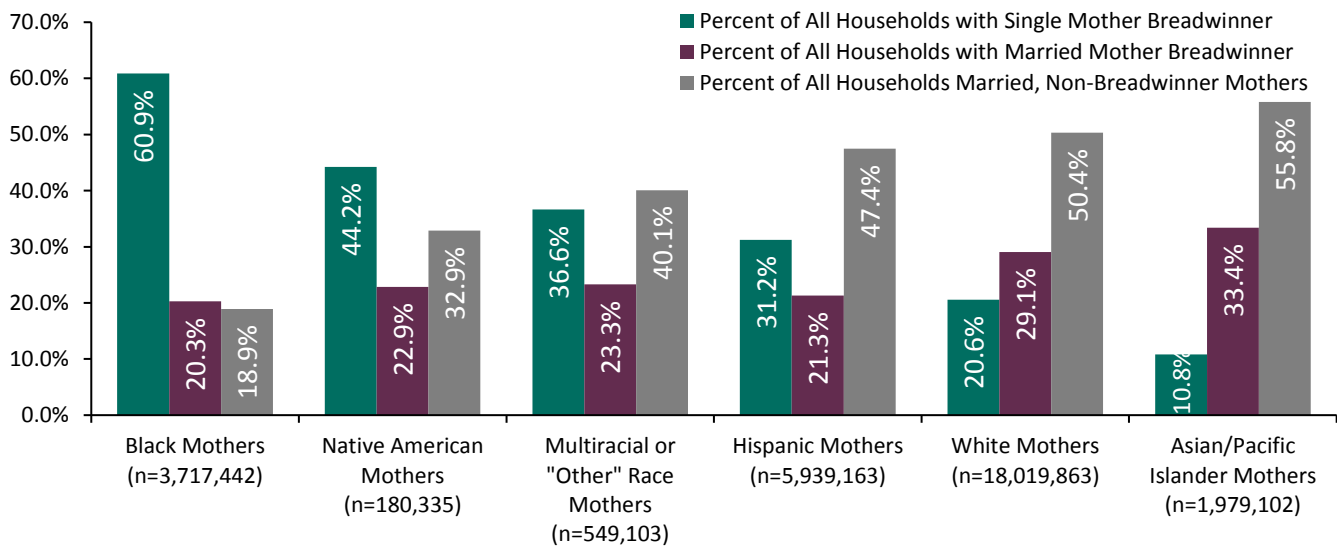


Breadwinner Mothers by Race/Ethnicity and State

With the large majority of U.S. mothers in the labor force and a steady decline in the real earnings of all workers over recent decades, families are increasingly relying on mothers' earnings for economic stability. In the United States, half of all households with children under 18 have a breadwinner mother, who is either a single mother who heads a household, irrespective of earnings, or a married mother who provides at least 40 percent of the couple's joint earnings.¹ At the same time, women are more likely than men to shoulder unpaid caregiving responsibilities and many women, especially women of color, are more likely to be balancing work and care alone. The lack of work-family supports in the United States, such as paid sick days and paid family leave, coupled with the high cost of child care, places an additional burden on low-income women and women of color, who are the least likely to have employer-provided paid leave.

The share of mothers who are breadwinners, and the breakdown between single and married breadwinner mothers, varies markedly by race and ethnicity (Figure 1). More than four in five Black mothers (81.1 percent) are breadwinners, with a majority of Black mothers (60.9 percent) raising families on their own. There are three times as many single Black mother breadwinners as married Black mother breadwinners. Two in three Native American mothers are breadwinners (67.1 percent), with the share of single mother breadwinners nearly double the share

Figure 1. Breadwinner Mothers with Children Under 18 by Race/Ethnicity of Mother and Household Type, United States, 2014



Notes: A breadwinner mother is defined as a single mother who heads a household (irrespective of earnings) or a married mother who earns at least 40 percent of the couple's joint earnings; single mothers who live in someone else's household (such as with their parents) are not included in breadwinners. Racial categories are non-Hispanic. Data, calculated using three-year averages (2012-2014), include households with a mother and children under age 18. Shares may not total 100% due to rounding.

