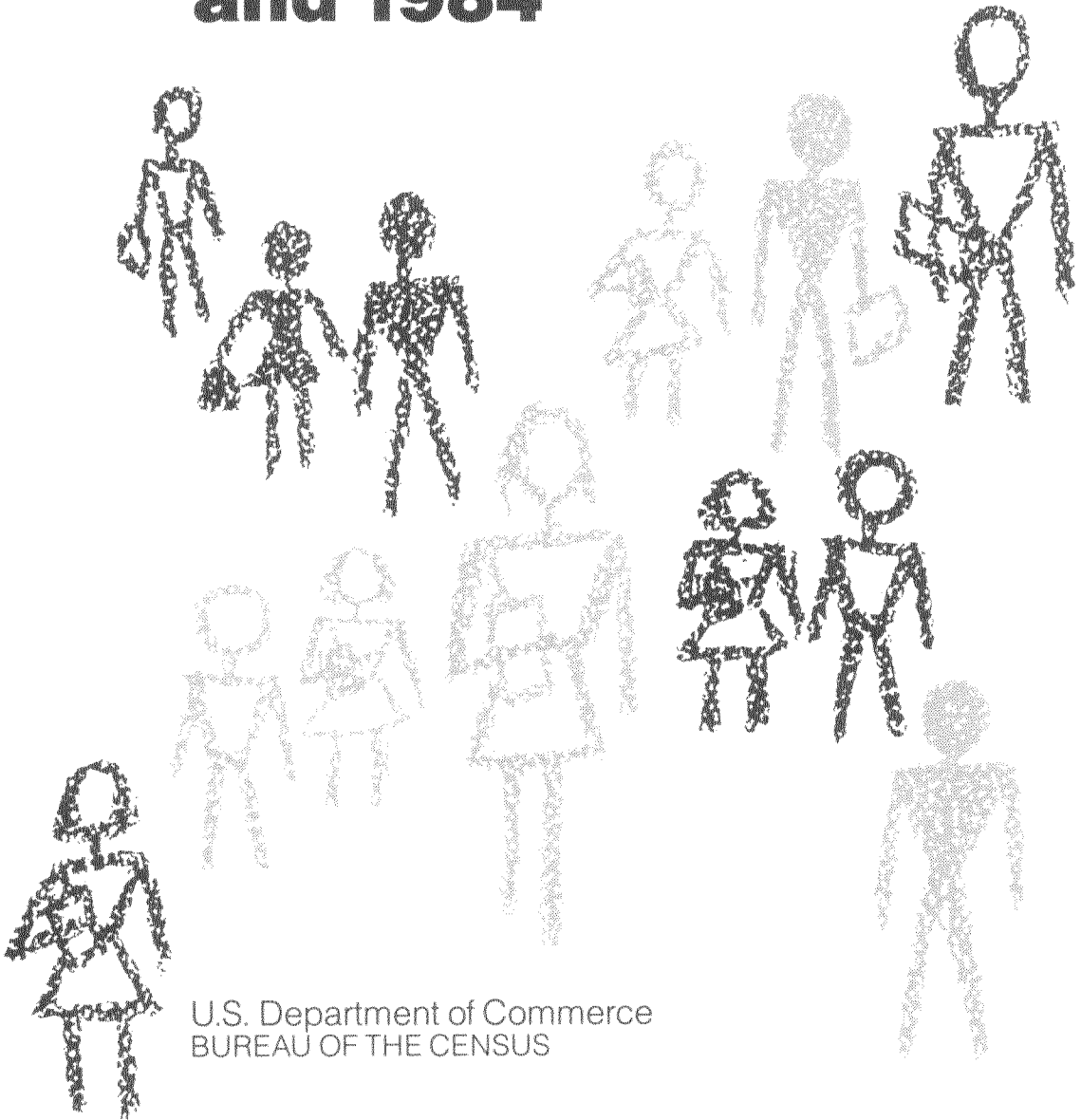


Population Characteristics

Series P-20, No. 426

**School Enrollment—
Social and Economic
Characteristics
of Students:
October 1985
and 1984**



U.S. Department of Commerce
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Population Characteristics

Series P-20, No. 426
Issued April 1988

**School Enrollment—
Social and Economic
Characteristics
of Students:
October 1985
and 1984**

by Rosalind R. Bruno



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School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1985 and 1984

INTRODUCTION

This report presents data on school enrollment from the October supplements to the Current Population Survey (CPS), collected in 1984 and in 1985. 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 vocational schools, adult education classes, and special schools. This report also contains summary data from earlier CPS surveys (appendix A) and a discussion of recent enrollment trends. Advance reports, based on the October 1984 and 1985 CPS data, covered changes in the number of persons enrolled in school and were released earlier as Current Population Reports, Series P-20, Nos. 404 and 409.

