

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' LIVES

The 1999
California
Report Card

CA REPORT CARD

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THE WOMEN'S



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Is California Making The Grade with Women and Girls?

- *California women earn less than men in every occupational category, an average of \$18,842 yearly compared to \$31,447 earned by California men.*
- *The percentage of female legislators in the State assembly has risen from 2% to 25% over the last 20 years.*
- *Only one school district of the eighty that were studied in the past four years was in compliance with the gender equity laws.*
- *The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that more than half of the country's 22,000 sewing shops violate minimum wage and overtime laws. Government surveys reveal that 75% of U.S. garment shops violate safety and health laws. Los Angeles is now the country's largest garment center.*
- *Since 1981, the number of women in California state prisons has risen from 1,010 to 11,505, a staggering 11 times increase.*

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Dear Friends and Colleagues,

The Women's Foundation enters its 20th anniversary year with a passionate commitment to invigorate political action among the women and girls of California. This 1999 California Report Card will further the Foundation's aim to support women and girls' organizations as they challenge systemic and structural inequalities.



The Women's Foundation has made grants to over 500 organizations, funding 5 million dollars worth of struggles and dreams. As we celebrate two decades of pooling resources for organizations that promote women's and girls' leadership, civic participation, and well-being, we are stopping for a moment to evaluate how women and girls are faring throughout the state.

We must continue to be vigilant in raising our voices about the needs of disenfranchised women and girls: health, freedom from violence, immigrants' rights, girls' leadership, economic justice and welfare reform. We intend for this report to be read as a whole: too often, the issues that structure our quality of life are unnaturally fractured and separated. Women know that the myriad issues that affect our lives are all interrelated. The immigrant woman who cannot afford health care, who spends 25% of her minimum wage income on child care, experiences these problems as related. A girl who suffers from peer harassment, who attends a school that violates gender equity laws, and either drops out or is ill-prepared to obtain the higher education that leads to a high paying job, lives the reality that these issues work in tandem.

Our grantees and our partners are working to ensure that human rights and dignity are realized in the lives of women and girls. Many of you who are reading this share our passion for justice, and have the audacity to demand a society where equality is substantive and actualized. Together, we can implement our vision of a society that nourishes the potential, health and security of all women. Our actions must be deliberate, strategic, and bold. For those of you who have worked with us and supported us, we encourage you to continue this journey. For those of you who are new friends, we welcome you to join us as we move into the 21st century with courage, change and dreams.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patricia W. Chang". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Patricia W. Chang
President and CEO

Economic Justice for Women and Girls **Grade: D**

The term Economic Justice refers to the need for a more fair and equitable distribution of wealth in America. California's women work a disproportionate amount of minimum and low-wage jobs; work part-time or two jobs more frequently than men; and often bear the cost of raising children.

- 58.7% of California workers earning \$4.75 are women, as are half who earn between \$4.76 and \$5.15, and roughly 70% of workers earning \$5.15.¹
- A 1997 study found that California women earn less than men in every occupational category, an average of \$18,842 yearly, compared to the \$31,447 earned by California men.²
- The wage gap between California women and men who work full time, year-round, is 76.4%.³
- About 15% of California's women live at or below the poverty level, compared to the national rate of 13.7%. California ranks 37th in the nation for women in poverty.⁴
- Nationally, 12.8 million families were maintained by single women, representing 18.2% of all families.⁵

These discouraging statistics only begin to describe the burden of economic inequity shouldered by California's women. Jobs traditionally labeled women's work, such as careers in education, child care, food service, health care, and cleaning professions are seen as an extension of women's family and household responsibilities, and therefore as jobs that do not require special or additional skills. Women face multiple obstacles, including discrimination, in entering non-traditional and often higher-wage jobs. Women face real barriers in areas such as economic literacy, and the cost and convenience of transportation, childcare, and housing.

Economic inequity involves occupational sex-segregation. For generations, it was legal to pay white women and people of color less than the amount white men were paid for the same job. Today, although many federal, state, and local laws require equal pay for equal work in the same job for the same employer, occupations continue to be highly sex-segregated. The terms "pay equity," "fair pay," and "comparable worth" refer to the campaign to ensure women receive equal pay for work of equivalent value, even when the actual jobs may differ. For example, a 1992 study showed that in Los Angeles, children's social workers—who were mostly women—were getting paid 34% less than County probation officers—who were mostly men. The jobs required similar skill, effort, responsibility, and had similar working conditions. The social workers earned \$35,000, while the probation officers were receiving \$55,000.⁶

Recent studies have shown that the "glass ceiling" still functions to keep women from advancing on pace with men, and this holds true within ethnic groups.

