



THE GENDER GAP IN UNIVERSITY ENROLLMENT: WHAT ROLE DO SKILLS AND PARENTS PLAY?

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Young men are far less likely than women to attend university across most OECD countries. Recent research also suggests that boys are also falling behind in their grades and educational aspirations during high school. Both grades and aspirations reflect many different individual characteristics and socio-economic circumstances. To uncover the deeper determinants of the gender gap in university participation, I use Canadian data from the Youth in Transition Survey to estimate a factor model based on a framework developed by Foley, Gallipoli, and Green (2014). I use that model to identify and quantify the impact of three factors: cognitive skills, non-cognitive skills and parental valuations of education (PVE). I find that all three factors play an important role in explaining both the level and the gap in university participation. The factor structure as a whole accounts for 64 percent of the gender gap, and the distribution of the PVE factor accounts for 23 percent. This result suggests that parents play a larger role than what is implied by decompositions employing only observed determinants.

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