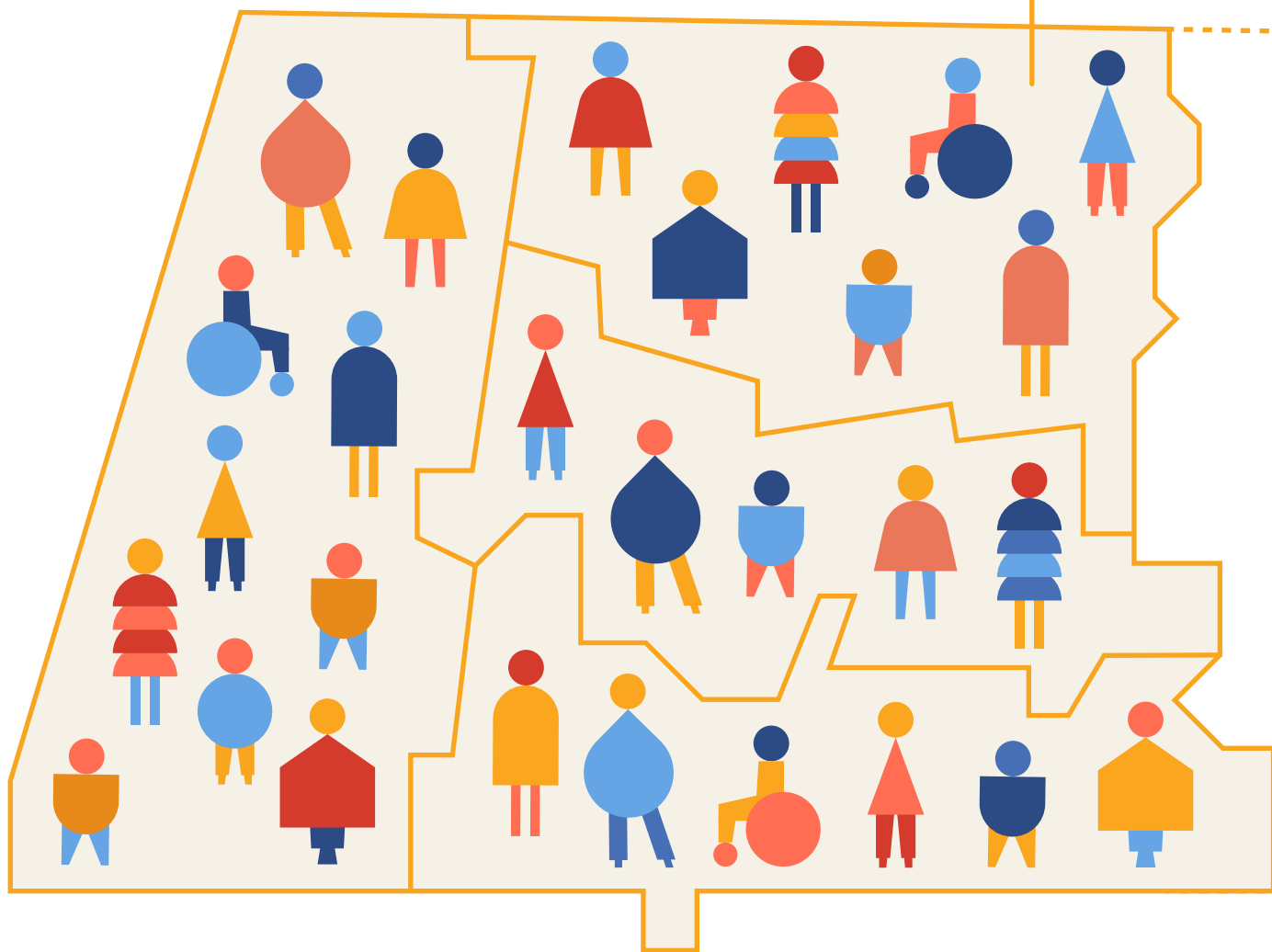
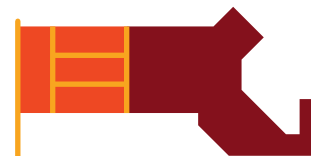


# Gender Equity in Western Massachusetts



The status of women, girls,  
transgender, nonbinary,  
and gender diverse  
adults and youth

## 2023 Key Findings



WOMEN'S FUND  
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.

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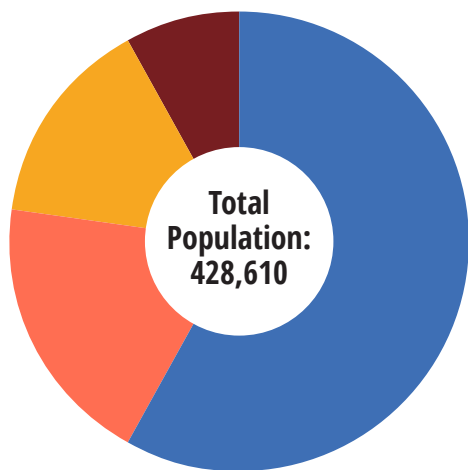
# Demographics

**Western Massachusetts, which includes Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire counties, continued to become more diverse since the last status report in 2019.<sup>1</sup>** Across the region, the proportion of Latina women especially grew. Close to half of Hampden County women identified as Black, Indigenous, or a person of color (BIPOC). Immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers from across the world have come to make a new home in the four counties. Older female adults (65+) were still a growing segment of the region’s population, with the highest median age in Franklin and Berkshire counties.<sup>2</sup> Statewide and local data on transgender and gender diverse residents indicate that this population has grown, especially among youth.<sup>3</sup>

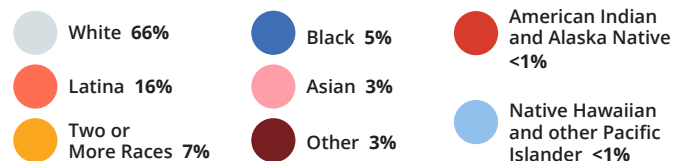
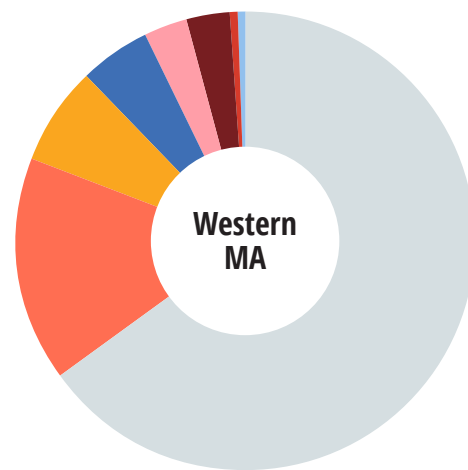
“I do a lot of work with MDPH and public health organizations to help folks understand why data equity isn’t something we’re seeing for our communities... and talking with them to help them understand how they can disaggregate their data to actually show numbers that are a little more real for us. And that would be helpful for funding and just being able to provide the services we need.

