

School Enrollment in the United States: 2011

Population Characteristics

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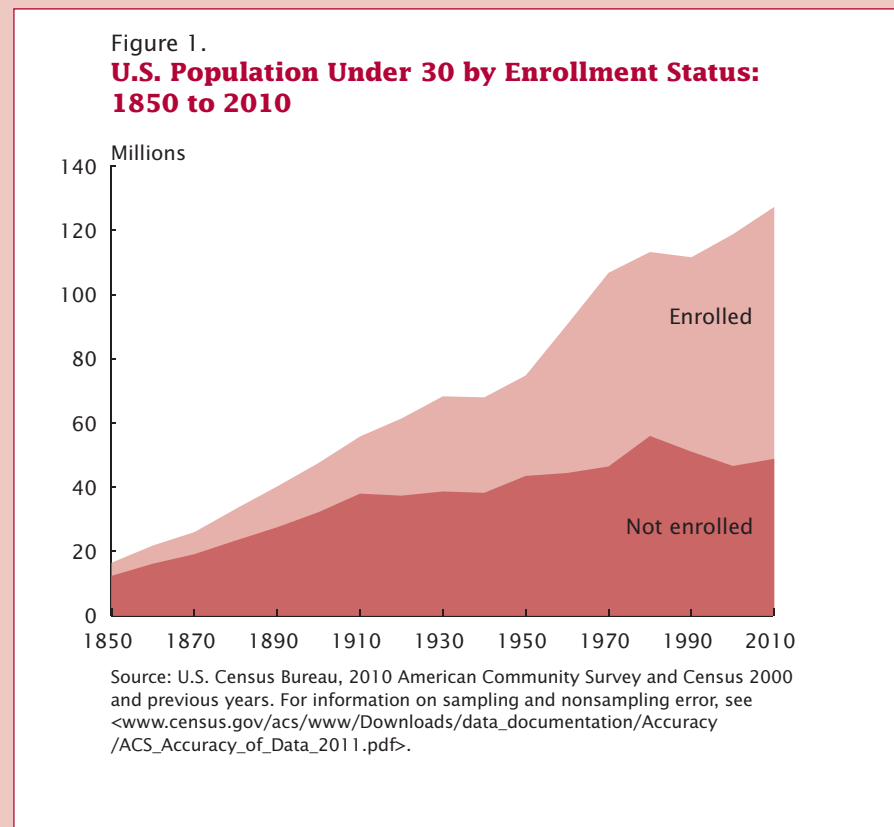
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INTRODUCTION

In the United States in 2011, more than one in four people were going to school. This included many types of people—children going to nursery school and elementary school, young adults attending high school and college, and adults taking classes to obtain a degree or diploma. What do we know about these people—their age and sex, where they live, their progress through school, the types of schools they attend? This report provides a guide to data from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources that provide a picture of the 83 million people who are enrolled in school.

The government has long been interested in how many people attend school, starting with the Census of 1850. At that time, 4 million students were enrolled in school, or 25 percent of the 16 million people under the age of 30 (Figure 1). Every census since that time recorded school enrollment. In 2011, estimates of enrollment came from the American Community Survey (ACS), a nationwide survey that is part of the census program. The 76 million students aged less



than 30 in 2011 represented 60 percent of the under-30 population.

In addition to administering the census and the ACS, the Census Bureau also conducts a number of other surveys collecting data from samples of the population. One of the most important of these is the

Current Population Survey (CPS), which was established in 1940 to measure unemployment levels, which were subject to widely different estimates at the time. The topic of school enrollment was included on the survey beginning in October 1945.

This report has two aims. The first is to look at statistics covering the span of enrollment from nursery school to college and beyond. The second is to look at the people who are enrolled in school and their age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, and family characteristics. Throughout, this report uses Census Bureau data sources, as well as data outside the Census Bureau, to help answer questions about students and their schools.

For many young people, school enrollment starts with nursery or preschool, which can be either a private program or a public program like Head Start. As they get older, students generally enroll in primary school, and then secondary school (high school), and many continue from there.

As children progress through school they advance in grade as they age, and hopefully progress to the point of graduation. The concept of “modal grade” refers to the most common grade enrolled by children of a given age. Those who leave school without graduating are considered “drop-outs,” and the rate at which people drop out of school can be measured various ways.

The schools attended by students may be public or private, or they may be public charter schools. Some students receive their education outside the formal school system through home schooling. Students going to college may attend a 2-year or a 4-year college, and the college may be a public or private institution. While most students attend college full-time, many enroll part-time. The school system is diverse, much like the students who are enrolled in it.

In the last part of the report, we discuss characteristics of students such as sex, race and Hispanic

origin, nativity, and family income. We provide documentation of the changes that are taking place in the makeup of the school population, including the increasing enrollment of Hispanic students and increasing college attendance by women. We rely primarily on census data, specifically the ACS and CPS, to provide this analysis because these are the best data on students and their families. We also refer to outside sources of data when necessary to complete the discussion of schools and students.

THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY AND THE CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY: TWO SOURCES OF SCHOOL ENROLLMENT DATA

Census Bureau statistics on enrollment come from two sources: the ACS and CPS. The ACS, part of the Census Bureau’s re-engineered 2010 Census program, looks at a wide range of social, economic, and housing characteristics for the population by a multitude of demographic variables. The ACS provides data on states, counties, cities, school districts, and neighborhoods throughout the United States. The ACS information comes from a sample of about 3 million addresses, or 1.7 percent of the nation’s population, each year. The ACS is administered to the entire resident population, including those living in institutions and other group quarters.¹ The ACS asks respondents throughout the entire calendar year whether they were enrolled in regular school at any time in the 3 months before the interview. The survey also asks

¹ Other differences between the ACS and Census 2010 affect comparisons of school enrollment. One of the most important is the reference time of data collection, which is the 3 months preceding collection (which occurs year-round) in the ACS but is fixed to the time preceding April 1 in the census. This difference especially affects comparisons of enrollment by age.

whether each person attended public school or private school and in what grade or level the person was enrolled. A variety of tables from the ACS about school enrollment can be accessed through the American FactFinder on the Census Bureau’s Web site, <<http://factfinder2.census.gov>>.

The Current Population Survey samples approximately 72,000 housing units on a monthly basis. Unlike the ACS, the reference population is the civilian noninstitutionalized population, so people living in institutions are not included. Estimates of school enrollment from the CPS are based on a special supplement, administered each October. The supplement on school enrollment asks twenty questions on single year of enrollment, enrollment status and level for the previous year, whether the respondent goes to school full-time or part-time, whether they attend a 2-year or 4-year institution, whether they are obtaining any vocational training, and what year they received their most recent degree. Tables about students and school enrollment from the CPS can be found on the Census Bureau’s Web site at <www.census.gov/hhes/school/>.

