

# *Revolutionizing* the future of widowhood

Impact Report 2011–2020



***We invite you to be a part of the next movement of global social significance, and one of the last social issues to be addressed: supporting widows.***

At Modern Widows Club, we serve women seeking to understand the widowhood experience, to assist them in creating a positive future and a purposeful life – women of all ages, beliefs, faiths, partner-statuses and ethnic backgrounds, women of all loss-circumstances, focused on growth versus grief and seeking empowerment.

*Join us as a widow-champion, and let's change the world.*

**Carolyn Moor**  
President &  
Development Director



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**OUR MISSION** 3

**ISSUE** 4

The number of widows, the stress, who they are and the challenges they face.

**ACTION** 10

How we address the needs of widows in the United States and around the world.

**IMPACT** 18

Modern Widows Club success stories of thriving widows and growing organization.

**FUTURE** 24

Our plans for the ever-changing environment.

# OUR MISSION

We serve to  
**empower women in widowhood**  
to lean into  
life, build  
resilience  
and make  
a difference  
in society.

# ISSUE

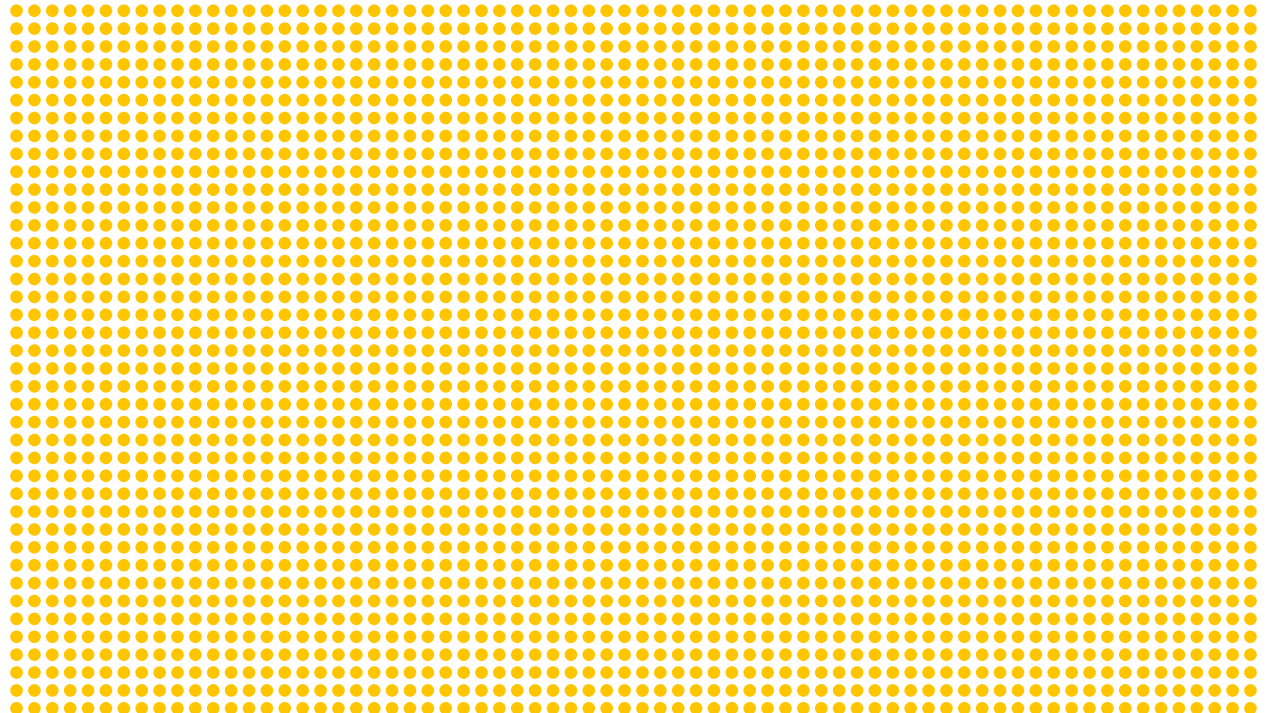
**The most stressful life event is losing a spouse.** In the United States, 2,800 women become widows every day. Widows face a statistically greater risk of illness due to this stress, in addition to the secondary impacts of widowhood, which can impact finances, households and children. There are not enough resources available to help widows navigate this life change, even though 70% of women will face widowhood in their lifetimes.

# WIDOWHOOD IS MORE COMMON THAN YOU THINK

---

There is very little research on widows under 65+. They are notoriously invisible in social services and policies. The urgency for funding to keep Modern Widows Club operational is undeniable.

