed by the

	figures: 61% of 18-24-year-olds and 51% of 25-35-year-olds talk openly about wages with friends. However, this seems to change once they start making careers. From the age of 30, wages are only discussed superficially. Older workers keep their lips tightly sealed. 3) *Women are particularly affected by the taboo.* This study seems to confirm that the taboo around pay perpetuates the pay gap. **Women score significantly lower than men in terms of knowledge about the pay of others** (64% of female respondents have no idea about the pay of colleagues with a different job, 40% are not aware of the pay package of employees with a similar job). Also, almost half of men know (approximately) what pay package their boss has, compared to only a quarter of women. The lack of knowledge also coincides with **a silence about their own wages**: women do not talk about this with colleagues with similar positions (38%), nor with other colleagues (57%) and certainly not with a supervisor (61%). This suggests that **women also negotiate less than men**, as among the latter, 45% never discuss their own pay with their boss.

Equal Pay Day 2023



View the clip

- Equal Pay Day: 20 March 2023
- Monthly pay gap before tax: 22%
- Slogan: It's handy to have a dick

Equal Pay Day falls on 20 March 2023 this year, as the wage gap v/m is 22%. So women have to work almost three extra months to earn what men already earned last year. It seems as if the latter have a secret handshake that gives them an advantage in the workplace as a matter of course. Research that ZIJkant commissioned from TOR research group (VUB) on the impact of fatherhood on the wage and career gap shows, in any case, that the breadwinner's model is still squarely in place.

First the good news. The new Statbel statistics on the pay gap show a clear improvement, especially among the youngest generation (-25), where it is even positive in favour of women. This proves that our Equal Pay Day actions are bearing fruit. But these figures do not say it all: they only reflect the gender gap in hourly wages in private companies with more than 10 employees.

We advocate looking at the wider picture. Therefore, for Equal Pay Day, we base ourselves on the latest statistics from the Institute for Gender Equality, and take into account the difference between the average annual wages of women and men (where the effect of part-time work is much more evident), across all sectors. Thus, we take into account all the elements that determine women's and men's wages.

	For 19 years, the progressive women's movement ZIJkant has been campaigning for equal pay with its Equal Pay Day, but the wage gap is proving intractable. When making deals, in office spaces, at international conferences or at cafés: it seems that merely having a penis opens doors. "I trust you because you have a dick," as the men - real dicks, by the way - in the campaign film by communications agency mortierbrigade and production house Czar say comradely to each other. They shake each other's penile hands, women stand by and watch. It is clear: the old boys' network is alive and kicking. This has its consequences. Women bump into glass ceilings, have to tackle sexist stereotypes and they struggle, much more than men, with combining a career and a family life. Because one of the main reasons for the pay gap is the fact that many more women (42%) than men (12%) work part-time, very often to look after children and take care of the household. Even in the Statbel statistics, the initially small pay gap rises noticeably in the age group of 35-plus. This needs to be better and, above all, more evenly distributed. Don't be a dick and help close the wage gap: this is therefore the message of this campaign. Because that 22% pay gap is riDICKulous. **New research by TOR (VUB)** This year, commissioned by ZIJkant, TOR research group (VUB) examined the effects of paternity and parental leave on the perception and distribution of paid and

	unpaid work within the family. The study focuses on men who have become fathers in the past five years and consists of a questionnaire and an interview. Traditional gender roles appear to be still very much in place: fathers' first place still remains the workplace, mothers' with the children. While fathers take paternity leave for granted, and even advocate making it compulsory, they feel the pressure to go back to work. Men therefore feel that the arrival of a child negatively affects their career or pay. Strangely, they do not think this applies to their partner. Nor does this leave ensure a more equal division of caring tasks: for most fathers, their paternity leave serves mainly to support their partners during those first hectic weeks. Taking parental leave after paternity leave also turns out to be less evident, not least because of the perception of this leave as "free time", to "sit at home". They receive insufficient support from the employer, and fear a negative impact on their careers. And importantly, loss of pay is a major obstacle. **Equating paternity leave with maternity leave** Despite the stereotypical division of labour, the TOR survey shows that pretty much all fathers are in favour of making paternity leave mandatory. Almost all also agree that equalising the length of paternity leave and maternity leave would provide more equal opportunities. The leave was already recently extended to 20 days, ZIJkant argues that it