TOTAL ENROLLMENT

In 2011, the 83 million people aged 3 and over that the ACS recorded as enrolled in school included 5 million children in nursery school, 4 million children in kindergarten, 33 million students enrolled in 1st through 8th grades, 17 million in 9th through 12th grades, and 24 million in college. College enrollment recorded in the CPS was slightly lower, 20 million, which may be partially due to the fact that enrollment is asked only in October of each year for the CPS, compared to year-round in the ACS.

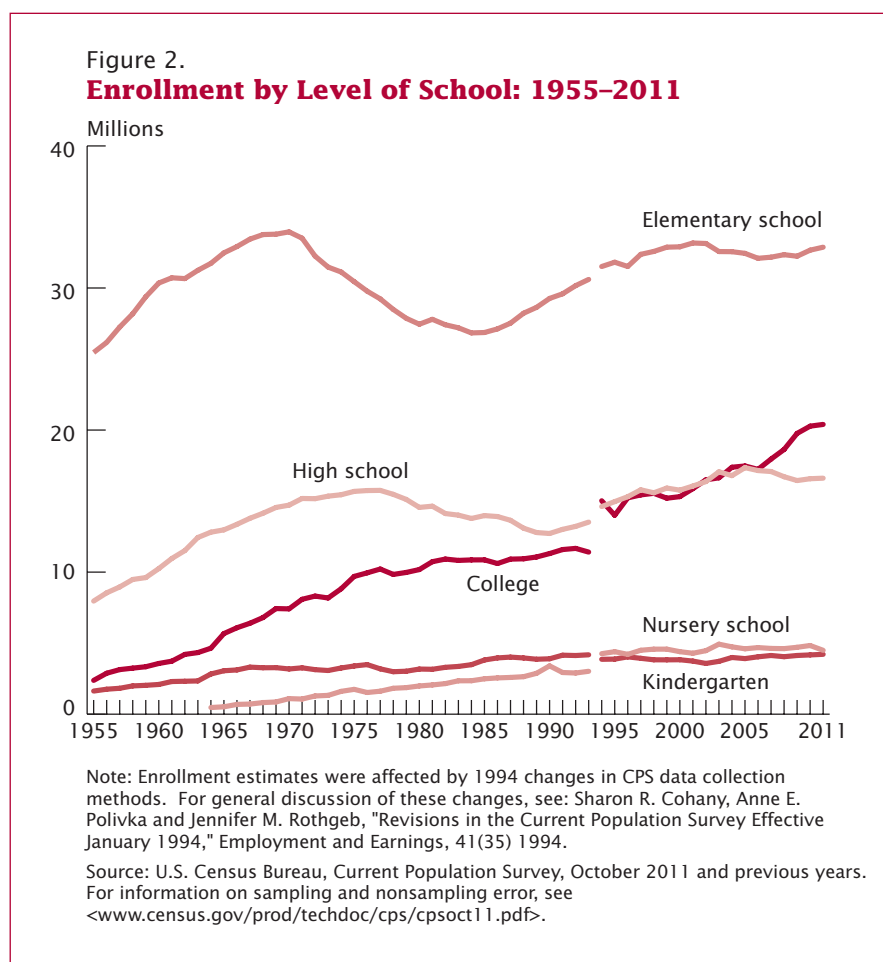
Trends in enrollment mirror population trends. The “baby boom” of 1948 to 1964 created a boom in school enrollment that reached 48.7 million in grades 1 through 12 in 1970, according to the CPS (Figure 2).² Elementary school enrollment rose in the mid-1960s, which was followed by an increase in high school enrollment in the early 1970s and an increase in college enrollment in the early 1980s.

While elementary school and high school enrollment dropped off after the baby boom students completed their schooling, college enrollment continued to rise as the rate of college enrollment increased. Increasing college attendance rates show up in the portion of enrolled students who are at the college level. In 1955, CPS statistics show elementary school enrollment (grades 1 to 8) made up 68 percent of total enrollment while college made up only 6 percent of enrollment. By 2011, elementary school enrollment had dropped to 42 percent while college enrollment had increased to 26 percent of total enrollment.

As the children of baby boomers started to go to school, total enrollment in grades 1 to 12 grew to new highs, reaching 49.5 million in 2003.³ The CPS shows that in 2011 there were 16.6 million students in high school, up from 15.7 million students in 2000 but down from 17.4 million in 2005.

² In 1994, the Census Bureau changed question wording and collection procedures, making comparisons with prior years somewhat tenuous.

³ Hyon Shin, “School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 2003,” *Current Population Reports*, P20-554, U.S. Census Bureau, May 2005, <www.census.gov/prod/2005pubs/p20-554.pdf>.



OTHER SOURCES OF STATISTICS ON SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

Although the above discussion focuses on national statistics, one strength of the ACS data is the ability to provide information on enrollment in individual communities, including many school districts around the country. Data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the Department of Education also provide information about individual districts and, sometimes, individual schools. The Common Core of Data (CCD) is the Department of Education’s primary source for public elementary and secondary school enrollment data. The CCD is collected annually from state education departments (see <<http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/>>). Unlike

the ACS and CPS, the CCD covers only public schools. NCES uses a survey from a sample of private schools to complete their picture of elementary and secondary enrollment, the biannual Private School Survey <<http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pss/>>.

Estimates from the CCD, CPS, and ACS are in close agreement. All three data sources estimate a total of 49 million public school students in kindergarten through 12th grade. However, the ACS estimates in 2010 and 2011 are lower than the CCD estimate by close to half a million, even though all round to the same amount.⁴ The small overall discrepancies and some larger ones at individual grade levels

⁴ The CPS estimate of public students in kindergarten through 12th grade is not statistically different from the ACS estimate or from the CCD estimate.

are examined in the report, “The Measurement of Grade of Enrollment in the American Community Survey and the Current Population Survey.”⁵

At the college level, NCES collects data through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), a series of interrelated surveys conducted annually. IPEDS provides basic data for analyzing postsecondary education trends in terms of the numbers of students enrolled, staff employed, dollars expended, and degrees earned. Unlike the CCD data, the IPEDS data do cover private schools, including for-profit schools (see <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/>).

Estimates of college enrollment vary between sources. The CPS estimate for fall of 2010 is 20 million; the IPEDS fall 2010 estimate is 21 million; and ACS estimate for calendar year 2010 is 23 million. Part of the difference may be due to the fact that short-term enrollment may be better captured in ACS, which asks about enrollment in the past 3 months rather than at a point in time (CPS) or from institutional sources (NCES).⁶ Other differences may be due to differences in population coverage and question wording.

ENROLLMENT BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION

This part of the report focuses on levels of school from nursery to college. We begin with early childhood education, the participation of young children in structured

teaching environments outside of their own homes in the year or years preceding kindergarten.

NURSERY SCHOOL

HEAD START

Head Start was established in 1965 by the federal government to serve low income families and address their unequal access to early childhood education programs. Head Start promotes the school readiness of children (aged birth to 5) by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development. Administrative data on Head Start enrollment are available from the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. These data provide basic enrollment numbers by state and the age, race, and ethnicity of students.

The Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) is the only census survey to offer Head Start enrollment data. SIPP data undercounts the number of children enrolled compared to Head Start administrative records. The undercount of Head Start enrollment by surveys like SIPP is discussed in a census paper titled, “Who’s in Head Start? Estimating Head Start Enrollment with the ACS, CPS, and SIPP.”⁷

Along with Head Start, there are many organizations and institutions providing care and instruction to young children. The ACS and CPS data collected by the Census Bureau rely on respondents to record “nursery school” as distinct

from less formal child care arrangements. However, a supplement to the SIPP provides detailed information on both formal and informal types of care arrangements for children www.census.gov/hhes/childcare/index.html.

NURSERY SCHOOL

Nursery school enrollment today has become increasingly common for 3- and 4-year olds. According to the CPS, only 10 percent of 3- and 4-year olds were enrolled in nursery school in 1965, while 48 percent of 3- and 4-year olds were enrolled in 2011 (see Figure 3). The rate of nursery school enrollment has been around 48 percent for the past 5 years.

Over half of all students enrolled in nursery school (59 percent) went to a public nursery school. Most students attended a part-day nursery school program with the exception of Black students, who were more likely to attend a full-day nursery school program (64 percent full-day). For some families, the cost of attending nursery school may prevent them from enrolling their children. The CPS data show that in 2011, 56 percent of 3- and 4-year olds from families with incomes of \$40,000 or more attended nursery school, compared with 41 percent of those from families with incomes of less than \$40,000.

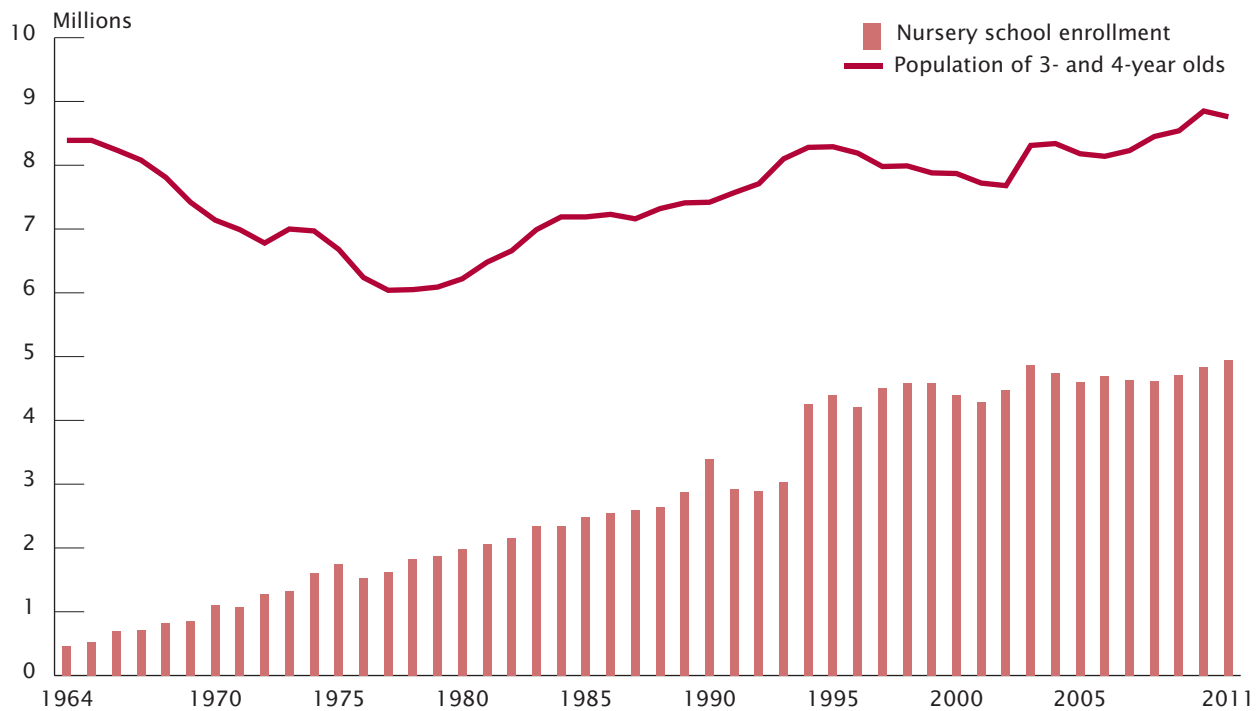
Nursery school enrollment is also related to the education and labor force participation of a child’s mother. Children of mothers who are college graduates were more likely to attend nursery school than children whose mothers did not finish high school (61 percent compared to 36 percent). Children of mothers in the labor force were more likely to attend nursery school than those whose mothers

⁵ Kurt Bauman and Jessica W. Davis, “The Measurement of Grade of Enrollment in the American Community Survey and the Current Population Survey,” U.S. Census Bureau.

⁶ Hyon Shin, “Comparison of Estimates on School Enrollment from the ACS and CPS: 2003,” *Census Comparison Reports*, U.S. Census Bureau, 2003, www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/library/2007/2007_Shin_01.pdf.

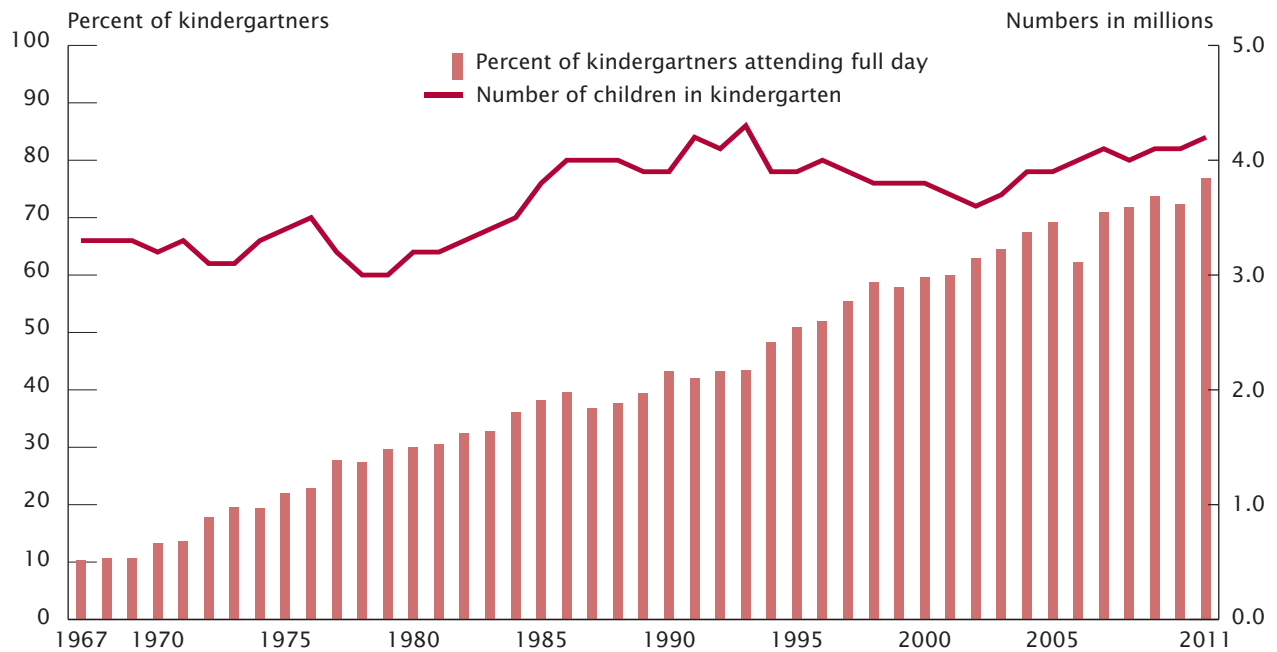
⁷ Lynda Laughlin and Jessica W. Davis, “Who’s in Head Start? Estimating Head Start Enrollment with ACS, CPS, and SIPP,” paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America, Washington, DC, March 31–April 2, 2011, www.census.gov/hhes/childcare/data/acs/Who%27s%20in%20Head%20Start_WP2011_15.pdf.

