



The Status of Black Women

in the United States

Executive Summary

STATUS OF WOMEN
IN THE STATES



ABOUT THIS REPORT

The **Status of Black Women in the United States** builds on IWPR’s long-standing report series, **The Status of Women in the States**, which since 1996 has provided data on women nationally and for all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The **Status of Black Women in the United States** seeks to address the gap in research on Black women’s well-being and to provide data that can inform policy and programmatic changes to benefit Black women and their families. The report was produced in collaboration with the National Domestic Workers Alliance’s work to amplify the historical and current contributions of Black domestic workers to the broader domestic worker movement. The **Status of Black Women in the United States** analyzes data disaggregated by gender as well as by race and ethnicity for all 50 states and the District of Columbia across six topical areas: political participation, employment and earnings, work and family, poverty and opportunity, health and well-being, and violence and safety. In addition, the report includes basic demographic data for each state and a set of policy recommendations. It was funded by the National Domestic Workers Alliance, with additional funding provided by the NoVo Foundation and the Ford Foundation.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN’S POLICY RESEARCH

The Institute for Women’s Policy Research conducts and communicates research to inspire public dialogue, shape policy, and improve the lives and opportunities of women of diverse backgrounds, circumstances, and experiences. The Institute works with policymakers, scholars, and public interest groups to design, execute, and disseminate research and to build a diverse network of individuals and organizations that conduct and use women-oriented policy research. IWPR’s work is supported by foundation grants, government grants and contracts, donations from individuals, and contributions from organizations and corporations. IWPR is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization that also works in affiliation with the women’s studies and public policy and public administration programs at The George Washington University.

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with support from:

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FOREWORD

Alicia Garza

Special Projects Director

The National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) was founded in 2007 at the first United States Social Forum in Atlanta, Georgia. The creation of this Alliance in the same city where Dorothy Bolden initiated the powerful National Domestic Workers Union of America in 1968, was nothing short of historic—a multiracial group of women, multiple languages being spoken simultaneously, from nine different organizations, who decided that we were more powerful together than we were on our own.

For nearly ten years now, the NDWA has been supporting local organizations of domestic workers to amplify their voice and their impact at the national level. We are now 20,000 workers organized, in 36 cities in 17 states, powered by more than 50 local affiliate organizations and two local NDWA chapters in Atlanta, Georgia and Durham, North Carolina.

Through organizing, leadership development, and political education, domestic workers are building a powerful movement that advances the original vision of Dorothy Bolden’s National Domestic Workers Union of America. Our work has focused largely on winning rights, respect and dignity for domestic workers. We have won seven statewide bills in six years that have guaranteed necessary protections for the workers who care for the ones we love the most. We have pushed government to sharpen the rules that protect those who make all other work possible. We have strengthened protections against trafficking and other abuses that women in the domestic work industry face.

Domestic work is rooted in the legacy of slavery. Enslaved Black women were forced to provide unpaid labor under brutal conditions for white landowners. While white women’s work was relegated to inside the home, enslaved Black women’s work was both inside and outside of the home. Outside the home, enslaved Black women were responsible for various aspects of agricultural labor. Inside the home, enslaved Black women were responsible for tending to white families as wet nurses, cooks, housekeepers, and caregivers, and were subject to multiple forms of violence—including sexual and emotional abuse.



Caring for the families of others often meant that enslaved Black women lacked agency and access to caregiving for their own families. Under slavery, Black women were not empowered to care for or make decisions for their own families, at the same time that they were forced to care for the families of their enslavers. Black women’s children were sold from their arms. Marriages were tenuous as couples were sold and separated.

As women, Black women were not afforded the same protections as white women who were relegated to maintaining the family and the household. Black women performed agricultural work as well as work inside two homes—their own and that of their enslaver. As Black people, Black women were not afforded the same protections as white people, including the right to vote, the right to address grievances against the government, the right to property, and the right to freedom. Instead, Black people were designated by the United States Constitution as three fifths of a human being—for the purposes of apportioning power and influence to those who bought and sold enslaved people.

White women were able to enter and succeed in the workforce largely because of the work of Black women and other women of color. Without Black women’s labor inside of white households, white women would not have been able to break (some) of the barriers of sexism that relegated the value of women’s contributions to the sphere of the home.

