FUTURE FORWARD WOMEN

U.S. WOMEN'S POWER AND INFLUENCE INDEX

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A state-by-state ranking of where women have the **most** and **least** power

✚ 2025 STATUS UPDATE

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FUTURE
FORWARD
WOMEN

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Future Forward Women is a new national initiative to build women's power and influence in the U.S. We unite, convene, and support catalytic leaders, organizations, and changemakers committed to driving lasting change in the lives of women, girls, and families. Our goal is to WIN big for women and families across all 50 states.

Established in 1987, **The New York Women's Foundation** has built a robust philanthropic strategy rooted in advancing gender, racial, and economic rights, placing us among the largest women-led grantmaking organizations in the world.

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METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

The index is part of Future Forward Women's ongoing commitment to advancing the best and boldest ideas, public policies, and strategies for building women's power and influence in the U.S.

To create the Power and Influence Index and tell the intricate story of women's lives across states, we relied on the most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, various federal and state-level agencies, and other relevant sources, including data compiled by the Center for American Women in Politics and Vote, Run, Lead. A complete list of sources can be found in the Appendices.

To understand women's absolute and relative levels of power and influence across the 50 states, we developed an Index composed of 18 key indicators and a bundle of nine critical public policies. The Index is structured around four key dimensions: economic status, civic engagement and **political inclusion, health, and public policy and legal protections**. A complete list of indicators can be found in the Appendices.

U.S. WOMEN'S POWER AND INFLUENCE INDEX, 2025

TOP 10 STATES

1 District of Columbia
2 Massachusetts
3 New York
4 Maryland
5 Washington
6 Vermont
7 California
8 Oregon
9 Colorado
10 Connecticut

BOTTOM 10 STATES

51 Alabama
50 Mississippi
49 Tennessee
48 Arkansas
47 South Carolina
46 North Carolina
45 Texas
44 Georgia
43 Indiana
42 West Virginia

A Story of Two Americas: Women's Rights and Well-Being Defined by State Borders

> ❝ *[My doctors] said they wanted to help, but couldn't under Texas law. Where else in medicine do we do nothing and just wait and see how sick a patient becomes before acting?* ❞
>
> **—Anna Zargarian, Texas Resident**[3]

The Power and Influence Index presents a stark and concerning portrait of everyday women whose economic well-being and ability to make ends meet for their families, safety, and access to high-quality health care are determined by their state borders.

Women living in states that rank in the top fifty percent of the Power and Influence Index tend to earn more, achieve higher levels of educational attainment, benefit from work policies and supports such as paid sick leave and childcare, experience better health outcomes, and are less likely to live in poverty.

Conversely, women in the bottom 25 states in the Index and the South are among the least likely to wield power and influence in their states. Southern states and many in the Midwest consistently rank low or last in the Index across all measures of women's well-being, placing them in the bottom 20 percent of states where women have the least power and influence.

The District of Columbia ranks first for women's power and influence in the United States, and the state of Alabama ranks last.

RANK	STATE	FINAL SCORE
1	District of Columbia	0.751
2	Massachusetts	0.741
3	New York	0.696
4	Maryland	0.672
5	Washington	0.672
6	Vermont	0.647
7	California	0.641
8	Oregon	0.638
9	Colorado	0.633
10	Connecticut	0.595
11	Illinois	0.595
12	Michigan	0.594
13	New Jersey	0.592
14	Maine	0.573
15	Hawaii	0.571
16	Delaware	0.567
17	Rhode Island	0.555
18	Minnesota	0.521
19	Nevada	0.506
20	Iowa	0.500
21	New Mexico	0.498
22	Montana	0.489
23	Alaska	0.486
24	New Hampshire	0.476
25	Florida	0.438
26	North Dakota	0.434
27	Nebraska	0.429

RANK	STATE	FINAL SCORE
28	Arizona	0.411
29	Wisconsin	0.406
30	Kansas	0.396
31	Wyoming	0.392
32	Virginia	0.388
33	Pennsylvania	0.371
34	Missouri	0.361
35	Ohio	0.348
36	South Dakota	0.342
37	Utah	0.325
38	Idaho	0.324
39	Oklahoma	0.314
40	Kentucky	0.306
41	Louisiana	0.305
42	West Virginia	0.296
43	Indiana	0.294
44	Georgia	0.273
45	Texas	0.260
46	North Carolina	0.252
47	South Carolina	0.215
48	Arkansas	0.206
49	Tennessee	0.187
50	Mississippi	0.177
51	Alabama	0.158

Source: Analysis and calculations by Future Forward Women, 2025

THE BEST STATES FOR WOMEN'S POWER AND INFLUENCE IN THE U.S.

