



D.C. is ranked last for women's health and well-being. It has the worst incidence rate of diabetes and mortality rate from breast cancer. It also has the worst proportions of AIDS and chlamydia cases among women.

--Institute for Women's Policy Research's Health and Well-Being Composite Index

In 2003, *A Portrait of Women and Girls in the Washington Metropolitan Area* found that four key areas hold the greatest potential to positively impact women's lives and economic security:

- Financial education and wealth creation opportunities;
- Pathways to self-sufficient jobs and business ownership;
- Affordable child care and early education options; and,
- **Improved health and safety.**

ISSUES OF HEALTH & SAFETY OF WOMEN IN OUR REGION

HIV AND AIDS

D.C. has the highest incidence of AIDS among women *than any other state* and a rate *10 times the national average*. Despite the falling incidence among men in D.C., new cases tripled among women from 1985 to 1999. In Wards 7 and 8, *nearly half* of new cases are women.

LACK OF HEALTH INSURANCE

- In our region, 12-14 percent of adult women are uninsured.
- The majority of women without insurance are working.
- Low income women are twice as likely to delay or forgo care due to cost as other women.
- Uninsured women are more likely to receive late stage diagnosis of certain cancers due to a lack of access to screenings such as Pap smears or breast exams. (This region exceeds the national average of female cancer deaths. D.C. has the highest breast cancer death rate in the country.)

REPRODUCTIVE CARE

- In D.C., 46 percent of women did not receive prenatal care in the first trimester (more than triple the national average).
- In our region, the infant mortality rate remains above the national rate.

PARTICULAR ISSUES FOR WOMEN OF COLOR

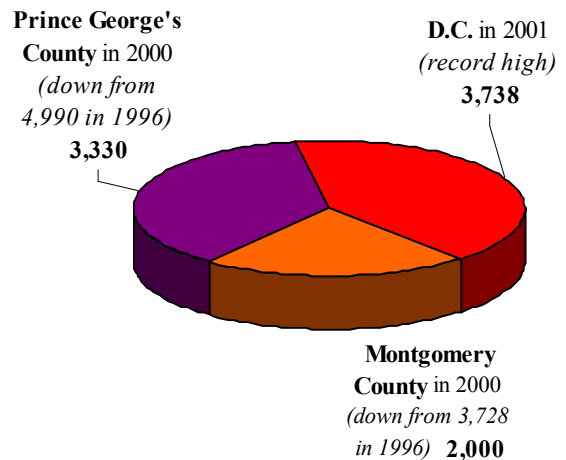
- African American women have higher rates of death from heart disease than other women of color.
- African American women have the highest level of obesity among all women in the area.
- African Americans are only 38 percent of the suburban Washington, D.C. population, but they accounted for 73 percent of its new HIV cases in 2000.
- African American women and Latinas, especially in D.C., are far less likely to receive prenatal care in the first trimester.
- D.C. has the third highest rate of African-American maternal deaths.

VIOLENCE AND SAFETY

- Despite violence rates decreasingly regionally from 1997-2000, local women and girls expressed an alarming sense of personal insecurity at community forums.
- More than 60 percent of civil-protection orders filed in D.C. were made by women in Wards 7 and 8. In 2002, women filed more protective orders than in any previous year that the data had been tracked.

- In D.C., more than 22,500 reports of violence against women were made in 2000. Women made up 50 percent of all reported, violent crime victims in D.C. that year.
- D.C. had a rape report rate from 1997-1999 that was markedly higher than other local jurisdictions and exceeding the national rate.
- Many girls in community forums had experienced violence and had little faith that the police or other institutions of authority could alter the situation.
- In D.C., there are only two confidential shelters for women fleeing violence, with approximately 50 beds total. Both have a waiting list. In Prince George's County, there is one shelter with 25 beds, and Alexandria has 14 beds. For women with children, safe spaces are even more difficult to find.

Domestic Violence Cases



POTENTIAL FOR IMPROVEMENT AND INNOVATION

The *Portrait Project* revealed that the following strategies would significantly transform the lives of women and girls in our region, and move women, their families and our community further along the pathway of economic self-sufficiency and progress:

1. Ensure that everyone, regardless of income, has adequate **health insurance** and access to health services.
2. Invest in outreach and health education to **improve use of preventative care services and screenings**.
3. Conduct outreach to **maintain gains in prenatal care among women of color** and **increase health education, especially on issues around sexual and reproductive health** among teens.
4. Improve the collection and use of **local, standardized data**, broken down by race, gender and age.
5. Develop **comprehensive services for victims of domestic violence** and increase public awareness of available services.
6. Make after-school **programs and care for children** during other out-of-school time more accessible for all young people—especially those in dangerous neighborhoods.
7. Ensure that **services are culturally appropriate** for women and girls of all backgrounds.
8. Make accurate, timely and **comparable data on violent crime** available to the community on a consistent basis.

These strategies now form the basis of Stepping Stones' grantmaking and capacity strengthening efforts throughout our region.

Join us as we change lives and create a stronger community through *the power of giving together*.

Whether it's time, talent or treasure you bring, The Women's Foundation has the knowledge, commitment and experience to make your gifts count in the lives of local women and girls.

Learn more at TheWomensFoundation.org, where you can download a copy of *The Portrait Project* report and check out our blog and get involved our work.