NEARLY **2,800**  
**MARRIED WOMEN IN THE U.S. ARE WIDOWED**  
**EVERYDAY**



SOURCE: 2011 US Census Bureau

# CRUSHING STRESS OF LOSING A SPOUSE

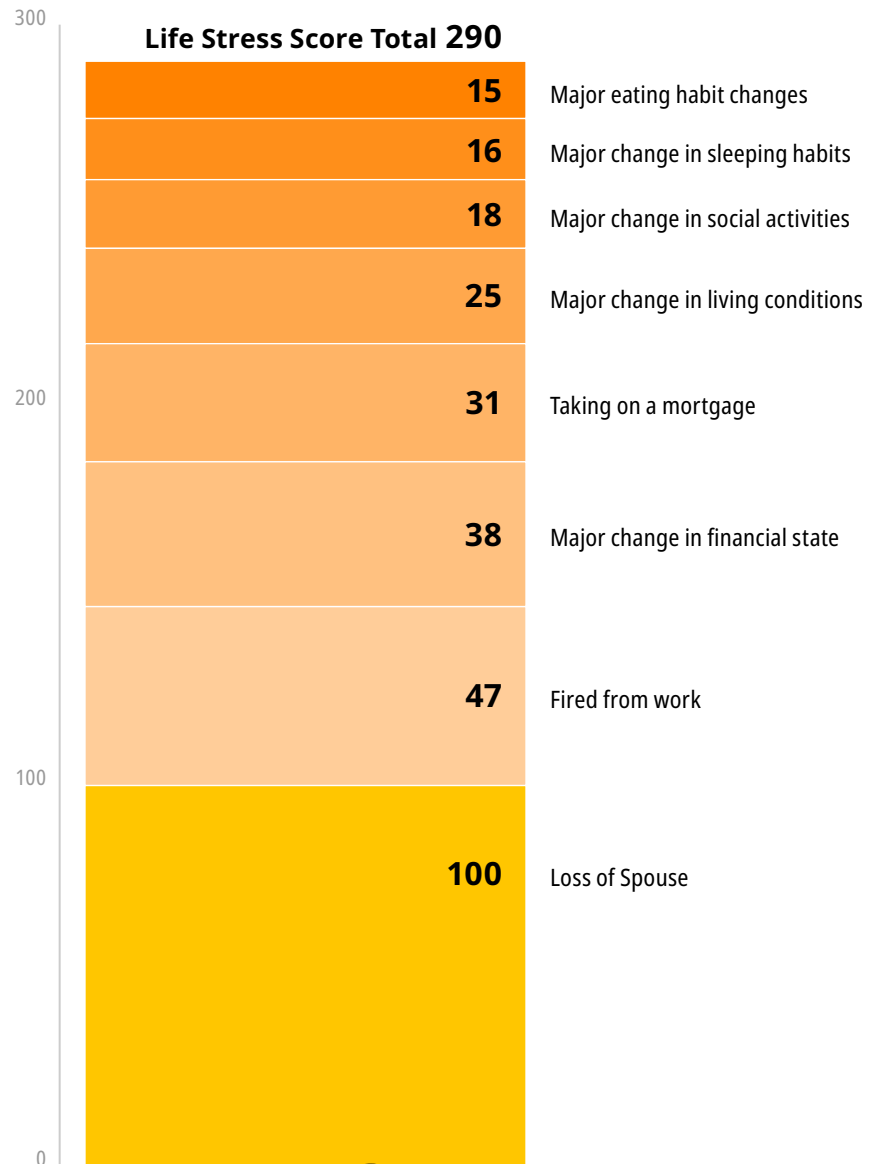
**The most stressful life event is losing a spouse.** According to the Holmes-Rahe Life Stress Inventory, the added secondary losses for a widow are likely to increase a stress-induced health breakdown.\*

\*NOTE: The Holmes-Rahe Life Stress Inventory lists 43 life-changing events. The selected events are stress scores for a typical widow in our organization based on our research and the 2020 MWC Survey/523 respondents.

SOURCE: Peter A Noone, The Holmes-Rahe Stress Inventory, *Occupational Medicine*, Volume 67, Issue 7, October 2017, Pages 581-582, <https://doi.org/10.1093/occmed/kqx099>

300 or greater increases  
the chance of illness by 80%

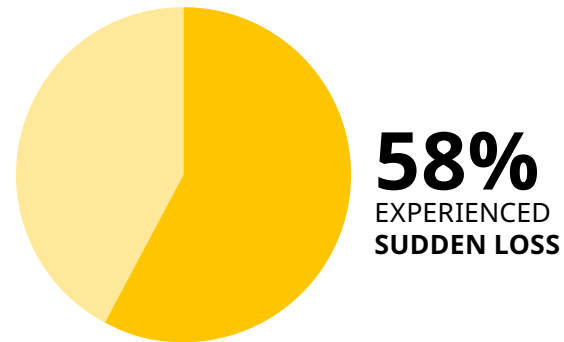
≥150 to 299 Life Stress Score  
can increase the chance of  
illness by 50% in 2 years