	should be extended even more gradually until - like maternity leave - it reaches 15 weeks. This puts women and men not only on an equal footing at home, but also at work. Twenty days is clearly too short to bring about a change in attitude. **A truly shortened working week** In addition, ZIJkant continues to push for the introduction of the shorter working week. The high proportion of part-time work among women points to a combination problem, and the fathers interviewed also stress that the different spheres of life are not aligned: "School hours are simply terrible for working parents". A thirty-hour week gives both women and men the chance to build a career, look after children ánd have time for each other. Ultimately, according to the TOR survey, men too clearly long for more time together with the family. Watch the film at www.equalpayday.be

Equal Pay Day 2022







View the clip

- Equal Pay Day: 24 March 2022
- Monthly pay gap before tax: 23%
- Slogan: Give mothers a fair chance to compete

Men do not make the link between a more equal division of care work and equal pay for women. Neither do women: they don't spontaneously think about more career opportunities or a better wage if tasks at home would be equally divided. These are the results from new research that ZIJkant had carried out by research agency Ipsos on the occasion of its eighteenth Equal Pay Day.

However, the gender pay gap can be largely reduced to a traditional role pattern in the household. Especially as soon as children are born, it seems as if women are tied to an umbilical cord for the rest of their lives. And that cord can get quite in the way, as shown in the original campaign film by mortierbrigade and Czar. For Equal Pay Day, ZIJkant therefore calls on fathers to divide the tasks fairly, and asks policy makers to eliminate the differences between paternity leave and maternity leave.

Women still earn 23% less than men on an annual basis, forcing them to work 83 days longer to get the same wage. That is why Equal Pay Day falls this year on **March 24, 2022**. At this rate, we still have to wait for another 58 years for equal pay.

A good start

	First the positive news: wage inequality is indeed decreasing. For singles without children, the **pay gap based on hourly wages is even negative** (-7%), in favor of women. The turning point is the age between thirty and forty years: from this point on, the pay gap rises steeply, ending in a pension ravine of 33%. It is not entirely coincidental that the pay gap should arise when most people start to have children. Figures from the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men show that **women and men without children earn about the same wage per hour**. But with each additional family member, the pay gap widens from 1.5% (no children) to 4.8% (1 child) to 5.7% (2 children) and 6.3% (at least 3 children). Mothers see their income fall because they reduce their paid work. The share of women working part-time increases along with the number of children they have. **In Belgium, almost half of women work part-time (42.5%), mainly to take care of their children.** Men, on the other hand, tend to work more when their family expands. In Belgium, only 11.8% of men work part-time. **New research: Men about their share of tasks at home (and what women think about that)** Previous studies have already shown that (care) tasks at home are not equally divided between men and women. We asked ourselves what it takes for fathers to care more. Commissioned by ZIJkant, research agency Ipsos therefore conducted a qualitative survey on the household of 24

	cohabiting/married fathers with young children. Some of the findings were subsequently tested with a quantitative survey among 975 Belgians (18y - 55+y), with a partner of the opposite sex. Women made up half of the participants. Three results stood out to us. 1. **'Balanced' division of labor (according to the men)** When it comes to their own family, the surveyed fathers generally feel that a **dynamic balance** has been established in the household. What do women think about this: The quantitative survey shows a more nuanced picture: **more than half of the women (62%) think they do (slightly) more than their partners in the household**. In addition, 47% of the men indicate that they divide the tasks approximately equally. But only 31% of women agree with this. 2. **Part-time work as trade-off for a livable household** Time is a very determining factor in the division of tasks: those who have time do more at home. It is therefore considered logical by the surveyed fathers that a part-time working partner takes up more household chores than a full-time working partner. **Part-time work is thus seen as a compromise to keep the household livable**, which may explain the (one-sided) perception of a 'balance'. When asked for an ideal division of tasks, men are mainly open to **solutions that give more time**. They would appreciate the promotion of external domestic help and a flexible way

