

**Understanding Today's College
Men and Women:
*Findings from a National Study on
Gender and the Student Experience***

**Prof. Linda J. Sax
Graduate School of Education and Information
Studies, UCLA**

**Presentation to the
UC San Diego Student Affairs
December 2, 2009**

Headlines

At Colleges, Women are Leaving Men in the Dust

- ◆ New York Times front page headline, July 2006

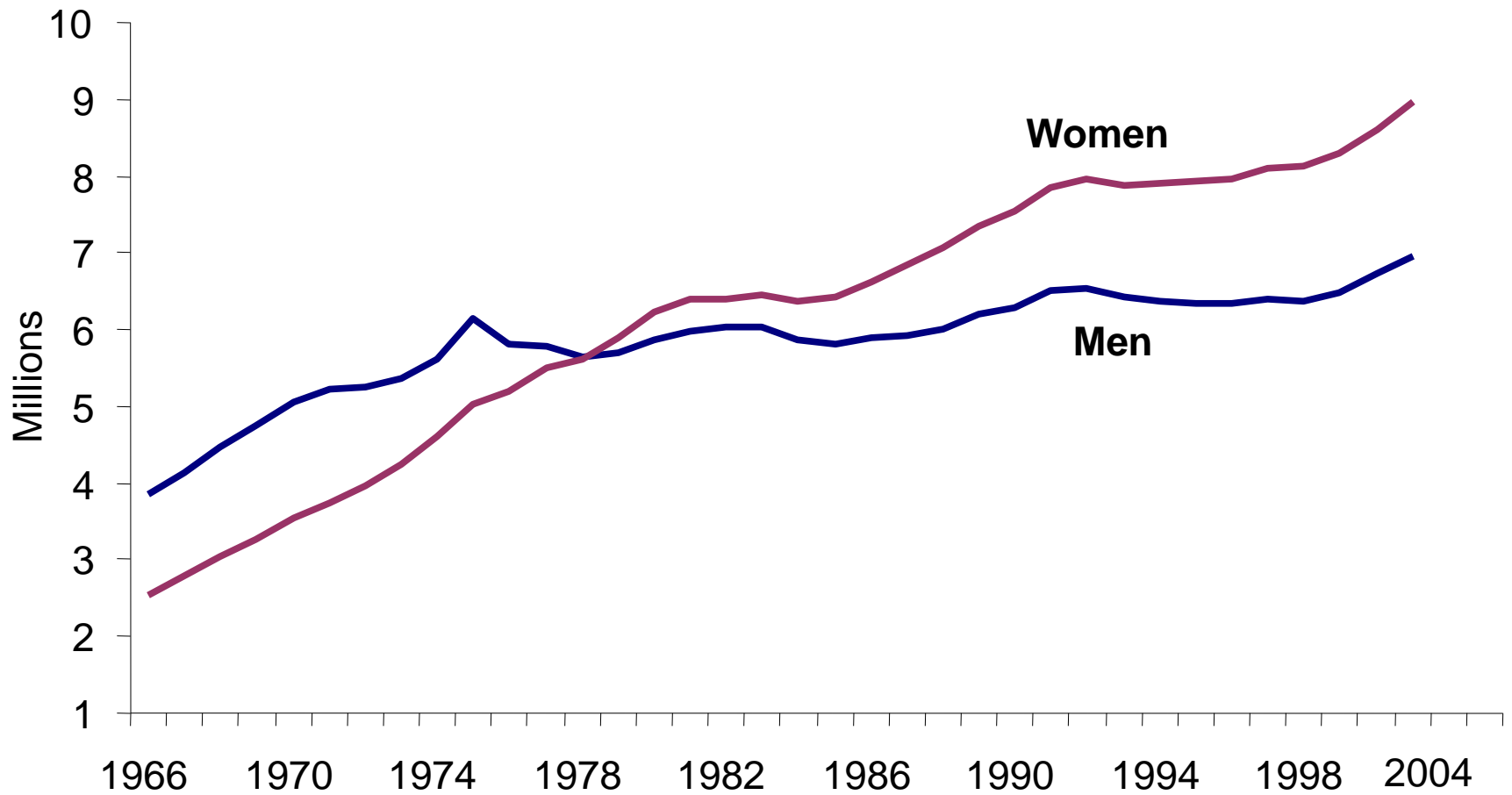
*Disappearing Act: Where Have all the Men Gone?
No Place Good*

- ◆ Washington Post, December 2005

*The NEW Gender Gap: Why Boys are Falling
Behind Girls in Education and What it Means for
the Economy, Business, and Society*

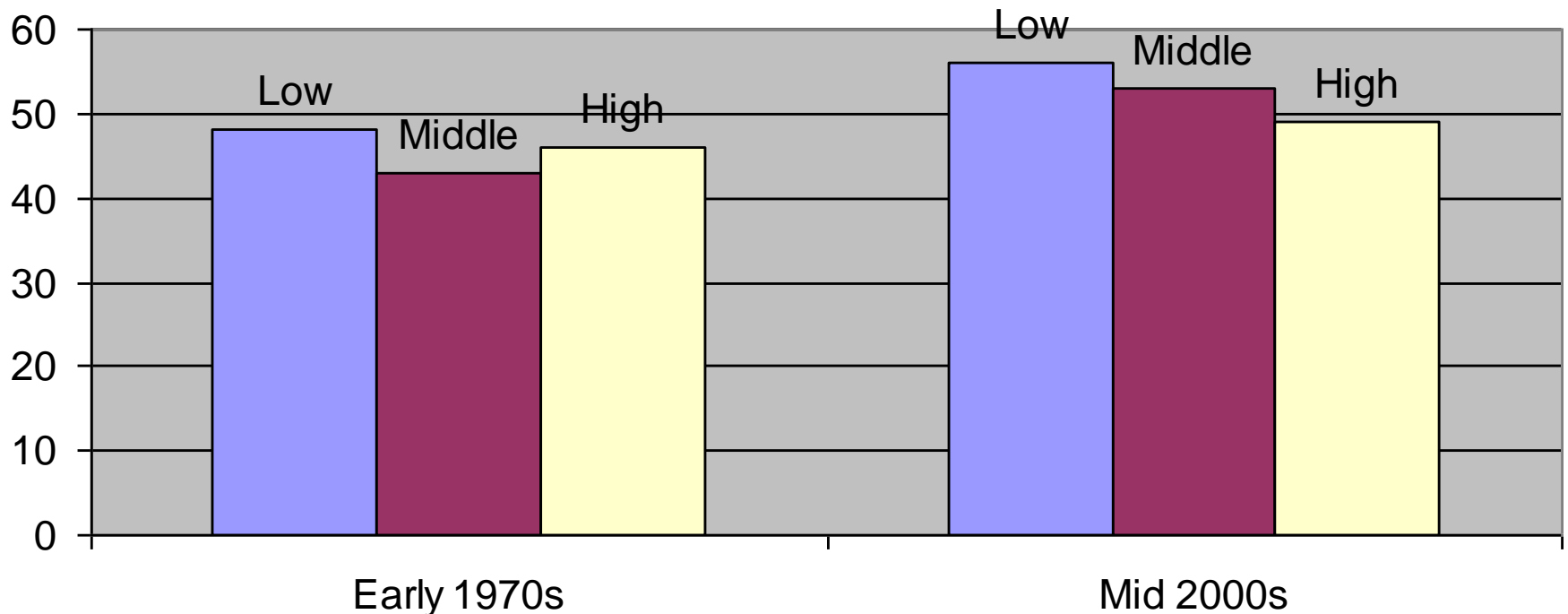
- ◆ Business Week cover story, May 2003

Total Enrollment in Colleges and Universities



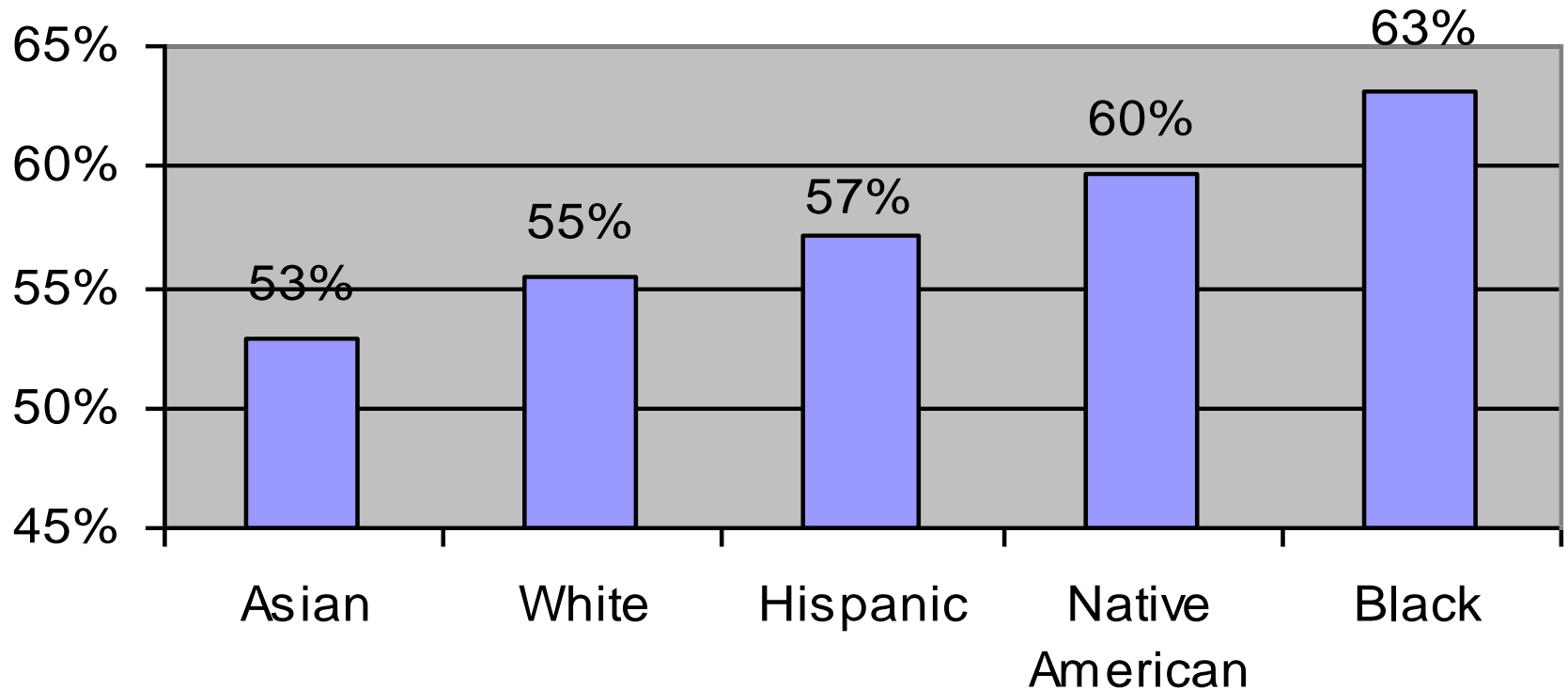
Low-Income Women Make Greatest Enrollment Gains

