



U.S. Department of Commerce  
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

# Population Characteristics

Series P-20, No. 333  
Issued February 1979

## **School Enrollment— Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1977**

# Population Characteristics

Series P-20, No. 333  
Issued February 1979

## School Enrollment— Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1977



**U.S. Department of Commerce**  
Juanita M. Kreps, Secretary  
Courtenay M. Slater, Chief Economist

**BUREAU OF THE CENSUS**  
Manuel D. Plotkin, Director



## BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

**Manuel D. Plotkin, Director**  
**Robert L. Hagan, Deputy Director**  
**Daniel B. Levine, Associate Director**  
for Demographic Fields

### POPULATION DIVISION

**Meyer Zitter, Chief**

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was prepared by **Rosalind R. Bruno**, under the direct supervision of **Larry E. Suter**, Chief, Education and Social Stratification Branch. Tabulation review and statistical testing were performed by **Andrea E. Adams**. **Brenda R. Jeffries** and **Dwight Hayes** provided valuable statistical assistance in the preparation of the tables. Statistical review was conducted by **William P. Smith** and **Lawrence S. Cahoon** of Statistical Methods Division. Overall supervision was provided by **Charles E. Johnson, Jr.**, Assistant Division Chief (Demographic and Social Statistics Programs) and **Paul C. Glick**, Senior Demographer, Population Division.

---

### SUGGESTED CITATION

U.S. Bureau of the Census, **Current Population Reports**, Series P-20, No. 333, "School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1977," U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1979.

---

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Postage stamps not acceptable; currency submitted at sender's risk. Remittances from foreign countries must be by international money order or by a draft on a U.S. bank. **Current Population Reports** are sold in two subscription packages: Series P-20, P-23, P-27, and P-60 are available for \$40.00 per year (\$10 additional for foreign mailing); Series P-25, P-26, and P-28 are available for \$70.00 per year (\$17.50 additional for foreign mailing). The single-copy price of this report is \$2.50.

# Contents

	Page
Introduction . . . . .	1
Black college enrollment . . . . .	1
Dropouts and modal grade of enrollment . . . . .	1
Changing age distribution of college students . . . . .	3
Related reports . . . . .	4

## TEXT TABLES

Table		
A.	Black college students 14 to 34 years old, by level: 1970 and 1977 . . . . .	2
B.	High school graduation and college enrollment rates for persons 18 to 24 years old, by race: 1967 and 1977 . . . . .	2
C.	College enrollment of the population 14 to 34 years old, by level, type of school, and age: 1970 and 1977 . . . . .	4

## DETAILED TABLES

1.	Enrollment status of the population 3 to 34 years old, by age, sex, race, and Spanish origin . . . . .	7
2.	Enrollment status of the population 3 to 34 years old, by level of education and metropolitan residence . . . . .	10
3.	Level of enrollment of the population 3 to 34 years old, by control of school and metropolitan residence . . . . .	14
4.	Enrollment status and level of school for the population 3 years old and over . . . . .	17
5.	Full-day attendance status for children 3 to 6 years old in nursery school and kindergarten, by level, control, and metropolitan residence. . . . .	18
6.	College enrollment of the population 16 to 34 years old, by full-time attendance . . . . .	19
7.	Enrollment status in 1977 of the population 14 to 24 years old, by enrollment status in 1976 . . . . .	20
8.	Year of high school graduation for persons 16 to 34 years old, by selected educational characteristics . . . . .	23
9.	Enrollment status of the population 3 to 34 years old, by region of residence . . . . .	25
10.	Marital status of the population 14 to 34 years old, by enrollment status, level of school, and full-time attendance . . . . .	26
11.	Years of school completed by family head, by enrollment status, for primary family members 3 to 34 years old . . . . .	29
12.	Primary families, by enrollment status for primary family members 18 to 24 years old . . . . .	36
13.	Family income for primary family members 18 to 24 years old, by enrollment status, level of school, and marital status . . . . .	38
14.	Enrollment status of primary family members 3 to 17 years old, by family income . . . . .	42

