



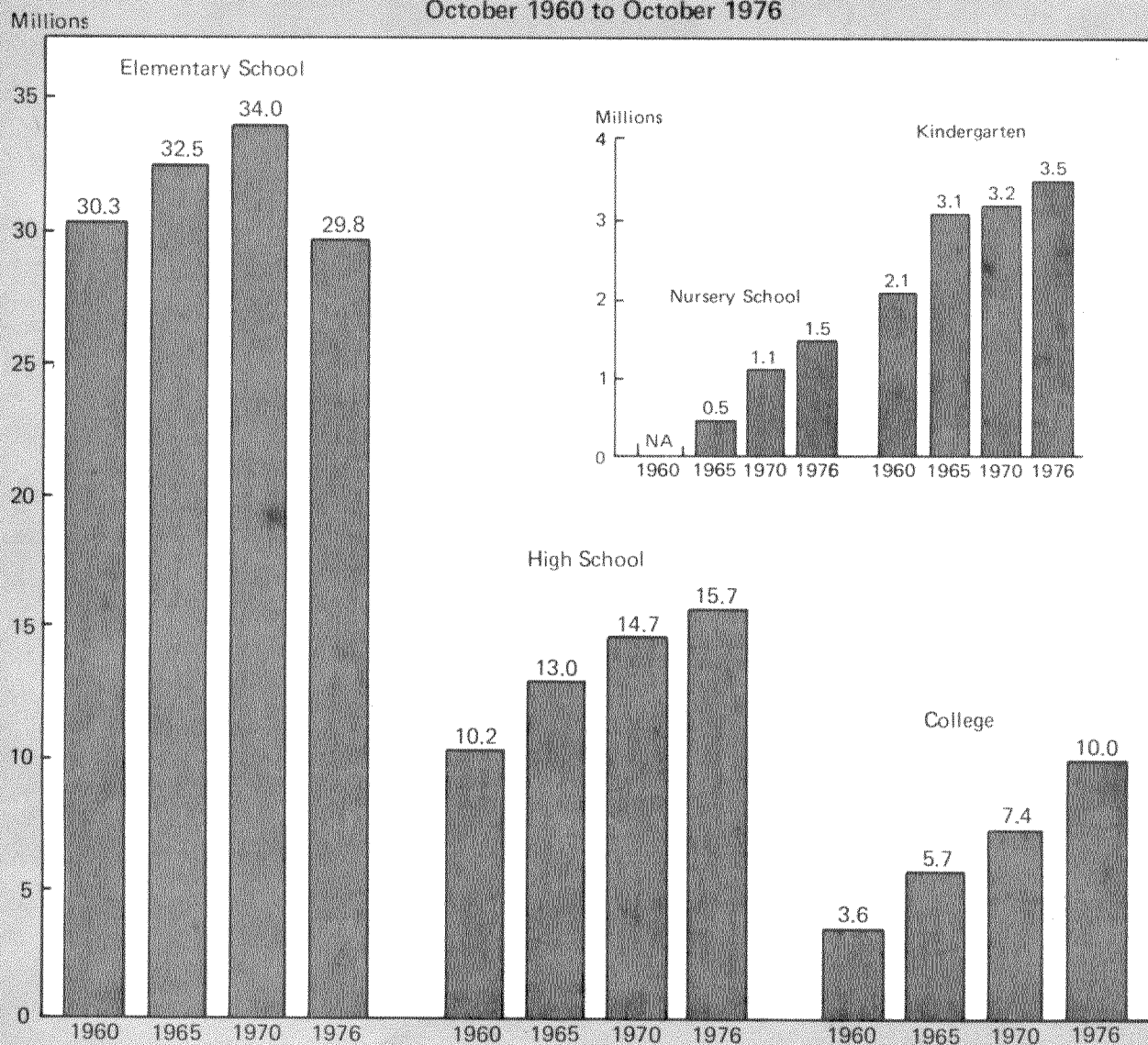
Population Characteristics

U.S. Department of Commerce
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

Series P-20, No. 309
Issued July 1977

School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1976 (Advance Report)

Figure 1. School Enrollment by Level for the Population 3 to 34 Years Old:
October 1960 to October 1976



Note: 1960 figures are for persons 5 to 34 years old; see Series P-20, No. 110.



