

Alabama

# Alabama ranks as worst state in South for women, report states



Dr. Robert Lightfoot, the medical director at Victory Health Partners, examines Mary Jane Kennedy of Mobile at the clinic on Thursday March 6, 2014 in Mobile, Ala. Victory Health Partners is a faith based nonprofit healthcare organization providing affordable quality care for low income uninsured adults in the greater Mobile area. (Sharon Steinmann/sssteinmann@al.com) (*Sharon Steinmann*)

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Alabama ranks as the worst state in the South for women with an overall grade of **D-**, **according to a recent report from the Institute for Women's Policy Research.**

Alabama receives D's and F's in all of the seven topical areas that affect women's lives: political participation, employment and earnings, work and family, poverty and opportunity, reproductive rights and health and well-being.

The Status of Women in the South is the first report to provide a comprehensive portrait of the status of women, particularly the status of minority women, in 14 southern states.

"With over one third of the nation's women and girls calling the South home, a lack of progress for women in the region is a setback for the United States overall and especially for the South," said IWPR President Heidi Hartmann, Ph.D. and MacArthur Fellow.

According to the report, the poverty rate for women in the South is higher than in the rest of the country. Closing the gender wage gap would reduce poverty for women in the South by more than half.

The gender wage gap costs women in the South \$155.4 billion per year, the equivalent of 2.8 percent of the southern states' combined gross domestic product (GDP) in 2014, the report states.

"The report is disheartening to be sure, but it's also extremely valuable because it makes crystal clear why our work is vital for Birmingham women. This is the reason we are here—to amplify the voices of women and create more opportunities for their economic success. When women move forward, Birmingham moves with them," said Jeanne Jackson, President/CEO of The Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham.

Here are some of the key findings from the report:

- Compared with the United States overall, women in the South tend to have better access to quality, affordable child care. Half of the 14 southern states rank in the top 10 nationally on the child care index
- The poverty rate among women in the South (16.4 percent) is higher than in states outside the South (13.7 percent). For black, Hispanic, and white women, poverty rates are higher in the South than in non-South states.
- Women's business ownership is more common in the South than in the rest of the country. Nine of the 14 southern states have shares of women-owned businesses that are higher than the national average.
- Women in the South are more likely to die from heart disease and breast cancer, more likely to have diabetes or AIDS, and have more days of poor mental health per month than women in the non-South states. Southern women are more likely than women in other regions to receive preventive care, including cholesterol screening, mammograms and testing for HIV.
- Both infant and maternal mortality are alarmingly high in the South. Infant mortality rates in the South are 7.2 deaths per 1,000 live births, compared with the much lower rate of 5.6 per 1,000 live births for all other states.
- 11 southern states accounted for over one-third of all female homicides by a male in 2013 (571 of the 1,615 victims). Black women were two and a half times more likely to be murdered by men than were white women.

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