



WNY WOMEN'S FOUNDATION

## **Impact of COVID-19 on Women in the Workplace and Child Care**

The COVID-19 pandemic has put unprecedented pressure on parents trying to balance work with child care responsibilities. Additionally, the pandemic has been a continual learning curve for businesses such as child care providers as they struggle to stay afloat through the crisis while providing quality care and ensuring the safety of their employees.

Many of the challenges currently facing women stem from systemic issues that existed long before the pandemic. Through active advocacy, the WNY Women's Foundation is working to ensure that women can continue to make advances in the workplace and the child care industry can return from this pandemic as a stronger workforce support.

Learn more about the WNY Women's Foundation and our work on behalf of women during the pandemic at <https://wnywomensfoundation.org>.

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## Working Mother Demographics

### Federal:

- 71% of mothers with children under 18 work outside the home, while 41% of women with children are the sole or primary breadwinner for their families. (Hinchliffe, 2020)
- Among solo parents, mothers are almost twice as likely as fathers to be living below the poverty line. (30% vs. 17%) (Livingston, 2018)
- 21.5 million workers in the United States have a child under the age of six. (Novoa, 2020)
- Two-thirds of children have all available parents in the workforce. (Novoa, 2020)
- 79% of Black mothers are breadwinners, 56% of whom are single mothers. (Shaw & Mason, 2020)
- 64% Native American women are breadwinners, more than 50% of whom are single mothers. (Shaw & Mason, 2020)
- Just over 40% of White and Asian women are single mother breadwinners. (Shaw & Mason, 2020)
- Among single-parent households with children under 14 years old, 57% have a full-time working parent. (Livingston, Stay-at-home moms and dads account for about one-in-five U.S. parents, 2018)
- 17.5 million workers – 11% of the U.S. workforce – are taking care of young kids on their own and will be unlikely to return to work full-time until schools and daycares fully reopen. (Long, 2020)
- In 2018, 64% of U.S. mothers were a primary or co-breadwinner, earning a substantial portion of their family's income. Black mothers and Hispanic mothers are especially likely to be the primary or co-breadwinner in their families, at 84.3% and 60.9% respectively. (Boesch & Hamm, 2020)
- Using the median hourly wage for single mothers (\$14.95 in 2018) and assuming, as above, that they work on average 35 hours per work, we find that labor market income for single mothers would increase by \$5 billion if child care were available and affordable. (Gould & Blair, 2020)

### New York State:

- In NYS, there are 1,647,611 households with children under 18 years old, of which 54.2% have a breadwinner mother. (Shaw & Mason, 2020)
- In NYS, there are 890,088 White mother households with children under 18 years old, 14.2% are single mother breadwinners. There are 226,250 Black mother households with children under 18 years old, 54.5% are single mother breadwinners. There are 333,182 Hispanic mother households with children under 18 years old, 38.4% are single mother breadwinners. There are 158,127 Asian/Pacific Islander mother households with children under 18 years old, 8.7% are single mother breadwinners. (Shaw & Mason, 2020)

## Gender Disparities During COVID-19

Due to the current pandemic, working from home has forced a change in routine and highlighted gender disparities in caregiving. Additionally, the pandemic has revealed the critical impact of child care availability on workforce participation for women and, following the closure of many child care centers, mothers have disproportionately had their work impacted more than fathers.

