Section 1
Participation in Education
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Contents

Introduction............................................................................................................................3

All Ages
Indicator 1. Enrollment Trends by Age ................................................................................4

Preprimary Education
Indicator 2. Early Development of Children ........................................................................6
Indicator 3. Knowledge and Skills of Young Children ............................................................8

Elementary/Secondary Education
Indicator 4. Public School Enrollment ..............................................................................10
Indicator 5. Private School Enrollment ..............................................................................12
Indicator 6. Homeschooled Students ..............................................................................14
Indicator 7. Racial/Ethnic Enrollment in Public Schools .....................................................16
Indicator 8. Language Minority School-Age Children ..........................................................18
Indicator 9. Children and Youth With Disabilities .............................................................20

Undergraduate Education
Indicator 10. Undergraduate Enrollment .........................................................................22

Graduate and Professional Education
Indicator 11. Graduate and First-Professional Enrollment ...............................................24
Section 1—Participation in Education

The indicators in this section of *The Condition of Education* report trends in enrollments across all levels of education. There are 16 indicators in this section: 11, prepared for this year’s volume, appear on the following pages, and all 16, including indicators from previous years, appear on the Web (see the List of Indicators on *The Condition of Education* website in the Contents section for a full list of the indicators). Enrollment is a key indicator of the scope of and access to educational opportunities and is a basic descriptor of American education. Changes in enrollment have implications for the demand for educational resources, such as qualified teachers, physical facilities, and funding levels, which are required to provide a high-quality education for our nation’s students.

The indicators in this section are organized into an overview subsection, which is made up of an indicator on enrollment rates reported by age group, and a series of subsections organized by level of the education system. These levels are preprimary education, elementary and secondary education, undergraduate education, graduate and professional education, and adult education.

The indicator in the first subsection compares rates of enrollment in formal education programs across certain age groups in the population. Looking at trends in the enrollment rates of individuals provides a perspective on the education of the U.S. population at different points in the life cycle and over time.

An indicator on the website describes participation in center-based early childhood care and education programs, such as Head Start, nursery school, and prekindergarten, which can help to prepare children for elementary school and can also serve as child care for parents. Two of the indicators on the following pages present aspects of family involvement in cultivating certain developmental areas in the preprimary years, which also plays a role in preparing children for formal education. Elementary and secondary education provide knowledge and skills that prepare students for further learning and productive membership in society. Because enrollment at the elementary and secondary levels is mandatory in most states until at least age 16, and in a number of states until age 17 or 18, changes in enrollment are driven primarily by shifts in the size and composition of the school-age population, as well as by shifts in the types of schools students attend, including public schools, private schools, and homeschooling. These factors are examined in indicators on the following pages. Postsecondary education offers students opportunities to gain advanced knowledge and skills either immediately after high school or later in life. Because postsecondary education is voluntary, changes in total undergraduate enrollments typically reflect fluctuations in enrollment rates and the perceived availability and value of postsecondary education, as well as the size of college-age populations. Graduate and professional enrollments constitute an important segment of postsecondary education, allowing students to pursue advanced coursework in a variety of areas. Indicators on postsecondary enrollment are found in this volume. An indicator on the Web describes adult education, which includes formal education activities in which adults participate in order to upgrade their work skills, to change careers, or to expand personal interests.

Some of the indicators in these subsections provide information about the characteristics of the students who are enrolled and, in some cases, how enrollment for different types of students varies across schools. For example, indicators that appear in this volume describe the racial/ethnic distributions of public school students, the number and characteristics of children who speak a language other than English at home, and the number and percentage of children with disabilities.

The indicators on participation in education from previous editions of *The Condition of Education*, which are not included in this volume, are available at [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe).
Changes in enrollment patterns may reflect changes in attendance requirements, the perceived value or cost of education, as well as the time taken to complete degrees. Changes in the total enrollment rates varied by age group between 1970 and 2007: these rates increased for those ages 3–4, 5–6, 18–19, 20–24, 25–29, and 30–34, remained around 100 percent for those ages 7–13, and fluctuated between 93 and 96 percent for those ages 14–17.

Between 1970 and 2007, the enrollment rate for children ages 3–4 (the ages at which children are typically enrolled in nursery school) increased from 20 to 55 percent. Some of the increase between 1970 and 2007 may reflect changes to the data collection method in 1994; however, by 1994, the rate of nursery school attendance had already doubled from the 1970 rate. As of September 2008, of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, there were 33 states that did not require kindergarten attendance (see table A-1-2). The enrollment rate for children ages 5–6 (the ages at which children are typically enrolled in kindergarten or 1st grade) increased from 90 percent in 1970 to 96 percent in 1976 and has since remained stable (see table A-1-1). For youth ages 7–13, the enrollment rate has remained at nearly 100 percent over the past 37 years, reflecting states’ minimum compulsory age requirements for school attendance (see table A-1-2). The enrollment rate for 14- to 17-year-olds has been slightly lower during this period (between 93 and 96 percent), with no measurable differences during the past 5 years (see table A-1-1). The maximum compulsory age of school attendance varies between the ages of 16 and 18 (see table A-1-2).

Young adults ages 18–19 are typically transitioning into postsecondary education or the workforce. Between 1970 and 2007, the overall enrollment rate for young adults ages 18–19 increased from 48 to 67 percent (see table A-1-1). During this time period, the enrollment rate for 18- to 19-year-olds at the elementary/secondary level increased from 10 to 18 percent, while enrollment for 18- to 19-year-olds at the postsecondary level rose from 37 to 49 percent. There were no measurable differences in these rates at either level during the past 5 years, although in 2007 the postsecondary enrollment rate for young adults ages 18–19 was among the highest recorded.

Adults ages 20–34 who are enrolled in school are usually enrolled in postsecondary education. Between 1970 and 2007, the enrollment rate for young adults ages 20–21 increased from 32 to 48 percent, and the rate for those ages 22–24 increased from 15 to 27 percent. Despite these increases in enrollment rates for young adults over time, during the past 5 years, there were few measurable differences in enrollment for these age groups. The enrollment rate for adults ages 25–29 increased from 8 percent in 1970 to 12 percent in 2007, while enrollment for adults ages 30–34 increased from 4 percent in 1970 to 6 percent in 1974 and has remained relatively stable (between 6 and 7 percent) from 1975 to 2007.

For more information: Tables A-1-1 and A-1-2
Glossary: Elementary/secondary school, Nursery school, Postsecondary education, Private school, Public school
Education Commission of the States (2007).

