



Fast Facts

Economic Security for Women and Families in Georgia

By Shilpa Phadke, Anusha Ravi, and Annie McGrew May 11, 2018

In the last several years, significant progress has been made to ensure women and their families have equal opportunities for economic security and prosperity. Topics such as equal pay; paid sick days and paid family leave; access to reproductive health; and affordable child care have gained traction on the local, state, and federal levels. But in the South especially, much work is still needed to promote economic security and ensure that all working families are able to get ahead—not just get by. Access to reproductive health care—including abortion, contraception, and maternal health care—is crucial to the conversation about women’s economic justice. Research has shown that women have greater earning potential and job mobility in states where reproductive health care is more readily available, compared with women in states that restrict reproductive health care access—which, unfortunately, includes many of the Southern states.¹

Women and families need policies that reflect their roles as providers and caregivers; in Georgia, mothers are the sole, primary, or co-breadwinners in 66.3 percent of families.² These numbers are higher for some women of color. In Georgia, 81.3 percent of black mothers are breadwinners. The following policy recommendations can help support the economic security of women and families in Georgia.

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 Georgia enjoy the fullest protections against discrimination.

- Georgia women who are full-time, year-round workers earn about 82 cents for every dollar that Georgia men earn;³ if the wage gap continues to close at its current rate, women will not reach parity in the state until 2055.⁴ The wage gap is even larger for black women and Latinas in Georgia, who earn 63 cents and 50 cents, respectively, for every dollar that white men earn.⁵
- Because of the gender wage gap, over the course of a lifetime, women in Georgia will lose \$337,360.⁶

Increase the minimum wage

Women constitute a disproportionate share of low-wage workers; raising the minimum wage would help hardworking women across Georgia better support their families.

- Women make up nearly two-thirds of all minimum wage workers in the United States.⁷ About 6 in 10 minimum wage workers in Georgia are women.⁸
- Increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2024 would boost wages for 941,000 women in Georgia and more than 23 million women nationally. Fifty-eight percent of the workers who would be affected by raising the minimum wage to \$15 are women.⁹
- In Georgia, the minimum wage for workers who receive tips is \$2.13. Nearly three-quarters of these workers are women.¹⁰

Guarantee access to quality health care

Women need comprehensive reproductive health services—including access to abortion and maternity care—in order to thrive as breadwinners, caregivers, and employees. At a minimum, to ensure women are able to access high-quality care, the state should invest in state-based family-planning programs; end onerous restrictions on abortion care; ensure access to unbiased and comprehensive sexuality education; and expand Medicaid.

- In 2014, 695,120 Georgia women were in need of publicly funded family planning services and supplies.¹¹
- There are significant state restrictions on abortion in Georgia: The state requires biased counseling that discourages a woman from having the abortion; a 24-hour waiting period before she can get the procedure; and parental consent for minors.¹²
- Georgia has the sixth highest infant mortality rate in the United States, at 7.5 deaths per 1,000 live births. The national rate is 5.9 deaths per 1,000 live births.¹³
- Georgia has a maternal mortality rate significantly above the national average, which is already higher than any other in the developed world.¹⁴ These rates are even higher for African American mothers in Georgia.¹⁵
- 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 funding cuts and policy changes at the federal level.¹⁶ Georgia should ensure on a state level that women have access to the full spectrum of quality, affordable, and women-centered family planning services.

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 Georgia, the rate is even higher: 44 percent of private sector workers, or 1.4 million people, do not have paid sick days.¹⁸ Georgia recently passed legislation, commonly referred to as a “kin care law,” that requires employers that offer paid sick leave to allow their employees to also use that time to care for family members.¹⁹

Ensure fair scheduling practices

Many low-wage and part-time workers—approximately 60 percent of whom are women²⁰—face erratic work schedules and have little control over when they work and for how long.

- More than 1 in 4 low-wage workers have schedules that are nonstandard—that is, outside of the traditional 9-to-5 workweek.²¹ 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 of sexual harassment.²²

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 crucial first stages of the child's life; to care for an aging parent or spouse; to recover from their own illness; or to assist a loved one's recovery.