**% Women Students Enrolled in College,
by Income Level**

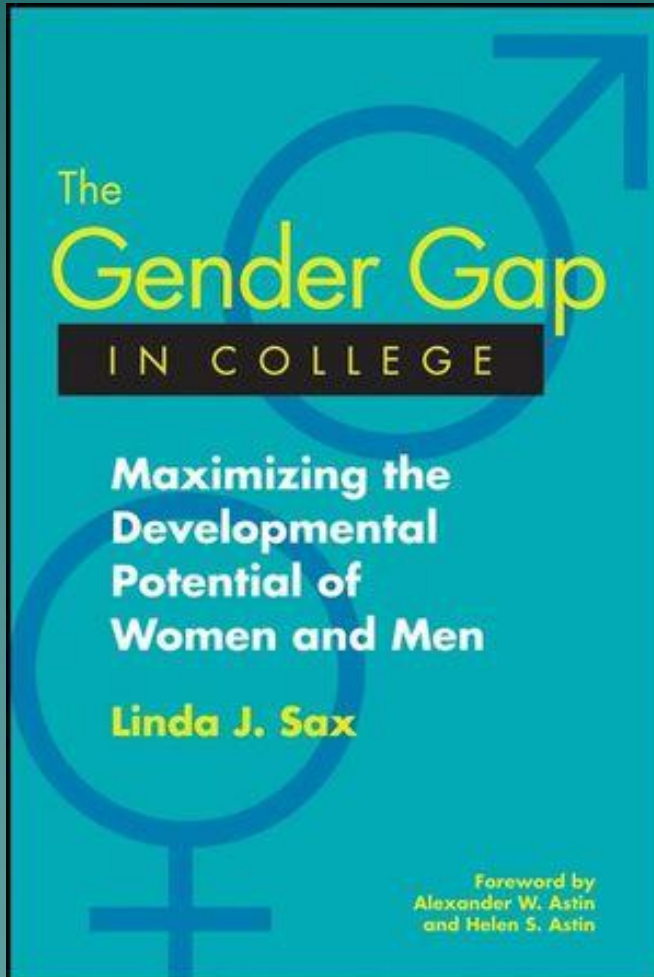


Gender Gap Most Pronounced Among Non-Asian Minorities

% Women in College by Race



Beyond the Enrollment Gap




- ◆ What are gender differences in the characteristics of students who come to college? How has that changed over 40 years?
- ◆ Do women and men experience college differently? Are there gender differences in the “impact” of college?

Data Sources

- ◆ Surveys conducted by Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA
- ◆ Entering student trends (1966 to 2006)
 - ◆ More than 8 million students entering more than 1,000 baccalaureate institutions
- ◆ Four-year longitudinal follow-up survey (1994-1998)

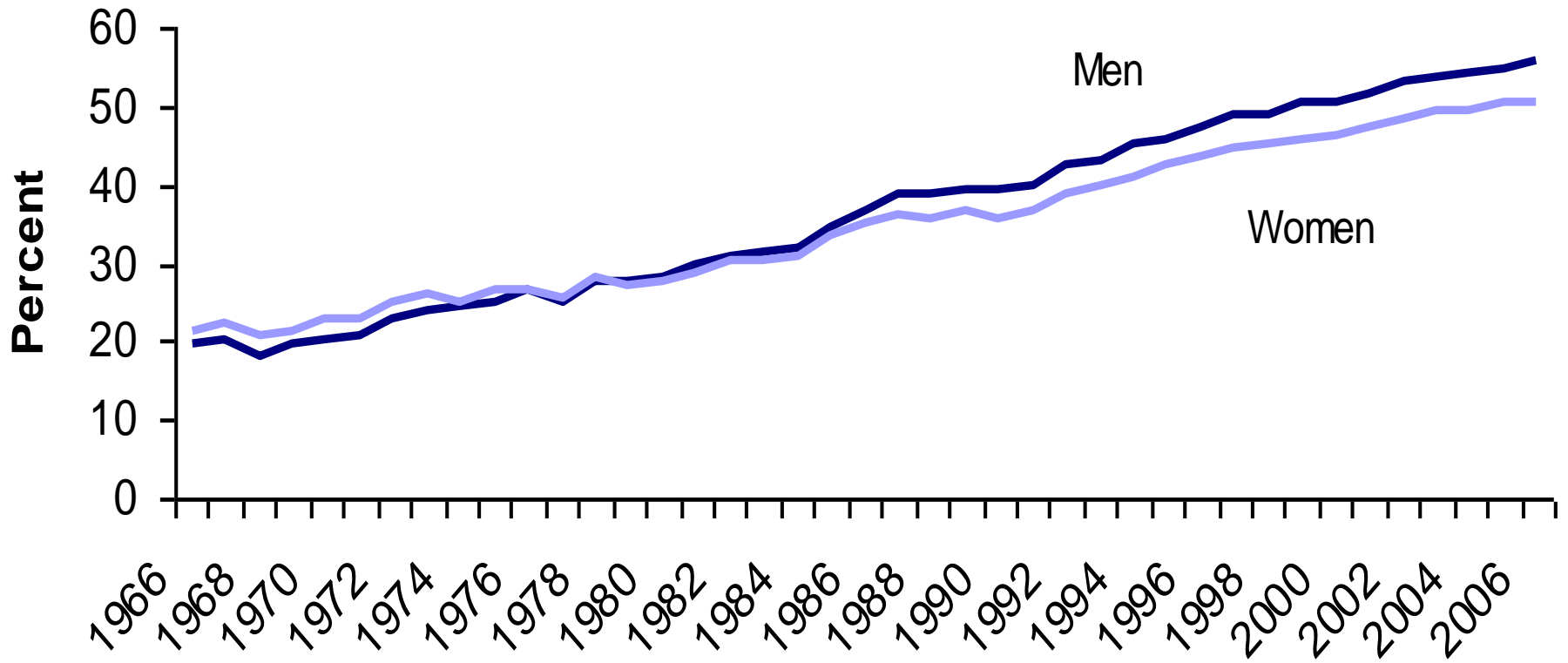
Key Gender Differences Among First-Year College Students

- ◆ Socioeconomic Background
 - ◆ Academic Self-Confidence and Engagement
 - ◆ Physical and Psychological Well-Being
 - ◆ Community Orientation
- 

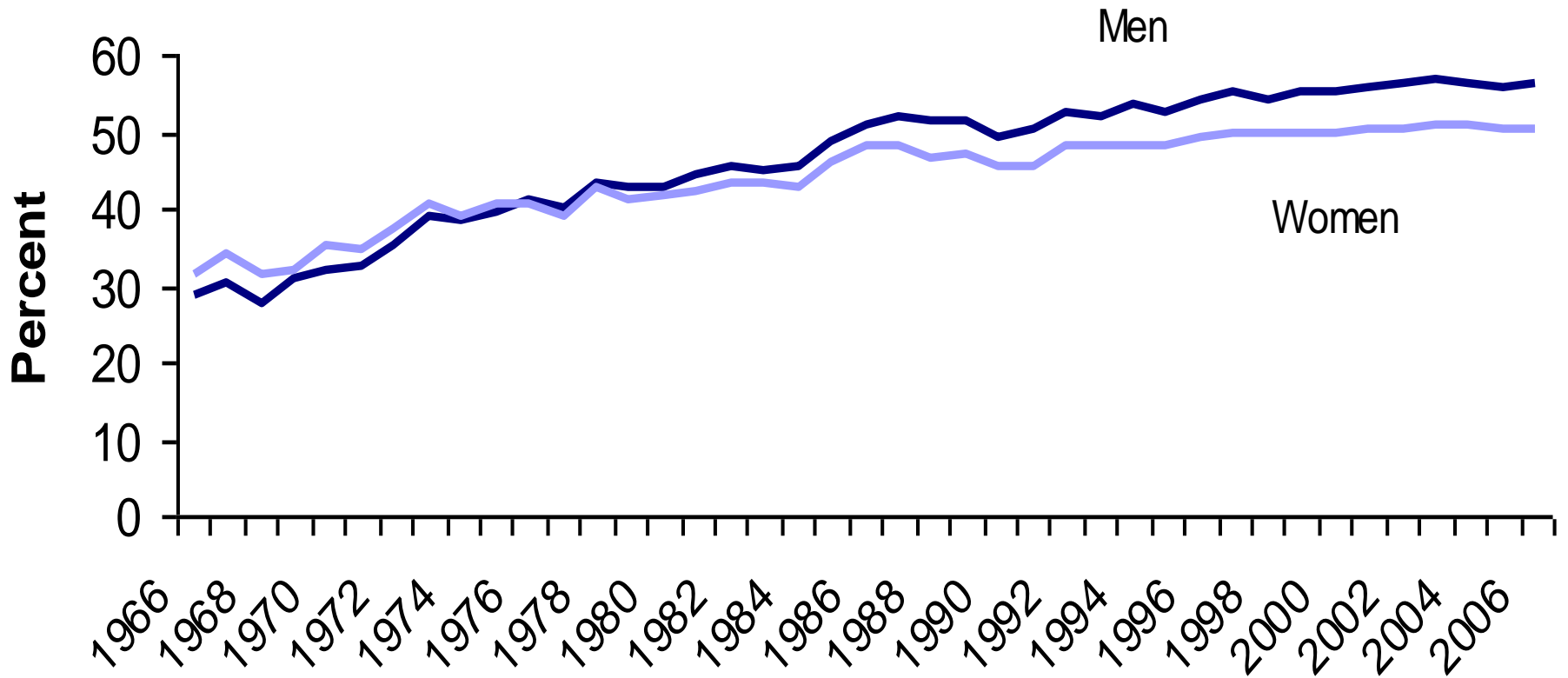
Socioeconomic Background

The image features a solid teal background. In the upper center, the words "Socioeconomic" and "Background" are stacked vertically in a large, bold, white sans-serif font. Each letter has a subtle drop shadow, giving it a slight 3D appearance. At the bottom right corner, there is a dark teal silhouette of a mountain range with jagged peaks.

