

# School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 2003

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## Population Characteristics

P20-554

This report highlights school enrollment trends of the population aged 3 and older and the social and economic characteristics of the large and diverse student population, based on data collected in the Current Population Survey (CPS) conducted by the Census Bureau in October 2003.

tend to mirror the populations in those ages (with close to 100-percent enrollment of the population aged 5 through 16) because of compulsory attendance requirements. In contrast, nursery school and college enrollment levels are

## Current Population Reports

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### THE ENROLLED POPULATION

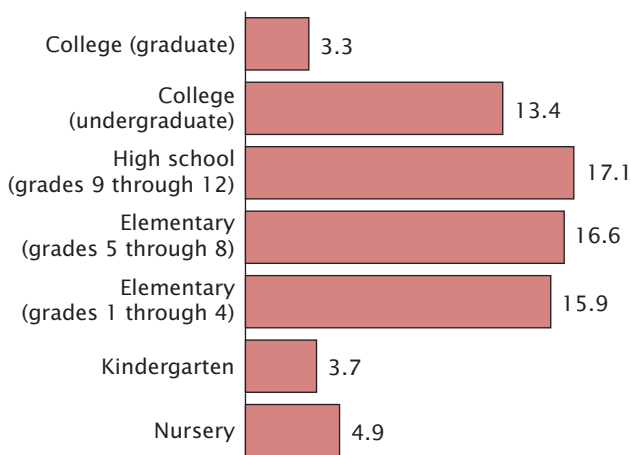
In October 2003, more than one-fourth of the population 3 years and older (74.9 million people) were in school in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Figure 1 shows that 9 million were enrolled in nursery school and kindergarten, 33 million in elementary school, 17 million in high school, and 17 million in college.

The number of students at each grade level is determined primarily by population trends. At the kindergarten, elementary, and high school levels, enrollment numbers

<sup>1</sup> The estimates in this report (which may be shown in text, figures, and tables) are based on responses from a sample of the population and may differ from actual values because of sampling variability or other factors. As a result, apparent differences between the estimates for two or more groups may not be statistically significant. All comparative statements have undergone statistical testing and are significant at the 90-percent confidence level unless otherwise noted.

**Defining School Enrollment:** Regular school includes nursery or pre-school, kindergarten, elementary school, and schooling which leads to a high school diploma or a college, university, or professional school degree. Technical and vocational programs are not included.

Figure 1.  
**School Enrollment by Grade Level:  
October 2003**  
(In millions)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October 2003.

influenced by social and economic factors as well as by age structure.

## NURSERY SCHOOL

Total nursery school enrollment has increased over the past few decades, from about one-half million in 1964 (when the data were first collected) to about 5 million currently (Figure 2). At the same time, the eligible population (children aged 3 and 4) fluctuated between 6 million and 8 million.<sup>2</sup> Over this period, the enrollment rate in nursery school rose from about 6 percent to about 60 percent, reflecting a shift in the societal norm concerning young children in school.

Most of the children enrolled in nursery school in 2003 (65 percent) were non-Hispanic White (Table A).<sup>3</sup> Over one-half of non-Hispanic White children (55 percent) were enrolled in nursery school, a higher proportion than Black (49 percent), Asian (43 percent), or Hispanic (39 percent) children.<sup>4</sup> Of children enrolled in nursery school, about 70 percent of Blacks and Hispanics, and about 40 percent of non-Hispanic Whites