Though slavery was legally abolished in the United States in 1865, the conditions that existed under slavery continue to persist today. Black women continue to be at a severe disadvantage in many aspects of our democracy and our economy. Whether one examines Black women’s access to health care, Black women’s earnings, or Black women’s access to much needed social supports like childcare and eldercare, Black women are getting the short end of the stick—despite having contributed so much to the building of this nation.

The result is a racialized economy where Black women are losing ground. The care economy was built, in large part, from Black women’s labor. Today, the care economy is one of the fastest growing sectors of the US economy, overall. Yet, in the fastest growing sector of the economy, wages are not growing. The people who care for those we care for the most are underpaid, undervalued, and under-protected. While the care workforce today is comprised largely of immigrant women from Central America, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia, Black immigrant and Black American women are still concentrated in the sector. Thirty percent of the workforce that cares for us are Black American women.

Three years ago, we had a vision to deepen our work amongst Black domestic workers, both US-born and immigrant, in order to help strengthen the domestic worker movement. Because domestic work is rooted in the legacy of slavery, we know we have more work to do to ensure that Black women are organized and contributing to the movement that we helped to shape, historically and in the contemporary

moment. To reshape our economy and our democracy so that every care worker is cared for in return, we know we have to build a multiracial, multinational movement. Black domestic workers are critical to this movement because of our history in this sector, and because of shared history of struggle against racism, enslavement, and patriarchy.

In 2013, we dreamt of building an organizing project inside of the NDWA to organize and build the leadership capacity of Black domestic workers called We Dream in Black (WeDIB). If Black women are going to lead the fight to transform our democracy and our economy, we have to invest in their capacity to do so. In our work, we provide support for Black domestic workers to be effective organizers that write and change policy and culture, to break down the barriers that keep Black immigrants and Black Americans divided, and to build our power across the diaspora.

Today, WeDIB is comprised of four NDWA chapters in New York City, Seattle, Durham and Atlanta, alongside affiliate members in Miami and Boston. WeDIB provides a critical opportunity for Black women across the diaspora to join together to understand what connects us and how our differences can be leveraged for power. Our motto is “across the diaspora, our organizing is our power.” Bringing together Black American and Black immigrant women to fight for each other can serve as a model for the rest of the domestic worker movement, as well as contribute to it.

In 2016, our team anchored an initiative to have half a million conversations with poor and low income women, women of color, and immigrant women across the country around an agenda of what we call “whole person politics.” Together, we talked with more than one million people who share a different vision for our country, rooted in the empowerment of those upon whom we depend on to provide care for our families and the people we love. We have brought together Black women from across the diaspora to discuss what unites us; to be courageous enough to talk about what keeps us separated, and to devise plans to build our power. We have partnered with labor unions, grassroots organizations, and other community institutions to build new relationships, to change the narrative about our lives and what we are facing, and to make the case for why Black women must be in the leadership of social movements in the 21st century. The Status of Black Women in the United States is one step in that journey.

FOREWORD (cont.)

This report, the Status of Black Women in the United States, is our first attempt to have a holistic view of the conditions that Black American women are experiencing across the country, with an eye towards Black women in the care industry. It is our hope that this research supports on the ground organizing work across the nation, and helps form the basis for new policy, practice and legislation that supports the well-being of Black caregivers, so that all caregivers can be cared for in return. Using available data, we have attempted to paint a picture of the lived experiences of millions of Black women across the United States.

There are also important gaps in this report--this data does not include the experiences of Black immigrant women, nor does it provide information on the experiences of Black transgender women in the care industry. Organizations like the Black Alliance for Just Immigration have contributed to the field by filling in these gaps and developing our understanding of what Black people in the United States are facing by making sure that Black immigrant life in the United States is being highlighted and is shaping our efforts to improve the lives of all Black people. Similarly, organizations like Transgender Gender Variant Intersex Justice Project have a focus on improving the lives of Black transgender women, particularly those who are currently or formerly incarcerated. As a result, the experiences highlighted here are merely a snapshot of the experiences of Black women born in the United States, and is not intended to be portrayed as the definitive experience of Black women. Instead, we hope that the data contained within this report can give us a better sense of what some Black women experience in the economy and in our democracy, and can provide an introduction to the conditions that some Black American families are facing. There is more work to do to bring together these experiences to create a more nuanced picture of Black life in the United States.