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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SUGGESTED CITATION

U.S. Bureau of the Census, **Current Population Reports**, Series P-20, No. 309, "School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1976," (Advance Report), U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1977.

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SCHOOL ENROLLMENT—SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS: OCTOBER 1976 (Advance Report)

HIGHLIGHTS

- Elementary school enrollment continued to decline as a result of the decrease in the number of births in earlier years.
- Nursery school attendance declined for the first time since 1964, when statistics on nursery school attendance were first collected.
- Enrollment in private elementary schools has declined both in numbers of students and as a proportion of the total elementary school population. Private elementary school enrollment has dropped by one-third in ten years.
- College enrollment of Black students under 35 years old reached 1.1 million in 1976. The total number of Black college students has increased nearly three-fold since 1966, increasing their share of the total college population from 5 to 11 percent.
- The number of undergraduate students enrolled in four-year colleges rose slightly between 1975 and 1976, but two-year college enrollment did not change significantly.
- College enrollment increased among women, but no change was detected for men.

INTRODUCTION

The total number of persons 3 to 34 years old enrolled in school in October 1976 was 60.5 million, not significantly different from the number enrolled in 1975. Enrollment in college, high school, and kindergarten did not change significantly between 1975 and 1976, but nursery school enrollment declined in both public and private schools for the first time since the Census Bureau first began collecting statistics on nursery school enrollment in 1964 when 471,000 children were enrolled in nursery school (figure 1 and table 1).

Although the number of children 3 and 4 years old has declined since 1965, the school enrollment rate increased in most years until 1975. The total number of 3-and 4-year-old children decreased by

1.7 million (20 percent) between 1965 and 1975, while the number enrolled in school rose by 1.2 million, involving a shift from 11 percent of the age group to 31 percent as shown below:

	1976	1975	1965
	(Numbers in thousands)		
Children 3 and 4 years old.....	6,239	6,676	8,387
Enrolled in school..	1,950	2,101	886
Percent.....	31.3	31.5	10.6

In 1976, there was some evidence of a decrease from the previous year in the number of 3-and 4-year-olds enrolled in school, proportionately about the same as the decrease in the population of the age group, that is, about 7 percent. Thus, the proportion of 3-and 4-year-olds enrolled remained about the same. Most nursery school students attend private schools; the proportion has remained around two-thirds or more for the past decade. At elementary school and high school levels, 90 percent or more of the students were in public schools; in kindergarten 85 percent attended public schools; but in nursery schools only 31 percent of the children were attending public schools in 1976.

The trend of declining elementary school enrollment, which has existed since the beginning of this decade, continued solely as a result of the decrease in numbers of births in earlier years. Enrollment rates of children of elementary school age have remained around 99 percent. Total elementary enrollment continued to grow into the late 1960's, but has dropped since 1970 by about 12 percent. Enrollment in private elementary schools began decreasing earlier. Private schools have lost 35 percent of their enrollment in the past 10 years.

High school enrollment did not change significantly from 1975 to 1976. The population of high school age is in a period of numerical stability, involving persons born when the number of births was greatest. As with private elementary schools, private high schools have experienced a decline in

enrollments (table 1). In the 10 years since 1966, total high school enrollment rose by 18 percent while private enrollment dropped 13 percent.

Private school enrollment slipped from 13 percent to 9 percent of the total elementary and high school enrollment between 1966 and 1976.

About 10 million persons 14 to 34 years old were enrolled in college in 1976, not significantly different from the 1975 figure. Another 1.2 million persons 35 years old and over were enrolled. For 14-to 34-year-olds, there were changes in the distribution of students among the college classes (table 3). At the freshman level, there was a decrease of 250,000 students (about a 9-percent drop). Freshman enrollment had increased by around 12 percent each of the preceding 2 years; in 1976 the freshman class dropped to about the size of the 1974 freshman class. At the sophomore level, there was some evidence of an increase (although not statistically significant), which was expected because of the record number of freshmen enrolled the year before. At the junior level, an increase of about 256,000 students offset the decline in freshmen. This increase was also expected, because of the large class of sophomores in 1975 and the gain in freshman enrollment 2 years earlier. No change was recorded in the number of seniors, but the substantial increase among persons in the junior year indicates the possibility of a larger number of seniors in 1977 and graduate students in 1978. The rises and falls in freshman enrollment from year to year filter through the undergraduate system in the succeeding 3 years. Therefore these data suggest that there may be a leveling off of college enrollment after a period of substantial growth.

