

# Briefing Paper

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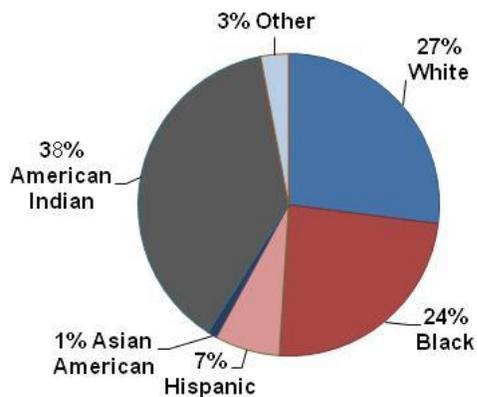
## The Status of Women in Robeson County, North Carolina

Women in Robeson County, North Carolina, and in North Carolina as a whole, have made significant progress during the last few decades, but more remains to be done to elevate women's status. Women make important contributions to the economic health of their communities—nearly half of women in Robeson County are in the labor force—but women's status overall still lags behind men's, and not all women are prospering equally. This briefing paper provides basic information about the status of women in Robeson County, focusing on women's earnings and workforce participation, level of education, poverty, access to child care, and health status. It also provides basic demographic information about women in this area.

### Basic Facts About Women in Robeson County

The female population in Robeson County is considerably more racially and ethnically diverse than in the state as a whole. In Robeson County, nearly three-fourths of women and girls are from a minority racial or ethnic group, compared with approximately one in three women in North Carolina overall. Nearly four in ten women and girls (38 percent, or 25,959) in Robeson County are American Indian; in the state, American

**Figure 1. Distribution of Women and Girls by Race and Ethnicity in Robeson County, All Ages, 2009–2011**



Note: Racial and ethnic categories are exclusive: white, not Hispanic; black, not Hispanic; Asian American, not Hispanic; American Indian, not Hispanic; and Other, not Hispanic. Hispanics may be of any race. "Other" includes those who identify with two or more racial categories and those whom the Census Bureau did not classify. Source: IWPR analysis of 2009–2011 Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

Indians comprise only one percent of the female population. Black women and girls constitute the next largest minority group in the county (24 percent compared with 22 percent in the state overall). The proportion of Hispanic and Asian American women and girls in Robeson County (seven percent and one percent, respectively) is similar to North Carolina as a whole (Table 1 and Figure 1).

The median age for the female population in Robeson County is 35 years, which is younger than the median age for this population in the state (38 years; Table 1). Only 13 percent of the female population in Robeson County is 65 years and older, which is a smaller proportion than in the state and nation (15 percent each). The share of the female population comprised of immigrants is slightly smaller in Robeson County than in North Carolina overall (five percent and seven percent, respectively; Table 1).

<b>Table 1. Basic Demographic Statistics for Women and Girls</b>			
	<b>Robeson</b>	<b>North Carolina</b>	<b>United States</b>
<b>Total Population</b>	134,096	9,656,401	311,591,919
Number of Women and Girls, All Ages	69,073	4,967,977	158,343,931
Median Age of All Women and Girls	35	38	38
Proportion of Women Aged 65 and Older	13%	15%	15%
<b>Distribution of Women and Girls by Race and Ethnicity, All Ages</b>			
White, Not Hispanic	27%	65%	63%
Black, Not Hispanic	24%	22%	13%
Hispanic	7%	8%	16%
Asian American, Not Hispanic	1%	2%	5%
American Indian, Not Hispanic	38%	1%	1%
Other, Not Hispanic	3%	2%	2%
<b>Proportion of Women and Girls Who Are Foreign-Born, All Ages</b>	5%	7%	13%
<b>Proportion of Women Who Are Married, Aged 15 and Older</b>	38%	47%	47%

Notes: Data for Robeson County are for 2009–2011. Data for North Carolina and the United States are for 2011 only. Source: IWPR analysis of 2009–2011 and 2011 American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

