

# THE REPORT ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN CALIFORNIA™

2023



## **Advancing Equity:** Leading With Meaning and Purpose

CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

 Mount Saint Mary's University  
LOS ANGELES

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# An Introduction From the President



Over the past few years, we have lived through a pandemic that has claimed more than 100,000 lives in California alone<sup>1</sup> and affected survivors physically, emotionally, and financially. We have reckoned with systemic racism and violence against our Black, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Jewish, and LGBTQIA+ siblings, among others. We have witnessed assaults on our very democracy and a political polarization that too often prevents us from seeing the humanity in each other.

Amidst all this turbulence and trauma, it is no wonder so many women are reassessing their priorities and seeking out new paths. Nationwide, nearly 2 in 3 employees say the pandemic pushed them to reflect on their purpose in life.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the pandemic-era “Great Resignation” continued in 2022, as 46.6 million Americans left their jobs.<sup>3</sup>

As we reflected on this exodus, we decided that our 2023 edition of *The Report on the Status of Women and Girls in California*<sup>TM</sup> should attempt to **assess what women need in order to attain agency for themselves, add meaning to their lives, and contribute fully to their families, communities, and businesses.**

The answers we found resonate with much of what we all know. To pursue a more fulfilling, purposeful life, we need:

- Good health and healthcare
- Economic security and education
- Work-life balance and support at home

As our faculty authors focused on these areas, we discovered a complex story of progress in some areas, and stagnation or regression in others. (See key takeaways in our Highlights on the following pages.)

For one example, on the economic front: Unemployment is trending downward, earnings upward, and remote work flexibility has become an expectation. Yet California women still lag behind men when it comes to both annual earnings and long-term wealth. And Latinas

and Black women in California consistently feel those inequities much more acutely, and for much longer, than anyone else.

**This Report also reaffirms a truth that has long inspired Mount Saint Mary's University to produce this research: Education's transformational impact on women's economic security cannot be overstated.**

Consider that among California households headed by a single woman *without* a high school degree, the poverty rate is 34%. When that woman instead has a bachelor's degree (or higher), the poverty rate drops to 10% — even without a spouse or partner present to provide additional family income. Education remains a constant and dramatic game-changer when it comes to solving gender inequities and economic insecurity.

This Report also includes our annual Scorecard, which highlights women's progress, or lack thereof, when it comes to gender parity in education, media, earnings, and corporate and political leadership. All areas that have a significant impact on women's quality of life, as well as on their families, companies, and communities. This year's Scorecard is particularly instructive amidst an ever-evolving post-pandemic landscape.

We hope this research opens eyes and influences policies. Because we owe it to ourselves and the girls who follow in our footsteps to pursue more equitable opportunities for all. Indeed, to help more California women go beyond “making a living” to making a *life* instead.

Thank you for reading, sharing, and caring.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ann McElaney-Johnson".

Ann McElaney-Johnson  
President, Mount Saint Mary's University  
Chair, Women's College Coalition



## HIGHLIGHTS

# 2023 Key Takeaways

We have highlighted findings from each primary area of research in this year's Report to reveal what is helping, or preventing, California women from leading purpose-filled lives of their choosing.



### ECONOMIC SECURITY

- In 2020 and 2021, **13% of California women lost a job**. Roughly **1 in 4** experienced income loss due to reduced work hours.
- The **median earnings** of California women working full-time **increased 14%** from 2019 to 2021. Earnings for women working part-time rose 9%.
- **Those earnings vary substantially by ethnicity**. Median earnings for a White woman working full-time in 2021, for instance, equaled \$73,059. At the other end of the scale, Latinas earned \$40,524.
- Nationally, the estimated median wealth of White men is \$83,440. That drops to \$66,930 for White women and **drops to \$6,700 and \$6,000** for Latina and Black women.
- The flexibility to work remotely continues. In 2019, 1 in 14 women worked from the home. In 2021, **1 in 3 worked remotely**.
- California women are still charting their own course to economic security and employment independence. Our state is home to the **largest number of women-owned businesses** in the United States — 1.5 million.
- California women own or co-own **36% of the state's privately owned businesses with paid employees**.



### HOME AND FAMILY

- Overall, 9% of California's family households experience poverty. But for households headed by women, with no spouse present, the **poverty rate more than doubles to 21%**. (And it is 29% for women-headed households with children.)
- **Education and poverty are inextricably linked**. Among households headed by a single woman without a high school degree, the poverty rate is 34% — more than 1 in 3. When that woman has a bachelor's degree or higher, the poverty rate drops to 10%.
- Among California women who are 25 years or over, **more than 1 in 3 (37%) have a bachelor's degree or higher**.
- **Housework and childcare remain the mother's domain**. Even among families where the mother is employed, 77% of mothers say they have primary responsibility for housework; 61% have primary responsibility for childcare.
- Christianity remains the most common faith tradition among California women, practiced by **69%** of female residents. But California's diverse population also creates a mosaic of some of the country's **most diverse faith communities**.



### HEALTH

- COVID-19 has impacted life expectancy for both women and men. Life expectancy for all Californians shortened from 80.9 years in 2019 to 79.0 in 2020 — an almost **two-year drop in a single year**.
- COVID-19 vaccines can help save lives; unvaccinated Californians are nearly three times more likely to die than vaccinated individuals. Statewide, **women make up 53% of all Californians vaccinated against COVID-19**.
- Californians report that symptoms of long COVID continue to affect them long term. An estimated **38% of women have been plagued by long COVID** statewide compared with 21% of men.
- Infant and maternal (pregnancy-related) mortality rates remain far higher for Black mothers and babies. Black babies are **twice more likely to die** than White babies. Black mothers are **four times more likely to die** from pregnancy-related causes than White mothers.
- Sleep is healing. Yet **3 in 10 California women report they get insufficient sleep**.

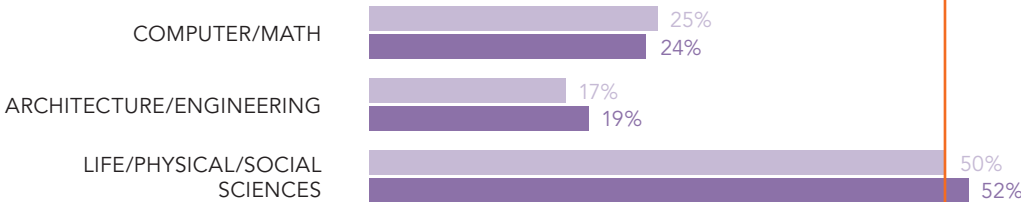


# Charting Gender Parity in California

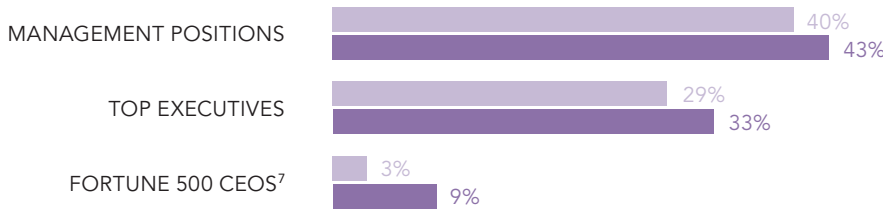
**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT<sup>4</sup>** Degrees held by California women ▶ **PARITY 50%** ■ 2010 ■ 2021



**STEM EMPLOYMENT<sup>5</sup>** California women in STEM occupations



**CORPORATE LEADERSHIP<sup>6</sup>** Women in corporate leadership occupations



Note: For management and top executive positions, these figures are for the total civilian employed population 16 years and over — both part-time and full-time workers. Fortune 500 listing is from fall 2021.

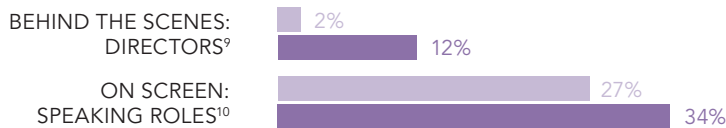
**GOVERNMENT<sup>8</sup>** California women in government



Note: The California State Legislature is a body of 120 members; in 2021 there were 40 women state legislators.

California's congressional delegation consists of two senators and 52 representatives.

**MEDIA** Women in the 100 top-grossing films of 2021



Note: These figures are for the 100 top grossing films in the United States, 2021.

**WAGE EQUITY<sup>11</sup>** California women's earnings compared to men's earning (full-time workers)

**PARITY 100%** ◀

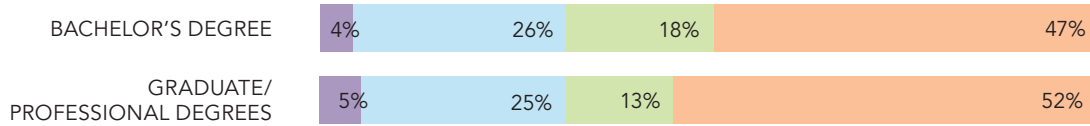




**The good news:** Thus far, research shows that the pandemic has not derailed women’s long-term gains in pursuit of greater parity. As the data on page 8 demonstrate, progress remains far too slow — but, in most areas, we are still moving forward compared to when we started tracking these vital categories over a decade ago. One notable exception: California’s congressional delegation. Note: The data on page 9 are from 2021 and show the racial and ethnic diversity among women in these positions.

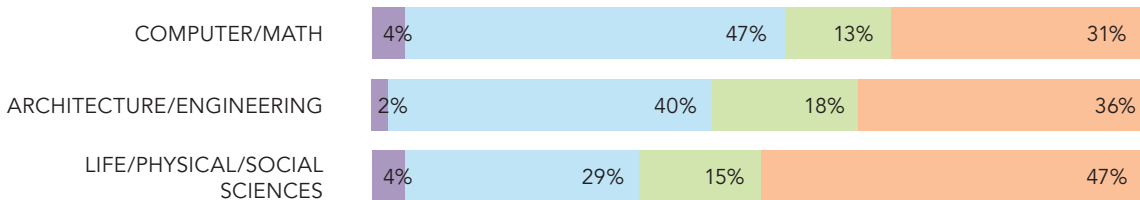
**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT<sup>4</sup>** Degrees held by California women

AFRICAN AMERICAN ASIAN AMERICAN LATINA WHITE



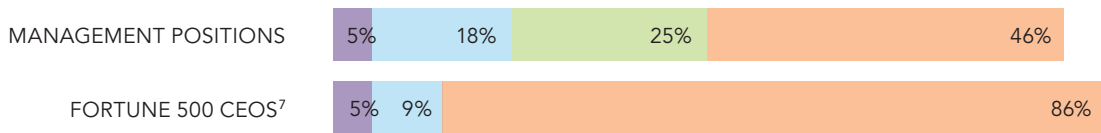
Note: Five percent of baccalaureate and graduate/professional degrees are awarded to women of other races.

