



Fast Facts

Economic Security for Women and Families in New Mexico

By Shilpa Phadke, Samantha Pedreiro, Diana Boesch, and Osub Ahmed

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In order for New Mexico's women and families to be self-sufficient and lead healthy, empowered lives, lawmakers must work to advance economic security by prioritizing policies that will ensure economic equality and reproductive health care access for all.

Women need policies that reflect their roles as providers and caregivers. In New Mexico, mothers are the sole, primary, or co-breadwinners in 62.6 percent of families,¹ and these numbers are higher for some women of color. The following policy recommendations can help support the economic security of women and families in New Mexico.

Promote equal pay for equal work

Although federal law prohibits unequal pay for equal work, there is more that can be done to ensure that both women and men across New Mexico enjoy the fullest protections against discrimination.

- New Mexico women who are full-time, year-round workers earned about 83 cents for every dollar that New Mexico men earned in 2017;² if the wage gap continues to close at its current rate, women will not reach parity in the state until 2054.³ The wage gap is even larger for black women and Latinas in New Mexico, who earned 60.6 cents and 55.7 cents, respectively, for every dollar that white men earned in 2016.⁴
- Due to the gender wage gap, each woman in New Mexico will lose an average of \$305,160 over the course of her lifetime.⁵

Increase the minimum wage

Women constitute a disproportionate share of low-wage workers; raising the minimum wage would help hardworking women across New Mexico and enable them to better support their families.

- Women make up nearly two-thirds of all minimum wage workers in the United States.⁶ More than half of the minimum wage workers in New Mexico are women.⁷
- Increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2024 would boost wages for 198,000 women in New Mexico and more than 23 million women nationally. Fifty-four percent of New Mexico workers who would be affected by raising the minimum wage to \$15 are women.⁸
- In New Mexico, the current minimum wage is \$7.50 per hour. The minimum wage for workers who receive tips is \$2.13 per hour. More than two-thirds of tipped wage workers are women.⁹

Guarantee access to quality health care

Women need access to comprehensive health services—including abortion and maternity care—in order to thrive as breadwinners, caregivers, and employees. To ensure women are able to access high-quality care, states should, at minimum, strengthen family planning programs such as Title X; protect Medicaid; and end onerous restrictions that reduce access to abortion care and undermine the patient-provider relationship. At the state level, New Mexico should ensure that women have access to the full spectrum of quality, affordable, and evidence-based reproductive health services.

- In 2014, more than 150,000 New Mexico women were in need of publicly funded family planning services and supplies, and 27 percent of those women were uninsured.¹⁰
- Title X—the nation’s only federal domestic program focused solely on providing family planning and other related preventive care, such as contraception, sexually transmitted infection testing, and cancer screenings—served slightly more than 13,000 women in New Mexico in 2017, down from almost 23,000 women in 2014.¹¹ Title X funding has also decreased, falling from \$4 million in 2014 to about \$3.3 million in 2017.¹²
- New Mexico has not passed any of the major abortion restrictions, such as biased counseling and waiting periods, found in other states.¹³
- New Mexico’s infant mortality rate of 6.2 deaths per 1,000 live births is slightly higher than the national rate of 5.9 deaths per 1,000 live births.¹⁴ The state’s maternal mortality rate is 19.1 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births,¹⁵ compared with the national rate of 18 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.¹⁶

Ensure workers have access to paid sick days

Everyone gets sick, but not everyone is afforded the time to get better. Many women go to work sick, 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.

- About 37 million U.S. employees, or nearly one-third of the nation's private sector workforce, do not have access to paid sick days.¹⁷
- In New Mexico, the rate is even higher: 50 percent of private sector workers, or 286,000 people, do not receive paid sick days.¹⁸

Ensure fair scheduling practices

Many low-wage and part-time workers—approximately 60 percent of whom are women¹⁹—face erratic work schedules and have little control over when they work and for how long.

- More than 1 in 4 low-wage U.S. workers has a schedule that is nonstandard—that is, outside of the traditional 9-to-5 workweek.²⁰ This can be especially difficult for parents who need to plan for child care.
- In addition to threatening the economic security of these workers and their families, unfair scheduling practices are often accompanied by reduced access to health benefits and increased potential for sexual harassment.²¹

Provide access to paid family and medical leave

Access to paid family and medical leave would allow workers to be with their newborn children during the critical early stages of the child's life; to care for an aging parent or spouse; to recover from their own illness; or to assist in a loved one's recovery.

- Only 17 percent of civilian workers in the United States have access to paid family leave through their employers.²²
- Unpaid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is inaccessible to 66 percent of working people in New Mexico. Workers and families in the state need paid family and medical leave for reasons other than childbirth. For example, more than 1 in 4 workers in New Mexico is at least 55 years old, and in less than 15 years, the state's population that is 65 and older will grow by 40 percent.²³ New Mexico's aging population means an increase in older adults with serious medical conditions who will need additional care.

