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FIRST ANNUAL  
**2012 Report**  
Status of Women  
and Girls in Maine



Report of the  
Permanent Commission on  
the Status of Women in Maine  
December 2012

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Permanent Commission  
on the Status of Women

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February 4, 2013

John R. Barden, Director  
Maine State Law and Legislative Reference Library  
43 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0043

Dear Mr. Barden:

Pursuant to MRSA Title 5, Chapter 371-A, § 7030-D, Powers and Duties of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, the **2012 Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Maine** has been submitted to Governor Paul R. LePage, Senate President, Justin L. Alfond, Speaker Mark W. Eves, and members of the 126<sup>th</sup> Maine Legislature. Enclosed, please find two copies of the report for the Maine State law and Legislative Reference Library to be placed on file. The report may also be accessed on-line through the website of the Secretary of State at [www.maine.gov/sos](http://www.maine.gov/sos).

Sincerely,



Eloise Vitelli, Chair

OCT 23 2013

Improving Opportunities for Women and Girls in Maine



### About the Report

The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (Commission) is pleased to present this initial report on the status of women and girls in Maine. We hope the report initiates a conversation among policy makers and the general public about the opportunities and challenges that exist for women and girls in Maine. The report focuses on **five dimensions** that contribute to the quality of life and opportunity for women and girls: Education; Economic Security; Health; Safety and Wellbeing; Leadership and Public Life. The report provides selected data to highlight the status of women and girls in each dimension and to provide an overview of where women and girls in Maine stand relative to their male counterparts, peers in neighboring states and the nation. The report draws on and makes reference to more in-depth studies and data on specific topics within each dimension.

#### Our goals in preparing the report are:

- To define the areas that have the most impact on opportunities for women and girls to succeed;
- To identify data that helps us understand how women and girls are faring in Maine;
- To identify gaps in the data that may limit our understanding and ability to improve opportunities for women and girls in the State;
- To point towards changes in public policy that may contribute to improving the lives of women and girls.

*The vision of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women is that all women and girls in Maine fulfill their highest potential as individuals and contribute to their community.*

Each area highlights data from relevant state and national-level reports, studies, and journals. Within each area, important subcategories are identified and examined, evaluating the status of Maine women and girls compared to national trends and to their male counterparts. The Commission intends this report to be used not only as a foundation for its policy recommendations, but also as a research tool for the Maine Legislature and the public at large. It is the hope of the Commission that this report will be a stepping stone towards improving the lives of women and girls, and thus, ultimately bettering Maine communities.

### I. Executive Summary

Recognizing the importance of understanding, supporting and enhancing women's role in American society, President Obama created the White House Council on Women and Girls in 2009. In March 2011, this Council released a statistical report summarizing the status of women and girls in America. The report highlighted five domains of women's lives and provided a broad summary of trends within these five domains, including continuing areas for improvement. This report made clear that while women have made significant progress in some areas over the past twenty years, such as educational attainment and labor force participation, they continue to experience considerable inequality in income and wages, and high rates of poverty. Addressing these challenges often requires state-level solutions through public policy and services, generating the need for a better understanding of how women and girls fare in specific states.

In 2011, the Permanent Commission on Women and Girls in Maine undertook a similar statistical review, to gain an understanding of areas for opportunities and challenges in women's lives in the State. The data was organized into five primary dimensions: Education, Economic Security, Health, Safety and Wellbeing, and Leadership in Public Life. Though there is clear overlap between these dimensions, this categorization provides a foundational framework for future research and facilitates the identification of areas for strengthening the status and wellbeing of women and girls in Maine.

Maine is a rural state, ranking only 38th in the United States for population density, and is estimated to be the 'oldest' state in the Union by 2020, based on the percentage of state residents over the age of 65. Just over half (51.1%) of the State's 1.32 million residents are female, with 14.3% of Maine's female population under the age of 25 and 17% 65 years or older, compared with 15% of the male population under 25 and 14% of males being 65 years or older.

#### A. Education

In Maine, on average, females consistently seek education, stay in school, and graduate at post-high school levels at greater rates than males. As young as fourth grade, girls in Maine are reading at higher levels than boys, though they rank last compared to neighboring New England states in the percent that are at or above reading proficiency for their grade level. 57% of Maine women over the age of 25 have some college education, and the University of Maine System campuses graduate more females than males, almost 2:1, at all degree levels. Unfortunately, mirroring national trends, women in Maine continue to pursue educational programs that lead

*Fifty-seven percent of Maine women over the age of 25 have some college education*



to traditionally female-dominated occupations, with historically lower pay scales and fewer non-monetary benefits. Conversely, females represent far less than half of post-high school students in higher-paying disciplines such as Math (34%), Physical Sciences (42%) and Engineering (9%).

*In Maine, the wage gap based on gender is 78.5%, almost two percent higher than the national average.*

### B. Economic Security

Women's participation in the labor force in Maine has risen steadily over the past twenty years. In 2010, females made up just under half (49%) of Maine's overall labor force while 61% of females 16 years and older were working, slightly higher than the national average (59%) for this age group. While women have experienced lower unemployment rates than men in recent years, more women are employed part-time often in jobs lacking benefits such as health insurance, sick leave, or retirement savings. Rates of poverty, homelessness and unemployment have not diminished with women's increasing participation in the labor market. In Maine, the wage gap based on gender is 78.5%, almost two percent higher than the national average. The largest earning differences are between men and women with graduate degrees, a difference of almost \$19,000 in annual median earnings.

Women and girls in Maine also face unique challenges and opportunities maintaining economic security, specifically due to age and lifespan. Women are over-represented in every age group over 35 years old. Seventeen percent of women are 65 years or older, compared to only 14% of men who are 65 years or older. Women also live approximately 5 years longer, on average, than their male counterparts, creating the need for income longer and exacerbating the challenges caused by earning less over a lifetime. Women also continue to be the primary caregivers of both children and aging parents, and are more likely than men to be the single heads of household. Ten percent of all households in Maine are run by single mothers, compared to less than 5% that are run by single fathers. These households experience more and deeper levels of poverty, and most report having very young children; 40% of single mothers in Maine live in poverty.

