WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

ENROLLMENT/DEGREE ATTAINMENT

- The overall college enrollment rate for 18- to 24-year-olds has been higher for females than for males every year since 2000.
  - Between 2000 and 2018, overall college enrollment rates increased for both 18- to 24-year females (38% to 44%) and males (33% to 38%).
  - The college enrollment rate for male students in the fall semester following their high school graduation, also known as the immediate college enrollment rate, increased from 60% in 2000 to 67% in 2018, while the same rate for female students (71%) did not change measurably during this same time frame.
- College enrollment rates increased from 2000 to 2018 for white, Black, and Hispanic female students age 18 to 24.
  - From 2000 to 2018, Black and Hispanic female students age 18–24 saw the largest increase in enrollment rates.
  - Black female enrollment for students age 18–24 increased from 35% to 41%, while Hispanic female enrollment increased from 25% to 40%. Enrollment for white females age 18–24 increased from 41% to 45%.
- In 2017–18, women earned 61% of all associate’s degrees, 60% of all master’s degrees, and 54% of doctoral degrees conferred.
- Sixty-five percent of females who began seeking a bachelor’s degree at a four-year institution in the year 2012 completed that degree within six years, compared to 59% of male students.
- First-time, full-time undergraduate female students seeking bachelor’s degrees had higher six-year completion rates than their male counterparts at both public (64% vs. 58%) and private non-profit institutions (70% vs. 64%). Male students had a higher six-year graduation rate at private for-profit institutions (26% vs. 25%).

GRANTS, LOANS & DEBT

- In the 2016 academic year, 62% of Pell Grant recipients were female.
  - In the 2015–16 academic year, the average Pell Grant amount for females was $3,700, an equivalent number to the average amount for males.
- In 2019, 61% of federal student loan recipients were women.
- In the United States, women hold nearly two-thirds of outstanding student loan debt, with more than $929 billion in total debt as of 2020.
- The mean total borrowed by women at public four-year institutions was $29,611; $32,086 at private non-profit four-year institutions; and $42,778 at for-profit institutions.
- Women first-generation college students borrowed, on average, $4,145 more than women whose parents held a bachelor’s degree.
SOURCES


Updated March 2021