



Postsecondary National Policy Institute

Women of Color in Higher Education

CENSUS OVERVIEW

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, 3.1% were Asian women, 0.3% were American Indian/Alaska Native women, and 0.1% were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander women.¹ Among women of color aged 25 or over, 31.2% had earned a bachelor's degree or higher, which is up from 23.5% in 2013.¹ 56.7% of Asian women had earned a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 29.3% of Black women, 22.9% of Hispanic or Latina women, 21.9% of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander women, and 18.4% of American Indian/Alaska Native women.¹ In 2023, the percentage of women of color with a bachelor's degree or higher was below the national rate of 37.5% for all women.¹

ENROLLMENT

- In Fall 2022, women of color made up 24.8% of all postsecondary enrollment and 42.8% of all female student enrollment.³
 - Hispanic or Latina women comprised 12.2% of all postsecondary enrollment, while Black women comprised 8%, Asian women comprised 4%, American Indian/Alaska Native women comprised 0.4%, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander women comprised 0.1%.³
- In 2023, 38.7% of 18–24-year-old women of color were enrolled in college, a similar share as 18-24-year-old women of all races.³
 - 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.³
- 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.³
 - Graduate enrollment for women of color increased considerably from 508,700 to 660,138, a 29.8% increase.³
 - 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%.³
- Women of color are much more likely to attend public versus private institutions.⁵
 - In 2019–20, 64.9% of women of color attended public institutions:
 - 34% attended public four-year institutions.⁵
 - 30.9% attended public two-year institutions.⁵

* “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.

FINANCIAL AID

- In the 2019-20 academic year, 63.2% of women of color received some form of federal Title IV financial aid, compared to 55.9% of white female students.⁵
 - 53.4% of women of color received a Pell Grant, compared to 36.2% of white female students.⁵
 - 34.7% of women of color received a federal student loan, compared to 39.8% of white female students.⁵
- The average amount of federal Title IV aid women of color received was \$8,573.⁵
 - The average Pell Grant amount for women of color was \$4,276.⁵
 - The average federal student loan amount for women of color was \$8,473.⁵

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.⁴
 - There is considerable variation, however:
 - 81.1% of Asian women graduated within six years.⁴
 - 62.2% of Hispanic or Latina women graduated within six years.⁴
 - 51.2% of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander women graduated within six years.⁴
 - 50.3% of Black women graduated within six years.⁴
 - 43.7% of American Indian/Alaska Native women graduated within six years.⁴
- 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.³

EARNINGS AND WEALTH

- 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.²
 - 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.²
- Wealth accumulation can be measured differently from income.⁶ Ten years after graduating:
 - 50.6% of women of color graduates reported owning a home, compared to 63% of all graduates.²
 - 81.4% of women of color graduates had some form of a retirement account, compared to 86.5% of all graduates.²

DATA SOURCES

¹ [American Community Survey & Current Population Survey](#). U.S. Census Bureau, April 2025.

² [Baccalaureate & Beyond Longitudinal Study](#). National Center for Education Statistics, November 2023.

³ [Digest of Education Statistics](#). National Center for Education Statistics, April 2025.

⁴ [Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System](#). National Center for Education Statistics, April 2025.

⁵ [National Postsecondary Student Aid Study](#). National Center for Education Statistics, November 2023.

⁶ [Wealth Analysis FAQ](#). Urban Institute, 2021.