



U.S. Department of Commerce
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

CURRENT POPULATION REPORTS

Population Characteristics

Series P-20, No. 294

Issued June 1976

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT—SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS OCTOBER 1975 (Advance report)

INTRODUCTION

The total number of persons 3 to 34 years old enrolled in school in the fall of 1975 was 61 million students, 1 percent higher than in 1974. The net gain in the school population between 1974 and 1975 reflects a large increase in the college population, moderate increases in secondary schools and nursery schools,¹ no significant change in kindergartens, and declines in elementary school enrollment paralleling to a large extent shifts in the age structure of the population. Elementary enrollment declined by 680,000, or 2 percent, because the number of births in the United States declined in the early 1960's and has been reducing the number of children of school age since 1970.

Elementary and Preliminary Enrollment. There is some evidence that enrollment in nursery schools increased between 1974 and 1975 even though the number of 3- and 4-year old children decreased by 4 percent. The increase in enrollment among these preschool children during the past year occurred only in public nursery schools; enrollment in private nursery schools was about the same. In 1975 a larger proportion of nursery school students were enrolled in public schools than in 1974—one-third of nursery school students were enrolled in public schools in 1975 compared with about one-fourth in 1974. The enrollment rate of

3- and 4-year old children has been increasing steadily over the past 10 years; 32 percent of 3- and 4-year olds were enrolled in 1975 compared with 21 percent in 1970 and 11 percent in 1965 (table 2). This increased participation apparently has occurred because nursery schools are becoming more accessible to parents, and because parents are willing to enroll preschool children in formal educational programs.

The number of pupils in public elementary schools (kindergarten through 8th grade) was at about the same level in the fall of 1975 as in 1965 (about 30.0 million); but the enrollment in private elementary schools declined by about 30 percent during that period. The number of pupils enrolled in private elementary schools has remained at about 3.8 million since 1973. That level is down from the 5.5 million enrolled in private schools in 1965 and 4.5 million in 1970.

The decline in total elementary school enrollment (including kindergarten) during the past 10 years was partially offset by an increase in the participation of 5- and 6-year old children in kindergartens. The number of students in kindergartens increased between 1965 and 1975 while the number of students in the first through eighth grades declined. The increased enrollment ratios of children at preschool ages may create new opportunities for teachers in a period when elementary schools have declining enrollment.

College Enrollment. The number of persons enrolled in college was 10.9 million persons in 1975, including 1.2 million persons 35 years old and over. This was a 10-percent increase since 1974 and one of the largest

¹The net gain for secondary enrollment is significantly different at the 68 percent level of confidence while the net gain for nursery school enrollment is significantly different at the 95 percent level of confidence.

numerical 1-year increases in enrollment during the past 10 years (table 1). The gain in college enrollment from 1974 to 1975 was due to a very large increase among full-time students, reversing the trends toward a greater proportion of part-time students observed between 1970 and 1974.² The increase between 1974 and 1975 occurred primarily among younger students who were enrolled in the first or second year of college (table 3).

Although the number of persons of college age continued to increase during the 1970's, a lower proportion of persons 18 and 19 years old (the usual ages of first entering college) have been enrolled in school than in the late 1960's (table 2).³ For example, enrollment rates for civilian men 18 and 19 years old declined from 60 percent in 1968 to 46 percent in 1974. However, in 1975, when the unemployment rate for teenagers was the highest for several years,⁴ the enrollment rates for men increased to 50 percent (table 2). Among women, the change between 1974 and 1975 in the proportion of those 18 and 19 years old enrolled in school was also significant. If enrollment rates for persons 16 to 34 years old had remained at the same level as in 1974, about 9.1 million persons 16 to 34 years old would have been in college in 1975 instead of the 9.7 million actually enrolled at those ages. Thus, changes in enrollment rates by age accounted for about 70 percent of the increase in college enrollment from 1974 to 1975.

There were nearly 1 million Black college students in 1975 (under age 35), an increase of 16 percent in 1 year (table 1). Black persons now account for 10 percent of all college students compared with about

² The proportion of part-time students enrolled in college in 1974 and 1975 was significantly different at the 86 percent level of confidence.

