

## Economic Empowerment Spotlight

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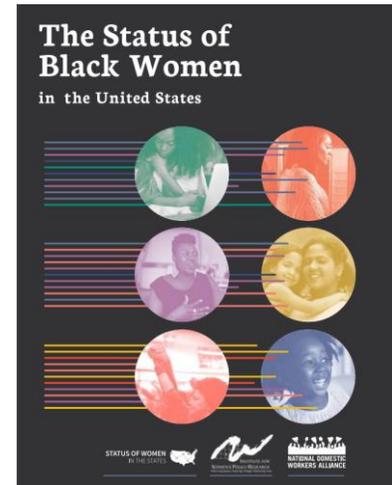
### The Status of Black Women in the United States

In collaboration with the [National Domestic Workers Alliance](#), the Institute for Women's Policy Research released a new comprehensive report as a part of the longstanding report series, [The Status of Women in the States](#). This 192 page report describes the experiences of millions of Black women across the United States, including key findings and recommendations related to political participation, employment and earnings, work and family, poverty and opportunity, health and well-being, and violence and safety.

Findings from this report emphasize the importance of understanding the complex challenges faced by Black women who experience violence and abuse, as well as the enduring contributions Black women make to the productivity, wealth, and success of the nation.

#### Key Findings Related to Economic Injustice and Safety

Black women have one of the highest labor force participation rates among women (tied with multi-racial women) and are relied upon by 81 percent of Black families as breadwinners (meaning they are single mothers or married and



contribute at least 40 percent of the couple's joint earnings). Despite significant contributions to the workforce, gender and racial discrimination in education and the labor market threatens Black women's and girls' economic security.

- Black girls are disproportionately [disciplined and expelled](#) from public schools—between 2011 and 2012, 45 percent of girls suspended and 42 percent of girls expelled were Black.
- Approximately 28 percent of Black women are employed in service occupations, which generally pay the lowest wages.
- The earnings of Black women who worked full-time, year-round were only 64 percent of White men's earnings (\$34,000 compared with \$53,000) in 2014.

## Resources:

To learn more about The Status of Black Women in the United States, see the following:

Executive Summary  
<https://iwpr.org/publications/exec-summary-status-black-women-united-states/>

Full Report  
<https://iwpr.org/publications/status-black-women-united-states-report/>

Persist to Power: Status of Black Women  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxUvHi1TRrA>

National Domestic Workers Alliance  
<https://www.domesticworkers.org/status-black-women-united-states>

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While these disadvantages pose serious threats to economic wellbeing, there are positive trends in union representation, educational attainment, and entrepreneurship that can help to improve Black women's economic security.

- About 12 percent of employed Black women are represented by a union; those who are earn an average of 32 percent more than non-unionized Black women.
- Between 2004 and 2014, the share of Black women with bachelor's degrees increased by 24 percent.
- Among women from the largest racial and ethnic groups, Black women had the greatest increase in the share of businesses owned between 2002 and 2012 (178 percent).

Black women face disproportionate rates of intimate partner and sexual violence – 41 percent compared with 32 percent of all women. The economic disadvantages faced by Black women and girls exacerbate their experiences with intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and stalking. [Lower incomes](#) and pervasive racial stereotypes contribute to the criminalization of Black survivors of intimate partner and sexual violence.

- Evidence suggests that women of color who [defend](#) themselves against an abusive partner are more likely to be interpreted as the aggressor.
- In a New York [study](#) of domestic violence survivors arrested due to an inability to determine the primary aggressor or to compliants filled by the abuser, 43 percent lived in poverty, and 66 percent were Black or Latina.

## Key Recommendations

Addressing gender and racial discrimination and improving access to education, good jobs, and justice is critical to Black women's economic security and safety. The report recommends:

- Holding employers accountable for their obligation to monitor their hiring, compensation, and promotion practices for discrimination;
- Protecting and strengthening workers' collective bargaining rights;
- Protecting and expanding federal aid programs such as Pell Grants;
- Expanding debt-assistance programs that cap federal loan payments at a percentage of graduates' monthly income;
- Continuing to support VAWA and VOCA and other programs that provide essential services and supports for survivors, such as housing, employment, and educational services; and,
- Addressing racism and discrimination, and fostering cultural competency among service providers and justice professionals to ensure that survivors of all races, classes, gender identities, and sexual orientations are not revictimized when accessing services.

To download the executive summary and the full report visit IWPR online at:

<https://iwpr.org/publications/exec-summary-status-black-women-united-states/>

<https://iwpr.org/publications/status-black-women-united-states-report/>.

