

WOMEN'S ACCESS TO QUALITY JOBS IN MISSISSIPPI

A COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S POLICY
RESEARCH AND THE WOMEN'S FOUNDATION OF MISSISSIPPI





Access to Quality Jobs

Women have a chance at economic security only when they have access to high-quality jobs with fair wages. Financial security and sustainability for women is the mission of the Women's Foundation of Mississippi, and we are happy to commission and share this report.

Women's access to quality jobs in Mississippi is an area that clearly needs a fresh focus and renewed public attention. We hope this report inspires a new dialogue on women in the workforce.

This is a condensed research presentation. This research was conducted by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) and commissioned by the Women's Foundation of Mississippi (WFM). The research in this report supports the idea of improving the quality of all jobs in Mississippi and investing in workers, especially those women workers who are over-represented in low-paying jobs with few benefits.

To read the comprehensive report, please visit our website at www.womensfoundationms.org/resources

This report seeks to provide information for use by ***policymakers, employers, and educators*** to help women obtain jobs that improve economic security of the family.



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Executive Summary

Work is the primary means by which American families and households obtain the resources to meet the basic needs of food, shelter, and healthcare. To provide economic security and stability, however, work should pay a **living wage, provide workers with sufficient hours of work (full-time, full-year employment), and provide access to health insurance, a pension, and the flexibility for working women and men to balance work and family.** Too many jobs fail to meet these desired characteristics.

Despite the fact that most households with children in Mississippi depend on the earnings of women workers—more than one-third of family households are headed by single mothers and more than half of households with children have a breadwinner mother—the earnings of women workers, especially Black and Hispanic women, are even lower than the median for all Mississippi workers (Anderson, Shaw, Childers, Milli, and DuMonthier 2016). **The median wage for all full-time, year-round working women in Mississippi is just \$30,485 (\$35,000 for White women, \$25,404 for Black women, and \$24,388 for Hispanic women).**

Women also earn less than men who work in the same broad occupational group because women are concentrated in the lower-paying detailed occupations that make up each of those broad occupational groups. And, in most cases, women still earn less than men even when they work in the same detailed occupation.



More troubling, this report shows that between 2004 and 2014 the inflation-adjusted median annual earnings of Mississippians working full-time, year-round **fell by more than \$1,000 in 12 of 22 broad occupational groups.** Over the same ten-year period, there was a decline in the share of full-time, year-round workers with family incomes of at least 125 percent of the official poverty line.

In three broad occupational groups—Personal Care and Service Occupations, Community and Social Services Occupations, and Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations—there was a decline of six percentage points or more in the share with family incomes of at least 125 percent of the poverty line. **Women, and women of color in particular, make up the majority of workers in these three broad occupational groups.**

A key reason women have lower earnings than men is the tendency for women to work in different—and lower paying—broad occupational groups than men. The analyses presented in this report found that more than one of every three (34.2 percent) Mississippi workers are in broad occupational groups rated as 'below average' or 'worst' job quality.

The worst job quality occupations alone employ almost one in five (19.7 percent) women but just more than one in ten (11.9 percent) men. These are jobs with earnings too low to provide economic security for a family of four with two full-time working adults and two young children, according to the Basic Economic Security Tables (BEST), one measure of basic needs.

Middle-skill jobs are a great way for women to earn better wages. While women tend to be concentrated in many of the lowest-paying jobs in Mississippi, there are opportunities for higher wages in 'middle-skill jobs' -- jobs that pay above the state median wage but do not require a bachelor's degree.

Among Mississippi workers, women are less likely than men to have full-time, year-round employment (67.3 percent of women, 77.1 percent of men), more likely to have access to paid sick days (60.5 percent of women, 55.9 percent of men), and about equally likely to have employer-provided health insurance (69.8 percent of women, 69.7 percent of men), and retirement benefits (43.3 percent of women, 43.6 percent of men).



