Geographers by Gender

Geography in the United States has traditionally been, and remains, a male-dominated discipline. According to various data sources, currently around two-thirds of geographers are male and one-third is female.

AAG members

Figure 1: Change in gender balance among AAG members, 1972-2018

The AAG membership can be used as a proxy for geographers as a whole since the members are a diverse group including students and educators, government, private sector and non-profit workers, unemployed and retirees.

- Approximately 42% of AAG members report their gender. Currently, 62% of AAG members who report their gender are male and 38% report that they are female¹.

- When the Association was established in 1904, just two of the original 48 members were women. The proportion of female members has been very steadily rising since.

- Figure 1 shows comparable membership records dating back to 1972 when 14% of members were female².

¹ Source: AAG membership data, 2018; sample size 4,921.
Geography in K-12 education

Teachers

- Of the approximately 18,500 geography teachers in public, county, state, and private schools in the United States, 59% are male and 41% female.\(^3\)

- Geography shows a much stronger male bias than among teachers of all subjects and grades at public and private schools, where 24% are male and 76% female.\(^4\)

- Among AAG members, the gender balance of K-12 educators has fluctuated over the years. In 1972, 80% were male and 20% female; in 2018 the figures were 50% male, 50% female (although the sample size was too small to be statistically significant) with gender balance around the turn of the century and an overall average across 47 years of 66% male and 34% female.\(^5\)

Students

Contrary to trends across the rest of geography, the gender balance at high school level is towards more females taking the subject.

- During the most recent year, 43% of the students taking the Advanced Placement (AP) exam in Human Geography were male and 57% were female.\(^6\) The figures were similar for the AP exam in Environmental Science at 44% male and 56% female.\(^7\)

- Looking across the 38 subjects currently available as AP programs, these two subjects lie around the overall average of all AP students (44% male, 56% female) with the extremes in gender balance being 24% female in Computer Science and 80% female in Studio Art (Drawing).\(^8\)

- Figure 2 shows that Human Geography has become increasingly female since AP programs started in 2001, while Environmental Science has varied little since starting in 1998.\(^9\)

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2 Source: Annual AAG membership data, 1972 to 2018.
4 Source: NCES number of teachers in public and private elementary and secondary schools, 2011-12; sample size 3,850,058.
5 Source: Annual AAG membership data, 1972 to 2018.
8 Source: The College Board, AP Program Summary Report 2018; sample size 5,090,324.
Geography in higher education

Faculty

- Currently 65% of geography department faculty are male and 35% are female\textsuperscript{10}.

- In comparison, instructional faculty in postsecondary institutions across all disciplines are more gender-balanced at 51% male and 49% female\textsuperscript{11}.

- Among AAG members, the proportion of female geographers in higher education has been increasing steadily by about 1% every two years. In 1972, 93% of AAG members who worked working in colleges or universities were male and 7% female, rising to 70% male and 30% female in 2018\textsuperscript{12}.

Students

- The current gender balances among geography students are 54% male to 46% female among graduate students\textsuperscript{13} and 61% male to 39% female among undergraduate students\textsuperscript{14}.

- Geography students are considerably more male-dominated than the student population overall where 41% of graduate students\textsuperscript{15} and 44% of undergraduate students\textsuperscript{16} are male (Figure 3).

- Among AAG members, the proportion of female geography students has been increasing steadily by about 0.66% every year. In 1972, 85% of AAG members who reported their employment status as student were male and 15% female, rising to 53% male and 46% female in 2018\textsuperscript{17}.

Geography in the workplace

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\textsuperscript{10} Source: AAG supplemental survey to geography departments, 2018; sample size 1,185.
\textsuperscript{11} Source: NCES number of faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, 2017; sample size 1,543,569.
\textsuperscript{12} Source: Annual AAG membership data, 1972 to 2019.
\textsuperscript{13} Source: AAG supplemental survey to geography departments, 2018; sample size 1,643.
\textsuperscript{14} Source: AAG supplemental survey to geography departments, 2018; sample size 6,761.
\textsuperscript{15} Source: NCES Fall enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, 2017; sample size 3,005,267.
\textsuperscript{16} Source: NCES Fall enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, 2017; sample size 16,760,331.
\textsuperscript{17} Source: Annual AAG membership data, 1972 to 2018.
• Among geographers who are working professionals in sectors other than education, 70% are male and 30% female, although there is quite a range between sectors, as shown in Figure 4; for example, 56% male in the non-profit sector but 75% male in private industry.18

• Among professional geographers outside of the education sector, the proportion of females has increased over the last few decades in every employment sector apart from the military (see Figure 5).

