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Florida Receives a D+ on Women's Employment and Earnings, with Wide Disparities by County

New report reveals women in Florida experience narrower wage gap than a decade ago, but lower overall earnings

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A new county-level analysis of the status of women in Florida finds that the state receives a D+ and ranks 36th in the nation on the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) Employment and Earnings Index—which scores states based on the share of women in the labor force, women's median annual earnings, the gender wage gap and the share of employed women in professional or managerial occupations. *The Status of Women in Florida by County: Employment & Earnings*, released by IWPR in partnership with Florida Philanthropic Network (FPN) and Florida Women's Funding Alliance (FWFA), finds that Florida's grade for women's employment and earnings has worsened since 2004 and reveals wide disparities in women's status by county and by race and ethnicity.

"While it is disheartening to see that women in Florida have lost ground in workforce participation and fairness, this study provides not only granular baseline data, but also practical policy recommendations for funders, agencies that serve women, policy makers and even human resource professionals to address these inequities," said Paula Liang, FWFA co-chair. "If we are all intentional in our work around women in the workplace, we can turn these numbers around."

Florida ranks 38th in the nation on median annual earnings for women who work full-time, year-round (\$35,000), with women's earnings varying considerably by race and ethnicity. Among women, White women have the highest median annual earnings (\$40,505), earning more than \$10,000 more per year than Black and Hispanic women, who earn \$30,415 and \$29,878, respectively.

"Since 2004, Florida's grade on the Employment & Earnings Index has actually gotten worse, moving from a C- to a D+," said Julie Anderson, IWPR Senior Research Associate and author of the report. "As the state grows more diverse, addressing the economic insecurity faced by women of color will be critical to improving the state's economy overall."

Women in Florida overall earn 87.5 cents for every dollar earned by a man; this is an increase from 79.9 cents in 2004. The report estimates that if working women in Florida were paid the same as comparable men—men who are of the same age, have the same level of education, work the same number of hours and have the same urban/rural status—women's average earnings would increase by \$6,300, a raise of over 16 percent. Added up across all working women in Florida, this would amount to \$28 billion in wage and salary income added to the state's economy.

“Although Florida has improved in some areas, we have declined in others. Collaboration between policymakers, employers and funders is needed to adequately tackle employment disparities and close the gender wage gap,” said Robert McFalls, FPN president & CEO. “Florida Women’s Funding Alliance continues to work toward achievable and equitable policy recommendations for both new and existing legislation to improve opportunities for women, their communities and all Floridians.”

The Status of Women in Florida by County: Employment & Earnings concludes with policy recommendations, including tackling the gender wage gap and the even larger wage gap for women of color; raising the minimum wage; encouraging women to pursue nontraditional careers; and supporting working women with caregiving responsibilities.

Additional findings from *The Status of Women in Florida by County: Employment & Earnings* include:

Single mother households in Florida have the lowest income. Families with children headed by a single mother have the lowest median household income, \$27,245, compared with \$79,434 for married couple families with children, and \$40,937 for households headed by single fathers. Previous research from IWPR, FPN and FWFA found that equal pay would reduce poverty among working single mothers in Florida by more than half (51 percent).

Education does not eliminate the wage gap. Despite higher education levels leading to higher earnings for both men and women, women who complete high school earn the same as men who do not, indicating that women in Florida need more educational qualifications than men to secure well-paying jobs.

Labor force participation for Florida women is among the lowest in the nation, with rates varying widely by county and race/ethnicity. Slightly more than half of women aged 16 or older in Florida are in the labor force, meaning they are either employed or actively looking for work; this range varies widely by county from a low of 24.6 percent to a high of 62.9 percent. Among women, Native American women have the lowest labor force participation rates across Florida. For every racial and ethnic group except Black women and men, men are more likely to be in the labor force than their female counterparts.

Working women in Florida are concentrated in specific occupations, depending on where they live. A greater share of women work in management, business, science, and arts occupations in Alachua, Leon, and St. Johns counties than in other counties, while women in Liberty, Hamilton, and Hardee counties are more likely to work in service occupations than women in other counties. Half of women in Glades County (49.5 percent) work in sales and office occupations.

The Status of Women in Florida by County: Employment & Earnings is part of a study of women in Florida by county, commissioned by FWFA in response to Florida’s D+ rating in IWPR’s *The Status of Women in the States: 2015*. The first report, *The Status of Women in Florida by County: Poverty & Opportunity*, was released in tandem with *The Status of Women in Florida by County: Population & Diversity*. The fourth and final report, *The Status of Women in Florida by County: Health & Well Being*, will be released in May 2018.

The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization that conducts and communicates research to inspire public dialogue, shape policy, and improve the lives and opportunities of women of diverse backgrounds, circumstances, and experiences. IWPR also works in affiliation with the Program on Gender Analysis in Economics at American University.

Florida Philanthropic Network understands the complexities of grantmaking in Florida's unique and varied communities. FPN connects more than 700 Florida foundation leaders and grantmaking professionals, funder-focused programming, resources and research from the field. Together, FPN members can build a successful model for cooperation and collaboration among all sectors – business, government and nonprofit – to promote, develop and advance philanthropy and further the best interest of all Floridians. The Florida Women's Funding Alliance (FWFA) is an affinity group of Florida Philanthropic Network that envisions a Florida where women and girls thrive. The FWFA mission is to transform the lives of women and girls through members' collective voices and resources.

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