



# AMERICA'S BEST COLLEGES FOR WOMEN 2026

**Newsweek**

## METHODOLOGY

America's Best Colleges for Women is a new ranking in partnership with Gender Fair, based on metrics derived from the Women's Empowerment Principles to ensure colleges address gender equality.

Colleges that perform well in this ranking will have put in place the structural elements that will support education and employment for women.

## WHICH COLLEGES ARE INCLUDED?

The ranking looks at US colleges from the 50 states plus Washington, D.C. The colleges must employ 20 or more women in academic roles and have 1,000 or more students. Colleges must award bachelor's degrees.

## WHERE IS THE DATA SOURCED FROM?

There are two main sources of data, both from the US Department of Education:

1. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)
2. Campus Safety and Security Database

In addition, we have used desk research to identify material changes since the latest government data publication, and to support data quality.



## WHAT ARE WE MEASURING?

We have identified four key areas that we expect the best schools to lead in:  
**Leadership, Pay & Policies, Safety, and Opportunity.**

### LEADERSHIP

Where women are visible leaders across the academy, we would expect the school to serve the needs of women better. This includes the university President, as well as professors. Leaders provide visible role models and can ensure that female students have the guidance and support required.

**Leadership is worth 35% of the score for a college.**

### PAY & POLICIES

Women should be fairly recognized and compensated. A college that discriminates in pay may not have a good track record in other areas. Daycare is also a critical facility to support and encourage women in the workplace as well as students with children.

**Pay and policies is worth 25% of the score for a college.**

### SAFETY

Women should feel safe in their college. We use public data on crimes against women and hate crimes to understand how safe universities are.

**Safety is worth 20% of the score for a college.**

### OPPORTUNITY

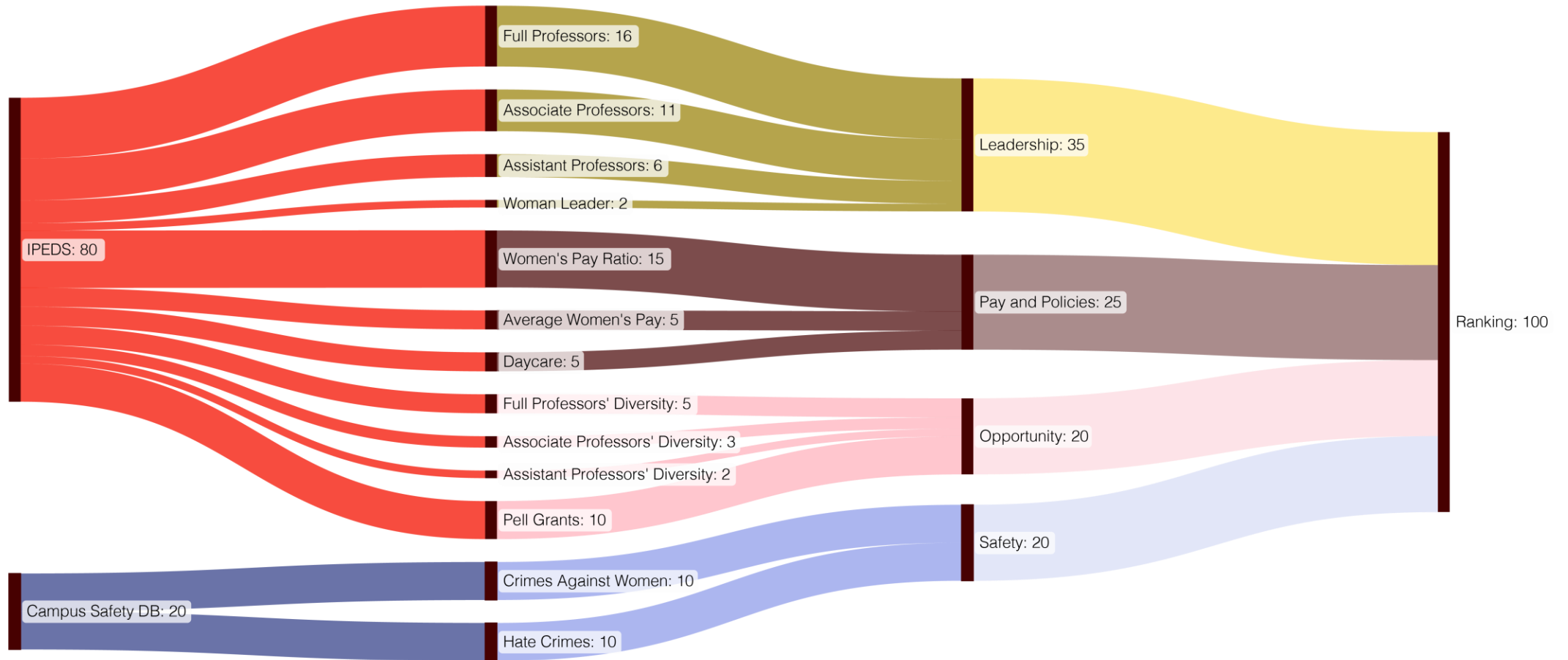
Research shows that women from different backgrounds suffer additional disadvantages. We look at how colleges are providing opportunities to a broad range of faculty and students.

