

# Population Characteristics



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## School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1984 (Advance Report)

This report presents summary data on school enrollment for 1984 and some of the important changes that have occurred in recent years. The data are from the October school enrollment supplements to the Current Population Survey (CPS). Data on school enrollment of the civilian population have been collected in the CPS annually since 1946 and regularly reported in this series (P-20). Additional information on school enrollment as well as detailed statements on sampling variability and limitations of the data will appear in a subsequent detailed report on the October 1984 enrollment survey. Some highlights of the topics discussed in this report are:

- In October 1984 there were 58.8 million persons 3 years old and over enrolled in school.
- Elementary school enrollment was at about 26.8 million, 7.1 million fewer students than in the peak year, 1970.
- High school enrollment was 13.8 million, about 2 million below the 1975-77 peak.
- There were 12.3 million college students in 1984, not significantly different from the previous 3 years.
- The proportion of Black high school graduates under 25 years old with some college experience,<sup>1</sup> rose and fell in the 17 years preceding the survey—it was 35 percent in 1967, 50 percent in 1976, and 45 percent in 1980-84.

### INTRODUCTION

In October 1984, 58.8 million persons were enrolled in school, including 4.6 million persons 25 years old and over, (past the expected school-leaving age). In fact, these older students accounted for 36 percent of all college students.

<sup>1</sup>High school graduates 14 to 24 years old who were enrolled in college or were not enrolled but had completed 1 or more years of college.

The number of persons enrolled in college in 1984 was significantly higher than the number enrolled in 1980 (table A), but not significantly different from the number enrolled in 1981, 1982, or 1983. So far, the decline in college enrollment projected by the Department of Education,<sup>2</sup> based, in part, on a decline in the traditional college-age population, has not appeared in the CPS estimates.

**Table A. Number of Students by Level: October 1984 and 1980<sup>3</sup>**  
(1980 census-based estimates. Numbers in thousands)

Level	1984	1980	Change
<b>3 to 34 years old</b>			
Nursery school.....	2,354	2,031	*323
Kindergarten.....	3,484	3,272	**212
Elementary.....	26,838	28,241	*-1,403
High school.....	13,777	14,935	*-1,158
College.....	10,859	10,473	**386
White.....	9,269	9,033	236
Black.....	1,139	1,052	87
<b>14 years old and over</b>			
College.....	12,304	11,688	*616
Male.....	5,989	5,617	*372
Female.....	6,315	6,071	244

\*Differences are significant at the 95 percent level of confidence.

\*\*Differences are significant at the 90 percent level of confidence.

Among the youngest students, those enrolled in nursery school, there was no significant change in enrollment from 1983 to 1984. There has been long-term growth in nursery

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Projections of Education Statistics to 1992-93*, 1985.

<sup>3</sup>Table A shows the number of persons enrolled in school by level, using 1980 census-based population estimates for 1980 and 1984. Use of estimates based on the same census allows for more consistent comparisons between years. The 1980 CPS enrollment data in the detailed tables use 1970 census-based estimates, which resulted in substantially lower enrollment estimates for all levels of school than the 1980 census-based estimates.

school enrollment, however. Throughout the entire period of population decline among 3- and 4-year-olds, which began in the mid-1960's and ended in 1979, the number of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in school grew because of increased enrollment rates. In every year since 1980, about 36 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds were enrolled in school compared with 11 percent in 1965. The 3-to-4-year-old population began to increase in 1979, because of an upward trend in the annual number of births which began in 1976,<sup>4</sup> and while the enrollment rate for children of eligible age did not increase after 1980, nursery school enrollment continued to grow (table 2).

Although the larger birth cohorts started reaching elementary school age in 1982, their impact has not yet stopped the decline in total elementary school enrollment, which dropped by 360,000 from 1983 to 1984. In 1984, elementary enrollment was 21 percent (7.1 million) below the 1970 peak. Private elementary school was 31 percent below the 1970 level. In 1984, about 10 percent of all elementary school students were attending private schools.

There were 13.8 million students enrolled at the high school level in 1984, 13 percent less than the 15.7 million enrolled in the peak years of 1975 to 1977. The larger birth cohorts which have begun to enter elementary school will not reach high school age until 1991. They may not cause the downward trend to be reversed until a few years later, depending on such factors as changes in dropout rates. The proportion of high school students in private schools was around 8 percent in the mid-1970's and in 1984.