³ See *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, No. 260, p. 2, for a discussion of the effects of the Armed Forces population on college enrollment rates from 1963 to 1972.

⁴ *Employment and Earnings: November 1975*. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Volume 22, No. 5, chart 9.

7 percent in 1970 and 5 percent in 1965. Currently, Blacks represent 12 percent of all persons of college age (18 to 24 years old). College enrollment rates for Blacks are still slightly lower than for Whites in part because a lower proportion of Blacks 18 to 21 years old have graduated from high school and thus are not eligible for college enrollment. For example, 27 percent of Blacks 18 to 21 years old were not in school and had not graduated from high school compared with 15 percent for Whites. The college enrollment rate among high school graduates 18 to 21 years old was about the same for Blacks as for Whites—41 percent and 43 percent, respectively.

In the 5 years since 1970, college enrollment increased by 31 percent, due particularly to an increase in the number of women students (table 1). The number of women enrolled in college increased by 45 percent compared with 21 percent for men during this period. However, men still have higher enrollment rates than women in every relevant age group.

Another factor which accounts for the increased number of students in the past 5 years has been the growth of community, or two-year colleges which are less expensive and nearer to population centers than other institutions.⁵ About one-half of the increase in undergraduates during the past 5 years occurred in two-year colleges. In this period, two-year college enrollment increased by about 50 percent while undergraduate enrollment in other colleges increased by 21 percent (table 5). Junior colleges attract persons who are older than other undergraduates and who are more likely to be enrolled part time. About one-half of undergraduates 25 to 34 years old were in junior colleges in 1975 compared with 38 percent in 1970, an increase of 166 percent in the number of 25-to-34-year-old undergraduates in two-year colleges in the 5-year period. Thus, the observed enrollment increases among persons over age 25 during the 1970's have occurred largely, but not exclusively, in two-year colleges.

⁵ C. Arnold Anderson, Mary Jane Bowman, and Vincent Tinto. *Where Colleges Are and Who Attends*. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company), 1972.

Figure 1. School Enrollment of the Population 3 to 34 Years Old by Level:
October 1965 to October 1975

Enrolled in School
(in thousands)

