

# HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WOMEN'S BENCHMARKS REPORTS

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## INTRODUCTION

In this summary we provide major findings from our Women's Benchmarks Reports on the city of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County, and the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The Pittsburgh MSA consists of Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Washington, and Westmoreland Counties.

These reports assess the socioeconomic status of women in the Pittsburgh area by using 2000 census data to compare women's conditions across the 70 largest cities, 50 largest counties, and 50 largest metro areas. In addition, comparisons of women and men's conditions in 2000 and changes in women and men's conditions from 1990 to 2000 are presented. This summary and the three benchmarks reports are at [www.ucsur.pitt.edu](http://www.ucsur.pitt.edu) (see publications). The Maurice Falk Fund funded this study.

## POPULATION AND FAMILY STATUS

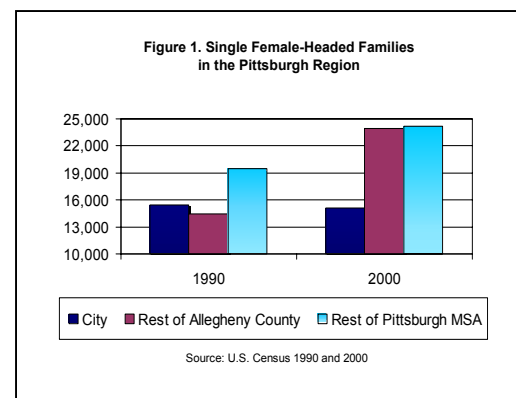
### 1. Voting-age women outnumber voting-age men by a large margin in the region.

According to the 2000 census, adult women (age 18 and over) outnumber adult men by 17,000 (14%) in the city, 75,000 (16%) in the county, and 122,000 (14%) in the Pittsburgh MSA. Despite this advantage, women hold a small percentage of elected positions in the region (see "Diversity Among Elected Officials in the Pittsburgh Region in 2002" at [www.ucsur.pitt.edu](http://www.ucsur.pitt.edu), click on publications).

### 2. The majority of the region's potential workforce and leaders are women.

Working-age women (age 18-64) outnumber working-age men by 4,000 (4%) in the city, 25,000 (7%) in the county, and 35,000 (5%) in the Pittsburgh MSA. This has produced a large female workforce (see the labor force section below) but has not resulted in much participation by women in community decision making. For example, women hold a small percentage of board positions in many organizations in the region (see "Diversity Within and Among Non-Profit Boards in Allegheny County" and "African American and Women Board Members in the Pittsburgh Region" at [www.ucsur.pitt.edu](http://www.ucsur.pitt.edu) ).

### 3. Large increases in the number of single female-headed families with children occurred in Allegheny County and the Pittsburgh MSA.



The number of single female-headed families with children declined in the city by 300 from 1990 to 2000 but increased in Allegheny County outside the city of Pittsburgh by about 10,000 and in the Pittsburgh MSA outside Allegheny County by 4,000 (Figure 1). These families, which often need many social services, are located primarily outside the central city.

**4. About 100,000 elderly women live alone in the region.**

In the city, county, and Pittsburgh MSA roughly 20% of the female population is under age 18, 60% is age 18-64, and 20% is age 65 and over. The elderly are a larger percentage of the female population in the region than in most other urban areas. For a full report on local elderly conditions see “The State of Aging and Health in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County” at [www.ucsur.pitt.edu](http://www.ucsur.pitt.edu).

Elderly living alone have social and health services needs in addition to those the elderly in general. About 44% (18,000) of elderly women in the city, 39% (56,000) in the county, and 39% (98,000) in the region live alone. These rates are about twice the rates for elderly men and are among the highest for large cities, counties, and metro areas.

**EDUCATION**

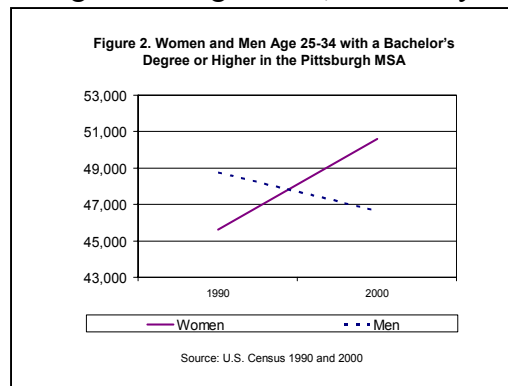
**5. A large part of the city’s female population consists of university students.**

More than 16% of the female population age 18-64 in the city of Pittsburgh are enrolled in an undergraduate higher education program, and about 5% are enrolled in graduate or professional degree programs. These are the first and second highest percentages, respectively, among the 70 largest cities in the US. The percentages of women enrolled in undergraduate and graduate or professional programs in Allegheny County and the Pittsburgh MSA are close to the medians for all large counties and metro areas.

