

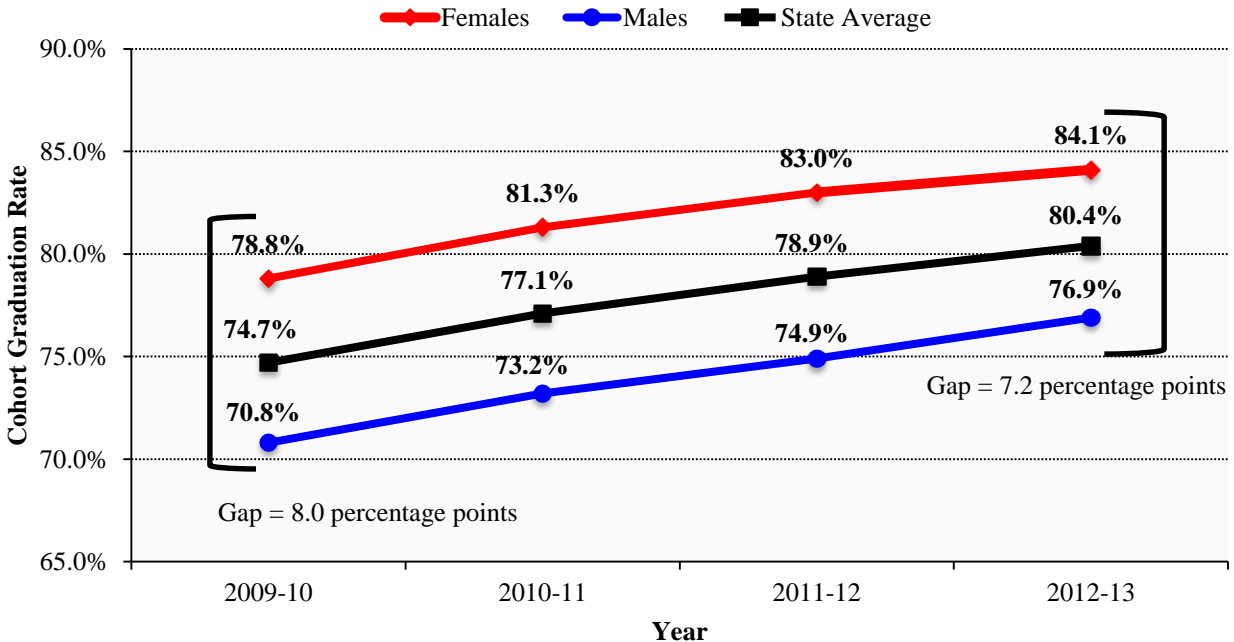
Analyzing the Gender Gap in California High School Graduation Rates

By Cameron Sublett

California high school graduation rates have increased steadily over the last four years. However, male and female high school students are not graduating at the same rates. Data made available through the California Department of Education¹ reveal a persistent gender gap in high school graduation rates over the last four years. This statistical brief explores this trend. Furthermore, because previous CDRP reports² have illustrated a disparity in high school graduation among ethnic groups, we disaggregate the gender gap by student ethnicity.

Figure 1 displays California high school 4-year adjusted cohort graduation rates³ between the years of 2009-10 and 2012-13⁴. The state average cohort graduation increased 5.7 percentage points, from 74.7 percent to 80.4 percent. During this same period female students in California graduated at higher rates relative to the state average each of the four years. In contrast, however, male students graduated at lower rates. This “gender gap” in cohort graduation rates remained relatively steady during this period, closing by just 0.8 percentage points, from 8.0 in 2009-10 to 7.2 in 2012-13.

Figure 1. California Cohort Graduation Rates by Gender, 2009-10 thru 2012-13



¹ Data Source: California Department of Education Dataquest: <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>

² See CDRP Statistical Brief 11 (December 2009): www.cdrp.ucsb.edu/dropouts/download.php?file=statisticalbrief-11.pdf

