

ECLAC SUBREGIONAL
HEADQUARTERS
FOR THE CARIBBEAN

Addressing gender disparities in education and employment

A necessary step for
achieving sustainable
development in
the Caribbean

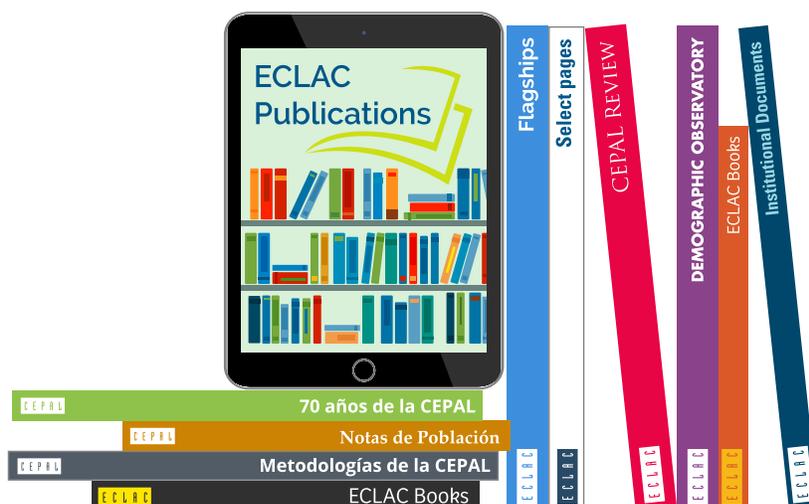
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**ECLAC SUBREGIONAL
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Contents

Abstract	7
Introduction	9
I. Background	11
A. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.....	11
B. The Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030	12
II. Understanding gender disparity in education and employment	15
A. Theoretical perspectives on gender disparity in education	15
B. Gender disparity in labour force participation and employment	18
III. Methodology	21
IV. Gender disparity in school enrolment	23
A. Gender disparities in primary education enrolment.....	23
B. Gender disparities in secondary education enrolment.....	24
C. Gender disparities in tertiary education enrolment	26
1. Enrolment by faculty at UWI.....	28
V. Gender disparity in educational attainment	33
A. Academic performance at the secondary education level.....	33
1. Performance in secondary education.....	33
B. Academic performance at the tertiary education level—UWI Mona	44
VI. Conclusion	50
Bibliography	53
Studies and Perspectives-The Caribbean Series: issues published	55

Tables

Table 1	Gender disparity in student enrolment at UWI Cave Hill by faculty, 2016/2017–2019/2020	31
Table 2	Gender disparity in student enrolment at UWI Mona by faculty, 2016/2017–2019/2020	31
Table 3	Gender disparity in student enrolment at UWI St. Augustine by faculty, 2016/2017–2019/2020	32
Table 4	Proportion of graduates by faculty by sex, 2016/2017–2019/2020	44
Table 5	Proportion of graduates by class of degree and sex, 2016/2017–2019/2020	46
Table 6	Academic performance at UWI Mona by faculty and GPI	48

Figures

Figure 1	Gender disparities in primary education, Caribbean small states 2012–2019	23
Figure 2	Gender disparities in secondary education, Caribbean small states 2012–2019	24
Figure 3	Gender disparities in lower secondary education, Caribbean small states 2012–2019	25
Figure 4	Gender disparities in upper secondary education, Caribbean small states 2010–2019	25
Figure 5	Gender disparities in lower secondary education, Caribbean small states 2012–2019	26
Figure 6	Gender disparities in upper secondary education, Caribbean small states 2012–2019	26
Figure 7	Gender disparities in tertiary education, Caribbean small states 2012–2019	27
Figure 8	Gender disparities in tertiary enrolment across three UWI campuses, 2016/2017 to 2019/2020	27
Figure 9	Gender disparity in student enrolment at UWI Cave Hill by faculty, 2016/2017–2019/2020	29
Figure 10	Gender disparity in student enrolment at UWI Mona by faculty, 2016/2017–2019/2020	29
Figure 11	Gender disparity in student enrolment at UWI St. Augustine by faculty, 2016/2017–2019/2020	30
Figure 12	Students' registration and performance in CSEC Mathematics by gender, 2010–2019	34
Figure 13	Students' registration and performance in CSEC English Language by gender, 2010–2019	35
Figure 14	Students' registration and performance in CAPE Pure Mathematics by gender, 2010–2019	35
Figure 15	Students' registration and performance in Literatures in English Unit 1 by gender, 2010–2019	36
Figure 16	Students' registration and performance in Communication Studies Unit 1 by gender, 2010–2019	36
Figure 17	Students' performance in CSEC Additional Mathematics by gender, 2010–2019	37
Figure 18	Students' performance in CSEC Agricultural Science (DA and SA) by gender, 2010–2019	38

Figure 19	Students' performance in CSEC Biology by gender, 2010–2019	39
Figure 20	Students' performance in CSEC Integrated Science by gender, 2010–2019.....	39
Figure 21	Students' performance in CSEC Chemistry by gender, 2010–2019.....	39
Figure 22	Students' performance in CSEC Physics by gender, 2010–2019	40
Figure 23	Students' performance in CSEC Information Technology by gender, 2010–2019	40
Figure 24	Students' performance in CSEC Information Technical Drawing by gender, 2010–2019	41
Figure 25	Students' performance in CSEC Economics by gender, 2010–2019.....	42
Figure 26	Students' performance in CSEC Principles of Accounts by gender, 2010–2019	42
Figure 27	Students' performance in CSEC Principles of Business by gender, 2010–2019	43
Figure 28	Students' performance in CSEC Caribbean History by gender, 2010–2019	43
Figure 29	Students' performance in CSEC Caribbean History by gender, 2010–2019.....	44
Figure 30	Gender disparities in academic performance	47
Box		
Box 1	Academic disciplines at UWI included in gender disparity analysis.....	22

Abstract

Considering the vital importance of gender equality to development and the specific promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no one behind, girls and boys should be provided with equal opportunities to achieve their fullest potential as promoted in specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and related targets. The different circumstances of girls and boys in the Caribbean make this particularly important. There is a disproportionately high level of unemployment among young women despite women notably having a higher tertiary education participation rate. This suggests that their educational participation, as well as their educational attainment, have not translated to economic opportunities. Conversely, there are increasing calls for educators and policy makers to pay attention to the underperformance of boys at the primary and secondary school levels which has implications for their participation in tertiary level education. Noting that the 2020–2029 decade has been termed the “Decade of Action” for sustainable development, there is the need for the Caribbean to urgently address its human capital development challenge even as the subregion deals with many economic, social, and environmental challenges facing it as small island developing States (SIDS).

In this study, we examined data on school enrolment and academic performance to discern any gender disparity in access to education and academic performance of students. Our findings suggest that the Caribbean has achieved and maintained gender parity in access to education at the primary and lower secondary education levels. At the upper secondary education level, boys are lagging behind in terms of net school enrolment. At the tertiary education level, the study confirms what is already public knowledge about the underrepresentation of men. In terms of academic performance, girls are outperforming boys, even in subjects and disciplines that are traditionally thought to be areas in which males excel academically. This brings up two critical issues with implications for the sustainable development of the subregion. First, the unemployment rate of young women is particularly high although they are attending school in greater numbers than boys and are outperforming boys in school. Second, it is clear that the education system is either failing the boys or not incentivising them enough.

Either way, boys are increasingly being left behind in the critical race of attaining quality education that is essential for decent work and livelihood in a world that is rapidly becoming knowledge-based.

If women and girls are not provided equal opportunity in employment despite being more qualified and representing a larger percentage of the potential workforce, and if boys continue to drop out of school early and maintain mediocre performance while in school, then the skills gap of the Caribbean workforce will widen, labour productivity will dip further, and economic growth will stagnate or decline. This prognosis does not augur well for achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and requires urgent and deliberate action to ensure that women and girls are empowered to achieve their full potential, and that boys are not left behind in this Decade of Action.

Introduction

The attainment of quality education is regarded as the foundation for improving people's lives and pursuing sustainable development.¹ This is the premise of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 4, which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Progress in achieving SDG 4 and its related targets, therefore, is critical to improving the quality of life of people and advancing the welfare of communities and nations.

Quality education is traditionally a cornerstone of Caribbean development. By making important advancement in education, the subregion was able to optimize the potential of its peoples and create opportunities for Caribbean nationals. This approach to quality education resulted in a highly educated Caribbean diaspora. However, in recent years, there have been growing concerns regarding the quality of education in Caribbean countries, especially at the primary and secondary school levels, which center around numeracy and literacy competencies of school graduates. In addition, there are questions regarding the functional skills of tertiary education graduates that might be inadequate for the labour market. In all, these concerns tend to exhibit a gender disparity and call for a thorough analysis that will help inform the development of programmes and policies to address them.

The Caribbean has recorded notable progress in improving access to education during this millennium. This includes increasing enrolment of both sexes at the primary school level and of women and girls at all levels of education. However, despite the improvement in educational participation of women and girls, especially at the tertiary level, there is a disproportionately higher level of unemployment among young women relative to young men. Unemployment, particularly among youth and women, is a major social challenge in the Caribbean. The average unemployment rate for persons aged 15-24 years was 35.2 per cent for females and 22.1 per cent for males in 2002. The rates improved marginally to 33.4 per cent for females and 20.6 per cent for males of the same age group in 2016 (ECLAC 2018). These are in stark contrast to the average unemployment rate of 7.4 per cent for the general

¹ 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean Regional knowledge management platform. <https://agenda2030lac.org/en/sdg/4-quality-education>.

population in 2017 (ILO, 2017). This suggests that the educational participation and educational attainment of young women and girls have not translated to economic opportunities for them.

A study of gender-based educational and occupational segregation in the Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago over the years 1999 to 2016 found that male dominance in tertiary education- specifically university level, over time reversed in favour of female. However, the labour market still favours men, suggesting that existing policies have not significantly contributed to a reduction in educational and occupational gender parity (Schimanski, Chagalj, Ruprah, 2018). Meanwhile, there is an ongoing debate on the reasons why women, especially young women, continue to have limited opportunities in the labour market in comparison to their male counterpart. While women represent a high majority of the public sector workforce, they occupy a proportionately lower percentage of senior and executive positions. These facts have prompted the call for girls and women to examine their chosen field of study that can impact on their skills set, employability, and career track.

Conversely, there are increasing calls for educators and policy makers to pay attention to the underperformance of boys at the primary and secondary school levels, which has implications for their participation in tertiary education. This issue is important enough that is considered a national development matter in some countries. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, in their National Economic and Social Development Plan 2013-2025, identified gender issues as hinderances to national development and flagged as a challenge, the unequal performances of boys and girls in the English Language and Mathematics examinations at the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) level. Antigua and Barbuda went further in its Medium-Term Development Strategy (MTDS) by singling out "the performance of males within society as it is widely thought that they are becoming marginalized and are generally underachieving in the workplace and academically"² (Hosein and others, 2019).

Considering the critical role of gender equality in development and the specific promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no one behind, girls and boys must be provided with equal opportunities to achieve their potential as promoted in specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their related targets. Noting also that the 2020 decade has been termed the "Decade of Action" for sustainable development, there is the need for the Caribbean to urgently address its human capital development challenge even as the subregion deals with the many economic, social, and environmental challenges facing Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Although promoting the human capital development of Caribbean SIDS requires a multifaceted approach with gender imperative being just a component, it is important to examine the gender dimension to adequately discern the challenges to equal educational opportunities and educational attainment of women and men, and the impacts that they have on the abilities of women and men to fully participate in economic, social, and cultural life. If countries are to meaningfully progress in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls (SDG 5), they should provide access to quality education and educational attainment must translate to decent work. At the same time, greater attention needs to be paid to the underachievement of boys in education in an effort to eliminate gender disparities in education as espoused in target 4.5 of the SDGs.

Considering the varying concerns regarding equity in quality education in the Caribbean, this study examines whether gender disparities exist in access to education and educational achievement among Caribbean youth, and the implications of such disparities, where they may exist, for the sustainable development of the subregion.

² Antigua and Barbuda, Ministry of Finance and Corporate Governance, *Medium Term Development Strategy 2016 to 2020*, September 2015, p. 58.

I. Background

Women and girls are the primary consumers of educational services in the Caribbean. This heightens the importance of ensuring a gender perspective regarding the issue of quality education in the subregion. Quality education and gender equality are two of the 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and are priority areas of the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030. These frameworks provide a development context for addressing gender disparities in access to quality education and the opportunities that such access confers.

A. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) is a landmark agreement negotiated and approved by the 193 Member States of the United Nations. Comprised of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 169 targets and 232 indicators, it aims to comprehensively address the economic, social, environmental and political dimensions of sustainable development way (United Nations, 2015). Building on a long history of international human rights and gender equality commitments, its universal approach recognizes the common challenges faced by all countries and reaffirms the responsibility of governments to address them to ensure the promise of leaving no one behind.

The 2030 Agenda clearly outlines that achieving gender equality is not only an important goal, but recognizes its centrality to development and as a prerequisite for progress across all 17 SDGs.³ It presents a platform for countries to accelerate the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, underscoring that "Realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress across all the Goals and targets. The achievement of full human potential and of sustainable development is not possible if one half of humanity continues

³ 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean Regional knowledge management platform. See: <https://agendaz030lac.org/en>.

to be denied its full human rights and opportunities [...]. The systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of the Agenda is crucial" (United Nations, 2015, para. 20).

Goal 5 of the SDGs⁴, the main goal that speaks directly to gender equality, underpins the notion that gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world. **Target 5.5 of the SDGs, Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life**, further emphasizes that gender equality is achieved when women and men in a society enjoy equal opportunities and rights in all spheres of life. Additionally, **target 4.3, By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university**; and **target 4.4, By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship**; recognize that gender equality is inextricably linked to efforts to promote the right to education and ensure that girls and boys, women and men are equally empowered in and through education.

B. The Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030

Latin America and the Caribbean have held regular meetings as part of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean⁵ to discuss and make political commitments to eradicate discrimination against women and girls and gender inequality, and advance towards the guarantee of full enjoyment of women's and girls' autonomy and human rights (ECLAC, 2017). From the first Regional Conference on the Integration of Women in the Economic and Social Development of Latin America held in Havana in 1977, to the thirteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean held in Montevideo in 2016, these commitments have shaped a Regional Gender Agenda that recognizes women's rights and equality as central and cross-cutting elements of all government efforts to strengthen democracy and ensure inclusive and sustainable development (ECLAC, 2017b). The existing commitments⁶ within the Regional Gender Agenda is in synergy with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and should be seen as complementary.

In 2016, at the thirteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC member States adopted the Montevideo Strategy for the Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030, to guide the implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda to ensure that it is used as a road map to achieve the 2030 Agenda from the perspective of gender equality and women's autonomy and human rights (ECLAC, 2017). It allows governments in the region to analyse their progress and to identify challenges and priorities relating to the achievement of the SDGs with emphasis on gender equality and women's rights and autonomy. The Strategy further calls for member States to incorporate the commitments undertaken by governments in the Regional Gender Agenda of the Regional Conference on Women in

⁴ SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

⁵ The Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean is a subsidiary body of ECLAC which is convened at least every three years, to identify the situation of women's autonomy and rights at the regional and subregional levels, present public policies recommendations for gender equality, undertake periodic assessments of the activities carried out in fulfilment of regional and international plans and agreements on the subject, and serve as a forum for debates on relevant issues.

⁶ The Regional Gender Agenda comprises of the commitments made by Latin American and Caribbean governments on women's rights and autonomy and gender equality that were adopted at sessions of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. These commitments are reflected in the Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into Latin American Economic and Social Development (1977), the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995-2001 (1994), the Santiago Consensus (1997), the Lima Consensus (2000), the Mexico City Consensus (2004), the Quito Consensus (2007), the Brasilia Consensus (2010) and the Santo Domingo Consensus (2013).

Latin America and the Caribbean, and in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, into national, subnational, and local policies, plans and programmes on equality, women's rights and sustainable development (ECLAC, 2017b).

The Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development⁷ receives annual reports from the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (resolution 700(XXXVI) of ECLAC) on progress made in the implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda and the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda from a gender perspective. In turn, the conclusions and recommendations agreed to at the intergovernmental level in the Forum inform the global process in the framework of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and the Economic and Social Council Forum on Financing for Development.

The Montevideo Strategy seeks to dismantle structural challenges in the region, while recognizing the special vulnerabilities facing the Caribbean SIDS. One structural challenge outlined in the Strategy that is of particular relevance to this study is the "*discriminatory, violent and patriarchal cultural patterns and the predominance of a culture of privilege*" (ECLAC, 2017b). While the Strategy does acknowledge that there has been regional progress in access by girls, female adolescents, young and adult women, in all their diversity, to the education system, and by young and adult women to the labour market and decision-making and their increased participation in these spheres, there is still the persistence of discriminatory sociocultural patterns that continue to reproduce inequalities (ECLAC, 2017b).

