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The Status of Girls in Wisconsin Executive Summary

2014

In partnership with



Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge all of the partners and collaborators who helped this report take shape.

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Overview

The Alverno College Research Center for Women and Girls is pleased to present, in collaboration with the Girl Scouts of Wisconsin Southeast, The Status of Girls in Wisconsin 2014 Report. This is the third report on the status of girls in Wisconsin as part of our continued commitment to raising awareness regarding issues that are impacting girls in our state. The original report was released in 2007, with an update in 2010. This current version focuses on girls (in most cases ages 10-19) across the state of Wisconsin. It should be noted that because data are drawn from various sources, age groups are at times different and thus noted throughout the report. As was true for previous editions, a major goal of this report is to provide relevant data through a centralized source. In fact, the Status of Girls in Wisconsin report is still the most comprehensive consolidation of information about the issues facing girls in our state.

As we constructed the Status of Girls in Wisconsin document, we kept in mind the multiple purposes for which such data may be used, including program development, continued research, and ongoing collaboration among the community stakeholders interested in improving the lives of girls in Wisconsin and beyond. As a data report, the purpose of this document is to provide information without extensive interpretation. Instead, we see this report as a catalyst for ongoing dialogue. This report brings awareness to inequities that persist for girls, with the hope of inspiring action to ensure these inequities do not prevent girls from pursuing their dreams and sharing in the responsibility and rewards that come with full participation in society.

Although this report reveals improvement for girls in some areas, it shows persistent, troubling patterns in others. For example, a promising trend for Wisconsin girls has been decreased tobacco use. In the area of education, Wisconsin high school girls have enrolled in more Advanced Placement courses than boys. However, girls have lower rates of passing the Advanced Placement exams, which points out an area for continued work. In the area of mental health, Wisconsin girls report far more symptoms of depression than boys. Throughout the report, we have drawn comparisons between Wisconsin girls and boys, and also between Wisconsin and U.S. girls, in order to facilitate as much understanding as possible. Additional comparisons are made across racial/ethnic groups and sexual orientation groups, as well as over historical time.

In this Executive Summary, intended to assist readers to access the main points of the full report, we provide an overview of key findings. Selected findings are highlighted at the beginning of the document, and then additional data follow that are arranged by topic area. In providing this summary and the full report we envision, through collaboration with community stakeholders, that future documents will be inspired by this initiative. We further hope that given the awareness that this report raises, different groups and individuals will delve into further analysis and action on behalf of girls in Wisconsin.

Note: Complete reference information for cited data can be found in the full report.

Status of Girls in Wisconsin Summary of Selected Findings

Key Demographics: The *Key Demographics* section of the report provides information about the number of girls living in Wisconsin by age group, race, poverty, housing and food access, family structure, employment rates, and access to health insurance.

Education: According to the WKCE math and science exams, boys still outpace girls at the advanced level. A higher proportion of girls compared to boys in 4th, 8th, and 10th grades were at the advanced level in language arts. There is a steady decline in the proportion of all students scoring either at the advanced or proficient level in social studies. There were graduation disparities across racial groups.

Social Support and Activities: Girls report multiple sources of stress in their lives, including school and social concerns. Adults and peers are important sources of support for girls. Participation in volunteer activities can play an important role in risk-avoidance for girls.

Media Engagement: Nearly one-quarter of Wisconsin high school girls watch three or more hours of TV on an average school day. Rates of playing video/computer games among Wisconsin girls have increased greatly in recent years. Rates of media use are much higher than rates of face-to-face interaction with others.

Physical Health: More than half of all high school girls report they are trying to lose weight. Less than half of all high school girls report being physically active at least five days per week.

Mental Health: Approximately one-third of high school girls in Wisconsin report symptoms of depression. Girls report more suicide attempts; boys complete suicide at a rate about four times higher than girls. Girls with low self-esteem are more likely to report engaging in harmful behaviors including substance abuse, self-harm behaviors, and disordered eating.

Substance Abuse: Female high school students' reports of smoking are decreasing in both Wisconsin and at the national level, and Wisconsin high school girls continue to report smoking at lower rates than boys. About one-quarter of Wisconsin high school girls have engaged in binge drinking. Rates of marijuana use by Wisconsin high school girls have risen.

