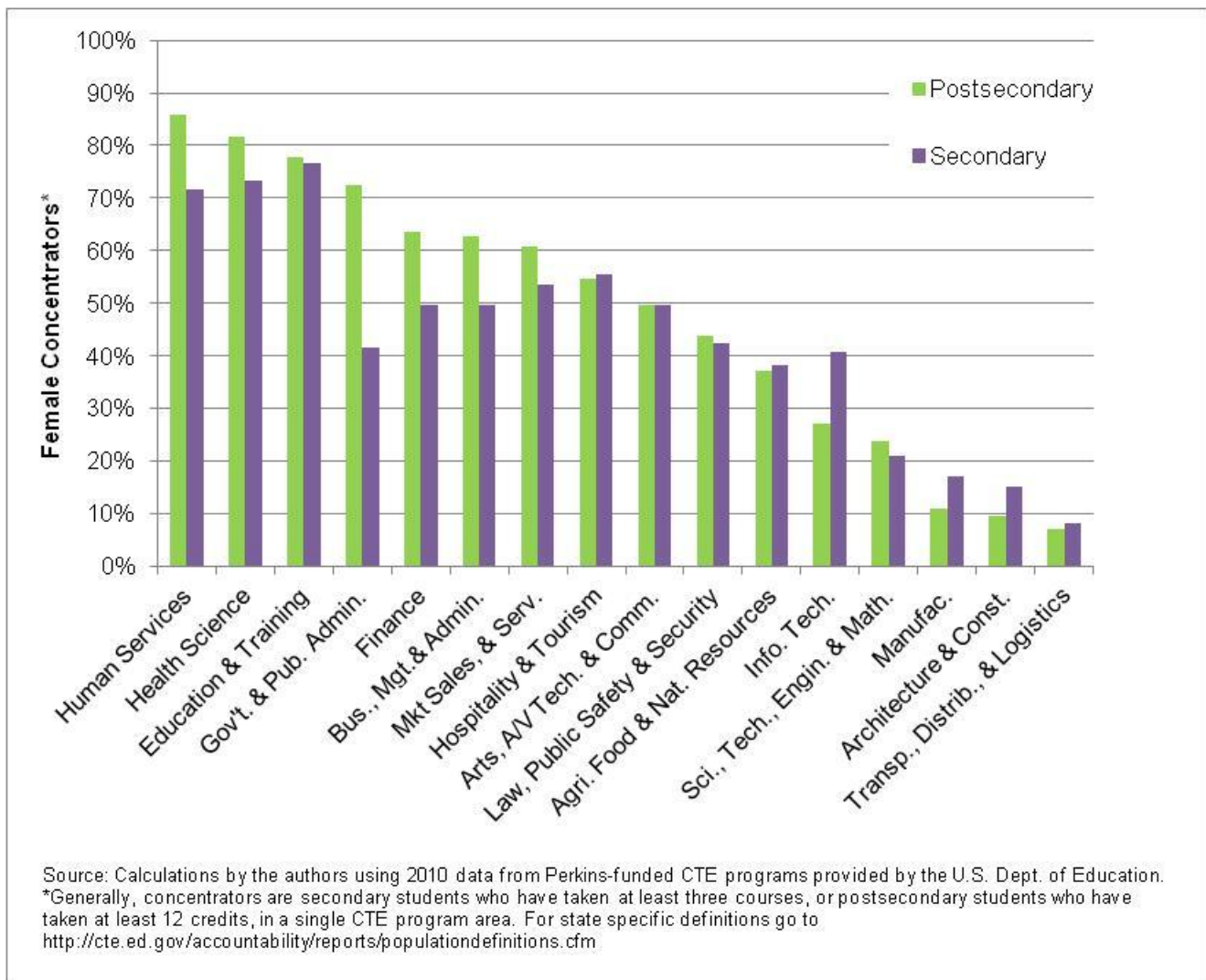


## Education Data Show Gender Gap in Career Preparation

- More than forty years after Title IX outlawed sex segregation in education, women and girls are still sorely underrepresented in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs that are nontraditional<sup>1</sup> for their gender.

Women and girls make up only a small percentage of students enrolled in the majority of programs funded by the Perkins Act that provide training for jobs in high-paying fields—a pattern that only intensifies in the transition from secondary to postsecondary education.