There is much at stake for all of us. A shifting political landscape has put Black women even more at risk for disenfranchisement and marginalization. A new movement has taken power at the state and federal level, and have quickly moved to dismantle already insufficient protections for cisgender women, transgender and gender nonconforming communities, immigrant communities, and Muslim communities. Domestic workers are vulnerable because of their exclusion from most federal labor protections, as well as ongoing attacks on labor regulations by an ultra-conservative political majority with an agenda to

increase the power, influence, and profits of corporations. Black domestic workers are particularly vulnerable because of the ways in which racial disparities, gender discrimination, and immigration status serve to further marginalize and disempower the very people who power our economy and push our democracy to be the best that it can be.

The intention behind this report is to make visible the experiences of Black women in our economy and our democracy. We hope that the information and recommendations contained within can be a contribution to a social movement that works hard each day to bring forward the world we know that we all deserve. Ultimately, we aim to contribute to that movement by ensuring that Black women--cisgender, transgender, gender non conforming, immigrant, low income, disabled, US born, with children or without--are at the center of an economy and a democracy that works for all of us.

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IWPR wishes to acknowledge two reports that were especially helpful resources: *Black Women in the United States 2016* (Black Women's Roundtable 2016) and the Center for American Women and Politics and Higher Heights Leadership Fund's report *Voices. Votes. Leadership. The Status of Black Women in American Politics* (Dittmar 2015).

Dr. Heidi Hartmann, IWPR President, reviewed the report and provided helpful feedback. Dr. Barbara Gault, Vice President and Executive Director, and Dr. Cynthia Hess, Associate Director of Research, also reviewed the report and provided guidance throughout the project. Julie Anderson, Senior Research Associate, contributed to the data collection and assisted with project management. Elyse Shaw, Senior Research Associate, also offered helpful input on the report. Jennifer Clark, Director of Communications, and Mallory Mpare-Quarles, Communications Manager, Production & Website, provided editorial assistance. Dr. Jeffrey Hayes, Program Director of Job Quality and Income Security, conducted data analysis on access to paid sick days. Former IWPR Data Analyst Jenny Xia, Research Assistant Emma Williams-Baron, Mariam K. Chamberlain Fellows Melanie Kruevelis and Gladys McLean, and Research Interns Emily Molloy and Bo Donoghue provided research assistance.

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Introduction.



Why the Status of Black Women in the United States?

Black women make essential contributions to the productivity, wealth, and success of the nation. For many years, Black women have supported their families and served as leaders in their communities and society at large.

Black women played an integral role in the fight to desegregate public schools in the 1950s and 1960s, the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and multiple movements to ensure equal treatment for Black and brown women and men. Today, Black women are one of the most active groups of voters in the country, and Black women and girls are creating greater opportunities for their communities through their leadership in social movements such as Black Lives Matter, Say Her Name, and the national domestic workers' movement for fair labor protections and dignified working conditions.

Yet, beginning with the stark exploitation of slavery in the seventeenth century, Black women's contributions to U.S. society and the economy have been undervalued and undercompensated. Black women, along with multiracial women, have the highest labor force participation rate in the nation among women, but at all educational levels Black women are concentrated in lower-paying jobs than most other groups of workers. When working full-time, year-round, Black women earn just 64 cents to every dollar earned by comparable White men. In addition, Black women are overrepresented in the service sector, doing crucial work to care for children, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities while earning low wages and receiving few benefits. Black women also experience high poverty rates as well as high rates of victimization from violence.

In the current political and economic context—which includes the spread of anti-union legislation and voter identification laws that can make it more difficult for people of color and low-income individuals to vote, the refusal of states to fully implement the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, and the disproportionate incarceration of Black women—it is essential to elevate Black women's voices and experiences. The Status of Black Women in the United States aims to provide critical data to identify the barriers that Black women face and suggest community investments, programs, and public policies that can lead to positive changes for Black women and their families.

About the Report

In the context of widespread economic inequality, the systematic disenfranchisement of Black communities, and blatant violence against and over-incarceration of Black and brown women, men, and children, Black women are demanding social and economic change with full and equal access to our social institutions and political power. As were their mothers and grandmothers before them, they are essential in building the movements to fight for civil rights, better education and health care, and against police violence and poverty.

