

Missouri women **working full-time** earn for each dollar a man earns:

\$0.775 *Overall Average*

\$0.68 *Black Women*

\$0.61 *Latinas*



10%

of Missouri women aged 65+ are living in poverty

The Status of Women in Missouri

A Summary Report to United WE

November 2020

9%

of Missouri women have no health insurance

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 **Institute of Public Policy**
Harry S Truman School of Public Affairs
University of Missouri

UNITED WE



41%

of all counties in Missouri



lack accredited child care facilities

Women make up

51%

of the Missouri population

but only

25.5%

of the legislature and executive branch



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Status of Women in Missouri is the third report in a series prepared by the University of Missouri (MU) Institute of Public Policy (IPP) for United WE. It measures the status of women across the state, benchmarking data in five focus areas: employment and income, education and child care, health, social and economic status, and leadership and public engagement. Data from the 2018 American Community Survey are combined with data from additional sources (e.g. Child Care Aware) to demonstrate that women in Missouri, like women across the country, face issues like pay inequity, difficulty accessing child care, poverty, and more. The gaps are often even more severe for women of color. Key findings in each of the five focus areas are presented below, followed by more thorough analysis.

Employment and Income

- All told, women in Missouri in 2018 earned only 77.5 cents for every dollar earned by a man, and the gap is even larger for women of color, at 68 cents for Black women and 61 cents for Hispanic women.¹
- The income gap compounds other economic challenges faced by Black women, like lack of access to quality child care and limited ability to plan for retirement, which were identified as concerns in the listening sessions.²
- This pay gap matters because it is driven by and perpetuates the devaluing of women's work and the disproportionately high number of hours women spend on unpaid labor, including in child care.³ It has life-long economic consequences.

Education and Child Care

- 47 out of 115 counties lack any accredited child care centers (40.9% of the counties in the state)—limiting critical access to child care.⁴
- Only 7% of center-based child care and 1% of family child care homes were accredited in Missouri in 2019.⁵
- The availability of high-quality child care is important not only because it impacts children's education during a crucial period of growth, but because it also directly affects women's employment: in Missouri, three times the number of women age 25-44 compared to men have stopped working since the pandemic started due to lack of child care.⁶
- Even when accessible, the cost of child care poses a burden: in Missouri, married couples at the poverty line spend an average of 66.6% of their income on center-based care.⁷

Health

- The percentage of Missourians without health insurance coverage is comparable though slightly higher than the national average as (9.7% of all Missourians and 9% of Missouri women in 2018, compared to 9.4% of all Americans and 8.3% of all American women).⁸ Over the last five years, access to healthcare coverage has slowly but steadily increased in Missouri. However, with more people in general, and women in particular, facing unemployment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of uninsured Missourians may temporarily rise, as healthcare coverage may no longer be provided by an employer.

- Health insurance coverage is important because it allows people to seek necessary care, which can benefit the families of women as well.⁹ Nevertheless, other restrictions may prevent women from seeking care. For example, women interviewed in the listening sessions reported that they were afraid that taking sick leave to care for themselves or others could put their jobs in jeopardy.¹⁰
- Missouri is one of 16 states with an infant mortality rate significantly higher than the national rate.¹¹ The CDC identified five main causes of infant death in 2018, of which the top three (birth defects, preterm birth/low birthweight, and pregnancy complications) can be offset by access to health services made easier by having health insurance.¹² Studies show that Medicaid expansions have reliably decreased rates of infant mortality in the United States.¹³ Access to affordable healthcare also decreases rates of maternal mortality, a particular issue for Missouri, which ranked 44th in the country for maternal mortality in 2019. As with many of the issues in this report, Black women and other women of color are at higher risk than white women.¹⁴

Social and Economic Status

- Women accounted for nearly two-thirds (64.8%) of the Missourians aged 65 and over living below the poverty level, which is 10% of all older women in Missouri, as compared to 7% of men aged 65 and older living in poverty.¹⁵ These figures have changed little since 2014.
- In Missouri in 2018, 16% of families with related children under 18 lived below the poverty line.¹⁶

Leadership and Public Engagement

- Missouri women's political representation in the legislative and executive branches is just 25.5%, despite women accounting for 51% of the population.
- In 2018, a record number of women nationally won elections to Congress, and women voted in larger numbers as well. In Missouri, the percentage of women who made up the voters in the 2018 mid-term elections was higher than the national average with 57% of the women voting population and 52.8% of the men voting population casting a vote.

The COVID-19 Impact

- Globally, the pandemic is projected to increase women's poverty and worsen the gender poverty gap.¹⁷ Nationally, this trend also holds, with more women than men in poverty, and food insecurity having increased in families with young children.¹⁸
- Missouri could potentially lose 48% of their child care supply due to the decrease in the industry during the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning that there would be only one spot in a licensed child care center for every six kids.¹⁹
- Lower-income individuals aged 65 and over are likely to be among those in particular need as food banks and senior centers have closed or reduced services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

Women in Missouri have made strides towards parity, though more work is needed. This report reflects on women's journeys, highlights opportunities for future progress, and serves as an update to the 2015 and 2017 Status of Women in Missouri reports.²⁰ The same economic, social, and leadership topic areas and lead indicators are analyzed here as in the two previous reports to effectively compare the gains women have made and the areas where disparities remain. These indicators were originally selected through the convening of an academic advisory committee, a review of existing reports and data, and focus groups in three major cities around the state to reflect on their impact on the lives of women and their families. The lead indicator for each section was chosen to best communicate the status of women in Missouri in each particular issue area, though they by no means present a comprehensive picture; to this end, additional indicators in each issue area are also examined. This summary report can be used to evaluate areas of growth, identify opportunities for additional progress, and provide relevant policy considerations.

Each topic area contains the following sections:

- Key data points indicating the status of women in Missouri and an analysis of data trends
- A brief look at historic policies in each area that have shaped women's journeys
- A look towards the future, opportunities for progress and a brief examination of the potential impact of the Coronavirus disease outbreak, or COVID-19.

LISTENING SESSION DATA

The report integrates observations from Black women who participated in two listening sessions conducted by the United WE in Kansas City in July 2020. The sessions focused on barriers to and opportunities for Black women's economic participation and civic engagement, and on the impact of the COVID-19 disease outbreak.

In the sessions, participants reported economic barriers such as limited access to education, limited access to capital to start businesses, few advancement opportunities, and lack of support for working mothers. They further reported that the COVID-19 disease outbreak has exacerbated these issues and added new ones, like the loss of healthcare access as a result of the economic downturn and inequitable distribution of the economic costs imposed by the pandemic. Difficulty accessing COVID-19 relief programs for businesses, diminished support for non-profits supporting minority communities, and increased challenges from children remaining home while mothers must balance care and work were all mentioned. The women noted that overall there is greater public awareness of the issues facing women of color, however, cross-sector solutions have yet to be implemented in a way that makes a substantive difference.

MYSIDEWALK DATA

Demographic and child care data contained in this report is also available through interactive data visualizations created by MySidewalk. The website is a tool to find more information and graphics depicting demographic, economic, and social information about Missouri women. The tool can be accessed at the following website: <https://dashboards.mysidewalk.com/status-of-women-in-missouri>

THE COVID-19 IMPACT

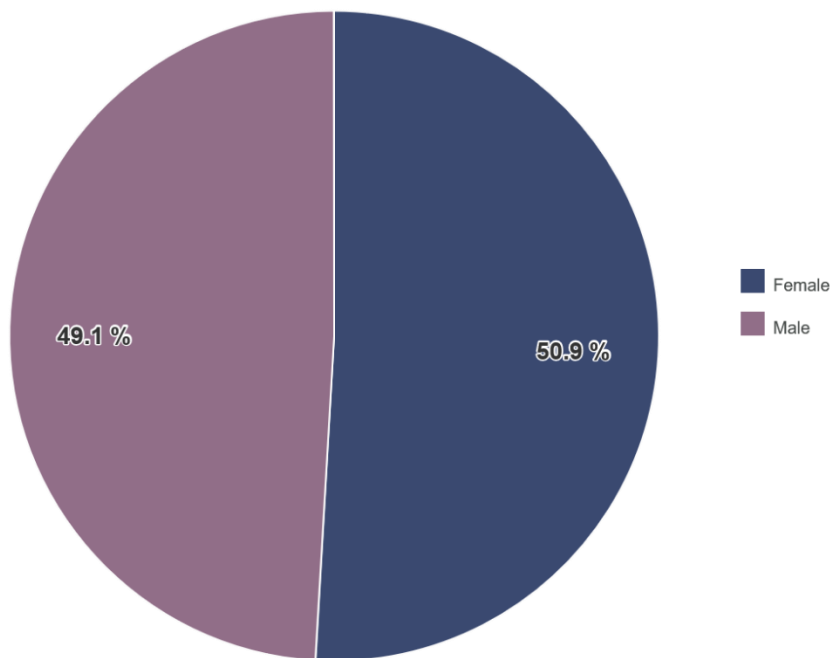
This report will briefly examine some of the initial economic, social, and health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and families, recognizing that it will take years of thorough research to determine the full extent of the impacts on women and families in Missouri, across the United States, and throughout the world.

PART 1: DEMOGRAPHICS

This section reviews relevant demographic factors of women in Missouri, including age, race, educational attainment, and marital status. All data presented in these sections is from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2018 five-year estimates (2014-2018) unless otherwise stated. First and foremost, the population of Missouri in 2018 was 6,090,062 people, of which 3,101,290 (50.9%) were women.

Figure 1.

