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Education Gender Gaps in the Mountain West, 2022

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EDUCATION GENDER GAPS IN THE MOUNTAIN WEST, 2022

K-12 Education Fact Sheet No. 8 | February 2022

Prepared by: Miguel A. Soriano Ralston, Lana Kojoian, Caitlin J. Saladino, and William E. Brown, Jr.

PURPOSE:

This fact sheet examines data from the Brookings Institution publication “Boys Left Behind: Education Gender Gaps Across the U.S.”¹ authored by Brookings Senior Fellow Richard V. Reeves and Research Analyst Ember Smith. The original report includes data on gender gaps in college degree attainment, high school graduation rates, and test scores throughout the U.S. This fact sheet highlights the percentage of women and men with college degrees, percentage of women and men graduating on time, Math and English test score gender gaps, and rankings of education gender gaps in the Mountain West states of Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah.

ABOUT THE DATA:

In the original report, Reeves and Smith explore data related to gender gaps in higher education degree attainment, on-time high school graduation, and test scores. This publication examines data included in Reeves’ book, *Of Boys and Men: Why the Modern Male Is Struggling, Why It Matters, and What to Do about It* (Brookings Institution Press, 2022). Data were also sourced from state departments of education and from the Stanford Education Data Archive.²

KEY FINDINGS:

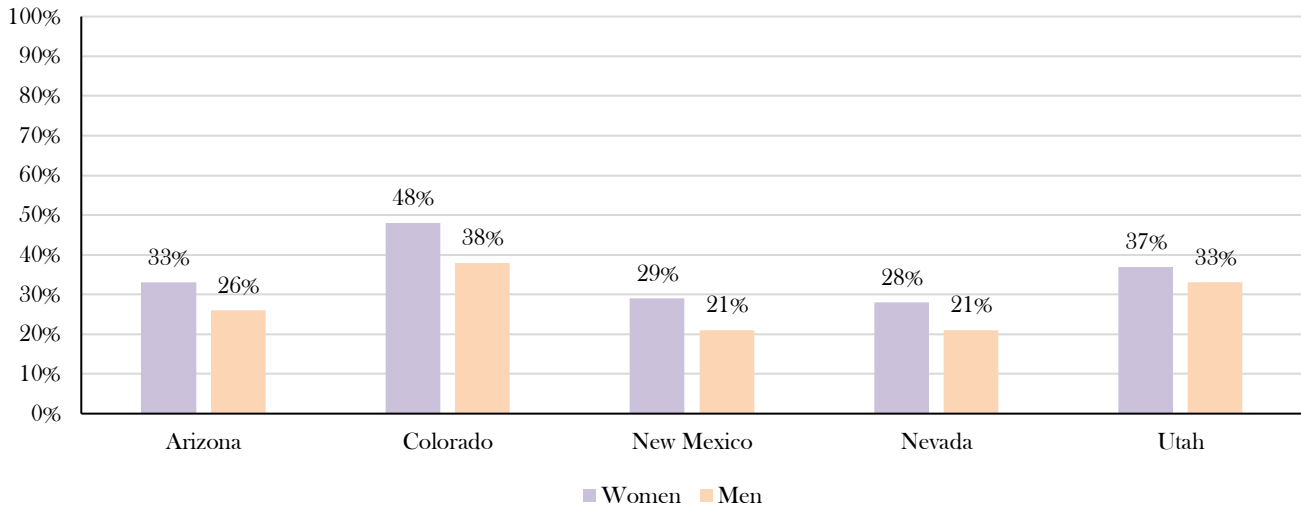
1. In 2020, New Mexico had the largest gender gap in college degree attainment in the Mountain West for those 25 to 34 years of age, where women were 38% more likely than men to have a bachelor’s degree or higher.
2. Among those 25 to 34 years of age in Nevada, women were 30% more likely than men to hold a bachelor’s degree or higher in 2020.
3. In 2021, New Mexico reported the largest gender gap in on-time high school graduation rates among Mountain West states; girls were 12% more likely than boys to graduate on time.
4. Between 2009 and 2018, boys outperformed girls in Math test scores by 0.12 grade-levels in Utah.
5. Between 2009 and 2018, girls outperformed boys in English test scores in every Mountain West state by nearly a full grade level: New Mexico, -0.94 grade-levels; Nevada, -0.91 grade-levels; Colorado, -0.90 grade-levels; Arizona, -0.86 grade-levels; and Utah, -0.81 grade-levels.
6. New Mexico ranked 10th nationally for total (combined English and Math) test score gender gap in the Mountain West, with girls outperforming boys by 0.51 grade-levels.
7. Utah ranked 35th nationally for total (combined English and Math) test score gender gap – the lowest in the Mountain West – with girls outperforming boys by 0.34 grade-levels.

