

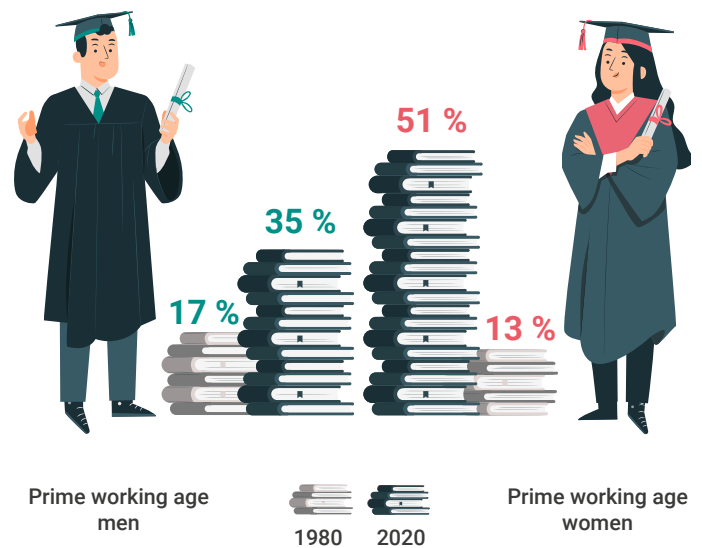


# Are Gender Gaps in Education Leaving Less Educated Men Behind in the Labor Market?

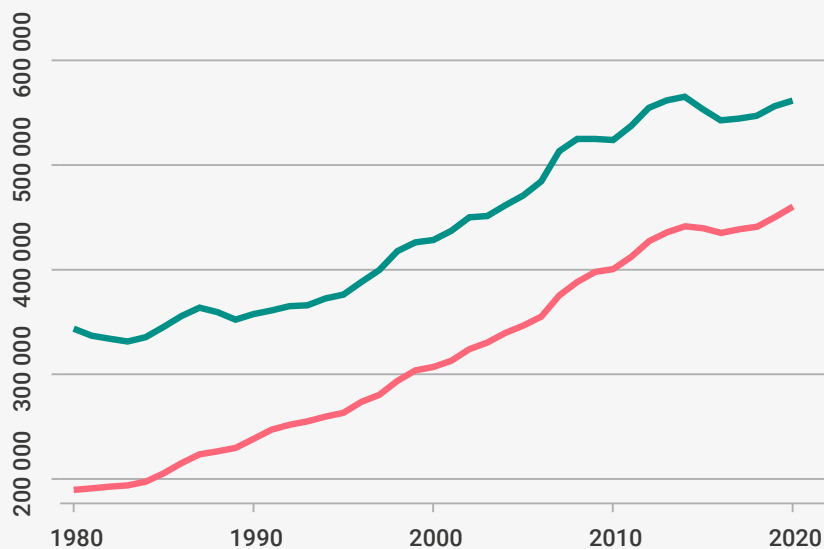
Over the past 40 years, women have made substantial progress in both education and the labor market. While fewer women than men in Norway had higher education degrees in 1980, the gender gap has since reversed. In the meantime, the share of men and women with higher education in the population has increased substantially. The reversal of the gender gap in education, in tandem with this educational expansion, has sparked concerns about how this development is affecting men's labor market prospects, and whether we are also beginning to see a reversal of the gender gaps in the labor market.

Prime working population is defined as age 20–55.  
Young adults are defined as age 20–34.

