



# Trump's War on Working Women

## Year One of Trump's War on Working Women

The first year of President Trump's second term has delivered devastating setbacks for working women. The Trump administration has not only rolled back workplace protections, it has taken aim at the very idea that gender equality is a shared, national value, recasting fairness as unmerited favoritism and discrimination as an acceptable norm. Through its implementation of [Project 2025](#), the administration has worked quickly to undermine civil rights enforcement; overturn longstanding protections against workplace discrimination; gut diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts; and weaken workplace protections in the jobs that women disproportionately hold. It is doing all this while touting a false and dangerous narrative that the success of working women and people of color suggests "illegal" or "reverse discrimination." For example, Trump's head of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the primary federal workplace civil rights enforcement agency, has effectively reframed the agency's mission to focus on [protecting white men](#) from diversity efforts. Under the banner of cracking down on "illegal DEIA," the administration is giving cover to a more insidious project: [making employers afraid](#) to even acknowledge race and gender inequality, much less address it.

Trump's attacks represent a coordinated effort to erase decades of progress made by working women, particularly Black, Hispanic, Indigenous, AANHPI women, and other women of color, mothers, and low-wage workers. This issue brief examines how the Trump agenda is failing working women and outlines the urgent need for policies that combat discrimination and advance inclusive economic prosperity.

## Dismantling Women's Workplace Power

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts are rooted in the fundamental belief that everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect and have a fair chance to succeed. [These efforts](#) help to remove artificial barriers that limit access to equal opportunity at work so that people of all backgrounds—including women, people of color, LGBTQI+ people, and people with disabilities—can compete and succeed based on their qualifications.

Instead of leaning into the strength and success that diversity has brought to our nation's workplaces, the Trump administration has suggested that diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts are illegal and has used the mantra of "illegal DEIA" to bully employers out of supporting the success of women and people of color at work.

- During his first week in office, Trump issued a series of [executive orders](#) making clear that attacking workplace civil rights protections were a top priority for this administration. In its first weeks, the administration:
  - Terminated federal diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility offices, positions, and programs.
  - Repealed an [executive order](#) that had been in place for decades prohibiting federal contractors (which employ about 20% of the U.S. workforce) from discriminating on the basis of sex, race, and other characteristics and requiring them to take steps to ensure equal opportunity in the workplace.
  - All but shuttered [the agency \(Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs or OFCCP\) tasked with requiring federal government contractors](#) to identify and address discrimination, harassment, and other barriers to employment for women and people of color.
  - [Threatened employers](#) who adopt diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility programs with legal action.
- This administration weakened the nation's flagship civil rights and labor rights enforcement agencies by:
  - Destroying the independence of the EEOC by abruptly firing [Democratic Commissioners](#) Charlotte Burrows and Jocelyn Samuels and the [EEOC General Counsel](#), Karla Gilbride years before their Senate-confirmed terms were set to expire, and installing leadership at the EEOC [to rubber stamp](#) the [administration's](#) anti-civil rights agenda.
  - Advancing [radical new interpretations](#) of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by issuing documents (including a ["What You Should Know"](#) and a fact sheet jointly with the Department of Justice) that inaccurately suggest that diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility policies, programs, and practices violate the law.
  - [Halting federal enforcement](#) of workplace discrimination laws against employers who discriminate through seemingly neutral employment practices that disproportionately harm workers based on sex, race, or other protected characteristics without justification (known as disparate impact).
  - Attacking transgender and non-binary workers. Trump's EEOC Chair Andrea Lucas' stated priority is to ["defend the biological](#) and binary reality of sex and related rights," signaling a desire to retaliate against employers with trans-inclusive policies. In an unprecedented move, the EEOC [dropped several cases](#) on behalf of workers and abdicated its responsibility to [protect trans and non-binary workers](#) from sex discrimination and sex-based harassment on the job, ignoring Supreme Court precedent and its statutory obligations.
  - A first-of-its-kind [firing of National Labor Relations Board \(Board\)](#) member Gwynne Wilcox (the first Black woman to serve on the Board), leaving the Board unable to hear cases of unfair labor practices or about union representation. Unions provide women with more [economic security, better benefits, and family sustaining jobs](#). This move by the administration made it harder for all workers, including women, to collectively bargain for their rights.
- The [EEOC bullied law firms](#) that were committed to advancing women and people of color in their workplaces through diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts – a transparent attempt to coerce them into abandoning these efforts. This tactic sends a perverse yet clear message to all employers that have programs and practices that support the advancement of women in the workplace that employers are at risk under this administration.

