

ECONOMIC SECURITY STATUS FACT SHEET

[The Rhode Island Women's Well-Being Index](#) provides a comprehensive, composite measure of how women are faring, broken down by city/town and county where such data is available. Based on a similar index created by the [CA Budget & Policy Center](#), the RI Index encompasses five "dimensions"- Health, Personal Safety, Employment & Earnings, Economic Security, and Political Empowerment- each of which is made up of several indicators. Data by race and ethnicity is currently not available. This fact sheet shows the latest statewide data for the Economic Security Status Indicator and ranks cities/towns or counties where possible.

The economic security of women in Rhode Island is critical to our communities' well-being and our state's prosperity. When women are economically secure, their families are financially secure; when families are financially secure, entire communities are secure. Economic security looks beyond employment and earnings to consider the full, multi-dimensional picture of what it means for Rhode Islanders to cover their essential needs sustainably and with dignity. These needs include, among other factors, access to affordable and high-quality housing, food, health care, and childcare.

Summary of Economic Security Indicators on Index	State	National
Percentage of women age 18 and over living in poverty (ACS 2014-2018)	14.3%	15.3%
Percentage of SNAP beneficiaries who are women age 18 and over (2019)	60.3%	63%
Fair market rent as a percentage of single mothers' median income (HUD 2020)	45.1%	35.8%
Percentage of female workers age 16 and over who commute less than 15 minutes to work (ACS 2014-2018)	29.0%	27.9%
Percentage of women age 25 and over with at least a high school diploma (ACS 2014-2018)	88.5%	88.3%

While the Index does not reflect the impacts of the COVID-19 health and economic crisis, the data shows that women's economic hardship was well-rooted before the pandemic. Some of these conditions have worsened as the pandemic has led to severe impacts on food insecurity, historic job losses by women, and childcare shortages, among others. As school and childcare supports have been upended due to the pandemic, mothers, in particular, are taking on an even heavier burden. As a result, [one in three](#) women is considering downshifting their careers or dropping out altogether, according to McKinsey, which may cause even more women and families to fall into poverty. In December of 2020, CNN reported that US employers cut 140,000 jobs in that month alone, with women accounting for all the losses, while men gained 16,000 jobs during the same time. Women are carrying the economic burden of the pandemic.

WOMEN IN POVERTY

Statewide, around 14% of women live in poverty, which is slightly higher than [the national average](#). This rate is doubled in Providence, and in Central Falls, poverty impacts 1 in 3 women.

Percentage of women age 18+, living in poverty as noted in the Census ACS 2014-2018 ranked by city/town, with 1 = Best (least % of women in poverty) and areas in orange being above the state average.

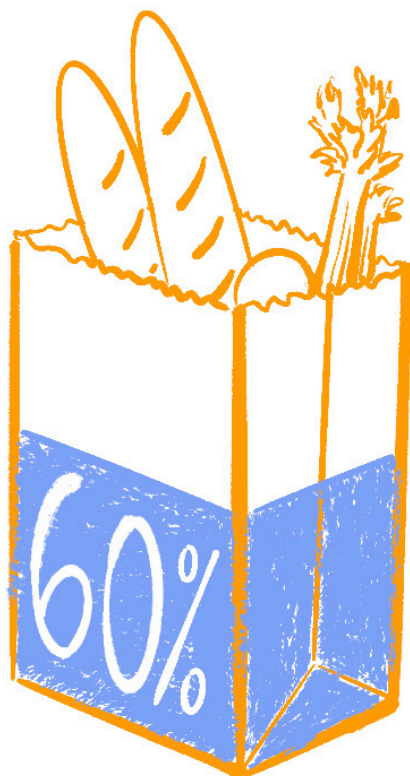


City/Town	Value	Rank
RHODE ISLAND	14%	
Warren	2%	1
South Kingstown	2%	1
Barrington	4%	2
Richmond	4%	2
Jamestown	5%	3
Scituate	5%	3
Newport	5%	3
Exeter	6%	4
Foster	6%	4
Johnston	6%	4
Hopkinton	6%	4
Tiverton	6%	4
Little Compton	7%	5
Glocester	7%	5
West Warwick	7%	5
East Greenwich	7%	5
Portsmouth	8%	6
Cumberland	9%	7
Charlestown	9%	7
Smithfield	9%	7
Bristol	10%	8
Coventry	10%	8
North Smithfield	10%	8
Cranston	10%	8
Middletown	10%	8
Westerly	10%	8
East Providence	11%	9
Lincoln	11%	9
Burrillville	11%	9
Narragansett	13%	10
West Greenwich	13%	10
North Providence	16%	11
Warwick	17%	12
North Kingstown	19%	13
Pawtucket	20%	14
Woonsocket	24%	15
Providence	29%	16
Central Falls	34%	17

FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity remains a challenge for most low-income women (around 60% statewide). This is most acutely felt in Block Island, Newport, North Smithfield, Cumberland, and North Kingstown, where two out of every three women receive SNAP benefits.

Percentage of women 18+ who are food insecure as documented by the proportion of SNAP recipient households headed by women ranked by city/town with 1 = Best (least food insecurity) and areas in orange which are above the state average



60%
OF WOMEN
IN RHODE
ISLAND ARE
**FOOD
INSECURE**

City/Town	Value	Rank
RHODE ISLAND	60%	
Barrington	55%	1
Charlestown	56%	2
Warren	57%	3
Glocester	57%	3
Smithfield	58%	4
Richmond	58%	4
Exeter	58%	4
West Greenwich	58%	4
Jamestown	58%	4
Providence	59%	5
Warwick	59%	5
Woonsocket	59%	5
Little Compton	59%	5
South Kingstown	59%	5
East Greenwich	60%	6
Pawtucket	60%	6
Middletown	60%	6
West Warwick	60%	6
Westerly	60%	6
Scituate	61%	7
Cranston	62%	8
Foster	62%	8
Johnston	62%	8
Central Falls	63%	9
North Providence	63%	9
Bristol	63%	9
Portsmouth	63%	9
East Providence	63%	9
Tiverton	63%	9
Hopkinton	64%	10
Burrillville	64%	10
Lincoln	65%	11
North Kingstown	65%	11
Cumberland	65%	11
North Smithfield	66%	12
Newport	66%	12
Block Island	67%	13

