



STAND TOGETHER

SO SHE CAN STAND ON HER OWN

YOUNG WOMEN'S INITIATIVE

A FAIR CHANCE

Improving Outcomes and Reducing Barriers to Success and Opportunity for Girls, Young Women, Transgender Young Women, and Gender Non-Conforming Youth of Color in DC



WASHINGTON AREA
WOMEN'S
FOUNDATION



ABOUT THE WASHINGTON AREA WOMEN'S FOUNDATION

The Washington Area Women's Foundation helps build pathways out of poverty for women and their families. We help to create economic opportunities that have positive ripple effects across society.

Since 1998, we have awarded nearly \$11 million in grants to more than 170 community-based organizations in the Washington, DC region and helped women increase their assets and income by more than \$57 million.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Claudia Williams, Program Officer, Research and Evaluation, Washington Area Women's Foundation, oversaw the collection of data and refined the data sets.

Kathryn Bowser designed the report.

THE YOUNG WOMEN'S INITIATIVE, WASHINGTON AREA WOMEN'S FOUNDATION

The Young Women's Initiative of the Washington Area Women's Foundation is a city-wide effort to improve life outcomes and increase opportunities for young women, girls, transgender young women, and gender non-conforming youth of color. Through leadership development, advocacy, and direct support to organizations, the Initiative aims to reduce systemic and institutional barriers to success and opportunity for young women so that they may reach their full potential.

The goals of the Initiative are to:

- Provide meaningful leadership opportunities and experiences to young women and girls of color between the ages of 12-24 in the District of Columbia;
- Work in partnership with key stakeholders, local policy makers, and community-based organizations to improve health, educational, and economic outcomes for young women and girls of color and their families;
- Align services and public policies to eliminate systemic and institutional barriers to success for young women and girls in the region;
- Produce original research on young women, girls, transgender young women, and gender non-conforming youth of color to influence the field and various communities of practice;
- Leverage financial resources and build the capacity of service providers to better meet the needs of young women and girls, transgender young women, gender non-conforming youth of color and their families.

To achieve these goals and improve educational, economic, and life outcomes for young women, girls, transgender young women, and gender non-conforming youth of color in the District of Columbia, the initiative will undertake the following programs and activities:



YWI INNOVATION LAB: The YWI Innovation Lab is a unique platform for local service providers, advocates and stakeholders to share and exchange ideas; learn about opportunities and the barriers to effectively serving young women, girls and gender non-conforming youth of color in the region; and shed a spotlight on innovative or emerging programs and efforts across the country.

The Innovation Lab also produces original research focused on young women and girls in the region that will be used by the field, local and national policy makers, and key stakeholders to inform policy decisions, allocate resources, and target efforts.



YOUNG WOMEN'S ADVISORY COUNCIL: The Young Women's Advisory Council of the Young Women's Initiative will be charged with helping to develop a city-wide, solution-driven plan to better align direct services, policies, and resources for young women and girls of color and their families. The recommendations issued by the Young Women's Advisory Council will help direct resources to communities and organizations. Additionally, Council members will have the opportunity learn about local policy and youth advocacy, and experience the power of participatory grantmaking.



THE YWI FUND: One of the overarching goals of the Young Women's Initiative is to funnel necessary resources to local organizations and agencies working to improve the lives of young women and girls in the DC Metropolitan Region. The YWI Fund invests in organizations working in five key spheres of influence: violence and safety; healthy and nurturing school environments; reproductive freedom and autonomy; housing resources and emergency shelter; and economic security and upward mobility.



GirlsLEAD SUMMIT: The GirlsLEAD Summit is a city-wide convening designed to build the confidence of young women and girls to effect positive change in their neighborhoods and communities. During the Summit, participants will lead interactive workshops on a range of topics including violence, street harassment, reaching educational goals, entrepreneurship, advocacy, social media, and technology. The GirlsLEAD Summit will be held in Winter 2018. To receive updates on the Young Women's Initiative and the Summit, please visit our website at thewomensfoundation.org/ywi.



