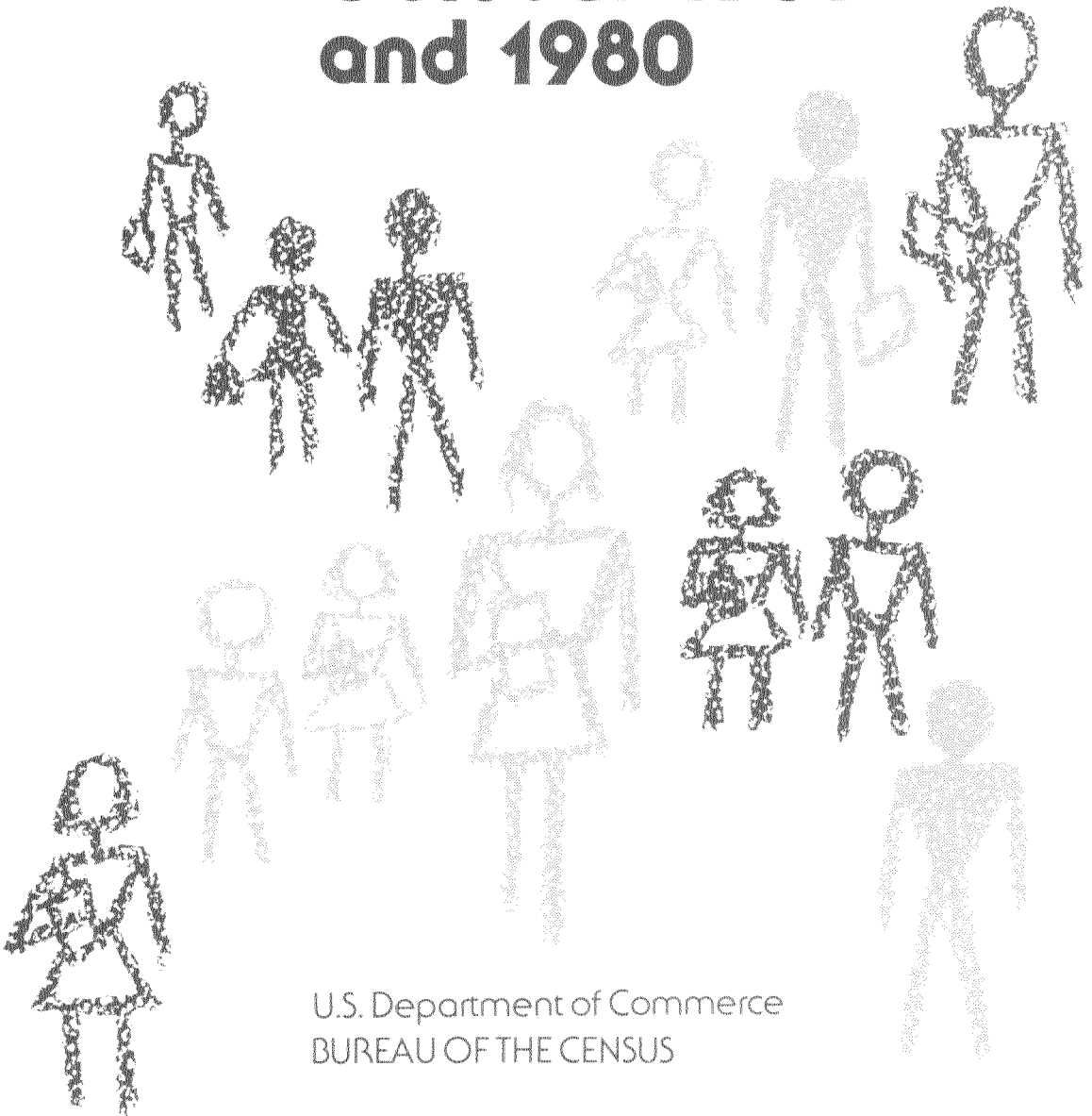


Population Characteristics

Series P-20, No. 400

**School Enrollment—
Social and Economic
Characteristics
of Students:
October 1981
and 1980**



U.S. Department of Commerce
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

