

December 2025 Issue

THE PINK PRICE TAG



KIFFY NWOSU

WHY DOES THE PINK RAZOR COST MORE?

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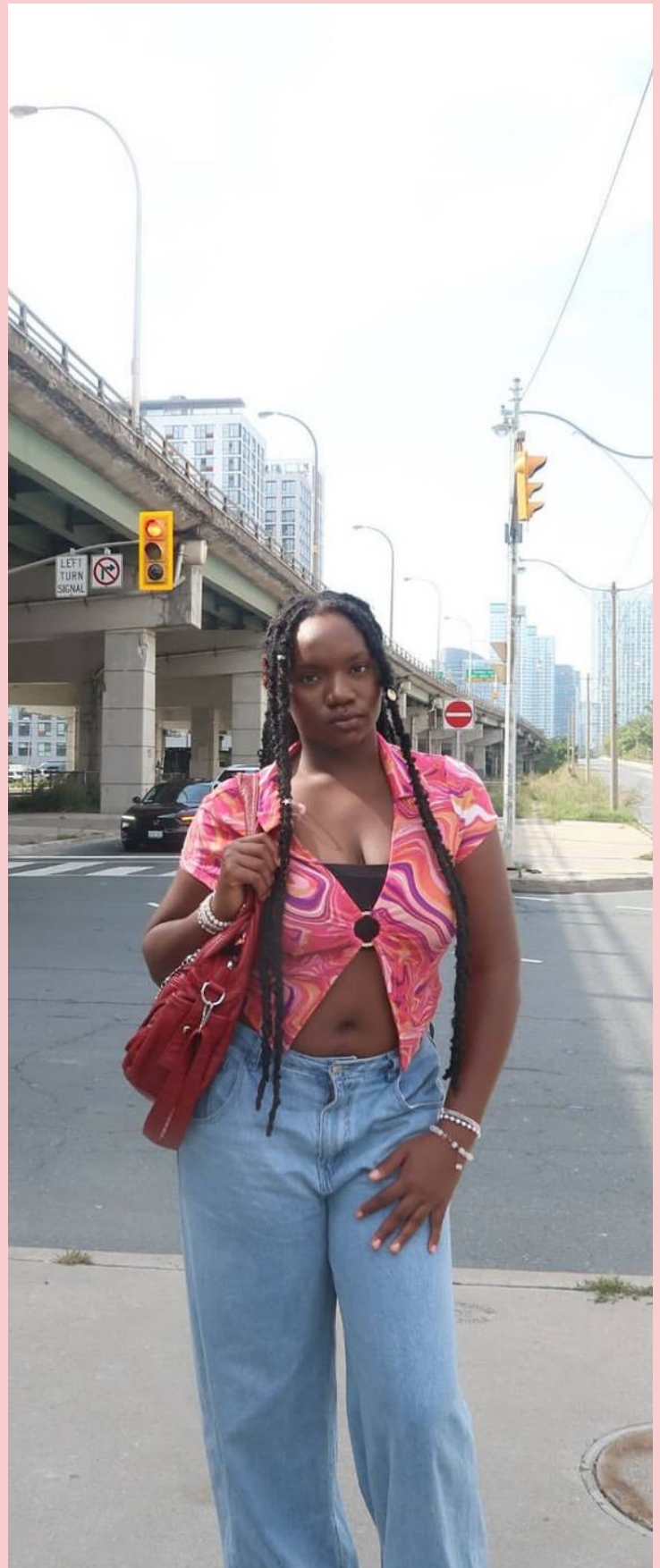
FROM *THE* EDITOR

Welcome to The Pink Price Tag. This project was created for my Gender, Media, and Communication class, and honestly, the Pink Tax was something I had heard about for years but never really looked into until now. Once I started researching it for this assignment, I realized just how often I see price differences in my own life and how many of my friends have noticed the same thing without knowing it had a name.