¹ Richard V. Reeves and Ember Smith. “Boys Left Behind: Education Gender Gaps Across The US” (2022). *Brookings Institution*. Retrieved from www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2022/10/12/boys-left-behind-education-gender-gaps-across-the-us/

² Reardon, S. F., Ho, A. D., Shear, B. R., Fahle, E. M., Kalogrides, D., Jang, H., & Chavez, B. (2021). *Stanford Education Data Archive* (Version 4.1). Retrieved from purl.stanford.edu/db586ns4974/

Figure 1 displays the percentage difference in college degree attainment between women and men 25 to 34 years of age in Mountain West states. Utah reported the smallest gender gap in degree attainment, where women were 14% more likely than men to have a bachelor’s degree or higher. New Mexico had the largest gender gap in degree attainment, where women were 38% more likely to have a bachelor’s degree or higher. Among those 25 to 34 years of age in Nevada, women are 30% more likely than men to hold a bachelor’s degree or higher.

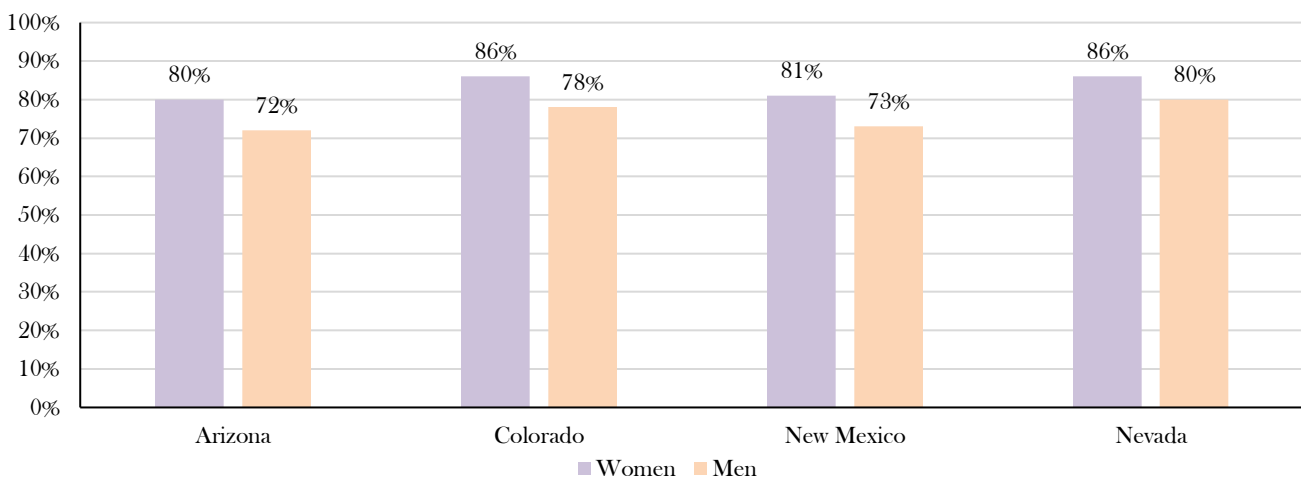
Figure 1: Ages 25 to 34 with a Bachelor’s Degree or Higher in the Mountain West by Gender, 2020



* Adapted from “Boys Left Behind: Education Gender Gaps Across The US”. *Brookings Institution*. www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2022/10/12/boys-left-behind-education-gender-gaps-across-the-us/

Figure 2 displays the share of high school freshmen graduating on-time in the Mountain West in 2021. New Mexico had the largest gender gap in on-time high school graduation, where girls were 12% more likely than boys to graduate on time. Nevada reported the smallest gender gap among Mountain West states, where girls were 8% more likely than boys to graduate on time. Utah did not report data for 2021.

Figure 2: Share of High School Freshman Graduating On-Time in the Mountain West by Gender, 2021



* Adapted from “Boys Left Behind: Education Gender Gaps Across The US”. *Brookings Institution*. www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2022/10/12/boys-left-behind-education-gender-gaps-across-the-us/

Table 1 displays average female and male Math test scores compared to the national average, as well as the grade-level gender gap in Mountain West states. These scores are based on Math scores for students in grades 3 through 8 between 2009 and 2018. A negative grade-level gender gap indicates that girls outperformed boys, and a positive grade-level gender gap indicates that boys outperformed girls.

