



The Status of Women in Westmoreland County

Acknowledgements

Status of Women in Westmoreland County
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The full Status of Women in Westmoreland County report can be accessed on www.unitedway4u.org or by contacting one of the project team members.

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THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN WESTMORELAND COUNTY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



In early 2007, several local women leaders convened to discuss the status of women in Westmoreland County. Their consensus was that conditions for women are not acceptable, but they wanted to substantiate this conviction. The group, which became the Status of Women in Westmoreland County project team, decided to pursue a two-fold strategy to address issues that impact the status of women in the community: 1) To conduct research documenting the status of local women compared to men in Westmoreland County and to women and men in the region, state and nation across a variety of indicators and 2) To use the report to launch community dialogue and action targeted at improving the status of women in Westmoreland County.

The Status of Women in Westmoreland County is the culmination of the research effort to document community conditions. The project team conducted the research during the first several months of 2008, using a combination of census and local data sources to compare the county to regional, state and national circumstances. While the status of women can be measured in a number of ways, this report focuses on five broad categories:

- Pay equity, employment and education
- Poverty
- Health and well-being
- Women in leadership
- Violence against women

The report highlights a variety of findings. There is some data that may raise concern, and some data indicates that the status of women in Westmoreland County compares favorably to those in the region, state and country. Other data has not been sufficiently analyzed to determine whether it is good, bad or neutral news with regard to the status of women. Further, local data about how specific groups of women are impacted by these issues is not available. However, this report does provide significant detail about the overall status of women in the county and will help develop a vision for the status of women and serve as a baseline for future comparison.

The project team hopes this report will inspire informed and lively conversation and action aimed at improving conditions for current and future generations of women who live and work in Westmoreland County. A brief summary of the findings in each of the five issues researched follows. Further details and graphic displays, as well as short vignettes that highlight the personal impact and inter-connected nature of these issues, are included in the full report.

Pay Equity, Employment and Education

Economic opportunity can impact the status of women in a variety of ways, and it is inter-connected with the other issues covered in this report. This section of the report highlights data related to the gender wage gap in Westmoreland County as compared to Pennsylvania and the country. The median salary for Westmoreland County women is 75.3% of what male wage earners are paid, and this gap is wider than the national gender wage gap of 77.3%.¹ It also provides information about the types of jobs women in the

¹ 2006 American Community Survey. U.S. Census Bureau.

county hold and compares their median salaries earned in five specific career paths to the median salaries earned by men. An analysis of median salaries by gender of the local nonprofit sector suggests that while the gender wage gap is smaller in some local nonprofits than in the workforce overall, it still persists.

The report presents data that illustrates at every educational level, from less than high school graduate through graduate and professional degree, Westmoreland County women earn less than men. This gender wage gap persists despite an increasing parity in educational levels of women and men in the county. For example, women with some college or an associate's degree make just 59% of what men with the same education earn in Westmoreland County.²

One of the key reasons that women leave corporate positions and start their own businesses is because of the lack of opportunity to advance in the company.³ While the growth of women-owned business is not tracked at the county level, women-owned firms (51% or more majority women-owned) in the Pittsburgh region have increased by 47.4% between 1997 and 2006.⁴ At the same time, however, the Pittsburgh region ranks among the lowest metropolitan regions in the country with respect to business and sales growth. In Westmoreland County, there are just 72 women-owned businesses that have a minimum of \$1 million in gross annual revenues, or 1% of all women-owned businesses in the county. Nationally, 3% of all women-owned businesses achieve this revenue threshold.⁵

Poverty

This section of the report highlights data related to women living in poverty in Westmoreland County and specifically examines how various family types are impacted by poverty. Over the past 40 years in the United States, the percentage of women living in poverty has consistently remained 3% higher than the percentage of men living in poverty. The same holds true in Westmoreland County. In 2006, a total of 19,020 females lived in poverty in Westmoreland County.⁶

Poverty impacts different types of families disproportionately. Most notably, over 41% of female-headed households (no husband present and children under 18) in Westmoreland County live at or below the poverty level. The median income for female-headed households in Westmoreland County is \$17,633, which is the poverty level for a family of three.⁷

Older women living in Westmoreland County are also far more likely to live in poverty than older men. In fact, 84% of older adults who live in poverty in the county are women.⁸ Further, there are a number of older adults living in poverty who are responsible for their grandchildren as well.

Health and Well-Being

In several measures of health and well-being, the status of women in Westmoreland County appears to be "OK." However, the data in this section of the report is framed within the larger national context regarding trends in women's health. Since 1983, women's life expectancy has been declining in 180 of the

² Ibid.

³ Paths to Entrepreneurship: New Directions for Women in Business. 1998. Center for Women's Business Research.

⁴ Women Owned Business in Pittsburgh, PA, 2006. Center for Women's Business Research.

⁵ Personal Communication. Westmoreland President's Organization, Seton Hill University Chapter, Westmoreland County.

⁶ 2006 American Community Survey. US Census Bureau.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ezzati M, Friedman AB, Kulkarni SC, Murray CJL. The Reversal of Fortunes: Trends in County Mortality and Cross-County Mortality Disparities in the United States *PLoS Medicine* Vol. 5, No. 4, e66 doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.0050066.

nation's 3,141 counties, compared to a life expectancy decline in just 11 counties for men. This decline has been tied to race, income and geography.⁹ To assess the status of women's health and well-being in Westmoreland County, the project team examined several reproductive health issues, disease rates, self-reported health status, mental health, insurance coverage and disability status.

Access to services is a key indicator of women's reproductive health, and in some respects, it appears that access to services is working. Pregnant women living in the county receive more pre-natal care and have fewer cesarean sections.¹⁰ The teen pregnancy rate in the county is significantly lower than in the state. Of potential concern is the 9% increase in abortions in the county between 2005-2006, and a net increase of abortions from 2000 through 2005, while national rates have steadily declined.¹¹ Reducing unplanned pregnancies is a strategy to reduce abortions, but it is estimated that 5,031 women living in poverty in the county lack access to contraception services.¹²

The report also highlights information comparing Westmoreland County women to the state and nation with regard to specific diseases, such as cancer and heart disease, as well as information about mental health services and insurance coverage. Finally, this section details the percentage of women and men in the county who live with some type of disability and reports the median salary for women with disabilities is 41% of the median salary for men with disabilities—the lowest median salary for women with disabilities in the seven-county region.¹³

Women in Leadership

To assess the extent to which women participate in leadership roles in Westmoreland County, the project team reviewed the roles women occupy in the public, corporate and nonprofit sectors.

In almost all aspects of public leadership, women play a small role. The project team examined women's participation at the local, county, state and federal government levels, and found that women hold very few leadership positions. All 64 county units of government were assessed, and of the 497 local government leadership roles, only 143, or 29%, are held by women. Women also play a limited role in leading educational institutions, in public school systems, on school boards and in higher education.

The assessment of women in corporate leadership roles yielded a similar result. In 32 companies employing over 250 in Westmoreland County, only four women served in executive leadership capacity as chief executive officers, chief financial officers or chief operating officers. Further, in the organizations studied, only 15% of the corporate board director positions are occupied by females. Finally, though women in Westmoreland County hold 52% of executive leadership positions in nonprofit organizations, they typically lead smaller, human service agencies rather than larger nonprofits.

Violence Against Women

It is difficult to gain a true understanding of the scope of violence against women in the community because victims of violence may not come forward to report the crime (often out of fear and concern for their safety) and because marginalizing women is a longstanding practice that occurs in a pervasive manner and is often not recognized or challenged. Therefore, to assess the impact of violence against women in Westmoreland County, the project team needed to look more broadly than existing data.

¹⁰ Pennsylvania Department of Health. Healthy People 2010. Retrieved from www.dsf.health.state.pa.us.

¹¹ Pennsylvania Department of Health. Abortion Statistics Reports 2000-2006.

¹² Adagio Health Comprehensive Needs Assessment, 2006.

¹³ American Community Survey 2006. U.S. Census Bureau.

There is extensive national data detailing violence against women. The United States Department of Justice states that an average of 511,000 assaults against women occurred each year from 2001-2005.¹⁴ It further reports that 25% of women who were sexually assaulted were assaulted by a current or former partner.¹⁵ One in four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.¹⁶ Ninety-one percent of sexual assault victims are female, and young women are disproportionately affected by domestic and sexual violence.¹⁷

Due to under-reporting, it is difficult or impossible to know the extent of the problem locally, but looking at the numbers of those seeking help can provide some insight. This section of the report highlights the services offered to local victims of domestic and sexual violence. Measuring progress towards reducing violence can be challenging because increased awareness and willingness to report these crimes will initially result in higher statistics. Long-term analysis of this issue is required.

Violence against women is also inter-connected with the other issues highlighted in this report. This section illustrates these connections with health and well-being, economic opportunity, leadership and poverty.

Conclusion

The Status of Women in Westmoreland County focuses primarily on facts and statistics gathered through months of research, and the data tell the story of the status of women in the county. However, the data also suggest an underlying theme of women's marginalization. Assessing the impact of this marginalization is not an easy task, but if it persists, opportunities for women will be limited and violence will persist as well.

The report concludes by suggesting that the status of Women in Westmoreland County can be improved in a number of ways by highlighting some of the most striking data collected:

- Women cannot head households and raise children on an annual income of \$17,633.
- Women should not make 75% or less of what men earn for the same work.
- There should not be nearly 20,000 women living in poverty and over 3,000 of women over the age of 65 living in poverty.
- There should not be 11,429 women between 18 and 64 without health insurance.
- Women with disabilities should earn more than \$9,316 annually and 41% of what men with disabilities earn.
- Women can and should hold more leadership positions in public, corporate and educational institutions.
- Women in nonprofit organizations should have greater opportunities to lead larger organizations and serve in board leadership roles.
- Women should not be subject to violence and should not fear reporting it when it happens.
- Women should not be de-personalized and marginalized, limiting their opportunities to fully participate in society as they choose.

¹⁴ United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved from <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs>.

