

How women, girls are faring in education, jobs in Calif.

By Los Angeles Times

California women have made significant strides in recent years, obtaining college and graduate degrees at a higher rate than men, for instance, but they still lag their male counterparts when it comes to leadership roles, earning power, and proficiency in advanced science and math, a new report shows.

The analysis, released Thursday, takes a wide-ranging look at how women and girls are faring across California. It points to recent achievements in some areas but highlights continuing inequities in many others, including women's low representation in elected office, in high-paying science and technology careers, and in the top ranks of the state's major public companies.

The analysis is believed to be the first to attempt a comprehensive look at the status of California's women and girls, based on such factors as poverty, education, employment, leadership, and mental and physical health. It was produced by faculty, staff and students at Mount St. Mary's College, a Los Angeles liberal arts institution that primarily enrolls women. Researchers worked on the project for a year, compiling data from multiple sources, including the U.S. Census and various state agencies.

"As a women's college, we have a deep interest in the forces that shape women's lives," Mount St. Mary's President Ann McElaney-Johnson said. "We see it as part of our role to shine a light on the opportunities for women, and on the inequities women continue to face."

The findings in many cases echo broad trends outlined in a

national report, "Women in America: Indicators of Social and Economic Well-Being," and other recent studies. Like those, it found that women have a distance to go in many areas to reach parity with men.

The report highlighted continuing gaps between the performance of boys and girls on mandated state tests in math and some areas of science, although not biology, where girls have pulled even. But the gender gap for advanced algebra, geometry, physics and chemistry has remained fairly constant in recent years, with girls tending to fall further behind as they reach more advanced math and science subjects.

The reasons for the gaps include different preparation and course-taking patterns in high school and college, said University of California, Los Angeles education professor Linda Sax, who studies gender differences in college students.

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