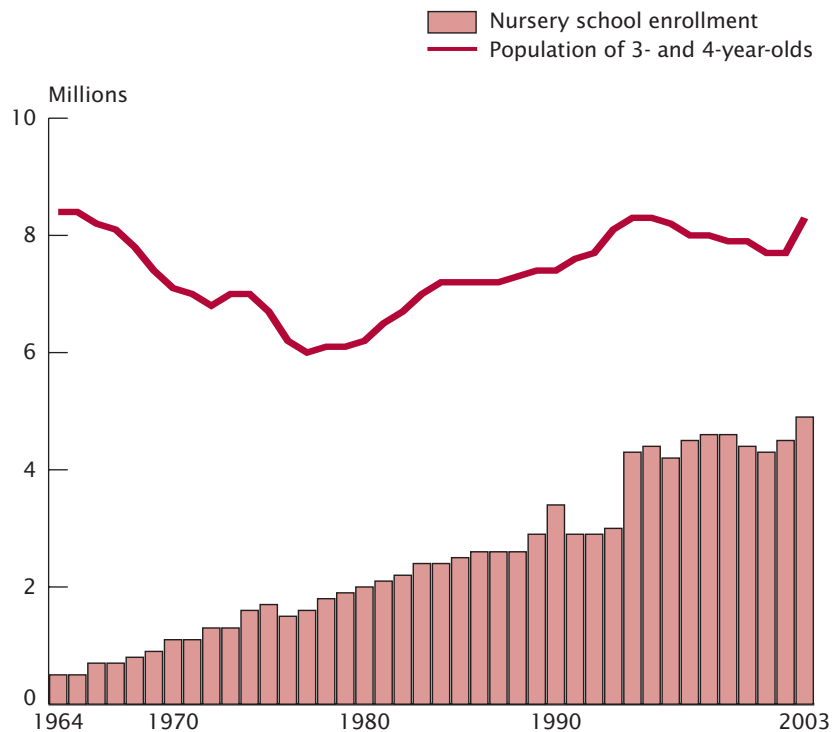
<sup>2</sup> With the exception of the estimate for total nursery school enrollment, discussion in this report about nursery school refers to children 3 to 4 years old.

<sup>3</sup> Hereafter, this report uses the term non-Hispanic White to refer to people who reported they are White only and not Hispanic or Latino. The term Black is used to refer to people who reported the single race Black or African American, the term Asian refers to people who reported the single race Asian, and the term Hispanic refers to people who are Hispanic or Latino. Because Hispanics may be any race, data in this report for Hispanics overlap slightly with data for the Black population and for the Asian population. Based on the October 2003 Current Population Survey, 3.6 percent of the single-race Black population 3 years and older and 1.0 percent of the single-race Asian population 3 years and older were Hispanic.

<sup>4</sup> The apparent differences between the proportions of Asian and Black children and between the proportions of Asian and Hispanic children enrolled in nursery school were not statistically significant.

Figure 2.

### Nursery School Enrollment and the Number of 3- and 4-Year-Olds: 1964 to 2003



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October 2003 and previous years.

## New Racial Classifications

In 2003, CPS respondents were able to identify themselves in one or more racial groups for the first time; previously only one was reported.\* The use of the single-race population in this report does not imply that it is the preferred method of presenting or analyzing data. The Census Bureau uses a variety of approaches. Data for people who reported a particular race, regardless of whether they also reported others, are available in the detailed table package for this report, which can be found at <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/school.html>.

Also in 2003, data on the Asian population were collected separately from data for the Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander population. Data on American Indians and Alaska Natives and on Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders are not included in this report because the sample sizes for these groups were not large enough to yield reliable results in the CPS.

\* The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) establishes the official guidelines for the collection and classification of data for race (including the option for respondents to mark more than one race) and Hispanic origin. Race and Hispanic origin are treated as separate and distinct concepts in accordance with OMB's guidelines. For further information, see [www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg//ombdir15.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg//ombdir15.html).