Sexual Health: About one-third of Wisconsin high school girls report having had sexual intercourse. The percentage of high school students in Wisconsin who reported using a condom during their last sexual intercourse moved from 58% to 63% over the past 10 years. Rates of births to teens have been declining in Wisconsin.

Crime and Incarceration: In 2014, 44% of all institutionalized female juvenile offenders in Wisconsin were committed in Milwaukee County. In Wisconsin, juvenile crime has decreased by about 8% from 2007-12.

Violence and Abuse: In 2012, nearly half of the rapes reported in Wisconsin had victims under the age of 18. In Wisconsin, 10% of girls who were dating reported they had been physically hurt by the person they were dating and 16% reported that they had been forced to do sexual things they did not want to do. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual students (34%) report higher rates of being victimized by cyberbullying compared to their heterosexual peers (17%).

Key Demographics

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (Census, 2012), in 2012, 371,675 girls (ages 10-19 years) lived in the State of Wisconsin. There were 395,140 boys of the same age living in Wisconsin during the same year. Girls made up about 7% of the total population of the state in 2012. The number of girls in Wisconsin has remained relatively constant over the past several years. The Milwaukee metro area has by far the highest population of girls in the state (Census, 2012). The following table shows that Wisconsin girls are less ethnically diverse than the U.S. overall.

Girls Ages 10-19, U.S. and WI, 2012

| | Wisconsin | United States |
|---------------------|-----------|---------------|
| White | 74% | 56% |
| African American | 8% | 12% |
| Hispanic (Any Race) | 7% | 18% |
| 2 or More Races | 4% | 4% |
| Asian | 3% | 4% |
| Other Races | 2% | 5% |
| Native American | 1% | 1% |

Source: Census, 2012.

For 2010-12, there were noteworthy differences in diversity among girls statewide compared to Milwaukee County: White (Wisconsin: 76%; Milwaukee County: 38%), African American (Wisconsin: 9%; Milwaukee County: 35%), Hispanic (any race) (Wisconsin: 9%; Milwaukee County: 19%), Asian (Wisconsin: 4%; Milwaukee County: 12%), Native American (Wisconsin: 12%; Milwaukee County: 2%) (Census, 2012).

The 2012 U.S. Census also reported that 114,022 (approximately 33%) of girls age 17 and under were living at or below the poverty line.

Education

During the 2012-13 academic year, there were 11 times more girls enrolled in public schools than private schools at both the elementary and high school levels in Wisconsin (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction [WI DPI], 2014a).

The Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) was designed to measure the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards and to assess students' knowledge in multiple content areas. Here is how Wisconsin girls fared in some of the areas of the WKCE:

Mathematics: A slightly higher proportion of boys than girls scored at the proficient level (except in 10th grade, where more girls than boys scored at the proficient level). A marginally higher proportion of boys performed better than girls at the advanced level in all grades. This disparity at the advanced level appears to widen with age (WI DPI, 2014c).

Science: Girls scored at the proficient level more often than boys in all grades. Boys scored at the advanced level more often than girls, especially in grades 8 and 10 (WI DPI, 2014d).

Language Arts: The majority of students enrolled in Wisconsin public schools performed at the advanced or proficient levels. A somewhat higher proportion of girls compared to boys in 4th, 8th, and 10th grades scored at the advanced level (WI DPI, 2014e).

Reading: For every grade tested, the largest proportion of girls scored at the basic level. More girls than boys scored at the advanced level (WI DPI, 2014c).

