

GEC Statement about "Pittsburgh's Inequality Across Gender and Race"

GEC Statement and FAQ (September 24, 2019)

Last week, Pittsburgh's Gender Equity Commission released a groundbreaking report on gender and racial inequality in our city that found serious disparities for all women, and especially for Black women and girls. Conducted by researchers at the University of Pittsburgh, the report looked at 50 different outcomes related to health, income, employment, and education.

The findings are stark, including:

- Pittsburgh's Black maternal mortality rate is higher than 97% of other cities.
- Pittsburgh's Black women are also less likely to be employed and more likely to live in poverty than Black women in 85% of cities.
- And Black men experience higher occupational segregation, homicide rates, cancer and cardiovascular disease compared to Black men in other cities.

For many of Pittsburgh's Black residents, these statistics are not surprising. However, this report does more than tell us what many already know. It does two new things that no analysis has offered before. First, the report uses an intersectional approach, looking at both gender and race together. This is the first gender analysis in the country to produce an empirical report on residents' wellbeing that examines both of these at once. Second, the researchers created a brand new tool that compared Pittsburgh's livability to 89 other cities. Even more important, the tool demonstrates where local factors are particularly impacting inequality, which suggests where interventions will be most effective.

This report is only the first step in identifying what the issues are around gender and race (and other intersections, such as disability and sexual identity) in our city. The Commission has hired the Pitt team to produce three more reports, which will be released this fall and winter: the second report will look at gender and racial equity among City employees. The third will examine the lived experience of people in the

city by engaging City residents in the conversation. And the final report will summarize all the findings to give us a broader context of gender equity in the city and offer recommendations to the Commission.

In addition to the reports it has commissioned from the University of Pittsburgh, the Gender Equity Commission is analyzing individual City departments, looking at policies, personnel, budgets, and public services through an intersectional gender equity lens. Based on the equity disparities identified in this multi-part analysis, the Gender Equity Commission will make recommendations to the Mayor's Office and City Council. It will also create a five-year action plan for the City, then monitor and guide its implementation.

As the recent report makes clear, Pittsburgh must address the reality that it is less livable for Black residents, and particularly Black women and girls, than the majority of U.S. cities. The factors described in the report are impacting real people, right now. Black women and girls are not just numbers or statistics, and the entire city has an obligation to act. This report was just the first step. The public is invited to participate in the Commission's work and help formulate solutions for the City:

- Attend the Black Girls Equity Alliance annual summit September 26-27 at Pitt, where the report will be discussed. (Open to all; [Registration here.](#))
- Talk to the Pitt team and Commissioners at an upcoming listening session (dates and times coming soon).
- Participate in a focus group with the University of Pittsburgh's research team. (Compensation provided; Email 412Equity@pitt.edu or call 412-510-9601).
- Attend the annual Pittsburgh Gender Symposium at Chatham University on November 2nd, which will spend the full half-day event on the report (free and open to the public; [registration here.](#))
- Get on the Gender Equity Commission mailing list and attend its public meetings, held every month with time set aside for public comments. ([Find contact and more info here.](#))

Working together, we can and must make Pittsburgh more livable for all.

– Gender Equity Commissioners, City of Pittsburgh

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Frequently Asked Questions

Where did the Gender Equity Commission come from? How was the community involved?

Created by City Council in 2016 following a broad grassroots community campaign, the Gender Equity Commission is part of a coalition of CEDAW cities in the United States. CEDAW is the United Nation's "Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women," an international bill of rights for women and girls. Pittsburgh was the sixth city in the country to sign a CEDAW ordinance, and the first to include the word "intersectional," mandating that the Commission's work consider multiple intersections that impact the lived experience of people in Pittsburgh, including gender, race, disability, sexual identity, and more. Gender is also used inclusively to include transgender, gender non-binary, and gender identity diverse people. Pittsburgh's CEDAW ordinance specifically mandates the Commission to oversee intersectional gender analyses like the report released last week. (Learn more about the [Pittsburgh for CEDAW movement here.](#))

Who is on the Gender Equity Commission? What is its vision?

The Gender Equity Commission consists of an Executive Director and 13 volunteer Commissioners who live or work in the City of Pittsburgh. The commissioners were chosen following a community nomination

process and represent a diverse range of professional backgrounds, expertise, and intersectional identities. ([Learn more about the commissioners here.](#)) The Commission defines its vision as “a future in which everyone in the City of Pittsburgh, regardless of gender identity or expression, is safe in all spaces, empowered to achieve their full potential, and no longer faces structural or institutional barriers to economic, social, and political equality.”

Who wrote the report and how were they hired?