Technical Notes

For this indicator, estimates include enrollment in any type of graded public, parochial, or other private school. These include enrollment in nursery schools, kindergartens, elementary schools, high schools, colleges, universities, and professional schools. Attendance may be on either a full-time or part-time basis during the day or night. Beginning in 1994, new procedures were used to collect preprimary enrollment data. As a result, pre-1994 data may not be comparable to data from 1994 or later. Excluded are enrollments in less-than-2-year postsecondary institutions and enrollments in “special” schools, such as trade schools, business colleges, or correspondence schools. The age groupings used in this indicator reflect the different schooling stages that are typical for students given their age. For example, students at ages 18–19 are typically transitioning from elementary/secondary education into postsecondary education or the workforce. For more information on the Current Population Survey (CPS), see supplemental note 2.
Figure 1-1. Percentage of the population ages 3–34 enrolled in school, by age group: October 1970–2007

1 Beginning in 1994, new procedures were used to collect preprimary enrollment data. As a result, pre-1994 data may not be comparable to data from 1994 or later.

NOTE: Includes enrollment in any type of graded public, parochial, or other private schools. Includes nursery schools, kindergartens, elementary schools, high schools, colleges, universities, and professional schools. Attendance may be on either a full-time or part-time basis and during the day or night. Excludes enrollments in less-than-2-year postsecondary institutions and enrollments in “special” schools, such as trade schools, business colleges, or correspondence schools. For more information on the Current Population Survey (CPS), see supplemental note 2.


Figure 1-2. Percentage of the population ages 3–34 enrolled in school, by age group: October 2007

NOTE: Includes enrollment in any type of graded public, parochial, or other private schools. Includes nursery schools, kindergartens, elementary schools, high schools, colleges, universities, and professional schools. Attendance may be on either a full-time or part-time basis and during the day or night. Excludes enrollments in less-than-2-year postsecondary institutions and enrollments in “special” schools, such as trade schools, business colleges, or correspondence schools. For more information on the Current Population Survey (CPS), see supplemental note 2.

Early Development of Children

When they were about 9 months, 2 years, and 4 years old, a smaller percentage of children in poverty were read to, told stories, or sung to daily by a family member, compared with children at or above poverty.

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B) collected information on a cohort of children who were born in 2001 and focused on several aspects of early childhood development, including interactions between young children and their families and the ways by which parents raise, nurture, and prepare their children for school. For the first three waves, data were collected on the children as infants (at about 9 months old), then as toddlers (at about 2 years old), and again as preschoolers (at about 4 years old). At each age, between one-third and one-half of these children were read to daily by a family member (see table A-2-1). In addition, approximately one-fourth of children at each of these ages were told stories daily, and between one-half and three-quarters were sung to daily.

In general, at all ages, a higher percentage of White children had family members who read to them daily than did children of other races/ethnicities. Also, a higher percentage of Asian children were read to than Hispanic and American Indian/Alaska Native children at all ages, and than Black children at ages 2 and 4 (with rates not measurably different at 9 months of age). Forty-one percent of White, 26 percent of Asian, 23 percent of Black, 21 percent of Hispanic, and 18 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native 9-month-olds had family members who read to them daily. At 2 years of age, 59 percent of White and 42 percent of Asian children had family members who read to them daily, compared with 25 percent of Black, 27 percent of Hispanic, and 30 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native children. At 4 years of age, 50 percent of White and 38 percent of Asian children were read to daily, compared with 21 percent of Black, 23 percent of Hispanic, and 25 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native children.

Overall, a smaller percentage of children in poverty were read to, told stories, or sung to daily by a family member than children at or above poverty. For example, 22 percent of 9-month-olds, 28 percent of 2-year-olds, and 21 percent of 4-year-olds in poverty were read to daily, compared with 36 percent of 9-month-olds, 51 percent of 2-year-olds, and 44 percent of 4-year-olds at or above poverty. Similarly, 24 percent of 9-month-olds, 23 percent of 2-year-olds, and 21 percent of 4-year-olds in poverty were told stories daily, compared with 28 percent of 9-month-olds, 30 percent of 2-year-olds, and 24 percent of 4-year-olds at or above poverty. Additionally, 67 percent of 9-month-olds, 63 percent of 2-year-olds, and 47 percent of 4-year-olds in poverty were sung to daily, compared with 76 percent of 9-month-olds, 69 percent of 2-year-olds, and 50 percent of 4-year-olds at or above poverty.

In general, levels of maternal education were positively related to the percentage of children who were read to, told stories, or sung to daily. For example, 20 percent of 4-year-olds whose mothers had not completed high school were read to daily, compared with 29 percent whose mothers completed high school, 39 percent whose mothers completed some college, and 61 percent whose mothers had at least a bachelor’s degree. Additionally, 22 percent of 2-year-olds whose mothers did not complete high school were told stories daily, compared with 29 percent whose mothers completed some college and 36 percent whose mothers had at least a bachelor’s degree. A smaller percentage of 9-month-olds whose mothers did not complete high school (65 percent) were sung to daily, compared with those whose mothers completed high school (71 percent), some college (78 percent), or a bachelor’s degree or higher (79 percent).

A smaller percentage of children whose families spoke a language other than English in the home were read to, told stories, or sung to daily than children whose families spoke primarily English in the home. For example, 18 percent of 9-month-olds, 24 percent of 2-year-olds, and 22 percent of 4-year-olds whose families spoke a language other than English in the home were read to daily, compared with 36 percent of 9-month-olds, 50 percent of 2-year-olds, and 42 percent of 4-year-olds whose families spoke primarily English in the home.

For more information: Table A-2-1; Indicator 3

Technical Notes

Variables correspond with the year of the estimate. For examples and for more information on the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B) in general, see supplemental note 3. High school completers include those who earned a high school diploma or its equivalent (e.g., a General Educational Development [GED] certificate). Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. For more information on parents’ education, race/ethnicity, and poverty, see supplemental note 1.
Figure 2-1. Percentage of 9-month-olds, 2-year-olds, and 4-year-olds read to, told stories, and sung to daily in a typical week by a family member, by mother’s education: 2001–02, 2003–04, and 2005–06

NOTE: The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B) sampled children born in 2001. Each age variable corresponds with the year of the estimate. For example, the 9-month estimates for “Read to” reflect the percentage of children whose parents read to them daily in a typical week at the time of the 9-month data collection. For more information on parents’ education, see supplemental note 1; for more information on the ECLS-B, see supplemental note 3.