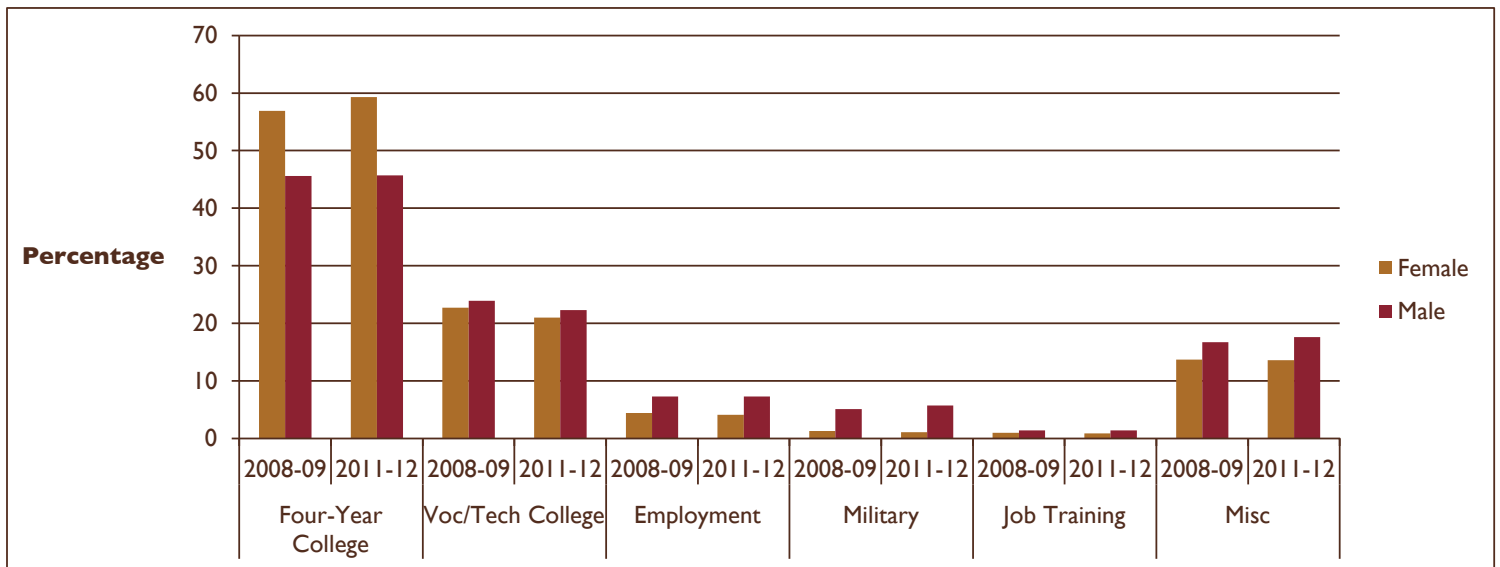
Social Studies: At least 45% of students in grades 4, 8, and 10 scored at the advanced level. More boys than girls performed at the advanced levels of the test (WI DPI, 2014f).

Advanced Placement (AP) courses are college-level courses available to students in grades 6-12. To successfully receive advanced placement credit, students must complete the AP course and successfully pass an AP exam. More girls typically enroll in AP courses. Girls' top choices for AP courses were English, psychology, and history, while boys' top choices were history, English, and calculus. More girls take AP exams, while more boys pass them for college credit (WI DPI, 2014h-j).

During the 2012-13 school year, 90% of girls in Wisconsin public school graduated with a regular high school diploma, compared to 86% of boys (WI DPI, 2014bb).

Wisconsin students in 2013 scored higher on all four tests of the ACT compared to national averages. Overall, Wisconsin girls achieved their highest scores on the reading portion of the ACT (ACT, Inc., 2013). More girls than boys reported aspirations to go to a four-year college (WI DPI, 2014k).

Postsecondary Aspirations of WI Students, by Gender, 2008-09 and 2011-12



Source: WI DPI, 2014k.

Social Support and Activities

Like adults, adolescents experience stressors from many different aspects of their life. For girls, social stressors seem to be particularly difficult to handle. Girls' perceptions of social support have remained relatively consistent over time. More girls than boys report that there is another adult at school they can talk to (WI DPI, 2013a).

Extra- and Co-Curricular Activities: Not all girls are involved in school-based athletics, but most participate in some type of physical activity (WI DPI, 2014m-r). Hispanic and African American girls participate in physical activities at lower rates than White girls (cited by Girl Scout Research Institute [GSRI], 2013).

Volunteer Activities: Middle/junior high school students in Wisconsin have shown a notable decrease in volunteer participation through school-sponsored community activities (from 2011-12 to 2012-13). There was also a decrease in high school volunteer participation, albeit a lesser one (WI DPI 2010a-c, 2014s-x).

According to the APA (2014):

- More than one-third of teen girls say they feel pressure to be a certain way, compared to less than one-quarter of boys.
- For teen girls, 68% report that some aspect of their appearance is a significant source of stress.
- Almost one-third of girls say they feel bad when comparing themselves to others on social media (compared to 13% of boys).

Media Engagement

In Wisconsin, 23% of girls and 22% of boys report watching three or more hours of TV per day on the average day (WI DPI, 2013c). This is in comparison to the overall national average of 33% (United States Department of Health and Human Services [US DHHS], 2013d).

