



RACE AND ETHNICITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

2024 Status Report
Executive Summary



Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: 2024 Status Report

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: 2024 Status Report follows *Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: A Status Report* (2019) and *Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: 2020 Supplement*. These reports and the accompanying website provide a data-informed foundation for those who are working to close persistent equity gaps and also offer a glimpse into the educational pathways of today’s college students and the educators who serve them. For more information, including downloadable figures and detailed data tables behind the figures presented in this report, please visit equityinhighered.org.

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The U.S. Census Bureau forecast that the White population will be less than half of the total U.S. population by 2045—what do educational pathways look like for a racially and ethnically diverse student body?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

U.S. postsecondary education is currently facing the challenges and opportunities presented by a growing and highly diverse population. Between 2002 and 2022, the population of the United States grew from about 282 million to approximately 329 million people. The U.S. population has not only increased, but it has also become more racially and ethnically diverse. The Hispanic or Latino population has grown considerably and represented one in five individuals in 2022. The U.S. Census Bureau forecast that the White population will be less than half of the total U.S. population by 2045¹ (Vespa, Medina, and Armstrong 2020). Given these population changes, what do educational pathways look like for a racially and ethnically diverse student body? How can higher education actors and society at large make informed decisions to promote social and economic mobility?

The American Council on Education (ACE)'s Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education project fills the need for a singular source from which policymakers, researchers, higher education practitioners, and others can access these types of data combined in a straightforward and reliable format. The project provides a data-informed foundation that enables the higher education community to examine the myriad differences by race and ethnicity that exist within the U.S. postsecondary education system. The data should serve as a starting point for stakeholders to ask questions and seek answers to how the higher education sector can close persistent racial equity gaps.

Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: 2024 Status Report examines over 200 indicators to determine who accesses a variety of educational environments and experiences, to explore how student trajectories and outcomes differ by race and ethnicity, and to provide an overview of the racial and ethnic backgrounds of faculty, staff, and college presidents. Many indicators present a snapshot of the most recent publicly available data, while others depict data over time. In addition to the Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education project's traditional focus on disaggregating data by demographic characteristics, this report includes for the first time information on enrollment, completion, and financing by Carnegie Classification.² Additionally, graduate enrollment trends in this report were analyzed by R1 doctoral, other doctoral, and master's institutions to offer a more nuanced view into graduate school completion. Finally, most available data sources combine diverse groups of students who have different experiences. For example, *Hispanic or Latino* included students of both South American and Puerto Rican origin, among others; yet data show that South American students generally had stronger educational outcomes than those from Puerto Rico. Students who were categorized as Asian included those from Indian backgrounds, who tended to have higher levels of attainment than those of other Asian subgroups. And some of the categories, such as Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander and American Indian or Alaska Native students, were frequently too small to yield meaningful results in surveys that are based on samples. Nonetheless, the differences reported here are stark and demand attention.

1 Vespa, Jonathan, Lauren Medina, and David M. Armstrong, 2020. *Demographic Turning Points for the United States: Population Projections for 2020 to 2060*. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

