



The state of Wyoming would lose at least \$45 million in GDP if every Wyoming woman stayed home from work for just one day.¹ Women's participation in the workforce increased dramatically in the second half of the 20th century and women are increasingly recognized as drivers of economic growth.^{2,3} Since 1970, around one-quarter of the current U.S. GDP has been generated by women.⁴ Every year, women's paid labor adds \$7.6 trillion to the national GDP.⁵ Keeping women in the workforce is crucial to the wellbeing of Wyoming's economy.

The benefits of women's participation in the workforce are not purely financial. Nationally, 86% of workers in healthcare support occupations (e.g., nursing assistants, pharmacy aides, medical assistants, etc.) are women; this percentage grows to 90% in Wyoming.⁶ Similarly in the education sector, the majority of staff in Wyoming's schools are women.⁷ Without the predominantly female workforce to fill these occupations, medical facilities, pharmacies and schools would not function.

In Wyoming, the median annual wage for employed civilian women in 2019 was \$37,520, just 70% of the median annual wage (\$50,005) of their male counterparts.⁸ Women earn less than their male counterparts across all industries, even with similar academic credentials.⁹ Average annual wages for men are higher in comparison with women in every age group.¹⁰

The Census Bureau estimates that 23.6 million women in the U.S. lived in poverty in 2019.¹¹ More than 34,000 of these women were from Wyoming (about 12% of all women in the state).¹² Prior to the pandemic, poverty was on the decline nationwide and in Wyoming.¹³ The United States saw an annual decline in poverty for five consecutive years while 2019 marked the second consecutive annual decline in poverty for Wyoming.¹⁴

When women work, research shows they invest 90% of their income back into local goods and services that benefit their families.¹⁵ That is a tremendous impact to local economies—and a good reason to make sure policies support labor force attachment, business development, support for entrepreneurs, and strong wages for Wyoming women.

Women in the Equality State are an underutilized economic resource. Wyoming policymakers can lead the way in ensuring a statewide workforce that attracts and retains employees equitably, across all sectors—a move that would significantly strengthen the state's economy overall—by prioritizing the women who are already in the workforce while putting in place policies to encourage women to join, rejoin, or remain in the labor force.

Women in Wyoming's Workforce

Women are an integral part of Wyoming's economy. Women make up 40% of Wyoming's full time civilian workforce.¹⁶ Of these over 82,000 workers, over half are employed in three industries: health care and social assistance, education, and retail trade.¹⁷

In Wyoming, women made up 90% of persons working in healthcare support occupations (e.g., nursing aides, home health aides, and dental assistants), compared to 86% nationally.¹⁸ Women made up 71% of teaching full-time equivalents (FTEs) and 63% of educational support staff FTEs.¹⁹ The gender split in legal occupations, sales and related occupations, and building/grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations is nearly equal. However, women in these occupations are generally in lower wage roles, earning 65%, 57%, and 58%, respectively, of what their male counterparts earn.^{20,21}

WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESS & ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN WYOMING

Women-owned businesses, which currently comprise less than a third of all businesses in the state, are

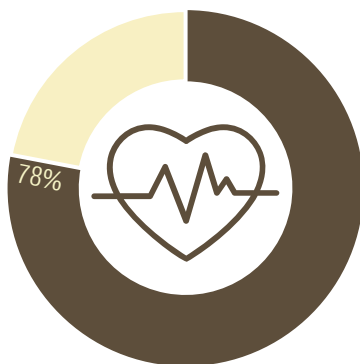
on the rise in Wyoming; they've increased by nearly 47% since 2012 and continue to grow.²² The growth in women-owned business is good for all of Wyoming since women are more likely to identify and remedy market needs, and boost the state's economy through increased employment rates, and greater purchase/sale of goods and services.²³ Research also shows that women-owned businesses promote greater economic stability, both in terms of income and employment rate, especially during times of recession.²⁴

THE NONPROFIT SECTOR

Nonprofits are a vital part of Wyoming's economy. In fact, 11% of all female workers are employed by private non-profit organizations.²⁵