Percent of men and women with higher education degrees



Median income of prime working age men and women<sup>1</sup>



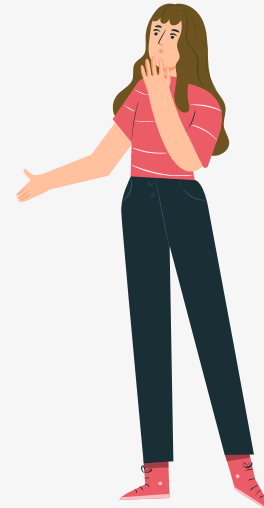
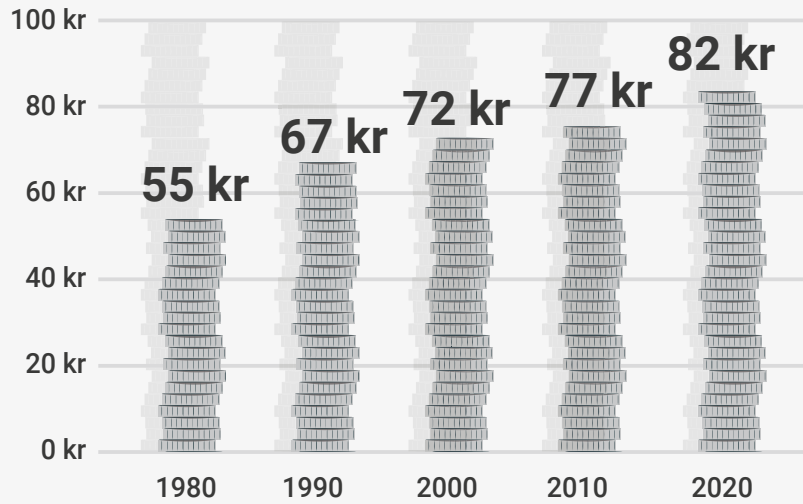
In the prime working age population, men's and women's incomes have increased considerably since the 1980s.

All incomes are measured in 2019 kroner, adjusted for inflation using the consumer price index.



## Women's median income relative to men's. Prime working age

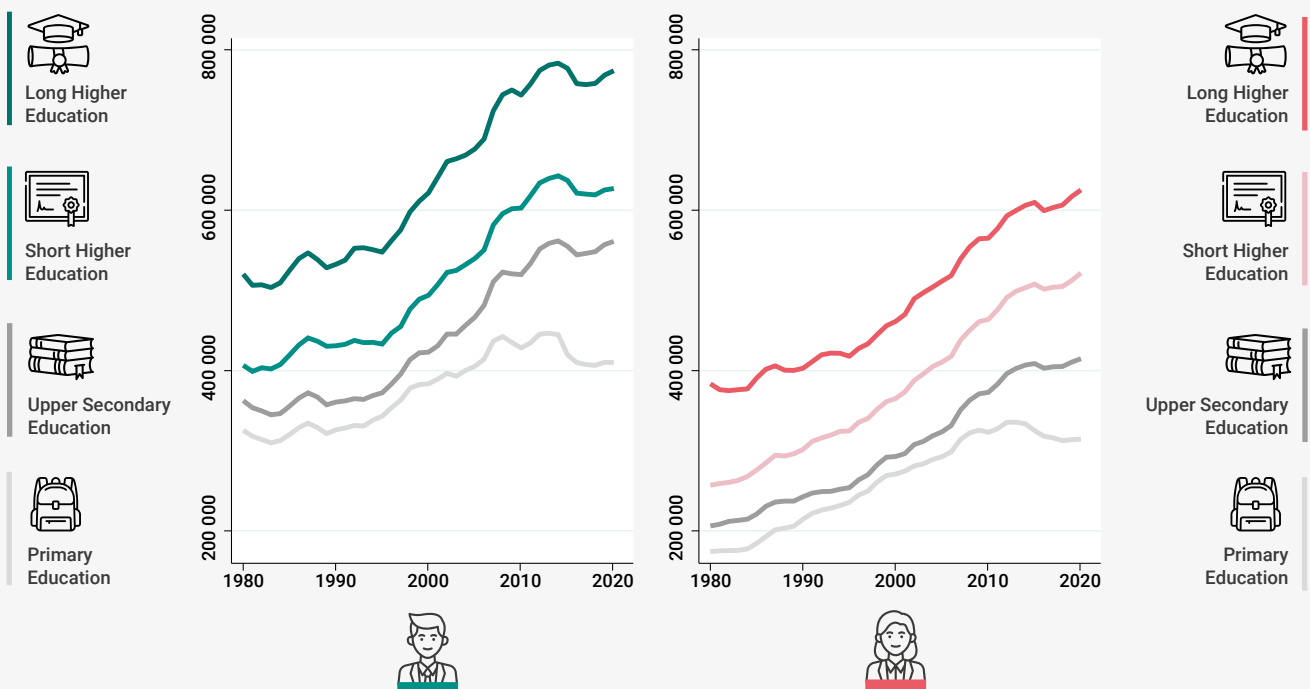
Even though men's and women's incomes have developed largely in parallel, the gender gap in income has decreased. As incomes increase, the gender difference constitutes a smaller share of the overall income. In 1980, women earned 55 kr for every 100 kr men earned. In 2020, the gap was reduced to 82 kr per 100 kr.



