



# Research-in-Brief

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*Key Findings from 25 Years of IWPR Research*

## **Enhancing the Status of Women: How Engaging Women in Leadership Creates a More Inclusive Democracy and Improves Women's Lives**

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The Institute for Women's Policy Research has been at the forefront of research on issues and policies that affect women's continued participation and leadership in society and politics. Through its analysis of the issues of greatest importance to women in society, IWPR has contributed to many policy changes. The research done by IWPR in the area of democracy and society across the years has shown the ways in which American society benefits from the advancement of women in leadership positions and women's increased civic and political engagement. IWPR's research also highlights policy changes that would help women achieve greater equity. IWPR's *Status of Women in the States* series of reports has been especially influential in advancing women's status in a variety of ways. IWPR continues to work both internationally and domestically to provide relevant data on issues of importance to women's lives and has disseminated its research through various conferences to ensure that advocates and policymakers alike have the tools to enable them to participate in making policy changes that benefit women and their families.

### **Early Work**

IWPR is headquartered in the nation's capital, where the organization has helped foster partnerships with many other nonprofit organizations and contributed testimony on national policy issues since its earliest years. Dr. Heidi Hartmann, with Dr. Roberta Spalter-Roth, first testified for IWPR in front of the Senate Subcommittee on Children, Families, Drugs, and Alcoholism in support of the Parental and Medical Leave Act on October 29, 1987. This testimony, "Costs to Women and Their Families of Childbirth and Lack of Parental Leave" (#1), highlighted the findings from IWPR's (then forthcoming) report, *Unnecessary Losses: Costs to Americans of the Lack of Family and Medical Leave* (#2). IWPR's testimony, and continued analysis and discussion of the importance of family and medical leave to improving the lives of women, contributed to the eventual passage of the Family and

Medical Leave Act in 1993. IWPR continues this work today through its analyses of access to paid sick days and paid family leave. In 1991, IWPR staff presented the lead testimony before the House of Representatives' Committee on Education and Labor, documenting the continued discrimination against women in the labor force and supporting the value of the proposed 1991 Civil Rights Act for women (#3). Remedies for federal, race, sex, and national origin discrimination were improved when the bill was signed into law later in 1991 by President George H. W. Bush.

In 1988, IWPR's first research study related to women's status, *The 35 Million: A Preliminary Report on the Status of Young Women* (#4) was prepared in conjunction with IWPR's Young Women's Conference and helped to form the Young Women's Project (YWP) led by a young IWPR

staff member. The YWP, an independent nonprofit organization, continues its work to this day, supporting teen and girl leaders in the District of Columbia metropolitan area in improving their lives and communities through civic engagement.

## Women and Immigration to the United States

*Organizations Working with Latina Immigrants: Resources and Strategies for Change* (#5), produced with funding from the Ford Foundation and released in 2011, examines a variety of questions based on extensive mixed-method research conducted over a two-year period. The project examined the roles of religious communities and nonprofit organizations in three new-destination metropolitan areas in addressing challenges faced by low-income Latina immigrants. The report was released at an event co-hosted by the Woodrow Wilson Center and The National Council of La Raza featuring presentations from study directors and report authors Cynthia Hess, Ph.D., and Jane Henrici, Ph.D., and a keynote address from Sara Manzano-Diaz, then Director of the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor.

IWPR's research shows that the issues faced by immigrant women cannot be resolved by the limited services and resources nonprofit organizations are able to provide. In moving forward, the authors argue that an advocacy movement concentrated more on the concerns specific to immigrant women could be particularly effective in working for policy change. This focus can change the way policymakers and the public respond to issues of immigration, particularly those faced by women and children.

In 2012, IWPR released *New Families, New Friends: Organizations Working With Latina Immigrants* (#6), a summary of the presentations made at a strategy forum held in Arizona as part of the larger two-year project. The researchers, activists, clergy, and other community members at the forum had worked with immigrant women to advance their status. The forum took place the same day as the host state took a step backwards in improving the lives of immigrants: Arizona Governor Jan Brewer signed into law SB 1070, a strict anti-immigration legislative act that allowed law enforcement officials to question the immigration status of any person.