## **Work and Earnings**

The labor force participation rate for women aged 16 and older in Robeson County is considerably lower than in the state as a whole (Table 2). Half of all women (49 percent) in Robeson County are in the workforce, compared with approximately six in ten women in the state of North Carolina (59 percent; Table 2). As is the case in the state and nation, women’s labor force participation rate in Robeson County is much lower than men’s (56 percent of men aged 16 and older in Robeson County are in the workforce). Among women from the largest racial and ethnic groups in the county, black women have the highest labor force

participation rate at 53 percent, followed by American Indian women (49 percent) and white women (48 percent; sample size is insufficient to provide estimates for Hispanic and Asian American women).<sup>1</sup>

In both Robeson County and the state overall, the labor force participation rate for women with dependent children (68 percent in the county and 74 percent in the state) is higher than it is for women overall (Table 2). Mothers with dependent children, however, are much less likely than fathers with dependent children to be working or looking for work. Approximately nine in ten fathers with children under age 18 (89 percent) in Robeson County and more than nine in ten fathers with dependent children in the state (93 percent; Table 2) are in the workforce, suggesting that women are still more likely than men to cut back on employment when they become parents.

The majority of employed women in Robeson County work full-time (72 percent). Women, however, are much more likely to work part-time than men (28 percent of employed women in the county compared with 16 percent of employed men).<sup>2</sup> Women are more likely than men to say they work part-time because of child care problems or for other reasons related to family care. In the state overall (data are not available for Robeson County), 20 percent of women, compared with 3 percent of men, give these reasons for working part-time.<sup>3</sup> Part-time workers are less likely than full-time workers to receive paid leave, health care insurance, and employer-sponsored pensions (SHRM 2011).

Approximately one in three employed women in Robeson County (32 percent) work in professional and managerial jobs, which is a considerably higher proportion than employed men (20 percent; Table 2). The proportion of employed women and men working in professional and managerial jobs in Robeson County is lower than in the state as a whole (Table 2), suggesting that this area has more limited opportunities for higher-paying jobs.

While employed women in Robeson County are more likely than employed men to hold managerial or professional jobs overall, a slightly larger share of employed men hold management positions (nine percent compared with eight percent).<sup>4</sup> In general, data on Robeson County point to stark gender segregation within broad occupational groups. Employed women are more than twice as likely as employed men to work in service occupations (27 percent compared with 12 percent) and in office and administrative support occupations (14 percent compared with 6 percent). Employed women in Robeson County are also twice as likely as their male counterparts to work in sales and related occupations (12 percent compared with 6 percent). Employed men, however, are much more likely than employed women to work in construction and extraction occupations; installation, maintenance, and repair occupations; production occupations; and transportation and material moving occupations. In Robeson County, such occupations account for 53 percent of men's jobs, compared with just 14 percent of women's jobs.<sup>5</sup>

Occupational segregation and women's underrepresentation in management jobs reduce women's earnings compared with men's (Hess, Hegewisch, Williams, and Yi 2013). In 2009–2011, the median earnings for women in Robeson County who work full-time, year-round were \$24,888 compared with \$30,418 for men, which means women earned 82 cents on the dollar compared with men (Table 2). This earnings difference is smaller than the gap between women's and men's earnings in the state as a whole, where women earn 80 cents for every dollar earned by men (Table 2). Median annual earnings for both women and men in Robeson County are substantially lower than in North Carolina overall (median earnings in the state are \$32,500 for women and \$40,800 for men; Table 2).