HOUSING

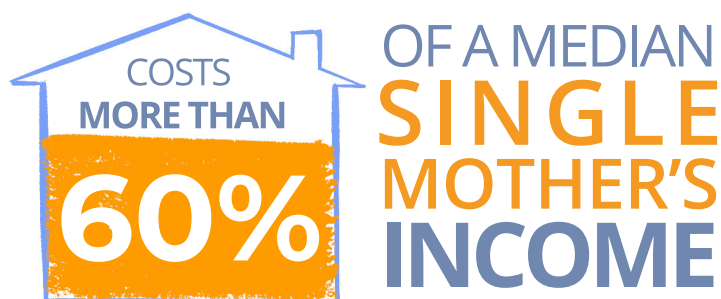
The homeownership rate for single women householders in Rhode Island is the 2nd lowest in the nation. The homeownership rate for households of color in Rhode Island is the lowest among all states. Fifty percent of all Rhode Island renters spend over 30% of their income on housing costs. As a general rule, housing costs should not be more than 30% of your take-home income, according to economists.

Women in Central Falls and Woonsocket are also disproportionately impacted by housing costs. In those cities, fair market rent is more than 60% of single mothers' median income. Housing costs in Burrillville, Pawtucket, Middletown, North Kingstown, and Westerly hover around 50%.

Fair market rent as a percentage of single mothers' median income noted by HUD in 2020, ranked by city/town where 1 = Best and areas in orange are higher than the state average. There is no current data for Glocester, Hopkinton, Jamestown, Little Compton, North Smithfield, Block Island, Portsmouth, or Providence.

City/Town	Value	Rank
RHODE ISLAND	45%	
North Providence	11%	1
Scituate	17%	2
Warren	17%	2
Exeter	18%	3
Foster	18%	3
Barrington	19%	4
East Greenwich	19%	4
Newport	21%	5
South Kingstown	22%	6
Smithfield	23%	7
Block Island	26%	8
Richmond	28%	9
Cranston	30%	10
West Warwick	30%	10
Lincoln	32%	11
Johnston	25%	12
Tiverton	40%	13
Coventry	40%	13
Narragansett	40%	13
Cumberland	40%	13
West Greenwich	41%	14
Warwick	41%	14
East Providence	44%	15
Bristol	44%	15
Charlestown	45%	16
Westerly	49%	17
North Kingstown	49%	17
Middletown	50%	18
Pawtucket	55%	19
Burrillville	59%	20
Woonsocket	61%	21
Central Falls	66%	22

FAIR MARKET VALUE



COMMUTE

Commuting time, which remains a substantial factor in perpetuating poverty, is more than 15 minutes for most women in Rhode Island. A lack of reliable, efficient transportation is often a huge barrier to employment. The longer an average commute in a given area, the worse the chances of low-income families moving up the ladder.

Percentage of female workers aged 16+ who commute less than 15 minutes to work as noted in the Census ACS 2014-2018, ranked by city/town with 1 = Best and areas in orange higher than the state average

City/Town	Value	Rank
RHODE ISLAND	29%	
Block Island	90%	1
North Providence	55%	2
Middletown	52%	3
Bristol	42%	4
Westerly	41%	5
Smithfield	41%	5
East Providence	36%	6
North Kingstown	34%	7
Warwick	33%	8
Woonsocket	33%	8
Providence	32%	9
Scituate	29%	10
Cranston	29%	10
Pawtucket	28%	11
West Greenwich	27%	12
Narragansett	27%	12
West Warwick	27%	12
Lincoln	26%	13
Cumberland	26%	13
Johnston	25%	14
Central Falls	24%	15
North Smithfield	24%	15
East Greenwich	24%	15
Portsmouth	24%	15
Barrington	22%	16
Little Compton	20%	17
Burrillville	20%	17
Charlestown	19%	18
Hopkinton	19%	18
Newport	19%	18
Coventry	18%	19
Tiverton	16%	20
Richmond	16%	20
Jamestown	15%	21
Glocester	14%	22
Warren	12%	23
South Kingstown	10%	24
Exeter	10%	24
Foster	6%	25

EDUCATION

Central Falls scored lowest among cities and towns on educational attainment; 80% or more women in all Rhode Island cities and towns have at least a high school diploma, except for Central Falls, where one in three women do not have a high school diploma.

Percentage of women aged 25+ with at least a high school diploma noted in the Census ACS 2014-2018 ranked by city/town with 1 = Best and areas in orange below the state average.

City/Town	Value	Rank
RHODE ISLAND	89%	
Warren	99%	1
Barrington	98%	2
Jamestown	97%	3
Block Island	97%	3
North Kingstown	97%	3
Richmond	97%	3
Foster	96%	4
Little Compton	96%	4
Hopkinton	96%	4
North Smithfield	96%	4
Glocester	96%	4
Smithfield	96%	4
East Greenwich	96%	4
South Kingstown	95%	5
North Providence	94%	6
Charlestown	94%	6
Scituate	93%	7
Exeter	93%	7
West Warwick	93%	7
Portsmouth	93%	7
Tiverton	92%	8
Middletown	92%	8
Coventry	92%	8
Johnston	92%	8
Westerly	91%	9
Burrillville	91%	9
Newport	91%	9
Cumberland	91%	9
West Greenwich	91%	9
Narragansett	90%	10
Lincoln	90%	10
Warwick	89%	11
Cranston	89%	11
Bristol	87%	12
East Providence	85%	13
Providence	80%	14
Pawtucket	80%	14
Woonsocket	79%	15
Central Falls	65%	16

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthening women's economic security requires programs that help women gain skills for family-supporting jobs, as well as programs that help families close the gap between income and expenses. Doing so will help Rhode Island to create high-quality family care, raise wages, improve labor standards, and address historical and persistent racial and gender inequities. Specific actions include:

- **Increase the benefit amount for families receiving RI Works cash assistance.** The benefit level for cash assistance has not been raised in nearly 30 years, and at \$6 a day per person, it is the lowest in New England. The vast majority of adults enrolled in RI Works are women (87%), and families depend on the program for support and are living in extreme poverty. Rhode Island could use general revenue and more of the TANF federal block grant to increase the benefit amount and invest more employment-readiness service funding. Other reforms to the RI Works program could include expanding the lifetime limit to 60 months and reducing immigrant families'. For more information, see [WFRI's The Uneven Path 2020](#).
- **Invest in programming that supports women's education and job training.** Educational attainment is one of the many factors linked to [increased earnings and economic wellbeing](#). To address the concentration of women in lower-wage positions and strengthen women's financial security, this requires, in part, ensuring women have the education and training necessary to undertake a broader range of high-skill jobs. This could be achieved by:
 - Including woman-dominated sectors in economic development and workforce training strategies (e.g., creating career pathways with stackable credentials).
 - Investing in high-quality educational pathways that are paired with holistic supports, including caregiving, and enhanced flexibility to empower women and mothers facing unemployment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic to access education and training they need to reenter the job market and earn family-sustaining wages.
 - Supporting programming that enables more young women to achieve high school graduation or GED certification and attain a minimum level of training that allows them to enter STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) careers, which are in high demand in RI and can provide higher pay and benefits than typical entry-level jobs. Doing so will also help women to succeed in a globalized, knowledge-based economy.
- **Make childcare a local priority to bolster economic growth.** A robust and equitable childcare system not only benefits children, families, and early educators, it also keeps women in the workforce, increases racial equity, and strengthens the economy

for everyone. Increase the state funding allocation so that all families can find and afford high-quality care in a setting of their choice. Some progress has been made in improving access to and payment for childcare assistance (i.e., Child Care Assistance Program); however, the investment of state dollars has been [virtually frozen for the past ten years](#), with the state appropriating only the bare minimum of general revenue it needs to draw down federal funds.

- **Increase access to affordable housing to advance more holistic security.** Many women-headed households are severely cost-burdened, spending more than half of their income on housing. These households are more likely than other renters to sacrifice other necessities like healthy food and healthcare to pay for rent. Provide funding to immediately increasing the available stock of affordable housing and passing legislation e that protects tenants and supports fair housing practices. We should also push each city and town to offer the federal 10% requirement of affordable housing while taking away the legality of income discrimination.
- **Increase the minimum wage and support equal/fair pay to support poverty reduction and reduce homelessness.** Like all other states in Rhode Island, women experience lower earnings and higher poverty rates than men. Closing the gender wage gap is essential for reducing poverty among women. Evidence suggests that if women received equal pay compared to their male counterparts, poverty for families with a working woman would be [reduced by half](#).
- **Expand eligibility of unemployment insurance** to permanently include previously excluded workers such as self-employed, independent contractors, people with limited work history, and freelancers, as was done in the economic response to the pandemic.
- **Provide access to high-quality or low-cost internet** for students at all educational levels, especially in families where both parents and children need remote learning resources.
- **Make public transportation more accessible with earlier and additional routes and stops.**

RHODE ISLAND WOMEN'S WELL-BEING INDEX
EMPLOYMENT & EARNINGS STATUS FACT SHEET

[The Rhode Island Women's Well-Being Index](#) provides a comprehensive, composite measure of how women are faring, broken down by city/town and county where such data is available. Based on a similar index created by the [CA Budget & Policy Center](#), the RI Index encompasses five "dimensions"- Health, Personal Safety, Employment & Earnings, Economic Security, and Political Empowerment- each of which is made up of several indicators. Data by race and ethnicity is currently not available. This fact sheet shows the latest statewide data for the Employment & Earnings Status Indicator, ranking cities/towns or counties where possible.

Before COVID-19's impact on the economy, women made up half the US labor force and Rhode Island. Women are essential contributors to our economy. Nationally, nearly 2/3 of mothers were breadwinners, either sole (41.4%) or jointly with another parent (22.5%). As women have entered the labor force in increasing numbers over recent decades, their contributions to their families' economic security have grown. They have helped spur greater economic productivity, generating substantial wealth for both the nation and Rhode Island economies.

As our 2020 report "[The Uneven Path](#)" shows, 2 in 5 Rhode Island women work in health care, social assistance, or educational services. 87% of Rhode Island's healthcare workers are women, with women of color accounting for 47% of these workers. Workers employed in service occupations are the most likely to have been unable to work due to the pandemic.

<u>Employment Indicator</u>	<u>State of RI</u>	<u>United States</u>
Female unemployment rate for the civilian population ages 16-64 (2018)	4.1%	4.5%
Labor force participation rate for women ages 16-64 (2018)	76.7%	73.2%
Percentage of women working in low-wage occupations (2012-2016)	64.4%	65.9%
Percentage of women working in managerial and professional occupations (2014-2018)	38.5%	37.9%
Median earnings for women employed FT, year-round in the past 12 months (2018)	\$46,177	\$41,690
The ratio of women's to men's median earnings for FT employees (2018)	84%	80%

UNEMPLOYMENT

COVID-19 created a “she-cession,” which has led to historic job losses by women, further highlighting the need for direct economic support for families that include childcare, housing, and food subsidies. As of January 2021, [COVID-19 unemployment insurance filings total 278,971](#). Persistent and high unemployment will affect women’s economic stability and well-being. Lost jobs and a prolonged departure from the labor force, voluntarily or involuntarily, affects long-term earnings, homeownership, career advancement, and wealth accumulation for women.

An equitable economic recovery and ensures women are included must support and strengthen the care infrastructure (i.e., child care, education, nursing care), provide support for workers’ education and training, and expand paid sick and family leave. A recovery rooted in these priorities will create high-quality jobs, value family care, raise wages, improve labor standards, and address historic and persistent racial and gender inequities.

FEMALE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE
Female unemployment rate for civilian populations ages 16-64 (2018) by county rank (1 = Best; Orange is above state average)

	Value	Rank
RHODE ISLAND	4.1%	
Bristol	3%	1
Newport	4%	2
Kent	4%	2
Washington	5%	3
Providence	6%	4

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION (2018)
Labor force participation rate for women ages 16-64 by county rank (1 = Best; Orange is below state average)

	Value	Rank
RHODE ISLAND	76.7%	
Washington	80%	1
Bristol	80%	2
Kent	79%	3
Newport	79%	3
Providence	75%	4

LOW WAGE OCCUPATIONS

Women make up 51% of the RI workforce, yet nearly 6 in 10 workers earning the minimum wage are women. A typical minimum-wage worker is a woman over 35 with some college, working full time, and likely to be a parent. Often, these jobs do not include meaningful paid medical and family leave. Women make up the vast majority of the workforce in the caregiving and childcare industries, yet, for the most part, jobs in these sectors do not pay family-sustaining wages. The pandemic has directly and negatively impacted these industries. The Economic Progress Institute of Rhode Island estimates that nearly 2 in 5 working women would benefit from raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, increasing the wages of 96,700 women.

