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Status of Women and Girls in Western Massachusetts, 2019

Prepared for the Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts by:
Jessie Gleckel, MPH

Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts
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PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTE
OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

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About This Report

This is the second report of its kind commissioned by the Women’s Fund of Western Massachusetts since 2013. The *Status of Women and Girls in Western Massachusetts, 2019* uses data from local, state, and federal agencies to highlight several facets of women and girls’ diverse experiences in Western Massachusetts. With an increased effort to explore intersectionality and gender (in)equity, this report underscores where women and girls, and therefore the whole region, continue to face obstacles. In addition, the report highlights women and girls’ progress and successes. This report is intended to

- provide new and additional information to the 2013 report;
- inform the Women’s Fund of Western Massachusetts community investment strategy; and
- serve as a tool to help the region collectively advocate for programs and policies that increase opportunities for women and girls and move Western Massachusetts toward a more gender inclusive and equitable region for all.

About the Women’s Fund of Western Massachusetts

The Women’s Fund of Western Massachusetts fuels progress toward gender equity by funding the most promising solutions, collaborating with results-oriented partners, and by elevating the collective power of local women to take charge, and to lead with purpose. Through grant-making for social impact, the Women’s Fund supports organizations and projects that help drive gender equity by fostering economic prosperity for women of all ages. The Women’s Fund strongly believes that the integration of multi-sector efforts and issues is critical to advancing progress for all. By joining forces with key strategic partners, we can leverage expertise, relationships, and resources to produce the most promising solutions and inspire cross-sector engagement. The Women’s Fund is committed to developing women’s leadership across varied sectors, capacities, and positions. By engaging and supporting women and girls of all ages to develop their best personal and professional selves, the Women’s Fund is committed to investing in the lives of women, children, and families across the Commonwealth. Together, we can make deep impact in our communities by helping to support the leaders of today – while building the leaders of tomorrow.

About the Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts

The Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts (PHIWM) builds measurably healthier communities with equitable opportunities and resources for all through civic leadership, collaborative partnerships and policy advocacy. PHIWM provides skills, expertise, and experience to create successful public health campaigns and sustainable system changes to improve health and well-being in Western Massachusetts. Through partnerships, PHIWM builds on community assets and builds community capacity to positively impact social determinants of health. Ensuring health equity and challenging institutional racism are core values integrated into all PHIWM’s services. Through coalition building, community-based research and evaluation, and health policy advocacy, PHIWM works with and on behalf of communities that experience health disparities and inequities.

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2019 Status of Women and Girls in Western Massachusetts Advisory Council Members

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STCC & Springfield School Committee

Rania Kfuri
Smith College

Chelsea Kline
Community Leader

Martha Potvin
Springfield College

Dora Robinson
United Way of Pioneer Valley

Michelle Sears
Health New England

Layla Taylor
Sullivan, Hayes & Quinn LLC

Michelle Theroux
Berkshire Hills Music Academy

Karla Travieso
Gardening the Community

Gwendolyn VanSant
Multicultural BRIDGE

Anne Weiss
Weiss Consulting

Subject Matter Experts/Key Informants (by Report Focus Area)

Berkshire Commission on the Status of Women

Health and Wellness

Catherine Brooks – Collaborative for Educational Services

Wendy Penner – Northern Berkshire Community Coalition

Jeanette Voas – Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Incarceration

Deborah Cubi – Hampden County Sheriff's Department

Tatyana Delaney – Hampden County Sheriff's Department

Ed Hayes – Franklin County Sheriff's Department

Gretchen Krull – Director of VOICES from Inside

Martha Lyman – Hampden County Sheriff's Department

Patricia Murphy – Hampden County Sheriff's Department

Marisa Pizii – Former Co-Director of the Prison Birth Project, currently Deputy Director of Programs for Civil Liberties and Public Policy at Hampshire College

Jennifer Sordi – Hampden County Sheriff's Department

Sally J. Van Wright – Hampden County Sheriff's Department

Participation and Leadership in Business and STEM

Mark Melnik – Donahue Institute

Political Representation and Participation

Nina Liang – Emerge Massachusetts

Public Safety

Yoshi Bird – YWCA of Western Massachusetts

Heather Hubbard – Franklin County Office of the District Attorney

Stacey Langknecht – Children's Advocacy Center of Franklin County and North Quabbin Area and Hampshire County

Vera Mouradian – Massachusetts Department of Public Health

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Welcome from the Women's Fund CEO:

The Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts is pleased to share our second research report focusing on women and this time, expanding the lens to include girls: *The Status of Women and Girls in Western Massachusetts, 2019*. Since the publication of our Status of Women in Western Massachusetts, 2013, we have seen progress in a number of areas for women, as well as places to grow.

In terms of progress, we see that more women are being educated at both the high school and college levels. While the trend is in the right direction, there is much room to grow, particularly in Hampden County. We see progress with more women being elected to office, but we must encourage women to reach higher so we can achieve shared leadership. Additionally, our region is very slowly becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. While most of Western Massachusetts' diversity still lies within Hampden County, the other three counties have made small gains.

Areas to focus attention and resources for women and girls include economic security, particularly for women of color, leadership, and health and safety. Hampden County, our most populated county, also deserves special consideration. Women and girls from Hampden County fare worse overall than in other Western MA counties. For girls in particular, we are concerned by health and safety indicators that show that girls are experiencing higher rates of child exploitation, depression, and sexually transmitted infections as compared to boys. Finally, we see a need for more supportive services for our region's incarcerated women, and full compliance with the anti-shackling legislation passed in 2014.

This report would not have been possible without support from our donors who are passionate about identifying and addressing challenges and opportunities faced by our region's women and girls. Our research partner, the Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts, and our Research Advisory Board were indispensable partners without whom this report could not exist.

We intend to use this report as both an educational tool and a call to action with our community, our policymakers, and other organizations devoted to advancing gender equity.

Onward,

Donna Haghghat

CEO

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Executive Summary

In recent years, mainstream and social media have raised the visibility and accountability of gender inequities experienced by women in our society —e.g., sexual harassment, the gender pay gap, and trans-inclusive policies for bathroom use in schools. In addition, the 2018 midterm elections saw the largest numbers of women run for governor and congressional offices, and a record number of women were elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Women of color also made historical gains in the number of candidates in local, state, and federal elections.¹ Women and girls, trans individuals, and gender non-binary and non-conforming individuals are making strides toward equity and there is evidence of cultural shifts occurring. Yet, much remains to achieve gender equity for all.

The Status of Women and Girls in Western Massachusetts, 2019 examines the status of women and girls across the four counties of Western MA (Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, Hampshire) and shows that despite some advancements, women and girls continue to inequitably experience obstacles to accessing opportunities that maximize mental and physical health, prosperity, social and political influence, and well-being. This report updates the previous *Status of Women and Girls in Western Massachusetts, 2013* report, providing a summary of key status indicators and highlighting differences and similarities among women and girls across Western Massachusetts counties. In addition, this report brings attention to racial and ethnic, educational, and socioeconomic status differences when possible. The work was guided by a regional Advisory Council of subject matter experts representing sector, geographic, and sociodemographic diversity.

A number of key findings emerged from analyses of local, state, and federal quantitative data and qualitative data gathered for this report on indicators of achievement, autonomy, health, and well-being. Although the findings in this report are broken out as distinct areas of focus for women and girls, it is critical to consider how these areas may overlap in their lives. For example, experiences of poverty may link to decreased educational opportunities and a history of sexual violence, mental illness, and poverty may link to an increased risk of incarceration.

Demographics

There is great diversity among the women and girls of Western MA. More than a quarter of the female population is women and girls of color and nearly two in ten speak a language other than English at home. The median age ranges from 36.4 in Hampshire County to 48.8 in Berkshire County, and women head 80% of single parent households in Western MA.

Education

Across all four counties of Western MA, women and girls had higher high school enrollment rates and lower dropout rates. Despite female students' lower performance on college entrance and advanced placement exams as compared with male students, they completed higher levels of education than men and boys.^{2,3,4}

In the 2017-2018 school year, women comprised the majority of educators at rates of 70% and higher across the region as well as principals and heads of school at rates of 55% and higher. However, women held only 39% of full-time superintendent positions in the region. Women of color held very few superintendent positions.⁵

Employment and Earnings

Despite their educational success, only about three quarters of women and girls in Western MA participated in the labor force and those who worked earned less compared to men. Consistent with state and national findings, women of color in Western MA fare the worst with regards to the wage gap. Black women in Franklin County earned the least of all groups of women in Western MA at 41 cents to each dollar White men in Franklin County earned, compared to the average rate of 83 cents to the dollar that women overall in Western MA earned compared to men. Additionally, women in Western MA with lower levels of education are paid far less than men with equivalent education. Women and girls in Berkshire, Hampden, and Hampshire who did not complete a high school education earned approximately 65 cents to each dollar that men with the same education earned. Across all four Western MA counties, those with a high school education earned 55 to 68 cents to each dollar that men with the same education earned.⁶

Rates of poverty among women in Western MA range from 12% in Franklin County to nearly 20% in Hampden County, well above the statewide rate of 12%. Women and girls of color also had substantially higher rates of poverty than White women and girls, with poverty rates of up to 42% among Latinx women and girls in Hampden County and up to 54% among Black women and girls in Franklin County.⁷

Health and wellness

Across a number of health indicators, adolescent girls in general and women and girls of color in Western MA experienced clear disparities compared with their male peers or females overall.

Approximately half of female students across Western MA were at great risk for depression, a rate twice or nearly twice that of their male peers.⁸ The rate of chlamydia among female adolescents was over ten times higher than that of all females in Berkshire and Hampden Counties. Female adolescents in Hampden and Hampshire experienced rates of gonorrhea 10-90% higher than their male peers.⁹ Teen birth rates were 30–98% higher than the state rate in all Western MA counties except Hampshire (Figure xxx). Large inequities exist among Latinx teens, particularly in Hampden County, where the Latinx teen birth rate was over four times that of the overall state rate.¹⁰ Over a quarter of pregnant teens (aged 15 to 19) in Berkshire (36%) and Franklin (27%) Counties smoked during pregnancy, which was twice that of all pregnant women who smoked in the respective counties.

Only 74% of Black and Latinx women in Berkshire County and 73% of Black women in Hampden County received adequate prenatal care compared with over 80% of women overall across the four counties. Women of color made up at least 45% of those who sought abortions in 2017,

disproportionate to the nearly 27% of women of color living in Western MA. These findings reflected the well-documented historic grave offenses Black women have experienced with regards to their reproductive and sexual health and disproportionately poorer health outcomes.¹¹

Incarceration

A history of trauma—which often includes sexual violence as a child or adolescent—poverty, and/or substance use is common among incarcerated women and girls and is often the reason (directly or indirectly) for their incarceration.^{12,13}

Participation and leadership in business, healthcare, higher education, and STEM

Women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions in healthcare and higher education,¹⁴ two of the major employers in the region, although some institutions have reached or are close to reaching gender parity. According to the most recent available census data on current occupations, women were grossly underrepresented in the STEM workforce at 28.4%.¹⁵

Political representation and participation

Despite nation-wide gains in women’s representation in political office, women in Western MA remain a stark minority in public office at the local (only 20% of mayors), state (33.3% of MA Legislators), and federal (36.4% of MA’s U.S. Congressional delegation) levels.

Public Safety and Crime

Sexual violence disproportionately affects women and girls.¹⁶ Documented reports of sexual violence through law enforcement and healthcare providers are a vast underrepresentation of the problem. As reported through law enforcement to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, rapes in Western MA represented 20% of statewide reported rapes. In 2018, Western MA restraining orders made up 19% of all restraining orders filed statewide. And community-based organizations throughout Western MA served hundreds of survivors of intimate partner violence and their children. Female students reported rates of dating violence more than twice that of male students in Franklin and Hampshire Counties and the City of Springfield. Female students and students who identify as LGBTQI+ in Western MA reported high levels of bullying and skipping school because they felt unsafe at school or traveling there or back. Female children aged 16 and younger accounted for the majority of cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children seen in child advocacy centers in Western MA.

