



MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN



ANNUAL REPORT 2015



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Mississippi Department of Education
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Mississippi Department of Mental Health
Mississippi Department of Transportation
Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries & Parks
Mississippi State Personnel Board
Office of the Mississippi Secretary of State

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Disclaimer

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ABOUT THE MISSISSIPPI COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

It is declared to be the public policy of this state to encourage, promote, and foster the success and well-being of its citizens and to offer unobstructed access to such opportunities as exists in order that all Mississippians may realize the quality of life for their families to which they aspire. It is a higher public purpose of state government to ensure that no individual is denied the opportunity to succeed and make positive contributions to Mississippi's quality of life because of gender.

--From the Preamble of House Bill No. 797 (Reg. Sess. 2001) establishing the Mississippi Commission on the Status of Women.

Vision Statement

The vision of the Mississippi Commission on the Status of Women is the improvement of the overall quality of life of women, specifically in the areas of education, health, economics, political participation, and race relations.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Mississippi Commission on the Status of Women is to assess and influence policies and practices that affect women through an inclusive, collaborative process. This mission is undergirded by the beliefs that:

- All people regardless of gender should have unobstructed access to opportunities to realize the quality of life to which they and their families aspire.
- No person should be denied the opportunity to succeed and make positive contributions to society.

Duties

- ✓ Research and publish periodic reports documenting the status and concerns of women.
- ✓ Advise and consult with the executive and legislative branches of state government.
- ✓ Serve as a liaison between government, private interest groups, and the general public concerned with services for women.
- ✓ Educate the state regarding the status of women.
- ✓ Make recommendations to public and private groups and persons concerned with any issue related to improving the status of women.
- ✓ Promote consideration of qualified women in positions at all levels of government.
- ✓ Report annually to the Governor and the Legislature on the Commission's activities and findings.

COMMISSION MEMBERS

APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR

Vivian Dailey (Vice Chair)
Diane Hawks
Shae Williams (Treasurer)
Vacancy

APPOINTED BY THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Laura Hipp (Secretary)
Vacancy
Vacancy

APPOINTED BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Regina Quinn
Heather Wagner (Chair)
Vacancy

APPOINTED BY THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

Natalie Cole
Mandy Davis
Rebecca Mansell

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Tamie Henry

Mississippi Commission on the Status of Women (MSCSW)

Woolfolk Building Annex, 501 N. State Street, Suite 2001-A Room 220, Ridgeland, MS 39201

Telephone: (601) 359-3044

Website: www.women.ms.gov

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

On behalf of the members of the Mississippi Commission on the Status of Women (MCSW), I am pleased to present the MCSW 2015 Annual Report. This report represents a snapshot of how women are faring at both national and statewide levels. Through this report, MCSW seeks to provide a realistic view of the level of meaningful participation, particularly in leadership positions, by women in higher education, the workforce, the political arena, business ownership, and other key areas that can improve the lives of individual Mississippians and influence policies and practices of employers, lawmakers, and elected officials. The basis for much of the information was reports submitted to the Interagency Council from state agency representatives about their workforce and workplace initiatives. We would like to extend our thanks for their cooperation.

The data contained in this report speak for themselves. However, of note in the comments from the state agencies were some areas identified as affecting overall well-being of women in the state that could serve as barriers to women fully participating or advancing in employment opportunities. The lack of wrap-around services, such as affordable childcare and transportation services, was noted by several agencies. Furthermore, several agencies reported the need to establish mentoring and training programs reaching out to the women labor market. Finally, within state government, legislatively or policy-imposed restrictions regarding promotions or pay increases adversely impact the ability of state entities to attract and retain qualified women employees.

MCSW has established a strategic plan to address several of the issues identified by our Interagency Council partners and continues to build partnerships with other organizations working toward common goals. To improve women's participation in the workforce during 2016, MCSW will work with the State Workforce Development Board to increase the employment and job opportunities made available to women in Mississippi. MCSW takes an active role in making recommendations related to legislation that impacts, for better or worse, the lives of women on issues as varied as equal pay, family and domestic violence, and access to legal services and health care. MCSW is developing partnerships that will give women, particularly low-income women, access to needed support services. Finally, while women represent more than half of Mississippi's population, their participation in state and local government is not representative, and the MCSW strives to encourage and support women seeking to contribute and serve the citizens of the state of Mississippi. To engage more women in the political process, MCSW has and will continue to support and sponsor seminars and educational forums that encourage seeking political office in cooperation with the Stennis Institute at Mississippi State University. Recommending women to fill seats on state-appointed boards and commissions is also a priority.

Women continue to achieve and excel in many areas. According to the 2015 AmEx Report on State of Women-Owned Businesses, Mississippi boasts an estimated 72,300 women-owned firms as of 2015. Since 2014, Mississippi has seen approximately eight new women-owned firms open each day. Progress is evident. However, as a gender, women continue to face a number of unique barriers to full participation in all aspects of society and the economy. Thus, it is with a sense of deep responsibility that the appointed members of MCSW begin the New Year. It is my honor to have been selected by my peers to serve as Chair, and I am looking forward to an active and productive 2016!

Thank you for your continued support of MCSW. We invite you to visit our website at www.women.ms.gov to learn more.

Sincerely,



Heather Philo Wagner, Chair

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

The Mississippi Commission on the Status of Women Annual Report 2015 provides information on women's initiatives, programs, and representation in state government and pinpoints where additional improvements are needed for women in the state. The report also tracks women's progress based on national and state-level statistics.

- Professional development and career initiatives promote the advancement of women in job ranks and into leadership positions (pg. 8).
- Gender parity and equal opportunities in the work environment reduce the gender wage gap and foster a civil and inclusive environment (pg. 9).
- Strategies and policies that promote a healthy work environment include work-life balance, job flexibility, and wellness programs (pg. 10).
- Outreach efforts, like training programs and infrastructure systems, create a foundation for women's well-being – physically, emotionally, and mentally (pg. 11 and 15).
- Access to educational experiences assists with job performance, educational pathways, or professional guidance (pg. 12).
- Education on and prevention of violence and discrimination through Title IX programs ensure women's rights in the academic and professional arenas (pg. 13).
- Entrepreneurship opportunities create a diverse business environment and allow women to compete equally (pg. 14).
- State agencies recommend additional funding and enrichment of programs that offer employee benefits, create workforce equity and diversity, and promote professional well-being for all women in the state (pg. 17).
- Women make up more than half (56 percent) of those employed in state agencies (pg. 18).
- The average percentage of women in managerial or other high-rank positions is 40 percent, a two percent decrease since 2010. Women in leadership positions are earning higher salaries than they were five years ago (pg. 18 and 19).
- Women continue to experience disparities by race/ethnicity across state agencies (pg. 19 and 20).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This fiscal year 2015 annual report provides information from state agencies on the position of women in state government. Furthermore, the report identifies agencies' core functions that impact the quality of life of all women in the state.

Data from state agencies indicate professional development programs are channels that can lead to career advancement for women within an organization. Such programs offer a supportive and appealing work environment as well as opportunities for women to hone their skills and enhance their performance and self-awareness. Additionally, training and economic development opportunities provide women entrepreneurs with avenues to seek assistance or sharpen their competencies.

Equally important are the wellness benefits and improved health initiatives that increase services to women and offer a holistic look at a person's well-being. In addition, specialized social-behavioral-emotional support programs have been expanded to include counseling, crisis management, interpersonal violence, parenting, prevention, transitional care, prenatal care needs, or wraparound services.

Moreover, efforts to increase representation of women in highly scientific and technical disciplines, such as science, mathematics, engineering, and technology, aim to promote diversity in the workforce and increase job productivity and satisfaction.

Inequities in earnings, disparities in higher management positions, and racial underrepresentation still pose challenges in Mississippi. As new programs and processes are implemented, women have the opportunity to expand their potential. National statistics show that occupations for Mississippi women are ranked near the top in the information and transportation/utilities fields. On the other hand, Mississippi women with a high school diploma are barely above the national average.

Proposed actions include encouraging communication within the community to find venues for support programs. Increased and targeted funding can also effectively alleviate issues with wage equality, workforce diversity, and training programs.

This report's findings can be a first step to creating a better present and a hopeful future for young girls, women, and all citizens in the state of Mississippi.

INTRODUCTION

This annual report covers the status of women in Mississippi state government and the programs initiated by state agencies to help women in the state. Mississippi has taken remarkable strides to improve the lives of women, from achieving greater gender parity in the workforce to providing better access to education, mentoring, training, and emotional-behavioral-intellectual support programs for girls, women, and, by extension, all Mississippians. Yet women in Mississippi still face challenges such as underrepresentation in leadership positions and science-technology-engineering-math (STEM) fields. Mississippi women also experience racial disparities and disparities in geographic areas with low social mobility.

This report builds on information on (a) career initiatives addressed to women employees across state agencies; (b) gender composition of managerial or other high-rank positions; (c) overall employee breakdown by gender; (d) racial breakdown of women employees; (e) average wages of high-rank positions; (f) programs targeting women and, by extension, all people in Mississippi; (g) areas in need of continuous support and further improvement; (h) limitations in addressing identified needs; and (i) suggestions for policy or legislative changes.

The report can serve as a resource for legislators, advocates, policymakers, and other stakeholders who seek to level the playing field in the development and delivery of programs and services. The report highlights opportunities and challenges that women face in state government and aims to ultimately encourage policy changes that support all women in the state.

METHODS

This report contains data from 13 state agencies (see Table 1) that responded to a set of nine questions (see Figure 1). The collected data reflect information on initiatives and programs, on women representation in state government, and on propositions that could improve the status of women in the state.

Figure 1: Questions to Interagency Council Members

QUESTIONS TO INTERAGENCY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Question 1: Does your agency have any initiatives or policies in place for meeting the needs of women employees in your agency? What was the participation rate of women employees in each of these initiatives? How long has your agency engaged in implementing these initiatives?

Question 2: Does your agency provide programs that help women in Mississippi and by extension all Mississippians? What was the participation rate of women in each of these programs? How long has your agency engaged in implementing these programs?

Question 3: In 2015, what are the top 10 highest rank positions in your agency? How many of these positions are occupied by males/females? What is the average wage of women versus men in these positions?

Question 4: In 2010, by comparison (as in question 3).

Question 5: What is the current race/ethnicity composition of women in your agency? What are the races of the top 10 women wage earners in your organization?

Question 6: How many total employees does your agency have? What is their gender distribution?

Question 7: From your perspective, what are some ideas in which women (either those employed by your agency or those accessing services provided by your agency) continue to need support and/or assistance?

Question 8: What, if any, limitations exist which prevent your agency from addressing these identified needs?

Question 9: What, if any, suggestions would you have for policy or legislative changes that could assist your agency in addressing needs of women?

The results were analyzed using a mixed-methods approach. A qualitative analysis uncovered social processes and explored the programs available to women. Data were aggregated and averaged to reflect the status of women in Mississippi state government. All findings are presented here with interpretations.

The report is organized to allow readers a full comparative review. The first part of the report describes the most prominent qualitative themes, while the second part presents a summary of women in state agencies. Lastly, Appendix A provides additional information furnished by state agencies, while Appendix B provides national data with different indicators of women's status and rankings that help understand the context of the current findings. National statistics were derived from the U.S. Census Bureau (Current Population Survey – 2015).