In 2013, IWPR released two reports based on expert interviews and analysis of U.S. Census data, in partnership with the Caring Across Generations (CAG) campaign. The CAG campaign seeks to build a culture of care in which elders and people with disabilities who need assistance, and immigrant women workers who provide that care, are all able to live with dignity and respect. *Improving Career Opportunities for Immigrant Women In-Home Care Workers* (#7), focuses on ways to improve labor conditions for immigrant women in-home care workers, addressing the lack of employment options. The report also provides examples of existing coursework, training, and career programs aimed at the unique needs of immigrant women domestic care workers. A companion report, *Increasing Pathways to Legal Status for Immigrant In-Home Care Workers* (#8), explores how the paths to legal status could be expanded for immigrant in-home care workers. The report shows how improved paths to legalization would benefit immigrant in-home care workers and the elderly and disabled people for whom they care. *Increasing Pathways to Legal Status* (#8) was released at a well-attended roundtable hosted by IWPR. Both reports were provided to CAG advocates and distributed among members of Congress.

## Women in Leadership

### Women in Unions

Although IWPR and other social science research has found that unions increase wages for women more than they do for men, union organizing and leadership has historically been dominated by men. In 2007 IWPR released *I Knew I Could Do This Work: Seven Strategies That Promote Women's Activism and Leadership in Unions* (#9), which presents strategies designed to help women claim a voice and transform their lives, unions, workplaces, and communities to better reflect their needs.

Looking to the future of union leadership, IWPR published a 2012 report, *The Next Generation: A Handbook for Mentoring Future Union Leaders* (#10), which provides a guide for mentoring diverse union leaders, including women. The handbook serves as a toolkit to aid mentors in encouraging the development and growth of potential union leaders.

## Women in Advocacy

A 2005 report, *The Ties That Bind: Women's Public Vision for Politics, Religion, and Civil Society* (#11), elucidates the reasons why women are not as politicized by congregational experiences as men are – men are more likely to attend or plan meetings and hold leadership positions in their congregations where they are recruited into other civic and political activities – even though women are more involved in congregational life. The report is based on 75 in-depth, qualitative interviews with women working within nonprofit faith-based groups focused on social justice issues, who expressed their unique visions for American politics and society. The report highlights that relationship-building among women within such social justice organizations can spark policy change. IWPR further explored social justice activism among women within non-profit faith-based groups in a 2006 report, *Called to Speak: Six Strategies That Encourage Women's Political Activism* (#12). The research highlights the strategies used by interfaith community groups to encourage women's political activism and leadership. The report shows that successful programs provide women with the resources and opportunities they need, not just as citizens but as women, and summarizes six key strategies interfaith groups employ to encourage women's political activism.

In 2008, *The Challenge to Act: How Progressive Women Activists Reframe American Democracy* (#13) explored the interrelated factors that influence women's vision for politics and society through analysis of more than 120 in-depth interviews with women activists involved in progressive movements for change. The report highlights the ways in which feminist organizations can strengthen their grassroots appeal and increase the diversity of their membership as well as the ways both religiously-inspired and secular social justice groups can become more fully involved in organizing to transform American democracy to make it more inclusive, responsive, and innovative. In order for this transformation to be successful, individuals and organizations must understand how values translate into actions.

## Women in Politics

IWPR's research also explores women's civic engagement and political participation. Using data collected for the Status of Women in the States reports and the social capital data collected for political scientist Robert Putnam's book, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of the American Community*, IWPR published the briefing paper "Women's Status and Social Capital Across the States" (#14; 2002). The paper analyzes the relationship between the measures of social capital, defined as connections within and between social networks, and indicators of women's status. Trends are then assessed across the states based on both dimensions. Overall, the findings suggest a strong relationship between levels of social capital and women's status. The paper concluded that women's organizations can help women engage with their communities to increase women's social capital, thus, improving the status of women more generally.