Research on and by Black women has brought the challenges and triumphs of Black women's lives to the forefront, highlighting where Black women's hard work and dedication have resulted in increased representation in political office or improved educational attainment and where more needs to be done to lift families from poverty or improve women's working conditions (Collins 2000a; Guy-Sheftall 1995). IWPR's *The Status of Black Women in*

the United States builds on this legacy by expanding what we know about Black women's status across states and across issue areas.

This report analyzes data for all 50 states and the District of Columbia across six topical areas that affect women's lives: political participation, employment and earnings, work and family, poverty and opportunity, health and well-being, and violence and safety. Within each of these areas, various indicators of well-being are explored. While the focus of the report is on the status of Black women, comparisons between Black women and other racial and ethnic groups of women (and men) are presented to contextualize the data. Basic demographic data for each state are also provided. The report concludes with recommendations to improve the status of Black women in the United States.



Key Findings.

The Status of Black Women in the United States identifies a number of key findings:



Black women vote at comparatively high rates and had a higher voting rate than all other groups of men and women during the last two presidential elections.

Black women remain underrepresented at every level of federal and state political office in the United States.

In 2014, Black women composed 6.4 percent of the United States population, but as of August 2016 held only 3.4 percent of seats in the United States Congress and no seats in the U.S. Senate. In state legislatures, Black women held just 3.5 percent of seats. Only two Black women in the country held a position in statewide executive elected office.

More than six in ten (62.2 percent) Black women are in the workforce,

making them one of the two racial/ethnic groups of women with the highest labor force participation rate among women and the only group of women with a higher labor force participation rate than their male counterparts.

Black women's median annual earnings (\$34,000 for those who work full-time, year-round) lag behind most women's and men's earnings in the United States.

Between 2004 and 2014, Black women's real median annual earnings declined by 5.0 percent (Table 2.2). As of 2014, Black women who worked full-time, year-round had median annual earnings that were 64.6 percent of White men's (\$53,000). In Louisiana, the state with the largest gap in earnings between Black women and White men, Black women earned less than half of White men's earnings (46.3 percent).

About 28 percent of employed Black women work in service occupations,

the occupational group with the lowest wages. Jobs in this broad occupational group often lack important benefits such as paid sick days.

Black families depend on Black women's earnings.

Eight out of ten (80.6 percent) Black mothers are breadwinners, who are either the sole earner or earn at least 40 percent of household income.

Quality child care is unaffordable for many Black women.

In all but two states in the country, the average costs of child care exceed 20 percent of Black women's median annual earnings.

While health insurance coverage rates have increased substantially due to the implementation of the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), 16.5 percent of nonelderly Black women in the United States still lacked coverage as of 2014.

Many of the states that place in the bottom third in the country in terms of Black women's health insurance coverage are states in which Medicaid expansion has not been adopted since the implementation of the ACA.

Between 2004 and 2014, the share of Black women with a bachelor's degree or higher increased by 23.9 percent, making Black women the group of women with the second-largest improvement in attainment of higher education during the decade.

In 2014, about 22 percent of Black women aged 25 and older had bachelor's degrees or higher. Black women had higher levels of education than Black men (17 percent), but lower levels of education than Asian/Pacific Islander men and women, men and women of another race or two or more races, and White men and women.

The number of businesses owned by Black women increased by 178 percent between 2002 and 2012, the largest increase among all racial and ethnic groups of women and men.

In 2012, Black women owned 15.4 percent of all women-owned businesses in the United States, a larger share than their share of the female population (12.7 percent). In the District of Columbia, Mississippi, and Georgia, Black women own more than 40 percent of all women-owned businesses. Yet, nationwide, businesses owned by Black women had the lowest average sales per firm among all racial and ethnic groups of women and men, at \$27,753.

Black women experience poverty at higher rates than Black men and women from all other racial/ethnic groups except Native American women.

A quarter of Black women in the United States live in poverty (24.6 percent), compared with 18.9 percent of Black men and 10.8 percent of White women, who have the lowest poverty rate among women.

Black women's average annual heart disease mortality rate declined by 38.5 percent between 1999 and 2013,

although at 177.7 per 100,000 it remains the highest rate among the largest racial and ethnic groups of women.

Black women have the second highest lung cancer mortality rate among the largest racial and ethnic groups of women (35.7 per 100,000),

behind White women (39.9 per 100,000), while having the highest breast cancer mortality rate among all racial and ethnic groups of women (30.2 per 100,000).

