

New Research: Status of Women & Girls+ in Minnesota

Women, girls, and gender-expansive people in Minnesota continue to face persistent inequities, according to the 2024 report on the *Status of Women and Girls+ in Minnesota* released on February 14 by the Women's Foundation of Minnesota and the Center on Women, Gender, and Public Policy (CWGPP) at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs. Those disparities are more profound for Black, Indigenous, and women and girls of color, rural women and girls, LGBTQ+ people, and older women.

The data shows progress in some areas since the last report compiled in 2022. But systemic gender and racial inequities continue to trap many women in poverty, compromise their safety, hinder access to healthcare, and limit leadership opportunities. Inequities for women and girls accumulate over a lifetime and are impacted substantially by race, place, LGBTQ+ status, and other identities pushed to the margins.

A presentation on March 6 will share highlights of the research: bit.ly/2024StatusVirtual. The report is available at: bit.ly/2024SOWG. The report focuses on four distinct issue areas:

Economics

Minnesota continues to economically shortchange all groups of women, with Latina, Black, and Indigenous women impacted the most. Minnesota remains a national leader in women's workforce participation, at 66 percent. Despite high rates of workforce and educational attainment, Minnesota women face persistent wage and wealth inequalities.

Women are the majority of workers in the state earning at or below the minimum wage and working in low-wage fields. More women in Greater Minnesota work minimum wage jobs, most of which do not offer benefits.

The wage gap facing all women in Minnesota has barely budged over the past decade. On average, Minnesota women who work full-time all year make 81 cents for every dollar that men make, with important differences when it comes to race and ethnicity. Latina women, for instance, make 57 cents for every dollar and Black women make 62 cents for every dollar.

For women to achieve economic security, we need to raise pay in occupations dominated by women, ensure all workers have access to a living wage, expand educational opportunities and access to high-paying trades, address the affordable housing crisis, and value unpaid carework through benefits like sick leave and subsidized child care.

Safety

Women and girls in Minnesota are harmed by gender-based violence across their lifetimes – in their homes, on the streets, and in schools, workplaces, and the criminal justice system. One in two Minnesota women report sexual violence, and one in four report physical violence from a partner in her lifetime. Rates are higher for Native American and Black women, in particular.

Consequences of this violence ripple over a lifetime and affect both physical and mental health, pregnancy, housing security, economic productivity, and personal security.

Sexuality and gender identity also influence safety. More than three-quarters of LGBTQ+ Minnesotans report experiencing anti-LGBTQ+ behavior in the past year.

Health

Health inequities for Black, Indigenous, and women and girls+ of color, LGBTQ+ people, and rural and girls+ lead to significant differences in health care access, quality, and outcomes in Minnesota.

Access to prenatal care is unequal across race and ethnic groups in Minnesota, with Native women reporting the highest rate of inadequate care at 49 percent, followed by Black women at 40 percent. Minnesota's decline in rural obstetric services outstrips the national average. Forty-two percent of Minnesota counties lack birth services.

Rural Minnesota has a shortage of healthcare providers in general, particularly in primary and mental health care. Rural hospitals have fewer services available, and a disproportionate number of rural medical facilities have closed.

The report also highlights the role of mental health in overall well-being, with depression a mental health risk for both older and younger women, as well as LGBTQ+ Minnesotans. Only 27 percent of the demand for mental health professionals in Minnesota is met.

Leadership

Corporate leadership in Minnesota remains dominated by white men. Of the top publicly held companies in Minnesota, only 11 percent are headed by a woman and only 2 percent of executive positions are occupied by a woman of color.

Women hold a greater share of nonprofit and government leadership positions, but men still outnumber women two to one. In politics, the proportion of women in the Minnesota Legislature reached a historic high of 39 percent in the 2022 election. On the local level, men continue to dominate county governments, and women are underrepresented in municipal offices and top school leadership positions.

The teaching profession in Minnesota is overwhelmingly white. Up slightly from 4 percent in the last report, only 6 percent of teachers in the state are non-white, compared to 37 percent of the population.

About Status of Women and Girls+ in Minnesota

The report, produced biennially since 2009, is the leading research on women, girls, and gender-expansive communities in the state and uses an intersectional lens to show how inequities impact communities differently. The report reflects the importance of disaggregating the data by gender, race, place, and additional identities like age, LGBTQ+, and disability to identify systemic barriers and community-specific solutions that benefit all Minnesotans.