Another way to increase the status of women is to reduce barriers to holding political office for women, since several studies from the field of political science have shown that women elected officials generally sponsor more women-friendly bills than their male counterparts. In 2001, IWPR explored women and elections in "The Political Glass Ceiling: Gender, Strategy, and Incumbency in U.S. House Elections, 1978–1998" (#15), which examined the factors contributing to the low number of women serving in elected office. The exploration of barriers to women running for and being elected to office continued in 2013 with IWPR's *Achieving Parity Study* for the Hunt Alternatives Fund, with the express goal of illuminating actions needed in order to double the number of women in elective office by 2022. IWPR's forthcoming report, *Building Women's Political Careers: Strengthening the Pipeline to Higher Office* (#16), finds that the political pipeline whereby women campaign for and build long-term political careers is gendered and continues to have significant gaps and barriers for women. The participants interviewed for the study – which included 60 women candidates, officeholders, legislators, young elected officials, and congressional staffers – provide numerous, concrete ideas for negotiating the gaps and barriers women face when running for office or seeking higher office.

# The Status of Women and Girls

## The Status of Women in the United States

### Overview of the *Status of Women in the States* Project

The *Status of Women in the States* (#17; #18; #19; #20; #21) reports have made the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) the leading source for timely and policy relevant information on the economic, social, and political progress of women throughout the United States. Initiated to address the need for state-level data on women, the first set of reports was released in 1996, and included biennial releases through 2004, when separate reports had been published for all 50 states and the District of Columbia, as well as biannual national reports summarizing results for all the states and the nation as a whole. The 1996-2004 series presented data for each state based on 30 composite indicators and five composite indices in order to rank the states in five categories: 1) Political Participation, 2) Employment and Earnings, 3) Economic Autonomy, 4) Reproductive Rights, and 5) Health and Well-Being (the nine indicators measuring health and well-being in the health and well-being composite were added in 2000). The reports also include national data and state-by-state and regional comparisons that are meant to inspire action. Since 2004, IWPR has published national and state-by-state reports as well as state-specific reports and local and regional reports when they are requested, in collaboration with other organizations.

Using participatory research methods, the reports provide an informational tool for residents to learn about the status of women within their state and throughout the country. The reports and accompanying state-by-state fact sheets are used to highlight women's progress and the obstacles they continue to face, and to encourage policy and program changes that can improve women's opportunities.

Overall, IWPR's *Status of Women* reports have shown that, while many women are witnessing real improvements in their economic, political, and social status, women have not achieved equality in any state, and in some areas, such as reproductive rights, women's status has declined across time in most states. IWPR continues to produce reports for states, regions, and metropolitan areas.

## The Development of the *Status of Women in the States*

During the 1980s and 1990s, demand was increasing for data showing how women fared across the United States and around the world. In the United States, federal policy makers were shifting more family and policy decisions to the state level. In 1995, the United Nations held the Fourth International Conference on Women, which emphasized the importance of measuring actual progress—or the lack of it—for women.

In 1996, with funding from the Ford Foundation, IWPR released the first 13 state reports in its *Status of Women in the States* report series. The 1996 series included reports on the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, and ten other states, and a national report on the status of women in all the states. Based on national- and state-level data (primarily from government agencies), these reports discussed the wide-ranging social, economic, and political conditions that affect women. The findings showed that, even within each state or district, women might have opportunities in one aspect of their lives, but face barriers in others. The 1996 report, *The Status of Women in New York State* (#22), for example, found that the composite scores for women in this state were relatively high for employment and earnings (10th of the 50 states and the District of Columbia) and reproductive rights (2nd of 51), but much lower for political participation (37th of 51).

### Media Outreach and Press Attention

For the 1996-2004 series, each set of reports was released at a news conference at the National Press Club and in states around the country, typically conducted all on the same day. The series typically received substantial media attention. With each successive release, media interest grew, with hundreds of stories on women's status in major national papers, such as the Washington Post, the New York Times, and USA Today, and in state media outlets around the country. Press interest in women's status, and especially the gender wage gap, remains strong.