### C. Health

Maine has made important strides with regards to improving the health of women and girls, and all residents, over the past twenty years. Maine's adolescent pregnancy rate has decreased 48% since 1988, making it one of the lowest in the nation. Approximately 40% of births in Maine were unplanned, compared to the 50% national average. Heart disease mortality and hospitalizations for depression and related mental health issues among women have been declining since 1999. Only 12% of Maine women do not have health insurance, ranking the state 11th best in the country. Maine also has a strong and consistent history of implementing anti-tobacco programming, ranking 7th best in the nation in 2010 for preventing youth from taking up smoking. However, funding for these programs have been cut in recent years and approximately 1 in 4 (25%) young women in the state smoke, compared to approximately

20% for the nation. Obesity rates in Maine have increased steadily over the past fifteen years, with approximately 30% of all residents reporting being obese and almost 60% of women reporting being overweight or obese. These factors of course contribute to increased risk for other health issues, including anxiety, heart disease, and substance abuse.

### D. Safety and Wellbeing

Maine has some of the most comprehensive and thoughtful laws in the United States regarding domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking. In 1991, Maine enacted first in the nation legislation requiring employers to post notices and conduct training on preventing sexual harassment in the workplace. In 1999, Maine created a first in the nation law requiring employers to provide unpaid leave for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking to attend court proceedings and seek medical treatment. Maine was one of the first states to include animals in domestic violence protection orders.

Despite Maine's strong public policy infrastructure, these crimes continue to be the most pervasive threat to the safety of women and girls in the state. Stalking, domestic and sexual violence and sexual harassment significantly impact Maine women and girls across economic, ethnic, racial, and age spectrums. As is true nationally, Maine women and girls report being victims of interpersonal violence at significantly higher rates than males. More than 40% of all Maine homicides each year are related to domestic violence or child abuse; domestic violence is the leading cause of homicide for females. Sexual violence rates among women are similarly high. In 2011, 86% of victims who called Maine's sexual assault crisis and support line were female. In a recent statewide study, 32.1% of Maine women surveyed and 5.3% of Maine men surveyed reported experiencing rape or sexual assault at some point in their lives.

*More than 40% of all Maine homicides each year are related to domestic violence or child abuse; domestic violence is the leading cause of homicide for females.*

Specific populations may be at heightened risk for domestic and sexual violence. Domestic violence victims are among the five primary subpopulations of homeless Mainers, with 12% of shelter clientele reporting domestic violence as the primary reason for their homelessness. Approximately 44% of homeless women surveyed had experienced rape or sexual assault since becoming homeless.

The consequences of these crimes jeopardize Maine women and girls' economic stability and health, often resulting in long-term emotional, social, and economic problems for individuals and communities. Victims of interpersonal crimes are more likely to experience other crimes as well. Stalking victims are twice as likely to be a victim of property or violent crime (34%) as opposed to those who have not experienced stalking (13.3%). The effects of violence against women are interconnected with poverty, homelessness, and other forms of victimization.



### E. Leadership and Public Life

Maine has a rich history of women's participation in leadership and public life, an important indicator of women's overall status and wellbeing, and takes credit for a number of national 'firsts' in this arena. The trend begins early with high percentages of school-age girls engaging in community-oriented and civic leadership activities. In 2009, 48% of high school and 51% of middle school girls in public schools in Maine reported feeling as though they mattered to their community. Approximately, 50% of middle school girls also spend time outside of school engaged in club or service activities. Unfortunately, participation and enthusiasm wanes as girls age. While three of Maine's four Congress-people are female, in 2010 women only made up 28% of the State's legislature and had lost ground from the almost 30% of positions they held in 2008. Maine is also one of 24 states in the country, and one of two (along with Rhode Island) in New England, that has yet to elect a female governor.

*While three of Maine's four Congress-people are female, in 2010 women only made up 28% of the State's legislature and had lost ground from the almost 30% of positions they held in 2008.*

*On average, across the State females consistently seek education, stay in school, and graduate at post-high school levels at greater rates than males.*





## I. In-depth Data Review

### A. Education

Across the country and world, education is well recognized as the foundation for economic development and social and political stability. This is especially true for girls and women, who have traditionally been excluded from educational attainment but have an increasing role in labor markets. A growing body of empirical literature suggests that gender equity in education promotes overall economic growth.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, organizations across the globe dedicate themselves to advancing educational opportunities for girls as an effective means of increasing the larger community's welfare.

Maine boasts relatively strong trends in the educational attainment of girls. On average, across the State females consistently seek education, stay in school, and graduate at post-high school levels at greater rates than males. Starting in grade school, girls in Maine tend to achieve higher proficiency in reading than boys, though in the most recent year both girls and boys in Maine were performing at lower rates than the national average and neighboring New England states. Specifically, a 2011 report of Maine public school systems reported that by 4th grade, approximately 35% of girls are consistently reading above grade level proficiency and just 42% are scoring proficient or higher for math. For 8th grade girls, the rates are 44% for reading and 39% for math, compared to 38% and 34% nationally.<sup>2</sup> This has important implications for future success as research indicates that early skill development and education are critical predictors for long-term economic achievements. Approximately 85% of core brain structure is formed by the age of three years, and success in pre-high school grades is associated with achievement at post-high school levels.<sup>3</sup> As part of its Measures of Growth report, the Maine Economic Growth Council has identified 4th grade reading as the measure that best indicates future educational and economic success. This measure received a red flag in the 2012 report to highlight that Maine 4th grade reading scores declined relative to national scores reversing previous trends.<sup>4</sup>

**NAEP Scores: Reading Achievement by the 4th Grade 2011  
Male/Female and New England State Comparison<sup>4</sup>**

Year	State	Percent of 4th Grade Females at or above reading proficient	Percent of 4th Grade Males at or above reading proficient
2011	Maine	35%	30%
	Connecticut	46%	38%
	Massachusetts	54%	47%
	New Hampshire	50%	38%
	Rhode Island	39%	32%
	Vermont	45%	38%
	National Rate	45%	44%