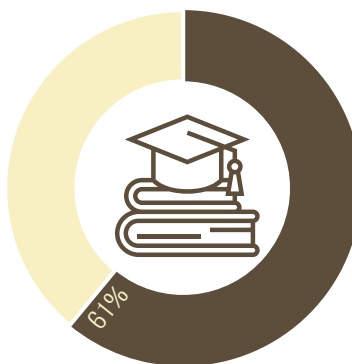
Not only are nonprofit organizations key to Wyoming's economy, they and the women who are employed in this sector supplement efforts to address needs unmet by other industries. Oftentimes, they can react more quickly to emerging social and economic problems.²⁶

OVER HALF OF ALL WYOMING WOMEN ARE EMPLOYED IN THREE INDUSTRIES



Women make up 78% of the health care and social assistance industry in Wyoming.

25% of working Wyoming women are in this industry.



Women make up 61% of the education services industry in Wyoming.

16% of working Wyoming women are in this industry.



Women make up 48% of the retail trade industry in Wyoming.

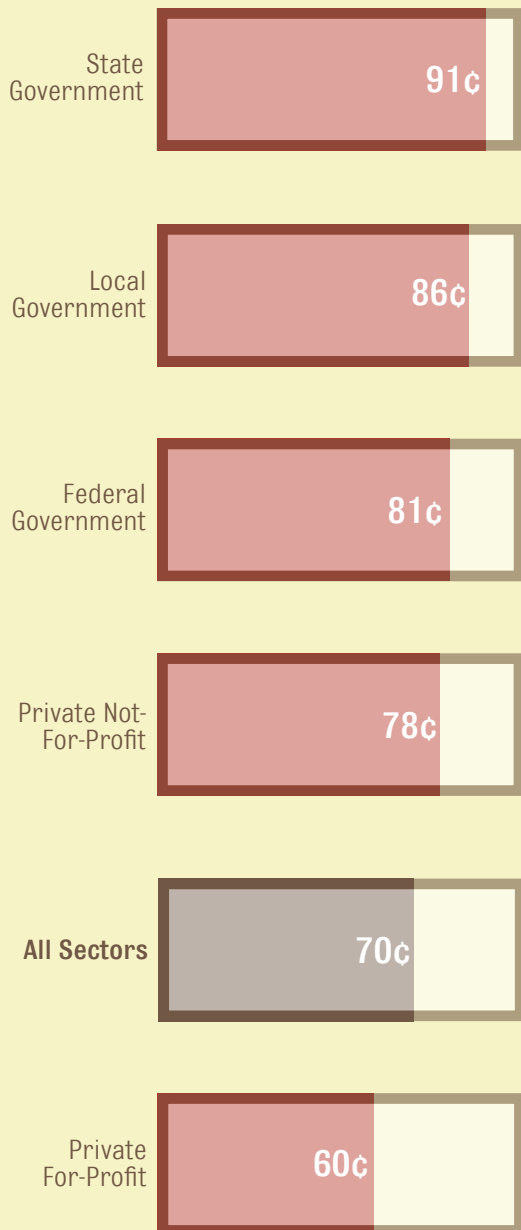
12% of working Wyoming women are in this industry.

Source: American Community Survey

A Closer Look at Women in Wyoming's Workforce

WAGE GAP BY SECTOR

For every dollar Wyoming men are paid, Wyoming women are paid...



Source: American Community Survey

ECONOMIC DRIVERS

Women make up

40%

of Wyoming's full-time, year-round civilian workforce

Source: American Community Survey

Women invest

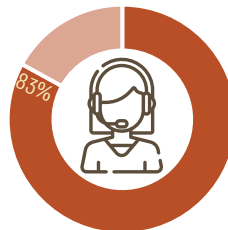
90%

of their income back into local goods and services that benefit their family

Source: The Lancet & Women Deliver

WOMEN'S OCCUPATIONS

62% of Wyoming women work in one of these three majority-female occupation areas

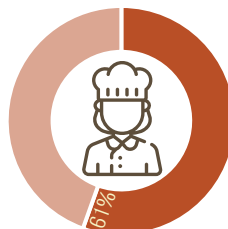
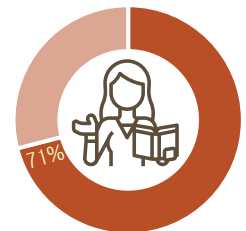


Women hold 83% of all office and administrative support occupations.