## Contents – Continued

### DETAILED TABLES—Continued

Table	Page
15. Single grade of enrollment, by single years of age for persons 3 to 34 years old . . . . .	46
16. Modal grade of enrollment, by single years of age for persons 3 to 21 years old . . . . .	49
17. Characteristics of students 35 years old and over . . . . .	51
18. Undergraduate college enrollment of persons 14 to 34 years old, by type of college and metropolitan residence . . . . .	52
19. Undergraduate college enrollment of persons 16 to 34 years old, by full-time attendance and sex . . . . .	53
20. Undergraduate college enrollment of persons 16 to 34 years old, by year of high school graduation and sex . . . . .	54
21. Undergraduate college enrollment of persons 14 to 24 years old, by enrollment status in October 1976 and sex . . . . .	55
22. Undergraduate college enrollment of persons 14 to 34 years old, by region . . . . .	55
23. Undergraduate college enrollment of persons 14 to 34 years old, by marital status and sex . .	56
24. Undergraduate college enrollment of primary family members 14 to 34 years old, by years of school completed by family head . . . . .	57
25. Undergraduate college enrollment of primary family members 18 to 24 years old, by family income . . . . .	58

## APPENDIXES

### Appendix A

Table	Page
A-1. Percent enrolled in school for the population 3 to 34 years old, by age, sex, and race: October 1967 to 1977 . . . . .	59
A-2. Age distribution of college students 14 to 34 years, by sex: October 1947 to 1977 . . . . .	61
A-3. Population 16 to 21 years old by enrollment status and whether high school graduate by age, sex, and race: October 1977, 1972, and 1967 . . . . .	62
A-4. Population 6 to 17 years old enrolled in modal grade by age, sex, and race: October 1977, 1972, and 1967 . . . . .	65

### Appendix B

Text	Page
Definitions and explanations . . . . .	69
Source and reliability of the estimates . . . . .	71

Table	Page
B-1. October CPS control card family income and March CPS supplement family income: 1967 to 1977 . . . . .	71
B-2. Standard errors for estimated numbers of persons (total or White) . . . . .	73
B-3. Standard errors for estimated numbers of persons (Black and other races) . . . . .	74
B-4. Standard errors for estimated numbers of persons (Spanish origin) . . . . .	75
B-5. Standard errors of estimated percentages (total or White) . . . . .	75
B-6. Standard errors of estimated percentages (Black and other races) . . . . .	76
B-7. Standard errors of estimated percentages (Spanish origin) . . . . .	77
B-8. "f" factors to be applied to tables B-2 through B-7 to approximate standard errors . . . . .	77

## SYMBOLS USED IN TABLES

- Represents zero or rounds to zero.
- B Base less than 75,000.
- ... Not applicable.
- NA Not available.

# School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1977

## INTRODUCTION

This report presents an analysis of data on recent changes in school and college enrollment based on the October 1977 Current Population Survey. The statistical tables present data on school-enrollment patterns in 1977 for students attending nursery school through college by demographic and socioeconomic characteristics such as age, race, sex, marital status, household relationship, and family income level. These tables are limited to persons enrolled in regular school (nursery school, kindergarten, elementary school, high school, and college or professional school) and exclude persons enrolled in vocational school or adult education classes. An advance report based on this survey, indicating changes in the number of persons enrolled in school by year, was published earlier in **Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 321.**

## Highlights

- The percent of persons who are not enrolled in school and are not high school graduates (high school dropouts) declined for 20- and 21-year-olds from 1967 to 1977. The percent of White 20- and 21-year-old high school dropouts declined from about 17 percent to 14 percent during the period; for Blacks the figure fell from 35 percent to 25 percent.
- The proportion of Black elementary- and high-school-age youth enrolled 2 or more years below the modal grade for their age was significantly reduced in the past 10 years.
- Blacks comprised 11 percent of all college students in 1977. They represented 13 percent of college freshmen and sophomores, but only 9 percent of seniors.
- Students 22 years old and over have accounted for most of the growth in 2-year colleges in the 1970's.
- The number of 25- to 34-year-old students in graduate school almost doubled from 1970 to 1977, while those under 25 years old increased by 20 percent.