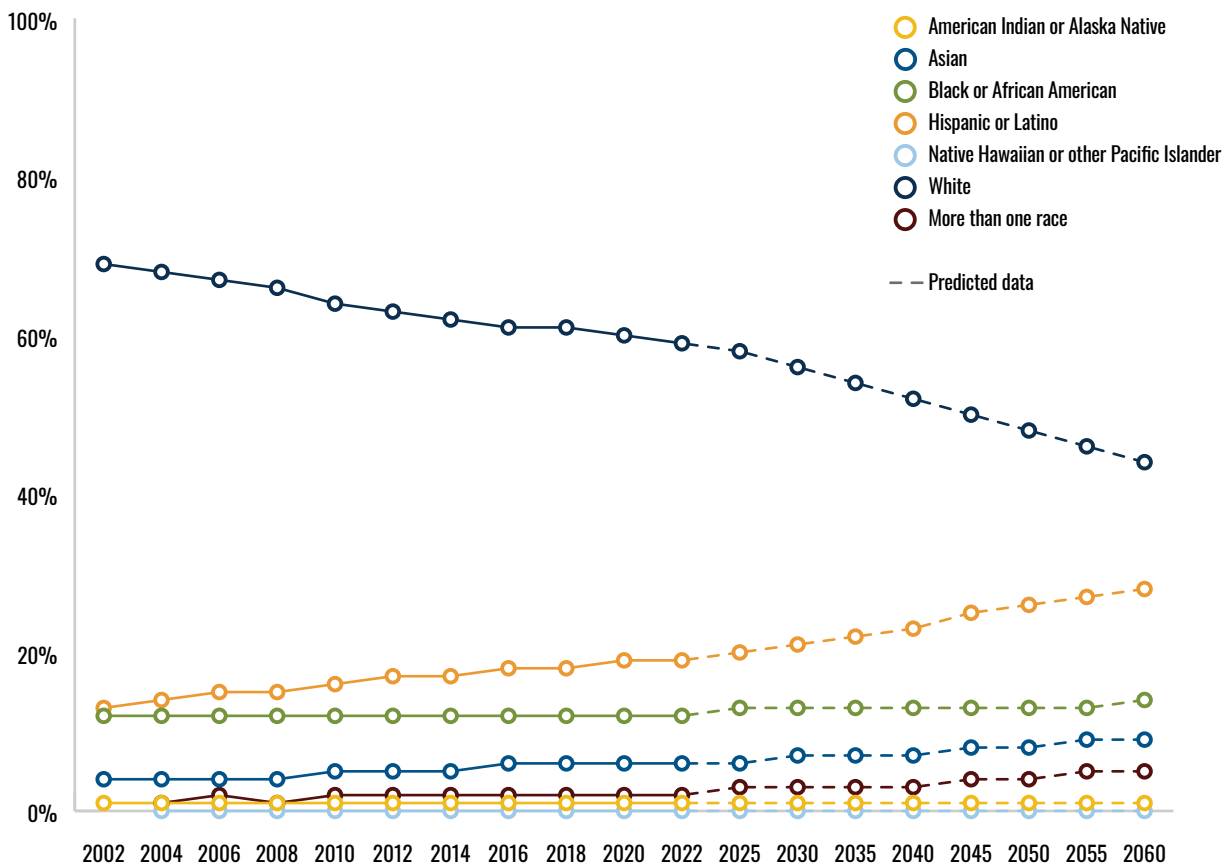
2 This report utilized the 2018 Basic Classification, as that was the most recent classification at the time of data analysis.



Similar to the increased diversity of the U.S. population, diversity in higher education participation has also increased.

Although the White population has continued to be the largest racial and ethnic group in the U.S., its share of the overall population decreased from 69.1 percent in 2002 to 59.2 percent in 2022. In contrast, the Hispanic or Latino population grew from 13.3 percent in 2002 to 19.1 percent in 2022 and increased the most in its total share of the overall population (see figure 1). Postsecondary education also experienced a demographic transformation due to the increased enrollment of students from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds. In particular, the undergraduate enrollment rates of Hispanic or Latino graduates and the share of Hispanic or Latino students among all undergraduate enrollment grew dramatically over the past two decades. Also, between 1999-2000 and 2019-20, the share of White students among all undergraduate enrollment dropped from 65.9 percent to 47.6 percent, while the share of students of color increased from 32.2 percent to 49.9 percent.

Figure 1: The U.S. Population, by Race and Ethnicity: 2002 to 2022, with Projections up to 2060



Sources: Data from U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2002-22; National Population Projections, 2017.
 Note: In 2002, the only reported racial demographic categories were Hispanic; White; Black; American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut; and Asian or Pacific Islander.

The levels of educational attainment continued to rise for all racial and ethnic groups, yet the gaps—such as those for non-White, non-Asian adults who were less likely to get a college degree—remained large.