Figure 2-2. Percentage of 9-month-olds, 2-year-olds, and 4-year-olds read to daily in a typical week by a family member, by poverty status: 2001–02, 2003–04, and 2005–06

NOTE: The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B) sampled children born in 2001. Each age variable corresponds with the year of the estimate. For example, the 9-month estimates for “Read to” reflect the percentage of children whose parents read to them daily in a typical week at the time of the 9-month data collection. For more information on parents’ education, see supplemental note 1; for more information on the ECLS-B, see supplemental note 3.

A smaller percentage of children born in 2001 who were in poverty demonstrated proficiency in various cognitive skills at about 2 years old and at about 4 years old than did their peers who were at or above poverty.

Using the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B), this indicator provides information on children when they were infants (at about 9 months old), when they were toddlers (at about 2 years old), and again when they were preschoolers (at about 4 years old). The assessments for 9-month-olds provide information on cognitive skills, including exploration, verbalizations, making simple gestures, and problem solving, and on motor skills, including coordination, sitting, prewalking, standing alone, skillful walking, and balance. The assessments for 2-year-olds provide information on cognitive skills, such as communication, listening comprehension, object discrimination, and knowledge of counting words or quantities; and on motor skills, such as skillful walking, balance, fine motor control, walking up and down stairs, alternating balance, and motor planning. Preschool-age assessments provide information on language, literacy, mathematics, color identification, and fine motor skills.

Nine-month-olds in poverty had lower proficiency levels in three of five cognitive skills, compared with children at or above poverty, although observed differences were less than 4 percentage points. For example, 81 percent of children in poverty were proficient in exploring purposefully, compared with 84 percent of those at or above poverty (see table A-3-1). For motor skills, no measurable differences were found between 9-month-olds in poverty and those at or above poverty.

In contrast to patterns found among 9-month-olds by poverty status, significant differences in all cognitive skills were found for 2-year-olds. For example, 29 percent of 2-year-olds in poverty demonstrated proficiency in listening comprehension, compared with 39 percent of those at or above poverty (see table A-3-1). For motor skills, no measurable differences were found between 9-month-olds in poverty and those at or above poverty.

Differences in cognitive skill proficiency observed when children were 2 years old held when they were 4 years old. Twenty percent of 4-year-olds in poverty were proficient in letter recognition, compared with 37 percent of their peers at or above poverty (see table A-3-3). Forty-five percent of 4-year-olds in poverty demonstrated proficiency in numbers and shapes, compared with 72 percent of their peers at or above poverty.

For 9-month-olds, there were few differences in cognitive skill proficiencies for most racial/ethnic groups. While differences were found for motor skills among 9-month-olds by race/ethnicity, no single group demonstrated consistently higher proficiency than others across all skills. In contrast, smaller percentages of Black, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaska Native 2-year-olds demonstrated proficiency in all cognitive skills than did their peers who were White, Asian, or of more than one race. For example, 56 percent of Blacks, 54 percent of Hispanics, and 50 percent of American Indians/Alaska Natives used expressive vocabulary, compared with 71 percent of Whites, 62 percent of Asians, and 64 percent of children of more than one race (see table A-3-2). For motor skills among 2-year-olds, few differences were found by race/ethnicity.

Generally, smaller percentages of Black, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaska Native 4-year-olds demonstrated proficiency in various cognitive skills than did their peers who were White, Asian, or of more than one race. For example, 28 percent of Blacks, 23 percent of Hispanics, and 19 percent of American Indians/Alaska Natives were proficient at letter recognition, compared with 37 percent of Whites, 49 percent of Asians, and 35 percent of children of more than one race (see table A-3-3). Additionally, smaller percentages of 4-year-old Blacks (55 percent), Hispanics (51 percent), and American Indians/Alaska Natives (40 percent) showed proficiency in numbers and shapes, compared with Whites (73 percent), Asians (81 percent), and children of more than one race (65 percent).

For more information: Tables A-3-1 through A-3-3; Indicator 2
Glossary: Cognitive development, Motor development
NCES 2009-020, Tables 112–114
Bayley, N. (1993) Knowledge and Skills of Young Children

For more information on race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and poverty, see supplemental note 1. For more information on the ECLS-B, see supplemental note 3.
Figure 3-1. Percentage of children demonstrating proficiency in various cognitive skills, by poverty status and age: 2001–02, 2003–04, and 2005–06

Figure 3-2. Percentage of children proficient in letter recognition and numbers and shapes at about 4 years old, by race/ethnicity: 2005–06

NOTE: Percentages reflect children who demonstrated mastery or “proficiency” by achieving a set threshold within a subscale measuring specific skills or abilities. The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B) sampled children born in 2001. While ECLS-B assessed some infants as young as 6 months and as old as 22 months, estimates reflect information collected on infants around 9 months old (6 to 10 months). Estimates for 2-year-olds pertain to children assessed between 22 and 25 months old. Estimates for 4-year-olds pertain to children assessed between 48 and 57 months old. For more information on race/ethnicity, see supplemental note 1, and for more information on ECLS-B, see supplemental note 3.

In 2006, about 49.3 million students were enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools. Of these students, 34.2 million were enrolled in prekindergarten (preK) through grade 8, and 15.1 million were enrolled in grades 9 through 12.

Public school enrollment declined during the 1970s and early 1980s and increased in the latter part of the 1980s. Between 2000 and 2006, public school enrollment increased by 2.1 million students, reaching 49.3 million students in 2006 (see table A-4-1). Total public school enrollment is projected to set new enrollment records each year from 2007 through 2018, reaching an estimated high of 53.9 million students in 2018 (the last year for which projected data are available).

Enrollment trends in grades preK–8 and 9–12 have differed over time as successive cohorts of students have moved through the public school system. For example, enrollment in grades preK–8 decreased throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, while enrollment in grades 9–12 decreased in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s. Enrollments at both grade levels increased from 1990 through 2006. Public school enrollment in grades preK–8 is projected to increase from 34.2 million in 2006 to 38.2 million in 2018. Enrollment in grades 9–12 is projected to increase to 15.1 million in 2007 before decreasing to 14.6 million in 2011; it is then expected to increase again to 15.8 million in 2018.