- Native American healthcare provider

## Geographic Distribution of Women and Girls in Western MA



## Racial Diversity Among Women and Girls in Western MA



Pie wedges go clockwise from highest % to lowest %.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2021 5-Year estimates

# Key Findings

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**As summarized in the topic areas below, the extensive data synthesized in this report tell a story of both positive change and ongoing injustice. Although numerous gender inequities in Western Massachusetts continue to exist, there has been progress. Many women and girls have experienced improved outcomes since the last status report, even as the COVID-19 pandemic wrought havoc on our communities. This report documents several positive trends across Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire counties.**

**Our region is far from achieving equity for too many women, girls, transgender (trans), and gender diverse residents.** For trans and gender diverse youth and adults, we don't have much trend data to measure progress. From the data we do have, it appears these communities experience alarming inequities in every facet of well-being.

The COVID-19 pandemic was disruptive and made inequities worse in the last three years. It took a toll on girls, especially girls of color and those living in poverty. Higher rates of depression and anxiety and alcohol use, compared to boys, are signs of their distress. Trans and gender diverse youth are also in crisis, as evidenced by greater self-reporting and observation of self-harm and suicidality than their peers. Youth development programs have played a critical role in affirming young people's sense of identity, self-worth, and leadership capacities.

Many women and trans adults are still much more likely than non-trans men to experience poverty because of differential education access, the gender wage gap, discrimination in

hiring and promotion, and other factors. They also face barriers to culturally appropriate and transgender services. This is especially the case for those who are Indigenous, Black and brown, immigrants and refugees, survivors of domestic violence, returning from incarceration, or living in rural areas. Service providers and healthcare systems are stretched thin and often can't adequately meet these individuals' needs. Massachusetts policies and equity goals are protections against national attacks on women and trans residents, but our state can do much more.

Despite the many challenges they face, our communities, and the organizations that serve them, have proven to be resilient and resourceful. Together we are all moving toward greater equity by creating initiatives, coalitions, networks, and informal systems that provide support: sharing information, and advocating for systemic changes. Essential to transformation are regional efforts to nurture community leaders of all ages who can bring stronger representation into politics, business, and beyond.

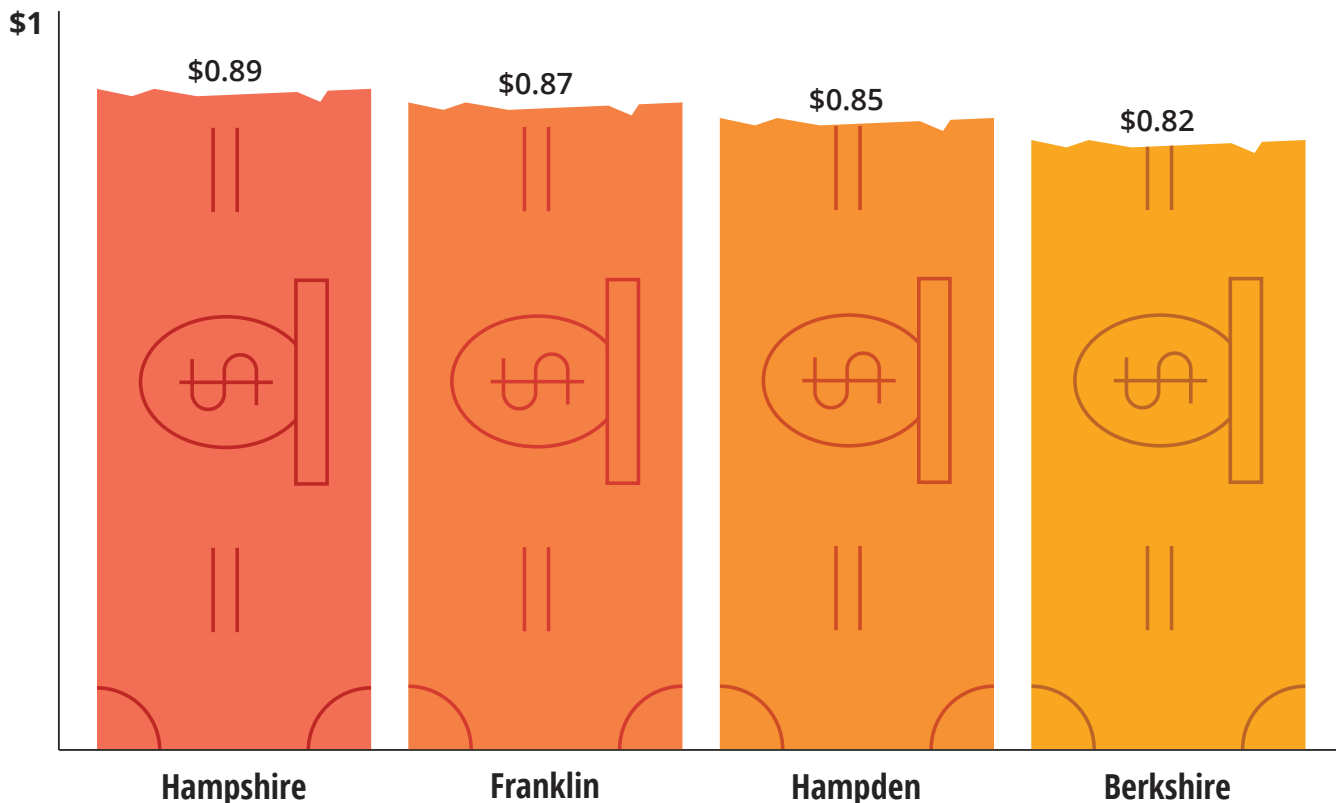


# Employment & Earnings

## BACKGROUND

The story of women’s, transgender, and gender diverse people’s ability to thrive economically in Western Massachusetts is set in the national context of longstanding pay inequities that are rooted in systems and policies. Nationally, the gender pay gap has barely narrowed in 20 years.<sup>4</sup> Several factors contribute to the gender pay gap and related disparities, including lower pay in fields that are overrepresented by women;<sup>5</sup> less access to higher education among some racial/ethnic groups;<sup>6</sup> hiring and employment discrimination that women—especially women of color—and LGBTQIA+ workers face;<sup>7</sup> and caregiving responsibilities. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, many more women were laid off or forced to leave jobs to be at home with their children when childcare centers closed and remote schooling began. All of these factors contribute to lower wages for women in Western Massachusetts.

## A Woman’s Earnings Proportional to a Man’s Dollar of Earnings by County, 2021



Source: County Health Rankings and Roadmaps, Connecting the Gender Pay Gap to Health

## **SIGNS OF PROGRESS**

**The gender pay gap locally has gradually narrowed over time, although it still exists.<sup>8</sup>**

After the negative economic impact of the pandemic, women's high unemployment rates fell to below pre-pandemic levels in 2021. Female labor force participation rates also rebounded.<sup>9</sup> Amid a national push to support Black wealth generation, interviewees reported that many women of color and immigrant women have embraced entrepreneurship, starting and expanding small businesses.

