

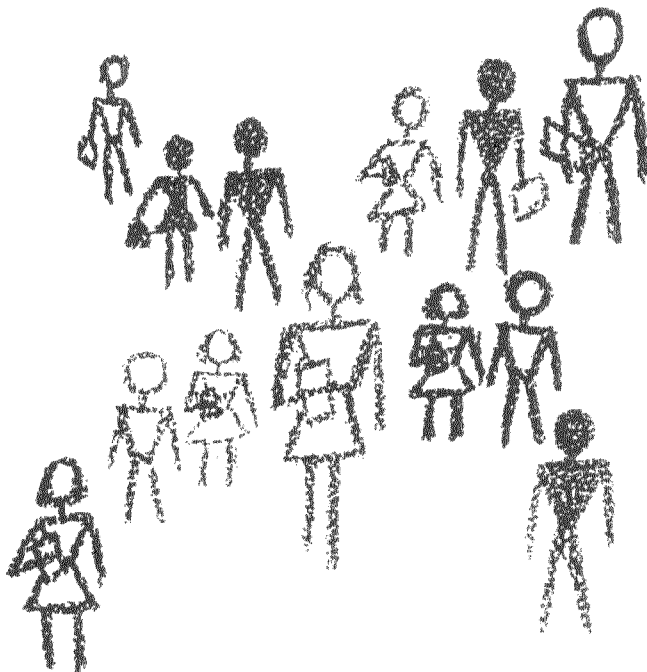
CURRENT POPULATION REPORTS

**Population Characteristics**

Series P-20, No. 460

by  
Robert Kominski  
and  
Andrea Adams

# **School Enrollment— Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1990**



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

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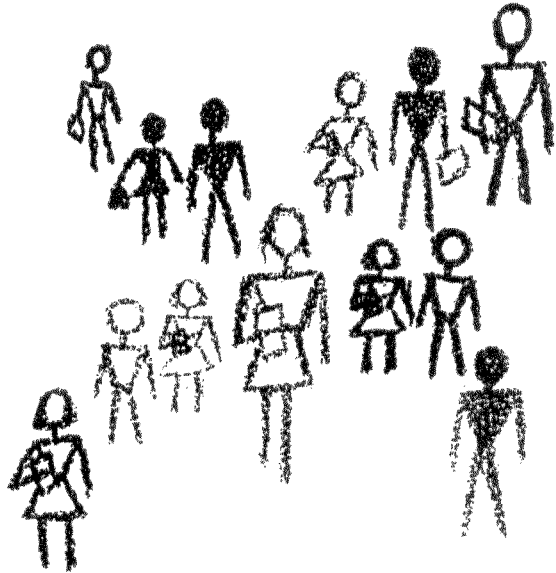
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# School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1990

(Note: The estimates for 1990 in this report are inflated to national population controls by age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. The population controls are based on results of the 1980 census carried forward to 1990. The estimates in this report, therefore, may differ from estimates that would have been obtained using 1990 census results brought forward to the survey date. Population controls incorporating 1990 census results will be used for survey estimation beginning in 1993.)

## INTRODUCTION

This report presents detailed tabulations of data on school enrollment of the civilian noninstitutional population in October 1990. It also includes summary time series of data collected since the beginning of the survey. The data are from the October school enrollment supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS). Data on school enrollment have been collected annually in the CPS since 1946 and reported in this publication series. The data cover enrollment in "regular school," which includes nursery school, kindergarten, elementary school, high school, and college and professional school. Data are shown by the following characteristics: age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, marital status, family status, family income, education of the householder, labor force status, metropolitan residence, region, and mother's labor force status and education (for preprimary enrollment). Also, the following enrollment characteristics are shown: level and grade of school, public/private school, full time and part time attendance status, and two-year/four-year college. Vocational school enrollment is shown separately.

Revisions in edit and tabulation processing have improved data quality, but have made the data beginning with 1987 not strictly comparable with data from earlier years. The previous processing procedures were used from 1967 to 1986. Time series tables in appendix A show two data entries for 1986 which permit comparisons of results according to each set of processing procedures.

