

# Research-in-Brief

IWPR# R242

## The Status of Women in Wisconsin *Highlights*

This Research-in-Brief is based on selected findings from *The Status of Women in Wisconsin* report, a definitive state-wide analysis on women's socio-economic and political circumstances.

Wisconsin reflects both the advances and limited progress achieved by women in the United States. While women in Wisconsin are seeing important changes in their lives and their access to political, economic, and social rights, they do not enjoy equality with men and lack many of the legal guarantees that would allow them to achieve it. Women in Wisconsin, and the nation, would benefit from stronger enforcement of equal opportunity laws, better political representation, adequate and affordable child care, stronger poverty reduction programs, and other policies to improve their status.

Among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, Wisconsin ranks in the top third for women's status in one area of their lives: the state is 15th for women's political participation. It is in the middle third of all states at 18th for women's health and well-being, 19th for social and economic autonomy, and 20th for employment and earnings. In contrast, Wisconsin is near the bottom of all states for women's reproductive rights, at 48th (see Chart 1).

Even the state's better rankings speak only to the status of its women relative to women in other states. Despite improvements in women's status across the country, women have not achieved equality with men in any state. With close to average rankings on many indicators, women in Wisconsin still face significant problems that demand attention from policymakers, women's advocates, and researchers concerned with women's status. As a result, in an evaluation of Wisconsin women's actual status compared with goals set for women's status, Wisconsin earns the grades of C+ in employment and earnings, social and economic autonomy, and health and well-being; C in political participation; and F in reproductive rights.

Wisconsin joins Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio as part of the East North Central region. Among these five states, women in Wisconsin fare relatively well in some areas but relatively poorly in others. The state leads the region for women's health and well-being, is second for women's political participation,

### Women in Wisconsin: What's Promising

- ♦ Women hold almost 40 percent of high-level appointed positions in the executive branch in Wisconsin.
- ♦ Wisconsin women are more likely to work than women in all but two states (Minnesota and Nebraska).
- ♦ Wisconsin is ranked third in the country for women's access to health insurance.
- ♦ Only three states (New Hampshire, Iowa, and Minnesota) have lower poverty rates among women than Wisconsin.
- ♦ Women in Wisconsin are much less likely than women in the United States to die of lung cancer, suicide, breast cancer, or heart disease.

### Women in Wisconsin: What's Disappointing

- ♦ Only one of Wisconsin's eleven seats in the U.S. Congress was filled by a woman, and less than a quarter of state legislators were women, as of fall 2002.
- ♦ At 30 cents per dollar, the gap between men's and women's wages in Wisconsin falls among the worst third of the states.
- ♦ About a third of single-mother families in Wisconsin live in poverty.
- ♦ Wisconsin women do not have guaranteed insurance coverage for contraception or infertility treatments, they face a waiting period when seeking abortions, and minors must receive parental consent for abortion.
- ♦ Women in Wisconsin experience among the highest number of days per month of poor mental health in the country.

## CHAPTER XIX

## EDUCATION, HISTORY

The superstition of education.—The loss from education; "missionary-made men."—Schools make persons all on one pattern; orthodoxy.—Criticism.—Reactions of the mores and education on each other.—The limitations of the historian.—Overvaluation of history.—Success and the favor of God.—Philosophic faiths and the study of history.—Democracy and history.—The study of history and the study of the mores.—The most essential element of education.—The history of the mores is needed.

**Introduction.** The one thing which justifies popular education for all children is the immense value of genius to the society. We have no means of discerning and recognizing, in their early childhood, the ones who have genius. If we could do so it would be a good bargain to pay great sums for them, and to educate them at public expense. Our popular education may be justly regarded as a system of selecting them. The pupils retire from the schools when they think that "they do not want any more schooling." Of course thousands withdraw for one who keeps on. It is a very expensive system, and the expense all falls on the taxpayers. The beneficiaries are left entirely free to spend their lives wherever they please. If the system is sound and just it must be so by virtue of some common interest of all the people of the United States in the social services of men of talent and genius in any part of the United States.