INTRODUCTION

The DC metropolitan region is home to about 327,865 girls and young women between the ages of 12-24, and nearly one in four or 18 percent reside in the District of Columbia. Of those, 67.4 percent are young women of color.¹ Compared to other girls in the region, young women and girls of color in the District are more likely to live in poverty, experience higher rates of homelessness or reside in communities with fewer resources and bridge opportunities.²

This brief, **A Fair Chance: Improving Outcomes and Reducing Barriers to Success and Opportunity for Girls, Young Women, Transgender Young Women, and Gender Non-conforming Youth of Color in DC**, aims to spark dialogue and spur action in communities and at the local government level to improve health, educational and economic outcomes for girls, young women, transgender young women, gender non-conforming youth of color, and their families.

Using the most recent data available³ the brief attempts to shed light on the social and economic conditions of girls, young women, transgender young women, and gender non-conforming youth of color in DC; to paint an accurate picture of the challenges and barriers to long-term success and opportunity for youth; and to identify opportunities for strategic collaboration and support across various communities of practice.

The brief is a part of the Washington Area Women's Foundation's commitment to racial equity and building the leadership of girls and young women. Our vision is to build a region where all residents thrive and the economic security and well-being of low-income girls, women and families is assured.

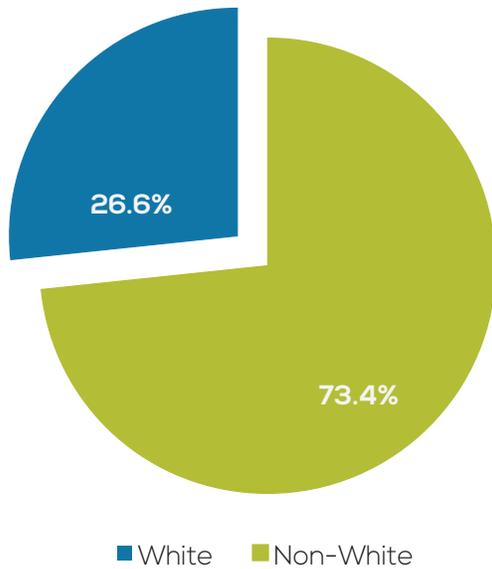
LIMITATIONS OF THE BRIEF

While this report tells us much about the social and economic conditions of girls, young women, and gender non-conforming youth of color in the District, it is not an all-encompassing picture. Data, both quantitative and qualitative, on LGBTQ youth, Native American and Asian girls and young women were limited. We intend for this report to encourage further conversation and provide the impetus for additional research and data collection.

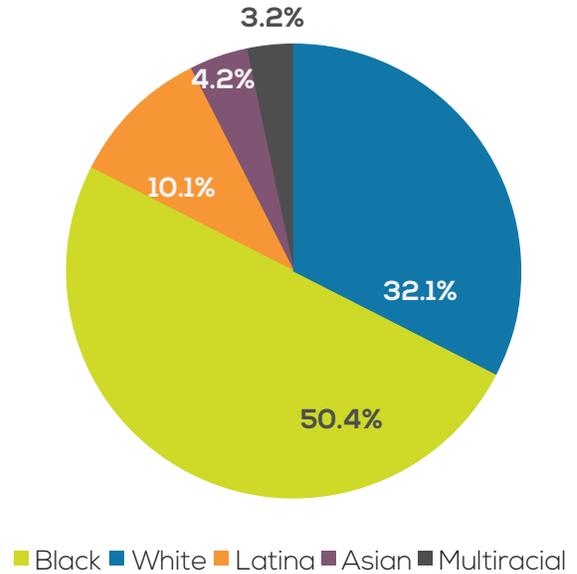
DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

Six out of nine, or 67.4 percent of girls and young women between the ages of 12-24 in the District are women of color. Fifty percent are Black, 32.1 percent are White non-Hispanic, 10.1 percent are Latino and 4.2 percent are Asian. With regard to citizenship and immigration status, in the District, 73.4 percent of foreign born young women identify as women of color.⁴

