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## School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1985 (Advance Report)

This report presents summary data on school enrollment for October 1985 and on some of the important changes in enrollment that have occurred in the past 20 years. The data are from the October school enrollment supplement 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 publication series. Additional data on school enrollment in 1985 and a detailed statement on sampling variability and limitations of the data will appear in a forthcoming report on the October 1985 enrollment survey. Some of the highlights of the topics discussed in this report are:

- In October 1985, there were 59.7 million persons 3 years old and over enrolled in school.
- While elementary and secondary school enrollment did not change between October 1984 and 1985, kindergarten enrollment grew, reflecting the increase in births that began in the late 1970's.
- At the college level, there was no change in enrollment from 1984 to 1985, there was significant growth in the number of students since 1975, largely because of the increased number of older students (25 years old and over).
- Black college enrollment totalled about 1.0 million in 1985, not significantly different from the number of Black college students in any of the previous 10 years.

In October 1985, there were 59.7 million persons enrolled in school, including 4.7 million college students who were 25 years old and over. These older students have become a larger portion of the college population in recent years. They were 38 percent of all college students in 1985, compared with 34 percent in 1975 (table 4). Following a very rapid increase in college enrollment (among students 14 to 34 years old) in the 1960's and early 1970's, the rise was slow after 1975 (table 1); enrollment rose by 71 percent from 1965 to 1975 and by only 12 percent since 1975.

In 1985, there were more children attending preprimary school than ever before. While during the late 1960's and the 1970's, the size of the preprimary-age population was

declining<sup>1</sup>, the proportion of that age group enrolled in school grew substantially, which resulted in a significant increase in preprimary enrollment from 1965 to 1980. Later, however, with evidence of only a slight increase in the enrollment rate of 3- to 5-year-olds, but a substantial increase in the number of persons in the age group, due to increased births in the late 1970's and the 1980's, preprimary enrollment grew again. Over the entire 20-year period from 1965 to 1985, preprimary enrollment grew by three-fourths, while the preprimary-age population declined by 14 percent.

In 1985, 2.5 million children were enrolled in nursery school, not significantly different from the number enrolled in 1984, but 25 percent more than the 2.0 million enrolled in 1980 (table 1). Over the longer term, since 1965, the number enrolled in nursery school grew by 2 million largely because the proportion of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in school more than tripled. In 1985, 39 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds were enrolled, compared with 31 percent in 1975 and 11 percent in 1965 (table 2).

Kindergarten enrollment grew significantly from 1984 to 1985 to 3.8 million (table 1). From 1980 to 1985, enrollment grew by one-half million students or 17 percent<sup>2</sup>, largely because the number of 5-year-olds grew—their enrollment rate did not grow. The enrollment rate of 5-year-olds was 71 percent in 1965, 80 percent in 1970, 91 percent in 1975, 93 percent in 1980, and 94 percent in 1985. Enrollment rates of 5-year-olds have been lower than those for elementary-school age children because kindergarten enrollment is primarily voluntary, and kindergarten has not been universally available in all public school systems<sup>3</sup>. With enrollment rates increasing at the same time the size of the eligible population was decreasing from the late 1960's through the 1970's, total

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-25, No. 952, *Projections of the Population of the United States, by Age, Sex, and Race: 1983 to 2080*.

<sup>2</sup>Unpublished estimates from the October 1980 Current Population Survey controlled to the 1980 Census gives the number of students enrolled in kindergarten in 1980, as 3,272,000.

<sup>3</sup>Students in all States will have the opportunity to attend public kindergarten when the kindergarten program is fully implemented in the Mississippi public school system in September 1986. Three States, Delaware, Florida and Kentucky, now require successful completion of kindergarten for entrance into first grade.

kindergarten enrollment in 1980 was not significantly different from that in 1965 (table 1).

The increase in kindergarten and nursery school enrollment in the 1980's because of increased population indicates an imminent reversal of the long-term trend of decline in elementary school enrollment<sup>4</sup>. From 1984 to 1985, there was no change in elementary school enrollment as that level has reached the end of its long decline, which began after enrollment peaked in 1970 (table 1). In 1985, 26.9 million students attended elementary school, four-fifths the number that were attending 15 years earlier.

