



Fast Facts: Economic Security for Michigan Women and Families

By Ryan Erickson and Sarah Jane Glynn May 26, 2015

In Michigan and across the country, policies are needed that promote economic security for women and families. Working families need higher livable wages, women need and deserve equal pay for equal work, and parents need to be able to maintain good jobs and raise their children simultaneously. Strong economic security policies will enable Michigan women and families to get ahead—not just get by.

The days of the full-time, stay-at-home mom are long in the past for most Americans. Nationally, mothers are the sole, primary, or co-breadwinners in 63.3 percent of families.¹ In Michigan, that rate is even higher: Mothers are the sole, primary, or co-breadwinners in 66.1 percent of Michigan families.² To promote women's economic security, policies should address the needs of working mothers and reflect how families have changed.

Provide access to paid sick days

Everyone gets sick, but not everyone is afforded the time to get better. Many women go to work sick or leave their sick children at home alone 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 40 million U.S. employees, or 40 percent of the nation's private-sector workforce, do not have access to paid sick days.³ In Michigan, the rate is even higher: Nearly 47 percent of private-sector workers—1.6 million people—do not have paid sick days.⁴
- If employees must stay home from work because they or their children are ill, the loss of pay can take a serious toll, particularly on low-income workers, who are the least likely workers to have access to this benefit.⁵



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Expand paid family and medical leave

Access to paid family and medical leave could allow workers to be with their newborn children at the crucial first stages of a child's life, to care for an aging parent or spouse, or to recover from their own illness.

- The United States is the only developed country without a federal law that provides access to paid maternity leave and one of only a small remainder of countries that does not offer broader family and medical leave insurance.⁶ Only 12 percent of workers in the United States have access to paid family leave through their employers.⁷
- The National Partnership for Women & Families gave Michigan an “F”—the lowest possible grade—on policies that help parents of newborn children because Michigan does not offer protections to new parents beyond the unpaid leave available to some workers under the Family and Medical Leave Act.⁸

Ensure equal pay

Although federal law prohibits unequal pay for equal work, there is more to do to ensure that both women and men enjoy the fullest protections against discrimination.

- Women are the primary, sole, or co-breadwinners in nearly two-thirds of U.S. families, but they continue to earn less than their male counterparts, with Latinas and African American women experiencing the sharpest pay disparities.⁹
- Michigan women earn 77 cents for every dollar that Michigan men earn, which is lower than the national average; nationally, women earn 78 cents for every dollar that men earn.¹⁰ The wage gap is even larger for black and Latina women in Michigan, who earn 65 cents and 54 cents, respectively, for every dollar that white men earn.¹¹

Expand quality, affordable child care

Families need child care to be able to work, but many families lack access to high-quality child care options. Parents want and need child care that supports young children's development and adequately prepares them for school.

- 66 percent of Michigan children younger than age 6 have all available parents in the workforce, which makes having affordable, high-quality child care a necessity.¹²
- For a family with one infant and one 4-year-old, child care in Michigan costs an average of \$17,680 per year, which is just less than one-third of the median income for a Michigan family with children.¹³



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Increase the minimum wage

Women make up a disproportionate share of low-wage workers, and raising the minimum wage would help hardworking women better support their families.

- Women make up nearly two-thirds of all minimum-wage workers in the United States.¹⁴
- Increasing the minimum wage to \$12 per hour would boost wages for 627,000 women in Michigan¹⁵ and nearly 16 million women nationally.¹⁶

Ryan Erickson is the Associate Director of Economic Campaigns at the Center for American Progress. Sarah Jane Glynn is the Director of Women's Economic Policy at the Center.

Endnotes

- 1 Sarah Jane Glynn, "Breadwinning Mothers, Then and Now" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2014), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/labor/report/2014/06/20/92355/breadwinning-mothers-then-and-now/>; Center for American Progress analysis of Minneapolis Population Center, "Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey: Version 3.0," available at <https://cps.ipums.org/cps/index.shtml> (last accessed May 2015).
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Elise Gould, Kai Filion, and Andrew Green, "The Need for Paid Sick Days: The lack of a federal policy further erodes family economic security" (Washington: Economic Policy Institute, 2011), available at <http://s4.epi.org/files/temp2011/BriefingPaper319-2.pdf>.
- 4 Institute for Women's Policy Research and National Partnership for Women & 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>.
- 5 The percentage of workers with paid sick leave increases with compensation. See Bureau of Labor Statistics, *National Compensation Survey: Employee Benefits in the United States, March 2013* (U.S. Department of Labor, 2013), table 32, available at <http://www.bls.gov/ncs/ebs/benefits/2013/ebbl0052.pdf>.
- 6 International Labor Organization, "Maternity and paternity at work: Law and practice across the world" (2014), available at http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/dgreports/-/dcomm/-/publ/documents/publication/wcms_242615.pdf; Jody Heymann and others, "Contagion Nation: A Comparison of Paid Sick Day Policies in 22 Countries" (Washington: Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2009), available at <http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/paid-sick-days-2009-05.pdf>.
- 7 Bureau of Labor Statistics, *National Compensation Survey*, table 32.
- 8 National Partnership for Women & Families, "Expecting Better: A State-by-State Analysis of Laws That Help New Parents" (2014), available at <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/expecting-better-2014.pdf>.
- 9 Anna Chu and Charles Posner, "The State of Women in America: A 50-State Analysis of How Women Are Faring Across the Nation" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2013), available at <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/StateOfWomen-4.pdf>.
- 10 Status of Women in the States, "Michigan," available at <http://statusofwomendata.org/explore-the-data/state-data/michigan/> (last accessed May 2015).
- 11 Chu and Posner, "The State of Women in America."
- 12 "Available parents" applies to "resident parents." See Kids Count Data Center, "Children Under Age 6 with All Parents in the Labor Force," available at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/5057-children-under-age-6-with-allavailable-parents-in-the-labor-force#detailed/2/2-52/false/36,868,867,133,38/any/11472,11473> (last accessed May 2015).
- 13 The average annual cost of child care in Michigan is \$9,724 for an infant and \$7,956 for a 4-year-old. For a family with children in Michigan, the median income is \$58,600 per year. See Child Care Aware of America, "Child Care in America: 2014 State Fact Sheets" (2014), available at http://usa.childcareaware.org/sites/default/files/19000000_state_fact_sheets_2014_v04.pdf; Kids Count Data Center, "Median Family Income Among Households with Children," available at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/65-median-family-incomeamong-households-with-children#detailed/2/2-52/false/36,868,867,133,38/any/365> (last accessed May 2015).
- 14 National Women's Law Center, "Fair Pay for Women Requires a Fair Minimum Wage," May 13, 2015, available at <http://www.nwlc.org/resource/fair-pay-women-requires-fair-minimum-wage>.
- 15 Economic Policy Institute, "State Tables: Characteristics of workers who would be affected by increasing the federal minimum wage to \$12 by July 2020" (2015), available at <http://s2.epi.org/files/2015/revised-minimum-wage-state-tables.pdf>.
- 16 Economic Policy Institute, "Data Tables: Raising the Minimum Wage to \$12 by 2020 Would Lift Wages for 35 Million Workers" (2015), available at <http://s4.epi.org/files/pdf/85139.pdf>.