Although the year-to-year fluctuations in graduate school enrollment have not been statistically significant, there have been apparent increases averaging about 90,000 students under 35 years old annually since 1970; as a consequence, there has been a 47-percent increase from 1970 to 1976.

Although no significant change in Black college enrollment occurred between 1975 and 1976, the number of Black students 14 to 34 years old has doubled since 1970. In 1976 there were about 1.1 million Black persons under the age of 35 enrolled in college compared with 0.5 million in 1970. About 77 percent of Black students were attending full time, a somewhat higher proportion than that for Whites (table 1). In 1976, Blacks were 11.7 percent of the civilian population 16 to 34 years old and Black students were 10.7 percent of all college

students of the same age.¹ In the 10 years since 1966, Black students more than doubled their share of the total college population, from 4.6 percent in 1966 to 10.7 percent in 1976 (table 1).

From 1975 to 1976, the number of women 14 to 34 years old enrolled in college increased by about 300,000, while no change in enrollment could be detected for men. In the 10 years since 1966 the enrollment rate for women has increased substantially whereas the enrollment rate for men has not changed significantly. Women students rose to 47 percent of all college students 14 to 34 years old, contrasted with 38 percent 10 years earlier (figure 2 and table 4).

Changes in enrollment patterns have caused major shifts in the groups dominating the college population. In 1970, 14-to-21-year-old men constituted the largest single group attending college and accounted for about one-third of all students under 35 years old. By 1976 they were reduced to about one-fourth of all students under 35 years old. In the 6-year period from 1970 to 1976, the total number of students increased about 2.5 million or by about 34 percent (table 4). At a time when the number of older students and young women students increased dramatically, the number of young men under 22 years old enrolled in college did not show a statistically significant increase; in this period there was a 35-percent rise for women of the same age, a 41-percent increase for men 22 to 34 years old (not significantly different from young women), and a 103-percent increase for women 22 to 34.

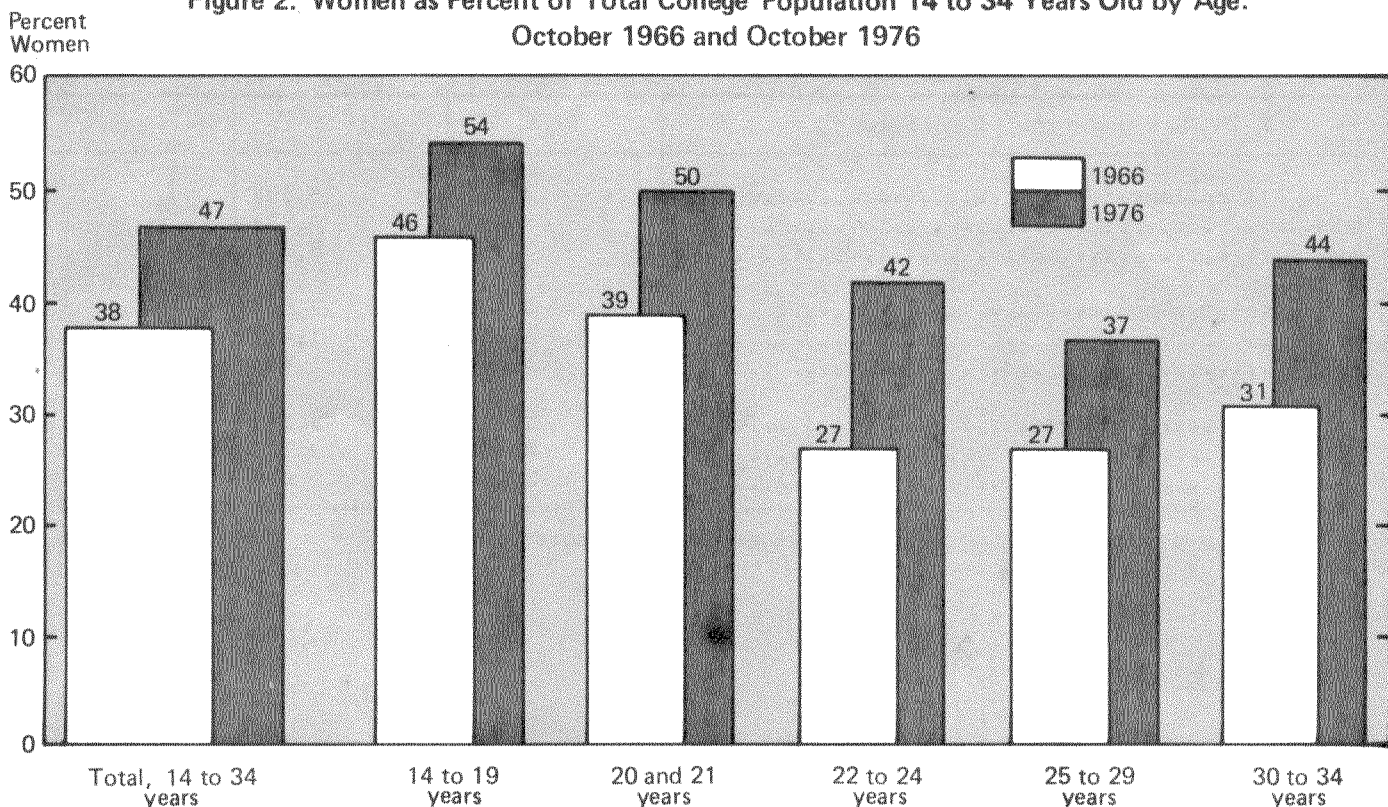
Women have become the majority group among young college students (14 to 21 years old). In 1976 women constituted 52 percent of the young "traditional age" students, outnumbering men by 200,000;² in 1970 they were 46 percent and men outnumbered them by 400,000. Men, however, are still in the majority among older students; they are about three-fifths of the students 22 to 34 years old, although women have gained some ground.

