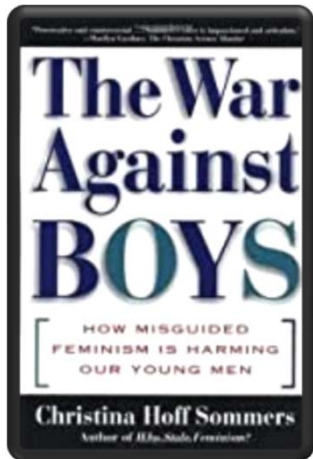


# Boys and Men Falling Behind

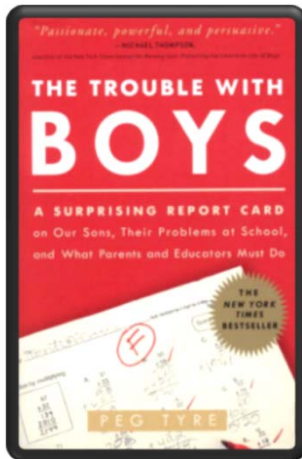
## A Research Agenda for Men and Women

Rebecca Thornton  
Baylor University

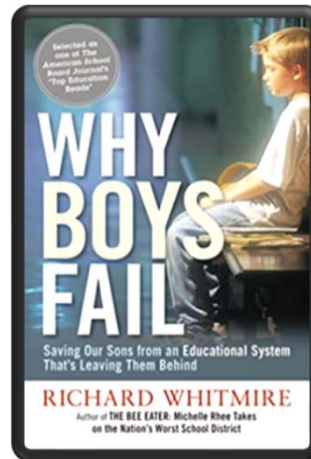
# Recent popular press...



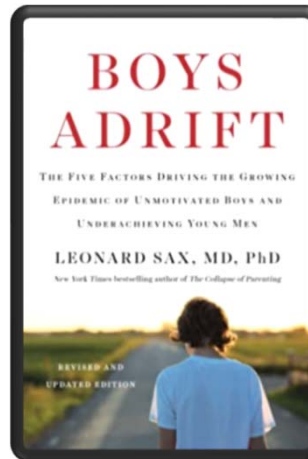
2001



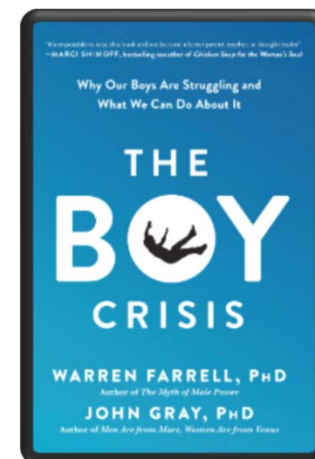
2009



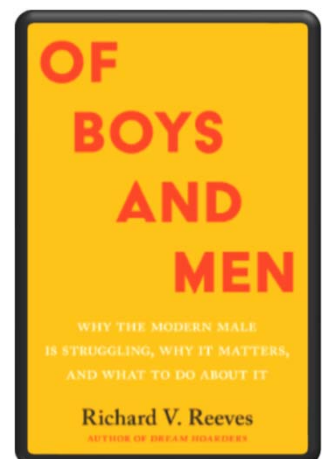
2011



2016



2019



2022

# Today

- Why study men and boys?
- Some gaps
- Broader implications
- How to help?
- Research and policy opportunities

# Why study men and boys?



# **Why study men and boys?**

## **1. Theory**

- Do individuals behave differently? If so, why?
- Are outcomes different? If so, why?

## **2. Policy**

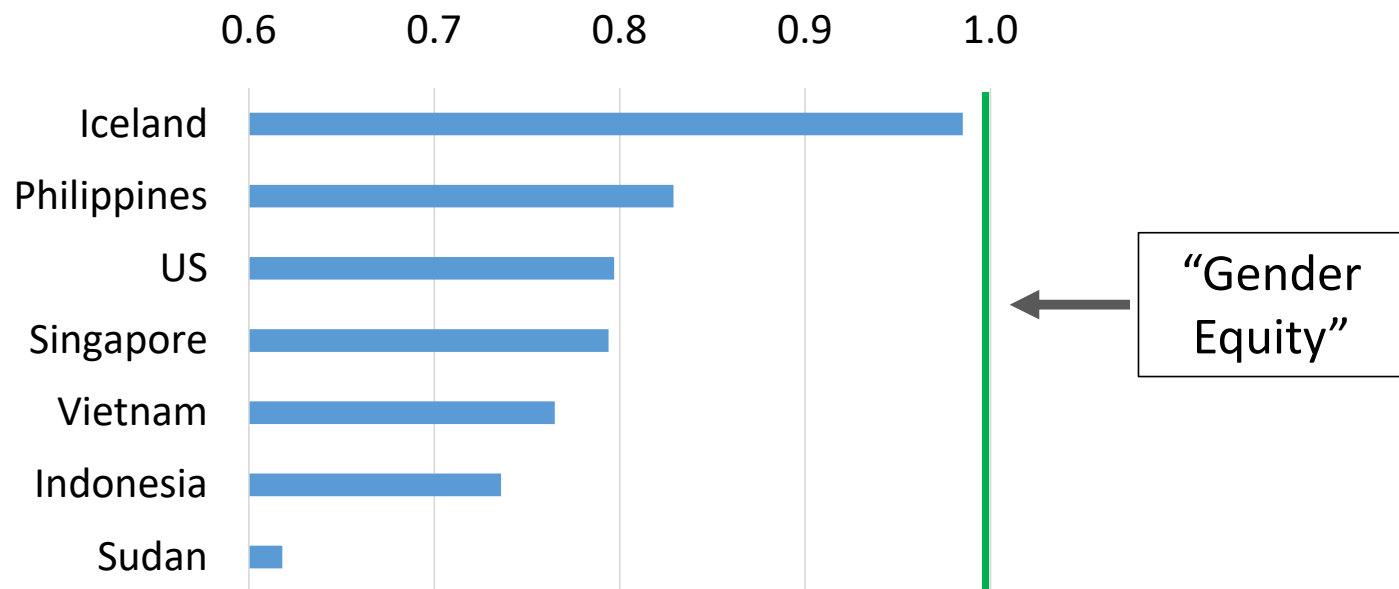
- Equity (outcomes/opportunity)
- Optimal design

# **Studying gender is not new**

- Traditional paradigm
  - Societal/household structures constrain women
  - Measure inequalities where women are disadvantaged

# Example: Global Gender Gap Index

- 4 domains (economic, education, health, political empowerment)
- Measure distance from parity



(World Economic Forum 2024)

# Gender empathy gap

“There is a prevailing tendency in our culture to treat boys’ and men’s issues as unimportant or even illegitimate.

(Christina Hoff Sommers)



# Gender empathy gap

“There is a prevailing tendency in our culture to treat boys’ and men’s issues as unimportant or even illegitimate.

This gender empathy gap has led to a one-sided narrative that focuses on women as perpetual victims and men as oppressors, ignoring the real struggles that boys and men face.”

(Christina Hoff Sommers)

# **Gender differences in outcomes?**

- Ability (construction workers, childcare workers)
- Preferences (stay at home mom, entrepreneur)
- Choices (criminal or health behavior)
- Constraints (discrimination, networks, ability)

# **Limited research on men and boys**

- Research on men and boys focused in developed countries
- Gender gaps across domains and time
- Interventions to help men and boys

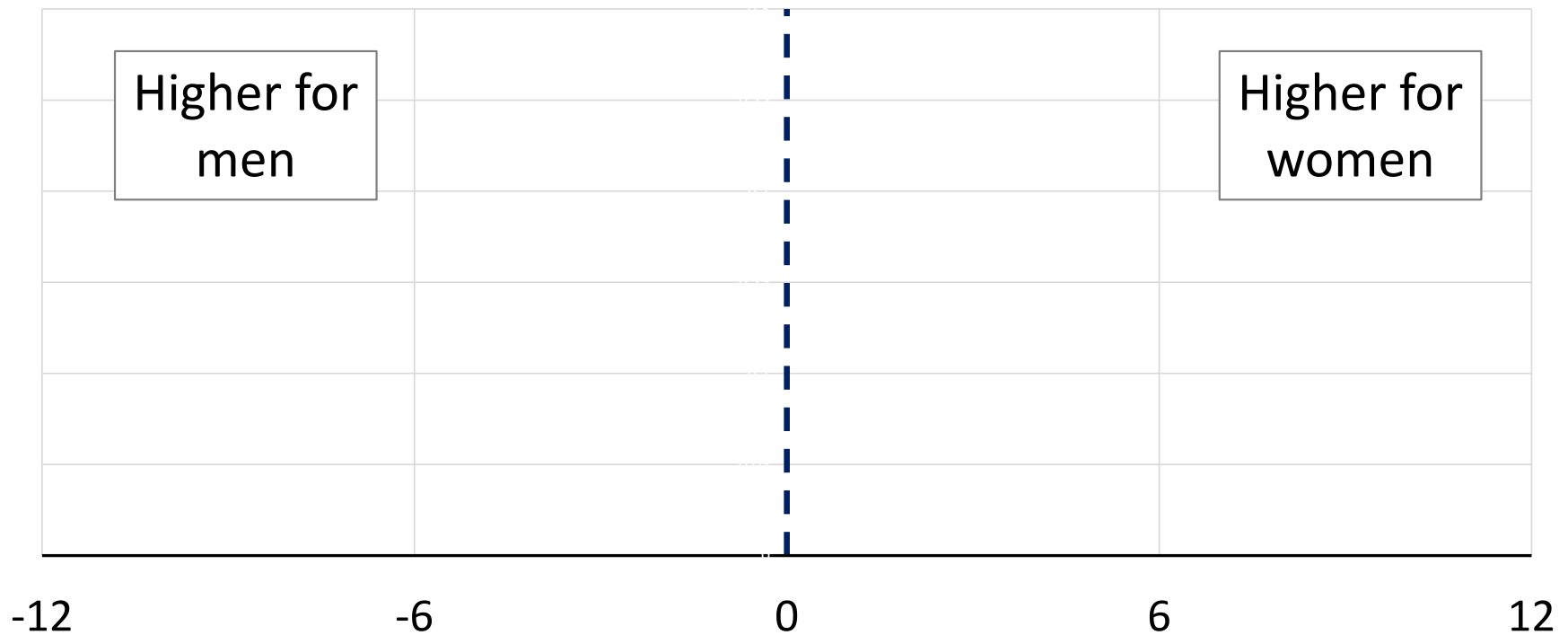
# Some gaps



**Health**

# Life expectancy gap (global)

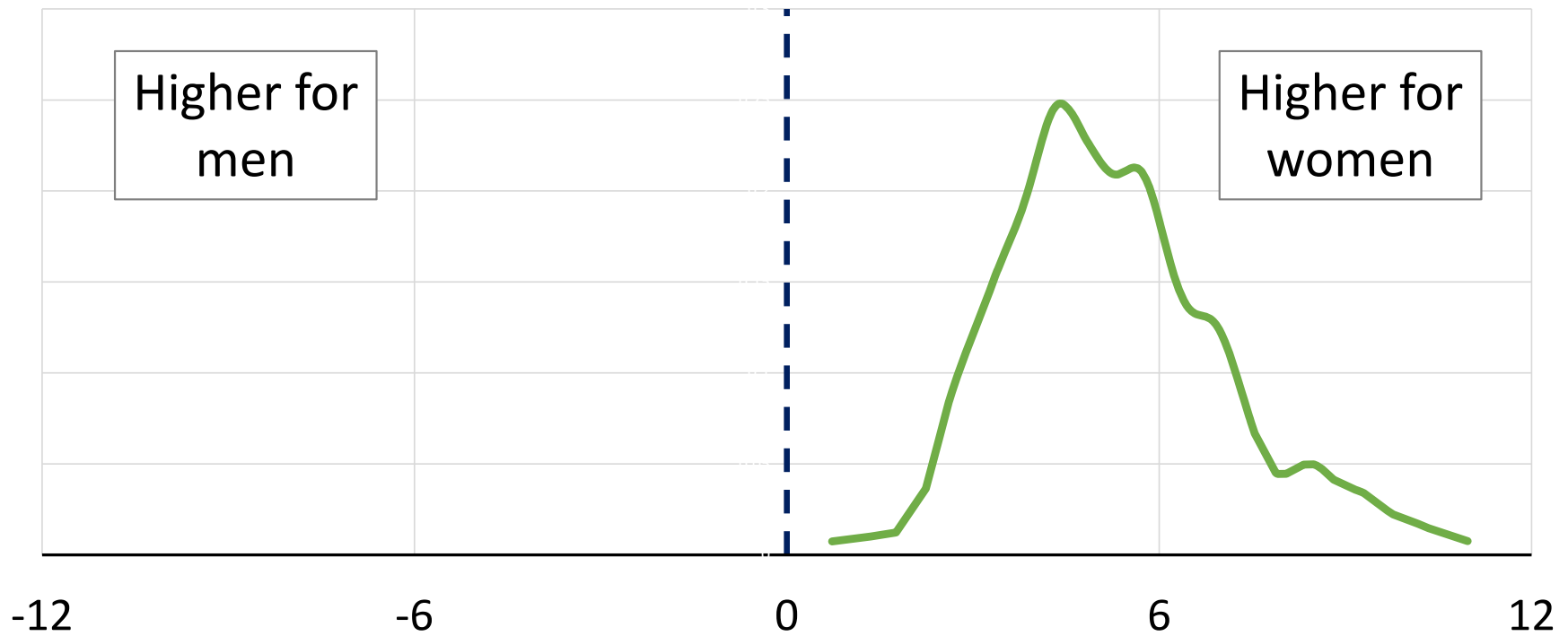
Difference in Years  
(Female-Male Life Expectancy)



(Author's calculations: United Nations Population Data 2022)

# Life expectancy gap (global)

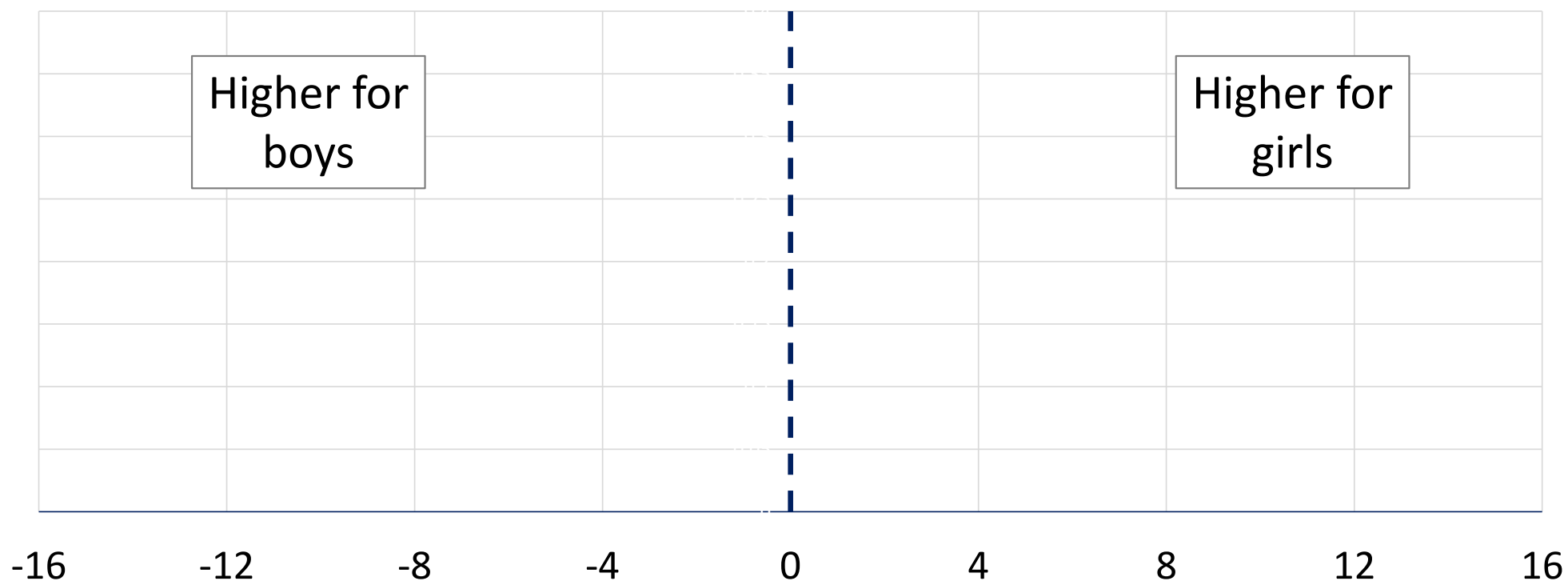
Difference in Years  
(Female-Male Life Expectancy)



(Author's calculations: United Nations Population Data 2022)

# Infant mortality gap (global)

Difference in Infant Mortality Rate  
(Female-Male Mortality)

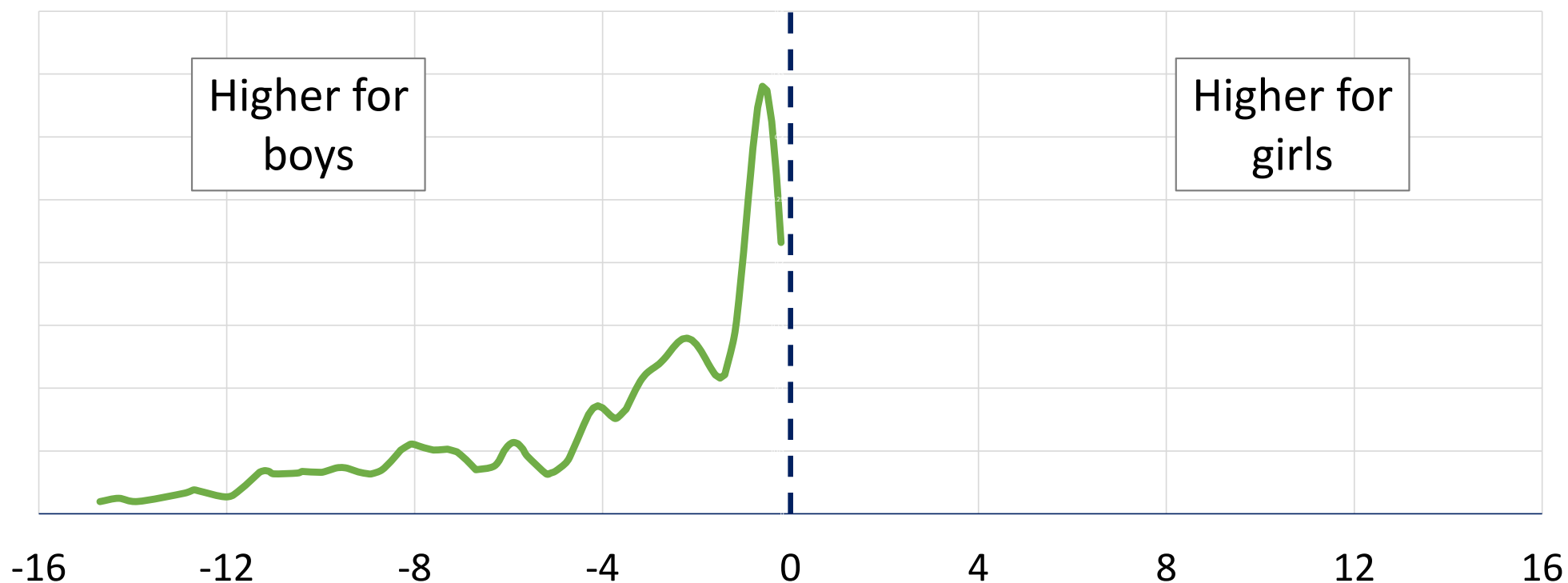


(Author's calculations: World Bank 2024)



# Infant mortality gap (global)

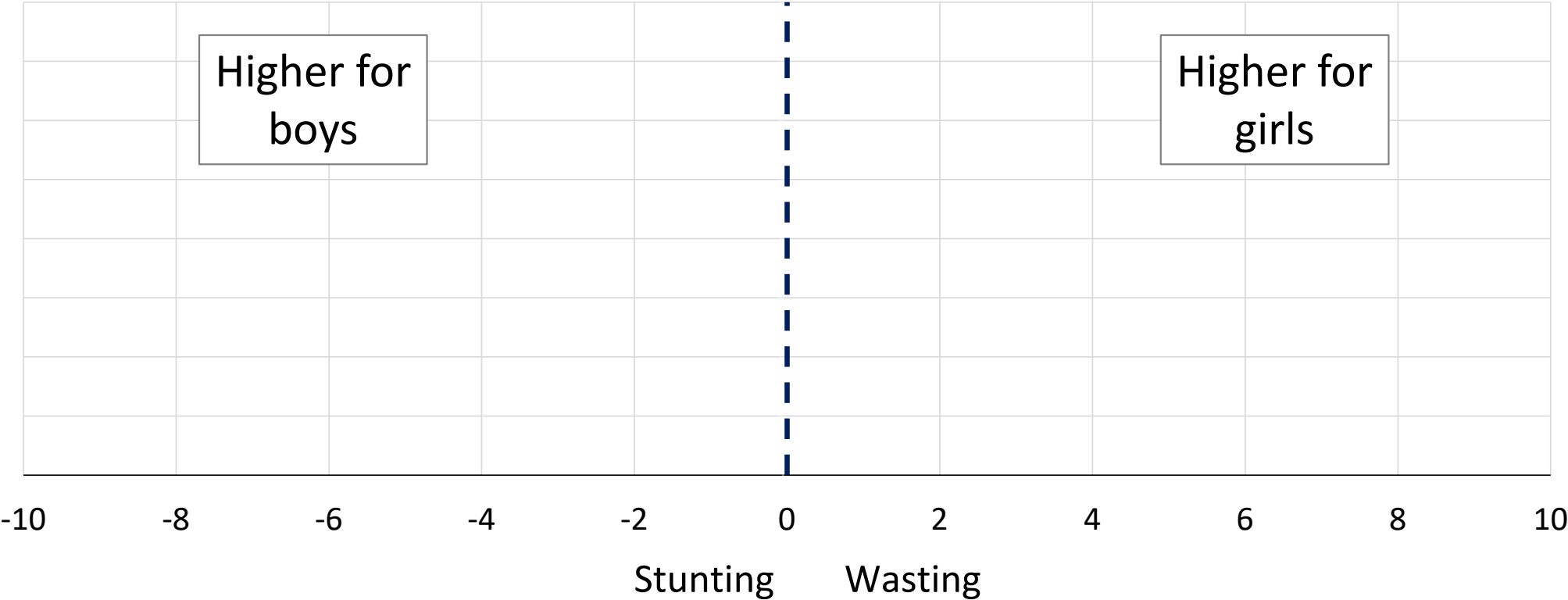
Difference in Infant Mortality Rate  
(Female-Male Mortality)



(Author's calculations: World Bank 2024)

# Childhood malnutrition gap (global)

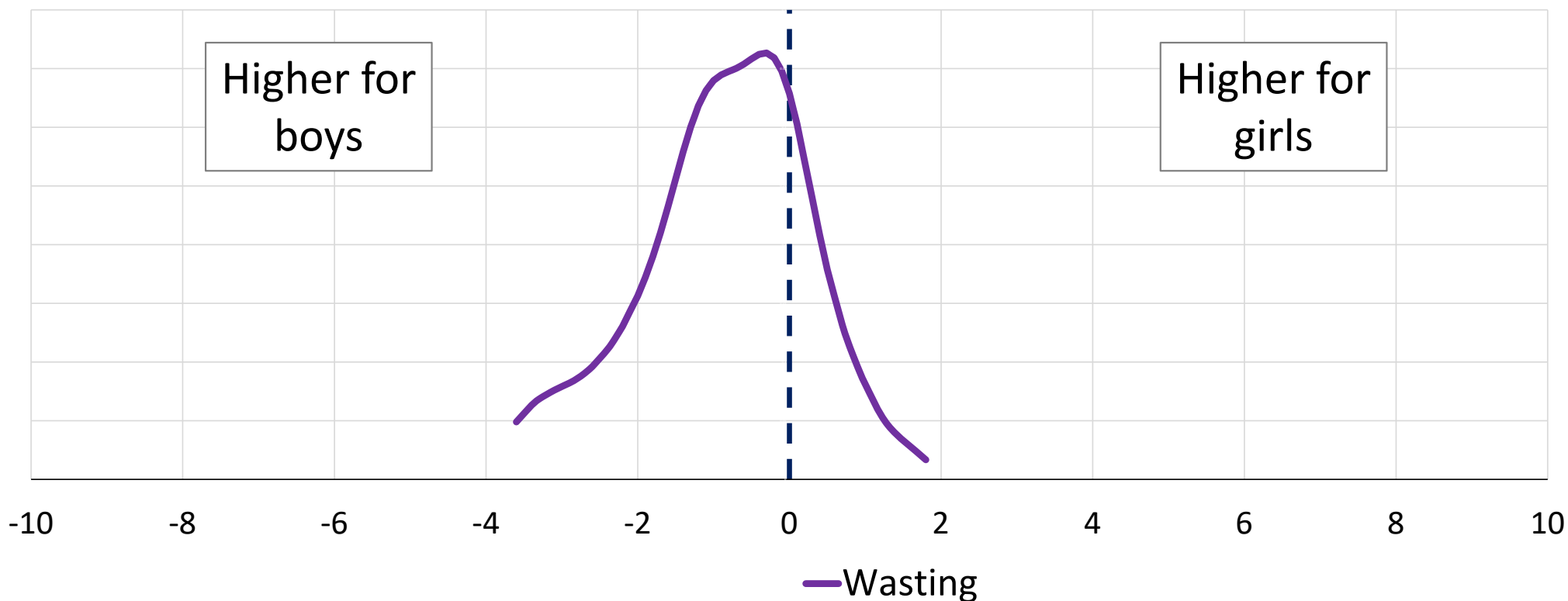
Difference in Malnutrition Prevalence  
(Female-Male Prevalence)



(Author's calculations: World Bank 2024)

# Childhood malnutrition gap (global)

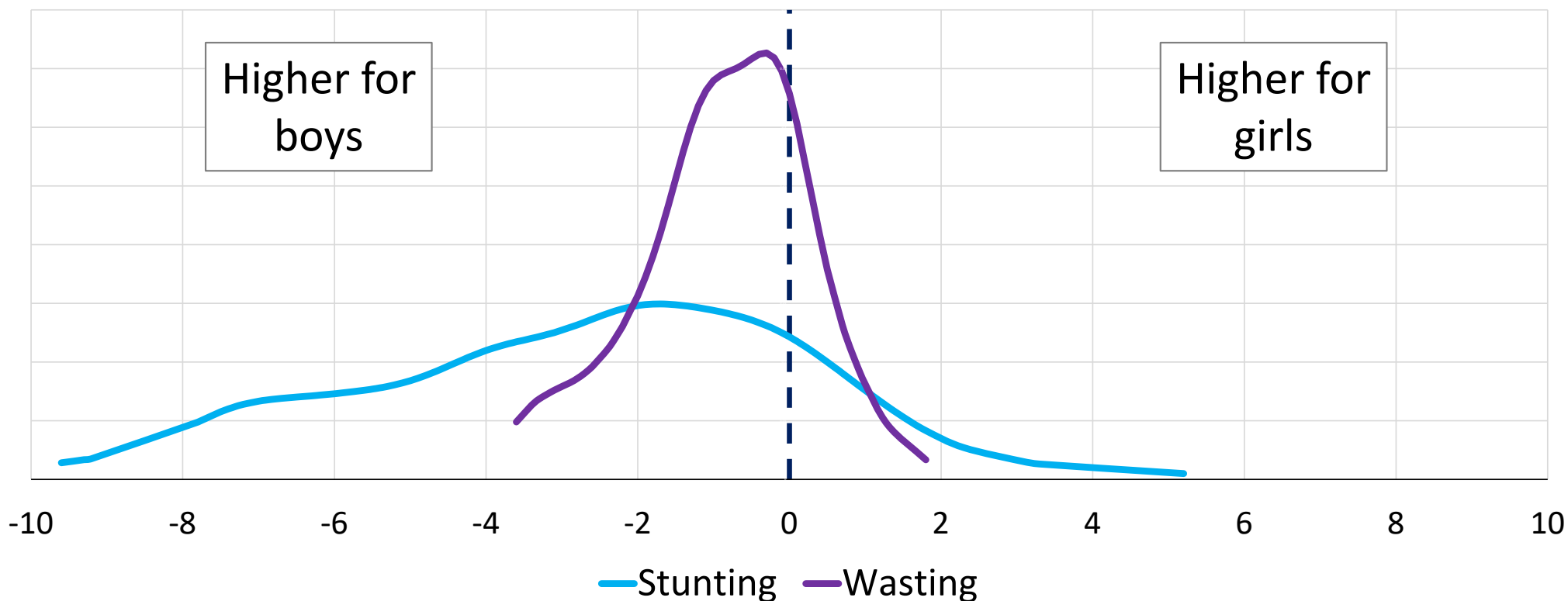
Difference in Malnutrition Prevalence  
(Female-Male Prevalence)



(Author's calculations: World Bank 2024)

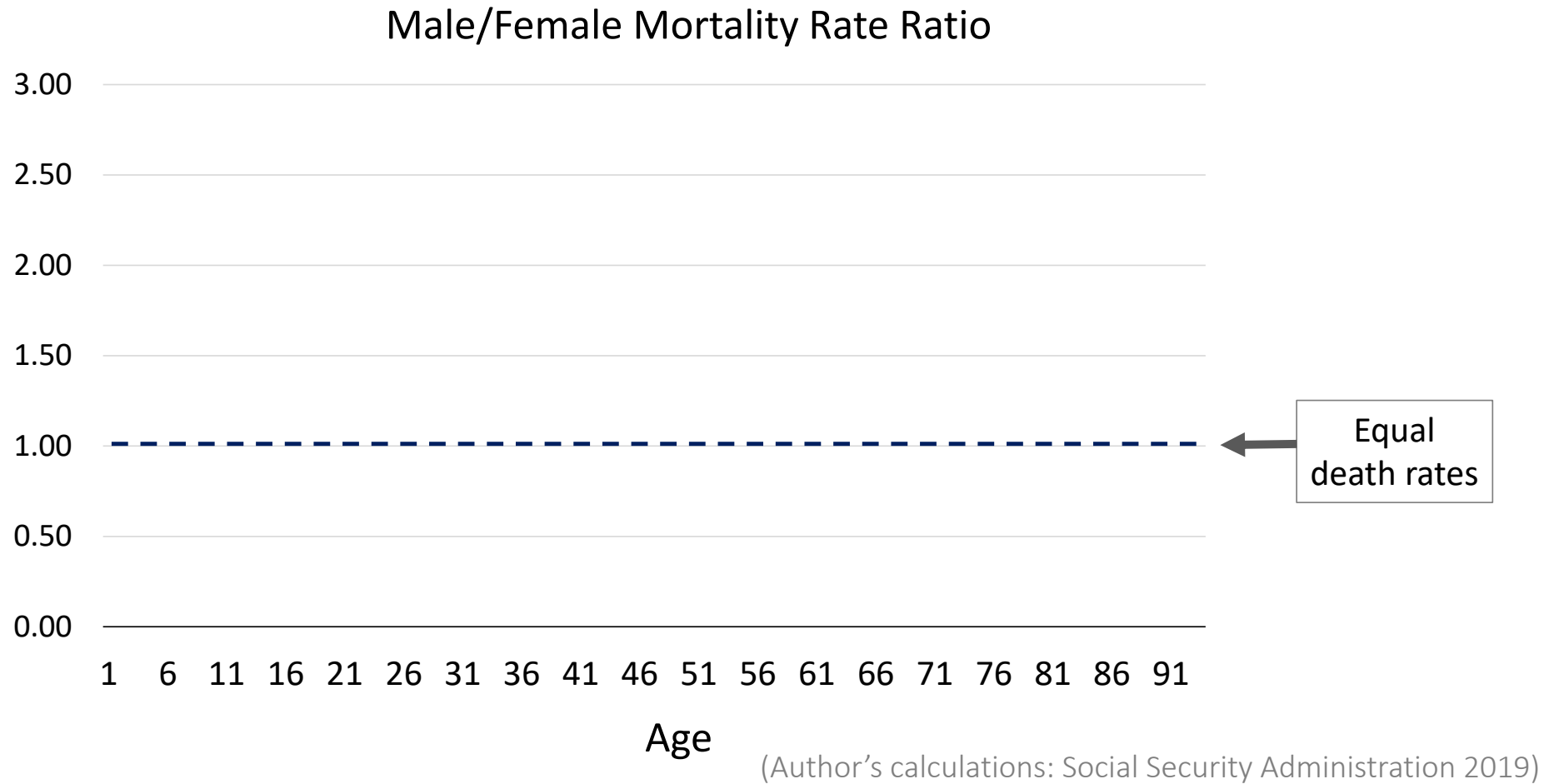
# Childhood malnutrition gap (global)