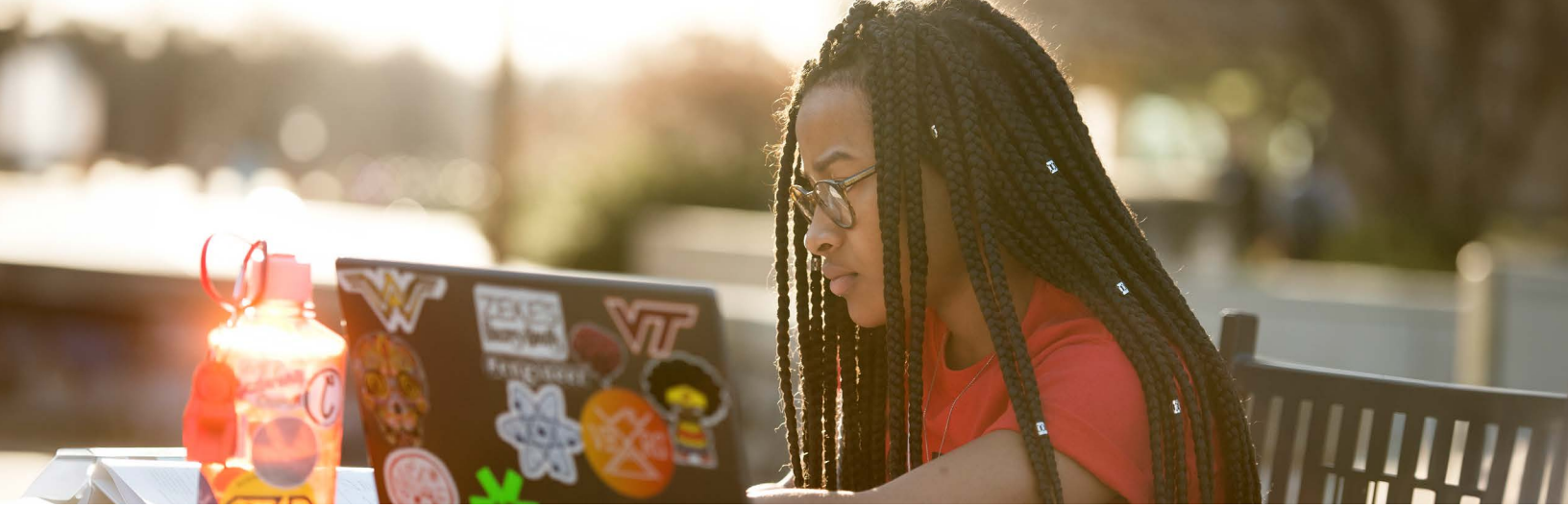
The share of adults who earned a bachelor’s degree or higher increased from 26.7 percent in 2002 to 37.7 percent in 2022. Hispanic or Latino adults made significant progress in educational attainment; their share of those who earned a bachelor’s degree or higher rose from 11.1 percent in 2002 to 20.9 percent in 2022. However, the growth in attainment of a bachelor’s degree or higher among White (from 29.4 percent to 41.8 percent) and Asian (from 47.7 percent to 60.2 percent) adults further increased existing gaps (see table 1).

Table 1: Educational Attainment of Adults Ages 25 and Older, by Race and Ethnicity: 2002 and 2022

		Less than High School	High School Graduate	Some College but No Degree	Associate Degree	Bachelor’s Degree	Master’s Degree	Professional Degree	Doctoral Degree
2002	All racial and ethnic groups	15.9%	32.1%	17.0%	8.3%	17.7%	6.3%	1.5%	1.2%
	American Indian or Alaska Native	21.5%	36.4%	19.7%	8.4%	9.6%	3.0%	0.4% !!	1.0%!
	Asian	12.3%	21.8%	11.2%	7.0%	31.3%	10.7%	2.7%	3.0%
	Black or African American	20.8%	33.9%	20.0%	8.1%	11.9%	4.0%	0.7%	0.5%
	Hispanic or Latino	43.0%	27.9%	12.7%	5.3%	8.1%	1.9%	0.7%	0.3%
	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	White	11.3%	33.0%	17.5%	8.8%	19.3%	7.1%	1.7%	1.3%
	More than one race	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2022	All racial and ethnic groups	8.8%	28.5%	14.6%	10.5%	23.4%	10.6%	1.5%	2.1%
	American Indian or Alaska Native	10.1%	39.3%	18.4%	12.0%	12.8%	6.4%	0.2%!!	0.8%!
	Asian	7.5%	18.3%	7.7%	6.3%	33.1%	19.3%	2.4%	5.4%
	Black or African American	9.5%	33.5%	18.1%	11.0%	17.3%	8.1%	1.0%	1.5%
	Hispanic or Latino	24.8%	32.7%	13.0%	8.6%	14.5%	4.7%	0.9%	0.8%
	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	6.7%	36.3%	14.7%	13.0%	19.5%	7.3%	0.4% !!	2.3%!
	White	4.8%	27.4%	14.9%	11.1%	26.1%	11.7%	1.7%	2.3%
	More than one race	5.8%	25.2%	18.0%	13.7%	24.0%	10.5%	0.8%!	2.1%

Sources: Data from U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2002 and 2022.

Notes: In 2002, the only reported racial demographic categories were Hispanic; White; Black; American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut; and Asian or Pacific Islander. | ! Interpret with caution. Ratio of standard error to estimate is greater than 30 percent but less than 50 percent. | !! Interpret with caution. Ratio of standard error is greater than 50 percent.



