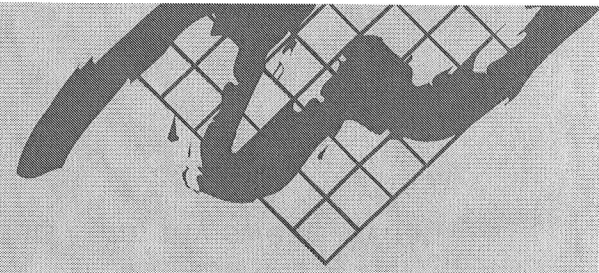


Research-in-Brief



IWPR# R246

The Status of Women in Massachusetts Highlights

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

Massachusetts illustrates both the advances and limited progress achieved by women in the United States. While women in Massachusetts, and the United States, 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 Massachusetts, 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.

Among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, Massachusetts scores in the top ten states in four areas of women's lives: it is fifth for women's social and economic autonomy, seventh for their employment and earnings, and eighth for their political participation and reproductive rights. The state also places in the top third of all states, at 16th, for women's health and well-being (see Chart 1).

Despite Massachusetts' strong performance, women have not achieved equality with men. Women in Massachusetts still face significant problems that demand attention from policymakers, women's advocates, and researchers concerned with women's status. As a result, in an evaluation of Massachusetts women's actual status compared with goals set for their status, Massachusetts earns the grades of B in employment and earnings, in social and economic autonomy, and in reproductive rights; B- in health and well-being; and C+ in political participation.

Massachusetts joins Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont as part of the New England region. Among these six states, Massachusetts ranks second for women's employment and earnings, for social and economic autonomy, for health and well-being, and for women's political participation. It falls to third for reproductive rights.

In population, Massachusetts is a large state, with 3.3 million women of all ages. Massachusetts women are less racially and

Women in Massachusetts: What's Promising

- ♦ Almost half of Massachusetts' appointed executive officials are women, and (as of summer 2002) the state was one of only five states with a woman governor.
- ♦ Women in Massachusetts are more likely to work in managerial and professional occupations than women in all but four states.
- ♦ Women in Massachusetts have among the highest earnings in the country.
- ♦ Women in Massachusetts have the second-highest level of educational attainment in the country and the fifth-highest level of health insurance coverage.
- ♦ Massachusetts is one of just four states that require insurance companies to cover both infertility treatments and comprehensive contraceptive coverage.
- ♦ Compared with women in other states, women in Massachusetts are among the least likely to commit suicide or to have chlamydia.

Women in Massachusetts: What's Disappointing

- ♦ No member of Massachusetts' congressional delegation is a woman, and just a quarter of state legislators are.
- ♦ Within the New England region, Massachusetts women have the second lowest labor force participation rates, behind only Rhode Island.
- ♦ Despite Massachusetts' high earnings among women, the state ranks just 20th for women living above poverty.
- ♦ Massachusetts requires parental consent for minors seeking an abortion.
- ♦ Massachusetts women are among the most likely to die of breast cancer and to have AIDS. AIDS rates among African American and Hispanic women in Massachusetts are particularly high.

ethnically diverse than the national population, with more whites but fewer African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans than the national average. Asian Americans make up about the same proportion in Massachusetts as nationally. In contrast, the state has a larger proportion of foreign-born women than the national average. A much larger proportion of Massachusetts women live in urban areas than in most states.

Although women in Massachusetts fare well in some areas, low-income women, women of color, and women in rural areas of Massachusetts face special challenges accessing resources and services in the state. Despite its high average income, Massachusetts is a state of high inequality and relatively high levels of hardship, especially among minority women.

Women in Massachusetts exemplify both the achievements and shortfalls of women's progress over the past century. While most Massachusetts women are witnessing real improvements in their economic, political, and social status, serious obstacles to their equality with men remain, and too many Massachusetts women are being left behind.