Mother's Education (% with College Degree or Higher)

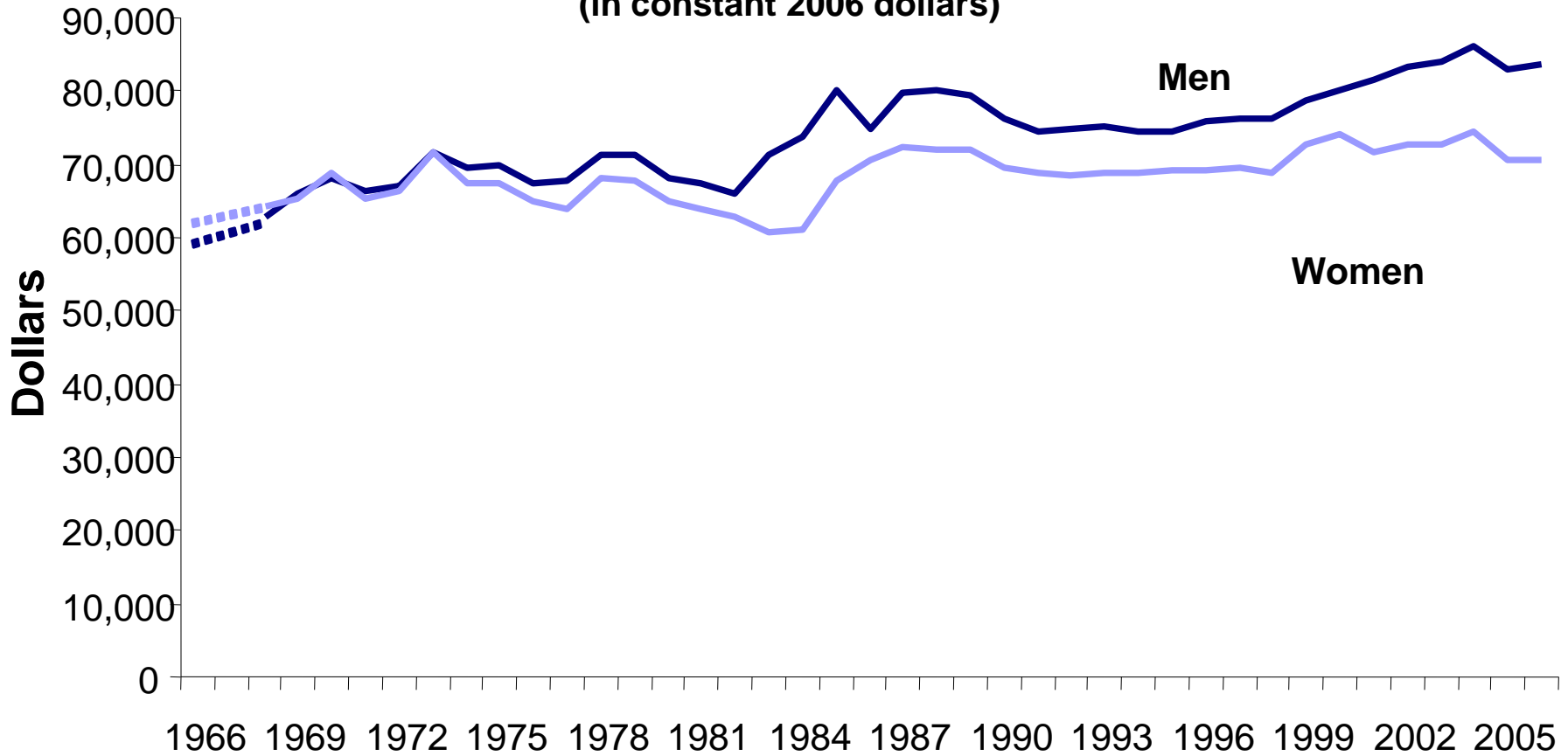


Father's Education (% with College Degree or Higher)



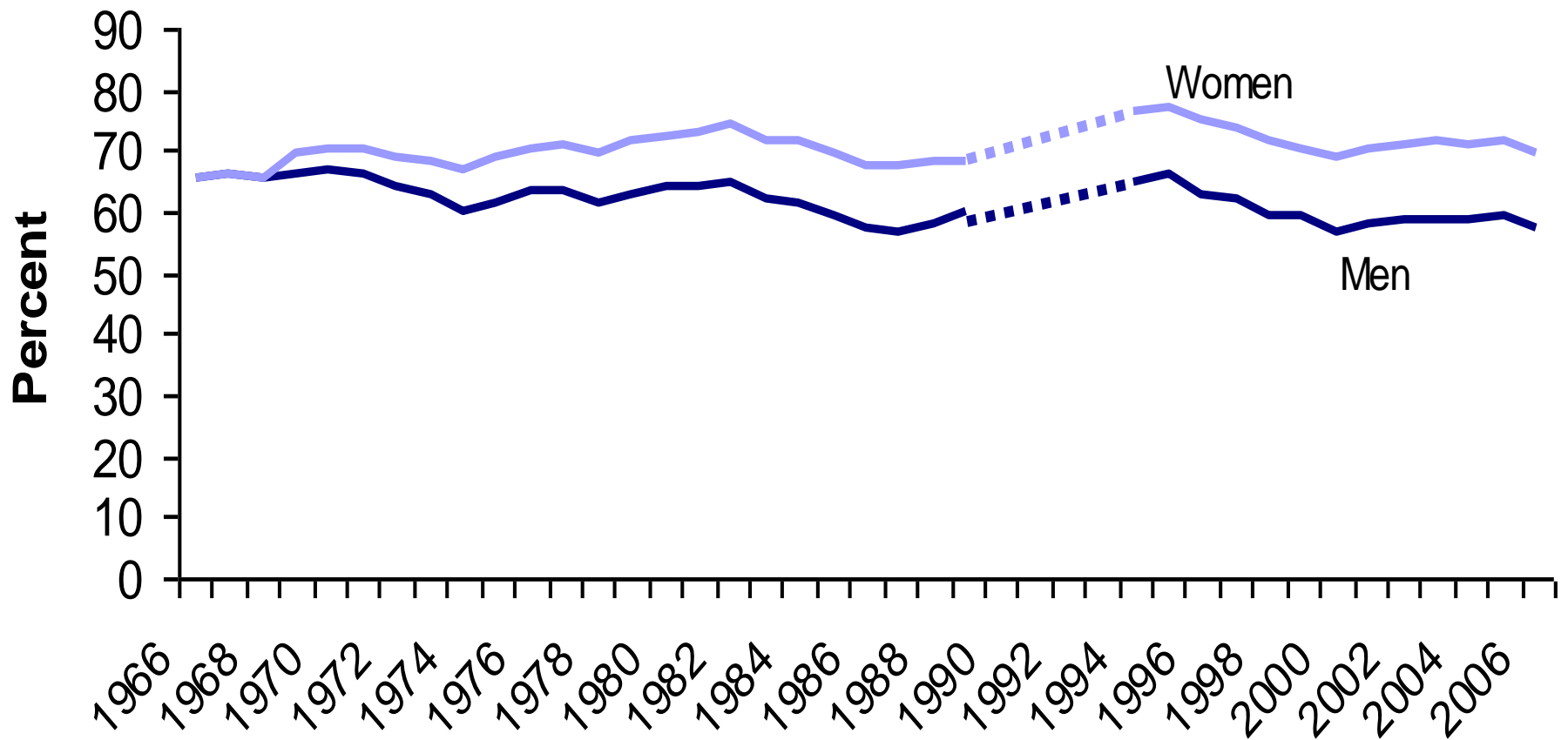
Median Family Income of Entering Freshmen (1966-2006)

(in constant 2006 dollars)