- Only 15 percent of civilian workers in the United States have access to paid family leave through their employers.²³
- Unpaid leave under Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is inaccessible for 60 percent of working people in Georgia. Workers and families in Georgia need paid family and medical leave for reasons other than childbirth: one in five workers is aged 55 and older, and in less than 15 years, the state's population that is 65 and older will grow by 40 percent.²⁴
- While paid leave is crucial for new parents, workers need paid leave for a number of other reasons. National data show that 55 percent of employees who take unpaid leave through FMLA use it for their own medical reasons. Another 21 percent use it for the birth or adoption of a child, while 18 percent use it to care for a family member.²⁵

Expand quality, affordable child care

Families need child care to ensure they are able to work, but many families lack access to high-quality child care options that support young children's development and adequately prepare them for school.

- Sixty-six percent of Georgia children younger than age 6 have all available parents in the workforce, which makes access to affordable, high-quality child care a necessity.²⁶
- For a Georgia family with one infant and one 4-year-old, the annual price of a child care center averages \$12,972 per year, or about one-fifth of the median income for a Georgia family with children.²⁷
- Georgia is a leader in public preschool, serving 60 percent of four year olds. Georgia became the first state to offer publicly funded universal preschool in 1992, but funding for the program continues to lag.²⁸

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 creating greater workplace accountability; strengthening enforcement; increasing funding for survivor support services; and educating the public on sexual harassment in the workplace.²⁹

- In Georgia, 32.6 percent of women have experienced contact sexual violence in their lifetime,³⁰ and 28.1 percent of women have experienced noncontact sexual harassment.³¹ Given research at the national level suggesting under-reporting of sexual harassment charges as high as 70 percent, these state numbers may only scratch the surface.³²
- Thirty-seven percent of Georgia women have experienced intimate partner violence, which includes physical violence, sexual violence, or stalking by an intimate partner. This is the same rate of intimate partner violence experienced by women throughout the United States.³³ 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.³⁴

Protecting the rights of incarcerated women

The growing problem of mass incarceration in the United States hinders the economic potential of those affected, which are primarily communities of color. 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.

- Many of the Southern states, including Louisiana, Oklahoma, Alabama, and Mississippi, have incarceration rates of more than 500 per 100,000 people.³⁵
- Nationally, women are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. prison population, but there are fewer federal prisons for women than there are for men, which contributes to overcrowding and hostile conditions for incarcerated women.³⁶
- 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.³⁷

Promote women's political leadership

Across the United States, women are dramatically underrepresented in political office; they constitute 51 percent of the population but only 29 percent of elected officials.³⁸

- Women make up 51 percent of Georgia's population but only 30 percent of its elected officials.³⁹
- Women of color constitute 23 percent of the state's population but only 8 percent of its officeholders.⁴⁰
- There are 17 women running for congressional and state executive offices in Georgia in the 2018 elections—15 Democrats and two Republicans.⁴¹

Shilpa Phadke is the vice president of the Women's Initiative at the Center for American Progress. Anusha Ravi is a research assistant for the Women's Initiative at the Center. Annie McGrew is a research assistant for Economic Policy at the Center.