## **CONTINUING INEQUITIES**

**Median earnings for White women outpaced earnings for Black, Indigenous, and women of color, who experienced higher rates of unemployment, especially in Hampden County.<sup>10</sup>**

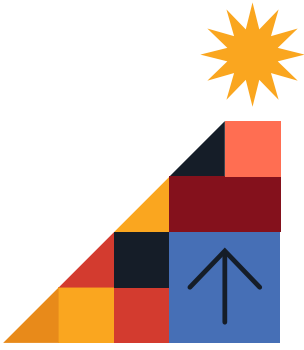
Among female and nonbinary respondents to the COVID-19 Community Impact Survey (CCIS) in the region, the pandemic caused the greatest employment disruptions for low-income women, nonbinary residents, and women with disabilities.<sup>11</sup> Women with young children had a harder time economically during and after the pandemic, often because there wasn't enough affordable child care. Many transgender and gender diverse job seekers, as well as immigrants, have experienced discrimination in hiring and employment.<sup>12</sup> Service providers reported that women who were survivors of intimate partner violence and/or returning from incarceration faced numerous challenges in gaining economic security, including lack of stable, affordable housing.

“There have been a lot of articles in the paper lately...which talk about the disconnect between jobs that are going unfilled and employers who are desperate for workers, and immigrants who are available to work—ready, willing, and able, but the federal regulations don't make it possible. So, you know, an amnesty for the 11 million [undocumented] people who are here would serve our economy very well, as well as serving the people who live here.”

– Immigrant services provider

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION**

- ▶ **Continue efforts to address the “cliff effect”** so that women who gain employment and increase their earnings don't suffer a net loss of income when they become ineligible for certain public benefits.
- ▶ **Combat wage theft and exploitation** of immigrant workers.
- ▶ **Advocate for wage equity** by supporting state-level efforts to mandate salary transparency in job postings.
- ▶ **Reduce barriers to employment** for women and trans people who are survivors of intimate partner violence or have experienced incarceration.



# Poverty & Opportunity

## BACKGROUND

A core belief in this country is that anyone should be able to achieve “self-sufficiency” regardless of the life circumstances they are born into. The concept of “opportunity” here refers to the ability to access education and therefore employment that can lift families out of poverty. **From its founding, the U.S. economy has been built on unpaid and undervalued labor of women and people of color, leading to structural poverty.** The concept of poverty as structural means that poverty is not primarily the fault of a person or the result of their actions, but rather is an outcome of our economic system and how it is structured. These systemic inequities and the myth of self-sufficiency hobble efforts to create a universal social safety net, which in turn prevents true gender and racial equity in our region. In addition to the gender pay gap described in the previous section, women, trans, and gender diverse residents often have limited access to higher education, affordable, high-quality housing, food, transportation, child care, and health care. Without adequate support in these areas, many are unable to earn enough income and other resources to thrive. In fact, the “poverty level” as defined by the federal government is far below the estimated living wage needed to meet household expenses in our region.<sup>13</sup>

“I just see so many people who have every intention of coming out and starting fresh and then, you know, in a pretty short amount of time they run out of any options of places to go. And then they have to make hard choices and look at the trade-offs, which then again contributes to the instability of the mental health, which is required to maintain employment.”

- Service provider working with formerly incarcerated women

## SIGNS OF PROGRESS

**Female poverty rates have been declining over the last several years across the region, especially in Berkshire and Hampshire counties.**<sup>14</sup> Lower poverty rates in 2020–2021 can be attributed in part to the government providing extra income supports during the pandemic. Education is an important tool to raise women out of poverty. Women continued to outpace men in educational attainment.<sup>15</sup> Women also made further strides in assuming educational leadership roles in Western Massachusetts. The proportion of female K–12 school superintendents grew to almost half (48%) of the total, from 39% reported in 2019. Since 2019, the percentage of female principals has also grown in all four counties. The ratio of female teachers, already close to three-quarters of all instructors, held steady.<sup>16</sup>

## Female Educational Leadership in Public Schools, 2022–23 School Year

COUNTY	Number of Female Super-intendents	Percent Female Super-intendents	Number of Female Principals	Percent Female Principals	Number of Female Teachers	Percent Female Teachers
Berkshire	4	25%	26	59%	830	73%
Franklin	11	58%	20	63%	448	75%
Hampden	11	46%	106	64%	3,478	74%
Hampshire	12	57%	32	68%	867	70%
<b>Regional Totals</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>5,624</b>	<b>73%</b>

Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2023

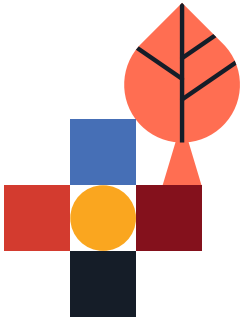
## CONTINUING INEQUITIES

**The female poverty rate in Hampden County continued to exceed rates in the other three counties.** For certain groups, the disparities are even greater: 23% of girls in the county and more than 30% of female-headed households were living below the nationally calculated poverty rate, as well as one in three Latina residents. Regional poverty rates among Black women were more than double those of White women, with the highest rate in Franklin County.<sup>17</sup> Survey data statewide indicate that transgender residents had higher poverty rates than the overall population.<sup>18</sup> Racial disparities in educational attainment limit some women’s opportunities to earn a living wage.<sup>19</sup> In each county, bachelor’s degree (BA) completion was highest among Asian women, followed by White women. BA attainment among Black and Latina women continued to be lower, both regionally and statewide.<sup>20</sup> The WFWM Greater Springfield Economic Security Hub (ESH) Survey findings provide a more nuanced understanding of how poverty has affected some women of color. Food, transportation, child care, and housing are all high concerns for these Springfield women and their families, as well as racial and gender discrimination.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

- ▶ **Increase supply of affordable housing** and housing subsidies in the region, and enforce fair housing laws.
- ▶ **Increase SNAP and HIP benefit levels** and eligibility.
- ▶ **Provide focused funding and services** to help women and trans people returning from incarceration access education and employment.
- ▶ **Increase access to transportation,** especially in rural areas.
- ▶ **Advocate for more equitable treatment of refugees and asylum seekers** fleeing strife in different countries.
- ▶ **Support eligibility of undocumented immigrants** to pay in-state tuition rates at state colleges and universities.





# Health & Well-Being

---

## **BACKGROUND**

**Women and girls face some unique health challenges.** For example, research has found that depression rates are higher among female individuals as compared to male counterparts, and are correlated with hormonal fluctuations, including puberty, pregnancy, and menopause.<sup>21</sup> Trans and gender diverse people also experience unique health concerns, including limited access to transgender health care, whether primary care, endocrinology, or mental health care. Racial, ethnic and gender inequities, such as Black and Indigenous maternal and infant mortality rates, reflect social and economic factors as well as systemic discrimination in healthcare delivery and access to care. In recent years, COVID-19 affected health and well-being, which upended everyone's lives and overloaded healthcare systems. Women, especially Indigenous and women of color, were more likely than others to bear the impact of the pandemic economically. They juggled job loss or change, child- and family-care duties, and students in school remotely. Communities of color experienced inequities in COVID-19 deaths and unequal access to vaccines. The pandemic greatly impacted rural women and girls, older women, female-headed households, and those facing language barriers or living with disabilities. It may take several years before the public health field understands more fully the lingering effects and inequities of the pandemic.

