

# THE STATUS OF GIRLS IN WISCONSIN: A REPORT UPDATE



ALVERNO COLLEGE RESEARCH CENTER FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

..... 2010

# THE STATUS OF GIRLS IN WISCONSIN: A REPORT UPDATE 2010

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## The **Alverno College Research Center for Women and Girls (RCWG)**

is pleased to present the 2010 Update to the 2007 Status of Girls in Wisconsin Report. Like the 2007 Report, the purpose of this Update is to centralize the data focused on Wisconsin girls ages 10-19 and make it accessible to a variety of individual stakeholders, agencies, groups, and institutions who have the needs and interests of Wisconsin girls in mind. Similar to the Report, this Update was created with a deeper purpose in mind. It is our hope that the findings in this Update can help initiate more action, collaboration, research and programming that will ultimately improve the quality of girls' lives in the State of Wisconsin.

Our intent is to present the most recent data available without interpretation and provide a scholarly, impartial, data-based profile of the lives of Wisconsin girls. Throughout this Update, we highlight certain gaps in the research and make specific calls for more action. It should be noted that not all of the areas that were addressed in the 2007 Report are included in the following Update. It is our intention with this Update to highlight the key findings that may differ from the 2007 Report's findings.

The mission of the **Alverno College Research Center for Women and Girls** is to initiate positive social change in the lives of women and girls through action-oriented research. This 2010 Update represents one of the many ways that we intend to initiate positive social change.

**This report is available online at:** [www.alverno.edu/research](http://www.alverno.edu/research)

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## DEMOGRAPHICS: A SNAPSHOT

In 2008, a total of 763,013 young people between the ages of 10 and 19 lived in the state of Wisconsin, including 372,866 girls (49%) and 390,147 boys (51%). Of Wisconsin's total population of 5.6 million, young people in this age group made up about 13.6% of the total population (United States Census Bureau American Community Survey [USCB ACS], 2008).

As shown in Table 1, girls in the 10-19 age group in Wisconsin remained less diverse than girls in the United States as a whole, but still remained more diverse than Wisconsin's population of adult women. The majority of Wisconsin girls were White; however, the number of Hispanic girls in Wisconsin increased from 5.7% in 2005 (Alverno College Research Center for Women & Girls [RCWG], 2007) to 6.7% in 2008 (USCB ACS, 2008). The racial and ethnic landscape among girls in the United States is also changing. For example, the number of Hispanic girls in the U.S. increased from 17.7% in 2005 (RCWG, 2007) to 18.9% in 2008 (USCB ACS, 2008).

**TABLE 1: WISCONSIN GIRLS (AGES 10-19) BY RACE & ETHNICITY, COMPARED TO GIRLS**

GIRLS BY RACE & ETHNICITY, 2008	GIRLS AGES 10-19 IN WISCONSIN (Percent)	GIRLS AGES 10-19 IN U.S. (Percent)
White	83.7%	70.0%
African American	7.8%	15.1%
American Indian	1.1%	0.94%
Asian	2.4%	3.9%
Other Race	1.9%	6.0%
2 or More Races	2.4%	3.8%
Hispanic (any race)	6.7%	18.9%

\* Total adds to more than 100% due to rounding.

Source: Adapted from United States, Census Bureau (2008). *American Community Survey*.

## EMPLOYMENT & POVERTY

In 2008, over 66,000 Wisconsin girls aged 16 to 19 were both enrolled in school and employed (USCB, 2008) compared to over 61,000 in 2005 (RCWG, 2007). In 2008, 43% of girls between the ages of 16-19 were enrolled in school and employed whereas only 36% of boys aged 16-19 were enrolled in school and employed (USCB, 2008).

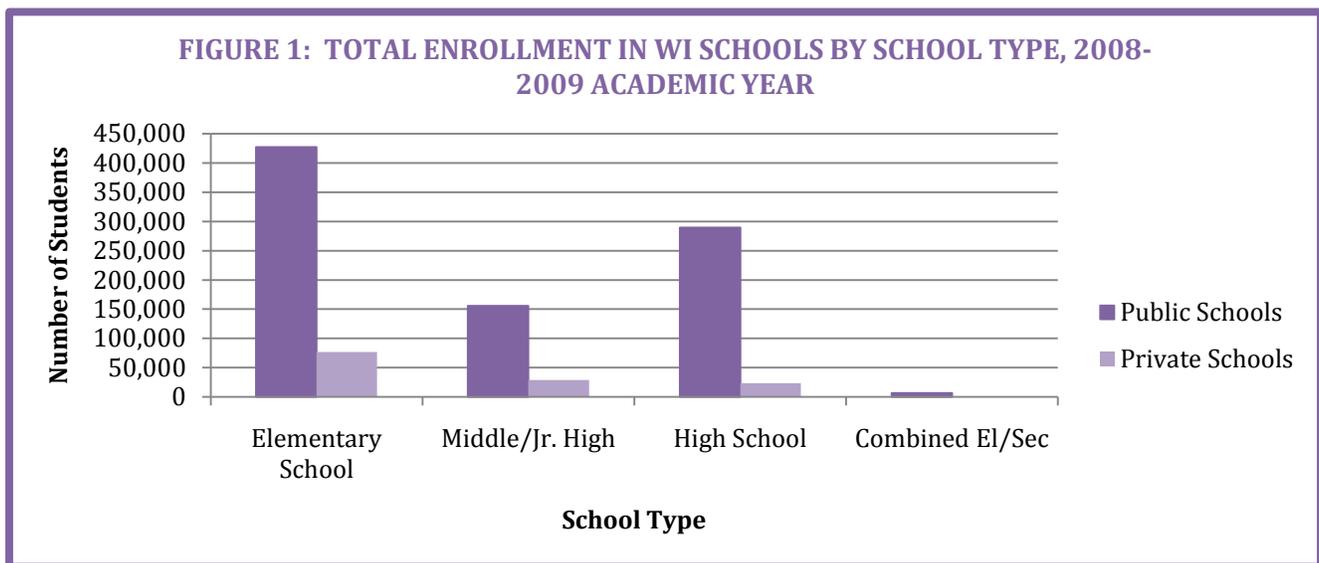
More Wisconsin girls (ages 16-19) than boys are both enrolled in school and employed.

In 2008, nearly 51,500 Wisconsin girls aged 17 years and under lived below the federal poverty line (USCB, 2008), which is a decrease from just over 54,000 in 2005 (RCWG, 2007). The federal poverty line is a formula that determines the poverty level for families based on household income and the number of people in the household. The 2008 federal poverty line is based on thresholds of \$17,346 in annual household income for a family of one adult and two children and \$21,834 for two adults and two children (USCB, 2008).

## EDUCATION

### PRIMARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

#### ENROLLMENT



Source: Adapted from State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2010). *Wisconsin information network for successful schools (WINSS) data analysis, state level data.*

During the 2008-2009 academic year in Wisconsin public schools (K-12), 48% of students were girls while 52% were boys. During the same academic year in Wisconsin private schools, approximately 50% of the students (K-12) were girls and 50% were boys (State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction [DPI], 2010).

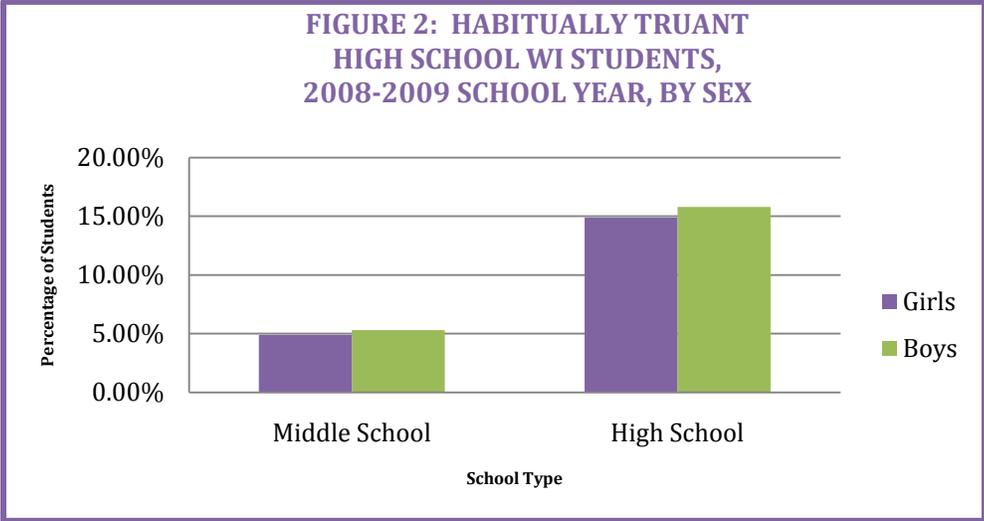
**ATTENDANCE**

Attendance for Wisconsin youth (PreK-12) in public schools has been consistent since the 1996-1997 to 2008-2009 academic year. Attendance was roughly 94% for both girls and boys throughout the period (DPI, 2010).

