

Chapter 2: Issues that Impact Girls & Young Women

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Child Care in Chicago

Source: General Accounting Office. *Welfare Reform: Implications of Increased Work Participation for Child Care* (Letter Report, 05/29/97, GAO/HEHS-97-75). 1997.

- In 1997 it was estimated that Chicago had 3,608 child care providers. Those facilities provided 103,396 spaces for children, and 56,348 (54%) of those spaces were located in poor neighborhoods.
- Local officials in Chicago regard their current supply of child care as inadequate for meeting current demand.
- GAO estimated that by 2002, the known supply of child care could meet only 12% of the estimated demand for infant care and even less in the poorest areas of Chicago.
- Another critical issue facing poor families is that many welfare parents are likely to obtain work at low-skill jobs that operate on nonstandard schedules. However, many of the known providers at the sites reviewed did not offer child care at nonstandard work hours.

Chicago and Illinois Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Data

Source: Illinois Department of Humans Services Website.
<http://www.state.il.us/agency/dhs/WIC.htm>

- Pregnant or postpartum women, infants, and children up to age 5 are eligible for the WIC program. They must meet income guidelines, a state residency requirement, and be individually determined to be at “nutritional risk” by a health professional.
- WIC program provides nutritional services to 120,000 caseloads in Cook County and 228,000 caseloads in Illinois.
- Food and agency costs total almost \$88 million in Cook County and \$179 million in Illinois.
- In fiscal year 1999 the WIC budget for the entire U.S. was \$3.942 billion.

Facts on Eating Disorders

Source: National Institute of Mental Health, *Facts on Eating Disorders*, NIH Publication No. 94-3477, 1994.

- More than 90% of those afflicted with eating disorders are adolescent and young adult women.
- Approximately 1% of adolescent girls develop anorexia nervosa, a dangerous condition in which they can literally starve themselves to death. One out of ten cases of anorexia nervosa leads to death from starvation, cardiac arrest, suicide or other complications.
- Approximately 2%-3% of young women develop bulimia nervosa, a destructive pattern of excessive overeating followed by vomiting or other purging behaviors to control their weight.
- These eating disorders also occur in men and older women, but much less frequently.

Body Image Issues for Girls

Source: U.S. Public Health Service's Office on Women's Health. *Information Fact Sheet The Health of Adolescent Girls*. 1999, and Brumberg, J.J. *The Body Project*. New York: Random House, 1997.

- A third of all girls in grades 9-12 think that they are overweight, and 60% say they are trying to lose weight. (PHS Office on Women's Health)
- Among girls aged 12 to 17, 11% actually are overweight. (PHS Office on Women's Health)
- "At the end of the 20th century, fear of fat, anxiety about body parts, and expectations of perfection in the dressing room have all coalesced to make 'I hate my body' into a powerful mantra that informs the social and spiritual life of too many American girls." (Brumberg, 1997)

Differences Between Male and Female Students in Elementary and Secondary Schools

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, and the National Center for Education Statistics. *The Educational Progress of Women*. 1995.

- Females are generally younger than males in first grade.
- Females are less likely than males to require special education services. In 1990, less than one-third of students in special education were female.
- Differences in the academic performance of female and male students appear as early as age 9, and persist through age 17.
- Compared to males of the same age, females students score higher in reading, similar in mathematics, and lower in science as measured by the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP).
- The mathematics and science courses that females and males take in high school are similar, with the exception that females are less likely than males to study physics.

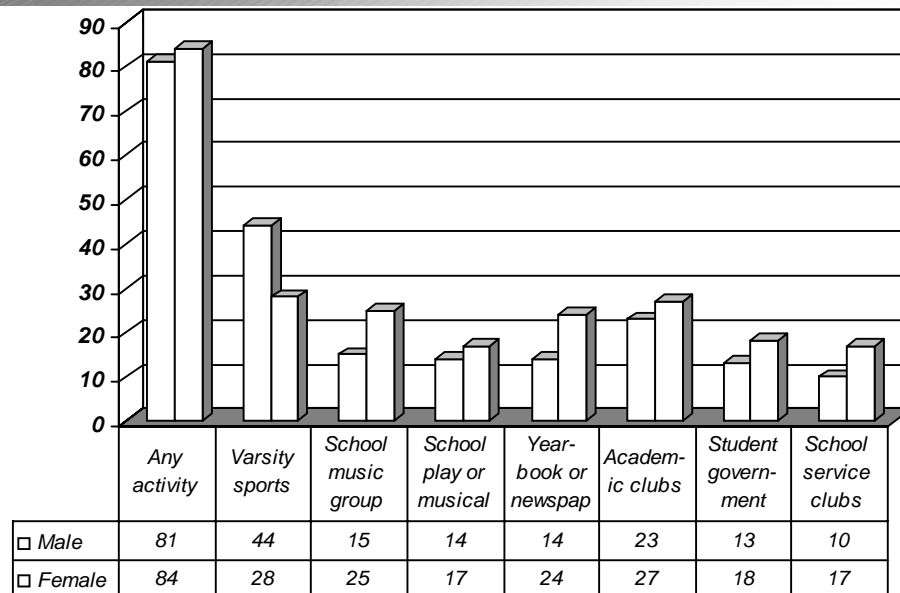
Limitations of Standardized Tests to Detect Gender Differences

Source: The National Council for Research on Women. *The Girls Report: What We Know and Need to Know About Growing Up Female*. 1998.