Table A.  
**School Enrollment for Nursery, Kindergarten, Elementary, High School, College and Graduate School by Race and Hispanic Origin: October 2003**

(Numbers in thousands)

Enrollment level	Total		Male	Female	Race and Hispanic origin				
	Number	90-percent confidence interval			White alone		Black alone	Asian alone	Hispanic (of any race)
					Total	Non-Hispanic			
<b>All students</b> .....	<b>74,911</b>	<b>74,350-75,472</b>	<b>37,322</b>	<b>37,590</b>	<b>57,391</b>	<b>46,439</b>	<b>11,407</b>	<b>3,311</b>	<b>11,928</b>
Nursery .....	4,928	4,762-5,094	2,637	2,291	3,909	3,184	697	138	768
Full day .....	2,533	2,409-2,657	1,343	1,189	1,840	1,419	525	83	445
Part day .....	2,395	2,274-2,516	1,294	1,101	2,069	1,765	172	55	323
Kindergarten .....	3,719	3,571-3,867	1,887	1,832	2,866	2,245	558	122	694
Elementary .....	32,565	32,158-32,972	16,845	15,719	24,711	19,252	5,245	1,258	5,974
High school .....	17,062	16,758-17,366	8,635	8,427	13,036	10,463	2,765	632	2,779
College, 1 to 4 years .....	13,370	13,101-13,639	5,902	7,468	10,389	8,964	1,810	754	1,544
Graduate school .....	3,268	3,132-3,404	1,416	1,852	2,481	2,331	334	408	170
<b>Students in public school</b> .....	<b>63,763</b>	<b>63,231-64,295</b>	<b>31,842</b>	<b>31,922</b>	<b>48,219</b>	<b>38,137</b>	<b>10,385</b>	<b>2,689</b>	<b>10,992</b>
Nursery .....	2,567	2,442-2,692	1,387	1,180	1,918	1,382	484	56	561
Full day .....	1,339	1,247-1,431	694	645	936	621	336	31	323
Part day .....	1,228	1,139-1,317	694	534	982	761	148	25	238
Kindergarten .....	3,098	2,962-3,234	1,577	1,521	2,367	1,804	495	93	633
Elementary .....	29,204	28,816-29,592	15,166	14,038	21,893	16,735	4,942	1,122	5,651
High school .....	15,785	15,492-16,078	8,002	7,784	11,939	9,473	2,691	585	2,667
College, 1 to 4 years .....	10,980	10,735-11,225	4,791	6,189	8,500	7,238	1,543	571	1,368
Graduate school .....	2,129	2,019-2,239	919	1,210	1,602	1,505	230	262	112
<b>Students in private school</b> .....	<b>11,148</b>	<b>10,900-11,396</b>	<b>5,480</b>	<b>5,668</b>	<b>9,172</b>	<b>8,302</b>	<b>1,022</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>936</b>
Nursery .....	2,361	2,241-2,481	1,250	1,111	1,990	1,802	212	82	206
Full day .....	1,194	1,107-1,281	650	544	904	798	189	52	121
Part day .....	1,167	1,081-1,253	600	567	1,087	1,004	24	30	85
Kindergarten .....	622	558-686	311	311	499	440	63	29	61
Elementary .....	3,361	3,223-3,499	1,679	1,682	2,818	2,517	302	136	322
High school .....	1,276	1,190-1,362	633	643	1,097	990	74	47	112
College, 1 to 4 years .....	2,389	2,272-2,506	1,110	1,279	1,889	1,727	268	182	177
Graduate school .....	1,139	1,058-1,220	497	642	879	826	103	146	58

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October 2003.

and Asians, were enrolled in public rather than private programs.

Nursery school attendance is linked to family income. Since nursery school is not part of the regular public school system in some areas, the cost of attending a private nursery school may prevent some families from enrolling their children, even though Head Start and other locally-funded nursery school programs are available to some children in low-income families. In 2003, 62 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds from families with incomes of \$50,000 or more attended nursery school, compared with 41 percent of those from

families with incomes less than \$20,000. Three-fourths (79 percent) of these lower-income students attended public nursery schools, compared with less than one-third (31 percent) of the high-income students.<sup>5</sup>

Nursery school enrollment is also associated with the education and labor force participation of a child's mother. Children of mothers who were college graduates were twice as likely to attend nursery school

<sup>5</sup> Many of the data cited in this report are from a set of Detailed Tables based on the October 2003 Current Population Survey available at <<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/school.html>>.

as children whose mothers did not finish high school (64 percent compared with 34 percent). Children of mothers in the labor force were more likely to attend nursery school than those whose mothers were not in the labor force (53 percent compared with 48 percent).