Educational attainment at higher levels is also associated with greater economic stability, reduced poverty, and reduced reliance on government-funded public assistance. This is truer than ever given the changing labor market. Industries that have traditionally not required post-high school education are relying increasingly on computerized systems and a workforce that is more educated and skilled. Nationally, among those receiving TANF benefits, heads of household who had not attained a high school diploma were likely to receive benefits 2.5 times longer and were more likely to access benefits more than once, than those with higher than high school levels of education.<sup>5</sup>

As girls in Maine age, they continue to demonstrate positive trends in accessing and completing post-high school education. Within the University of Maine systems, women outnumbered men's graduation rates by nearly 2 to 1 at all degree levels over the past five years.<sup>6</sup> In 2010, more than half of women in Maine over the age of 25 had some college education and almost a third had a bachelor's or graduate degree. Women's access and retention rates in post-high school education are the highest at the associate's level.



The challenge for girls and women in Maine is that even among those who are able to successfully pursue higher education they continue to do so via paths that lead to traditionally female-dominated occupations, which serve to keep their wages and income relatively low.

During the academic 2010-2011 year in the University of Maine system, female graduates dominated males in lower-paying disciplines such as Social Science (56%), Education (73.5%), and Health (87%).



Conversely, females represented far fewer than half of graduates in Math (35%), Physical Sciences (42%) and Engineering (19%).<sup>9</sup> Much effort is being made to get more girls and women into STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) disciplines. This is in part because these are higher wage occupations and are in growing demand. Data from the UMS academic year report 2010-2011 shows that women are increasing their degree attainment in STEM related areas with the exception of Architecture and related sciences and Communications Technologies. Males still exceed females in degrees in Engineering (81% men, 19% women), Engineering related (93% men, 7% women), Math (65% men, 35% women) and Computer Science (73% men, 27% women).<sup>9</sup>

Further, a small percentage of women in Maine continue to face poorer employment prospects and relative economic instability over time. For more than five years in a row, almost a tenth (9.6%) of all women in Maine have not obtained a high school diploma.<sup>10</sup> The potential for these women's earnings to stagnate and their quality of life to be compromised is high.

### Economic Security

Economic security, or economic stability, means having access to a variety of resources sufficient to meet one's basic needs for clothing, housing, food, and health care. While this term may be contemporary, the concept is not. Common wisdom and the supporting research recognize that economic security provides a foundation for overall status and wellbeing. Monetary resources are a key to this economic security, and are typically secured through employment and income.

While education can provide a pathway for women and girls towards economic stability, educational attainment alone does not guarantee it. Factors such as actual wages, age, lifespan, and family composition can all significantly influence and shape women's economic stability.

During the past decade in Maine, as in the country, women's participation in the labor force has risen steadily. Rates of poverty, homelessness and unemployment, however, have not diminished accordingly. While some of these trends mirror national statistics, women and girls in Maine also face unique challenges and opportunities, specifically with regards to age and lifespan, and employment opportunities affected by the rural nature of the State.

### Employment

Women make up just less than half of the labor force in Maine, work at nominally lower rates than their male counterparts, and account for less than half of the State's unemployed. Women, however, also represent more than half of Maine's part-time workers. Part-time work is associated with lower wages and often offers little or no non-monetary benefits such as health insurance, paid sick time, retirement plans, or disability insurance. Lack of paid sick time, for example, can put a mother's job at risk or at the least reduce her income when she has to miss work to care for a sick child. Lack of retirement plans mean women rely to a greater degree on social

security income in their later years. So, while girls and women in Maine are certainly working, many are in jobs that do not lead to long-term economic security and success.

- In 2010, females made up 49% of the state's overall labor force and 61% of females 16 years and older were in the Maine labor force.<sup>11</sup>
- In the same year, women made up only 42% of the State's 57,000 unemployed, and reported an unemployment rate slightly lower than that of men, 7% vs. 9%.<sup>12</sup>

Maine is a largely rural state, ranking 38th in the United States for population density. It is estimated that approximately 60% of Maine's population lives in rural areas and the rural counties in Maine tend to have higher rates of poverty and lower median incomes.<sup>13</sup> Employment opportunities in Maine are often limited by its rural nature and corresponding low population.

Due in part to both necessity and cultural values, Maine has a long and deep history of entrepreneurship. Maine is a small business state with over 171,000 small or micro businesses (fewer than 4 employees) and more than 100,000 self-employed individuals.<sup>14</sup> Women are part of this economic engine: in 2011 there were 40,500 women-owned firms, accounting for just over a quarter of all small businesses in the State. In Maine, according to SBA Office of Advocacy statistics, women-owned firms made up 25.6% of all firms in 2007 with an additional 31,000 self-employed women.

Recent trends, however, suggest Maine women-owned businesses (WOB) have room to grow, compared to other states. Between 1997 – 2012, Maine ranked 41st in the rate of growth in the number of women-owned firms, and 50th in the growth in revenues among WOB.<sup>15</sup>

In the *Report on the State of Women Owned Businesses, A Summary of Important Trends 1997-2011*, Maine is cited as among the five states where women-owned firms lag far behind national averages in revenue growth (12.9% growth in revenues compared to national average of 53.4% growth).<sup>16</sup>

One bright spot: increasing numbers of women are seeking opportunity in one of Maine's traditional industries – agriculture. The number of farms owned by women grew from 1,559 in 2002 to 2043 farms in 2007. The number of young women entering farming is also increasing.<sup>17</sup>



*Women are part of this economic engine: in 2011 there were 40,500 women-owned firms, accounting for just over a quarter of all small businesses in the State.*



