

STATUS OF WOMEN

in Southwest Pennsylvania

Research Summary

This overview describes the status of women in the eleven counties of southwest Pennsylvania (SWPA). The series was developed as a tool for grant seekers, policy makers and the general public working to enhance the status of women in the region. Five indicators were used to assess women's status: political participation, employment & economic status, social & economic autonomy, reproductive rights, and health & well-being. Composite data was compiled in each of these subject areas and counties were ranked on each composite indicator to allow for comparison of the status of women by county.

This report expands the Status of Women in Pennsylvania Report compiled by the Institute for

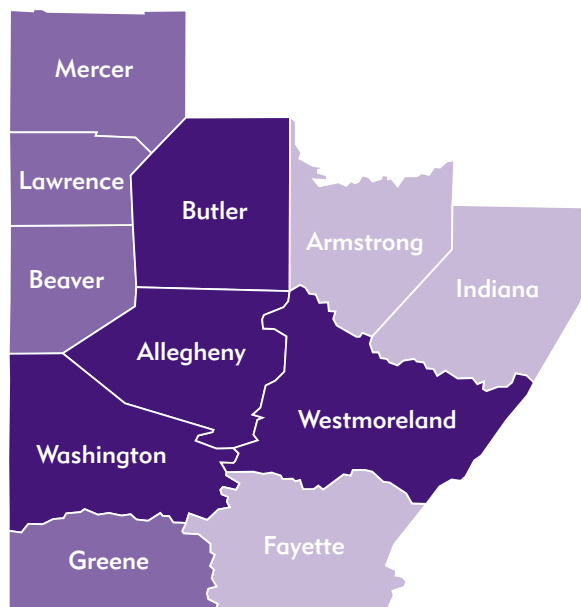
Women's Policy Research (IWPR) as part of the *Status of Women in the States* series. Methodology employed by IWPR was adapted to the county level and data was collected from multiple sources including the U.S. Census as well as state and regional sources. The research is limited by the availability of data.

Data was collected in the same way for each county, to allow for accurate rankings and regional comparisons. For example, political offices varied from county to county, but all eleven had a form of a county commission. Thus, one of the indices used to provide a comparative measure of political participation was the number of elected female county commissioners.

Regional Ranking on the Status of Women

Of the eleven counties, Mercer ranked highest in women's political participation; Allegheny ranked highest in employment and economic status; Butler ranked highest in social and economic autonomy; Greene ranked highest on reproductive rights, and Lawrence had the highest ranking for women's health and well-being. When rankings on all indicators are combined, Washington County ranks the highest overall.

■ = High ■ = Medium ■ = Low



This report on the status of women in southwest Pennsylvania is a launching point and we look forward to building on the series in the future. Questions and comments on how the research can be expanded are welcome and encouraged. More in-depth research on the status of women in each

county and the region is available from the co-sponsors of this report, the Regional Women's Initiative at Chatham College (www.chatham.edu/RWI) and the Women and Girls Foundation of Southwest Pennsylvania (www.womenandgirlsfoundation.org).

