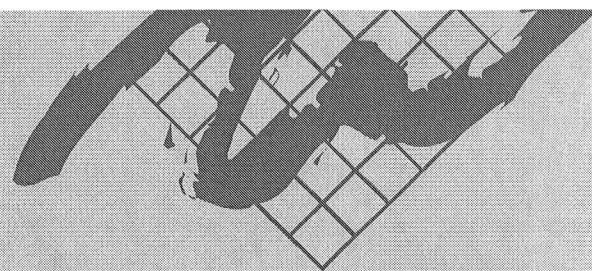


Research-in-Brief



IWPR# R243

The Status of Women in Kansas *Highlights*

This Research-in-Brief is based on selected findings from *The Status of Women in Kansas* report, a definitive state-wide analysis on women's socio-economic and political circumstances.

Kansas illustrates both the advances and limited progress achieved by women in the United States. While women in Kansas, and the United States as a whole, are seeing important changes in their lives and their access to political, economic, and social rights, they do not enjoy equality with men and lack many of the legal guarantees that would allow them to achieve it. Women in Kansas, and the nation, would benefit from stronger enforcement of equal opportunity laws, better political representation, adequate and affordable child care, stronger poverty reduction programs, and other policies to improve their status.

Of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, Kansas ranks in the top third of all states for indicators in two areas of women's lives: it is eighth for women's health and well-being and 16th for their social and economic autonomy. It is closer to average for women's employment and earnings and political participation, ranking 24th and 29th. It is far below average for women's reproductive rights, ranking 34th (see Chart 1).

Kansas' better rankings indicate that in some areas of their lives, women in the state are better off than women in most other states. Still, in no state do women do as well as men. With average rankings on most indicators of women's status, women in Kansas still face significant problems that demand attention from policymakers, advocates, and researchers concerned with women's status. As a result, in an evaluation of Kansas' women's status compared with goals set for women's status, Kansas earns the grades of B in health and well-being, C+ in employment and earnings and in social and economic autonomy, C- in political participation, and D+ in reproductive rights.

Kansas joins Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Nebraska, and South Dakota as part of the West North Central region. Among these seven states, the status of women in Kansas is slightly below average. The state is second for women's social and economic autonomy; fourth for

Women in Kansas: What's Promising

- ♦ A relatively high proportion of state legislators and appointed executive officials in Kansas—about a third—are women.
- ♦ About 66 percent of women in Kansas are in the labor force, one of the top participation rates in the country.
- ♦ Women in Kansas are much more likely than women in the United States as a whole to have completed high school.
- ♦ Low-income women are much more likely to have access to publicly supported contraceptive services in Kansas than in the country as a whole.
- ♦ Women in Kansas are among the least likely in the country to experience activities limitations due to their health.

Women in Kansas: What's Disappointing

- ♦ As of fall 2002, no member of Kansas' congressional delegation was a woman.
- ♦ Kansas has no institutional resources for women in the state government, such as a commission for women or a women's caucus in the state legislature.
- ♦ Women in Kansas are much less likely than women in the rest of the country to work in managerial or professional occupations.
- ♦ Single women with children are more likely to live in poverty in Kansas than they are nationally.
- ♦ Kansas is one of the few states that require both parental notification for minors and a waiting period for all women seeking abortions.
- ♦ While mortality rates from breast cancer are lower in Kansas than nationally, they are higher for African American women.

reproductive rights, health and well-being, and employment and earnings; and sixth for political participation.

Kansas has almost 1.4 million women and the 32nd largest population in the country. Women in Kansas have much higher labor force participation rates than women in the country as a whole. Kansas women are less racially diverse than the national population, with far fewer African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanics than the national average. At the same time, its diversity is growing. In particular, the percentage of Hispanic women living in Kansas doubled between 1990 and 2000, from 3.2 percent to 6.4 percent of the population. A larger proportion of Kansas women live in rural areas than in most states. Women in rural areas face special challenges accessing services (such as domestic violence shelters, health providers, or family planning resources) and finding employment.

Women's status in Kansas exemplifies both the achievements and shortfalls of women's progress over the past century. Many Kansas women are witnessing real improvements in their economic, political, and social status. But serious obstacles to their equality remain.

Political Participation

Women in Kansas register and vote at rates that are near average for the country as a whole, and they have levels of representation in elected office at rates slightly higher than women in the rest of the country. At the same time, they lack adequate political representation through institutional resources in government, such as a commission for women. Overall, the state ranks 29th and receives a grade of C- on the political participation composite index. More active voter participation and better representation could benefit Kansas women overall by encouraging the adoption of more women-friendly policies, which in turn could enhance women's status in other areas.

Employment and Earnings

Kansas' ranking on the employment and earnings composite index (24th) reflects a wide ranging performance for women's economic status. Kansas women rank in the top ten—at eighth—for their levels of labor force participation. The state ranks about average in the ratio of women's to men's earnings, at 25th in the nation. In contrast, women's median earnings and the number of women in managerial and professional occupations in Kansas earn it the below-average ranks of 30th and 33rd, respectively. Kansas' performance on indicators of employment and earnings earns an overall grade of C+, indicating that the state can still make important strides in promoting women's equity in the labor market.

