

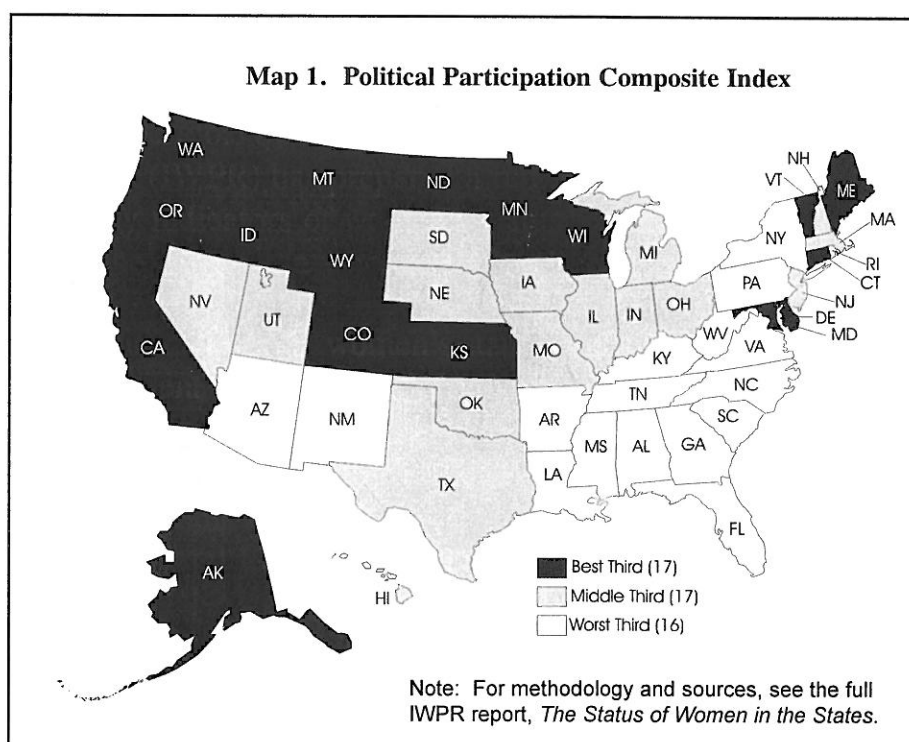
The Status of Women in the States: Highlights

Monitoring women's progress in the United States poses a unique challenge, as statistics that describe national trends often overlook differences between states and regions. The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) has prepared a report on the *Status of Women in the States* that presents data on key indicators of women's status for the 50 states and the District of Columbia as well as for the nation as a whole.