A student who is absent from school without an acceptable excuse for part or all of five or more days on which school is held during a semester is *habitually truant* (DPI, 2010). In Wisconsin, during the 2008-2009 academic year, boys were slightly more likely to be

**Data show that habitual truancy increases when Wisconsin public school students enter high school.**

habitually truant than girls. As shown in Figure 2, of girls in high school, 14.9% were habitually truant compared to 15.8% of boys. In middle school, 4.9% of girls were habitually truant compared to 5.3% of boys (DPI, 2010).

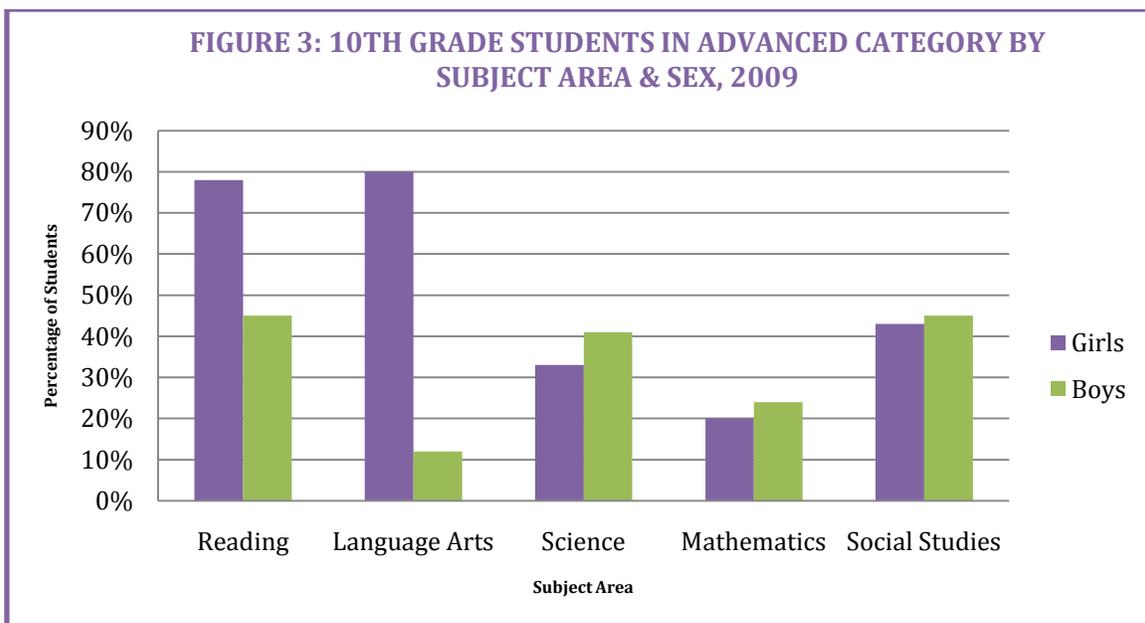


Source: Adapted from State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2010). *Wisconsin information network for successful schools (WINSS) data analysis, state level data.*

## STANDARDIZED TESTING IN SUBJECT AREAS

The Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) is the standardized statewide test administered to students in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> grades to test their knowledge in the main subject areas they are exposed to most frequently (DPI, 2010).

The following statistics are for November 2009 and represent Wisconsin 10<sup>th</sup> graders including 33,381 girls and 35,321 boys (DPI, 2010). These findings are consistent overall with the trends identified in the 2007 Status of Girls in Wisconsin Report (RCWG, 2007).



Source: Adapted from State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2010). *Wisconsin information network for successful schools (WINSS) data analysis, state level data.*

### Note:

Wisconsin uses four *proficiency* categories: advanced, proficient, basic, and minimal performance. The term *proficient* describes students who demonstrate competency in academic knowledge and skills tested on WKCE for that grade level. *Advanced*, however, refers to students who demonstrate in-depth understanding of academic knowledge and skills (DPI, 2010).

Scoring in either *proficient* or *advanced* categories is a goal set by the Department of Public Instruction for all Wisconsin students (DPI, 2010). In 2009, 10<sup>th</sup> grade Wisconsin girls reached *advanced* scoring in each of the 5 major subject areas, with over 40% of girls scoring *advanced* in both reading and social studies, (DPI, 2010). Similar scores exist for 10<sup>th</sup> grade girls' combined *proficient* and *advanced* scores (DPI, 2010).

Data show that girls from grades 5 through 7 are growing in math ability since 2007. Wisconsin girls are closing the achievement gap in math and matching boys in *advanced* scores in grade 5 and 7. In 2009, 45% of 5<sup>th</sup> grade and 36% of 7<sup>th</sup> grade Wisconsin girls scored at *advanced* levels in math (DPI, 2010).

Although the achievement gap between girls and boys has been narrowing in recent years, 10<sup>th</sup> grade girls still lag behind boys in obtaining *advanced* scores in science and mathematics.

## ADVANCED PLACEMENT COURSES & EXAMINATIONS

Advanced Placement (AP) courses are college-level courses offered to students in grades 6-12. The majority of students who take these courses are in high school (grades 9-12) (RCWG, 2007).

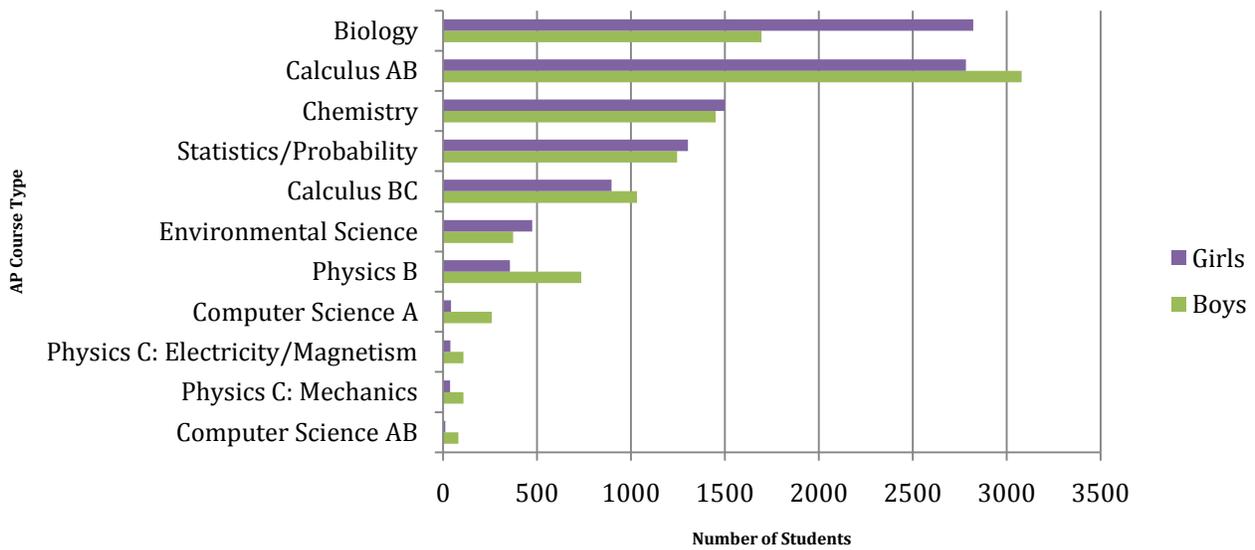
Wisconsin has retained its “Best in the Midwest” title for both participation and performance on Advanced Placement (AP) exams taken by 2009 high school graduates (DPI-NR, 2010).

In 2009, 16,109 or 25.3% of Wisconsin high school graduates took an AP exam while in high school. This shows continued growth since 2008 and 32.9% growth over a five year period (DPI-NR, 2010).

## PARTICIPATION IN AP COURSES

In 2009, girls participated in similar or lower numbers than boys in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) AP courses (Figure 4). An exception is biology, in which Wisconsin high girls participated in numbers nearly doubling the participation of boys -- 2,823 compared to 1,695 (DPI, 2010).

