

# THE STATUS OF GIRLS IN WISCONSIN:

A Report Update 2010



*Alverno*  
COLLEGE

RESEARCH CENTER FOR  
WOMEN AND GIRLS

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

The Alverno College Research Center for Women and Girls presents the 2010 update to the 2007 Status of Girls in Wisconsin Report. Like the 2007 Report, the purpose of this update is to consolidate data focused on Wisconsin girls, ages 10-19, and make the data accessible to a variety of individual stakeholders, agencies, groups, and institutions that have the needs and interests of Wisconsin girls in mind. It is our hope that the findings in this update can help initiate 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 thus provide an impartial, data-based profile of the lives of Wisconsin girls. Not all of the areas that were addressed in the 2007 Report are included in the following update. It is our intention here to highlight key findings that may differ from those of the 2007 Report.

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

**The Alverno College Research Center for Women and Girls takes scholarly research out of the world of academia and into the real world where it can inspire, transform, and support initiatives that improve the lives of women and girls in Wisconsin and beyond.**

## DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2008, a total of 763,013 young people between the ages of 10 and 19 lived in the state of Wisconsin: 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 state population (United States Census Bureau American Community Survey [USCB ACS], 2008).

As shown in Table 1, girls in Wisconsin showed less ethnic diversity than girls in the United States, but were more diverse than Wisconsin's population of adult women. The majority of Wisconsin girls were White. The percentage of Hispanic girls in Wisconsin increased from 5.7% in 2005 (Alverno College Research Center for Women and Girls [RCWG], 2007) to 6.7% in 2008 (USCB ACS, 2008), paralleling a change in the percentage of Hispanic girls nationally from 17.7% in 2005 (RCWG, 2007) to 18.9% in 2008 (USCB ACS, 2008).

**TABLE 1: WISCONSIN GIRLS (AGES 10-19) BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, COMPARED TO GIRLS IN THE U.S., 2008**

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 AND POVERTY

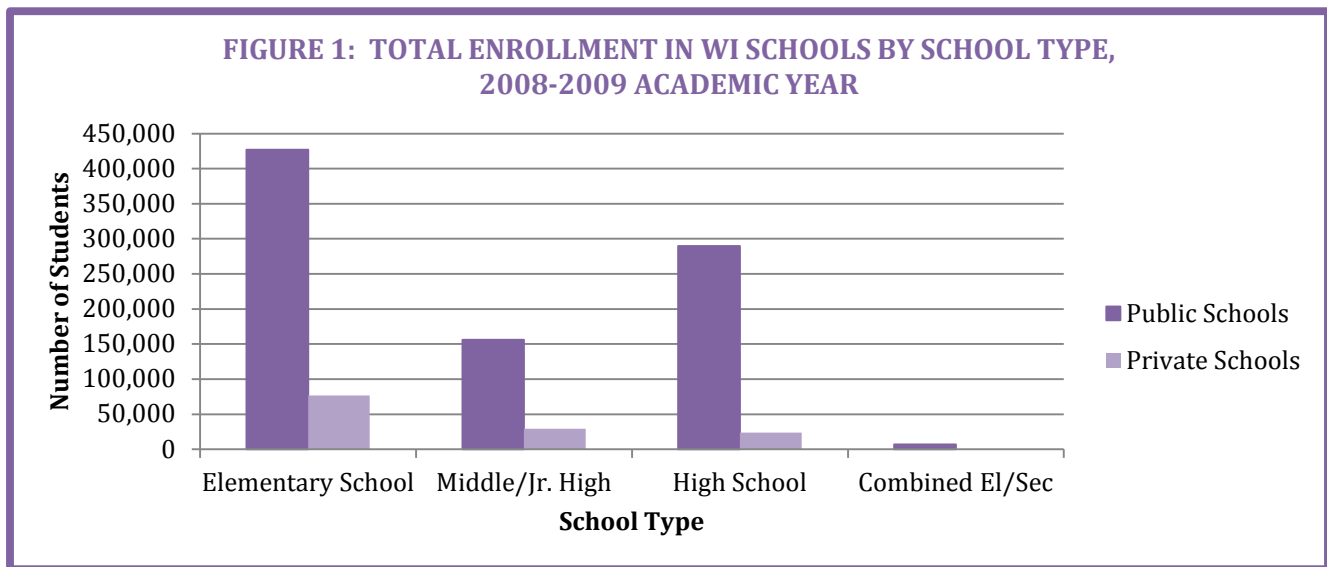
In 2008, more than 66,000 Wisconsin girls aged 16 to 19 were both enrolled in school and employed (USCB, 2008) compared to more than 61,000 in 2005 (RCWG, 2007). In 2008, 43% of girls aged 16 to 19 were enrolled in school and employed, compared to 36% of boys aged 16 to 19 (USCB, 2008).

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 was defined as an annual household income of \$17,346 or less for a single adult with two children, and \$21,834 for two adults and two children (USCB, 2008).

## EDUCATION

### PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

#### ENROLLMENT



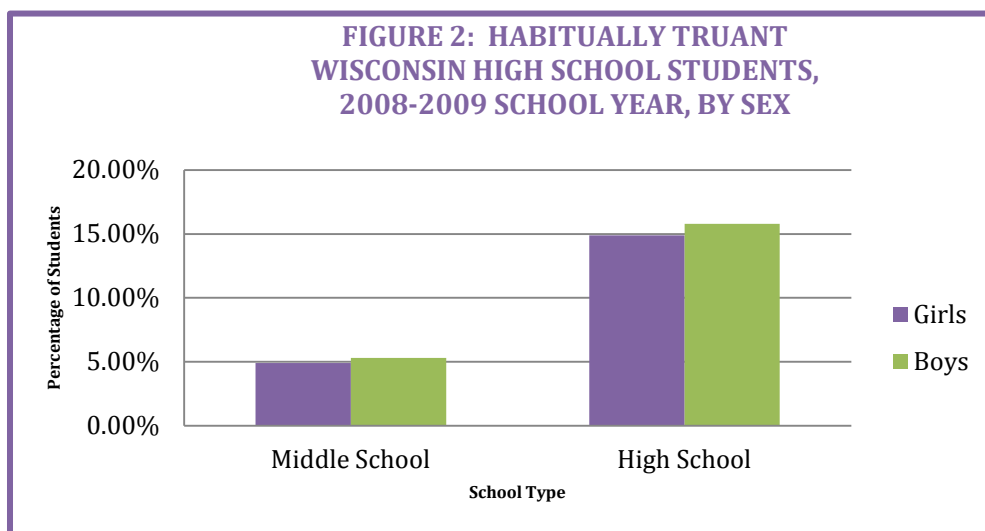
Source: Adapted from State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2010). *Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools (WINSS) data analysis, state level data.*

During the 2008-2009 academic year in Wisconsin public schools (K-12), 48% of students were girls and 52% were boys. During the same academic year in Wisconsin private schools, approximately 50% of 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 from the 1996-1997 to the 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 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).



