

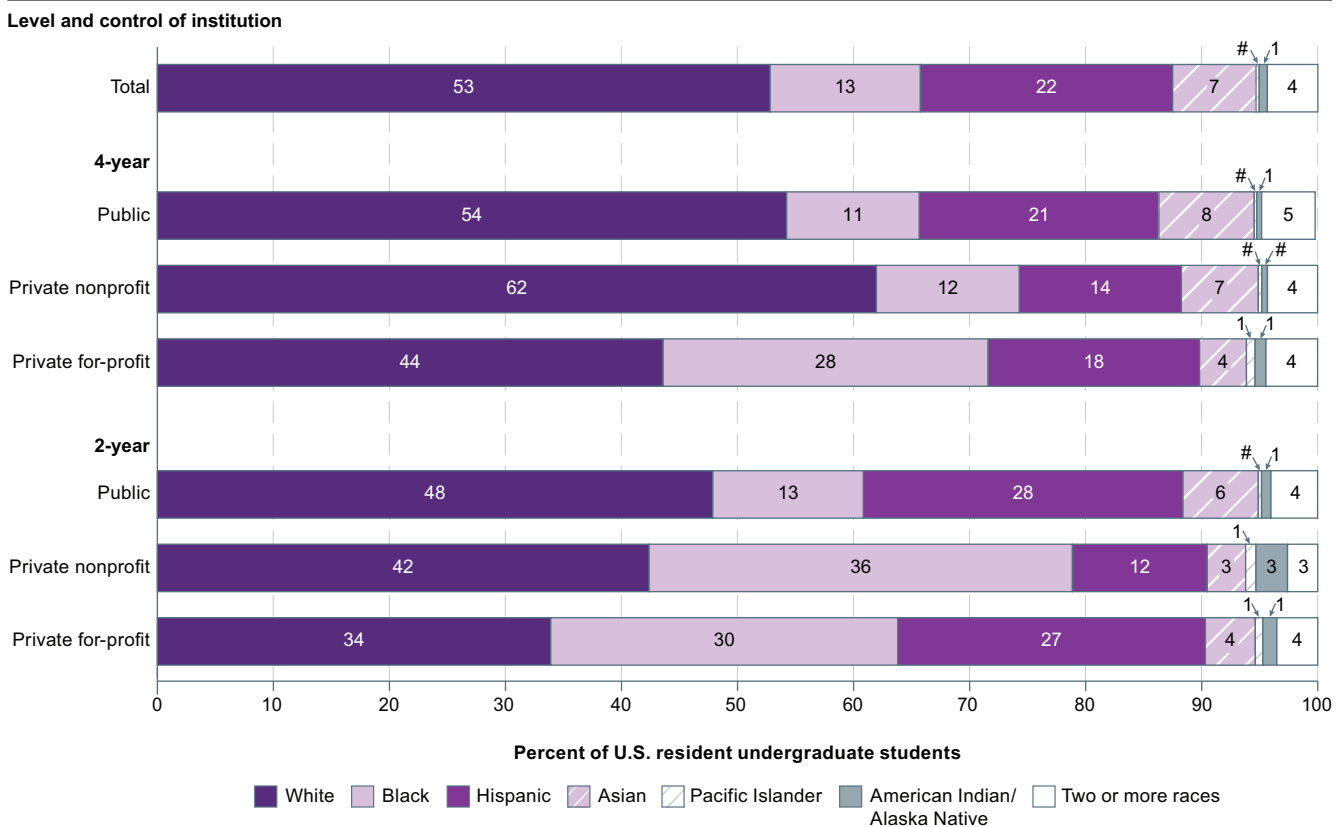
Characteristics of Postsecondary Students

In fall 2020, some 73 percent of the 10.9 million undergraduate students at 4-year institutions were enrolled full time, compared with 37 percent of the 4.9 million undergraduate students at 2-year institutions.

In fall 2020, approximately 15.9 million undergraduate students and 3.1 million postbaccalaureate (graduate) students attended degree-granting postsecondary institutions in the United States.^{1,2} Unless otherwise noted, enrollment includes both U.S. resident students and nonresident alien students. The characteristics of students, such as their age and race/ethnicity, varied among public, private nonprofit, and private for-profit institutions and between 4- and 2-year institutions.