Difference in Malnutrition Prevalence  
(Female-Male Prevalence)

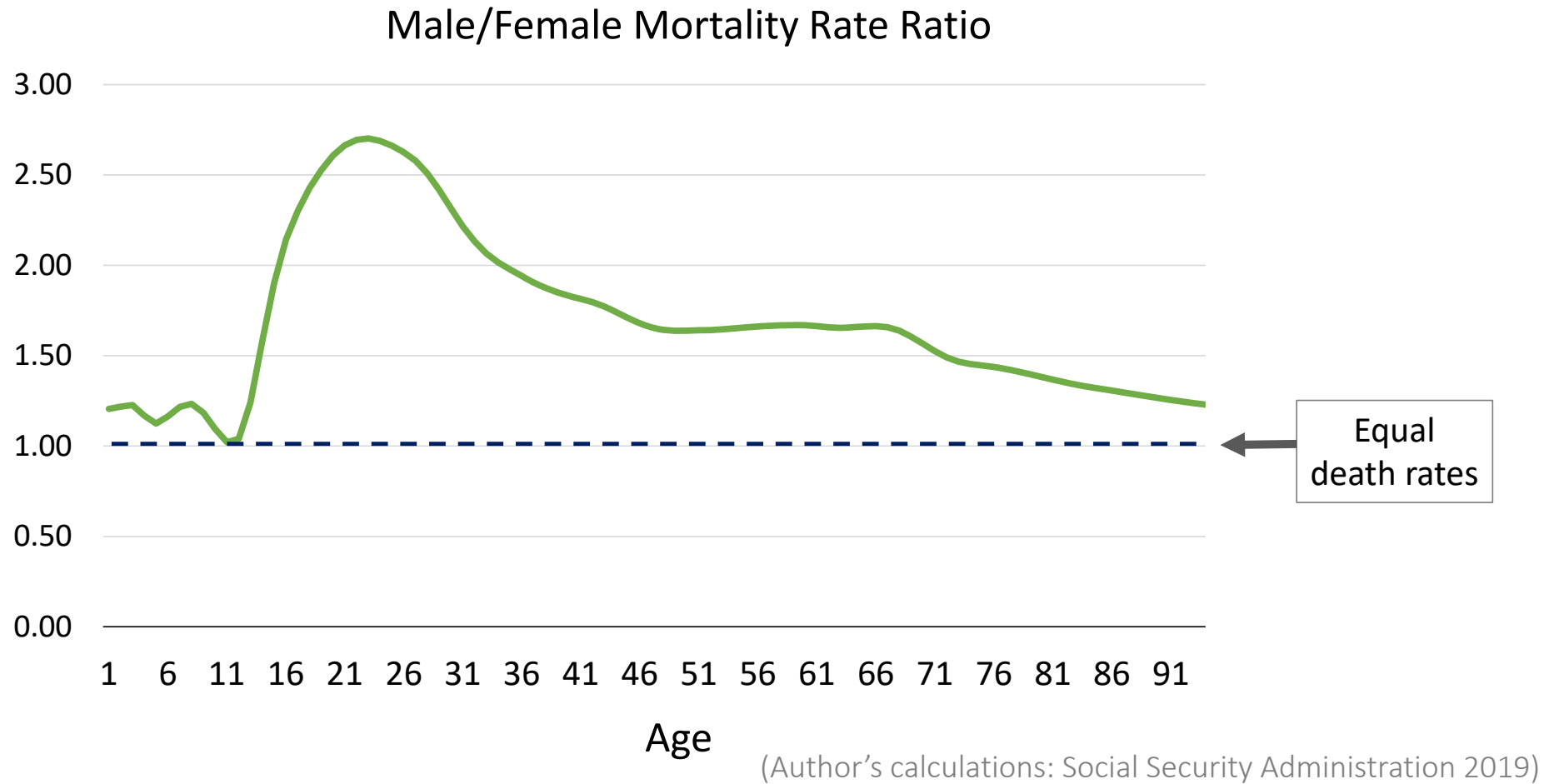


(Author's calculations: World Bank 2024)

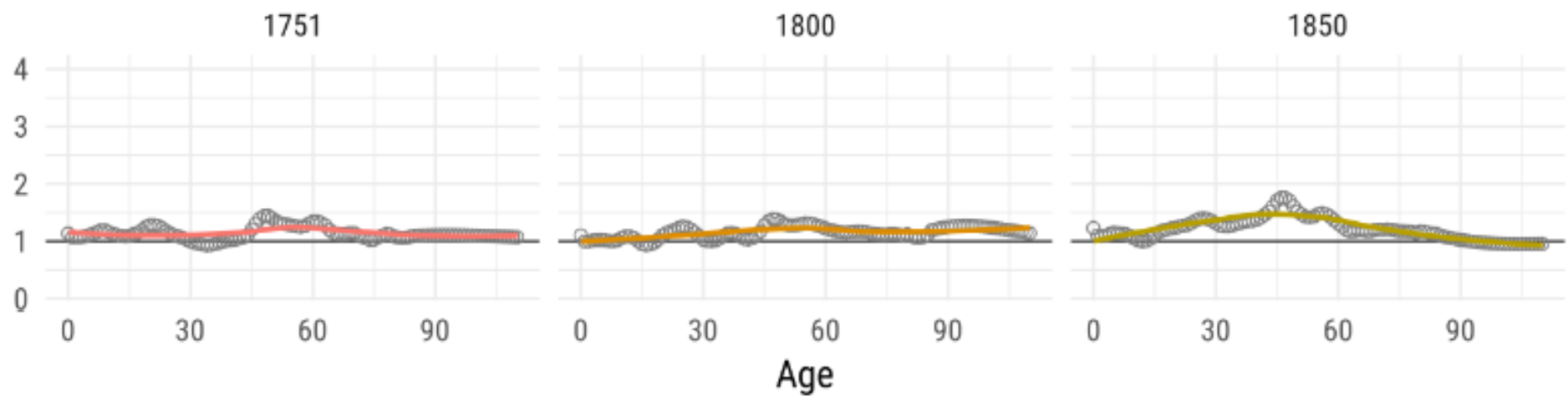
# Mortality ratio by age (US)



# Mortality ratio by age (US)

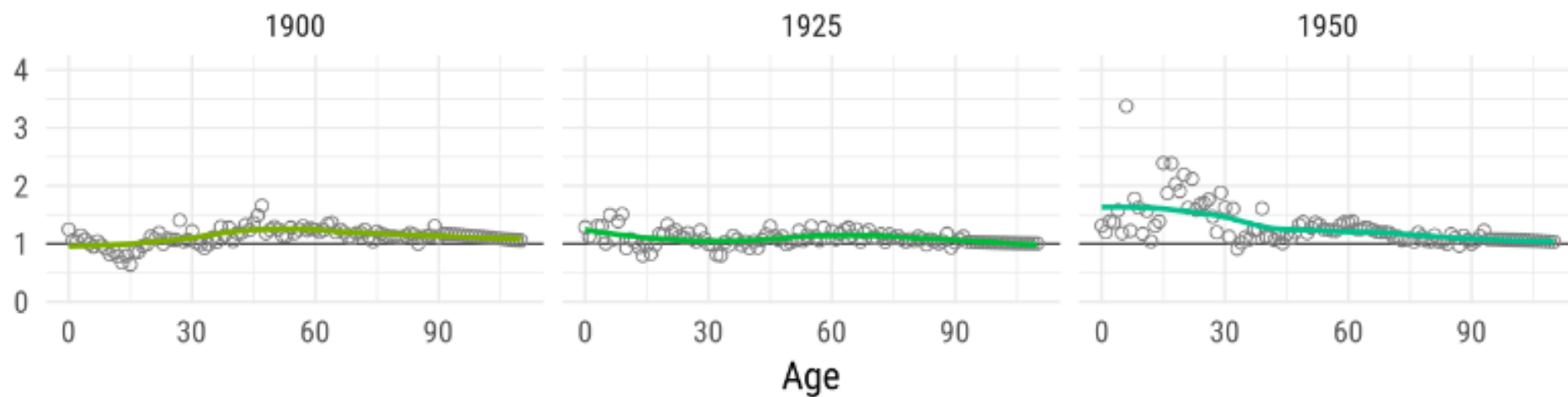


# Mortality ratio by age (Sweden)



(Kashnitsky 2017)

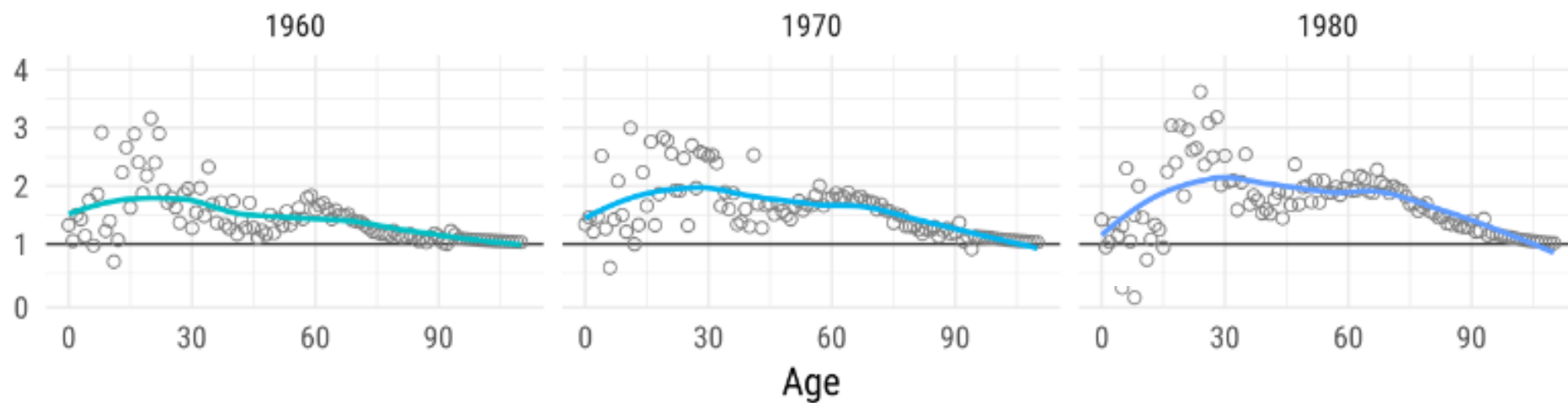
# Mortality ratio by age (Sweden)



(Kashnitsky 2017)

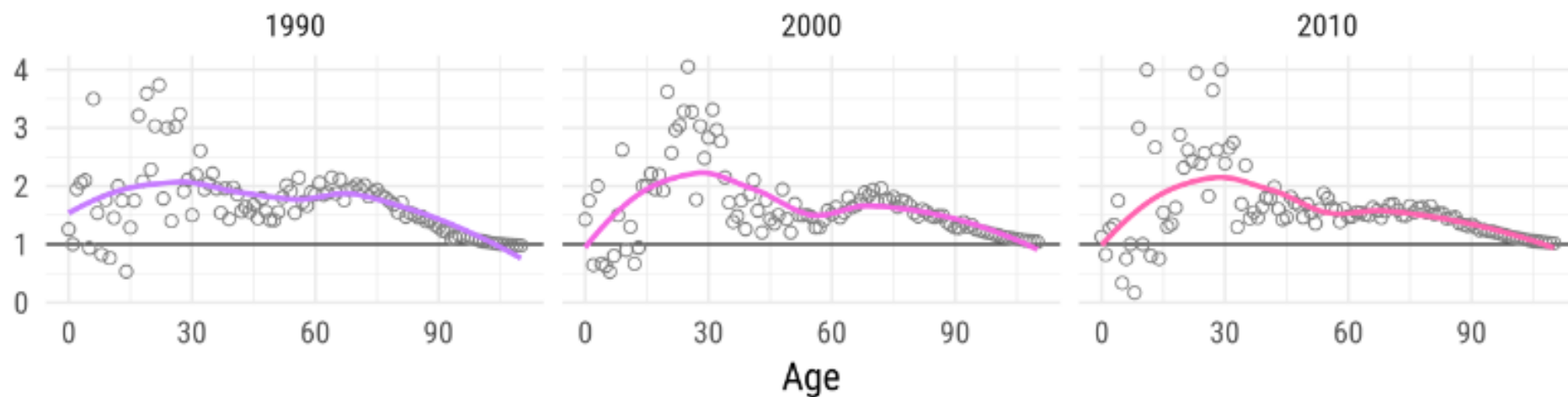


# Mortality ratio by age (Sweden)



(Kashnitsky 2017)

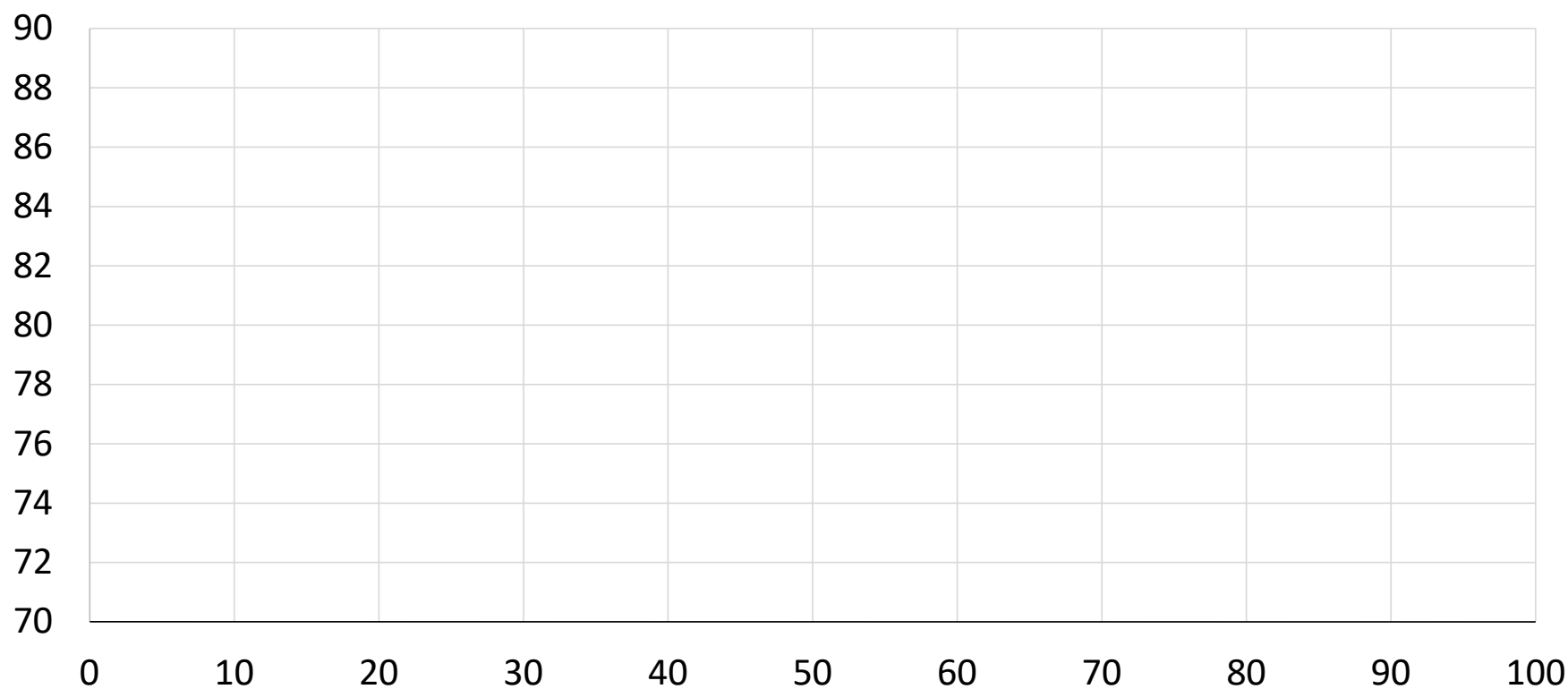
# Mortality ratio by age (Sweden)



(Kashnitsky 2017)

# Life expectancy by income (US)

Life Expectancy at Age 40

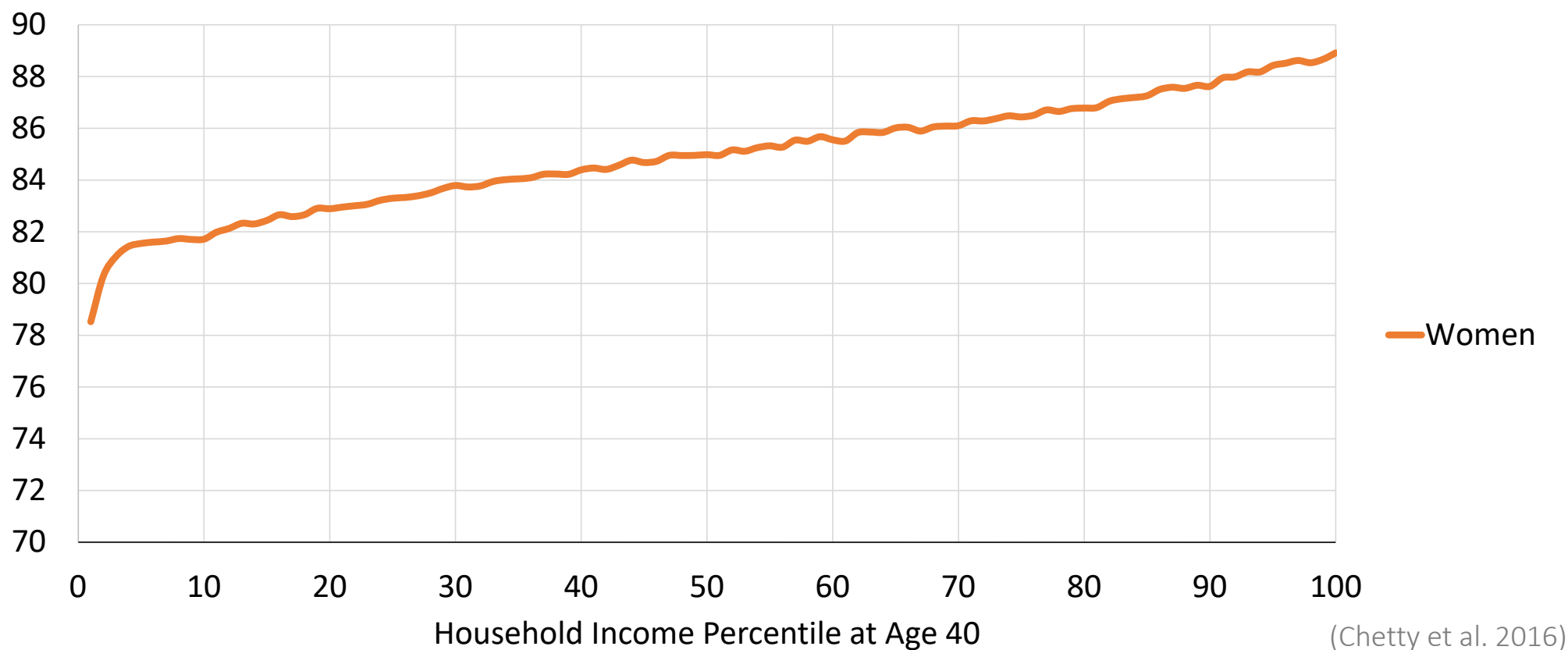


Household Income Percentile at Age 40

(Chetty et al. 2016)

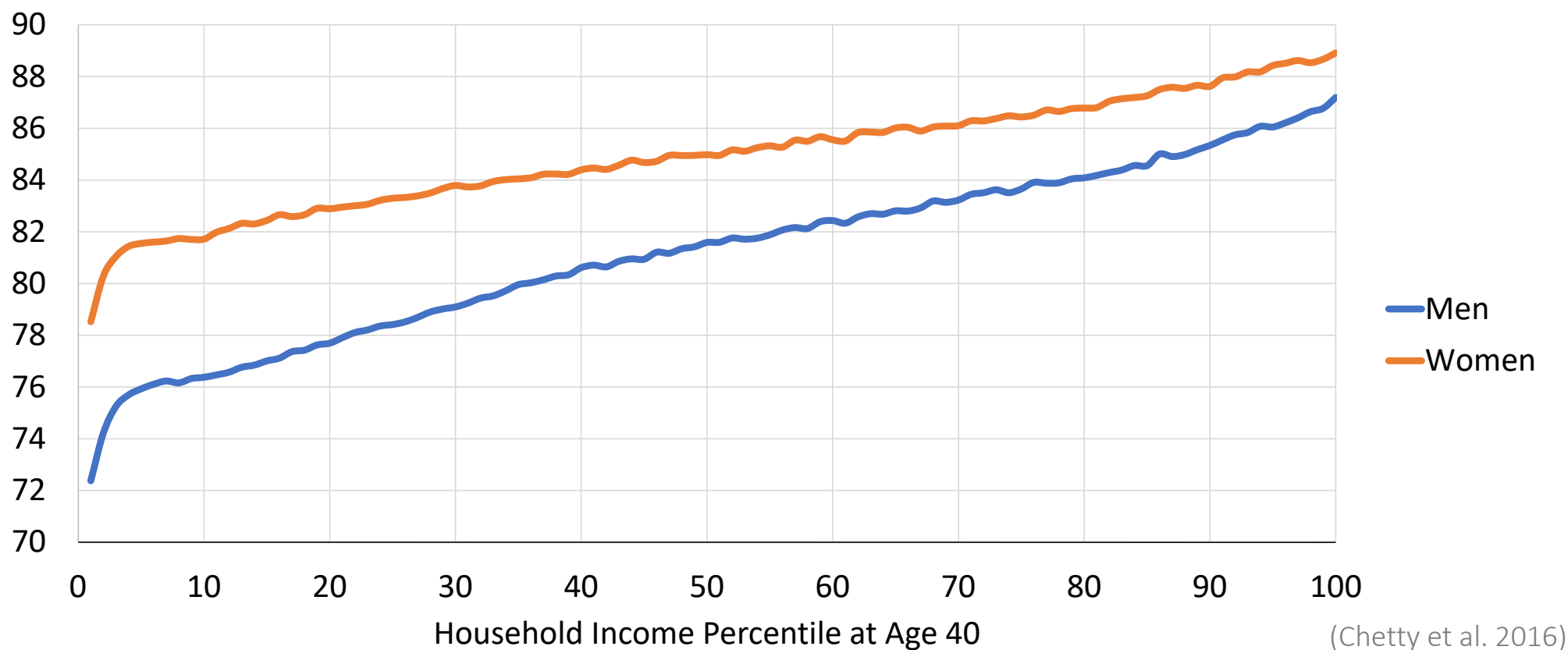
# Life expectancy by income (US)

Life Expectancy at Age 40



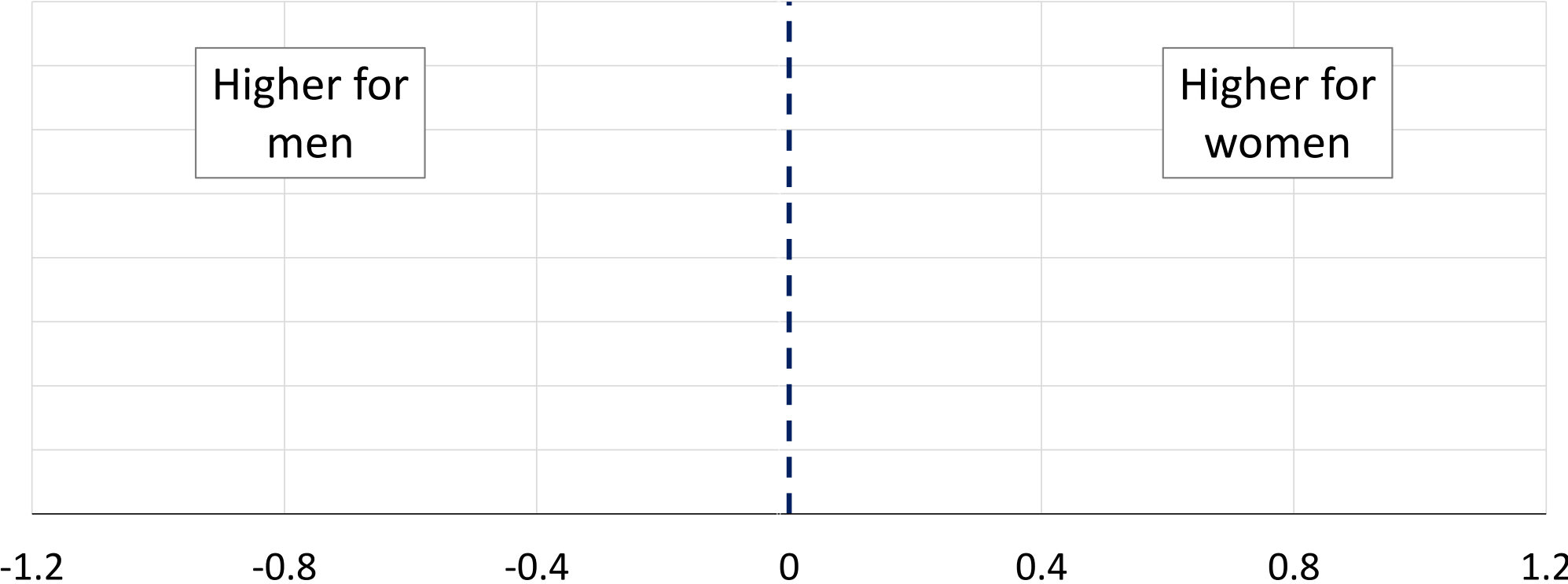
# Life expectancy by income (US)

Life Expectancy at Age 40



# Suicide gender gap (global)

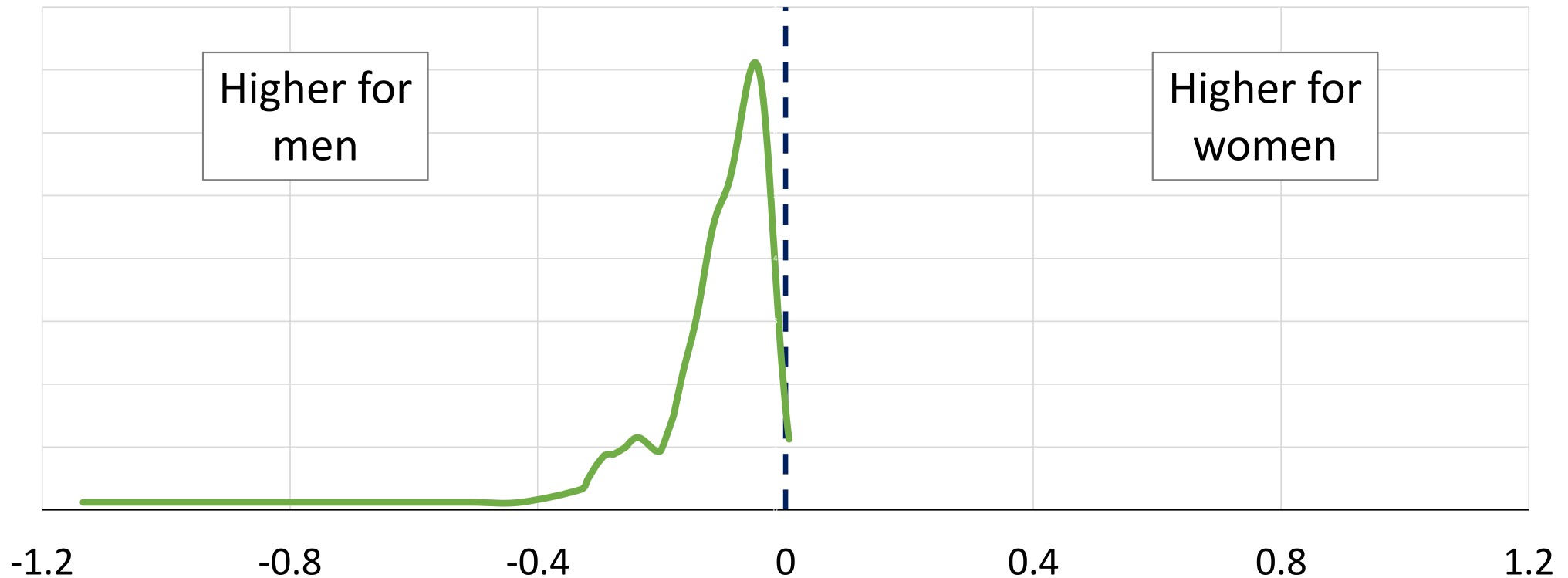
Difference in Suicide Rate  
(Female-Male Rate)



(Author's calculations: World Health Organization 2024)

# Suicide gender gap (global)

Difference in Suicide Rate  
(Female-Male Rate)



(Author's calculations: World Health Organization 2024)