Population by Sex



Missouri

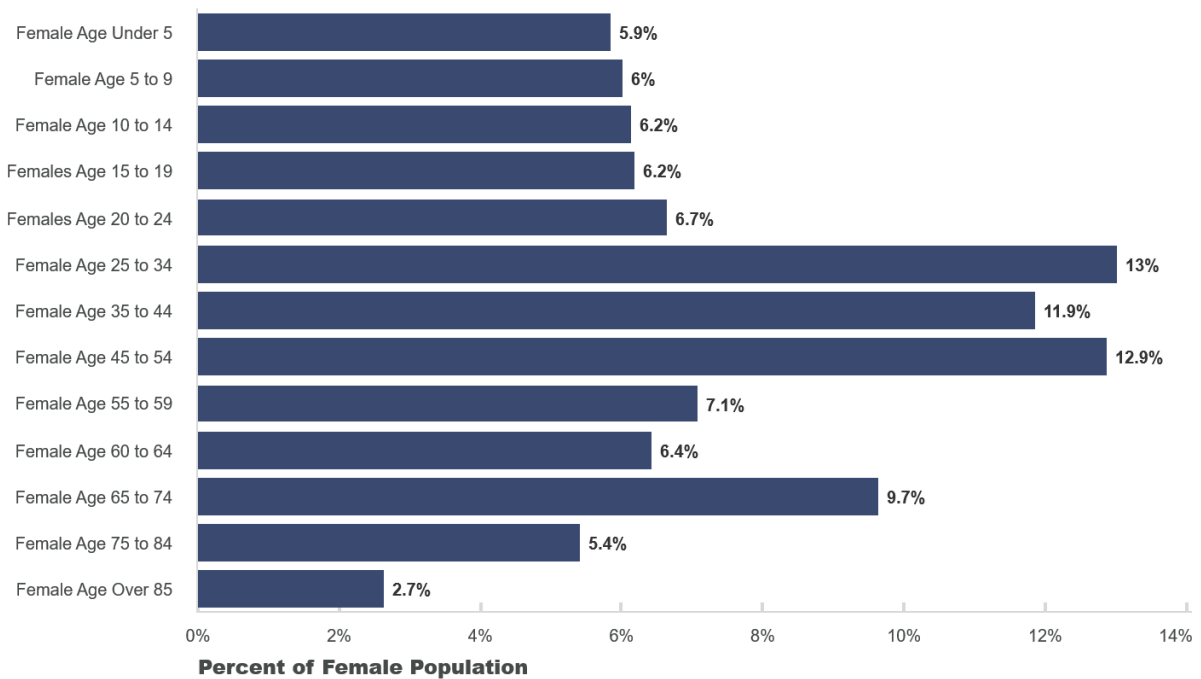
mySidewalk.com - Sources: US Census ACS 5-year

AGE

- 21.8% of Missouri women were under 18 years old compared to 23.7% of Missouri men.
- 17.7% Missouri women were age 65 or older compared to 14.4% of Missouri men. See Figure 2 for a breakdown of women by age.

Figure 2.

Females by Age



Missouri

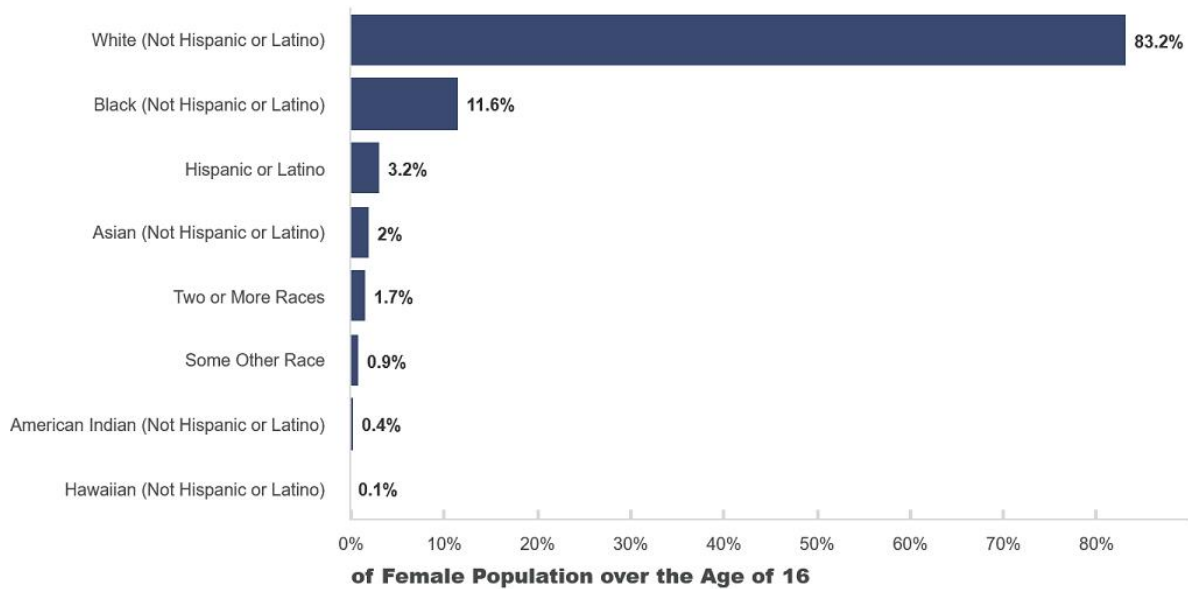
mySidewalk.com · Sources: US Census ACS 5-year

RACE AND ETHNICITY

- 82.2% of the Missouri population identified as white alone, followed by Black alone (11.5%), Hispanic or Latino (4%), Asian alone (2%), American Indian or Alaska Native alone (0.5%), and finally Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander alone (0.1%).
- For individuals who identify with two or more races (2.8%), 84.8% are white, 13% Black, 2.6% Asian, 1.3% American Indian, and 0.2% Native Hawaiian.
- White women made up 41.7% of Missouri's population compared to 40.5% for white men; Black women made up 6.1% of Missouri's population, compared to 5.5% for Black men. Hispanic women were 1.98% of the population, compared to 2.1% of Hispanic men; Asian women comprised 1.01% of Missouri's population, compared to 0.9% of Asian men. American Indian or Alaska Native women were 0.2% of Missouri's population, as were American Indian or Alaska Native men; and Native Hawaiian women made up only 0.0005% of the population compared to 0.0006% of their male counterparts. For a full break down of women by race, see Figure 3.

Figure 3.

Women by Race/Ethnicity



■ Missouri

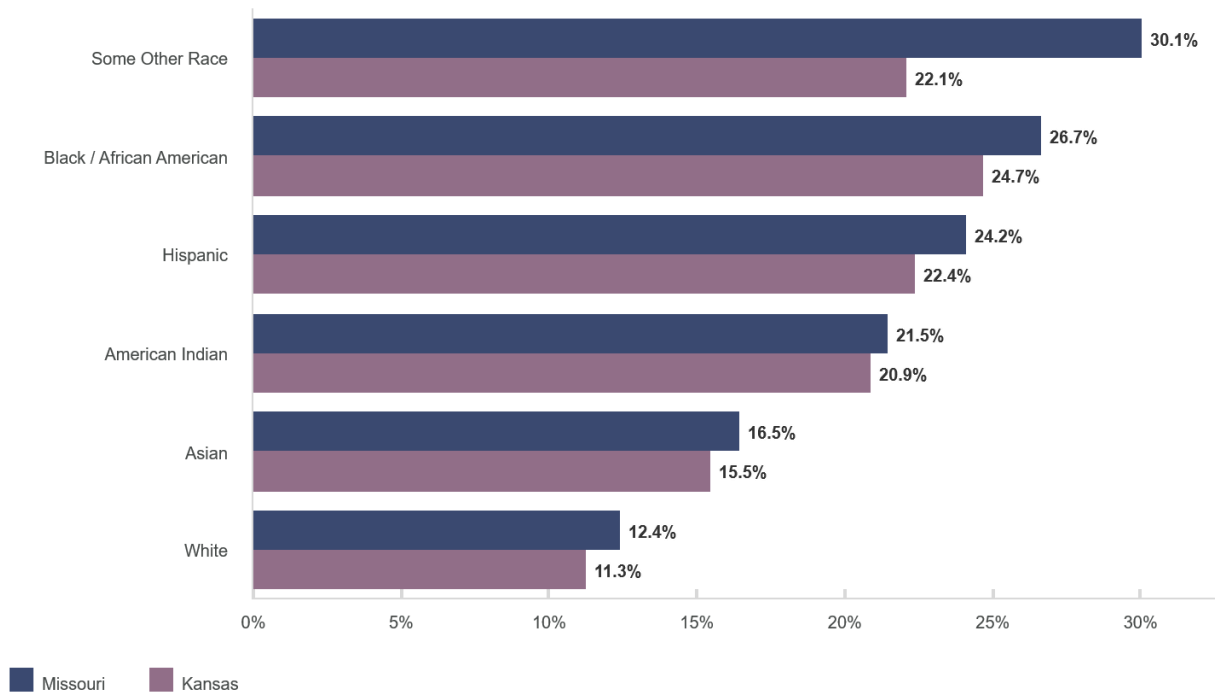
mySidewalk.com - Sources: ACS 5-year

POVERTY

- More than 14% of Missouri's population are living in poverty, and over half of these (55.6%) were women. Women living in poverty are 8% of the total population of Missouri.
- Of the total population of women in Missouri, 15.4% were below the poverty line, compared with 12.9% of men.
- 18% of Missourians in poverty were young people under the age of 18.
- 8.2% of older Missourians over the age of 65 fell below the poverty line, with older women more than twice as likely to be living in poverty than men of the same age.
- 70% of the Missourians living in poverty in 2018 identified as white, which is significantly less than their share of the population (82.5%). The Black and Latino populations were disproportionately represented in the population living in poverty (20.9% Black, 12.1% Hispanic or Latino, and 2% Asian). See Figure 4 for the rate of poverty by race.

Figure 4.

Poverty Rate by Race



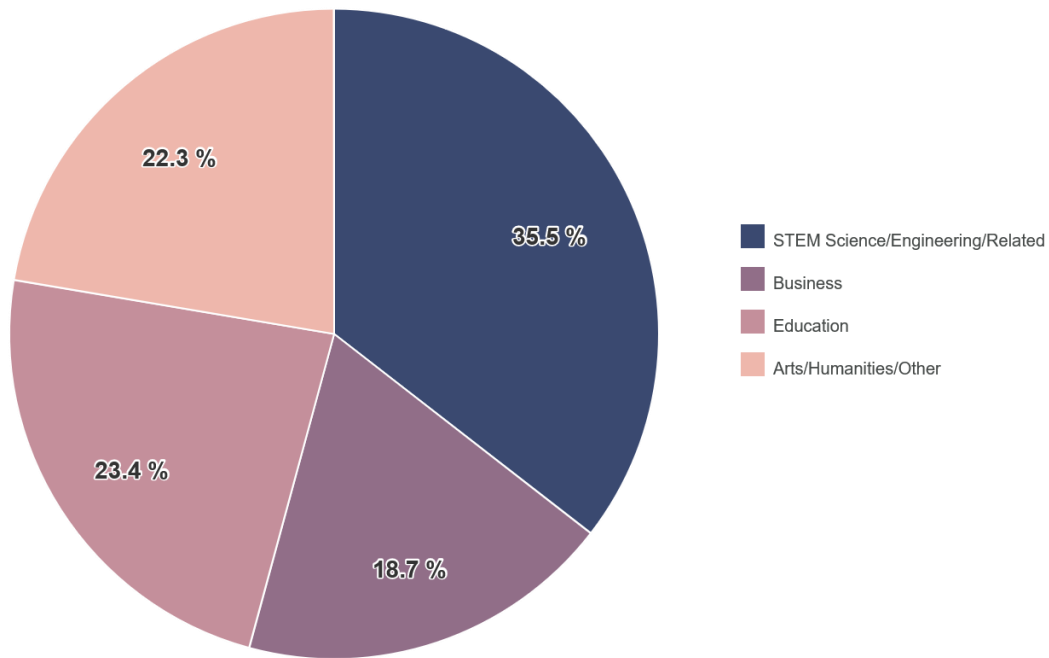
mySidewalk.com · Source: US Census ACS 5-year

EDUCATION

- More women than men completed bachelor's (18% vs. 17.3%) and advanced degrees (11.4% vs. 10.4%), although at a lower rate compared to women in the United States overall (19.7% and 12.2% respectively). Missouri men completed bachelor's and advanced degrees at lower rates than in the United States as well (19.1% and 12% respectively).
- The majority of women's bachelor's degrees 35.5% are in STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). For a full breakdown of women's bachelor's degrees by field, see Figure 5.