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Justice. 1998. Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey.

¹⁶ Tjaden, Patricia & Thoennes, Nancy. 2000. Extent, Nature and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey. National Institute of Justice and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention.

¹⁷ National Center for Victims of Crime. Retrieved from www.ncvc.org.

THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN WESTMORELAND



INTRODUCTION

The status of women in Westmoreland County is not acceptable, for the current and future generations of women who live and work here.

Concerned with this issue, a group of local women leaders began meeting in early 2007 to initiate discussion and action aimed at improving the status of women in Westmoreland County. This group, which became the project planning team, includes leaders of the YWCA of Westmoreland County, Blackburn Center (domestic and sexual violence service/prevention program), Westmoreland County Commission for Women and Families, Seton Hill University and its women's business center, E-Magnify, and the United Way of Westmoreland County and its Women's Leadership Council. Although this group believes that much informal discussion about the status of women in the county has occurred, it was not aware of a formal analysis and action plan.

The status of women is an issue of importance to many organizations and individuals, women and men, throughout the community. While the group had a "gut" feeling that women may not be enjoying adequate levels of well-being in the county, it did not have community-specific, detailed information to test these feelings and assumptions. Therefore, the project planning team mobilized to better assess these assumptions and to develop an action plan for improving the status of women in Westmoreland County. The first step in this plan was to conduct research to carefully assess the current status of women across a variety of indicators. ***The Status of Women in Westmoreland County*** is the result of that research.

The purpose of this report is to build upon previous research that examines the status of women in the region and state, such as *Status of Women and Southwest Pennsylvania*, produced by the Regional Women's Initiative at Chatham College and the Women and Girls Foundation of Southwest Pennsylvania, and the *2004 Status of Women in Pennsylvania Report* produced by the Pennsylvania Commission for Women. The *Status of Women in Westmoreland County* drills deeper into specific conditions in the community, using a combination of census and local data sources to compare the county to both state and national circumstances.

While this research covers a number of issues impacting the status of women overall, the project team acknowledges that not all women may be affected in the same manner. Much of the available data did not allow the team to provide specific information about how the issues addressed may disproportionately impact women based on race, age, ethnicity, disability status, class, religion and sexual orientation. This is a first-time effort to collect and report on detailed local data but should not be viewed as a comprehensive study. The project team is committed to addressing potential differences across specific groups of women in the dialogue and work that follows this report.

The status of women can be measured in a number of ways. The project team developed a list of issues to be researched by reviewing indicators used in a combination of pre-existing regional, state and national studies and reports, accessing available data sources and calling upon their professional knowledge of issues impacting the welfare of women and their knowledge of Westmoreland County. The issues selected for coverage in this report do not represent an exhaustive or all-inclusive list, but do play a substantive role in impacting the status of women. The list of issues focuses on five broad categories:

- Pay equity, employment and education
- Poverty
- Health and well-being
- Women in leadership
- Violence against women

The project team conducted research on these issues over a three-month period in early 2008. Within each of these categories, the team investigated a number of indicators to provide a detailed view of the status of women in the county. For instance, for women in leadership, the team collected data about women serving in a variety of positions: as public school superintendents, on school boards, as leaders of institutions of higher education, as corporate leaders, as nonprofit executives and on both corporate and nonprofit boards. Each broad area includes multiple indicators to help draw a more complete picture of the status of women.

The reader will note a variety of findings; there is some data that may raise concern, and some data that seems to indicate the status of women in Westmoreland County compares favorably to those in the region, state and country. Other data has not been analyzed sufficiently to determine if it is good, bad or neutral news with regard to the status of women.

Some circumstances look positive for Westmoreland County women when compared to women in other parts of the state or country, but when compared to men, the assessment may be negative. Further, even when conditions in the county seem to compare favorably to other regions, if circumstances in these other regions are unfavorable, does it necessarily mean that the status of women in Westmoreland County is good? Therefore, drawing conclusions about the data must be made with caution because conclusions can differ vastly based on the frame of reference. Rather, it might be more constructive to compare the data to a community vision for the status of women.

The goal of this report is to provide an overall scan of current conditions; it does not assess trends or predict potential future conditions. Circumstances may change that may positively or adversely impact the status of women. The data in this report will help develop the vision for the status of women and serve as a baseline for future comparisons.

The intent is not to evaluate the data presented in this report, but to start a community dialogue; developing the path to equity, health and safety must happen on a community level. The task and challenge ahead is to use this report as a call to coordinated action for improving the status of women. As the reader will see, the five broad issues addressed in this report are deeply inter-connected; pay equity impacts poverty; poverty impacts health and well-being, women in leadership roles impact pay equity, and all these issues impact violence against women. While immediate action in all areas may not be possible, action in any area is likely to improve conditions in another.

The project team hopes this report will inspire informed and lively conversation and action, with the result that women who live in Westmoreland County will enjoy more economic and educational opportunities, enhanced health and well-being, access to leadership positions and the opportunity to mentor other women to become leaders. Ultimately, the project team envisions a community that does not tolerate violence and fosters a higher level of respect in how women are portrayed in the media and in public life. It is not just women who will benefit from transforming the community in these ways; the lives of all residents of Westmoreland County, now and in the future, will be richer for the effort. The reader is invited to be part of the change.

Pay Equity, Employment and Education

Economic opportunity can impact the status of women in the county in a variety of ways, and as will be illustrated in this report, it is interconnected with women in poverty, women's health, women in leadership roles and violence against women. This section highlights data related to the gender wage gap in Westmoreland County as compared to Pennsylvania and the country. It also summarizes information about what types of jobs women hold and the median salaries earned in those positions as compared to men in the county and statewide with specific data related to the nonprofit sector in the county; level of education obtained and median salaries; and data about women-owned business for Westmoreland County, comparing it to the region, state and country.

Gender Wage Gap

In 2006, there were approximately 366,440 Westmoreland County residents, 188,806 females and 177,634 males. Women represent 51.5% of the county population. The county workforce (those over 16 years old) includes 182,178 people, and women comprise 46.4% of the workforce.¹


Even though women make up almost half of the workforce, their pay and participation is not equal to men in the county. The median salary for Westmoreland County women is only 75.3% of what male wage earners are paid in the county. This gender wage gap is wider than the national gender wage gap of 77.3%; it is smaller than the state gender wage gap of 74.2%.² In 2002, Pennsylvania ranked 43rd in the country in pay equity.³ This gap may be attributed to a number of causes; however, one could consider the fact that men and women differ in the types of occupations they fill. While the most commonly held occupations for men in the county are salespeople and supervisors, women are most frequently employed in lower paying administrative support positions.

Gender Wage Gap 2006



Labor Force Participation

Further compounding this issue, even when men and women are in the same occupational category, the gender wage gap persists. For example, the median salary for males in management and professional occupations in the county was \$52,302 in 2006; for women in the same jobs, the median salary was \$38,089: women earned just 72.8% of what men earned for the same job. In architecture and engineering jobs, women in Westmoreland County earned just 65.6% of what men do in these jobs. The only occupational category in which Westmoreland women earned salaries competitive with men was computer and mathematical occupations in which they earned 99.8% of what their male counterparts made in this job category. However, there are three times as many Westmoreland County men than women who work in computer and mathematical occupations.⁴



The median salary for Westmoreland County women is only 75.3% of what male wage earners are paid in the county.

¹ 2006 American Community Survey. U.S. Census Bureau.

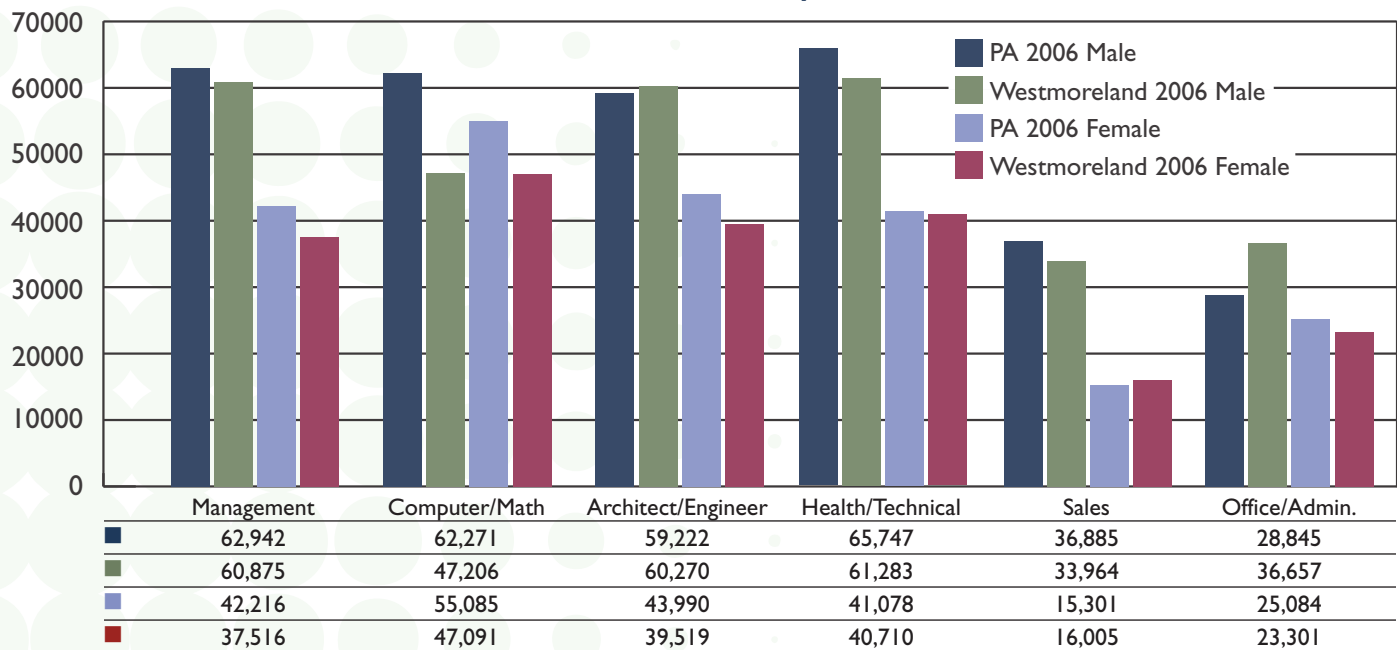
² Ibid.