Percentage of women working in low-wage occupations from 2012-2016 by town/city rank (1=Best; Orange means more women are working in low wage jobs than the state average)

City/Town	Value	Rank
RHODE ISLAND	64.4%	
Jamestown	41%	1
Scituate	43%	2
Portsmouth	44%	3
Central Falls	47%	4
Glocester	50%	5
Middletown	50%	5
Cranston	50%	5
Warren	51%	6
North Kingstown	52%	7
Exeter	52%	7
West Warwick	52%	7
Hopkinton	52%	7
Warwick	53%	8
Warwick	53%	8
Barrington	53%	8
Smithfield	55%	9
Johnston	55%	9
North Providence	56%	10
Bristol	56%	10
Charlestown	56%	10
East Greenwich	56%	10
Little Compton	56%	10
Providence	57%	11
Tiverton	57%	11
Cumberland	57%	11
East Providence	57%	11
Pawtucket	57%	11
Narragansett	58%	12
Lincoln	58%	12
West Greenwich	59%	13
South Kingstown	59%	13
Westerly	60%	14
Burrillville	60%	14
Coventry	60%	14
Foster	61%	15
Richmond	62%	16
Newport	62%	16
Woonsocket	63%	17
North Smithfield	63%	17
Block Island	67%	18

MANAGERIAL & PROFESSIONAL OCCUPATIONS

According to [research by McKinsey & Company](#), women are significantly under-represented in corporate pipelines. Only 1 in 5 C-suite leaders are women, and fewer than 1 in 30 are women of color. Fewer women than men are hired at entry-level, despite women being 57% of recent college graduates. At every subsequent step in the corporate ladder, female representation declines, particularly for women of color. Common barriers to advancing women in leadership include unsupportive work culture (including flex-scheduling), organizational bias, and conflicts with caring for a family.

Percentage of women working in managerial and professional occupations from 2014-2018 ranked by city/town with 1=Best; Orange is below state average

City/Town	Value	Rank
RHODE ISLAND	38.5%	
Burrillville	61%	1
Johnston	60%	2
Glocester	60%	2
Smithfield	59%	3
Warren	59%	3
Foster	59%	3
West Warwick	58%	4
Tiverton	58%	4
Central Falls	58%	4
North Smithfield	57%	5
Charlestown	56%	6
Warwick	56%	6
Cumberland	56%	6
Exeter	56%	6
Middletown	56%	6
Scituate	56%	6
Westerly	55%	7
East Providence	55%	7
Coventry	54%	8
Pawtucket	54%	8
West Greenwich	54%	8
North Providence	54%	8
Newport	53%	9
Block Island	53%	9
Cranston	53%	9
Bristol	52%	10
Providence	52%	10
Woonsocket	51%	11
South Kingstown	51%	11
Lincoln	51%	11
Narragansett	51%	11
North Kingstown	51%	11
Jamestown	50%	12
Portsmouth	50%	12
Richmond	49%	13
Hopkinton	49%	13
East Greenwich	49%	13
Barrington	48%	14
Little Compton	26%	15

MEDIAN EARNINGS

Median earnings for women employed full-time, year-round in 2018, ranked by city/town with 1=Best; Orange is below the state average.

City/Town	Value	Rank
RHODE ISLAND	\$46,177	
Barrington	\$75,035	1
East Greenwich	\$72,452	2
Jamestown	\$72,297	3
North Kingstown	\$62,583	4
Exeter	\$60,258	5
Portsmouth	\$60,170	6
Narragansett	\$59,494	7
Scituate	\$56,131	8
North Smithfield	\$55,520	9
Cumberland	\$55,407	10
West Greenwich	\$54,774	11
Smithfield	\$54,625	12
Glocester	\$54,435	13
South Kingstown	\$54,170	14
Lincoln	\$53,333	15
Hopkinton	\$52,791	16
Bristol	\$51,725	17
Bristol	\$51,725	18
Warwick	\$50,757	19
Tiverton	\$50,705	20
Little Compton	\$49,668	21
Cranston	\$48,461	22
Westerly	\$48,561	23
Richmond	\$47,373	24
Newport	\$47,281	25
Warren	\$47,239	26
North Providence	\$46,599	27
Burrillville	\$45,716	28
East Providence	\$44,802	29
Coventry	\$44,725	30
Johnston	\$44,165	31
Charlestown	\$43,843	32
West Warwick	\$42,319	33
Block Island	\$42,143	34
Middletown	\$41,186	35
Foster	\$40,455	36
Pawtucket	\$38,370	37
Providence	\$37,435	38
Woonsocket	\$36,332	39
Central Falls	\$27,326	40

WAGE/WEALTH GAP

The gender wage gap compounds women’s economic insecurity during times of downturn. The average for all women in RI in 2018 was \$.84 compared to a white man’s \$1, and that number dropped significantly when race/ethnicity are considered. Factoring in race/ethnicity highlights profound disparities in women’s earnings compared to the earnings of white men, disparities which grow over a lifetime. Raising wages to match those of comparable men would have a dramatic impact on families.

Unfortunately, new studies indicate the COVID-19 pandemic is reversing some of the progress made in recent years to close the gender wage gap. As of July 2020, nearly one in three mothers aged 25-44, and one in eight fathers of the same age, were not working due to child care issues. Workers in low-paid “front-line” and essential jobs, disproportionately women of color, are doubly impacted, facing higher rates of infection and death in part due to workplace exposure, and typically less likely to have paid leave or the ability to work remotely. Based on this information, we expect to see the gender wage/wealth gap widen over the next few years.

The ratio of women’s to men’s median earnings for individuals employed full-time, year-round in 2018, ranked by city/town, with 1= Best and Orange indicating where the ratio is below the state average (where there is more income disparity between earners).

