

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

In 2012, slightly more women than men aged 25–29 years had earned a high school or general equivalency degree (91.1 versus 88.4 percent, respectively; data not shown).¹³ Although there has not historically been a sex disparity in secondary education, a large disparity in postsecondary educational attainment has been eliminated or reversed over the last four decades. In 1969–1970, men earned a majority of every type of post-secondary degree, while in 2010–2011, women earned more than half of all associate’s, bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral or first professional degrees, including degrees in medicine, dentistry, and law. The most significant increase has been in the proportion of doctoral or first professional degrees earned by women, which

rose from 9.6 percent in 1969–1970 to 51.4 percent in 2010–2011.

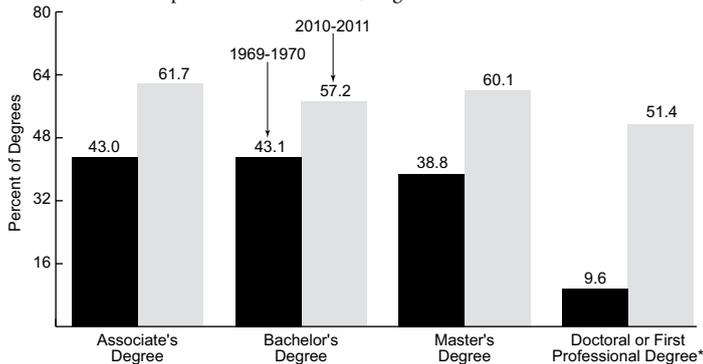
Despite the overall female advantage in postsecondary education, there are significant disparities by discipline. For example, in 2010–2011, women earned less than one in five bachelor’s degrees in computer sciences (17.6 percent) and engineering (17.2 percent). Conversely, women earned the overwhelming majority of bachelor’s degrees in education (79.6 percent) and health professions (85.0 percent). Within the health professions, women earned a smaller proportion but still a majority of doctoral degrees (57.8 percent); representation was higher in pharmacy (61.8 percent), physical therapy (68.5 percent), health care administration (72.6 percent), and public health (71.9 percent), but lower for den-

tristry (45.5 percent) and medicine (48.4 percent; data not shown). Approximately 90 percent of all registered nursing degrees were awarded to women in 2010–2011.¹³

There are also racial and ethnic disparities in educational attainment. Although 34.7 percent of all women aged 25–29 years had a college degree in 2009–2011, fewer than one in six non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (10.4 percent), non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Native (14.2 percent), and Hispanic women (15.5 percent) had a college degree, followed by 21.9 percent of non-Hispanic Black women. Non-Hispanic Asian and non-Hispanic White women were most likely to have a bachelor’s degree (62.7 and 41.4 percent, respectively; data not shown).¹⁴

Degrees Awarded to Women, by Type, 1969–1970 and 2010–2011

Source I.8: U.S. Department of Education, Digest of Education Statistics



*Includes Ph.D., Ed.D., and comparable degrees at the doctoral level as well as degrees formerly classified as first-professional, such as M.D., D.D.S., and law degrees.

Bachelor's Degrees Awarded to Women, by Selected Discipline, 2010–2011

Source I.9: U.S. Department of Education, Digest of Education Statistics

