



DATA REVEAL MULTIPLE BARRIERS TO GENDER JUSTICE IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Women* are an economic and political force in South Carolina. They are more highly educated than men, comprise 48.6 percent of the paid labor force,¹ and are 56 percent of voters.²

But as a result of unfair and discriminatory policies and practices, South Carolina is a state with stark disparities based on race, gender, and sexual orientation, and gender identity.

Black women, who are 75.7 percent of all women of color in South Carolina,³ face tremendous barriers to fair wages, affordable child care, dignity-based schools and workplaces, and comprehensive health care, including abortion. LGBTQ people also face large barriers to opportunity, equity, and economic security. Although there is a paucity of data on LGBTQ people in South Carolina, particularly transgender women and nonbinary people, the information that is available indicates significant disparities in treatment, access, and care.

This fact sheet provides an overview of how women and gender expansive people are faring in South Carolina. It focuses on the discrepancies between women's political participation and leadership, as well as the issues that determine whether individuals can make real decisions about whether and when to start a family; access affordable, high-quality child care; and pursue work that pays them

equitably and treats them with dignity—core building blocks of gender justice. Recent policy advances in South Carolina, such as the Pregnancy Accommodations Act, demonstrate that South Carolinians can come together to advance meaningful changes for gender equity. The information below can help identify additional opportunities to build on those successes and ensure that all South Carolinians have equitable opportunity to thrive.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP

Women Are the Majority of South Carolina Voters, but Women's Voting Power Is Not Reflected in Their Political Power.

- Women were 56 percent of the electorate over the past two cycles.⁴
 - Women of color were 18 percent. Among women of color voters:
 - 92 percent were Black,
 - Four percent were Latina, and
 - Four percent were Asian American or "other."

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- White women were 38 to 39 percent of South Carolina electorate.
- There is a huge partisan gap in South Carolina voting patterns by race (60–70 points in the last two elections) and a much smaller gap (10–11 points) based on gender, according to Catalist’s two-party vote share models, in 2016 and 2018:⁵
 - Black women favored Democratic candidates at rates of 98 and 97 percent, respectively;
 - Latinx women favored Democratic candidates at rates of 73 and 68 percent, respectively;
 - Asian American women favored Democratic candidates at rates of 62 and 60 percent, respectively; and
 - White women supported Republican top-of-ticket candidates at rates of 76 and 70 percent, respectively.
- South Carolina has very low rates of women’s political representation.
 - Currently, there are no women in South Carolina’s congressional delegation.
 - South Carolina ranks 44th in the nation when it comes to women’s representation in the state legislature.⁶
 - 16.5 percent of South Carolina state legislators are women, well below the national average of 28.9 percent.⁷
- Latinx women are paid 53.9 cents to every dollar paid to a white, non-Hispanic man.
- Native women are paid 60.9 cents to every dollar paid to a white, non-Hispanic man.
- Asian women are typically paid 71.7 cents for every dollar paid to a white, non-Hispanic man, and that wage gap is substantially larger for some subgroups of Asian women.⁹
- Overall, South Carolina women are paid 77.3 cents to every dollar paid to men.
- The overall wage gap for South Carolina women has narrowed by a mere four cents over the last 20 years.¹⁰ If today’s wage gap persists, a Black woman in South Carolina will lose \$860,000 to the wage gap over a 40 year career.¹¹ For a Latinx woman, this adds up to more than \$900,000 in lost earnings over a 40 year career. In order to “catch up” to what the typical white, non-Hispanic South Carolina man is paid by age 60, depending on her race, a South Carolina woman would need to work anywhere from 12 to 34 additional years.¹²
- Black women experience higher poverty rates (23.8 percent) than white, non-Hispanic women (11.4 percent) in South Carolina, as do other women of color.¹³
 - 32.2 percent of Native American women in South Carolina live below the poverty line.
 - 26.3 percent of Latinx women in South Carolina live below the poverty line.
 - 12 percent of Asian women in South Carolina live below the poverty line.¹⁴
 - Overall poverty rates for women in South Carolina (15.1 percent) are higher than the national average (12 percent).

