



p o l i t i c s o f
PARENTHOOD

A data-driven study of state legislators, motherhood, and caregiving.

STATE LEGISLATURES, OCTOBER 2022

Contents

Message from the Founder and CEO	3
About Vote Mama Foundation	5
Representation Matters: in Government and in Data	6
Politics of Parenthood Survey	7
Key Findings: Representation of Mamas	8
Political Affiliation: Representation Among Mamas	10
Demographics: Representation Among Mamas	12
State by State: Representation of Mamas	15
From Representation to Policymaking	17
Future Directions	19
Appendix: Methodology	21

Message from the Founder and CEO



In 2018, I ran for Congress with my two toddlers in tow. I quickly realized that Congress was not designed for people like me—campaigning for nearly two years, eighteen hours a day, no pay, and constant judgment for campaigning as a mother of young kids. Once elected, the hours are even longer, the travel more grueling, the criticism for serving as a mother even more intense. The systems upholding political campaigns and elected office were not created to be accessible.

When moms step up to run we spend a good amount of head-space juggling the condescending questions of “who will watch your children when you run?” and “how can you do this to them?” with the knowledge that we’re running, that we’re giving up our personal lives, that we’re putting it all on the line for them.

American policies were not designed to support mothers because our policies were not crafted by them.

By the time American women are 45 years old, 85% of us are mothers.¹ Yet only 23% of our state legislators are moms, and only 5% are moms with children under 18.

Nearly 4 million American women give birth each year.² Yet only 12 women serving in state legislatures gave birth in the past year, and just 3 of them are Black mothers. Is it any wonder the U.S. has the highest maternal mortality rate of other high-income countries,³ and Black women are nearly 3 times more likely to die from pregnancy-related complications than white women?⁴

Our legislators are charged with solving challenges most have never personally faced, and our policies reflect that. Only 11 states have passed paid family leave.⁵ In 34 states, it is more expensive to send an infant to childcare than a teenager to a four-year public college.⁶

The decisions made by state legislatures significantly impact our daily lives. They introduce more legislation than Congress and pass these bills at a faster rate.⁷

In the past year, state lawmakers have banned history lessons on slavery and the Holocaust.⁸ They have banned books with any mention of sexuality or gender fluidity.⁹ They have introduced countless bills aimed at attacking LGBTQIA+ children.¹⁰ They have outlawed abortion in 13 states via trigger laws.¹¹

1 <https://www.pewresearch.org/topic/family-relationships/parenthood/>

2 2020 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year Estimate Public Use Microdata Samples

3 <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2022/apr/health-and-health-care-women-reproductive-age>

4 <https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/features/maternal-mortality/index.html>

5 <https://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/state-family-and-medical-leave-laws.aspx>

6 <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/>

7 <https://www.quorum.us/data-driven-insights/state-legislatures-versus-congress-which-is-more-productive/>

8 <https://pen.org/steep-rise-gag-orders-many-sloppily-drafted/>

9 <https://oksenate.gov/press-releases/standridge-files-bills-address-indoctrination-oklahoma-schools?back=/senator-press-releases/rob-standridge>

10 <https://www.aclu.org/legislation-affecting-lgbtq-rights-across-country-2021>

11 <https://reproductiverights.org/maps/abortion-laws-by-state/>

Moms know the challenges that women, kids, and working families face at a visceral level. However, we're often unheard because we are systemically kept out of the conversation, out of office, and out of power. We're missing a critical voice at the decision-making table.

In Congress, moms of young kids write more bills focused on health care, childcare, education, reproductive rights, and affordable housing for families than other lawmakers.¹² Members of Congress earn six figures¹³ and have a budget for staff¹⁴, but most state legislators are either unpaid or paid below their state's standard cost of living, and many don't have funding to hire staff.¹⁵

Virginia state senators earn \$18,000 per year. New Hampshire state legislators earn just \$200 for a two-year term. New Mexico state legislators receive no salary at all.¹⁶ According to the National Conference of State Legislators, there are only four states with full-time legislatures that pay their legislators enough of a liveable wage that they can survive without an additional income: New York, Michigan, California, and Pennsylvania.¹⁵

State legislatures were designed for wealthy white male landowners. They were designed to be "citizen legislatures" with legislators who work part-time and have other jobs to sustain them. They need to be modernized. Working people are not able to travel to their state capitol for months each year and keep their jobs. A state representative in Georgia earns just \$17,342 each year,¹⁶ yet the average cost of childcare in Georgia is \$7,306.¹⁷

Georgia State Rep. Rebecca Mitchell spent 237% of her state legislative income on childcare in 2021.¹⁸

That doesn't take into consideration taxes, and the cost of rent, food, health care, transportation, and other basic necessities.

After my campaign, I launched Vote Mama Foundation to break down the structural and cultural barriers moms face while running for office and legislators face while fighting for family-friendly legislation. Beyond making state legislatures full-time and paying legislators a liveable wage, we also need to provide funds for them to hire staff and allow candidates and legislators to use the funds they're raising for their campaigns on child and dependent care. We need predictable hours, virtual voting and committee hearings, and reasonable voting schedules. We need paid family leave for state legislators, changing tables and pumping rooms in statehouses, and affordable on-site childcare.

Vote Mama Foundation is working to change these structural barriers, modernize state legislatures, and make it easier for mamas to run and serve.