## **SIGNS OF PROGRESS**

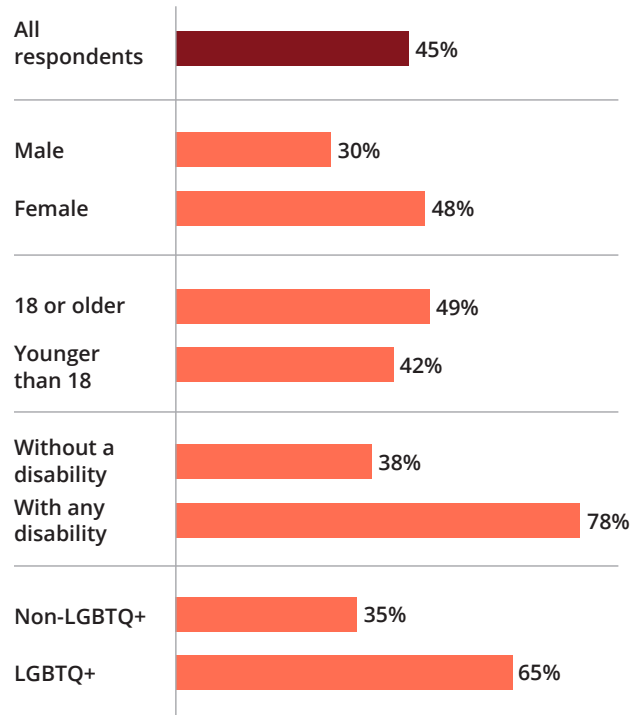
**While mental health continues to be a major concern, especially among youth, there was no reported increase in suicidal ideation and intent among female students in Hampshire County in 2021.**<sup>22</sup> The pandemic accelerated the availability of telehealth and telemental health services, which has increased access to families with transportation barriers. Student survey data in all four counties documented a decline in girls' alcohol use, which may have been because of curtailed access during remote schooling.<sup>23</sup> Maternal mortality continued to decline in Massachusetts, which has among the lowest rates nationally.<sup>24</sup>

## **CONTINUING INEQUITIES**

**Girls reported higher rates of sustained sadness, hopelessness, and anxiety than boys, and the pandemic sent rates higher overall.** Surveyed LGBTQIA+ youth experienced higher rates of these mental health conditions than non-trans, heterosexual youth. (Non-trans means a person's

gender identity is the same as the sex assigned to them at birth.) During the pandemic, youth with disabilities, students of color, and rural youth also reported higher rates of anxiety and depression than respondents overall.<sup>25</sup> Even though Massachusetts has a reputation as a trans-friendly state, some transgender and gender diverse youth and young adults reported feeling unsafe outside their home, and were more likely than other young people to engage in self-harm and have suicidal thoughts.<sup>26</sup> In Berkshire, Franklin, and Hampden counties, girls reported higher rates of marijuana and alcohol use than boys.<sup>27</sup> Chlamydia rates have risen among girls and women 15–24 in Springfield, Amherst, and Chicopee.<sup>28</sup> Black infant mortality rates in Hampden County were more than twice the rates for White and Latine populations.<sup>29</sup> Statewide, unexpected complications of labor and delivery doubled in the last decade, and the rate for Black birthing people was double that for White people.<sup>30</sup>

**Youth Up to Age 24 Who Reported Feeling So Sad or Hopeless Almost Every Day for Two Weeks or More in a Row that they Stopped Doing Usual Activities (2020)**



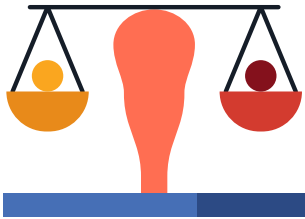
Source: MDPH COVID-19 Community Impact Survey, 2020

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION**

- ▶ **Create or expand Indian Health Service (IHS) provider access** in Western Massachusetts. Provide funding for culturally responsive mental health care for Indigenous residents of the region. Ensure Mass Health removes barriers to coverage.
- ▶ **Increase access to transgender health care** and mental health services throughout the region, especially in Berkshire County and other rural areas.
- ▶ **Increase funding for prevention strategies** to support girls of color,

transgender, and gender diverse students to address poor mental health outcomes and relatively higher use of some substances.

- ▶ **Require schools to train leaders and teachers** to effectively address and seek to repair harms to girls and gender diverse students who experience discrimination at school, especially those who are BIPOC.
- ▶ **Increase resources and awareness to reduce chlamydia and STIs** in Hampden and Hampshire counties.



# Reproductive Justice

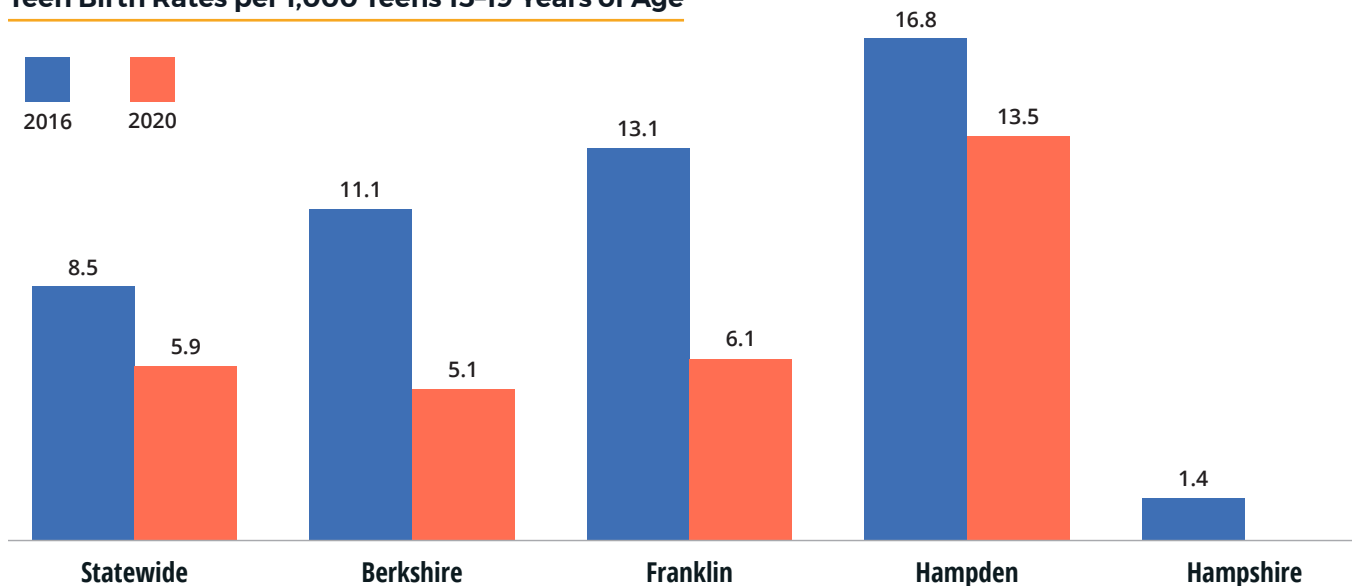
## BACKGROUND

**Although conversations about reproductive justice (RJ) often center on abortion-related issues, the concept is much broader.** Formally coined by a group of Black women in 1994, RJ includes comprehensive sex education, sexually transmitted infection (STI) prevention and care, adequate pregnancy care and parental leave, safe places to raise children, the right to be child-free, and more. At the national level, legislators and lobbyists continue to launch attacks against sexual and reproductive autonomy. This is evidenced by the U.S. Supreme Court overturning *Roe v. Wade* in June 2022, individual states severely limiting abortion access, and nationwide backlash against sexual education.

