

The 2020 Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Kern County was commissioned by The Women's and Girls' Fund at Kern Community Foundation and prepared by the Center for the Advancement of Women at Mount Saint Mary's University, Los Angeles. The data included in this report, generated from the 2018 American Community Survey and other relevant reports, provide a portrait of the wellbeing and standing of women and girls in Kern County using a variety of economic and social indicators.

The 2020 report examines the status of women and girls across the county in terms of economic wellbeing, family and homes, and health and safety—and the correlation of educational attainment of women to these issues. A special chapter focuses on women in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) workforce. On key issues, data from the 2015 Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Kern County are referred to for comparison with updated figures.

This report offers a snapshot of the challenges women face and the areas in which they have enjoyed relative gains. Our hope is that the report findings inspire gender equity advocates to make positive change on behalf of the almost 450,000 women and girls residing in Kern County. The report may also assist Kern County policymakers in providing justification for the allocation of local resources to women and girls in the years to come.

Read the full report at kernfoundation.org



Latina leaders 2019 Report

ABOUT THE PARTNERS

KERN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

*Growing community.
Growing philanthropy.*

The Women's and Girls' Fund

A Leadership Initiative of
KERN COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION



Kern Community Foundation is a vibrant nonprofit enterprise with a powerfully simple mission of growing community and growing philanthropy. The Foundation is known as a home for local philanthropists, as a results-oriented grantmaker and as a trusted community leader. Since its establishment in 1999, the Foundation has grown to hold more than 175 charitable funds with assets of more than \$28 million, and has awarded more than \$24 million in grants to improve the quality of life for all who live in Kern County.

[KERNFOUNDATION.ORG](https://kernfoundation.org)

The Women's and Girls' Fund at Kern Community Foundation, a leadership initiative of Kern Community Foundation, allows individuals to make a significant impact on their community through collective giving. Through the Women's and Girls' Fund, one person's gift combines with many others to build an endowment. The assets of the fund are professionally managed and invested by Kern Community Foundation. A percentage of the fund's value is available to grant each year while the principal remains intact, enabling the fund to make grants in perpetuity, and to respond to the changing needs of women and girls in Kern County.

Mount Saint Mary's University is the only women's university in Los Angeles and one of the most diverse in the nation. Mount Saint Mary's is known nationally for its research on gender equity, its innovative health and science programs, and its commitment to community service. As a leading liberal arts institution, The University provides year-round, flexible and online programs at the undergraduate and graduate level. Weekend, evening and graduate programs are offered to both women and men. Mount alums are engaged, active global citizens who use their knowledge and skills to better themselves, their communities and the world.

