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The Status of Women in the Triangle Metropolitan Area, North Carolina

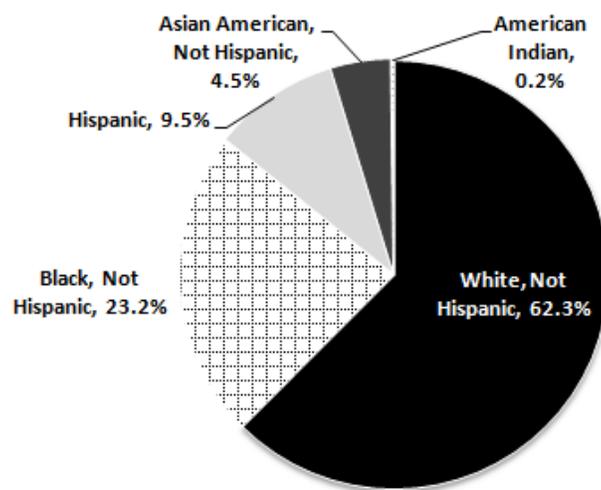
Introduction

Women in the Triangle Metropolitan Statistical Area, and in North Carolina as a whole, have made much progress during the last few decades.¹ The majority of women work—many in professional and managerial jobs—and women are a mainstay of the economic health of their communities. Yet, not all women are prospering. This briefing paper provides basic information about the status of women in the Triangle area, focusing on women’s earnings and workforce participation, level of education, poverty, access to child care, and health status. It also provides background demographic information about women in the region.

Basic Facts About Women in the Triangle Area

The Triangle Metropolitan Statistical Area (referred to here as the Triangle area or The Triangle)—including Chatham, Durham, Franklin, Johnston, Orange, and Wake counties—has a diverse population of women and girls. Thirty-seven percent are women and girls of color (Figure 1), which is a slightly higher share than in the state as a whole (34 percent; Table 1). The Triangle area also has a substantially higher population of foreign-born women and girls than North Carolina overall (11.4 percent compared with 7.0 percent; Table 1).

Figure 1. Distribution of Women and Girls by Race and Ethnicity in the Triangle Metropolitan Area, All Ages, 2008–2010



Note: Total does not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: IWPR analysis of 2008–2010 Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

The female population in the Triangle area is slightly younger than in North Carolina and the United States as a whole. The median age among women in this area is 35, three years younger than in the state and the nation. Eleven percent of women in the Triangle area are 65 years and older, compared with 15 percent of women in the state as a whole (Table 1).

Table 1. Basic Demographic Statistics for Women and Girls			
	Triangle Metropolitan Statistical Area	North Carolina	United States
Total Population	1,567,748	9,561,558	309,349,689
Number of Women and Girls, All Ages	805,743	4,905,216	157,294,247
Median Age of All Women and Girls	35	38	38
Proportion of Women Aged 65 and Older	11%	15%	15%
Distribution of Women and Girls by Race and Ethnicity, All Ages			
White, Not Hispanic	62.3%	66.3%	64.9%
Black, Not Hispanic	23.2%	22.2%	12.9%
Hispanic	9.5%	7.9%	16.2%
Asian American, Not Hispanic	4.5%	2.3%	5.1%
American Indian, Not Hispanic	0.2%	1.1%	0.7%
Proportion of Women and Girls Who Are Foreign-Born, All Ages	11.4%	7.0%	13.0%
Proportion of Women Who Are Married, Aged 18 and Older	52%	50%	49%

Note: Data for The Triangle Metropolitan Statistical Area are for 2008–2010. Data for North Carolina and the United States are for 2010 only.

Source: IWPR analysis of 2008–2010 and 2010 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

Work and Earnings

The majority of women aged 16 and older in the Triangle area are in the labor force. Sixty-four percent are either employed or actively looking for work, a higher share than in North Carolina as a whole (59 percent). The proportion of women overall in the labor force in the Triangle area is lower than the proportion of men in the workforce (76 percent; Table 2), as it is in most jurisdictions. Women’s labor force participation, however, varies considerably among women from different racial and ethnic groups. In the Triangle area, black women have the highest labor force participation rate at 69 percent, followed by white women (63 percent) and Hispanic women (62 percent), and then by Asian American women (58 percent).ⁱⁱ

In The Triangle, as in the state overall, the rate of labor force participation is higher for women with dependent children (under age 18) than for all women. Seventy-three percent of mothers with dependent children are in the workforce, a much higher proportion than for all women but still considerably lower than for men with dependent children (96 percent; Table 2). This suggests that women are more likely than men to cut back on employment when they are parents.