Distribution of Foreign Born Young Women in DC by Race and Ethnicity, 2011-2015



Distribution of Young Women in DC by Race and Ethnicity, 2011-2015

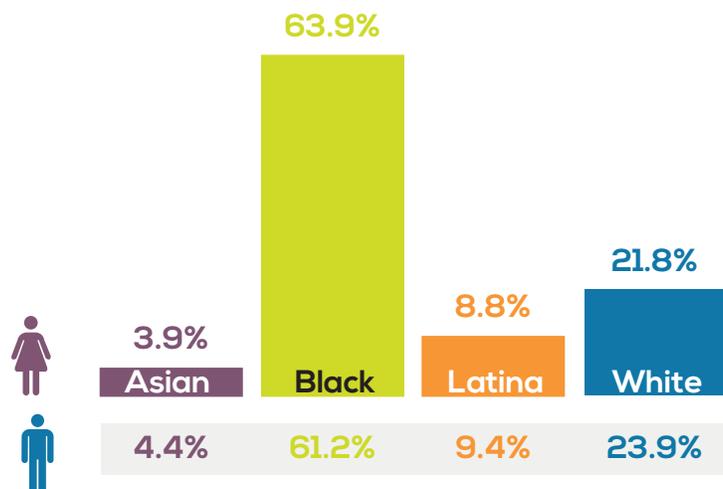


The Women's Foundation's analysis of the American Community Survey, 2011-2015. Note: For ages 12-24 years.

POVERTY AND ECONOMIC SECURITY

Girls and young women of color are more likely to live in poverty in the District. The poverty rate for girls and young women in the District is 34.5 percent. For girls and young women of color, however, the poverty rate is higher (37.2 percent). Among all girls and young women between the ages of 12-24 in poverty in the City, 64 percent are Black and 9 percent are Latina⁵

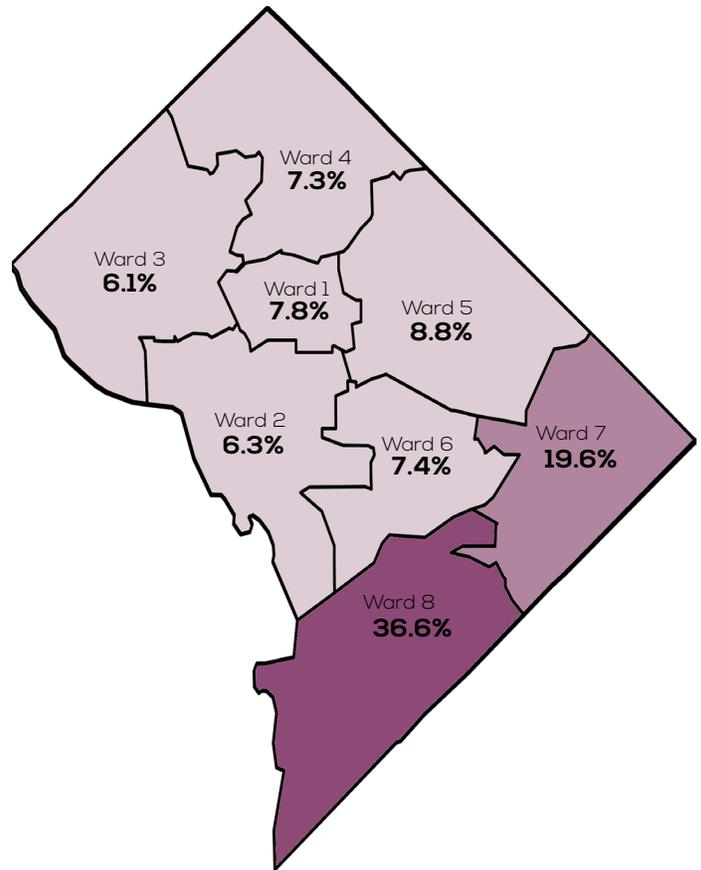
Distribution of Youth Poverty in DC by Race and Ethnicity, 2011-2015



The Women's Foundation's analysis of the American Community Survey, 2011-2015. Note: For ages 12-24 years.



Distribution of Young Women of Color in Poverty in DC, 2011-2015



The Women's Foundation's analysis of the American Community Survey, 2011-2015.
Note: For ages 12-24 years.