# Suicide among adolescents (global)

Suicide Rate among 15-24 year olds, 2005-2009

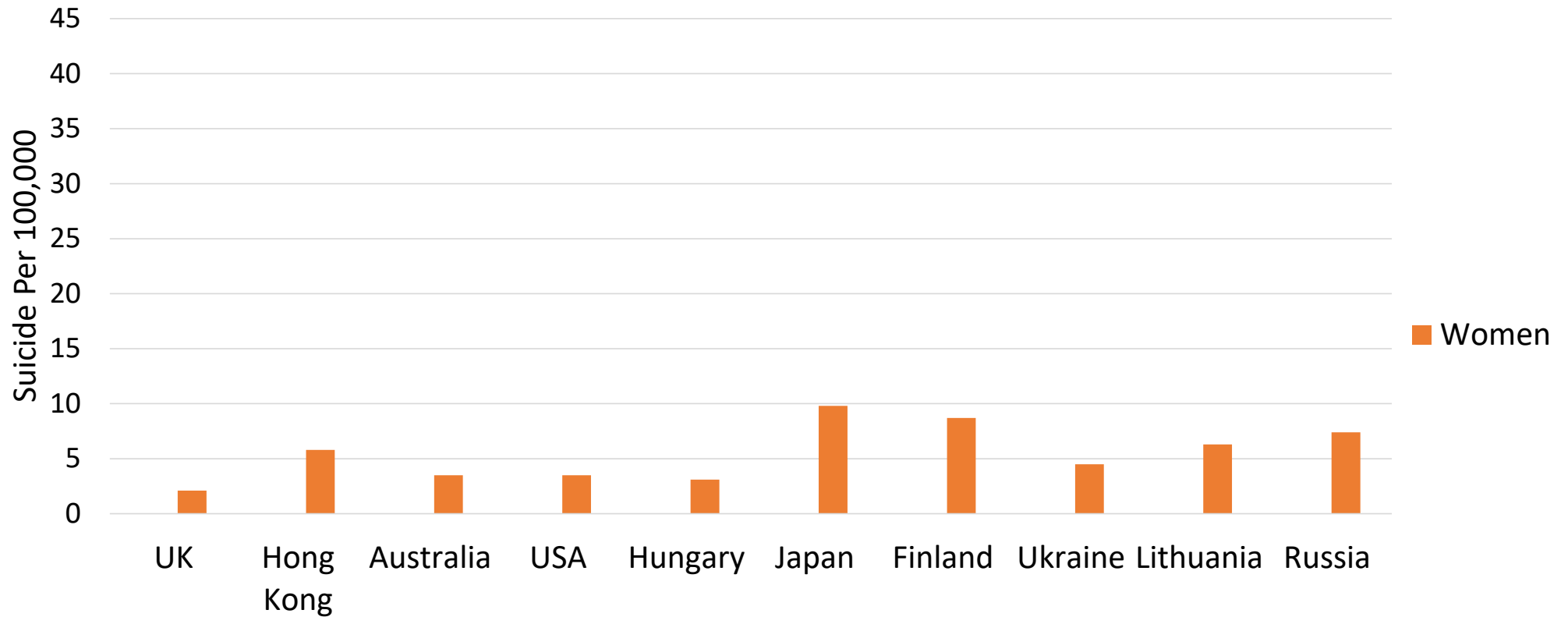


(Hawton, Saunders and O'Conner 2012)



# Suicide among adolescents (global)

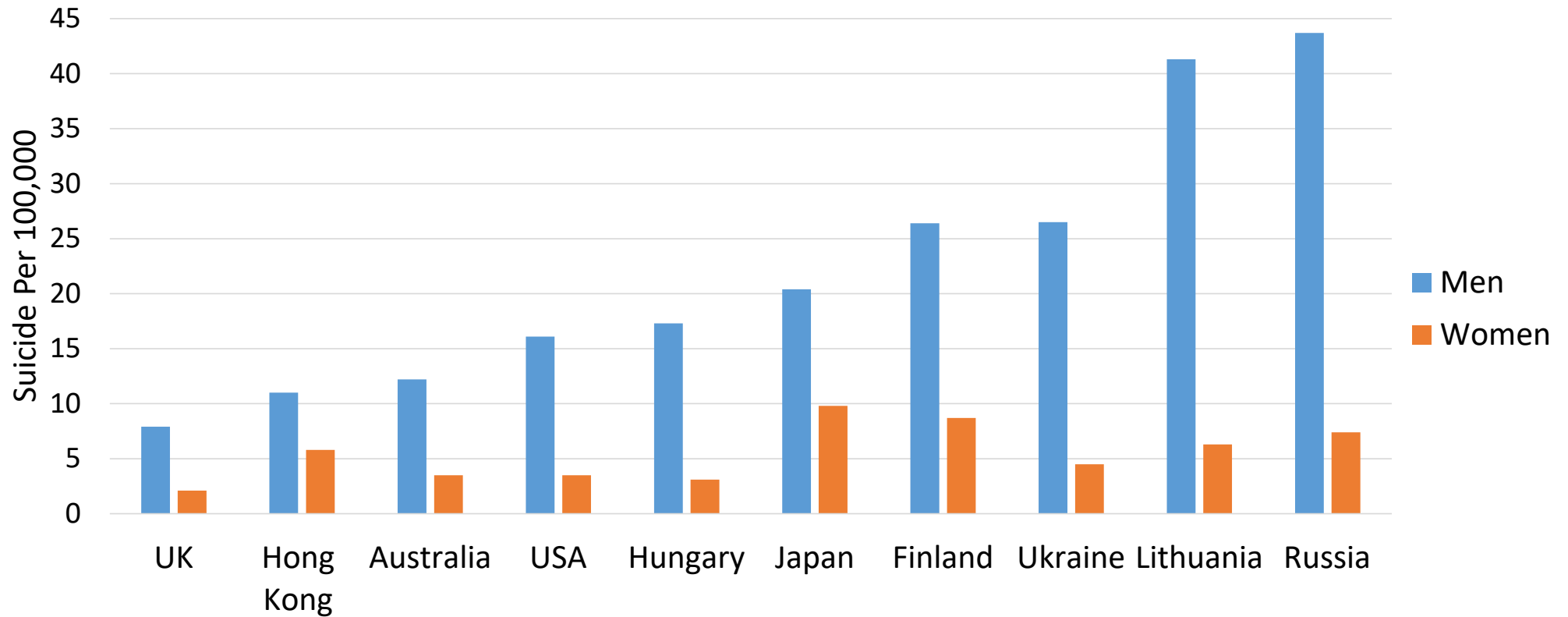
Suicide Rate among 15-24 year olds, 2005-2009



(Hawton, Saunders and O'Conner 2012)

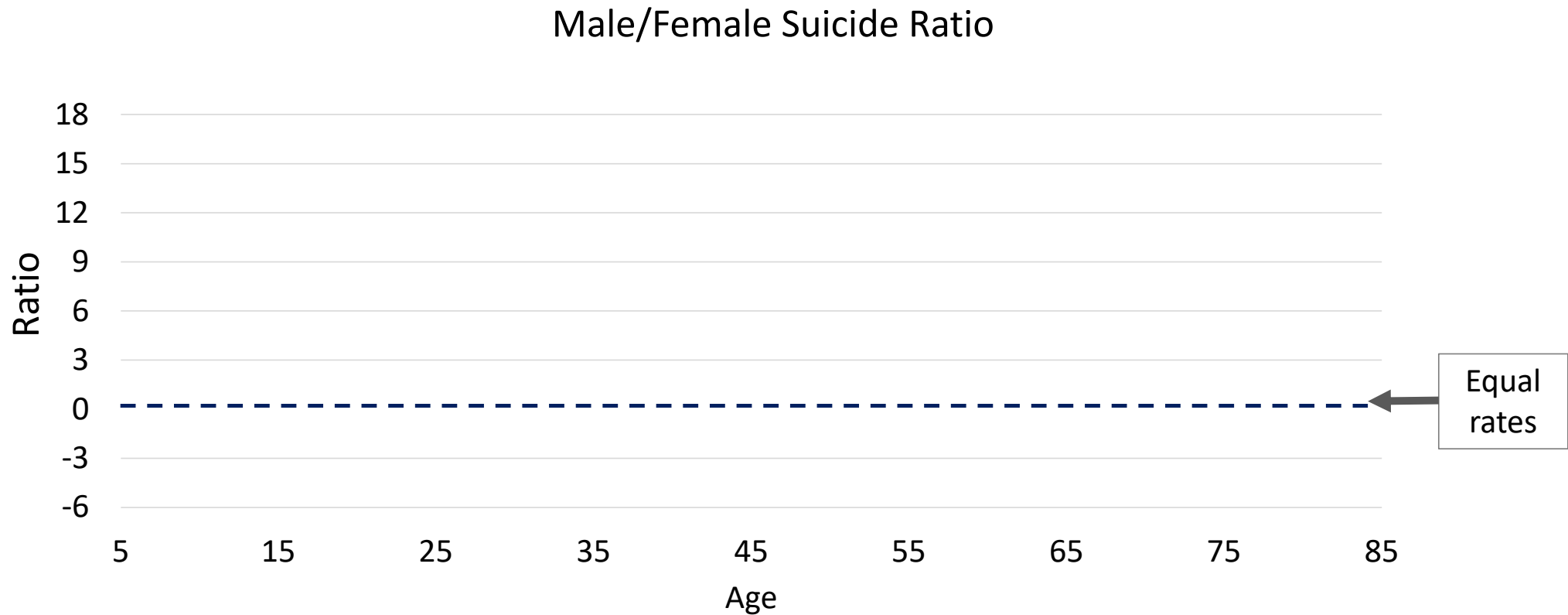
# Suicide among adolescents (global)

Suicide Rate among 15-24 year olds, 2005-2009



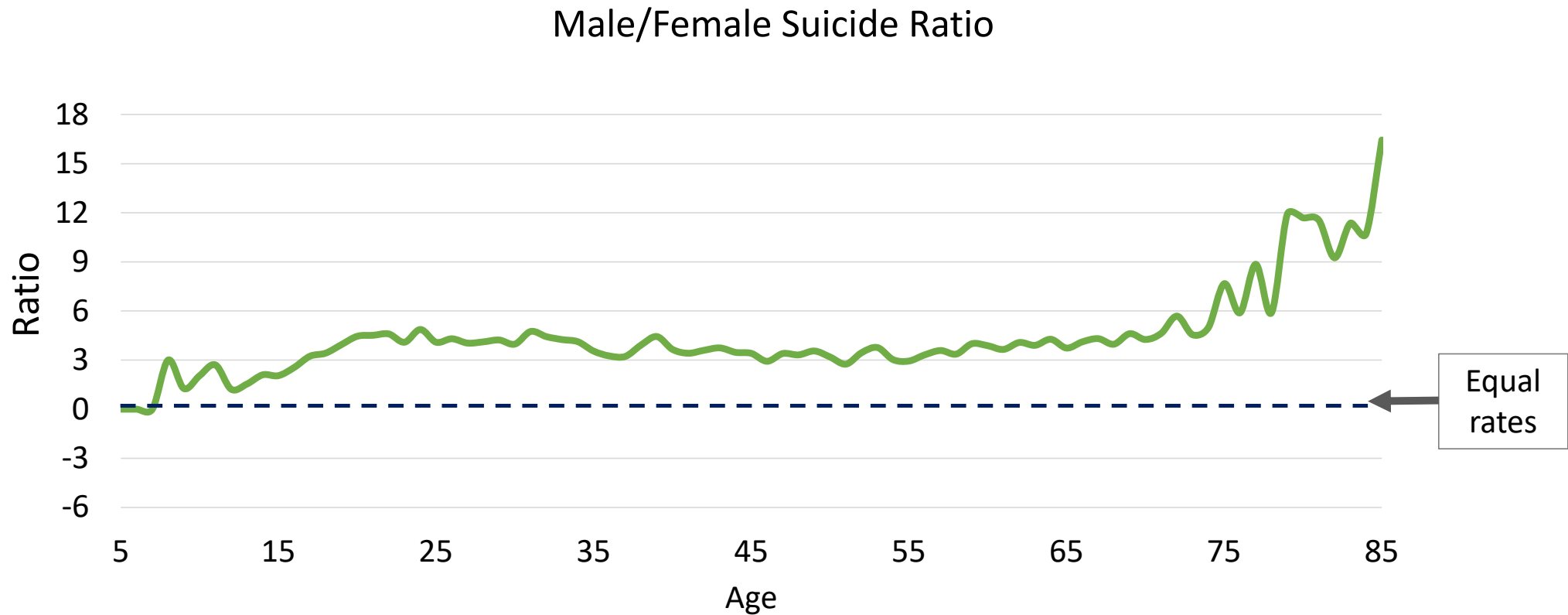
(Hawton, Saunders and O'Conner 2012)

# Suicide gender ratio by age (US)



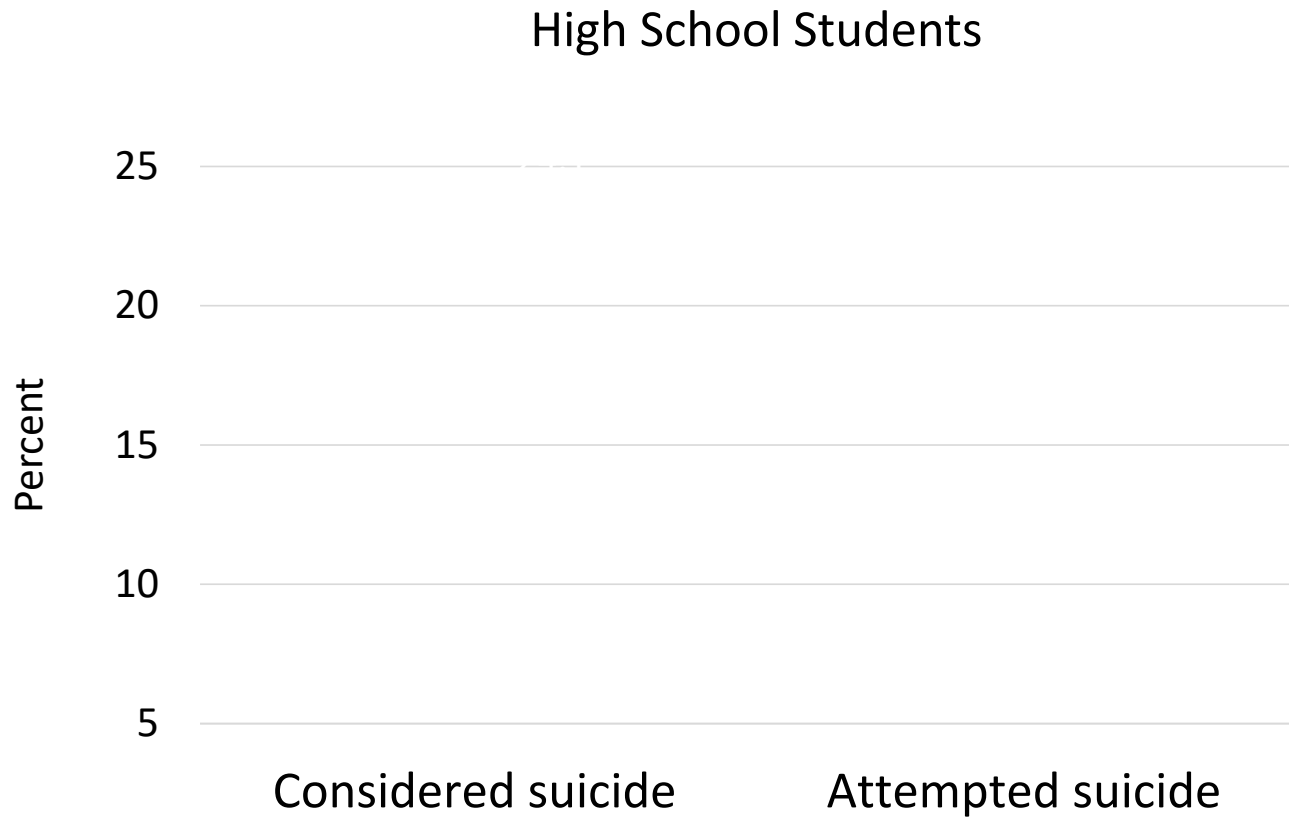
(Author's calculations: CDC, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control 2020)

# Suicide gender ratio by age (US)



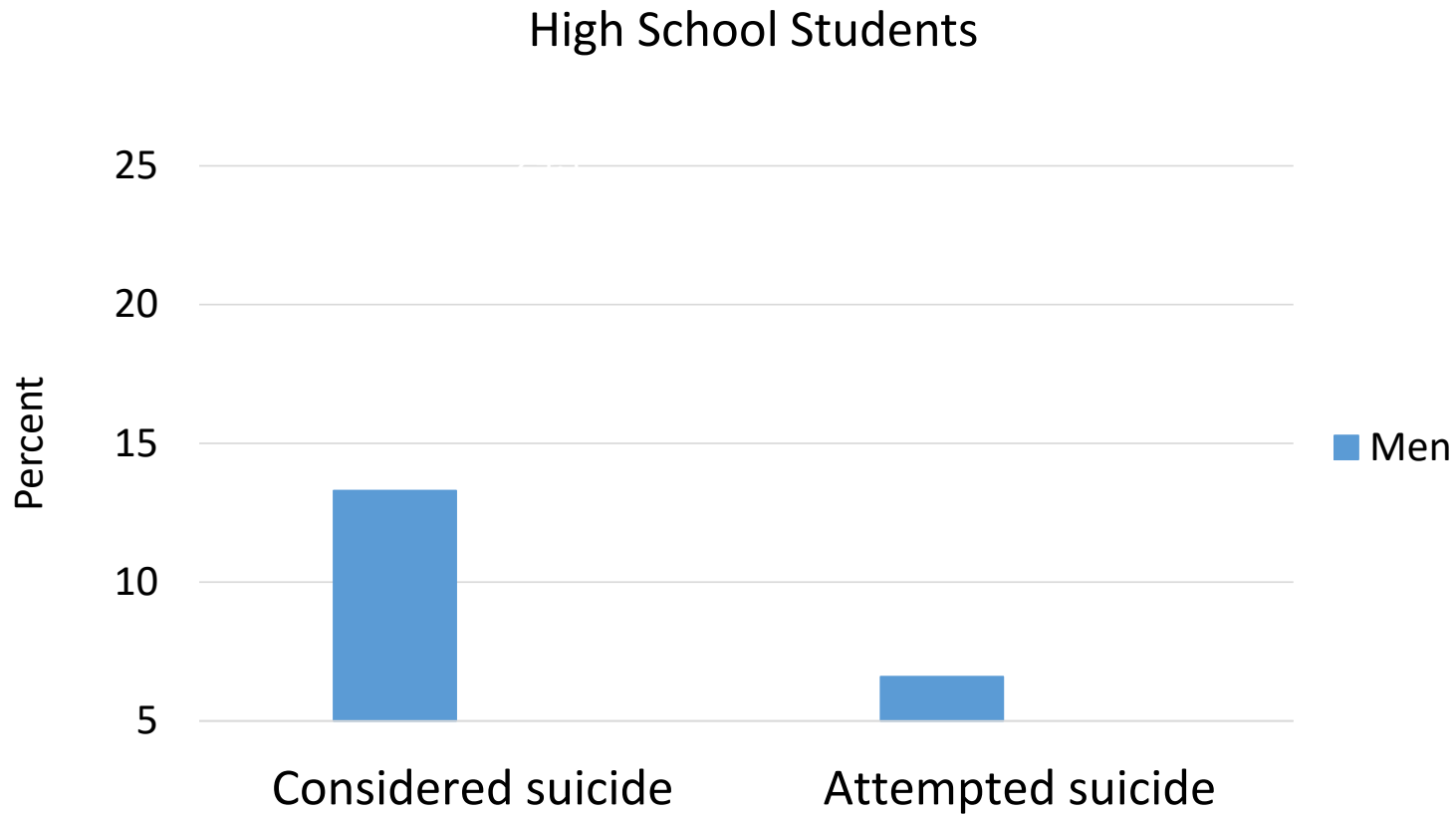
(Author's calculations: CDC, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control 2020)

# Suicidal thoughts/attempts (US)



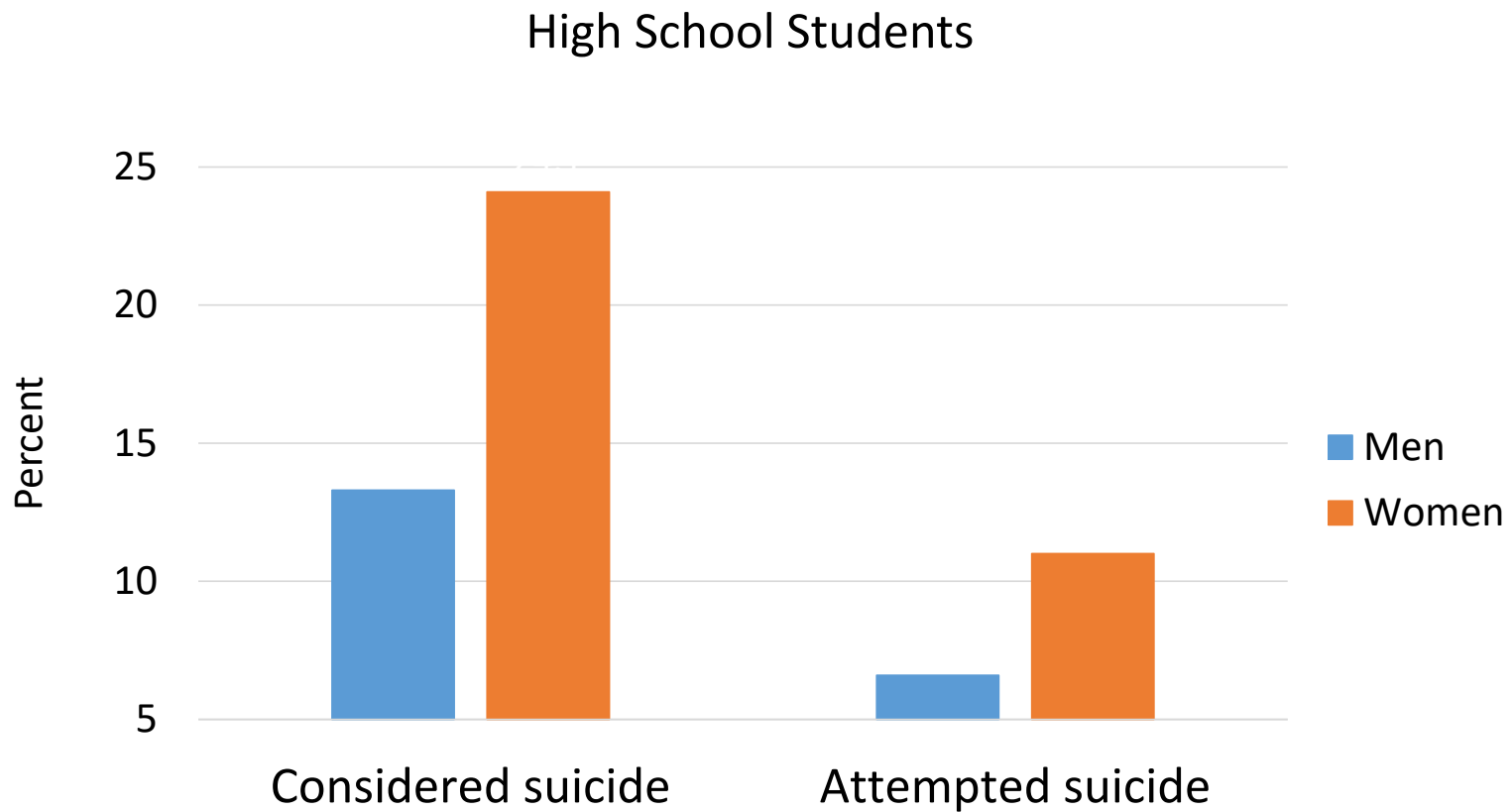
(Author's calculations: CDC 2019)

# Suicidal thoughts/attempts (US)



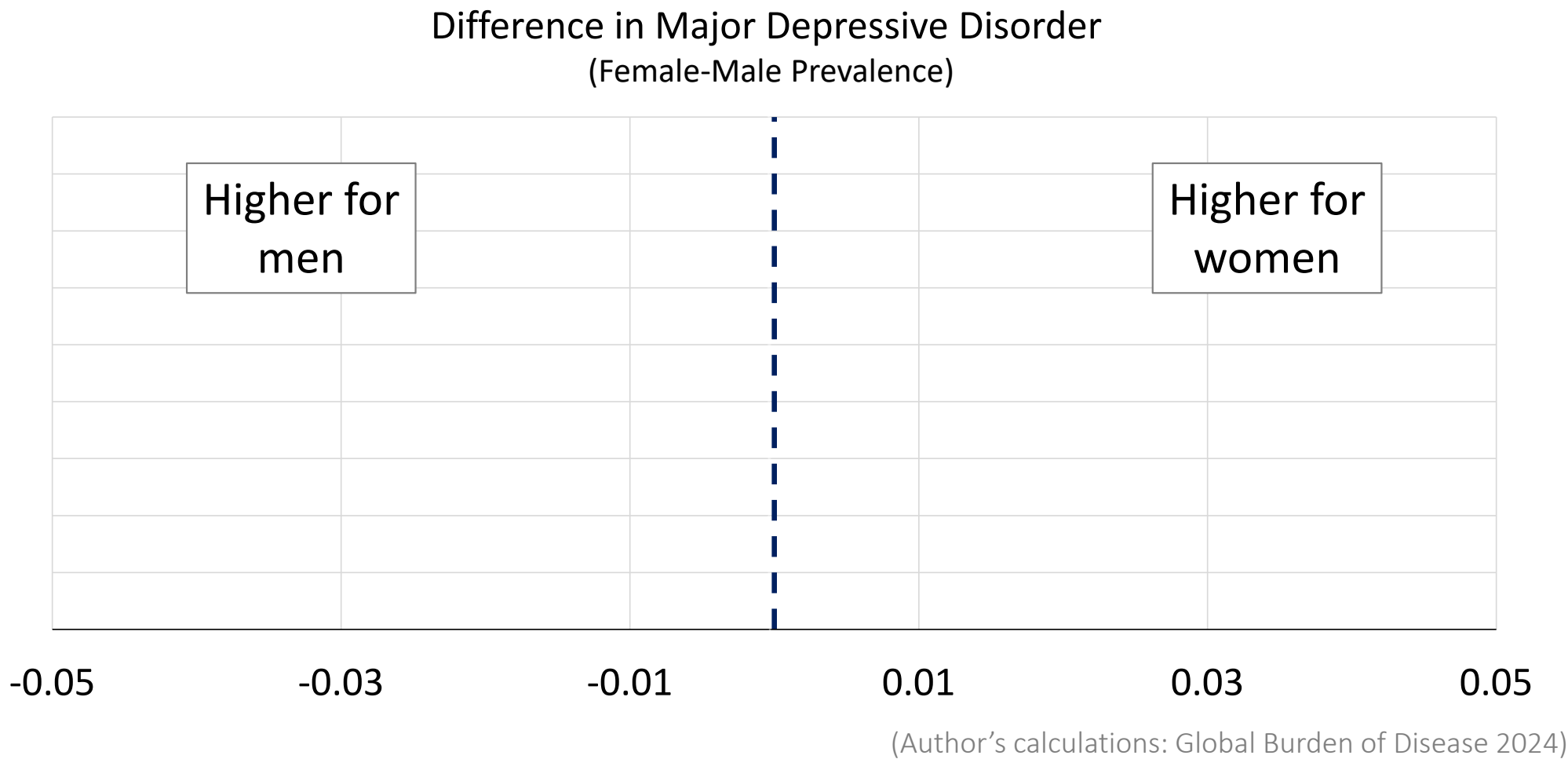
(Author's calculations: CDC 2019)

# Suicidal thoughts/attempts (US)



(Author's calculations: CDC 2019)

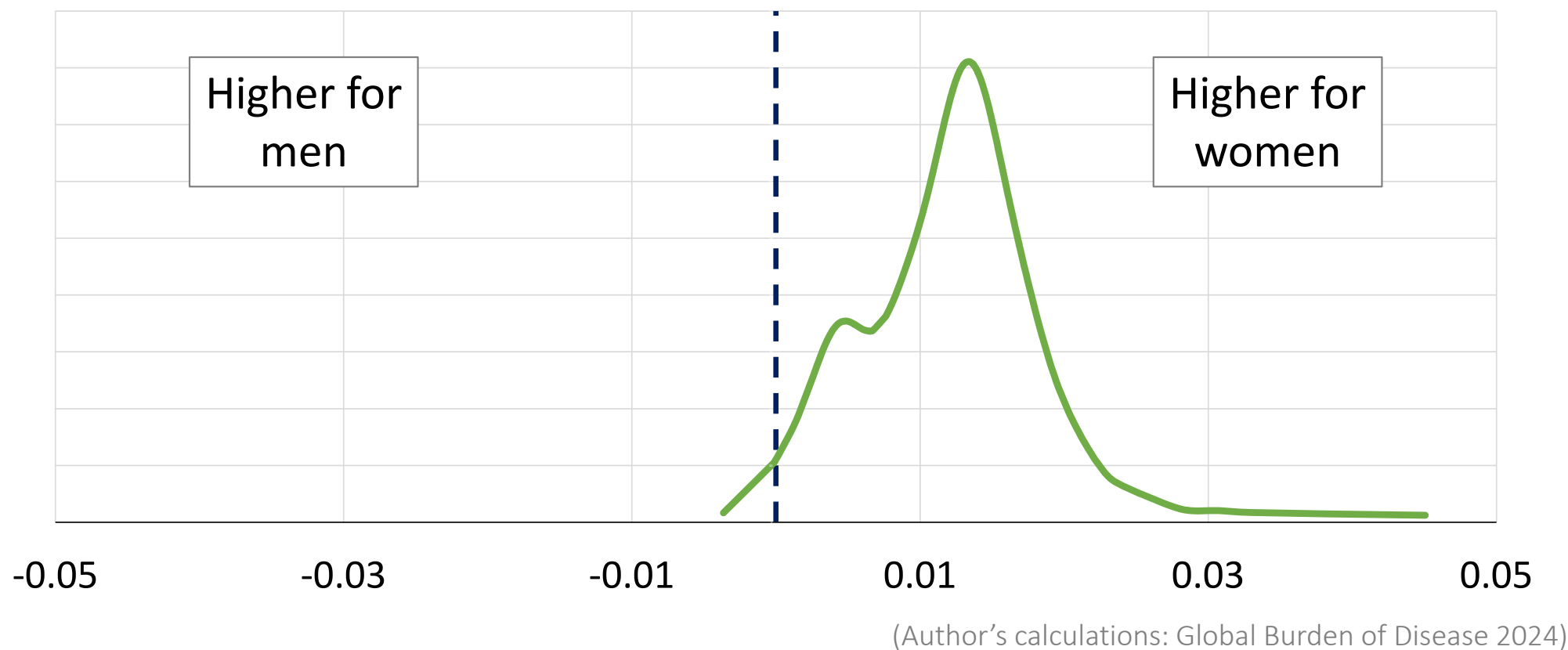
# Depression gender gap (global)





# Depression gender gap (global)

Difference in Major Depressive Disorder  
(Female-Male Prevalence)



# **Research and policy**

- How to help improve boy's and men's health?
- Depression/suicide paradox
- Changes over time
- Mental health, occupational safety, cancer & heart disease