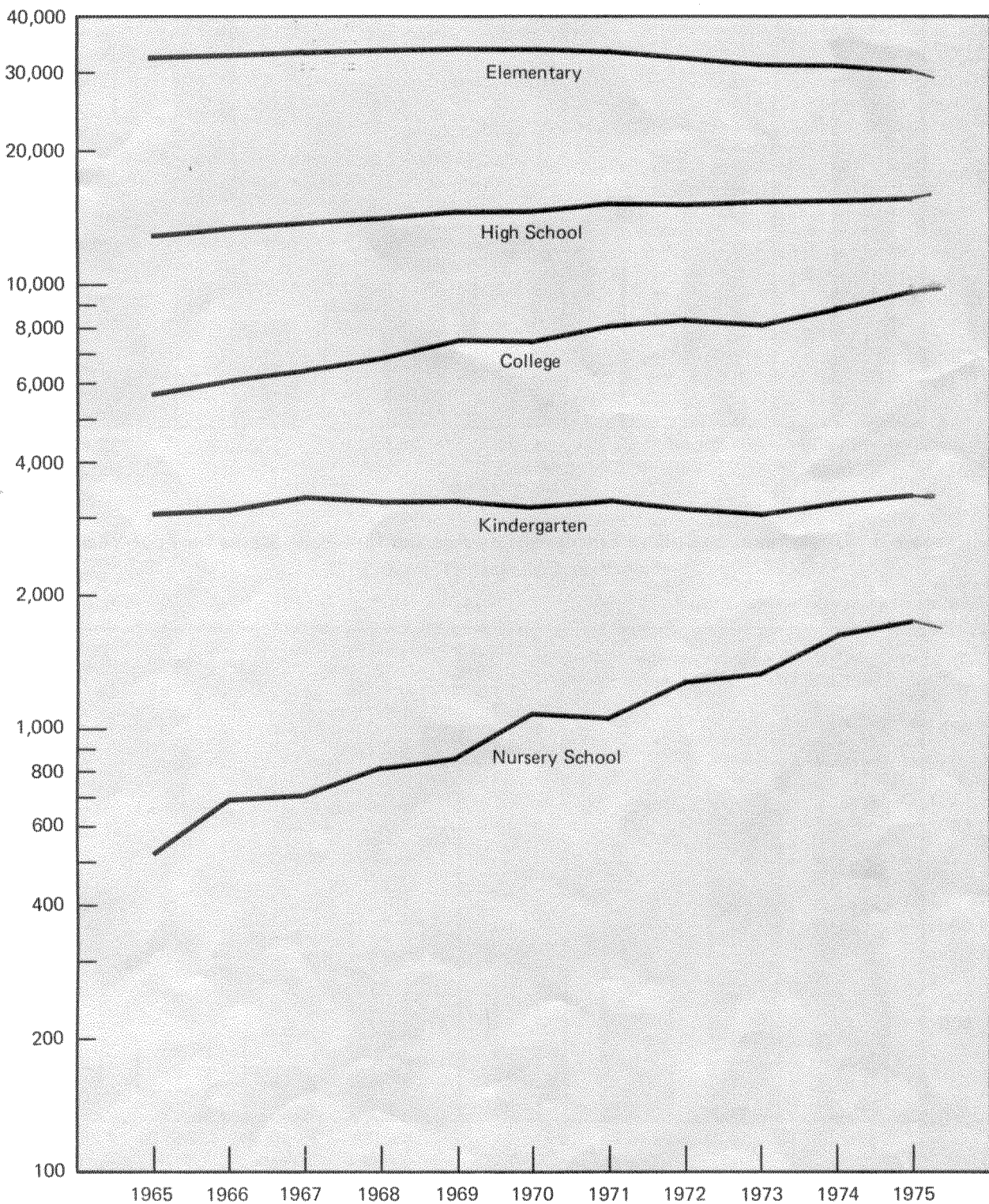


Figure 2. College Enrollment of the Population 16 Years Old and Over, by Age: October 1970, 1974, and 1975

College enrollment (in thousands)

