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THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN MAINE: HIGHLIGHTS

The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) has prepared a report on the *Status of Women in Maine* to inform Maine residents about the progress of women in Maine relative to women in other states, to men, and to national trends. In addition to this report, IWPR staff have produced reports on 12 other states and the District of Columbia as well as a national report that summarizes key findings for all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

In each report, various indicators describe women's status in four important areas: political participation, employment and earnings, economic autonomy, and reproductive rights. Basic health and demographic data are also provided. On two of the four aspects of women's well-being for which IWPR calculated composite indicators, Maine ranks in the top third of the nation. Maine ranks first in the New England region (consisting of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont in addition to Maine) for political participation; however, Maine ranks near or at the bottom of its region for all the other indicators. Thus Maine still has room for improvement in the status of its women.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Ranks

The composite political participation rank is based on women's voter registration and turnout, women elected officials at the state and federal levels, and women's institutional resources in the state (such as a state commission for women). The national rank is of a possible 50, because the District of Columbia is not included in this ranking. The regional rank is of a maximum of six and refers to the states in the New England region.

- Maine ranks fourth in the nation and first in the New England region on the political participation composite indicator.
- Maine ranks second in the nation and first in its region on women's voter registration. There are nearly 56,000 unregistered women who are eligible to vote in the state of Maine.

Facts and Figures

- Forty-nine of the 186 seats in Maine's state legislature were filled by women in 1996, placing Maine 12th among all states in terms of the percentage of women in the state legislature.
- Since 1964, female voters in the United States have outnumbered male voters, but voter turnout is relatively low for both sexes by international standards. Still, voter turnout rates in Maine have been much higher than the national averages. Seventy-three percent of eligible women and 75 percent of eligible men in Maine reported that they voted in the November 1992 election.

Chart I. How Maine Ranks on Key Indicators

	National Rank*	Regional Rank*
COMPOSITE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION INDEX	4	1
Women's Voter Registration, 1992-1994	2	1
Women's Voter Turnout, 1992-1994	6	1
Women in Elected Office Composite, 1996	8	1
Women's Institutional Resources, 1996	40	6
COMPOSITE EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS INDEX	27	6
Women's Median Annual Earnings, 1990	31	6
Ratio of Women's to Men's Earnings, 1990	21	3
Women's Labor Force Participation, 1994	36	6
Women in Managerial and Professional Occupations, 1994	24	6
COMPOSITE ECONOMIC AUTONOMY INDEX	26	6
Percent with Health Insurance Among Nonelderly Women, 1991-1992	22	5
Educational Attainment: Percent of Women with Four or More Years of College, 1990	25	6
Women's Business Ownership, 1992	40	4
Percent of Women Above the Poverty Level, 1990	24	6
COMPOSITE REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS INDEX	17	5
<p><i>See Appendix I of "The Status of Women in the States," available from IWPR, for a detailed description of the methodology and sources used for the indices presented here.</i></p> <p><i>* 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 six and refer to the states in the New England region (Maine, Connecticut, Vermont, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire).</i></p>		

Calculated by the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS

Ranks

The composite employment and earnings rank is based on women's median annual earnings, the female/male earnings ratio, women's labor force participation, and the proportion of employed women in professional and managerial positions. The national rank is of a possible 51, referring to the 50 states plus the District of Columbia.

- Maine ranks 27th in the nation and last in its region on the employment and earnings composite indicator.
- Maine's worst employment and earnings indicator is women's labor force participation, on which it ranks 36th in the nation and last in its region. Maine also ranks last in its region for women's median annual earnings and for the percentage of women in managerial and professional occupations.

Facts and Figures

- Compared with women in the nation as a whole, Maine women's median annual earnings are lower (\$18,780 and \$16,540 respectively). However, in 1990, the ratio of the median annual earnings of women to those of men for full-time, year-round workers aged 18 to 65 in Maine was similar to that in the United States as a whole (68.5 percent in the United States and 68.9 percent in Maine).
- The female unemployment rate in Maine is the highest in the New England region and the 15th highest in the nation. In 1994, the unemployment rate for women in Maine was 6.3 percent compared with the nation's 6.0 percent female unemployment rate.

