

Protect Our Care Wisconsin: How Trump's ACA sabotage has impacted women

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MILWAUKEE, WI — President Trump's failure to adequately respond to the pandemic has had unique social, economic, and health implications for women. Women are both on the front lines of responding to the crisis as care workers and on the front lines at home - many having left the workforce to care for their children as an unrelenting virus has forced schools to move online. This exodus from the workforce has likely resulted in the loss of health care coverage for women, as the pandemic continues to ravage the United States. Making matters worse, President Trump is currently backing a lawsuit that would overturn the Affordable Care Act (ACA) as the nation is still reeling from the pandemic. Without the ACA, women would lose critical protections and face even higher costs for care. The lawsuit will be heard on November 10 — exactly one week after the election. Now, more than ever, women's health care is on the ballot.

Women Have Suffered Disproportionate Economic Implications As A Result Of The Pandemic

Women Have Been Disproportionately Impacted By Pandemic-Related Job Losses. Before the pandemic, women [outnumbered](#) men in the workforce; however, due in part to their roles in vulnerable industries [like](#) food service, retail, and personal care, women have lost employment at higher rates than men.

According to the Pew Research Center, 11.5 million women [lost their jobs](#) from February to May, compared to 9 million men. During the peak of pandemic-related job losses, the Bureau of Labor Statistics [reported](#) that the unemployment rate for women climbed to 15.5 percent, compared to 13 percent for men.

- **Hispanic And Latina Women Have Been Especially Hard Hit By Pandemic-Related Job Losses.** In April, unemployment for Hispanic women [rose](#) to 20.2 percent, highlighting that a larger proportion of Hispanic were unemployed compared to women overall. One reason for steeper unemployment among Hispanic women is that they are more likely than other groups to be represented in the leisure and hospitality industry, which [shed almost](#) 40% of its workforce between February and May (worse than any other sector). Last month, the jobless rate among Latina women [was at](#) 11 percent.
- **Black Women Have Been Especially Hard Hit By Pandemic-Related Job Losses.** In April, unemployment for Black women [rose](#) to 16.4 percent, compared to 15.5 percent for women overall. Compared with the job recovery rate of white women, Black women's jobs have come back at a much slower rate. [According to](#) the Center for American Progress, white women currently hold 7.1 percent fewer jobs than in February, while Black women's jobs are still down 11.9 percent.

Women Are Still Facing Higher Levels Of Unemployment Than Men.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, [7.7 percent of women](#) over the age of 20 remain unemployed, compared to 7.4 percent of men, though the gap has likely narrowed due to [surges](#) of women leaving the workforce. Heidi Shierholz, senior economist and director of policy at the Economic Policy Institute told [The 19th](#): "...there is a real possibility many jobs lost by women will never come back."

Working Mothers Are Exiting The Workforce At Alarming Rates. According to [The 19th](#), working mothers have reduced their work hours four to five times more than fathers to care for children during the pandemic. A survey from the Census Bureau conducted in July found that nearly [31 percent of women ages 25 to 44](#) with children at home were not working because of coronavirus-related child care problems, compared to just 11.6 percent of men. "Put another way, working mothers are three times more likely to have been sidelined from their jobs by

COVID-19 child care issues than working fathers,” per HuffPost. According to NPR, 865,000 women [left the US workforce](#) in September alone — four times more than men. The share of women in the workforce is now [down to levels](#) not seen since 1988.

- **Latina Women Left The Workforce At Three Times The Rate Of Women Overall In September.** According to NPR, Latina women [left](#) the workforce at three times the rate of white women and at four times the rate of Black women in September. The number of Latina women in the workforce [dropped](#) by 2.7 percent between August and September, compared to 1.2 percent among all women — even as 87,000 Latino men joined the workforce.

Pandemic-Related Job Losses Will Have A Longstanding Toll On Women’s Careers And Exacerbate The Gender Pay Gap. Women who are forced to even temporarily exit the workforce as a result of job loss or caregiving responsibilities during the pandemic may see lower pay in the future. On average, salary offers for women who take time off are [7 percent](#) lower than other candidates, according to an analysis by Payscale. According to the [National Bureau of Economic Research](#), the pandemic will increase the gender pay gap by 5 percentage points. Per [Bloomberg](#): “In a regular recession, the pay gap between men and women shrinks by two percentage points as men tend to get hit harder by job losses, according to the paper published this month. But in a pandemic recession, that gap increases by five percentage points.”

Women Have Suffered Unique Health Implications During The Pandemic

Women Make Up More Than Half Of Essential Workers, And More Than Three-Quarters Of Health Care Workers. [According to](#) a New York Times analysis, 52 percent of essential workers are women. Notably, women make up [77 percent](#) of the 19 million health care workers nationwide. In other words, nearly four out of every five workers in health care are women. As the pandemic worsens, health care workers have been among the hardest hit. [6 percent](#) of adults hospitalized with coronavirus between March and May were health workers and the CDC [warns](#) that nurses remain at high risk of being infected. An October analysis by the CDC of 13 states found that women [accounted](#) for 72 percent of hospitalizations

among health care workers during the first three months of the pandemic.