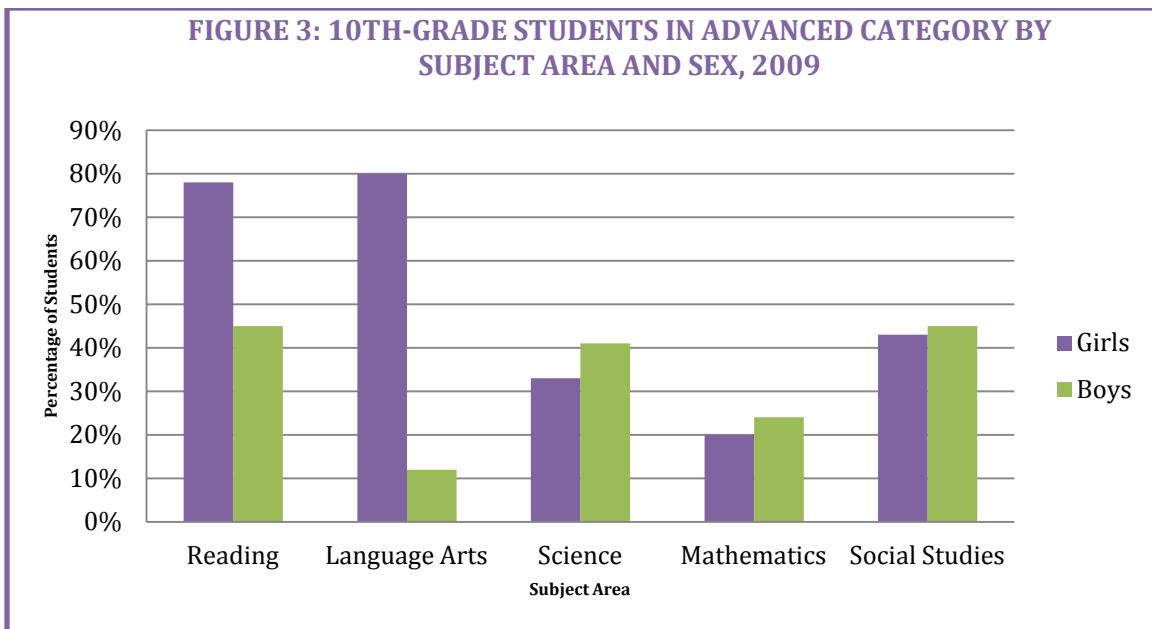
Source: Adapted from State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2010). *Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools (WINSS) data analysis, state level data.*

## 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, from November 2009, represent Wisconsin 10<sup>th</sup> graders—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.*

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, 10th-grade Wisconsin girls reached advanced scoring in each of the five major subject areas, with more than 40% of girls scoring advanced in both reading and social studies (DPI, 2010). Similar scores exist for 10th-grade girls' combined proficient and advanced scores (DPI, 2010).

Data show that girls in fifth and seventh grades have made progress in closing the achievement gap in mathematics, matching boys in advanced scores. In 2009, 45% of 5th-grade and 36% of 7th-grade Wisconsin girls scored at advanced levels in math (DPI, 2010).

## ADVANCED PLACEMENT COURSES AND EXAMINATIONS

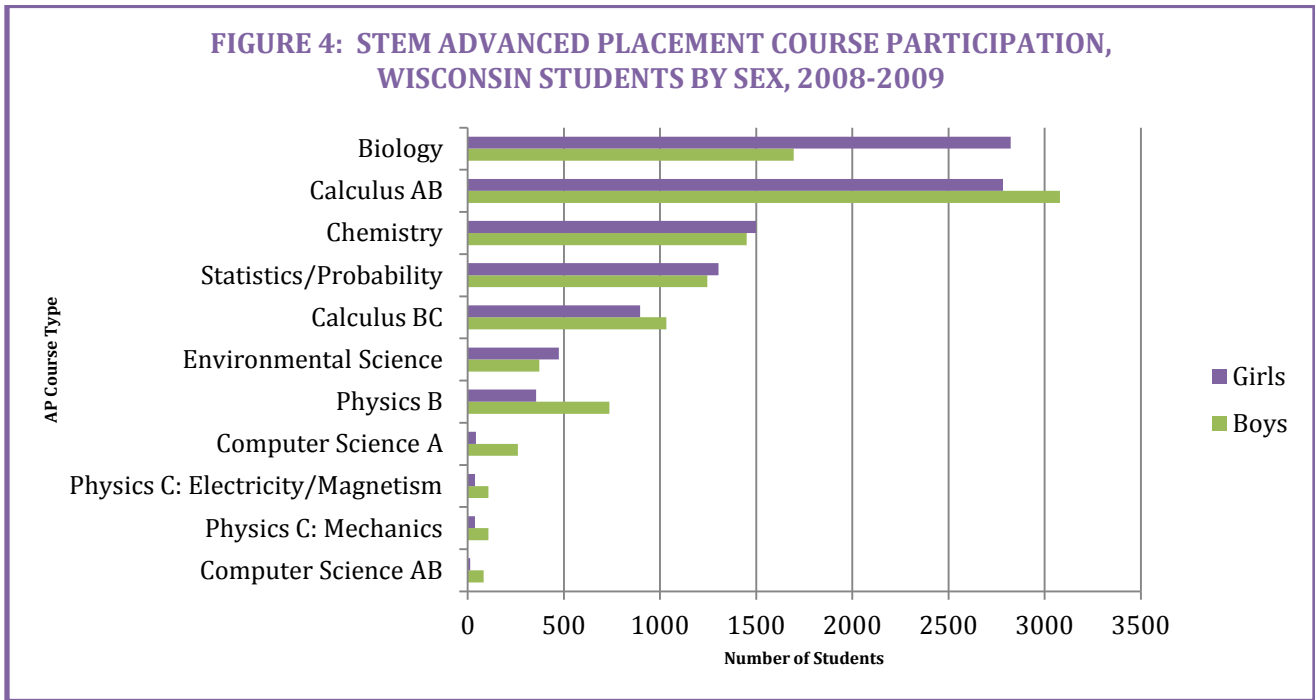
Advanced Placement (AP) courses are college-level courses offered to students in grades 6-12. The majority of students who take these courses are in high school (grades 9-12) (RCWG, 2007).

In 2009, 16,109 Wisconsin high school graduates (25.3%) took an AP exam while in high school. The percentage of students who took an AP exam grew by 32.9% over a five year period (DPI-NR, 2010).