Black women's average incidence of AIDS is five times higher than any other racial and ethnic group of women.

However, incidence of AIDS among Black women decreased by 45.1 percent between 2000 and 2013.

Black women experience intimate partner violence at higher rates than women overall.

More than 40 percent of Black women experience physical violence by an intimate partner during their lifetimes (41.2 percent), compared with 31.5 percent of all women.

From a young age, Black girls are disciplined at higher rates than all other groups of girls within public schools.

Black girls composed 45 percent of girls suspended from K-12 schools between 2011 and 2012.

Black women of all ages were twice as likely to be imprisoned as White women in 2014 (109 per 100,000 Black women were imprisoned in state and federal prisons compared with 53 per 100,000 White women).

Among young women, the disparity is especially pronounced: Black women aged 18-19 are four times as likely to be imprisoned as White women of the same age (32 per 100,000 compared with 8 per 100,000).

About the Data

The Status of Black Women in the United States builds on IWPR's long-standing **The Status of Women in the States** report series, which since 1996 has provided data on women nationally and for all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

When developing the project in the mid-1990s, IWPR referred to several sources for guidelines on what to include. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action from the U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women guided some of IWPR's choices of indicators. This document, the result of an official convocation of delegates from around the world, outlines issues of concern to women, rights fundamental to women achieving equality and autonomy, and remaining obstacles to women's advancement. IWPR also worked with state advisory committees between 1996 and 2004 to produce a report for each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia; these committees reviewed their state's report and provided input for improving the project as a whole. The selection of data for this report was informed both by IWPR's previous work on the status of women and by input received from experts in the field.

This report relies on multiple data sources, including data from federal government agencies and nonprofit organizations. The primary data source is the American Community Survey (ACS) from the Minnesota Population Center's Integrated Public Use Microdata Series. The ACS is a large annual survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau of a representative sample of the entire resident population in the United States, including both households and group quarter (GQ) facilities. The ACS has sufficiently large sample sizes to provide data on women disaggregated by race/ethnicity and age at the state level. For this report, IWPR used 2014 data, the most recent available, for most indicators and combined three years of data (2012, 2013, and 2014) when necessary to ensure large enough sample sizes to produce reliable estimates. When examining trends at the national level in Black women's status over the last decade, IWPR used 2004 ACS data for comparison.

Some of the differences reported among states—or between a state and the nation—are likely to be statistically significant. That is, they are unlikely to have occurred by chance and probably represent a true difference among states or between a state and the country as a whole. In other cases, these differences are too small to be statistically significant and are likely to have occurred by chance. IWPR did not calculate or report measures of statistical significance. Generally, the larger a difference between two values (for any given sample size or distribution), the more likely it is that the difference is statistically significant. Sample sizes differ among the indicators analyzed.

How The Status of Women in the States Reports Are Used

The Status of Women in the States reports have three primary goals:

to analyze and disseminate information about women's progress in achieving rights and opportunities;

to identify and measure the remaining barriers to equality; and

to provide baseline measures for monitoring women's progress.

The reports have been used throughout the country to highlight remaining obstacles facing women in the United States and to encourage policy changes designed to improve the status of women of all races and ethnicities. IWPR's state and local partners use the reports to educate the public; inform policies and programs; make the case for changes that benefit diverse women, including establishing commissions for women, expanding child care subsidies for low-income women, encouraging women to vote and run for office, strengthening supports for women-owned businesses, developing training programs for women to enter nontraditional occupations, and increasing women's access to health care; establish investment priorities; and inspire community efforts to strengthen area economies by increasing the participation of women and improving women's status.

This report was produced in partnership with the National Domestic Workers' Alliance's work to amplify the historical and current contributions of Black domestic workers to the broader domestic worker movement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this report highlight the need for policy interventions that protect Black women’s voting rights, improve Black women’s pay, benefits, and access to quality jobs, reduce the costs of caregiving to families, increase Black women’s access to education and health care, support victims of violence, and address institutionalized racism and sexism within the criminal justice system as well as elsewhere in society.