Since 1970, the South has been the region of the country with the largest share of public school enrollment in the United States. However, the regional distribution of students in public schools has not remained static. The share of total public school enrollment in the Northeast and the Midwest decreased between 1970 and 2000 (from 21 to 17 percent and 28 to 23 percent, respectively), while the share for both the South and the West increased during this period (from 32 to 37 percent and 18 to 24 percent, respectively). The number of students enrolled followed a similar pattern between 2000 and 2006, decreasing slightly in both the Northeast and Midwest, but increasing by one-half million students in the West and 1.0 million students in the South. According to projections, by 2018, some 14 percent of public school students will be in the Northeast, 20 percent will be in the Midwest, 25 percent will be in the West, and 40 percent will be in the South.

From 2006 to 2018, public school enrollment in grades preK through 12 in the United States is projected to increase by 9 percent (see table A-4-2). The rate of increase in overall U.S. enrollment is not expected to be evenly distributed by grade level or among states. For example, enrollment in grades preK–8 is projected to increase more than enrollment in grades 9–12 during this period (12 vs. 4 percent). In grades preK–8, enrollment is expected to increase by more than 30 percent in Arizona, Nevada, and Texas, but to decrease by more than 5 percent in Rhode Island and New York. Projections indicate that enrollment in grades 9–12 will experience a wider range of percent change than enrollment in grades preK–8 between 2006 and 2018: enrollment in Arizona, Nevada, and Texas is projected to increase by more than 30 percent, while enrollment in Rhode Island, Vermont, and the District of Columbia is projected to decrease by more than 20 percent.

For more information: Tables A-4-1 and A-4-2; Indicators 10 and 11
Glossary: Elementary/secondary school, Public school

Technical Notes

The most recent year of actual data is 2006, and 2018 is the last year for which projected data are available. For more information on projections, see NCES 2009-062.

Some data have been revised from previously published figures. For a list of the states in each region, see supplemental note 1.
Figure 4-1. Actual and projected public school enrollment in grades prekindergarten (preK) through 12, by grade level: Fall 1970–2018

<table>
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<th>Fall of year</th>
<th>Enrollment (in thousands)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grades preK–8</td>
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<td>Grades 9–12</td>
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<td>1970</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Projected

NOTE: The most recent year of actual data is 2006, and 2018 is the last year for which projected data are available. For more information on projections, see NCES 2009-062. Some data have been revised from previously published figures.


Figure 4-2. Projected percent change in public school enrollment in grades prekindergarten through 12, by state: Between fall 2006 and fall 2018

NOTE: The most recent year of actual data is 2006, and 2018 is the last year for which projected data are available. For more information on projections, see NCES 2009-062. For a list of states in each region, see supplemental note 1.

Private school enrollment in prekindergarten through grade 12 increased from 5.9 million in 1995 to 6.3 million in 2001, and then decreased to 5.9 million in 2007. About 11 percent of all elementary and secondary school students were in private schools in 2007.

Private school enrollment in prekindergarten through grade 12 increased from 5.9 million in 1995 to 6.3 million in 2001, and then decreased to 5.9 million in 2007. About 11 percent of all elementary and secondary school students were in private schools in 2007 (see tables A-5-1 and A-5-2).

Between 1995 and 2003, Roman Catholic schools maintained the largest share of total private school enrollment, but the percentage of all private school students enrolled in Roman Catholic schools decreased from 45 percent in 1995 to 39 percent in 2007 (see table A-5-1). This decrease stemmed from the decline in the percentage of these students enrolled in parochial schools (those run by a parish, not by a diocese or independently). In contrast, the percentage of students in Conservative Christian schools increased from 13 to 15 percent of all private school students between 1995 and 2007. The percentage of students enrolled in nonsectarian schools increased from 20 to 22 percent during this period.

In 2007, most private school students were enrolled in schools with a regular program emphasis (85 percent; see table A-5-3). Of the remaining students, 5 percent were enrolled in early childhood schools, 4 percent in Montessori schools, 2 percent in schools with a special program emphasis, 2 percent in special education schools, and 1 percent in alternative schools. The student composition of private schools varied by type of program emphasis. Private schools with a special education or an alternative emphasis had the highest percentages of enrollment (39 and 35 percent, respectively) coming from one or more of the Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, or American Indian/Alaska Native racial/ethnic groups. About 25 percent of students in private schools with a regular program emphasis were from these groups.

In 2007, the percentage of all students who were enrolled in private schools was higher in the Northeast (15 percent) than in the Midwest (11 percent), the South (10 percent), and the West (9 percent) (see table A-5-2). Looking at changes over time, in the Midwest and West, the percentage of students enrolled in private schools was lower in 2007 than in 1995. The percentage of students in the Northeast who were enrolled in private schools in 2007 (15 percent) was similar to the percentage enrolled in 1995 (16 percent). In the South, the percentages of students enrolled in private schools remained around 10 percent from 1995 to 2007.

There were differences in the racial/ethnic composition of private school enrollments (data from 2007) compared with public school enrollments (data from 2006). Whites made up a greater share of private school enrollment than of public school enrollment (75 vs. 57 percent), while the opposite was true for Blacks (10 vs. 17 percent) and Hispanics (10 vs. 20 percent) (see table A-5-3 and NCES 2008-022, table 41). Asians/Pacific Islanders made up 5 percent of both public and private school enrollments, and American Indians/Alaska Natives made up 1 percent of each.

For more information: Tables A-5-1 through A-5-3
Glossary: Private school, Public school

Technical Notes

Other religious schools are those with a religious orientation or purpose, but are not Roman Catholic. Conservative Christian schools are those with membership in at least 1 of 4 associations, and affiliated schools are those with membership in 1 of 12 associations. Unaffiliated schools are those that have a more general religious orientation or purpose, but are not classified as Conservative Christian or affiliated with a specific religion. Nonsectarian schools do not have a religious orientation or purpose. Vocational schools are included with special program emphasis schools. Calculations were revised and estimates may differ from previously published data. Estimates from the Private School Survey (PSS) may differ from those derived from the National Household Education Survey (NHES) because of differences in survey methodology. For more information on private schools, private school program emphases, NHES, and the PSS, see supplemental note 3. The distribution of private school students by race/ethnicity excludes prekindergarten students. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. For more information on geographic region and race/ethnicity, see supplemental note 1. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.
Figure 5-1. Percentage distribution of private school students in prekindergarten through grade 12, by school type: Various years, fall 1995 through fall 2007

NOTE: Affiliated religious schools have a specific religious orientation or purpose, but are not Roman Catholic. Nonsectarian schools do not have a religious orientation or purpose. Calculations were revised and estimates may differ from previously published data. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. For more information on the Private School Universe Survey (PSS), see supplemental note 3.


