

## **The Aurora Report: Executive Summary**

### **Aurora Women and Girls Foundation**



# The Aurora Report: Executive Summary

## Aurora Women and Girls Foundation



### MISSION

The mission of the Aurora Women and Girls Foundation is to be a catalyst for positive change in the lives of women and girls in Greater Hartford. We:

- Engage in strategic grantmaking that supports and empowers women and girls of all ages.
- Provide opportunities to educate and engage women and men in the power of philanthropy to achieve social change for women and girls.
- Convene the community around issues facing women and girls in our region to promote collaboration and effective solutions.



### WHO WE ARE

Thirteen years ago, Hartford community women leaders came together to create a collective voice and vehicle through which they could channel resources to uplift women and girls in the Hartford region. They rallied around the retirement of Hartford Banking Executive and community leader Eileen Kraus and started a women and girls fund after hearing about the successes that had come from these efforts in other parts of the country. They recognized this as the start of a new day for area women and girls, and so they chose the name Aurora for our Foundation.



### OUR RESEARCH

The Aurora Women and Girls Foundation, through a generous grant from The Ensworth Charitable Trust, Bank of America, N.A., Trustee, commissioned the first comprehensive study of women and girls in Hartford County. The study examines the opportunities and challenges for Hartford County females in education, economic security, leadership, health and well being, and crime and safety, as well as the demographic composition of women and girls and their philanthropic giving. This research will inform and advise the Aurora Foundation's future grant making efforts and strategic initiatives. It will also serve as a resource for other groups in the non-profit, corporate and government sectors.

Our thanks to our research partners, the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) in Hartford, Connecticut and Marcia Coné, Principal, Marcia Coné Consulting, for their invaluable participation in this effort.





## NEEDS ASSESSMENT ADVISORY PANEL

### PANEL CO-CHAIRS:

**Karen Jarmoc, Aurora Board Member, Executive Director, CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

**Gina Federico Muslim, Aurora Board Member, Director Hartford Partnership, Community Solutions**

Dr. Cathryn Addy, President, Tunxis Community Technical College

Patricia (Pat) Baker, President & CEO, Connecticut Health Foundation

Yvette Bello, Former Executive Director, Latino Community Services

Donna Berman, Executive Director, Charter Oak Cultural Center

Nancy Bernstein, President & CEO, Women's Health Connecticut

Lucy Brakoniecki, Research & Evaluation Director, Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund

Cheryl Dumont-Smith, Executive Director, Aurora Women and Girls Foundation

Janet Bailey Faude, Aurora Board Chair, Fundraising and Management Consultant

Kara Hart, Staff Attorney, Greater Hartford Legal Aid

Gillian R. Howell, Managing Director, National Philanthropic Solutions U.S. Trust

Yvette Melendez, Vice President for Government & Community Alliances, Hartford Hospital

Amy Muslim, Research Consultant, Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund

Major Regina Rush-Kittle, Commanding Officer Bureau of Professional Standards and Compliance, Connecticut State Police

Deidre Tavera, E.D., Strategic Planning and Development, Hartford Public Schools

Deborah Ullman, CEO, YWCA for the Hartford Region

Teresa Younger, Former Executive Director, Permanent Commission on the Status of Women in Connecticut





## FORWARD

In keeping with our name as a symbol of dawn, the Aurora Foundation leadership believes that it is time for the dawn of a new era for women and girls in Hartford County. Many of our sisters lack the opportunity to achieve their full potential while struggling to meet even the most fundamental needs.

The Aurora Report contains information gathered from focus groups, surveys and other secondary sources on a variety of challenges affecting women and girls in the communities that comprise Hartford County. While many females in our region are economically secure, well educated, and affluent, just as many find themselves with insufficient wages, education, training, health care, and their physical safety at risk, leaving them unable to achieve economic well-being and stability for themselves and their families. This is especially true for women of color in the urban and urban periphery areas of Hartford County.

