Why the Sierra Club Should Support Women's Rights, Along with Voting Rights and Labor Rights

Goal 5 of the UN’s recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals is achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls by 2030.

The United States

Food Insecurity

Food Insecurity and Very Low Food Security (1)

In 2014:

- 48.1 million Americans lived in food insecure households, including 32.8 million adults and 15.3 million children.
- 14 percent of households (17.4 million households) were food insecure.
- 6 percent of households (6.9 million households) experienced very low food security.
- Households with children reported food insecurity at a significantly higher rate than those without children, 19 percent compared to 12 percent.
- Households that had higher rates of food insecurity than the national average included households with children (19%), especially households with children headed by single women (35%) or single men (22%), Black non-Hispanic households (26%) and Hispanic households (22%).

Preventing Pregnancy and Unplanned Motherhood

50% of pregnancies in the U.S. are unplanned, due to lack of knowledge about conception and contraception, ineffectiveness of the contraceptive method used, costliness of effective methods, or barriers to contraceptive use. While religion plays a small part in contraceptive use, 98% of religious women have used contraception at some time in their life. (2)

Most American families want two children. To achieve this, the average woman spends about five years pregnant, postpartum or trying to become pregnant, and three decades—more than three-quarters of her reproductive life—trying to avoid an unintended pregnancy. (2)

Poor women are 5 times more likely to have an unintended pregnancy that richer women. (2)

In Texas, the family planning budget was recently cut by two-thirds, leaving 147,000 low-income Texas women without access to preventive care and Latinas living in poor and rural areas with large immigrant populations have been disproportionately hard-hit. Similar attacks on contraception are being made in several other states and even on the national level there are threats to Title-X, the Federal Family Planning program, as well as to Planned Parenthood, which provides healthcare services and contraception to low-income women.

In 1950, 18 million women were in the workforce. By the 1980s, the pill’s impact had had such an effect that 60 percent of women of reproductive age were employed. By 2000, the ranks of women in the workforce had more than tripled since the ’50s, rising to 66 million. Overall, from 1970 to 2009 women went from holding 37 percent of all jobs to almost half of them. (3)
Consulting giant McKinsey explains that without the huge increase in women’s workforce participation since the 1970s, “our economy would be 25% smaller today — an amount equal to the combined GDP of Illinois, California and New York.” (3)

Mothers Participation in the Labor Force

Mothers of younger children work fewer hours, resulting in lower wages. Half of pregnancies are unintended.

The labor force participation rate of mothers with children under 18 years of age was 69.9 percent in 2013, 74.7 percent for mothers with children 6-17 years of age, and 63.9 percent for mothers with children under 6 years of age, 61.1 percent for mothers with children under 3 years of age, and 57.3 percent for mother of infants (2013 annual averages). (4)

The labor force participation rate for single mothers with children under 18 years of age was 74.2% in 2013, and 67.8% for married mothers –spouse present -with children under 18. Note: Single mothers include never married; married, spouse absent; divorced; separated; and widowed persons. (4)

Working Hours

Women in developing countries typically spend three hours more per day than men on unpaid work such as household chores and caring for children and elderly relatives, and two hours more than men in developed countries. (5)

The Income Gap

in 2014, women working full time in the United States typically were paid just 79 percent of what men were paid, a gap of 21 percent. The gap has narrowed since the 1970s (Figure 1), due largely to women’s progress in education and workforce participation and to men’s wages rising at a slower rate. But progress has stalled in recent years, and the pay gap does not appear likely to go away on its own. (6)

Working mothers typically receive 70 cents for every dollar working fathers receive. (7)

Compared with white men, African American women typically make just 64 cents on the dollar. Latinas typically make 54 cents to the dollar when compared with white, non-Hispanic men. (7)

According to the GAO report, single woman households had the lowest total annual income of all households, averaging about $27,000. Fifty-seven percent of the household income (or about $15,000) came from their personal wage and salary earnings. The remaining $12,000 came from other sources, such as government benefits and other household members’ earnings. Without income from these other sources, the low-wage single mother households would be well below the poverty
level of $22,314 (or $10.73 per hour, full-time) for a family of four (GAO 2011). (8)

Women have caught up with men in terms of education. In fact, in the United States and a number of other countries, women now actually surpass men in educational achievement. (9)
So there is not a problem with female achievement. The problem enters in when young adults try to balance work and family, and women end up carrying nearly all of the caregiving responsibilities.
Childcare is very expensive.
The necessity in many prestigious jobs is to put in very long work hours and then leave the more mundane aspects of daily life—like cooking, grocery shopping, and picking up the kids—to other people.
This generally means that women put many more hours into these household activities than men. This greatly disadvantages women in the workplace. It is unrealistic to expect gender equality if workplaces demand that women be available all the time. (9)

From National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, in an email sent 11-9-2015:

At NLIRH, we believe that every Latina should be able to live and work with dignity— and that includes the ability to earn a fair wage. And we also believe that raising the minimum wage can help women and families have more self-determination over their own lives—including whether or when to become a parent.