While the majority of employed women in the Triangle area work full-time (74 percent), women are more likely than men to work part-time (26 percent of employed women in the area work part-time, compared with 15 percent of employed men).ⁱⁱⁱ The reasons for women’s higher rates of part-time work vary. Some women cannot find child care or work part-time for other family-care related issues; in North Carolina overall (data are not available for The Triangle), 20 percent of women, compared with only 3 percent of men, give these reasons for working part-time.^{iv} In addition, although the Great Recession has led both

men and women to experience an increase in part-time work during the last few years for economic reasons, women are more likely than men to work in the sectors and occupations where jobs are only available on a part-time basis (Shaefer 2009). In general, part-time workers are much less likely than full-time workers to have access to paid leave, healthcare, and employer supported pensions (Society for Human Resource Management 2011).

In addition to these differences in hours worked, women and men in the Triangle area, as in the nation as a whole, tend to work in different occupations. Almost half of women in The Triangle (49 percent) work in professional and managerial jobs, which is a higher proportion than men (44 percent) in this metropolitan area and a substantially larger proportion than women in the state overall (40 percent; Table 2). This ratio points to the great employment opportunities open to many women in the area.

Yet, women in the Triangle area are still less likely than men to work in management positions (10 percent and 14 percent, respectively), and women and men tend to work in different professional fields. The Triangle has generally higher levels of employment in computing, architecture, and engineering professions than other parts of the state, and more women in this metropolitan area work in these occupations than in North Carolina as a whole.^v Women, however, are much less likely than men to work in these professional occupations (4 percent compared with 11 percent), but are more likely to work in education and health care practitioner (21 percent compared with 8 percent). Women in The Triangle are also much more likely than men to work in non-professional office and administrative jobs (18 percent compared with 7 percent), while men are much more likely than women to work in construction, installation and repair, and transportation occupations (21 percent compared with 2 percent).^{vi}

Despite their relatively high representation in professional jobs, women in the Triangle metropolitan area have lower median annual earnings than men. In 2008–2010, women’s median annual earnings in The Triangle for full-time, year-round work were \$40,000, compared with \$50,336 for men; women earned only 79 cents for every dollar earned by a man, less than the 83 cents per dollar earned by women in the state overall. Median earnings for women and men are considerably higher in The Triangle than in the state as a whole, but the area’s earnings advantage is less for women than for men, resulting in a larger wage gap compared with the state and the same as the nation (Table 2).^{vii}

Educational Attainment

Many women in the Triangle metropolitan area are well-educated. Forty-two percent of all women aged 25 and older in the metropolitan area have a bachelor’s degree or higher, a similar proportion to men (43 percent). Women in The Triangle are much more likely to have at least a bachelor’s degree than women in the state or the nation (27 percent and 28 percent, respectively; Table 2).

Yet, nearly three in ten women in the Triangle area—an estimated 153,500^{viii}—have not completed high school or do not have educational qualifications beyond a high school diploma or the equivalent. Proportionately more men than women in The Triangle have such a low educational attainment (32 percent compared with 29 percent; Table 2), but women with this level of education are less likely than men to have jobs with wages sufficient to sustain a family. Median annual earnings for women who are employed full-time, year-round and have less than a high school diploma are only \$18,200; for comparable men they are \$24,400. With a high school degree or the equivalent, women in The Triangle earn \$29,000, while men earn \$37,000. In this area, women with some college education or an associate’s degree earn less than men with only a high school diploma (\$35,500 compared with \$37,000).^{ix}

In this area, as in the state and nation as a whole, having a college education raises the level of earnings for both women and men, but does not reduce the gender gap in earnings. In the Triangle area, the

difference in earnings between men and women is even larger when only those with a bachelor's degree or higher are compared. College-educated women in The Triangle make only 68 cents for every dollar earned by a college-educated man (Table 2).