25,575 Wyoming women work as bill collectors, postal clerks, tellers, court clerks, dispatchers, and secretaries.

Women hold 71% of all educational instruction and library occupations.

14,826 Wyoming women work as K-12 teachers, professors, and librarians.



Women hold 61% of all food preparation and serving related occupations.

10,757 Wyoming women work as cooks, servers, dishwashers, fast food workers, waitresses, and hostesses.

Source: American Community Survey; Bureau of Labor Statistics

Strategies for Increasing Economic Impact

THE GENDER WAGE GAP

In 2018, the Department of Workforce Services produced a report that examined the impact to Wyoming's economy of closing the gender wage gap. When economists from the Research and Planning section modeled the impact of raising women's hourly wages to match those of Wyoming men, their analysis estimated an infusion of \$153 million in labor income in one year alone.²⁷

That additional labor income would contribute to another 604 jobs, approximately \$22.2 million in additional labor income, and over \$80 million in output to the Wyoming economy, as measured in 2016 dollars.²⁸

Maintaining competitive wages and minimizing gender wage disparities in sectors that are predominantly women is an important component of this economic effort. Among teachers, despite overall stagnant wages in education, the wage gap tends to be smaller—in large part because they have an objective pay scale.²⁹ Tools like an objective pay scale can help ensure equitable wages.

THE MINIMUM WAGE & TIPPED MINIMUM WAGE

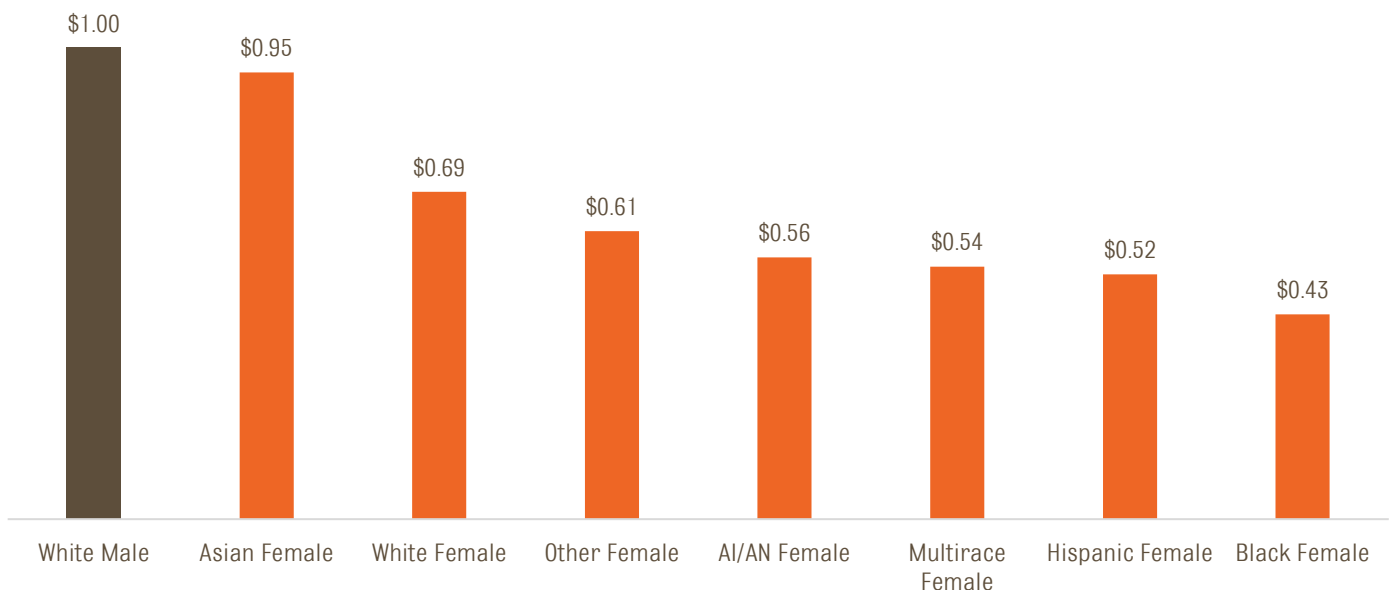
Women in Wyoming comprise the majority of the state's minimum wage and tipped wage workforce. The 2018 Department of Workforce Services report on wage and benefit disparities in Wyoming demonstrated that raising the state minimum wage to just \$9.50 per hour and raising the tipped minimum wage to \$5.50 per hour will address 2/3 of the gender wage gap. In turn, this slight increase in women's earnings would result in increased spending in Wyoming's communities.³⁰