CURRENT POPULATION REPORTS

Population Characteristics

Series P-20, No. 400

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School Enrollment— Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1981 and 1980

by Rosalind Bruno



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School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1981 and 1980

The 1981 data in this report are based on population estimates by age, race, and sex, consistent with the 1980 Census of Population, while the 1980 estimates are based on population estimates consistent with the 1970 Census of Population. In addition, a change in the method of identifying children of Spanish origin in the October CPS, beginning in 1980, increased the number of children recorded as being of Spanish origin. See Methodological Notes.

INTRODUCTION

This report presents data from the October school enrollment supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS), collected in 1980 and in 1981. The statistical tables present data for students attending nursery school through college by age, race, Spanish origin, sex, marital status, household relationship, residence, and family income. The tables are limited to enrollment of the civilian noninstitutional population in regular schools, and thus exclude enrollments in special schools, vocational schools, and adult education classes. This report also contains summary data from earlier CPS surveys and a discussion of data on courses taken by high school students collected in the October 1979 supplement. Advance reports, based on the October 1980 and 1981 CPS data, covered changes in the number of persons enrolled in school and were released earlier as Current Population Reports, Series P-20, Nos. 362 and 373.

Total school enrollment of persons 3 to 34 years old declined by 3 percent between 1970 and 1981, from 60.4 million students in 1970 to 58.4 million in 1981 (table A). Nursery school and college were the only levels of school with higher enrollment in 1981 than in 1970, 88 percent and 45 percent higher respectively. An 18 percent decline in elementary school enrollment between 1970 and 1981 generally reflected the replacement of children born during the post-World War II baby boom by subsequent smaller birth cohorts. The number of high school students in 1981 was about the same as in 1970 (14.6 million); however, enrollment declined from an apparent peak of about 15.7 million in the period 1975-77. Kindergarten enrollment was 3.2 million in 1981 and in 1970; it reached 3.4 million in the middle of the decade.

At all levels below college, enrollment trends for males and females were about the same. There were different enrollment trends for Blacks and Whites, however, largely due to differences in the age structure of the population.¹ The birth rate for Blacks has been higher than for Whites and the decreases in births following the baby boom were slower for Blacks than for Whites. White enrollment in elementary school

(grades 1 to 8) dropped 21 percent from 1970 to 1981 and Black enrollment dropped only 12 percent (table A). At the high school level, White enrollment in 1981 was below the 1970 level and the 1975-77 apparent peak. For Blacks while there is some evidence that high school enrollment had declined since 1977, it was still above the 1970 level.

For persons of Spanish origin, school enrollment data were first available from the CPS in 1972. The number of persons of Spanish origin enrolled in school increased by 40 percent from 1972 to 1981 (table B). During the 9-year period elementary² and high school enrollment rose by one-third³ for the Spanish origin population, in part due to rapid population growth which was caused by immigration and high fertility. College enrollment doubled.

College enrollment among persons 14 to 34 years old increased by 45 percent from 7.4 million students in 1970 to 10.7 million in 1981 (table C). Much of the increase is attributable to the population increase caused by the post-World War II baby boom, which lasted until the early 1960's, and part was due to increases in enrollment rates. By 1981, the cohort born in the peak birth years was almost beyond the peak college attendance ages. In fact, the number of persons in the 18 to 21 year old age group began to decline in 1981, while the number in the later 20's kept growing.⁴ From 1970 to 1981, the number of older college students (22 to 34 years old) increased more than the number of young students. The number of older persons eligible to enroll in college increased more than the number of young eligibles and the enrollment rate for older persons increased while the rate for young persons did not. This resulted in the proportion of the student population under 22 years old dropping 10 percentage points from 1970 to 1981, to 54 percent. If we include the 1.2 million students over 34 years old⁵, then students under 22 years old were only 48 percent of all students in 1981 (56 percent in 1972).

