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THE SCIENCE OF INSIGHT

**REPORT TO THE WOMEN'S FUND OF CENTRAL OHIO:**

**ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY FOR WOMEN IN CENTRAL OHIO – KEY DATA AND CONCEPTS**

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## OVERVIEW

The Women's Fund of Central Ohio (WFCO) has been giving voice and visibility to the women and girls throughout Central Ohio since 2001. Consistent with its mission to *transform the lives of women and girls, by mobilizing the collective power and passion of all women working together*, WFCO recently commissioned an innovative research project to better understand the concept of "economic self-sufficiency" and how this concept is manifested among Central Ohio women.

Working with its research partner, Illuminology, WFCO's purpose was twofold: to gather accurate and reliable information relating to the topic of economic self-sufficiency; and to translate these data into a form that can be easily and persuasively communicated. The resulting information is intended to support WFCO's efforts to convene meaningful community conversation regarding the topic, inform future grant-making efforts of the organization, and guide the development of programs, advocacy and further research. Key findings from this research are presented below and explained more fully on the pages that follow.

**THE TERM "ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY" IS RARELY DEFINED IN THE LITERATURE AND IS UNDIFFERENTIATED FROM OTHER, SIMILAR TERMS.** Not only does there seem to be a lack of consensus regarding what, exactly, economic self-sufficiency is (nor how it is different from "economic security" or "economic independence"), but it is unclear to whom this concept should refer. That is, should policies and interventions be aimed at increasing the economic self-sufficiency (or economic security) of women only, or of women and their families? At what level of personal or household income may self-sufficiency be attained?

**MOST PUBLICATIONS ON THIS TOPIC MEASURED THE LEVEL OF EARNINGS A FAMILY NEEDS TO AFFORD BASIC NECESSITIES**, such as housing, food, utilities, transportation, and child care expenses, without receiving financial or in-kind support from family or governmental sources. In the Columbus MSA, this amount is nearly \$46,219 for a single mother with two children, or a full-time hourly wage of \$22.22.

**FAMILY STRUCTURE AND CHILD CARE COSTS HAVE A LARGE IMPACT ON WOMEN'S ECONOMIC SECURITY.** On average, female-headed households in the Central Ohio area are much more likely to live in poverty and have lower median incomes than male-headed households or married family households. Female-headed households with very young children appear most vulnerable, which suggests that the increased provision of high-quality childcare might be among the most significant avenues for increasing the likelihood of female-headed households attaining economic security. Indeed, child care is one of the largest monthly expenditures for mothers, with the cost of one year of care for two young children estimated at \$15,600.

**CENTRAL OHIO WOMEN FACE STRONG CHALLENGES TO ENSURING THEIR ECONOMIC SECURITY.** Women are more likely than men to work part-time, which decreases their total annual earnings and makes them less likely to have the leave policies and benefits enjoyed by many full-time workers. Furthermore, comparing Central Ohio women and men who are employed with full-time jobs, women's median earnings in 2012 were 78% of men's earnings.

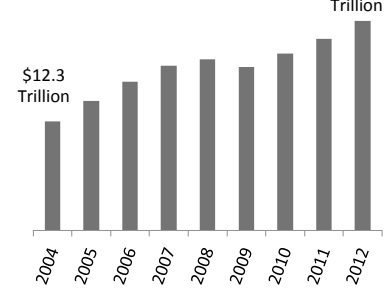
**OVERALL, 1 IN 4 FEMALE HOUSEHOLDERS IN CENTRAL OHIO ARE NOT ECONOMICALLY SECURE**, meaning their households' annual incomes are not high enough to provide for their basic needs without receiving financial or in-kind support from family, community, or governmental sources. The percentage of single-female households unable to achieve economic security is larger still, at 45%.

**ENCOURAGING AND DISCOURAGING ECONOMIC TRENDS**

After the worst recession in generations, Americans are hearing about the improving economic conditions in our country from the news media. And in many ways, these news stories report some encouraging signs.

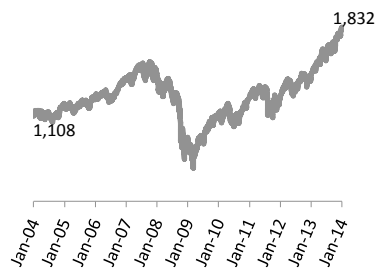
The United States Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is growing again. Home sales are increasing to their highest levels since 2006, as are home valuations. Auto sales, too, are at their highest levels since 2006.

**Figure 1: United States' GDP**



Source: World Bank

**Figure 2: S&P 500**



Source: St. Louis Federal Reserve.

Major stock market indices, like the S&P 500 and the Dow Jones Industrial Average, are at record highs.

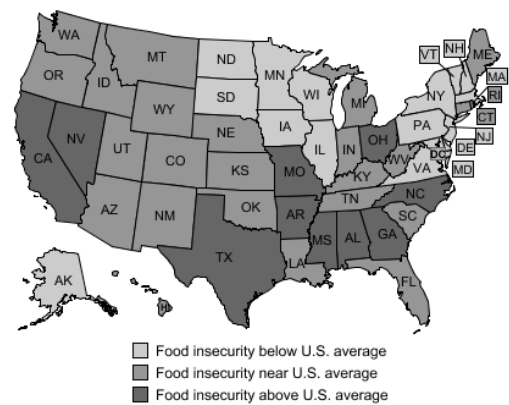
And the unemployment rate is decreasing, both across the country and here in Ohio.

However, one also finds continued signs of people in economic distress, indicating a significant disconnect between the leading economic indicators

noted above and what people are experiencing in their everyday lives – not only across America, but here in Ohio as well.

In 2012, the United States Department of Agriculture listed Ohio as the 10th worst state for food insecurity – at times during the year, nearly 730,000 Ohio households were uncertain of having or were unable to acquire enough food to meet the needs of all their members because of insufficient money or other resources for food. Consistent with this, the Mid-Ohio Food Bank reported a 49% increase in demand over the past five years, answering 162,000 food requests each month.

**Figure 3: Prevalence of Food Insecurity, average 2010-12**



Source: USDA Economic Research Service

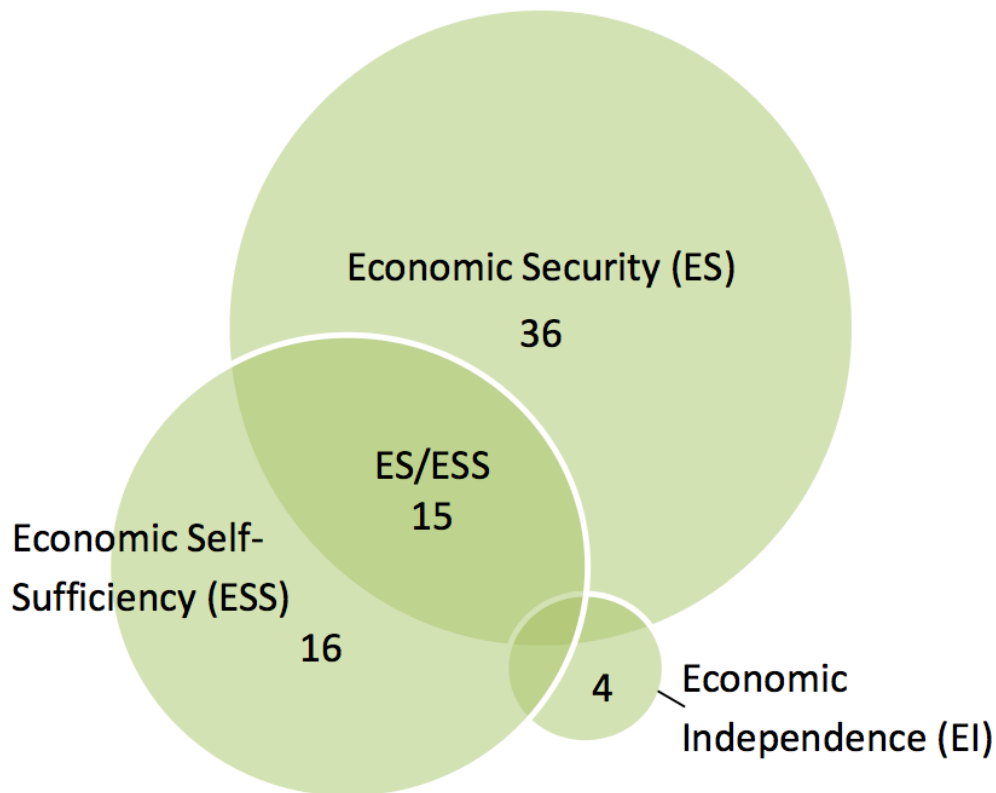
Warning signs are also seen when one looks at other basic needs, like safe and affordable shelter. Franklin County's Community Shelter Board reported a 65% increase in family homelessness since 2010, with more than 4,000 family members turning to Franklin County's emergency shelter system in fiscal year 2013.

For many Ohioans, economic challenges are causing severe hardship as householders attempt to meet their basic needs—a concept sometimes referred to as attaining “economic self-sufficiency.” In the following section, we will further explore this concept and the extent to which women face unique challenges in securing economic self-sufficiency for themselves and their families.

**DEFINING ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY**

**The terms "Economic Self-Sufficiency," "Economic Security," and "Economic Independence" were often used interchangeably and in reference to an otherwise undefined concept.** A targeted Internet search revealed that the term "Economic Security" was the most commonly used.<sup>1</sup> Often, a white paper or publication was observed to use multiple variants of these terms without differentiating between or among them, suggesting the authors thought of them as referencing the same underlying concept. Indeed, for many of the publications reviewed, the use of different terms in one document (e.g., "economic security" and "economic self-sufficiency") appeared to be a rhetorical device that allowed the author to avoid using repetitive language.