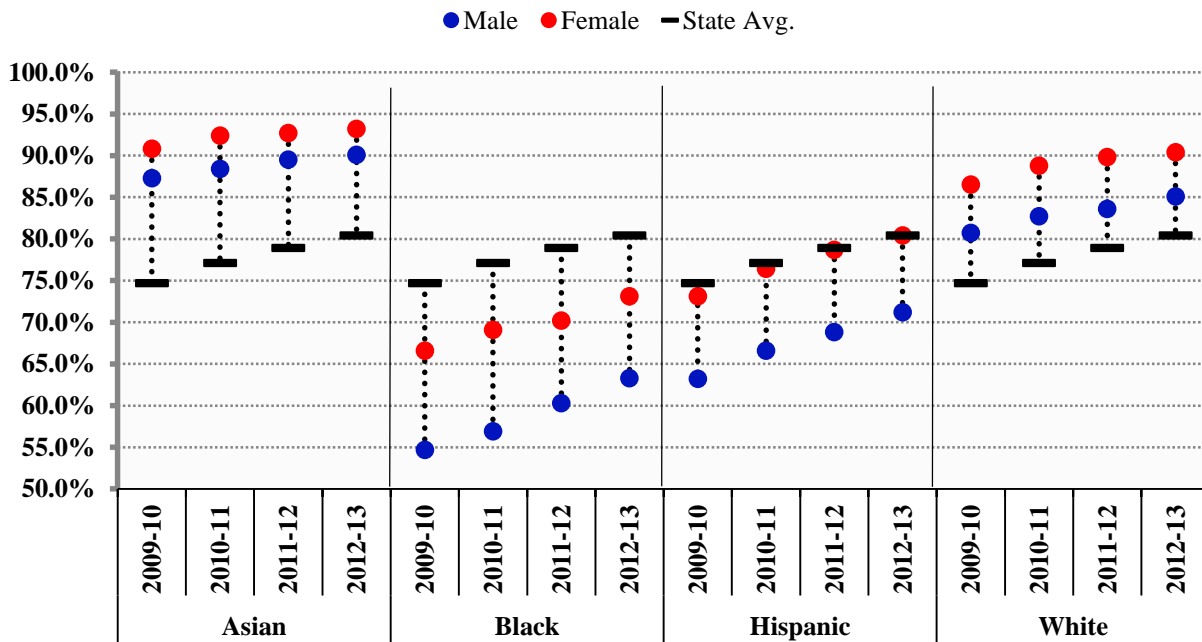
³ The cohort represents students who first enter 9th grade four years earlier.

⁴ An interactive version of this graph can be found at:

<https://public.tableausoftware.com/profile/california.dropout.research.project#!/vizhome/CaliforniaGraduationRates/Dashboard1>

Figure 2 illustrates California cohort graduation rates from 2009-10 through 2012-13 disaggregated by ethnicity and gender. Among Asian students, both males and females performed much better relative to the average state cohort graduation rate. Although female Asian students outperformed male Asian students each year, the gap between male and female Asian students was relatively small, with an average difference of 3.5 percentage points over four years. Similarly, both White males and females appeared to outperform the state average. Yet, the gap between White males and White females was more pronounced relative to Asian students, with an average difference of 5.9 percentage points over four years.

Figure 2. California Cohort Graduation Rates by Race and Gender, 2009-10 thru 2012-13



In contrast to White and Asian students, Black and Hispanic students consistently underperformed relative to the state average, except for Hispanic females who graduated just below the state average in 2009-10 but by 2012-13 experienced graduation rates at the state average of 80.4 percent. Still, the gender gap among Black and Hispanic students was much greater than for White and Asian students and was most pronounced among Black males and females. The average gender gap among Black students was 11% between 2009-10 and 2012-13. The average gender gap among Hispanic students was 9.7%.

These data show that the gender gap for ethnic groups did close from 2009-10 through 2012-13. The gap between Black males and females narrowed the most, dropping from 11.9 percentage points in 2009-10 to 9.8 percentage points in 2012-13. The gap among Hispanic males and females remained much more consistent over this period, dropping just seven tenths of a percent, from a gap of 9.9 percentage points in 2009-10, to 9.2 percentage points in 2012-13.

The findings here suggest a number of conclusions. First, female students, regardless of ethnicity, graduate at substantially higher rates than their male counterparts. Second, the gender gap in cohort graduation rates is least pronounced in Asian students and most pronounced among Black students. Third, between the years of 2009-10 and 2012-13, the gender gap among Black students closed the most with a drop in roughly 2 percentage points while the gender gap among Asian students closed the least (0.4%) during the same period.