

May 24, 2018

Women Hold Nearly Two-Thirds of Outstanding Student Loan Debt

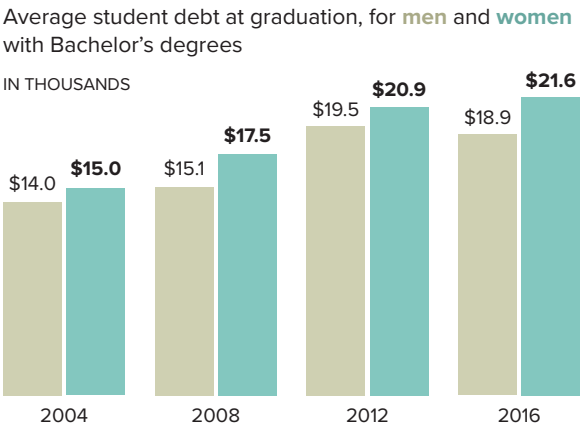
An analysis of federal data by the American Association of University Women finds that nearly two thirds of the nation’s student loan debt is held by women.

According to the report, that figure is driven by several long-term trends. Women have outnumbered men on college campuses since the 1980s — 57 percent of students were women in 2016 — but this alone cannot account for the disproportionately high debt load.



Women Graduate with \$2,700 More Student Debt Than Men

The report finds that women tend to graduate with more debt in the first place, in part because men are more likely to enroll at cheaper public institutions. Additionally, women who work jobs while enrolled in school earn \$1,500 less per year than male students who work, a pay gap that persists even after controlling for the number of hours worked.



Women with Degrees Earn Less Than Men with Degrees

Pay gaps between men and women grow after graduation. According to the report, women with bachelor’s degrees earn 18 percent less than their male counterparts one year after graduation, and this gap expands to 20 percent four years after graduation.

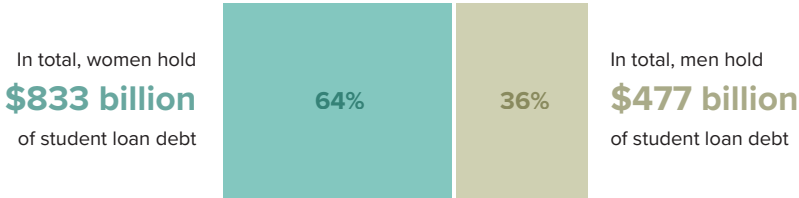
These pay differences affect student borrowers’ ability to repay loans, resulting in slower repayment and greater interest accrual for women. Among those who graduated in 2008, men repaid 38 percent of their student debt balances within four years, while women from the same graduating class only repaid 31 percent over the same time period.

Median full-time earnings for bachelor’s degree holders



Women Hold 64 Percent of All Outstanding Student Loan Debt

In its conclusion, the report recommends a greater role for income-driven repayment plans and more aggressive enforcement of federal equal pay laws to help close the gender pay gap. In addition, they recommend universities offer free or low-cost childcare services — noting that 26 percent of undergraduates have dependent children, and that 71 percent of these student parents are women.



Sources: Amer. Assn. of University Women, “Deeper in debt: Women and student loans”; National Center for Education Statistics
By Tucker Doherty, POLITICO Pro DataPoint

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