In fall 2020, approximately 10.9 million (69 percent) undergraduate students attended 4-year institutions and 4.9 million (31 percent) undergraduate students attended 2-year institutions. At 4-year institutions, 8.0 million (73 percent) attended full time and 2.9 million (27 percent) attended part time. At 2-year institutions, 1.8 million (37 percent) attended full time and 3.1 million (63 percent) attended part time.

Figure 1. Percentage distribution of U.S. resident undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by level and control of institution and student race/ethnicity: Fall 2020



Rounds to zero.
 NOTE: Data in this figure represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2021, Fall Enrollment component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 306.50.

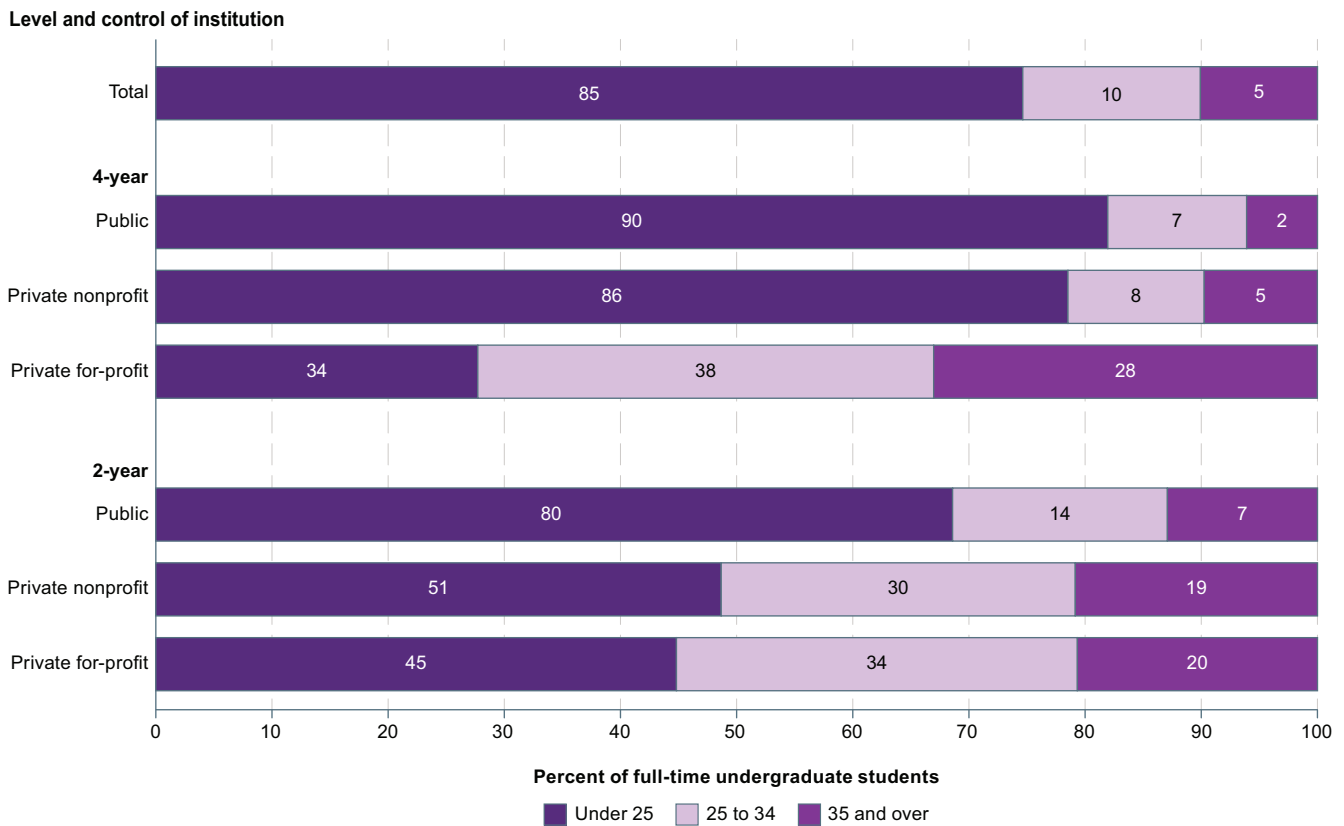
In fall 2020, the overall U.S. resident undergraduate student population was 53 percent White, 22 percent Hispanic, 13 percent Black, 7 percent Asian, 4 percent Two or more races, 1 percent American Indian/Alaska Native, and less than 1 percent Pacific Islander. The distribution of full- and part-time undergraduate students by racial/ethnic groups varied among public, private nonprofit, and private for-profit institutions and between 2- and 4-year institutions.³

