

Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: A Status Report

METHODS



Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: A Status Report

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This chapter is part of a larger report by the American Council on Education (ACE) titled *Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: A Status Report*. The report and its accompanying microsite provide a data-informed foundation for those working to close persistent equity gaps by providing a comprehensive review of the educational pathways of today's college students and the educators who serve them.

Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: A Status Report and the microsite were made possible through the generous support of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Visit www.equityinhighered.org to learn more about the project and to download the full report containing more than 200 indicators on race and ethnicity. Also available on the site are downloadable figures, detailed data, and other resources on race and ethnicity in higher education.

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Welcome! Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education provides a data-informed foundation for those working to close persistent equity gaps by providing a glimpse into the educational pathways of today's college students and the educators who serve them.

[EXPLORE THE REPORT](#)

Featured Findings:

45.2% of Undergraduates were Students of Color

32.0% of Graduate Students were Students of Color

Explore the Report's Findings

This report examines data across 11 chapters that provide a foundation from which the higher education community and its many stakeholders can draw insights, raise new questions, and make the case for why race and ethnicity still matter in American higher education. [Download the Report >](#)

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Explores U.S. population growth and differences in educational attainment, by race and ethnicity.

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Examines the racial and ethnic composition of secondary school completers, GED® test performance, and public high

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Explores patterns in undergraduate enrollment, including where students enroll, program award level, and field of

ABOUT THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION

ACE is the major coordinating body for the nation's colleges and universities. Our strength lies in our diverse base of member institutions. We represent nearly 1,800 college and university presidents and the executives at related associations, and are the only major higher education association to represent all types of U.S. accredited, degree-granting institutions: two-year and four-year, public and private. For more information, visit acenet.edu.

Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: A Status Report provides an in-depth examination of the educational journeys of students, from secondary to postsecondary and graduate education, first and foremost by race and ethnicity. In addition to exploring student access and attainment, this report presents data on the racial and ethnic makeup of college and university faculty, staff, and chief executives. To tell these stories, the report presents over 200 indicators drawn from 11 principal data sources. Many of the report's indicators present a snapshot of data, drawn from the most current data source, while others were expanded to show changes over time.

The purpose of this section is threefold: first, to familiarize the reader with the various data sources used throughout the report; second, to clarify how key concepts were defined; and finally, to provide guidance on how to interpret the findings contained in this report. Additionally, helpful methodological notes are included throughout the report both in the text and in table and figure notes.

Principal Data Sources

Data for this report were drawn from 11 principal sources. The majority of these data were collected by federal agencies—the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and U.S. Census Bureau. When federally collected data were insufficient to address a particular indicator, non-federally collected data were sought and included. Each of the principal data sources used in this report is described below, with notes indicating the chapters where data were presented.

Current Population Survey (CPS)

The Current Population Survey (CPS), sponsored jointly by the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, is the primary source of labor force statistics for the population of the United States. The CPS is used to collect data for a variety of other studies that keep the nation informed of the economic and social well-being of its people. Providing information on many of the things that shape American life—work, earnings, and education—the CPS also conducts supplemental inquiries that vary month to month, covering a wide variety of topics such as child support, volunteerism, health insurance coverage, and school enrollment. The CPS is representative of the civilian noninstitutionalized population, which includes civilians in households, people in non-institutional group quarters (other than military barracks), and military in households living off post or with their families. Other military in households and in group barracks and people living in institutions are excluded. Data from the CPS has been published since 1947. The survey also has one of the highest response rates among government household surveys, averaging around 90 percent. Data from CPS were presented in Chapters 1 and 3.

GED® Test

The GED® test is made up of four subjects, broken into separate exams. By collecting information on Mathematical Reasoning, Reasoning Through Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science, the GED Testing Service has compiled comprehensive data on prospective students in higher education. With college readiness being an integral issue of equity for American higher education, these nationwide data provide information to assess current curricula and work toward more coherent and relevant instruction that better aligns with students' career goals and provides an entrance for students into higher education and the U.S. labor market. Data from the GED® were presented in Chapter 2.