The average self-sufficiency wage in California for an adult with a pre-school age and a school age child stands at \$12.46/hour.

The California civil service workforce:

The median salary paid women, compared to men: 74 percent

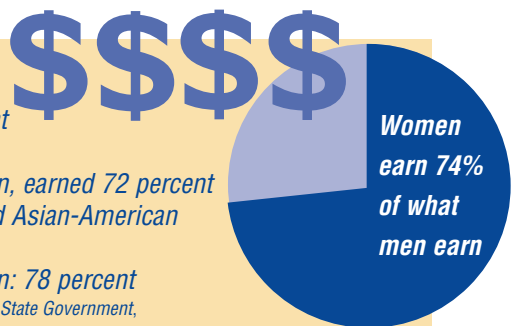
Latinas earned 73 percent of the median paid Latinos.

African-American women, compared to African-American men, earned 72 percent

Asian-American women earned 74 percent of the median paid Asian-American men

The median salary paid white women, compared to white men: 78 percent

Source: Becky LaVally, *Exploring the "Glass Ceiling" and Salary Disparities in California State Government*, Senate Office of Research, 1996.



- The average self-sufficiency wage in California for an adult with a preschool age and a school age child stands at \$12.46/hour.⁷ While nationally, 12.8 million families were maintained by single women, representing 18.2% of all families,⁸ too often, women do not earn incomes that allow them to be self-

sufficient. Indeed, 58.7% of California workers earning \$4.75 are women, as are half who earn between \$4.76 and \$5.15, and roughly 70% of workers earning \$5.15.⁹

•The most recent statistics show that 65% of working mothers in California have children under six years old.¹⁰

Low-income working women do not have enough childcare options, as there are 200,000 children on the waiting list for state child care assistance.¹¹ Available child care is usually too high in cost, unavailable during swing-shift hours, and poses additional burdens on women's schedule and transportation needs.

• In California, only 29% of licensed family child care homes provide evening or weekend care. Only 2% of child care centers provide care during non-standard hours.¹²

• Families above the poverty level spend an average of 8.7 percent of their income on child care as compared to families below the poverty level who spend almost triple that percentage, 23.2 %.¹³

If a two-parent household is required to spend almost a quarter of their earnings on childcare, what happens to single mothers earning minimum wage? The Women's Foundation realizes that women's self-sufficiency depends upon women's economic independence and viability. This economic status is inextricably linked to education, access to child care, and affordable housing.

The Women's Foundation has responded to economic justice issues in several ways.

1) We designed a comprehensive welfare-to-work program that went beyond getting a woman off of welfare, instead guided by the importance of how to get a woman and her children out of poverty.

2) Three major donors came together to form an Economic Development and Justice Fund, which in 1998-99 granted \$425,000 to nine organizations. **The Women's Foundation grantees include:**

Women In Skilled Trades, dedicated to providing non-traditional job-training for women.

OpNet, helping young, low-income people of color learn skills for the high-wage multimedia industry.

Magic Years is a worker-owned child care management company dedicated to providing high quality child care to diverse communities, while improving the standard of child care jobs.



Parent Voices assists low-income mothers in advocating for quality child care.

Equal Rights Advocates is a civil rights organization dedicated to ending discrimination against women and girls through legal challenges and public policy analysis. ERA is investigating how immigrants are affected by welfare-to-work laws.

Just Economics works to broaden public participation in setting economic policy by identifying the economic basis of social problems.

Sweatshop Watch is a coalition of labor, community, and immigrant rights, civil rights and women's organizations committed to eliminating the exploitation that occurs in sweatshops.

Women's Economic Agenda Project provides computer training, technical assistance, and micro-loans for women to start businesses.

California Women and Politics Grade: B

California has made important gains in the area of women and politics over the last 20 years, with increased representation by women at the local, state, and national levels. While we are encouraged by this significant trend, we also note that California trails other Western states in representation at the state level, and that we are far from achieving the desired goal of proportional representation at 50%.