While postsecondary completions increased for all racial and ethnic groups, some consistently experienced poorer outcomes than those of other groups.

Regardless of the institution type at which they began, Black or African American students were less likely than their peers from other racial and ethnic groups to complete a degree or certificate. For example, among students who began at R1 doctoral universities in fall 2011, the shares of those who had earned a bachelor’s degree six years later ranged from 69.2 percent of Black or African American students to 86.5 percent of Asian and 90.9 percent of international students.

Among those who began at associate institutions, the shares who had left their college or university within six years of first enrolling without completing a degree or certificate ranged from 23.0 percent of international and 33.1 percent of Asian students to 52.2 percent of Black or African American students. These numbers show that Black or African American students consistently had lower completion rates than those of any other racial and ethnic groups, regardless of the Carnegie Classification of the starting institution.

Postsecondary completions differed widely among racial and ethnic groups.

Bachelor’s degrees were concentrated among Asian, White, and multiracial students. In comparison, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latino, and American Indian or Alaska Native students earned a larger share of subbaccalaureate certificates and degrees (see table 2).

Table 2: Undergraduate Completions Across Award Levels, by Race and Ethnicity: 2021

	Short-Term Certificates	Long-Term Certificates	Associate Degrees	Bachelor’s Degrees	Total
All racial and ethnic groups	19.3%	0.3%	26.9%	53.5%	100%
American Indian or Alaska Native	26.3%	0.3%	33.9%	39.6%	100%
Asian	13.5%	0.2%	24.5%	61.8%	100%
Black or African American	24.1%	0.3%	28.4%	47.2%	100%
Hispanic or Latino	22.6%	0.2%	34.8%	42.4%	100%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	21.4%	0.5%	32.0%	46.1%	100%
White	18.5%	0.3%	24.6%	56.6%	100%
More than one race	17.2%	0.3%	26.8%	55.7%	100%
Race or ethnicity unknown	22.2%	0.3%	26.6%	50.9%	100%
International students	7.8%	0.1%	16.2%	75.9%	100%

Sources: Data from U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2001 and 2021.

Notes: Data reflect undergraduate degrees and certificates earned at all Title IV–eligible, degree-granting institutions. | *Short-term certificates* include those that were of less than two academic years. | *Long-term certificates* include those that were of at least two but less than four academic years. | In 2001, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander students was not an available category. These students were categorized as Asian. | In 2001, data on students of more than one race were not collected separately.

Data reveal disparities in how students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds financed their postsecondary education, with Black or African American students being more likely than those from other groups to incur large amounts of educational debt.

In 2019–20, the shares of undergraduates who borrowed to pay educational costs ranged from 26.8 percent of Asian students (who borrowed an average of \$7,620) and 28.1 percent of Hispanic or Latino students (who borrowed an average of \$7,448) to 49.7 percent of Black or African American students (who borrowed an average of \$7,373) (see table 3). Among both dependent and independent students, Black or African American undergraduates borrowed at the highest rates across all sectors and income groups. Hispanic or Latino and Asian students borrowed at lower-than-average rates. However, Asian students borrowed the highest amount per borrower when including parent loans.