City/Town	Value	Rank
RHODE ISLAND	84%	
Exeter	102%	1
Central Falls	94%	2
Pawtucket	90%	3
Warwick	90%	3
Hopkinton	89%	4
Bristol	89%	4
Providence	88%	5
Westerly	88%	5
Cranston	88%	5
Scituate	87%	6
Glocester	87%	6
East Providence	86%	7
East Providence	86%	7
Burrillville	84%	8
Warren	84%	8
North Smithfield	84%	8
Cumberland	83%	9
Tiverton	83%	9
North Kingstown	83%	9
Charlestown	81%	10
West Warwick	81%	10
West Greenwich	80%	11
Newport	79%	12
North Providence	79%	12
Smithfield	78%	13
South Kingstown	78%	13
Woonsocket	77%	14
Richmond	77%	14
Johnston	76%	15
Barrington	74%	16
Portsmouth	73%	17
Narragansett	72%	18
Coventry	71%	19
Jamestown	71%	19
East Greenwich	71%	19
Middletown	65%	20
Block Island	62%	21
Little Compton	57%	22
Foster	57%	22

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Increase the minimum wage and support equal/fair pay to support poverty reduction.** Like all other states, Rhode Island women experience lower earnings and higher poverty rates than men. Closing the gender wage gap is essential for reducing poverty among women. Evidence suggests that if women received equal pay compared to their male counterparts, poverty for families with a working woman would be [reduced by half](#).
- **Invest in programming that supports women's education and job training.** Educational attainment is one of the many factors linked to [increased earnings and economic well-being](#). To address the concentration of women in lower-wage positions and strengthen women's financial security, this requires, in part, ensuring women have the education and training necessary to undertake a broader range of high skill jobs. Improvements could be achieved by:
 - Increasing provider reimbursement rates and including woman-dominated sectors in economic development and workforce training strategies (e.g., creating career pathways with stackable credentials).
 - Enhancing community colleges' funding and bringing a gender lens to community college institutions and programs to generate the culture, programs, and support needed for women to thrive.
 - Investing in high-quality educational pathways paired with holistic supports, including caregiving, and enhanced flexibility to empower women and mothers facing unemployment as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic to access education and training they need to reenter the job market and earn family-sustaining wages.
 - Supporting programming enables more young women to achieve high school graduation or GED certification and attain a minimum level of training that allows them to enter STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) careers. These careers are in high demand in RI and can provide higher pay and benefits than typical entry-level jobs. Doing so will also help women to succeed in a globalized, knowledge-based economy.
- **Make childcare a local priority to bolster economic growth.** A robust and equitable childcare system not only benefits children, families, and early educators, it also keeps women in the workforce, increases racial equity, and strengthens the economy for everyone. Provide funding so that all families can find and afford high-quality care in a setting of their choice. Some progress has been made in improving access to and payment for childcare assistance (i.e., Child Care Assistance Program); however, the investment of state dollars has been [virtually frozen for the past ten years](#), with the state appropriating only the bare minimum of general revenue it needs to draw down federal funds.
- **Raise wages for caregivers** to ensure they make at least a living wage, particularly for the direct care workforce, with 88% of its workforce being women and child care providers represented nearly 100% by women.
- **Improve paid family and medical leave wage policies** to ensure that even our lowest-paid employees can take paid time off to care for themselves and loved ones without putting their jobs or their ability to pay for basic needs in jeopardy.

RHODE ISLAND WOMEN'S WELL-BEING INDEX HEALTH STATUS FACT SHEET

[The Rhode Island Women's Well-Being Index](#) provides a comprehensive, composite measure of how women are faring, broken down by city/town and county where such data is available. The Index is based on a similar index created by the [CA Budget & Policy Center](#). The RI Index encompasses five "dimensions"- Health, Personal Safety, Employment & Earnings, Economic Security, and Political Empowerment- each of which is made up of several indicators. Data by race and ethnicity is currently not available. This fact sheet shows statewide data for the Health Status Indicator, ranking cities/towns where possible. The main chart shows the source of the data.

HEALTH INDICATORS ON INDEX

	State	National
Percentage of women age 18 and over who report being in fair or poor health (RI Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 2018)	17.1%	13.4%
Percentage of women age 18 and over who are obese (RI Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 2018)	27.0%	41.0%
Percentage of women ages 18-64 without health insurance (ACS 2014-2018)	3.4%	13.1%
Percentage of women with delayed prenatal care (RI Kids Count 2020)	15.9%	25.0%
Percentage of women age 18 and over who likely have experienced severe psychological distress in the past year (RI Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 2018)	13.8%	3.9%

HEALTH INSURANCE

The state average for the % of women ages 18-64 without health insurance is 3.4%, compared to the national average of 13.1%. The primary reasons for not having health insurance is the high cost of employer-sponsored coverage and ineligibility for Medicaid, which may be due to lack of required immigration status or the income line. Significantly more women (77%) than men make up the population of parents enrolled in Medicaid/Rite Care, and women represent over two-thirds (68%) of the seniors enrolled in Medicaid coverage.

Under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), most private plans and Medicaid expansion plans cover a wide range of preventative services without cost-sharing. The Medicaid expansion results in better economic outcomes, both for the individual and the community. Having a health insurance card allows for more healthcare access than if a person is uninsured, but having a health insurance card does not guarantee access to healthcare or access to culturally appropriate services.

Telemedicine removes many barriers to care for those who can access it through their phones, smart devices, or personal computers and for those who may have trouble scheduling time out of work, childcare, or transportation. It also reduces exposure to pathogens for both patients and care providers. In March of 2020, Governor Raimondo issued an executive order expanding access to telemedicine, thereby compelling insurance carriers to establish reasonable requirements for coverage of these services.

Below is the ranking by city/town of the % of women without health insurance with 1= Best; rows in orange are above the state average (and thus have a lower % of coverage).

City/Town	Value	Rank
RHODE ISLAND	17%	
Scituate	1%	1
Tiverton	1%	1
East Greenwich	1.1%	2
Barrington	1.2%	3
Johnston	1.2%	3
North Kingstown	1.3%	4
Smithfield	1.3%	4
Narragansett	1.4%	5
Richmond	1.6%	6
Portsmouth	1.8%	7
Glocester	1.9%	8
Warren	2.2%	9
Coventry	2.4%	10
Cumberland	2.7%	11
N. Providence	2.7%	11
W. Greenwich	2.7%	11
W. Warwick	2.7%	11
Hopkinton	2.8%	12
Little Compton	2.8%	12
Charlestown	2.9%	13
N. Smithfield	2.9%	13
Bristol	3%	14
S. Kingstown	3%	14
Lincoln	3.1%	15
Warwick	3.1%	15
Burrillville	3.3%	16
Jamestown	3.6%	17
Cranston	3.8%	18
Foster	3.9%	19
E. Providence	4.2%	20
Block Island/New Shoreham	4.8%	21
Exeter	5.1%	22
Pawtucket	5.1%	22
Middletown	5.5%	23
Westerly	5.7%	24
Woonsocket	6.1%	25
Providence	6.9%	26
Newport	8.2%	27
Central Falls	15.8%	28

PRENATAL CARE

The state average for the % of women with delayed prenatal care in Rhode Island is 15.9%. Reasons women may not receive adequate care include affordable and convenient access, cultural attitudes, and unintended pregnancies. Long-standing disparities persist in maternal and child health. According to national measures, RI is in the top 25% of the nation for timely prenatal care that the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) releases each year.