- While girls or boys may outperform one another in certain general subject areas (such as verbal, science, or math), when those subjects are broken down into more specific sub-skills (such as math computation versus math concepts), performance may vary. For instance, boys outperform girls on math concepts, but girls outperform boys on math computation.
- It is essential to remember that test scores measure students' performance, but they do not necessarily indicate students' academic or intellectual capabilities, since standardized tests and traditional school curricula may not speak to the language forms and knowledge in students' diverse cultural backgrounds.

Percentage of High School Seniors by Gender Participating in Extracurricular Activities

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, and the National Center for Education Statistics, *The Educational Progress of Women*. 1995.



- Almost 83% of high school seniors in 1992 engaged in at least one extracurricular activity.
- Females were more likely than males to participate in all types of activities except sports.

High School Athletic Participation

Source: National Federation of State High Schools Association, 1996, and the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. 1997.

- Girls account for approximately 37% of all high school athletes.
- Participation in sports is linked with decreased incidence of depression, pregnancy, and smoking initiation among teenage girls.

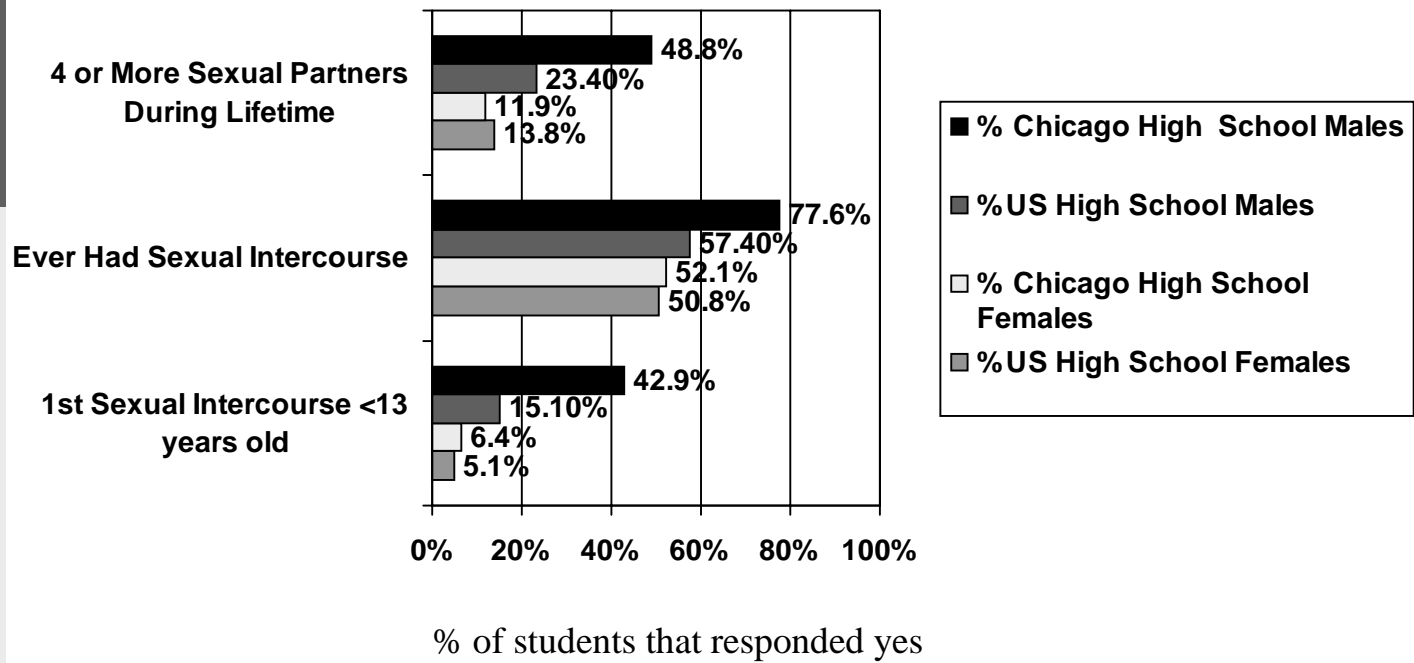
Facts on Teen Sexual Activity

Source: U.S. Public Health Service's Office on Women's Health.
Information Fact Sheet The Health of Adolescent Girls. 1999.