**699. The superstition of education.** Popular education and certain faiths about popular education are in the mores of our time. We regard illiteracy as an abomination. We ascribe to elementary book learning power to form character, make good citizens, keep family mores pure, elevate morals, establish individual character, civilize barbarians, and cure social vice and disease. We apply schooling as a remedy for every social phenomenon which we do not like. The information given by

schools and colleges, the attendant drill in manners, the ritual of the mores practiced in schools, and the mental dexterity produced by school exercises fit individuals to carry on the struggle for existence better. A literate man can produce wealth better than an illiterate man. Avenues are also opened by school work through which influences may be brought to bear on the reason and conscience which will mold character. Not even the increased production of wealth, much less the improvement of character, are assured results. Our faith in the power of book learning is excessive and unfounded. It is a superstition of the age. The education which forms character and produces faith in sound principles of life comes through personal influence and example. It is borne on the mores. It is taken from the habits and atmosphere of a school, not from the school text-books. School work opens an opportunity that a thing may be, but the probability that it will be depends on the persons, and it may be *nil* or contrary to what is desired. High attainments in school enhance the power obtained, but the ethical value of it all depends on how it is used. These facts are often misused or exaggerated in modern educational controversies, but their reality cannot be denied. Book learning is addressed to the intellect, not to the feelings, but the feelings are the spring of action.

**700. The loss from education.** **Missionary-made men.** Education has always been recognized as a means of individual success and group strength. In barbarism the children are educated by their elders, especially the little boys by the big ones, but the whole mental outfit possessed by the group is transmitted to the children, and all the mores pass by this tradition. It is to be noticed, therefore, that in our modern education the sense of the term has been much narrowed, since we mean by it book learning or schooling. Teachers are not wanting who teach manners and mores out of zeal and ambition, and families and churches can be found which duly supplement the work of schools, but the institutions follow no set plan of cooperation, and one or another of them fails in its part. The modern superstition of education contains a great error. It is forgotten that there is always a loss

employment and earnings, and social and economic autonomy, and is last for women's reproductive rights.

Wisconsin is an average-sized state, with just over 2.7 million women of all ages. Women in Wisconsin are less diverse than women nationally, with fewer African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and immigrants. Wisconsin does, however, have one of the largest and fastest growing Hmong populations in the country. The Hmong and all women of color experience additional obstacles to equality in the state. Wisconsin also has a relatively high proportion of women living in rural areas. Women in rural areas face special challenges accessing services (such as domestic violence shelters, health providers, or family planning resources) and finding employment.

Women in Wisconsin exemplify both the achievements and shortfalls of women's progress over the past century. Many Wisconsin women are witnessing real improvements in their economic, political, and social status. These advances are evident in some relatively high rankings for women's status compared with other states. But many serious obstacles to their equality remain.

## Political Participation

Women in Wisconsin register (eighth) and vote (fifth) at much higher rates than women in most states. They have average levels of representation in elected office (26th) and through institutional resources such as a commission for women (20th). Overall, the state ranks 15th and receives a grade of C on the political participation composite index. Increased representation in the political process could benefit women by encouraging the adoption of more women-friendly policies, which in turn could enhance women's status in other areas.

## Employment and Earnings

While women in Wisconsin participate in the workforce much more often than women in the rest of the country, they earn only average wages. They also work as managers or professionals less frequently than women in the nation as a whole, and their earnings equality with men is lower than in most of the country. These factors combine to place Wisconsin 20th in the nation on the employment and earnings composite index. The state receives a grade of C+ in this area.

## Social and Economic Autonomy

Wisconsin has relatively high levels of health insurance coverage and of women living above poverty. The state ranks in the top five states for both indicators. In contrast, at 31st among the states, women in Wisconsin are less likely than women nationally to have a college education. Wisconsin also ranks below average for women's business ownership (at 33rd). Overall, Wisconsin ranks 19th on IWPR's composite index of social and economic autonomy. Wisconsin's room for improvement is reflected in its grade of C+ for this composite index.

