



# Woman's Well-Being Index, State of Wisconsin

## Executive Summary

This report provides a data-driven snapshot of the status and lived experiences of women and girls in Wisconsin across five critical domains: Demographics, Education, Economic Security, Health & Safety, and Housing. The findings underscore both the progress made and the persistent inequities that shape outcomes and limit opportunities for women across the state.

### Key Points

- Women's achievements in education and contributions to the workforce and civic life are significant, yet systemic inequities in pay, health, and leadership limit their full participation and prosperity.
- Economic and social policies—such as wage transparency, paid leave, reproductive rights, and housing affordability—are critical to gender equity.
- Intersectional disparities, especially around race and geography, must be central to strategies aimed at improving outcomes for ALL women and girls in Wisconsin.

### Demographics

Women and girls make up nearly half of Wisconsin's 5.9 million residents. While most are white and native-born, racial and ethnic diversity is growing. Demographic trends such as aging populations, marriage status, and same-sex households reflect the changing social fabric of the state.

### Education

Education remains a crucial determinant of health, financial stability, and civic engagement. Women in Wisconsin have high educational attainment, with 34% holding bachelor's degrees or higher—surpassing their male counterparts. However, disparities persist, particularly in funding for education and enforcement of policies like Title IX, which protect women and gender-diverse individuals in educational settings.

### Economic Security

Despite higher educational achievement, women in Wisconsin face a persistent and widening gender pay gap. In 2022, women earned only 80.4 cents for every dollar earned by men—the widest gap since 2016. Racial disparities compound this issue, with Black and Latina women earning significantly less than white men. High rates of labor force participation and leadership gains contrast with ongoing challenges in wage equity, caregiving expectations, and poverty—especially among women of color and single mothers.

### Health and Safety

Wisconsin women are more likely to have health insurance than men, yet disparities in maternal health, mental health, and reproductive care access remain concerning. Black and Indigenous women experience significantly higher rates of maternal and infant mortality. Rural maternity care deserts, lack of paid family leave, and insufficient postpartum care further threaten maternal well-being. Sexual and domestic violence also remain pervasive, particularly among Indigenous and LGBTQ+ communities, pointing to the need for more trauma-informed, identity-sensitive support systems.

### Housing

Housing affordability and access directly impact women's well-being. While 68% of Wisconsin households own their homes, homeownership rates for Black and Latina women lag significantly behind. Nearly half of renters are cost-burdened, and housing insecurity disproportionately affects women of color. Structural issues such as underinvestment and rising rent costs hinder housing equity.

This report calls on policymakers, leaders, employers, and communities to prioritize investments that enable Wisconsin women and girls to thrive—because when they thrive, so does the state.

Use the QR code to access the dynamic online Index, the full narrative or information related to Greater Milwaukee. The narratives were co-curated by Women's Fund of Greater Milwaukee and University of Wisconsin – Madison, Center for Nonprofit and Community Studies.

