

## THE FUND FOR WOMEN & GIRLS

# Status Report and Landscape Analysis Highlights

2019

The Fund for Women & Girls is committed to advancing gender equity and investing in sustainable solutions that strengthen the economic security, health, and safety of women and girls throughout Fairfield County. We regularly commission research to assess progress and inform our funding priorities. To gauge the needs and service gaps impacting women and girls in our region, as well as service providers, in 2019 we commissioned two bodies of research—*Count Her In: A Status Report on Women and Girls in Fairfield County* and *Count Them In: A Landscape Analysis of Fairfield County Organizations Supporting Women & Girls*. We have also created a companion piece of recommendations for closing the opportunity gap for women and girls based on the research.

Produced in partnership with DataHaven and Knowledge Designs to Change, our two bodies of research collectively include more than 70 pages of data. The status report uses quantitative data from federal and state government sources and qualitative data derived from stakeholders to ascertain how women and girls in our county are faring. The landscape analysis uses qualitative data derived from providers who offer gender-specific supports for women and girls in Fairfield County. Together, these two research reports help us better understand the under-met needs of women and girls in our diverse county, as well as barriers to accessing services.

***This summary highlights key information found in both reports, which are located at FCCFoundation.org/FWG2019. Below are action steps to consider as you read.***

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

**READ** the two reports.

**ANALYZE** the data.

**ADVOCATE** for the issues that resonate the most with you, your organization, and your community.

**SHARE** with your friends, colleagues, and elected officials.

**COMMIT** to implementing one or more of our recommendations, and let us know!

### THE REGION WE SERVE

Bethel	Darien	Monroe	Norwalk	Sherman	Weston
Bridgeport	Easton	New Canaan	Redding	Stamford	Westport
Brookfield	Fairfield	New Fairfield	Ridgefield	Stratford	Wilton
Danbury	Greenwich	Newtown	Shelton	Trumbull	

***To download the full reports, go to FCCFoundation.org/FWG2019***

# A Diverse County

Of Fairfield County's total population of 947,328, just over 51 percent is female, and 22 percent are girls under age 18. The median age of these 485,948 women and girls is 42 years, about four years higher than that of men in the county.

About half the female populations of Danbury, Norwalk, and Stamford are non-white, and about four out of every five women and girls in Bridgeport are women or girls of color.

**46 percent of the girls in Fairfield County are girls of color.**

**20 percent of women age 65 and older are women of color.**

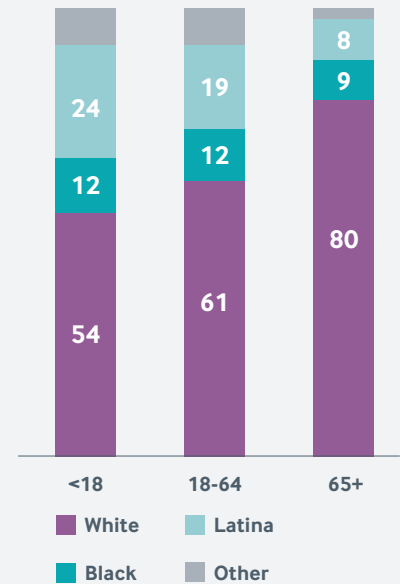
Nonprofit providers expressed a desire for more opportunities for women and girls in workplace internships, leadership activities, civic engagement training and science careers.

Role models are critical and there is a need to increase the number of adult and peer mentoring opportunities inside schools as well as in community settings. Service providers expressed the need for more counselors of color who can understand and relate to the lived experience of young girls of color. In addition, girls interviewed also called for mentorship programs that expose them to female leaders and, more specifically, to women who look like they do.

**Fairfield County has a large immigrant population: 22 percent of its residents are foreign-born, compared to 14 percent of all Connecticut residents.**

Between 1990 and 2017, the immigrant population in Fairfield County doubled, following trends in other parts of the state and across the nation. There are about 98,500 women and 6,000 girls living in Fairfield County who were born outside of the United States.

