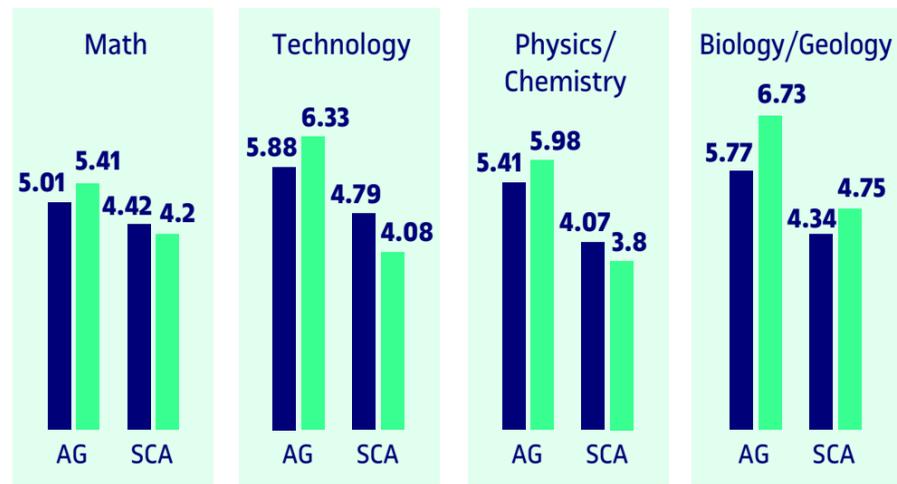# Gender roles in study choices

In our society erroneous stereotypes and beliefs exist which tend to consider women more competent in subjects associated with languages and men in the fields of science and technology. These gender stereotypes influence men and women's academic motivations and explain the vocational segregation observed in study and occupational choices.
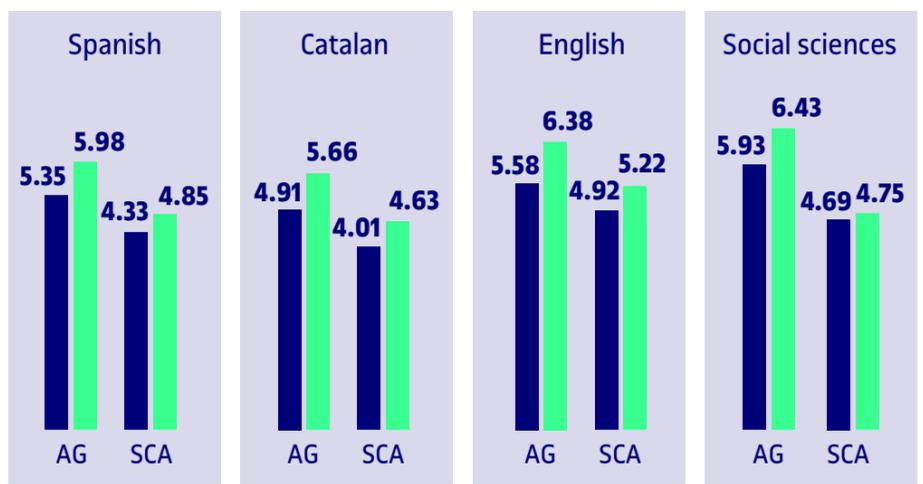
Gender gap in self-concepts of ability
Difference between self-concepts of ability and actual grades

Scientific and technological subjects

Math	Technology	Physics/Chemistry	Biology/Geology
AG: Boys 5.01, Girls 5.41 — SCA: Boys 4.42, Girls 4.2	AG: Boys 5.88, Girls 6.33 — SCA: Boys 4.79, Girls 4.08	AG: Boys 5.41, Girls 5.98 — SCA: Boys 4.07, Girls 3.8	AG: Boys 5.77, Girls 6.73 — SCA: Boys 4.34, Girls 4.75

Non-scientific and technological subjects

Spanish	Catalan	English	Social sciences
AG: Boys 5.35, Girls 5.98 — SCA: Boys 4.33, Girls 4.85	AG: Boys 4.91, Girls 5.66 — SCA: Boys 4.01, Girls 4.63	AG: Boys 5.58, Girls 6.38 — SCA: Boys 4.92, Girls 5.22	AG: Boys 5.93, Girls 6.43 — SCA: Boys 4.69, Girls 4.75

Boys **Girls** AG Actual grades from 1 to 10   SCA Self-concept of ability from 1 to 7   (Data source: Sáinz, 2016)

Students who do not consider themselves enough competent in a given subject will tend to discard related disciplines, regardless of their actual grades in that subject.

Girls consider themselves less competent in subjects traditionally related to scientific and technological fields, despite obtaining comparable or even higher grades than boys.

Educational intervention proposals

Prevent male and female students from having a negative and false perception of their own abilities in different subjects. Specifically, it is important to counteract the trend among girls to underestimate their math skills.

Encourage collaborative work in mixed-gender groups at primary and secondary school, and highlight the value of diversity in opposition to sexist clichés.

Disseminate broad information on the diverse social applications of technologies and exact sciences, as well as social sciences, arts and humanities and life sciences, beyond the stereotyped image of these professions.

Improve academic advice and occupational guidance from a gender perspective, in order to prevent sexist bias in decision making and promote resources for boys' and girls' empowerment in disciplines which run counter to traditional gender roles.

Design interventions in secondary education (when major changes and processes of social influence occur) in order to deal with the value that students, families and teachers place on the different disciplines in relation to gender roles.

Tackle academic sexism and stereotyped ideas about occupations from an earlier age involving children, families and teachers, in order to prevent stereotypes becoming so influential in boys' and girls' motivation towards subjects traditionally associated with men and women.

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