

Research-in-Brief



The Status of Women in Delaware: Highlights

The status of women in Delaware mirrors both the achievements and shortfalls of women's status in the United States as a whole. While Delaware women are witnessing real improvements in their economic, political and social status, serious obstacles to their equality remain. The state's rankings of tenth on the reproductive rights index and 13th on the economic autonomy index are in the top third for all states. Its rankings are closer to average at 17th on the political participation composite index and 19th on the employment and earnings composite index. At 48th on the health and well-being composite index, however, Delaware ranks close to the bottom of all states (see Chart I).

Notably, even the state's best rankings speak only to the status of its women relative to women in other states: despite improvements and the high rank of some states, in no state do women do as well as men, and even those states with better policies for women do not ensure equal rights for women. As a result, in an evaluation of Delaware women's status compared with goals set

Chart I: How Delaware Ranks on Key Indicators

Indicators	National Rank*	Regional Rank*	Grade
Composite Political Participation Index	17	2	C+
Women's Voter Registration, 1992-96	34	4	
Women's Voter Turnout, 1992-96	28	2	
Women in Elected Office Composite Index, 2000	11	2	
Women's Institutional Resources, 2000	31	7	
Composite Employment and Earnings Index	19	4	C+
Women's Median Annual Earnings, 1997	19	4	
Ratio of Women's to Men's Earnings, 1997	30	7	
Women's Labor Force Participation, 1998	23	3	
Women in Managerial and Professional Occupations, 1998	20	4	
Composite Economic Autonomy Index	13	4	B-
Percent with Health Insurance Among Nonelderly Women, 1997	21	1	
Educational Attainment: Percent of Women with Four or More Years of College, 1990	16	4	
Women's Business Ownership, 1992	14	4	
Percent of Women above the Poverty Level, 1997	8	2	
Composite Reproductive Rights Index	10	3	B
Composite Health and Well-Being Index	48	8	D-

See Appendix II in *The Status of Women in Delaware* for a detailed description of the methodology and sources used for the indices presented here.

* 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 nine and refer to the states in the South Atlantic Region (DC, DE, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV).

Calculated by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

for women's ideal status, Delaware earns a grade of B in reproductive rights, B- in economic autonomy, a C+ in employment and earnings and in political participation, and D- in health and well-being (see Chart I).

Delaware joins the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia as part of the South Atlantic census region. Among these nine states, Delaware ranks about average. The state is fourth on two composites, employment and earnings and economic autonomy. It ranks somewhat higher at third for reproductive rights and second for the political participation composite index, but it drops to eighth for women's health and well-being.

Political Participation

Delaware has a relatively large number of women in elected office, at eleventh for the country as a whole. Delaware women also vote at rates about average for the country at 28th. In contrast, women in Delaware lack a women's caucus in the state legislature and their voter registration rates are relatively low, at 34th. Consequently the state ranks 17th in the nation and second in its region on the political participation composite index. Like most states, Delaware's performance on indicators of political participation does not approach anything near equity for women. Despite its relatively high ranking for women in elected office, no woman represents Delaware in the U.S. Congress, and women make up less than a fourth of the state legislature. As a result, Delaware receives a grade of C+ for measures of political participation.

Employment and Earnings

Women in Delaware participate in the workforce and work as managers or professionals at rates slightly above average for women in the nation as a whole, and their earnings are slightly higher than wages for U.S. women. On the other hand, their earnings relative to those of Delaware men are slightly lower than in most of the country. These factors combine to place Delaware 19th in the nation on the employment and earnings composite index. The state received a grade of C+, reflecting the inequality women still experience when compared with men.

Economic Autonomy

While Delaware ranked slightly higher at 13th on IWPR's composite index of economic autonomy, the state's women still face serious obstacles in this domain as well. Despite the state's affluence, for example, almost 30 percent of single females with children are living in poverty, and more than 14 percent of nonelderly adult women lack health insurance. Both Delaware's success and its need for continued improvement is reflected in its grade of B- on the economic autonomy composite index.