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18 Source: AAG membership data, 2018 excluding the employment categories student, K-12 educator, college and university, unemployed, retired; sample size 423.
AAG Presidents

Of the 114 AAG Presidents between 1904 and 2018, 99 were male (87.6%) and 15 female (13.2%)\(^{19}\). The first female President was Ellen Churchill Semple who served 1921-22. The next female president was not selected until 1984-85. 12 of the 15 women Presidents have served in the last 20 years (1996-2018).

The American Society of Professional Geographers, which was established in 1944 and merged with the AAG in 1948, had five Presidents, all of whom were men\(^{20}\).

Between 1955 and 1966 the AAG appointed an Honorary President in addition to a President, the former had a year to prepare a presidential address and the latter carried out the executive duties of the organization. All 12 people who served annual terms as Honorary President were male\(^{21}\).

AAG Council

There are 19 member of the AAG Council\(^{22}\). Over the last two decades, the ratio of men to women has fluctuated year by year with the extremes being 14 men/5 women and 6 men/13 women, as shown in Figure 6\(^{23}\).

AAG Executive Directors and Staff

In 1963 the AAG established a national office with a full-time Executive Officer\(^{24}\). To date eight different people have held this position, of which just one was a woman, who served from 1979 to 1984\(^{25}\).

In 1963 the central office had two female full-time assistants, and two part-time assistants in addition to the male Executive Officer\(^{26}\). Today there are 13 male and 8 female members of staff\(^{27}\).

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\(^{19}\) Source: AAG Handbook 2018, p314; William Morris Davis served three terms as President but as two were separate in time so he is counted twice.


\(^{22}\) The AAG Council comprises the Officers of the Association (President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer), Councilors (6 elected at large plus 1 elected from each regional division), the most recent Past President, and the Executive Director (\textit{ex officio})

\(^{23}\) Source: AAG Council minutes and internal documents, 1998-2018.

\(^{24}\) The first 3 office holders had the title of Executive Officer, the next was Executive Secretary, and since then the position has been Executive Director.


AAG Journals

Journal Editors, Associate Editors, Editorial Board members

AAG has four scholarly journals: *Annals of the AAG*, *The Professional Geographer*, the AAG *Review of Books*, and *GeoHumanities*.

The gender composition of those currently serving as editors, associate editors and on the editorial boards is shown in Table 129. Overall, 53% of those serving in different roles are male, 40% are female, and 7% did not list a gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Editors</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Editors</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial Board</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>108</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considering the editorial boards separately, Figure 7 shows some difference ranging from the *Annals of the AAG* board being about half male while the *GeoHumanities* board being over half female30.

Of the 49 people who have served as editors of the AAG journals from 1911 to 2017, 39 were male and 10 female. The distribution by journal is shown in Figure 831.

The first female was Evelyn L. Pruitt who served as editor of *The Professional Geographer* from 1958 to 1959.

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27 Source: [http://www.aag.org/cs/staff](http://www.aag.org/cs/staff), correct at 28 Nov
28 The genders used for the editorial boards of the AAG *Review of Books* and *GeoHumanities* in this chart are from 2016. Current results are not available for this section as we enhance our data collection and reporting methods.
29 Source: Names of Editors, Associate Editors and Editorial Board members are on the webpages for each journal [http://www.aag.org/cs/publications/journals](http://www.aag.org/cs/publications/journals), correct at 17 Nov 2018.
30 Source: ibid.
31 Source: AAG Handbook 2018, pp10-11. Current results are not available for this section as we enhance our data collection and reporting methods.
It was more than 70 years from the founding of the *Annals of the AAG* that its first female editor was appointed: Susan Hanson who served from 1982 to 1987.

