

the condition of education 2004



INDICATOR 19

Trends in Undergraduate Persistence and Completion

The indicator and corresponding tables are taken directly from *The Condition of Education 2004*. Therefore, the page numbers may not be sequential.

Additional information about the survey data and supplementary notes can be found in the full report. For a copy of *The Condition of Education 2004* visit the NCES web site (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2004077>) or contact ED PUBs at 1-877-4ED-PUBS.

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Postsecondary Persistence and Progress

Trends in Undergraduate Persistence and Completion

While bachelor's degree completion rates have been steady over time, the likelihood of still being enrolled with no degree at the end of 5 years has increased.

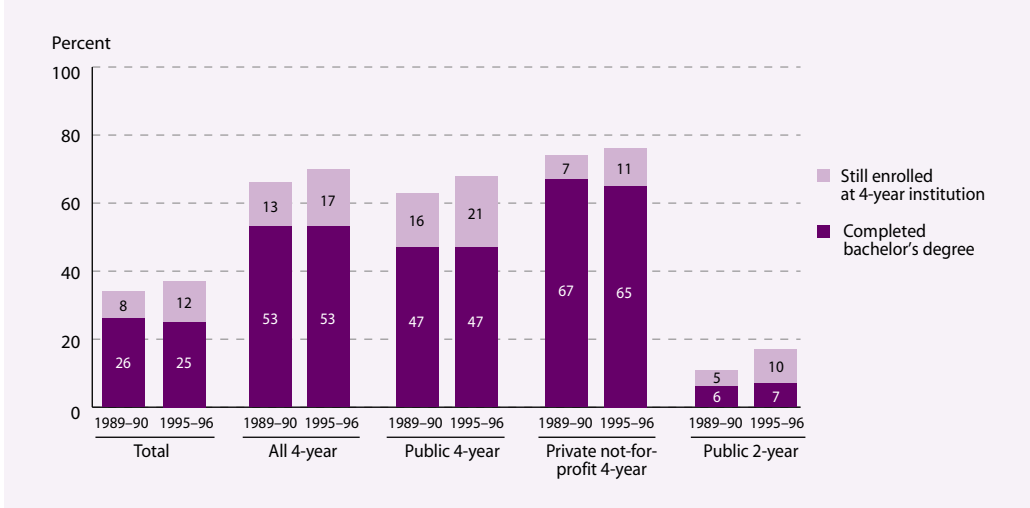
Recent analyses of data based on high school seniors in 1972, 1982, and 1992 suggest that U.S. students' access to college has increased over the last three decades, but rates of completion have not changed (Barton 2002; Adelman 2004). This indicator compares students (regardless of age) who enrolled in postsecondary education for the first time in 1989–90 with those who began in 1995–96. Among students who started at a 4-year college or university, 53 percent of both cohorts had completed a bachelor's degree at the end of 5 years. However, the later cohort was more likely than the earlier one to have no degree but still be enrolled (17 vs. 13 percent) and also less likely to have left postsecondary education without a degree (20 vs. 24 percent) (see supplemental table 19-1). The remaining students either earned an associate's degree or vocational certificate or were enrolled at a 2-year or less-than-2-year institution.

Among students who first enrolled in a public 2-year college, the likelihood of being enrolled in a 4-year institution at the end of 5 years also increased (from 5 to 10 percent). That is, for students who started at a community college, those

who began in 1995–96 were more likely than their counterparts who started in 1989–90 to be still enrolled and working toward a bachelor's degree after 5 years. At the same time, however, community college students who first enrolled in 1995–96 were less likely than their peers who first enrolled in 1989–90 to have acquired a vocational certificate (9 vs. 13 percent).

Considering all students, regardless of where they started, the likelihood of being enrolled in a 4-year institution at the end of 5 years increased for students at all income levels, for both men and women, and for White students (see supplemental table 19-2). A similar apparent increase for other racial/ethnic groups could not be confirmed statistically. At the same time, no measurable differences were detected in the bachelor's degree completion rates for any of these groups. In other words, although students in the later cohort were not more successful than those in the earlier cohort in earning a bachelor's degree within 5 years, they were more likely to be still enrolled in a 4-year institution if they had not completed their undergraduate education.

FIVE-YEAR UNDERGRADUATE COMPLETION AND PERSISTENCE: Percentage of 1989–90 and 1995–96 beginning postsecondary students who had completed a bachelor's degree or were still enrolled in a 4-year institution at the end of 5 years, by type of first institution and year first enrolled



NOTE: Total includes private not-for-profit 2-year and less-than-2-year institutions and public less-than-2-year institutions.