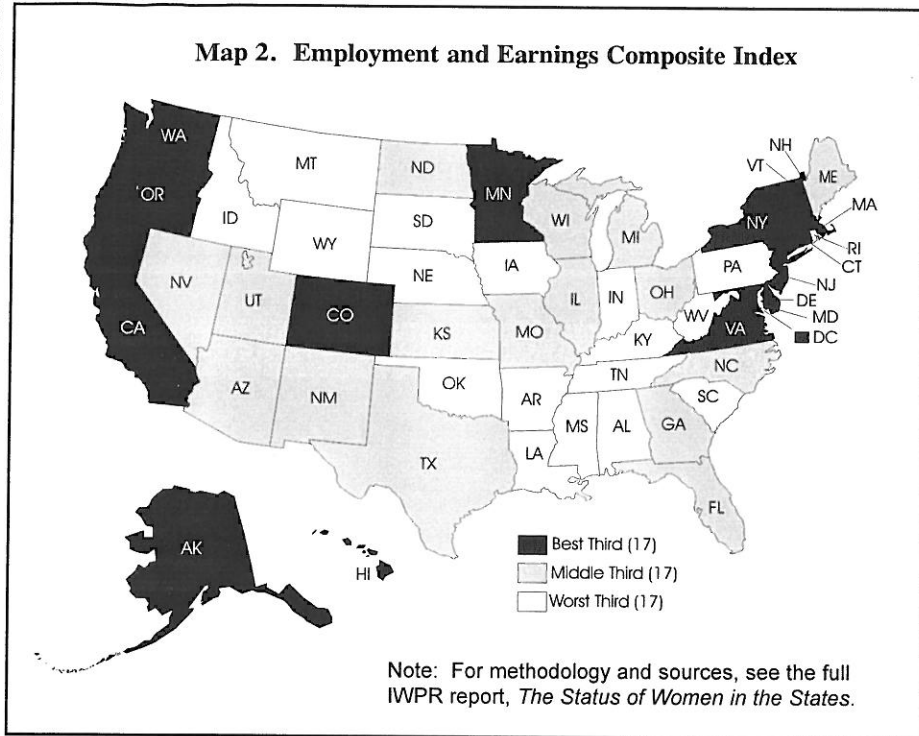
The report's four composite indicators describe women's status in the following important areas: political participation, employment and earnings, economic autonomy, and reproductive rights. Basic health and demographic data are also provided. Taking all four composite indicators into account, women's status is highest in the District of Columbia, Maryland, Vermont, and Connecticut. These states ranked in the top ten on all four composite indicators (while the District of Columbia is unranked for political participation, were its elected officials treated as state officials, it would also rank very high). Women's status is lowest in Mississippi, Kentucky, Arkansas, and Tennessee. These states rank in the bottom ten on all four composite indicators.

Political Participation

The political participation composite index is based on women's voter registration and turnout, women elected officials on the state and federal level, and women's institutional resources in the states (commissions for women or other bodies). The national rank is of a possible 50, because the District of Columbia is not included in this ranking. Map 1 shows composite rankings on this index.



Map 2. Employment and Earnings Composite Index



Women in Managerial and Professional Occupations

- The District of Columbia has the highest percentage (43.0 percent) of women employed in professional and managerial jobs. A high percentage of women in Maryland (35.4 percent), Massachusetts (34.9 percent), Colorado (32.2 percent), and Vermont (32.1 percent) also hold professional and managerial jobs.

- In general, women are least likely to hold professional and managerial jobs in the southeast. For example, Mississippi (23.6 percent), Kentucky (24.2 percent), and Arkansas (23.7

percent) all score poorly in comparison to the national average (28.7 percent) on this component. Alaska (75.0 percent), and South Dakota (74.6 percent), women also rank well on the wage gap indicator.

- West Virginia has the worst earnings ratio in the nation, at 58.9 percent. Louisiana (60.0 percent), Indiana (61.1 percent), and Utah (also 61.1 percent) are the states with the next lowest earnings ratios.

Labor Force Participation

- In Minnesota, 69.8 percent of women are in the labor force, making it the state with the highest labor force participation for women. Women in the west and midwest tend to have high rates of labor force participation. The top five states include Alaska (67.5 percent), Wisconsin (67.3 percent), Nebraska (66.9 percent), Colorado (65.7 percent), and one New England state — New Hampshire (also at 65.7 percent).
- West Virginia has the lowest percentage of women in the labor force, at 46.6 percent. Most states with low labor force participation are in the southeast, such as Kentucky (55.3 percent), Louisiana (53.3 percent), and Alabama (54.8 percent).

percent) all score poorly in comparison to the national average (28.7 percent) on this component.