## Resources:

A Better Balance: Tools and Resources for Paid Sick Time Campaigns  
[www.abetterbalance.org/resources/tools-and-resources-for-paid-sick-time-campaigns/](http://www.abetterbalance.org/resources/tools-and-resources-for-paid-sick-time-campaigns/)

A Better Balance promotes equality and expanding choices for men and women at all income levels so they may care for their families without sacrificing their economic security.

Family Values@Work  
<http://familyvaluesatwork.org/resources-and-toolkit>

Family Values@Work is a national network of 24 state and local coalitions helping spur the growing movement for family-friendly workplace policies such as paid sick days and family leave insurance.

National Partnership for Women and Families  
<http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/work-family/psd/survivors-of-domestic-and-sexual-violence-need-paid-safe-days.pdf/>

National Partnership for Women and Families promotes fairness in the workplace, reproductive health and rights, access to quality, affordable health care, and policies that help women and men meet the dual demands of work and family.

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## Paid Sick and Safe Days

Survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking often need time off from work to seek medical care, obtain a protection order, and find shelter or safe housing to protect themselves and their children from harm. Once safe from immediate threats, survivors may need additional time off to work with victim advocates or participate in the justice system. Analysis of data from the [National Violence Against Women Survey](#) found that victims of intimate partner violence who were stalked lost an average of 10.1 days of paid work per year, those who were raped lost an average of 8.1 days per year, and those who experienced physical violence lost 7.2 days per year. Taking time off is often necessary to achieve safety, yet it can have a significant impact on survivors' economic security. Paid sick and safe laws allow survivors to seek critical services when needed without having to jeopardize their ability to pay bills or their employment.

[San Francisco](#) was the first city to adopt a policy in 2007. Since then [eight states and more than 30 counties and cities](#) have enacted paid sick and safe leave policies. While individual statutes vary, these paid leave laws generally allow eligible employees to accrue time off that can be used to recover from an illness or take care of a sick family member without the loss of income or risk of losing their job. Many statutes include [safe leave provisions](#) for domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking victims to take paid time off to help ensure their safety and well-being. Approved activities may include seeking medical attention for injuries or counseling, obtaining victim and/or legal services, relocating oneself and one's family, and participating in investigations or court proceedings related to abuse.

[Protections for survivors vary](#) by state with some including paid leave for domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking (Arizona, California, District of Columbia, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington) while others only cover domestic and sexual violence (Connecticut) or domestic violence (Massachusetts). Of counties and cities with paid sick and safe leave ordinances, San Diego, San Francisco, Emeryville, and Los Angeles, CA; Chicago/Cook County, IL; Montgomery County, MD; Philadelphia, PA; New Brunswick, NJ; Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN; and Seattle and Spokane, WA, have coverage for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. While Berkeley and Oakland, CA; New Jersey City, Newark, Irvington, Passaic, East Orange, Paterson, Trenton, Montclair, Bloomfield, Elizabeth, Plainfield, and Morristown, NJ; and New York City, have paid sick leave policies they do not include safe time coverage for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

Coverage also often depends on the [size of the employer](#) and [occupation](#), and accrual of paid sick hours often begins at the start of employment. When eligible, employers generally require a certain period of employment prior to accessing paid leave. For survivors protected by these laws, paid leave may mean the difference between risking their income and employment to be safe and maintaining economic independence so that they may be free from abuse in future.

For more information on these statutes and sick and safe leave campaigns, visit [A Better Balance](#), [Family Values@Work](#), or the [National Partnership for Women and Families](#).

## Federal Action on Human Trafficking

On June 12, the House passed [H.R. 2200](#), the Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2017; [H.R. 2480](#), the Empowering Law Enforcement to Fight Sex Trafficking Demand Act; and [H.R. 2664](#), the Enhancing Detection of Human Trafficking Act.

On June 29, the Senate Judiciary Committee approved the Trafficking Victims Protection Act ([S. 1312](#)) to provide technical assistance to help child sex trafficking victims, and the Abolish Human Trafficking Act ([S. 1311](#)) to require restitution for victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

On August 2, the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee passed the No Human Trafficking on Our Roads Act ([S. 1532](#)) to ban human trafficking felons from working commercial vehicles, and the Combatting Human Trafficking in Commercial Vehicles Act ([S. 1536](#)) to improve prevention efforts under the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

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## Policy Update

### Federal Policy Update

On June 15, the Senate passed the [Providing Resources, Officers, and Technology to Eradicate Cyber Threats to Our Children Act of 2017](#).