# WIDOW

# WHO ARE WIDOWS?

**70%**  
OF MARRIED  
WOMEN  
WILL FACE  
**WIDOWHOOD**  
IN THEIR  
LIFETIMES



## AGE WHEN WIDOWHOOD OCCURRED



**76%**  
WERE 59 OR  
YOUNGER

SOURCES: <https://investedwithyou.com/women/>  
2011 U.S. Census Bureau  
2020 MWC Survey/523 respondents

# CHALLENGES WIDOWS FACE EVEN YEARS AFTER LOSS

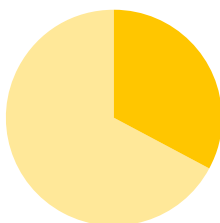
## HEALTH

**91%**  
EXPERIENCED  
BRAIN FOG

◀ **44%**  
of the  
widows  
with  
brain fog  
reported  
it lasting  
2 years  
or more

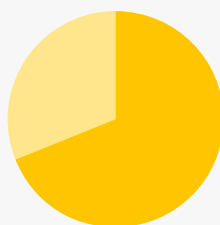
(Brain Fog affects mental processes,  
such as memory and concentration)

**33%**  
Diagnosed  
with a **new**  
**mental or**  
**physical**  
health issue  
within a year  
of loss



## HOUSEHOLD

**69%**  
Felt forced  
to make  
decisions  
they were  
unprepared  
to make  
within the  
first 2 years



**48%**  
Had children  
living in the  
home at the  
time of loss

▲ **49%** of those families  
reported their education  
was negatively impacted

**17%** of widows currently care  
for senior family members

## EMPLOYMENT

WORKING OUTSIDE  
THE HOME WHEN  
WIDOWHOOD OCCURRED

NO  
**33%**

YES  
**67%**

**29%**  
Had to start  
working after  
widowhood



**75%**  
Brain fog  
impacted  
them at work



**83%**  
Change in  
employment  
other than  
working less



## INSURANCE

**15%**  
LOST their health insurance



▲ **20%** of those widows  
had children living at home

**18%** of widows had a change  
in health insurance

## LEGAL

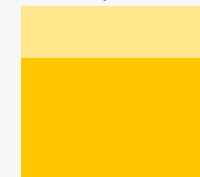
**44%**  
Sought legal help



▲ nearly **18%** of those widows had  
estates that took over 2 years to resolve

## SPIRITUAL / COMMUNITY

**70%**  
Had a place to worship



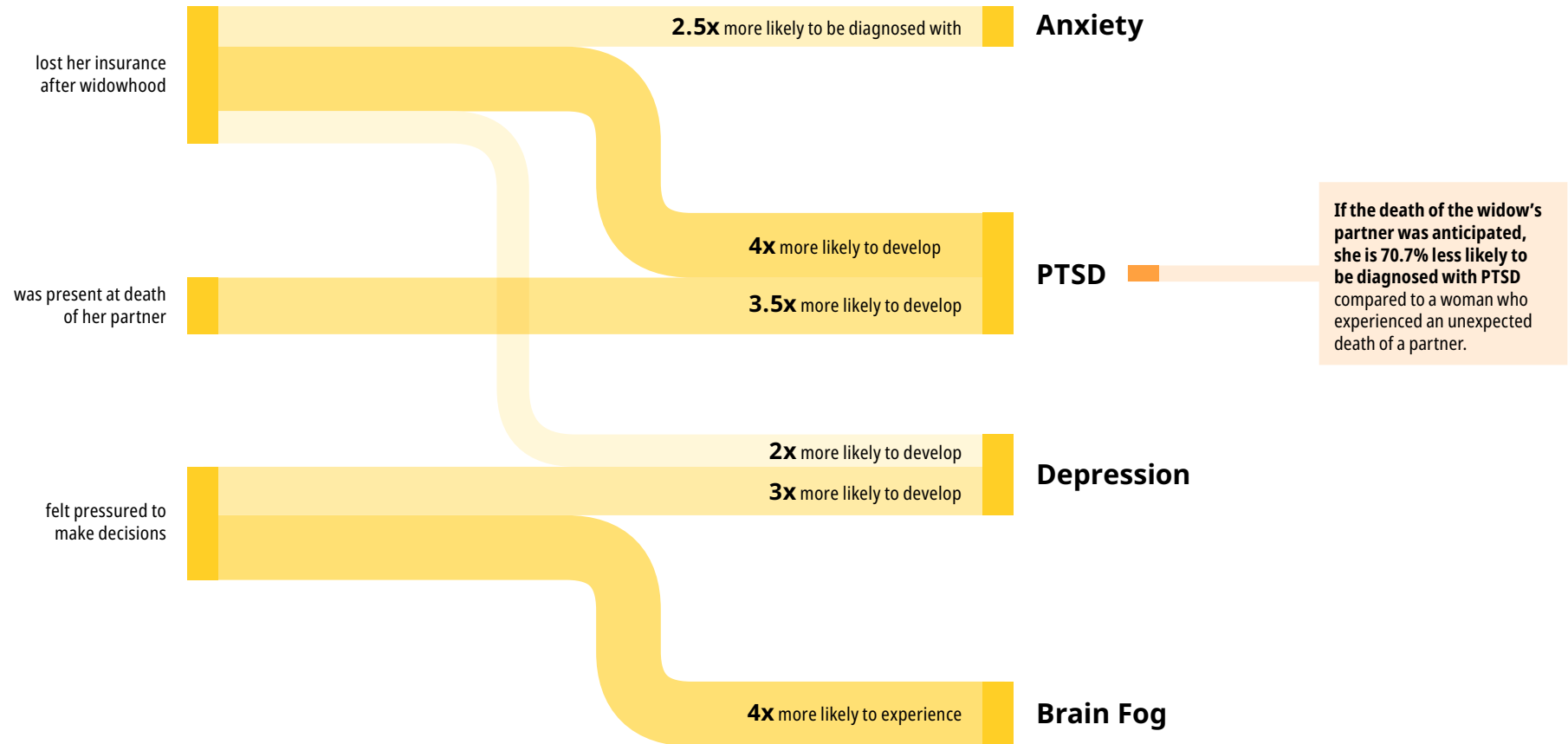
◀ **49%** of  
those widows  
felt support  
was insufficient