Figure 3.
Nursery School Enrollment and the Number of 3- and 4-Year Olds: 1964 to 2011



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October 2011 and previous years. For information on sampling and nonsampling error, see <www.census.gov/prod/techdoc/cps/cpsoc11.pdf>.

Figure 4.
Kindergarten Enrollment and the Percent Attending Full Day: 1967 to 2011



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October 2011 and previous years. For information on sampling and nonsampling error, see <www.census.gov/prod/techdoc/cps/cpsoc11.pdf>.

were not in the labor force (62 percent compared with 30 percent).

KINDERGARTEN

In 2011, the CPS counted 4.2 million students enrolled in kindergarten, up from 3.3 million in 1967 (see Figure 4). While the number in kindergarten is higher than in the 1960s, kindergarten enrollment remained relatively unchanged from 1986 to 2005. Kindergarten enrollment in 2011 was up from the 2005 level by 273,000. Changes in enrollment over the past few decades are reflected not so much in the number of students but in the type of enrollment and in the race and Hispanic origin of students (see later section).

In 2011, 77 percent of children attended kindergarten full-day, up from 37 percent in 1987 and 8 percent in 1967. The increase in attendance of full-day kindergarten programs may reflect the changing needs of children and their families, particularly of families with parents in the labor force. However, changes in kindergarten enrollment patterns are not perfectly associated with changes in employment patterns of parents. In 1986, 57 percent of married couples with children under 18 surveyed in the CPS had both spouses in the labor force. The percentage rose to 68 percent in 2000 and was slightly lower at 65 percent in 2011.

In 2011, 40 percent of students enrolled in full-day kindergarten programs had a mother employed full-time, compared with the 14 percent whose mothers were employed part-time and 30 percent of students whose mothers were not in the labor force. Nearly one in four students enrolled in full-day kindergarten programs came from families with incomes of \$75,000 or more.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY ENROLLMENT

Elementary and high school attendance have historically made up the bulk of school enrollment, in part because enrollment is generally mandatory between the ages of 5 and 18, although these requirements vary between states.

The majority of students in elementary and high school attend public schools. In 2011, according to the ACS, 90 percent of elementary school and high school students attended public schools. Despite this overwhelming majority, there is also diversity in forms of enrollment, both public and private.

Although private schools still make up 10 percent of all enrollment from kindergarten through 12th grade, the number of elementary and high school students attending private school has recently fallen. In 2005, 4.8 million primary and secondary students attended private schools, down to 4.1 million in 2011. This topic is further examined in a Census Bureau working paper, "The Decline in Private School Enrollment."⁸ Among the topics considered in this paper is the potential contribution of the simultaneous growth in charter schools.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

A public charter school is a publicly funded school that is typically governed by a group or organization under a contract or charter with the state, the charter exempts the school from selected state or local rules and regulations. The CPS and ACS do not differentiate between charter school and traditional schools in terms of school enrollment. The NCES has data on

⁸ Stephanie Ewert, "The Decline in Private School Enrollment," SEHSD Working Paper Number FY12-117, U.S. Census Bureau, January 2013, <www.census.gov/hhes/school/files/ewert_private_school_enrollment.pdf>.

charter school enrollment provided by the CCD. Charter school enrollment has nearly quadrupled in the past decade. In the 1999–2000 school year there were less than half a million students enrolled in charter schools, compared to 1.4 million students enrolled in the 2008–2009 school year. The proportion of students enrolled in charter schools varies by state. For more information on charter schools, see the NCES Web site, <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgb.asp>.

HOME SCHOOLING

Home schooling is the instruction of school-aged children (5–17) in grades equivalent to kindergarten through 12th grade at home instead of at a public or private institution. Currently, there is no regular periodic collection of home schooling data by the Census Bureau or by NCES. The CPS and ACS do not presently offer data on homeschool enrollment. The NCES has collected data on home schooling in the National Household Education Survey (NHES). According to NHES data, in 2007 there were about 2 million home schooled students, up from 850,000 in 1999 and 1.1 million in 2003. For data on homeschooling, see the NCES Web site at <<http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=91>>. An earlier examination of this topic at the Census Bureau indicated that there is evidence that home schooling trends may have impacted overall reports of school enrollment, as many homeschool families do not report their activities as enrollment.⁹ In the ACS, respondents are now asked to include "home

⁹ Kurt J. Bauman, "Home Schooling in the United States: Trends and Characteristics," U.S. Census Bureau working paper series 53, August 2001, <www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0053/twps0053.html>.

school” as a form of private school enrollment.

GRADE OF ENROLLMENT AND AGE

There is a close correspondence between age and grade of enrollment at the elementary and secondary levels. Census Bureau publications on this subject often make use of the concept of “modal grade,” which refers to the most common grade enrolled by children of a given age. Children enrolled at a grade below their modal grade, especially because of grade retention, are more likely to drop out of school.¹⁰ The recent census report on enrollment¹¹ provides a look at the prevalence of children enrolled below modal grade for their age.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Stearns, Stephanie Moller, Judith Blau, and Stephanie Potochnick, 2007. “Staying Back and Dropping Out: The Relationship between Grade Retention and School Dropout,” *Sociology of Education*, 80: 210–240.

¹¹ Jessica W. Davis and Kurt Bauman, “School Enrollment in the United States: 2008,” *Current Population Reports*, P20-564, U.S. Census Bureau, June 2011, <www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/p20-564.pdf>.

In the 2011 ACS, the majority of students aged 6 to 17 (65 percent) were enrolled at their modal grade, with 18 percent of students enrolled below modal grade and 17 percent of students enrolled above modal grade. Male students were more likely to be enrolled below modal grade than female students (21 percent compared with 16 percent). Black students had the highest percentage of 6- to 17-year olds enrolled below modal grade, and Asian students had the lowest percentage of enrollment below modal grade (21 percent and 12 percent, respectively).