Across the eight wards in the District, girls and young women of color in poverty are more likely to reside in Wards 7 and 8 with poverty rates of 19.6 percent, and 36.6 percent.⁶ Since the most recent recession, the poverty rate for Wards 7 and 8 has increased from 27 percent pre-recession to 28.0 and 39.5 percent respectively for women in 2015. In other parts of the city, poverty rates fell by one percent.⁷

DISCONNECTED YOUTH AND UNEMPLOYMENT

One in every seven Americans ages 16 to 24 is neither working nor in school—5.8 million young people in all.⁸

Unemployment or disconnection from the labor market or education, and a lack of training opportunities is a problem for youth in the District. Studies show that disconnected youth, defined as young people who are neither working nor in school, are more likely to struggle in the labor market as adults and earn less than their peers who have achieved steady employment over time or higher levels of education.⁹

Nationally, the youth unemployment rate is 11.6 percent. When race is taken into consideration, the rate in late 2016 is more stark: the unemployment rate of black youth increased by 25%, up 11 percent over the same period the year before. White youth unemployment is roughly half that rate at 13 percent.¹⁰

In the Washington DC metropolitan area, the disconnection rate is 11.3 percent. However, in the City, nearly one in five African American youth is disconnected and the unemployment rate for black youth between the ages of 16-24 is 41 percent. In DC, the disconnection rate of Latino youth is 11.2 percent.

In DC, disconnection is highly influenced by neighborhood. The rate is highest east of the Anacostia River at 31.7 percent and lowest west of Rock Creek Park at 3.0 percent. While the DC metropolitan area ranks third nationally in terms of disconnected youth, the rate of disconnection east of the Anacostia River is three times the rate for the entire metro area.

Nationally, when gender is taken into consideration, with the exception of Latinas, girls and young women are slightly less likely to be disconnected than boys and young men, 12.0 percent vs. 12.5 percent, a small but statistically significant difference. In the District, the disconnection rate among young women is 10.3 percent compared to 12.3 percent for young men.¹¹

EARLY MOTHERHOOD AND REPRODUCTIVE & SEXUAL HEALTH

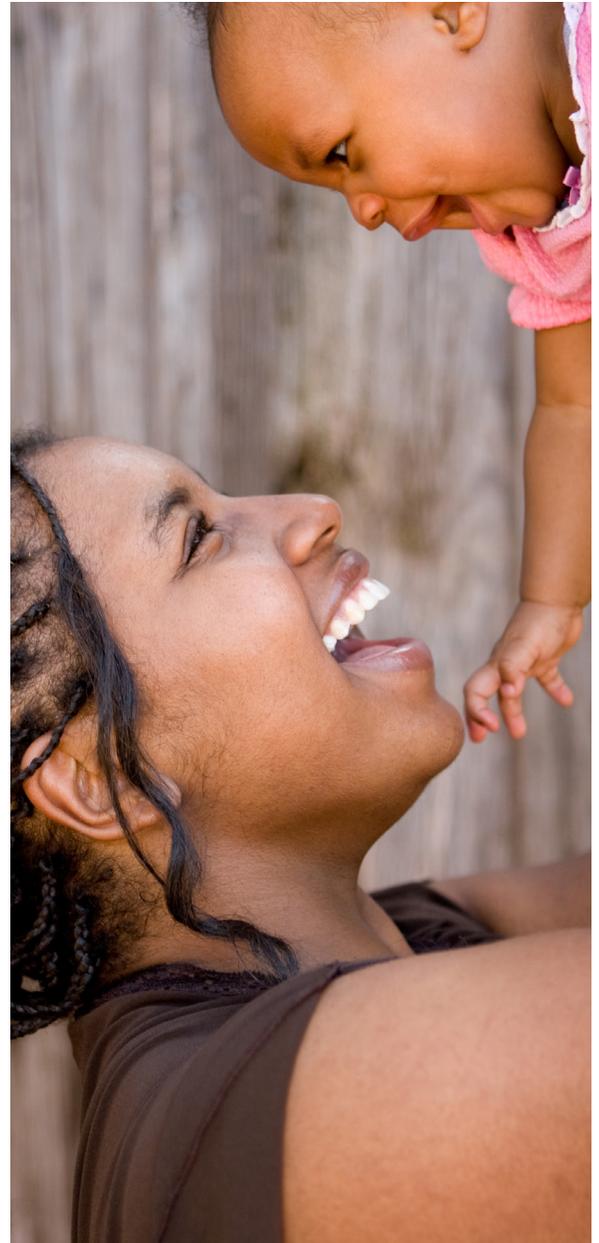
“I got pregnant in 8th grade, and I was taking care of my daughter in the 9th grade. The hardest part was going to school and my friends moving back from me. The other thing that was hard was that after having my daughter, I [realized] I didn’t know nothing about motherhood. Motherhood is very hard.”

