

# Gender Equity



in Higher Education

*Are Male Students  
at a Disadvantage?*

Updated Tables and Figures  
August 2003



**American Council on Education  
Center for Policy Analysis**

# Gender Equity in Higher Education: Are Male Students at a Disadvantage?

Updated Tables and Figures—August 2003

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The ACE Center for Policy Analysis has updated selected tables and figures from its 2000 report, *Gender Equity in Higher Education: Are Male Students at a Disadvantage?* This report includes indicators drawn from numerous federal studies to examine the gender gap at different points along the educational pipeline. Many of these studies are regularly updated. The text that follows highlights changes in these indicators since the publication of the original report.

## HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

**Updated Figure 1** contains new data for 1999 to 2002, tracking the share of Americans aged 25 to 29 with a high school diploma, GED, or similar credential. This indicator has been stable since 1998. The only major change is a widening gender gap among Hispanics, as the share of Hispanic women with a high school diploma has increased and the share of Hispanic men with a high school diploma is unchanged.

## IMMEDIATE COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

**Updated Figure 3** shows the share of individuals who enroll in college by October of the year in which they graduate from high school. The updated figure adds data for 1999 and 2000. It shows a continued decline since the late 1990s in the share of women enrolling in college immediately after high school graduation and, as a result, a narrowing of the gender gap for this indicator.

## COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

**Updated Figure 4** compares the male share of total undergraduate enrollment in fall 1997 with the male share of undergraduate enrollment during fall 1999 for students in different age groups. It shows no change in the overall male share of enrollment or in the male share among students in different age groups.

**Updated Figure 5** details enrollment in the 24 and younger age group, by race/ethnicity. Because this type of comparison is only available using a nationally representative sample survey of college students (the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, or NPSAS), which is only conducted every four years, the reference years differ from Updated Figure 4. In 1995–96 and 1999–2000, the overall share of men among all undergraduates aged 24 or younger was the same (46 percent). However, the share of men among some racial/ethnic groups differed substantially. The male share among traditional-aged white and Asian-American students declined between 1995–96 and 1999–2000, while the male share among African-American and American Indian undergraduates increased. It should be noted that among Asian Americans, men went from outnumbering women to sharing enrollment evenly with them.

**Updated Table 3** further disaggregates traditional-aged students aged 24 and younger by income, as well as by race/ethnicity. It shows a significant decline in the male share of white students at the middle- and upper-income levels. The decline in the share of men among Asian-American students was confined to low- and, most dramatically, middle-income students. While there was no significant change in the gender balance among middle-income African Americans, the male share of enrollment among low- and especially upper-income African Americans increased substantially. Hispanic men at the middle-income level saw a significant increase in their share of enrollment.

## PERSISTENCE AND DEGREE ATTAINMENT

**Updated Table 4** presents persistence and degree attainment rates after five years for two cohorts of students: those who enrolled for the first time in 1989–90 and those who began postsecondary education in 1995–96.\* It shows no substantial change in either persistence or bachelor's degree attainment for men in any racial or ethnic group. However, because African-American and Hispanic men (who have lower levels of degree attainment than whites) made up a larger share of the 1995–96 cohort than the 1989–90 group, the overall rate of bachelor's degree attainment for all men declined from 31 percent to 28 percent. There was no substantial change in the overall bachelor's degree completion rate for women, but the share of both African-American and Hispanic women who had earned a bachelor's degree within five years of entry sharply declined between the 1989–90 and 1995–96 cohorts.

\*Figures were calculated for all students who indicated a bachelor's degree goal at entrance, regardless of whether they ever attended a four-year institution.

**Updated Figure 6** presents the share of Americans aged 25 to 29 who had earned a bachelor's degree, updated to include data from 1999 to 2002. It shows that, despite the decline in persistence rates for African-American women documented in Updated Table 4, an increasing share of young women in this racial/ethnic group have earned a bachelor's degree. This may be a function of continued enrollment growth. Even if bachelor's degree attainment rates declined in the late 1990s, the overall share of women with a bachelor's degree increased because the number of women enrolling continued to grow. Updated Figure 6 also shows that the share of African-American men with a bachelor's degree has rebounded from a previous period of decline and that African-American men and women now share a similar likelihood of having earned a bachelor's degree. In contrast, the share of Hispanic men and women with a bachelor's degree was unchanged during this period. For whites, women continued their steep climb in educational attainment while the attainment of men remained flat, exacerbating the educational gender gap within this group.