³ The Long and Winding Road to Equal Pay. AFL-CIO. Retrieved from www.wgfswwpa.org.

⁴ 2006 American Community Survey. U.S. Census Bureau.

Pay inequity in Westmoreland County is consistent with state and national trends: men earn more than women. Further, men hold higher paying positions in management, engineering, sales and other occupations. In 2006, there were an estimated 1,375 males in top executive positions in Westmoreland County compared to only 313 female executives. These female executives earned just 68.7% of what male executives were paid. In selected job categories, Westmoreland County women trail median earnings for Westmoreland County men across these jobs, and Westmoreland County women trail state median earnings for women in four of six jobs as illustrated below.

Median Earnings by Gender and Employment
PA and Westmoreland County: Males and Females



Nonprofit Sector

Because more women work in nonprofits than men, it is also instructive to look at the wage gap specifically in the nonprofit sector. The wage gap between women and men who work in nonprofits is narrower than the overall wage gap in Westmoreland County—women make 88.4% of the male median salary (as opposed to a 75.3% gender wage gap in the county overall).⁵

While the gender wage gap is smaller and the female median salary is higher in the nonprofit sector than overall, it is important to note that the median salary includes all county nonprofit organizations, particularly ones with higher operating budgets and salaries, such as hospitals and colleges. This is likely driving the median salaries higher than they would be in most human service, arts and economic development nonprofits.

To further investigate this question, the project team conducted a median salary scan by gender in ten Westmoreland County nonprofits of various types (human services and arts organizations) and budget sizes. This scan revealed that the female nonprofit median salaries did not reach the \$35,844 overall county median; however, in several organizations in the scan, the male nonprofit median exceeded the overall median salary for males in the county. Although the scan included a limited number of agencies, it does illustrate that significant gaps still exist.

⁵ 2006 American Community Survey. U.S. Census Bureau.

Median Salary Scan: Westmoreland County Nonprofits (excluding Health and Higher Education): Full-time Employees

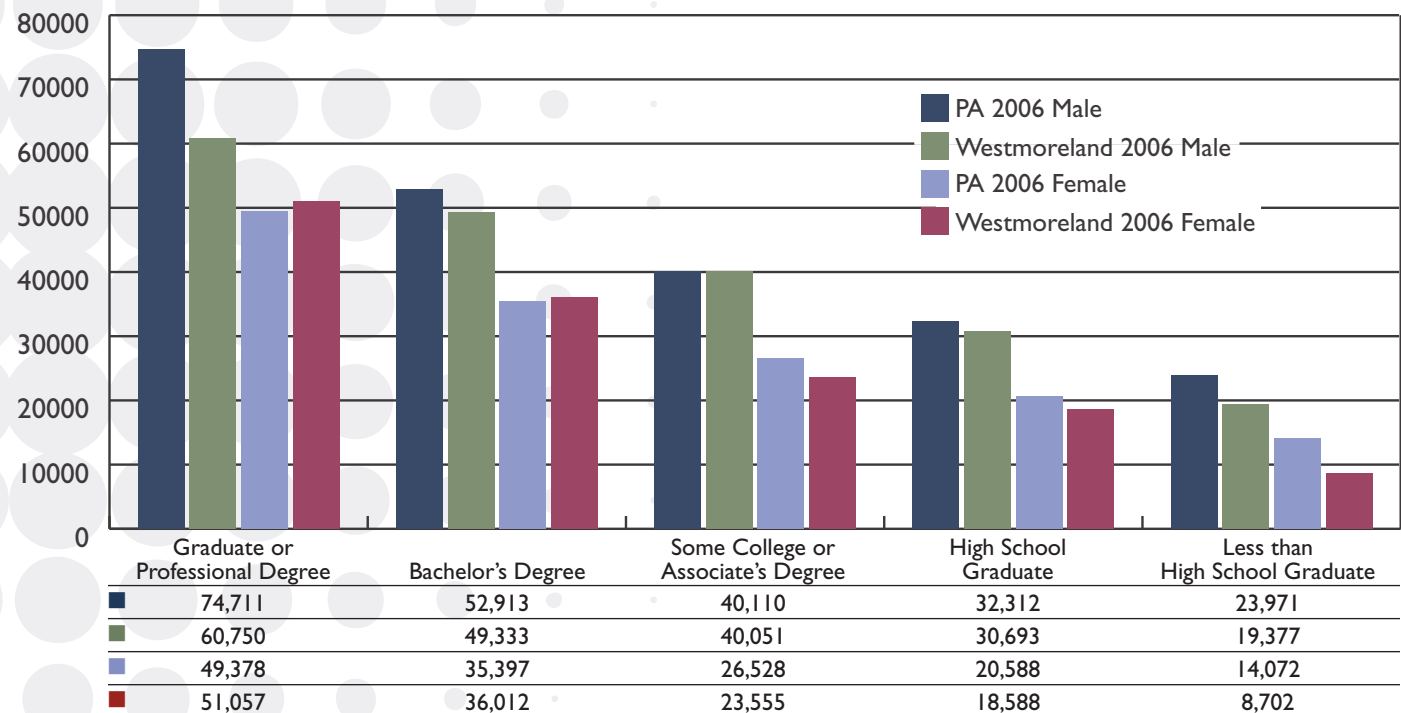
Agency #	Budget	Overall Median	Female Median	Male Median	Gender Gap
1	\$18,010,228	\$32,365	\$32,365	\$38,750	83.50%
2	\$12,812,034	\$20,904	\$20,592	\$28,080	73.30%
3	\$2,100,000	\$27,955	\$32,340	\$24,024	74.3%*
4	\$1,700,000	\$31,520	\$31,100	\$45,100	69%
5	\$1,600,000	\$31,900	\$31,616	\$35,415	89.30%
6	\$1,300,000	\$33,000	\$32,306	\$46,270	69.80%
7	\$1,100,000	\$26,510	\$26,510	N/A	N/A
8	\$671,770	\$26,000	\$26,100	N/A	N/A
9	\$611,650	\$27,328	\$27,328	N/A	N/A
10	\$393,700	\$26,111	\$26,400	N/A	N/A

*Gap is reverse. Male median is less than female median at this agency.

Education

The gender wage gap and the differences in labor force participation may in part be attributed to educational levels achieved by men and women in Westmoreland County. There are some differences between educational achievement based on gender in the county. Most notably, more Westmoreland County men hold Bachelor's and graduate or professional degrees than women. In the county, 17.6% of men and 14.4%

**Median Earnings by Gender and Education
PA and Westmoreland County: Males and Females**



⁶ Ibid.

of women have earned Bachelor's degrees, and 8.4% of men and 6.7% of women hold graduate or professional degrees.⁶ However, when examined by age categories, this educational attainment gap was more pronounced in those 45 years old and over.



When analyzing median earnings by educational level attained, Westmoreland County women still make far less than men in the county and state, despite their educational level.

When analyzing median earnings by educational level attained, Westmoreland County women still make far less than men in the county and state, despite their educational level. Westmoreland County women also make less than the Pennsylvania median salary for women at all levels of education except the Bachelor's and graduate or professional degree levels. For instance, Westmoreland County women who have some college or an associate degree earned \$23,555 versus \$40,051 earned by Westmoreland County males with the same educational background; women with this background earn just 58.8% of the male median salary.

Women-Owned Business

As noted, women in Westmoreland County are working in more traditional administrative support occupations with lower pay, and a significant wage gap persists across most occupational categories and educational levels. Another important factor to consider in economic opportunity is the extent to which women in Westmoreland County own businesses.

In a national study of women business owners, 29% said that they left their corporate positions due to lack of opportunities to advance in the company. Further, 44% of these women said that a key reason for their move to entrepreneurship was that their contributions were not recognized and valued.⁷

Growth of women-owned business is not tracked at the county level; however, from 1997-2006, the number of women-owned firms in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area, which includes Westmoreland County, increased by 47.4%. While this appears to be a significant increase in the number of new businesses, the Pittsburgh region ranked 47th out of 50 metropolitan regions in the country in overall growth of women-owned firms and 24th out of 50 in sales growth and growth in employees.⁸

There are 6,752 women-owned businesses in Westmoreland County, which are defined as privately-held, 51% majority or more women-owned firms. Almost 25% of Westmoreland County firms are women-owned businesses; in the Pittsburgh region, 28.3% of firms are owned by women, and in Pennsylvania overall, 26% of firms are owned by women.⁹ Westmoreland County lags both the region and the state.

To help gauge the economic impact of women-owned business in Westmoreland County, consider this: there are 72 women-owned companies that have a minimum of \$1 million in gross annual revenues. However, the national percentage of women-owned businesses that earn in excess of \$1 million is 3%.¹⁰ If Westmoreland County women-owned businesses exceeding this revenue benchmark were to be on par with the national average, the county would have over 200 such businesses, rather than 72, or 1% of the total women-owned businesses.

⁷ Paths to Entrepreneurship: New Directions for Women in Business. 1998. Center for Women's Business Research.

⁸ Women Owned Business in Pittsburgh, PA, 2006. Center for Women's Business Research.

⁹ 1997 Economic Census Minority and Women-Owned Business, Westmoreland County, PA. U.S. Census Bureau.

¹⁰ Personal Communication. Westmoreland President's Organization, Seton Hill University Chapter, Westmoreland County.

Poverty

Poverty has been defined as, “deprivation of those things that determine the quality of life, including food, clothing, shelter and safe drinking water, but also “intangibles” such as the opportunity to learn and to enjoy the respect of fellow citizens.”¹¹ More formally, poverty is defined by a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition (but not by geography); if income falls below the thresholds adjusted annually by the federal government, the family is considered to be living in poverty.¹² This section highlights data related to women living in poverty in Westmoreland County and specifically examines how various family compositions are impacted by poverty.