**STEM EMPLOYMENT<sup>5</sup>** California women in STEM occupations



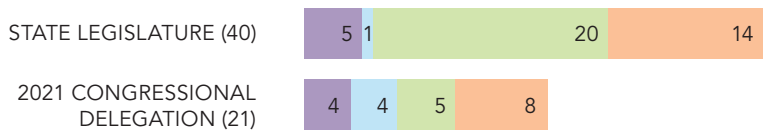
Note: These percentages, which do not add to 100%, do not account for women of other races/ethnicities who hold STEM jobs.

**CORPORATE LEADERSHIP<sup>6</sup>** Women in corporate leadership occupations

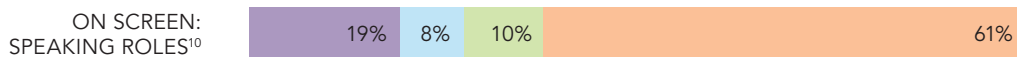


Note: Top executive positions are not broken out by race/ethnicity at this source. Percentages are rounded.

**GOVERNMENT<sup>8</sup>** California women in government

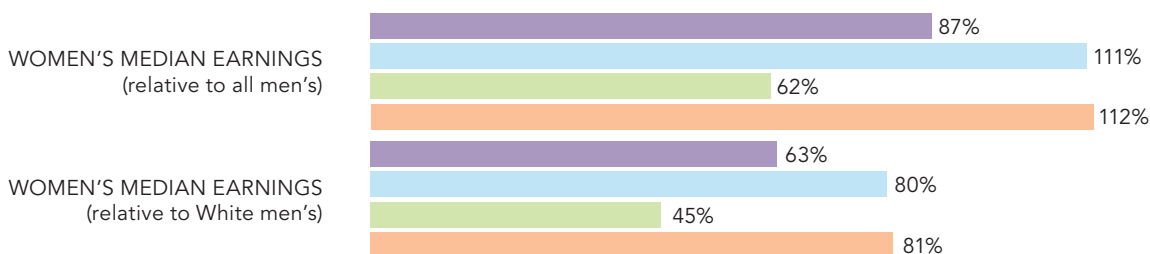


**MEDIA** Women in the 100 top-grossing films of 2021



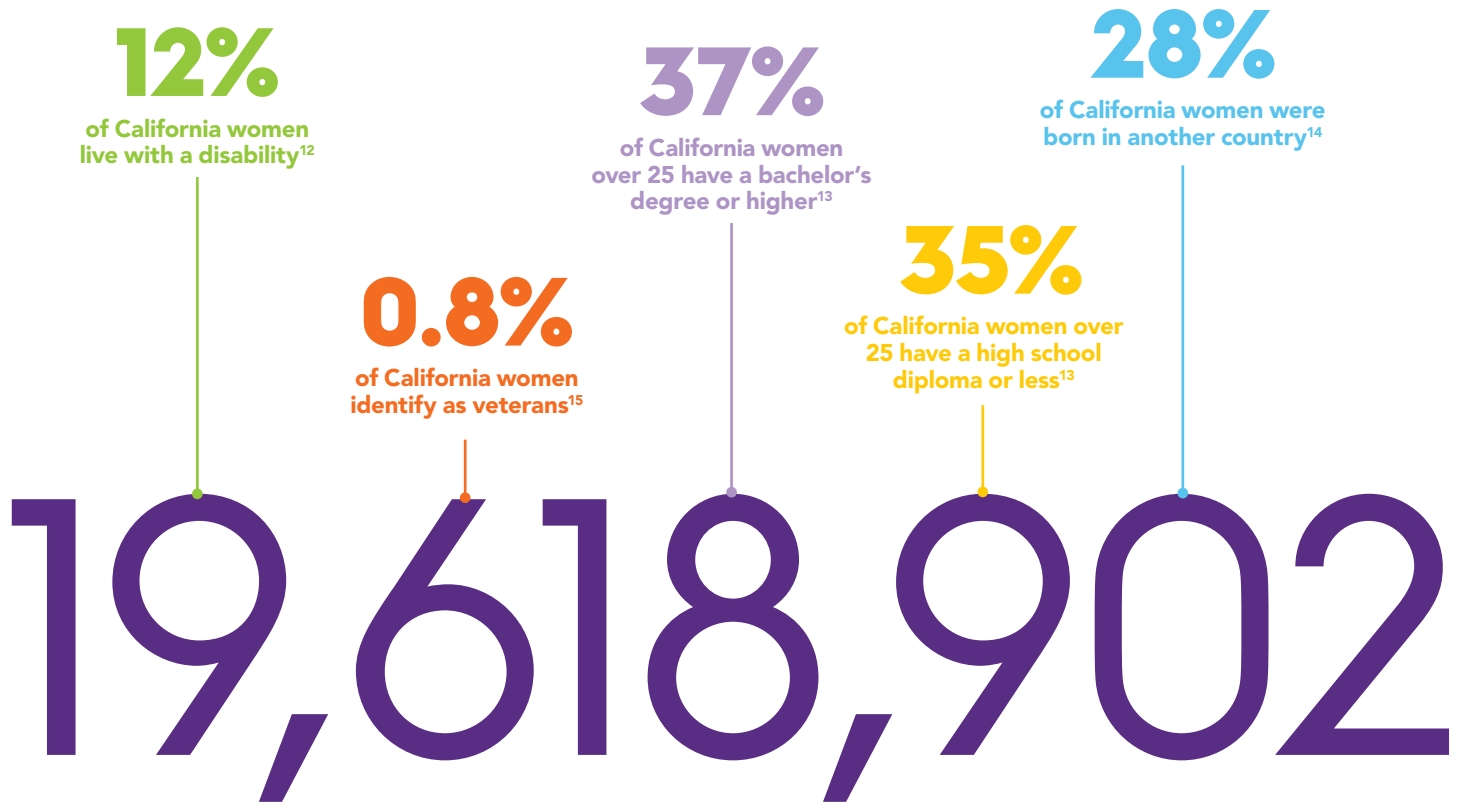
Note: Directors' race/ethnicity data not available at this reference source.

**WAGE EQUITY<sup>11</sup>** California women’s earnings compared to men’s earning (full-time workers)

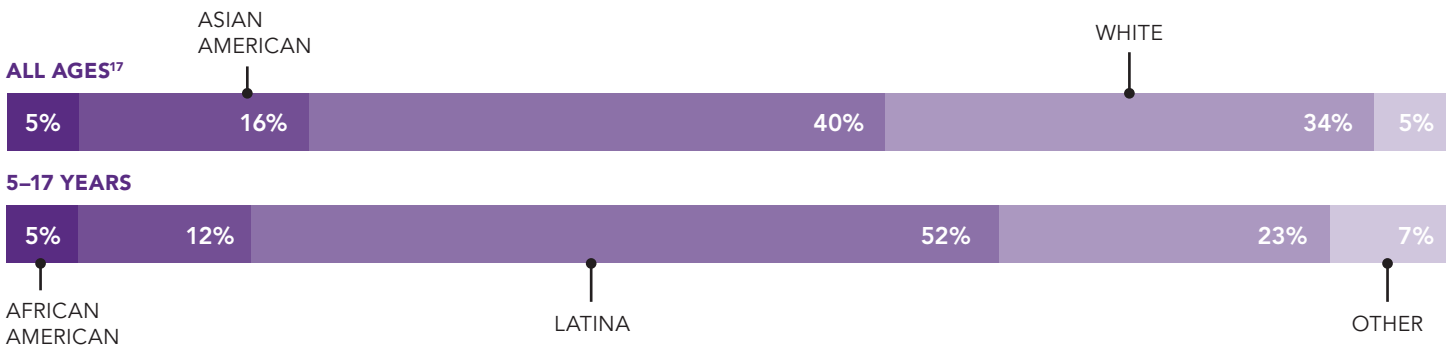


SNAPSHOT

# California's Women and Girls Today



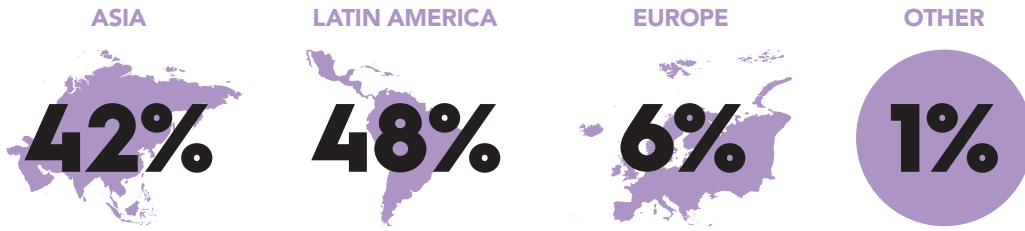
WOMEN AND GIRLS MAKE UP **50%** OF THE POPULATION IN CALIFORNIA<sup>16</sup>



► Among girls 5 to 17 years of age, the majority are Latina.<sup>17</sup>

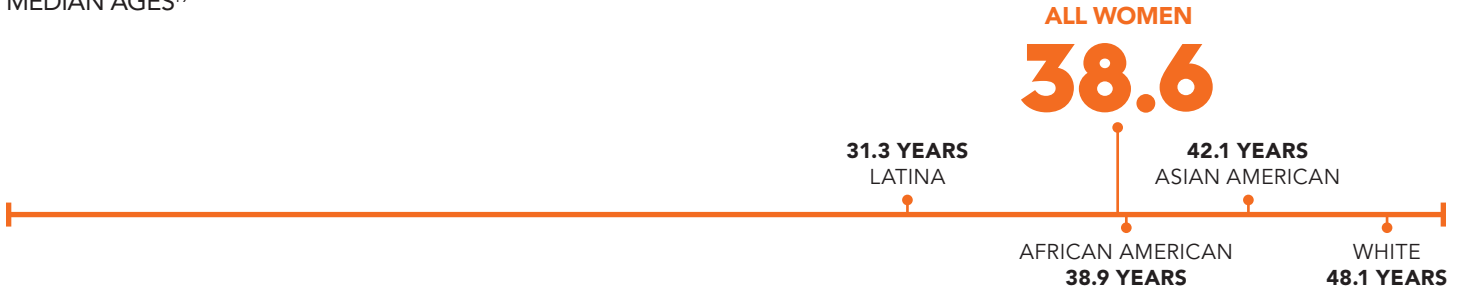
Note: Populations native to the United States or its territories are included in the "other" category: American Indian/Native Alaskan (1%) and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (less than 0.5%).

