



Fast Facts

Economic Security for Women and Families in Iowa

By Shilpa Phadke, Diana Boesch, and Nora Ellmann

October 19, 2018

Lawmakers in Iowa must pave the way to economic security for women and families by ensuring that state policies guarantee economic equality and reproductive health care access for all women. Policymakers should prioritize policies that allow families to receive higher, livable wages; promote equal pay for equal work; and help parents maintain good jobs that allow them to work and raise their children.

Women need policies that reflect their roles as providers and caregivers. In Iowa, mothers are the sole, primary, or co-breadwinners in 68.1 percent of families, and these numbers are higher for some women of color.¹ The following policy recommendations can help support the economic security of women and families in Iowa.

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 Iowa enjoy the fullest protections against discrimination.

- Iowa women who are full-time, year-round workers earned about 79 cents for every dollar that Iowa 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 2062.³ The wage gap is even larger for black women and Latinas in Iowa, who earned 59.4 cents and 57.7 cents, respectively, for every dollar that white men earned in 2016.⁴
- Due to the gender wage gap, each woman in Iowa will lose an average of \$463,760 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 Iowa and enable them to better support their families.

- Women make up nearly two-thirds of all minimum wage workers in the United States.⁶ About three-quarters of all minimum wage workers in Iowa are women.⁷
- In Iowa, the current minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour.⁸ The minimum wage for workers who receive tips is \$4.35 per hour.⁹ More than 75 percent of tipped wage workers in Iowa are women.¹⁰
- Increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2024 would boost wages for 329,000 women in Iowa and more than 23 million women nationally. Fifty-nine percent of the Iowa workers who would be affected by raising the minimum wage to \$15 are women.¹¹

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, Iowa should ensure that women have access to the full spectrum of quality, affordable, and women-centered reproductive health services.

- In 2014, more than 190,000 women in Iowa were in need of publicly funded family planning services and supplies, and 12 percent of those women were uninsured.¹²
- Threats to repeal pre-existing condition protections under the Affordable Care Act would impact millions of women. More than 67 million women and girls nationally have pre-existing conditions and could be denied insurance, including about 642,000 women in Iowa.¹³
- 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 28,000 women in Iowa in 2017, down from about 43,000 women in 2014.¹⁴ Title X funding has itself increased slightly, from about \$3.9 million in 2014 to about \$4.1 million in 2017.¹⁵

- Iowa has restrictions that bar public family planning funds from going to abortion providers in the state.¹⁶
- There are also state restrictions on abortion care itself: Public funding is available for abortion only in cases of life endangerment, rape, or incest, and the governor must approve each Medicaid-funded abortion. Additionally, a woman must undergo an ultrasound, and the provider must offer her the option to view the image, before she can undergo the procedure. Parental notification for young people under age 18 is required.¹⁷
- Iowa's infant mortality rate—6.1 deaths per 1,000 live births—is slightly higher than the national rate of 5.9 deaths per 1,000 live births.¹⁸ The state's maternal mortality rate is 30.6 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births,¹⁹ compared with the national rate of 18 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.²⁰

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.²¹
- In Iowa, the rate is even higher: 45.3 percent of private sector workers, or 531,389 people, do not receive paid sick days.²²
- In 2017, the Iowa Legislature passed a law that pre-empts municipalities from enacting sick leave laws that exceed or conflict with state and federal employment laws.²³

Ensure fair scheduling practices

Many low-wage and part-time workers—approximately 60 percent of whom are women²⁴—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 have a schedule that is nonstandard—that is, outside of the traditional 9-to-5 workweek.²⁵ 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.²⁶

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 parent or spouse; to recover from their own illness; or to assist in a loved one's recovery.

- Only 17 percent of civilian workers in the United States have access to paid family leave through their employers.²⁷
- Unpaid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is inaccessible to 61 percent of working people in Iowa. Workers and families in the state need paid family and medical leave for reasons other than childbirth. For example, more than 1 in 4 workers in Iowa is at least 55 years old, and in fewer than 15 years, the state's population that is ages 65 and older will grow by nearly 30 percent.²⁸ Iowa's aging population means an increase in older adults with serious medical conditions who will need additional care.
- National data show that 55 percent of employees who take unpaid leave through the FMLA use it for personal medical reasons. Twenty-one percent of workers use leave for the birth or adoption of a child, while another 18 percent use it to care for a family member.²⁹

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.

