

Project Pulse

SARIS
Student Affairs Research, Information and Systems
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Gender Equity Survey (F99-E)

Executive Summary: Nineteen percent of women and eight percent of men perceived that they had been treated unfairly by a UMass instructor because of their sex. Eight percent of women and three percent of men perceived that they had been ignored by an instructor because of their sex. Two-thirds of respondents agreed (either strongly or somewhat) with the statement, "Overall, the required readings in the courses you have taken at UMass have included texts, works, or research studies authored by women." Twenty-four percent of women and twelve percent of men agreed (either strongly or somewhat) that "Faculty at UMass expect female students to work harder than male students." Four-fifths of respondents agreed (either strongly or somewhat) that "Instructors at UMass treat all students the same, whether the student is male or female." Nearly two-fifths said they observe "male students speaking in class more than female students" either very often or often. Forty-four percent said they hear "instructors using the terms 'man,' 'mankind,' 'he,' 'him,' or 'his,' to refer to both sexes either very often or often.

On Tuesday, October 28, 1999, Project Pulse conducted a survey on gender equity in the classroom for the Faculty Senate Council on the Status of Women. Pulse interviewers attempted to contact 843 juniors and seniors who had been randomly selected by computer from the University's database. The interviewers successfully contacted 706 of these students and 516 (73.1%) agreed to be interviewed. The response rate for the survey was 61.2%, and the sampling error is plus or minus approximately five percentage points. The final disposition of the sample is presented in Table 1. Demographics of the survey respondents are presented in Table 2.

Table 1. Final disposition of the sample.

	N	% of Total	% of Contacted
Response rate (In & cooperated)	516	61.2	73.1
In, declined interview	190	22.5	26.9
Not in	137	16.3	
Totals	*843	100.0	100.0

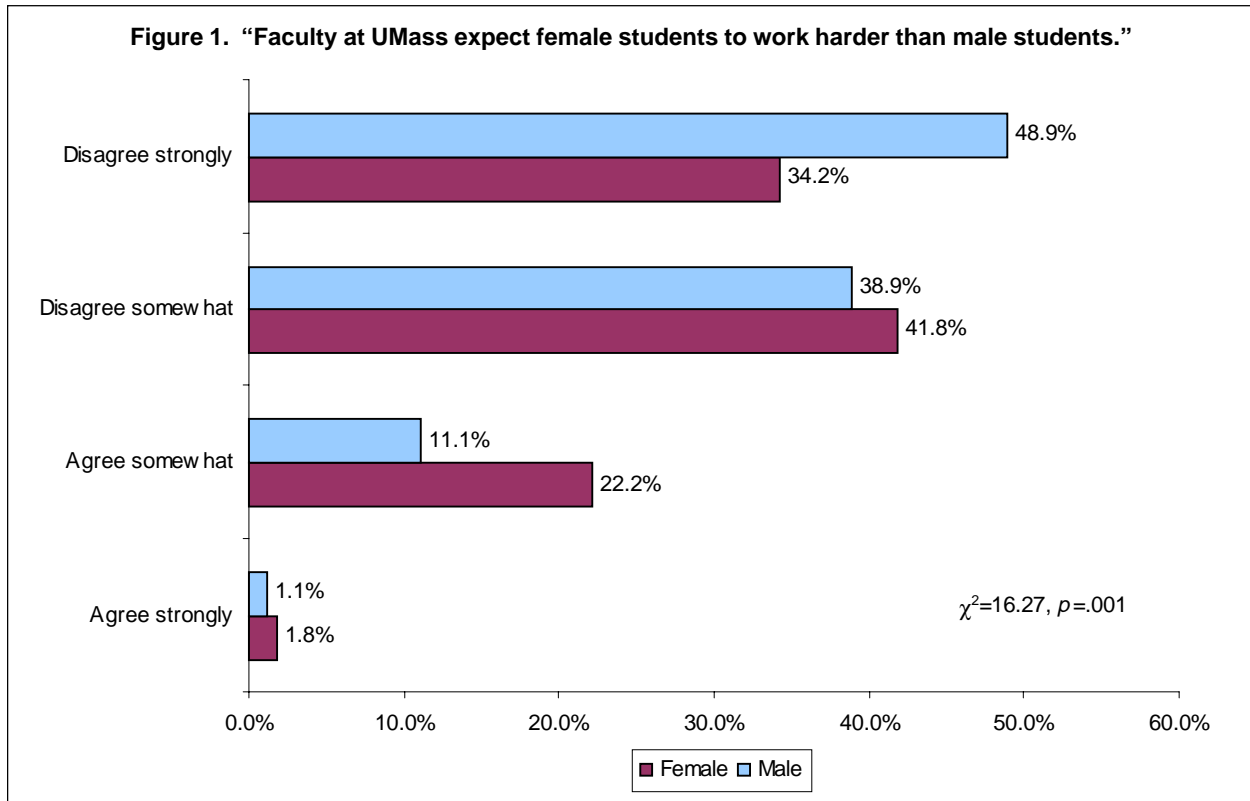
*Excludes 91 sampled students with unobtainable phone numbers.