## Forcing Women Out of the Workforce

While Trump claims that he's brought economic prosperity for working families, the administration has, in fact, worked to undermine women's job security and decreased women's labor force participation rates, threatening the financial security of women and the families who rely on women's paychecks. Women have lost jobs and been forced out of the workplace entirely:

- Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows volatility in women's labor force participation in 2025.<sup>i</sup> Women experienced net declines in their labor force size in at least six months of 2025<sup>ii</sup> and by the end of the year there were just 184,000 more women in the labor force compared to January. Meanwhile, there were 572,000 more men in the labor force over the same time period. This means men joined the labor force at three times the rate of women over the course of the year and women's modest 2025 labor force gains lag behind gains made in recent years. Additionally, other trends signaled a slowing of the economy over 2025, with detrimental impacts for women.
  - Unemployment rose in 2025 for most groups. The overall unemployment rate increased from 4.0% to 4.4% while the rate for women ages 20 and over increased from 3.6% to 3.9%. However, the increase in unemployment was particularly acute for Black women whose rate rose 1.9 percentage points in 2025 – from 5.4% in January to 7.3% in December.<sup>iii</sup> Similarly, unemployment for American Indian/Alaska Native women rose from [5.9% to 7.1%](#).
  - Job creation slowed way down in 2025, with data showing that a net 351,000 women's jobs were added between January and December, which pales in comparison to previous years' gains, and is less than half of the net gain in women's jobs from the previous year.<sup>iv</sup>
- In the federal sector alone, the administration fired hundreds of thousands of workers. While we do not have complete data on the gender breakdown, many of them were women. This resulted in [277,000 fewer](#) federal government workers in December 2025 than in January when Trump took office, or a reduction of about 9%.<sup>v</sup> Women and people of color made up the [majority of the workers](#) in many of the federal agencies decimated by the Trump administration.
- The labor force participation rate of [mothers with young children](#) also rapidly declined, with the steepest drops experienced by Black mothers, whose participation is now lower than before the pandemic.
- Immigrant women ([7.9% of the U.S. labor force](#)) report being [afraid to go to work](#) because of the fear of deportations and ICE enforcement. Immigrant workers make up [a substantial share of early educators](#) and one study estimates that this administration's increase in ICE deportation and detainments is associated with nearly [40,000 fewer child care workers](#), who possibly left the child care workforce to remain hidden from federal agents.
- The Trump Administration is [undermining our nation's child care providers](#).
  - The Department of Health and Human Services proposed a rule reducing payments to child care providers, making it harder for states to access their child care funds, and announced funding freezes in five states - California, Colorado, Illinois, Minnesota, and New York. This funding freeze threatens the ability of child care providers to continue operating and the financial security of the women and families they serve. The administration also doubled down on a "Defend the Spend" policy, requiring all 50 states to provide additional documentation and verification before receiving child care funds. This policy has led to delays in states' access to funding.
  - The administration is also attacking [the Head Start program](#), leading to some programs temporarily closing their doors and threatening these workers' jobs.

- The Department of Education [eliminated many post-baccalaureate degrees](#) from the regulatory definition of “professional degree,” the majority of which are predominantly held by women, limiting access to critical funding pathways for degree access and completion for women and Black students. Overall, 63% of master’s degrees and 57% of doctorate degrees are held by women. Women also hold over 75% of graduate degrees for registered nursing, dental hygiene, occupational therapy, audiology, social work, teaching, and public health.<sup>vi</sup>

## Driving Down Women’s Wages

Millions of working people struggle to support themselves and their families on poverty-level wages. Women are close to [two-thirds of the workforce](#) in jobs that pay the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour or just a few dollars above it. Women overwhelmingly are the essential but underpaid workers who care for children and seniors, staff grocery stores and hotels, clean homes and offices, and more—typically for less than \$15 per hour. And women are nearly [7 in 10](#) workers for whom the federal minimum cash wage has been just \$2.13 per hour for more than three decades.