# **Victimization**

# Incarceration over time (US)

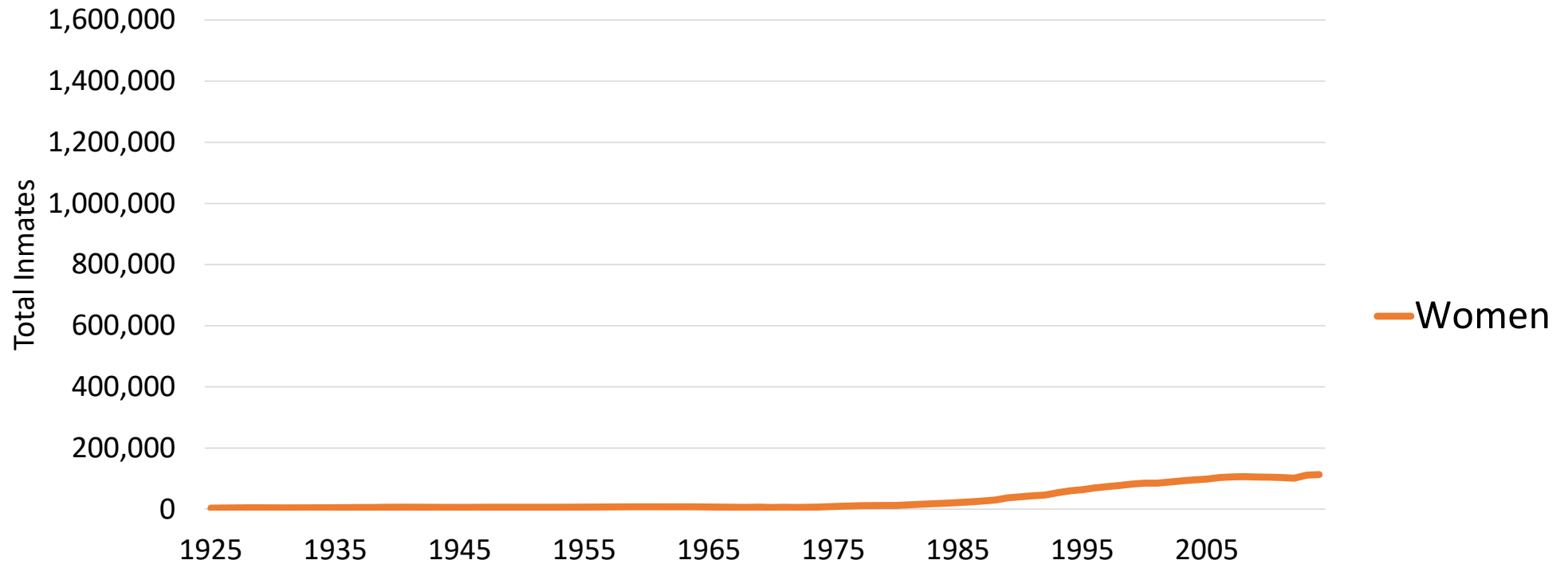
Total Prison Population Over Time



(Smallman 2010)

# Incarceration over time (US)

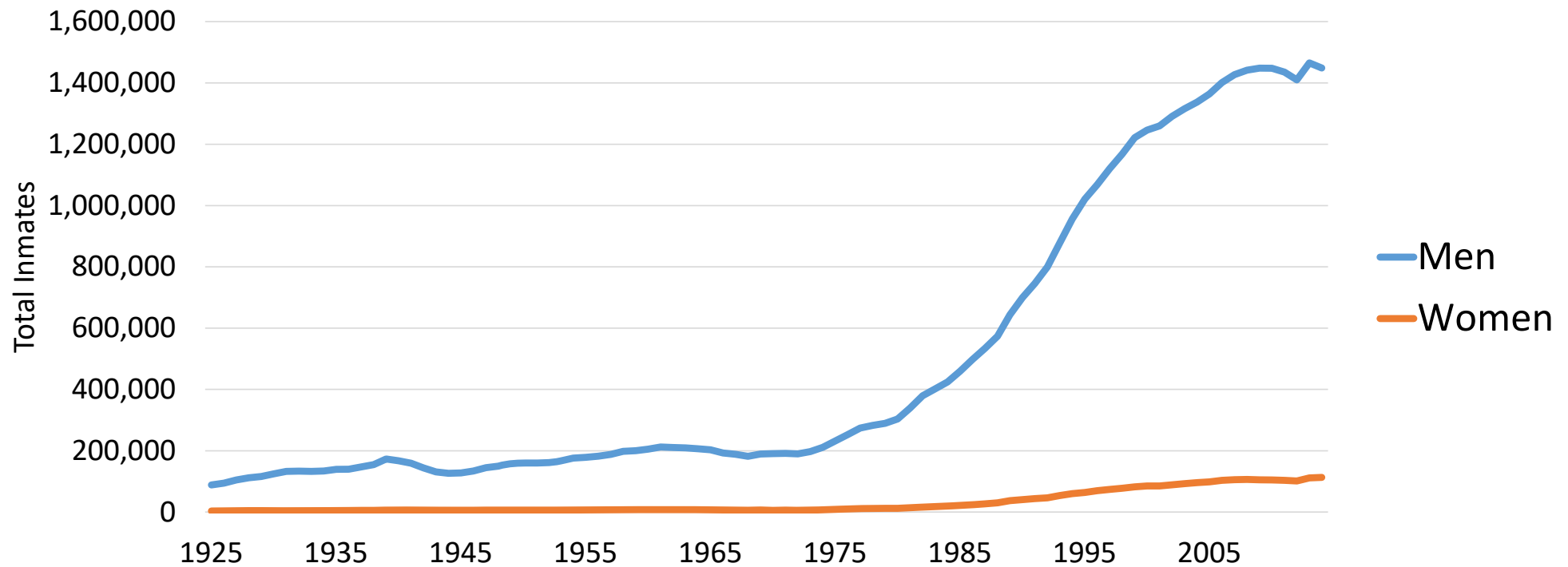
Total Prison Population Over Time



(Smallman 2010)

# Incarceration over time (US)

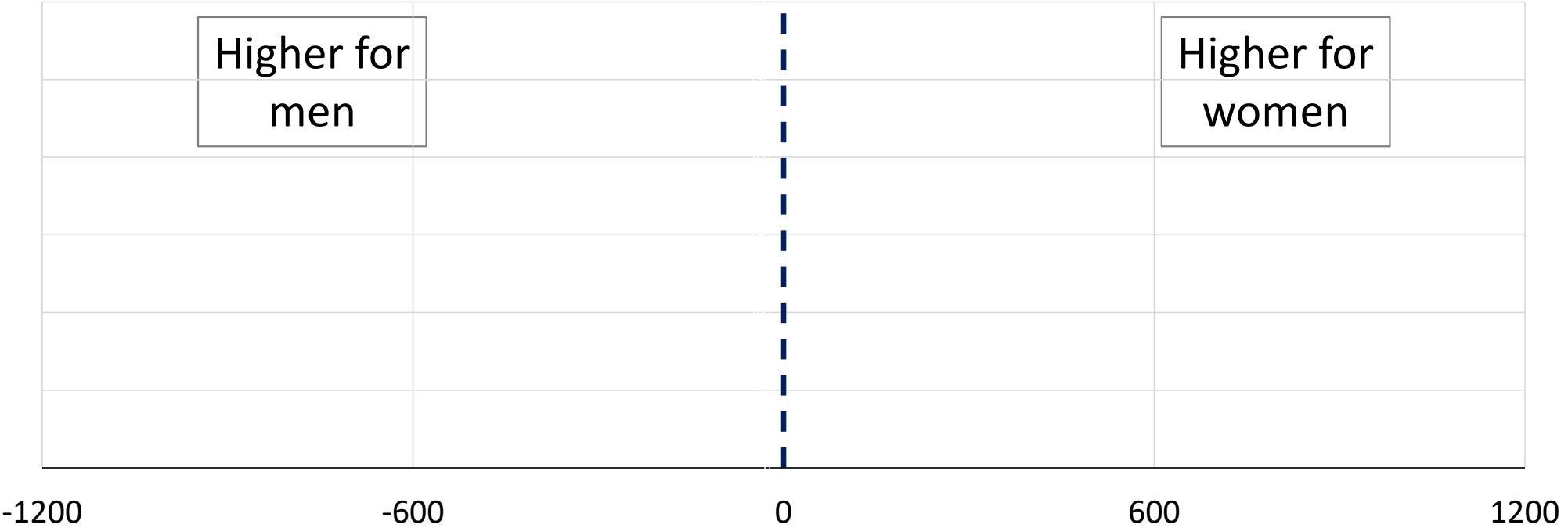
Total Prison Population Over Time



(Smallman 2010)

# Incarceration gap (global)

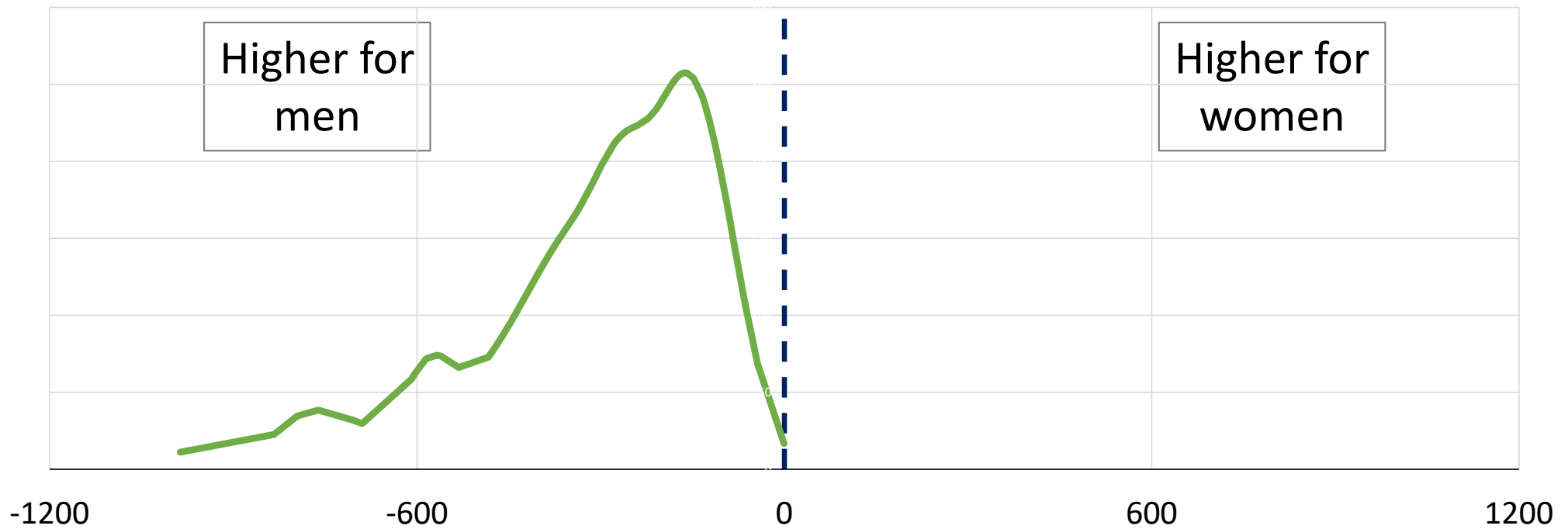
Difference in Incarceration Rate/100,000  
(Female-Male Rate)



(Author's calculations: United Nations 2024)

# Incarceration gap (global)

Difference in Incarceration Rate/100,000  
(Female-Male Rate)



(Author's calculations: United Nations 2024)

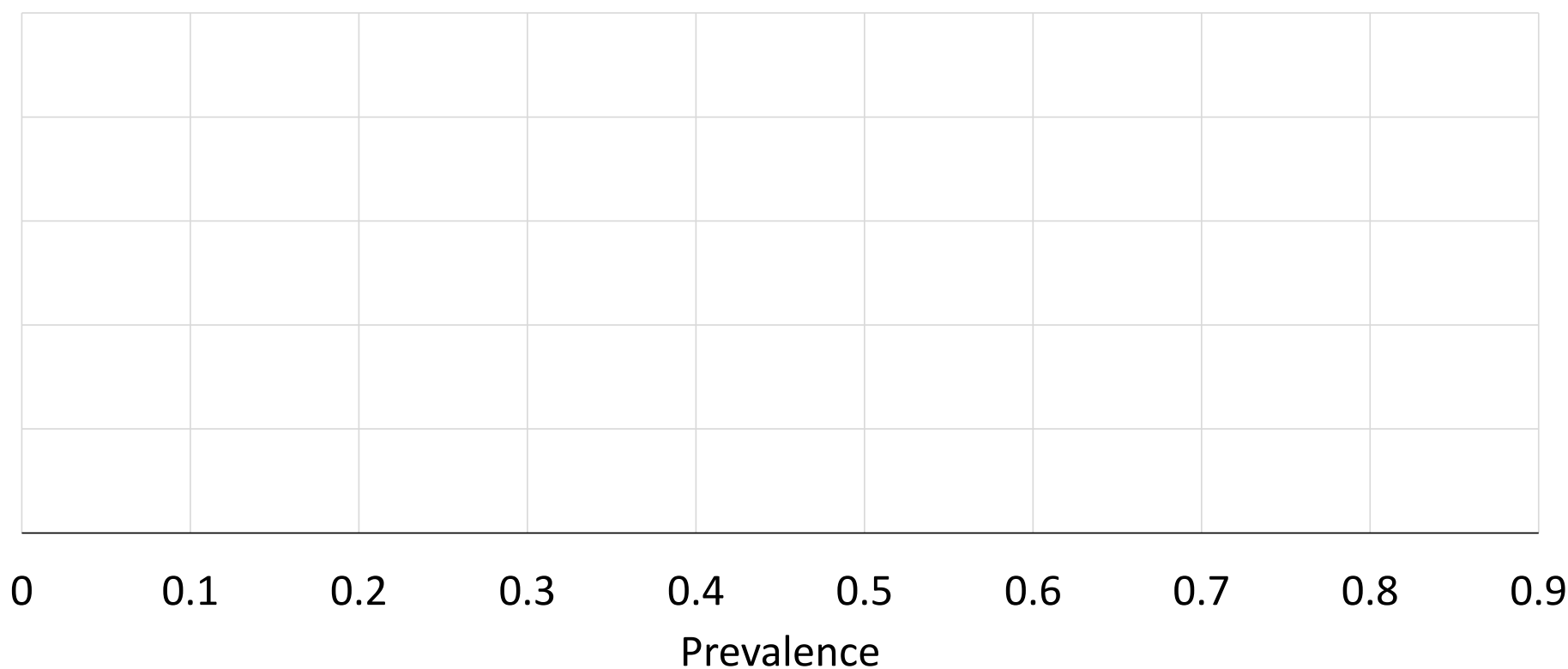


# Equal punishment?

- Conditioning on the same charge (Starr 2015)
  - Men receive 63% longer sentences
  - 2 times more likely to be incarcerated
- Consistent across studies (Glaeser & Sacerdote 2000, 2003)

# Domestic violence (global)

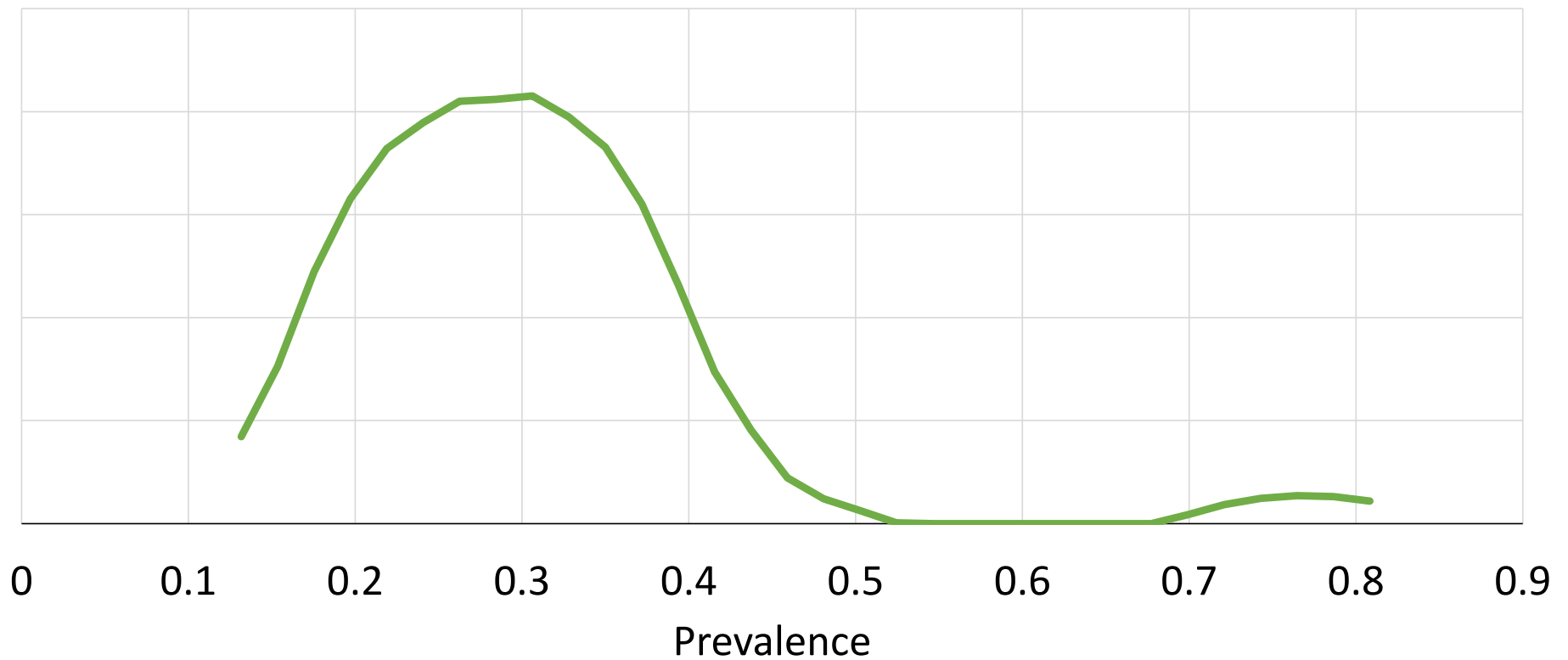
Distribution of Country-Level “Any Dating Violence”



(Author's calculations: International Dating Violence Study (32 countries), Strauss 2008)

# Domestic violence (global)

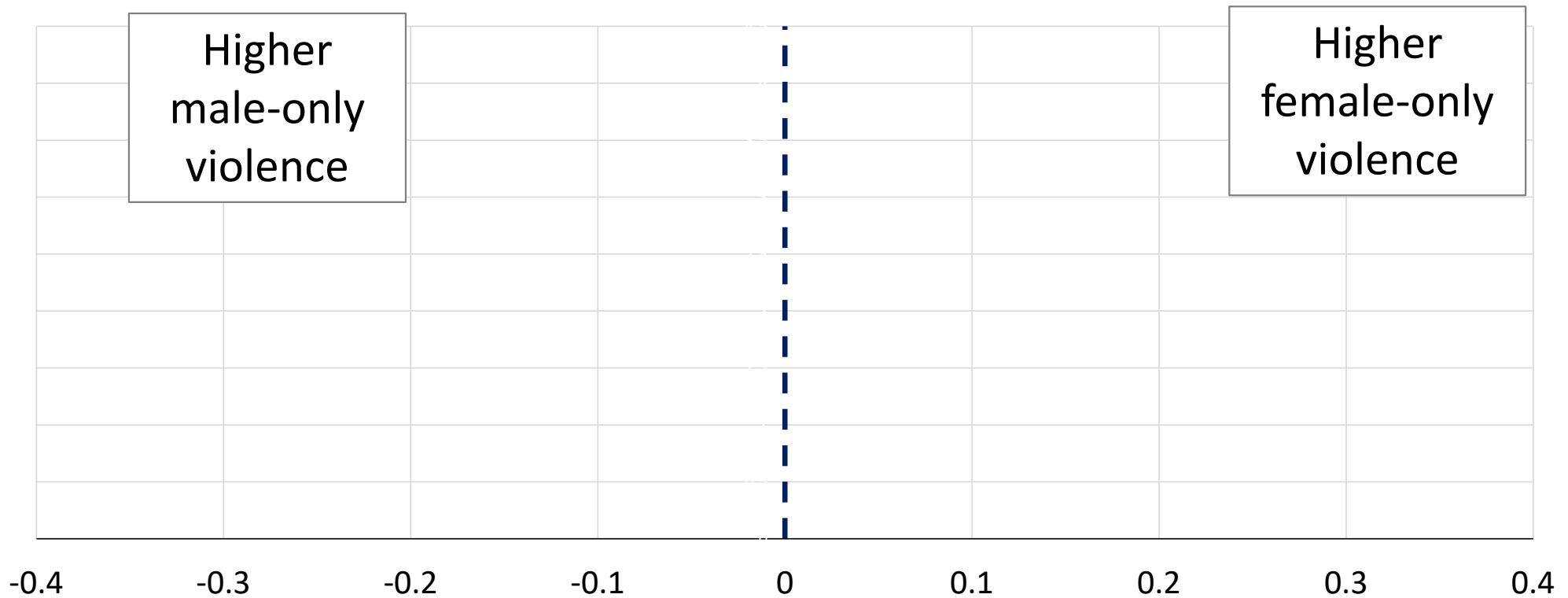
Distribution of Country-Level “Any Dating Violence”



(Author's calculations: International Dating Violence Study (32 countries), Strauss 2008)

# Domestic violence gap (global)

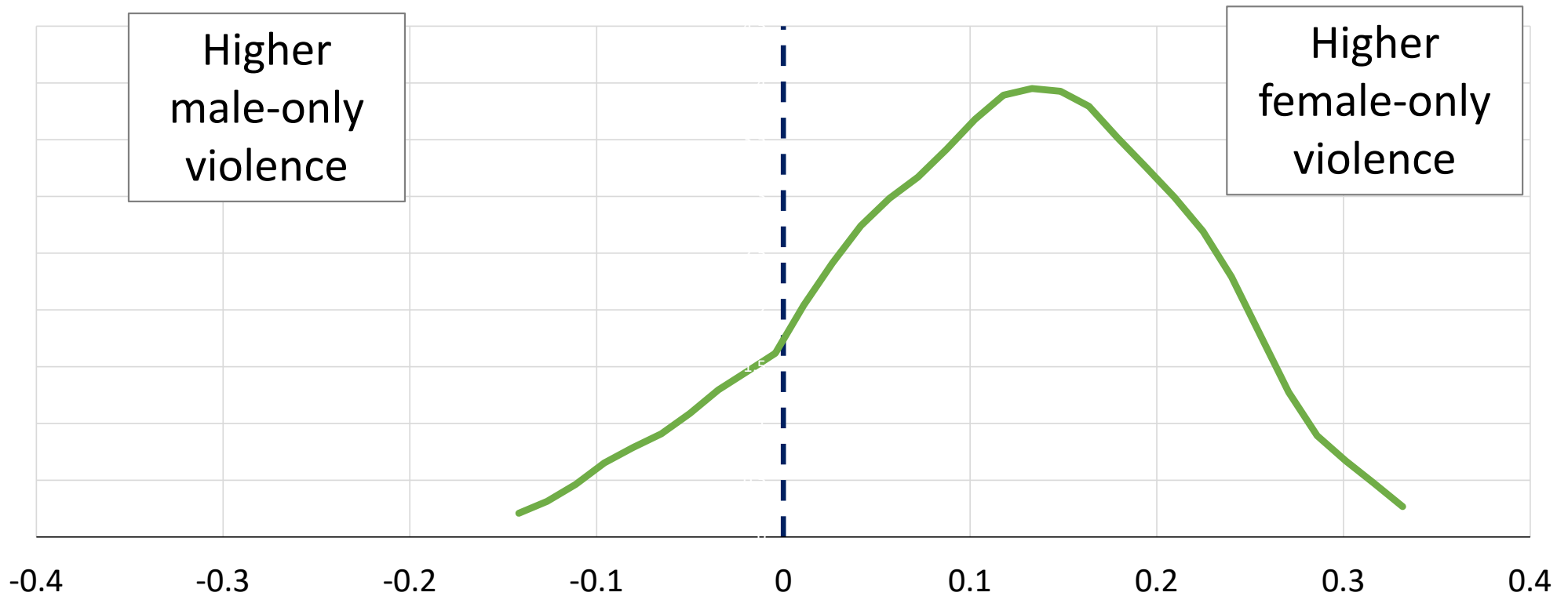
Difference in Asymmetric Violence Rate  
(Female-Only Prevalence – Male-Only Prevalence)



(Author's calculations: International Dating Violence Study (32 countries), Strauss 2008)

# Domestic violence gap (global)

Difference in Asymmetric Violence Rate  
(Female-Only Prevalence – Male-Only Prevalence)



(Author's calculations: International Dating Violence Study (32 countries), Strauss 2008)

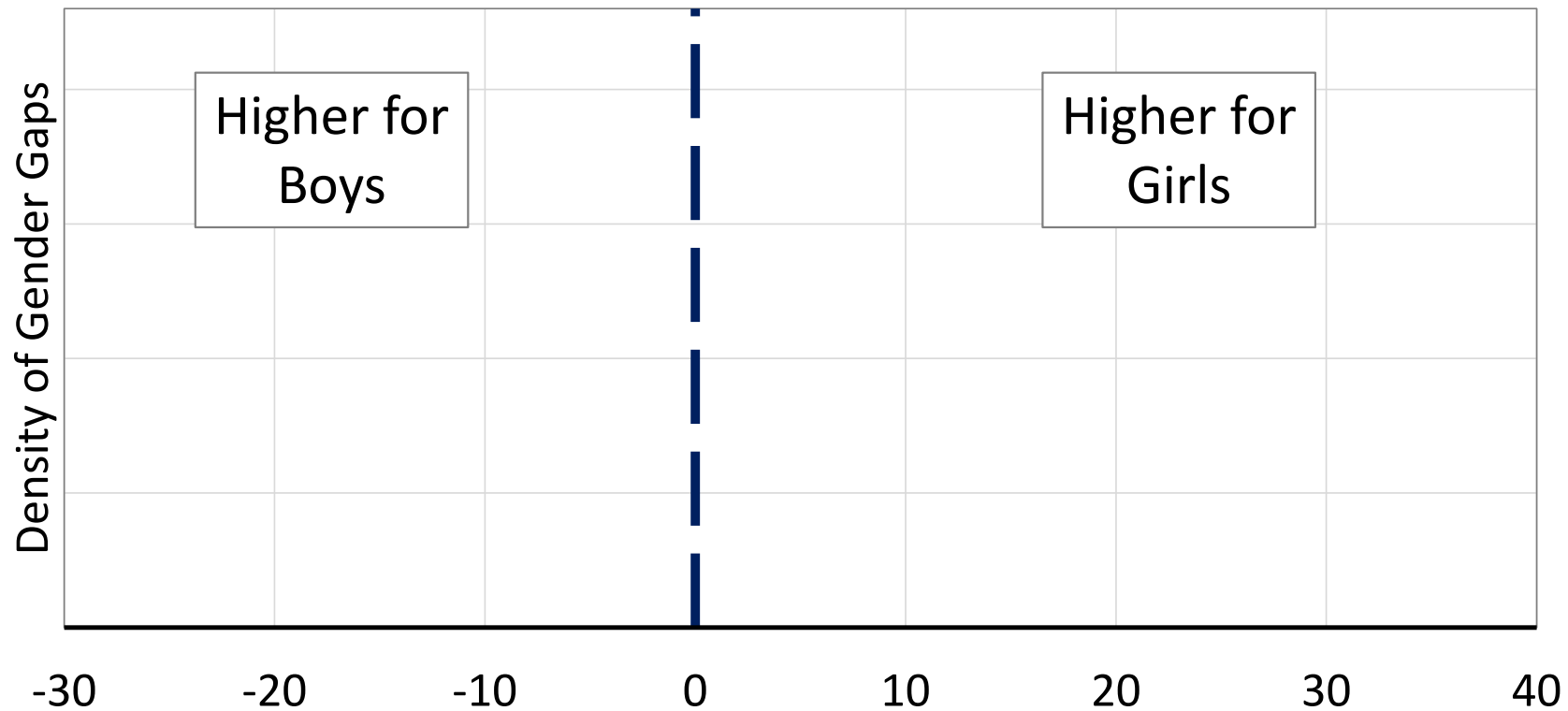
# Research and policy

- What policies reduce inequalities in the criminal justice system?
- Family court system and outcomes
- What explains the asymmetry in domestic violence reporting?
- How to support families and relationships to improve well-being?