## HIGHLIGHTS

(Figures shown in parentheses define 90-percent confidence intervals. For details of calculation see "Appendix B, Source and Accuracy of the Estimates.")

- In October 1990, 63.0 ( $\pm 0.5$ ) million persons were enrolled in regular school—nursery school through college. About 60.6 ( $\pm 0.4$ ) million of these persons were between the ages of 3 and 34.
- The number of persons in nursery school or kindergarten was 7.3 ( $\pm 0.2$ ) million, an increase from the 6.7 ( $\pm 0.2$ ) million enrolled in the fall of 1989.
- Elementary school enrollment (grades 1-8) stood at 29.3 ( $\pm 0.2$ ) million persons, up from 28.7 ( $\pm 0.2$ ) million one year earlier.
- High school enrollment totalled 12.8 ( $\pm 0.1$ ) million persons, not statistically different from the 12.9 ( $\pm 0.1$ ) million in 1989.
- The annual high school dropout rate (from grades 10-12) for 1990 was 4.0 ( $\pm 0.5$ ) percent, not statistically different from the 1989 rate of 4.5 ( $\pm 0.6$ ) percent.
- The number of persons enrolled in college totalled 13.6 ( $\pm 0.3$ ) million, significantly more than the 13.2 ( $\pm 0.3$ ) million enrolled one year before. About 2.3 ( $\pm 0.1$ ) million of current college students were over age 34.

## SCHOOL ENROLLMENT IN 1990

### Preprimary Enrollment

About 59.4 percent of children 3 to 5 years old (6,659,000) were enrolled in preprimary school in the fall of 1990. Among children 3 and 4 years old, 44.4 percent were enrolled, most of them in nursery school (3.0 million of 3.3 million total enrollees). Given the availability of public kindergarten in all states, most 5 year olds were enrolled in school (93.3 percent), the majority in kindergarten (85.3 percent). There was no difference



**Table A. Enrollment of Children 3 and 4 Years Old in Nursery School by Family Income and Race: October 1990**

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Total	Less than \$20,000	\$20,000 to \$39,999	\$40,000 and over
<b>TOTAL</b>				
All Races .....	7,415	2,588	2,473	1,927
Enrolled in nursery school .....	3,026	780	944	1,140
Percent enrolled .....	40.8	30.1	38.2	59.2
Percent public .....	34.5	66.0	32.2	14.2
Percent private .....	65.5	34.0	67.8	85.8
<b>WHITE</b>				
Total children .....	6,018	1,772	2,177	1,750
Enrolled in nursery school .....	2,510	492	828	1,055
Percent enrolled .....	41.7	27.8	38.0	60.3
Percent public .....	29.3	60.2	30.3	13.1
Percent private .....	70.7	39.8	69.7	86.9
<b>BLACK</b>				
Total children .....	1,086	665	244	89
Enrolled in nursery school .....	393	225	94	51
Percent enrolled .....	36.2	33.8	38.5	57.3
Percent public .....	63.7	78.7	50.0	(B)
Percent private .....	36.3	21.3	50.0	(B)
<b>HISPANIC ORIGIN<sup>1</sup></b>				
Total children .....	835	470	226	88
Enrolled in nursery school .....	206	87	63	43
Percent enrolled .....	24.7	18.5	27.9	48.9
Percent public .....	63.1	84.0	(B)	(B)
Percent private .....	36.9	16.0	(B)	(B)

<sup>1</sup>May be of any race.

measured in preprimary enrollment levels for Whites (59.7 percent) and Blacks (57.8 percent), but the level for Hispanic children (who can be of any race) was significantly lower (49.0 percent).

A large difference in nursery school enrollment is observed when examined across family income groups. Table A shows that 30.1 percent of young children (ages 3 and 4) from families with income less than \$20,000 were enrolled in nursery school, as compared to 38.2 percent for children from families with income between \$20,000 and \$39,999. Children from families with income \$40,000 and above had the highest level of nursery school enrollment (59.2 percent).