Table 2. Demographic summary of the respondents

Female	45.2	Junior	46.5
Male	54.8	Senior	53.5

Average age = 21.8 years

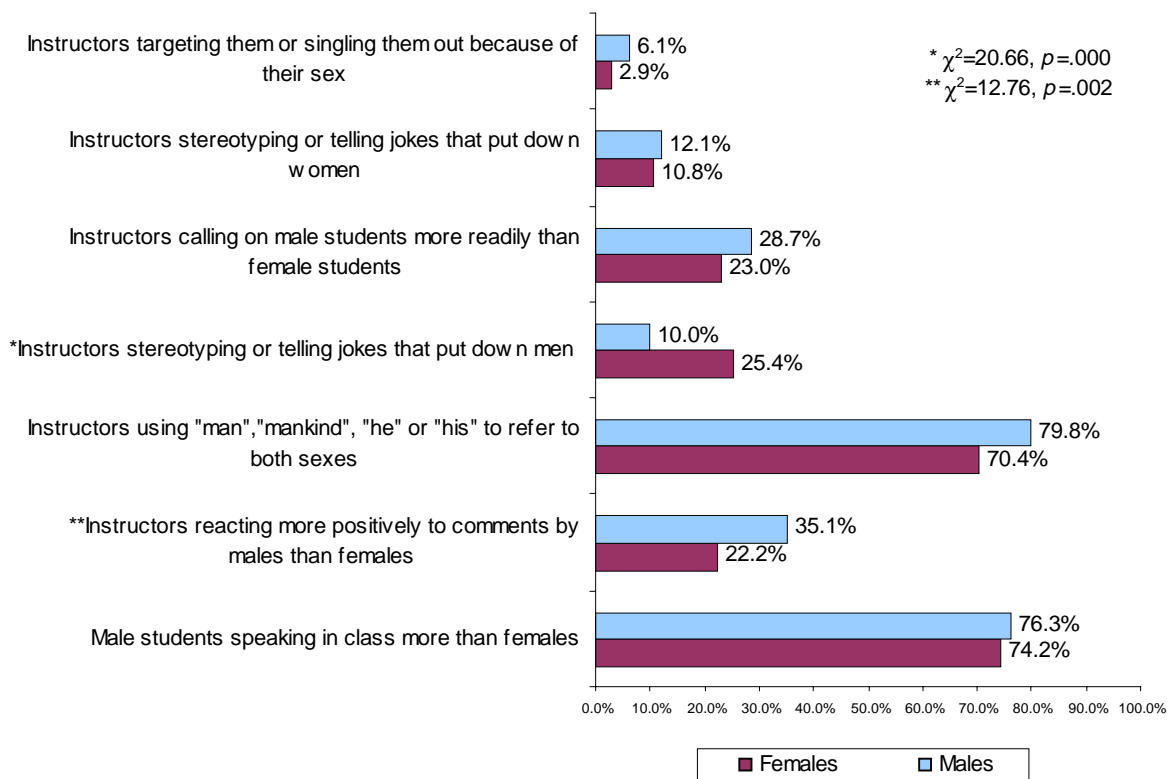
First, respondents were read four statements pertaining to academic life at UMass, and were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each. More than four-fifths of respondents (82.4%, n=410) disagreed (either strongly or somewhat) with the statement, “In general, faculty at UMass expect female students to work harder than male students.” However, women were significantly more likely than men to agree with this statement (see Figure 1). Four-fifths of respondents (79.3%, n=405) agreed (either strongly or somewhat) with the statement “Instructors at UMass treat all students the same, whether the student is male or female.”



