

# Women & Economic Freedom

## Discussion Guide



## Let's review

*At the start of each discussion, review the conversation ground rules for returning and new members alike to set the stage for active participation by all. You may want to use a timer as you go around the room. And don't forget to decide who will take notes and post a discussion recap.*

- **Be open and curious:** Everyone has a unique perspective, so listen and be prepared to hear a different point of view. Remember, you do not need to share your political affiliation; this is a discussion and exchange of ideas, not politics.
- **Be respectful and engaged:** Be sure that everyone has a chance to speak before adding a second comment or perspective. Encourage each other's participation.
- **Be focused and concise:** Keep the conversation centered on the issue and the brief.

**The "Table-it" Rule:** If the group has gone off-topic but the area is of interest, the group can table the conversation and save it for another time to be addressed in a different manner.

## Let's begin

- Each member is invited to answer the following questions in a **two-minute reaction** to the Brief:
  - Introduce yourself, and share what "lens of care" did you wear when reviewing this Brief (e.g. personal, professional, community, state, nation, global)?
  - What did you find most interesting or surprising from reading the Brief? What matters?

## Spread the word: facts to share during your discussion:

- According to the [World Bank](#), around 2.4 billion women globally have **less** economic opportunity than men, and 178 countries maintain legal barriers that prevent women from fully participating in the workforce.
- When analyzing legal protections, [women enjoy 64% fewer protections than men do.](#)
- The worldwide gap between men and women's lifetime earnings is an [estimated](#) \$172 trillion.
- As of the most recent jobs report, prime-age women had a labor force participation rate of [77.8%](#).
- As of 2022- [20.82 million women and 17.1 million men were living below the poverty line in the United States.](#)
- [11% of Fortune 500 company CEOs](#) are women, and roughly [30% of Fortune 500 board members.](#)

- In 2022, companies founded exclusively by women received only 2.1% of the total capital invested in venture-backed startups in the U.S., according to the [U.S. VC Female Founders Dashboard by PitchBook](#).
- In 2022, the typical earnings for American women amounted to [82 cents](#) for every dollar earned by men.

## Let's discuss

*Below are questions for the group to consider and discuss, or choose your own.*

- **Community:** How do government rules and regulations affect the economic opportunities available to women?
  - How can community initiatives support women in overcoming regulatory barriers to economic empowerment?
  - What does economic freedom mean to you, and how do you think it impacts women after reading this brief?
- **Government:**
  - What should be the role of government in promoting women's economic freedom?
  - Where do you see intersections between government policies, business practices, and individual efforts in advancing women's economic freedom?
  - How can government policies be designed or reformed to better support women-owned businesses and address gender disparities in the workforce?
  - Does the United States have a role to play worldwide in ensuring women have the same legal rights as men in countries where there are disparities?
- **Business:** Are women-owned businesses thriving in your community? What factors contribute to their success or challenges?
  - In your experience, is it easy for women to establish and grow enterprises in our area? What barriers do they face?
  - How can businesses, both large and small, actively contribute to creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for women in the economy?
  - Do you think private sector companies should be required to have women in senior leadership positions and on boards of directors?

## Let's act

1. Take it local. Talk to your neighbors to find out if any programs for empowering women's economic freedom or entrepreneurship exist in your community. Identify opportunities to mentor women who are in need of job training, interviewing skills, financial counseling or other help.
2. Explore the impact of economic freedom on women in your community. Search your municipality's website for information pertaining to business rules and regulations, and economic development initiatives. Try searching the words "small business directory" + [your state or municipality]. Get to know local business owners or entrepreneurs in your community, and ask them about the government regulations that may affect their businesses, including any occupational licensing requirements, which can often be onerous.
3. Investigate private sector and community programs aimed at promoting opportunities for women.
4. Research your elected representatives' positions on free enterprise and economic freedom and their vision for how to tackle economic problems facing Americans and your

community. Research what are the state regulatory agencies, your city council, and state policymakers who control occupational licensing, permitting, and other regulatory red tape that make it easier or harder for entrepreneurs. You can find contact information for federal, state, and local government officials here. Your state or municipality's websites will also have information to contact leaders. Try looking at the drop-down menu for a Government tab.

5. Get involved in your community's economic development council and research business networks and associations in your community
6. Establish a relationship with your legislators. It's easy to establish a relationship with your legislators. Start by introducing yourself. You can also learn to write to your representatives or set up a meeting with a legislator on The Policy Circle website.
7. Consider writing a letter to the editor or an op-ed on your stance on data privacy in your local paper. Learn how on The Policy Circle website.

## Next Steps for Your Circle

- **Post a Recap:** Summarize your discussion to share thoughts with members not present and share planned actions from group members. Designate who will post a meeting recap on your circle page.
- **Decide your next meeting topic.** Want to discuss a related brief at your next meeting? Suggestions include:
  - [China & The Risk to our Daily Lives](#)
  - [Education Innovation- The Future of the Classroom](#)
- **Dive Deeper into the issues.** If this is an area you would like to pursue further, consider taking possible steps to influence policy. The Policy Circle offers resources for [influencing policy](#) and [organizing a petition](#) to amplify your voice and raise awareness. Don't miss our [latest events](#) that help you dive deeper into this issue and more.