Of the 3 and 4 year olds enrolled in nursery school, 1,043,000 (34.5 percent) were in public school, while 1,984,000 (65.5 percent) attended private school. Family income is strongly associated with patterns of public and private nursery schooling. Children from families with high income are more likely to attend private school, while those from lower income families are more likely to enroll in public systems. Sixty-six percent of the nursery school students from families with income less than \$20,000 attended public school, as opposed to fifteen percent of those from families with income over \$40,000.

## Elementary and Secondary School Enrollment

There were 29.3 million persons enrolled in elementary school (grades 1 through 8) in the fall of 1990. Given the near universal nature of schooling for young persons, the number of persons enrolled in elementary school closely parallels the size of the population 6 to 13 years of age. During the 1970's and early 1980's, elementary school enrollments fell, following the general decrease in the size of the 6 to 13 year old population. In the past few years, however, this has changed, as both the population and enrollments have risen; this trend is expected to continue for the near-term future. The current middle-series projections of the population<sup>1</sup> for children ages 6 to 13 for 1995 is 30.1 million. If existing enrollment rates for this age group continue, there will be over a million more elementary students in 1995 than in 1990.

Most elementary school students attend public institutions, as the top panel of table B shows. In the fall of 1990, about 9.2 percent of all elementary school students ages 3 to 17 were in private schools, but the data

<sup>1</sup>Current Population Report, Series P-25, No. 1018, Projections of the Population of the United States by Age, Sex, and Race: 1988 to 2080

**Table B. Public and Private Elementary and High School Enrollment of Primary Family Members 3 to 17 Years Old by Family Income, Race, and Hispanic Origin: October 1990**

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Total	Less than \$20,000	\$20,000 to \$39,999	\$40,000 and over
<b>ELEMENTARY SCHOOL</b>				
<b>All Races</b>				
Total enrolled .....	28,748	9,480	9,293	8,223
Percent public .....	90.8	95.9	91.2	85.0
Percent private .....	9.2	4.1	8.8	15.0
<b>White</b>				
Total enrolled .....	22,961	6,229	8,038	7,387
Percent public .....	89.8	95.2	90.6	85.0
Percent private .....	10.2	4.8	9.4	15.0
<b>Black</b>				
Total enrolled .....	4,520	2,777	922	487
Percent public .....	95.7	97.9	95.7	85.6
Percent private .....	4.3	2.1	4.3	14.4
<b>Hispanic Origin<sup>1</sup></b>				
Total enrolled .....	3,257	1,783	908	380
Percent public .....	94.1	97.9	93.3	78.2
Percent private .....	5.9	2.1	6.6	22.1
<b>HIGH SCHOOL</b>				
<b>All Races</b>				
Total enrolled .....	11,175	3,062	3,453	3,797
Percent public .....	92.6	96.6	94.2	88.3
Percent private .....	7.4	3.4	5.8	11.7
<b>White</b>				
Total enrolled .....	9,061	2,025	2,946	3,405
Percent public .....	91.7	95.8	94.0	87.8
Percent private .....	8.3	4.2	6.1	12.2
<b>Black</b>				
Total enrolled .....	1,634	899	371	236
Percent public .....	96.8	98.1	96.0	92.8
Percent private .....	3.2	1.8	4.0	6.8
<b>Hispanic Origin<sup>1</sup></b>				
Total enrolled .....	1,164	579	357	142
Percent public .....	95.4	98.1	97.5	81.7
Percent private .....	4.6	1.6	2.5	19.7

<sup>1</sup>May be of any race.

indicate that private school enrollment is more likely for children from families with higher family income. Whereas 4.1 percent of children from families with income less than \$20,000 attended private school, 15 percent of those from families with income of \$40,000 or more did so.