## SIGNS OF PROGRESS

**Teen birth rates dropped between 2016 and 2020 across the region.**<sup>31</sup> Women continued to have access to abortion services throughout the region and state, even after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*.<sup>32</sup> In 2023, Governor Healey purchased a year's worth of mifepristone, one of two pills approved to medically induce abortion, to ensure access to this resource as courts in various jurisdictions disputed its legality.<sup>33</sup>

### Teen Birth Rates per 1,000 Teens 15–19 Years of Age

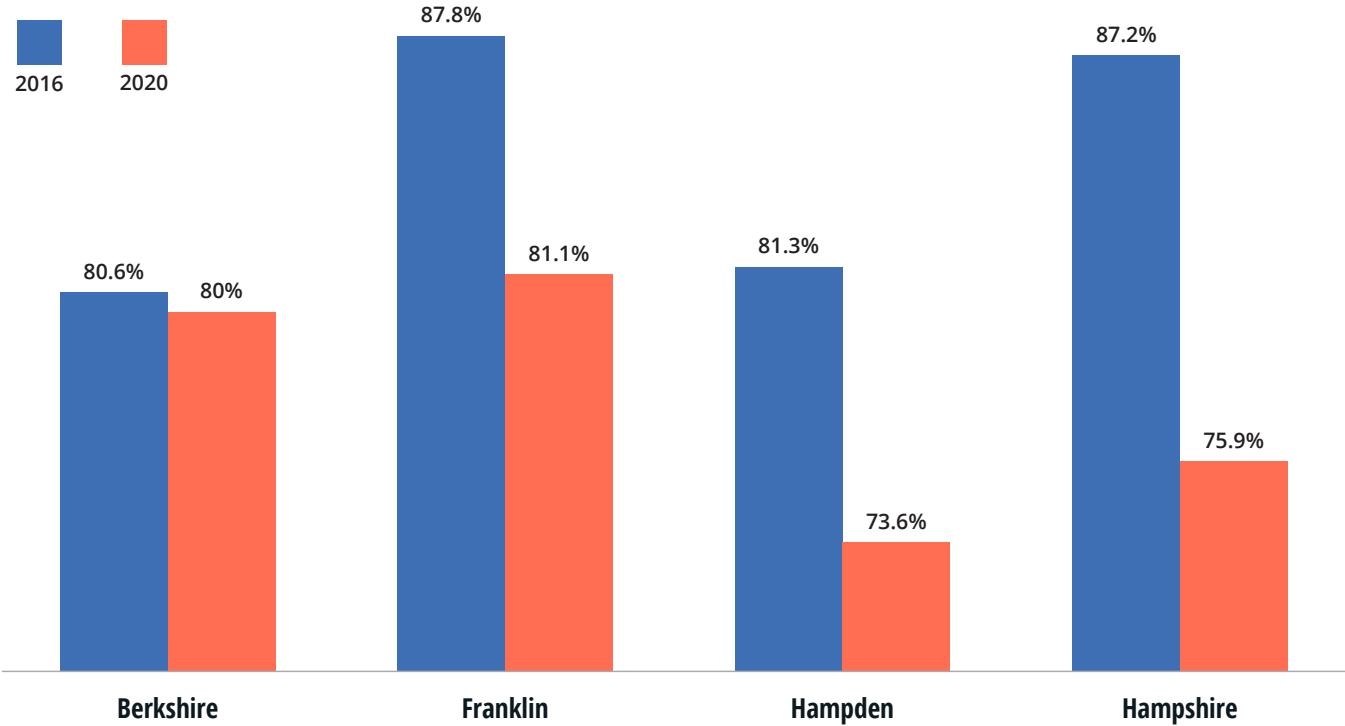


Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health Registry of Vital Records and Statistics, 2020. Note: the rate for 2020 was not available for Hampshire County.

## CONTINUING INEQUITIES

Despite overall declines, inequities persist in teen birth rates, especially among Latina girls in the region.<sup>34</sup> After modest but steady improvements in the rate of adequate prenatal care, the pandemic caused rates to decline in 2020 in all four counties, with the biggest percent change in Hampshire County.<sup>35</sup> The downward trend in adequate prenatal care across racial/ethnic groups preceded this period, and therefore is not solely attributable to the pandemic. Those with public insurance were less likely to receive adequate care than privately insured residents.

### Adequate Prenatal Care by County



Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health Registry of Vital Records and Statistics, 2020

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

- ▶ **Heavily regulate Crisis Pregnancy Centers**, which mislead potential clients, often do not provide medically appropriate prenatal care, and actively discourage pregnancy termination.
- ▶ **Support modernization of sexual and reproductive health curricula in schools**, including advocacy at the state level and school district level for strong guidance and adequate funding to implement evidence-based education that is culturally responsive, especially for BIPOC students and LGBTQIA+ youth.



# Violence & Safety

## **BACKGROUND**

**Violence may occur in myriad ways: physical, sexual, mental, emotional, and more.** This section examines domestic and sexual violence, bullying, school discipline, and incarceration. These experiences, and the resulting responses to harm, are highly influenced by power dynamics and larger societal systems and expectations. People who are women, gender diverse, Black and brown, or any combination of marginalized identities are at higher risk of experiencing intimate partner (IPV), dating (DV), and sexual violence (SV). The intersectionality of identities is important to highlight for incarceration as well. Race, gender identity, disability status, and sexual orientation inform experiences with the criminal justice system. Women also face subsequent difficulties when seeking support.<sup>36</sup> Survivors who seek help often feel disempowered and dismissed by responding agencies. Victims often may confide in a friend, violence hotline worker, or therapist as a way to avoid re-traumatization and red tape. Women who have been incarcerated often experience discrimination as they re-enter their community and seek housing and employment.

## **SIGNS OF PROGRESS**

**Incarceration rates for women overall have declined in Massachusetts over the last decade.** Regionally, since 2016 the rates of female incarceration in jails decreased in Berkshire, Hampden, and Hampshire Counties.<sup>37</sup>

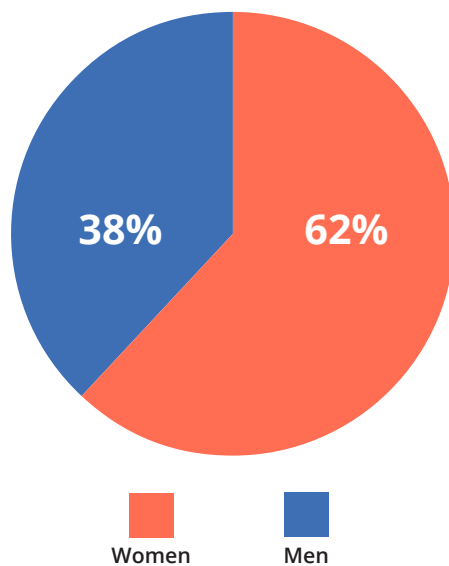
**“We have to make the community safe, and all those systems—the police, the courts—every single system has to be working to keep that survivor and her family and her children safe so they don’t have to flee and go to a brand-new place to live unless they want to. We aren’t there. We are not there.”**

**– Domestic violence service provider**

## CONTINUING INEQUITIES

**The COVID-19 pandemic worsened existing inequities and created additional barriers for domestic violence survivors seeking support.** In 2020, Jane Doe Inc. member programs, which serve victims of domestic violence and/or sexual assault, reported an 84% increase in requests for services. Service providers reported that women striving for economic security on their own may feel forced to go back to an abuser, often because of lack of affordable housing. High school girls reported higher rates of forced sexual intercourse and sexual dating violence than boys.<sup>38</sup> The pandemic temporarily suppressed all types of bullying, but rates rose again after students returned to in-person classes.<sup>39</sup> Among female students, Indigenous, Black, and Latina girls experienced school discipline at higher rates than their enrollment—reflecting racial disparities in discipline practices.<sup>40</sup> While female incarceration rates have declined statewide in the last decade, female pretrial detention has consistently exceeded male rates.<sup>41</sup> Women represent only 3% of incarcerated people, yet they make up 62% of pretrial detainees, an increase from 42% in 2021.<sup>42</sup> Women returning to their community after incarceration face many barriers to stability.

