

# **An Assessment of the Status of Women in Ventura County, 2011**

*A report compiled by  
CSU Channel Islands Sociology students  
as a service-learning capstone project*

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**Table of Contents**

**Executive Summary** ..... ii

**Introduction** ..... 1

**Demographics** ..... 3

Percent of population of men and women in Ventura County.....

Median age of all women in Ventura County .....

Distribution of women over 15 years of age by marital status.....

**Education and Earnings**.....7

Percent of women and men by educational attainment age 25+.....

Percent of women and men with advanced degrees in Ventura County.....

Median annual earnings for women and men with 4+ years of college in Ventura County.....

**Employment, Occupation and Income**.....13

Occupational distribution by gender.....

Percent of women’s annual earnings, (Year round full-time).....

Part-time employment.....

Unemployment rates.....

Percent of women living below the poverty level.....

**Household composition and homelessness** ..... 24

Percent of families with children under 18 headed by women.....

Homelessness.....

**Political Participation**.....26

Board of supervisors.....

City Council Members.....

State Senate.....

**Health and Well-Being**.....28

Percent of women with health insurance among non-elderly .....

Fertility rate.....

Teen Pregnancy.....

Low and very low birth weight.....

Infant mortality rate.....

Mothers beginning prenatal care in 1<sup>st</sup> trimester.....

Number of accredited child care providers.....

Number of Women, Infant and Children (WIC) program participants.....

**Safety**.....35

Number of reported rape crimes.....

Suicide rates .....

Domestic violence and domestic violence shelters .....

Percent of Federal State prison population who are women.....

**Conclusion** ..... 38

### Executive Summary:

- This report was completed as a service learning project on the part of Sociology capstone students at California State University, Channel Islands, in collaboration with the Ventura County Commission for Women (VCCW). The report is a compilation of publically available secondary data designed to assist the VCCW in evaluating the general status and particular needs of women in the county. Throughout the report, comparisons are made between women and men, or between Ventura County and larger geographic aggregations (California and the United States as a whole).
- *Demographics:* While women outnumber men in population, the most significant gender gap is prevalent at the national level. The marital status of most women over the age of 15 either currently married or have been at one time but now widowed or divorced while we also see a large number of women who have never been married.
- *Educational Attainment:* In recent decades, we have seen women's educational attainment rise from levels substantially below men to the point where women overall now surpass men in terms of educational attainment. This trend seems to appear in all three areas of comparisons: county, state, and national levels.
- *Employment and Earnings:* Gendered occupations explain some income inequality between men and women, but much inequality exists within occupations. . . . For example, women continue to be overrepresented in "typical" service areas while continuing to be underrepresented in manual labor type jobs.
- *Household composition and homelessness:* In Ventura County, 16.1% of households are headed by women alone with children under 18 years of age compared to the 76.6% of households who are married couples. 33% of the homeless in the county are women.
- *Political Participation:* County level elected officials, such as the Board of Supervisors, show that women elected are almost equal to men.
- *Health and Well-Being:* Women age 18-64 years old in Ventura County are more likely to be uninsured than are women within California or the nation as a whole. The fertility rate for women age 15 to 44 in Ventura County 73.1 live births per thousand, which is slightly above state and national rates. The teen fertility rate (ages 15-19) in the county is 39 live births per 1,000 women, which is . . . . In 2009, 79.7% of women in the county received prenatal care.
- *Child Care & Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Assistance:* Ventura County has 303 accredited child care providers – relative numbers per thousand? Of the estimated eligible population of women, infants, and children in Ventura County, 83% are currently taking advantage of this program. The reasons why the other 17% are not taking advantage of assistance is unknown.
- *Violence and safety:* Rape crimes in 2009 were significantly lower per capita in Ventura County than those of the state or nation (which is a manifestation of lower rates of crime generally in the county). There were 1,677 reports of 1,677 reports in the county. . Two main advocacy groups provide assistance to victims of domestic violence and their children. While the United States has 7% of the female population incarcerated, Ventura County houses 5.9% of the female population in our area.

**Introduction:**

*The VCCW:* The Ventura County Commission for Women (VCCW) was established in 1981 with the mission of encouraging, supporting, and facilitating the empowerment and education of Ventura County women. The VCCW serves as an advisory body to the Board of Supervisors on issues impacting and relating to women, and coordinates efforts with federal, state and local community groups to improve the quality of life for women. To accomplish their mission, Commission members need to have access to current data regarding women in Ventura County across a range of indicators.

*Process & purpose:* This report was compiled as a service-learning project on the part of Sociology students at California State University, Channel Islands, for their capstone course. The four students, working with a faculty supervisor, collaborated with representatives of the VCCW to identify the areas of data that would be most helpful for accomplishing their mission. After meetings with VCCW representatives and the commission as a whole, it was determined that a comprehensive report across a wide range of areas would be most useful. The students worked throughout spring semester to gather compile the necessary data and present them in the form of this written report.

As a comprehensive report, the data address many disparate areas of concern and interest on the part of the VCCW – such as demographics, employment and earnings, educational attainment, political participation, health and well-being, and violence and safety concerns. Most areas include comparisons between women and men, and across several geographical levels for comparison (generally county, state, and national). We hope that our report will assist the VCCW to identify some of the crucial needs of women in the county, and ultimately to develop programs that will address those needs in a way that promotes greater equality and opportunities for women in Ventura County.

*Data sources:* The report was compiled using secondary data gathered from various publically available sources. At the time of the writing, the 2010 Census data are not yet available for most of the necessary areas (aggregated by sex, etc.). Consequently, most of the Census data presented below were compiled from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2005-2009 estimates. Additional data were compiled from public websites and other sources. All sources are indicated in the text.

*Acknowledgements:* We would like to thank the members of the VCCW for partnering on the project – particularly Shanté Morgan Durisseau and Debra Bagley who worked initially with the team to specify the project. We would also like to thank Chris Williamson (Senior Planner, City of Oxnard) for his assistance and guidance in navigating Census data delivery systems on the internet.

## Demographics

*Sex composition and ratios:* We begin by presenting some basic demographic variables, beginning with the sex composition and sex ratios in Ventura County, relative to California and the United States. As indicated in the table below, sex composition in Ventura County slightly favors males, at 50.1%, to 49.9% females; that represents a sex ratio of 100.53.<sup>1</sup> At the state level, the percentages are virtually even (with men slightly outnumbering women). At the national level, the balance favors females at 50.7% to 49.3% men, representing a sex ratio of 97.13.

	<b>FEMALES (#)</b>	<b>MALES (#)</b>	<b>FEMALE (%)</b>	<b>MALE (%)</b>	<b>SEX RATIO</b>
<b>VENTURA COUNTY</b>	<b>395,119</b>	<b>397,194</b>	<b>49.9%</b>	<b>50.1%</b>	<b>100.53</b>
<b>CALIFORNIA</b>	<b>18,149,901</b>	<b>18,158,626</b>	<b>50.0%</b>	<b>50.0%</b>	<b>100.05</b>
<b>UNITED STATES</b>	<b>152,925,887</b>	<b>148,535,646</b>	<b>50.7 %</b>	<b>49.3%</b>	<b>97.13</b>

Source: US Census Bureau, 2008 Population Estimates; T06 Sex by Age.

As those data indicate, the sex ratio at the national level exhibits the greatest difference from perfect equality. In more developed societies like the United States, we expect to see higher numbers of women relative to men (which represents a "lower" sex ratio, by traditional demographic measures). That is largely because more developed societies have higher life expectancies, and in societies with higher life expectancies the longevity advantage for women has a more pronounced effect on gender composition in the population as a whole. The reason we do not see that effect at the state and (even less) at the county level is that it is counterbalanced or outweighed by the effects of

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<sup>1</sup> The sex ratio is calculated by taking the number of males and dividing by the number of females and multiplying by 100. That sex ratio represents the standard statistic that demographers use to measure and compare relative gender composition across populations.

immigration – most specifically, the kind of labor migrations in which men predominate. For that reason and others, positive sex ratios (i.e. male dominant) are a common characteristic of Western states more generally.<sup>2</sup>

*Age and sex distribution:* Aside from overall sex ratios, one of the most important demographic characteristics of any population is its distribution across the age spectrum. Starting with the average age within the population (presented in the table below), the median age for women in Ventura County is 37.5 years. For men in the county, the median age is 34.5 (a difference which is to be expected, given women's longevity advantage). That is nearly two years higher than women's median age at the state level (35.7), and slightly under the national median age for women (37.9 years).

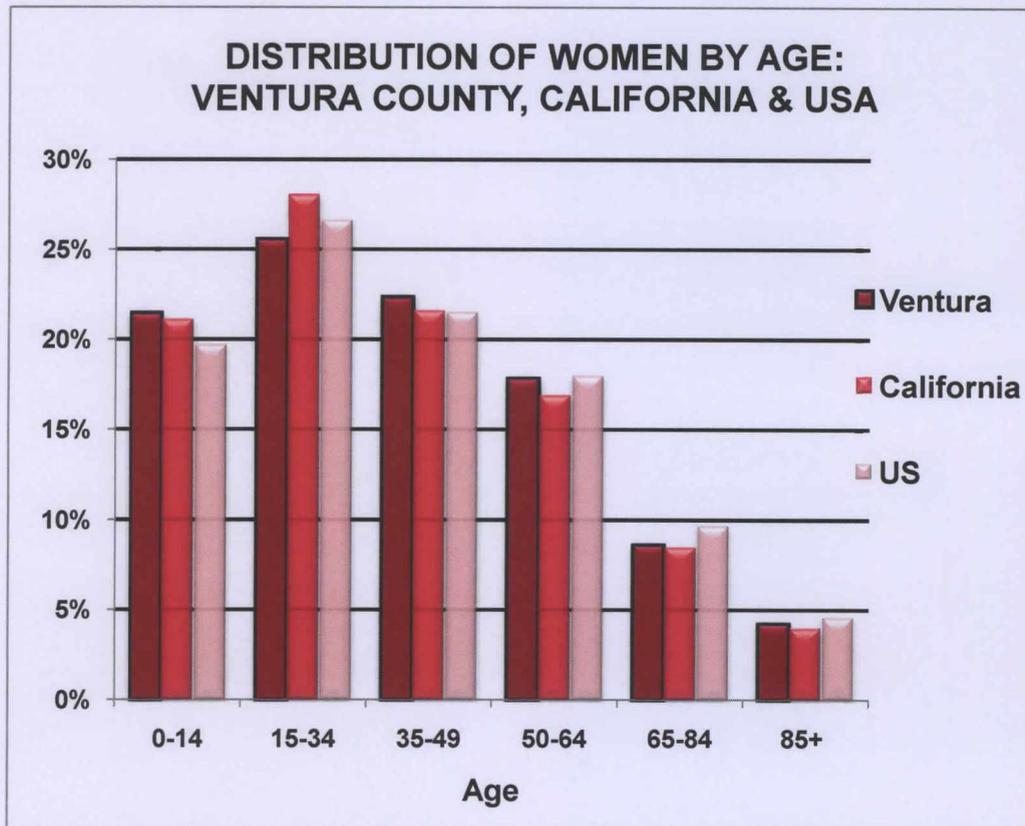
<b>MEDIAN AGES</b>	<b>VENTURA COUNTY</b>	<b>CALIFORNIA</b>	<b>UNITED STATES</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36.1</b>	<b>34.6</b>	<b>36.5</b>
<b>FEMALES</b>	<b>37.5</b>	<b>35.7</b>	<b>37.9</b>
<b>MALES</b>	<b>34.8</b>	<b>33.4</b>	<b>35.2</b>

*Source:* US Census Bureau, 2008 Population Estimates. T07 Median Age by Sex.