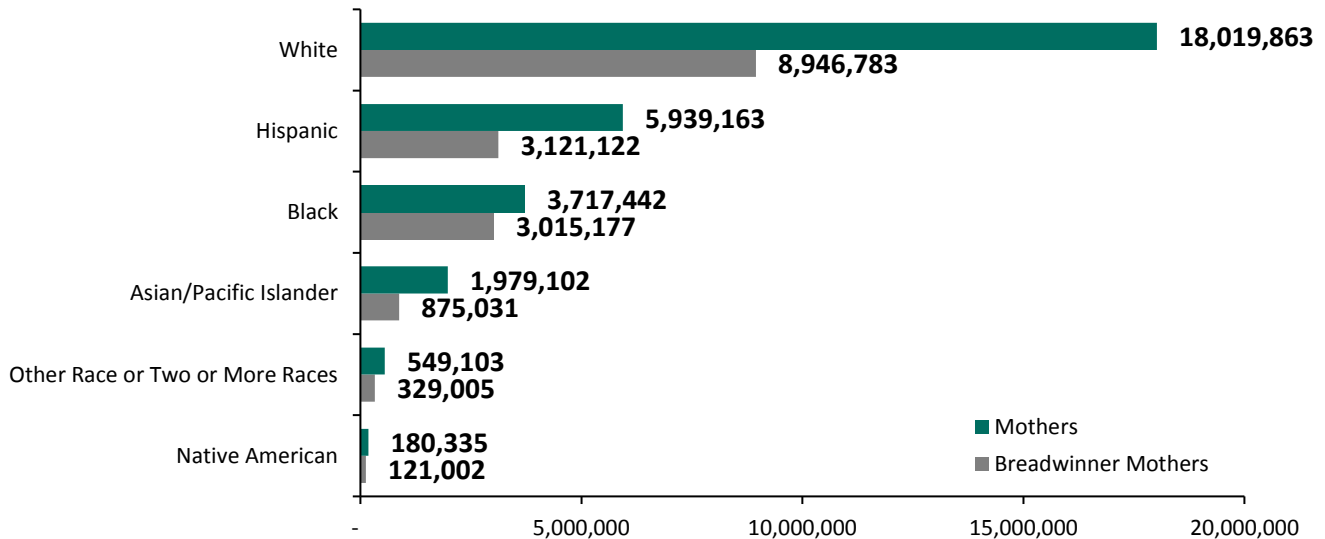
Source: IWPR analysis of American Community Survey microdata (Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Version 6.0).

¹ An estimated 16.4 million households (49.7 percent of families with children under 18) had a breadwinner mother in 2014; see Cynthia Hess, Jessica Milli, Jeff Hayes, and Ariane Hegewisch, *The Status of Women in the States: 2015*, Table 3.3, Washington DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research, <http://statusofwomensdata.org/explore-the-data/work-family/>.

who are married breadwinners. Among White and Asian/Pacific Islander mothers, fewer than half are breadwinners, and breadwinners are more likely to be married than raising families on their own.

While Figure 1 shows how households with children are distributed by the race or ethnicity of the mother, Figure 2 provides the numbers of households by the race or ethnicity of the mother, and the numbers of those households with a breadwinner mother. Of the approximately 18.0 million White mothers in the United States, half of them (8.9 million) are breadwinners (Figure 2). Similarly, 3.1 million of the 5.9 million Hispanic mothers, or about half, are breadwinners. Among Black mothers, however, more than 4 in 5 (3.0 million of 3.7 million women, or 81.1 percent) are breadwinners. Of the 180,335 Native American mothers, 121,002 (or 67.1 percent) are breadwinners. Three in five mothers (329,005 of 549,103; 59.9 percent) who identify as multiracial or of another race are breadwinners. Asian/Pacific Islander mothers are the least likely to be breadwinners; there are 2.0 million Asian/Pacific Islander mothers, and 875,031 of them are breadwinners (44.2 percent).