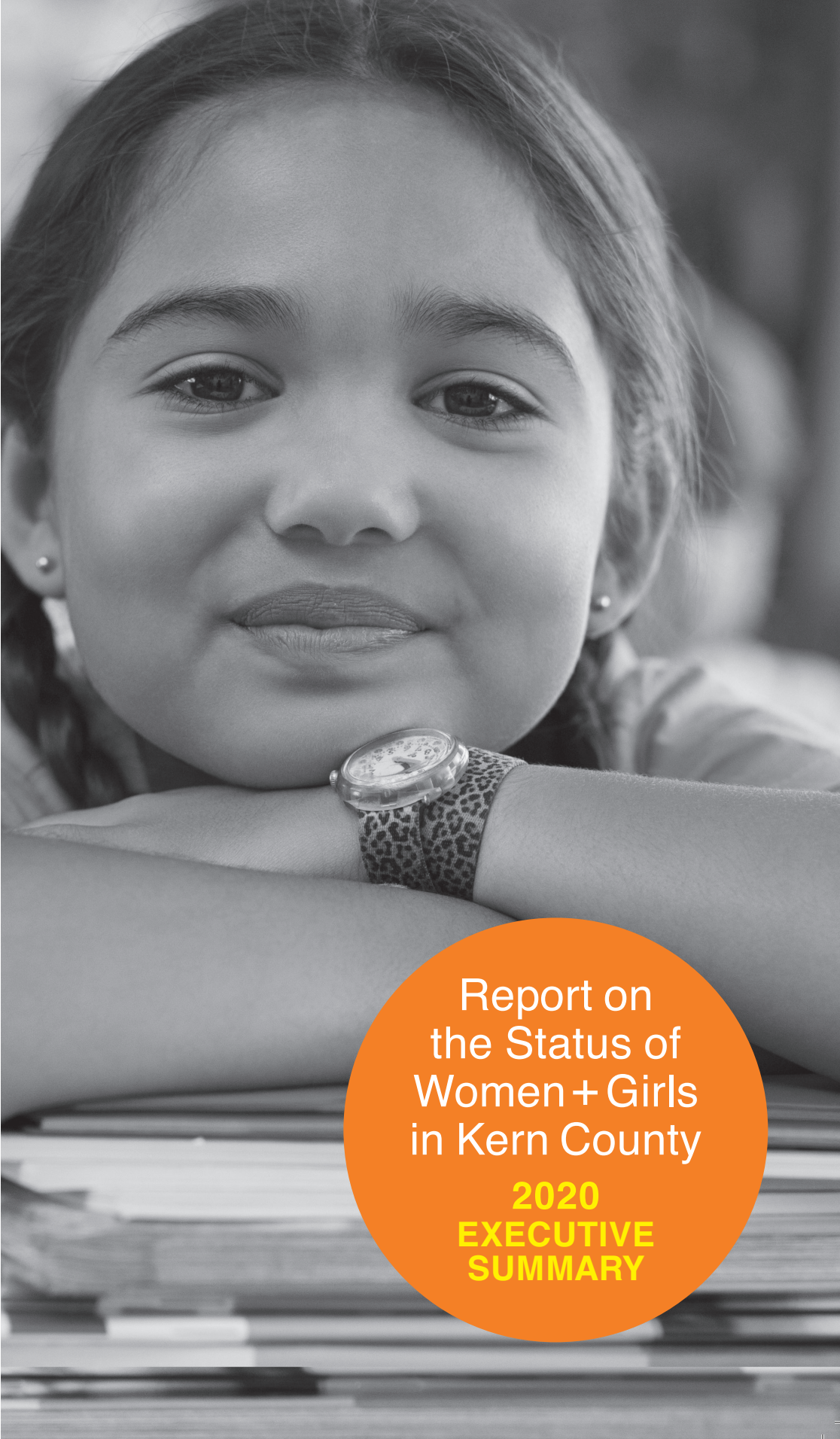
[MSMU.EDU](https://msmu.edu)

READ THE FULL REPORT

The complete 2020 Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Kern County is available for download at kernfoundation.org. It contains additional data for all sections, as well as full source citations. For more information about this report, please call 661.325.5346.

The Women's and Girls' Fund

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Report on
the Status of
Women + Girls
in Kern County
**2020
EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY**

DEMOGRAPHICS

Latinas comprise a slight majority —53%— of Kern County women and constitute the youngest group in the county.

Over one-third (36%) of Kern County Latinas are under 18 years old.

20% of Kern County women were born in another country. In Kern households where English is not the primary language, Spanish is spoken in 86% of them.

EDUCATION



Boys & Girls Club 2017 Report

17% of Kern girls in grades K-12 were classified as English learners (EL) and Latinas accounted for 93% of this group. The most recent scores indicated that 63% of EL K-12 girls

initially tested at the beginning level and needed substantial help using English to learn new things at school and to interact in social situations.

The high school dropout rate of Kern girls has hovered around 6-6.5% in recent years, compared to the statewide average of 6.9-7.3%.

Girls outpace boys in Kern County when it comes to high school graduation rates.

Overall, Kern girls have a four-year high school graduation rate of 90% compared to an 84% graduation rate for boys.

41% of Latinas in Kern County do not have a high school diploma.

25% of Kern women have an associate's degree or higher compared to the 22% that was reported in the 2015 report. Half of Kern County women have a high school education or less.

WOMEN AND THE STEM PROFESSIONS

Kern women in STEM occupations are significantly better paid than women across the entire workforce. Collectively, California women working full-time in computer, engineering, and science occupations earn 86 cents to each dollar paid to men.