- Seventy-five percent of Iowa children younger than age 6 have all available parents in the workforce, which makes access to affordable, high-quality child care a necessity.³⁰
- For an Iowa family with one infant and one 4-year-old, the annual price of a child care center averages \$18,186 per year, or one-quarter of the median income for an Iowa family with children.³¹
- Iowa does better than the national average on children enrolled in public preschool, with 67 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 threats 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 Iowa, 33.3 percent of women have experienced contact sexual violence in their lifetimes,³⁴ and 27.8 percent of women have experienced noncontact sexual harassment.³⁵ 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.³⁶
- Thirty-five percent of Iowa women have experienced intimate partner violence, which can include physical violence, sexual violence, or stalking by an intimate partner.³⁷ 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.³⁸

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.³⁹ 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.⁴⁰

- The incarceration rate in Iowa is 286 per 100,000 people.⁴¹ Approximately 9.1 percent of prisoners in Iowa are women.⁴²
- 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.⁴³
- 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 from and further disruption in relationships with children for whom they are primary caregivers.⁴⁴

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.⁴⁵

- Women make up 50 percent of Iowa's population but only 34 percent of its elected officials.⁴⁶
- Women of color constitute 6 percent of the state's population but only 1 percent of its officeholders.⁴⁷

Shilpa Phadke is the vice president of the Women's Initiative at the Center for American Progress. Diana Boesch is a research assistant of women's economic security for the Women's Initiative at the Center. Nora Ellmann is a research assistant for women's health and rights for the Women's Initiative.

Endnotes

- 1 Sarah Jane Glynn's analysis of Miriam King and others, "Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey: Version 5.0. [Machine-readable database]" (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2017), on file with Sarah Jane Glynn.
- 2 National Partnership for Women and Families, "America's Women and the Wage Gap" (2018), available at <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/workplace-fairness/fair-pay/americas-women-and-the-wage-gap.pdf>.
- 3 Status of Women in the States, "The Economic Status of Women in Iowa" (2018), available at <https://statusofwomendata.org/wp-content/themes/witsfull/factsheets/economics/factsheet-iowa.pdf>.
- 4 National Women's Law Center, "The Wage Gap for Black Women State Rankings: 2016" (2018), available at <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Black-Women-State-by-State-2018.pdf>; National Women's Law Center, "The Wage Gap for Latina Women State Rankings: 2016" (2018), available at <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Latina-Women-State-by-State-2018.pdf>.
- 5 National Women's Law Center, "Lifetime Wage Gap Losses for Women: 2016 State Rankings" (2018), available at <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Women-Lifetime-Losses-State-by-State-2018.pdf>.
- 6 National Women's Law Center, "Women and the Minimum Wage, State by State" (2018), available at <https://nwlc.org/resources/women-and-minimum-wage-state-state/>.
- 7 National Women's Law Center, "Women and the Minimum Wage, State by State" (2018), available at <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Women-Minimum-Wage-2018.pdf>.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 National Women's Law Center and Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, "Tipped Workers State by State" (2017), available at <https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Tipped-Workers-State-by-State-7.20.17.pdf>.
- 11 Economic Policy Institute, "State tables on \$15 minimum wage impact" (2017), available at <https://www.epi.org/files/2017/MW-State-Tables.pdf>; David Cooper, "Raising the minimum wage to \$15 by 2024 would lift wages for 41 million American workers" (Washington: Economic Policy Institute, 2017), available at <https://www.epi.org/publication/15-by-2024-would-lift-wages-for-41-million/>.
- 12 Jennifer J. Frost, Lori Frohwirth, and Mia R. Zolna, "Contraceptive Needs and Services, 2014 Update," Table 3 and Table 6 (Washington: Guttmacher Institute, 2014), available at https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/contraceptive-needs-and-services-2014_1.pdf.
- 13 Center for American Progress and National Partnership for Women & Families, "Moving Backward: Efforts to Undo Pre-Existing Condition Protections Put Millions of Women and Girls at Risk" (2018), available at <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/health-care/aca-pre-ex-protections-women-girls.pdf>
- 14 Office of Assistant Secretary for Health, *Title X Family Planning Annual Report: 2014 National Summary* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2015), available at <https://www.hhs.gov/opa/sites/default/files/title-x-fpar-2014-national.pdf>; Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, *Title X Family Planning Annual Report: 2017 National Summary* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018), available at <https://www.hhs.gov/opa/sites/default/files/title-x-fpar-2017-national-summary.pdf>.
- 15 National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association, "Title X in Your State," available at <https://www.nationalfamilyplanning.org/pages/issues/nfprha-interactive-map> (last accessed September 2018).
- 16 Guttmacher Institute, "State Family Planning Funding Restrictions," available at <https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/explore/state-family-planning-funding-restrictions> (last accessed September 2018).
- 17 Guttmacher Institute, "State Facts About Abortion: Iowa" (2018), available at <https://www.guttmacher.org/factsheet/state-facts-about-abortion-iowa>.
- 18 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 July 2018).
- 19 Iowa Department of Health Bureau of Health Statistics, "2016 Vital Statistics of Iowa" (2017), available at https://idph.iowa.gov/Portals/1/userfiles/68/HealthStats/vital_stats_2016-20171211.pdf.
- 20 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Pregnancy Mortality Surveillance System," available at <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/pregnancy-mortality-surveillance-system.htm> (last accessed September 2018).
- 21 Bureau of Labor Statistics, *National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2018* (U.S. Department of Labor, 2018), available at <https://www.bls.gov/nchs/ebs/benefits/2018/employee-benefits-in-the-united-states-march-2018.pdf>; National Partnership for Women and Families, "Paid Sick Days: Quick Facts," available at <http://www.paid sickdays.org/research-resources/quick-facts.html> (last accessed September 2018).
- 22 Institute for Women's Policy Research and National Partnership for Women and Families, "Workers' Access to Paid Sick Days in the States" (2015), available at <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/workers-access-to-paid-sick-days-in-the-states.pdf>.
- 23 Annemaria Duran, "Iowa's New Preemptive Sick Leave & Minimum Wage Law Rolls Back Local Law," *SwipeClock*, April 27, 2017, available at <https://www3.swipeclock.com/blog/iowas-new-preemptive-sick-leave-minimum-wage-law-rolls-back-local-law/>.
- 24 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%9494and-two-thirds-are-women/>.
- 25 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/>; María 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>.
- 26 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/>.