⁷ The Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development (established at the thirty-sixth session of ECLAC in 2016) is the regional mechanism for follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

II. Understanding gender disparity in education and employment

A. Theoretical perspectives on gender disparity in education

Marginalization thesis, sociological perspectives, and educational perspective are the three main theoretical perspectives of gender disparities in education and the labour market in the Caribbean.⁸ Miller (1986) undoubtedly brought significant attention to gender disparity in the Caribbean through the marginalization thesis and provided the foundation for subsequent theoretical perspectives. Utilizing data on changes in teacher employment over the 20th Century, Miller (1986) noted that colonial and present-day education system created an environment that benefited females and marginalized males.⁹ During that era, the teaching profession was one of the most available avenues of upward social mobility. Miller (1986) applied the dependency theory to argue that the colonial powers and white elites limited the promotion of black male teachers to leadership positions in fear that they would pose a challenge to them, by feminizing the teaching profession.¹⁰ Miller (1986) suggests that the predominance of women in the teaching profession creates a safeguard against those black males who may have posed a challenge to the white status quo. Miller posited that the white elite strategically capitalized on the advancement of women's rights and empowerment during that era to marginalize black males.¹¹ Miller (1991) also used data from United States and Soviet Union to support and expand his thesis.¹²

⁸ De Lisle, Jerome (2018). The development of theory on gendered patterns of achievement in the Anglophone Caribbean: insights, contradictions, and silences. *Gender and Education*, 2018 .vol. 30, no. 4, p450–466. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2016.1216951>.

⁹ Miller, E. (1986). *Marginalization of the Black male: Insights from the Development of the Teaching Profession*. Kingston: Institute of Social and Economic Research.

¹⁰ Miller, E. (1986). *Marginalization of the Black male: Insights from the Development of the Teaching Profession*. Kingston: Institute of Social and Economic Research.

¹¹ Chevannes, Barry (1999). *What we sow and What we reap: Problems in male identity*. <http://gracekennedy.com/lecture/GKF1999Lecture.pdf>.

¹² Miller, E. (1991) *Men at Risk*. Kingston: Jamaica Publishing House.

Miller (1991) further refined the marginalization theory with the concept of “one’s place in society”, which is determined by race, class, gender, age, lineage, and which he termed “operational attributes”. These operational attributes enable the power holders of central places in post-colonial Caribbean States to “distribute the rest of the population in a queue from center to margin, moving groups up and down the queue as a way of holding on to their power”.¹³ Miller (1991) categorizes women as a marginalized group that have moved up the queue “both as a general concession to the demands of marginal groups as well as to serve as junior partners in the consolidation of the power of the elite”.¹⁴ However, Miller acknowledged that women are also marginalized in the workplace and those with little or no education are the most marginalized, irrespective of gender. These women have the highest unemployment rates, lowest pay rates, and are the least protected.¹⁵

Miller’s marginalization thesis was received with much criticism and was challenged by the sociological and educational perspectives. Although Figueroa (2007) agreed with the marginalization thesis on a historical condition of male privileging in the Caribbean, he purported that the sole reason for male underperformance is gender privileging and not male marginalization. Figueroa (2007) applied gender privileging theory to gender socialization in the family, school, and work. He observed that “historically males have occupied positions of great power, social prestige, and access to power, which reflect how males should be raised in the home, treated at school and remunerated at work”.¹⁶ “Certain tasks, spheres of activities and attributes have been privileged as male; while others have been privileged as female”, which permeate through the family, community, school and the labor market.

Figueroa (2000) attributed male underperformance in education to their lack of core skills needed for school success. “Early childhood socialization better prepares girls for schooling in the Caribbean than boys. Girls are more confined to the house, more under adult supervision, given more responsibility, expected to be disciplined, taught to please others, and involved in doing uninteresting and repetitive tasks”.¹⁷ Whereas boys are given the “freedom to roam the streets, the lower levels of responsibility and self-control that are required of them. They get fewer chores that give them an opportunity to learn the process skills that are required for schooling”.¹⁸

Figueroa (2007) asserts that the school setting is increasingly seen as a female sphere. “With the acceptance of concepts of greater gender equality, less attention was paid to the boys. Given notions of male toughness they continued to be treated more harshly in schools, being more likely to suffer public humiliation at a time when children were becoming more conscious of their rights”.¹⁹

Figueroa (2007) also asserts that an accumulation of factors contributed negatively to boys’ interest and engagement in school because these “‘in-school’ experiences clashed with their gender socialization and concepts of male identity”.²⁰ Figueroa therefore submits that the empowerment of

¹³ Chevannes, Barry (1999). What we sow and What we reap: Problems in male identity. <http://gracekennedy.com/lecture/GKF1999Lecture.pdf>.

¹⁴ Chevannes, Barry (1999). What we sow and What we reap: Problems in male identity. <http://gracekennedy.com/lecture/GKF1999Lecture.pdf>.

¹⁵ De Lisle, Jerome (2018). The development of theory on gendered patterns of achievement in the Anglophone Caribbean: insights, contradictions, and silences. *Gender and Education*, 2018.vol. 30, no. 4, p450–466. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2016.1216951>.

¹⁶ Figueroa, Mark (2007). Under-achieving Caribbean Boys; Marginalisation or Gender Privileging. <https://www.cedol.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/23-25-2007.pdf>.

¹⁷ Figueroa, Mark (2000). Making Sense of Male Experience: The Case of Academic Underachievement in the English-speaking Caribbean. *IDS Bulletin* Vol. 31.no.2.

¹⁸ Figueroa, Mark (2007). Under-achieving Caribbean Boys; Marginalisation or Gender Privileging. <https://www.cedol.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/23-25-2007.pdf>.

¹⁹ Figueroa, Mark (2007). Under-achieving Caribbean Boys; Marginalisation or Gender Privileging. <https://www.cedol.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/23-25-2007.pdf>.

²⁰ Figueroa, Mark (2007). Under-achieving Caribbean Boys; Marginalisation or Gender Privileging. <https://www.cedol.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/23-25-2007.pdf>.

women and girls increased their access to education, while gendered socialization helped them to perform better than men and boys in school.²¹

However, Figueroa (2000) recognized that the female's success in school does not translate to increased earning capacity.²² Traditionally, subjects taken at the secondary education level and field of study at the tertiary level was mainly gender segregated due to socialization practices in the home, school, and labour market. However, girls and women's empowerment have enabled them to break barriers and pursue traditionally male fields of study, excel and increase their social mobility. However, many do not participate in the labour force due to childbearing and rearing responsibilities. Among those who participate in the labor force, they receive less pay than their male counterparts with similar qualifications, and few hold senior executive positions in organizations, but many are in middle management as managers of the organizations which can be synonymous to managers/ caretakers of the home. Moreover, Figueroa argued that "male-oriented jobs such as the artisan crafts are more flexible, highly paid and remote from the tax net than those that can be attained with a modest educational background". Figueroa concludes that "educational achievement is far more important for females than males in as far as it impacts on their ability to increase their earning capacity".²³

Chevannes (1999) studied socialization practices in the community, family, and the home and his perspective focused on Caribbean male identity and how it is reflected in patriarchy, men's sexuality, parenthood, violence, and in education. Chevannes (2001) conducted ethnographic research in three Caribbean communities in Dominica, Jamaica, and Guyana to examine socialization practices in the family and community and observed gendered division of labour.²⁴

Domestic work such as cooking, washing, tidying the house are chores seen as the responsibility of the females. However, chores related to the domestic economy such as farming, wage labor, artisan skills and other outdoor forms of income earning are the responsibility of the male. Chevannes (1999) asserted that while males and females can perform cross gender tasks, children are made aware of the gender significance of these tasks to prepare them for independent living. The female tasks identify with their assigned role as nurturer and are considered light work, while the male tasks are considered heavy work, more technical, and connote a role as provider/breadwinner.²⁵ The gender significance of these tasks is translated to the education system, where subjects and fields of study that denote a nurturer role are selected and/or assigned to females and those that denote a provider/breadwinner role are selected and/or assigned to males.²⁶ In the labour market many of these nurturer type jobs and skills are at a lower earning capacity, in contrast to those jobs/skills that denote provider/breadwinner role. Moreover, many females do not participate in the labour market because these types of nurturer tasks are done in the household and are unpaid.

In subsequent work, Chevannes (1999) examined the performance of males and females at tertiary institutions in Jamaica and concluded that males are not marginalized but are under-participating in tertiary education as a result of low enrolment and low attendance rates.²⁷ Moreover,

²¹ Figueroa, Mark (2007). Under-achieving Caribbean Boys; Marginalisation or Gender Privileging. <https://www.cedol.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/23-25-2007.pdf>.

²² Figueroa, Mark (2000). Making Sense of Male Experience: The Case of Academic Underachievement in the English-speaking Caribbean. *IDS Bulletin* Vol.31.no.2.

²³ Figueroa, Mark (2007). Under-achieving Caribbean Boys; Marginalisation or Gender Privileging. <https://www.cedol.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/23-25-2007.pdf>.

²⁴ Chevannes, B. (2001). *Learning to be a Man: Culture, Socialization and Gender Identity in Five Caribbean Communities*. Kingston: University of the West Indies Press.

²⁵ Chevannes, B. (2001). *Learning to be a Man: Culture, Socialization and Gender Identity in Five Caribbean Communities*. Kingston: University of the West Indies Press.

²⁶ Chevannes, Barry (1999). What we sow and What we reap: Problems in male identity. <http://gracekennedy.com/lecture/GKF1999Lecture.pdf>.

²⁷ Chevannes, Barry (1999). What we sow and What we reap: Problems in male identity. <http://gracekennedy.com/lecture/GKF1999Lecture.pdf>.

many males drop out at subsequent levels of the education system at higher rates than females because they find school to be unattractive given their confinement to those gender-specific fields and subjects where they are performing poorly. Instead they elect to enter the labour market unskilled in the hope of making a living.²⁸ However, Chevannes noted that the males who remain in school and pursue tertiary education performed better than their female counterparts. He found that females were outperforming males in graduating with upper second-class honors degrees, but males were outperforming them in graduating with first class honors degrees.²⁹

The educational perspective argues that school factors contribute to the gender disparity in education such as incompatibility between schooling and one's social identity, gender differences in teacher–student interaction and effects of school practices (Evans, 2000). Bailey (2000) held the view that males were not marginalized³⁰ but were under-represented in the education system because of several factors such as family and community violence, low financial resources, and limited capacity.³¹ Bailey (2000) asserted that the value placed on certification differs for males and females and must be considered when examining differences in male representation in the education system. Bailey (2000) also held the view that males were on par in their performance with females except with those gender segregated subjects.³² Furthermore, Bailey (2000) cautioned that “female’s under-representation in technical and vocation craft subjects limits their acquisition of skills that would equip them for employment in non-traditional higher paying occupations such as electrical engineering and auto mechanics. It also forces them toward lower-paying lower status service-oriented sectors of the labour market”.³³ Furthermore, Bailey (2000) observed that males and females are not monolith groups and to better understand and eliminate gender disparity in education, within group/gender differences and between groups must be examined by relevant demographic factors such as geography, race and ethnicity, social status, school type (such as single sex and co-educational types; and traditional/denominational schools and other secondary school types).³⁴

B. Gender disparity in labour force participation and employment

There are several features that describe the Caribbean labour market (Downes, 2006). These features reflect the peculiarities of the subregion that include small population, open economies, and highly mobile labour force. Mismatch between the demand and supply of labour, which has been cited by the private sector (ECLAC 2018), reflects a small cadre of highly skilled professional, technical and managerial personnel.

The overall higher levels of female participation and performance at the secondary and tertiary levels of education systems have been insufficient to overcome gender inequalities in the labour market. In exploring the factors that contribute to gender differentials in unemployment in Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago, Seguino (2003) found that even with a university degree, women were more

²⁸ Chevannes, Barry (1999). What we sow and What we reap: Problems in male identity. <http://gracekennedy.com/lecture/GKF1999Lecture.pdf>.

²⁹ Chevannes, Barry (1999). What we sow and What we reap: Problems in male identity. <http://gracekennedy.com/lecture/GKF1999Lecture.pdf>.

³⁰ Bailey, Barbara (2000). School Failure and Success: A Gender Analysis of the 1997 General Proficiency Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) Examinations for Jamaica. *Journal of Education and Development in the Caribbean* Vol4 (1).

³¹ Bailey, Barbara (2000). School Failure and Success: A Gender Analysis of the 1997 General Proficiency Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) Examinations for Jamaica. *Journal of Education and Development in the Caribbean* Vol4 (1).

³² Bailey, Barbara (2000). School Failure and Success: A Gender Analysis of the 1997 General Proficiency Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) Examinations for Jamaica. *Journal of Education and Development in the Caribbean* Vol4 (1).

³³ Bailey, Barbara (2000). School Failure and Success: A Gender Analysis of the 1997 General Proficiency Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) Examinations for Jamaica. *Journal of Education and Development in the Caribbean* Vol4 (1).

³⁴ Bailey, Barbara (2000). School Failure and Success: A Gender Analysis of the 1997 General Proficiency Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) Examinations for Jamaica. *Journal of Education and Development in the Caribbean* Vol4 (1).

likely to be unemployed than men with the same level of education. While there has been some narrowing of the gender gap in the labour force participation rate, attributed to growing trends in women seeking paid employment because of increasing levels of education, decreasing fertility rates, and changing aspirations, this has not translated into commensurate achievement in the workplace as women continue to either be underemployed or unemployed (Stuart, Gény and Abdulkadri, ECLAC, 2018).

Seguino (2003) noted that there was greater gender inequality in job access among poorer groups, however, the probability of being unemployed decreased with more education. In Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, the gender gap in unemployment rates decreased (gender inequality narrowed) with higher education. It is interesting to note that in Trinidad and Tobago, women with secondary education had higher unemployment rates than men with any level of education, including those with no education. While unemployment was more prevalent among the younger populations, women were at a greater disadvantage than men in their prime years (20-54) as income providers (Seguino, 2003).

Using household survey data, Schimanski and others (2018) found that the Bahamas (over 80 per cent), Barbados (about 70 per cent), and Jamaica (about 60 per cent) were the leading Caribbean countries in terms of overall female labour force participation, with Trinidad and Tobago (about 58 per cent) not too far behind. Only the Bahamas and Barbados recorded female labour force participation above the 65 per cent average for Latin America and the Caribbean LAC.³⁵ However, as time progressed, the data showed that female labour force participation rates decreased especially for younger and older women, despite continuously rising female secondary and tertiary education levels qualification. This was attributed to lack of childcare facilities and flexibility of job contracts, compelling mothers (and grandmothers) to stay home to provide childcare.

Even with consistent labour force participation by females in the four study countries, there were still high levels of occupational segregation. The Bahamas was characterized by the highest relative occupational segregation for traditionally male-dominated occupations such as crafts workers; agricultural, forestry and fishery workers; and plant and machine operators and assemblers, and traditionally female-dominated clerical occupations, with a very high proportion of younger women in service and sales jobs. While the data showed a large share of persons in the same occupational sectors despite different gender-specific educational backgrounds, a reduction in occupational segregation has yet to be seen to date. This suggests that simply encouraging women to pursue higher education and participate in the labour market may not be enough to lower gender segregation of occupations.

Barbados also had similar traditionally male- and female-dominated occupations, with relative educational segregation significantly impacting relative occupational segregation, except in elementary occupations where there was less emphasis on educational background. However, women were leaving elementary occupations at a higher rate than men, which suggested a need for further policy emphasis on continued promotion of secondary education among women, as well as university and secondary education among men, who seemed to have been left behind, in order to break the tradition of associating specific gender with certain occupations (Schimanski and others, 2018). In Jamaica, while elementary occupations were relatively less segregated over time and educational segregation played a lesser role in occupational segregation that remained, there appeared to have evolved a modest increase in male-domination of employment in the plant and machine operators and assemblers and crafts and related worker occupations.

³⁵ The female labour force participation rates in The Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago were based on household surveys in these countries and the estimates were largely in line with the figures published by the World Bank Indicators and ILO estimates during the analysis period 1999 to 2016.

In Trinidad and Tobago, although university level education was particularly highly segregated with an overrepresentation of women, Schimanski and others (2018) reported a slight decrease in segregation in clerical occupations, but an increase among craft-related workers and plant and machine operators and assemblers. Except for the highly skilled occupations, occupational segregation was noted to be directly linked to educational segregation. Nevertheless, women were overrepresented in clerical, service and sales, and technical associate positions, but underrepresented in craft worker and plant and machine operator and assembler occupations, compared to men.

Most women have lower-paying jobs and earn less than men. This situation is common to almost all employment sectors. The Graduate Tracer Reports of 2011 and 2016 from The University of the West Indies highlighted evidence of gender inequality in incomes, based on the survey responses from first-degree graduates on their experience in the labour market across the subregion. The 2014 graduate data showed that the nominal median salaries were 32 per cent higher for males in Trinidad and Tobago, 9 per cent higher in Jamaica and 10.9 per cent higher in Barbados, across all occupations (University of the West Indies, 2018).

While labour market participation rates are converging and women have surpassed men in terms of education, the labour markets remain characterized by persistent segregation. Therefore, there is a need for more proactive labour market policy across the subregion, one that provides and promotes equal opportunities for women by increasing the availability of childcare facilities to raise younger to middle-aged women's labour market participation. Affirmative action programmes, designed to increase the share of women in traditionally male-dominated occupations, can have a strong effect on decreasing occupational segregation (Schimanski and others, 2018).

III. Methodology

This study utilized secondary data sources to examine gender disparities in education at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. At the primary education level, gender disparity in access to education was examined using the World Bank World Development Indicators (WDI) database. Data from 2012-2019 contained in the annual reports of the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) on registration for and performance on a variety of subjects in CSEC at the general and technical proficiency levels, and the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) conducted in May/June were analyzed for any trend in gender disparity in student performance.³⁶ The Cave Hill, Mona, and St. Augustine campuses of The University of the West Indies (UWI) were used as proxies for tertiary institutions in the Caribbean. Data on student enrollment at these campuses and degrees earned from the Mona campus during 2016/2017-2019/2020 academic years were analyzed for any trends in gender disparity.