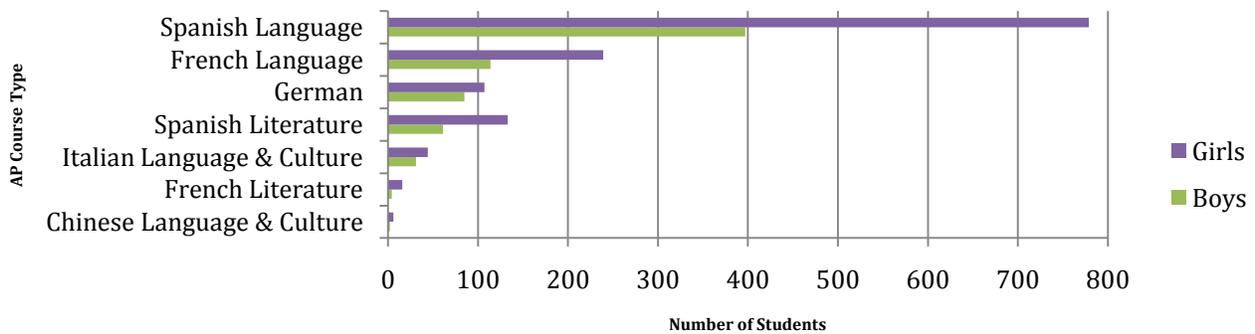
**FIGURE 4: STEM ADVANCED PLACEMENT COURSE PARTICIPATION, WISCONSIN STUDENTS BY SEX, 2008-2009**



Source: Adapted from State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2010). *Wisconsin information network for successful schools (WINSS) data analysis, state level data.*

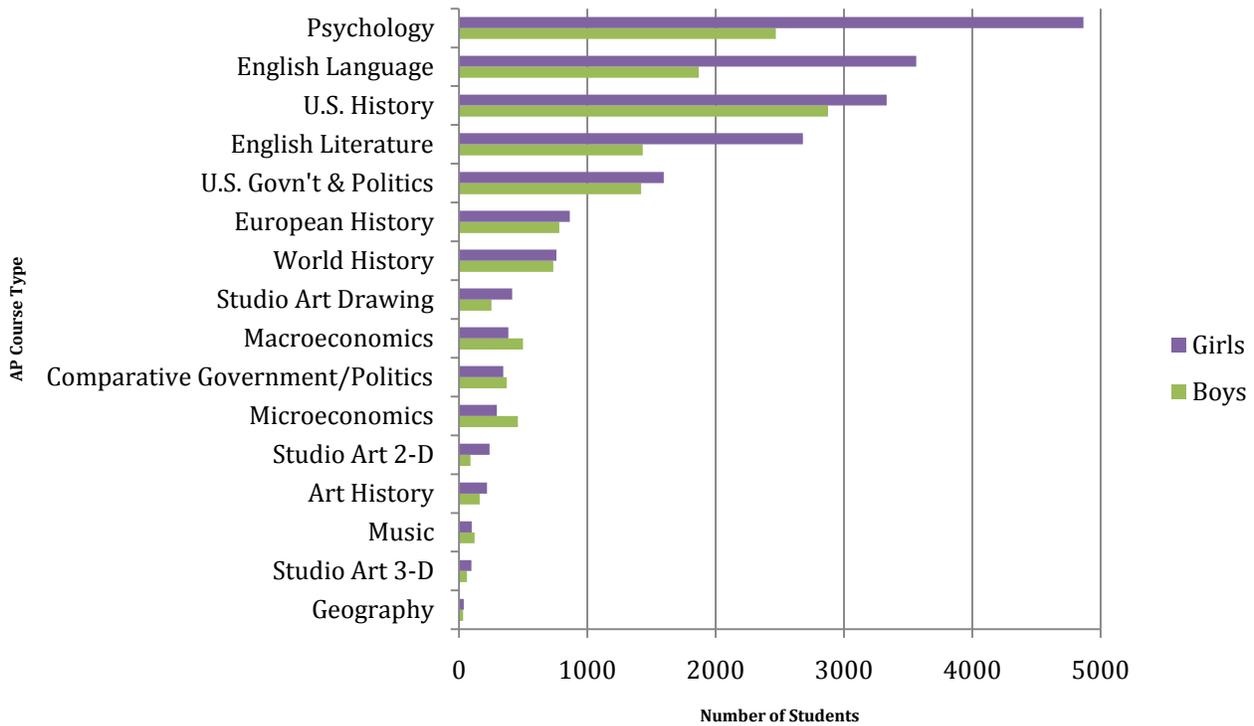
As shown in Figure 5, Wisconsin girls' participation in foreign language AP courses was higher than that of boys in 2008-2009.

**FIGURE 5: FOREIGN LANGUAGE ADVANCED PLACEMENT COURSE PARTICIPATION, WISCONSIN STUDENTS BY SEX, 2008-2009**



Source: Adapted from State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2010). *Wisconsin information network for successful schools (WINSS) data analysis, state level data*

**FIGURE 6: OTHER ADVANCED PLACEMENT COURSE PARTICIPATION, WISCONSIN STUDENTS BY SEX, 2008-2009**



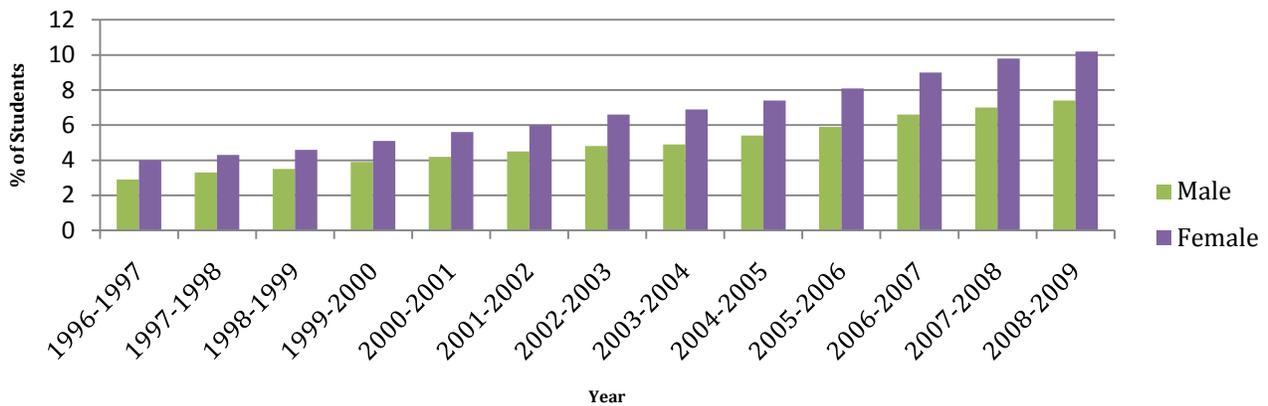
Source: Adapted from State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2010). *Wisconsin information network for successful schools (WINSS) data analysis, state level data.*

Figure 6 clearly shows the areas in which participation of girls surpassed that of boys. In 2008-2009, girls participated in psychology and English courses in numbers nearly twice that of boys.

### **PARTICIPATION IN AP EXAMS**

Typically, a higher number of high school girls than boys take AP examinations which lead to a possible college credit. As shown in Figure 7 on page 9, participation in these examinations has increased approximately 25% for both boys and girls since the 2004-2005 academic year. More specifically, the percentage of students taking examinations increased from 5.4% to 7.4% for boys and from 7.4% to 10.2% for girls (DPI, 2010).

**FIGURE 7: PARTICIPATION IN ADVANCED PLACEMENT EXAMS, WISCONSIN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, BY SEX**



Source: Adapted from State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2010). *Wisconsin information network for successful schools (WINSS) data analysis, state level data.*

**TABLE 2: PERCENT OF WISCONSIN STUDENTS SUCCESSFULLY PASSING AP EXAM, BY SEX**

	GIRLS	BOYS
1996-1997	63.4%	68.4%
1997-1998	64.8%	70.1%
1998-1999	63.7%	71.9%
1999-2000	65.5%	70.7%
2000-2001	62.0%	68.8%
2001-2002	66.7%	72.9%
2002-2003	64.7%	72.0%
2003-2004	66.2%	71.7%
2004-2005	64.6%	70.7%
2005-2006	65.4%	72.1%
2006-2007	65.3%	70.7%
2007-2008	63.8%	70.7%
2008-2009	64.8%	71.6%

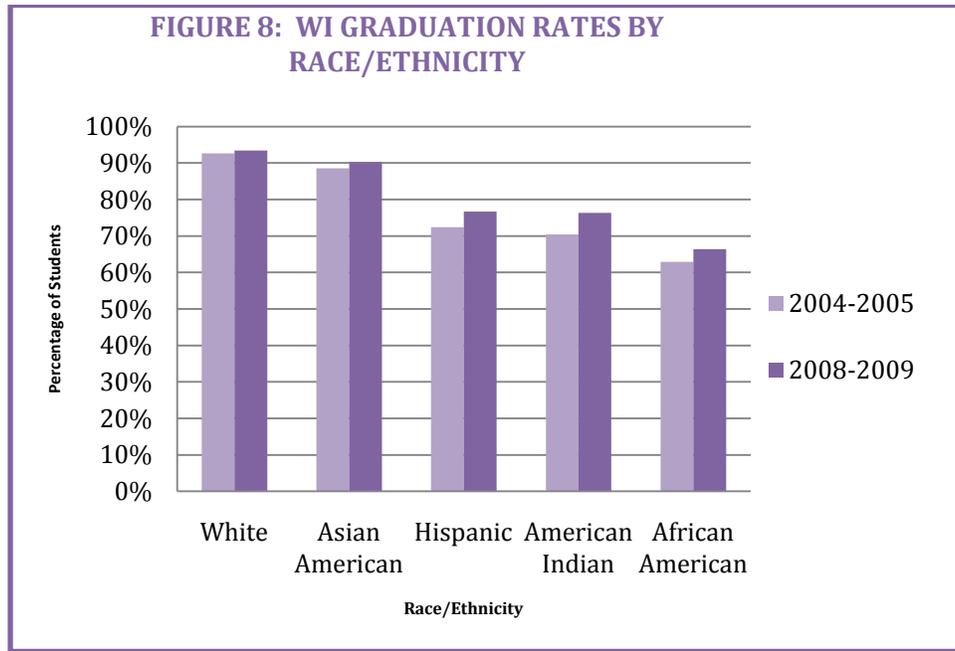
Although a higher number of Wisconsin girls participated in AP examinations in the 2008-2009 academic year as shown in Figure 7, a greater proportion of boys successfully passed them with a score of 3 or above (out a possible 5) as shown in Table 2 (DPI, 2010).