Recent research indicates that 95% of adolescents ages 12-17 have internet access (Pew Research Internet Project, 2012). When using social media, a high percentage of adolescents post personal information, including photos of themselves, the city where they live, and their birth date (Pew Research Internet Project, 2012). One national survey indicated that about 3% of boys and 6% of girls ages 13-18 have engaged in sexting (cited by APA, 2011). In 2011, 16% of girls reported three or more hours per day of playing video/computer games compared to 35% in 2013 (WI DPI, 2011b, 2013c).

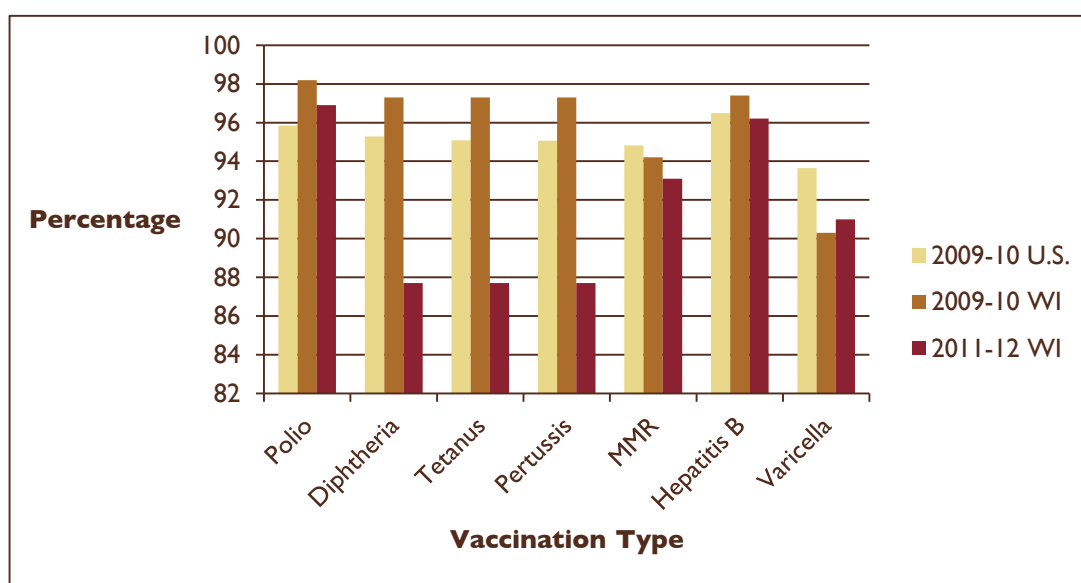
Physical Health

In Wisconsin, the percentage of students in public schools receiving a free lunch increased from 35% in 2008-09 to 47% in 2012-13 (WI DPI, 2014).

Since 2009, the percentage of Wisconsin high school girls reporting that they meet criteria for overweight has remained relatively stable at approximately 14% (WI DPI, 2009b, 2011b, 2013c). Consistent with data collected in other years, 60% of high school girls reported attempting to lose weight in 2013, compared to 27% of boys (WI DPI, 2013c). Although statewide goals to increase the number of adolescents who report regular physical activity have been achieved, it is noteworthy that fewer girls report engaging in regular physical activity than boys. This discrepancy between girls and boys has been a consistent trend in Wisconsin over time (WI DPI, 2009b, 2011b, 2013c), as well as on a national level (US DHHS, 2009, 2011, 2013d).

Compared with national data, Wisconsin is doing better on the percentage of students meeting minimum immunization requirements (Centers for Disease Control [CDC], 2014).

Vaccination Type vs. Percentage of Students, U.S. and WI, 2014



Source: CDC, 2014.

According to the Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative (2012), allergies and asthma represent important public health concerns among Wisconsin children, especially girls.

Mental Health

Depression: According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH, 2011), by age 15 girls are twice as likely to experience a major depressive episode than boys. In 2013, 33% of Wisconsin high school girls reported that they felt sad or hopeless for two weeks in a row within the past year, compared to 17% of high school boys (WI DPI, 2013a).

In 2013, Wisconsin had the 13th highest youth suicide rate in the nation (WI DPI, 2013b).