Almost two out of three low wage workers are women- and a disproportionate number are Latina. That includes millions of working moms and single parents—ordinary people who work hard but still can't afford the basics like groceries, rent, transportation, or can't afford to cover their basic reproductive healthcare needs.

What about the Millennials?

Our country's future is supposed to be in the hands of our younger generation, but what does their resilience look like?

Of the 75 million millennials, about 25 million don't have a desire to have children. Millennial: a person reaching young adulthood around the year 2000. (10)

Among women aged 19 years and younger, more than 4 out of 5 pregnancies were unintended. (11)

In 2008, Nearly three-quarters of pregnancies among un-married women aged 20–24 were unintended (73%), compared with 63% among unmarried women aged 25–29. (16)

While workers aged 55 and older have gained over 7.5 million jobs in the past 8 years, workers aged 55 and under, have lost a cumulative total of 4.6 million jobs. (12)

The Great Recession affected U.S. workers of all ages, but it had a disproportionate impact on the Millennial generation. Unemployment rates among this cohort remain high at 15.2 percent for those ages 18 to 29, while underemployment rates are even higher at 40 percent. (13)
The ranks of unemployed Millennials now total 4.6 million, nearly 40 percent of all U.S. unemployed workers. (13)

The majority of women in a recent Guttacher Institute study reported that birth control enables them to support themselves financially (56 percent), complete their education (51 percent), and get or keep a job (50 percent). (13)

In just about every state in the country, Millennial women are more likely than Millennial men to have a college degree, yet Millennial women also have higher poverty rates and lower earnings than Millennial men.

- Although more women are receiving high school diplomas and completing college than ever before, a considerable proportion of women either do not graduate high school or finish their education with only a high school diploma.

- By the time a college-educated woman turns 59, she will have lost almost $800,000 throughout her life due to the gender wage gap.

- In 2013, about 14.5 percent of women ages 18 and older had family incomes that placed them below the federal poverty line, compared with 11 percent of men. (14)

Rape, Violence, Trafficking

In the United States, an estimated 19.3% of women and 1.7% of men have been raped during their lifetimes;

An estimated 15.2% of women and 5.7% of men have been a victim of stalking during their lifetimes. (15)

Of the 18.3% of women who have survived rape or attempted rape, 12.3% were younger than age 12 when they were first raped, and 29.9% were between the ages of 11 and 17. (17)

63.84% of women who reported being raped, physically assaulted, and/or stalked since age 18 were victimized by a current or former husband, cohabiting partner, boyfriend, or date. (17)

A University of Pennsylvania research study found that domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to low-income, inner-city Philadelphia women between the ages of 15 to 44 - more common than automobile accidents, mugging and rapes combined.

The costs of intimate partner violence against women exceed an estimated $5.8 billion.

Intimate partner violence causes U.S. women to lose about $727 million in wages from their approximately 8 million days of missed work.

Women who resided in households that earned less than $10,000 annually are four times more likely to experience violence than women in wealthier households.

An estimated 17,500 women and children are trafficked into the United States annually for sexual exploitation or forced labor. (17)

Public Office (18)

Women hold less than 20% of congressional seats. America now ranks ninety-eighth in the world for
percentage of women in its national legislature, down from 59th in 1998. That’s embarrassing: just behind Kenya and Indonesia, and barely ahead of the United Arab Emirates.

In *Patterns of Democracy*, former American Political Science Association president Arend Lijphart found strong correlations between more women legislators and more progressive policy on issues like the environment, macroeconomic management, comprehensive support for families and individuals, violence prevention, and incarceration. Other studies have found that women legislators—both Republican and Democrat—introduce a lot more bills than men in the areas of civil rights and liberties, education, health, labor, and more.

American women also do better in multi-seat districts, even if proportional representation rules aren’t used. As FairVote’s report shows, women hold an average of 31 percent of state legislative seats elected in multi-seat districts, compared to only 23 percent elected in one-seat districts. Vermont’s state legislature has 41 percent women, elected in districts with anywhere from one to six legislators per district. Even a strongly conservative state like Arizona has 36 percent women in its state house, elected from two-seat districts.

