

# **WOMEN'S ISSUES** are **COMMUNITY** **ISSUES**

**2017 Status Report on  
Women & Children in Central Texas**



**Women's Fund**  
AUSTIN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

# WOMEN'S ISSUES ARE COMMUNITY ISSUES

## WOMEN'S FUND LEADERSHIP

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# We believe that when women are economically secure, safe and healthy, then families and communities thrive.

## AUSTIN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Austin Community Foundation is the catalyst for generosity in Austin – and has been for the past 40 years. We bring together philanthropists, dollars and ideas to create the Austin where we all want to live.



### Our approach is to:

- / **Inform.** We apply data to understand the greatest needs to close the opportunity gap in Central Texas.
- / **Invite.** We bring funders, leaders and organizations to the table.
- / **Invest.** We make a collective impact by informing and engaging donors and fundholders and together making philanthropic investments that shape Austin's future, today.

## THE WOMEN'S FUND

The Women's Fund at Austin Community Foundation was founded in 2004 to focus on the needs of women and children in Central Texas. At the time, there was a lack of philanthropic support targeting the specific needs of women and children and no comprehensive data set tracking their well-being in our community. Since then, Women's Fund investors have granted over \$1.4 million to more than 60 local nonprofit programs, and in 2015, the Women's Fund issued its first report, *Stronger Women, Better Austin: A Status Report on Women & Children in Central Texas*.

During this time, there has been a growing awareness that **gender matters**. Investing in a woman has a proven ripple effect, benefiting not just her family but her greater community. **The Women's Fund is a key strategy in Austin Community Foundation's effort to close the opportunity gap.**

The central question remains: *What is life in the Austin area really like for women today?*

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

Similar to *Stronger Women, Better Austin*, this report focuses on six indicator areas: basic needs, economic security, education, health, safety and leadership. Additionally, in this report we have sought to:

- / Refresh data from the 2015 report and, where helpful, provide comparisons to track progress.
- / Expand our previous study to include data and analysis on the well-being of women and children in the entire six county area (Bastrop, Burnet, Caldwell, Hays, Travis and Williamson Counties). The addition of regional and longitudinal data is essential to understanding our changing community.
- / Augment data with survey results from the Austin Area Sustainability Project (A<sup>2</sup>SI) project. Survey questions provide insight to women's lived experience, such as whether she feels safe walking in her neighborhood at night.
- / Provide a deeper dive into key themes and crucial building blocks for women's economic security: housing, child care, education and teen pregnancy prevention.

## METHODOLOGY

This report was developed in collaboration with the RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at The University of Texas at Austin. The RGK Center is leading the Austin Area Sustainability Indicators (A<sup>2</sup>SI) project, a community data initiative that tracks 128 regional indicators of community sustainability. The data in this report is either part of the A<sup>2</sup>SI Community Survey data that is collected by the RGK Center or publicly available data through the American Community Survey, governmental databases and other trusted research institutes.

Learn more: [austinindicators.org](http://austinindicators.org)

# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In many ways women and children in Central Texas are thriving. As a slight majority of Central Texans, women have a higher educational attainment than men and more than half have completed some college. Women are becoming notable leaders in our community, especially through elected positions. Women entrepreneurs are finding great success, especially in Austin.

However, women continue to be paid less than men in comparable positions, including management roles, and women report feeling limited by their skills or a lack of equal opportunity to get the job they want. Lower wages have life-long implications for women's economic security, and for single mothers the consequences are profound. One in three families headed by a single mother lives in poverty.

About 25% of Central Texans are children (18 or under). Greatly concerning is the fact that as many as one in four children live in poverty, though this varies depending on the county where a child lives. Children's safety also varies by county with the highest rates of child abuse in rural counties that often lack support services for struggling families.

Suburban family poverty is increasing by as much as 13%, presumably due to the high cost of living in Austin. Another stressor for families is child care access and cost, and even working families who qualify for child care assistance cannot get it due to lack of funding. Notably, the cycle of poverty is not a cliché. A child's academic success, including high school graduation and college completion, is strongly correlated with a family's income.