SOURCE: 2020 MWC Survey/523 respondents



# HEALTH IMPACT OF LIFE EVENTS

## If a widow...



If a widow lost health insurance after widowhood, she is 2.5x more likely to be diagnosed with anxiety, 4x more likely to develop PTSD and 2x more likely to be diagnosed with depression compared with widows who did not lose health insurance.

If the widow was present at the time of death of her partner, she is 3.5 times more likely to develop PTSD than someone who was not present.

If a widow felt perceived pressure to make decisions, she is 3x more likely to develop depression and 4x more likely to experience brain fog.

SOURCE: 2020 MWC Survey/523 respondents

# ACTION

Modern Widows Club addresses the needs of widows through mentoring, education, awareness and advocacy.

**Widows can find needed support** through local chapters, virtual chapters, online resources and national events dedicated to improving widows' lives.

# OUR APPROACH

---

Modern Widows Club provides ongoing services and life support to **transform grief into reconciliation**, offering HOPE through a network of Wisters™ (widow sisters) and providing understanding that encourages HEALING. We promote mentoring and opportunities for widows to GROW individually and ADVOCATE within their local communities. These services are provided at no charge and continue long after the widow becomes ineligible for grief support services that generally end after 24 months.



# HOLISTIC HEALTH FOR THE MODERN WIDOW

**Modern Widows Club is the leading expert** in advancing holistic widow support, research, education and advocacy worldwide, with programs focusing on the Seven Pillars of Healthy Widowhood.

Holistic health is essential because the mind and body connection cannot be detached, so unaddressed emotional pain results in physical manifestations.