Kern women's representation vary across STEM occupations:

- 49% of mathematicians.
- 40% physical and life scientists,
- 23% employed in computer occupations,
- 16% engineers

The Kern Economic Development Foundation (KEDF) surveyed over 120 Kern women in STEM jobs and convened a focus group in 2017 to explore workplace challenges. Two-thirds of women who participated indicated they had faced gender issues in the workplace.

Some of the most frequently mentioned issues included:

- A gender-based wage gap,
- Not having a voice that's heard or respected, and
- Difficulty maintaining a good work-life balance.



PHOTO: CHERYL MESTMAKER

POVERTY

In Kern County, 23% of women and girls live in poverty. In the state of California, 14% of women and girls live in poverty.

The poverty rate of Kern's children under the age of 18 years is staggering. While 17% of children across the state live in poverty, 28% of county children live in poverty.

39% of households headed by women live in poverty.

Evidence shows that education is a mitigating factor to poverty: a higher level of educational attainment generally optimizes economic opportunity by maximizing income and minimizing poverty.

A Kern woman without a high school education is 6X more likely to live in poverty than one with a bachelor's degree or higher.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Across the county, 93% of women were insured in 2018.

Mothers under the age of 20 and those above the age of 40 are most likely to give birth to babies of low birthweight. 12% of births in Kern were preterm, a higher proportion of births than the state average.

The rate of all drug-related deaths among Kern women is nearly 2X that of the state.

Since 2015, calls for Domestic Violence assistance throughout the county have trended upward significantly. The number of calls reported in 2018 represented more than a two-fold increase from those reported in 2015 and a nearly 50% increase from 2017.

FAMILY & HOME

While 4% of births were by teen mothers aged 15-19 years, over 80% of mothers were between 20 and 34 years of age.

The proportion of women giving birth who are single is much higher in Kern County (43%) than across the state (32%).

When household costs exceed 35% or more of income, a family may have no disposable income available to cover emergencies. Over 70% of all households in Kern may be financially vulnerable in the face of unexpected expenses or loss of income.

SUMMARY SOURCES

- Brookings Institute Research
- California Department of Education
- California Department of Public Health
- California Health Interview Survey
- California State University, Bakersfield
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Kern Community College District
- Kern County Department of Public Health
- Kern Economic Development Foundation
- Lucille Packard Foundation for Children's Health
- National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
- Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Kern County: 2015
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- Taft College Institutional Research Reports
- University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute.
- United Health Foundation
- Urban Institute
- U.S. Census Bureau
- U.S. Department of Education
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

EDUCATION AS A PATHWAY OUT OF POVERTY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



Teen success 2019 Report

The 2020 Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Kern County pays special attention to how educational attainment correlates with various areas of the report from economic wellbeing to the health and safety of communities. Education—whether understood via literacy rates or post-secondary training—can have significant outcomes on the lives of women and girls.

Educational attainment is tied to unemployment. As one might expect, women are less likely to be unemployed as their educational attainment increases. For the population 25-64 years of age, the unemployment rate of Kern women and men with less than a high school diploma is roughly six times that of those who hold a minimum of a four-year college degree.

Evidence shows that education is a mitigating factor to poverty: a higher level of educational attainment generally optimizes economic opportunity by maximizing income and minimizing poverty. While the median earnings of men are higher than those for women at all levels of educational attainment, a woman with a four-year bachelor's degree earns more than twice as much as one with a high school diploma, and nearly three times more than a woman who did not complete high school.

While an education is no guarantee of life above the poverty line, the poverty rate of single mothers and their families is greatest among those who have less than a high school diploma. The poverty rate decreases with increasing educational attainment of the mother, dropping from roughly 7 or 8 in 10 for single mothers without a high school education to fewer than 1 in 10 for those with a four-year college degree or higher.

Educational attainment is also shown to correlate with domestic violence (DV). One of the risk factors for domestic violence is a lack of education of either the victim or perpetrator, or a disparity in educational attainment between the partners.

- Women with less than a high school or college education are at higher risk of being a victim of DV than those with a college degree; and
- Perpetrators with lower levels of education than their partners are more likely to be DV offenders than those with educational attainment equal to their partners.