More detailed information on women's age distributions can be seen in the graph which below, which presents the percentage of women in each age category at each geographical level. We can see that the distributions are relatively similar at the county, state, and national levels. There are only slight differences in overall patterns – with Ventura County having a slightly higher percentage of women's population who are 14 & under and who are 35-49, and a lower percentage in the 15-34 category. This seems

<sup>2</sup> For a general overview and comparison of sex ratios across states, see: "Gender in the United States" in NationalAtlas.gov ([http://www.nationalatlas.gov/articles/people/a\\_gender.html](http://www.nationalatlas.gov/articles/people/a_gender.html)).

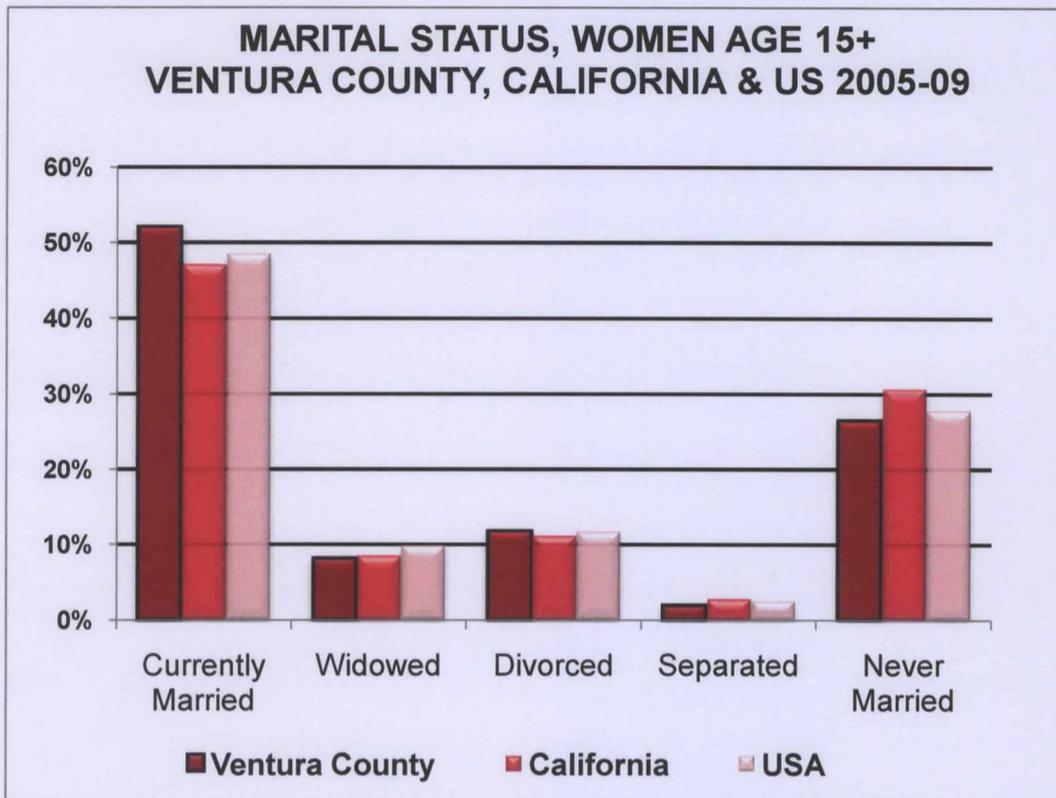
to suggest a slight generational cohort effect in the late 30s and 40s, who are likely to have children in the youngest category.



Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, B01001. SEX BY AGE

*Marital status:* Marital status has an important impact on women's status and lives, as it shapes careers and largely defines family life. The figure below illustrates the percentages of women in Ventura County who fall into various categories of marital status (currently married, widowed, divorced, separated, and never married), compared to patterns at the state and national levels. The data show that approximately half of the women at each of the geographical levels are currently married. The next largest category is "Never Married." As we know, that is a growing segment of the population (both male and female) due primarily to the rising age of first marriages (in the US and

other developed nations), as well as the increasing number of women who choose not to marry at all.



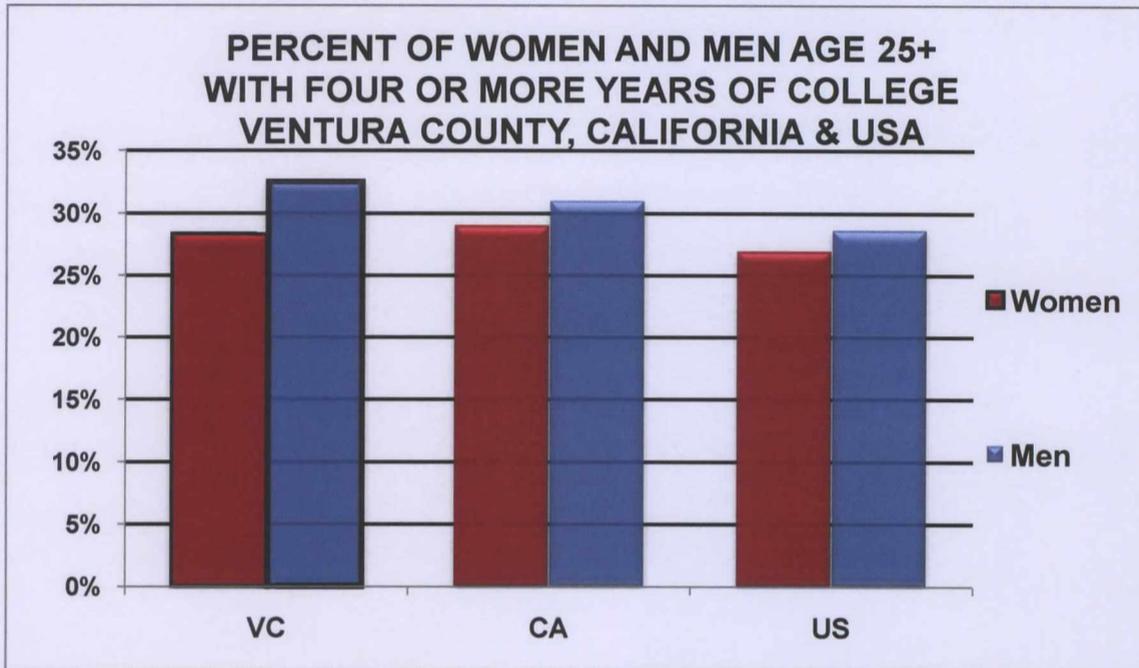
Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, B13001. MARITAL STATUS BY AGE FOR WOMEN 15 TO 50 YEARS

### **Educational Attainment and Earnings**

When considering the overall determinants of women's status in Ventura County, educational attainment and earnings are among the most important issues to examine. Educational attainment is indicative of the openness and equality of social institutions, and has a crucial impact on women's lives and ability to support themselves. Earnings represent the single most important measure of self-sufficiency.

In our society, college has become the standard divide in terms of educational attainment. Those with a college education and those without generally compete in

distinct occupational pools with very different economic rewards attached to them. In short, college is now the primary gateway to higher paying careers. The graph below presents data on the percentage of women and men over 25 years of age (which is approximately the age at which most will have completed their college education) who have four or more years of college education at the county, state, and national levels.

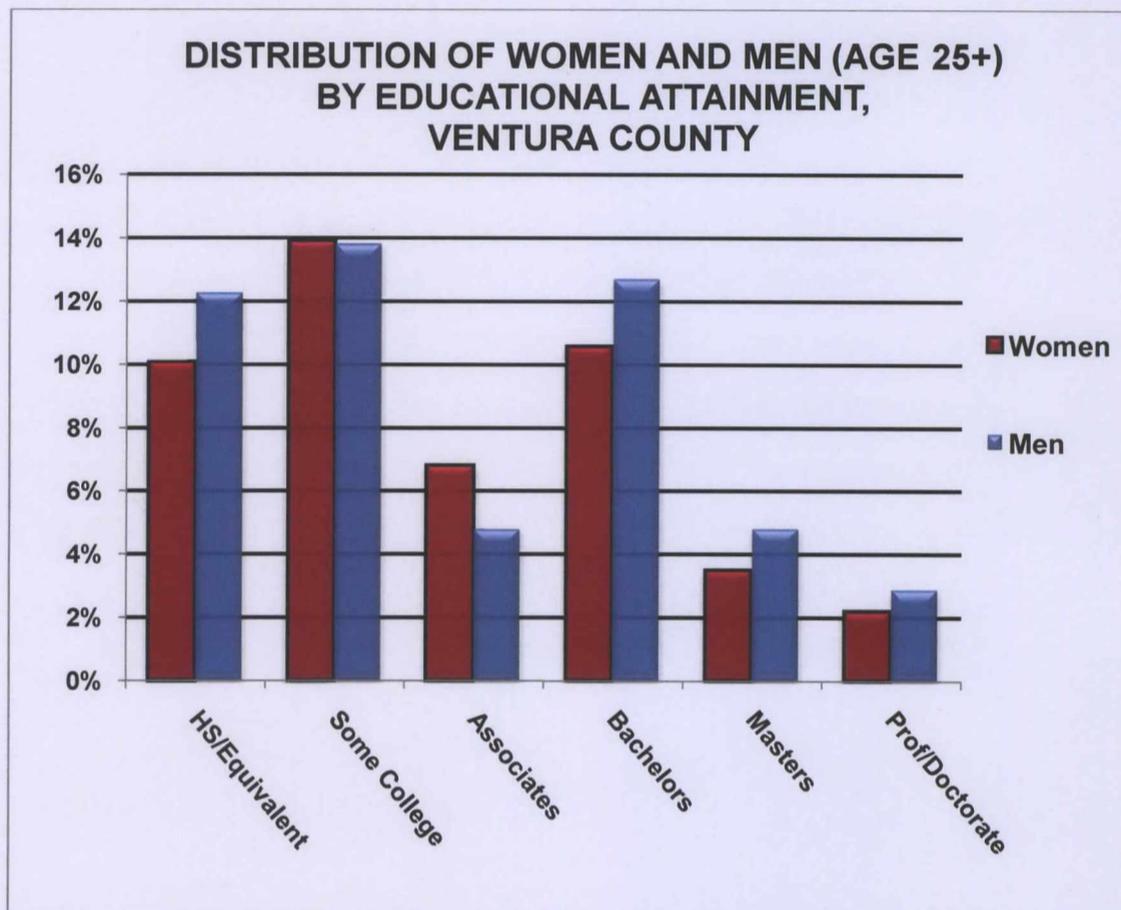


Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, B15002. SEX BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR THE POPULATION 25 YEARS AND OVER

We can see from the graph that Ventura County is a more educated population, relatively speaking, than California and the nation as a whole. That is good news for the county. However, we can also see that the gender gap in college education is higher in Ventura County than at either of the higher geographical levels; women who have completed four or more years of college trail men by 4.1% in the county, compared with 2.0% and 1.7% differentials at the state and national levels, respectively. Without additional data any interpretation of the causes of such differences is speculative, but they are consistent with patterns in many immigrant populations.