Gross and net enrolment ratios and related parity indices for Caribbean small States³⁷ are provided by WDI and available in the public domain. The annual reports of CXC are also publicly available. Despite the different operational definitions for the Caribbean subregion, enrolment ratios are consistent and relatively similar for Caribbean small States and CXC member countries. Also, UWI campuses publish annual reports that contain data on enrollment and graduation, including special reports of tracer studies of graduates. These sources provide good data to examine gender disparities in education at the tertiary level.

Academic performance was assessed using grades derived from CSEC and CAPE examinations at the CXC regional level. For CSEC Grades I-III are considered passing grades and for CAPE Grades I-IV are

³⁶ Students from all CXC member Countries of Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and Turks and Caicos Islands were included in the analysis.

³⁷ WDI categorizes Caribbean small states (CSS) to include Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago but excludes Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, St Maarten and Turks and Caicos. <http://www.oecd.org/dev/americas/LEO-2019-Chapter-6.pdf>. Special feature: Caribbean small states.

considered passing grades for UWI entrance. This study limited academic performance at CAPE to Unit/Level 1, since The UWI offers provisional acceptance after Level 1 grades have been received.

At the CSEC level, performance was examined in general subjects that most students are either required or choose to take, such as Mathematics, English Language, Information Technology, Principles of Accounts, and Principles of Business. Performance in traditionally male-dominated subjects such as Agricultural Science and Technical Drawing was also examined. Furthermore, performance in subjects such as Additional Mathematics, Agricultural Science, Biology, Caribbean History, Chemistry, Economics, Integrated Science, Physics, and Religious Education was assessed. At the CAPE level, performance was only examined in Pure Mathematics Unit 1, Literature in English Unit 1, and Communication Studies Unit 1.³⁸

For CSEC and CAPE, the percentages of students with a passing grade in the analysed subjects were compared by sex using the gender parity index (GPI). For each measure, GPI was computed by dividing the percentage of female by the percentage of male. A GPI below 0.97 indicates gender disparity in favour of males, whereas a GPI above 1.03 indicates a disparity in favour of females. GPI values between 0.97 and 1.03 reflect gender parity.³⁹

At the tertiary level, gender differences in enrolment and throughput by field of study are analysed in similar way to that of the secondary education using GPI. Gender differences in throughput are examined using data for the four-year period 2016-2019, disaggregated by gender and faculty. Analysis at the faculty level included all faculties of UWI. Box 1 provides a breakdown of the faculties included in the gender disparity analysis. Furthermore, gender differences in academic performance are examined using the percentage of male and female students receiving first class honours, second class honours (upper and lower divisions), and pass degrees as the metrics for calculating the GPI.

Box 1

Academic disciplines at UWI included in gender disparity analysis

- Food and Agriculture (St. Augustine Campus)
- Humanities and Education
- Science and Technology
- Medical Sciences
- Social Sciences
- Engineering
- Institute of Gender and Development
- Law
- Sport

Source: ECLAC based on information from annual reports on student statistics published by The Office of Planning and Institutional Research, UWI.

Note: The other categories would comprise students enrolled degree programmes in the faculty that were not identified separately.

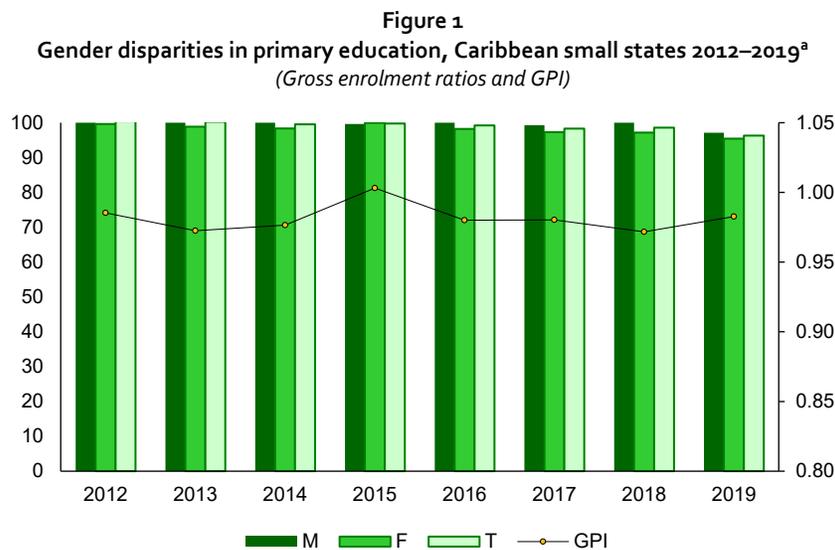
³⁸ Note that data for the year 2018 was not available for those subjects.

³⁹ This represents UNESCO metrics for determining gender disparity.

IV. Gender disparity in school enrolment

A. Gender disparities in primary education enrolment

Despite marginal declines, analysis of enrolment rates across the Caribbean small States group revealed high levels of engagement for both male and female students over the period 2012-2019. Gross enrolment among boys stood at 101.12 per cent in 2012 and fell to 97.14 per cent in 2019. Over the same period, enrolment in primary school among girls fell from 99.62 per cent to 95.45 per cent. Still, the level of enrolment between boys and girls was almost equal for the eight-year period. GPI rose from 0.99 in 2012 to 1.00 in 2015 before falling .02 percentage points to 0.98 in 2019 (see figure 1).



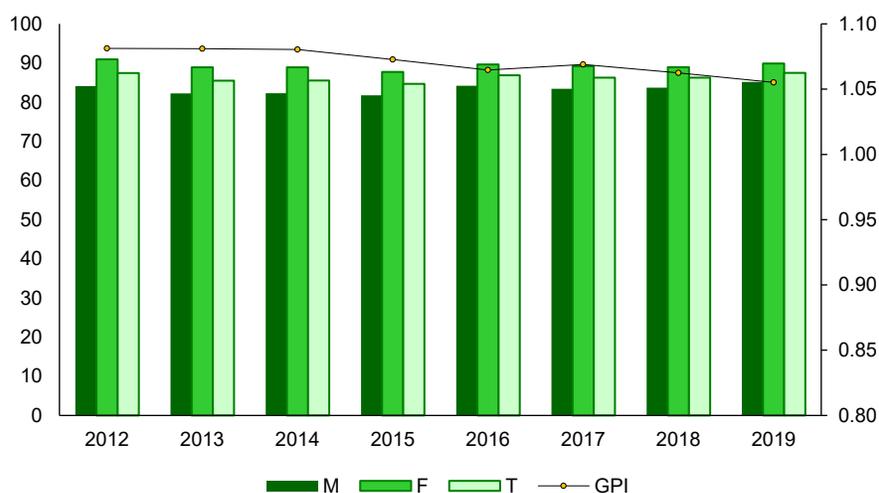
Source: ECLAC based on data from World Bank's World Development Indicators database.

^aThe left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

B. Gender disparities in secondary education enrolment

Compared with the global average, school enrolment for boys and girls in secondary education in the Caribbean is high, but lower than at the primary education level. In contrast with the trend observed for primary education, secondary education enrolment is higher among girls than boys over the entire period of study. Enrolment increased from 84.10 per cent among boys to 85.18 per cent but fell from 90.63 per cent to 89.88 per cent among girls. This higher participation among girls is reflected in GPI values above 1.03, indicating gender disparity in secondary school attendance in favour of girls (see figure 2).

Figure 2
Gender disparities in secondary education, Caribbean small states 2012–2019
(Gross enrolment ratios and GPI)



Source: ECLAC based on data from World Bank's World Development Indicators database.

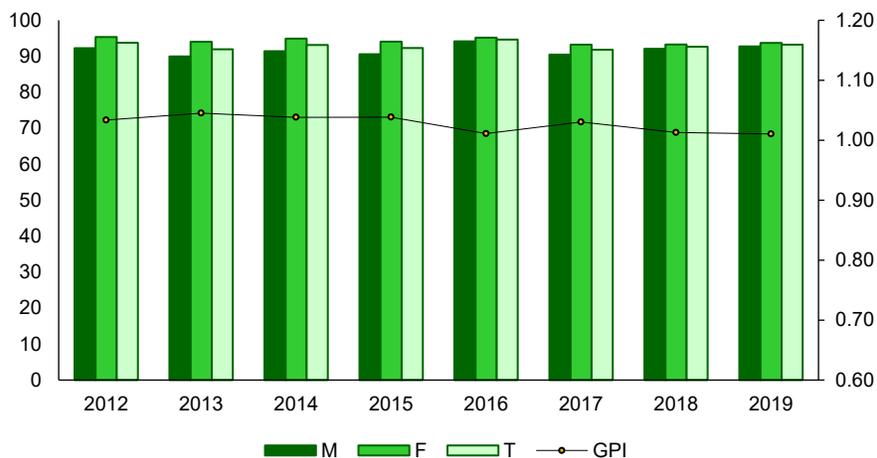
Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

The disparity becomes more pronounced when enrolment is segregated by lower and upper secondary education level. As shown in figure 3, only in 2015 was there a slight disparity (GPI of 1.04) between boys and girls in levels of enrolment in lower secondary education. However, as figure 4 shows, girls attended upper secondary education at a relatively higher level than boys by 20 per cent in 2010 although this disparity narrowed over time to 14 per cent by 2019. Interestingly, while trends in net enrolment in lower secondary education showed similar gender disparity (or lack of it) as was observed for gross enrolment, the marked gender disparity shown in gross upper secondary enrolment are not replicated when net enrolment data are examined (see figures 5 and 6). In fact, the data only showed marginal disparity in upper secondary education enrolment between 2013 and 2016 and by 2017 gender parity was achieved.

Gender parity in enrolment was only present when net enrolment⁴⁰ was used as the metric measure, which points to underlying factors that encourages girls and young women to stay in school in order to remedy low educational performance or to return to school, after initial exits, in order to gain additional qualifications.

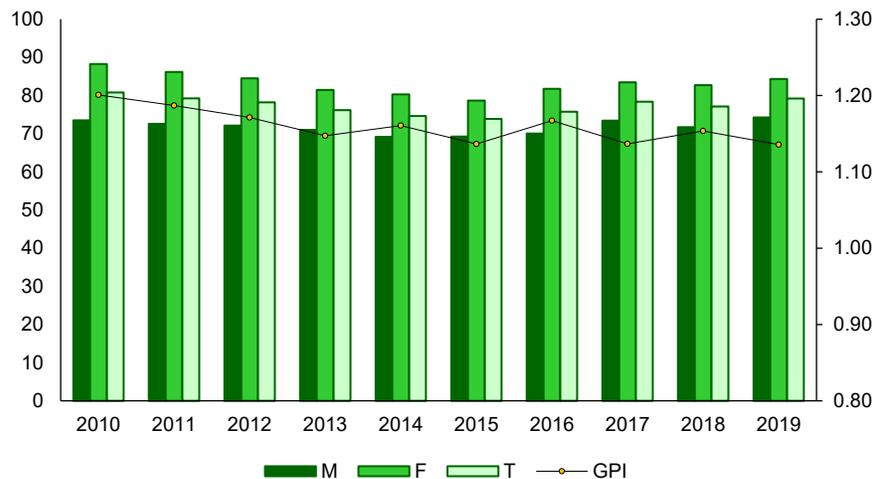
⁴⁰ Net enrolment only counts students attending schools that are designed for their age group.

Figure 3
Gender disparities in lower secondary education, Caribbean small states 2012–2019
(Gross enrolment ratios and GPI)

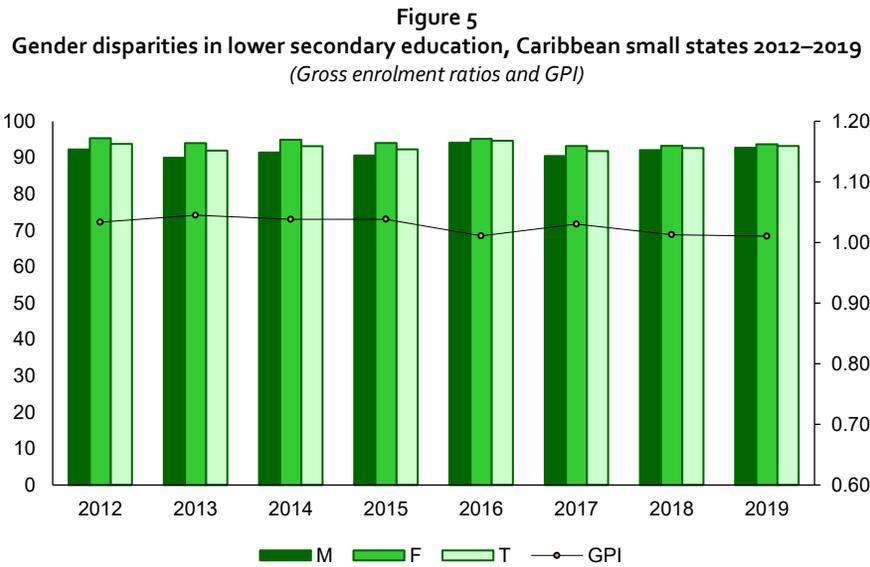


Source: ECLAC based on data from World Bank's World Development Indicators database.
 Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

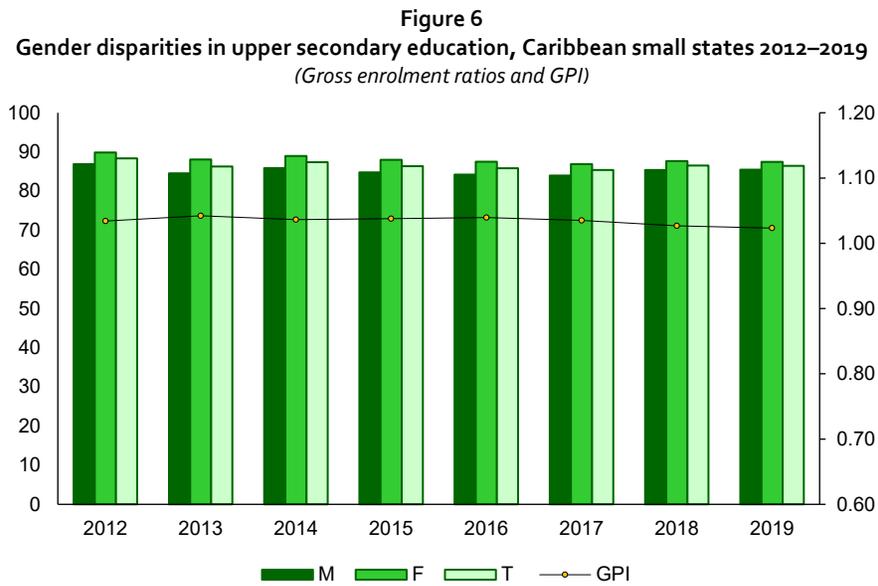
Figure 4
Gender disparities in upper secondary education, Caribbean small states 2010–2019
(Gross enrolment ratios and GPI)



Source: ECLAC based on data from World Bank's World Development Indicators database.
 Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.



Source: ECLAC based on data from World Bank’s World Development Indicators database.
 Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

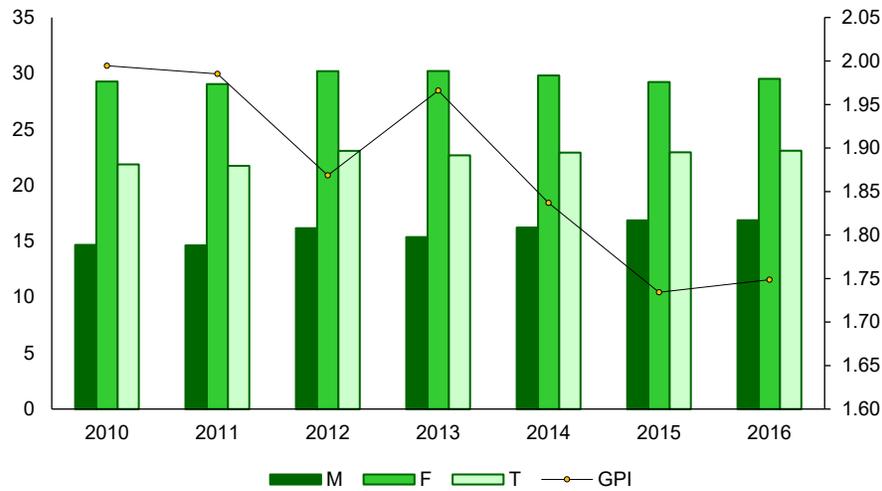


Source: ECLAC based on data from World Bank’s World Development Indicators database.
 Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

C. Gender disparities in tertiary education enrolment

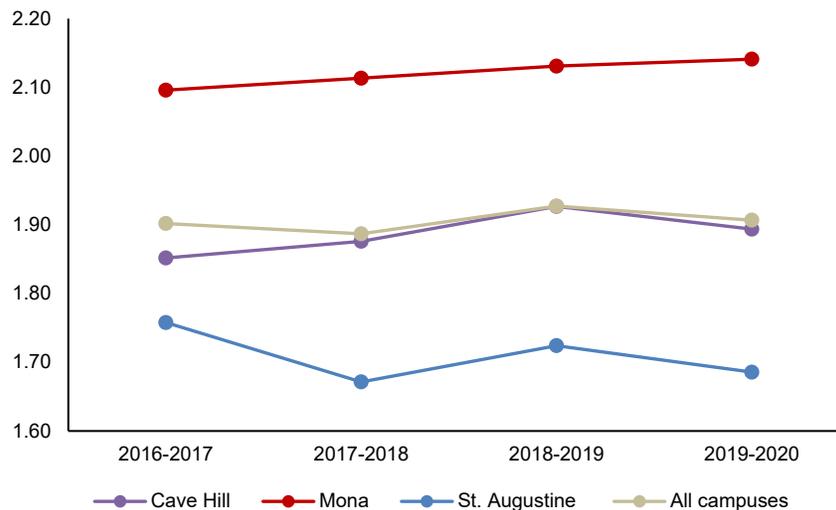
Across the Caribbean, enrolment in tertiary level education by men is noticeably lower than that of women. In 2016, about 30 per cent of women compared to almost 17 per cent of men in the Caribbean were enrolled in a tertiary level education. During 2010-2012 period, GPI in tertiary education enrolment was approximately 2, indicating that in relative terms women were attending tertiary institutions at a rate that was twice that of men. By 2016, the GPI had improved to about 1.75 (figure 7).