Table 2. Overview of Women's and Men's Economic Status

	Triangle Metropolitan Area	North Carolina	United States
Labor Force Participation Rate, Aged 16 and Older			
Women	64%	59%	59%
Men	76%	70%	70%
Mothers With Children Under 18 Years	73%	74%	73%
Fathers With Children Under 18 Years	96%	94%	94%
Percent of Employed Women and Men Who Work Full-Time, Aged 16 and Older			
Women	74%	72%	71%
Men	85%	84%	84%
Percent of Employed Women and Men in Professional or Managerial Occupations, Aged 16 and Older			
Women	49%	40%	39%
Men	44%	30%	33%
Median Annual Earnings for Full-Time, Year-Round Workers, Aged 16 and Older			
Women	\$40,000	\$33,000	\$36,000
Men	\$50,336	\$40,000	\$45,500
Gender Earnings Ratio, Aged 16 and Older	79%	83%	79%
Gender Earnings Ratio by Educational Attainment, Aged 25 and Older			
Less Than High School Diploma	75%	76%	74%
High School Diploma or the Equivalent	78%	75%	74%
Some College or Associate's Degree	78%	76%	76%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	68%	70%	71%
Proportion of Women and Men with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher, Aged 25 and Older			
Women	42%	27%	28%
Men	43%	26%	29%
Proportion of Women and Men with a High School Diploma or Less, Aged 25 or Older			
Women	29%	40%	42%
Men	32%	46%	44%
Percent of Women and Men Living At or Below Poverty, Aged 18 and Older			
Women	13%	17%	15%
Men	10%	13%	12%
Percent of Households Receiving Food Stamps	7.1%	12.5%	11.5%
Percent of Women and Men Without Health Insurance Coverage Aged, 18–64			
Women	17%	21%	19%
Men	24%	26%	25%

Notes: Data for The Triangle Metropolitan Area are for 2008–2010. Median annual earnings in 2010 inflation-adjusted dollars. Data for North Carolina and the United States are for 2010 only.

Source: IWPR analysis of 2008–2010 and 2010 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

Poverty

Overall, women in the Triangle metropolitan area are considerably less likely than women in either the state or the nation as a whole to live at or below the poverty level (13 percent compared with 17 percent and 15 percent, respectively; Table 2). Yet, a substantial number of women in this area have incomes that leave them near or below the federal poverty line. Approximately 78,000 women aged 18 and older in The Triangle area are poor and another 93,000 are near poverty (living with incomes between 100 and 200 percent of the federal poverty line).^x Women in The Triangle are more likely than men to live at or below the poverty line (13 percent compared with 10 percent; Table 2), and 58 percent of all adults aged 18 and older in this area with poverty incomes are women.^{xi} Seven percent of households in the Triangle area receive food stamps, a much smaller proportion than in North Carolina as a whole (13 percent; Table 2).

Poverty is a particularly severe problem for families headed by non-married mothers. These families make up between one-fifth and one-third of all families with dependent children in the Triangle area, but at least half of all families with children in poverty for five of the six counties in this metropolitan area (Table 3). In North Carolina as a whole, only one in ten (11 percent) non-married mothers with young children (under five) and incomes below the qualifying poverty threshold receives any welfare cash assistance.^{xii}

Child Care



The lack of affordable child care is a major burden on families in the Triangle area. In the absence of quality, reasonably-priced child care, women may decide to interrupt their tenure in the labor market, reducing their earnings potential and undermining their ability to provide for their families, put aside resources for retirement, or save for emergencies. Alternatively, women may have to place their children in low- quality or unreliable care.

The average fees for year-round, full-time child care in North Carolina range from \$6,227 (for a four-year-old in a family child care home) to \$9,185 (for an infant in a child care center). By comparison, the average annual tuition and fees for a public four-year college in North Carolina are \$5,685 (Child Care Aware of America 2012). In the Triangle area, 50,905 children qualify for child care subsidies because their parents earn too little to afford the fees, yet fewer than one in four eligible children receives any subsidized child care within any of the Triangle metropolitan area's six counties. Child care subsidy payment rates for eligible children in each county are substantially below the market rates for child care in the state (Table 3 and Center for Urban Affairs and Community Services 2012).