DROP-OUTS

Not all students manage to complete high school. Students who leave high school without finishing, for whatever reason, are considered drop-outs. The Census Bureau calculates two types of drop-out rates. The event drop-out rate was first introduced in the October 1993 CPS School Enrollment report, showing the number of non-high school graduates who were not

currently enrolled in school but were enrolled in school the previous year. The CPS asks a retrospective question on enrollment, “Were you enrolled in school last October?” (1 year ago). Based on the answers to this question and the current enrollment item, the Census Bureau obtains an estimate of the number of persons who left school in that period. The event drop-out rate captures the percentage of youth aged 15 to 24 who dropped out of grades 10 through 12 between one October and the next (October 2010 and October 2011). Note that these need not be permanent drop-outs. Some of these people may return to school at a later point.

In 2011, according to the CPS, 3 percent of 15- to 24-year olds who had been enrolled in grades 10 through 12 the previous year had dropped out of school (event drop-outs, Table 1). The high school event drop-out rate was lower for students aged 15 to 17 (2 percent) than for students aged 20 to 24 (9

Table 1.

Event Drop Out Rates and High School Noncompleters, Aged 15–24: 2011

(Numbers in thousands and percents)

Characteristics	Population 15 to 24 years old					
	Total	Enrolled in grades 10 to 12 in the previous year			No high school completion and not enrolled in school	
		Total	Dropped out ¹	Event drop-out rate	Number	Percent
Total	42,225	12,351	374	3.0	2,761	6.5
Age 15 to 17	12,282	6,667	147	2.2	280	2.3
Age 18 to 19	8,465	4,832	144	3.0	545	6.4
Age 20 to 24	21,477	852	83	9.8	1,936	9.0
Sex						
Male	21,467	6,299	206	3.3	1,526	7.1
Female	20,758	6,052	169	2.8	1,234	5.9
Race/Hispanic						
White alone	32,426	9,324	261	2.8	2,089	6.4
White alone, non-Hispanic	24,660	7,063	171	2.4	1,127	4.6
Black alone	6,358	2,030	78	3.8	450	6.5
Asian alone	1,788	555	17	3.1	78	4.4
Hispanic (of any race)	8,477	2,436	100	4.1	1,059	12.5

¹ Dropped out means not enrolled and not a high school graduate, given that the person was enrolled in high school the previous year. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2011.

percent). Males and females both had a drop-out rate of 3 percent. Non-Hispanic White students had a lower drop-out rate (2 percent) than Hispanic students (4 percent).¹² The drop-out rate of 15–17 year olds has fallen dramatically since 1971. Today’s 2 percent rate is much lower than the percent rate of the mid-1970s. More students are staying in and completing high school.

The second measure of drop-outs used by the Census Bureau is the drop-out “pool,” which is the percentage of youth aged 15 to

¹² The drop-out rate of non-Hispanic White students was not significantly different from Asian students (3 percent). The drop-out rate of Asian students was not significantly different from Black or Hispanic students (4 percent and 4 percent, respectively).

24 who are not enrolled in school and who do not have a high school degree (regardless of when they might have left school).

In 2011, 7 percent of 15- to 24-year olds were in the drop-out pool. The number varies by age because younger students are less likely to be high school graduates and were more likely to be enrolled. Two percent of 15- to 17-year olds, 6 percent of 18- to 19-year olds, and 9 percent of 20- to 24-year olds were not enrolled and not high school graduates. Hispanic students were more likely to be in the drop-out pool than other students, 11 percent compared to 4 percent of non-Hispanic White and Asian

students, and 6 percent of Black students.¹³

The NCES reports regularly on drop-out rates. They produce an annual report entitled, “Public School Graduates and Dropouts from the Common Core of Data.” On a regular basis they also produce a comprehensive look at drop-out rates from various surveys, the most recent of which is “Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972–2009.” Both of these reports are available at <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/pub_dropouts.asp>.

¹³ The rate of White students in the drop-out pool is not statistically different from the rate of Asian students in the drop-out pool.

Table 2.

Enrollment in Undergraduate and Graduate College by Selected Characteristics: 2011

(Numbers in thousands and percents)

Selected characteristics	College enrollment						
	Total	Two-year institution			Four-year institution		
		Total	Full time	Part time	Total	Full time	Part time
Total	20,379	6,135	19.1	11.0	14,244	53.9	16.0
Sex							
Male	9,123	2,582	18.7	9.6	6,541	55.0	16.7
Female	11,256	3,554	19.4	12.2	7,703	53.1	15.4
Age							
16–18	1,972	705	30.9	4.9	1,267	62.0	2.3
19–20	4,776	1,552	26.2	6.3	3,225	63.9	3.6
21–22	3,783	874	14.5	8.6	2,909	68.8	8.1
23–24	2,223	556	13.9	11.1	1,667	58.6	16.4
25–29	3,066	914	16.3	13.5	2,152	44.9	25.3
30–34	1,551	487	16.8	14.6	1,064	37.1	31.5
35 and over	3,007	1,047	13.8	21.0	1,959	28.6	36.5
Race and Hispanic origin							
White alone	15,400	4,560	18.6	11.0	10,841	54.1	16.3
White alone, non-Hispanic	12,696	3,327	16.7	9.5	9,370	56.8	17.1
Black alone	3,143	1,084	22.9	11.6	2,059	49.5	16.0
Asian alone	1,201	271	14.4	8.2	930	65.5	11.9
Hispanic (any race)	2,948	1,316	27.1	17.5	1,631	41.9	13.4
Employment							
Full time	5,238	1,585	10.0	20.3	3,653	29.3	40.5
Part time	5,612	1,768	21.2	10.4	3,843	57.8	10.6
Not employed	9,528	2,781	22.9	6.3	6,747	65.2	5.6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October 2011.

COLLEGE

In 2011, the CPS counted 20.4 million people enrolled in college, up 4.5 million from a decade earlier. Forty percent of this growth can be attributed to an increase in 2-year college attendance. In 2011, there were 6.1 million students enrolled in 2-year colleges, up from 3.9 million in 2000 (Table 2).

While there has been an increase in 2-year college enrollment, 4-year colleges remain the most popular type of college to attend. Most students in college were enrolled full-time at 4-year colleges (54 percent). This was consistent across all race and Hispanic-origin groups as well as all age groups below the age of 35.

Most students enrolled in undergraduate college were 24 years old or younger (71 percent), and this is true for both 2-year (64 percent) and 4-year college enrollment (75 percent). Students enrolled in graduate school were more likely to be older with 74 percent of them aged 25 and over.

FINANCIAL AID

Many college students rely on financial aid to afford the tuition and costs of attending college, especially as the cost of attendance grow. Census surveys do not currently collect information on financial aid. NCES collects data on this subject in National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS). NPSAS is a comprehensive research dataset, based on student-level records, on financial aid provided by the federal government, the states, postsecondary institutions, employers, and private agencies, along with student demographic

and enrollment data. According to NPSAS data, more than half of undergraduate students (66 percent) and graduate students (74 percent) in the 2007–2008 school year received financial aid. More information on this data can be found on the NCES Web site <<http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/npsas/>>.