## PARTICIPATION IN AP COURSES

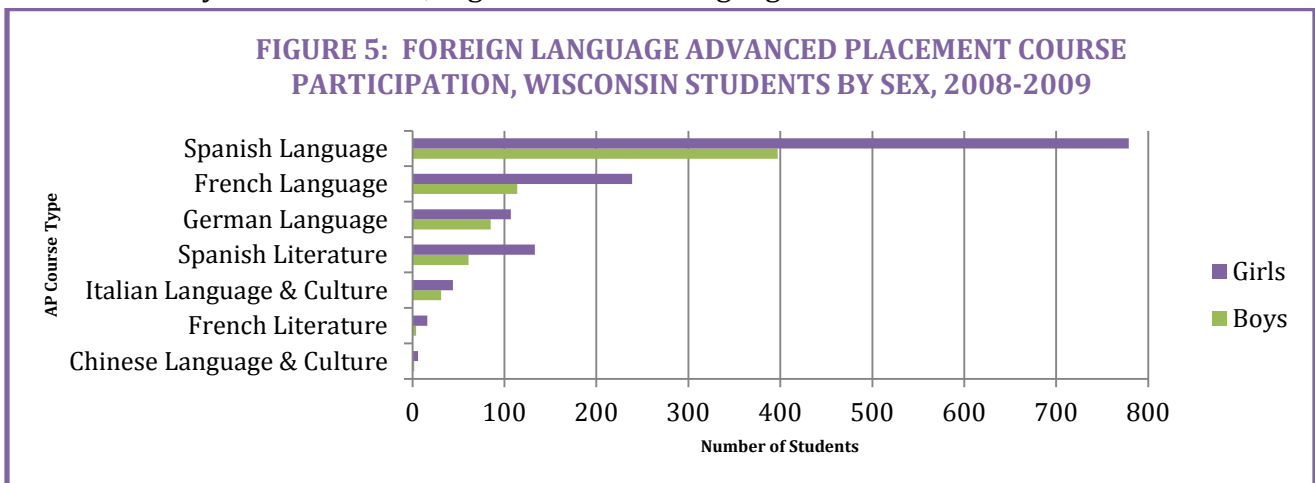
Wisconsin has retained its “Best in the Midwest” title for both participation and performance on Advanced Placement (AP) exams taken by 2009 high school graduates (DPI-NR, 2010).

In 2009, girls participated at similar or lower rates than boys in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) AP courses (Figure 4). An exception is biology, in which Wisconsin high school girls participated at a rate 66% higher than that of boys— 2,823 compared to 1,695 (DPI, 2010).



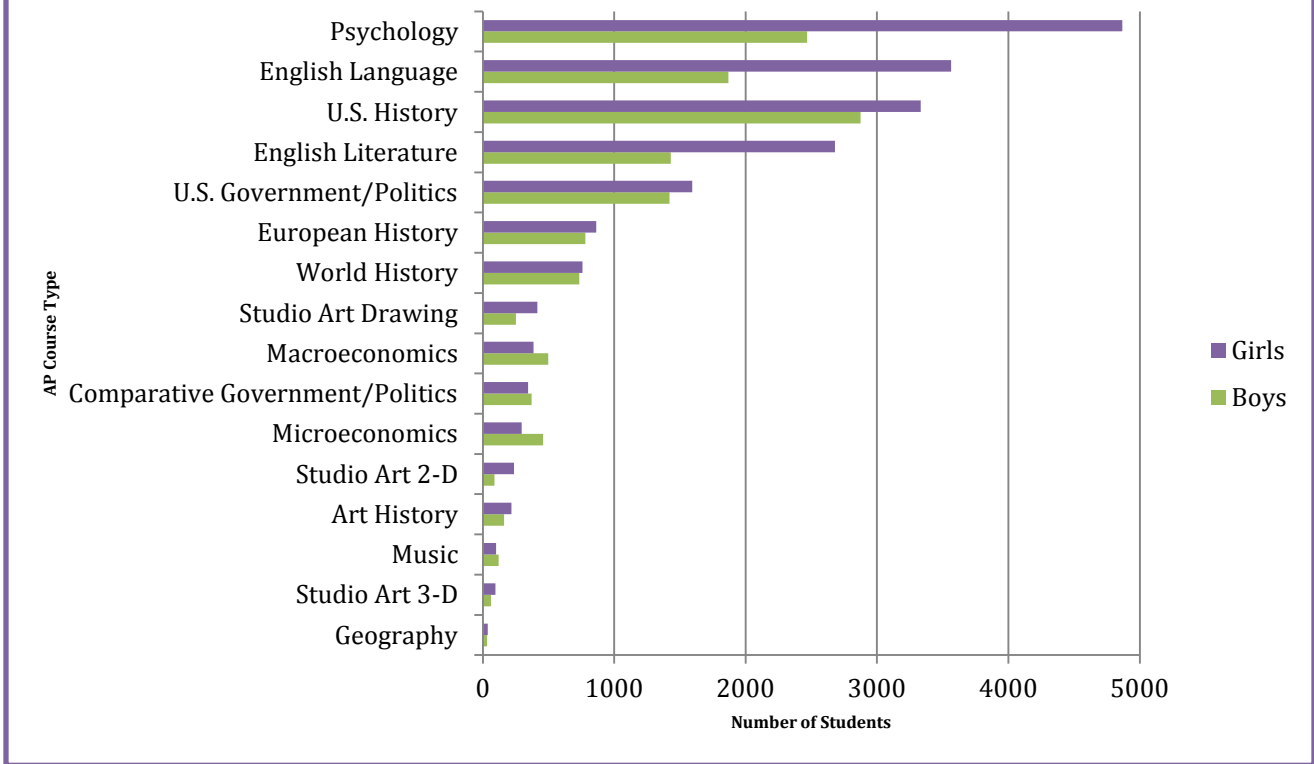
Source: Adapted from State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2010). *Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools (WINSS) data analysis, state level data.*