## BLACK COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

In 1970, about one-half million Black students were in college, representing about 7 percent of all college students. By 1977, 1.1 million Black students 14 to 34 years old were enrolled in college comprising about 11 percent of the

college population (table A). A larger proportion of Black students were enrolled in the first 2 years of college than at higher levels, with about two-thirds of Black students enrolled as freshmen or sophomores compared with half of all White students.

Black students accounted for 13 percent of all freshmen and sophomores and 13 percent of the total college age population (18 to 21 years old). However, they accounted for only 9 percent of all seniors. There is some evidence that the proportion of graduate students who were Black (6 percent) was lower than for seniors.

The fact that a higher proportion of freshmen and sophomores in 1977 were Black suggests that college attainment levels of Blacks might soon reach those of Whites. Yet, even though Blacks seem to enroll at the entry level of college at reasonably high rates, there is some evidence that they have not been enrolling at the advanced levels at equally high rates. For example, in 1977 the proportion of all seniors who were Black should be close to the proportion of all freshmen in 1974 who were Black. However, 9 percent of the seniors in 1977 were Black as compared with 12 percent of the freshmen in 1974.<sup>1</sup> The proportion of Blacks enrolled in college full time was about the same as for Whites; so it does not appear that enrollment practices of Blacks would prevent them from reaching the third or fourth year of college at the same rate as Whites. Therefore, a higher proportion of Black students than White students must discontinue enrollment prior to graduation. The evidence for this conclusion could be more precisely determined from a longitudinal study rather than from a series of annual surveys, but no such study is available. Further evidence that Blacks who enter college are less likely to complete 4 years of college than Whites is shown by comparing the ratio of college graduates to those who completed any college for 25- to 29-year-old Blacks to the same ratio for Whites (41 percent for Blacks compared with 54 percent for Whites).<sup>2</sup>

## DROPOUTS AND MODAL GRADE OF ENROLLMENT

Lower educational levels of Blacks compared with Whites are evident in school enrollment rates of youth and the

<sup>1</sup> **Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 286, "School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1974."**

<sup>2</sup> **Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 314, "Educational Attainment in the United States: March 1977 and 1976."**

educational attainment of adults. In recent years, more Black youth have remained in high school and college and, in addition, those enrolled have been less likely to drop behind in school. For example, high school graduation rates for Blacks have increased substantially more than for Whites, with the difference in the proportion of Blacks and Whites who have completed high school dropping from 22 to 15 percentage points (table B). Therefore, current enrollment rates suggest that the difference between Black and White high school graduation levels will decrease further in the next 10 years. In addition, there is already evidence that among young high school graduates, Blacks and Whites are attending college at about the same rate (table B).

About 16 percent of all persons 20 and 21 years old were not enrolled in school in 1977 and had not completed high school (high school dropouts). The comparable percentage was 19 percent in 1967 (table A-3). However, the percentage of Black youths who were not graduates and not in school decreased even more. In 1967, 35 percent of Black 20- and 21-year-olds were dropouts; in 1977, the figure was 25

percent. For Whites of the same age, the figure dipped from 17 percent to 14 percent, a smaller, but significant, change. At younger ages the differences were not so great; around 8 percent of both Black and White 16- and 17-year-olds were dropouts in 1977 (table A-3).

Information on students still in school gives some insight into attainment levels for adults in the near future. In the 10-year period from 1967 to 1977, there was a rise in the enrollment rates of teenage youth, particularly among Blacks. In addition to the significant increase in the proportion of Black teenagers remaining in school (91 percent of 16- and 17-year-olds in 1977 compared with 84 percent in 1967), there was reduction in the proportion of Black students enrolled below the modal grade for their age. During this period, more Black than White children were enrolled below their modal grade, but a decline has occurred in the proportion of Black high-school age youth severely behind their age-mates. In 1967, about 18 percent of Black 16- and 17-year-old students were enrolled at least 2 years