**The 2007 Status of Girls in Wisconsin reported that more Wisconsin high school girls than boys participated in AP courses and took the AP examinations. However, boys passed these exams at higher rates than girls. Currently, no changes have occurred to this disparity.**

Source: Adapted from State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2010). *Wisconsin information network for successful schools (WINSS) data analysis, state level data.*

## GRADUATION & DROPOUT

During the 2008-2009 academic year, a higher number of girls graduated from Wisconsin public high schools with a diploma -- 91.5% of girls compared to 87.4% of boys (DPI, 2010).



Source: Adapted from State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2010). *Wisconsin information network for successful schools (WINSS) data analysis, state level data.*

As shown in Figure 8, graduation rates also show racial and ethnic disparity. Typically, White and Asian American students graduate at higher rates than other ethnicities. Graduation rates for other racial/ethnic groups were above 60%.

**Mind the Gaps:**  
To date, data showing graduation rates by gender and race/ethnicity are not publicly available.

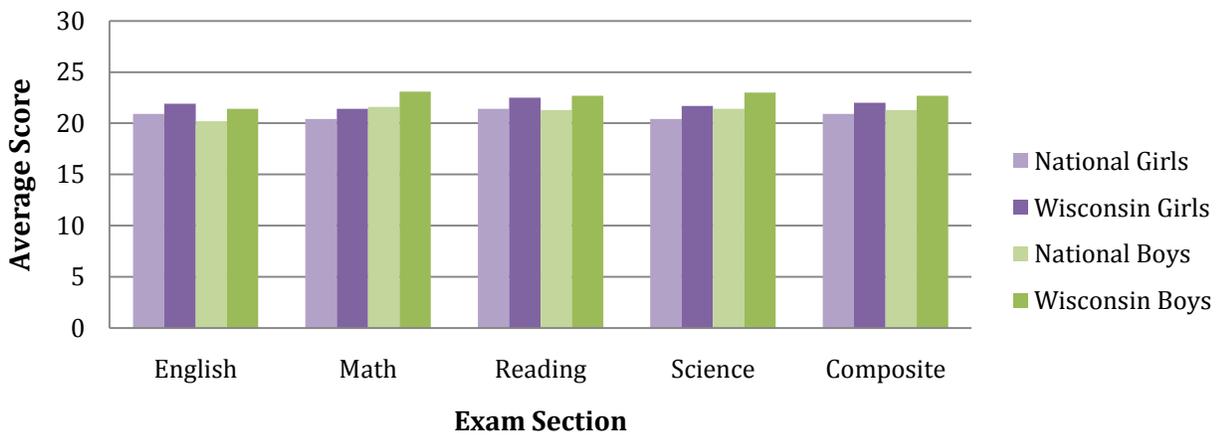
Girls are less likely than boys to drop out of high school. In the 2008-2009 academic year, only 1.8% of Wisconsin high school girls dropped out of high school compared to 2.51% of their male peers (DPI, 2010).

A higher percentage of girls in Wisconsin public high schools graduate with a diploma and a lower percentage of them drop out when compared to Wisconsin high school boys.

## POST-SECONDARY EXAMS

The American College Testing (ACT) Program and the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) are two types of entrance examinations taken by high school students before applying to post-secondary educational institutions. A student may take one or both examinations depending on factors, such as student specialization or admissions requirements of a desired post-secondary institution (RCWG, 2007). In 2009, only 5% of Wisconsin high school seniors took the SAT (DPI- NR, 2009) while 67% took the ACT (ACT Inc., 2009). Therefore, only data regarding ACT are included in this update.

**FIGURE 9: AVERAGE ACT SCORES, UNITED STATES & WISCONSIN BY SEX, 2009**



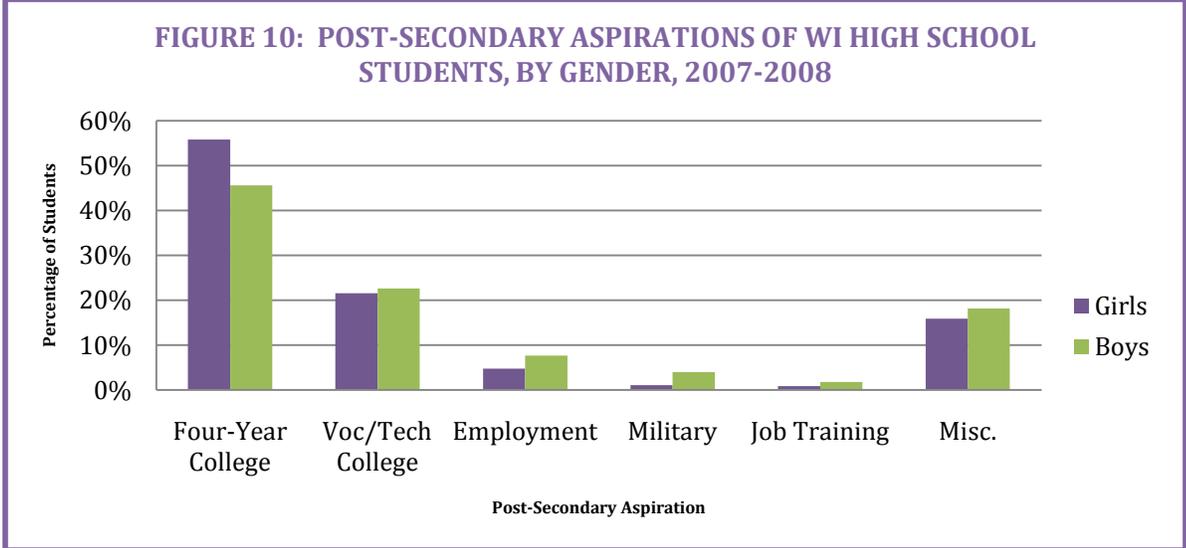
Source: Adapted from ACT, Inc. *ACT high school profile report: The graduating class of 2009, Wisconsin, 2009.*

In 2009, 46,658 Wisconsin high school students took the ACT and 54% of the test-takers (25,171) were girls (ACT, Inc., 2009). Wisconsin students have consistently scored higher composite ACT scores than the national average since 2007 (ACT, Inc., 2009). A few areas indicate potentials for improvement, however. Wisconsin boys scored higher in the areas of math and science, with 60% of boys and 47% of girls scoring at benchmark scores in math and 44% of boys and 32% of girls scoring at

benchmark scores in science. Benchmark scores are the minimum scores needed on an ACT subject-area test and indicate about a 50% chance of scoring a B or higher and about a 75% chance of obtaining a C or higher in the corresponding college courses.

## POST-SECONDARY ASPIRATIONS

As shown in Figure 10, a higher number of high school girls than boys in Wisconsin indicated their intent to attend a four-year college after high school graduation while a higher number of boys reported their intent to attend a vocational/technical college or pursue employment/military. More boys than girls also reported miscellaneous plans that did not fit into any of the other categories (DPI, 2010).



Source: Adapted from State of Wisconsin, Department of Public Instruction, *Wisconsin’s information network for Successful Schools (WINSS) Data Analysis*, 2010.