--Rosa, a young mother in DC

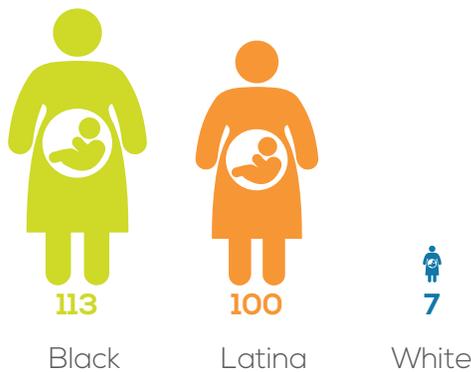
Race and ethnicity are strong predictors of early motherhood in DC. Despite dramatic decreases over the last decade in teen births and pregnancies in DC, Black and Latina girls are more likely to become young mothers compared to their White counterparts—113 per 1,000 girls for Blacks, 100 per 1,000 girls for Latinas, and 7 per 1,000 girls for White non-Hispanic girls.¹²

Next, access to the full range of reproductive health care options is critical to the long-term success of girls and young women in the District. According to a study by the Center for Disease Control, in 2013, one in six high schoolers in DC had engaged in sexual activity or intercourse by the age of 13 and a little over a third reported that they were currently sexually active.¹³

Among gay, lesbian or bisexual youth in DC, 66 percent reported that they had engaged in sexual activity and only a small fraction reported that they did not use birth control or condoms, 32 percent and 13 percent, respectively.¹⁴ (The DC Center for the LGBTQ Community)



Teen Pregnancy Rate in DC by Race and Ethnicity, 2011

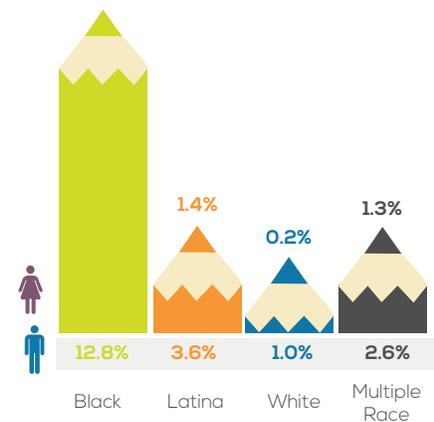


The Women’s Foundation’s compilation of data from The National Campaign to Prevent Pregnancy, 2011. Note: Number of pregnancies per 1,000 Girls, 15 to 19 years old.

IN-SCHOOL DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS AND SUSPENSION RATES

In-school disciplinary actions and suspension rates among Black and Latina girls and young women are alarmingly high compared to other girls in the District. Black girls are nine times more likely to receive at least one out-of-school suspension, compared to non-Black girls. Less than 0.2 percent of White non-Hispanic girls in DC receive an out-of-school suspension.¹⁵

Rates of Out-of-School Suspensions in DC by Race and Ethnicity, 2015-2016



YOUTH ENGAGEMENT WITH THE JUVENILE CRIMINAL-LEGAL SYSTEM

*“What really is important is that we know whenever a young person commits an offense and walks through the doors of a courthouse in DC, it’s a turning point in their lives. And how government responds at that critical moment can help turn their trajectory around.”*¹⁶ (Townes, 2016)

--DC Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie

Over the last several years, youth-involved crime has trended down in DC. From 2009 to 2014, the number of youth arrests plummeted by 27 percent. Arrests for serious crimes—homicide, rape, arson and aggravated assaults—have either decreased or remained flat over the last couple of decades. The vast majority of youth-involved crimes or arrests in DC involve no weapons or violence.¹⁷

Despite national declines in arrests of youths in the US, the proportion of girls and young women of color involved in the juvenile justice system has increased at every stage of the process from arrest to probation, over the last twenty years.

In 2013, Black girls, the fastest-growing segment of the juvenile justice population, were 20 percent more likely to be detained than their White counterparts. And although Native American girls make up a small percentage of the US population, they are 50 percent more likely than White non-Hispanic girls to be detained and 40 percent more likely to be referred to court.¹⁸

SAFETY AND VIOLENCE

Black and Latina girls have higher rates of physical altercations at school compared to other girls in DC. Nearly one out of four Black and Latina girls, 14.7 percent and 9.6 percent, respectively, report being in a physical fight or altercation on school property, compared to just 2.3 percent of White non-Hispanic girls. Black and Latina girls were also more likely to skip school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school compared to other girls, 5.7 percent and 8.7 percent, respectively. Less than two percent of White non-Hispanic girls reported skipping school because they felt unsafe.