In Wisconsin in 2013, 22% of heterosexual students reported feeling sad or hopeless almost daily compared to 57% of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students (WI DPI, 2013d).

Suicide: As a general trend, girls in Wisconsin and nationally report higher rates than boys of seriously considering suicide (US DHHS, 2009, 2011, 2013d; WI DPI, 2009a, 2011a, 2013a). In 2011, suicide was the second leading cause of death for Wisconsin youth ages 15-24, behind accidental death (Wisconsin Department of Health Services [WI DHS], 2011a). This ranking was the same for females and males. While girls continue to report more suicide attempts, boys complete suicide at a rate about four times higher than girls (WI DPI, 2013b). For lesbian, gay, and bisexual high school students in 2013, 49% considered suicide in the past year compared to 11% of heterosexual students (WI DPI, 2013a).

Self-Harm: In Wisconsin, self-harm behavior was the leading cause of hospitalization for youth ages 10-17 from 2007-09 (WI DHS, 2011b). In 2013, 25% of high school girls and 10% of boys in Wisconsin reported engaging in self-harm behavior (WI DPI, 2013c).

Body Image: For girls, there seems to be a tendency to overestimate one's own weight. In Wisconsin in 2013, 14% of girls were classified as overweight yet 60% were trying to lose weight (WI DPI, 2013c).

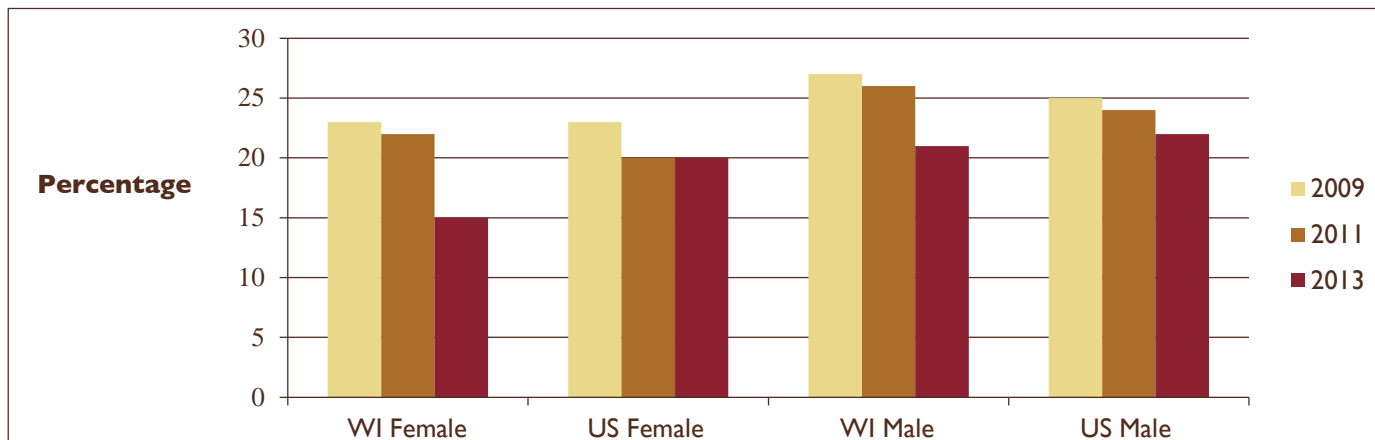
Substance Abuse

Tobacco: Wisconsin students tend to engage in smoking less than the national average, and Wisconsin girls tend to smoke less and use smokeless tobacco much less than boys (WI DPI, 2009b, 2011b, 2013c). However, females are less likely to try to quit smoking and more likely to relapse if they do quit (National Institute on Drug Addiction, 2012).

Girls face unique risks related to binge drinking, including increased likelihood for self-medication to alleviate depression symptoms, unintended pregnancy, and drinking during pregnancy (Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, 2012).

Alcohol: Recent findings show that Wisconsin ranks highest in the nation for adult binge drinking, and Wisconsin teens appear to be a risk for similar behavior (United Health Foundation, 2013).

Percentage of High School Students Binge Drinking, U.S. and WI, 2009-13



Source: US DHHS, 2009, 2011, 2013g; WI DPI, 2009b, 2011b, 2013c.

The number of adolescents who have ridden in a car with a drinker has decreased only slightly, and reports of drinking after driving remain relatively static (WI DPI, 2009b, 2011b, 2013c).