Following a public request for proposals, the Gender Equity Commission hired the University of Pittsburgh research team to produce a total of four reports, with the remaining to be released later this fall and winter. This team includes authors with diverse identities (across race, religion, disability, etc.) and is led by the scholars who produced the pathbreaking 2016 white paper, “[Inequities Affecting Black Girls in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County](#)” (sponsored by FISA Foundation and the Heinz Endowments and released at the Black Girls Equity Alliance summit). The authors of “Pittsburgh’s Inequality Across Gender and Race” are:

- Junia Howell, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Pittsburgh. Howell's research focuses on how cities can foster equity for all residents.
- Sara Goodkind, Ph.D., M.S.W., is Associate Professor of Social Work, Sociology, and Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies at the University of Pittsburgh. Her research focuses on social service programs and systems that work with young people.
- Leah A. Jacobs, Ph.D., M.S.W., is an Assistant Professor in the School of Social Work at the University of Pittsburgh. She studies criminal justice involvement and behavioral health, focusing on related socio-structural risk factors and points of intervention.
- Dominique Branson, is a graduate student in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Pittsburgh. She studies the correlation between African American Language and the social outcomes of Black Americans, particularly in the U.S. Criminal Justice System.
- Liz Miller, M.D., Ph.D. is Professor in Pediatrics, Public Health, and Clinical and Translational Science at the University of Pittsburgh and Director of the Division of Adolescent and Young Adult

Medicine, UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. Her research addresses interpersonal violence prevention and adolescent health promotion in clinical and community settings.

Why another report? Didn't we already know this?

Aligning with the Mayor's goal of building a resilient city that is livable for all residents, the report evaluates health, income, employment and educational outcomes across various subpopulations. This approach is similar to previous reports produced by both the City and the University of Pittsburgh. However, this report does two brand new things that no other gender analysis or reports about Pittsburgh have done before.

First, it uses an intersectional approach simultaneously examining gender and race. This is the first gender analysis in the country to produce an empirical report on residents' wellbeing that examines both of these at once. Second, the scholars created a brand new tool that allows a comparison of Pittsburgh's livability to other cities. Previous ranking systems that compare Pittsburgh's livability to other cities do not examine whether this livability is the same for all residents.

Conversely, reports that focus on inequality within Pittsburgh do not compare Pittsburgh to other cities. Without comparing Pittsburgh to other cities it is easy to dismiss observed inequality as an inevitable outcome of national racial and gender inequality. This report demonstrates where local factors are particularly impacting inequality, and therefore where we might make effective local change.

This report is the first time anyone has used data-driven methods to document that life in Pittsburgh is harder for Black residents, especially for Black women and girls, than it is for Black residents in similar cities.

How does the Gender Equity Commission work with the community?

As an all-volunteer group, the commission recognizes and respects the long history of crucial gender equity work done by individuals and organizations in our community. Rather than duplicating those vital efforts, the commission aims to amplify, connect, and convene:

- Amplify the voices, wisdom, and experiences of those Pittsburgh residents most impacted by inequality as well as the leaders who have been working on these issues for years. For example, the commission invites local leaders and organizations engaged in the work of gender equity to speak at its monthly public meetings and also leaves two open periods at each meeting to hear from anyone in attendance.

- Connect people across silos to learn from each other, including scholars, community organizations, businesses, foundations, and government leaders. For example, the commission has hosted networking events and symposia; it sends a monthly newsletter promoting local organizations and events; and commissioners frequently attend community meetings, events, sit on panels, and more.
- Convene people to focus on specific issues and initiatives. For example, the commission has a working group with community collaborators looking at bringing a national workforce development program to Pittsburgh designed to create systemic change in hiring and promotion.

The goal of the Gender Equity Commission is to bring the collective knowledge, expertise, and lived experience of the community to the City through policy, budget, and legislative recommendations.

What's next and how do I get involved?

The commission has hired the Pitt team to produce three more reports, which will be released this fall and winter: the second report will look at gender and racial equity among City employees. The third will examine the lived experience of people in the city by engaging City residents in the conversation. And the final report will summarize all the findings to give us a broader context of gender equity in the city and offer recommendations to the Commission.

In addition to the reports it has commissioned from the University of Pittsburgh, the Gender Equity Commission is analyzing individual City departments, looking at policies, personnel, budgets, and public services through a gender equity lens. Based on the equity disparities identified in this multi-pronged approach, the Gender Equity Commission will make policy recommendations to the Mayor's Office and City Council aimed at creating the structural changes that will improve life for women, girls, and Black Pittsburghers. It will also create a five-year action plan for the City, then monitor and guide its implementation.

This report was just the first step. The public is invited to participate in the Commission's work and help formulate solutions for the City:

- Come to the Black Girls Equity Alliance annual summit September 26-27 at Pitt, where the report will be discussed. ([Registration here.](#))

- Talk to the Pitt team and Commissioners at a listening session (dates and times coming soon).
- Participate in a focus group with the University of Pittsburgh's research team. (Email 412Equity@pitt.edu or call 412-510-9601).
- Attend the annual Pittsburgh Gender Symposium at Chatham University on November 2nd, which will spend the entire day considering the report (free and open to the public; [details here.](#))

Get on the Gender Equity Commission mailing list and attend its public meetings, held every month with time set aside for public comments. ([Find contact and more info here.](#))