- National data show that 55 percent of employees who take unpaid leave through FMLA use it for personal medical reasons. Twenty-one percent of workers use leave for the birth or adoption of a child, while another 18 percent use it to care for a family member.²⁴

Expand quality, affordable child care

Families need child care to ensure they are able to work, but many lack access to affordable, high-quality child care options that support young children's development and meet the needs of working families.

- Sixty-one percent of New Mexico children younger than age 6 have all available parents in the workforce, which makes access to affordable, high-quality child care a necessity.²⁵
- For a New Mexico family with one infant and one 4-year-old, the annual price of a child care center averages \$15,569 per year, or nearly one-third of the median income for a New Mexico family with children.²⁶
- New Mexico is ahead of the national average in children enrolled in public preschool, with 50 percent of 4-year-olds enrolled.²⁷

Protect workers against all forms of gender-based violence

Women cannot fully participate in the economy if they face the threat of violence and harassment. There are a number of steps lawmakers can take to prevent violence against women and to support survivors, including establishing greater workplace accountability; strengthening enforcement; increasing funding for survivor support services; and educating the public on sexual harassment in the workplace.²⁸

- In New Mexico, 37.8 percent of women have experienced contact sexual violence in their lifetimes,²⁹ and 39.2 percent of women have experienced noncontact sexual harassment.³⁰ Given that research at the national level suggests that as many as 70 percent of sexual harassment charges go unreported, these state numbers likely only scratch the surface.³¹
- Thirty-eight percent of New Mexico women have experienced intimate partner violence, which can include physical violence, sexual violence, or stalking by an intimate partner.³² Experiencing intimate partner violence has been shown to hinder women's economic potential in many ways, including loss of pay from missed days of work and housing instability.³³

Protecting the rights of immigrant women and families

Immigrants—particularly those seeking asylum and those without legal status—can be vulnerable to social and economic insecurity. A combination of federal and state policies targeting immigrants is cause for concern in New Mexico. The Trump administration’s decisions to rescind the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and allow Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to expire for more than 300,000 people who have lived and worked lawfully in the country for nearly two decades will force many immigrants out of the workforce, putting them, their families, and the communities in which they reside in economic peril.³⁴ In addition, immigrant women can be especially vulnerable to domestic and sexual abuse and exploitation.³⁵

- In 2016, almost 10 percent of New Mexico’s population was foreign-born, of which more than half were women.³⁶
- In 2016, 1 in 8 workers in New Mexico was foreign-born, contributing to the state’s economy across various industries.³⁷
- More than 115,000 New Mexicans live in households with family members who are unauthorized, including more than 55,000 children.³⁸
- If Dreamers are no longer able to renew their DACA, New Mexico could lose more than \$384 million annually from its gross domestic product (GDP).³⁹ There are 12,000 immigrants in the state’s workforce who are Dream-Act eligible, and putting them on a pathway to citizenship could increase the state’s GDP by up to \$505 million.⁴⁰

Protecting the rights of incarcerated women

The growing problem of mass incarceration in the United States hinders the economic potential of those affected and disproportionately harms communities of color.⁴¹ Incarceration can have a particularly destabilizing effect on families with an incarcerated mother, especially if that woman is a breadwinner. The experience of incarceration is also uniquely traumatic for women in ways that can deter long-term economic security, even after release.⁴²

- The incarceration rate in New Mexico is 335 per 100,000 people.⁴³ Approximately 10 percent of prisoners in New Mexico are women.⁴⁴
- Women are the fastest-growing segment of the overall U.S. prison population, but there are fewer federal prisons for women than there are for men, contributing to overcrowding and hostile conditions for incarcerated women.⁴⁵

- Incarcerated women suffer from a wide range of abuses at the hands of the prison system, including lack of access to menstrual hygiene products; lack of adequate nutrition and prenatal care; shackling during pregnancy and childbirth; and separation and further disruption from children for whom they are primary caregivers.⁴⁶

Promote women's political leadership

Across the United States, women are underrepresented in political office: They constitute 51 percent of the population but only 29 percent of elected officials.⁴⁷

- Women make up 51 percent of New Mexico's population but only 38 percent of its elected officials.⁴⁸
- Women of color constitute 31 percent of the state's population but only 18 percent of its officeholders.⁴⁹

Shilpa Phadke is the vice president of the Women's Initiative at the Center for American Progress. Samantha Pedreiro is a graduate intern for the Women's Initiative at the Center. Diana Boesch is a research assistant for the Women's Initiative at the Center. Osub Ahmed is a policy analyst for the Women's Initiative at the Center.

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