- *The percentage of female legislators in the State assembly has risen from 2% to 25% over the last 20 years.*
- *California's 25% compares unfavorably to Washington's 41% and Arizona's 36%.*
- *In 1993, only 15% of the 1,496 sitting judges in California were women.¹⁴*



The Women's Foundation is proud to note that since 1992, two influential women have represented California in the United States Senate. The following table shows an encouraging trend in number of women who serve in California's State Senate and Assembly:

Yr.	Senate seats	% of Senate	Assembly seats	% of Assembly
1972	0	0%	2	2%
1980	2	5%	10	12%
1988	4	10%	13	16%
1994	5	12%	22	28%
1999	10	25%	20	25%

Source: California Legislature Handbooks, 1972-1988, Pocket Directory of the California Legislature, 1990-1998 and the California Secretary of State's Office.

While the number of women elected to state office has risen, we should also note that only a quarter of our political body of representatives are women, while more than 50% of the population in California is comprised of women.

Not only are women not proportionately represented in its state government, California lags behind all the other Western states in percentage of women legislators on the state level:

Washington:	41%
Arizona:	36%
Nevada:	36%
Colorado:	33%
Oregon:	30%
California:	25%
Nationwide:	22%

Source: Center for the American Woman and Politics, Rutgers University, 1998.
From: California and the West; Women to play largest role ever in legislature, Amy Pyle, Los Angeles Times 11/23/98

*More California Women Should be Registered to Vote!
58.1 % of California women registered to vote in 1992 and 1994, ranking 48 out of 50 states.*

The Women's Foundation is launching The Initiatives Forum, a policy action fund, designed to develop the vital links between those who make and influence policy, and the women and girls impacted by policy decisions.

A similar picture arises when looking at women's participation in local governments, and within the state judicial system. A survey done in 1990 by the Senate Rules Committee revealed that out of 3,044 members of boards and commission only 27.6% were women.¹⁵

In 1993, only 15% of the 1,496 sitting judges in California were women.¹⁶ The time for a more proportioned representation of women in the judicial system is not only overdue, but also critical in an era of dramatic increases in numbers of imprisoned women, and continuing concerns regarding how the judicial system responds to violence against women. San Francisco, for example, has established a Family Court, specifically addressing domestic violence.

The Women's Foundation celebrates those women who participate in all levels of policy and decision-making on the national, state, and local levels. However, the Foundation is not only interested in leaders with national stature: we are also committed to bringing the voices of disenfranchised women and girls into conversations about setting the agenda for policy and legislation.

The Women's Foundation is launching The Initiatives Forum, a policy action fund, designed to develop the vital links between those who make and influence policy, and the women and girls impacted by policy decisions. The Initiatives Forum will make action grants to community-based women's and girls' organizations to strengthen their capability for community education, organizing, and advocacy. The Initiatives Forum will also invest in the media and policy analysis capacity of women's and girls' organizations to increase their effectiveness.

Women's Institute for Leadership Development, (WILD) for Human Rights, one of TWF's fiscal-sponsored projects, took the lead in passing the UN Convention to Eliminate All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as a San Francisco City Ordinance.



TWF partnered with National Women's Political Caucus to form **the Women's Leadership Alliance**, a coalition of nine Bay Area women's organizations. This coalition is focusing on economic security for older women, and on passing CEDAW in the California State Legislature.

Patti Chang, President and CEO of TWF, is also the President of the San Francisco **Commission on the Status of Women**.

TWF was proud to support **Women Count!**, a non-partisan campaign to encourage women to cast their ballots in recent elections.

Other organizations working to improve the representation of women in politics include: NOW, National Women's Political Caucus, and Emily's List.

Education is not only a foundation for self-fulfillment, it is also the predominant path to self-sufficiency, as higher education is correlated with higher wages. The Women's Foundation applauds the gains made by California's women and girls in the increasing percentage of female high school graduates and enrollment in state universities. However, we remain concerned about the hostile environment girls face in school; conditions that lead girls to drop-out; and the gender stereotypes perpetuated in schools that negatively affect girls' educational paths, and in turn, their career options.

Despite the mandate to ensure gender equity in education over 27 years ago, girls as young as eight years-old still complain of sexual harassment in schools.

Women are better represented in higher education in California than ever before.