We must address unacceptable racial and ethnic disparities. Whites and Asians have better maternal and child health outcomes than other racial/ethnic groups in the state. A higher percentage of non-white women receive delayed prenatal care than white women and the state as a whole. For example, [Black women are 2.6 times more likely to die](#) due to a pregnancy-related cause than white women, perhaps due to racial bias within the medical system.

Below is the ranking of the % of women who do not receive adequate prenatal care by city/town with 1= Best. Items in orange are areas below the state average.

City/Town	Value	Rank
RHODE ISLAND	15.9%	
Hopkinton	7.7%	1
Charlestown	9.1%	2
Exeter	9.2%	3
Westerly	9.4%	4
East Greenwich	10.7%	5
Jamestown	11.2%	6
Burrillville	11.5%	7
South Kingstown	11.7%	8
Narragansett	11.8%	9
Coventry	11.9%	10
Portsmouth	11.9%	10
North Kingstown	12.1%	11
Cumberland	12.2%	12
Warwick	12.2%	12
Johnston	13.2%	13
Middletown	13.2%	13
Warren	13.2%	13
North Smithfield	13.6%	14
Smithfield	13.6%	14
West Warwick	13.6%	14
West Greenwich	13.9%	15
Glocester	14%	16
Barrington	14.2%	17
Bristol	14.2%	17
Foster	14.5%	18
East Providence	14.6%	19
Lincoln	14.6%	19
North Providence	14.7%	20
Cranston	15%	21
Richmond	15.3%	22
Tiverton	15.5%	23
Newport	15.6%	24
Scituate	16%	25
Pawtucket	19%	26
Little Compton	19.7%	27
Central Falls	19.8%	28
Providence	19.8%	28
Woonsocket	20.7%	29

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings from this report and other local briefs highlight Rhode Island's need to increase funding, enact policies to improve women's health indicators, and address gender and racial disparities. These include:

- Require Medicaid and private insurance coverage for continuous, one-to-one, emotional, and physical support to pregnant persons by a trained, culturally competent, registered prenatal doula.
- Codify the ACA ban on gender rating through insurance companies to set premium levels into Rhode Island statute.
- Codify ACA Consumer Protections including Essential Health Benefits into Rhode Island statute
- Make permanent the emergency regulatory changes enacted in 2020 by Governor Raimondo, allowing Telemedicine to protect and expand access to health care.
- Mandate coverage of all FDA-approved forms of contraception without patient cost-sharing, as is currently the law under the Affordable Care Act. Apply over-the-counter birth control when accompanied by a prescription.
- Ensure equitable access to abortion services by removing the ban on coverage in the state's Medicaid and employee health insurance programs.

RHODE ISLAND WOMEN'S WELL-BEING INDEX PERSONAL SAFETY STATUS FACT SHEET

[The Rhode Island Women's Well-Being Index](#) provides a comprehensive, composite measure of how women are faring, broken down by city/town and county where such data is available. The Index is based on a similar index created by the [CA Budget & Policy Center](#). The RI Index encompasses five "dimensions"- Health, Personal Safety, Employment & Earnings, Economic Security, and Political Empowerment- each of which is made up of several indicators. Data by race and ethnicity is currently not available. This fact sheet shows statewide data for the Personal Safety Status Indicator, ranking cities/towns or counties where possible.

Safety is one of the most critical basic needs of women. The Women's Fund of Rhode Island (WFRI) believes every woman deserves to feel safe in her home and community. While the impacts of many of the forms of violence included in this section are horrifying and life-altering, prevention is possible. This area's recommendations take steps towards preventing violence through economic justice, education, and further research.

Personal Safety Indicator	State	National
Average annual fatal accidents per 100,000 women	22	Unknown
Average annual hospital encounters due to assault per 100,000 women	278	381
Average annual domestic violence calls for assistance per 100,000	11	48
Average annual sexual assaults per 100,000 females	25	44
Average annual number of suicides per 100,000 women	5	8

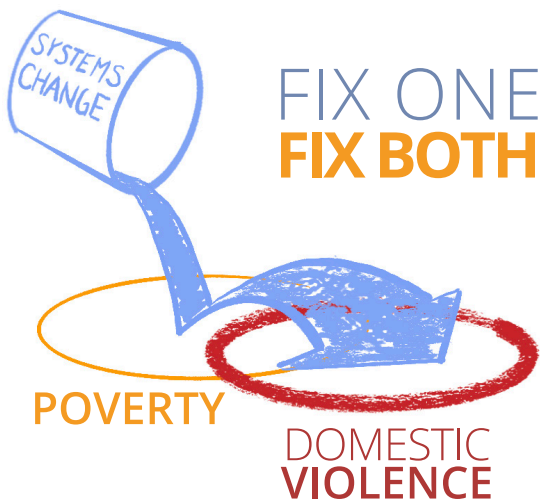
Average Annual Fatal Accidents per 100,000 Women;
1= Best; Orange is worse than state average

County	County Average	Rank
RHODE ISLAND	22	
Bristol	17	1
Newport	19	2
Washington	22	3
Providence	22	3
Kent	27	4

ASSAULTS

Assault refers to any attempt to cause bodily harm to another person. In Rhode Island, the legal definition for assault ranges from simple assault to the most severe: felony assault (which would include the use of a weapon, fire, or acid, or is severe enough to impair bodily function post-injury). Roughly 1 in 370 Rhode Island women visited an emergency room with injuries from being assaulted in 2019.

Average Annual Hospital Encounters Due to Assault Per 100,000 Women ranked from best to worst; Orange is worse than state average.