Local, State and National Poverty Statistics

Over the past 40 years in the United States, the percentage of females living in poverty has consistently remained 3% higher than the percentage of males living in poverty. The same holds true in Westmoreland County. In 2006, 7.7% of males lived in poverty compared to 10.1% of females. While the percentage of women in the county living in poverty is lower than the state (13.3%) and national levels (13.6%), any level of poverty in a community causes concern.¹³ In addition, there are segments of the population that deserve particular attention.

Female-Headed Households

Poverty impacts different types of family configurations disproportionately. There are significant differences in median income among the various household types, specifically with female-headed households. There are 13,881 female-headed households in the county; 6,811 of these female-headed households include children under 18 years old. By comparison, there are 5,843 male-headed households in the county, and 2,425 of these include children.

In 2006, over 41% of the female-headed households in Westmoreland County lived at or below the poverty level, a percentage that has increased dramatically from 27% in 2004. This percentage is higher than the state, in which 37% of female headed-households are living in poverty. Having almost half of female-headed households in poverty is a startling number — particularly when the overall poverty rate in the county is under ten percent.¹⁴

Lucky to Make Such a Good Salary

ABOUT 20 YEARS AGO, Helen was employed in a male dominated field, working her way up from bookkeeper to office manager. In this position, she put in many extra, unpaid hours of work. She also enrolled in college courses so that she could better understand the industry and help the business prosper, which it did. Helen, a widow and single mother, sacrificed time with family and friends to build her career.

While compensation was not her primary motivation, Helen felt that the owner noticed and appreciated her dedication by offering her a top salary in the company.

Several years into her tenure as office manager, Helen learned the owner decided to employ someone to help smooth the transition to a new computer system for the business. Helen had already worked tirelessly to adopt the new system, and it was beginning to become manageable. She was delighted that someone else was hired to assist.

After the new male employee was hired, Helen's boss took her to lunch. He praised her for her patience and hard work keeping the business going during the computer difficulties. Then he told her that because this man was married and had a wife and two sons, he needed to pay him more than he paid her. He knew she would understand because the man was head of a household. When Helen asked that her salary be raised accordingly, her boss appeared to be in shock and told her she was lucky — not many women made such a good salary. A few months later, Helen left her position to start her own business.

While some may note that Helen's story took place two decades ago in an era past, the gender wage gap continues to persist today.

¹¹ Retrieved from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty>.

¹² Retrieved from www.censusbureau.biz.

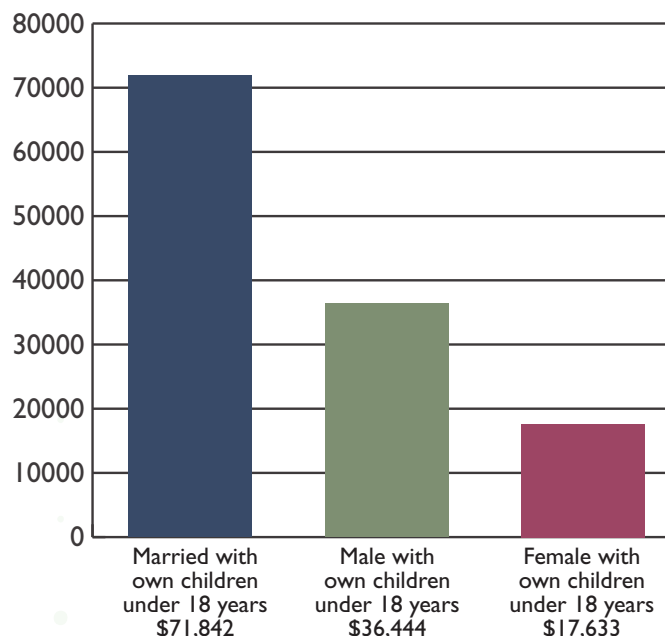
¹³ 2006 American Community Survey. US Census Bureau.

¹⁴ 2004 & 2006 American Community Survey. U.S. Census Bureau.

The financial challenges of female-headed households with children under 18 years old is starkly illustrated when comparing median family income of various family types in Westmoreland County. The median family income for married couples with children is \$71,842, and for male-headed households with children it is \$36,444. However, for female-headed households with children, the median income is only \$17,633, which is the poverty level for a family of three.¹⁵

Especially in times of economic uncertainty, female-headed households with and without children are disproportionately impacted by poverty. According to the Westmoreland County Food Bank, 79% of its clients are female, and 64% of its clients have incomes of less than the federal poverty level.¹⁶ In addition, food stamp use in Westmoreland County has increased by 5.6% to 28,999 from April 2007 to April 2008, the highest increase in use in a five county southwestern Pennsylvania region and higher than the 3.8% overall increase statewide.¹⁷

**Westmoreland County
Median Family Income 2006**



Older Women

Given that a large percentage of older adults reside in Westmoreland County, it is important to note that older women are far more likely than men to be living below the poverty level in Westmoreland County. In fact, 84% of the older adults living in poverty in Westmoreland County are women. This means that of the 3,925 older adults living in poverty, 3,288 are women and 637 are men living below the federal poverty income guideline of \$10,400 annually.

Westmoreland County Older Adult Poverty

Number with 2006 Income at or below poverty level:	32,785
Male:	13,765
Male 65 +	637
Female:	19,020
Female 65 +	3,288



In addition, there are a number of older adults in Westmoreland County who have their grandchildren living with them and are responsible for them. The responsible grandparent is typically the grandmother. There are 4,213 grandparents living with their grandchildren, and in 1,563 of these homes, the grandparent has the primary responsibility for the grandchildren. In 313 (over 20%) of grandparent homes in which the grandparent is responsible for children under 18 years, the grandparent's income is below the poverty level.¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Westmoreland County Food Bank.

¹⁷ U.S. Department of Agriculture. Retrieved from www.usda.gov.

¹⁸ 2006 American Community Survey. U.S. Census Bureau.

While it may be encouraging to note that poverty rates in Westmoreland County for women and men are lower than state and national averages, it is important to remember the actual numbers of women who live in poverty in this county. In 2006, a total of 19,020 females of all ages lived in poverty in Westmoreland County. They are children, younger women who are raising children, middle aged women and older women who live on social security.

Health and Well-Being

In several respects, the news about the status of women's health in Westmoreland County appears to be largely "OK." However, this information should be framed in the larger picture of national trends with regard to women's health. Specifically, since 1983 there has been a trend of declining life expectancy for women in 180 of the nation's 3,141 counties, compared to a life expectancy decline in just 11 counties for men. Researchers have tied this decline to race, income and geography, noting that the steepest declines occur in the "worst of the worst off."¹⁹ Economic and poverty status impact health and well-being. (Once again, the reader will note the inter-connected nature of the issues highlighted in this report.) Another study documents a steep increase in the number of pregnant women with pre-existing diabetes, reporting that the rate has more than doubled, which suggests greater health risks for mothers and newborns.²⁰ Close monitoring of these trends locally is necessary.

To assess the status of women's health in Westmoreland County, the project team analyzed several reproductive health issues, disease rates, self-reported health status, mental health, health insurance coverage and disability status at the county level and compared to regional, state and national data.

Reproductive Health

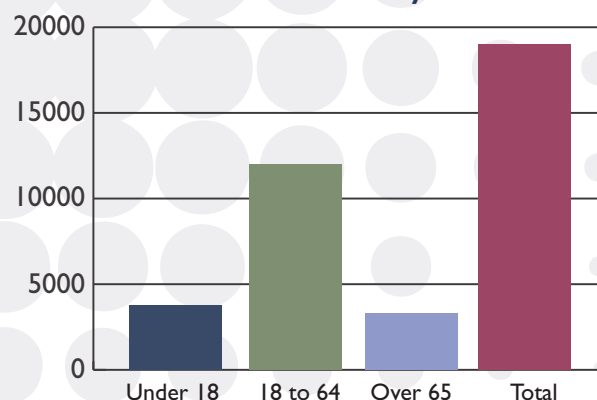
Access to health services is a key indicator of women's reproductive health. Westmoreland County has 10 women's health centers located within its borders that provide family planning and reproductive health services. While there are no areas of the county designated as having a medical or healthcare professional shortage, the location of the health providers relative to where women live who most need services can be a barrier to access. For example, many obstetricians and gynecologists are located in the central portion of the county requiring those who live in other parts of the county to travel for service.



Pregnant women living in Westmoreland County receive more pre-natal care and experience a lower incidence of low birth weight babies compared to women across the state.

In some categories, access to services seems to be working. Pregnant women living in Westmoreland County receive more pre-natal care and experience a lower incidence of low birth weight babies compared to women across the state. Women with low-risk pregnancies in Westmoreland County are also less likely to give birth by cesarean section; 24.8% of women give birth by cesarean in the county compared to 27.1% statewide.²¹

**Westmoreland County
Women in Poverty 2006**



¹⁹ Ezzati M, Friedman AB, Kulkarni SC, Murray CJL. The Reversal of Fortunes: Trends in County Mortality and Cross-County Mortality Disparities in the United States *PLoS Medicine* Vol. 5, No. 4, e66 doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.0050066.

²⁰ Lawrence, Jean M., Contreras, Richard and Sacks, David A. May 2008. Trends in the Prevalence of Preexisting Diabetes and Gestational Diabetes Mellitus Among a Racially/Ethnically Diverse Population of Pregnant Women, 1999–2005. *Diabetes Care*, 31:899-904.

²¹ Pennsylvania Department of Health. Healthy People 2010. Retrieved from www.dsf.health.state.pa.us.

