



Postsecondary National Policy Institute

Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Students in Higher Education

CENSUS OVERVIEW

According to the Census' American Community Survey, in 2021 [19.8 million](#) (5.9%) of the U.S. population were Asian American or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (AAPI).¹ Of the approximately 19.1 million Asian Americans, the largest ethnic groups were Asian Indian (4.4 million), Chinese (4.4 million), Filipino (2.9 million), Vietnamese (1.9 million), Korean (1.4 million), and Japanese (742,000). Of the 612,448 Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander residents, 185,000 were Native Hawaiian, 122,000 were Samoan, and 69,000 were Chamorro. Among Asian American residents aged 25 or over, [56.4%](#) had earned a bachelor's degree or higher. Among Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander residents aged 25 or over, [18.2%](#) had earned a bachelor's degree or higher. In 2010, the shares of bachelor's degree or higher recipients for Asian Americans and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders were [49.9%](#) and [14.9%](#), respectively.²

ENROLLMENT

- In [fall 2020](#), AAPI students made up 7.3% of all postsecondary enrollment.
- In 2020, 64% of the Asian and 34% of the Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander 18–24-year-old population were [enrolled](#) in college compared to 40% of the overall U.S. population.
- Since fall 2010, AAPI student enrollment has increased from 1.28 million to 1.39 million, an 8.5% increase:
 - Undergraduate enrollment increased from 1.09 million to 1.14 million, a 5.2% increase.
 - Graduate enrollment increased from 194,300 to 246,400, a 26.8% increase.
- Disaggregating data shows a mixed result:
 - Asian American student enrollment increased from 1.22 million to 1.34 million between fall 2010 and fall 2020.
 - Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander enrollment decreased from 64,000 to 48,600 between fall 2010 and fall 2020.
- AAPI students are much more likely to [attend](#) public versus private institutions of higher education.
 - In fall 2020, 74.9% of AAPI students attended public institutions:
 - 52% attended public four-year institutions.
 - 22.9% attended public two-year institutions.
- [21%](#) of the fall 2020 enrollment at Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs) were AAPI students.

¹ Collectively, the AAPI umbrella represents over 50 different ethnic groups that vary greatly in terms of languages, English proficiency, colonial history, immigration patterns, and socioeconomic and first-generation college-going status. For federal data sources, AAPI includes Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander populations.

² When discussing race/ethnicity, disaggregating to the extent possible is very important. We will be discussing AAPI students because this group is used for federal designations, but it is important to note that data is available at deeper levels than AAPI. For more information, see the [AAPI Data Project](#).

FINANCIAL AID

- According to the National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey, [48%](#) of AAPI students received some form of federal Title IV financial aid in the 2017–18 academic year, compared to 59% of all students.
 - [38%](#) of AAPI students received a Pell Grant, compared to 44% of all students.
 - [38%](#) of Asian American students received a Pell Grant, while 47% of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students received a Pell Grant.
 - [26%](#) of AAPI students received a federal student loan, compared to 39% of all students.
 - [25%](#) of Asian American students received a federal student loan, while 36% of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students received a federal student loan.
- Among AAPI students who received federal Title IV aid in 2017-18, the [average amount](#) received was \$8,339.
 - The average Pell Grant amount for AAPI students was \$4,144.
 - The average federal student loan amount for AAPI students was \$8,663.

COMPLETION/DEGREE ATTAINMENT

- [76%](#) of first-time, full-time AAPI students attending four-year institutions beginning in 2014 graduated within six years, compared to 64% for all students.
 - 77% of Asian American students graduated within six years, while 52% of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students graduated within six years.
- At two-year institutions, among first-time, full-time students beginning in 2017, [41%](#) of AAPI students graduated within three years, compared to 34% overall.
 - 42% of Asian American students graduated within three years, while 31% of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students graduated within three years.
- Of the more than two million [bachelor's degrees](#) conferred in the 2019–20 academic year, 161,444 (7.9%) went to AAPI students.

EARNINGS AND WEALTH

- According to the Baccalaureate and Beyond Study, ten years after receiving a bachelor's degree, AAPI graduates who reported having an income averaged a gross income of [\\$89,947](#), compared to the national average of \$76,370.
 - Asian American graduates reported an average gross income of \$91,282, while Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander graduates reported an average gross income of \$69,634.
- Wealth accumulation can be [measured](#) differently from income. Ten years after graduating:
 - [53%](#) of AAPI graduates reported owning a home, compared to 63% of all graduates.
 - [82%](#) of AAPI graduates had some form of a retirement account, compared to 87% of all graduates.

DATA SOURCES

[American Community Survey](#). & [Current Population Survey](#). U.S. Census Bureau, March 2023.
[Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study](#). National Center for Education Statistics, March 2023.
[Digest of Education Statistics](#). National Center for Education Statistics, March 2023.
[National Postsecondary Student Aid Study](#). National Center for Education Statistics, March 2023.