Defining & Measuring Quality Jobs

While there is no consensus on what constitutes a “good job,” common characteristics across definitions include:

- **livable wages**
- **the provision of health insurance**
- **employer-supported retirement benefits**
- **access to full- time work**
- **access to paid leave**

This report compares broad occupational groups based on a Job Quality Index comprised of five dimensions:

- 1) **Median annual wages**
- 2) **Employer-provided health insurance**
- 3) **Employer-sponsored retirement benefits**
- 4) **Full-time, full-year employment**
- 5) **Access to paid sick days**

Table 3.1. Job Quality Category Assignment for Broad Occupational Groups in Mississippi

Best Job Quality	Architecture and Engineering
	Computer and Mathematical
	Legal
Above Average Job Quality	Life, Physical, and Social Science
	Management
	Business and Financial Operations
	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical
Average Job Quality	Construction and Extraction
	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair
	Protective Service
	Production
	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports and Media
	Community and Social Services
	Office and Administrative Support
	Education, Training, and Library
Below Average Job Quality	Transportation and Material Moving
	Sales and Related
Worst Job Quality	Farming, Fishing, and Forestry
	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance
	Food Preparation and Serving Related
	Personal Care and Service
	Healthcare Support

Women who do make it into ‘best’ job quality occupations receive a lower wage than even men in the above average job quality category.

Defining & Measuring Quality Jobs

Table 3.4 reveals wage discrepancy by gender within the same job occupation. Women earn less than men in every job quality category, but the wage gap is widest in better jobs and narrowest in the worst quality jobs. Mississippi women working full-time, year-round are paid, on average, just 76 percent of what men are paid. The gender wage gap is larger in the 'best' job quality and 'above average' job quality occupations where the wage gaps in median annual pay are \$19,508 and \$19,632, respectively.

The wage gap is smaller in the 'worst' job quality occupations where women's median wages of \$18,700 are \$3,984 less than their male counterparts in these occupations. In fact, the table shows that women earn less than men in every job quality category. Men are also more likely than women—by almost ten percentage points—to work full-time, year-round.

Full-time, year-round employment increases the probability that workers will receive the other employment benefits. For many other women, part-time employment reflects a lack of full-time options. While many women choose to work part-time, that choice may reflect constraints such as lack of affordable childcare or the need to care for sick or disabled family members such as a parent.

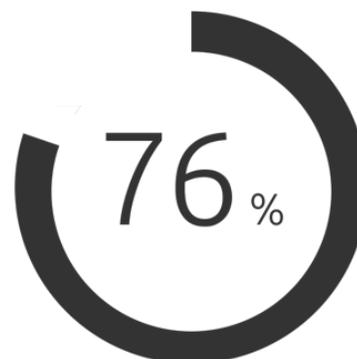
Table 3.4. Job Quality Indicators for Women and Men Nationally, Statewide in Mississippi, and for each Job Quality Category in Mississippi, 2014.

	Median Wages		Health Insurance Coverage (Percent)		Retirement Benefits (Percent)		Employed Full-Time, Year-Round (Percent)		Paid Sick Days (Percent)	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
United States	\$38,614	\$48,976	72.0%	70.4%	44.3%	45.2%	63.3%	75.8%	60.1%	60.2%
Mississippi	\$30,485	\$40,000	69.8%	69.7%	43.3%	43.6%	67.3%	77.1%	60.5%	55.9%
Best Job Quality	\$49,492	\$69,000	87.7%	86.5%	N/A	N/A	86.1%	90.4%	83.5%	84.8%
Above Average Job Quality	\$45,368	\$65,000	83.3%	79.4%	51.9%	54.7%	81.3%	88.4%	77.9%	76.4%
Average Job Quality	\$30,000	\$37,000	77.3%	72.0%	51.5%	44.5%	72.1%	78.6%	68.9%	56.2%
Below Average Job Quality	\$25,000	\$36,088	55.6%	65.6%	N/A	36.6%	53.0%	73.9%	42.7%	50.8%
Worst Job Quality	\$18,700	\$22,684	48.5%	50.2%	20.1	N/A	50.9%	58.2%	35.5%	31.5%

Source: IWPR analysis of 2012-2014 American Community Survey data, 2012-2014 Current Population Survey data, and 2014 Integrated Health Interview Series data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMs). N/A indicates too few observations to calculate percentage.

