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The State of Women in America

A 50-State Analysis of How Women
Are Faring Across the Nation

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Introduction and summary

The role of women in the United States has changed dramatically over the past few decades. For one, more and more women have taken on new responsibilities outside the home by joining the paid workforce. While women made up only about one-third of the workforce in 1969, women today make up almost half of all workers in the United States.¹ Women are also stepping up to lead the country; a record number of women ran for public office in 2012, and a record-high percentage of women are serving in Congress.² In addition to making progress on issues of economics and leadership, women have made progress on health issues, which impact women's personal well-being, as well as their economic security. Over the past few years, women have been able to end gender discrimination by big insurance companies and gain free contraception coverage because of the Affordable Care Act.

Despite women's advancements, however, substantial inequalities remain. Although an increasing number of women are either the sole breadwinner for their family or share the role with their partners, women in the United States are paid only 77 cents for every dollar a man makes.³ The pay gap is even larger for women of color. On average, African American women make 64 cents for every dollar that white men make.⁴ While 2012 was a watershed year for women in terms of getting elected to public office, women still comprise only 18.1 percent of Congress, despite making up more than half of the U.S. population.⁵ They also face challenges on health issues, as 2012 saw continued conservative efforts to erode women's ability to make their own decisions about their health and well-being.

A deeper examination shows that disparities for women also exist among states. Women in Vermont, for example, make on average close to 85 cents for every dollar a man makes, while women in Wyoming make only 64 cents—more than 25 percent less than women in Vermont.⁶ On leadership, 15 states have no female elected leaders in the House of Representatives or the Senate. Lastly, while less than 10 percent of women in Vermont, Wisconsin, Hawaii, and Massachusetts are uninsured, nearly 25 percent of women in Texas do not have health insurance.⁷

How women are faring across the states

In this report, we examine both the progress made and the challenges remaining for women across the country. We do so by reviewing three categories that are critical to women’s overall well-being: economics, leadership, and health. Within each of those three categories, we analyze multiple factors—36 factors overall. In selecting the factors, we were unable to include every metric available but strove to include a broad array of factors that would help illustrate the multitude of issues facing women. We also included data on women of color in order to show the challenges that different communities face.

Factors examined

Factors	Source
Economic security factors	
Overall wage gap for women	Calculations based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 American Community Survey (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2013).
Wage gap for African American women	Calculations based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 American Community Survey.
Wage gap for Hispanic American women	Calculations based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 American Community Survey.
Percentage of total female population that would be impacted by raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour	Economic Policy Institute, “Characteristics of workers who would be affected by increasing the federal minimum wage to \$10.10 by July 1, 2015” (2013), available at http://www.epi.org/files/2013/EPI-federal-minimum-wage-state-impact.pdf .
Overall poverty rate for women and girls	U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 American Community Survey, Table C17001.
Poverty rate for African American women and girls	U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 American Community Survey, Table C7001B.
Poverty rate for Hispanic American women and girls	U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 American Community Survey, Table C17001I.
Poverty rate for Asian American women and girls	U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 American Community Survey, Table C17001D.
Poverty rate for Native American women and girls	U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 American Community Survey, Table C17001D.
Paid family leave laws	National Partnership for Women & Families, “Advancing a Family Friendly America: How Family Friendly Is Your State?,” available at http://www.nationalpartnership.org/issues/work-family/family-friendly-america/family-friendly-america-map.html (last accessed September 2013).
Temporary disability insurance	National Partnership for Women & Families, “Expecting Better: A State-by-State Analysis of Laws That Help New Parents” (2012), available at http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/expecting-better.pdf .
Paid sick leave	National Partnership for Women & Families, “Advancing a Family Friendly America: How Family Friendly Is Your State?”
Access to early childhood education	W. Steven Barnett and others, “The State of Preschool 2012” (New Brunswick, New Jersey: National Institute for Early Education Research, 2012), available at http://nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/yearbook2012.pdf .
Spending on early childhood education	Barnett and others, “The State of Preschool 2012.”

Leadership factors

Women in Congress	Center for American Women and Politics, "State by State Information," available at http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/fast_facts/resources/state_fact_sheet.php#states (last accessed September 2013).
Women in elected executive statewide office	Center for American Women and Politics, "State by State Information."
Women in state legislature	Center for American Women and Politics, "State by State Information."
Minority women elected to Congress, executive statewide office, and state legislature	Center for American Women and Politics, "Facts on Women of Color in Elective Office," available at http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/fast_facts/women_of_color/elective_office.php (last accessed September 2013).
Overall management gap	U.S. Census Bureau, "American FactFinder," available at http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=EEO_10_5YR_EEOALL1R&prodType=table (last accessed August 2013).
Management gap for African American women	U.S. Census Bureau, "American FactFinder."
Management gap for Hispanic American women	U.S. Census Bureau, "American FactFinder."
Management gap for Asian American women	U.S. Census Bureau, "American FactFinder."
Management gap for Native American women	U.S. Census Bureau, "American FactFinder."