## DEGREES CONFERRED

**Updated Figure 7** shows that men earned a smaller share of all types of degrees in 1999–2000 than in 1995–96, except associate degrees. Men continue to earn the majority of professional and doctoral degrees, but their shares of bachelor's and master's degrees now approach 40 percent.

**Updated Figure 8** presents the distribution of bachelor's degrees among white and racial/ethnic minority men and women. It is updated to include data from 1999–2000. It shows that the share of bachelor's degrees awarded to minority men and women continued to increase, while the share awarded to white women has largely held steady since 1980–81. The share of bachelor's degrees awarded to white men continued to decline, as minorities earned a larger proportion of all bachelor's degrees conferred.

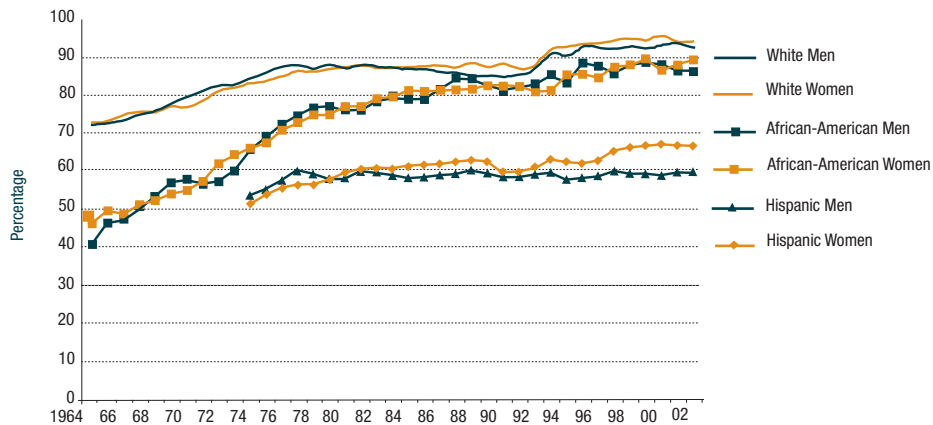
Another way of looking at the same information is to track the total number of bachelor's degrees conferred. **Updated Figure 9** includes these data through 1999–2000. It shows that the number of bachelor's degrees awarded to minority men and women continued to increase and that the number of degrees awarded to white women is again on the rise after a flat period during the 1990s. However, the number of bachelor's degrees awarded to white men has been flat since the early 1990s, when the number of degrees awarded to both white men and women went through a period of decline.

## SUMMARY

These updated tables and figures point to a number of trends, some of which are contradictory. However, the overarching impression is that African-American men appear to be making some progress in closing the gender gap, but that Hispanics and white men are falling further behind their female peers. Most striking is the sharp downturn in the male share of traditional-aged undergraduate enrollment among middle- and upper-income whites, a dramatic change since *Gender Equity in Higher Education* was published in 2000.

### UPDATED FIGURE 1

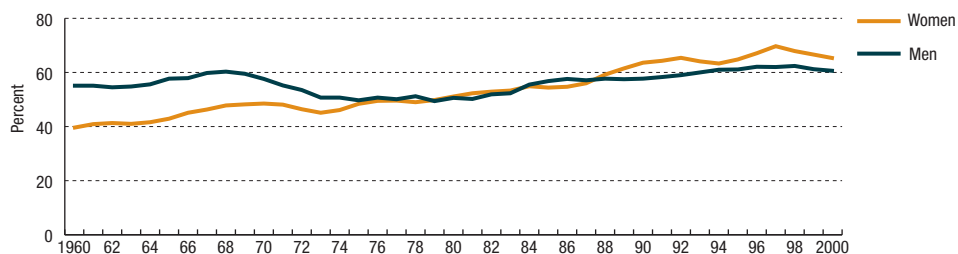
Percentage of Americans Aged 25 to 29 with a High School Diploma, by Race/Ethnicity and Gender: 1964 to 2002



Note: To reduce year-to-year variability due to sampling error, a three-year running average is used for Hispanics.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, March Current Population Surveys: 1964 to 2002.