**More girls than boys at Wisconsin public high schools indicated their intent to attend a four-year college after high school graduation. More boys than girls reported intent to obtain employment or join the military.**

**Note:**

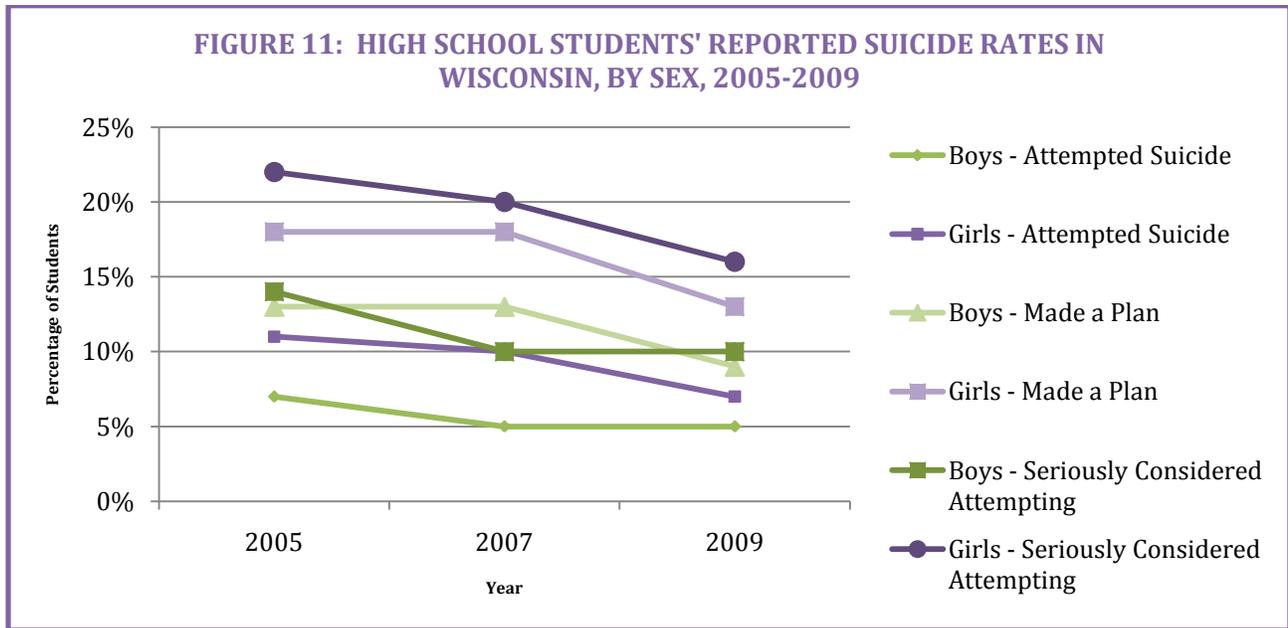
Students who fall in the *employment* category have already secured career-based employment. Those students who fall in the *miscellaneous* category indicated that they are either seeking employment, or have declared *other*, or *undecided*. Additionally, students who did not respond to the question are grouped in the *miscellaneous* category. Those students who indicated intent to attend a 2-year University of Wisconsin school are included in the 4-year college category (DPI, 2010).

## HEALTH

### MENTAL HEALTH

#### YOUTH SUICIDE

Self-reported suicide attempts for Wisconsin high school students have decreased since 2005. From 2005 to 2009, reported suicide attempts have decreased for girls from 11% to 7% and for boys from 7% to 5% (DPI, 2009; DPI, 2007; DPI, 2005). In 2009, 7.1% of Wisconsin girls reported having attempted suicide one or more times in the past 12 months compared to 4.6% of boys (DPI, 2009).



Sources: Adapted from State of Wisconsin, Department of Public Instruction, *Youth Risk Behavior Survey* (2009, 2007, 2005); United States Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance* (2007, 2005).

In the past 15 years, the percentage of Wisconsin high school students who self-reported having seriously considered suicide fell by more than half – from 27% in 1993 to 13% in 2009 (DPI, 2009). Rates of suicide attempts in Wisconsin were similar to national rates for 2009 with 5.8% of Wisconsin youth and 6.3% of national youth attempting suicide, (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2010a; DPI, 2009).

In 2009, more girls than boys were likely to report risk behaviors relating to suicide, both nationally and in Wisconsin (CDC, 2010a; DPI, 2009). In 2009, more Wisconsin girls (16%) than boys (10%) reported seriously considering suicide (DPI, 2009). Additionally, more girls (7%) than boys (5%) reported making a suicide attempt that year (DPI, 2009).

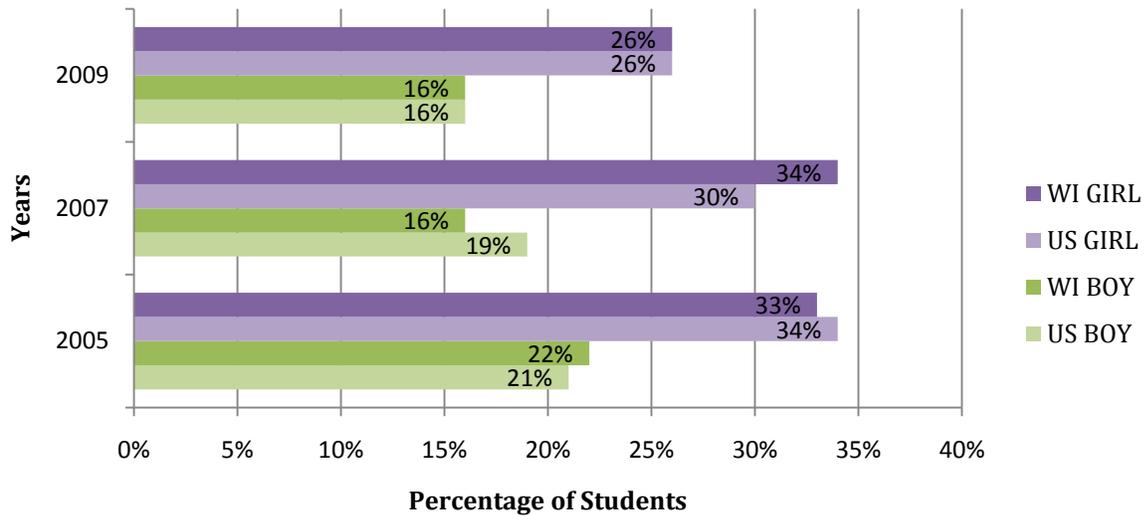
In 2007, statistics indicate that suicide was the fourth leading cause of death for Wisconsin and national youth between 10 and 19, (CDC, 2010b). Rates were higher for boys (31) than girls (4) that year, however (CDC, 2010b). Thus, suicide was the third leading cause of death for boys and the sixth for girls in Wisconsin (CDC, 2010b). Similar rates are found among national youth.

**Call for Action: Additional research is needed regarding suicide ideation in Wisconsin youth. Specifically, very little data are publicly available which separate suicide statistics by sex. Future research should focus on identifying contributing factors that propel Wisconsin girls and boys into suicide ideation and attempts.**

## **DEPRESSION**

In 2009, about one out of every five Wisconsin high school students self-reported having felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two or more continuous weeks that they stopped performing some normal activities. While 26% of Wisconsin girls reportedly experienced these feelings, 16% of boys reported experiencing similar feelings (DPI, 2009).

**FIGURE 12: WI & US HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS REPORTED FEELING SAD/HOPELESS FOR TWO OR MORE CONTINUOUS WEEKS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS**



Sources: Adapted from State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, *Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, (2009) & Center for Disease Control and Prevention, *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance* (2008, 2006).

## PHYSICAL HEALTH

### WEIGHT & HEALTH

Overall, Wisconsin high school students self-reported inadequate levels of physical activity and consumption of fruits and vegetables. The percent of overweight and obese high school students, as measured on the Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey, has not changed since 1999. In 2009, 7% of girls self-reported they were obese compared to 12% of boys. This statistic may be low due to problems with self-reporting. About 60% of girls reported that they were trying to lose weight compared to 28% of boys (DPI, 2009).

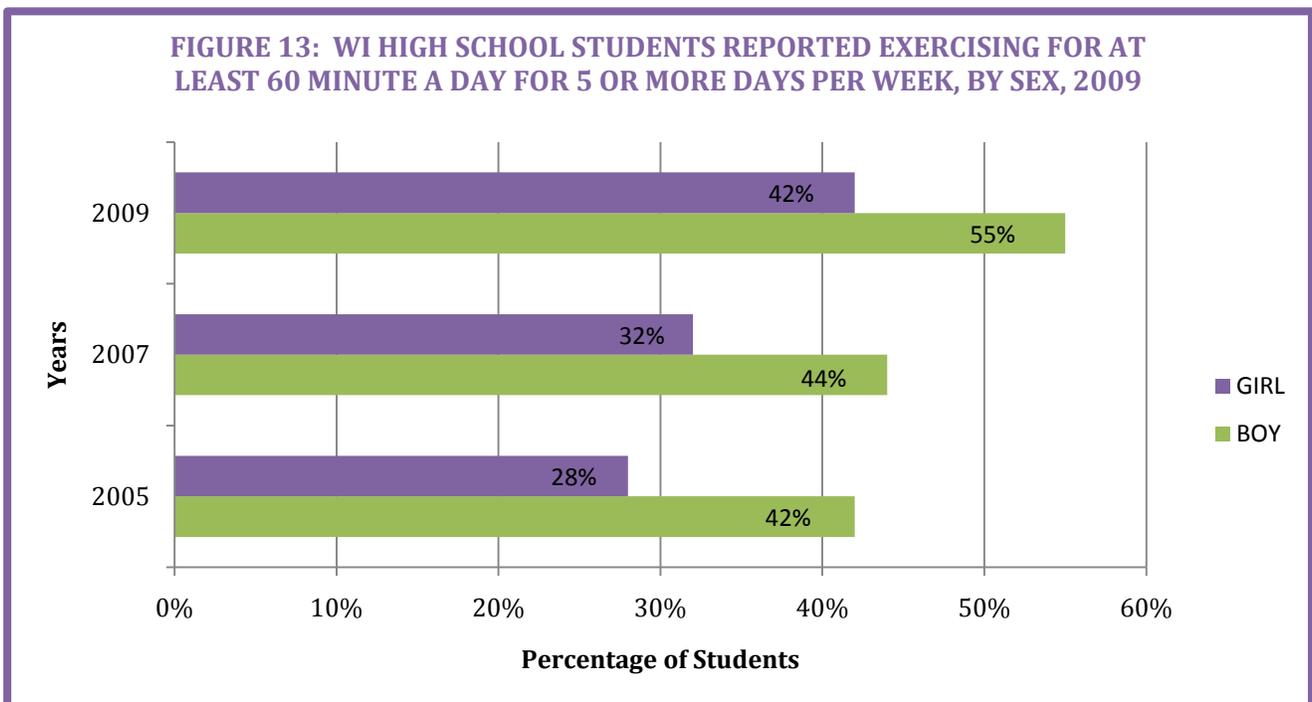
#### Note:

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey measures obesity using the traditional Body-Mass Index (BMI) guide. Obesity is reached when the weight exceeds the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile for the same age and height group (DPI, 2005).

**“One in four Wisconsin high school students are overweight or obese and 60% of them will be overweight as adults.” These weight-related issues can lead to a variety of health disorders. At the current rate, researchers say “today’s children are likely to have a shorter life expectancy than their parents do” (University of Wisconsin Madison, School of Medicine and Public Health, 2009).**

## EXERCISE

Figure 13 shows that between 2005 and 2009, there was a substantial increase in the number of Wisconsin high school students self-reporting their exercise activity. However, Wisconsin girls are still not likely to exercise as often as boys (DPI, 2009; DPI, 2007; DPI, 2005).



Sources: Adapted from State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, *Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, 2009; Center for Disease Control and Prevention, *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance* (2006, 2008).

**Data indicate that 32% of Wisconsin girls met recommended levels of exercise in 2007, compared to 26% of girls nationally (DPI, 2007; CDC, 2008).**

## BODY IMAGE

According to most recent data on body image released by the Girl Scouts Research Institute [GSRI], 9 out of 10 girls in the U.S. self-report that the fashion industry (89%) and/or the media (88%) place a lot of pressure on teen girls to be thin. Another notable finding from this study showed that African American and Hispanic girls in the U.S. have a more positive body image when compared to White girls. Findings showed that more African American girls (17%) reported feeling completely satisfied with their bodies while 14% of Hispanic girls and 10% of White girls felt completely satisfied with the way their bodies looked (GSRI, 2010).

## SUBSTANCE USE/ABUSE

*Binge drinking* is described as having five or more drinks of alcohol in a row within a couple of hours on one or more of the past 30 days (DPI, 2009). Of female high school students in Wisconsin, 23% self-reported their drinking habits as binge drinking (DPI, 2009). This is a decrease from the 2007 Status of Girls in Wisconsin Report findings which stated that in 2005, 29% of Wisconsin high school girls were engaged in binge drinking (RCWG, 2007).

## CIGARETTE USE

A decline is seen in the number of Wisconsin high school girls who self-report having smoked a cigarette before the age of 13. Since findings reported in 2005, the percentage of girls who self-reported having their first cigarette before the age of 13 has declined, from 11% in 2005 to 7.6% in 2009 (DPI, 2009; DPI, 2005).

## REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

### SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

Sexual behaviors that put youth at risk for negative health outcomes include having sexual intercourse, using drugs or alcohol before sexual intercourse, lack of protection during sexual intercourse, and having sexual intercourse with multiple partners.

**TABLE 3: REPORTED SEXUAL INTERCOURSE BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 2009**

RACE/ETHNICITY	REPORTED SEXUAL INTERCOURSE (%)
<b>African American</b>	70%
<b>American Indian</b>	47%
<b>Hispanic</b>	47%
<b>White</b>	39%
<b>Asian</b>	32%

Source: Adapted from State of Wisconsin Department of Health & Family Services, 2009.

In 2009, 41% of Wisconsin high school girls reported that they had experienced sexual intercourse; 32% reported to be currently sexually active, which was a decrease from 36% in 2007 but similar to 2005 statistics (DPI, 2009; DPI, 2007; DPI, 2005). In addition, 2009 statistics show that 14% of girls who had sexual intercourse in the last three months used alcohol or drugs before their last sexual intercourse, which was a notable drop from 22% in 2007 (DPI 2009; DPI, 2007). In 2009, 33% of Wisconsin girls reportedly used birth control pills in their last sexual intercourse and 59% girls used condoms in their last sexual intercourse - a 3% increase since 2007 (DPI, 2009; DPI, 2007). Students reporting multiple (4 or more) sexual partners decreased from 1993-2009 -14% to 10% (DPI, 2009).

As shown in Table 3, African American, American Indian and Hispanic youth were more likely to report having had sexual intercourse than their White and Asian counterparts (State of Wisconsin Department of Health & Family Services [DHFS], 2009).

**Call for action: There is a need for more qualitative research identifying sociocultural factors that may be contributing to these statistics regarding sexual health among girls of color in Wisconsin.**

For the past two decades, the abstinence-only-until-marriage sexuality education in schools has received heavy federal funding.

**In November 2009, however, the Wisconsin Assembly passed the Healthy Youth Act that would require Wisconsin school districts to teach comprehensive sex education, a change from the law that required human sexuality education to emphasize abstinence-only-until-marriage (SIECUS, 2010).**

This new bill requires school districts to provide medically accurate and age-appropriate information that addresses “the health benefits, side effects, and proper use of contraception and other methods for preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases,” among other topics (Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States [SIECUS], 2010). The change reflects research indicating comprehensive sex education as more effective in reducing STIs, HIV infection, and unintended pregnancies (University of California San Francisco [UCSF], AIDS Research Institute, 2002).

Since sex education has, as its goal, the reduction of HIV, STIs, and pregnancy, education should focus on targeting the entire population, especially risk groups such as the sexually experienced, sexually abused, homeless and runaway, and LGBT youth. Additionally, sex education should respect the diversity of values and beliefs represented in the community (UCSF, 2002).

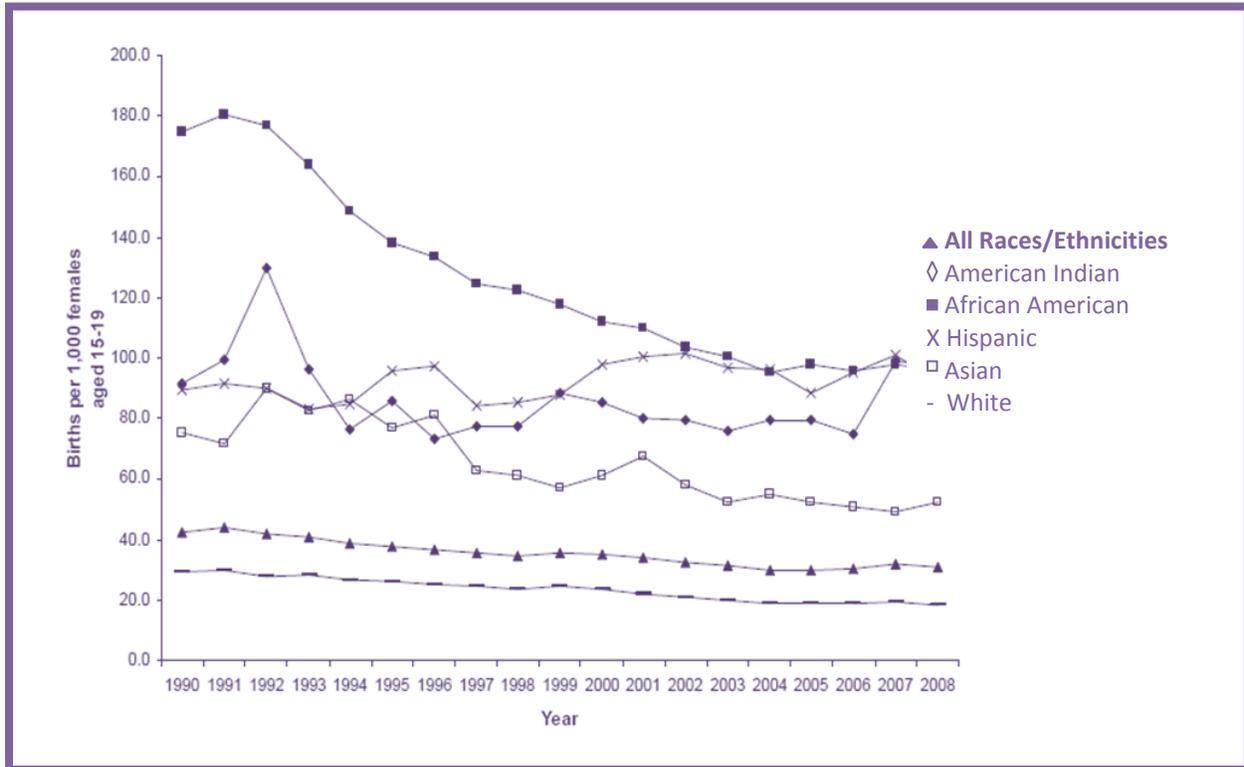
## TEEN PREGNANCY

According to the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Wisconsin’s 2008 teen birth rate was 31 births per 1,000 females aged 15-19 (DHFS, 2009b). In 2006, U.S birth rate was 42 births per 1,000. It is also important to note that there was a decline in number of births to Wisconsin girls under 15 years of age.