²About half of the reported increase can be attributed to change in method of reporting Spanish origin for children; see **Methodological Note**.

³Not significantly different from the total increase.

⁴U.S. Bureau of the Census op. cit.

⁵Data were first collected in 1972.

¹U.S. Bureau of the Census, **Current Population Reports, Series P-25, No. 965, Estimates of the Population of the United States by Age, Sex, and Race: 1980 to 1984.**

Table A. School Enrollment of Persons 3 to 34 Years Old by Level and Race and Percent Change: October 1981 and 1970

(Numbers in thousands)

Level	All races			White			Black		
	1981	1970	Percent change	1981	1970	Percent change	1981	1970	Percent change
Total enrolled	58,390	60,357	-3.3	48,169	51,719	-6.9	8,350	7,829	-6.7
Nursery school	2,058	1,096	87.7	1,685	893	88.7	284	178	59.6
Kindergarten	3,161	3,183	-0.7	2,597	2,706	-4.0	474	426	11.3
Elementary school	27,795	33,950	-18.1	22,663	28,638	-20.9	4,291	4,868	-11.9
High school	14,642	14,715	-0.5	12,062	12,723	-5.2	2,168	1,834	18.2
College	10,734	7,413	44.8	9,162	6,759	35.6	1,133	522	117.0

Table B. School Enrollment of Persons 3 to 34 Years Old for Persons of Spanish Origin by Level and Percent Change: October 1981 and 1972

(Numbers in thousands)

Level	1981	1972	Percent change
Total enrolled	4,551	3,257	39.7
Nursery school	131	61	(B)
Kindergarten	306	241	27.0
Elementary school	2,474	1,879	31.7
High school	1,130	834	35.5
College	510	242	110.7

Table C. College Enrollment of Persons 14 to 34 Years Old by Age and Percent Change: October 1981 and 1970

(Numbers in thousands)

Age	Population		College students		Percent change 1970-81	
	1981	1970	1981	1970	Population	College students
Total	82,281	62,873	10,734	7,413	30.9	44.8
14 to 17 years old	15,270	15,718	232	260	-2.9	-10.8
18 and 19 years old	8,115	6,958	3,044	2,594	16.6	17.3
20 and 21 years old	8,365	6,118	2,545	1,857	36.7	37.0
22 to 24 years old	12,485	9,476	1,986	1,354	31.8	46.7
25 to 29 years old	19,780	13,415	1,717	939	47.4	82.9
30 to 34 years old	18,266	11,188	1,211	410	63.3	195.4

In 1970, there were 46 percent more men than women among college students 14 to 34 years old; by 1981, about equal numbers of men and women attended (table D). College enrollment increased for men (14 to 34 years old) by about 22 percent from 1970 to 1981. Women had significantly higher gains during the same period, about 78 percent. The number of women under 22 years old enrolled rose by 41 percent, while for women, 22 to 34 years old, the number enrolled more than doubled.

**Table D. Age Distribution for College Students
14 to 34 Years Old by Sex: October
1981 and 1970**

(In thousands)

Age	Men		Women	
	1981	1970	1981	1970
Total	5,372	4,401	5,363	3,013
14 to 17 years old . .	96	130	136	130
18 and 19 years old .	1,450	1,346	1,594	1,248
20 and 21 years old .	1,239	1,083	1,305	774
22 to 24 years old . .	1,144	902	842	452
25 to 29 years old . .	909	684	808	255
30 to 34 years old . .	533	256	677	154

COURSE ENROLLMENT OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS 1979

Recent widespread interest in high school curricula and course requirements which was stimulated by a report to the Secretary of Education by the National Commission on Excellence in Education⁶ has made presentation of heretofore unpublished data from the October 1979 Current Population Survey timely. In October 1979, additional questions were included in the CPS school enrollment supplement concerning college plans of high school students and specific types of courses high school students were taking. Questions on high school enrollment in specific areas of vocational training such as business, health occupations, shop for vocational training, agriculture, distributive education, and cosmetology were included at the request of the Department of Education. In addition, three areas of study were included that could be considered college preparatory or academic—foreign languages, science (chemistry and physics), and mathematics (algebra 2 or 3, geometry, trigonometry, precalculus or calculus).