Table 1: Participating Agencies'

	FULL AGENCY NAME	ACRONYM
1.	Mississippi Attorney General's Office	AGO
2.	Mississippi Department of Finance & Administration	DFA
3.	Mississippi Department of Public Safety	DPS
4.	Mississippi Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning ²	IHL
5.	Mississippi Community College Board	MCCB
6.	Mississippi Development Authority	MDA
7.	Mississippi Department of Education	MDE
8.	Mississippi State Department of Health	MSDH
9.	Mississippi Department of Mental Health	MDMH
10.	Mississippi Department of Transportation	MDOT
11.	Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks	MDWFP
12.	Mississippi State Personnel Board	MSPB
13.	Office of the Mississippi Secretary of State	SOS

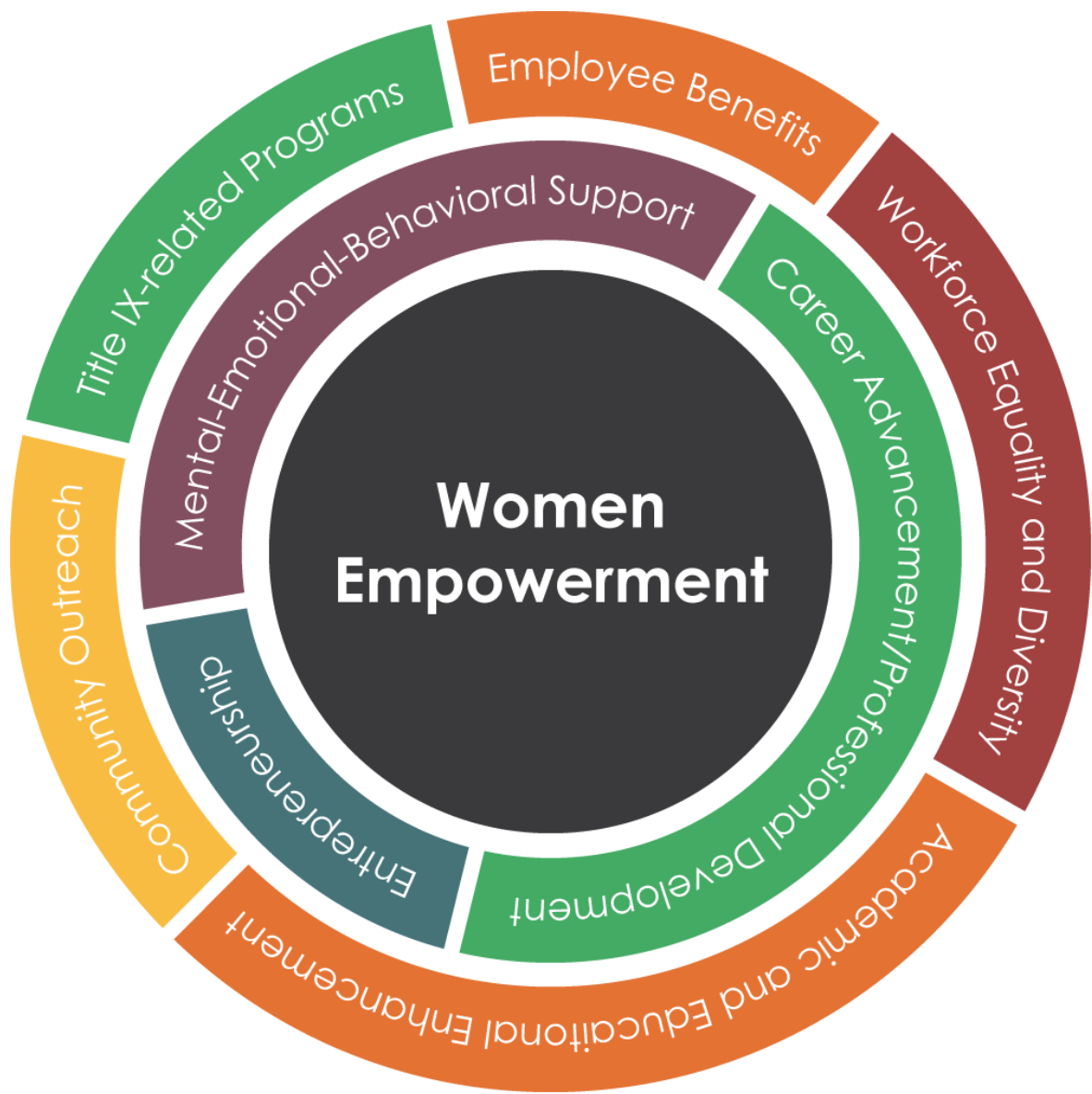
¹ The Mississippi Department of Human Services was invited but was not represented at the interagency meeting. Information from MDHS was not available for inclusion in this report. The Mississippi Department of Corrections presented a report at the interagency meeting but did not distribute copies of the report. Information from MDOC was not available for inclusion in this report.

² IHL is comprised of eight public universities. Responses from all eight higher education institutions were aggregated, averaged, and presented in this report.

PART 1: KEY CONCEPTS FROM STATE AGENCIES

Each year the Mississippi Commission on the Status of Women organizes an interagency meeting during which each state agency reports on its programs and initiatives related to women's empowerment and advancement in state government and society as a whole. Eight main themes emerged from analysis this year. State agencies were also asked to indicate the longevity and participation rate of their initiatives or programs (see Appendix A). Figure 2 summarizes the most prevalent concepts among state agencies.

Figure 2: Main Themes of Women Empowerment



Career Advancement and Professional Development

Initiatives and programs that promote the advancement of women throughout the ranks and into leadership positions continue to be of utmost importance for the majority of state agencies (see Figure 3). Mentoring resources provide guidance and the organizational support to increase employee and user participation. Professional development opportunities, such as conferences, career counseling, and training, educate women about best practices and provide them with the skills needed to succeed in the professional arena.

Figure 3: Career Advancement and Professional Development Programs by State Agency

AGO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Employee Training 	DFA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Employee Training 	DPS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Employee Training 	IHL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •JSU ADVANCE •Mentoring •Promotion of Women Faculty
MDA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Employee Training 	MDE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Mentorship 	MDMH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Certified Public Manager Program •State Executive Development Institute •FOCUS Program 	MDOT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Employee Training •National Transportation Management Conference
MDWFP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Mentorship 	MSDH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Professional Administrative and Supervisory Training 	MSPB <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Career Counseling Services •Employee Training 	SOS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Employee Training

The Secretary of State's Office encourages all employees to participate in training initiatives, as well as associations/organizations that provide career development for their current positions. Several women employees have served or currently serve in leadership roles within these organizations.

- Secretary of State

Women, either those employed within our agency or those outside our agency, have access to assistance or support on a daily basis by trained personnel within their respective departments.

- Mississippi Department of Public Safety

Workforce Equality and Diversity

The workplace experience can be both beneficial and challenging to women. Programs that promote equal opportunities, reduce the gender wage gap, and foster a diverse, civil, and inclusive environment that allows women in the workforce to reach their potential are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Workforce Equality and Diversity Programs by State Agency

AGO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal Representation Of Women In The Workplace 	DFA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal Wages 	IHL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive and Diverse Climate • Diversity Training Sessions • Multicultural Awareness • Employee Raises • Women in STEM areas • Leadership / Empowerment • Promoting Cultural Civility • Equal Opportunity / Regulatory Compliance 	MCCB <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Fairs
MDE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender / Racial Equality 	MDMH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Raises • Basic Supervisory Course • Cultural Competency Program • Women's Economic Security Summit 	MDOT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal Opportunity / Affirmative Action Plan • Sensitivity and Respect Committee 	
MDWFP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Fairs 	MSDH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Raises 	MSPB <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compensation System 	

Women employees in the Office of the Attorney General have not experienced the traditional barriers that tend to result in the underrepresentation of women in the agency and leadership. Because women may enjoy the benefits of a supportive work environment, the Office of the Attorney General is an attractive workplace for women.

- Mississippi Attorney General's Office

As a condition of receiving federal funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation, all state DOTs are required to have an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)/Affirmative Action Plan (AAP). As a part of this plan, MDOT identifies areas within the agency where minorities, mostly African-Americans and women, are underutilized within seven EEO categories. MDOT then develops a plan to hire and promote minorities and women in these areas.

- Mississippi Department of Transportation

Employee Benefits

State agencies employ different strategies and programs to address the needs of women in the workplace (see Figure 5). These approaches include creating policies that provide work-life balance and flexibility; accounting for dependents by supporting wraparound services for either children or elderly family members; stimulating awareness and interest in agency services; accommodating programs for healthy living; or assigning venues for conflict resolution.

Figure 5: Employee Benefits Programs by State Agency

AGO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal / Paid Leave • Leave Without Pay Options • Flexible Work Hours 	DFA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Health Plan 	IHL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Insurance Benefits • Leave Policies • Spousal Support • Work-Life Balance • Wraparound Services (Dependent Care) • Accommodations for Mothers • Flexibility in the Workplace • Tuition Remission • Wellness Programs
MCCB <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wraparound Services 	MDE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellness Programs • Flexibility in the Workplace • Work-Life Balance • Leave Policies • Scholarships and Loan Forgiveness • Incentive Options for Teachers In Geographical Shortage Areas 	MDMH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellness Programs
MDWFP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Days • Wellness Programs 	MSDH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodations for Mothers • Nutrition Education • Wellness Program 	MSPB <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Appeals Board

We use targeted marketing to encourage women employees to visit facilities, take part in agency services, and increase their knowledge about available recreational opportunities. We host Employee Days throughout the state in an effort to encourage families to visit our facilities.

- Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks

Examples of MSPB initiatives that have a direct impact on women include offering job fairs throughout Mississippi, promoting job opportunities with the state, or providing career counseling services for applicants who want to pursue a career in state government.

- Mississippi State Personnel Board

Community Outreach

In many instances, community outreach efforts are paramount in tying the work of state agencies to women and the general population (see Figure 6). Infrastructure that guarantees the safety and well-being of abused or battered individuals and ensures their smooth integration into society is very important. Also, training programs that provide common sense survival skills for daily protection are part of the issues some agencies address. Lastly, health awareness management and services aim to improve the care delivered to everyone in Mississippi.

Figure 6: Community Outreach Programs by State Agency

DFA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State and School Employees Health and Life Insurance Management Program 	IHL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe House • Teach Mississippi Institute • University Extension Services • Rural Health and Social Disparities • Child Welfare Institute • Center of Excellence in Minority Health • Women's Health Awareness 	MCCB <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention of Unplanned Pregnancies Bill 	MDMH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Integration • Respite • Waiver Expansion Services • Women's Center for Nonviolence • Alcohol and Drug Services
MDWFP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hunter Safety 	MSDH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WIC Program • Domestic Violence Shelters 	SOS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen Regulations and Protection 	

DFA staff makes recommendations to the Board about benefits enhancements and/or changes based on industry standards and plan performance in the State and School Employees Health and Life Insurance Management Program. Recent recommendations have enriched offerings to women to encourage wellness and improved health.

- Mississippi Department of Finance & Administration

In 2014, the Legislature tasked our agency along with IHL to help address the issue of unplanned pregnancies among older teens. Senate Bill No. 2563 required the community colleges and universities to conduct a study on ways to prevent unplanned pregnancies among 18- and 19-year-olds. This legislation was the first of its kind in the nation. In 2015, Arkansas adopted legislation that mirrored Mississippi's.