Reproductive Rights

Delaware women have relatively high levels of access to im-

portant reproductive rights and resources, and as a result the state ranked tenth on this composite index. Delaware requires health insurers to provide contraceptive coverage and allows access to abortion without a waiting period. A higher-than-average proportion of women live in counties with abortion providers, and Delaware requires schools to provide students sex education. However, access to abortion in Delaware is restricted by mandatory parental notification and limited public funding. Delaware's grade of B on this composite index indicates that the state's women still lack a few provisions that would guarantee their reproductive choice, although they enjoy access to many resources in this area.

Health and Well-Being

Women in Delaware experience relatively poor levels of health and well-being compared with women in other states. The state ranks very near the bottom for women's mortality from breast and lung cancer, women's incidence of chlamydia and AIDS, and the number of days per month on which women's activities are limited by their health. While the state performs somewhat better on women's incidence of diabetes and mortality from heart disease, overall it still ranks only 48th of all states and the District of Columbia, and it earns a D- on measures of women's health and well-being.

Women's Resources and Rights Checklist

The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995, heightened awareness of women's status around the world and pointed to the importance of government action and public policy for the well-being of women. At the conference, representatives of 189 countries, including the United States, unanimously adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which pledged their governments to action on behalf of women. The Platform for Action outlines critical issues of concern to women and remaining obstacles to women's advancement.

Chart II, the Women's Resources and Rights Checklist, provides an overview of the policies supporting women's rights and the resources available to women in Delaware. This list derives from ideas presented in the Platform for Action, including the need for policies that help prevent violence against women, promote women's economic equality, alleviate poverty among women, improve their physical, mental, and reproductive health and well-being, and enhance their political power.

Many of the indicators in Chart II can be affected by state policy. As a result, the Women's Resources and Rights Checklist provides a measure of Delaware's commitment to policies designed to help women achieve economic, political, and social well-being. In Delaware, women enjoy some of the rights identified with women's well-being, although they lack many others. The state receives a total score of ten out of 28 possible measures presented in the Women's Resources and Rights Checklist.

Chart II: Women's Resources and Rights Checklist

	Yes	No	Other Information	Total Number of States with Policy (of 51) or U.S. Average
Violence Against Women				
Is domestic violence a separate criminal offense in Delaware?		✓		30
Does Delaware law require domestic violence training of new police recruits?		✓	Mandated by Council on Police Training	32
Domestic violence and sexual assault spending per person:			\$1.18	\$1.34
Is first stalking offense a felony in Delaware?	✓			10
Does Delaware law require sexual assault training for police and prosecutors?		✓		10
Child Support				
Percent of single-mother households receiving child support or alimony:			36%	34%
Percent of child support cases with orders for collection in which support was collected:			37.1%	39.2%
Welfare Policies				
Does Delaware extend TANF benefits to children born or conceived while a mother is on welfare?		✓		27
Does Delaware allow receipt of TANF benefits up to or beyond the 60-month federal time limit?		✓	48-month limit	30
Does Delaware allow welfare recipients at least 24 months before requiring participation in work activities? ¹		✓		23
Does Delaware provide transitional child care under TANF for more than 12 months?	✓		24 months	33
Has Delaware's TANF plan been certified or submitted for certification under the Family Violence Option or made other provisions for victims of domestic violence?	✓		Certified	40
In determining welfare eligibility, does Delaware disregard the equivalent of at least 50 percent of earnings from a full-time, minimum wage job? ²		✓		25
Average TANF benefit in Delaware, 1997-98:			\$270.52	\$358.08
Employment/Unemployment Benefits				
Is Delaware's minimum wage higher than the federal level as of March 2000? ³	✓			11
Does Delaware have mandatory temporary disability insurance?		✓		5
Does Delaware provide Unemployment Insurance benefits to:				
Low-wage workers?			Sometimes	12
Workers seeking part-time jobs?	✓			9
Workers who leave their jobs for certain circumstances ("good cause quits")?		✓		23
As of July 2000, has Delaware proposed policies allowing workers to use Unemployment Insurance for paid family leave?		✓		0 Enacted; 13 Proposed
Has Delaware implemented adjustments to achieve pay equity in its state civil service?		✓		20
Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity				
Does Delaware have civil rights legislation prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity?		✓		19
Does Delaware have a Hate Crimes law covering sexual orientation?	✓			24
Has Delaware avoided adopting a ban on same-sex marriage?		✓		20
Reproductive Rights				
Does Delaware allow access to abortion services without mandatory parental consent or notification?		✓		9