## Incomes of men and women without upper secondary diplomas have stagnated in recent years

Women and men at all education levels have seen their incomes increase over time. But the incomes of men and women without upper secondary diplomas have stagnated in recent years, increasing the income gaps between those with and without upper secondary diplomas.

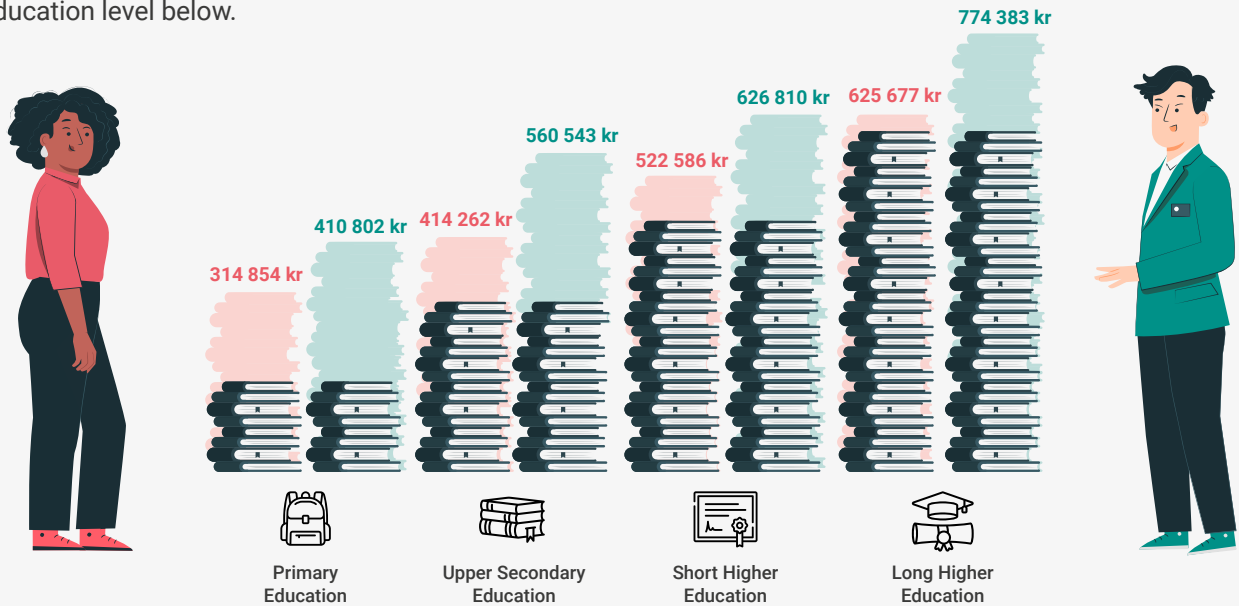
## Median income 1980–2020 prime working age adults by education level<sup>1</sup>



Short higher education: Bachelor's degrees or equivalent. Long higher education: Master's degrees or higher

