

# the status OF WOMEN AND GIRLS



greater houston  
2004

The Women's  
Resource  
OF GREATER HOUSTON


## ON AN AVERAGE DAY IN HARRIS COUNTY:

85 girls will be born  
23 will be Anglo with a life expectancy of 80 years  
15 will be African American with a life expectancy of 75 years  
42 will be Hispanic with a life expectancy of 81 years  
5 will be of other races  
8 babies will be born to teen mothers  
55 babies will be born to unmarried mothers  
51 women will have an abortion  
93 women will marry  
40 women will divorce  
1 woman will be diagnosed with HIV  
26 women will legally immigrate to the Houston metropolitan area  
4 women will report being sexually assaulted  
19 women are estimated to be sexually assaulted  
1 woman will report a sex-based discrimination case  
1 girl or woman will be reported missing  
28 women will die  
6 women will die of cancer  
1 woman will die of lung cancer  
1 woman will die of breast cancer

### Data Sources:

Texas Vital Statistics: 2001, Texas Department of Health; Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2002; Texas Department of Public Safety Missing Persons Clearinghouse; TDH Texas Cancer Registry; Crime in Texas: 2001 Annual Report, DPS; Busch, Bell, DiNitto, & Neff, A Health Survey of Texans: A Focus on Sexual Assault, University of Texas, August 2003.

Notes: 1. Numbers are rounded to the nearest whole number; 2. No life expectancies are calculated for "other race" for females in Texas due to small numbers; 3. Teen births are categorized by the TDH to be girls 17 and younger; and 4. Estimated rapes are calculated using the 20% reporting rate by women in Texas in the Busch, et al study.



The Status of Women and Girls  
Greater Houston

Second Edition – 2004

Commissioned by The Women's Resource of Greater Houston

Underwritten by Houston Endowment, Inc.

Halliburton

Patrick Henry Creative Promotions

April, 2004

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# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

It is a pleasure to present you with this pivotal report, *The Status of Women and Girls in Greater Houston 2004*. As you will see from reading introductory comments made by others, this report is a sequel to a similar report that was produced in 1997. Both are the genesis of *The Women's Resource of Greater Houston* (formerly *Greater Houston Women's Foundation*), an organization whose mission focuses on the well being of women and girls in the community.

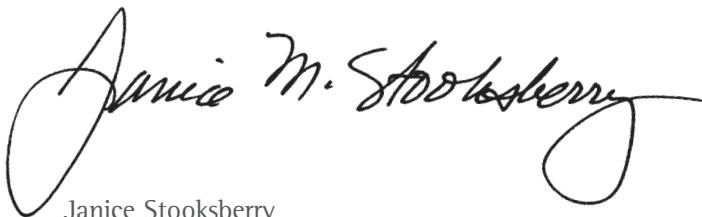
In their opening remarks, the professors who prepared this research document opined that "there is a glass [of water] on the table, but the question is whether the glass is half-full or half-empty" for women and girls in the community. There have been distinct improvements in some areas of women and girls' status over the past seven years; likewise, there have been discouraging setbacks. The value of this report is, of course, that these changes have been documented and are once again available from a single resource available to the general public as well as to specialists in fields such as education, health, employment, and crime, among others.

Houston's immense diversity and its accompanying strengths and challenges provide a bellwether for the rest of our growing nation. *The Women's Resource* is proud to sponsor production of a report that can be used as an indicator of the work facing our government, social service agencies, educational institutions, health centers, and employers in the near future. It is our aim to continue researching these areas individually with an eye to generating community partnerships that address the research's findings.

In fact, it was a generous grant from *Houston Endowment, Inc.*, that allowed this research to be conducted by an outstanding team of scholars from *The University of Houston*. On behalf of the board and staff of *The Women's Resource*, I wish to acknowledge the prescient view of this foundation as it, too, looks toward the future of a city thriving with possibility and teeming with problems.

Please take a few moments to read through this report. Its findings can change attitudes....and lives.