In addition to its educational benefit, nursery school may provide child care for some families. Although half of nursery school students attended part-day, among nursery school students whose mothers worked full-time, 64 percent attended full-time. Of nursery school students whose mothers

were not in the labor force, 42 percent attended full-time.

## KINDERGARTEN

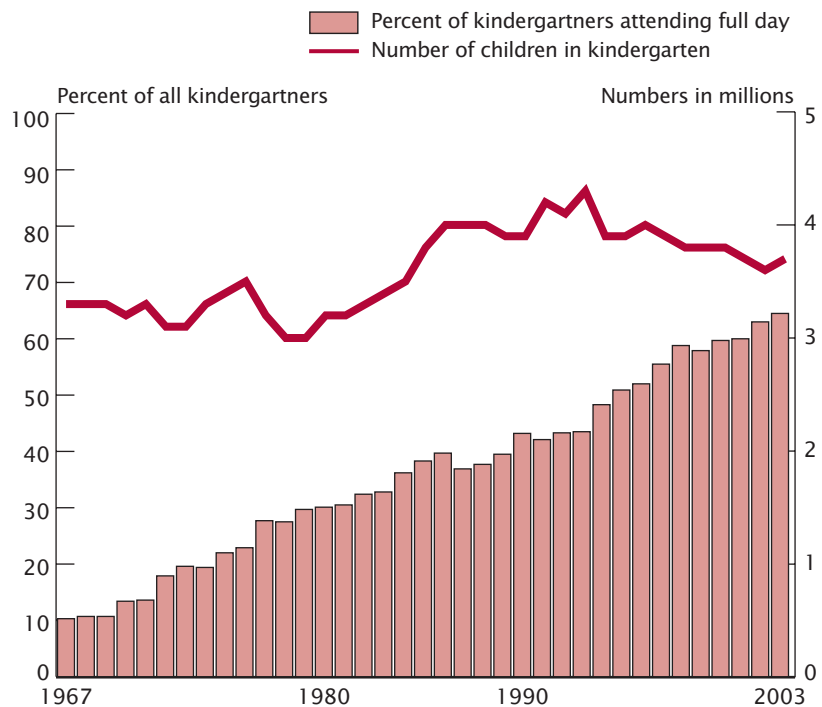
In October 2003, 3.7 million children were enrolled in kindergarten (Table A). Over the past decade, the kindergarten figures fluctuated in a narrow range around this level. Among children enrolled in kindergarten in 2003, the majority were non-Hispanic Whites (60 percent), followed by Hispanics (19 percent) and Blacks (15 percent). Asian children accounted for 3 percent. These percentages were similar to their groups' proportions of the population 5 years old: 60 percent non-Hispanic White, 20 percent Hispanic, 14 percent Black, and 4 percent Asian.

Most 5-year-olds were enrolled in school (92 percent), likely reflecting the availability of public kindergarten in most states. Among that group, kindergarten enrollment was most frequent (69 percent); 17 percent were in nursery school, 5 percent were in first grade, and 8 percent were not enrolled.<sup>6</sup>

During the past three decades, the percentage of children attending kindergarten all day increased, from one-fifth (20 percent) in 1973 to over three-fifths (65 percent) today (Figure 3). A majority of the children in 2003 (56 percent) entered kindergarten with previous school experience, having been enrolled in nursery school the preceding year, so that for many students, attending kindergarten was not a major transition from home life to school.

<sup>6</sup> For more information on kindergarten enrollment, see CPS October 2003 School Enrollment Detailed Table 2, "Single Grade of Enrollment and High School Graduation Status for People 3 Years Old and Over, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: October 2003" at <<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/school.html>>.