Table 3: Types of Loans: Undergraduate Students, by Race and Ethnicity: 2019–20

	Direct Subsidized Loans		Direct Unsubsidized Loans		Subsidized and Unsubsidized Combined		Perkins Loans		Private Loans		Direct PLUS Loans to Parents or Guardians		Total Loans (Excluding Parent PLUS Loans)		Total loans (Including Parent PLUS Loans)	
	% Borrowing (n=4,940,177)	Average Amount Borrowed per Borrower	% Borrowing (n=4,939,126)	Average Amount Borrowed per Borrower	% Borrowing (n=5,872,062)	Average Amount Borrowed per Borrower	% Borrowing (n=521,468)	Average Amount Borrowed per Borrower	% Borrowing (n=1,018,388)	Average Amount Borrowed per Borrower	% Borrowing (n=748,978)	Average Amount Borrowed per Borrower	% Borrowing (n=6,169,184)	Average Amount Borrowed per Borrower	% Borrowing (n=6,200,628)	Average Amount Borrowed per Borrower
All racial and ethnic groups	28.9%	\$3,790	28.9%	\$3,975	34.3%	\$6,532	3.0%	\$2,884	6.0%	\$10,028	4.4%	\$16,273	36.1%	\$7,948	36.3%	\$9,873
American Indian or Alaska Native	21.3%	\$3,416	22.5%	\$4,480	26.0%	\$6,674	1.2% †	‡	4.3%	\$7,182 †	0.7% ††	‡	26.8%	\$7,620	27.0%	\$7,840
Asian	24.3%	\$4,146	22.0%	\$3,941	28.5%	\$6,571	3.9%	\$2,868	5.3%	\$13,559	4.3%	\$20,770	29.9%	\$8,756	30.2%	\$11,600
Black or African American	43.8%	\$3,645	42.1%	\$4,088	48.4%	\$6,855	4.2%	\$2,698	4.4%	\$7,230	6.2%	\$14,339	49.7%	\$7,373	49.9%	\$9,111
Hispanic or Latino	23.6%	\$3,741	20.8%	\$3,782	26.5%	\$6,282	1.7%	\$2,705	4.4%	\$9,088	3.0%	\$15,501	28.1%	\$7,448	28.2%	\$9,079
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	27.3%	\$3,423	30.1%	\$4,427	34.9%	\$6,484	‡	‡	3.9% †	‡	3.8% †	‡	36.6%	\$7,426	36.6%	\$8,453
White	29.3%	\$3,821	31.2%	\$4,009	36.6%	\$6,465	3.4%	\$2,944	7.3%	\$10,172	4.6%	\$16,204	38.6%	\$8,151	38.8%	\$10,058
More than one race	30.7%	\$3,858	30.5%	\$3,788	35.0%	\$6,687	3.2%	\$3,156	6.1%	\$10,594	5.4%	\$18,633	36.6%	\$8,198	36.9%	\$10,848

Source: Data from U.S. Department of Education, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, 2020.

Notes: † Interpret data with caution. Estimate is unstable because the standard error represents more than 30 percent of the estimate. †† Interpret data with caution. Estimate is unstable because the standard error represents more than 50 percent of the estimate. ‡ Reporting standards not met.

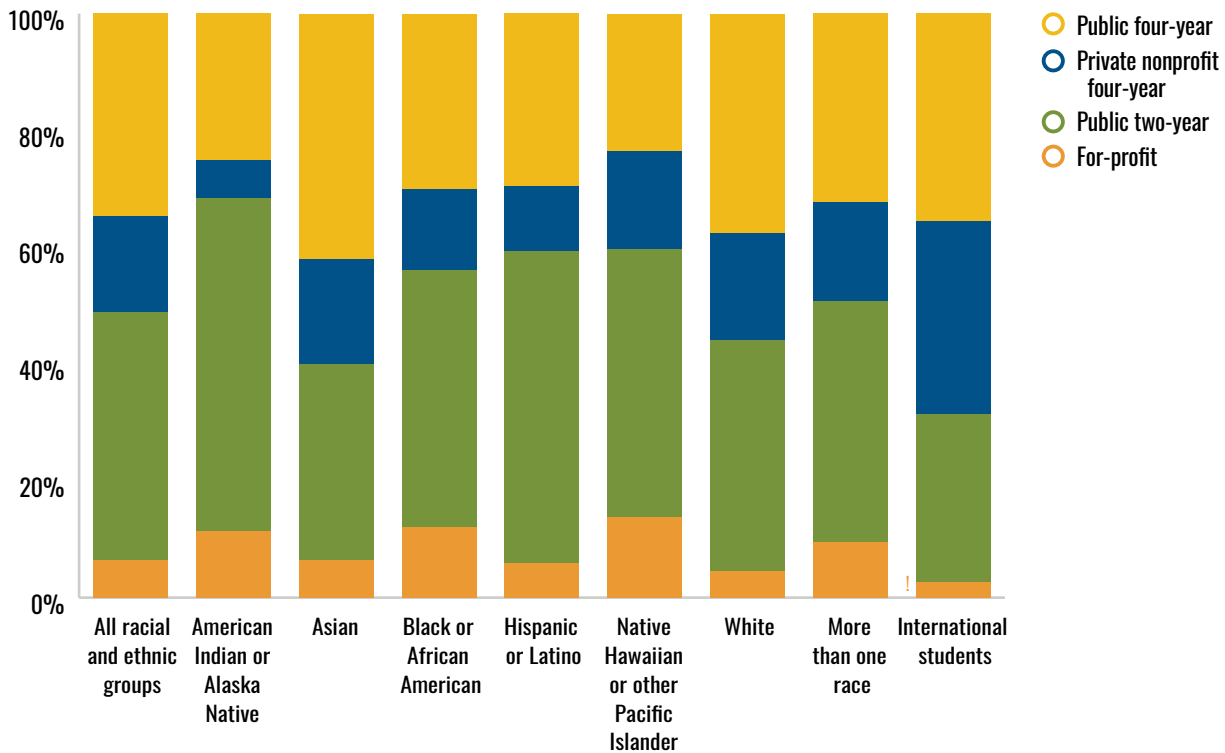


Larger shares of Black or African American and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander students enroll at for-profit institutions for both undergraduate and graduate degrees compared to other groups.