**Figure 4: Use of Key "Economic Self-Sufficiency" Terms, by Number of Sources Reviewed**



As shown in Table 1 (next page), "Economic Security" was also the term used most often by Women's Funds across the United States, while academics were somewhat more likely to use the term "Economic Self-Sufficiency."

<sup>1</sup> Our search process unfolded as follows. We searched for the terms "Economic Self-Sufficiency," "Economic Security," and "Economic Independence;" refined those searches with the terms "gender," "women," and "United States" and by articles published in the last 5 years; and then reviewed the top 100 records from each search. We scanned the publications for mentions of one or more of the key search terms, then evaluated the publications for relevance to this research project. In addition, we excluded articles that focused exclusively on refugees, domestic violence, substance abuse, offenders, or social security. Overall, we reviewed over 50 relevant academic articles and published reports, 57 Women's Fund websites across the United States, and women's advocacy group websites and news articles recommended by WFCO.

**Table 1: Use of Key "Economic Self-Sufficiency" Terms, by Source**

Economic Security (ES)	Both ES and ESS	Economic Self-Sufficiency (ESS)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Atlanta Women's Foundation</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Community Foundation of Greater New Haven: Community Fund for Women and Girls</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Dallas Women's Foundation (website)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Fund for Women and Girls of the Fairfield County Community Foundation</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Kentucky Foundation for Women</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Maine Women's Fund (funding initiative)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Ms. Foundation for Women</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">New York Women's Foundation</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">The Women's Fund, Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Vermont Women's Fund (website)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Washington Area Women's Foundation</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Westerns New York Women's Foundation (website)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Foundation of Arkansas</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Foundation of California</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Fund for the Fox Valley Region</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Fund of Central Indiana (website)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Fund of Essex County</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Fund of Greater Chattanooga</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Fund of Hawaii (website)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Fund of Mississippi</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Fund of New Hampshire</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Fund of New Jersey (website)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Fund of Rhode Island</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Fund of Southwest Florida (website)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Fund of the Capital Region (website)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Fund of Winston-Salem</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Legacy Fund, Southwest Florida Community Foundation</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's' Fund of Western North Carolina (website)</a></li> <li>• Center for American Progress</li> <li>• IWPR/Rockefeller Study of Economic Security</li> <li>• National Economic Council</li> <li>• Restaurant Opportunities Centers United/IWPR</li> <li>• The White House Council on Women and Girls</li> <li>• Albelda (academic)</li> <li>• Gerson (academic)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Chicago Foundation for Women</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Crittenton Women's Union (actually uses all three terms)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Greater Cincinnati Foundation Women's Fund</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Foundation of Genesee Valley</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Foundation of Montana</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Fund: Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts (website)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Fund of Greater Memphis</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Fund of Miami-Dade</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Fund of Monterey County</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Fund of New Hampshire (website)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Fund of Porter County (website)</a></li> <li>• Women's Funding Alliance</li> <li>• Center for Women's Welfare</li> <li>• Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR)</li> <li>• Wider Opportunities for Women</li> <li>• Women's Economic Security Campaign (WESC) (actually uses all three terms)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Aurora Women &amp; Girls Foundation, Inc. (website)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Frontera Women's Foundation (website)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Iowa Women's Foundation (website)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women and Girls Fund of the Community Foundation of Northwest Connecticut (website)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Center for Education and Career Advancement (website)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Foundation of Minnesota</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Fund of Greater Kansas City (website)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Women's Fund of Omaha</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Wyoming Women's Fund (website)</a></li> <li>• National Poverty Center</li> <li>• Urban Institute (Acs et al)</li> <li>• Hildebrandt and Ford (academics)</li> <li>• Hong (academic)</li> <li>• Kling et al (academic)</li> <li>• Neumark (academic)</li> <li>• Quigley and Raphael (academics)</li> </ul>

*Citations for the academic sources noted above are included at the end of this report.*

**The terms "Economic Security," "Economic Self-Sufficiency," and "Economic Independence" were rarely defined explicitly**, which means that it is unclear how or if these concepts are reliably different from one another. Moreover, there was considerable variation in the way these terms were discussed and/or measured in the text of the publications. Furthermore, in some cases the terms were used to refer to *individual women* while in other cases they referred to *both women and their families*.

Although these terms were rarely defined explicitly (exceptions are outlined in the box to the right), most sources appear to have an implicit definition in mind when writing about or measuring this concept. That is, most studies framed the concept of economic security as the *level of earnings a family needs to afford basic necessities*, such as housing, food, utilities, transportation, and childcare expenses. For example:

- "Women's economic independence and security depend on *having enough income and financial resources to meet basic needs and support themselves and their families.*" (Hess et al, 2012);
- "The Massachusetts [Self-sufficiency] Index is a measure of how much income various family types across the Commonwealth require to *meet their most basic expenses*—housing, utilities, food, basic transportation, child care, health care, clothing, essential personal and household items, and taxes—without public or private assistance." (Crittenton Women's Union);
- "The Self-Sufficiency Standard defines the amount of income necessary to *meet basic needs* (including taxes) *without public subsidies* (e.g., public housing, food stamps, Medicaid or child care) and without private/informal assistance (e.g., free babysitting by a relative or friend, food provided by churches or local food banks, or shared housing)." (Center for Women's Welfare);
- "We then report on a specific measure of self-sufficiency—the "self-sufficiency index"—which is defined as the *ratio of family earned income to family needs.*" (Acs et al, 2010).

### Few define "economic security"

Only a few organizations explicitly defined the concept of economic security.

#### Wider Opportunities for Women

"For worker households, security wages must cover basic health, safety and work-related costs—housing, utilities, food, transportation, childcare, health care, household items and taxes."

<http://www.wowonline.org/good-jobs-economic-security/>

#### Restaurant Opportunities Centers United with the Institute for Women's Policy Research

"Basic economic security is defined as the ability to afford housing, utilities, food, transportation, child care, health care, emergency and retirement savings, and other personal expenses."

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/161943672/The-Third-Shift-Child-Care-Needs-and-Access-for-Working-Mothers-in-Restaurants>

Some sources and publications discussed economic security in the context of *helping women to get out of and stay out of poverty*.

- "We need to *lift women out of poverty* and support them on their path to achieving economic security." (Women's Foundation of Colorado);
- "...need to promote women's economic independence, including employment, and *eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women by addressing the structural causes of poverty* through changes in economic structures, ensuring equal access for all women, (including those in rural areas), as vital development agents, to productive resources, opportunities, and public services." (Antonopoulos 2009);
- "...*eliminate poverty* by supporting women struggling to overcome economic insecurity." (Women's Economic Security Campaign).

Some sources and publications discussed economic security in terms of *reducing women's or families' dependence on government support*.

- “Economic security for single-mother families has always been elusive and has almost always rested on a combination of *earnings*, kinship or community networks, and *public supports*.” (Albelda, 2009);
- “Self-sufficiency (SS) has been accepted as an economic and financial concept (i.e., *finding a job and leaving welfare*) that one ought to attain....Federal policymakers give no explicit definition of [economic self-sufficiency] except to say that it is obtained through work, that it includes *freedom from dependence on government support*, and that it strengthens families.” (Hong, 2009);
- “Workers in these occupations are potentially placed among the working poor, with earnings that are often *too high to qualify for public supports* but too low to attain economic security.” (IWPR Fact Sheet #C350a).

And lastly, some sources and publications discussed *access to supportive services* as integral for women to achieve economic security.

- “Crittenton Women’s Union (CWU) takes a pioneering approach to helping low-income women attain economic independence for themselves and their families. In addition to *providing direct services and advocating for social policy changes*, CWU conducts independent research into the barriers these women face in gaining economic security.” (Crittenton Women’s Union, 2010);
- “President Obama has worked to restore economic security for American women. From passing health care reform that *outlaws gender discrimination, to prosecuting pay discrimination against women, to launching groundbreaking consumer protection efforts, to investing in child care*, the Obama Administration has worked to support women as they provide for their families and save for the future.” (White House Council on Women and Girls, 2012);
- “The study goes on to explore factors that increase women’s opportunities for economic self-sufficiency, such as having job *training and union coverage*, as well as factors that could worsen the situation, such as having disabilities and numerous work transitions.” (Kishbaugh and Hayes, 2013).

In recognition of the patterns shown in Figure 4 and Table 1, the remainder of this document uses the language “economic security” to refer to the underlying concept of economic self-sufficiency.

Furthermore, we define “economic security” to describe those households in which there is sufficient income to meet the household's basic needs, which would include housing, child care, health care, food, transportation, utilities, taxes, and other expenses. The next section of this report attempts to quantify this concept of economic security, to answer the question, “How much is enough?”

## QUANTIFYING ECONOMIC SECURITY

**How to quantify the amount of earnings required for economic security?** There are a number of ways to answer this question, with the answers varying according to how one defines the minimum amount of household income necessary to afford basic necessities.

The most conservative definition would be one that references federal poverty guidelines, which are based on earnings and family size. In this case, most single-mother families with one or two children<sup>2</sup> and with an annual household income under \$19,000 would be classified as being in poverty. Indeed, the 2012 federal poverty guideline for a single mother with one child, working full-time over the course of the year, is \$15,130, which translates to \$7.27/hr.<sup>3</sup> By way of comparison, Ohio's minimum wage in 2014 is \$7.95.