Digest of Education Statistics

The primary purpose of the Digest of Education Statistics is to provide a compilation of statistical information covering the broad field of American education from pre-kindergarten through graduate school. The Digest includes a selection of data from government and private sources in addition to the survey results carried out by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The publication contains information on a number of schools and colleges, teachers, enrollments, and graduates, in addition to educational attainment, finances, federal funds for education, libraries, and international education. Additionally, supplemental information is collected on population trends, attitudes on education, education characteristics of the labor force, government finances, and economic trends to provide context for evaluating education data. Data from the Digest of Education Statistics were presented in Chapters 2 and 3.

National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS)

The National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) examines the characteristics of students in postsecondary education, with a special focus on how they finance their education. NPSAS sample surveys provide access to nationally representative data for undergraduate and graduate students. NPSAS is a comprehensive research dataset, based on student-level records and financial aid provided by the federal government, the states, postsecondary institutions, employers, and private agencies, along with student demographic and enrollment data. NPSAS is the primary source of information used by the federal government (and others, such as researchers and higher education associations) to analyze student financial aid and to inform public policy on such programs as Pell Grants and Direct/Stafford loans. Data from NPSAS were presented in Chapters 3, 4, 7, and 8.

Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B)

The Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B) examines students' education and work experiences after they complete a bachelor's degree. The study draws its cohorts from NPSAS. The B&B sample is representative of graduating seniors in all majors, with a special emphasis on the experiences of new elementary and secondary teachers. Following several cohorts of students over time, B&B looks at bachelor's degree recipients' workforce participation, income and debt repayment, and entry into and persistence through graduate school programs, among other indicators. B&B also gathers extensive information on bachelor's degree recipients' undergraduate experience, demographic backgrounds, expectations regarding graduate study and work, and participation in community service. Data from B&B were presented in Chapter 4.

Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS)

The Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS) Longitudinal Study currently surveys cohorts of first-time, beginning students at three points in time: at the end of their first year, and then three and six years after first starting in postsecondary education. The study draws its cohorts from NPSAS and collects data on a variety of topics, including student demographic characteristics, school and work experiences, persistence, transfer, and degree attainment. BPS tracks students' paths through postsecondary education to allow for a more in-depth exploration of what academic fields students pursue, how financial aid influences their persistence and completion, and in some cases, why students leave higher education without an award. Data from BPS were presented in Chapter 5.

Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) is the primary source for information on U.S. colleges, universities, and technical and vocational institutions. IPEDS is a system of interrelated surveys conducted annually by the U.S. Department of Education's NCES. IPEDS gathers information from more than 7,500 colleges, universities, and technical and vocational institutions that participate in the federal student aid programs in fundamental areas such as enrollment, program completion and graduation rates, institutional costs, student financial aid, and human resources. Data collected through IPEDS are publicly released and can be accessed through the IPEDS Data Center. Data from IPEDS were presented in Chapters 5, 6, 9, and 10.

National Student Clearinghouse (NSC)

The National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) is a nonprofit and nongovernmental organization that contracts with colleges and universities to provide educational reporting, data exchange, verification, and research services. Given its direct relationship with college enrollment, completion, and tracking, NSC has an expansive network of information, data, and resources about student-level educational outcomes nationwide. With increasing participation from colleges and universities, as of spring 2018 the NSC data account for 97 percent of the enrollments at U.S. Title IV, degree-granting institutions. By tracking students across institutions, NSC data are robust and can be used to more fully understand trends in college enrollment and completion. The research arm of NSC works with higher education institutions, states, districts, high schools, and educational organizations to better inform practitioners and policymakers about student educational pathways and enable informed decision making. Data from NSC were presented in Chapters 5 and 9.

American College President Study (ACPS)

Since it was first published in 1988, the American Council on Education's American College President Study (ACPS) has remained the most comprehensive source of information about the college presidency and higher education leadership pipeline. The report provides information on the demographics, career paths, and experiences of college and university presidents. College and university presidents occupy a leadership role unlike any other, and ACPS includes insight into key areas, including diversity and inclusion, state funding and political climate, relationships with governmental officials, political constituencies, and governing boards, as well as presidential perspectives on matters concerning performance measures, evaluation, and other topics shaping the future of higher education. The *American College President Study 2017* analyzed responses from 1,546 college and university presidents. Data from ACPS were presented in Chapter 10.

