

Minnesota

Lower wages, poverty remain obstacles for women, study says

Health, fitness also areas of concern

By Megan Boldt
mboldt@pioneerpress.com

Women in Minnesota earn less than their male peers and face a series of other challenges when it comes to safety, health and leadership roles.

That's according to a report, "Status of Women & Girls in Minnesota" released today by the Women's Foundation of Minnesota and the University of Minnesota Humphrey Institute's Center on Women & Public Policy.

Women have made strides toward equality since gaining the right to vote in 1920, said Lee Roper-Batker, president and CEO of the Women's Foundation of Minnesota. But research shows hurdles remain.

"By shortchanging women, we're hurting families, communities and the entire state," Roper-Batker said.

Here are some of the findings:

- All full-time working women in Minnesota earn less than white men. White, black and Hispanic women earn \$0.76, \$0.61 and \$0.56 on the dollar, respectively compared to

white men.

- Minnesota's senior women are at a higher risk than senior men for living in poverty. More than twice as many women over 65 live below the poverty line when compared to men, earning just over \$11,233 a year in Social Security benefits.

- By mid-life, one in three Minnesota women have been sexually assaulted. 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.

- Minnesota girls are less likely than boys to be physically active daily — 10 percent of 12th-grade girls compared to 24 percent of boys in their grade. Girls are also less likely to participate in school sports — 48 percent of 12th-grade girls compared to 59 percent of boys.

- Almost twice as many Minnesota girls report suicidal thoughts or attempted suicides as boys.

- Minnesota is a national leader in the proportion of women serving in the state Legislature at 34 percent. But female leaders in business are conspicuously absent. None of Minnesota's Fortune 500 companies are led by women.