The questionnaire listed specific courses and was not exhaustive of all academic or vocational courses. While the courses have been summarized in the tables into "academic" and "vocational," students may have been taking other academic or vocational courses not referenced in the question. The three course areas listed as academic are widely held as part of an academic curriculum. The vocational courses cover the major vocational offerings. The survey did

not identify whether particular high schools were academic or vocational. Also, it did not identify the students curriculum or track. The same questions were asked about all students in 10th through 12th grades. Some schools may not offer all of the courses listed, and, thus, the options may not have been the same for all students. Although the academic courses are nearly universally available (the variety and number of courses may differ), the specific vocational courses are not.

Enrollment in the three types of college preparatory courses was varied. In the 10th grade, half of all students were taking at least one mathematics course (table A-4), in the 12th grade, only one-third were taking a math course. Conversely, more 12th graders than 10th graders were taking chemistry or physics. The science courses enrolled 1-in-8 10th graders and 1-in-5 12th graders. Enrollment in foreign languages was highest among 10th graders with 31 percent and lowest among 12th graders with 14 percent.

Much of the between grade difference has to do with the sequencing of courses within school systems. Physics and chemistry are given in 11th and 12th grades most often. Foreign languages are begun early and many of those who are taking foreign languages in the 12th grade may be taking the third or fourth year of a language. Among all students, 12th grade students were least likely to be enrolled in any of the three academic courses, perhaps because required courses were finished early. Forty-four percent of 12th grade students were enrolled in at least one academic course compared with 58 percent of 10th and 11th grade students. Among those who planned to attend college, 61 percent of 12th graders and 79 percent of 10th and 11th graders were attending academic classes. Women were more likely than men to take foreign languages, and men were more likely than women to enroll in science and math; these relationships held in almost every grade. Over all grades, Whites were more likely than Blacks to be enrolled in each of the three academic areas (table A-4).

Whereas, the enrollment rate in academic courses was substantially lower for 12th graders than for 10th graders, the enrollment rate in vocational courses was not lower for seniors, but higher—42 percent for 10th graders and 48 percent for 12th graders. Between grade differences for the vocational subject areas were small. The number of students taking business education averaged 23 percent (varying 5 percentage points between grades). Enrollment in shop for vocational training averaged about 19 percent (varying about 2 percentage points between grades). A little more than 1-in-3 female high school students was enrolled in at least one business course compared to roughly 1-in-10 males (table A-5). By contrast, at least 1-in-3 males was in a shop class compared with 1-in-30 females. Each of the other vocational subjects enrolled less than 10 percent of all students. The enrollment rates of White and Black students in the vocational courses were not significantly different (table A-4), except in agriculture, in which Whites were slightly more likely than Blacks to be enrolled and in health occupations for which there is some evidence that Blacks were more likely than Whites to enroll. (In both areas enrollment rates were 4 percent or less.)

Home economics was not included among vocational courses in this study but it enrolled 1-in-5 females compared with less than 1-in-20 males, and a slightly higher proportion of Blacks than Whites. A course like typing for personal use was not considered a vocational course, but was added to allow respondents to separate that kind of course from business typing. Twelve percent of those planning to attend 4-year colleges were taking typing compared with 4 percent of those with no college aspirations.

⁶National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk, The Imperative for Educational Reform*, April 1983.

HIGH SCHOOL COURSES AND COLLEGE PLANS

Post high school plans were strongly related to the types of courses in which high school students enrolled. While 1-in-5 high school seniors who did not plan to attend college was enrolled in courses in at least one of the three academic areas, 3-in-5 of those who planned to attend college were in academic courses (table A-5).