CERTIFICATES, DIPLOMAS, AND SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS

New forms of education have started to become more prominent in recent years, including various forms of certificate programs, adult learning, and on-line classes. A common thread among these programs is that they are difficult to measure with accuracy, due to their sometimes short-term nature, the use of overlapping or nonstandard schools, and other factors. Data on “business, vocational, technical, secretarial, trade, or correspondence courses” is captured in the CPS (see Table 6 at the site <www.census.gov/hhes/school/data/cps/2010/tables.html>). NCES also provides some information on these topics at <<http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ctes/>>.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOL POPULATIONS

In this part of the report, we describe characteristics of students and their families. We start with race and Hispanic origin, an area of change in recent years. We continue with a discussion of nativity and family income, disability status, and sex.

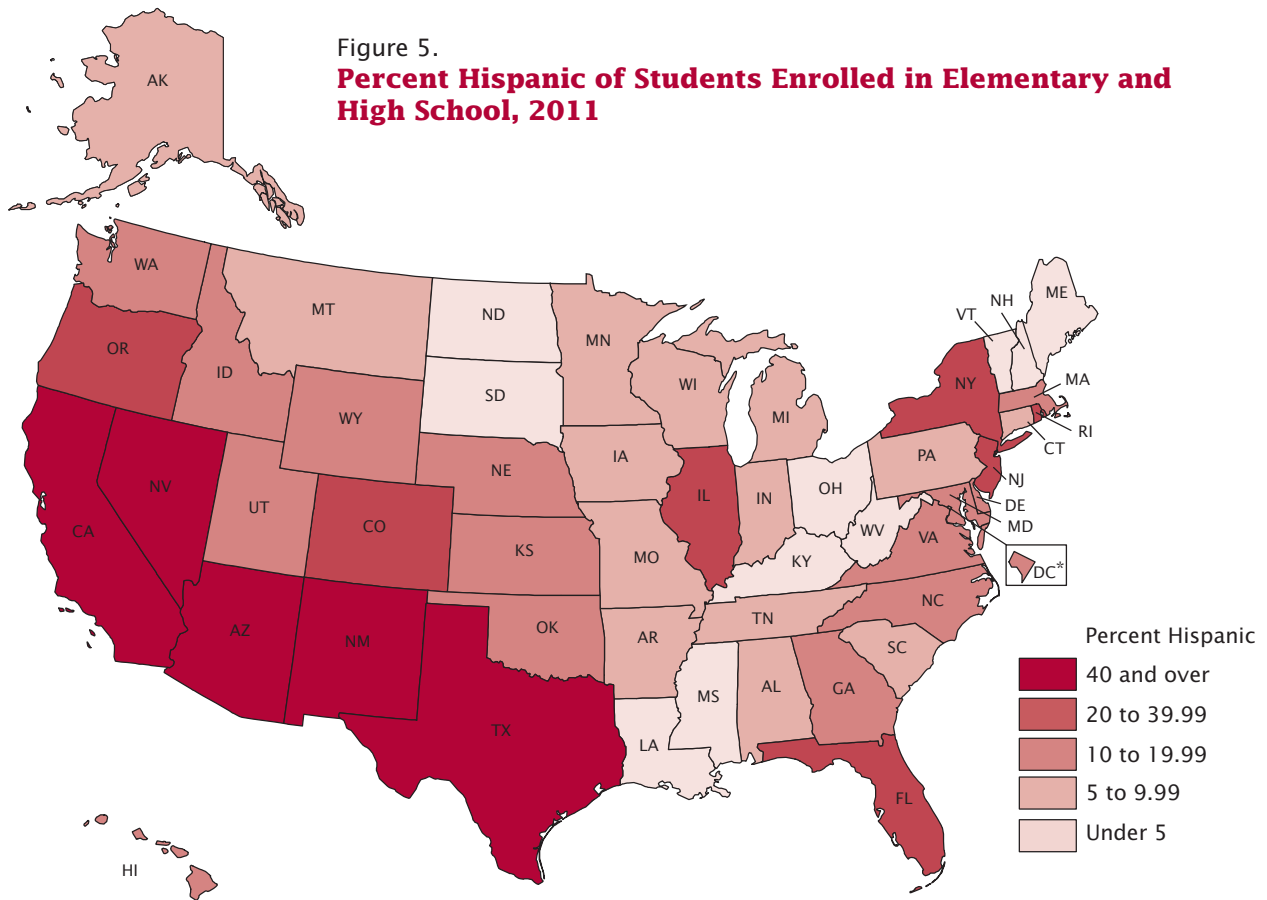
RACE AND HISPANIC ORIGIN

Changes in the race and Hispanic origin of student populations across all levels of enrollment share a similar pattern, which is that the proportion of students who are non-Hispanic White students has decreased while the proportion who are Hispanic student has been on the rise. In the 2000 Census, non-Hispanic Whites were 62 percent of students at all levels. This fell to 55 percent in the 2011 ACS. During the same period the proportion Hispanic among those enrolled in school grew from 15 percent to 20 percent of the total.

The overall growth in Hispanic enrollment has helped create high levels of enrollment in certain states, as can be seen in the ACS data. In New Mexico, Hispanic students made up over half of students in grades 1 through 12 (59 percent) in 2011 (see Figure 5). California had the second highest percentage of Hispanic students in elementary and high school (51 percent). In other western states, including Arizona, Nevada, and Colorado, 30 percent or more of students were Hispanic (43 percent, 40 percent, and 30 percent, respectively). States with very few Hispanic students included West Virginia and Vermont (less than 3 percent).

The race and Hispanic origin of nursery school students showed slightly different patterns at different levels of education. In 2011, non-Hispanic White students made up 2.8 million out of 5 million or 55 percent of nursery school students (see Table 3), while they were 69 percent in 2000. Hispanic students were 20 percent of the total

Figure 5.
Percent Hispanic of Students Enrolled in Elementary and High School, 2011



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey. For information on sampling and nonsampling error, see <www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2011.pdf>.

nursery school enrollment, up from 14 percent in 2000. Black students made up 15 percent of the total in 2011 and 16 percent in 2000.

In 2011 the ACS also showed non-Hispanic Whites were 2.2 million of the 4.2 million kindergartners, or 51 percent, compared with 55 percent in 2000. Hispanic kindergartners were 24 percent of the total in 2011 and 19 percent in 2000. Black kindergartners were 14 percent in 2011 and 15 percent in 2000.

A similar story took place at the elementary and secondary levels. In 2011, non-Hispanic White students made up 55 percent of the elementary school population, down from 69 percent in 2000. Hispanic students were 23 percent of those attending grades 1 to 12 in 2011, up from 17 percent in 2000. The Black proportion of elementary and secondary students was 14 percent in both 2011, down from 15 percent in 2000.