The Status of Black Women in the United States

Strengthening Black Women’s Political Participation

Having Black women in political office helps to ensure that the issues affecting women, families, and people of color are addressed in public policy discussions. Institutional resources—including training programs and financial supports geared toward recruiting and supporting Black women candidates—can improve Black women’s political representation.⁸³ In addition, asking and encouraging Black women to run for office and holding political parties accountable for supporting and promoting women candidates, including women of color, would strengthen the pipeline of Black women to political office.

While Black women have been voting at increasing rates, strict voter identification laws, strict voter identification laws, which in multiple states have been found to intentionally discriminate against Black and Latino voters, have the potential to thwart that momentum. States can support Black women’s strong voter turnout by removing restrictive voter identification laws that prevent women, especially women of color and low-income women, from voting. On a federal level, policymakers can prevent states from passing restrictive voter identification laws by strengthening and restoring Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act.

Another measure to ensure that Black women with caregiving and other responsibilities have access to the polls is for states to expand early voting. All states should offer early voting to ensure that all voters, regardless of their circumstances, have the opportunity to vote.

Supporting Employment and Increasing Earnings for Black Women

Widespread racial discrimination in the labor market drives persistent disparities in unemployment among Black workers, regardless of their education level. To remedy race and gender disparities in employment as well as earnings, employers should be held accountable for their obligation to monitor their hiring, compensation, and promotion practices. They should be required by federal, state, and local policies to increase transparency about pay and promotion decisions and to allow workers to share pay information without retaliation.

Raising the minimum wage can improve Black women’s earnings, reduce poverty, and reduce gender and racial earnings inequality. States and the federal government should raise the minimum wage and eliminate the subminimum wage to lift the earnings of Black women, who are disproportionately represented in jobs that pay at or below minimum wage.

Black women protected by collective bargaining agreements earn more, have access to more benefits, and enjoy more economic stability than their counterparts who are not protected by collective bargaining agreements or a union contract. States and the federal government can improve Black women’s earnings and quality of employment by protecting and strengthening workers’ collective bargaining rights—changes that are especially necessary in states that have passed “right-to-work” laws.

Domestic workers have long been excluded from federal and state labor protections, leaving many Black women workers vulnerable to exploitation and economic insecurity. States should amend wage, unemployment insurance, and workers’ compensation laws to remove exemptions for domestic workers. In addition, the National Labor Relations Act should be amended to cover home care workers employed by private households.

The federal government should consider striving to reduce the economic burdens of high unemployment, caregiving responsibilities, and low wages on Black women’s lives by instituting a universal basic income (U.B.I.). A U.B.I. is a monthly distribution of a small sum of money from the government to all citizens. It is one way to reimburse unpaid caregivers for doing work that yields considerable benefits to society. There is evidence that potential benefits of a U.B.I. include reducing poverty, improving economic security, reducing gender inequality, and improving macroeconomic growth (Bruenig 2013; Haarmann et al. 2009; Reeves 2016). As of January 2016, Finland and Switzerland were considering implementing a U.B.I. (Shulevitz 2016).

Creating a Policy Infrastructure to Support Work-Life Balance

Many Black women have caregiving responsibilities, for an elderly parent, a person with a disability, or a young child, which they must balance with work obligations. States can help Black women stay in their jobs and advance in their careers by enacting policies such as paid family and medical leave and paid sick days, which can help workers balance their family care responsibilities with the demands of their jobs.

Public policies that discourage unpredictable employer-controlled scheduling practices can also improve the economic stability and well-being of Black women, who disproportionately work in low-wage jobs where unpredictable schedules are common. Reporting Pay legislation, which requires employers to pay workers a certain minimum number of hours when workers are scheduled for a shift, and Guaranteed Minimum Hour legislation, which requires employers to schedule workers at or above an agreed-upon minimum number of hours each week, are just two examples of policies that improve workers' job stability and can enable Black women to have more stable and successful careers.

Expanding publicly funded early care and education can improve women's earnings and ensure that eligible parents receive child care whether they are employed, looking for work, or pursuing education. Expanding child care subsidies⁸⁴ can also increase parents' access to quality child care, improve performance and advancement at work, and reduce child care-related work interruptions.

Women and men who leave the workforce to care for family members are penalized by losing Social Security benefits during the time they dedicate to caring for their families. Federal policymakers should consider implementing a Social Security caregiver credit to support individuals who limit their time at their paid jobs or leave work to provide care for others. This credit would especially help women, including women of color, who disproportionately provide the lion's share of caregiving within their families.