- Mississippi Community College Board

Academic and Educational Enhancement

Educational programs for women, students, and faculty are included in the roster of many state agencies (see Figure 7). For some agencies, educational attainment and outcomes, academic performance, and classroom and campus environment constitute integral purposes of their operations toward the development of women. Other agencies offer higher education coursework, internships and scholarships that assist with enhanced job performance, educational pathways, or professional guidance. Also, gender studies provide the background knowledge and skills to explore the impact of gender in education and the marketplace.

Figure 7: Academic and Educational Enhancement Programs by State Agency

AGO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher Education Benefits 	IHL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational Attainment • Interdisciplinary Groups • Status of Women Commissions • University Ombudsperson • Upward Mobility Mechanisms • JSU ADVANCE • Women and Gender Studies • Activities Sponsored by Centers/Institutes • Tuition Waiver 	MCCB <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Enrollment • MyBest for students without a GED
MDE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Performance • Educational Outcomes • Teach for America 	MDOT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internship Program • National Transportation Leadership Institute • Mississippi Summer Transportation Institute • TRAC and RIDES Program • SASHTO Scholarship 	MDWFP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment Campaigns

Mississippi Summer Transportation Institute has been around since 1998, with an average of approximately 50 percent of students being women each year. Since 2003, the SASHTO Scholarship has awarded approximately 35 to 40 scholarships to women students.

- Mississippi Department of Transportation

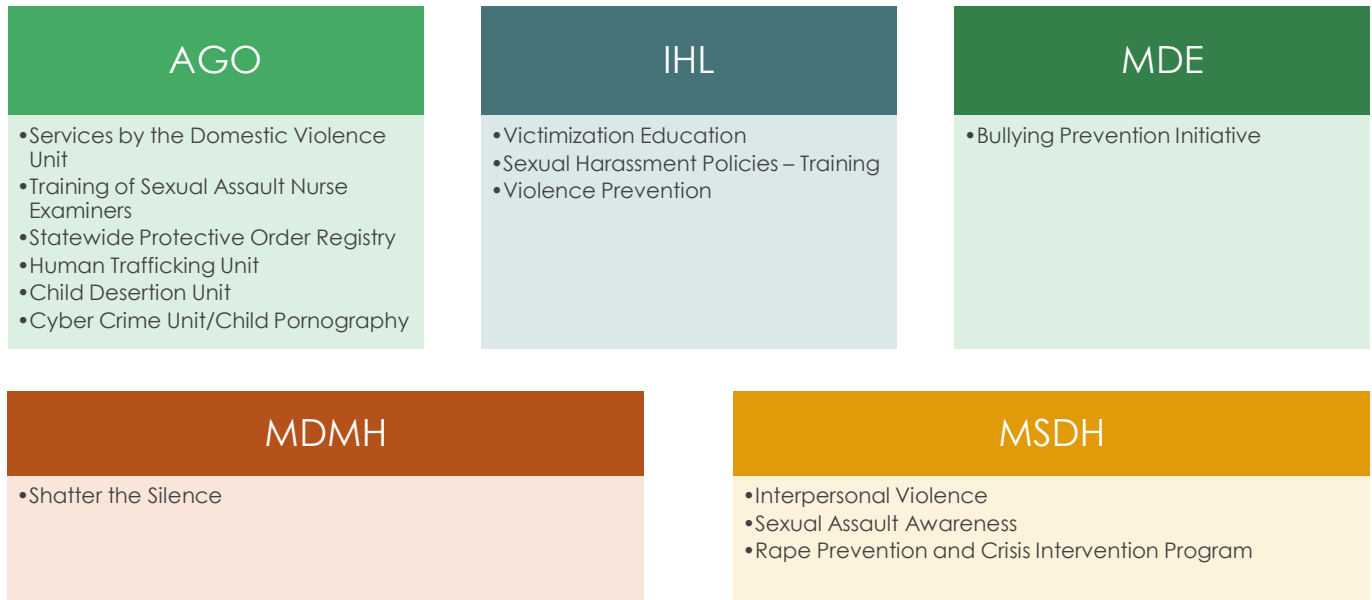
JSU ADVANCE has created opportunities to enhance and support the careers of women faculty in eligible disciplines at JSU and, in doing so, helped the local community as well.

- Mississippi Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning – Jackson State University

Title IX Programs

Violence specifically targeting women is addressed in some of the programs offered by state agencies (see Figure 8). All higher education institutions have established a Title IX office for victims of misconduct, bullying, harassment, or assault. Education on and prevention of violence is a foremost goal for state agencies outside academia, too. In addition, agencies offer services and support to victims in regard to the criminal justice process.

Figure 8: Title IX Programs by State Agency



The Office Against Interpersonal Violence administers grants to support domestic violence shelters and sexual assault centers around the state of Mississippi.

- Mississippi State Department of Health

The Office of the Attorney General has several programs and services that are available to all people, but the majority of beneficiaries have traditionally been women.

- Mississippi Attorney General's Office

Entrepreneurship

Women- and minority-owned businesses have the opportunity to flourish in Mississippi (see Figure 9). The state offers a variety of programs for businesses to create a thorough business plan, gain financial control, compete equally, and achieve sustainability in the business environment.

Figure 9: Entrepreneurship Programs by State Agency

IHL	MDA	MDOT	MSPB
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Entrepreneurship Conference•Youth Entrepreneurship Program•Women-Owned Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Minority and Small Business Development•Counseling Sessions•Entrepreneur Center•Financing Programs•Mississippi Market Wholesale Show•Networking Opportunities•Women-Owned Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Pre-Approved Vendor Lists

During fiscal year 2015, the Entrepreneur Center at MDA provided consultations to more than 936 potential or existing women-owned businesses. From this, 69 long-term projects were completed with women-owned businesses, resulting in 288 jobs and over \$4,000,000 in investments in women-owned businesses in Mississippi. The Center also held 63 training events across the State of Mississippi where one-half of the participants who successfully completed the training were women.

- Mississippi Development Authority

The goal of the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program is to ensure that firms owned and controlled by minorities, women, and other socially and economically disadvantaged persons have the opportunity to grow and become self-sufficient to ensure they are able to compete on equal basis with non-disadvantaged businesses for contracts and subcontracts in the transportation industry.

- Mississippi Department of Transportation

Mental-Emotional-Behavioral Support

A few state agencies offer programs and services to women and all people in Mississippi suffering from intellectual and developmental disabilities, substance abuse problems, or other mental health issues (see Figure 10). These programs cover prevention, treatment, or counseling services.

Figure 10: Mental Emotional Behavioral Support Programs



The Mississippi Department of Mental Health provides grant funding to BORN FREE, which is a primary residential treatment program for pregnant and/or parenting women needing assistance to recover from chemical addictions.

- Mississippi Department of Mental Health

MUW has begun an Employee Assistance Program, at no cost to the individual. This program offers short-term counseling for employees and members of their household to help with everyday life issues. It also offers assistance, information, and support to help individuals achieve a better balance between work, life, and family.

- Mississippi Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning – Mississippi University for Women

Barriers

Two major challenges of state government are budget constraints and human power. In terms of budgetary limitations, agencies expressed difficulties in developing and implementing initiatives and programs that benefit women in the state (IHL, DFA). Another barrier related to funding is coverage for staff training and hiring (DPS). Underfunding seems to be a constant challenge for community colleges (MCCB) as well as other educational (MDE), health-related (MSDH and MDMH), or recreational-conservation agencies (MDWFP). In general, limited financial support has (a) decreased employee or public participation and (b) diminished opportunities for buy-in from the legislative body. In regard to capital resources, empowerment of initiatives and programs with necessary staff who provide services to people in Mississippi (IHL) seem to be the most critical area.

One additional domain that poses limitations is the small number of women in nontraditional fields like STEM. Agencies argue that the current lack of resources and advocacy groups can hinder women from acquiring positions in science and engineering fields (IHL). State entities indicated the importance of providing continuous support in that area to ensure that company culture can be reversed (MDOT).

Financial resources. The community colleges have been historically underfunded.

- Mississippi Community College Board



Recent legislative limitations related to promotions have made it difficult to utilize the program or any other measure as a means to advance employees—women and/or men—within our organization.

- Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration

Other than funding, one of the main issues that prevents DMH from addressing some of these needs is stigma. Every year, thousands of Mississippians struggle with their mental health. Mental illnesses are common and treatable, but they are seldom talked about as openly as physical health issues. Support from the community can be essential to someone's recovery. It is so important that people in the community have conversations about prevention, treatment, and recovery. By supporting others in their recovery from mental illness or substance abuse issues, we can help create a better tomorrow not just for them, but for our communities and our state as a whole.

- Mississippi Department of Mental Health

Suggestions

State agencies offer a series of suggestions pertaining to funding, employee benefits, workforce equity and diversity, professional well-being, and outreach efforts. Improvement of these areas could potentially provide pathways for more women to thrive in state government and in society as a whole.

- **Funding** – Additional subsidies could ensure that initiatives are well targeted (IHL), contribute to increased participation (MDMH, MDWFP), and are effectively implemented (MCCB, MDA, MSDH) to meet the needs of a desired population (e.g., women).
- **Employee Benefits** – On-site childcare (IHL, MDE), affordable healthcare for employees and dependents (IHL), assistance with work flexibility and leave policy (DFA, IHL), and career placement for spouses (IHL) would ensure greater balance in the work-life equation.
- **Diverse and Equal Workforce** – Equity and inclusion (DFA, IHL) are mainly expressed by wage parity and competitiveness, increased representation of women in scientific and technical disciplines, breaking of old network habits in hiring, and availability of training sessions that can promote a culture of civility and respect.
- **Professional Well-Being** – Productivity and professional success in the workplace could be achieved by applying advancement and enhancement policies (MDOT, SOS) and by extending current policies to child birth or adoption (IHL).
- **Outreach** – Community efforts can extend to partnerships with local organizations for mentoring of women-, small- or minority-owned businesses (MDA), to annual state fairs with celebrities, or to recreational activities for juniors (MDWFP).

Within the last year healthcare, childcare options, housing, etc. have become more expensive with increased out-of-pocket costs for many employees. Promised raises have been curtailed, and persistent increases in costs associated with working at the university (commuting, housing availability, etc.) have reduced overall net income for some employees. While no singular issue is seen as a cause of workplace dissatisfaction, it must be recognized that the convergence of recent and recurring events is contributing to poor morale. Given the high proportion of state workers employed by universities, legislative relief is sought to help address university employees' concerns with regard to these matters.

- Mississippi Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning – Alcorn State University

State leaders should work with the State Personnel Board, IHL, Executive Directors, and other state agency leaders to develop and promote programs designed to recruit more women in highly technical fields such as engineering, architecture, and scientific disciplines to work in state government.