Sincerely,



Janice Stooksberry

President

Board of Trustees

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A black and white close-up portrait of a woman with dark hair, smiling warmly. The image is the background for the entire page.

# PREFACE

# PREFACE

As a research team we are pleased and proud to have the opportunity to present the second edition of the Status of Women and Girls in Greater Houston. The first report, published in 1997, was an important milestone, serving as a benchmark on the status of women and girls in our area. The report enabled policy makers, funders, and service providers to more strategically plan their efforts to address the needs of women and girls in Houston and Harris County.

This second report, published seven years later, revisits many of the same status indicators while adding some new indicators to better assess the lives of women and girls. The second report allows a comparison over the seven years so that the status of women and girls can be tracked by broad categories including education and training, employment and economics, family and community, health, leadership, and crime and safety.

Every effort was made to present the data in a user-friendly format to support the work of numerous agencies, policy makers, and advocates. The data are presented in such a format that changes over time can be monitored, documenting progress or setbacks while identifying both topical areas of concern and vulnerable populations of women and girls.

This publication is the product of countless hours of work and the intensive labor of many people. The authors would like to take this time to acknowledge those who have supported this work. First, we would like to thank Elizabeth Stewart and Bonnie Foxworth for initially approaching us with the idea of updating the first report. Their commitment to addressing the needs of women and girls in Houston and Harris County is impressive and inspirational. We thank them for inviting us to participate in this exciting project once again.

We would like to thank Robbie Blanton, Executive Director of The Women's Resource, for her support and enthusiasm for this project. Penny Harp has been most helpful in organizing meetings and keeping communications open. Dr. Gilda McFail and the research committee have provided helpful guidance and feedback. We appreciate their thoroughness in reviewing the report.

Two people at the University of Houston Graduate School of Social Work were especially supportive of this work: Dean Ira Colby was an enthusiastic advocate of the project and Ann McFarland, Director of the Office of Community Projects, has been an invaluable team member in bringing this project to fruition.

A special note of appreciation goes to Kevin Kulish

for his support of this work including numerical oversight.

We would like to thank Halliburton for their generous underwriting for the production and publication of the report. Ellie Francisco was instrumental in bringing this report to a Houston and Harris County audience. In the production and publishing phase we would like to thank Tommy Palermo, Sr. and his very competent staff for their hard work in bringing this report to the printed page.

We are grateful to Patrick Henry Creative Promotions for their underwriting of the design and layout phase. Julia Church and her talented staff provided numerous creative hours towards the attractive, clean look of the report.

Finally, this report would not have been possible without the countless people who generously provided data. Although many statistics are now available online, many times special data analyses were conducted to separate the data by gender or geographic location. Most of the analysts were government employees who responded in a timely fashion and cheerful manner. Especially helpful were employees at the Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas Departments of Health and Human Services, and Texas Bureau of Vital Statistics. Especially during these times of decreasing budgets and longer hours, their efforts were greatly appreciated. When public data were not available, nonprofit organizations were contacted for numbers. Once again, people generously responded. Although too numerous to name, the authors gratefully acknowledge the efforts of these dedicated people who, by providing data, are contributing to the cause of women and girls in Houston and Harris County.

Finally, the authors would like to dedicate the second edition of this report to one of the authors of the original report, Dr. Karen Stout, who died of breast cancer at the age of 44 in the spring of 2002. Karen was a dedicated scholar, activist, teacher, social worker, wife, and mother. Her goal in life was addressing violence against women in all of its forms. Her tireless advocacy, teaching, researching, and writing affected many women's lives in our city, our state, and even our nation. She is greatly missed. Karen would be most pleased and proud that her life's work continues. This report is dedicated to Karen's memory and to her daughters, Brenna and Delaney, whose future she worked to ensure by making the world a more equitable place for all girls and women.

# METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the report was primarily one of secondary data analysis. That is, data collected by others were gathered, analyzed, and reported. To insure the integrity of the data, objective governmental sources were the first sources sought. If government sources were not available for the data in question, some nonprofit agencies that keep numbers on a topical area were approached.<sup>1</sup> Every attempt was made to collect and report the data accurately. Although each data source is carefully referenced, any mistakes in data reporting and interpretation are our own.

Since the population is almost evenly distributed between male and females in our area, the data were not weighted. Also, the salaries presented are not adjusted for inflation. Comparisons between the years of the first and second report are often difficult. In some cases the data are reported differently over the years by governmental agencies, making comparisons challenging. For instance, between the first and second reports, the Census Bureau began collecting data by race and ethnicity in a markedly different way, making comparisons over the years more demanding. See the following publication for a more complete discussion of this issue: Grieco, E., & Cassidy, R. (March 2001). Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin, 2000. U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Brief.

It is always difficult to determine which names to use when describing people by race and ethnicity. Some would argue that no racial/ethnic categories are necessary since they can divide rather than unite Americans. However, presenting data by race/ethnicity can be helpful in determining which groups of women and girls are making progress and which are falling behind. In addition, such designations can help service providers and policy makers better utilize scarce resources. However, designated racial/ethnic labels are often less than satisfactory and people often object to a government designation of their identity. While realizing that these labels are problematic and controversial, we will use the commonly accepted designations of the day, most often used by information gathering agencies like the U.S. Census Bureau. For instance, we will use Black and African American, White and Anglo, and Hispanic and Latino/a, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific

Islander, and American Indian and Alaska Native. Although it is preferable that people have the opportunity to self-identify, since the study uses secondary data and labels that was not possible.

For the most part numbers were rounded to the nearest tenth, except in the "On an Average Day in Harris County" statistics where numbers were rounded to the nearest whole. For the most part data are presented for Harris County as a whole. However, in some cases data were not available by county, in which case they are identified as either statewide or citywide. In some instances the data represents geographic areas designated by the Census Bureau such as the Houston-



Galveston-Brazoria Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) or the Houston Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA). Every effort has been made to specify which geographic location is represented for each data point reported.

In the first report published in 1997, almost 180 status indicators were included. In this second edition, to make the report more reader-friendly and accessible, subtopics are alphabetized under six larger topical areas, and more graphs and charts have been included. We hope these changes make the report more helpful as a quick and valuable reference for agencies, service providers, advocates, and policy makers who work on behalf of women and girls.

## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> For some readers, using nonprofit numbers may introduce some bias. Many of the agencies that collect and analyze such data on specific problems are generally advocacy groups who work to make a difference in the problem they are addressing. However, the numbers used in their analysis are most often government sources and their data and methodology are documented on their websites. Every attempt was made to use only the most respected and frequently cited organizations.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After reading through the data-rich and number-intensive report, it is possible to arrive at one of two conclusions: women are doing wonderfully well and a party should be planned, or conditions are very dire for women and a wake should be held. All can agree that there is a glass of water on the table, but is it half-full or half-empty? There is plenty of evidence in this report to support either perspective.

There is much evidence in this report on the status of women and girls in the greater Houston area to make an optimist happy. For instance, on nearly every educational indicator, girls and women are outperforming boys and men. On average girls are less likely to drop out of high school or obtain a GED and more likely to enroll in college and earn a degree. The numbers and revenues of women-owned businesses continue to grow, outpacing the rate of growth of male-owned firms. Women are less likely than men to be arrested or imprisoned.

Women registered voters outnumber men, and women's leadership opportunities are growing, especially in the public sector. The City of Houston's most recent election resulted in a City Council composed of fifty percent female council members. Women's salaries are growing at a faster rate than male salaries and the gap between male and female wages is narrowing. The rate of teenage pregnancy and abortions performed are both decreasing.

