



FACT SHEET

Fast Facts: Economic Security for South Carolina Families

By Ryan Erickson, Sarah Jane Glynn, and Heidi Williamson February 18, 2016

In South Carolina and across the United States, policies that promote economic security for women are vital to the stability, sustainability, and overall well-being of families. Working families need higher livable wages, women need and deserve equal pay for equal work, and parents need to be able to maintain good jobs that allow them to work and raise their children simultaneously. These economic priorities are important because women play an increasingly pivotal role in the economic success of their families. Women of color, in particular, are disproportionately more likely to live in lower-income families that need their financial support to make ends meet. Strong economic security policies will enable all South Carolina women and families to get ahead—not just get by.

For most South Carolinians, the days of the stay-at-home mom are history: Mothers are the sole or primary breadwinners in 43 percent of South Carolina families and co-breadwinners in another 24 percent.¹ This is not surprising since most women in the state work—nearly 7 in 10, or 68.4 percent, of South Carolina women are in the labor force.² Significantly, if women had not increased their labor force participation between 1963 and 2013, inequality in the state would be 12 percent higher today.³ Women's importance to the economic stability of families cuts across all racial and ethnic groups in South Carolina. For example, more than half—57 percent—of African American-led households with children younger than age 18 are headed solely by African American women.⁴ To promote women's economic security, South Carolina's policies should address the needs of working mothers and reflect the roles that women are playing to provide for their families. Here are seven areas in which policymakers and advocates can help women bolster their families' economic security.

Provide access to paid sick days

Everyone gets sick, but not everyone is afforded the time to get better. Many women go to work sick or leave their sick children at home alone because they fear that they will be fired for missing work. Allowing employees to earn paid sick days helps keep families, communities, and the economy healthy.

- Thirty-nine percent of the nation’s private-sector workforce does not have access to paid sick days.⁵ In South Carolina, the rate is even higher: 47 percent of private-sector workers, or nearly 720,000 people, do not have paid sick days.⁶
- If employees must stay home from work because they or their children are ill, the loss of pay can take a serious toll—particularly on low-income workers, who are the least likely to have access to paid sick leave.⁷

Expand paid family and medical leave

Access to paid family and medical leave would allow workers to be with their newborn children during the crucial first stages of a child’s life, to care for an aging parent or spouse, or to recover from their own illness.

- The United States is the only developed country that does not guarantee access to paid maternity leave and one of only three developed countries that do not offer broader family and medical leave insurance.⁸ Only 12 percent of workers in the United States have access to paid family leave through their employers.⁹
- The National Partnership for Women & Families gave South Carolina an “F”—the lowest possible grade—on policies that help parents of newborn children. South Carolina does not significantly expand upon federal rights or protections guaranteed by federal law for state employees or private-sector workers.¹⁰

Ensure equal pay

Although federal law prohibits unequal pay for equal work, there is more to do to ensure that both women and men enjoy the fullest protections against discrimination across South Carolina.

- Women are the primary, sole, or co-breadwinners in nearly two-thirds of U.S. families but continue to earn less than their male counterparts.¹¹ Latinas and African American women experience the sharpest pay disparities.¹²
- South Carolina women earn just 80 cents for every dollar that South Carolina men earn.¹³ The wage gap is even larger for black women and Latinas in South Carolina, who respectively earn 58 cents and 51 cents for every dollar that white men earn.¹⁴

Expand quality, affordable child care

Families need child care to be able to work, but many families lack access to high-quality child care options. Parents want and need child care that supports young children’s development and adequately prepares them for school.

- Sixty-seven percent of South Carolina children younger than age 6 have all available parents in the workforce, which makes access to affordable, high-quality child care a necessity.¹⁵

For a South Carolina family with one infant and one 4-year-old, child care costs an average of \$11,126 per year, or more than one-fifth of the median income for a South Carolina family with children.¹⁶

- Under the Center for American Progress' High Quality Child Care Tax Credit, families in South Carolina would, on average, save \$3,172 annually compared with current child care costs.¹⁷ CAP's proposal would also create a financial incentive for child care providers to improve their quality, therefore expanding access to high-quality child care programs for South Carolinians.

Increase the minimum wage

Women make up a disproportionate share of low-wage workers, and raising the minimum wage would help hardworking women across South Carolina better support their families.

- Women make up nearly two-thirds of all minimum wage workers in the United States.¹⁸
- Increasing the minimum wage to \$12 per hour would boost wages for 344,000 women in South Carolina and nearly 20 million women nationally.¹⁹ Almost 58 percent of the workers in South Carolina who would be affected by raising the minimum wage to \$12 are women.²⁰

Guarantee access to quality health care

Women need comprehensive reproductive health services—including access to abortion care—in order to thrive as breadwinners, caregivers, and employees.