Chart II: Women's Resources and Rights Checklist, continued

	Yes	No	Other Information	Total Number of States with Policy (of 51) or U.S. Average
Reproductive Rights, continued				
Does Delaware allow access to abortion services without a waiting period?	✓			33
Does Delaware provide public funding for abortions under any or most circumstances if a woman is eligible?		✓		15
Does Delaware require health insurers to provide comprehensive coverage for contraceptives?	✓			11
Does Delaware require health insurers to provide coverage of infertility treatments?		✓		10
Does Delaware allow the non-legal parent in a gay/lesbian couple to adopt his/her partner's child? ⁴			No case has been tried	21
Does Delaware require schools to provide sex education?	✓			18
Institutional Resources				
Does Delaware have a Commission for Women?	✓			39
Total Policies⁵	10	16		28 possible

See Appendix III of *The Status of Women in Delaware* for a detailed description and sources for the items on this checklist.

¹ Immediate for all able and 2-parent households; when determined ready or within 24 months for single-parent households.

² Delaware uses the same rules and under the former AFDC program; see Appendix III for details.

³ As of September 1, 1997, the federal minimum hourly wage was increased to \$5.15. Delaware's minimum wage is \$6.15.

⁴ Most states that allow such adoptions do so as the result of court decisions. In Delaware, no case has yet been tried.

⁵ Policies in the "yes" and "no" columns do not add up to 28 because some of Delaware's policies have mixed evaluations and thus fall in the "other" column.

Compiled by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

Conclusion

Delaware reflects both the advances and limited progress achieved by women in the United States. While women in Delaware and the United States as a whole are seeing important changes in their lives and in their access to political, economic and social rights, they by no means enjoy equality with men, and they still lack many of the legal guarantees that would allow them to achieve that equality.

In order for women in Delaware to achieve more equality and greater well-being, the state should adopt the policies it lacks from the Women's Resources and Rights Checklist. In addition, women in Delaware and the nation would benefit from stronger enforcement of equal opportunity laws, better political representation, adequate and affordable child care, and other policies that would help improve their status.

The Status of Women in Delaware is part of an ongoing research project conducted by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) to establish baseline measures of the status of women in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The effort is part of a larger IWPR Economic Policy Education Program, funded primarily by the Ford Foundation, with additional funding by the Motorola Corporation, by Kristie Graham and the Stocker Foundation, by the Minnesota Women's Foundation, and by the Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation. The project is intended to improve the ability of advocates and policymakers at the state level to address women's economic issues. The first two series of reports were released in 1996 and 1998 and included a summary national report and 24 state reports. This third series includes nine states as well as an update of the national report.

For more information on IWPR reports or membership, please call (202) 785-5100, or visit our website at <http://www.iwpr.org>

The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) is a public policy research organization dedicated to informing and stimulating the debate on public policy issues of critical importance to women and their families. IWPR focuses on poverty and welfare, employment and earnings, work and family issues, the economic and social aspects of health care and domestic violence, and women's civic and political participation. IWPR's work is supported by foundation grants, government grants and contracts, donations from individuals, and contributions from organizations. IWPR is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. ❖