Minnesota women and girls are stalled on the road to equality in economics, safety, health and leadership

MINNEAPOLIS -- (Feb. 28, 2012) – The Women's Foundation of Minnesota, in partnership with the University of Minnesota Humphrey School’s Center on Women & Public Policy, released new research today on the status of women and girls in the state.

“Since women gained the right to vote in 1920, we've changed laws, practices and attitudes to promote fairness and opportunity,” said Lee Roper-Batker, president and CEO of Women’s Foundation of Minnesota. “Despite current laws that guarantee equal opportunity for all women and men, our research paints a different picture: Minnesota women and girls are stalled on the road to equality.”

According to Roper-Batker, while inequalities exist for all women and girls in Minnesota, even greater disparities exist for women of color, rural women, and older women in the state.

ECONOMICS

Wage Gap & Job Clustering

“Regardless of education, age, or race and ethnicity, the wage gap continues to prevent Minnesota women and their families from receiving their fair share,” said Roper-Batker.

According to the research, all full-time working women earn less than white men. White, African American and Latina women earn $0.80, $0.64 and $0.56 on the dollar, respectively, compared to white men. Women with physical disabilities and noncitizens earn the least at $0.51 and $0.55 on the dollar compared to white men. Women in greater Minnesota earn approximately $10,000 less per year on average than their male counterparts.

The report also finds that for women, a college degree isn't the guarantee it used to be. Newly-minted female physicians earn $16,000 less than their male counterparts, right out of medical school. The average starting salary for female BA holders (class of 2010, nationally) was 17% lower than the average starting salary for male BA holders.

“The higher the education level a young woman attains, the bigger the pay gap she is likely to experience: young women with advanced degrees can expect to lose $1 million — or about $11,000 per year — over the course of their careers,” said Roper-Batker.

“Job clustering also contributes to the wage gap, threatens women’s economic security and stability, and compromises the productivity of Minnesota’s economy,” said Roper-Batker.
Forty-six percent (46%) of Minnesota women working full-time are employed in service and sales sectors in which median full-time salaries range from $24,842 to $35,352, hours are less predictable, and jobs less secure. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of Minnesota’s white men work in sales and service compared to 63% of African American, 64% of Native American, and 60% of Latina women.

**Workforce**

Women make up the majority of Minnesota’s workforce: 80% of women with children work, and 51% of Minnesota’s working mothers are the primary breadwinner for their family, representing a 27% increase in the past two years.

Eighty percent (80%) of Native American and African American working women with children in Minnesota earn the majority of their family’s income, up from 60% in 2008.

**Poverty**

Minnesota’s female-headed households are more likely than other family configurations to be in poverty. Seventy-four percent (74%) of Native American, 54% of African American, 49% of Latina, and 40% of Asian female-headed households fall below the federal poverty line.

Minnesota’s Asian women and men without children experience poverty at roughly the same rates, but Asian female-headed households are more than twice as likely as Asian male-headed households to live in poverty. This is the widest gap within any racial/ethnic group.

Minnesota’s senior women are at higher risk than senior men of falling below income levels needed to maintain homes and meet basic needs. More than twice as many women over 65 than men live below the poverty line, earning just over $11,233 a year in social security benefits.

**Housing**

Minnesota saw a 27% increase in the number of homeless families — mostly led by women — from 2006 to 2009. Sixty-three percent (63%) of the state’s homeless young adults (18-21) are women; this group saw the largest increase at 57% over the same time period.

Minnesota has the third highest accredited childcare costs in the country. Here, accredited care for one child exceeds the average tuition and fees at public colleges and all other household expenses, including the mortgage, for many families.

“Minnesota’s rental housing affordability is ranked the worst in the Midwest,” said Roper-Batker. “Sixty-eight (68%) of female-headed households in rental housing and 45% of those who own their home are paying costs that exceed 30% of their income.”

**SAFETY**

“Minnesota girls are growing up in a culture that both sexualizes them and normalizes gender-based violence,” said Roper-Batker.
Sexual Assault

The data demonstrate that the trajectory towards sexual assault begins early, with one in four 9th grade girls in Minnesota girls facing harassment in school.