	of working, such as more flexible parental leave, an end-of-year bonus transformed into extra holidays, the four-day working week with retention of salary or more tax-efficient household checks. Remarkably, with these solutions fathers hope to gain **more me-time for their partners and themselves**, more rest and more quality time together. The extra free time is not seen as an opportunity for the partner to focus more on her work. **3. Men see no link between care work and the pay gap** The link between reducing working time and increasing care time thus seems to be acknowledged. Yet, strangely enough, when asked about the consequences of an unequal division of tasks at home, fathers do not spontaneously think of the professional impact for the partner. In other words, they realize that time spent on housework and care tasks is at the expense of working time, but **they do not consider the consequences on the labor market**, such as the fact that women earn less or have fewer chances to make promotion. The quantitative study confirms this reasoning: **only 3% of men refer to increased career opportunities or a better/higher wage for the partner as a possible positive consequence of a balanced division of labor.** <u>What do the women think about this?</u> In short: the same. In the quantitative survey,

	5% of women refer to increased career opportunities as a possible positive consequence of an equal division of household and care tasks and barely 2% (!) think of a higher wage. There are no differences according to age. These results are striking, as figures show that the share of part-time work among women does indeed have a very large impact on the gender pay gap in Belgium: after correction for working hours, the pay gap decreases by almost two thirds: from 23% to 9%. The pension gap is also largely attributable to the high proportion of part-time work among women. It is clear that having children still puts women at a disadvantage on the labor market, as the care responsibilities mainly fall on their shoulders. The combination of work and family proves to be difficult, and mothers pay the highest price. It seems as if that umbilical cord is never cut. **Campaign video: Give mothers a fair chance to compete** The labor market is not a fair game for women, because they are more often tied to children. With that idea in mind, communication agency **mortierbrigade** and production house **Czar** developed ZIJkant's eighteenth Equal Pay Day campaign. In the campaign film, former female athletes testify about how their careers changed through motherhood. They do their utmost to continue to perform, but the umbilical cord makes their jobs difficult.

	Fortunately, these sportswomen turn out to be accomplished multitaskers. For example, the world hammer throw champion exchanged the hammer for her (own) son, who is thrown away by his umbilical cord. The pole vaulter invented a pulley system that allows her son to coil and unwind the umbilical cord. The synchronized swimmers have more work to avoid getting into a knot. The underlying message is: **men, stop this madness** and take up your responsibilities. Because let's face it: the care of children can be taken up by both partners. Watch the film at www.equalpayday.be

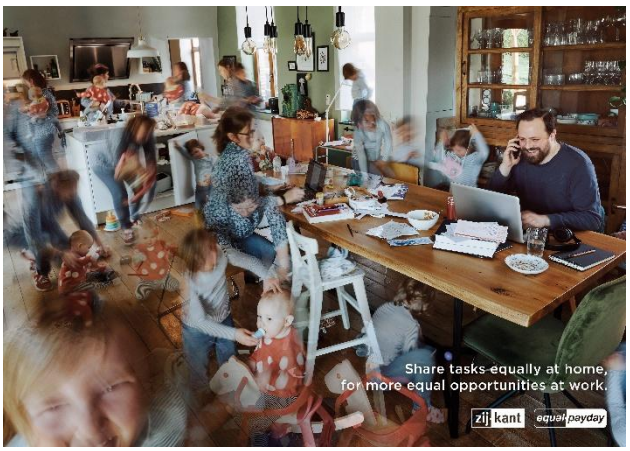
European campaign 2022: Unequal Pay Day

	• Unequal Pay Day: 15 November 2022 • Hourly European pay gap: 13% • Slogan: Apply your skills to the household 15 November is European Unequal Pay Day. Women workers in Europe still earn 13% less than men, which means they will work for free from 15 November. ZIJkant and PES Women are calling on men to use their skills more for housework and childcare, so that women too can go full steam ahead for their jobs. As the Unequal Pay Day campaign video literally shows: men HAVE the skills. To mark Unequal Pay Day, ZIJkant and PES Women organised an international equal pay conference at Brussels City Hall on Friday 4 November, where the latest campaign video

View the clip	was premiered. The video, developed by mortierbrigade and Czar, calls on men to take up their share of unpaid work so that women can also have equal opportunities on the labour market. No more of the rhetoric that women are simply better at laundry and pee: men have exactly the same competences, only they usually apply them in different contexts.