## Median income in 2020 by gender and education level

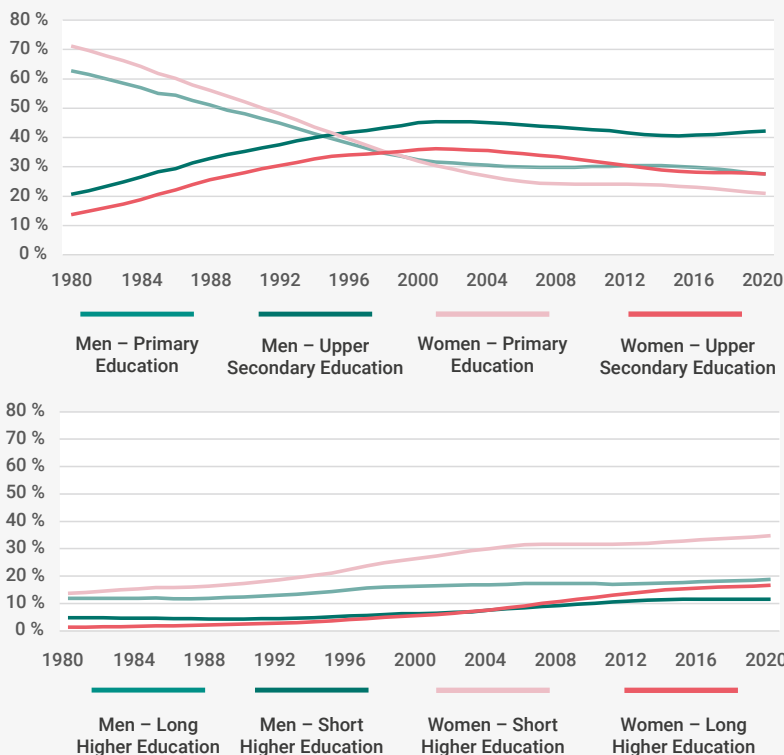
When we compare the median incomes of men and women with different levels of education, we generally find a pattern where women's income at a particular education level is similar to the income of men at the education level below.



## Young adults without upper secondary diplomas are falling behind on income and employment

The reversal of the gender gap in education is relatively recent. The impact of the current distribution of men and women across educational levels should therefore be most visible among young adults.