**Authors of published material**

A total of 535 authors contributed to items published in the four AAG journals across all issues of 2016. Of these, 351 (66%) were male and 184 (33%) were female. Table 2 shows some differences between the journals, with *GeoHumanities* being the most gender balanced with 48% male and 52% female contributors in 2016, and the *AAG Review of Books* being the most gender skewed with 80% male and 20% female contributors in 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><em>Annals of the AAG</em></th>
<th><em>The Prof Geographer</em></th>
<th><em>AAG Review of Books</em></th>
<th><em>Geo Humanities</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>215</strong></td>
<td><strong>149</strong></td>
<td><strong>69</strong></td>
<td><strong>102</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The gradual convergence towards gender parity over time from almost 100% authorship by men to 65-70% men is shown in Figure 9. Data was gathered from the two longest-running AAG journals, the *Annals of the AAG* and *The Professional Geographer*, taking volumes at decadal intervals (from 1956 to 2016) as a sample and snapshot.

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32 Current results are not available for this section as we enhance our data collection and reporting methods. Please refer to last reported results until new information becomes available.

33 Source: Table of contents of each issue.

34 Source: Table of contents of each issue; the count included substantive content such as research articles, commentaries, technical notes, editorials, presidential addresses, and memorials, but excluded book reviews, association notes, correspondence, and editor reports.
Between 1951 and 2018, there were a total of 694 recipients of AAG Honors and Awards. Aside from the 12 recipients that were organizations, the individuals comprised 530 (76.4%) men and 164 (23.6%) women.

The distribution of recipients by the major categories of award is shown in Figure 10. By proportion, males were the recipients of 85% of AAG Honors, 70% of AAG Awards, 74% of AAG Book Awards, and 56% of AAG Research Grants.

Looking at recipients of honors and awards by decade, the growth of female recipients has matched the growth of male participants, as shown in Figure 11. By proportion, there is a gradual move towards gender balance; in the 1950s, 90% of recipients were male but by the 2010s only 63% recipients were male.

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35 Sources: AAG Handbook 2018, pp25-36 and lists on individual honors and awards webpages [www.aag.org/cs/grantsawards](http://www.aag.org/cs/grantsawards); together these are not a completely comprehensive list of all AAG awards through time but represents a large sample.

36 Current results are not available for this section as we enhance our data collection and reporting methods. Please refer to last reported results until new information becomes available.
Other Awards and Honors

Finally, in terms of geographers’ representation in the academy more widely, Table 3 shows the gender balance of those elected to prestigious organizations or recipients of major fellowships. The gender imbalance here is stark, ranging from 86% to 91% male representation.

Susan Hanson was the first female geographer to be a member of the NAS and AAAS, both in 2000. She was also the first female to be a Guggenheim Fellow in Geography in 1989, and 10 of the total of 14 women have been selected in the last ten years. The first Macarthur Fellow in Geography was selected in 2007.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Geographers nominated or elected to prestigious organizations</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geographer Members of the National Academy of Sciences (1863-2017)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographer Members of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1796-2016)</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guggenheim Fellows in Geography (1926-2017)</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographer MacArthur Fellows (1981-2007)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further information

Quantitative studies

Where Are the Women? Accounting for Discrepancies in Female Doctorates in U.S. Geography

Women in Economic Geography

The representation of women in academic Geography: contexts, climate and curricula

Female Representation in the Discipline of Geography

Qualitative research

Changing Expectations and Institutions: American Women Geographers in the 1970s

Women, Gender, and the Histories of American Geography

Women’s Worlds at the American Geographical Society

Many Roads: The Personal and Professional Lives of Women Geographers

Women in Geography in the 21st Century
Focus Section (2000) in The Professional Geographer 52 (4): 697-758

Other references

Women’s Contributions to Geography and Cartography
A set of articles by Alice C. Hudson and Mary McMichael Ritzlin, Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress

‘Practically All the Geographers Were Women’
By Janice Monk (2008), presentation at Society of Woman Geographers Triennial

The full datasets used to compiled this report are available to download from the Disciplinary Data Dashboard:
http://www.aag.org/disciplinarydata/gender

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