### Expansions and Changes in Methods Over Time

IWPR learned more and enhanced the reports as the series progressed. For example, in 2000, IWPR assigned, for the first time, a letter grade to each state for each of

the composite indicators of women's status. This allowed IWPR to provide a more normative view of how state rankings stood up to goals for women's status. The top ranked state on a component might earn only a B or less if it was still far from equity, despite being the best in the nation. The letter grades also gave the one three-page fact sheet summarizing the report's main findings more of a report card feel. In 2000, IWPR also added "focus boxes" to the reports, written by state partners, on topics of interest, for which there were generally no national data available on a state-by-state basis. Current state and local reports include extensive analysis of state and local data sources on topics such as access to public benefits and housing, girls' health, and gender-based violence. The final group of state reports in the first series, released in 2004, focused on many of the states with a high proportion of Native Americans. In 2004 the micro data from the 2000 Census became available and provided a large enough data set to be able to tabulate all information for Native Americans (most data sets are too small to allow this). The 2004 reports, including the national report, provided a large amount of data disaggregated by race and ethnicity, including breakdowns within the Hispanic and Asian American groups. The economic data for all races and ethnic groups were summarized in an additional national report, *Women's Economic Status in the States: Wide Disparities by Race, Ethnicity, and Region* (#23), early in 2004.

## **Beyond 2004: Updated National and Customized State and Local-Level Reports**

After the full first series of reports had been completed in 2004, IWPR continued to release updated national reports and state reports, particularly when requested by state partners. In 2006, IWPR released *The Best and Worst State Economies for Women* (#24) which outlined the economic progress of women including differences between regions and states, using the two composites related to economics. Since 2004 IWPR has released state and local level reports for a number of areas including Wisconsin, Michigan, New York, the Washington DC Metropolitan Area, Minnesota, New York City, and New Haven (Connecticut). Many of these reports have considered the status of girls in addition to women. For example,

in 2009, IWPR worked with the Black Women for Black Girls Giving Circle, a funding initiative of the Twenty-First Century Foundation, to release a report providing an in-depth examination into the lives of black girls living in New York City by pairing original data from surveys and focus groups with a review of existing literature (#25).

A number of recent IWPR *Status of Women* reports have included extensive trend information and detailed county-by-county breakdowns in addition to state and national data. For example, in 2013, IWPR released *The Status of Women in North Carolina* (#26), *The Status of Women and Girls in West Virginia* (#27), and *The Status of Women and Girls in Colorado* (#28). To help identify areas of progress and places where additional improvements are needed for women in these two states, the reports also tracked women's progress over the last two decades, and examined differences in the status of women across various sub-state regions.

## **Findings from the *Status of Women in the States* Reports**

Some patterns in women's status compared to men's have been consistent throughout each of the *Status of Women in the States* reports. Women's median earnings have consistently been lower than men's throughout the United States, and more women than men live in poverty. Throughout the series, women in the United States typically have had higher voter registration rates than men nationally and in nearly all states. Women are also more likely to vote than men. At the same time, while variation among the states on female representation in state delegations and in Congress has been high, representation of women has not reached equity in any state and the reports consistently point to a need for more equitable representation in the state and national legislatures.

Analyses of women's reproductive rights in the 1996-2004 series showed that rights varied greatly across all the states, with some states, such as Vermont and Hawaii, typically ranking well on most components and other states, such as Mississippi and South Dakota, ranking poorly across the range of indicators. Other states displayed varied commitments to protecting the reproductive rights of women. As the series of reports progressed, in all states across the country women's reproductive rights and access to reproductive choices were increasingly being

challenged and often limited.

State rankings on women's health also vary widely, but one strikingly consistent set of findings is the poor health outcomes experienced by women of color compared with white women. For example, the 2000 Indiana report found that African American women in the state had a mortality rate 38 percent higher than that found among white women (605.4 compared to 375.5, per 100,000). The death rates for young African-American women (aged 15-34) were more than double the rates for white women in the same age range.