SOURCE: Horn, L., and Berger, R. (forthcoming). *College Persistence on the Rise? Changes in 5-Year Degree Completion and Postsecondary Persistence Between 1994 and 2000* (NCES 2004–156), table 5-A. Data from U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 1989/90 and 1995/96 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Studies (BPS:90/94 and BPS:96/01).

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Supplemental Notes 1,3,8
Supplemental Tables 19-1, 19-2

Adelman 2004

Barton 2002



Trends in Undergraduate Persistence and Completion

Table 19-1. Percentage distribution of 1989–90 and 1995–96 beginning postsecondary students by their status at the end of 5 years, by type of first institution and year first enrolled

Type of first institution and year first enrolled	Completed (highest level)			No degree or certificate		
	Bachelor's degree	Associate's degree	Vocational certificate	Still enrolled at 4-year institution	Still enrolled at 2-year institution or less	Not enrolled
Total						
1989–90	25.8	11.2	13.0	8.1	5.2	36.8
1995–96	25.1	9.9	11.7	11.6	6.6	35.2
All 4-year						
1989–90	53.3	4.2	2.9	13.3	1.9	24.4
1995–96	53.4	3.7	2.3	17.2	3.2	20.4
Public 4-year						
1989–90	46.9	4.7	3.2	16.1	2.3	26.8
1995–96	46.6	4.1	2.6	20.9	3.7	22.1
Private not-for-profit 4-year						
1989–90	66.6	3.0	2.3	7.4	1.2	19.6
1995–96	65.3	2.9	1.6	10.7	2.2	17.3
Public 2-year						
1989–90	6.3	17.5	12.9	5.1	9.6	48.6
1995–96	6.9	15.9	9.3	9.7	10.5	47.8

NOTE: Total includes private not-for-profit 2-year and less-than-2-year institutions and public less-than-2-year institutions. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: Horn, L., and Berger, R. (forthcoming). *College Persistence on the Rise? Changes in 5-Year Degree Completion and Postsecondary Persistence Between 1994 and 2000* (NCES 2004–156), table 5-A. Data from U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 1989/90 and 1995/96 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Studies (BPS:90/94 and BPS:96/01).

Trends in Undergraduate Persistence and Completion

Table 19-2. Percentage distribution of 1989–90 and 1995–96 beginning postsecondary students by their status at the end of 5 years, by student characteristics and year first enrolled

Student characteristic and year first enrolled	Completed (highest level)			No degree or certificate		
	Bachelor's degree	Associate's degree	Vocational certificate	Still enrolled at 4-year institution	Still enrolled at 2-year institution or less	Not enrolled
Sex						
Male						
1989–90	24.5	10.2	11.3	10.0	5.6	38.4
1995–96	23.5	10.7	9.6	14.1	6.6	35.6
Female						
1989–90	26.9	12.1	14.4	6.3	4.8	35.4
1995–96	26.3	9.3	13.4	9.6	6.6	34.8
Race/ethnicity¹						
Asian/Pacific Islander						
1989–90	34.4	8.5	11.5!	13.5	6.4	25.7
1995–96	35.7	10.6!	6.9	16.0	7.6	23.2
Black						
1989–90	16.9	8.8	16.1	8.2	5.3	44.7
1995–96	14.5	5.2	16.9	11.2	7.2	45.1
White						
1989–90	27.3	11.6	12.3	7.9	4.3	36.6
1995–96	27.8	10.3	10.6	11.4	6.3	33.6
Hispanic						
1989–90	17.8	11.5	15.7	6.8	11.8	36.4
1995–96	15.2	11.8	14.4	11.4!	7.4	39.8
Family income						
Lowest quarter						
1989–90	16.7	11.5	17.2	7.3	4.9	42.3
1995–96	15.0	14.0	14.9	10.7	6.1	39.4
Middle two quarters						
1989–90	24.6	11.6	13.2	7.8	5.2	37.5
1995–96	23.7	9.5	12.5	11.4	7.4	35.5
Highest quarter						
1989–90	38.4	9.8	7.7	9.5	5.5	29.1
1995–96	41.0	5.9	5.7	12.8	5.4	29.2

!Interpret data with caution (estimates are unstable due to small sample sizes).

¹Black includes African American, Pacific Islander includes Native Hawaiian, and Hispanic includes Latino. Racial categories exclude Hispanic origin. Estimates for American Indians are excluded due to extremely small sample sizes.