A less conservative definition of economic security may be found in the income eligibility criteria for Federal and State assistance programs, which can range up to 200% of federal poverty guidelines, depending on the program. To achieve this level of economic security, a single mother with one child in Central Ohio<sup>4</sup> would need to work full-time at a job paying more than \$14.55/hr to support herself and her family without assistance.

To help advance the conversation beyond these basic and expanded poverty guidelines, we created "Basic Needs Budgets" that accounted for the average cost of child care, health care, housing, food, and transportation costs, as well as other expenses, for Central Ohio households.<sup>5</sup> Two examples of basic needs budgets are shown below in Table 2; bottom line basic needs budgets are shown in Table 3. These data show a single mother with one child in Central Ohio would need a household income that is 235% of the federal poverty guideline in order to cover the basic expenses for herself and her family.

**Table 2: Cost Breakdown of the Average Monthly Basic Needs Budget for Women in the Columbus MSA (2012 dollars)**

	Single mother, one child		Single mother, two children	
	Monthly amount	% of monthly total	Monthly amount	% of monthly total
<b>Child care</b>	\$707	24%	\$1,284	33%
<b>Housing</b>	\$790	27%	\$790	21%
<b>Food</b>	\$326	11%	\$453	12%
<b>Transportation</b>	\$414	14%	\$414	11%
<b>Health care</b>	\$279	9%	\$382	10%
<b>Other necessities</b>	\$301	10%	\$336	9%
<b>Taxes</b>	\$149	5%	\$193	5%
	\$2,966		\$3,852	

<sup>2</sup> In 2012, 58,965 households in the greater Columbus area (8.2%) were headed by single women, with no husband present and with at least one child under age 18.

<sup>3</sup> \$15,130 translates to \$7.27/hr, assuming full-time employment working 40 hours per week, 52 weeks per year.

<sup>4</sup> Because the county-level data presented in this report are from 2012 or earlier, we use the 2012 Columbus MSA boundaries. This includes the following counties: Delaware; Fairfield; Franklin; Licking; Madison; Morrow; Pickaway; and Union. In April 2013, the Columbus MSA was expanded to include Perry and Hocking Counties (to the southeast). Throughout the report, we use the terms "Central Ohio" and "Columbus MSA" to refer to the same concept, which is the greater Columbus area.

<sup>5</sup> The National Center for Children in Poverty (<http://www.nccp.org/tools/frs/budget.php>) and the Economic Policy Institute (<http://www.epi.org/resources/budget/>) have each created basic needs calculators containing data for the Columbus MSA. They generally use the same public domain data sources, but use different assumptions, resulting in variation in the estimated costs for childcare and healthcare. For the purposes of this study, we used national and state public domain data (where available) or the average of the estimates used by these two sources to create sample budgets for different household types.



**Table 3: Basic Needs Budgets for different types of Central Ohio households (2012 dollars)**

	Monthly basic needs budget is...	Requires hourly wage of...	Annual basic needs budget is...	Which is this far from the federal poverty level...
Single woman, living alone	\$1,719	\$9.91/hr	\$20,623	185% of poverty
Single mother, one child	\$2,966	\$17.11/hr	\$35,596	235% of poverty
Single mother, two children	\$3,852	\$22.22/hr	\$46,219	242% of poverty
Single mother, three children	\$4,828	\$27.86/hr	\$57,940	251% of poverty
Single mother, four children	\$5,485	\$31.64/hr	\$65,821	244% of poverty
Single woman supporting family member(s) 18 and over	\$2,485	\$14.34/hr	\$29,822	197% of poverty
Single woman living with someone to whom she is not related	\$2,729	\$7.87/hr (2 FT earners)	\$32,750	216% of poverty
Married couple, no children	\$2,341	\$6.75/hr (2 FT earners)	\$28,087	186% of poverty
Married couple, one child	\$3,569	\$10.30/hr (2 FT earners)	\$42,833	224% of poverty
Married couple, two children	\$4,368	\$12.60/hr (2 FT earners)	\$52,412	227% of poverty
Married couple, three children	\$5,344	\$15.42/hr (2 FT earners)	\$64,133	237% of poverty
Married couple, four children	\$6,001	\$17.31/hr (2 FT earners)	\$72,013	233% of poverty

Source: Public domain data (where available) or the average of the estimates used by the National Center for Children in Poverty (<http://www.nccp.org/tools/frs/budget.php>) and the Economic Policy Institute (<http://www.epi.org/resources/budget/>)

As noted above, **one of the highest expenses in these basic needs budgets is the cost of child care.** These costs represent over 30% of the basic budget for a woman with two children (Table 3), who would need to work full time earning more than \$22 per hour to cover her basic expenses. In 2012, the annual cost of child care for one infant and one preschooler was \$15,600.<sup>6</sup> In total, current estimates suggest that a household with two children aged three years apart would spend a staggering \$140,000 in center-based care through age 12.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> In 2013 dollars.

<sup>7</sup> Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association (2012).

**ECONOMIC SECURITY IN CENTRAL OHIO**

If one accepts the premise that households with sufficient income to meet their basic needs are economically secure, then it is possible to use Census Bureau data and the basic needs budgets above to estimate the number of Central Ohio households that are economically insecure. Ideally, these economically secure households would not require regular financial assistance from familial, community, governmental sources,

**1 in 4 single or married female householders in Central Ohio do not have economic security**, meaning their household had an income that was less than its basic needs budget. This translates to about 160,000 single or married female householders in Central Ohio, or 27% of single or married female householders.<sup>8</sup>

When we look at women providing sole support for their households, we see that the situation is even more dire. Nearly 1 in 2 – or 45 percent – single-householder women earn less than is needed to guarantee economic security for their families. This translates to about 100,000 households in Central Ohio.

**Women providing sole-support for their families must earn a higher wage to achieve economic security** than married women or single women who are not living alone, who are able to share earnings or child care responsibilities. For instance, although the total basic needs budget for a married couple with two kids is higher than that of a single woman with two kids (due to the larger family size), each householder of the married couple must only earn at least \$12.60 per hour—a much lower and more accessible wage than the \$22 per hour a single mother must earn to support her family.

**KEY FINDINGS**

**THE TERM “ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY” IS RARELY DEFINED IN THE LITERATURE AND IS UNDIFFERENTIATED FROM OTHER, SIMILAR TERMS.** Not only does there seem to be a lack of consensus regarding what, exactly, economic self-sufficiency is (nor how it is different from "economic security" or "economic independence"), but it is unclear to whom this concept should refer. That is, should policies and interventions be aimed at increasing the economic self-sufficiency (or economic security) of women only, or of women and their families? At what level of personal or household income may self-sufficiency be attained? Furthermore, most organizations appear to use the term “economic security.”

**MOST PUBLICATIONS ON THIS TOPIC MEASURED THE LEVEL OF EARNINGS A FAMILY NEEDS TO AFFORD BASIC NECESSITIES**, especially housing and child care but also including health care, food, utilities, transportation and other expenses, *without* receiving financial or in-kind support from family or governmental sources. In the Columbus MSA, we estimate this amount to be about \$46,000 annually for a single mother with two children, or a full-time hourly wage of over \$22 per hour.

For the purposes of this report, we define “economic security” to describe those households in which there is sufficient income to meet the household's basic needs, which would include housing, child care, food, transportation, utilities, taxes, and other expenses. Using this definition, we found that **MORE THAN 1 IN 4 FEMALE HOUSEHOLDERS IN CENTRAL OHIO ARE NOT ECONOMICALLY SECURE.**

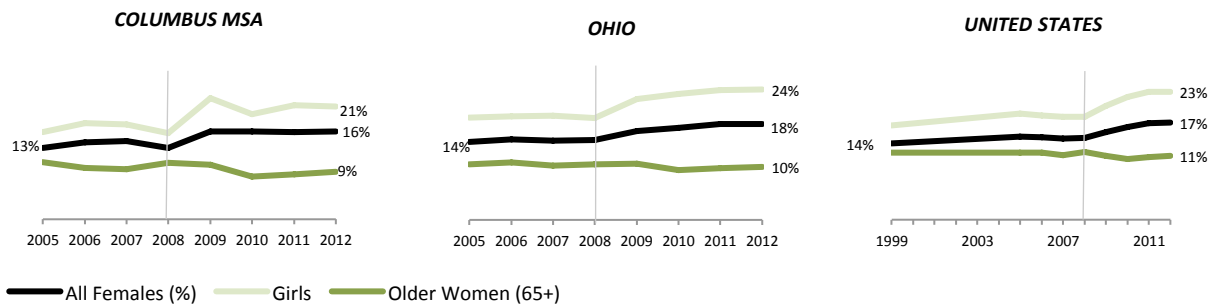
<sup>8</sup> American Community Survey 2010-2012 3-year estimates.

**DATA ON WOMEN'S EARNINGS AND EMPLOYMENT**

The second portion of this report focuses on the current economic state of women in Central Ohio, comparing women in the Central Ohio area to women across Ohio and across the nation, as well as highlighting county-level differences within the Columbus MSA. These data highlight the extent of the issues facing Central Ohio women striving for economic security, and are important for WFCO to consider as it defines this concept and then works to address it through advocacy and strategic initiatives.

**Sixteen percent of females in Central Ohio were living below the federal poverty line in 2012**, including over 20% of girls in Central Ohio. See Figure 5. While the number of girls and working-age women experiencing poverty has increased since the start of the recession in 2008, the poverty rates of women 65 and over are generally lower than the average for all females. Because the percentage of working-aged, parenting-aged women (18-64) in poverty is closely aligned with the percentage of all females in poverty, this demographic group is not shown in the charts below.

