Research-in-Brief



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The Status of Women in Michigan: Highlights

Women in Michigan exemplify both the achievements and shortfalls of women's progress over the past century. While Michigan's women are witnessing real improvements in their economic, political, and social status, serious obstacles to their equality remain. The state's rankings are near the top of the nation for women's political participation, at 2nd; about average, at 25th, for social and economic autonomy; but below average for employment and earnings, health and well-being, and reproductive rights, at 33rd, 37th, and 42nd, respectively (Chart 1).

Even the state's better rankings speak only to the status of its women relative to women in other states: despite improvements and the high ranks of some states, in no state do women do as well as men, and even those states with better policies for women do not ensure equal rights. With below average rankings on many indicators, women in Michigan still face significant problems that demand attention from policymakers, advocates, and researchers concerned with women's status. Thus, Michigan earns the grades of B in political participation, C in social and economic autonomy, C- in employment and earnings, D+ in health, and D- in reproductive rights (Chart 1).

Michigan's rankings and grades were calculated by combining data on several indicators of women's status in each of the five areas into composite indices. These data were used to compare women in Michigan with women in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. In addition, they were used to evaluate women's status in the state in comparison with women's ideal status (for more information on the methodology for the composite indices and grades, see Appendix II of *The Status of Women in Michigan*).

Michigan joins Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Wisconsin as part of the East North Central region. Among these five states, Michigan's ranks vary from best to worst depending on the issue area: the state is 1st in the region in political participation, 3rd in reproductive rights, 3rd in social and economic autonomy, 4th in employment and earnings, and 5th in health and well-being.

Women in Michigan: What's Promising

- As of July 2004, women held two key elected executive office positions in Michigan: governor and secretary of state. One of two U.S. senators from Michigan was a woman, out of only 14 female U.S. senators in the nation.
- Women's rates of voter registration and turnout are higher than the national averages.
- Women's median annual earnings for full-time, year-round work in Michigan are in the top third of the nation.
- Michigan is ranked 10th in the nation and 1st in the region for women's business ownership.
- Michigan's AIDS rate is lower than the national average, at 3.1 per 100,000 versus 9.2 per 100,000 in the nation as a whole.

Women in Michigan: What's Disappointing

- Michigan is close to the bottom of the nation, at 49th, for the ratio of women's to men's earnings, with women earning only 67 percent of what men earn.
- Thirty six states have higher levels of educational attainment among women, and only 20 percent of Michigan women have completed their college education.
- More than one in ten women in Michigan lives below the poverty line.
- Michigan ranks in the worst third of the nation for women's mortality rates from heart disease and breast cancer, for incidence rates of diabetes and chlamydia, and for overall levels of mental health.
- Michigan law does not allow minors to receive an abortion without parental consent and does not require health insurers to provide comprehensive coverage for contraceptives or fertility treatments.

Chart 1. How Michigan Ranks on Key Indicators

Indicators	National Rank*	Regional Rank*	Grade
Composite Political Participation Index	2	1	В
Women's Voter Registration, 1998 and 2000 (71.9% registered)	13	2	
Women's Voter Turnout, 1998 and 2000 (56.3% voted)	11	2	
Women in Elected Office Composite Index, 2004	4	1	
Women's Institutional Resources, 2004	22	3	
Composite Employment and Earnings Index	33	4	C-
Women's Median Annual Earnings, 2002 (\$30,700)	15	1	
Ratio of Women's to Men's Earnings, 2002 (66.7%)	49	5	
Women's Labor Force Participation, 2002 (58.9% of women are in the labor force)	35	5	
Women in Managerial and Professional Occupations, 2001 (31.6%)	27	3	
Composite Social and Economic Autonomy Index	25	3	C
Percent with Health Insurance Among Nonelderly Women, 2001-02 (86.5%)	19	2	
Educational Attainment: Percent of Women with Four or More Years of College, 2000 (20.2%)	37	3	
Women's Business Ownership, 1997 (27.2% of businesses are owned by women)	10	1	
Percent of Women Above the Poverty Level, 2002 (88.7%)	27	5	
Composite Reproductive Rights Index	42	3	D-
Composite Health and Well-Being Index	37	5	D+

Notes: See Appendix II of *The Status of Women in Michigan* for a detailed description of the methodology and sources used for the indices presented here.

Calculated by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

Michigan is a large state, with over 5.1 million women of all ages. The state has the 8th-largest population of women in the nation. While in some ways Michigan's women are less diverse than the national population, with fewer Asian American and Hispanic women, the state has more African American women than the national average, and the proportion of Native American women is similar to the nation as a whole. Throughout the country, women's status varies by race and ethnicity; Chart 2 shows that it does in Michigan as well.