College attendance among persons 35 years old and over increased dramatically and rapidly from 1973 to 1975, as there was a 50-percent rise in just 2 years; however, in 1976 the number enrolled did not change significantly, remaining around 1.2 million (table 4). There was some evidence of an increase in enrollment among women and a decrease among men between 1975 and 1976, as women advanced from 52 percent to 59 percent of the older

¹ The difference between the 11.7 percent and 10.7 percent is significant at the 94-percent level of confidence.

² Significant at the 94-percent level of confidence.

Figure 2. Women as Percent of Total College Population 14 to 34 Years Old by Age:
October 1966 and October 1976



students. The growth in enrollment of the population 35 years old and over in this two-year period, then a leveling off in 1976, was similar to the trend among younger students.

Two-year colleges experienced no significant growth in 1976. After a 50-percent rise in the two-year college enrollment of the population 14 to 34 years old from 1970 to 1975, there was no change and perhaps a decrease (although not statistically significant) from 1975 to 1976. A significant increase of about 360,000 students, however, was recorded for four-year college undergraduate programs between 1975 and 1976 (table A). The most notable change among two-year college students was the decline in the proportion of students under 20 years old enrolled in two-year colleges which fell from 32 percent to 28 percent in 1 year (table 5). There is some evidence that the total number of men enrolled in two-year colleges declined, while the number in four-year colleges did not change

significantly.³ Among women, on the other hand, the number of students in two-year colleges did not change significantly, but the number enrolled in four-year colleges rose.⁴ Older students were more likely than younger students to attend two-year colleges. About half of the undergraduates 25 to 34 years old were enrolled in two-year colleges compared with one-fourth of the students under 25 years old.

Symbols. A dash"—" represents zero or rounds to zero and "NA" means not available.

³There is only some evidence that the difference in changes in enrollment of men in two-year and four-year colleges is significant.

⁴The difference in changes among men and women in two-year colleges is not statistically significant, nor is the same comparison for four-year colleges.

**Table A. Undergraduate Enrollment of the Population 14 to 34 Years Old by Sex:
October 1976 and October 1975**

(In thousands)

Sex and type of college	1976	1975	Change
All colleges ¹	8,270	8,108	162
Male.....	4,301	4,393	-92
Female.....	3,969	3,715	254
Two-year colleges.....	2,435	2,561	-126
Male.....	1,272	1,412	-140
Female.....	1,163	1,148	15
Four-year colleges.....	5,550	5,193	357
Male.....	2,882	2,793	89
Female.....	2,668	2,400	268

¹Includes persons for whom type of college is not reported.