Expanding Opportunities and Reducing Poverty Among Black Women

To make higher education more accessible to Black women, federal aid programs such as Pell Grants should be protected and expanded. Restoring and expanding state funding of higher education can also prevent further increases in college tuition at public colleges and universities.

Reversing the decline of federal funding for campus child care through the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) program is necessary to support the large portion of Black women who are student parents. In addition, institutions of higher education can develop targeted scholarships and inclusive campus policies that support students with dependent care obligations in order to help them achieve success.

To reduce the long-term effects of student debt on Black women's economic security, policymakers can expand debt-assistance programs that cap federal loan payments at a percentage of graduates' monthly income.

Policymakers and workforce development leaders should adopt strategies to promote gender and racial/ethnic equity in access to higher-paid career training opportunities. Workforce development programs that recruit and train Black women in specific skills can help them gain access to career ladders and upward mobility and can reduce their concentration in lower-paying jobs.

States and the federal government can increase the positive impact of social safety net programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) by increasing benefit levels and improving outreach to those families who need assistance. The federal government should also protect Social Security benefits, which are vital for preventing dependent survivors (including many children), the disabled, and older women from living in poverty.

Policymakers should consider proposals for reparations towards Black Americans for the injustices committed against them throughout United States history. Specific proposals for reparations range from studying the modern legacy of slavery on Black Americans' wealth and economic status to providing free college education to Black women and men.

Improving Black Women's Health and Access to Health Care Services

State policies that limit the potential of the Affordable Care Act to reach low-income and minority populations as intended undermine efforts to improve Black women's health status. Expanding Medicaid, especially in states with relatively large Black populations, is one essential step to improving Black women's health and access to health care services. States should expand eligibility for all Medicaid services to those with incomes up to 138 percent of the poverty line if they have not yet done so (31 states had made this change as of July 2016). States should also consider expanding eligibility for Medicaid family planning programs.

Increased investments in research, health prevention, and treatment for Black women specifically can help to address disparities in health outcomes and ensure that Black women receive appropriate, quality care.

Reducing Violence Against Black Women and Increasing Safety

The federal government can support survivors of violence by continuing to support funding streams that provide essential services and supports for domestic violence victims, such as housing, employment, and educational services. States can promote the safety of survivors by barring abusers from gun possession and by recognizing stalking as a serious crime that includes a wide range of behaviors.

Improved data collection on Black women's experiences with intimate partner violence, police brutality, and incarceration would help researchers, policymakers, and service providers develop a more complete understanding of the challenges Black women face in situations of violence and help pinpoint the greatest threats to Black women's safety, as well as the most effective interventions.

Addressing racism, discrimination, and cultural insensitivity among domestic violence service providers and law enforcement is an important step toward ensuring that domestic violence survivors of all races, classes, gender identities, and sexual orientations are not revictimized when accessing services. Increasing police accountability for the response of law enforcement to violence against Black women and their communities is also vital to reducing the abuse some Black women experience at the hands of the police.

Nationwide criminal justice system reform has the potential to improve the lives of countless Black women who have been affected directly or indirectly by incarceration. Specifically, reductions in mandatory sentencing policies and prison terms can decrease the number of Black women who are incarcerated and address racial disparities in incarceration. Providing states with incentives to reduce incarcerated populations can also help achieve this goal and reverse existing incentives for incarceration.

NOTES

83. One example of such a program is Run Sister Run, organized by the Center for American Women and Politics (Center for American Women and Politics 2016). See Sanbonmatsu (2015) for focus group results on the value of the Run Sister Run program to Black female candidates in New Jersey. Additionally, the Higher Heights Leadership Fund supports Black women candidates by providing training and networking opportunities (Higher Heights Leadership Fund 2015).