Marijuana: Depressed teens are twice as likely as non-depressed teens to use marijuana and other illicit drugs. Depressed teens are more than twice as likely as their peers to abuse or become dependent on marijuana. Teen girls who use marijuana daily are more likely to develop depression than girls who do not use marijuana (Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2008).

In 2013, African American high school students reported the highest level of marijuana use (29%) (WI DPI, 2013c). Hispanic/Latino students reported the second highest (27%), and Asian American students reported the lowest rate of marijuana use (8%) (WI DPI, 2013c).

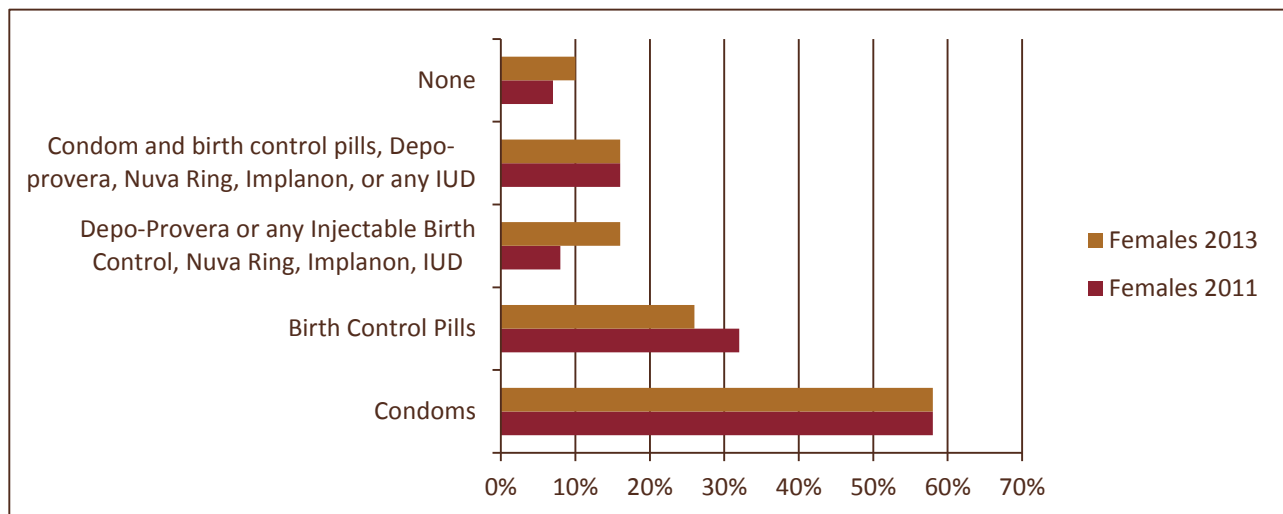
Other Drugs: In 2009 and 2011, Wisconsin high school girls were more likely than boys to report using inhalants at least once (WI DPI, 2009b, 2011b). In 2013, this shifted and male students reported higher usage (WI DPI, 2013c). High school girls were less than half as likely as boys to report using heroin or methamphetamines (WI DPI, 2011b). Boys were more likely to report using a prescription drug non-medically at least once in their lifetime (WI DPI, 2011b).

Sexual Health

Sexual Activity: In Wisconsin, 37% of high school girls and 33% of high school boys reported ever having had sexual intercourse. More girls (6%) than boys (3%) reported having sexual contact with both males and females (WI DPI, 2013c).

Contraceptive Use: Among sexually active girls in Wisconsin, 58% reported that their partner used a condom during their last sexual intercourse experience; 26% of girls reported using birth control pills (WI DPI, 2013c).

Contraceptive Use during Last Sexual Intercourse for WI High School Girls, 2011-13



Source: WI DPI, 2011b, 2013c.