Note: Workers age 16 and older. Median earnings are for full-time, year-round workers (35 or more hours per week and 50 or more weeks per year). Health Insurance is coverage provided by an employer or union of any family member.

Mississippi women working full-time, year-round are paid, on average, just 76% of what men are paid.



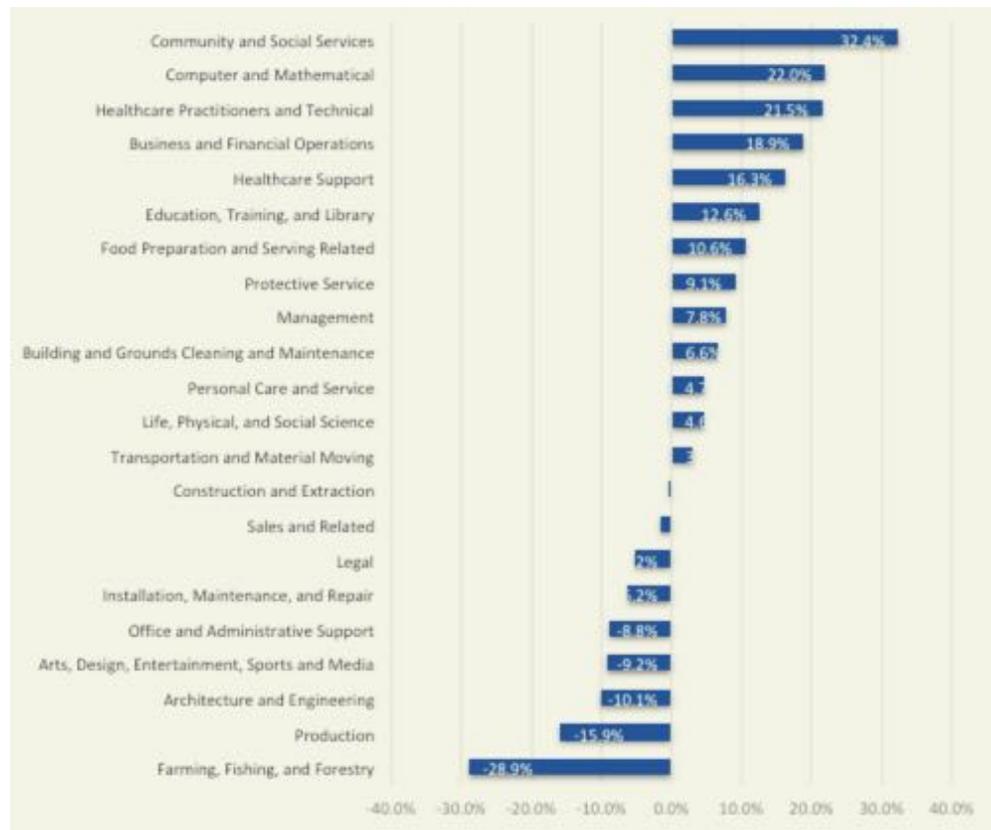
Job Market Conditions

In 2014 there were almost 16,000 more jobs in Mississippi than there had been in 2004, a rate of net job growth of 1.4 percent, a rate 4.2 percentage points lower than the national growth rate (5.6 percent; Bureau of Labor Statistics 2015a). The rate of job growth was also much lower than the rate of population growth—there was a 6.9 percent increase in the working-age population (aged 16 to 64) in Mississippi. To better understand which occupations are growing and which are in decline, Figure 2.1 shows job growth and job losses in Mississippi between 2004 and 2014 across 22 broad occupational groups. Nine of the 22 broad occupational groups had a net loss of jobs over the ten-year period while 13 experienced job growth.