College enrollment of students of all ages has not changed significantly since 1981.<sup>5</sup> Women remained 51 percent of all students as they have been since 1980; they were 43 percent of all students in 1972. While the population of 18- and 19-year olds has declined since 1981,<sup>6</sup> the CPS sample is not large enough to distinguish the apparent parallel decline in enrollment from sampling fluctuations. About 36 percent of college students were 25 years old and over in 1984 and 1981, compared with 28 percent in 1972.

Total Black college enrollment (14 to 34 years old) has not changed significantly since 1976. In the 14 years spanning

1970 to 1984, the number of White students increased by 37 percent and Black students by 118 percent. Most of the change for both groups occurred in the first half of that period. In most of the years since 1976, there have been more Black women enrolled than Black men; in earlier years, there were no significant differences (table 3). Among Whites, more men than women were enrolled through 1978. Since then, there has been no significant difference between the number of men and women enrolled.

In 1984, about 2.8 million undergraduate students (14 to 34 years old) were enrolled in 2-year colleges, not significantly different from the number enrolled in 1983. From 1974 to 1982, 2-year college enrollment grew by 45 percent compared with a 24-percent increase for all undergraduate enrollment. Two-year college enrollment declined by 9 percent from 1982 to 1984, while total undergraduate enrollment did not change (table 5). Two-year colleges accounted for 30 percent of total undergraduate enrollment in 1984, and they have been more likely than 4-year colleges to serve older and part-time students. Forty-three percent of persons attending 2-year colleges in 1984 attended part time compared with 25 percent of all undergraduates. About 29 percent of 2-year college students were 25 years old or over compared with 20 percent of all undergraduates.

Graduate school enrollment rose 21 percent, from 1974 to 1984, to 1.8 million. The proportion of graduate students attending full time rose from 44 to 55 percent in the same period. There is some evidence that women rose as a proportion of all graduate students in the period, from 40 to 44 percent.

## TRENDS IN COLLEGE ENROLLMENT BY RACE

Somewhat different trends emerged in the college enrollment of young Whites and Blacks in the period 1967 to 1984 (the period for which consistent data are available). Black enrollment at least doubled in the first half of the period (to 1976), while White enrollment rose by one-third (table B). From 1976 to 1984, neither group experienced a significant increase in enrollment. These patterns reflect changes in the numbers of high school graduates and the fraction going on to college.

In the first half of the period (1967 to 1976), for both race groups the number of college-age high school graduates increased and college attendance also increased. The number of high school graduates increased rapidly for two reasons. First, the size of the college-age population grew—the largest cohorts of the “baby boom” generation were moving into

<sup>4</sup>U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-25, No. 971, *Estimates of the Population of the United States and Components of Change: 1970 to 1984* and earlier reports.

<sup>5</sup>The addition to the CPS of monthly enrollment questions for persons 16 to 24 years old in 1984 and changes in the edit procedures have caused a slightly larger number of college students to be tabulated than in previous years. The edit change is an improvement and should result in a more accurate estimate of college enrollment. The edit adjustment also caused a slight increase in the proportion of students counted as enrolled full time.

<sup>6</sup>The first year that data were available for students of all ages including those 35 years old and over.

FIGURE 1.  
Percent of Persons Who Were High School Graduates or Enrolled in College by Race: 1967 to 1984