Overall Ranking

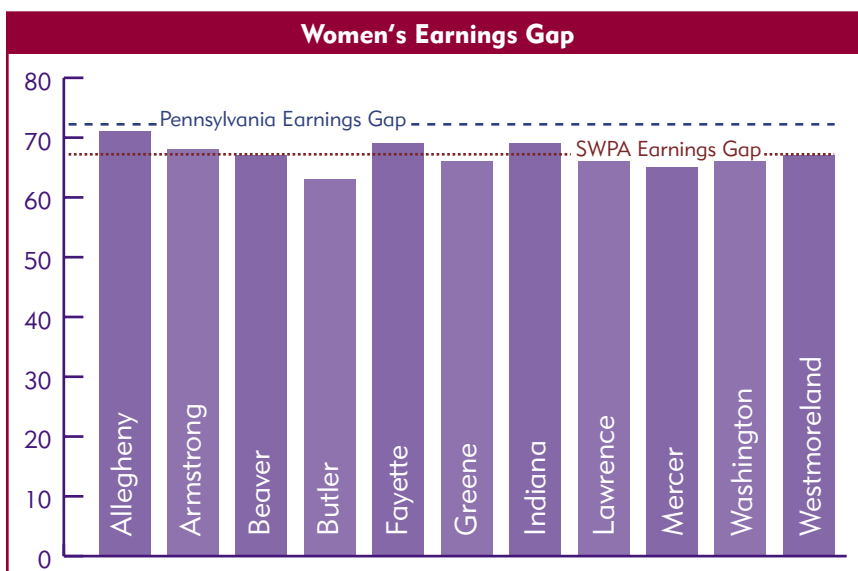
County (listed in order of overall composite rank)	Political Participation	Employment & Economic Status	Social & Economic Autonomy	Reproductive Rights	Health & Well-being
Washington	3	5	5	4	2
Allegheny	7	1	3	2	8
Butler	8	3	1	5	5
Westmoreland	2	2	2	9	10
Beaver	8	4	4	8	3
Mercer	1	11	6	3	7
Greene	3	10	11	1	4
Lawrence	8	7	9	6	1
Fayette	3	8	10	7	9
Indiana	8	6	7	11	6
Armstrong	3	9	8	10	11

Employment & Economic Status

Pennsylvania ranks behind 35 other states in women's employment and economic status and regionally, SWPA lags behind the state average.

- **Labor Force Participation (LFP):** Regionally women (16+) represent 45-55% of LFP. All of the counties except Allegheny and Butler have LFP rates below the state average of 55%.
- **Managerial/Professional Occupations:** In nine of eleven counties, the proportion of women in these positions is below the state average of 33.5%. Only Allegheny and Butler counties exceed the average.
- **Gender Wage Gap:** The median earnings for women working full-time are below the state average of \$26,687 in ten of the eleven counties. All counties in the region have a wage gap larger than the statewide gap.

The employment & economic status composite index reflects four indicators: women's earnings, participation in the labor force, women in managerial/professional occupations, and the wage gap.



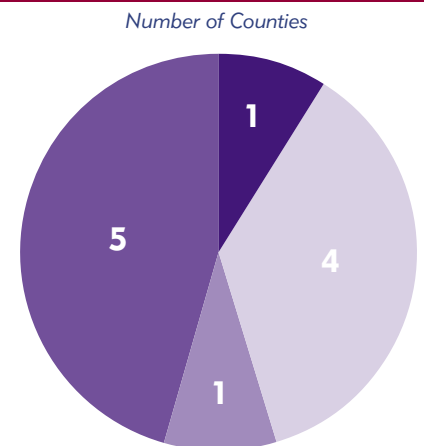
Political Representation

IWPR's 2004 Status of Women in the States report ranked Pennsylvania 47th in women's political participation and representation. Pennsylvania is the only state in which women are less likely than men to register to vote. Statewide a mere 14% of the legislature are women and no woman has been elected governor. There are also no female U.S. Senators from the state and only 2 women currently serve in the 21 member congressional delegation. This weakness in political representation starts at the local level with few women elected to countywide office.

- **County Commissioners:** Women comprise only 22% of county commissions in SWPA versus 26% statewide. Five counties – Beaver, Butler, Indiana, Lawrence and Westmoreland – have no female commissioners.
- **Women's Commissions:** Only two counties, Mercer and Westmoreland, have active women's commissions. There are twelve county commissions statewide.

The political participation composite index reflects two indicators: women's representation on county councils and the existence of a county women's commission.