The growth in healthcare jobs in Mississippi reflects the growth in demand for healthcare as the baby boomer generation ages, as is the case nationally, but Mississippi has particularly demanding healthcare needs. Obesity is a serious problem in the state (as it is nationally), and the state ranks at or near the bottom nationally for heart disease mortality, incidence of diabetes, and poor mental health, among other health related ailments (Anderson *et al.* 2016).

The fastest growing broad occupational groups are Community and Social Services Occupations, Computer and Mathematical Occupations, and Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations, each experiencing growth of 20 percent to more than 30 percent across this recent ten-year period. Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations, Community and Social Services Occupations, along with Healthcare Support Occupations (16.3 percent growth) are part of the established Healthcare and Social Assistance Industry in Mississippi. In addition, a new healthcare support industry is growing in regions of the state like the Mississippi Delta (State of Mississippi 2015).

Figure 2.1. Percentage Job Growth and Decline by Broad Occupational Group for the years 2004 to 2014



In contrast to the fast growing broad occupational groups, Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations and Production Occupations saw a substantial decline in workers, with employment dropping by 28.9 percent and 15.9 percent, respectively.

The broad occupational groups employing the largest numbers of Mississippians in both 2004 and 2014 were *Office and Administrative Support Occupations*, despite its loss of almost 15,000 jobs, *Sales and Related Occupations* with a loss of nearly 2,000 jobs, and, even with the loss of more than 19,500 jobs, *Production Occupations*.

The fastest growing jobs in Mississippi are predominantly done by women and many are in the **worst job quality** occupations.

Women are more than 70% of all workers in the four broad occupational groups projected to grow the fastest in Mississippi between 2012 and 2022.

THE FUTURE OF MISSISSIPPI JOBS

OCCUPATIONAL TRENDS AND STRATEGIES TO INCREASE WOMEN'S ACCESS

Reason for Hope, Room for Growth

The report points to the need for embracing multiple strategies to increase women’s access to high quality jobs. Improving women’s job quality and economic security requires increasing the number of women in **middle-skill STEM and other nontraditional jobs for women.**

While not all middle-skill jobs are high quality jobs, nationally more than one-half of projected job openings in middle-skill are good quality. In technical terms, these occupations have median annual earnings for full-time workers of \$35,000 or more, suggesting that many of these jobs represent a promising prospect for workers seeking to improve their circumstances.