- Mississippi Department of Finance & Administration

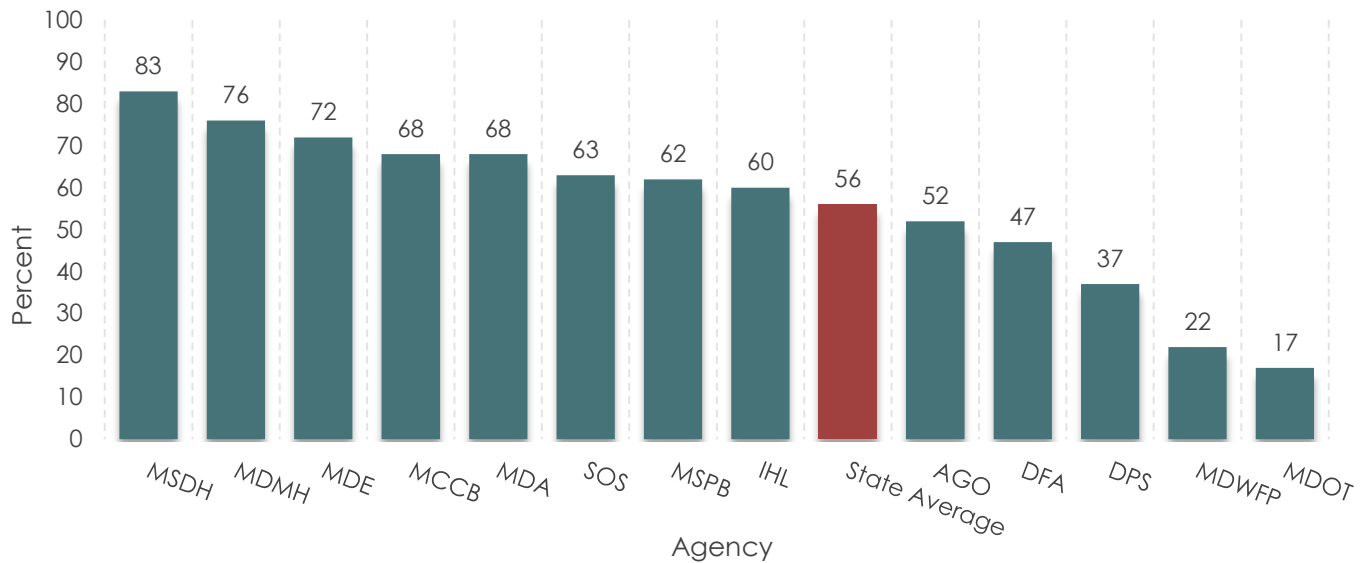
Adopting a statewide policy that gives state agencies the option to have on-site child care/day care available for women who are working mothers would help. By having this option available to women, studies have shown that productivity increases, companies are able to recruit and retain valuable employees, morale is boosted, and it also offers emotional security.

- Mississippi Department of Education

PART II: PRESENCE OF WOMEN IN STATE GOVERNMENT

Women government make up more than half (56 percent) of those employed in state agencies (see Figure 11). The majority of agencies exceed the state average for women in the workforce. The greater prevalence of women personnel is found in health-related, education, and service-type agencies, which reinforces the idea that these sectors are dominated by women.

Figure 11: Overall Presence of Women Employees in State Agencies

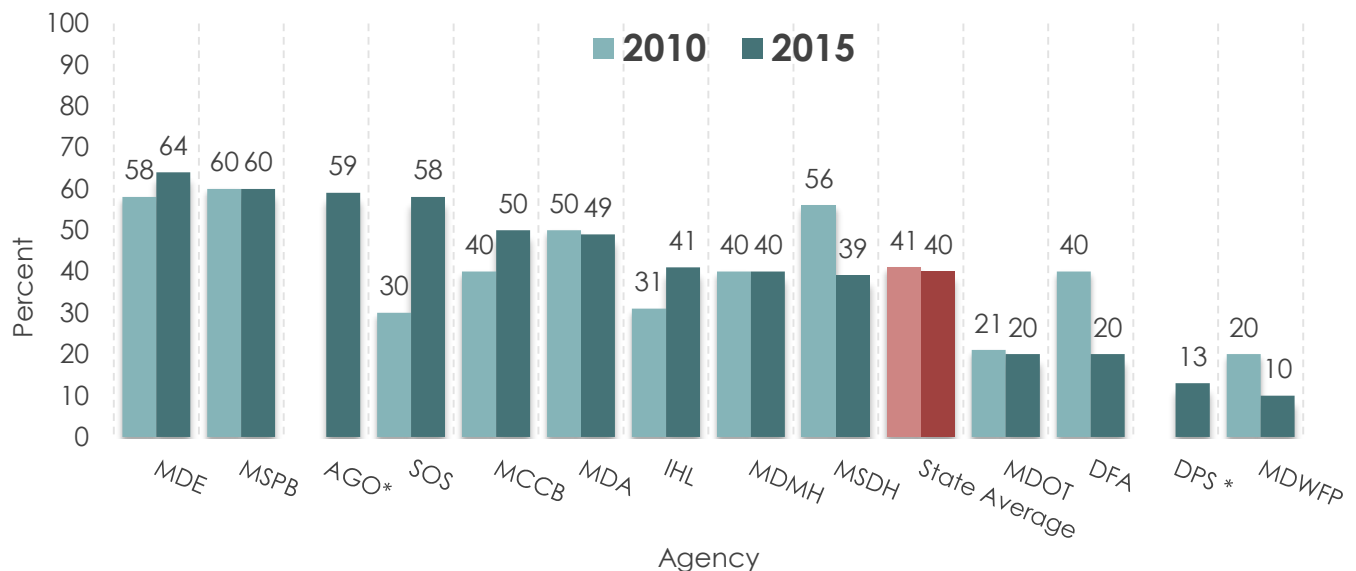


Source: Mississippi Commission on the Status of Women, Interagency Data 2015.

Trends in Presence of Women in High-Rank Positions

Women occupy less than half (40 percent) of the managerial, directorial, or other executive positions in state government (see Figure 12). This average of 40 percent in 2015 signifies an almost 2.5 percent decrease from 2010. Even though women occupy senior management positions, most agencies do not maintain gender equality in these positions.

Figure 12: Women Presence in Top 10 Highest Rank Positions



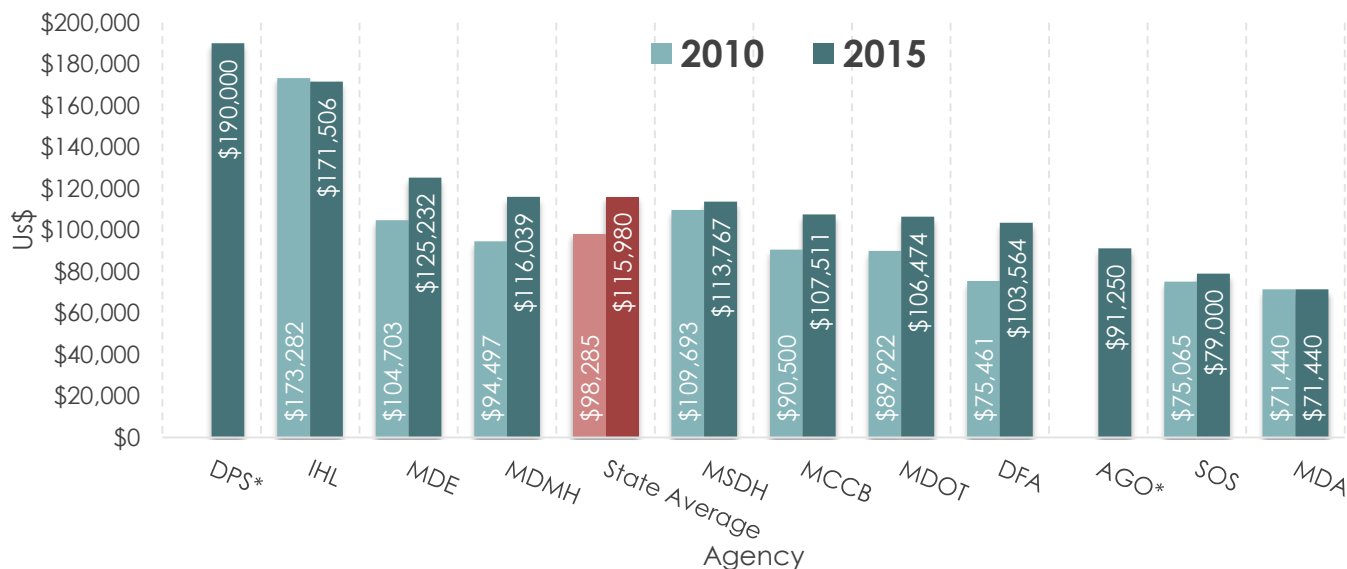
*Data for 2010 not available.

Source: Mississippi Commission on the Status of Women, Interagency Data 2015.

Wages of Women in High Rank Positions

In FY 2015, women in leadership positions have earned higher salaries than they did five years ago (see Figure 13), most likely due to advancements of women with high educational credentials and to a greater number of women in labor participation.

Figure 13: 2010 vs. 2015 Average Wages for Women in High Positions



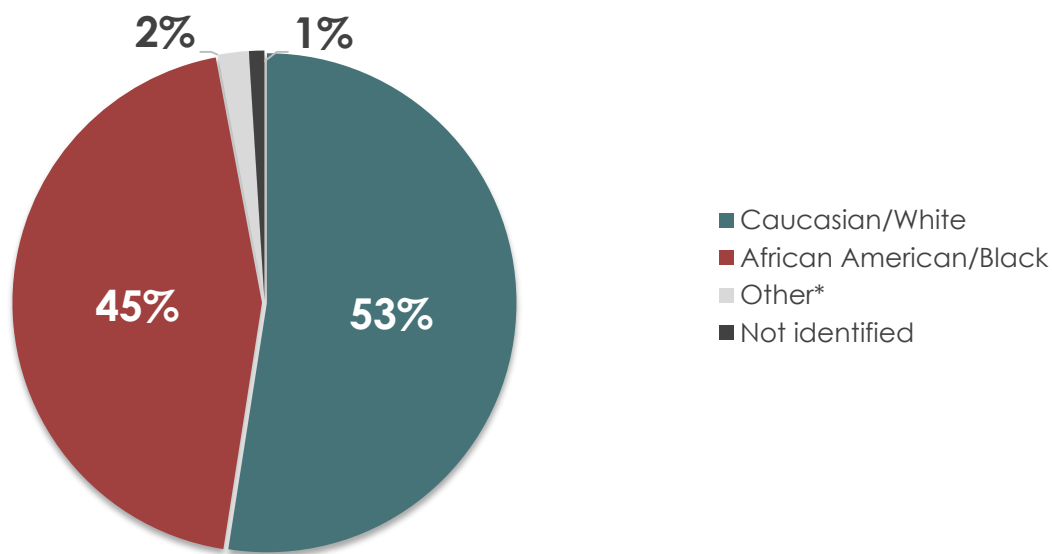
*Data for 2010 not available.

Source: Mississippi Commission on the Status of Women, Interagency Data 2015.

The Color of Women in State Government

As shown in Figure 14, the majority of the women working in state government are white (53 percent), while 45 percent are black. In addition, two percent of employees identify as Asian, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, or multiracial. This pattern is more uneven in the representation of women in leadership roles, where the majority of top positions are occupied by white women in almost every case (see Figure 15).