In fall 2020, nearly all undergraduate students (95 percent) attending degree-granting institutions enrolled in either public 4-year (48 percent), public 2-year (30 percent), or private nonprofit 4-year (17 percent) institutions. Enrollment at public 4-year institutions was the most representative of the racial/ethnic makeup of the overall undergraduate population. At these institutions, 54 percent of students were White, 21 percent were Hispanic, 11 percent were Black, 8 percent were Asian, 5 percent were of Two or more races, 1 percent were American Indian/Alaska Native, and less than 1 percent were Pacific Islander. In comparison, private nonprofit 4-year institutions had

a higher percentage of White students (62 percent) and lower percentages of Hispanic (14 percent) and American Indian/Alaska Native (less than 1 percent) students, compared with the overall undergraduate population. The reverse was true at public 2-year institutions. There was a lower percentage of White students (48 percent) and higher percentages of Hispanic (28 percent) and American Indian/Alaska Native (1 percent) students at public 2-year institutions.

The remaining 5 percent of undergraduate students were distributed across private for-profit 2- and 4-year institutions and private nonprofit 2-year institutions in fall 2020. These institutions had lower percentages of White and Asian students and higher percentages of Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Pacific Islander students, compared with the overall undergraduate population. For example, at private for-profit 4-year institutions, 44 percent of students were White, 28 percent were Black, 18 percent were Hispanic, 4 percent each were of Two or more races or Asian, and 1 percent each were American Indian/Alaska Native or Pacific Islander.

Figure 2. Percentage distribution of full-time undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by level and control of institution and student age: Fall 2019