Working on this issue opened my eyes to how common gender-based pricing actually is, and how little it's talked about in mainstream media. My goal with this magazine is to make the Pink Tax impossible to ignore. I want young women and girls to understand what's happening, why it matters, and how we can shop smarter and push back.

Lifebachukwu Swogu

Editor-in-Chief



IN THIS ISSUE

Dive into the hidden costs of being a woman. From razor pricing to shampoo markups, The Pink Price Tag exposes the everyday products that cost more simply because they're marketed to us. Learn how companies use color, branding, and packaging to justify higher prices and what you can do to avoid paying the extra "pink fee."



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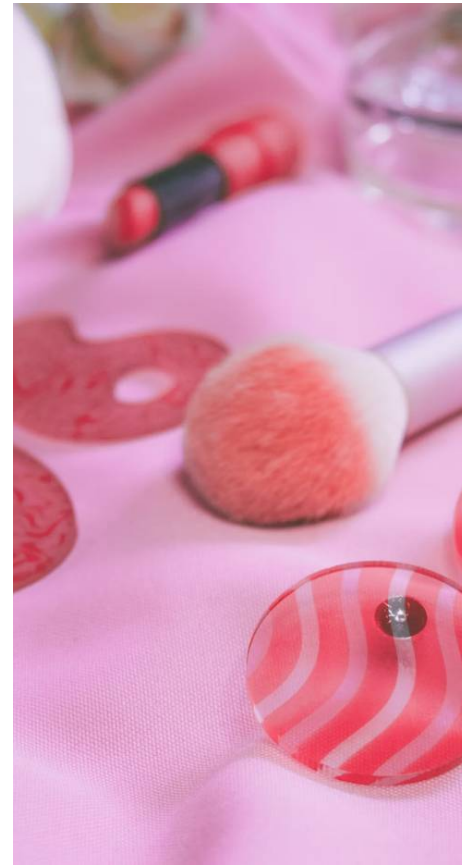


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WHAT EVEN IS THE PINK TAX?

Most people have heard of the Pink Tax, but far fewer can clearly explain what it actually is. The name sounds like some kind of government fee or official tax placed on women, but the Pink Tax isn't a literal tax at all. Instead, it's a widespread and often invisible pattern of gender-based price differences, where products marketed toward women cost more than nearly identical versions marketed toward men. These differences appear in everyday purchases—razors, deodorant, shampoo, clothing, toys, and even services like dry cleaning and haircuts. The Pink Tax is essentially the price of being a woman in a marketplace shaped by gendered marketing, historical norms, and corporate pricing strategies.

Researchers have been studying the Pink Tax for decades, but one of the most comprehensive examinations came from the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs. Their 2015 report compared nearly 800 products and found that women's items cost an average of 7% more than men's versions across all categories (New York City Department of Consumer Affairs, 2015). In personal care products—razors, shaving cream, shampoo—women paid about 13% more. These differences may look small on a store shelf, but they add up over a lifetime of buying necessities.

To understand how the Pink Tax works, it helps to look at real examples. A woman's pack of disposable razors might cost \$1 to \$3 more than the men's pack sitting right beside it, even though the only difference is the color and the packaging. Deodorants marketed to women often contain the same ingredients as men's deodorants but are priced higher simply because they are labeled "for her." Even children's toys aren't exempt—products marketed to girls tend to cost more than those marketed to boys, despite having identical functions or materials. This shows that the Pink Tax is not about higher manufacturing costs; it's about marketing, branding, and what companies believe consumers will pay.

PHOTO BY [FIRDAUS ROSLAN](#) ON [UNSPASH](#)

WHAT EVEN IS THE PINK TAX?

