

NCRW Big Five: Women and Educational Disparities—A Call to Action

Women are closing the gender gap across several measures in terms of educational attainment and achievement. The large gender gaps between women and men that were evident in the early 1970s have largely disappeared.

Today, women are more likely than men to attend college after high school, and are as likely to graduate with a postsecondary degree. However, the gains made by women have not translated into earnings and higher wages in the labor market.

Furthermore, gains made by women as a whole have not been fully realized for low-income women and women of color. Access to education is key to women's economic security and well-being. More vigorous efforts are needed to ensure sufficient support programs at the state and federal levels for low-income women and women heads of households.

Quick Facts

- 95% of white women graduate from high school compared to only 88% of African American women and 67% of Latino women.ⁱ
- Women receive more Bachelor's degrees than men among all racial groups except among Latinos where there is no significant gender difference.ⁱⁱ

- Women make up 51% of students in medicine and 53% of other health science professional programs.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Women with Bachelor's degrees earn an average annual income of \$45, 290 compared to \$70,253 among men with Bachelor's degrees.^{iv}

TAKE ACTION

First Find Your Representative: Who represents you in your state legislature and at the local level? Who represents you in Congress? Go to these links to find out!

For your Representative:

<https://www.house.gov/writerep/>

For your Senators: <http://www.senate.gov/>

For your local and state representatives:

<http://www.votesmart.org/>

Now, write a letter urging your elected officials to fully fund Title I of No Child Left Behind and the enforcement of Title IX, legislation which supports programs for low-income women and women heads of households. Refer them to our website so they can get the facts.

Get People Talking: Are women's issues or the impact of public policies on women's lives part of the national conversation? Not enough! Help get the conversation started. Tell people the facts about women's lives. Send these fact sheets to your email list. Join with a local community or women's organization to hold a town hall meeting on what's at stake for women in today's economic and political environment. Share this information with your city or county office on women's issues.

Disparities and High School Graduation Rates

Women across family income levels and racial groups are more likely than men to graduate from high school.^v

Racial and ethnic minority women register lower graduation rates than white women--88% for African American women and 67% for Latinas, compared to a completion rate of 95% for white women.^{vi}

Although high school completion rates among Latinos of both genders have increased over the past two decades, they still register lower rates compared to the rest of the population.^{vii} Language barriers, familial obligations, and immigration status contribute to the gap in high school completion rates for Latino students.^{viii}

College

Studies show that students who enroll in college directly after high school have higher retention and graduation rates.^{ix} Women are more likely than men to enter college on completion of high school. As a result, women tend to receive more Bachelor's degrees than men among all racial groups except for Latinos where there is no significant difference.^x

However, women and people of color are more likely to be "non-traditional" college students.^{xi xii} For example, women outnumber men by nearly 2-to-1 among older students. Among older students, women comprise a majority across income levels and racial groups.^{xiii} Women of color are especially likely to enroll in college at a later age with one-third of African American women enrolling after the age of 25.^{xiv}

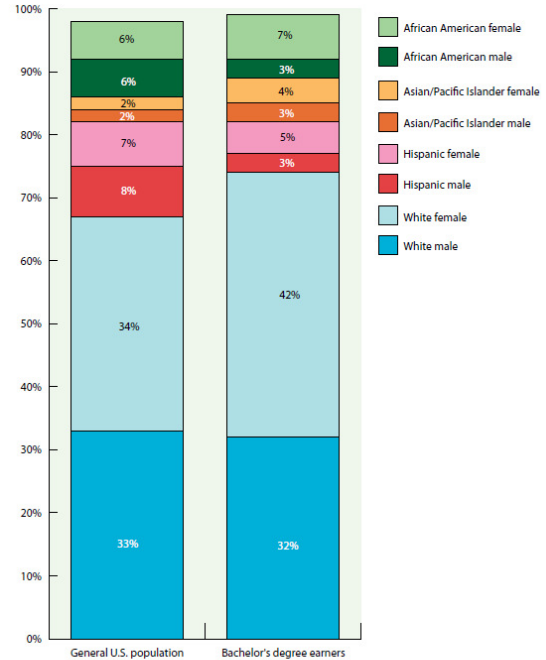
Women of Color and Educational Disparities