Overall, women either appear to be doing well against some challenging odds or struggling with little support, especially in the suburbs and rural areas where there is less established infrastructure, including affordable child care, affordable healthcare, public transportation and job training. Without a doubt, Austin as the hub of economic growth in Central Texas must look after its neighbors who work hard to support its success.

**The Women's Fund believes that ensuring the economic security of women in Central Texas is key to alleviating poverty across our community. As this report illustrates, there is indeed work to be done.**

# Getting to know Central Texas

## WHO ARE CENTRAL TEXAS WOMEN?<sup>1</sup>

- / Just over half of Central Texans are women.
- / More than half of Central Texas women have a bachelor's degree or higher.
- / **Nearly 60% of women work in the paid labor force.<sup>2</sup>**

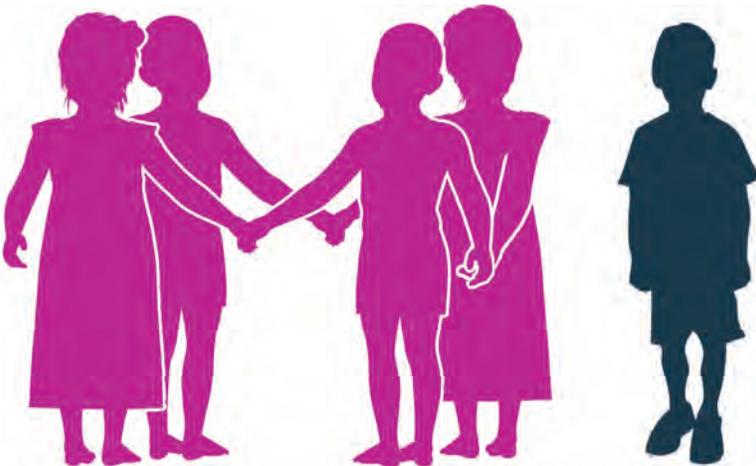
## WHO ARE CENTRAL TEXAS CHILDREN?<sup>3</sup>

- / About 25% of Central Texans are children (18 or under).
- / **One in five children live in poverty in the Austin area.**
- / In Burnet and Caldwell Counties this number is closer to one in four children in poverty.

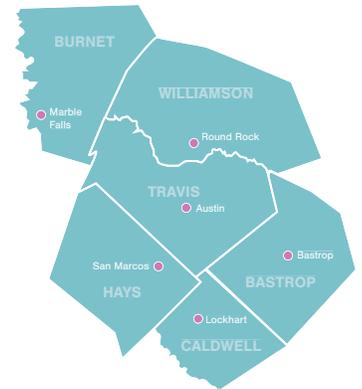
## WHO ARE CENTRAL TEXAS FAMILIES?<sup>4</sup>

- / More than 40% of households in Williamson County include at least one child, yet in Travis County just over 30% of households include a child.
- / While the majority of households with children are headed by married-couple families, the number of single-headed households with children has increased from 27% in 2010 to 40% in 2014.
- / **Of households with children in Travis County, 20% (1 in 5) are headed by a single woman.**

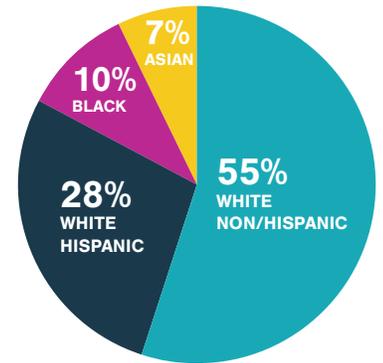
## 1 in 5 children live in poverty in the Austin area