### UPDATED FIGURE 3

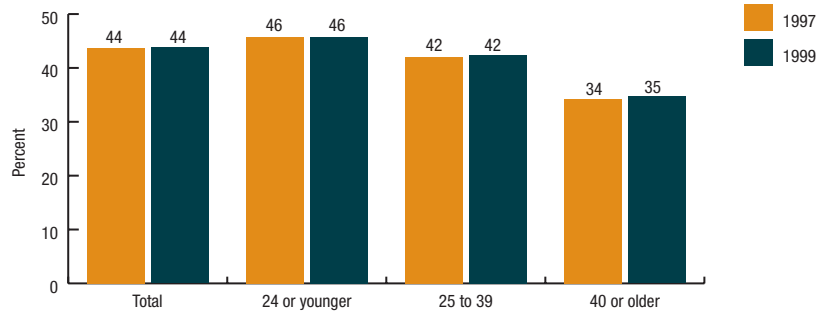
Immediate College Enrollment Rates of High School Graduates, by Gender: 1960 to 2000



Note: To reduce year-to-year variability due to sampling error, a three-year running average is used.  
Source: U.S. Department of Education, *Digest of Education Statistics: 2002*, Table 185.

**UPDATED FIGURE 4**

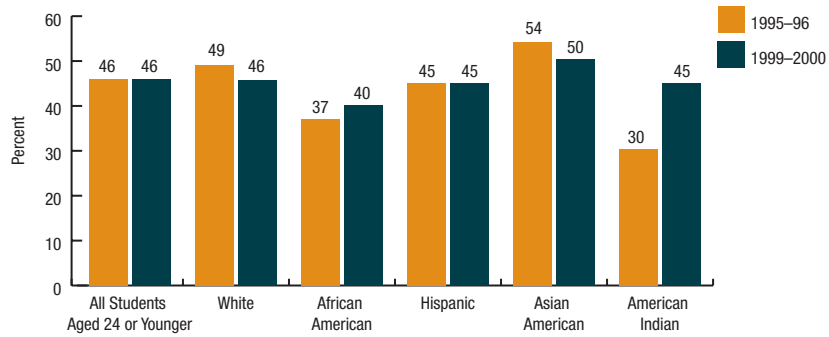
Share of Males Among All Undergraduates, by Age: Fall 1997 and Fall 1999



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System: Fall 1997 and Fall 1999 Enrollment Surveys.

**UPDATED FIGURE 5**

Share of Males Among Undergraduates Aged 24 or Younger, by Race/Ethnicity: 1995–96 and 1999–2000



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Postsecondary Student Aid Studies: 1995-96 and 1999-2000.

**UPDATED TABLE 3**

Share of Males Among Undergraduates Aged 24 or Younger, by Race/Ethnicity and Income: 1995–96 and 1999–2000

	Low Income (less than \$30,000)		Middle Income (\$30,000 to \$69,999)		Upper Income (\$70,000 or more)	
	1995-96	1999-2000	1995-96	1999-2000	1995-96	1999-2000
White	46	44	50	46	52	47
African American	32	35	48	47	41	47
Hispanic	43	41	46	50	50	49
Asian American	53	51	57	47	52	54
American Indian	23	41	53	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>All Students</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>48</b>

N/A: Sample size too small to yield a reliable estimate.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Postsecondary Student Aid Studies: 1995-96 and 1999-2000.

**UPDATED TABLE 4**

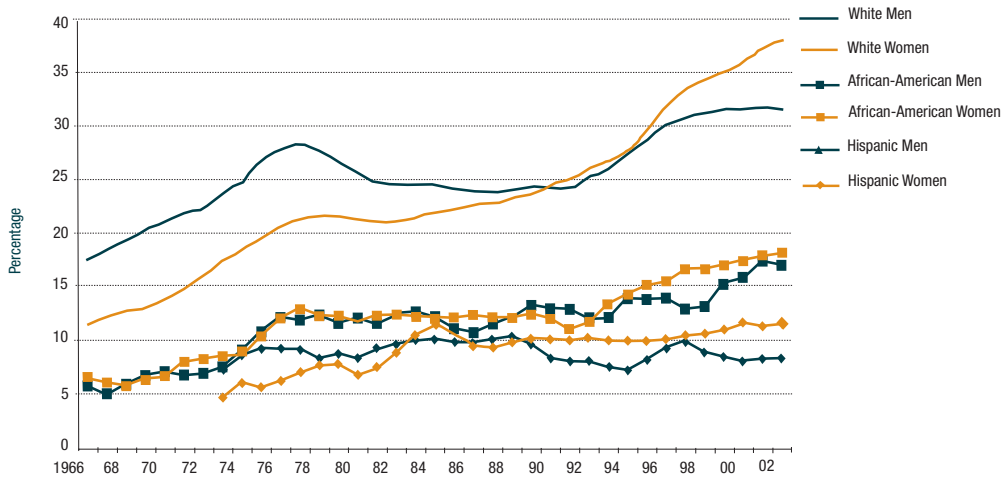
Percentage of Students Who Attained a BA or Were Still Enrolled After Five Years, by Race/Ethnicity and Gender: 1989–90 and 1995–96 College Entrants