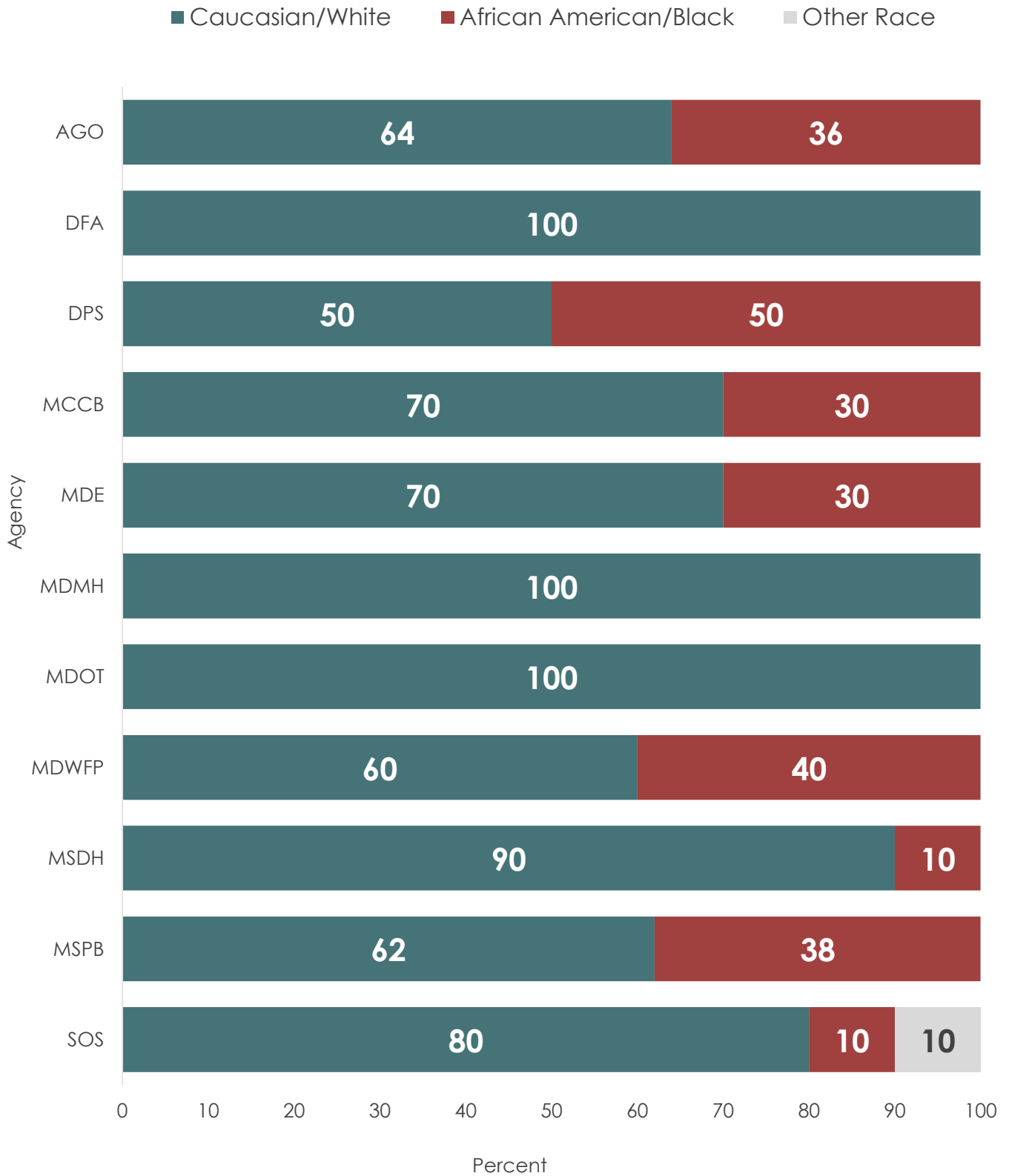
Figure 14: Racial Diversity of Women Employees in State Agencies (Average Percentages)



*Other includes: Asian, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, or other.

Source: Mississippi Commission on the Status of Women, Interagency Data 2015.

Figure 15: Racial Distribution of Women Leaders in Top 10 Positions



Source: Mississippi Commission on the Status of Women, Interagency Data 2015.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This annual report highlights state agencies' efforts to improve the status of women in Mississippi. Data reflect various types of initiatives, programs, and representation of women in workforce, leadership positions, and diverse occupations.

Career advancement and professional development of women employees play an important role for all state agencies. Many agencies implement policies that promote gender parity and encourage diversity in the workforce. Yet as state statistics indicate, this equality is uneven or disproportionate, especially in leadership positions. Employee benefits and outreach programs (including entrepreneurial opportunities) constitute another set of strategies to improve the position of women in the workforce and society. However, financial constraints inhibit full development and implementation of these programs. Furthermore, work against the victimization or stigmatization of women is represented in Title IX and mental, emotional, or behavioral support programs. Lastly, academic and educational enhancement for women representation in nontraditional roles or in STEM fields are a top priority for some state agencies. Even though Mississippi ranks among the top 10 states in high school graduation rates for women in workforce, there is a staggering drop to the bottom in women's tertiary education attainment, according to national statistics.

In view of this information, the Commission recommends more careful programming to address the needs of women in the state. Targeted funding, support for dependent care, greater diversity and equality in the workforce, and intensified outreach efforts can benefit and advance the interests and well-being of women in Mississippi.

In addition, the Commission will continue its efforts to promote the following list of recommendations:

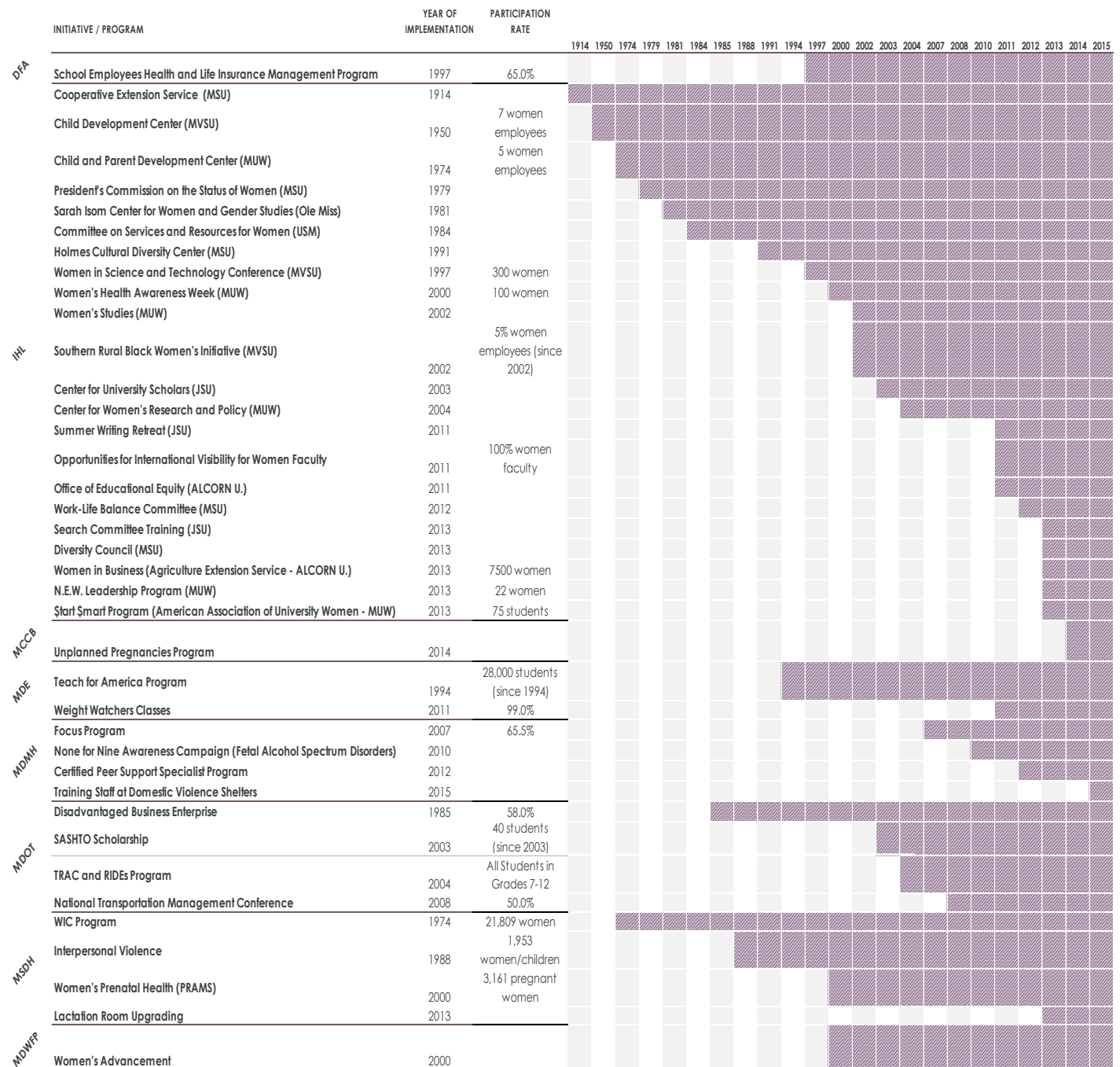
1. Encourage state agencies to keep statistics on how their work specifically impacts women and on the total number and percentage of women they employ in higher positions. This information should be provided to the Commission annually.
2. Reduce pay gaps between men and women. To that end, the State Personnel Board should report regularly on the percentage of women filling top positions in different state agencies; the number of women relative to men by job category; and the average wages of women versus men in each category.
3. Reevaluate and revise current child support guidelines as part of the goal of reducing the poverty rate among women in Mississippi.
4. Improve women's representation on boards and commissions. To increase the number of women who are considered for appointment, officials making such appointments should solicit and keep on file resumes of women qualified to serve on their boards or commissions.
5. Update data regularly on women holding elected offices across the state in the Secretary of State Office.
6. Invite and include additional state agencies in the next annual report.

APPENDIX A:

LONGEVITY OF PROGRAMS AND PARTICIPATION RATE

The following diagram shows implementation years of some programs. Participation rate represents 2015, unless otherwise noted.

