



PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Dana Micheli 212.261.4663

NEW REPORT: ECONOMIC STATUS OF NEW YORK WOMEN HAS DECLINED

State's women are more likely to be poor now than in 1989

Women in New York State fare worse economically than they did in 1989, according to The New York Women's Foundation's (NYWF[®]) new report, *The Economic Status of Women in New York State*.

The report, researched and authored by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR), examines how women in New York State fare in two areas: employment and earnings and social and economic autonomy. While the report finds substantial potential for women's economic progress, it also depicts a stark and alarming portrait of poverty in a wealthy society, particularly for women of color.

"We are deeply troubled by the growing gap between the rich and poor in our state. It is unacceptable that in such a resource-rich environment thousands of women and families live in poverty. If we are to eradicate poverty, we need to come together to identify and support lasting solutions," said Foundation President and CEO Ana L. Oliveira.

According to the report, women in New York are more likely to live in poverty than their national counterparts (15.2% versus 12.7% of women nationally), placing the state at 40th in the nation on this indicator and down from 30th in 1989. The picture of poverty in New York becomes bleaker when one considers the inadequacy of the official poverty measure.

"We all know intuitively that \$19,806 for a family of two adults and two children is just a fraction of what's needed to make ends meet. In fact, other measures of family expenses, such as self-sufficiency standards and family budgets that show us what's really necessary for a family to get by would indicate that far more of New York's women are in families with incomes that don't cover the basics" said Erica Williams, IWPR study director and report author.

The median annual earnings of women in New York State are \$33,300, an amount slightly higher than for women nationally (\$31,800) but pulling the state down from 5th in the country in 1989 to 13th in 2005.

“The federal poverty standard is woefully inadequate in New York State, especially in New York City where the cost of living is even higher. According to the most recent New York City Self-Sufficiency Standard, a family of four in the Bronx needs a yearly income of \$42,000 to \$79,000, depending on the ages of the children, to cover their basic needs; the same families in Queens need \$43,000 to \$89,000 ” said Merble Reagon, Executive Director of the Women’s Center for Education and Career Advancement.

The report also looks at the earnings of full-time working-women and men 25 and older in New York by education level and while women have a slightly higher level of education than men across races and ethnicities, they earn less than equally educated men with little exception. Women with a graduate degree earn just slightly more than men with an bachelor’s degree and women with a bachelor’s degree earn a bit more than men with an associate’s degree.

“Even with the great strides women have made in higher education over the years, the additional qualifications attained by full-time women workers at this juncture have only allowed them to catch up to the earnings of less-well educated men,” says Dr. Heidi Hartmann, economist and IWPR president and founder. “Higher education undoubtedly gives women’s earnings a big boost, but it has yet to put women on a par with men.”

Part of the continued disparity between women’s and men’s earnings is due to the continued segregation of women into female-dominated fields and jobs, many of which are low-paying and pay less than men’s lowest-paying jobs. For example, the lowest paying occupation for Latina women working full-time and year-round is child care, which pays \$11,200. Latino men, on the other hand, have median annual earnings of \$18,500 for their lowest paying job of textile, apparel, and furnishing work. Likewise, women’s highest paying jobs typically pay less than men’s highest paying jobs. For example, whereas white women earn \$122,000 as top executives, their highest paying job, white men earn \$284,200 as physicians and surgeons. This trend holds true with jobs that are most common to women and men as well.

The Economic Status of Women in New York State also points to consistent disparities between white women and African American, Latina, and Native American women across a number of indicators, including educational attainment, earnings, and health insurance coverage, and outlines the particular economic vulnerabilities of foreign-born women in the state. It offers a number of recommendations to improve the economic status of women in New York State:

Enact local and state living wage laws to ensure a basic standard of living for women and families and use Self Sufficiency Standards to determine income eligibility guidelines for programs and policies designed to help families achieve economic security.

Address poverty through an expansion of New York’s Earned Income Credit and Child Care Tax Credit, and the state’s income eligibility limit for Medicaid.

Support women's ability to work by increasing access to high quality affordable childcare and paid time off benefits such as sick days, parental leave and family care so women do not have to choose between caring for themselves, a family member, and earning an income.

Increase opportunities for women's enrollment in higher education, particularly for African American and Latina women;

Eliminate gender- and race-based discrimination in the workplace and ensure equal pay for equal work through evaluations of promotions and pay within companies.

Promote women's entrepreneurship by increasing government contracts and subsidies for women-owned businesses and women's access to business credit

Increase the presence and voice of women in political leadership to bring a more balanced approach to public policy-making on issues affecting women and families.

As a public philanthropy, The New York Women's Foundation[®] further recommends encouraging grant-makers and philanthropists to support women, communities and broad-based change by directing philanthropic efforts toward leadership development, community organizing, advocacy, public policy and research. NYWF[®] calls on philanthropists to invest in women-led organizations and programs in order to elevate women leaders and raise the visibility of issues affecting women, families and communities, and to fund capacity-building and collaborative efforts to ensure the sustainability of effective community-based organizations.

The New York Women's Foundation[®] has worked to eradicate poverty among women and girls in New York City since 1987. The Foundation funds women-led organizations in all five boroughs, and in five strategic areas: community organizing and advocacy, health and sexual rights, economic security, safety, and positive development of young women and girls.

The Institute for Women's Policy Research conducts rigorous research and disseminates its findings to address the needs of women, promote public dialogue, and strengthen families, communities, and societies. IWPR focuses on issues of poverty and welfare, employment and earnings, work and family issues, health and safety, and women's civic and political participation.

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