Two of the four statements addressed the extent to which courses at UMass incorporate scholarship by women and address women’s experiences. Two-thirds of the respondents (62.2%, n=299) agreed with the statement “Overall, the required readings in the courses you have taken at UMass have included texts, works, or research studies authored by women.” A similar proportion (60.6%, n=299) agreed with the statement “The courses you have taken at UMass have reflected the experiences of women.” There were no statistically significant differences between women’s and men’s responses to these items.

Next, respondents were asked how frequently they personally see or hear various types of behaviors in their classes at UMass. Nearly two-fifths of students (38.7%, n=197) reported that they observe “male students speaking in class more than female students” either “very often” or “often.” In contrast, only 5% (n=26) observe “instructors reacting more positively to comments or observations made by males than those made by females” either “very often” or “often.” The same proportion said they observe “instructors calling on male students more readily than female students” either “very often” or “often.” More than two-fifths of respondents (43.5%, n= 219) said they hear “instructors using the terms ‘man,’ ‘mankind,’ ‘he,’ ‘him,’ or ‘his,’ to refer to both sexes” either “very often” or “often.” Only 2% (n=10) reported that they hear “course instructors stereotyping, making negative remarks about, or telling jokes that put down men” either “very often” or “often.” Only 1% (n=5) said they hear instructors making the same sorts of comments about women either “very often” or “often.” No students said they experience instructors targeting them or singling them out unfairly because of their sex either “very often” or “often.” Figure 2 contrasts the proportion of females and males indicating that they observe each behavior in their classes at UMass. As illustrated, the responses of males and females differed significantly on two of the seven items.