### *Wages and Income*

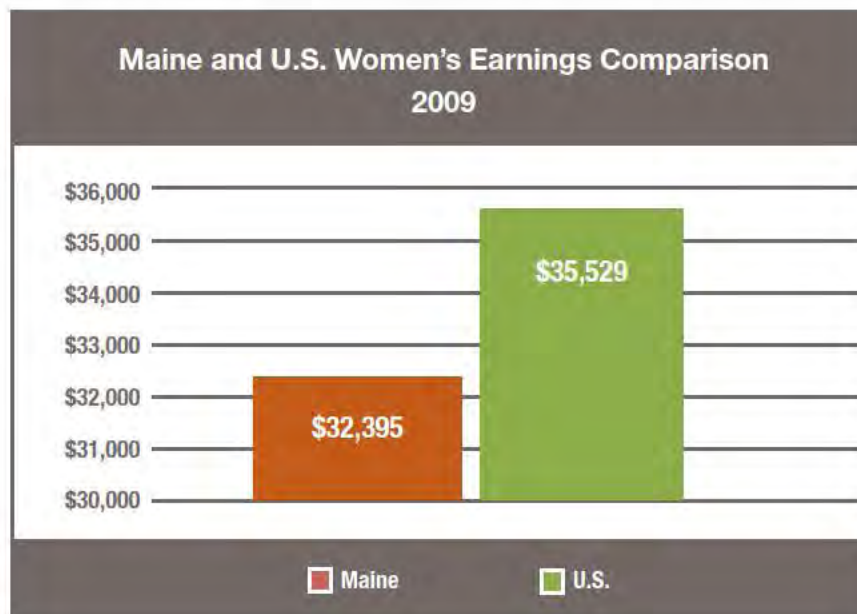
Though women have increased their education and labor force participation, these achievements have not eliminated wage inequities nationally nor in Maine. This is due primarily to disparities in earnings, and the type of work in which women tend to engage. In Maine, the 2010 wage gap based on gender was 78%, almost two percent higher than the national average. This means for every dollar earned by a man, a woman earns only 78 cents for the same or equivalent work.<sup>18</sup>

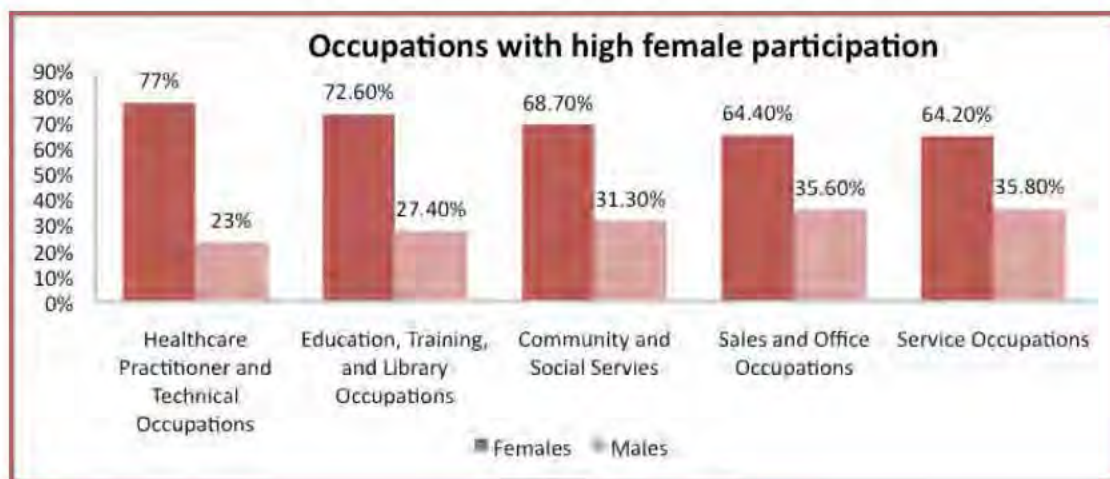
The persistent gender wage gap has serious short and long-term implications for women's economic stability. In the short-term, the inequity of wages makes meeting basic needs more difficult and contributes to rates of poverty and reliance on government funded programs. In the long-term, Maine's wage gap accounts for losses of hundreds of thousands of dollars over a lifetime, including depressed social security and other retirement safety nets.

At all levels of education, women across the United States earned only 77% of what their male counterparts earned in 2009. In Maine, the largest earning differences are between men and women with graduate degrees, a difference of almost \$19,000 in annual median earnings.

Pay inequity can be partly attributed to the fact that women tend to pursue employment paths in lower-wage arenas such as the service industry, sales occupations, social services, non-leadership roles in the healthcare industry, and the education field. Conversely, women's participation rates are low in occupations with higher earning potential.

The five occupational areas with the greatest annual earnings for women in Maine are computer/mathematics, architecture/engineering, legal occupations, healthcare practitioner and technical professions, and life, physical, and social science.<sup>19</sup>





### *Age and Lifespan*

Age and lifespan are also influencing factors in women's economic standing, and have a direct impact on women's income. As people age their sources of income change, shifting away from reliance on earned wages to dependence on retirement accounts and social security benefits. Already discussed in this report, women's retirement holdings are negatively impacted by their employment participation trends and the gender wage gap. This, in part, accounts for women's heavy reliance on social security benefits in later life, and yet social security income is increasingly ineffective in helping women achieve and sustain economic stability.

In Maine, just over half (51%) of the State's 1.32 million residents are female. It is estimated that by 2020 Maine will be the 'oldest' state in the Union, and women are over-represented in every age group over 35 years old. Seventeen percent of women in Maine are 65 years or older, compared to only 14% of men who are 65 years or older. Women also live approximately 5 years longer, on average, than their male counterparts.<sup>20</sup>

In 2009, it was estimated that more than a third (38%) of Maine's older population would be living at or below the federal poverty line if not for receiving social security and a third of all older people in Maine rely on social security as their *only* source of income.<sup>21</sup> For women, the situation is more dramatic. In 2010, while 111,161 Maine women received social security benefits (compared to 88,021 men),<sup>22</sup> they received lower benefit rates than men and were more likely to report social security as their only income. Together, these numbers tell a story of women in Maine whose economic stability is directly impacted by how old they are and how long they live. As women age, their access to economic safety nets is decreased compared to their male counterparts and their safety nets are smaller. Further, because women live longer than men, their need for income spans greater periods of time, perpetuating rates of poverty into later life.

