



New research from the Women's Foundation of Minnesota shows that women in the state are shortchanged in economics, safety, health and leadership

MINNEAPOLIS – (June 17, 2010) - The Women's Foundation of Minnesota, in partnership with the University of MN Humphrey Institute's Center on Women & Public Policy, released research today on the status of women and girls in Minnesota.

"Since gaining the right to vote in 1920, women have made great strides toward equality. We've changed laws, practices and attitudes to promote fairness and opportunity," said Lee Roper-Batker, president and CEO, Women's Foundation of Minnesota. "But today, our research shows that women in Minnesota continue to be shortchanged in wages, safety, health, and leadership. By shortchanging women, we're hurting families, communities, and the entire state."

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

### **Economics**

"The research shows that the wage gap shortchanges Minnesota women and their families an average of \$11,000 each year, or \$1 million over her lifetime. All full-time working women in Minnesota earn less than white men. White, African American and Latina women earn \$0.76, \$0.61 and \$0.56 on the dollar, respectively, compared to white men," said Roper-Batker.

While women in Minnesota now earn the majority of post-secondary degrees at all levels, the data show that education often increases the wage gap. Minnesota women with professional and Master's degrees face even larger pay gaps than women with less education, resulting in an estimated lifetime loss of \$2 million dollars in wages.

In Minnesota, female-headed households are most likely to be in poverty: 60% of Native American, 46% of Latina, 44% of African American, and 42% of Asian female-headed households with children fall below the federal poverty line.

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.

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.

### **Safety & Security**

"Minnesotans have settled for a "D" in safety, with one in three of our daughters, mothers and sisters surviving sexual or physical violence by mid-life. Ensuring only 67% of Minnesota's women and girls' safety is a failing grade," said Roper-Batker.

The data demonstrate that sexual assault begins early, with 23% to 30% of Minnesota girls facing harassment, or “hostile hallways,” in school. Based on the data, Minnesota girls are on a lifetime trajectory toward sexual assault.

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 females have been sexually assaulted. And by mid-life, 33% of Minnesota women have experienced a rape crime -- approximately one in three women.

Another form of sexual abuse is the prostitution of children, mostly girls, throughout the state. New, ongoing research conducted for the Women’s Foundation of Minnesota showed that in February 2010 an estimated 80 girls under 18 were sold in Minnesota, through the Internet or escort services.

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.

Another devastating consequence is teen pregnancy. An estimated 60% of teen first pregnancies are preceded by experiences of molestation, rape, or attempted rape.

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.

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 & Reproductive Rights**

“Compared to the nation, Minnesota is relatively healthy, but a “wellness gap” exists for many Minnesota women and girls that is both disparate and unequal,” said Roper-Batker.

A majority of Minnesota adult women are now considered obese or overweight, and the rates are increasing. In 2008, 25% of Minnesota women were obese and 31% overweight, with greater Minnesota women at even higher risk.

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

Cancer incidence and mortality impact women in the northeastern region of Minnesota and women of color in the state disproportionately.

- Breast and cervical cancer incidence and lung cancer mortality are significantly higher for women in the northeastern region than the statewide average.
- 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. Native American women in Minnesota are 10% more likely to be diagnosed with cancer than white Minnesota women, but 58% more likely to die from it.
- Minnesota’s African American women are 8% less likely than white women to get cancer, but 15% more likely overall to die from the disease.

While fewer 9th graders in Minnesota are having sex, the data show that the number of sexually active girls and boys not using any form of birth control is on the rise. Data from 1998 and 2007 shows a jump from 28% to 47% of sexually active 9th grade African American girls reporting that they never use any form of birth control. And for sexually active 9th grade African American boys, it's a 10% jump from 25% to 35%.

Almost twice as many girls in Minnesota report suicidal thoughts or attempted suicide as boys. Some girls of color -- and in particular, Native American girls -- are at the highest risk. Of all Minnesota 9th graders in 2007, 47% of Native American girls reported that they thought about suicide, followed closely by 45% of mixed-race girls and 36% of Latina girls. The same data show that 21% of Native American girls, 16% of mixed-race girls and 16% Latina girls attempted suicide.

While the data indicate the need for mental health treatment and services, it also shows that women and girls of color are less likely than their white counterparts to receive therapeutic treatment: 57% of African American girls and 51% of Asian girls who reported a mental or emotional problem lasting a year or more had not received treatment, compared to 33% of white girls.

### **Power & Leadership**

"Women remain underrepresented in the Minnesota state house, courthouse and boardroom. Progress for women leaders in Minnesota has flat-lined, and in some areas, is on the decline," said Roper-Batker.

At 34%, Minnesota is a national leader in the proportion of women serving in the state Legislature. But progress has stalled, well short of women's share of the population. And the recent decline in the number of women candidates for the Legislature does not bode well for reaching parity at this level.

The data also show that while women running for the Minnesota Legislature are winning at equal rates to men, women candidates and elected officials are more qualified by some measures than their male counterparts. Women were more likely to hold leadership roles in almost all sectors before running.

Women leaders in business are conspicuously absent. The data show that none of Minnesota's Fortune 500 companies are led by a woman; 66% are Human Resources executive officers and 16% are Chief Financial Officers.

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 of any circuit court in the country.

### **About Status of Women & Girls in Minnesota**

Launched in 2009, *Status of Women & Girls in Minnesota* (SWGM) is an ongoing collaborative research project of the Women's Foundation of Minnesota and the University of MN Humphrey Institute's Center on Women & Public Policy. Annually, data specific to Minnesota women and girls is gathered and analyzed in economics, safety and security, health and reproductive rights, and power and leadership.

The project represents a unique approach to research by using a gender-race-geography-equity lens. Over 100 experts from academia, government, nonprofit and private sectors, elected bodies and philanthropy participated in working groups and reviewed data on women and girls in Minnesota to identify the key issues outlined in the research, and proffer solutions.

Through the research, a baseline is provided for measuring 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.

“We’re thrilled to have received a grant from the Women’s Foundation to be the researcher on this project. It fulfills the Center’s core mission to use gender analysis to critically examine the state of the state’s women and challenge fundamental assumptions about politics, law, and economics,” said Debra Fitzpatrick, director, University of MN Humphrey Institute’s Center on Women & Public Policy.

**NEXT STEPS: 2010 Road to Equality Tour - June 21-30, 2010**

To deepen its understanding of what the data looks like in communities across the state, the Women’s Foundation of Minnesota will visit seven cities on its 2010 Road to Equality Tour, June 21-30, including Warroad, Moorhead, Grand Rapids, Duluth, Willmar, St. Cloud and Rochester. The Foundation will present the data and gain community input.

PDF downloads of the full report and summary of **Status of Women & Girls in Minnesota** and more information about the **2010 Road to Equality Tour** is available at [www.wfmn.org](http://www.wfmn.org).

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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).

**Contact:**

Mary Beth Hanson, communications director, Women’s Foundation of Minnesota  
612-236-1811 direct, 612-812-6733 cell, [marybeth@wfmn.org](mailto:marybeth@wfmn.org)