**Figure 5: Poverty Status of Women, by Age and Geography**

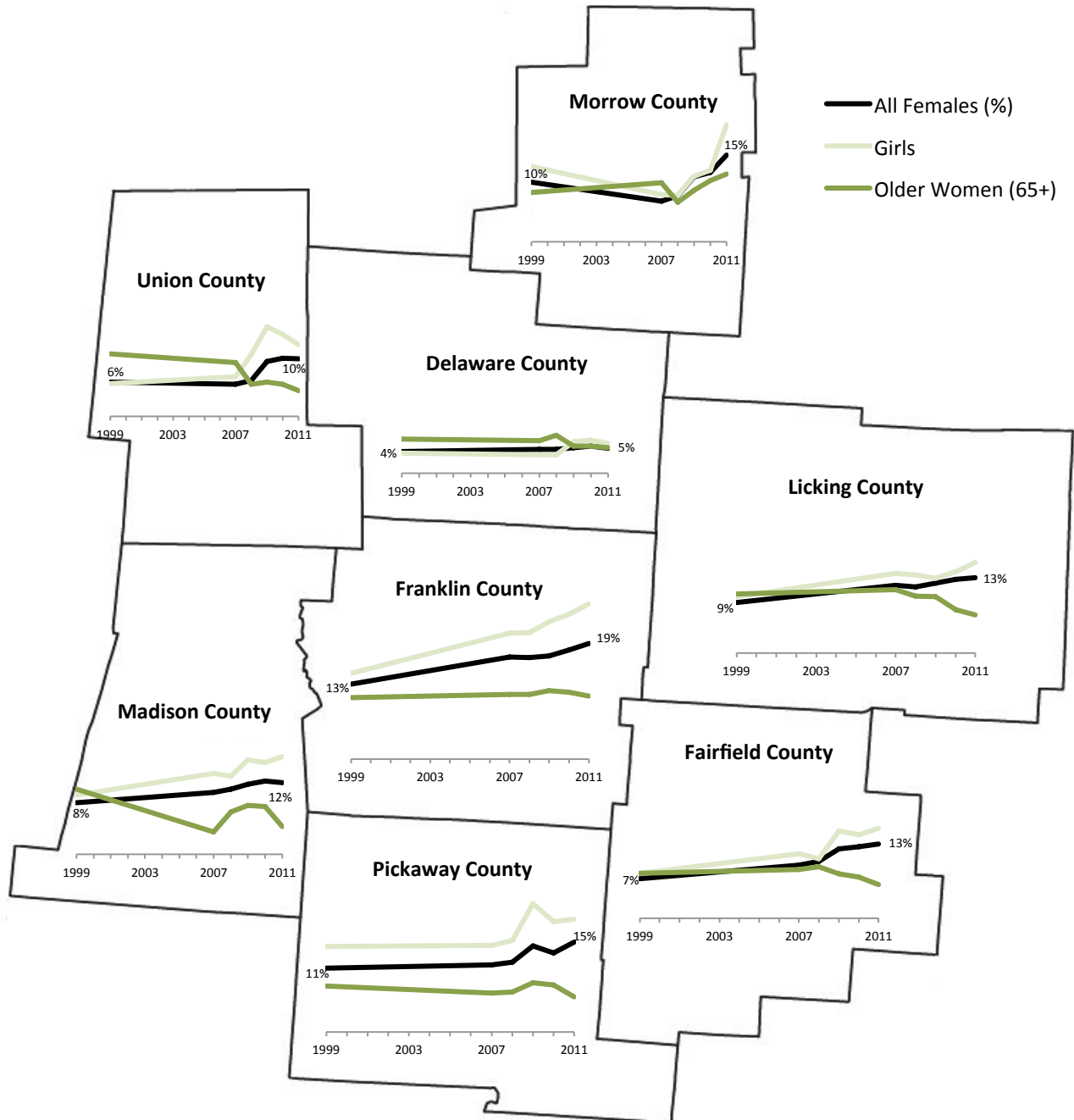


Note: The vertical gray line denotes the start of the most recent recession.

Source: 2000 Decennial Census (US 1999 data), American Community Survey 1-year estimates (2005-2012).

**Poverty rates in Central Ohio varied greatly by county, from a high of nearly 1 in 5 females living in poverty in Franklin County to a low of 1 in 20 females in Delaware County**, as shown in Figure 6. The most recent recession seems to have affected some counties more than others, judging by the strong jumps in the percent of females living in poverty in Morrow, Pickaway, and Union Counties after 2008. Poverty rates for girls remain higher than the average for all females, including a high of 26% in Franklin County—more than 1 in 4 girls.

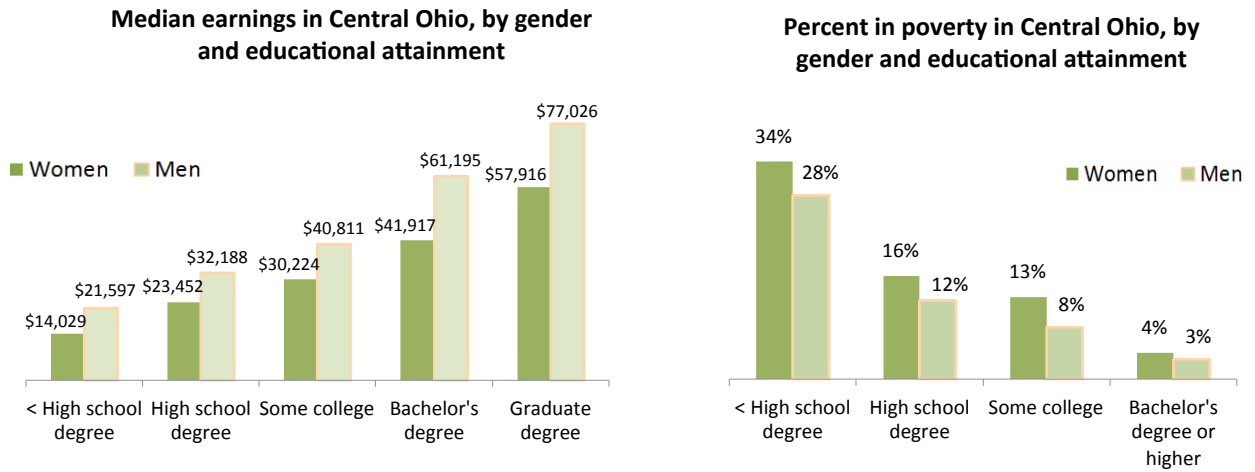
**Figure 6: Poverty Status of Women, by Age and Central Ohio County**



Source: 2000 Decennial Census (1999 data), American Community Survey (for county level, 3-year estimates are available for years 2007-2011).

**Earnings and poverty status are closely aligned with educational attainment**, with those with higher degrees estimated to have the highest median incomes and lowest rates of poverty. For instance, the estimated median earnings of Central Ohio women with Bachelor’s or Master’s degrees exceeded the amount needed to meet the basic needs of a family budget, while earnings of women who had not earned a high school diploma had earnings below the poverty line for a parent with one child. See Figure 7 (next page). Furthermore, a third of Central Ohio women who had earned less than a high school diploma were living at or below the poverty level in 2012. However, the data suggest that a woman’s completion of high school or equivalency exam may significantly decrease her likelihood of living in poverty.

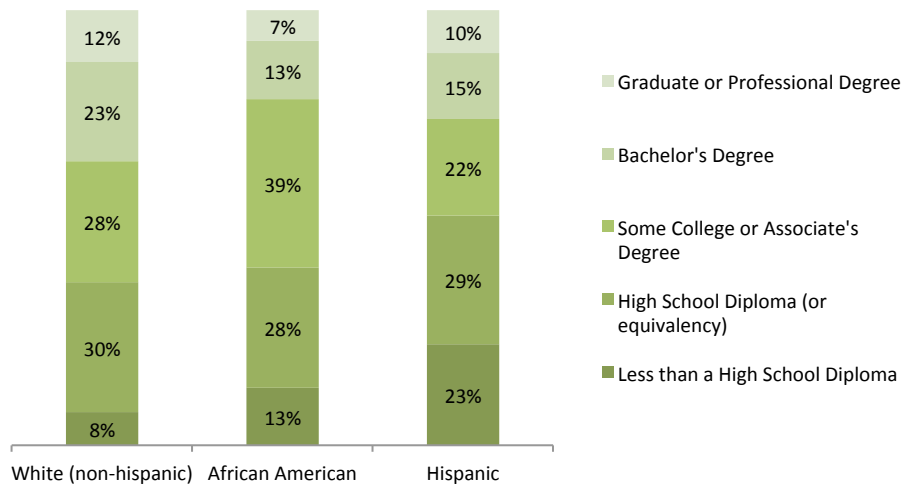
**Figure 7: Earnings and Poverty Status of Women in the Columbus MSA, by Educational Attainment**



Source: American Community Survey 1-year estimates, 2012. Median earnings data shown in 2013 dollars.

**Educational attainment varies by race and ethnicity**, particularly at the lower end of educational attainment. Notably, Census estimates that Hispanic-Latino women in Central Ohio were least likely to have earned a high school diploma, a statistic most highly correlated with low earnings and a greater likelihood of living in poverty. In contrast, a greater percentage of white women had earned a college degree or higher, with an estimated 33% having done so, as compared with 19% of African American women or 28% of Hispanic women. See Figure 8.