Black or African American and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander enrolled at for-profit institutions at higher rates than those of other groups.

Larger shares of Black or African American and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander undergraduates than those of other groups were enrolled at for-profit institutions in 2019–20 (12.1 percent and 13.7 percent, respectively, compared with 6 percent overall) (see figure 2). These two groups were also more likely than others to earn a degree or certificate at for-profit institutions in both undergraduate and graduate levels.

Figure 2: Undergraduate Enrollment Across Sectors, by Race and Ethnicity: 2019–20



Source: Data from U.S. Department of Education, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, 2020.

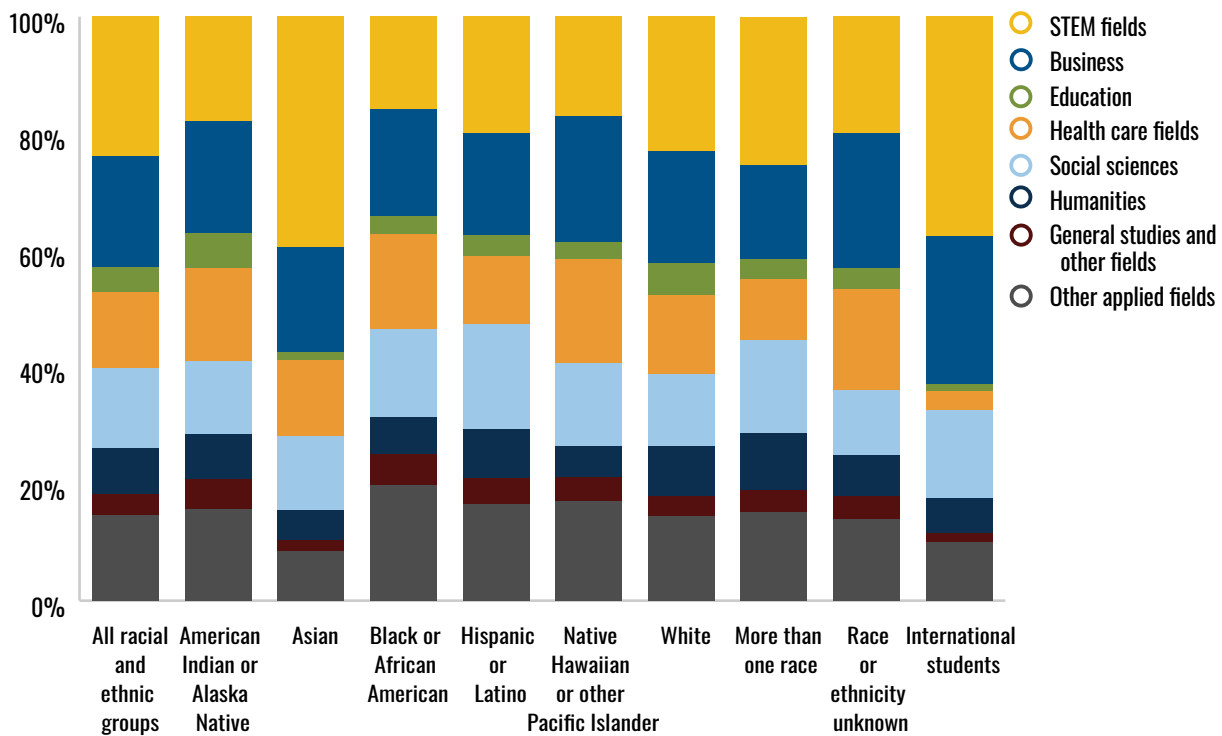
Notes: Data reflect undergraduate enrollment at public four-year, private nonprofit four-year, public two-year, and for-profit institutions. | Institutions were categorized into sectors based upon control of the institution and the length of the predominant award granted. | Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. | ! Interpret data with caution. Estimate is unstable because the standard error represents more than 30 percent of the estimate.