However, there is also evidence presented that reflects a lack of progress, and even a worsening of conditions for women and their children, to make a pessimist grow more dour. For instance, women still earn only 78 cents for each dollar earned by a man. Sixty-nine women were killed in Harris County in 2001, almost half (46.4%) murdered by a male family member. The number of family violence incidents increased and the number of women and their children turned away from domestic violence shelters increased dramatically. The safety net for poor women is being dismantled as social service programs are cut due to both political ideology and state budget reductions. Waiting lists for subsidized childcare and housing exist causing poor women to struggle to make ends meet.

Health risks for women are many, including both lung and breast cancer. Smoking and obesity continue to be problematic for women. As one survey revealed, over half of all women in the area reported trying to lose weight. One third of the same respondents reported that they had no health insurance. Reports of gender-based employment discrimination continue to rise. While women are earning more money, they remain segregated into lower-paid, "pink collar" jobs.

Since the last report published in 1997, the percentage of reported rapes increased by almost six percent. In 2001 only 14.2% of reported rapes resulted in an arrest. Arrests of women on drug abuse charges increased by 58.5% over the intervening years while there was a 13% decline in the number of women receiving state-funded treatment. A United Way survey revealed that stress is the number one individual concern of survey respondents, including both men and women; with over 45% reporting that someone in their household suffers from serious stress and anxiety.

Almost one in every three births in Harris County is to a single mother and almost half of unmarried mothers do not have a high school diploma. Almost a half of a million people live under the poverty level in Harris County and rates are the highest for children under the age of 18 years old. Over half of the households receiving public assistance are African American households and 95% of those are headed by a woman. In 2003, almost 10,000 people were sanctioned due to noncompliance with TANF requirements (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families), which resulted in a withdrawal of benefits, impacting almost 7,000 children. Although women comprise over half of the county's population and over half of the registered voters, women still comprise zero percent of the Harris County delegation to the State Senate and only 24% of the Harris County Delegation to the State House of Representatives. Neither Rice University nor the University of Houston meets Title IX guidelines suggesting there be equal ratios of female athletes to female undergraduates.

A pragmatist might even question some of the areas where women are reportedly doing well. For instance, although women are performing wonderfully well in educational institutions; will that success translate into better jobs and higher salaries in the workplace? Although the number of abortions performed is decreasing, is that attributable to abstinence, to increased use of birth control, or more limited access to abortion services? More women are starting their own businesses, but is that the result of a spirit of entrepreneurship or obstacles for women in the traditional workplace? Although the data reported are important and helpful, they cannot provide the answers to questions that arise about cause and effect.

Additionally, even in areas where women seem to be doing relatively well, especially when compared to men, such as numbers of women arrested and incarcerated, such comparisons can be deceiving. For instance, although men account for 80% of arrests in Harris County compared to 20% for women, the actual number of arrests for men has decreased by 16.5% from 1995 to 2000 while the numbers of arrests for women has increased by 2.2%.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, problems are not just observed between comparing numbers of women relative to men, but comparing rates of change and percentages as well. Many of the incarcerations of women are for violent offenses—a troubling trend that needs to be addressed, despite the smaller numbers of women involved relative to men. The goal of equality was meant to increase the number of women in Congress, not prison.

A limitation of this research is that it relies on data collected and published primarily by government institutions. Although these numbers are very helpful, they do not tell the whole story of girls and women and their lives. There is a lot of life being lived between the numbers that the report cannot document. For instance, there is growing concern over the early sexualization of young girls and its effect upon their self-esteem, body image, and sexual lives. Women often struggle individually to balance the needs of their work and family lives, in effect working a second shift at home.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women's recent successes have been met with some backlash in the news media. For example, recent educational successes among women in higher education were reported on the front page of the Houston Chronicle<sup>2</sup>; however, rather than celebrating women's progress, the article focused on two major concerns: 1) fear that girls and women's educational progress came at the expense of boys and men and 2) fear that highly educated women would have trouble finding a similarly educated male partner. With such a response to women's gains, it seems premature to declare that women have achieved full equality.