**People Detained Pretrial Statewide**

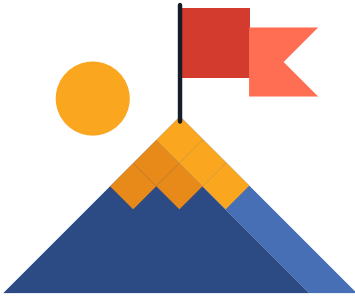


**In Massachusetts in 2022, only 3% of people in the Department of Corrections jurisdiction were women, yet women make up 62% of pretrial detainees. This shows that women are held at a significantly higher rate than men.**

Source: Cannata N, Matthews H, Desrochers B, et al. Massachusetts Department of Correction. Published online 2021.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

- ▶ **Massively increase resources for youth and adult violence prevention**, and for support services for survivors of IPV/DV/SV.
- ▶ **Create more temporary and permanent affordable housing** options for survivors.
- ▶ **Invest in data reporting systems** and in building trust to increase survivor willingness to report.
- ▶ **Shift policies and practices that punish survivors**, and require agencies to use trauma-informed practices.
- ▶ **Enact a 5-year moratorium** on prison/jail construction throughout the state.
- ▶ **Implement elder parole** (parole offered for people over 55 and incarcerated for 15+ yrs).



# Leadership

## BACKGROUND

**Gender equity in leadership positions is a growing focus, as women and gender diverse people continue to face significant barriers in accessing and thriving in leadership roles across various sectors and industries.** While women tend to earn college degrees at higher rates than male counterparts, they are often underrepresented in leadership roles, which confer status, power, and financial compensation. A survey of 40,000 employees across corporate America found that while women leaders are just as ambitious as male counterparts, they are more likely to experience microaggressions such as being second-guessed repeatedly or being mistaken for a more junior employee.<sup>43</sup> Women face not only a “glass ceiling” but often a “glass ladder” that prevents them from getting positions that take them toward the highest leadership rung.

## SIGNS OF PROGRESS

**Based on statewide data, since 2019, the proportion of female CEOs has doubled from 4% to 8% of top corporations, and all that growth is among women of color, who went from zero to 4% of CEOs in 2022.**<sup>44</sup> In the healthcare and social assistance fields, women make up between half and three-quarters of the leaders in Western Massachusetts counties, and at least 75% of all employees regionally as well.<sup>45</sup> Further, women, and even women of color, are filling leadership roles at local hospital systems. Female presidents of higher education institutions are close to wage parity with male counterparts, as their statewide salaries are about 94% of male presidents.

### Average Higher Education Leader Compensation in Massachusetts by Sex, 2019

POSITION	Male	Female	Female as % of Male Salary
President	\$474,196	\$443,811	94%
Provost	\$352,091	\$277,373	79%
All others	\$306,582	\$234,607	77%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$330,712</b>	<b>\$257,355</b>	<b>78%</b>

Source: Women’s Power Gap in Higher Education, 2019. Note that “all others” includes senior academic and administrative leadership.

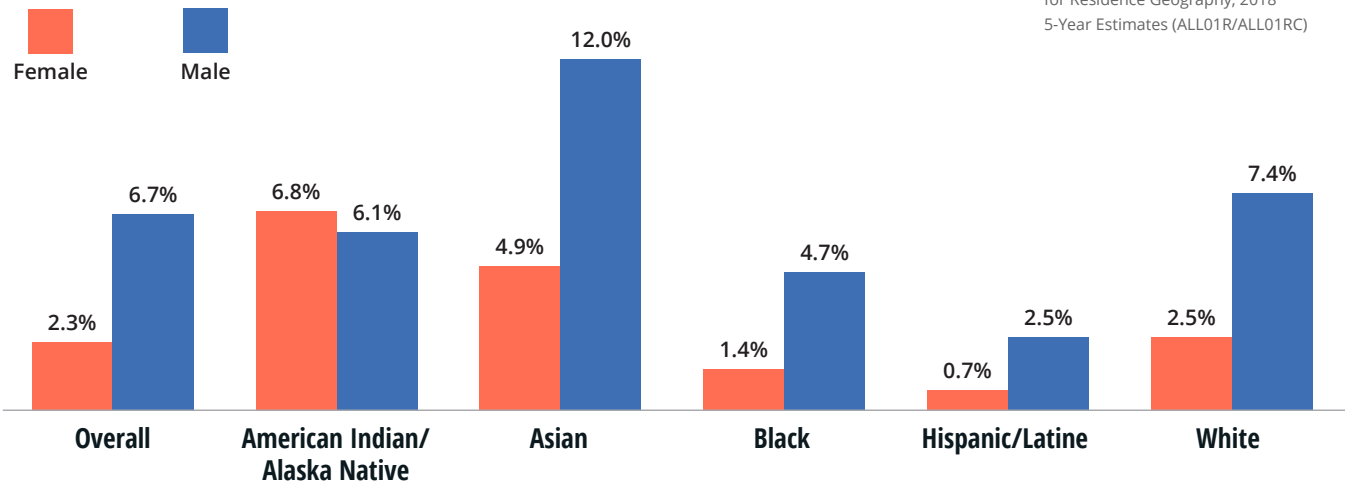
## CONTINUING INEQUITIES

**Trans and gender diverse residents reported a dearth of leaders that share their identity in every sphere.** There is an urgent need for greater representation of this community in all sectors. Lack of data tracking on sex and gender identity for leadership roles in the corporate, nonprofit, and healthcare sectors is a major barrier to understanding whether we are making progress and where more action is needed.

In higher education, there remains a need for female representation among leaders especially at institutions that are not historically or presently women’s colleges. Further, when looking at provost salaries and those for other senior academic and administrative leadership by sex, institutions continue to pay their female employees unfairly (less than 80% of male counterparts’ salaries). Additionally, female employees remain woefully underrepresented in STEM occupations across the region as less than 3% of female workers are in the STEM field. Further, when examining those who are pursuing such careers, racial and ethnic disparities remain with 5% of Asian female workers in STEM compared to less than 1% of all Latina workers.