# **Education**

# School enrollment (global)

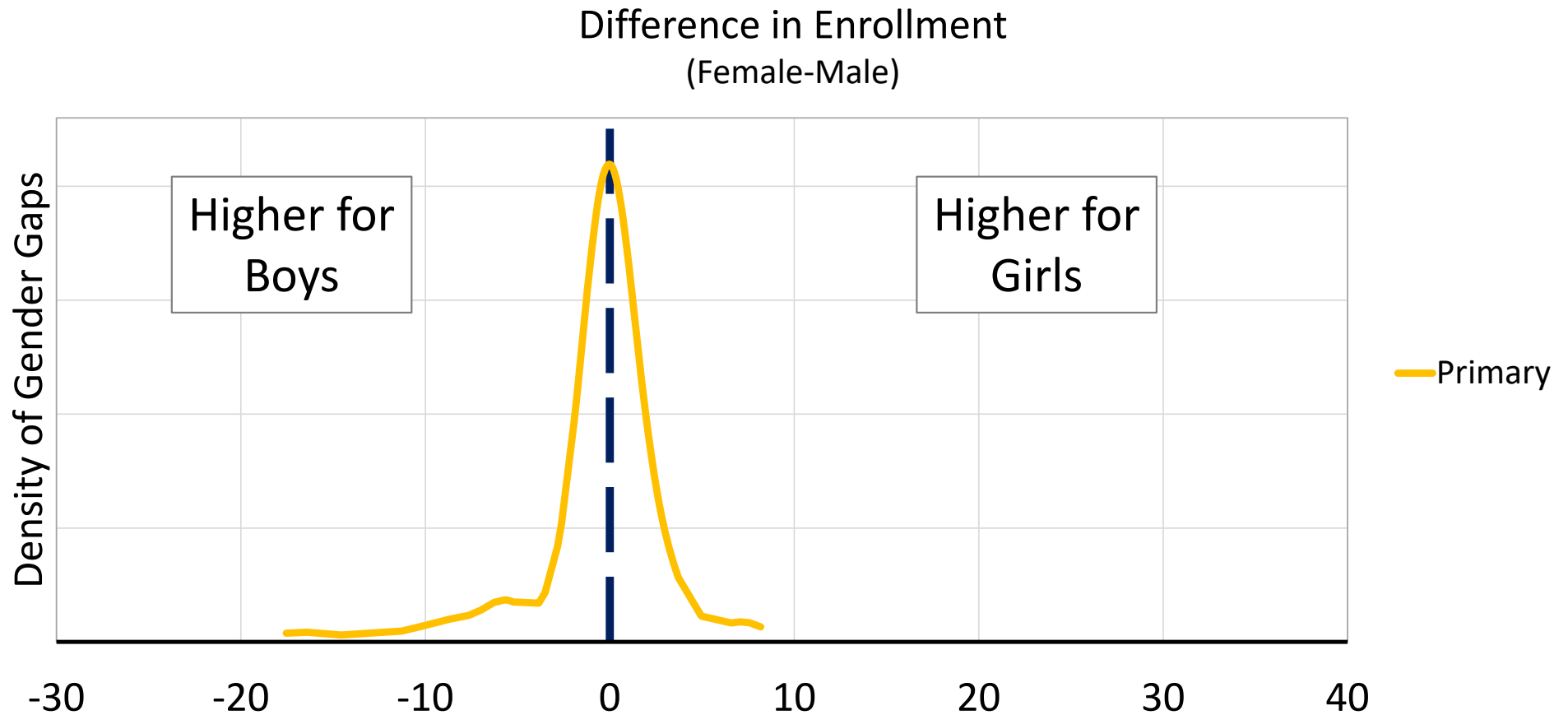
Difference in Enrollment  
(Female-Male)



(Author's calculations: UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2018)



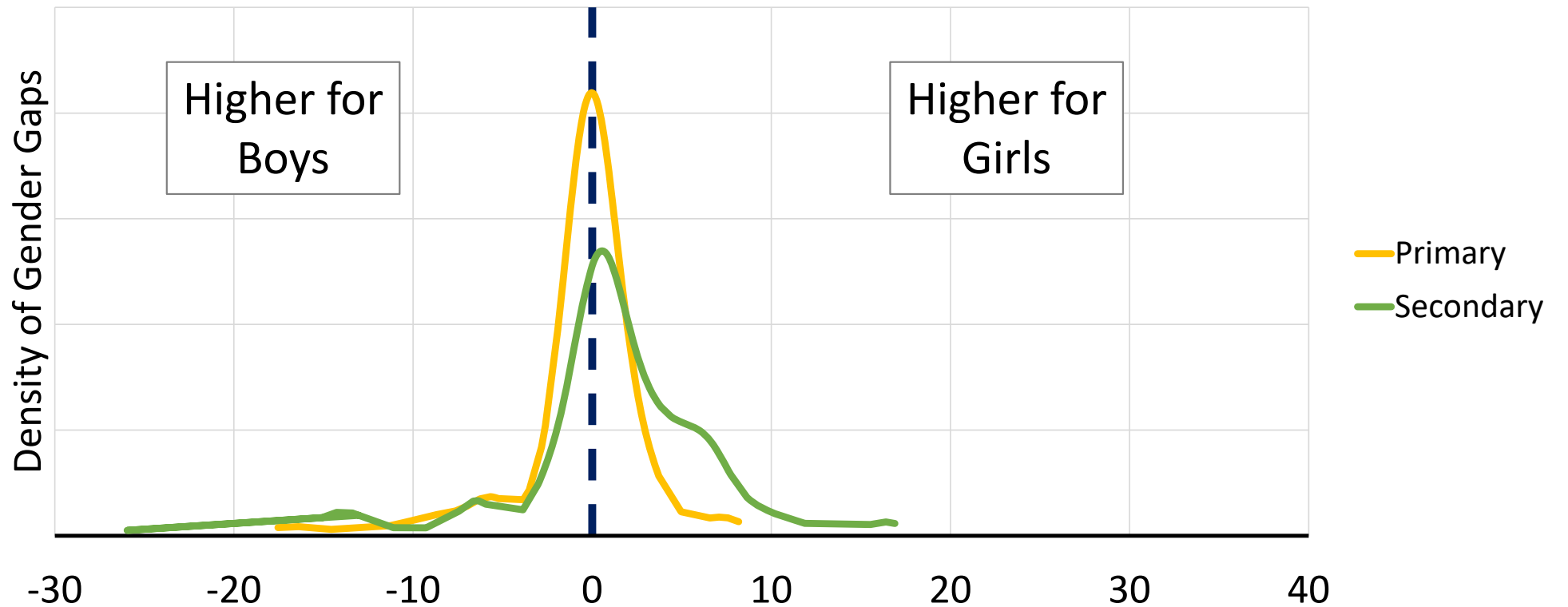
# School enrollment (global)



(Author's calculations: UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2018)

# School enrollment (global)

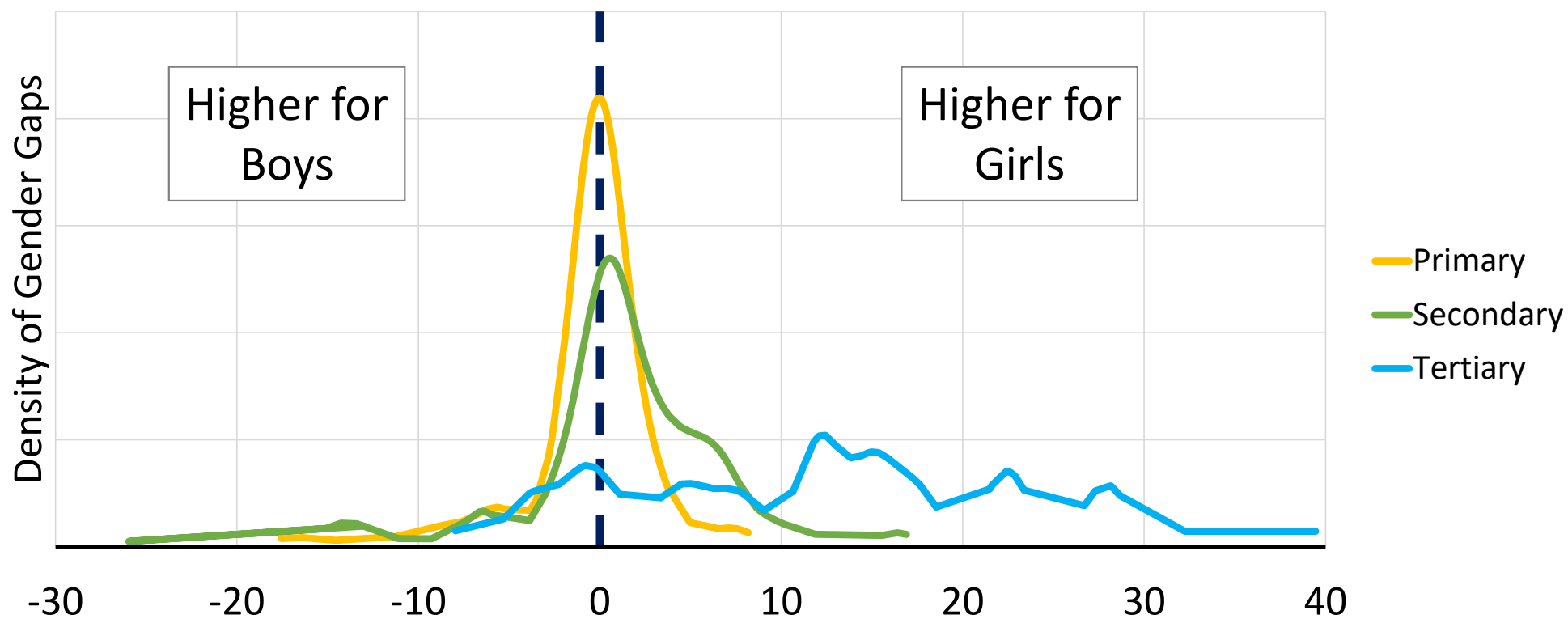
Difference in Enrollment  
(Female-Male)



(Author's calculations: UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2018)

# School enrollment (global)

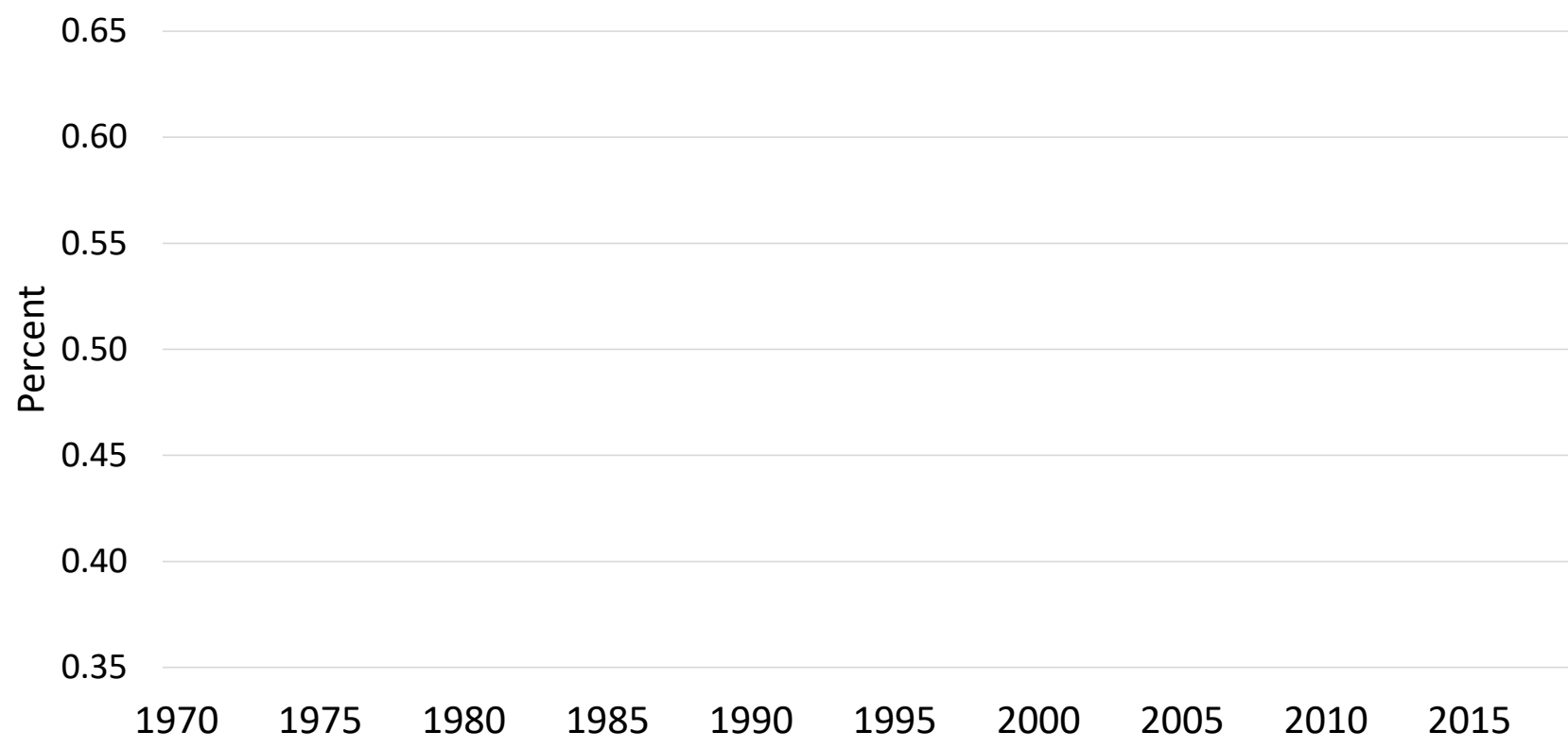
Difference in Enrollment  
(Female-Male)



(Author's calculations: UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2018)

# Gender gap over time (US)

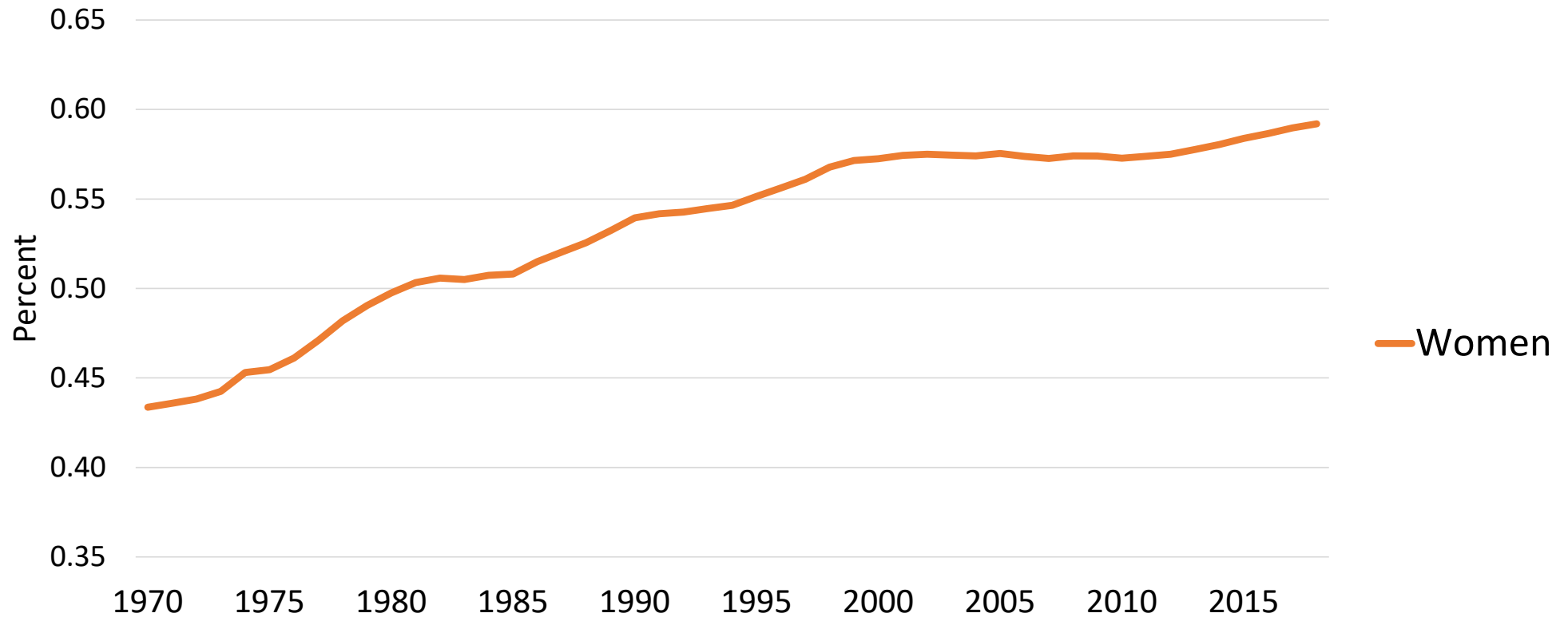
Bachelor's degrees



(Author's calculations: National Center for Education Statistics 2018)

# Gender gap over time (US)

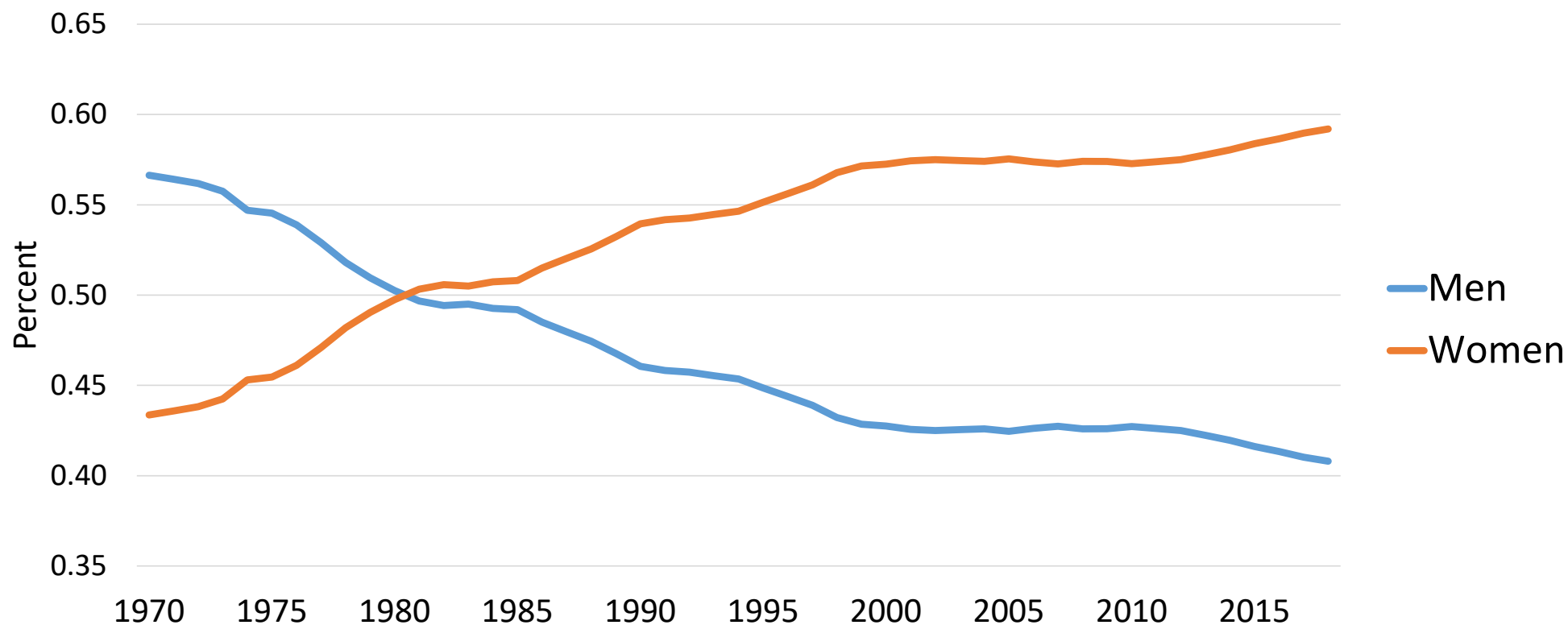
Bachelor's degrees



(Author's calculations: National Center for Education Statistics 2018)

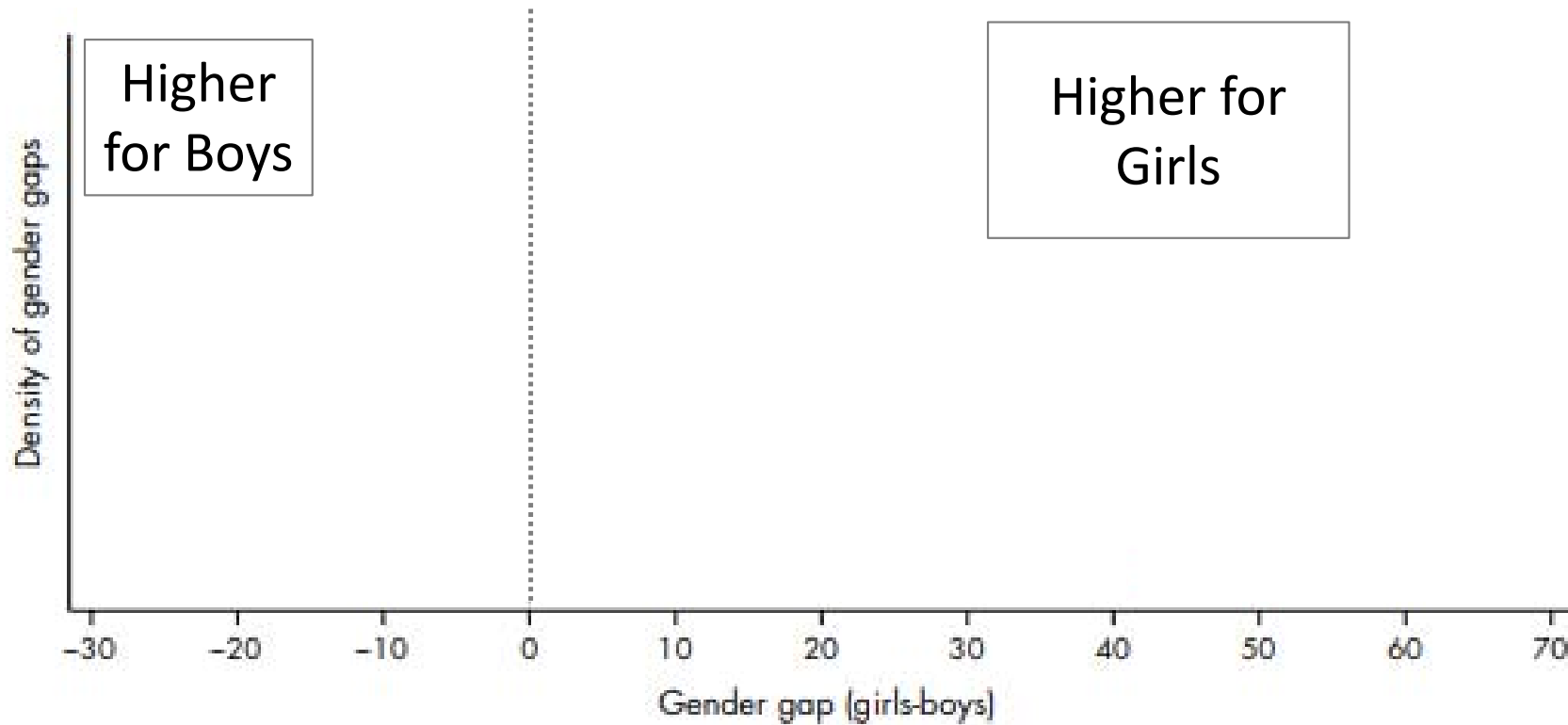
# Gender gap over time (US)

Bachelor's degrees



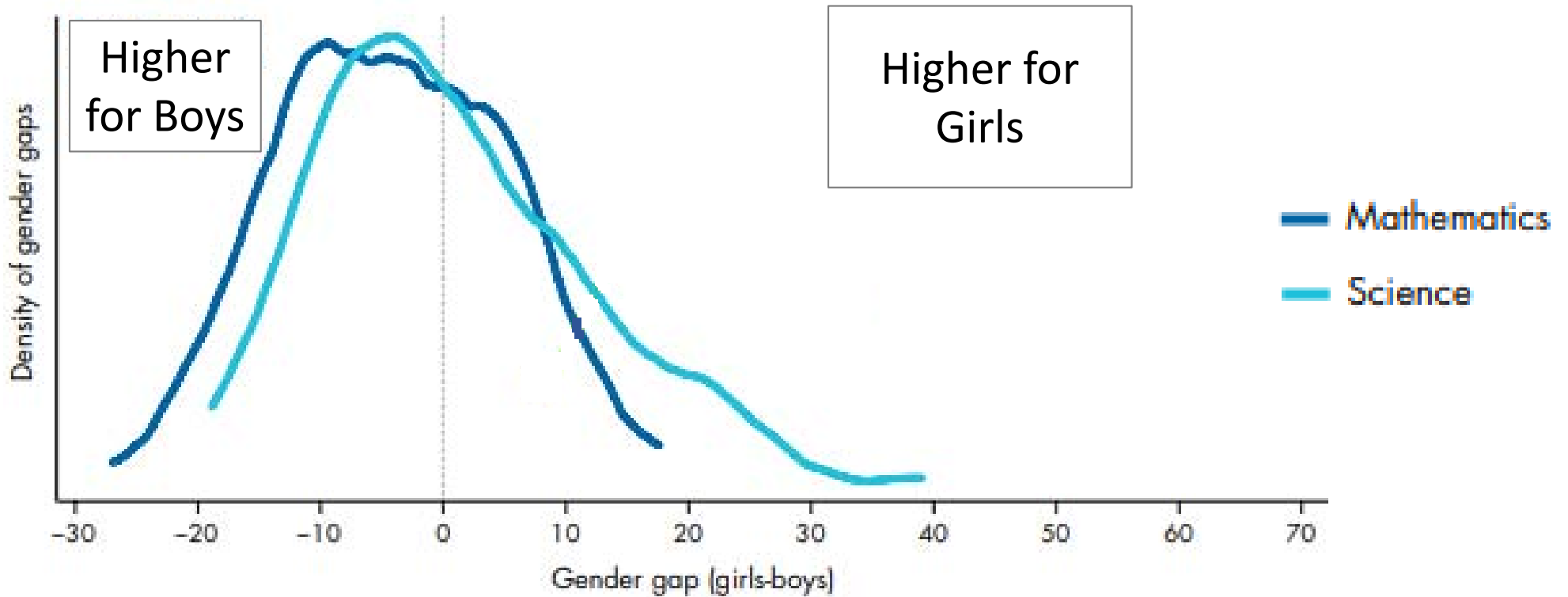
(Author's calculations: National Center for Education Statistics 2018)

# Learning (global)



(PISA (2015) 72 countries , World Development Report 2018)

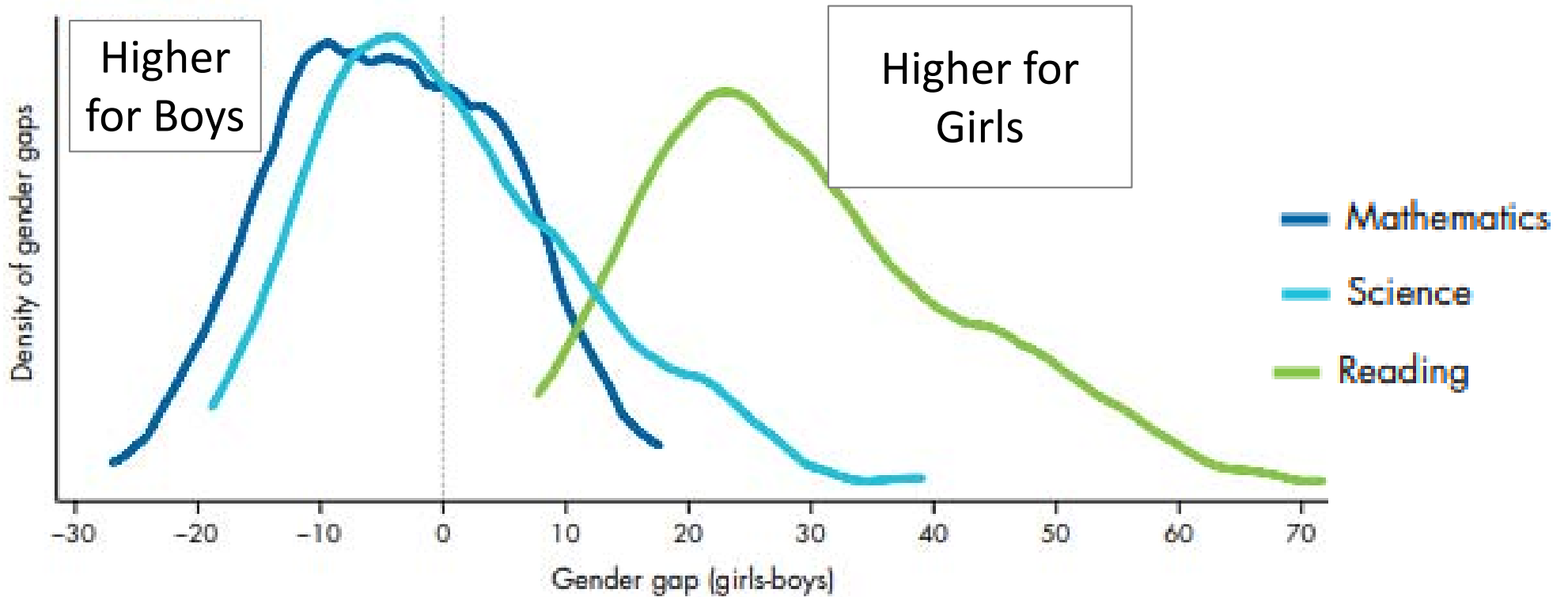
# Learning (global)



(PISA (2015) 72 countries , World Development Report 2018)



# Learning (global)



(PISA (2015) 72 countries , World Development Report 2018)

# **Research and policy**

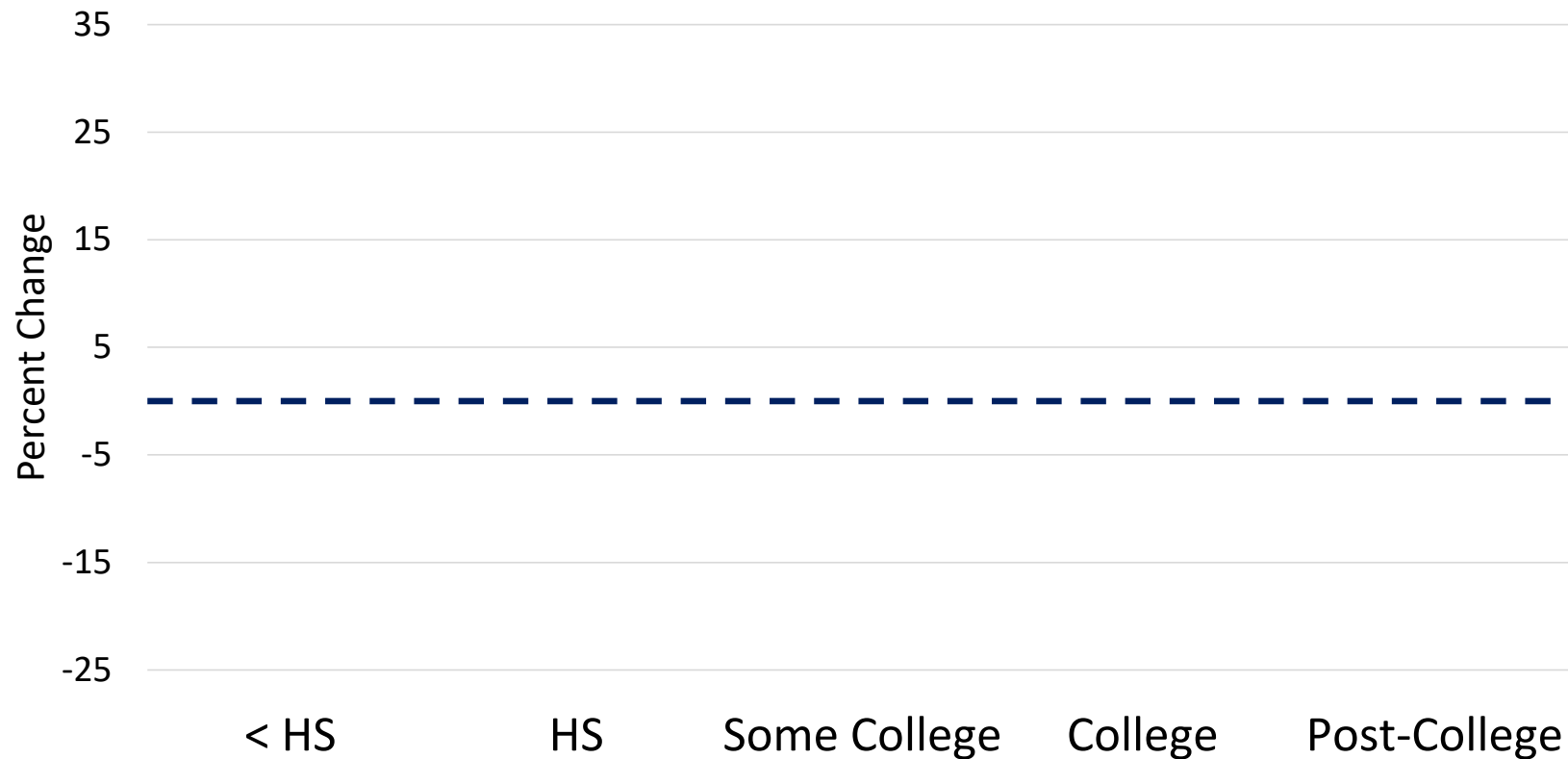
- Distributional differences (time, setting, changes in policies)
- How to encourage boy's reading?
- What is driving the exit from college?