Table 3. The Status of Children: Family Income, Poverty, and Child Care

	Chatham	Durham	Franklin	Johnston	Orange	Wake	North Carolina
Family Income							
Annual Income a Family of One Adult and Two Children Needs to Afford Essential Living Expenses, 2010 ¹	\$47,377	\$47,163	\$43,511	\$43,221	\$49,483	\$48,107	\$41,920
Median Annual Income of Married-Couple Families With Children Under 18 Years, 2008–2010	\$81,797	\$83,284	\$59,847	\$69,340	\$104,010	\$99,399	\$70,124
Median Annual Income of Non-Married Fathers With Children Under 18 Years, 2008–2010²	\$34,146	\$30,721	\$27,526	\$26,399	\$39,536	\$36,949	\$29,874
Median Annual Income of Non-Married Mothers With Children Under 18 Years, 2008–2010²	\$25,866	\$24,926	\$23,390	\$23,764	\$22,624	\$29,876	\$20,393
Poverty							
Number of Families in Poverty With Children Under 18, 2008–2010 ²	1,275	5,657	1,377	4,727	2455	13,568	254,650
Share of Families in Poverty With Children That Are Headed by Non-Married Women, 2008–2010 ²	57%	65%	50%	45%	54%	56%	61%
Share of All Families With Children Under 18 That Are Headed by Non-Married Women, 2008–2010 ²	23%	34%	20%	22%	23%	22%	29%
Child Care							
Children Eligible for Child Care Subsidy, SFY 2010–2011 ³	2,120	11,582	2,539	7,458	3,453	23,753	391,549
Budget Currently Available to Serve Eligible Children, SFY 2010–2011 ³	\$2,597,330	\$14,146,073	\$2,166,453	\$6,493,190	\$5,133,429	\$34,706,379	N/A
Percent of Eligible Children Receiving Subsidized Child Care Services, SFY 2010–2011 ³	17%	19%	14%	15%	15%	21%	N/A
Budget per Child Eligible for Child Care Subsidy, SFY 2010–2011	\$1,225.16	\$1,221.38	\$853.27	\$870.63	\$1,486.66	\$1,461.14	N/A
Total Number of Children Age 0 to 5 Enrolled in Child Care, 2011 ⁴	1,051	7,055	1,093	4,007	2,311	22,665	207,953

Notes: N/A indicates data are not available.

Sources: ¹Sirota and McLenaghan (2010).

²IWPR compilation of 2010 and 2008–2010 American Community Survey data accessed through American Fact Finder (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 2012); data for North Carolina are for 2010 only.

³North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education (2012).

⁴The Annie E. Casey Foundation Data Center Kids Count (2012).

Health

Health is an important component of women’s and girls’ overall well-being. Poor health poses serious obstacles to economic stability, educational attainment, and employment opportunities, just as good health can help women to thrive in all these areas. While many women in North Carolina experience good health, others face poor health outcomes, suggesting that women’s health care needs remain an important part of their status that must be examined and addressed.

Having basic health insurance coverage is critical to women’s access to health care. Seventeen percent of women aged 18–64 in the Triangle metropolitan area, however, do not have health insurance coverage (Table 2). Lack of health insurance leaves women without coverage not only for basic wellness and check up visits, but also for severe or chronic medical problems.

In the counties within the Triangle area for which data are available, rates of women’s mortality from stroke and diabetes are lower than in the state overall. Women in Durham and Franklin counties, however, have higher rates of mortality from breast and ovarian cancer than do women in the state and the nation as a whole (Table 4).

In Franklin, Orange, and Wake counties, teen pregnancy rates in the Triangle metropolitan area are lower than in the state overall (Table 4).