Our intention is that The Aurora Report will become a valuable and widely used reference tool for those interested in these issues. In the coming months we will issue a series of research snapshots that will allow us to delve more deeply into the specific issues facing women and girls, while also engaging the community in conversations that will lead to collaborations and partnerships, programs and policies, and actions and achievements to improve the lives of women and girls.

We hope you will join us.

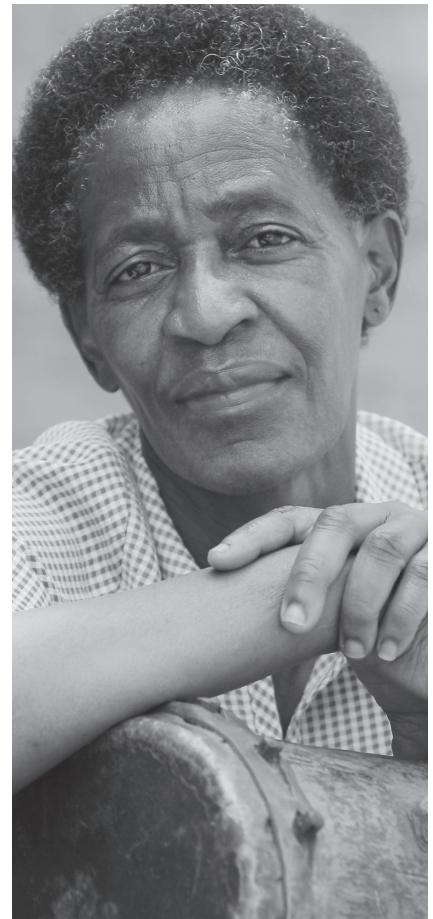
—The Board of Directors and Staff of Aurora Foundation for Women and Girls

## DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographic makeup of Hartford County has shifted dramatically in the last 12 years. In fact, women in Hartford County are more ethnically and racially diverse than women in Connecticut as a whole. Women and girls represent 52% (462,001) of the total population in Hartford County.

The women of our county were more than twice as likely to be the single heads of family households as compared to men, and more so in communities of color. Living costs, combined with the high cost of childcare and low wages make it difficult for many of these women to make ends meet.

Of significance, Asian and Latina women are emerging populations in Hartford County and will have a substantial impact on our economy in both the long and short term. In fact, the median age of both of these populations is significantly lower, indicating an influx of women of color who are looking to join our workforce. This trend is expected to continue, and thus requires thoughtful deliberation and action to develop a skilled, educated workforce that will ensure economic security for individuals and families. This economic shift will help create strong for-profit, non-profit and government sectors ensuring a vibrant economy.



Percentage of Women and Girls in Hartford County By Race		Median Age of Women by Race in Hartford County		Population growth from 2000-2012 in Hartford County	
Asian	4%	Asian	32	Asian	+ 65%
Black or African American	13%	Black or African American	34	Latinas	+ 37%
Latina	15%	Latina	28		
Caucasian	72%	Caucasian	45		





## EDUCATION

Education is critically important for females and is a significant part of attaining financial stability and improving the well-being of children. The good news for Hartford County is that women's educational attainment has risen across all racial and ethnic groups in the last five years.

African Americans and Latinas still lag far behind their Asian and Caucasian sisters with respect to educational attainment. In fact, nearly one in three Latinas in the county reported not completing high school. More than half of the young women entering Connecticut's community college system were deemed not college-ready and many are in need of remedial course work which increases the length of time required to complete a degree. This has raised the cost of a college education overall for such students. College readiness, affordability, and academic and social supports are critical to women's educational successes, especially when looking at the intersection of race, class and gender, and first-generation college enrollees.

