

# THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN NEW JERSEY: HIGHLIGHTS

The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) has prepared a report on the *Status of Women in New Jersey* to inform New Jersey residents about the progress of women in New Jersey 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, various 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, New Jersey ranks in the top third of the nation. New Jersey ranks first in the Middle Atlantic region (consisting of New York and Pennsylvania in addition to New Jersey) on three of the four composite indicators. Yet New Jersey still has room for improvement in the status of its women, especially in terms of political participation, an area in which the state generally ranks in the bottom third of the nation as a whole.

## 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. The regional rank is of a maximum of three and refers to the states in the Middle Atlantic region.

- New Jersey ranks 33rd in the nation and first in the Middle Atlantic region on the political participation composite indicator.
- New Jersey ranks 32nd in the nation on women's voter registration. There are nearly 779,000 unregistered women who are eligible to vote in the state of New Jersey.

### *Facts and Figures*

- In 1996, 15 percent of the seats in New Jersey's state legislature were filled by women, one of New Jersey's 13 seats in the United States House of Representatives was filled by a woman, and New Jersey was the only state with a woman governor.
- Since 1964, female voters in the United States have outnumbered male voters, but voter turnout is relatively low for both sexes by international standards. Sixty-two percent of eligible women and 60 percent of eligible men in New Jersey reported that they voted in the November 1992 election, rates similar to the national averages.

## Chart I. How New Jersey Ranks on Key Indicators

	National Rank*	Regional Rank*
<b>COMPOSITE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION INDEX</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>1</b>
Women's Voter Registration, 1992-1994	32	1
Women's Voter Turnout, 1992-1994	38	2
Women in Elected Office Composite, 1996	23	1
Women's Institutional Resources, 1996	10	2
<b>COMPOSITE EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS INDEX</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>
Women's Median Annual Earnings, 1990	4	1
Ratio of Women's to Men's Earnings, 1990	37	2
Women's Labor Force Participation, 1994	38	1
Women in Managerial and Professional Occupations, 1994	6	1
<b>COMPOSITE ECONOMIC AUTONOMY INDEX</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>
Percent with Health Insurance Among Nonelderly Women, 1991-1992	23	2
Educational Attainment: Percent of Women with Four or More Years of College, 1990	10	1
Women's Business Ownership, 1992	42	2
Percent of Women Above the Poverty Level, 1990	3	1
<b>COMPOSITE REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS INDEX</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
<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 three and refer to the states in the Middle Atlantic region (New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania).</i>		

*Calculated by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.*

## EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS

### *Ranks*

The composite employment and earnings rank is based on women's median annual earnings, the female/male earnings ratio, women's labor force participation, 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.

- New Jersey ranks ninth in the nation and first in its region on the employment and earnings composite indicator.
- New Jersey's worst employment and earnings indicators are women's labor force participation, on which it ranks 38th in the nation though first in its region, and the ratio of women's to men's earnings, on which it ranks 37th in the nation and second in its region.

## *Facts and Figures*

- Compared with the nation as a whole, New Jersey women have slightly less 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 65.7 percent in New Jersey.
- In 1994, the unemployment rate for women in New Jersey was 6.8 percent compared with the nation's 6.0 percent female unemployment rate. The female unemployment rate in New Jersey is the highest in the Middle Atlantic region and the 10th highest in the nation.

## **ECONOMIC AUTONOMY**

### *Ranks*

The composite economic autonomy rank is based on women's access to health insurance, women's educational attainment, women's business ownership, and the proportion of women living above poverty.

- New Jersey ranks 12th in the nation and first in its region on the economic autonomy composite indicator.
- New Jersey ranks third in the nation and first in its region in terms of the percentage of women above poverty.

### *Facts and Figures*

- Women in New Jersey are more likely to complete four or more years of college than women in the nation as a whole (21.0 percent compared to 17.6 percent nationally), although women in New Jersey are less likely to have more than a high school education (41.7 compared to 42.6 nationally).
- The business receipts of women-owned businesses in New Jersey rose by 59 percent in constant dollars between 1987 and 1992. This compares 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.

- New Jersey ranks fifth in the nation and second in its region on the reproductive rights composite indicator.

### *Facts and Figures*

- Seventy-six percent of counties in New Jersey have abortion providers, a high proportion when compared with the national average (16 percent).
- Seventeen states, including New Jersey, fund abortions in all or most circumstances.

## HEALTH AND VITAL STATISTICS

- In New Jersey, the infant mortality rate (deaths of infants under age one per 1,000 live births), fertility rate (live births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44), and percentage of low birth weight babies are nearly identical to those in the nation as a whole.
- The percentage of the population enrolled in HMOs in New Jersey is somewhat less than in the United States as a whole (16.9 percent compared to 19.5 percent). Medicare and Medicaid recipients in New Jersey are much less likely than those nationwide to be enrolled in an HMO.

## BASIC DEMOGRAPHICS

- Compared with the nation as a whole, New Jersey has a slightly older female population and a greater proportion of foreign-born women.
- The female population in New Jersey is slightly more ethnically diverse than in the nation as a whole, with minority women making up about 26 percent of women in New Jersey and 24 percent of women in the United States as a whole.

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*The Institute for Women's Policy Research 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 New Jersey, 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 New Jersey assisted in reviewing the report. The Advisory Committee for the report in New Jersey is chaired by Mary Hartman, Institute for Women's Leadership, Rutgers University, and includes: Muriel Calvanelli, Advisory Commission on the Status of Women; Barbara Irvine; Dianne Mills McKay, American Association of University Women, New Jersey; Sheila Pfafflin, Association of Women in Science; Dianne Donnelly, Girl Scout Council, New Jersey; Norma Gindes, Hadassah, Northern New Jersey; Mary Singletary, National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs, New Jersey; Linda Bowker, Division on Women, New Jersey Department of Community Affairs; Evelyn Field, National Council of Negro Women, New Jersey; Bear Atwood, National Organization for Women, New Jersey; Amelia Kressler, Women's Agenda of New Jersey; Paula Rotthenberg, New Jersey Project, William Patterson College; Alice Meyer, New Jersey Women Lawyers Association; Jeannine La Rue, New Jersey Women's Summit, Inc.; Myra Terry, Women's Fund of New Jersey; Deirdre Webster, Association of Black Women Lawyers of New Jersey; and Marie Thompson, Business and Professional Women Federation.*

*This Research-in-Brief was written by Stacey Friedman and prepared by Megan DeBell in February 1997. The full report, The Status of Women in New Jersey, 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 and a discount on all publications. For copies of the New Jersey report, reports on other states, or a national report contact, the Institute for Women's Policy Research, 1400 20th Street, NW, Suite 104, Washington, DC 20036, phone 202/785-5100, fax 202/833-4362 or visit our web site at <http://www.iwpr.org>.*

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