Liuba Grechen Shirley
Founder & CEO

¹² <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1532673X1880803>

¹³ https://www.legistorm.com/member_of_congress_salaries.html

¹⁴ https://ballotpedia.org/Staff_salaries_of_United_States_Senators_and_Representatives#cite_note-1

¹⁵ <https://www.ncsl.org/research/about-state-legislatures/full-and-part-time-legislatures.aspx>

¹⁶ <https://www.ncsl.org/research/about-state-legislatures/2022-legislator-compensation.aspx>

¹⁷ <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states>

¹⁸ Financial documents provided directly to Vote Mama Foundation.

About Vote Mama Foundation

Vote Mama Foundation is the leading source of research and analysis about the political participation of mothers in the United States. We work toward gender equity by breaking the barriers mothers face running for office, normalizing mothers of young children running for office, and enabling legislators to pass family-friendly policies. Vote Mama Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.



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Representation Matters: in Government and in Data



Vote Mama Foundation launched the *Politics of Parenthood* project to answer a seemingly simple question: **How many mothers with kids under 18 are serving in state legislatures?**

It quickly became apparent that answering this question would be a complex process. Despite the fact that gender equity in politics is a widely researched topic, there has been very little research on the political participation of mothers and no data available on the representation of mothers serving as legislators at any level of government—until now.

With *Politics of Parenthood*, Vote Mama Foundation seeks to address this gap in political research.

Mothers comprise an all but unexplored population that is critical to understand, not just as a subpopulation of women, but as a distinct population in its own right that is integral to a well-functioning government and to achieving gender equity in politics.

Representation that reflects our diverse population is vital for a healthy democracy, both symbolically and practically. It is an awesome responsibility to represent the interests of a community, and it is one that can never be performed perfectly. When legislators' perspectives do not

align with their communities, their policy priorities fail, or even harm, their constituents.

Just as lived experience affects how policy is approached, it affects how we assess and solve problems. The first step to solving any problem is collecting enough information to understand who is impacted and how. That is why Vote Mama Foundation has collected demographic information not just on mothers serving in state legislatures, but all state legislators who use she/her or they/them pronouns and plans to expand data collection to all state legislators in the near future.

The Biographical Directory of Congress provides a dataset of federal legislators that includes their birth years, but even a basic resource like this does not exist at lower levels of government. Because of this lack of transparency, the numerous individuals and organizations that aim to hold our government accountable must collect the data themselves, often at considerable expense.

For projects like *Politics of Parenthood* that involve novel research questions or unique subsets of legislators, each legislator has to be researched individually. For state legislators, that is nearly 7,400 people. Upon publication, many organizations report only the results of their research, not the data itself. When individual data points are available, they are most commonly published in a format best suited for communication with the public, such as an interactive web page or a visually appealing table. While public understanding of research is a necessity, publishing research

solely in this format requires other researchers to transcribe the information manually to compile their own datasets, continuing the cycle of duplicating labor. Our Foundation aims to help break this cycle.

More information about our legislators should be accessible to researchers and the public alike. *Politics of Parenthood* compiles publicly available information to establish a baseline population size with demographic data including but not limited to: age, geographic location, parental status,

number and age of children, time spent in political office, race/ethnicity, level of education, and marital status. Data is collected through extensive monitoring of news and social media and builds on the work of other organizations.¹ Because the data relies on publicly available information, it is not infallible or exhaustive. However, to the knowledge of Vote Mama Foundation, it is the largest and most complete demographic dataset of state legislators in the U.S. [To request the dataset, visit Vote Mama Foundation's website.](#)

¹ See Appendix for more details.

Politics of Parenthood Survey

Vote Mama Foundation launched the pilot phase of the Politics of Parenthood Survey in early 2022 to confirm the information included in the dataset and expand on details that are not publicly available for all, or even most, legislators. In addition to information about parenthood, the survey aimed to identify state legislators who are primary caregivers for people other than their minor children (i.e. an elderly parent or an adult child with care needs) and asked about their experiences related to the cost and accessibility of child and dependent care. Vote Mama Foundation is using this pilot survey to inform future research directions that will rely more heavily on qualitative data about state legislators, motherhood, and caregiving.

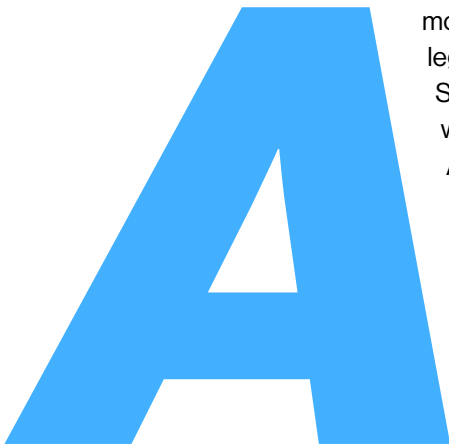
Who is a Mama?

Mamas are cis and trans women with biological children, foster children, step children, and formally or informally adopted children under the age of 18. In this report, we also refer to mamas interchangeably as moms or mothers of young children.

Who is included in the dataset?

The Politics of Parenthood dataset includes all state legislators who use she/her or they/them pronouns.

Key Findings: Representation of Mamas



Among the 7,383 state legislators in the United States, 386 are moms with children under 18. According to the 2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 17.8% of the adult

population is made up of women who live with related kids under 18.

As of September 2022, we found that only 5.3% of all state legislators are women with minor children at home. In order to achieve full representation, Americans need to elect 926 more moms with young children to state legislatures.