- Teen pregnancy rates have decreased significantly in the 1990's from a high of **62.1 per 1,000** teens aged 15-19 in 1991 to **54.7 per 1000** in 1996.
- Teen girls' use of contraceptives at first intercourse has risen from 48% in 1980 to 78% in 1995. Two-thirds of them are using condoms at first intercourse.

Self-Reported Sexual Behavior Among High School Students in Chicago and the US

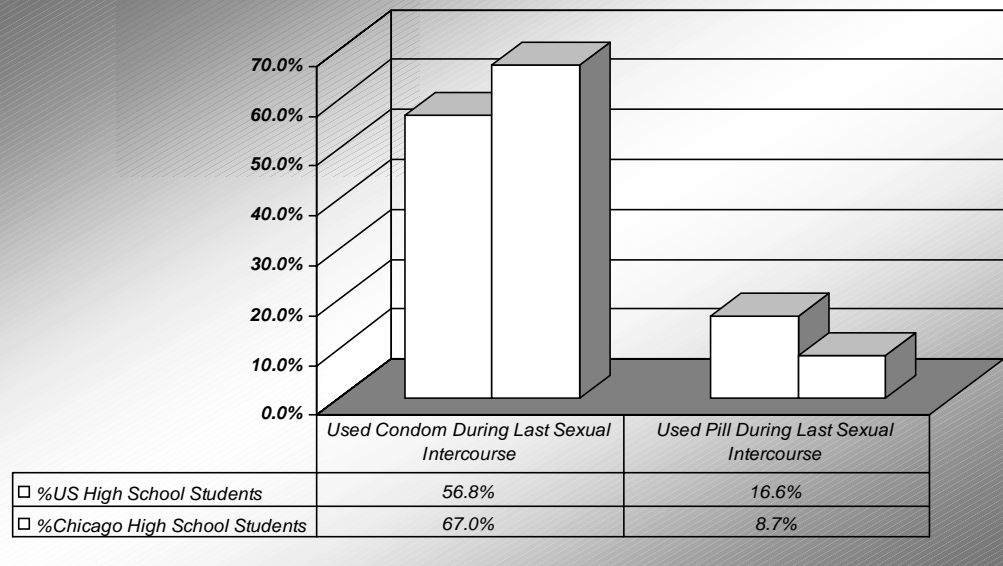
Source: Chicago Department of Public Health. *The Health of School-Aged Children in Chicago*. 1998.



Self-Reported Contraception Use by Chicago High School Students

Source: Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH). *The Health of School-Aged Children in Chicago*. 1998, and National Academy of Sciences. *The Best Intentions, Unintended Pregnancy and the Well-Being of Children and Families*. 1995.

- Condoms are the most common form of contraception utilized by Chicago high school students. (CDPH, 1998)
- A sexually active adolescent who does not use contraception has a 90% chance of pregnancy within one year. (National Academy of Sciences, 1995)
- Survey results indicate that 10.2% of Chicago high school students had been pregnant or had gotten someone pregnant. (CDPH, 1998)



Illinois State Sexuality and STD/HIV Education Regulations

Source:The NARAL Foundation. *State Sexuality and STD/HIV Education Regulations*. 1999, and Sears, J. *Sexuality and the Curriculum: The Politics and Practices of Sexuality Education*. 1992.

- Illinois schools must provide sexuality and STD/HIV education as a component of mandatory comprehensive health education (NARAL Foundation, 1999).
- Sexuality education classes that discuss sexual intercourse must be age appropriate and must teach abstinence until marriage. Classes are not required to provide contraceptive information. In addition, such courses must teach “honor and respect for monogamous heterosexual marriage” and stress that “pupils should abstain from sexual intercourse until they are ready for marriage” (NARAL Foundation, 1999).
- Critics of the sex education curriculum point out that it focuses on hygiene and biology, rather than intimacy and relationships, and it tends to offer only biological, heterosexist images of “normal” sexuality (Sears, 1992).

High School Students Suicide Attempts in Chicago

Source: Chicago Department of Public Health. *Trends in Adolescent Risk Behavior: The Chicago Youth Risk Behavior Survey*. 1999, and Chicago Department of Public Health. *Leading Causes of Death in Chicago, 1995-1997*. 1999.

- Chicago female high school students were more likely than male students to contemplate suicide and to attempt suicide.
- Females tend to use more non-lethal methods to commit suicide than males. About 39.9% of female suicides were the result of firearms, compared to 63.2% of male suicides.
- For ages 15-24 suicide is the 5th leading cause of death for females and the 3rd leading cause of death for males.