Not surprisingly, aligning the socio-economic status (SES) of towns and cities with student preschool attendance, early literacy/numeracy skill scores, standardized testing rates/scores, and cohort graduation rates indicates that towns with higher SES (such as Avon, Farmington, Glastonbury, Simsbury, South Windsor, and West Hartford) outperform those with lower SES (such as Hartford and New Britain). Slow economic recovery and the resulting increase of poverty, and related factors in the suburbs and rural areas, challenge educators and practitioners to address the specific educational needs of their female students.

### Educational attainment for women in Hartford County by race/ethnicity, 2011

	No High School Diploma	High School Diploma	Some College; Associates Degree	Bachelors Degree	Masters and above
All female	12%	27%	28%	19%	14%
*Black or African American	17%	30%	36%	10%	7%
Asian	17%	11%	18%	28%	26%
*Latina	32%	26%	29%	9%	4%
Caucasian	8%	28%	27%	21%	16%

\* For African American and Latina women, Bachelors degree attainment percentages were troublingly low.

“A lot of girls didn’t make it to college – that’s the first barrier. Some went to college or trade school and needed more time, so they may not have finished. Women finishing school – it all depends on who’s in the household, who’s the positive female figure in their life, who they can reach out to at school. Some have babies; some are just not doing anything.”

– Daniella, Hartford Public Schools graduate and matriculating student at CCSU

### Enrollment in 2011-2012 by community college by gender, race and age

	Asnuntuck	Capital	Manchester	Tunxis
Total enrollment 2011-2012	1673	4425	7692	4734
Women	54%	71%	53%	57%
Race				
African American	7%	35%	15%	7%
Asian	4%	4%	4%	3%
Latina	7%	27%	15%	14%
Caucasian	77%	22%	58%	70%
Age 24 and under	57%	45%	38%	63%
% Receiving Aid/Pell grants	45%/33%	70%/57%	46%/36%	45%/33%

The SAT is still used by most colleges to make decisions about admission. Research shows that scores on the SAT are still a good predictor of student success in college. Yet, there are disparities in both test taking and test performance by gender, race and SES across towns in Connecticut.

#### In Connecticut, data related to SATs and gender indicated that,

- Females were more likely than males to sit for SATs as seniors.
- Girls who live in urban districts, or in districts with more students in poverty, were less likely to take SATs. For example, in East Granby, 100% of female high school seniors sat for the SAT, while in New Britain, only 42% of female high school seniors did.
- The number of female students who took the SAT between 2006 and 2011 fell 5.6% in Connecticut.



“Your family comes first, however, work penalizes you if you need time to care for them.” – Hartford Single Mother

## CRIME AND SAFETY

Criminal involvement has life-altering consequences for women and girls. The numbers of young women who violate the law are growing. Diversion programs through schools and the criminal justice system are working, however additional gender-specific, family-oriented interventions are needed to reach girls and their families to address problems earlier.

Formerly incarcerated women with little resources, a criminal history and little to no social support, struggle to re-enter society and become self-sufficient. Obtaining access and support to address employment, housing, transportation, mental and physical health, and basic needs such as food, clothing and identification, are often impossible.

- Adult female arrests increased from 31% to 34% between 2010-2012
- In Hartford County 14 towns had increased proportions of arrest for females across 10 offensive categories.
  - Prostitution and Commercial Vice: +78%
  - Embezzlement: +54%
  - Larceny: +40%
  - Disorderly Conduct: +32%
  - Assault: +28%
  - DUI: +25%

## ECONOMIC SECURITY

There is a complex constellation of factors that affect women's economic security. While many women and girls in the county are economically secure, well-educated, and affluent, just as many find themselves with insufficient wages, education, training, health care, and their physical safety at risk, leaving them unable to achieve economic well-being and stability for themselves and their families. This is especially true for women of color in the urban and urban periphery of Hartford County. The wages a woman in Hartford County needs to earn in order to sustain her and her family is often beyond her grasp.