Women County Commissioners



- = Two of three county commissioners are women
- = One of three county commissioners are women
- = Four out of fifteen county commissioners are women
- = No county commissioners are women

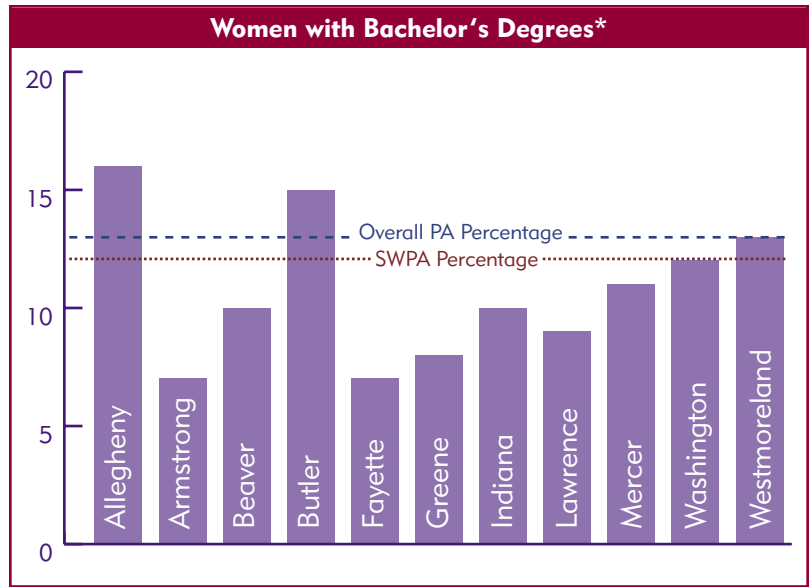
Social & Economic Autonomy

IWPR distinguishes between labor force participation and economic autonomy to highlight issues that allow women to act independently, exercise choice and control their lives. This report does the same.

- Education:** Nine of 11 counties in SWPA fall below the state average in the percent of women 25 years of age and older with bachelor degrees. Allegheny and Butler have a higher percentage of college educated women than other counties in the region and a higher percentage than the state as a whole.
- Women-Owned Businesses:** The percent of women-owned businesses in seven of the 11 counties are equal to or higher than the state average of women-owned businesses. In both Fayette and Beaver, the percentage of women majority-owned firms (28%) exceeds the national average (26%).
- Poverty:** In six of the 11 counties, the percent of women living in poverty is greater than the average level of poverty in the state. Fayette County stands out with the lowest rate of women with a bachelor's degree (7%) and the highest rate of women living in poverty (20%).

The social & economic autonomy composite index reflects three indicators: women's education, women-owned businesses, and poverty rates.

Social and Economic Autonomy		
County	Percent of Women-Owned Businesses ¹	Percent of Females Above Poverty Line ²
Pennsylvania	24%	88%
Allegheny	24%	88%
Armstrong	24%	87%
Beaver	28%	89%
Butler	25%	90%
Fayette	28%	80%
Greene	19%	82%
Indiana	25%	81%
Lawrence	21%	86%
Mercer	21%	87%
Washington	21%	89%
Westmoreland	25%	90%



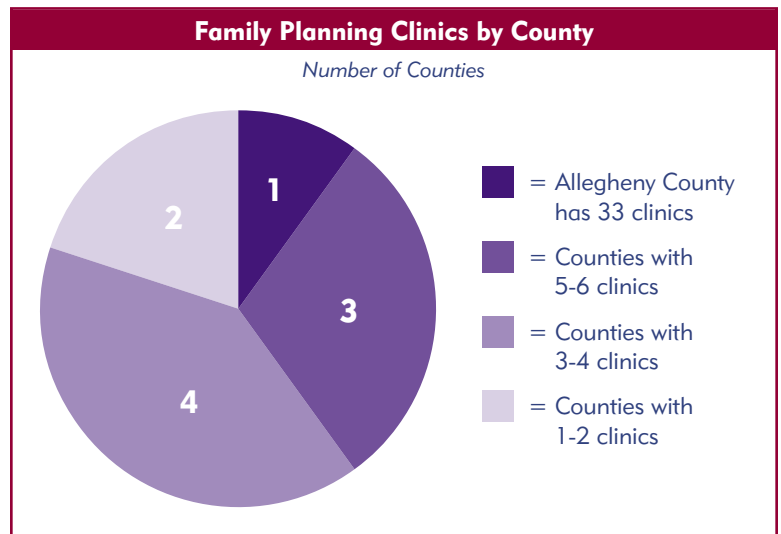
*Percent of women for whom a bachelor's is the highest degree earned.