# Broader implications



# Change in wages by education (US)

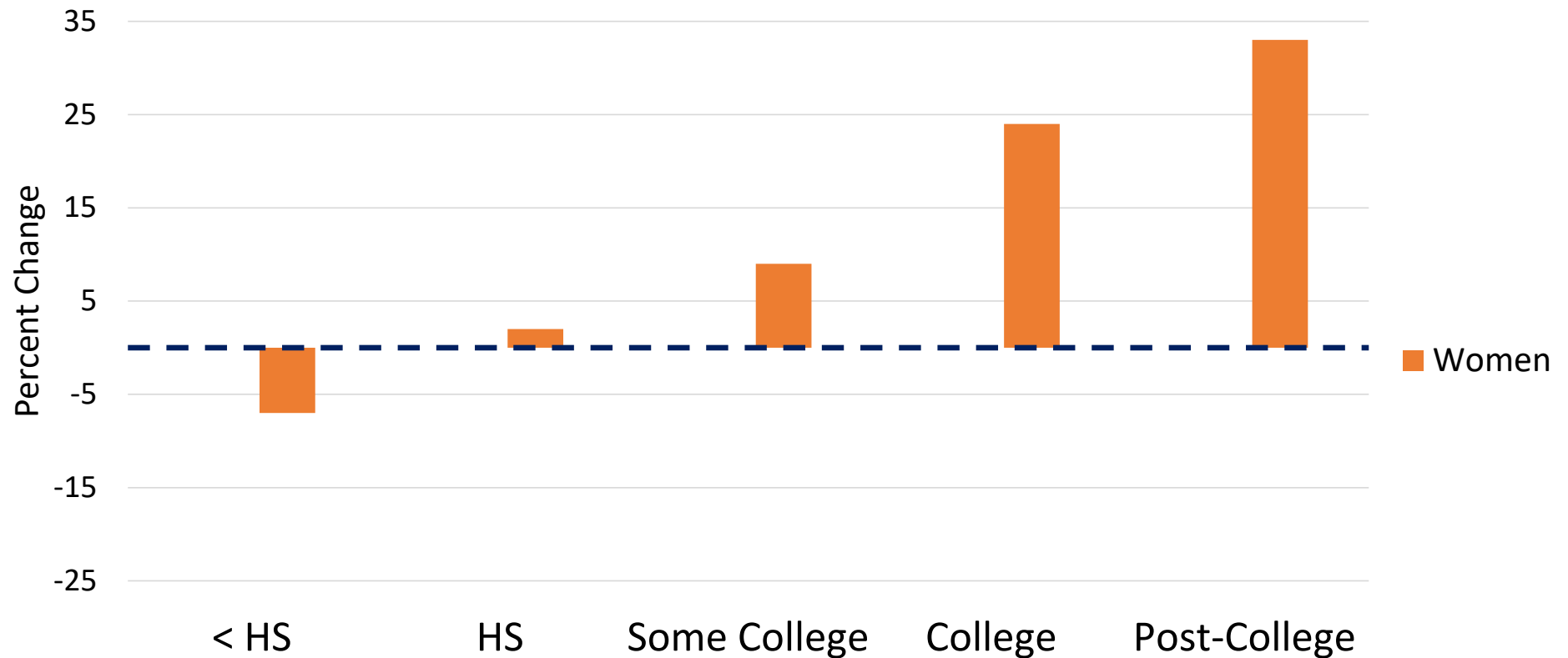
Percent Changes in Real Hourly Wage, 1979-2010 (Ages 25-39)



(Autor and Wasserman 2013)

# Change in wages by education (US)

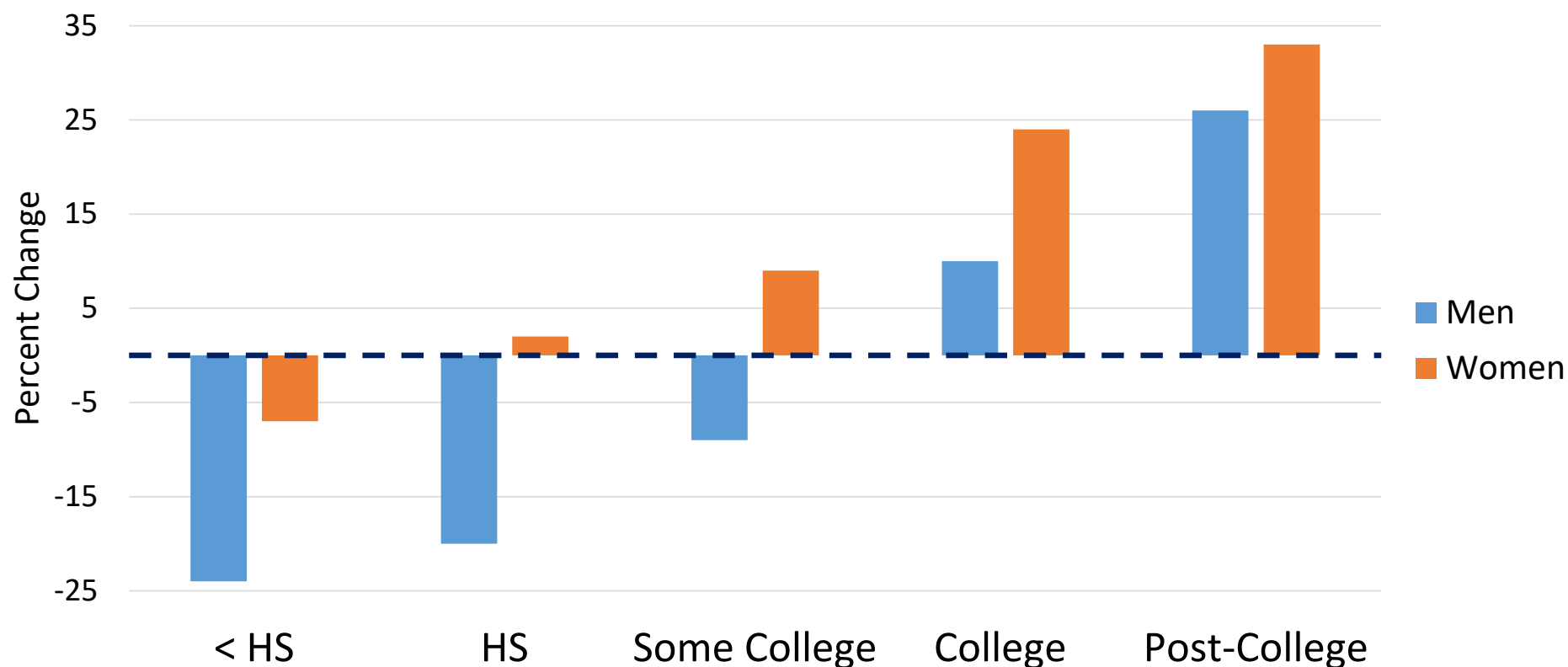
Percent Changes in Real Hourly Wage, 1979-2010 (Ages 25-39)



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# Change in wages by education (US)

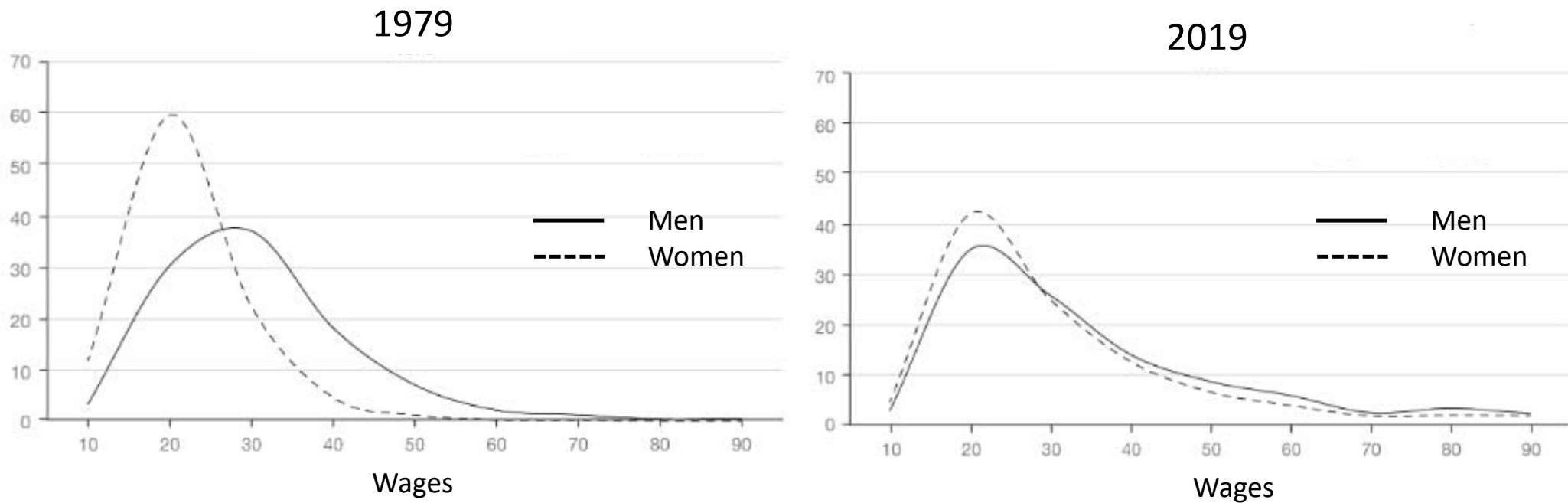
Percent Changes in Real Hourly Wage, 1979-2010 (Ages 25-39)



(Autor and Wasserman 2013)

# Change in pay gap (US)

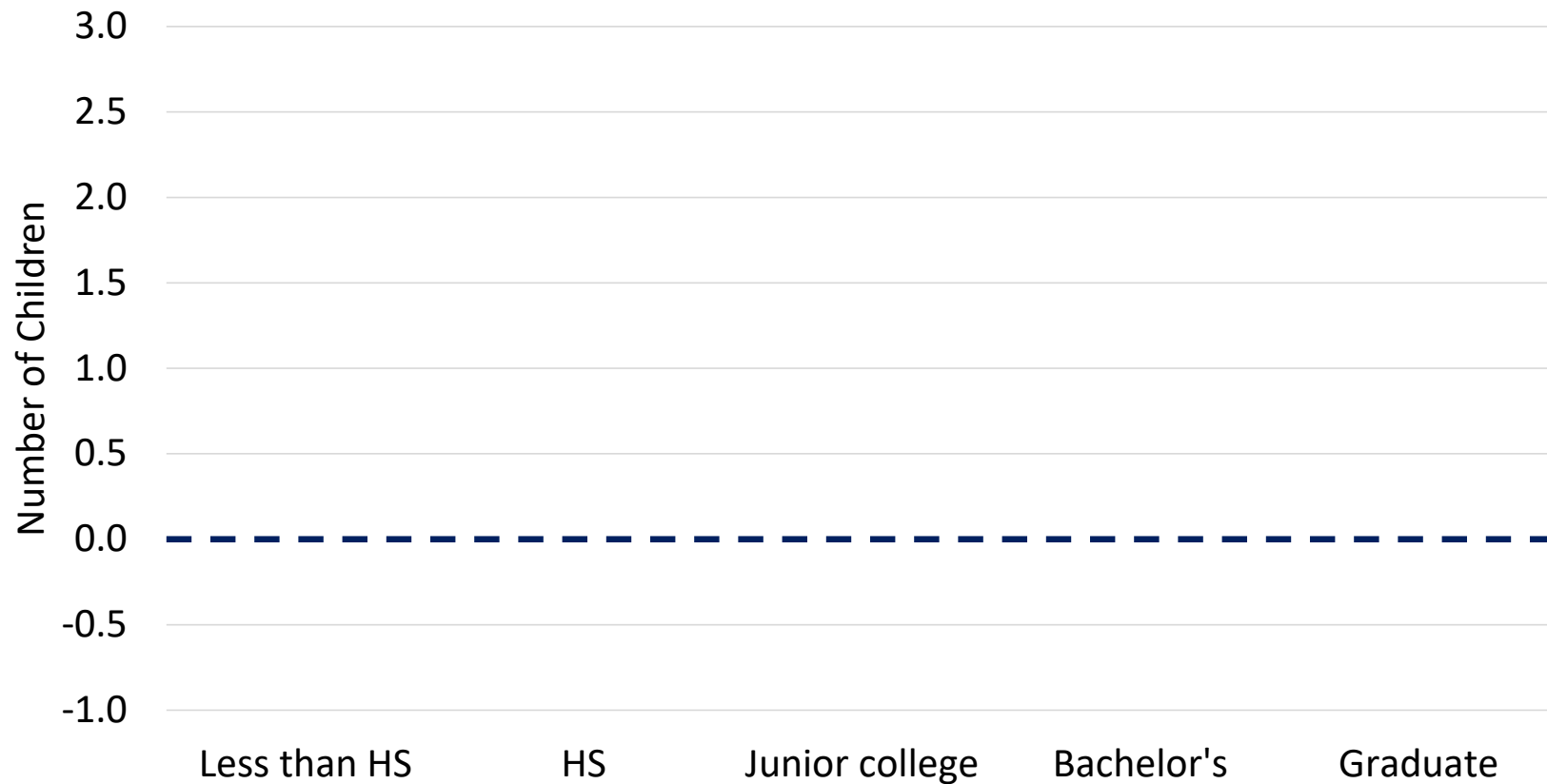
## Male and Female Wage Distributions



(Reeves 2022)

# Fertility gap by education (US)

Ideal vs. Actual Number of Children

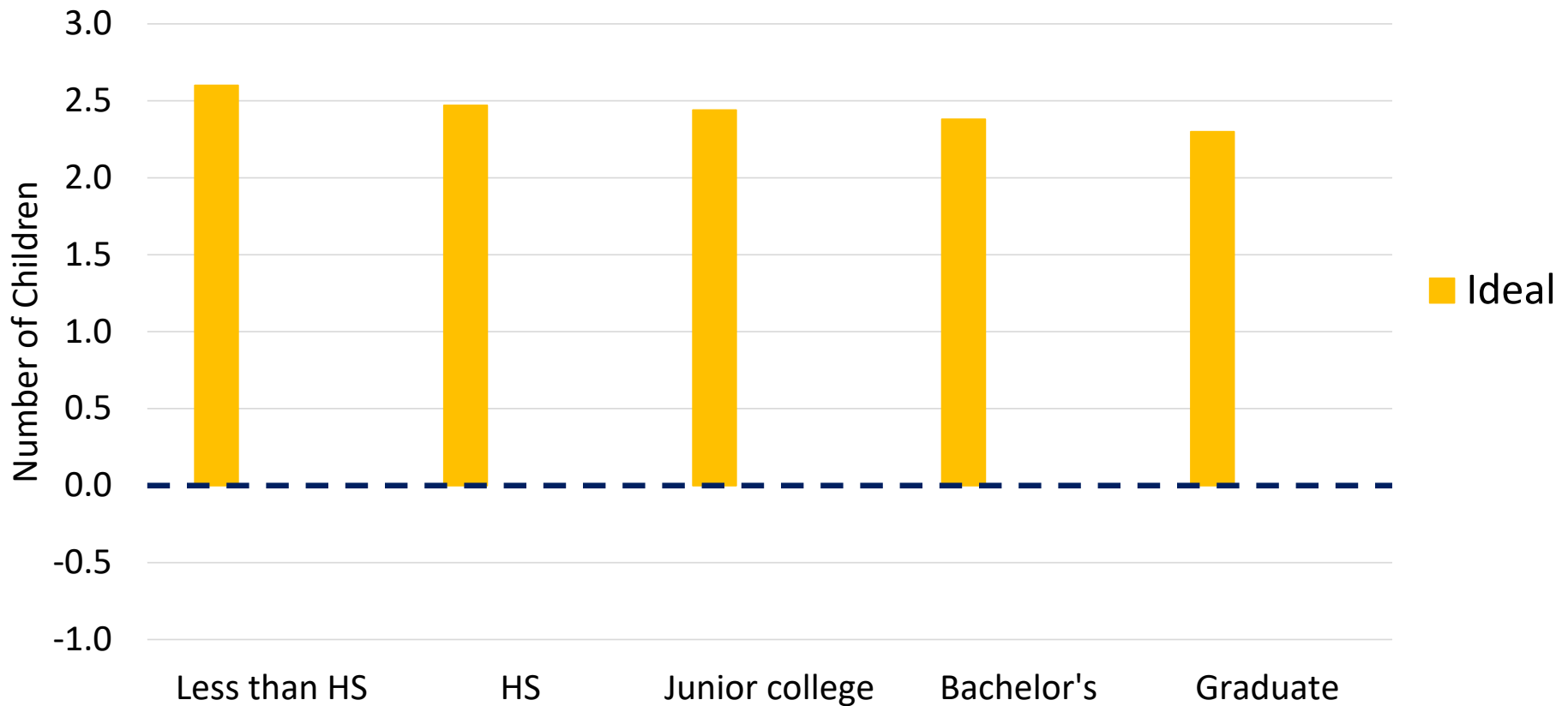


(Author's calculations: GSS 2000-2019, N=2919)



# Fertility gap by education (US)

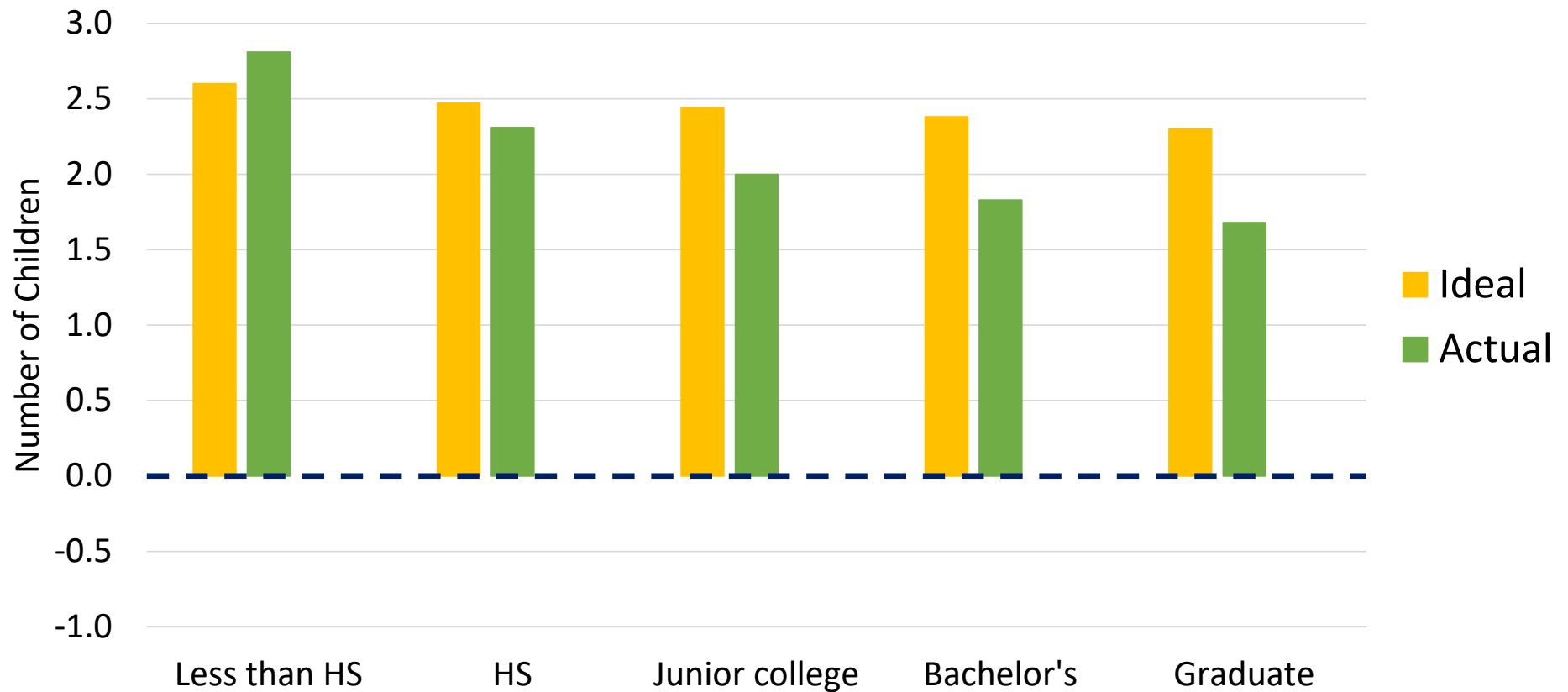
Ideal vs. Actual Number of Children



(Author's calculations: GSS 2000-2019, N=2919)

# Fertility gap by education (US)

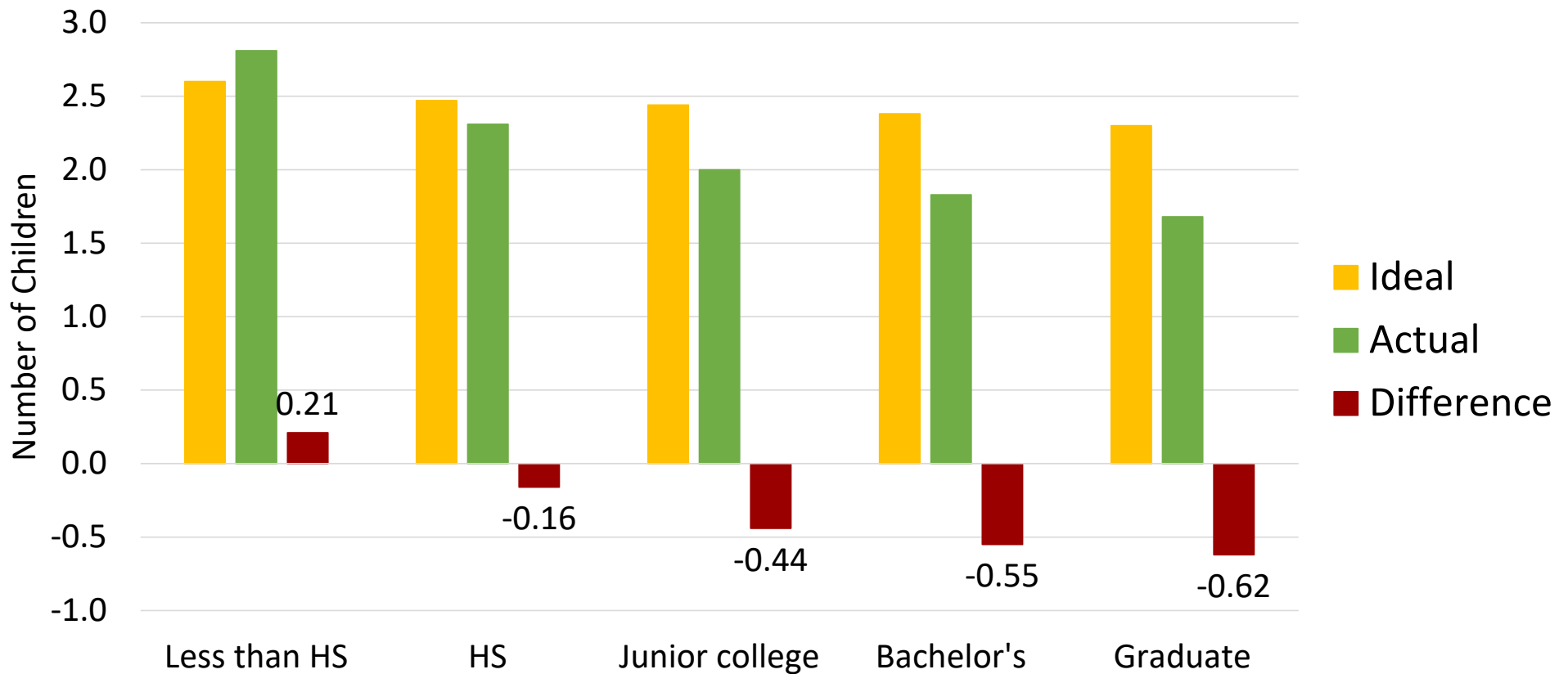
Ideal vs. Actual Number of Children



(Author's calculations: GSS 2000-2019, N=2919)

# Fertility gap by education (US)

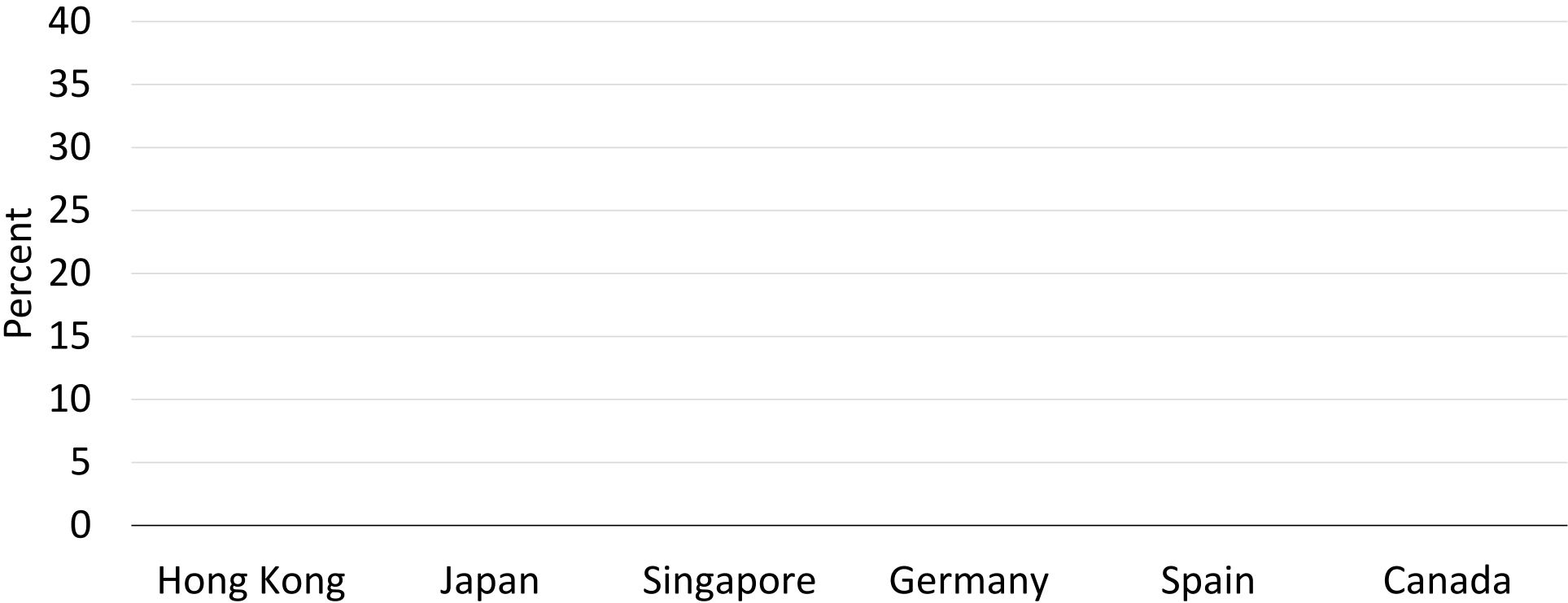
Ideal vs. Actual Number of Children



(Author's calculations: GSS 2000-2019, N=2919)

# Childlessness (global)

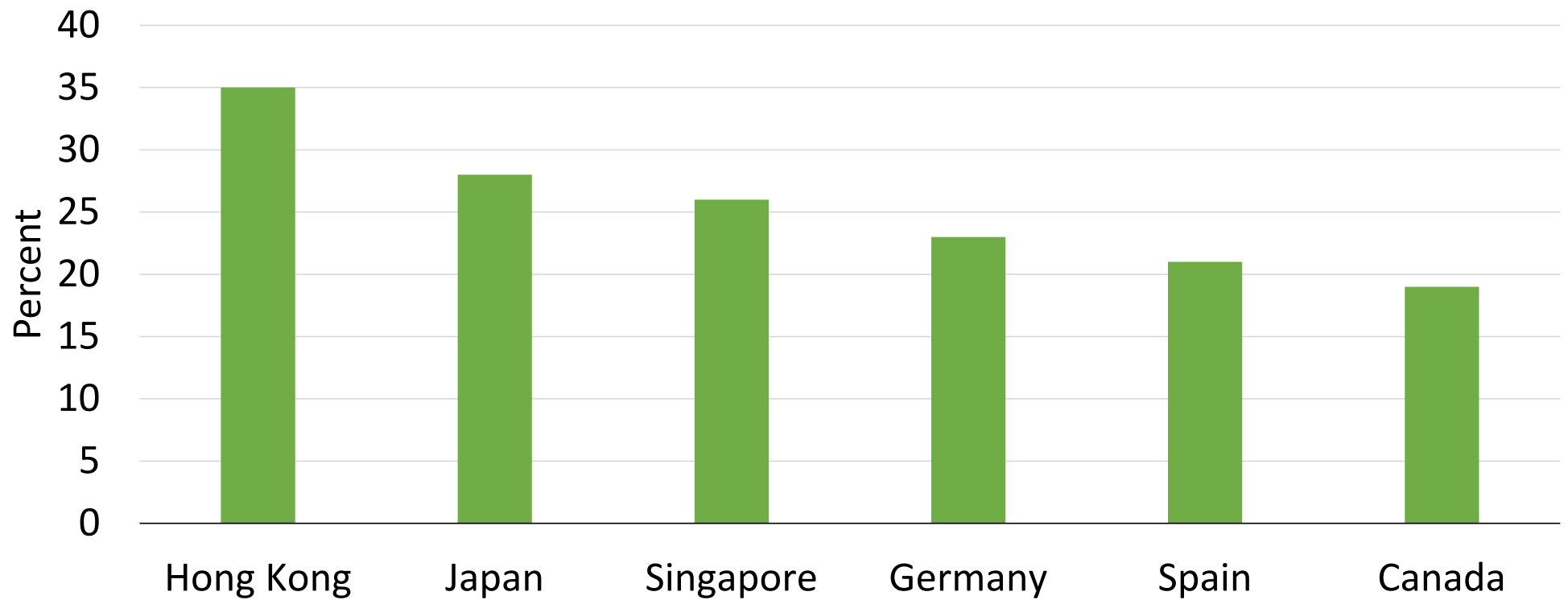
Percent Women Over 45 Without Children



(Sobotka 2021)

# Childlessness (global)

Percent Women Over 45 Without Children



(Sobotka 2021)

# Female happiness

- “Why Women Still Can’t Have It All” (The Atlantic 2012)
- “What Our Mothers Didn’t Tell Us: Why Happiness Eludes the Modern Woman” (Crittenden 2000)
- “The Paradox of Declining Female Happiness” (Stevenson & Wolfers 2009)