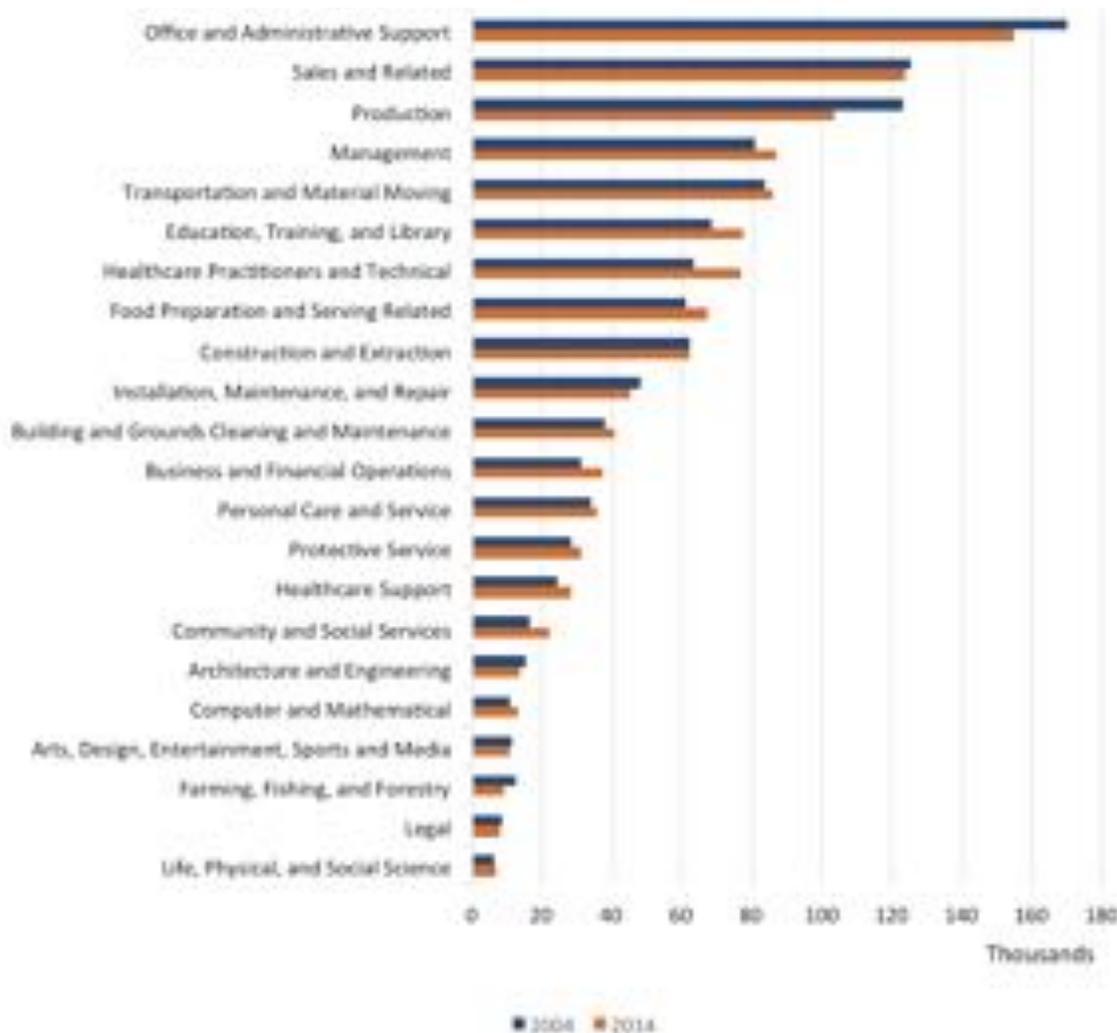
Where to Watch

The occupations with the greatest projected growth are:

- 1) Healthcare Support
- 2) Healthcare Practitioners
- 3) Personal Care and Service
- 4) Education, Training, Library

The groups projected to grow fastest are all predominantly female occupations. Two of those groups are currently rated as 'worst' job quality with low median wages and few benefits.

Figure 2.2. Total Employment by Broad Occupational Group, 2004 and 2014.



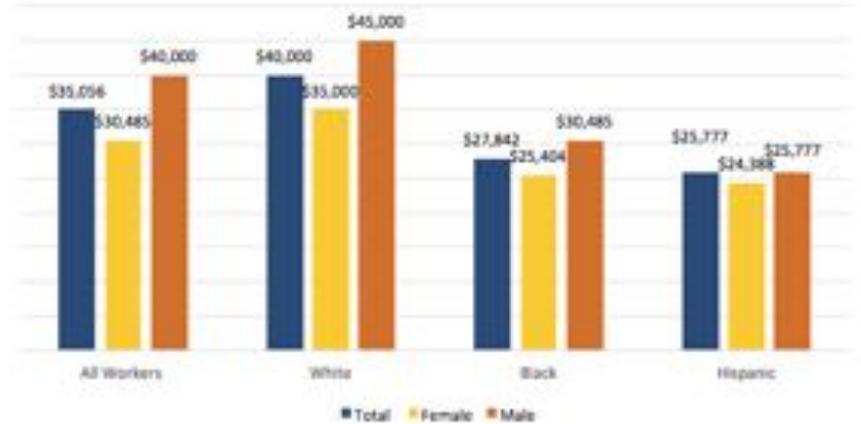
THE WAGE GAP BY GENDER & RACE

At a Glance ▼

The wages of all women working full-time, year-round in Mississippi are just 67.7 percent of White men's wages.

Women are paid less than their same-race male counterparts across all major racial/ethnic groups with the smallest gaps among Black and Hispanic workers due to the low wages of Black and Hispanic men. White women are paid 77.8 percent, Black women are paid 56.5 percent, and Hispanic women just 54.2 percent of White men's wages.

