

# DELAWARE WOMEN



WOMEN'S  
ADVANCEMENT  
& ADVOCACY

## AND THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

July 2020



**EMPLOYMENT**



**HEALTH  
DISPARITIES**



**ECONOMIC  
SECURITY**



**SOCIAL  
INEQUITIES**

## EMPLOYMENT & COVID-19

During this unprecedented public health and economic crisis, women are over-represented as frontline workers and those losing income through temporary job loss in the service sector. For example, many of our frontline workers in healthcare, child-care centers, and other essential businesses, are women. Additionally, industries that typically employ more women such as restaurants and retail have had to eliminate jobs or substantially cut back on hours, leaving women more likely to face unemployment. Women of color are disproportionately impacted by these issues as they are more likely to work in sectors affected by the crisis.

### DELAWARE WOMEN WORKING ON THE FRONTLINE:

**77%**

of Delaware hospital medical workers are women.



**93%**

of Delaware home health care workers are women.



**93%**

of Delaware child-care workers are women.



### DELAWARE WOMEN WORKING IN BUSINESSES AFFECTED BY TEMPORARY CLOSURES:

**54%**

of Delaware restaurant and food service employees are women.



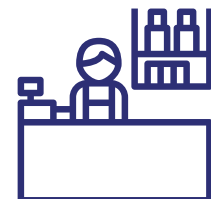
**77%**

of Delaware beauty salon and barbershop employees are women.



**77%**

of Delaware retail clothing store employees are women.

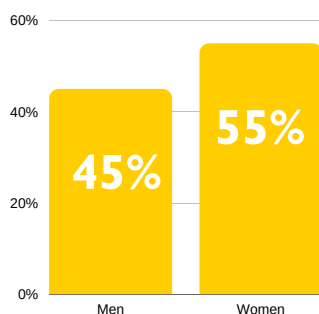




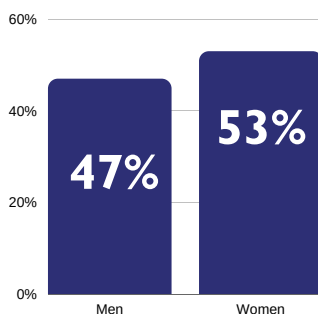
## HEALTH DISPARITIES & COVID-19

The most recent data available (July 21) illustrates that Delaware women are a larger percentage of both COVID-19 cases and deaths. There are several racial and ethnic disparities as well. Although just 10% of Delaware's population is Hispanic, they represent 26% of all COVID-19 cases. Only 23% of Delaware's population is Black, yet 26% of COVID-19 cases are Black Delawareans.

COVID-19 Cases in Delaware by Gender



COVID-19 Deaths in Delaware by Gender



Data Source: My Healthy Community Delaware Environmental Public Health Tracking Network

Beyond COVID-19 cases, a pandemic can also create potential health issues for women related to reproductive health care, including maternal and infant health. Reproductive health needs are more likely to be unmet during a time of crisis when medical systems are under strain, access to services is limited, or women are reluctant to attend appointments, potentially leading to poor health outcomes.<sup>1</sup> This unmet need has a disproportionate impact on all women and low-income women in particular. Ensuring that reproductive health care remains accessible even during a larger crisis is vital to the health and well-being of Delaware women.

## DEFINING DISPARITIES

Healthy People 2020, which provides science-based, 10-year national objectives for improving the health of all Americans, defines a health disparity as “a particular type of health difference that is closely linked with social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantage. Health disparities adversely affect groups of people who have systematically experienced greater obstacles to health based on their racial or ethnic group; religion; socioeconomic status; gender; age; mental health; cognitive, sensory, or physical disability; sexual orientation or gender identity; geographic location; or other characteristics historically linked to discrimination or exclusion.”<sup>2</sup>

For all Delawareans, other influences on health include the availability of and access to:<sup>3</sup>

- High-quality education
- Nutritious food
- Decent and safe housing
- Affordable, reliable public transportation
- Culturally sensitive health care providers
- Health insurance
- Clean water and non-polluted air

## ECONOMIC SECURITY AND COVID-19

23%

of Black women in Delaware live in poverty.

20%

of Hispanic women in Delaware live in poverty.

9%

of White women in Delaware live in poverty.

