

# Santa Barbara Gender Quality Examined

By Kelsey Brugger

Report Released Ahead of Feminist Gloria Steinem's Visit

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Despite the high visibility of powerful Santa Barbara women — Rep. Lois Capps, State Sen. Hannah-Beth Jackson, District Attorney Joyce Dudley, Mayor Helene Schneider, and so on — and the fact that females make up 54 percent of county voters, only 30 percent of our elected positions are filled by women. That's one of the findings put forth in a recent Orfalea Foundation study, which compiled statistics on education, poverty, child care, and compensation rates in Santa Barbara and was released ahead of feminist Gloria Steinem's visit to the Arlington Theatre this Thursday.

Santa Barbara teen pregnancy rates have decreased overall in recent years, but the Latina teen pregnancy rate is 14 times higher than that of white females, the study shows. A single mother earning minimum wage spends, on average, 81 percent of her salary on child-care costs. Of the 412,871 people living in the county in 2012, 10.6 percent were employed women living below the poverty line, compared to 7.4 percent of men. "Clearly, there's a long way to go," said 3rd District Supervisor Doreen Farr, adding she has seen enormous strides for women since she was a teenager. "I played sports in high school when it wasn't cool."

Nine females have sat on the County Board of Supervisors since the first woman was elected to the position in 1989. Former Santa Barbara County CEO Chandra Wallar became the first woman appointed to the chief spot in 2010, and she was recently replaced by Mona Miyasato. At the Santa Barbara city level, women have held administrator positions in the Public Works, Airport, and Parks and Recreation departments and have served as mayor for much of the last three decades. Of the 89 city firefighters, three are women. The police department employs 21 female officers — three sergeants — out of 143 sworn personnel. And of the 616 Sheriff's Office employees, 166 are females. Violence against women is lower in the county compared to the rest of the state, according to the study.

President Barack Obama recently reminded Americans that women make up about half of the national workforce, but only earn 77 cents for every dollar a man earns. In Santa Barbara, women make up 39 percent of the workforce and earn 81 cents to the male's dollar. There are 11,000 women-owned businesses, or 28 percent of all businesses in the county. "There's less overt discrimination and much more structural discrimination," said UCSB Feminist Studies Department Chair Eileen Boris, who has sat on the board of CAUSE (Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy). "[Santa Barbara] might be a special place, but the county as a whole exemplifies the two Americas. That is incredibly dangerous for the health of democracy."