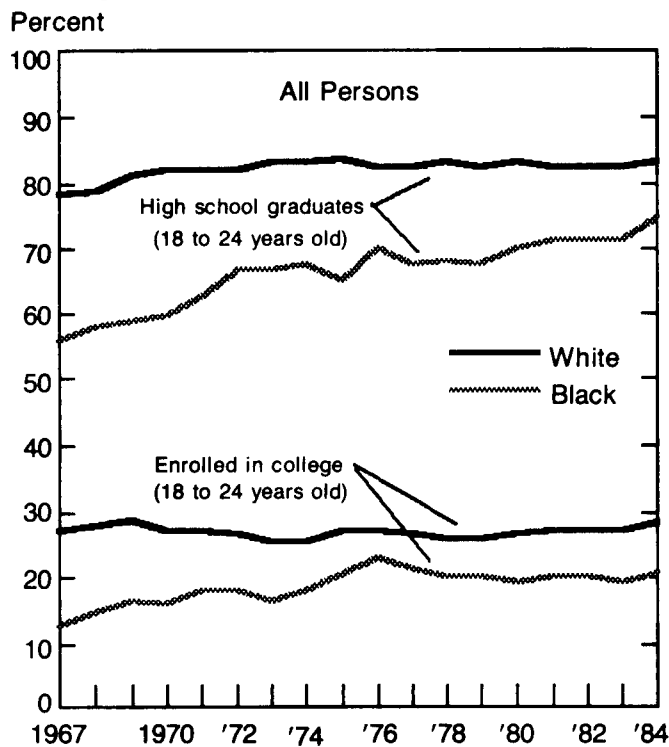
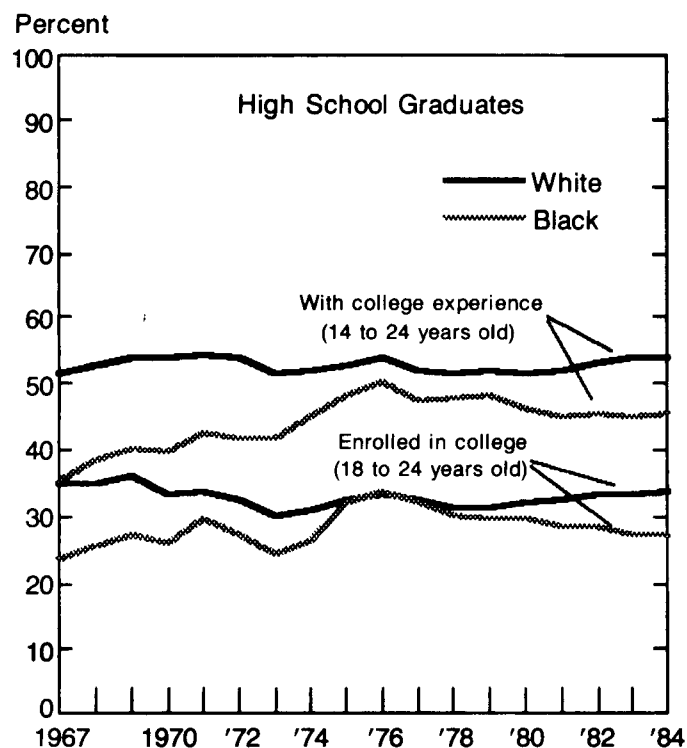


FIGURE 2.  
Percent of High School Graduates Who Were Enrolled in College or Had College Experience by Race: 1967 to 1984



college ages and replacing smaller ones. Second, the high school completion rate increased, particularly for Blacks, which also increased the pool of persons eligible for college. In the period 1967 to 1984, the proportion of Black 18- to 24-year-olds who were high school graduates rose from 56 percent to over 70 percent (figure 1 and table B). The proportion of the age group (18 to 24 years old) enrolled in college rose from 13 to 20 percent. There is some evidence that the proportion of high school graduates (those theoretically meeting minimum requirements for college entry) enrolled in college also rose, from 23 to 27 percent. However, in the middle of the period (1976), when 68 percent of Black 18- to 24-year-olds were high school graduates, 33 percent of those graduates were enrolled in college, a significantly larger proportion than was enrolled in either 1967 or 1984 (figure 2). During this period, the proportion of White 18- to 24-year-olds who were high school graduates rose from 78 to 83 percent, and the proportion of those high school graduates enrolled in college remained near one-third.<sup>7</sup>

Other figures available from the annually published survey data show the proportion of high school graduates 14 to 24 years old with any college experience. These figures are substantially higher than enrollment figures, since they include persons who were attending college at the time of the survey plus those who were not attending but had completed 1 or more years of college (table B). In the span of 6 or more years, from high school graduation to age 24, many persons had completed their college education and were no longer enrolled. Among high school graduates 14 to 24 years old, the proportion of Blacks with some college experience rose from 35 percent in 1967 to 50 percent in 1976. By 1980, the proportion had dropped to 46 percent, and it remained at about that level through 1984 (figure 2). Thus, the gains made in the first half of the period for Blacks were partially lost after 1976. For Whites, the proportion with some college experience varied from 51 percent to 54 percent between 1967 and 1984.