Figure 5.

Women Bachelor's Degrees Fields



Missouri

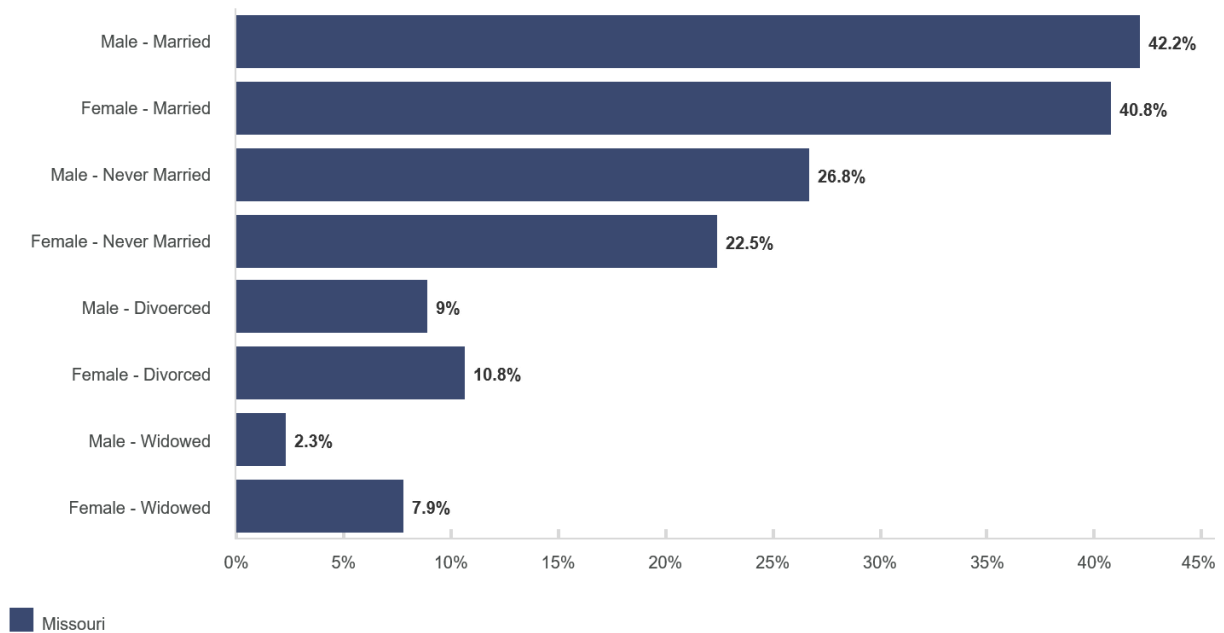
mySidewalk.com · Sources: US Census ACS 5-year

MARITAL STATUS AND HOUSEHOLDS

- Close to half of women over age 15 in Missouri are married (46% with their spouse present).
- Of the women in Missouri in 2018 who were not married, a little over a quarter (27.4%) of them had never married, 9.6% of them were widowed, and 13.1% of them were divorced. About 74.8% of individuals are part of a married couple and 35.8% of those couples had children under 18. Woman householders with no husband present constituted 18.2%, of which 54.8% of those had children under 18.
- More woman householders (85.3%) lived alone than male householders (78.5%). For a breakdown of marital status in Missouri, see Figure 6.

Figure 6.

Types of Marital Status by Sex



PART 2: EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

LEAD INDICATOR: GENDER PAY GAP

Information for this section comes from the American Community Survey 2018 five-year estimates (2014-2018) unless otherwise specified. All statistics presented are for individuals in Missouri aged 16 and older who worked full-time in the past 12 months.

Data on Earnings¹

The median earnings for women were \$37,610, compared to \$48,531 for men — with Missouri women earning just 77.5 cents for every dollar earned by a man. In 2018 one-year ACS data, Missouri women made 81 cents for every dollar made by men (\$42,238 earned by women working full-time year-round in the past 12 months, compared to \$52,004 for men).

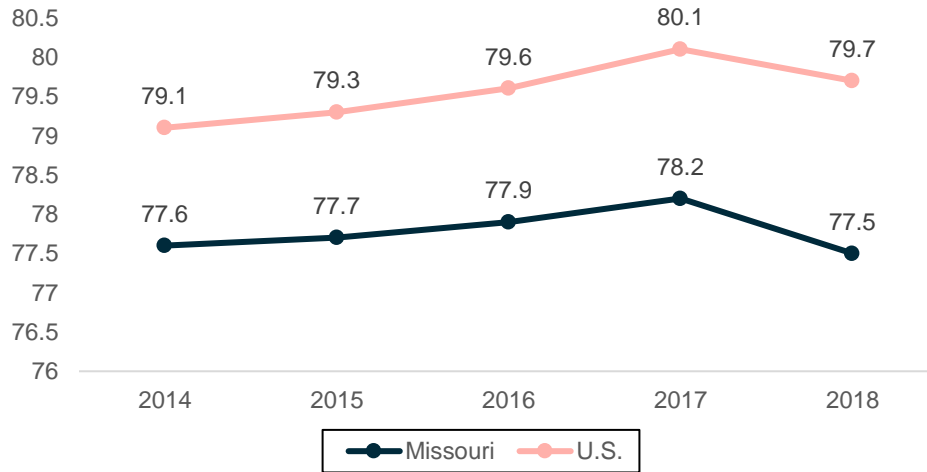
The gender gap in earnings has decreased over time. The trend in the pay gap, as seen through five-year estimates from 2014 (2010-2014) to 2018 (2014-2018), has decreased in very small increments before ticking back up slightly in 2018. In 2014, the median pay gap was 77.6 cents to the dollar and remained

¹ “Earnings” indicates wage/salary income and self-employment income, while “income” also includes such categories as retirement or disability, public assistance, social security, VA payments, etc.

fairly steady in 2015 and 2016. In 2017 the gap decreased to 78.2 cents and then increased again in 2018 to a gap of 77.5 cents, as seen in Figure 7.

Figure 7.

Median Gender Pay Gap (5-Year Estimates)

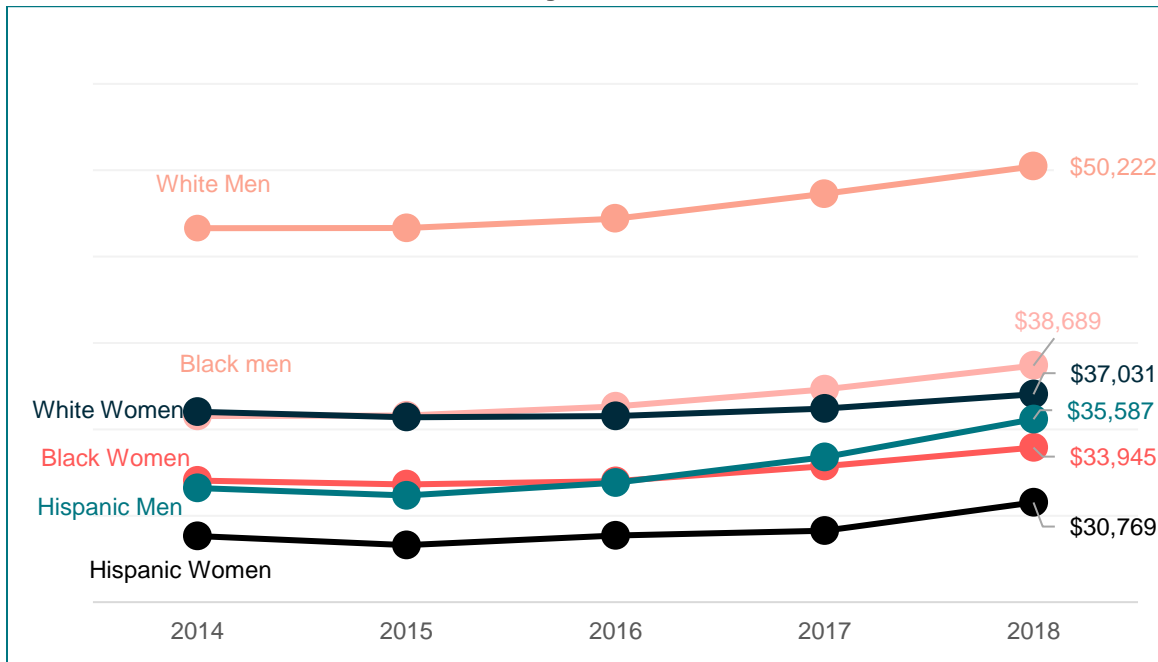


Data on Earnings by Race/Ethnicity

While the gender pay gap in Missouri has been hovering around 20% since 2014, the median gender pay gap for women of color is much higher than the pay gap for white women. For those women who selected Black alone in 2018, they earned only 68 cents for every dollar earned by white men. This number held relatively consistent for 2014-2018 as well, with variations of less than one cent. For Hispanic or Latino women in 2018, they earned only 61 cents for every dollar earned by a white man. Figure 8 visually depicts median income over time by sex and race.

Figure 8.

Missouri Median Income Over Time by Sex and Race



ADDITIONAL INDICATORS

Unemployment by Race and Gender

As a companion to the pay gap, unemployment rates also vary by race and gender. The rates examined are from 2020 given the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on unemployment rates. As of July 2020, the national unemployment rate was 10.2% and Missouri’s was 6.9%.²¹ Unemployment was lower for men (9.4%) than women (10.5%) and unemployment for white workers (9.2%) was lower than for Black workers (14.6%), who have seen steady unemployment increases for the last few months while unemployment numbers for other groups have declined.²²

ANALYSIS: WHY THE PAY GAP MATTERS

Although women in Missouri, as well as in the U.S., are completing higher education at rates equal to or greater than men, and entering the workforce at historic levels, the wage gap persists. This gap is driven by continuously devaluing women’s work, women’s role in childbearing and rearing (which necessitates time off of work while men continue to climb the career ladder), and the disproportionately high number of hours spent performing unpaid labor, including in child care, even if the mother is the sole breadwinner in the household.²³ Women with children’s outsized share of unpaid labor is only increasing during the COVID-19 outbreak, as working mothers are twice as likely as men to spend an additional five hours per day on “household responsibilities.”²⁴ Even in research which controls for occupation, education, and experience, women are still paid less than men.²⁵ The wage gap can have life-long economic consequences on participation in the labor force and levels of compensation. 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.²⁶

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS FOR EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

LOOKING BACK: POLICY TIMELINE

This section introduces several key pieces of economic legislation impacting women’s lives by addressing the gender pay gap.



