

Bureau of the Census Statistical Brief

Our Scholastic Society

Are you attending school? If your answer is “yes,” then join the club! In October 1993, 65 million people were enrolled in regular schools throughout the United States. This total included 3 million in nursery school, 4 million in kindergarten, 31 million in elementary school (grades 1-8), and 14 million each in high school and college. This Brief uses data collected by the Current Population Survey to examine various enrollment trends at different levels of school.

More parents are sending their kids to nursery school.

Aside from learning activities at home, the best preparation for school is time in a successful nursery school or preschool program. In 1993, about one-third of 3- and 4-year-olds attended nursery school, way up from the one-tenth 25 years earlier. Why the big jump? Mainly because their mothers became better-educated and likelier to be in the labor force. (See graph at right.)

Government programs help.

Not surprisingly, nursery school enrollment rates were highest for children in families with incomes of \$40,000 or more (50 percent). But thanks mainly to public programs

such as Head Start, 24 percent of those in low-income families (under \$20,000) also were able to attend.

Elementary and high school enrollment levels are increasing slowly.

As “baby boom” women entered their prime childbearing years in the late 1970’s, the annual number of births began to climb. Thus, the “echo boom” had commenced. In the mid-1980’s, kids born during the “echo boom” started entering elementary school. At that point, elementary school enrollment, which had been in decline for many years, began to rise. In 1993, it was 439,000 higher than it was a year earlier, over 3 million higher than a decade earlier.

In the early 1990’s, “echo boomers” started reaching high school. As a result, high school enrollment,

which reached a low point at the very beginning of the decade, also began to rise. In 1993, there were 303,000 more high school students than there were a year earlier. Enrollment at both the elementary and high school levels is expected to keep rising through the end of the century.

Classrooms are now more of a melting pot.

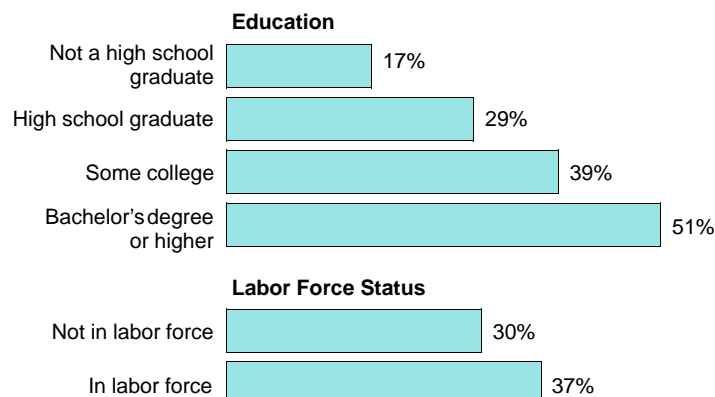
The Nation’s primary and secondary schools are becoming more racially and ethnically diverse places. In 1993, minorities (persons other than non-Hispanic Whites) comprised 32 percent of all students at these levels, up from 21 percent two decades earlier.

Private schools have become less popular.

Between 1963 and 1993, public school enrollment grew 7 percent; meanwhile, enrollment in private

Nursery School Attendance Is Linked to Mother’s Education and Labor Force Status

Percent of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in nursery school, by mother’s level of education and labor force status: 1993



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BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

More Young Adults These Days are Graduating from High School and Going on to College

Proportion of adults aged 18–24 who had completed high school and proportion of those high school grads who were enrolled in college, by sex, race, and Hispanic origin: 1993 and 1973

	1993		1973	
	Percent H.S. grad	Percent of H.S. grads in college	Percent H.S. grad	Percent of H.S. grads in college
All	82%	41%	81%	30%
Sex				
Men	80%	42%	80%	35%
Women	84%	41%	81%	25%
Race and Hispanic Origin				
White	83%	42%	83%	30%
Black	75%	33%	67%	24%
Hispanic origin	61%	36%	55%	29%

Note: Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

schools plunged 35 percent. (See graph on bottom right.) Consequently, 10 percent of elementary students and 7 percent of high school students were enrolled in private schools in 1993, down from 15 percent and 10 percent, respectively, 30 years earlier.

A good many young adults have fallen behind

In 1993, 32 percent of 15-to-17-year-olds were enrolled below the appropriate grade level for their age, up from 23 percent in 1980. Boys were much more likely than girls to have been a grade or more behind (39 percent versus 25 percent).

For various reasons, kids don't all begin school at the same age. So there will always be at least *some* enrolled below their appropriate (modal) grade level. This is illustrated by the 17 percent of 1993's 15-to-17-year-olds who were already below modal grade when they were aged 6-to-8. But many more fell behind shortly thereafter. When these children moved into the 9-to-11-year age group, the rate rose to 27 percent.

.... or dropped out.

During the year beginning in October 1992, 4 percent of all 10th-

11th-, and 12th-graders dropped out of high school; a decade earlier, the figure was 5 percent. The 1992-93 rate was higher (8 percent) for students from low-income families.

Unless they re-enroll or get an equivalency diploma, these young adults become part of the "dropout pool" — those who are neither high school graduates nor enrolled in school. In 1993, 13 percent of 18-to-24-year-olds were in the "dropout pool," down from 15 percent in 1983. Hispanics were far more likely to be dropouts (33 percent) than Blacks (16 percent) and Whites (12 percent).

Notably, 54 percent of college students were women, up from 44 percent in 1973. Women constituted an even larger share (59 percent) of students 25 and over.

More information:

School Enrollment — Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1993. Current Population Reports, Series P20-479. Contact Customer Services (301-763-4100 or 301-457-4100 after Dec. 16) for ordering information.

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College students are getting older.

Between 1983 and 1993, the number of "traditional" college-age adults (those aged 18 to 24) fell by more than 4 million. Yet the number of college students rose by nearly 2 million. Why? One reason is that more adults aged 25 and up are attending. These older adults comprised 40 percent of all college students in 1993, up from 37 percent a decade earlier. Similarly, those who were aged 35 or more rose from 12 percent to 18 percent.

This Brief is one of a series that presents information of current policy interest. It may include data from businesses, households, or other sources. All statistics are subject to sampling variability, as well as survey design flaws, respondent classification errors, and data processing mistakes. The Census Bureau has taken steps to minimize errors, and analytical statements have been tested and meet statistical standards. However, because of methodological differences, use caution when comparing these data with data from other sources.

Enrollment Picks Up in Public Schools, Continues to Sag in Private Schools

Elementary and high school enrollment, by type of school: 1963, 1973, 1983, and 1993 (Numbers in millions)

