



**EMPLOYMENT & ECONOMICS**

# EMPLOYMENT & ECONOMICS

An anonymous proverb reads, "Man may work from sun to sun, but woman's work is never done." Although women have worked throughout the ages, relatively recently the pattern of middle class women's work has changed with more women moving out of private, unpaid labor in the home to join other women in paid employment. This shift has had dramatic, and still untold, effects upon women, families, and the workplace. New terms have sprung into the nation's lexicon such as sexual harassment, glass ceilings, supermoms, and the second shift. The debate continues about who is responsible for picking up the burdens of care giving often left unmet when women enter the labor force: women, men, the government, or the workplace? Questions abound, but answers are few.

## CHILD CARE

Average Weekly Day Care Center Costs, (rounded to nearest dollar) in Selected Areas of Houston, 2003 <sup>1</sup>	Zip Code Area	Infants, Age 0 to 18 months	Toddler, Age 18 to 23 months	Preschoolers, Ages 2-5	Before and After Kindergarten	Before and after School
Denver Harbor Area	77011, 77012, 77023	\$126	\$110	\$75	\$85	\$85
East of Downtown	77020, 77026	\$102	\$95	\$83	\$62	\$56
Galleria Area	77056, 77057	\$189	\$172	\$138	\$103	\$98
Gulfton Area	77081	\$112	\$100	\$98	\$72	\$77
Pasadena	77502, 77504	\$107	\$97	\$83	\$53	\$48
Reed Road Area (between Holmes, Hwy 288, and Cullen Areas)	77045, 77051, 77033	\$99	\$89	\$81	\$65	\$63
South of Downtown	77004, 77021	\$111	\$101	\$93	\$64	\$65

Since the care and rearing of children in this nation remains primarily a female responsibility, childcare remains of special interest to women. Many women struggle to balance paid labor and care for children, which often results in conflicts and uneasy feelings for women who want to be both good mothers and good employees. The need for quality child care crosses all lines of class and race with most women confronted with the need for quality childcare from high powered and highly paid corporate women to poor working mothers who receive subsidized support for childcare. Average child care costs can range widely from \$80 a week for an infant in Denver Harbor to almost \$200 a week in the Galleria or Memorial areas. Since these are average costs the prices can be both higher and lower. Although the economic slowdown over the past few years caused child care prices to stabilize, recent surveys show slowly increasing prices.<sup>2</sup>

Subsidized child care is an important issue for women. Often subsidized childcare is the difference between a woman being able to work to support herself and her children or having to rely solely on public assistance. Neighborhood Centers, Inc. is the provider of subsidized child care services in the thirteen county Houston-Galveston area.<sup>3</sup>

- Neighborhood Centers manages over \$80 million annually for child care services.
- More than 20,500 children in a thirteen county area receive subsidized child care each day and 8,500 remain on a waiting list for assistance.
- Of the families receiving assistance, 83.5% have household incomes of less than \$15,000 per year.
- Many of the parents are former TANF clients who left welfare programs for work, often made possible by subsidized child care monies.

Many parents continue to struggle to find good quality, reliable, and affordable child care. Centers or home with flexible hours remains difficult to find for mothers and fathers who work nontraditional hours. Parents who work traditional hours often struggle to reach their child care provider by closing time due to Houston's congested traffic and spread out geography, which often results in prolonged commutes. Area providers are seeing a surge in parents, often single-income parents, who are seeking low cost child care. Often their salaries do not qualify them for subsidized child care, but with one income and perhaps two young children needing child care, they struggle to make ends meet.

### Data Sources:

1 Statistical Reports for Databases, by Provider Age Groups, Initiatives for Children, 2003.

2 Personal communication with Kathy Butler, Database Coordinator, Initiatives for Children.

3 Neighborhood Centers, Inc. Contract Partner to The WorkSource. See <http://neighborhood-centers.org>.

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## DISCRIMINATION - EMPLOYMENT

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) was established by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Commission has two major charges: enforcing federal civil rights employment laws and promoting equal opportunity in employment. Several of the federal statutes enforced by the EEOC include:

- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin;
- The Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) of 1967 which prohibits employment discrimination against individuals 40 years of age and older;
- The Equal Pay Act (EPA) of 1963 which prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender in compensation for substantially similar work under similar circumstances; and
- The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 prohibiting employment discrimination on the basis of disability in the private sector and state and local governments.

