



FAST FACTS:

Economic Security for Women and Families in California

By Diana Boesch, Rachel Kershaw, and Osub Ahmed

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***Authors' note:** CAP uses “Black” and “African American” interchangeably throughout many of our products. We chose to capitalize “Black” in order to reflect that we are discussing a group of people and to be consistent with the capitalization of “African American.”*

California has been leading the way in improving job quality and workplace benefits that support the economic security and health of women and their families, including paid family and medical leave and paid sick days. Lawmakers should continue the progressive momentum and prioritize policies that ensure women’s health and economic well-being.

Women need policies that reflect their roles as providers and caregivers. In California, mothers are the sole, primary, or co-breadwinners in 59.5 percent of families,¹ and these numbers are higher for some women of color. The following policy recommendations can help support the economic security of women and families in California.

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 California enjoy the fullest protections against discrimination.

- California women who are full-time, year-round workers earned about 89 cents for every dollar that California men earned in 2017;² if the wage gap continues to close at its current rate, women will not reach parity in the state until 2043.³ The wage gap is even larger for Black women and Latinas in California, who earned 61 cents and 42.3 cents, respectively, for every dollar that white men earned in 2017.⁴
- Due to the gender wage gap, each woman in California will lose an average of \$228,160 over the course of her lifetime.⁵

Increase the minimum wage

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

- Women make up nearly two-thirds of all minimum wage workers in the United States.⁶ More than half of all minimum wage workers in California are women.⁷
- In California, the current minimum wage is \$12 per hour and is currently on track to reach \$15 per hour by 2022.⁸ More than 3 in 5 tipped wage workers in California are women.⁹

Guarantee access to quality health care

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

- In 2014, more than 2.6 million women in California were in need of publicly funded family planning services and supplies, and 23 percent of those women were uninsured.¹⁰
- Title X—the nation’s only federal domestic program focused solely on providing family planning and other related preventive care, such as contraception, sexually transmitted infection testing, and cancer screenings—served about 892,000 women in California in 2017, down from about 955,000 women in 2014.¹¹ Title X funding has itself increased, from \$19.1 million in 2014 to about \$22.7 million in 2019.¹²
- California does not have any major abortion restrictions like other states.¹³
- California’s infant mortality rate—4.2 deaths per 1,000 live births—is lower than the national rate of 5.8 deaths per 1,000 live births.¹⁴ The state’s maternal mortality is 7.3 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births,¹⁵ compared with the national rate of 17.2 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.¹⁶

Ensure workers have access to paid sick days

Everyone gets sick, but not everyone is afforded the time to get better. Many women go to work sick, because they fear that they will be fired for missing work. Allowing employees to earn paid sick days helps keep families, communities, and the economy healthy.

- More than 34 million U.S. employees, or 29 percent of the nation's private sector workforce, do not have access to paid sick days.¹⁷
- California passed a statewide paid sick days law that went into effect in 2014, allowing employees to accrue one hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours worked. Approximately 6.9 million workers formerly without paid sick leave gained access through this law.¹⁸

Ensure fair scheduling practices

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

- More than 1 in 4 low-wage U.S. workers has a schedule that is nonstandard—that is, outside of the traditional 9-to-5 workweek.²⁰ This can be especially difficult for parents who need to plan for child care.
- In addition to threatening the economic security of these workers and their families, unfair scheduling practices are often accompanied by reduced access to health benefits and increased potential for sexual harassment.²¹
- In 2015, San Francisco passed a predictable scheduling and fair treatment law for retail employees, which protects approximately 23,000 workers.²² San Jose passed a law in 2016, which affected an estimated 175,000 workers, that requires private sector employers to offer additional hours to part-time employees before hiring more employees.²³ Emeryville passed a fair workweek ordinance in 2016 to ensure predictable schedules for approximately 2,500 workers in retail trade and fast food.²⁴

Provide access to paid family and medical leave

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

- Only 17 percent of civilian workers in the United States have access to paid family leave through their employers.²⁵
- In 2002, California was the first state to pass a paid family leave law, which established an insurance program in 2004 to provide workers paid family leave to care for a new child or an ill family member, to complement the state's existing temporary disability program.²⁶ All private sector workers are covered under the law and receive partial wage replacement, up to 100 percent of the state's average weekly wage. Workers can take up to six weeks for paid family leave and up to 52 weeks for their own disability.²⁷

- California’s paid family and medical leave law will help the state manage the growing needs for elderly caregiving. For example, more than 1 in 5 workers in California is at least 55 years old, and in less than 15 years, the state’s population that is 65 and older will grow by nearly 33 percent.²⁸ California’s aging population means an increase in older adults with serious medical conditions who will need additional care.

Expand quality, affordable child care

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

- Sixty-three percent of California children younger than age 6 have all available parents in the workforce, which makes access to affordable, high-quality child care a necessity.²⁹
- For a California family with one infant and one 4-year-old, the annual price of a child care center averages \$27,744 per year,³⁰ or 36 percent of the median income for a California family with children.³¹
- California is above the national average in children enrolled in public preschool, with about 44 percent of 4-year-olds enrolled.³²

Protect workers against all forms of gender-based violence

Women cannot fully participate in the economy if they face the threat of violence and harassment. There are a number of steps lawmakers can take to prevent violence against women and to support survivors, including establishing greater workplace accountability; strengthening enforcement; increasing funding for survivor support services; and educating the public on sexual harassment in the workplace.³³

- In California, 35 percent of women have experienced contact sexual violence in their lifetimes, and 34.4 percent of women have experienced noncontact sexual harassment.³⁴ Given that research at the national level suggests that as many as 70 percent of sexual harassment charges go unreported, these state numbers likely only scratch the surface.³⁵
- Almost 35 percent of California women have experienced intimate partner violence, which can include physical violence, sexual violence, or stalking by an intimate partner.³⁶ 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.³⁷

Protecting the rights of incarcerated women

The growing problem of mass incarceration in the United States hinders the economic potential of those affected and disproportionately harms communities of color.³⁸ 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.³⁹

- The incarceration rate in California is 328 per 100,000 people.⁴⁰ Approximately 4.5 percent of prisoners in California are women.⁴¹
- Women are the fastest-growing segment of the overall U.S. prison population, but there are fewer federal prisons for women than there are for men, contributing to overcrowding and hostile conditions for incarcerated women.⁴²
- 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.⁴³

Promote women's political leadership

Across the United States, women are underrepresented in political office: They constitute 51 percent of the population but only 29 percent of elected officials.⁴⁴

- Women make up 51 percent of California's population but only 30 percent of its elected officials.⁴⁵
- Women of color constitute 31 percent of the state's population but only 8 percent of its officeholders.⁴⁶

Diana Boesch is a research associate for women's economic security for the Women's Initiative at the Center for American Progress. Rachel Kershaw is a former intern for the Women's Initiative at the Center. Osub Ahmed is a senior policy analyst for women's health and rights with the Women's Initiative at the Center.

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