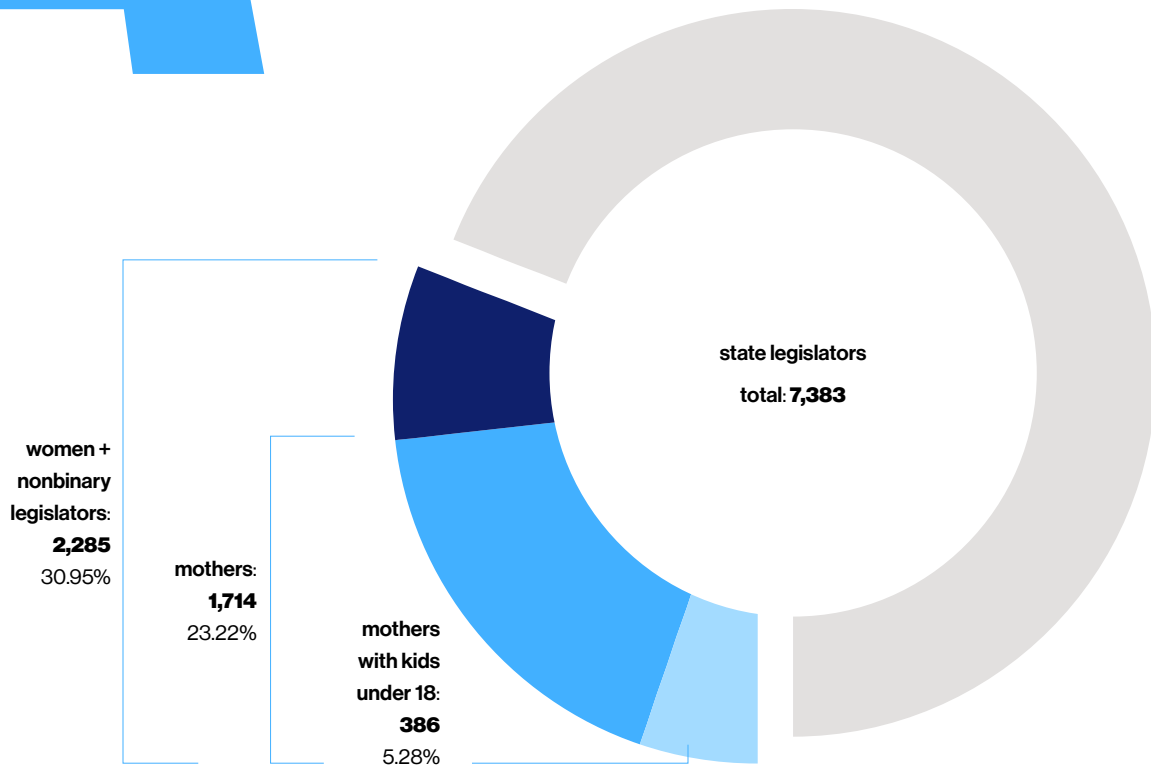


Figure 1
Women and nonbinary state legislators as a percentage of all state legislators, broken out by parental status and age of children.

17.8%
of people
in the U.S. are
moms with
kids under 18

926
the number of moms with
kids under 18 needed to achieve
equitable representation in
all state legislatures

5.3%
of all state
legislators are
moms with
kids under 18

	state legislators		state senators		state representatives	
total	7,383		1,972		5,411	
total women + nonbinary	2,285	30.95%	559	28.35%	1,726	31.90%
without children	562	7.61%	119	6.03%	443	8.19%
unknown parental status	9	0.12%	0	0.00%	9	0.17%
total mothers	1,714	23.22%	440	22.31%	1,274	23.54%
with adult children	1,246	16.88%	333	16.89%	913	16.87%
with minor children	390	5.28%	92	4.67%	298	5.51%
unknown child age	78	1.06%	15	0.20%	63	0.85%

Table 1
Parental status and child age of women and nonbinary state legislators broken out by legislative body.

Political Affiliation: Representation Among Mamas

There is a distinct Democratic majority among women and nonbinary legislators, with 66% identifying as Democrats.

Moms of minor kids lean even more heavily Democratic at 73%.

This distinction is consistent across both State Senators and Representatives, with party affiliation varying by less than 1% between chambers.

Democratic mamas with kids under 18 make up 75% of all Generation X mamas. This distinction holds true across all generations, with 72.8% of all mamas with kids under 18 identifying Democratic.