## Highest level of completed education among young adults<sup>2</sup>



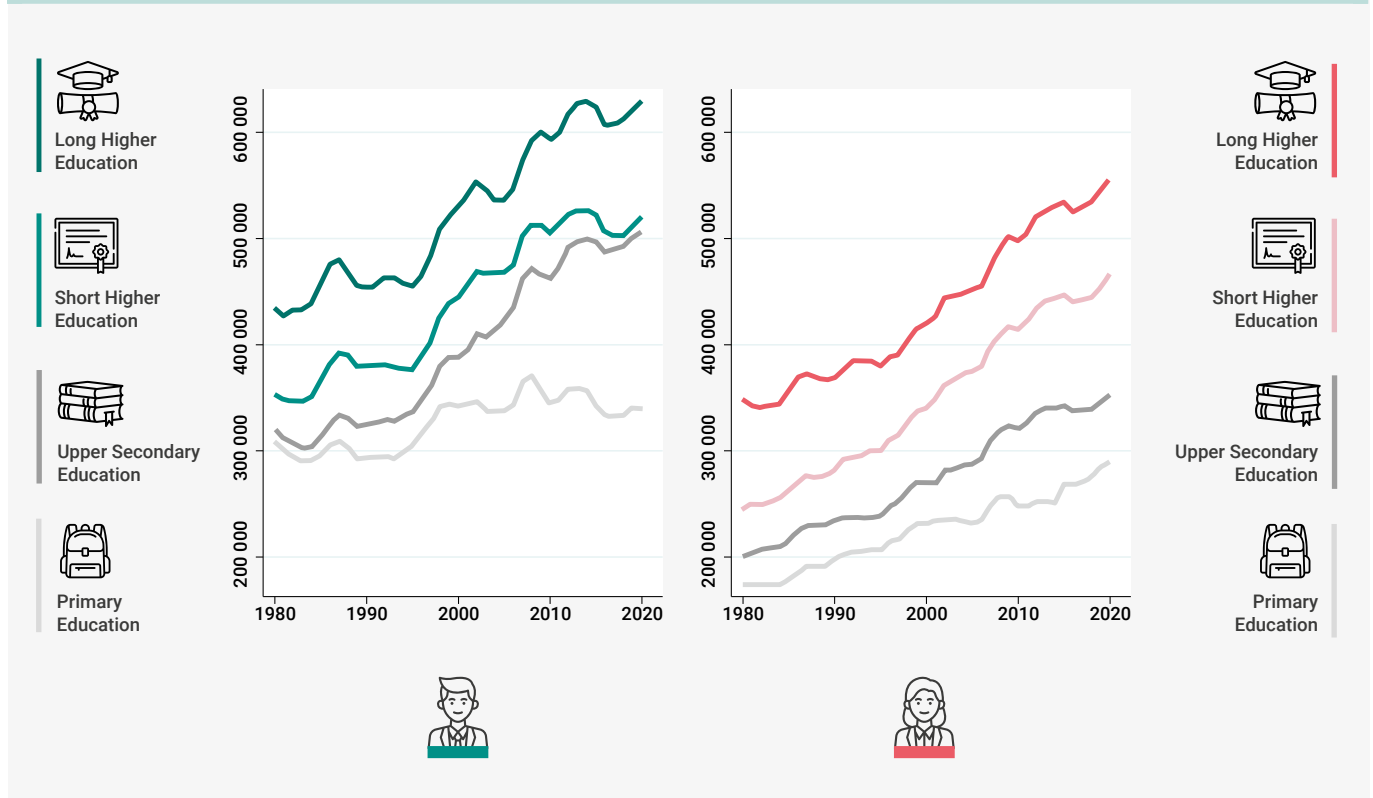
Education levels have increased among both men and women, but more so for young women than for young men. Young adults' education levels, as well as the gender gap, has remained relatively stable since the mid-2000s. The exception is long higher education, where the reversal of the gender gap occurred more recently.

For all education levels, young adults' incomes have increased since the 1980s. However, among young men, incomes have increased much less for those without upper secondary diplomas, than for the rest. The incomes of men with upper secondary education have increased more than incomes for those with short higher education, to such a degree that in 2020, income differences between these two groups of young men are small. For young women, incomes have increased in all groups, but more slowly for those without higher education. As a result of this, income gaps between men with upper secondary and higher

education have decreased, whereas for women they have increased. For both groups, those without any upper secondary credentials are falling substantially behind.

In 1980, most young adults had not completed upper secondary education. In 2020, the most common education level among young men was upper secondary, while the most common education level among young women was short higher education. These are also the groups that have seen the largest income increases over the past 40 years.