In the fall of 1990, about 12.8 million persons were enrolled at the high school level (grades 9 through 12). During the last five years, the number of persons in high school fell as the size of the population ages 14 to 17 also dropped. Middle-series projections of 14 to 17 year olds indicate that high school enrollments will rise over the next few years, if enrollment rates remain the same.

Public institutions account for most high school enrollments, with just 7.4 percent of secondary students

attending private schools. The bottom half of table B shows public and private high school enrollment levels by income, race, and Hispanic origin groupings. As with primary school, there is a relationship between family income and private school enrollment. About 3.4 percent of children from lower income (less than \$20,000) families attended private high school, compared to 11.7 percent from higher income families.

### Modal Grade

One indicator of the progress of children in school is whether they are enrolled in a grade appropriate for their age, that is, the grade they would be expected to attend had they enrolled in the first grade at age 6 and

experienced normal progression without failure. As children fall behind in school they may suffer serious problems, culminating for some in the failure to complete school at all. Table C shows the proportion of persons who are either enrolled in a grade too low for their age (below "modal grade") or who have dropped out of school altogether. This table shows these proportions for four age groups, corresponding to the four 3-grade parts of elementary and secondary schooling (i.e., grades 1-3, 4-6, 7-9, and 10-12).

Relatively large proportions of persons are below the modal grade at each age level. However, at least some of this occurs because some children do not enter school "on time" (that is, at the modal age for the grade). This delay may be due in part to state regulations on minimum allowable entry ages for children, partly because of the difference in childrens' ages when they enter school as opposed to the survey date, and partly due to parents who choose to delay the entry of their child into school. The first column of table C, showing the proportion of children ages 6 to 8 who are below modal grade, acts as a summary baseline estimate of these three different factors, which cannot be disentangled in this survey. In 1990, 21.8 percent of all children ages 6 to 8 were below their modal grade, compared to 15.3 percent for this same age group one decade earlier.

By ages 15 to 17, 34.8 percent of all persons are either enrolled below their modal grade or have dropped out completely in 1990, compared to 29.1 percent for this group in 1980. However, this 5.7 percentage point difference is statistically indistinguishable from the 6.5

percent increase in the baseline level for 6 to 8 year olds. Thus, if it is assumed that the cross-sectional patterns are representative of cohort trends, then the increase in the level for older students may be a function of nothing more than the increase that has occurred in the initial delay at the start of schooling.

In 1990 as well as 1980, the rate for Whites ages 15 to 17 (32.0 percent) was substantially lower than for Blacks (48.0) or Hispanics (48.6), (Blacks and Hispanics were not statistically different from one another). Similarly, in both time periods, teenage females were less likely to be below their modal grade (or dropped out) than were males (29.4 versus 39.9 percent in 1990; 24.7 versus 33.2 percent in 1980). More striking is the change in the proportion for different age groups. The difference between the 6 to 8 and 9 to 11 year-old age groups is 5.0 percentage points for Whites, 11.2 for Blacks and 13.7 for Hispanics. Clearly, a lot of falling behind in school occurs at an early age for Black and Hispanic students. In the comparison of 9 to 11 and 12 to 14 year-old age groups the contrast is also very strong; while the White proportion increases by 1.4 points (not a statistically significant change), the Black level rises by another 12.9 points. These cross-sectional estimates, if viewed in terms of cohorts moving through school, indicate that Black students fall behind early in school and stay behind. While all students in general have larger proportions below modal grade (or dropped out) in 1990 than in 1980, the pattern of how this unfolds portrays a particularly disturbing pattern for Black and Hispanic students.