BIRTHPLACE OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN AND GIRLS IN CALIFORNIA

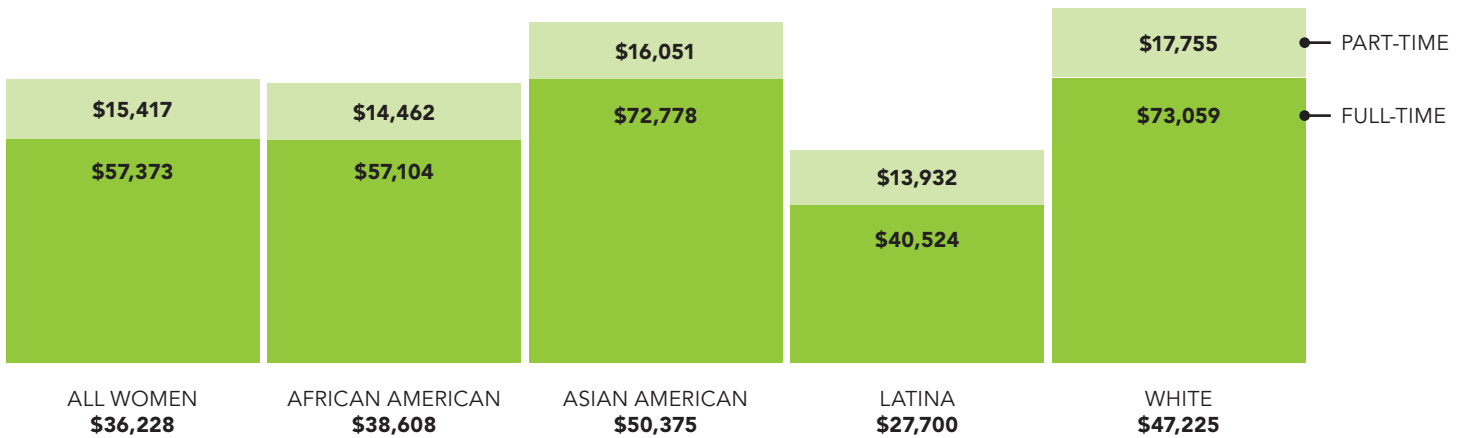


► In 2021, nearly half (48%) of California women and girls born in another country have immigrated from Latin America, down from 51% in 2016. In 2021, 42% are from Asia, up from 39% in 2016.<sup>18</sup>

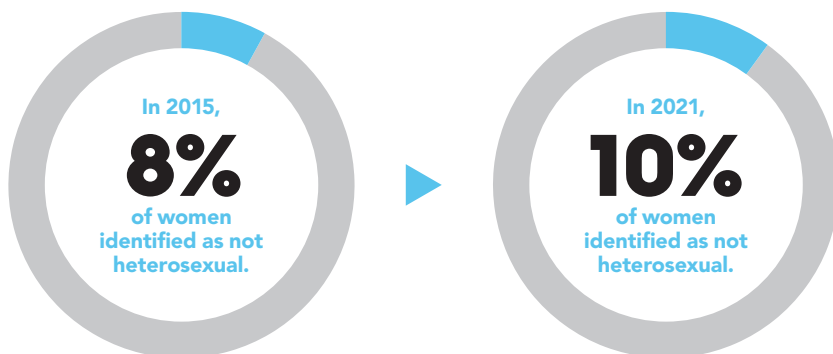
MEDIAN AGES<sup>19</sup>



MEDIAN EARNINGS OF CALIFORNIA WOMEN (16 AND OLDER)<sup>20</sup>



SEXUAL ORIENTATION



► In recent years, diversity in sexual orientation has increased across California, as more California women now identify as not heterosexual.<sup>21</sup>

Across 2018-2021<sup>22</sup>, 0.8% of Californians (0.2% of women) identified as transgender or gender nonconforming.<sup>23</sup>





## FROM THE DIRECTOR

# Welcome From the Center for the Advancement of Women



As I reflect on the theme of this year's Report, on leading with purpose and meaning, I think about the step forward that Los Angeles recently made. Here, where I live, Karen Bass became the first Black woman — indeed, the first woman at all — elected as mayor of the nation's second-most populous city.

Mayor Bass carries on a rich tradition of Black women who advance equity in ways that authentically reflect their sense of purpose. History tells us about this tradition's deep roots, which date back to groundbreaking pioneers like Maria W. Stewart and Anna Julia Cooper — women who made unlikely strides for abolition, women's rights, and women's education in the 19th century. Women we should all know better today. Women who made the pursuit of equity their purpose in life.

Meaning and purpose. I have studied these concepts in nearly all of my research. My students can attest that I enthusiastically bring these conversations into the classroom, too. I have written a book about purpose-based decision-making. I also host a podcast called "Leadership Purpose with Dr. Robin" that helps women find, or stay aligned with, their leadership purpose.

Everyone's purpose is uniquely their own. It is there for each of us to discover. To find clues to that discovery we only need to express the parts of us that live deep down within ourselves — that shape who we are — and we can do that by exploring our passions, our values, our natural abilities. Once we have a sense of what those are, we can begin to use them in service to a cause beyond ourselves. That is when we find our purpose.

My own pursuit of purpose has led to my current role as interim director of the Center for the Advancement of Women here at Mount Saint Mary's University. The Center is a vibrant hub for research, leadership development, and advocacy. It supports a growing community of women leaders from across our state. And it offers resources that allow us to explore topics that include advancing equity through leading with meaning and purpose from a data-driven, real-world perspective.

I hope that you will join us in our work. We need allies who share our collective purpose. And who will collaborate with us to eradicate the gender inequities that persist in our world today.

To leading with purpose,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robin L. Owens".

Robin L. Owens, PhD  
Interim Director, Center for the  
Advancement of Women  
Associate Professor of Religious Studies,  
Mount Saint Mary's University

**WE NEED ALLIES WHO  
SHARE OUR COLLECTIVE  
PURPOSE. AND WHO WILL  
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ERADICATE THE GENDER  
INEQUITIES THAT PERSIST IN  
OUR WORLD TODAY.**



## CHAPTER ONE

# Economic Security

For California's women, the economic outlook has been a mixed bag since COVID-19's arrival. Earnings have increased for many, and the pandemic necessitated a rapid expansion of remote work flexibility. But job loss, reduced work hours, and inflation hit women in lower-wage jobs hardest. And while the ongoing gender wage gap receives warranted attention, **a deeper root cause of inequality stems from a gender wealth gap.** All of this matters because it is nearly impossible to achieve agency and independence without firm financial footing.

### DEFINING DATA



#### Education and poverty are clearly connected.

Among households headed by a single woman *without* a high school degree, the poverty rate is **1 in 3**. With a bachelor's degree or higher, that poverty rate drops to **1 in 10**.

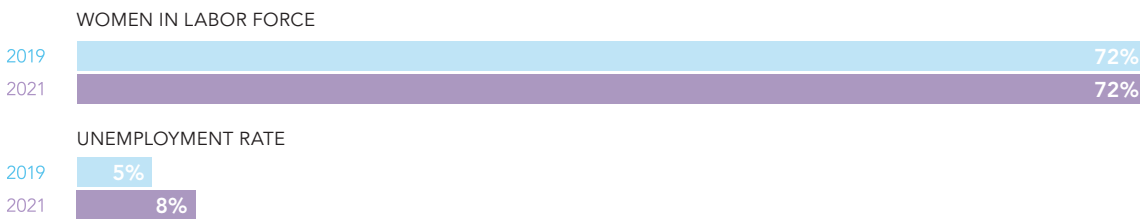


## EMPLOYMENT

In 2022, monthly unemployment rates have generally trended downward. By December 2022, the monthly unemployment rate for California women and men was 4%, after reaching a high of 16% in May 2020 early in the pandemic.<sup>24</sup>

Simultaneously, more California women have decided to stop working since the onset of COVID-19. From 2019 to 2021, the percentage of non-working women in California rose from 29% to 31%.

**FIGURE 1** LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT RATES OF CALIFORNIA WOMEN<sup>25</sup>



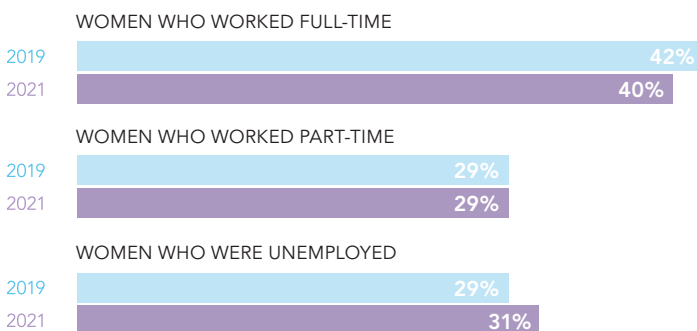
Note: These figures are for the population 20–64 years of age.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 and 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

For working Californians, the pandemic and its ongoing effects have dramatically altered the work experience and, in some cases, incomes.

One positive outcome of the pandemic: greater work flexibility. In 2019, for example, 7% of women (and 6% of men) working in California did their jobs remotely.<sup>26</sup> In 2020 and 2021, one-third of women reported working from home. On the other hand, many California women faced the harsh realities of job loss and reduced work hours, especially in the first couple years of the pandemic.

**FIGURE 2** WORK STATUS OF CALIFORNIA WOMEN: PRE-PANDEMIC VS. POST-PANDEMIC<sup>27</sup>



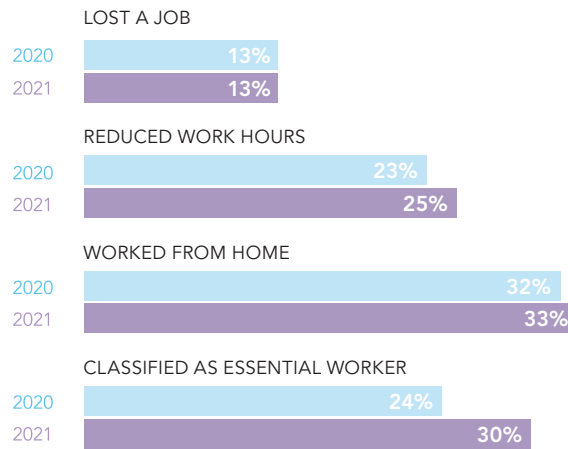
Note: Each year considers any work in the preceding 12 months. These figures are for women 16–64 years of age.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 and 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

For some women, the reduction in income from job loss or reduced work hours was significant; for others, the experience of working from home brought concerns of division of labor involving housework and childcare when schools were closed. For women who remained on the job as essential workers — especially women with families — concerns over coronavirus exposures piled on top of concerns over childcare and caregiving duties for other family members.

As is often the case in times of crisis, the more financially vulnerable have endured the greatest impacts of the pandemic. For instance, self-employed Latinas have faced daunting financial stress since the novel coronavirus arrived. In year one of the pandemic, 76% of self-employed Latinas experienced a loss of employment income, compared to 61% of White women and 52% of White men.<sup>28</sup>

**FIGURE 3** IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S WORK EXPERIENCE<sup>29</sup>



## EARNINGS

Despite the workplace disruptions between 2019 and 2021, working women have experienced an increase in median earnings. The median earnings of women who worked full-time, all year, in both 2019 and 2021 have increased by 14% to \$57,373. Median earnings of those who worked part-time increased by 9% to \$15,417.<sup>30</sup> (For a breakdown of women's median earnings by race/ethnicity, see our Snapshot on page 11.)