Methods

This report was developed based on analyses of secondary data from existing quantitative data sources and content analysis of qualitative data from structured interviews and recordings from Commissions on the Status of Women and Girls public hearings in Western Massachusetts (MA). Qualitative data were analyzed to identify themes and issues unique to women and girls in Western MA. Data were collected on the four Western MA counties with occasional focus on select communities: Berkshire County (North Adams and Pittsfield); Franklin County (Greenfield, Montague, and Orange); Hampden County (Chicopee, Holyoke, Springfield, West Springfield, and Westfield); and Hampshire County (Amherst, Easthampton, and Northampton). The research team proposed this list of select communities based on knowledge from passed assessments of identified inequities and needs. The Women’s Fund and the Advisory Council to this report agreed to the suggested select communities during the first Advisory Council meeting. The research team also gathered input and insight, informally and formally (e.g., email exchanges, phone calls), from dozens of subject matter experts through the convening of a regional Advisory Council.

Secondary data analyses were conducted on data obtained from existing national, state, and local quantitative data sets. These included data from U. S. Census Bureau, MA Department of Public Health, MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, sheriffs’ departments, and school-based surveys. The report primarily uses descriptive statistics to present these data. A limited amount of primary qualitative data collection was completed through structured individual and group interviews as well as unstructured consultations with a variety of subject matter experts for the report’s various focus areas. Themes from these data are also presented alongside the quantitative data, offering some additional context. When data sources permitted, we examined data by race/ethnicity, age, and socioeconomic status. However, many of the available data sources are limited in how they are able to be disaggregated, which pose challenges to an in-depth and authentic look at intersectionality and how inequities play out among those who have historically and currently face various forms of oppression.

The Women’s Fund and PHIWM convened a regional Advisory Council of subject matter experts representing sector, geographic, and sociodemographic diversity five times over a six month period to fulfill four essential roles in the process of the report’s development:

- Provide subject matter, geographic, community, and personal experience/expertise.
- Represent their communities, organizations, and/or agencies in guiding the process for developing this report.
- Provide guidance and input into the assessment process, data sources, data analyses, and report. (As part of this role, Advisory Council members completed a brief online survey to help prioritize topics on which to focus qualitative data collection.)
- Serve as a conduit of information about the assessment and report to their communities, organizations/agencies and solicit additional support, as appropriate and needed.

The Advisory Council, along with other local/regional and statewide subject matter experts, provided consultation and input on relevant data sources to use for the report as well as experiential knowledge of the topical focus and geographic areas. These qualitative insights are woven into the narrative of this report.

Notes about Low Numbers

When examining data across communities and disaggregating by race and ethnicity, data were unavailable for some populations because of the smaller population sizes in some parts of Western MA and the small number of people of color living in some communities. In some cases the counts were low and the data were available; however, the estimates should be interpreted with caution. Please be aware of the following when reading the report:

- In order to be able to disaggregate data by age, gender, and race/ethnicity, there are some data that were aggregated across multiple years (e.g., STI data).
- In cases where the data were not aggregated across years and there were small numbers,
 - an estimate with a numerator count less than 5 was suppressed and there is a dash (-) in its place in tables; and
 - an estimate with a numerator count less than 10 should be interpreted with caution and is indicated by an asterisk (*).

Notes on Terminology

Equity and Equality

The terms (in)equity and (in)equality are both used in this report. They are not interchangeable terms. Equity refers to fairness while equality refers to equivalence or sameness. Gender equity speaks to fair treatment and distribution of resources, as well as policies that address the unique needs of women, trans, gender neutral, other gender-non conforming, and men. Gender equality refers to all genders having the same treatment and distribution of resources, and same benefits of policies. Equity is about justice. It is about acknowledging both historic and current systems of discrimination and injustice and the intentionality of keeping our foundations imbalanced and unequal.

Gender vs. Sex

The Advisory Council decided to use the term gender throughout this report while acknowledging that its use may be an oversimplification and misrepresentation (i.e., when the data actually speaks to issues pertaining to or referring to sex assigned at birth) at different points in the report. There was a desire and intention for this report to be much more gender inclusive, highlighting gender-based intersectionalities for women and girls in Western Massachusetts. Unfortunately, gender-inclusive and non-binary data are still very limited. Many of the data sources used for this report are still collecting data on gender using a gender-binary question. And those data sources that are collecting gender non-binary data are not doing so consistently across agencies, organizations, and/or data collection instruments. It is for these reasons that this report is regrettably written in gender-binary terms. However, the term gender was still chosen instead of sex so that it was not assumed that individuals who self-report their gender (even through a gender-binary question) through surveys and other data collection instruments are referring only to their sex assigned at birth.

Latinx

This report uses 'Latinx' throughout instead of Latina, Hispanic, or Hispanic/Latina. "Latinx is the gender-neutral alternative to Latino, Latina and even Latin@. Used by scholars, activists and an increasing number of journalists, Latinx is quickly gaining popularity among the general public. It's part of a "linguistic revolution" that aims to move beyond gender binaries and is inclusive of the intersecting identities of Latin American descendants. In addition to men and women from all racial backgrounds, Latinx also makes room for people who are trans, queer, agender, non-binary, gender non-conforming or gender fluid."¹⁷

Background

Western Massachusetts

Western MA is comprised of four counties: Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire. The four counties make up 27% of Massachusetts' 10,565 square miles and 12% of the state's population. Springfield, located in Hampden County, is the largest population Center in Western MA, the third largest city in Massachusetts, and accounts for almost a third of the population in Hampden County. The largely rural region has a population density of 299.1 people per square mile (compared with the rest of the state which has a combined population density nearly three times greater at 879.5).¹⁸

The region is home to 14 four-year colleges and universities,¹⁹—three of which are Women's Colleges/Universities—and a number of community colleges and other higher education institutions.

Status of Women and Girls

Reports on the status of women and girls are tools designed to assess gender equality and equity. Though progress has been made towards gender equity, many inequities continue to exist. As identified in the previous *Status of Women and Girls in Western Massachusetts, 2013* report, women in Western MA experience many of the inequities that are experienced by women across the United States.

Guided by the voices, experiences, and expertise of women from the four Western MA counties, this report builds on the previous report. In order to more fully understand the status of women and girls in this region, this report begins investigating the commonalities among women and girls as well as what makes them different and unique. It is our hope that it can be used as a tool for challenging institutions and systems that have created oppressive practices and perpetuated oppression, including racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, xenophobia, ableism, and ageism.

Findings

Demographics of Women and Girls in Western Massachusetts

Age and Geographic Distribution

An estimated 430,649 women and girls live in Western MA with a median age ranging from 36.4 to 48.8 across the four Western MA counties (Table 1). Similar to the rest of the state, women and girls in Western MA make up just over half of the population. More than half of the region’s women and girls reside in Hampden County, the county with the largest population and highest population density in the region.

Table 1. Select Sociodemographic Characteristics of Women in Western MA Counties

	Berkshire (Pop. 126,313)	Franklin (Pop. 70,702)	Hampden (Pop. 469,818)	Hampshire (Pop. 161, 834)
Population (% of total pop.)	65,216 (51.6%)	36,259 (51.3%)	242,789 (51.7%)	86,385 (53.4%)
Age				
Median	48.8	47.9	40.5	36.4
Under 18	16.5%	16.8%	20.2%	13.4%
65 and Older	24.1%	22.7%	18.3%	17.2%
Race/Ethnicity				
White*	88.9%	91.3%	62.6%	83.4%
Latina	4.4%	3.7%	25.3%	5.7%
Black*	2.8%	1.2%	7.7%	2.7%
Asian*	1.7%	1.7%	2.6%	6.0%
American Indian/Native Hawaiian*	0.2%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%
Two or More Races*	2.1%	1.8%	1.6%	2.0%

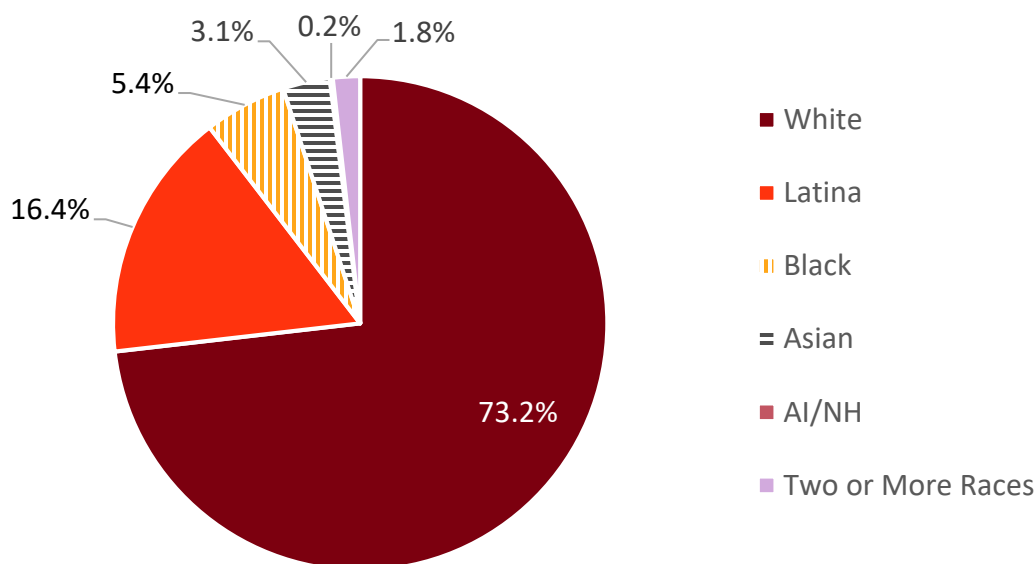
Source: U.S. Census, ACS, 2017 1-Year Estimate

* Non-Hispanic/Latinx

Racial and Ethnic Diversity

The racial and ethnic diversity of Western MA, although increasing, was still not reflective of the state as a whole (Figure 1) (Table 1) in 2017. In Western MA, approximately 26% of the female population identified as women and girls of color. The racial/ethnic distribution among females varies substantially across Western MA, from a female population comprised of 8.7% women and girls of color in Franklin County, to a female population who are 37.4% women and girls of color in Hampden County, which is home to the largest urban area in the region (Springfield). Among women of color, the largest population is Latinx women, with the majority residing in Hampden County (87%), where 25.3% are Latinx. Black women comprise 5.4% of the population with Hampden County home to 82.3% of the Black women and girls in the region.²⁰ Eight percent of women and girls in Western MA were born outside of the U.S. Important to note, though, is that this estimate does not take into consideration any immigrants or refugees who are living in Western MA and currently undocumented. Eighteen percent of the Western MA population (not exclusively women and girls) speak a language other than English at home, and over three quarters (77.8%) of these reside in Hampden County.²¹

Figure 1. Racial Diversity among Women and Girls in Western MA



Source: U.S. Census, ACS, 2017 1-Year Estimate

Single Mother Households

There were an estimated 34,266 single parent households in Western MA. Women headed 79.7% of these households. Of the four counties, this rate was highest in Hampden (81.4%) and lowest in Franklin (74.2%). Of the select communities, the rate of single mother-headed households was highest in Springfield (88.3%), Holyoke (88.2%), and Amherst (86.5%) and lowest in Easthampton (62.0%), Orange (65.1%), and West Springfield (68.7%).²²

Marital Status

Among women in the western MA counties, an estimated 38.3% had never been married, 42.4% were married, 13.1% were divorced or separated, and 6.2% are widowed. Women aged 15 and older in all four counties reported their marital status as divorced at higher rates than men. They also reported lower rates of currently being married and never being married (Table 2). Women aged 65 and older, across the four counties of Western MA, were widowed at rates around three times higher than males the same age. Two communities where these rates were even higher were the towns of Orange and Ware where the women aged 65 and older were widowed at rates greater than five times higher than men (Table 3).²³

Table 2. Marital Status of Individuals Aged 15 and Older by Gender and County.

	Divorced (%)		Currently Married (%)		Never Married (%)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
BERKSHIRE	12.1	14.8	47.3	43.2	35.8	29.8
FRANKLIN	10.6	15	50.4	47	35.1	26.7
HAMPDEN	9.1	12.8	44.3	39.1	41.9	36
HAMPSHIRE	8.2	10.7	42.6	37	45.5	44

Source: U.S. Census, ACS, 5-Year Estimate 2013-2017

Table 3. Percent of Widowed Seniors Aged 65 and Older by Gender and County.