Figure 16: Longevity of Programs and Participation Rate in 2015

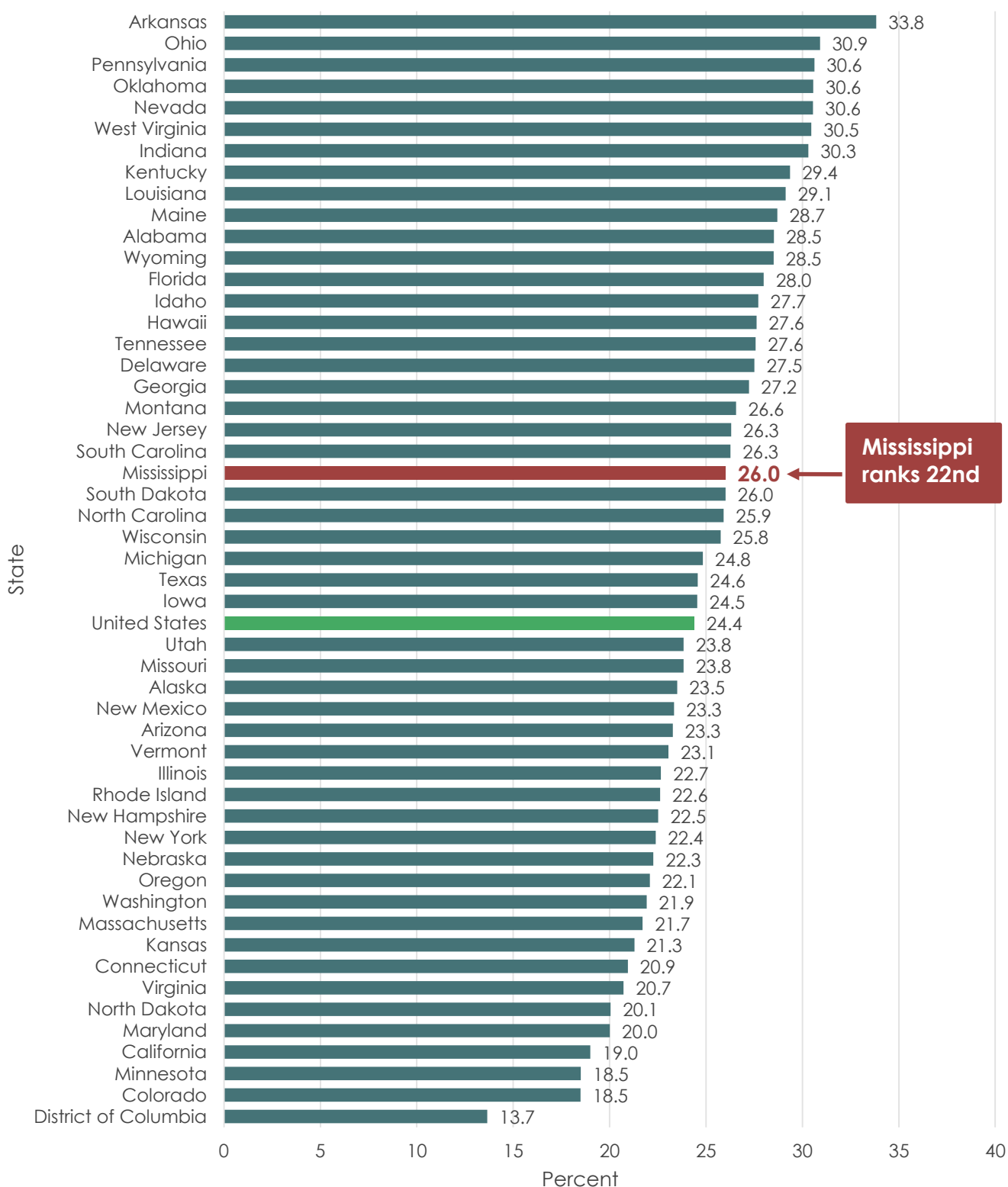


Source: Mississippi Commission on the Status of Women, Interagency Data 2015.

APPENDIX B: NATIONAL STATISTICS

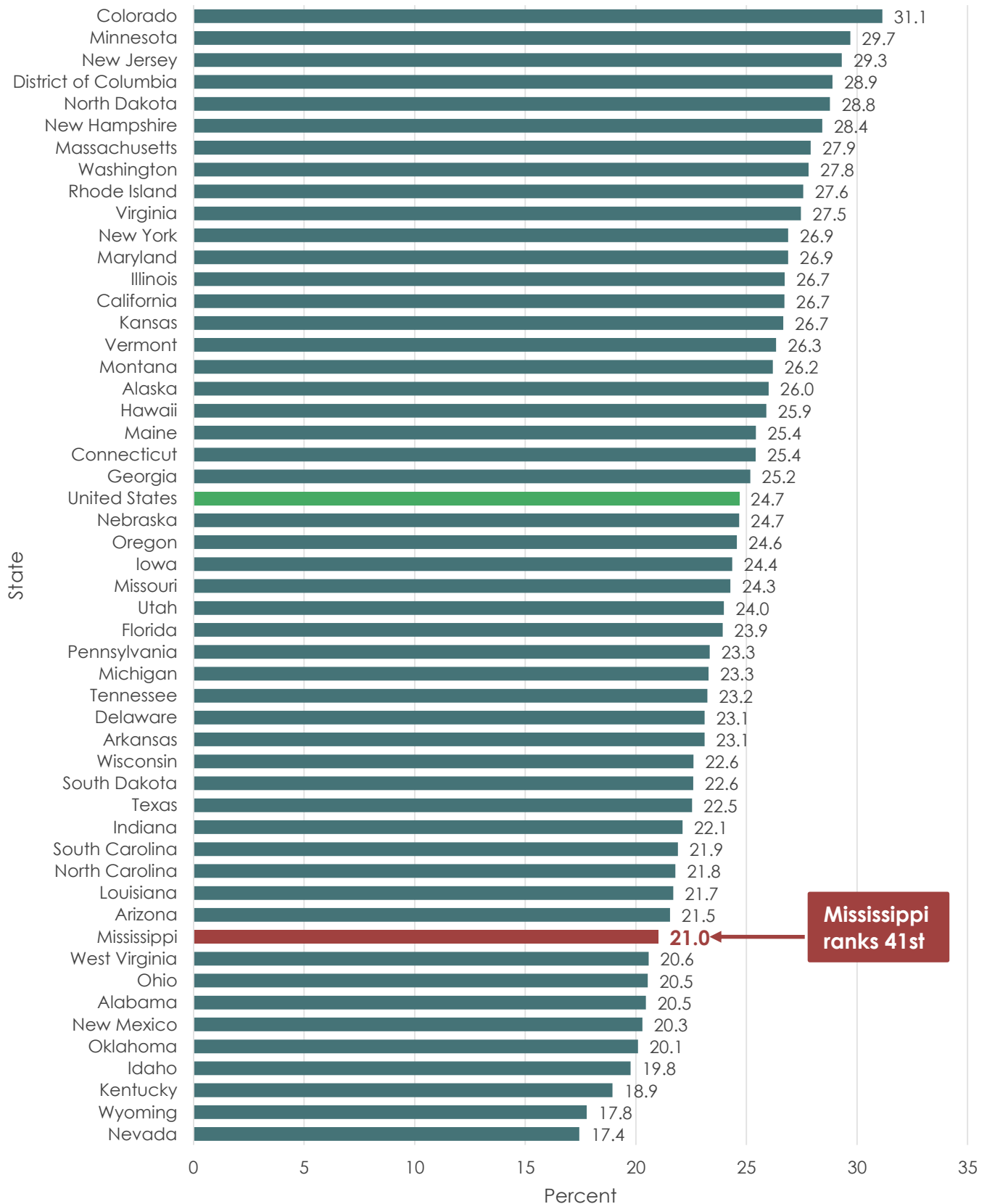
Educational Attainment

Figure 17: Women (Age 25+) in Workforce with a High School Diploma by State



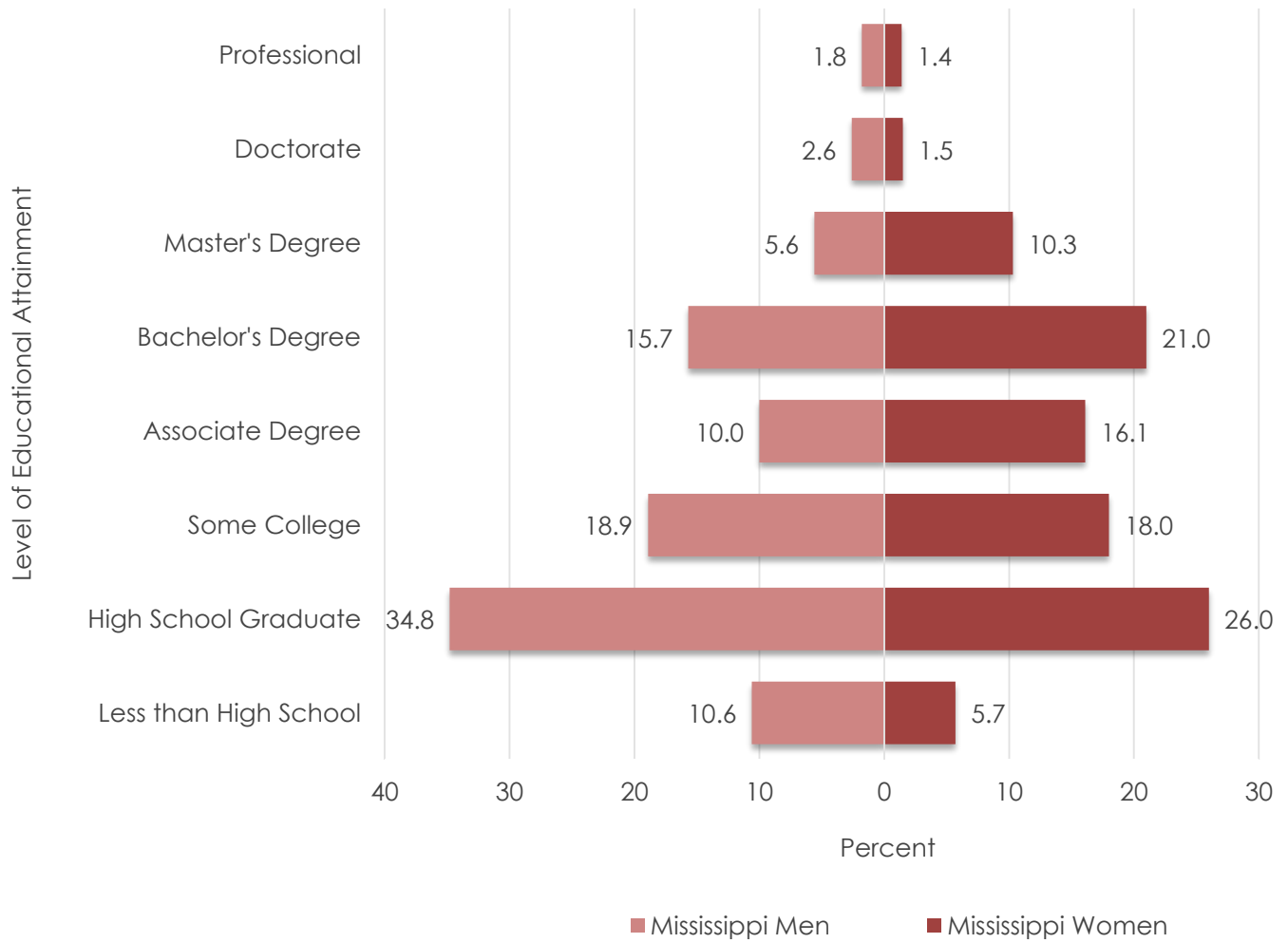
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2013-2015 Estimates.

Figure 18: Women (25+) in Workforce with a Bachelor's Degree by State



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2013-2015 Estimates.

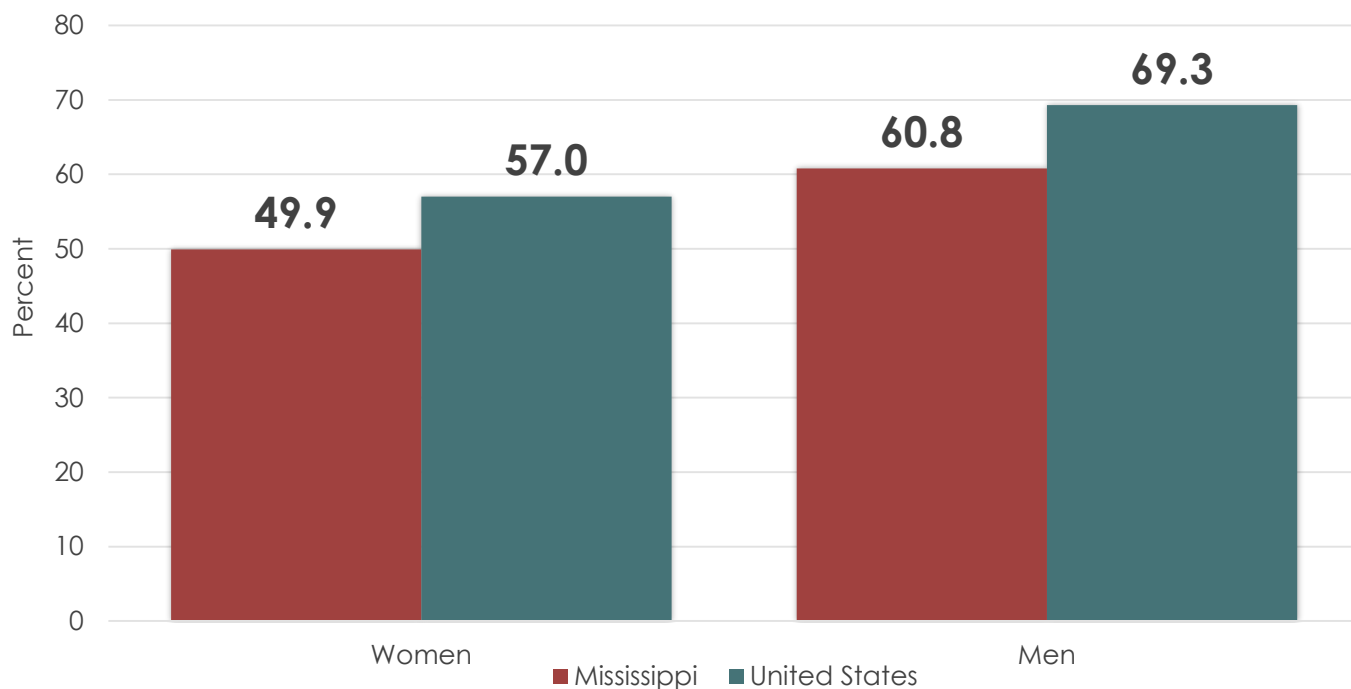
Figure 19: Educational Attainment in Mississippi by Gender



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2013-2015 Estimates.