City/Town	Value	Rank
RHODE ISLAND	278	
Bristol	88	1
Exeter	92	2
Cumberland	104	3
Portsmouth	104	3
North Smithfield	106	4
Tiverton	107	5
Smithfield	120	6
West Greenwich	121	7
Lincoln	128	8
Narragansett	135	9
Jamestown	145	10
Barrington	156	11
Glocester	161	12
Newport	164	13
Scituate	170	14
East Greenwich	175	15
Hopkinton	189	16
Johnston	195	17
Warwick	205	18
Burrillville	217	19
Little Compton	223	20
North Kingstown	223	20
Middletown	241	21
Charlestown	242	22
Coventry	245	23
East Providence	252	24
Richmond	265	25
Westerly	269	26
Warren	293	27
Cranston	311	28
West Warwick	319	29
North Providence	322	30
Pawtucket	483	31
Providence	714	32
Central Falls	726	33
Woonsocket	778	34
Block Island	891	35

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence refers to engaging in any sexual act without the other person's consent (s) involved. The CDC estimates that in Rhode Island, 30.6% of women and 13.2% of men will experience sexual violence in their lifetime.

Roughly 1 in 4,000 women reported being sexually assaulted in 2019, but we acknowledge this statistic only accounts for women that formally reported their assault. Historically, sexual violence is underreported because of feelings of shame or embarrassment, fear of the offender's response, and the long, slow criminal justice process that rarely produces satisfactory outcomes for survivors. Projects like the Women's Well-Being Index rely on data generated by reports to law enforcement or victim service agencies, and, thus, our understanding of how many Rhode Islanders experience sexual violence is limited.

The CDC has identified "teaching skills" through school-aged youth's education as a critical component of sexual violence prevention. Legislation in Rhode Island passed increased the availability of consent-based sexual and dating violence prevention education. However, [oversight and coordination for these educational initiatives are required for consistent implementation](#).

Average Sexual Assault per 100,000 Females by County

(1= Best; Orange is worse than state average)

	County Value	County Rank
Washington	9	1
Kent	9	1
Bristol	10	2
Providence	36	3
Newport	124	4

SUICIDE

Average annual number of suicides per 100,000 women ranked by county (1= Best; Orange is worse than the state average)

	County Value	County Rank
Washington	4	1
Providence	5	2
Kent	6	3
Newport	7	4
Bristol	Unknown	Unknown

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

According to the RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence, domestic violence is defined by a pattern of abusive behaviors used to establish power and control over another person include physical, sexual, emotional, financial, and psychological abuse.

Domestic violence is often underreported because of the social isolation abusive relationships create, victims' fears of retaliation, and our criminal justice system that is not consistently victim-centered or trauma-informed. Projects like the Women's Well-Being Index rely on data generated by reports to law enforcement or victim service agencies, and, thus, our understanding of how many Rhode Islanders experience domestic violence is limited.

The data map on domestic violence occurrences in Rhode Island closely correlates with poverty statistics throughout the state. Considering that domestic violence is a crime of power and control, policy interventions should be rooted in economic justice that liberates women from dangerous situations at home. Because poverty is also a risk factor associated with the perpetration of domestic violence, policies that aim to reduce wealth inequality can impact domestic violence incidence overall.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Protect patient privacy by ensuring that confidential health care information is not shared with anyone other than the patient (Explanation of Benefits Reform).
- Mandate improved sexual-education curriculum on consent and safe relationships in Rhode Island schools.
- Public health research has identified correlations between alcohol outlet density and violence rates, even when controlling for other factors like race, community resources, and drug arrests. While the Women's Well-Being Index has been able to identify which communities experience higher rates of assaults on female-identifying victims, we do not have statewide or local data to compare related to alcohol outlet density. Data on local ordinances, several outlets, zoning laws, etc., could help identify local policies that could impact the most affected communities.
- Appoint school district coordinators with a background of collaborating with community-based organizations addressing domestic/sexual violence to implement the Lindsay Ann Burke Act and oversee dating violence education. These coordinators would be charged with assessing a district's needs. They would help establish and troubleshoot an appropriate model, provide training to educators on policy, facilitate training on the selected model to educators, and provide supervision and support to educators on implementing the curriculum, potentially including co-facilitation appropriate and necessary.
- Provide domestic violence victim relocation assistance in accordance with their needs
- Jobs which pay a living wage go a long way towards helping individuals to achieve economic independence, often a challenge for those who are trying to escape domestic violence situations.

POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT STATUS FACT SHEET

[The Rhode Island Women's Well-Being Index](#) provides a comprehensive, composite measure of how women are faring, broken down by city/town and county where such data is available. Based on a similar index created by the [CA Budget & Policy Center](#), the RI Index encompasses five "dimensions"- Health, Personal Safety, Employment & Earnings, Economic Security, and Political Empowerment - each of which is made up of several indicators. Data by race and ethnicity is currently not available. This fact sheet shows the latest statewide data for the Political Empowerment Status Indicator, ranking cities/towns or counties where possible. All of the data is from 2020.

Due to their distinct role in their families and communities, women bring a unique and valuable perspective to policymaking and the political process. By casting a vote or holding public office, women can voice their priorities and concerns across various issues and challenges. These include securing affordable childcare or quality education for their children, keeping their families healthy and safe, and earning a fair income sufficient to make ends meet and help their families thrive. When women engage in the political process, it increases the chances that issues typically of concern to women come to the forefront during electoral, legislative, and budget deliberations.

Although women make up more than half of the U.S. population, they are not proportionately represented at the decision-making tables in business and government, where priorities are set, and resources are allocated that affect all of our lives. In 2021, women hold 23.7% of U.S. Congressional seats and 30.3% of statewide elective executive offices. Even in Rhode Island, where we have a record 45.1% of women in our state legislature, we still have a way to go before achieving equity in office, including the representation that reflects our community's diversity. Our goal should always be to achieve gender and racial equity for all elected and appointed positions within our state.