	Males (%)	Females (%)
BERKSHIRE	11.2	32.9
FRANKLIN	10.1	33.9
HAMPDEN	12.7	36.1
HAMPSHIRE	10.6	31.5

Source: U.S. Census, ACS, 5-Year Estimate 2013-2017

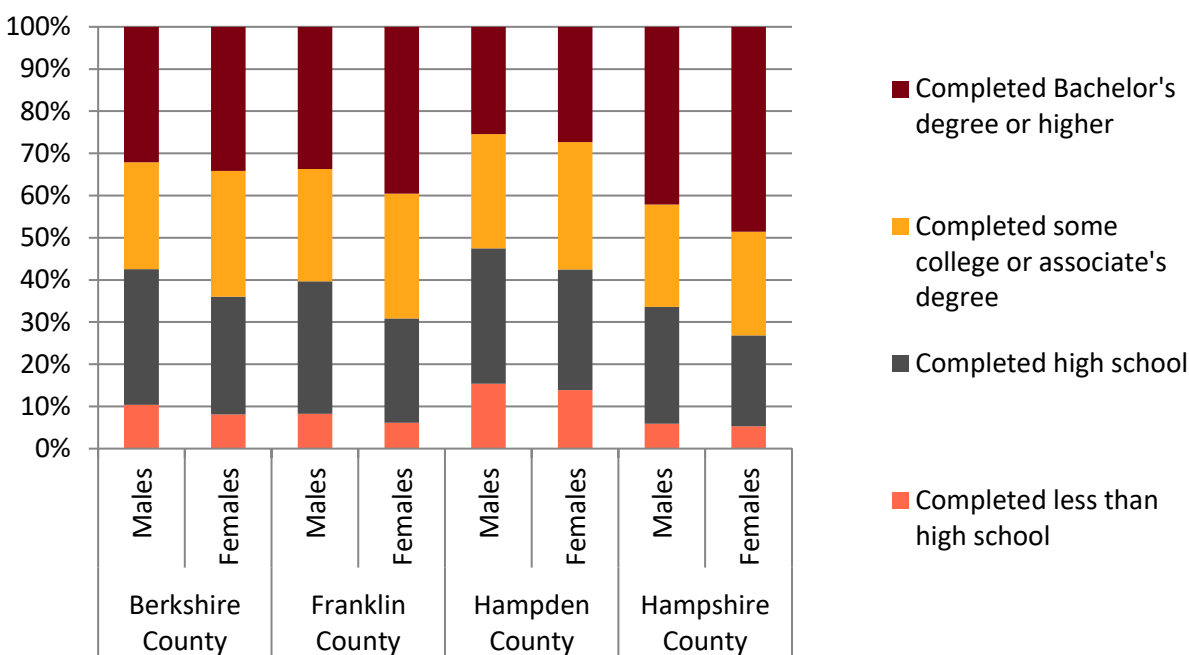
Education

Students

Educational Attainment

Across all four counties of Western MA, women and girls completed higher levels of education than men and boys. Hampshire County had the largest proportion of college-educated women at 48.6%, followed by Franklin County at 39.5%. Hampshire County also had the smallest proportion of women who did not complete a high school education at 5.3%, again followed by Franklin County at 6.1%. Hampden County had the highest rate of women who did not complete high school at 13.9% (Figure 2).²⁴

Figure 2. Educational Attainment by Gender and County



Source: U.S. Census, ACS, 5-Year Estimate 2013-2017

Enrollment and Completion

Throughout Western MA school districts, K-12 rates of enrollment for the 2017-2018 school year were generally 50% for female students with some slight variations. However, three school districts in Berkshire, one in Franklin, and one in Hampden had female enrollment rates much lower with rates ranging from 30.6% to 39.7%. Three of the five districts—Northern Berkshire Regional Vocational Technical, Franklin County Regional Vocational Technical, Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical (in Hampden County)—are vocational technical schools. The historic bias of vocational education against girls/women, may explain the lower enrollment of

female students.²⁵ Two school districts in Hampshire County—Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter Public and Worthington—had noticeably higher rates of female enrollment at 68.8% and 61.3%, respectively.²⁶

Female students are increasingly completing school (at various levels) at higher rates than male students (Figure YX, above). Across the four counties, for the 2017-2018 school year, girls had lower rates of dropping out of school than their male counterparts. However, dropout rates varied across the region with higher rates such as 4.5% for females and 5.7% for males in Springfield (Hampden County) and with lower rates such as 1.1% for females and 4.3% for males in North Adams (Berkshire County). Lower dropout rates among female students were consistent with statewide data: 1.5% for female students and 2.2% for male students.²⁷

Test-Taking

Female students in Western MA are taking advanced placement and college entrance exams at higher rates, yet consistently scoring lower, than male students. According to the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE), female students took 56.4% of the advanced placement (AP) tests taken in Western MA in 2017-2018. However, only 48.0% of female students' test scores were in the higher range of 3 to 5 as compared with 57.0% of male students' test scores. The participation rate of female students in Western MA was comparable to the statewide rate. However, female students in Western MA had a lower rate of high scores (3 to 5) than female students statewide (63.6%, which was still lower than male students statewide at 69.1%).²⁸

Similarly, more female than male students took the SAT in almost 90% (40 of 47) of the school districts in Western MA that MA DESE had available data for by gender. The percent of females taking the SATs in each of the Western MA counties was as follows: Berkshire – 58.0%, Franklin – 59.7%, Hampden and Hampshire – 54.8%. In the majority of school districts, female students' mean scores in both Reading/Writing and Math were generally lower than male students' mean scores. For example, in Northampton and Westfield female students' mean scores on Reading/Writing were 18 and 17 points lower and mean scores on Math were 46 and 44 points lower than their male peers' mean scores. In only one school district, female students had an average score on the math section higher than that of their male peers. In 18 of the 47 school districts, female students' average score on the reading/writing section was higher than that of their male peers. Lower scores among females were consistent with statewide averages.²⁹

Educators and Administrators

Teachers

According to MA DESE, which also provides demographic information on educators and school administrators, women held the vast majority of K-12 public school teaching positions in Western MA in 2017-2018. During the 2017-2018 school year, a large majority of teachers were female (Berkshire – 74.2%, Franklin - 76.8%, Hampshire – 69.9%, Hampden – 74.7%) and few were teachers of color (Berkshire – 2.8%, Franklin – 2.2%, Hampshire – 6.1%, Hampden – 10.5%). Although the proportion of teachers of color was highest in Hampden County, this rate was far from representative of the diversity of the student body.³⁰

Principals and Heads of School

During the 2017-2018 school year, women made up the majority of school principals/heads of school in all four Western MA counties (Berkshire – 57.5%, Franklin – 59.9%, Hampshire – 54.9%, Hampden – 60.8%). There were few principals or heads of school of color (Berkshire – 2.4%, Franklin – 0%, Hampshire – 5.5%), except in Hampden County where nearly one in five (18.7%) were people of color, almost double the rate of teachers of color in the same county. (Note: When looking at district-level data, DESE does not provide principals' and heads of school's race and ethnicity by gender.)³¹

Superintendents

Of the 90 superintendent positions in Western MA, some of which are part-time and some of which are full time, 37 (41.1%) were held by women during the 2017-2018 school year. Women held 18 (39.1%) of the 46 full-time superintendent positions. Of the female superintendents, only 3 (8.1%) of those positions were held by women of color.³²

Employment and Earnings

Academic achievement among women continues to show growth, and regionally women are completing higher levels of education than their male counterparts. However, women continue to participate in the labor force at lower rates than men, and, on average, continue to earn less than men. The US Census Bureau defines participation in the labor force as currently employed or unemployed, but looking for or waiting for employment.ⁱ

Table 4. Percent Participation in Labor Force and Unemployment by Gender, County, and Select Municipalities

	PARTICIPATION IN LABOR FORCE (%)		UNEMPLOYED (%)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Berkshire County	81.3	78.6	8.3	5.1
North Adams	72.5	74.2	11.7	7.3
Pittsfield	80.9	78.1	9.1	6.4
Franklin County	82.0	77.5	6.6	5.1
Greenfield	80.1	80.2	6.4	4.9
Montague	81.9	77.1	9.6	6.4
Orange	74.5	63.2	13.6	6.3
Hampden County	79.5	72.9	7.6	6.7
Chicopee	81.8	73.4	7.8	6
Holyoke	69.4	69.5	9.5	8.7
Springfield	71.9	67.6	10	10.1
West Springfield	86.2	73.5	7.9	3.9
Westfield	86.3	77.6	8.1	3.6
Hampshire County	79.8	77.3	6.8	4.8
Amherst	66.3	67.7	9.5	6.7
Easthampton	82.1	84.9	9.2	5.5
Northampton	81.5	75.7	6.0	4.4

Source: U.S. Census, ACS, 5-Year Estimate 2013-2017

ⁱ According to the US Census Bureau's glossary of terms, "the labor force includes all people classified in the civilian labor force, plus members of the U.S. Armed Forces (people on active duty with the United States Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard). The civilian labor force consists of people classified as employed or unemployed." Individuals, male or female, who are unable to work and/or choose not to seek employment (e.g., to stay home to care for their children) are not considered part of the labor force.

Employment

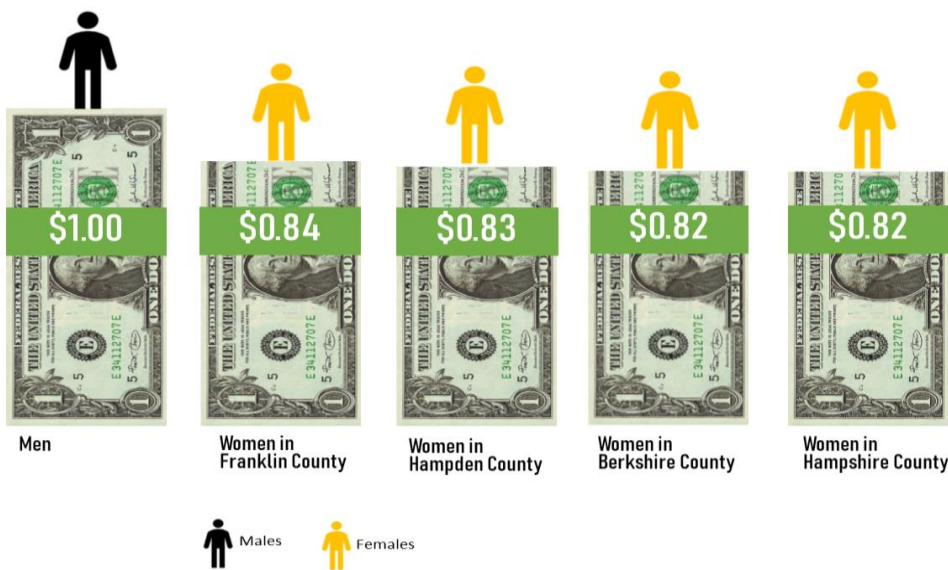
In all counties, women were participating in the labor force at a rate greater than 70%, according to US Census estimates for 2013–2017. Hampden County saw the lowest participation of females in the labor force among the four counties (72.9%); Berkshire had the highest with 78.6%. In Western MA, the gap between males and females aged 20 to 64 in the labor force was greatest in Hampden County and smallest in Hampshire County, where the participation rate was 77.3% among females compared to 79.8% among males (Table 4). Statewide the gap was similar to Hampden County with 77.5% of females and 84.3% of males participating in the labor force.