By the time Minnesota girls graduate from high school, about 12% report a date-related sexual assault. By the time they finish college, 29% of Minnesota women have been sexually assaulted. And by mid-life, 33% of Minnesota women have experienced a rape crime — approximately one in three women.

Bullying

Bullying is common in Minnesota schools. Gay teens and girls are more likely to experience verbal, sexual or relational forms of bullying. Bullying is associated with significantly higher negative mental health outcomes for all students, but especially girls in general, girls of color and girls with female sexual partners. Fifty percent (50%) to 60% of bisexual and lesbian girls who were bullied reported a suicide attempt.

Sexual Abuse Inside & Outside of the Home

“Girls are two to three times more likely than boys to endure sexual abuse by a family member, and girls of color are more frequently the victims of sexual abuse, overall,” says Roper-Batker. “By mid-life, 33% of Minnesota women have experienced a rape crime — that’s approximately one in three women.”

The prostitution of adolescent girls is a prevalent and rising form of sexual violence in Minnesota. Early research on the issue showed that in August 2010, an estimated 124 Minnesota girls under 18 were prostituted on the Internet and through escort services, growing from 89 in February 2010.

“We pay for the effects of this violence against girls in the form of mental health issues, teen pregnancy, substance abuse and incarceration,” said Roper-Batker.

Intimate Partner Violence

Women’s physical safety is also at risk in Minnesota. By their 40’s, approximately 33% of women in Minnesota have been a victim of intimate partner violence. The data show that significant levels of intimate partner violence occur across all socioeconomic backgrounds and all over the state, with some of the highest levels occurring in greater Minnesota.

Related Effects of Sexual Violence

The effects on Minnesota’s sexually abused girls are devastating. Sexually abused girls are three times more likely to have an emotional or mental health problem lasting more than a year, twice as likely to be depressed, and three times more likely to hurt themselves on purpose.

An estimated 60% of teen first pregnancies are preceded by experiences of molestation, rape, or attempted rape.
Minnesota girls in juvenile correctional facilities have the highest rates of sexual abuse of any group: 41% outside the home and 21% at the hands of family.

Violence at home is the second leading cause of homelessness among Minnesota women, with 32% reporting that they were homeless in part due to an abusive relationship.

**HEALTH**

“Across multiple indicators of health and wellness, many Minnesota women and girls are at growing risk,” said Roper-Batker. “The data also reveal persistent disparities for our women and girls of color.”

**Physical Health**

A majority of Minnesota adult women are now considered obese or overweight, and the rates are increasing. In 2009, 25% of Minnesota women were obese and 30% overweight, with greater Minnesota women at even higher risk.

Minnesota girls are less likely than boys to be physically active daily — 11% of 12th grade girls compared to 26% of 12th grade boys. Minnesota’s white girls are more likely to participate in school sports than girls of color — for example, 26% of white 12th grade girls compared to 8% of Latina 12th grade girls.

**Cancer**

Cancer incidence and mortality impact women of color and women in some regions of the state disproportionately.

While cancer mortality for Minnesota women overall is lower than the national average, Native American women here are two times more likely to die from cancer than Native American women nationally. Minnesota’s African American women are 7% less likely than white women to get cancer, but 21% more likely overall to die from the disease.

Cervical cancer incidence is significantly higher than the statewide average in the southwest region of the state, as is lung cancer mortality in the northeast region.

**Access to Care**

Women of color are also more likely to be uninsured than white women, with approximately 33% of Latina women, for example, falling in this category.

**Reproductive Health**

Teen birth rates in Minnesota are drastically higher for girls of color than for white girls. For Minnesota’s Native American and Asian teens, the birth rate is almost double the national average (97.3 compared to 55.5 births per 1,000 among Native Americans and 40.6 versus 14.6 for Asians).

While fewer 9th graders have sex, risky behaviors have been on the rise since 1998 for those who are sexually active. Forty-four percent (44%) of sexually active 9th grade Latinas and more
than one-third of sexually active 9th grade white girls never use any form of birth control. One-third of sexually active 9th grade African American girls never talk with their partner about preventing pregnancy, and sexually active 9th grade Asian girls and boys are least likely to talk about or use birth control.