On August 1, the Senate approved by unanimous consent the Rapid DNA Act ([H.R. 510](#)), which requires the FBI to reduce the current DNA backlog, and passed the [POWER Act](#), which directs each U.S. Attorney to lead at least one public event promoting pro bono legal services for survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

The Senate also passed the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act, [S. 860](#), on August 1. In addition to reauthorizing funding for juvenile justice programs, the bill requires states to “address the needs of girls in or at risk of entering the juvenile justice system, including pregnant girls, young mothers, survivors of commercial sexual exploitation or domestic child sex trafficking, girls with disabilities, and girls of color” and to provide alternative facilities for juveniles forced to engage in commercial sex acts.

### State Policy Update

**California:** The Assembly is currently considering two bills: [A.B. 168](#), which would prohibit employers from seeking salary history information about an applicant, and [A.B. 1209](#), which would require large employers to publicly share the median earnings by gender of salaried employees and board members. Gov. Brown signed [S.B. 204](#) on July 21, authorizing law enforcement to enforce Canadian domestic violence protection orders, and [A.B. 331](#) on August 7, allowing campus-based domestic violence counselors to keep their communications with survivors confidential.

**Colorado:** The [No Bail for Stalking and Domestic Violence Offenders Act](#) went into effect on August 9, amending the list of offenses that automatically result in no bail to include certain forms of stalking and domestic violence.

**Massachusetts:** The legislature’s FY2018 budget expands [Earned Income Tax Credit](#) (EITC) access to domestic violence survivors residing in the state by allowing them to maintain eligibility regardless of filing status.

**New Jersey:** [A.B. 4927](#), passed by the legislature and then conditionally vetoed, would expand paid family leave, including access for care following domestic violence. Christie also vetoed [A.B. 3480](#), which would have banned employers from inquiring about worker’s wage and salary histories. Gov. Christie signed [A.B. 1199](#) on August 7, allowing victims and witnesses in domestic violence and sexual assault cases to testify by closed circuit television in certain circumstances.

**Texas:** Under recently signed [H.B. 214](#), most standard, private insurance plans are prohibited from covering abortions, including cases of rape and incest, and the mother is required to pay an additional premium to obtain coverage.

**Washington:** Governor Inslee signed the [Washington Family Leave Act](#) on July 5, providing eligible employees up to twelve weeks of paid, job-protected leave for qualifying family or medical reasons, or up to sixteen weeks of combined family and medical leave (with an additional two weeks available to mothers who experience pregnancy-related complications). Benefits go into effect January 1, 2020.

## About the ESS Project:

The ESS Project seeks to build, protect, and restore the economic security of survivors of intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and stalking so that they may be safe and free of abuse. We provide community and justice system professionals with strategies, tools, and training to improve how policies and programs respond to the economic consequences of abuse and survivors' economic security.

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## Highlighting Program and Policy Innovations: The Independence Project

Economic abuse is a common obstacle to seeking safety for survivors of domestic violence and has long been used by abusers to gain power and control and to create dependency. [Tactics of economic abuse](#) may include destruction of property, interruption of work and/or school, coercion into crime, and fraud or identity theft, all of which can have [immediate and lasting consequences](#) on survivors' economic security and ability to stay safe. Protecting and restoring survivors' economic security can help present a pathway to long-term independence and safety.

Studies have found between [94](#) and [99](#) percent of domestic violence survivors experience financial abuse. This abuse, combined with today's high cost of living, shortage of good jobs, and diminished safety net, severely limit survivors' ability to achieve safety and justice. To promote survivor economic security and long-term safety, the [criminal justice system](#), victim advocacy programs, and communities must recognize and respond to the economic barriers and costs survivors face. Some domestic violence programs and coalitions provide economic empowerment services such as financial literacy and job readiness workshops, as well as actual [asset building](#) activities including Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) and micro-loans. According to a [2015 annual survey](#) of domestic violence shelters and service providers, nearly 400 of the 1,752 programs surveyed reported financial assistance as a significant unmet need, while nine percent of programs that responded to the survey reported that they provided matched savings and/or microloan programs throughout the year.

In March 2017, the [National Network to End Domestic Violence](#) (NNEDV) in partnership with Verizon and Thirty One Gifts, launched the Independence Project, a credit building program focused on supporting survivors of domestic violence in improving their credit scores through micro-lending. Participating survivors receive a \$100 microloan that is to be repaid over ten months. The expectation is that survivors will use those funds for the sole purpose of repayment. NNEDV monitors repayment and reports to the major credit bureaus. These efforts to [build and repair credit](#) will help improve survivors' access to housing, employment, and loans.

Currently, 10 states are participating and three more are opening for applications soon. To learn more, visit the National Network to End Domestic Violence [online](#) or view the Independence Project [brochure](#).

### New IWPR and ESS Project Resources

[The Economic Cost of Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking](#)

[The Status of Black Women in the United States](#)

[The Economic Impact of Equal Pay by State](#)