**Opportunity is worth 20% of the score for a college.**

For all metrics we scale the data across a zero to one range so that they can be compared and then apply a percentage according to our decision about its importance in the overall ranking.

# METHODOLOGY

(SANKEY DIAGRAM)



**METHODOLOGY****LEADERSHIP**

For the first three metrics we use the percentage of people in specific roles who are women. These metrics are normalized using a percentile approach.

Women Leader refers to the person in day-to-day control of the college, this could be a Vice-Chancellor, President, or CEO. This metric is binary in nature.

Where data for the proportion of women at a given level is not present in the data set, the lowest proportion from the other fields is used.

<b>METRIC NAME</b>	<b>DATA SOURCE</b>	<b>NORMALIZATION</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Proportion of Women Professors	IPEDS	Percentile	16%
Proportion of Women Associate Professors	IPEDS	Percentile	11%
Proportion of Women Assistant Professors	IPEDS	Percentile	6%
Woman Leader	IPEDS	-	2%
<b>Total</b>			<b>35%</b>

**METHODOLOGY****PAY & POLICIES**

For the Ratio of Women's to Men's pay, we take the average women's pay (in academic roles) and divide it by the average men's pay. We cap this at equality: where the ratio is 1:1 and then use a percentile normalization.

For Average Women's Pay we took the range of maximum and minimum average pay and scaled across this range. Presence of daycare at college is binary.

**15%****RATIO OF WOMEN'S TO  
MEN'S PAY**

NORMALIZATION:  
Capped at parity, percentile

**5%****AVERAGE ACADEMIC  
WOMEN'S PAY**

NORMALIZATION:  
Range

**5%****PRESENCE OF DAYCARE****25%****TOTAL**

**METHODOLOGY**

**SAFETY**

For these metrics, which have a very biased distribution, we first inverted the number of reported crimes per student (so that low numbers were good) and took the square root of the value.

**10%**

**CRIME AGAINST WOMEN**

**10%**

**HATE CRIMES**

**20%**

**TOTAL**

Data Source: IPEDS | Normalization: Inverted Square Root

**METHODOLOGY****OPPORTUNITY**

The Proportion of Students receiving Pell Grants is a percentage value. For the three metrics exploring diversity we use the percentage of people in specific roles who are non-white. These metrics are normalized using a percentile approach.

Where data for the proportion of women at a given level is not present in the data set, the lowest proportion from the other fields is used.

<b>METRIC NAME</b>	<b>DATA SOURCE</b>	<b>NORMALIZATION</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Proportion of Students Receiving Pell Grants	IPEDS	-	10%
Proportion of Non-white Professors	IPEDS	Percentile	5%
Proportion of Non-white Associate Professors	IPEDS	Percentile	3%
Proportion of Non-white Assistant Professors	IPEDS	Percentile	2%
Total			20%

# CREATING THE OVERALL RANKING

The scores for each college are created by scaling the scores for each metric according to the percentage shown above.

The overall score is rounded to one decimal place. Where two or more colleges have the same overall score, they are given the same rank and sorted alphabetically.

# DISPLAYING DATA

We display the ranks of the top 200 ranked colleges individually, and then we group colleges in bands. Within each band we order colleges alphabetically.

In the table we show the overall score for each of the colleges (or the range of scores when the colleges are banded).

We also show the score for each of the four areas as an integer value.



# HOW TO USE THE RANKING

This ranking gives an insight into which colleges are best for women. We encourage you to explore the presented data – you can sort the table by any of the four key areas, and you can also look at how the Center for Reproductive Rights has categorized States.

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