Figure 3.  
**Kindergarten Enrollment and the Percent Attending Full Day: 1967 to 2003**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October 2003 and previous years.

## ELEMENTARY AND HIGH SCHOOL

The number of students enrolled in elementary and high school (49.5 million) in 2003 surpassed the all-time high (48.7 million) set in 1970, when baby-boom children were in school (Figure 4).<sup>7</sup> During the 1970s and early 1980s, total elementary and high school enrollment fell, following a general decrease in the size of the 6- to 17-year-old population. Subsequently, enrollments rose along with the population this age. This increased enrollment is expected to continue until 2005, followed by a small decline between 2005 and

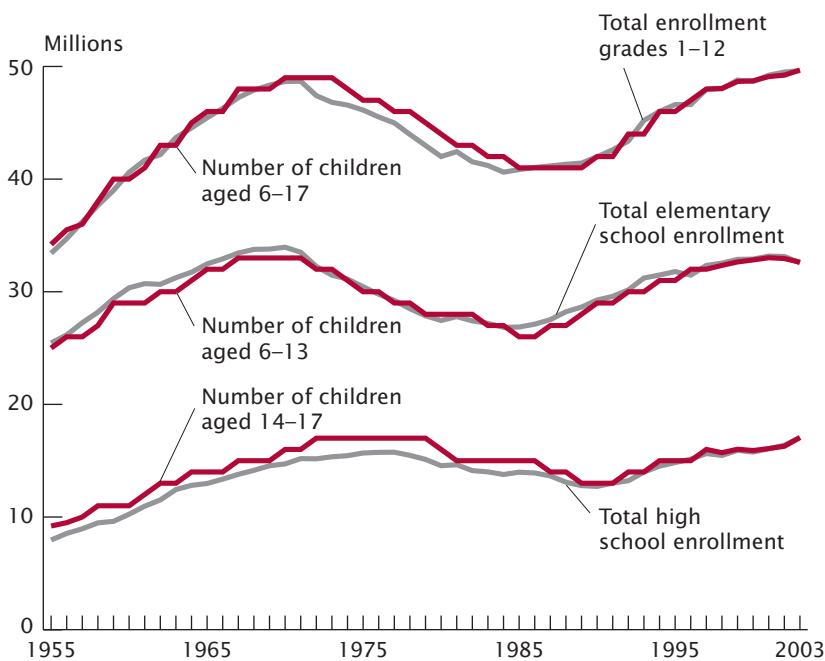
<sup>7</sup> The comparison of elementary and high school enrollment between 1970 and 2003 is limited to students 3 to 34 years old because that was the population asked about school enrollment in 1970.

2010 due to the small decline in annual births from 1991 to 1997. The number of elementary and high school students is projected to increase again after 2010.<sup>8</sup>

Elementary and high school students today are more diverse by race and Hispanic origin than the baby-boom generation of students. In 1970, when the crest of the baby boom was enrolled in elementary and high school, the student population was 79 percent non-Hispanic White, 14 percent Black, 1 percent Asian and Pacific Islander and other

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "Projections of Education Statistics to 2012" <[http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/proj2012/ch\\_1.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/proj2012/ch_1.asp)> and U.S. Census Bureau, 2004, "U.S. Interim Projections by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin" at <<http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/usinterimproj/>>.

Figure 4.  
**Elementary and High School Enrollment and School-Age Population: 1955 to 2003**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October 2003 and previous years.

racés, and 6 percent Hispanic.<sup>9</sup> In 2003, 60 percent were non-Hispanic White, 16 percent Black, 4 percent Asian, and 18 percent Hispanic. The Census Bureau's population projections indicate that the population aged 6 to 17 will become increasingly diverse in future years.