LABOR FORCE

Figure 20: Labor Force Participation by Gender in Mississippi and the United States



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2013-2015 Estimates.

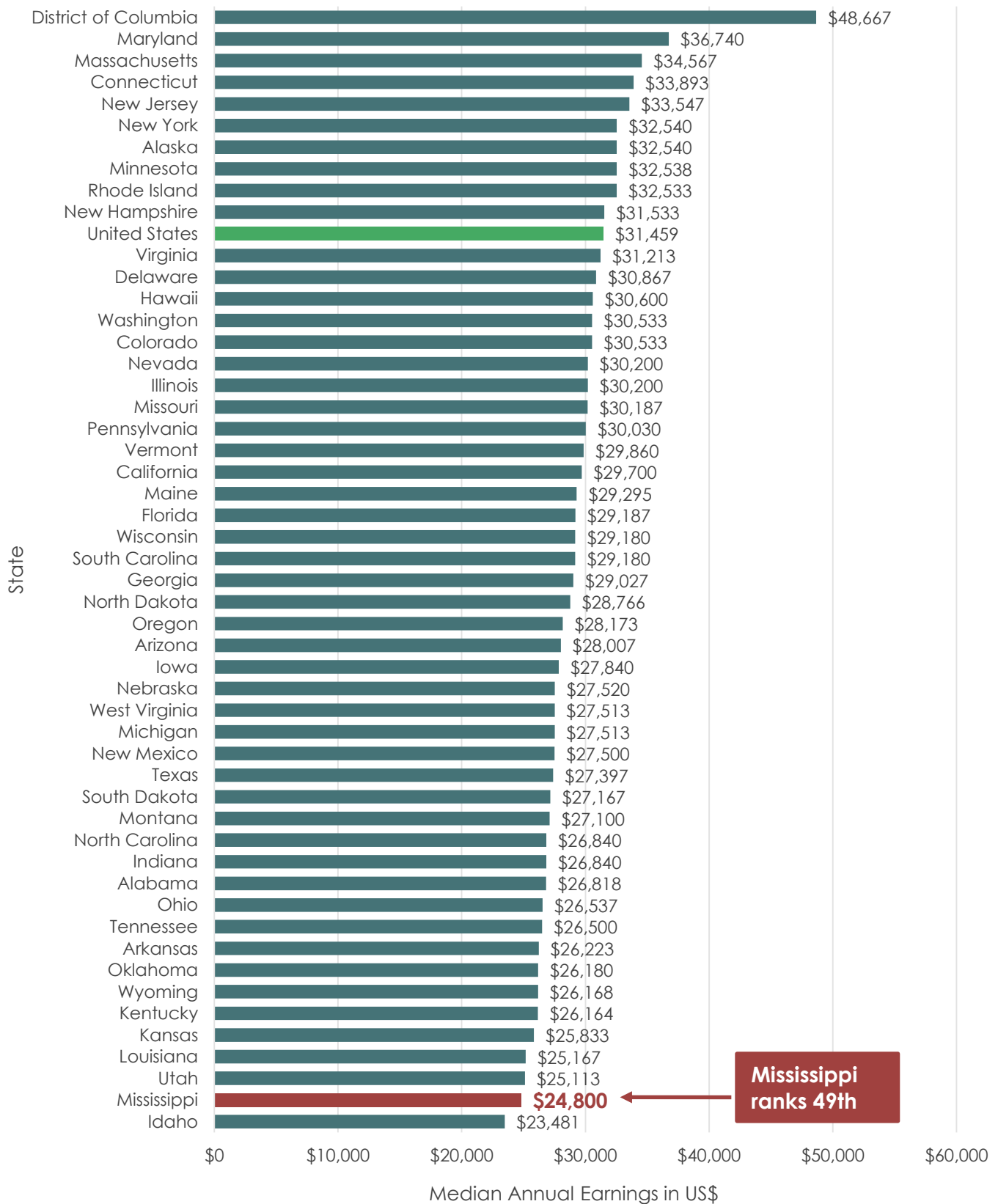
Figure 21: Unemployment Rate by Gender in Mississippi and the United States



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2013-2015 Estimates.

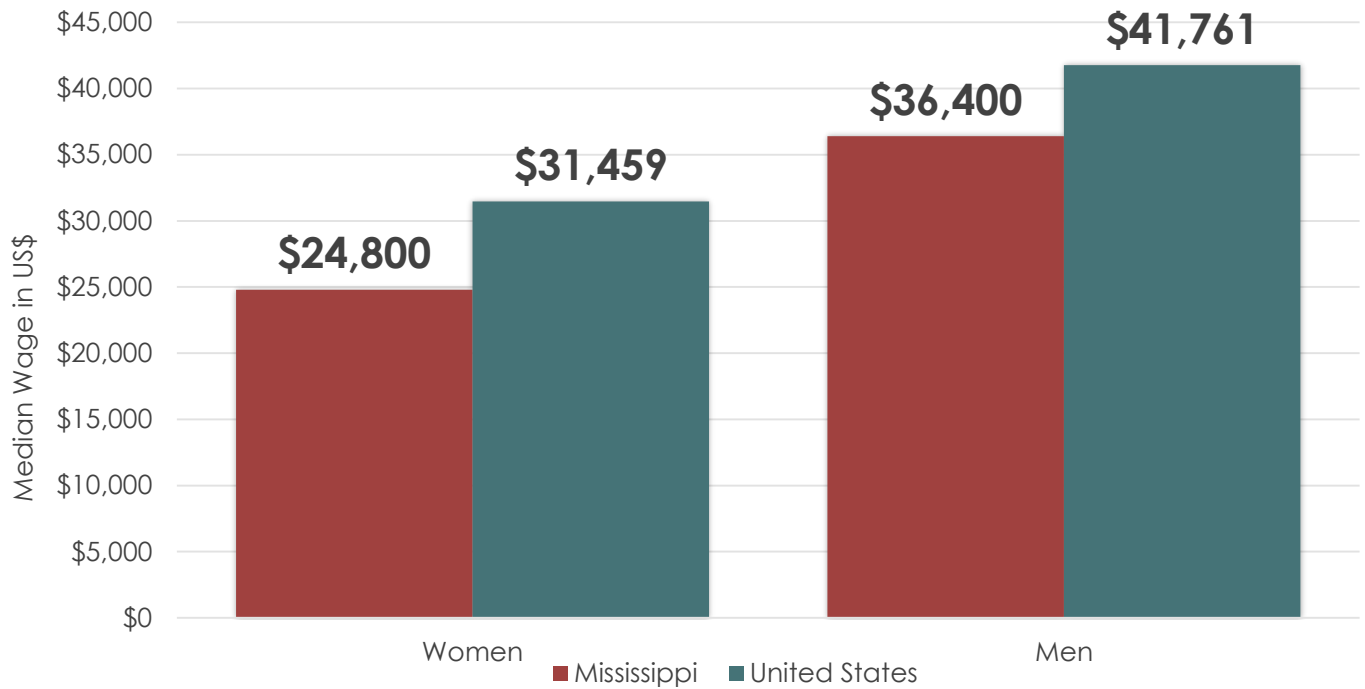
Earnings

Figure 22: Median Annual Earnings of Women by State



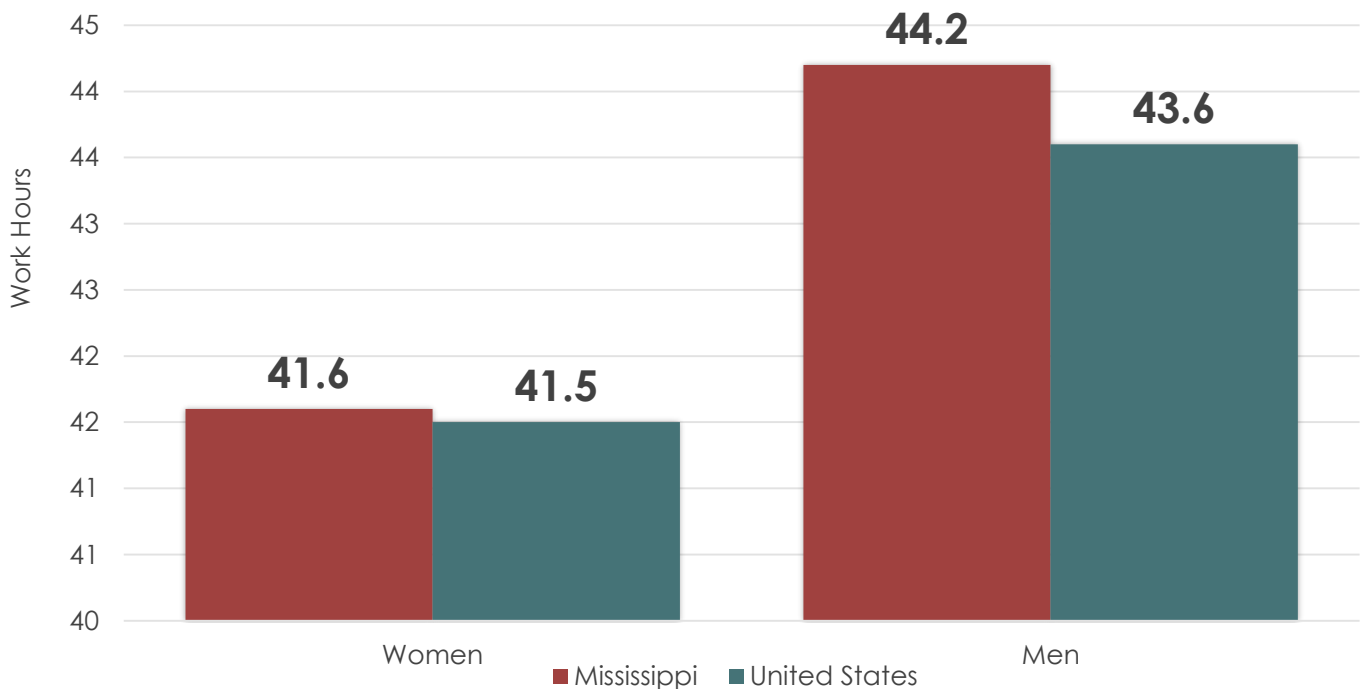
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2013-2015 Estimates.