- In Hartford County there are almost 60,000 women and girls living in poverty.
- African American and Latina female-headed households with children under the age of 18 are over-represented in the population with the group in greatest need having an income 50% less than the federal poverty level.
- Single female-headed households with dependent children headed by African American and Latina women suffer alarming rates of deprivation with 35.6% of African American and 47.2% of Latina female-headed households living in poverty.
- Women's earnings vary with their full- or part-time work status, educational attainment, occupational choices, and by industry sector.
- Women with a high school diploma earned approximately \$26,000 per year; women with a BA earned approximately \$47,000.
- Women predominated in occupations such as education, health care, office, and administrative occupations, and were underrepresented in construction and production occupations.
- Reliable, affordable childcare is a critical need for women's workforce success, yet Hartford ranked number one in the State for highest percent of income spent for one infant/toddler, for both childcare centers and family daycare homes.
- An annual average expense for infants and toddlers in childcare centers in Hartford County was \$15,061.



## HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Women in Hartford County are living longer, but chronic diseases affect poor women of color disproportionately. Socioeconomic and racial disparities are prevalent across most health indicators in the county, and health problems, such as obesity, asthma, cancer, and reproductive health issues are heavily concentrated in Hartford and urban ring towns.

Hartford County had the second highest utilization of substance abuse services through the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). Utilization of mental health and substance abuse services have increased substantially; young girls are drinking more and at a younger age than in the past. The average age of women from Hartford County receiving services is 37 and the majority of those served, (59%), are Caucasian.

### TEEN PREGNANCY

The financial impact of teen pregnancy is staggering and the societal consequences are significant. Teen mothers and their children face social and economic disadvantages throughout their lives.

In 2010 Hartford County had the highest percentage of births (7.6%) to women less than 20 years of age compared with all other counties in the state. Teen birth rates in Hartford County mirror the national trends, with higher rates among African American and Latina women as compared to Caucasian. Hartford and New Britain are towns in Hartford County with the highest number of births to young women under the age of 20; both have a rate that is two times higher than the next highest town in the county.

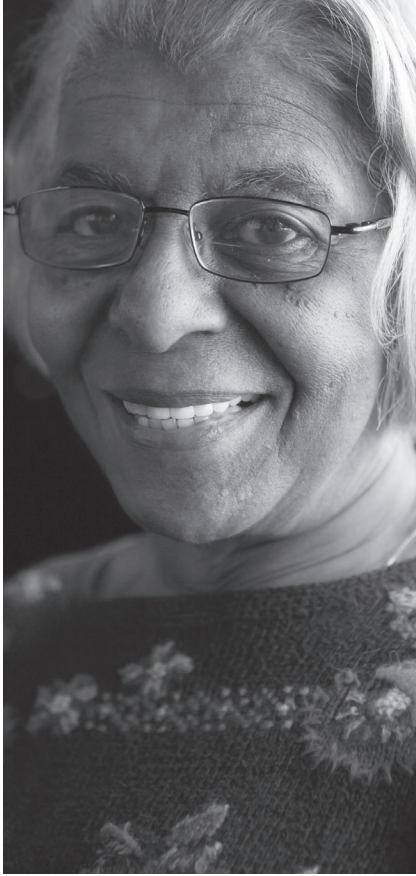


### TEEN MOTHERS

- Have higher rates of low birth weight babies and infant mortality than mothers in their 20s.
- Are less likely to finish high school ... only 38% of teen mothers ever will.
- Are more likely to live in poverty and rely on public assistance.

#### Birth to mothers less than 20 years old by city/town and race/ethnicity

Town	Births Overall	Birth to Latinas	Birth to African American	Birth to Caucasian
Hartford	15.3%	18.9%	12.9%	5.8%
New Britain	14.3%	22.2%	7.2%	5.1%
East Hartford	7.6%	13.2%	5.7%	3.9%
Manchester	6.2%	18%	8.4%	4.5%
Bristol	6.0%	14.3%	<1%	4.3%
Windsor	5.7%	<1%	11.2%	<1%



## LEADERSHIP

Women's leadership has the capacity to positively transform the economic bottom line across sectors. Research shows that when women's representation is at least 30% or more of boards, commissions, elected offices, corporate leadership, and corporate boards we see stronger governance, increased corporate social responsibility and better economic outcomes. Women must be present to address social needs, as well as to advocate for issues that disproportionately impact women and girls. Despite this, women lack widespread support for, and access to, leadership opportunities.