Table A. Black College Students 14 to 34 Years Old, by Level: 1970 and 1977

(Numbers in thousands)

Year in college	1977		1970	
	Number	Percent of all students	Number	Percent of all students
Black college students.....	1,103	10.8	522	7.0
Freshman.....	380	13.0	190	8.6
Sophomore.....	327	13.8	146	8.4
Junior.....	164	9.8	89	7.1
Senior.....	123	8.6	57	5.3
Graduate student.....	110	6.1	40	3.5

Table B. High School Graduation and College Enrollment Rates for Persons 18 to 24 Years Old, by Race: 1967 and 1977

(Numbers in thousands)

Age, enrollment status	1977		1967	
	White	Black	White	Black
Total, 18 to 24 years old....	23,430	3,387	17,500	2,283
High school graduate.....	19,291	2,286	13,657	1,276
Percent.....	82.3	67.5	78.0	55.9
Enrolled in college.....	6,209	721	4,708	297
Percent of high school graduates.	32.2	31.5	34.5	23.3
Not high school graduate.....	4,138	1,099	3,841	1,007
Not enrolled in school.....	3,445	808	3,141	788
Percent of total.....	14.7	23.9	17.9	34.5



below the modal grade for their age; by 1977, the proportion was reduced to 10 percent (table A-4).

For younger high-school age students (14- and 15-year-olds), a similar trend occurred for Black youth between 1967 and 1977 in the proportion of students 2 or more years below the mode (table A-4). The figure for Blacks in 1977 was not significantly different from that for Whites. For Whites, there was a 2-percent decrease in the proportion of students 2 or more years below the mode; for Blacks, the decrease was a substantial 9 percent.

The proportion of children enrolled in school below the modal grade is higher at high school age than at entering level elementary school age. About 12 percent of enrolled 6- to 9-year-olds and 20 percent of 14- and 15-year-olds were below the modal grade in 1977 (see section for Whites in table A-4). Because most children who fall behind in school have usually done so by 14 years of age, there was little difference in modal grade of enrollment between ages 14 and 17.

Male and female children differ in likelihood of being enrolled below the modal grade; a significantly larger proportion of males than females were enrolled below the mode, particularly among older children in 1977. For Whites, the proportion of males and females below the mode did not change significantly between 1967 and 1977. For Blacks, the proportion of males below the mode was well above the proportion for females in 1967 but dropped to a level not significantly different from females in 1977.

## CHANGING AGE DISTRIBUTION OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

The 1947 baby boom cohort hit college campuses in 1965. Between 1964 and 1965, the number of young adults 18 and 19 years old increased by almost 1 million, with college-enrollment rates increasing by 4 percentage points for both men and women of the same age. Since that time, the number of persons of traditional college age (18 to 21 years old) has continued to increase. Since the number of births has been generally lower since the peak of the baby boom from 1957 to 1961, the population 18 to 21 years old will begin to decrease by 1980. Consequently, there has been concern over an impending reduction in the traditional college age population.

The earliest baby boom cohort reached 30 years of age in 1977, thus the increased enrollment of 25- to 29-year olds from 1970 to 1977 was accounted for by both an increased enrollment rate and an increased number of persons in the age group. One-third of the increase in enrollment since 1970 can be attributed to the population increase. The 25- to 29-year-old group will continue to grow until 1986 when the persons born after the peak birth years will begin to move into the age group.<sup>3</sup>

The growth in the number of older students has increased the college population since 1970 more than has the increased number of traditional age students. About 36 percent of all college students were 25 years old and over in 1977 compared with 28 percent 5 years earlier. However, the majority of older students did not attend full time, about 2 out of 3 attended part time in 1977. Among 18- to 21-year-olds, only about 1 in 10 attended part time. Consequently, as far as time invested in college courses, credit hours, or tuition charges are concerned, the older college students have far less impact on college class sizes than the numbers enrolled show. For example, the older full-time students made up only 18 percent of all reported full-time students in 1977. Nevertheless, this proportion was half again as large in 1977 as in 1972.

