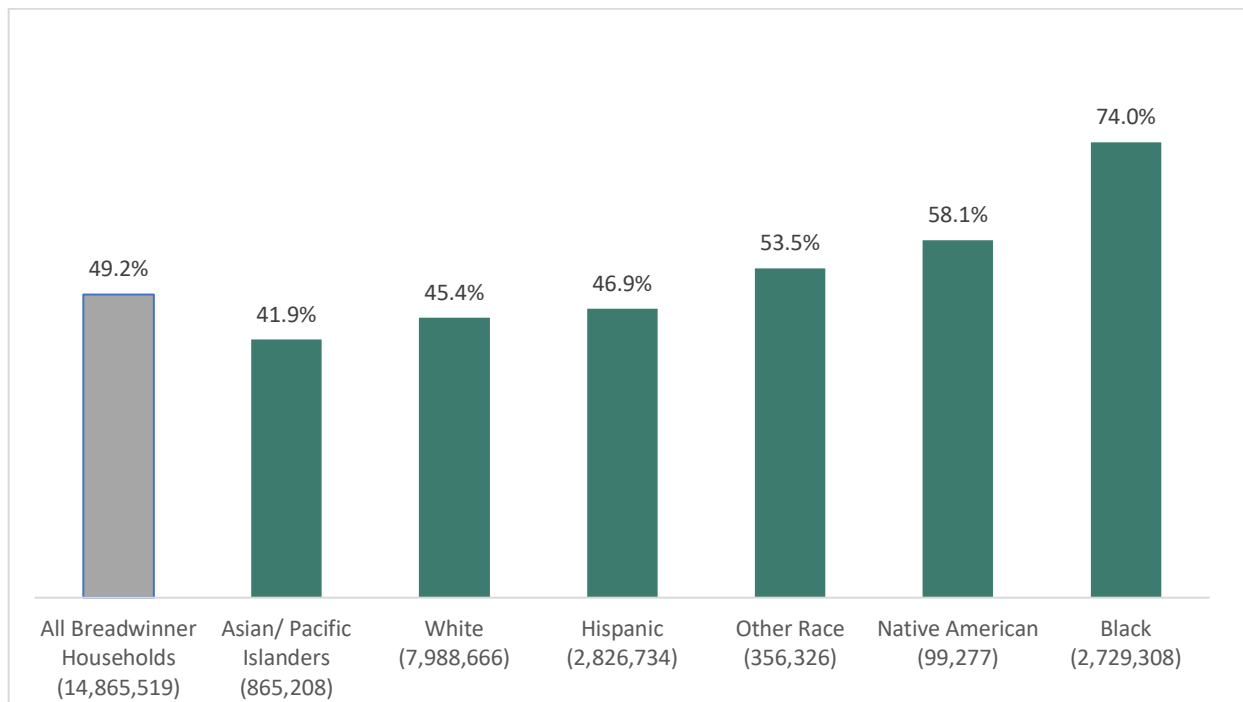


Breadwinner Mothers by Race/Ethnicity

The large majority of mothers in the United States are in the labor force making their economic contribution vital for their families' economic security. One in two of the over 30 million families with children under 18 in the United States have a breadwinner mother, who is either a single mother, irrespective of earnings, or a married mother contributing at least 40 percent of the couple's joint earnings; the share of mothers who are breadwinners varies substantially by race and ethnicity (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Two in four Mothers, and three in four Black Mothers, are Breadwinners for their Families

Households with a breadwinner mother as percent of all households with children younger than 18 years, by race/ethnicity, 2018



Notes: Racial categories are non-Hispanic; Hispanics may be of any race. A breadwinner mother is defined as a single mother who heads a household (irrespective of earnings) or as a married mother who earns at least 40 percent of the couple's joint earnings. In brackets are the number of households with children under 18 for each category.