- In 2013, 319,860 South Carolina women were in need of publicly supported family planning services and supplies.²¹
- Because federal Title X funding—which covers contraception, pregnancy testing, and cancer screenings—has not kept up with inflation and often faces the threat of cuts at the federal level,²² South Carolina should step in and ensure that women have access to quality family planning resources.²³

Promote women's political leadership

Across the United States, women are dramatically underrepresented in political office: They make up 51 percent of the population but only 29 percent of elected officials.²⁴

- Women make up 52 percent of South Carolina's population but only 24 percent of its elected officials.²⁵
- Women of color make up 19 percent of the state's population but only 7 percent of its officeholders.²⁶

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Endnotes

- 1 Data are taken from Sarah Jane Glynn and Jeff Chapman's analysis of Miriam King and others, "Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey: Version 3.0," available at <https://cps.ipums.org/cps/index.shtml> (last accessed February 2016).
- 2 Sarah Jane Glynn's analysis of Miriam King and others, "Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey: Version 3.0. [Machine-readable database]" (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010).
- 3 Brendan Duke's analysis of data from Sarah Flood and others, "Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey: Version 4.0," available at <https://cps.ipums.org/cps/index.shtml> (last accessed January 2016).
- 4 Bureau of the Census, *2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates* (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2015), Table B17010B.
- 5 Bureau of Labor Statistics, *National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2015* (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015), Table 32, available at <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2015/ownership/private/table32a.pdf>.
- 6 Institute for Women's Policy Research and National Partnership for Women & Families, "Workers' Access to Paid Sick Days in the States" (2015), available at <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/workers-access-to-paid-sick-days-in-the-states.pdf>.
- 7 The percentage of workers with paid sick leave increases with compensation. See Bureau of Labor Statistics, *National Compensation Survey*, Table 32.
- 8 Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, "OECD Family Indicators" (2015), available at http://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF2_1_Parental_leave_systems.pdf; Jody Heymann and others, "Contagion Nation: A Comparison of Paid Sick Day Policies in 22 Countries" (Washington: Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2009), available at <http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/paid-sick-days-2009-05.pdf>.
- 9 Bureau of Labor Statistics, *National Compensation Survey*, Table 32.
- 10 States' grades in this assessment reflect the degree to which a state's laws improve upon federal law. See National Partnership for Women & Families, "Expecting Better: A State-by-State Analysis of Laws That Help New Parents" (2014), available at <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/expecting-better-2014.pdf>.
- 11 Sarah Jane Glynn, "Breadwinning Mothers, Then and Now" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2014), available at <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Glynn-Breadwinners-report-FINAL.pdf>.
- 12 Anna Chu and Charles Posner, "The State of Women in America: A 50-State Analysis of How Women Are Faring Across the Nation" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2013), available at <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/StateOfWomen-4.pdf>.
- 13 National Women's Law Center, "The Wage Gap, State by State," available at <http://www.nwlc.org/wage-gap-state-state> (last accessed February 2016).
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 "Available parents" refers to "resident parents." See Kids Count Data Center, "Children Under Age 6 with All Parents in the Labor Force," available at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/5057-children-under-age-6-with-allavailable-parents-in-the-labor-force#detailed/2/2-52/false/36,868,867,133,38/any/11472,11473> (last accessed February 2016).
- 16 The average annual cost of child care in South Carolina is \$6,475 for an infant and \$4,651 for a 4-year-old. For a family with children in South Carolina, the median income is \$52,000 per year. See Child Care Aware of America, "Parents and the High Cost of Child Care" (2015), available at <http://usa.childcareaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Parents-and-the-High-Cost-of-Child-Care-2015-FINAL.pdf>; Kids Count Data Center, "Median Family Income Among Households with Children," available at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/65-median-family-incomeamong-households-with-children#detailed/2/2-52/false/36,868,867,133,38/any/365> (last accessed February 2016).
- 17 The cost reduction estimate assumes that the family using the credit is earning \$40,000 annually. Katie Hamm and Carmel Martin, "A New Vision for Child Care in the United States" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2015), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/report/2015/09/02/119944/a-new-vision-for-child-care-in-the-united-states-3/>.
- 18 National Women's Law Center, "Fair Pay for Women Requires a Fair Minimum Wage" (2015), available at <http://www.nwlc.org/resource/fair-pay-women-requires-fair-minimum-wage>.
- 19 Economic Policy Institute, "State Tables: Characteristics of workers who would be affected by increasing the federal minimum wage to \$12 by July 2020" (2015), available at <http://s2.epi.org/files/2015/revised-minimum-wage-state-tables.pdf>; David Cooper, "Raising the Minimum Wage to \$12 by 2020 Would Lift Wages for 35 Million Workers" (Washington: Economic Policy Institute, 2015), Appendix A: Data tables, available at <http://s4.epi.org/files/2015/raising-the-minimum-wage-to-12-dollars-by-2020-would-lift-wages-for-35-million-american-workers.pdf>.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Jennifer J. Frost, Lori Frohwirth, and Mia R. Zolna, "Contraceptive Needs and Services, 2013 Update" (New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2015), available at <https://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/win/contraceptive-needs-2013.pdf>.
- 22 Rachel Benson Gold, "Going the Extra Mile: The Difference Title X Makes," *Guttmacher Policy Review* 15 (2) (2012): 13–17, available at <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/gpr/15/2/gpr150213.html>.
- 23 Because Title X-funded programs are often vulnerable to cuts, South Carolina lawmakers should ensure that these programs are adequately funded. For more information on the Title X-funded programs in South Carolina, see National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association, "Title X in South Carolina: Improving Public Health and Saving Taxpayer Dollars" (2015), available at <http://www.nationalfamilyplanning.org/document.doc?id=569>.
- 24 Reflective Democracy Campaign, "Who Leads Us?," available at <http://wholeads.us> (last accessed February 2016).
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid.