# School Enrollment-Social and Economic Characteristics of Students 

## Population Characteristics

Going to school opens doors. It provides equality of opportunity and facilitates the pathway for future individual achievement and economic success. Today, with more than one-fourth of America's population enrolled in school, the student population is quite diverse. This report highlights school enrollment trends and the social and economic characteristics of the student population. The findings are based on data collected in the Current Population Survey (CPS) conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau in October 1997.

## One of four Americans are enrolled in school

More than one-fourth of the population, 72.0 million people, were enrolled in school throughout the United States in October 1997. Among those enrolled, 8.4 million were in nursery school and kindergarten, 32.4 million in elementary school, 15.8 million in high school, and 15.4 million in college ${ }^{1}$
(Figure 1).
The number of students at each grade level is primarily influenced by population trends. In fact,

[^0]at the kindergarten, elementary, and high school levels, enrollment numbers tend to closely mirror the population count in those ages (with close to 100 percent enrollment of the population ages 5 through 16) because of compulsory attendance requirements. In contrast, nursery school and college enrollment levels are influenced more by social and economic factors that change enrollment rates.

Defining school enrollment: Regular school includes nursery school, kindergarten, and that which may advance a person toward an elementary or high school diploma, or a college, university, or professional school degree.

Figure 1.
School Enrollment by Grade Levels: October 1997
(In millions)


## Current Population Reports

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Figure 2.
Nursery School Enrollment Increased Dramatically Over the Past Few Decades Despite Flux in the Number of 3 and 4 Year Olds
(In millions)


## Nursery school enrollment reaches record level set in 1995

Total nursery school enrollment has increased dramatically over the past few decades, from about one-half million in 1964 (when the data were first collected) to 4.5 million cur-rently-reaching the record level set in 1995 (Figure 2). At the same time, the eligible population (children ages 3 and 4$)^{2}$ fluctuated around 8 million. In fact, over this period, the enrollment rate in nursery school rose from about 5.2
${ }^{2}$ With the exception of the estimate for the total nursery school enrollment, when talking about nursery school, we are referring to children 3 to 4 years old.

Table A.
Summary Measures of School Enrollment for Nursery, Kindergarten, Elementary, and High School: October 1997
(Numbers in thousands)

|  | Total | Male | Female | White | Black | Asian and Pacific Islanders | Hispanic Origin |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| ALL STUDENTS | 72,031 | 35,870 | 36,160 | 56,587 | 11,270 | 3,261 | 9,220 |
| Nursery | 4,500 | 2,303 | 2,197 | 3,489 | 796 | 168 | 548 |
| Full day | 2,049 | 1,043 | 1,003 | 1,373 | 565 | 83 | 248 |
| Part day | 2,451 | 1,260 | 1,194 | 2,116 | 231 | 85 | 300 |
| Kindergarten | 3,933 | 2,012 | 1,921 | 3,078 | 632 | 161 | 648 |
| Elementary | 32,367 | 16,663 | 15,705 | 25,289 | 5,332 | 1,329 | 4,644 |
| High School | 15,794 | 8,049 | 7,745 | 12,289 | 2,606 | 656 | 2,120 |
| Public: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Nursery | 2,254 | 1,171 | 1,083 | 1,572 | 582 | 59 | 436 |
| Full day | 1,060 | 531 | 527 | 623 | 387 | 28 | 177 |
| Part day | 1,194 | 640 | 556 | 949 | 195 | 31 | 259 |
| Kindergarten | 3,271 | 1,676 | 1,594 | 2,532 | 571 | 110 | 589 |
| Elementary | 29,309 | 15,079 | 14,228 | 22,677 | 5,048 | 1,186 | 4,427 |
| High School | 14,633 | 7,459 | 7,176 | 11,288 | 2,516 | 600 | 2,034 |
| Percent below modal grade 15 to 17 years old | 32.1 | 37.8 | 26.1 | 30.3 | 40.0 | 31.9 | 41.4 |
| Annual Dropout Rate (10th-12th grade) | 4.3 | 4.7 | 3.8 | 4.2 | 4.8 | 2.6 | 8.6 |
| Population, 18 to 24 years old | 24,973 | 12,513 | 12,460 | 20,020 | 3,650 | 1,005 | 3,606 |
| Dropouts | 3,236 | 1,765 | 1,471 | 2,476 | 611 | 857 | 1,103 |
| High school graduates | 20,338 | 9,933 | 10,403 | 16,557 | 2,725 | 545 | 2,236 |
| Enrolled in college | 9,204 | 4,374 | 4,829 | 7,495 | 1,085 | 82 | 806 |

Note: Hispanics may be of any race. The numbers of students in the three race groups shown here do not add to the total because data for American Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts are not shown.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October 1997.
Contact: U.S. Census Bureau, Education and Social Stratification Branch, 301-457-2464.
percent to about 48.3 percent, reflecting a shift in the societal norm of young children in school.

Most of the children enrolled in nursery school were White (77.5 percent), as shown in Table A. However, proportionally, Black children were more likely to be enrolled (54.3 percent) than White children (47.2 percent). Black children enrolled in nursery school were more likely to be enrolled in public rather than private programs than White children-72.4 percent compared with 42.2 percent. About 30.7 percent of Hispanic ${ }^{3}$ children were enrolled in nursery school and about three-fourths ( 77.5 percent) of these nursery school students attended public programs. ${ }^{4}$

Since nursery school is not part of the regular public school system in most areas and is predominantly private, the cost of attending may prevent some families from enrolling their children. Thus, nursery school attendance is closely linked to family income, even though Head Start and other locally funded nursery school programs are available to some children in low-income families. About 58.2 percent of 3 - and 4-year-olds from families with incomes of $\$ 40,000$ or more attended nursery school in 1997, compared with 42.1 percent of those from families with incomes less than $\$ 20,000$. More than three-fourths (79.9 percent) of these lower-income

[^1]nursery school students attended public schools, compared with about one-fourth (28.5 percent) of the high-income students.

Nursery school enrollment is also related to the education and labor force participation of a child's mother. Children of mothers who are college graduates were substantially more likely to attend nursery school than children whose mothers did not finish high school (61.1 percent compared with 32.8 percent). Children of mothers in the labor force were more likely to attend nursery school than those whose mothers were not in the labor force (51.7 percent compared with 44.0 percent).

In addition to its educational benefit, nursery school may provide child care for some families. Although the majority of nursery school students attended part-day, among nursery school students whose mothers worked full time, 30.3 percent attended full-time. For the nursery school students whose mothers were not in the labor force, 15.0 percent attended full-time.

## Kindergarten enrollment levels remain high

In October 1997, about 3.9 million children were enrolled in kindergarten. Over the past decade, the kindergarten enrollment figures fluctuated in a narrow range around this 3.9 million value. Given the availability of public kindergarten in most states, the vast majority of 5-year-olds were enrolled in school ( 94.8 percent), most in kindergarten ( 74.4 percent). There were no significant differences among Whites, Blacks, and Asians ${ }^{5}$ in

[^2]the proportion of 5-year-olds enrolled in kindergarten. For Hispanic 5 -year-olds, 94.4 percent were enrolled in school and 71.6 percent were enrolled in kindergarten. ${ }^{6}$

Over half (55.6 percent) of kindergartners were attending school full day. During the past three decades, the percent of kindergartners attending school all day increased dramatically, from 1 in 10 (10.7 percent) in 1967 to more than 1 in 2 (55.5 percent) today (Figure 3). Moreover, most children (53.4 percent) are entering kindergarten with previous school experience that is, they were enrolled in nursery school the preceding year. Thus, for many students, kindergarten is not the major transition from home to school that it was in the past.

## The number of elementary and high school students is near the baby-boom peak

The number of students enrolled in elementary and high school (48.0 million) in 1997 is near the all-time high ( 48.7 million) reached in 1970 when the baby-boom children were in school ${ }^{7}$ (Figure 4). During the 1970s and early 1980s, elementary and high school enrollments fell, following a general decrease in the size of the 6- to 17-year-old population. In the past few years, however, as the larger population cohorts of

[^3]Figure 3.
The Proportion of Kindergartners Attending School Full Day Increased Over the Last Three Decades (In percent)


Figure 4.
Population Trends Brought Elementary and High School Enrollment Near Baby-Boom Peak
(In millions)

echo-boom children have come of school age, enrollments have risen. ${ }^{8}$ This trend is expected to continue for the near future, as the number of

[^4]children ages 6 to 17 is projected to increase moderately. ${ }^{9}$
${ }^{9}$ Day, Jennifer Cheeseman, Population Projections of the United States by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1995 to 2050, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, P25-1130, U.S.
Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1996.

Different from the baby-boom generation of students, elementary and high school students today are more racially and ethnically diverse. In 1972, when the crest of the babyboom was enrolled in elementary and high school, 85 percent of the student population was White, 14 percent Black, and the remaining 1 percent mostly Asian and other. In 1997, 78 percent of elementary and high school students were White, 17 percent Black, and 4 percent Asian. The proportion of elementary and high school students who were Hispanic has increased also, from about 6 percent in 1972 to 14 percent in 1997. Moreover, the Census Bureau's population projections indicate that the school-age population (ages 6 to 17 years) will become even more diverse in future years.

## Other aspects of students' family backgrounds are diverse

Elementary and high school students come from diverse family backgrounds. More than two-thirds of these students ( 70.9 percent) came from families with both parents present, 23.1 percent lived with only their mother, and 4.7 percent lived with only their father. About 1 in 5 ( 18.7 percent) had at least one foreign-born parent. Almost half (46.5 percent) of elementary and high school students came from families with annual incomes of at least \$40,000, and 1 in 4 (25.3 percent) came from families whose income was below $\$ 20,000$.

Private school enrollment is more likely for children from families with higher family incomes. Whereas 2.8 percent of children from families with incomes under $\$ 20,000$ attended private elementary or high

Table B.
Annual High School Dropout Rates, by Gender, Race, Hispanic Origin, Family Income, and Grade Level: October 1997

|  | Dropout Rate |
| :--- | ---: |
| Total | 4.3 |
| Male | 4.7 |
| Female | 3.8 |
| White | 4.2 |
| Black | 4.8 |
| Asian and Pacific Islanders | 2.6 |
| Hispanic Origin | 8.6 |
| Family Income |  |
| less than $\$ 20,000$ | 8.2 |
| $\$ 20,000-\$ 39,999$ | 3.8 |
| \$40,000 and over | 1.6 |
| Grade Level |  |
| 10th Grade | 2.1 |
| 11th Grade | 3.7 |
| 12th Grade | 7.7 |

Note: Hispanics may be of any race. The number of students in the three race groups shown do not add to the total because data for American Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts, are not shown.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current
Population Survey, October 1997.
Contact: U.S. Census Bureau, Education and Social Stratification Branch, 301-457-2464.
school, 13.4 percent of those from families with incomes of $\$ 40,000$ or more did so. In general, about 1 in 10 students attended private school in 1997. This proportion has fluctuated around this level since the 1970s.

## Some students fall behind

In 1997, nearly one-third (32.1 percent) of 15 - to 17 -year-olds were enrolled below the modal grade for their age, that is, the grade which is most common for a given age. Enrollment below the mode in school could be due to late entry into school ${ }^{10}$ or to falling behind after

[^5]school entry. Indeed, 20.4 percent of the aforementioned cohort of 15- to 17-year-olds were below modal grade in 1988 when they were 6 - to 8 -year-olds. In the intervening years, about 1 in 10 students was retained in grade (or held back).

Boys tend to start school at older ages than girls, with 21.9 percent of boys ages 6 - to 8 -years-old below modal grade in 1997, compared with 15.1 percent of girls. Boys also have a significantly higher rate of retention throughout their school years. By ages 15 to 17 in 1997, 37.8 percent of boys were below modal grade, compared with 26.1 percent of girls.

In the younger age group (6- to 8-year-olds), no differences existed among White and Black children in the proportion below modal grade, which suggests they all start school around the same ages. However, a higher proportion of Black students than of White students tended to be below modal grade in the 15 - to 17 -year-old student population, 40.0 percent compared with 30.3 percent.

## Some students drop out

During the one-year period from October 1996 to October 1997, about 454,000 or 4.3 percent of all students in the 10 th, 11 th, or 12th grade dropped out of high school. This rate is statistically equivalent to the 1996 dropout rate but is statistically lower than the 1995 dropout rate.

The high school dropout rates of Whites, Blacks, and Asians were not statistically different from each other. The Hispanic rate of 8.6 percent was the highest (Table B). The rates for men and women, at 4.7 percent and
3.8 percent, respectively, were not statistically different from each other.

The likelihood of dropping out of high school was higher for students from lower-income families. While 8.2 percent of high school students from families with incomes below $\$ 20,000$ dropped out of school in the past year, just 1.6 percent of those from families with incomes of $\$ 40,000$ or more left school before graduation.

The risk of dropping out varied by the student's grade level. Only 2.1 percent of 10 th graders dropped out of school, compared with 3.7 percent of 11 th graders and 7.7 percent of 12 th graders.

## Some students continue

Unlike the earlier school years with their prescribed sequential grade levels, the end of high school presents a multitude of pathways for young adults. By the time students reach age 18 , some will have dropped out of school, some will still be in high school, and some will have graduated. Among those who have completed high school, some will go on to college.

For the 18- to-24-year-old cohort, 3.2 million people, or 13.0 percent, were in the "dropout pool" in 1997. The dropout pool is the population who are no longer enrolled and who have not completed high school. This dropout pool measure is to some extent a summary of the year-to-year dropout rates (and re-enrollments) over the life of a cohort. Men and women were significantly different in their dropout pool proportions (14.1 percent compared with 11.8 percent). Blacks had a somewhat higher dropout pool proportion than Whites in 1997 (16.7 percent compared
with 12.4 percent). The Hispanics dropout pool proportion was 30.6 percent.

Some of the students who had not graduated from high school were, however, still enrolled in high school and may eventually graduate. About 5.6 percent of the 18 - to 24 -yearolds were still enrolled in high school in October 1997, although most of them were just 18 years old.

More than 4 out of 5 people, 18 - to 24-years-old, were high school graduates. The proportion of women was significantly higher than the proportion of men who had completed high school ( 83.5 percent compared with 79.4 percent). The proportions of Whites ( 82.7 percent) and Asians ( 85.2 percent) who were high school graduates were not significantly different from each other, but were higher than the proportion of Blacks (74.7 percent). The proportion of Hispanics who had completed high school was 62.0 percent.

Not all high school graduates continue their education beyond high school. In the fall of 1997, 45.2 percent of high school graduates in the 18- to 24- age cohort were enrolled in college. The proportion of women enrolled was higher than the proportion of men ( 46.4 percent and 44.0 percent). Asians had the highest proportion of high school graduates enrolled in college at 63.7 percent, well above that for Whites ( 45.3 percent) and Blacks (39.8 percent). About 36.0 percent of Hispanic high school graduates were enrolled in college. ${ }^{11}$

[^6]Figure 5.
The Number of Traditional College-Age Students Reached a Record High Level in 1997
(In millions)


Specifically for the 1997 graduating class of approximately 2.8 million students, 67.0 percent went immediately on to college. More women than men went straight to college ( 70.3 percent compared with 63.6 percent). Significant differences were apparent among the proportions of the White and Black recent graduates who went directly on to college ( 67.5 percent and 59.6 percent). About 65.6 percent of Hispanics went immediately on to college. ${ }^{12}$ This suggests that although these groups may have similar ambitions immediately out of high school, intervening factors, such as financial difficulty, family obligations, and inadequate college preparedness, may affect some groups disproportionately more than others, resulting in differences in ultimate college completion rates.

[^7]
## College enrollment of traditional college-age students reaches a record high

In October 1997, 15.4 million students were enrolled in colleges across the country (Table C), not significantly different from 15.2 million the previous year, but dramatically higher than a decade ago when about 12.7 million students were enrolled in college.

The number of traditional collegeage students (i.e., those under 25 years old) reached a record high level of 9.4 million in 1997 (Figure 5). This peak is fueled by both the demographic momentum of the population structure, that is, the increased number of people in that age group, and the increased proportion of those who continue on to college soon after high school. Even if the proportion of students who continue on to college soon after high school rises no further, the number of college students under

Table C.

## Summary Measures of College Enrollment: October 1997

(Numbers in thousands)

|  | Total | Male | Female | White | Black | Asian and Pacific Islanders | Hispanic Origin |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| TOTAL COLLEGE ENROLLMENT |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Ages 15 years and over | 15,436 | 6,843 | 8,593 | 12,442 | 1,903 | 947 | 1,260 |
| 15 to 17 years | 172 | 6,89 | 8,593 | -127 | , 24 | 20 | + 49 |
| 18 to 19 years | 3,362 | 1,561 | 1,801 | 2,792 | 381 | 164 | 316 |
| 20 to 21 years | 3,143 | 1,521 | 1,622 | 2,602 | 321 | 191 | 254 |
| 22 to 24 years | 2,699 | 1,292 | 1,406 | 2,101 | 383 | 190 | 236 |
| 25 to 29 years | 2,154 | 1,052 | 1,102 | 1,666 | 258 | 201 | 174 |
| 30 to 34 years | 1,116 | 457 | 658 | 856 | 165 | 91 | 80 |
| 35 years and over | 2,791 | 899 | 1,892 | 2,297 | 372 | 90 | 151 |
| Type of School: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2-year college | 4,078 | 1,663 | 2,415 | 3,290 | 541 | 204 | 475 |
| 15 to 19 years old | 1,178 | 536 | 641 | , 987 | 133 | 51 | 159 |
| 20 to 24 years old | 1,288 | 603 | 684 | 1,010 | 176 | 80 | 183 |
| 25 years and over | 1,613 | 524 | 1,089 | 1,293 | 232 | 73 | 133 |
| 4 -year college | 8,331 | 3,876 | 4,455 | 6,745 | 1,031 | 484 | 679 |
| 15 to 19 years old | 2,327 | 1,069 | 1,257 | 1,903 | 272 | 133 | 203 |
| 20 to 24 years old | 3,929 | 1,931 | 1,999 | 3,185 | 459 | 260 | 287 |
| 25 years and over | 2,075 | 875 | 1,199 | 1,658 | 301 | 91 | 189 |
| Graduate school | 3,027 | 1,304 | 1,723 | 2,407 | 331 | 260 | 105 |
| 15 to 24 years old | 654 | 294 | 360 | 538 | 69 | 41 | 23 |
| 25 to 34 years old | 1,299 | 653 | 646 | 981 | 135 | 169 | 61 |
| 35 years and over | 1,073 | 356 | 717 | 888 | 127 | 50 | 21 |
| Public: | 12,090 | 5,353 | 6,737 | 9,714 | 1,546 | 712 | 1,079 |
| 2-year | 3,780 | 1,552 | 2,228 | 3,059 | 498 | 181 | 450 |
| 4-year | 6,294 | 2,951 | 3,343 | 5,062 | 817 | 361 | 550 |
| Graduate | 2,016 | 850 | 1,166 | 1,593 | 231 | 170 | 79 |
| Percent of students: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Employed full-time | 33.0 | 33.9 | 32.2 | 33.6 | 34.3 | 22.7 | 32.0 |
| Employed part-time | 29.2 | 25.6 | 32.0 | 30.7 | 20.7 | 27.8 | 29.0 |
| FULL TIME ENROLLMENT: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Ages 15 years and over | 10,236 | 4,816 | 5,420 | 8,127 | 1,280 | 721 |  |
| 15 to 17 years | 144 | 56 | 88 | 106 | 23 | 14 | 44 |
| 18 to 19 years | 3,026 | 1,402 | 1,623 | 2,503 | 349 | 151 | 246 |
| 20 to 21 years | 2,761 | 1,339 | 1,422 | 2,275 | 278 | 178 | 196 |
| 22 to 24 years | 1,978 | 967 | 1,011 | 1,526 | 291 | 145 | 157 |
| 25 to 29 years | 1,108 | 593 | 514 | 809 | 124 | 153 | 78 |
| 30 to 34 years | 457 | 197 | 260 | 328 | 81 | 46 | 33 |
| 35 years and over | 761 | 259 | 502 | 579 | 132 | 34 | 43 |
| Type of School: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2-year college | 2,290 | 983 | 1,307 | 1,789 | 345 | 127 | 258 |
| 15 to 19 years old | 947 | 439 | 507 | 790 | 114 | 38 | 116 |
| 20 to 24 years old | 804 | 371 | 433 | 596 | 139 | 53 | 107 |
| 25 years and over | 539 | 172 | 366 | 403 | 91 | 35 | 36 |
| 4 -year college | 6,627 | 3,182 | 3,445 | 5,343 | 806 | 422 | 482 |
| 15 to 19 years old | 2,197 | 1,004 | 1,193 | 1,793 | 259 | 127 | 174 |
| 20 to 24 years old | 3,476 | 1,721 | 1,756 | 2,834 | 379 | 238 | 229 |
| 25 years and over | 953 | 456 | 497 | 716 | 168 | 57 | 79 |
| Graduate school | 1,319 | 651 | 668 | 995 | 129 | 173 | 57 |
| 15 to 24 years old | 484 | 229 | 255 | 397 | 51 | 31 | 17 |
| 25 to 34 years old | 605 | 341 | 264 | 419 | 51 | 123 | 32 |
| 35 years and over | 229 | 80 | 149 | 178 | 27 | 19 | 7 |

Note: Hispanics may be of any race. The numbers of students in the three race groups shown here do not add to the total because data for American Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts are not shown.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October 1997.
Contact: U.S. Census Bureau, Education and Social Stratification Branch, 301-457-2464.
age 25 will increase dramatically over the next decade, as the larger population groups born during the 1980s and 1990s reach collegeeligible age.

About 6.1 million non-traditional college-age students, those ages 25 or older, were enrolled in college in 1997. Non-traditional college-age students account for about 40 percent of all college students and have remained near this proportion since the late 1980s.

Women accounted for 55.7 percent of all college students, continuing the majority role they have occupied since 1979. However, even though women hold the majority role in the traditional college-age student population ( 52.7 percent), they were especially prevalent among older students, with women making up 60.3 percent of non-traditional college-age students. Among students ages 35 and over, 67.8 percent were women.

Of the 15.4 million college students enrolled in 1997, 4 of 5 were White (80.6 percent), 12.3 percent Black, and 6.1 percent Asian. ${ }^{13}$ Similar to the trends in the elementary and high school levels, the race and ethnic composition of college students has shifted during the past two decades, from 86.3 percent White, 11.1 percent Black, ${ }^{14}$ and 2.6 percent other races. Currently, about 8.2 percent of college students are Hispanic compared with about 3.6 percent in 1977.
${ }^{13}$ The percentages of Asians and Hispanics enrolled in college in 1997 were not significantly different.
14 The percentage of Blacks enrolled in college in 1977 and the percentage of Blacks enrolled in college in 1997 were not significantly different.

One-third of college students were enrolled part-time in 1997. For many people, college enrollment must be negotiated not only with respect to financial cost, but among many life-cycle factors as well, such as marriage, family, and career. Indeed, non-traditional college-age students were much more likely than their younger counterparts to attend college part-time ( 61.6 percent compared with 15.6 percent). A greater proportion of female than male students attended part-time (36.9 percent compared with 29.6 percent). The proportions of White (34.7 percent) and Black (32.8 percent) students who attended part-time did not differ significantly, but Asians ( 23.9 percent) were less likely than the other groups to attend college part-time. About 36.7 percent of Hispanics were enrolled part-time.

Most college students ( 62.2 percent) worked while attending school. Although women college students were just as likely to be employed full time as part time ( 32.2 percent and 32.0 percent), men were more likely to be employed full time than part time ( 33.9 percent and 25.6 percent). ${ }^{15}$ White college students were more likely to be employed than Black or Asian students. ${ }^{16}$ Almost 2 out of 3 Hispanic students were employed ( 61.0 percent) while they were enrolled in college in $1997 .{ }^{17}$

[^8]Most college students were enrolled at the undergraduate level (12.4 million or 80.4 percent). Of undergraduates, one-third attended twoyear institutions. About 39.6 percent of students at two-year institutions were of non-traditional college ages (ages 25 and older), and many of these non-traditional college-age students were women (67.5 percent). In comparison, of the 8.3 million undergraduates enrolled in four-year institutions, only one-fourth were ages 25 and older.

About 3.0 million students were enrolled in graduate school in the fall of 1997. Almost all of these students were at least age 25 , and one-third were at least age 35 . More women than men were enrolled at the graduate level (1.7 million compared with 1.3 million). Of the Asian college students, 27.4 percent were in graduate school in 1997. This is significantly higher than the percentage of White or Black college students in graduate school (19.3 percent and 17.4 percent respectively). ${ }^{18}$ About 16.1 percent of all graduate students were foreign-born.

The majority of people enrolled in college were attending public institutions ( 78.3 percent). Blacks were slightly more likely to be enrolled in public colleges than Whites and Asians (whose rates were not significantly different from each other). About 85.6 percent of Hispanic college students were enrolled in a public college.

[^9]
## Source of the Data

Most estimates in this report come from data obtained in October 1997 from the Current Population Survey (CPS). Some estimates are based on data obtained from the CPS in earlier years, or from decennial censuses. The Census Bureau conducts the CPS every month. The school enrollment data presented in this report are collected in October of each year only.

## Accuracy of the Estimates

All statistics are subject to sampling error, as well as nonsampling error such as survey design flaws, respondent classification and reporting errors, data processing mistakes, and undercoverage. The Census Bureau has taken steps to minimize errors in the form of quality control and editing procedures to reduce errors made by respondents, coders and interviewers. Ratio estimation to independent age-race-sex-Hispanic population controls partially corrects for bias attributable to survey undercoverage. However, biases exist in the estimates when missed respondents have characteristics different from those of interviewed respondents in the same age-race-sex-Hispanic group. Analytical statements in this report have been tested and meet statistical standards. However, because of methodological differences, use caution when comparing these data with data from other sources.

For information on the source of the data, the accuracy of the estimates, and the computation and use of standard errors, contact John M. Finamore, Demographic Statistical Methods Division (301-457-4183) or via Internet E-mail (John.M.Finamore@ccmail.census.gov).

## More Information

The set of detailed tabulations consists of 19 tables from the 1997 October CPS (83 pages) and 7 historical tables. The electronic version of these tables is available on the Internet, at the Census Bureau's World-Wide Web site (http:// www.census.gov). Once on the site, click on "Subjects A-Z," then on "S," and finally on "School Enrollment."

A paper version of these tables is available as PPL-102 for \$31. To receive a paper copy, send your request for "PPL-102, School Enroll-ment-Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1997," along with a check or money order in the amount of $\$ 31$ payable to Commerce-Census-88-00-9010, to U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, P.O. Box 277943, Atlanta, GA 30384-7943, or call our Statistical Information Office on 301-457-2422. A copy of these tabulations will be made available to any existing Current Population Report P20 subscriber without charge, provided that the request is made within three months of the issue date of this report. Contact our Statistical Information Office on 301-457-2422.

## Contact

For additional information on these topics, contact Gladys M. Martinez or Jennifer C. Day, Education and Social Stratification Branch, 301-457-2464
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## User Comments

The Census Bureau welcomes the comments and advice of data and report users. If you have any suggestions or comments, please write to:

Chief, Population Division
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Washington, DC 20233
or send E-mail to:
pop@census.gov


[^0]:    ${ }^{1}$ The estimates for high school and college enrollment were not significantly different from each other.

[^1]:    ${ }^{3}$ Hispanics may be of any race. Because the characteristics of race and Hispanic origin are not mutually exclusive, comparisons of estimates for racial categories with estimates for Hispanics are not recommended. However, to avoid misinterpretation of information in this report, we have footnoted estimates for these groups that are not significantly different from each other.
    ${ }^{4}$ The percentages of Hispanics and Blacks in public nursery school were not significantly different from each other.

[^2]:    ${ }^{5}$ Includes Pacific Islanders.

[^3]:    ${ }^{6}$ The percentage of all 5 -year-olds enrolled in kindergarten and the percentage of Hispanic 5 -year-olds enrolled in kindergarten were not significantly different. In addition, there were no significant differences between the percentage of 5 -year-olds enrolled in school and the percentage of Hispanic 5 -year-olds enrolled in school.
    ${ }^{7}$ The comparison in elementary and high school enrollment between 1970 and 1997 is limited to students 3 - to 34-yearsold because that was the population asked about school enrollment in 1970.

[^4]:    ${ }^{8}$ For 1995 and 1996, the numbers of people enrolled were not significantly different.

[^5]:    ${ }^{10}$ State laws differ on the minimum enrollment age and some parents choose to start their children later. State laws also have been changing in recent years to move the cut-off date forward in many states.

[^6]:    ${ }^{11}$ The percentages of Blacks and Hispanics enrolled in college were not significantly different.

[^7]:    ${ }^{12}$ The percentages of Blacks and Hispanics going immediately on to college were not significantly different. In addition, the percentages of Whites and Hispanics going immediately on to college were not significantly different.

[^8]:    15 The percentage of men working full time and the percentage of women working full time were not significantly different.
    ${ }^{16}$ The percentages of Black and Asian students who are employed were not significantly different.
    ${ }^{17}$ The percentages of Asian and Hispanic students who are employed were not significantly different. In addition, the percentage of Hispanic students employed and the percentage of all students employed were not significantly different.

[^9]:    18 The White and Black percentages are not significantly different.