Figure 5-2. Percentage distribution of public and private school enrollments, by race/ethnicity: Fall 2007

NOTE: Private school distribution excludes prekindergarten students. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Data on public schools are for fall 2006. For more information on race/ethnicity, see supplemental note 1, and for more information on the Private School Universe Survey (PSS) and the Common Core of Data (CCD), see supplemental note 3.

This indicator examines the number and characteristics of homeschooled students in the United States. Homeschooled students are school-age children (ages 5–17) in a grade equivalent to at least kindergarten and not higher than 12th grade who receive instruction at home instead of at a public or private school either all or most of the time.

In 2007, the number of homeschooled students was about 1.5 million, an increase from 850,000 in 1999 and 1.1 million in 2003 (see table A-6-1). The percentage of the school-age population that was homeschooled increased from 1.7 percent in 1999 to 2.9 percent in 2007. The increase in the percentage of homeschooled students from 1999 to 2007 represents a 74 percent relative increase over the 8-year period and a 36 percent relative increase since 2003. In 2007, the majority of homeschooled students received all of their education at home (84 percent), but some attended school up to 25 hours per week. Eleven percent of homeschooled students were enrolled in school less than 9 hours per week, and 5 percent were enrolled between 9 and 25 hours per week.

More White students were homeschooled than Black or Hispanic students or students from other racial/ethnic groups (3.4 percent). Students in two-parent households made up 89 percent of the homeschooled population, and those in two-parent households with one parent in the labor force made up 54 percent of the homeschooled population. The latter group of students had a higher homeschooling rate than their peers: 7 percent, compared with 1 to 2 percent of students in other family circumstances. In 2007, students in households earning between $25,001 and $75,000 per year had higher rates of homeschooling than their peers from families earning $25,000 or less a year.

Parents give many different reasons for homeschooling their children. In 2007, the most common reason parents gave as the most important was a desire to provide religious or moral instruction (36 percent of students) (see table A-6-2). This reason was followed by a concern about the school environment (such as safety, drugs, or negative peer pressure) (21 percent), dissatisfaction with academic instruction (17 percent), and “other reasons” including family time, finances, travel, and distance (14 percent). Parents of about 7 percent of homeschooled students cited the desire to provide their child with a nontraditional approach to education as the most important reason for homeschooling, and the parents of another 6 percent of students cited a child’s health problems or special needs.
Figure 6-1. Number and distribution of school-age children who were homeschooled, by amount of time spent in schools: 1999, 2003, and 2007

Figure 6-2. Percentage of school-age children who were homeschooled, by reasons parents gave as the most important reason for homeschooling: 2007

NOTE: Homeschooled students are school-age children (ages 5–17) in a grade equivalent to at least kindergarten and not higher than 12th grade. Excludes students who were enrolled in public or private school more than 25 hours per week and students who were homeschooled only because of temporary illness. For more information on the National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES), see supplemental note 3.


1 “Other reasons” parents gave for homeschooling include family time, finances, travel, and distance.

NOTE: Homeschooled students are school-age children (ages 5–17) in a grade equivalent to at least kindergarten and not higher than 12th grade. Excludes students who were enrolled in public or private school more than 25 hours per week and students who were homeschooled only because of temporary illness. For more information on the National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES), see supplemental note 3.

Between 1972 and 2007, the percentage of public school students who were White decreased from 78 to 56 percent. During this period, the percentage of students from other racial/ethnic groups increased from 22 to 44 percent; this increase largely reflects growth in the percentage of Hispanic students.

The shifting racial and ethnic distribution of public school students enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade is one aspect of change in the composition of school enrollment. Between 1972 and 2007, the percentage of public school students who were White decreased from 78 to 56 percent (see table A-7-1). Accordingly, the percentage of public school students who were part of other racial/ethnic groups increased to 44 percent in 2007, up from 22 percent in 1972 and 32 percent in 1987. This increase over time largely reflects the consistent growth in the percentage of students who were Hispanic. In 2007, Hispanic students represented 21 percent of public school enrollment, up from 6 percent in 1972 and 11 percent in 1987. Since 1987, the percentage of public school students who were Hispanic has increased more than the percentage of students who were White, Black, or members of other racial/ethnic groups. During this period, the percentage of students who were Black decreased from 17 percent in 1987 to 15 percent in 2007, with the percentage of Hispanic enrollment measurably surpassing that of Black enrollment for the first time in 2002. Students from other racial/ethnic groups—Asian (4.1 percent), Pacific Islander (0.3 percent), and American Indian/Alaska Native (0.8 percent) students, and students of more than one race (2.6 percent)—made up about 7.8 percent of public school enrollment in 2007.

The racial/ethnic composition of public schools differed by region, though the combined enrollment of Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Native Alaska students generally increased as a percentage of the total enrollment in all regions between 1987 and 2007 and during the broader period of 1972 and 2007 (see table A-7-2). In each year from 1972 to 2007, the West and South had larger enrollments of these students than the Northeast and Midwest did.

In 2007, the West had the largest enrollment of Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Native Alaska students of any region. Beginning in 2003, the percentage of these students exceeded the percentage of Whites in the total enrollment, and by 2007, enrollment for these students comprised 57 percent of the total in this region. In the West, Hispanic enrollment has been the largest, aside from White enrollment, since 1972, with the percentage of students who were Hispanic more than doubling (from 15 to 39 percent) by 2007. Between 1972 and 2007, the percentage of Blacks enrolled generally remained stable (between 5 and 7 percent), while the percentage of Whites enrolled decreased from 73 to 43 percent.

In the South, the combined enrollment of Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Native Alaska students increased from 30 percent in 1972 to 49 percent in 2007. The majority of this growth was due to an increase in the percentage of Hispanics enrolled. Although Blacks have maintained the largest percentage of enrollment in the South, aside from Whites, the percentage of Black enrollment generally remained at around 25 percent between 1972 and 2007. During this period, the percentage of Hispanic enrollment grew from 5 to 19 percent, while White enrollment decreased from 70 to 51 percent.

Between 1972 and 2007, the combined enrollment of Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Native Alaska students increased from 19 to 36 percent. The percentage of Hispanic enrollment increased from 6 to 15 percent from 1972 to 2007, while the percentage of Blacks enrolled in 1972 was not measurably different than the percentage in 2007. White enrollment decreased from 81 to 64 percent during this period.