Social and Economic Autonomy

Kansas ranked in the top third of all states, at 16th overall, for indicators of women's social and economic autonomy. Its

levels of educational attainment are in the top third of all states, and it is above average for women's health insurance coverage and business ownership. Its lowest ranking in this area, 24th, is for the proportion of women living above poverty; over 37 percent of single women with children are living in poverty in the state. Kansas' room for improvement is reflected in its grade of C+ for this composite index.

Reproductive Rights

Kansas women lack many important reproductive rights and resources, and as a result the state ranks in the bottom third, at 34th of 51, on the reproductive rights composite index. The state does not allow access to abortion without parental notification for minors and a waiting period for all women seeking an abortion. Poor women in Kansas cannot receive public funding for abortion except under limited circumstances. The state also lacks insurance mandates for comprehensive contraceptive coverage or infertility treatments. Because—like most states—Kansas does not guarantee many important rights, the state receives a grade of D+ on this composite index.

Health and Well-Being

At eighth in the country, women in Kansas have relatively good health status compared with women in other states. They have lower levels of mortality from heart disease, lung cancer, and breast cancer than women in the nation as a whole. Their mental health is also much better, and they experience fewer activities limitations due to health than women nationally. The state could improve in a few areas, especially by decreasing the proportions of women with chlamydia and diabetes. Overall, Kansas receives a B for women's health and well-being.

Women's Resources and Rights Checklist

The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995, heightened awareness of women's status around the world and pointed to the importance of government action and public policy for the well-being of women. At the conference, representatives of 189 countries, including the United States, unanimously adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which pledged their governments to action on behalf of women. The Platform for Action outlines critical issues of concern to women and remaining obstacles to women's advancement.

Many of the laws, policies, and programs that already exist in the United States meet the goals of the Platform for Action and support the rights of women identified in the Platform. In some ways, women in the United States enjoy access to relatively high levels of gender equality compared with women around the world. In other areas, the United States and many individual states have an opportunity to better support women's rights.

Chart 1
How Kansas Ranks on Key Indicators

Indicators	National Rank*	Regional Rank*	Grade
Composite Political Participation Index	29	6	C-
Women's Voter Registration, 1998 and 2000	21	7	
Women's Voter Turnout, 1998 and 2000	27	7	
Women in Elected Office Composite Index, 2002	19	3	
Women's Institutional Resources, 2002	44	6	
Composite Employment and Earnings Index	24	4	C+
Women's Median Annual Earnings, 1999	30	3	
Ratio of Women's to Men's Earnings, 1999	25	4	
Women's Labor Force Participation, 2000	8	5	
Women in Managerial and Professional Occupations, 1999	33	4	
Composite Social and Economic Autonomy Index	16	2	C+
Percent with Health Insurance Among Nonelderly Women, 2000	22	6	
Educational Attainment: Percent of Women with Four or More Years of College, 1990	17	2	
Women's Business Ownership, 1997	22	2	
Percent of Women Above the Poverty Level, 1999	24	5	
Composite Reproductive Rights Index	34	4	D+
Composite Health and Well-Being Index	8	4	B
See Appendix II in <i>The Status of Women in Kansas</i> 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 seven and refer to the states in the West North Central region (IA, KS, MN, MO, ND, NE, and SD).			
Calculated by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.			

The Women's Resources and Rights Checklist, Chart 2, provides an overview of the policies supporting women's rights and the resources available to women in Kansas. This list was derived from ideas presented in the Platform for Action, including the need for policies that help prevent violence against women, promote women's economic equality, alleviate poverty among women, improve their physical, mental, and reproductive health and well-being, and enhance their political power. The rights and resources outlined in the Women's Resources and Rights Checklist fall under several categories: protection from violence, access to income support (e.g., through welfare and child support collection), women-friendly employment protections, family leave benefits, legislation protecting sexual minorities, reproductive rights, and institutional representation of women's concerns.

Many of the indicators in Chart 2 can be affected by state policy decisions. As a result, the Women's Resources and Rights Checklist provides a measure of Kansas' commitment to policies designed to help women achieve economic, political, and

social well-being. In Kansas, women have some of the rights on this checklist but lack others. The state has adopted twelve out of 31 possible policies presented in the Women's Resources and Rights Checklist.

The Status of Women in Kansas is part of an ongoing research project conducted by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) to measure and track the status of women in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Primarily funded by the Ford Foundation, with additional funding from state and local foundations and organizations, this project intends to improve the ability of advocates and policymakers at the state level to address women's issues. Funding from the Rockefeller Family Fund, the Open Society Institute, and the Marjorie Cook Family Foundation also supports the project. The first three sets of reports were released in 1996, 1998, and 2000, consisting of 33 state reports and three national reports. The 2002 series includes nine states as well as an update of the national report. The 2002 National Report provides an overview of women's status across all 50 states and the District of Columbia. See IWPR's website (www.iwpr.org) for more information.