Figure 5.2. Median Wages for Mississippi Workers by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex, 2014.



Wage Discrepancy ▼

Occupational segregation does not fully explain the gender wage gap because even when women work in the same detailed occupations as men, they still earn less than their male counterparts.

In addition to segregation by occupation, wage gaps reflect the devaluation of work that has historically been, and continues to be, done primarily by women, the concentration of women into low-wage occupations, the demands of women's caregiving responsibilities, and discrimination.

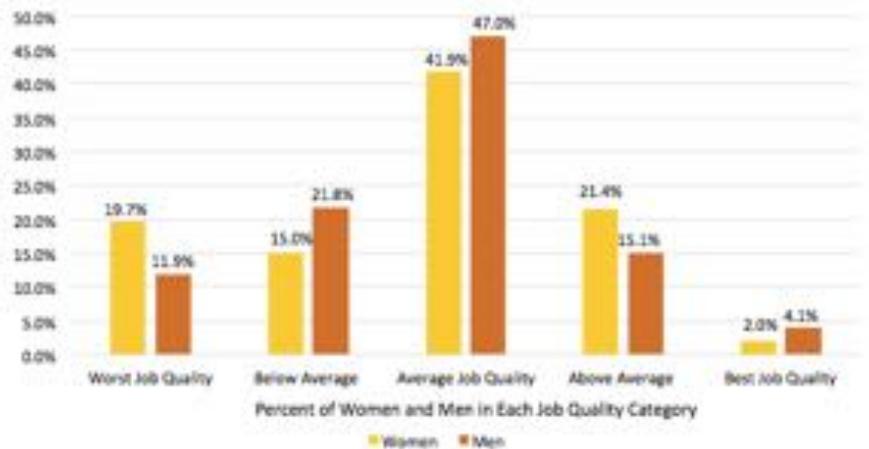
Who Works Where? ▼

Men are more likely than women to be in best quality jobs, 47.0 percent of all men compared with 41.9 percent of women.

Men are also more likely than women to work in below average job quality occupations—21.8 percent of men compared with 15.0 percent of women—while women are more likely than men to work in above average job quality occupations—21.4 percent versus 15.1 percent.

Below, in Figure 5.3, this report examines the distributions of workers across job quality categories, broad occupational groups, and detailed occupations by sex and, to the extent possible, race/ethnicity.

Figure 5.3. Distribution of Mississippi Workers' Job Quality Categories by Sex, 2014



As distressing as these circumstances are, the above analyses show that much of the inequality within the Mississippi labor market falls along gender and racial lines.

Women in Mississippi earn just 76 cents for every dollar men earn, and the gaps for Black and Hispanic women are even greater.

While the largest share of workers from all racial/ethnic groups—men and women—work in 'average' job quality occupations, women are more likely than men to work in 'above average' job quality occupations, yet in that job quality category women earn nearly \$20,000 less per year than men. In fact, across all job quality categories women earn less than men, ranging from almost \$20,000 less in the 'best' job quality category to about \$4,000 less in the 'worst' quality occupational category.

These inequities reflect both occupational segregation—women are more likely to work in lower-paying detailed occupations than men across all job quality categories—and women being paid less than men even when they work in the same detailed occupations.

Efforts to raise women's earnings and close the gender wage gap will require that more women, especially women of color, move into better-paying nontraditional occupations.

We must ensure women's access to the education and job training that are required to succeed. Specifically, we must lower the barriers to girls and women's graduation, including high school and their full participation in higher education, apprenticeships, and other means of job preparation.

Efforts must include educating girls and young women early about both traditional and nontraditional occupations including job training requirements, occupational responsibilities, and earnings.

Health insurance coverage was also crucial, not just to address physical illness or disability, but also to ensure access to contraception and mental health care. These examples illustrate the interconnected nature of the barriers women face in their efforts to become self-sufficient and provide for their families.

The good news is that, assuming the gender composition of occupations remains the same, women are estimated to be 71.9 percent of workers in new jobs in the 'above average' job quality category.

