



STATUS OF WOMEN IN MISSOURI: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women in Missouri have made strides towards parity, though there remains work to be done. This report updates the 2015 and 2017 Status of Women in Missouri reports by reflecting on women's journeys and highlighting opportunities to empower future progress.

Too many women with the passion, talent and skills to lead remain on the sidelines because they face unnecessary obstacles such as pay inequality, limited family leave, entrepreneurship restrictions, sexual harassment, and inadequate public policies. These are solvable challenges. Our elected government doesn't yet reflect the diversity of our state – including gender diversity. This year, women's legislative and executive branch representation in Missouri is 25.5% despite women accounting for 51% of the population. In addition, barriers to childcare limits women's economic potential. COVID has illuminated how challenging it is to fully participate in the workforce when childcare is compromised.

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

- In Missouri in 2018, for every dollar earned by a man, women made only 77.5 cents.
- When breaking down the difference in median incomes by race and ethnicity, the gender pay gap was even greater. Black women earned only 68 cents for every dollar earned by a white man and Hispanic women earned only 61 cents for every dollar earned by a white man.
- Even in research which controls for occupation, education, and experience, women are still paid less than men.¹ Policies that could have an impact on bridging the pay gap include increased paid parental leave, flexible child care options, and eliminating disclosure of previous compensation levels.²

EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE

- In Missouri in 2019, 7% of center-based child care centers were accredited, 1% of family child care homes were accredited, and 90% of school aged care programs had licensed slots for school aged children.
- Forty-one percent of all counties in Missouri lack any accredited childcare facilities.
- While child care is costly and presents a steep expense for families, it can also be difficult to obtain. In 2018, over half of Americans lived in an area classified as a child care desert, meaning that there is only one licensed child care slot for every three young children.³ Policies which focus on paid family and medical leave and flexible child care options could also help address some of the child care needs of families in Missouri.

HEALTH

- In Missouri in 2018, 9.7% of all Missourians and 9% of women did not have health insurance coverage.
- Over the last five years, the percentage of Missourians with no health care coverage has slowly but steadily decreased.
- Medicaid coverage in Missouri will be expanded beginning in July 2021. It is likely to extend coverage to 230,000 Missourians.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STATUS

- In Missouri in 2018, 10% of women aged 65 and over were living below the poverty level.
- Although the decline in the percentage of women aged 65 and older who were living in poverty has been within one percent, these figures have changed little since 2014.
- Older Americans who are able to age in place and remain independent longer, save themselves money and create cost savings for programs such as Medicare.

LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- In 2020, the total woman legislative and executive branch representation is 25.5%, despite women accounting for 51% of the population.
- Programs such as United WE's Appointments Project which is designed to "empower women and strengthen diversity in communities by increasing the gender diversity of public boards and commission," can have an impact on women's participation in leadership positions. ⁴

¹ Churches, Kimberly. "Why the Pay Gap Persists in High-Paying Professions." October 20, 2019.

<https://www.aauw.org/resources/news/media/insights/why-the-pay-gap-persists-in-high-paying-professions/>.

² Ferrant, Gaëlle, Luca Maria Pesando, and Keiko Nowack. 2014. "Unpaid Care Work: The Missing Link in the Analysis of Gender Gaps in Labour Outcomes." *OECD Development Centre*.

https://www.oecd.org/Dev/Development-Gender/Unpaid_Care_Work.Pdf; Barnes, Medora W. 2015. "Gender Differentiation in Paid and Unpaid Work During the Transition to Parenthood." *Sociology Compass* 9(5): 348-364.

³ Malik, R., Hamm, K, Schochet, L., Novoa, C., Workman, S., & Jessen-Howard, S. (December 6, 2018). America's Child Care Deserts in 2018. *Center for American Progress*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2018/12/06/461643/americas-child-care-deserts-2018/>

⁴ "Appointments Project® in Missouri." *Women's Foundation*. <https://www.appointmentsproject.org/missouri/>.