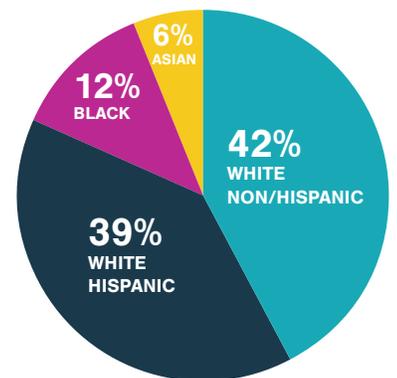
## OUR REGION



## DEMOGRAPHICS



RACE/ETHNICITY  
ALL FEMALES IN  
TRAVIS COUNTY



RACE/ETHNICITY  
FEMALE CHILDREN  
UNDER 19

**Example of family budget:  
single mom with 2 kids\***

Annual income needs to be 2.7x bigger than 100% of poverty

Hourly wage needed - \$24.85  
Necessary Annual Income - \$49,704

BASIC EXPENSES:	
Housing.....	\$963
Food.....	\$529
Child Care.....	\$900
Medical/Insurance.....	\$799
Transportation.....	\$359
Other Necessities.....	\$298
Savings.....	\$0
Payment on Debt.....	\$0
Federal Taxes/Credits.....	\$293

**TOTAL \$4,142  
per month**

\*Developed using CPPP's family budget calculator: [familybudgets.org](http://familybudgets.org)

**ANNUAL  
POVERTY  
GUIDELINES**

2015<sup>10</sup>



**1 PERSON  
\$11,770**



**2 PERSON  
\$15,930**



**3 PERSON  
\$20,090**



**4 PERSON  
\$24,250**

**Basic Needs**

**WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN THE AUSTIN AREA  
ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY LIVING IN POVERTY**

Families headed by single mothers are especially challenged with one-third of them living in poverty with their children.<sup>5</sup> While the family poverty rate in our region has remained around 10%, where a family lives is rapidly changing due to lack of affordable housing. Central Texas is seeing one of the fastest increases of people living in poverty in the suburbs in the nation. This shift in population has profound implications for employment, transportation and schools. In addition, services for families in need—whether provided by nonprofits or local government—have not kept up with shifting populations.

- / Nearly 40% of Austin-area single mothers and their children live in poverty compared to only 10% of the general population.<sup>6</sup>
- / Women make up approximately 38% of the homeless population. Children comprise an estimated 20% of Austinites experiencing homelessness.<sup>7</sup>
- / Nearly 2/3 of students in Austin ISD qualify for free or reduced meals due to their family's extremely low income.<sup>8</sup>
- / One in three female-headed households receives supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) benefits.<sup>9</sup>

**WHAT IS POVERTY?**

Poverty statistics are often used as a proxy measure to describe the number of people or share of the population that, because of income level, may face challenges meeting their basic needs. Poverty thresholds are updated annually by the U.S. Census Bureau and used for calculating all official poverty statistics. Households with annual incomes below the thresholds are counted as living in poverty, while households with annual incomes at or above are not considered to be in poverty.

At times, a household's income will be expressed as a percentage of the poverty threshold. For example, a family with income equal to the poverty threshold can be described as living "at 100% of poverty, and a family with income equal to double the poverty threshold can be described as living "at 200% of poverty.

In Travis County in 2015, about 22.6% of children and 14.5% of adults had household incomes under 100% of the poverty level.

**It is estimated that households in the Austin area need incomes of at least double the poverty threshold simply to make ends meet.**

# Economic Security

A stable income to support a basic standard of living now and in the foreseeable future is essential for Central Texas families. Yet with women making on average \$9,000/year less than men in comparable jobs,<sup>11</sup> women are more likely to experience financial insecurity.

- / The median income for women working full-time is \$37,270 and for men is \$46,410 across the Austin area.<sup>12</sup>
- / In Travis County, the median income for women is \$41,919 and for men is \$50,103.<sup>13</sup>
- / One in four women do not feel there are equal opportunities to get the job they desire, a trend that has persisted since 2006.<sup>14</sup>

**3 out of 4 of Central Texas jobs do not pay a living wage for a single mom with two kids.**



## HOUSING

A FOUNDATION FOR ECONOMIC SECURITY



Safe and affordable housing is a foundational necessity for a woman's economic security. As the Central Texas economy booms, housing costs have soared. 60% of single mother households that rent in Central Texas are housing cost burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their monthly income on housing.<sup>15</sup> This means that women are forced to prioritize rent over other necessary expenses such as food, transportation and medical needs. It also means that women are disproportionately the victims of frequent evictions<sup>16</sup> when they are unable to make ends meet and pay rent on time.