In 2002, the EEOC received a total of 84,442 charges across the nation and obtained a record \$310.5 million in monetary benefits for victims of employment discrimination. These numbers represent a 5% increase in the number of charges from 2001 and a 3.8% increase in monetary benefits from the same year.

On a local level, the Houston District Office receives

200 to 300 phone calls a day.<sup>3</sup> Callers often have a difficult time getting through to speak to someone on the phone due to the large volume of calls. As a result,

EEOC Cases Filed in the Houston Metropolitan Statistical Area <sup>1,2</sup>	1995	2002
<b>Title VII</b>		
Race-based Charges	158	211
Religious Charges	11	6
National Origin	108	111
Retaliation	103	143
<b>Sex-Based</b>		
Discrimination Charges	200	228
Other	1	9
<b>Equal Pay Act Charges</b>		
Age Discrimination in Employment	7	15
Americans with Disabilities Charges	134	126
Pregnancy Discrimination	128	129
	9	12

the Commission is studying the possibility of implementing a national telephone hotline communication system. Of the Title VII based discrimination charges in Houston in 2002, 33.7% were due to sex discrimination, making sex discrimination the largest category of Title VII charges. There were twelve cases of pregnancy discrimination filed in 2002, up from 9 in 1995. The number of pregnancy discrimination cases nationwide is also increasing. Reasons cited for the increase include that more women are in the labor force, there is a greater awareness of worker's rights, and the current weak economy has caused companies to lay off more employees.<sup>4</sup>

### Data Sources:

1 EEOC, National Database Automatic Reporting Facility, Cases filed in Houston MSA, 1990-2002

2 2002 Annual Report, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Washington, DC.

3 Personal communication with Joan Ehrlich, former head of the Houston District Office of the EEOC and currently head of the San Francisco Office.

4 Tahmincioglu, E. (September 14, 2003). Pregnant women filing more complaints of bias. New York Times, online. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/09/14/jobs/14jmar.html>.

## EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Employment Status, Census 2000 <sup>1</sup>	Numbers in Labor Force (Population 16 and over)	Percent of Total Labor Force
Men	917,312	55.5%
Women	736,580	44.5%

Women in Harris County comprise a full 44% of labor force participation with two-thirds of employed women also being mothers of children under the age of 18 years. Women are more likely to be employed when their children are over the age of six.

In married couple families, almost two-thirds are dual-earner couples. Women are twice as likely as men to work in a part time job.

When speaking of women's difficulties at work, the glass ceiling phenomenon is often mentioned, but the

Women and Labor Force Participation	Numbers	Percent of Labor Force Participation
In Labor Force	736,580	57.6%
Not in Labor Force	542,341	42.4%

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Mothers (age 16 and older) with children under the age of 18 years old <sup>1</sup>	Numbers in Labor Force	Numbers not in Labor Force	Percent of Mothers in Labor Force
With children under 6 years only	66,924	54,937	54.9%
With children under 6 years and 6 to 17 years	53,979	49,536	52.1%
With children 6 to 17 years only	165,601	79,095	67.7%
Totals	286,504	183,568	60.9%

the paid work force; and the lack of financial equality for mothers in marriage, and especially upon divorce.<sup>2</sup>

The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) compiles a national report that compares the status of women across states. According to their index on the "employment and earnings" report card, Texas ranks 24 out of the 50 states earning a grade of C+.<sup>2</sup> The index is calculated using a variety of indicators,

problem that seems to affect more women is the

"maternal wall." The maternal wall addresses the difficulties that mothers working in the paid labor force face, as well as at-home mothers who are not counted in the labor force even though they are working full-time raising children. As the data show, a full two-thirds of employed women are also mothers of children under the age of 18 years. Ann Crittenden's book, "The Price of Motherhood," details some of the difficulties faced by fulltime mothers: "the

including the median earnings of women, the earnings

Married-Couple Families in Labor Force <sup>1</sup>	Numbers	Percent
Employed man with wife in labor force	300,202	63%
Employed man with wife not in labor force	176,485	37%
Total	476,687	100%

ratio between men and women, the percent of women in the labor force, and the percent of women employed in managerial or professional occupations.<sup>3</sup>

The Current Population Survey is the regular monthly survey conducted with about 60,000 households from which the national unemployment rate is derived. Often when unemployment figures are reported, a single number is given for the unemployment rate whether reported at the national, state, or local level. More informative are the detailed rates that are broken down by both gender and race. With this increased information, patterns of employment and unemployment are more readily observed.