Reproductive Rights

Pennsylvania ranks poorly (41st) in comparison with other states with respect to reproductive rights and availability of family planning clinics that provide reproductive health services and access to contraceptives, including emergency contraceptive pills.

- Family Planning Clinics:** All 11 counties have at least one clinic to provide family planning and reproductive health services. Greene County has four, nearly one per every 10,000 women in the county.

The reproductive rights composite index reflects two indicators: family planning clinics and abortion providers.



Health & Well Being

Pennsylvania compares well with other states for the health and well-being of women. Increasingly, health researchers are focusing on physical security as an important indicator of women's well-being. Regionally, high rape crisis and shelter services rates indicate that a need for more resources exists and, would be utilized if available.

- **Teen Birth:** Teen births rates in every county are below the state rate of 3.6%. They are highest in Fayette County (4.5%) and lowest in Butler and Washington counties (1.6% and 1.9%, respectively).
- **Rape Crisis Services:** There are rape crisis services in every county in SWPA. The number of female clients served for rape crisis services is highest in Lawrence County where approx. 4.7 women per 1,000 population received counseling services.
- **Domestic Violence:** Every county is served by at least one domestic violence shelter, while Allegheny has four. Domestic violence advocates in Lawrence and Fayette assisted more women in securing Protection from Abuse Orders (PFAs) than in other counties and in the state as a whole.

The health & well-being composite index reflects four indicators: teen birth rates, rape crisis services, protection from abuse orders and domestic violence shelters.

County <i>(listed in order of composite health and well-being)</i>	Percent of Births to Teens	Rape Crisis Srvs Per 1,000 Pop	PFAs Per 1,000 Pop
Pennsylvania	3.6%	5	3.4
Lawrence	3.2%	4.7	4.5
Washington	1.6%	2.1	3.5
Beaver	3.1%	3.4	3.4
Greene	3.9%	1.0	3.2
Butler	1.6%	2.6	1.9
Indiana	2.3%	2.9	1.3
Mercer	3.0%	2.7	2.7
Allegheny	3.0%	2.7	2.7
Fayette	4.5%	2.8	3.6
Westmoreland	1.9%	1.8	2.1
Armstrong	3.2%	1.5	1.6

How does Pennsylvania rank nationally on women's progress across five dimensions?*

■ Political Participation & Representation	47th	■ Reproductive Rights	41st
■ Employment & Earnings	36th	■ Health & Well-Being	29th
■ Social & Economic Autonomy	29th		

*2004 IWPR Status of Women in the States Report

The Status of Women in SWPA was produced by:

REGIONAL WOMEN'S INITIATIVE

AT CHATHAM COLLEGE

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A new project of the Pennsylvania Center for Women, Politics, and Public Policy at Chatham College, RWI seeks to advance the status of women in the 11 counties of Southwest Pennsylvania through increasing awareness of gender disparity and empowering women to change the status quo.

Women & Girls Foundation of Southwest Pennsylvania

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WGF is an independent community foundation serving eleven counties in Southwest Pennsylvania. Our mission is to achieve equity for women and girls in the region. Through a combination of public advocacy, coalition building and grantmaking, WGF seeds, supports, and strengthens women's and girls' efforts to achieve social and economic justice in Southwest Pennsylvania.

About the Researchers

Special thanks to the women who researched and authored this regional data study and collaborated with RWI and WGF to produce this series.

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