- / Though the region's population grew by 10% from 2010 to 2014, housing only grew by 3%, making it difficult and competitive to find housing. Securing housing a family can afford presents an even greater challenge.<sup>17</sup>
- / To afford a rental unit without experiencing a housing cost burden, an individual must earn approximately \$20/hour. This hourly wage is well above the minimum wage of \$7.25/hour. A modest two-bedroom rental is increasingly out of range for Central Texas residents.<sup>18</sup>
- / More than 50% of Austin area survey respondents believe the community has a responsibility to make sure housing is more affordable for median income workers.<sup>19</sup>
- / Nearly half of residents living in Housing Authority City of Austin (HACA) properties are single moms. 80% of HACA residents are women.<sup>20</sup>

# Education<sup>21</sup>

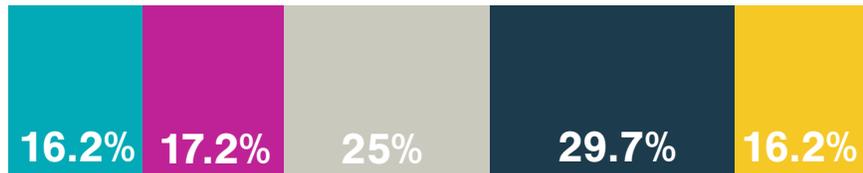
**57% of Central Texas students are not ready to enter kindergarten.**



Educational outcomes for children in Central Texas vary widely depending on their family’s income. Students from families with low incomes do not perform as well throughout their educational journeys when compared to non-low-income peers.

- / More than half—57%—of Central Texas students are not ready to enter kindergarten across a range of competencies.
- / 45% of students in Central Texas are classified as low income, nearly double from ten years ago.
- / Fortunately, Central Texas low-income students graduate at a higher rate than their peers in other regions across the state.
- / However, only 1 in 10 low-income graduates complete college within six years of finishing high school.

**WOMEN’S EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN TRAVIS COUNTY**



## CHILD CARE AN ESSENTIAL WORK SUPPORT



Meaningful engagement in the workforce for women requires access to affordable, quality child care. The benefits can be seen for both mother and child, as research shows students that attend quality child care enter kindergarten ready to succeed and enable mothers to work without the stress of finding reliable, affordable care for their children.

- / More than 60% of children age 6 and under have all available parents in the labor force.<sup>22</sup> This population has consistently surpassed the available capacity of child care facilities and far surpasses the capacity of accredited facilities.
- / Child care should cost no more than 10% of a family’s median income. The average yearly tuition—\$8,836—for one child in a full-time licensed child care center is well out of reach for many families.<sup>23</sup>
- / Though the Texas Workforce Commission provides child care assistance to parents that work, attend school, or participate in job training, only half of child care providers in Travis County accept these subsidies.<sup>24</sup>
- / More than 10,000 low income children in Travis County do not have access to a subsidized child care spot.<sup>25</sup>

# Education

## A PATHWAY OUT OF POVERTY



The opportunity to pursue education, persist to completion, and acquire job skills ensures that women can provide financially for their families. Women in Central Texas earn more with every step up on the ladder of educational attainment, though earnings still lag behind similarly educated men. With family incomes increasingly dependent on having women in the workforce, access to affordable, high-quality education is a key contributor to overall economic security for women and families.

- / More than half of Austin-area women have completed some college.<sup>26</sup>
- / Despite enrolling in and completing college at higher rates than male peers, women struggle to pay off student debt.<sup>27</sup>
- / One in three women in the Austin area feel limited by current skill level or education in the kind of job they'd like to have.<sup>28</sup>
- / Despite outpacing their male peers in degree completion, women consistently have a higher rate of poverty across each level of educational attainment.<sup>29</sup>
- / When looking at rates of degree completion over time, a “leaky pipeline” shows that girls and women face many obstacles to persisting through the educational spectrum.<sup>30</sup>

### TOP WORKFORCE SECTORS FOR WOMEN IN 2015<sup>31</sup> (by total employment)

#### MEDIAN INCOME

### TOP WORKFORCE SECTOR FOR MEN IN 2015<sup>32</sup> (by total employment)

#### MEDIAN INCOME

Management	\$62,950	Management	\$85,544
Education, training, and library	\$44,637	Computer and mathematical	\$85,232
Business and financial operations	\$53,990	Business and financial operations	\$71,422
Health diagnostics and treating practitioners	\$67,242	Architecture and engineering	\$90,801
Arts, design, entertainment, sports	\$46,136	Arts, design, entertainment, sports	\$52,691



# Health

Health is essential to a woman’s economic security. Without access to preventive care, education about healthy living, and affordable health insurance, families living at or near poverty find themselves one health crisis away from financial ruin.