Political Empowerment Indicator	State	National
Percentage of women who voted in the 2020 general election	50.8%	58.5%
Percentage of city council members for incorporated cities in the county who are women	33.2%	53.0%
Percentage of appointed state judges who are women	30.5%	34.0%
Percentage of state legislators for the county who are women	34.7%	24.9%

VOTING

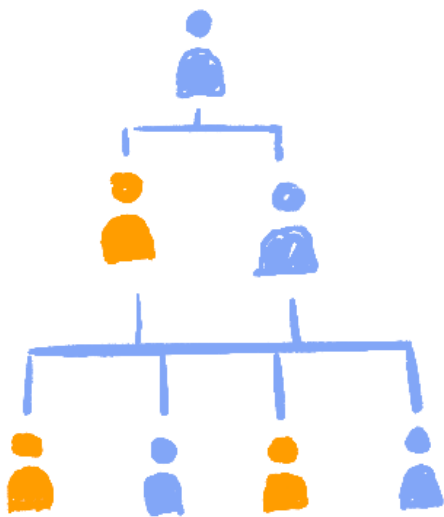
The right to vote is the cornerstone of representative democracy and, therefore, an equitable society.

Percentage of women who voted in the 2020 general election ranked by city/town, with 1 = Best and areas in orange below the state average.

City/Town	Value	Rank
RHODE ISLAND	51%	
Cranston	51%	1
North Smithfield	50%	2
Newport	50%	2
Pawtucket	49%	3
Smithfield	48%	4
Richmond	47%	5
Johnston	47%	5
Woonsocket	46%	6
Warwick	46%	6
Warwick	46%	6
Warren	46%	6
Cumberland	44%	7
East Providence	44%	7
Lincoln	43%	8
East Greenwich	43%	8
Providence	42%	9
Exeter	42%	9
Middletown	41%	10
Coventry	40%	11
North Kingstown	40%	11
Jamestown	40%	11
West Warwick	40%	11
Portsmouth	40%	11
Barrington	40%	11
North Providence	39%	12
Westerly	38%	13
South Kingstown	38%	13
West Greenwich	37%	14
Central Falls	35%	15
Glocester	34%	16
Hopkinton	34%	16
Tiverton	34%	16
Scituate	34%	16
Charlestown	33%	17
Narragansett	33%	17
Bristol	32%	18
Block Island	32%	18
Foster	31%	19
Little Compton	30%	20
Burrillville	30%	20

CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Percentage of city council members for incorporated cities in the county who are women ranked by city/town with 1 = Best and areas in orange below the state average.



City/Town	Value	Rank
RHODE ISLAND	33%	
Newport	89%	1
Charlestown	80%	2
Coventry	60%	3
Hopkinton	60%	3
North Kingstown	60%	3
Smithfield	60%	3
Tiverton	60%	3
Providence	53%	4
Middletown	43%	5
Westerly	43%	5
Barrington	40%	6
East Greenwich	40%	6
Foster	40%	6
Jamestown	40%	6
North Smithfield	40%	6
Central Falls	29%	7
Portsmouth	29%	7
Scituate	29%	7
Cumberland	25%	8
Pawtucket	22%	9
Bristol	20%	10
East Providence	20%	10
Glocester	20%	10
Johnston	20%	10
Lincoln	20%	10
Narragansett	20%	10
Block Island	20%	10
Richmond	20%	10
South Kingstown	20%	10
West Greenwich	20%	10
West Warwick	20%	10
Warren	20%	10
Burrillville	14%	11
Warwick	14%	11
Woonsocket	14%	11
Cranston	11%	12

APPOINTED STATE JUDGES

Women judges bring their lived experience of complex family relationships and obligations to their actions. They tend to have a more comprehensive and empathetic perspective, not only on the legal basis for action but also on the people's consequences. Women judges bring a gender lens to their lived experiences in a highly male-dominated profession. Getting a more comprehensive and empathetic perspective to the bench, women judges provide a more holistic approach to our justice administration.

In terms of representation at all levels of the judiciary and on policy-making judicial councils, achieving equality for women judges should be our goal. The entry of women judges into spaces from which they have been historically excluded will help our judiciary be more transparent, inclusive, and representative of the people whose lives they impact.

Percentage of appointed state judges are women ranked by city/town with 1=Best and areas in orange that are lower than the state average.

City/Town	Value	Rank
RHODE ISLAND	31%	
Foster	100%	1
Glocester	100%	1
Hopkinton	100%	1
North Providence	100%	1
Richmond	100%	1
Pawtucket	67%	2
Charlestown	50%	3
Coventry	50%	3
Jamestown	50%	3
Johnston	50%	3
Providence	41%	4
Bristol	33%	5
North Kingstown	33%	5
Narragansett	33%	5
Cranston	23%	5
Barrington	0%	6
Burrillville	0%	6
Central Falls	0%	6
Cumberland	0%	6
East Greenwich	0%	6
Exeter	0%	6
Lincoln	0%	6
Middletown	0%	6
North Smithfield	0%	6
Newport	0%	6
Portsmouth	0%	6
South Kingstown	0%	6
Scituate	0%	6
Smithfield	0%	6
Tiverton	0%	6
West Greenwich	0%	6
West Warwick	0%	6
Warren	0%	6
Westerly	0%	6
Woonsocket	0%	6
Block Island	0%	6

STATE LEGISLATORS

Percentage of state legislators who are women ranked by county with 1=Best and areas in orange below the state average.

County	Value	Rank
RHODE ISLAND	35%	
Bristol	67%	1
Newport	50%	2
Kent	40%	3
Washington	39%	4
Providence	24%	5

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Although not included in this index at this time, an ongoing study managed by the Latino Policy Institute in coordination with Roger Williams University students indicates a lack of gender and racial diversity amongst boards and commissions throughout the State of Rhode Island and its cities and towns. These organizations provide direction and recommendations to local government and are meant to be reflective of the community's voice. It is often unclear what openings are available on boards and commissions and what the process is to apply for those openings.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Make permanent the temporary changes to Rhode Island's voting laws that were enacted during the 2020 pandemic, including:
 - requiring the Secretary of State to send a mail ballot application to every registered voter in Rhode Island;
 - waiving the requirement for a voter casting a mail ballot to obtain the signature of two witnesses or one notary public;
 - requiring drop boxes placed in all communities where voters can safely and securely deposit their mail ballots and provide 20 days of early voting for voters to vote in-person, but not on election day.
- Make childcare an allowable campaign expense for candidates for office.
- Provide childcare at the polls while parents are waiting in line to vote.
- Mandate the slate for candidates for appointed positions should reflect the state's racial and gender diversity before any appointments are made.
- Mandate transparency in the board and commission appointment process at the state and local levels, so it is clear when openings are available and what the application process is. Information should be easily available and public.