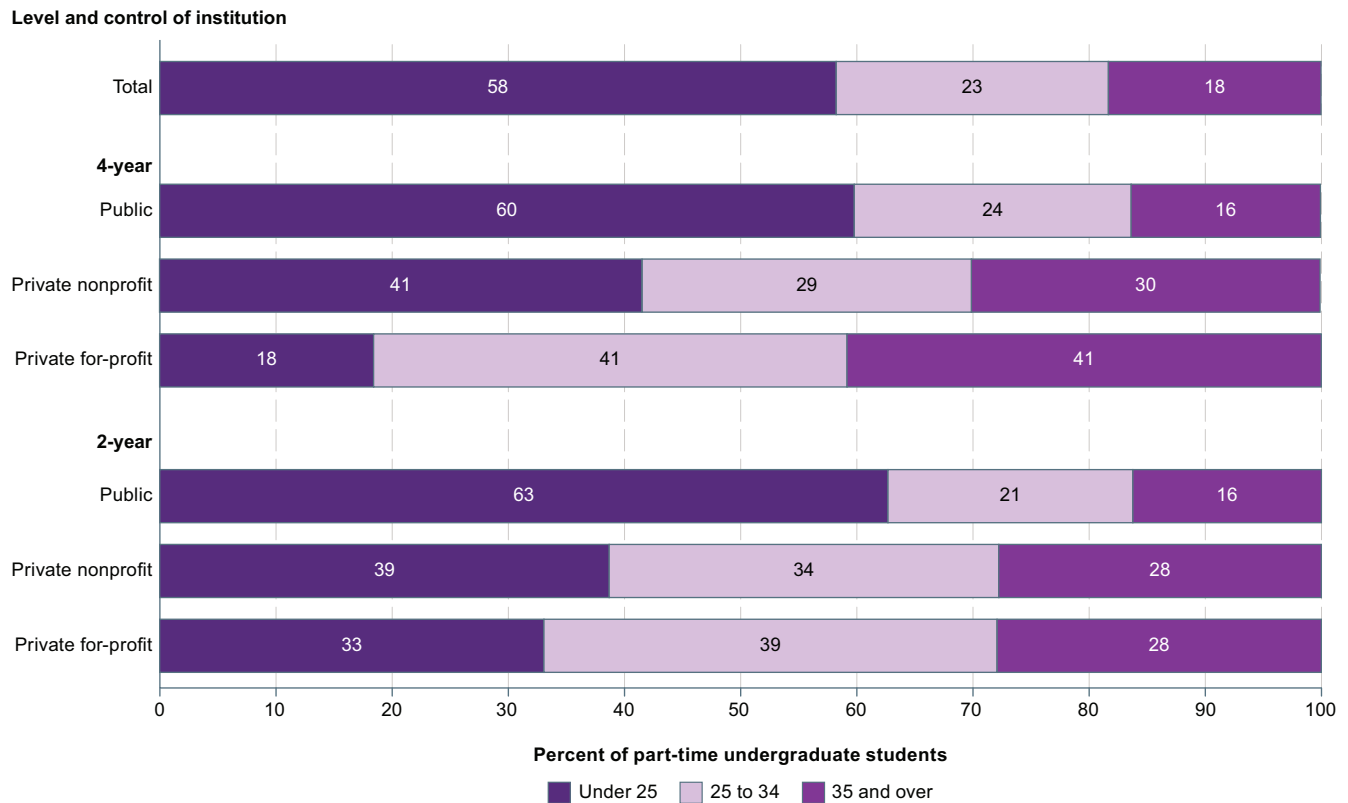


NOTE: Data in this figure represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Percentage distributions exclude students whose age is unknown. Enrollment includes both U.S. resident students and nonresident alien students. Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2020, Fall Enrollment component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 303.50.

In fall 2019,⁴ there were differences in the ages of undergraduate students by level and control of institution.⁵ Ninety percent of full-time undergraduate students at public 4-year institutions were under the age of 25, compared with 86 percent at private nonprofit 4-year institutions and 80 percent at public 2-year institutions. Of the remaining full-time students at these institutions, most were between the ages of 25 and 34 (ranging from 7 to 14 percent). No more than 7 percent were age 35 and over at these institutions (ranging from 2 to 7 percent). In contrast, 45 percent of

full-time students were under age 25 at private for-profit 2-year institutions, and 51 percent were under age 25 at private nonprofit 2-year institutions. At these institutions, around one-third of full-time students were between the ages of 25 and 34 (34 and 30 percent, respectively) and around one-fifth were age 35 and over (20 and 19 percent, respectively). Private for-profit 4-year institutions were the only institutions where students under age 25 did not make up the largest percentage of full-time students. Full-time undergraduate students ages 25 to 34 made up the largest age group at these institutions (38 percent).

Figure 3. Percentage distribution of part-time undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by level and control of institution and student age: Fall 2019

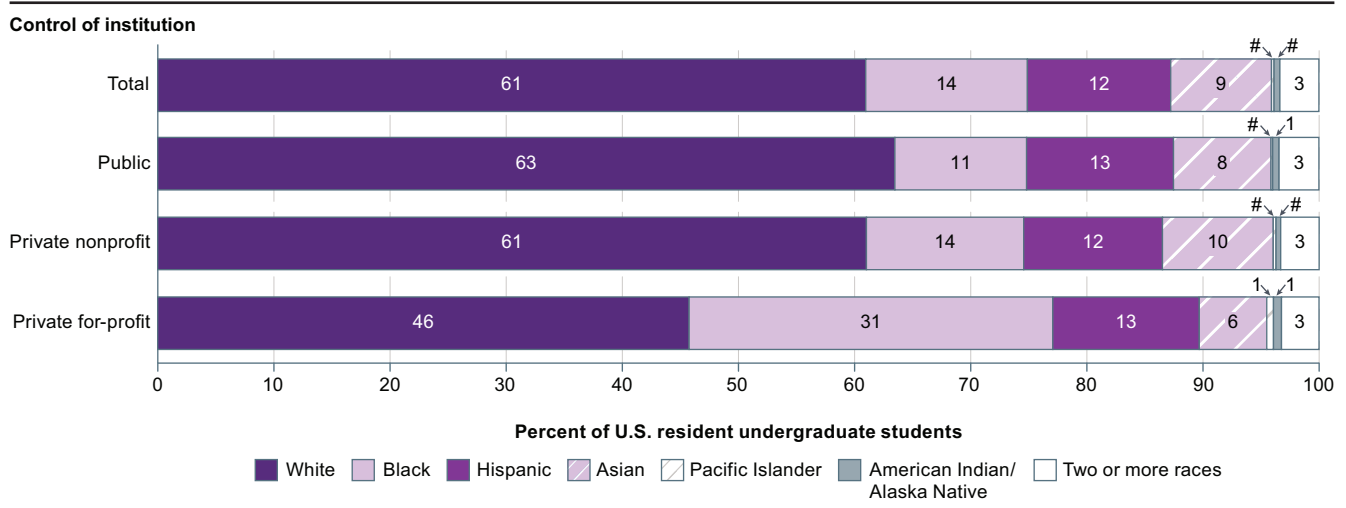


NOTE: Data in this figure represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Percentage distributions exclude students whose age is unknown. Enrollment includes both U.S. resident students and nonresident alien students. Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2020, Fall Enrollment component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 303.50.

