

{ New Hampshire's *Working Women* }



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Since the 1970s,

women have made economic progress in New Hampshire, but the gains have been limited. For example, although their representation among full-time workers in the state has increased from 27 percent to more than 40 percent, increases in their earnings, business ownership, executive leadership, and decision-making responsibility have lagged behind their increased participation in the labor force and their advances in education. A 2005 study by the New Hampshire Women's Policy Institute has the details.¹ (See "The Economic Status of Working Women in New Hampshire.")

Education and Occupation

The good news is that New Hampshire women's real (inflation-adjusted) income has risen over the last three decades. Growth in full-time working female income has been faster than growth in full-time working male income, and, as a result, there has been some convergence in women's and men's earnings. The greatest convergence occurred in the 1980s, when growth rates in real income for females exceeded growth in males' income, and also in the 1990s, when moderate growth in female income accompanied a slight decline in men's real income.

In 1999, full-time working women from New Hampshire earned 73 cents for every dollar earned by men, doing slightly better than the U.S. average of 72 cents. The differences in full-time women's and men's income in New Hampshire is lowest

in younger age groups. For every dollar earned by men, women in the youngest adult cohort earned approximately 83 cents, whereas women in the oldest age cohort earned approximately 60 cents. One likely reason is that the older the women are, the more household responsibilities they have taken on and the less time they have spent relative to men gaining work experience and establishing business connections and networks.

Education does not explain earnings differentials. By 1999, N.H. women equaled or surpassed men in graduating from high school, associate's

degree programs, four-year undergraduate college programs, and master's degree programs. Yet full-time male workers were reaping significantly greater monetary returns from education at all levels. For example, full-time working N.H. women aged 23-30, with 4-year college degrees, earned 68 percent of what their male counterparts earned on average. The gap increased with age and family responsibility. Among 31- to 44-years-old, full-time working college graduates, females earned 65 percent of the average male.

Occupation concentrations by gender in New Hampshire explain some of the gender-based differential returns from education. Specific sectors of the labor market had high concentrations of one gender, with many women working in relative-

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ly low-paying occupations.

Two of the five top female-dominated occupations fell in the lowest third of New Hampshire occupations, compared with one of the five top male-dominated occupations. Health-care support occupations had the highest concentration of female full-time workers (93 percent female). These jobs include health-care aides, massage therapists, dental assistants, and medical assistants; registered nurses are not included in the category. In 1999, median annual wage for N.H. health-care support workers was \$22,000.

Top male-dominated categories tend to emphasize physical labor and strength, whereas female-dominated

categories generally emphasize care-giving or personal assistance. In New Hampshire's personal-care and the service industries, 79 percent of jobs were held by women; in office and administrative support, 73 percent; in health-care practitioner occupations, 71 percent; and in education, training, and library work, 65 percent.

Women with children of any age, and particularly women with children under six years old, tended to replace full-time employment with part-time or exit the labor force. Although more than 71 percent of women without children were employed full-time in 1999, full-time employment for women with young children dropped

to about 50 percent. When women did return to the full-time labor force, the data show that they suffered an economic penalty for taking the lead role in family care.

In contrast, men's employment in full-time work rises when children enter the picture. Eighty-five percent of men without children were employed full-time in 1999, whereas more than 90 percent of men with a child of any age were employed full-time.

Taken together, these findings indicate that when a man and a woman shared a household, the males typically focused on economic accomplishment, and the females took primary responsibility for the home front. Leaving the full-time labor force during childbearing and child-rearing years significantly affected women's long-term economic status and helped explain facts such as 57 percent of New Hampshire's full-time low-wage workforce being made up of women—a much higher percentage than their overall representation in the full-time workforce (47 percent).

Women at High Levels

The New Hampshire Women's Policy Institute also looked at how the state is doing in terms of women-owned businesses and women in executive positions and on boards.

Women-Owned Businesses

Across the United States, the ratio of female-to-male earnings correlates with higher percentages of businesses that are women-owned, with the average being 26 percent. New Hampshire is 44 on the list, however, with only 23.6 percent women-owned businesses.²

And although many of the states with the highest percentages of female-owned businesses (including Maryland, Colorado, Virginia, Washington, and New Mexico) are also in the top fifth of high-technology states, New Hampshire diverges.³ It ranks in the top quintile of states with high employment in technology but in the bottom tier of states in the percentage of female-owned businesses.

