

# ECONOMIC ISSUES FOR WOMEN IN TEXAS: Houston Metro Area

In the Houston metro area, **29%** of households are **female-headed** yet they represent **52%** of households living in **poverty**<sup>1</sup>

Women in the Houston metro area earn almost **\$11,000 less** than men a year<sup>6</sup>

*Median earnings for full-time workers in 2012*

By identifying the issues that affect women's economic security, we can discover opportunities and target resources to drive positive change for the more than 3 million women and girls living in the Houston metro area.<sup>2</sup> This fact sheet complements the state report, *Economic Issues for Women in Texas*, and examines the building blocks of economic security important for women and families in the Houston metro area, comprising Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery and Waller counties.<sup>3</sup> It is one in a series of nine metro fact sheets focusing on Amarillo, Austin, Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston, McAllen, San Antonio and Tyler metro areas.

## WOMEN'S EARNINGS

Full-time working women in the Houston metro area have median earnings of \$38,474 a year, the second-highest earnings behind Dallas (\$40,714). However, the full-time earnings gap between men and women is \$10,855 per year, the largest earnings gap of the nine selected metro areas. Put another way, Houston women earn 78 cents for every dollar a man earns.<sup>4</sup>

Depending on whether the employer or household is responsible for the health insurance premium, 65 to 72 percent of jobs in the Houston metro area do not pay enough for a one-parent, one-child family to make ends meet and save a little for a college education and retirement. Two-parent families fare somewhat better. However, even for families with two full-time working adults and two children, who have the benefit of employer-sponsored health premiums, 27 percent of jobs in the Houston metro area still do not pay enough for families to make ends meet and save for college and retirement.<sup>5</sup>



72% of jobs in the Houston metro area pay less than \$44,700 per year — which cannot sustain a single mom with one child<sup>7</sup>

The occupational sector with the highest female employment is Educational Services, which includes teachers, administrators and teaching assistants. Women employed in this sector earn on average \$3,334 per month. One sector with high female employment and strong wages is Professional, Scientific and Technical Services, which includes occupations such as accountants, lawyers and management analysts.<sup>8</sup> As shown below, men who work in this subsector tend to earn significantly more.

5 MOST COMMON JOB SECTORS FOR HOUSTON METRO WOMEN	AVG MONTHLY EARNINGS	5 MOST COMMON JOB SECTORS FOR HOUSTON METRO MEN	AVG MONTHLY EARNINGS
1. Educational Services	\$3,334	1. Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	\$8,676
2. Ambulatory Health Care Services	\$2,874	2. Administrative and Support Services	\$4,450
3. Food Services and Drinking Places	\$1,275	3. Food Services and Drinking Places	\$1,594
4. Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	\$4,967	4. Educational Services	\$4,332
5. Administrative and Support Services	\$2,900	5. Specialty Trade Contractors	\$4,405

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Workforce Indicators for 2013 Q2

### WOMEN AND POVERTY

Although the female poverty rate in the Houston metro area is lower than in Texas, over 500,000 women and girls in the Houston metro area still live in poverty.<sup>9</sup> Female-headed households make up 29 percent of all households in the Houston area, but 52 percent of all households in poverty.<sup>10</sup> For a single parent with two children, poverty is defined as living on less than \$18,769 in income per year.<sup>11</sup>

Female poverty is lower in Houston than other metro areas, but women are still more likely to live in poverty than men<sup>12</sup>

POVERTY INDICATOR BY GENDER	HOUSTON METRO AREA	TEXAS
Female poverty rate	17%	19%
Male poverty rate	14%	16%
# of women and girls in poverty	509,751	2,358,471
# of men and boys in poverty	419,042	1,911,747
Female-to-male poverty ratio	1.2x greater	1.2x greater
# of female-headed households in poverty	146,726	728,042
# of male-headed households in poverty	58,801	290,887
% of households that are headed by females	29%	30%
% of households in poverty that are headed by females	52%	53%

Source: 2012 American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, Table B17017 and B17001

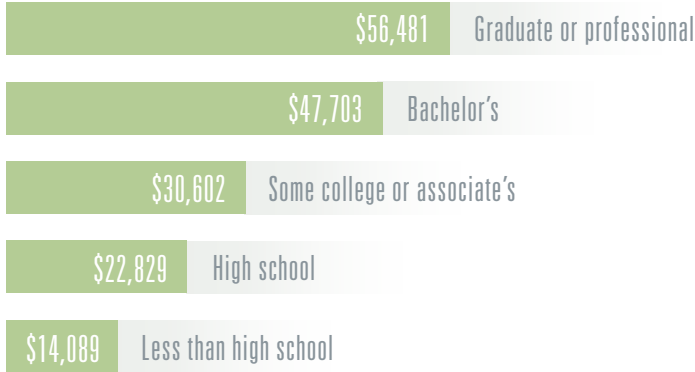
## THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF WOMEN'S ECONOMIC SECURITY

### EDUCATION

Women in the Houston metro area earn more with each step up in their education. Women with a high school diploma earn 62 percent more than women without a high school diploma. Women with a bachelor's degree earn 56 percent more than women with an associate's degree.<sup>13</sup> However, the "leaky pipeline" shows that there are still many barriers for students, female and male.<sup>14</sup>