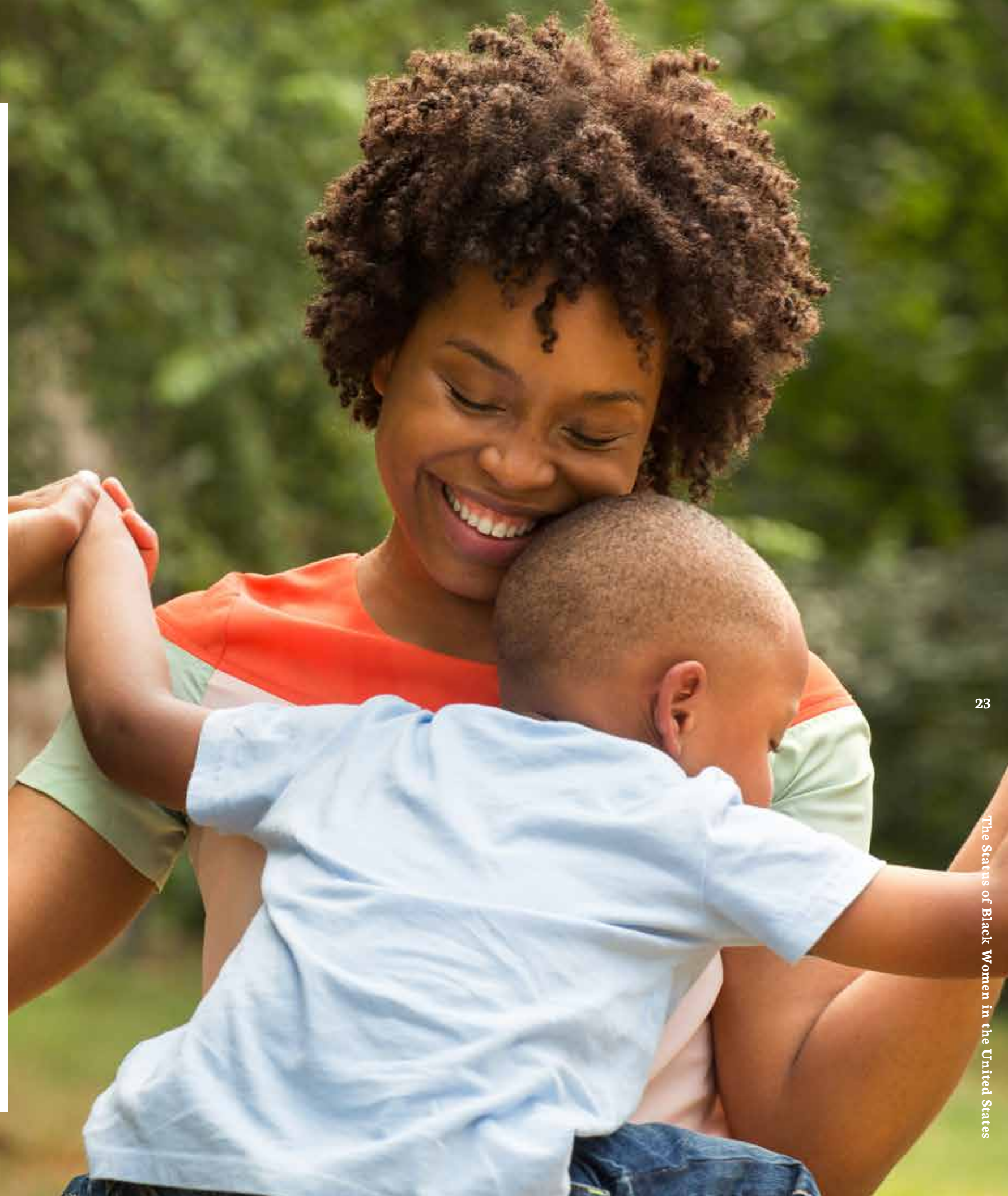
84. Only 17 percent of potentially eligible children received any child care subsidy in 2011 (ASPE 2015).

Black women are integral to the well-being of their families, their communities, and the nation as a whole.

Through their work, entrepreneurship, caregiving, political participation, and more, Black women are creating opportunities for themselves and their families and improving the U.S. economy and society.

While there is considerable diversity among Black women due to differences in contextual factors such as class, immigration status, gender identity, and disability status, the findings of this report show that Black women continue to experience structural barriers to progress that have roots in the nation's legacy of racial and gender discrimination and exploitation.

Policy changes and social justice movements that place Black women's experiences and interests at the forefront can address these barriers by building on the legacy of Black women's activism and leadership—a legacy of working to build a nation in which justice, democracy, and equal opportunity can be truly realized.



The Status of Black Women

in the United States

Executive Summary

STATUS OF WOMEN
IN THE STATES



INSTITUTE FOR
WOMEN'S POLICY RESEARCH
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