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



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.*

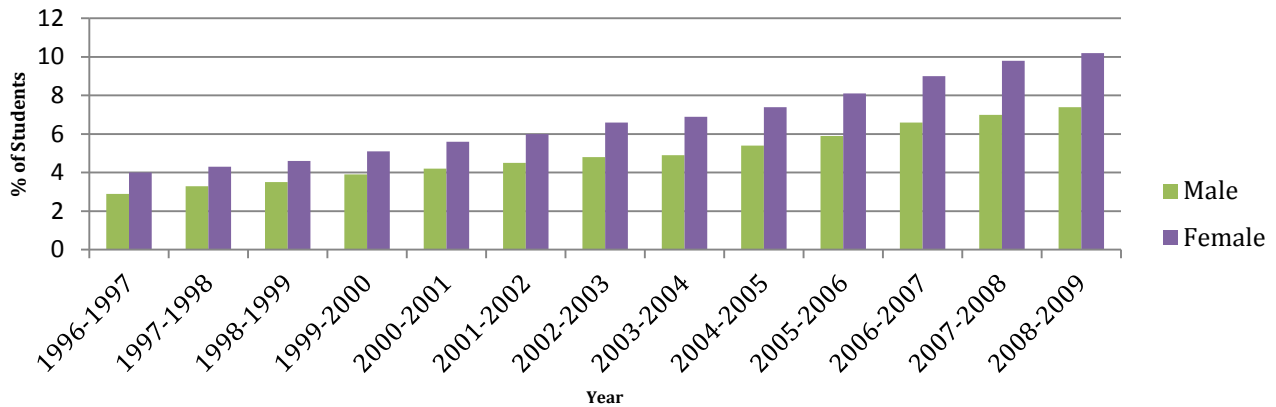
Figure 6 shows participation in AP classes in the social sciences and humanities. In most of these courses, girls participated as often as, or more often than, boys, including in the most popular classes of psychology, English, and U.S. history.

### PARTICIPATION IN AP EXAMS

Typically, a higher number of high school girls than boys take AP examinations, exams that lead to possible college credit. As shown in Figure 7, 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**

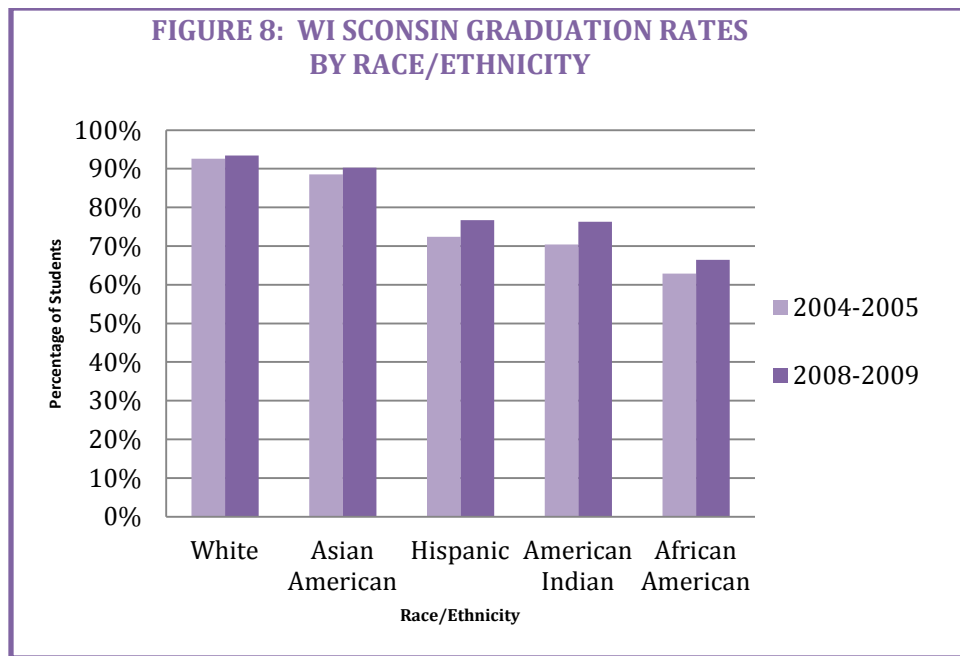
YEAR	GIRLS	BOYS
1996-1997	63.4%	68.4%
1997-1998	64.8%	70.1%
1998-1999	63.7%	71.9%
1999-2000	65.5%	70.7%
2000-2001	62.0%	68.8%
2001-2002	66.7%	72.9%
2002-2003	64.7%	72.0%
2003-2004	66.2%	71.7%
2004-2005	64.6%	70.7%
2005-2006	65.4%	72.1%
2006-2007	65.3%	70.7%
2007-2008	63.8%	70.7%
2008-2009	64.8%	71.6%

Source: Adapted from State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2010). *Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools (WINSS) data analysis, state level data*

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 achieved a score of 3 or above (out of a possible 5) as shown in Table 2 (DPI, 2010).

## GRADUATION AND DROPOUT

During the 2008-2009 academic year, a higher number of girls than boys graduated from Wisconsin public high schools with a diploma—91.5% of girls compared to 87.4% of boys (DPI, 2010). Girls are less likely than boys to drop out of high school. In the 2008-2009 academic year, 1.8% of Wisconsin high school girls dropped out of high school compared to 2.5% of their male peers (DPI, 2010).



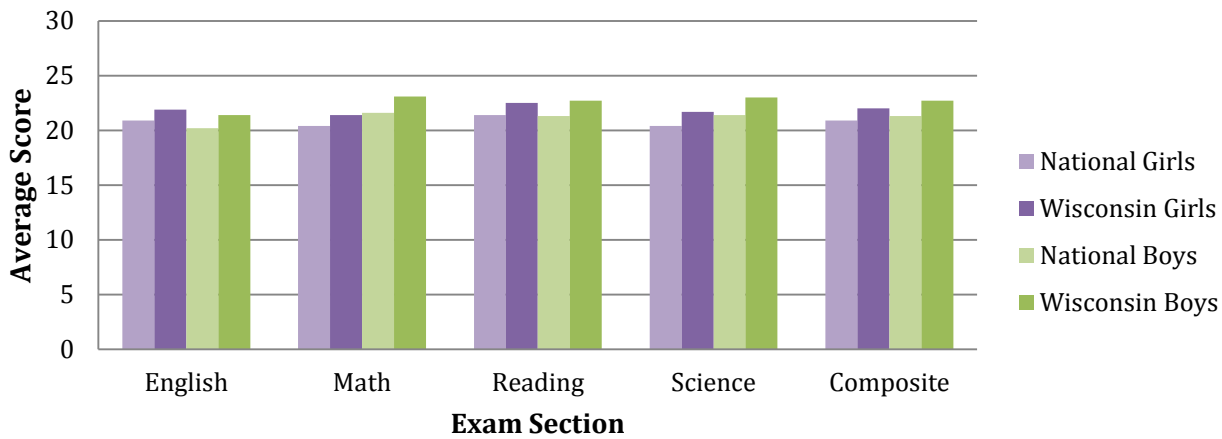
Source: Adapted from State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2010). *Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools (WINSS) data analysis, state level data.*

As shown in Figure 8, graduation rates show racial and ethnic disparity. White and Asian American students graduate at higher rates than other ethnicities. Graduation rates for other racial/ethnic groups were above 60%. To date, data showing graduation rates by gender and race/ethnicity are not publicly available.