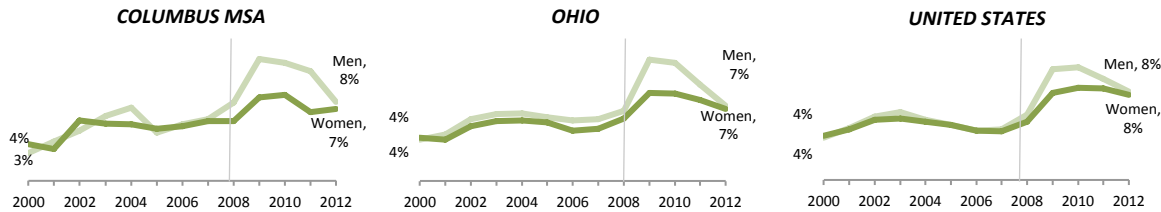
**Figure 8: Educational Attainment of Women in the Columbus MSA, by Race/Ethnicity**



Source: American Community Survey, 2012.

**In 2012, women and men experienced similar levels of unemployment in Central Ohio, Ohio, and the nation as a whole.** Although the effects of the recent recession had a greater impact on men’s unemployment than women’s, unemployment rates for both groups are higher than what they were in 2000.<sup>9</sup> See Figure 9.

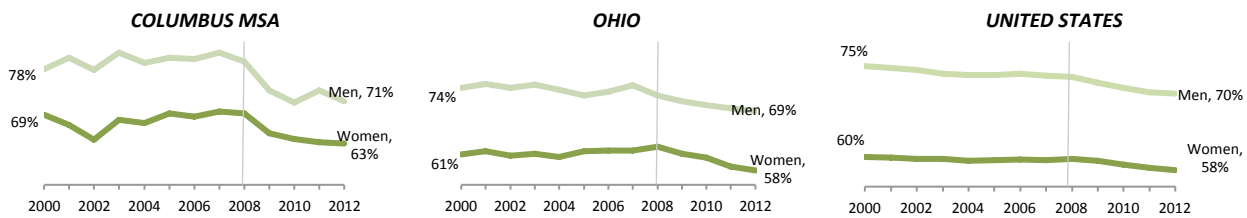
**Figure 9: Unemployment Rate, by Sex and Geography**



Note: The vertical gray line denotes the start of the most recent recession. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey.

**In 2012, women in Central Ohio reported labor force participation rates that were higher than women across Ohio or the United States as a whole.** Men’s labor force participation rates exceeded women’s, although by a slightly smaller margin in the Columbus MSA than in the state or the nation. Labor force participation has decreased since 2008—more sharply in Central Ohio than in the state or the nation—and has yet to rebound to pre-recession levels. See Figure 10. Nearly 40% of women in the Columbus MSA are not participating in the workforce, and thus must rely on other means for economic security.

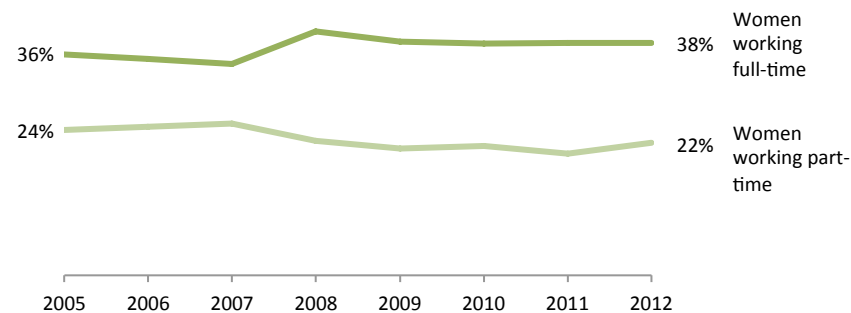
**Figure 10: Labor Force Participation Rate, by Sex and Geography**



Note: The vertical gray line denotes the start of the most recent recession. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey.

**Of the 750,000 women in Central Ohio, nearly 40% hold full-time, year round positions, and an additional 20% hold part-time jobs.** See Figure 11.

**Figure 11: Percent of Women Employed in the Columbus MSA, by Worker Status**

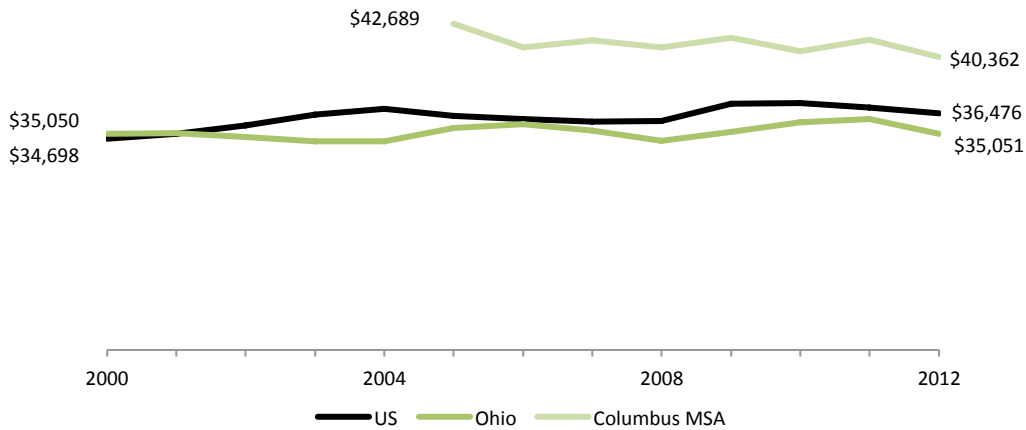


Source: American Community Survey.

<sup>9</sup>According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, the most recent recession lasted from December 2007 through June 2009.

The following series of charts describes the earnings of these working women and the extent to which they are able to ensure economic security without familial or governmental assistance. For example, **half of the women who work full-time in Central Ohio earn a higher median wage as compared to women across Ohio or the United States as a whole** (Figure 12). Although the dollar amounts earned have increased slightly over the years, when adjusted for inflation, the data show a slight decline in the purchasing power of those earnings.

**Figure 12: Women's Median Annual Earnings (Full-time Employment), by Geography**

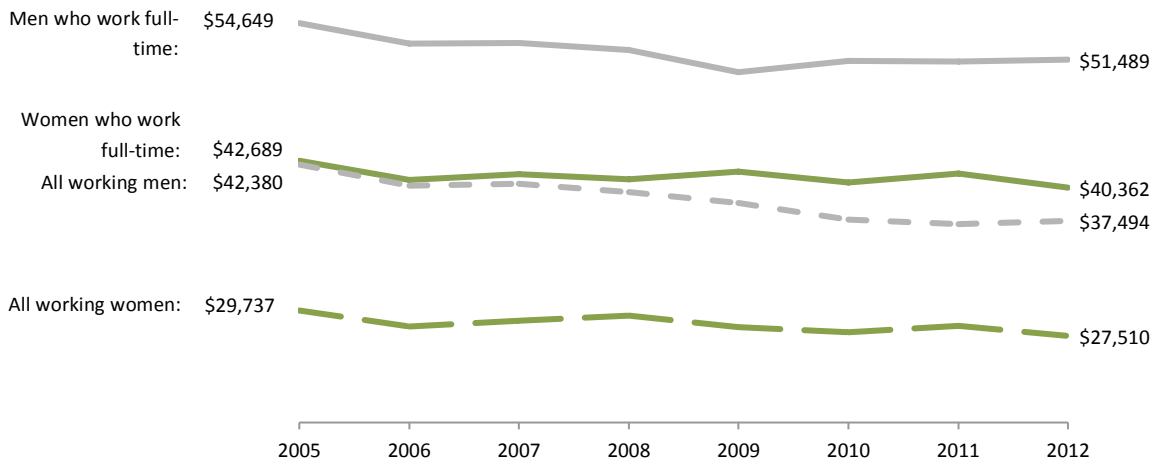


Note: Median annual earnings of full-time wage and salary workers, adjusted to 2013 dollars.

Source: National and Ohio Data from Bureau of Labor Statistics annual Current Population Survey data (2000-2012), Columbus MSA annual data from American Community Survey (2005-2012).

**In the context of a basic needs budget, the data show that only about half of the Central Ohio women who work full time also earn enough (\$40,362) to achieve economic security for themselves and one child without assistance, and fewer still earn enough to support a larger family.** Looking at the median earnings of both full- and part-time workers over time (Figure 13), we see that half of working women in Central Ohio earn less than \$27,510, earnings that fall far short of the amount needed to ensure economic security (without additional assistance from family or government sources).

**Figure 13: Median Earnings for Working Women in the Columbus MSA, by Worker Status**



Source: American Community Survey, 1-year estimates, adjusted to 2013 dollars.

**Women’s median earnings vary among Central Ohio counties, from a high of \$52,482 in Delaware County to a low of \$36,606 for full-time workers in Morrow County.** See Figure 14. As with the larger area estimates, the median income for all working women skews much lower, with Delaware and Morrow Counties having the highest and lowest median incomes, respectively.