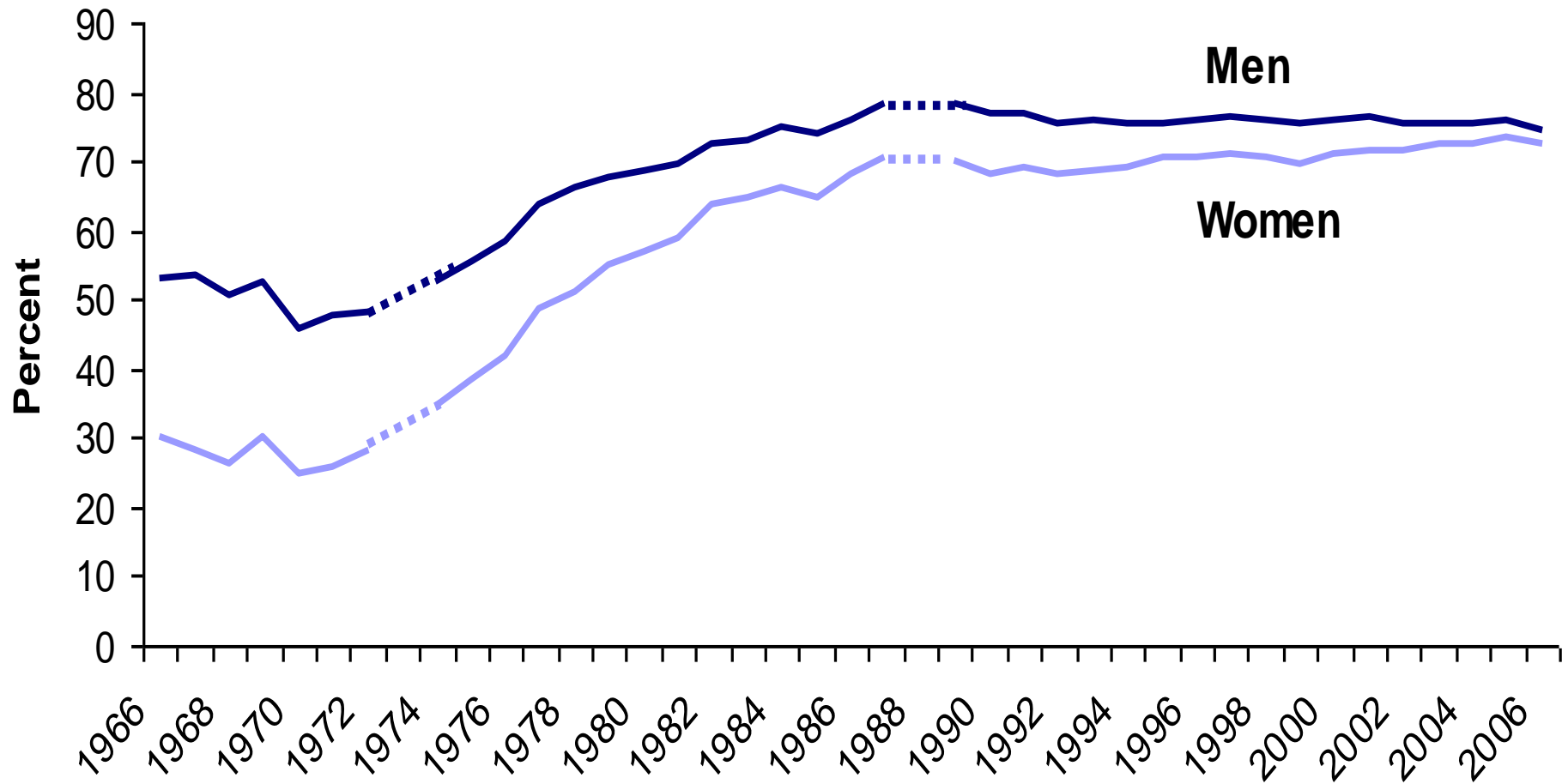


Data unavailable for the year 1967

Concern About Ability to Pay for College



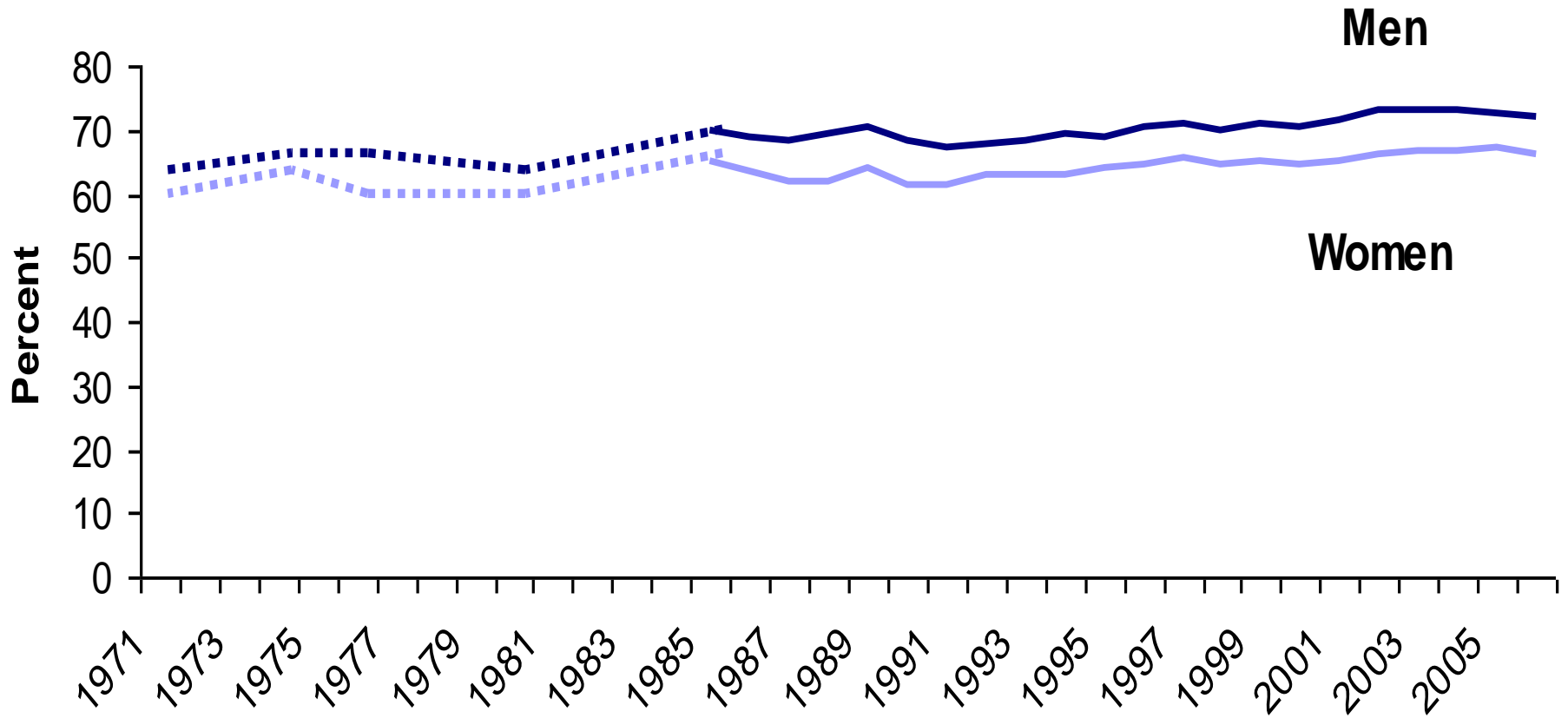
Goal of Being Well-Off Financially



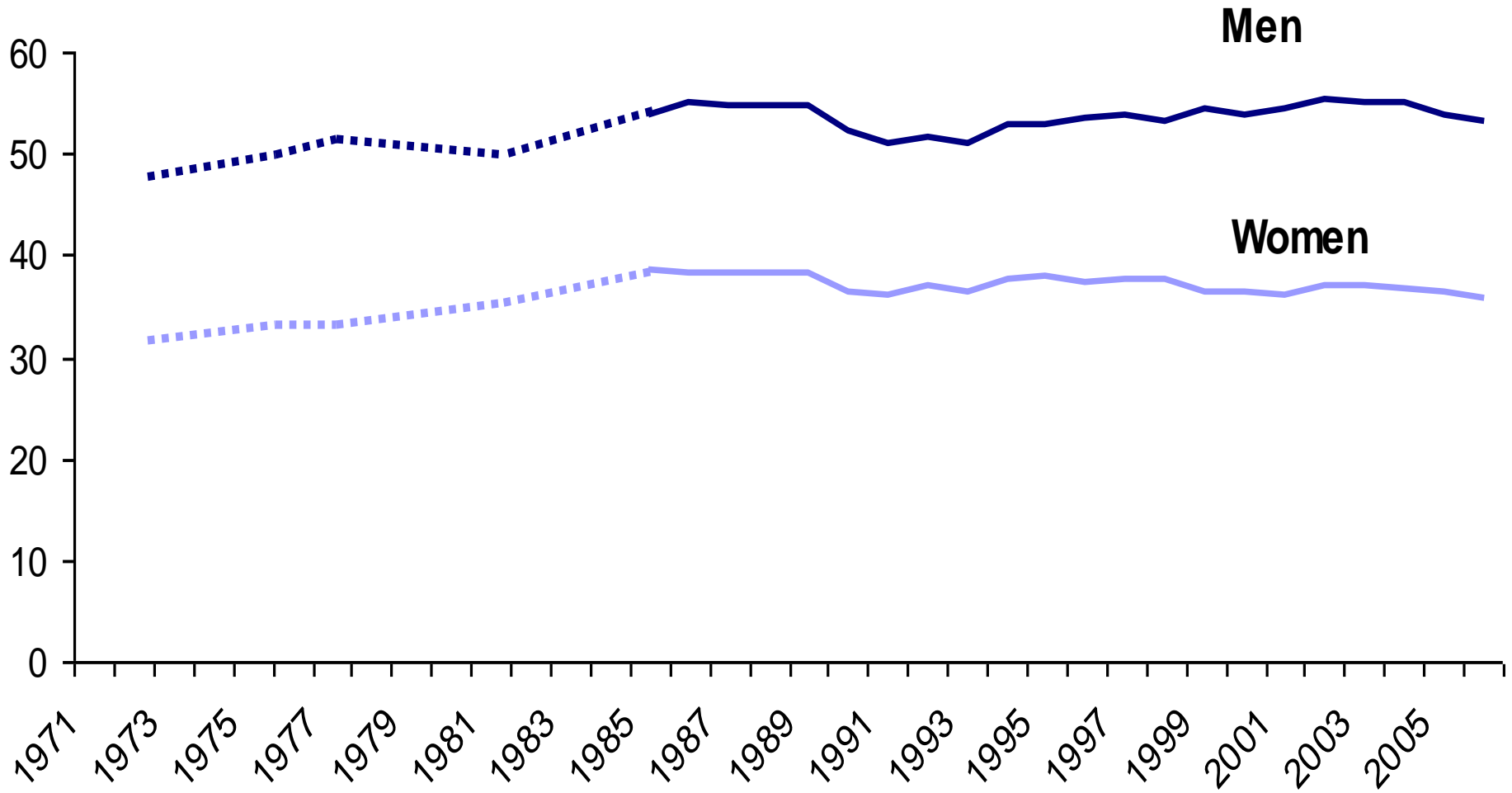
Academic Self- Confidence and Engagement

The background is a solid teal color. In the bottom right corner, there is a stylized silhouette of a mountain range in a slightly darker shade of teal.