**FEMALE POPULATION BY RACE & AGE**  
Percent of women & girls, 2017



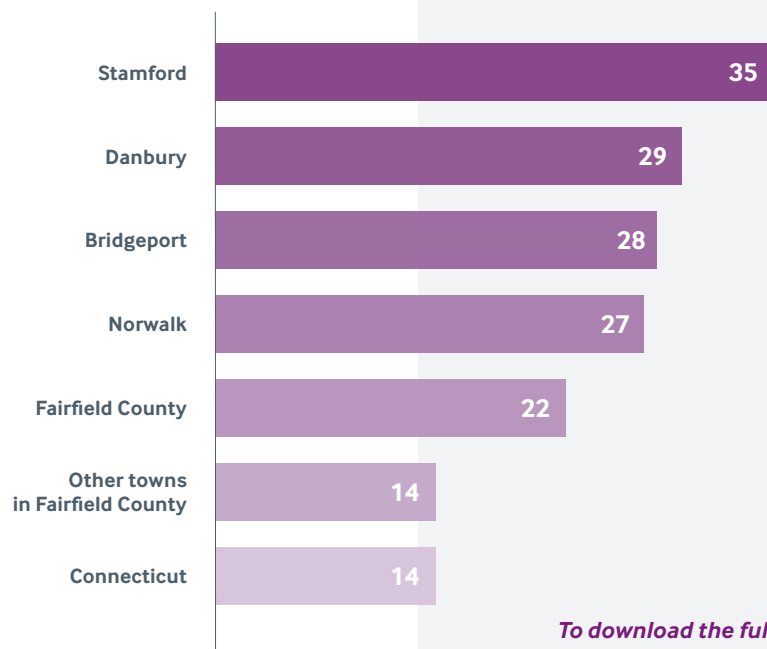
**More than 54,000 women and girls in Fairfield County (over the age of 4) speak English less than very well or not at all.**

Language needs are not yet completely being met by service organizations. In addition, nonprofit providers also identified transportation, childcare, economic insecurity, fear of government and limited awareness of available services/resources as barriers to women thriving.

Language barriers were linked to underdeveloped cultural understanding and noted as critical impediments to meeting the need of women and girls, particularly those who are underserved and may not feel comfortable accessing supports.

More specifically, providers noted newer immigrant communities as having high populations of English-language learners not yet receiving the support they need.

**FEMALE IMMIGRANT POPULATION**  
Percent of foreign-born women and girls, 2017



To download the full reports, go to [FCCFoundation.org/FWG2019](http://FCCFoundation.org/FWG2019)

# Educational Attainment

Throughout most of Fairfield County, a higher share of women have a master's or other advanced degree compared to women across the nation.

*In contrast, about one in four women living in Bridgeport lack a high school diploma, which is twice the national rate of 12 percent.*

There are many reasons why women and girls living in areas in the county with higher levels of

social needs have significantly lower educational attainment, including the heavy financial burden of post-secondary tuition or family responsibilities such as caregiving. These women may have had fewer opportunities as girls to network with women who have higher levels of educational attainment for myriad reasons, including differences in family social and migration histories, discrimination, and a lack of exposure to programs and experiences that facilitate such connections.

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT Percent of women ages 25 and older, 2017

	No HS diploma	HS diploma or GED	Bachelor's degree only	Master's degree or higher
Connecticut	9	26	21	17
Fairfield County	10	22	26	20
Bridgeport	24	31	12	6
Danbury	16	29	18	15
Norwalk	13	21	24	17
Stamford	10	21	27	20
Other towns in FC	5	18	31	25

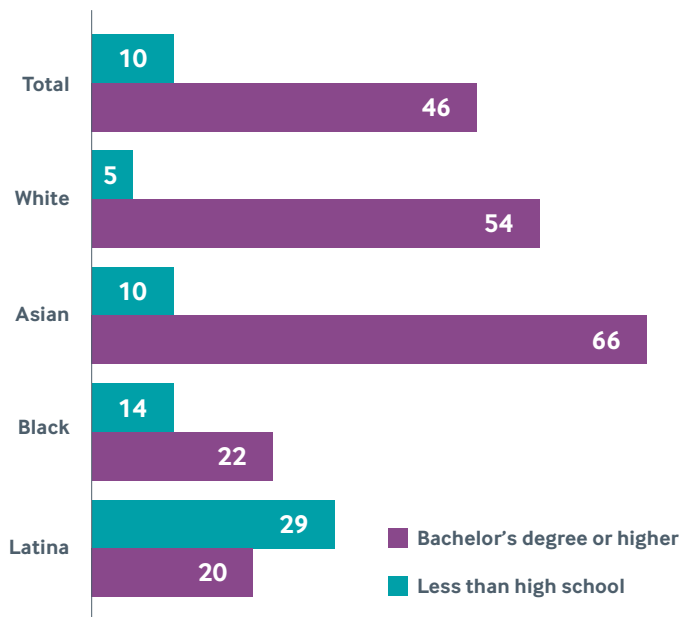
*29 percent of Latinas and 14 percent of Black women in Fairfield County lack a high school diploma, versus just 5 percent of white women.*

While the overall growth in high school graduation rates has been tremendous, disparities in girls' four-year high school graduation rates still exist by race and school district.