**In 2008, 76 births were to Wisconsin girls younger than 15-years-old, compared to 92 births in 2006 (DHFS, 2009a).**

Figure 14 displays Wisconsin births to teen mothers. In 2008, Wisconsin teen births represented 8% of births overall. Teen births accounted for 22% of all African American births -- the highest among all ethnicities (DHFS, 2009b). In comparison to 2007 data, Wisconsin teen birth rates for females under the age of 20 declined in 2008 among Whites, African Americans, American Indians, and Hispanics, but increased among Asians (DHFS, 2009b).

**FIGURE 14: WISCONSIN TEEN BIRTHS BY RACE / ETHNICITY, 1990 – 2008**



Source: State of Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. *Births to teens in Wisconsin 2008*.

In 2008, the infant mortality rate was 10.8 per 1,000 births to Wisconsin teens between the ages of 15-19, compared to 6.6 per 1,000 births to Wisconsin mothers ages 20 and older (DHFS, 2009b). The infant mortality rate among Wisconsin African American teenage girls (13.3) was much higher than White girls (8.6) and other racial/ethnic groups (10.1) (DHFS, 2009b).

**Wisconsin law provides minors' access to confidential reproductive healthcare for contraception, pregnancy-related care, and testing and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases. However, it does not provide for confidential abortion services to minors unless certain conditions are met (Physicians for Reproductive Choice & Health, 2008).**

## SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS/DISEASES (STI/D)

According to the Wisconsin STD Program, in 2007 and 2008, chlamydia was the predominant sexually transmitted infection among youth and the predominant STI among females (DHFS, 2009c). In 2008, 80.2% of Wisconsin youth infected by chlamydia were girls (DHFS, 2009c). The rate of incidence of chlamydia among teenage girls between the ages 15-19 increased from a rate of 2877 (per 100,000) in 2007 to 2988 (per 100,000) in 2008 (DHFS, 2009c). There was a corresponding increase in the incidence rate of chlamydia among teenage males during the same period.

**In 2008, incidence of chlamydia among girls was 4.4 times higher than in boys. Possible reasons for the disparity are that the cervix of teenage girls is not mature and therefore the cervix is more susceptible to infection and multiple re-infections if their partners are untreated (CDC).**

### **Note:**

As stated in the Status of Girls in Wisconsin 2007 report (RCWG, 2007), incidence of sexual intercourse is measured by the Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey (DPI, 2009), but general sexual activity is not measured. Therefore, it is important to note that incidences of oral and anal sex which affect health outcomes were not reported by the survey.

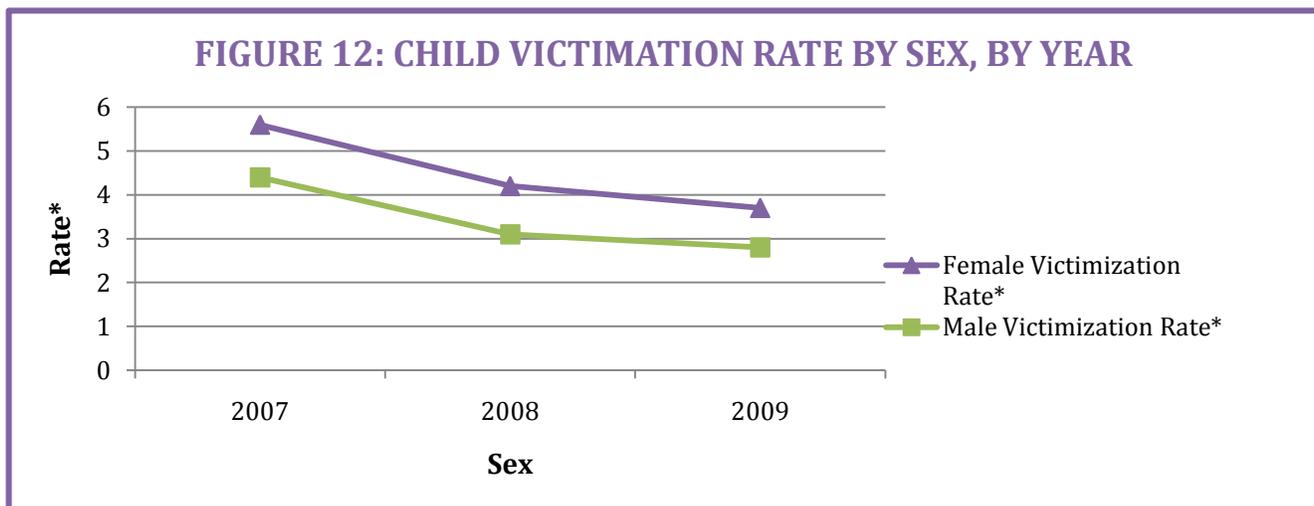
Data indicate a decrease in the overall number of gonorrhea cases among Wisconsin youth from 2007 to 2008 (DHFS, 2009c). In regards to syphilis, the difference in case number was too small to provide an accurate representation of any change in trends from 2007 to 2008. Unlike in 2007, data for incidence of genital herpes were not provided by the Wisconsin STD program in 2008. In 2007, the rate of incidence of genital herpes was 219 per 100,000 teens (DHFS, 2009c). The overall rate of the four sexually transmitted infections (e.g., chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, and genital herpes) among African American youth declined 17% between 1993 and 2007; however, in 2007, the African American youth incidence rates for these STIs were still 5 times the rate for all Wisconsin youth (DHFS, 2009c).

**Call for action:** More context is needed to better understand these statistics. What sociocultural factors are contributing to these STI statistics? Furthermore, to date, there are no data publicly available regarding STI incidence rates by race *and* gender. In order for programming to reach its full potential, these data would be very useful.

## ABUSE

### CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

The number of child abuse and neglect cases reported in Wisconsin dropped from 6,721 cases in 2007 to 4,865 cases in 2008 and then dropped again in 2009 to 4,289 cases (DHFS, 2007, 2008, 2009). Figure 12 (page 22) displays child victimization by rate and sex of child for those years.



\*Cases per 1,000 population

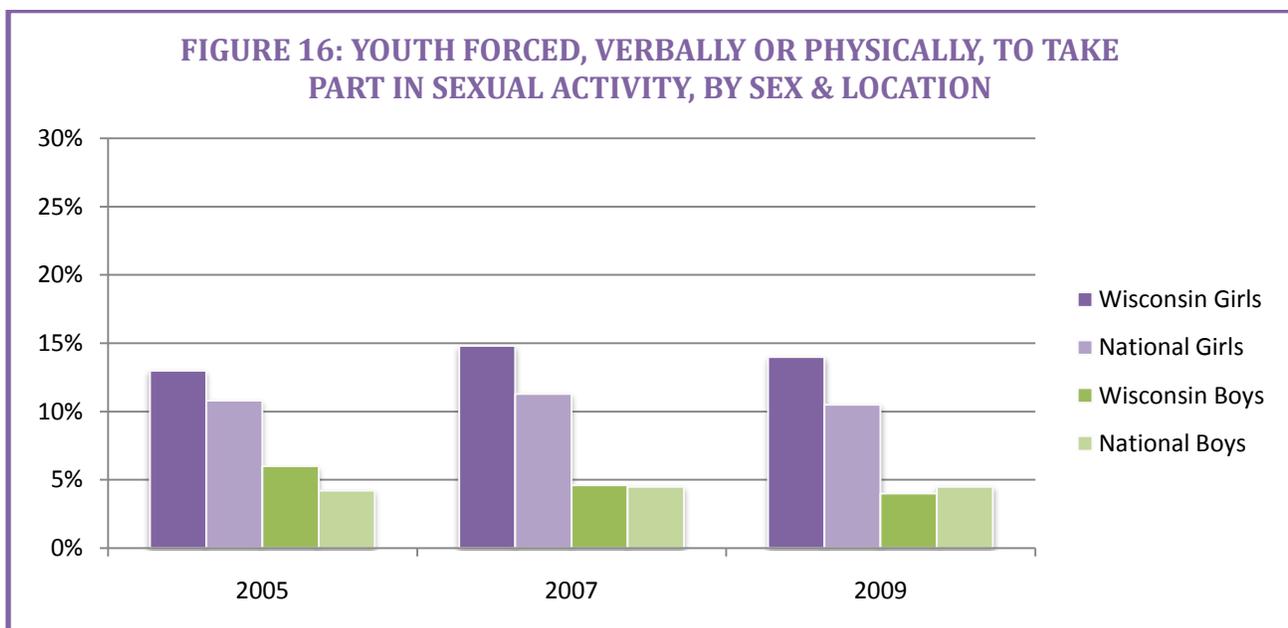
Source: Adapted from State of Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Division of Children and Family Services, Bureau of Programs and Policies. *Child abuse and neglect report* (2007, 2008, 2009).