Campaign 2021





View the clip

- Equal Pay Day: 25 March 2021
- Monthly pay gap before tax: 23%
- Slogan: Share tasks equally at home, for equal opportunities at work

On 25 March, ZIJkant organises Equal Pay Day. As a result of the gender pay gap of 23% (gross annual income, 2018), women in Belgium have to work until this day to close their wage gap of the preceding year.

One of the main causes of the gender pay gap is the unequal share of household work and care responsibilities. This was already the case before the world was hit by a pandemic. In these times of lockdown, we might think that homeworking fathers would participate more in the organisation of their households. But several studies show the opposite: while men tend to isolate themselves in separate home offices to handle their videocalls and meetings, women juggle and struggle with their computers on the kitchen table, trying to keep the children busy during their meetings and emptying washing machines.

This unequal share of unpaid work has a big impact on women's careers. Even before COVID, a noticeable shift occurs around the age of 30. When they start having children, women work part-time much more frequently than men do and

	rely much more on parental leaves, putting their careers on hold. Despite the fact that we find ourselves in the year 2021, gender stereotypes still push women towards care responsibilities while men are busy building their careers. The COVID crisis throws us back in time and widens the gender pay gap. For this year's Equal Pay Day campaign, photographer Jef Boes created portraits of real young families in their houses, coping with the COVID situation. A time-lapse shows a moving mother, trying to get her work done in a chaotic setting. In opposition to this "mother in motion", a father is working steadily on his career. In addition to these portraits, a funny clip created by communication agency Mortierbrigade and production company Caviar shows how children interfere with the video calls of their parents. While the reactions are positive when a father is being interrupted, the tone of voice changes when this happens to women. The baseline: being interrupted at work once is cute, being interrupted every day sucks.

Campaign 2020



View the clip.

- Equal Pay Day: 27 March 2020
- Monthly pay gap before tax: 24%
- Slogan: Wait until you retire before having children

On 27 March, it is Equal Pay Day. As a result of the gender pay gap of 24% (gross annual income, 2017), women have to work until this day to close their wage gap of the preceding year.

One of the main causes of the gender pay gap is the impact of children on women's careers. While female starters are paid equally or better than their male colleagues, a noticeable shift occurs around the age of 30. When they start having children, women work part-time much more frequently than men do.
Despite the fact that we find ourselves in the year 2020, gender stereotypes still push women towards care responsibilities while men are busy building their careers.

In a funny and provoking clip, communication agency Mortierbrigade and production company CZAR Brussels advise women to wait until their retirement before having children.

Campaign 2019



View the clip.

- Equal Pay Day: 14 March 2019
- Monthly pay gap before tax: 20%
- Slogan: Share the work, close the pension gap

This year's focus is on the unequal share of unpaid household jobs and paid work. The video by communication agency mortierbrigade and production company CZAR, showcases men and their work in a quirky manner to encourage them to reduce the pay gap. The clip won a Bronze Lion at the International Festival of Creativity in Cannes in the category Craft.

Campaign 2018



View the clip.

