



# CSW 69 Beijing +30 Shadow Report

## Education and Training of Women

*Kristy Kelly, Ph.D.*

The Beijing Platform for Action recognizes that education is a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development, and peace. It notes that non-discriminatory education benefits both girls and boys and contributes to more equal relationships between women and men. The Platform advocates for educational equality and improved literacy as means for women to become agents of change and participants in decision-making in society. It promotes investing in formal and non-formal education and training for girls and women as one of the best means of achieving sustainable development and economic growth.<sup>1</sup>

The Beijing Platform sets forth **six strategic objectives** to advance women's educational equality:

- B.1. Ensure equal access to education*
- B.2. Eradicate illiteracy among women*
- B.3. Improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education*
- B.4. Develop non-discriminatory education and training*
- B.5. Allocate sufficient resources for and monitor the implementation of education reforms*
- B.6. Promote lifelong education and training for girls and women.*<sup>2</sup>

After 30 years, there remain a number of issues in education and training for women in the United States:

### **Female students experience sexual violence and bullying that affect their safety at school.**

- In 2022, 18% of female students reported that they had experienced sexual violence, and 14% reported that they had been forced to have sex, compared to 5% and 4% of boys, respectively. 10% of girls reported that they did not go to school out of concerns for their safety, compared to 7% of boys.<sup>3</sup>
- Online bullying is on the increase, impacting access to and experiences with education. 20% of girls report experiencing bullying online, and 17% of girls report being bullied at school, compared to 11% and 13% of boys, respectively.<sup>4</sup>
- School safety is a growing concern for marginalized girls and gender-nonconforming students.<sup>5</sup>

### **Pregnant and parenting students face barriers to completing their education.**

- Between 2012 and 2017, 52% of all parenting students left college before completing their degree, compared to 29% of non-parenting dependent students.<sup>6</sup>
- Protections for pregnant and parenting students, guaranteed by Title IX, the 1972 civil rights law designed to prevent schools from engaging in sex discrimination against women and girls and sexual violence survivors, were recently weakened by a Trump administration directive, increasing the risk of harassment and loss of access to quality education.<sup>7</sup>

### **Bias against girls in math and science undermines their interest in pursuing high-paying STEM fields.**

- Girls' and young women's achievement in mathematics and science is on a par with that of boys and young men.<sup>8</sup> But bias against girls in their early years through higher education discourages them over time and constitutes the biggest obstacle keeping college women away from pursuing STEM degrees.<sup>9,10</sup>
- Cultural bias against female achievement results in pronounced gender differences in the sciences, with long-term economic ramifications. Even though women earn 58% of bachelor's degrees in all fields and 50% of degrees in science and engineering fields grouped together, they earn only 24% of engineering, 21% of computer science, and 24% of physics degrees, the highest paying fields. The patterns persist after college, with women making up only 35% of the lucrative STEM workforce.<sup>11</sup>
- Women of color are especially affected by discriminatory attitudes towards female science abilities. While Latina, Black, and Indigenous women make up 17% of the U.S. population, they earn just 14% of bachelor's degrees in STEM fields and comprise less than 10% of the STEM workforce.<sup>12</sup> The impacts of the intersectional inequalities of gender, race, ethnicity, and class can hinder identification with and long-

term participation in STEM, especially for those from lower-income households, perpetuating economic disadvantage.<sup>13</sup>

### Despite women's higher graduation rates, the gender wage gap persists at all educational levels.

- Women of all races and ethnicities attend school and graduate at higher rates than their male peers. Even at the doctoral level, 54% of degrees in 2022 were conferred to women.<sup>14</sup>
- Paradoxically, the gender pay gap widens for women with more education. In 2022, the gender pay gap was 21.4% for high school graduates, 29.8% for college grads, and 30.2% for those with advanced degrees. Even straight out of college, women get paid \$4.50 less per hour than their male peers.<sup>15</sup>
- While education increases economic security, more women fall under the poverty line than men at every educational level. In 2021, 5.7% of women with bachelor's degrees fell below the poverty line compared to 16.9% of women with high school degrees, and 33.1% with less than high school, a higher rate of poverty at each level than men (4.3%, 11.5%, and 24.6% respectively).<sup>16</sup>
- Racial gaps persist among women's educational attainment. Nearly twice as many white women (39%) complete their associate or bachelor's degree by the age of 29 than Black women (21%) and Latinas (20%), contributing to the racial pay gap among women.<sup>17</sup>