Figure 23: Median Wage by Gender in Mississippi and the United States



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2013-2015 Estimates.

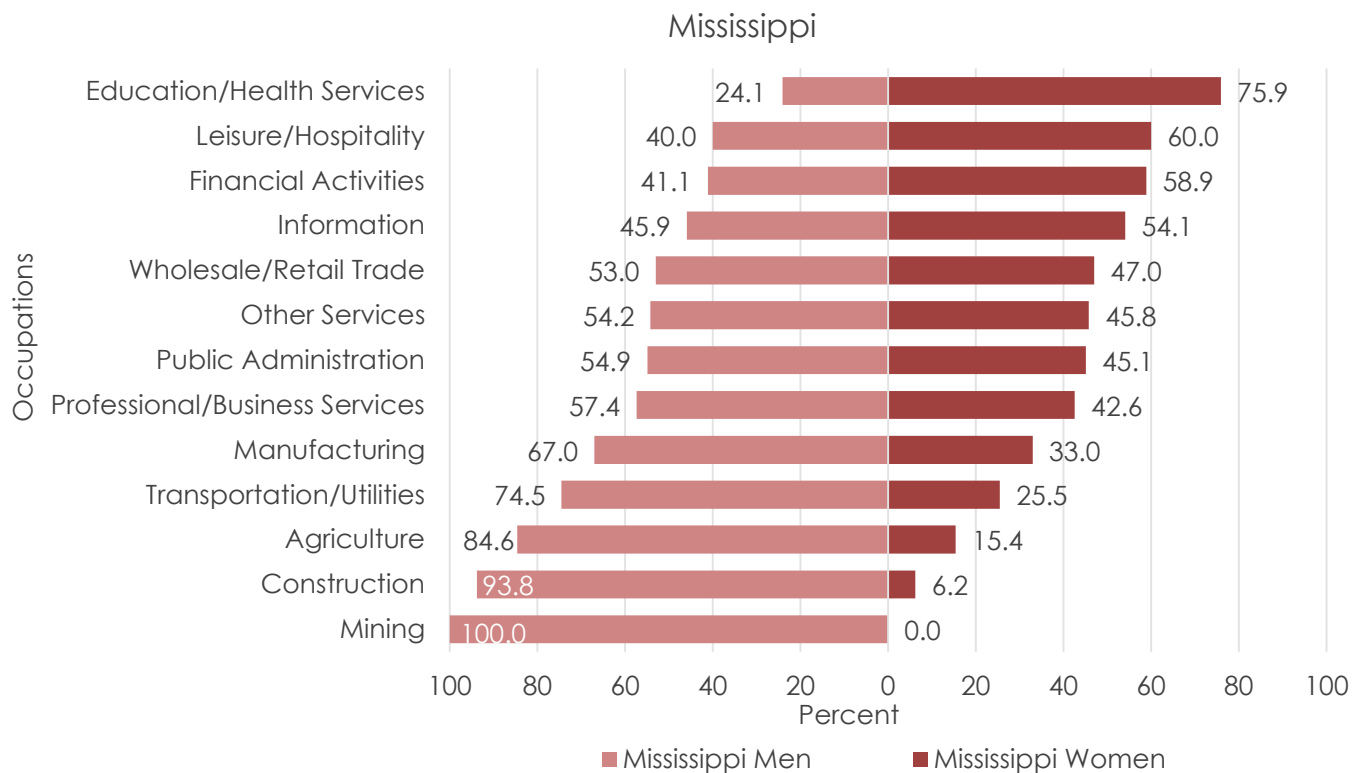
Figure 24: Work Hours for Women in Mississippi and the United States



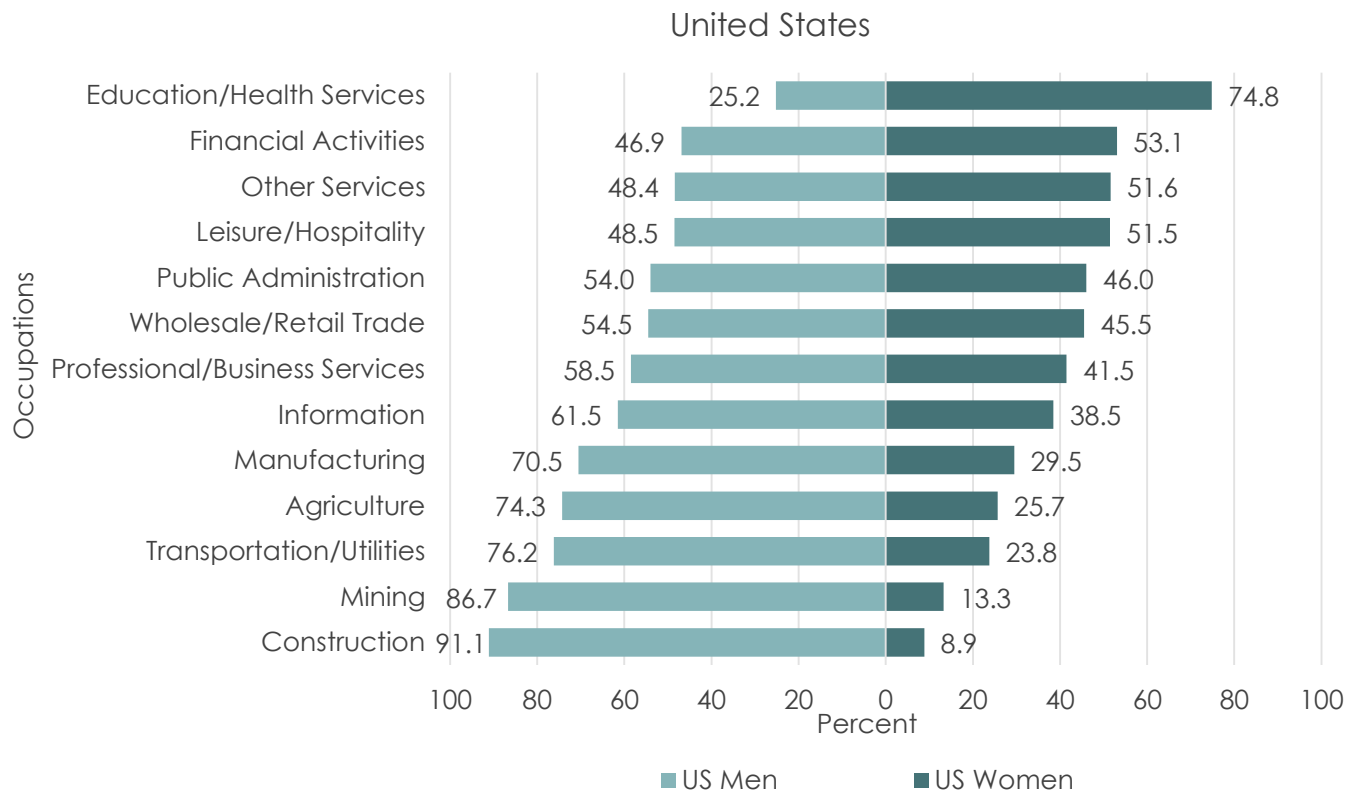
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2013-2015, Estimates.

Occupations

Figure 25: Employment by Occupation in Mississippi and the United States

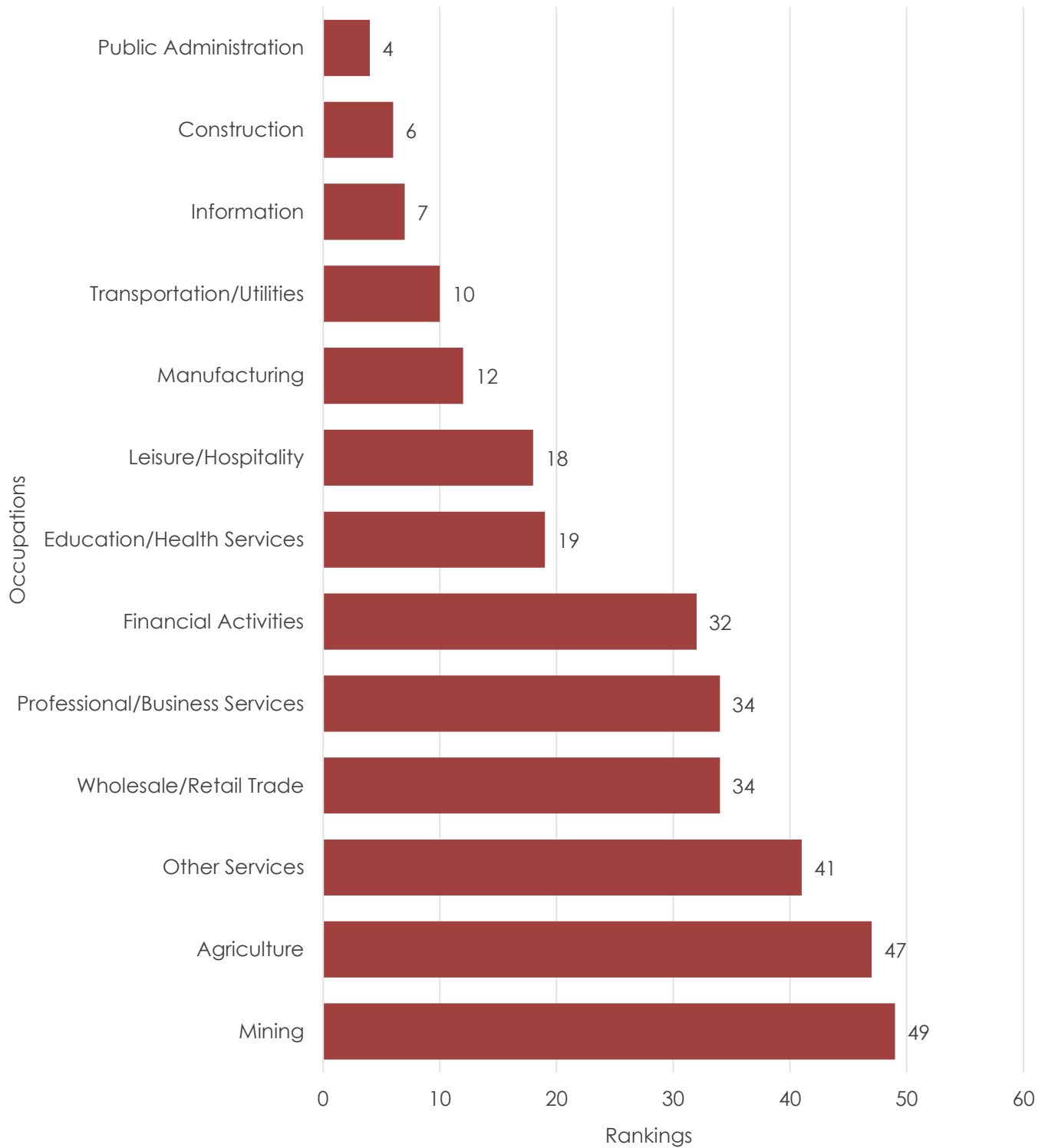


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2013-2015 Estimates.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2013-2015 Estimates.

Figure 26: National Rankings for Women's Management Occupations in Mississippi



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2013-2015 Estimates.



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