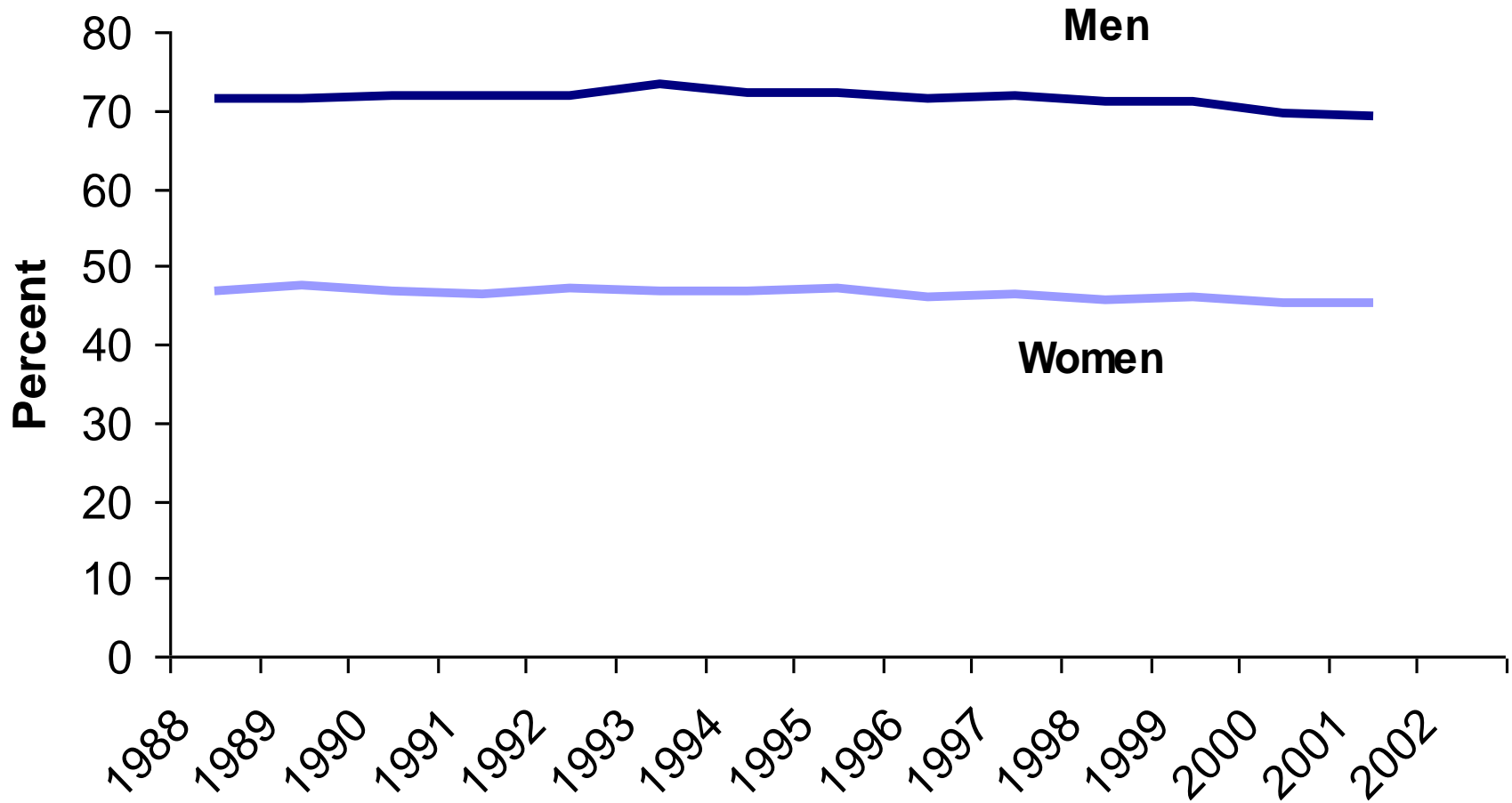
Self-rated Academic Ability



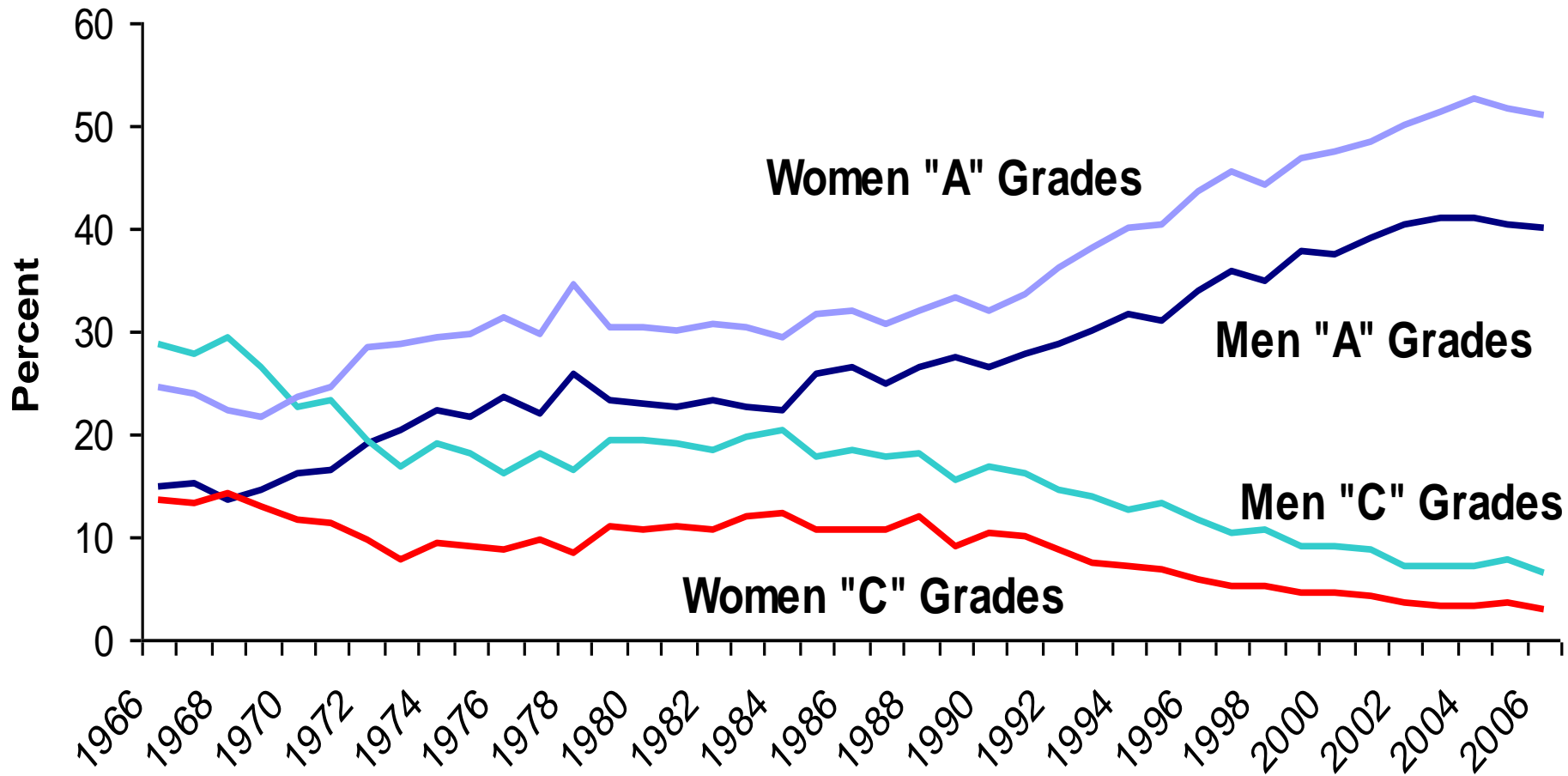
Self-rated Mathematical Ability



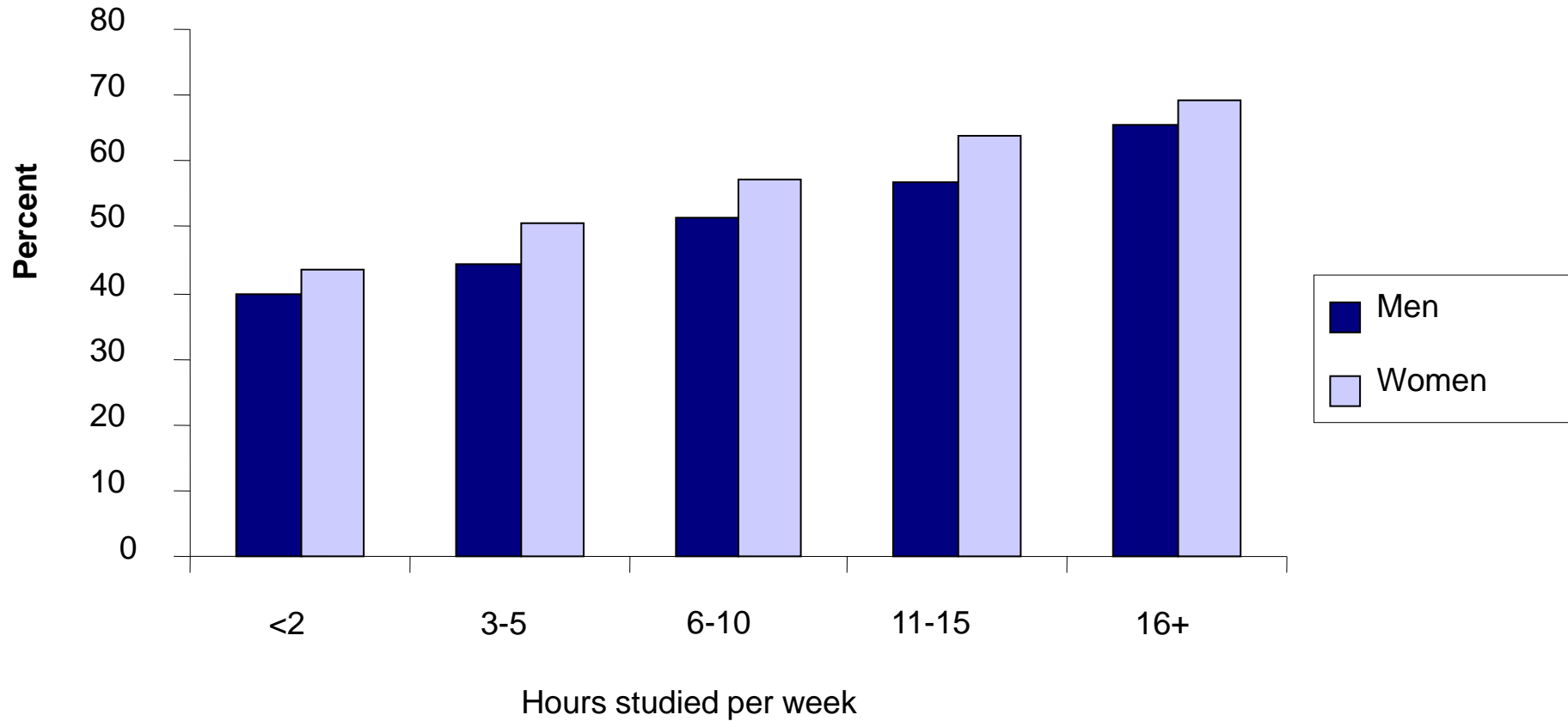
Self-rated Competitiveness



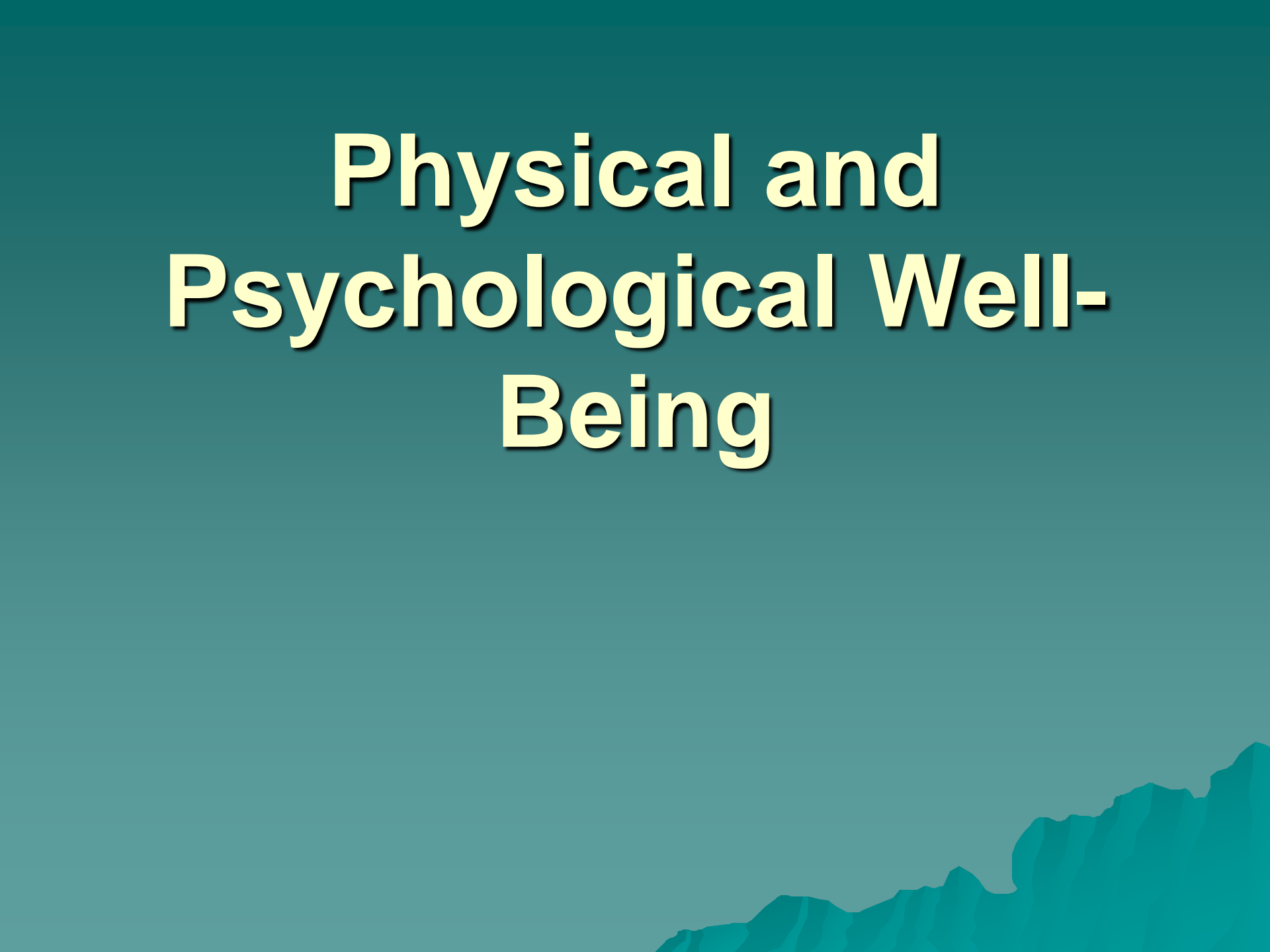
% Earning "A" and "C" Grades



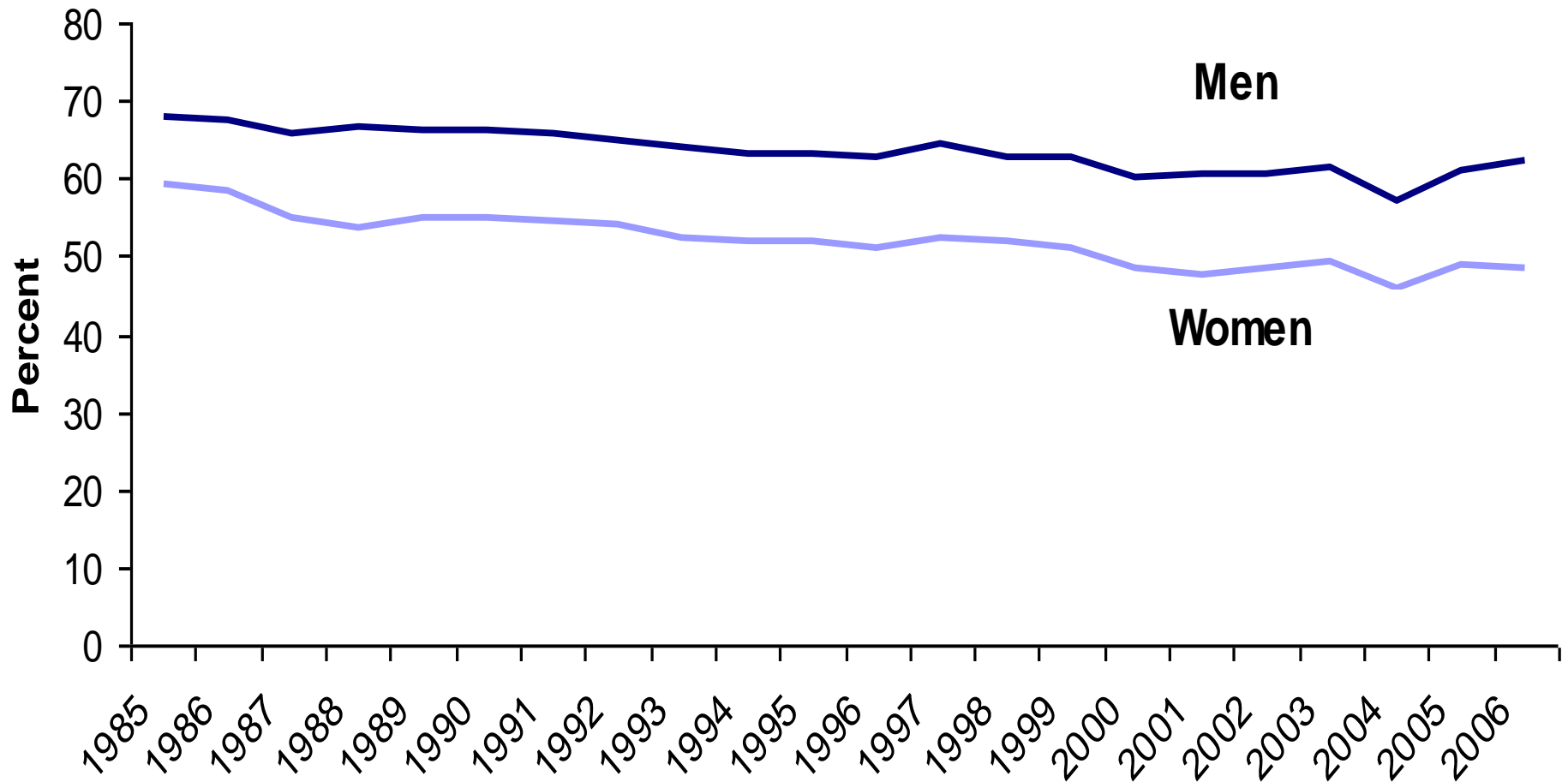
