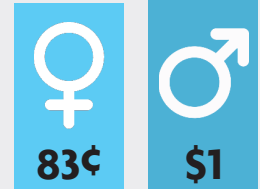


# The Status of Women in NC: Investing In Economic Opportunity For North Carolina Women

Women are an important economic force in North Carolina, as employees, employers, consumers, business owners, caregivers and more. This report highlights where women are making progress and where North Carolina can strengthen its investment in economic opportunity for women—an investment that benefits, families, communities, and the state’s economy as a whole.

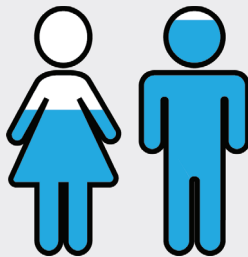
## NC is Slowly Narrowing the Gender Wage Gap

The gender wage gap for women’s median earnings compared to men’s in NC narrowed from 80.9% to 83.4% between 2016 and 2023 raising NC from 31st to 9th place nationally.



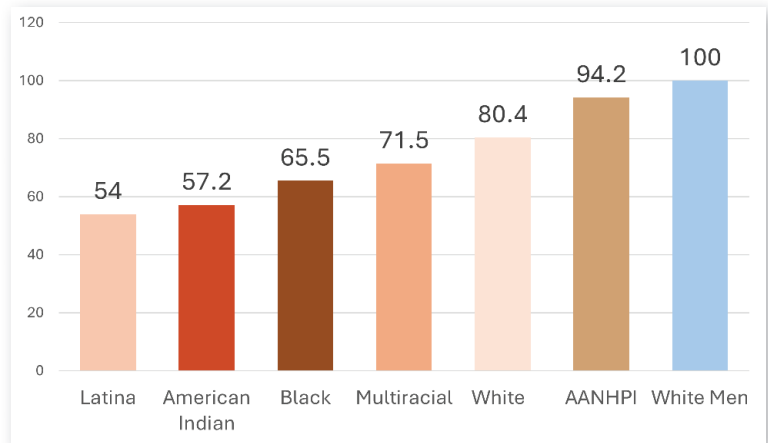
## Fewer Mothers in the Labor Force

68.9 % of mothers with children under the age of six were in the labor force, compared to 93.8% of fathers.

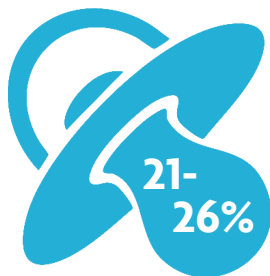


## Women’s vs. Men’s Earnings

Women’s earnings compared to White men varied widely by race/ethnicity.



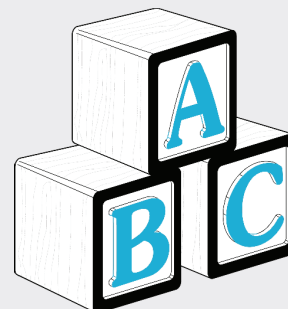
Women with a Bachelor’s degree earned 72¢ for every dollar earned by equally educated men.



of their annual  
income

## Annual Income on Childcare

North Carolina women working full-time spent 21% (for home-based care) to 26% (for center-based care) of their annual income for infant childcare.



## Preschool Enrollment is Lagging

NC ranks lowest among the Southeastern states in preschool enrollment for three-year-olds (7%) and well below the national average (17%). The state also ranks second lowest among the eight states analyzed for four-year-old enrollment (30%).

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## Policy Recommendations

### Expand Access to Paid Family and Medical Leave and Child Care and Early Education

- Create a task force to explore a statewide comprehensive paid family and medical leave program.
- Guarantee workers across the state access to paid sick days.
- Increase North Carolina families' access to childcare by investing in the childcare subsidy program.
- Invest in and expand eligibility for free pre-K for families.



### Support Pay Equity, Livable Wages, and Better Workplaces

- Enact pay equity policies across state agencies to model opportunities for statewide expansion and regional leadership.
- Increase the minimum wage to promote access to livable wages for North Carolinians.
- Extend workplace antidiscrimination protections to cover sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, and marital status.



### Invest in Women's Education, Career Pathways, and Small-Business Ownership

- Expand opportunities for student loan forgiveness for care workers and STEM-related professions.
- Promote collaboration that advances workforce strategies to support women.



The full report by the Institute for Women's Policy Research analyzed data on the status of women in North Carolina compared with women in: FL, GA, KY, SC, TN, VA and WV. It follows up on the 2018 Status of Women in North Carolina report expanding the look at the impacts and costs of childcare and other caregiving on women's economic opportunity along with key labor market indicators such as earnings, employment, labor force participation, and occupational distributions.