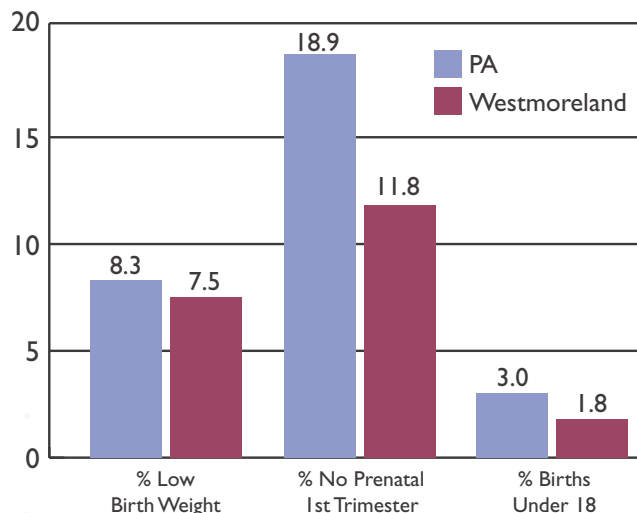
However, the number of abortions in Westmoreland County and the percentage of total county pregnancies ending in abortion have increased by 9% between 2005-2006, while nationally abortion rates have steadily declined. Further, between 2000-2005, there was a 2% net increase in the number of abortions in Westmoreland County.²²

Reducing the number of unplanned pregnancies, which are currently at nearly 50% nationwide, is a critical strategy to reducing the number of abortions.²³ While middle and upper class women have made progress in reducing unplanned pregnancies, poor women are facing more unplanned pregnancies and higher rates of abortion due to the reduction in the use of contraception.²⁴

In Westmoreland County, the data on unplanned pregnancy risk is mixed. From 2003-2005, the percent of teen pregnancies in Westmoreland County, 1.8%, was significantly lower than the state rate of 3%.²⁵ With regard to the number of teen pregnancies, Westmoreland County ranks 50th of 67 counties, which means that 49 other Pennsylvania counties had more teen pregnancies.²⁶ However, the percentage of teen pregnancies ending in abortion was 29.5%.²⁷ Further, in 2007, it is estimated that 5,031 women living below 185% of the poverty level did not have access to contraception services in Westmoreland County.²⁸

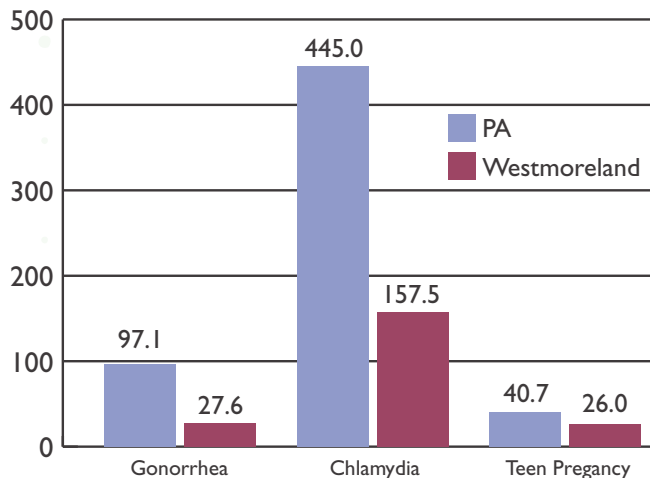
With regard to sexually transmitted disease, women of all ages in Westmoreland County experienced significantly lower rates of sexually transmitted diseases such as chlamydia and gonorrhea in 2006. However, local women are being treated for these sexually transmitted diseases almost twice as often as men in the county across all age categories.²⁹

Women's Health: Pregnancy PA & Westmoreland County



From PA Department of Health County Profile 2003-2005

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (per 100,000) and Teen Pregnancy Rates (per 1,000) PA & Westmoreland County Women



From PA Department of Health BRFSS (2006 & 2005)

²² Pennsylvania Department of Health. Abortion Statistics Reports 2000-2006.

²³ Finer, LB and Henshaw, SK. 2006. Disparities in Rates of Unintended Pregnancy in the United States, 1994 and 2001. *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 38 (2): 90-96.

²⁴ Gold, Rachel Benson. Summer 2006. Rekindling Efforts to Prevent Unplanned Pregnancy: A Matter of 'Equity and Common Sense.' *Guttmacher Policy Review*, 9(3).

²⁵ Pennsylvania Department of Health. County Profiles. Retrieved from www.dsf.health.state.pa.us.

²⁶ Teen Pregnancy Rates, Ages 15-19, Pennsylvania Counties. 2005. PA Division of Health Statistics and Research, PA Department of Health.

²⁷ PA Division of Health Statistics and Research, Pennsylvania Department of Health.

²⁸ Adagio Health Comprehensive Needs Assessment, 2006.

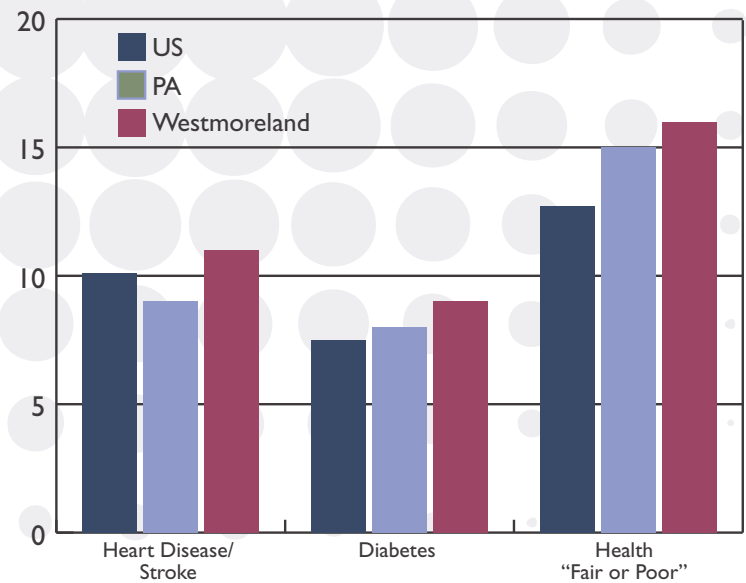
²⁹ Pennsylvania Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). 2004-2006. Retrieved from www.dsf.health.state.pa.us.

Disease Rates and Self-Reported Health Status

Westmoreland County women are slightly more likely to be obese, 25%, when compared to the percentage of women statewide who are obese, which is 24%. With regard to specific diseases, in 2005, Westmoreland County women had a significantly lower overall cancer rate than women throughout Pennsylvania.

Westmoreland County women were also two percent more likely to have been told that they had a heart disease or stroke than women in Pennsylvania overall, 11% in the county versus 9% at the state level. However, nationally, 10.1% of women have experienced heart disease or stroke. Slightly more women in the county were told that they have diabetes than at the state level, 9% in the county versus 8% at the state level. Nationally, 7.5% of women have diabetes. In terms of overall health status, 16% of Westmoreland County women report their health as being fair or poor, and 15% of Pennsylvania women overall report fair or poor health. Only 12.7% of women nationally report their health status as being fair or poor.^{30 31}

**Diseases and Health Status
Percent Distributions
US, PA & Westmoreland County Women**



From PA Department of Health BRFSS (2006 & 2005)
& 2006 National Health Interview Survey

Mental Health

Major Depressive Disorder is the leading cause of disability in the U.S. for ages 15-44.³² Approximately 12 million women in the United States experience clinical depression each year, and women are twice as likely as men to experience depression.^{33 34} Although comprehensive local data regarding specific mental illness diagnoses is not available, 59% (3,745) of the people 18 and older who access mental health services through Health Choices (the public mental health system) are women. Further, depression and related disorders are among the most common diagnoses for adult women in Westmoreland County.³⁵

Health Insurance

Of critical concern to improving and maintaining the status of women's health in Westmoreland County is access to affordable healthcare. While healthcare expenses increase, the number of Pennsylvanians who receive employer-based healthcare coverage is decreasing, and the number of uninsured individuals is on the rise. From 2000 to 2005 in Pennsylvania, the number of uninsured rose by almost 25%.³⁶ Although the percentage of those in Pennsylvania without health insurance coverage is lower than the national average, 10.2% versus 15.8% nationally, millions across the country cannot afford insurance coverage.³⁷

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Pleis JR, Lethbridge-Çejku M. 2007. Summary health statistics for U.S. adults: National Health Interview Survey, 2006. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 10(235).

³² The World Health Organization. 2004. The World Health Report 2004: Changing History, Annex Table 3: Burden of disease in DALYs by cause, sex, and mortality stratum in WHO regions, estimates for 2002. Geneva: WHO.

³³ National Institute of Mental Health. 1999. Unpublished Epidemiological Catchment Area Analyses.

³⁴ National Institute of Mental Health: Depression: Treat it. Defeat it. Retrieved from http://www.nimh.nih.gov/depression/genpop/gen_fact.htm.

³⁵ Westmoreland County Mental Health/Retardation. July 2008. Personal Communication.

³⁶ Critical Condition: The State of Healthcare in Pennsylvania. October 2007. Pennsylvania Healthcare Containment Council.

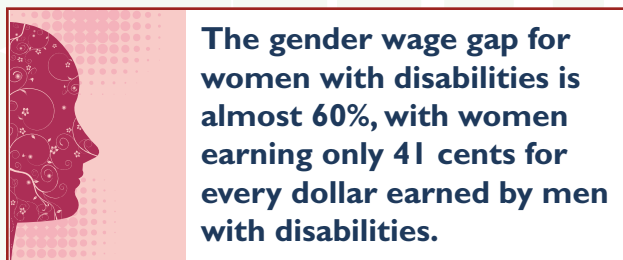
³⁷ Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2006. U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved from www.uscensus.gov.

Various sources suggest that the percentage of women in Westmoreland County lacking health insurance ranges between 5-10%, depending on age and income level. For women between the ages of 18 to 64, 10% do not have health insurance. This means that approximately 11,429 women in this age range in Westmoreland County do not have health insurance and are likely not able to afford regular and adequate healthcare.



Disability

The connections between health and well-being and economic issues of pay equity and poverty are even more sharply focused when considering those who live with disabilities. In Westmoreland County, 18.2% (or 32,172) females over the age of five live with a disability (physical, mental, sensory or self-care); 15.9% (or 26,390) county males over five live with a disability. Nationally, 15.4% of females over five live with some type of disability. Twenty-one percent of women with disabilities in Westmoreland County have incomes below the poverty level, whereas 15% of men with disabilities have incomes below poverty.