Of the Spanish-origin population 18 to 24 years old, the proportion who were high school graduates rose from 52 percent in 1972<sup>8</sup> to 60 percent in 1984. The proportion of high school graduates enrolled in college did not vary from 30 percent during the period. The size of the CPS sample is not sufficient to detect small differences in small population groups such as the Spanish-origin population of college age.

<sup>7</sup>The reader should be cautioned about interpretation of enrollment rates in the late 1960's when large proportions of young males were in the Armed Forces, which served to reduce the pool of civilians eligible for college and increased reported enrollment rates slightly. In the late 1960's nearly 20 percent of men 18 to 24 years old were in the Armed Forces compared with around 7 percent in 1984. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 400, *School Enrollment--Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1981 and 1980*.

<sup>8</sup>U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Report, Series P-20, No. 260, *Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1972*, and later annual reports in the P-20 series.

Table B. Persons 14 to 24 Years Old by High School Graduate Status, College Enrollment, Attainment, Race and Spanish Origin: October 1967 to 1984

(Numbers in thousands. Civilian noninstitutional population)

Race and year	Persons 18 to 24 years old						High school graduates, 14 to 24 years old		
	High school graduates			Percent			All graduates	Percent	
	All persons	Total	Enrolled in college	High school graduates	Enrolled in college	Of high school graduates enrolled in college		Enrolled in college	Enrolled or completed 1 or more years
<b>ALL RACES</b>									
1984.....	28,031	22,870	7,591	81.6	27.1	33.2	23,252	33.7	53.0
1983.....	28,580	22,988	7,477	80.4	26.2	32.5	23,360	33.1	52.8
1982.....	28,846	23,291	7,678	80.7	26.6	33.0	23,706	33.5	52.7
1981.....	28,965	23,343	7,575	80.6	26.2	32.5	23,706	32.9	51.7
1980 <sup>1</sup> .....	28,957	23,413	7,400	80.9	25.6	31.6	23,856	32.1	51.1
1979.....	27,974	22,421	6,991	80.1	25.0	31.2	22,911	31.9	51.6
1978.....	27,647	22,309	6,995	80.7	25.3	31.4	22,759	31.9	51.4
1977.....	27,331	22,008	7,142	80.5	26.1	32.5	22,499	33.0	52.0
1976.....	26,919	21,677	7,181	80.5	26.7	33.1	22,158	33.7	53.4
1975.....	26,387	21,326	6,935	80.8	26.3	32.5	21,824	33.1	52.5
1974.....	25,670	20,725	6,316	80.7	24.6	30.5	21,267	31.2	51.3
1973.....	25,237	20,377	6,055	80.7	24.0	29.7	20,895	30.4	50.7
1972.....	24,579	19,618	6,257	79.8	25.5	31.9	20,107	32.6	52.9
1971.....	23,668	18,691	6,210	79.0	26.2	33.2	19,130	33.9	53.1
1970.....	22,552	17,768	5,805	78.8	25.7	32.7	18,218	33.5	52.3
1969.....	21,362	16,703	5,840	78.2	27.3	35.0	17,152	35.7	52.5
1968.....	20,562	15,683	5,356	76.3	26.0	34.2	16,165	35.2	51.5
1967.....	20,009	15,114	5,100	75.5	25.5	33.7	15,642	34.9	50.5
<b>WHITE</b>				<b>83.5</b>	<b>28.7</b>				
1984.....	23,347	19,373	6,256	83.0	28.0	33.7	19,686	34.2	53.8
1983.....	23,899	19,643	6,463	82.2	27.0	32.9	19,948	33.5	53.4