## Reproductive Rights

Wisconsin women lack many important reproductive rights and resources, and as a result, the state ranks 48th of 51 on the reproductive rights composite index. Poor women in Wisconsin can receive public funding for abortion only under federally mandated, limited circumstances, and the state lacks mandates for comprehensive contraceptive coverage or infertility treatments. Only about 38 percent of women live in counties with abortion providers. Finally, lesbian couples have been denied the right to adopt their partners' children. Because Wisconsin does not guarantee women many important reproductive rights, the state receives a grade of F on this composite index.

## Health and Well-Being

Women in Wisconsin experience about average health status compared with women in other states. Mortality rates from lung cancer and suicide are relatively low among Wisconsin women. In contrast, the number of days per month of women's poor mental health is relatively high, as is the incidence of chlamydia. Wisconsin's national rank of 18th suggests that, while the state ranks higher than many states for women's health and well-being, it has room for improvement. Wisconsin receives a C+ on this composite index.

## 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.

Many of the laws, policies, and programs that already exist in the United States meet the goals of the Platform for Action and support the rights of women identified in the Platform. In some ways, women in the United States enjoy access to relatively high levels of gender equality compared with women around the world. In other areas, the United States and many individual states have an opportunity to better support women's rights.

The Women's Resources and Rights Checklist, Chart 2, provides an overview of the policies supporting women's rights and the resources available to women in Wisconsin. This list was derived 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. The rights and resources outlined in the

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**Chart 1**  
**How Wisconsin Ranks on Key Indicators**

Indicators	National Rank*	Regional Rank*	Grade
<b>Composite Political Participation Index</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>C</b>
Women's Voter Registration, 1998 and 2000	8	1	
Women's Voter Turnout, 1998 and 2000	5	1	
Women in Elected Office Composite Index, 2002	26	2	
Women's Institutional Resources, 2002	20	3	
<b>Composite Employment and Earnings Index</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>C+</b>
Women's Median Annual Earnings, 1999	24	4	
Ratio of Women's to Men's Earnings, 1999	39	1	
Women's Labor Force Participation, 2000	3	1	
Women in Managerial and Professional Occupations, 1999	37	3	
<b>Composite Social and Economic Autonomy Index</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>C+</b>
Percent with Health Insurance Among Nonelderly Women, 2000	3	1	
Educational Attainment: Percent of Women with Four or More Years of College, 1990	31	2	
Women's Business Ownership, 1997	33	5	
Percent of Women Above the Poverty Level, 1999	4	1	
<b>Composite Reproductive Rights Index</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>F</b>
<b>Composite Health and Well-Being Index</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>C+</b>
See Appendix II in <i>The Status of Women in Wisconsin</i> 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 five and refer to the states in the East North Central region (IL, IN, MI, OH, and WI).			
Calculated by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.			

Women's Resources and Rights Checklist fall under several categories: protection from violence, access to income support (e.g., through welfare and child support collection), women-friendly employment protections, family leave benefits, legislation protecting sexual minorities, reproductive rights, and institutional representation of women's concerns.

Many of the indicators in Chart 2 can be affected by state policy decisions. As a result, the Women's Resources and Rights Checklist provides a measure of Wisconsin's commitment to policies designed to help women achieve economic, political, and social well-being. In Wisconsin, women lack most of the rights on this checklist. The state has adopted eleven out of 31 possible policies presented in the Women's Resources and Rights Checklist.

*The Status of Women in Wisconsin* is part of an ongoing research project conducted by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) to measure and track the status of women in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Primarily funded by the Ford Foundation, with additional funding from state and local foundations and organizations, this project intends to improve the ability of advocates and policymakers at the state level to address women's issues. Funding from the Rockefeller Family Fund, the Open Society Institute, and the Marjorie Cook Family Foundation also supports the project. The first three sets of reports were released in 1996, 1998, and 2000, consisting of 33 state reports and three national reports. The 2002 series includes nine states as well as an update of the national report. The 2002 National Report provides an overview of women's status across all 50 states and the District of Columbia. See IWPR's website ([www.iwpr.org](http://www.iwpr.org)) for more information.