- While working from home, fathers have had an average of 5.1 uninterrupted work hours during the day, while mothers are only getting 2.6. (Andrew, et al., 2020)
- Working mothers are being interrupted 57% more during their paid work hours than fathers. (Andrew, et al., 2020)
- Nearly half (47%) of mothers' paid work hours are split between work and other distractions, while only 30% of men's paid work hours are prone to interruption. (Andrew, et al., 2020)
- Mothers are spending 10.3 hours every day looking after their children. This is 2.3 hours more than fathers. (Andrew, et al., 2020)
- Mothers during COVID perform about 60% of childcare: 7.2 hours per week for fathers versus 13.7 hours for mothers. (Ward, 2020)
- 41% of parents said mothers handled the majority of the extra child care work during the pandemic, 15% said fathers took on the majority of caregiving responsibilities. (Mullen, 2020)
- Women spend 37% more time on household and care work than their male counterparts. (Shaw & Mason, 2020)
- Black and Latina women spend nearly twice as much time on unpaid household and care work as their male counterparts. (Shaw & Mason, 2020)
- Women with full-time jobs, a partner, and children report spending a combined 71 hours a week on child care, elder care, and household chores – compared with 51 hours for men. (Lean In, 2020)
- Working mothers are 47% more likely than working dads to have permanently lost their job or quit. (Andrew, et al., 2020)
- A quarter of women are experiencing physical symptoms of severe anxiety, compared with just 11% of men. (Lean In, 2020)
- On average, 14% of women have considered quitting their jobs because of the coronavirus pandemic (Hinchliffe, 2020)
- 26% of Hispanic women who responded to the survey said they were considering quitting their jobs, compared with 15% of both Black and Asian women and 12% of white women. (Hinchliffe, 2020)
- In July 2020, close to 31% of women ages 25 to 44 with children at home were not working because of COVID-19-related child care issues, compared with 11.6% of men. (Heggeness & Fields, 2020)
- Of the more than 1.1 million workers who were forced out of their jobs in September, 865,000 (80.0%) were women, including 324,000 Latinas and 58,000 Black women. (Ewing-Nelson, 2020)

- By October, 32% of employers reported they'd lost employees, and 50% said childcare led to employees' decisions to exit the workforce. (Mullen, 2020)
- Employment levels for single mothers were 22% lower in April 2020 than in April 2019, compared to 9% lower for moms in two-parent homes. (Henderson, 2020)
- 42% of women with children under the age of two have been forced from the workforce during the pandemic. (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2020)
- Women are twice as likely as men to say they left the workforce for caregiving responsibilities due to childcare provider or school closures (16% vs. 8%). (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2020)

## Representation of Women in Essential Fields and Child Care

Women, especially women of color, are disproportionately represented in low-wage jobs, meaning they are less likely to have access to workplace benefits such as paid sick leave. Workers of color, and Latinx workers in particular, have been found to be less likely to have access to paid sick days. (Boesch, Glynn, & Phadke, 2020)

- 78% of all healthcare and social assistance workers are women. (Davis, 2020)
- Of the 3.5 million teachers in the United States, 76% are women (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020)
- Women make up 75% of hospital workers, 93% of child care workers, 90% of people helping in private homes, and two-thirds of cashiers and retail people in grocery stores. (National Women's Law Center, 2020)
- Nearly one-third (30.4%) of Latina workers are in service occupations. (Gould, Perez, & Wilson, 2020)
- Women work two-thirds of minimum wage jobs. (Hinchliffe, 2020)
- The average hourly wage of child care workers is \$10.72 per hour. Such low wages mean that 53% of these workers live in families that utilize public income supports (like the federal Earned Income Tax Credit). (Austin, Edwards, Chávez, & Whitebook, 2019)
- Black early childhood educators still earn an average of \$0.78 less per hour than white early educators, which means \$1,622.40 less per year for a full-time, full-year worker. (Austin, Edwards, Chávez, & Whitebook, 2019)
- 59% of home-based educators live in households with incomes that are less than the national median; for Black educators, this figure is 75%. (Austin, Edwards, Chávez, & Whitebook, 2019)
- Black early educators who work with infants and toddlers earn \$0.77 less per hour on average than other infant-and-toddler teachers; among preschool teachers, this wage gap widens to \$1.71 per hour. (Austin, Edwards, Chávez, & Whitebook, 2019)
- While all teachers experience a “pay bump” for working with older children, the increase for Black educators is smaller than it is for other educators: \$0.96 less per hour on average. (Austin, Edwards, Chávez, & Whitebook, 2019)
- The average hourly pay for a child care worker is \$11. (Malik, 2019)
- 94% of child care workers are women. (Peck, 2020)
- Approximately 50% of child care workers are women of color. (DataUSA, 2018)

## **Child Care Centers as Women-Owned Small Businesses and the Impact of COVID-19**

Child care is an essential workforce support and child care providers have struggled to stay afloat during the pandemic. Child care standards for the safety of children do not permit the social distance guidelines required by a pandemic of this scale, nor the limited capacity requirements. In addition, child care providers have struggled to access appropriate personal protective equipment. The WNY Women's Foundation advocates to help essential child care providers access PPE so that they can stay open safely.