# Parent concerns (US)

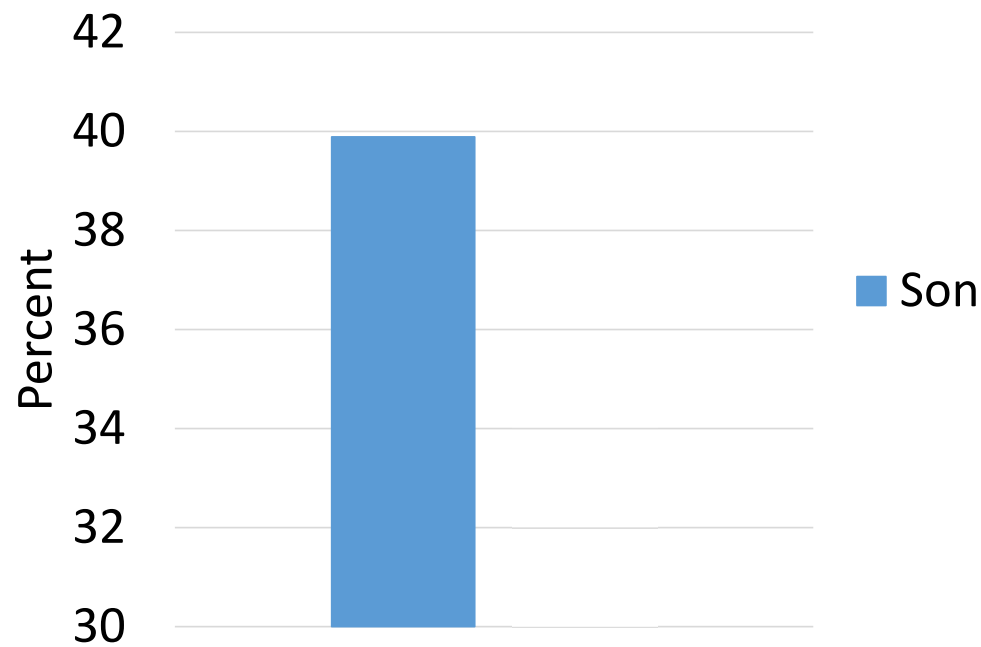
“I am worried about my son/daughter becoming a successful adult”



(Reeves and Smith, American Family Survey 2020)

# Parent concerns (US)

“I am worried about my son/daughter becoming a successful adult”

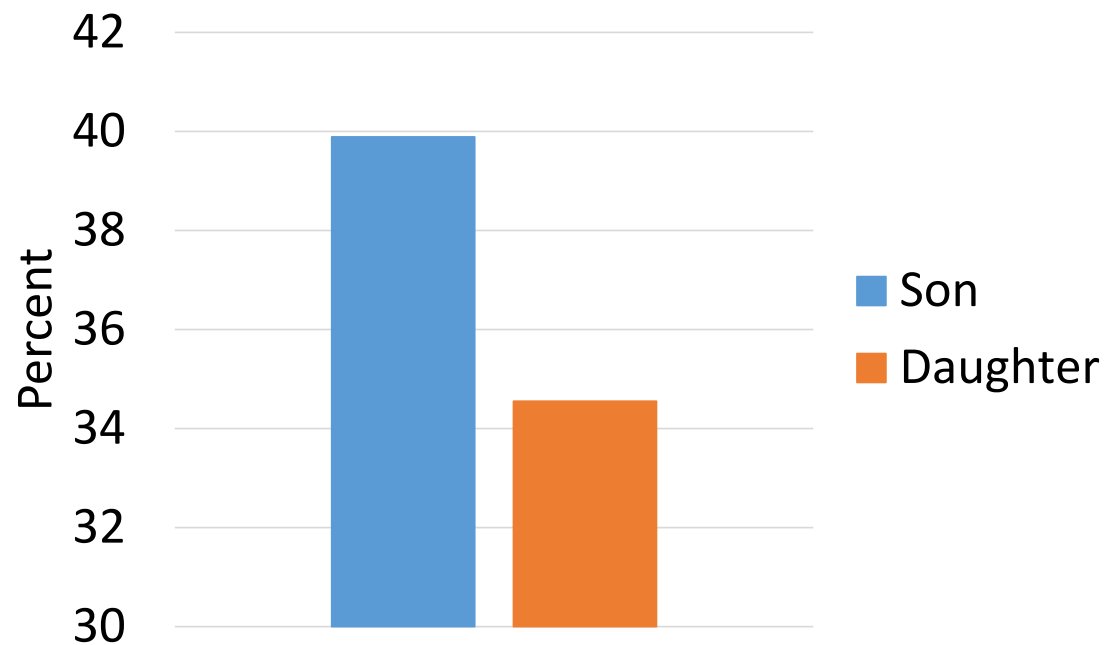


(Reeves and Smith, American Family Survey 2020)



# Parent concerns (US)

“I am worried about my son/daughter becoming a successful adult”



(Reeves and Smith, American Family Survey 2020)

# **Research and policy**

- Impact on women and girls
- Declining marriage and birthrates
- How to support parents?
- Changes in demand for sons

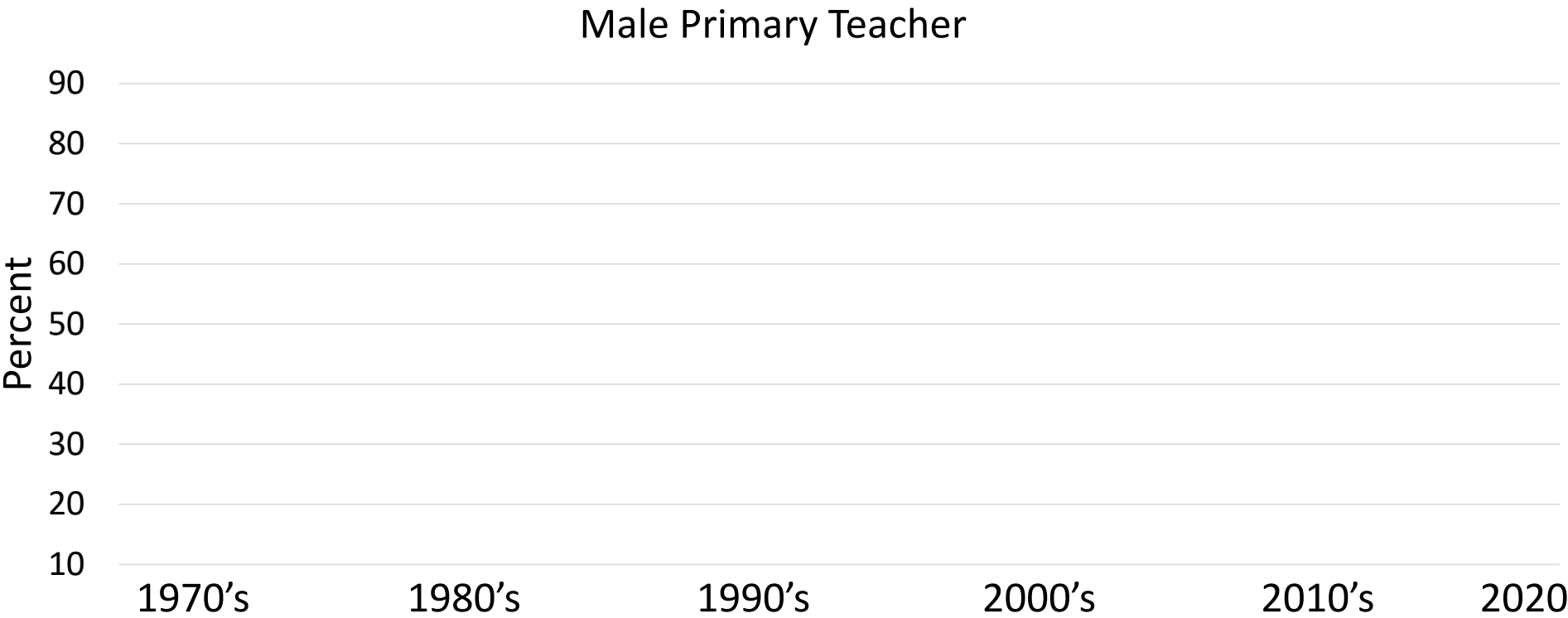
# How to help?



# School policies (US)

- Reductions in recess; 26 minutes/day elementary school (SHPPS, 2014)
- Grading biases (Lavy and Sand 2018; Cornwell et al. 2013)
- Male teachers
  - 3% preschool and KG teachers (BLS)
  - 11% elementary teachers (NCES)
  - 20% Librarians (BLS)

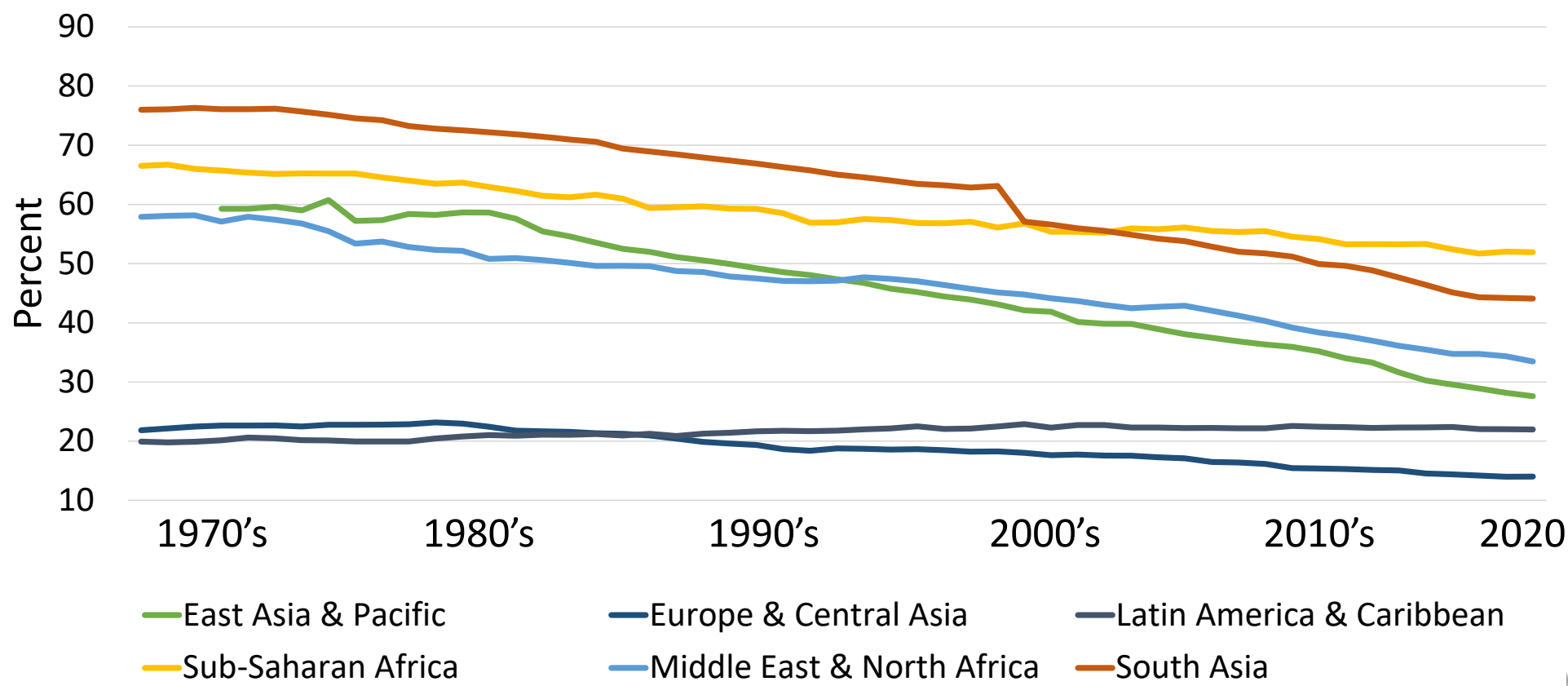
# Male teachers over time (global)



(Author's calculations: World Bank 2024)

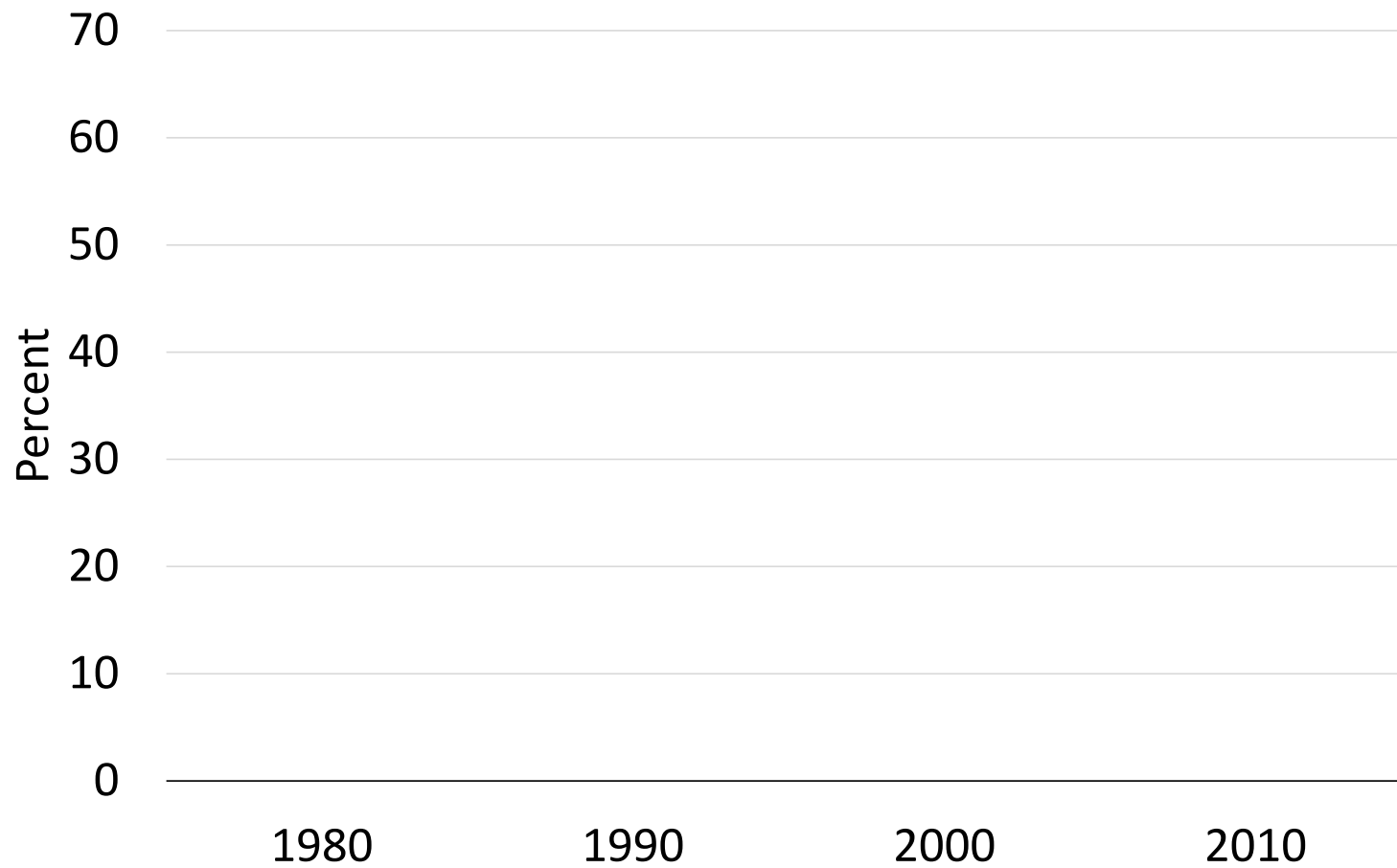
# Male teachers over time (global)

Male Primary Teacher



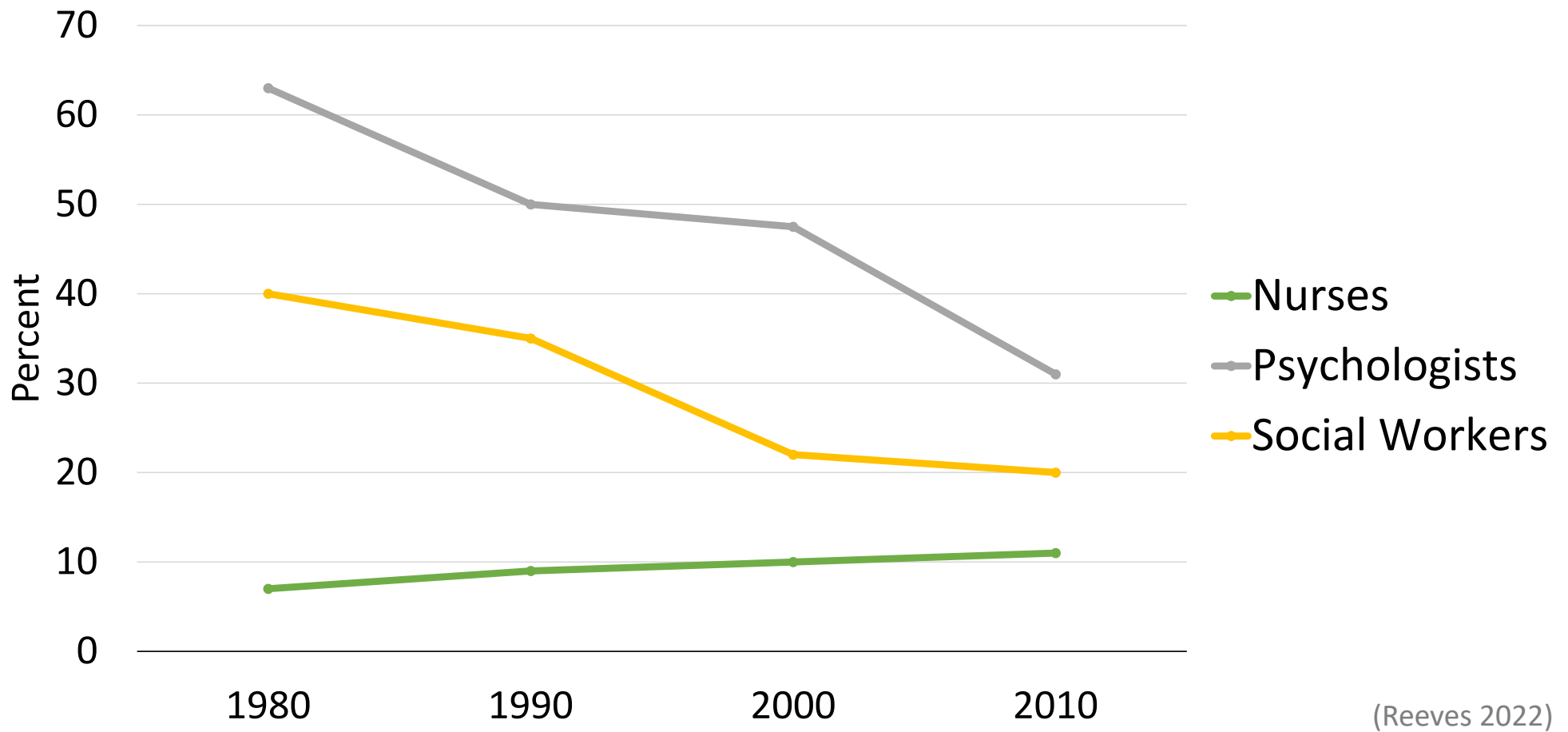
(Author's calculations: World Bank 2024)

# Male care-givers over time (US)



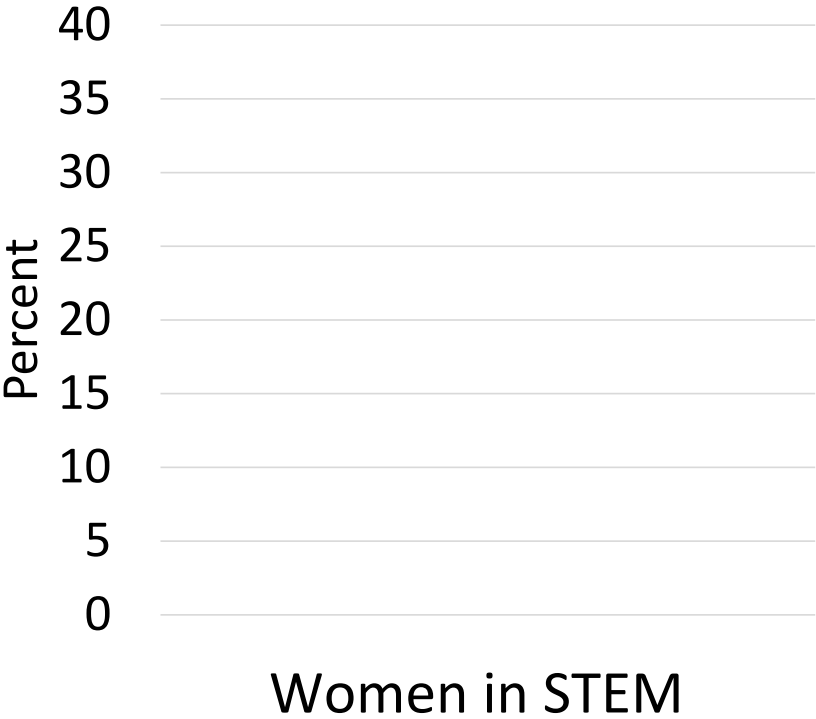
(Reeves 2022)

# Male care-givers over time (US)



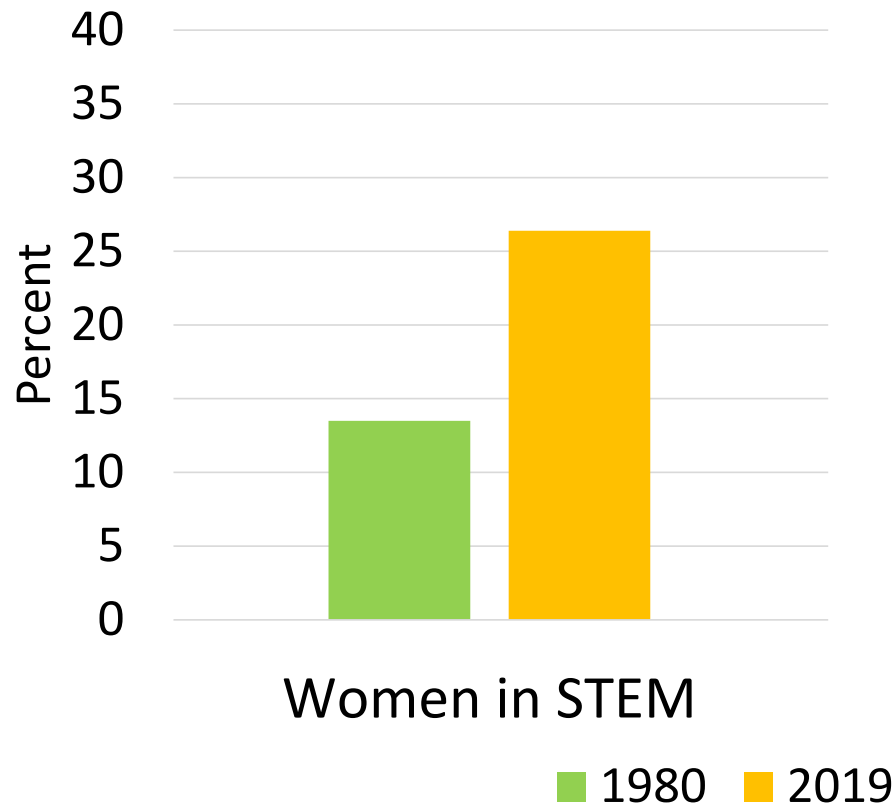


**STEM vs.**  
**HEAL (Health, Education, Administration, Literacy)**



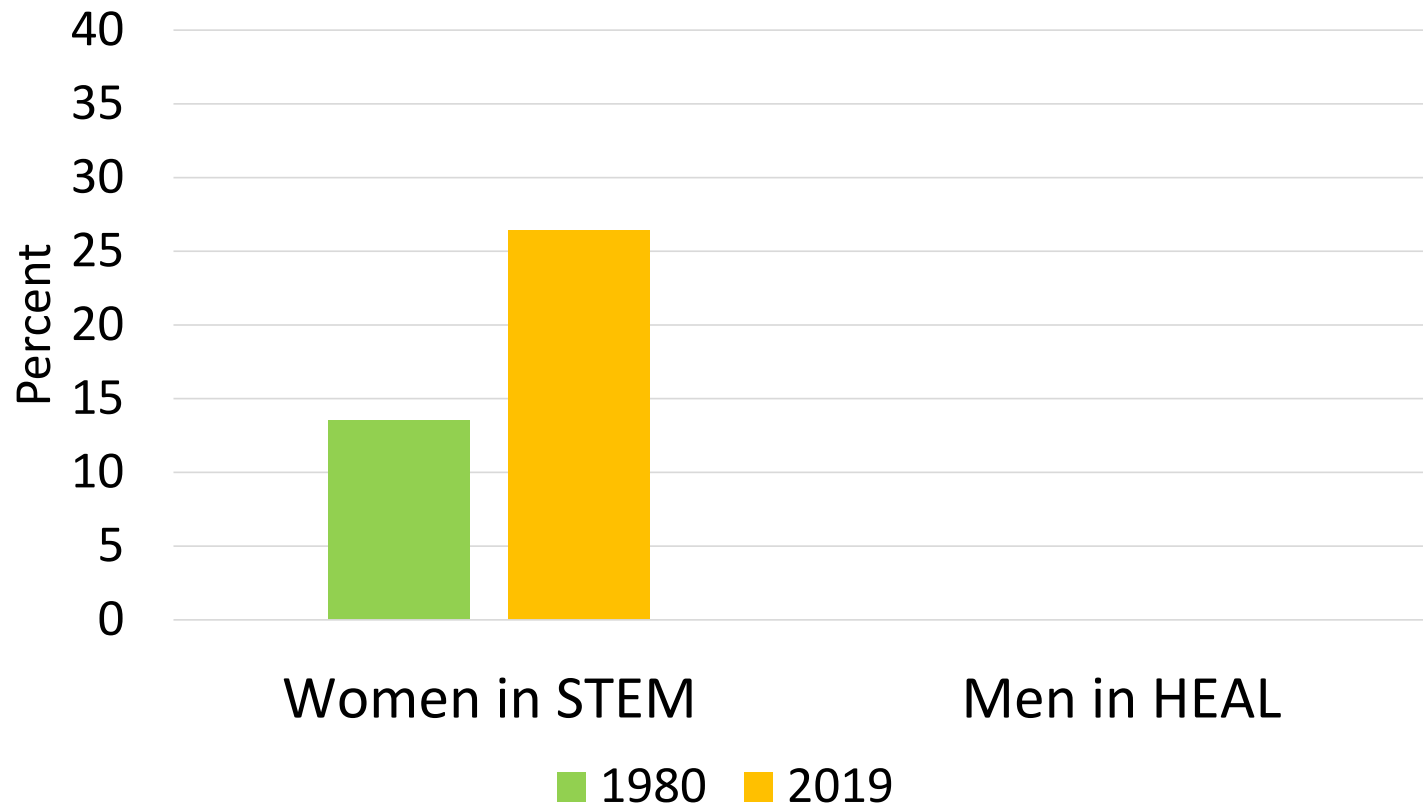
(Reeves 2022)

# **STEM vs.** **HEAL (Health, Education, Administration, Literacy)**



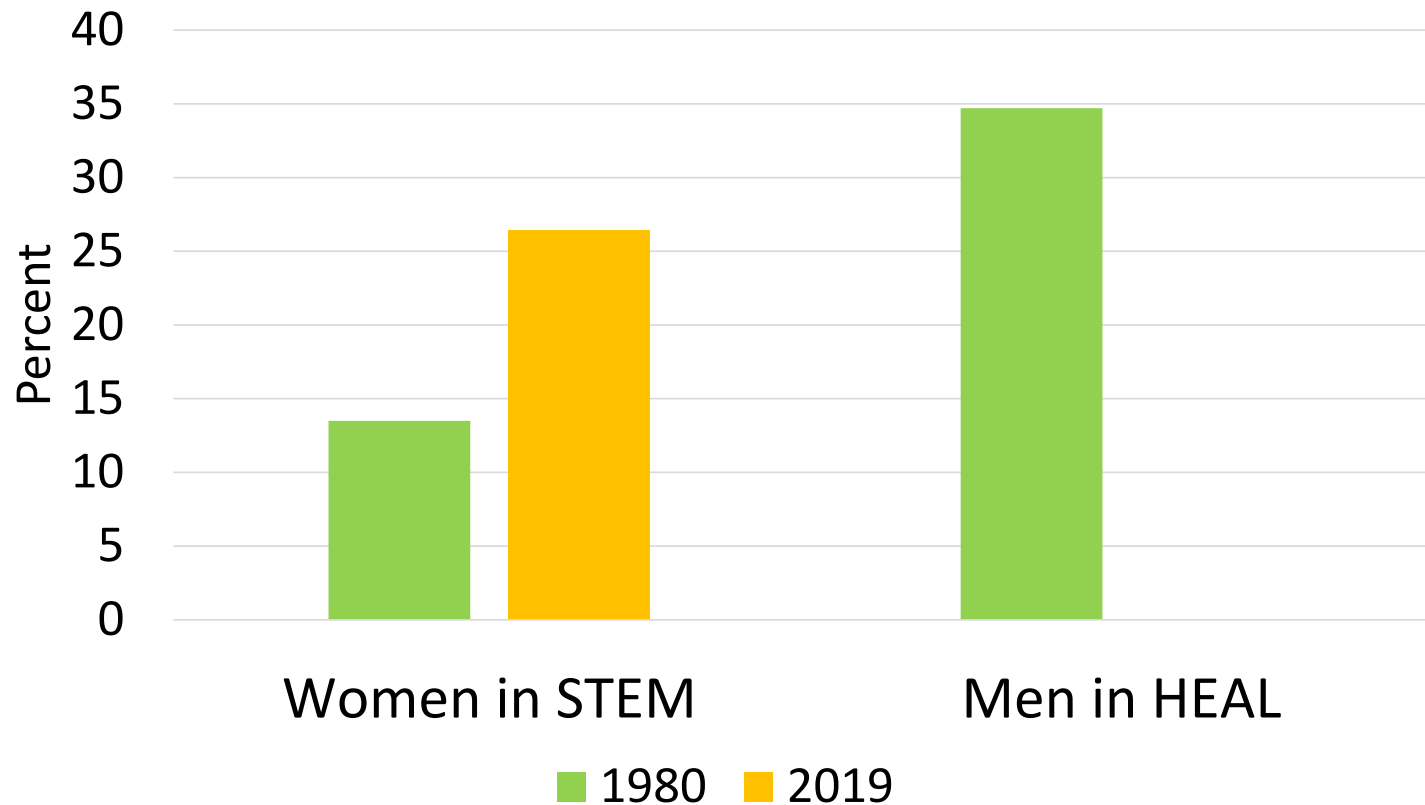
(Reeves 2022)