Across the region, the percent of females participating in the labor force who were unemployed was lower than males. Hampshire County had the lowest percent of unemployed females (4.8%) and Hampden County had the highest (6.7%).³³

Earnings

Women in Western MA experience a disparity in earnings similar to that of the rest of the state and the nation. The Bureau of Labor Statistics released a report in 2018 showing ten-year trends on the persistent wage gap between women and men in MA. According to the report, since 1997, women’s earnings compared to those of men have fluctuated, with a low of 74.8% of men’s earnings in 2007 and a high of 84.3% in 2016. In 2017, MA women’s earnings decreased to 81 cents to each dollar men earned,³⁴ while in Western MA women earned slightly more at 83 cents (Figure 3).³⁵

Figure 3. Women’s Earnings Proportional to Men’s, by County (based on past 12-month median income)



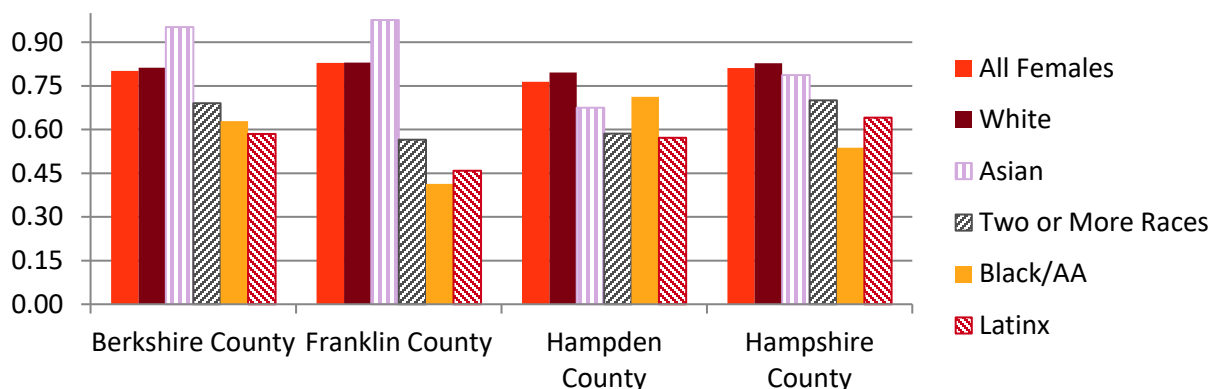
Source: U.S. Census, ACS, 5-Year Estimate 2013-2017

This income disparity was much more pronounced when considering women’s race/ethnicity and level of education. Women of color experienced larger disparities in earnings compared to White women. Women of color in Western MA, with the rare exception, made considerably less than White women. This gap ranged from 4 cents among Asian women in Hampden County to 42 cents among Black women in Franklin County (Figure 4).

Black women in Franklin County earned the least of all groups of women in Western MA at 41 cents to each dollar White men earned, followed by Latinx women in Franklin County at 46 cents. In Berkshire and Franklin Counties, Asian women had the highest earnings among women in Western MA at 95 cents and 98 cents, respectively.ⁱⁱ

Women of color, and more specifically Black women, Latinx women, and women who identified with two or more races all experienced lower earnings proportional to men who identified as their same race/ethnicity.³⁶

Figure 4. Women’s 12-Month Earnings Ratios Compared with Every Dollar White Men Earned by Race/Ethnicity and County.



Source: U.S. Census, ACS, 5-Year Estimate 2013-2017

Women with less education are paid less than men with equivalent education. The wage gap between men and women in Western MA was largest among those with a high school equivalent or less (with the exception of those with less than a high school education in Franklin County). This gap ranged from 36 cents in Berkshire and Hampshire Counties to 45 cents in Franklin County. In all counties, except for Hampden, the wage gap narrowed to a quarter or less with at least some college education or an Associate’s Degree. With completed Bachelor’s or Graduate or Professional Degrees, the wage gap narrowed substantially only in Hampden County to 24 cents and 17 cents, respectively (Table 5).³⁷

ⁱⁱ Note that these median income estimates may be based on a small sample of Asian women given the number of women aged 18 to 64 is 835 and 411 in Berkshire and Franklin Counties, respectively. Asian women in these two counties make up 41% and 43%, respectively, of the Asian populations. And it is estimated that just over 70% of the Asian population of each county participates in the labor force.

Table 5. Women’s 12-Month Earnings Ratios Compared with Every Dollar Men Earned by Educational Attainment and County

	Less than high school graduate	High school equivalent	Some College or Associate’s Degree	Bachelor’s Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree
BERKSHIRE	0.64	0.68	0.76	0.72	0.75
FRANKLIN	0.84	0.55	0.75	0.79	0.74
HAMPDEN	0.67	0.66	0.66	0.76	0.83
HAMPSHIRE	0.64	0.68	0.78	0.73	0.76

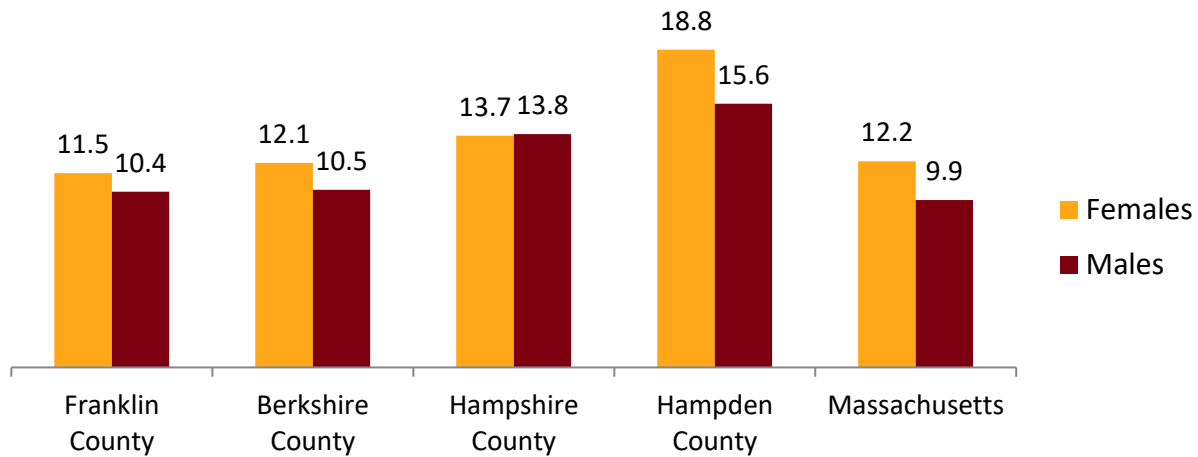
Source: U.S. Census, ACS, 5-Year Estimate 2013-2017

Working women earn less money over their lifetime on average than men. A national study completed by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce found that women’s lifetime earnings are about 25% less than that of men with equivalent education, although this varies at different levels of educational attainment. One of the starkest divides in wages earned over a lifetime is between women and men with Professional Degrees. Women in professions that often have some of the highest earning capacity (e.g., medical doctors and lawyers) are estimated to earn over a million dollars less than their male counterparts.³⁸

Poverty

Rates of poverty among women in Western MA range from 11.5% in Franklin County to 18.8% in Hampden County, well above the statewide rate of 12.2%. Women in Western MA are living in poverty at higher rates than their male counterparts, with the exception of Hampshire County where the rates are comparable (Figure 5). The persistent gender wage gap plays a role in this disparity, although is likely not the only factor (as demonstrated in Hampshire County). Women and girls of color faced substantially higher wage gaps and higher rates of poverty than White women and girls. With poverty rates of up to 41.7% among Latinx women and girls in Hampden County and up to 54.1% among Black women and girls in Franklin County, these are among the highest rates of poverty experienced in Western MA.³⁹

Figure 5. Percent of Population Living in Poverty by County and Gender



Source: U.S. Census, ACS, 5-Year Estimate 2013-2017

Promising state policies to address wage gaps

In recent years, there have been multiple efforts to address the gender wage gaps in MA:

- MA Equal Pay Law, which was passed in 2016 and went into effect July 2018, was designed to address wage gaps due to discriminatory practices. With this piece of legislation, “employers in MA are no longer allowed to ask employees about salary history, the first ban of its kind in the United States. The new law simultaneously promotes salary transparency, incentivizes internal audits for wage gaps, and requires equal pay for comparable work.”⁴⁰ The law also ensures that leave taken for pregnancy, family or medical reasons—common reasons women may choose or need to take leave—“will not count against one’s seniority,” which is often used to determine pay.
- In 2017, the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act was signed into law to protect women from workplace discrimination based on pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions and to ensure they are given the reasonable workplace accommodations they need (e.g., water and bathroom breaks, space and time for lactation).⁴¹
- In 2018, the MA State Legislature and Governor signed a bill into law that increases the minimum wage from \$10 to \$15 by 2023 and allows for “12 weeks of paid leave to care for a sick family member or a new baby and 20 weeks of paid leave for personal medical needs” beginning in 2021.⁴²

Health and Wellness

Mental Health and Substance Use

Women’s Mental Health and Substance Use

Among women in Western MA, women in Hampshire County had the lowest rate of mental health-related emergency department visits in Western MA with a rate of 1392.7 per 100,000. Women in Franklin County had nearly twice that rate at 2658.3 per 100,000—the highest among the four Western MA Counties. Rates of mental health-related emergency department visits among women in Western MA were lower than their male counterparts and lower than the statewide rate for women (Table 6).

Table 6. Rates of Mental Health-Related Emergency Department Visits by Gender (per 100,000), 2014

	Females	Males
BERKSHIRE	2113.8	2996.4
FRANKLIN	2658.3	2497.3
HAMPDEN	2415.7	3548.4
HAMPSHIRE	1392.7	2154.3
STATEWIDE	2949.8	2949.8

Source: MA DPH, Public Health Information Tool, 2014

Adolescent Girls’ and LGBTQI+ Youth’s Mental Health

Girls in Western MA consistently (across multiple school-based surveys) reported depressive symptoms or were assessed at high risk for depression at elevated rates. Prevention Needs Assessment Survey (PNAS) data from 2017 and 2018 for Berkshire, Franklin, Hampshire Counties and Springfield (PNAS data are not available for Hampden County) indicated that approximately half of girls were at high risk for depression.⁴³ The PNAS assesses students’ risk for depression. Female students across Western MA were at great risk for depression at a rate of twice or nearly twice that of their male peers (Table 7). The PNAS was not conducted at a state level in MA; however, according to the 2017 MA Youth Risk Behavior Survey, statewide, female middle and high school students reported depressive symptoms, self-harming behavior, and suicidal ideation at rates significantly higher than their male peers.⁴⁴

Consistent with statewide findings,⁴⁵ students in Franklin and Hampshire Counties and the City of Springfield, who identified as LGBTQI+ⁱⁱⁱ reported alarmingly elevated rates of being at high risk for depression. In Franklin County, 72.2% of students who identified as lesbian, gay,

ⁱⁱⁱ Questions about gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation were not asked in a uniform way across the PNAS conducted in Franklin and Hampshire Counties and the City of Springfield, and not asked at all in the 2018 PNAS in Berkshire County. It is due to this limitation that these data are not presented per county/city.

bisexual, or unsure about their sexuality were at high risk of depression. In Hampshire County, more than 76% of transgender and gender-neutral students were at high risk for depression.⁴⁶

Table 7. Percent of Students at High Risk for Depression by Gender.

	Male students (%)	Female students (%)
BERKSHIRE	29.5	53.7
FRANKLIN	30.8	62.4
SPRINGFIELD	32.0	55.7
HAMPSHIRE	27.7	46.7

Source: Prevention Needs Assessment Surveys, 2017 (Berkshire, Hampshire) & 2018 (Franklin, Springfield)

Adolescent Girls' Substance Use

More than one fifth of girls from Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire Counties reported drinking alcohol, smoking e-cigarettes, and/or using marijuana in the past 30 days (PNAS, 2017 & 2018).

- Rates of alcohol and marijuana use were highest in Berkshire County (30.2% and 24.4%, respectively) and the lowest in Springfield (16.2% and 11.7% respectively).
- E-Cigarette use rates were highest in Franklin County (23.2%) followed by Berkshire, and were lowest in Springfield (6.1%).
- Rates of marijuana use among girls were highest in Berkshire (24.4%) followed by Franklin and Hampshire. Girls in Springfield reported marijuana use at a rate just over half that of girls in Hampshire (Table 8).