## POSTSECONDARY 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 postsecondary educational institutions. A student may take one or both examinations depending on factors such as student specialization or admissions requirements of a desired postsecondary institution (RCWG, 2007). In 2009, 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*.

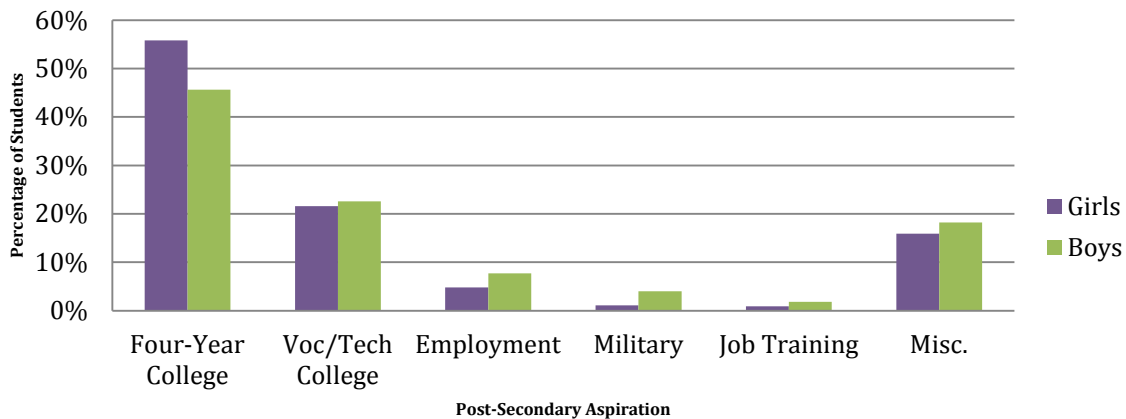
In 2009, 46,658 Wisconsin high school students took the ACT and 54% of the test-takers (25,171) were girls (ACT Inc., 2009). Wisconsin students have consistently scored higher composite ACT scores than the national average since 2007 (ACT, Inc., 2009). There are some gender differences; Wisconsin boys scored higher in the areas of math and science, with 60% of boys and 47% of girls achieving benchmark scores in math and 44% of boys and 32% of girls achieving benchmark scores in science. Benchmark scores are the minimum scores needed on an ACT subject-area test and correspond to a 50% chance of scoring a B or higher and a 75% chance of obtaining a C or higher in the corresponding college courses.

## POSTSECONDARY 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).

Students who fall in the *Employment* category have already secured career-based employment. 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 two-year University of Wisconsin school are included in the four-year college category (DPI, 2010).

**FIGURE 10: POSTSECONDARY ASPIRATIONS OF WI HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, BY GENDER, 2007-2008**



Source: Adapted from State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, *Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools (WINSS) data analysis, state level data.*

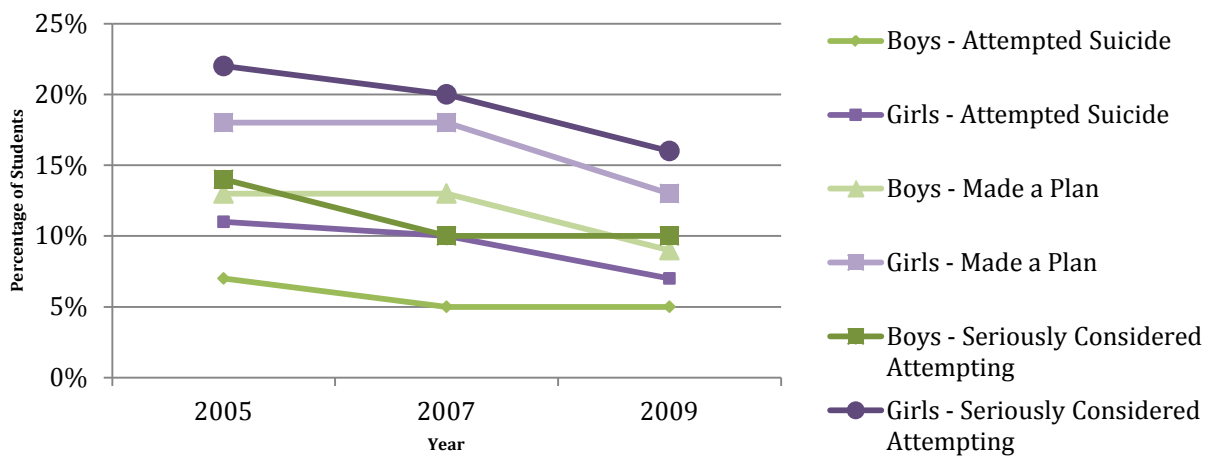
## HEALTH

### 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 from 11% to 7% for girls and from 7% to 5% for boys (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).

**FIGURE 11: HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' REPORTED SUICIDE RATES IN WISCONSIN, BY SEX, 2005-2009**



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 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance* (2007, 2005).

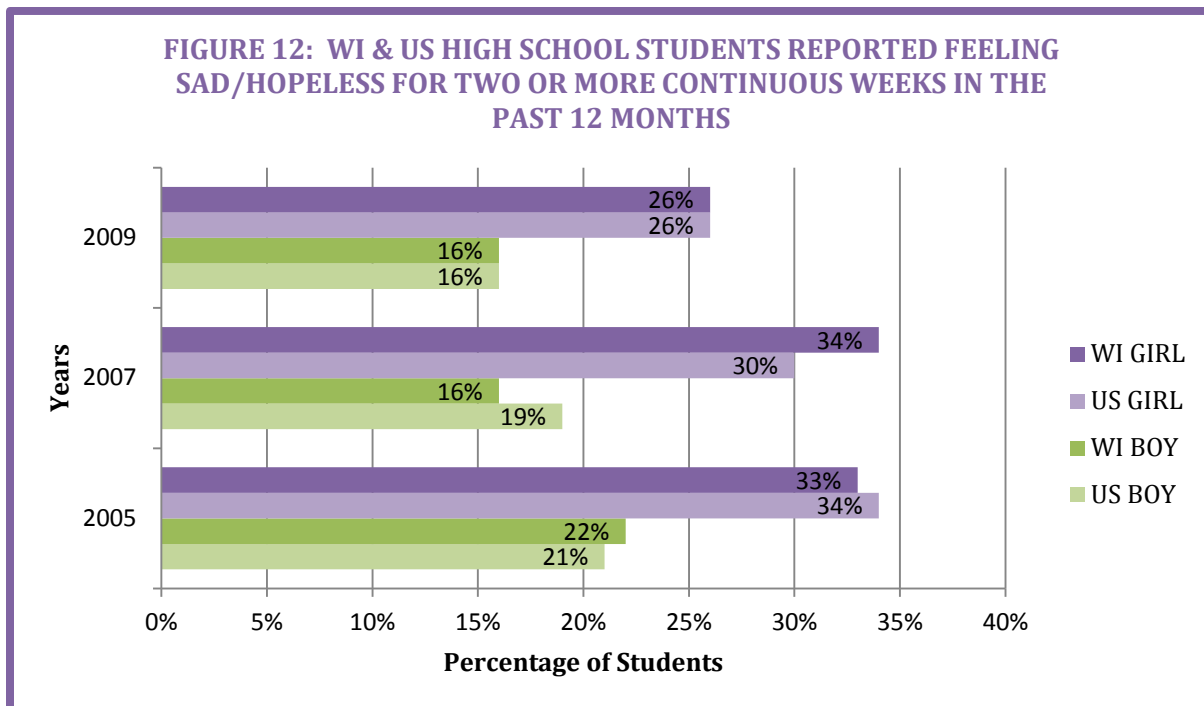
In the past 15 years, the percentage of Wisconsin high school students who self-reported having seriously considered suicide fell by more than half—from 27% in 1993 to 13% in 2009 (DPI, 2009). Rates of suicide attempts in Wisconsin were similar to national rates for 2009, with 5.8% of Wisconsin youth 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 the ages of 10 and 19 (CDC, 2010b). Rates were higher for boys (31) than girls (4) that year (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.