Overall, while Michigan's women are witnessing real improvements in their economic, political, and social status, serious obstacles to their equality remain.

Political Participation

Michigan has a relatively large number of women in elected office, ranking 4th in the country as a whole. There is a partisan women's caucus in the state legislature and a government-appointed commission for women. Women in Michigan also register and vote at rates that are higher than those among women in the country as a whole. Consequently, the state ranks 2nd in the nation and 1st in its region on the political participation composite index. Despite its high ranking, like most states, Michigan's performance on indicators of political participation does not approach equality for women. For example, as of August 2004, only two of its 15 members of

the U.S. House of Representatives were women, and women made up less than one-fourth of the state legislature. As a result, Michigan receives a grade of B for measures of political participation.

Employment and Earnings

Michigan ranks 33rd overall on the employment and earnings composite index. Michigan women score within the top third of the nation, at 15th, for median annual earnings, and around the middle of the nation, at 27th, for the percent of women in managerial and professional occupations. The state ranks 35th for women's labor force participation. At 49th, Michigan ranks near the bottom of the country for the ratio of women's to men's earnings, with Michigan women earning only 67 percent of what men earn. This lack of equity in wages contributes to an overall grade of C- for employment and earnings, indicating that the state can still make important strides in promoting women's equity in the labor market.

Social and Economic Autonomy

Ranking 25th in social and economic autonomy, Michigan's women fare reasonably well on some indicators but face obstacles in this category as well. Although women in Michigan are more likely than women nationally to own businesses, at 10th in the nation, less than one-third of all businesses in the state are owned by women. Michigan women are more

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^{*} The national rankings are of a possible 51, referring to the 50 states and the District of Columbia, except for the Political Participation indicators, which do not include the District of Columbia. The regional rankings are of a maximum of five and refer to the states in the East North Central region (IL, IN, MI, OH, and WI).

Women of Color in Michigan: Highlights

The status of women in Michigan varies on many indicators by race and ethnicity (Chart 2). Michigan can improve the status of women of color by addressing the ongoing racial and ethnic disparities in the state.

- Michigan is one of the few states where African American women earn the same as or more than white women, at \$30,700 per year for full-time, year-round work for both African American and white women.
- At the same time, compared with Michigan's white and Asian American women, African American women are much more likely to live in poverty. Nearly one in four African American women in Michigan lives in poverty.
- Hispanic and Native American women in Michigan who work full-time, full-year earn even less than women in other racial/ethnic groups in the state and are more likely to live in poverty than white and Asian American women.
- Hispanic, Native American, and African American women are less likely than Asian American or white women to have two- or four-year college degrees or to work in professional and managerial jobs.
- African American and Native American women in Michigan are more likely to die from heart disease or lung cancer than women of other major racial and ethnic groups.
- Hispanic, African American, and Native American women face serious obstacles to prenatal care, and the infant mortality rate among African Americans is more than double that among every other racial/ethnic group.

Chart 2.

Overview of the Status of Women of Color in Michigan

	White Women	African American Women	Hispanic Women	Asian American Women	Native American Women
Political Participation					
Number of Women in Elected Statewide Executive Office, 2004	2	0	0	0	0
Number of Women in U.S. Congress, 2004	2	1	0	0	0
Number of Women in Appointed Office, 2003	8	2	0	1	0
Employment and Earnings					
Median Annual Earnings (for full-time, year-round employed women), 1999 (in 2003 dollars)	\$30,900	\$30,900	\$26,500	\$35,300	\$26,000
Earnings Ratio Between Women and White Men, 1999	65.1%	65.1%	55.8%	74.4%	54.7%
Women's Labor Force Participation, 2000	59.1%	59.3%	60.7%	56.8%	64.0%
Women in Managerial and Professional Occupations, 2000	34.2%	26.8%	23.1%	50.8%	25.6%
Social and Economic Autonomy					
Percent of Women with College Education (two- or four-year degree or higher), 2000	28.7%	20.9%	19.8%	60.1%	18.4%
Percent of Women Above the Poverty Level, 1999	91.7%	76.4%	82.2%	88.7%	80.4%
Reproductive Rights					
Percent of Mothers Beginning Prenatal Care in the First Trimester of Pregnancy, 2001	89%	69%	71%	89%	77%
Infant Mortality Rate (deaths of infants under age one per 1,000 live births), 2001	6.2	16.2	6.3	5.6	N/A
Percent of Babies with Low Birth Weight, 2001	6.7%	14.1%	6.2%	7.7%	8.1%
Health and Well-Being					
Female Heart Disease Mortality, per 100,000, 1999-2001	223.8	321.8	157.4	104.6	317.8
Female Lung Cancer Mortality, per 100,000, 1999-2001	42.6	49.7	16.3	25.2	94.9
Female Breast Cancer Mortality, per 100,000, 1999-2001	26.1	36.2	16.2	N/A	37.8
Average Annual Incidence Rate of AIDS Among Women (per 100,000 adolescents and adults), 1999	0.7	18.0	8.2	N/A	N/A

Notes: N/A = Not Available.