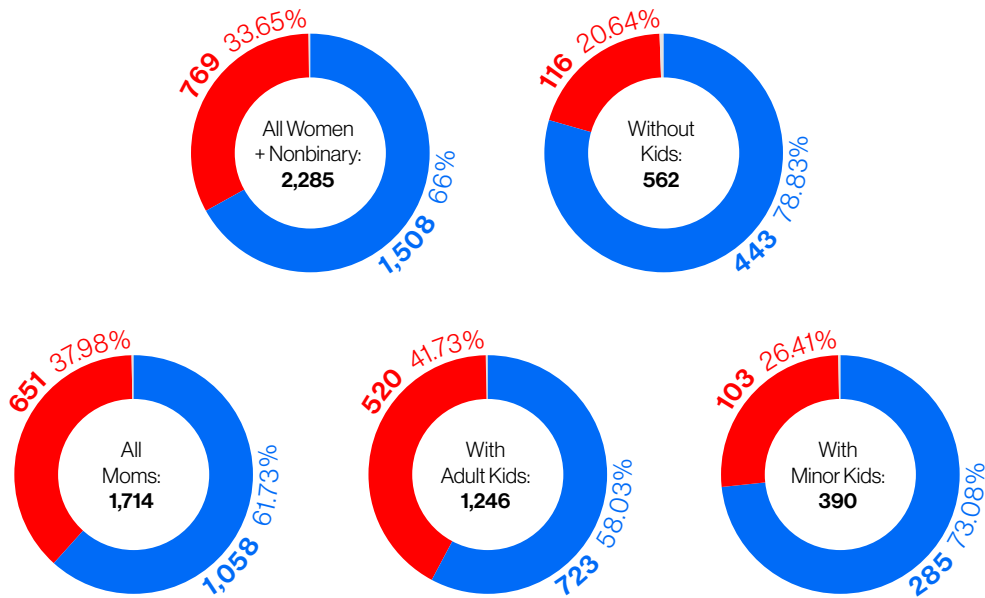


Figure 2
Party affiliation of women and nonbinary state legislators by parental status and age of children.

	total women + nonbinary		without children		with children		with adult children		with minor children	
state legislators	2,285		562		1,714		1,246		390	
democrat	1,508	66.00%	443	78.83%	1,058	61.73%	723	58.03%	285	73.08%
republican	769	33.65%	116	20.64%	651	37.98%	520	41.73%	103	26.41%
independent / other	8	0.35%	3	0.53%	5	0.29%	3	0.24%	2	0.51%
state senators	559		119		440		333		92	
democrat	367	65.65%	101	84.87%	266	60.45%	189	56.76%	68	73.91%
republican	192	34.35%	18	15.13%	174	39.55%	144	43.24%	24	26.09%
independent / other	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
state reps	1,726		443		1,274		913		298	
democrat	1,141	66.11%	342	77.20%	792	62.17%	534	58.49%	217	72.82%
republican	577	33.43%	98	22.12%	477	37.44%	376	41.18%	79	26.51%
independent / other	8	0.46%	3	0.68%	5	0.39%	3	0.33%	2	0.67%

Table 2
Party affiliation of women and nonbinary state legislators, state senators, & state reps broken out by parental status & children’s age.

Demographics: Representation Among Mamas

Moms of young children are not underrepresented in state legislatures solely because women and mothers in general are underrepresented.

Of women and nonbinary state legislators, 75% are mothers, but only 16.9% of women state legislators have minor children. In the United States as a whole, 85% of women have children by age 45, and 34.8% of all adult women have minor children.

Consequently, moms with young children are represented in state legislatures at less than half the rate they appear in the population, despite the fact that mothers in general are relatively close to full representation.



This data suggests that the lack of representation of moms with young children is the result of structural marginalization rather than individual circumstances or preferences. Further, it suggests that moms of young children face barriers that are unique, or intensified, compared to women and mothers of adult children. Despite this, moms with young kids have greater diversity in ethnicity and sexual orientation than their counterparts with adult children. There are two notable exceptions: 1) there are currently no transgender or nonbinary legislators with minor children, and 2) there are proportionally fewer Black moms with minor children than Black mothers of adult children.

Tracking variation in demographics over time will allow for future analysis on the intersections of parenthood and other underrepresented groups.

There is a distinct pattern of decreasing representation as child age decreases. Less than half of state legislators who are moms of minors have kids estimated to be younger than middle to high school age. In 2021-2022, the birth rate among women state legislators was just 0.5%, a rate ten times lower than the estimated rate of 5% among the total population of U.S. women.

Figure 3
Race and ethnicity as a percentage of women and nonbinary state legislators grouped by parental status and age of children.