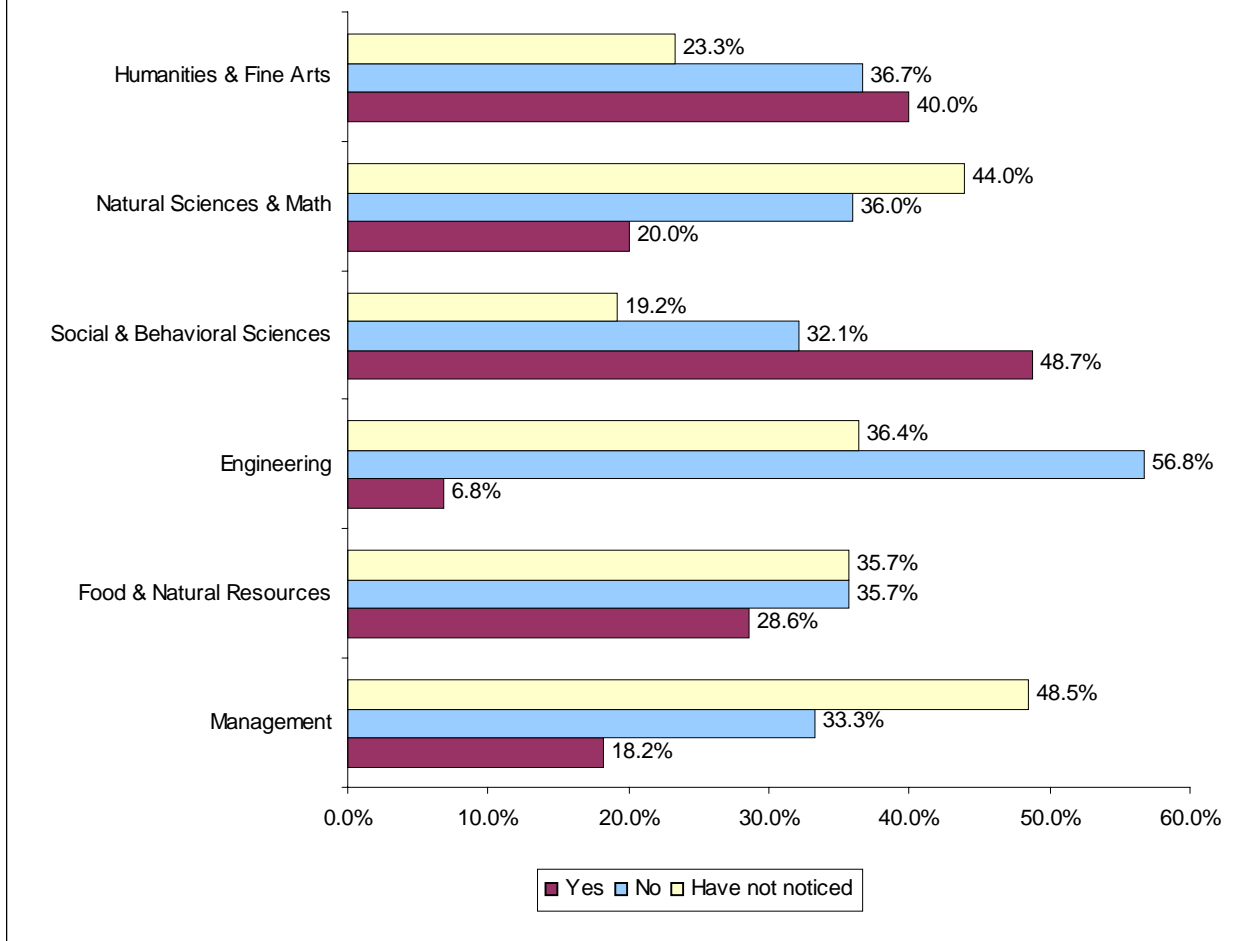
Figure 2. Proportions of females and males who observe each behavior in their classes at UMass
 (% saying "sometimes," "often," or "very often')



Next, respondents were questioned about instructor behavior and gender dynamics in one of their current classes. Specifically, students were asked to report on behavior in a small course (50 or fewer students) in their major. (The 93 students who were not taking a small course in their major during the Fall semester were skipped to the next set of survey questions.) The courses the students described had an average of 27.6 students. Over two-thirds of the students (69.4%, n=288) reported that their instructor for this course was male. The vast majority of students (80.7%, n=338) said their instructor knew them by name.

Respondents were asked if their instructors had "assigned texts, readings, research studies or other work authored by women." Twenty-nine percent (n=120) of students reported that they had not noticed, whereas 35.0% (n=143) said "yes." Women were more likely than men to report that their instructor had assigned works by women (43.6% v. 27.4%, $c^2=15.64, p=.000$), whereas men were more likely than women to say that they had not noticed (36.5% v. 21.3%, $c^2=15.64, p=.000$). Responses to this question also varied with the school or college in which the target course was offered. Nearly half (48.7%, n=38) of the students majoring in the Social and Behavioral Sciences said their course instructor assigned works authored by women, compared to only 6.8% (n=3) of students in the School of Engineering. Figure 3 illustrates students' responses to this question by school/college.

Figure 3. Proportion of students majoring in each school/college who reported that their instructor assigned texts, readings, research studies, or other work authored by women.