Across all levels and controls of institutions in fall 2019, higher percentages of part-time students than of full-time students were age 25 and over. Specifically, 23 percent of part-time students were ages 25 to 34, and 18 percent were age 35 and over, compared with 10 and 5 percent, respectively, for full-time students. As with full-time students, the age of part-time undergraduate students varied by level and control of institution. For example, the majority of part-time students at public institutions were under age 25 (60 percent at 4-year institutions and 63 percent at 2-year institutions). At private nonprofit

institutions, those under age 25 also made up the largest percentages of part-time students, although they were not a majority (41 percent at 4-year institutions and 39 percent at 2-year institutions). In contrast, at for-profit institutions, those under age 25 were not the largest group of part-time students. Specifically, at 2-year for-profit institutions, those ages 25 to 34 made up the largest percentage of part-time students (39 percent). At 4-year for-profit institutions, those ages 25 to 34 and those age 35 and over each made up 41 percent of part-time students.

Figure 4. Percentage distribution of U.S. resident postbaccalaureate (graduate) enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by control of institution and student race/ethnicity: Fall 2020



Rounds to zero.

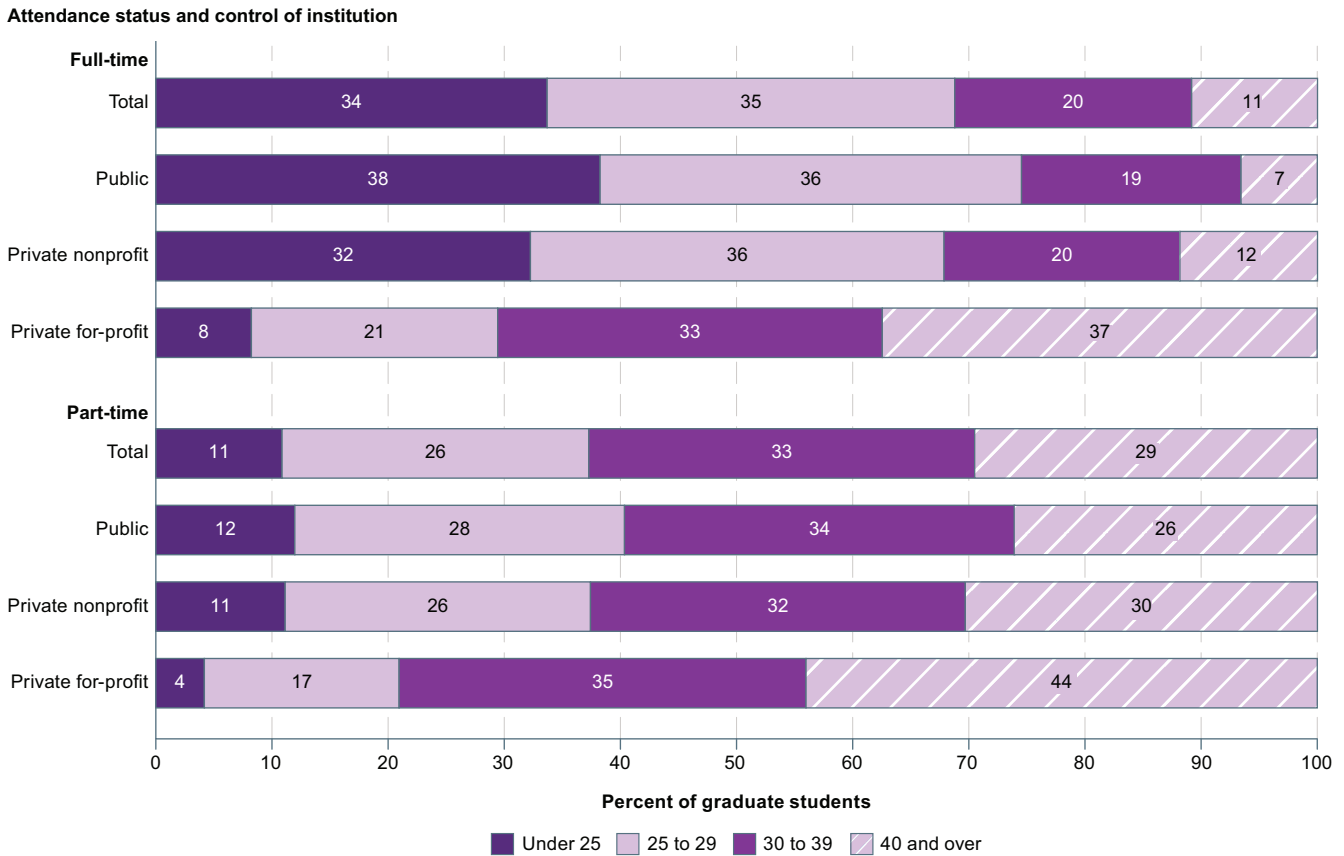
NOTE: Data in this figure represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Degree-granting institutions grant associate’s or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2021, Fall Enrollment component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 306.50.