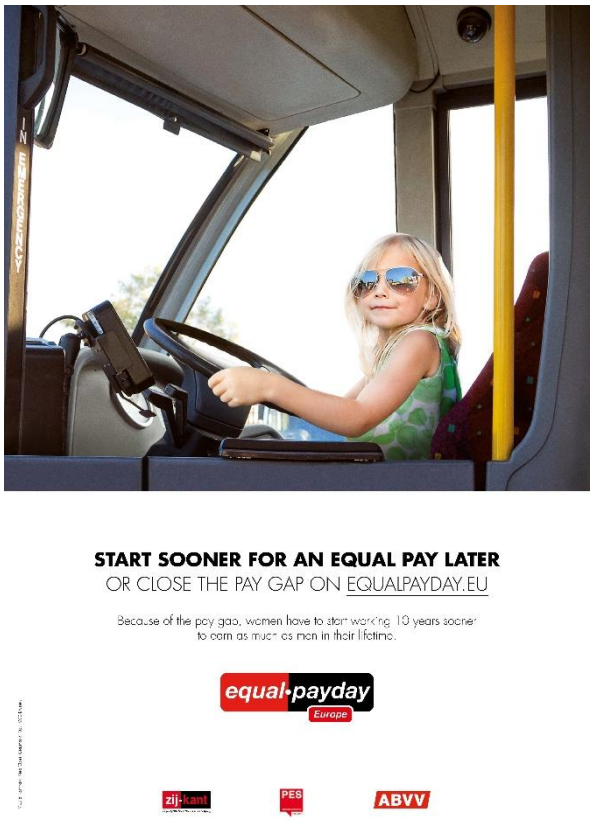
- Equal Pay Day: 14 March 2018
- Monthly pay gap before tax: 20%
- Slogan: Close the gender pay, gap, close the pension gap

ZIJkant launches its 14th campaign in collaboration with PES Women. This year's focus is on the pension gap. The gap between the amounts women and men receive when they retire is 39% in Europe and 25% in Belgium.

The campaign is launched in Brussels on European Equal Pay Day (28 February). An event gathers representatives from women's rights organisations, trade unions and members of national parliaments and MEPs.

The campaign video highlights the problem of the pension pay gap in a funny and thought-provoking way. The creative directors of the campaign this year are Jens Mortier, Joost Berends and Philippe De Ceuster from mortierbrigade. The movie is directed by Joe Vanhoutteghem, the director of photography is Grimm Vandekerckhove and the production company is Czar Brussels.

Campaign 2017



View the clip.

- Equal Pay Day: 14 March 2017
- Monthly pay gap before tax: 20%
- Slogan: Start sooner for an equal pay later

On 22 February 2017, **ZIJkant**, together with PES Women and ABVV launched a European Equal Pay Day campaign.

On the initiative of **ZIJkant**, creative agency mortierbrigade has created a playful short film to depict an unorthodox way to close the gender pay gap – asking girls to start their working careers ten years earlier than men, so they can earn the same as men in their lifetime.

Campaign 2016



View the clip.



View the clip.

- Equal Pay Day: 13 March 2016
- Monthly pay gap before tax: 20%
- Slogan: #InherShoes

The gender pay gap is largely due to part-time work: almost half of employed women does not have a full-time job, compared to only one in ten men. Indeed, women account for four out of every five part-time workers. Even in 2016 women are essentially still taking care of most family and household tasks. More equality and an even distribution of family and household tasks are essential for women to gain access to full-time jobs (and full-time pay). That is why we are asking everyone to put themselves in a woman's shoes and to devote their full attention not to her generous cleavage but to her scanty pay check.

Pay me like a man

On International Women's Day, **ZIJkant**, PES Women and the Dutch PvdA-women launch a European Equal Pay Day campaign video clip, created by mortierbrigade and the production company Czar. In the high-profile clip, Erika Ervin, American actress and transgender model, tells how happy she is to now be a woman, but also the severe sacrifices she made to become one. She refers to the gender pay gap she has experienced since she is a woman. Her motto: "Treat me like a woman, pay me like a man"…

2015 Campaign



View the clip.

- Equal Pay Day on 14 March 2015
- Pay gap in gross monthly wage: 20%
- Slogan: #SpeakUpEPD

In 2015 Belgian women still earn one fifth less than men. But, there is also good news: thanks to our Equal Pay Day action days and as a result of frequent social concertation, the gender disparity in average gross hourly wages of full-time workers partly decreased. In 2001, the wage gap for men and women working full time still amounted to 15%; in 2012, this wage gap decreased to 6%. **ZIJkant** and ABVV want this positive and faster evolution in hourly wages also reflected in the gross monthly wages. One of the major reasons for the pay gap is part-time work. More than 4 out of 5 people who work part time are women. 46% of all female employees work part-time, compared to only 10% of men.