The 1996–2004 reports also show some notable shifts in women's status over the period. For example, the gender wage gap narrowed during the time covered by the reports, with the ratio of women's to men's earnings growing from 68.5 percent in 1989 to 77 percent in 2005. The number of women in elected office climbed steadily over the period, and the proportion of women employed in professional or managerial occupations grew, climbing from 28.7 percent in 1994 to 35.5 percent in 2002. The percent of women with four years or more of college education increased substantially, growing from 17.6 percent in 1989 to 26.5 percent in 2005. The proportion of women living above the poverty line also increased, but much more moderately, moving from 86.8 percent in 1989 to 87.3 percent in 2005.

Customized state and local reports have revealed findings in topic areas not initially covered by the first series of reports. For example, IWPR's *Black Girls in New York City* (#25) report finds safety to be an intense concern for survey respondents, with 60 percent of girls stating they worry about their personal safety due to drug activity, violence, gang activity, and fights at school. Self-esteem is another issue identified, as femininity within the context of dominant American culture is based on ideals that are “directly counter to those physical and behavioral qualities typically associated with black girls.” Faith, family, and racial identity are all found to be protective and supportive factors in the lives of black girls. The report closes with policy recommendations for reducing poverty and violence in black communities, addressing the educational needs of black girls, and building alliances among organizations striving to address the challenges faced by black girls in New York City.

## Participatory Research Methods and Tools

Over the course of the *Status of Women in the States* project, IWPR developed and honed participatory research methods that maximized the involvement of state and local partners. Each report engaged lead partners and advisory committees, and especially during the years when IWPR released groups of reports at the same time, ensuring inclusion required a highly organized and systematic approach to inviting and incorporating feedback, as well as helping committees to communicate findings effectively and prepare their media and outreach strategies. IWPR developed a series of tools that it distributed over the course of the project, including *The Status of Women in Your County: A Community Research Tool* (#29), *Assessing the Status of Women at the County Level: A Manual for Researchers and Advocates* (#30), and *Models for Action: Making Research Work for Women* (#31). IWPR has also made data from the report series available for other researchers on FemStats, IWPR's online data center.

## Using the *Status of Women in the States* reports for Action

The *Status of Women in the States* reports have been used to advance women's status in a variety of ways, such as informing legislative agendas; establishing philanthropic priorities; and launching campaigns to increase women's leadership, business ownership, and participation in politics. An internal evaluation of the *Status of Women in the States* project catalogued hundreds of applications of the reports.

The power of *Status of Women* data is illustrated in this excerpt from a 2008 letter from then Lieutenant Governor of the State of Wisconsin to the citizens of the State of Wisconsin.

"Just five years ago, on my first morning as lieutenant governor, I was presented with the Institute for Women's Policy Research "*Status of Women in Wisconsin*" report that gave us a low C- grade for the status of women in our state. A design team of a handful of women leaders set to work immediately, and started to breathe life into what became the statewide economic development initiative Wiscon-

sin Women = Prosperity. Countless women and men across Wisconsin joined in over time.

To transform that initial report into a precise diagnostic tool to map our strategy to raise the grade for women here, we identified the following as essential building blocks for a woman's prosperity, inextricably linked:

\* Leadership and Political Participation \* Economic Sufficiency \* Educational Opportunity \* Health, Safety and Well Being

We worked with research teams from the UW-Madison La Follette School of Public Affairs and other academics, with professionals and experts in all fields -- an irrepressible army of volunteers. We gathered anecdotal data from citizens at forums in thirteen Wisconsin cities. We turned that initial report into a very precise diagnostic tool to inform our strategy to raise the grade for Wisconsin women, and improve the state's economic outlook by doing it."

--Barbara Lawton,

Former Lt. Governor of the State of Wisconsin

The Lt. Governor's progress report goes on to describe the many actions that resulted from this effort, including passage of a program to certify women-owned business, establishment of a pilot program to help welfare recipients pursue postsecondary education, and development of a Jobs Plus program that partnered employers with women job seekers to teach job skills that corresponded with potential employment opportunities in the company.