### Women hold a disproportionate amount of student loan debt and take longer than men to repay.

- Women hold 64% of all student loan debt and take about two years longer than men to repay student loans. From the moment women graduate from college, most face a gender pay gap — which compounds as they age. As a result, women often put off saving for retirement, buying a home, or starting a business.<sup>18</sup>
- Black women have the highest average amount of cumulative undergraduate and graduate student loan debt. The average Black woman's student loan debt grows 13% in their first 12 years of repayment. In the same period, the average White woman's student loan debt shrinks by 28%. White men, in comparison, see their student loan debts drop by 44%.<sup>19</sup>

### Recommendations for Better Gender Data

While significant research and data collection have been conducted on education and training for women, some gaps remain. At the time of this report preparation, US government data is being removed from websites tracking gender and education at all levels. Government funding supporting access to education for marginalized female student with disabilities and those pursuing STEM fields, as well as fields of knowledge such as women and gender studies, critical race theory, sex and sexuality, are targeted for closure. Funding for public schools, teacher education, and loans and grants for poor students pursuing college education are being reduced. Reinstatement of resources for tracking and supporting women and girls through all levels of schooling is needed to achieve gender equality in the United States as outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action.

<sup>1</sup> UN Fourth World Conference on Women 1995 paragraph 69. *Beijing Platform for Action*.

<sup>2</sup> UN Fourth World Conference on Women 1995. *Beijing Platform for Action*.

<sup>3</sup> Hudson, Valerie D. et al. 2023. *CEDAW Shadow Report for the United States*. Bush School of Government & Public Service, Texas A&M Univ., pg. 285.

<sup>4</sup> Hudson 2023, pg. 285.

<sup>5</sup> Alonso, J. 2025, *Department of Education Reverts to Trump's Title IX Rule*. Insider Higher Education.

<sup>6</sup> Hudson 2023, pg. 279.

<sup>7</sup> *Title IX Enforcement Directive DCL*. February 4, 2025.

<sup>8</sup> National Girls Collaborative Project 2024. *The State of Girls and Women in STEM*.

<sup>9</sup> Cimpian, Joseph, R. 2018. *How Our Education System Undermines Gender Equity and Why Culture Change – Not Policy – May be the Solution*. Brookings.

<sup>10</sup> Kugler, Adriana D. et al. 2017. *Choice of Majors: Are Women Really Any Different From Men?* National Bureau of Economic Research.

<sup>11</sup> National Girls Collaborative Project 2024. *The State of Girls and Women in STEM*.

<sup>12</sup> National Girls Collaborative Project 2024. *The State of Girls and Women in STEM*.

<sup>13</sup> National Girls Collaborative Project 2024. *STEM Statistics: K-12 Education*.

<sup>14</sup> Women in Academia Report 2023. *Gender Differences in Graduate Degree Awards*.

<sup>15</sup> Felix Richter 2023. *Gender Pay Gap Widens with Educational Levels*. Economic Policy Institute.

<sup>16</sup> Hess, Cynthia and Stephanie Román 2016. *Poverty, Gender, and Public Policies*. Institute for Women's Policy Research Briefing Paper p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> American Association of University Women (AAUW) 2023. *Fast Facts: Women of Color in Higher Ed*.

<sup>18</sup> Hanson, M. 2025. *Student Loan Debt by Gender*. Education Data Initiative.

<sup>19</sup> Hanson, M. 2025. *Student Loan Debt by Gender*. Education Data Initiative.