

# CAPITOL INJUSTICE

An Analysis of Statehood for Washington D.C.  
and its Projected Impacts on Disenfranchised  
Women and Black Americans

JUNE 2021

*Statehood for Washington D.C. would rectify one of contemporary America's most  
egregious violations of democratic rights*

1000%

**Summary**

“Taxation Without Representation” is emblazoned on every Washington D.C. license plate. It highlights that citizens of Washington D.C. are the only women and men in the United States who are deprived of self-government at the federal level but required to pay federal income taxes.<sup>1</sup>

For decades, residents of Washington D.C. have fought for self-determination and an equal say in Congress. In a 2016 referendum, 79 percent of D.C. voters voted in favor of D.C. becoming its own state.<sup>2</sup>

On June 22, the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs will hold a hearing on The Washington, D.C. Admission Act. Passage would make D.C. a state, providing it with the same privileges and authority granted to all states, including two U.S. Senators and one Representative in the U.S. House.

The Gender Equity Policy Institute conducted an analysis of D.C.’s current subordinate and anomalous political status, with a focus on its impact by gender, race, and ethnicity.

In this moment of racial reckoning, in the midst of a burgeoning movement to protect the fundamental right to vote, it should not escape notice that the nation’s worst violation of civil rights falls heaviest on Black women. (See Figure 1)

- D.C. is majority-female (52%) and nearly half Black (47%).
- Black women and girls make up the largest single demographic group in D.C., at 25% of the population.
- D.C.’s proportion of women is higher than any other state, at a statistically significant level.<sup>3</sup>
- D.C.’s proportion of black women relative to its population is higher than any other state, at a statistically significant level.<sup>4</sup>

Washingtonians are the only U.S. citizens who have no Congressional representation but are subject to the Federal income tax. On several measures, they pay more than the residents of any other state.

- The median federal income tax liability is higher in DC than any other state, a finding the Institute found to be statistically significant across multiple years.<sup>5</sup>
- It is two times higher than Kentucky and 30% higher than the next highest state.
- DC residents pay more in federal income taxes per capita than any other state, a finding robust to multiple measurements.<sup>6</sup>

Washingtonians, especially women, are engaged voters who have consistently demonstrated a high level of participation. (See figure 2) But under D.C.’s current status:

- 527,773 registered voters<sup>7</sup> are effectively disenfranchised at the federal level.
- 705,749 Americans are currently denied Congressional representation, equal citizenship, and local self-government, including 369,809 women and girls.
- 328,979 Black Americans—179,248 of whom are Black women and girls—are denied Congressional representation, equal citizenship, and local self-government.<sup>8</sup>

**D.C. Disenfranchisement and its Consequences**

Some might argue that D.C. is too small to be a state. But eight sitting U.S. senators represent states that have populations of a similar size to D.C. Four of those senators represent states with fewer people than D.C., while the other four represent states slightly more populous than the nation’s capital.<sup>9</sup>

The denial of full self-government and Congressional representation to D.C. citizens has concrete negative consequences. In the American federalist system, state governments control their budgets and make their own local laws. However, under D.C.’s current subordinate status, the D.C. government must submit its budget to Congress for approval through the latter’s annual appropriations process. Likewise, Congress has over-

sight—and a de facto veto—over other programmatic and fiscal policies. The President can even prevent D.C. bills from becoming law.

Likewise, there are several areas where states have power, but for D.C., the same power resides with Congress or the Federal executive branch. For example, governors typically have authority over their own state’s National Guard. But the president and Department of Defense control D.C.’s. During the January 6 U.S. Capitol attack, repeated requests by the mayor and other D.C. officials for National Guard support were rebuffed for hours.<sup>10</sup>

Congress and the President have not hesitated to impose their own agenda on the people of the district, contradicting policies D.C.’s elected officials attempted to enact. In the Medicaid program, partially funded by the federal government, states can use their own funds to pay for abortion services. Yet, every year Congress bans D.C. from using its own funds for abortion care for people in their Medicaid program. Congress has also prevented D.C. from using its own funds to pay for lobbying for voting representation in Congress and other measures. President Trump, in his final budget request, attempted to eliminate federal tuition assistance for D.C. residents and payments for the D.C. Sewer and Water Authority.<sup>11</sup>

With statehood, instead of Congressmembers from the other 50 states having power over these essential matters, D.C.’s own representatives—who would best represent the interests of their constituents—would have the authority to make these important decisions.

**Conclusion**

Given D.C.’s population and high voter turnout, women and Black Washingtonians would see particularly substantial improvements in political rights from statehood. Furthermore, by gaining the privileges and authority of a state, D.C. would be able to assert its own control over its budget, its Medicaid program, and other important policy and fiscal matters that are currently decided by the representatives of other states in the U.S. Congress.