**Table 2. Overview of Women's and Men's Economic Status**

	<b>Robeson</b>	<b>North Carolina</b>	<b>United States</b>
<b>Labor Force Participation Rate, Aged 16 and Older</b>			
Women	49%	59%	59%
Men	56%	69%	69%
Mothers With Children Under 18 Years of Age	68%	74%	73%
Fathers With Children Under 18 Years of Age	89%	93%	93%
<b>Percent of Employed Women and Men Who Work Full-Time, Aged 16 and Older</b>			
Women	72%	72%	71%
Men	84%	84%	84%
<b>Percent of Employed Women and Men in Professional or Managerial Occupations, Aged 16 and Older</b>			
Women	32%	40%	40%
Men	20%	31%	33%
<b>Median Annual Earnings, Full-Time, Year-Round Workers, Aged 16 and Older</b>			
Women	\$24,888	\$32,500	\$36,100
Men	\$30,418	\$40,800	\$46,000
<b>Gender Earnings Ratio, Aged 16 and Older</b>	82%	80%	78%
<b>Gender Earnings Ratio by Educational Attainment, Aged 25 and Older</b>			
Less Than High School Diploma	77%	77%	72%
High School Graduate	69%	75%	76%
Some College or Associate's Degree	69%	76%	74%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	108%	69%	72%
<b>Proportion of Women and Men with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher, Aged 25 and Older</b>			
Women	14%	27%	28%
Men	11%	26%	29%
<b>Proportion of Women and Men with a High School Diploma or Less, Aged 25 or Older</b>			
Women	55%	40%	41%
Men	71%	46%	44%
<b>Percent of Women and Men Living Below Poverty, Aged 18 and Older</b>			
Women	28%	17%	15%
Men	22%	13%	12%
<b>Percent of Households with Incomes At or Below 200% of the Poverty Line Receiving Food Stamps</b>	43%	33%	32%
<b>Percent of Women and Men Without Health Insurance Coverage, Aged 18–64</b>			
Women	32%	21%	19%
Men	39%	25%	24%

Notes: Data for Robeson County are for 2009–2011. Median earnings are in 2011 inflation-adjusted dollars. Data for North Carolina and the United States are for 2011 only.

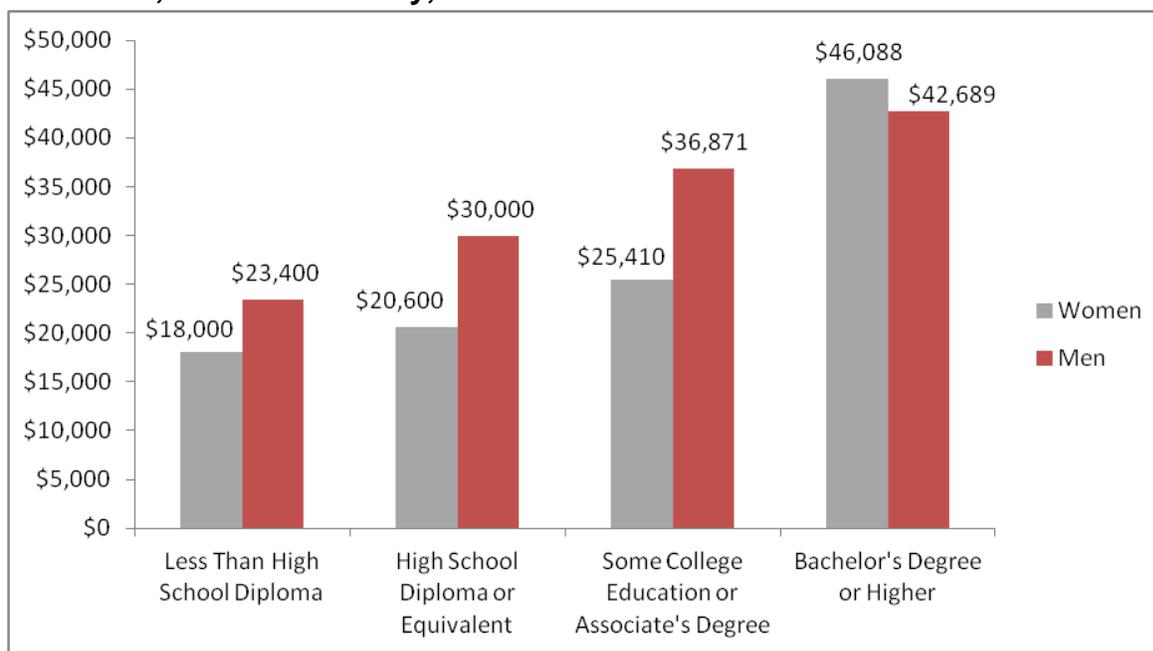
Source: IWPR analysis of 2009–2011 and 2011 American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