**Figure 14: Women’s Median Earnings, by Worker Status and Central Ohio County**

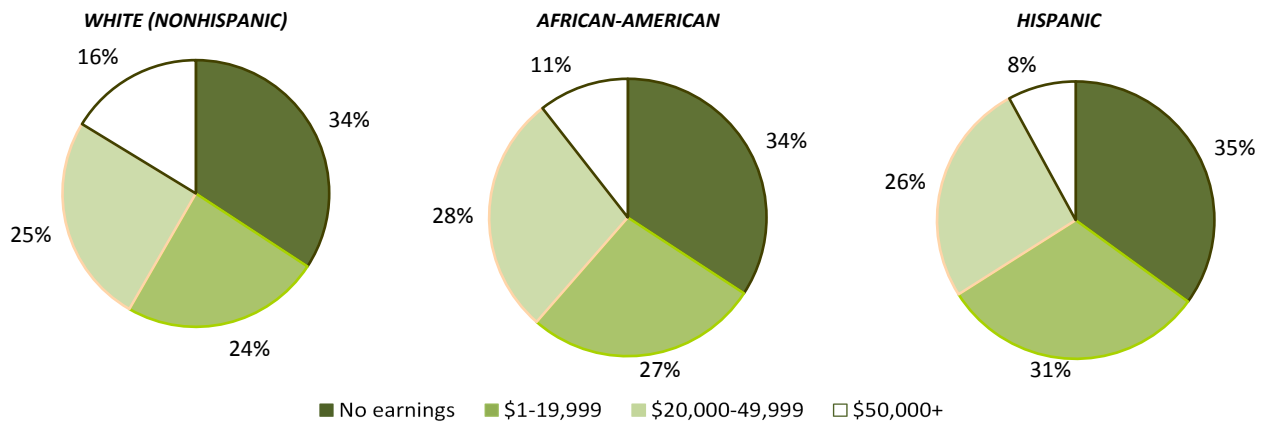


Source: 2000 Decennial Census (1999 data), American Community Survey (for county level, 3-year estimates are available for end-years 2007-2011). Earnings data are adjusted to 2013 dollars.



**Estimates of economic security differ greatly by race/ethnicity.** As shown in Figure 15, annual earnings estimates for Central Ohio women vary by race and ethnicity, with a higher percentage of minority women in the lower income brackets. Women earning less than \$50,000 may be more likely to face economic insecurity: depending on family size, women earning less than \$20,000 are likely living in poverty while women earning between \$20,000-\$49,999 are at or under the 200% poverty line. The percentage of white women that were estimated as making \$50,000 or more is double the percentage of Hispanic women. As a group, Hispanic women are more likely to be working for earnings less than the federal poverty guideline for a parent with two children.

**Figure 15: Earnings of Women in the Columbus MSA, by Race and Ethnicity**

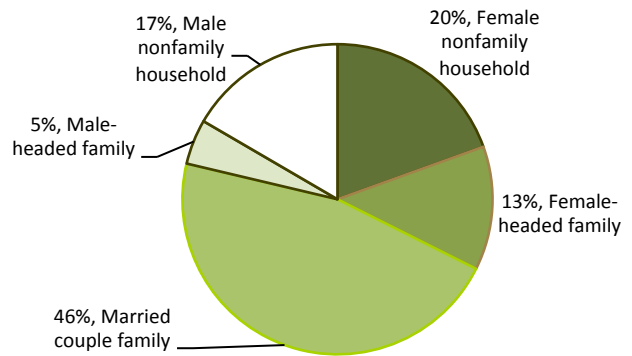


Source: American Community Survey, 2012.

**FAMILY-LEVEL DATA ON EARNINGS AND EMPLOYMENT**

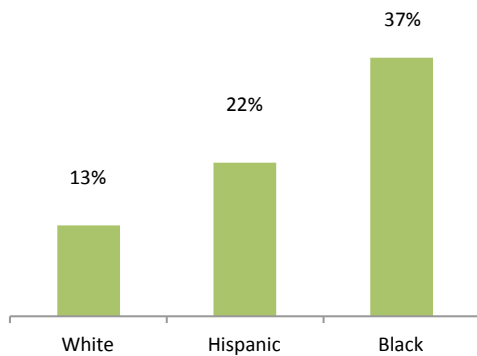
**In Central Ohio, a third of households are dependent on a woman’s income for economic security**, with 13 percent of households being female-headed families and an additional 20 percent being female-headed nonfamily households. See Figure 16.

**Figure 16: Households in the Columbus MSA, by Head of Household**



Source: American Community Survey, 2012.

**Figure 17: Percent of Population in Female-Headed Households in the Columbus MSA, by Race/Ethnicity**

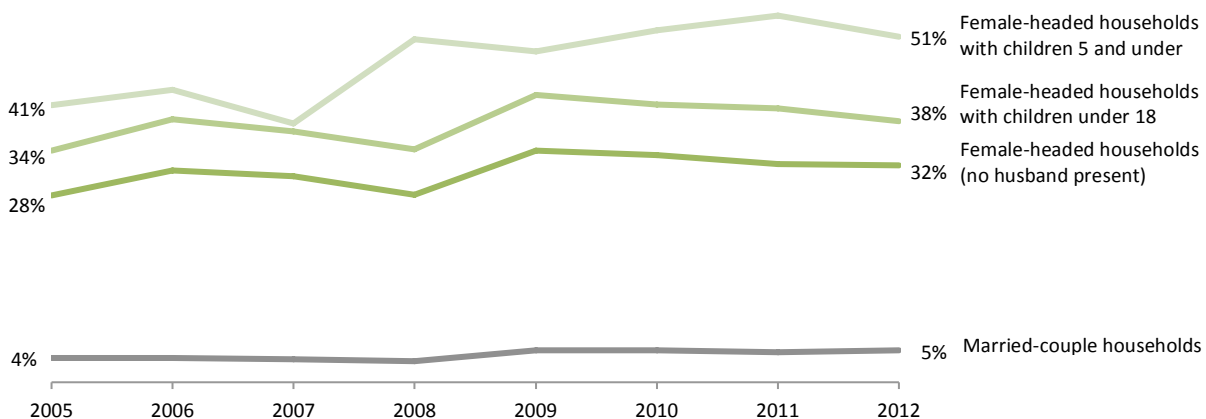


Source: American Community Survey, 2012.

**Minority women are far more likely to provide sole support for their households.** While the percentage of white female-headed households is equal to the Central Ohio average, Hispanic and black women are nearly 2 to 3 times more likely, respectively. See Figure 17.

**Family type is associated with how likely a woman is to live in poverty.** In Central Ohio, the poverty rate is more than six times higher for women in female-headed households than for married women (see Figure 18). The percent of women with children is even higher still, with 38% of female-headed households with children under 18 living in poverty. Female-headed households with young children are by far the most vulnerable group with both the highest rate of poverty at 51% and the fastest growth over the last few years.

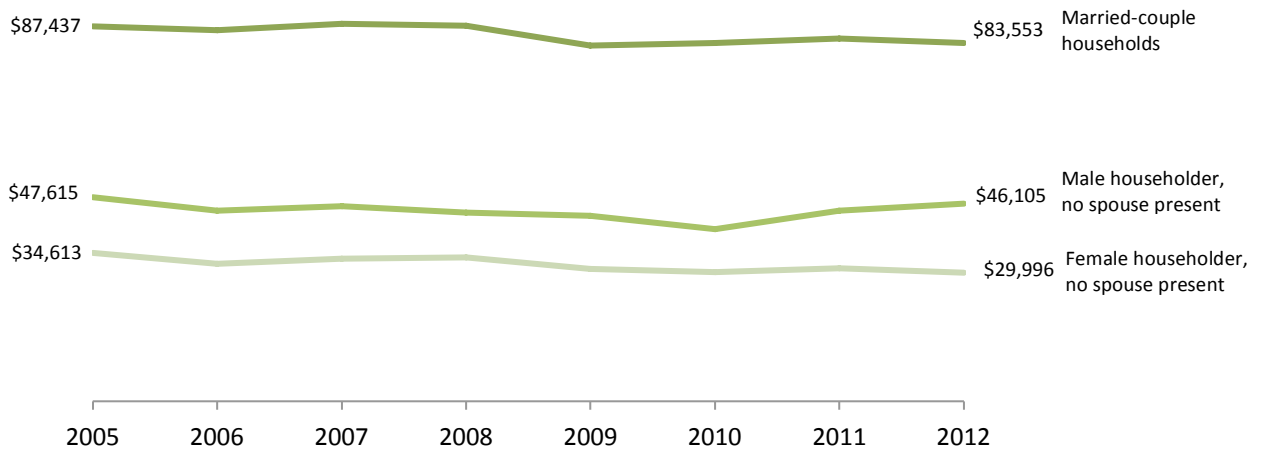
**Figure 18: Poverty Rates in the Columbus MSA, By Household Type**



Source: American Community Survey.

**Family type is also associated with family income.** The median household income of married couple households far exceeds the minimum requirements for economic security (as suggested by the basic needs budgets reviewed earlier in this report), as they enjoy both the potential for dual earnings and the opportunity to share child care burdens. See Figure 19. Due to men’s higher incomes, families headed by a single, male earner are more likely to have enough to cover basic expenses than are families headed by single, female earners.

**Figure 19: Median Family Incomes in the Columbus MSA, by Household Type**

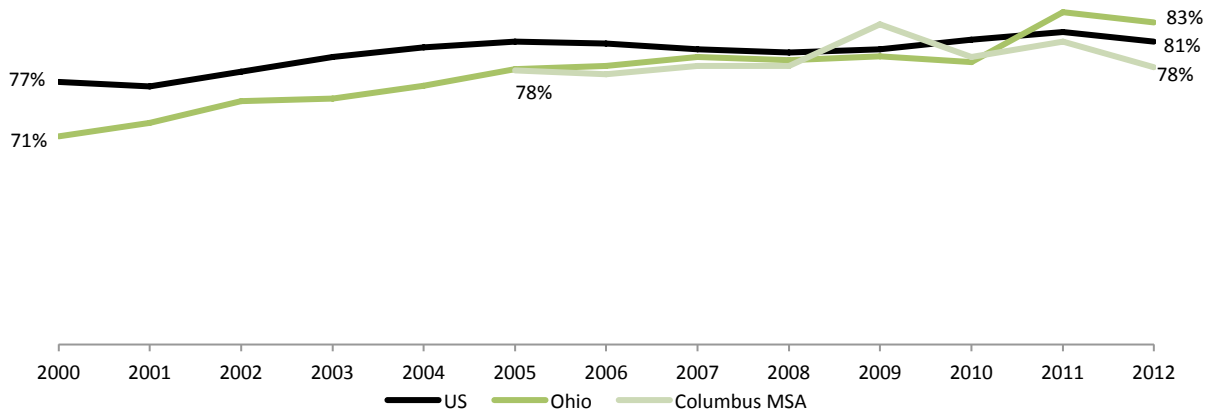


Source: American Community Survey, adjusted to 2013 dollars.

