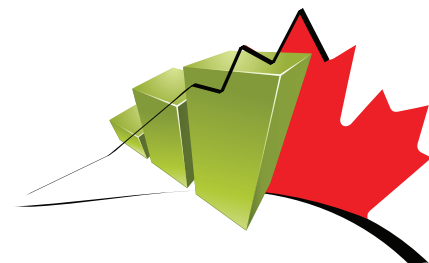


## Economic and Social Reports

# Gender-related differences in desired level of educational attainment among students in Canada



by Zechuan Deng

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# ***Gender-related differences in desired level of educational attainment among students in Canada***

by Zechuan Deng

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## **Abstract**

In recent decades, women’s educational attainment has increased significantly in Canada. In 2016, 40.7% of young women aged 25 to 34 reported having a bachelor's degree or higher, up from 32.8% in 2006. By comparison, 29.1% of young men aged 25 to 34 reported having a bachelor's degree or higher, up from 24.8% in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2017). This short study discusses gender-based differences in desired level of educational attainment for students, as well as obstacles encountered in school.

## **Authors**

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## **Acknowledgement**

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This short study is based on the 2016 General Social Survey (GSS) - Canadians at Work and Home. The main objective of the survey is to take a comprehensive look at the way Canadians live by incorporating the realms of work, home, leisure and overall well-being. The target population includes all non-institutionalized persons aged 15 years and older, living in Canada's ten provinces. The main population of interest is respondents whose main activity was "going to school" during the reference month at the time of the survey, referred to as students throughout this study.<sup>1</sup> The sample size includes 1,243 respondents, where approximately 49% were men and 51% were women. The 2016 GSS included many new perception questions related to desired level of educational attainment that had not been asked in any other cycles of GSS or major social surveys in Canada.

## Women were more likely than men to choose a bachelor's degree or above as the highest level of education desired

In 2016, 83% of students from all age groups indicated that they would like to pursue a bachelor's degree or above as the highest level of education desired. Among them, 85% of women indicated this same desire for their educational attainment, compared with 80% of men. In the case of students aged 15 to 24, 86% of women indicated that they want to pursue a bachelor's degree or above as the highest level of education desired, compared with 78% of men. These results hold when both age and current level of education are accounted for. For instance, among those aged 15 and older, women were 4.4 percentage points more likely than men to set a bachelor's degree or above as their desired level of highest education; among students aged 15 to 24, women were 5.4 percentage points more likely to do so than men.

**Table 1**

**Percentage of students that chose a bachelor's degree or above as their highest desired level of education, by sex, 2016**

	Sex	
	Male (reference group)	Female
	percent	
Bachelor's degree or above	79.6	85.0 *

\* significantly different from reference category by column ( $p < 0.05$ )

Note: Percentage of students that chose a bachelor's degree or above - all sexes is 82.3%.

Source: Statistics Canada General Social Survey, 2016.

**Table 2**

**Percentage of students (aged 15 to 24) that chose a bachelor's degree or above as their highest desired level of education, by sex, 2016**

	Sex	
	Male (reference group)	Female
	percent	
Bachelor's degree or above	78.4	85.6 **

\*\* significantly different from reference category by column ( $p < 0.01$ )

Source: Statistics Canada General Social Survey, 2016.

1. The 2016 GSS was collected between Aug. 2, 2016 and Dec. 23, 2016.

**Table 3****Probit model result: Average marginal effects of sex on the probability of choosing a bachelor's degree or above as the highest level of education desired**

Variable	Marginal effects (1)	Marginal effects (2)
<b>Female</b>		
Coefficient	0.054 †	0.044 †
Standard error	(0.030)	(0.030)
Age and current education control	No	Yes
Replications (number)	500	500
Number of observations	1,185	1,185

† significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.10$ )

**Notes:** Constants do not have margin effects so they are excluded from the table. The sample population here is smaller than 1,243 as the regression model excludes answers for "valid skips," "don't know," "refusal," and "not stated." Standard errors are estimated using the bootstrap weight (BRR) and Delta-method, which are shown in parentheses. The reference group consists of male and less than high school.