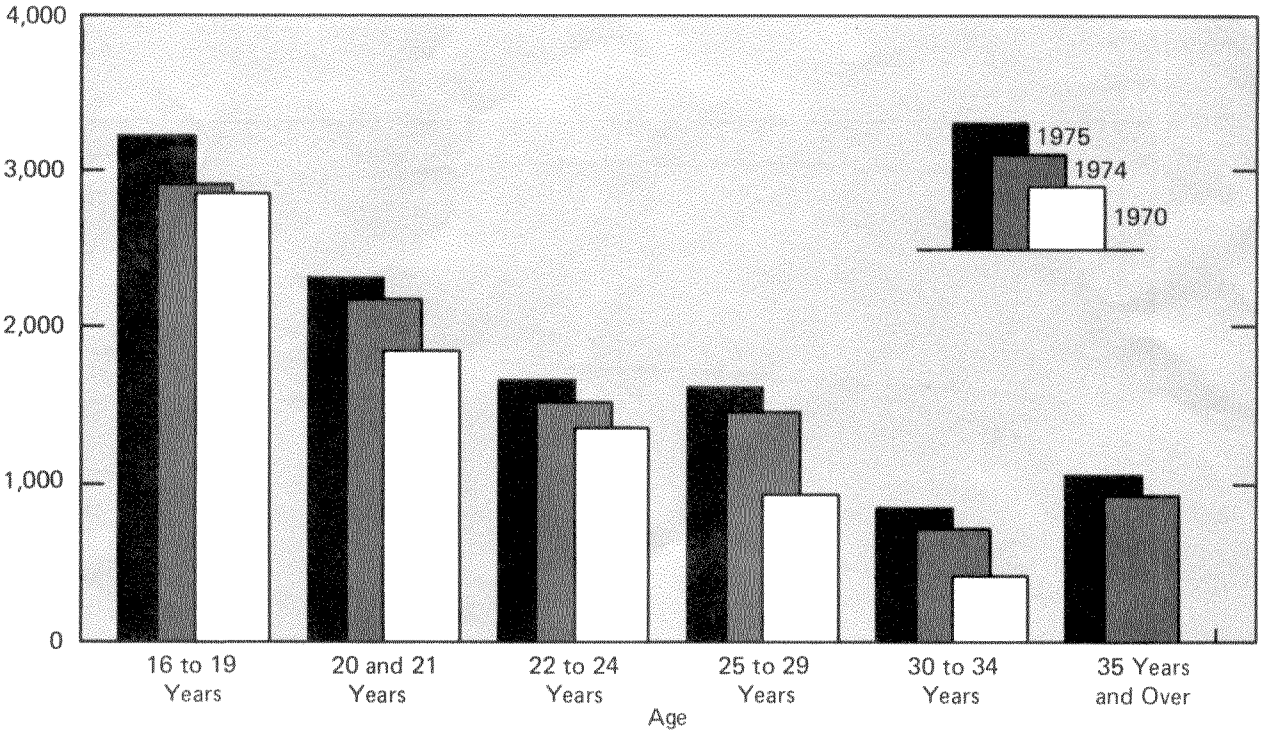
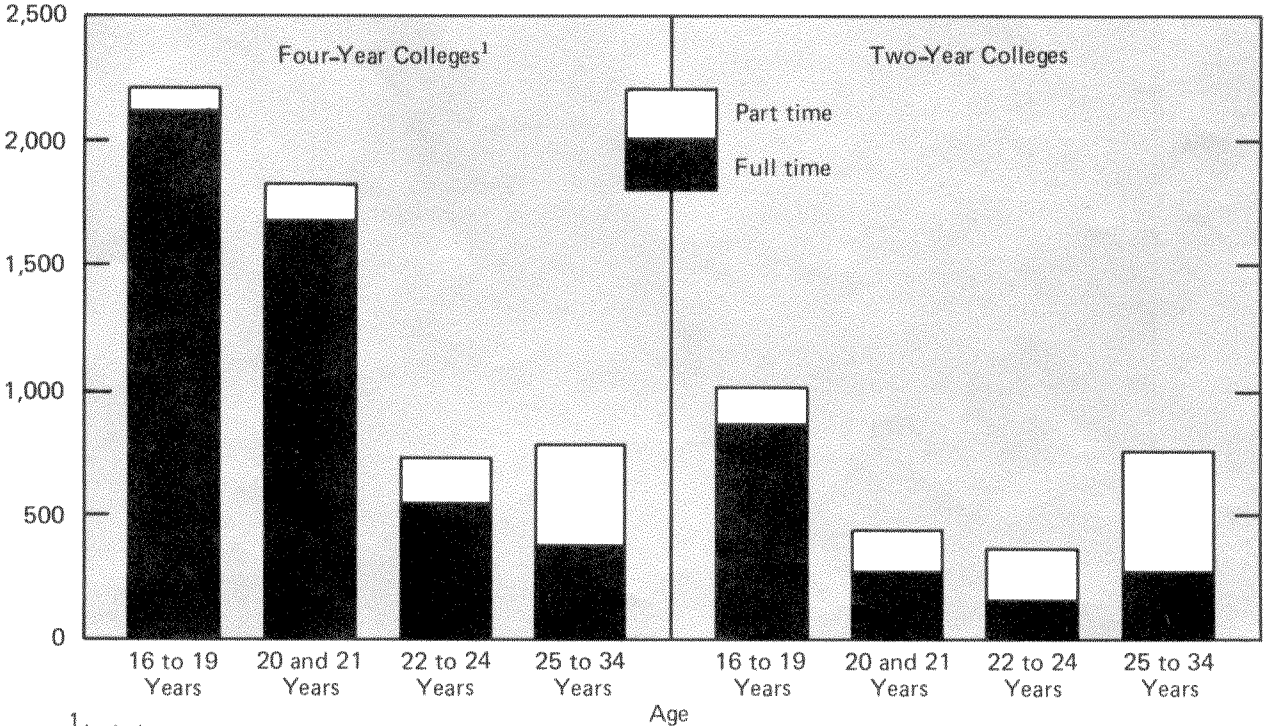


Figure 3. Undergraduate College Enrollment by Age and Full-Time Status for Four-Year and Two-Year Colleges: October 1975

Number of students (in thousands)



¹ Includes persons not reporting type of college.

Figure 4. College Enrollment of the Population 14 to 34 Years Old by Race and Sex:
October 1965 to October 1975

Enrolled in College
(in thousands)