*“What is misunderstood  
will always be underserved.”*

– Sir Richard Branson



# WOMEN WE SERVE

---

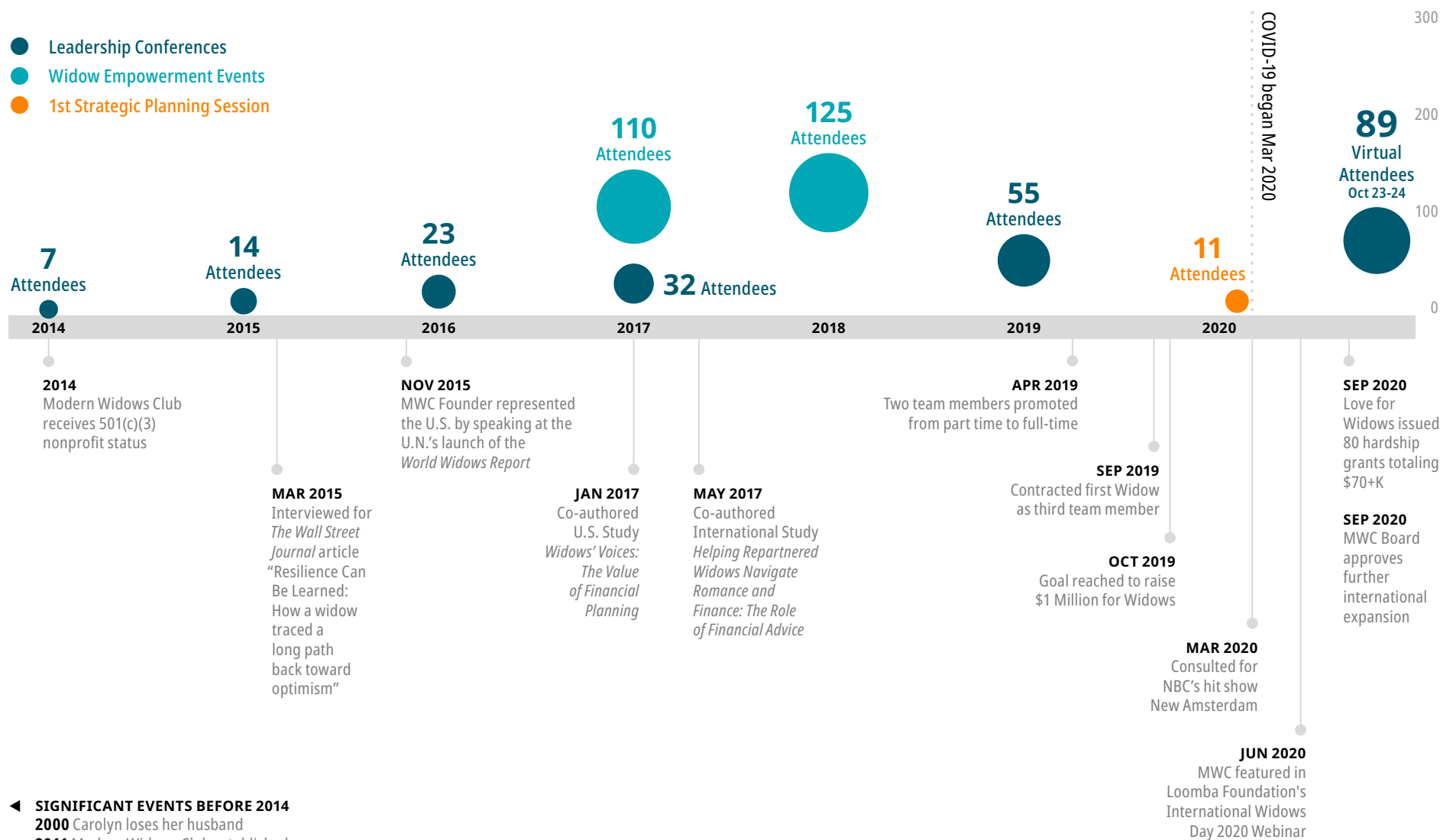
**We serve women seeking to understand the widowhood experience.** To assist them in creating a positive future and purposeful life. Women of all age ranges, beliefs, faiths, partner status and ethnic backgrounds. Women of all loss circumstances focused on growth versus grief, seeking empowerment.



IMAGES: Jenn Fortune Photography

# 6 YEARS OF GROWTH SINCE RECEIVING NONPROFIT STATUS

- Leadership Conferences
- Widow Empowerment Events
- 1st Strategic Planning Session



- ◀ **SIGNIFICANT EVENTS BEFORE 2014**  
**2000** Carolyn loses her husband  
**2011** Modern Widows Club established



# OUR TEAM

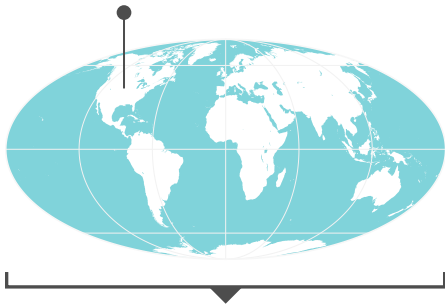
## FOUNDER / DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Carolyn Moor

BOARD OF DIRECTORS	EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR			ADVISORY COUNCIL
<b>CHAIR</b>		<b>Gina Strasser (staff)</b>		<b>CHAIR</b>
Hank Varnell	<b>OPERATIONS</b>	<b>PROGRAMS</b>	<b>DEVELOPMENT</b>	Jennifer Johnson
<b>PRESIDENT</b>	<b>OPERATIONS MANAGER</b>	<b>PROGRAM MANAGER</b>	<b>DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR</b>	<b>MEMBER</b>
Carolyn Moor	<i>Vacant</i>	<i>Vacant</i>	Carolyn Moor (staff)	Dr. Steven Southwick
<b>TREASURER</b>	<b>ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT</b>	<b>LEADERSHIP TRAINING</b>	<b>COMMUNITY OUTREACH SPECIALIST</b>	<b>MEMBER</b>
Jason Lewis	Andrea Catalano (volunteer)	<i>Vacant</i>	Sonya Giroux (contractor)	Linda Ferrone
<b>SECRETARY</b>	<b>COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER</b>	<b>PROGRAM DIRECTOR</b>	<b>RESEARCH/DEVELOPMENT</b>	
Susie Richetti	Laurie Rich (contractor)	Lyn Kienholz (contractor)	Victor Hurlburt (volunteer)	
<b>MEMBER</b>	<b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b>	<b>PROGRAM SUPPORT MANAGER</b>	<b>VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT</b>	
Patty Gannon	<i>Vacant</i>	Cindy Toledo (contractor)	Volunteers	
<b>MEMBER</b>	<b>WEB SECURITY /IT</b>	<b>MENTAL HEALTH CONSULTANT</b>		
Blake Lasater	Adam Wood (contractor)	Jordan Harrold (contractor)		
	<b>MARKETING/GRAPHICS</b>	<b>EVENT PLANNER</b>		
	Sherri Days, Graphics (contractor)	<i>Vacant</i>		
		<b>CURRICULUM COORDINATOR</b>		
		<i>Vacant</i>		

# INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH

The United States is the  
**3rd LARGEST**  
widow population with  
**13.5M**



As of 2015,  
the global documented  
population of widows is **258M** caring for  
**584M**  
fatherless  
children  
(under 18 and  
adult children)

SOURCE: <https://www.theloombafoundation.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/WWR.pdf>



RONA Foundation completed dignity widow home



RONA Foundation orphans with LEGO® building toys

2019 Modern Widows Club Leadership Conference. Since then, we've partnered with her local widows to help fund the purchase of sewing machines and a sewing program to advance economic empowerment.

Currently, they have three widows in a year-long training program and have installed solar lighting, so work can proceed anytime because they do not have electricity. They received their first order from a hotel for face masks! **This program has endless potential for sustainable income opportunities,** and we look forward to our continued collaboration.

## The RONA Foundation

The RONA Foundation, founded by Roseline Orwa, began simply as a widow-to-widow friendship with Carolyn in 2012 via Facebook. Carolyn mentored Roseline and helped her access widow research for advocacy and taught her how to create local widow leaders to raise awareness for widow causes. Roseline built mud hut homes for destitute widows. Over 50 dignity widow houses sponsored and built over the last seven years, some funded through the community chapters. Carolyn mailed LEGO® building toys to Kenya so Roseline could sell them for seeds in the garden and give to the young fatherless and orphaned kids in the community.

Their friendship and collaboration grew over the years, and in 2019, Carolyn and Roseline met in person in Nashville, TN, at the



Roseline Orwa and Carolyn at 2019 MWC Leadership Conference



RONA Foundation sewing program widow apprentice



# TANGIBLE & TIMELY SUPPORT

## Healthy Widow Healthy Woman Podcast

Broadcast Modern Widows Club and widowhood onto the international platform resulting in worldwide education and awareness, creating our stance as cultural influencers.



Hosts Carolyn Moor & Howard Salter

The podcast launched in June 2019 and has seen **5,804 downloads** as of September 2020.

## COVID-19 Increases Need

LOVE FOR WIDOWS (LFW) Benevolent Fund, granted 80 micro-grants \$100-\$1000 for 70 submissions due to the enormous COVID-19 hardships, food and medical emergencies. We are seeking foundations and individuals to continue this program in perpetuity. The increase in COVID-19 widows globally is 100,000+.

**Our organization is experiencing an intense increase due to this pandemic.**

In May 2020, \$74,249 was distributed to widow leaders and MWC members in great need.

# 4,479

Number of times widows received direct tangible support services

Jan 1 to Sep 30, 2020

*"I am truly grateful for the love and support. I'd be lost without it- carrying a heavyweight on my shoulders, a burden that has now been taken away. My family sends our heartfelt gratitude for your compassion and care for widows."*

– MWC LFW Recipient

# IMPACT

Since its founding in 2011, Modern Widows Club has touched the lives of countless women with 34 community chapters across the country.

**MWC is expanding internationally in 2020, with efforts in Kenya, Costa Rica, Israel, Nigeria, India** and two Virtual Chapters to offer global access.

More than 44,000 social media followers utilize MWC resources, and a free virtual library of blogs provides nearly a decade's worth of content related to the seven pillars of healthy widowhood on the MWC website.

# EXPANDING OUR SUPPORT THRU WIDOW LED CHAPTERS

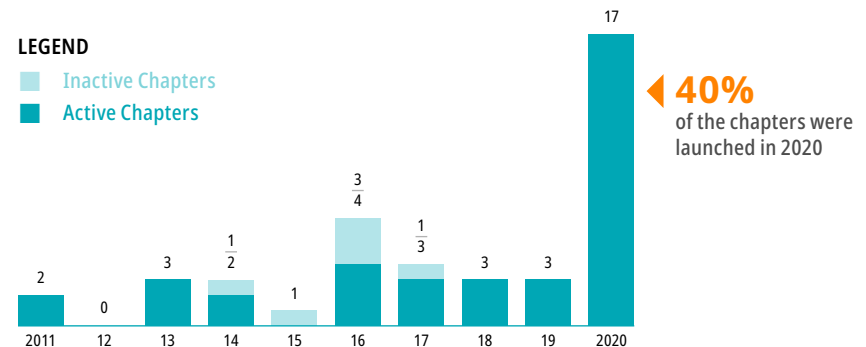
Modern Widows Club is the **only** widow leadership organization in the world to advance widow support, research and education.

Since 2011, MWC has established 43 Chapters nationally, two Virtual Chapters and four international affiliates. Due to circumstances beyond our control, six chapters are currently inactive.

Each chapter provides on-site education and resources via 2-3 widow leadership teams.