Part of the problem appears to be major disagreements between men and women, and even among women, about what success for women looks like. Does success mean being like men or different from men? Was the goal of the women's movement to move women into the public sphere or to change the public sphere so it is friendlier for both men and women? Such questions raise ideological disagreements about the very nature of men and women, the effects of nature (biology) or nurture (environment), and the definitions of equality, equity, and justice.

In sum, the report documents limited progress for women in areas such as education and work opportunities, while continuing to document serious problems in the areas of violence and social welfare. It is hard to talk about women as a class when the universe of women is amazingly diverse. The report clearly shows that some are far more at risk than others: that is, women of color, poor women, women who are mothers, and women with disabilities are among the most vulnerable. The racial disparities in women's life expectancies, salaries, rates of prenatal care, low birth weight babies, teen-age mothers, HIV/AIDS prevalence, and receipt of public assistance is troubling.

**With these thoughts in mind, several recommendations are in order:**

1. More attention and resources need to be directed at our most vulnerable sub-populations of women, such as women of color, immigrant women, incarcerated women, mentally ill women, homeless women, and poor women. Statistics reveal that these women lag behind on nearly every indicator.

2. The demands on women are many, especially in their dual roles as both wage earners and caregivers. More support needs to be given to women in the area of work and family conflicts. This is an area that is receiving increased attention and policy proposals from a variety of think tanks and advocacy groups. Although this problem is often viewed as a personal one, it is political and structural, and must be addressed in those arenas. Many questions arise. How can women continue to provide unpaid care to children, the elderly and disabled when they are expected to be earning a living in the paid labor market as well? Who is going to pick up the burden of caregiving? Will men assume greater responsibility, or businesses, or government? Are these private family concerns or public policy issues?

3. The lack of safety nets for poor women and their children is troubling when budget deficits are forcing program cutbacks. More resources, not less, must be directed toward poor women and their children. Education, childcare, and advanced job skills are the way out of poverty, not minimum wage jobs.

4. Violence against women remains a problem that affects women of all races, ages, and socioeconomic levels. More resources must be focused on prevention and to curtail the damage done by sexual assault and family violence.

5. Women remain economically vulnerable to low wages, poverty, and lack of pension and retirement plans. Girls and women seem unprepared for lives where they may, through choice or happenstance, be the sole support for themselves and their children, often through divorce or widowhood. Girls and women need to increase their financial knowledge in order to live economically secure lives. As one nonprofit organization devoted to increasing women's financial savvy notes, "A man is a not a (financial) plan."<sup>3</sup>

6. A careful documentation of women's lives through this and other reports is a valuable service to the community and must continue. The status of women and girls is too important to leave to anecdotes and stereotypes. Data produced, collected, published, and disseminated by objective institutions are vital in continuing to monitor the status and document the progress, and in some instances the lack of progress, of women and girls, not only in the greater Houston area, but across the county and around the globe. More organizations should analyze their data by gender to document how men and women may be affected differently in some problem areas.

The status of women and girls in any given society at any time in history is not due to happenstance or coincidence. The collective status of women and girls is also not due solely to personal choices that some women may or may not make. The status of women and girls is most often due to structural conditions as dictated by law and policy and under girded by societal, religious, cultural, and family values.

Houston is a diverse city with a rich, exciting existence that includes major sports teams, the space center, a world-class medical center, and the world headquarters of the oil and gas industry. Our geographical diversity is mirrored in our rich diversity of people and ideas. Such a city offers unique opportunities for a wide range of people who share this piece of land on the edge of a bayou and the nation's third coast. These opportunities should not be limited by one's gender or decision to have children. As an ancient Chinese proverb notes, "Women hold up half the sky." Women and girls are not only half of Houston's population, but half of Houston's talent, creativity, and spirit as well. These characteristics must be cherished and nurtured while obstacles to the advancement of women are removed. This report is another effort to see this dream turn into a reality for all women and girls in the greater Houston area.

### Data Sources:

1 Harrison, P.M., & Beck, A.J. (July 2003). Prisoners in 2002. Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, NCJ 200248.