- In Maine, the average social security benefit for women 65 and older is \$11,000 a year, compared to almost \$15,000 provided to men 65 years and older.
- The median income for women who are 65 years and older and live alone is just over \$17,000, and for their male counterparts it is \$26,000.<sup>25</sup> This means that social security benefits represent 65% of single, older women's total income and only 58% of single, older men's.



### *Family Composition*

Family composition and roles in family life can significantly shape women's ability to attain education, the types of employment opportunities available to her, and ultimately long-term economic stability. While trends in male participation in caregiving and other domestic responsibilities are certainly changing, women continue to be the primary caregivers of both children and aging parents, and are more likely than men to be single heads of household.<sup>24</sup> This may account for the fact that 13.7% of females in Maine are living under the federal poverty threshold compared to only 12.1% of males.<sup>25</sup> Single women with families experience higher rates of poverty, homelessness, and lack of food security than those of single men with families.

The overwhelming majority of single-parent households are headed by women.<sup>26</sup> These households experience more and deeper levels of poverty, and most have very young children. Thus, the poorest families in Maine are those headed by single mothers who have very young children. The responsibilities of caregiving contribute to poor economic standing by interfering with women's ability to work full-time. The responsibilities also hinder ability to seek employment in higher-paying industries, which tend to require longer hours and offer less predictable schedules.

Among families headed by single mothers:

- Over 30% are living in poverty;<sup>27</sup> and
- Over 60% of households with young children (under 5 years old) are living in poverty.<sup>28</sup>

Women in Maine are more likely to work part time than men, and when asked, part time female workers in the State report "family obligations" as the number one reason they are not engaged in full-time employment. Researchers support this finding and suggest that the traditional division of labor within the home serves to keep women from devoting substantial time to labor market work.

Additionally, many women work part-time because they are unable to find full-time work. Part-time work tends to have less flexibility and fewer non-monetary benefits, including the flexibility for the worker to tend to unscheduled caregiving responsibilities. Over time, this translates to decreased employment stability and fewer accumulated monetary resources.<sup>29</sup>

Women running households alone are also more likely to need government assistance to get by financially. The federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF) provides some financial assistance to poor and low-income families, for basic needs such as food and housing. In Maine, 92% of families receiving TANF were headed by women, the vast majority of which were single mothers raising very young children.<sup>30</sup> While TANF plays an important role for these families, benefits are time limited and assistance levels do not adequately cover the cost of all basic needs. In 2010, approximately 44% of people

**Homeless Women in Maine**



in Maine who sought homeless shelter services were women and girls, and almost 10% of those were girls under the age of 17. National estimates indicate that only 60% of homeless people use traditional homeless services, including shelters. This tells us that the numbers reported are only the tip of the iceberg. The percentage of Mainers without food security has increased from 2005-07 average of 13.3% to 2008-10 average of 15.4%. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food security as “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.” Maine ranks sixth to last in the nation for “very low food security” with 6.8% of the State’s residents struggling every day to put food on the table. Many of these families are headed by single mothers as we know that nationally, 35% of households headed by single mothers report being without food security.<sup>31</sup>

Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women and children and is a causal factor to the need for welfare assistance. The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty has identified domestic violence as a leading cause of homelessness, especially for women.

### Health

The health of women and girls in Maine is a key factor that contributes to or detracts from their ability to take advantage of opportunities for education, employment, and leadership. It also affects a woman’s ability to support herself and her family. Ultimately, health either allows or hinders a woman’s ability to contribute her fullest to society. The most recent (2011) Maine Women’s Health Report presented by the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention,<sup>32</sup> provides an in-depth look at the health status of women and girls.

The report looks at access to care, mental and physical wellbeing, reproductive health, substance use and abuse, chronic disease, injury, and healthy activities including preventive care services across the life span, by education levels and other demographics.

Access to health care is an essential component to the overall health of Maine women. Over the last decade, the country and Maine have experienced a decline in employer-based coverage. At 48%, Maine does not differ significantly from the nation (49%) in the percentage of people receiving employer-based coverage. On the other hand, Maine has been doing well relative to other states in its uninsured rate. Maine is ranked 5th in the nation for the lowest number of uninsured – only 10% of Maine’s population is uninsured compared to 17% nationally.

About 12% of Maine women however do not have health insurance making Maine 11th best in the U.S. (MWH report 2011). Furthermore, about 1 in 5 women aged 18 – 24 reported lack of a primary care provider. Financial limitations also create a barrier to health care access. During the past year, one in ten (10.8%) women reported that they needed to see a doctor but could not because of cost.



*Access to health care is an essential component to the overall health of Maine women.*



## Health Insurance Coverage of the Total Population 2008-2009

(Source: Kaiser Family Foundation)

United States	Source	Maine
49%	Employer	48%
5%	Individual	4%
16%	Medicaid	22%
12%	Medicare	14%
1%	Other Public	2%
16%	Uninsured	10%

### *Health Risk Factors/ Chronic Disease*

There are a number of factors that contribute to increased health risks for women including lifestyle, socioeconomic status, education level and geography, among others. Other factors to be considered are diet and exercise, access to preventive care, and the promotion of health care to women and girls. Another factor that can create health care difficulties is the lifespan of Maine women. Women live longer than men; older women are more likely than older men to live in poverty and to live alone. As of 2007, the life expectancy of women in Maine was 81.3 years compared to that of men, at 76 years.

As is the case nationally, weight is a widespread health issue for women in Maine. Almost 60% of women in Maine were overweight and obese; 30.5% were overweight and 26.9% were obese in 2009. This issue also effects elderly women; the Body Mass Index rate for females 65+ (as of 2010) is 34.7% overweight and 23.9% obese. This compares to males at 48.0% overweight and 24.9% obese. For Maine as a whole, 63.7% of adults were overweight or obese, which is close to the national rate. The Maine Economic Growth Council gave this measure a red flag in its 2012 report.<sup>33</sup>

The three leading causes of death in Maine – heart disease, cancer, and stroke – parallel the national leading causes of death. The types of cancer-related deaths that are most common in Maine and the U.S. are lung cancer and breast cancer.