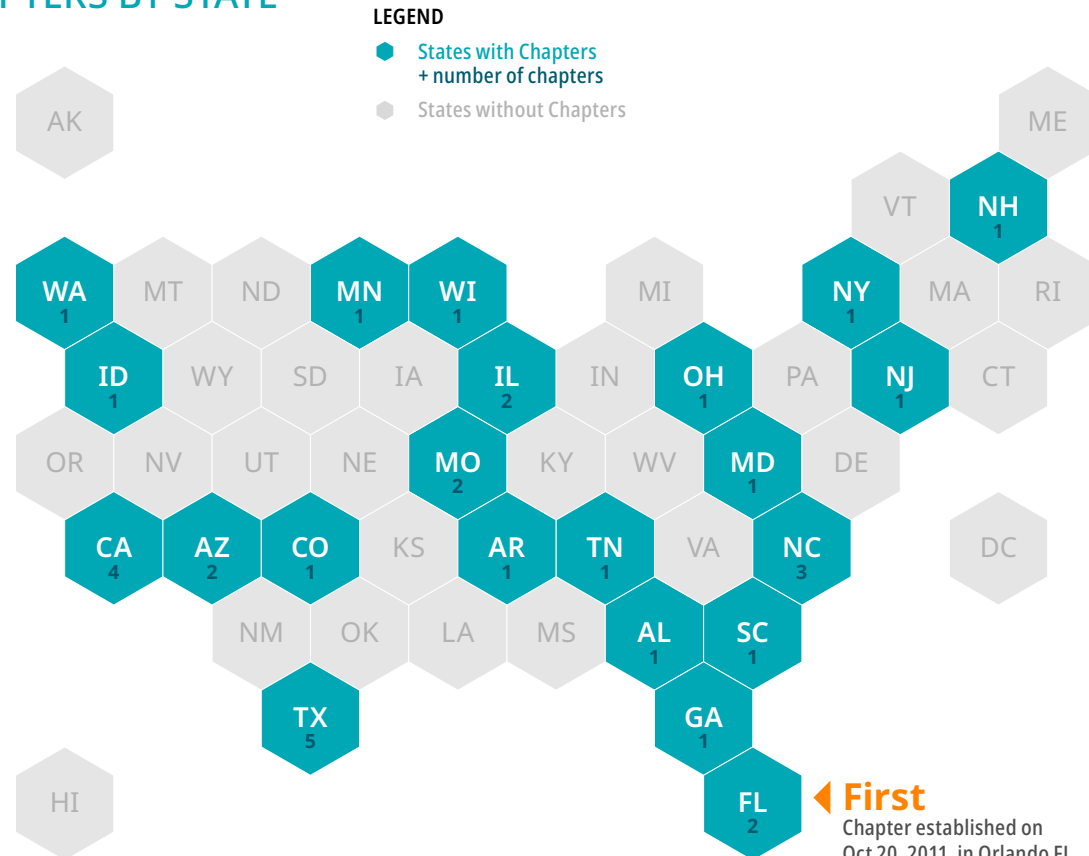
## LAUNCHED CHAPTERS

International affiliates not included



## ACTIVE CHAPTERS BY STATE

As of Nov 1, 2020



# WISTER™ STORY

## Sunshine Woodyard

Sunshine became **one of the original members of the Modern Widows Club** in 2011 when she lost her husband at the age of 36.

MWC Founder Carolyn Moor mentored her as she relaunched her life from scratch, going back to school and earning a Master's Degree in Human Communication. Sunshine wrote her Master's Thesis about widow bloggers and dedicated it to MWC and Carolyn. Now she works with MWC as our Social Media Coordinator.

We are honored to have you at MWC moving forward and reaching back in this hope, heal, grow and lead movement to empower widows to thrive!



Sunshine hiking with fiancé



Sunshine hiking with fiancé

## Cindy Toledo

**Upon arriving home, she found her husband of 20+ years had died.** He died of a sudden heart attack at age 60. Cindy's life unraveled. She lost her home, job and struggled to rebuild even with her two grown daughters' help. She needed resources and fast. Upon finding Modern Widows Club in 2011, six months into widowhood, she was mentored and became our Seattle leader serving over 2,500 widows at two chapters. Because of this experience, she rebuilt her life of moving forward and reaching back. She met Robert in year six, and they were married.

This union brought another level of outreach as the couple's love for travel and serving widows merged. As part of their Christian faith, they've built mud huts for Kenyan widows and fatherless families. She currently holds the position of Regional Director West, which is responsible for equipping and training national and international widow leaders.



Cindy's very first MWC meeting in Orlando, FL



Cindy and Robert

# WISTER™ STORY

## Gina Strasser

Gina met Carolyn for dinner in Orlando 18 months after her husband was killed in a car accident. Her personal experience with unforeseen death, both accidental and by suicide, as well as helping loved ones with chronic disease, including metastatic cancer and mental illness, gave her the desire to create permanent change for widows and their families. After that dinner, Gina knew she would dedicate the nonprofit skills she'd acquired over 23 years to volunteer for Modern Widows Club.