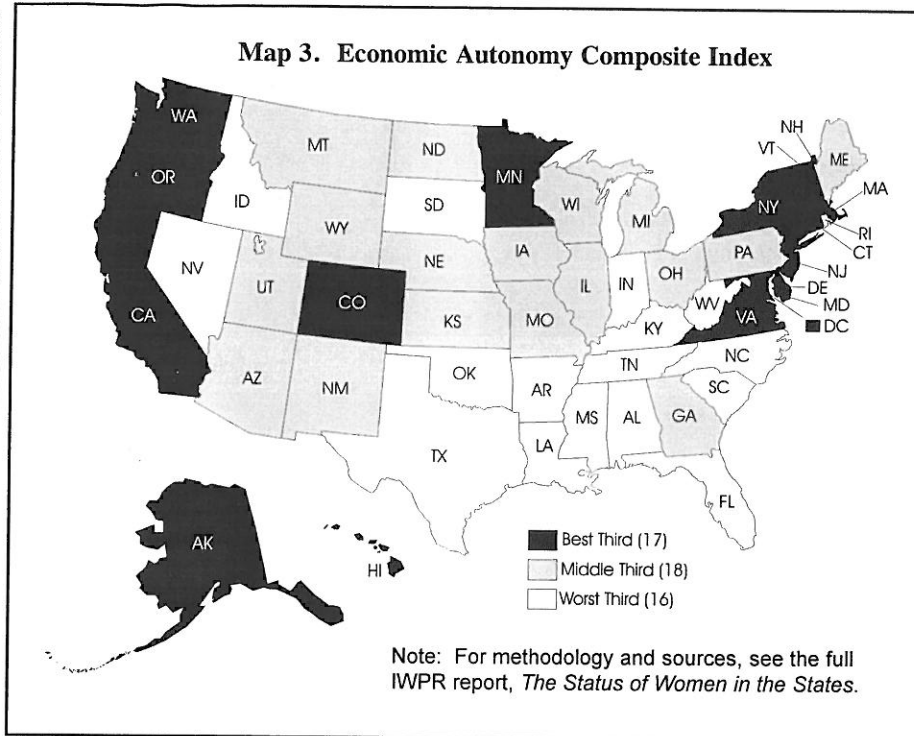
Economic Autonomy

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. The national rank is of a possible 51, referring to the 50 states plus the District of Columbia. Map 3 shows composite rankings for this indicator.

Access to Health Insurance

- Women in the southwestern and southeastern United States are the least likely to have health insurance. Texas (21.5 percent), Nevada (20.1 percent), and Florida (20.0 percent) have the highest percentages of women who lack health insurance.
- Women in the North Central states, New England, and parts of the midwest are most likely to have health insurance. Women in Wisconsin, Connecticut, and North Dakota are very likely to have

Map 3. Economic Autonomy Composite Index



- The western and southwestern regions of the country have high percentages of women-owned businesses. The midwest, mid-atlantic and many of the prairie states have moderate numbers of women-owned businesses. There are fewer women-owned businesses in the southeast and in New England.

Women's Poverty

- Women are most likely to be poor in the southeastern and many of the southwestern states. In the worst-ranking state of Mississippi, 25.2 percent of women have family incomes below the poverty level

health insurance: only 7.6, 6.8, and 8.4 percent, respectively, of women are not insured in these states. Women in Hawaii (7.8 percent uninsured) are also likely to have health insurance.

for their family size. In Louisiana (23.6 percent), Arkansas (19.8 percent), and New Mexico (19.7 percent), women are also much more likely to be poor than women in the nation as a whole (13.2 percent).

Educational Attainment

- Women are more highly educated in the District of Columbia than elsewhere in the nation. Almost 31 percent of women in the District of Columbia have at least a college degree. There is a large gap between the District of Columbia and the state with the next highest percentage of college-educated women, Massachusetts (24.1 percent).
- Only 10.9 percent of women in West Virginia have at least a college degree, making it the lowest ranking state on this indicator. In general, women in the southeast and parts of the midwest tend to be less educated than in other parts of the country.

- Women are least likely to be poor in the northeast and parts of the west and midwest. Connecticut (7.0 percent), New Hampshire (7.4 percent), and New Jersey (7.8 percent) have the lowest poverty rates among women.

Women Business Owners

- The District of Columbia has the highest percentage (41.3 percent) of businesses that are women-owned. Mississippi has the lowest percentage (30.2 percent) of women-owned businesses.