Chart 2
Women's Resources and Rights Checklist

	Yes	No	Other Information	Total Number of States with Policy (of 51) or U.S. Average
Violence Against Women				
Has Kansas adopted a domestic battery statute complementing assault laws?	✓			34
Does Kansas law require domestic violence training of new police recruits and health care professionals?		✓		10
Does Kansas law prohibit domestic violence discrimination in insurance?	✓			22
Is a first stalking offense a felony in Kansas?	✓			12
Does Kansas law require sexual assault training for police, prosecutors, and health care professionals?		✓		4
Child Support				
Percent of single-mother households receiving child support or alimony:			52%	34%
Percent of child support cases with orders for collection in which support was collected:			62%	39%
Welfare and Poverty Policies				
Does Kansas extend TANF benefits to children born or conceived while a mother is receiving welfare?	✓			28
Does Kansas allow receipt of TANF benefits up to or beyond the 60-month federal time limit?	✓		60-month limit	44
Does Kansas allow welfare recipients at least 24 months before requiring participation in work activities?	✓		24 months	13
Does Kansas provide transitional child care under TANF for more than 12 months? ¹		✓		14
Has Kansas' TANF plan been certified or submitted for certification under the Family Violence Option or made other provisions for victims of domestic violence?	✓			37
In determining welfare eligibility, does Kansas disregard the equivalent of at least 50 percent of earnings from a full-time, minimum wage job?		✓		11
Does Kansas have a state Earned Income Tax Credit? ²	✓			16
Maximum TANF benefit for a family of three (two children) in Kansas, 2001:			\$386.00	\$379.00
Employment/Unemployment Benefits				
Is Kansas' minimum wage higher than the federal level as of January 2002? ³		✓	\$2.65	12
Does Kansas have mandatory temporary disability insurance?		✓		5
Does Kansas provide Unemployment Insurance benefits to:				
Low-wage earners?		✓		14
Workers seeking part-time jobs?		✓		9
Workers who leave their jobs for certain circumstances ("good cause quits")? ⁴	✓			30
Has Kansas implemented adjustments to achieve pay equity in its state civil service?		✓		20

(continued on next page)

(Chart 2 continued)		Yes	No	Other Information	Total Number of States with Policy (of 51) or U.S. Average
Family Leave Benefits					
Has Kansas proposed legislation extending Unemployment Insurance benefits to workers on temporary leave to care for infants and newly adopted children?		✓			0 Enacted; 20 Proposed
Has Kansas proposed legislation allowing use of temporary disability insurance to cover periods of work absence due to family care needs?			✓		1 Enacted; 3 Proposed
Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity					
Does Kansas have civil rights legislation prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity?			✓		14
Has Kansas adopted legislation creating enhanced penalties or a separate offense for crimes based on sexual orientation?		✓			28
Has Kansas avoided adopting a ban on same-sex marriage?			✓		16
Reproductive Rights					
Does Kansas allow access to abortion services:					
Without mandatory parental consent or notification?			✓		8
Without a waiting period?			✓		29
Does Kansas provide public funding for abortions under any or most circumstances if a woman is eligible?			✓		16
Does Kansas require health insurers to provide comprehensive coverage for contraceptives? ⁵			✓		19
Does Kansas require health insurers to provide coverage of infertility treatments?			✓		11
Does Kansas allow the non-legal parent in a gay/lesbian couple to adopt his/her partner's child? ⁶				No case has been tried	25
Does Kansas require schools to provide sex education?		✓			23
Institutional Resources					
Does Kansas have a commission for women?			✓		40
Total Policies ⁷		12	18		31 possible
<p>See Appendix III in <i>The Status of Women in Kansas</i> for a detailed description and sources for the items on this checklist.</p> <p>¹ In Kansas all employed persons under 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Line are eligible regardless of prior TANF status.</p> <p>² Kansas' refundable Earned Income Tax Credit is 10 percent of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit.</p> <p>³ Kansas' minimum wage is \$2.65, but the federal minimum wage of \$5.15 generally overrides it.</p> <p>⁴ Kansas provides Unemployment Insurance to workers who leave their jobs for compelling and necessitous personal circumstances.</p> <p>⁵ Kansas requires that at least one method of contraception be covered for all state employees.</p> <p>⁶ Most states that allow such adoptions do so as a result of court decisions. In Kansas, no case has yet been tried.</p> <p>⁷ Policies in the "yes" and "no" columns do not add up to 31 because some of Kansas' policies have mixed evaluations and thus fall in the "other" column.</p> <p>Compiled by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.</p>					

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 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 issues, the economic and social aspects of health care 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 and to build a network of individuals and organizations that conduct and use women-oriented policy research. IWPR, an independent, nonprofit organization, also works in affiliation with the graduate programs in public policy and women's studies at The George Washington University.

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