Of course, 2021 and 2022 brought inflation rates not seen in decades, threatening to undo those earning increases. Research shows that "inflation is not gender neutral," as women make up 58% of minimum wage workers nationwide — workers who would be most affected by spiking inflation rates.<sup>31</sup>

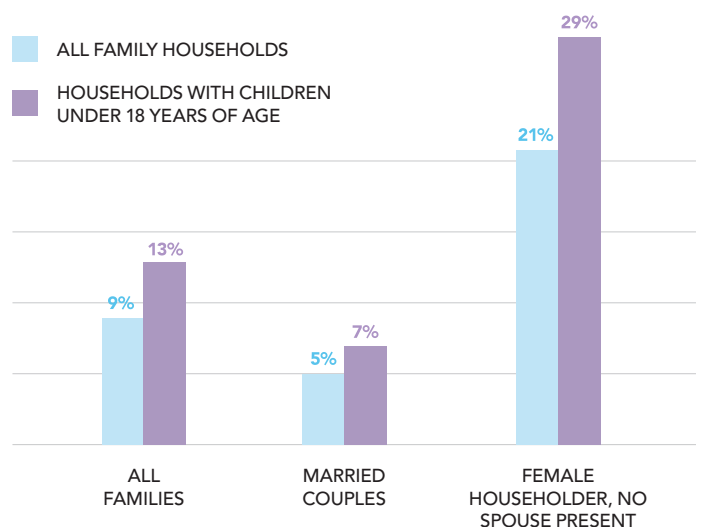
In California, the number of women and men working in front-line essential jobs is roughly equal. However, women are greatly overrepresented in a number of low-wage occupations, including as secretaries (91%), personal care aides (81%), office clerks (79%), cashiers (69%), and janitors/cleaners (60%).<sup>32</sup>

## POVERTY

In 2021, 13% of California's women and girls were living on income below the Federal Poverty Level, the same as in 2019.<sup>33</sup> In 2021, 7% of women and girls lived in extreme poverty on income that was less than half of the Federal Poverty Level, compared to 6% in 2019.<sup>34</sup>

Of note, family households have a poverty rate of 9%, but for households headed by women with no spouse present, that rate more than doubles to 21%.<sup>35</sup> That poverty rate climbs even higher for women-headed households with children present.

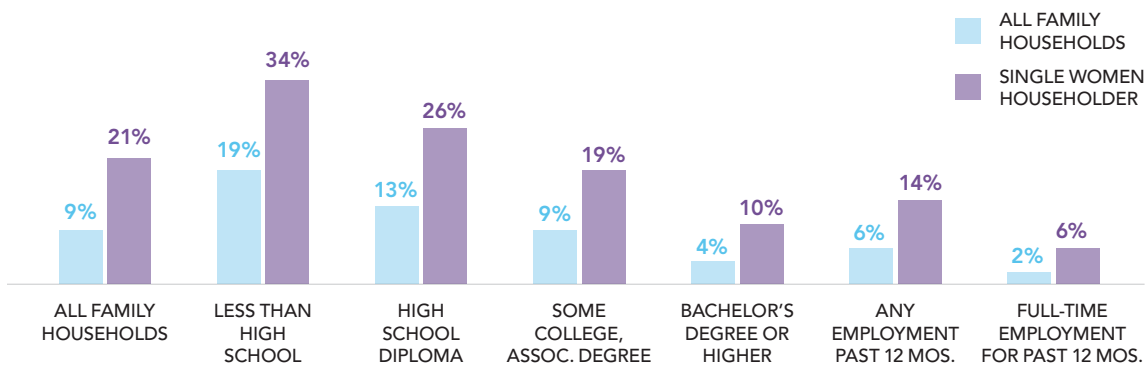
**FIGURE 4** POVERTY RATES OF CALIFORNIA FAMILIES



## ► Promoting Economic Security: What the research suggests

Data show a direct correlation between educational attainment and those living in poverty: A higher level of education correlates with a lower poverty rate. Likewise, stable, full-time employment is an important factor in keeping families out of poverty.

**FIGURE 5** POVERTY RATES OF CALIFORNIA FAMILIES BY EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OF HOUSEHOLDER<sup>36</sup>



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Statistically, education and employment are instrumental to economic security — and education remains an important key to securing both gainful employment and sufficient wages.

### Women's wealth

As the last few years taught us, there will always be times when income is suddenly reduced or lost as a result of unemployment, illness, or other catastrophic circumstances such as a pandemic. In these times of crises, economic security is only possible with financial reserves from which to draw. These reserves may be in the form of cash, savings accounts, retirement accounts, investment funds, or as equity in a business or property.

Although this type of wealth may be inherited, for most people it is accumulated through saving and investing on a regular basis. Since women — and especially women of color — have traditionally earned less income, they remain at a disadvantage when it comes to accruing financial assets. The greatest source of wealth for many people is equity in an owned home. In California, the 2020 median net worth of households was \$247,000; when equity in a home (market value of the home, minus mortgage/housing costs) is excluded, that net worth drops to \$71,500.<sup>37</sup>

There have been various estimates of individual wealth, but a 2016 study focuses on major disparities in wealth by gender, race, and ethnicity.<sup>38</sup>

The racial wealth gap among single women is alarming: for every \$100 owned by White women, Latinas own \$10 and Black women own \$9.

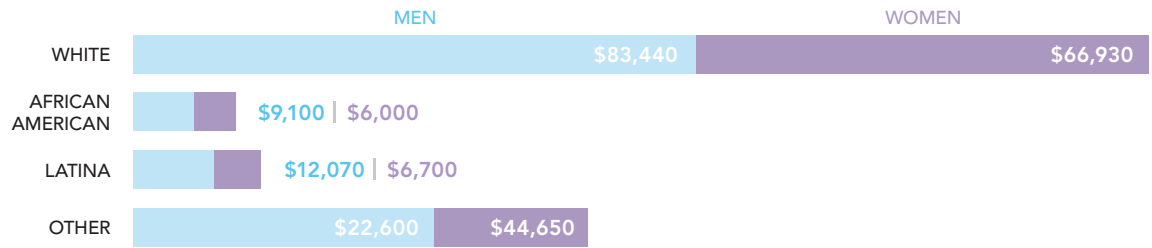
Given the wealth disparity and women's lower median incomes, it is not easy for many women to build wealth. Some strategies have been advanced, however, including a focus on entrepreneurship and getting more women — especially women of color — engaged in investing.<sup>39</sup>



Note: These figures are based on the 2016 Survey of Consumer Finances and do not include the value of vehicles. "Other" includes Asians, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders and any other racial groups not accounted for as White, African American (Black), or Latinx.

Source: Asset Funders Network

**FIGURE 6** ESTIMATED MEDIAN WEALTH OF U.S. SINGLE WOMEN (2016)



**Women-owned businesses**

One area of entrepreneurship where women excel is the creation of small businesses.<sup>40</sup> California is home to the largest number (1,543,000) of women-owned businesses nationwide.<sup>41</sup> Women own roughly 20% of the 742,000 privately owned businesses with paid employees in the state of California. And women co-own another 16% of private businesses with a male business partner.<sup>42</sup>

Generally, women-owned businesses are smaller than the average U.S. business in terms of employment and revenue.<sup>43</sup> However, businesses owned by women are showing a higher rate of growth in numbers of firms, employment, and revenue compared with the U.S. average. In 2021, half (49%) of new business startups in the U.S. were led by women entrepreneurs.<sup>44</sup>







## CHAPTER TWO

# Home and Family

California boasts a population that is recognized as **the most diverse in the country**.<sup>45</sup> For instance, 28% of California's female population was born outside the United States. That diversity brings a wealth of benefits to our state, as well as a responsibility to meet the distinct needs of these different communities.

### DEFINING DATA



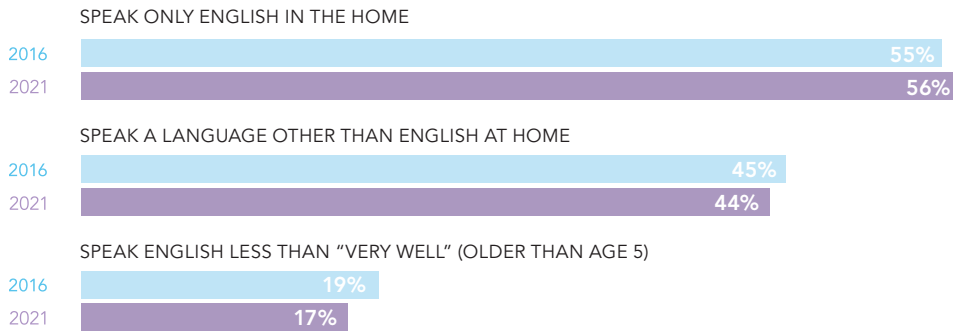
The pandemic might have started a work-from-home revolution, but it did not lead to a seismic shift in household duties once the workday concludes. Among families where the mother is employed:

- **77% of mothers say that they are still mainly responsible for housework**
- **61% of women feel that they remain the primary caretakers for children**



**FIGURE 7** LANGUAGE SPOKEN IN THE HOME<sup>46</sup>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates



## CALIFORNIA HOUSEHOLDS

In 2021, there were about 13.5 million occupied housing units statewide that provide homes to over 39 million Californians. The majority (56%) were occupied by owners, while 44% were rental units.<sup>47</sup> On average, there are just over three people in each home.

Notably:

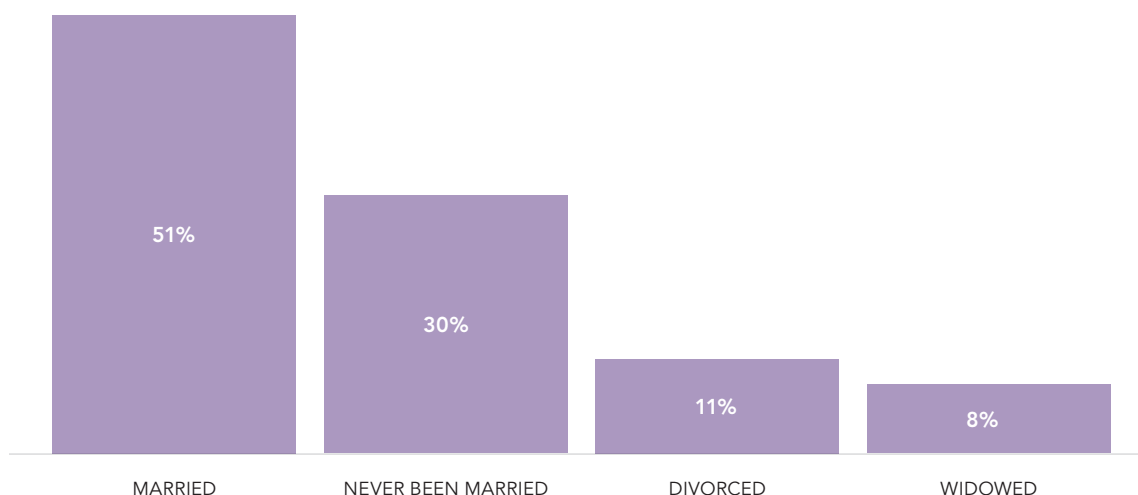
- Most housing units are family homes (68%).
- There are four million California households (30%) headed by women — either living alone or as head of family.<sup>48</sup>
- Over half of households headed by a single woman (56%) or a single man (51%) have people under 18 years; 45% of married couple households have children living in them.<sup>49</sup>

Before we delve into household poverty rates and the gender division of household labor, it is instructive to know that roughly half of California’s women are currently married.