In addition to informing action on behalf of women all around the country, the *Status of Women in the States* project has also inspired others to develop their own research capacity and publish their own reports. For example, the Women's Foundation of Minnesota established a women's research center at the University of Minnesota Humphries School of Public Policy to publish *Status of Women in Minnesota* reports on a regular basis. IWPR's work broke the ground for tracking the status of women and has made the tracking of women's status and progress a common practice, narrowing this gap in research.

## The Status of Women Around the Globe

Although IWPR's research has largely focused on women at the state, local, and national levels within the United States, IWPR has increasingly brought a global lens to its work. IWPR's conferences have included participants and attendees from all over the world, incorporating international perspectives into these events as well as subsequent publications. Additionally, IWPR has taken on various comparative projects, such as a research review highlighting the features of work-family policies globally that are most likely to help women succeed in the labor market. Research on women and gender issues in other countries, comparative research, and research on international issues such as global trade and its impacts on women was included in IWPR's agenda in its earliest planning documents.

In 2009 The Status of Women in the Middle East and North Africa (SWMENA) project, a multi-year project, was begun in partnership with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). Funded by the Canadian International Development Agency, the project marks the first large-scale study done by IWPR on the status of women outside the United States, expanding IWPR's work to cover a broader range of issues through analysis of women's status internationally. The multi-year project addresses the status of women in Lebanon, Morocco, and Yemen. The project has two phases: 1) collecting and analyzing data on women's status, and 2) increasing the capacity of local non-governmental organizations to advance the status of women. The overarching goal is to improve the status of women in the Middle East and North Africa by strengthening local NGOs and providing more effective ways to use research in advocating for women. The project created a toolkit, *Using Research on the Status of Women to Improve Public Policies in the Middle East and North Africa: A Capacity-Building Toolkit for Nongovernmental Organizations* (#32; 2012), that stresses the importance of understanding the reality of all women's lives when seeking to use research effectively. The partners continue to release products from the research.

In 2010 IWPR released a number of briefs stemming from its research in each country. While some of the

topics overlap for all three countries, each topic is addressed through a country-specific lens and some topics are unique to that country. For example, “Opinions on the Family Law and Gender Quotas Topic Brief” (#33) examines The Morocco Family Law—which sets a minimum marriage age of 18 and allows mothers to pass citizenship to their children—and the introduction of gender quotas for women in Parliament, two topics widely debated among the Moroccan people and advocacy groups and unique to the status of women in Morocco. However, each country—Lebanon, Morocco, and Yemen—has a “Freedom of Movement, Freedom from Harassment & Violence Topic Brief” (#34; #35; #36) and a “Paid Work and Control of Earnings and Assets Topic Brief” (#37; #38; #39), which address women’s ability to move freely and safely in public spaces and women’s control over their earnings (respectively), as these are issues that are essential to the advancement of women’s civic, political, and economic participation in all three countries.

The “Freedom of Movement” (#34-6) briefs show that some women and men in all three countries believe it is acceptable for women to be beaten by their husbands in certain situations. While Lebanese men and women have the lowest acceptance of violence against women (14 percent), men and women in Morocco and Yemen have a higher acceptance of spousal violence (39 percent in Morocco and 34 percent in Yemen). IWPR’s briefs find it is working women in Yemen who experience the most harassment at work, with 44 percent saying men make unwelcome physical contact or comments at least once in a while, while this is true for only 16 percent of women in Morocco and 18 percent in Lebanon. IWPR’s briefs on “Paid Work and Control of Earnings” (#37-9) find that in both Lebanon and Morocco, major family decisions about assets are most likely made by both married women and their husbands, however, in Yemen current or former husbands are more likely to make major family decisions. Also, in all three countries less than half of married women believe they would be able to support their families without their husband’s income.

In 2010, results from the “Focus on Yemen: Freedom of Movement, Freedom from Harassment & Violence” (#36) were presented by IWPR and IFES researchers in Cairo. Additionally in 2010, IWPR and IFES met with the World Bank’s World Development Report 2012 project team

to discuss the World Bank’s use of the SWMENA data and analyses on women’s freedom of movement, control over assets and decision making, political participation, and access to health care to fill in some gaps in their data on women’s well being around the world for their 2012 report.