The Equal Pay Act of 1963 prohibited employers from paying employees of different sexes different wages when they are performing equal work on “jobs the performance of which requires equal skill, effort, and responsibility, and which are performed under similar working conditions.”²⁷

Executive Order #15-09 (2015) directed all Missouri Executive Branch agencies to review the practices outlined in the pay equity guidelines developed by the University of Missouri Institute of Public Policy (IPP) to determine how they can be used to address any gender wage gaps identified. It also strongly encouraged, but did not require, private employers to do the same.

Kansas City Ordinance 19028 (2019) noted the wage gap in the city and therefore disallowed employers from asking about an applicant’s salary history, screening applicants based on current or prior wages or other compensation, using salary history in negotiating employment contracts or determining compensation, or disfavoring applicants for refusing to disclose their salary histories.

LOOKING FORWARD: OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRESS

Pay Equity Best Practices

Developed in 2016 by the Institute of Public Policy at the University of Missouri in conjunction with United WE, a set of best practices for improving the gender pay gap suggests that employers should first determine whether a wage gap exists in their organization and whether their compensation system is equitable. This can be accomplished through self-audits and evaluations of the system, including consideration of how equitable the gender distribution is of job titles and pay grades. Other best practices include ensuring that salary ranges, company policies concerning pay, and employee evaluation processes are clear and transparent. One way this can be developed is through clear guidelines for pay that are consistently applied to all job titles.²⁸

Minimum Wage Laws

Missouri's state-mandated minimum wage is currently \$9.45 (with a few exceptions, including tipped workers and government positions), though individual employers may exceed this baseline if they choose.

The minimum wage is particularly important for women, as women in the workforce tend to occupy lower-paid positions, and wage increases have the potential to help close the gender pay gap, help women out of poverty, and reduce child poverty in woman-headed households.²⁹

St. Louis City currently has a minimum wage of \$9.45 like the rest of Missouri, but for several months in 2017, the city's minimum wage was several dollars higher than the state's.³⁰

St. Louis passed a minimum wage increase in 2015, noting the decades-long increasing of income inequality in the city, the struggle of minimum wage workers to meet basic needs, and the higher levels of poverty faced by residents of St. Louis proper compared to its surrounding areas.³¹ A group of employers sued the city to prevent the law, resulting in a two-year delay in its implementation, as the Missouri Supreme Court ruled in the city's favor in 2017.³² Of the 38,000

workers benefitting from the Ordinance, over half were women, over a quarter had children, and over half were living in poverty or below 200% of the poverty level. The minimum wage increase was short-lived, however, as the MO General Assembly passed a preemption that prohibited political subdivisions from requiring employers to provide wages or benefits exceeding those mandated by the state.³³ Civil service employees are exempt from this law, allowing their minimum wage in St. Louis to rise to \$15 per hour as of mid-February 2020.³⁴

On the other side of the state, Kansas City has taken a different approach, designing a voluntary program for individual employers within the city that highlights businesses offering a higher minimum wage. Since late 2017, these businesses can apply to the city for a Living Wage sticker to publicly display and are part of a searchable database administered by the City Clerk's Office. To search by business name or contact information, visit this website: <http://city.kcmo.org/kc/LivingWage/Search>. In 2018 the living wage for Kansas City was determined to be \$10 an hour; in 2019 it was \$11.25 an hour, and in 2020 it is \$12.50 an hour.³⁵

Occupational Licensing

As of the last available survey, approximately one-third of all businesses in Missouri are woman-owned. Occupational licensing is intended to protect consumers by setting standards, but some licensing requirements act in practice as a barrier to entry, particularly to low-income occupations and to women.³⁶ Women in the listening sessions indicated that Black women in particular may not know all of the available options and resources and expressed concern about barriers to licensing. Potential solutions include providing increased mentoring to women entrepreneurs, setting performance benchmarks, standardizing the board and commission website, revising statutes to allow for broader reciprocity, require registration only, and deregulate existing occupational licensing boards.³⁷

Increasing Minimum Wage

St. Louis City

Only city civil service employees currently have a higher minimum wage than the state's (due to state law).

Kansas City

The City has created a voluntary program to encourage individual business owners to provide a living wage above the state's minimum wage.

Recent Movements

Statewide pay equity legislation in Missouri is a long-term goal, however in the meantime, efforts continue to highlight the sources of pay disparities, like having adequate access to child care, paid leave policies, occupation type, and more (explored later in this report). This is a systemic and long-term way of addressing the issue, but additional legislation may also be necessary to reach equity goals.³⁸

THE COVID-19 IMPACT

Many of the jobs hit hardest by the pandemic are those that tend to be disproportionately populated by women, like those in the service sector, child care, personal care service, food service, and others. Women of color may be particularly hard hit, as they already face greater gender pay gaps, have less inherited generational wealth, and are more likely to be the breadwinners in their + households than white women.³⁹ 2020 spring data indicates that women were considering leaving the workforce at a rate 1.3 times greater than men, and that Black women, women with children, and senior women were the most likely to consider leaving. This has the potential to reverse what progress the country has made as not only would this decrease the number of women in the workforce, but senior women more often champion diversity and inclusion than senior men, and are “more likely to mentor or sponsor women of color.”⁴⁰ The Missouri unemployment numbers reflect these gender differences; in March nearly 4,000 more men than women were unemployed, but by June over 26,000 more women than men were unemployed. The latest numbers are from September, when the discrepancy has lessened, but more than 6,000 more women than men were unemployed.⁴¹

The Impact of COVID-19

The economic burdens faced by women, and particularly by women of color, have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. These burdens include limited access to healthcare, fear of losing a job, limited access to or ability to afford child care, and lower donations to non-profits supporting communities of color.

While women in general make less than men in Missouri and across the United States, the difference is particularly striking in the healthcare field, where women physicians make about 75 (MO) and 73 (US) cents to a male physician’s dollar respectively. Women registered nurses make 77 (MO) and 80 (US) cents to the dollar respectively, and women paramedics make 86 (MO) and 77 (US) cents to the dollar respectively. The difference for women lab techs is less, though still not at parity, with women earning 86 (MO) and 85 (US) cents for every dollar earned by male lab techs in the US and Missouri respectively.

PART 3: EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE

LEAD INDICATOR: NUMBER AND DISTRIBUTION OF ACCREDITED CHILD CARE CENTERS

In 2019, the total number of center-based child care programs was 1,830, of which 7% were accredited;² the total number of family child care homes was 1,011, of which 1% were accredited; the total number of

² Accredited child care facilities are those that meet voluntary standards above and beyond what is required for licensure. There are several organizations recognized by the Missouri Department of Social Services (DSS) that can

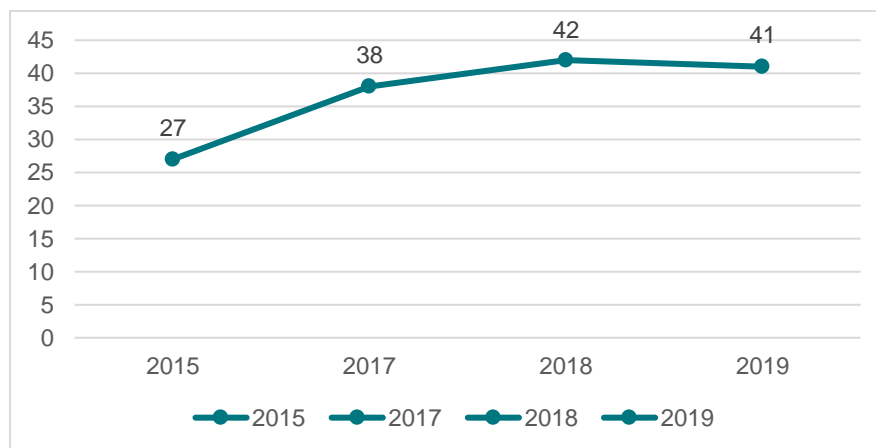
school aged care programs was 2,524. 90% of these school aged licensed programs have slots for school aged children.

There were 47 out of 115 counties³ in Missouri in 2019 with no accredited child care centers, which is 40.9% of the counties in the state.⁴²

Compared to the 2017 and 2015 reports, a greater number of Missouri counties lack access to accredited child care facilities. The percent of counties without accredited child care facilities has been steadily declining, from 27% in 2015 to 38% in 2017, to 42% in 2018, but at 40.9% in 2019, there was a small increase in counties with accredited child care centers, see Figure 9.

Figure 9.

Percent of Counties Without Accredited Child Care Centers (2019)



ADDITIONAL INDICATORS

Cost of Child Care

In the state of Missouri, according to a 2019 Child Care Aware report, the annual price of center-based infant care is \$9,880, which is more than the average tuition and fees at a public four-year university (\$8,670). Child care is a significant expense for many families, averaging 11.6% of a married couple's income. Single parents in Missouri on average spend 40% of their income on center-based infant care and married couples at the poverty line spend an average of 66.6% of their income on center-based care.⁴³

While child care is costly and presents a steep expense for families, it can also be difficult to obtain. A 2018 Center for American Progress study found that over half of Americans live in an area classified as a child care desert, meaning that there is only one licensed child care slot for every three young children.⁴⁴

provide accreditation, which indicates higher quality on a variety of criteria. "Who Regulates Child Care?" *Child Care Aware*. <https://www.childcareaware.org/families/child-care-regulations/who-regulates-child-care/>; "DSS Recognized Accrediting Organizations." *Missouri Department of Social Services*. <https://dss.mo.gov/cd/child-care/child-care-providers/accrediting-organizations.htm>

³ Missouri has 114 counties plus the City of St. Louis for a total of 115 sub-state divisions.

home daycares that intend to watch more than six children must seek licensure.⁴⁸ MO HB 397 also institutes other child protection and transparency measures such as prohibiting anyone but a child’s guardian from instituting a do-not-resuscitate order, making non-identifiable child fatality data publicly available, and protecting children in custody hearings.⁴⁹

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (2020), passed during the Coronavirus disease outbreak, provided \$3.5 billion in supplemental funding to the CCDBG program. This supplemental funding was given to states to support their child care industries, especially as centers closed or were required to stay open to care for the children of essential workers. This immediate relief was used by states in varying ways such as to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to child care workers or to continue to pay providers for students enrolled in their programs.⁵⁰

LOOKING FORWARD: OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRESS

Earned Paid Family and Medical Leave

Missouri still lacks a statewide paid family and medical leave policy, but strides have been made in recent years, including the 2017 executive order by then-Governor Greitens granting six weeks of paid parental leave to all Missouri executive branch employees which covered both caregivers. Four additional statewide agencies have followed suit.⁵¹ At the municipal level, as of 2015, eligible Kansas City government employees were granted six weeks of paid parental leave, with one week added each fiscal year for three years. Since late 2019, St. Louis County has had a paid family leave policy that allows all eligible County employees two weeks of paid leave for a new child or a family member who is ill.⁵² More recently, Jackson County (which includes parts of Kansas City), established a 12-week paid parental leave policy for all eligible County employees. County Executive White signed the executive order in June of 2020.⁵³

Paid Family Leave

Missouri – Executive branch employees have six weeks of paid leave for both caregivers.