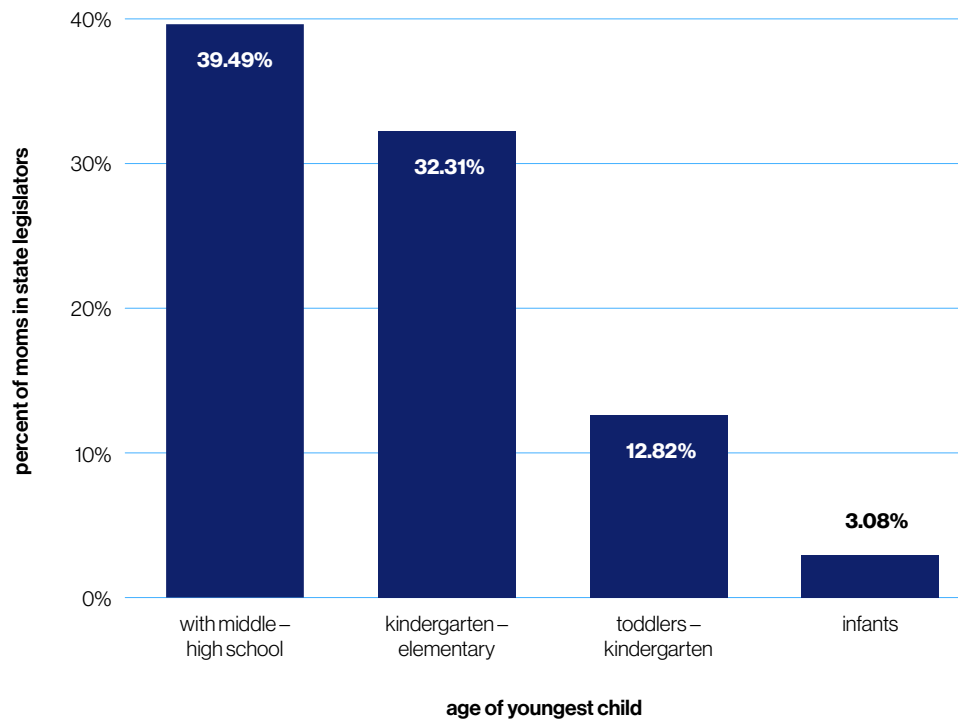
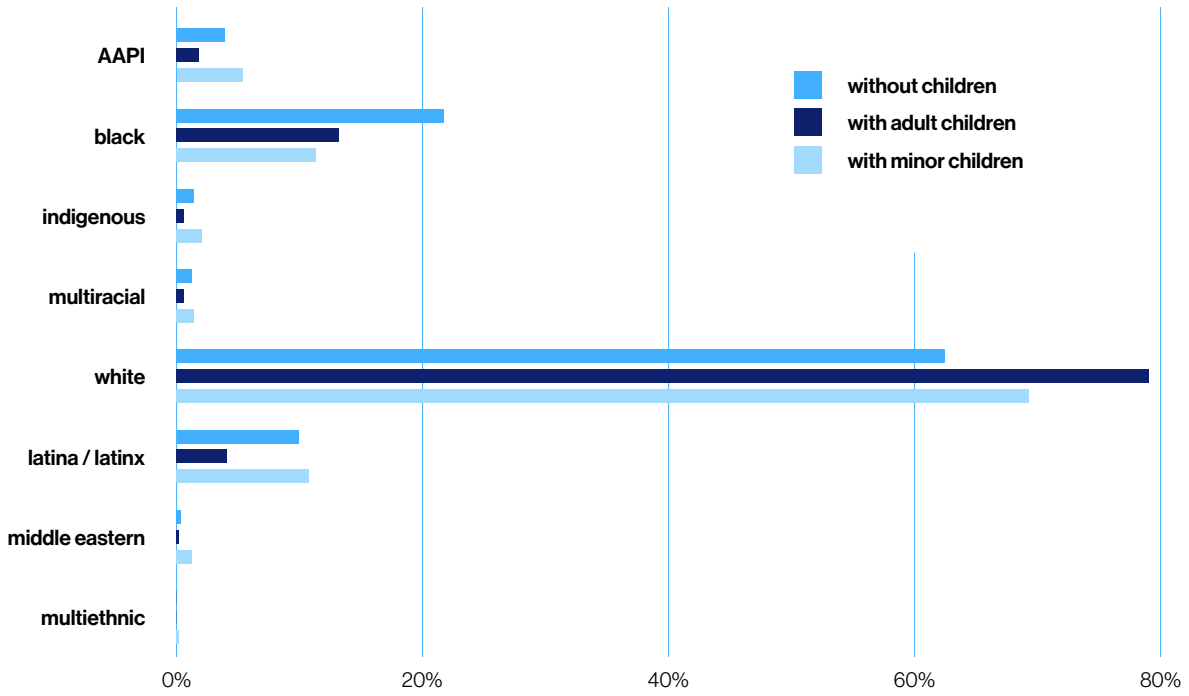


Figure 4
Representation among legislators with minor children broken out by age group of youngest child.