While the completion of four years of college is a useful starting point in assessing educational attainment, it is crucial to go beyond that to examine the distribution of educational attainment across the full spectrum of levels and degrees.

The following graph presents those data for Ventura County.



Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, B15002. SEX BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR THE POPULATION 25 YEARS AND OVER

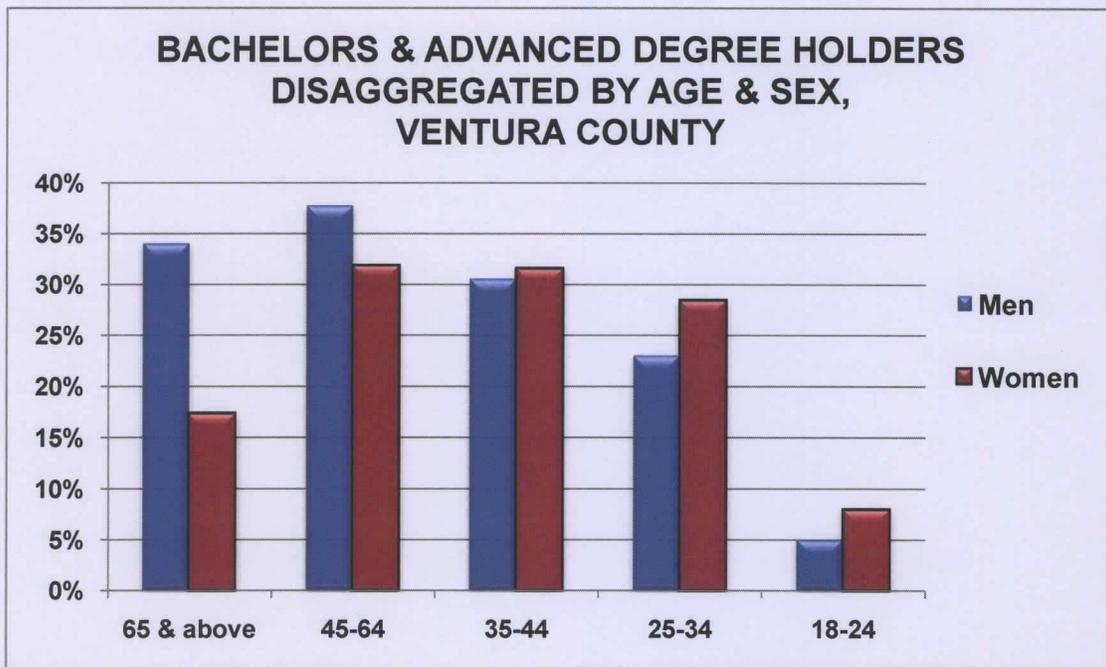
Overall men outnumber women in the attainment of the highest degrees (bachelor's, master's, and professional and doctorate). In the category of high school degree or equivalent, men are ahead in attainment by about 2.2%. However, women outnumber men in the categories of some college (by 0.1%) and associates degree (by 2%). Beyond associate degree-holders, the difference between women and men

earning bachelors and graduate degrees in Ventura County reverts back to favor men. In keeping with the national patterns, these differences are minimal with no more than 2% more men than women earning higher degrees in each category.

The data presented so far on differences in educational attainment by sex in the population as a whole suggest that men overall achieve higher levels of education than women. However, when assessing levels of educational attainment across the population as a whole we get no sense of the substantial changes that have occurred in recent decades as increasing numbers of women have entered into higher education and achieved bachelor's and postgraduate degrees. By disaggregating the population not only by sex, but by age cohorts, we can observe evidence of those changes over time, since education is completed for most members of the population relatively early in their life cycle. (Most bachelor's degrees are completed by the early 20s, and postgraduate degrees by the early 30s. While there is still some growth in advanced degrees, this change is small relative to the age cohort as a whole.) In other words, disaggregating data on educational attainment by age allows us to see evidence of change over time (or across generations) with data that are collected at one point in time. The figure below displays those patterns by comparing differences in the percentages of men and women who have earned bachelor's degrees and advanced degrees across age cohorts in Ventura County.

As we expected, men outnumber women with advanced degrees by 17% in the 65+ category. However, the gender gap decreases and begins to reverse when we look at younger age cohorts. In the 45-64 age cohort, the gender cap narrows to 7%; in the 35-44 age category, women with bachelor's and advanced degrees slightly outnumber

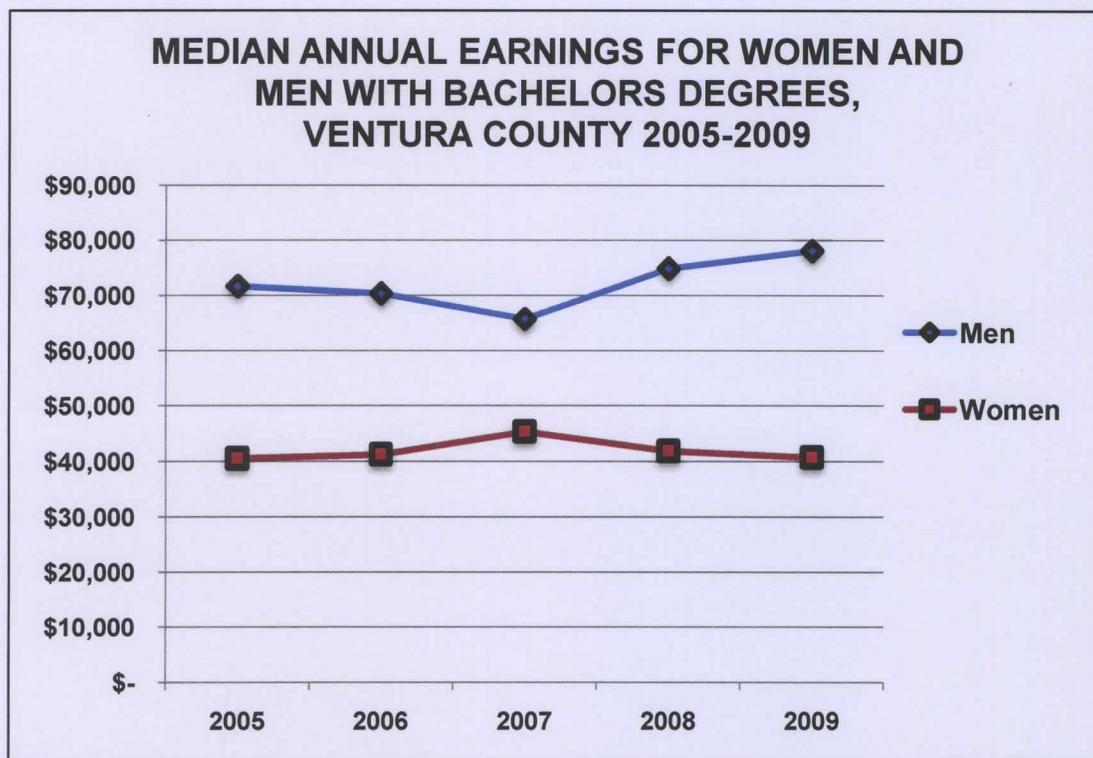
men (by approximately 1%). In the 25-34 age cohort (the youngest category within which we expect the majority of persons to have completed their education) we see that the proportion of women with higher degrees is in excess of 5% greater than the proportion of men. That difference is substantial. Differences in the 18-24 age category reflect a similar pattern (women receiving higher degrees at a higher rate than men), even though educational attainment is far from complete within that age cohort.



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, B15002. SEX BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FOR THE POPULATION 25 YEARS AND OVER

New statistics on the gender gap in education published in the 2010 update of *Gender Equity in Higher Education* provide support for the decreasing gender gap in educational attainment. The distribution of undergraduate degrees has remained consistent since 2000 with 43% of men overall receiving bachelor's degrees, leaving 57% of women attaining bachelor's degrees.

*Educational attainment and income:* For those interested in sex equity, trends in educational attainment are welcome news. While that is good news in its own right, it is also good news because of its expected influence on income gaps between men and women. However, as we see below, the economic returns to educational attainment for women continues to lag behind those for men. Specifically, the graph below presents annual earnings for women and men with bachelor's degrees over a five year period from 2005 to 2009.



Source: Postsecondary Education Commission 2005-2009 Estimates

We can see that earnings are much higher for men throughout the period under consideration. The gap exhibited a decided narrowing trend over the first half of the period, and then in the two subsequent years the gap widened so that it ultimately surpassed the gap in 2005. That period, of course, represents an extremely volatile era

in the economy. As the economy recovers, it will be important to reassess the income gap (and many of the other economic data presented below) to see how the recovery effects issues of income equity for women and men.