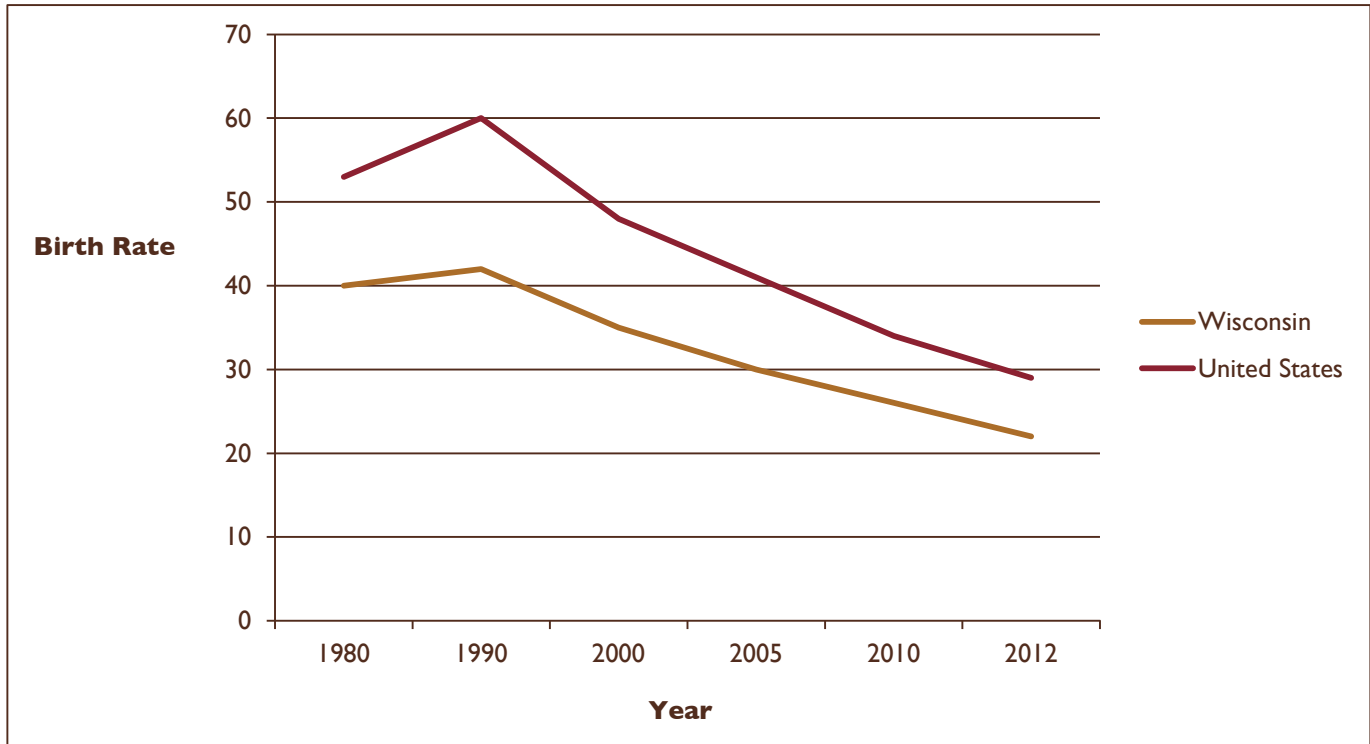
Sexually Transmitted Infections: Wisconsin females ages 15-19 were 3.5 times more likely than their male counterparts to have been diagnosed with an STI in 2012 (WI DHS, 2012b). Out of 8,474 newly reported cases of syphilis, gonorrhea, or chlamydia, girls represented 78% (WI DHS, 2012b). National trends show that young people ages 15-24 account for half of new STIs (US DHHS, 2013a). In Wisconsin, males are more likely than females to become infected with HIV (WI DHS, 2012c).

The Centers for Disease Control recommends HPV vaccinations for girls and boys starting at age 11. In 2011, 53% of girls ages 13-17 had received one or more doses of the HPV vaccine; 35% had completed the recommended three doses (Guttmacher Institute, 2009).

The vast majority of Wisconsin female students reported being taught about HIV/AIDS in school. However, less than half reported ever talking about HIV/AIDS with parents or other adults in the family (WI DPI, 2013c). Nationally, it is estimated that 58% of those unaware of their HIV infection status are individuals ages 13-24 (US DHHS, 2013c).

Births to Teens: The teenage birth rate (per 1,000 females) has declined steadily over the past 20 years (US DHHS, 2012, 2013d; WI DHS, 2012e). From 1991-2011, it declined by 47% in Wisconsin and 49% in the U.S. (females ages 15-19).

Birth Rates (per 1,000 Females), Ages 15-19, U.S. and WI, 1980-2012



Source: US DHHS, 2012, 2013d; WI DHS, 2012.