Figure 7
Gender disparities in tertiary education, Caribbean small states 2012–2019
(Gross enrolment ratios and GPI)



Source: ECLAC based on data from World Bank’s World Development Indicators database.
 Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

Figure 8
Gender disparities in tertiary enrolment across three UWI campuses, 2016/2017 to 2019/2020
(Gender parity index, GPI)



Source: ECLAC based on annual reports data on student statistics published by The Office of Planning and Institutional Research, UWI.

Time series data from the UWI on enrolment over the four-year academic sessions 2016/17 to 2019/20 corroborate WDI data for Caribbean small States that show a higher level of female participation in tertiary higher education in the subregion. Student enrolment at UWI indicated that, across the Cave Hill, Mona, and St. Augustine campuses of the university, females recorded a higher enrolment rate than males. For every 100 female students enrolled at UWI in 2019/20, there were 54 male students. At the undergraduate level, females enrolment was 65.5 per cent and 71.6 per cent of

throughput in the same year. Moreover, data for the 2016-2020 period show that there has been little change in the gender gap across faculties with females outnumbering males in enrolment for all faculties except Science and Technology, Engineering, and the new Sport Faculty.

The Caribbean has consistently had a greater proportion of females enrolled in higher education. In 2016/17, aggregate GPI across the three UWI campuses was 1.90 suggesting that the enrolment rates for females almost doubled that for males. At the university level, this trend remained steady over the study period. However, at the campus level, gender disparity in enrolment was more pronounced and rising at Mona but less pronounced and reducing at St. Augustine. At Cave Hill, gender disparity mirrored the university average except in 2016/2017 when gender disparity was lower than the university average (see figure 8).

1. Enrolment by faculty at UWI

Across the Cave Hill, Mona, and St Augustine campuses of UWI, there were stark gender differences in the fields of study of students. There was a distinct reflection of cultural norms and gender segregation where Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) degrees programmes in Faculties of Engineering and Science and Technology had higher participation from males than females. Moreover, the new Faculty of Sport which had the lowest enrolment across campuses was not surprisingly dominated by male enrolment. Gender biases in favour of females also existed in the Institute of Gender and Development and the Faculty of Humanities and Education. The Faculty of Medical Sciences, which offers STEM programmes, was dominated by females across campuses. This holds for Nursing, a traditionally feminine field of study, and all other medical disciplines offered in the faculty. The Faculty of Food and Agriculture at the St. Augustine campus achieved and continued to maintain gender parity in enrolment since 2017/2018 while the Faculty of Social Science at Mona attained gender parity during 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 academic years.

Overall, the findings suggest that during 2016/17 to 2019/20 period, the gender gap for tertiary education enrolment has remained steady in the subregion; female enrolment continued to be more than double male enrolment across the three UWI campuses. The traditional biases are clear across faculties, where, in some instances, there have been widening gender imbalances. The data showed a consistent trend in reinforcing gender norms towards areas and skills seen as masculine or feminine. For instance, although enrolment was lower for males across campuses, the gender parity indices reveal that there are male biases towards STEM-related fields like Science and Technology, Engineering and Sport.

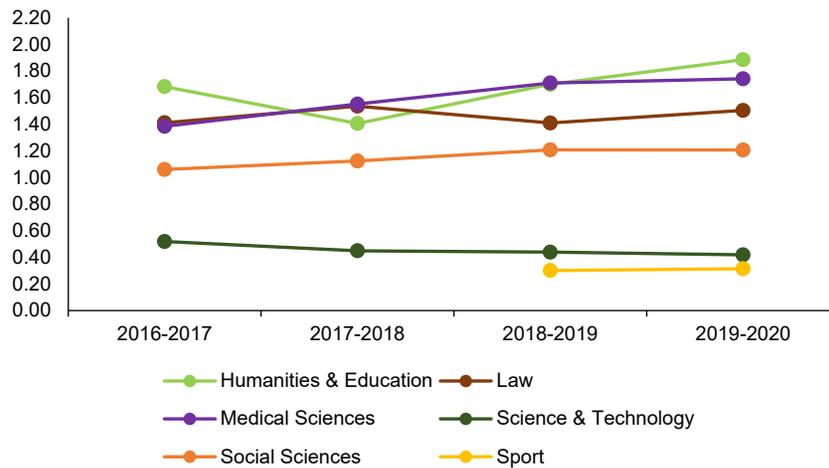
Data from the Cave Hill campus show a widening gap in gender disparity in enrolment, with the disparity increasing in favour of females across all faculties except in Science and Technology and Sport where the disparity is in favour of males. In 2019/20, the gender parity index of enrolment was highest in the Faculty of Humanities and Education (1.89) followed by Medical Sciences (1.74), Law (1.50), and Social Sciences (1.21). In the same academic year, GPI was lowest in the Faculty of Sport (0.31) followed by the Faculty of Science and Technology (0.42). Over the 2016/17 - 2019/20 period, gender disparity increased the most in the Faculty of Medical Sciences with Faculties of Social Sciences and Science and Technology also showing gender disparity in enrolment (see figure 9).

If focus is on the enrolment of a particular gender across the faculties, data for 2019/20 academic session indicated that the highest proportion of female students (56.8 per cent) and male students (47.1 per cent) was enrolled in the Faculty of Social Sciences. A sizeable proportion of male students also enrolled in the Faculty of Science and Technology (31.5 per cent) which has been experiencing increasing enrolment from males (see table 1).

At the Mona campus, the Faculty of Social Sciences achieved gender parity during two out of the four academic years covered in this study with GPI of 1.02 and 1.03 in 2017/2018 and 2018/2019, respectively. Gender disparities in favour of females was most pronounced, but rapidly improved, in the

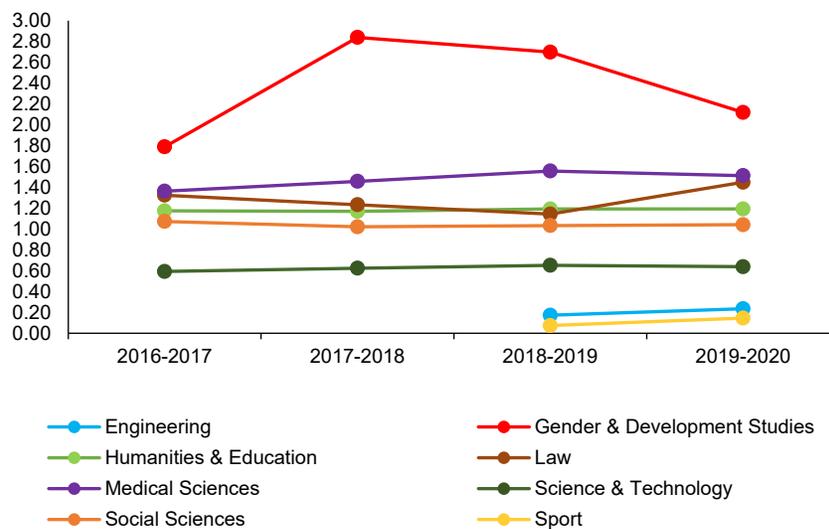
Institute of Gender and Development Studies with GPI of 2.84 in 2017/18 and 2.12 in 2019/20. Gender disparity in favour of females also existed in the Faculties of Medical Sciences, Law, and Humanities and Education where GPI was 1.51, 1.45, and 1.19, respectively, for 2019/20. For Medical Sciences and Law, the results showed a trend of widening gender gap in enrolment. However, enrolment in the new Faculties of Sport and Engineering exhibited high gender disparity in favour of males with GPI of 0.15 and 0.24, respectively, while the Faculty of Science and Technology also showed disparity in enrolment in favour of males, but to a lesser extent, with a GPI of 0.64 in 2019/20 (see figure 10).

Figure 9
Gender disparity in student enrolment at UWI Cave Hill by faculty, 2016/2017–2019/2020
(Gender parity index, GPI)



Source: ECLAC based on data from annual reports on student statistics published by The Office of Planning and Institutional Research, UWI Cave Hill.

Figure 10
Gender disparity in student enrolment at UWI Mona by faculty, 2016/2017–2019/2020
(Gender parity index, GPI)

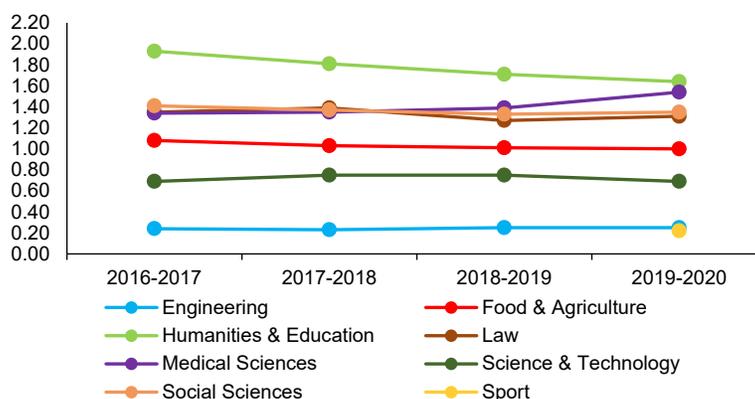


Source: ECLAC based on data from annual reports on student statistics published by The Office of Planning and Institutional Research, UWI Mona.

Within-sex analysis showed that the largest proportion (46.8 per cent) of females enrolled in the Faculty of Social Sciences, followed by the Faculties of Medical Sciences and Science and Technology (21.0 per cent and 16.3 per cent, respectively, in 2019/20. During the same academic year, the share of total male enrolment was highest for the Faculty of Social Sciences (40.8 per cent), followed by the Faculties of Science and Technology and Engineering (29.7 per cent and 16.6 per cent, respectively). Males recorded decreased participation in some female-dominated fields over the period of study, where for example, the proportion of all male enrolment in the Faculty of Medical Sciences decreased from 16.6 per cent in 2016/17 to 13.9 per cent in 2019/20 (see table 2).

Except for the faculty of Food and Agriculture, all other faculties at the St. Augustine campus have gender disparity in enrolment for the period of study. Females continued to be disproportionately overrepresented in enrolments in the Faculties of Humanities and Education, Medical Sciences, Social Sciences, and Law with gender parity indices of 1.64, 1.54, 1.35 and 1.31, respectively, in 2019/20. On a positive note, there has been a narrowing of gender gap in enrolment in the Faculty of Humanities and Education which saw a GPI decrease from 1.93 in 2016/17 to 1.64 in 2019/20. Conversely, the Faculties of Engineering, Sport, and Science and Technology had gender disparity in enrolment that equates to disproportionate overrepresentation of males during the same period, with GPI of 0.25, 0.22 and 0.69, respectively (see figure 11).

Figure 11
Gender disparity in student enrolment at UWI St. Augustine by faculty, 2016/2017–2019/2020
(Gender parity index, GPI)



Source: ECLAC based on data from annual reports on student statistics published by The Office of Planning and Institutional Research, UWI St. Augustine.

The distribution of student enrolment in faculties within sex categories adds context to the gender disparity observed. The share of female enrolment in 2019/20 is highest for Social Sciences (31.9 per cent) followed by Medical Sciences (23.5 per cent) and Science and Technology (17.5 per cent). A closer look at the fields with higher male enrolment ratios shows that females have increased participation in the Faculty of Science and Technology from 15.7 per cent to 17.5 per cent of all enrolled females. However, they marginally decreased participation in the Faculty of Engineering with enrolment in the engineering fields dropping from 5 to 4.6 per cent of all females. In 2019/20, the share of enrolment for males is highest in the Faculty of Science and Technology followed by the Faculties of Social Sciences and Engineering (25.4 per cent, 23.6 per cent and 18.8 per cent, respectively). Males have had a marginal decrease in participation in some female-dominated fields, for example Medical Sciences, decreasing from 16.4 to 15.2 per cent of all enrolled males. At the same time, males increased participation in the Social Sciences, from 22.4 to 23.6 per cent of all males (see table 3).

Table 1
Gender disparity in student enrolment at UWI Cave Hill by faculty, 2016/2017–2019/2020
(Gross enrolment ratios and GPI)

Faculty	2016–2017				2017–2018				2018–2019				2018–2019			
	M	F	T	GPI												
Humanities & Education	5.7	9.7	8.3	1.68	6.6	9.3	8.3	1.41	5.5	9.4	8.0	1.70	5.5	10.3	8.6	1.89
Law	7.5	10.6	9.5	1.41	6.5	10.0	8.8	1.54	6.6	9.3	8.4	1.41	6.1	9.2	8.2	1.50
Medical Sciences	6.7	9.2	8.3	1.38	6.5	10.1	8.9	1.55	5.7	9.8	8.4	1.71	5.1	9.0	7.6	1.74
Science & Technology	26.6	13.8	18.3	0.52	29.2	13.1	18.7	0.45	31.1	13.7	19.6	0.44	31.5	13.2	19.5	0.42
Social Sciences	53.5	56.7	55.6	1.06	51.1	57.5	55.3	1.12	46.9	56.6	53.3	1.21	47.1	56.8	53.5	1.21
Sport	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.2	1.3	2.3	0.30	4.6	1.4	2.5	0.31

Source: ECLAC based on data from annual reports on student statistics published by The Office of Planning and Institutional Research, UWI Cave Hill.

Table 2
Gender disparity in student enrolment at UWI Mona by faculty, 2016/2017–2019/2020
(Gross enrolment ratios and GPI)

Faculty	2016–2017				2017–2018				2018–2019				2018–2019			
	M	F	T	GPI												
Humanities & Education	9.0	10.6	10.1	1.17	8.5	10.0	9.5	1.17	8.1	9.7	9.2	1.19	8.1	9.6	9.1	1.19
Law	3.2	4.3	4.0	1.32	3.7	4.6	4.3	1.23	3.8	4.4	4.2	1.14	3.4	4.9	4.4	1.45
Medical Sciences	16.6	22.6	20.7	1.36	14.9	21.7	19.5	1.46	13.6	21.2	18.7	1.56	13.9	21.0	18.7	1.51
Science & Technology	29.7	17.6	21.5	0.59	28.4	17.7	21.1	0.62	25.3	16.5	19.3	0.65	25.5	16.3	19.2	0.64
Engineering	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.9	0.5	1.3	0.17	3.1	0.7	1.5	0.24
Social Sciences	40.8	43.8	42.8	1.07	44.2	45.2	44.9	1.02	45.6	47.1	46.6	1.03	44.9	46.8	46.2	1.04
Gender & Development	0.6	1.1	0.9	1.79	0.3	0.9	0.7	2.84	0.3	0.7	0.5	2.70	0.3	0.6	0.5	2.12
Sport	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.4	0.0	0.1	0.07	1.0	0.1	0.4	0.15

Source: ECLAC based on data from annual reports on student statistics published by The Office of Planning and Institutional Research, UWI Mona.

Table 3
Gender disparity in student enrolment at UWI St. Augustine by faculty, 2016/2017–2019/2020
(Gross enrolment ratios and GPI)

Faculty	2016–2017				2017–2018				2018–2019				2018–2019			
	M	F	T	GPI												
Humanities & Education	7.9	15.2	12.5	1.93	8.0	14.4	12.0	1.81	8.1	13.8	11.7	1.71	7.7	12.6	10.8	1.64
Law	2.4	3.2	2.9	1.35	2.7	3.8	3.4	1.39	2.9	3.8	3.5	1.27	3.0	4.0	3.6	1.31
Medical Sciences	16.4	22.0	20.0	1.34	16.0	21.7	19.5	1.35	15.4	21.4	19.2	1.39	15.2	23.5	20.4	1.54
Science & Technology	22.9	15.7	18.4	0.69	23.2	17.4	19.5	0.75	23.7	17.8	20.0	0.75	25.4	17.5	20.4	0.69
Engineering	21.2	5.0	10.9	0.24	20.7	4.8	10.7	0.23	19.4	4.9	10.2	0.25	18.8	4.6	9.9	0.25
Social Sciences	22.4	31.5	28.2	1.41	22.9	31.3	28.1	1.37	24.1	32.0	29.1	1.33	23.6	31.9	28.8	1.35
Food & Agriculture	6.8	7.3	7.1	1.08	6.6	6.8	6.7	1.03	6.3	6.4	6.4	1.01	5.8	5.8	5.8	1.00
Sport	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	0.0	0.0	0.0	-	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.22

Source: ECLAC based on data from annual reports on student statistics published by The Office of Planning and Institutional Research, UWI St. Augustine.