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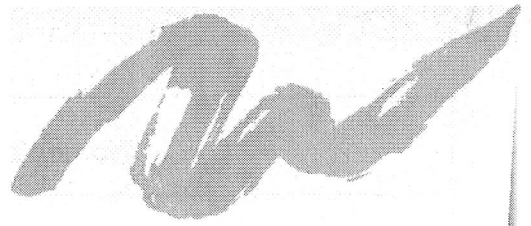
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**Chart 2  
Women's Resources and Rights Checklist**

	Yes	No	Other Information	Total Number of States with Policy (of 51) or U.S. Average
<b>Violence Against Women</b>				
Has Wisconsin adopted a domestic battery statute complementing assault laws?	✓			34
Does Wisconsin law require domestic violence training of new police recruits and health care professionals?		✓	Police Only	10
Does Wisconsin law prohibit domestic violence discrimination in insurance?	✓			22
Is a first stalking offense a felony in Wisconsin?		✓	Felony or Misdemeanor	12
Does Wisconsin law require sexual assault training for police, prosecutors, and health care professionals?	✓			4
<b>Child Support</b>				
Percent of single-mother households receiving child support or alimony:			45%	34%
Percent of child support cases with orders for collection in which support was collected:			47%	39%
<b>Welfare and Poverty Policies</b>				
Does Wisconsin extend TANF benefits to children born or conceived while a mother is receiving welfare? <sup>1</sup>		✓		28
Does Wisconsin allow receipt of TANF benefits up to or beyond the 60-month federal time limit? <sup>2</sup>	✓		60-month limit	44
Does Wisconsin allow welfare recipients at least 24 months before requiring participation in work activities?		✓	Immediate	13
Does Wisconsin provide transitional child care under TANF for more than 12 months? <sup>3</sup>		✓		14
Has Wisconsin' TANF plan been certified or submitted for certification under the Family Violence Option or made other provisions for victims of domestic violence?		✓		37
In determining welfare eligibility, does Wisconsin disregard the equivalent of at least 50 percent of earnings from a full-time, minimum wage job? <sup>4</sup>	✓			11
Does Wisconsin have a state Earned Income Tax Credit? <sup>5</sup>	✓			16
Maximum TANF benefit for a family of three (two children) in Wisconsin, 2001:			\$673.00	\$379.00
<b>Employment/Unemployment Benefits</b>				
Is Wisconsin' minimum wage higher than the federal level as of January 2002? <sup>3</sup>		✓	\$5.15	12
Does Wisconsin have mandatory temporary disability insurance?		✓		5
Does Wisconsin provide Unemployment Insurance benefits to:				
Low-wage earners?		✓		14
Workers seeking part-time jobs?		✓	Proposed	9
Workers who leave their jobs for certain circumstances ("good cause quits")? <sup>6</sup>	✓			30
Has Wisconsin implemented adjustments to achieve pay equity in its state civil service?	✓			20

(continued on next page)

# Introduction



**D**uring the 20th century, women made significant economic, political, and social advances, but they are still far from enjoying gender equality. Throughout the United States, women earn less than men, are seriously underrepresented in political office, and make up a disproportionate share of people in poverty. Even in areas where there have been significant advances in women's status, rates of progress are slow. For example, at the rate of progress achieved between 1989 and 2002, women will not achieve wage parity for more than 50 years. If women's representation in Congress changes at the rate it did during the last decade, it will take almost 100 years to achieve equality in political representation.