## Educational Attainment

Both women and men in Robeson County are much less likely than their counterparts in the state and nation as a whole to have a bachelor’s degree or higher. Fourteen percent of women and 11 percent of men aged 25 and older in Robeson County have this level of education, compared with 27 percent of women and 26 percent of men in the state overall (Table 2). The share of women and men with a bachelor’s degree or higher in the nation is similar to the share in North Carolina (28 percent of women and 29 percent of men in the United States have a least a bachelor’s degree; Table 2).

The comparatively low levels of education among women in Robeson County mean that a substantial number of women—an estimated 23,837, or 55 percent—either have not completed high school or have only a high school diploma or the equivalent.<sup>6</sup> While a much higher share of men have such low educational attainment (71 percent; Table 2), it is more difficult for women with this level of formal education to find jobs with earnings sufficient to support a family. The median annual earnings for women in Robeson County with less than a high school diploma are just \$18,000 compared with \$23,400 for comparable men. Women who have completed only a high school degree have slightly higher median earnings at \$20,600, which is nearly \$10,000 less than the earnings of men with this same level of education (\$30,000). Women with some college education or an associate’s degree have median earnings of \$25,410 compared with \$36,871 for their male counterparts (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Median Annual Earnings by Gender and Educational Attainment, Aged 25 and Older, Robeson County, 2009–2011**



Note: Median earnings are in 2011 inflation-adjusted dollars.

Source: IWPR analysis of 2009–2011 American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

Women and men with a bachelor's degree or higher have the highest median annual earnings. In Robeson County, the median earnings for women with this level of education are \$46,088, which is approximately \$3,000 greater than the median earnings for men with a bachelor's degree or higher (\$42,689; Figure 2). The higher earnings for women at this educational level differs from the pattern in the state and nation as a whole, where women with at least a bachelor's degree earn only 69 cents and 72 cents on the dollar compared with their male counterparts, respectively (Table 2). This atypical pattern may stem partly from the fact that men's earnings in Robeson County are clustered more toward the higher end of the earnings spectrum than women's; men's mean earnings (a different measure from men's median earnings) for those with this level of education are higher (\$64,342) than women's (\$53,400), and the earnings ratio of the means is 83 percent.<sup>7</sup>

## Poverty

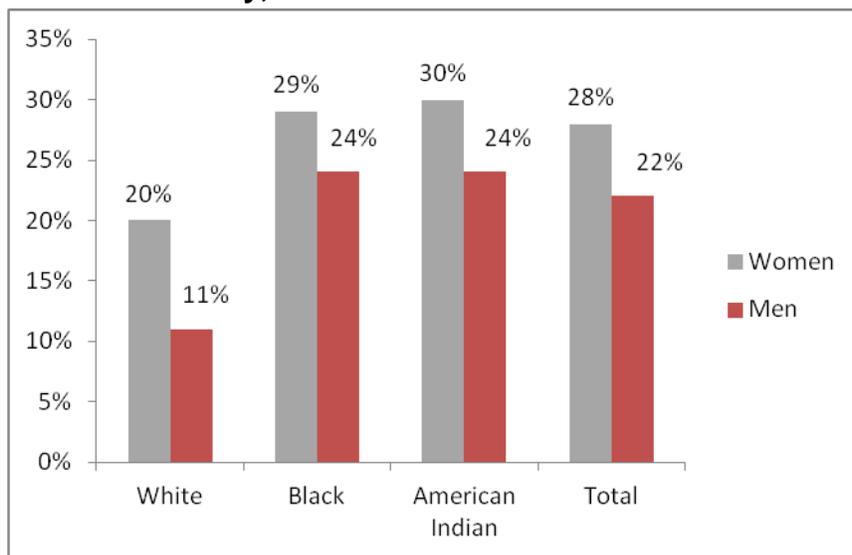
A substantial number of women in Robeson County have family incomes that leave them below or close to the federal poverty line. An estimated 14,138 women aged 18 and older (28 percent) live below the poverty line, while another 15,400 (31 percent) live near poverty (with incomes between 100 and 200 percent of the federal poverty line).<sup>8</sup> Women are more likely than men to live below the poverty line (28 percent compared with 22 percent; Table 2). In Robeson County, 43 percent of all households with incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty line receive food stamps, which is a considerably higher proportion than in North Carolina and the United States as a whole (33 percent and 32 percent, respectively; Table 2).