Respiratory issues also plague Maine women. The fourth leading cause of death among females in the U.S. and Maine are Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases (CLRD). Smoking is the leading cause of CLRDs. Furthermore, Asthma is more prevalent among women compared to men in Maine, and the U.S.

Not all of the health-related information regarding Maine women, however, is negative. Since 1999, heart disease mortality and hospitalizations have been declining. Depression-related hospitalizations have decreased significantly over time. Over half of Maine women meet the recommended levels of physical activity, and more than 80% of women in the past three years have taken preventative healthcare actions such as a mammogram or a pap test.<sup>34</sup>

### *Reproductive Health*

Maine has one of the lowest adolescent birth rates in the U.S. The Maine birthrate for teens ages 15-19 was 26.1 births per 1000 teen girls in 2008 – significantly lower than the national rate of 42/1000. This may be due in part to the fact Maine teens are taking preventative measures regarding pregnancy. 35.6% of high school girls surveyed used birth control pills before their last sexual intercourse, 59.5% used condoms.<sup>35</sup>

Breast feeding is common in Maine, with 75% of women reporting that they breastfeed their babies.<sup>36</sup>

### *Youth Depression and Body Image*

From the 2009 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey we learn the following:

- 14.9% of high school girls surveyed seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year. 21.7% of middle school girls surveyed have seriously considered attempting suicide in their lifetime.
- 59.4% of high school girls surveyed are trying to lose weight, as well as 52.6% of middle school girls.

### *CDC Identified areas of concern*

The Center for Disease control has identified several areas of concern specifically affecting women in Maine. These include:

About 40% of new mothers in Maine reported that their most recent pregnancy was unintended. Rates of cesarean section increased 40% over the past decade. Unintentional poisonings have been increasing over the past ten years. 1 in 4 Maine women have ever been diagnosed with depression and 1 in 5 have ever been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. The number of pregnant Maine women seeking treatment for substance abuse increased 125% between 2001 and 2010. About 1 in 4 young women in Maine smoke.

## **D. Safety and Wellbeing**

Maine is consistently rated as one of the safest places to live in the United States.<sup>37</sup> Yet far too many Maine women and girls remain vulnerable to domestic and sexual violence. Intimate partner violence and sexual violence and stalking impact women in Maine across their life span and throughout the multiple dimensions of their lives. Our society has become more aware of the full impact of exposure to violence beyond the immediate safety concerns presented by the violence itself, including physical, reproductive and emotional health, economic wellbeing, educational success and employment.

### *Domestic Violence*

The 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey indicates that 1 in 4 women have been the victim of severe physical violence by an intimate partner.<sup>38</sup> Nearly half of women who experience intimate partner violence (IPV) experienced psychological aggression and 41.1% reported experiencing some form of coercive control within an intimate relationship. Women are disproportionately affected by intimate partner violence. 81% of women who experience violence by an intimate partner reported significant short or long term impacts.<sup>39</sup>



While the precise extent of domestic abuse in Maine is hard to determine, there are indicators that give us a good sense of the scope. In Maine in 2010, one criminal domestic assault occurred every hour and 42 minutes, creating a total of 5,117 criminal offenses. This reflects 45.1% of all assaults committed. Domestic assaults, however, decreased for the third year in a row by 3.2% in 2011.<sup>40</sup> The Maine Domestic Abuse Homicide Review Panel notes that approximately 50% of Maine's homicides are consistently related to domestic violence, the majority of which are femicides.<sup>41</sup>

*In Maine in 2010, one criminal domestic assault occurred every hour and 42 minutes, creating a total of 5,117 criminal offenses.*

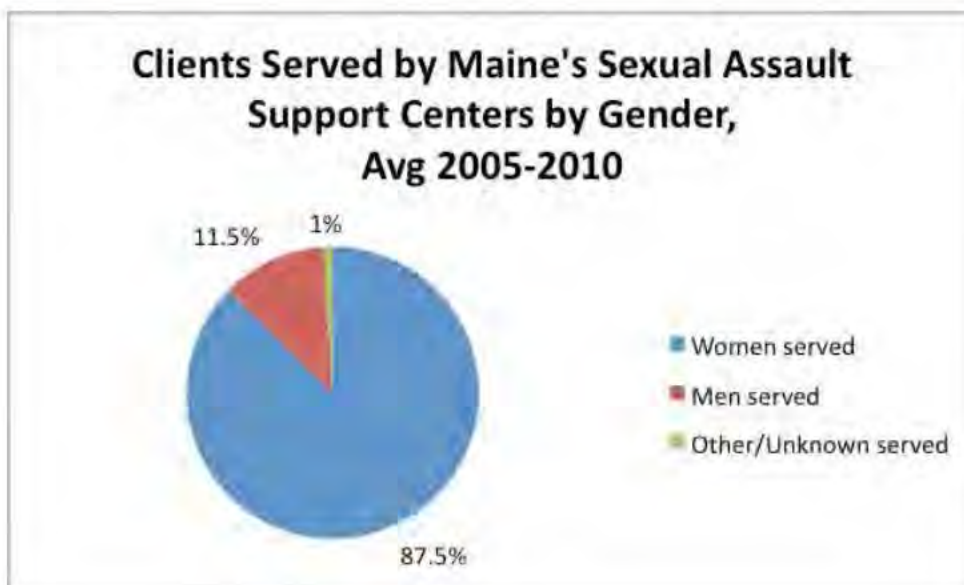
Domestic abuse is not always reported to the police. According to the Maine Crime Victimization Survey, two thirds of victims of violent crime reported to law enforcement.<sup>42</sup> The numbers of civil legal actions and the numbers of victims seeking services at Maine's domestic violence resource centers allows us a fuller sense of the extent of intimate partner violence in Maine. 'Protection from Abuse' orders have remained consistent over the past years at about 6,000 per year.<sup>43</sup> During 2011, Maine's domestic violence resource centers had over 66,000 contacts with 12,799 people affected by domestic abuse. Of the people who contacted the centers, 12,039 were adults and 760 were children and predominately women and girls.

