THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN NEW MEXICO: HIGHLIGHTS

The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) has prepared a report on the Status of Women in New Mexico to inform New Mexico residents about the progress of women in New Mexico relative to women in other states, to men, and to national trends. In addition to this report, IWPR staff have produced reports on 12 other states and the District of Columbia as well as a national report that summarizes key findings for all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

In each report, various indicators describe women's status in four important areas: political participation, employment and earnings, economic autonomy, and reproductive rights. Basic health and demographic data are also provided. On three of the four aspects of women's well-being for which IWPR calculated composite indicators, New Mexico ranks in the bottom half of the nation. New Mexico does not fare much better relative to the states in the Mountain West region (consisting of Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming in addition to New Mexico). Thus New Mexico still has room for improvement in the status of its women.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Ranks

The composite political participation rank is based on women's voter registration and turnout, women elected officials at the state and federal levels, and women's institutional resources in the state (such as a state commission for women). The national rank is of a possible 50, because the District of Columbia is not included in this ranking. The regional rank is of a maximum of eight and refers to the states in the Mountain West region.

- New Mexico ranks 35th in the nation and seventh in the Mountain West region on the political participation composite indicator.
- New Mexico ranks 39th in the nation and seventh in its region in terms of women's voter registration. There are nearly 164,000 unregistered women voters who are eligible to vote in the state of New Mexico.

Facts and Figures

- Twenty-three of the 112 seats in New Mexico's state legislature were filled by women in 1996, placing New Mexico 26th in terms of the percentage of women in the state legislature.
- New Mexico did not have any women serving in the U.S. Senate or the U.S. House of Representatives in 1996.
- Since 1964, female voters in the United States have outnumbered male voters, but voter turnout is relatively low for both sexes by international standards. Sixty-three percent of eligible women and 62 percent of eligible men in New Mexico reported that they voted in the November 1992 election.
### Chart I. How New Mexico Ranks on Key Indicators

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*See Appendix I of The Status of Women in the States, available from IWPR, for a detailed description of the methodology and sources used for the indices presented here.

* 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 eight and refer to the states in the Mountain West region (Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, New Mexico, and Arizona).

### EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS

#### Ranks

The composite employment and earnings rank is based on women’s median annual earnings, the female/male earnings ratio, women’s labor force participation, and the proportion of employed women in professional and managerial positions. The national rank is of a possible 51, referring to the 50 states plus the District of Columbia.

- New Mexico ranks 27th in the nation and fifth in its region on the employment and earnings composite indicator.
- New Mexico’s worst employment and earnings indicator is women’s labor force participation, on which it ranks 43rd in the nation and last in its region.
New Mexico’s best rank is on the proportion of working women in professional and managerial occupations. New Mexico ranks seventh in the nation and second in its region on this indicator.

**Facts and Figures**

- Compared with women in the nation as a whole, New Mexico women have slightly lower earnings equality with men. In 1990, the ratio of the median annual earnings of women to those of men for full-time, year-round workers aged 18 to 65 was 68.5 percent in the United States and 67.3 percent in New Mexico.
- The female unemployment rate in New Mexico is the fourth lowest in the Mountain West region and the 22nd lowest the nation. In 1994, the unemployment rate for women in New Mexico was 5.3 percent compared with the nation’s 6.0 percent female unemployment rate.

**ECONOMIC AUTONOMY**

**Ranks**

The composite economic autonomy rank is based on women’s access to health insurance, women’s educational attainment, women’s business ownership, and the proportion of women living above poverty.

- New Mexico ranks 27th in the nation and fifth in its region on the economic autonomy composite indicator.
- New Mexico ranks last in the nation and in its region on the percentage of nonelderly women with access to health insurance.
- New Mexico ranks second in the nation and first in its region for the proportion of businesses that are owned by women.

**Facts and Figures**

- The proportion of women in poverty in New Mexico is noticeably higher than in the United States (19.7 percent compared with 13.2 percent).
- The business receipts of women-owned businesses in New Mexico rose by 106 percent (in constant dollars) between 1987 and 1992. This compares favorably with an increase of 87 percent in business receipts for women-owned firms nationally and 35 percent for all firms in the United States during this time period, also adjusted for inflation.

**REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS**

**Ranks**

The composite reproductive rights rank is based on information regarding legislation on access to legal abortions, the availability public funding for abortions and infertility treatments, the position of the governor and state legislature on reproductive choice, maternity stay laws, and legislation regarding adoption by gay and lesbian couples.

- New Mexico ranks eighth in the nation and first in its region on the reproductive rights composite indicator.
Facts and Figures

- New Mexico, 16 other states, and the District of Columbia fund abortions in all or most circumstances.

- New Mexico is the only state to have passed legislation to allow a nonbiological parent in a gay or lesbian couple to adopt a child.

HEALTH AND VITAL STATISTICS

- Compared with the nation as a whole, New Mexico has a higher fertility rate (live births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44) and a similar infant mortality rate (deaths of infants under age one per 1,000 live births). The percentage of low birth weight babies in New Mexico is higher than the national average among whites and lower among African Americans.

- The percentage of the population enrolled in HMOs in New Mexico is similar to that in the United States as a whole (17.4 percent and 19.5 percent, respectively). Medicare recipients in New Mexico are more likely than those nationwide to be enrolled in an HMO (14.9 percent versus 9.2 percent), as are Medicaid recipients (39.6 percent of Medicaid recipients in New Mexico are enrolled in HMOs compared with 21.4 percent of Medicaid recipients nationally).

BASIC DEMOGRAPHICS

- Compared with the nation as a whole, New Mexico has a relatively small female elderly population, a small proportion of women living in metropolitan areas, and a small proportion of foreign-born women.

- The female population in New Mexico is more ethnically diverse than in the nation as a whole, with minority women making up about 49 percent of women in New Mexico and 24 percent of women in the United States as a whole. Of the female population in New Mexico, 37.1 percent are Hispanic and 9.0 percent are Native American.

The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) is an independent, non-profit, scientific research organization founded in 1987 to meet the need for women-centered, policy-oriented research. This fact sheet is based on the report The Status of Women in New Mexico, part of a larger research project funded by the Ford Foundation. The data used in the report come from a variety of sources, primarily government agencies, and individuals and organizations in New Mexico assisted in reviewing the report. The Advisory Committee for the report in New Mexico was chaired by Patricia Kelllider, New Mexico Commission on the Status of Women, and includes: Barbara Taylor, Business and Professional Women, New Mexico; Barbara Schneider, New Mexico Department of Human Services; Gene Lovato, New Mexico Department of Human Services; Mary Ellen McKay, College of Agriculture and Home Economics, New Mexico State University; and Adelamar Alcantara, Bureau of Business and Economic Research.

This Research-in-Brief was written by Stacey Friedman and prepared by Megan DeBell in March 1997. The full report, The Status of Women in New Mexico, is available for $10.00 from the Institute for Women's Policy Research. Members and affiliates of the Institute's Information Network receive regular reports and information and a discount on all publications. For a copy of the report or more information on membership, contact IWPR at 1400 20th Street N.W., Suite 104, Washington, D.C. 20036, phone 202/785-5100, fax 202/833-4362, or visit our web site at http://www.iwpr.org.

In New Mexico, for a copy of the report, contact: New Mexico Commission on the Status of Women, 2401 12th Street, NW, Albuquerque, NM 87110, phone 505/841-8920, fax 505/841-8926.