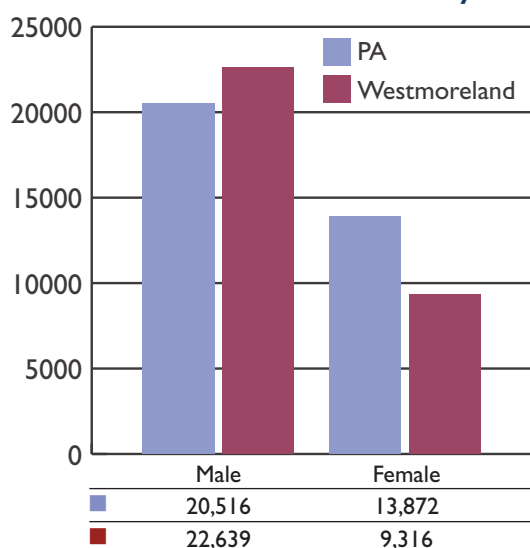
It is particularly striking to look at the 2006 median earnings for men and women with disabilities in Westmoreland County. In this instance, the female median is just \$9,316, well below the federal poverty guideline while the male median salary is \$22,639³⁸. The gender wage gap for women with disabilities is almost 60%, with women earning only 41 cents for every dollar earned by

men with disabilities. When compared to seven other counties in southwestern Pennsylvania, Westmoreland County has the lowest median salary for women with disabilities.

Although male median earnings in the county exceed the state median, the median salary for females with disabilities in Westmoreland County is 33% less than the Pennsylvania median earnings for women with disabilities.

Women who live with disabilities comprise a significant portion of the Westmoreland County population and are likely not able to achieve high levels of health and well-being when the gaps in their income so significantly lag the overall median income, as well as the median income of males with disabilities. Further analysis of why women with disabilities in Westmoreland County face this economic disadvantage is warranted.

**Median Earnings in Past 12 months with Disability 2006
PA & Westmoreland County**



³⁸ American Community Survey 2006. U.S. Census Bureau.

Women in Leadership

Those in leadership roles have the ability to set the agenda and the power to bring about change. When particular groups are not represented in leadership positions, decisions may be made that do not fully consider their best interests and perspectives. The research conducted by the project team determined that women working in Westmoreland County often hold administrative or clerical positions, making less money than men and more often living in poverty. Would an expansion in leadership, to be more inclusive of women, begin to shift that needle?



A comparison of the number of male versus female commissioners, row officers, mayors, supervisors and council members indicates that of the 497 local government leadership roles, only 143, or 29%, are held by women.

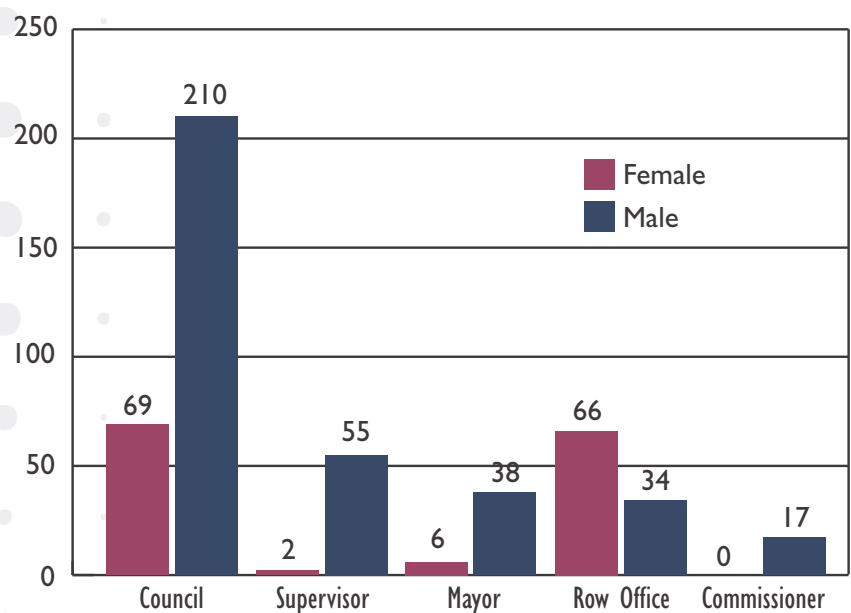
To assess the extent to which women participate in leadership roles in Westmoreland County, this research reviewed the roles women occupy in the public, corporate and nonprofit sectors. The data highlighted in this section of the report was collected primarily from local sources and personal communication with those living and working in the community. Due to the unique nature of the data collected, there are far fewer comparisons to national or state circumstances with regard to women in leadership roles.

Public Leadership

In almost every aspect of public life assessed, women play a disproportionately small role in Westmoreland County. The project team examined women's participation at the local, county, state and federal levels, and in almost every unit of government, women hold very few leadership positions. Westmoreland County has 64 local units of government, including townships, boroughs, municipalities and cities. A comparison of the number of male versus female commissioners, row officers, mayors, supervisors and council members indicates that of the 497 local government leadership roles, only 143, or 29%, are held by women. Further, women are most likely to participate in row office positions like tax collector, auditor or secretary rather than as supervisors or mayors.

The percentage of women who hold county-level leadership positions improves only slightly from that at the local level; 30% of county level leadership positions are held by women. One of the three county commissioners is a woman, and two of eleven county judges are women. Women hold four of the 14 district justice positions in the county.

**Women in Local Government
Westmoreland County**



There are eight Pennsylvania State House Districts within Westmoreland County and six Senate Districts; in these 14 districts, there is only one female serving in the state legislature.³⁹ Currently, Pennsylvania has one female federal legislator (from eastern Pennsylvania) and ranks 43rd in terms of women serving in Congress.⁴⁰

Women Leaders in Education

It is also important to assess to what extent women assume leadership roles in the Westmoreland County public school system. There are 19 public school districts that serve Westmoreland County. Of the 19 districts, four districts, or 21%, are led by female superintendents. In this measure, Westmoreland is comparable to a 2003 national study that highlights the gender of public school superintendents; nationally, 18% of public school districts across the country were led by women.⁴¹ Women lead less than a quarter of Westmoreland County public schools.

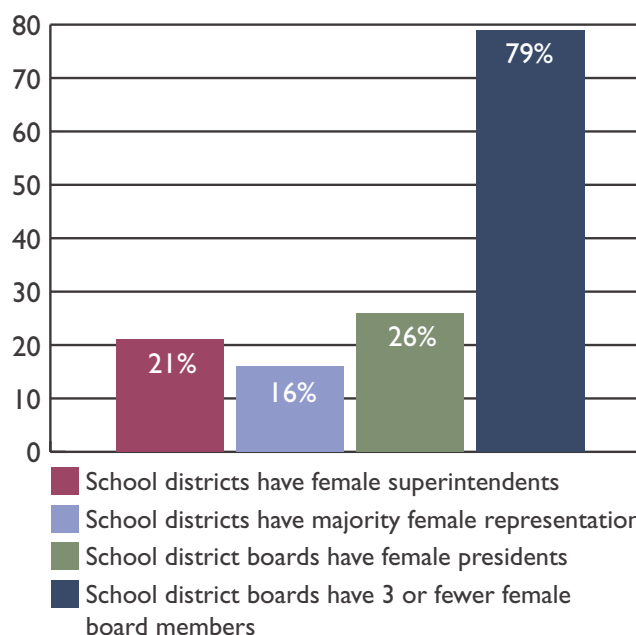
Of Westmoreland County's 19 school districts, 15 districts (79%) are governed by school boards comprised of three or fewer female members. The average board size in Westmoreland County is 10 members. Only three of the 19 districts (16%) have a majority female representation. Five school boards have female board presidents. One of the 19 school boards has no female directors. According to a National School Board Association study, 61% of school board members are male and 39% are female across the country.⁴² In Westmoreland County, over 70% of school board members are male and 29% are female.

In an assessment of leadership roles at the five institutions of higher education located in Westmoreland County, which included president, provost, vice president and board chair, results showed that 10 of the 23 leadership roles were occupied by women; however, it is important to note that six of the leadership positions held by females were in one institution that has traditionally served women. In each of the other four institutions, only one leadership position was held by a female.

Women in Westmoreland Co. Government

Office	Male	Female
Board of Commissioners	2	1
Clerk of Courts	1	0
Controller	1	0
Coroner	1	0
DA	1	0
Jury Commissioners	0	2
District Justices	14	4
Prothonotary	1	0
Recorder of Deeds	1	0
Register of Wills	1	0
Sheriff	1	0
Treasurer	0	1
Judges	9	2
TOTAL	33	10

Women in Westmoreland County Public School Leadership



³⁹ Retrieved from www.legis.state.pa.us.

⁴⁰ Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers University. Retrieved from www.cawp.rutgers.edu.

⁴¹ Grogan, Margaret and Brunner, C. Cryss. February 2005. Women Leading Systems: What the latest facts and figures say about women in the superintendency today. *The School Administrator*. American Association of School Administrators.

⁴² Hess, Frederick M. 2002. School Boards at the Dawn of the 21st Century. National School Board Association Study.