**DATA ON WOMEN'S EARNINGS COMPARED TO MEN'S**

Although women have made incremental gains over the years, women's earnings continue to lag behind men's at about 81 cents on the dollar, nationwide. Here in Central Ohio, women's full-time earnings ratio briefly exceeded the national average, but is now back to the same level as in 2005. See Figure 20. The jump to 83% in 2009 likely reflects job and income loss among men rather than specific gains made by women.

**Figure 20: Women's Earnings for Full-time Employment as a Percentage of Men's, by Geography**

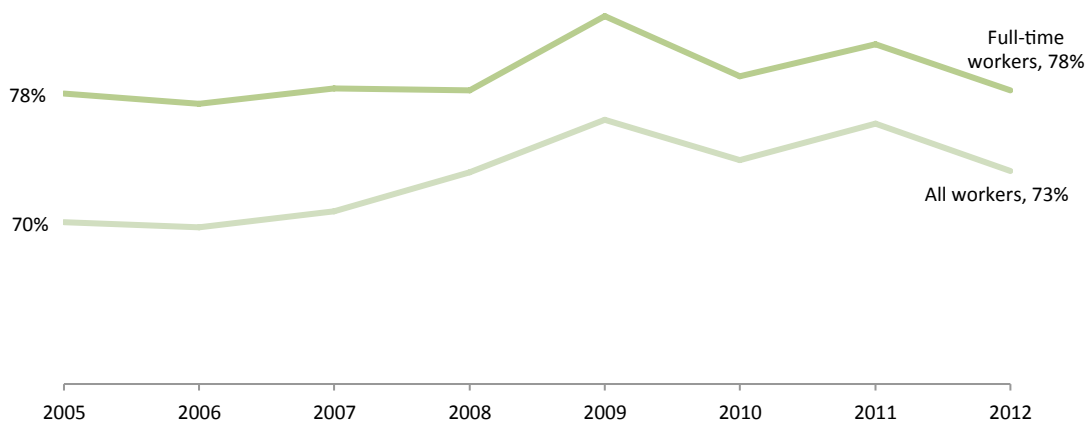


Note: Median annual earnings of full-time wage and salary workers.

Source: National and Ohio Data from Bureau of Labor Statistics annual Current Population Survey data (2000-2012), Columbus MSA annual data from American Community Survey (2005-2012).

Looking at the full universe of working women—those working full-time and part-time—we see that women's median earnings overall represent an even smaller percentage of men's earnings, and women have made no lasting gains over the past 7 years. This disparity is due in part to the facts that women are more likely than men to work part time and women's employment tends to be concentrated in certain occupations.<sup>10</sup> This pattern exists both in the Columbus MSA as a whole (Figure 21) and to varying degrees in the individual counties here in Central Ohio (Figure 22, next page).

**Figure 21: Women's Earnings as a Percentage of Men's in the Columbus MSA, by Worker Status**



Source: American Community Survey, 1-year estimates.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, October 2012. [Highlights of Women's Earnings in 2011 – Report 1038](#).

**Figure 22: Women’s Median Earnings as a Percent of Men’s, by Worker Status and Central Ohio County**



Source: 2000 Decennial Census (1999 data), American Community Survey (for county level, 3-year estimates are available for end-years 2007-2011).

In most Central Ohio counties, women’s median earnings as a percent of men’s increased from 1999 to 2011.

When we view variations in women’s median earnings around the Columbus MSA in the context of men’s earnings, we see that a higher income does not necessarily translate to greater earnings parity. Indeed, although women’s median earnings in Delaware County are the highest in the MSA, their earnings represent the lowest percentage of men’s. See Figure 23 (next page). Conversely, Morrow County ranks second-highest

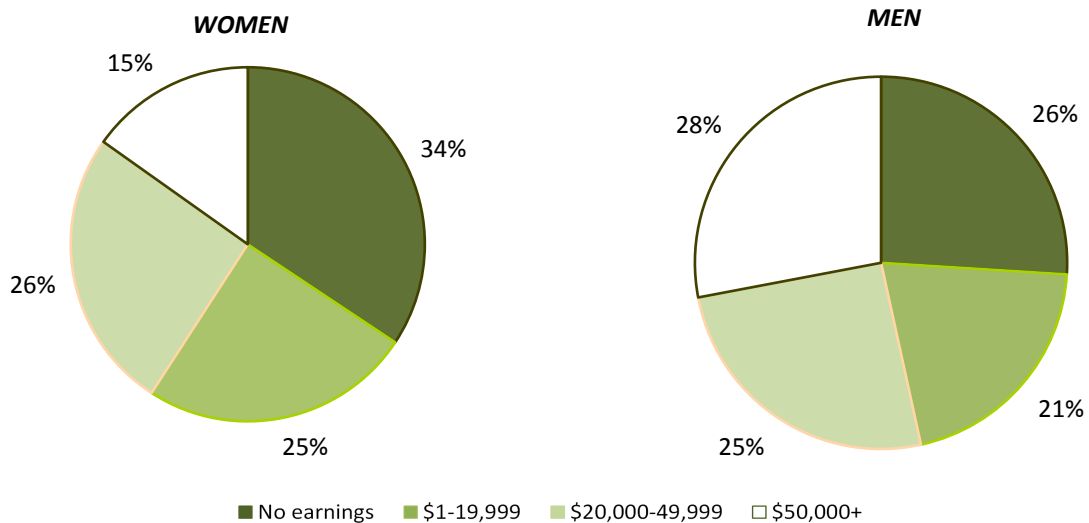
in its ratio of women’s to men’s earnings at 83%; however, women in that county have the lowest median earnings in Central Ohio.

**Figure 23: Ranked List of Full-time Earnings, by Central Ohio Counties**

Women’s Median Full-time Earnings in 2011 (highest to lowest)		Women’s Earnings as a % of Men’s in 2011 (highest to lowest)	
Delaware	\$52,482	Franklin	85%
Union	↑	Morrow	↑
Licking			
Franklin			
Fairfield			
Pickaway			
Madison			
Morrow		\$36,606	

**According to 2012 Census estimates, Central Ohio women are about half as likely as men to earn enough to support a basic needs budget for a family of three.** Furthermore, Central Ohio women are more likely than men to have no earnings (see Figure 24). Recall that people earning less than \$50,000 may be more likely to face economic insecurity: depending on family size, people earning less than \$20,000 are likely living in poverty while people earning between \$20,000-\$49,999 are at or under the 200% poverty line.

**Figure 24: Earnings of Columbus MSA Residents, by Sex**

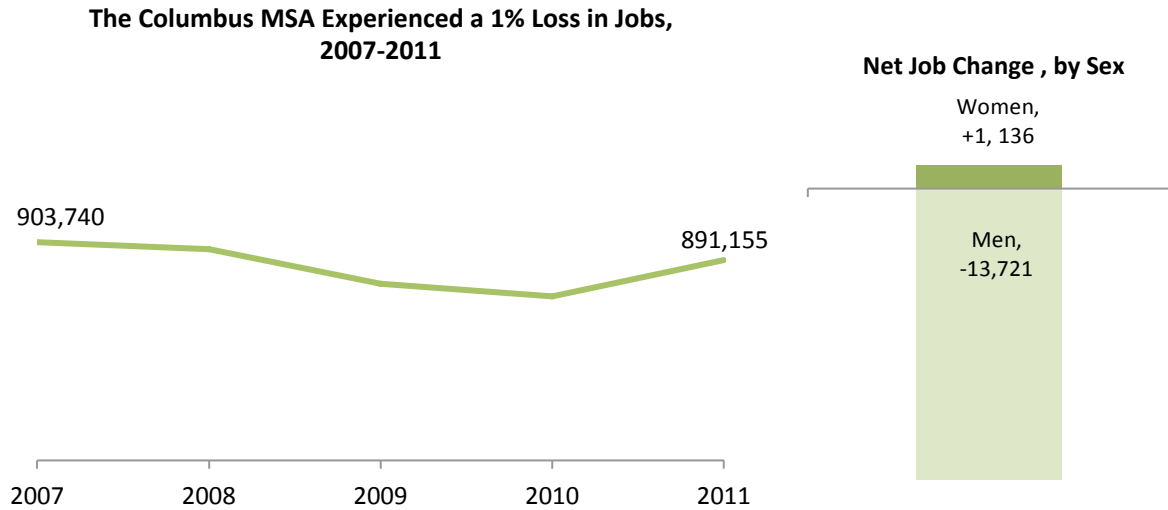


Source: American Community Survey, 2012.

**CENTRAL OHIO EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRY DATA**

**The Central Ohio area experienced a drop in the number of jobs during the recent recession, but has generally rebounded** to about 1% less than the pre-recession employment level. The net change in jobs affected men to a greater extent than women.