### **Employment, Occupation, and Income**

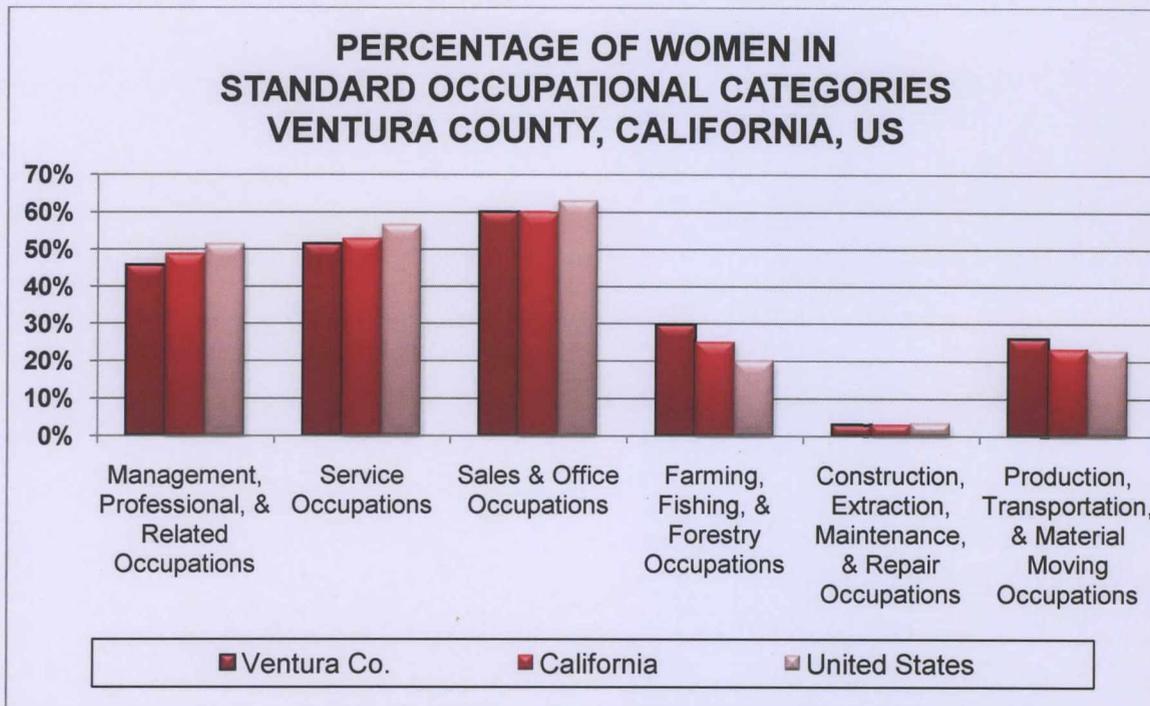
One of the most important sources of income inequality is the way that men and women are distributed in different ways across the occupational structure – that is, the way that men are predominant in some occupations while women are predominant in others. Because of differences in median incomes across occupational categories, the distribution across occupations is a major determinant of any group's overall income level. Generally speaking, occupational categories in which men are predominant end to have higher median incomes than those in which women are predominant.

To observe sex differences in occupational distribution, we use a system of Standard Occupational Codes (SOCs) which account for all occupations in our economy. The table below presents the percentage of women in each of the highest level categories – i.e. those categories which pool together multiple occupations with similar characteristics into six large and comprehensive categories.<sup>3</sup> (We will examine more detailed categories in data presented below.) We can see that at all geographical levels, women have their highest representation in several main categories:

Management, professional & related occupations; Service occupations; and Sales & office occupations – ranging from just under 50% in the first category to approximately 60% in the third category.

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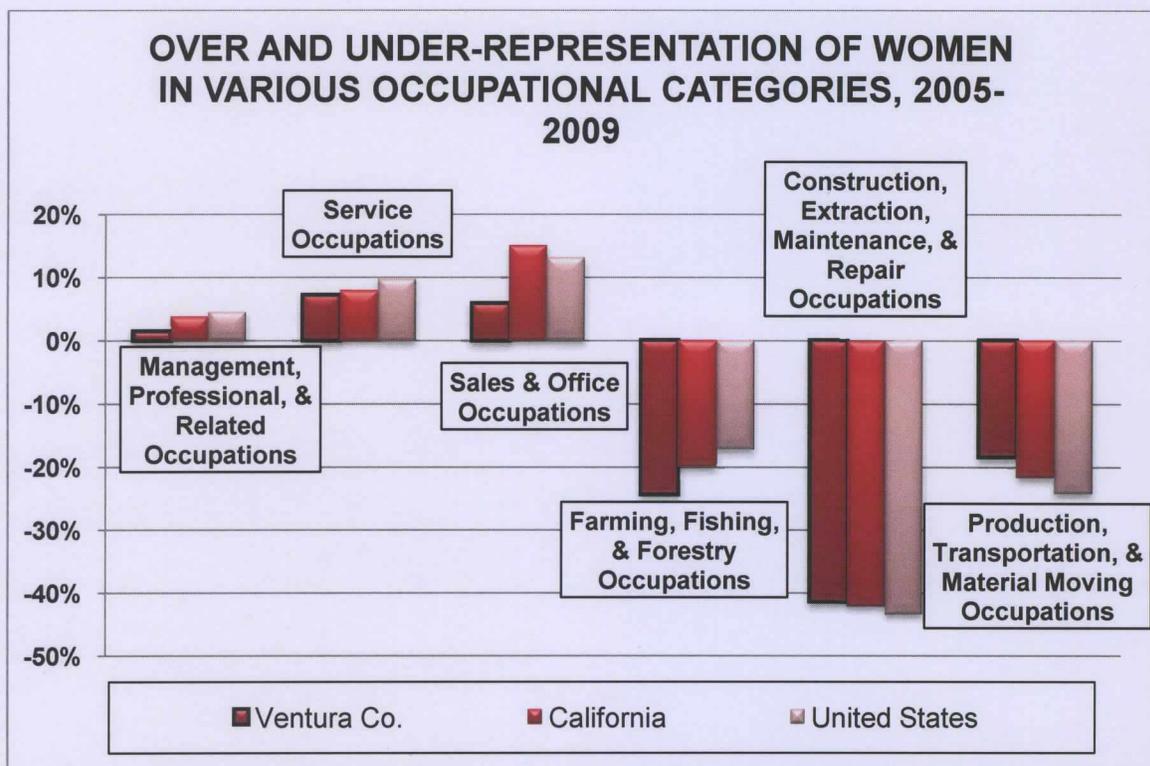
<sup>3</sup> While the types of occupations will be generally familiar, one can find documentation which elaborates on the occupations which comprise each category in the U.S. Census Bureau page on "Industry and Occupation." Please see the following link: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/ioindex/ioindex.html>.



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates S24010. SEX BY OCCUPATION FOR THE CIVILIAN EMPLOYED POPULATION 16 YEARS AND OVER

While the table above is useful for understanding women's relative representation in various categories, it can be difficult to draw direct conclusions from those data about over-representation and under-representation in any particular category at any particular level. For a more nuanced presentation, we must recall that gender segregation in occupations (or any type of segregation, for that matter) is an over- or under- representation of men or women in any occupational category. In a labor force in which men and women are both 50% of the labor force, any deviation above or below that represents over-representation or under-representation within that category. In actuality, women represent less than half of the labor force in each of those regional aggregations. In Ventura County, women represent 44.2% of the labor force; in California, women represent 45.0% of the labor force; and in the United States as a whole, women represent 46.9% of the labor force. (In all calculations in this section,

"labor force" includes the civilian employed population 16 years and over, not restricted to year-round full-time). Consequently, accurate representation of relative representation must take that into consideration. In the graph below, those figures are taken into consideration. Additionally, rather than present the percentage of women in an occupational category, the graph presents actual percentages of over- and under-representation. In brief, we can see that women are slightly to moderately over-represented in the first several categories, and substantially to dramatically under-represented in the remaining several categories.



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates S24010. SEX BY OCCUPATION FOR THE CIVILIAN EMPLOYED POPULATION 16 YEARS AND OVER

Approximately half of the categories indicate relatively small differences in representation across by sex (generally, less than a 10% difference). The greatest differences are in the categories which have traditionally been associated with the most

physical work, where women continue to be greatly under-represented. In contrast, women are overrepresented in the remaining categories, including a slight over-representation in the Management and professional category – which generally requires the highest educational credentials.

Occupational segregation has many social implications, but none are as important as its implications on income levels for men and women. Consequently, it is important to consider the median incomes associated with those occupational categories (although the relative median incomes will be intuitively familiar to most observers). The following table presents median incomes for each of the categories represented in the data above.

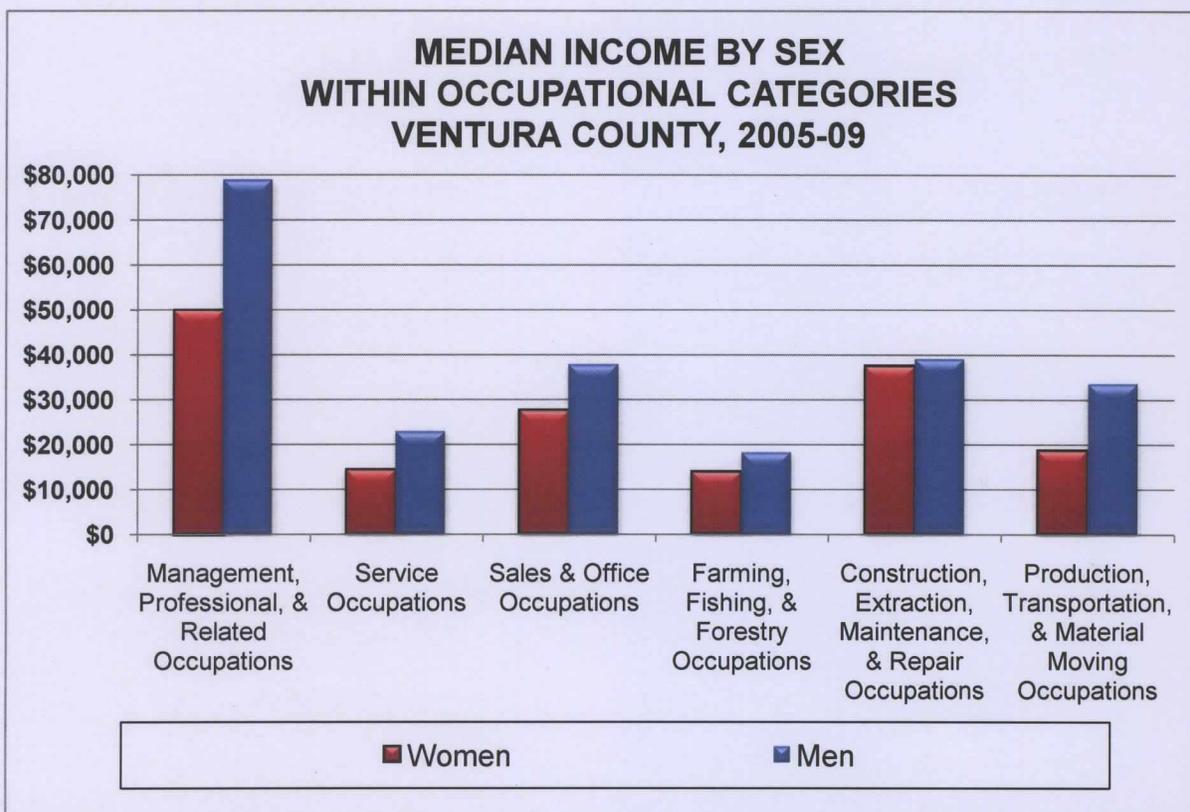
	Ventura County	California	United States
<b>Management, professional, &amp; related occupations</b>	\$63,070	\$58,837	\$50,326
<b>Service occupations</b>	\$18,227	\$18,379	\$16,883
<b>Sales &amp; office occupations</b>	\$30,817	\$30,164	\$27,301
<b>Farming, fishing, &amp; forestry occupations</b>	\$17,083	\$15,966	\$17,324
<b>Construction, extraction, maintenance, &amp; repair occupations</b>	\$39,092	\$34,610	\$33,906
<b>Production, transportation, &amp; material moving occupations</b>	\$28,741	\$26,411	\$28,603

*Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates S24010. SEX BY OCCUPATION FOR THE CIVILIAN EMPLOYED POPULATION 16 YEARS AND OVER*

For those interested in women's advancement, there is mixed news here. To focus on the most dramatic: of the three categories in which women are over-represented, we see the single category with the highest overall median income (Management, professional, & related occupations), and we also see the category with what is very close to the lowest median income (Service occupations). Women are also

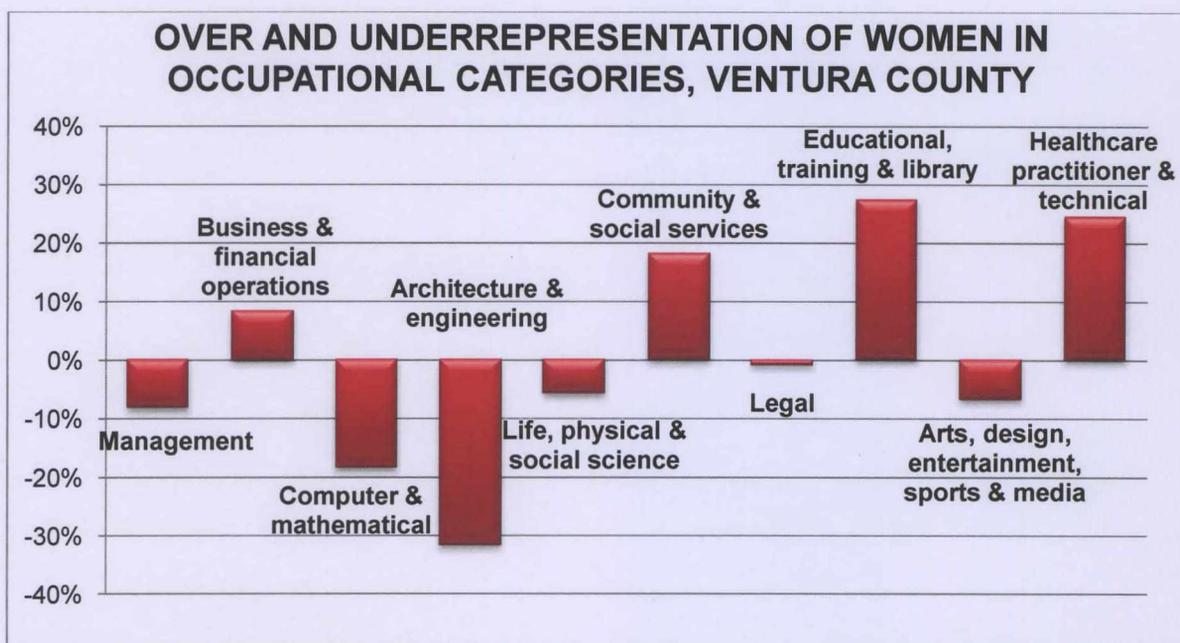
greatly underrepresented in the category with the second highest median income (Construction, extraction, maintenance & repair occupations) – a category which has solid incomes notwithstanding the lack of formal educational requirements.

While it is useful to look at median incomes across different occupational categories, it is also important to look at differences in median incomes for women and men *within* those categories. The mixed news for women gets worse when we examine intra-occupational income differences by sex. In the following graph (which only presents data for Ventura County), we can see that men enjoy median annual incomes that are higher than women for every occupational category – and, in some cases, substantially higher.



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates S24010. SEX BY OCCUPATION FOR THE CIVILIAN EMPLOYED POPULATION 16 YEARS AND OVER

In the category with the highest overall median income (Management, professional & related occupations), we see the greatest overall income differential by sex. In Ventura County, the median income for men within the management and professional category is \$78,829, while the median income for women in that category is \$49,922. Given the importance of the management and professional occupations category, the remainder of this analysis will focus our attention there. It is important to remember that there are many different occupations within the broad category represented by Management and professional occupations. While previously presented data suggested a slight overrepresentation of women in the management and professional category, that advantage is deceptive; when we disaggregate that large occupational category into its ten standard components, as in the following table, we see that the distribution of men and women varies substantially.



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates S24010. SEX BY OCCUPATION FOR THE CIVILIAN EMPLOYED POPULATION 16 YEARS AND OVER

Again, one can see the remnants of gender role influences on the distribution of occupations – even *within* the occupational category. Women are *overrepresented* in the fields of education, healthcare, and social services, and *underrepresented* in the technical fields of architecture and engineering and in computer and mathematical occupations. That again has implications for income differences. The table below includes the rates of over/underrepresentation of women in each of the subfields above, along with the median incomes for each. Generally, we see that within the management and professional occupations, women are overrepresented in fields with the lowest median incomes, and underrepresented in those fields with the highest.

	% Women	Over/Under Represented (44.2% base)	Median income for Occ. Cat.	Difference in Med. Income (Men - Women)
Management occupations	35.9%	-8.3%	\$80,027	-\$32,931
Business & financial operations occupations	52.6%	+8.4%	\$55,644	-\$14,712
Computer & mathematical occupations	25.7%	-18.5%	\$77,740	-\$10,248
Architecture & engineering occupations	12.5%	-31.7%	\$81,875	-\$17,387
Life, physical & social science occupations	38.4%	-5.8%	\$71,503	\$18,076
Community & social service occupations	62.4%	+18.2%	\$39,761	-\$10,916
Legal occupations	44.1%	-1%	\$86,875	-\$47,049
Education, training & library occupations	71.6%	+27.4%	\$42,420	-\$13,872
Arts, design, entertainment, sports & media occ's	37.4%	-6.8%	\$41,038	-\$26,823
Healthcare practitioner & technical occupations	68.7%	+24.5%	\$61,935	-\$34,269

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates S24010. SEX BY OCCUPATION FOR THE CIVILIAN EMPLOYED POPULATION 16 YEARS AND OVER

So far, we have addressed income inequalities resulting from differences in occupational distribution, and income differentials within occupations. Another very important contributor to income inequalities between sexes is the difference in the rate of part-time employment between sexes.

*Employment status:* In Ventura County, 49.9% of women in the labor force are employed year-round full time (YRFT). In contrast, 66.3% of men are YRFT employees. At the state and national levels, women are also less likely to work YRFT. However, the differential between men and women (16.4%) is higher than at the state or national levels (13.8% and 13.2%, respectively). Again, it is difficult to offer any particular explanation for that difference, but it might warrant additional investigation.

Full-Time Year Round Employment	Women	Men
Ventura County	49.9%	66.3%
California	50.7%	64.5%
United States	52.3%	65.5%

*Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates S24010. SEX BY OCCUPATION FOR THE CIVILIAN EMPLOYED POPULATION 16 YEARS AND OVER*

Stated in another way, women are much more likely to work part-time. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics data from 2010 to 2011, there are an estimated 70,703 individuals in Ventura County in part-time positions; 65% of them are women. It is important to add that part-time work (like all other categories of work), tend to be less economically remunerative for women relative to men. The following table presents women's and men's median incomes for part-time work at each of the three geographical levels. In Ventura County, the median income for women working part-

time is \$41,627; for men, it is \$53,731. Comparing with the state and national levels, we again see that the differential is somewhat higher in the county.

Median Earnings Full-Time Employment	Women	Men
Ventura County	\$41,627	\$53,731
California	\$40,256	\$48,293
United States	\$35,207	\$45,363

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates S24010. SEX BY OCCUPATION FOR THE CIVILIAN EMPLOYED POPULATION 16 YEARS AND OVER

*Reasons for part-time employment:* There are many reasons why men and women work part-time – and those reasons are likely to vary by sex. Focusing on traditional gender roles, for example, we might expect that women will choose to work part-time due to primary child care responsibilities. (Of course, such "choices" are often made by women under substantial cultural pressures that are not exerted upon men.) In order to understand the full effects of part-time employment, it is crucial to investigate how decisions regarding part-time employment are made.

In data collected for the American Community Survey, part-time workers are asked to specify the reason why they are working part-time. Based on responses, they were categorized as having either "economic reasons" for working part-time, or "non-economic reasons" for working part-time. *Economic reasons* were defined by any of the following: Slack work or business conditions; Could find only part-time work; Seasonal work; or, Job started or ended during the week. *Noneconomic reasons* were defined by any of the following: Child-care problems; Other family or personal obligations; Health or medical limitations; In school or training; Retired or social security limit on earnings;

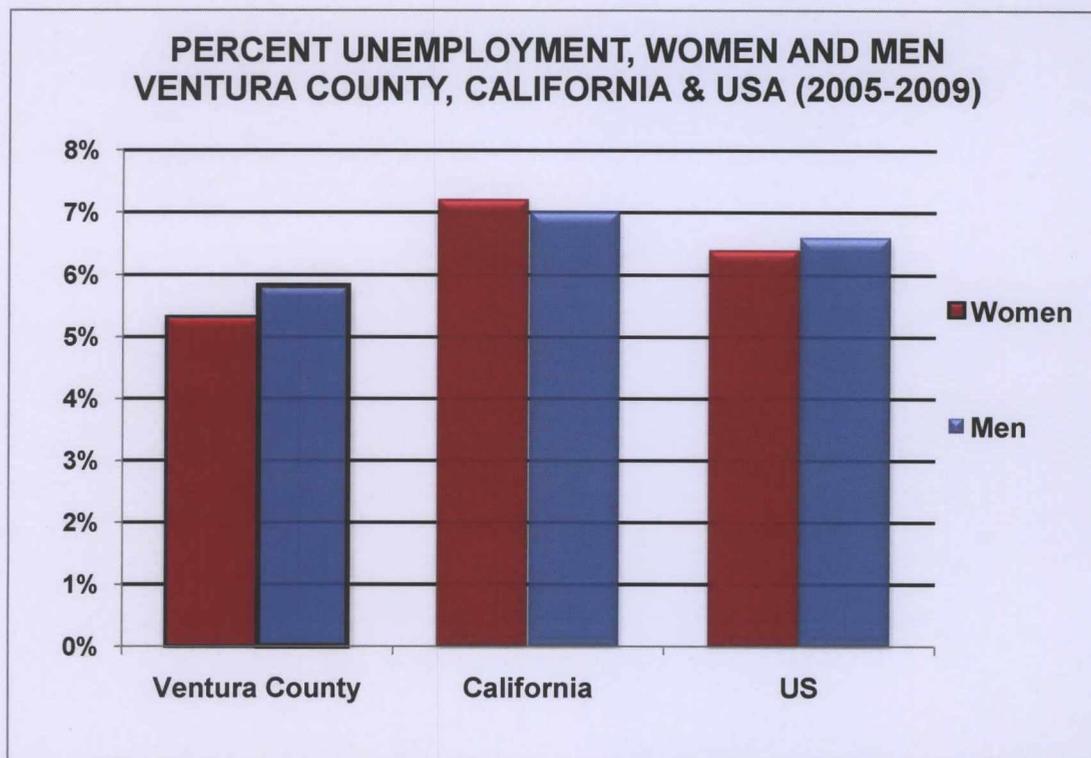
Vacation or personal day; Holiday, legal or religious reasons; or Weather-related curtailment. The distribution of economic and noneconomic reasons for part-time work for women and men in Ventura County are presented in the figure below.