**6. Young women in the region are highly educated.**

The percentage of women age 25-34 with a high school degree and the percentage with a bachelor’s degree in the city (93% and 42%), county (95% and 41%), and region (94% and 35%) are among the highest in the nation. The city has the third highest high school attainment rate while the county and Pittsburgh MSA have the highest rates. The city has the 13<sup>th</sup> highest rate for bachelor degree attainment among women age 25-34, the county has the 15<sup>th</sup> highest rate, and the region has the 21<sup>st</sup> highest rate. Women age 25-34 in the county and metro area have obtained bachelor degrees at higher rates than men.

**7. Retention of educated young women resulted in a “brain gain” in the region.**



From 1990 to 2000 the number of women residents age 25-34 with a bachelor's degree or higher increased by 850 (9.5%) in the city, 452 (1.4%) in the county, and 4,983 (10.9%) in the Pittsburgh MSA. The number of male residents age 25-34 with a bachelor's degree or higher increased from 1990 to 2000 by 1,103 (11.6%) in the city, decreased by 3,533 (-9.9%) in the county, and decreased 2,113 (-4.3%) in the Pittsburgh MSA. As shown in Figure 2, the increase in educated young women was greater than the loss of educated young men, which produced an overall brain gain in the region. Further, educated young women now outnumber educated young men in the region.

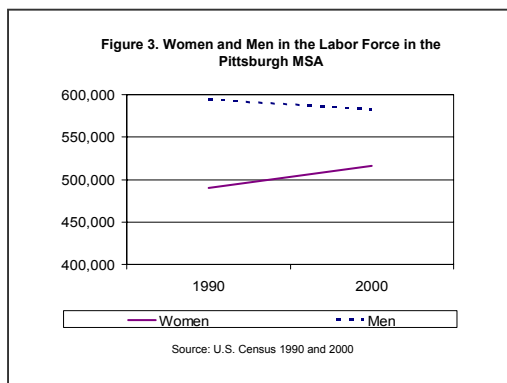
## LABOR FORCE AND EMPLOYMENT

### 8. Working-age women in Allegheny County have above average labor force participation and employment rates.

About 74% of women age 25-59 in the county are in the labor force (working or looking for work) and 71% are employed. These rates rank 14<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> highest, respectively, among the 50 largest counties in the nation. Labor force and employment rates of women 25-59 in the city and metro area are about average.

### 9. Women are the source of the region's labor force growth.

The number of women in the labor force (working or looking for work) in the Pittsburgh MSA increased by 26,000, 5.4%, from 1990 to 2000 while the number of men in the region's labor force declined by 11,000, -1.9% (Figure 3).



### 10. Women are the primary source of the region's growth in full-time employment.

From 1990 to 2000 the number of women working full-time in the region increased by 42,000 (16.7%) and the number of men working full-time increased by 25,000 (6.1%).

### 11. The region has low levels of full-time jobs and high levels of part-time jobs.

About half of the women in the city, county, and metro area who worked any hours in 1999 were employed full-time. Smaller percentages of employed women age 16 and older worked full-time in 1999 in the Pittsburgh area than in most other large cities, counties, and metro areas.

### 12. Women in the region have low employment in many occupations and industries.

In the following non-traditional occupations, women in the Pittsburgh MSA have the:

- Fifth lowest share (2.0%) of jobs in construction trades

- Sixth lowest share (4.1%) of jobs in installation, maintenance, and repair
- Fourth lowest share (9.6%) of jobs in firefighting, prevention, and law enforcement
- Lowest share (10.1%) of jobs in architecture and engineering
- Seventh lowest share (13.3%) of jobs in transportation and materials moving
- Third lowest share (23.1%) of production jobs

Women also have low employment rates in several traditional industries:

- Lowest share (49.5%) of jobs in state government
- Second lowest share (52.9%) of jobs in local government
- Second lowest share (64.6%) of jobs in educational services

Women in the region have high employment rates in two traditional, low-paying occupations:

- Second highest share (61%) of food preparation and serving jobs
- 10<sup>th</sup> highest share (75.5%) of office and administrative support jobs

## EARNINGS, INCOME, AND POVERTY

### 13. Part-time women workers in the Pittsburgh area are the lowest paid in urban America, and full-time women workers are nearly the lowest paid.

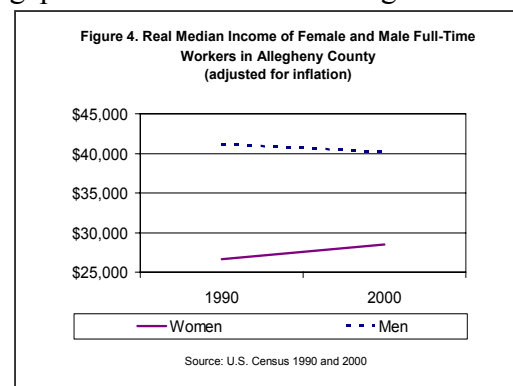
Median earnings of part-time women workers in the city, county, and region are the lowest among all large urban areas of the US, and median earnings of full-time women workers are among the lowest in the nation. The low earnings of women in the region are not primarily due to the region's low cost of living since: 1) the cost of living in the Pittsburgh MSA is not more than 5% below the median of other large urban areas (see data provided by the Pittsburgh Regional Alliance at [www.pittsburghregion.org](http://www.pittsburghregion.org)); but 2) women's median earnings in the Pittsburgh MSA are about 20% below the median of the 50 largest metro areas for part-time jobs and 10% below for full-time jobs.