Additionally, colleges may be attracting older students in ways other than offering regular college courses. For example, adults may enroll in "adult education" courses and vocational courses not included in this survey.<sup>4</sup> Many 2-year colleges and State universities also have vocational curricula which offer vocational diplomas or certificates but not credit toward a college degree. Students in such programs would not be included in the college population since they are not pursuing a regular college degree (a bachelor's degree or higher).

A substantial proportion of older students had completed bachelor' degrees and were enrolled in graduate or professional school in 1977; of students 25 to 34, 41 percent were graduate students in 1977 (table C). Among undergraduates, the 25- to 34-year-old population of students rose from 12 to about 20 percent of all students under 35. Older students accounted for more than half the increase in 2-year college enrollment and one-third of the undergraduate enrollment rise in 4-year colleges and universities from 1970 to 1977.

Graduate and professional school students, or those enrolled in the fifth year of college or higher, were a relatively small proportion of all college students (about 18 percent) in 1977. However, the proportion has grown since 1970 with the increased enrollment of older students. The number of graduate students under 35 years old rose by about 60 percent, a significantly faster rate of increase than for undergraduates, about a 33 percent rise from 1970 to 1977. Of the increase in graduate students, most of the change has been among persons 25 to 34 years old returning to school. The number 25 to 34 years old rose by 562,000, an increase of nearly 100 percent. The number of younger graduate students rose by only 20 percent. Students 25 to 34 grew from 53 percent of all graduate students under 35 years old in 1970 to 64 percent by 1977 (no information on the college level of students 35 years and over is currently available).

The proportion of all undergraduate students enrolled full time decreased from 1970 to 1977 because a greater number of older students were attending college part time and more

<sup>4</sup> The National Center for Education Statistics publishes data on adult education. See Imogene E. Okes, *Participation in Adult Education, Final Report 1972*, National Center for Education Statistics, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1976.

<sup>3</sup> *Current Population Reports, Series P-25, No. 704, "Projections of the Population of the United States: 1977 to 2050."*

Table C. College Enrollment of the Population 14 to 34 Years Old, by Level, Type of School, and Age: 1970 and 1977

(Numbers in thousands. For meaning of symbols, see text)

Year and age	Total population	Enrolled in college	Undergraduate						Graduate	
			All colleges <sup>1</sup>		Two-year colleges		Four-year colleges		Total	Full time
			Total	Full time	Total	Full time	Total	Full time		
1970										
14 to 34 years.....	62,873	7,413	6,274	5,208	1,692	1,177	4,377	3,874	1,140	555
14 to 17 years.....	15,718	260	260	245	77	69	175	167	-	-
18 and 19 years.....	6,958	2,594	2,593	2,440	818	717	1,692	1,643	1	-
20 and 21 years.....	6,118	1,857	1,803	1,628	281	197	1,462	1,380	54	42
22 to 24 years.....	9,476	1,354	866	591	234	114	606	467	488	304
25 to 29 years.....	13,415	939	509	237	174	59	318	174	430	175
30 to 34 years.....	11,188	410	241	64	109	21	123	42	169	37
1977										
14 to 34 years.....	76,351	10,217	8,408	6,311	2,510	1,372	5,492	4,659	1,810	885
14 to 17 years.....	16,582	274	274	240	68	54	141	132	-	-
18 and 19 years.....	8,151	2,913	2,910	2,622	865	664	1,914	1,837	3	2
20 and 21 years.....	7,990	2,430	2,376	2,075	455	283	1,855	1,741	54	43
22 to 24 years.....	11,190	1,799	1,206	775	380	162	781	590	593	382
25 to 29 years.....	17,269	1,809	1,016	435	441	148	515	265	793	343
30 to 34 years.....	15,169	992	624	163	300	60	285	94	368	116
Change 1970 to 1977										
14 to 34 years.....	13,478	2,804	2,134	1,103	818	195	1,115	785	670	330
14 to 17 years.....	864	14	14	-5	-9	-15	-34	-35	-	-
18 and 19 years.....	1,193	319	317	182	47	-53	222	194	-2	2
20 and 21 years.....	1,872	573	573	447	174	86	393	361	-	1
22 to 24 years.....	1,714	445	340	184	146	48	175	123	105	78
25 to 29 years.....	3,854	870	507	198	267	89	197	91	363	168
30 to 34 years.....	3,981	582	383	99	191	39	162	52	199	79