### Median income by gender and education. Young adults<sup>1</sup>



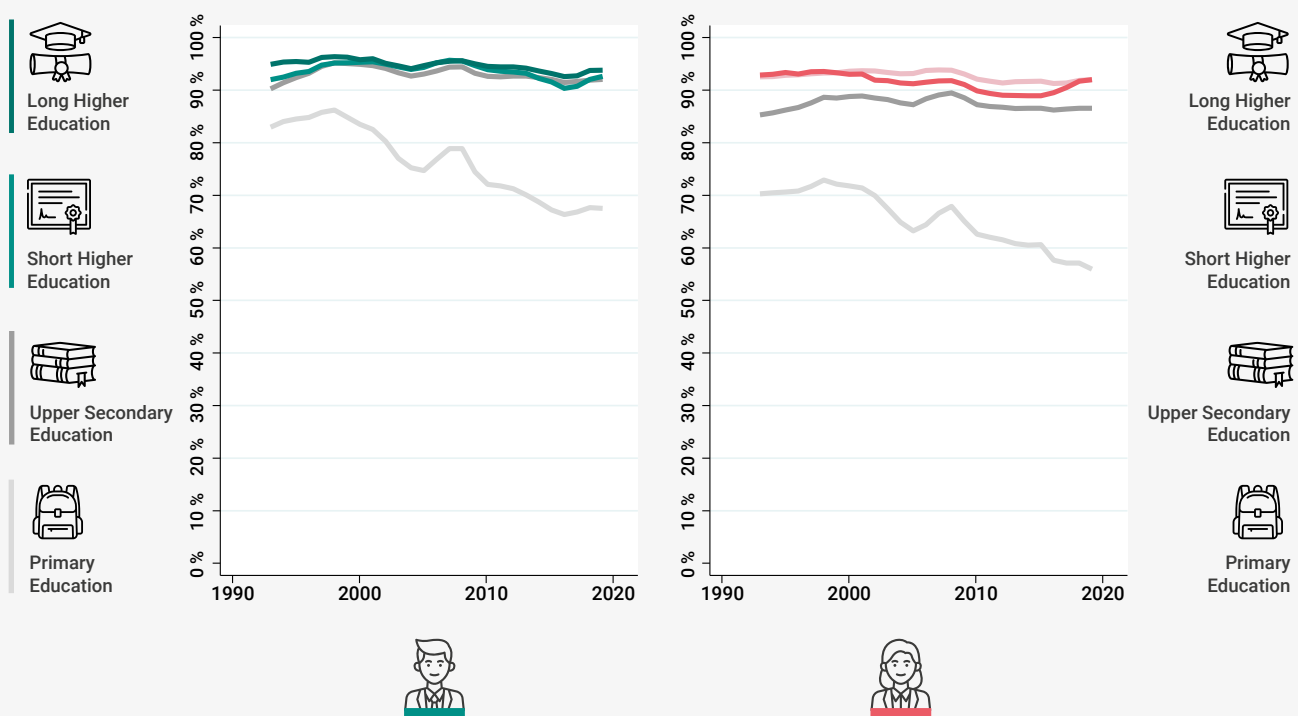
## Reduced employment among men and women without upper secondary diplomas

Among young men and women, employment levels have been relatively stable for most levels of education, but women with upper secondary degrees have had lower levels of employment than their male counterparts throughout the period. For men and women without upper secondary diplomas, employment has decreased considerably. Among those without upper secondary diplomas, employment levels are higher for men than for women. In recent years, however, more men than women are without upper secondary diplomas. Young men have therefore

been more affected by the decreasing employment of people without upper secondary diplomas.

In 1993, 49 587 men and 75 574 women were registered without ongoing educational activities or formal work. In 2019, 58 807 young men and 61 696 young women were registered without ongoing educational activities or formal work.

### Employment by gender and level of education. Young adults<sup>3</sup>



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1. Yearly pensionable income for residents with incomes above 0.5G (G=National Insurance Scheme Basic Amount). Individuals registered with ongoing educational activities are excluded from the analyses. All incomes are adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) with 2019 as reference year. The income measure does not include income from wealth, and is not adjusted for working time.
  2. Highest completed level of education among resident 20–34-year-olds who are not registered with ongoing educational activities. Short higher education refers to Bachelor's degrees and equivalent. Long higher education refers to Master's degrees, professional degrees and doctoral degrees.
  3. Residents with yearly occupational income above 0.5G (G=National Insurance Scheme Basic Amount) who are not registered with ongoing educational activities are defined as employed. The year 2020 is omitted from the analyses because of an exceptional dip in employment for young adults without upper secondary diplomas likely caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Comparable statistics available from Statistics Norway for the years 2021 and 2022 show employment levels similar to the years 2018 and 2019. Showing a trend that culminates in a dip in 2020 would therefore be misleading.

Data: Linked population data from public registries administered by Statistics Norway. Accessed as part of the project "Individual and collective outcomes of formal and informal institutions in the Nordic setting"

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#### Projects:

[Determined to succeed? Maturation, Motivation and Gender Gaps in Educational Achievement](#)  
[Gender Equality Challenges among Norwegian Men Today](#)

Further information about the projects can be found on the project webpage (QR code).

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