Girls across Western MA reported slightly higher rates of substance use than boys with a few exceptions in Berkshire and Hampshire Counties where boys had slightly higher rates of cigarette, e-cigarette, and marijuana use. Rates of cigarette use among girls in Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampshire were higher than the statewide rate for girls. Statewide, boys reported substance use at higher rates than girls.⁴⁷

Table 8. Percent of Students Using Various Substances by Gender.

	Alcohol		Cigarettes		E-cigarettes [‡]		Marijuana	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
BERKSHIRE	26.6	30.2	7.6	6.8	18.4	14.7	23.5	24.4
FRANKLIN	23.1	25.9	5.7	6.8	21.3	23.2	20.9	20.8
SPRINGFIELD	10.1	16.2	1.8	1.1	4.5	6.1	9.6	11.7
HAMPSHIRE	25.8	27.0	6.0	5.2	14.2	11.1	22.2	19.8
STATEWIDE*	29.8	33.0	8.7	3.9	21.9	18.4	24.9	23.2

*Statewide data from the 2017 MA Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) among 9-12 graders; whereas the Western MA data are from Prevention Needs Assessment Surveys completed with 8th, 10th, and 12th graders. Because these surveys and populations are different, take caution when comparing these data.

‡In the MA YRBS students are asked about using electronic vapor products, which is broader than E-cigarettes.

Sexual and Reproductive Health

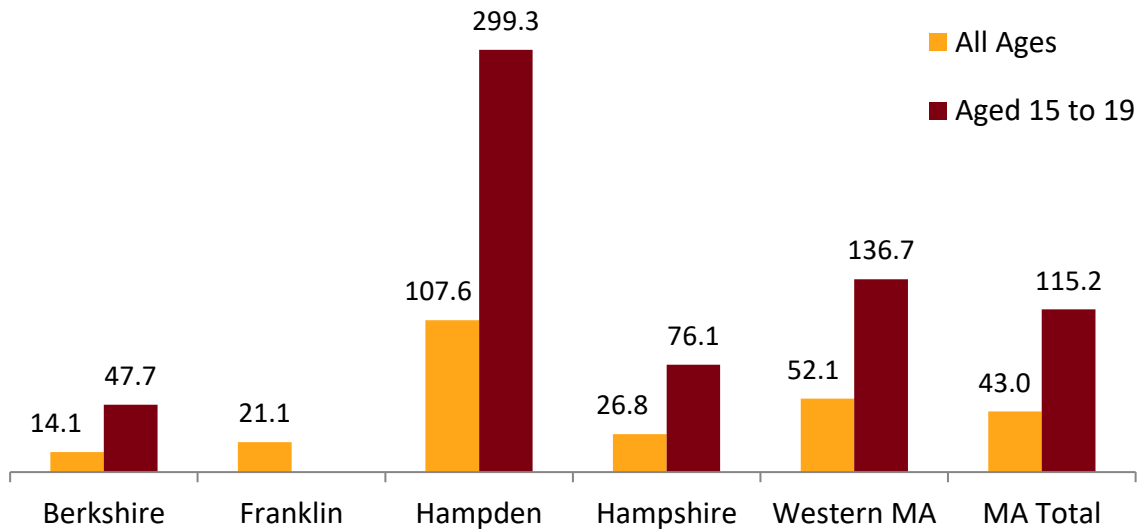
Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

Between 2013 and 2017, among women across the four counties of Western MA, the average annual rates of syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia (per 100,000) were highest in Hampden County. Rates of syphilis (6.5) and gonorrhea (107.6) among women in Hampden County were 3.4 and 1.4 times higher, respectively, than statewide rates.

Among female adolescents aged 15 to 19, rates of gonorrhea and chlamydia were particularly concerning with rates much higher than overall female rates in each county, with the exception of rates of gonorrhea in Franklin County (Figures 6 and 7).

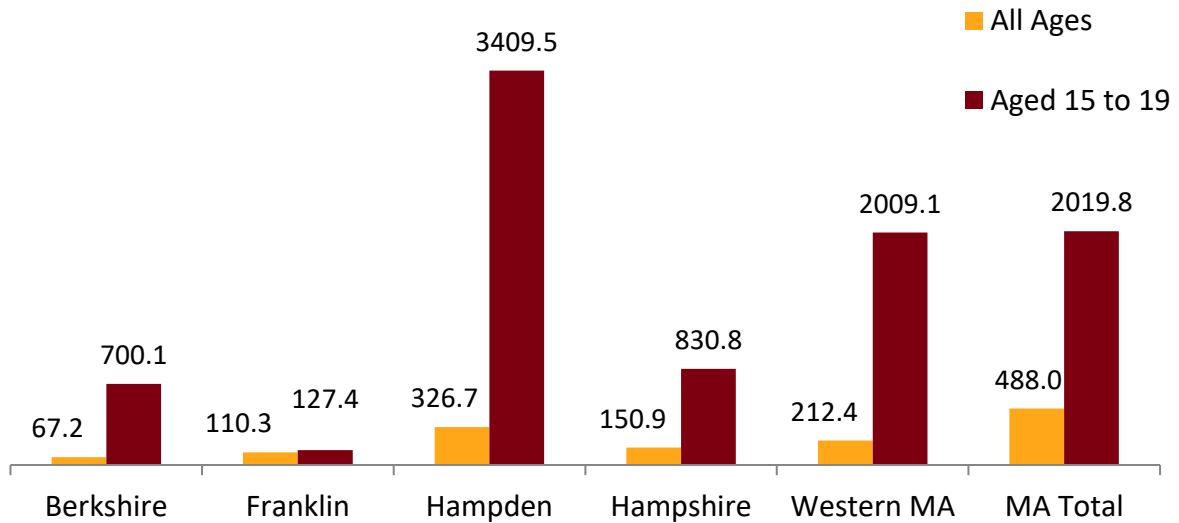
- In Hampden County, the rate of chlamydia among female teens was particularly high (3409.5) with a rate almost 70% greater than the state.
- The rate of chlamydia among female adolescents was over ten times higher than among all females in Berkshire and Hampden Counties.
- In Berkshire, Hampden, and Hampshire they experienced rates of chlamydia 4.1, 3.3, and 2.7 times higher than their male peers. In Franklin County female adolescents had a lower rate of chlamydia than their male peers.
- Female adolescents in Hampden and Hampshire experienced rates of gonorrhea 10-90% higher than their male peers. The number of cases of gonorrhea was too low in Berkshire and Franklin among all adolescents for rate estimates.⁴⁸

Figure 6. Average Annual Rates of Gonorrhea among Women and Girls by County (per 100,000), 2013-2017



Source: MA DPH, Department of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences, Sexually Transmitted Infections 2013-2017

Figure 7. Average Annual Rates of Chlamydia among Women and Girls by County (per 100,000), 2013-2017



Source: MA DPH, Department of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences, Sexually Transmitted Infections 2013-2017

Prenatal Care

Adequacy of prenatal care (APNC) is determined by the timing of the initiation of prenatal care and the frequency of prenatal care visits, as measured by the Adequacy of Prenatal Care Utilization (APNCU) Index. The APNCU identifies women who have received at least basic adequate prenatal care as women who begin receiving prenatal care by their fourth month of pregnancy and attend at least 80 percent of recommended prenatal care visits.⁴⁹

Across the four counties of Western MA, more than 80% of women received APNC in 2016, although this varied by county. In Berkshire and Hampden Counties, a lower percentage of women (80.6 and 81.3, respectively) received APNC than women in Franklin and Hampshire Counties (87.8 and 87.2, respectively).⁵⁰

This proportion noticeably varied in Berkshire and Hampden Counties by race/ethnicity, where only 74% of Black and Latinx women in Berkshire and 73% of Black women in Hampden received APNC (Table 9). Studies suggest that racial and ethnic disparities in receiving adequate prenatal care is linked to systemic injustices facing many individuals of color, including lower insurance rates, practitioners’ stereotypes of women of color when providing care, and unequal education opportunities.⁵¹ Statewide 82.3% of women received APNC; however, APNC was noticeably lower among women of color.⁵²

Table 9. Percent Pregnant Women Who Received Adequate Prenatal Care by County, 2016.

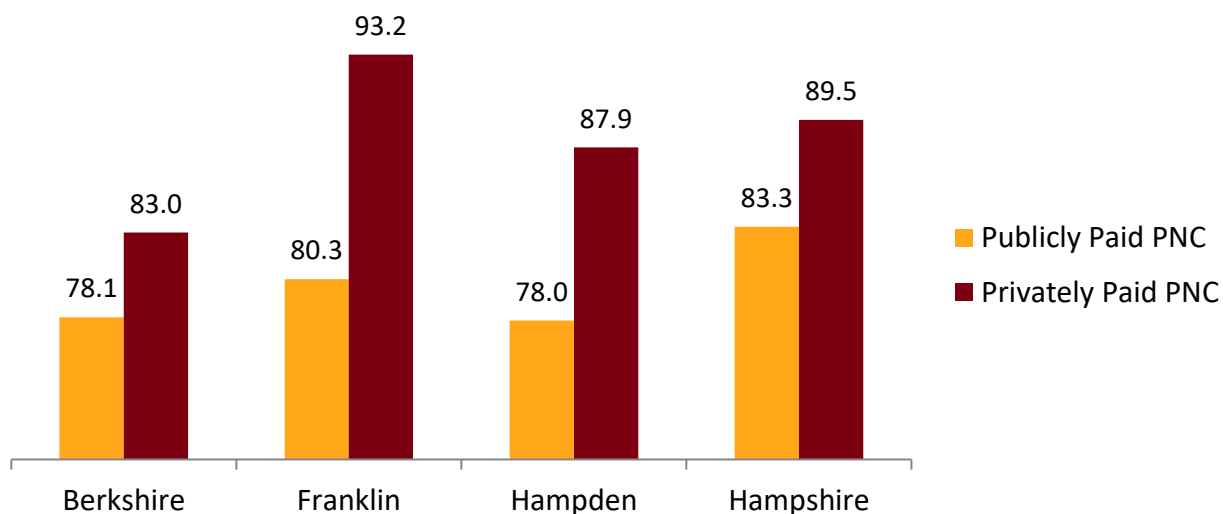
	Overall	Latinx	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Black	White	Other
BERKSHIRE	80.6	74.0	88.9	74.2	81.4	82.4
FRANKLIN	87.8	81.3	61.5*	100.0*	88.7	-
HAMPDEN	81.3	79.7	82.5	73.0	84.2	80.0
HAMPSHIRE	87.2	86.7	84.1	95.7	87.5	77.8*
STATEWIDE	82.3	78.8	82.9	69.8	85.7	75.6

Source: MA DPH Birth Data Set, 2016

Similar regional inequities exist among low-income women, as suggested by the lower percentage of women with public insurance who received APNC compared to women with private insurance (Figure 8).

The rate of APNC for pregnant teenagers aged 15 to 19 is higher than pregnant women of all ages in Berkshire and Franklin at 85.1% and 91.3%, but noticeably lower in Hampden and Hampshire at 72.7% and 69.2% (Table 10). These lower rates of APNC among teens, although not as low as the statewide rate, are consistent with lower statewide rates of APNC among teens compared to pregnant women of all ages.

Figure 8. Percent Pregnant Women Who Received Adequate Prenatal Care by Payer and County, 2016



Source: MA DPH Birth Data Set, 2016

Low Birth Weight

Infants in Berkshire and Hampden Counties were born with low birth weights (LBW) at slightly higher rates than infants statewide. These rates were higher when disaggregated by race/ethnicity in Hampden County and by age in Berkshire and Hampden Counties. In Hampden County, infants of color experienced rates of LBW 16.9–44.6% higher than infants of all races/ethnicities. Infants born to teens aged 15 to 19 experienced LBW at a rate 55.4% higher than infants born to women overall and 33% higher than infants born to teens statewide (Table 10).⁵³

Table 10. Percent of Adequate Prenatal Care and Low Birth Weight Among All Births and Teen Births by County, 2016.