% Earning "A-, A, or A+" High School GPAs, by Time Spent Studying



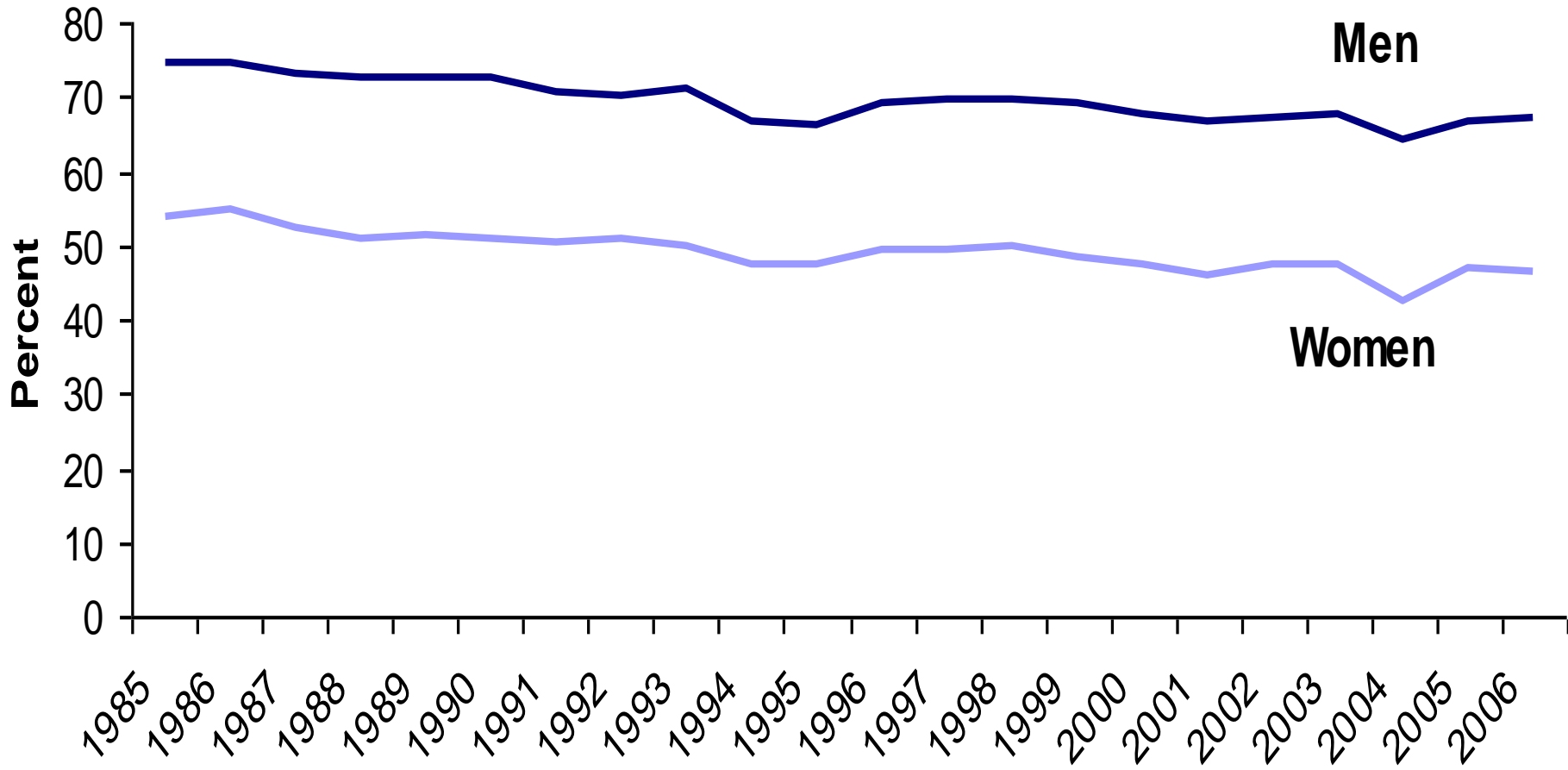
Physical and Psychological Well- Being

The background is a solid teal color. In the bottom right corner, there is a silhouette of a mountain range, rendered in a slightly darker shade of teal than the background.