Mental Health
Almost twice as many girls in Minnesota report suicidal thoughts or attempted suicide as boys. Girls of color, abused girls, and girls who have had one or more female sexual partners are especially at risk. In 2010, 11% of 9th grade Native American girls, 10% of 9th grade Latina girls, and 34% of lesbian/bisexual girls (grades 9, 12) attempted suicide. Approximately 28% of sexually abused 9th grade girls attempted suicide.

And while the data indicate that the need for mental health treatment and services in the state is great — Minnesota ranks 49th in the nation for counselor-to-student ratios — it also shows that women and girls of color are less likely than their white counterparts to receive therapeutic treatment: 63% of Asian girls and 57% of African American girls who reported a mental or emotional problem lasting a year or more had not received treatment, compared to 30% of white girls.

LEADERSHIP
“At all levels of leadership — from school boards to Fortune 500 companies — women remain underrepresented across the nation. In Minnesota, progress for women leaders has flattened in most professions and, in some areas, is on the decline,” said Roper-Batker.

More than 50% of Minnesota’s county commissions do not include a woman, and 24% of all Senate districts did not have a woman candidate in the last 10 years. Since 2004, only 37% of the state’s school board members have been female.

“And the research shows that women candidates win at equal rates to men,” said Roper-Batker, “They make up a small proportion of candidates for office at all levels. Minnesota has never had a woman governor and no woman of color has ever held statewide elected office.”

A net loss of five women in the 2010 election brings down to 65 the total number of women in the state Legislature. This contrasts with a historic high of 70 in 2008.

“Recent election cycles have punctured women’s ‘critical mass’ (40%) in the state Senate, deflating representation to proportions not seen in a decade,” said Roper-Batker.

Business
Women business leaders in Minnesota are conspicuously absent. None of Minnesota’s 21 Fortune 500 companies are led by a woman.

“Twenty-eight (28%) of Minnesota’s top 100 publicly held companies have no women directors and 31% have no women corporate officers,” said Roper-Batker. “Sixty-six percent (66%) of
Minnesota’s Fortune 500 Human Resources executive officers are women, while only 16% are Chief Financial Officers.”

Law

Women were once the majority of Minnesota’s seven-member Supreme Court, but now hold just two seats. With the exception of the Minnesota Court of Appeals, the proportion of women on the state bench has stalled at around 29%.

In the judiciary, the data show that only one woman has ever been appointed to the Federal 8th Circuit Court of Appeals. This powerful court, which includes Minnesota, sits just below the U.S. Supreme Court and has the worst gender diversity record of any circuit court in the country.

About the **Status of Women & Girls in Minnesota** project

Launched in 2009, *Status of Women & Girls in Minnesota* is an ongoing collaborative research project of the [Women’s Foundation of Minnesota](http://www.wfmn.org) and the [Center on Women & Public Policy](http://www.umn.edu). Annually, data specific to Minnesota women and girls is gathered and analyzed in economics, safety, health, and leadership.

The project represents a unique approach to research by using a gender-race-place-equity lens. Experts from academia, state and federal government, nonprofit and private sectors, elected bodies and philanthropy participated in working groups and reviewed data to identify the key issues outlined in the research, and proffer solutions.

The research provides a strategic baseline for gauging where to apply needed interventions and benchmark the continued progress on the road to economic, political and social equality for all women and girls in Minnesota.

“Our grant from the Women’s Foundation to conduct research through this project, annually, supports the Center’s mission to apply a gender lens to determine the true status of women and girls in the state and challenge fundamental assumptions about politics, law, and economics,” said Debra Fitzpatrick, director, University of MN Humphrey School’s Center on Women & Public Policy.

The data reviewed came from published reports produced by government agencies, nonprofits, and original gender-based analysis of publicly available datasets (Minnesota Student Survey, Minnesota Crime Survey, Behavioral and Risk Factor Surveillance Survey, American Community Survey).

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**About the Women’s Foundation of Minnesota**

The Women’s Foundation of Minnesota is a statewide community foundation that invests in social change to achieve equality for all women and girls in Minnesota. The Foundation funds innovative social change programs, builds women’s philanthropy, conducts and reports research, advocates public policy, and educates the public about the successes and challenges of Minnesota’s women and girls. It is the oldest women’s foundation in the country. More at [www.wfmn.org](http://www.wfmn.org).