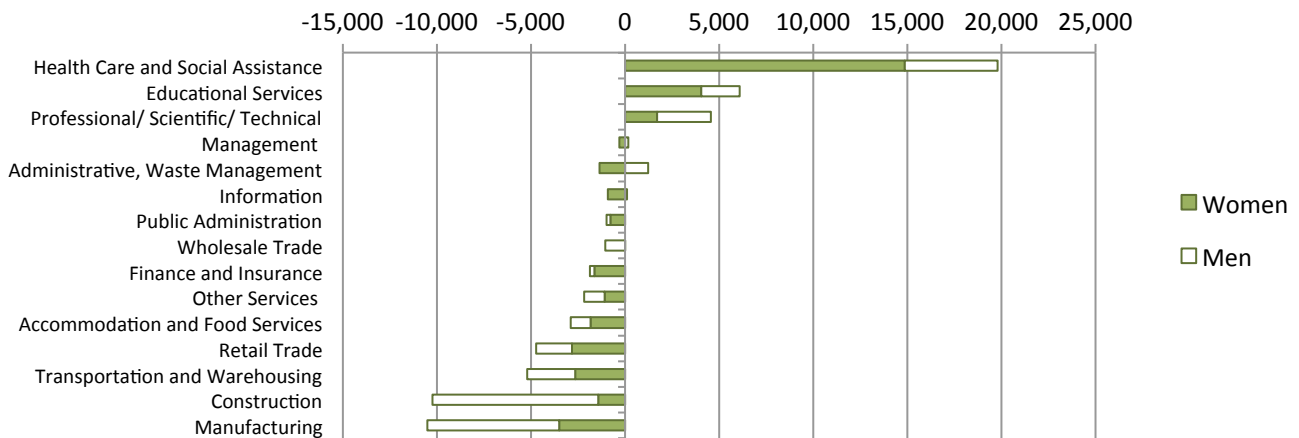
**Figure 25: Job Change in the Columbus MSA between 2007 and 2010**



Source: Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LED) data.

**The 1% decrease in jobs from 2007 to 2011 includes a large amount of job growth in the health care industry and significant job losses in the fields of construction and manufacturing.** In the two industries experiencing the most growth—Health Care and Education—Central Ohio women experienced greater job gains than men. See Figure 26. In the two industries experiencing the greatest loss of jobs—Construction and Manufacturing—Central Ohio women experienced less job loss than Central Ohio men.<sup>11</sup>

**Figure 26: Net Job Change 2007 to 2011 in the Columbus MSA for the 15 Major Occupational Categories, by Sex**

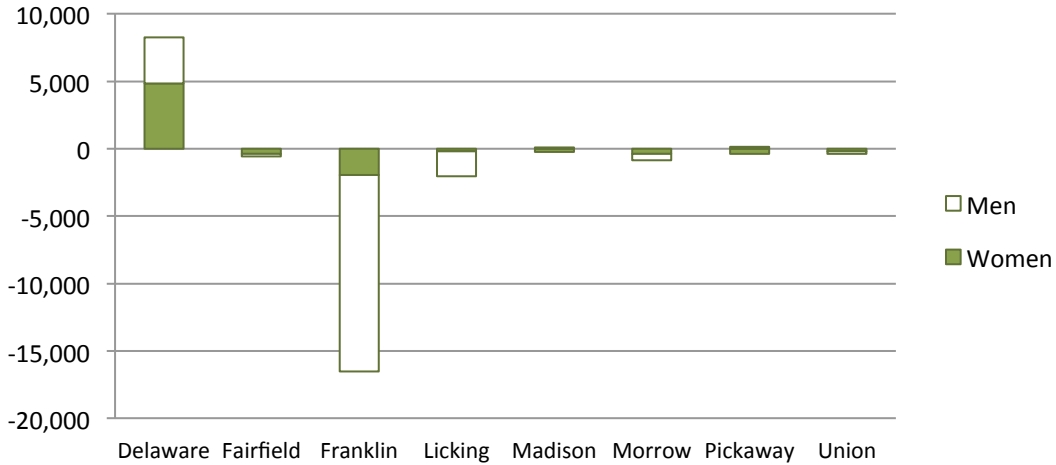


Source: Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LED) data (2007 and 2011).

<sup>11</sup> The occupational category “Other Services” describes services not included in other industry categories, including repair and maintenance (of automobiles and other goods), personal and laundry services, and membership associations and organizations.

**Around Central Ohio, we see that the majority of job growth occurred in Delaware County, with women holding more than half the net change in jobs.** See Figure 27. This increase offset decreases in the overall number of jobs in Franklin and Licking Counties, a change that affected men more than women.

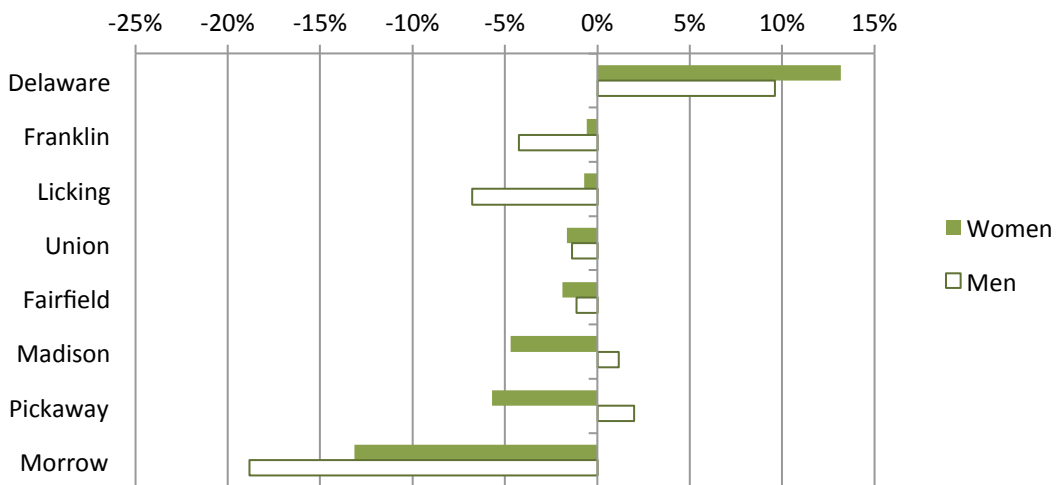
**Figure 27: Net Job Change, by Central Ohio County**



Source: Census LED Data 2007-2011. Data are based on job location.

Consistent with the pattern noted above, women experienced a greater increase in jobs in Delaware County and a smaller decrease in Morrow County than did men. In Madison and Pickaway Counties, the number of jobs held by women decreased, while the number held by men increased. See Figure 28. These gender differences are likely related to changes in jobs by industry. For example, the industries offering the largest net increases in jobs in Delaware County were Professional, Health Care, and Accommodation and Food Services, occupations often held by women. In contrast, the jobs lost in Morrow County were concentrated in the Manufacturing and Construction fields, in which women are less likely to be employed.

**Figure 28: Percent Change in Jobs, by Sex and Central Ohio County**



Source: Census LED Data 2007-2011. Data are based on job location.



**Individual counties in Central Ohio experienced growth and decline in different industries.** The high-growth industry of healthcare resulted in the highest job gains in Franklin, Fairfield, Delaware, and Licking Counties. See Figure 29. While most counties experienced a decrease in construction and manufacturing jobs, Pickaway County experienced its greatest job increases in those industries.

**Figure 29: Industries Experiencing the Greatest Increases and Decreases in Jobs, by Central Ohio County**



Source: Census LED Data 2007-2011. Data are based on job location.

### **KEY FINDINGS**

#### **CENTRAL OHIO WOMEN FACE STRONG CHALLENGES TO ENSURING THEIR ECONOMIC SECURITY**

because women are more likely than men to work part-time. Furthermore, comparing Central Ohio women and men who are employed with full-time jobs, women's median earnings in 2012 were 78% of men's earnings. For this latter reason alone, a majority of women likely have difficulty ensuring economic security for themselves and their families. Lastly, the data indicate that Central Ohio's minority women are less likely to be economically secure, defined as having an income sufficient to meet a household's basic needs.

#### **CENTRAL OHIO WOMEN FARE SLIGHTLY BETTER THAN WOMEN ELSEWHERE IN OHIO OR THE**

**NATION**, with higher workforce participation rates, slightly lower poverty rates, and higher earnings for full-time workers.

**FAMILY STRUCTURE HAS A LARGE IMPACT ON WOMEN'S ECONOMIC SECURITY.** On average, female-headed households in Central Ohio are much more likely to live in poverty and have lower median incomes than male-headed households or married family households.

#### **THE DATA SUGGEST THAT WFCO COULD MAKE AN IMPACT ON WOMEN'S ECONOMIC SECURITY BY FUNDING PROGRAMS OR LEADING ADVOCACY IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:**

- Female-headed households with very young children appear most vulnerable, which suggests that the increased provision of high-quality childcare might be among the most significant avenues for increasing the likelihood of female-headed households attaining economic security.
- Lower levels of educational attainment result in lower incomes and higher rates of poverty, challenges that are more prevalent among minority women. However, the rates of poverty are cut in half for women who complete high school or equivalency, indicating that education programs would also support women's economic security.
- The issue of earnings parity could be addressed through programs supporting girls' and women's entry to higher-paying careers, funding programs designed to help women's professional development, and providing advocacy for equal pay initiatives.
- The industries experiencing job growth in Central Ohio vary by county, suggesting that effective job training programs should be grounded in local economic trends.

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