

Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: 2024 Status Report



METHODS

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: 2024 Status Report follows *Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: A Status Report* (2019) and *Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: 2020 Supplement*. These reports and the accompanying website provide a data-informed foundation for those who are working to close persistent equity gaps and also offer a glimpse into the educational pathways of today’s college students and the educators who serve them. For more information, including downloadable figures and detailed data tables behind the figures presented in this report, please visit equityinhighered.org.

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METHODS

Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: 2024 Status Report provides an updated overview of various topics in higher education—including undergraduate and graduate student enrollment, completion, student debt, and financing—by race and ethnicity. It also includes an overview of the racial and ethnic backgrounds of faculty, staff, and college presidents. This data-informed foundation allows for the examination of the myriad differences that emerge by race and ethnicity within our postsecondary education system. These data serve as a starting point for stakeholders to ask questions and seek answers as to how the field can close persistent racial equity gaps. This report presents 201 indicators drawn from eight principal data sources. Many indicators present a snapshot of the most recent publicly available data, while others depict data over time.

The purpose of this appendix 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. Helpful methodological notes are also included throughout the report.

Principal Data Sources

Data for this report were drawn from eight principal sources. Many of these data were collected by the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Census Bureau. When federally collected data were insufficient to address a particular indicator, nonfederal data were included. The principal data sources used in this report are described herein, with notes indicating the chapters in which the 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 represents individuals who were ages 15 and older and not in the armed forces. People in institutions, such as prisons, long-term care hospitals, and nursing homes are ineligible to be interviewed in the CPS. 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 2. For more information on CPS, visit <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps.html>.

National Population Projections

National Population Projections, a product of the U.S. Census Bureau, is a set of projections based on the 2010 census. The 2017 series uses the official estimates of the resident population on July 1, 2016 to project the U.S. population from 2017 to 2060. The series uses the cohort-component method and historical trends in births, deaths, and international migration to project the future size and composition of the national population. The series also accounts for the generally lower mortality rates and longer life expectancy of the foreign-born people and accounts for the effects of international migration on the population of the United States. Data from the 2017 National Population Projection were presented in chapter 1. For more information, visit <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2017/demo/popproj/2017-summary-tables.html>.

Digest of Education Statistics

The primary purpose of the *Digest of Education Statistics* is to provide a compilation of statistical information on American education that ranges from prekindergarten through graduate school. The *Digest* includes data from government and private sources and survey results from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The publication contains information on 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 about 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 chapter 2. For more information on the *Digest*, visit <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/>.

National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS)

The National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) examines the characteristics of students in postsecondary education, with 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 provided by the federal government, the states, postsecondary institutions, employers, and private agencies, along with student demographic and enrollment data. NPSAS is one of the sources 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 or Stafford Loans. Data from NPSAS:20 were presented in chapters 2, 3, 6, and 7. The frequencies and averages reported were based on random samples, not populations. They represent estimates with margins of error. We do not report these margins of error, but we do note if the small sample sizes and large variances make the estimates unreliable. For more information on NPSAS, visit <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/npsas/>.

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, following several cohorts of students over time. The study draws its cohorts from NPSAS samples. As such, frequencies detailed in this report are estimates. The B&B sample is representative of graduating seniors in all majors. Following graduates for one, four, and 19 years after they have completed their bachelor's degree, 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. Four cohorts have been followed. Students in the most recent cohort completed their bachelor's degrees in 2015–16 and were followed in 2017 and 2020. Data from B&B:16/20 were presented in chapter 3. For more information on B&B, visit <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/b&b/>.

Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS)

The Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS) 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. As such, frequencies detailed in this report are estimates based on samples. BPS collects data on various topics, including student demographic characteristics, education and work experiences, persistence, transfer, and degree attainment. The BPS tracks students' paths through postsecondary education to allow for a more in-depth exploration of what academic fields students pursue, how their persistence and completion is associated with financial aid, and—in some cases—why students leave higher education without completing their programs. Data from BPS were presented in chapter 4. For more information on BPS, visit <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/bps/>.

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 NCES. IPEDS gathers information from more than 7,000 colleges, universities, and technical and vocational institutions that participate in federal student aid programs in fundamental areas such as enrollment, program completion and graduation rates, institutional costs, student financial aid and human resources. Frequencies detailed in this report from IPEDS data are actual counts of students, faculty, and staff on U.S. campuses. Data collected through IPEDS are publicly released and can be accessed through the IPEDS Data Center. Data from IPEDS were presented in chapters 4, 5, and 8. For more information on IPEDS, visit <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/>.

Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED)

The Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED) is an annual census of all individuals who received a research doctorate from accredited U.S. institutions in a given year. The SED identifies characteristics and trends in doctoral education through

the collection of doctoral degree recipients' demographic information, educational history, and postgraduation plans and outcomes. It also includes a follow-up survey designed to identify characteristics and trends of the population of doctoral recipients. The SED has been administered annually since 1957, and it is a joint product of the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES), National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Education, and National Endowment for the Humanities. Data from the 2021 SED were presented in chapter 5. For more information on SED, visit <https://nces.nsf.gov/surveys/earned-doctorates/2022#survey-info>.

American College President Study (ACPS)

Since it was first published in 1988, the American College President Study (ACPS) has remained the most comprehensive source of information about the college presidency and higher education leadership pipeline. ACPS includes surveys conducted approximately every five years, the results of which are analyzed in corresponding reports that provide 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 the presidential demographics and pathways to the college presidency. New data collected in 2022 included when respondents first aspired, applied, and were appointed to the presidency; information on the responsibilities that presidents balance with their jobs, such as caregiving for loved ones; and insights on their community and support networks. *The American College President: 2023 Edition* analyzed responses from 1,075 college and university presidents. Data from ACPS were presented in chapter 8. For more information on ACPS, visit <https://www.acenet.edu/acps>.

Key Definitions

With multiple data sources, it is important to be clear about how key terms were defined throughout this report. The following section provides an overview and defines some key terms.

Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity are complex social constructions, and the language and methods used to identify groups of people continue to evolve. This is 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 included new racial categories; the collection of information on ethnicity (defined as whether an individual is of Hispanic origin or not); and the allowance for individuals to self-identify their race and ethnicity, as well as to identify as being of more than one race. These changes made by the Census Bureau 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 or Latino* if they reported being of Hispanic or Latino origin, regardless of race. We refer to students identified as U.S. nonresidents as *international students*. The racial and ethnic categories used throughout the report are defined as follows:

- **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 Philippines, 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.

1 See U.S. Census Bureau, "U.S. Decennial Census Measurement of Race and Ethnicity Across the Decades: 1790–2020," published August 3, 2021 and last modified June 9, 2022, <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/decennial-census-measurement-of-race-and-ethnicity-across-the-decades-1790-2020.html>.

- **White:** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.
- **Multiracial:** Category used by institutions to report persons who selected more than one race. This corresponds with the IPEDS category of *two or more races*.
- **International student:** A person who is not a citizen or national of the United States, is in this country on a visa or temporary basis, and does not have the right to remain indefinitely. This corresponds with the IPEDS category of *U.S. nonresidents*. While some international students, faculty, and staff are people of color, IPEDS does not provide further information that allows us to quantify this group.

Gender

Throughout this report, data were 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. In this report, some tables include information on other identities associated with gender—including genderqueer, gender nonconforming, or a different gender identity—which NPSAS:20 collected for the first time.

Higher Education Institutions and Sectors

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. Higher education institutions were defined exclusively as colleges and universities in the 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico and that were eligible to receive Title IV federal funds. Throughout this report, institutions were classified into four sectors. The term *sector* is used throughout the report to describe both the control of an institution and the length of the predominant credential awarded.² Those sectors are:

- **Public Four-Year Institutions:** Colleges or universities in which programs and activities are operated by publicly elected or appointed school officials and supported mainly 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 individuals or agency in control does not receive 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.
- **Public Two-Year Institutions:** Colleges or universities in which programs and activities are operated by publicly elected or appointed school officials and supported primarily by public funds. A college or university was classified as being a two-year institution if it offers only associate degrees and other postsecondary certificates, awards, or diplomas of less than four academic years, or if 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 individuals or agency in control receives compensation beyond wages, rent, or other expenses for the assumption of risk. These institutions are degree-granting and may offer both undergraduate and graduate credentials.

Carnegie Classifications³

This report categorized institutions into Carnegie Classifications based on the Basic Classification for 2018, an update from the traditional classification framework developed by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education in the 1970s. The Basic Classification was first published in 1973 and subsequently updated in 1976, 1987, 1994, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015, 2018, and 2021. It is important to note that classifications are time-specific descriptions of institutional attributes and behavior; thus, an individual institution's classification may change over time. This report utilized the 2018 Basic Classification for data analysis, as that was the most recent classification prior to data collection. For the purposes of this report, institutions were categorized into sectors based on the degrees awarded during the most recent classification.

² The choice to classify institutions in 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 predominantly award associate degrees and certificates, they were classified in this report as two-year institutions and not four-year institutions.

³ For more information on Carnegie Classifications, visit: <https://carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu/>.