**Figure 1. Women and Girls Remain Concentrated in Traditionally Female CTE Programs**

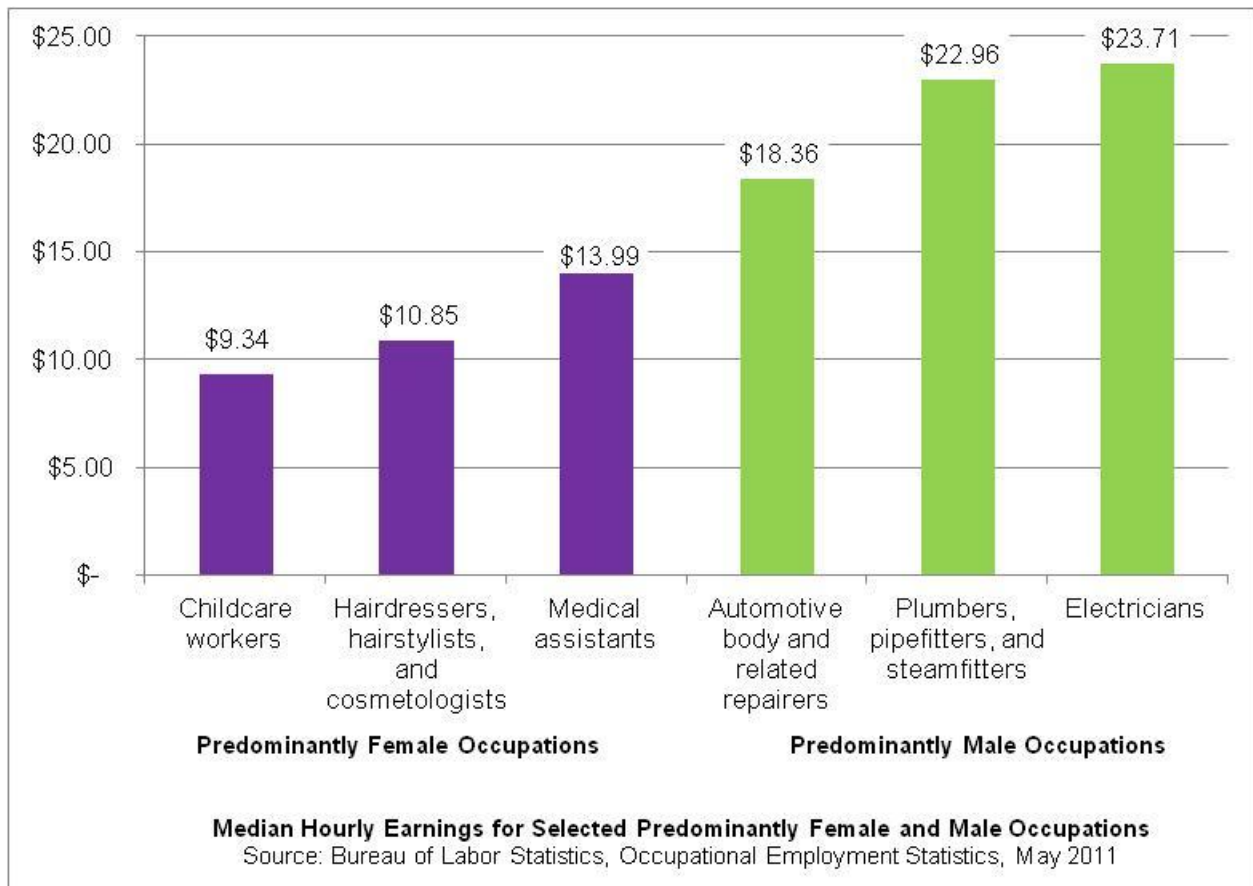


<sup>1</sup> The Perkins Act defines “nontraditional fields” as occupations or fields of work for which individuals from one gender comprise less than 25 percent of the individuals employed in each such occupation or field of work

- **Women and girls remain concentrated in CTE courses that provide training for traditionally female, low-paying fields (see Figure 1).**

Women and girls account for more than 70 percent of students at the secondary level and more than 80 percent of students at the postsecondary level enrolled in the “Human Services” cluster, which includes training for low-paying jobs such as Childcare Provider and Cosmetologist. In contrast, women and girls make up only 15 percent of students at the secondary level and less than 10 percent of students at the postsecondary level enrolled in the “Architecture and Construction” cluster, which includes training for relatively high-paying jobs such as Energy Technician and Electrician.

**Figure 2. Women Found in Lower Paying Career Preparation Programs than Men**



- **Women and girls’ participation in CTE programs that prepare them for high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand jobs is critical to ensuring their economic security and to closing the wage gap.**

Women are either primary breadwinners or co-breadwinners in 63.9 percent of families with children.<sup>2</sup> The typical woman working full time, year round continues to be paid only 77 cents<sup>3</sup> for every dollar paid to her male counterpart.

- **Traditionally male occupations pay far more than traditionally female occupations. CTE programs prepare too many girls and young women for these low-paying, predominately female jobs (see Figure 2).**

Women’s concentration in these predominantly female jobs is a significant contributor to the wage gap and to women’s economic insecurity.

<sup>2</sup> Boushey, Heather, Ann O’Leary, and Sarah Jane Glynn, 2013. *Our Working Nation in 2013: An Updated National Agenda for Work and Family Policies*. Washington DC: Center for American Progress.

<sup>3</sup> Institute for Women’s Policy Research. 2013. *The Gender Wage Gap: 2012*. Fact Sheet. Washington, DC: Institute for Women’s Policy Research.