The teen birth rate has been steadily declining for all racial/ethnic groups over the past decade. The data reveal, however, that birth rates are considerably higher for African American, American Indian, Hispanic, and Asian females than for White females (WI DHS, 2014).

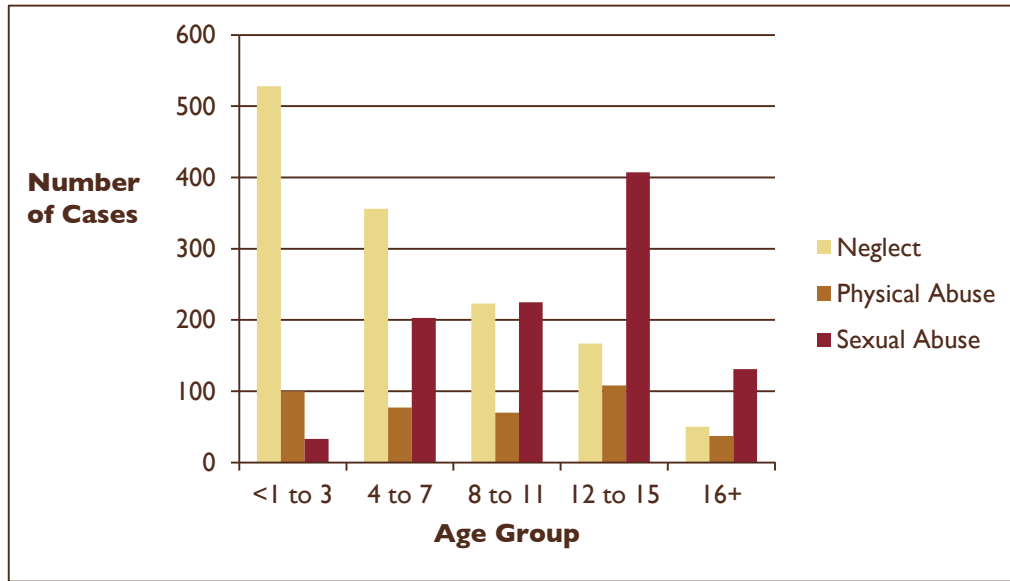
Crime and Incarceration

Roughly 40% of juvenile female offenders committed technical crimes such as property theft, disorderly conduct, and liquor law violations (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013). Southeastern Wisconsin is the only region of the state where male juvenile offenders in institutions outnumber females (girls: 53%; boys: 68%) (Wisconsin Department of Corrections, 2014). African Americans (69%) make up a disproportionately large percentage of incarcerated youth, followed by White (26%), Hispanic/Latino (8%), Native American (5%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (0.5%) (WI DOC, 2014a)

Violence and Abuse

Nationally, girls (51%) experienced more child abuse than boys (49%). This trend is similar in Wisconsin (Wisconsin Department of Children and Families [WI DCF], 2012).

Number of WI Female Child Abuse Victims, by Abuse Type and Age, 2012



Source: WI DCF, 2012.

For boys it appears that the rates of victimization in Wisconsin decrease as they age, while for girls, the rates increase for those 12-15 years of age. Girls in Wisconsin report higher rates of sexual abuse across every age category compared to boys (WI DCF, 2012). White children represented the largest victim category, followed by African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian and Native Hawaiian, Native American, and multiracial (Kids Count, 2011).

Sexual Assault: In Wisconsin in 2012, 1,224 rapes were reported and in 46% of these cases the victim was under the age of 18 (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2013).

Teen Dating Violence: In 2013, 10% of girls who were dating reported they had been physically hurt by the person they were dating and 16% that they had been forced to do sexual things they did not want to do (WI DPI, 2013c).

Bullying and Cyberbullying: In Wisconsin in 2013, 26% of girls and 20% of boys reported being bullied in the last 12 months on school property (WI DPI, 2013c). Children under age 15 report the highest incidences of cyberbullying, with girls (27%) noting higher rates than boys (10%) (WI DPI, 2013c).

Human Trafficking: In Wisconsin, there were over 200 cases of trafficking reported in 2012; 15% were children (Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance, 2012). In the Milwaukee area, there were 77 cases of youth (ages 12-17) being trafficked; 92% were female (Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission, 2013).

Juvenile Victims of Rape

- 56% of the assailants were acquaintances of the victim
- 19% were family members
- 13% were unknown/strangers

(Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2013)



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