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Fitting the Mold: An Analysis of Gender Distribution in Fields of Study Across U.S. Regions 2000-2025

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Abstract

This study seeks to examine regional differences in gender distribution across fields of study within the United States over the past 25 years. While enrollment and completions have increased amongst women in higher education, original trends of desegregation seen in the 1970s and 1980s seemingly stalled when analysis was extended to the early 2000s. Previous examination has largely concluded that gender segregation continues to persist, with continued concentration of female students in traditionally female-dominated fields and male students in male-dominated fields, and more integrated fields experiencing a “male flight” phenomenon. Analysis will examine traditional patterns to see if they are maintained, while also being exploratory and trend focused to investigate shifts and patterns allowing for comparison between where we have been and current standing. By examining the years 2000-2025, this study aims to further advance and update previous literature by applying the gender segregation index to data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) for all public 4-year institutions in the United States. The analysis will test previous findings based on literature for applicability to the 21st century and test for commonality across the different regions of the United States from a sociocultural perspective.

Keywords: Fields of Study; Gender; Higher Education: Historical Analysis: Region-Based Analysis