(CONTINUED)

But products are only one part of the Pink Tax. Services also frequently cost more for women. Dry cleaners often charge more to clean women's shirts, even when they are the same fabric and similar sizes as men's shirts. Hair salons routinely list "women's haircuts" at a higher starting price, regardless of hair length or styling. These added costs accumulate over time, meaning women spend thousands more over a lifetime simply because of how items are marketed and categorized. Another important piece of understanding the Pink Tax is how it affects women's financial well-being. Because women already face gender wage gaps and are more likely to earn less over their lifetimes, the added financial burden of higher-priced everyday items reinforces economic inequality. According to Consumer Reports (2024), many women don't even realize they're paying more because the price differences are so normalized in stores and online. This subtle, hidden nature of the Pink Tax is part of what makes it so frustrating. It is an inequality that feels both everywhere and nowhere obvious when pointed out, but often overlooked.

Media coverage of the Pink Tax tends to focus on a few dramatic examples like a viral receipt, a shocking toy price comparison but young women in my survey said that these stories don't go deep enough. They want to know why this is happening, how it affects them, and what they can do about it. With the Pink Tax appearing across so many marketplace categories, understanding it is the first step toward avoiding it and pushing for policy change.

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REAL LIFE EXAMPLES



[deleted]. (2021). [product] pink tax [Photograph]. Reddit, r/pointlesslygendered.



fyonn. (2018). [Photograph posted in r/pics]. Reddit. <https://www.reddit.com/r/pics/>



BrokenAndBeautiful. (2020). Used this example to teach my male friend about the "pink tax" [Photograph]. Reddit, r/pointlesslygendered.

"The pink tax is real, but only because people (mostly boomers) are willing to pay more for the same product because it says "women's" on it, the only way to get rid of it is if everyone stopped buying it, then businesses would be forced to lower the price."

--Reddit user

EVEN MORE EXMAPLES OF THE PINK TAX



DialDiva. (2025). [Post about pink tax] [Photograph]. Reddit, r/GirlGamers.



AlysonBurgers. (2023). Seriously? The "pink tax" on puppy toys?!? [Photograph]. Reddit, r/Feminism.



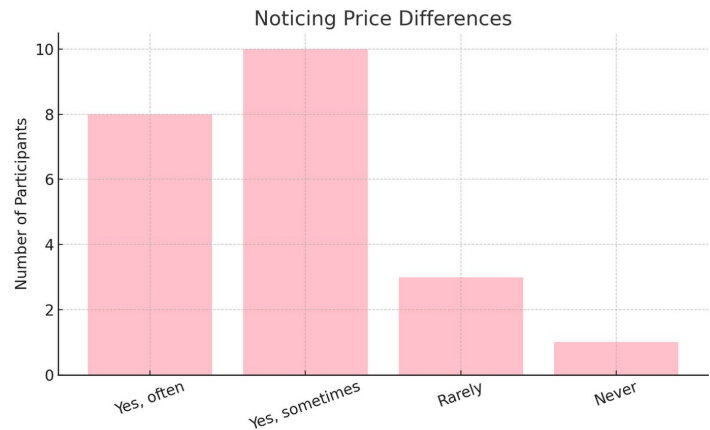
OddCommieKitty. (2019). When people say the "pink tax" isn't real [Photograph]. Reddit, r/pointlesslygendered.

"The pink tax doesn't exist because of the chemistry of the color, but rather because of how femininity is marketed and how the market perceives the aesthetic or emotional value of a product. But it depends on each company and its pricing strategy"
--Reddit user

WHO EVEN KNOWS THEIR TAXES ARE PINK?

In my survey of 22 participants, most had heard of the term Pink Tax, but the majority admitted they didn't fully understand what it meant. Some recognized it vaguely from TikTok or social media, while others said they had only heard it mentioned by friends.

Yet here's the interesting part: even though many students couldn't clearly define the Pink Tax, almost all of them said they've noticed price differences between men's and women's products. Razors, shampoo, deodorant, clothing, haircuts you name it. So, people see the Pink Tax long before they realize it has a name. This disconnect is exactly why the Pink Tax continues to slip under the radar. When a women's razor is two dollars more than the men's version next to it, most shoppers assume it's just branding or style. When a "women's" deodorant costs more but contains the same ingredients as the men's, people chalk it up to scent or packaging. And when dry cleaners or salons charge different prices based on gender, people assume it's normal even when the services are exactly the same.

