



Postsecondary National Policy Institute

Women of Color in Higher Education

CENSUS OVERVIEW

According to the Census' American Community Survey, in 2023 [19.2%](#) of the total U.S. population identified as a woman of color.¹ In total, 9.6% of the population were Hispanic or Latina women, 6.1% were Black women,² 3.1% were Asian women, 0.3% were American Indian/Alaska Native women, and 0.1% were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander women.³ Among women of color aged 25 or over, [31.2%](#) had earned a bachelor's degree or higher. The rate for Asian women is 56.7%, for Black women it is 29.3%, for Hispanic or Latina women it is 22.9%, for Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander women it is 21.9%, and for American Indian/Alaska Native women it is 18.4%. Bachelor's degree or higher attainment is up from [23.5%](#) in 2013 for women of color, with an average increase of 6.4 percentage points for all included racial/ethnic groups. Despite this increase, educational attainment for women of color in 2023 was below the national rate of 37.5% for all women.

ENROLLMENT

- In [fall 2022](#), women of color made up 24.8% of all postsecondary enrollment and 42.8% of all female student enrollment.⁴
 - Hispanic or Latina women represented 12.2%, Black women represented 8%, Asian women represented 4%, American Indian/Alaska Native women represented 0.4%, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander women represented 0.1% of all postsecondary enrollment.
- In 2023, 38.7% of 18–24-year-old women of color were enrolled in college, a similar share as all 18–24-year-old women.
 - This share varies considerably across race/ethnicity: 60.2% of Asian women, 36.2% of Black women, 35.4% of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander women, 35.1% of Hispanic or Latina women, and 20.9% of American Indian/Alaska Native women were enrolled.⁵
- Since [fall 2012](#), overall enrollment of women of color has increased from 4.38 million to 4.6 million, a 5.1% increase:
 - Undergraduate enrollment increased from 3.87 million to 3.94 million, a 1.9% increase.
 - Graduate enrollment for women of color increased considerably from 508,700 to 660,138, a 29.8% increase.

¹“Woman” in this fact sheet will denote the sex or gender designation of the data source. Therefore, in the Census, “woman” includes all individuals listed as “female.” Women of color estimates do not include those individuals included in “Other” racial/ethnic category or those who listed two or more races.

² Black or African American individuals will be described as “Black” in this fact sheet.

³ Hispanic or Latina estimates include people of all races who chose Hispanic or Latina as an ethnicity.

⁴ IPEDS reports nonresident students as a single racial category. These students are not included in the women of color classification.

⁵ Based on the author's calculations of the Census' Current Population Survey [microdata](#).

- The overall enrollment increase is largely driven by Hispanic or Latina women, which increased by 31.2%, and Asian women enrollment, which increased by 18.1%; Black women enrollment, however, declined by 20.8%, and American Indian/Alaska Native women enrollment decreased by 26.3%.
- Women of color are much more likely to [attend](#) public versus private institutions.
 - According to the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), in 2019–20, 64.9% of women of color attended public institutions:
 - 34% attended public four-year institutions.
 - 30.9% attended public two-year institutions.

FINANCIAL AID

- According to the NPSAS, [63.2%](#) of women of color received some form of federal Title IV financial aid in the 2019–20 academic year, compared to 55.9% of white female students.
 - [53.4%](#) of women of color received a Pell Grant, compared to 36.2% of white female students.
 - [34.7%](#) of women of color received a federal student loan, compared to 39.8% of white female students.
- The [average amount](#) of federal Title IV aid women of color received was \$8,573.
 - The average Pell Grant amount for women of color was \$4,276.
 - The average federal student loan amount for women of color was \$8,473.

COMPLETION/DEGREE ATTAINMENT

- [61.8%](#) of first-time, full-time women of color attending four-year institutions beginning in 2017 graduated within six years, compared to 67.5% for all women.
 - There is considerable variation, however:
 - [81.1%](#) of Asian women graduated within six years.
 - 62.2% of Hispanic or Latina women graduated within six years.
 - 51.2% of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander women graduated within six years.
 - 50.3% of Black women graduated within six years.
 - 43.7% of American Indian/Alaska Native women graduated within six years.
- Of the more than two million [bachelor's degrees](#) conferred in the 2021–22 academic year, 435,872 (21.6%) went to women of color.

EARNINGS AND WEALTH

- According to the Baccalaureate & Beyond study, ten years after receiving a bachelor's degree, women of color graduates who reported having an income averaged a gross income of [\\$66,632](#), nearly \$10,000 less than the national average.
 - Women of color tend to earn \$10,000 less on average than men of color, but the same as white women, indicating persistent intersectional discrepancies in earnings.
- Wealth accumulation can be [measured](#) differently from income. Ten years after graduating:
 - [50.6%](#) of women of color graduates reported owning a home, compared to 63% of all graduates.
 - [81.4%](#) of women of color graduates had some form of a retirement account, compared to 86.5% of all graduates.

DATA SOURCES

[American Community Survey](#) & [Current Population Survey](#). U.S. Census Bureau, February 2025.

[Baccalaureate & Beyond Survey](#). National Center for Education Statistics, November 2023.

[Digest of Education Statistics](#). National Center for Education Statistics, February 2025.

[National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey](#). National Center for Education Statistics, February 2025.