ECONOMIC AUTONOMY

Ranks

The composite economic autonomy rank is based on women's access to health insurance, women's educational attainment, women's business ownership, and the proportion of women living above poverty.

- Maine ranks 26th in the nation and last in its region on the economic autonomy composite indicator.
- Maine ranks 25th in the nation and last in its region in terms of women's educational attainment.

Facts and Figures

- The proportion of women in poverty in Maine is lower than in the United States (12.3 percent and 13.2 percent, respectively); however, Maine ranks last in its region on the percentage of women above poverty.
- The business receipts of women-owned businesses in Maine rose by 51 percent (in constant dollars) between 1987 and 1992. This is compared with an increase of 87 percent in business receipts for women-owned firms nationally and 35 percent for all firms in the United States during this time period, also adjusted for inflation.

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Ranks

The composite reproductive rights rank is based on information on legislation relating to access to legal abortions, the availability of public funding for abortions and infertility treatments, the position of the governor and state legislature on reproductive choice, maternity stay laws, and legislation regarding adoption by gay/lesbian couples.

- Maine ranks 17th in the nation and fifth in its region on the reproductive rights composite indicator.

Facts and Figures

- Fifty percent of counties in Maine have abortion providers, a relatively high proportion when compared with the the national average (16 percent).
- Maine is one of two states that require that a minor receive counseling before obtaining an abortion, including discussion of the possibility of consulting her parents.

HEALTH AND VITAL STATISTICS

- Maine has a lower infant mortality rate (deaths of infants under age one per 1,000 live births), a substantially lower fertility rate (live births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44), and a lower percentage of low birth weight babies than the nation as a whole. This may indicate that women in Maine have better access to prenatal care than women nationally.
- The percentage of the population enrolled in HMOs in Maine is much less than that in the United States as a whole (6.2 percent and 19.5 percent, respectively).

BASIC DEMOGRAPHICS

- Compared with the nation as a whole, Maine has a higher proportion of women over age 65 (a lower proportion of women living in metropolitan areas (65.2 versus 83.1 percent), and a smaller proportion of foreign-born women (3.5 percent compared with 7.9 percent).
- The female population in Maine is less ethnically diverse than in the nation as a whole, with minority women making up about two percent of women in Maine and 24 percent of women in the United States as a whole.

The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) is an independent, non-profit, scientific research organization founded in 1987 to meet the need for women-centered, policy-oriented research. This fact sheet was written in January 1997 by Stacey Friedman and is based on the report The Status of Women in Maine, part of a larger research project funded by the Ford Foundation. The data used in the report come from a variety of sources, primarily government agencies, and individuals and organizations in Maine assisted in reviewing the report. The Advisory Committee for Maine is chaired by Laura Fortman, Women's Development Institute and Mary Louise McGregor and includes: Jim Killacky, National Association of Social Workers; Sandra S. Butler, School of Social Work, University of Maine; Karin Anderson, Maine Women's Fund; Lou Chamberland, Women's Business Development Corporation; Gilda Nardone, Maine Center for Women, Work and Community, University of Maine at Augusta; Christopher St. John, Maine Center for Economic Policy; Ellen Golden, Coastal Enterprises, Inc.; Christine Hastedt, Maine Equal Justice Project; Kyle Slayback, Women Unlimited; and Mary Anne Turowski, Maine Women's Labor Institute.

The full report, The Status of Women in Maine, is available for \$10.00 from the Institute for Women's Policy Research, 1400 20th Street, NW, Suite 104, Washington, DC, 20036, phone 202/785-5100, fax 202-833-4362

In Maine, for a copy of the report, contact: Young Women's Christian Association of Greater Portland, 87 Spring Street, Portland, ME, 04101, phone 207/874-1130, fax 207/874-1136; or Women's Development Institute, P.O. Box 85, Hallowell, ME, 04347, phone 207/622-0851, fax 207/621-2551.