In Robeson County, as in North Carolina overall, poverty varies considerably among the largest racial and ethnic groups. As shown in Figure 3, American Indian women have the highest poverty rate at 30 percent, followed by black women (29 percent) and white women (20 percent; sample sizes are too small to estimate the poverty rates for Hispanic and Asian American women). In the state as a whole, Hispanic women are the most likely to be poor; one in three Hispanic women (33 percent) in North Carolina lives below the poverty line, compared with 28 percent of American Indian women, 26 percent of black women, and 13 percent of white and Asian American women.<sup>9</sup> For all the racial and ethnic groups shown in Figure 3 below, poverty rates are higher for women than for men. This pattern holds true for the state as well (Hess, Hegewisch, Williams, and Yi 2013).

Families headed by single mothers face a considerably higher risk of living in poverty than other families. In Robeson County, 44 percent of all families with dependent children are headed by single mothers. Yet, among families with children who are poor, 65 percent are headed by single mothers (Table 3).

Unfortunately, the public safety net is failing many low-income families in the state. In North Carolina as a whole, only eight percent of single women with children under 18 and family incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty line receive welfare cash assistance.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 3. Poverty Rates for Women and Men Aged 18 and Older by Race/Ethnicity, Robeson County, 2009–2011**



Notes: Racial and ethnic categories are exclusive: white, not Hispanic; black, not Hispanic; and American Indian, not Hispanic. Samples sizes are insufficient to provide separate estimates for Hispanics and Asian Americans. Includes those with family incomes below the federal poverty line.

Source: IWPR analysis of 2009–2011 American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

## Child Care

Early care and education programs provide an important workforce support for mothers and fathers. Affordable, quality child care makes it possible for parents to do their jobs while knowing their children are receiving adequate support and a good education. Unfortunately, many families in the United States have limited access to affordable child care. In the absence of quality, affordable child care, many women interrupt their tenure in the labor market, reducing their ability to provide for their families and save for retirement. Other women may be forced to put their children in low-quality, unreliable care.

Historically, North Carolina has had strong initiatives to prepare children for kindergarten and support working parents. Smart Start, the state’s early childhood initiative that was established in 1993 as a public/private partnership, has received national recognition for its efforts to improve the quality, affordability, and accessibility of early care and education.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, North Carolina’s More at Four Pre-Kindergarten Program—the state’s targeted early education program for at-risk four-year-olds—was identified in 2011 as one of six programs nationally to meet all ten benchmarks for quality care delineated by the National Institute for Early Education Research (National Institute for Early Education Research 2011).

Despite the supports offered by these strong initiatives, many North Carolina families find the cost of child care prohibitively expensive. In North Carolina, the average cost of full-time, year-round child care ranges from \$6,227 (for a four-year-old in a family child care home) to \$9,185 (for an infant in a child care center; Child Care Aware of America 2012). By comparison, the average annual tuition and fees at a four-year

public college in the state are \$5,685 (Child Care Aware of America 2012). In Robeson County, 8,546 children are eligible for child care subsidies because their parents earn too little to afford the fees. Yet, only about one in five of those who are eligible receive a subsidy for child care (Table 3).