**Footnotes – United States**


(2) [https://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/FB-Unintended-Pregnancy-US.html](https://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/FB-Unintended-Pregnancy-US.html)

(3) [http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2012/03/02/436783/economic-benefits-contraception/](http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2012/03/02/436783/economic-benefits-contraception/)

(4) [http://www.dol.gov/wb/stats/recentfacts.htm](http://www.dol.gov/wb/stats/recentfacts.htm)

(5) [https://agenda.weforum.org/2015/11/do-women-work-longer-hours-than-men/](https://agenda.weforum.org/2015/11/do-women-work-longer-hours-than-men/)


(7) [http://www.aauw.org/2015/06/04/78-cents-whole-story/](http://www.aauw.org/2015/06/04/78-cents-whole-story/)


(9) [http://www.summer.harvard.edu/blog-news-events/gender-inequality-women-workplace](http://www.summer.harvard.edu/blog-news-events/gender-inequality-women-workplace)


(11) [http://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/unintendedpregnancy/](http://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/unintendedpregnancy/)


(14) [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ariel-smilowitz/for-us-women-inequality-takes-many-forms_b_7064348.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ariel-smilowitz/for-us-women-inequality-takes-many-forms_b_7064348.html)

(15) [http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss6308a1.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss6308a1.htm)


(17) [http://www.feminist.com/antiviolence/facts.html](http://www.feminist.com/antiviolence/facts.html)

The Developing World

Women and children are particularly susceptible to the effects of climate disruption: women and children are 14 times more likely to die during natural disasters than men; women account for 70% of those living below the poverty line globally.

Empowering women to control their own fertility improves their lives, their families, and their communities in far-reaching ways.

Sonia Pressman Fuentes, one of the founders of National Organization of Women (NOW) supplied this list:

In the rest of the world, women face many of the same problems as in the US, and, particularly in the developing world, they face additional problems, such as:

• high rates of preventable maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent mortality;
• so-called “honor” killings;
• female genital mutilation;
• the abduction and rape of girls and women into marriage;
• the abduction and forcible recruitment of girls and women into renegade guerrilla forces;
• poisonings, acid attacks, and shootings of school girls, their parents and teachers; and
• rape used as an instrument of war or a tactic of social control, ethnic domination, and demographic change.

Young people in the developing world

Half the world’s population – 3.5 billion people – is under the age of 25. Eighty-seven percent live in developing countries. It is almost a certainty that these young people will add another 3.5 billion people to the earth when they have children. If we engage, educate and empower youth now, they will have the strong skills needed to harness their youthful energy to secure a more sustainable future in a world with limited resources.

Each year, approximately 121 million adolescents turn 16 years old and can enter the world’s labor market. But most of those who want to work are unable to find jobs. By 2020 nearly 1.1 billion new potential workers will be competing with each other.
The Women's Movement: Where It's Been, Where It’s At -- And the Problems That Remain

From an email received from Sonia Pressman Fuentes today (11-8-2015) with the following information about the Women's Movement.

Talk by Sonia Pressman Fuentes (Founding member of National Organization for Women – Now) to the WIN (Women in Nielsen) Employee Research Group

June 16, 2015

Excerpts:

I date the beginning of the legal revolution in women's rights in this country to 1961 when President Kennedy established the President's Commission on the Status of Women, with Eleanor Roosevelt as chair, to review, and make recommendations for improving, the status of women. On November 1, 1963, three weeks before his assassination, President Kennedy established a committee and council to facilitate carrying out the recommendations of the President's Commission.

1963 was also the year when Congress passed the Equal Pay Act, which became effective in 1964. That law required equal pay for equal or substantially equal work without regard to sex.

In 1964, Congress passed another act, Title VII of the Civil Rights act of 1964, which took effect on July 2, 1965, and was enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

Originally, the EEOC had jurisdiction only over Title VII, which prohibited discrimination in employment based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin by covered employers, labor unions, and employment agencies. It prohibited discrimination not only in pay but in all terms and conditions of employment, including advertising for employees, pre-employment inquiries and testing, job qualifications, hiring and firing, promotions, retirement, and insurance and pension benefits.

After I graduated from the University of Miami (Florida) School of Law in 1957, when 3% of this country's law school graduates were women, I went to work for the Federal government in Washington DC. In October 1965, three months after it had commenced operations, I joined the EEOC as the first woman attorney in its office of the general counsel where I had the responsibility for fighting employment discrimination, including that based on gender.

At that time, few Americans were aware that there was such a thing as gender discrimination. When I mentioned "women's rights" in my early speeches, the response was laughter. Words like "women's rights" hadn't yet entered the nation's vocabulary. Furthermore, just as violence has been the traditional weapon used against those who advocated for equality for African Americans, ridicule has been the traditional weapon used against those who fought for equal rights for women.