About half (49.4 percent) of seniors planned to attend college. Slightly over half of those, or 28 percent of all seniors, intended to go directly to 4-year colleges. Fifteen percent of seniors planned to attend a 2-year college and then a 4-year college, and 7 percent planned to attend a 2-year college only. In addition, 22 percent reported they *might* attend and 28 percent had no plans for college (did not plan to attend or did not report plans). Seniors who intended to enroll in a 4-year college only were most likely to be taking academic courses; 75 percent were attending at least one academic course. Of others who planned to attend college, 47 percent of those planning to attend a 2-year college and then a 4-year college, and 36 percent of those expecting to attend a 2-year college only were in the academic classes. Seniors planning to enter 4-year colleges were most likely to be taking courses in each of the academic areas—30 percent were taking a foreign language, 47 percent physics or chemistry, and 61 percent mathematics (table A-5).

Roughly half (48 percent) of all seniors were enrolled in vocational courses, including 41 percent of seniors who definitely planned to attend college and 58 percent of other seniors. Seniors who intended to attend a 2-year college only, were much more likely than those who intended to attend only a 4-year college to enroll in a vocational course, 66 percent versus 32 percent. Of those who planned to attend both types of school 47 percent were taking vocational courses. Thus it appears, that the vocational courses serve a greater variety of students than the academic courses. College bound students were much more likely to take academic courses than were noncollege bound students, but the proportions of each student group enrolled in the vocational courses were not as different.

REGIONAL VARIATION IN COURSE ENROLLMENT

One of the most interesting aspects of the data is the large difference between geographic areas. The proportion enrolled in each academic subject, at each grade level, was greater in the Northeast than in the other regions. Enrollments in the other three regions were not significantly different from each other in the majority of subjects and grades.

Of all 10th to 12th grade students in the United States, 54 percent were taking at least one of the three academic courses (table E). In the Northeast, the proportion was 62 percent. In the three other regions the proportion averaged 51 percent. In the separate fields, the proportions enrolled were higher in the Northeast than in other regions. In foreign language, the proportion for the Northeast was 35 percent; the other three regions averaged 20 percent. In physics and chemistry, the proportion for the Northeast was 28 percent compared to 17 percent for the rest of the country. And for mathematics the figures were 54 percent and 42 percent, respectively.

The differences cannot be fully explained by any single factor. The regions are not very different in college expectations. In fact, the proportion expecting to attend college is highest in the West at 57 percent for seniors; the other regions are not different from each other and averaged 48 percent (table E). However, the proportion of the expected attendance which will at least begin in 2-year colleges was substantially larger in the West than in other regions. As noted earlier, seniors planning to attend a 4-year college only were most likely to be enrolled in academic courses. There is some evidence that seniors in the Northeast were more likely than those in the remainder of the country to plan to attend only a 4-year college (30 percent compared with 25 to 28 percent in other regions).

METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

In October 1981, 58.4 million persons 3 to 34 years old were enrolled in school (table 1). These survey data are based

Table E. Selected Characteristics of High School and College Students by Region: October 1979

(Numbers in thousands)

Area	High school students										College students ¹			
	Taking academic courses				Seniors planning to attend college				Attending private school (9th to 12th grades)	Under-graduates in 4-year colleges		18- to 21-year olds enrolled in college		
	10th to 12th		12th		Total		4-year college only							
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent						Number
United States	11,200	53.6	3,545	43.5	1,753	49.5	978	27.6	15,116	7.4	9,192	68.5	16,314	31.9
Northeast	2,600	62.4	835	49.3	406	48.7	259	31.0	3,531	10.0	2,113	75.2	3,485	37.3
Midwest ²	2,997	51.4	1,003	40.5	468	46.7	277	27.7	3,998	7.9	2,255	73.3	4,594	29.5
South	3,582	50.3	1,061	42.8	512	49.3	282	26.6	4,892	6.4	2,766	70.1	5,373	29.6
West	2,020	51.2	647	42.0	367	56.7	159	24.6	2,696	5.3	2,058	54.0	2,862	33.3

¹Region of residence may be that of student's parents (the household of which student is a part) rather than of the student if he/she is living away at school.