Among Mountain West states, female test scores in Arizona and Nevada were both 0.47 grades below the U.S. average, while New Mexico had the largest grade-level difference compared to the national average (0.82 grades below). Male test scores in Utah were 0.32 grades above the U.S. average, while New Mexico males were 1.01 grades below the U.S. average. In Colorado there was no significant gap between the female (0.53 grades above) and male test scores (0.57 grades above). The only state in the Mountain West where boys outperformed girls in Math was Utah (0.12 grade-levels). In Colorado, there was not a statistically significant gender gap in Math (.03 grade-levels).

A Math Test Score Rank closer to 1st indicates a larger gender gap for a given state, whereas a test score ranking closer to 50th indicates a smaller gender gap. Among Mountain West states, New Mexico ranks 10th nationally for Math test scores, with girls outperforming boys in Math by 0.20 grade levels.

Table 1: Math Test Score Gender Gaps in the Mountain West, 2009-2018

State	Female Test Scores Relative to U.S. Average	Male Test Scores Relative to U.S. Average	Grade Level Gender Gap	Math Test Score Rank
Arizona	0.47 grades below U.S. average	0.54 grades below U.S. average	-0.08	13 th
Colorado	0.53 grades above U.S. average	0.57 grades above U.S. average	0.03	42 nd
New Mexico	0.82 grades below U.S. average	1.01 grades below U.S. average	-0.20	10 th
Nevada	0.47 grades below U.S. average	0.54 grades below U.S. average	-0.08	27 th
Utah	0.19 grades above U.S. average	0.32 grades above U.S. average	0.12	19 th

* Adapted from "Boys Left Behind: Education Gender Gaps Across The US". *Brookings Institution*. www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2022/10/12/boys-left-behind-education-gender-gaps-across-the-us/

Table 2 displays average female and male English test scores compared to the national average, as well as the grade-level gender gap in Mountain West states. These scores are based on Reasoning Through Language Arts (RLA) scores for students in grades 3-8 between 2009 and 2018. A negative grade-level gender gap indicates that girls are outperforming boys, whereas a positive grade-level gender gap indicates that boys are outperforming girls.

Between 2009 and 2018, girls outperformed boys in English test scores in every Mountain West state. Female test scores in Arizona were equal to the national average (0.00 grades below), while female test scores in Colorado had the largest difference from the national average in the Mountain West (1.01 above). Male test scores in Utah were the closest to the national average (0.09 grades below) and male test scores in New Mexico had the largest difference from the national average in the Mountain West (1.49 grades below).

An English test score ranking closer to 1st indicates a larger gender gap for a given state, whereas a test score ranking closer to 50th indicates a smaller gender gap. Among Mountain West states, New Mexico ranks 14th nationally for English test scores, with girls outperforming boys in English by 0.94 grade levels.

Table 2: English Test Score Gender Gaps in the Mountain West, 2009-2018

State	Female Test Scores Relative to U.S. Average	Male Test Scores Relative to U.S. Average	Grade Level Gender Gap	English Test Score Rank
Arizona	0.00 grades below U.S. average	0.86 grades below U.S. average	-0.86	22 nd
Colorado	1.01 grades above U.S. average	0.11 grades above U.S. average	-0.90	20 th
New Mexico	0.54 grades below U.S. average	1.49 grades below U.S. average	-0.94	14 th
Nevada	0.05 grades below U.S. average	0.96 grades below U.S. average	-0.91	17 th
Utah	0.73 grades above U.S. average	0.09 grades below U.S. average	-0.81	30 th

* Adapted from “Boys Left Behind: Education Gender Gaps Across The US”. *Brookings Institution*. www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2022/10/12/boys-left-behind-education-gender-gaps-across-the-us/

Table 3 displays test score gender gap rankings in the Mountain West. These scores are based on math and RLA scores for students in grades 3-8 between 2009 and 2018. Gender gap estimates indicate the grade-level difference between the state’s average girl and average boy. A negative test score gap indicates that girls are outperforming boys, whereas a positive test score gap indicates that boys are outperforming girls.

New Mexico ranks 10th nationally for total test score gender gap in the Mountain West, with girls outperforming boys by 0.51 grade levels. Utah ranks 35th nationally for total test score gender gap – the lowest in the Mountain West – with girls outperforming boys by 0.34 grade levels.

Table 3: Total (English and Math) Test Score Gender Gap Rankings in the Mountain West, 2009-2018

State	Total Test Score (combined English & Math) Rank	Total Test Score (combined English & Math) Gender Gap
Arizona	21 st	-0.51 grades below the national average
Colorado	29 th	-0.44 grades below the national average
New Mexico	10 th	-0.57 grades below the national average
Nevada	23 rd	-0.49 grades below the national average
Utah	35 th	-0.34 grades below the national average

* Adapted from “Boys Left Behind: Education Gender Gaps Across The US”. *Brookings Institution*. www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2022/10/12/boys-left-behind-education-gender-gaps-across-the-us/