- / 1 in 10 women are uninsured.<sup>33</sup>
- / 1 in 10 children are uninsured.<sup>34</sup>

## TEEN PREGNANCY PREVENTION

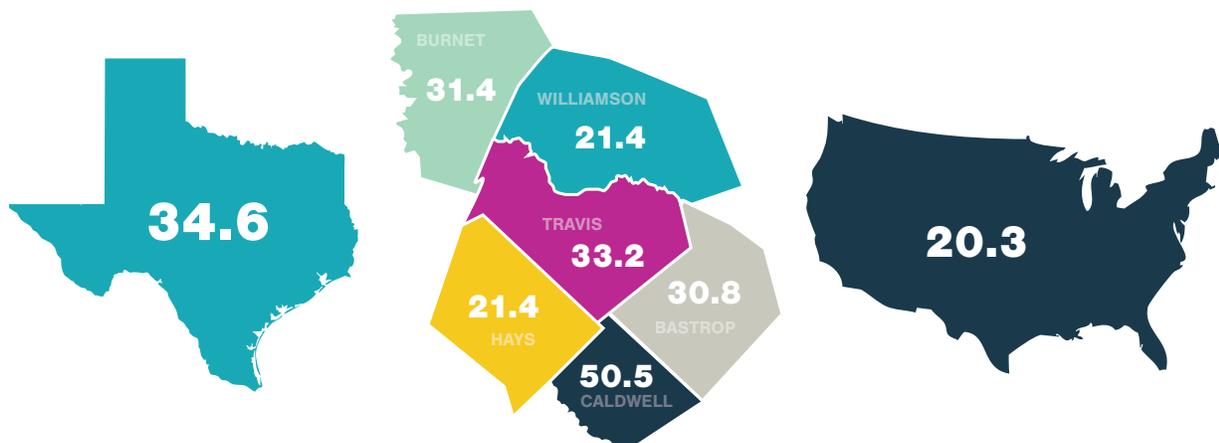
A VITAL STRATEGY TO ENSURE FUTURE SUCCESS



Central Texas continues to see high rates of teen pregnancy, which leaves young women less likely to finish school and much more likely to raise their children in poverty. Reducing high teen pregnancy rates in our community has the potential to reduce high school dropout rates, improve college competition, boost tax contributions through higher earnings and improve the economy.<sup>35</sup>

- / Teen birth rates in Travis County vary drastically by race/ethnicity (births per 1,000 females ages 15-19):<sup>36</sup>
  - » White, Non-Hispanic – 8.8
  - » Black, Non-Hispanic – 34.9
  - » Hispanic – 61.6
  - » Other – 6.8
- / Adolescents who identify as Hispanic account for 77% of all teen births.<sup>37</sup>
- / One in five babies born to female teens under 19, were born to teens that were already moms.<sup>38</sup>

### TEEN BIRTH RATES (births per 1,000 females ages 15-19):<sup>39</sup>



# Safety

If women and children do not feel safe at home, it is difficult to expect success at work and school. Far too many women and children in Central Texas live in situations that create fear and instability. Data on public safety is only capable of reporting offenses known to law enforcement. It is well documented that victims of, or witnesses to, a crime, including interpersonal violence, may choose not to report the incident to law enforcement.