Usual Hours Worked in Paid Employment <sup>1</sup>	35 or more hours per week	15 to 34 hours per week	1 to 14 hours per week	Percent of Part-time Workers (less than 35 hours a week)
Men	884,232	86,160	25,059	11.2% of all men in paid employment
Women	631,129	141,869	34,423	21.8% of all women in paid employment

mommy tax," which is the money college-educated women lose when they have a child and remain out of

unemployment are more readily observed.

Unemployment Rate, Houston PMSA, Annual Averages, 2001 <sup>2</sup>	
Total	4.9
Men	5.1
Women	4.6
White	3.8
Men	3.7
Women	3.8
Black	8.7
Men	10.2
Women	7.2
Hispanic Origin	5.1
Men	5.2
Women	5.0

Houston PMSA, Annual Averages, 2001 <sup>2</sup>	Civilian Labor Force Participation Rate
Total	69.0
Men	79.0
Women	59.0
White Total	69.0
Men	80.1
Women	57.7
Black Total	69.4
Men	73.7
Women	65.5
Hispanic Origin Total	66.4
Men	81.6
Women	50.4

**Data Sources:**

- 1 Current Population Survey, 2001 annual averages, estimates for Houston PMSA.
- 2 Crittenden, A. (2001). *The Price of Motherhood: Why the most important job in the world is still the least valued*. New York: Henry Holt & Company.
- 3 *The Status of Women in the States*, (2002-03) (4th Ed.). Institute for Women's Policy Research, Washington, DC.

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## OCCUPATIONS BY GENDER

Some of the discrepancies between men's and women's wages are attributed to the phenomenon of occupational segregation. This term describes the fact that men and women often tend to cluster in different occupations and the salary differentials are often noticeable. Although many women are entering jobs that once were dominated by men, the trend is still for women to cluster in "pink collar" jobs such as nursing, teaching, and secretarial work.

When women do move into professions once dominated by men, such as pharmacy and veterinary medicine, a process often occurs termed the

"feminization of an occupation."<sup>2</sup> The result is often lower salaries and status. When men move into professions once dominated by women, such as social work, nursing, and teaching, the opposite effect occurs. That is, men are moved up quickly into management, a phenomenon that has been researched and termed the "glass escalator."<sup>3</sup>

Although "help wanted" advertisements are no longer listed in the newspaper by gender, gender still seems to be an

underlying factor when career decisions are made. Those espousing conservative ideologies tend to believe that when women choose more traditional female occupations they do so in order to balance the needs of family and work. Those espousing more liberal ideologies tend to believe that when women choose more traditional female occupations they do so as a result of socialization, conforming to female stereotypes, or due to the lack of flexibility in many traditional male occupations, and/or a desire to avoid glass ceilings and sexual harassment.

Occupations <sup>1</sup>	Percent Male	Percent Female
Architecture and Engineering	40,449 (87.4%)	5,810 (12.6%)
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media	13,986 (53.7)	12,039 (46.3%)
Community and social service	6,771 (41.5%)	9,538 (58.5%)
Construction and maintenance	162,462 (96.7%)	5,488 (3.3%)
Computer and mathematical	31,229 (71.6%)	12,360 (28.4%)
Education, training, and library	19,255 (22.8%)	65,172 (77.2%)
Financial Specialists	20,025 (47.9%)	21,785 (52.1%)
Fire fighting, prevention and law enforcement workers	11,668 (81%)	2,740 (19%)
Food preparation and serving related	33,133 (47.4%)	36,722 (52.6%)
Health care support	3,135 (13.1%)	20,813 (86.9%)
Legal	11,822 (54.4%)	9,899 (45.6%)
Office and administrative support	62,820 (26.0%)	179,074 (74.0%)
Management, business, and financial operations	130,748 (58.9%)	91,155 (41.1%)
Production, transportation, and material moving	158,376 (81.3%)	36,378 (18.7%)
Personal care and service	7,845 (20.9%)	29,731 (79.1%)
Sales	98,040 (52.6)	88,251 (47.4%)