**FIGURE 8** MARITAL STATUS OF CALIFORNIA WOMEN<sup>50</sup>

Note: These percentages are for California women 20 years and older.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates



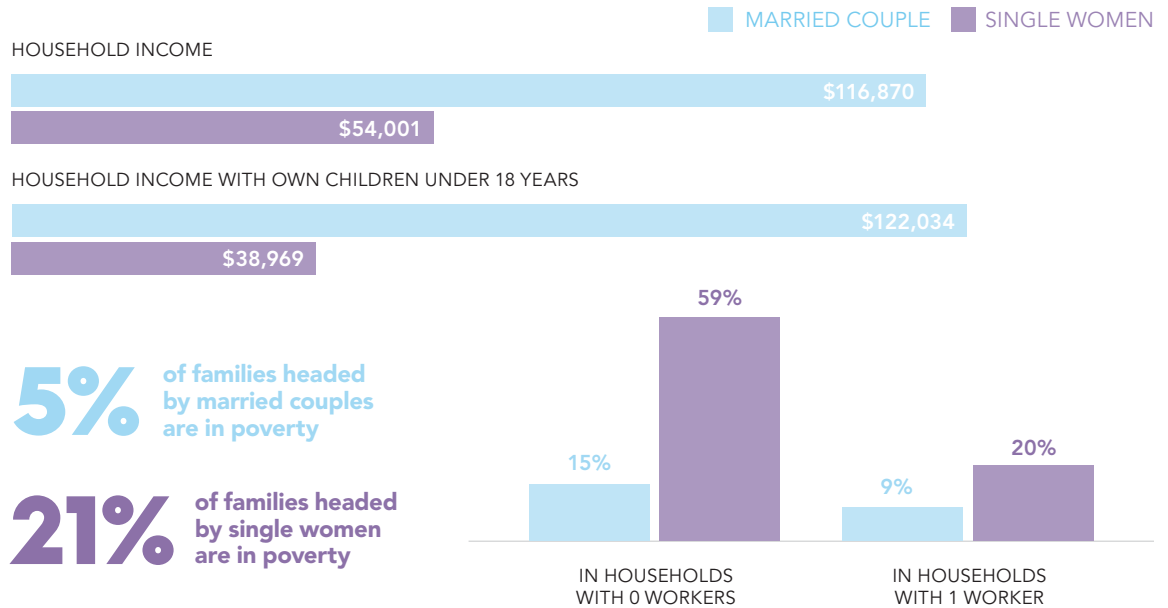
## FAMILY HOMES

The average size of California families is close to 3.5, regardless of who heads the home. But there are distinct economic characteristics between types of households. A partnered couple family can have two working parents, while a working single mother brings home only one paycheck. This increases the odds that a family headed by a single woman is more likely than a partnered-couple family to live in poverty.

Note: Here, “single women” is defined as a household headed by a woman with no spouse present.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

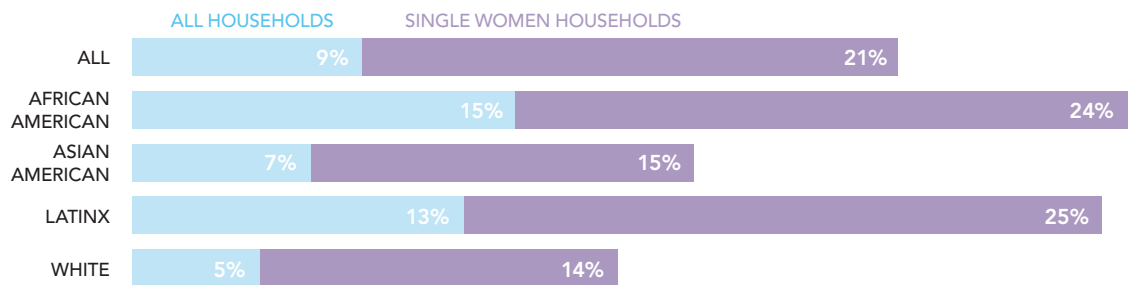
**FIGURE 9** MEDIAN INCOME<sup>51</sup> AND POVERTY RATES<sup>52</sup> OF CALIFORNIA FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS



Additionally, Black and Latina households are more likely to live in poverty than White or Asian American households.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

**FIGURE 10** POVERTY RATES OF CALIFORNIA FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS BY RACE/ETHNICITY OF HOUSEHOLDER<sup>53</sup>



### Single-mother families

Where children are involved, the median income of a single mother household drops from \$54,000 to \$39,000. For a single woman raising her own children, the poverty rate increases dramatically with the number of children:<sup>54</sup>

- 1–2 children = 27% of families live in poverty
- 3–4 children = 55% in poverty
- 5 or more children = 75% in poverty

Poverty hits single-mother households particularly hard when the mother is not employed; well over half (59%) of their families live in poverty. When the single mother is able to work, other issues arise — the issues faced by all working parents. Chiefly, how to find the time to meet paid job objectives *and* domestic work (housework, childcare, caregiving for other family members), while taking care of self, too.

## MEANING BEYOND WORK AND FAMILY

The pursuit of meaning and purpose often include searches both inward (faith) and outward (community engagement). California’s women and girls are no different.

### Faith and spirituality

When it comes to religious affiliation, California’s diverse residents create a mosaic of some of the country’s most diverse faith communities. According to a 2021 report from the Public Religion Research Institute:

- Santa Clara County has the fifth-greatest religious diversity in the nation.
- Imperial County has the ninth-highest concentration of Latinx Catholics in the nation.
- Santa Clara, Alameda, and San Mateo counties have three of the top 10 concentrations of Hindu Americans in the nation.
- San Francisco, Alameda, San Mateo, and Santa Clara counties have four of the top 10 concentrations of Buddhist Americans in the nation.<sup>55</sup>

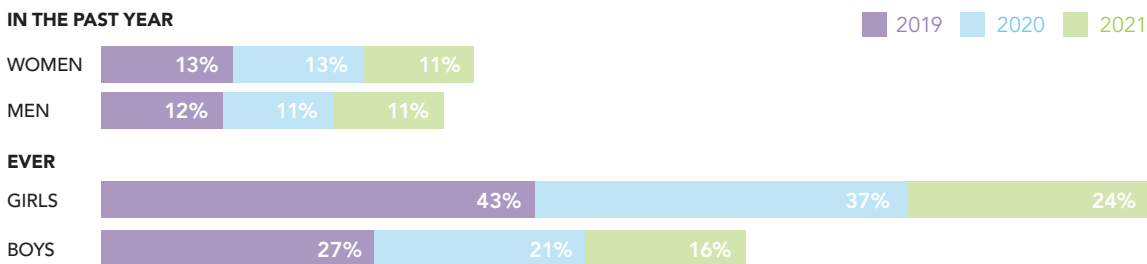
In the most recent study published by the Pew Research Center, Christianity was the most common faith tradition among California women, practiced by 69% of female residents. Among all Californians, 63% identify as Christian, 27% identify as unaffiliated (atheist, agnostic, no religion), and 9% identify as non-Christian faiths (Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, other world religions).<sup>56</sup>

In other realms of spirituality, 57% of women meditate at least once a week, compared with 43% of men.<sup>57</sup> Among all California adults who feel “a sense of spiritual peace and well-being several times a year,” 51% are women; 49% are men.<sup>58</sup>

### Community engagement

Research shows that civic engagement can give people a greater sense of “belonging, self-esteem, sense of control, and symbolic immortality, four key areas of meaning in life.”<sup>59</sup>

**FIGURE 11** CALIFORNIANS ENGAGED IN VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY WORK<sup>60</sup>



Note: The exact survey question for this table was “Have you engaged in formal volunteer work on community problems in the past year/ever?”

Source: 2019–2021 California Health Interview Survey

In total, among *all* Californians, 5.7 million residents volunteered 379.2 million hours of service through organizations statewide — creating an estimated \$13.5 billion in economic impact.<sup>61</sup>

Many Californians are employed in cause-driven nonprofits, too. Among the 1.4 million Californians working in nonprofit industries, 63% are women.<sup>62</sup> These women have a median earning of \$43,000 relative to \$52,000 for men.<sup>63</sup>

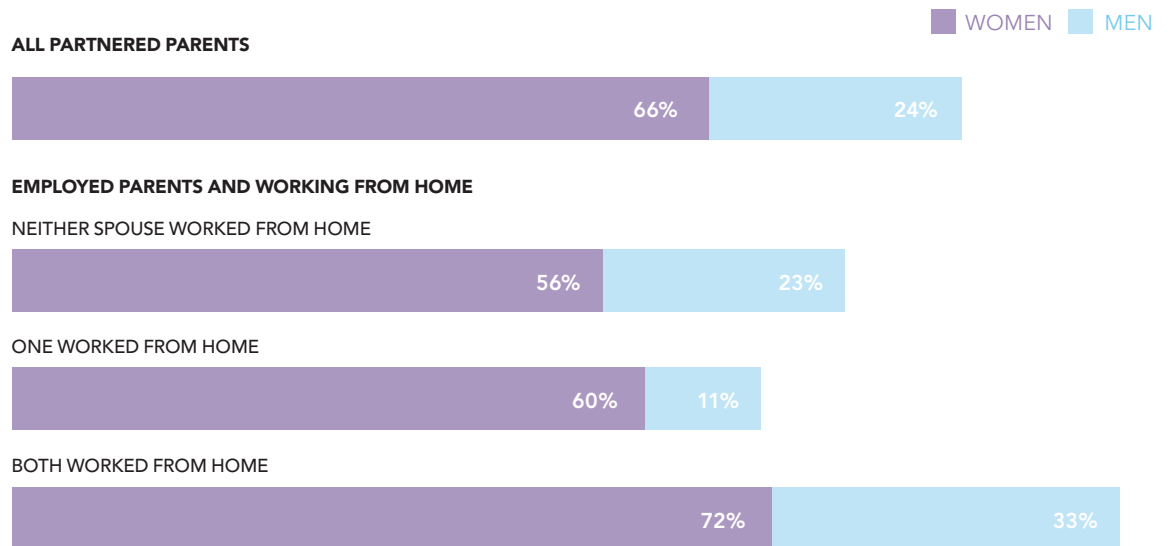
## GENDER DIVISION OF HOUSEHOLD LABOR

Traditionally, the major responsibility for domestic and childcare work has fallen to the mother. But the pandemic at times shifted schooling, childcare, and some paid work to the home. In 2020, a survey was conducted to see if a shift in the division of labor at home followed suit. While the survey found that fathers increased the time they spent in housework and childcare during the pandemic, mothers also increased the time they spent in these tasks. The result: Housework and childcare remain the primary responsibility of the mother.<sup>64</sup>

Note: These data are gathered via survey, separately, from each parent.