2 Nissimov, R. (June 16, 2003). Gender Gap Reaches New Degree: Some Experts Worried As Women Outnumber Men at Colleges.

(p. 1A) Houston Chronicle. Houston, Texas.

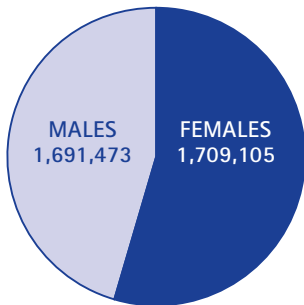
3 Women's Institute for Financial Education (WIFE). <http://www.wife.org>.



**INTRODUCTION**

# INTRODUCTION

HARRIS COUNTY POPULATION, 2000 Census<sup>1</sup>



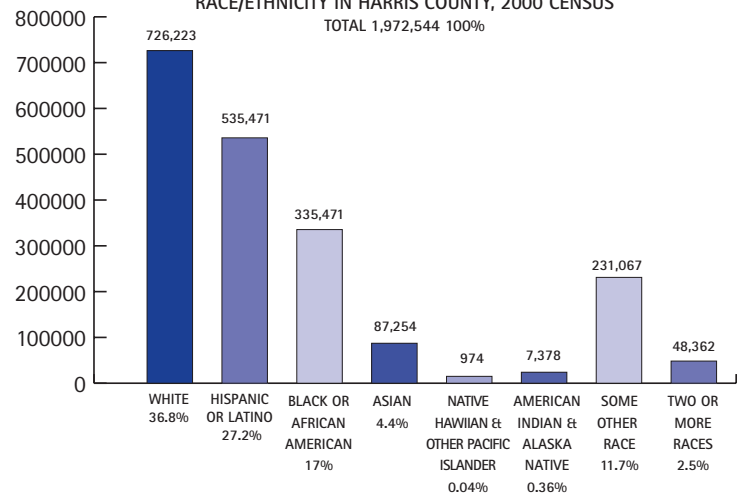
**TOTAL POPULATION**  
3,400,578

This report seeks to document the status of women and girls in the greater Houston area in six topical areas: Education & Training, Employment & Economics, Family & Community, Health, Leadership, and Crime and Safety. Although the focus of this

report is on the status of women and girls in our local area, primarily the city of Houston, Harris County, and surrounding counties, it is often helpful to place this in the broader context of state and national conditions for women. At times state or national data will be presented, either to provide context for local numbers or to fill a void when local data are not available

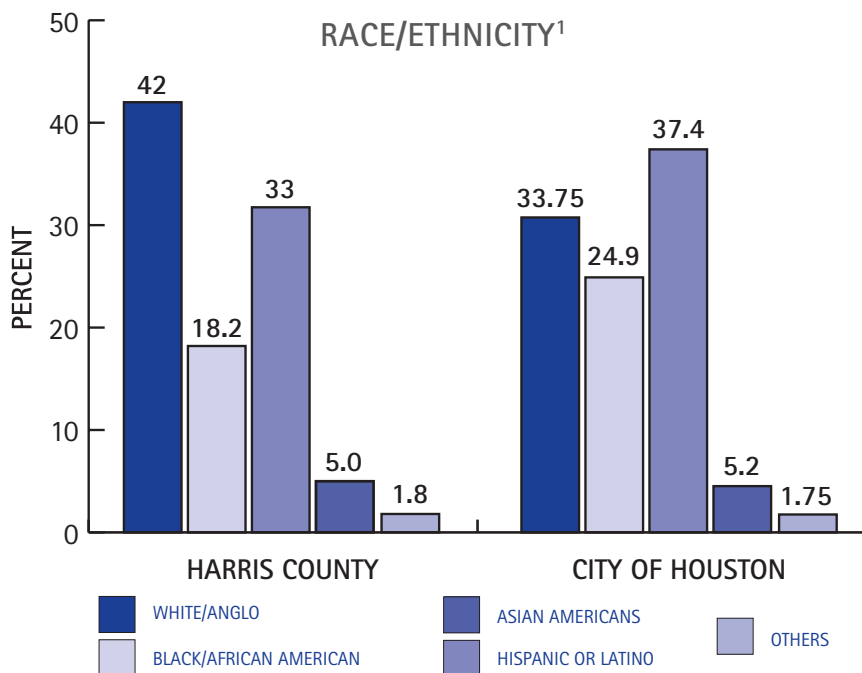
A helpful place to begin is to describe the demographic characteristics of the girls and women in our area. By an almost negligible margin, girls and women make up the majority of people in Harris