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

For Too Many South Carolinians, Hard Work Doesn’t Pay Off. This is especially true for Black women in South Carolina, who are disproportionately segregated into low-wage jobs and paid less for their work because of structural exclusion and discrimination based on race and sex. As a result, Black women and other women of color in the state are disproportionately likely to live below the poverty line.

- A Black woman in South Carolina is typically paid 57.5 cents to every dollar typically paid to a white, non-Hispanic man. Other women of color in South Carolina face high wage gaps as well.⁸

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- Comparable state-level data on LGBTQ people are unavailable. But because the South Carolina legal framework does not explicitly protect LGBTQ people from workplace discrimination, LGBTQ South Carolinians—especially transgender individuals and LGBTQ people of color—are at heightened risk for economic insecurity due to workplace discrimination, something one quarter of LGBTQ people nationally reported experiencing in the past year.¹⁵

CHILD CARE

Child Care Costs Hold South Carolina Families Back. High-quality, affordable child care is an economic necessity for hundreds of thousands of South Carolina families. Currently, 66.2 percent of South Carolina women with children age six and under are employed.¹⁶ Despite the vast need, families in South Carolina struggle to find and afford the child care they want and need for their children.

- The average annual costs for full-time center-based infant care in South Carolina is \$9,100—an amount approaching the cost of in-state tuition at a four-year public university.¹⁷

Using the HHS threshold, infant care would only be considered “affordable” for the top 21.4 percent of South Carolina families.

- For a single parent in South Carolina, the cost of center-based child care would consume 39.9 percent of total income; married parents of two children living at the poverty line would spend 68.9 percent of their income on center-based child care¹⁸—well above the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ (HHS) affordability guideline of seven percent of family income.
 - Using the HHS threshold, infant care would only be considered “affordable” for the top 21.4 percent of South Carolina families.¹⁹

- Only five percent of Black South Carolina children eligible for child care assistance under federal law received it through Child Care Development Block Grant in 2016.²⁰ South Carolina ranks as the worst state in the country when it comes to the percent of eligible Black children receiving child care assistance.²¹

EDUCATION

Discipline Practices Disproportionately Impact and Disadvantage Black Girls in School. Racist and sexist discipline informed by stereotypes about Black girls push them out of school. Black students are more likely to be subjected to harsh discipline policies like corporal punishment and are more likely to be suspended for minor offenses like dress code violations or subjective offenses like “defiance” or “disturbing schools.”²²

- In the 2015–16 school year, Black girls in South Carolina were suspended from school 3.7 times more often than white girls.²³
- Black girls in South Carolina, who are 34.7 percent of the female student population, constituted 59.3 percent of girls referred to law enforcement and 63.5 percent of girls who experienced a school-related arrest.²⁴

These challenges are compounded by the poor quality of South Carolina public schools overall. With only a “minimally adequate” education required by the state constitution, South Carolina continues to place at or near the bottom of national rankings for public schools.²⁵ The state’s education funding formula is complex, fractured, and unstable; in recent years, there has been a growing consensus that it is not working.

Girls and Women Face Other Threats to Their Safety and Dignity in Educational Settings. Nationally, more than one in five girls ages 14 to 18 report that they have been kissed or touched without their consent, with LGBTQ girls being more likely to experience nonconsensual

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kissing or touching.²⁶ During college, more than one in five women (and nearly one in 18 men) are sexually assaulted.²⁷ A 2017 national survey with a representative but non-random sample of youth found that 57.3 percent of LGBTQ respondents reported experiencing sexual harassment at school.²⁸ Comparable state-level data are lacking and limited to formal reports, which wildly understate incidence.