## 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).



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

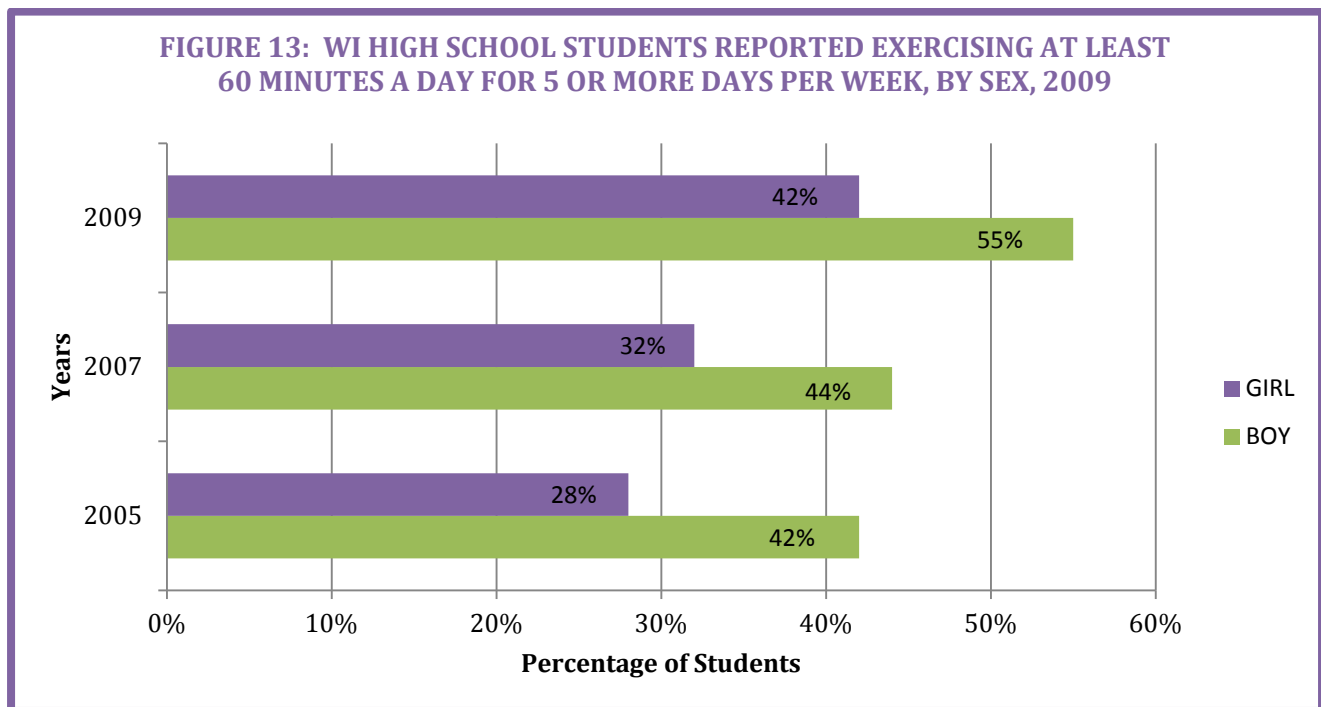
## PHYSICAL HEALTH

### WEIGHT AND HEALTH

Overall, Wisconsin high school students self-reported inadequate levels of physical activity and consumption of fruits and vegetables. The percentage 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 that they were obese, compared to 12% of boys. This statistic may not reflect true obesity rates because of problems with self-reporting. About 60% of girls reported that they were trying to lose weight compared to 28% of boys (DPI, 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). Data indicate that 32% of Wisconsin girls met recommended levels of exercise in 2007 compared to 26% of girls nationally (DPI, 2007; CDC, 2008).



Sources: Adapted from State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, *Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, 2009; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance* (2006, 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 United States report that the fashion industry (89%) and/or the media (88%) place a lot of pressure on teen girls to be thin. The same study reported that African American and Hispanic girls in the United States 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 that 29% of Wisconsin high school girls reported engaging in binge drinking in 2005 (RCWG, 2007).

## CIGARETTE USE

The number of Wisconsin high school girls who self-report having smoked a cigarette before the age of 13 has declined. Since findings reported in 2005, the percentage of girls who self-reported having their first cigarette before the age of 13 has dropped 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.

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

**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.

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% of girls used condoms in their last sexual intercourse, a 3% increase since 2007 (DPI, 2009; DPI, 2007). Students reporting multiple (four or more) sexual partners decreased between 1993 and 2009 from 14% to 10% (DPI, 2009).

Incidence of sexual intercourse is measured by the Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey (DPI, 2009), but general sexual activity is not measured. Therefore, incidences of oral and anal sex, which affect health outcomes, were not reported by the survey.

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 and Family Services [DHFS], 2009).

For the past two decades, the abstinence-only-until-marriage sexuality education in schools has received heavy federal funding. The Wisconsin Healthy Youth Act, passed in 2009, 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).