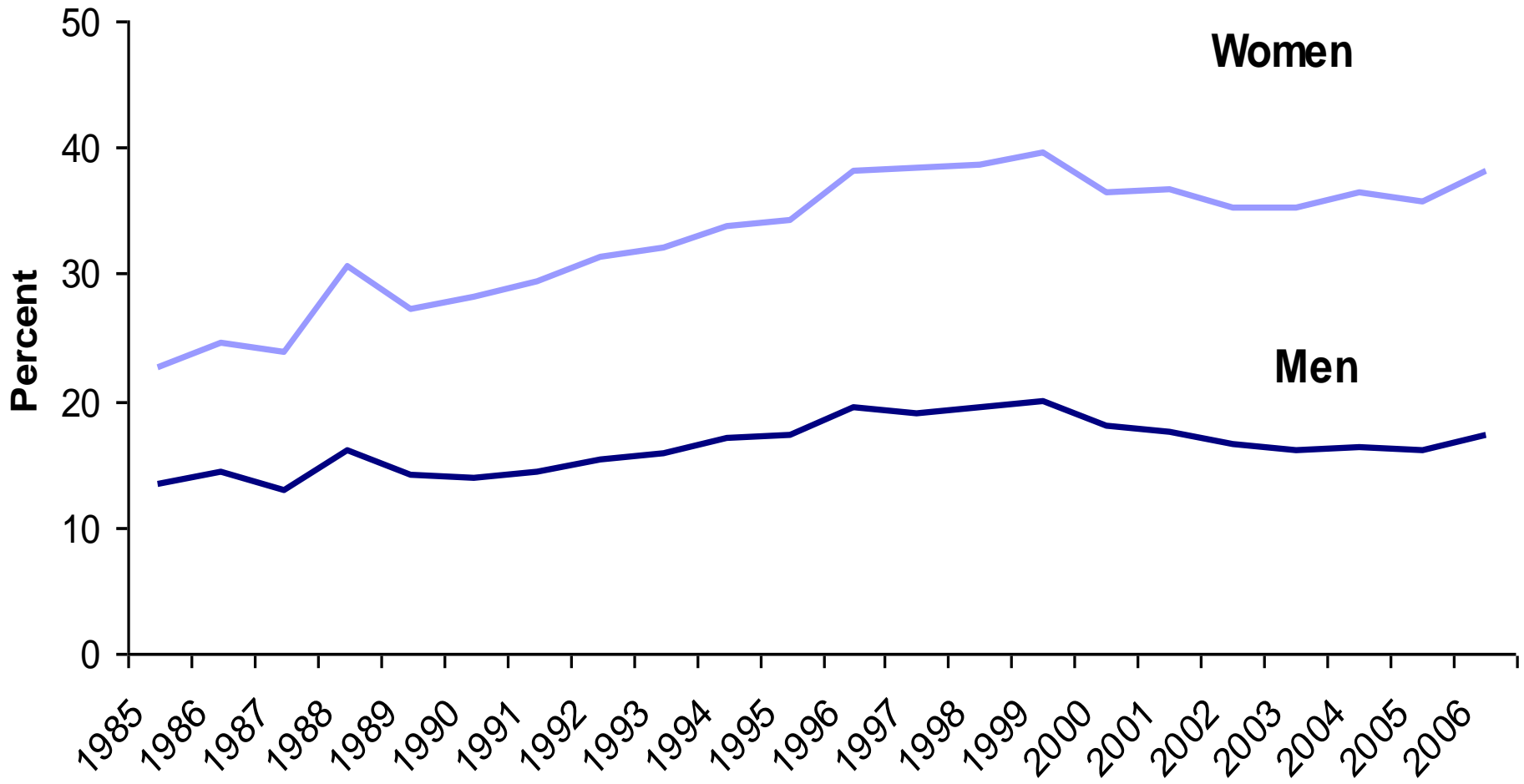
Self-rated Emotional Health



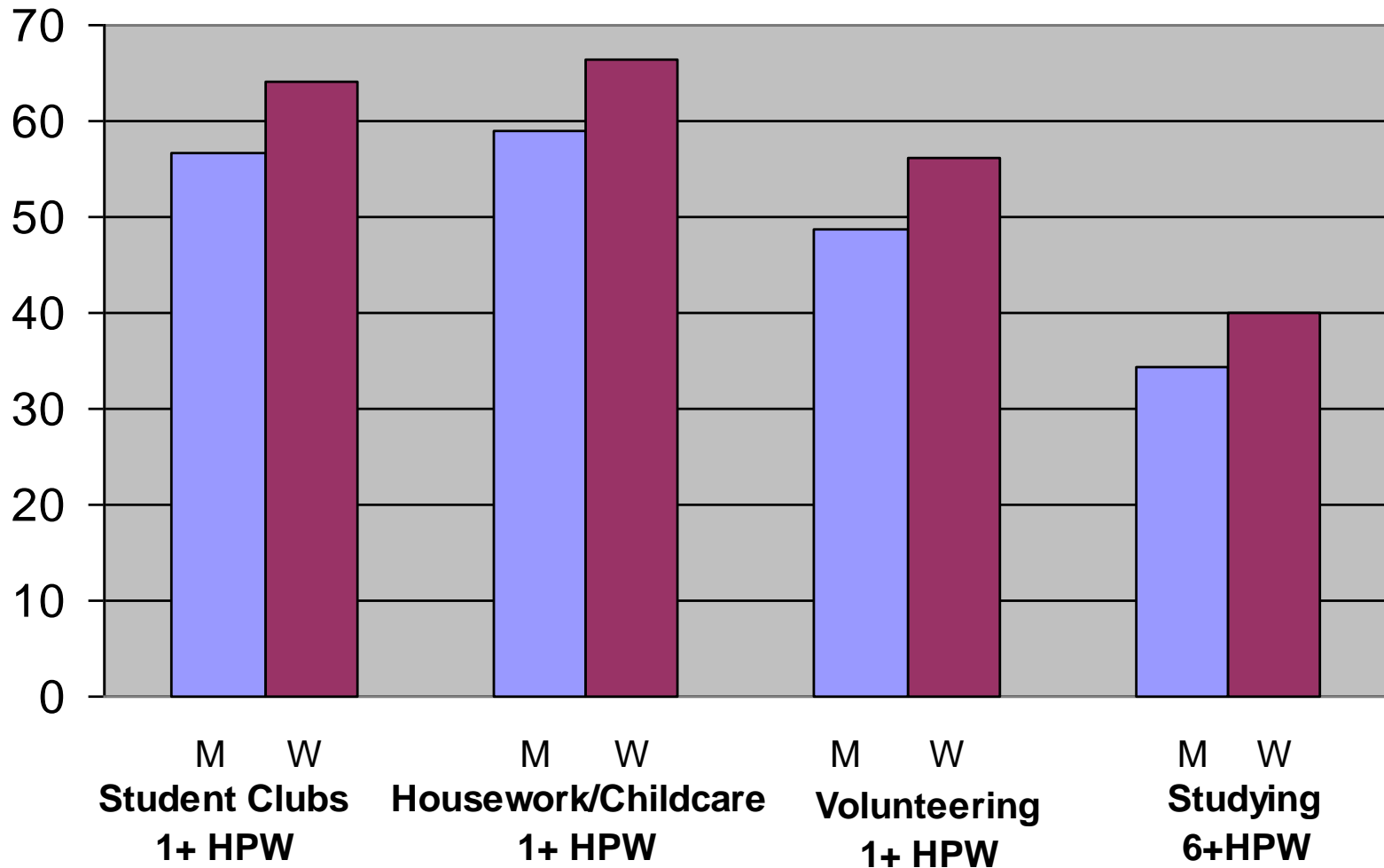
Self-Rated Physical Health



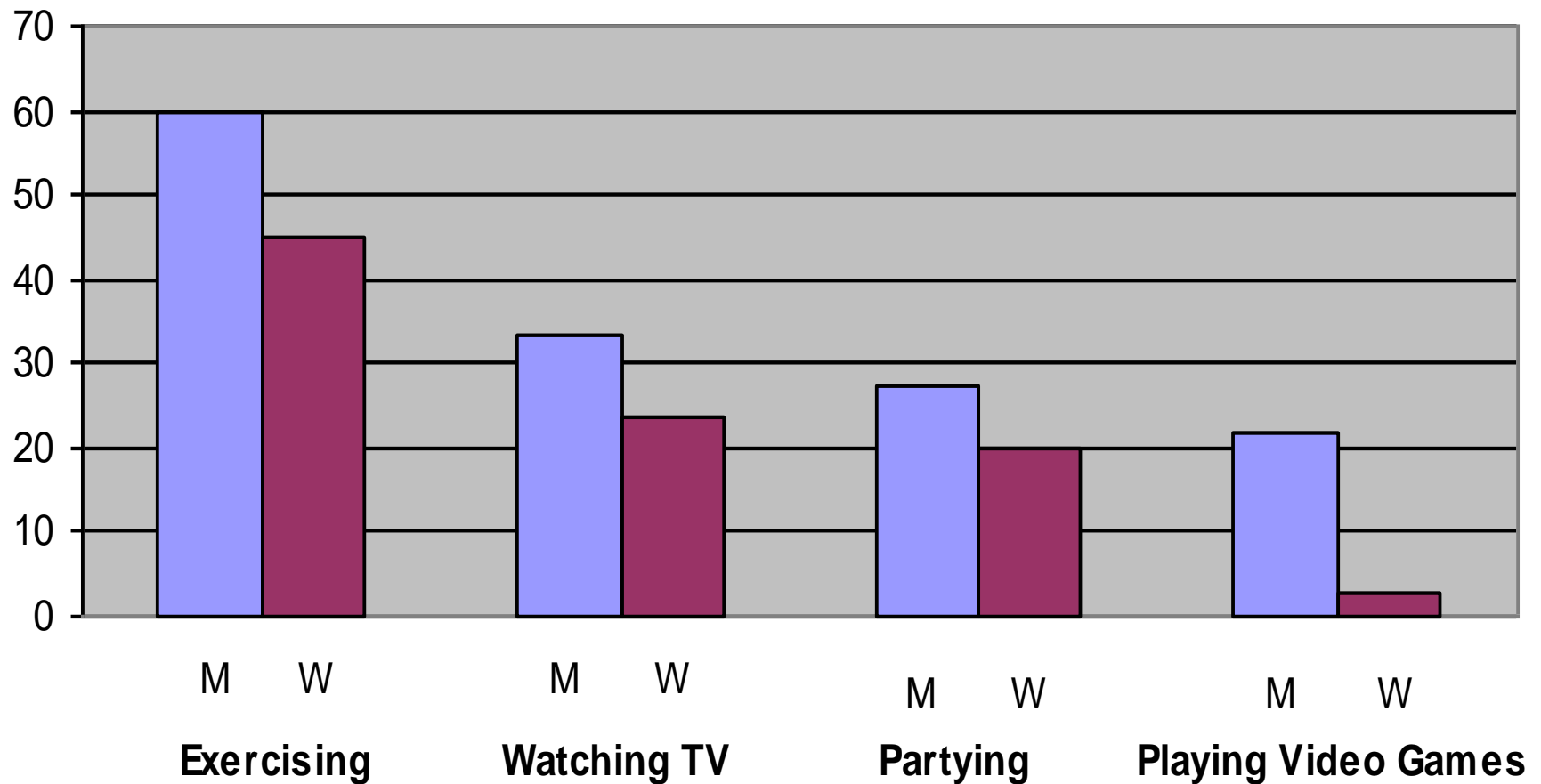
Feeling Overwhelmed by Responsibilities



Gender Differences in Time Allocation



Gender Differences in Time Allocation (percent spending 6 or more hours per week)