In colleges and universities, non-Hispanic White students made up 14.3 million of the 23.9 million students (60 percent) in 2011. Hispanic college enrollment grew by 1.7 million from 2000 (Census 2000) to 2011 (ACS), reaching 3.5 million in the latter year (15 percent of the total). Enrollment of Hispanic students has contributed to the growth in both total college enrollment and 2-year college enrollment. In the 2011 CPS, 2.9 million Hispanic students were enrolled in college with 1.3 million

Table 3.

School Enrollment by Level of Enrollment and Selected Characteristics: 2011

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Total students	Level of school enrollment						
		Nursery	Kindergarten	Elementary grades 1 to 4	Elementary grades 5 to 8	High school	Undergraduate college	Graduate school
Total	83,132	5,019	4,204	16,293	16,552	17,198	19,738	4,127
Sex								
Male	40,922	2,612	2,161	8,318	8,520	8,876	8,718	1,716
Female	42,210	2,406	2,043	7,975	8,032	8,321	11,020	2,412
Age								
3-4	3,999	3,769	229	0	0	0	0	0
5	3,553	1,207	2,218	128	0	0	0	0
6-9	15,932	42	1,758	13,996	136	0	0	0
10-13	16,327	0	0	2,168	14,018	139	0	0
14-17	16,382	0	0	0	2,334	13,910	143	0
18-22	13,934	0	0	0	19	2,729	10,992	194
23-24	2,371	0	0	0	6	55	1,786	524
25-29	3,721	0	0	0	6	96	2,389	1,229
30-34	2,138	0	0	0	6	62	1,393	676
35-64	4,557	0	0	0	21	188	2,917	1,432
65 and over	219	0	0	0	8	21	118	72
Race and Hispanic Origin								
White	56,980	3,411	2,829	11,148	11,370	11,686	13,669	2,868
White, non-Hispanic	46,054	2,755	2,163	8,621	8,972	9,287	11,641	2,614
Black	12,413	737	602	2,272	2,418	2,733	3,105	545
Asian	4,400	242	188	734	719	742	1,281	491
Hispanic	16,916	1,016	1,045	3,898	3,716	3,773	3,099	369
Nativity								
Native-born	77,380	4,941	4,115	15,811	15,734	15,975	17,476	3,328
Foreign-born	5,752	78	89	482	819	1,224	2,261	800
Language								
English only	61,573	1,009	3,078	12,676	13,025	13,258	15,420	3,106
Speaks other language	17,560	239	898	3,616	3,528	3,940	4,317	1,021
Type of School								
Public	69,538	2,858	3,688	14,649	14,905	15,611	15,421	2,405
Private	13,594	2,160	516	1,644	1,648	1,587	4,316	1,722
Region								
Northeast	14,259	895	680	2,646	2,759	2,997	3,419	862
South	30,849	1,886	1,631	6,197	6,287	6,282	7,119	1,447
Midwest	18,070	1,125	909	3,518	3,562	3,746	4,314	895
West	19,953	1,112	984	3,932	3,944	4,173	4,885	923

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011.

of those students in 2-year colleges, up from a total of 1.4 million in 2000, of which half a million were in 2-year colleges. Black students also increased their share of college enrollment, making up 15 percent of college and university students in 2011, compared with 14 percent in 2000.

NATIVITY

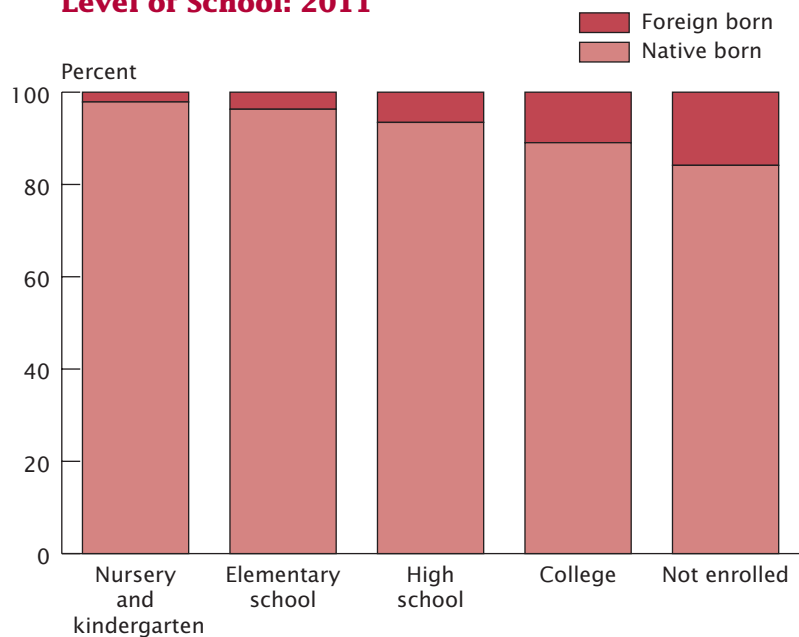
According to the recent Census Bureau report, “The Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 2010,” foreign-born residents now make up 13 percent of the U.S. population.¹⁴ At least in part because the foreign-born tend to be older than the native population, foreign-born students made up a smaller share of those who were enrolled in school (7 percent). In general, foreign-born students were less prevalent at lower grade levels than they were at higher levels of school. The report shows that foreign-born students made up 4 percent of elementary school students, 7 percent of high school students, 11 percent of college undergraduates, and 19 percent of graduate students in 2011 (see Figure 6).

ENROLLMENT BY SEX

In the Census of 1850, males made up 53 percent of those recorded as attending school. In the 2011 ACS, the edge went to females, as they made up 51 percent of students at all levels. Below the college level, more males than females were enrolled in school at all levels but nursery school. Males made up 51 percent of students in kindergarten, elementary, and high

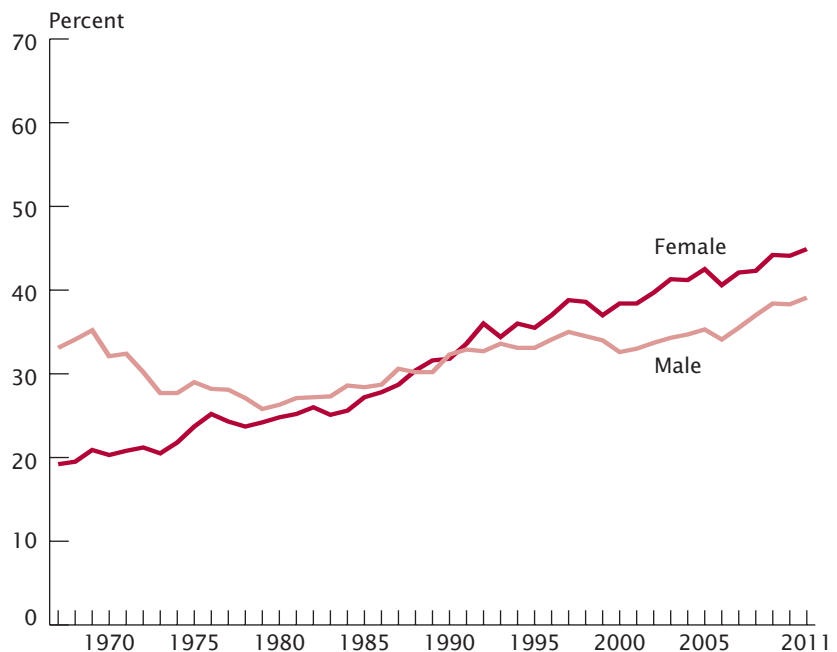
¹⁴ Elizabeth M. Grieco, Yesenia D. Acosta, G. Patricia de la Cruz, Christine Gambino, Thomas Gryn, Luke J. Larsen, Edward N. Trevelyan, and Nathan P. Walters, “The Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 2010,” *American Community Survey Reports*, ACS-19. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, May 2012. <<http://www.census.gov/prod/2012pubs/acs-19.pdf>>.