Endnotes

- 1 Kate Bahn and others, "Linking Reproductive Health Care Access to Labor Market Opportunities for Women" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2017), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2017/11/21/442653/linking-reproductive-health-care-access-labor-market-opportunities-women/>.
- 2 Sarah Jane Glynn, "Breadwinning Mothers Are Increasingly the U.S. Norm" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2016), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2016/12/19/295203/breadwinning-mothers-are-increasingly-the-u-s-norm/>; authors' analysis of Steven Ruggles and others, "Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey Data for Social, Economic, and Health Research," available at <https://cps.ipums.org/cps/index.shtml> (last accessed July 2015).
- 3 National Women's Law Center, "Wage Gap State Rankings: 2016," available at <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Wage-Gap-State-By-State-2017.pdf> (last accessed April 2018).
- 4 Status of Women in the States, "The Status of Women in Georgia, 2015: Highlights," available at <https://statusof-womendata.org/wp-content/themes/witsfull/factsheets/factsheet-georgia.pdf> (last accessed April 2018).
- 5 National Women's Law Center, "The Wage Gap for Black Women State Rankings: 2015," March 2017, available at <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Black-Women-State-by-State.pdf>; National Women's Law Center, "The Wage Gap for Latina Women State Rankings: 2015," March 2017, available at <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Latina-Women-State-by-State.pdf>.
- 6 National Women's Law Center, "Lifetime Wage Gap Losses for Women: 2016 State Rankings," available at <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Women-Lifetime-Losses-State-by-State-2018.pdf> (last accessed April 2018).
- 7 National Women's Law Center, "Women and the Minimum Wage, State by State," available at <https://nwlc.org/resources/women-and-minimum-wage-state-state/> (last accessed April 2018).
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Economic Policy Institute, "State tables on \$15 minimum wage impact" (2017), available at <https://www.epi.org/files/2017/MW-State-Tables.pdf>.
- 10 National Women's Law Center, "Tipped Workers State by State," July 2017, available at <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Tipped-Workers-State-by-State-7.20.17.pdf>.
- 11 Guttmacher Institute, "Contraceptive Needs and Services, 2014 Update: Table 3" (2014), available at https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/report_downloads/contraceptive-needs-and_services-tables-2014.pdf.
- 12 Guttmacher Institute, "State Facts About Abortion: Georgia," January 2018, available at <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/state-facts-about-abortion-georgia>.
- 13 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Infant Mortality Rates by State: 2016," available at https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/infant_mortality_rates/infant_mortality.htm (last accessed May 2018).
- 14 United Health Foundation, "America's Health Rankings: Maternal Mortality in United States in 2016," available at https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/2016-health-of-women-and-children-report/measure/maternal_mortality/state/ALL (last accessed May 2018); Nina Martin and Renee Montagne, "U.S. Has The Worst Rate of Maternal Deaths In The Developed World," NPR, May 12, 2017, available at <https://www.npr.org/2017/05/12/528098789/u-s-has-the-worst-rate-of-maternal-deaths-in-the-developed-world>.
- 15 Cristina Novoa and Jamila Taylor, "Exploring African Americans' High Maternal and Infant Death Rates" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2018), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2018/02/01/445576/exploring-african-americans-high-maternal-infant-death-rates/>.
- 16 Kiersten Gillette-Pierce and Jamila Taylor, "The Threat to Title X Family Planning," (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2017), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2017/02/09/414773/the-threat-to-title-x-family-planning/>.
- 17 Bureau of Labor Statistics, *National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2017* (U.S. Department of Labor, 2017), available at <https://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2017/ebb0061.pdf>; "Quick Facts" (Washington: National Partnership for Women and Families, 2018) available at <http://www.paidicksdays.org/research-resources/quick-facts.html> (last accessed April 2018).
- 18 National Partnership for Women and Families, "Workers' Access to Paid Sick Days in the States," May 2015, available at <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/workers-access-to-paid-sick-days-in-the-states.pdf>.
- 19 Georgia General Assembly, "Labor and Industrial Relations; employees to use sick leave for the care of immediate family members; allow," available at <http://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/en-US/Display/20172018/SB/201> (last accessed May 2018).
- 20 National Women's Law Center, "Collateral Damage: Scheduling Challenges for Workers in Low-Wage Jobs and Their Consequences" (2017), available at <https://nwlc.org/resources/collateral-damage-scheduling-challenges-workers-low-wage-jobs-and-their-consequences/>; National Women's Law Center, "Part-Time Workers Are Paid Less, Have Less Access to Benefits—and Two-Thirds Are Women" (2015), available at <https://nwlc.org/resources/part-time-workers-are-paid-less-have-less-access-benefits%E2%80%94and-two-thirds-are-women/>.
- 21 National Women's Law Center, "Set Up For Success: Fair Schedules Are Critical for Working Parents and Their Children's Well-Being" (2017), available at <https://nwlc.org/resources/set-up-for-success-why-fair-schedules-are-critical-for-working-parents-and-their-childrens-well-being/>; Maria E. Enchautegui, "Nonstandard Work Schedules and the Well-Being of Low-Income Families" (Washington: Urban Institute, 2013), available at <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/32696/412877-Nonstandard-Work-Schedules-and-the-Well-being-of-Low-Income-Families.PDF>.
- 22 Katherine Gallagher Robbins and Shirin Arslan, "Schedules That Work for Working Families," Center for American Progress, December 18, 2017, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/poverty/news/2017/12/18/444245/schedules-work-working-families/>.
- 23 Bureau of Labor Statistics, *National Compensation Survey*.
- 24 National Partnership for Women and Families, "Paid Leave Means a Stronger Georgia" (2018), available at <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/paid-leave/paid-leave-means-a-stronger-georgia.pdf>.
- 25 U.S. Department of Labor, *Family and Medical Leave in 2012: Technical Report* (2014), available at <https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/fmla/FMLA-2012-Technical-Report.pdf>.
- 26 Kids Count, "Children under age 6 with all available parents in the labor force," available at <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/5057-children-under-age-6-with-all-available-parents-in-the-labor-force?loc=37&loct=2&loc=37&loct=2#detailed/2/37/false/870,573,869,36,868/any/11472,11473> (last accessed May 2018).