Kansas City – Eligible public employees have nine weeks of paid parental leave.

St. Louis County – Eligible public employees have two weeks of paid family leave.

Jackson County – Eligible county employees have 12 weeks of paid parental leave

Best Practices for Increasing Access to Child Care

Paying child care workers a living wage is important not only for the wellbeing of the workers, who are largely underpaid,⁴ but also benefits child care centers and the children under their care. Nationally, median wages for early educators often fall below the poverty threshold; child care workers are mostly women, nearly half of whom are women of color.⁵⁴ Raising incomes can lead to better health and less stress, which helps child care workers “engage in high-quality interactions that support children’s development and learning.”⁵⁵ Research shows that children cared for by early educators with higher

⁴ The median income for child care workers only meets the threshold for a living wage for a single adult in five states, and for workers with children, their income does not meet the threshold in any state. In Missouri, the median income is 93% of a living wage, but for a worker with a child it is 42% of a living wage.

levels of wellbeing are more likely to receive instruction that expands their cognitive and language skills.⁵⁶ Paying a living wage also helps providers to attract and retain high quality staff, which benefits the children not only through higher quality care, but also greater continuity of care, which helps their social-emotional development and leads to more “positive expression and behavior.”⁵⁷ It could also help decrease the gender pay gap by increasing the income of this woman-dominated field.

Increasing Access to Child Care

- Pay child care workers a living wage
- Collect data on child care access on unemployment applications
- Use CARES Act funding for ECE
- Provide funding for increased access to child care

Collecting data on child care access on unemployment applications could help determine how much unemployment is caused by a lack of access to child care, and thereby support efforts to increase access. Missouri has begun to acknowledge this issue, as the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations issued guidance in May 2020 that noted that lack of child care due to COVID-19 was an acceptable reason not to return to work if recalled, and would not result in an inability to draw unemployment benefits.⁵⁸ The CARES Act provides pandemic unemployment aid for primary caregivers of

children kept home from school due to COVID-19 closures but only if those children require constant care.⁵⁹ CARES funding could also be used to increase access to child care as providers can apply for aid to remain open through what has often been significant losses of business.⁶⁰ However, this only applies to businesses that have not had to close down and implementation so far has been spotty, with only one quarter of the child care market receiving Paycheck Protection Program loans. Home-based providers are experiencing the greatest challenges in receiving assistance and are receiving the least amount of assistance.⁶¹ Missouri is using CARES CCDBG funding to continuing paying child care providers who accept subsidies, but is not providing additional funding for providers caring for the children of essential workers or waiving child care tuition for families.⁶²

Finally, states can provide funding to increase access to child care. This process has already started at the federal level, where an additional \$550 million for CCDBG and increased support for Early Head Start Expansion, Head Start, Preschool Development Grants, and other early childhood programs was appropriated for Fiscal Year 2020.⁶³ Funding for CCDBG and how it is used may be particularly important as most CCDBG funding goes to center-based programs, which often have had trouble meeting the needs of families with nontraditional work schedules, families with infants and toddlers, families in rural areas, and families with children with special needs. Many low-income families fall into these categories, which are noted in the 2014 CCDBG reauthorization as deserving priority. CCDBG funds should be used to provide higher pay, bonuses, or grants to providers serving those priority populations, provide those educators with training and other resources to support their work, use contracts as well as vouchers as payment to increase the number and quality of child care serving priority populations, and develop consumer education efforts.⁶⁴ Investing in the ECE system may be costly in the short run, but aside from the normative goods of paying child care workers more comparably to their school-age educator counterparts and providing high-quality care and education to more children, there are long-term economic benefits to increasing and revising ECE funding. Namely, increased wages should lead to increased tax revenue, while increased availability of care should reduce the income lost when parents do not work to care for their children, which would in turn again increase tax revenue.⁶⁵

THE COVID-19 IMPACT

The COVID-19 disease outbreak has hit the child care industry especially hard, further exacerbating the scarcity of quality child care options for parents. A recent nationwide Bipartisan Policy Center and Morning Consult survey found that *only 8% of respondents reported that there were no changes* to their child care provider's availability during the COVID-19 disease outbreak. Additionally, only 22% of essential workers reported being able to use their previous child care arrangement during the COVID-19 disease outbreak.⁶⁶ A recent study also found that Missouri could potentially lose 48% of their child care supply due to the decrease in the industry during the COVID-19 disease outbreak, meaning that there would be only one spot in a licensed child care center for every six kids.⁶⁷

The Impact of COVID-19

A recent study found that only 8% of respondents across the United States reported that there were no changes to their child care provider's availability during the Coronavirus disease outbreak.

Since single parents tend to occupy positions that are lower paid and less likely to allow remote work, and because child care may be less available and schools may move to remote instruction, they are forced to make difficult choices.⁶⁸ The situation for mothers in general is also more difficult due to COVID-19, as approximately one-fifth of working-age adults reported having to take time off or quit entirely because the pandemic interfered with their ability to secure child care. Women are especially likely to not be working, with nearly

three times the number of women age 25-44 having stopped working since the COVID-19 pandemic began due to lack of child care.⁶⁹

PART 4: HEALTH

LEAD INDICATOR: PROPORTION OF MISSOURIANS WITHOUT HEALTHCARE

All Missourians

In the ACS 5-year estimates for 2018, 5.8% of Missourians under 18 did not have healthcare coverage (1.4% of the population), 13.8% of Missourians age 18-64 lacked healthcare coverage (8.2% of the population), and 0.5% of Missourians 65 and over did not have health insurance (less than one percent of the population). Overall, the total percentage of Missourians without health insurance coverage was 9.7%. This is only slightly higher than the national average of 9.3% of Americans without health insurance coverage.

In one-year ACS data for 2018 for the civilian, non-institutionalized population, 5.7% of Missourians under the age of 19⁵ did not have health insurance; 13.4% of Missourians ages 19-64 did not have health insurance, and 0.5% of Missourians ages 65 and over did not have health insurance.

Women in Missouri

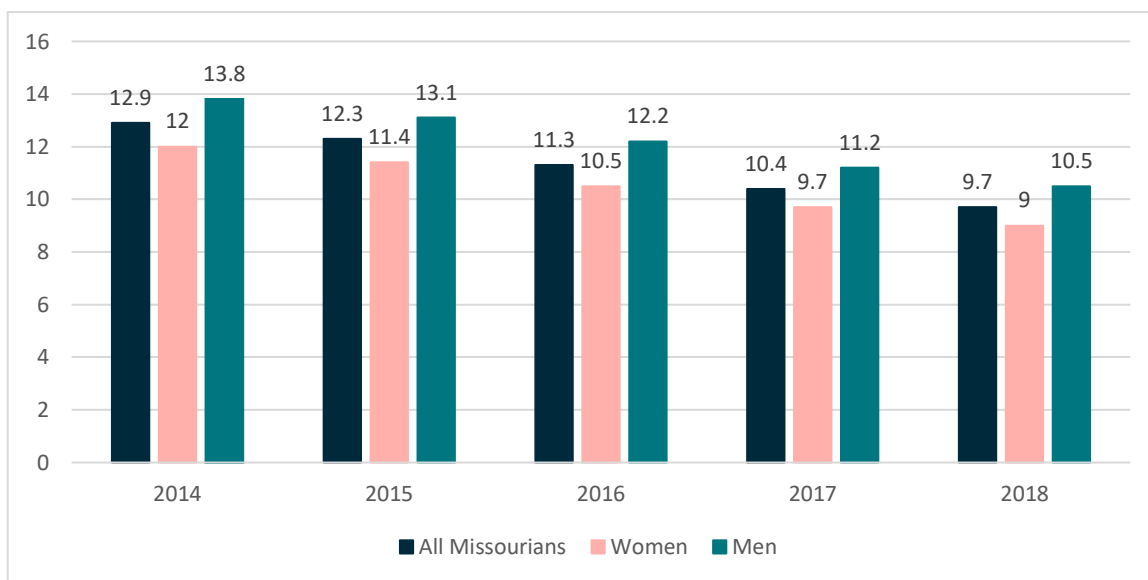
According to the ACS 5-year estimates for 2018 for the civilian, non-institutionalized population, women are more likely than men to have health insurance and the rate is improving. 9% of Missouri women (4.6% of the total population) did not have health insurance, compared to 10.5% of Missouri men. The

⁵ In 2017 the age categories changed from under 18 to under 19, and 18-24 to 19-25.

proportion of Missouri women without health insurance slowly but steadily decreased from 2014-2018. In 5-year estimates for 2014, 12% of women in Missouri did not have health insurance; in 2015 that number dropped to 11.4%, then to 10.5% in 2016, 9.7% in 2017, and 9.0% in 2018, see Figure 10.

Figure 10.