Figure 2. All Mothers and Breadwinner Mothers with Children Under 18 by Race/Ethnicity of Mother and Household Type, United States, 2014



Notes: Data are three-year averages (2012-2014) and include households with a mother and children under age 18. See Figure 1 note for definition of a breadwinner mother. Racial categories are non-Hispanic.

Source: IWPR analysis of American Community Survey microdata (Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Version 6.0).

There are also differences in the share of breadwinner mothers across racial and ethnic groups among the 50 states and the District of Columbia:

- Among White, Hispanic, and Black mothers with children under 18, a higher share of Black mothers are breadwinners than White or Hispanic mothers in every state.²
- The state with the lowest share of Black breadwinner mothers is Washington (71.9 percent); the state with the highest share is Wisconsin (88.1 percent). Among White mothers, the share who are breadwinners ranges from a low of 34.2 percent in Utah to a high of 59.5 percent Vermont. Alabama is the state with the lowest share of Hispanic mothers who are breadwinners (40.4 percent); the highest share is in Massachusetts (72.2 percent).
- In each state except West Virginia, the share of White breadwinner mothers who are married is greater than the share who are single. There are more single Black breadwinner mothers than married ones in every state. In all but two states, Arkansas and Idaho, single Hispanic breadwinner mothers outnumber married breadwinner mothers.

² Sample sizes are inadequate to provide reliable data for Hispanic women in nine states and the District of Columbia and Black women in 17 states. Due to inadequate sample sizes, data for other racial groups are not included in Table 1.

Table 1. Breadwinner Mothers with Children Under 18 by Race/Ethnicity of Mother and Household Type, United States, 2014