Corporate Leadership

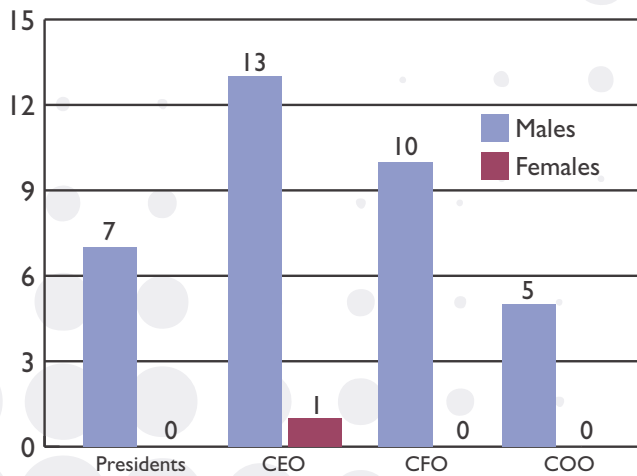
To understand what leadership roles women play in Westmoreland County corporations, the project team conducted an analysis of leadership positions, including president, chief executive officer, chief financial officer and chief operating officer, at companies with over 250 and over 500 employees. There are 60 Westmoreland County companies employing 250 or more, but the analysis was limited to 32 of these companies in which the leadership is based in the county, not those whose leaders work in another county or state.⁴³

Of the 17 companies studied employing 250 or more, only one female held a leadership position. Of the 15 companies employing 500 or more, only three females held one of the leadership positions. Women

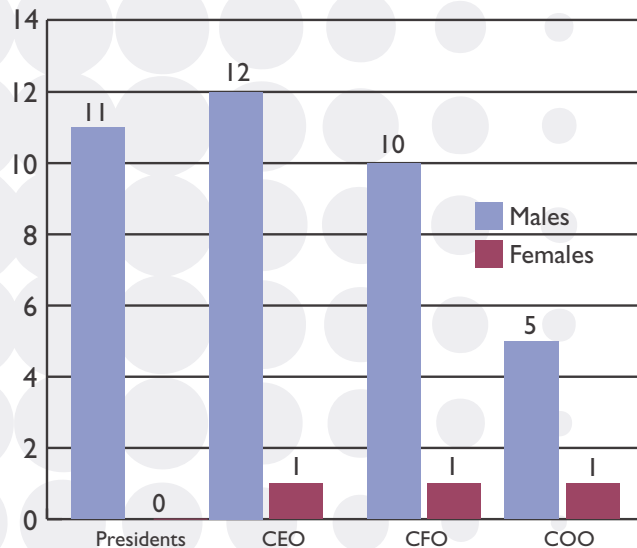


Women in Westmoreland County hold just 5% of corporate leadership positions in larger companies.

Women in Corporate Leadership Roles
17 companies, 250 or more employees



Women in Corporate Leadership Roles
15 companies, 500 or more employees



in Westmoreland County hold just 5% of corporate leadership positions in larger companies. In a recent Pittsburgh region analysis conducted by a local newspaper, it was reported that 11% of executive positions and 10.9% of board seats were held by females.⁴⁴

Of the 32 companies studied employing over 250, most are not publicly held and do not have corporate boards. However, for the five companies for which board listings were obtained, corporate boards in Westmoreland County are also predominantly male. Of the five boards for which data was available, the female to male ratio of board members is as follows: 1:8, 2:8, 3:11, 2:10 and 0:9. In this small sample, women hold just 15% of corporate board director positions within the county.

Nonprofit Leadership

Eleven percent of county female year-round workers over the age of 16 are employed in Westmoreland County's nonprofit sector as compared to just 5% of county males. In 2006, there were 9,001 women and 4,816 men working for area nonprofits.⁴⁵ But to what extent are women serving in leadership roles in the county's nonprofit sector?

To determine the scope of female leadership in Westmoreland County, the project team assessed the number of female executives and board members serving in leadership capacities, including board president (or chair), vice president (or vice chair) and treasurer. Although Westmoreland County is home to 300+ charitable organizations, this study was limited to

⁴³ Center for Workforce Information & Analysis. Retrieved from www.paworkstats.state.pa.us.

⁴⁴ Fitzpatrick, Dan. 18 March 2008. Top 50: Companies slow to expand ranks of female executives. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

⁴⁵ American Community Survey 2006. U.S. Census Bureau.



This nonprofit leadership analysis indicated that approximately 52% of nonprofit executives are female.

501 (c)(3) organizations within the county that are non-religious (but including faith-based providers who offer services outside of the specific faith community) and that have a full-time paid executive and a board of directors.⁴⁶ A convenience sample of 64 nonprofits, including health, human services, the arts, education, recreation and economic development organizations, was drawn to measure the level of female leadership at nonprofits in the county.

This nonprofit leadership analysis indicated that approximately 52% of nonprofit executives are female. Anecdotally, males tend to serve as executives of much larger nonprofits (measured by budget size), than females. For example, male executives lead Excelsa Health, the area hospital system, Family Services of Western PA and Westmoreland Community Action whereas women lead smaller agencies like the YWCA, Blackburn Center, and Central Westmoreland Habitat for Humanity.

Fewer women play leadership roles on nonprofit boards than as nonprofit executives. Of the agencies analyzed, 33% had female board presidents, 36% had female board vice presidents and 37% had female treasurers. The percentage of women serving in nonprofit leadership roles is indeed higher than those in the corporate and public sectors, but it is still far from representative or equitable.

Local Leadership Opportunities...

JANICE HAS ALWAYS BEEN PROUD to serve on various Westmoreland County nonprofit boards. She would describe herself as a leader on these boards. She is frequently called upon to head up committees. She donates both money and time and voices her opinion on a regular basis.

However, in recent months and after years of being asked to serve as secretary and note-taker, Janice has found herself questioning the actions or inactions of her board peers and to think more deeply about her role as a female leader.

After serving on the board of a nonprofit agency for several years, Janice found herself one of two potential candidates to serve as chair of the Finance Committee. The recently appointed chair had turned in his resignation because of pressures from a new job. Only two Finance Committee members remained, Janice and the previous committee chair. Despite Janice's considerable background in finance and successful management of a nonprofit three times larger than the one in question, the board initially looked outside of the current committee for a new Finance Committee Chair. Their initial discussion focused on the awkwardness of bringing in a new Finance Committee member to serve as chair of that committee. The organization's executive director suggested that Janice consider taking the position. In response to that, a board member asked Janice, "Are you comfortable with numbers?" As Janice looked around the room, she realized others shared the concern.

Although not the first instance in which she faced gender stereotyping, Janice reflected on the meeting and responses of her peers, and she considered several questions:

- When pay equity continues to be a barrier for women, why is the issue so rarely addressed by nonprofit boards and executive directors?
- In her role as executive director, does she interact differently with her female and male staff in salary negotiations?
- How often do boards look at the number of women in management positions?
- Why do female board members seem to be looked to first for minute taking, event planning and fund raising, and last as treasurers or board chairs?

⁴⁶ DeVita, Carol J., Twombly, Eric C., Auer, Jennifer and You, Yuan. 2004. Charting the Resources of the Pittsburgh Region's Nonprofit Sector. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, The Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy.

Violence Against Women

In the first four categories this report addresses, the project team has been able to illustrate the status of women through hard data that drill down to the county level. However, to understand the impact of violence against women, the team had to look more broadly than existing data.

Most people would agree that violence against women – or anybody, as many would say – is a problem. The project team focused on two issues relevant to the analysis undertaken in this report: does the violence that is occurring against women look different than other kinds of violence in the community, and does it adversely impact the status of women in this county? The team's answer to both: Yes.

It is difficult to gain a true understanding of the scope of violence against women in the community for two main reasons:

- 1). For a variety of reasons, often out of concern for the safety of themselves and their children, victims of domestic and sexual violence may not come forward to report the crime, and
- 2). Marginalizing women is a longstanding practice that occurs in a pervasive manner often not recognized or challenged in the community.



On a national scale, the project team has gathered data about violence against women. According to the United States Department of Justice (DOJ), there was an average of 511,000 assaults against women each year from 2001-2005.⁴⁷ Many victims of violence do not report the crimes because they fear further harm, fear being judged or fear that nothing will happen as a result of reporting it. As widely seen in cases involving celebrity perpetrators, women who do report domestic or sexual violence are often questioned about their own behavior instead of being treated as victims of a crime.

One in every four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.⁴⁸ The majority (73%) of family violence victims are female. Females were 84% of spousal abuse victims, and 86% of abuse victims were at the hands of a boyfriend.⁴⁹ Almost one-third of female homicide victims who are reported in police records are killed by an intimate partner.⁵⁰ Seventy-six percent of femicide victims had been stalked by the person who killed them.⁵¹

Sexual violence often happens within the context of a relationship, giving the perpetrator continued access to the victim. The US DOJ reports that 25% of women who reported sexual assault were raped or sexually assaulted by a current or former partner.⁵² It has been estimated that 62% of sexual assaults are not reported to the police.⁵³ In addition, it appears that the greatest risk factor for being sexually assaulted is simply being female. In 2001, 91% of victims of sexual assault were female.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved from <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs>.

⁴⁸ Tjaden, Patricia & Thoennes, Nancy. 2000. Extent, Nature and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey. National Institute of Justice and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention.

⁴⁹ U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. June 2005. Family Violence Statistics.

⁵⁰ Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Uniform Crime Reports*. 2001. Crime in the United States, 2000.

⁵¹ McFarlane, et al. 1999. Stalking and Intimate Partner Femicide. *Homicide Studies*.

⁵² U.S. Department of Justice. 1998. Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey.

⁵³ Bergen, R.K. 1996. *Wife Rape: Understanding the Response of Survivors and Service Providers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

⁵⁴ National Center for Victims of Crime. Retrieved from www.ncvc.org.

Every 2.5 minutes, someone in the United States is sexually assaulted.⁵⁵

One in five women has experienced an attempted or completed rape, as compared to one in 33 men.⁵⁶ One in five high school girls report being abused by a date, and date rape accounts for almost 70% of the sexual assaults

reported by adolescent and college age women; 38% of those women are between 14 and 17 years old.^{57 58}

Another facet of this violence is sexual harassment. Ninety percent of women under 50 who have served in the military have been victims of sexual harassment.⁵⁹ In a survey of 9,000 clerical and professional women, 92% of respondents experienced overt physical harassment, sexual remarks and leering, with the majority regarding this behavior as a serious problem at work. Nearly 50% said they or someone they knew had quit or been fired because of sexual harassment, and 75% believed that if they complained to a supervisor, nothing would be done.⁶⁰ In Fiscal Year 2003, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) received 13,566 new charges of sexual harassment. Eighty-five percent of those charges were filed by females.⁶¹

Women, especially young women, are disproportionately affected by domestic and sexual violence, but because of under-reporting, it is difficult, if not impossible to truly know the extent of the problem within any community. However, one can look at who is asking for help in Westmoreland County to begin to understand how significantly this issue impacts the lives of women, keeping in mind that the problem runs much deeper than those who seek services.