To make significant progress toward gender equity, policymakers, researchers, and advocates need reliable data about women and the issues affecting their lives. Recognizing this need, the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) initiated a series of reports on *The Status of Women in the States* in 1996. The biennial series is now in its fifth round. Over the course of a decade, reports on each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia have been completed. This year, IWPR produced reports on twelve states, together with an updated national report summarizing results for all the states and the nation as a whole.

## Goals of *The Status of Women in the States* Reports

*The Status of Women in the States* reports are produced to inform citizens about the progress of women in their state relative to women in other states, to men, and to the nation as a whole. The reports have three main goals: 1) to analyze and disseminate information about women's progress in achieving rights and opportunities; 2) to identify and measure the remaining barriers to equality; and 3) to provide baseline measures and a continuing monitor of women's progress throughout the country.

The 2004 reports contain indicators describing women's status in five main areas: political participation, employment and earnings, social and economic autonomy, reproductive rights, and health and well-being. In addition, the reports provide information about the basic demographics of the state (see

Appendix I). For the five major issue areas addressed in this report, IWPR compiled composite indices based on the indicators presented to provide an overall assessment of the status of women in each area and to rank the states from 1 to 51 (including the District of Columbia; see Appendix II for details).

Although state-by-state rankings provide important insights into women's status throughout the country—indicating where progress is greater or less—in no state do women have adequate policies ensuring their equal rights. Women have not achieved equality with men in any state, including those ranked relatively high on the indices compiled for this report. All women continue to face important obstacles to achieving economic, political, and social parity.

To address the continuing barriers facing women across the United States, the reports also include letter grades for each state for each of the five major issue areas. IWPR designed the grading system to highlight the gaps between men's and women's access to various rights and resources. States were graded based on the difference between their performance and goals set by IWPR (e.g., no remaining wage gap or the proportional representation of women in political office; see Appendix II). For example, since no state has eliminated the gap between women's and men's earnings, no state received an A on the employment and earnings composite index. Because women in the United States are closer to achieving some goals than others, the curve for each index is somewhat different. Using the grades, policymakers, researchers, and advocates can quickly identify remaining barriers to equality for women in their state.

IWPR designed *The Status of Women in the States* to actively involve state researchers, policymakers, and advocates concerned with women's status. Beginning in 1996, these state partners have collaborated on the design and written portions of *The Status of Women in the States* reports, reviewed drafts, and disseminated and applied the findings in their states. Their participation has been crucial to improving the reports and increasing their effectiveness and impact in each round. Many have used the reports to advance policies to improve women's status.



(Chart 2 continued)

	Yes	No	Other Information	Total Number of States with Policy (of 51) or U.S. Average
<b>Family Leave Benefits</b>				
Has Wisconsin proposed legislation extending Unemployment Insurance benefits to workers on temporary leave to care for infants and newly adopted children?		✓		0 Enacted; 20 Proposed
Has Wisconsin proposed legislation allowing use of temporary disability insurance to cover periods of work absence due to family care needs?		✓		1 Enacted; 3 Proposed
<b>Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity</b>				
Does Wisconsin have civil rights legislation prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity?	✓			14
Has Wisconsin adopted legislation creating enhanced penalties or a separate offense for crimes based on sexual orientation?	✓			28
Has Wisconsin avoided adopting a ban on same-sex marriage?	✓			16
<b>Reproductive Rights</b>				
Does Wisconsin allow access to abortion services: Without mandatory parental consent or notification?		✓		8
Without a waiting period?		✓		29
Does Wisconsin provide public funding for abortions under any or most circumstances if a woman is eligible?		✓		16
Does Wisconsin require health insurers to provide comprehensive coverage for contraceptives? <sup>7</sup>		✓		19
Does Wisconsin require health insurers to provide coverage of infertility treatments?		✓		11
Does Wisconsin allow the non-legal parent in a gay/lesbian couple to adopt his/her partner's child? <sup>8</sup>		✓	Appellate Court	25
Does Wisconsin require schools to provide sex education?		✓		23
<b>Institutional Resources</b>				
Does Wisconsin have a commission for women?	✓			4
<b>Total Policies</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>20</b>		<b>31 possible</b>

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

<sup>1</sup> Wisconsin's benefit system involves payments based upon which work program participants are assigned to, regardless of family size. TANF benefits do not increase as a family size increases.