State	White Mother Households				Hispanic Mother Households				Black Mother Households			
	Number of Households	Share without Breadwinner Mother	Share with Breadwinner Mother		Number of Households	Share without Breadwinner Mother	Share with Breadwinner Mother		Number of Households	Share without Breadwinner Mother	Share with Breadwinner Mother	
			Single	Married			Single	Married			Single	Married
Alabama	296,424	52.7%	20.6%	26.7%	21,744	59.6%	22.4%	18.0%	126,292	17.8%	64.5%	17.7%
Alaska	46,114	56.6%	17.3%	26.1%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Arizona	297,799	49.5%	22.7%	27.8%	220,019	47.7%	33.0%	19.3%	25,034	23.2%	53.6%	23.2%
Arkansas	200,933	49.2%	22.6%	28.2%	26,685	49.8%	23.1%	27.0%	45,027	16.6%	65.5%	17.9%
California	1,219,432	53.0%	19.7%	27.3%	1,536,550	49.6%	28.5%	22.0%	177,609	19.9%	59.5%	20.6%
Colorado	359,022	52.3%	19.2%	28.6%	128,287	46.8%	32.0%	21.2%	19,314	27.0%	49.5%	23.5%
Connecticut	231,042	51.6%	18.4%	30.0%	62,304	34.5%	46.6%	18.9%	35,374	18.7%	58.3%	23.0%
Delaware	48,844	41.7%	22.7%	35.6%	9,652	43.6%	31.5%	25.0%	17,143	18.5%	54.8%	26.7%
Dist. of Columbia	12,782	51.2%	11.6%	37.2%	5,817	N/A	30.1%	N/A	22,648	12.2%	72.6%	15.1%
Florida	770,511	46.7%	24.0%	29.3%	465,418	44.1%	30.3%	25.6%	270,774	20.6%	56.3%	23.1%
Georgia	526,504	53.2%	18.0%	28.8%	107,820	56.0%	24.8%	19.2%	309,948	21.2%	57.2%	21.7%
Hawaii	25,616	62.5%	15.6%	21.9%	12,582	48.2%	26.0%	25.8%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Idaho	136,581	54.4%	20.9%	24.7%	23,642	49.1%	21.3%	29.6%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Illinois	766,751	51.7%	18.4%	29.9%	241,448	50.6%	25.8%	23.6%	168,709	16.2%	67.5%	16.3%
Indiana	510,251	49.7%	23.4%	26.8%	48,499	51.0%	28.0%	21.0%	63,419	14.8%	68.3%	16.9%
Iowa	273,125	45.0%	20.9%	34.1%	18,825	45.7%	33.5%	20.8%	11,018	N/A	60.9%	N/A
Kansas	227,955	50.9%	19.7%	29.4%	39,541	50.6%	29.1%	20.3%	17,908	24.3%	54.1%	21.6%
Kentucky	366,905	45.9%	24.8%	29.4%	14,778	50.4%	29.3%	20.2%	34,913	15.0%	68.5%	16.5%
Louisiana	258,019	53.9%	22.1%	24.0%	22,132	49.7%	32.7%	17.6%	138,559	17.7%	66.7%	15.6%
Maine	105,920	42.2%	27.3%	30.5%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Maryland	294,851	50.2%	16.7%	33.1%	59,574	48.9%	26.3%	24.9%	165,070	20.2%	53.7%	26.1%
Massachusetts	454,651	49.6%	20.3%	30.1%	84,400	27.8%	53.7%	18.4%	46,203	20.1%	57.6%	22.3%
Michigan	703,023	49.4%	21.7%	28.9%	50,020	45.6%	34.0%	20.4%	129,661	15.3%	69.4%	15.3%
Minnesota	441,762	45.6%	19.0%	35.4%	30,059	48.5%	31.0%	20.5%	36,762	22.7%	57.0%	20.3%
Mississippi	160,221	50.2%	21.0%	28.8%	7,105	52.7%	25.2%	22.0%	112,917	16.9%	65.3%	17.8%
Missouri	461,505	46.7%	22.4%	30.9%	23,329	48.2%	32.0%	19.8%	66,423	14.5%	67.4%	18.0%
Montana	80,037	50.0%	19.5%	30.5%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nebraska	155,097	48.0%	20.7%	31.3%	24,902	48.5%	29.0%	22.5%	9,714	N/A	65.3%	N/A
Nevada	116,046	47.1%	24.2%	28.7%	87,909	44.6%	30.3%	25.1%	20,265	19.3%	64.9%	15.8%
New Hampshire	115,452	48.8%	23.5%	27.6%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
New Jersey	487,005	55.4%	14.8%	29.8%	194,325	41.9%	37.7%	20.4%	110,726	21.8%	56.5%	21.6%
New Mexico	63,403	49.2%	24.2%	26.6%	100,992	42.2%	35.6%	22.3%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
New York	989,864	50.3%	18.9%	30.8%	367,219	36.1%	44.5%	19.4%	254,831	19.3%	58.8%	22.0%
North Carolina	597,288	48.9%	20.1%	31.0%	104,774	52.2%	30.1%	17.8%	203,412	18.4%	59.9%	21.7%
North Dakota	62,779	53.1%	18.9%	28.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ohio	879,206	47.4%	23.5%	29.1%	41,800	38.1%	40.7%	21.2%	146,546	14.6%	69.0%	16.3%
Oklahoma	243,825	49.3%	23.7%	27.0%	44,614	54.7%	26.3%	19.0%	26,822	15.1%	67.7%	17.3%
Oregon	264,054	48.2%	24.4%	27.4%	56,659	46.7%	29.3%	24.0%	6,071	N/A	57.8%	N/A
Pennsylvania	879,798	50.4%	19.9%	29.6%	88,861	35.8%	47.9%	16.3%	122,874	15.3%	65.9%	18.8%
Rhode Island	68,350	42.3%	26.1%	31.6%	16,424	29.8%	52.6%	17.6%	6,356	N/A	65.4%	N/A
South Carolina	273,495	50.0%	21.8%	28.2%	29,813	53.4%	28.3%	18.3%	120,677	18.0%	62.4%	19.7%
South Dakota	68,874	44.0%	21.5%	34.6%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tennessee	450,592	49.4%	21.4%	29.2%	38,198	54.8%	27.4%	17.8%	108,609	17.2%	63.7%	19.1%
Texas	1,109,708	54.1%	19.3%	26.6%	1,178,180	51.2%	28.9%	19.9%	304,321	21.3%	56.0%	22.7%
Utah	258,079	65.8%	13.7%	20.5%	47,094	51.7%	24.2%	24.2%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Vermont	51,468	40.5%	25.5%	34.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Virginia	503,322	52.1%	17.6%	30.3%	84,466	51.7%	25.5%	22.9%	152,707	21.5%	55.1%	23.4%
Washington	460,468	53.2%	20.8%	26.0%	99,333	47.7%	31.2%	21.1%	22,436	28.1%	46.4%	25.6%
West Virginia	145,592	48.2%	26.9%	24.9%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5,385	N/A	64.6%	N/A
Wisconsin	451,404	45.4%	20.9%	33.7%	44,063	45.3%	32.0%	22.7%	38,620	11.9%	79.2%	8.9%
Wyoming	48,114	54.1%	21.3%	24.6%	6,455	N/A	30.1%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
United States	18,019,863	50.4%	20.6%	29.1%	5,939,163	47.4%	31.2%	21.3%	3,717,442	18.9%	60.9%	20.3%