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2014-2018 5-year estimate

### CHALLENGES

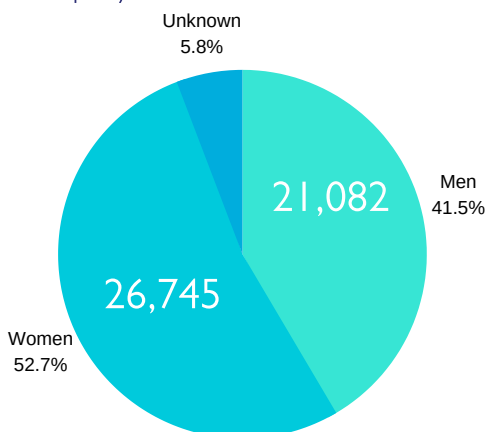
In Delaware, 82% of Black mothers, 58% of White mothers and 56% of Hispanic mothers are key family breadwinners.<sup>4</sup> Given existing wealth and wage disparities, it is much more likely that women will have a harder time recovering from the economic impact of the pandemic. There are 40,398 Delaware women working in low-paying jobs, representing 63% of the low-paid workforce.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, nearly 1/3 of Delaware mothers live in poverty.<sup>6</sup> Many jobs that typically pay \$12 or less an hour have become our most essential workers and Delaware women make up large numbers of those continuing to serve the public during this difficult time. As our state looks to address the ongoing COVID-19 crisis and the ramifications of the pandemic, it is imperative to keep in mind how this event disproportionately impacts different populations, particularly women and people of color.

### WAGE GAP

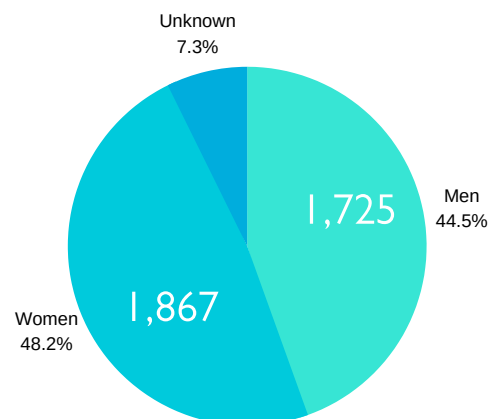
Delaware women working full time, year-round are typically paid much less than white, non-Hispanic men. White women are paid \$11,041 less per year, Black women \$18,076 less, and Hispanic women \$24,601 less than non-Hispanic white men.<sup>7</sup>

## UNEMPLOYMENT

May 2020  
Unemployment Insurance Claimants



May 2019  
Unemployment Insurance Claimants



Data source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2020 Characteristics of Unemployment Insurance Claimants

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## **SOCIAL INEQUITIES & COVID-19**

### **CAREGIVING**

Women are more likely to balance being in the labor force while also providing unpaid labor devoted to caregiving.<sup>8</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this issue with the closure of schools as well as some child-care centers. The need to work either remotely or on the frontlines of the pandemic highlighted the gap in more family-friendly policies, including access to paid leave, quality child-care options, and more flexible work arrangements.<sup>9</sup>

### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

One unintended consequence of the necessary measures meant to keep the public safe during the pandemic, such as quarantine and shelter-in-place, was the increase in domestic violence (DV).<sup>10</sup> Although DV services, including legal services, were open and available, DV victims living with their abuser faced the challenge of safely accessing the available DV services and support without their abuser knowing. DV offenders track phone usage, texts and website visits making it very difficult for a DV victim to safely seek help. COVID-19 has exacerbated risk factors associated with domestic violence, which may have contributed to the spike in hotline calls received. Additionally, COVID-19 has created increased difficulties for effective prevention implementation across the state of Delaware.

### **HOUSING**

Safe and stable housing is paramount to ensuring health and stability, particularly for families and children in school.<sup>11</sup> While Delaware issued strong protections during the pandemic, it is vital to continue those efforts during the economic recovery period.

## **211 HELPLINE SERVES WOMEN**

The Delaware 211 Helpline is a free resource that connects callers with health and human service providers, seven days a week. From help with COVID-19 questions to assistance with food, shelter, child care, personal crises and more, 211 is an invaluable resource. Compared with last year, calls for food and for rent/mortgage assistance are up 300% and 100%, respectively.

**From**

**March 1, 2020-May 28, 2020**

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**8,550**

Delaware women made a call to 211.

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**80%**

of all callers were women.

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**40%**

of all calls were related to COVID-19.

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**50%**

Increase in calls compared to 2019.

Data Source: United Way of Delaware

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### ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Office of Women's Advancement & Advocacy recognizes that gender isn't binary or fixed and that the current COVID-19 crisis can have different impacts on non-binary and transgender people. OWAA would also like to draw attention to the intersectionality of gender with characteristics such as race/ethnicity, location, disability and class, and the importance of those intersections in the efforts to reduce the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19.

Pandemics such as COVID-19 and crises such as natural disasters affect groups differently. Data collection is the key to understanding these differences and in creating appropriate responses. Data should represent our state's population and the diverse experiences of our residents. Data can illustrate, highlight, and shine light on the unique experiences of Delawareans and, therefore, enable responses to the current COVID-19 pandemic and other crises to be much more in touch with the needs of our population.

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