

Women's Well-Being Index

Executive Summary — State of Wisconsin

Scope

The Women's Well-Being Index is designed to measure how women across Wisconsin are faring in multiple domains: education, economic security, health, housing, and safety. It aims to identify disparities (by race, age, geography, and other factors) to guide resource allocation and inform policy.



Key Findings

Education

- Women generally match or exceed men in educational attainment for high school completion and college attendance.
 - 32% of Wisconsin women have some college or an associate's degree.
 - 28% have a high school diploma as their highest level of education.
 - 22% have a bachelor's degree.

Economic Security

- Women's labor force participation is relatively high: excluding widowed women (often retirees), about 66% of Wisconsin women are in the workforce.
- However, Wisconsin has a significant and widening gender pay gap. In 2022, women earned 80.4 cents for every dollar earned by men, the lowest such level since 2016.
- Racial and ethnic disparities compound this: wages are especially lower for Black and Hispanic/Latina women compared to white men.

Health & Safety

- Mental health challenges are rising: depression among younger women (ages 18-44) have increased significantly in recent years.
- Personal safety, such as intimate partner violence, community safety, and access to safe spaces, is less well captured in the index, evidencing a need for more data.
- Preventive care usage among women is below ideal: only about 73.1% of Wisconsin women aged 18-44 report receiving an annual preventive medical visit.
- Infant mortality and maternal health show racial disparities: the ratio of Black to white infant mortality in Wisconsin is about 2.8.
- Insurance coverage is not universal; some women, particularly in marginalized communities, face higher risk of being uninsured or underinsured.

Housing

- Many Wisconsin households with women are cost-burdened by housing.
- Stability and affordability remain concerns especially for low-income women, single mothers, and women of color.

Conclusion

Women in Wisconsin benefit from relatively high labor force participation and increasing pay equity compared to past decades, but significant gaps persist—especially for women of color and in less advantaged communities. Economic security remains fragile when wages, caregiving burdens, and housing affordability are considered together with health and safety.