Nearly all respondents (96.1%, n=398) reported that in terms of academic performance, their instructor “expects the same from both” female and male students. Almost half of the students said that they voluntarily answer questions or contribute to class discussions during almost every class period. There were no significant differences in women’s and men’s responses to this question.

When asked how often their instructor calls on them when they raise their hand to make a comment or ask a question, more than half (55.2%, n=222) of the students said “very often.” As illustrated in Figure 4, women were more likely than men to report being called on “very often.” Next, students were asked, “Which group of students participates more in your class – males or females?” Forty percent of students (n=166) said “males,” 32.9% (n=137) said “females,” and 24.5% (n=102) said that males and females participate equally. As illustrated in Figure 5, male students were more likely than females to think that males participate more, while females were more likely than males to think that females participate more. Males were more likely than females to perceive that male and female students participate equally.

Figure 4. When you raise your hand to ask a question or make a comment in class, how often does the instructor call on you?

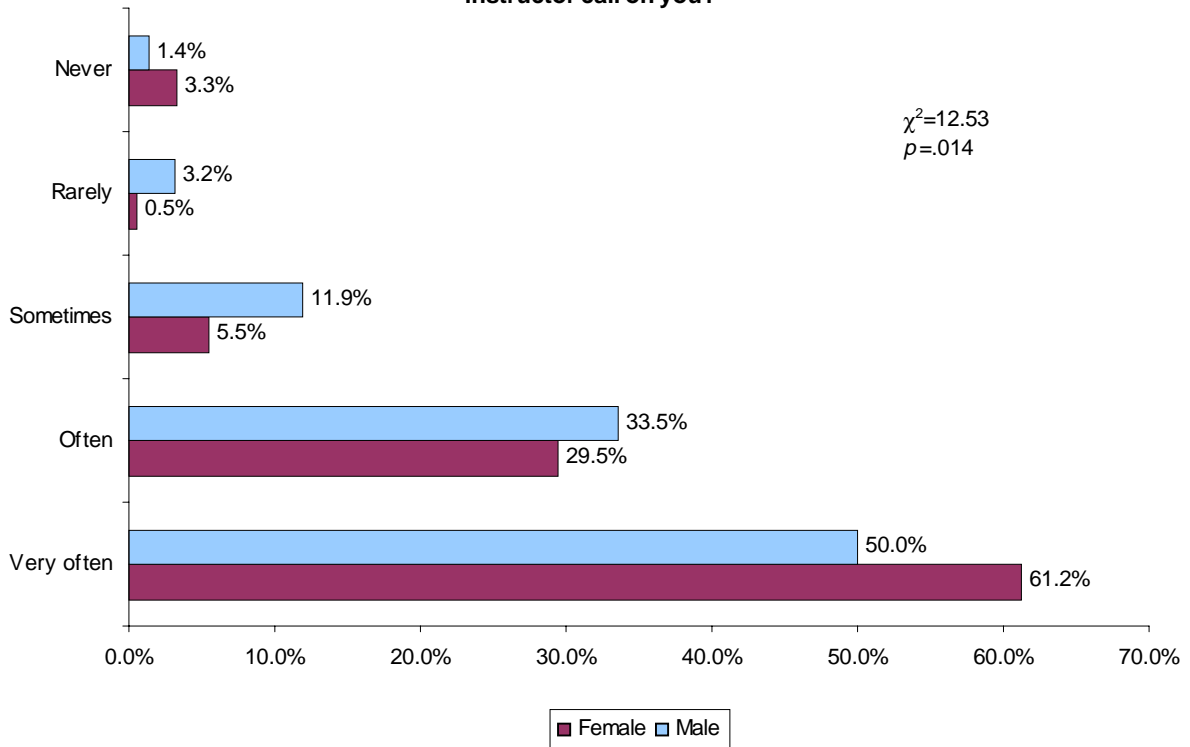
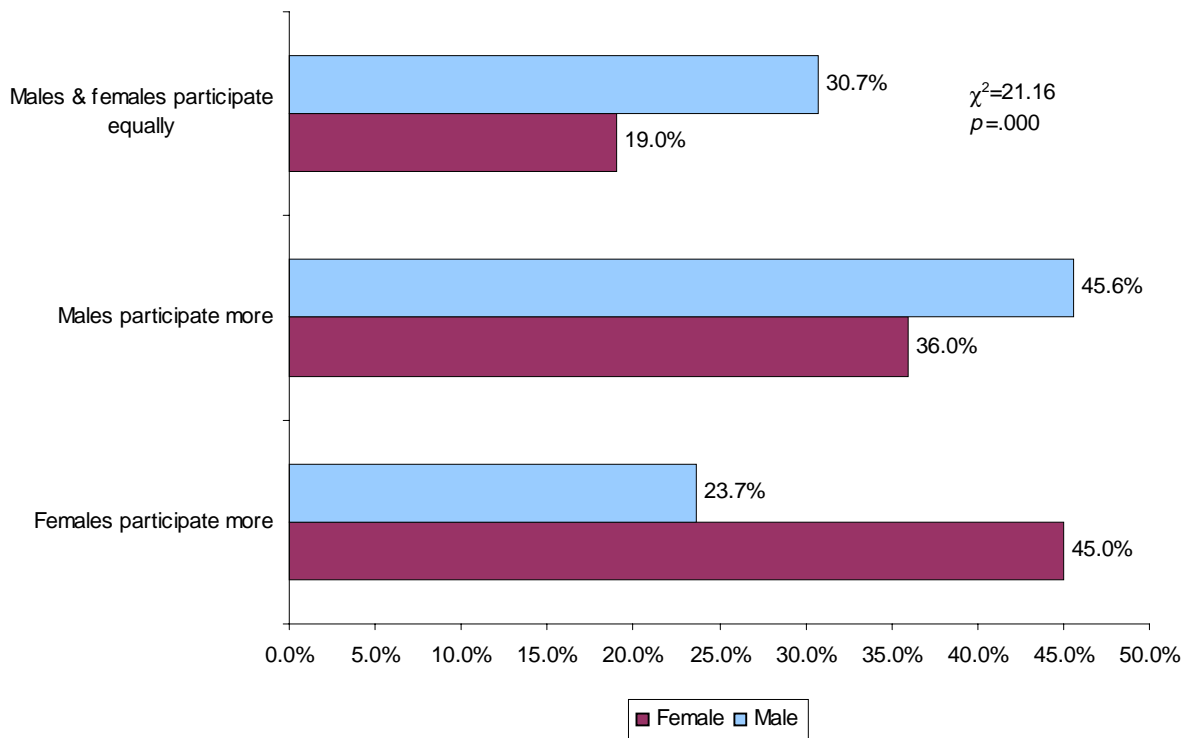