Percentage of Missourians Without Health Insurance Coverage (ACS 5-Year)



ADDITIONAL INDICATORS

Health Outcomes

Early health outcomes vary in Missouri, but overall health outcomes for infants are worse than on a national level. The national infant mortality rate in 2018, according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) National Vital Statistics Report, is 5.67 infant deaths for every 1,000 live births. In Missouri, the 2018 infant mortality rate is 6.35 infant deaths for every 1,000 live births, making Missouri one of 16 states with an infant mortality rate significantly higher than the national rate.⁷⁰ Additionally, 8.7% of babies in Missouri are born with a low birthweight as compared to 8.28% nationally.⁷¹

Adults in Missouri face a number of adverse health outcomes as well. Rates of death for cancer (176.6 per 100,000 people), heart disease (196.75 per 100,000 people), and issues attributable to smoking (137.37 per 100,000 people) are all higher than the national rates, according to 2008-2018 state estimates. In Missouri, the cancer death rate for women is 139.99 per 100,000 people, which is lower than the men’s rate of 199.09 per 100,000 people. Similarly, the rate of heart disease deaths for women is 147.4 per 100,000 people compared to the men’s rate of 283.3 per 100,000 people.⁷² The CDC estimates from 2017 state data that the national death rate from heart disease is 165 per 100,000 people and the death rate from cancer is 152.5 per 100,000 people.⁷³

Domestic Violence

Spousal or partner abuse can be severely damaging not just to women, but also to their children. Although the most recent updates to the data came in 2015, from 2012-2015, Missouri had 1,510 instances of spousal or partner abuse per 100,000 residents, which is a rate of 6.72. This is down slightly from the rate of 7.5 from 2010-2014.⁷⁴

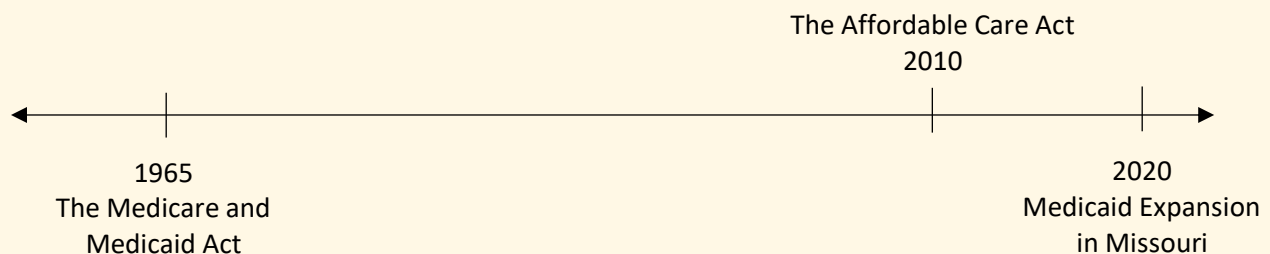
ANALYSIS: WHY ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE MATTERS

Access to affordable healthcare is important for women’s physical and mental wellbeing. Insurance can help women access healthcare and receive preventive care that can preempt more costly illnesses over time.⁷⁵ Uninsured women are less likely to receive adequate care during pregnancy and delivery, and are more likely to have low-birthweight infants and problems during delivery. Uninsured children are less likely to have access to healthcare, and consequently can receive late or no care for conditions that could have been prevented or treated earlier. These problems are more pronounced for lower-income and/or minority women and children.⁷⁶ Outside of pregnancy-related care, women are more likely to require more healthcare over the course of their lives, but are also more likely to have lower incomes than their male counterparts; this means that women face higher health care costs but may have trouble meeting those costs or may choose to forgo necessary care. These issues are compounded by the fact that women tend to hold lower-paying positions that lack the flexibility or paid sick leave to receive necessary medical care.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS FOR HEALTH

LOOKING BACK: POLICY TIMELINE

This section introduces several key pieces of healthcare legislation impacting women’s lives through access to affordable healthcare insurance.



The Medicare and Medicaid Act (1965) created two public health insurance programs: Medicare, a health insurance program for senior citizens, and Medicaid, a health insurance program for low-income Americans. Over the program’s lifespan, it has been expanded to cover more people and provide more benefits. For example, a later addition of Medicare provided prescription drug coverage and Medicaid expansions have opened coverage up to a wide variety of people including pregnant women, disabled people, and people who need long-term care.⁷⁷

The Affordable Care Act (2010) is a comprehensive healthcare reform law that aimed to expand affordable healthcare to more Americans. The law provided subsidies for households to lower healthcare

costs for more Americans, granted each state the ability to expand Medicaid (though not all states have done so as of 2020), and supported innovative delivery methods to lower overall healthcare costs.⁷⁸

Medicaid Expansion in Missouri (2020) was passed through a ballot measure during the August 2020 primary elections. Medicaid expansion had previously passed in 37 states and Washington D.C., making Missouri the 38th state to expand Medicaid. Expansion, as outlined in the ACA, opened up Medicaid coverage to families and individuals at 138% of the federal poverty level.⁷⁹

LOOKING FORWARD: OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRESS

Medicaid Expansion 2020

The impact of the August 2020 vote that adopted Medicaid expansion will continue into the future, opening up coverage to healthy adults at 138% of the federal poverty level, a change that could include an additional 230,000 Missourians as of July 2021. A Washington University study found that implementing this expansion has the potential to save the state up to \$39 million in the first year, but up to \$932 million by 2024. This does not include the likelihood that increased access to preventative care will decrease healthcare costs in the long term.⁸⁰

Implementation of Medicaid Expansion

Medicaid coverage in Missouri will be expanded beginning in July 2021. It is likely to extend coverage to 230,000 Missourians and could save the state \$39 million.

Children's Health Care Bills

Several bills (HB 2379, HB 1670, and HB 1272) were introduced in 2020 intended to allow children eligible for MO HealthNet benefits to remain eligible for one year and to eliminate the 30-day waiting period after enrollment, allowing children to more easily and quickly access care and eliminate the necessity that parents re-enroll their children every three months. It would also aid in rectifying the removal of up to 60,000 eligible children from Missouri's Medicaid rolls over 2018-2019.⁸¹ Forward momentum has been stalled since at least May for each of these bills.⁸²

THE COVID-19 IMPACT

With more people in general, and women in particular, facing unemployment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of uninsured Missourians may temporarily rise, as healthcare coverage may no longer be provided by an employer. Data from the listening sessions shows that Black women in particular are concerned with access to healthcare through employers, both the availability of insurance and the fear that taking sick leave if they or a loved one contract COVID-19 will put their job in jeopardy. Additionally, the medical bills associated with COVID-related care are unaffordable for some, especially women of color due in large part to existing inequities in earnings.

The Impact of COVID-19

Black women in the listening sessions said they were afraid that taking sick leave to care for themselves or others could put their jobs in jeopardy.

Domestic violence against women has already increased during the pandemic. Not only are fears over the virus providing an excuse for increased intensity and frequency of domestic abuse, but fears of going into hospitals can hinder women from getting the care they need. Quarantines and regional lock downs take women away from reporting or other avenues of reprieve and can reduce the ability of women to seek help.⁸³

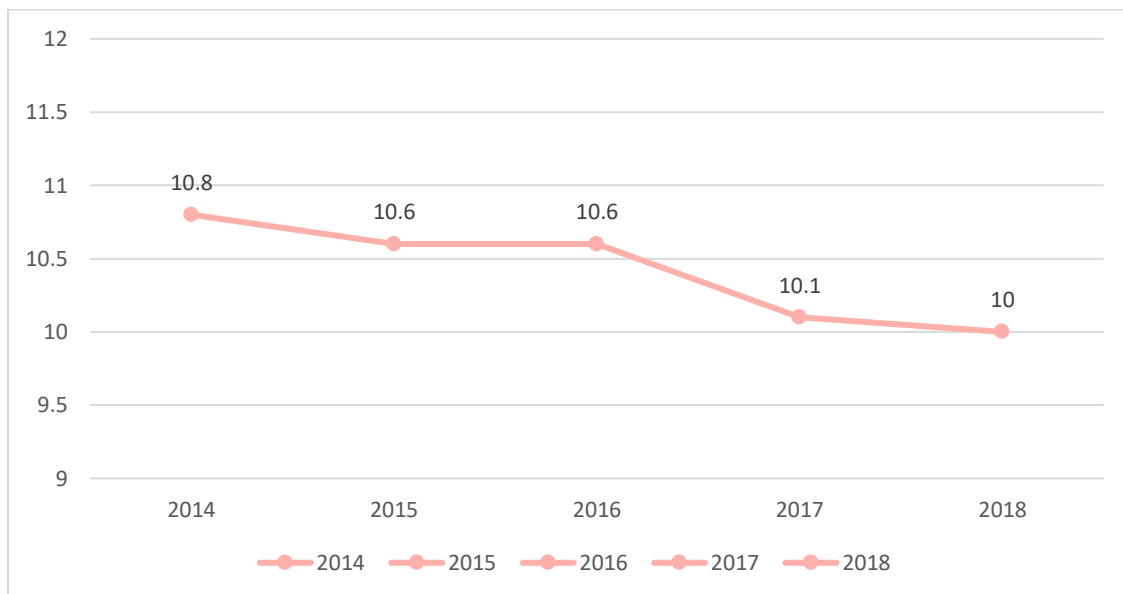
PART 5: SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STATUS

LEAD INDICATOR: POVERTY RATE OF WOMEN 65 AND OLDER

The total estimate of the number of women age 65 and older in Missouri living below the poverty level was 52,622. This is 0.9% of all Missourians, 1.7% of all Missouri women, 11.3% of all women in poverty, and 10% of all Missouri women aged 65 and older, see Figure 11. The percentage of women aged 65 and over living below the poverty level has decreased slightly by about 0.8% since 2014.

Figure 11.

Percentage of Women Aged 65 and Over Living Below the Poverty Level



ADDITIONAL INDICATORS

Social Assistance

In Missouri, 15% of families with children under 18 lived under the poverty line. Additionally, more women (14.3%) live under the poverty line in Missouri than men (12.1%).⁸⁴ 11.6% of households receiving benefits were women-led households with no partner present. Families with at least one Black (21.7%) and Hispanic or Latino (20.4%) householder were more likely to be in poverty than families with white householders (12%). Missourians have access to a wide variety of social assistance programs for parents and children. In 2018, 745,983 people (8%) in Missouri received monthly Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.⁸⁵ Additionally, in 2018, 64,129 children (17.2%) were certified for Women, Infants, Children (WIC) benefits. 70.9% of people receiving WIC are white and 20.2% of people receiving WIC are Black.⁸⁶

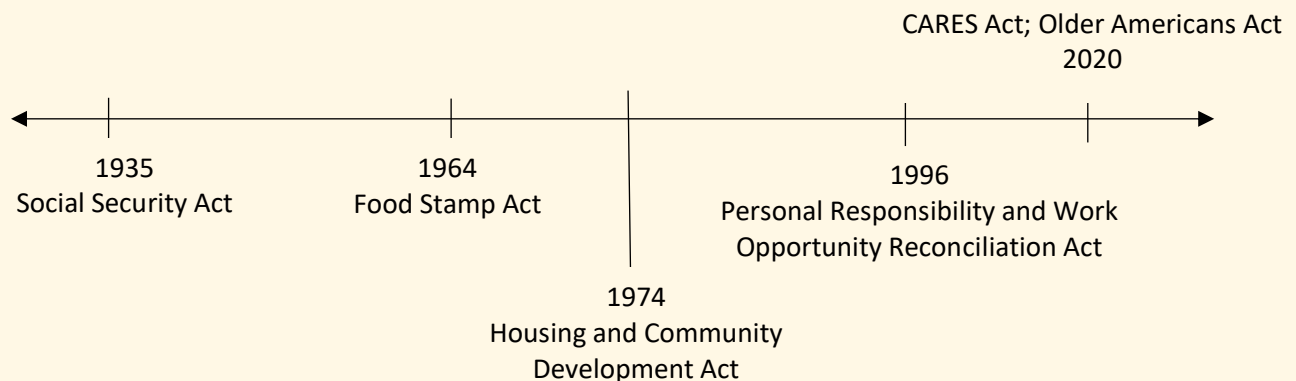
ANALYSIS: WHY SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MATTERS

Because women tend to hold lower-paying jobs, part-time jobs, and spend more time on unpaid labor, they may have less in savings and fewer retirement benefits once they reach age 65 than men, contributing to more older Missouri women than men living in poverty. Furthermore, women over 65 maintain caregiver responsibilities, with 3% of grandparents living with grandchildren and 1.4% of grandparents responsible for grandchildren under 18 in ACS 5-year estimates. Social assistance programs like SNAP can help low-income seniors, who are particularly vulnerable to the negative health consequences that come with food insecurity, to afford nutritious food and redirect their resources to cover the rest of their household expenses.⁸⁷

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STATUS

LOOKING BACK: POLICY TIMELINE

This section introduces several key pieces of social and economic legislation impacting women's lives through social assistance programs.