### Education Pays<sup>15</sup>

Median earnings for women 25 and over with earnings



### HEALTH INSURANCE

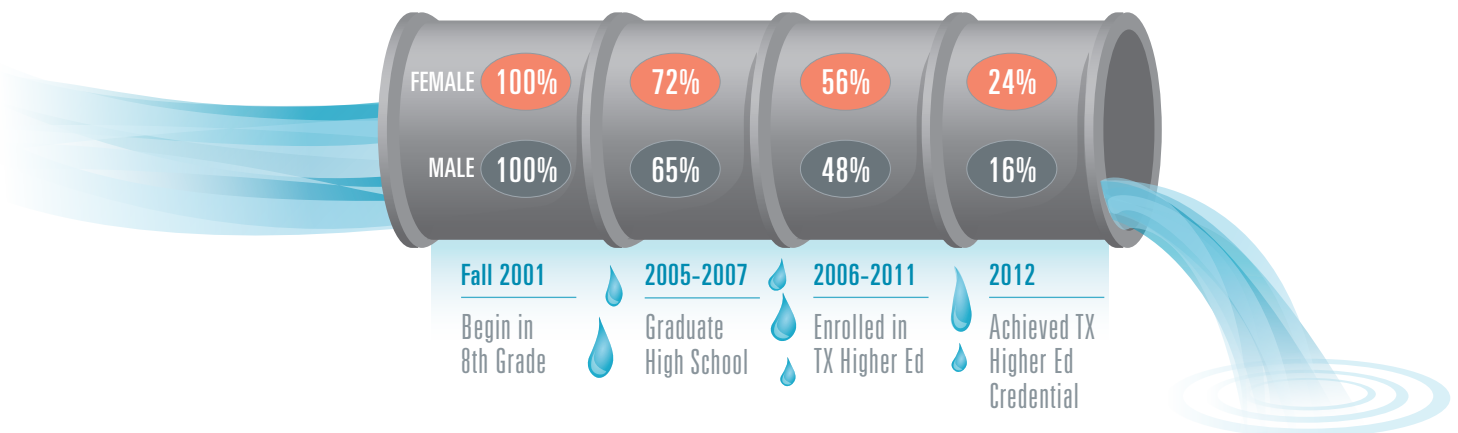
Health insurance is a financial shield that 23 percent of women and girls in the Houston metro area lack. Thirty-nine percent of all uninsured females in the Houston metro area are between the ages of 18 to 34; 18 percent are girls under age 18.<sup>17</sup>

More than **689,000** women and girls in the **Houston** metro area don't have **health insurance**<sup>18</sup>



### The "Leaky Pipeline" for Houston metro students<sup>16</sup>

24 percent of female eighth-graders completed a higher education credential 11 years later



15,566 children received financial assistance for child care, but 211,484 would likely be eligible<sup>19</sup>



Percentage of renter families burdened by housing costs in the Houston metro area<sup>24</sup>

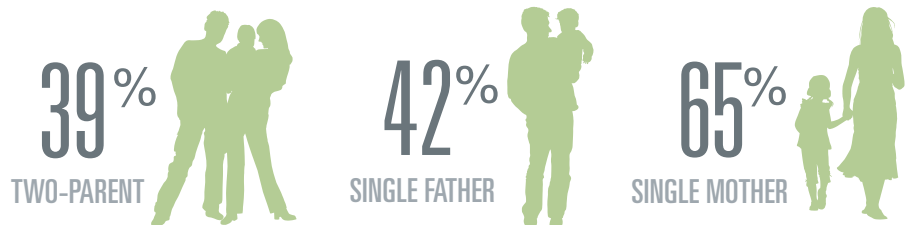
*This study was produced by Texas Women's Foundation, the research and advocacy arm of Dallas Women's Foundation. The study was conducted by the Center for Public Policy Priorities. For endnotes and sources, visit [www.TexasWomensFdn.org](http://www.TexasWomensFdn.org)*

## CHILD CARE

With 59 percent of children under six living in families with all available parents in the labor force,<sup>20</sup> child care is a significant need for women in the Houston metro area. Too many families are not able to access child care subsidies. In 2012, the average monthly waitlist for child care subsidies in the Gulf Coast Workforce Development Area was 4,521 children.<sup>21</sup> This means that low-income parents who are working or in job-training programs are not able to receive the financial assistance for child care they qualify for and that helps them to become and remain employed. High child care costs force many lower wage women to stay out of the workforce. In the Houston metro area, typical cost for full-time care for one child is \$5,297 per year, while a typical single mom has an income of \$25,694 a year.<sup>22</sup>

## HOUSING

High housing costs squeeze a family's budget, making it difficult to afford other basic needs, such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care. The housing burden is highest for single mothers in the Houston metro area. Sixty-five percent of single-mother families in the Houston area who rent their homes spend at least 30 percent of their income on housing costs.<sup>23</sup>



## CONCLUSION

Strengthening the economic security of women and girls is critical to the success and future of the Houston metro area. These economic building blocks—women's earnings, education, health care, child care and housing—affect women's ability not only to be more financially secure in the present, but to move up in the future. We hope this report will spark a desire to learn more about issues affecting women in this area, and help drive change for women and their families. We invite you to contribute your voice and resources to make the ripple effect felt for families and communities throughout the Houston metro area.