Health factors

Overall percentage of women uninsured	U.S. Census Bureau, "Model-based Small Area Health Insurance Estimates (SAHIE) for Counties and States," available at http://www.census.gov/did/www/sahie/ (last accessed September 2013).
Percentage of African American women uninsured	U.S. Census Bureau, "Model-Based Small Area Health Insurance Estimates (SAHIE) for Counties and States."
Percentage of Hispanic American women uninsured	U.S. Census Bureau, "Model-Based Small Area Health Insurance Estimates (SAHIE) for Counties and States."
State position on Medicaid expansion	Kaiser Family Foundation, "Status of State Action on the Medicaid Expansion Decision, as of September 3, 2013," available at http://kff.org/medicaid/state-indicator/state-activity-around-expanding-medicaid-under-the-affordable-care-act/ (last accessed September 2013).
Defunding Planned Parenthood and other providers' preventative health services	Guttmacher Institute, "Laws Affecting Reproductive Health and Rights: State Trends at Midyear, 2013," available at http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/updates/2013/statetrends22013.html (last accessed September 2013).
Percentage of contraceptive needs met	Jennifer J. Frost, Mia R. Zolna, and Lori Frohwirth, "Table 6." In "Contraceptive Needs and Services, 2010" (New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2013), available at http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/win/contraceptive-needs-2010.pdf .
States with forced ultrasound provisions	Guttmacher Institute, "Requirements for Ultrasound" (2013), available at http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/spibs/spib_RFU.pdf .

Unconstitutional bans on abortion	Guttmacher Institute, "State Policies on Later Abortions" (2013), available at http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/spibs/spib_PLTA.pdf .
Restrictive counseling and waiting-period restrictions	Guttmacher Institute, "Counseling and Waiting Periods for Abortion" (2013), available at http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/spibs/spib_MWPA.pdf .
Targeted regulation of abortion provider, or TRAP, laws	Guttmacher Institute, "Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers" (2013), available at http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/spibs/spib_TRAP.pdf .
Maternal mortality rate	National Women's Law Center, "Maternal Mortality Rate (per 100,000)," available at http://hrc.nwlc.org/status-indicators/maternal-mortality-rate-100000 (last accessed September 2013).
Infant mortality rate	National Center for Health Statistics, "Infant Mortality Rates, By State: 2010" (2010), available at http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/states/INFANT_MORTALITY_RATES_STATE_2010.pdf .
Rate of availability of obstetrician-gynecologists, or OB-GYNs	U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2012," available at http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes291064.htm (last accessed September 2013).

We ranked each state on all 36 factors and then arrived at overall rankings in the categories of economics, leadership, and health by taking the averages of how states ranked on the factors within those categories. We then gave each state an overall national ranking, taken from an average of how the states rank across the three categories.

Our analysis determined that on matters of economics, leadership, and health, women, on average, fare the best in Maryland and the worst in Louisiana. More than 22 percent of women in Louisiana are in poverty, compared to 11 percent of women in Maryland. Additionally, taking in all of the leadership factors considered, Maryland ranks first in the nation in terms of women reaching leadership positions in the public and private sector. Meanwhile, Louisiana receives a D- on overall leadership factors.

Table 1 details how all 50 states rank on issues of economics, leadership, and health for women based on the 36 factors examined in this report. For a full explanation of our methodology, please see the appendix.

TABLE 1

The state of women in America: Overall state rankings and grades

State rank	State	Overall grade	State rank	State	Overall grade
1	Maryland	A	26	Florida	C
2	Hawaii	A	27	Wyoming	C
3	Vermont	A	28	Pennsylvania	C-
4	California	A	29	Wisconsin	C-
5	Delaware	A	30	Ohio	C-
6	Connecticut	A-	31	Missouri	D+
7	Colorado	A-	32	Kentucky	D+
8	New York	A-	33	Montana	D+
9	New Jersey	A-	33	Nebraska	D+
10	Washington	A-	35	South Carolina	D
11	Minnesota	B+	36	Idaho	D
12	Alaska	B+	37	North Dakota	D
13	Illinois	B+	38	Kansas	D-
14	Rhode Island	B	39	North Carolina	D-
15	Massachusetts	B	40	Tennessee	D-
16	Oregon	B	41	Georgia	F
17	Nevada	B	42	Indiana	F
18	New Hampshire	B-	43	South Dakota	F
19	New Mexico	B-	44	Arkansas	F
20	Maine	B-	45	Texas	F
21	Iowa	C+	46	Mississippi	F
22	Arizona	C+	47	Alabama	F
23	Virginia	C+	48	Oklahoma	F
24	Michigan	C	49	Utah	F
25	West Virginia	C	50	Louisiana	F

Source: Center for American Progress Action Fund analysis based on 36 factors related to economic security, leadership, and health for women. For more information on how rankings and grades were calculated, please see the Methodology section.

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