Passage of the Washington, D.C. Admission Act would eliminate the source of one of the nation’s most egre-

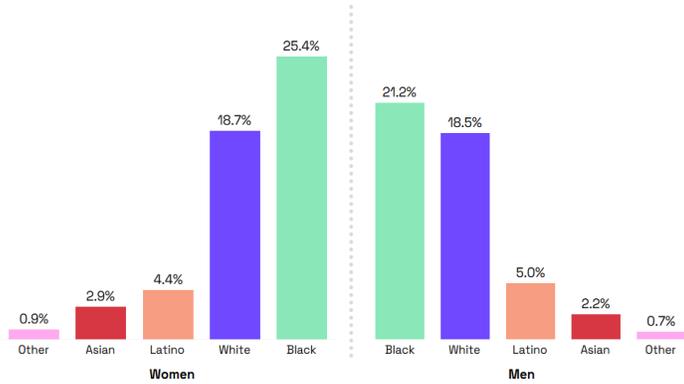
gious violations of democratic rights. By restoring full self-determination and representation to a jurisdiction that is predominantly Black and majority women, statehood for D.C. would both rectify systemic discrimination and immediately and powerfully advance gender and racial justice. Given D.C.’s current representation—a Black woman mayor, Muriel Browser, a Black woman Congressional delegate, Eleanor Holmes Norton, and a city council that is at gender parity—the new State of Washington, Douglass Commonwealth is poised to be an exemplar of what a truly inclusive and representative 21st century democracy looks like.

The bill earns a rare 100% on the Gender Equity Policy Institute’s gender equity scale, indicating it satisfies all criteria for advancing gender, racial, ethnic, and intersectional equity. Every single D.C. resident, regardless of race, sex, gender, creed, or color, would benefit from Congressional representation and local self-government. Moreover, the measure addresses a structural foundation of inequality in the foundational area of civil rights; notably, it vastly expands rights and leadership opportunities for Black women in particular.

In sum, even as statehood would provide equal rights to all, the effort appropriately reflects an awareness of the gender and racial discrimination inherent in D.C.’s subordinate political status, and for that reason the Institute considers D.C. statehood to be a model policy for fulfilling the promise of American democracy.

Appendix

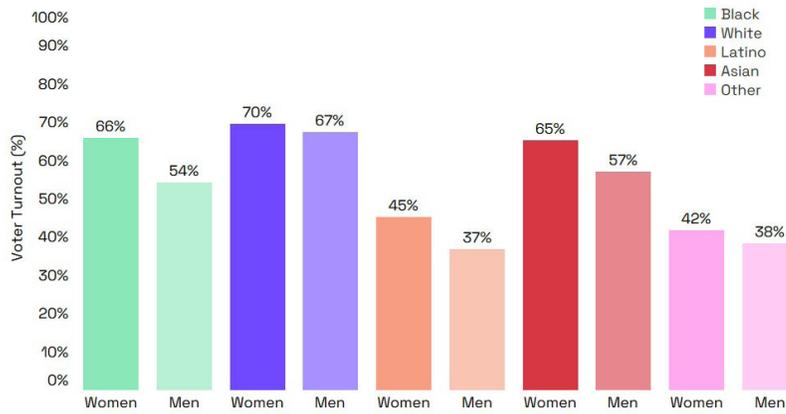
FIGURE 1:  
WASHINGTON, D.C. POPULATION BY RACE AND GENDER



	All	Black	White	Latinos	Asian	Other
Women	369,809	179,248	132,013	31,391	20,729	6,428
Men	335,940	149,731	130,428	35,341	15,774	4,666
Total	705,749	328,979	262,441	66,732	36,503	11,094

GEPI analysis of ACS (2019)

FIGURE 2:  
A MODEL OF ENGAGED AND INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY



GEPI analysis of CPS (2019)

Figure 2: Voter Turnout by Gender and Race, Washington D.C., 2020, by race and gender

Nearly two-thirds of eligible D.C. voters voted in the 2020 presidential election. Women were particularly enthusiastic, turning out at a higher rate than men. D.C. voters have a record of supporting diverse political leaders. The D.C. Council is one of the few legislatures in the United States that is majority women.<sup>12</sup>

- 69% of eligible women voters in D.C. voted in the 2020 presidential election.<sup>13</sup>
- Women in every racial group turned out at rates higher than their male counterparts.
- Of the 13 elected members of the D.C. Council, 6 are men and 7 are women.<sup>14</sup>

## Sources

<sup>1</sup> While residents of other United States territories such as Puerto Rico are required to pay federal taxes such as Social Security, estate, and others, they do not pay federal income taxes.