### 14. The gender gap in pay in the Pittsburgh region is among the largest in America.

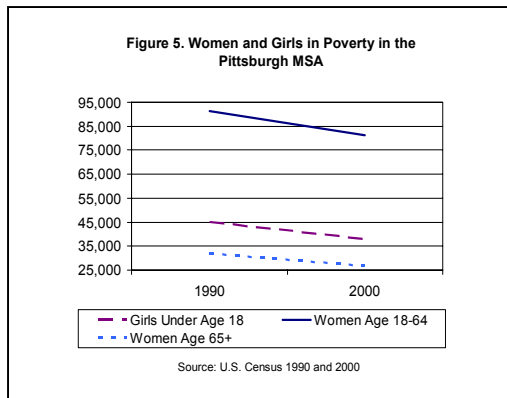
Full-time women workers in the Pittsburgh MSA earn less than 70% of the annual earnings of full-time male workers. This earnings gap of 30% is the seventh largest among the 50 most populated metro areas.

### 15. Women have low incomes in the region.

Median incomes of women workers, single women with children, and women living alone in the Pittsburgh area are among the lowest in the nation. The real median income of full-time female workers in the city and county increased



from 1990 to 2000, while the real median income of male full-time workers declined (Figure 4).



## 16. Poverty for women and girls declined.

Poverty rates for single women with children and women age 18-64 in the Pittsburgh area declined from 1990 to 2000. The number of women and girls in poverty also declined from 1990 to 2000 in the region (Figure 5). However, poverty rates for single women with children remain high (the city ranks 13<sup>th</sup> highest, the county 10<sup>th</sup> highest, and the region 4<sup>th</sup> highest).

## HOMEOWNERSHIP AND DISABILITY

### 17. Women have a small homeownership advantage in the Pittsburgh region.

Women age 15-64 and living alone in Pittsburgh and other urban areas have higher homeownership rates than those of men. However, the ratio of female/male homeownership rates in the Pittsburgh MSA (1.06) is much smaller than the median ratio of the 50 largest metro areas in the US (1.17).

### 18. Disabled women in the region have low employment and high poverty rates.

In the city, county, and region: 1) women age 16-64 and 65 and over have low disability rates; 2) disabled women age 16-64 have low employment rates; and 3) disabled women age 16-64 and 65 and over and disabled girls have high poverty rates.

## CONCLUSION

These highlights of the three Women's Benchmarks Reports show that the most positive women's conditions in the Pittsburgh area are:

- High enrollments in post-secondary education
- High levels of education attainment
- Increasing numbers of female college graduates living in the region
- Increasing female labor force and labor force participation
- Increasing numbers of women working full-time
- Increasing real incomes for women workers
- Decreasing poverty rates for women and girls
- Low disability rates for adult women

These highlights suggest that the most serious problems for women in the Pittsburgh region are:

- Lack of political and decision making power despite population advantages
- Increasing numbers of single female-headed families with children
- High levels of part-time employment
- Low rates of employment in high-paying occupations and industries and high rates of employment in low-paying occupations and industries
- Low pay compared to the pay of women in other urban areas
- A high gender gap in pay compared to the gender gap in other urban areas
- High poverty rates for single women with children
- Low employment rates and high poverty rates for disabled women

Considering the positive and negative women's conditions together, one of the most clear and disturbing findings is that working-age women in Allegheny County are among the most educated in urban America but are the lowest paid in part-time jobs, are among the lowest paid in full-time jobs, and have one of the largest female-male gaps in pay. A major reason for this inconsistency, as shown in this report, is that women workers in Allegheny County are concentrated in low-paying occupations and industries much more than women in other large counties.

It is not known why women in the county are much more concentrated in low-paying occupations and industries than women in other large counties. One possible explanation is discrimination, which could involve: 1) employers exclude qualified women from higher paying occupations and industries; and 2) women choose not to obtain the skills or apply for jobs in certain occupations and industries because of perceived discrimination. A second possible explanation is that women may choose to work in certain occupations and industries due to personal, family, or cultural considerations.

Further research is needed to determine why educated women in the county are in low-paying jobs and what can be done about it. Further research is also needed to determine: 1) which specific age groups of women in the county, with and without a bachelor's degree, have low wages in full-time jobs; 2) which occupations and industries have women, with and without a bachelor's degree, with low wages in full-time jobs; and 3) whether women are paid less than men who are doing the same jobs as women.

In response to these reports, the next steps for organizations in the region could be to: 1) select one or more important problems or opportunities for improvement; 2) understand why the selected conditions are unusually good or poor in the Pittsburgh area; 3) identify and analyze possible actions for improving conditions; 4) select and implement the most cost-effective actions; and 5) monitor and evaluate initiatives to determine whether full implementation has occurred, whether the actions are effective in improving conditions, and how to improve the initiatives.