### POPULATION GROWTH AND ENROLLMENT LEVELS

During the twenty-year period between 1983 and 2003, the number of children enrolled in elementary and high school increased by about 8 million (from 41.2 million to 49.6 million).<sup>10</sup> Most of the

<sup>9</sup> The crest of the baby boom refers to the highest point in enrollment for the baby-boom generation at about 49 million students.

<sup>10</sup> For more information on historical elementary and high school enrollment, see the School Enrollment Historical Table A-1, "School Enrollment of the Population 3 Years and Over, by Level and Control of School, Race, and Hispanic Origin: October 1955 to 2003" at <<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/school.html>>.

growth in the number of children enrolled in school is driven by the number of babies born during the prior 6- to 17-year period. Children enrolled in 2003 were born during the 1986 to 1997 period; children enrolled in 1983 were born during the 1966 to 1977 period. The total number of births was 7 million higher in the latter period than in the former (47.5 million compared with 40.7 million).<sup>11</sup>

The growth in the number of births during the late 1980s and early 1990s was driven in part by the demographic momentum of the population, that is, a large number of women who were born during the baby boom having babies. During this time the number of births ranged between 3.6 million

<sup>11</sup> National Center for Health Statistics, *Vital Statistics of the United States: Natality, 1999*, Table 1-1 "Live Births, Birth Rates, and Fertility Rates, by Race: United States, 1909-99."

to 4.0 million annually. In addition, the increase in births was influenced by the rise in the total fertility rate from 1.8 births per woman in the 1970s and early 1980s to 2.0 in the 1990s.<sup>12</sup>

Immigration also contributes to the growth of the population enrolled in elementary and high school. Among students in 2003, 22 percent had at least one foreign-born parent, including 6 percent who were foreign born themselves, and 16 percent who were native with at least one foreign-born parent (Table B).<sup>13</sup>

The factors that underlie the increase in enrollment differ by race and Hispanic origin. The higher number of non-Hispanic White and Black children enrolled in school was due primarily to increased births. In contrast, immigration was a major factor in the growth in the number of Asian children and Hispanic children—91 percent of Asian and 66 percent of Hispanic students had a foreign-born parent.

### STUDENTS' FAMILIES

In 2003, two-thirds of elementary and high school students (68 percent) lived in families with two parents present, 23 percent lived with only their mother, and 5 percent lived with only their father.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> National Center for Health Statistics, *Vital Statistics of the United States: Natality, 1999*, Table 1-7, "Total Fertility Rates and Birth Rates, by Age of Mother and Race: United States, 1940-99" and *National Vital Statistics Reports*, Vol. 51, No. 12, August 4, 2003, Revised June 2004, Table 1, "Number of Births, Crude Birth Rates, General Fertility Rates, and Birth Rates, by Age and Race of Mother: United States, 1990-2001."

<sup>13</sup> The Census Bureau uses the term "foreign born" to refer to anyone who is not a U.S. citizen at birth. The term "native" is used to refer to anyone born in the United States, Puerto Rico, a U.S. Island Area (American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Virgin Islands of the United States) or born abroad of a U.S.-citizen parent.

<sup>14</sup> For more information on family and household status of students, check DataFerrett at <<http://dataferrett.census.gov/TheDataWeb/index.html>>.

Table B.  
**Students Who Are Foreign Born or Have Foreign-Born Parents by Race and Hispanic Origin: October 2003**