**Table C. Proportion of Persons Who are Either Below Modal Grade or Have Dropped Out , by Age, Race, Sex, and Hispanic Origin: October 1980 and 1990**

Sex, race, and Hispanic origin	6 to 8 years	9 to 11 years	12 to 14 years	15 to 17 years	Sex, race, and Hispanic origin	6 to 8 years	9 to 11 years	12 to 14 years	15 to 17 years
<b>1990</b>					<b>1980</b>				
<b>Total</b>					<b>Total</b>				
Total.....	21.8	28.1	31.4	34.8	Total.....	15.3	21.1	23.7	29.1
Male.....	24.1	32.3	36.7	39.9	Male.....	17.6	24.3	28.1	33.2
Female.....	19.4	23.6	25.8	29.4	Female.....	12.9	17.7	19.2	24.7
<b>White</b>					<b>White</b>				
Total.....	22.2	27.2	28.7	32.0	Total.....	15.1	19.9	21.9	26.7
Male.....	24.8	31.6	33.9	37.4	Male.....	17.6	22.8	26.3	30.5
Female.....	19.3	22.6	23.3	26.3	Female.....	12.6	16.8	17.5	22.6
<b>Black</b>					<b>Black</b>				
Total.....	22.1	33.3	46.1	48.0	Total.....	15.7	28.6	32.0	42.6
Male.....	23.3	37.3	52.8	53.3	Male.....	17.8	33.0	37.4	48.4
Female.....	20.7	28.9	39.3	42.7	Female.....	13.5	24.2	26.8	36.8
<b>Hispanic Origin<sup>1</sup></b>					<b>Hispanic Origin<sup>1</sup></b>				
Total.....	21.9	35.6	38.5	48.6	Total.....	22.6	27.1	37.3	48.4
Male.....	22.2	36.9	42.0	52.8	Male.....	25.1	31.2	41.0	54.2
Female.....	21.5	34.0	34.9	44.4	Female.....	20.3	22.9	33.9	42.6

<sup>1</sup>May be of any race.

## High School Dropouts

During the one year period from October 1989 to October 1990, about 347,000, or 4.0 percent, of all students in the 10th, 11th, or 12th grade dropped out of high school.<sup>2</sup> While this overall national dropout rate is considerably lower than the level of 6.0 percent just ten years earlier (see table A-3), variation among different subpopulations is apparent.

The data in table D show that the high school dropout rate of 3.8 percent for Whites is not statistically different from the Black rate of 5.1 percent, but is significantly different from the Hispanic rate of 8 percent, (the Black and Hispanic rates are not statistically different from each other). The rates for men and women, at 4.1 and 3.9 percent, respectively, are also not statistically different from each other. Across family income groups there are differences in the dropout rate. While 6 percent of high school students from families with income below \$20,000 dropped out of high school in the past year, just 1.0 percent of those from families with incomes of \$40,000 or more left school before graduation.

<sup>2</sup>The annual high school dropout rate was first presented in Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 413, School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1983. Details of its calculation are presented in that report, as well as in Appendix B, Definitions and Explanations, of this report.

A different measure of high school dropouts is the proportion of persons who are no longer enrolled and have not completed high school. This "dropout pool" measure is to some extent a summary of the year-to-year dropout rates (and reenrollment) over the life of a cohort. Data from table 1 show that among persons 18 to 24 years old, 3.4 million (13.6 percent) were high school dropouts. Men and women were not different in their proportions of dropouts (13.9 versus 13.3 percent). While Blacks and Whites had roughly equal proportions (15.1 versus 13.5 percent), the level for Hispanics was 37.3 percent.

## College Enrollment

In October 1990, 13,621,000 persons were enrolled in colleges across the nation; this was a significant increase from the 13.2 million who were enrolled in the fall of 1989. Table E details some of the basic characteristics of college students in 1990, illustrating the diverse nature of the college population. As can be seen in the age detail, 40.2 percent of all college students were age 25 or older and 17.0 percent were over age 34. Women accounted for 54.5 percent of college students. There were 11.1 million students enrolled at the undergraduate level, and 64.3 percent of them were

**Table D. Annual High School Dropout Rates: October 1990**

Characteristic	Rate	Characteristic	Rate
Total.....	4.0	Family income less than \$20,000.....	6.0
Male.....	4.1	Family income between \$20,000 and \$39,999.....	2.9
Female.....	3.9	Family income greater than \$40,000.....	1.0
White.....	3.8	10th grade.....	2.9
Black.....	5.1	11th grade.....	3.3
Hispanic origin <sup>1</sup> .....	8.0	12th grade.....	6.4

<sup>1</sup>May be of any race.