For the creation of the Equal Pay Day campaign spot, **ZIJkant** and ABVV once again relied on the agency mortierbrigade, this year in co-operation with Caviar (production) and MediaMonks (interactive marketing). The result is a real interactive cliché killer, a technical masterpiece telling a double story. In a rather stereotypical commercial British actress Rachel Donovan glorifies a new detergent. But one sees clearly that she speaks in voice-over, and in the repeat of the scene you can hear the undubbed truth about what women really

	want. The video can be seen on TV and on www.equalpayday.be Like Rachel Donovan, **ZIJkant** and ABVV invite all women and men to use #SpeakUpEPD in order to express what women really want. And that is an undeniable signal: equal pay. Woman are fed up to work as hard as men for a smaller salary and they urge all women and men to help close the gender pay gap.The Equal Pay Day messages 2015 are distributed on posters, postcards, stickers, Facebook and Twitter. On Friday 13th and Saturday 14th March, volunteers of **ZIJkant** and ABVV occupy public places in Flanders and Brussels to run their Equal Pay Day campaign.

2014 Campaign



View the clips about fat and black people.

- Equal Pay Day on 18 March 2014
- Pay gap in gross monthly wage: 21%
- Slogan: 'It's a disgrace …'

In 2014 **ZIJkant** and ABVV 'celebrate' the tenth anniversary of Equal Pay Day, but it is not a very festive occasion.

ZIJkant and ABVV believe it's a disgrace that women are still paid less than men. To share their outrage with the general public, employers and policymakers, they developed a disgraceful campaign in collaboration with the communication agency mortierbrigade: "You think it's a disgrace that ginger, bold, black or big people earn less. Why don't you think the same about women …?" The campaign is launched on 7 March 2014 with a large article on the gender pay gap in the national newspaper De Standaard. The website www.equalpayday.be offers a face swap. By changing gender female Facebook users can finally earn 21% more. Men will have to make do with 21% less.
On 18 March 2014 volunteers of **ZIJkant** and ABVV distribute flyers and posters of bold, ginger, big or black men. They construct Injustice Gates to make the unfairness of the gender pay gap more tangible. Men can take the fastlane, women will have to make a detour to reach the same goal.

2013 Campaign



View the clip.

- Equal Pay Day on 20 March 2013
- Pay gap in gross monthly wage: 22%
- Slogan: 'Extreme Housekeeping. Sometimes a man gotta do what a woman usually does'

Equal Pay Day 2013 raised awareness among the public on the impact of part time work by a large number of women on their pay and career perspectives. With our campaign 'Extreme Housekeeping' we suggested men to take a larger part in household duties so that their partners can work full time for a full wage.

The advertising agency Mortierbrigade created a sensational clip. They invited four-time world champion kickboxing Semmy Schilt to demonstrate that real men break gender stereotypes in an original way. As a natural born action hero he cleans the house and prepares dinner. Mike Dyson and Spray Liotta figure as sidekicks. Fans will recognise about every cliché from the action film genre and find some very interesting suggestions to close the pay gap.

2012 Campaign



View the clip.

- Equal Pay Day on 20 March 2012
- Pay gap in gross monthly wage: 22%
- Slogan: 'Close the pay gap. Become a porn actress'

Equal Pay Day 2012 focused on the link between study, career and pay. In collaboration with the Flemish ABVV and with the support of Equal Opportunities Flanders and the Belgian Institute for the Equality of Women and Men, **ZIJkant** designed the brochure 'Your studies now also determine your pay later'. This message was directed at youth and the need for well thought choices concerning study and career, a balanced combination of work and family, and the impact of family decisions on pay and one's further career.

ZIJkant and advertising agency Mortierbrigade launched a controversial Equal Pay Day clip under the motto 'Close the pay gap. Become a porn actress'. In the video, former American porn icon Sasha Grey talks about her career and about the choices she made as a young woman, while her former colleagues perform porn in the background. Or so it seems... The clip aimed to encourage girls to take the future into their own hands, and not to blindly follow traditional gender roles.

2011 Campaign



View the clip.

- Equal Pay Day on 25 March 2011
- Pay gap in gross monthly wage: 23%
- Slogan: 'To earn less is to work longer'

The 2011 campaign made the link between wages and pensions, and aimed to make people aware of the fact that their career and their pay determine their pension. The poster showed a spirited mature woman who earned less than men her entire life, and thus was forced to work longer for a decent pension.