- *Even in 1990, California had a higher than national average for the number of women with more than a high school education—51% in California compared to 42.7% nationwide.¹⁷*

- *And, as the California Post-Secondary Education Commission revealed in 1997, women are well represented in the state school systems: in 1996, half of the students in the UC professional schools were women, and women comprised 48% of the master's students and 41% of doctoral students.*

While schools were required to ensure gender equity in 1972, it was not until Rep. Jackie Speier sponsored legislation in California in 1993 that the state conducted on-site survey inspections to determine compliance with these regulations. The Gender Equity Office of the California Department of Education has been studying girls in 20 school districts every year since 1994. Only one school district of the eighty that were studied in the past four years was in compliance with the gender equity laws. Information from the 1999 Senate of Office Research Report profiling girls in math and science courses supports this data. The report reveals that over the past 10 years the number of girls enrolled in math and science classes has hardly changed.

- *Between 1987 and 1997, there was only a 1% increase—from three to four percent—in enrollment of 9-12th grade girls in 1st year Physics; a 2% increase in Chemistry, from eight to ten percent; and a 4% increase in enrollment in Advanced Math, from six to ten percent.*

- *Despite the mandate to ensure gender equity in education over 27 years ago, girls as young as eight years-old still complain of sexual harassment in schools.*

- *In 1992, 89 percent of girls surveyed reported being harassed in school. ***

- *In 1993, 85 percent of girls ages eight to 11 reported having been harassed in school. ***

And the California Gender Equity Office still finds that schools don't maintain records of sexual harassment complaints, and that in many districts, sexual harassment policies don't include rules, procedures, or remedies.

Teenage pregnancy is another issue of concern. Nationally, 25 percent of all girls will become pregnant before their 18th birthday. **



• In California, pregnancy is the most common reason cited for dropping out of school; pregnant and parenting teenage girls account for 25 percent of the entire drop-out rate. ** Almost half of teen mothers never complete high school. **

How are California schools responding to these issues? Over \$88 million annually in federal and matching state funds go toward abstinence-only programs authorized by welfare reform legislation. Programs that discuss contraception and other protective behaviors are not eligible. ** “The Public Media Center and the Applied Research Center found in 1997 that the most widely used abstinence-only curriculum in California, Sex Respect, exhibits gender and racial bias, includes misinformation about the failure rate of contraceptives, and contains medically inaccurate information about AIDS. They report that two California school districts have found the curriculum violates the California Education Code, that 1/3 of the state’s public junior high schools are in violation of the Education Code for failing to cover condom effectiveness and that many of the California schools offering sex education do not comply with state law.” **



Although the statistics for women’s enrollment in higher education are encouraging, the status of K-12 education for girls and young women demands further scrutiny. While formally, girls are not excluded from any classes, the data about their experiences suggests that schools need to take proactive steps to ensure

the full inclusion of girls in all programs offered, and ensure that offer girls are educated in a safe environment designed to encourage their growth. Inadequate sex education, and the stigmatization of pregnancy means that more girls are being denied access to the education they deserve. Schools must monitor and train teachers, counselors, and all other school personal to engage in equitable interaction with girls, to decrease the hostile environment that pervades school hallways and classrooms, and to counteract gender stereotyping that negatively affects girls’ educational choices. Without work to assure compliance with gender equity laws, girls in California are unable to achieve equal outcomes and are still denied access into nontraditional classes, career paths and wages.

The Women’s Foundation’s grantees are addressing the difficult issues faced by women and girls in education.

Equal Rights Advocates, a civil rights organization dedicated to ending discrimination against women and girls, is launching a new coalition, RESPECT, to counteract sexual harassment in schools.

GirlSource creates economic empowerment opportunities for young women, including programs for students at Hilltop High School, a school designed for pregnant teens and teen mothers.

Girls After School Academy provides educational enrichment for African-American girls in San Francisco’s Bayview/Hunter’s Point neighborhood.

Real Alternatives for Youth runs a teen pregnancy prevention program in Visalia, focusing on Latina adolescents.

Lifetime works to encourage access to higher education for women receiving public assistance.

With the exception of Native Americans and most African-Americans, all people living in the United States are the children, grandchildren, or descendants of immigrants. It seems easy for most Americans to forget that those who arrived here on the Mayflower and their contemporaries who followed were *immigrants* who left their home country for a variety of reasons, including religious persecution, social inequality, and economic hardship.