In the Midwest, the combined enrollment of Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Native Alaska students increased from 12 to 28 percent between 1972 and 2007. Black students have remained the largest group—aside from White students—in the region, but Hispanic enrollment increased more than Black enrollment during this period. Between 1972 and 2007, the percentage of Black students enrolled increased from 11 to 13 percent, while Hispanic enrollment increased from 2 to 9 percent. Although White enrollment decreased from 88 percent in 1972 to 72 percent in 2007, among all regions, the Midwest has maintained the highest percentage of Whites enrolled during this period.

For more information: Tables A-7-1 and A-7-2
Glossary: Public school

Technical Notes

Estimates include all public school students enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. For more information on race/ethnicity and region, see supplemental note 1. For more information on the Current Population Survey (CPS), see supplemental note 2.
Figure 7-1. Percentage distribution of the race/ethnicity of public school students enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade: Selected years, October 1972–October 2007

- White: 1972 (78%) > 1987 (68%) > 2007 (56%)
- Black: 1992 (17%) > 1997 (15%) > 2002 (11%)
- Hispanic: 1987 (6%) > 1992 (15%) > 2002 (21%)
- Other\(^1\): 1987 (4%) > 1992 (1%) > 2002 (8%)

\(^1\) "Other" includes all students who identified themselves as being Asian, Hawaiian, American Indian, or two or more races.

NOTE: Estimates include all public school students enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Over time, the Current Population Survey (CPS) has had different response options for race/ethnicity. For more information on the Current Population Survey (CPS), see supplemental note 2; for more information on race/ethnicity, see supplemental note 1.


Figure 7-2. Percentage distribution of the race/ethnicity of public school students enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade, by region: October 1987–October 2007

- Northeast: 1987 (90%) > 2007 (78%)
- Midwest: 1992 (90%) > 2007 (78%)
- South: 1997 (90%) > 2007 (78%)
- West: 2002 (90%) > 2007 (78%)

\(^1\) "Other" includes all students who identified themselves as being Asian, Hawaiian, American Indian, or two or more races.

NOTE: Estimates include all public school students enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Over time, the Current Population Survey (CPS) has had different response options for race/ethnicity. For more information on the Current Population Survey (CPS), see supplemental note 2; for more information on race/ethnicity and region, see supplemental note 1.

Between 1979 and 2007, the number of school-age children (children ages 5–17) who spoke a language other than English at home increased from 3.8 to 10.8 million, or from 9 to 20 percent of the population in this age range (see table A-8-1). An increase was also evident during the more recent period of 2000 through 2007 (from 18 to 20 percent). The percentage of school-age children who spoke a language other than English at home and spoke English with difficulty increased from 3 to 6 percent between 1979 and 2000, but did not change measurably between 2000 and 2007, remaining between 5 and 6 percent.

Among school-age children who spoke a non-English language at home, the percentage who spoke English with difficulty has decreased over time. For example, of the school-age children who spoke a language other than English at home, 34 percent spoke English with difficulty in 1979, compared with 31 percent in 2000, and 25 percent in 2007.

The percentage of school-age children who spoke a language other than English at home and who spoke English with difficulty varied by demographic characteristics in 2007, including race/ethnicity, poverty status, and age (see table A-8-2). Among school-age children, 18 percent of Hispanics and 16 percent of Asians spoke a non-English language at home and spoke English with difficulty, compared with 7 percent of Pacific Islanders, 3 percent of American Indians/Alaska Natives, and 1 percent each of Whites, Blacks, and children of more than one race. Differences were also seen among racial/ethnic subgroups of Hispanic and Asian school-age children. For example, 21 percent of Mexican school-age children spoke a non-English language at home and spoke English with difficulty versus 8 percent each of Puerto Rican and Other Hispanic school-age children.

For Asians, 24 percent of Vietnamese 5- to 17-year-olds spoke a non-English language at home and spoke English with difficulty, compared with 8 percent of their Filipino peers. In terms of poverty status, higher percentages of poor (10 percent) and near-poor (8 percent) 5- to 17-year-olds spoke a non-English language at home and spoke English with difficulty than did nonpoor 5- to 17-year-olds (3 percent). Concerning differences by age, a greater percentage of 5- to 9-year-olds spoke a language other than English at home and spoke English with difficulty than did 10- to 17-year-olds (7 vs. 4 percent). This pattern by age held across most demographic characteristics.

In terms of language spoken, in 2007, of the school-age children who spoke a language other than English at home and who spoke English with difficulty, about 2.1 million (or 75 percent) spoke Spanish; 320,000 (or 12 percent) of these children spoke Asian/Pacific Islander languages; 287,000 (or 10 percent) spoke other Indo-European languages; and 72,000 (or 3 percent) spoke another language (see table A-8-3).

English-speaking ability also varied by state and region of the country in 2007. The percentage of 5- to 17-year-olds who spoke a non-English language and who spoke English with difficulty was about 1 percent in several states, including Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, South Dakota, Mississippi, West Virginia, Montana, and Wyoming, but was higher in the southern state of Texas (10 percent) and in certain western states, including Arizona (9 percent) and California (11 percent).

Respondents were asked whether each child in the household spoke a language other than English at home. If they answered “yes,” they were asked how well each child could speak English using the following categories: “very well,” “well,” “not well,” and “not at all.” All those who reported speaking English less than “very well” were considered to have difficulty speaking English. Spanish-language versions of both the Current Population Survey (CPS) and the American Community Survey (ACS) were available to respondents. Due to differences between the CPS and the ACS, use caution when comparing data before 2000 (CPS) with data from 2000 onward (ACS). For more information on the CPS and the ACS, see supplemental notes 2 and 3, respectively. Asian/Pacific Islander languages include any native languages spoken by Asians or Pacific Islanders, which linguists classify variously as Sino-Tibetan, Austronesian, or Austroasiatic, or Austronesian languages. Other Indo-European includes Indo-European languages other than Spanish (e.g., French, German, Portuguese, etc.). Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. For more information on race/ethnicity, poverty status, and geographic region, see supplemental note 1.
Figure 8-1. Percentage of children ages 5–17 who spoke a language other than English at home and who spoke English with difficulty: Selected years, 1979–2007

NOTE: Respondents were asked whether each child in the household spoke a language other than English at home. If they answered “yes,” they were asked how well each child could speak English using the following categories: “very well,” “well,” “not well,” and “not at all.” All those who reported speaking English less than “very well” were considered to have difficulty speaking English. Spanish-language versions of both the Current Population Survey (CPS) and the American Community Survey (ACS) were available to respondents. Due to differences between the CPS and the ACS, use caution when comparing data before 2000 (CPS) with data from 2000 onward (ACS). For more information on CPS and the ACS, see supplemental notes 2 and 3, respectively.