	Adequate Prenatal Care (%)		Low Birth Weight (%)	
	All Ages	Aged 15-19	All Ages	Aged 15-19
BERKSHIRE	80.6	85.1	8.1	10.6*
FRANKLIN	87.8	91.3	6.0	-
HAMPDEN	81.3	72.7	8.3	12.9
HAMPSHIRE	87.2	69.2	6.3	-
STATEWIDE	82.3	63.9	7.5	9.7

Source: MA DPH Birth Data Set, 2016

Teen Birth Rates

The MA teen birth rate was among the lowest in the country at a rate of 8.5 per 1,000 compared to 20.3 per 1,000 nationally.⁵⁴ Rates were 30–98% higher than the state rate in all Western MA counties except Hampshire (Table 11). Large inequities exist among Latinx teens, particularly in Hampden County, where the Latinx teen birth rate was over four times that of the overall state rate. Latinx teen births made up 74.4% of the teen births in Western MA.⁵⁵

Table 11. Teen Birth Rates (per 1,000) by County, 2016.

	Overall	Latinx	Asian	Black	White
BERKSHIRE	11.1	-	0.0	-	11.1
FRANKLIN	13.1	-	0.0	0.0	12.9
HAMPDEN	16.8	39.8	12.6*	11.7	4.7
HAMPSHIRE	1.4	7.0*	-	0.0	1.1*
STATEWIDE	8.5	29.9	2.4	11.7	3.8

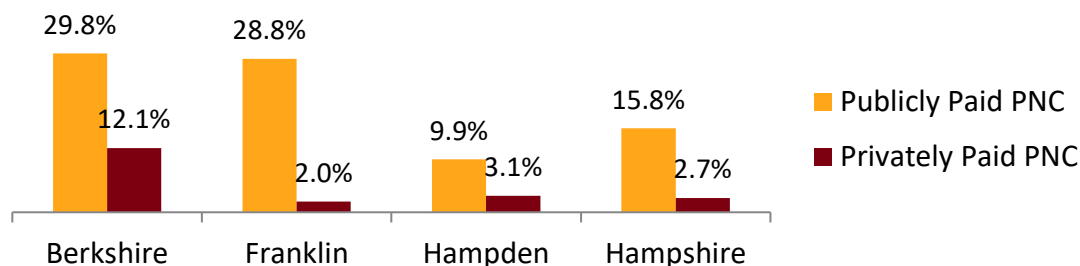
Source: MA DPH Birth Data Set, 2016

Smoking during Pregnancy

Smoking during pregnancy disproportionately occurred in rural areas and among White women on public insurance in Western MA. The proportion of women who smoked during pregnancy in Western MA in 2016 exceeded the 5.4% of pregnant women statewide. This gap was most obvious in the two most rural counties in the state where rates were over double that of the state rate: Berkshire (19%) and Franklin (12.3%). Pregnant women of all races/ethnicities in

Western MA were smoking at higher rates than statewide, with the highest rates in Berkshire County across all racial/ethnic groups.^{iv}

Figure 9. Percent Pregnant Women Who Smoked by Payer and County, 2016



Source: MA DPH Birth Data Set, 2016

^{iv} In Hampden County, 17.9% of women who identified as non-Hispanic “Other” race/ethnicity smoked during pregnancy. None of the other three counties had a sufficient number of pregnant women in this category to report these data. Statewide the proportion was 9.6%.

The proportion of pregnant teens (aged 15 to 19) who reported smoking was nearly twice that of all pregnant women who smoked in Berkshire (36.2%) and more than twice that of all pregnant women who smoked in Franklin (27.3%). In Hampden the proportion of pregnant teens who smoked (4.3%) was less than that of all pregnant women (7.4%). This stark contrast in Hampden may be due to lower smoking rates among Latinx women combined with Latinx teens representing 74.4% of the county's teen births.

The proportion of pregnant women who reported smoking during pregnancy was higher among those whose prenatal care was paid for through public insurance, suggesting a difference by income level and/or employment status (Figure 9).⁵⁶

Abortion

In 2017, the rate of abortions in Western MA among adolescent girls and women aged 15 to 44 was 14.5 per 1,000 just slightly higher than the state rate of 13.2 per 1,000. The rate among teenagers 15 to 19 was 6.2 in Western MA and 5.9 statewide. Women of color made up at least 45% of those who sought abortions in 2017, clearly disproportionate to the nearly 27% of women of color living in Western MA. The proportion of Black women who sought abortions was nearly three times that of proportion of Black women in Western MA, and the proportion of Latinx women who sought abortions was nearly 40% greater than the proportion of Latinx women represented in Western MA. The vast majority (87.6%) of the abortions performed in Western MA in 2017 were performed at two licensed clinics. Another 6.6% were performed at three hospitals in the region and the remaining 5.8% with other physicians.⁵⁷

Policies Protecting Women's Sexual and Reproductive Rights and Health

- In November 2017, the ACCESS Bill (Advancing Contraceptive Coverage and Economic Security) was signed into law ensuring that insurance carriers in MA provide all FDA-approved contraceptive methods with no copay, including emergency contraception.
- In 2018, MA General Court took action to repeal a nearly two-century old abortion ban in order to allow women access to abortion regardless of federal laws on abortion. This change protects women's rights to abortion in the case that the US Supreme Court overturns or restricts federal law protecting abortion under *Roe v. Wade*.
- The passing of the PATCH Act (Protect Access to Confidential Healthcare), effective April 1, 2019, ensures that confidential information contained in Explanations of Benefits (EOBs)—such as reproductive health care—is not shared with anyone other than the patient when people are on the same health plan. Not only can patients now choose how to receive EOBs, but the information contained in them will be more generic (e.g., "office visit") when sensitive care is provided. In addition, patients will now be sent for preventive health services with no cost-sharing (e.g., counseling for domestic violence).⁵⁸

Incarceration

Rates of Incarceration

In 2018, 1,879 women were incarcerated in the Franklin County Jail (13%) and in the Western MA Regional Women’s Correctional Center (WCC) (87%), the two correctional facilities housing women in Western MA.^v Women housed in the Franklin County Jail are being tried for crimes committed in Franklin County. Women housed at WCC are predominantly being tried for crimes committed in the other three Western MA Counties and Worcester County, although other counties in Massachusetts also use the facility. The mean age of the women was 33 and 34.6 in WCC and Franklin, respectively.^{59,60} Under half of women incarcerated in WCC in 2018 had cases being judged/decided in Western MA. Of those 742 cases, nearly two-thirds were Hampden County-based cases.

Of the women incarcerated at WCC, the percent of Black and Latinx women (26.4%) was only slightly higher than the percentage of Black and Latinx women living in Western MA. In the Franklin Jail, a larger percentage of women were Black (5.3%) compared to Franklin County’s Black female population as a whole (1.2%). Similarly, Latinx women make up 7.2% of the women incarcerated in the Franklin County Jail, twice that of Franklin County’s Latinx female population.

Needs of Incarcerated Women

A history of trauma—which often includes sexual violence as a child or adolescent—poverty, and/or substance use is common among incarcerated women and girls, and is often the reason (directly or indirectly) for their incarceration.^{61,62}

Across Western MA substance use recovery services and sober housing are in short supply, especially for women. These resources are greatly needed along with affordable housing, debt relief, financial assistance, quick reunification with children and other family members, and continuity of therapy and recovery.

There are numerous prenatal and postpartum considerations for women who are pregnant and give birth while incarcerated, including ensuring that women receive adequate prenatal care (including the administration of prenatal vitamins); safe, supportive, and shackle-free birthing experiences; and a breast pump and milk storage facilities post-partum. In 2018, 85 (5.2%)

^v Franklin County Jail data is from February 5, 2018 (when the jail began housing regularly incarcerating women being adjudicated in Franklin County) and January 15, 2019.

women at WCC were pregnant and four gave birth while incarcerated. Six women requested and were supplied breast pumps along with pumping education.⁶³ In recent years, WCC changed its policies and practices to align more fully with these unique needs of some incarcerated women.

Policy

- In April 2018, the MA Primary Caretakers Bill was passed into law as part of a larger criminal justice reform law. This law expands the use of community-based alternatives to incarceration for parents of dependent children, which would allow parents to continue to care for their family while dealing with the consequences of their conviction.⁶⁴
- The Anti-Shackling Law, which passed in May 2014, provides protections for pregnant women who are incarcerated. In addition to banning the inhumane practice of shackling pregnant women, this law requires correctional facilities to provide regular prenatal and postnatal medical care, a healthy diet, appropriate clothing, screening for postpartum depression, and written educational information about prenatal nutrition, maintaining a healthy pregnancy and childbirth. An Act to ensure compliance with the anti-shackling law for pregnant incarcerated women was introduced in 2017. According to the MA Legislature's Bills & Laws website, as of January 1, 2019 the proposed bill was no longer being considered.⁶⁵

Participation and Leadership in Business, Healthcare, Higher Education, and STEM

Business

In 2012, the most recent Survey of Business Owners data available, women owned one-third of all business firms in Western MA, comparable to the proportion of firms owned by women statewide. Women in Berkshire and Hampden Counties owned slightly lower proportions (30.4% and 30.9%) and Franklin and Hampshire County ownership among women was slightly higher (32.6% and 34.5%).⁶⁶

Healthcare

Healthcare is one of the largest employment sectors in Western MA. Leadership analysis of the largest non-governmental hospitals and healthcare systems showed at least 41.0% of leadership positions are held by women with the exception of one hospital with 16.3%. For this analysis, hospital and health system leadership included overarching health system leadership, boards of trustees, senior hospital leadership, and senior hospital management.

Higher Education

Despite female students comprising the majority of students enrolled in higher education in Western MA institutions, women often do not hold the majority of institutional leadership positions in higher education. Sixteen^{vi} Western MA institutions of higher education were included in a study on the gender power gap in higher education institutions.⁶⁷ The study, conducted by Women's Power Gap, assessed gender parity in leadership across MA colleges and universities and ranked them "based on a composite score that reflects the extent to which women are represented in three influential leadership categories: 1) top leadership post, 2) senior leadership team, and 3) governing board." A ranking of 1 was the highest score with most the gender parity in leadership and institutions were categorized based on their scores, as Satisfactory, Status Quo, Unsatisfactory, or Needs Urgent Attention. Of the 93 institutions ranked for comprehensive gender leadership, four of the top ten were institutions in Western MA (Smith College at #2, Bay Path University at #5, Berkshire Community College at #7, and Mount Holyoke College at #9). Of the 16 institutions in Western MA, six were categorized as Satisfactory, four as Status Quo, five as Unsatisfactory, and one (Springfield Technical Community College) as Needs Urgent Attention. Based on the 2017-2018 school year, 43.8% had female Presidents and 81.2% had female Provosts. At seven (46.7%) of the colleges and universities, women made up at least 50% of the highest salaried positions (Note: This information was not available for one of the colleges).

^{vi} Note: This study did not include Bard College at Simon's Rock and Elms College.

STEM

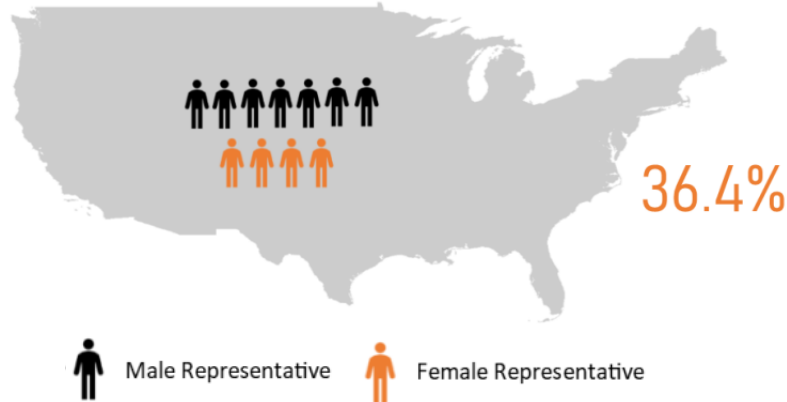
According to the US Census Bureau's most current occupation-related five-year estimates, 2006-2010, women were largely underrepresented in the STEM field. Only 2.4% of women in Western MA worked in STEM jobs. This is 88.3% lower than the statewide rate for women. When race and ethnicity were factored in, the divide was even larger. Only 2.2% of Black women and 1.6% of Latinx women were in STEM occupations. Asian women had the largest percentage of women in the STEM workforce in Western MA (8.1%), yet it is still substantially lower than that of Asian men (20.3%). Within the STEM field, women in Western MA held less than one third (28.4%) of all STEM jobs. Among the four counties, this proportion was highest in Franklin County (33.5%). The rate in Western MA is consistent with the statewide rate of STEM jobs held by women.⁶⁸

Political Representation and Participation

Federal Political Representation

As of the 2018 election, at the federal level, four of the 11 members (36.4%) of the U.S. Congressional delegation representing MA were female—one U.S. Senator and three U.S. Representatives. Neither of the two Representatives from Western MA was female.