Part Time Employment 2010-2011	Economic Reasons	Noneconomic Reasons	Not at Work
<b>Women</b>	<b>21.4%</b>	<b>72.4%</b>	<b>5.1%</b>
<b>Men</b>	<b>36.1%</b>	<b>58.0%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>

As the table indicates, the dominant reasons for part-time work are noneconomic. Moreover, part-time employment for women (relative to men) is still more likely to be accounted for by noneconomic reasons. As we can see from the definitional elements above, noneconomic reasons include two categories that are closely associated with traditional women's gender roles within the family. Not only do those components include the more immediately apparent issues of child raising, but the "other family obligations" component includes such tasks as caretaking for elderly parents which are also primarily delegated to women's responsibilities (and which will be increasingly important as aging baby boomers face their elderly years).

*Unemployment rates:* One of the most important sources of income inequality across any groups or individual level comes from unemployment – an issue with particular resonance in the current economic climate. Before presenting data on unemployment, it is important to note that our data cannot be completely current, as data at the county level disaggregated by sex are not available on a month by month or annual basis. Here, we rely on data from the American Community Survey, pooled from 2005-00 (as well as data from 2000, to provide some sense of temporal change). While

these data do little to help us to understand the current economic climate, they are adequate for understanding general sex differentials in unemployment rates. The table below presents the pooled estimates from 2005-09. :

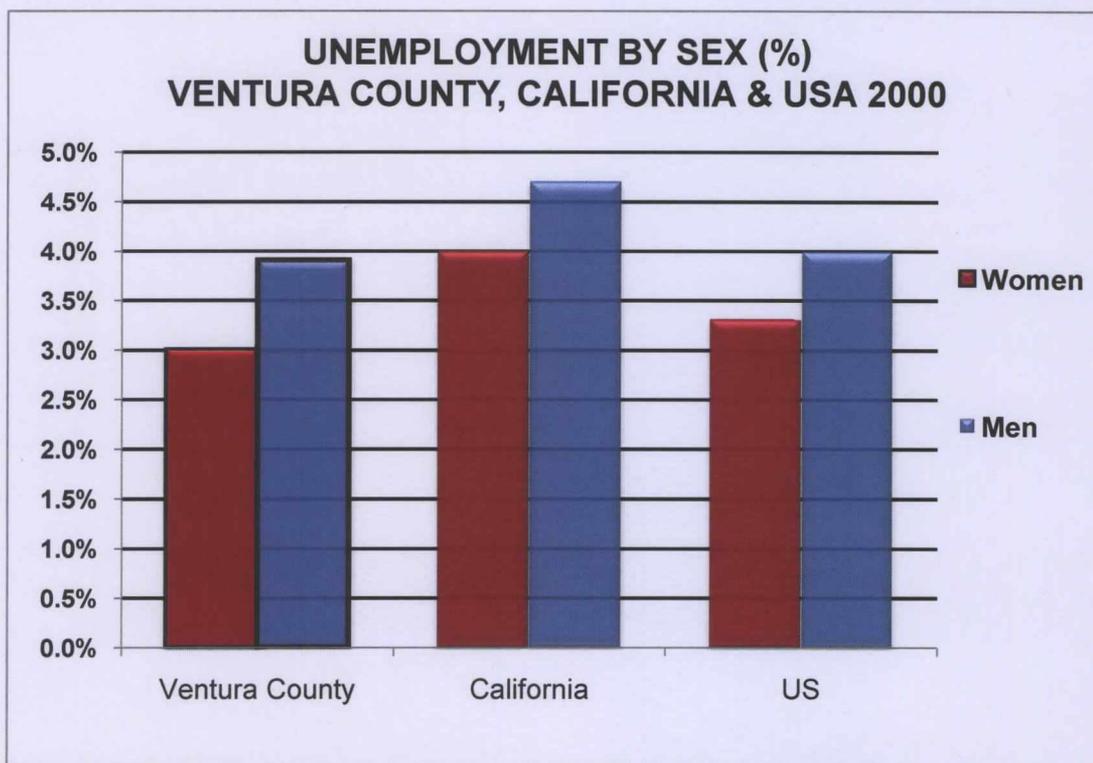


Source: S2301 Employment Statistics 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5 year estimate

We can see first, that Ventura County has a relatively low unemployment rate relative to the national and state levels. (The relative differences here are somewhat less useful, given the particularly high unemployment rates in California during the recent recession – and the fact that the data are based on estimates which span an era which predates the worst of the recession.) Shifting to an examination of differences between men and women (our focus here), we can also see that women have an unemployment rate of 5.3%, compared to men's rate of 5.8%. Once again, this presents mixed news for women's advocates. While lower unemployment rates are very good,

women's rates are lowered by the fact that many more women are simply not in the workforce – and therefore not counted in the unemployment statistics. As with part-time work, we might want to assess the reasons for being out of the workforce – but such data are not available. In this case, it is difficult to come to hard and fast conclusions about the data and would require further research.

In order to briefly give a more developed sense of change over time in the volatile unemployment rate, we also provide the unemployment rates from 2000. Not only do we see lower rates overall (not surprising), but we also see that the gaps between men and women are substantially greater. That suggests that women's "demand" for employment is more easily filled when the economy is running at full speed. But, as we have seen, women's demand for employment differs from men, in terms of part-time status, is more likely to vary with noneconomic reasons, etc.



Source: QT-P24 Employment by sex: 2000, Census 2000 Summary File 3

*Poverty rates:* One final and extremely important measure of economic status, associated with income inequalities (and often caused by unemployment) is the poverty rate. American Community Survey pooled estimates (2005-2009) suggest that 10.1% of women in Ventura County live below the poverty line, while for men the rate is 8%. The 1.9% difference is by no means a small gap – and falls most harshly on female-headed households (which will be examined more closely in the next section). Comparing those rates to higher geographical aggregations, the rate of poverty among women at the state level is 14.2%, compared to 12.2% for men. Finally, at the national level, the percentage of women living below the poverty is 14.8%, compared to 12.2% for men. In Ventura County, not only are poverty rates slightly lower, but the differential between men and women is slightly smaller. That is of little consolation given that those data indicate that one in every ten women in the county lives below the poverty level. Moreover, remember that those data are pooled estimates from 2005-09; the rates are undoubtedly higher presently.

#### **Household composition and homelessness**

Having a secure home for oneself and one's family is a crucial aspect of health and happiness in our (or any) society. One's ability to support a secure household is clearly dependent on the issues above – most notably, earnings (and education). In this brief section, we assess household composition for women (closely related to family structure) and homelessness among women.

*Female-headed households:* Female-headed households represent a particularly important issue for women's advocates. As with many other issues addressed above,

they can be the result of independent choices, choices within constraints, or outcomes completely beyond their control. The social outcomes of female-headed households are equally varied; they may represent thriving homes, but are also at greater risk of falling into poverty. While we cannot distinguish among causes or outcomes with the data presented here, it is important to keep those variations in mind when assessing the data. The table below compares the percentages of total households that fall into the categories of female-headed or married couples.

Household Composition:	Female household	Married Couple
Ventura County	11.2%	57.5%
California	12.7%	49.9%
United States	12.4%	49.7%

Source: B11001. HOUSEHOLD TYPE. 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Data show that in Ventura County, 11.2% of total households are female-headed households, while married couples make up 57.5% of the remaining households of families with children under 18 years of age. Relative to the state and national levels, Ventura County has a smaller percentage of female-headed households. In California, 12.7% of households are female-headed, while married couples comprise 49.9%. At the national level, 12.4% of households are female-headed, and 49.7% of households are married couples.

*Homeless:* Counting the homeless is notoriously difficult, because of the challenges of tracking homeless and gathering accurate information, as well as the fact that rates of homelessness change on a day-to-day basis. The best and most recent data for Ventura County come from the homeless survey conducted by the Ventura

County Homeless and Housing Coalition in 2010, which gives us the best in-depth data on the homeless in the county, including data disaggregated by gender, age, ethnicity and city of residence.<sup>4</sup> According to the VCHHC report, there are approximately 1,815 adults and children who are considered homeless. Among the homeless population, 67% were men, and 33% were women. The VCHHC report is a tremendous resource for the county and should be referred to directly for information on homelessness.

### **Political Participation**

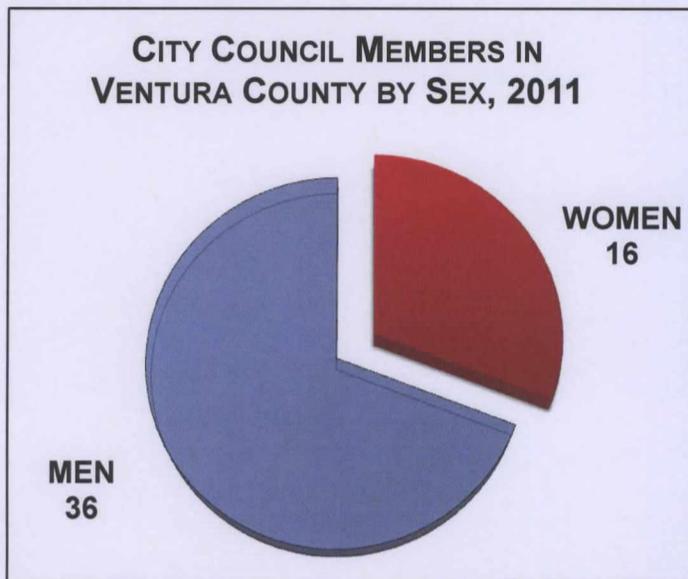
Political participation is an important indicator of the status of women. In a democratic society, to the extent that women are elected to represent their fellow citizens in equal measure, this suggests that they are engaging in what is arguably the highest form of political participation. Moreover, the greater the number of elected political representatives, the greater women's ability to collectively (or individually) pursue their interests within the political system. Below, we present data on the sex composition of elected officials from within Ventura County at the city, county, state, and federal levels.

*Municipal offices:* The assessment of the City Councils within the county shows that 16 out of 52 total city council members are women, representing about 31%, as indicated in the graph below. It is interesting to note that no more than two women serve as council members in any city in the county, with the exception of Ojai (which has four

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<sup>4</sup> Ventura County Homeless and Housing Coalition. 2010. *County of Ventura 2010 Homeless Count*. Ventura, CA. (For a copy of the report, see: [www.vchhc.org](http://www.vchhc.org).) In their research, homelessness was defined using standard definitions from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Specifically, to be considered homeless, persons must reside in one of the following places: in places not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, and abandoned buildings; in an emergency shelter; and in transitional housing for homeless persons. (See VCHHC 2010 report, p. 4.)

female council members). On the other end of the spectrum, Santa Paula is the only city out of 10 in the county that has no women represented on the city council. Three out of the 10 city mayors are women, or 30%.