There are racial disparities in reported child maltreatment. In 2009, Caucasian children made up 85% of the total child population but 70% of maltreatment victims. African American children made up 10% of the total child population while accounting for 24% of maltreatment victims. American Indian children made up 2% of the child population and 4% of victims. Finally, Asian American children made up 3% of the child population but 2% of maltreatment victims (DHFS, 2009).

For girls in Wisconsin, the likelihood of sexual abuse increases between the ages of 11 and 15. For boys in this age span, however, likelihood of sexual abuse decreases.

## SEXUAL ASSAULT

As shown in Figure 16 (page 23), a higher percentage of females than males were reportedly verbally or physically forced to take part in sexual activity.



Sources: Adapted from State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (2009). *2009 Wisconsin youth risk behavior survey: Executive summary*. State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (2007). *2007 Wisconsin youth risk behavior survey*. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2007). *Youth risk behavior surveillance – United States, 2007*. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2009). *Youth risk behavior surveillance – United States, 2009*.

## SOCIAL AGGRESSION

In 2009, 15% of Wisconsin high school students reported feeling unsafe at school. However, nearly a quarter (23%) reported being harassed and bullied on school property in the past 12 months. In addition, 18% of students reported that someone tried to hurt them by “hitting, punching, or kicking them” while at school. Nearly half of high school girls (47%) and 36% of high school boys believe that bullying and harassment are problems at their school (DPI, 2009).

## CYBERBULLYING

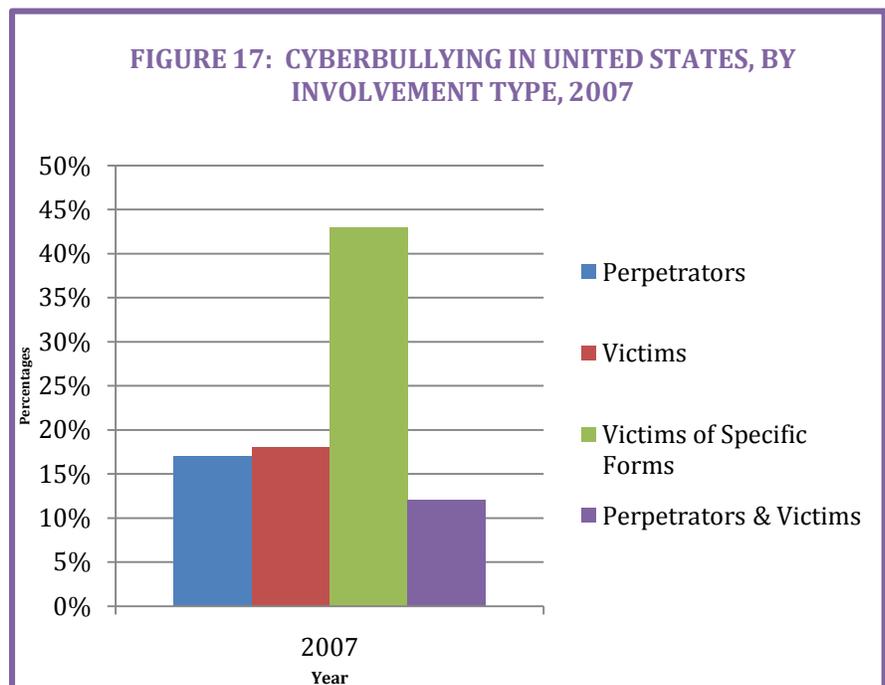
A new type of bullying, *cyberbullying*, is becoming a significant issue in adolescent life. The Cyberbullying Research Center (2009) defines *cyberbullying* as “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices.”

*“It was just some guy on YouTube his name was fire guy or something and he just started being a jerk to me and my friend for like no reason.”*

-Cyberbullying Research Center, quote from 12-year-old girl as part of ongoing study

To date, there is little state-specific research focusing on bullying and cyberbullying. In 2007, however, a survey was conducted with 2,000 middle-school students from a populous school district in the United States.

As shown in Figure 17, 17% of students reported being perpetrators of cyberbullying, 18%



Source: Adapted from Cyberbullying Research Center. (2009b). *Cyberbullying fact sheet: What you need to know about online aggression*.

reported being victims and 12% reported being both perpetrators *and* victims. In addition, 43% said they had experienced specific forms of cyberbullying such as receiving a message that made them upset (Cyberbullying Research Center [CRC], 2009b).

The same study surveyed adolescents on suicide ideation. Cyberbullying victims and perpetrators were about twice as likely as those not involved in cyberbullying to have attempted suicide. Of the girls involved in this study, 18% reported that they attempted suicide and 20% reported that they seriously thought about attempting suicide. While neither cyberbullying nor traditional bullying directly cause suicide, both forms of bullying are reported to intensify feelings of instability and hopelessness within already troubled individuals (Cyberbullying Research Center, 2009a).

*“I posted something asking people to describe me in one word. I expected mean things but the only answers I got were FAT FAT FAT FAT.”*

-Cyberbullying Research Center, quote from 12-year-old girl as part of ongoing study

## “SEXTING”

Aside from bullying, teen girls are involved in other dangerous online activity. A survey conducted by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy surveyed 1,280 teens and young adults. They found that 22% of teen girls (13 to 16 years of age) have sent or posted nude or semi-nude pictures or videos of themselves online. Further, 37% of teen girls send or post sexually suggestive messages and 48% receive them. While 40% of teen girls say they send sexually suggestive content “as a joke”, 29% of teen boys say that girls who do so are “expected to date or hook up in real life” (National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2009).

## SOCIAL SUPPORT

Wisconsin high school youth seek social support from parents, teachers, and other adults in their lives. In 2007, Wisconsin youth reported that when faced with an important question, approximately 90.3% of Wisconsin high school boys and 87.5% of girls reported that they had at least one adult in their lives to turn to for help (DPI, 2007).

As shown in Table 4, the majority of high school girls and boys reported that their families gave them love and support in 2009. Lower percentages of high school students reported that teachers really care, give support, and encouragement.

More high school boys than girls feel like they belong at school, but more girls than boys feel that there is an adult (teacher or other staff member) at school with whom they could talk (DPI, 2010).

**TABLE 4: REPORTED SOCIAL SUPPORT FELT AMONG WI HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, BY SEX, 2009**

<b>TYPE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT</b>	<b>BOYS(%)</b>	<b>GIRLS(%)</b>
<b>Family gives love and support</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>87%</b>
<b>Teachers really care, give support, and encouragement</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>66%</b>
<b>Feel like you belong at school</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>71%</b>
<b>Adult (teacher or other staff) at school you could talk to</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>75%</b>

Source: Adapted from Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Wisconsin YRBS Executive Summary, 2009.

**Beyond the Report: Social support acts as a positive influence or *asset* in the lives of Wisconsin youth. Along with other *assets*, social support has the power to protect them from dangerous activity and promote healthy behaviors. In 2009, students generally reported high levels of social support (DPI, 2010).**

## **A CALL FOR ACTION**

This 2010 Update to the Status of Girls in Wisconsin Report provides you with a snapshot of updated findings related to girls between the ages of 10-19 in the State of Wisconsin. It is our hope that you and your organization, group, and institution will use this Update to help guide your future research projects and programming focusing on Wisconsin girls. Our goal was not only to centralize the most recent data available focusing specifically on girls, but to also highlight the gaps in the research --particularly the gaps that still exist since the 2007 Report -- and areas that need to be researched further.

In conducting research for this Update, our team noticed the overall dearth of recent qualitative data focusing on the range of Wisconsin girls' daily life experiences, voices, views, and perceptions. Updated statistics were generally readily available; however, locating girls' contextualized experiences and gathering girls' voices from ethnically and racially diverse samples represented significant challenges in our work.

***“Action without study is fatal. Study without action is futile.” ~ Mary Beard***

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