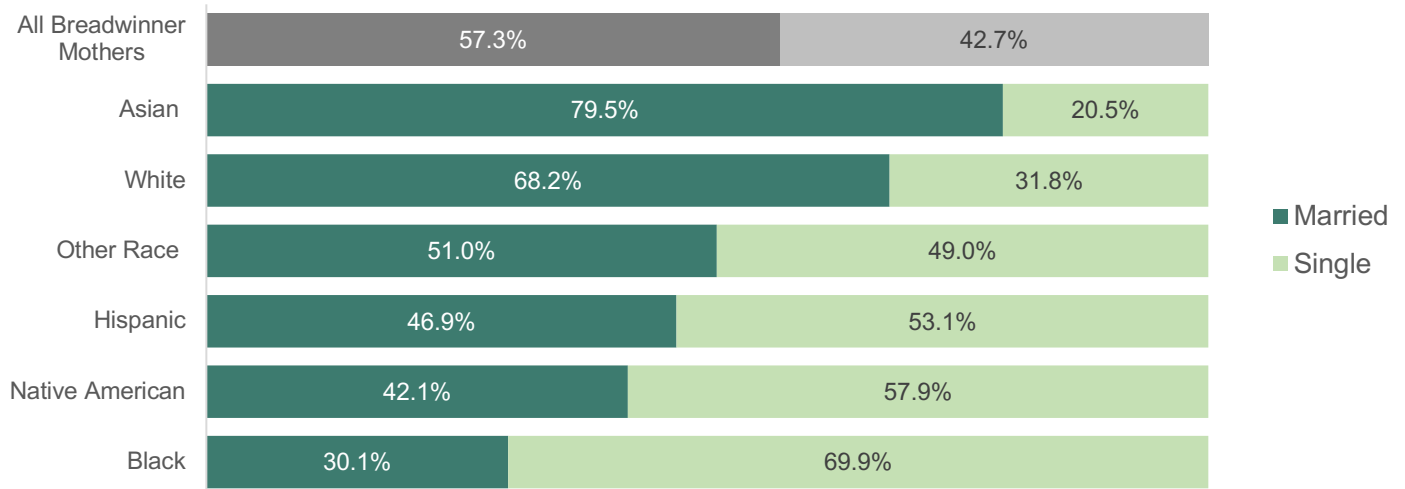
Source: IWPR analysis of American Community Survey microdata.

Women are more likely than men to shoulder unpaid care responsibilities, and many women, especially women of color, may have to balance paid work and care work alone.¹ These care responsibilities are exacerbated by the closure of schools as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

More than four in ten breadwinner mothers (42.7%), over six million women, are single. The share of single mothers among breadwinners varies starkly by race and ethnicity, from two out of ten Asian mother breadwinners (20.5%), over half of Hispanic (43.1%) and Native American (57.9%), to seven in ten Black mothers (69.9%, Figure 2).²

Figure 2: The Share of Breadwinner Mothers who are Single Varies Sharply by Race and Ethnicity

The distribution of breadwinner mothers of children younger than 18 years, by marriage status and race/ethnicity, 2018



Notes: Racial categories are non-Hispanic; Hispanics may be of any race. Single mothers include never married, separated, divorced, and widowed. For definition of breadwinner mothers see Figure 1.

The healthcare sector provides essential services during the current crisis and employs 936,000 breadwinner mothers who worked as registered or licensed practical nurses and 547,000 who worked as home health aides, personal care aides, or nursing assistants.³ Under the COVID 19 relief package, parents of children younger than 18 or older children unable to provide self-care are entitled to take paid leave to provide care for their children; yet the regulatory restriction – including wait periods, exemptions for large and small employers and for healthcare employers, and less than full wage replacement⁴ – may make it particularly difficult for single mothers to stay at home with their children. For the 840,000 breadwinner mothers who are teachers in Pre-K, Kindergarten, elementary and middle schools,⁵ school closure means that they are able to be at home with their children, but may be expected to master remote instruction while also having to provide child care at home.

¹ Even among full-time workers, women spend substantially more time each day on household and care work than men; see Cynthia Hess, Tanima Ahmed, and Jeff Hayes (2020) “Providing Unpaid Household and Care Work in the United States: Uncovering Inequalities.” Washington, DC: Institute for Women’s Policy Research <<https://iwpr.org/publications/providing-unpaid-household-and-care-work-in-the-united-states-uncovering-inequality/>>.

² Five percent of households with children under 18 are headed by single fathers, 1.5 million; IWPR analysis.

³ IWPR analysis of 2018 American Community Survey microdata.

⁴ See U.S. Department of Labor Wage & Hour Division (2020) “COVID-19 and the American Workplace.” <<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic>> (accessed April 5, 2020).

⁵ IWPR analysis of 2018 American Community Survey microdata.

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