The Social Security Act of 1935 established a system of benefits for elderly Americans, funded through taxes. In addition to creating the Social Security program, the act also included support for state old-age

assistance programs, unemployment insurance, welfare for parents and children, and funding for public health measures. It also established a Social Security Board to carry out the functions of the act and provide further recommendations as needed.⁸⁸ In **1950**, states could extend social security coverage to state and local employees under Section 218 Agreements, and coverage was made mandatory in **1990**, if those employees were not already covered under Section 218. Every state has executed Section 218 Agreements.⁸⁹

The Food Stamp Act of 1964 established a cooperative federal-state system for food assistance, originally called food stamps. This was intended to improve the access to healthy food and thus raise the level of nutrition of low-income households, and to strengthen U.S. agricultural economy by more effectively utilizing food abundances.⁹⁰ Now known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), a significant amount of Americans receive these monthly benefits. In April 2020, the latest month for which data is available, 360,937 Missouri households received SNAP, adding up to \$137.4 million in benefits for Missourians in that month alone.⁹¹

The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 established the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) which allowed cities to determine their own community development project needs, where the federal government had previously made those decisions. CDBG combined several separate categorical programs under the Department of Housing and Urban Development into a single funding stream given to cities each year. The amount allocated is determined through a formula that accounts for population and other factors such as poverty and housing dilemmas. CDBG funds can be put towards a variety of purposes, the primary objectives of which should include helping to provide decent housing and a suitable living environment and expanding economic opportunities, principally for low- and middle-income people. However, on the whole, communities can choose to use their funds for a wide variety of housing, community, and economic development activities.⁹²

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 reformed the national welfare system and created the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. The aim of the act was to make welfare support a temporary stop for individuals on their way to gaining employment. The law included strong work requirements and provided incentives for states to move people into employment, which also included increased funding for programs such as child care.⁹³

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (2020), passed during the Coronavirus disease outbreak, provided \$3.5 billion in supplemental funding to the CCDBG program. This supplemental funding was given to states in order to support their child care industries, especially as centers closed or were required to stay open to care for the children of essential workers. This immediate relief was used by states in varying ways such as to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to child care workers or to continue to pay providers for students enrolled in their programs.⁹⁴

LOOKING FORWARD: OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRESS

The Older Americans Act (2020)

According to the National Council on Aging, the Older Americans Act, reauthorized in March 2020 until 2024, provides resources and assistance to keep older Americans healthy and independent. Resources support healthy meal programs, training, transportation, and others. Older Americans are more likely to struggle with health and economic hardships like affording prescriptions while living on a fixed income.^{95 96} Part of this legislation is the National Family Caregiver Support Program, which allows states to determine how they will fund programs for caregiver assessments and for support services. Data will be kept nationally and a report will be issued a year from the Act's enactment noting the best practices of the programs carried out under the NFCSP.

The Older Americans Act

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.

Missouri State Plan on Aging 2020-2023

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services developed this plan under the Older Americans Act and the Division of Senior and Disability Services is in charge of administering it. The plan first determines what the current state of aging is in Missouri and what resources are available, before laying out three goals and strategies to achieve them. The goals are that Missouri older adults will have access to information, services, and resources to support healthy and independent living, Missouri older adults will engage with local senior centers that meet their nutritional, health, and social needs, and to bolster collaborations to improve responses to reported abuse, neglect, and exploitation as well as complaints of mistreatment to ensure advocacy and protective services are provided to the right people, at the right time, in the right environment.⁹⁷

The Heroes Act (2020 – Pending)

The Heroes Act was introduced to the United States House of Representatives in May 2020 to further address continuing issues stemming from COVID-19, including funds for essential workers, testing, direct payments, introducing OSHA requirements, supporting small businesses, strengthening housing, unemployment, and food security assistance, and providing funds for an accurate Census and the preservation of the Post Office.⁹⁸ An updated version of the bill including more support for the Paycheck Protection Program, assistance for airline workers, and more assistance for education and child care, passed the House on October 1st, 2020 after negotiations based on the original bill.⁹⁹

COVID-19 TANF Payments

Several states issued additional payment to families enrolled in their state's TANF programs specifically to help them meet the additional challenges presented by the COVID-19 disease outbreak. Alabama, Illinois, North Carolina, Oklahoma Rhode Island, and West Virginia all issued payments of up to \$615 to TANF families to help with COVID-19 related needs. Although these payments benefited families that received them, TANF benefits in most states are still too low to raise families out of poverty; in Missouri, TANF benefits are at or below 20% of the poverty line. The situation is even more dire for Black and

Latinx children, who are more likely than white children to live in states with the lowest level of benefits and whose households are more likely to be hit hardest by the COVID-19 disease outbreak.¹⁰⁰

THE COVID-19 IMPACT

COVID-19 has already had an economic impact on people from all walks of life, though it has affected some groups more than others, and is likely to continue doing so. Lower-income individuals aged 65 and over are likely to be among those in particular need as food banks and senior centers have closed or reduced services. Additionally, social distancing recommendations are particularly important for older Americans, so accessing food banks and senior centers that remain open is even more difficult. They may also be financially unable to stock up on necessities, or have difficulty finding assistance to get to and from grocery stores, especially in a safe manner. Food insecurity also tends to make chronic health conditions worse, which is even more dangerous during this pandemic.¹⁰¹

Globally, the pandemic is projected to increase women's poverty and worsen the gender poverty gap.¹⁰² Nationally, this trend also holds, with more women than men in poverty, and food insecurity having increased in families with young children.¹⁰³

While it may be difficult to tell how the COVID-19 outbreak has impacted social assistance metrics, data from July 2020 indicates that many of the indicators have stayed consistent. 777,885 individuals received SNAP benefits in July 2020 (compared to 745,983 in 2018).¹⁰⁴ Additionally, for much of the COVID-19 pandemic, communities have provided other local means of social assistance such as school districts providing meals to students who would have typically benefitted from free and reduced-price lunch.

The Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 virus has the potential to more seriously affect women over age 65 living in poverty because they face difficulty staying safe while accessing necessary resources.

PART 6: LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

LEAD INDICATOR: PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC OFFICE

Legislative

In 2020 before the election, there were 207 total legislative seats, with five vacancies, and six possible executive positions with no vacancies. There were two women representing Missouri in Congress out of 10 available seats (two Senators and eight Representatives), 40 women in the Missouri House of Representatives out of 161 non-vacant seats (163 total seats), and eight women in the Missouri Senate out of 31 non-vacant seats (34 total seats). This makes for a total of 50 women representing Missouri in the national and state legislatures out of 202 non-vacant seats, or 24.8% legislative representation. This is the lowest level of representation since 2014 (22.4%)—it rose slightly to 25.5% in 2016, holding steady through 2018, dipped slightly in 2019 (25.4%), before dropping further in 2020 (24.8%), as the number

of women remained the same but more men filled vacant seats, lowering the overall proportion of women's representation.

Executive

For statewide elected positions in 2020 in the executive branch of Missouri government, there are six possible positions to be filled: Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, Auditor, Secretary of State, and Treasurer. In 2018, the office of Auditor is the only one of these six positions filled by a woman, for 16.7% representation in the executive branch. Representation in local elected positions was slightly higher; of the top ten most populous cities in Missouri, there were two women mayors in 2020 (20%). These data indicate that women are represented at much lower rates than men relative to each group's share of the population at multiple levels and branches of government.

Total (Pre-Election)

Totaling the legislative and executive representation, for 2020 women filled 51 of the 208 non-vacant positions, 202 from the legislature and 6 from the executive, for 24.5% representation. The national percentage of women across all state legislatures was 29.1%.¹⁰⁵

Total (Post-Election)

After the November 2020 election, women gained one seat in the Missouri delegation of the United States House of Representatives, lost one seat in the Missouri House of Representatives, and gained two seats in the Missouri Senate. The proportion of women in the executive branch did not change. All told, women after the election hold 53 of 208 non-vacant seats, for 25.5% representation.

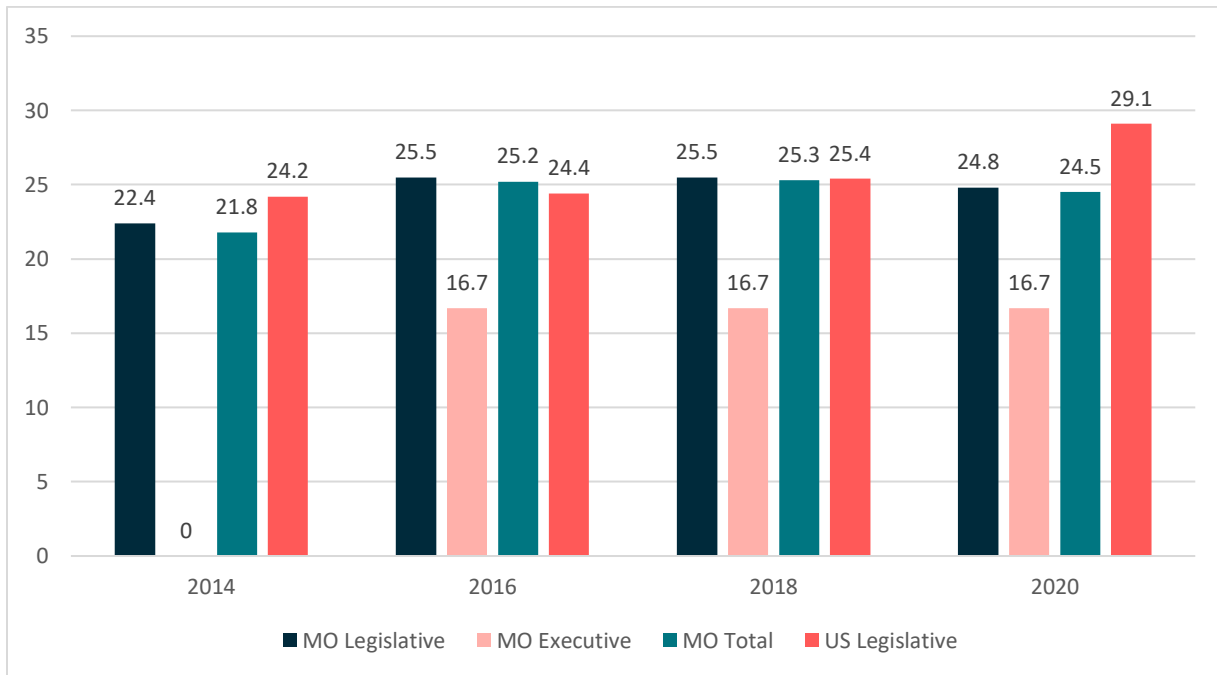
While the federal executive branch positions do not neatly map onto Missouri's executive positions, as Missouri's positions are all elected independently and are fewer in number, Joe Biden and Kamala Harris' win will mark the first time a woman has held the Vice Presidency. Appointees for Cabinet positions have yet to be announced. Legislatively, the national figure for women's representation in the 116th United States Congress (pre-election) 2020 was 23.7%.¹⁰⁶ Several legislative races remain uncalled, leaving the final numbers for the United States Congress not yet available, but women are likely to pick up several seats, leaving the final number likely to surpass 25%, with women of color comprising 8.8% of Congress.¹⁰⁷