Figure 8-2. Percentage of children ages 5–17 who spoke a language other than English at home and who spoke English with difficulty, by state: 2007

NOTE: Respondents were asked whether each child in the household spoke a language other than English at home. If they answered “yes,” they were asked how well each child could speak English using the following categories: “very well,” “well,” “not well,” and “not at all.” All those who reported speaking English less than “very well” were considered to have difficulty speaking English. For more information on the American Community Survey (ACS), see supplemental note 3.

The Condition of Education 2009

Technical Notes

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), enacted in 1975, mandates that children and youth ages 3–21 with disabilities be provided a free and appropriate public school education. Data collection activities to monitor compliance with IDEA began in 1976.

The number and percentage of children and youth ages 3–21 receiving special education services increased nearly every year since the inception of IDEA up until 2004–05 (see table A-9-1). Since 2004–05, the number and percentage of students served have declined each year through 2006–07. In 1976–77, some 3.7 million children and youth were served under IDEA, representing 5 percent of all children and youth ages 3–21. By 2006–07, some 6.7 million children and youth received IDEA services, corresponding to about 9 percent of all children and youth ages 3–21. Among students served under IDEA in 2006–07, about 59 percent were White, 20 percent were Black, 17 percent were Hispanic, 2 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1 percent were American Indian/Alaska Native (data not shown).

Since 1980–81, a larger percentage of children and youth ages 3–21 have received special education services for specific learning disabilities than for any other disability type (see table A-9-2). A specific learning disability is a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. These disorders include conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The percentage of children and youth ages 3–21 receiving special education services for a specific learning disability was 3 percentage points higher in 2006–07 than in 1976–77 (5 vs. 2 percent). In comparison, the next most prevalent disability type, speech or language impairments, remained fairly constant around 3 percent, with variations of less than 1 percentage point during this period.

In 2006–07, about 40 percent of all children and youth receiving services under IDEA had specific learning disabilities, and 22 percent had speech or language impairments. Students with disabilities such as other health impairments, mental retardation, emotional disturbances, developmental delay, and autism accounted for between 4 and 10 percent each. Children and youth with multiple disabilities; hearing, orthopedic, and visual impairments; traumatic brain injury; and deaf-blindness each accounted for less than 2 percent of children with disabilities.

For more information: Tables A-9-1 and A-9-2

Technical Notes

Special education services through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are available for eligible children and youth identified by a team of qualified professionals as having a disability that adversely affects their academic performance and as being in need of special education and related services. The estimates include children and youth receiving special education services through IDEA in early education centers and public schools in the 50 states and the District of Columbia and in Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools through 1993–94. Beginning in 1994–95, numbers and percentages exclude BIE schools. For more information about the student disabilities presented here, see supplemental note 7. The four race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. For more information on race/ethnicity, see supplemental note 1.
Figure 9-1. Percentage of 3- to 21-year-olds in early education centers or public schools receiving services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), by primary disability type: Selected school years, 1976–77 through 2006–07

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Specific learning disabilities</th>
<th>Speech or language impairments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976–77</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980–81</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990–91</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994–95</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000–01</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006–07</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

NOTE: For years prior to 1994–95, data included children and youth from birth to age 21, and estimates included Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools. Increases since 1987–88 are due in part to legislation enacted in fall 1986, which added a mandate for public school special education services for 3- to 5-year-old children with disabilities. For more information about student disabilities, see supplemental note 7.


Figure 9-2. Percentage distribution of 3- to 21-year-olds served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), by primary disability type: School year 2006–07

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Disability Type</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specific learning disabilities</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech or language impairments</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other health impairments</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental retardation</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional disturbance</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental delay</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autism</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple disabilities</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing impairments</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthopedic impairments</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual impairments</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traumatic brain injury</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Rounds to zero.

¹ A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

NOTE: Includes children and youth in the 50 states and the District of Columbia and excludes Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools. Detail may not sum to total because of rounding. For more information about student disabilities, see supplemental note 7.

From 2000 to 2007, undergraduate enrollment rose by 19 percent. During this period, there were larger relative gains in female enrollment, full-time enrollment, and enrollment in private institutions than in male enrollment, part-time enrollment, and enrollment in public institutions.

Total undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions increased from 7.4 million in 1970 to 13.2 million in 2000 and to 15.6 million in 2007. According to projections, enrollment in undergraduate institutions is expected to reach 17.5 million in 2018 (the last available year of projected data).

Undergraduate enrollment grew at a faster rate during the 1970s (42 percent) than in more recent decades (see table A-10-1). It was during the 1970s that female enrollment, part-time enrollment, and enrollment in public institutions increased most rapidly (by 76, 97, and 50 percent, respectively) and contributed to the large increases in these enrollments since 1970. Undergraduate enrollment of male and female students, part- and full-time students, and students at both public and private (not-for-profit and for-profit) institutions continued to increase throughout the 1980s and 1990s, though at slower rates than they had during the 1970s. From 2000 to 2007, undergraduate enrollment rose by 19 percent. During this period, there were larger relative gains in female enrollment (20 percent), full-time enrollment (24 percent), and enrollment in private institutions (32 percent) than in male enrollment (16 percent), part-time enrollment (10 percent), and enrollment in public institutions (15 percent).

Undergraduate enrollment at 2-year institutions increased from 5.9 to 6.6 million (11 percent) from 2000 to 2007 and is expected to reach 7.5 million students by 2018 (see table A-10-2). Between 2000 and 2007, 2-year college enrollment rose at a faster rate for females (13 percent) than for males (8 percent). According to projections, this pattern will continue, with female enrollment at 2-year institutions reaching nearly 4.5 million in 2018 and male enrollment reaching 3.0 million in 2018.