1982.....	24,206	19,944	6,694	82.4	27.2	33.1	20,292	33.6	53.1
1981.....	24,486	20,123	6,549	82.2	26.7	32.5	20,439	33.0	52.1
1980 <sup>1</sup> .....	24,482	20,214	6,423	82.6	26.2	31.8	20,583	32.3	51.4
1979.....	23,895	19,616	6,120	82.1	25.6	31.2	20,033	31.8	51.7
1978.....	23,650	19,526	6,077	82.6	25.7	31.1	19,911	31.7	51.3
1977.....	23,430	19,291	6,209	82.3	26.5	32.2	19,712	32.6	52.1
1976.....	23,119	19,045	6,276	82.4	27.1	33.0	19,462	33.5	53.5
1975.....	22,703	18,883	6,116	83.2	26.9	32.4	19,298	33.0	52.7
1974.....	22,141	18,318	5,589	82.7	25.2	30.5	18,794	31.2	51.7
1973.....	21,766	18,023	5,438	82.8	25.0	30.2	18,470	30.8	51.6
1972.....	21,315	17,410	5,624	81.7	26.4	32.3	17,838	33.0	53.9
1971.....	20,533	16,593	5,594	81.3	27.2	33.5	17,087	34.2	54.1
1970.....	19,608	15,960	5,305	81.4	27.1	33.2	16,334	33.9	53.4
1969.....	18,606	15,031	5,347	80.8	28.7	35.6	15,383	36.2	53.5
1968.....	17,951	14,127	4,929	78.7	27.5	34.9	14,506	35.7	52.5
1967.....	17,500	13,657	4,708	78.0	26.9	34.5	14,022	35.2	51.4
<b>BLACK</b>				<b>75.6</b>	<b>19.7</b>				
1984.....	3,862	2,885	786	74.7	20.4	27.2	2,950	28.0	45.2
1983.....	3,865	2,740	741	70.9	19.2	27.0	2,790	27.7	45.0
1982.....	3,872	2,744	767	70.9	19.8	28.0	2,793	28.0	45.5
1981.....	3,778	2,678	750	70.9	19.9	28.0	2,718	28.7	44.8
1980 <sup>1</sup> .....	3,721	2,592	715	69.7	19.2	27.6	2,656	28.1	45.9
1979.....	3,510	2,356	696	67.1	19.8	29.5	2,415	30.6	48.4
1978.....	3,452	2,340	694	67.8	20.1	29.7	2,396	30.6	47.8
1977.....	3,387	2,286	721	67.5	21.3	31.5	2,342	32.4	46.9
1976.....	3,315	2,239	749	67.5	22.6	33.5	2,291	34.2	50.4
1975.....	3,213	2,081	665	64.8	20.7	32.0	2,149	32.6	48.1
1974.....	3,105	2,083	555	67.1	17.9	26.6	2,145	27.5	44.8
1973.....	3,114	2,079	498	66.8	16.0	24.0	2,139	25.0	41.6
1972.....	2,986	1,992	540	66.7	18.1	27.1	2,044	28.0	42.0
1971.....	2,866	1,789	522	62.4	18.2	29.2	1,833	30.0	42.3
1970.....	2,692	1,602	416	59.5	15.5	26.0	1,635	26.7	39.4
1969.....	2,542	1,497	407	58.9	16.0	27.2	1,547	27.5	40.1
1968.....	2,421	1,399	352	57.8	14.5	25.2	1,432	26.0	38.1
1967.....	2,283	1,276	297	55.9	13.0	23.3	1,316	23.7	35.0
<b>SPANISH ORIGIN<sup>2</sup></b>									
1984.....	2,018	1,212	362	60.1	17.9	29.9	1,223	30.0	46.0
1983.....	2,025	1,110	349	54.8	17.2	31.4	1,134	32.3	48.4
1982.....	2,001	1,153	337	57.6	16.8	29.2	1,173	30.0	47.3
1981.....	2,052	1,144	342	55.8	16.7	29.9	1,166	30.5	45.8
1980 <sup>1</sup> .....	2,033	1,099	327	54.1	16.1	29.8	1,117	30.1	47.3
1979.....	1,754	968	292	55.2	16.6	30.2	1,001	31.2	45.7
1978.....	1,672	935	254	55.9	15.2	27.2	965	28.0	43.2
1977.....	1,609	880	277	54.7	17.2	31.5	900	32.4	43.8
1976.....	1,551	862	309	55.6	19.9	35.8	891	36.3	48.9
1975.....	1,446	832	295	57.5	20.4	35.5	849	36.5	50.8
1974.....	1,506	842	272	55.9	18.1	32.3	858	33.1	47.8
1973.....	1,285	709	206	55.2	16.0	29.1	732	30.3	43.0
1972.....	1,338	694	179	51.9	13.4	25.8	709	27.2	36.7

<sup>1</sup>Data for 1980 and all later years use 1980 Census-based estimates.

<sup>2</sup>May be of any race.

Note: High school graduates are persons who have completed 4 years of high school or more.