

THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN TEXAS: HIGHLIGHTS

The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) has prepared a report on the *Status of Women in Texas* to inform Texas residents about the progress of women in Texas 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, composite indices based on several 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, Texas ranks in the bottom half of the nation. Thus Texas still has ample room for improvement in the status of its women. Despite its relatively low ranking nationwide, Texas ranks first in the West South Central region (consisting of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma in addition to Texas) on three of the four composite indices.

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 four and refers to the states in the West South Central region.

- Texas ranks 32nd in the nation and first in the West South Central region on the political participation composite index.
- Texas ranks 39th in the nation and last in its region on women's voter registration. There are 1.7 million unregistered women who are eligible to vote in the state of Texas.

Facts and Figures

- Thirty-three of the 181 seats in Texas's state legislature were filled by women in 1996, placing Texas 31st among all states in terms of the percentage of women in the state legislature.
- Since 1964, female voters in the United States have outnumbered male voters, but voter turnout is relatively low for both sexes by international standards. Fifty-seven percent of eligible women and 55 percent of eligible men in Texas reported that they voted in the November 1992 election.

Chart I. How Texas Ranks on Key Indicators

	National Rank*	Regional Rank*
COMPOSITE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION INDEX	32	1
Women's Voter Registration, 1992-1994	39	4
Women's Voter Turnout, 1992-1994	46	4
Women in Elected Office Composite, 1996	19	1
Women's Institutional Resources, 1996	10	1
COMPOSITE EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS INDEX	18	1
Women's Median Annual Earnings, 1990	20	1
Ratio of Women's to Men's Earnings, 1990	8	1
Women's Labor Force Participation, 1994	29	1
Women in Managerial and Professional Occupations, 1994	21	1
COMPOSITE ECONOMIC AUTONOMY INDEX	38	1
Percent with Health Insurance Among Nonelderly Women, 1991-1992	50	4
Educational Attainment: Percent of Women with Four or More Years of College, 1990	24	1
Women's Business Ownership, 1992	34	2
Percent of Women Above the Poverty Level, 1990	44	2
COMPOSITE REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS INDEX	29	3
<i>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.</i>		
<i>* 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 four and refer to the states in the West South Central region (Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas).</i>		

EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS

Ranks

The composite employment and earnings rank is based on women's median earnings, the female/male earnings ratio for full-time, year-round workers, the proportion of adult women who participate in the labor force, and the proportion of working women in professional and managerial positions. The national rank is of a possible 51, referring to the 50 states plus the District of Columbia.

- Texas ranks 18th in the nation and first in its region on the employment and earnings composite index.
- Texas's worst employment and earnings indicator is women's labor force participation, on which it ranks 29th in the nation, but still first in its region.

Facts and Figures

- Compared with the nation as a whole, Texas women enjoy greater 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 72.0 percent in Texas.
- The female unemployment rate in Texas is the second highest in the West South Central region and the 11th highest in the nation. In 1994, the unemployment rate for women in Texas was 6.6 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 level, the proportion of businesses that are women-owned, and the proportion of women living above poverty.

- Texas ranks 38th in the nation and first in its region on the economic autonomy composite indicator.
- Texas ranks 50th in the nation and last in its region in terms of the percent of nonelderly women with access to health insurance.

Facts and Figures

- In general, women in Texas have slightly lower levels of education than women in the nation as a whole. Over 28 percent of women in Texas do not have a high school diploma compared with over 25 percent of women in the United States.
- The business receipts of women-owned businesses in Texas rose by 114 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 on legislation relating to access to legal abortions, the availability of 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.

- Texas ranks 29th in the nation and third in its region on the reproductive rights composite index.

Facts and Figures

- Seven percent of counties in Texas have abortion providers, a low proportion when compared with the national average (16 percent).
- Texas is one of 33 states that restrict public funding for abortions. Texas does not provide public funding for an abortion unless a woman's life is in danger or she has become pregnant as a result of rape or incest.

HEALTH AND VITAL STATISTICS

- Compared with the nation as a whole, Texas has a lower infant mortality rate (deaths of infants under age one per 1,000 live births), a higher fertility rate (live births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44), and a comparable percent of low birth weight babies.
- The percentage of the population enrolled in HMOs in Texas is about half that of the whole United States (9.7 percent compared to 19.5 percent). Similarly, Medicare and Medicaid recipients in Texas are less likely than those nationwide to be enrolled in an HMO.

BASIC DEMOGRAPHICS

- Compared with the nation as a whole, Texas has a relatively small elderly population, a young population overall, and a high fertility rate.
- The female population in Texas is more ethnically diverse than in the nation as a whole, with minority women making up about 39 percent of women in Texas and 24 percent of women in the United States as a whole. The proportion of Hispanic women is about three times higher in Texas than in the nation as a whole.

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 Texas, 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 Texas assisted in reviewing the report. The Advisory Committee for the report in Texas was chaired by Linda May, Greater Houston Women's Foundation, and Judy Reiner, Planned Parenthood of Houston and Southeast Texas, and includes: Ruth Ann Geer, League of Women Voters of Texas; Mitzi Voracheck, Houston Area Women's Center; Diana Strassmann, Rice University; and Candace O'Keefe, Foundation for Women's Resources.

This Research-in-Brief was written by Stacey Friedman and prepared by Jill Braunstein in February 1997. The full report, The Status of Women in Texas, 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. For copies of the full report or information on membership, contact IWPR at 1400 20th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036, phone: 202/785-5100, fax: 202/833-4362, or visit our web site at <http://www.iwpr.org>.

In Texas, for copies of the report, contact: Planned Parenthood of Houston and Southeast Texas, 3601 Fannin, Houston, TX 77004, phone 713/831-6559, fax 713/522-9047 or League of Women Voters of Texas, 1212 Guadalupe, Suite 107, Austin, TX 78701, phone 512/472-1100, fax 512/472-4114.