Between 2000 and 2007, full-time undergraduate enrollment in 2-year institutions increased at a faster rate (21 percent) than part-time enrollment at 2-year institutions (5 percent). Projections indicate that this pattern will continue, with full-time enrollment reaching 3.1 million in 2018 and part-time enrollment reaching 4.3 million in 2018. Enrollment in private 2-year institutions rose at a faster rate (17 percent) than enrollment in public 2-year institutions (also referred to as community colleges) (11 percent) between 2000 and 2007. According to projections, in 2018, enrollment at private 2-year institutions will reach 344,000, compared with 7.1 million for public 2-year institutions.

Undergraduate enrollment at 4-year institutions increased from 7.2 to 9.0 million (25 percent) from 2000 to 2007 and is expected to reach 10.0 million students in 2018. Female enrollment at 4-year institutions increased at a faster rate (26 percent) than male enrollment (23 percent) during this period. According to projections, this pattern will continue, with female enrollment at 4-year institutions reaching nearly 5.8 million in 2018 and male enrollment reaching 4.2 million in 2018.

Between 2000 and 2007, full-time undergraduate enrollment in 4-year institutions increased at a faster rate than part-time enrollment at 4-year institutions (25 vs. 22 percent). Projections indicate that this pattern will continue, and in 2018, full-time enrollment at 4-year institutions will reach 8.1 million and part-time enrollment will reach 2.0 million. Enrollment in private 4-year institutions rose at a faster rate (34 percent) than enrollment in public 4-year institutions (20 percent) from 2000 to 2007. According to projections, in 2018, enrollment at private 4-year institutions will reach 3.5 million, while enrollment at public 4-year institutions will reach 6.5 million.

Technical Notes

Projections are based on data through 2007 and middle alternative assumptions concerning the economy. The most recent year of actual data is 2007, and 2018 is the last year for which projected data are available. For more information on projections, see NCES 2009-062. Data for 1999 were imputed using alternative procedures. For more information, see NCES 2001-083, appendix E. For more information on the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), see supplemental note 3. For more information about the Classification of Postsecondary Education Institutions, see supplemental note 8.
Figure 10-1. Actual and projected total undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by sex and attendance status: Fall 1970–2018

Figure 10-2. Undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by control of institution: Fall 2000 and 2007

Graduate and First-Professional Enrollment

Enrollment in both graduate and first-professional programs increased between 2000 and 2007. For both program types, increases in enrollment are projected to continue through 2018, with enrollment increasing at a faster rate for females than for males.

In 1976, some 1.3 million students were enrolled in graduate programs: 715,000 males and 619,000 females (see table A-11-1). Graduate enrollment fluctuated between the mid-1970s and mid-1980s but increased between 1985 and 2007 to 2.3 million. For females, enrollment increased between the mid-1970s and 2007 to nearly 1.4 million, while for males, enrollment decreased between the mid- and late 1970s and fluctuated in the early 1980s, before increasing through 2007 to 910,000.

An additional 244,000 students were enrolled in first-professional programs in 1976: 190,000 males and 54,000 females. First-professional enrollment fluctuated during the 1980s before increasing between 1990 and 2007 to 351,000. For males, enrollment decreased between the mid-1970s and the late 1980s and fluctuated through 2000; between 2001 and 2007, male enrollment increased to 178,000, the highest point since the mid-1990s. Enrollment for females increased between the mid-1970s and 2007 to 173,000.

Projections indicate that enrollment increases in graduate and first-professional programs will persist, with graduate enrollment exceeding 2.7 million and first-professional enrollment reaching 422,000 in 2018. Increases for males and females are also expected at both levels through 2018; however, female enrollment is expected to increase faster than male enrollment.

From 2000 to 2007, graduate and first-professional enrollment increased for each racial/ethnic group (see table A-11-2). Whites held the greatest share of enrollment at both levels during this period but experienced the least growth. White graduate enrollment increased by 16 percent (from 1.3 to 1.5 million students) from 2000 to 2007, and first-professional enrollment increased by 11 percent (220,000 to 245,000). In comparison, total graduate enrollment for students in all other racial/ethnic groups (Blacks, Hispanics, Asians/Pacific Islanders, and American Indians/Alaska Natives) increased by 53 percent (359,000 to 548,000), and first-professional enrollment increased by 25 percent (78,000 to 97,000) during this period. Among these graduate students, growth was greatest for Blacks (67 percent) and least for Asians/Pacific Islanders (33 percent). At the first-professional level, among these students, Asians/Pacific Islanders saw the greatest growth (30 percent) from 2000 to 2007, and American Indians/Alaska Natives saw the least growth (13 percent). In 2007, students in all other racial/ethnic groups represented 24 percent of graduate enrollment, up from 19 percent in 2000, and 28 percent of first-professional enrollment, up from 25 percent in 2000.

Differences in enrollment patterns for males and females were also found by race/ethnicity. At the graduate level, male enrollment increased in each racial/ethnic group from 2000 to 2007. For White males, graduate enrollment increased by 11 percent (from 503,000 to 560,000) during this period. In comparison, graduate enrollment for males in all other racial/ethnic groups increased by 38 percent (from 135,000 to 186,000). Among these males at the graduate level, Blacks experienced the greatest growth (50 percent) from 2000 to 2007, while Asians/Pacific Islanders experienced the least growth (25 percent). For females at the graduate level, enrollment increases also occurred for each racial/ethnic group from 2000 to 2007, with the least growth occurring for White females (20 percent), from 756,000 to 905,000. Among females in all other racial/ethnic groups, Blacks experienced the greatest growth in graduate enrollment (74 percent) from 2000 to 2007, while Asians/Pacific Islanders experienced the least growth (41 percent). In 2007, at the graduate level, males in all other racial/ethnic groups made up 20 percent of male enrollment, up from 17 percent in 2000, and their female counterparts made up 26 percent of female enrollment, up from 21 percent in 2000. At the first-professional level, from 2000 to 2007, enrollment trends for males and females by race/ethnicity were generally similar to those at the graduate level.

For more information: Tables A-11-1 and A-11-2; Indicators 4 and 10
Glossary: First-professional degree, Nonresident alien
NCES 2009-020

Technical Notes

The most recent year of actual data is 2007, and 2018 is the last year for which projected data are available. For more information on projections, see NCES 2009-062. Because of underreporting and nonreporting of racial/ethnic data, some estimates are slightly lower than corresponding data in other published tables.

Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Nonresident aliens are shown separately since information about their race/ethnicity is not available. For more information on race/ethnicity, see supplemental note 1. For more information on the Classification of Postsecondary Education Institutions, see supplemental note 8.