College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR)

With the most reliable and comprehensive higher education salary and benefits data available, CUPA-HR collects data on salaries for administrators, faculty, and professionals and staff, along with data on health care and other benefits. The collection of surveys includes administrators, faculty, professionals, and staff in higher education. Additionally, benchmarking data on voluntary and involuntary turnover rates; student, staff, and faculty ratios; collective bargaining for faculty, staff, and graduate students; chief human resource officer reporting relationship; diversity data; and comparison groups are available to assist leaders in planning for budgets; salary increases; and creating equity in the hiring and human resources processes. Data from CUPA-HR were presented in Chapter 10.

American Community Survey (ACS)

The American Community Survey (ACS), a product of the U.S. Census Bureau, is an ongoing survey that supplies vital information about the U.S. and its people. Information from the survey generates data that is used to inform a variety of state and federal policy decisions. As a robust source for detailed population and housing information in the U.S., the ACS disseminates information about jobs and occupations, educational attainment, veterans, whether people own or rent their homes, and other topics. The ACS is representative of both the civilian and military population in households and in group quarters. The group quarters includes individuals in correctional institutions or nursing homes and noninstitutionalized individuals. Data from the ACS have been published since 2005. Data from the ACS were presented in Chapter 11.

Key Definitions

With various data sources, it is important to be clear about how key terms were defined throughout the report. The following section provides an overview as well as definitions of some of the key terms used throughout the report.

Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity are complex social constructions. As the United States has grown more diverse, the language and methods used to identify groups of people have changed substantially. This is perhaps most evident in the changes made over time in the collection of race, ethnicity, and origin data by the U.S. Census Bureau.¹ These changes include new racial categories, the collection of information on ethnicity (defined as whether an individual is of Hispanic origin or not), and allowing individuals to self-identify their race and ethnicity, as well as to identify as being of more than one race. These changes made by Census have informed the data collection efforts of other federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Education.

While the language used to identify race and ethnicity varies by data source, this report primarily uses the race and ethnicity categories as currently defined by IPEDS. In doing so, the report identifies individuals as “Hispanic” if they reported being of Hispanic or Latino origin, regardless of race. We also refer to students identified as nonresident aliens as “international students.” The racial and ethnic categories used throughout the report are defined below:

1 http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/06/ST_15.06.11_MultiRacial-Timeline.pdf

American Indian or Alaska Native: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community attachment.

Asian: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian Subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Black (or African American): A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.

Hispanic (or Latino): A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

White: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

More than one race: Category used by institutions to report persons who selected more than one race. This is the IPEDS' category "two or more races."

International student: A person who is not a citizen or national of the United States and who is in this country on a visa or temporary basis and does not have the right to remain indefinitely. This is the IPEDS' category "nonresident alien."

Gender

Throughout this report data are disaggregated by gender. This report uses the gender terms of "men" and "women" rather than the sex terms of "male" and "female." While the authors recognize gender to be a complex construct with psychological, social, and behavioral dimensions, the analysis presented in this report is bound by the limitations in the data collected by federal agencies such as the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Department of Education. As a result, many other identities associated with gender, including transgender and gender non-conforming, could not be addressed in this report.

Higher Education Institutions

In this report, higher education was broadly defined as any formal education beyond high school offered at public and private, nonprofit and for-profit colleges and universities. In Chapters 3 through 10, higher education institutions were defined as colleges and universities that are degree-granting, located in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico,² and eligible to receive Title IV federal funds. The term sector is used throughout the report to describe both the control of an institution and the most common type of award it confers.³ In this report, institutions were classified into one of four sectors based on their control and the length of the predominant credential awarded. Those categories are defined below:

Public Four-Year Institutions: Colleges or universities whose programs and activities are operated by publicly elected or appointed school officials and which are supported primarily by public funds. More than 50 percent of the total number of degrees and certificates awarded by these institutions are at or above the bachelor's level. Institutions that confer only graduate degrees with no undergraduate programs were also included here.