Trends

The total amount of legislative representation for women in Missouri has changed very little over the past several years, barring a 3.1% increase from 2014 to 2016, before remaining consistent from 2016-2018, and decreasing by 0.1% in 2019 and by 0.6% in 2020, see Figure 12. After the 2020 election, the number increased by 0.9% to its highest point at 25.7%. At the municipal level, the percentage of the ten most populous cities' mayors that are women grew from 10% to 20% from 2014 to 2015, held steady at 20% through 2017, increased to 30% in 2018, and dropped back down to 20% in 2019 and 2020, pre-election.

Figure 12.

The Percentage of Women in Public Office



ADDITIONAL INDICATORS

Public Engagement

In 2018, a record number of women won elections to Congress, and women voted in larger numbers as well. In Missouri, the percentage of women who made up the voters in the 2018 mid-term elections was higher than the national average, with 57% of the women voting population and 52.8% of the men voting population casting a vote.¹⁰⁸ In the 2018 mid-term elections, 55% of eligible women in the nation cast their ballots compared to 51.8% of men. Women also made up the majority of the electorate in 2018, 53% women to 47% men.¹⁰⁹

In terms of public engagement, voting in elections and running for office is not the only way that citizens can get involved with their country and community. A significant amount of people also engage in volunteer work, especially women, who historically volunteer more of their time than men. Specifically, in 2015, 31.4% of women in Missouri volunteered compared to 23.3% of men, which was slightly higher than the national average of 28.2% for women and 22% for men.¹¹⁰ In 2018, 33.8% of women volunteered nationally compared to 26.8% of men.¹¹¹ From a 2018 report from the Corporation for National and Community Service, 31.9% of Missourians report volunteering. 3.63% of Missourians specifically noted that they volunteer their time with a civic, political, professional, or international organization.¹¹²

ANALYSIS: WHY WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP MATTERS

Although women's political engagement and participation in the United States has increased over time, in Missouri the level of legislative and executive representation has remained relatively constant, with a slight decrease in 2020, and well below women's share of the population. Women have voted in increasing numbers since it became legal and by the 1980s women's voting rates outpaced men's, a pattern that has continued in every presidential election since 1984 and in most midterm elections as well.¹¹³ Women have also narrowed the gender gap in forms of political participation other than voting, including campaign participation, donations, contacting government officials, or attending protests.¹¹⁴ Women comprise 51% of Missouri's population but their representation in the legislature for the past six years has barely surpassed 25%, and has not even reached 20% in the executive branch. Missouri lags behind the national average for state legislative representation, which is 29%, which is still far from parity. There are several states that have 40-50% representation for women in their legislatures.¹¹⁵

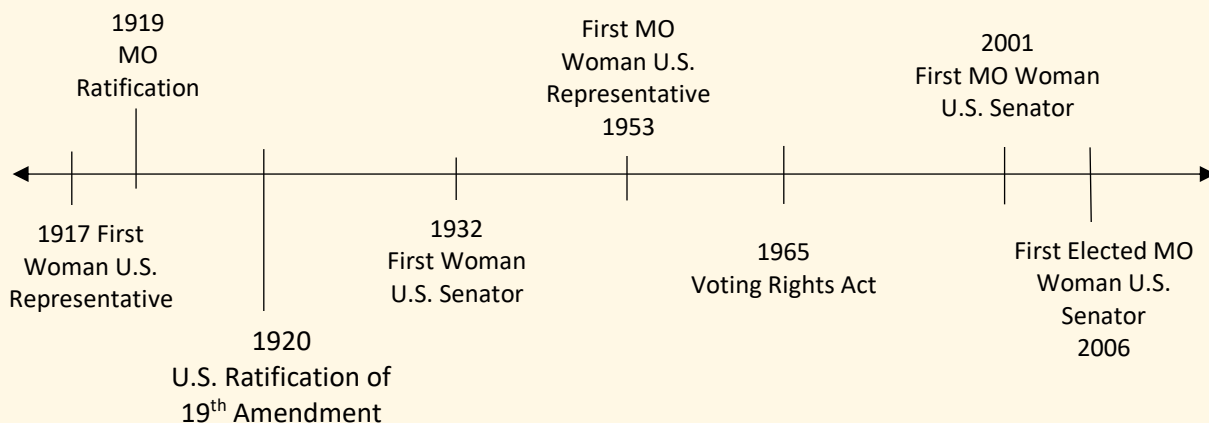
Reasons why women do not run for or serve in office at the same rate as men include the lack of mentorship and networking, and the societal norms that emphasize politics as a career choice for men and discourage women from thinking they are qualified, even with similar qualifications to men who run.¹¹⁶ A 2020 study on primary races found that even compared to 2018, women are running at greater rates than before, though still not at parity, and are winning at greater rates as well. In races without an incumbent where at least one woman and one man were running, Democratic women won 73% of their primaries and Republican women won 50% of their primaries. However, even once the barriers to running for office are surmounted, training, endorsements, and financing are all still issues.¹¹⁷

Encouraging women leadership in political spaces can lead to a number of positive outcomes for the state as women often emerge as collaborative, communicative leaders. Women leaders are more likely to seek common ground and are more likely to seek increased outcomes in the realm of education and healthcare.¹¹⁸ Lastly, increasing the number of women in leadership positions encourages other women to seek out leadership opportunities for themselves.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

LOOKING BACK: POLICY TIMELINE

This section introduces several key pieces of political legislation as well as some significant dates for women's representation in public office.



Ratification of the 19th Amendment - August 2020 marks the 100-year anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, granting women the right to vote. Initial themes of the Suffragette movement focused on the social and institutional barriers to women’s rights, including “family responsibilities, a lack of educational and economic opportunities, and the absence of a voice in political debates.”¹¹⁹ This included equal access to education, equal access to employment, retaining a right to property and wages once married, and control over one’s own body.¹²⁰ Later efforts focused entirely on obtaining the right to vote, arguing that women deserve the same rights and responsibilities of citizenship as men. Although the 19th amendment granted the right to vote to women, Native American women were excluded as they were not considered citizens, and Black women, particularly in the South, were subject to the same racial violence and disenfranchisement as Black men, only truly gaining the right to vote after continued struggles for suffrage and equality led to the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.¹²¹

The Final Vote

In August of 1920, only one more state needed to ratify the 19th Amendment for it to become the law of the land, and Tennessee was one of the suffragists’ last hopes. Although the state Senate had voted to ratify, the state House was locked in a tie and the fate of the Amendment hung on the vote of just one young Representative. Though he personally supported extending suffrage, he was under immense pressure from his colleagues to vote against extending it. With an encouraging letter from his mother in his pocket, he voted “aye,” securing the right to vote nationally.

Voting Rights Act (1965)

This Act prohibited racial discrimination in voting; this act was the culmination of decades of effort to stop states from disenfranchising voters of color, and came on the heels of state troopers attacking peaceful marchers without provocation in Alabama. President Johnson was vocal about the need for change and Congress soon began hearings on the bill. Addressing challenges to the 15th Amendment on a case-by-case basis was inefficient and largely ineffectual, so a national solution was created to ban the use of literacy tests, direct the Attorney General to challenge poll taxes, and initiate special oversight on areas of the country deemed to have the greatest potential for discrimination.¹²² There was a retrenchment in 2013, as the requirement for nine states to receive preclearance for election changes was struck down and seven of those states immediately announced new restrictions.¹²³

LOOKING FORWARD: OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRESS

Appointments Project®

United WE’s Appointments Project is designed to “empower women and strengthen diversity in communities by increasing the gender diversity of public boards and commissions.”¹²⁴ Twelve Missouri cities and counties currently participate.¹²⁵ Data released from the Appointments Project found that the representation of women on Kansas City boards and commissions had increased from 33% in 2014 up to 43% in July 2019.¹²⁶ The Appointments Project’s 140 women appointees since 2014 includes 28% women of color, which is an important achievement, but nonetheless highlights the even greater gaps in

representation for women of color.¹²⁷ In listening sessions, Black women reported interest in civic leadership roles to support underrepresented communities and help those less fortunate, but were hesitant because they did not believe that their voices would be heard and respected.

Women Candidates in 2020

A record number of women candidates ran for the U.S. House and Senate in 2020, surpassing even 2018's numbers. 583 women ran for the House of Representatives and 60 women ran for the Senate.¹²⁸

THE COVID-19 IMPACT

While COVID-19 is unlikely to influence the total number of women holding legislative and executive positions; it is more likely to have an impact on women's broader civic engagement. The reduction in available child care options outside the home and the potential for schools to be moved to a blended or online schedule could increase the demands on women's time to care for children when in a home with an unequal distribution of child care, leaving less time for taking on positions on boards or commissions, or participating in other civic activities, like campaign activities.

The Impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 has the potential to negatively impact the amount of time available to devote to civic engagement, and may decrease voter turnout due to safety concerns.

CONCLUSION

Women in Missouri have made strides towards parity since their inclusion in the economic and political fabric of society more broadly, and since the first status of women report more specifically, though work remains to be done. The gender wage gap still persists, especially for women of color who make less than their white counterparts. This fundamental inequity often compounds other economic and social challenges women face, like limited access to child care, as it is women who often take up the mantle of care, something that has been reinforced in the wake of the COVID-19 disease outbreak. Women in Missouri face risk factors to their health both from lack of insurance and from an increased poverty status relative to men as they reach old age. Women voters and politicians have the ability to create change and exert an influence on politics, a fact that is only growing over time. This report can and should be used as a tool for policy work at the local level in addition to the state level. If fully embraced, the opportunities for future progress outlined here could have a lasting impact on the lives of women in Missouri for years to come.

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