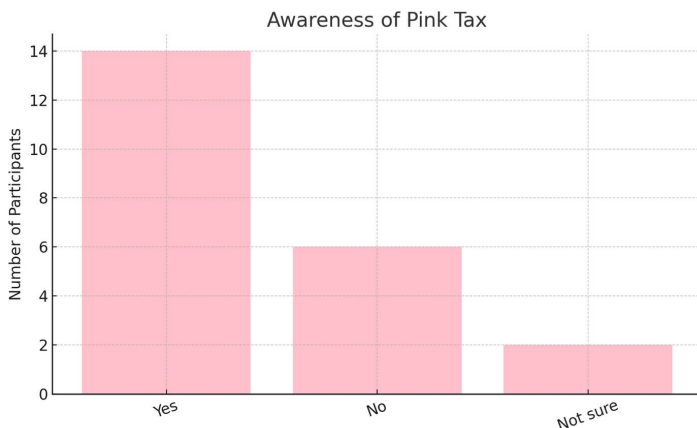


Distribution of Students response to whether they notice price differences between products marketed towards males vs females

When I asked students whether they actually noticed gender-based price differences, the responses were striking. Eighteen out of twenty-two said yes, either often or sometimes. This means that the majority of young people are encountering the Pink Tax without necessarily having the language to identify it. They see it, they feel it, but they don't always know why it is happening which mirrors my own experiences and the conversations I have had with friends. One of the clearest signs that students perceive the Pink Tax is in the way they shop. More than half of the participants, thirteen people said they sometimes buy the men's version of a product because it's cheaper. This behavior shows two things: first, they've noticed the pattern; and second, they've learned to adapt in order to avoid overpaying. To me, this is one of the most telling findings. You shouldn't need a degree in gender studies to make sense of the Pink Tax yet so many people switch to men's products just to save money. Students are essentially being pushed toward products that weren't even marketed to them, simply because choosing the "women's" option means paying extra.

The emotional reaction to these price differences is just as revealing. Several participants reported feeling annoyed, confused, or outright frustrated when comparing men's and women's products. This frustration reflects more than just irritation over a few dollars, it reflects the underlying message that femininity comes with a cost. And it's not just students in my survey who feel this way.

The conversations I've had with friends often sound almost identical: Why is the pink razor more expensive? Why does women's deodorant cost more for the same ingredients? These questions come up naturally because the unfairness is so obvious once you start noticing it. Even on Reddit, especially in communities like r/pointlesslygendered, r/Feminism, and r/GirlGamers, people express the exact same feelings. Users post photos of identical "men's" and "women's" products with price differences and caption them with disbelief, annoyance, or sarcasm reactions that perfectly match the emotional responses from my survey.



Students response to their survey question on the awareness of the pink

Another important part of understanding the Pink Tax is looking at its long-term financial impact. A price difference of one or two dollars might seem minor in the moment, but when these differences appear across deodorant, razors, haircuts, laundry services, clothing, shampoo, and even children's toys, they compound into a significant financial burden over time. According to studies like the NYC Department of Consumer Affairs report, women pay thousands more over a lifetime for nearly identical goods.

This issue becomes especially harmful for young women who are already navigating student loans, entry-level wages, and the gender pay gap. When my survey participants said they felt "nickel and dimed" just for being female, they weren't exaggerating the math backs them up.