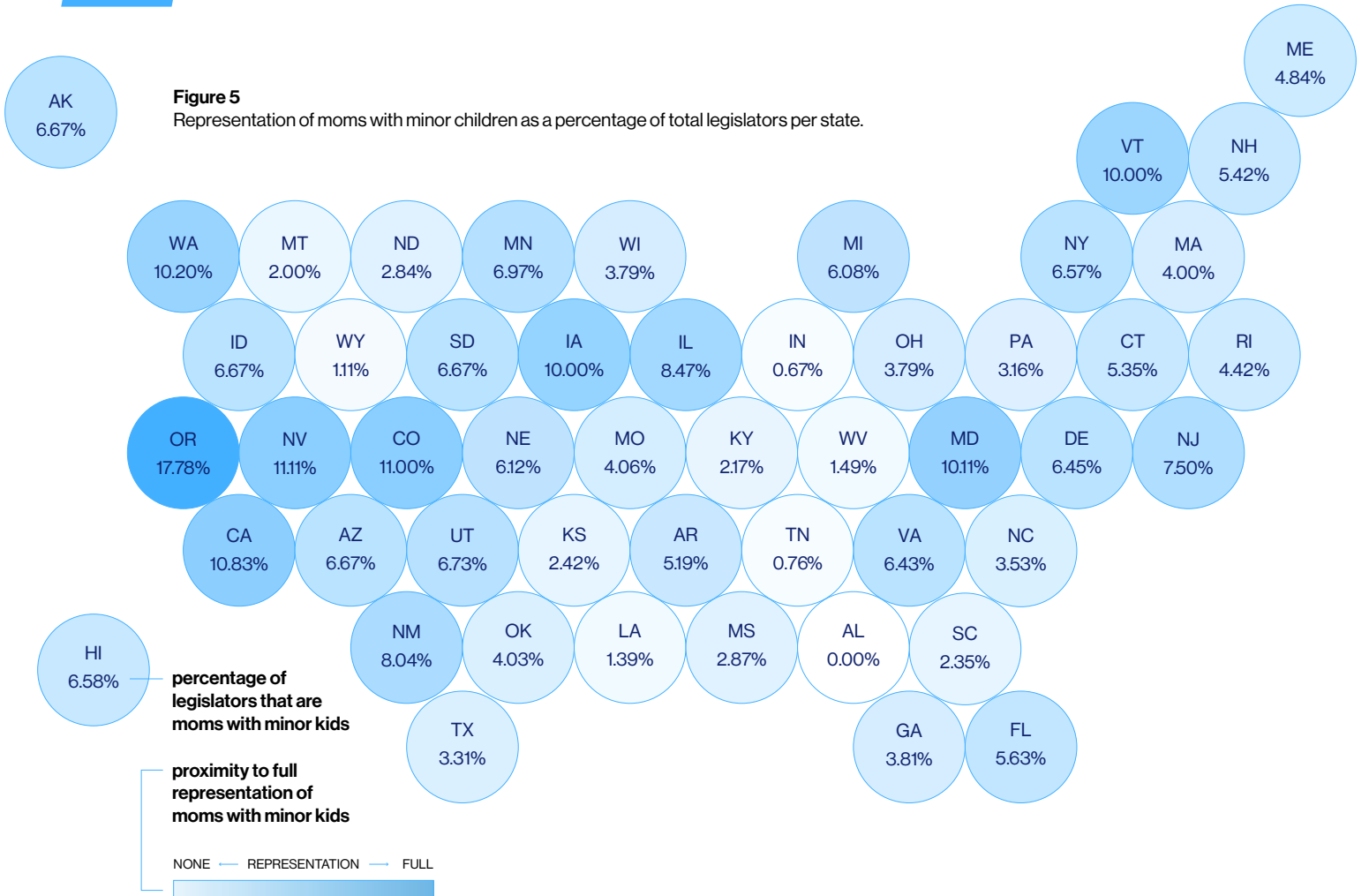
	without children		with adult children		with minor children		with middle - high school	with kindergarten - elementary	with toddlers - kindergarten	with infants
total	562		1,246		390		154	126	50	12
cisgender women	554	98.58%	1,244	99.84%	390	100.00%	154	126	50	12
nonbinary people	2	0.36%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0
transgender women	6	1.07%	2	0.16%	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0
asexual	0	0.00%	1	0.08%	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0
bi-/pansexual & queer	22	3.91%	6	0.48%	8	2.05%	2	4	2	0
lesbian/gay	42	7.47%	10	0.80%	15	3.85%	3	3	4	0
straight	498	88.61%	1,229	98.64%	367	94.1%	149	119	44	12
AAPI	21	3.74%	24	1.93%	21	5.38%	6	9	3	1
black	123	21.89%	167	13.40%	45	11.54%	25	12	4	2
indigenous	8	1.42%	8	0.64%	8	2.05%	3	3	1	0
multiracial	7	1.25%	9	0.72%	6	1.54%	1	3	1	1
white	352	62.63%	989	79.37%	271	69.49%	104	87	36	8
latina/latinx	56	9.96%	53	4.25%	42	10.77%	19	11	5	0
middle eastern	3	0.53%	1	0.08%	5	1.28%	1	3	0	0
multiethnic	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	0.26%	1	0	0	0
gen Z 1997 - 2012	4	0.71%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0
millennials 1981 - 1996	191	33.99%	6	0.48%	145	37.18%	29	50	41	10
gen X 1965 - 1980	175	31.14%	391	31.38%	227	58.21%	119	70	8	1
baby boomers 1946 - 1964	171	30.43%	748	60.03%	14	3.59%	4	5	1	1
silent gen 1928-1945	11	1.96%	88	7.06%	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0
democrat	443	78.83%	723	58.03%	285	73.08%	117	93	35	7
republican	116	20.64%	520	41.73%	103	26.41%	37	33	15	5
independent/other	3	0.53%	3	0.24%	2	0.51%	0	0	0	0

Table 3
Demographics of women and nonbinary state legislators broken out by parental status and age of youngest child.

State by State: Representation of Mamas

The only state legislature that has achieved equitable representation of women is Nevada, though most states have at least half the number of women needed for full representation. Only 7 states, however, have even half the number of moms with kids under 18 that are needed for full representation, and 23 states have less than a quarter.

Oregon is the only state legislature in the U.S. with full representation of moms with young kids, who comprise 17.8% of their representatives. Alabama is the only state with no mothers of young children serving in its state legislature. Now that we have this baseline, we can set our sights on finding and removing the barriers that prevent moms from running for and serving in legislative office in each state.