ZIJkant also made a clip with 4 thumping grannies working with power tools to the tune of the dance hit 'Satisfaction'. The clip became a world hit and has already been viewed more than two million times on YouTube. And there was also professional praise, with a Golden Cub for the best Belgian commercial of 2011 and three nominations at the Cannes Advertising Festival.

During the campaign, the film 'Made in Dagenham' was shown at cinemas, a film about the wage struggle of female British workers at Ford during the sixties. In Belgium, Equal Pay Day was co-promoter of this feel-good film, a real Equal Pay Day movie.

2010 Campaign



View the clip.

- Equal Pay Day on 26 March 2010
- Pay gap in gross monthly wage: 23%
- Slogan: ‘You’ll have to make do as long as your wife earns 23% too little’

'Everyone will benefit if the pay gap disappears' was the core message of Equal Pay Day 2010. The campaign was explicitly directed at men: four creative posters and a web ad showed how they too suffer the consequences of the pay gap in their family. Thus, the campaign called upon men to contribute to the fight for equal pay for men and women.

2009 Campaign



- Equal Pay Day on 27 March 2009
- Pay gap in gross monthly wage: 24%
- Slogan: 'Women work for free from 3:05 pm'

The fifth edition was developed around the stroke of the clock at 3:05 pm. Since the pay gap is 24%, a simple calculation reveals that on a 9-to-5 working day, women work for free from 3:05 pm. The message also appeared in several media during the campaign week before Equal Pay Day.
At the stroke of 3:05 a radio commercial called on women to stop working, and via a unique Facebook application, users could 'donate' their status to Equal Pay Day, so at 3:05 the message automatically appeared: "It's 3:05. From now on, women work for free."

2008 Campaign



View the clip.

- Equal Pay Day on 31 March 2008
- Pay gap in gross monthly wage: 25%
- Slogan: 'Women are still on sale'

In the fourth campaign, we not only pleaded for a closing of the pay gap, but also for improving (the predominantly low) women's wages. On the poster, a woman was advertised as a bargain, with a 25% discount. The message was clear: women's wages are on sale throughout the year.

This time the web ad was also shown via public broadcasting as a public interest message. Hundreds of thousands of TV viewers were able to view dozens of men going wild in their search for women in the office, as if it were the first day of sales.

2007 Campaign



View the four clips: film 1, film 2, film 3, film 4.

- Equal Pay Day on 30 March 2007
- Pay gap in gross monthly wage: 24%
- Slogan: 'It's not hormones, it's the difference in pay'

Thanks to previous Equal Pay Day campaigns, the first Belgian pay gap report was published in 2007. Finally, we had official figures to support our demands.

The 2007 campaign was full of humour. With a close-up of a woman in tears and the accompanying slogan: the message was clear: the woman was not menstruating, she had just seen her payslip. Filmmaker Fien Troch again contributed to the campaign with four hilarious films in which women release their pay gap frustrations on their environment. These ads were also critically acclaimed, including bronze at the CCB Awards.

2006 Campaign



View the clip.

- Equal Pay Day on 31 March 2006
- Pay gap in gross monthly wage: 24%
- Slogan: 'Stupid cow, paying women 24% less is an insult'

This campaign shocked the public, which was our intention. The idea was to visualise the insult that women undergo constantly by earning less than men. The poster depicted a woman with 'stupid cow' on her name badge and the accompanying web ad was called 'Executive Cow'.

For this ad – in which a young woman is subjected to one insult after another at her workplace – **ZIJkant**, **ABVV**, communication agency mortierbrigade and director Fien Troch won the Bronze Lion in the category 'Public Awareness Messages' at the Cannes Advertising Festival.

2005 Campaign

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- Equal Pay Day on 31 March 2005
- Pay gap in gross monthly wage: 24% *(correction in 2007 to 28%)*
- Slogan: ‘Louise finally earns as much as a man’

The first Equal Pay Day campaign was striking and effective. Our central figure 'Louise' almost became 'Louis', with a beard and without hair, hoping to finally earn as much as a man.
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Contact

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