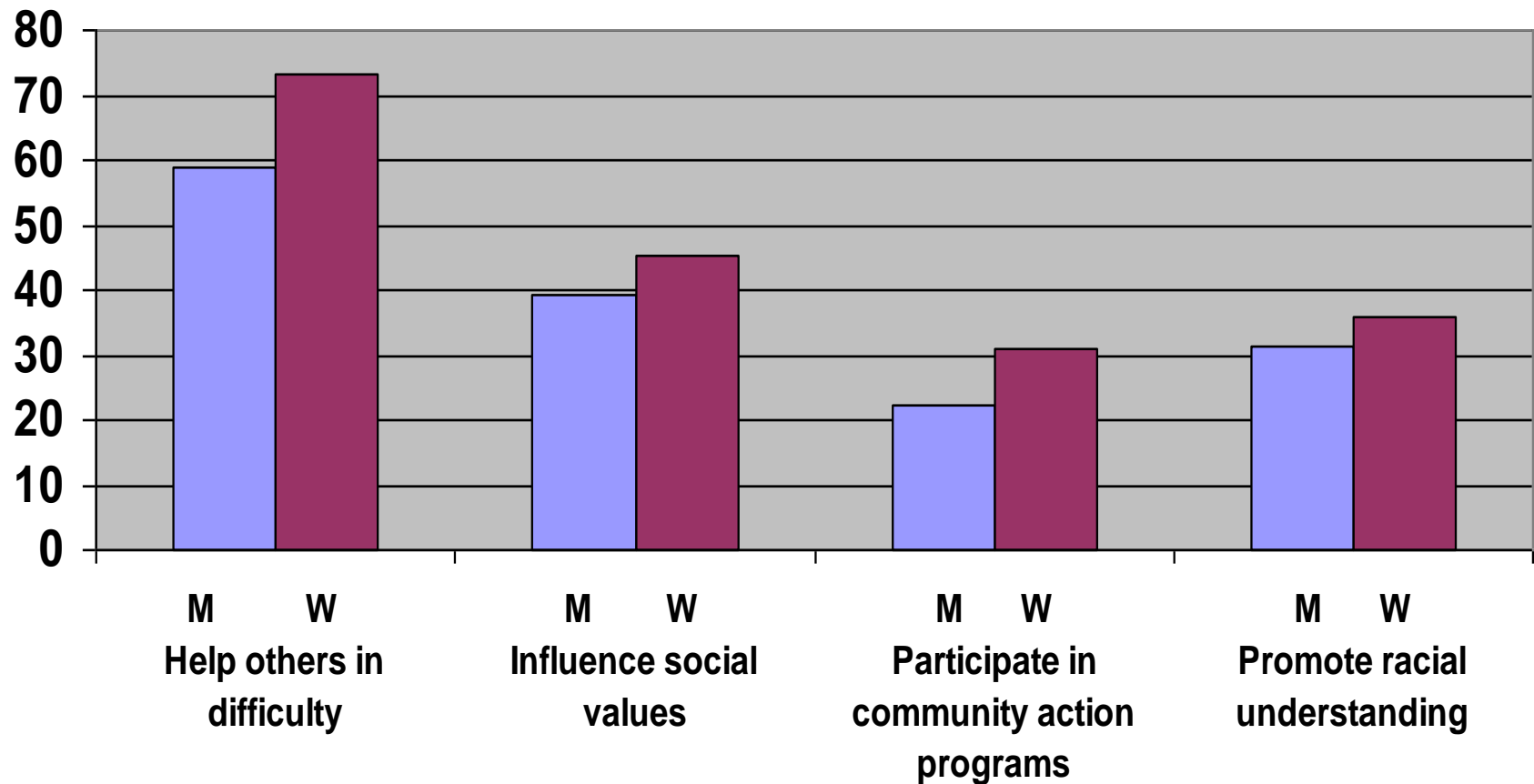


Community Orientation

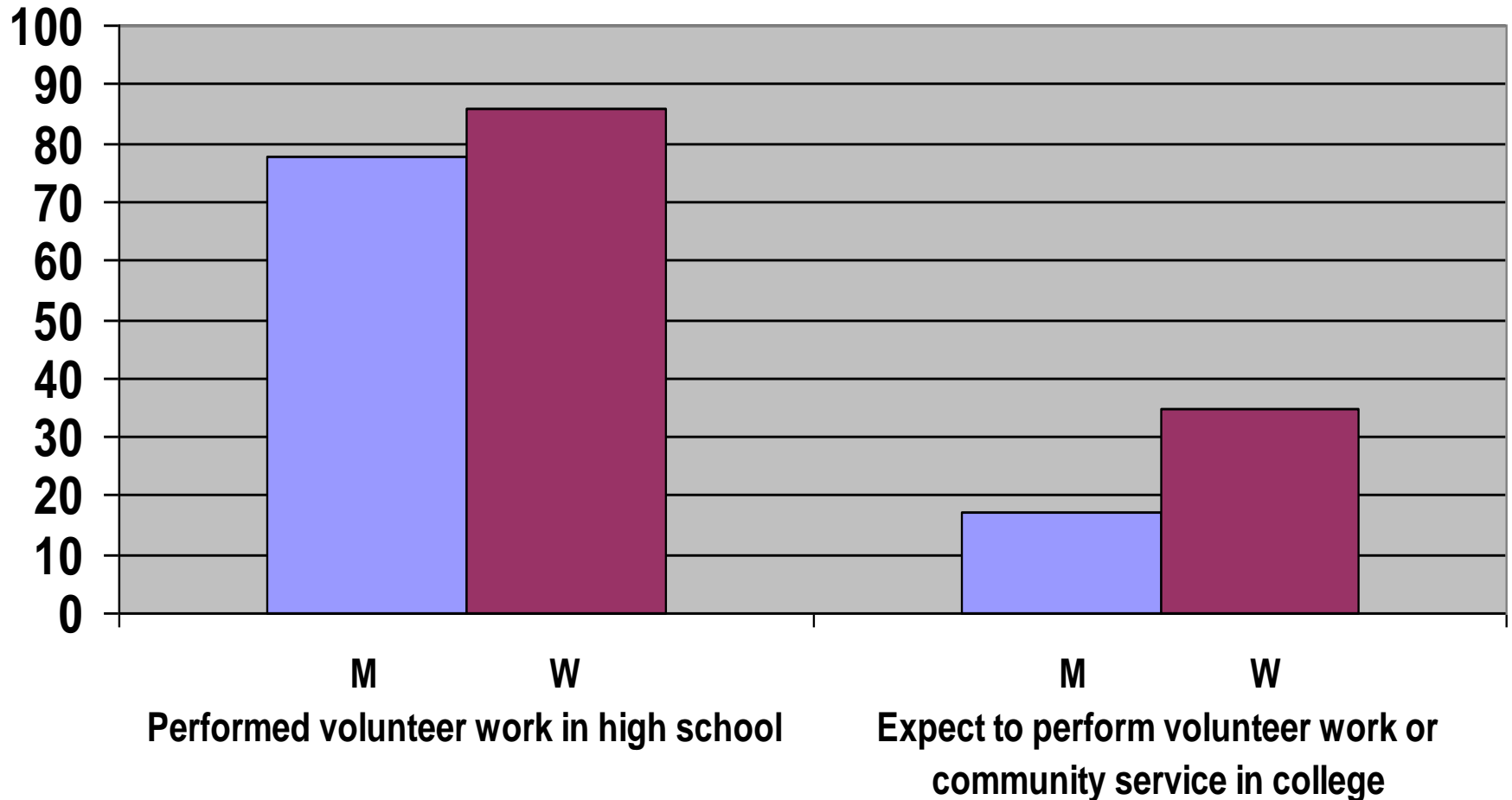


Gender Differences in Community Orientation

(percent rating very important or essential)



Gender Differences in Volunteerism



***Gender Differences are Evident
at College Entry, But...***

***Are there Gender Differences in
the “Impact” of College?***

Are there Gender Differences in the Impact of College?

- ◆ Examined three categories of college outcomes:
 - Personality and Identity (11 measures)
 - Political and Social Attitudes (8 measures)
 - Academic Outcomes (7 measures)
- ◆ Assessed how these outcomes were influenced by various aspects of college
 - Type of college attended
 - Place of residence during college
 - Financial situation
 - Characteristics of college student body
 - Forms of curricular and extracurricular involvement

Institutional and Student Samples

Institutional Type	Institutional Sample	Student Samples		
		Total	Women	Men
Public University	16	1,189	726	463
Private University	25	3,163	1,825	1,338
Public 4-Year	19	1,320	782	538
Private Nonsectarian 4-Year	52	4,373	2,677	1,696
Private Catholic 4-Year	28	3,721	2,291	1,430
Private Other Religious 4-Year	64	3,871	2,600	1,271
Total	204	17,637	10,901	6,736

Proportion of Significant College Effects That Are...

	<u>Percent</u>
Identical for women and men	27%
Stronger for one gender	18%
Significant only for one gender	53%
Opposite for women and men	2%

Gender Differences in College Effects: *Examples Across Four Themes*

Theme #1: Salience of Family Connections for Women

Theme #2: Gendered Effects of Student-Faculty Interaction

Theme #3: Academic Engagement is Especially Critical for Men

Theme #4: Complex Reactions to Diversity Among Male Students

Connection to Family

*Attending college farther away
from parents predicts...*

Gains in leadership confidence for women only

Increases in emotional health for women only

Gains in academic orientation for women only

Connection to Family: Implications for Campus Practice and Future Research

- ◆ Encourage parents to “let go” of their daughters
- ◆ Be wary of the technology tether
- ◆ Consider the needs of women who cannot go away to college

- ◆ Study the consequences of women’s ongoing connections to family
- ◆ How does the type and frequency of student-parent communication relate to students’ personal, academic and social development during college?
- ◆ How does this vary by students’ gender, race and class?

Student-Faculty Interaction

Unique Effects for Men

Greater exposure to faculty predicts...

Gains in cultural awareness for men only

Increases in political liberalism for men only

Greater commitment to promoting racial understanding
for men only

More progressive gender role orientations for men only

Student-Faculty Interaction

Unique Effects for Women

Faculty not taking student's comments seriously predicts...

Declines in self-rated physical health for women only

Declines in self-rated math ability for women only

Declines in degree aspirations for women only



Student-Faculty Interaction

Unique Effects for Women

Receiving honest feedback from faculty predicts...

Gains in physical health for women only

Gains in drive to achieve that are larger for women

Higher college GPA's for women than men

Student-Faculty Interaction: Implications for Campus Practice and Future Research

- ◆ Probe on the student-faculty dynamic in counseling, residential life
- ◆ Use orientation and first-year seminars to develop realistic expectations among students
- ◆ Encourage faculty to reflect on their teaching practices and out-of-class demeanor with male and female students
- ◆ Assess the qualitative dimensions of student-faculty interactions (quality vs. quantity)
- ◆ How does the nature of student-faculty interactions depend on:
 - where the interaction takes place?
 - the academic discipline?
 - the gender of the professor?

Academic Engagement

Time devoted to studying and homework predicts...

Gains in political engagement for men only

Gains in cultural awareness for men only

Higher college GPA's for men than women

Greater academic confidence for men than women

Academic Engagement: Implications for Campus Practice and Future Research

- ◆ Consider strategies for facilitating greater academic engagement among male students
- ◆ Prioritize men's involvement in high-impact practices
 - “learning communities, first-year seminars, writing-intensive courses, student-faculty research, study abroad, internships and capstone seminars” (Kinzie, 2007, using NSSE data)
- ◆ Should strategies for promoting student engagement be different for women and men?
- ◆ What specific forms of academic engagement are most influential for women and men?

Exposure to Diversity

Diversity workshops predict...

Increases in commitment to racial understanding that are larger for men

More progressive gender role attitudes for men only

Social diversity experiences predict...

Gains in cultural awareness, commitment to social activism, and desire to improve race relations that are larger for men



Exposure to Diversity

Some Challenges for Men

Diversity workshops predict...

Greater levels of stress or “feeling overwhelmed” for men only

Taking women’s studies courses predicts...

Declines in self-rated physical health for men only



Exposure to Diversity: Implications for Campus Practice and Future Research

- ◆ Campuses should promote opportunities to learn about diversity, but should provide resources for those who may experience stress or self-doubt.
- ◆ Consider why women seem to benefit less. Might they need more advanced diversity programming?
- ◆ Why are men more challenged/conflicted by these experiences than women? Specifically what aspects of diversity programming lead to which outcomes?
- ◆ Would we find the same gender difference in reaction within different racial/ethnic groups?

Getting to the Bottom Line

- ◆ **Campuses must be aware of and responsive to challenges faced by both genders**
 - For men: Access, academic engagement, civic engagement, uneven response to diversity
 - For women: Financial strain, stress, self-confidence, connection to family, reaction to faculty
- ◆ **Engage in campus conversations**
 - How are women and men faring on our campus?
 - What changes should we make to programs or services?
 - Who is “responsible” for addressing gender gaps?