IWPR’s experiences in conducting international research projects on issue related to women span a breadth of indicators and nations. IWPR has prepared reports for international organizations such as the World Bank and the United Kingdom Equality and Human Rights Commission. The report prepared for the World Bank, The Impact of “Family-Friendly” Policies on Women’s Employment Outcomes and on the Cost and Benefits of Doing Business (#40), reviews research in developed and developing countries on the impact of parental leave, flexible working time, and child care policies on women’s labor market outcomes. IWPR also provided analysis and coding of qualitative data from 19 nations for the World Bank’s 2012 *World Development Report on Gender Equality and Development* (#41). For the United Kingdom Equality and Human Rights Commission, IWPR produced *Flexible Working Policies: A Comparative Review* (#42) that analyzes the economic impact of legislation to facilitate workplace flexibility in OECD countries.

IWPR’s commitment to exploring issues affecting women around the world was highlighted by Dr. Heidi Hartmann’s presentation at the first International Widow’s Day at the United Nations Headquarters on June 23, 2011. Her presentation, “Widows: Causes and Effects” (#43), discussed the disadvantages widows face around the world and highlighted the need for establishing property rights for widows, the necessity of improving the public safety net, and the importance of education and employment for all women.

## Women’s Policy Research Conferences

Since its founding, IWPR has brought together researchers, activists, advocates, and policymakers in order to better inform individuals, organizations, and governments about the most pertinent policy issues for women and to build a community of those who use and those who produce research and policy analysis. In this way IWPR’s conferences strengthen women’s civic and political engagement.

At the *First Annual Women's Policy Research Conference*, which was held in Washington, DC, on May 18, 1989, and received financial support from the AAUW, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees—Office of Women's Rights, the Coalition of Labor Union Women, and the Communications Workers of America, 27 scholarly papers were presented and more than 250 attended. This conference began building an important, new network dedicated to exploring research findings and public policies and their implications for women's lives. The *First Annual Women's Policy Research Conference Proceedings* (#44) contained all the papers presented as well as commentaries offered by discussants and talks by plenary speakers and covered such topics as feminist advocacy, changes in the status of women, welfare reform, employment equality, and family care, among others.

The *First Annual Conference* was such a success that IWPR hosted its *Second Annual Women's Policy Conference* in June of 1990 and extended the event to two days. While the sessions at the *Second Annual Conference* and the published *Conference Proceedings* (#45) mainly addressed health care issues from a feminist perspective, IWPR stressed that problems of family, employment, education, and health care are inextricably connected and that, therefore, policy decisions in one area will necessarily have consequences that extend beyond the targeted issue. The *Third Women's Policy Conference*, held two years later on May 15-16, 1992, and co-hosted by the Department of Sociology, College of Arts and Sciences, at American University, was entitled *Exploring the Quincennial: The Policy Challenges of Gender, Diversity, and International Exchanges*. This conference convened more than 400 scholars, advocates, activists, and policymakers from around the world to discuss the complex issues surrounding race, ethnicity, and class and served to enlarge the network of individuals and organizations concerned with policy research of importance to women to many nations beyond the United States.

In 1993, IWPR sponsored a conference on Capitol Hill on *Women and Welfare Reform: Women's Poverty, Women's Opportunities, and Women's Welfare* responding to the initiative of Congresswoman Patsy Mink to organize a forum for policy education on welfare reform and women's daily lives. The published proceedings were

widely circulated to members of Congress and their staff (#46).

This was followed by the *Fourth Women's Policy Research Conference, Innovations in Government and Public Policy: New Directions for Women*, in June of 1994, also co-hosted by the Department of Sociology at American University, with funding support from the Ford Foundation. The express purpose of the fourth conference was to explore how women can take part in reinventing state and local government with positive outcomes for them and their families.