- Studies have shown that only 12 percent of college students who experience sexual assault report to their schools or the police²⁹ and only two percent of girls ages 14 to 18 report sexual assault or harassment.³⁰
- In 2017, 20 colleges and universities across 188 campuses in South Carolina reported to the U.S. Department of Education that 80 rapes occurred on campus—a small fraction of the 238,567 students enrolled at South Carolina colleges and universities that year.³¹
- For the 2015–2016 school year, 365 South Carolina girls reported to their schools being bullied or harassed on the basis of sex, 116 students reported sexual assault, and five students reported rape—again, an implausibly low number, considering there were 767,540 total students and 373,589 girls enrolled in South Carolina K–12 public schools.³²

SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE

As the Me Too Movement Revealed, Sexual Harassment and Assault Remain Endemic—and Major Barriers to Equal Opportunity in the Workplace. National surveys of employees find that at least 25 percent, and as many as 85 percent, of women surveyed report having experienced sexual harassment at work.³³

- Despite the high rates of sexual harassment found in numerous studies, actual reporting rates are low. There were only 144 sexual harassment claims from South Carolina filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in 2018.³⁴ Given that surveys indicate

only six to 13 percent of individuals who experience harassment file a formal complaint, actual incidence in the state is likely far higher.³⁵

- Based on these formal complaints, Black women appear to be disproportionately likely to experience sexual harassment at work. Between 2012 and 2016, Black women nationally were nearly three times as likely as white, non-Hispanic women to file sexual harassment charges with the EEOC.³⁶

In Addition to Workplace Harassment, South Carolinians are Vulnerable to Sexual Assault,

experiencing a form of sexual violence during their lifetimes at rates (40.1 percent) that are higher than the national average (36.3 percent).³⁷ Women survivors identify their perpetrators as current or former intimate partners in about half of cases.

- Although national data shows declining rates of sexual violence between 1993 and 2016,³⁸ the 15 sexual assault crisis centers operating within the South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (SCCADVASA) reported an upward trend in the number of new clients served between 2014–2018.³⁹
- Women sought services for sexual violence in South Carolina from 2014–2018 at a rate of about three-and-a-half times higher than that of men,⁴⁰ and Black women were overrepresented (33.5 percent of crisis center clients versus 27.1 percent of the overall population).⁴¹
- Transgender women of color are particularly likely to be subjected to intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and homicide. The life expectancy for transgender women of color in the U.S. is 35 (compared to 78 years old for their cisgender counterparts), due in part to the increased risk of anti-transgender violence and homicide.⁴² In South Carolina, there have been four documented homicides of transgender women since 2018. All of the cases highlighted systemic problems when it comes to transgender violence such as misgendering (using

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pronouns that are incongruent with how a transgender person self-identifies) and dead-naming (calling a transgender person by their name assigned at birth and not the name they chose for themselves) in police and media reports.⁴³

HEALTH AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

South Carolina Makes Health Care Inaccessible to Too Many Individuals—Which Contributes to Poor Health Outcomes and Perpetuates Racial Health Disparities. The state ranked 12th worst in the country in 2017 when it came to the number of insured women.⁴⁴

- Black women, Latinx women, and Asian American women in South Carolina are disproportionately likely to lack health insurance.⁴⁵
 - Black women are 31.1 percent of uninsured women in South Carolina but are 27.2 percent of the state’s population of adult women.
 - Latinx women are 13.7 of uninsured women in South Carolina but are 4.2 percent of the state’s population of adult women.
 - Asian American women are 2 percent of uninsured women in South Carolina but 1.7 percent of the state’s total population of adult women.
 - Overall, South Carolina women aged 19–64 are more likely to be uninsured than the national average (13.5 percent, versus 11.0 percent nationally), as are women of reproductive age (14.2 percent, versus 11.9 percent nationally).⁴⁶
- Expanding Medicaid would make 211,000 South Carolina non-elderly adults, 50 percent of whom are people of color and nearly half of whom are women, eligible for health coverage.⁴⁷ However, state lawmakers have refused to do so. This refusal directly impacts the health and well-being of women and babies in South Carolina.
- Maternal mortality rates for Black women in South Carolina (46.3 deaths per 100,000 live births) are more than three times the rates for white women (13.7 deaths per 100,000 live births).⁴⁸