Hispanics may be of any race or two or more races. Racial categories (Whites, African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Other/Two or More) do not include Hispanics.

See The Status of Women in Michigan for sources and a description of how race and ethnicity are defined for the economic data presented here.

Compiled by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

likely than women in the country as a whole to have health insurance, but more than one in seven remains uninsured. They are less likely to have a college education than women nationally. Finally, Michigan ranks in the bottom half of states, at 27th, for the proportion of women living above poverty. Michigan's room for improvement in guaranteeing women's social and economic autonomy is reflected in the state's grade of C. Michigan must still make significant strides toward ensuring equal access to key resources for all of the state's women.

Reproductive Rights

Michigan women lack many of the reproductive rights and resources identified as important, and as a result the state ranks 42nd of 51 on the reproductive rights composite index. Poor women in Michigan can receive public funding for abortion only under federally mandated, limited circumstances. Although 69 percent of women live in counties with abortion providers, for many women, especially those in rural areas, abortion is virtually inaccessible: the majority of counties in Michigan, 83 percent, do not have an abortion provider, and women living in rural counties without a provider may have to travel a considerable distance to access abortion. The state does not require health insurers to provide comprehensive coverage for contraceptives and for infertility treatments. Lesbian couples are not guaranteed the right to adopt their partners' children. Because, like most states, Michigan does not guarantee many important rights, the state receives a grade of D- on this composite index.

Health and Well-Being

Women in Michigan experience many obstacles to good health and well-being compared with women in other states. Michigan ranks 37th of all the states on this indicator and receives a grade of D+. Although Michigan women have better than average rates of mortality from suicide compared with women in other states, they are more likely to die from heart disease, lung cancer, and breast cancer, to be diagnosed with diabetes and chlamydia, and to have poor overall mental health. Michigan's women would benefit from better health care access and from more preventive services, including screening programs and services to reduce smoking and to promote good nutrition and exercise.

Conclusion

While women in Michigan and the United States as a whole are seeing important changes in their lives and improved access to political, economic, and social rights, they by no means enjoy equality with men, and they still lack many of the legal guarantees that would allow them to achieve that equality. Disparities by race and ethnicity continue to diminish women's health, education, earnings, and rights. Women in Michigan and the nation as a whole would benefit from improved access to education and to high quality jobs, stronger enforcement of equal opportunity laws, better political representation, adequate and affordable early care and education, and other policies that would help improve their status.

This Research-in-Brief is based on selected findings from The Status of Women in Michigan report, part of The Status of Women in the States report series released in 2004. The Research-in-Brief and reports are edited by Dr. Amy Caiazza and April Shaw at the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) and released in November, 2004. The 2004 set includes Women's Economic Status in the States: Wide Disparities by Race, Ethnicity, and Region; The Status of Early Care and Education in the States and two accompanying state-level analyses of Wisconsin and New Mexico; 12 state-level Status of Women reports; and a national overview of women's status across the country.

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The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) is a scientific research organization dedicated to informing and stimulating debate on public policy issues of critical importance to women and their families. The Institute works with policymakers, scholars, and public interest groups to design, execute, and disseminate research that illuminates economic and social policy issues affecting women and families, and to build a network of individuals and organizations that conduct and use women-oriented policy research. IWPR's work is supported by foundation grants, government grants and contracts, donations from individuals, and contributions from organizations and corporations. Members and affiliates of IWPR's Information Network receive reports and information on a regular basis. IWPR, an independent 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, also works in affiliation with the public policy and women's studies programs at the George Washington University. Contact IWPR by phone at (202) 785-5100 or by email at iwpr@iwpr.org for information about publications or membership or see www.iwpr.org.

The Nokomis Foundation is a private women's foundation established by Mary Caroline "Twink" Frey in 1990. The Nokomis Foundation strives to make a difference in the lives of women and girls, primarily by advocating for women-friendly policies, celebrating women's accomplishments, instilling economic self-sufficiency, and promoting healthy choices. The Foundation carries out its mission of creating a stronger voice for women and girls by advocating for their needs; offering funding, expertise and resources for organizations serving women and girls; and providing opportunities to convene around gender-based issues.

For copies of The Status of Women in Michigan report, this Research-in-Brief, or an accompanying Fact Sheet, please call the Nokomis Foundation at 616-451-0267.