Although the number of Black and Latino women who obtain a college degree has increased in recent years, they still lag behind white women. African American women are 10% more likely to drop out of

high school and 11% fewer black women earned college degrees compared to white women.^{xv}

The gap between whites and African Americans and Hispanics in achieving Bachelor's degrees has actually widened in the past three decades.^{xvi}

FIGURE 38. PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF GENERAL U.S. POPULATION IN 2006 AND BACHELOR'S DEGREES CONFERRED IN 2005-06, BY GENDER AND RACE/ETHNICITY



Note: Data include bachelor's degrees conferred by Title IV institutions, i.e., institutions that have a written agreement with the U.S. Secretary of Education that allows the institution to participate in any Title IV federal student financial assistance programs (other than the State Student Incentive Grant and the National Early Intervention Scholarship and Partnership programs). Degree earners data excludes nonresident aliens and students whose race/ethnicity was unknown.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, Table 3: Annual estimates of the population by sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino origin for the United States: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2006 (NC-EST2006-03). Washington, DC: Author, 2007. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Postsecondary Institutions in the United States: Fall 2006 and Degrees and Other Awards Conferred: 2005-06*, by Laura G. Knapp, Janice E. Kelly-Reid, Scott A. Ginder, & Elise Miller (NCES 2007-166). Washington, DC: Author, 2007.

Graduate Degrees

For the past two decades, women have earned at least half of the graduate degrees conferred each year. Nearly half of these, however, were earned in traditionally female-dominated fields such as nursing, education, and social work. For instance, women accounted for 65% of doctoral degrees in education. In a male-dominated field—engineering—women comprised only 21% of students earning a graduate degree. However, women are advancing in some male-dominated fields. They now represent a slight majority in medicine (51 percent) and other health science professional programs (53 percent).^{xvii xviii xix}

Learn More, Earn Less

According to recent studies, earnings have not kept pace with the gains in women's educational attainment in the past three decades. In 2006, women were 5% more likely to graduate from high school and 25% more likely to have a Bachelor's degree, but they still earned 25% less than men with the same amount of education. In some instances, women earned less than men at the educational level below them (ex. women with Associate's degrees earning less than men with only high school diplomas).^{xx xxi}

Conclusion

While test scores, high school completion, and college degree attainment rates have increased over the last two decades, disparities still persist for women.

Achievement gaps based on age, race, and income remain barriers to women achieving greater economic security for themselves and their families.^{xxii xxiii}

More vigorous efforts and public policies are needed at the federal and state levels to ensure sufficient support for low-income women and women heads of households. More also needs to be done to encourage women's entry into technical, engineering, and other non-traditional fields.

NCRW Network Expertise

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The NCRW Big Five Campaign

The National Council for Research on Women is raising awareness about the status of women in the United States by focusing on the *Big Five* issues of importance to women and girls, namely: economic security, health, immigration, violence, and education. Although these issues are critical to the lives and well-being of women and girls, they are particularly acute for those living in poverty, immigrants and women of color.

For more information, please contact the National Council for Research on Women: ncrw@ncrw.org or visit our website: www.ncrw.org.

ⁱ Corbett, Christianne, Catherine Hille and Andresse St. Rose. 2008. "Where the Girls Are: The Facts About Gender Equity in Education." From the American Association of University Women, available at

<http://www.aauw.org/research/upload/whereGirlsAre.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ Vinas, Maria Jose. 2008 July 24. "Girls as Good as Boys at Math, Study Finds." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, available at

<http://chronicle.com/wiredcampus/article/3191/girls-as-good-as-boys-at-math-study-finds>.

ⁱⁱⁱ "Education and Title IX." N.d. From the National Organization for Women, available at

http://www.now.org/issues/title_ix/index.html

^{iv} Kelly, Kacie. 2008. "Call to Action: A Pay Equity Resource Guide." From The Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy, available at

http://www.mccormack.umb.edu/centers/cwppp/documents/pa_yequityjune2008.pdf.

^v Corbett, Christianne, Catherine Hille and Andresse St. Rose. 2008. "Where the Girls Are: The Facts About Gender Equity in Education." From the American Association of University Women, available at

<http://www.aauw.org/research/upload/whereGirlsAre.pdf>.