²Formerly North Central.

on population estimates which are consistent with the 1980 Census of Population. The CPS estimates of school enrollment for 1981 are not directly comparable with the estimates for 1972 to 1980 which were based on population estimates consistent with the 1970 census; however, the comparability is better for the earlier years. The April 1, 1980, census population was about 5.5 million greater than the estimate for the same date obtained by carrying forward the 1970 census population with data on births, deaths, and (legal) international migration.⁷ It is not known at this time how much of this difference, or "error of closure," is due to improvements in census coverage or to the enumeration of illegal immigrants not included in the estimate. (In contrast, the error of closure between the 1960 and 1970 censuses was small.)

The change in censuses on which the estimates are based had a significant effect on the age distribution and size of the population of school age, but there is virtually no effect on the proportions of each age group enrolled. Absolute numbers for 1980 and 1981 should be compared only with adjustments to reflect the differences shown in table F.

As a result of the 1970 to 1980 error of closure, independent estimates of the October 1981 civilian noninstitutional population based on the 1980 census are (generally) higher than estimates based on the 1970 census, as shown in table F for school ages. The overall effect is that estimated school enrollment in the 3 to 34 age span in October 1981 is 2.9 percent higher with 1980 census based population estimates (58.4 million) than with 1970 census based population estimates (56.9 million), as shown in table 1. As a consequence of the error of closure, presentation of annual data

and calculation of change between years would show a growth in elementary and secondary enrollment between 1980 and 1981, if the 1981 (1980 based) data were used, simply because of the change in population estimates. In actuality a decline in enrollment occurred at both levels.

To reduce the impact of this discontinuity, comparisons of 1981 school enrollment data with comparable data for 1980 should be based on 1970 census based population estimates, and therefore two sets of estimates for 1981 are included in table 1. Comparisons of 1980 based data for 1981 with earlier years is less affected by the discontinuity. Therefore, in the text of this report 1981 enrollment data (using 1980 census based population estimates) are compared with data for 1972 and 1970.

Data on public and private enrollments are not available for high school and college for 1980; however, data on total enrollment and grade are available. The method used to collect the 1980 data for these students was not comparable with methods used for other years, so that data on type of school were not produced for 1980.

Large changes in the number of children reported as Spanish origin from 1979 to 1980 occurred because of changes in the method of classifying children as Spanish in the October school enrollment survey. This did not change the total number of children counted in the survey but did increase the number of children 3 to 13 years old classified as Spanish origin by approximately 23 percent. The basic CPS is for adults 14 years old and over. Spanish origin is reported for each adult. Prior to 1980, Spanish origin for children, was allocated from a parent.

Starting with the 1980 survey, Spanish origin was reported for all persons, including children, so that origin is no longer allocated on the basis of responses for older family members. Data on children of Spanish origin for 1980 and 1981 are consistent with each other but not with data for earlier years.

⁷U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 115, Coverage of the National Population in the 1980 Census by Age, Sex, and Race: Preliminary Estimates by Demographic Analysis.*

Table F. Population and Enrollment Estimates by Age: October 1981

(Number in thousands)

Age	1980 census based			1970 census based		
	Population	Enrolled in school	Percent enrolled	Population	Enrolled in school	Percent enrolled
Total, 3 to 34 years old	119,302	58,390	48.9	115,855	56,939	49.1
3 and 4 years old	6,476	2,332	36.0	6,376	2,300	36.1
5 and 6 years old	6,335	5,955	94.0	6,159	5,793	94.1
7 to 13 years old	24,209	24,025	99.2	23,544	23,362	99.2
14 to 17 years old	15,270	14,373	94.1	14,966	14,097	94.2
18 and 19 years old	8,115	3,976	49.0	8,034	3,941	49.1
20 and 21 years old	8,365	2,643	31.6	8,136	2,579	31.7
22 to 24 years old	12,485	2,057	16.5	11,959	1,965	16.4
25 to 29 years old	19,780	1,774	9.0	18,891	1,682	8.9
30 to 34 years old	18,266	1,254	6.9	17,790	1,221	6.9