Political Participation

Women in Massachusetts register to vote at rates above women in most states, and they are slightly more likely to vote than women are nationally. The proportion of elected officials who are women is among the top third of all states. The state also has the highest level of women's institutional resources in the country (it is tied with fourteen other states on this indicator). Overall, Massachusetts ranks eighth on the political participation composite index. Despite this high rank, however, women have not achieved proportional levels of political representation. As a result, the state receives a grade of C+ for indicators of women's political participation. More active voter participation and greater representation in elected office could benefit 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

Massachusetts' ranking on the employment and earnings composite index (seventh) reflects scores in the top third on three of the component indicators of this index. Women in Massachusetts earn more, have more earnings equity with men, and are more likely to work in managerial and professional positions than women in the nation as a whole. In contrast, they rank below the midpoint of all states for women's labor force participation. Overall, Massachusetts earns a B for measures of women's employment and earnings.

Social and Economic Autonomy

Massachusetts ranks fifth in IWPR's composite index of social and economic autonomy. It is second for the percent of women with a college education and fifth for women's health insurance coverage. Businesses in Massachusetts are more likely to be

owned by women than nationally as well. In contrast, despite the state's affluence, the state is only 20th for women above poverty, and 35.8 percent of single women with children in the state are living in poverty. Massachusetts' room for improvement is reflected in its grade of B for this composite index.

Reproductive Rights

Massachusetts women have many important reproductive rights and resources, but they lack others. The state mandates but does not enforce a waiting period for abortions, requires health insurers to cover infertility treatments and contraceptives, and allows individuals in same-sex couples to adopt their partners' children. Still, the state also mandates parental consent for minors' abortions. It also does not require schools to provide sex education. Overall, Massachusetts ranks eighth and receives a grade of B on the reproductive rights composite index.

Health and Well-Being

Women in Massachusetts have above average health status compared with women in other states. The state's mortality rate from suicide and incidence rate of chlamydia are particularly low. In contrast, Massachusetts' mortality rates from breast and lung cancer and incidence rate of AIDS among women are relatively high. The state ranks near the middle of all states for women's incidence of diabetes, days of poor mental health, and activities limitations due to health. Massachusetts' overall rank of 16th for women's health and well-being suggests that while the state ranks higher than many others, it also has room for improvement. Massachusetts receives a B- on this composite index.

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.

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 Massachusetts. This list was

Chart 1
How Massachusetts Ranks on Key Indicators

Indicators	National Rank*	Regional Rank*	Grade
Composite Political Participation Index	8	2	C+
Women's Voter Registration, 1998 and 2000	20	4	
Women's Voter Turnout, 1998 and 2000	22	5	
Women in Elected Office Composite Index, 2002	12	3	
Women's Institutional Resources, 2002	1	1	
Composite Employment and Earnings Index	7	2	B
Women's Median Annual Earnings, 1999	7	2	
Ratio of Women's to Men's Earnings, 1999	15	3	
Women's Labor Force Participation, 2000	30	5	
Women in Managerial and Professional Occupations, 1999	5	2	
Composite Social and Economic Autonomy Index	5	2	B
Percent with Health Insurance Among Nonelderly Women, 2000	5	3	
Educational Attainment: Percent of Women with Four or More Years of College, 1990	2	1	
Women's Business Ownership, 1997	14	1	
Percent of Women Above the Poverty Level, 1999	20	4	
Composite Reproductive Rights Index	8	3	B
Composite Health and Well-Being Index	16	2	B-

See Appendix II in *The Status of Women in Massachusetts* 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 six and refer to the states in the New England region (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, and VT).

Calculated by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

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 Massachusetts' commitment to policies designed to help women achieve economic, political, and social well-being. In Massachusetts, women enjoy many rights identified as important to women's well-being, although

they lack others. The state has adopted 19 out of 31 possible policies presented in the Women's Resources and Rights Checklist.