### Percentage of Employees in STEM Fields in Western Mass

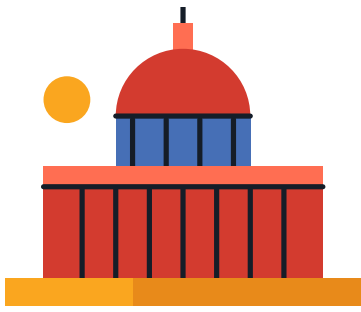
Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS EEO Occupation by Sex and Race/Ethnicity for Residence Geography, 2018 5-Year Estimates (ALL01R/ALL01RC)



## OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

- ▶ **Require entities that receive any sort of state funding to report the sex, gender identity, race, and ethnicity of staff and board leadership.** Aggregate and publish these data annually so the public and researchers can understand the trends.
- ▶ **Advocate for wage parity** in institutions of higher education.
- ▶ **Support and promote programs, pipelines, and mentorship** that encourage women and gender diverse individuals with intersecting identities to pursue STEM fields.





# Political Participation

## BACKGROUND

**Gender equity in political participation has been a crucial issue in the United States, particularly for women who have been historically excluded from politics.** Women were galvanized to vote after the Supreme Court voted to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the case that protected abortion rights nationwide back in 1973. More than half of female voters nationally said this decision made them more motivated to vote in the 2022 midterm election (53%); it was even higher among women 18–49 (59%).<sup>46</sup> In Massachusetts, women filled five of six statewide offices including Maura Healey, the first woman and first openly gay elected Governor of the Commonwealth, and Andrea Campbell, the first Black woman elected to Attorney General. Campbell is also the first woman of color to win a statewide election in Massachusetts, and Governor Healey and Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll’s elections qualify this state as the only in the nation to have women in both offices.<sup>47</sup>

## SIGNS OF PROGRESS

**The region made progress in state legislative representation, as 10 of the 27-member delegation from Western Massachusetts are women, an increase to 37% in 2023.<sup>48</sup>**

Representative Shirley Arriaga from Chicopee is the first woman of color to hold this seat. Ashley Shade, a transgender woman elected to North Adams City Council in 2021 and the first trans state party chair (of the Massachusetts Libertarian Party), is the only openly transgender person elected in the Commonwealth. The proportion of female lawyers and lawyers of color in the state is growing, especially among lawyers under 45.<sup>49</sup> Of the 20 female chiefs of municipal police departments, more than half work in Western Massachusetts.<sup>50</sup>

## Local Mayoral Representation



**5 out of 11**

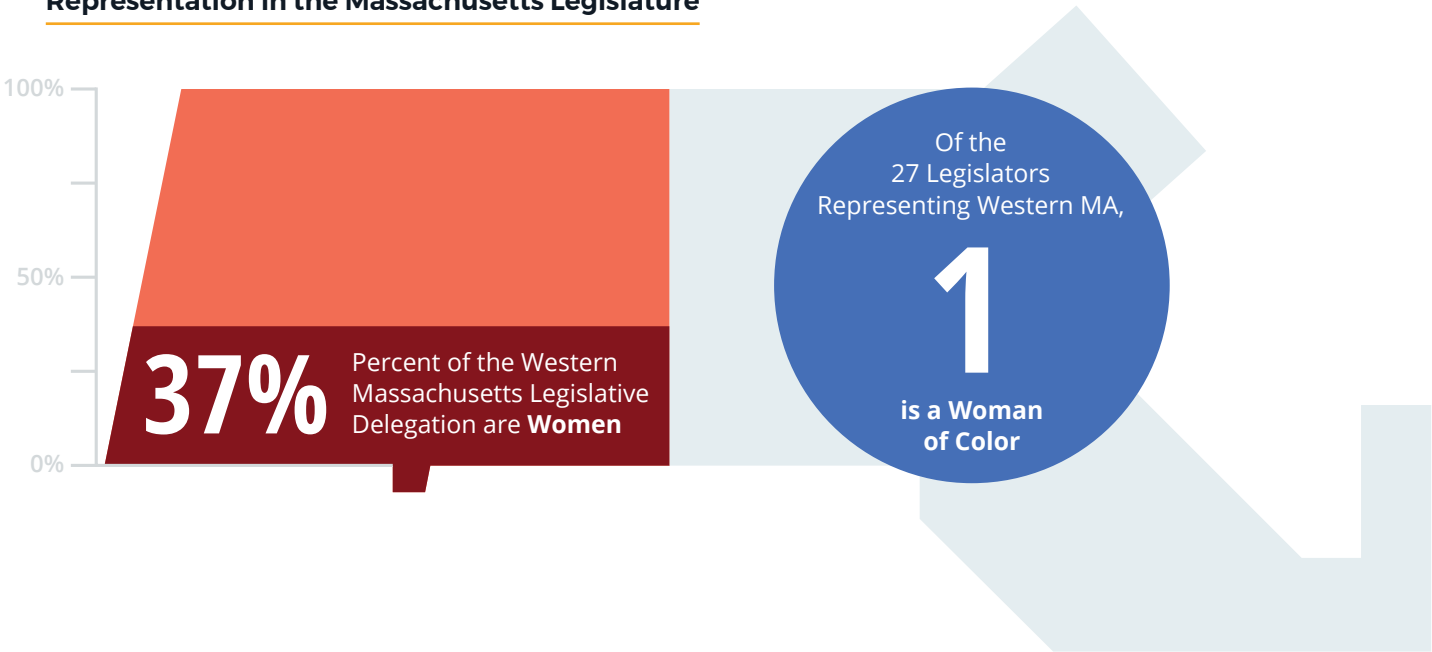
Five of the eleven mayors in Western MA are **women**. None of the female mayors in Western MA are **women of color**.

## CONTINUING INEQUITIES

Since the last status report, there was no increase in the proportion of female representation in the federal congressional delegation from Western Massachusetts.

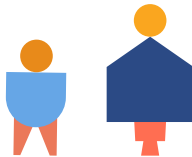
In the courts, women are half of all judges but only 34% of Chief Justices.<sup>51</sup> More than 80% of female and trans lawyers in Massachusetts are White.<sup>52</sup> There are no female district attorneys in the region.<sup>53</sup> While some advancement has occurred in women’s political representation, which confers significant social capital and power, trans and gender diverse people still face significant barriers to political leadership.

### Representation in the Massachusetts Legislature



## OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

- ▶ **Mandate that municipal associations, courts, and legal associations collect sex, gender identity, and race and ethnicity data from their members** (mayors, judges, lawyers, and sheriffs) annually and publish it publicly.
- ▶ **Invest in career pipelines** for women and gender diverse leaders.
- ▶ **Make child care an eligible campaign expense** for political candidates.



# About this Report

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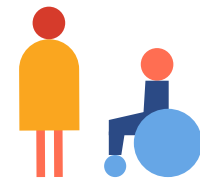
This report is the third commissioned by the Women’s Fund of Western Massachusetts, following the status reports completed in 2013 and 2019. Its purpose is to:

- ▶ **Shed light on strengths, progress, and areas of continued or emerging gender inequity** in our four-county region of Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire counties.
- ▶ **Inform the foundation’s strategic planning and grantmaking** for the next several years.
- ▶ **Provide actionable data and insights** for our current partners, and motivate others to pursue gender and racial equity.
- ▶ **Support collective advocacy** by using findings to engage individual stakeholders, community-based organizations, for-profit companies, other funders, government, higher education, and other agencies in advancing gender-equitable policies and practices.