“I wish schools would offer support. I feel like, if I wasn’t in school, I’d be fine. Basically, my whole identify is teaching them [teachers and administrators]; and it’s not really [about] being myself. I have to teach you what my rights are or how to handle other trans students. I just can’t ‘be.’”

--Amber, Transgender Youth in DC

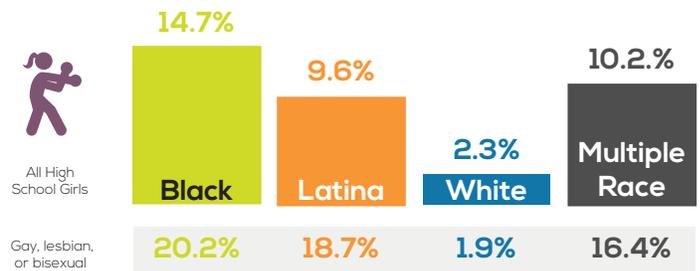
Lesbian, gay or bisexual girls and young women in high school report a high number of physical altercations at school. Close to 20 percent of girls that identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual in the District report being in a physical fight on school property, and 9.4 percent reported skipping school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school.¹⁹

Compared to youth that identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual, young people that identify as transgender are three times more like to have been in a at least twelve or more altercations or fights at school. Thirty-five percent of transgendered students in the District also reported missing at least one day of school because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school.

DATING AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

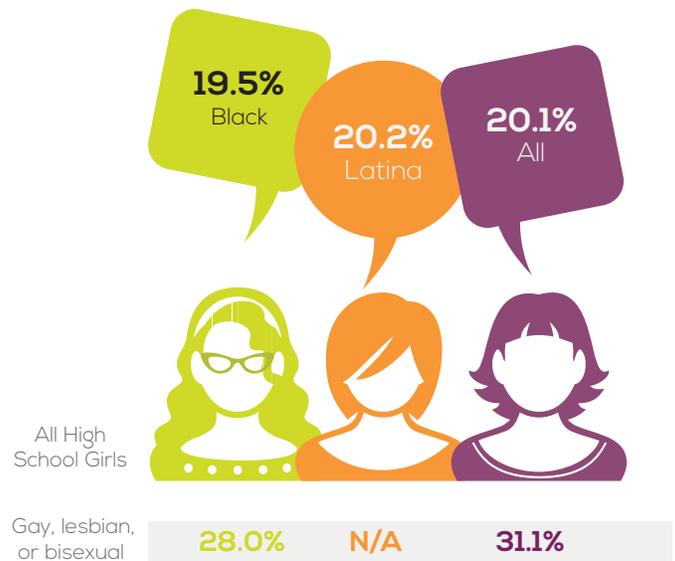
Domestic violence and sexual assault are major impediments to learning and the overall social and emotional well-being of girls and young women. In the District, 20 percent of girls and young women in high school report experiencing physical or sexual dating violence. About 20.2 percent Latina and 19.5 Black high school girls reported experiencing physical or sexual dating violence.²⁰

Were in a Physical Fight on School Property in DC, 2015



Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Date, 2015

Dating and Sexual Violence among High School Girls in DC, 2015



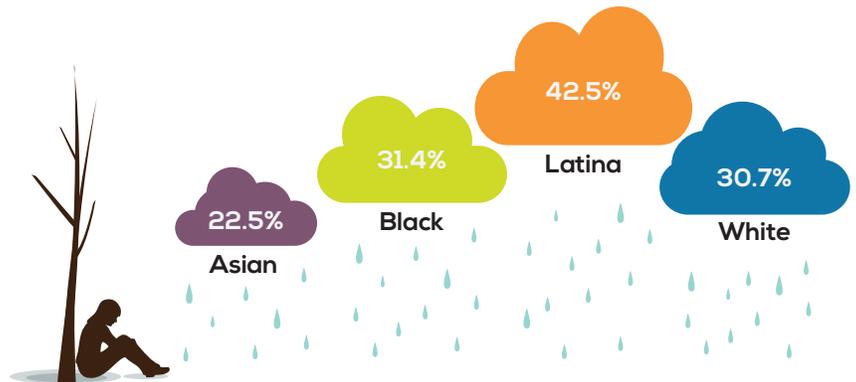
Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Date, 2015

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The emotional and mental health of young women and girls in the District is shaped by race and ethnicity. Thirty-one percent of Black high school girls and 42 percent of Latinas report feeling sad or hopeless for two or more weeks in a row so that they stopped doing some usual activities. Close to 30 percent of Black and Latina girls in high school in the District contemplated suicide.