While domestic violence and abuse span economic, ethnic, racial and age spectrums, certain populations are more at risk and/or more vulnerable to serious impact from the violence they experience. According to national statistics, Native women experience heightened risk for IPV and minority women may be more at risk for serious domestic violence.<sup>44</sup> Children exposed to IPV are at significantly higher risk in adulthood for serious health and mental health problems.<sup>45</sup>

Relationship violence is also prevalent among adolescents. Nationally, of women who have experienced relationship violence, more than 1 in 5 experienced it for the first time between the ages of 11 and 17 years. Almost half of those women were between 18 and 24 when they first experienced IPV.<sup>46</sup> In Maine, young people are generally at heightened risk for violent crime and threats of violence, with 12.9% of those between 18 and 24 years old experiencing violent crime. 12.9% of those 18-24 also experienced the threat of violence within the last 12 months. As the population ages, threats of violence and experiences of violent crime both decrease significantly.

Health impacts of violence are immediate as well as long term. An estimated 62,000 women in Maine will seek medical care related directly to interpersonal violence over the course of their lives.<sup>47</sup>

Domestic abuse has a clear impact on the economic wellbeing of women and children in Maine. One in four women in the workplace identify as a domestic violence survivor or victim.<sup>48</sup> Victims of domestic abuse reported that obtaining and keeping a job was difficult; 60% of victims responding to the survey experienced losing a job and up to 96% reported a range of difficulties related to the actions of an abuser.<sup>49</sup>



### *Sexual Violence*

Maine women and girls experience sexual violence regardless of socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, age, or sexual orientation. Men and boys also experience sexual violence, but women and girls experience sexual violence at a much higher rate. According to a recent Maine study, 32.1% of females surveyed and 5.3% of males surveyed have experienced rape or sexual assault at some point in their lives.<sup>50</sup> Sexual violence often results in long-term negative emotional, social, and economic issues for individuals and communities.

Sexual violence exists on a spectrum (which includes rape, sexual harassment, and sex exploitation) and occurs across the life span and life experience. For instance, a study of working Maine teens found that 33% of girls who participated in the survey experienced sexual harassment while at work, resulting in lower self-esteem, poorer physical and mental health, and trauma symptoms.<sup>51</sup> At the opposite end of the age spectrum, research has shown that between 1 and 2 million Americans age 65 or older have been injured, exploited, or otherwise mistreated by someone on whom they depended for care or protection.<sup>52</sup> Additional research on elder women in Maine is needed to further understand this problem, especially with regard to sexual violence.

Different populations experience sexual violence at different rates. Homeless women and girls are at significant risk for sexual assault and sex exploitation. A study found that of the women interviewed, 44% were sexually assaulted since becoming homeless.<sup>53</sup> Although sexual violence can happen to anyone regardless of race or ethnicity, Native women and girls experience sexual violence at a higher rate than their white counterparts. Over one-fourth of Native women and girls have experienced rape and half of Native women and girls have experienced sexual violence other than rape.<sup>54</sup>

The impacts of sexual violence are devastating and manifest through severe psychological distress and symptoms including depression, anxiety, suicide attempts, and overall significant mental and physical



health problems.<sup>55</sup> Specifically regarding Maine women, 48.6% of adult sexual assault survivors report that they have been diagnosed as depressed, as opposed to 17.5% individuals who have never been sexually assaulted.<sup>56</sup> Additionally, 38.3% of adult Maine sexual assault survivors report that they have ever been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, as opposed to 14.2% of individuals who have never been sexually assaulted.<sup>57</sup> Women who experience sexual violence are also more likely to have substance abuse issues: 28.7% of female sexual assault survivors in Maine report they drank heavily in the past month (compared to 4.4% of individuals who have never been sexually assaulted).<sup>58</sup>

### *Stalking*

Approximately 17% of Maine women surveyed experienced stalking.<sup>59</sup> Stalking, like sexual violence and domestic violence, results in serious mental and physical impacts. Most stalking victims experience anxiety, insomnia, severe depression, and loss of work or school time as a result of being stalked. One in seven victims relocates as a result of stalking.<sup>60</sup> Stalking victimization is reported at a rate of 24.5% for youth 18 to 24 years old compared to decreasing rates as people age.<sup>61</sup>

## E. Leadership and Public Life

Women's participation in public life and in particular, leadership roles is an important indicator of their overall status and wellbeing. A society equally governed by women provides fairer representation of its diverse communities and members, and a more balanced perspective for policy and rule making. As important, civic leadership opportunities provide girls and women with an important avenue for accomplishing equality in social status and economic stability.

We found little readily available data that would measure the impact of women's leadership in the private sector, or in larger institutions such as hospitals and universities, economic development agencies, or even in local public government agencies such as school boards, town councils or select boards. While anecdotal evidence suggests Maine women are moving into leadership roles as CEOs, Presidents and board members, national data would indicate there is likely room to expand women's leadership at all levels.

Maine has a rich history of women's participation in leadership and public life, and takes credit for a number of national 'firsts' in this arena. Margaret Chase Smith was the first woman in the country to be elected to both the US House of Representatives and the US Senate. Current US Senator Olympia Snowe was the first woman in the United States to be elected to the State House, State Senate, and both congressional houses. And upon her election as State Sen-

*Maine has a rich history of women's participation in leadership and public life, and takes credit for a number of national 'firsts' in this arena.*



ate President, Elizabeth Mitchell became the first woman in the country to have served as both Speaker of the State House and President of the State Senate. However, Maine continues to face challenges engaging girls in paths that lead to public leadership roles. To further this goal Maine must foster girls' interest in public life so as to sustain it into adulthood, as a means of ensuring women are equally represented in top decision making roles.