Highlights

- Elementary and high school enrollment was 40.8 million (± 0.4)¹ in 1985, down from 46.1 million (± 0.4) in 1975.
- Enrollment rates of 6- to 15-year-olds remained essentially the same, with changes in enrollment mirroring changes in the size of the school-age population. The enrollment rate of 16- and 17-year-olds grew slightly.
- There were 12.5 million (± 0.3) college students in 1985, 15 percent (± 3) above enrollment a decade earlier.
- The college enrollment rate of Black 18- to 21-year-olds did not change from 1975 to 1985—it remained at 25 percent (± 2), while the proportion of the age group who were high school dropouts declined by 10 percentage points (± 3) to 17 percent (± 2).

- Preprimary enrollment of 3- to 5-year-olds was 5.9 million (± 0.2) in 1985, an 18 percent (± 5) increase over the number enrolled a decade earlier, due to an increase in the population of 3- to 5-year-olds and a rise in their enrollment rate.
- In 1985, 38 percent (± 2) of kindergarten students attended full day, up from 14 percent (± 2) in 1970.
- In 1985, 34 percent (± 3) of nursery school students attended full day, compared with 27 percent (± 3) in 1970.

OVERALL ENROLLMENT TRENDS

Total school enrollment of the population 3 years old and over in 1985 was 59.8 million (table 4), a decrease of 4 percent since 1975. While elementary school and high school enrollment continued to decline in the 1980's,² nursery school and kindergarten enrollment grew. The long-term decline in total births was reversed in the late 1970's and consequently, larger cohorts of children have begun to move into the preprimary and early elementary grades. Elementary school enrollment appears to have bottomed out and is not likely to decline further in the near future. Increases have been observed in the first two grades since 1982. The impact of the larger cohorts entering elementary school should be evident in total elementary school enrollment numbers before 1990. From 1985 to 1990 the elementary school-age population (6 to 13 years old) will increase by over 2 million (8 percent) having decreased by 6.7 million since 1970.³

College enrollment grew by 15 percent from 1975 to 1985. Sixty-five percent of the growth was in the number of students 25 years old and over. Those older students were 34 percent of all students in 1975 and 38 percent in 1985.

PREPRIMARY ENROLLMENT

Kindergarten and nursery school enrollment of 3- to 5-year-olds not only has grown over the last decade and a half (from 4.1 million to 5.9 million students), but also has become increasingly full-day (table A).

¹The data in this report are from a sample survey of the population and, therefore, are subject to both nonsampling and sampling error. The number in parentheses is equal to 1.6 times the standard error of the estimate. This gives the 90-percent confidence interval when added to and subtracted from the estimate. A complete discussion of confidence intervals and standard errors is in appendix C.

²Elementary school enrollment began to decline in the early 1970's; high school enrollment began to decline in the late 1970's.

³Table 15 and Current Population Report, Series P-20, No. 222, *School Enrollment: October 1970*; Series P-25, No. 952, *Projections of the Population of the United States, By Age, Sex, and Race: 1983 to 2080*; and unpublished data.

Kindergarten. Traditionally, attendance in kindergarten has been in half-day classes, as a gradual introduction to the elementary school system. The proportion of kindergarten students attending school full day expanded from 14 percent to 38 percent between 1970 and 1985. There may be many reasons for the introduction of full-day kindergarten programs to school systems. They may include the perceived educational value of a full class-day, as early childhood education has become more common and significant proportions of young children attend nursery school. Also, the expense and difficulty of providing transportation in less populated areas for kindergarten students in half-day classes may have contributed to a decision to implement full-day programs. Services such as reduced cost meals and health care may make a full-day program desirable in some areas.

There are apparent regional differences in enrollment and in type of attendance in kindergarten. About 87 percent of all 5-year-olds were enrolled in preprimary school in October 1985 (most in kindergarten). The proportions enrolled varied from 81 percent in the Northeast to 91 percent in the Midwest (table B). Substantial differences existed between regions in full-day enrollment. The South, with the shortest history of kindergartens in the public schools, had the largest proportion of students attending full day in 1985, 65 percent (table C). The proportions of kindergarten students attending full day in the three other regions were 36 percent in the Northeast and 20 percent or less in the Midwest and West. The traditional half-day kindergarten program had not been institutionalized in the South, as it had been, over many decades, in the other regions. When kindergartens were added to the public elementary schools in the South, it may have been easier for school systems to introduce new programs as full-day programs than it was for school systems in the other regions to change traditional half-day programs. From 1970 to 1985 the proportion of 5-year-olds enrolled in school in the South rose from 47 to 87 percent. In the rest of the country in 1970, about 79 percent were enrolled in preprimary school.⁴

Although there was little difference in the enrollment rate of 5-year-olds by metropolitan status of residence (table B), kindergarten students in central cities and nonmetropolitan areas were more likely than those in the suburbs to attend full day (table C). This may reflect both the desire for educational enrichment in less affluent areas and the expense of bus-sing.

About 64 percent of Black kindergarten students were attending full day in 1985, twice the proportion of Whites (table A). The higher proportion of Blacks

attending full day may be explained in part by kindergarten enrollment in the South, since about 6 in 10 Black kindergarten students were in the South, compared with 3 in 10 non-Black students.⁵

Nursery school. As increased proportions of parents seek out early educational opportunities for preschool children, enrollment rates of 3- and 4-year-olds, the dominant group of nursery school students, rose from 21 percent in 1970 to 39 percent in 1985 (table A-3). The proportion of children attending nursery school full day increased from 27 percent in 1970 to 34 percent in 1985. While full-day attendance in kindergarten is a relatively new phenomenon, a substantial proportion of nursery school students attended full day in both 1970 and 1985 (table A).

Although in all comparisons in table B, 4-year-olds were significantly more likely to be enrolled than 3-year-olds, all further discussions of enrollment of nursery school age children are for 3- and 4-year-olds combined.

Some geographic differences in nursery school attendance are noteworthy. About half of 3- and 4-year-olds in the Northeast were enrolled in school in 1985, significantly above the other regions which ranged from 35 to 39 percent (table B). Nursery school students in the South were much more likely than others to attend full day—53 percent, compared with one-quarter of those in the remainder of the country. Children living in metropolitan suburbs were more likely than those in central cities or in nonmetropolitan areas to attend school; however, it was nursery school students in central cities who were most likely to attend full day (table C).

Black and White 3- and 4-year-olds did not differ significantly in the proportion enrolled in school in 1985 (table B). Of children enrolled in nursery school, however, twice the proportion of Blacks as Whites attended full day (66 percent vs. 28 percent) (table A). The higher full-day attendance for Blacks does not appear to be related to a different labor force status distribution of their mothers. In each status, Black children were more likely than White children to be enrolled full day (table D). A factor contributing to the difference is that Blacks were more likely to be in the South and in central cities, where full-day attendance was most common.

In all regions roughly one-third of nursery school students were in public schools. Some public elementary school systems included preschool programs. In addition, the Federal Head Start program is active in all regions and comprises about half of public nursery

⁴Unpublished data from October 1970 Current Population Survey.

⁵From detailed tabulations available from the Bureau of the Census upon request (65 pages for \$20.00).

school enrollment.⁶ Of children attending nursery school, those in suburbs of metropolitan areas were least likely to attend public programs. Head Start is most active in areas which demonstrate economic need, largely central cities and rural areas. About 40 percent of nursery school students in central cities and non-metropolitan areas attended public nursery schools compared with 27 percent in the suburbs (table C). Black children were twice as likely as Whites to attend public nursery school (table A).

IS PREPRIMARY SCHOOL ALSO DAY CARE?

Because of nearly universal availability of kindergarten, the vast majority of 5-year-olds were enrolled in school in 1985 (including some in first grade). There is virtually no difference in the proportion of 5-year-olds enrolled by mother's labor force status (table D). There was some discrepancy in the proportions enrolled full day, between children whose mothers worked and those whose mothers did not work, but it was not great enough to suggest that full-day kindergarten programs were used primarily as child care arrangements for working mothers. Nevertheless, some working parents may opt for a school with a convenient full-day program. Forty-two percent of kindergarten students whose mothers were in the labor force attended full day (including 47 percent of those whose mothers were employed full time), compared with 34 percent of those whose mothers were not in the labor force (table E).

Nursery school, on the other hand, appeared more likely than kindergarten to serve as day-care, even though a much smaller proportion of nursery school age children than kindergarten age children attended school (20 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds in 1970 and 39 percent in 1985, compared with 80 percent or more of 5-year-olds in both years).⁷ There was a stronger relationship between mother's labor force status and nursery school attendance than between mother's labor force status and kindergarten attendance. Three- and four-year-old children with mothers in the labor force were more likely than children with mothers not in the labor force to attend school (mostly nursery school)—44 percent vs 33 percent;⁸ among 5-year-olds there was no difference—about 87 percent of each group (table D).

The difference is more striking when the relationship of mother's labor force status to full-day attendance is considered (table E). About 6 in 10 nursery

school students whose mothers worked full time, (59 percent) were attending full day compared with only 16 percent of those whose mothers were not in the labor force (table E). The proportions for kindergarten students ranged from 32 to 47 percent (discussed above).

The data suggest, then, that a significant fraction of nursery school enrollment, particularly full day, may also serve as day-care for children of working parents. On the other hand, the substantial proportion of children attending, among those whose mothers were not in the labor force, provides sufficient evidence that nursery school serves a wider clientele seeking early childhood education than just families also seeking child care.

ENROLLMENT OF YOUNG ADULTS

The traditional college age population, 18 to 21 years old, is more likely than any other age group to be enrolled in college, although, because of the increased enrollment of older students in recent years, they are no longer the majority of all college students (table A-4). In 1972 (the first year data were available for all ages), 18- to 21-year-olds were 53 percent of all college students; in 1985, they were only 44 percent of all students. The number of young students (18 to 21 years old) grew by less than 1 million (15 percent), while the number of older students grew by 2.7 million (68 percent) in the period (table A-4).

The major educational transitions of America's youth occur between 18 and 21 years old. These transitions are represented in table F and figure 1, as persons of this age are distributed across four mutually exclusive statuses: enrolled in high school, high school dropout, high school graduate not enrolled in college, and enrolled in college. Overall, in 1985 the enrollment statuses of men and women were not very different: men were slightly more likely than women not to have finished high school (i.e. still enrolled or dropouts) (table F), while about equal proportions were enrolled in college.

Analyses of school enrollment data often have compared the proportions of Blacks and Whites who were either high school graduates and college enrollees or high school dropouts (not enrolled, not high school graduate). However, the fact that a substantial proportion of Blacks and Hispanics were still in high school beyond age 17 has not been noted widely (table F). Twice the proportion of 18- to 21-year-old Blacks and Hispanics as Whites remained in high school in 1985. Because of higher proportions below the modal grade in earlier years of school, Blacks and Hispanics may graduate at older ages than Whites (table 16).

⁶Department of Health and Human Services, Head Start Program.

⁷Unpublished data from October 1970 Current Population Survey.

⁸An analysis of trends appears in Current Population Report, Series P-20, No. 408, *School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1982*.

An earlier report in this series⁹ showed that the college enrollment of Black high school graduates 18 to 24 years old grew from 1967 to 1975 to be about equal to Whites. After 1975, the proportion of Black high school graduates enrolled in college declined, while the proportion of White high school graduates enrolled continued to grow. Other changes have occurred since 1975 that provide a more complete perspective from which to analyze these enrollment trends: for Blacks 18 to 21 years old, there was a 10 percentage point decline in the proportion who were high school dropouts (to 17 percent in 1985 which brought the dropout proportion close to that for Whites) There was also a complementary 10 percentage point increase in the pool of high school graduates from which

college enrollees are drawn, to 71 percent of the age group (table F). Of those high school graduates, only the proportion who were not enrolled in college also rose; the proportion of the age group enrolled in college did not change—it remained at 25 percent. In other words, the higher proportion completing high school combined with no change in the college-going rate had the effect of lowering the percentage of graduates who went on to college.

For Whites, there was less change in the decade: 81 percent of 18- to 21-year-olds were high school graduates in both years, the proportion enrolled in college rose 4 percentage points to 39 percent in 1985, and the proportion who were dropouts decreased slightly.

Among Hispanics, the proportion of 18- to 21-year-olds who were dropouts was substantially larger than for the other groups. The proportions enrolled in high school and college were not different from those for Blacks (table F).

⁹Current Population Report, Series P-20, No. 404, *School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1984 (Advance Report)*.

Eleven detailed tabulations on preprimary enrollment of 3- to 5-year-olds by age, race, and Hispanic origin, by maternal demographic, social, and economic characteristics, comprising 65 pages of computer output, are available for \$20. Ask for the "preprimary tabulations," and make check payable to "Commerce-Census." Direct inquiries and requests to Paul Siegel, Population Division, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington, DC 20233. Telephone (301) 763-1154.

Figure 1.
Enrollment Status of Persons 18 to 21 Years Old by
Race: October 1975 and 1985

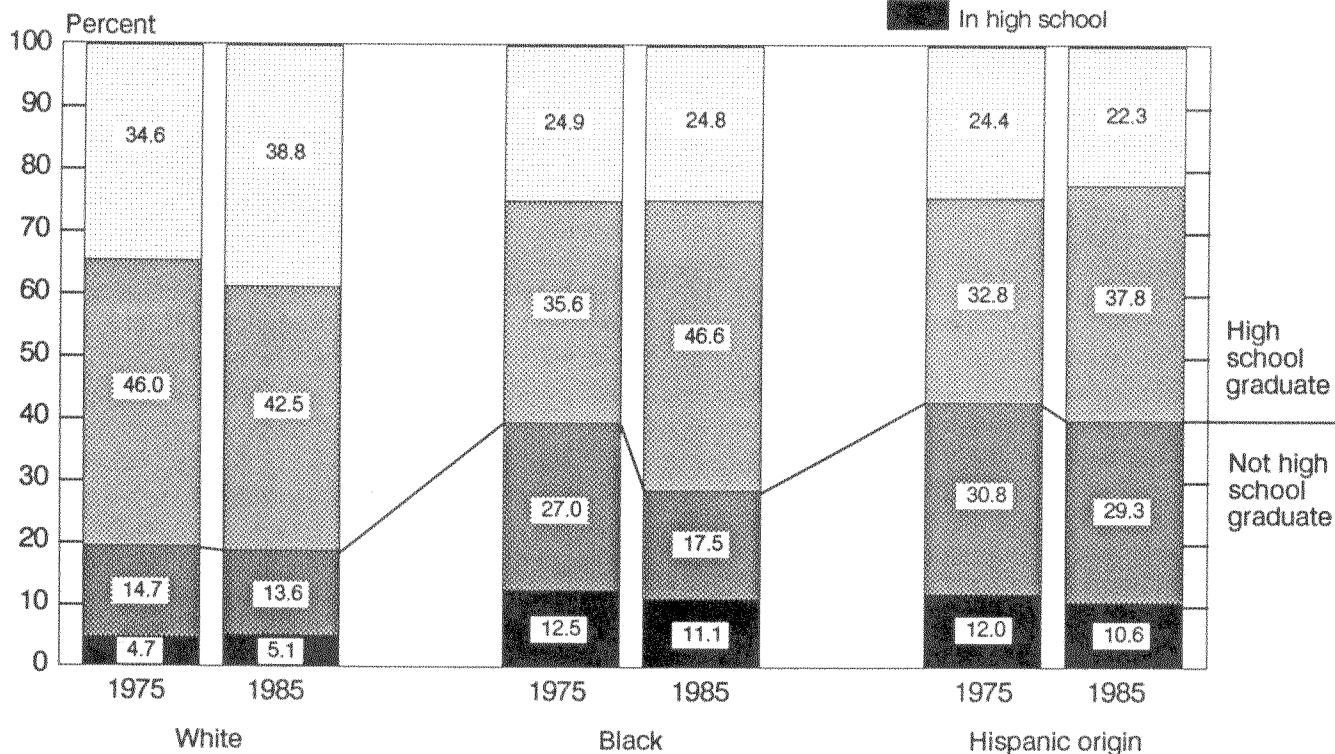


Table A. Preprimary Enrollment of Children 3 to 5 Years Old by Full-day Attendance, Public Control, and Race: October 1970 to 1985

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Year			
	1985	1980	1975	1970
All races	10,733	9,284	10,185	10,949
Enrolled in preprimary school	5,865	4,878	4,955	4,104
Percent enrolled	54.6	52.5	48.6	37.5
Enrolled in nursery school	2,477	1,981	1,745	1,094
Percent full day	34.0	34.4	33.9	26.6
Percent in public school	34.2	31.7	32.7	30.3
Enrolled in kindergarten	3,388	2,897	3,211	3,010
Percent full day	38.4	30.0	21.9	13.5
Percent in public school	84.0	84.2	83.5	83.0
White	8,700	7,581	8,441	9,098
Enrolled in preprimary school	4,757	3,994	4,106	3,443
Percent enrolled	54.7	52.7	48.6	37.8
Enrolled in nursery school	2,077	1,632	1,429	891
Percent full day	28.4	28.7	26.9	21.2
Percent in public school	29.5	26.2	27.2	22.1
Enrolled in kindergarten	2,680	2,362	2,677	2,552
Percent full day	32.5	24.0	19.1	10.5
Percent in public school	82.5	83.1	82.5	82.3
Black	1,645	1,445	1,521	1,680
Enrolled in preprimary school	919	749	732	586
Percent enrolled	55.8	51.8	48.1	34.9
Enrolled in nursery school	328	294	276	178
Percent full day	65.5	66.0	68.1	54.5
Percent in public school	63.7	61.2	62.0	72.5
Enrolled in kindergarten	590	455	455	408
Percent full day	63.9	60.7	37.4	31.6
Percent in public school	89.8	89.2	90.8	88.0

Table B. Preprimary Enrollment Rate of 3- to 5-Year-Olds by Age, Race, Region, and Metropolitan Status: October 1985

(Numbers in thousands)

Race, region, and metropolitan status	3 and 4 years old						5 years old	
	All children	Percent enrolled	3 years old		4 years old		All children	Percent enrolled
			All children	Percent enrolled	All children	Percent enrolled		
All races	7,192	38.9	3,594	28.8	3,598	49.1	3,542	86.5
White	5,836	38.6	2,919	28.5	2,917	48.6	2,864	87.5
Black	1,100	42.7	550	33.4	550	52.0	545	82.5
Northeast	1,288	48.6	661	34.8	627	63.1	604	81.2
Midwest	1,894	34.7	940	25.0	954	44.3	922	91.4
South	2,404	38.9	1,210	31.0	1,194	46.9	1,209	86.7
West	1,607	36.3	784	24.9	823	47.1	807	84.7
Metropolitan areas	4,876	41.2	2,469	30.9	2,407	51.8	2,345	85.2
Central city	2,015	37.0	1,016	26.4	999	47.8	893	82.1
Outside central city	2,861	44.2	1,453	34.1	1,408	54.6	1,452	87.1
Nonmetropolitan areas	2,316	34.2	1,125	24.2	1,191	43.6	1,196	89.2

Table C. Enrollment Characteristics of Preprimary Students 3 to 5 Years Old, by Region and Metropolitan Status: October 1985

(Numbers in thousands)

Region and metropolitan status	Nursery school			Kindergarten		
	All students	Percent		All students	Percent	
		Full day	Public school		Full day	Public school
United States	2,477	34.0	34.2	3,388	38.4	84.0
Northeast	537	26.8	33.0	580	36.2	79.8
Midwest	654	17.7	34.3	846	15.6	86.2
South	739	52.8	31.8	1,244	65.3	83.3
West	548	35.2	38.3	718	20.3	86.2
Metropolitan areas	1,781	35.5	32.2	2,226	3.9	80.9
Central city	625	45.4	42.2	853	45.4	80.2
Outside central city	1,157	30.2	26.7	1,373	30.1	81.4
Nonmetropolitan areas	696	30.2	39.2	1,162	43.1	90.0

Table D. Preprimary Enrollment Status and Full-day Attendance for Children 3 to 5 Years Old, by Labor Force Status of Mother and Age: October 1985

(Numbers in thousands)

Labor force status of mother and age	All children	Percent enrolled	
		Total	Full day
3 and 4 years old	7,192	38.9	13.8
Mother in labor force	3,796	43.6	19.6
Employed full time	2,276	43.0	25.6
Mother not in labor force	3,172	33.2	6.5
3 years old	3,594	28.8	9.7
Mother in labor force	1,880	34.3	15.3
Employed full time	1,143	35.0	20.2
Mother not in labor force	1,599	22.3	2.9
4 years old	3,598	49.1	17.9
Mother in labor force	1,916	52.8	23.7
Employed full time	1,133	51.1	30.9
Mother not in labor force	1,573	44.3	10.2
5 years old	3,542	86.5	32.5
Mother in labor force	1,892	87.2	35.7
Employed full time	1,152	85.9	38.7
Mother not in labor force	1,532	86.0	28.6