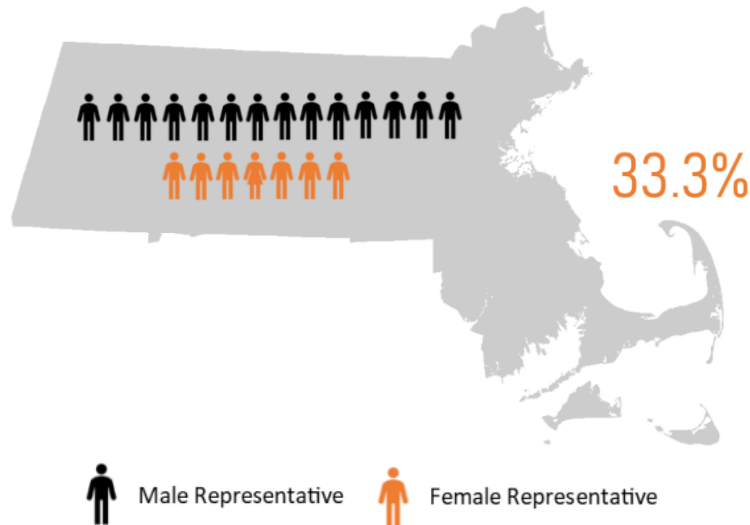
Percent of US Congressional Delegation* from MA who are female



State Political Representation

Although women represent slightly over half (52%) the population of Western MA, they make up only 33.3% of MA Legislators—both MA Senate and House of Representatives Members—from Western MA.

Percent of MA Legislature* from Western MA who are female



Local Political Representation

Elected positions for local leadership and representation of 13 municipalities across the four counties remain largely held by men. These include mayors, city council members, and select board members. Of the 13 municipalities, 10 have mayors, 20% of whom are women. All of the 13 city councils or town select boards are majority male with the exception of the Amherst Town Council (Table 12).

Percent of Mayors from Western MA** who are female

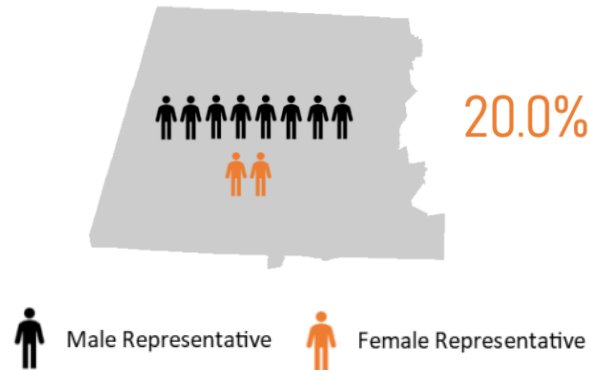


Table 12. Percent of Females Elected to City Councils and Select Boards

	Town/City Council (%)	Select Board (%)
Berkshire County		
North Adams	22.2	N/A
Pittsfield	27.3	N/A
Franklin County		
Greenfield	38.5	N/A
Montague	N/A	0.0
Orange	N/A	25.0
Hampden County		
Chicopee	0.0	N/A
Holyoke	30.8	N/A
Springfield	15.4	N/A
West Springfield	0.0	N/A
Westfield	15.4	N/A
Hampshire County		
Amherst	69.2	N/A
Easthampton	11.1	N/A
Northampton	44.4	N/A

Source: Each city/town's municipal website, January 2019.

Public Safety and Crime

Similar to most sub-state regions across the country, in Western MA there are no region-wide population surveys or surveillance systems set up to measure incidence and prevalence of intimate partner, dating, and sexual violence; violence against children; and child exploitation. Subject matter experts across Western MA and at the State (MA Department of Public Health and Executive Office of Public Safety and Security) provided programmatic and incidence data along with suggestions for national resources to use for estimates of various types of violence against women and children.

The following sections on violence draw from these data sources to show the extent of violence women and children continue to experience in Western MA. Despite protective legislation and existing supportive and preventive services and efforts, cultural change is slow and strong and consistent accountability is rare. Robust population level data are still needed to gain a deeper understanding of how best to shift culture and allocate resources for effective violence prevention.

Sexual Violence

In MA, one way incidents of sexual violence are measured is through the completion of Provider Sexual Crime Reports (PSCRs). Typically, a medical provider completes a PSCR when an individual seeks medical attention (most often in a hospital/medical center) following a sexual assault. PSCRs are submitted to the MA State Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS). Over 2017 and 2018, EOPSS received 2,934 reports. Of these, 394 (13.4%) assaults reportedly occurred in Western MA. Only 57% were known to have been reported to the police. Victims/survivors predominantly identified as female (93.9%); 4.1% identified as male, 1.62% as transgender, and two cases had no identified gender. Children (aged 0 to 18) accounted for nearly one-third of the cases and young adults (aged 19-24) for 28.7%. Adults aged 25 to 59 were nearly 40% of the cases and the remaining 1.6% were aged 60 or older. The perpetrator was known to the victim/survivor in 82% of the cases.⁶⁹

As shown in Table 13, the number of assaults was not evenly distributed across the four counties of Western MA. However, it is important to consider limitations to these data. These data are based on those individuals who sought medical attention after a sexual assault, where a PSCR was completed, and the institution submitted the reports to EOPSS. A higher number of cases from a particular County could signify a higher incidence of sexual violence, but it could also signify a higher rate of help seeking and/or PSCR completions and submissions.

Table 13. Distribution of 2017-2018 PSCRs in Western MA

	Number of PSCRs	Percent of PSCRs (%) (n=394)
BERKSHIRE	91	23.1
FRANKLIN	15	3.8
HAMPDEN	218	55.3
HAMPSHIRE	70	17.8

Source: MA EOPSS, PSCRs 2017-2018

Another measure of sexual violence, available at a local level, is the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Uniform Crime Report Offenses Known to Law Enforcement (FBI UCR). According to the 2017 FBI UCR, there were 403 rapes in Western MA and 2,012 statewide.⁷⁰ This accounted for 20% of rapes in an area that represented only 12% of the population of MA. This high proportion relative to population does not necessarily reflect a higher prevalence of rape in Western MA, and may be indicative of higher rates of reporting by survivors and/or higher rates of recording and reporting by law enforcement. In the top ten MA municipalities listed in the FBI UCR 2017 report, six of the municipalities were in Western MA, four of which were Berkshire County communities: Stockbridge (1st), Adams (3rd), Greenfield (4th), Pittsfield (5th), North Adams (6th), and Northampton (9th).

However, sexual violence reports to law enforcement and health care providers in the region likely represented only a small fraction of the incidents actually experienced, as evidenced by the reports of local service providers. In 2018, the YWCA of Western Massachusetts received 994 sexual violence calls to its hotline, provided counseling services to 253 clients, and received 179 requests for on-site medical accompaniment at area hospitals for survivors reporting sexual violence in Hampden County. The Elizabeth Freeman Center in Berkshire County received 96 sexual violence calls to its hotline and provided supportive community services to 271 survivors of sexual violence in 2018.

Intimate Partner and Dating Violence

Intimate Partner Violence

In 2018, 6,896 restraining orders were filed in Western MA. This constitutes 18.7% of all restraining orders filed in MA and 8.2% of all district court filings in Western MA. Data from four service providers across three Western MA counties help to better understand the needs of women experiencing intimate partner violence.

- **Berkshire County.** The Elizabeth Freeman Center provides crisis intervention, support, and prevention services to survivors of intimate partner and sexual violence in Berkshire County (Table 14). The majority of clients seen at Elizabeth Freeman Center in 2018 were aged 25 to 59 (Table 15) and identified as female. A number of clients (25.4%) reported a disability (e.g., physical, cognitive), particularly those who received emergency

shelter (52.4%). In the same year, the agency received 506 calls to its hotline for intimate partner violence and housed 63 survivors in its emergency shelter and an additional 97 in motels when the emergency shelter was at capacity. Its SAFEPLAN programs served 467 survivors of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and/or child witnesses of violence with court-based advocacy.

- **Hampden County.** The YWCA of Western MA provides crisis intervention services for survivors of intimate partner violence and sexual violence. In 2018, the agency fielded 5,116 calls to its hotline intimate partner violence. The majority of calls received (for intimate partner and sexual violence and shelter assistance) were conducted in English (93.5%); 3.8% were conducted in Spanish, 0.5% in other languages, and the remaining were not identified in the call records. The YWCA provided 500 survivors with counseling and support services for intimate partner violence and provided transitional housing and emergency shelter beds to 97 survivors of intimate partner violence and sexual violence and their children, which represented only 3.8% of the calls received requesting shelter. Although not all calls for shelter were for individuals experiencing intimate partner violence or sexual violence and included individuals who were homeless also seeking emergency shelter, the YWCA received more calls for shelter for survivors of intimate partner violence or sexual violence than they could accommodate. The YWCA SAFEPLAN programs, sited at four Hampden and Hampshire County courts, served 499 survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking with court accompaniment, support, referrals, and assistance with restraining orders.

Womanshelter/Compañeras is dedicated to assisting, supporting, and empowering those whose lives are affected by battering and abuse in Hampden County. In 2018, Womanshelter/Compañeras provided services to 3,721 participants, the majority of whom identified as female (72%). Across all programs, the majority of participants (67%) reported a specialized need (e.g., physical, cognitive). In the same year, the agency received 1,950 calls to its hotline for intimate partner violence and housed 125 survivors and their children in its emergency shelter and an additional 11 in hotels when the emergency shelter was at capacity. Womanshelter/Compañeras SAFEPLAN programs served 852 survivors of intimate partner violence, and/or child witnesses of violence with court-based advocacy (Table 16).

- **Hampshire County.** Safe Passage, serves survivors of intimate partner violence in Hampshire County. In 2018, Safe Passage provided services to 1435 clients, received 936 hotline calls, and served 14 adults and 8 children in its emergency shelter. Their gender identify cannot be characterized because the majority did not disclose gender identity (71.2%). The agency provided 252 survivors individual counseling and 44 group counseling, the majority of whom (71.8% and 93.2%, respectively) identified as female, In addition, Safe Passage provided individual counseling to 19 children who witnessed violence.

Table 14. Number and Percent of Clients Who Received Elizabeth Freeman Center Services by Type of Violence Experienced, 2018

Type of Violence Experienced	SAFEPLAN Court Advocacy (n=467)		Community Services (n=1003)		Emergency Shelter (n=63)		All Programs	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
IPV	456	91.6	766	84.1	44	69.8	1189	84.6
SV	94	18.9	271	29.7	7	11.1	358	25.5
Child Witness to Violence	24	4.8	89	9.8	22	34.9	116	8.3
Unanswered			5	0.5			7	0.5
Total Unique Entries	498	NA	911	NA	63	NA	1406	NA

Source: Elizabeth Freeman Center Program Data, 2018.

Table 15. Percent of Clients Who Received Elizabeth Freeman Center Services by Age, 2018

Client's Age	SAFEPLAN Court Advocacy (n=467)	Community Services (n=1003)	Emergency Shelter (n=63)	All Programs (n=1544)
0 - 17	2.6	10.6	31.7	11.5
18 - 24	11.8	12.1	12.7	11.3
25 - 59	76.9	68.8	55.6	63.4
60+	8.6	4.9		5.6
Unknown	0.2	0.3		1.9
Unanswered		3.4		6.2

Source: Elizabeth Freeman Center Program Data, 2018.