- **The upcoming reauthorization of the Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act provides an ideal opportunity to reduce occupational segregation by promoting training for women and girls in high-skill, high-demand and high-wage jobs.**

The Perkins Act has held states accountable for increasing participation and completion rates of students in CTE courses that are nontraditional for their gender. The 2006 reauthorization of the Act included sanctions for noncomplying states and requirements for state and local improvement plans for those not meeting performance measures. Some states report significantly better results than the national average. Seven states had secondary enrolment rates for girls in non-traditional programs that were at least 10 percentage points higher than the national average of 28 percent; ten states had postsecondary completion rates for women in nontraditional programs that were at least 10 percentage points higher than the national average of 27 percent. Many state and local CTE directors count the nontraditional accountability measure and the accompanying provisions in the Perkins Act among the key reasons for their state's success in improving students' participation in and completion of nontraditional CTE programs. The accountability measure challenges educational institutions to address the barriers that women and girls face in entering nontraditional fields, such as sexual harassment in the classroom, bias in career recruitment, counseling, or mentorship, and a lack of access to appropriate tools or facilities.

- **While the nontraditional measure is essential to closing the gender gap in CTE, failures in implementation and enforcement of the data reporting requirement undermine its effectiveness.**

For example, radically inconsistent reporting standards and definitions among states result in wide variations in the quality of data reported. These variations make it extremely difficult to compare different programs and different states. Inaccuracies in data reporting must also be addressed. Finally, the current measure requires states to meet nontraditional performance levels that combine males and patterns and stymies more direct initiatives to narrow the gender gap.

In 2012, the U.S. Department of Education issued its *Blueprint for Transforming Career and Technical Education* and expressed concerns about the need to ensure that states and localities are accountable for closing equity gaps and improving opportunities and outcomes for *all students* in CTE programs. The blueprint did not go far enough in addressing the closing of equity gaps in CTE. Therefore, the CTE Task Force makes these additional recommendations for reauthorization of the Perkins Act.

## **Key Recommendations for Accountability in the Perkins Act Reauthorization**

### **→ States should continue to be held accountable**

Maintain the requirement that states continue to set negotiated performance levels and report on the number of students who participate in and complete CTE programs that are nontraditional for their gender. Congress should retain and strengthen current provisions requiring improvement plans and authorizing sanctions for states that do not meet performance measures. Congress should include provisions in the bill that give the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) the explicit authority to hold states accountable.

### **→ Disaggregate information about participation and completion**

Disaggregating data by gender, race, disability, parental status, income status, and English learning status is critical to providing an accurate understanding of how women and girls are faring in CTE, as well as to identifying whether more progress is being made for some groups of women and girls but not for others. Reporting separately for male and female students would also facilitate the development of specific strategies to recruit and retain both women and men into nontraditional fields.

→ **Encourage continuous improvement at the state and local level**

Currently, nontraditional performance levels are negotiated between the Department of Education and state education agencies and between state education agencies and local education agencies. This process should build meaningful continuous improvement over time from valid and consistent baseline data.

→ **Provide specific funding to states for services that prepare students for nontraditional fields**

Congress should raise the state leadership set-aside from 10 to 15 percent with the direction that the additional 5 percent would be used to close equity gaps, especially gender gaps in CTE programs that lead to occupations with family-sustaining wages.

→ **Correct inconsistencies in state data reporting**

Require states to use clear and consistent definitions when reporting state data. Currently, there are significant inconsistencies in data standards and reporting among states. Some states use varying definitions and reporting methods that make comparisons difficult. In other instances, reported rates were radically inconsistent with performance in previous years or in other areas. Irregular data should trigger further investigation and technical assistance by the Department of Education. Consistent reporting is critical so that states can learn from one another about how to improve outcomes.

→ **Launch challenge grants**

Provide challenge grants to states to identify and address the main barriers to students' participation in CTE programs that are nontraditional for their gender. Challenge grants can be awarded to states to promote innovative policies and practices in teacher professional development, student support programs or career counseling, and assessment methods that expose students to all career options.

→ **Require the Department of Education to identify and build on the success of high-performing states**

Some states have demonstrated success in promoting and providing training for women in nontraditional occupations and should serve as models for other states to follow. For example, Missouri, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, and New Mexico all have state-wide rates of female participation in nontraditional fields above 40 percent in some fields. Congress should require the Department of Education to research relevant state-level policies and programs for increasing the number of students in nontraditional CTE programs, identify best practices, and provide technical assistance to other states to implement similar practices.

→ **Reinstate the position of Gender Equity Coordinator for CTE programs**

Congress should reinstate the position of Gender Equity Coordinator for CTE programs, which was part of the Perkins Act prior to reauthorization in 1998. State Gender Equity Coordinators are vital to ensuring that the gender equity measures in Perkins are implemented consistently and effectively throughout all states.

→ **Require better coordination between OCR and OVAE**

Congress should require the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights and the Office of Vocational and Adult Education to better align their processes for investigating and remedying gender-based inequities in CTE programs, including by jointly providing technical assistance to states and conducting periodic compliance reviews.

\* This report was prepared as a summary of an analysis by the Institute for Women's Policy Research, the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity, the National Women's Law Center, and Wider Opportunities for Women, under the auspices of the National Coalition of Women and Girls in Education and the National Coalition on Women, Jobs and Job Training.