^{vi} Corbett, Christianne, Catherine Hille and Andresse St. Rose. 2008. "Where the Girls Are: The Facts About Gender Equity in Education." From the American Association of University Women, available at

<http://www.aauw.org/research/upload/whereGirlsAre.pdf>.

^{vii} King, Jacqueline E. 2006. "Gender Equity in Higher Education: 2006." From the American Council on Education Center for Policy Analysis, available at

http://www.acenet.edu/bookstore/pdf/Gender_Equity_6_23.pdf.

^{viii} Cook, Bryan J. and Diana L. Cordova. 2007. "Minorities in Higher Education: Twenty-Second Annual Status Report: 2007 Supplement." From the American Council on

Education, available at

<http://www.acenet.edu/AM/Template.cfm?Section=CAREE&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=23716>.

^{ix} King, Jacqueline E. 2006. "Gender Equity in Higher Education: 2006." From the American Council on Education Center for Policy Analysis, available at http://www.acenet.edu/bookstore/pdf/Gender_Equity_6_23.pdf.

^x Vinas, Maria Jose. 2008 July 24. "Girls as Good as Boys at Math, Study Finds." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, available at <http://chronicle.com/wiredcampus/article/3191/girls-as-good-as-boys-at-math-study-finds>.

^{xi} King, Jacqueline E. 2006. "Gender Equity in Higher Education: 2006." From the American Council on Education Center for Policy Analysis, available at http://www.acenet.edu/bookstore/pdf/Gender_Equity_6_23.pdf.

^{xii} King, Jacqueline E. 2006. "Gender Equity in Higher Education: 2006." From the American Council on Education Center for Policy Analysis, available at http://www.acenet.edu/bookstore/pdf/Gender_Equity_6_23.pdf.

^{xiii} Corbett, Christianne, Catherine Hille and Andresse St. Rose. 2008. "Where the Girls Are: The Facts About Gender Equity in Education." From the American Association of University Women, available at <http://www.aauw.org/research/upload/whereGirlsAre.pdf>.

^{xiv} Corbett, Christianne, Catherine Hille and Andresse St. Rose. 2008. "Where the Girls Are: The Facts About Gender Equity in Education." From the American Association of University Women, available at <http://www.aauw.org/research/upload/whereGirlsAre.pdf>.

^{xv} Casey, Timothy. 2007. "Women: Now Learning More, But Still Earning Less." From Legal Momentum, available at <http://www.legalmomentum.org/site/DocServer/LMGenderPayGapReportfinal.pdf?docID=881>

^{xvi} King, Jacqueline E. 2006. "Gender Equity in Higher Education: 2006." From the American Council on Education Center for Policy Analysis, available at http://www.acenet.edu/bookstore/pdf/Gender_Equity_6_23.pdf.

^{xvii} King, Jacqueline E. 2006. "Gender Equity in Higher Education: 2006." From the American Council on Education Center for Policy Analysis, available at http://www.acenet.edu/bookstore/pdf/Gender_Equity_6_23.pdf.

^{xviii} King, Jacqueline E. 2006. "Gender Equity in Higher Education: 2006." From the American Council on Education Center for Policy Analysis, available at http://www.acenet.edu/bookstore/pdf/Gender_Equity_6_23.pdf.

^{xix} "Education and Title IX." N.d. From the National Organization for Women, available at http://www.now.org/issues/title_ix/index.html

^{xx} Casey, Timothy. 2007. "Women: Now Learning More, But Still Earning Less." From Legal Momentum, available at <http://www.legalmomentum.org/site/DocServer/LMGenderPayGapReportfinal.pdf?docID=881>

^{xxi} Corbett, Christianne, Catherine Hille and Andresse St. Rose. 2008. "Where the Girls Are: The Facts About Gender Equity in Education." From the American Association of University Women, available at <http://www.aauw.org/research/upload/whereGirlsAre.pdf>.

^{xxii} Corbett, Christianne, Catherine Hille and Andresse St. Rose. 2008. "Where the Girls Are: The Facts About Gender Equity in Education." From the American Association of University Women, available at <http://www.aauw.org/research/upload/whereGirlsAre.pdf>.

^{xxiii} King, Jacqueline E. 2006. "Gender Equity in Higher Education: 2006." From the American Council on Education Center for Policy Analysis, available at http://www.acenet.edu/bookstore/pdf/Gender_Equity_6_23.pdf.