Figure 6.
Nativity of Students by School Enrollment and Level of School: 2011



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October 2011. For information on sampling and nonsampling error, see <www.census.gov/prod/techdoc/cps/cpsoct11.pdf>.

Figure 7.
Percentage of 18- to 24-Year Olds Enrolled in College: 1967-2011



U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October 2011 and previous years. For information on sampling and nonsampling error, see <www.census.gov/prod/techdoc/cps/cpsoct11.pdf>.

school in 2011. In college, over half of both undergraduate (55 percent) and graduate students (57 percent) were women. Combining undergraduate and graduate levels, women made up 53 percent of all college students in 2011 (Figure 7). Women began to outnumber men in undergraduate college since 1979. At the graduate level, women first came into the majority in 1990, and, after a few years of being close to half, they have been more than half of all students from 1995 forward. Women are especially prevalent among older students.¹⁵ It was not until 1988 that more female 18- to 24-year olds were enrolled in college than male 18- to 24-year olds. Except for 1990 and 1993, when the two sexes were not statistically different, women of that age have remained in the majority (see Figure 7).

INCOME AND POVERTY

The Census Bureau captures data on income and poverty status of students and their families. Poverty is defined as having family income that falls below a threshold that depends on family size. For a family of four (2 parents and 2 children) in 2011, the annual poverty threshold was \$22,811.¹⁶ Further

¹⁵ Hyon Shin, "School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 2003," *Current Population Reports*, P20-554, U.S. Census Bureau, May 2005, <www.census.gov/prod/2005pubs/p20-554.pdf>.

¹⁶ Poverty thresholds are posted at <www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/threshld/index.html>.

information is available at <www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/index.html>.

Sixteen percent of the population 3 years and older surveyed in the ACS lived in a family whose income was below the poverty line in 2011. The percentage was higher for students enrolled in kindergarten (25 percent) and grades 1 to 4 (23 percent). Older students generally had lower rates of poverty, with the exception of college students, who sometimes depend on student loans or other sources of support that are not counted as "income" for the purpose of poverty measurement. The lowest poverty rate, 13 percent, was found among those who are not enrolled in school.

Data on poverty are very important for determining the distribution of money from the federal government to aid the education of disadvantaged students. Some of these can be found from the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates Program (SAIPE). SAIPE produces model-based estimates annually of income and poverty for school districts, counties, and states. School district estimates include total population, children aged 5–17, and related children aged 5–17 in families in poverty.¹⁷

¹⁷ The link for the SAIPE program is <www.census.gov/did/www/saipe/>.

Disability and Schooling

Title I (Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged) was established in 1965 to ensure that all children have the opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments. This applies to both elementary and secondary education. In addition, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was established to guarantee that students with disabilities are provided a free and suitable public school education. Both the ACS and the CPS collect information on disability and can provide enrollment statistics for students with disabilities. In 2011, the ACS reported that 6 percent of students aged 6 to 21 enrolled in public schools (excluding college) had a disability, which is lower than the 13 percent of public school students reported by the NCES.¹⁸ The difference between the two numbers can be explained in part by differences in collection of data. The ACS measures disability with a series of questions about difficulty hearing, seeing, remembering, going out, and dressing. Together these questions form one disability variable. The disability data collected by the NCES comes from states who are required to

¹⁸ Condition of Education 2012 (NCES 2012-045). National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

report children served through IDEA program. According to the Department of Education, about 38 percent of children served under IDEA were classified as having “specific learning disabilities” and another 22 percent had “speech or language impairment.” It is likely that many of these children were not recorded as having a disability as defined by the ACS.

SOURCES OF THE DATA

Most estimates in this report are from the 2011 American Community Survey (ACS) and the 2011 October supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS). Some estimates are based on data obtained by the ACS and CPS in earlier years.

The population represented (the population universe) in the 2011 ACS includes both the household and the group quarters populations (that is, the resident population). The group quarters population consists of the institutionalized population (such as people in correctional institutions or nursing homes) and the noninstitutionalized population (most of whom reside in college dormitories).

The population represented (the population universe) in the School Enrollment Supplement to the October 2011 CPS is the civilian noninstitutionalized population living in the United States. The institutionalized population, which is excluded from the population universe, is composed primarily of the population in correctional institutions and nursing homes (91 percent of the 4.1 million institutionalized people in Census 2000).

ACCURACY OF THE ESTIMATES

Statistics from sample surveys are subject to sampling error and nonsampling error. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and are significant at the 90 percent confidence level. This means the 90 percent confidence interval for the difference between estimates being compared does not include zero. Nonsampling error in surveys may be attributed to a variety of sources, such as how the survey was designed, how respondents interpret questions, how able and willing respondents are to provide correct answers, and how accurate answers are coded and classified. To minimize these errors, the Census Bureau employs quality control procedures in sample selection, the wording of questions, interviewing, coding, data processing, and data analysis.

The final ACS population estimates are adjusted in the weighting procedure for coverage error by controlling specific survey estimates to independent population controls by sex, age, race, and Hispanic origin. This weighting partially corrects for bias due to over- or undercoverage, but biases may still be present, for example, when people who were missed differ from those interviewed in ways other than sex, age, race, and Hispanic origin. How this weighting procedure affects other variables in the survey is not precisely known. All of these considerations affect comparisons across different surveys or data sources. For information on sampling and estimation methods, confidentiality protection, and sampling and nonsampling errors, please see the

“2011 ACS Accuracy of the Data” document located at www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2011.pdf.

The CPS weighting procedure uses rati- on estimation whereby sample estimates are adjusted to independent estimates of the national population by age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. This weighting partially corrects for bias due to undercoverage, but biases may still be present when people who are missed by the survey differ from those interviewed in ways other than age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. How this weighting procedure affects other variables in the survey is not precisely known. All of these considerations affect comparisons across different surveys or data sources. Further information on the source of the data and accuracy of the estimates, including standard errors and confidence intervals, can be found at www.census.gov/apsd/techdoc/cps/cpsoct11.pdf or by contacting David Hall of the Demographic Statistical Methods Division via e-mail at dsmd.source.and.accuracy@census.gov.

MORE INFORMATION

Detailed tabulations, related information, and historic data are available on the Internet at the School Enrollment page on the Census Bureau’s Web site at www.census.gov/hhes/school.

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