In 2019, Wyoming women in food preparation and serving related occupations earned \$0.83 for every \$1.00 earned by their male counterparts.³¹

Raising the minimum wage for all workers would help draw many more workers – women and men – out of poverty.³²

GENDER WAGE GAP IN WYOMING, BY RACE

The gender wage gap is even greater for women of color



Source: American Community Survey

FOCUS ON MARGINAL PROPENSITY TO CONSUME (MPC)

Marginal propensity consume is the increase in consumer spending that results from an increase in income especially at lower income levels.³³ This means that when income increases for lower income workers, they tend to spend more of that income than high wage earners.³⁴ Therefore, increasing wages for low-income women will be directly beneficial to Wyoming's economy.

MAINTAIN WYOMING WOMEN'S LABOR FORCE ATTACHMENT

Lack of benefits such as paid family leave and paid sick days has a greater negative impact on women than men because women are more likely to stay home with sick children or other ill family members.³⁵ When women exit the labor force, the impacts to state and local economies are severe. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, hundreds of thousands of women nationwide have been forced out of the workforce to care for children. The full economic impact of this exodus is not yet known, but economists predict that if even 1% of mothers were to leave the workforce, the national economy would lose over \$64.5 billion per year.³⁶ In addition, the nation may permanently lose almost five million child care slots, a loss that may greatly hamper post-pandemic economic recovery.³⁷

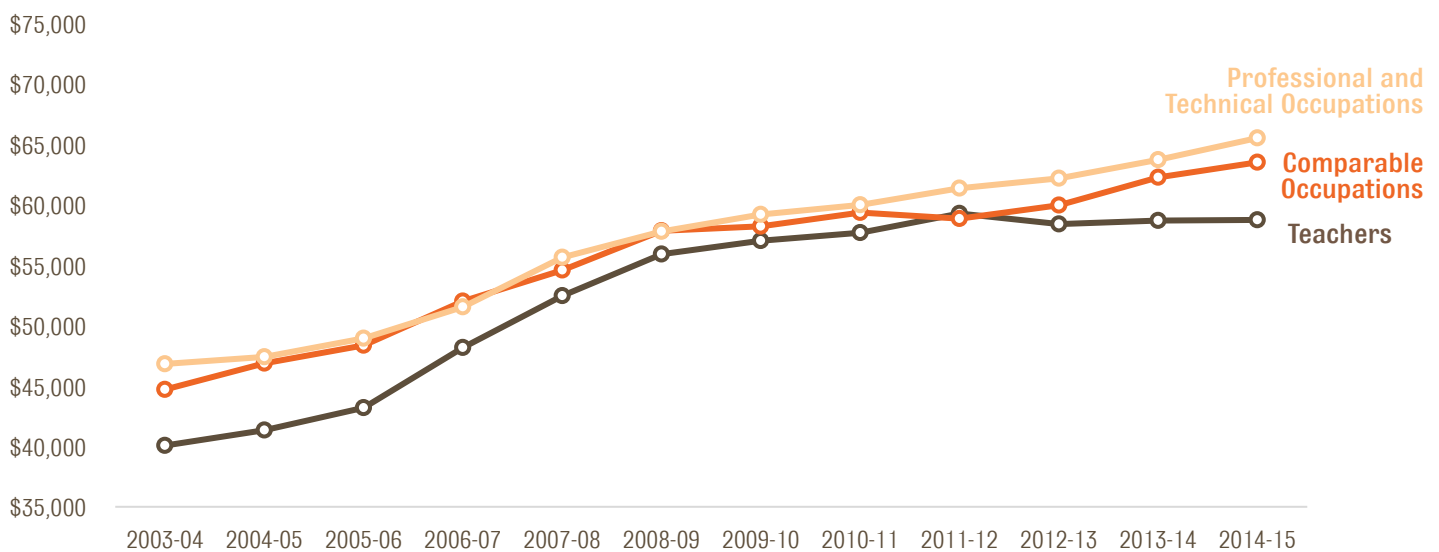
ENSURE THAT SALARIES IN EDUCATION AND HEALTHCARE KEEP PACE WITH OTHER PROFESSIONAL ROLES