### **Federal:**

- More than 330,000 child care workers lost their jobs in April. (Peck, 2020)
- Without adequate federal support, the coronavirus pandemic could permanently eliminate 4.5 million child care spots -- nearly 50% of US child care capacity, which was already far below our country's needs. (Jessen-Howard & Workman, 2020)
- 1 in 3 jobs in child day care centers went away at the beginning of the pandemic, likely for good. (Malik, 2020)
- In March, 30% of surveyed child care providers said that they would not survive a closure of more than two weeks without significant public investment and support that would allow them to compensate and retain staff, pay rent or mortgages, and cover other fixed costs. 17% would not survive a closure of any amount of time without support. 16% would not survive longer than a month, and 25% did not know. Only 11% felt confident that they could survive a closure of an indeterminate length of time without support. (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2020)
- In March, 49% of surveyed providers reported losing income because of families who cannot pay, another 25% of respondents are losing income because they are reimbursed by the state based on attendance rather than enrollment for the low-income families they serve who receive child care subsidies. (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2020)
- Of childcare providers that remained open in some way, 85% reported that they were operating at less than 50% of their enrollment capacity, and the majority of those--65%--were operating at less than 25% of capacity. (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2020)
- Prior to the pandemic, there were 2.61 children for every child care slot. With the projected losses from COVID-19, there would be 4.16 children for every slot. (Smith, 2020)

### **New York State:**

- Outside of New York City, 28% of child care providers that can serve infants and toddlers have closed, including 22% of family child care providers and 50% of child care centers that can serve infants and toddlers. (The Education Trust - New York, 2020)
- Nearly 9 in 10 open providers that can serve infants and toddlers (88%) have self-reported enrollment between zero and 50% of their capacity. (The Education Trust - New York, 2020)

- New York is projected to lose nearly 180,000 regulated slots. (Nabozny, 2020)

## **Economic Impact on Families in Need of Quality, Affordable Child Care**

The WNY Women's Foundation has advocated for child care subsidy eligibility to be expanded in Erie County to target the growing need for parents to access quality child care during the pandemic, particularly for essential workers. Many parents are currently juggling jobs and child care while child care providers and schools are remote, and determining the added cost of children staying at home.

- Nearly 10% of economic activity won't happen as long as schools and day cares remain closed. (Long, 2020)
- About six in 10 parents say remote learning will negatively affect their finances. (Mullen, 2020)
- 23% of parents expect they'll have limited career opportunities due to a lack of work/life balance, 22% think they will have to cut their hours at work to help a child with remote learning, and 16% said they'll have additional childcare expenses so parents can continue to work. 15% worry they might have to stop working entirely to facilitate remote learning for their child. (Mullen, 2020)
- Two-thirds of parents with children ages 5-10 believe remote learning will negatively affect their financial situation. About 57% of parents with children ages 11-15 and 46% of parents with children ages 16-18 also said this. (Mullen, 2020)
- 54% of parents they've made workplace changes during COVID-19 to afford child care. (Mullen, 2020)
- More than 70% of parents said their job has been affected when child care plans fell through on short notice. (Mullen, 2020)
- About a quarter of people have been paying full tuition for child care throughout the pandemic, another 35% of respondents have been paying partial tuition. (Smith, 2020)
- More than half of parents who rely on family child care providers and child care centers expect to need additional support to help their children return. (Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, 2020)
- Stay-at-home mothers and fathers account for about one-fifth of U.S. parents, meaning 80% of parents are employed either full time or part time. (Livingston, 2018)
- 33.3% of parents are starting work late due to caring for their children, 32.4% are stopping work early, 20.9% are missing a meeting, 12.1% are missing a deadline, 27.9% are missing a full day of work, 29.9% are working late at night, and 34.3% had none of the above impacts. (Horowitz, 2020)
- 13% of U.S. parents had to quit a job or reduce their working hours due to a lack of child care. (Long, 2020)
- Parents were losing an average of eight hours of work a week – the equivalent of a full day – because they had to address their kids' needs. (Long, 2020)
- 20% of employers are currently willing to increase their investment in childcare needs. Additionally, 49% of employers would be likely to provide additional childcare assistance if the government offered supplementary incentives. When asked what types of additional childcare assistance they would be willing to provide, employers cited flexible