Source: *Gender and Society*

**FIGURE 12** PARENT WITH MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHILDCARE IN WORK-FROM-HOME ERA



As the above figure shows, women still shoulder more responsibility for childcare than men when examined in the aggregate. The same holds true for division of household chores.

Among all partnered parents, 77% of mothers say they also have major responsibility for housework, compared to 35% of fathers who say they have the bulk of the housework duties. And even among families where the mother is employed, 77% of mothers report being mainly responsible for housework and 61% report being mainly responsible for care of children.

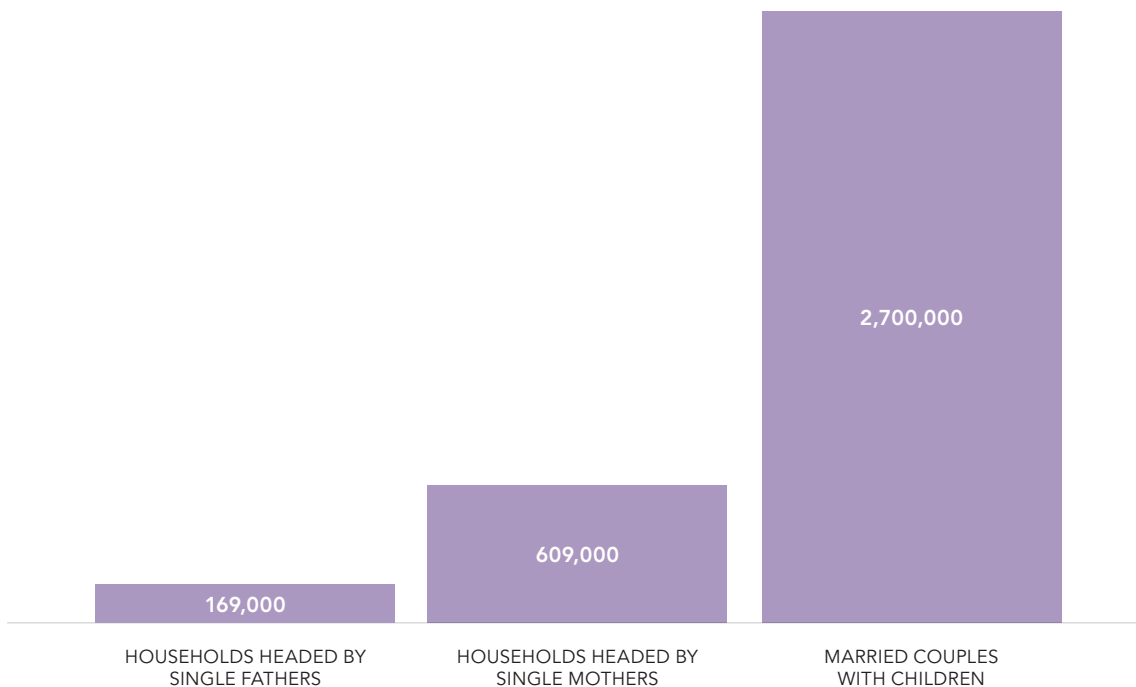


## ► Maintaining Home and Family: What the research suggests

### ***Families headed by a single woman***

In 2021, there were 609,000 California households headed by single mothers, 169,000 headed by single fathers, and 2.7 million households headed by married-couple families with children.<sup>65</sup> The median income of a single-mother household is less than that of both a married-couple family and a single-father household.<sup>66</sup> So it is no surprise that a single mother caring for her children is four times or more likely to live in poverty than a married-couple family. In general, single mothers have a fragile economic status that becomes more precarious with an increasing number of children, making a path out of poverty difficult.

**FIGURE 13** FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS IN CALIFORNIA



### ***Rethinking gender inequality in home and family care responsibilities***

The pandemic resulted in the relocation of work, school, and childcare to the home. For some employees, working from home became a long-term reality. As this chapter has shown, though, there has been no discernible change in the division of household labor — yet. Employers are developing new workplace policies, and it is too soon to know the future impact of remote work. However, working from home offers an opportunity to rethink the stereotypical gender-based division of housework and family care and arrive at a more equitable distribution of domestic duties.

### ***Life-family-work balance***

If “home is where the heart is,” home, family, and friends can be an important part of a productive life. During the time when isolation was used as a tool to limit the spread of the coronavirus, women were disproportionately impacted as sudden changes in access to familiar sources of assistance took hold. Stress levels rose in women more than men. The pandemic has taught us that the support system offered by a network of family and friends can be essential for maintaining the emotional and economic well-being of women and their families.



## CHAPTER THREE

# Health

**Good health is at the core of a productive and satisfying life.** In this chapter, we explore data associated with life expectancy, women's health, and mental well-being. This section also includes a look at individual behaviors that promote good health.

### DEFINING DATA



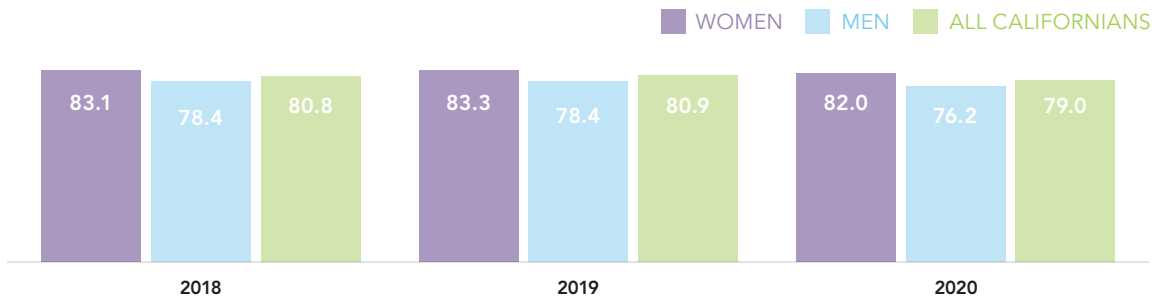
A vital reminder COVID-19 has given us: Vaccines can save lives. Unvaccinated Californians are nearly **three times** more likely to die than vaccinated individuals.

**Women make up 53% of all Californians vaccinated against COVID-19.**

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## LIFE EXPECTANCY

**FIGURE 14** LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH OF CALIFORNIANS<sup>67</sup>



The drop in life expectancy in 2020 is due to deaths caused by COVID-19. Across the United States, COVID-19 has played a part in decreasing the life expectancy of women from 81.4 years in 2019, to 79.9 years in 2020, and 79.3 years in 2021.<sup>68</sup>

The specific leading cause of death depends on age, but heart disease is the number one “killer” by far of both women and men in California. For young women 15–34 years of age, the top three leading causes of death in 2020 were accidents, suicide, and cancer.<sup>69</sup> Death by disease becomes more prevalent with increasing age.

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## WOMEN’S HEALTH

### Long COVID

While doctors and scientists have a long way to go to fully understand long COVID, its apparent symptoms are a significant cause for concern, particularly for California women. The California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls has analyzed CDC data to estimate long COVID rates by gender, race, and sexual orientation.

Estimated long COVID rates by gender:

- California women: 38%
- California men: 21%

Long COVID rates rise for certain demographics, including for Black women (41.2%), Latinas (42.7%), and gay/lesbian women (50.7%).<sup>70</sup>

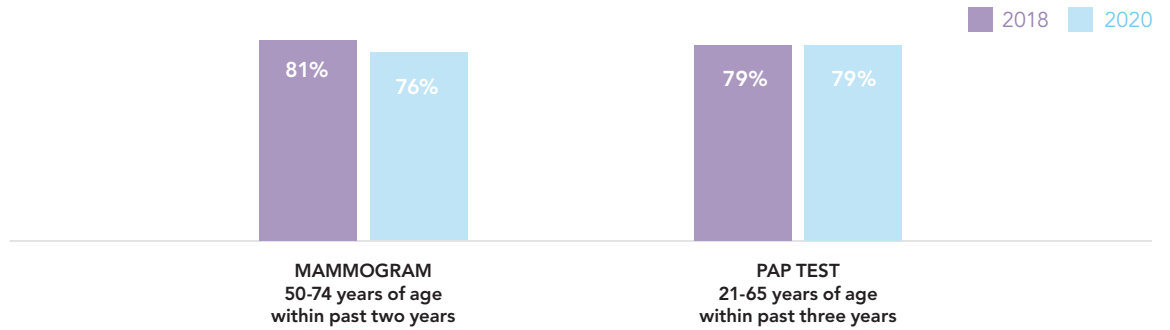
### Breast/cervical cancers

In 2022, the numbers of California women projected to die from cancers specific to women are:<sup>71</sup>

- 4,700 from female breast cancer
- 1,500 from cancers of the uterus
- 1,400 from ovarian cancer
- 520 from cervical cancers

Staying up to date on recommended vaccines and screenings plays an important role in safeguarding the health of women. Regular screenings, including a mammogram and a Papanicolaou (PAP) test, are recommended to increase the probability of early discovery of breast and cervical cancers when treatment can be more effective and increase the odds of survival. Roughly 80% of California women are current in these two areas.<sup>72</sup>

**FIGURE 15** CALIFORNIA WOMEN WHO REPORTED HAVING A MAMMOGRAM OR PAP TEST



**Childbirth**

We have not yet witnessed a drop in childbirth since the pandemic’s onset. In 2021, about 460,000 California women gave birth, compared to 451,000 in 2019.<sup>73</sup>

About 2% of new mothers are 15–19 years of age; teen mothers have a higher chance of delivering low-birthweight or pre-term infants than women 20–35 years of age. These birth factors are associated with increased risk of infant death. Based on an infant mortality rate of 4.17,<sup>74</sup> four out of 1,000 infants did not live to celebrate their first birthday.