<b>Table 3. The Status of Children: Family Income, Poverty, and Child Care</b>		
<b>Family Income</b>	<b>Robeson</b>	<b>North Carolina</b>
<b>Annual Living Income Standard</b>		
Annual Income a Family of One Adult and Two Children Needs to Afford Essential Living Expenses, 2010 <sup>1</sup>	\$39,016	\$41,920
Median Annual Income of Married-Couple Families With Children Under 18 Years, 2009–2011 <sup>2</sup>	\$55,800	\$73,366
Median Annual Income of Single Men With Children Under 18 Years, 2009–2011 <sup>2</sup>	N/A	\$30,514
Median Annual Income of Single Women With Children Under 18 Years, 2009–2011 <sup>2</sup>	\$16,782	\$21,371
<b>Poverty</b>		
Number of Families in Poverty With Children Under 18 Years, 2009–2011 <sup>2</sup>	6,211	243,461
Share of All Families in Poverty With Children Under 18 That Are Headed by Single Women, 2009–2011 <sup>3</sup>	65%	61%
Share of All Families With Children Under 18 That Are Headed by Single Women, 2009–2011 <sup>3</sup>	44%	29%
<b>Child Care</b>		
Number of Children Eligible for Child Care Subsidy, SFY 2010–2011 <sup>4</sup>	8,546	391,549
Budget Available to Serve Eligible Children, SFY 2010–2011 <sup>4</sup>	\$7,553,038	N/A
Percent of Eligible Children Receiving Subsidized Child Care Services, SFY 2010–2011 <sup>4</sup>	21%	N/A
Total Number of Children Aged 0 to 5 Enrolled in Child Care, 2011 <sup>5</sup>	4,331	207,953

Notes: N/A indicates data are not available. “Single women” refers to women who are married with an absent spouse, separated, divorced, widowed, or never married.

Sources: <sup>1</sup> Sirota and McLenaghan 2010.

<sup>2</sup> IWPR compilation of 2009–2011 American Community Survey data accessed through American Fact Finder (U.S. Department of Commerce 2013).

<sup>3</sup> IWPR analysis of 2009–2011 American Community Survey data accessed through American Fact Finder (U.S. Department of Commerce 2013).

<sup>4</sup> North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Annie E. Casey Foundation 2013.

## Health

Health is an important component of women’s overall well-being that contributes to their economic stability, educational attainment, and employment opportunities. While many women in Robeson County experience good health, women as a whole in this county have worse health outcomes on a number of indicators than their counterparts in the state and nation, suggesting that health remains an aspect of women’s status in Robeson County that needs to be examined and addressed.

Having health insurance coverage is critical to women’s access to health care. In Robeson County, 32 percent of women aged 18–64 do not have health insurance of any kind, compared with 21 percent in the state as a whole (Table 2).<sup>12</sup> Lack of health insurance coverage leaves women without coverage not only for basic wellness and check up visits, but also for severe or chronic medical problems.

On several other selected health indicators, women in Robeson County, for the most part, do not fare well compared with their counterparts in the state and nation overall. Between 2006 and 2010, women in the county had a higher mortality rate from breast cancer than women in the state and nation (28.1 per 100,000 for women in Robeson County, compared with 23.1 per 100,000 for women in North Carolina and 22.6 per 100,000 for women in the United States as a whole). Women in Robeson County also had significantly higher mortality rates from heart disease and diabetes than women in the state and nation overall (Table 4). The mortality rate from stroke and other cerebrovascular diseases, however, was slightly lower for women in the county (46.1 per 100,000) than in North Carolina as a whole but higher than in the nation overall (47.9 per 100,000 and 41.0 per 100,000, respectively; Table 4).<sup>13</sup>

<b>Table 4. Overview of Women's Health Status</b>			
	<b>Robeson</b>	<b>North Carolina</b>	<b>United States</b>
<b>Total Number of Teen Pregnancies, Aged 15–19 Years, 2011<sup>1</sup></b>	355	13,909	N/A
<b>Pregnancy Rate Among Teens Aged 15–19 (per 1,000), 2011<sup>1</sup></b>	69.1	43.8	N/A
<b>Heart Disease Mortality Rate per 100,000, All Ages, 2006–2010<sup>2</sup></b>	195.0	147.0	154.2
<b>Mortality Rate from Stroke and Other Cerebrovascular Diseases, All Ages, 2006–2010<sup>2</sup></b>	46.1	47.9	41.0
<b>Diabetes Mortality Rate, All Ages, 2006–2010<sup>2</sup></b>	50.3	19.4	18.9
<b>Breast Cancer Mortality Rate, All Ages, 2006–2010<sup>3</sup></b>	28.1	23.1	22.6

Notes: N/A indicates data are not available.