Private Nonprofit Four-Year Institutions: Colleges or universities in which the individual(s) or agency in control receives no compensation, other than wages, rent, or other expenses for the assumption of risk. More than 50 percent of the total number of degrees and certificates awarded by these institutions are at or above the bachelor's level. Institutions that confer only graduate degrees with no undergraduate programs were also included here.

2 Chapter 9 of this report provides a snapshot of minority serving institutions (MSIs). The analysis of MSIs includes institutions located in other U.S. territories, including American Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Marshall Islands, Northern Marianas, and the Virgin Islands.

3 The choice to classify institutions this way, rather than by the length of the longest program offered was made in order to more accurately classify community colleges that award a small number of bachelor's degrees. Because these institutions award predominantly associate degrees and certificates, in this report, they are classified as two-year institutions and not four-year institutions.

Public Two-Year Institutions: Colleges or universities whose programs and activities are operated by publicly elected or appointed school officials and which is supported primarily by public funds. A college or university was classified as being a two-year institution if it (1) offers only associate degrees and other postsecondary certificates, awards, or diplomas of less than four academic years or (2) less than 50 percent of the total number of degrees and certificates awarded by the institution are at or above the bachelor's level.

For-Profit Institutions: Colleges or universities in which the individual(s) or agency in control receives compensation other than wages, rent, or other expenses for the assumption of risk. These institutions are degree-granting and may offer both undergraduate and graduate credentials.

Postsecondary Credentials

The U.S. Department of Education's definitions of postsecondary awards, as defined in IPEDS, were used throughout this report. While IPEDS recognizes three types of undergraduate certificates, this report aggregates the data into two categories: short-term and long-term certificates. Similarly, IPEDS recognizes two types of graduate certificates. In this report we aggregate those awards into a single category called post-baccalaureate certificates. Finally, IPEDS classifies doctoral degrees into one of three categories: professional practice, research/scholarship, and other. In this report, doctor's degrees-research/scholarship and doctor's degrees-other were aggregated into a single category called doctoral degrees. Doctor's degrees-professional practice were renamed professional degrees. The postsecondary credentials presented on throughout the report were defined as follows:

Short-Term Certificate: An award that requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level, below the baccalaureate degree, of less than two academic years.

Long-Term Certificate: An award that requires completion of an organized program of study at the postsecondary level, below the bachelor's degree, of at least two but less than four academic years.

Associate Degree: An award that normally requires at least two but less than four years of full-time equivalent college work.

Bachelor's Degree: An award that normally requires at least four but not more than five years of full-time equivalent college-level work.

Post-baccalaureate Certificate: An award that requires completion of an organized program of study beyond the bachelor's or master's degree.

Master's Degree: An award that requires the successful completion of a program of study of at least the full-time equivalent of one but not more than two academic years beyond the bachelor's degree.

Professional Degree: A doctor's degree that is conferred upon completion of a program providing the knowledge and skills for the recognition, credential, or license required for professional practice. Some examples include law (JD), medicine (MD), veterinary medicine (DVM), pharmacy (PharmD), and others, as designated by the awarding institution.

Doctoral Degree: A PhD or other doctor's degree that requires advanced work beyond the master's level, including the preparation and defense of a dissertation based on original research, or the planning and execution of an original project demonstrating substantial artistic or scholarly achievement. Some examples include doctor of education (EdD), doctor of business administration (DBA), doctor of science (DSc), and others, as designated by the awarding institution.

Fields of Study

The Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) provides a taxonomic scheme that supports the accurate tracking and reporting of fields of study and program completions activity. CIP was originally developed by the U.S. Department of

Education's NCES in 1980, with revisions occurring in 1985, 1990, 2000, and 2010. In this report, the 2010 CIP was used to group academic programs into fields of study in line with the variables MAJORS2Y, MAJORS4Y, and GRADMAJ in the 2015–16 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study.⁴ These variables aggregate fields of study into categories most appropriate for analyzing students in sub-baccalaureate programs, baccalaureate programs, and graduate programs, respectively. The table below presents the field of study categories used throughout the report. Additional details about fields of study can be found in Chapters 3–6.