	1989–90 Entrants by 1994			1995–96 Entrants by 2000		
	Attained BA	Still Enrolled	Total	Attained BA	Still Enrolled	Total
White Men	33	16	49	31	18	49
White Women	38	12	50	39	11	50
African-American Men	16	15	31	15	16	31
African-American Women	24	11	35	20	13	33
Hispanic Men	19	12	31	18	11	28
Hispanic Women	29	14	43	21	13	34
<b>All Men</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>All Women</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>47</b>

Note: Includes only students who, at entrance, expressed the goal of attaining a bachelor's degree. Students may have attended any type of institution and may never have enrolled at a four-year institution.  
Source: U.S. Department of Education, Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Studies: 1989/1994 and 1995/2001.

**UPDATED FIGURE 6**

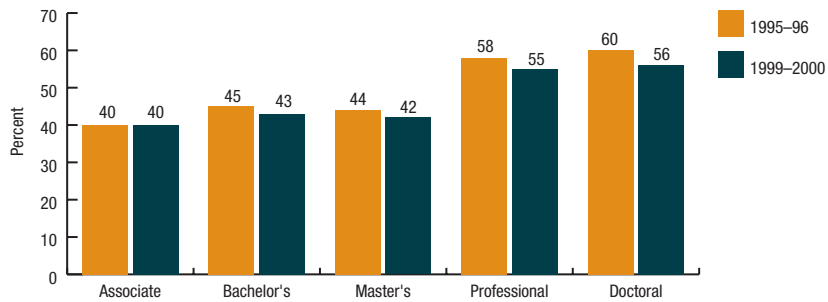
Percentage of Americans Aged 25 to 29 with a Bachelor's Degree, Selected Years: 1966 to 2002



Note: To reduce year-to-year variability due to sampling error, a three-year running average is used for all groups.  
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, March Current Population Surveys: 1964 to 2002.

**UPDATED FIGURE 7**

Share of Degrees Conferred to Men: 1995–96 and 1999–2000

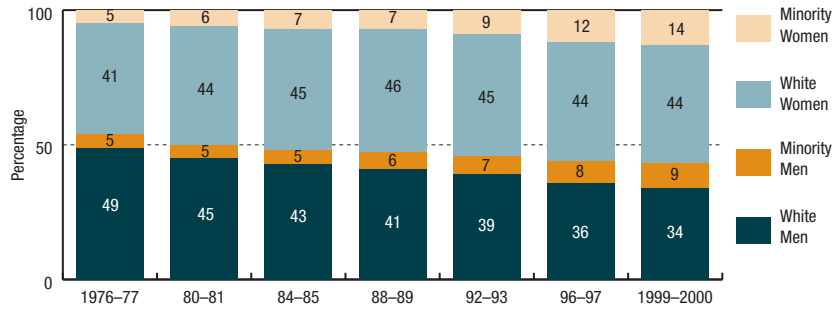


Source: U.S. Department of Education, *Digest of Education Statistics: 2002*, Table 247.



**UPDATED FIGURE 8**

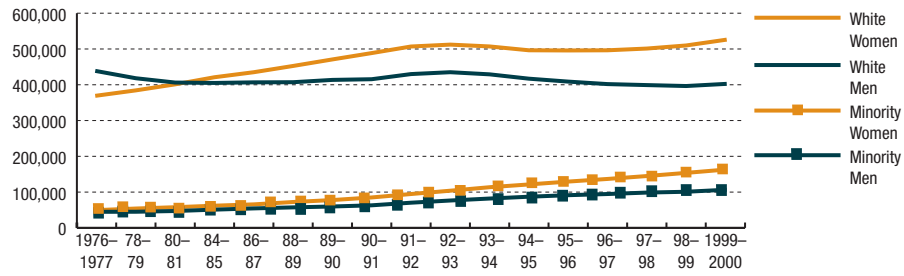
Distribution of Bachelor's Degrees Conferred, by Gender and Race/Ethnicity: 1976 to 2000 (Selected Years)



Source: U.S. Department of Education, *Digest of Education Statistics: 2002*, Table 268.

**UPDATED FIGURE 9**

Number of Bachelor's Degrees Conferred, by Race/Ethnicity and Gender: 1976 to 2000



Source: U.S. Department of Education, *Digest of Education Statistics: 2002*, Table 268.

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