# **STEM vs.** **HEAL (Health, Education, Administration, Literacy)**



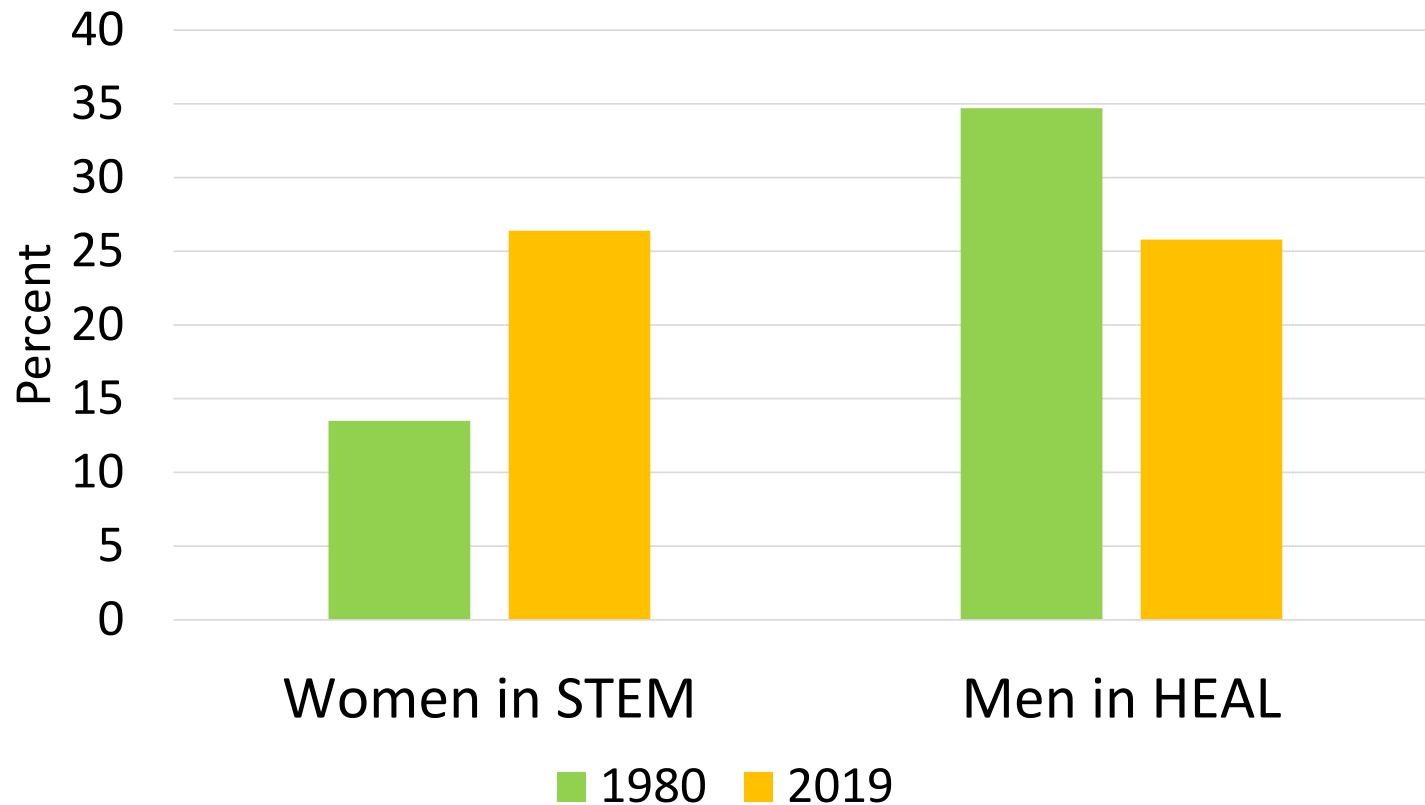
(Reeves 2022)

# **STEM vs.** **HEAL (Health, Education, Administration, Literacy)**



(Reeves 2022)

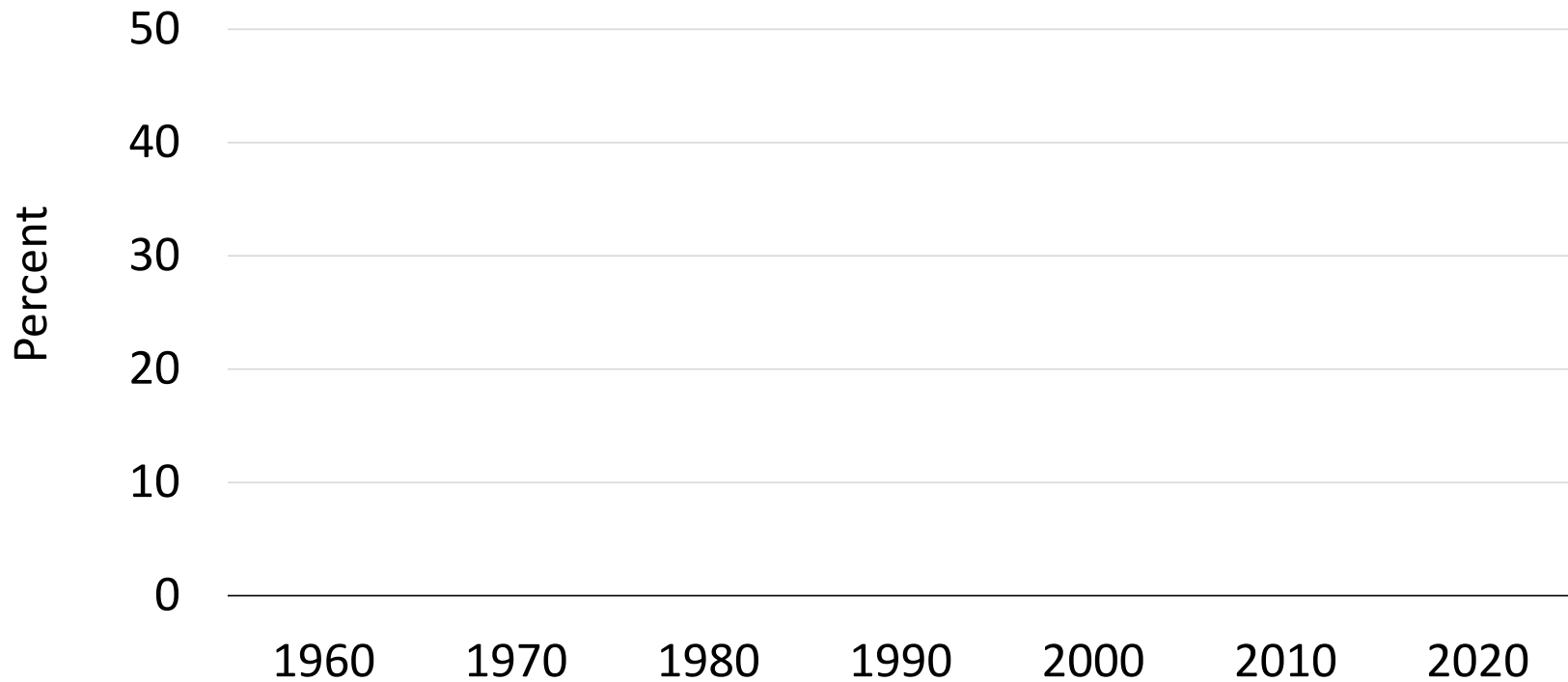
# **STEM vs.** **HEAL (Health, Education, Administration, Literacy)**



(Reeves 2022)

# Household composition (US)

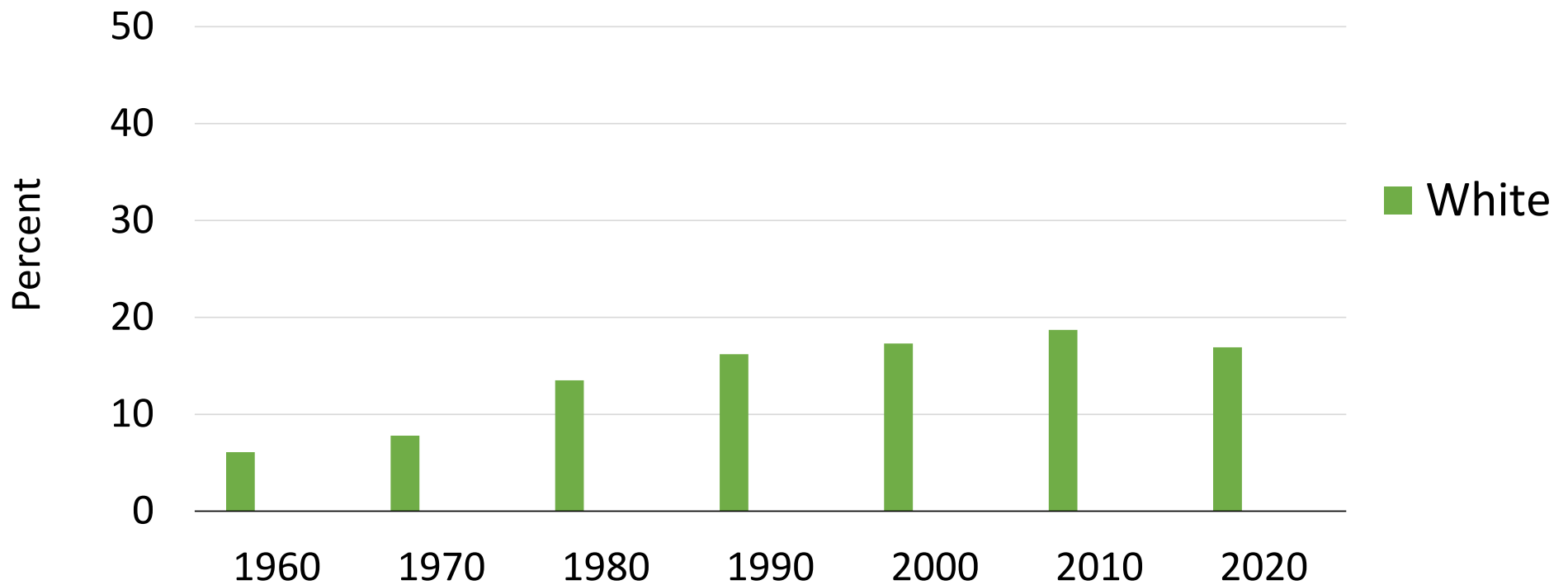
## Children Living with Mother Only



(Author's calculations: Census 2020)

# Household composition (US)

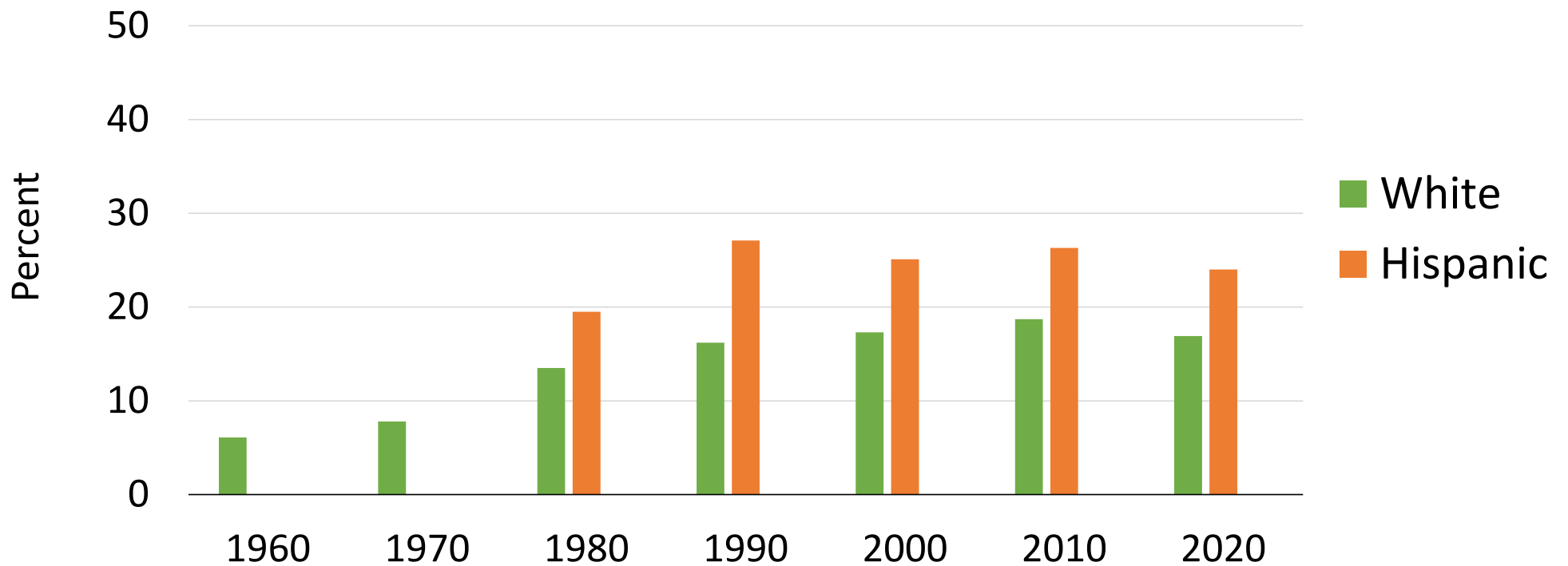
## Children Living with Mother Only



(Author's calculations: Census 2020)

# Household composition (US)

## Children Living with Mother Only

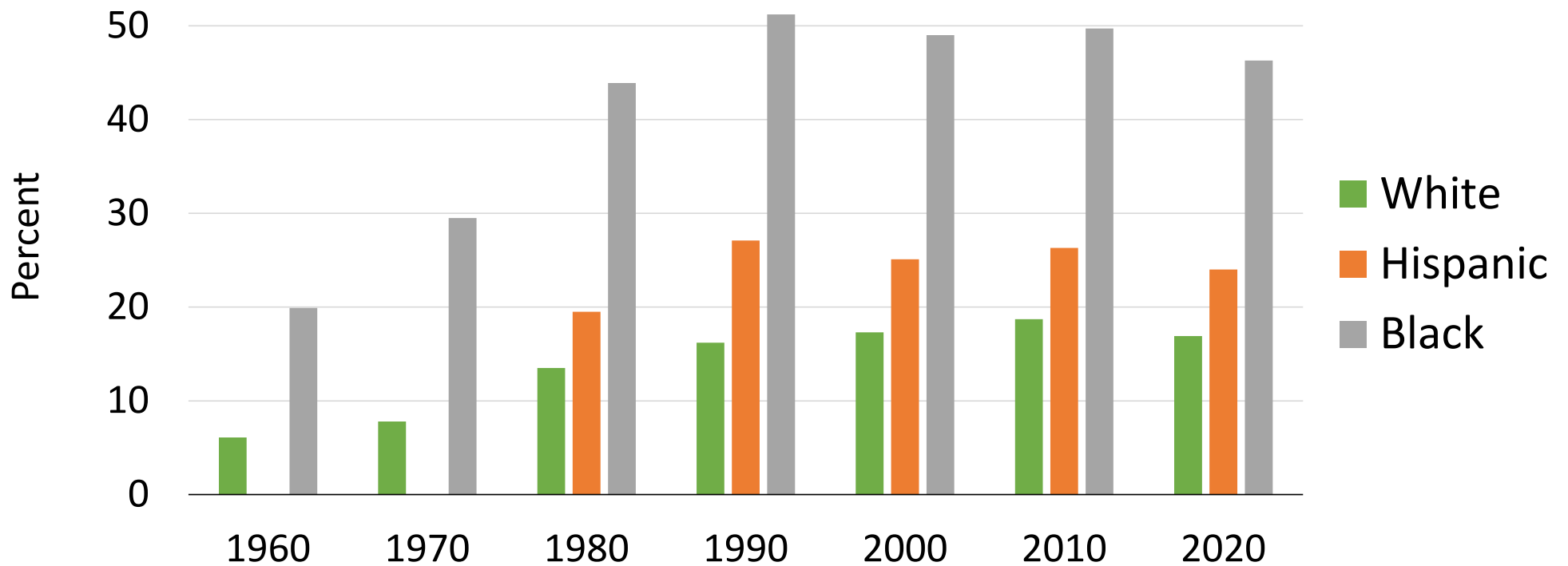


(Author's calculations: Census 2020)



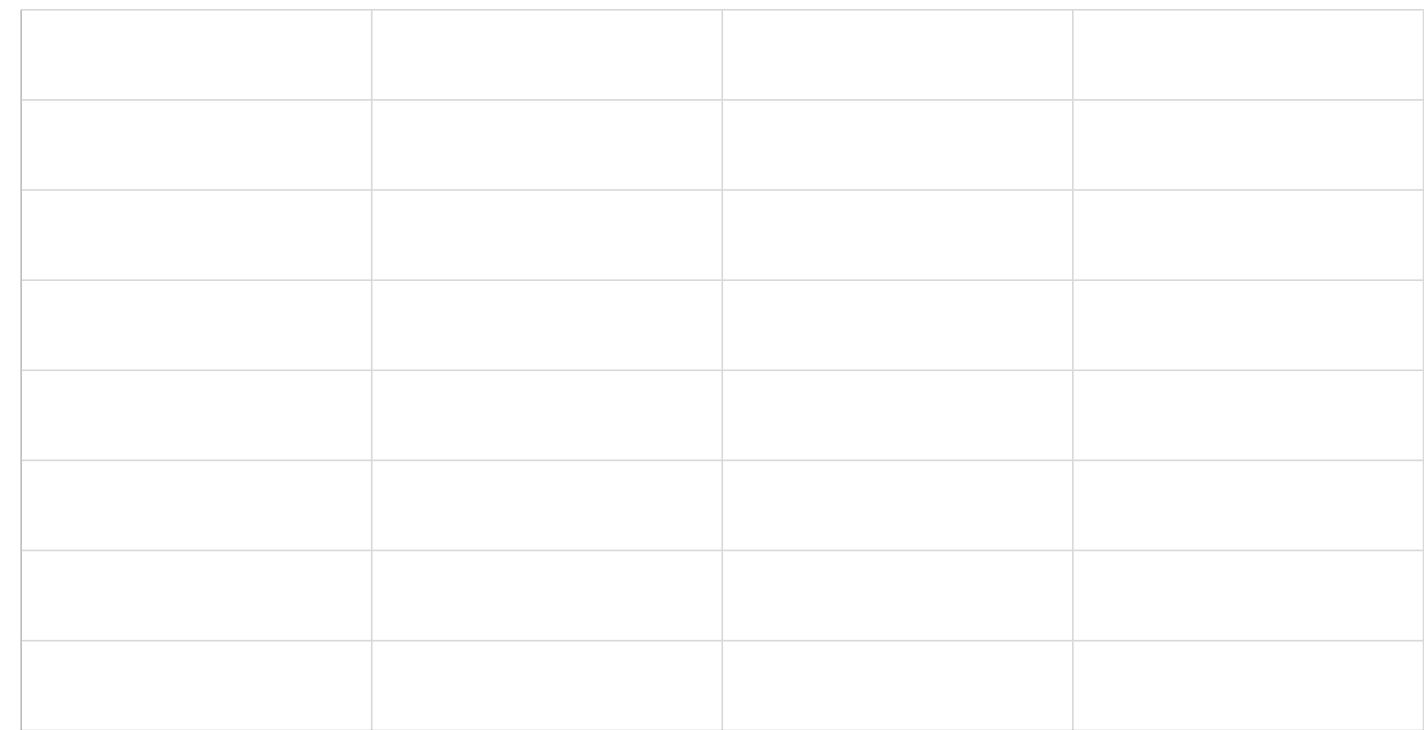
# Household composition (US)

## Children Living with Mother Only



(Author's calculations: Census 2020)

# Household composition (global)

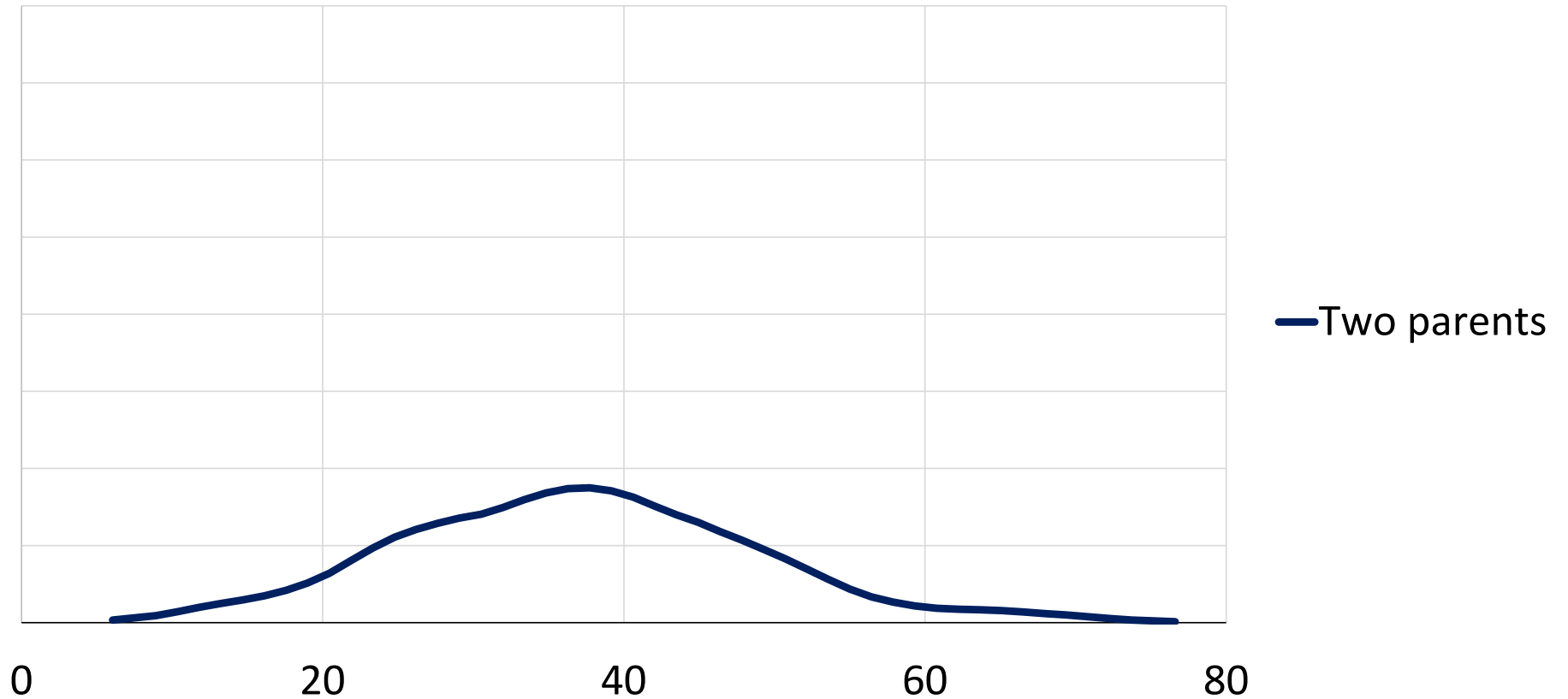


0 20 40 60 80

Percent of Households

(Author’s calculations: United Nations 2022)

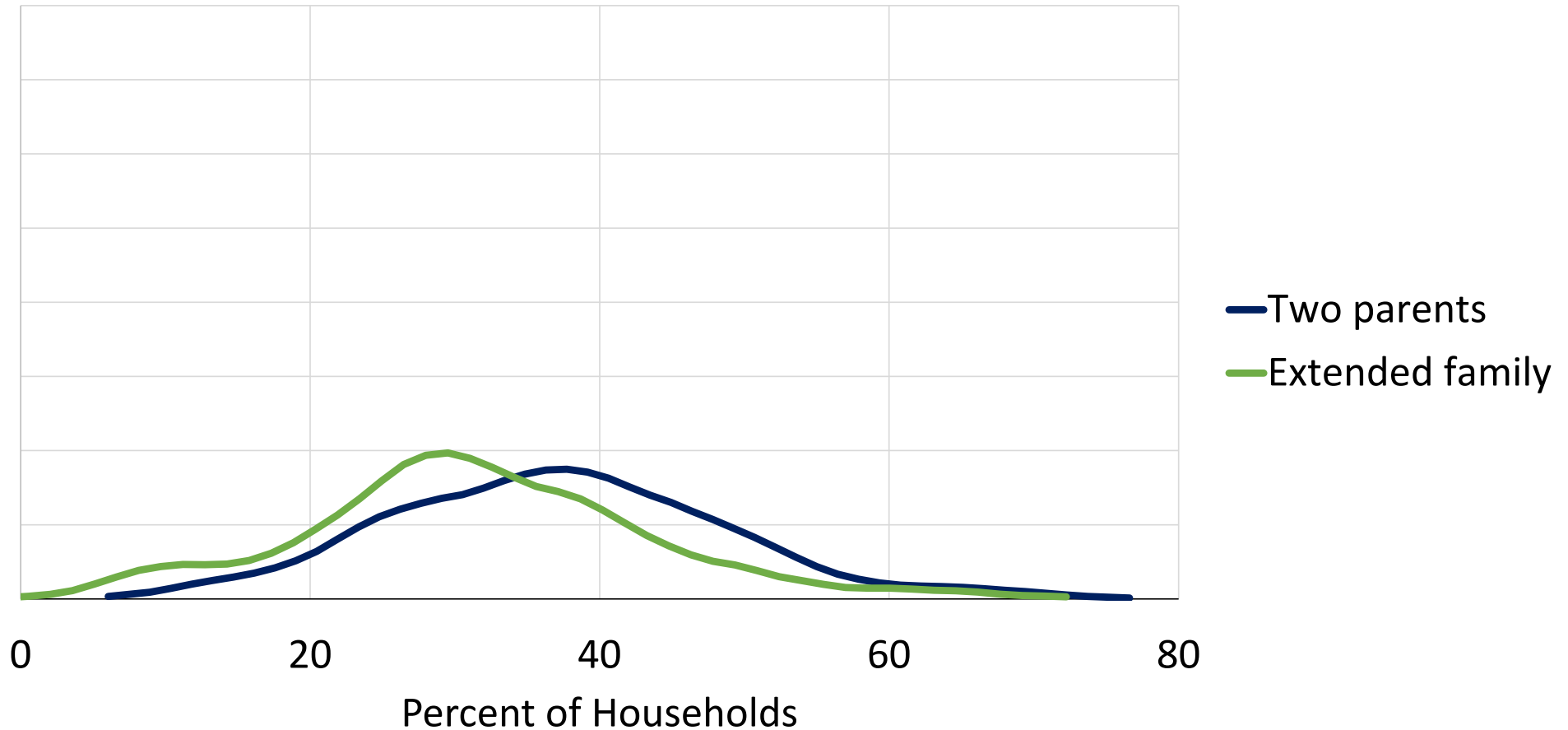
# Household composition (global)



Percent of Households

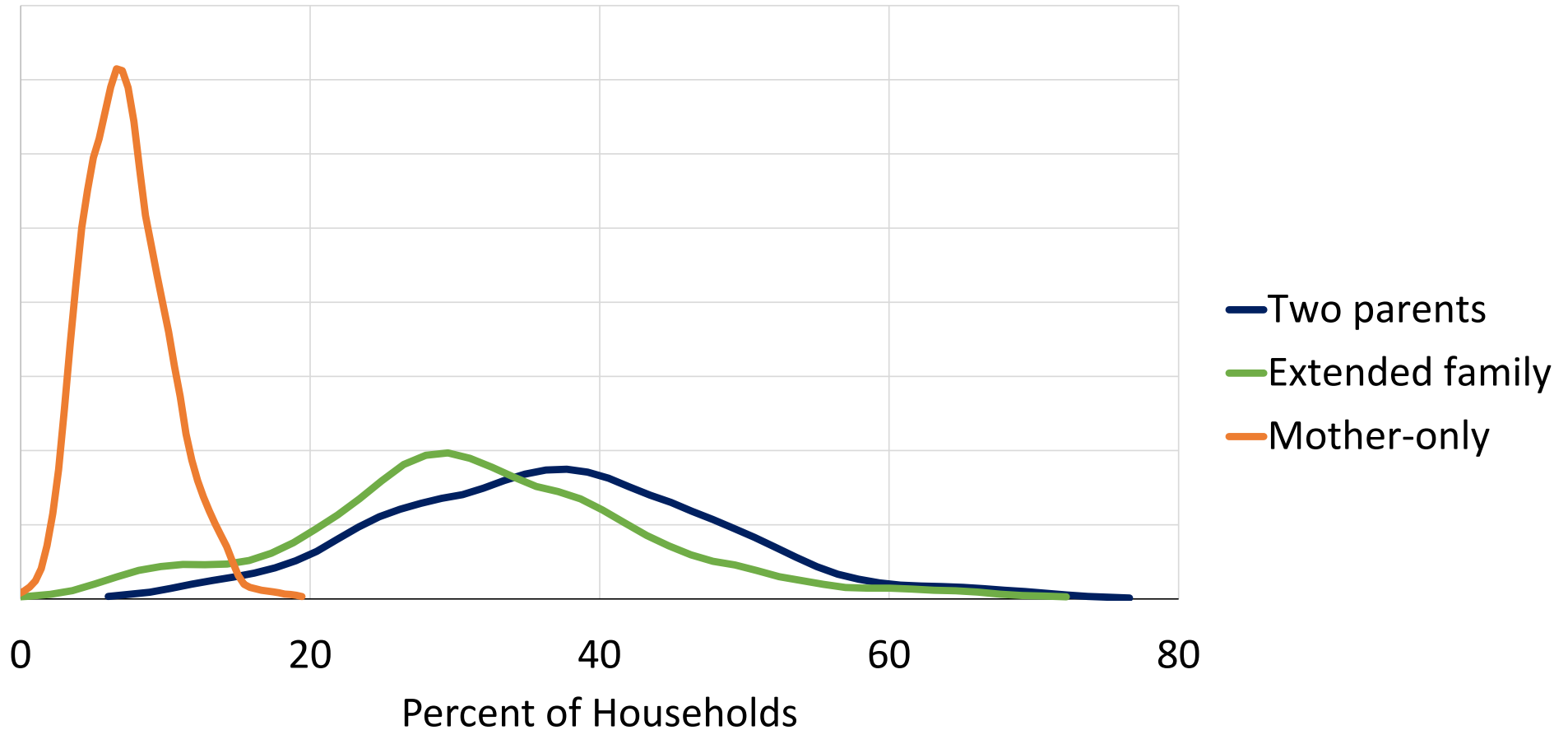
(Author's calculations: United Nations 2022)

# Household composition (global)



(Author's calculations: United Nations 2022)

# Household composition (global)



(Author's calculations: United Nations 2022)

# Response to interventions

- Interventions in the US
  - Less-effective for boys (Reeves 2022)
  - Can be negative (Kling et al. 2007)
- Education interventions in developing countries
  - Similar for girls as for boys; girl-targeted not more effective for girls (Evans and Yuan 2018)

# Institutions

- Universities (US)
  - 19% require gender diversity statements (Paul and Maranto 2021)
  - Two majors in male studies vs. ~380 women's studies departments
- Government and multilaterals
  - US White House Gender Policy Council “barriers faced by women and girls”
  - UN Women “gender equality and the empowerment of women”
  - Global Fund for Women “advance women's rights”

# **Research and policy**

- Household composition and boy's outcomes
- Recruiting men into HEAL professions
- Education and health policies
- Designing and evaluating optimal interventions



# Future directions



- Research boys and men
- Evaluate broader impacts on women and children
- Who else might be at need?
- Advocate, educate and allow for conversation

When only one sex wins,  
both sexes lose

**Thank you!**

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