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Total		Native of native parentage		Children with at least one foreign-born parent					
					Total		Foreign born		Native	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>All grades</b> .....	<b>74,911</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>58,501</b>	<b>78.1</b>	<b>16,410</b>	<b>21.9</b>	<b>4,982</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>11,428</b>	<b>15.3</b>
White alone .....	57,391	100.0	46,454	80.9	10,937	19.1	3,015	5.3	7,922	13.8
White alone non-Hispanic ...	46,440	100.0	42,728	92.0	3,712	8.0	1,016	2.2	2,696	5.8
Black alone .....	11,408	100.0	9,682	84.9	1,726	15.1	642	5.6	1,084	9.5
Asian alone .....	3,312	100.0	277	8.4	3,035	91.6	1,190	35.9	1,846	55.7
Hispanic (of any race) .....	11,929	100.0	4,227	35.4	7,703	64.6	2,120	17.8	5,583	46.8
<b>Nursery and Kindergarten</b>										
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>8,647</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>6,905</b>	<b>79.9</b>	<b>1,742</b>	<b>20.1</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>1,497</b>	<b>17.3</b>
White alone .....	6,775	100.0	5,498	81.2	1,277	18.8	162	2.4	1,115	16.5
White alone non-Hispanic ...	5,429	100.0	5,008	92.2	421	7.8	53	1.0	369	6.8
Black alone .....	1,255	100.0	1,096	87.3	159	12.7	28	2.2	131	10.4
Asian alone .....	260	100.0	30	11.5	231	88.8	56	21.5	175	67.3
Hispanic (of any race) .....	1,462	100.0	552	37.8	910	62.2	115	7.9	795	54.4
<b>Elementary</b>										
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>32,565</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>25,298</b>	<b>77.7</b>	<b>7,267</b>	<b>22.3</b>	<b>1,489</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>5,777</b>	<b>17.7</b>
White alone .....	24,711	100.0	19,646	79.5	5,065	20.5	1,094	4.4	3,971	16.1
White alone non-Hispanic ...	19,252	100.0	7,431	38.6	5,882	30.6	1,259	6.5	4,623	24.0
Black alone .....	5,245	100.0	4,517	86.1	727	13.9	141	2.7	586	11.2
Asian alone .....	1,258	100.0	119	9.5	1,139	90.5	210	16.7	928	73.8
Hispanic (of any race) .....	5,974	100.0	2,048	34.3	3,926	65.7	914	15.3	3,012	50.4
<b>High School</b>										
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>17,062</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>13,468</b>	<b>78.9</b>	<b>3,593</b>	<b>21.1</b>	<b>1,281</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>2,312</b>	<b>13.6</b>
White alone .....	13,036	100.0	10,559	81.0	2,477	19.0	860	6.6	1,617	12.4
White alone non-Hispanic ...	10,463	100.0	9,695	92.7	768	7.3	222	2.1	546	5.2
Black alone .....	2,765	100.0	2,402	86.9	363	13.1	143	5.2	220	8.0
Asian alone .....	632	100.0	51	8.1	581	91.9	223	35.3	358	56.6
Hispanic (of any race) .....	2,779	100.0	966	34.8	1,813	65.2	674	24.3	1,139	41.0
<b>College, 1 to 4 Years</b>										
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>13,370</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>10,440</b>	<b>78.1</b>	<b>2,930</b>	<b>21.9</b>	<b>1,381</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>1,549</b>	<b>11.6</b>
White alone .....	10,389	100.0	8,667	83.4	1,722	16.6	673	6.5	1,048	10.1
White alone non-Hispanic ...	8,964	100.0	8,133	90.7	831	9.3	334	3.7	497	5.5
Black alone .....	1,810	100.0	1,409	77.8	401	22.2	275	15.2	126	7.0
Asian alone .....	754	100.0	57	7.6	697	92.4	399	52.9	298	39.5
Hispanic (of any race) .....	1,544	100.0	591	38.3	953	61.7	367	23.8	586	38.0
<b>Graduate School</b>										
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>3,268</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2,390</b>	<b>73.1</b>	<b>878</b>	<b>26.9</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>9.0</b>
White alone .....	2,481	100.0	2,085	84.0	396	16.0	225	9.1	171	6.9
White alone non-Hispanic ...	2,331	100.0	2,024	86.8	307	13.2	177	7.6	130	5.6
Black alone .....	334	100.0	258	77.2	76	22.8	55	16.5	21	6.3
Asian alone .....	408	100.0	20	4.9	388	95.1	302	74.0	87	21.3
Hispanic (of any race) .....	170	100.0	70	41.2	100	58.8	49	28.8	51	30.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October 2003.

