

Empower America's Talent.

MEASURES OF APTITUDES HELP CLOSE THE GENDER GAP

Research confirms aptitude assessments are critical to increasing workplace diversity and strength, particularly in wake of COVID-19 pandemic



RESEARCH INVOLVING

7,222

individuals confirmed
females have significant
talent for in-demand
industries

MANUFACTURING

4.1x more females identified

CONSTRUCTION

7.1x more females identified

COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY

2.0x more females identified

HEALTH CARE-PATIENT CARE

1.6x more males identified

HEALTH CARE-TECHNICAL

7.6x more females identified



New research conducted by the University of Missouri and published in Cambridge University Press proves interest-based and self-reported career guidance programs direct females away from high-demand, high-wage jobs.

For decades, students' self-reported interests have served as a primary career guidance method. The results of these surveys rely heavily on students' awareness of, and familiarity with various industries and job functions. However, **few students have the necessary self-awareness and career exposure to obtain reliable guidance** from these methods.

This "exposure gap" is particularly harmful to young women whose visions of opportunity can be limited by gender stereotypes and societal norms. **As a result, interest surveys can actually steer female students away from the modern economy, leading to a "gender imbalance in high-demand careers."**

INTERESTS VARY, BUT APTITUDES REMAIN CONSISTENT

The University of Missouri compared 7,222 (3,619 female and 3,603 male) high school students' self-reported interests and assessed natural aptitudes in four rapidly-growing industries: manufacturing, computer technology, construction and healthcare (direct patient care and technical).

According to the university's research, interests are influenced by perceived societal norms, which can limit the scope of students' career exploration. While interests vary by gender, both males and females demonstrate equal aptitudes for careers across the four study industries.

- Male students demonstrated a greater interest in manufacturing, construction, computer technology and tech-focused health care jobs, while females were more likely to demonstrate a high interest in patient-centered health care.
- However, aptitude assessments helped identify seven times more female students with the natural talent for careers in construction and technical health care, four times more females with the talent for jobs in the manufacturing field, and twice as many females with the talent for jobs in computer technology.
- Aptitude assessments also helped identify nearly twice as many males with the talent to pursue jobs in patient-centered health care.

As the research concludes, "In a post-COVID world, there will be slack in the labor markets. As a result, the risk increases for students as they move from educational pathways to careers. Without making intentional decisions to align aptitudes, interests, educational pathways, and labor market needs, students could suffer real economic harm." Helping all students – especially females and others who may have constrained visions of opportunity – better understand how their unique aptitudes align with 21st century careers, opens the door to a more meaningful discussion on talent, increased salary opportunities, improved self-efficacy in high-demand occupational fields, and, in turn, a significantly larger and more diverse workforce that will be integral to a broad and lasting economic recovery.