While Trump claims his economy should earn an [A++++++](#), the administration’s policies have done nothing to raise working women’s wages. Not only have the administration’s actions pushed women out of the labor force, but under this administration’s economic policy, more families are being [forced to skip meals and accrue debt](#) just to make ends meet. In the Trump economy, some workers are even experiencing [cuts to their pay](#). The administration’s policies are meant to further enrich billionaires and corporations while doing nothing to put more money in the pockets of working women:

- The Trump administration revoked a Biden-era executive order that raised the minimum wage for federal contractors; this action essentially sanctions pay cuts of approximately [25%, or \\$9,000](#), every year for full-time federal contractors making the minimum wage. This includes janitors who clean government buildings, food service workers on military bases, and cashiers at national park gift shops. Those most likely to have had their pay cut by Trump’s actions are disproportionately [women, Black workers, and Hispanic workers](#).
- Trump paid lip service to the nearly [7 in 10](#) tipped workers who are women by signing into law H.R. 1, the “Big Ugly Bill” with a no-tax-on-tips provision. While no-tax-on-tips sounds nice, the law’s tax deduction for tipped income will do [nothing to raise pay for many tipped workers](#). More than [one-third](#) of tipped workers – of whom a [disproportionate share](#) are women – have earnings so low that they are already exempt from income taxes. Exempting tips from taxation will likely lead to cases where low-income workers end up [effectively losing income through](#) losing eligibility to tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC). Overall, 85% of the benefit of the tip deduction will go to workers who have an [annual income between \\$100,000 and \\$500,000](#).
- The Trump Department of Labor has proposed a [slew of anti-worker regulatory proposals](#), including
  - [Rolling back basic minimum wage and overtime protections for home care workers](#), which would depress their low wages even further. These workers, who are overwhelmingly women of color and immigrant women, are the backbone of the economy, instrumental to the delivery of long-term care that enables older adults and individuals with disabilities to receive assistance in their own homes and remain integrated in the community.
  - [Withdrawing proposed regulations that would have ensured workers with disabilities are paid at least the full federal minimum wage, further disadvantageing working disabled women](#). Working women who are disabled are paid just [56 cents for every dollar](#) paid to nondisabled men, costing disabled women tens of thousands of dollars each year. When compounded with the attacks described throughout this document, the failure to raise wages for the [40,000 disabled workers](#) making less than the minimum wage, is yet another attack on disabled women.

- Even with an [unprecedented](#) widening of the [gender pay gap](#), the administration is actively undermining efforts to close the gender pay gap by:
  - Asserting that employers may expose themselves to [legal risks](#) if they use their workforce data to pursue diversity, equity, inclusion, or accessibility efforts, including when collected to address gender pay inequities. Such, self assessments of workforce data allow employers to proactively identify and address unjustified pay disparities amongst men and women in their workforce.
  - Dismantling the OFCCP's ability to conduct [audits of federal contractors](#) pay practices – a key tool in addressing workplace gender pay inequities for nearly 20% of the U.S. workforce.

## Normalizing Harassment and Retaliation

Workplace harassment occurs across industries and affects workers from every community and at every career level. Women are more likely to experience workplace harassment. Nearly [one in three women](#) report experiencing sexual harassment at work; these rates are even higher for women of color, LGBTQI+ workers, and women in low-paid and male-dominated industries. Harassment [drives workers out of jobs, suppresses wages](#), and contributes [to turnover and lost productivity](#)—costs borne by families, employers, and the broader economy. Despite this reality for working women, the Trump administration is paving the way for things to get worse:

- The EEOC Chair is [abandoning the agency's practical anti-harassment guidance](#) document, making it harder for workers to enforce their anti-harassment rights at work. The [EEOC's Harassment Guidance](#) is an important resource that helps [ensure all workers can work safely and with dignity](#).
- The administration has also sought to weaken protections for women in the military, which is particularly disturbing given the extremely [high rates of sexual assault and harassment](#) in the military. Defense Secretary Hegseth has [signaled](#) his intent to eliminate the ability to file anonymous complaints of harassment and force the dismissal of complaints that don't provide "actionable credible evidence" or "sufficient merit" without first providing an opportunity to develop evidence. These proposals, combined with threats of sanctions against complainants under military law for "false" complaints, will have a chilling effect on victims of sex discrimination, many of whom already fear coming forward given the reality of [retaliation](#).
- President Trump's actions and personnel choices send a chilling message about the normalization of harassment and assault. The President himself was [found liable for sexual abuse](#). And Trump's cabinet members, such as [Secretary of War \(Defense\) Pete Hegseth](#), were successfully confirmed with little accountability despite credible allegations.