At the high school level, there has been no change in the number of persons enrolled in the past 3 years. The 1985 enrollment figure was 11 percent below the 1975 to 1977 peak, however. Although neither total elementary school enrollment nor total high school enrollment has changed recently, reported private school enrollment at these levels was significantly higher in 1985 than in 1984, but not different from the estimates for 1983. In fact, 1985 private high school enrollment was not significantly different from that in any year since 1970 except 1984 (table 1).

<sup>4</sup>For projections of elementary-school-age population see Current Population Reports, Series P-25, No. 952, op.cit.

In the two decades preceding this survey, college enrollment increased, but substantially more in the first decade than in the second. Much of the increase in college enrollment in the 1965-75 decade was because of population growth as the early "baby boom" cohorts reached college age. In the next decade, the growth in college enrollment was primarily among older students, partially because of the aging of these early baby boom cohorts. From 1965 to 1975, the college population (14 to 34 years old) grew by about 71 percent, but in the next decade it grew by only 12 percent. From 1975 to 1985, the number of students under 25 years old grew by only 8 percent, while the number of students 25 to 34 years old grew by 24 percent. In addition, the number of students 35 years old and over grew by 40 percent in the same period (there is only some evidence that this was greater than the growth for persons 25 to 34 years old). The increase among students 25 years old and over accounted for two-thirds (65 percent) of the total increase in college enrollment between 1975 and 1985, and their proportion rose from 34 to 38 percent of all students in 1985.

In the 20 years from 1965 to 1985, there were significant changes in the distributions of college students as table A shows. Women became a larger proportion of students, as

**Table A. Characteristics of College Students 14 to 34 Years Old: October 1985, 1975 and 1965**

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	All students			Percent change in number of students	
	1985	1975	1965	1975-85	1965-75
Number of students, 14 to 34 years .	10,863	9,697	5,675	12.0	70.9
Percent . . . . .	100.0	100.0	100.0	(X)	(X)
White . . . . .	85.9	87.8	93.7	9.6	60.2
Black . . . . .	9.7	9.8	4.8	10.7	246.0
Spanish origin . . . . .	5.3	4.3	(NA)	40.8	(NA)
Men . . . . .	49.2	55.1	61.7	0.1	52.5
Women . . . . .	50.8	44.9	38.3	26.7	100.5
14 to 24 years . . . . .	71.8	74.5	83.6	7.9	52.3
25 to 34 years . . . . .	28.2	25.5	16.4	24.1	165.5
Full time . . . . .	71.0	73.3	77.8	8.6	60.9
Part time . . . . .	29.0	26.7	22.2	21.4	105.6
Undergraduate . . . . .	83.9	83.7	84.9	12.3	68.4
First year . . . . .	27.2	29.8	32.8	2.2	55.1
Second year . . . . .	23.8	24.5	22.1	8.8	89.2
Third year . . . . .	17.8	15.4	15.8	29.4	66.5
Fourth year . . . . .	15.1	14.0	14.1	21.3	68.6
Graduate . . . . .	16.1	16.4	15.1	10.1	85.0
Number of students 14 years and over . . . . .	12,524	10,880	(NA)	15.1	(NA)
Percent . . . . .	100.0	100.0	(NA)	(X)	(X)
Men . . . . .	47.2	54.3	(NA)	-0.1	(NA)
Women . . . . .	52.8	45.7	(NA)	33.2	(NA)
14 to 24 years . . . . .	62.3	66.4	(NA)	7.9	(NA)
25 years and over . . . . .	37.7	33.6	(NA)	29.4	(NA)
35 years and over . . . . .	13.3	10.8	(NA)	40.4	(NA)

(X) Not applicable. (NA) Not available.

did Blacks. Part-time students and older students also increased proportionately. For every group of college students shown in table A, the increase was substantially larger in the first half of the period than the second. In the first decade, the growth in the number of White and Black students was sizable, but the proportional growth was four times greater for Blacks than for Whites. In the second decade, growth for

Whites was slight, and for Blacks, a significant change could not be detected (partially because of the limited sample size). For a few groups, after very large increases in the first decade, there was no change in the second. This was particularly true for male college students, who increased by 53 percent in the first decade and not at all in the second.

### SYMBOLS USED IN TABLES

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- Represents zero or rounds to zero.
  - B Base too small to show derived measure.
  - NA Not available.
  - X Not applicable.
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