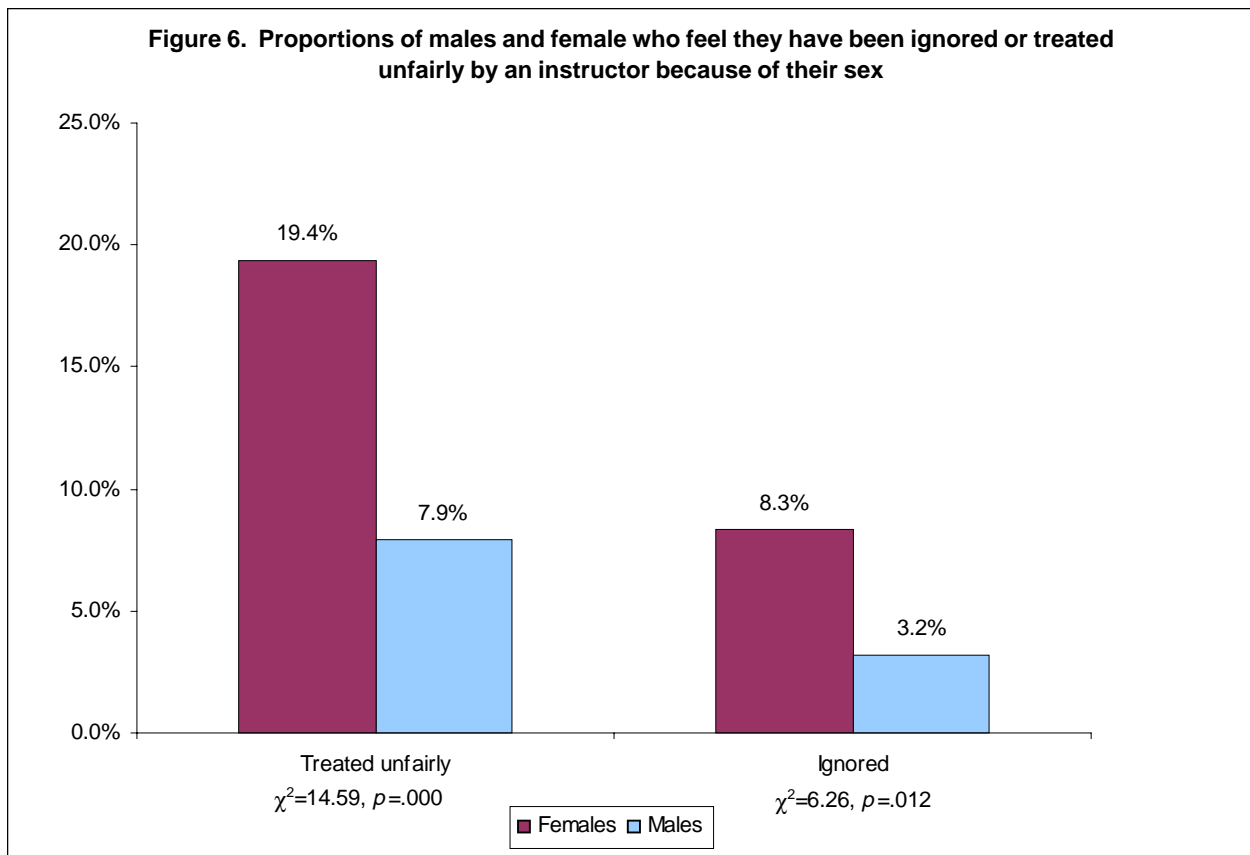
Figure 5. In your opinion, which group of students participates more in your class – males or females?



Finally, respondents were asked how often their instructor “uses humor or makes humorous references that you feel are offensive, embarrassing or belittling to males,” and then asked the same question with regard to females. Approximately one-tenth of students reported having heard their instructor make such remarks about either males (13.0%, n=54) or females (10.5%, n=44).

The next group of questions asked all students to reflect on their course experiences at UMass overall. First, students were asked about the inclusion of scholarship by women in courses in their major. One-third of students (33.9%, n=174) reported having had a course in their major that did not include texts, readings, or research by women, whereas 31.4% (n=162) indicated that they had not noticed. More than three-quarters (77.2%) reported having had a course in their major that had included materials authored by women, whereas 15.4% (n=79) said they had not noticed.

The next two questions explored students’ impressions of their treatment by UMass instructors. Respondents were asked if there had ever been an instance when they felt that they were treated unfairly by an instructor because of their sex. Thirteen percent of respondents (n=66) said “yes.” When asked if there had ever been an instance when they felt that they were ignored by an instructor because of their sex, 5.5% (n=28) said “yes.” As illustrated in Figure 6, women were more likely than men to report having had each of these experiences.



--Meg Kluge & Elizabeth Williams

[Click here to see item-by-item](#)

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