Sub-baccalaureate Credential Programs	Baccalaureate Credential Programs	Graduate Credential Programs
STEM Fields	STEM Fields	STEM Fields
Business and Personal and Consumer Services	Business	Business and Management
Health Care Fields	Education	Education
Social Sciences and Humanities	Health Care Fields	Health Care Fields
General Studies and Other Fields	Social Sciences	Humanities
Manufacturing, Military Technology, and Other Applied Fields	Humanities	Social and Behavioral Sciences
Undecided	General Studies and Other Fields	Law
	Other Applied Fields	Other Fields
	Undecided	

Occupations

The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) is a federal statistical standard used by federal agencies to classify workers into one of 867 detailed occupations.⁵ These detailed occupations are combined to form 459 broad occupations, 98 minor groups, and 23 major groups. Using the SOC's 23 major groups, identified by two-digit numerical codes, Chapter 11 of this report presents data on four occupations groups defined below:

Management, Business, and Financial Occupations: Any occupation classified into the following major groups: Management occupations (11) or Business and Financial Operations occupations (13).

STEM Occupations: Any occupation classified into the following major groups: Computer or Mathematical occupations (15), Architecture and Engineering occupations (17), or Life, Physical, and Social Science occupations (19).

Education Occupations: Any occupation classified as an Education, Training, and Library occupation (25).

Health Occupations: Any occupation classified into the following major groups: Healthcare Practitioners and Technical occupations (29) or Healthcare Support occupations (31)

Notes on Interpreting the Data

This study presents a descriptive analysis of key data to provide readers with an in-depth picture of the educational journeys of students disaggregated by race and ethnicity. Descriptive analysis is used to describe or summarize data and to identify meaningful patterns. While descriptive analysis can provide important insights into data, it cannot be used to explain why a pattern may or may not exist. It is important to note that this study **does not discuss causality and readers should not interpret our findings as being causal.**

Furthermore, much of the data analyzed in this study come from complex surveys that rely on statistical analysis weights to make the data representative of the populations of interest (e.g., the United States, all students enrolled in undergraduate education). Data derived and presented from ACS, CPS, B&B, BPS, and NPSAS are weighted estimates. As a result, some

⁴ Each variable aggregates students' fields of study into categories most appropriate to analyze students in sub-baccalaureate, baccalaureate, and graduate certificate and degree programs, respectively.

⁵ For more information on SOC, see <https://www.bls.gov/soc>.

data point estimates in the report were flagged as “unstable” and others could not be reported at all due to small sample sizes.⁶ Data were flagged or suppressed most frequently when multiple levels of disaggregation were presented, particularly among American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander groups.

In the book *Beyond the Asterisk*, Shotton, Lowe, and Waterman (2013) note that the continued use of quantitative research has perpetuated a long history of educational research that excluded American Indian and Alaska Native populations, ultimately making them invisible. The same could be said for Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders. While not an exhaustive list, the following books may provide readers a deeper understanding of the characteristics and challenges of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Asian American and Pacific Islander groups enrolled in higher education, along with examples of how to serve these students through to completion.

Brayboy, Bryan McKinley Jones, Amy J. Fann, Angelina E. Castagno, and Jessica A. Solyom, eds. 2012. *Postsecondary Education for American Indian and Alaska Natives: Higher Education for Nation Building and Self-Determination*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Museus, Samuel D., Amefil Agbayani, and Doris Ching, eds. 2017. *Focusing on the Underserved: Immigrant, Refugee, and Indigenous Asian American and Pacific Islanders in Higher Education*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Shotton, Heather J., Shelly C. Lowe, and Stephanie J. Waterman. 2013. *Beyond the Asterisk: Understanding Native Students in Higher Education*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Finally, while this report presents over 200 indicators, these indicators alone cannot provide a complete picture of race and ethnicity in higher education. Future iterations of this work, will seek to include additional data and analyses to further illuminate the racial and ethnicity diversity of students, faculty, and staff.

⁶ Throughout the report, NCES data reporting guidelines were followed to suppress cases with too few respondents and to flag estimates as unstable when the standard error represented more than 30 percent of a given estimate.

