

# SENATE CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE

STATE CAPITOL  
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA  
95814

## Women, Poverty, and Inequality

**National Women's Law Center, "Insecure and Unequal: Poverty and Income Among Women and Families, 2000–2012," 2013.**

[http://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/final\\_2013\\_nwlc\\_povertyreport.pdf](http://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/final_2013_nwlc_povertyreport.pdf)

This report provides a number of census statistics on women and poverty, comparing 2012 to 2011 and to 2000. Key findings for 2012 include:

- 14.5% of women lived in poverty, while 11% of men did. This rate was higher for black women (25.1%), Hispanic women (24.8%), Native American women (34.4%), and foreign-born women (20%). Asian women had a poverty rate of 11.5%. White, non-Hispanic women had a poverty rate of 10.3%, while white, non-Hispanic men had a poverty rate of 7.7%.
- Almost 17.8 million women lived in poverty; nearly 7.8 million of these women had incomes at 50% or less of the federal poverty level (described as "extreme poverty").
- More than 16 million children lived in poverty, and 44% of children living in poverty lived in extreme poverty.
- 40.9% of female-headed households with children lived in poverty, while 22.6% of male-headed households with children and 8.9% of married couples with children did. For female-headed households with children, poverty rates were higher for black women (46.7%), Hispanic women (48.6%), Native American women (56.9%), and foreign-born women (47.1%). Asian female-headed families with children had a poverty rate of 26.3%. White, non-Hispanic women in this family type had a poverty rate of 33.1%.

- Women ages 65 or older had a poverty rate of 11%, while men in the same age group had a rate of 6.6%. For women 65 or older living alone, the poverty rate was 18.9%; the rate for men 65 or older living alone was 11.9%. Poverty rates for women in this age group (regardless of living situation) were higher for black women (21.2%), Hispanic women (21.8%), Asian women (12.2%), Native American women (27.1%), and foreign-born women (16.9%). White, non-Hispanic women 65 or older had a poverty rate of 8.6% and the rate for their male counterparts was 4.6%.
- Women were typically paid 77 cents per every dollar earned by their male counterparts. White, non-Hispanic women earned 78% and Asian women earned 87% of what white, non-Hispanic men did, while black women earned 64% and Hispanic women 54% of what white, non-Hispanic men did.

**The Working Poor Families Project, “Low-Income Working Families: The Growing Economic Gap,” Policy Brief, Winter 2012–2013.**

[http://www.workingpoorfamilies.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Winter-2012\\_2013-WPFP-Data-Brief.pdf](http://www.workingpoorfamilies.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Winter-2012_2013-WPFP-Data-Brief.pdf)

This policy brief provides a number of statistics pertaining to low-income working families and states that inequality among working families is on the rise, with working families earning higher incomes receiving a larger share of income compared to working families earning lower incomes. (“Low-income” families are defined as those households earning up to 200% of the federal poverty level; in 2011, for example, this would amount to \$45,622 or less for a family of four with two children.) Also, this brief provides an argument against the notion that low-income families do not work and simply live off of government assistance: “. . . in 2011, more than 7 in 10 low-income families and half of all poor families were working. They simply didn’t earn enough money to pay for basic living expenses.” A few additional statistics of note:

- The proportion of working families in the United States that were low-income rose from 28% in 2007 to 32% in 2011.
- 23.5 million children lived in low-income working families in 2011.
- A disproportionate number of low-income working families are headed by racial/ethnic minorities: 59% of low-income working families had at least one minority parent in 2011, compared to 42% of all working families.

- The one-fifth of working families that earned the lowest incomes took home less than 5 percent of all income earned, while the wealthiest one-fifth of working families earned 48% of all income.
- California was one of 10 states where, between 2007 and 2011, the share of low-income working families increased by at least 5 percentage points.

**The Working Poor Families Project, “Low-Income Working Mothers and State Policy: Investing for a Better Economic Future,” Policy Brief, Winter 2013–2014.**

[http://www.workingpoorfamilies.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/WPFP\\_Low-Income-Working-Mothers-Report\\_021214.pdf](http://www.workingpoorfamilies.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/WPFP_Low-Income-Working-Mothers-Report_021214.pdf)

This policy brief provides an analysis similar to the one described above, but focuses on low-income working mothers. It also references a number of other studies and reports. A few key findings include:

- In 2012, 22% of *all* working families were headed by women, while 39% of low-income working families were. The proportion of low-income working families headed by women was much greater for African Americans, at 65%. This percentage was 20% for Asians, 31% for Latinos, 36% for whites, and 45% for other racial groups.
- Almost 50% of low-income working mothers work in retail and service sector jobs; these jobs often offer few to no benefits, low wages, and limited hours.

**Legal Momentum and the Women’s Legal Defense and Education Fund, “Worst-Off—Single Parent Families in the United States: A Cross-National Comparison of Single Parenthood in the U.S. and Sixteen Other High-Income Countries,” December 2012.**

<http://www.legalmomentum.org/sites/default/files/reports/worst-off-single-parent.pdf>

This report compares single-parent families in the United States to those in 16 other high-income nations (with a per-capita gross income above \$30,000) and finds that, for several indicators, single-parent families in the United States fare the worst. Some findings include:

- 87% of U.S. children living with a single parent lived with their mother (2011).

- 39% of single mothers who were employed were in low-wage jobs (earning less than \$11.23/hour), and 36% of employed single mothers both earned low wages and lived in families with low incomes (up to 200% of the federal poverty level) (2009).
- The United States was the only country examined that did not provide a “child allowance” (i.e., government-supported cash payments to help offset costs associated with raising a child).

*Regarding single mothers, also see:*

**Population Reference Bureau, “U.S. Children in Single-Mother Families,” 2010.**

<http://www.prb.org/pdf10/single-motherfamilies.pdf>

*For poverty data from specific legislative districts, see:*

**The Women’s Foundation of California, “A District by District Look at Poverty in California.”**

<http://www.womensfoundca.org/report/district-district-look-poverty-california>

*Prepared for Senator Mitchell by the Senate Office of Research*