



## CSW 68 Gender and Poverty Briefs

### The Impact of Poverty on Native American Women and Girls

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Native Americans, who were the original stewards of North America, experience the highest rates of poverty, early death, and violence in the United States. The national poverty rate for Native American women and their families is higher than that of all other racial and ethnic groups in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Intergenerational poverty in tribal communities is the result of historical policies, forced land removal, the removal of children, and of state-inflicted violence. Today, Native American women, girls, and relatives face significant structural barriers to accessing quality education and jobs, resulting in the reducing of economic mobility, intensifying disparities in labor participation, the lowering of educational attainment, and the widening of the gender wealth gap. For instance, in 2022 Native American full-time working women earned just 57 cents for every dollar paid to white men<sup>2</sup> and were disproportionately likely to have low-wage jobs.<sup>3</sup> Longstanding health, economic, and educational disparities continue to reinforce poverty among the first inhabitants of the United States.

High poverty rates among Native Americans have deleterious impacts on the next generation, leading to a disproportionate mortality rate among children. Native American children have the highest childhood mortality rate when compared to all other racial and ethnic populations in the United States. Native Americans have the highest percentage of children who will not outlive their parents. In some states, such as New Mexico and South Dakota, we see extremely high rates of childhood poverty and premature death, both of which particularly impact infant girls and children.

The poverty commonly experienced by Native American women increases their vulnerability to violence in their homes as well as in public places. Native American women suffer intimate partner physical and sexual violence at rates twice as high as white women.<sup>4</sup> More than a third (34%) of Native American women are likely to be raped in their lifetime, whereas for women as a whole, the risk is less than one in five.<sup>5</sup> Approximately 70% of the violent victimizations experienced by Native American women are not committed by persons of their same race.<sup>6</sup>

#### Fast Facts

- In 2022 Native American women with a full-time job reported an average income of \$41,228, compared to white women who earned \$54,453, and white men who earned \$68,677.<sup>7</sup>
- The Native American gender wage gap typically costs Native women 40 cents to the dollar compared to white males. That adds up to \$2000 per month, a loss of nearly \$1 million over a lifetime of work.<sup>8</sup>
- Unemployment rates for Native American workers are significantly higher than other workers. In June 2021, it was 1.5 times higher (8.5%) than workers overall (5.8%).<sup>9</sup>
- In 2019, Native American girls ages 1-4 in New Mexico had a death rate of 120.1 per 100,000, nearly four times as high as white girls (31.1 per 100,000).<sup>10</sup>

- 5,491 missing and murdered Native American women were recorded by the FBI as of December 2022.<sup>11</sup> In New Mexico, Native women suffer from the highest rate of homicide among all racial and ethnic groups.<sup>12</sup>

## Recommendations

- 1) Strengthen and **enforce equal pay laws** such as the Paycheck Fairness Act to reduce the gender wage gap.
- 2) Establish and fully fund national **paid family and medical leave plans** to support low-income working mothers and other working families.
- 3) Strengthen and **fully fund indigenous educational institutions**, including Tribal Colleges and Universities, that provide a supportive mentoring environment for Native American female students, including access to childcare.
- 4) Establish **scholarships and mentorship programs for female indigenous students** in law, public health, social work, and law enforcement programs.
- 5) Increase funding for the Indian Health Service and **expand community health clinics**, especially in rural and tribal areas, including maternal and early childhood healthcare.
- 6) Develop prevention and **outreach programs on domestic violence and healthy relationships** tailored to tribal communities.

## Resources

Native American Budget and Policy Institute 2019. *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls: A Briefing Paper*.

Tucker, Jasmine 2021. *Native American Women Need Action That Closes the Wage Gap*. National Women's Law Center.

Tucker, Jasmin and Julie Vogtman 2023. *When Hard Work is Not Enough: Women in Low-Paid Jobs*. National Women's Law Center.

Rosay, André B. 2016. *Violence Against Native American and Alaskan Native Women and Men*. National Institute of Justice.

<sup>1</sup> Shrider, Emily A. and John Creamer. *Poverty in the United States: 2022*. United States Census Current Population Reports p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> National Partnership for Women and Families 2022. *Native American Women and the Wage Gap*. p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Tucker, Jasmin and Julie Vogtman 2023. *When Hard Work is Not Enough: Women in Low-Paid Jobs*. National Women's Law Center p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Rosay, André B. 2016. *Violence Against Native American and Alaskan Native Women and Men*. National Institute of Justice p. 44.

<sup>5</sup> Tjaden, Patricia and Nancy Thoennes 2000. *Full Report of the Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women*. National Institute of Justice p. 22.

<sup>6</sup> Greenfield, Lawrence A. and Steven K. Smith 1999. *American Indians and Crime*. Bureau of Justice Statistics p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> American Community Survey 2022. *Table B20017C, Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months by Sex and Work Experience*. US Census Bureau.

<sup>8</sup> Tucker, Jasmine 2021. *Native American Women Need Action That Closes the Wage Gap*. National Women's Law Center p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Tucker, Jasmine 2021. *Native American Women Need Action That Closes the Wage Gap*. National Women's Law Center p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> New Mexico Department of Health. *New Mexico Selected Health Statistics Annual Report 2019*. Table M-4(b).

<sup>11</sup> National Crime Information Center. *2022 NCIC Missing Person and Unidentified Person Statistics*. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

<sup>12</sup> New Mexico Indian Affairs Department 2021. *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives*. Task Force Findings with University of New Mexico.

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