## TEEN PREGNANCY

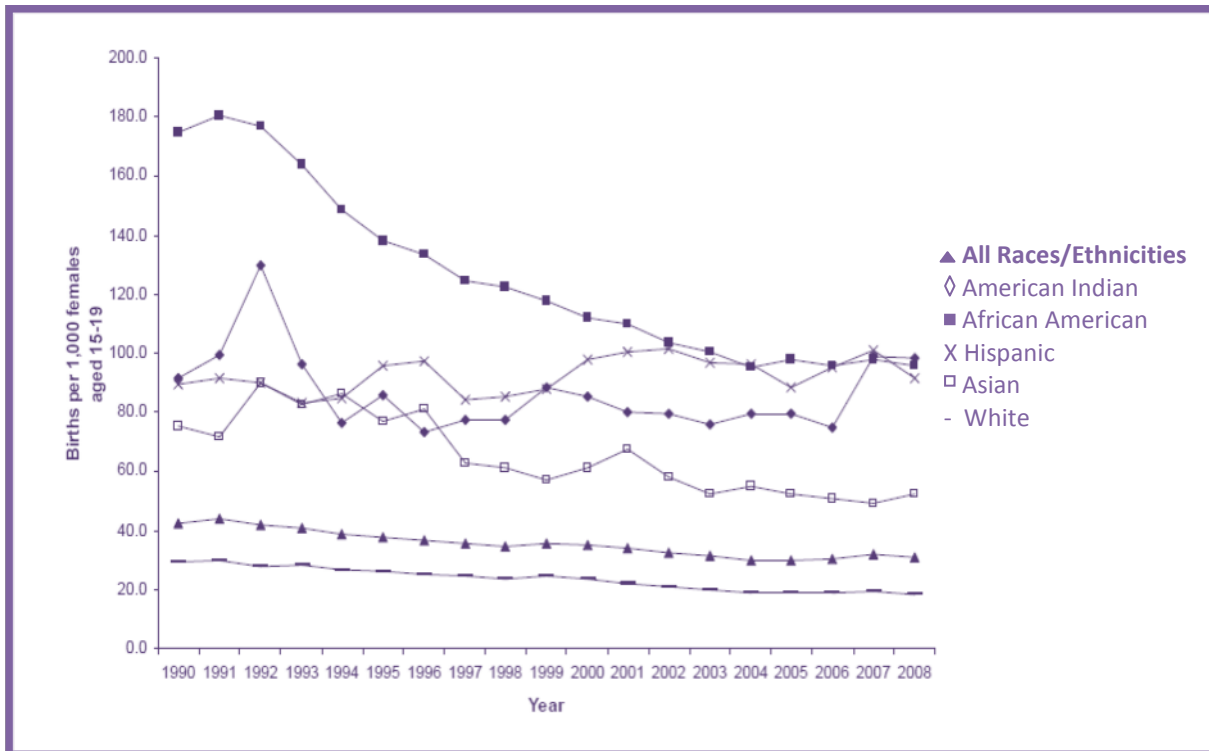
According to the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Wisconsin’s 2008 teen birth rate was 31 births per 1,000 females aged 15-19 (DHFS, 2009b). In 2006, the U.S birth rate was 42 births per 1,000. There was also a decline in the number of births to Wisconsin girls under 15 years of age. In 2008, there were 76 births to Wisconsin girls 15 or younger 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 twenty declined in 2008 among Whites, African Americans, American Indians, and Hispanics, but increased among Asians (DHFS, 2009b).

In 2008, the infant mortality rate was 10.8 per 1,000 births to Wisconsin teens aged 15-19, compared to 6.6 per 1,000 births to Wisconsin mothers aged 20 and older (DHFS, 2009b). The infant mortality rate among Wisconsin African American teenage girls (13.3) was much higher than that for White teenage 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. Wisconsin law does not provide for confidential abortion services to minors unless certain conditions are met (Physicians for Reproductive Choice & Health, 2008).

**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*.

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

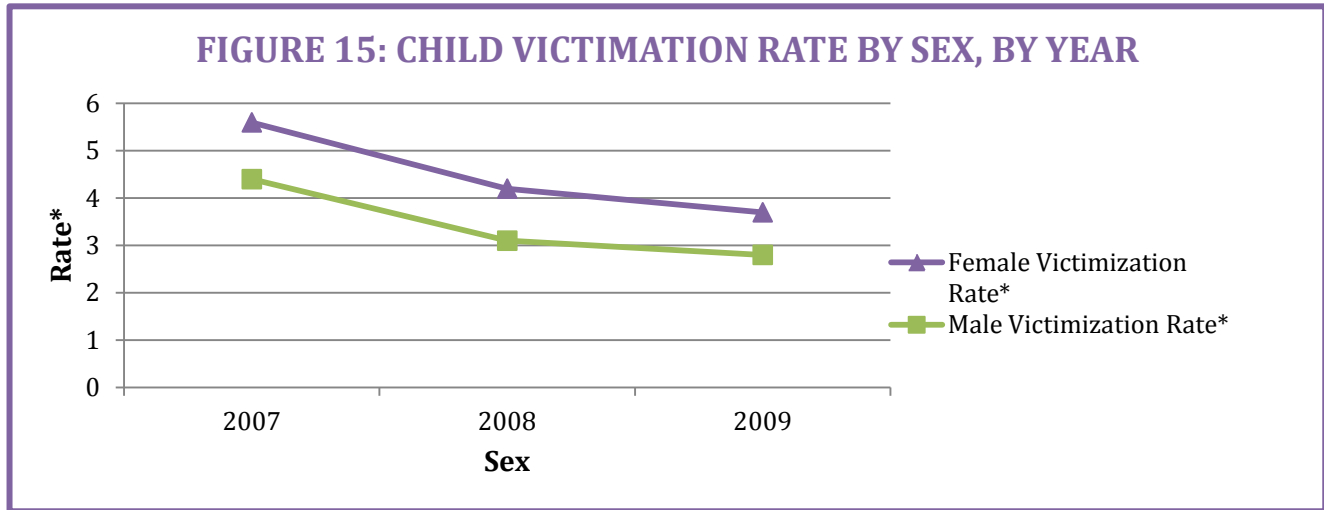
According to the Wisconsin STD Program, in 2007 and 2008, chlamydia was the predominant sexually transmitted infection among youth and the predominant STI among females (DHFS, 2009c). In 2008, 80.2% of Wisconsin youth infected by chlamydia were girls (DHFS, 2009c). The rate of incidence of chlamydia among teenage girls aged 15-19 increased from a rate of 2,877 per 100,000 in 2007 to 2,988 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.

Data indicate a decrease in the overall number of gonorrhea cases among Wisconsin youth from 2007 to 2008 (DHFS, 2009c). Regarding 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 five times the rate for all Wisconsin youth (DHFS, 2009c).

# ABUSE

## CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

The number of child abuse and neglect cases reported in Wisconsin dropped from 6,721 in 2007 to 4,865 in 2008, and then dropped again in 2009 to 4,289 (DHFS, 2007, 2008, 2009). Figure 15 displays child victimization rates by sex of child for those years.