PINK TAX SURVIVAL GUIDE: HOW TO OUTSMART GENDER-BASED PRICING

THE PINK TAX ISN'T GOING ANYWHERE... BUT NEITHER ARE WE. BEFORE YOU SPEND ANOTHER DOLLAR ON A "WOMEN'S" PRODUCT THAT COSTS MORE FOR NO REASON, FLIP THROUGH THIS GUIDE. W



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One of the simplest strategies is to look past the packaging. Marketers know how to make products seem different even when they aren't. For example, many "women's" razors are the exact same design as the men's version, but with a curved pastel handle and flowery branding. Shampoo and conditioner marketed to women often include words like "silky," "touchably soft," or "nourishing," while men's bottles use phrases like "3-in-1," "fresh," or "cool sport." Flip both bottles around, and you'll often find the same base ingredients. In other words, the difference is mostly marketing, not function. Shopping by ingredients instead of aesthetics can easily save you several dollars per product.

Another important tip is to compare unit prices, not just shelf prices. Stores sometimes hide gender-based price differences by reducing the quantity of women's products. A women's deodorant might cost the same as the men's version but contain half an ounce less. When you compare price per ounce, the "pink" version is almost always more expensive.

You can also save money by avoiding products labeled as "for women" altogether. Many consumers in my survey admitted they simply buy men's products because they are cheaper, and in most cases, they work just as well. If a men's razor shaves smoothly and costs less, why pay more? If a men's shampoo smells good and is half the price, it's a win.

When it comes to services, the same rule applies: ask questions. Many salons and dry cleaners still rely on outdated gender-based pricing systems. A "women's haircut" might cost more even if the client has short hair, while a man with long hair pays less. The solution? Ask for pricing based on hair length, not gender. More places are shifting toward gender-neutral pricing because customers speak up.

One of the most powerful tools you have as a consumer is awareness. Once you know the Pink Tax exists, it becomes almost impossible not to notice. Suddenly, the price difference in razors looks absurd. And that awareness leads to smarter shopping, one that challenges the assumptions companies have made about female customers for decades.

Is *Shrinkflation* Gendered Too

Most consumers have experienced shrinkflation without realizing it. One day your deodorant stick looks a little shorter, your shampoo bottle is a little lighter, or your box of tampons contains two fewer units than last month, all while the price stays the same or even increases. Shrinkflation is a marketing strategy companies use to cut costs without raising prices in a way that sparks immediate backlash. But when you pair shrinkflation with gender-based pricing, a bigger issue surfaces: This becomes especially concerning when you consider how often shrinkflation affects products that women disproportionately purchase. Personal care items like shampoo, conditioner, body wash, and lotion are some of the most shrinkflation-prone items on store shelves. These products are also major categories where we already see the Pink Tax at work. So when shrinkflation hits these products, women get caught in a double bind: higher prices and shrinking quantities for most women, making about the same while paying more.

Take razors, for example, one of the classic symbols of the Pink Tax. Women's razors often cost more, even though they're nearly identical to men's. But shrinkflation can add a second layer of pricing inequality. A pack that once included five razors may now include four, with no clear warning on the packaging. One recent study found that the median package size shrank by 11%, pushing up the unit price by about 9%.

A bottle of shave gel may look the same on the outside but contain fewer ounces. If the men's version hasn't shrunk at the same rate, women end up paying more for less compared to men not once, but twice. And because shrinkflation is subtle by design, consumers rarely catch it unless they're actively looking for changes in weight, size, or unit price.