While for-profit institutions awarded 7.0 percent of all undergraduate completions in 2021, 18.5 percent of Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander and 13.6 percent of Black or African American students earned their undergraduate degrees and certificates at for-profit institutions. Also, while for-profit institutions awarded 7.7 percent of all graduate completions in 2021, 21.5 percent of Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander and 18.5 percent of Black or African American students earned their graduate degrees and certificates at for-profit institutions.

Science, technology, mathematics, and engineering (STEM) fields were the popular choice among international and Asian students.

Among 2019–20 bachelor’s degree recipients, nearly four in 10 Asian and international students studied STEM fields, while fewer than 20 percent of Hispanic or Latino, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and Black or African American students did so (see figure 3). Furthermore, STEM was also the most popular field of study for research doctoral degree recipients. About 70 percent of international students and approximately 48 percent of Asian students earned their research doctoral degrees in STEM, while only 10 percent of Black or African American students did so.

Figure 3: Field of Study for Bachelor’s Degree Recipients, by Race and Ethnicity: 2021



Source: Data from U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2021.
 Notes: Data reflect bachelor’s degrees earned at all Title IV–eligible, degree-granting institutions. | *STEM fields* includes computer and information sciences, engineering and engineering technology, biological and physical sciences, science technology, math, and agriculture. | *General studies and other programs* includes fields such as liberal arts and sciences, interpersonal and social skills, personal awareness and self-improvement, and multi- or interdisciplinary studies, among others. | *Other applied fields* in this figure includes personal and consumer services; manufacturing, construction, repair and transportation; military technology and protective services; architecture; communications; public administration and human services; design and applied arts; law and legal studies; library sciences; and theology and religious vocations.

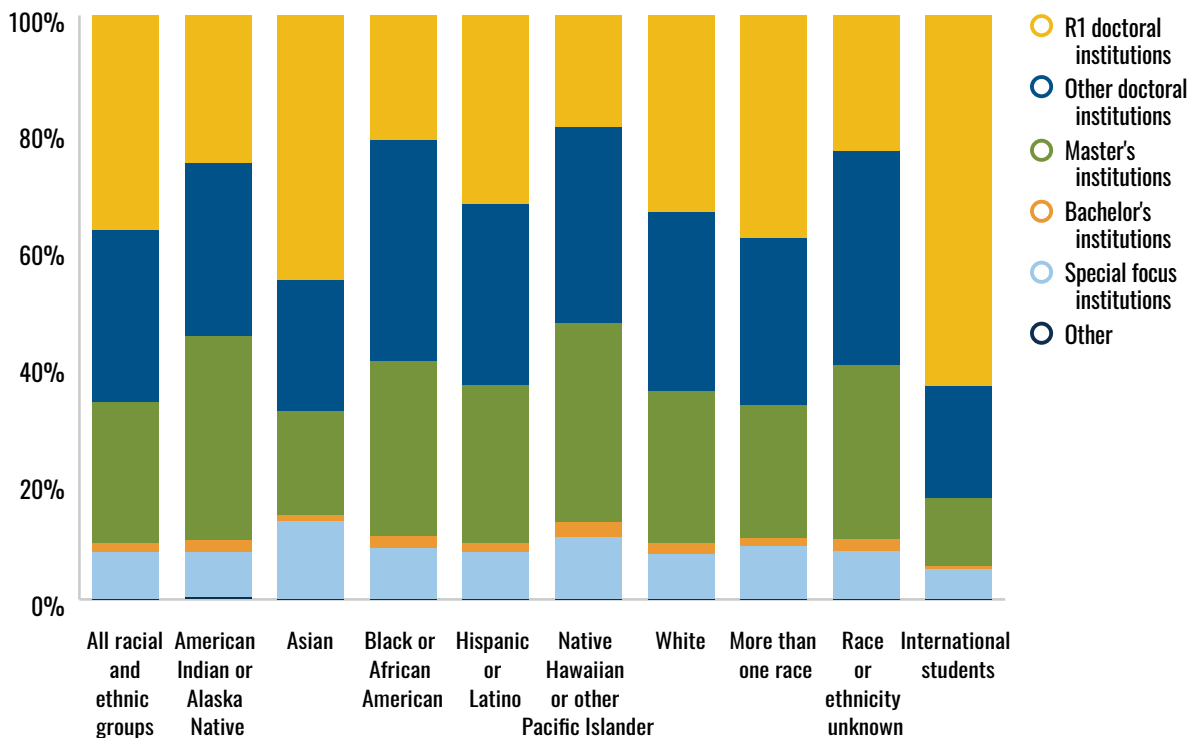


For all racial and ethnic groups, the six-year completion rate was the highest at R1 doctoral institutions, with Asian and international students more likely than others to earn a graduate degree or certificate.