The District of Columbia ranks first for women's power and influence in the United States.

The District of Columbia holds the top position in the nation regarding women's power and influence. This should-be state claims the number one ranking because of its supportive public policies for women and families, strong health outcomes, and a significant presence of women in influential roles. Women in the District earn more than their counterparts in any other state and possess the highest bachelor's degrees nationwide.

Massachusetts, New York, Maryland, and Vermont round out the list of the top five states for women's power and influence in the U.S. Each state ranked in the top 10 on all four dimensions of power and influence.

WOMEN OF COLOR + POWER & INFLUENCE

In the top 10 states for Women's Power and Influence, women of color were better off or held more power and influence in the states than those states that ranked in the bottom 10 states in the index. In Massachusetts, the median annual earnings for Black women is $36,743, and more than 40 percent hold a Bachelor's degree.[4] In sharp contrast, in Louisiana, the median salary for Black women is $ $24,743 and less than 17 percent have a college degree.[5]

White women hold the most power and influence in the U.S. and surpass Black and Hispanic women on every indicator of well-being and influence in the Index.

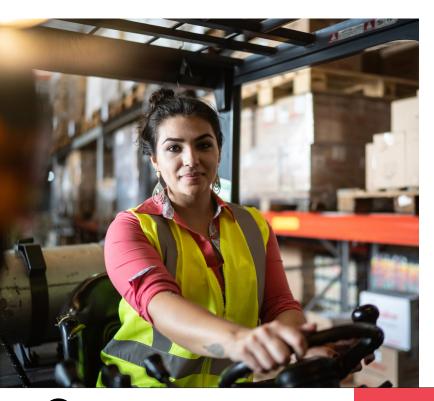# THE WORST STATES FOR WOMEN'S POWER AND INFLUENCE IN THE U.S.

The state of Alabama ranks 51st in the nation for women's power and influence in the U.S.
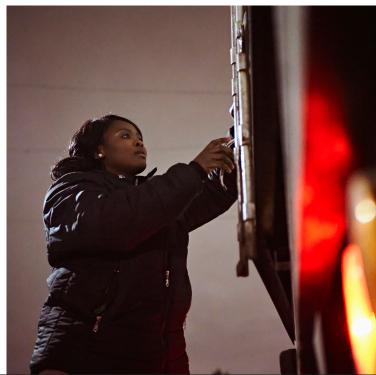
Alabama edged out several other low-ranked states to earn the dubious distinction of being the state where women fare the worst and have the least power and influence. The state earned nearly negative scores due to its lack of support for policies and legislation that support women, families, and equitable health outcomes.

The state of Mississippi ranks last in terms of economic power for women.
Women in the state have lower median earnings and face higher poverty rates compared to women in other parts of the country.

Tennessee, Arkansas, and South Carolina are the three other states in the bottom five for women's power and influence.

States in the bottom 25 percent of the Power and Influence Index also rank lowest on nearly all well-being indicators for women and families.

APPENDIX

METHODOLOGY NOTE:

In each domain, we used commonly accepted measures to create sub-indices. Two conversions of variables were necessary to standardize each index and create a comprehensive index that captured all of the measures.

First, we had to make all of the variables directional. Variables were converted to the same direction to address the different directional interpretations so that higher values consistently indicated worse outcomes. Some variables were changed from positive measures to negative measures.

LIST OF POWER AND INFLUENCE INDEX INDICATORS

Economic (8):

- Educational Attainment
- Poverty
- Median Household Income
- Weekly Earnings
- Women's Earnings % of Men's Earnings
- Labor Force Participation
- Unemployment
- Union Membership

Political Power (5):

- Number of Women Elected to Congress (House by State)
- Number of Women Elected to Congress (Senate by State)
- Number of Women in State Legislatures (by state)
- Percent of Women Voted (by state)
- Women in Executive Office or Leadership (by state)

Health (3):

- Insurance Rate Coverage
- Maternal Mortality Rate
- Gender-Based Violence
- Public Policy and Legislation (9 public policies and legislation):
- Universal Pre-K
- Reproductive Rights (Access to Care)
- Paid Sick Leave
- Earned Income Tax Credit (State)
- Medicaid Expansion
- Pay Transparency
- Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)
- Sexual Harassment
- Tipped Wages

Limitation of the Index

While this Index tells us much about the power and influence of women in the U.S. and their social, economic, and political well-being, it does not paint an all-encompassing picture. At the onset, we recognized the severe gap in data and information available on particular groups of women, including lesbian and bisexual women, transgender women, women with disabilities, and women who are incarcerated. As a result, our analysis may be limited. We intend for this report to spark further conversations and provide the impetus for additional research and data collection.