

Economic Security

INDICATORS

Economic Security is the first of three sections, to be followed in the year ahead by *Health & Safety* and *Education & Leadership*. In this section, we see how low wages, lack of child care, fewer assets and other factors all contribute to the economic instability facing an astounding and unacceptable number of women and their families in this region.

To better understand the challenges facing our region's women, we present the *Dallas Women's Foundation's Economic Security Indicators*. By annually examining and measuring the status of women with key indicators, Dallas Women's Foundation will inform our own grant making. In addition, we hope to provide objective data to agency partners, policymakers, other foundations, and the academic community, and advocate to create informed and impactful action.

Knowledge is power and the key to finding solutions. The Dallas Women's Foundation looks forward to working with the community to harness the information in this ongoing study to invest in today's and tomorrow's women and contribute to a healthy, thriving community.

Note: Sources for the enclosed findings are detailed in Dallas Women's Foundation Economic Indicator Study available at www.dallaswomensfoundation.org/research/

For more information about the Dallas Women's Foundation and how to get involved visit www.dallaswomensfoundation.org or call 214-965-9977. To be added to Dallas Women's Foundation secure database to receive invitation to events and periodic updates, please email lgrindele@dallaswomensfoundation.org.

2008*

*Updated 10/08 with
2007 ACS data



Lifting Communities
by investing
in women

Economic Security

INDICATORS

STUDY OVERVIEW

Dallas Women's Foundation's annual indicator study will examine three areas that serve as the foundation to well-being: *Economic Security, Health & Safety and Education & Leadership*. Each is essential to self-sufficiency and therefore essential to our work with women and girls. In the first report, Dallas Women's Foundation will examine Economic Security indicators, with reports on the other sections to follow throughout the year ahead.

KEY FINDINGS

Female-headed households are a substantial demographic segment with significant impact in our region.

There are 600,400 households led by women in Dallas-Fort Worth – more than one quarter (28 percent) of the region's total. That is more households than there are in the cities of Dallas and Arlington combined.

Households serve as the building blocks of economic health in every community. The economic security of female-headed households is essential to the well-being of the entire metropolitan area.

Female-headed households and families in Dallas-Fort Worth suffer disproportionately from poverty.

Female-headed households are three times more likely to live in poverty than households led by married couples and by men.

Even when not compared to other households, the numbers are startling. In the Dallas-Fort Worth region, one out of every five households led by women – 125,400 total – live below the poverty line. That is roughly equal to a city the size of Arlington.

Education is crucial, but education alone does not erase economic disparities for the region's women.

At best, women in our region must achieve a full level of education ahead of men to make the same level of earnings. For example, the median earnings of a woman with a graduate degree is less than that of a man with only a bachelor's degree. Similarly, women must get a high school diploma to make the same amount as men who have not completed high school.

While education is a crucial factor that significantly improves earnings for women, it alone does not lift women up from financial difficulty as effectively as it does men.

Lower pay and women's roles in our region's work force jeopardize their chances of achieving economic security.

Earnings for our region's women are disproportionately low, with median earnings for women about 15% less than that of men. In terms of wages, women earn significantly less than their male peers in almost every field.

But income and earnings discrepancies also originate in the types of jobs women hold. Women are less likely to participate in the labor force and are more likely to work in lower paying occupations than men. In addition, only 37 percent of women participate in full-time, year-round jobs, which are most likely to open doors to higher wages, health insurance and group retirement plans.

Our region's women have fewer safeguards to provide a buffer from financial troubles.

The median net worth of Texas' female-headed households is less than half of that for households headed by men or married couples. In addition, the rate of homeownership among women-led households lags that of other households by 10 percent. Also contributing to the lack of safeguards for women are high health care and child care costs.

More than ever, today's women have access to the building blocks for a self-sufficient, fulfilling existence. While we rejoice in this progress, we remain profoundly distressed by the significant challenges that remain. Unequal wages, domestic violence, impediments to education, obstacles to full-time jobs and lack of affordable child care, health care and elder care hinder too many women.

The good news is, if we rise to the challenge and address the issues facing the region's women, the rewards will be exponential. We know that when you support and strengthen individual women, their successes are passed along to their families and, ultimately, their communities. The result is a ripple effect that can produce profound societal change.

