



Postsecondary National Policy Institute

BLACK STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

While Black students are catching up to their white counterparts in terms of college enrollment, there has been less progress in closing the degree attainment gap. In 2019, 29% of the Black population aged 25 to 29 held a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 45% of the white population in the same age range.

ENROLLMENT/DEGREE ATTAINMENT

- The college enrollment rate for Black students who enter immediately after completing high school (GED recipients included) was 57% in 2019, lower than in 2000 (66%).
 - Between 2000 and 2010, Black undergraduate enrollment increased by 73% (from 1.5 million students to 2.7 million).
 - However, between 2009 and 2019, Black undergraduate enrollment decreased from 2.5 million students to 2.1 million students.
- Of the 16.6 million undergraduate students enrolled in the Fall of 2019, Black students made up 2.1 million students of the undergraduate population but they were not equally represented at different institution types.
 - Black students made up 12% of the student population at 4-year public institutions, 13% of the student population at 4-year private nonprofit institutions, and 29% of the student population at 4-year private for-profit institutions.
 - Only 15% of Black students attended a highly selective institution, and only 8% of Black students attended an elite research institution.
- Black students earned 14% of all bachelors degrees, 7% of all master's degrees, and 5% of all doctoral degrees conferred in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields in the 2018-19 academic year.
- Bachelor's degree attainment for Black people aged 25 to 29 has increased more slowly than among white people.
 - 29% of Black people aged 25 to 29 held a bachelor's degree or higher in 2019, up 11 percentage points from 18% in 2000.
 - By comparison, degree attainment for white 25 to 29-year olds increased from 34% to 45% during the same time period.
- In 2019, approximately 40% of Black adults aged 25 to 29 had at least a two-year college degree, an increase from 26% in 2000. Among white adults, this level of degree attainment grew from 44% in 2000 to 56% in 2019.

GRANTS, LOANS & DEBT

- 72% of Black students received Pell Grants in 2015-16, compared with 34% of white students. The average award for Black students was \$5,000.
- In the 2015-2016 academic year, 71% of Black students took out federal student loans, compared with 56% of white students.

- In the 2015-16 academic year, Black students took out larger federal loans on average (\$11,140) than Hispanic (\$10,500), Asian (\$10,940), and American Indian/Alaska Native (\$9,210) students. On average, white students (\$12,100) and Pacific Islander students (\$12,560) took out slightly higher loan amounts than Black students.

SOURCES

[“The Condition of Education 2021.”](#) U.S Department of Education, May 2021. Accessed July 2021.

[“Digest of Education Statistics: 2019.”](#) National Center for Education Statistics. 2020. Accessed July 2021.

[“National Postsecondary Student Aid Study: 2016 Undergraduates.”](#) National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education. Accessed July 2021.

[“Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2018.”](#) U.S. Department of Education. Accessed July 2021.

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