Data Source:

1 U.S. Department of Commerce, 2000 Census, SF3, Harris County.

2 Reskin, B.F. (1993). Bringing the men back in: Sex differentiation and the devaluation of women's work. In L. Richardson & V. Taylor (Eds.), *Feminist Frontiers III* (pp. 198-210). New York: McGraw-Hill.

3 Williams, C. (1995). *Still a man's world Men who do "women's" work* University of California Press.

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## POVERTY

Harris County Population Living in Poverty, 2000 Census <sup>1</sup>	All Ages	Under age 18	Ages 18-64	Ages 65+
Numbers of those living in poverty	503,234	192,871	280,852	29,511
Percent Living in Poverty	15%	19.9%	13.1%	12.2%

The 2000 Census revealed that almost half a million people in Harris County live in poverty with the highest rate occurring among children under the age of 18. People of color are disproportionately poor.

wages and limited public assistance benefits contribute to Texas' large working poor population.

It is important to note that advocacy groups that monitor poverty statistics believe the number of

Income below the poverty level, Census 2000 <sup>2</sup>	Numbers	Percent
Males	233,388	46.4%
Females	269,846	53.6%
Total	503,234	100%

Almost half of those living in poverty live in a married couple household. There are almost five times more female-headed households than male-headed households living in poverty. More children living in poverty live in a female-headed household than any other family type. According to a new study, having a child is now the single best predictor that a woman will end up in financial collapse.<sup>3</sup> The term "the feminization of poverty" was coined to highlight the reality that being female often puts women at risk for being poor.

people living in poverty is greatly underestimated. Poverty is determined by the federal government's official poverty formula developed in the 1960s. Although the level has been adjusted annually for inflation, it does not reflect other changes such as families spending proportionally less on food and more on child care.<sup>7</sup> The current federal government's poverty threshold for a family of four (two parents, two children) is \$18,244 while a recent study by the Center for Public Policy Priorities, an Austin-based

From 1998 through 2000, Texas had the eighth highest rate of poverty in the nation, with an annual rate of 14.9 percent per year.<sup>4</sup> The most recent poverty data were released in Fall 2003 as a result of the Census Bureau's annual Current Population Survey. The official poverty rate for Texas increased from 15.2 to 15.3 percent meaning that almost 3.2 million Texans live in poverty.<sup>5</sup> Most poor families in Texas are families headed by a worker.<sup>6</sup> Low

Females living in Poverty, by Ethnicity/Race Harris County, Census 2000 <sup>2</sup>	Number of females living in poverty	Number of females at or above poverty level	Total Number of females	Percent of females within each race/ethnicity living in poverty
Black or African American	79,821	250,634	330,455	24.2%
American Indian and Alaskan Native	1,176	5,554	6,730	17.5%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	103	572	675	15.3%
Asian	11,454	73,591	85,045	13.5%
Hispanic or Latino	129,154	407,286	536,440	24.1%
White	45,673	670,977	716,650	6.3%

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Income Below the Poverty Level by Family Type, Census 2001 <sup>2</sup>	Number of Families	Percent of Families	Number of Families with Related Children under age 18
Married-Couple Family	48,857	48.0%	37,463
Male householder, no wife present	9,324	9.2%	6,830
Female householder, no husband present	43,512	42.8%	38,140

think tank, found that a Houston family of four needs annual earnings of \$40,669 in order to meet basic needs.<sup>7</sup> That figure represents more than double the government's definition of the poverty threshold.

The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) publishes a report that ranks states on several indicators of special importance to women. On the

"Social and Economic Autonomy" indicator, Texas is ranked 40 out of 50 states, earning a grade of D.<sup>8</sup> The components of the indices include the percent of women with health insurance, the percent of women with four or more years of college, the percent of women-owned businesses, and the percent of women living above the poverty level.