<sup>2</sup> Rebecca Hersher, "D.C. Votes Overwhelmingly to Become 51st State." NPR. November 9, 2016, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/11/09/501412360/d-c-votes-overwhelmingly-to-become-51st-state>.

<sup>3</sup> Gender compositions tend to cluster around 50:50—nearly equal proportions of men and women. ACS data (2019) shows D.C. is a woman-majority city, with women making up 52. percent of the population. GEPI used the ACS data to estimate the proportion of women in each state and D.C. and found the difference between D.C. and all other states to be statistically significant.

<sup>4</sup> ACS data (2019) shows black women compose of 25.4 percent of the D.C. population. GEPI estimates the proportion of black women in each state and D.C. and found the difference between D.C. and all other states to be statistically significant.

<sup>5</sup> Using the ASEC supplement for the CPS, the Institute estimated the median federal income tax liability for tax-paying residents. The median federal income tax for D.C. (\$9,734, year 2020) was higher than any other state and the difference in medians was statistically significant compared to every U.S. state. The findings hold for all years collected (2018, 2019, and 2020).

<sup>6</sup> The Institute conducted multiple measurements to estimate the federal income tax per capita by state. Typically, estimates use Gross IRS Revenue (source: <https://www.irs.gov/statistics/soi-tax-stats-gross-collections-by-type-of-tax-and-state-irs-data-book-table-5>) by state divided by state population to estimate federal tax per capita. This measurement does not accurately capture the federal income tax per capita, with estimates ranging upwards of \$40K. Instead, the Institute used the Annual Social and Economic Supplement Survey of the Current Population Survey to estimate the federal income tax per capita. The findings hold for all years collected (2018, 2019, and 2020).

<sup>7</sup> "Citywide Registration Summary as of December 31, 2020". Monthly Report of Voter Registration Statistics and Registration Transactions. District of Columbia Board of Elections. D.C: 2020. <https://www.dcoeb.org/Data-Resources/Voter-Registration-Statistics>.

<sup>8</sup> Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Sophia Foster, Ronald Goeken, Jose Pacas, Megan Schouweiler and Matthew Sobek. IPUMS USA: Version 11.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.18128/DOI0.V11.0> (Hereafter, GEPI Analysis of ACS (2019), IPUMS USA.)

<sup>9</sup> The states are Wyoming, Vermont, Alaska, and North Dakota. D.C. is more populous than Wyoming and Vermont. Table 1. Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for the United States, Regions, States, and Puerto Rico: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2019 (NST-EST2019-01), US Census Bureau, Population Division, released Dec. 2019.

<sup>10</sup> House Committee on Oversight and Reform, "Fact Sheet and Timeline: Delayed National Guard Response to January 6 Insurrection," June 15, 2021, <https://oversight.house.gov/sites/democrats.oversight.house.gov/files/COR%206%20JAN%2021%20Timeline.pdf>; DC Council Statement on the Department of Defense's Denial of DC's National Guard Deployment Request, Jan. 6, 2021, <https://dccouncil.us/dc-council-statement-on-the-department-of-defenses-denial-of-dcs-national-guard-deployment-request/>.

<sup>11</sup> Office of Management and Budget, A Budget for America's Future: Appendix, 2020, p.1253.

<sup>12</sup> On gender breakdowns in municipal office and state legislatures, see Center for American Women in Politics, Rutgers (CAWP) <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/women-municipal-office>; On Congress, Statewide executive office, and other levels of office, see factsheets at CAWP <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/current-numbers>.

<sup>13</sup> GEPI Analysis of ACS (2019), IPUMS USA.

<sup>14</sup> Council of the District of Columbia, 2020. <https://dccouncil.us/councilmembers/>.

## ABOUT THE GENDER EQUITY POLICY INSTITUTE

### OUR MISSION

The Gender Equity Policy Institute is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing opportunity, fairness, and well-being for all people through research and education exposing the gender impacts of the policies, processes, and practices of government and business.

### OUR WORK

We conduct and publish research on the best practices for advancing gender equity. We analyze and score public policies and business practices to identify the effects on people of all genders, with particular attention to the impacts on groups, such as women, people of color, and LGBTQ+ people, who have been systematically disadvantaged by discrimination, bias, and structural inequality. By educating policymakers, business leaders, and advocates about the inequities and financial disparities embedded in seemingly neutral economic and political processes, we provide the tools and knowledge that leaders need to rebalance systems, guarantee equal benefits and opportunities, and secure a just and sustainable future for all Americans.

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