All mortality rates are per 100,000 and age-adjusted to the 2000 U.S. standard population.

Source: <sup>1</sup> North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services 2013.

<sup>2</sup> IWPR compilation of data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2012.

<sup>3</sup> IWPR compilation of data from the National Cancer Institute 2013.

Although teen pregnancy rates have fallen in the state and nation in recent years, teenage pregnancy remains a significant concern in many areas. In Robeson County, the pregnancy rate for teens aged 15–19 is much higher than in North Carolina as a whole (69.1 per 1,000 compared with 43.8 per 1,000; Table 4).

## Conclusion

Many women in Robeson County are thriving, yet the data reviewed in this briefing paper show that there are still areas for improvement, including the wage gap, access to affordable child care, and educational attainment. Policy recommendations to address these challenges include:

- promoting quality flexible working practices to make it easier for parents to combine paid work with caregiving;
- increasing financial supports, including child care, for women with low levels of income;
- expanding career counseling and mentoring for women and girls;
- facilitating further access to education and encouraging women and girls to pursue education and careers in nontraditional areas;
- monitoring workforce development to ensure that women and men have equal access to training in high-growth, well-paid careers;
- supporting more targeted teen pregnancy prevention programs and increased support for teens who are already pregnant and parenting;
- improving access to health services needed to monitor and address conditions such as heart disease and diabetes; and
- ensuring that all families who need it receive welfare cash assistance from “Work First,” North Carolina’s Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program.

## Methodological Notes

This briefing paper presents data for Robeson County, the state of North Carolina, and the nation. Demographic and economic data are based primarily on IWPR analysis of the IPUMS version of the American Community Survey (Ruggles et al. 2010). IWPR used estimates that combine multiple years of data (2009–2011) for Robeson County to ensure sufficient sample sizes that allow for reliable reporting. Data for the state and nation are for 2011 only, except where otherwise noted. Data on child care comes from the Annie E. Casey Foundation Data Center Kids Count, Child Care Aware of America, and the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education. Data on women’s health status are from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. A full description of the methodology is available in IWPR’s 2013 *Status of Women in North Carolina* report (Hess, Hegewisch, Williams, and Yi 2013).

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> IWPR analysis of 2009–2011 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

<sup>2</sup> IWPR analysis of 2009–2011 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Institute for Women’s Policy Research 2013.

<sup>4</sup> IWPR analysis of 2009–2011 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

<sup>5</sup> IWPR analysis of 2009–2011 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

<sup>6</sup> IWPR analysis of 2009–2011 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

<sup>7</sup> IWPR analysis of 2009–2011 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

<sup>8</sup> IWPR analysis of 2009–2011 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

<sup>9</sup> IWPR analysis of 2009–2011 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

<sup>10</sup> IWPR analysis of 2011 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

<sup>11</sup> See <<http://www.smartstart-nc.org/>> (accessed January 29, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Those who have health insurance coverage of any kind were covered by one of the following options at the time the American Community Survey data were collected: 1) employer-provided insurance; 2) privately purchased insurance; 3) Medicare; 4) Medicaid or other governmental insurance. The Census Bureau does not consider respondents to have coverage if their only coverage is from Indian Health Services (IHS), since IHS policies are not always comprehensive.

<sup>13</sup> The ICD-10 codes used for heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, and diabetes are 100–109, I11, I13, and I20–151 (heart disease); 160–169 (cerebrovascular disease); and E10–14 (diabetes).

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