**Source:** Statistics Canada General Social Survey, 2016.

**Table 4****Probit model result: Average marginal effects of sex on the probability of choosing a bachelor's degree or above as the highest level of education desired (ages 15 to 24)**

Variable	Marginal effects (1)	Marginal effects (2)
<b>Female</b>		
Coefficient	0.072 †	0.054 †
Standard error	(0.035)	(0.033)
Age and current education control	No	Yes
Replications (number)	500	500
Number of observations	904	904

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

† significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.10$ )

**Notes:** Constants do not have margin effects so they are excluded from the table. The sample population here is smaller than 1,243 as the regression model excludes answers for "valid skips," "don't know," "refusal," and "not stated." Standard errors are estimated using the bootstrap weight (BRR) and Delta-method, which are shown in parentheses. The reference group consists of male and less than high school.

**Source:** Statistics Canada General Social Survey, 2016.

## More women than men report that they encountered obstacles preventing them from achieving the highest level of education desired

While women were more likely than men to desire a bachelor's degree or above as their highest level of education, they were also more likely to report obstacles preventing them from going as far in school as they would like, compared with men. In 2016, 34% of women reported that they encountered some form of obstacle in achieving the highest level of education desired, compared with 27% of men. In the case of students aged 15 to 24, 30% of women reported that they encountered some form of obstacle in achieving the highest level of education desired, compared with 22% of men. These results hold when both age and current level of education are accounted for. For instance, among those who were aged 15 and older, women were 8.7 percentage points more likely than men to experience obstacles in obtaining the desired level of education. Among students aged 15 to 24, women were 10.8 percentage points more likely than men to experience obstacles.

**Table 5****Percentage of students (aged 15 and older) who report that they encountered obstacles in achieving the highest level of education desired, by sex, 2016**

Is there anything standing in your way of going as far in school as you would like to go?	Sex	
	Male (reference group)	Female
	percent	
Yes	26.5	34.0 **
No	73.5	66.0 **

\*\* significantly different from reference category by column ( $p < 0.01$ )

Source: Statistics Canada General Social Survey, 2016.

**Table 6****Percentage of students (aged 15 to 24) who report that they encountered obstacles in achieving the highest level of education desired, by sex, 2016**

Is there anything standing in your way of going as far in school as you would like to go?	Sex	
	Male (reference group)	Female
Yes	21.7	30.5 *
No	78.3	69.5 *

\* significantly different from reference category by column ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Statistics Canada General Social Survey, 2016.

**Table 7****Probit model result: Average marginal effects of sex on the probability of individuals (aged 15 and older) facing any obstacles in obtaining their desired level of education**

Variable	Marginal effects (1)	Marginal effects (2)
<b>Female</b>		
Coefficient	0.088 **	0.087 **
Standard error	(0.034)	(0.034)
Age and current education control	No	Yes
Replications (number)	500	500
Number of observations	1,185	1,185

\*\* significantly different from reference category by column ( $p < 0.01$ )

**Notes:** Constants do not have margin effects so they are excluded from the table. The sample population here is smaller than 1,243 as the regression model excludes answers for "valid skips," "don't know," "refusal," and "not stated." Standard errors are estimated using the bootstrap weight (BRR) and Delta-method, which are shown in parentheses. The reference group consists of male and less than high school.

Source: Statistics Canada General Social Survey, 2016.



**Table 8****Probit model result: Average marginal effects of sex on the probability of having any obstacles in obtaining the desired level of education for individuals (age 15 to 24)**

Variable	Marginal effects (1)	Marginal effects (2)
Female		
Coefficient	0.105 **	0.108 **
Standard error	(0.038)	(0.038)
Age and current education control	No	Yes
Replications (number)	500	500
Number of observations	914	914

\*\* significantly different from reference category by column ( $p < 0.01$ )

**Notes:** Constants do not have margin effects so they are excluded from the table. The sample population here is smaller than 1,243 as the regression model excludes answers for "valid skips," "don't know," "refusal," and "not stated." Standard errors are estimated using the bootstrap weight (BRR) and Delta-method, which are shown in parentheses. The reference group consist of male and less than high school.

**Source:** Statistics Canada General Social Survey, 2016.

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