Table 16. Percent of Clients Who Received Womanshelter/Compañeras Services by Age, 2018

	SAFEPLAN Court Advocacy (%) (n=852)	Community Services (%) (n=794)	Emergency Shelter (%) (n=125)	All Programs (%) (n=1771)
Client's Age				
0 - 17	11	4	52	22
18 - 24	15	17	8	13
25 - 59	73	71	40	61
60+	1	3		2
Unanswered		5		2
Language Spoken				
English	70	68	70	69
Spanish	25	24	24	24
Other	5	8	6	7

Source: Womanshelter/Compañeras Program Data, 2018.

Dating Violence

Data on dating violence available for Western MA counties indicate that a number of girls experience dating violence, and they do so at rates higher than boys.

- In Franklin County, 10.6% of girls who have been in dating relationships have been forced into sexual activity, a rate three times that of their male peers.⁷¹
- Hampshire County girls reported a similar rate of forced sexual activity by a dating partner, a rate 2.7 times that of boys in Hampshire. Hampshire girls also reported experiencing various types of psychological dating violence at rates more than twice that of Hampshire boys: 13.5% have been told what to wear, 11.4% have been called names or put down repeatedly, and 9.4% were made to feel afraid.⁷²
- Eighth grade girls and boys in Springfield reported almost equal rates of dating violence (25%).⁷³ Among tenth and twelfth grade girls in Springfield, 7.4% reported being forced to do sexual things by a dating partner and 7.5% reported experiencing physical harm from a dating partner, rates 2.3 and 2 times that of boys, respectively.⁷⁴
- These data were not available for Berkshire County.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

Commercial sexual exploitation of children is the sexual abuse or exploitation of any child under the age of 18 for someone's financial benefit or in exchange for something else of value, such as food or shelter. Examples of commercial sexual exploitation of children include child sex trafficking and child pornography. For this report, child advocacy centers and district attorneys in Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden Counties provided data to help characterize the prevalence of this crime.

- **Berkshire County.** Between January 2016 and December 2018, Berkshire County Kids' Place (the county's child advocacy center) served 526 children aged 0 to 18 who had experienced sexual abuse and/or commercial sexual exploitation. Of these children, two-thirds were under the age of 13. The vast majority (70.3%) of children seen were girls.⁷⁵
- **Franklin and Hampshire Counties.** Between January 2016 and December 2018, the Northwest District Attorney's Office and Children's Advocacy Center of Franklin County and North Quabbin Area and Hampshire County recorded 21 cases of suspected or confirmed commercial sexual exploitation of children in Hampshire County and 11 in Franklin County, the vast majority of which were female. In only one case the child was male. Across both counties 50% of the children were aged 13 to 16. The youngest were aged 0 to 5 and the oldest were 17 or 18. The Children's Advocacy Center believes the low numbers are at least partly due to a lack of awareness and education about child sexual exploitation, and is working to change this in the communities it serves.⁷⁶
- **Hampden County.** Between February 2016 and January 2019 the Hampden County Child Advocacy Center received 291 referrals of children/transitional age youth (aged 7-24) who were exploited or deemed at extremely high risk of exploitation following 51As^{vii} filed with the Department of Children and Families. Of those referrals, the majority were females (88.7%) and over half (51.5%) were children aged 7 to 16. The remaining 44.3% were adolescents and young adults aged 17 and over. More than half of the referrals are considered active cases with activity within the past year.⁷⁷

^{vii} A 51A Report is filed by a "mandated reporter who, in his professional capacity, has reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering physical or emotional injury resulting from: (i) abuse inflicted upon him which causes harm or substantial risk of harm to the child's health or welfare, including sexual abuse; (ii) neglect, including malnutrition; (iii) physical dependence upon an addictive drug at birth, shall immediately communicate with the department orally and, within 48 hours, shall file a written report with the department detailing the suspected abuse or neglect; or (iv) being a sexually exploited child; or (v) being a human trafficking victim." Source: MA State Legislature General Laws Chapter 119: Protection and Care of Children, and Proceedings Against Them. Available at: <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXVII/Chapter119/Section51A>. Accessed April 3, 2019.

School Safety

School survey data from across Western MA indicated a number of female students had experiences in school that prevented them from feeling safe. Female students reported higher rates of being bullied and missing school because of not feeling safe than their male peers.

- More than a quarter of female students in Berkshire County, Franklin County, Hampshire County and the City of Springfield reported being bullied, with the highest rate reported among girls in Franklin County (PNAS, 2017 & 2018). These rates were 38% to 71% higher than male students (Figure 10).⁷⁸
- Between 5.0% and 13.5% of female students across Western MA reported skipping school at least once in the past 12 months because they felt unsafe either on the way to or from school or while at school. These rates were highest in Franklin County and in the City of Springfield. Female students skipped school at rates 23.5% to 130% greater than their male counterparts (Figure 11).⁷⁹
- These disproportionate experiences of female students in Western MA are consistent with statewide rates.⁸⁰

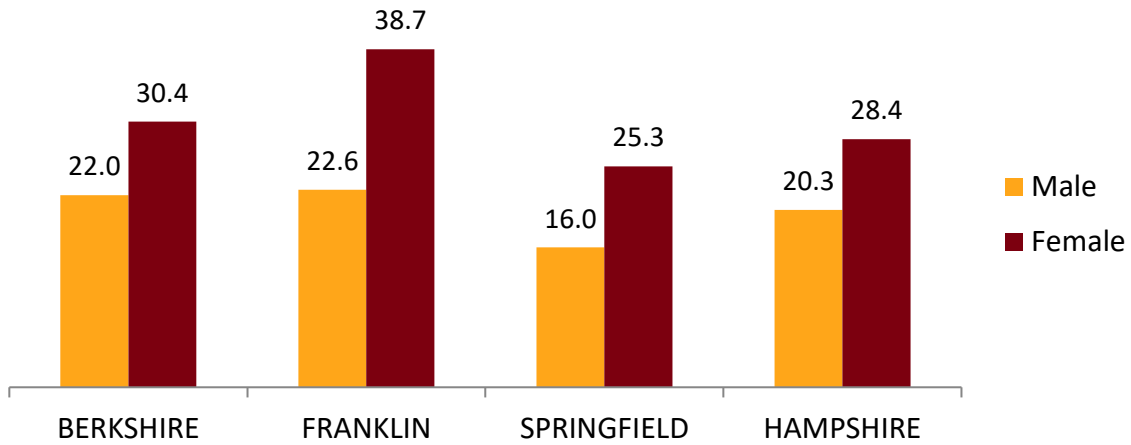
Consistent with statewide findings,⁸¹ students in Franklin and Hampshire Counties who identified as LGBTQI+^{viii} reported experiencing bullying and skipping school because of feeling unsafe at higher rates than those students who did not identify as LGBTQI+.⁸²

Policy

In July 2018, the Public Accommodations Bill was signed into law to ensure that everyone, regardless of their gender identity, can access hospitals, hotels, and other public places without facing gender discrimination. This change provides important anti-discrimination protections for people who are transgender.

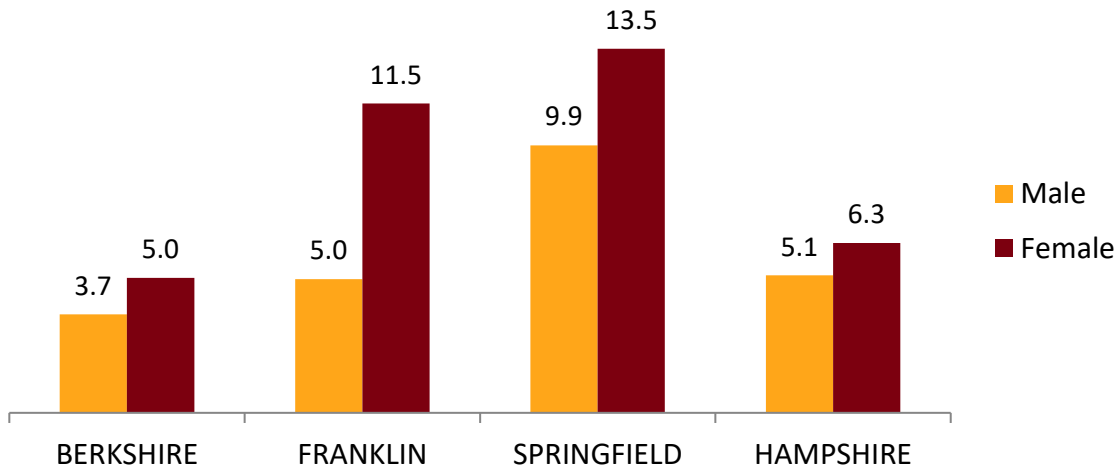
^{viii} Questions about gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation were not asked in a uniform way across the PNAS conducted in Franklin and Hampshire Counties and the City of Springfield, and not asked at all in the 2018 PNAS in Berkshire County. It is due to this limitation that these data are not presented per county/city.

Figure 10. Percent of Students Who Were Bullied in the Past 12 Months by Gender and County



Source: Prevention Needs Assessment Surveys, 2017 (Berkshire, Hampshire) & 2018 (Franklin, Springfield)

Figure 11. Percent of Students Who Skipped School Because They Felt Unsafe in the Past 12 Months by Gender and County



Source: Prevention Needs Assessment Surveys, 2017 (Berkshire, Hampshire) & 2018 (Franklin, Springfield)

Western Massachusetts Status

Gender Inclusivity in Data Collection

While this report illuminates a great deal of data, it highlights the unattainable information that is currently not being collected. We recommend information be collected that is more inclusive of all identities on the gender spectrum instead of the traditional binary choices.

Data on Women in Leadership Positions

Women—and women of color—in leadership positions is a key element of modeling what is possible for today's young women and gender non-conforming youth. We encourage this region to consider how to better collect this information so we may empower the leaders of tomorrow.

Need for Countywide Youth Data

To better understand and advocate for youth needs in Hampden County and in all Western MA counties, we encourage uniform methods of data collection in each county.

Areas That May Merit Further Exploration

While this report is as comprehensive as possible within our resources and the data readily available, we are aware of other areas that may merit further exploration. These include period poverty, the effects of the opioid crisis on women and girls in Western MA, and early marriage.

Data Limitations

- The research team used the best available data that we could gather to describe existing conditions and experiences of women and girls in Western MA. Population-level data for Western MA, its counties, and communities were available for some but not all of the focus areas and individual indicators of interest for this report and were not always available from the last complete calendar year. We used most currently available U.S. Census data, usually from 2017 and/or three or five year pooled data estimates because of small numbers of respondents for certain indicators for a given year.
- There are multiple limitations to understanding intersectionality in the lives of women and girls. In particular, understanding gender identity and sexual orientation among women and girls with regards to population estimates, life experiences, obstacles to accessing services, and physical and mental health outcomes is not possible when most data sources do not offer options for non-binary gender identity. The U.S. Census and MA DESE data are important examples of this. The state presents none of its education data with consideration for non-binary gender identifying students and/or teachers/administrators. We, therefore, do not know anything about the academic achievements and/or drop-out rates for non-binary gender identifying youth.
- Data on youth are not entirely comparable across counties and communities. Different survey instruments are used for school-based surveys and frequency of administration of these surveys also varies with funding and county/communities' priorities. This limits comparability of data on youth across the region. Also limited are the topic areas and available disaggregations, e.g., non-binary gender identity and sexual orientation, as not all communities/counties choose to ask these questions or ask them in the same or comparable way.
- Small numbers from rural areas and the ways data are currently collected make it difficult to delve into the unique needs and assets of rural areas and to explore the differences between people residing in rural versus urban areas. This is particularly true when exploring health and using data from the Department of Public Health.
- There are no region-wide population surveys or surveillance systems set up to measure incidence and prevalence of intimate partner, dating, and sexual violence; violence against children; and child exploitation. Current data used to describe these experiences of violence are widely understood to be a gross underrepresentation of the actual burden of violence experienced, especially at a community and/or county level. Service providers' records and reports by medical providers and law enforcement rely on victims/survivors seeking services and self-reporting experiences of violence.

There is a need for prioritized investments to collect more robust population data for Western MA, with a particular focus on rural versus urban experiences, gender identity and sexual orientation, and under-studied health issues—e.g., sexual violence, intimate partner violence, sexual risk-taking behaviors.

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