ETHNICITY<sup>2</sup> ESTIMATED NUMBER OF WOMEN BY RACE/ETHNICITY IN HARRIS COUNTY, 2000 CENSUS  
TOTAL 1,972,544 100%



County: there are almost two million females in Harris County, nearly one million in the city of Houston. The diversity of women is striking, with the city being more

Age, by decade, Harris County, 2000 Census <sup>1</sup>	Number of Females in Harris County each Decade	Percent in each Decade
0-9 years	272,987	16.0%
10-19 years	251,746	14.7%
20-29 years	267,375	15.6%
30-39 years	283,768	16.6%
40-49 years	264,856	15.5%
50-59 years	168,652	9.9%
60-69 years	93,837	5.5%
70-79 years	68,536	4.0%
80-over	37,348	2.2%



diverse than the county. For instance, in the city of Houston 30% of the people are White/Anglos, 37% are Hispanic/Latino, 25% are African American, and 5% are Asian. For the first time in the history of the census the survey included the category of "two or more races" and 48,362 females in the county included themselves in this category. Programs aimed at women need to take into account the diversity in our area and the increasing numbers of biracial and multiracial women.

The Houston Area Survey provides a glimpse of Harris County residents' attitudes toward the growing diversity of our county. The percentage of people who believe that Houston's growing diversity due to immigration is good for the city increased steadily

# INTRODUCTION

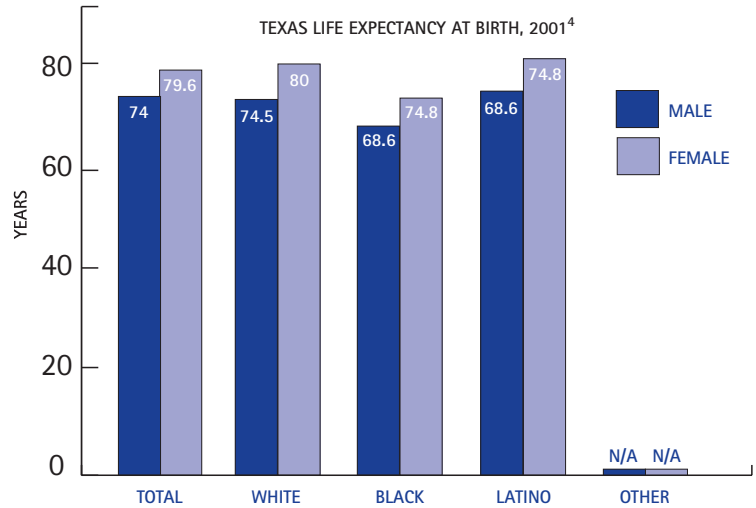
Age of Females,  
Harris County, 2000 Census<sup>1</sup>

