

Report finds familiar income gap for women

ST. PAUL (AP) — A new report shows wide disparities still exist for women in Minnesota when it comes to income, leadership positions, economic status, and health.

The research by the Women's Foundation of Minnesota and the University of Minnesota's Center on Women and Public Policy found Minnesota women on average are paid \$11,000 less each year than men with the same jobs. The gap exists in every occupation, including those dominated by women, the report said.

Among women of color, the disparities are more extreme, with some making 56 cents for every dollar earned by a white man.

Among the occupations with the biggest wage gaps is the health care field, where women earn 62 cents on the dollar. In legal occupations, women earn 53

cents for every dollar earned by men.

Lee Roper-Batker, the president of the Women's Foundation of Minnesota, said economists cite three reasons for the income gap. She said women often choose careers that pay less and employers sometimes punish women who take time off to have children. The third reason is "good old-fashioned sexism," she said.

The report said Minnesota women are clustered in low-wage jobs.

Families headed by single women are most likely to live under the poverty line. On an average night, women and children make up two-thirds of the state's homeless population.

That statistic is played out every day, said Liz Kuoppala, the executive director of the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless. She works in northern

Minnesota, on the Iron Range.

"We talk to homeless women in rural areas who are staying up in a tent," she said. "Up in my part of the state, they climb down steep embankments to mine dumps where there's access to water."

The research shows girls and women also live in danger of assault. It said one in every three women in Minnesota will be the victim of sexual or physical assault by middle age.

According to the Women's Foundation of Minnesota, that adds up to 250,000 women at any given time, a population that could fill the Metrodome four times.