Throughout this report, institutions were classified into one of the following seven categories:

- **R1 Doctoral Institutions:** Institutions identified as *doctoral universities: very high research activity* or *R1 doctoral universities* in the 2018 Basic Classification. Such institutions awarded at least 20 research or scholarship doctoral degrees and had at least \$5 million in research expenditures, as reported through the National Science Foundation Higher Education Research and Development Survey (HERD).⁴ This category excludes special focus institutions and Tribal Colleges and Universities.
- **Other Doctoral Institutions:** Institutions identified as *doctoral universities: high research activity* (or *R2 doctoral universities*) and institutions identified as *doctoral/professional universities* (or *D/PU*) in the 2018 Basic Classification. R2 institutions awarded at least 20 research or scholarship doctoral degrees and reported at least \$5 million in research expenditures through NSF HERD. D/PU institutions awarded fewer than 20 research/scholarship doctoral degrees but awarded at least 30 professional practice doctoral degrees in at least two programs. This category excludes special focus institutions and Tribal Colleges and Universities.
- **Master's Institutions:** Institutions that awarded at least 50 master's degrees and fewer than 20 doctoral degrees. This category excludes special focus institutions and Tribal Colleges and Universities.
- **Bachelor's Institutions:** Institutions at which bachelor's or advanced degrees account for at least 50 percent of all degrees but for which fewer than 50 master's degrees or 20 doctoral degrees were awarded. This category also includes some institutions that conferred more than 50 percent but fewer than 90 percent of degrees at the associate's level and conferred more than 10 percent of degrees at the baccalaureate level or higher (called *baccalaureate/associate's colleges: mixed baccalaureate/associate's* in the 2018 Basic Classification). This category excludes special focus institutions and Tribal Colleges and Universities.
- **Associate Institutions:** Institutions at which an associate degree is the highest level of degree awarded. This category also includes some institutions that have at least one baccalaureate degree program but have conferred fewer than 10 percent of degrees at the baccalaureate level or higher (called *baccalaureate/associate's colleges: associate's dominant* in the 2018 Basic Classification). This category excludes special focus institutions and Tribal Colleges and Universities.
- **Special Focus Institutions:** Institutions at which degrees are highly concentrated in a single field or set of related fields. Examples include two-year institutions focused on health professions, technical professions, arts and design, or other fields; and four-year faith-related institutions, medical schools and centers, other health professions schools, engineering schools, other technology-related schools, business and management schools, arts, music, and design schools, law schools, and other special focus institutions. This category excludes Tribal Colleges and Universities.
- **Tribal Colleges and Universities:** Institutions that are members of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium. Tribal Colleges and Universities were created and chartered by American Indian tribes or the federal government with the specific purpose of providing access to postsecondary education to American Indian populations through culturally based programs that are holistic and supportive. There were 34 Tribal Colleges and Universities in the United States, according to the 2021 IPEDS data.⁵

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 aggregated those awards into a single category of *postbaccalaureate certificates*. Finally, IPEDS classifies doctoral degrees into one of three categories: *professional practice*, *research/scholarship*, or *other*. In this report, we presented doctor's degrees—research/scholarship as *research doctoral degrees*, and we aggregated doctor's degrees—professional practice and doctor's degrees—other into *professional and other doctoral degrees*. The postsecondary credentials discussed 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-level work.

⁴ For more information on HERD, visit <https://nces.nsf.gov/surveys/higher-education-research-development/2022>.

⁵ For more information on Tribal Colleges and Universities, visit <http://www.aihec.org/index.html>.

- **Bachelor’s Degree:** An award that normally requires at least four but not more than five years of full-time equivalent college-level work.
- **Postbaccalaureate 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.
- **Doctoral Degrees:** A *research doctoral degree* is 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. A *professional doctoral degree* is 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. *Other doctoral degrees* are doctor’s degrees that do not meet the definition of research doctoral or professional doctoral degree.

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, 2010, and 2020. In this report, the 2020 CIP was used to group academic programs into fields of study that are in line with the variables MAJORS2Y, MAJORS4Y, and GRADMAJ in NPSAS:20. These variables aggregate fields of study into the categories that are most appropriate for analyzing students in subbaccalaureate programs, baccalaureate programs, and graduate programs, respectively. The following table presents the field of study categories used throughout this report.⁶ Additional details about fields of study can be found in chapters 4, 5, and 7.

Subbaccalaureate Credential Programs	Baccalaureate Credential Programs	Graduate Credential Programs
STEM fields	STEM fields	STEM fields
Business and personal and consumer services Health care fields	Business Health care fields	Business and management Health fields
	Education	Education
Social sciences and humanities	Social sciences Humanities	Social and behavioral sciences Humanities
General studies and other fields	General studies and other fields	Other fields
		Law
Manufacturing, military technology, and other applied fields	Other applied fields	

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.**

⁶ Organization of the table of fields of study was determined by this report’s authors, and it should not be viewed as a reflection of any formal classification of fields.

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 CPS, B&B, BPS, and NPSAS are weighted estimates. As a result, some data point estimates in the report were flagged as unstable and others could not be reported at all due to small sample sizes.⁷ 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.

⁷ This report followed NCES data reporting guidelines 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.



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