**Table E. Characteristics of the College Population: October 1990**

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Total population	Enrolled in college	Type of school			Percent enrolled full time	Percent public school	Percent employed		
			2-year college	4-year college	Graduate school			Total	Full time	Part time
Total.....	191,848	13,621	3,965	7,143	2,514	63.8	78.9	60.9	32.3	28.6
Male.....	91,597	6,192	1,624	3,406	1,162	67.8	77.9	60.5	33.0	27.4
Female.....	100,251	7,429	2,340	3,737	1,352	60.5	79.8	61.3	31.8	29.5
White.....	163,373	11,488	3,290	6,071	2,127	63.0	78.8	63.3	33.5	29.7
Black.....	21,907	1,393	493	704	196	66.1	80.3	50.0	29.9	20.2
Hispanic origin <sup>1</sup> .....	14,815	748	360	303	85	55.3	84.5	63.8	37.6	26.2
15 to 19 years old.....	16,976	3,196	1,059	2,135	2	91.2	79.5	44.1	7.7	36.4
20 to 21 years old.....	7,183	2,767	689	2,051	27	85.2	76.5	53.4	14.5	39.0
22 to 24 years old.....	10,605	2,178	475	1,206	497	70.8	81.8	61.4	28.0	33.4
25 to 34 years old.....	42,627	3,162	967	1,100	1,095	42.4	77.5	74.0	54.2	19.8
35 years and older.....	114,457	2,319	775	650	893	23.4	80.5	74.9	61.9	13.0

<sup>1</sup>May be of any race.

**Table F. Full-time Enrollment by Age and Type of College: October 1990**

(Numbers in thousands)

Age	All colleges		2-Year colleges		4-Year colleges		Graduate school	
	Total students	Percent full time	Total students	Percent full time	Total students	Percent full time	Total students	Percent full time
Total .....	13,621	63.8	3,965	49.3	7,143	79.0	2,514	43.8
15 to 24 years old .....	8,141	83.7	2,223	66.7	5,392	91.4	526	76.6
25 to 34 years old .....	3,162	42.4	967	32.1	1,100	46.7	1,095	47.3
35 years and over .....	2,319	23.4	775	20.6	650	31.2	893	20.2

enrolled in four-year institutions. The majority of students (63.8 percent) were enrolled full time, and 78.9 percent were enrolled in a public college or university. Finally, 60.9 percent of all college students were employed either full or part time.

For many persons, college enrollment must be negotiated not only with respect to financial cost, but among many lifecycle factors as well, such as marriage, building a family, and establishing a career. Table F shows the proportion of students attending full time at two-year and four-year institutions, by the age of the student. In general, a much larger proportion of students at four-year schools attend full time, but there is also a strong relationship between age and full time attendance. While 91.4 percent of traditional age college students in four-year schools are attending full time, just 20.6 percent of persons age 35 or older in two-year schools are full time students.

#### DATA FILES AVAILABLE

The time series tabulations of enrollment shown in tables A-1 through A-6 in appendix A are now available on two floppy diskettes. The tables are available as

either six ASCII print files, or six LOTUS 1-2-3 © files (version 2.1). Users wishing to purchase files should specify which data format they prefer (ASCII or LOTUS), include a check for \$25 (make checks payable to "Commerce-Census") and send to—

Education and Social Stratification Branch  
Population Division  
U.S. Bureau of the Census  
Washington, D.C. 20233

#### USER COMMENTS

We are interested in your reaction to the usefulness of the information presented here and to the content of the questions used to produce these results. We welcome your recommendations for improving our survey work. If you have suggestions or comments, please send them to—

Current Survey Comments  
Population Division  
U.S. Bureau of the Census  
Washington, D.C. 20233