In Wyoming, women made up 90% of healthcare support employees, compared to 86% nationally.³⁸ Many of these occupations pay relatively low hourly wages, particularly pharmacy aides and physical therapist aides, who in 2019 earned median hourly wages of \$10.82 and \$12.44 respectively.³⁹

A recent report to the Wyoming Select Committee on Education Recalibration found that, on average, Wyoming teaching wages have not significantly increased since 2012.⁴⁰ On average, Wyoming teachers earn approximately \$60,000 annually.⁴¹

In contrast, wages in professional and technical occupations (e.g., accountants, registered nurses, architects, and computer programmers) saw a sustained rise of 2-3% each year over the past four years. In 2019, workers in professional and technical occupations earned, on average, \$70,000 annually.⁴² This sustained wage increase also appears in the narrower set of comparable occupations, currently at \$68,512. "Since 2012 wage growth in comparable occupations continued while wages in teaching have flattened."⁴³

AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGES FOR TEACHERS AND COMPARABLE WORKERS IN WYOMING



Source: Teacher Labor Markets in Wyoming: Final Report to Wyoming Select Committee on School Finance Recalibration

EQUALIZE LENDING AND SUPPORT FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Women-owned businesses regularly receive less funding than comparable businesses owned by men. Research from biz2Credit, an organization that provides funding to small businesses, found that the average funded amount for women-owned businesses (\$48,341) was 31% less than the same for men-owned businesses (\$70,239) in 2018.⁴⁴

Research from the Urban Institute demonstrates that women-owned businesses account for less than 5% of all dollars lent to small businesses each year, while Forbes found that women-owned businesses generally receive just 80% of the capital that male-owned businesses do.^{45,46}

DISAGGREGATE DATA BY SEX

Unfortunately, there is much information that we do not have about the impacts of women's labor on Wyoming's economy because the data are not disaggregated by sex. For example, Wyoming received \$1,052,798,882 from the Paycheck Protection Program—which was distributed to 13,586 small businesses.⁴⁷ Disaggregating data by sex will help shed light on areas where Wyoming is investing in women's participation in the workforce and opportunities for improvements.

RECOGNIZE THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF UNPAID LABOR

Even as more women had been joining the labor market pre-pandemic, they continue to do the majority of unpaid labor.⁴⁸ In addition to paid work, Oxfam estimates that if American women earned minimum wage for the unpaid domestic and caring work they provide their families and communities, they would have earned \$1.5 trillion in 2019.⁴⁹

In an average week, women spend nine hours more than men engaged in primary child care (child care done as the main activity -- bathing, feeding, playing) and 14 more hours than men engaged in secondary child care (caring for children while simultaneously completing other tasks -- cooking, cleaning, grocery

shopping).⁵⁰ Additionally, women spend more hours per week completing household activities, household shopping, caring for adult family members, and helping non-household adults or the community.⁵¹

Raising awareness of and recognizing the value of unpaid work is a key target of the United Nations' goal to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.⁵² This recommendation can promote equity for women performing unpaid labor in Wyoming as well.