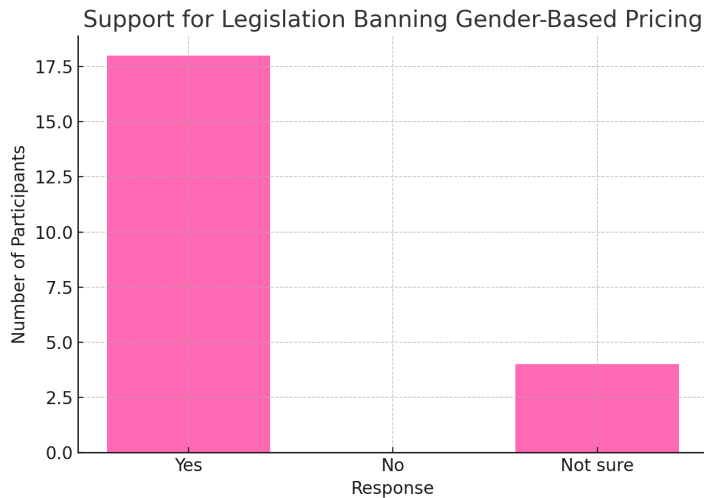
Data on gender-specific shrinkflation is emerging, but consumer reports and online communities have already begun connecting the dots. On Reddit, especially in forums like *r/pointlesslygendered* and *r/Feminism*, users regularly post side-by-side comparisons showing women's products shrinking faster or offering fewer units than their male-marketed equivalents. The pattern aligns with what we know about the Pink Tax: companies charge more for feminine branding because they know it works. Shrinkflation becomes another quiet tactic layered onto this strategy.



Photography by Jaya Shah

Shrinkflation on its own is frustrating, but when it hits products already affected by the Pink Tax, the impact becomes impossible to ignore. Women end up paying more for items that cost more and contain less, simply because of the way these products are packaged and marketed. What makes this even more concerning is that most people don't notice the changes until they compare old and new versions side-by-side. The combination of gender-based pricing and shrinking quantities creates a silent financial burden that many women absorb without realizing it. Recognizing this pattern is the first step toward pushing back.

SHOULD THE PINK TAX BE BANNED?



When I asked survey participants whether they believed gender-based pricing should be addressed through legislation, the responses were almost unanimous. Eighteen out of twenty-two respondents said yes, they would support laws banning the Pink Tax altogether. Four participants were unsure, but not a single person opposed the idea. This is one of the clearest indicators from the survey that young consumers are not only aware of unfair pricing, they want something to be done about it.

This level of agreement is significant. Students come from different backgrounds, majors, and financial situations, yet almost everyone felt that gender-based price differences were unfair enough to justify government action.

Across the United States and in other parts of the world, there are real efforts underway to end gender-based pricing, the unfair markup on women's products often called the Pink Tax. Some jurisdictions have adopted laws to make this kind of price discrimination illegal, while others are considering bills that would create statewide or even nationwide bans.

In the U.S., a major milestone came in 2020, when New York State Legislature passed a law banning gender-based price discrimination. Starting September 30, 2020, businesses in New York are prohibited from charging different prices for goods or services that are "substantially similar" solely based on the gender of the intended buyer.



Not long after, the state of California State Legislature followed suit. On January 1, 2023, California Assembly Bill 1287 (AB 1287) took effect. The law bans businesses from charging different prices for "substantially similar" consumer products based solely on gender – closing a loophole that had previously exempted retail products. Now, under California law, products targeted at women cannot legally cost more than equivalent products for men.

At the federal level, there have been attempts to codify a nationwide ban. The Pink Tax Repeal Act has been introduced in Congress multiple times, most recently in 2024. This bill would make it unlawful to sell or offer for sale any two consumer products or services that are "substantially similar" at different prices based on gender. It would give enforcement power to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and state attorneys general.

SHOULD THE PINK TAX BE BANNED? (CONT'D)

However, despite these legislative efforts, there is no federal law yet that bans the Pink Tax nationwide and pricing decisions remain mostly under the control of private businesses.

Because there are differences across states, the impact for consumers can vary widely. In states like New York and California, shoppers now have legal protection when they purchase substantially similar products or services marketed to different genders. In other states, however, women may still face higher prices. This patchwork means that awareness – like what your survey measured – remains essential. Even where laws exist, many consumers might not know their rights or may simply not notice the difference until they compare similar products side by side.

In addition to laws, advocacy organizations and consumer-rights groups continue to raise awareness about gender-based price discrimination. On a global level, institutions such as the United Nations have called for actions to ensure women have equal access to goods and services, free from discriminatory price penalties.



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