While grade school girls are interested in being involved in public life and report feeling that their voice matters, their interest wanes as they age. In 2009, girls in public schools in Maine were asked about whether they mattered to the people in their community. Of those surveyed, 48% in high school and 51% in middle school reported they "agree" or "strongly agree" with this statement.<sup>62</sup> 51% of middle school girls also spend time outside of school engaged in club or service activities, whereas that number drops to under 42% among high school girls.

Today, three quarters of Maine's Congressional Delegation are women – Senator Olympia Snowe, Senator Susan Collins, and Representative Chellie Pingree. Yet, despite these important achievements, Maine has fallen short in other areas. The State has yet to elect a female Governor, and while the State ranks in the top 15 nationwide for the percentage of women serving in the State Legislature, the bar is quite low. In 2010, women only made up 28% of the State's legislature and had lost ground from the almost 30% of positions they held in 2008. Among County Commissioners, who are elected officials responsible for fiscal operations and policy decisions, only 26% are female. Maine also has only one female sheriff and only three female district attorneys.

Legislative Session	% Women in Legislature	State Ranking
125th Legislature 2010	29%	13th
124th Legislature 2008	29.6%	10th
123rd Legislature 2006	30.6%	23rd
122nd Legislature 2004	23.1%	18th
121st Legislature 2002	26.9%	8th
120th Legislature 2000	30.1%	12th
119th Legislature 1998	27.4%	14th
118th Legislature 1996	25.5%	12th
117th Legislature 1994	27.3%	6th
116th Legislature 1992	31.7%	3rd
115th Legislature 1990	32.8%	3rd
114th Legislature 1988	31.2%	2nd

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### III. Summary Findings

#### A. Education

- In 2011, approximately one-third of Maine 4th grade girls were reading at or above the appropriate proficiency level.
- Maine women trend towards education that prepares them for traditionally female-dominated occupations, which are generally lower-paying.
- Though more than half of Maine women hold a higher-education degree, 9.6% of Maine women do not graduate from high school.

#### Primary Recommendations:

- Maine needs targeted policy choices that will positively affect elementary school reading levels and increase the number of high school graduates.
- Maine needs greater investments in traditionally female-dominated occupations to reflect the education obtained to hold such occupations.

#### B. Economic Security

- In 2010, the wage gap based on gender was 78%, which is higher than the national average.
- Part-time work can hinder a women's ability to obtain adequate pay and benefits such as health insurance and paid time off.
- Elderly women in Maine have decreased access to economic safety nets compared to their male counterparts, and their safety nets are smaller. Further, women live longer than men and their need for income spans greater periods of time, perpetuating rates of poverty into later life.
- 23% of single-parent households in Maine are led by women, and on average, the poorest families in Maine are those headed by single mothers who have very young children.

#### Primary Recommendations:

- Maine should introduce new, or amend existing, policy that focuses on moving single mothers and elderly women out of poverty. This policy should include consideration for single mothers who are unable to retain full-time employment due to caregiving responsibilities.
- Maine must articulate and follow through on a vision for gender-based economic equality.

#### C. Health

- Heart disease, cancer, and stroke are the leading causes of death in Maine women. Lung cancer is the most common type of terminal cancer. Additionally, a prevalent health issue among Maine women is obesity.
- In 2011, one in ten Maine women reported that they needed to see a doctor but were unable to due to the cost.
- Because women have lower average incomes than men, and because they are more likely to be single parents shouldering the cost of child healthcare, they are more likely to experience medical-related debt.

### Primary Recommendations:

- Maine must ensure that health care policies consider the financial and logistical limitations that are specific to Maine women, specifically women living in poverty, single mothers, and the elderly.
- Maine must make it a priority to ensure that no person in need of medical attention is unable to attain it due to cost or resulting debt.

### D. Safety and Wellbeing

- Domestic abuse remains an issue in Maine and predominantly affects women.
- Sexual exploitation, harassment, stalking and violence are experienced by Maine women and girls regardless of socioeconomic and race considerations. Homeless women and girls, however, face a significant risk for encountering sexual violence.
- Women who are sexually assaulted are at a greater risk for mental and physical health issues, and substance abuse problems.

### Primary Recommendations:

- Maine must support policy that works to end sexual exploitation, harassment, stalking and violence towards Maine residents, considering especially women and girls.
- Greater investments should be made to ensure that victims receive support for mental and physical health issues resulting from these crimes.
- Efforts should be made to educate both men women about these issues, and what can be done to prevent their occurrence.

### E. Leadership and Public Life

- Maine continues to face challenges engaging girls in paths that lead to public leadership roles.

### Primary Recommendations:

- Maine should address that challenge by making investments in opportunities for women and girls regarding leadership education.





## IV. Acknowledgments

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The Commission, established by statute in 2010, is charged with researching and reporting on the status of women and advocating for improving the opportunities afforded them. We look forward to further editions of this report and welcome comments and questions as we seek to improve and expand upon this work.

### Commission Members (2011)

Sarah Bigney, Jenna Vendil, Odelle Bowman, Megan Williams, Kimm A. Collins, Eloise Vitelli, (chair) Elizabeth Ward Saxl, Fatuma Hussein, Robyn Merrill, Julia Colpitts, Romy Spitz, Ph. D., Karen Keim, Jane Root, Denis Culley, Esq., Sarah Standiford, Penny Guisinger

### Commission Members (2012)

Sarah Bigney, Odelle Bowman, Jennifer Burke, Megan Williams, Kimm A. Collins, Eloise Vitelli, (chair) Elizabeth Ward Saxl, Fatuma Hussein, Julia Colpitts, Romy Spitz, Ph. D., Karen Keim, Denis Culley, Esq., Cheryl Timberlake, Ruth Summers, Karen Raye, Donna Yellen, Brenda Commander

For more information about the Commission and its work,  
please visit: [www.maine.gov/sos/womens-comm.htm](http://www.maine.gov/sos/womens-comm.htm)

## Appendix Notes

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