The Status of Women in Massachusetts 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 Massachusetts adopted a domestic battery statute complementing assault laws?	✓			34
Does Massachusetts law require domestic violence training of new police recruits and health care professionals?"	✓		Police Only	10
Does Massachusetts law prohibit domestic violence discrimination in insurance?	✓			22
Is a first stalking offense a felony in Massachusetts?	✓			12
Does Massachusetts law require sexual assault training for police, prosecutors, and health care professionals?	✓		Police and Prosecutors Only	4
Child Support				
Percent of single-mother households receiving child support or alimony:			40%	34%
Percent of child support cases with orders for collection in which support was collected:			35%	39%
Welfare and Poverty Policies				
Does Massachusetts extend TANF benefits to children born or conceived while a mother is receiving welfare?	✓			28
Does Massachusetts allow receipt of TANF benefits up to or beyond the 60-month federal time limit? ¹	✓		No lifetime limit; 24 out of any 60 months	44
Does Massachusetts allow welfare recipients at least 24 months before requiring participation in work activities?	✓		2 months	13
Does Massachusetts provide transitional child care under TANF for more than 12 months?	✓		12 months	14
Has Massachusetts' 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 Massachusetts disregard the equivalent of at least 50 percent of earnings from a full-time, minimum wage job? ²	✓			11
Does Massachusetts have a state Earned Income Tax Credit? ³	✓			16
Maximum TANF benefit for a family of three (two children) in Massachusetts, 2001:			\$633.00	\$379.00
Employment/Unemployment Benefits				
Is Massachusetts' minimum wage higher than the federal level as of January 2002?	✓		\$6.75	12
Does Massachusetts have mandatory temporary disability insurance?	✓		Proposed	5
Does Massachusetts 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 Massachusetts implemented adjustments to achieve pay equity in its state civil service?	✓			20

(continued on next page)

(Chart 3.1 continued)

	Yes	No	Other Information	Total Number of States with Policy (of 51) or U.S. Average
Family Leave Benefits				
Has Massachusetts proposed legislation extending Unemployment Insurance benefits to workers on temporary leave to care for infants and newly adopted children?	✓			0 Enacted; 20 Proposed
Has Massachusetts proposed legislation allowing use of temporary disability insurance to cover periods of work absence due to family care needs? ⁵	✓			1 Enacted; 3 Proposed
Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity				
Does Massachusetts have civil rights legislation prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity?	✓			14
Has Massachusetts adopted legislation creating enhanced penalties or a separate offense for crimes based on sexual orientation?	✓			28
Has Massachusetts avoided adopting a ban on same-sex marriage?	✓			16
Reproductive Rights				
Does Massachusetts allow access to abortion services: Without mandatory parental consent or notification?		✓		8
Without a waiting period? ⁶		✓		29
Does Massachusetts provide public funding for abortions under any or most circumstances if a woman is eligible?	✓			16
Does Massachusetts require health insurers to provide comprehensive coverage for contraceptives?	✓			19
Does Massachusetts require health insurers to provide coverage of infertility treatments?	✓			11
Does Massachusetts allow the non-legal parent in a gay/lesbian couple to adopt his/her partner's child? ⁷	✓		Appellate Court	25
Does Massachusetts require schools to provide sex education?		✓		23
Institutional Resources				
Does Massachusetts have a commission for women?	✓			40
Total Policies	19	12		31 possible

See Appendix III in *The Status of Women in Massachusetts* for a detailed description and sources for the items on this checklist.

¹ Massachusetts has no lifetime limit for benefit receipt, but the state restricts cash assistance to 24 months in a continuous 60-month period for able-bodied recipients whose oldest child receiving TANF is at least two years old.

² Massachusetts disregards less than 50 percent of earnings from a full-time, minimum wage job for nonexempt recipients; exempt recipients are defined as those with children under two.

³ Massachusetts' refundable Earned Income Tax Credit is 15 percent of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit.

⁴ Massachusetts provides Unemployment Insurance benefits to workers who leave their jobs for compelling and necessitous personal circumstances.

⁵ Massachusetts' proposed mandatory TDI bill would cover family leave periods if passed.

⁶ Massachusetts' waiting period is not enforced.

⁷ Most states that allow such adoptions do so as a result of court decisions. In Massachusetts, an appellate court has ruled in favor of second-parent adoptions.

Compiled by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

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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. 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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