

THE HEART OF GENDER JUSTICE IN NEW MEXICO:

*Intersectionality, Economic Security,
and Health Equity*



NEW MEXICO WOMEN.ORG

Advancing Opportunities for Women and Girls.

THE PROJECT

This booklet summarizes key findings from a joint project of NewMexicoWomen.Org (a program of New Mexico Community Foundation) and University of New Mexico. Focusing on women in New Mexico, this project includes qualitative findings from community dialogues around gender, health, and economic equity, as well as quantitative findings from an analysis on the link between economic security and women's health status by race and ethnicity. Using both community voices and data, this document seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the intersectional nature of women's lives. For a full description of the findings and methodologies used in the community dialogues and quantitative analysis, see the full reports.

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KEY FINDINGS



- 1** Socioeconomic determinants impact women's health and well-being. These include: income inequalities, economic insecurity, intersections of race and place, and number of earning parents in a household.
- 2** Intersecting layers of discrimination impact women's health and well-being. These include: patriarchy, sexism, structural racism, anti-immigrant sentiment, and effects of historical trauma.
- 3** Race, ethnicity, income, insurance coverage, and place matter with regard to access to care and health outcomes.
- 4** Environmental contamination and pollution undermine community health.

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS MATTER

The health of women and girls in New Mexico is shaped by social determinants, which are described as “where and how women and girls live, work, learn, pray and play.”¹ A key message that communities emphasized across the state was the critical role and significant impact that social determinants, including historical trauma and colonization, patriarchy, and structural racism, have upon women and their communities’ well-being. These root causes lie at the heart of gender justice in New Mexico.

1 Michael Marmot et al., “Closing the Gap in a Generation: Health Equity through Action on the Social Determinants of Health,” *The Lancet* 372, no. 9650 (Nov. 8, 2008):1661–1669.



INTERSECTIONALITY MATTERS

The impact of social determinants of health on diverse communities of women are best understood using an intersectional feminist lens. This means moving beyond gender to consider the influence that other social factors such as race, class, ability, sexuality, religion, age, and environment have on one's lived experiences. Intersectionality

acknowledges that systems of power, patterns of oppression, and identities are not only interrelated; they are bound together and influenced by each other.^{2,3} Ultimately, an intersectional feminist analysis allows communities and individuals to articulate the multiple aspects of identity and experience that both enrich their health, economic opportunities, and lives, as well as potentially compound, challenge, and complicate them. This booklet seeks to illustrate how these layers of complex identities affect women's health, economic opportunities, and lives.



2 Collins, P.H. & Bilge, S. *Intersectionality*. Polity Press, Cambridge, UK; 2016.

3 Hankivsky O. *Introduction to the Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis Framework*. Paper presented at: International Journal of Qualitative Methods 2012.

GENDER EQUITY

"I feel unsafe a lot, being a woman and being gay. Being out with my family and my daughter and what people say, or how they relate to me and my wife."

—Santa Fe participant

"I work on a farm and supervise two males slightly younger than me, and it's interesting that the assumption whenever anyone gets to the field—is that one of the men would be in charge."

—Las Cruces participant

SOCIO ECONOMIC EQUITY

Economic insecurity is most prevalent among Native American, Hispanic, and foreign-born women in New Mexico. Native American women are more than twice as likely to be poor than White women in New Mexico.

Participants described how challenging it is for communities that have experienced traumas and borne the brunt of ongoing structural inequalities to achieve economic security.

HEALTH EQUITY

Regarding access to health care, Native American and Hispanic women face the greatest challenges in New Mexico. Hispanic women are over 25% less likely than White women to be insured.

While exercise and diet are critically linked to one's health, communities described physical well-being and healthy bodies as an issue of justice and not simply personal choice.

"All my life I was always on the heavy side. Now when I really reflect back...I realize when I was little, I was an emotional eater...historical trauma was one of the things that caused that."

—Gallup participant

RACIAL EQUITY

Social determinants have a disproportionate impact on the health, economic opportunities, and well-being of women and girls of color.

"As a White man, I benefit economically from racism...Some of my ancestors were given land, Native people's land, for free, and we were given access to credit. We were able to accrue wealth, whereas people of color were not."

—Albuquerque participant



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IMMIGRATION STATUS

Foreign-born women are nearly twice as likely to be poor than US-born women in New Mexico.

A woman's immigration status as documented or undocumented is inextricably linked to her health and economic opportunities.

"The border is with you wherever you are."

—Las Cruces participant

HEALING HISTORICAL TRAUMA

Participants stated that poor health, gender-based violence, mental health issues, and breakdown in family systems are caused in part by historical and intergenerational trauma.

"Nobody ever talks about the historical trauma that has occurred in these communities with colonialism...There's a lot of pain."

—Española participant

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Participants expressed how low-income communities and communities of color experience the detrimental effects of environmental contamination in a disproportionate way—for example, by losing access to safe and clean outdoor spaces.

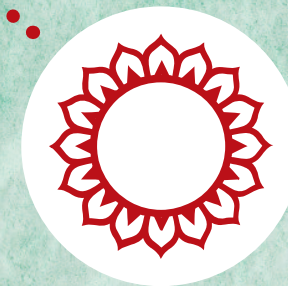
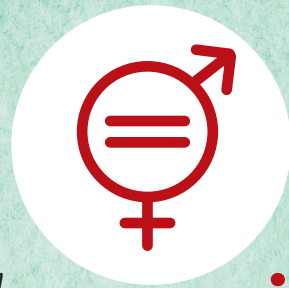
"Everybody on the reservation was thinking, 'Oh, we don't live by a uranium mine, so we're okay.' What they're not realizing is those uranium mines were never cleaned up. It's still seeping into our groundwater."

—Gallup participant

EQUITY FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

Rural communities across the state described a context of government underinvestment in services and safety nets, resulting in negative health outcomes for women.

In New Mexico, women living at or near a metropolitan area were 20% less likely to be obese, 21% more likely to have a mammogram, and 24% more likely to get a checkup within a two-year period than women living in a rural area.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Support communities:** Those most impacted are women and girls of color and those in low-income and rural communities, immigrant women, and LGBTQ communities.
- **Recognize community members as experts:** Community organizing and civic engagement were brought up as the most effective ways to create long-term change.
- **Apply a gender and social justice lens to funding and policymaking:** Communities described the need to educate funders and policymakers.
- **Support community and individual healing efforts:** Communities discussed longer-term, culturally rooted healing as a critical need.



GENDER JUSTICE AND HEALING



Based upon these findings, NewMexicoWomen.Org has decided to focus on **Gender Justice and Healing.**

NMW.O defines gender justice as a commitment to end patriarchy and to create a world free from misogyny. Further, gender justice encompasses the various social, economic, and environmental justice issues associated with gender. A gender justice analysis also acknowledges that men and gender non-conforming individuals are constrained by patriarchal gender roles and norms.

NMW.O defines healing as the process of restoring health from an unbalanced or unhealthy state. NMW.O will prioritize healing, as communities across the state emphasized it as both a powerful restorative process and outcome unto itself.

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ABOUT NEWMEXICOWOMEN.ORG

NewMexicoWomen.Org (NMW.O), a program of New Mexico Community Foundation, is the only fund of its kind in the state working to advance opportunities for women and girls so they can lead self-sufficient, healthy, and empowered lives. NMW.O pursues its mission via a three-pronged strategy: to educate, lead, and invest.

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