Four years later, **Gina was honored to accept the role of Executive Director at MWC** and now oversees operations providing services to more than 44,000 individuals globally. This is positive evidence of the social impact MWC has by hiring empowered widows within our organization.



Gina and Carolyn's first meeting



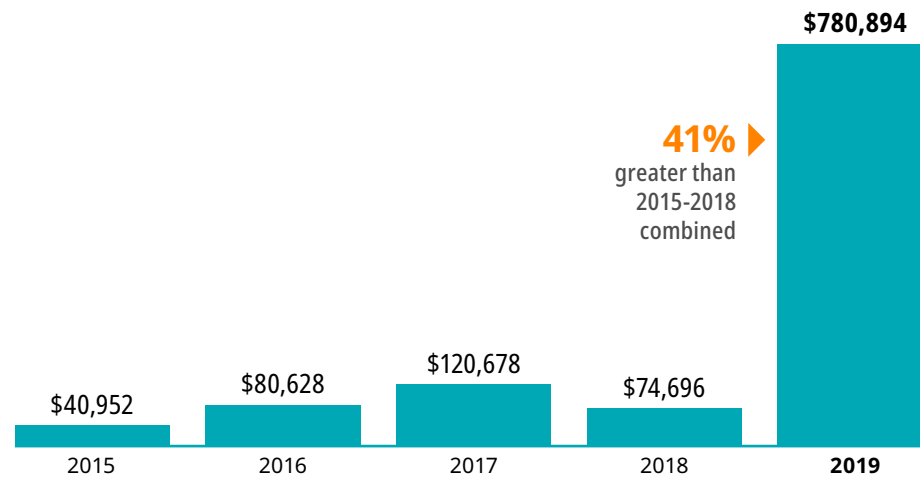
Gina Strasser, Former Executive Director at Modern Widows Club



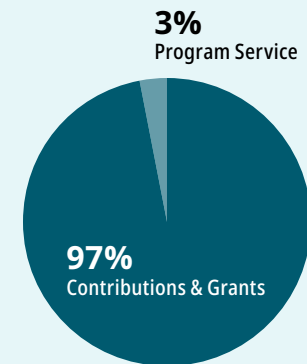
# THE POWER OF ONE

**One seed funder established our ability to hire the necessary staff** to advance our programs and outreach, inspiring other investors to gain confidence in Modern Widows Club's mission and see the importance of addressing this long-neglected social issue.

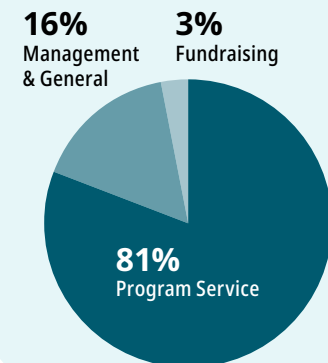
## REVENUE HISTORY



## REVENUE 2019



## EXPENSES 2019



# FUTURE

In the ever-changing current environment, Modern Widows Club aspires to:

## provide

necessary mentoring and resiliency education efforts to widows, with a priority on addressing the unknown needs of women widowed during the pandemic, and with special attention to those raising children, caring for the elderly and essential workers;

## offer

programs and services inclusive to all socio-economic status, faiths, political views, and beings who consider themselves widowed, without bias, while continuing to advocate for widows in local communities, nationally and internationally;

## develop

online self-instructed and interactive evergreen education courses, concurrent with webinars and events which create sustainable revenue;

## lead

on research on widows' physical and mental health while strengthening collaborations with other organizations;

## pursue

an implementable plan focused on a minimum of 10% annual community (chapter) growth and virtual growth while encouraging awareness for, historically, the most underserved demographic of women.



***Become a widow-champion and help change the world.***

**DONATE** [ModernWidowsClub.org](https://ModernWidowsClub.org) **OR**  
Text **MWC** to 407-602-6868

**EMAIL** [Support@ModernWidowsClub.org](mailto:Support@ModernWidowsClub.org)

**CALL** 844-4-A WIDOW

**JOIN** [ModernWidowsClub.org](https://ModernWidowsClub.org)

**PODCAST** [HealthyWidowHealthyWoman.org](https://HealthyWidowHealthyWoman.org)

**SUBSCRIBE** to MWC YouTube channel

**GET SOCIAL**

For more ways to get involved or to sign up for our newsletter, visit [ModernWidowsClub.org](https://ModernWidowsClub.org)

Publication created by [sherridays.com](https://sherridays.com) through Catchafire volunteer projects.

*“I actually had no idea about how life-altering becoming a widow was until I found myself becoming one. In one breath, everything I believed about myself disappeared. I went from being seen as a married woman to being known only as a grieving widow. The impact is indescribable. I needed to find others who understood this and ask a lot of safe and confidential questions.”*

– MWC Member