*County:* At the county level, we see that two out of the five county supervisors are women (Linda Parks and Kathy Long). Other elected positions in county government include: Assessor, Auditor-Controller, County Clerk and Recorder, District Attorney, Sheriff, Superintendent of Schools,

Treasurer-Tax Collector, and County Executive Officer. Of those positions, the office of Auditor-Controller is the only one held by a woman (Christine Cohen). Of 29 Superior Court Judges in Ventura County, seven are women, representing 24.1% of the total.

*State level:* In the State Senate, Ventura County is part of three districts (the 17<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 23<sup>rd</sup> districts). Of those three districts, two are represented by women (Fran Pavley and Sharon Runner). Across the state as a whole, 30% of Senators (12 of 40) are women. In the State Assembly, four districts represent Ventura County (the 35<sup>th</sup>, 37<sup>th</sup>, 38<sup>th</sup>, and 41<sup>st</sup> districts). Of those districts, Julia Brownley is the only female representative. In the State Assembly as a whole, there are 21 women out of a total of 80 Assembly Members (26.2%). Overall, Ventura County Senators are more likely to be women than in the state as a whole; in the Assembly, they are less likely to be women.

*Federal level:* At the federal level, Ventura County is represented by two Congressional districts (23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>). Of those two, one representative is a woman (Lois Capps). In Congress as a whole, 16.4% of representatives are women.

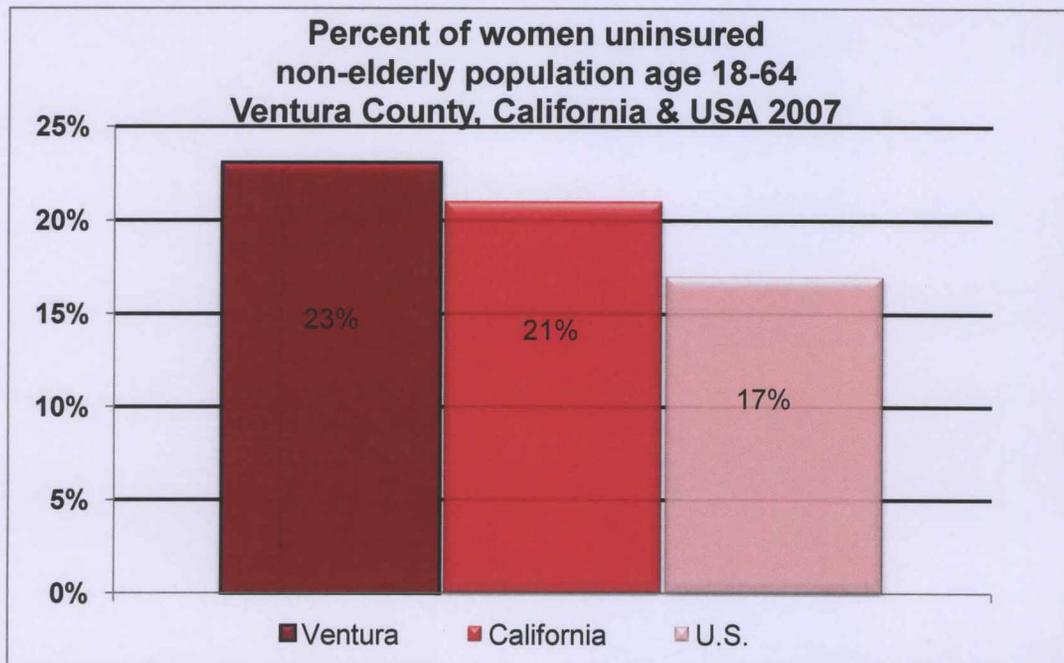
The following table is provided for easy reference to the data presented above for state and national representatives (compiled from various public websites associated with the political bodies described).

	<b># Women elected (Ventura Co.)</b>	<b>%Women elected (Ventura Co.)</b>	<b># of Women elected (total body)</b>	<b>% of Women elected (total body)</b>
<b>CA State Assembly</b>	<b>1 (of 4)</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>21 (of 80)</b>	<b>26.2%</b>
<b>CA Senate</b>	<b>2 (of 3)</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>12 (of 40)</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>US House of Representatives</b>	<b>1 (of 2)</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>71 (of 435)</b>	<b>16.4%</b>

### Health and wellbeing

Health and wellbeing are crucial issues for women in our society, and can include a variety of possible measures. Below, we present several measures that address different aspects of health and wellbeing, and include measures specific to infants as well as women. Specifically, we present data on the percent of uninsured women, disability status, fertility rates, teen pregnancy, low and very low birth weight babies, infant mortality, prenatal care, and child care providers. We will present them briefly with little interpretation, since the causes and effects for any specific measure within this area are generally far beyond the data – and, in any event, beyond the expertise of the authors.

*Uninsured:* The percent of women who are uninsured (among non-elderly women, aged 18-64) is one of the most important influences on access to health care.<sup>5</sup> As data in the table below indicate, women in Ventura County aged 18-64 are uninsured at a higher rate (23%) than those at the state or national level.



Source: 2007 California Health Interview Survey

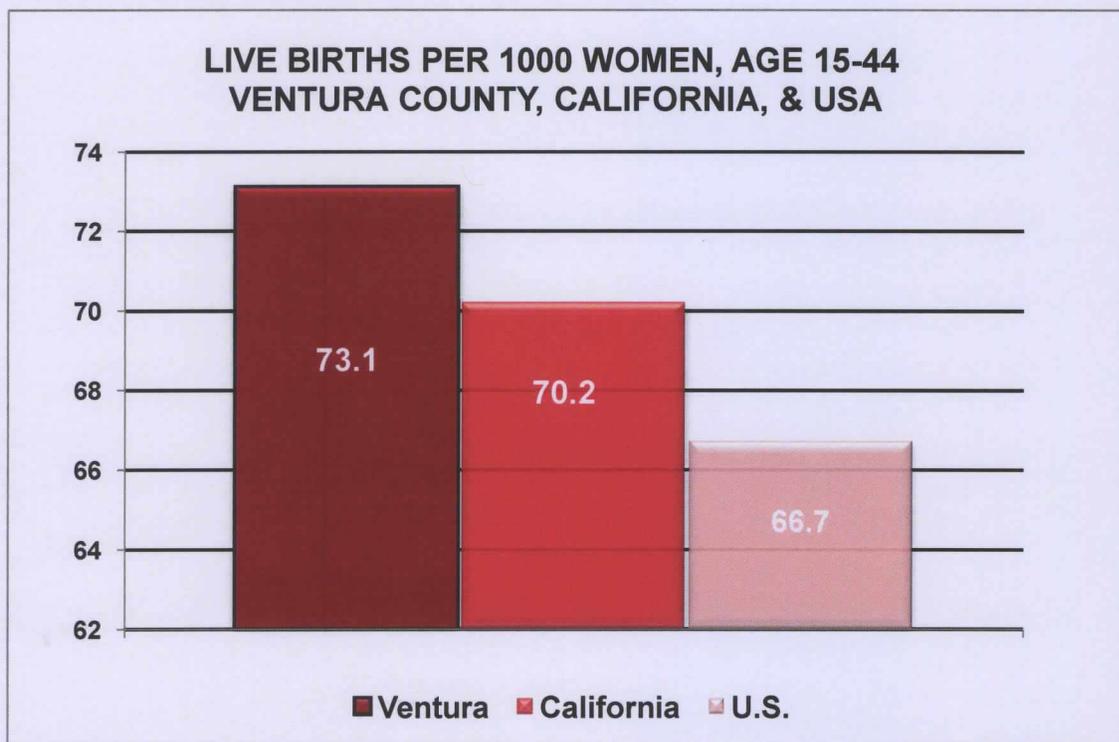
*Disability Status:* Disabilities comprise a broad category, which include many different manifestations.<sup>6</sup> Data from Ventura County indicate that the proportion of

<sup>5</sup> Uninsured estimates based on the Census Bureau's March 2009 Current Population Survey (CPS: Annual and Economic Supplements.)

<sup>6</sup> A disability, according to the source, is "a person hav[ing] any of the following long-lasting conditions: (a) blindness, deafness, or a severe vision or hearing impairment? [Sensory Disability]; (b) a condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying? [Physical Disability] (2) Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition lasting six months or more, does this person have any difficulty in doing any of the following activities: (a) learning, remembering, or concentrating? [Mental Disability]; (b) dressing, bathing, or getting around inside the home? [Self-Care Disability] (3) Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition lasting six months or more, does this person have any difficulty in doing any of the following activities [asked of persons ages 16 and older]: (a) going outside the home alone to shop or visit a doctor's office? [Go-Outside-Home Disability]; (b) working at a job or business? [Employment Disability]. A person is coded as having a disability if he or she or a proxy respondent answers affirmatively for one or more of these six categories."

women aged 21-64 with disabilities is 14.8%. For the purposes of comparison, within California that percentage is 16%; at the national level, it is 15.4%.