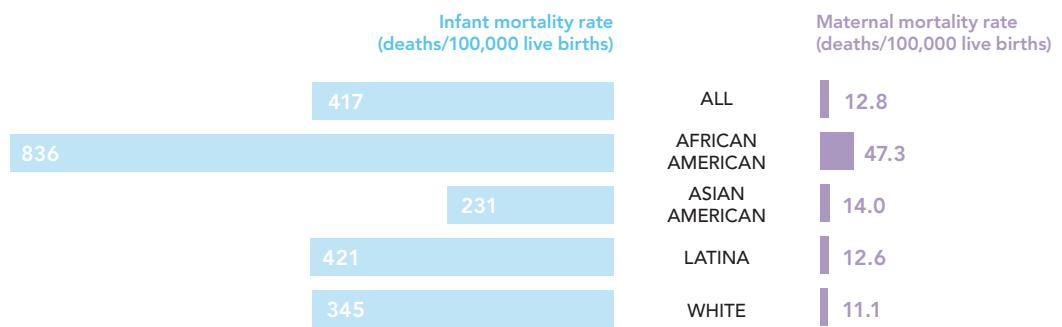
Health outcome studies show that exclusive breastfeeding is associated with improved infant and childhood health, as well as with decreased rates of childhood obesity.<sup>75</sup> In California, 94% of mothers initiate breastfeeding and 70% exclusively breastfed their infants at birth.<sup>76</sup>

The health of infants is connected to the health of the mother. Pregnancy-related deaths of mothers are mothers who die within one year of ending a pregnancy (either by giving birth or other means). Significantly more infants die within one year of birth than their mothers die from pregnancy-related causes. About one-third of mothers who die within one year from the end of pregnancy are from cardiovascular issues related to the pregnancy.

Note: Deaths of both infants and mothers are within one year of birth or the end of pregnancy. Note that we have adjusted both columns to a 100,000 baseline for consistency. Infant mortality rates are typically reported out of 1,000 live births.

Source: California Department of Public Health, Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Division

**FIGURE 16** CALIFORNIA’S INFANT<sup>77</sup> AND MATERNAL<sup>78</sup> PREGNANCY-RELATED MORTALITY RATES BY RACE/ETHNICITY OF MOTHER



Two figures that jump out from the table above: The mortality rates for Black mothers and their babies are significantly higher than for other races/ethnicities. Black babies are more than twice as likely to die within one year than White babies; Black mothers are more than four times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than White women.



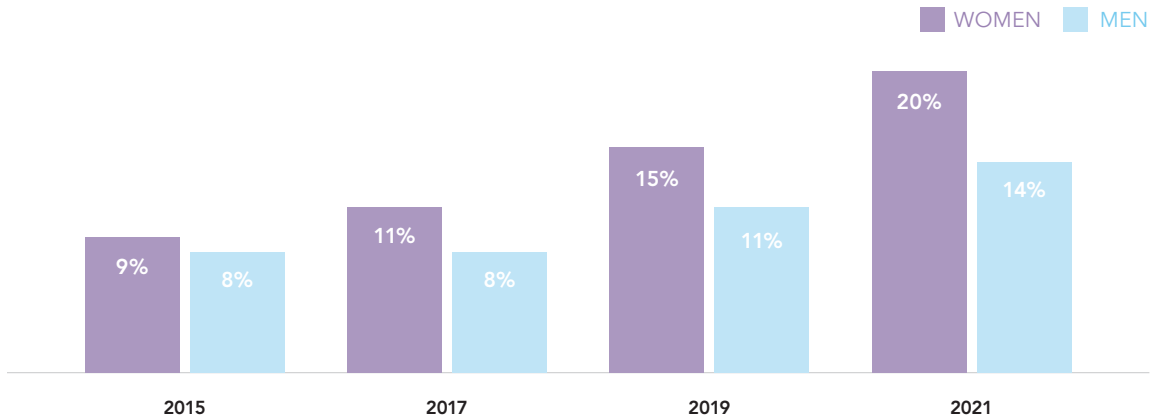
## EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Across the state, as well as the nation, a greater percentage of women than men report issues with emotional well-being. And, in recent years there has been a gradual increase in the percentage of both women and men who report emotional or mental health issues.

The California Health Interview Survey has explored indicators of mental and emotional well-being for multiple years through several questions on its annual survey. From answers to these questions, statisticians predict how likely an individual is to have experienced a serious psychological episode in the past 12 months.<sup>79</sup>

**FIGURE 17** PERCENTAGE OF CALIFORNIA WOMEN AND MEN LIKELY TO HAVE EXPERIENCED SERIOUS PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

Source: California Health Interview Survey

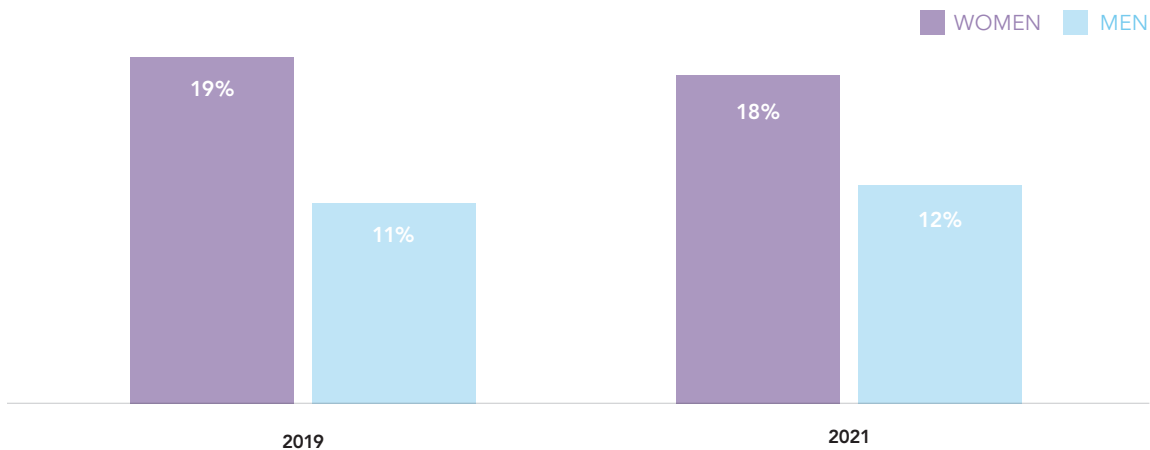


Prior to the pandemic, 15% of California women (11% of men) were likely to have experienced serious psychological distress during the past 12 months; when the pandemic hit, that percentage rose to 20% for California women (14% for men).

Across the state, nearly 1 in 5 women reports an actual medical diagnosis of depression.

**FIGURE 18** CALIFORNIANS DIAGNOSED WITH DEPRESSION<sup>80</sup>

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey



However, in 2020, when asked if they had felt depressed or hopeless over the past week, more than half of California women reported experiencing mild to severe depression. By fall 2022, these numbers had not decreased significantly: 55% of women still reported some form of depression (mild to severe) compared to 48% of men.<sup>81</sup>

## ► Promoting Personal Health: What the research suggests

### Preventive care

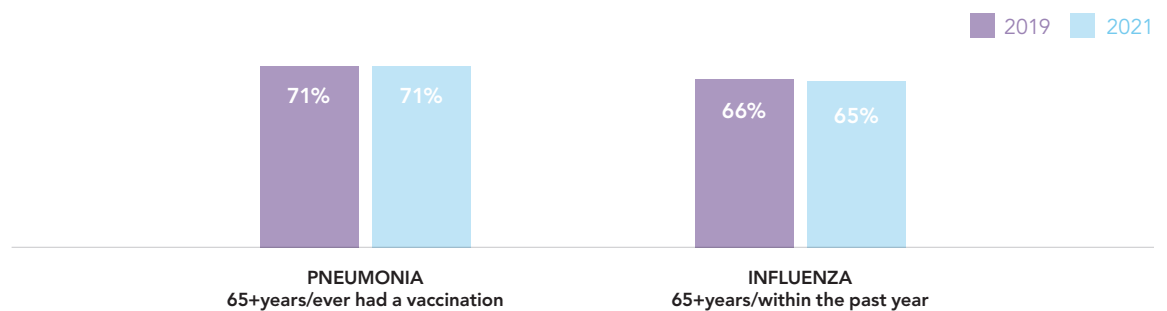
One approach to preventive care is getting regular health screenings when recommended, such as the cancer screenings discussed earlier in this chapter. Another vital step requires staying up to date on vaccinations, including for COVID-19. As of November 2022, unvaccinated Californians were nearly three (2.9) times more likely to die from COVID-19 than those who were vaccinated.<sup>82</sup>

As of January 2023, 73% of California's population is vaccinated against COVID-19; 61% have been vaccinated and received a booster. Of those vaccinated, 53% are women.<sup>83</sup>

Older, more "routine" vaccines remain extremely important, too. For instance, influenza and pneumonia were among the top ten causes of death for California women in 2020, killing 2,800.<sup>84</sup> These deaths can often be prevented by immunization. More than 65% of older Californians, who are predominantly women, are immunized against these diseases. That means, however, that 30–35% of women are not currently immunized against these viral diseases.<sup>85</sup>

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey

**FIGURE 19** CALIFORNIA WOMEN WHO RECEIVED A PNEUMONIA OR INFLUENZA SHOT

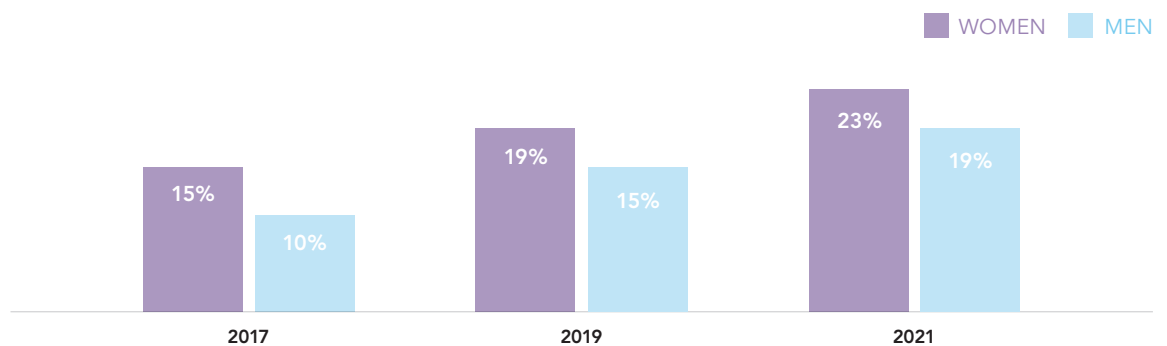


### Timely medical care

More women than men tend to delay getting medical care when needed. When the pandemic began, the number of Californians delaying (or foregoing) medical care increased significantly.<sup>86</sup>

Source: 2017–2019 California Health Interview Surveys

**FIGURE 20** CALIFORNIANS WHO DELAY SEEKING MEDICAL CARE



Women who delayed getting needed medical care cited cost or lack of insurance (27%), healthcare system issues (23%), personal reasons (23%), and COVID-19 (27%).<sup>87</sup> But the cost of delayed medical care is often a big price to pay in terms of outcomes. Cancers need to be discovered and treated in early stages for best outcomes, and good maintenance of chronic conditions can prolong a productive life.

### Healthy habits: Nutrition, physical activity, and time off

A healthy lifestyle includes a nourishing diet, physical activity, and sufficient sleep.