Female <sup>1</sup>	1,709,105
Under 1 year	28,019
1 year	26,896
2 years	26,639
3 years	26,941
4 years	26,934
5 years	27,209
6 years	27,541
7 years	27,404
8 years	27,689
9 years	27,715
10 years	27,631
11 years	27,238
12 years	25,842
13 years	25,730
14 years	25,182
15 years	25,574
16 years	23,793
17 years	24,546
18 years	24,113
19 years	22,097
20 years	23,962
21 years	22,754
22 to 24 years	77,707
25 to 29 years	142,952
30 to 34 years	137,404
35 to 39 years	146,364
40 to 44 years	142,989
45 to 49 years	121,867
50 to 54 years	99,243
55 to 59 years	69,409
60 and 61 years	21,255
62 to 64 years	30,185
65 and 66 years	17,837
67 to 69 years	24,560
70 to 74 years	38,302
75 to 79 years	30,234
80 to 84 years	19,440
85 years and over	17,908

from 54% in 1994, to 63% in 1999, to 69% in 2001.<sup>5</sup> However, this increasingly positive view is countered by other responses that highlight tensions between ethnic and racial groups when assessing intergroup relationships and perceived discrimination. For instance, Anglos and Latinos are more likely to positively rate opportunities for communities of color than are African Americans. Fifty-five percent of Anglos and 56% of Latinos agreed that "blacks and other minorities have the same opportunities as whites in the U.S. today" while 74% of African American respondents disagreed with the statement. Different racial and ethnic

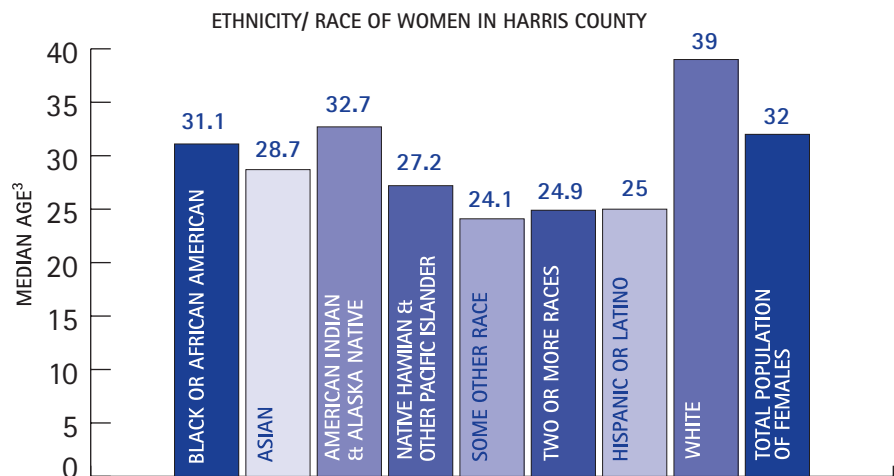
groups rate intergroup relations differently, with Anglos viewing them most positively and African Americans most negatively, with Latinos in the middle.

Harris County census data for 2000 indicate there were almost 30,000 female infants under the age of one year and nearly 200,000 women age 60 and older. Women have a longer life expectancy across all racial



and ethnic groups than men with Latinas having the longest life expectancy at 80.7 years and African American women having the shortest life expectancy among women at 74.8 years.

In sum, females comprise the majority of people in Harris County. Women in the county are racially and ethnically diverse and tend to live longer than men. Such diversity and long life expectancies brings both opportunities and challenges. Providing culturally competent services and working collaboratively with others become increasingly important skills for service providers. Although there is growing acceptance of the county's diverse population, intergroup tensions exist and perceptions of discrimination vary considerably.



**Data Sources:**

- 1 U.S. Department of Commerce, Sex by Age, Census 2000, Summary File 3 (SF3), Harris County.
- 2 U.S. Department of Commerce, Census 2000, Summary File 1 (SF1), Harris County. Note: The number of women by ethnicity may exceed the total number of women in Harris County because a small percentage of women may be counted twice. For instance, a woman whose mother is White and father is Hispanic might be placed in the category of both Hispanic and two or more races.
- 3 Median means the middle, that is half of the group is older than the specified age and half are younger.
- 4 Texas Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, 2001.
- 5 Klinberg, S.L. (2002). Houston's Economic and Demographic Transformations: Findings from the expanded 2002 survey of Houston's ethnic communities. The Houston Area Survey (1982-2002). Rice University, Department of Sociology, p. 18.