Rank	State	total legislators	mamas with kids <18	percent of mamas with kids <18	number needed for full representation
1	Oregon	90	16	17.78%	0
2	Nevada	63	7	11.11%	4
3	Colorado	100	11	11.00%	7
4	California	120	13	10.83%	8
5	Washington	147	15	10.20%	11
6	Maryland	188	19	10.11%	14
7	Iowa	150	15	10.00%	12
7	Vermont	180	18	10.00%	14
9	Illinois	177	15	8.47%	17
10	New Mexico	112	9	8.04%	11
11	New Jersey	120	9	7.50%	12
12	Minnesota	201	14	6.97%	22
13	Utah	104	7	6.73%	12
14	Alaska	60	4	6.67%	7
14	Arizona	90	6	6.67%	10
14	Idaho	105	7	6.67%	12
14	South Dakota	105	7	6.67%	12
18	Hawaii	76	5	6.58%	9
19	New York	213	14	6.57%	24
20	Delaware	62	4	6.45%	7
21	Virginia	140	9	6.43%	16
22	Nebraska	49	3	6.12%	6
23	Michigan	148	9	6.08%	17
24	Florida	160	9	5.63%	19
25	New Hampshire	424	23	5.42%	52
26	Connecticut	187	10	5.35%	23
27	Arkansas	135	7	5.19%	17
28	Maine	186	9	4.84%	24
29	Rhode Island	113	5	4.42%	15
30	Missouri	197	8	4.06%	27
31	Oklahoma	149	6	4.03%	21
32	Massachusetts	200	8	4.00%	28
33	Georgia	236	9	3.81%	33
34	Ohio	132	5	3.79%	18
34	Wisconsin	132	5	3.79%	18
36	North Carolina	170	6	3.53%	24
37	Texas	181	6	3.31%	26
38	Pennsylvania	253	8	3.16%	37
39	Mississippi	174	5	2.87%	26
40	North Dakota	141	4	2.84%	21
41	Kansas	165	4	2.42%	25
42	South Carolina	170	4	2.35%	26
43	Kentucky	138	3	2.17%	22
44	Montana	150	3	2.00%	24
45	West Virginia	134	2	1.49%	22
46	Louisiana	144	2	1.39%	24
47	Wyoming	90	1	1.11%	15
48	Tennessee	132	1	0.76%	22
49	Indiana	150	1	0.67%	26
50	Alabama	140	0	0.00%	25

Table 4
Reaching Full Representation: State by State Rankings

From Representation to Policymaking

W

hen mamas are at the decision-making table, policy priorities change—and they change for the better.



Utah State Senator Luz Escamilla + Representative Candice B. Pierucci

Senator Escamilla and Representative Pierucci both moms of young children, sponsored the Expanded Infertility Treatment Coverage Pilot in 2021. With their support, the Utah legislature expanded an existing pilot program for fertility coverage by an additional three years, allowing prospective parents time and flexibility to grow their families in ways that they choose and can afford.

Colorado State Senator Brittany Pettersen

When Colorado State Senator Pettersen gave birth while serving in the Colorado State Legislature, she had to document her absence as long-term sick leave. Because of her lived experience navigating this outdated process, she introduced the Compensation Requirements For Members Of The General Assembly in the 2022 session. This legislation guarantees 12 weeks of paid family leave for state legislators with an additional 4 weeks of leave in the case of pregnancy or birthing complications. It's the first bill of its kind to pass any state legislature in the country.



“It’s important that elected officials are reflective of the population they are serving, which means making it accessible for parents of young children to hold elected office. It’s a small step forward to ensure those who want to serve their state and start a family are able to do so. We need more young moms in office who understand the current struggles families are facing.” - Senator Pettersen

Former Virginia State Delegate Jennifer Carroll Foy

When Del. Carroll Foy ran for office in 2017 she was pregnant with twin boys. As a young Black mother, she used her position in the Virginia State House of Delegates to address cracks in Virginia's maternal healthcare system. She sponsored the State Plan for Medical Assistance (Payment for Services Provided by Certified Doulas) that directed the Department of Medical Assistance Services to evaluate and assess the feasibility of doula care reimbursements by Medicaid, which disproportionately benefits moms of color in the state of Virginia.

“When you have legislators who have been forced back to work hours after having their stomachs stapled shut from giving birth or having their risk of surviving childbirth more than double due to maltreatment because of the color of their skin, you have moms like me who pass bills to end pregnancy discrimination, make doula services covered by Medicaid to reduce the Black maternal mortality rate, and fight for paid family medical leave.” - Former Delegate Carroll Foy



New York State Senator Jessica Ramos + Assemblywoman Sarah Clark

Senator Ramos, mother of two, and Assemblywoman Clark, mother of three, know firsthand how difficult it is to access quality affordable childcare. They introduced the Early Learning Child Care Act in 2022, which would provide subsidies for children to attend early learning childcare programs and establish the New York state childcare board.

“As Assemblymember Clark and I traveled the state speaking with parents and childcare providers to develop the Early Learning Childcare Act, it affirmed that childcare is not a niche issue. There’s no such thing as someone else’s child, and we need parents at the policymaking table to ensure that value is reflected in our budget and our laws.” - Senator Ramos

“There is a mantra I hear repeatedly from the families across New York: ‘nothing about us without us’. Given some of the challenges we face across many of our human service sectors, the larger caring economy in general, and workforce shortages, childcare solutions are needed more than ever. This is why having moms at the table is critically important. Working alongside Senator Ramos, we have developed the first comprehensive plan to address our childcare challenges, find sustainable solutions, and create new opportunities.”

- Assemblywoman Clark



Future Directions

When only 5.3% of state legislators in the U.S. are moms with minor children, it is no surprise our policies so often fail women and families. The U.S. political system was not designed for moms to run or serve—at any level of government.

The U.S. is ranked 27th in the world in public education and healthcare¹, 36th in the world in regards to women's political empowerment², and it is the only country in the world other than Papua New Guinea without paid family leave.³

In the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) 2008 Recruitment Studies, women were considerably more likely than men to report the age of their children as a “very important” factor in their decision to run.⁴ The results of this study are widely cited as an area of vulnerability for equitable representation. Because there has been no dataset of legislators and their children, it has not been possible to quantify the extent to which the intersection of gender, parenthood, and child age influences the representation of mothers with young children in U.S. legislatures compared to fathers. As Vote Mama Foundation expands the *Politics of Parenthood* initiative to include legislators who are men and fathers, this will finally become possible.