- From 2013–2017, South Carolina had an overall maternal mortality rate of 24.7 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2016—much higher than the national rate of 16.8 per 100,000 births and more than three times the national 1987 rate of 7.2 deaths per 100,000 births.⁴⁹
- In South Carolina, Black infant mortality rates (12.2 deaths per 1,000 live births) were more than twice as high as white infant mortality rates (5 deaths per 1,000 live births) in 2018.⁵⁰
 - Infant mortality rates increased between 2016 and 2017 (from 6.5 to 7.2 infant deaths per 1000 births), one of the highest rates in the country.⁵¹
 - Overall, South Carolina ranks in the bottom 10 in the country on a number of reproductive health and birth outcome markers, including infant mortality, low-birthweight babies, and preterm births.⁵²

The South Carolina General Assembly is Fast-Tracking Radical and Dangerous Abortion Bans.

During the 2019–2020 legislative session, South Carolina lawmakers focused on passing legislation that would ban abortion at six weeks, before most people even know they are pregnant. Numerous existing restrictions already make it very difficult for South Carolinians to access abortion care.

- As of 2017, 93 percent of South Carolina counties—where 71 percent of South Carolinians reside—had no clinics that provided abortions.⁵³ The impact falls hardest on those who already face multiple barriers to care, such as those struggling to make ends meet, people of color, rural South Carolinians, and people who already have children.
- Even South Carolinians who are able to reach an abortion provider may be unable to afford the care they need because the state withholds insurance coverage from those who have decided to have an abortion. South Carolina denies abortion coverage to those enrolled in the state Medicaid program, and politicians enacted a law prohibiting health plans offered in the private health care marketplace from covering abortion.⁵⁴ And

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another law similarly restricts insurance policies for public employees from providing abortion coverage.⁵⁵

There Have Been Important Gains for Birth Control Access in South Carolina, But Many South Carolinians Still Face Barriers. Birth control improves individuals' ability to control whether and when they have a child, a critical factor in helping all people participate equally in education and the workforce. And birth control is good for health, including for the management of health conditions like endometriosis and fibroids that are more common among Black people.

- The Affordable Care Act guarantees that 915,636 South Carolina women have critical insurance coverage of birth control without out-of-pocket costs.⁵⁶ South Carolina has expanded Medicaid eligibility for family planning services to individuals with incomes up to 199 percent of the federal poverty level.⁵⁷ Additionally, the state requires Medicaid coverage of postpartum long-acting reversible contraceptives separately from global maternity fees, which enables those who want an intrauterine device (IUD) or contraceptive implant to get one before leaving the hospital after having a baby.⁵⁸
- But the ACA's birth control coverage does not reach everyone. Individuals who are enrolled in grandfathered health plans, including state and public school employees in South Carolina, lack this critical coverage. And insurance companies can still place restrictions on coverage, such as forcing people to obtain a prescription

for an over-the-counter method in order to receive coverage or putting limits on how much birth control an individual can get at one time.

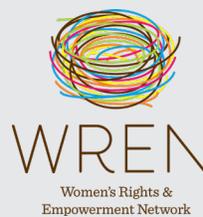
More Attention is Needed to LGBTQ Individuals' Health Outcomes and Access to Care. Although there is a paucity of data on state-wide health outcomes for LGBTQ individuals, a recent local needs assessment of the Charleston tri-county metro area revealed that many LGBTQ community members struggle to find quality care from practitioners who are educated about and sensitive to the needs of their LGBTQ patients.⁵⁹

- More than half, 51 percent, of respondents reported that their partners were not treated like family by their health care provider; 41 percent said their doctors did not know their sexual orientation; 50 percent of non-cisgender respondents reported that their doctors did not know their gender identity; and more than one third felt as though their physicians did not know how to answer their questions.⁶⁰

This fact sheet provided an overview of South Carolina girls' and women's well-being around five core pillars of gender justice: economic opportunity and inclusion; affordable, high-quality child care; education; protection from sexual harassment and violence; and health and reproductive rights. The data reveal a decidedly challenging environment facing women and girls who experience multiple forms of discrimination based on race, class, and/or sexual orientation or gender identity.