Although the state is generally considered a good place to start a business, the female business ownership gap represents a lost opportunity for both the New Hampshire economy and women. The New Hampshire Women's Policy Institute believes this is an area requiring more attention and research.

Better child care, education, health care, and business and public policies supportive of family life and flexible work schedules are all key.

Boardrooms and Corner Offices

The New Hampshire Women's Policy Institute study also looked at executive positions in New Hampshire. When the research was undertaken, there were 25 public companies based in the state. Although females held almost one-half of the managerial and professional positions in New Hampshire, they had not been promoted to leadership positions in local public companies to anywhere near the same extent as men. Seven, or 24 percent, of New Hampshire-based public companies had no female directors or executive officers. Only 13 percent of executive officers at New Hampshire-based public companies were females. That is less than the 16 percent of female corporate officers in Fortune 500 companies.

Of the public companies based in New Hampshire, 12 (48 percent) had no women executive officers, nine (36 percent) had one executive officer, three (12 percent) had two, and only one (4 percent) had three or more female executives. Sixteen of New Hampshire's public companies (64 percent) had no women among the five highest-paid executive officers. Six (24 percent) had one woman among their five highest-compensated executive officers, and only two companies (or 8 percent) had two women among their highest-paid executives.

New Hampshire's public compa-

nies also rank below the Fortune 500 in the percentages of female board directors.⁴ Women held only 8.8 percent of the 193 board seats on New Hampshire public companies, compared with the Fortune 500 average of 14 percent.

The low percentage of female executives and directors can be attributed in

ly life and flexible work schedules are all key. For-profit, nonprofit, and government entities also should focus on supporting female-owned businesses and encouraging entrepreneurship.

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¹ See <http://www.nhwpi.org/report05.htm>.

² Amy Caiazza, April Shaw, and Misha Werschkul, *Women's Economic Status in the States: Wide Disparities by Race, Ethnicity, and Region* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2004), <http://www.iwpr.org>.

³ *Cyberstates 2003: A State by State Overview of High-Technology Industry* (Washington, D.C.: American Electronics Association, 2003).

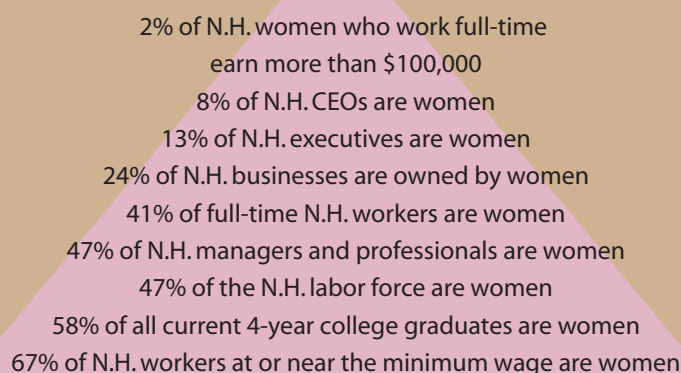
⁴ *2003 Catalyst Census of Women Board Directors: A Call to Action in a New Era of Corporate Governance* (New York: Catalyst, 2003).

part to the relatively small size of public companies in New Hampshire. Smaller public companies, on average, do have lower percentages of female executives and directors than larger companies.

Going Forward

Much can be done to improve the economic status of women in the state. To start, the support system and culture for working females and families should be improved. Better child care, education, health care, and business and public policies supportive of fami-

The Economic Status of Working Women in New Hampshire



2% of N.H. women who work full-time earn more than \$100,000
 8% of N.H. CEOs are women
 13% of N.H. executives are women
 24% of N.H. businesses are owned by women
 41% of full-time N.H. workers are women
 47% of N.H. managers and professionals are women
 47% of the N.H. labor force are women
 58% of all current 4-year college graduates are women
 67% of N.H. workers at or near the minimum wage are women