



City and County of San Francisco Commission and Department on the Status of Women

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Mission

The San Francisco Commission and Department on the Status of Women promotes equitable treatment and fosters the advancement of women and girls throughout San Francisco through policies, legislation, and programs, both within City and County government and in the private sector.

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Executive Summary

This report follows up on *A Report on Girls in San Francisco, Benchmarks for the Future (2003)*. It looks at emerging trends in the lives of girls today and reexamines key findings. Using the 2003 *Girls Report* as a baseline, we have seen many improvements in the lives of youth in San Francisco, especially for girls, over the past decade. Yet disturbing trends remain that demand attention and redoubled efforts in order to ensure positive change over the next decade.

For this update, the Department on the Status of Women relied on existing research from local, state, and national sources. The *Update on Girls in San Francisco* focuses on a few key areas in young people's lives, based on core principles of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)—the right to health, the right to live a life free of violence, and the right to education.¹ Below are highlights from each section.

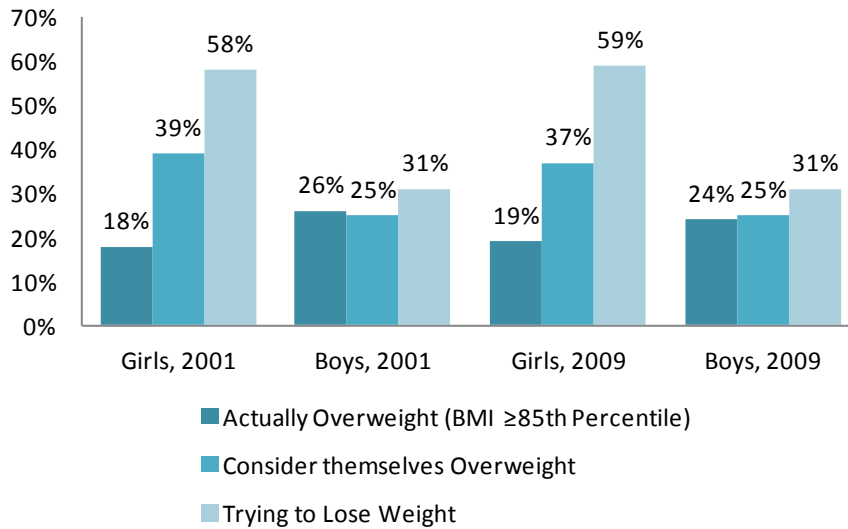
Demographics

In the past 10 years, the San Francisco girl population has been shrinking, especially among African American girls, which were only 7% of the total girl population in 2010. Yet African American girls continue to make up more than half of all girls in foster care and in the juvenile justice system, respectively. Hispanic/Latina representation in foster care and the juvenile justice system has also increased in the past decade. A review of practices is needed as to why these two populations continue to be overrepresented in these two systems.

Health

We have seen a dramatic 51% decrease in teen pregnancy from 2000 to 2010. Both Hispanic/Latina (52%) and African American girls (26%) continue to have high pregnancy rates. STDs have also remained consistently high for girls. The percent of girls and boys in 5th, 7th, and 9th grades who are *not* physically fit has increased by at least 10% over the past 10 years. In 2009, 19% of San Francisco public high school girls were overweight, yet 37%, almost double, considered themselves overweight, and almost 60% were trying to lose weight. This trend was not true for boys. The continued trend of girls trying to lose weight even when they are not overweight is unhealthy and can be tied to the media's obsession with body image. Media literacy groups working to dispel myths and encourage healthy self-image, such as MissRepresentation.org and About Face, should be supported.

¹ In 1998, San Francisco became the first city in the world to enact a local ordinance reflecting the principles of CEDAW, a UN bill of rights for women that has been adopted by 187 countries, with the notable exception of the United States.



Weight Perceptions among San Francisco High School Students, 2001² and 2009³

Safety

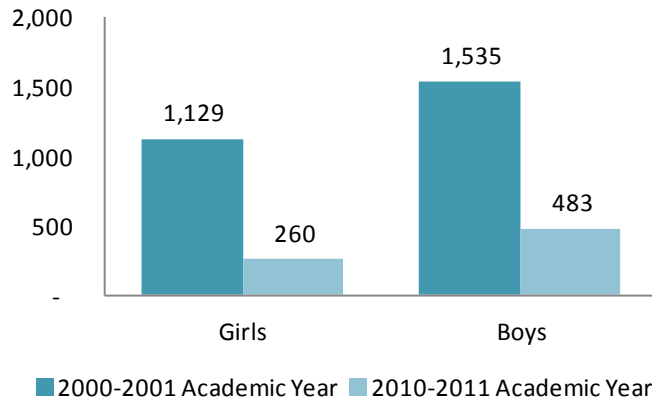
Compared to 10 years ago, fewer girls are in physical fights at school or skip school because they feel unsafe, yet these issues continue to be important, especially among Hispanic/Latina girls, who experienced bullying and violence at school at higher rates than girls in general. In 2009, 10% of all girls and 15% of Hispanic/Latina girls reported having experienced violence on school grounds. The rate of girls experiencing dating violence and rape remains unacceptably high at 7%. Girls' services in this area should be reexamined to see what is working best or what other practices are needed to address these concerns.

Education

San Francisco girls' enrollment in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) classes has remained low and declined precipitously over the past decade. Enrollment in Computer Science classes has dropped the most dramatically. The total student enrollment in Computer Education classes in San Francisco public schools dropped 72% from 2000 to 2010. For girls alone, the drop was 77%. A focus on what strategies work to both attract girls of all racial and ethnic backgrounds to take technology and other STEM classes, and how to help them succeed in these subjects is critical to the future success of girls in this field. The San Francisco Unified School District, with the support of the City and County of San Francisco, should create a new STEM partnership with San Francisco and Silicon Valley companies to improve this situation. Future economic development packages should include an investment in STEM education with a focus on the participation of girls in San Francisco.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "YRBSS - United States, 2001: Table 35," page 55.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "YRBSS - United States, 2009: Table 91," page 128.



Enrollment in Computer Education Courses in San Francisco by Gender, 2000-2001 and 2010-2011⁴

Conclusion

This *Update on Girls in San Francisco: A Decade of Success and Challenges* is only part of the steps necessary to improve the lives of young people. We welcome further insights and research, and look to community partners, educators, researchers, and policy makers to help change the course for the next generation of girls in San Francisco.

⁴ California Department of Education, DataQuest, “Course Enrollments by County (2000-01).” and Department of Education, DataQuest, “Course Enrollments by County (2010-01).”
 <<http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/page2.asp?level=County&subject=Course&submit1=Submit>>