Conservative forces have created a climate in which it has become acceptable to blame immigrants—among the most disenfranchised people in the U.S.—for a host of economic and social problems. This scapegoating of immigrants has a long history in the U.S., but is especially sobering during this time of national economic growth. Indeed, it is interesting to note that “groups today that are regarded as typically American, e.g., the Irish, Italians, and Eastern Europeans, were once viewed as distinctly ‘un-American.’”¹⁸ In the 1850’s, political parties argued in favor of implementing literacy tests for voting, aimed at Irish immigrants.¹⁹

Some anti-immigration discourse asserts that the U.S. cannot sustain a larger population. The problem of sustainability has little to do with the number of new immigrants, but rather, that the U.S. uses a disproportionate share of the world’s resources. Those who express concern or anger about immigrants’ use of social services compared with their tax expenditures might reframe the issue by ensuring that immigrants can work for self-sufficient wages, through access to quality education, job training, child care, and minimum or living wage standards. The real content of much anti-immigrant rhetoric seems to blame immigrants for their *poverty*, combined with a latent fear about a non-white majority in the U.S. Few anti-immigrant advocates express dismay about Madeline Albright, Ted Koppel, the billionaire financier George Soros, or famous musicians, models and athletes who make the United States their home.

Of the 1.2 million people who work in California’s \$19 billion agricultural industry, 90% are immigrants and 30% are women.

Indeed, as the Russell Sage Foundation noted, “The national immigration debate is increasingly preoccupied with questions about the current costs and benefits of immigration...in the long run, the impact of immigration on the country will turn less on the experiences of the new arrivals, and more on the eventual success or failure of their children and grandchildren.”²⁰ That is, rather than debating the economic contributions and burdens of immigrants, the country should prioritize how we are ensuring immigrant families well-being, in order to prepare for the future success of their children and descendants, particularly through education. “California must realize that those immigrants who are already here constitute about one-quarter of its existing population, and they and their children are responsible for about two-thirds of the state’s population growth. As a result, their experiences will go a long way toward determining the state’s immediate future.”²¹

- *About 50% of California’s foreign-born residents are from Mexico or Central America, and about 33% are from Asia, compared with 23 and 21 percent, respectively, for the U.S.*²²

- *By the year 2040, the population of California will be 48% Latino.*²³

Silicon Valley presents an interesting case study of native-born and immigrant women. While the technology industry offers the possibility of career advancement and wealth for many women, it also generates “sweatshops”, where a largely immigrant, female population works under dubious conditions.

- *According to an analysis of U.S. Census data by the Economic Policy Institute, wage inequality in Silicon Valley has exceeded wage inequity for the nation since 1993. Growth in compensation of top executives at major Silicon Valley firms relative to the earnings of their employees grew from 42:1 in 1991 to 220:1 in 1996.*²⁴

- *Over half of all Silicon Valley workers earn less than a self-sufficiency wage.*²⁵

Immigrant Women's Labor

- *More than 350,000 undocumented women work as nannies and house cleaners in the U.S., with no social security benefits.*
- *Approximately 300,000 immigrant women eligible for amnesty either did not apply or were denied legal status due to the discriminatory way immigration law is interpreted and implemented.²⁶*
- *Of the 1.2 million people who work in California's \$19 billion agricultural industry, 90% are immigrants and 30% are women.²⁷*

Women and Sweatshops

- *Los Angeles is now the country's largest garment center, employing an estimated 160,000 workers, mostly immigrants from Central America and Asia. The industry is also one of Southern California's largest manufacturing businesses.²⁸*
- *"The Department of Labor estimates that more than half of the country's 22,000 sewing shops violate minimum wage and overtime laws. Government surveys reveal that 75% of U.S. garment shops violate safety and health laws."²⁹*
- *Nationally, nearly 75% of the employees working in the apparel industry in 1996 were women.³⁰*
- *According to UCLA Professor Goetz Wolff, the average hourly wage of California's women garment workers fell from \$6.37 in 1988 to \$5.62 in 1993.³¹*
- *The Department of Labor conducted 101 investigations of California garment manufacturers between April and June 1998. Seventy-two of these investigations uncovered violations. The amount of back wages recovered by California garment workers was \$346,656 in the three month period.³²*



Immigrants and Public Assistance

Popular myth would have the public believe that immigrants utilize government-sponsored services which they do not pay for with tax money.

