



Postsecondary National Policy Institute

Women of Color in Higher Education*

CENSUS OVERVIEW

In 2024, 19.6% of the U.S. population identified as women of color.¹ In total, 9.9% of the population were Hispanic or Latina women, 6.1% were Black women, 3.2% 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, 32.3% had earned a bachelor's degree or higher, which is up from 23.8% in 2014.¹ 58.1% of Asian women had earned a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 29.9% of Black women, 23.9% of Hispanic or Latina women, 23.8% of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander women, and 20.5% of American Indian/Alaska Native women.¹ In 2024, the percentage of all women of color with a bachelor's degree or higher was below the national rate of 37.8% for all women.¹

ENROLLMENT

- In Fall 2023, women of color accounted for 24.1% of all postsecondary enrollment and 41.8% of all female enrollment.⁴
 - Hispanic or Latina women comprised 12.0% of all postsecondary enrollment, while Black women comprised 7.7%, Asian women comprised 3.9%, American Indian/Alaska Native women comprised 0.4%, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander women comprised 0.1%.⁴
- Between Fall 2013 and Fall 2023, overall enrollment of women of color increased from 4.10 million to 4.58 million, an 11.7% increase:
 - Undergraduate enrollment for women of color increased from 3.64 million to 3.95 million, an 8.5% increase.³
 - Graduate enrollment for women of color increased from 464,111 to 631,946, a 36.2% increase.³
 - The overall enrollment increase is largely driven by Hispanic or Latina women's enrollment, which increased by 34.8%, and Asian women's enrollment, which increased by 22.6%; Black women's enrollment decreased by 13.1%, and American Indian/Alaska Native women's enrollment decreased by 18.3%.³
- In 2023, 38.7% of 18- to 24-year-old women of color were enrolled in college, a share similar to that of 18- to 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
- 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.

^ IPEDS reports nonresident students as a single racial category. These students are not included in the Women of Color classification.

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 federal student loans, compared with 39.8% of White female students.⁵
- Among women of color who received federal Title IV aid, the average amount 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 nearly two million bachelor's degrees conferred in the 2023–24 academic year, 449,037 (22.8%) went to women of color.⁴

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 below the national average for women.²
 - Women of color tend to earn \$10,000 less on average than men of color, but the same as White women, indicating persistent gender 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 a retirement account, compared to 86.5% of all graduates.²

DATA SOURCES

¹[American Community Survey & Current Population Survey](#). U.S. Census Bureau, January 2026.

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

³[Digest of Education Statistics](#). National Center for Education Statistics, January 2026.

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

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

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