### Politics

- In Hartford County, 18% (4) of Hartford County's mayors/first selectman are women. The four female mayors from Hartford County represent East Hartford, Marlborough, Simsbury, and Wethersfield.
- 25% (3) State Senators from Hartford County are women (12 total seats)
- 16% (7) State Representatives from Hartford County are women (43 total seats)

### Business

- In 2013 there were 17 Fortune 500 companies in Connecticut.
- 29% (5) of these are located in Hartford County, however none have female CEOs.
- Women are underrepresented in a number of sectors, however women-owned businesses are exceeding overall sector growth in seven of the thirteen most heavily populated industries, including wholesale trade, finance and insurance, real estate, health care and social assistance, construction, and arts, entertainment, and recreation.

## PHILANTHROPY

Women are more likely to remain single, direct their own financial assets and are spending more than at any other time in history. As women continue to move into positions of power and influence, they are also more likely to accumulate wealth. In fact, the financial clout of women is reported to be at an all-time high. While women's wealth and charitable giving continues to shift, gender specific investing in programs for women and girls has remained at 7% or less for the past ten years.

The 2012 Giving Across America report indicates that Hartford County ranked 73rd out of 3115 counties in the United States for charitable giving. The report found that residents of Hartford County contributed 376.8 million dollars to charitable organizations. If 1% of these contributions were directed toward women and girls, over 3.76 million dollars could be invested in programs to support some of the most vulnerable populations in our county.

At the Aurora Women and Girls Foundation we are leveraging our resources to improve the status of women and girls in Hartford County. We know that when women are economically secure, so are their families, which means towns and cities in Hartford County become places where opportunity, access, and equality thrive socially and economically.

- Of the top 100 largest Connecticut grant makers, 20 are located in and fund in Hartford County. Four of the 20 are funding at least one gender-specific project.
- Results of a survey completed by over 300 attendees at the 2013 Aurora Women and Girls Foundation Annual Signature Breakfast showed that the top three issues identified for women and girls were the costs of higher education, childcare, and the academic achievement gap. When categorizing the top three, the results show that 74% of the respondents identified educational issues as their top concern.
- Stakeholders from Hartford County foundations report that a majority of the funding for women and girls programs typically focuses on skill-building, confidence-building, and helping women and girls make better choices.

## WOMEN VETERANS

As the number of women in the military has grown, so has the number of women veterans. In 2012, there were approximately 14,000 women veterans living in Connecticut with more than 2,600 residing in Hartford County. Women veterans face substantial and unique challenges readjusting to civilian life, especially in the areas of housing, mental health, health care, employment and homelessness.

- In Hartford County, approximately 8% of the population are veterans; females are 5% of this population (approximately 2,619 women vets in Hartford County).
- Female veterans are almost four times more likely to become homeless than women who have not served in the military.
- Only one of the three veterans' housing facilities in the county house female veterans.



---

P.O. Box 271035 | West Hartford, Connecticut 06127 | 860.881.4926  
info@aurorafoundation.org | [aurorafoundation.org](http://aurorafoundation.org)

**AURORA**  
**FOUNDATION**  
For Women and Girls in Greater Hartford

© 2014 by the Aurora Women and Girls Foundation, Inc. All rights reserved. Any portion of this report may be reproduced without prior permission, provided the material includes the source cited as The Aurora Women and Girls Foundation, Inc., "The Aurora Report" Hartford, CT 2014.