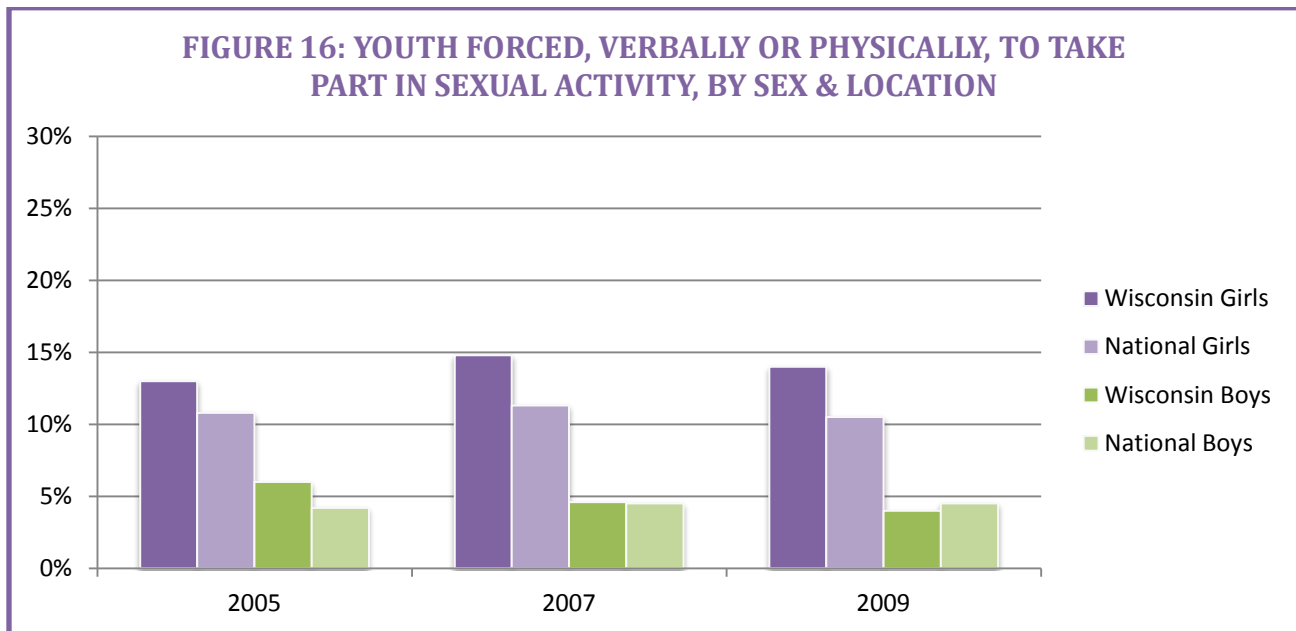
\*Cases per 1,000 population

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, White 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. Asian American children made up 3% of the child population and 2% of maltreatment victims (DHFS, 2009).

## SEXUAL ASSAULT

As shown in Figure 16, a higher percentage of females than males reported being 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*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2007). *Youth risk behavior surveillance – United States, 2007*. Centers 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. 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).

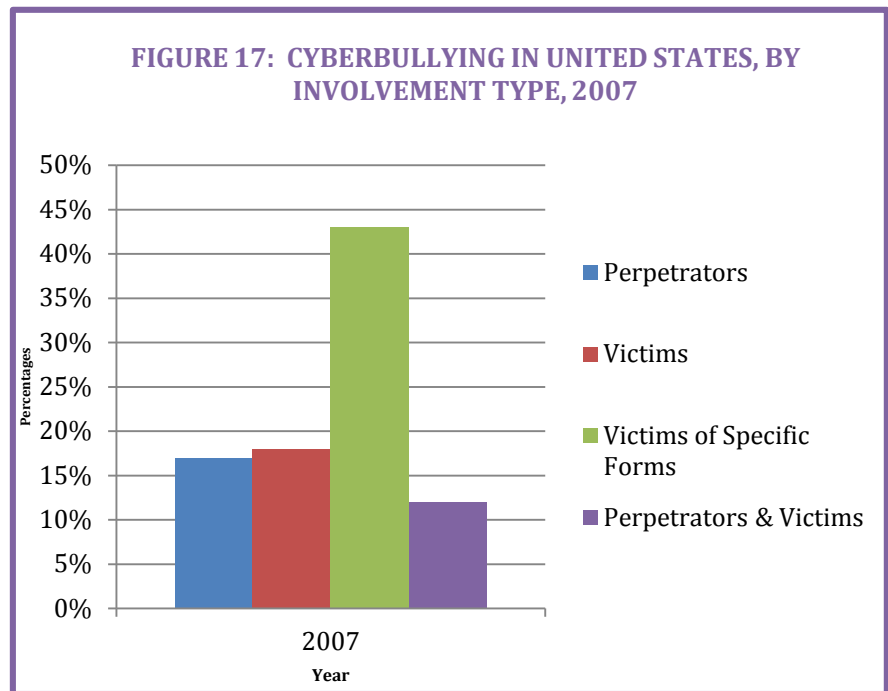
## CYBERBULLYING

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.”

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% 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 and attempts. 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).



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

## “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

Social support acts as a positive influence in the lives of Wisconsin youth. Social support can help protect children and teenagers from dangerous activity and promote healthy behaviors. In 2009, students generally reported high levels of social support (DPI, 2010).

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, 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 they felt teachers really care, give support, and give 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**

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

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

## IN CONCLUSION

The data in this report can be used in a number of ways, but the major purpose of the Research Center for Women and Girls in compiling this information is to provide as unbiased a look as possible at important indicators about the lives that Wisconsin girls live. It is not the purpose of this report to suggest what appropriate benchmarks for a particular statistic might be; in some cases, the salient concern may be gender gaps, whereas in others the concern is comparison to national averages or an ideal performance. By providing these data, as well as additional county-level data in our report appendices, we hope that girl-serving agencies and groups can gain a clearer picture of the current status of girls as they develop important programming to improve girls' lives.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project was supported by the Alverno College Research Center for Women and Girls, former Director Kate Masley (August 2009 - January 2011), Kris Vasquez, Project Supervisor Katie Krueger, and Student Researchers Kaela Broemer, Kassie Cornelius, Megan Kemmet-Wanke, Carolyn Mattox, Meghana Rao, and Bridgett Shepard. The Research Center thanks Russell Brooker, Sandra Graham, Jim Henderson, Christine Lidbury, Cory Masiak, Judith Reissetter, Chris Renstrom, Kim Skerven, and Julie Ullman for assistance with this report.

Original report issued April 2010.

Revised report issued July 2011.

Revised report issued November 2011.

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