- 27 Child Care Aware of America, "Child Care in America: 2014 State Fact Sheets" (2014), available at http://www.ks.childcareaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2014-Child-Care-in-America_State-Fact-Sheets.pdf; Kids Count, "Median family income among households with children," available at <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/65-median-family-income-among-households-with-children#detailed/1/any/false/870,573,869,36,868/any/365> (last accessed May 2018).
- 28 http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Georgia_YB2017.pdf
- 29 Jocelyn Frye, "From Politics to Policy: Turning the Corner on Sexual Harassment," Center for American Progress, January 31, 2018, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/news/2018/01/31/445669/politics-policy-turning-corner-sexual-harassment/>.
- 30 "Contact sexual violence includes rape, being made to penetrate someone else, sexual coercion, and/or unwanted sexual contact." See Sharon G. Smith and others, "The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2010–2012 State Report," Table 3.9 (Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012), available at <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/NISVS-StateReport-Book.pdf>.
- 31 Noncontact unwanted sexual experiences include harassment, unwanted exposure to sexual body parts or making a victim show their body parts, and/or making a victim look at or participate in sexual photos or movies. See Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Sexual Violence: Definitions," available at <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/definitions.html> (last accessed May 2018).
- 32 Chai R. Feldblum and Victoria A. Lipnic, "Select Task Force on the Study of Harassment in the Workplace" (U.S. Washington: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2016), available at https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/task_force/harassment/report.cfm.
- 33 Smith and others, "The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey," Table 5.7.
- 34 Asha DuMonthier and Malore Dusenbery, "Intersections of Domestic Violence and Economic Security" (Washington: Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2016), <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/B362-Domestic-Violence-and-Economic-Security-1.pdf>.
- 35 The Sentencing Project, "State-by-State Data," available at <https://www.sentencingproject.org/the-facts/#map> (last accessed April 2018).
- 36 Alec Hamilton, "For Female Inmates In New York City, Prison Is A Crowded, Windowless Room," NPR, January 16, 2017, available at <https://www.npr.org/2017/01/16/505315466/for-female-inmates-in-new-york-city-prison-is-a-crowded-windowless-room>.
- 37 Khala James, "Upholding the Dignity of Incarcerated Women," Center for American Progress, December 22, 2017, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/news/2017/12/22/444468/upholding-dignity-incarcerated-women/>.
- 38 Reflective Democracy Campaign, "Reflective Democracy Research Findings: Summary Report, October, 2017," available at <https://d3aj5lmz3dz4x7.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/reflective-democracy-2017-research-summary.pdf> (last accessed April 2018).
- 39 Reflective Democracy Campaign, "Home," available at <https://wholeads.us/> (last accessed May 2018).
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Center for American Women and Politics, "2018: Women Candidates for U.S. Congress and Statewide Elected Executive," available at <http://cawp.rutgers.edu/buzz-2018-potential-women-candidates-us-congress-and-statewide-elected-executive#ga> (last accessed April 2018).