Reproductive Rights

The reproductive rights composite index is based on information on legislation relating to access to legal abortions, the availability of public funding for abortions and infertility treatment, the position of the governor and state legislature on reproductive choice, maternity stay laws, and legislation regarding adoption by lesbian and gay couples. Map 4 shows composite rankings for this indicator.

- Reproductive rights are strongest in the northeastern United States and in the Pacific West region. The highest ranking state, Hawaii, provides pub-

Voter Registration and Turnout

- Nevada had the lowest reported women's voter registration, with only 57.1 percent of eligible women registered. Many southern states and some of the mid-atlantic states also had low female voter registration rates in 1992 and 1994.
- Women voters in Montana had the highest turnout rate in the country with 68.8 percent of registered women reporting voting in the 1992 and 1994 elections. Reported women's voter turnout was generally high in most of the northern states, from Michigan west to Oregon, and in Alaska.
- Voter turnout is lowest in much of the south, from Florida through Texas, as well as in California. In Kentucky, only 43.6 percent of registered women reported voting, on average, in the 1992 and 1994 elections, making it the lowest ranked state in the country for voter turnout.

Elected Officials

- A record number of women served in the 104th Congress. Nine women served in the U.S. Senate and women filled 49 of the 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives (this includes the woman delegate from the District of Columbia). In contrast, in the 96th Congress (1979-1981), only one Senator and 16 members of the House of Representatives were women.
- In general, women are more likely to hold elected office in the west. Kansas had the highest score on the women elected officials component indicator. The top ten states include Washington (2nd), California (3rd), and Colorado (5th). A few northeastern states also rank in the top ten: Delaware (4th), Maine (8th), and Connecticut (9th).
- Nearly all of the southeastern states rank in the bottom third on the women in elected office indicator. Alabama and Louisiana (tied at 47th), Kentucky (49th), and Mississippi (50th) have the worst records of electing women to public office.

Institutional Resources

- Five states — California, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, and Virginia — have all three types of institutional resources for women, including a state commission for women, a women's state agenda project, and women's state legislative caucuses. Institutional resources for women tend to be concentrated in the South Atlantic region.
- Three states — Arizona, Kansas, and Mississippi — have none of these institutional resources for women at the state level.

Employment and Earnings

The employment and earnings composite index is based on women's median annual earnings, the female/male earnings ratio, women's participation in the labor force, and the proportion of women in professional and managerial occupations. The national rank is of a possible 51, referring to the 50 states plus the District of Columbia. Map 2 shows the rankings on this composite index.

Women's Earnings

- The District of Columbia ranked the highest in the nation in terms of the median annual earnings of women working full-time, year-round in 1990, at \$24,500. In Alaska (\$24,000), Connecticut (\$23,000), and New Jersey (\$22,700), women also have high earnings compared to the average for women in the United States (\$18,780).
- In South Dakota, women earned a median salary of \$13,429, which is the lowest in the country. In other low ranking states, including Arkansas, Montana, and North Dakota, women earn only slightly more (\$14,000).

The Wage Gap

- The District of Columbia has the best earnings ratio in the nation. There, women earn 87.5 percent of what men earn. In Hawaii (76.0 percent),

In the District, most women of color are African-American (67.4 percent of women); in Hawaii, most are Native-Hawaiian and Asian-American (64.4 percent of women); and in New Mexico, most are Hispanic or Native American (37.1 and 9.0 percent of women, respectively).

- California (21.3 percent), Hawaii (16.8 percent), and New York (16.0 percent) have the highest percentages of foreign-born women. The number of foreign-born women in California increased by 65 percent between 1980 and 1990.

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 IWPR report *The Status of Women in the States*, part of a larger research project funded by the Ford Foundation. The data used come from a variety of sources, primarily government agencies.

This Research-In-Brief was written by Megan DeBell and prepared by Jill Braunstein in June 1997. Copies of the full report, *The Status of Women in the States*, as well as fourteen reports on individual states, are available for \$10.00 each 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 reports or more information on membership, contact IWPR at 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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