NOTE: See supplemental note 3 for information on income quarters. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: Horn, L., and Berger, R. (forthcoming). *College Persistence on the Rise? Changes in 5-Year Degree Completion and Postsecondary Persistence Between 1994 and 2000* (NCES 2004–156), table 5-B. Data from U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 1989/90 and 1995/96 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Studies (BPS:90/94 and BPS:96/01).

Trends in Undergraduate Persistence and Completion

Table S19. Standard errors for the percentage of 1989–90 and 1995–96 beginning postsecondary students who had completed a bachelor's degree or were still enrolled in a 4-year institution at the end of 5 years, by type of first institution and year first enrolled

Year first enrolled and type of first institution	Still enrolled at 4-year institution	Completed bachelor's degree
Total		
1989–90	0.54	1.04
1995–96	0.56	0.86
All 4-year		
1989–90	0.77	1.35
1995–96	0.69	1.25
Public 4-year		
1989–90	1.03	1.64
1995–96	0.95	1.40
Private not-for-profit 4-year		
1989–90	0.70	1.91
1995–96	0.87	2.09
Public 2-year		
1989–90	0.87	1.01
1995–96	1.06	0.90

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 1989/90 and 1995/96 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Studies (BPS:90/94 and BPS:96/01).

Trends in Undergraduate Persistence and Completion

Table S19-1. Standard errors for the percentage distribution of 1989–90 and 1995–96 beginning postsecondary students by their status at the end of 5 years, by type of first institution and year first enrolled

Type of first institution and year first enrolled	Completed (highest level)			No degree or certificate		
	Still enrolled Bachelor's degree	Still enrolled Associate's degree	Vocational certificate	at 4-year institution	at 2-year institution or less	Not enrolled
Total						
1989–90	1.04	0.81	0.83	0.54	0.56	1.08
1995–96	0.86	0.70	0.70	0.56	0.54	0.96
All 4-year						
1989–90	1.35	0.39	0.38	0.77	0.27	1.04
1995–96	1.25	0.39	0.24	0.69	0.29	0.81
Public 4-year						
1989–90	1.64	0.54	0.52	1.03	0.38	1.39
1995–96	1.40	0.55	0.33	0.95	0.41	1.00
Private not-for-profit 4-year						
1989–90	1.91	0.43	0.40	0.70	0.25	1.36
1995–96	2.09	0.48	0.31	0.87	0.31	1.34
Public 2-year						
1989–90	1.01	1.63	1.44	0.87	1.25	2.01
1995–96	0.90	1.42	1.15	1.06	1.16	1.71

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 1989/90 and 1995/96 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Studies (BPS:90/94 and BPS:96/01).

Trends in Undergraduate Persistence and Completion

Table S19-2. Standard errors for the percentage distribution of 1989–90 and 1995–96 beginning postsecondary students by their status at the end of 5 years, by student characteristics and year first enrolled

Student characteristic and year first enrolled	Completed (highest level)			No degree or certificate		
	Still enrolled Bachelor's degree	Still enrolled Associate's degree	Vocational certificate	at 4-year institution	at 2-year institution or less	Not enrolled
Sex						
Male						
1989–90	1.34	0.89	1.13	0.85	0.95	1.58
1995–96	1.14	1.00	0.92	0.93	0.76	1.42
Female						
1989–90	1.26	1.19	1.11	0.63	0.72	1.49
1995–96	1.15	0.88	0.99	0.69	0.76	1.27
Race/ethnicity						
Asian/Pacific Islander						
1989–90	4.44	2.96	3.36	3.20	3.09	5.27
1995–96	3.42	3.39	2.63	3.23	2.93	3.97
Black						
1989–90	2.06	2.07	2.45	1.48	1.74	3.53
1995–96	1.58	1.14	2.36	1.70	1.27	2.69
White						
1989–90	1.18	0.89	0.93	0.59	0.55	1.19
1995–96	1.08	0.81	0.79	0.68	0.65	1.14
Hispanic						
1989–90	2.90	2.70	3.11	1.90	3.14	4.39
1995–96	1.45	1.85	2.57	1.56	1.54	2.86
Family income						
Lowest quarter						
1989–90	1.31	1.43	1.57	0.92	1.14	2.06
1995–96	0.97	1.57	1.38	0.97	0.81	1.76
Middle two quarters						
1989–90	1.19	1.06	1.12	0.73	0.76	1.44
1995–96	1.02	0.84	0.98	0.81	0.92	1.35
Highest quarter						
1989–90	2.02	1.59	1.21	1.21	1.15	2.05
1995–96	1.95	1.07	0.87	1.19	1.12	2.01

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 1989/90 and 1995/96 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Studies (BPS:90/94 and BPS:96/01).