

# Fact Sheet

IWPR # R291

November 2004

## The Best and Worst States Overall for Women in 2004

This Fact Sheet is based on findings from *The Status of Women in the States* report for 2004, a national overview report that presents and analyzes data for all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Overall, the best state for women is Vermont. Women's status is also high in Connecticut, and Minnesota and Washington also fare well, rounding out the best states for women. Only these four states met the two criteria for being among the top states for women: 1) ranking in the top ten on at least one composite index of women's status, and 2) never appearing in the bottom half of all states on any composite index (see Appendix II of *The Status of Women in the States* for details). Oregon received an honorable mention because it ranked in the top half of all states on all of the composite indices but never ranked in the top ten of all states.

In contrast, the worst state for women is Mississippi. Women's status is also low in South Carolina and Kentucky, followed by Arkansas and Oklahoma, which are tied at 47th. Tennessee and Texas round out the seven worst states for women. Each of these states ranks in the bottom ten on at least one composite index of women's status and never appears in the top half of all states on any composite index (see Appendix II of *The Status of Women in the States* for details). Florida received a dishonorable mention because it ranked below the midpoint of all states on each of the composite indices, yet never ranked in the bottom ten of all states for any composite.

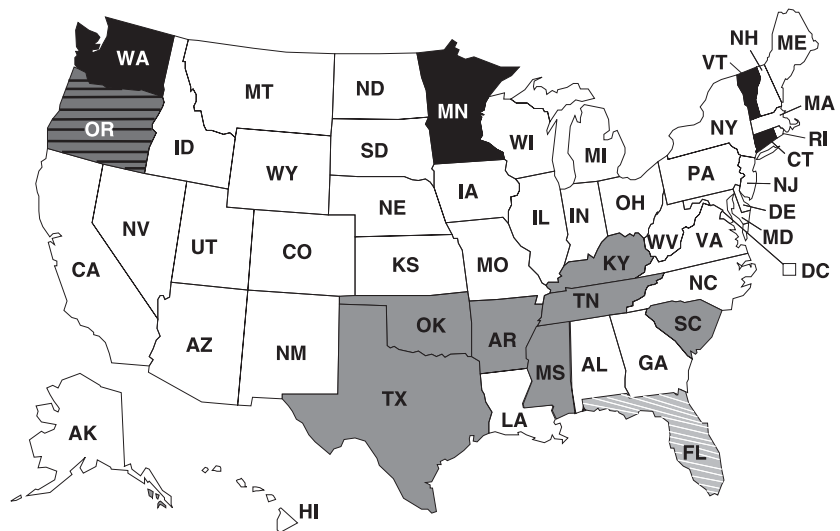
### BEST STATES, 2004

1. Vermont
2. Connecticut
3. Minnesota
4. Washington
5. Honorable Mention: Oregon

### WORST STATES, 2004

51. Mississippi
50. South Carolina
49. Kentucky
47. Arkansas  
Oklahoma (tied)
46. Tennessee
45. Texas
44. Dishonorable Mention: Florida

### Best and Worst States for Women, 2004



■ Best States    ▨ Honorable Mention    ▩ Dishonorable Mention    ■ Worst States

Note: For methodology and sources, see Appendix II in *The Status of Women in the States* full report.

Calculated by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

# The Best and Worst States for Women in 2004:

## Politics, Economics, Reproductive Rights, Health

Women's progress has involved both great achievements and significant shortfalls. Many U.S. women are seeing important changes in their lives and access to political, economic, and social rights. Not all women, however, enjoy access to the country's political and economic resources, nor are they sharing equally in the fruits of progress. Women do not enjoy equality with men and lack many of the legal guarantees that would enable them to achieve it.

The rankings for each of the composite indices presented below were calculated by combining data on several indicators of women's status in each of the five areas. These data were used to compare women in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia (see Appendix II of *The Status of Women in the States* report for details).

<b>POLITICAL PARTICIPATION</b> (EXCLUDES THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA)	<b>TOP FIVE</b> 1. WASHINGTON 2. MICHIGAN 3. CALIFORNIA 4. CONNECTICUT 5. MAINE	<b>BOTTOM FIVE</b> 50. NEW JERSEY 49. TENNESSEE 48. SOUTH DAKOTA 47. PENNSYLVANIA 46. WEST VIRGINIA
<b>EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS</b>	<b>TOP FIVE</b> 1. DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA 2. MARYLAND 3. ALASKA 4. MASSACHUSETTS 5. CONNECTICUT	<b>BOTTOM FIVE</b> 51. WEST VIRGINIA 50. LOUISIANA 49. ALABAMA 48. IDAHO 47. MISSISSIPPI
<b>SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC AUTONOMY</b>	<b>TOP FIVE</b> 1. MARYLAND 2. DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA 3. MASSACHUSETTS 4. COLORADO 5. CONNECTICUT	<b>BOTTOM FIVE</b> 51. MISSISSIPPI 50. ARKANSAS 49. LOUISIANA 48. WEST VIRGINIA 47. ALABAMA
<b>REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS</b>	<b>TOP FIVE</b> 1. HAWAII 2. VERMONT 3. CONNECTICUT 4. NEW JERSEY 5. NEW YORK	<b>BOTTOM FIVE</b> 51. MISSISSIPPI 50. SOUTH DAKOTA 49. NORTH DAKOTA 48. NEBRASKA 47. IDAHO
<b>HEALTH AND WELL-BEING</b>	<b>TOP FIVE</b> 1. UTAH 2. MINNESOTA 3. SOUTH DAKOTA 4. NORTH DAKOTA 5. HAWAII	<b>BOTTOM FIVE</b> 51. DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA 50. KENTUCKY 49. MISSISSIPPI 48. WEST VIRGINIA 47. LOUISIANA

### ABOUT THIS FACT SHEET

This Fact Sheet is part of *The Status of Women in the States* report series released in 2004. This series 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 the national report and accompanying Research-in-Brief.

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### ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S POLICY RESEARCH

The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) is a scientific research organization dedicated to informing and stimulating the debate on public policy issues of critical importance to women and their families. IWPR focuses on issues of poverty and welfare, employment and earnings, work and family, health and safety, and women's civic and political participation.

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, an independent, nonprofit, research organization, also works in affiliation with the graduate programs in public policy and women's studies at The George Washington University.

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 is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

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