Women are also, however, expected to be more than 70 percent (72.9 percent) of all workers in projected new jobs in the worst job quality category. Women are expected to fill only 28.2 percent of projected new openings in the 'best' job quality category and just more than one-half (50.7 percent) of projected openings in the 'average' job quality category.

Why Race Matters



White men



White women



22.2%



Black women



43.5%



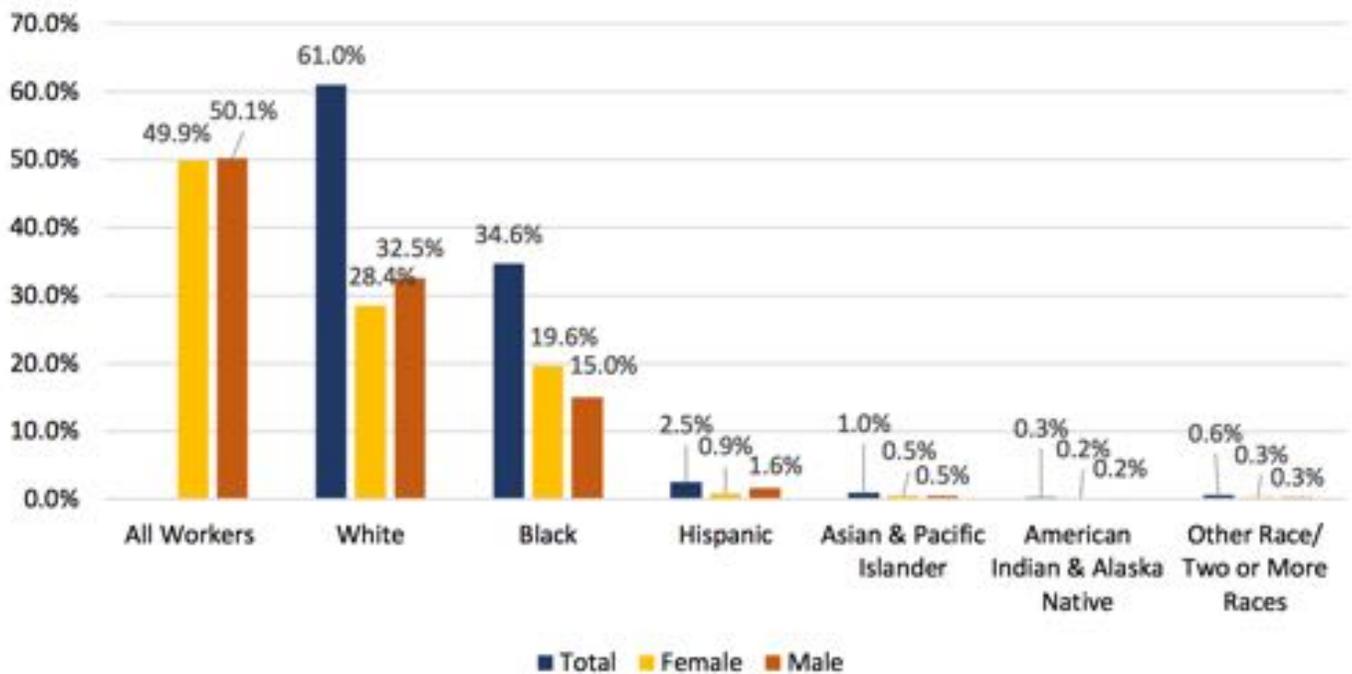
Hispanic women



45.8%



Figure 5.1. Sex and Race Composition of Mississippi Workers, 2014





PUTTING WOMEN IN THE DECISION-MAKER'S CHAIR

ECONOMIC SECURITY FROM THE TOP-DOWN

EXPERIENCE, EDUCATION, TRAINING

Increasing women's access to better quality jobs in Mississippi will require that high school graduation rates improve and will likely require additional education and training beyond high school. Beyond high school, many young women (and men) in Mississippi will need to obtain some postsecondary education including associate's degrees and non-degree awards. Key policies to increase postsecondary educational attainment include increasing financial aid and/or free tuition, especially at Mississippi's community colleges. Partnering with employers and unions to provide apprenticeships for low-wage workers, especially for jobs that are nontraditional for women, can raise women's earnings and help increase occupational integration. Employers and unions can also explore other career paths in addition to apprenticeships that allow progress into better paying jobs. These policies can increase access to better-paying jobs for women in poorly paid jobs across job quality categories, but especially for women in below average and worst job quality occupations.