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1. National Women’s Law Center (NWLC) calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey using IPUMS.
2. Unpublished analysis by Catalist (on file with NWLC).
3. NWLC calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey using IPUMS.
4. Unpublished analysis by Catalist (on file with NWLC).
5. Id.
6. Id.
7. Id.
8. NWLC, *The Wage Gap, State by State* (Oct. 10, 2019), available at <https://nwlc.org/resources/wage-gap-state-state/>.
9. Data were not available to disaggregate AAPI women, who are a diverse community, spanning dozens of racial and ethnic communities, more than 100 languages and vastly different immigration narratives. Poverty rates among some AAPI women are much higher. See <https://nwlc.org/blog/its-not-really-aapi-equal-pay-day-heres-why/>.
10. NWLC calculations based on U.S. Dep’t of Labor, BLS, *Highlights of Women’s Earnings* annual reports, 1998–2017, available at <https://www.bls.gov/cps/earnings.htm#demographics> (last visited October 28, 2019).
11. NWLC, *The Lifetime Wage Gap, State by State* (Mar. 25, 2019), <https://nwlc.org/resources/the-lifetime-wage-gap-state-by-state/>.
12. Id.
13. NWLC, *Women and Poverty, State by State* (Oct. 4, 2019), available at <https://nwlc.org/resources/women-and-poverty-state-by-state/>.
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23. NWLC calculations based on U.S. Dep’t of Educ., Off. for Civil Rights, 2015–16 Civil Rights Data Collection, available at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crcd-2015-16.html>. Please note that this figure does not include girls with disabilities.
24. Id.
25. *Abbeville County School District v. the State of South Carolina*. Appellate Case No. 2007-065159 (SC 2014). <https://www.sccourts.org/opinions/HTMLFiles/SC/27466.pdf>.
26. NWLC, *Let Her Learn: Stopping School Pushout For Girls Who Have Suffered Harassment Or Sexual Violence* (2017), https://nwlc-ciw49tixgw5lbab.stackpathdns.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/final_nwlc_Gates_HarassmentViolence.pdf
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42. Arheghan, Ose., GLAAD, *A beginner’s guide to trans awareness week* (Nov. 2018), available at <https://www.glaad.org/amp/beginner-guide-transweek-2018>.
43. Sasha Wall, 29 years old, was found shot and killed in her car in April, 2018 in Chesterfield County. Five months later, another black transgender woman, 37 year old Regina Denise Brown, was found beaten to death and her house set ablaze in Orangeburg. In August 2018, Kendra Martinez, a Latinx transgender woman, was punched unconscious outside a nightclub in downtown Charleston. Denali Berries Stuckey, a 29 year old black transgender woman, was found shot to death near a road in North Charleston in the summer of 2019. Two weeks later, Pebbles LaDime Doe, a 24 year old black transgender woman, was shot to death in rural Allendale.
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45. NWLC calculations based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey using IPUMS.
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*Throughout this document, we use “women” in an inclusive way, acknowledging that trans-men and gender nonconforming people are also impacted by “women’s issues.” For the purposes of this fact sheet, “gender expansive” is an umbrella term used for individuals that broaden their own culture’s commonly held definitions of gender, including expectations for its expression, identities, roles, and/or other perceived gender norms. Gender-expansive individuals include those with transgender and non-binary identities, as well as those whose gender in some way is seen to be stretching society’s notions of gender. For both women and gender marginalized people, the root of discrimination and marginalization are the same – misogyny and white supremacy. When terminology varies across sections of the report, it is a reflection of language used in the data that is cited.