working hours (44%) and remote work (36%). (U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2020)

- More than 70% of parents of children under the age of 5 report that their child care provider is closed or operating with limited hours or space. (Kashen, Glynn, & Novello, 2020)
- 33% of the working women 25 to 44 years old who are unemployed said the reason was child care demands. Only 12% of unemployed men cited those demands. (Cohen, 2020)

## Racial Inequity on impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted communities of color and brought forward systemic racial inequities which need to be addressed and actively changed to ensure recovery from this health crisis.

- Majority black counties have three times the rate of infections and nearly six times the rate of deaths as majority white counties, according to the analysis. (Scott, 2020)
- More than one in five Latinx workers lost their jobs between February and April. The beginnings of a recovery in May and June translated into significant job gains for Latinx and white workers alike, but Latinx workers still face a far larger job deficit from February to June than white workers, 9.1 percentage points versus 5.9 percentage points. (Gould, Perez, & Wilson, 2020)
- Nearly half (48.1%) of Latinx workers are in the three occupations with the largest job losses between February and May. This is significantly higher than the concentration of Latinx men working in those occupations (35.9%) and far less than white non-Latinx workers' concentration in these occupations (29.5% for white men and 29.1% for white women). (Gould, Perez, & Wilson, 2020)
- White families hold, on average, more than three times the liquid assets Latinx families do, \$49,529 versus \$15,377. (Gould, Perez, & Wilson, 2020)
- The Latinx poverty rate is 2.2 times the white poverty rate. More than one in six Latinx people in this country live below the poverty line—that's below about \$26,000 annual income for a family of four. (Gould, Perez, & Wilson, 2020)
- 75% of Black and Latina women spend a combined 21-plus hours per week on housework, compared with just over half of white women; they also spend more time on child care and elder care than their white counterparts. (Lean In, 2020)
- As of mid-July, 64% of Latinx adults and 57% of Black adults reported that they or someone in their household lost income from employment due to the coronavirus. (Schmit, Ullrich, & Robbins, 2020)
- A significant share—53% and 42% of Latinx and Black adults, respectively—reported in July that they or someone in their household expects to lose income from employment in the following four weeks. (Schmit, Ullrich, & Robbins, 2020)
- 20% of Latinx households and 24% of Black households with children reported sometimes or often not having enough food in the previous 7 days. (Schmit, Ullrich, & Robbins, 2020)
- During the COVID-19 crisis, rates of food insecurity among Black households with children are nearly twice as high and 60% higher for Hispanic households with children as they are among white households. (Schmit, Ullrich, & Robbins, 2020)
- White women are less likely than women of other ethnicity groups to have left the workplace during the coronavirus pandemic. (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2020)
- About 1 in 9 Black women (11.1%) ages 20 and over were unemployed in September. Black women's unemployment rate was down from 12.0% in August, but still over twice

as high as their pre-pandemic unemployment rate (4.8% in February). (Ewing-Nelson, 2020)

- Nearly 1 in 9 Latinas ages 20 and over (11.0%) were unemployed in September, 18 up from 10.5% in August, and more than double their pre-pandemic unemployment rate (4.9% in February). (Ewing-Nelson, 2020)
- In September, the unemployment rates for Black women and Latinas were more than one and a half times higher than the rate for white men ages 20 and over (6.5%). (Ewing-Nelson, 2020)

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