<sup>2</sup> Within the 60-month time limit, Wisconsin also enforces 24-month time limits for each work program assignment. For participants who are unable to advance to the next work program level, the right to benefits may be limited to 24 months.

<sup>3</sup> All families earning less than 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Level are eligible for child care assistance, regardless of prior TANF status, and they remain eligible until their income reaches 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. Former TANF recipients are not guaranteed child care.

<sup>4</sup> Families earning less than 115 percent of the Federal Poverty Line are eligible for TANF.

<sup>5</sup> Wisconsin's refundable Earned Income Tax Credit is 4 to 43 percent of the Federal Earned Income Tax Credit. For families with one child the state credit is 4 percent; with two children, 14 percent; and with three children, 43 percent of the Federal Earned Income Tax Credit.

<sup>6</sup> Wisconsin provides Unemployment Insurance benefits to workers who leave their jobs due to domestic violence, sexual harassment, or individual or family illness.

<sup>7</sup> Wisconsin requires that at least one method of contraception be covered for all state employees.

<sup>8</sup> Most states that allow such adoptions do so as a result of court decisions. In Wisconsin, an appellate court has ruled against second-parent adoptions.

Compiled by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

## About the Indicators and the Data

IWPR referred to several sources for guidelines on what to include in these reports. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action from the U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women guided some of IWPR's choices of indicators. This document, the result of an official convocation of delegates from around the world, outlines issues of concern to women, rights fundamental to achieving equality and autonomy, and remaining obstacles to women's advancement. IWPR also turned to members of its state advisory committees, who reviewed their state's report and provided input for improving the project as a whole. Finally, IWPR staff consulted experts in each subject area for input about the most critical issues affecting women's lives.

Ultimately the IWPR research team selected indicators by using several principles: relevance, representativeness, reliability, and comparability of data across all the states and the District of Columbia. While women's status is constantly changing, the evidence contained in this report represents a compilation of the best available data for measuring women's status.

To facilitate comparisons among states, IWPR uses only data collected in the same way for each state. Much of the data is from federal government agencies, including the Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Centers for Disease Control, and the National Center for Health Statistics. Nonprofit and research organizations also provide data.

For the 2004 series of reports, IWPR used data from two different sources to report on women's economic status:

### A) Census 2000 Data.

Census 2000 data were collected by the United States Census Bureau through its census of the entire U.S. population. A subset of Census respondents, or 17 percent of households, was asked to complete a long form with additional questions, and a portion of these data (for 2.8 million individuals) is available through the Public Use Microdata Samples. In the Census data, the sample size for women for full-time, full-year workers ranged from 2,768 in Wyoming to 179,500 in California; for men, the sample size ranged from 4,314 in the District of Columbia to 273,713 in California. These data allowed IWPR to provide state-level statistics on a variety of indicators of women's economic status by race and ethnicity, including data on earnings, the gender wage ratio, labor force participation, education, and poverty. These data reflect

conditions in 1999-2000. The decennial censuses provide the most comprehensive data for states and local areas, but they are conducted only every ten years. Please note that unless otherwise noted, the data in this report for the various races (white, African American, Asian American, and Native American) do not include Hispanics; Hispanics, who may be of any race, are reported separately. For information on how race and ethnicity were defined for the purposes of this report, see Appendix III.

### B) 2002-2003 Current Population Survey Data.

As in previous years, IWPR used the Current Population Survey (CPS) to produce statistics for the major economic indices and rankings, to maintain consistency with previous reports and to use the most up-to-date information available. The CPS is a monthly survey of a nationally representative sample of households. It is conducted jointly by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. To ensure sufficiently large sample sizes for cross-state comparisons, two years of data were combined and then tabulated. For this set of reports, IWPR used new economic data for the calendar years 2001-2002. Because the CPS has a much smaller sample than the decennial Census, the population subgroups that can be reliably studied are limited (for information on sample sizes, see Appendix II), which led to the decision to supplement the most current CPS data with slightly older decennial Census data from 2000.