In 1996 IWPR hosted the *Leadership Conference for Women, the Economy, and the Elections*. Participants received a 600 page Briefing book, *From the Wage Gap to the Gender Gap: A Political and Economic Handbook* (#47), comprised of a series of fact sheets highlighting and summarizing political and economic issues of importance to women, collected from a variety of organizations as well as from IWPR.

IWPR held its *Fifth Women's Policy Research Conference, Women's Progress: Perspectives on the Past, Blueprint for the Future*, June 12-13, 1998. This conference, co-sponsored by the Women's Studies Program at George Washington University (GWU), brought together more than 400 scholars, researchers, advocates, and policymakers to discuss issues such as employment and earnings, democracy and society, family and work, poverty and income, and health and well being. The following year, IWPR co-hosted the *Working Conference on Women and Social Security* with the National Council of Women's Organizations Task Force on Women and Social Security in July at Airlie House in Virginia. This two-day conference was convened with the goal of crafting politically feasible proposals for strengthening Social Security for women and families and closing the projected solvency gap. It resulted in *Strengthening Social Security for Women: A Report from the Working Conference on Women and Social Security* (#48), which was published in 2000.

The *Status of Women: Finding the Facts, Forging the Future* was IWPR's *Sixth Women's Policy Research Conference* held June 8-9, 2001, and co-sponsored by GWU's Women's Studies Program and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, enabling IWPR to include women in leadership and research positions in Germany as active participants in the conference. Due to the reauthorization of the 1996

changes to U.S. federal welfare policy scheduled to take place in 2002, many of the panels addressed poverty, low wage work, income assistance, child care, health care, education and job training, and other issues that are especially critical to many low income women and mothers. The *Seventh Women's Policy Conference, Women Working to Make a Difference*, was convened June 22-24, 2003, and continued IWPR's partnership with GWU and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. Twenty of the more than 100 presentations were later published in the first two double issues of the newly retitled *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* (#49; #50; 2005), now hosted at IWPR and edited by Dr. Hartmann.

The *Eighth Women's Policy Research Conference* was entitled *When Women Gain, So Does the World* (#51) again co-sponsored by GWU's Women's Studies Program and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and held June 19-21, 2005, covered a broad range of issues essential to women and families, including women's leadership, poverty and income security, health, and women's rights, among many others. This three day conference also included a mini-conference, coordinated by The Research Network on Gender, Politics, and the State, which focused on exploring the partnerships between women's advocates inside and outside of government and their potential for improving gender equality in North America and Western Europe through public policy changes.

In April of 2008, IWPR co-sponsored the Summit on Economic Justice for Women: Bringing together Research and Advocacy to Advance Economic Justice and Empowerment for Women with the National Council of Negro Women and the National Organization for Women Foundation, which was held in Atlanta, Georgia. This event was convened with the purpose of studying the economic

impacts on women of violence, discrimination, lack of access to education and job training, inadequate child and family care programs, immigration and migration policies, and disease.

Most recently, IWPR and the Wellesley Centers for Women co-hosted Achieving Equity for Women: Policy Alternatives for the New Administration (#52) on April 9, 2009. As the title suggests, the conference's aim was to explore policy options and make recommendations on such issues as the impact of the economic recession on women, retirement and social security, expanding early care and education, and healthcare reform. On May 22, 2013, IWPR hosted a symposium in celebration of its 25th anniversary, Making Research Count for Women: Launching the Next 25 Years (#53), which focused not only on what IWPR has learned over the past 25 years about achieving economic and political equality for women, but also discussed the shape of women's lives in the next 25 years and new directions for policy to achieve equity.

## Conclusion

IWPR has been committed since its inception to working toward equity for women in all areas of their lives. Through its research in the field of democracy and society, IWPR has provided both clear analysis of women's status and recommendations that can advance women's civic and political engagement and leadership, improve the lives of immigrants, and advance women globally. The Institute has brought this research to a broad audience through its events and conferences, with the goal of continuing to inform social and policy changes in the United States and around the world.

**This Research-in-Brief is one in a series of publications highlighting IWPR's most significant research contributions to policy issues affecting women across IWPR's twenty-five year history.**

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