Table E. Enrollment Status, Level of Enrollment, and Full-Day Attendance, for Children 3 to 5 Years Old, by Employment Status of Mother and Race: October 1985

(Numbers in thousands)

Labor force status of mother and race	All children	Enrolled						Not enrolled
		Nursery school			Kindergarten			
		Total	Full day		Total	Full day		
			Number	Percent		Number	Percent	
ALL RACES								
All children	10,733	2,477	843	34.0	3,388	1,301	38.4	4,868
Living with mother	10,392	2,406	806	33.5	3,272	1,257	38.4	4,714
Mother in labor force	5,688	1,492	659	44.2	1,814	759	41.8	2,382
Employed	5,073	1,390	627	45.1	1,609	669	41.6	2,074
Full time	3,428	904	532	58.8	1,065	496	46.6	1,459
Part time	1,646	486	96	19.8	544	173	31.8	616
Unemployed	614	102	31	30.4	205	90	43.9	307
Mother not in labor force	4,705	914	147	16.1	1,458	498	34.2	2,333
WHITE								
All children	8,700	2,077	590	28.4	2,680	871	32.5	3,943
Living with mother	8,445	2,026	562	27.7	2,599	846	32.6	3,821
Mother in labor force	4,573	1,224	453	37.0	1,427	501	35.1	1,922
Employed	4,173	1,148	438	38.2	1,319	464	35.2	1,706
Full time	2,718	693	361	52.1	841	341	40.5	1,183
Part time	1,455	455	77	16.9	478	123	25.7	523
Unemployed	401	76	16	21.1	108	37	34.3	217
Mother not in labor force	3,872	802	109	13.6	1,172	345	29.4	1,899
BLACK								
All children	1,645	328	215	65.5	590	377	63.9	726
Living with mother	1,570	308	206	66.9	561	361	64.3	701
Mother in labor force	910	219	172	78.5	329	229	69.6	362
Employed	727	197	161	81.7	241	178	73.9	288
Full time	577	174	144	82.8	187	135	72.2	216
Part time	150	23	17	(B)	55	43	(B)	72
Unemployed	183	21	11	(B)	88	51	58.0	74
Mother not in labor force	660	89	34	38.2	232	131	56.5	339

**Table F. Enrollment Status of Persons 18 to 21 Years Old by Race, Hispanic Origin and Sex:
October 1985 and 1975**

(Numbers in thousands)

Sex, race, and Hispanic origin	1985						1975					
	Number	Percent					Number	Percent				
		Total	Enrolled in high school	High school graduate		High school dropout		Total	Enrolled in high school	High school graduate		High school dropout
			In college	Not in college				In college	Not in college			
Both Sexes												
All races	14,883	100.0	6.0	37.1	42.8	14.1	15,693	100.0	5.7	33.5	44.5	16.3
White	12,349	100.0	5.1	38.8	42.5	13.6	13,448	100.0	4.7	34.6	46.0	14.7
Black	2,149	100.0	11.1	24.8	46.6	17.5	1,997	100.0	12.5	24.9	35.6	27.0
Hispanic (of any race).....	1,144	100.0	10.6	22.3	37.8	29.3	899	100.0	12.0	24.4	32.8	30.8
Men												
All races	7,260	100.0	7.5	36.7	40.3	15.6	7,584	100.0	7.4	35.4	41.3	15.9
White	6,069	100.0	6.2	38.1	40.5	15.2	6,545	100.0	6.2	36.9	42.8	14.1
Black	1,017	100.0	14.3	25.7	41.1	19.1	911	100.0	15.9	23.9	31.1	29.0
Hispanic (of any race).....	551	100.0	11.6	17.6	32.7	37.7	416	100.0	17.3	25.2	29.3	27.9
Women												
All races	7,623	100.0	4.7	37.5	45.2	12.6	8,109	100.0	4.2	31.8	47.4	16.6
White	6,280	100.0	3.9	39.5	44.5	12.0	6,903	100.0	3.2	32.4	49.0	15.3
Black	1,132	100.0	8.3	24.0	51.6	16.1	1,085	100.0	9.7	25.8	39.2	25.4
Hispanic (of any race).....	594	100.0	9.6	26.4	42.4	21.4	484	100.0	7.6	23.6	35.7	33.1