<sup>1</sup>Includes undergraduates for whom type of school is not reported.

students of all ages were attending 2-year colleges part time. Among the traditional college age students (18 to 21 years old) in 4-year colleges, there has been no significant change in full-time enrollment; about 95 percent were enrolled full time in 1977. Among all 2-year college students, the figure was 55 percent full time in 1977 compared with 70 percent in 1970 (table C).

Since 1970, the characteristics of students in 2-year colleges changed more than those of students in 4-year colleges. In 1970, 53 percent of the 2-year college students were under 20 years old; by 1977, this proportion dropped by nearly one-third to 37 percent (data for 2- and 4-year colleges were only available for students under 35 years old) (table C). The proportion of junior college students who were delayed starters (that is, 22- to 34-year-olds enrolled in 2-year colleges) rose from 31 percent to 45 percent, an increase of one-half. Although the number of young students did not decrease, their proportion of the total was smaller because many older, part-time students were attending. Of the nearly 50-percent growth in 2-year colleges between 1970 and 1977, three-fourths of it was contributed by the 22- to 34-year old population. But even in 4-year colleges,

about half of the undergraduate growth was attributed to this older group, who made up 29 percent of 4-year college students in 1977 and 24 percent in 1970.

## RELATED REPORTS

Advance data on school enrollment for October 1976 were presented in Series P-20, No 321. Statistics on school enrollment for October of the years prior to 1976 have been published in other reports in Series P-20. See back cover for list.

Data on the relationship between preprimary enrollment of children and labor force participation of mothers were presented in **Current Population Reports**, Series P-20, No. 318, "Nursery School and Kindergarten Enrollment of Children and Labor Force Status of Their Mothers: October 1967 to October 1976."

Statistics on school enrollment for cities, standard metropolitan statistical areas, States, regions, and the United States appear in reports of the decennial censuses. Detailed statistics on school enrollment by age and socioeconomic

characteristics for regions and the United States are presented in Subject Reports of the 1970 census, especially in PC(2)-5A School Enrollment.

Figures on school enrollment from the October Current Population Survey differ from decennial census data for reasons in addition to the difference in the dates. In the first place, the survey data exclude the institutional population and members of the Armed Forces. These two groups were included in the census. Second, there were differences in field work. The small group of Current Population Survey enumerators were more experienced and had more intensive training and supervision than the large number of temporary census enumerators and may have more often obtained more accurate answers from respondents. Third, the census was taken in April and relates to enrollment since February 1, whereas the surveys were taken in October and relate to enrollment in the current term. This difference in months of the year affects not only the extent of school enrollment

(through "dropouts" during the school year, etc.) but also the level of school in which persons of a given age are enrolled.

**Data from school systems.** Information on college enrollment is also collected and published by Federal, State, and local governmental agencies, and by independent research organizations. This information is generally obtained from reports of school systems and institutions of higher learning, and from other surveys and censuses. These data are only roughly comparable with data collected by the Bureau of the Census by household interviews, however, because of differences in definitions, subject matter covered, and enumeration methods. The census data are subject to sampling variability, which may be relatively large where numbers for specific age or population groups, or for given school categories, are small.

---

#### NOTE

In the past the Census Bureau has designated a head of household to serve as the central reference person for the collection and tabulation of data for each member of the household (or family). However, the trend toward recognition of equal status and roles for adult family members makes the term "head" less relevant in the analysis of household and family data. As a result, the Bureau is currently developing new techniques for the enumeration and presentation of data which will eliminate the concept "head." Although the data in this report are based on this concept, methodology for future Census Bureau reports will reflect a gradual movement away from this traditional practice.

---