Past reports focused on the status of women and girls, and this report expanded its focus to include transgender and gender diverse individuals—anyone whose gender does not match their assigned sex at birth and/or falls outside the male/female binary. We also sought a deeper understanding of the experiences of several populations, including Indigenous women, survivors of intimate partner violence, immigrants and refugees, formerly incarcerated women, and Springfield women of color.

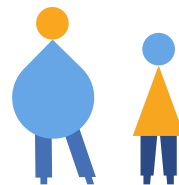
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To see the full report, go to:  
<https://data.mywomensfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Womens-Fund-Gender-Equity-Report-FINAL-2023-9-13.pdf>.



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The data included here are also available, along with additional data, in the Women’s Fund data hub:  
<https://data.mywomensfund.org/data-hub/>.



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# Endnotes

- 1 U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2021 Five-Year Estimates.
- 2 UMass Donahue Institute, Massachusetts Estimates Program, Population Projections. <https://donahue.umass.edu/business-groups/economic-public-policy-research/massachusetts-population-estimates-program/population-projections>
- 3 Herman, JL, Flores, AR and O'Neill, KK. How Many Adults and Youth Identify as Transgender in the United States? UCLA School of Law, Williams Institute, June 2022. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/trans-adults-united-states/>
- 4 Kochhar, Rakesh. The Enduring Grip of the Gender Pay Gap. Pew Research Center. March 1, 2023. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2023/03/01/the-enduring-grip-of-the-gender-pay-gap/>
- 5 The Pew report noted: "there has been virtually no change in the degree to which women are overrepresented in education, health care, and personal care and services occupations – the last of which are lower paying than the average across all occupations. The distribution of women and men across occupations remains one of the drivers of the gender pay gap."
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- 7 Center for American Progress. Discrimination and Barriers to Well-Being: The State of the LGBTQ+ Community in 2022. January 2023. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/discrimination-and-barriers-to-well-being-the-state-of-the-lgbtqi-community-in-2022/>
- 8 County Health Rankings and Roadmaps. Gender Pay Gap. Accessed May 3, 2023. <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/reports/gender-pay-gap>
- 9 Unemployment and Labor Force Participation rates are from U.S. Census, ACS Five-Year Estimates, 2011 to 2021.
- 10 Median wage data are from the U.S. Census, ACS, 2021 One-Year Estimates. Unemployment data are ACS 2021 Five-Year Estimates.
- 11 Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts. COVID-19 Community Impact Survey: Impact of COVID-19 on Women and Nonbinary People's Financial Well-Being in Western MA. Prepared for the Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts. July 2022.
- 12 U.S. Transgender Survey, 2015. Immigrant-serving organizations reported on workplace discrimination for this report.
- 13 See the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Living Wage Calculator, accessed on June 6, 2023 for Hampden County. <https://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/25013>. For example, in Hampden County, the poverty rate for one adult with one child is \$8.80 per hour, and the living wage needed to meet household expenses is \$37.83 per hour.
- 14 U.S. Census, ACS, 2021 Five-Year Estimates.
- 15 U.S. Census, ACS, 2021 Five-Year Estimates, Educational Attainment for Population 25 and Over.
- 16 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- 17 U.S. Census, ACS, 2021 Five-Year Estimates.
- 18 U.S. Transgender Survey. Massachusetts Findings. 2015.
- 19 To find out what the living wage is for a county in Western Massachusetts, go to: <https://livingwage.mit.edu/states/25/locations>. For reference, the Alliance for Digital Equity estimated that the living wage for a two-person household is about \$50,000 in Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire counties. <https://sites.google.com/view/alliancefordigitalequity/reportsdata/2021-assessment-report?authuser=0> The federal poverty rate for a two-person household is \$19,720. <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines>
- 20 U.S. Census, ACS, 2021 Five-Year Estimates.
- 21 Soares CN, Zitek B. Reproductive hormone sensitivity and risk for depression across the female life cycle: a continuum of vulnerability? J Psychiatry Neurosci. 2008 Jul;33(4):331-43. PMID: 18592034; PMCID: PMC2440795. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2440795/>
- 22 Spiffy/HOPE Coalition. 2021 Hampshire County Youth Data. Spotlight on COVID-19 Impacts. Presentation of Hampshire County 2021 Prevention Needs Assessment Survey given on June 2, 2021.
- 23 Sources are Berkshire County PNAS (2021); Franklin County PNAS (2022); Springfield PNAS (2021); MA Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2022). Because surveys, populations, and years are different, caution should be taken when comparing these data.
- 24 Kaiser Family Foundation, State Health Facts. Maternal deaths and mortality rates per 100,000 live births. 2018–2020. <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/maternal-deaths-and-mortality-rates-per-100000-live-births/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>
- 25 MDPH COVID-19 Community Impact Survey, 2020.
- 26 Based on focus groups and interviews conducted in 2023 in Hampden and Berkshire counties, and Hampshire County PNAS data, 2021.
- 27 Sources are Berkshire County PNAS (2021); Franklin County PNAS (2022); Springfield PNAS (2021); MA Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2022). Because surveys, populations, and years are different, caution should be taken when comparing these data.
- 28 MDPH Surveillance Data Overview of Sexually Transmitted Infections, Massachusetts, 1990–2020.
- 29 County Health Rankings.
- 30 MDPH. Data Brief: An Assessment of Severe Maternal Morbidity in Massachusetts: 2011–2020. July 2023. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/an-assessment-of-severe-maternal-morbidity-in-massachusetts-2011-2020/download>
- 31 Massachusetts Department of Public Health Registry of Vital Records and Statistics, 2020.
- 32 Division of Medical Assistance 130 CMR 484.000: Abortion Services Section 484.001 <https://www.mass.gov/doc/130-cmr-484-abortion-services/download>
- 33 Governor Healey Announces Immediate Action to Protect Access to Medication Abortion in Massachusetts | Mass.gov <https://www.mass.gov/news/governor-healey-announces-immediate-action-to-protect-access-to-medication-abortion-in-massachusetts>
- 34 Massachusetts Department of Public Health Registry of Vital Records and Statistics, 2020.
- 35 Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Birth Data Set. 2020.
- 36 Sokoloff NJ, Dupont I. Domestic Violence at the Intersections of Race, Class, and Gender: Challenges and Contributions to Understanding Violence Against Marginalized Women in Diverse Communities. Violence Against Women. 2005;11(1):38–64. doi:10.1177/1077801204271476
- 37 Cannata N, Matthews H, Desrochers B, et al. Massachusetts Department of Correction. Published online 2021.
- 38 Youth Online: High School YRBS – United States 2021 Results | DASH | CDC. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed June 20, 2023.
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- 41 Cannata N, Matthews H, Desrochers B, et al. Massachusetts Department of Correction. Published online 2021.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Women in the Workplace. McKinsey & Company; 2022. Accessed June 3, 2023. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/women-in-the-workplace#/>
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- 52 NORC at the University of Chicago. Massachusetts Lawyer Census. Accessed May 27, 2023.
- 53 Massachusetts District Attorneys Association.