- 27 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics National Compensation Survey, "Employee Benefits Survey, Table 32. Leave benefits: Access, civilian workers, March 2018," available at <https://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2018/ownership/civilian/table32a.htm> (last accessed September 2018).
- 28 National Partnership for Women and Families, "Paid Leave Means a Stronger Iowa" (2018), available at <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/paid-leave/paid-leave-means-a-stronger-iowa.pdf>.
- 29 Jacob Alex Klerman, Kelly Daley, and Alyssa Pozniak, "Family and Medical Leave in 2012: Technical Report" (Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates Inc., 2014), available at <https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/fmla/FMLA-2012-Technical-Report.pdf>.
- 30 Annie E. Casey Foundation 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/2/17/false/870,573,869,36,868/any/11472,11473> (last accessed October 2018).
- 31 Child Care Aware of America, "2017 State Child Care Facts in the State of Iowa," available at http://usa.childcareaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/IA_Facts.pdf (last accessed October 2018).
- 32 National Institute for Early Education Research, "Iowa," available at http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/iowa_YB2017.pdf (last accessed October 2018).
- 33 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/>.
- 34 "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: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012), available at <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/NISVS-StateReport-Book.pdf>.
- 35 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 October 2018).
- 36 Chai R. Feldblum and Victoria A. Lipnic, "Select Task Force on the Study of Harassment in the Workplace" (Washington: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2016), available at https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/task_force/harassment/report.cfm.
- 37 Smith and others, "The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey," Table 5.7.
- 38 Asha DuMonthier and Malore Dusenbery, "Intersections of Domestic Violence and Economic Security" (Washington: Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2016), available at <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/B362-Domestic-Violence-and-Economic-Security-1.pdf>.
- 39 Angela Hanks, "Ban the Box and Beyond" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2017), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/reports/2017/07/27/436756/ban-box-beyond/>.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 E. Ann Carson, "Prisoners in 2016," Table 7 (U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018), available at <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/p16.pdf>.
- 42 Ibid., Table 2.
- 43 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>.
- 44 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/>.
- 45 Reflective Democracy Campaign, "Reflective Democracy Research Findings: Summary Report, October, 2017," available at <https://wholeads.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/reflective-democracy-2017-research-summary.pdf> (last accessed October 2018).
- 46 Reflective Democracy Campaign, "How Does Your State Rank in the National Representation Index?," available at <https://wholeads.us/electedofficials/> (last accessed October 2018).
- 47 Ibid.