## POVERTY INCOME GUIDELINES FOR CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES

Family Size <sup>9</sup>	2001 Actual	2002 Actual	2003 Projected	2004 Projected
1	\$8,590	\$8,910	\$9,170	\$9,380
2	\$11,610	\$11,990	\$12,330	\$12,620
3	\$14,630	\$15,070	\$15,490	\$15,860
4	\$17,650	\$18,150	\$18,650	\$19,100
5	\$20,670	\$21,230	\$21,810	\$22,340

Data Sources:

- 1 Texas Population Living Below Poverty in 1999 by County. Harris County. Monthly Program Statistics Report, June 2003, Health and Human Services Commission.
- 2 U.S. Department of Commerce, 2000 Census, SF-3, Washington, DC.
- 3 Warren, E., & Tyagi, A.W. (2003). *The Two-Income Trap: Why Middle Class Mothers and Fathers are Going Broke*. New York: Basic Books.
- 4 2003 Reference Guide, Texas Department of Human Services. Austin, TX.
- 5 Clemetson, L. (Saturday, September 27, 2003). Poverty Increases: Texas Rates Climb Slightly. *Houston Chronicle*, page A-1.
- 6 Center for Public Policy Priorities. *Texas Poverty 101: Policy Brief*. Austin, TX.
- 7 Snyder, M. (October 4, 2003). Poverty figures, reality don't match, groups say. *Houston Chronicle*, 29A, 35A.
- 8 *The Status of Women in the States*. (2002-03) (4th Ed.). Institute for Women's Policy Research, Washington, DC.
- 9 2003 Reference Guide, Texas Department of Human Services, Austin, TX. Note: For each additional family member, add \$3,020 for 2001, \$3,080 for 2002, \$3,160 for 2003, and \$3,240 for FY 2004.



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## SALARIES AND THE WAGE GAP

Median earnings, for full-time, year round work, Harris County <sup>1</sup>	Median Earnings in 1990 Census	Median Earnings in 2000 Census	Difference in dollars between 1990 and 2000 Census	Percent Increase
Male	\$30,518	\$37,361	+\$6,843	+22.4%
Female	\$21,289	\$28,941	+\$7,652	+35.9%
Difference in dollars between male and female worker	\$9,229	\$8,420		

the highest median salary. The wages of women of different ethnicities and races are then calculated as a percentage of the median salaries of white men. To keep the numbers comparable, only the median salaries of full-time, year round workers are analyzed.

### Compared to white men earning \$1.00:

- White women earn 67 cents.
- Asian women earn 58 cents.
- American Indian and Alaskan Native women earn 51 cents.
- African American women earn 50 cents.
- Latina women earn 40 cents.

Women's median salaries rose almost a thousand dollars each year in the seven years between the first and this second report. The good news is that women's salaries increased at a faster rate than men's and the gap between male and female median wages narrowed. The bad news is that the median male salary was still \$8,000 dollars more a year than the median female salary. Median salaries showed racial/ethnic disparities, with women of each race/ethnicity earning less than their male counterparts, with the lowest wages received by Latino men and women and the greatest disparity between male and female experienced between Anglo men and women.<sup>2</sup>

The gender wage gap compares the differences in salaries between men and women. Often the gap is expressed using the white male dollar as the standard, since it tends to be

The numbers would actually show greater disparities if all women with earnings were included in the calculations since women, more often than men, tend to be part-time workers who move in and out of the paid labor force, often due to family care-taking demands.

In analyzing the wage gap over forty years, the Institute for Women's Policy Research finds that most of the progress in closing the gender wage gap occurred during the 1980s.<sup>3</sup> Although the ratio is at an all time high, 76.6 in 2002 for full-time workers employed year-round nationwide, the slower, and sometimes stagnant, pace since the 1990s makes achieving parity with men's salaries doubtful for women. The wage ratio is higher in Harris County than the nation as it is 77.5 for full-time, year-round work.

The very existence of the wage gap and the reasons for its occurrence are debated in the women's community and the public at large. Some women's groups either deny the existence of the wage gap or explain it as a consequence of women's choices, such as

accepting lower-paid work in order to balance family and work lives. Others explain the wage gap as an artifact of continuing sexual discrimination and pay inequities that women face in the workforce.