- *Nationally, immigrants pay \$70 to \$90 billion each year in taxes and use less than \$50 billion in services.³³ However, because undocumented immigrant populations are concentrated in about seven states (and because of the decline in federal responsibility for services) these states bear a disproportionate cost of providing education and Medicaid.³⁴ For example, federal expenditures for bilingual education declined 48% during the 1980s, despite a 50% increase in the population with limited English proficiency.³⁵*
- *Only five percent of AFDC recipients between 1984-88 nationally were foreign-born.³⁶ Equal Rights Advocates estimates that about 20% of California's AFDC recipients are immigrants. Changes in welfare laws that require recipients to work do not take language skills into account.*
- *Of the 125 million immigrants in the world today, less than 2% come to the U.S.³⁷*

Because employers frequently pay below market wages and offer no benefits to immigrants and migrant workers, American consumers enjoy lower prices for goods such as produce, clothing, and restaurant service. The public and employers benefit at the expense of immigrants' economic security and quality of life.

Current Law

Starting in 1995, opponents of immigration and immigrants' rights started to create more stringent laws; during 1996 and 1997, laws affecting immigrants have undergone significant changes. The stringent proposition 187 would have made it illegal for immigrants to utilize public schools, or have access to health care. While court battles led to the elimination of these most draconian restrictions, 187 stands as a model for anti-immigration organizers nationwide. Coupled with changes in welfare laws, the prevailing attitude of voters in the U.S. opposes federal government programs, leaving no certainty of social programs for the poorest and most disenfranchised people residing in the U.S.

Domestic Violence

• *A 1990 study of undocumented women in the SF/Bay Area found that 34% of Latina, 30% of Chinese, and 20% of Filipina women interviewed reported experiencing domestic violence. Forty-eight percent of the Latinas said that the intensity of the violence had increased since moving to the U.S.*³⁸

Non-profit organizations working on behalf of immigrants' rights are making a difference. Provisions helping battered immigrant women obtain legal residency were included in the 1994 Violence Against Women Act as the result of coalition between immigrant rights' advocates and anti-domestic violence advocates.



Refugees

A person is considered a refugee if she left her country of origin because of a “well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion.” This definition is used by the U.S. Refugee Act of 1980 and the United Nations. Economic violence, even in cases partially caused by the U.S. (such as in Central America), is not considered a cause for legal status.

Sexual Orientation and Immigration

It is significant to note that the overwhelming impetus for United Nation's attention to refugees was the indifference shown to those fleeing Nazism by most governments, who explicitly barred entry to refugees. Gay and lesbian people were among those singled out by the Nazis for extermination. Because the federal government does not recognize marriage

between people of the same gender, gay men and lesbians cannot (legally) marry their partners in order to stay in the United States. Many gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and HIV-positive people face persecution in their country of origin.

The Women's Foundation grantees work to ensure immigrants' rights:

Asian Immigrant Women's Advocates fosters empowerment of low-income Asian immigrant women through leadership development, education, activism, and advocacy.

California Latino Civil Rights Network serves as a statewide clearinghouse and resource center for research, advocacy, and policy development.

Immigrant Women's Advocacy Project works to improve the living conditions of immigrant women and girls in rural communities, especially the Central Valley.

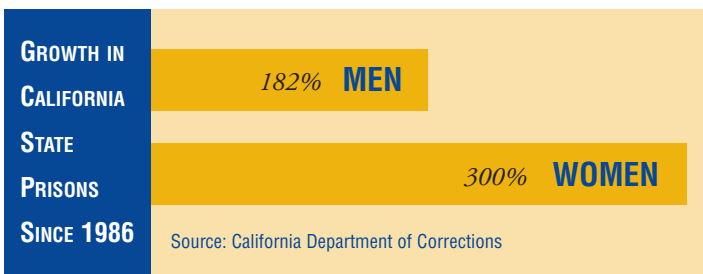
International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Coalition advocated for the rights of lesbian and gay immigrants and refugees.

Refugee Transitions teaches English, employment and life skills to refugees in their homes.

Women and Girls in California Prisons **Grade: F**

Swelling numbers say much about the state of women and girls in the corrections system today. Without any focus on rehabilitation, prisons have increasingly become institutions of social control for poor women and girls and those of color. Rising numbers do not indicate a rise in crime, but rather the growing racial and economic injustice in this state that takes its toll on poor women with children and those of color who are without resources and assets. California now has the uncertain distinction of having the most women prisoners in the nation, as well as the world's largest women's prison. This is partly due to the worsening economic conditions for women, and the increase in arrest rates due to the "war on crime" and "war on drugs". The rate of imprisonment in California is approximately 45 per 100,000. Women have become the hidden victims of the state's zeal for incarceration, as the number of California prisoners surged past the 100,000 mark in April of 1991.³⁹

- *Since 1981, the number of women in California state prisons has risen from 1,010 to 11,505, a staggering 1,100% or 11 times more than in 1981.*⁴⁰
- *By contrast, the men's prison population has increased 182% since 1986 compared to the 300% growth of women prisoners in the same thirteen-year period.*⁴¹



California now has the uncertain distinction of having the most women prisoners in the nation, as well as the world's largest women's prison.