Notes: Data are three-year averages (2012-2014) and include households with a mother and children under age 18. See Figure 1 note for definition of a breadwinner mother. Racial categories are non-Hispanic. N/A = not available. Data for other racial groups are not included due to inadequate sample sizes.

Source: IWPR analysis of American Community Survey microdata (Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Version 6.0).

A number of policy interventions could help to support the growing number of families that rely on working mothers for economic stability:

- Since women are more likely than men to hold jobs that pay at or below minimum wage, raising the minimum wage could improve the earnings of breadwinner mothers, reduce poverty, and reduce gender and racial earnings inequality.
- The earnings wage gap translates into lower lifetime pay for women, less income for families, and higher rates of poverty across the country. Federal and state governments could increase women's earnings and grow the economy by fully enforcing the Equal Pay Act, the Civil Rights Act, and state equivalents. If women received equal pay with comparable men, poverty among working women would be cut in half. The high poverty rate among working single mothers would also fall dramatically from 29.3 percent to 15.8 percent, or nearly half, if they earned the same as comparable men. Working women would see an average annual earnings increase of about \$6,500; added up across all working women, this amounts to \$482 billion.
- Women who are covered by a union contract, especially women of color, earn higher wages, experience a smaller gender wage gap, and have greater access to benefits than their counterparts who are not protected by collective bargaining agreements or a union contract. Federal and state governments could improve women's earnings and the quality and stability of their employment by protecting and strengthening workers' collective bargaining rights—changes that are especially necessary in states that have passed “right to work” laws.
- Mothers disproportionately shoulder unpaid caregiving responsibilities, for elderly relatives, individuals with a disability, and children, which they often must balance with employment. Paid sick days and paid family and medical leave can provide breadwinner mothers with caregiving commitments the chance to stay in their jobs and advance, rather than cutting back or leaving entirely. Reducing paid work time would have detrimental impacts on their economic security lasting into retirement.
- Quality child care is unaffordable for many families, leading either to high child care costs or reduced paid work time. Expanding publicly funded early childhood care would ensure that eligible parents can receive child care whether they are employed, looking for work, or pursuing education or training, and would increase the family's disposable income and standard of living. Expanding child care subsidies could also increase parents' access to quality child care, improve performance and advancement at work, and reduce child-care related work interruptions.

This Quick Figures, prepared by Julie Anderson, is part of a series of IWPR research products on topics relevant to the 2016 election.

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