V. Gender disparity in educational attainment

A. Academic performance at the secondary education level

1. Performance in secondary education

Mathematics and English Language

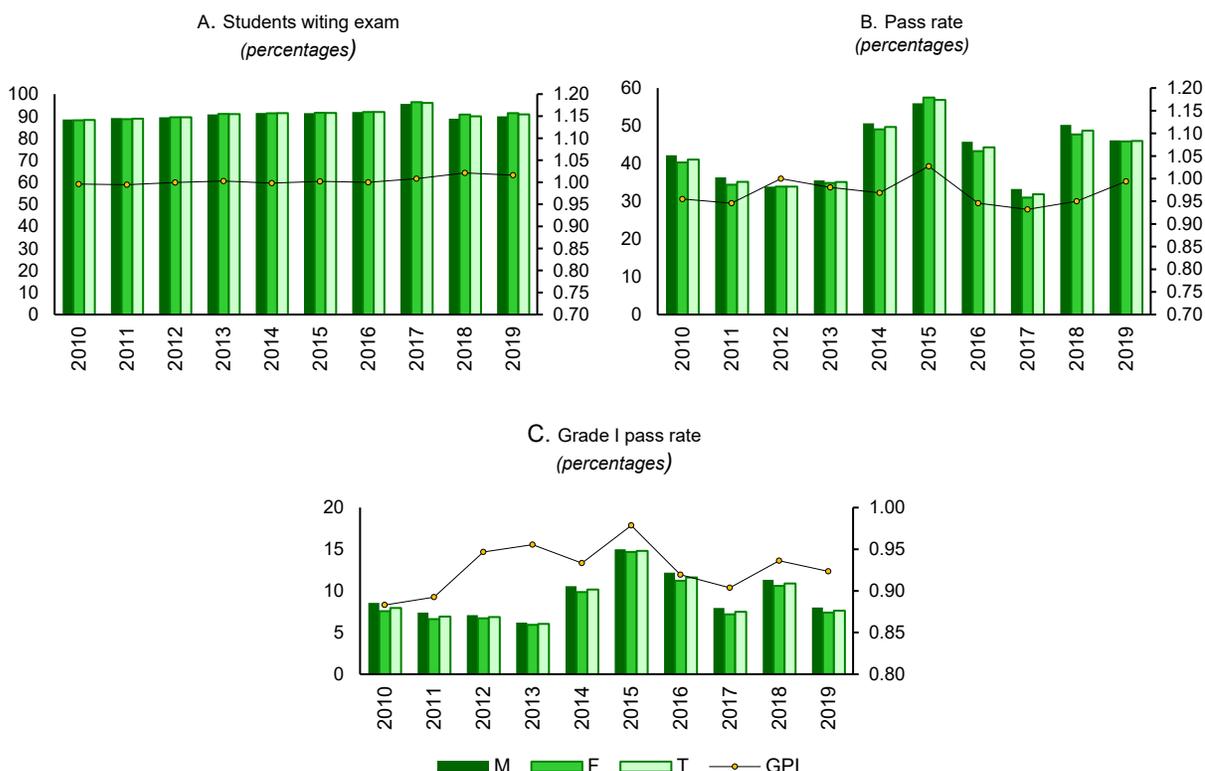
Passing grades in Mathematics and English Language at the secondary education level are required for matriculation in many tertiary institutions and for employment in certain jobs, as such students are required to seat for these subjects in the CSEC examination. However, registration for both or either subject does not guarantee that the student will take the examination. On average, during the period 2012-2019, about 60 per cent of candidates who registered to take the CSEC Mathematics general proficiency and English Language examinations were females. Except for English Language in 2018 where the GPI was 1.04, there was no gender disparity among students who actually sat for CSEC examinations in these two compulsory subjects.

The pass rates for Mathematics generally fluctuated over the 2010-2019 period, ranging from a low of approximately 32 per cent in 2017 to a high of about 57 per cent in 2017. A closer examination revealed that the majority of the students passed with Grade III (44-56 per cent), the lowest passing grade, and there were slightly higher proportions of females than males earning that grade. Conversely, a higher proportion of males got Grade I and II. Overall, there is no discernible trend of gender disparity in Mathematics pass rate over the period of study although the GPI revealed slight disparity in favour of males during 2010-2011 and 2016-2018 periods. However, when we considered only the students that got Grade I, there was a clear gender disparity in favour of males (see figure 12).

In the case of English Language, the pass rate was above 50 per cent and increased gradually during the period of study, except for 2012 when it was about 47.6 per cent. Similar to Mathematics, the majority of the students passed with Grade III, ranging from 36 per cent in 2016 to 52 per cent in 2012. The GPI revealed clear disparity in performance between genders with females significantly

outperforming males in the subject. Not only did a higher proportion of females pass the subject, but a much greater proportion of them also passed with Grade I relative to males (see figure 13).

Figure 12
Students' registration and performance in CSEC Mathematics by gender, 2010–2019



Source: ECLAC based on data from CXC annual reports.

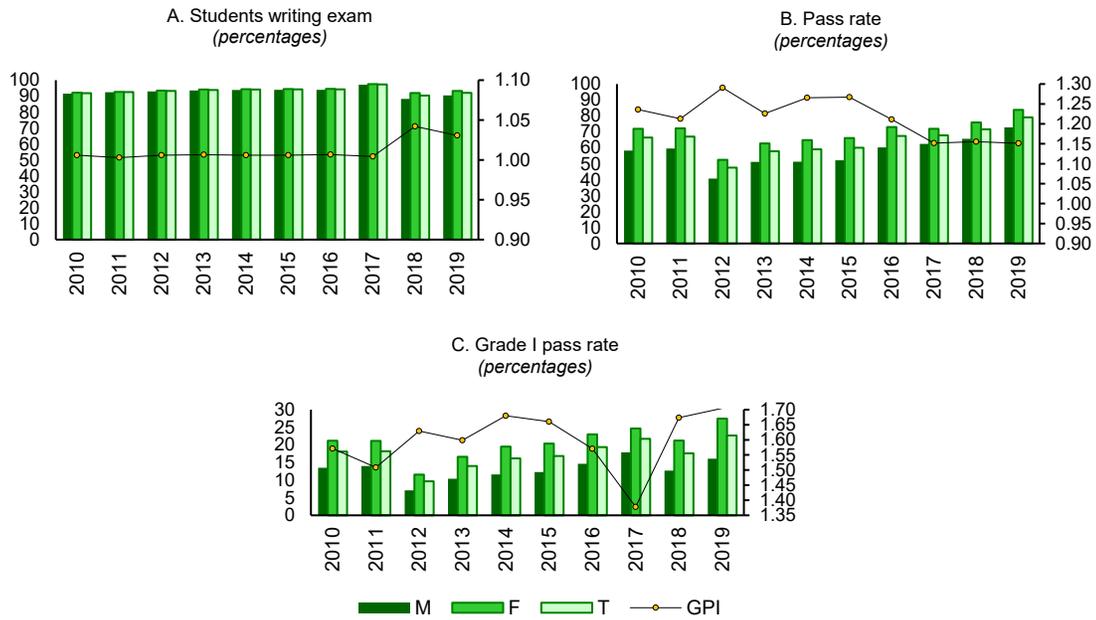
Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

At the level of CAPE, there is no gender disparity in the proportion of students who registered and took Pure Mathematics Unit 1 for the period 2010 to 2019. For Literatures in English Unit 1, except for the 2012-2013 and 2015 periods, the data showed gender disparity in favour of females among registered students who took the examination. Overall pass rate in Pure Mathematics showed gender disparity in favour of females between 2010 and 2015. By 2016 gender parity had been achieved but pass rates for 2019 showed a return to slight disparity in favour of females. Higher proportions of females got Grade I in Pure Mathematics over the study period. While gender disparity was not present for all years, GPI showed a trend of increasing disparity where females outperformed males in getting Grade 1 in Pure Mathematics (see figure 14). In similar manner, the overall pass rate in Literatures in English showed modest gender disparity with females slightly outperforming males. However, greater proportions of females passed at the Grade I level with the GPI as high as 2.5 in 2012. Since reaching the peak of the gender gap in performance in 2012, there has been a consistent narrowing of the gap with males outperforming females in scoring Grade 1 in 2014 (see figure 15).

Communication Studies is compulsory at the CAPE level such that 93 to 95 per cent of registered students took the Unit 1 examination for the period 2010-2019 and there was gender parity among those students. The pass rates were relatively high hovering around 95 to 98 per cent during that period

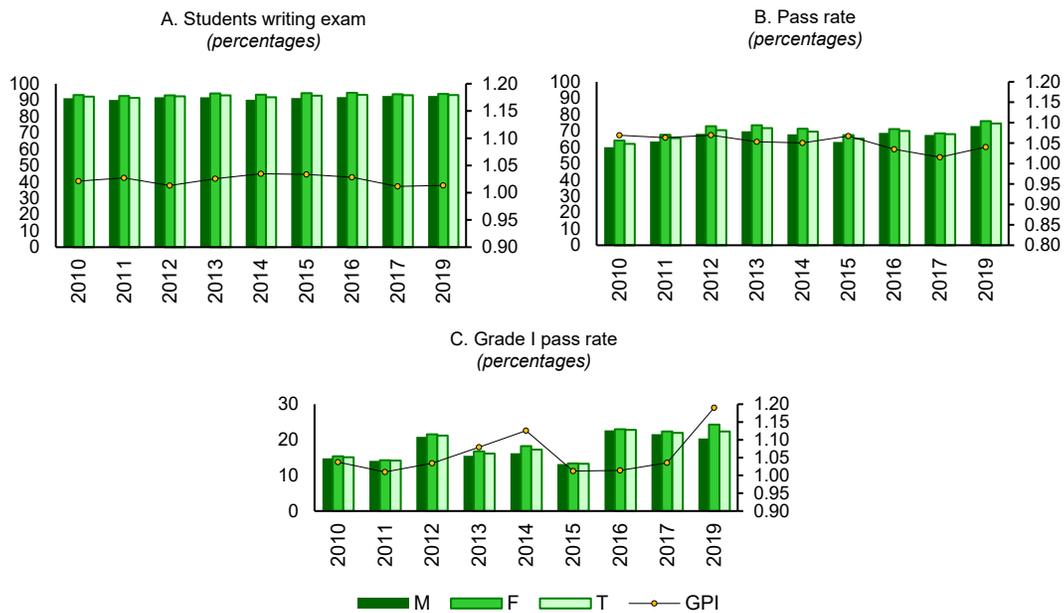
and there was a general trend of a gender parity in pass rates from slight gender disparity favouring females in 2010 and 2012 to gender parity during 2011–2017 but slight gender disparity favouring females in 2019 (GPI 1.04). Females outperformed males in passing with Grade 1 and this gender gap persisted throughout the period (see figure 16).

Figure 13
Students' registration and performance in CSEC English Language by gender, 2010–2019



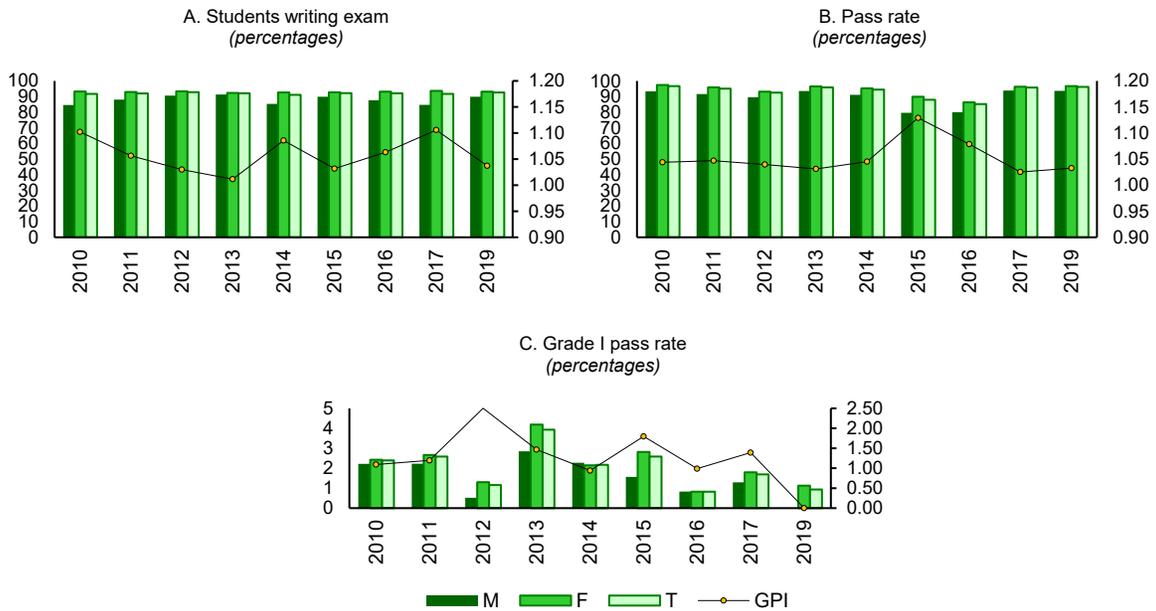
Source: ECLAC based on data from CXC annual reports.
Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

Figure 14
Students' registration and performance in CAPE Pure Mathematics by gender, 2010–2019



Source: ECLAC based on data from CXC annual reports.
Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

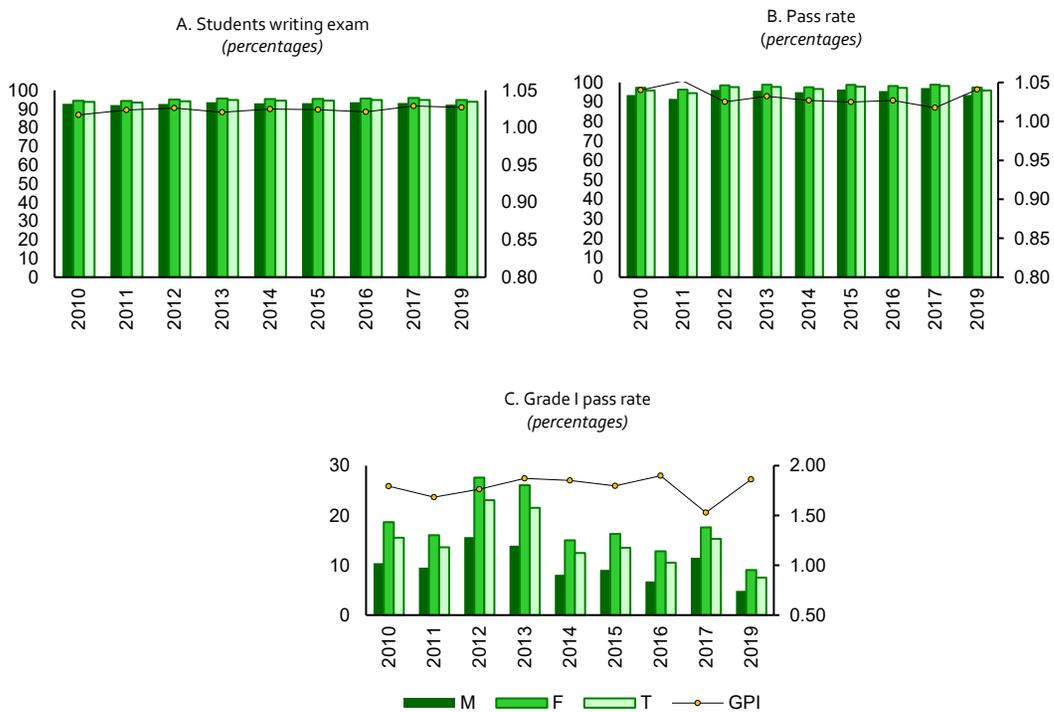
Figure 15
Students' registration and performance in Literatures in English Unit 1 by gender, 2010–2019



Source: ECLAC based on data from CXC annual reports.

Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

Figure 16
Students' registration and performance in Communication Studies Unit 1 by gender, 2010–2019



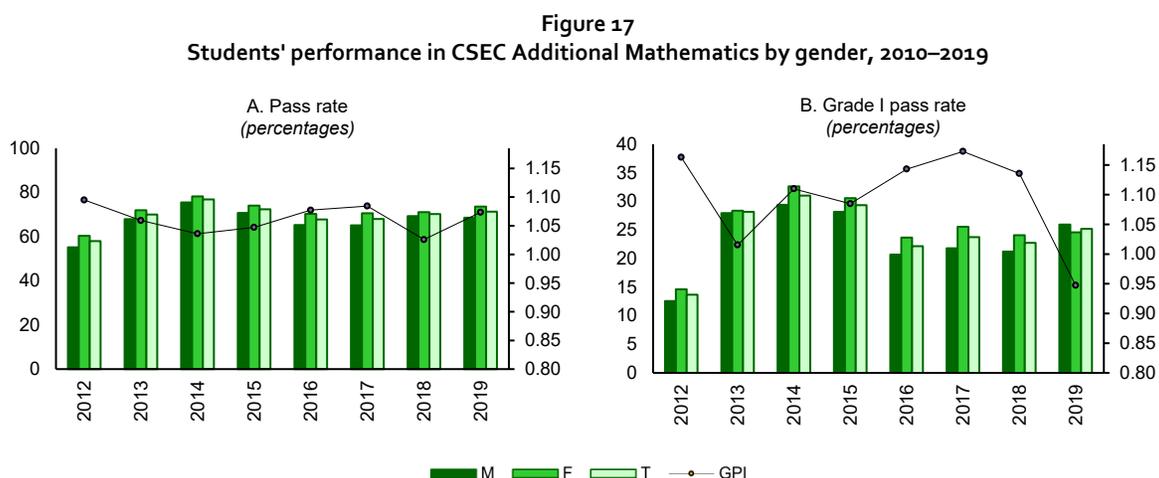
Source: ECLAC based on data from CXC annual reports.

Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

Science, Technology, and Engineering

In the subject areas that lead to a career in science, technology and engineering, the performance of students in Additional Mathematics, Agricultural Science Double Award (DA) and Single Award (SA), Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Information Technology, and Technical Drawing was examined.

Students registered to take CSEC Additional Mathematics recorded one of the highest attendance rates on CSEC examinations since the subject was introduced in 2012 with 92-96 per cent of registered students sitting for the exam during 2012-2019. The pass rate of the subject ranged from a low 58 per cent in 2012 to a high of about 77 per cent in 2014. The majority of the students with passing grades for CSEC Additional Mathematics had Grade III (39-55 per cent). In general, the pass rate for the subject showed gender disparity in favour of females with a consistently higher proportion of females passing the subject with the exception of 2018 when the GPI was 1.03. Among those who got Grade I, the females outperformed the males in six out of eight years for which data were available, with gender parity achieved in just one year. Only in 2019 did males outperform females with a GPI of 0.95, capping a two-year drastic drop in GPI from a value of 1.17 in 2017 (see figure 17).



Source: ECLAC based on data from CXC annual reports.

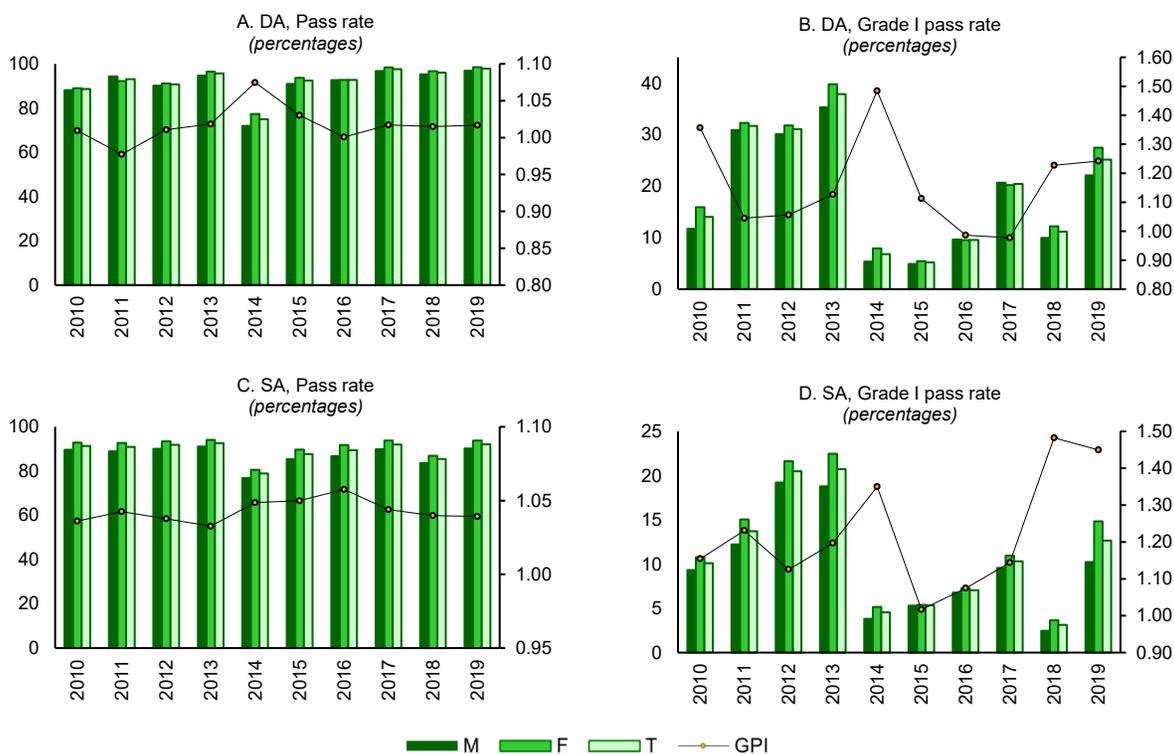
Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

During 2010-2019, a higher percentage of students who registered to take Agricultural Science wrote CSEC Agricultural Science (DA) (92-96 per cent) than CSEC Agricultural Science (SA) (86-94 per cent). The pass rate of both streams (DA and SA) has generally been high, with the lower pass rate of 75 per cent recorded for DA in 2014. There was no gender disparity in the passing rate of Agricultural Science (DA), except in 2014 when GPI of 1.07 indicated disparity in favour of females. In contrast, there was gender disparity in the pass rate of Agricultural Science (SA) in favour of females, except in 2013 when the GPI was 1.03. Among students passing with a Grade 1, the GPI showed gender disparity in students getting the top grade in DA in 2017 and 2018 when gender parity was achieved. In similar trend, gender disparity existed in students getting the top grade in SA in favour of females, except in 2015. For both Agricultural Science streams, gender disparity in passing with Grade I widened in favour of females during 2017-2019 (see figure 18).

The percentage of students registered for CSEC Biology that wrote the examination hovered around 92-96 per cent with slightly more females writing the examination. The pass rate has been generally high but declining from 75 per cent in 2010 with slight increases to reach 72 per cent in 2013, a peak of 80 per cent in 2016, and 77 per cent in 2019. The GPI for the overall pass rate was 1 in 2010 and

has since been slightly declining indicating that increasing proportion of males was passing the subject but the difference in performance did not result in any gender disparity. However, higher proportions of females passed Biology with Grade I leading to gender disparity in performance at the top grade with females outperforming males generally between 2010 and 2017. Since 2018, there has been general improvement in performance by both sexes with gender parity achieved (see figure 19).

Figure 18
Students' performance in CSEC Agricultural Science (DA and SA) by gender, 2010–2019



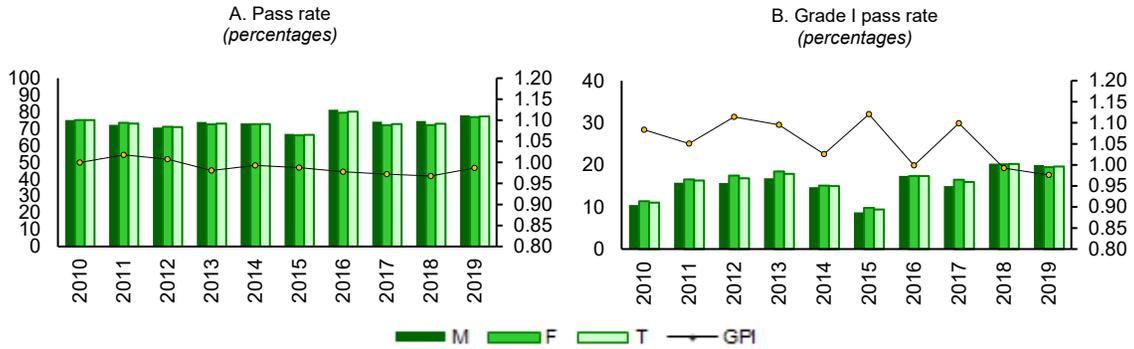
Source: ECLAC based on data from CXC annual reports.

Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

Over the study period, between 86 and 92 per cent of students who registered for CSEC Integrated Science wrote the examination for the subject. The pass rate has, in general, been gradually declining over the period of study from a high of 85.01 per cent in 2010 to a low of 39.12 per cent in 2018, with gender parity achieved for the period 2010-2015. For the remaining years when there was gender disparity in the pass rate, females performed better than males except in 2017. However, when only those with Grade I passes are considered, females outperformed males with a rising trend in gender disparity where GPI was 1.06 in 2010 and increased to 1.37 in 2019 (see figure 20).

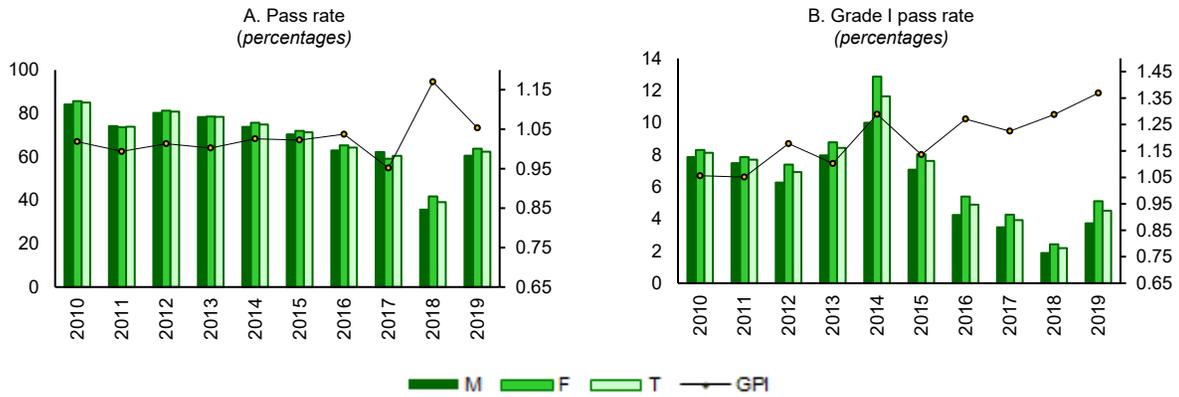
Over the period 2010-2019, between 91 and 96 per cent of students who registered for CSEC Chemistry wrote the examination. The pass rate for the subject has been declining from a high of 69.65 per cent to a low of 54.22 per cent in 2017. Since reaching the trough that year, the pass rate has been on an upward trend, reaching 67.96 per cent in 2019. Aside from 2012 when there was gender disparity in the pass rate in favour of males, there was gender parity until 2014 after which males outperformed females in passing the subject. However, the GPI showed an increasing trend toward parity in the last three years. Among those students with Grade I, there was either gender parity or disparity in favour of male during the period of study, and recent trend indicate that the gender gap in performance at the top grade is widening with males outperforming females in getting Grade 1 in Chemistry (see figure 21).

Figure 19
Students' performance in CSEC Biology by gender, 2010–2019



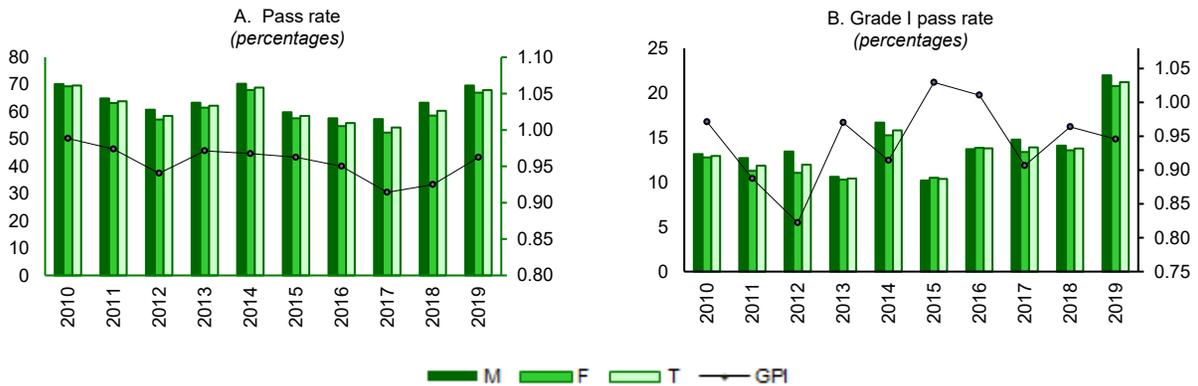
Source: ECLAC based on data from CXC annual reports.
Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

Figure 20
Students' performance in CSEC Integrated Science by gender, 2010–2019



Source: ECLAC based on data from CXC annual reports.
Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

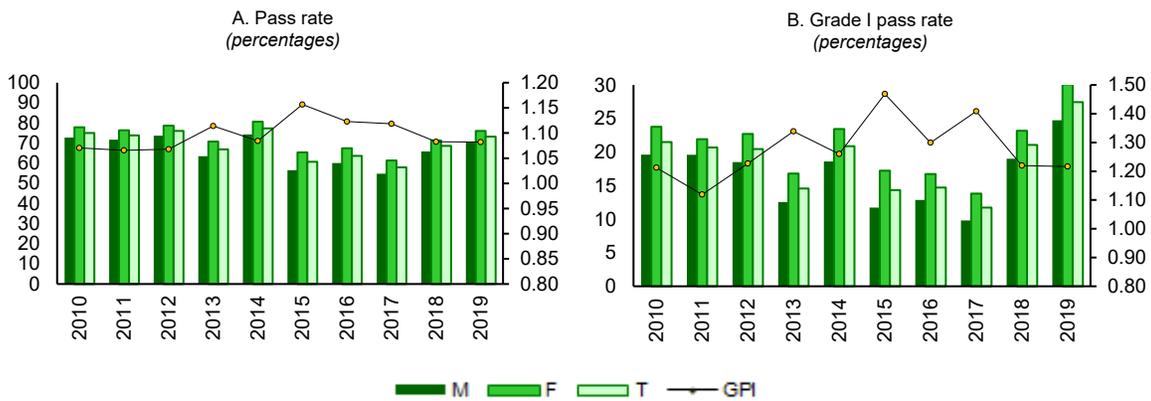
Figure 21
Students' performance in CSEC Chemistry by gender, 2010–2019



Source: ECLAC based on data from CXC annual reports.
Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

Approximately 88-94 per cent of those who registered for CSEC Physics sat for the examination between 2010 and 2019. The pass rate for CSEC Physics fluctuated over the period with the lowest pass rate of 58 per cent recorded in 2017 and the highest rate of 77 per cent in 2014. The pass rate displayed gender disparity throughout the study period with GPI in the range of 1.07 to 1.16. In addition to overall better performance, females also outperformed males in getting Grade I in Physics. The gender disparity in top performance in the subject grew between 2010 and 2015 after which there has been a trend or reduction in gender performance gap (see figure 22).

Figure 22
Students' performance in CSEC Physics by gender, 2010–2019

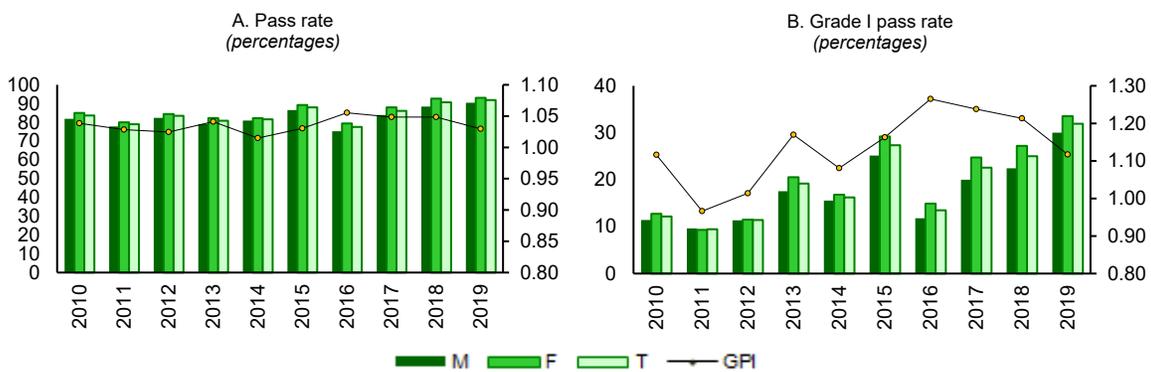


Source: ECLAC based on data from CXC annual reports.

Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

The percentage of students who took the CSEC Information Technology examination, among those who registered for it, ranged from 83-93 per cent during 2010-2019. For the ten-year period, there was either gender parity in the pass rate or slight disparity in favour of females. During this period, students generally performed passed the subject ranging from a low of about 77.6 per cent in 2016 to a high of about 92 per cent in 2019. However, when only Grade I passes are considered, there was a clear gender disparity in favour of females. While GPI has shown a decreasing trend in the last three years, a GPI of 1.12 in 2019 shows how females have outperformed males in getting the top grade in Information Technology (see figure 23).

Figure 23
Students' performance in CSEC Information Technology by gender, 2010–2019

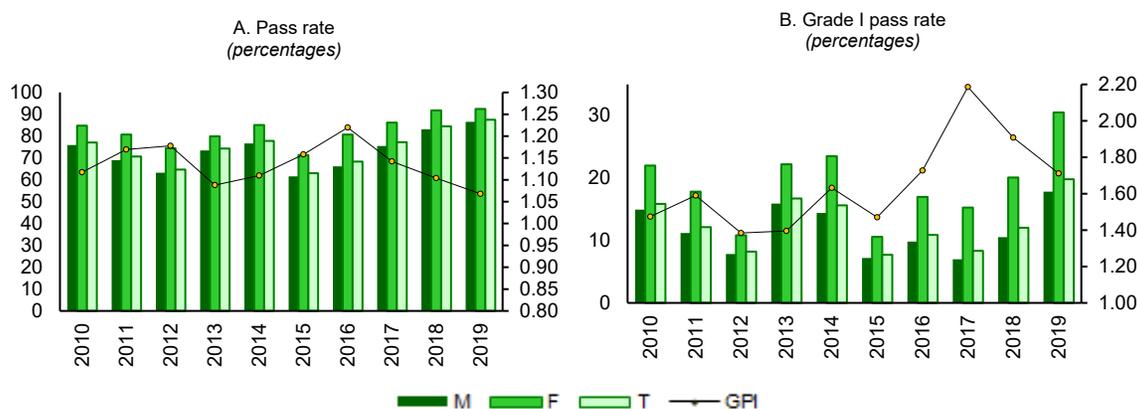


Source: ECLAC based on data from CXC annual reports.

Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

During 2010-2019, only 80-86 per cent of those who registered for CSEC Technical Drawing wrote the examination. The pass rate for the subject has been increasing steadily from a low of 63 per cent in 2015 to a high of approximately 87.5 per cent in 2019. Over this period, there was consistent gender disparity with higher percentages of females passing the subject relative to males. The gender disparity in performance is more pronounced at the Grade I pass level where the percentage of females getting the top grade was more than twice that of males in 2017 with GPI of 2.19. Since then, there has been a downward trend in the GPI, reaching 1.71 in 2019. In essence, females have consistently outperformed males in passing Technical Drawing, as well as in passing at the top grade since 2010 (see figure 24).

Figure 24
Students' performance in CSEC Information Technical Drawing by gender, 2010–2019



Source: ECLAC based on data from CXC annual reports.

Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

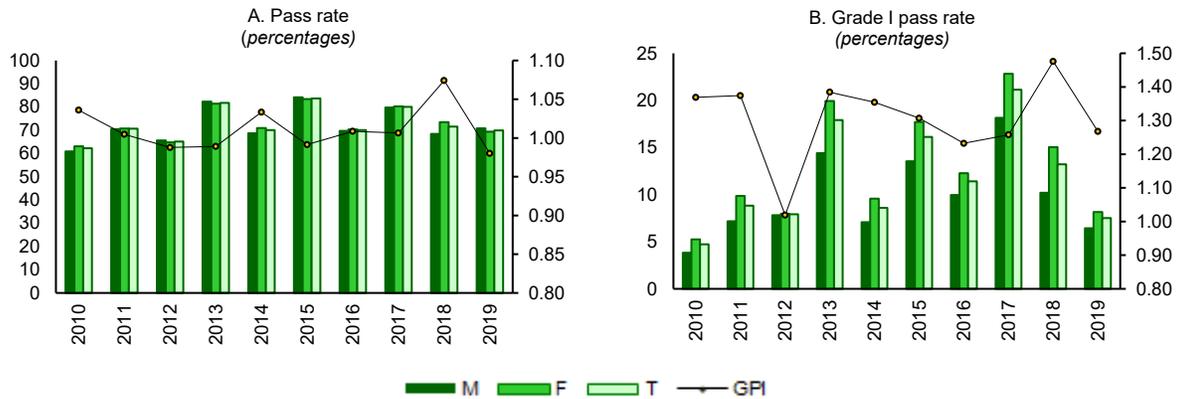
Social Sciences

The performance of students was assessed in only three social science subjects, namely, Economics, Principles of Accounts, and Principles of Business. Of the students who registered for these subjects in the period 2010-2019, between 92 and 96 per cent of them took the examination for CSEC Economics, 83-92 per cent took CSEC Principles of Account, and 83-92 per cent took CSEC Principles of Business.

The pass rate in CSEC Economics fluctuated from a low of approximately 62 per cent in 2010 to a high of 84 per cent in 2015 with the majority of students passing with Grade III (44-59 per cent) in seven of the ten years covered in the study. In general, there was gender parity in the percentage of students with a passing grade, except in 2010 and 2018 when slightly higher percentages of females passed the subject. However, among students passing with Grade I, females consistently outperformed males in Economics except in 2012 when there was gender parity (see figure 25).

The pass rate of CSEC Principles of Accounts fluctuated during 2010-2019, ranging from about 55 per cent in 2012 to approximately 75 per cent in 2019 with the majority of students passing with Grade III (40-56 per cent). Gender disparity existed in the percentage of students passing CSEC Principles of Accounts for all ten years covered in the study. In addition, females consistently outperformed males in getting Grade 1 in the subject with GPI reaching the highest level of 1.49 in 2018 before reducing to 1.19 in 2019 (see figure 26).

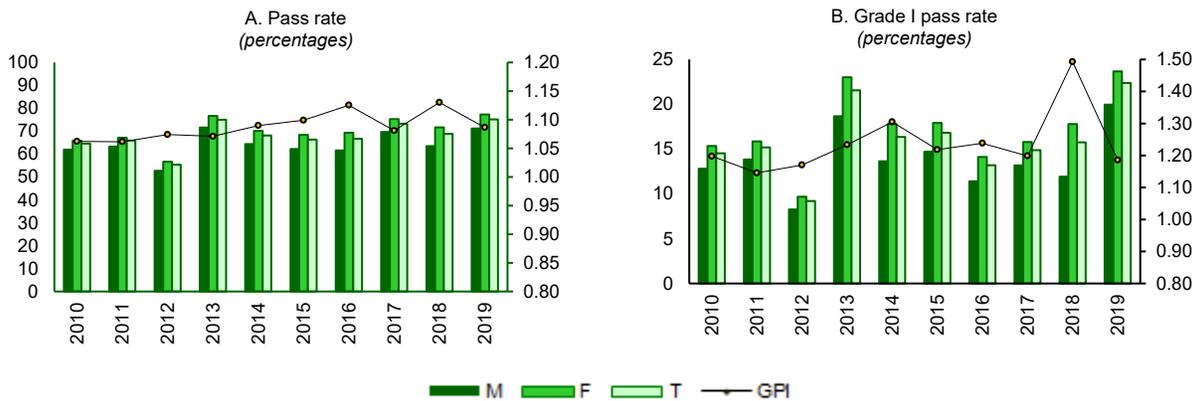
Figure 25
Students' performance in CSEC Economics by gender, 2010–2019



Source: ECLAC based on data from CXC annual reports.

Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

Figure 26
Students' performance in CSEC Principles of Accounts by gender, 2010–2019

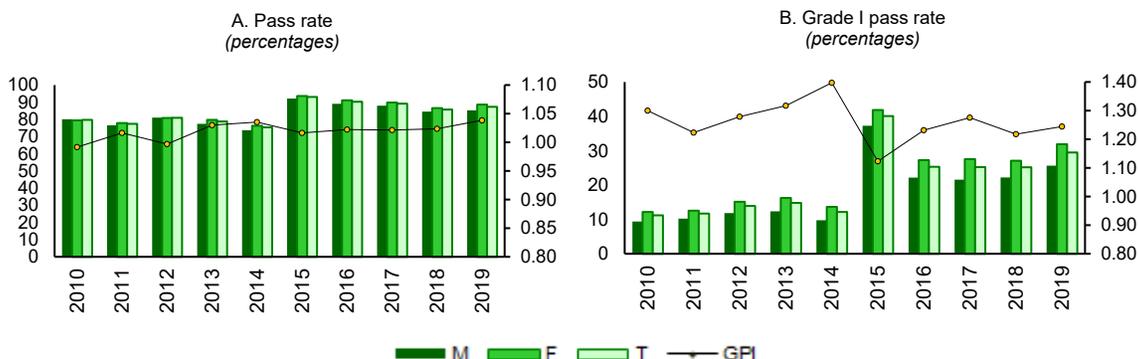


Source: ECLAC based on data from CXC annual reports.

Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

Students who took CSEC Principles of Business during 2010-2019 generally performed well with pass rate ranging from a low of a 75 per cent in 2014 to a high of 93 per cent in 2015. Unlike in the case of Economics and Principles of Accounts, the majority of the students passed with Grade III (42-47 per cent) in only four years of the ten-year period. In 2015, majority of students (43 per cent) had Grade I. Overall, there is no gender disparity in the percentage of students passing the subject apart from 2014 and 2019 when the GPI of 1.04 showed slight disparity in favour of females. However, among students getting Grade 1, there was clear gender disparity with females consistently outperforming males (see figure 27).

Figure 27
Students' performance in CSEC Principles of Business by gender, 2010–2019



Source: ECLAC based on data from CXC annual reports.

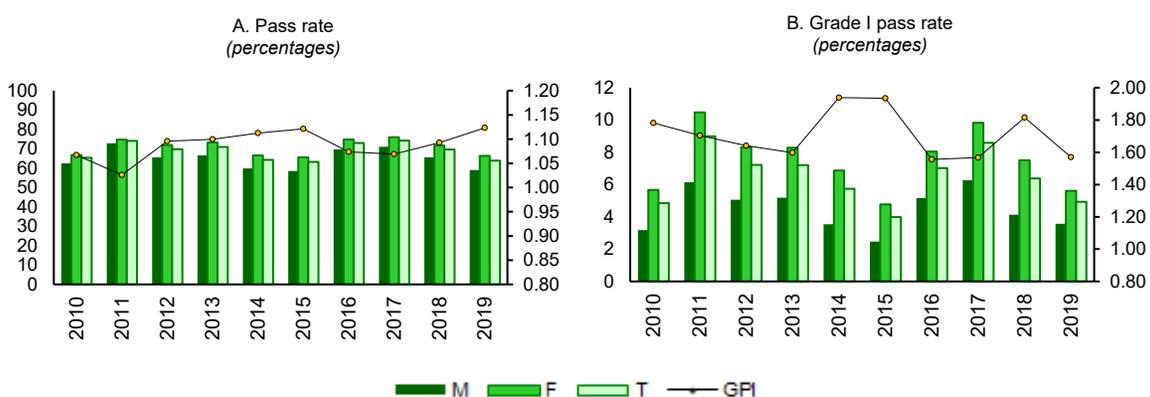
Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

Humanities

In the field of humanities, CSEC Caribbean History and CSEC Religious Education were analysed. A high percentage of those who registered for each subject during 2010-2019 sat for the examination —between 90 and 93 per cent for Caribbean History and 90-92 per cent for Religious Education.

The pass rate for Caribbean History fluctuated between 63 per cent in 2015 to 74 per cent in 2011 and 2017. The most common passing grade was Grade III (50-61 per cent), with at least half of students passing with that grade. Gender parity in passing Caribbean History existed in 2011 but the data showed gender disparity in favour of females for the remaining nine years of the period covered in the analysis. Although the proportion of students passing with Grade I was generally low, females outperformed males in getting the top grade with GPI exceeding 1.50 every year (see figure 28).

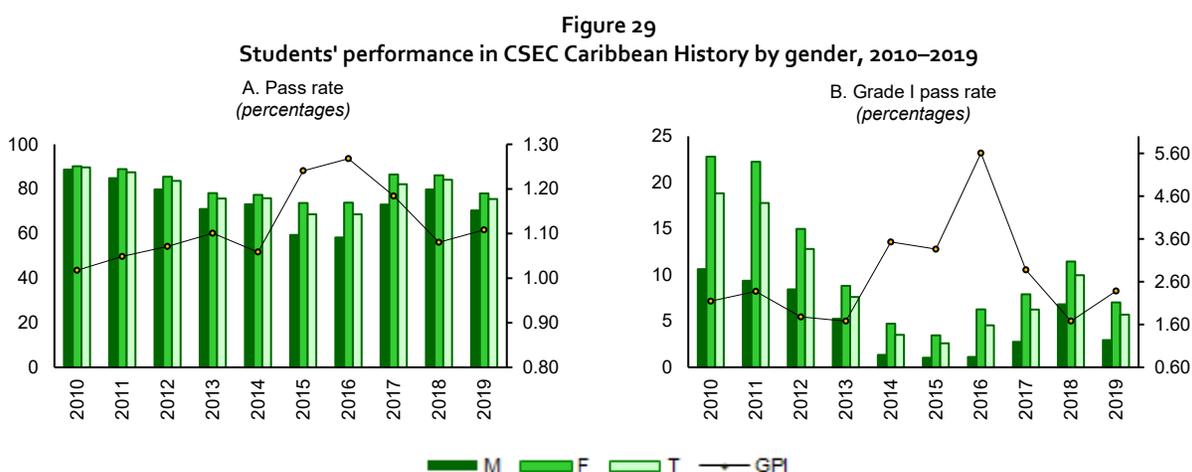
Figure 28
Students' performance in CSEC Caribbean History by gender, 2010–2019



Source: ECLAC based on data from CXC annual reports.

Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

The pass rate of Religious Education has generally been high, ranging from a low of about 69 per cent in 2015 and 2016 to a high of 90 per cent in 2010. There was no particularly dominant grade that students got over the ten-year period. With the exception of the first of the study period, females consistently had higher pass rate than males, depicting gender disparity in the pass rate for the subject. Furthermore, there was significant gender disparity in the proportion of students getting Grade I, with females outperforming males in Religious Education (see figure 29).



Source: ECLAC based on data from CXC annual reports.

Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

B. Academic performance at the tertiary education level—UWI Mona

Enrolment in tertiary education institutions does not always result in graduation. Moreover, graduation does not necessarily reflect good academic performance. Data from the UWI Mona for the period 2016/17 to 2019/20 were examined for trends in gender disparities in the rate of graduation and the class of degree awarded at the undergraduate level. Graduation data revealed that more than 70 per cent of first degree graduates in each year were females. Except in the newly established Faculty of Engineering where more than 70 per cent of graduates were males, women constituted more than 75 per cent of graduates from the Institute of Gender Studies and more than 50 per cent of graduates in the other faculties over the study period (see table 4).

Table 4
Proportion of graduates by faculty by sex, 2016/2017–2019/2020
(Percentages)

Faculty	2016–2017			2017–2018			2018–2019			2019–2020		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Humanities & Education	22.8	77.2	100	22.8	77.2	100	21.6	78.4	100	22.3	77.7	100
Law	24.7	75.3	100	22.1	77.9	100	31.7	68.3	100	24.1	75.9	100
Medical Sciences	21.6	78.4	100	20.4	79.6	100	20.5	79.5	100	25.7	74.3	100
Science & Technology	44.6	55.4	100	37.8	62.2	100	41.1	58.9	100	37.6	62.4	100
Engineering	-	-	-	-	-	-	76.7	23.3	100	71.4	28.6	100
Social Sciences	29.2	70.8	100	25.0	75.0	100	25.3	74.7	100	26.7	73.3	100
Gender & Development	23.1	76.9	100	13.3	86.7	100	7.1	92.9	100	7.7	92.3	100
UWI Mona	28.4	71.6		25.4	74.6		26.8	73.2		28.0	72.0	

Source: ECLAC based on data from annual reports on student statistics published by The Office of Planning and Institutional Research, UWI Mona.

Looking at the class of degree received by graduates of the UWI Mona during 2016/17–2018/19, there was apparent gender disparity across all degree classes except Second Class Honours-Lower Division where gender disparity only existed among graduates in 2016/2017. Men outperformed women in getting a First Class Honours degree in 2016/17. Since that year, women outperformed men in the First-Class Honours category. For the category of Honours with Distinction, the equivalent of First-Class Honours in Medicine, men outperformed women in 2016/17 and 2017/18 while women outperformed men in 2018/19 and 2019/20. For the four years in which data were available, women outperformed men in the Second-Class Honours Upper Division category. Apart from 2016/17 when women outperformed

men in the Second-Class Honours Lower Division category, there was gender parity in the percentage of graduating women and men that received this class of degree for the period of study. Only for the Pass degree category and the Honours degree category in Medicine do men outperform women for the four academic years covered in the study (see table 5).

There is a growing trend of women outperforming men in academics at the tertiary level (see figures 30 to 33). Only in 2016/17 did more men, in relative terms, graduate with First Class Honours than women. Excluding that, more women, relatively, graduated with First Class and Second Class Honours-Upper Division than men, with gender disparity in the First Class Honours category widening in favour of women from a GPI of 1.27 in 2017/18 to 1.33 in 2019/20.

The trend in women outperforming men at the broad campus level at UWI Mona cuts across faculties as well. In 2016/17, there was either gender parity in the proportion of men and women graduating in the First Class Honours or men outperformed women in this class of degree across all faculties, except in the faculty of Humanities and Education where there was slight gender disparity in favour of women (see table 6A). Gender disparity in top performance in the Faculty of Humanities and Education switched in favour of men in 2017/2018 and 2018/19 before switching again in favour of women in 2019/20. In the Faculties of Law, Medical Sciences, and Social Sciences, women outperformed men in getting First Class Honours from 2017/18 to 2019/20, from a position of either gender parity or gender disparity in favour of men in 2016/17. In the Faculty of Engineering, women outperformed men in getting First Class Honours for the years (2018/19 and 2019/20) in which data were available. Only in the Faculty of Science and Technology did men outperform women in getting First Class Honours, except in 2017/18 when more women than men, in relative terms, graduated with First Class Honours. In contrast, except in the Faculty of Science and Technology in 2016/17 and the Faculty of Law in 2019/20 where there was gender parity, men consistently "outperformed" women in getting the Pass degree in all faculties over the four-year period (see tables 6A, 6B, 6C, and 6D).