Among high school girls in the District that identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual, 47 percent reported feeling sad or hopeless and 32 percent had considered attempting suicide. When race and ethnicity are taken into account, 44 percent of Black girls and 58.5 percent of Latina girls that identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual report feeling sad or hopeless for two weeks or more in a row.²¹

High School Girls Who Felt Sad or Hopeless Everyday for Two or More Weeks in a Row, 2015



Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Date, 2015

HOMELESSNESS

"[I have been waiting on housing] for a while. I guess there is no space, it's just waiting and I don't know how long it will be. A typical day for me is filling out job applications and looking for a place to stay."

--Nina, Transgender Youth in DC

Homeless youth in the District are majority girls. In the District, girls are more likely to be homeless (56.9 percent) than their male counterparts (42.5 percent). According to the most recent study on youth homelessness by the DC Advocates for Youth Alliance (DCAYA), the leading causal factor cited by non-parenting youth to exit their home was family conflict or neglect and abuse in the home.

Next, 43 percent of the District's homeless youth population identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

Homelessness can also have an adverse impact on a young person's ability to complete high school. In the District, youth between the ages of 18-24 who were considered homeless were less likely to complete high school or obtain a GED than non-homeless youth, 73 percent compared to 85.3 percent.²²





CONCLUSION

For girls, young women, transgender young women, and gender non-conforming youth of color in the District, there is a severe gap between their lived experiences, the resources and supports available to them and what it will really take to help them achieve long-term economic security, and academic and career success. In most instances, on every social indicator of well-being, from poverty to health to violence, girls, young women, and gender non-conforming girls in the District rank low or last.

It is our intent that this brief will be used by key stakeholders, girl and youth serving organizations, legislators and practitioners, and philanthropic organizations to work across communities of practice and institutions to improve outcomes for girls and young women in the City; to develop a holistic and comprehensive approach to program development and services; and to implement policies and legislation that promote the overall well-being and economic security of low-income girls and their families.

(ENDNOTES)