In fall 2020, some 49 percent of all graduate students attended public institutions, 43 percent attended private nonprofit institutions, and 8 percent attended private for-profit institutions. Of graduate students attending private for-profit institutions, 31 percent were Black, which was more than double the percentages at private nonprofit institutions and public institutions (14 and 11 percent, respectively). Nearly two-thirds of U.S. resident graduate students at public institutions and private nonprofit institutions were White (63 and 61 percent, respectively),

compared with 46 percent of students at private for-profit institutions. Hispanic students accounted for 13 percent of graduate student enrollment at public institutions, 13 percent at private for-profit institutions, and 12 percent at private nonprofit institutions. Asian students accounted for 10 percent of graduate student enrollment at private nonprofit institutions, 8 percent at public institutions, and 6 percent at private for-profit institutions.

Figure 5. Percentage distribution of full-time and part-time postbaccalaureate (graduate) enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by attendance status, control of institution, and student age: Fall 2019



NOTE: Data in this figure represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Percentage distributions exclude students whose age is unknown. Enrollment includes both U.S. resident students and nonresident alien students. Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2020, Fall Enrollment component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 303.50.

In fall 2019, approximately 75 percent of full-time graduate students at public degree-granting institutions were under age 30 (38 percent were under age 25, and 36 percent were ages 25 to 29). Sixty-eight percent of full-time graduate students at private nonprofit institutions were also under age 30 (32 percent were under age 25, and 36 percent were ages 25 to 29). In contrast, 71 percent

of full-time graduate students at private for-profit institutions were age 30 and over (33 percent were ages 30 to 39, and 37 percent were age 40 and over).⁶ Among part-time graduate students, 79 percent were age 30 and over at private for-profit institutions, as were 63 percent at private nonprofit institutions and 60 percent at public institutions.

Endnotes:

- ¹ Data in this indicator represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia.
- ² For more information on how postsecondary enrollment has changed over time, see indicators [Undergraduate Enrollment](#) and [Postbaccalaureate Enrollment](#).
- ³ Throughout this indicator, comparisons by race/ethnicity exclude nonresident alien students.

- ⁴ IPEDS collects fall enrollment counts by student age categories annually, but institutions are required to respond only in odd-numbered years. For this reason, the age analysis reflects fall 2019 enrollment.
- ⁵ Throughout this indicator, students of unknown ages are excluded from the age analysis.
- ⁶ Detail does not sum to totals because of rounding.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, tables 303.50, 303.60, and 306.50; *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 306.50

Related indicators and resources: [Characteristics of Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions](#); [Characteristics of Postsecondary Faculty](#); [Postbaccalaureate Enrollment](#); [Spotlight B: Characteristics of Postsecondary Institutions Serving Specific Minority Racial/Ethnic Groups](#) [*Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups*]; [Undergraduate Enrollment](#)

Glossary: College; Control of institutions; Enrollment; Full-time enrollment; Nonresident alien; Part-time enrollment; Postbaccalaureate enrollment; Postsecondary institutions (basic classification by level); Private institution; Public school or institution; Racial/ethnic group; Undergraduate students; U.S. resident