To close the achievement gap, programs that help students of color learn about educational opportunities and resources need to be promoted, as it is difficult, if not impossible, for young women to take advantage of opportunities that are unknown to them. Culturally competent opportunities and resources for English-language learners could potentially help close the gap for Latina students without a high school degree.

Specifically, financial education was identified by nonprofit providers as an unmet need in our county. There is also concern that financial education is not being delivered uniformly and that a common curriculum needs to be developed.

## WOMEN'S EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT BY RACE Percent of women ages 25 and older; Fairfield County, 2017



# Economics & Income

*According to the MIT Living Wage calculator, in Connecticut, a family of one adult and one child needs an annual income of \$59,760 before taxes to afford basic needs such as food, childcare, medical care, housing and transportation. In Fairfield County, the same family would need an income of \$64,295 before taxes.*

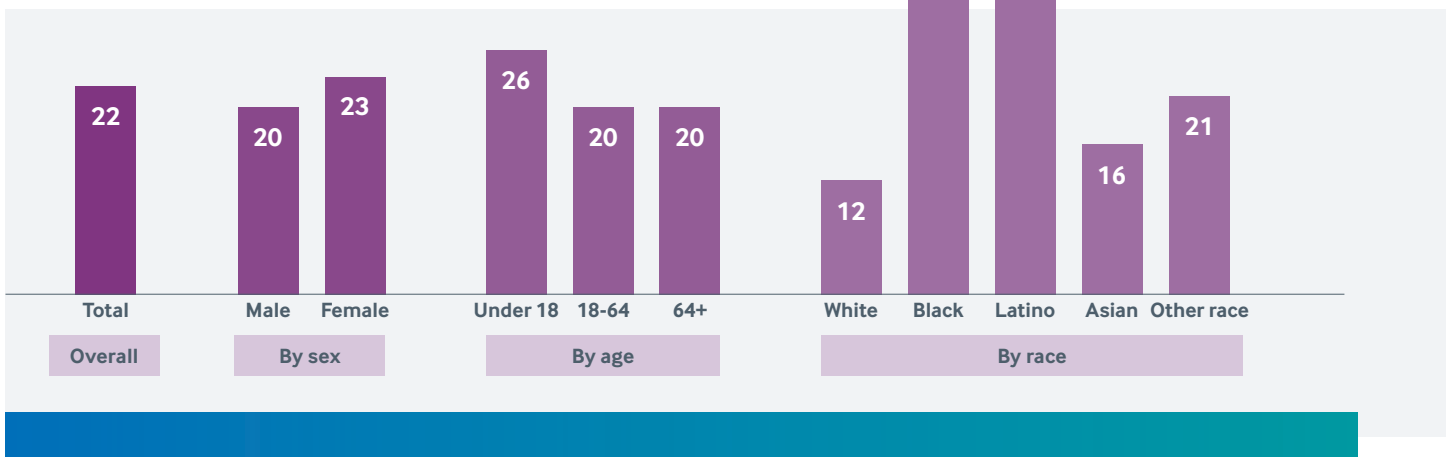
Families in Fairfield County have lower rates of receiving public assistance in forms of Supplemental Security Income (SSI), cash public assistance income, or food stamps (SNAP) than families throughout the state.

*Almost 27,000 girls live in low-income households in Fairfield County.*

Children living with a single mother are much more likely (40 percent) to be in a household that receives public assistance than those living with a single father (22 percent) and those living in a married-couple household (8 percent).

Strengthening parenting skills, emphasizing family supports, supporting single-parent households, and establishing support groups for new moms in need were identified as areas of opportunity by providers. Two-generational family strategies of support were also identified as an important approach to achieve improved outcomes.

**LOW-INCOME RATE BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS**  
Percent of population in low-income households;  
Fairfield County, 2016



# Health & Sexuality

Women who experience Adverse Childhood Events (ACEs) have a higher risk of experiencing intimate partner violence later in life compared to women who experience relatively fewer ACEs. As the number of ACEs during childhood increases, the risk of poor health behaviors and outcomes in adulthood also increases.

*People of color are more likely to experience traumatic events as children. For many reasons, including the culmination of toxic stress and adverse lifetime events, women of color in Connecticut are more likely to give birth to underweight babies and are more likely to have higher infant mortality rates.*

Landscape analysis participants noted the critical need for reproductive health education and the evolving ways in which today's young women access information about this subject. There were concerns expressed about social media replacing safe spaces where girls and young women could socialize and talk about issues related to sexuality and health. Furthermore, the communication patterns of girls may suggest that afterschool programming is a better vehicle for information delivery about sexuality than in-school programs.