- ¹ The Women's Foundation's analysis of the American Community Survey, 2011-2015. The category of girls and young women of color includes Black or African American; American Indian and Alaska Native; Asian; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander; Hispanic or Latina and some other race or combination of races. Girls who identify their origin as Hispanic, or Latino may be of any race. To prevent double counting, Latinas/Latinos are always separated from Whites, and from other racial categories when possible.
- ² Williams, C., & Stillwell, L. (2015). *Girls' Economic Security in the Washington Region*. Washington, DC: Washington Area Women's Foundation. Retrieved May 18, 2017 from <https://media.thewomensfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/23091244/2015-08-20-WorkforceReport1.pdf>; and Chapman, H. (2016). *Homelessness in Metropolitan Washington: Results and Analysis from the Annual Point-in-Time Count of Persons Experiencing Homelessness*. Washington, DC: Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. Retrieved May 9, 2017 from http://www.missiondc.org/data/2016_Homeless_Report.pdf?rev=F1BF.
- ³ The data used to prepare this brief comes from multiple sources including the U.S. Census Bureau's 2011-2015, American Community Survey (ACS) accessed through American Fact Finder, and the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) of the University of Minnesota Population Center, and the 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). The Women's Foundation did not calculate or report measures of statistical significance for data presented in this issue brief. The Women's Foundation's analysis of the IPUMS ACS file may differ slightly from published estimates that are available through American Fact Finder or Social Explorer. Differences arise primarily because the U.S. Census Bureau uses more sophisticated weights to derive estimates. These more sophisticated weights allow a single sample to simulate multiple samples, thus generating more informed standard error estimates that can be used to obtain more precise confidence intervals and significance tests. However, this difference is generally not large enough to alter the significance level of coefficients.
- ⁴ The Women's Foundation's analysis of the American Community Survey, 2011-2015.
- ⁵ The Women's Foundation's analysis of the American Community Survey, 2011-2015.
- ⁶ The Women's Foundation's analysis of the American Community Survey, 2011-2015.
- ⁷ Giambone, A. (2016, 09 01). *Poverty in DC is Getting Worse East of the Anacostia River, Study Finds*. Washington City Paper. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/news/housing-complex/blog/20835238/poverty-in-dc-is-getting-worse-east-of-the-anacostia-river-study-finds>; and The Women's Foundation's analysis of the American Community Survey, 2011-2015.
- ⁸ Lewis, K., & Burd-Sharps, S. (2013). *Halve the Gap By 2030: Youth Disconnection in America's Cities*. Brooklyn, NY: Social Science Research Council. Retrieved May 18, 2017 from <http://ssrc-static.s3.amazonaws.com/moa/MOA-Halve-the-Gap-ALL-10.25.13.pdf>.
- ⁹ Lewis, K., & Burd-Sharps, S. (2013). *Halve the Gap By 2030: Youth Disconnection in America's Cities*. Brooklyn, NY: Social Science Research Council. Retrieved May 18, 2017 from <http://ssrc-static.s3.amazonaws.com/moa/MOA-Halve-the-Gap-ALL-10.25.13.pdf>.
- ¹⁰ Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2016). *Employment and Unemployment among Youth Summary*. Retrieved May 1 2017 from <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/youth.nr0.htm>.
- ¹¹ Lewis, K., & Burd-Sharps, S. (2013). *Halve the Gap By 2030: Youth Disconnection in America's Cities*. Brooklyn, NY: Social Science Research Council. Retrieved May 18, 2017 from <http://ssrc-static.s3.amazonaws.com/moa/MOA-Halve-the-Gap-ALL-10.25.13.pdf>.
- ¹² Data for Black girls excludes Hispanics. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. (n.d.). *Teen Pregnancy Rate by Race/Ethnicity Comparison, 2011*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved May 9, 2017 from <https://thenationalcampaign.org/data/landing>.
- ¹³ Kann, L. (2014). *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance — United States, 2013*. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved May 8, 2017 from <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss6304a1.htm>.
- ¹⁴ The DC Center For The LGBT Community. (2010). *LGBT Youth in the District of Columbia*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved May 18, 2017 from <http://www.thedccenter.org/docs/2015/yrebs2010.pdf>.
- ¹⁵ District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education. (2016). *State of Discipline: 2015-2016 School Year*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved May 8, 2017 from https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page_content/attachments/2015-16%20OSSE%20Discipline%20Report%20Updated%20Jan%206%202017.pdf.
- ¹⁶ Townes, C. (2016, 10 19). *Lawmakers prepare to give juvenile justice system a huge makeover in DC*. Thinkprogress. Retrieved from <https://thinkprogress.org/lawmakers-preparing-to-give-juvenile-justice-system-a-huge-makeover-in-d-c-dd2964d0f747>.
- ¹⁷ Townes, C. (2016, 10 19). *Lawmakers prepare to give juvenile justice system a huge makeover in DC*. Thinkprogress. Retrieved from <https://thinkprogress.org/lawmakers-preparing-to-give-juvenile-justice-system-a-huge-makeover-in-d-c-dd2964d0f747>.
- ¹⁸ Levintova, H. (2015, 10 1). *Girls Are the Fastest-Growing Group in the Juvenile Justice System*. Mother Jones. Retrieved from <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/09/girls-make-ever-growing-proportion-kids-juvenile-justice-system>.
- ¹⁹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015). *Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Data*. Atlanta, GA: Author. Retrieved May 8, 2017 from: <http://nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Default.aspx>.
- ²⁰ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015). *Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Data*. Atlanta, GA: Author. Retrieved May 8, 2017 from: <http://nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Default.aspx>.
- ²¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015). *Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Data*. Atlanta, GA: Author. Retrieved May 8, 2017 from: <http://nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Default.aspx>.
- ²² Bahrapour, T. (2016,01 13). *Nearly half of homeless youth are LGBTQ, first-ever city census finds*. The Washington Post. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/social-issues/nearly-half-of-homeless-youth-are-lgbtq-first-ever-city-census-finds/2016/01/13/0cb619ae-ba2e-11e5-829c-26ffb874a18d_story.html?utm_term=.98a85fdb99d1.



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