1999 Median Annual Earnings by Race, Year-Round, Full-Time, for population 16 years and older with earnings, Harris County, 2000 Census

Earnings <sup>1</sup>	Male	Female	Differences in Dollars for Female Workers
African American	\$30,488	\$25,598	- \$4,890
American Indian and Alaskan Native	\$32,299	\$25,758	- \$6,541
Asian	\$36,488	\$29,811	- \$6,677
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	\$34,453	\$24,615	- \$9,838
Hispanic or Latino	\$24,414	\$20,449	- \$3,965
White	\$50,965	\$34,188	- \$16,777

### Data Sources:

1 U.S Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, SF3, 2000, Median Earnings in 1999 (Dollars) by Work Experience in 1999 by Sex for the Population 16 years and over with earnings in 1999, Summary File 3.

2 Note: Median means "middle," that is, half of the salaries are above this number and half of the salaries are below. Medians are generally believed to be more helpful than averages when looking at salaries for adding million-dollar salaries or no salaries into an average can distort the data.

3 The Gender Wage Gap: Progress of the 1980s Fails to Carry Through. Fact Sheet: November 2003. Institute for Women's Policy Research, IWPR Publication #C353, Washington, DC.



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## WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES

Houston Metropolitan Women-Owned Businesses (WOB) <sup>1</sup>	1997	2002	Percent Share WOB, 2002
Number of businesses	79,026	89,907	25.9%
Number of Employer Businesses <sup>2</sup>	12,576	18,354	23.3%
Employment	117,622	169,014	17.2%
Sales (\$000)	17,011,816	27,639,753	12.8%

As of 2002, there were an estimated 89,907 majority-owned (women owning more than 50% of the company), privately held women-owned firms in Houston, accounting for 26% of all privately held firms in the metropolitan area. Between 1997 and 2002, the Center for Women's Business Research estimates that the number of women-owned firms in the Houston

Across the nation, there are an estimated 1.2 million majority-owned, privately-held firms owned by women of color in the United States.<sup>3</sup> This means that one in five women-owned firms is owned by a woman of color. Over one-third (39%) are owned by Latinas, 30% are owned by African Americans, 30% are Asian or Pacific Islander, and 6% are owned by women of Native

Percent Change, 1997-2002 <sup>1</sup>	Women-Owned Businesses	All Businesses
Number of businesses	+ 13.8%	+ 8.2%
Number of Employer Businesses	+ 45.9%	+ 4.4%
Employment	+ 43.7%	+ 5.8%
Sales	+ 62.5%	+ 24.2%

metropolitan area increased by nearly 14%, employment grew by nearly 44%, and sales increased by nearly 63%.

The growth in women-owned businesses has been impressive over the last five years. Houston ranks fifth in the top 50 metropolitan areas in the number, employment, and sales of women-owned firms and eighth in terms of the percent growth in the number, employment, and sales of women-owned firms between 1997 and 2002. However, Houston ranks 45th in terms of percent shares owned by women in all privately-owned firms in the area in 2002. Although it is important to note that women-owned firms employ 169,000 people, it is also noteworthy that only about 20% of women-owned firms have employees.

American or Alaska Native heritage. Texas ranks third of all states, preceded only by California and New York, in the number of minority women-owned firms.

The City of Houston has implemented a Minority/Women Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (MWDBE) program to increase opportunities for minorities and women business owners to participate in City contracting. The MWDBE goals are: construction, 17%, purchasing, 11%, and professional services, 24%. In July 2003 there were 1,511 certified and active businesses in the MWDBE Directory and of those firms 41.4% were women-owned businesses.<sup>4</sup>

Data Sources:

1 Women-Owned Businesses in Houston, TX: 2002: A Fact Sheet. Center for Women's Business Research using Bureau of the Census Data.

2 Note: Share of all firms includes those publicly owned.

3 Minority Women-Owned Businesses in the United States: 2002. Center for Women's Business Research.

4 Personal Communication with George Edwards, Administrative Manager for Certification, Affirmative Action and Contract Compliance Division, MWDBE Directory, City of Houston, July 3, 2003.