ELIMINATING EMPLOYMENT BIAS

Enforcement of anti-discrimination laws which prohibit the use of sex, race, ethnicity, national origin, and religion in decisions about recruiting, hiring, firing, job placement, promotions, steering, etc. is critical to ensuring equal employment opportunity. This includes policies such as requiring employers to provide aggregate pay data by sex, race, and ethnicity and making it illegal to prohibit workers from sharing information about their salaries. More transparency in employer decision-making around hiring, pay, and promotion can help reduce occupational segregation and close gender wage gaps. ***Just closing the gender wage gap for similar men and women could, by itself, cut the poverty rate among working women in Mississippi in half.*** Reducing levels of occupational segregation is a crucial step in closing the gender wage gap.

Policy Recommendations

1 Increase the minimum wage. The federal minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour, leaving many workers and their families in poverty. Raising the minimum wage, including for tipped workers who have a federal minimum wage of \$2.13, would improve overall job quality, raise earnings, and reduce gender and racial wage gaps.

Increase access to health insurance and retirement benefits. This will improve standard of life for women.



3

Increase access to paid sick days. Legislation providing access to paid sick days would allow these workers to take care of themselves and their families without fear of losing their jobs or losing badly needed wages.

Increase access to full-time, full-year work to help workers meet the economic needs of their families.

4

Reduce discrimination by improving enforcement of state and federal anti-discrimination laws, and increasing transparency around hiring, job placement, and pay, and banning the use of salary history in determining the current salary of new hires.

5

6

Increase access to training and education through increased financial support, subsidized and on-campus childcare, and partnerships with employers and unions to provide apprenticeships and other career pathways to nontraditional jobs for women and disadvantaged men in STEM and health care.



7

Improve workers' access to collective bargaining to increase wages and to increase access to paid sick days, health insurance, and retirement benefits for workers, as well as both the predictability of work schedules and the flexibility to take time off with pay to care for family members.

Conclusion

Women's access to quality jobs in Mississippi is not where it needs to be. Working women, especially single mothers, need increased access to continued education and workforce training, so they may improve their financial situation and achieve economic security and longterm sustainability.

Women in Mississippi earn just 75 cents for every dollar men earn, and the gaps for Black and Hispanic women are even greater. These inequities reflect both occupational segregation - women are more likely to work in lower-paying detailed occupations than men across all job quality categories - and women being paid less than men even when they work in the same detailed occupations.

The research in this report illustrates the pressing case for attention from employers and policymakers to the quality of all jobs in Mississippi. Improving job quality will help all Mississippi workers, but especially women who are most likely to be in the worst quality jobs.

It is critical that improving job quality is an urgent priority, because it appears to be headed in the wrong direction - between 2004 and 2014 median pay has fallen in 15 of the 22 broad occupational groups studied. Poverty rates among full-time, year-round workers have increased. Absent any changes to job quality in Mississippi, job growth will help maintain current inequities and likely lead to an increase in the total number of Mississippi workers with low wages and few benefits. Two of the four fastest growing broad occupational groups - Healthcare Support Occupations and Personal Care and Service Occupations - are among the worst job quality occupations in the state, and they are more than 70 percent female.

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This is a condensed research presentation.

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The Women's Foundation of Mississippi is the only grant making entity in the state focused entirely on women and girls. We provide financial and other resources to cultivate social change that will create long-term opportunity for personal stability and stronger families. We provide funding to community partners, commission and share credible research, and advocate for breaking systemic barriers.

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