RETAIN GOOD EMPLOYEES

Employee retention is central to operating a sustainable and successful business. Turnover is expensive and has a negative impact on organizational performance.⁵³ Women who receive unequal pay as compared to their male counterparts are less likely to remain in their current occupations, as are women who recognize the lack of opportunity for career advancement.⁵⁴ Women also tend to need more flexibility in setting their work schedules to accommodate their familial needs.⁵⁵ If a woman feels that she is sacrificing more to her organization than she is getting in return, she may be inclined to search for work elsewhere.

ENSURE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, QUALITY CHILD CARE

Access to quality, affordable child care is essential for mothers who work. The Child Care Subsidy Program administered through the Wyoming Department of Family Services provides assistance paying for child care to parents working, receiving work training or going to school.⁵⁶ However, a challenge parents experience is that participation by child care providers is voluntary. Therefore, access to these subsidies can be limited. For instance, in a recent search of Albany County providers, just five out of a possible 33 providers accepted subsidies.⁵⁷ With child care spots further limited in some communities as a result of the pandemic's effects on businesses, maintaining access to affordable child care is as important as ever. Through public-private partnerships and policies designed to help working parents access/build high-quality childcare, Wyoming businesses can reduce costs associated with childcare problems and strengthen the workforce.⁵⁸

Policy Recommendations

Women are significant drivers of Wyoming's economy and can be utilized as a potential resource. Current policy tends to ignore women's outsized impact as both earners and consumers. That is a missed opportunity for Wyoming.

Policies that allow wage disparities to flourish, that do not consider the impact of women's unpaid labor, or that misunderstand the need to keep women in the workforce at the same rates as men have serious and broad repercussions. This is true both nationwide and in Wyoming.

By focusing more deliberately on the significant impact women have on state and local economies, and by looking at where and how current policies fall short, Wyoming's policymakers, innovative businesses, and organizations can spur much-needed economic progress and expand local markets at a time when the state could greatly benefit from it. Wyoming's economy will benefit through the following actions.

ENCOURAGE ONGOING LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

- Consider extending paid family leave and paid sick leave protections in Wyoming, first offered under the Family First Coronavirus Relief Act, and consider establishing a standard that allows workers to earn seven to nine job-protected paid sick days each year.
- Passage of the Wyoming Pregnant Worker Fairness Act, proven to protect both businesses and pregnant women, has been endorsed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.⁵⁹

RAISE THE MINIMUM WAGE & TIPPED MINIMUM WAGE

- Consider the Self-Sufficiency Standard for Wyoming in establishing a state minimum hourly wage.⁶⁰

- County commissioners may want to consider seeking authorization to establish a higher local minimum hourly wage based on the self-sufficiency wage in their county. To see the wage needed to be self-sufficient in each Wyoming county take a look at the [Wyoming Self-Sufficiency calculator](#).
- Raising and indexing the federal subminimum wage for tipped workers to at least 70% of the regular minimum wage and raising and indexing the federal minimum wage for all workers would both reduce the gender wage equity gap in the restaurant industry and immediately raise wages for thousands of workers in Wyoming.⁶¹

CLOSE THE GENDER WAGE GAP

- Legislation supporting wage transparency would be beneficial to employees and businesses alike because it increases job satisfaction and in turn can decrease employee turnover.
- Employers with 100 or more employees that receive state funds or are already required to file annual reports to the state could submit a pay data report with specified wage information covering the prior calendar year, to include the number of employees by race, ethnicity and sex and may correspond to specific types of jobs. This type of data would assist with wage transparency and improve wage gaps.

CONCLUSION

Wyoming has opportunities to improve its economy by investing in policies that facilitate women's participation in the workforce. Adopting one or more of these policy recommendations will tap into the underutilized workforce of women and help strengthen Wyoming's economy in the future.

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