In 2007/2008, Blackburn Center Against Domestic & Sexual Violence, a human service agency in Westmoreland County that provides supportive services—including a shelter, 24-hour hotline, counseling and medical and legal advocacy—to survivors of all forms of domestic violence and sexual assault, reported that it served 2,701 new clients. Blackburn Center provided 12,386 hours of counseling, answered 2,986 hotline calls, offered 4,364 days of emergency shelter, and accompanied victims to the emergency room 123 times, and to court 1,779 times.

These statistics reflect what is likely the tip of the iceberg in terms of the number of women who are impacted by violence. And, unlike measuring progress in closing the gender wage gap, it is difficult to say when progress has been made in reducing violence against women.



The Family Violence Prevention Fund reports that abuse is more common for pregnant women than gestational diabetes or preeclampsia—conditions for which pregnant women are routinely screened.

Blackburn Center Services—2007/2008

New Clients	2,701
Counseling Hours	12,386
Hotline Calls	2,986
Days of Shelter	4,364
Legal Advocacy Contacts	1,779
Medical Advocacy Contacts.....	123

⁵⁵ Catalano, S.M. 2005. National Crime Victimization Survey, U.S. Department of Justice.

⁵⁶ U.S. Department of Justice. 1998. Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey.

⁵⁷ Silverman JG et al. 2001. Dating Violence Against Adolescent Girls and Associated Substance Use, Unhealthy Weight Control, Sexual Risk Behavior, Pregnancy, and Suicidality. JAMA, 286:572-9.

⁵⁸ Levy B, ed. 1991. *Dating Violence: Young Women in Danger*. Seattle: The Seal Press.

⁵⁹ Murdoch, Maureen and Nichol, Kristin. 1995. Women veterans' experiences with domestic violence and with sexual harassment while in the military. Archives of Family Medicine, 4:411-418.

⁶⁰ McKinney, Kathleen and Maroules, N. 1991. *Sexual Harassment*. In *Sexual Coercion*. Grauerholz and Koralewski, eds. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

⁶¹ Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. 2004. *Sexual Harassment Charge Statistics FY93-03*. Washington, D.C.: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Retrieved from <http://www.eeoc.gov/stats/harass.html>.

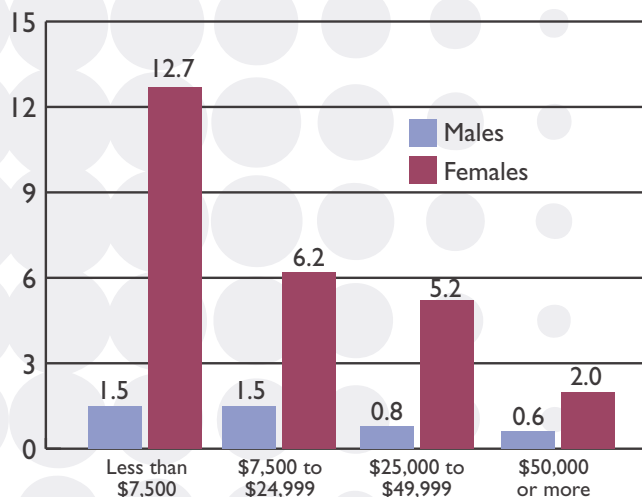
The public response to violence against women can provide a powerful message to victims. Perpetrators of domestic or sexual violence are rarely held fully accountable for their actions, which is sometimes highlighted in the media when the perpetrator is a public figure. Victims get a powerful message – as does the broader community – about the negative repercussions of reporting domestic or sexual violence.

If awareness and willingness to report these crimes increases, services provided will likely also increase. Clearly, an important factor in improving the status of women is a decline in crimes against women, followed by a reduction in the need for services. However, the statistics, as described by reported incidents and services provided may appear to get worse as the community moves towards a zero tolerance stance on these crimes, as the focus on blaming the victim shifts to perpetrator accountability and as awareness of services increases. It will take long term analysis – as opposed to a snapshot – of statistics to gauge whether conditions have improved for women relating to domestic and sexual violence.

It should be noted that violence impacts many facets of women's health and well-being. Women who have experienced any type of personal violence reported greater physical symptoms than those who were not abused, even when the last episode of violence was an average of 14 to 30 years earlier. The risk of suffering from six or more chronic physical symptoms increased with the number of forms of violence experienced.⁶² The Family Violence Prevention Fund reports that

Average annual nonfatal intimate partner victimization rate, by income and gender, 2001-2005

Rate per 1000 persons age 12 or older



Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics
www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/

Violence and Cascading Consequences

PAULA IS MARRIED and has two children: a teenage daughter, Tracy, from her first marriage and an infant son with her current husband. She worked a part-time job with no benefits, no health insurance.

In March 2008, Tracy disclosed that her stepfather's brother had sexually assaulted her on several occasions. When informed, her husband did not believe Paula, becoming enraged when she insisted that they report the abuse. In the ensuing argument, he broke Paula's arm in two places, a continuation of his escalating pattern of abuse that Paula endured to keep the family together.

Paula realized that the domestic violence had escalated beyond her ability to protect herself or her children and filed a Protection from Abuse (PFA) order against her husband. He was evicted from their home, but the family's safety wasn't ensured because he violated this order several times. With her husband gone, Paula no longer had help from his income to cover bills and had no income of her own since she was unable to work. Without health insurance, her medical bills began to mount.

Paula was unable to care for her infant on her own because of her broken arm. For a few weeks following the injury, Paula's mother—who lives near Harrisburg—moved in with her to help care for the children and to provide transportation for her follow up medical visits to the specialist in Pittsburgh. Paula also needed help getting her daughter to counseling appointments and to the store for groceries and other essentials. Her mother was unable to stay indefinitely because of her own job and responsibilities. As a result, Paula has had to pay people to come to her home to fill in on all the day-to-day functions her mother had been doing. Paula is now on welfare and has a significant debt that she will be paying off for years.

⁶² Nicolaidis et al. 2004. Violence, Mental Health and Physical Symptoms in an Academic Internal Medicine Practice. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 19: 815-23.

abuse is more common for pregnant women than gestational diabetes or preeclampsia—conditions for which pregnant women are routinely screened.⁶³ Further, victims of sexual assault are three times more likely to suffer from depression, four times more likely to be suicidal and 26 times more likely to abuse drugs.⁶⁴ Domestic violence perpetrators frequently sabotage the ability of victims to hold jobs, gain an education and achieve financial independence.



Violence can impact all women, but females living in households with lower annual incomes experience the highest average annual rates of nonfatal intimate partner violence.

Despite the lack of certainty regarding the extent of violence against women in Westmoreland County, the national evidence clearly indicates that this issue is not just detrimental in and of itself, but is also closely connected to each of the other four status of women issues addressed in this report.

An Underlying Theme

In this report, the project team has focused primarily on facts and statistics, allowing the data to tell the story of the status of women in Westmoreland County. However, a review of the data, particularly the historical and current prevalence of the challenges, suggests an underlying theme of women's marginalization.

Assessing the impact of marginalization is not an easy task, especially trying to assess its impact on a local level. What is known globally, though, is that when society permits marginalization of women, women will continue to be demeaned, opportunities will be limited, and violence will persist. When women are stereotyped into certain roles, their ability to participate as they choose in *education, business, leadership and labor force opportunities* is limited. Violence can impact all women, but females living in households with lower annual incomes experience the highest average annual rates of nonfatal intimate partner violence, with the rate more than doubling for those living well below poverty level (incomes less than \$7,500 annually). Violence and marginalization of women are intimately related issues, and they are also intimately related to the other status of women issues outlined in this report.

To make a difference in the status of women, the community must look beyond what is accepted as commonplace and inevitable to consider the critically important and sometimes destructive influences at work in the community.

⁶³ Parsons, L., et.al. 2000. "Violence Against Women and Reproductive Health: Toward Defining a Role for Reproductive Health Care Services." *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 4(2), pg. 135.

⁶⁴ World Health Organization. 2002. *The World Report of Violence and Health*.



CONCLUSION

This report—in fact, this project—began with a “gut-level” feeling that the status of women in Westmoreland County is not what it can and should be. The project team gathered and presented facts in five key and broad areas:

- Pay equity, employment and education
- Poverty
- Health and well being
- Women in leadership
- Violence against women

The status of women in the community has been illustrated as it relates to these issues by citing a range of data, conducting new research specifically designed to more comprehensively assess women’s leadership in the county and by comparing women in Westmoreland County to those in the region, state and country. In many instances, particularly in some measures of poverty and health and well being, women in Westmoreland County fare better than those in the state and at the national level. In other instances, Westmoreland County compares less favorably to the state and nation, such as in pay equity, women-owned business and median salary for women with disabilities. And yet, in some instances, it is unclear how Westmoreland County compares with other areas, such as with women in public, corporate and nonprofit leadership roles.

Regardless of what the available benchmarking suggests, the evidence clearly indicates that the status of women in Westmoreland County can be improved in a number of ways.

- Women cannot head households and raise children on an annual income of \$17,633.
- Women should not make 75% or less of what men earn for the same work.
- There should not be nearly 20,000 women living in poverty and over 3,000 of women over the age of 65 living in poverty.
- There should not be 11,429 women between 18 and 64 without health insurance.
- Women with disabilities should earn more than \$9,316 annually.
- Women can and should hold more leadership positions in public, corporate and educational institutions.
- Women in nonprofit organizations should have greater opportunities to lead larger organizations and serve in board leadership roles.
- Women should not be subject to violence and should not fear reporting it when it happens.
- Women should not be de-personalized and marginalized, limiting their opportunities to fully participate in society as they choose.