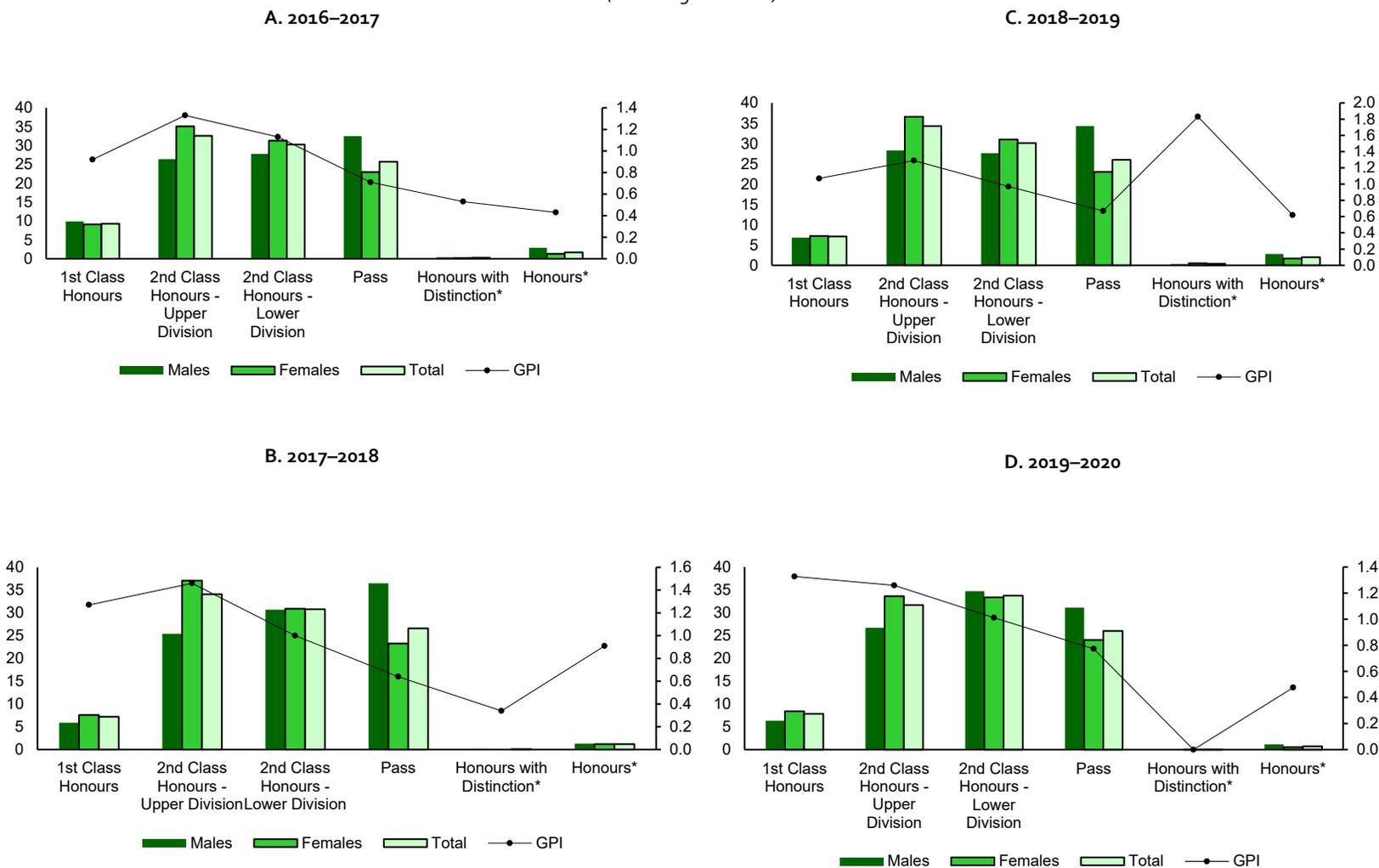
Table 5
Proportion of graduates by class of degree and sex, 2016/2017–2019/2020
(Percentages and GPI)

Faculty	2016–2017				2017–2018				2018–2019				2018–2019			
	M	F	T	GPI												
1st Class Hons	9.9	9.1	9.3	0.92	5.9	7.6	7.2	1.27	6.8	7.2	7.1	1.07	6.3	8.4	7.8	1.33
2nd Class Hons -Upper Div.	26.4	35.1	32.6	1.33	25.4	37.1	34.1	1.46	28.3	36.6	34.3	1.29	26.7	33.6	31.7	1.26
2nd Class Hons - Lower Div.	27.8	31.3	30.3	1.13	30.7	30.9	30.8	1.00	27.6	31.0	30.1	0.97	34.7	33.4	33.7	1.01
Pass	32.5	23.0	25.7	0.71	36.5	23.3	26.6	0.64	34.3	23.0	26.0	0.67	31.1	24.0	26.0	0.77
Hons with Distinction ^a	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.53	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.34	0.3	0.5	0.4	1.83	0.0	0.1	0.0	-
Hons ^a	2.9	1.3	1.7	0.43	1.3	1.2	1.2	0.91	2.8	1.7	2.0	0.62	1.2	0.6	0.7	0.48

Source: ECLAC based on data from annual reports on student statistics published by The Office of Planning and Institutional Research, UWI Mona.

^aMedical Sciences only.

Figure 30
Gender disparities in academic performance
(Percentages and GPI)



Source data: Annual reports on Student Statistics published by The Office of Planning and Institutional Research, UWI Mona.

Note: The left axis represents enrolment in percentage and the right axis represents GPI in ratio.

Table 6
Academic performance at UWI Mona by faculty and GPI
(Percentages and GPI)

A. 2016–2017

Faculty / Institute	1st Class honours				2nd Class honours upper division				2nd Class honours lower division				Pass				Honours with distinction ^a				Honours ^a			
	M	F	T	GPI	M	F	T	GPI	M	F	T	GPI	M	F	T	GPI	M	F	T	GPI	M	F	T	GPI
Humanities & Education	11.6	12.0	11.9	1.04	30.4	39.5	37.4	1.30	39.1	33.9	35.1	0.87	18.8	14.6	15.6	0.77	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Law	27.8	25.5	26.0	0.92	33.3	37.3	36.3	1.12	25.0	27.3	26.7	1.09	13.9	10.0	11.0	0.72	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Medical Sciences	3.1	3.1	3.1	0.99	10.1	32.9	28.0	3.27	10.1	25.3	22.0	2.51	61.6	34.0	39.9	0.55	1.9	0.7	1.0	0.37	13.2	4.0	6.0	0.30
Science & Technology	12.2	11.6	11.9	0.95	30.6	32.6	31.7	1.07	32.2	31.3	31.7	0.97	25.0	24.6	24.8	0.98	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Sciences	9.7	9.9	9.8	1.02	31.5	35.9	34.6	1.14	31.9	36.2	34.9	1.13	26.9	18.0	20.6	0.67	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gender Studies	0.0	0.0	0.0		0.0	30.0	23.1		100	40.0	53.8	0.40	0.0	30.0	23.1		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	9.9	9.1	9.3	0.92	26.4	35.1	32.6	1.33	27.8	31.3	30.3	1.13	32.5	23.0	25.7	0.71	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.53	2.9	1.3	1.7	0.43

Source: ECLAC based on data from annual reports on student statistics published by The Office of Planning and Institutional Research, UWI Mona.

^aMedical Sciences only.

B. 2017–2018

Faculty / Institute	1st Class honours				2nd Class honours upper Division				2nd Class honours lower division				Pass				Honours with distinction ^a				Honours ^a			
	M	F	T	GPI	M	F	T	GPI	M	F	T	GPI	M	F	T	GPI	M	F	T	GPI	M	F	T	GPI
Humanities & Education	12.7	10.3	10.9	0.81	39.7	40.8	40.6	1.03	23.8	34.3	31.9	1.44	23.8	14.6	16.7	0.61	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Law	9.4	15.9	14.5	1.70	31.3	44.2	41.4	1.42	37.5	27.4	29.7	0.73	21.9	12.4	14.5	0.57	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Medical Sciences	4.3	4.8	4.7	1.10	9.3	33.5	28.6	3.59	9.9	17.9	16.3	1.80	70.2	39.8	46.0	0.57	0.6	0.2	0.3	0.26	5.6	3.8	4.2	0.68
Science & Technology	6.3	8.0	7.3	1.27	26.3	35.1	31.7	1.33	39.4	36.5	37.6	0.92	28.0	20.5	23.3	0.73	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Sciences	4.8	7.8	7.1	1.64	30.4	38.9	36.8	1.28	38.1	38.2	38.2	1.00	26.7	15.0	17.9	0.56	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gender Studies	0.0	0.0	0.0		0.0	15.4	13.3		50.0	46.2	46.7	0.92	50.0	38.5	40.0	0.77	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	5.9	7.6	7.2	1.27	25.4	37.1	34.1	1.46	30.7	30.9	30.8	1.00	36.5	23.3	26.6	0.64	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.34	1.3	1.2	1.2	0.91

Source: ECLAC based on data from annual reports on student statistics published by The Office of Planning and Institutional Research, UWI Mona.

^aMedical Sciences only.

C. 2018–2019

Faculty / Institute	1st Class honours				2nd Class honours upper division				2nd Class honours lower division				Pass				Honours with distinction ^a				Honours ^a			
	M	F	T	GPI	M	F	T	GPI	M	F	T	GPI	M	F	T	GPI	M	F	T	GPI	M	F	T	GPI
Humanities & Education	17.2	12.9	13.8	0.75	41.4	41.9	41.8	1.01	31.0	35.7	34.7	1.15	10.3	9.5	9.7	0.92	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Law	0.0	8.2	5.6		37.8	35.1	35.9	0.93	35.6	41.2	39.4	1.16	26.7	15.5	19.0	0.58	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Medical Sciences	4.7	6.5	6.1	1.38	8.8	34.7	29.4	3.96	5.8	13.1	11.6	2.24	66.7	38.6	44.4	0.58	1.2	1.5	1.4	1.29	12.9	5.6	7.1	0.43
Science & Technology	9.8	6.4	7.8	0.66	29.3	36.5	33.6	1.25	31.6	38.6	35.7	1.22	29.3	18.5	22.9	0.63	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Sciences	5.3	6.5	6.2	1.23	32.0	36.9	35.6	1.15	37.0	40.1	39.3	1.08	25.7	16.5	18.8	0.64	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gender Studies	0.0	0.0	0.0		0.0	23.1	21.4		100	30.8	35.7	0.31	0.0	46.2	42.9		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Engineering	6.1	20.0	9.3	3.30	54.5	50.0	53.5	0.92	15.2	30.0	18.6	1.98	24.2	0.0	18.6	0.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	6.8	7.2	7.1	1.07	28.3	36.6	34.3	1.29	27.6	31.0	30.1	1.12	34.3	23.0	26.0	0.67	0.3	0.5	0.4	1.83	2.8	1.7	2.0	0.62

Source: ECLAC based on data from annual reports on student statistics published by The Office of Planning and Institutional Research, UWI Mona.

^aMedical Sciences only.

D. 2019–2020

Faculty / Institute	1st Class honours				2nd Class Honours upper division				2nd Class honours lower division				Pass				Honours with distinction ^a				Honours ^a			
	M	F	T	GPI	M	F	T	GPI	M	F	T	GPI	M	F	T	GPI	M	F	T	GPI	M	F	T	GPI
Humanities & Education	9.0	14.1	13.0	1.57	35.8	48.3	45.5	1.35	34.3	26.5	28.2	0.77	20.9	11.1	13.3	0.53	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Law	6.7	9.2	8.6	1.37	37.8	31.7	33.2	0.84	31.1	35.2	34.2	1.13	24.4	23.9	24.1	0.98	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Medical Sciences	1.5	6.5	5.2	4.33	9.8	27.6	23.0	2.82	6.0	9.6	8.7	1.60	75.9	53.1	59.0	0.70	0.0	0.3	0.2		6.8	2.9	3.9	0.42
Science & Technology	10.5	7.4	8.6	0.71	32.1	35.7	34.3	1.11	37.0	41.6	39.9	1.12	20.4	15.2	17.2	0.75	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Sciences	4.7	7.6	6.9	1.62	26.5	32.1	30.6	1.21	46.3	42.3	43.4	0.91	22.4	17.9	19.1	0.80	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gender Studies	0.0	0.0	0.0		0.0	41.7	38.5		100	25.0	30.8	0.25	0.0	33.3	30.8		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Engineering	20.0	50.0	28.6	2.50	40.0	20.0	34.3	0.50	20.0	30.0	22.9	1.50	20.0	0.0	14.3	0.00	0.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	6.3	8.4	7.8	1.33	26.7	33.6	31.7	1.26	34.7	33.4	33.7	0.96	31.1	24.0	26.0	0.77	0.0	0.1	0.0		1.2	0.6	0.7	0.48

Source: ECLAC based on data from annual reports on student statistics published by The Office of Planning and Institutional Research, UWI Mona.

^aMedical Sciences only.

VI. Conclusion

Two of the 17 goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the attainment of inclusive and equitable quality education (Goal 4) and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (Goal 5), have particular significance for the sustainable development of the Caribbean. The subregion is often characterized as capacity-constrained due, in part, to a small pool of persons with tertiary level education and the high levels of emigration of skilled labour (ECLAC 2018). There is also the concern of the mismatch between the skills of the Caribbean workforce and labour market demand, which not only has implications for current labour productivity, but also for the innovativeness of Caribbean economies (ECLAC 2020). Quality education, including vocational training and lifelong learning opportunities, therefore, provide a means to address the skills gap in the workforce. This is particularly important as Caribbean economies have, in general, been experiencing low growth and become less globally competitive (Schwab, 2019). At the same time, unemployment remains high among youth with a clear gender disparity that disadvantages girls and young women. One out of every three females between the ages of 15-24 years seeking a job remained unemployed in 2016. For the same age category, only one out of every five males was unemployed in 2016. With Caribbean economies recovering from, and arguable still experiencing, the effects of COVID-19, youth unemployment is almost certain to rise and remain high for the near future.

COVID-19 has severely impacted the service economies of the Caribbean, especially the tourism and hospitality sectors in which the workforce is predominantly women.⁴¹ Also, there has been increased incidence of violence against women and girls since the pandemic and the role that a lack of economic autonomy plays in exposure of women and girls to violence cannot be ignored. Therefore, for there to be gender equality and women and girls to be empowered they need to be provided with equal access to education, employment, productive resources (including land and financing), and political offices, among many others.

⁴¹ Approximately 12 per cent of employed women in the Caribbean work in the tourism sector while 5.7 per cent of men work in the sector (ECLAC 2021).

This study has shed some light on the situation of boys and girls and young men and young women in the Caribbean education system. Evidence presented in the study affirms some of the traditionally held views while debunking others. It shows that Caribbean countries continue to perform well in providing boys and girls equal access to primary education. At the secondary education level, boys and girls also have equal access to education when only students schooling at their age-appropriate level are considered, with girls slightly doing better in school attendance in some instances. However, when age is not factored, girls are accessing upper secondary education at much higher rate than boys. Although the gender gap in access is narrowing, it is still at a high level. The implication of this is that more young women return to school after a temporary pause in their education or stay longer in school to improve their performance even if it requires multiple attempts. This is a good development which improves educational and job opportunities for young women.

At the tertiary level of education, the participation of men drastically falls with 30 per cent of women and only 17 per cent of men enrolling in a tertiary institution. At the regional university, The University of the West Indies, women consistently outnumbered men in enrolment and women were twice as many as men at the Mona campus since 2016/17. Overall, the Caribbean has done well in providing education to girls and women. While boys have equally accessed education at the primary and lower secondary levels, men are lagging behind in seeking tertiary education.

In terms of academic performance, girls seem to have a clear edge across all levels and in almost every subject and field of study. Males did better than females in CSEC Mathematics and females outperformed males in CSEC English Language. In both CAPE Pure Mathematics and Literatures in English Unit 1, females outperformed males. In the science, technology, and engineering subjects, females outperformed males in Additional Mathematics, Agricultural Science, Integrated Science, Physics, Information Technology, and Technical Drawing. Only in Chemistry did males outperform females while in Biology females outperformed males in part before gender parity was achieved. In the social sciences and humanities, males outperformed females in Economics, Principles of Accounts, Principles of Business, Caribbean History, and Religious Education.

The academic superiority of females continued in the sample of Caribbean tertiary level students who graduated from UWI Mona during 2016-2020 period with women dominating men in receiving First Class Honours and Second Class Honours-Upper Division degrees at the campus-wide level. Within each faculty, women outperformed men in getting the top-tier classes of degree in the Faculties of Engineering, Law, Medical Sciences, and Social Sciences. Only in the Faculty of Science and Technology did men outperformed women in the First Class Honours category while women and men alternate in outperforming each other in the Faculty of Humanities and Education.

If more females are getting education and performing at top-tier levels, why then do we still have gender gap in employment and wages? One theory is that females study subjects and pursue degrees in areas that are not in demand or high paying. Our findings largely refute this theory. Not only are females studying "hard science" subjects, but they are performing much better than males in them. Furthermore, not only are females outshining males in Additional Mathematics, Physics, Information Technology, and Technical Drawing, females are outnumbering males in getting first class degrees in Engineering and Medicine as well. Even in Science and Technology fields where men outperformed women in the First Class Honours category, women still outperformed men in the Second-Class Upper Division category. Therefore, there is inherent inconsistency in the academic attainment and performance of females and their economic opportunity in the job market. This is a matter of Human Resources for the Caribbean and at the same time an obstacle to sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda calls for member States of the United Nations to adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels. Such legislation and enabling policies are needed to ensure that women and girls are given equal and fair opportunity to use their skills and attain their economic, political, and decision-

making autonomy, which is critical in stemming the rising trend of gender-based violence in the subregion on one hand, and in innovatively contributing to fill the work force skills gap that continues to exist in the subregion.

On the other hand, this study underscores the disturbing reality that Caribbean males are being left behind in seeking and attaining inclusive and equitable quality education. Available data revealed that males are pursuing education beyond lower secondary level in fewer numbers. There are various theories on the reasons why males are increasingly disinterested in school. However, even when they stay in school, they are performing under par with females. At the tertiary level, only in the Pass class of degrees do men overwhelmingly do better than women. As earlier alluded to, graduating from school does not necessarily connote having received quality education nor does it signify attainment of functional skills. In the new knowledge economy, which has been hastened by the COVID-19 pandemic, a degree or certification will only provide access to job opportunity. Only the functional skills that graduates and school leavers have will lead to decent work for the individual and economic growth for the nation and subregion. Therefore, urgent attention needs to be paid to male underperformance in accessing education, especially tertiary level education enrolment, and in receiving quality education that leads to higher educational attainment when they do enroll.

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