**FIGURE 21** PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND NUTRITION PATTERNS OF CALIFORNIA WOMEN<sup>88</sup>

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey

#### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY (2019)

**54%** of women engaged in 150 minutes/week or more of aerobic activity

**29%** of women engaged in two days of muscle-strengthening activity

#### NUTRITIONAL HABITS (2021)

**81%** of women consumed one or more servings of vegetables/day

**67%** of women consumed one or more servings of fruit/day

The National Institutes of Health recommend that adults sleep seven to eight hours nightly for good biological, cognitive, and emotional functioning. Yet, in 2020, 29% of women indicated they got insufficient sleep.<sup>89</sup> A similar percentage (27%) of children get inadequate sleep.

**It is critical that gender parity be considered as a substantive element of the health of the state's overall workforce and capacity for economic growth.**

**— HOLLY MARTINEZ**





## A CLOSER LOOK

# Identifying Policy Solutions for Gender Inequities in California

For more than 50 years, the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls has identified and worked to eliminate inequities in state laws, practices, and conditions that affect California's women and girls.

In 2022, the Commission released the *California Blueprint for Women's Pandemic Economic Recovery* examining pre-pandemic economic conditions for women, women's labor-market outcomes during the height of the pandemic, financial indicators from the government's pandemic response, and overall safety net usage by women.

The *Blueprint* confirms that California women went into the pandemic worse off due to existing systemic inequities in the workforce, with employment rates 20% lower than men, a persistent pay gap, and an "occupational segregation" of women — particularly women of color, who hold nearly half of all low-paying jobs, which leaves them with reduced lifetime earnings and perpetuates generational poverty.

Occupational segregation also means that it was specifically *women* who were our essential workers that kept hospitals open, children educated, and food on our tables. Frontline and service sectors were the most impacted, with nearly 80% of jobs lost concentrated in female-dominated, low-wage occupations. As industries reopened their doors and jobs became available, childcare accessibility and affordability vanished.

Working with advocates, the state legislature, state agencies, and businesses, the Commission is championing a long-term policy agenda based on these data that increases economic security for *all* Californians, prioritizes the well-being of women and girls, and strengthens a globally competitive state economy.

In 2022, two critical pieces of legislation addressing economic gender disparities were authored by commissioners and co-sponsored by the Commission and signed into law by Governor

Newsom. Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer Kahan (D–Orinda), also a CCSWG commissioner, authored AB 1287, which eliminates the "pink tax" on goods marketed to women, prohibiting price differentials for substantially similar goods. This will also help combat the increased impact of inflation on women.

Another CCSWG commissioner, State Sen. Monique Limón (D–Santa Barbara), authored SB 1162, which increases pay transparency by requiring employers to disclose a position's pay range in job listings and to employees who request it. The bill also expands pay data reporting to include contractors. Both actions increase transparency and empower all workers to demand equal pay.

The *Blueprint* data affirm that it is critical that gender parity be considered as a substantive element of the health of the state's overall workforce and capacity for economic growth, and must also be considered as an essential element in state resource stewardship. Women are slightly more than half the population of California and serve as key drivers of industry and essential workforce participants. California cannot afford to count women workers as less important to the economy than their male counterparts.

California must not wait until the next crisis before leveraging the lessons from this one to build more equitable support systems and strengthen our economy — and our largely female essential labor force — to better weather future storms.

**HOLLY MARTINEZ** is executive director of the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls.

**CALIFORNIA CANNOT AFFORD TO COUNT WOMEN WORKERS AS LESS IMPORTANT TO THE ECONOMY THAN THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS.**

## EDITOR'S NOTE

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This 12th annual edition of The Report on the Status of Women and Girls in California™ accesses research results across the state and the nation to build a comprehensive picture of how California's women and girls are faring. The 2023 Report focuses on information relevant to three intersecting areas of women's lives: economic security, health, and home and family. We also provide breakdowns of some data by racial or ethnic identity to provide some insights into disparities among women.

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### COMMON TERMS USED IN THE REPORT

#### Gender

While we do note California's transgender and nonbinary population, the Report is generally written in binary terms based on the majority of the state's population that identifies as either female or male.

- Women, girls, females: Females is the general term but is not generally favored in diversity studies. The Report refers to women (females 18 years and over unless otherwise specified) and girls as generally females under the age of 18 years.
- Men, boys, males: The age distinctions used for females generally apply here.

#### Racial/ethnic distinctions, in surveys usually self-identified by respondents

U.S. Census data allow a single choice among several races or a multiracial identification; a racial group is exclusively of that race on the basis of self-identification. Ninety-five percent of California women self-identify as one of four racial/ethnic groups: African American (Black), Asian, Hispanic (Latinx), and White.

- Latinx refers to a group of mixed genders, Latina to Latinx women, and Latino to Latinx men. The Census Bureau also refers to Latinx as persons of any race, but of Hispanic origin.
- African American, as used in this Report where source data use the term, includes persons who identify as Black.
- Asian American refers to a person who identifies as Asian and who resides in the United States.
- White includes anyone who identifies as such, excluding persons who have identified a Latin or Hispanic heritage.

Two other racial groups native to the United States or its territories are tracked by the Census Bureau: American Indian/Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. Unfortunately, statistical data on these populations at the level used in this Report are generally not stable or reliable due to the small population sizes.

#### Characteristics of data used in the Report

- **The data provide a snapshot at the time the measurement was made.** The Report draws heavily on the U.S. Census Bureau's yearly American Community Surveys (ACS). The most recent ACS data is from 2021; other smaller databases used for the Report may have data available from 2022.
- **Data over multiple years must be used to discern trends.** This Report makes use of multi-year trends through 2019 to determine how women's status has changed. However, a discontinuity is seen in some of the 2020 and 2021 data as a result of the pandemic. It's not yet clear whether the discontinuity is a blip or whether it signals a new trend line.
- **All statistical data are imprecise.** The reliability or precision of data relies on the size of sample studied and how representative the sample is of the population as a whole. Note that for simplicity, margins of error are not given in this Report and data are generally rounded to whole numbers. Use caution when comparing any numbers that are close in value. Specific margins of error can be found in most of the references cited.
- **Survey data are only as accurate as the respondents' answers.** Many surveys ask participants a lot of questions, some of which require specific and extensive knowledge. When using survey data, it is assumed that respondents answer as truthfully as they can. However, individuals may differ in their understanding of questions, their life experiences, and knowledge of facts.
- **Go to the source in the endnotes.** The following endnotes provide detailed citations for all data and claims presented in the Report.

Good data should lead to complex questions, reflection, and potential new actions. With each edition of this Report, our goal is to help inform public policies and other data-driven decision-making that affects the status of women. This year, we hope the Report will also provide useful context as we all seek to find greater meaning and purpose in our personal and professional lives.

## CONCLUSION

# Turning Research Into Action

We stand at a pivotal time in California's history. The last few years have been undeniably painful. But amidst the pain, there is hope. And, as this Report shows, opportunity. Together, we have the power to create a more equitable and meaningful future for California's women and girls.

That is why we always compile this Report with a laser focus on data specific to California women and girls. We want this research to serve as an effective tool for all who advocate for the advancement of women in our state — from policy analysts, elected officials and business leaders to nonprofit advocates and everyday citizens.

**Here are three additional steps you can take today to help us all advance equity in California:**

### 1 Read the *California Blueprint for Women's Pandemic Recovery*.

If you are interested in advocating for women's economic security in California, please equip yourself with the knowledge contained in this report, published in the fall of 2022 by our allies at the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls. One of their key findings: "Pandemic response through government safety-net programs demonstrably helped women meet life's basic needs, pay down debt and significantly reduced child poverty, highlighting a clear path forward to an equitable economy that has now demonstrated to be feasible."

### 2 Research the status of women in your own community or corporation.

A statewide report is valuable, but we also know that statistics can vary significantly from city to city — even street to street. The Center for the Advancement of Women at Mount Saint Mary's University has developed dozens of customized research reports for nonprofits, foundations, corporations, and government agencies — from Los Angeles County to Sonoma County and beyond. Commission us to produce a report for your community. Or use our Guide to Using U.S. Census Data to create your own localized report.

### 3 Support women's colleges and universities.

Mount Saint Mary's University is not only home to the Center for the Advancement of Women; it is also home to the national Women's College Coalition. The WCC is the only organization that singularly focuses on the advancement of women's higher education. As we have seen in this Report, a college education is vital to improving women's quality of life and decreasing poverty rates in homes headed by women. Learn how you can collaborate with women's colleges nationwide through the WCC.

And women's education isn't the only way you can help California's women find more opportunities to pursue their purpose. Support organizations that advocate for policy changes that improve the quality of life for women, their families, and their communities. Frequent women-owned businesses and invest in their success. Vote for women running for office. We all have a role to play and we all have a responsibility to lift each other up along the way.

### THANK YOU

Thank you for reading this Report and for sharing it with friends, colleagues, and allies statewide. We want to hear if this research is useful to you and your organization. Are there unplowed fields of study that you would like us to address in future Reports? Please let us know: [info.caw@msmu.edu](mailto:info.caw@msmu.edu).

The Center for the Advancement of Women at Mount Saint Mary's University operates as a hub for intersectional gender equity research, advocacy, and leadership development. Our vision is to find solutions to persistent gender inequities and work with partners to eradicate those inequities in our lifetime.

Join us: [msmu.edu/caw](https://msmu.edu/caw).

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> California Department of Public Health. (2023, January 7). *Tracking COVID-19 in California*. [covid19.ca.gov/state-dashboard](https://covid19.ca.gov/state-dashboard)
- <sup>2</sup> McKinsey & Company. (2021, April 5). *Help your employees find purpose — or watch them leave*. [mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/help-your-employees-find-purpose-or-watch-them-leave](https://mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/help-your-employees-find-purpose-or-watch-them-leave)
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## ABOUT US

### ABOUT THE CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN AT MOUNT SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY

The Center for the Advancement of Women at Mount Saint Mary's University is a hub for gender equity research, advocacy, and leadership development. Its vision is to find solutions to persistent gender inequities and work with partners to eradicate those inequities in our lifetime. That goal includes eliminating obstacles that women face in the workplace, in their communities, in the media, and beyond to make a positive difference in the lives of women and girls in California and our nation. The Center also creates public programming, research guides, and training opportunities to engage more partners in its work. → [MSMU.EDU/CAW](https://msmu.edu/caw)

### ABOUT MOUNT SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY

Mount Saint Mary's is the only women's university in Los Angeles and one of the most diverse in the nation. The University is known nationally for its research on gender equality, its innovative health and science programs, and its commitment to community service. As a leading liberal arts institution, Mount Saint Mary's provides year-round, flexible, and online programs at the undergraduate and graduate level. Weekend, evening, and graduate programs are offered to all genders. Mount alums are engaged and active global citizens who use their knowledge and skills to better themselves, their communities, and the world. → [MSMU.EDU](https://msmu.edu)



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