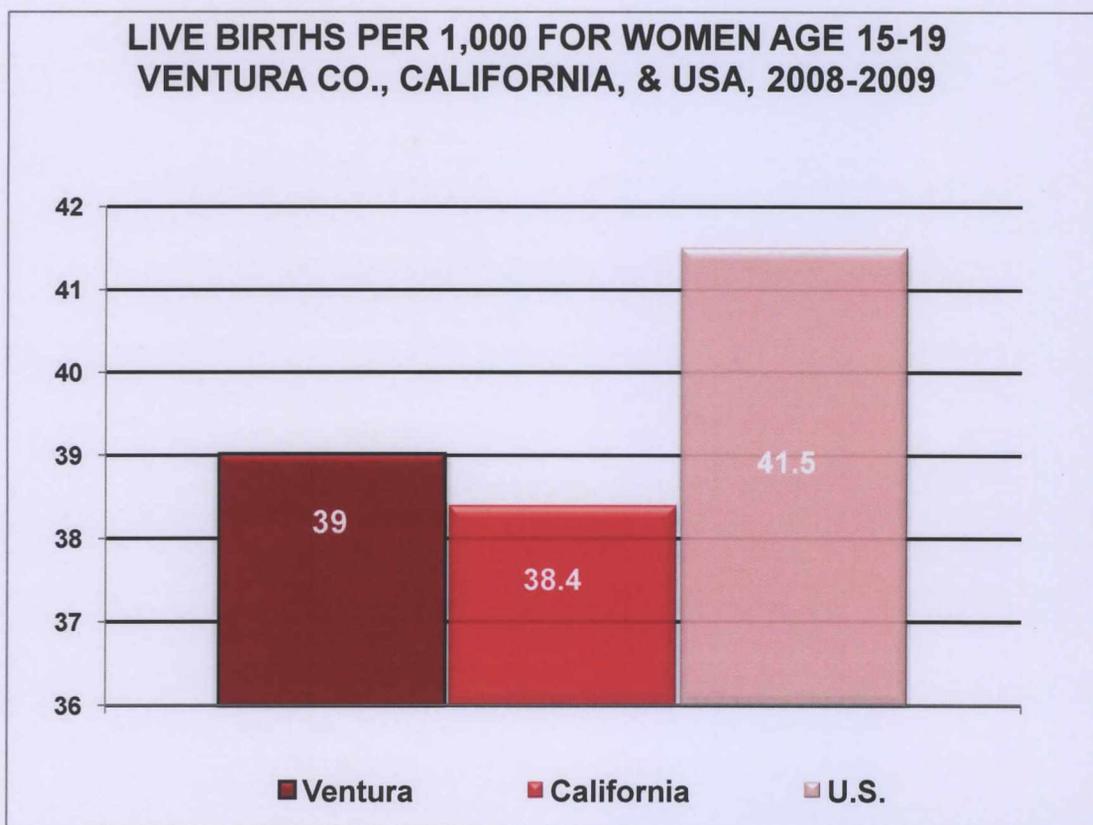
*Fertility Rates:* The fertility rate is particularly interesting in light of recent cultural trends toward women choosing to have fewer children, and to begin childbearing at a later age. That broadening of reproductive choices was a fundamental outcome of the second wave of the Women's Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The table below presents fertility rates (live births per 1000 women in the population aged 15-44) in Ventura County, California, and the United States.



Source: US Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey, B13002. WOMEN 15 TO 44 YEARS WHO HAD A BIRTH IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS BY MARITAL STATUS AND AGE

As we can see from the graph, the fertility rate for women in Ventura County is 73.1 per thousand; the comparable rate for California is 70.2, and for the United States as a whole is 66.7. So Ventura County has a significantly higher fertility rate.

*Teen pregnancy:* One of the more contentious issues related to reproduction in recent decades is the teen pregnancy rate. In Ventura County the teenage pregnancy rate is 39 (live births per 1,000 women ages 15-19). That is slightly higher than California, and lower than the nation as a whole. In recent years, we have seen rises in teen pregnancies, after more than a decade of decreases. The causes are not completely understood. As one author of a local report from 2008 on the return of rising rates of teen pregnancy suggested regarding causes: "It's impossible to know exactly why the numbers are going up. . . . The obvious reason we can see is that teens are having unprotected sex."<sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> Tom Kiskien. 2008. "County and State Teen Pregnancy Rates Rise," *Ventura County Star*. May 21, 2008.

*Low and very low birth weight babies:* While issues of infant health are not directly a measure of the status of women, they are so closely related that we might think of them as an indirect indicator of the status of women. Moreover, the health of infants has such a large influence on mothers' health, they might also be rightly considered to have an effect on women's status (in terms of health, wellbeing, etc.).<sup>8</sup> Here, we present data on the rates of low birth weight and very low birth weight babies.<sup>9</sup>

According to Centers for Disease Control, 2.1% of babies in Ventura County in 2008 were low birth weight babies. For comparison, 6.8% of babies in the California, and 8.2% babies in the United States were of low birth weight. The percentage of very low birth weight babies in Ventura County level at 1.2%. The percentage is the same in California, and slightly higher in the United States as a whole (1.5%).

*Infant Mortality Rate:* According to data reported by the California Department of Health Services, California's Infant Mortality Rate from 1995-2004 for Ventura County was 7.5%, somewhat higher than the state rate (5.2%) and national rate (6.8%).

*Prenatal Care:* Rates of women receiving prenatal care in the first trimester have been on the rise among many women across the country.<sup>10</sup> Prenatal care can help the mother and baby stay healthy throughout the pregnancy by providing necessary medical attention and doctor's visits throughout the woman's entire pregnancy. Many risks to both mother and infant may be avoided by receiving prenatal care in the first trimester. The percentage of women in Ventura County who received prenatal care in

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<sup>8</sup> There are a variety of factors that can result in very low birth weight or low birth weight babies, such as chronic health problems, consumption of alcohol or drugs, and socioeconomic factors.

<sup>9</sup> According to the California Department of Public Health in 2008 low birth weight is birth weight of less than 2,500 grams (5lb. 8oz.); a baby is identified as very low birth weight if the weight is less than 1,500 grams at delivery.

<sup>10</sup> See Women's Health website: [www.womenshealth.gov/gov/prenatal-care.cfm](http://www.womenshealth.gov/gov/prenatal-care.cfm).

the first trimester of pregnancy for the year 2009 is 79.7%, trailing behind California (81.3%) by less than 2%. However, both of these statistics fail 2010 objective of 90% set by the government through the Healthy People Organization ([www.HealthyPeople.gov](http://www.HealthyPeople.gov)). The issue of prenatal care has also been cited as a social issue affecting health such as racial and ethnic disparities.

*Child Care Providers:* As more and more women are becoming full time workers, one of the areas that women as well as couples are relying on is childcare providers. Ventura County has a total of 303 childcare providers; these are some of the most advertised centers:

- Child Development Resources of Ventura County (CDC)
- CalWORKS (California Work Opportunities and Responsibilities to Kids)
- WorkLife Program County of Ventura
- Children First Ventura County
- Ventura County Public Health/Maternal Child Adolescent Health
- Ventura County Office of Education
- Children and Families First Commission of Ventura County
- First 5 Ventura County
- Children's Home Society

	Ventura County	California	USA
Child care providers	303	10,850	119,922

In California, there are a total of 10,850 number of accredited child care providers. In the United states there is a total of 119,922 accredited child care providers.

Social Services: One of the social services provided on the county level that target women is Women, Infants, & Children (WIC). Based on information reported by

the US Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services, the United States as a whole has an estimated 9,175,478 participants in their Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, better known as WIC. Out of this nationwide total, California alone provides assistance to 1,459,460 women, infants and children. Out of this number, approximately 26,000 participants reside in Ventura County.

We found most of the participants to be children ages 1-5. To put this into better perspective, women make up 23.3% (2,138,302), infants (under one year) 23.7% (2,174,232), while child participation is at 53% (4,862,944).

These data was made available by WIC in March of 2011 and is only preliminary participation data based on 12-month averages. If we look at percentages of participants in comparison to the female population, 5.9% of the US female population is participating in the program; at the state level that percentage is 8.04% and Ventura County is 6.5%. The estimated eligible population for women, infants, and children of Ventura County who are actually enrolled in the WIC program is 83%. Reasons for non-enrollment of the remaining 17% are unknown. For eligible participation and non-participation percentage, estimates were developed by the program in January 2005 using data from April 2003.

### **Violence and Safety**

Among the many measures of women's status in our society, arguably none is more dramatic and tragic than those issues related to violence directed against women – whether in the form of sexual assaults, or in the form of domestic violence. Here we assess those indicators in Ventura County, along with an assessment of some of the

programs in response, as well as two other issues related to violence and safety (suicide and incarceration).

*Sexual assaults:* The rate of sexual assaults in the county in 2009 was 13.8 per 100,000. When comparing that rate to state and national levels, the county rate is relatively low. (Demographic Research Unit) Data collected by the Federal Bureau of Investigation from 2009 shows that there were 88,097 forcible rape incidents throughout the nation. Given the national population of 307,006,550, that translates to a rate of 28.7 forcible rapes per 100,000 persons. These numbers have been decreasing since 1990 [citation / explanation]. The data for California show a slightly lower rate of 23.6.

*Domestic violence:* As with sexual assaults, domestic violence represents one of the most direct and tragic threat to women's lives. Data on rates of domestic violence in Ventura County from monthly data in 2008-2009, report domestic violence under two categories: "Incident Reports" and "Domestic Violence." For the year of 2008 there were a total of 1603 reports, in 2009 there were 1677, which make up under 0.1% of the total crimes reported for that year.

Shelters are an important resource for providing a safe haven and a source of information for women. Some of the shelters available to help prevent or respond to domestic violence provide several types of support for women in situations of domestic violence (current or potential). Ventura County has several women's shelters located in various cities. For example, *The Coalition to End Family Violence* is a shelter located in the City of Oxnard that offers a range of programs (e.g. Assistance for callers 24 hours a day; Crisis response and Intervention; Emergency shelter; Batterer's intervention; Counseling programs in both English and Spanish; Youth counseling; Family parenting

programs; Child abuse intervention programs; Legal services programs; and Training, education and outreach programs). Another women's shelter in the county is *Interface Children and Family Services* whose services include: Shelter for women and children; Counseling for victims, batterers and children; Support groups for women; Bilingual services for victims; and Referral services. Finally, the Ventura County's District Attorney's Office offers victims' assistance programs, including restraining order assistance at no charge in domestic matters, as well as criminal case information, and counseling services.

*Suicide rates:* Within the Ventura County population of almost 830,000, the total suicide deaths for 2007 were 89, representing a rate of 10.7 per 100,000. There were also 260 nonfatal self-inflicted injuries representing a rate of 31.4. Focusing on women, 17 of those suicides were by women, representing a rate of 4.1 per 100,000 – far lower than the male rate of 17.3 per 100,000. That reflects a basic gendered pattern in which men are high more likely to commit suicide than are women. For the purposes of comparison, data from 2007 compiled by the California Department of Mental Health, Office of Suicide Prevention, found a rate approximately 9.4 per 100,000 – substantially lower than the county.

*Incarceration:* The final variable requested for this report is the percent of federal state prison who are women. The percentage of women in the Ventura County prison population is notably smaller than that of California as a whole. 5.9% of the Ventura County prison population is women, while 6.4% of California men make up the state prison population. When comparing this data at a national level, the US has 7.0% of women behind bars.

## Conclusions

The data compiled for this report summarize a wide range of patterns and trends. While women are moving forward and advancing in some areas, there are still significant gaps to be addressed. For example, younger women are now surpassing men in educational attainment, but earnings – which might in large part be considered the "fruits" of educational persistence and success – continue to lag behind men. Likewise, violence against women has become more widely recognized and condemned in recent years, but still remains a direct and constant threat in the lives of many women – and, in some measure, to all women.

Of course, as with any such comprehensive report, we have presented data that are "an inch deep and a mile wide." As with any type of research, there are clear limitations to this report. It raises as many questions as it answers – but we hope that it clarifies questions, and points in fruitful directions for future inquiries. Additional limitations on this particular project stem from time constraints and the lack of availability of certain data. (For example, when the data from the decennial census are fully available, it will be possible to update and narrow analyses in productive ways.)

In spite of its limitations, we hope that the Ventura County Commission for Women will find our report to be a valuable resource to aid in their mission of empowering and educating women, and that it provides a sound basis for considering policies and programs that will benefit women throughout the county in the future.