Research Indicates That Women May Be Disproportionately Losing Health Insurance As A Result Of The Pandemic. Research has shown that more than [14 million](#) people could have lost employer-sponsored health coverage as a result of the pandemic. Because women are losing employment at higher rates, it is likely they are more likely to be [losing](#) employer-sponsored coverage as well. At the same time, the Trump administration has refused to take commonsense steps to increase coverage, like opening a special enrollment period or further incentivizing states to expand Medicaid. Lack of health care may be contributing to women forgoing essential medical care like mammograms and pap smears. In June, [49 percent](#) of women reported postponing medical care because of the virus, compared to 33 percent of men. Delaying preventive care can have devastating consequences. The National Cancer Institute projected more than 5,000 excess breast cancer deaths over the next decade as a result of the pandemic's disruption in medical care. The 19th noted that this almost certainly will have a [disproportionate impact](#) on Black women, who already face a breast cancer mortality rate 42 percent higher than white women.

Maternal Health Is Suffering During The Pandemic. The pandemic is worsening already poor maternal health outcomes in the United States. After months of silence on the issue, the CDC reported that pregnant women are at high risk of serious illness if they contract the coronavirus. A June 2020 CDC [study](#) found that pregnant women with coronavirus had a 50 percent higher chance of being admitted to intensive care and a 70 percent higher chance of being intubated. Already, [27,566 pregnant women](#) have been infected with the virus and 44 have died as of late October. Pregnant women of color have been infected at significantly higher rates than white women. By August, CDC data [showed](#) Hispanic and Latina mothers made up nearly half of coronavirus cases among pregnant women nationally. One [study](#) found that pregnant Black and Hispanic women in Philadelphia were five times more likely to be exposed to coronavirus.

Health Care Coverage For Women Remains At Risk

If the Trump lawsuit is successful, it will [strip coverage](#) from more than 20 million Americans, raise premiums, end protections for people with pre-existing conditions, put insurance companies back in charge, and force seniors to pay more for prescription drugs. Health care coverage for women is especially important during the coronavirus pandemic. Women are on the front lines of responding to the crisis as health care workers and other essential jobs and are therefore more likely to be exposed to the coronavirus. At the same time, the economic toll of the pandemic has disproportionately impacted women, with millions losing jobs and health care coverage.

If the ACA is overturned, key protections for women would be ripped away overnight:

- **GONE:** Protections for 135 million Americans with pre-existing conditions. The uninsured rate will increase by 69 percent.
- **GONE:** Insurance companies will be able to charge women 50 percent more than men.
- **GONE:** Contraception coverage for 60 million people who now have access to birth control with no out-of-pocket costs.
- **GONE:** A ban on discrimination for women, LGBTQ Americans, and individuals with disabilities in health care settings.
- **GONE:** Essential protections for breastfeeding parents, including workplace standards and access to breast pumps with no out-of-pocket costs.

68 Million Women With Pre-Existing Conditions Would Lose Protections. An estimated [68 million](#) women and girls have pre-existing conditions that would be grounds for insurance companies charging more or denying them coverage without the ACA. According to [Planned Parenthood](#), before the ACA: “Millions of women were denied coverage because of a range of health issues labeled as pre-existing conditions, including pregnancy, breast cancer, and irregular periods. Black and Latino women face higher rates of many chronic illnesses. As a result, higher premiums or denial of coverage for pre-existing conditions threaten the health and financial security of women of color the most.”

Women Can Be Charged More Than Men For The Same Coverage. Prior to the ACA, women were often charged premiums on the nongroup market of [up to 50 percent higher](#) than men for the same coverage. Without the ACA, women would also lose guaranteed coverage of preventive care services, like pap smears and mammograms. Before the ACA, [1 in 5 women](#) reported postponing or going without preventive care due to cost.

More Than 60 Million People Could Lose Access To Birth Control With No Out-Of-Pocket Fees. The ACA guarantees that private health plans cover [18 methods](#) of contraception and make them available to [62.4 million](#) patients with no out-of-pocket costs. More than 99 percent of sexually-active women have used contraceptives at some point in their lifetimes, and approximately [60 percent](#) of women of reproductive age currently use at least one birth control method. In addition to increasing access to this essential treatment, this ACA provision has saved money for women and their families: women saved \$1.4 billion on birth control pills alone in 2013.

Women, LGBTQ Americans, And Individuals With Disabilities Can Face Discrimination In Health Care Settings. [Section 1557](#) of the ACA prohibits discrimination the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability by any health program or activity receiving federal assistance. It also prohibits these types of discrimination in health programs and activities administered by HHS as well as the ACA marketplaces.

Nursing Parents Would Lose Breastfeeding Support And Critical Workplace Protections. The Affordable Care Act [requires](#) insurance companies to cover breastfeeding support and counseling, as well as breast pumps without cost-sharing for pregnant and nursing women.