When I joined the EEOC, a woman's role was to marry and raise a family. She could work for a few years before marriage on jobs considered appropriate for women. These included secretary, bookkeeper, saleswoman, schoolteacher, telephone operator, librarian, performer, housekeeper, and nurse. Other jobs were considered men's jobs.

It was expected that a woman would be a virgin when she married. When she had children, she was to raise her boys and girls differently so they would behave in ways appropriate to their genders. If a woman divorced, it reflected poorly on her. If she failed to marry, she was deemed an “old maid,” relegated to the periphery of life. Under no circumstances were women to earn more money than
their husbands.

Men, on the other hand, were the decision-makers and activists. they were the heads of their households, and their wives and children were expected to defer to their wishes.

Men were expected to take the initiative in dating, have sexual experiences before marriage, propose marriage, bear the financial burden for the entire family.

In 1965, there were about a hundred permanent employees in the EEOC headquarters, most of whom had come there to fight discrimination against African Americans. They did not want the commission's resources diverted to issues of gender discrimination. After all, the EEOC had been created in response to the movement for civil rights for African Americans. There had been no similar movement immediately before 1965 for women's rights.

However, in the commission's first fiscal year, about 37% of the complaints alleged gender discrimination! These complaints raised a host of new issues that were more difficult than those raised by the complaints of race discrimination. I found myself increasingly frustrated by the unwillingness of most of the officials to come to grips with these issues.

My boss, the general counsel, took to calling me a "sex maniac" because I raised the question of gender discrimination whenever an issue was being discussed.

Through my work, I came in contact at various government agencies with mid-level staffers and we formed an informal network of information-sharing and support on women's rights cases that were developing at the EEOC. This information would then be passed on to Marguerite Rawalt, a trailblazing Washington, DC attorney and feminist. She, in turn, would relay this information to her network of feminist attorneys in private practice around the country, who would then represent the complaining parties in precedent-setting gender discrimination lawsuits.

In 1966, Betty Friedan, author of the book published in 1963 called the Feminine Mystique came to the EEOC to interview the general counsel and his deputy. When she saw me, I invited her into the privacy of my office, and told her, with tears in my eyes, that what this country needed was an organization to fight for women like the National Association for Colored People (NAACP) fought for its constituents.

In June 1966, Betty Friedan and a small group of women planned an organization that subsequently became the National Organization for Women (NOW). Its purpose was "to take the actions needed to bring women into the mainstream of American society, now, full equality for women, in fully equal partnership with men." In October, more women (of whom I was one) - and men - joined the founding members.

After its founding, NOW embarked upon an ambitious program of activities to get the EEOC to enforce Title VII for women. it filed lawsuits, petitioned the EEOC for public hearings, picketed the EEOC and the White House, and generally mobilized public opinion.

Because of that and pressure by now, the EEOC began to take seriously its mandate to eliminate sex discrimination in employment. It conducted hearings and began to issue interpretations and decisions implementing women's rights. It prohibited sex-segregated advertising columns, and, with narrow exceptions, required that all jobs, including jobs as flight cabin attendants, had to be open to men and women alike.

- a woman could not be refused employment because of the preferences of her employer, co-workers, clients, or customers, or because she was pregnant or had children;
- a woman who needed time off in connection with pregnancy, childbirth, or after the birth of a child was entitled to the same time off and pay that her employer provided for employees in general who requested time off for illness or other reasons;
• men and women doing substantially equal work were entitled to equality in pay and other benefits, including pension and retirement benefits.

• they also had the right to be free of sexual harassment on the job; and

• state laws that restricted women's employment were superseded by Title VII. State laws that required benefits for women could be harmonized with Title VII by providing the same benefits to men.

New government agencies were created to fight discrimination, such as the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) in the department of labor. The OFCCP implemented executive orders that required contractors and subcontractors of the federal government to take affirmative action to hire and promote women or risk the loss of millions of dollars in government contracts.

Discrimination based on gender or marital status in the sale and rental of housing and in the granting of credit was prohibited.

Title IX of the education amendments of 1972 prohibited educational institutions, from preschools through colleges and universities, that received federal funds, from discriminating on the basis of gender against students and all employees. Besides equality in expenditures for male and female students. Title IX includes access to higher education, employment, and sexual harassment.

The pregnancy discrimination act of 1978 codified the EEOC's guidelines on pregnancy and childbirth.