California has the largest prison building plan in the United States, and even so women are entering prisons at such increasing levels that new prisons can barely accommodate them. Every prison for women in California is 160% or more above its designated capacity. The federal prison in Dublin is 128% over capacity. California also has the largest correctional facility for women. Together the Central CA Facility and the neighboring Valley State Prison—California's maximum security prison for women—account for 60% of the women prisoner population in California.⁴²

Within the prison population, poverty is the norm. The Bureau of Justice Statistics says that "the greatest source of growth in state prisons is the violent offenders, not drug violators." However, roughly four out of every five women in California prisons have been sentenced to prison for nonviolent crimes. More women than men commit crimes due to circumstances arising out of poverty.

- *80% of women in prison report incomes of less than \$2,000 the year before their arrest and 92% of women prisoners reported an annual income of less than \$10,000.*
- *80% of women prisoners are non-violent offenders. Their crimes include "paper" crimes such as credit card theft, forgery, larceny, property crimes and drug offenses.*⁴³

Disturbingly, women of color account for a large fraction of the high numbers.⁴⁴

- *As of January, 1999, 62% of the women in CA state prisons are women of color.*
- *While African American women comprise 13% of California's population, they make up 33.6% of the female prison population.*
- *Conversely, white women comprise 37% of the prison population compared to 48% of the California population.*

- *Latinas are 22.3% of the women's prison population.*

According to a Department of Justice Statistics report released in April 1998, 48% of women in United States jails reported being sexually or physically abused prior to detention; 27% reported being raped. Given the general under-reporting by women in the area of sexual assault, the actual percentages are likely to be much higher.

A 1995 study of women in the California prison system found that 71% of incarcerated women had experienced ongoing physical abuse prior to the age of 18 and that 62% experienced ongoing physical abuse after 18 years of age. The report also found that 41% of women incarcerated in California had experienced sexual abuse prior to the age of 18 and 41% experienced sexual abuse after 18 years of age. Such a background further inhibits the ability of female inmates to report or seek recourse in case of abuse within the prison system.⁴⁵

The interlocking nature of incarceration and poverty do not stop with the women who go to prison. 76% of California women prisoners are mothers,⁴⁶ and most of these mothers have single head of household status. When women go to prison, it is likely that their children will enter foster care, and not have contact with a parent. One study suggests that children of prison inmates are six times more likely to become imprisoned.⁴⁷

The rise in criminal offenses among girls is a clear indicator of this phenomenon and shows the unfortunate and continuing trend of the incarceration of women and girls.

- *Between 1988 and 1997, the number of girls admitted to California juvenile halls increased nearly twice as fast as that of boys.*⁴⁸

- *Forty-six percent of almost 1,000 girls studied in California juvenile halls had records of abuse or neglect in their case files.*⁴⁹



- *A study of women's prisons in three states including California found that 45.1% of those interviewed had been arrested as a juvenile and 44.2% were locked up for more than one day as juveniles.*⁵⁰

Grantees of The Women's Foundation are raising their voices to stand by women and girls who are considered "throwaway" people.

WILD for Human Rights, a fiscal sponsored project of The Women's Foundation, has generated reports on the human rights of women in prison and has begun to document the abuses that women in prison uniquely experience.

Legal Services for Prisoners with Children works with women prisoners in educating the public about the prison system's violations, such as the lack of adequate healthcare, custody issues and inhumane practices such as handcuffing women prisoners while they give birth.

Families with a Future/Network on Women in Prison coordinates transportation and accommodations for minor children and their caregivers to visit their incarcerated mothers.

Grandmothers as Second Parents organizes support groups for grandparents who take on the role of parents for children whose parents are imprisoned.

Sierra Youth Center is one of the few residential programs in California for adjudicated female adolescents: they estimate that at least 75% of their youth are survivors of physical abuse.

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