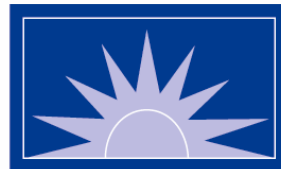




Status of Women In Wisconsin Report

Executive Summary

Institute For Women's
Policy Research



WOMEN'S FUND
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FOUNDATION

Overview of Key Indicators

Wisconsin's national
rank among 50 states and
the District of Columbia:

<u>Composite Political Participation Index</u>	15
Women's Voter Registration, 1998 and 2000	8
Women's Voter Turnout, 1998 and 2000	5
Women in Elected Office Composite Index, 2002	26
Women's Institutional Resources, 2002	20
<u>Composite Employment and Earnings Index</u>	20
Women's Median Annual Earnings, 1999	24
Ratio of Women's to Men's Earnings, 1999	39
Women's Labor Force Participation, 2000	3
Women in Managerial and Professional Occupations, 1999	37
<u>Composite Social and Economic Autonomy Index</u>	19
Percent with Health Insurance among Non-elderly Women, 2000	3
Percent of Women with Four or More Years of College, 1990	31
Women's Business Ownership, 1997	33
Percent of Women Above the Poverty Level, 1999	4
<u>Composite Reproductive Rights Index</u>	48
<u>Composite Health and Well-being Index</u>	18

Analysis

Wisconsin reflects both the advances and limited progress achieved by women across the United States. While women in Wisconsin are seeing important changes in their lives and access to political, economic and social rights, they do not enjoy equality with men and lack many of the guarantees that would allow them to achieve it. Women in Wisconsin, and the nation, would benefit from stronger enforcement of equal opportunity laws, better political representation, adequate and affordable childcare, stronger poverty reduction programs, and other policies to improve their status.

Wisconsin is an average-sized state with just under 2.7 million women of all ages. Women in Wisconsin are less diverse than women nationally, with fewer African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and immigrants. Wisconsin does, however, have one of the fastest-growing Hmong populations in the country. Women of color experience additional obstacles to equality in the state. Wisconsin has a relatively high proportion of women living in rural areas. Women in rural areas face special challenges accessing services, such as domestic violence shelters, health providers and family planning clinics. Rural women also face additional challenges finding employment.

Among the 50 states and the District of Columbia, Wisconsin ranks in the top third for women's status in one area of their lives: The state is 15th for women's political participation. It is in the middle third of all states at 18th for women's health and well-being, 19th for social and economic autonomy and 20th for employment and earnings. In contrast, Wisconsin is near the bottom of all states for women's reproductive rights at 48th.

Even the state's better rankings speak only to the status of its women relative to the women in the other states. Despite improvements in women's status across the country, women have not achieved equality with men in any state. With close to average rankings on many indicators, women still face significant problems that demand attention from policymakers, advocates and researchers.

Women in Wisconsin do well in the following areas:

- Women hold almost 40 percent of high-level appointed positions in the executive branch in Wisconsin.
- Wisconsin women are more likely to work than women in all but two states, Minnesota and Nebraska.
- Wisconsin is ranked third in the country for women's access to health insurance.
- Only three states (New Hampshire, Iowa and Minnesota) have lower poverty rates among women than Wisconsin.
- Women in Wisconsin are much less likely than women in the United States to die of lung cancer, suicide, breast cancer or heart disease.

Still, there are important areas where the state could improve women's status:

- Only one of Wisconsin's eleven seats in the US Congress was filled by a woman and less than a quarter of state legislators were women before the most recent election.
- At 31 cents per dollar, the gap between women and men's wages falls among the worst third of the states.
- One third of single-mother families in Wisconsin live in poverty.
- Wisconsin women do not have guaranteed insurance for contraception or infertility treatments and they face a waiting period when seeking abortions, and minors must receive parental consent for abortion.
- Women in Wisconsin experience among the highest number of days per month of poor mental health in the country.

Women in Wisconsin exemplify both the achievements and shortfalls of women's progress over the past century. Many Wisconsin women are witnessing real improvements in their economic, political and social status. These advances are evident in some relatively high rankings compared to other states. However, many other obstacles to their equality remain.

Political Participation

At eighth for voter registration and fifth for voter turnout, Wisconsin women register and vote at a fairly high rate. Ranking 26th, they have average levels of representation in political office. Overall, the state ranks 15th nationally in political participation. Increased representation in the political process could benefit women by encouraging more women-friendly policies, which in turn could enhance women's status in other areas.

Employment and Earnings

While women in Wisconsin participate in the workforce much more often than women in the rest of the country, they earn only average wages. They also work as managers and professionals less frequently than women in the nation as a whole, and their earnings proportion to men is lower than in most of the country. These factors combine to place Wisconsin 20th in the nation on the employment and earnings composite index.

Social and Economic Autonomy

Wisconsin has relatively high levels of health insurance coverage and of women living in poverty. The state ranks in the top five of states for both indicators. In contrast, at 31st among the states, women in Wisconsin are less likely than women nationally to have a college education. At 33rd for business ownership, Wisconsin is also below average. Overall, Wisconsin ranks 19th among the states for social and economic autonomy.

Reproductive Rights

Wisconsin women lack many important reproductive rights and resources, and as a result the state ranks 48th out of 51 on the reproductive rights composite index. Poor women in Wisconsin can receive public funding for abortion only under federally-mandated limited circumstances and the state lacks mandates for comprehensive coverage or infertility treatments. Only about 38 percent of women live in counties with abortion providers. Finally, lesbian couples have been denied the right to adopt their partners' children.

Health and Well-Being

Women in Wisconsin experience about average health status compared with women in other states. Mortality rates from lung cancer and suicide are relatively low among Wisconsin women. In contrast, the number of days per month of poor mental health is relatively high, as is the incidence of Chlamydia. Wisconsin's national rank of 18th suggests that while the state ranks higher than many states for women's health and well-being, it has room for improvement.

For a complete copy of the *Status of Women In Wisconsin Report*, visit www.womensfund.com

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