- / One in three women report being afraid to walk at night in their neighborhood.<sup>40</sup>
- / In 2015, there were 4,217 confirmed victims of child abuse and neglect in the six-county Austin region. The most rural counties – Burnet, Bastrop, and Caldwell - consistently had the highest rates of reported child abuse.<sup>41</sup>
- / Nearly 20% of children in the Austin area removed from abusive environments were previously confirmed as victims, a percentage that's unchanged from a decade ago.<sup>42</sup>
- / Though crime in Austin has decreased over the past 10 years, rape incidents have increased.<sup>43</sup>

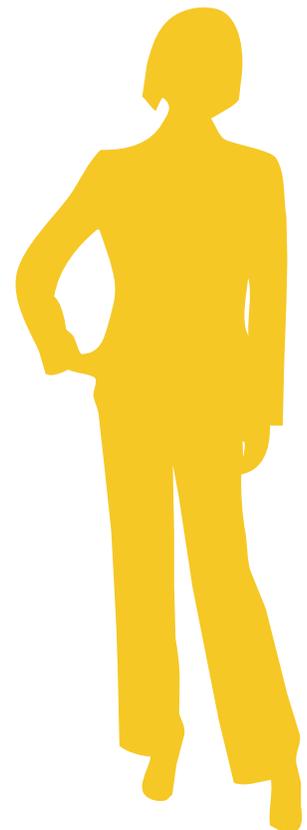
**1 in 3 women report being afraid to walk in their neighborhood at night.**



# Leadership

Women's issues are community issues, yet women continue to be underrepresented in positions of power. Without a voice at the table for civic, community and business conversations, policies and decisions will be made that marginalize the needs of women and families. The greatest progress has been made in elected offices, where women in Central Texas have gained significant positions of leadership.

- / In 2014, Travis County elected its first female county judge.
- / In 2015, 7 of the 10 city council members in Austin were women. Representing a majority for the first time ever.
- / In 1996, Travis County elected its first female sheriff.\*
- / The percentage of businesses owned by women has increased over time by 9%, growing from 26% in 1997 to 35% in 2012.<sup>44</sup>
- / Austin MSA ranks 5th between the top 10 metro areas in the US for women-owned firms.<sup>45</sup>
- / Top 25 Nonprofit CEOs: 5/25<sup>46</sup>
- / Top 25 Private Companies: 2/25<sup>47</sup>
- / Top 25 Public Companies: 0/25<sup>48</sup>



# Acknowledgements

*Women's Issues are Community Issues* was made possible by the following partners:

- / RGK Center for Philanthropy at UT Austin
- / The Honor Roll
- / Participants in the 2017 Strategy Lab series for honing the Women's Fund vision
- / Research & Planning Division of Travis County Health and Human Services & Veterans Service for establishing a high standard for this report.

## WOMEN'S FUND INVESTORS

Special thanks to these Women's Fund investors whose contributions support our data-informed approach.



Kozmetsky Family Foundation

Anita & Scot Salmon  
Jessica & Greg Weaver

Mollie Butler / Fayruz Benyousef  
Covalent Foundation / Jolynn Free  
Lisa & Dan Graham / Janet Harman / Gita Lal  
MFI Foundation / Lisa Mink / Nona Niland  
Bettye Nowlin / Deborah Peel / Edie Rogat  
Andrea Scarborough / Strangeworks  
Kerry Tate/ Carrie Frugé Walker

## ABOUT THE WOMEN'S FUND

The Women's Fund at Austin Community Foundation educates, engages and inspires giving to improve the lives of women and children in our community. We believe that when women are economically secure, safe, and healthy, then families and communities thrive. Inspired by this guiding framework, the Women's Fund employs a data-driven approach to grantmaking, impact investing, educational programming and leadership development. Learn more: [austincf.org/women](http://austincf.org/women)

## ABOUT AUSTIN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Austin Community Foundation is the catalyst for generosity in Austin. We bring together philanthropists, dollars and ideas to shape Austin's future. Celebrating our 40th anniversary, the Foundation has granted more than \$300 million to nonprofits across Central Texas since 1977. Learn more: [austincf.org](http://austincf.org)

## FOR A FULL LIST OF SOURCES:

[austincf.org/womensissues](http://austincf.org/womensissues)



**Austin Community**  
FOUNDATION

**Endnotes for *Community Issues are Women's Issues: 2017 Status Report on Women & Children in Central Texas***

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*\*Correction, previous iterations of this report stated 2016 as the year Travis County elected the first female sheriff. The correct date is 1996, when Margo Fraiser was elected.*