In some cases, we report data on one indicator from two different sources (for example median annual earnings), so that we can provide both the most current data available from the CPS and detailed race and ethnicity breakdowns using Census 2000. The reader should use caution in making comparisons across these data sources since they represent two different samples of individuals surveyed in different years in different economic conditions.

Identifying and reporting on subregions within states (cities or counties) were beyond the scope of this project, which means that some regional differences among women within the states are not reflected. For example, pockets of poverty are not identified, and community-level differences in women's status are not described. While these differences are important, addressing them was not possible due to resource constraints.

A lack of reliable and comparable state-by-state data limits IWPR's treatment of several important topics: violence against women, issues concerning nontraditional families of all types, issues of special impor-

# ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S POLICY RESEARCH

The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) is a scientific research organization dedicated to informing and stimulating debate on public policy issues of critical importance to women and their families. IWPR focuses on issues of poverty and welfare, employment and earnings, work and family issues, the economic and social aspects of health care and safety, and women's civic and political participation.

The Institute works with policymakers, scholars, and public interest groups to design, execute, and disseminate research and to build a network of individuals and organizations that conduct and use women-oriented policy research. IWPR, an independent, nonprofit organization, also works in affiliation with the graduate programs in public policy and women's studies at The George Washington University.

IWPR's work is supported by foundation grants, government grants and contracts, donations from individuals, and contributions from organizations and corporations. IWPR is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

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tance to lesbians, and issues concerning women with disabilities. The report also does not analyze women's unpaid labor or women in nontraditional occupations. In addition, income and poverty data across states are limited in their comparability by the lack of good indicators of differences in the cost of living by state; thus, poor states may look worse than they really are, and rich states may look better than they really are. IWPR firmly believes that all of these topics are of utmost concern to women in the United States and continues to search for data and methods to address them. Many of these issues do not receive sufficient treatment in national surveys or other data collection efforts.

These data concerns highlight the sometimes problematic politics of data collection: researchers do not know enough about many of the serious issues affecting women's lives because women do not yet have sufficient political or economic power to demand the necessary data. As a research institute concerned with women, IWPR presses for changes in data collection and analysis in order to compile a more complete understanding of women's status.

Readers of this report should keep a few technical notes in mind. In some cases, differences reported between two states—or between a state and the nation—for a given indicator are statistically significant. That is, they are unlikely to have occurred by chance and probably represent a true difference between the two states or the state and the country as a whole. In other cases, these differences are too small to be statistically significant and are likely to have occurred by chance. IWPR did not calculate or report measures of statistical significance. Generally,

the larger a difference between two values (for any given sample size or distribution), the more likely it is that the difference will be statistically significant.

Finally, when comparing indicators based on data from different years, the reader should note that in the 1990-2004 period, the United States experienced a major economic recession at the start of the 1990s, followed by a slow and gradual recovery, with strong economic growth (in most states) in the last few years of the 1990s. By 2000, however, the economy had slowed significantly, and a recession began in March 2001 and officially ended in November 2001. The period since the end of the recession has been marked by slow economic growth.

### **How *The Status of Women in the States* Reports Are Used**

*The Status of Women in the States* reports have been used throughout the country to highlight remaining obstacles facing women in the United States and to encourage policy changes designed to improve women's status. The reports have helped IWPR's state partners and others educate the public about issues concerning women's status; inform policies and programs to increase women's voter turnout; and make the case for establishing commissions for women, expanding child care subsidies for low-income women, strengthening supports for women-owned businesses, developing training programs for women to enter non-traditional occupations, and improving women's access to health care. Data on the status of women give citizens the information they need to address the key issues facing women and their families.