In 1993, about two weeks after taking office, President Clinton signed the family and medical leave act, requiring employers to provide their employees with up to twelve weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave each year in connection with the birth or adoption of a child; the serious illness of a child, spouse, or parent; or the inability of an employee to work because of a serious health condition.

In 1976, women were admitted to West Point and our other military academies, a development that was unthinkable before the women's movement. As of the beginning of 2014, more than 200,000 women were in the active-duty military, and they constituted 14.6 percent of the active-duty force.

The effects of Title VII have spilled over to every area of our society. Laws have changed women's rights with regard to abortion, divorce, alimony, child custody, child support, rape, jury service, appointments as administrators and executors of estates, sentencing for crimes, and admission to places of public accommodation, such as clubs, restaurants, and bars. Our spoken and written language has changed.

Many people think that women in this country have achieved all their goals -- but that is very far from the truth.

There are many issues that remain for us to deal with and they are often interrelated. I just have time to list 20 of them now, without discussing them. This list of problems that remain is in no way exhaustive.

1. poverty, hunger, and homelessness
2. the continuing gender wage and salary gap
3. violence against women
4. womens reproductive rights and continuing efforts to whittle down Roe v. Wade
5. employer accommodations for pregnancy-related work limitations
6. inadequate maternal and infant health care
7. the absence of laws mandating paid parental and sick leave
8. the lack of affordable and competent child care
9. women in prison
10. human trafficking
11. girls and women with disabilities
12. inadequate access to health care
13. the inadequate representation of women in stem jobs, those in science, technology, engineering, and math and among stem degree holders.
14. the inadequate representation of women in political life.
15. discrimination in academia
16. underrepresentation in the justice system--as judges, prosecutors, and police officers
17. inadequate representation among those who run our top corporations and serve on corporate boards
18. inadequate representation and unequal pay for actors, writers, directors, and producers in the entertainment industry
19. surrogacy, also known as third-party reproduction.
20. the failure to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and the Convention On the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
Factsheet: Reproductive Choice and the Environment

* U.S. contraceptive usage is relatively ineffective: 50% of pregnancies are unintended. The pill, with common usage, has a 9% failure rate. Poor women cannot afford the more effective types of contraception: the IUD and subdermal implant.

* Contraception for low-income women is being threatened along with abortion in states and on the national level. People of color are disproportionately affected, yet surveys show that the majority of them want reproductive rights and contraception.

* Women below the poverty line are five times as likely to have an unplanned birth than women who make more than 400% of the poverty line (1). One in six Americans don't even get enough food.

* The U.S. has the highest per capita energy use on the planet. It also has the third-highest per capita meat consumption behind Hong Kong and Luxembourg. It has one of the highest population growth rates among developed countries. If it continues at its current growth rate of 0.7%, U.S. population will double in 100 years. It's fertility rate is among the highest of the developing countries, and is higher than Brazil, Lebanon, Ukraine, Thailand, Cuba, Japan, and Korea, among others. U.S. per capita energy consumption is close to twice that of Germany.

* The U.S. uses the resources of almost two countries, each the size of the U.S.

* Therefore, any increase in U.S. population would be multiplied times U.S. consumption to reflect the added impact on our shrinking planet.

* Women and children are 14 times more likely to die during natural disasters than men; women account for 70% of those living below the poverty line globally.

* Being able to plan their family size will make them more resilient.

* A study by statisticians at Oregon State University concluded that in the United States, the carbon legacy and greenhouse gas impact of an extra child is almost 20 times more important than some of the other environmentally sensitive practices people might employ their entire lives - things like driving a high mileage car, recycling, or using energy-efficient appliances and light bulbs (2).

* In Texas, the family planning budget was cut by two-thirds, leaving 147,000 low-income Texas women without access to preventive care and Latinas living in poor and rural areas with large immigrant populations have been disproportionately hard-hit.

* In a October 2014 poll commissioned by The National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health (NLIRH) and conducted by an independent research firm, 603 likely Latino voters in South Texas were surveyed and it was found that:
  - Seventy eight percent agreed with this statement: “A woman has the right to make her own personal decisions about abortion without politicians interfering.” (63% strongly agreed, and 70% of the Republicans polled also agreed with the statement.)
  - Sixty percent agreed with this statement: “Even though some church leaders take a position
against abortion, when it comes to the law, I believe it should remain legal.”

- Seventy six percent agreed with this statement: “I consider birth control part of basic health care that should be covered by health insurance, no matter where you work.”

1) http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonkblog/wp/2015/03/05/why-are-poor-women-so-much-likelier-to-have-unintended-pregnancies

2) http://oregonstate.edu/ua/ncs/archives/2009/jul/family-planning-major-environmental-emphasis