Table 4. Overview of Women's Health Status								
	Chatham	Durham	Franklin	Johnston	Orange	Wake	North Carolina	United States
Total Number of Teen Pregnancies (15–19 Years), 2010¹	85	478	88	278	115	1,054	15,957	N/A
Pregnancies Among Teens Aged 15–19 Years, (Rate per 1,000), 2010¹	53.8	53.4	48.1	49.9	17.4	35.1	49.7	N/A
Average Annual Incidence and Mortality Rates Among Women (per 100,000)²								
Breast Cancer, 2005–2009	17.1	26.9	24.2	21.1	22.8	21.9	23.5	23.0
Cervical Cancer, 2005–2009	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.6	2.3	2.4
Uterine Cancer, 2005–2009	N/A	4.6	N/A	N/A	N/A	4.3	4.0	4.2
Ovarian Cancer, 2005–2009	7.2	8.8	11.7	9.0	7.6	8.4	7.9	8.2
Heart Failure Death Rate per 100,000, 35 Years and Older, 2009³	N/A	38.5	N/A	N/A	N/A	22.2	20.9	23.3
Stroke, 2009 (Mortality Rate Only)³	N/A	23.1	N/A	N/A	N/A	20.7	38.7	33.4
Diabetes, 2009 (Mortality Rate Only)³	N/A	17.3	N/A	24.8	N/A	11.9	26.5	24.9

Notes: N/A indicates data are not available.

Rates based on small numbers (fewer than 20 cases) are unstable and are not reported.

Sources: ¹ North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (2012).

² National Cancer Institute State Cancer Profiles (2012).

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2012).

Conclusion

Many women in the Triangle Metropolitan Statistical Area are thriving, a finding reflected in women's higher earnings in this metropolitan area and higher share of professional jobs than elsewhere in the state. Yet, many areas for improvement remain, including a persistent gender wage gap, lower educational attainment and earnings of a substantial share of women, and limited access to affordable child care. Policy recommendations to address these challenges include:

- Promoting quality flexible working practices to make it easier for parents to combine paid work with care giving;
- Ensuring that employers are aware of their obligations under the federal anti-discrimination statutes;
- Providing training to employers on best practices for recruiting and retaining female employees, particularly in sectors where they are now under-represented;
- Increasing career counseling and financial supports—including child care—for women with low levels of education;
- Monitoring workforce development to ensure that women and men have equal access to training in high-growth, well-paid careers;
- Supporting more targeted teen pregnancy prevention programs and increasing support for teens who are already pregnant and parenting; and
- Ensuring that all families, if they need, receive cash assistance from 'Work First,' North Carolina's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program.

Methodological Notes

This briefing paper presents data for the Triangle Metropolitan Statistical Area, defined to include Chatham, Durham, Franklin, Johnston, Orange, and Wake counties. Demographic and economic data are based on IWPR analysis of the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series version of the American Community Survey (Ruggles et al. 2010) and on American Community Survey data accessed through American Fact Finder. To ensure sufficient sample sizes that allow for reliable reporting, IWPR used estimates that combine several years of data (2008–2010) for the Triangle Metropolitan Area metropolitan area. Data for the state and nation as a whole are based on one-year (2010) data. Data on child care come from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Child Care Aware of America, and the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education. Data on women's health status are from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Cancer Institute, and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services; for some indicators, data are not be available for all counties because the number of sample cases is too small. To define the Triangle area, IWPR aggregated Public Use Micro Data Area variables (PUMAS), which are the smallest geographical unit available in the American Community Survey data.

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Notes

ⁱ The Triangle metropolitan statistical area (MSA) is comprised of the following counties: Chatham, Durham, Franklin, Johnston, Orange, and Wake.

ⁱⁱ IWPR analysis of 2008–2010 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

ⁱⁱⁱ IWPR analysis of 2008–2010 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

^{iv} IWPR calculations based on U.S. Department of Labor (2011). Table 23: States: Persons at Work 1 to 34 Hours by Sex, Age, Race, Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity, and Hours of Work, 2010 Annual Averages.

^v IWPR analysis based on IWPR analysis of 2008–2010 and 2010 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

^{vi} IWPR analysis based on IWPR analysis of 2008–2010 and 2010 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

^{vii} Because these estimates are based on the American Community Survey, they are not strictly comparable to IWPR's standard calculation of the gender wage gap for the United States, which is based on the Current Population Survey (CPS). In 2010, the national earnings gap based on the CPS was 23 percent (Hegewisch and Williams 2011).

^{viii} IWPR analysis based on IWPR analysis of 2008–2010 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

^{ix} IWPR analysis of 2008–2010 and 2010 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

^x IWPR analysis of 2008–2010 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

^{xi} IWPR analysis of 2008–2010 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

^{xii} IWPR analysis of 2010 IPUMS American Community Survey microdata (Ruggles et al. 2010).

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