Similarly, previous research has shown that at the federal level, mothers of minor children introduced more bills related to welfare of children and families than mothers of adult children or women overall.⁵ With this dataset, we can more readily explore this difference at the state level and continue our research to understand subsequent correlations between mothers and the policies they support.



With detailed demographic data on women and nonbinary state legislators now publicly available, Vote Mama Foundation will continue to expand our research in identifying, analyzing, and breaking down barriers that systematically exclude mamas from accessing political positions of power. The data presented here is long overdue, but it is just the beginning of our collective understanding of the experience of being both a legislator and a caretaker. There are many more data points we are unable to collect without talking to legislators themselves. How many legislators have children with disabilities? How many are primary caregivers to people other than their children? How does caregiving impact their work as legislators? We need qualitative data—to listen to mamas, not just describe them.

1 [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(18\)31941-X/fulltext#seccestitle160](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(18)31941-X/fulltext#seccestitle160)
 2 https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf
 3 <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=FAMILY>
 4 <https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/web/ICPSR/studies/35244>
 5 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1532673X18808037?journalCode=aprb>

This research inspires many new questions, but it can also provide many answers. While Vote Mama Foundation's analysis focuses on the intersection of motherhood and political participation, it is our intention for this data to benefit all those working toward an equitable and accountable political system.



We have already begun collecting demographic data on federal legislators, and the focus of the next report in the Politics of Parenthood series will be the 118th U.S. Congress.

To learn more about Vote Mama Foundation and the Politics of Parenthood project, please visit our website at votemamafoundation.org and follow us on social media @votemamafdn.

Appendix 1: Methodology

Vote Mama Foundation collected demographic data on 2,311 state legislators using extensive investigation of legislators' public social media profiles, news and nonprofit organizations' publications, public records databases, and state government websites. The data is current as of August 15, 2022.

Legislators were identified for inclusion by cross-referencing data from CAWP, Victory Institute's Out for America project, and Ballotpedia against legislative rosters. Data collected for each legislator includes: census region, title, name, state, district, party, year of birth, number of children, children's years of birth, year first assumed any political office, year first assumed current office, gender presentation, sexual orientation, marital status, race/ethnicity, and level of education.

Each legislator was categorized according to their status as a mama¹ and the age of their children. Years of birth were estimated if exact years were not available.² For legislators whose children were estimated to be near the age of 18, other contextual information was used to categorize them as mothers of adults or minors (i.e. high school graduation/college attendance, registration to vote, marriage). While 96% of all legislators in our dataset have been categorized by whether they have no children, adult children, or minor children, the presented age categories among minor children are less exact. Age estimates are complete for 88% of minor children. Age categories are defined as follows:

middle – high school		kindergarten – elementary		toddler – kindergarten		infant	
year of birth	age range	year of birth	age range	year of birth	age range	year of birth	age range
2000's	12 to 22	2010's	2 to 12	late 2010's – early 2020's	2 to 5	2021, 2022	- 1
late 2000's	12 to 18	early 2010's	7 to 12	2020's	0 to 2		
late 2000's – early 2010's	10 to 17	late 2010's	2 to 7	2017 – 2020	2 to 5		
2005 – 2010	12 to 17	2011 – 2016	6 to 11				

¹ To the best of Vote Mama Foundation's knowledge, all legislators in the dataset who have children present as women and use she/her pronouns.
² Full documentation on variables including estimates and data sources is included with the dataset.

Self-description of demographics such as gender, sexual orientation, and race/ethnicity was used when available. If self-description was not available, legislators were categorized into demographic categories based on presentation and inclusion/exclusion from other datasets. For example, a legislator who uses she/her pronouns in her official bio, is in a heterosexual marriage, is not included in Out for America's database of LGBTQIA+ elected officials, and has no press coverage about her sexual orientation or gender identity is listed as a straight cisgender woman. Similarly, a legislator with light skin whose race is listed as "Unknown" in CAWP's database, does not participate in any race/ethnicity-related caucuses, and has no public messaging about their race/ethnicity is listed as white/european. We recognize this method may not accurately capture the way legislators personally identify. However, in cases where there is a discrepancy between identity and presentation, we believe presentation is a more accurate metric by which to measure representation.

Benchmarks for representation were calculated using the 2020 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year Estimate Public Use Microdata Samples. The custom table is included in the full dataset. Representation of mamas is defined as equitable when the percentage of mothers with minor children in the legislative body is equivalent to the percentage of the adult population who are women with related minor children in their households. Birth rate was converted from births per 1000 women to a percentage. For the purposes of this report, representativeness within each state legislature was compared to the percentage of the entire adult population in the U.S., rather than the adult population within each state. While it is beyond the scope of this report to untangle the differences in representation amongst parents of each underrepresented gender, it is important to note that the ACS categorizes respondents according to sex rather than gender identity.

[The full dataset can be requested at
www.votemamafoundation.org/som-about.](http://www.votemamafoundation.org/som-about)

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Disclosure: Vote Mama PAC, a distinct legal entity, proudly endorsed and supported Senator Ramos, Senator Pettersen, Assemblywoman Clark, and Fmr Delegate Carroll Foy, who are each quoted in this report.