

The Intersections of Our Lives

POLICY BRIEFINGS BY NATIONAL WOMEN OF COLOR ORGANIZATIONS

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Women of Color and Economic Policy October 2017 | Fact sheet

Intro

Women of color are the backbone of the economy of the United States. As 22% of the labor forceⁱ, women of color do the critical work that allows our country to thrive. However, many barriers to our economic security remain and vast numbers of women of color have yet to receive the promise of shared prosperity. These disparities impact women of color themselves, their families and their communities.

Demographic Profile

- There are over 63 million women of color living in the United States today, and over the next forty-five years, that number is set to almost double to 119 million.ⁱⁱ By 2050, there will be more American women of color than either non-Hispanic White women or men.ⁱⁱⁱ The political power of women of color cannot be ignored.
- Since 1975, the number of women in the workforce has doubled. Today women represent 46.8% of the labor force. Among that number, 13.9% are Black, 15.1% are Latina and 5.8% are Asian American and Pacific Islander.^{iv}
- Within our own racial groups, the majority of women of color participate in the labor force. Black women have the highest labor force participation rate among women at 59.7 percent; 55.2 percent of Asian women; and 55.7 percent of Latinas.^v

Poverty

- Women in all racial and ethnic groups were more likely than white, non-Hispanic men to be in poverty. The effect is worse for women of color. In 2015:
 - African American women: 23.1 percent of African American women lived in poverty.
 - Latina women: 20.9 percent of Hispanic women lived in poverty.
 - Asian American women: 11.7 percent of Asian women lived in poverty.^{vi}

Low-wage work & lack of paid family leave and paid sick days

- Nearly half of low-wage (\$10.25 or less) women workers are women of color^{vii}
- Women of color are particularly overrepresented among minimum wage and tipped workers. Women of color are 22 percent of minimum wage workers and 23 percent of tipped workers.^{viii}
 - Latinas are more likely to work in the service industry than any other female population of color.^{ix}
 - Thai, Mongolian, Malaysian, Bangladeshi, Burmese and Indonesian are more likely than the average woman worker to be employed in the restaurant industry.

Vietnamese, Tongan, Fijian and Mongolian women are overrepresented in personal care and service occupations, which include manicurists, hairstylists, childcare workers and personal care aides. Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Nepalese, Korean and Mongolian women occupy retail jobs at higher rates than other racial and ethnic groups.^x

- The concentration of women of color in low-wage jobs means that our communities are also less likely to receive paid family leave or paid sick days.

Gender Wage Gap

- African American women working full time, year round typically make only 63 cents for every dollar paid to their white, non-Hispanic male counterparts.
- For Latinas, this figure is only 54 cents.
- For Asian American women it is 85 cents, and for Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander women it is 60 cents.
 - Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander women have some of the highest wage gaps compared to other racial and ethnic groups. Nepalese women make only 51 cents to every dollar a white man earns, and that number is even less for Burmese (44 cents), Marshallese (44 cents), and Bhutanese (38 cents) women.^{xi}
 - While wages earned between AAPI men and women of the same ethnic background reveal different patterns, AAPI women overall experience one of the widest within-ethnicity wage gaps compared to other racial and ethnic groups. Asian women earn roughly 81 cents to an Asian man's dollar—lower than most other racial and ethnic groups. On average, Indian women only earn 73 cents to an Indian man's dollar, disproportionately less than what white women earn in comparison to white men.^{xii}

Organizations

In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Agenda is a national-state partnership of 8 Black women's Reproductive Justice organizations in CA, GA, LA, OH, PA, TN and TX representing Black women and girls.

The ***National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)***, with operations in NYC, DC, Chicago, and Atlanta and chapters in 16 cities, is the organizing home for Asian American and Pacific Islander women activists in the United States. NAPAWF is the nation's only national, multi-issue organization for AAPI women and girls.

The ***National Hispanic Leadership Agenda's (NHLA)*** mission calls for unity among Latinos around the country to provide the Hispanic community with greater visibility and a clearer, stronger influence in our country's affairs. NHLA brings together Hispanic leaders to establish policy priorities that address, and raise public awareness of, the major issues affecting the Latino community and the nation as a whole. In 2012, NHLA published a groundbreaking report entitled *Trabajadoras: Challenges and Conditions of Latina Workers in the United States*.

The ***National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health (NLIRH)*** is the only national reproductive justice organization dedicated to building Latina power to advance health, dignity, and justice for Latinas, their families, and communities in the United States through leadership development,

civic engagement, community mobilization, policy advocacy, and strategic communications. NLIRH has operations in Washington, DC, New York, Texas, Florida and Virginia. We serve as co-chair of All Above All, a campaign to restore public funding for abortion in the US, and as a leader in the HEAL for Immigrant Woman and Families coalition working to bring health access to immigrant women.

The **National Women’s Law Center** has worked for more than 40 years to protect and promote equality and opportunity for women and families. The Center champions policies and laws that help women and girls achieve their potential at every stage of their lives — at school, at work, at home, and in retirement. Center staff are committed advocates who take on the toughest challenges, especially for the most vulnerable women.

ⁱ Department of Labor, Women’s Bureau. 2016, Issue Brief. *The Economic Status of Women of Color: A Snapshot*

ⁱⁱ U.S. Census Bureau, "Projections of the Population by Sex, Hispanic Origin, and Race for the United States: 2015 to 2060", available at <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popproj/tables/2014/2014-summary-tables/np2014-t10.xls> (last accessed August 2017)

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid

^{iv} Department of Labor, Women’s Bureau. 2016, Issue Brief. *The Economic Status of Women of Color: A Snapshot*

^v Ibid

^{vi} National Women’s Law Center. “*National Snapshot: Poverty Among Women & Families, 2015*”, Sep 2016, <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Poverty-Snapshot-Factsheet-2016.pdf>

^{vii} National Women’s Law Center. “*The Women in the Low-Wage Workforce May Not Be Who You Think*”, Sep 2015, https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/chartbook_women_in_the_low-wage_workforce_may_not_be_who_you_think.pdf

^{viii} Ibid

^{ix} Labor Council for Latina American Advancement. “*Trabajadoras: Challenges and Conditions of Latina Workers in the United States*”, 2012.

^x National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum. “*Fighting Invisibility Closing the Wage Gap*”, Mar 2017, https://napawf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/FIGHTING-INVISIBILITY_FINAL-4.03.17.pdf

^{xi} National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum. “*Achieving Pay Equity for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders*”, Mar 2017, https://napawf.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/EPD_Fact-Sheet_FINAL.pdf

^{xii} Ibid