The Gender Gap in Educational Attainment: Variation by Age, Race, Ethnicity, and Nativity in the United States

Sarah R. Crissey, Nicole Scanniello, and Hyon B. Shin, Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division, U.S. Census Bureau

Introduction

The gender gap in educational attainment has been a topic of interest for decades. This report examines the variation by age, race, Hispanic origin, nativity, place of birth, and year of entry. The analysis utilizes data from the American Community Survey (ACS) to assess the gender gap in educational attainment among women and men across different demographic characteristics.

Methods

Variation in educational attainment by age, race, Hispanic origin, and nativity may contribute to differences in the gender gap across these characteristics. The gender gap in bachelor's degree attainment varied by age. The gap was largest for adults aged 25 to 29 years, where a larger proportion of women had a bachelor's degree relative to men.

Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin

- **Bachelor's degree or higher**—this category includes people whose highest degree was a bachelor's, master's, or professional or doctorate degree.
- **High school graduate or higher**—this category includes people whose highest degree was a high school diploma or its equivalent; people who attended college, but did not receive a degree; and people who reported completing the 12th grade but not receiving a high school diploma.

Findings—Differences by Race and Hispanic Origin for Young Adults

- **Non-Hispanic Whites** had the highest ratio of women's bachelor's degree attainment relative to men.
- **Non-Hispanic Other (includes those who selected more than one race)** had the highest ratio of women's bachelor's degree attainment relative to men.
- **Latin America**
  - **Non-Hispanic Whites** had the highest ratio of women's bachelor's degree attainment relative to men.
  - **Non-Hispanic Other (includes those who selected more than one race)** had the highest ratio of women's bachelor's degree attainment relative to men.
- **Other (includes Oceania and those born at sea)**
  - **Non-Hispanic Whites** had the highest ratio of women's bachelor's degree attainment relative to men.
  - **Non-Hispanic Other (includes those who selected more than one race)** had the highest ratio of women's bachelor's degree attainment relative to men.

Findings—Differences by Age and Hispanic Origin for Young Adults

- The gap in BA attainment was highest for Hispanic women and lowest for non-Hispanic White women.
- Among young adults (25 to 29 years), there was race variation in the gender gap at the bachelor's degree level. In the younger age groups, women had higher attainment relative to men. While in older age groups, men had higher attainment relative to women. The gap for young adults (25 to 29 years) showed a higher proportion of women with a BA compared to men.

Findings—Differences by Nativity, Race, and Hispanic Origin

- **Foreign-born**
  - **Non-Hispanic Whites**
    - The ratio of the proportion of foreign-born women to the proportion of foreign-born men with a bachelor's degree was slightly higher for women.
  - **Non-Hispanic Other (includes those who selected more than one race)**
    - The ratio of the proportion of foreign-born women to the proportion of foreign-born men with a bachelor's degree was slightly higher for women.
- **Native**
  - **Non-Hispanic Whites**
    - The opposite occurred for non-Hispanic White women.
  - **Non-Hispanic Other (includes those who selected more than one race)**
    - The opposite occurred for non-Hispanic White women.

Findings—Differences by Nativity, Race, and Hispanic Origin for Young Adults

- **Foreign Born**
  - **Non-Hispanic Whites**
    - The educational attainment gap varied by year of entry. At the high school level, the educational attainment gap was at the bachelor's degree level for those who immigrated prior to 1990. In every year of entry category for the 25 to 29 population, women's educational attainment level was higher relative to men.
  - **Non-Hispanic Other (includes those who selected more than one race)**
    - The opposite occurred for non-Hispanic White women.
  - **Latin America**
    - The educational attainment gap varied by year of entry. At the high school level, the educational attainment gap was at the bachelor's degree level for those who immigrated prior to 1990. In every year of entry category for the 25 to 29 population, women's educational attainment level was higher relative to men.

Findings—Differences by Place of Birth and Year of Entry

- **Foreign Born**
  - **Non-Hispanic Whites**
    - Among young adults, 25 to 29 years, there was race variation in the gender gap at the bachelor's degree level. In every year of entry category for the 25 to 29 population, women's educational attainment level was higher relative to men.
  - **Non-Hispanic Other (includes those who selected more than one race)**
    - The opposite occurred for non-Hispanic White women.

Conclusion