## Stopping the War on Working Women

The Trump administration's track record for women has been terrible. In its first year, this administration has used every tool in its power to turn back the clock for working women. By weaponizing federal civil rights, labor, and employment laws and advancing false narratives around diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility the administration's actions are eroding gains for workers who are women, people of color, LGBTQI+, and other historically excluded groups. The administration's actions fail to recognize the reality for everyday women: millions of women work, [are the primary breadwinner or co-breadwinner for their families](#), and they are being asked to do more with less.

As working women, we need policy changes that address the real issues we face – policies that ensure that paychecks cover the bills, our voices and work are valued, and that we feel safe in our workplaces. These policies will:

- [Raise the federal minimum wage](#) and ensure that tipped workers receive the full minimum wage before tips. This will help lift women and their families out of poverty and narrow racial and gender wage gaps.
- [Strengthen equal pay](#) laws to close the gender and racial pay gaps by requiring employers to collect and analyze their compensation data, be transparent in their pay practices, and ensure workers are paid fairly for their work.
- Strengthen the economy and increase women’s labor force participation by
  - Guaranteeing that all workers have access to earned, [paid sick days to care](#) for themselves, a sick child, or loved one.
  - Providing all workers with access [to paid family and medical leave](#) for the birth or adoption of a child, or to care for family members or themselves when they experience a significant health issue, with guarantees that they can return to their job.
  - Guaranteeing that our frontline workers, like [domestic workers](#) and [part-time workers](#), have basic rights.
  - Promoting equity and stability in work schedules with [predictable and fair work schedules](#).
- [Promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility](#) in the workplace, ensuring that women have access to equal employment opportunities.
- [Strengthen legal protections](#), expand employer accountability, and ensure workers have clear, enforceable rights to safe and respectful work environments, ensuring that all workplaces are free from harassment, including sex harassment.
- [Encourage workers to form a union](#) to advocate for better wages and working conditions.
- Restore and strengthen federal enforcement of workplace protections against discrimination and harassment for women, LGBTQI+ people, people of color, and people with disabilities.

With these policy changes, working women, and our country, will thrive, not just survive.

## ENDNOTES

[i] NWLC calculations using BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Sex and Age," Table A-1 in December 2025 Employment Situation Summary (Washington, DC: January 9, 2026), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t01.htm>. Historical data available at <https://www.bls.gov/webapps/legacy/cpsatab1.htm>.

[ii] Data was not collected for October 2025 due to the federal government shutdown.

[iii] NWLC calculations using BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Sex and Age," Table A-1 in December 2025 Employment Situation Summary (Washington, DC: January 9, 2026), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t01.htm>, BLS, "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Race, Sex, and Age" Table A-2 in December 2025 Employment Situation Summary (Washington, DC: January 9, 2026), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t02.htm>, and BLS, "Employment status of the Hispanic or Latino population by sex and age," Table A-3 in December 2025 Employment Situation Summary. (Washington, DC: January 9, 2026), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t03.htm>.

[iv] NWLC calculations using U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), "Employees on Nonfarm Payrolls by Industry Sector and Selected Industry Detail," Table B-1 in December 2025 Employment Situation Summary, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t17.htm>

[v] NWLC calculations using BLS, Table B-1 "Employees on Nonfarm Payrolls by Industry Sector and Selected Industry Detail," in December 2025 Employment Situation Summary <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t17.htm> (Washington, DC: January 9, 2026). Share of the workforce lost is based on the January 2025 federal workforce.

[vi] Source: NWLC calculations using U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Table 318.30: Bachelor's, master's, and doctor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions by sex of student and field of study.