Completion rates at R1 doctoral institutions were higher when compared with those from other institution types.

For all racial and ethnic groups, the six-year completion rate was the highest at R1 doctoral institutions and the lowest at associate and special focus institutions. Asian and international students were more likely than others to earn a graduate degree or certificate at R1 doctoral institutions (about 45 percent and 64 percent, respectively, compared with approximately 37 percent overall). American Indian or Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander students were more likely than others to earn a graduate degree or certificate at master's institutions (about 35 percent and 34 percent, respectively, compared with approximately 24 percent overall) (see figure 4).

Figure 4: Graduate Completions Across Carnegie Classifications, by Race and Ethnicity: 2021



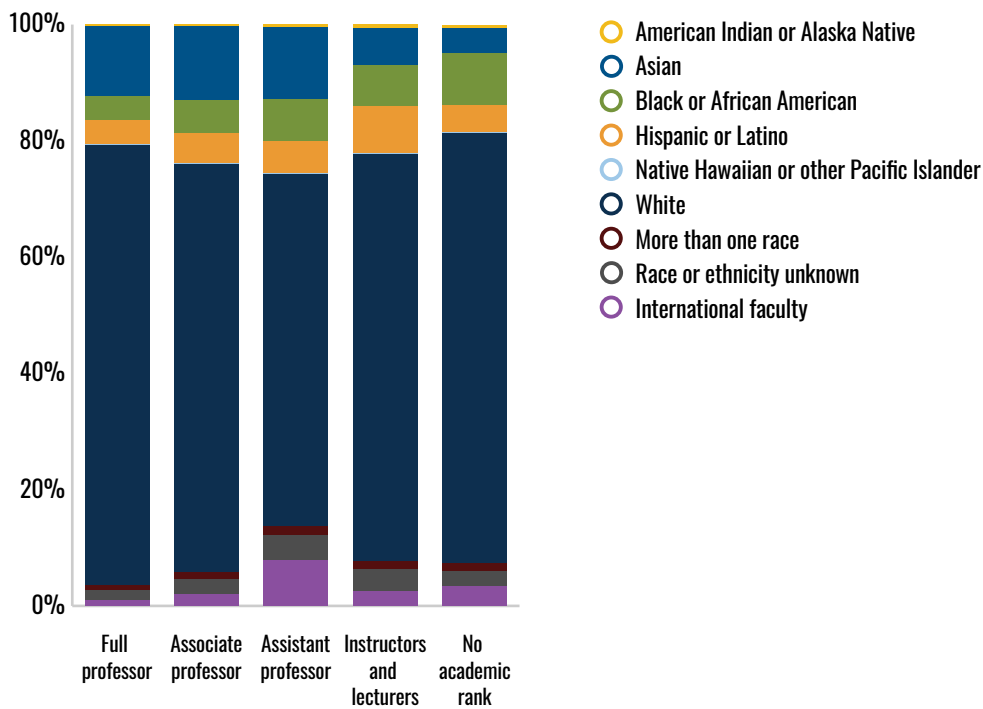
Source: Data from U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2021.

Notes: Data reflect graduate degrees and certificates earned at all Title IV-eligible, degree-granting institutions that were classified by the 2018 Carnegie Basic Classification. | Other includes other types of institutions, including some cases of associate institutions and Tribal Colleges and Universities that offer or confer graduate degrees.

College and university faculty and staff were less racially and ethnically diverse than their students. Despite increased shares of non-White students at all levels of higher education, college faculty, staff, and administrators remained predominantly White.

In 2021, 69.4 percent of all full-time faculty and 56.2 percent of newly hired full-time faculty were White, whereas 6.1 percent of all full-time faculty and 9.3 percent of new full-time faculty were Black or African American. Moreover, professors who had lower academic ranks were more diverse than those who had higher ranks. The share of White faculty among all full-time full professors was 75.7 percent, while the shares among associate and assistant professors were 70.2 percent and 60.2 percent, respectively (see figure 5).

Figure 5: Full-Time Faculty Across Race and Ethnicity, by Faculty Rank: Fall 2021



Source: Data from U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2021.
 Note: Data reflect full-time instructional staff with faculty status at all Title IV-eligible, degree-granting institutions.