Table C.

### Summary Measures of Below Modal Grade, Dropout, and High School Graduates by Race and Hispanic Origin: October 2003

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Total	Male	Female	Race and Hispanic origin				
				White alone		Black alone	Asian alone	Hispanic (of any race)
				Total	Non-Hispanic			
<b>Population, 15 to 17 years old . . . . .</b>	<b>12,753</b>	<b>6,569</b>	<b>6,184</b>	<b>9,889</b>	<b>7,980</b>	<b>1,950</b>	<b>458</b>	<b>2,063</b>
Percent below modal grade . . . . .	30.6	35.1	25.8	29.4	28.7	37.4	24.5	32.7
<b>Population, 18 and 19 years old . . . . .</b>	<b>7,533</b>	<b>3,764</b>	<b>3,769</b>	<b>5,915</b>	<b>4,780</b>	<b>1,052</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>1,214</b>
Dropouts . . . . .	817	480	337	659	379	128	3	291
Enrolled in high school . . . . .	1,345	781	565	979	758	277	41	234
High school graduates . . . . .	5,371	2,503	2,867	4,277	3,643	647	242	689
Enrolled in college . . . . .	3,512	1,568	1,944	2,833	2,486	374	209	379
<b>Percent:</b>								
Dropouts . . . . .	10.8	12.8	8.9	11.1	7.9	12.2	1.0	24.0
Enrolled in high school . . . . .	17.9	20.7	15.0	16.6	15.9	26.3	14.3	19.3
High school graduates . . . . .	71.3	66.5	76.1	72.3	76.2	61.5	84.6	56.8
Enrolled in college <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	65.4	62.6	67.8	66.2	68.2	57.8	86.4	55.0
<b>Population, 18 to 24 years old . . . . .</b>	<b>27,404</b>	<b>13,681</b>	<b>13,724</b>	<b>21,502</b>	<b>17,158</b>	<b>3,837</b>	<b>1,144</b>	<b>4,754</b>
Dropouts . . . . .	3,228	1,875	1,354	2,489	1,267	545	56	1,353
Enrolled in high school . . . . .	1,573	887	686	1,111	820	344	58	305
High school graduates . . . . .	22,603	10,919	11,684	17,901	15,070	2,948	1,030	3,096
Enrolled in college . . . . .	10,364	4,697	5,667	8,150	7,129	1,225	693	1,115
<b>Percent:</b>								
Dropouts . . . . .	11.8	13.7	9.9	11.6	7.4	14.2	4.9	28.5
Enrolled in high school . . . . .	5.7	6.5	5.0	5.2	4.8	9.0	5.1	6.4
High school graduates . . . . .	82.5	79.8	85.1	83.3	87.8	76.8	90.0	65.1
Enrolled in college <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	45.9	43.0	48.5	45.5	47.3	41.6	67.3	36.0

<sup>1</sup> Percent of high school graduates enrolled in college.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October 2003.

Almost half (48 percent) of elementary and high school students came from families with annual incomes of at least \$50,000, and 18 percent came from families with incomes below \$20,000.<sup>15</sup>

Children from families with higher incomes were more likely to be enrolled in private school. While 4 percent of children from families with incomes under \$20,000 attended private elementary or high school, 14 percent of those from families with incomes of

<sup>15</sup> For more information on family income for elementary and high school students, see CPS October 2003 School Enrollment Detailed Table 6, "Enrollment Status of Primary Family Members 3 to 17 Years Old, by Family Income, Level of Enrollment, Control of School, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: October 2003" at <<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/school.html>>.

\$50,000 or more did so. About 1 in 10 students attended private school in 2003, and the proportion has fluctuated around this level since the 1970s.

#### MODAL GRADE

In 2003, nearly one-third (31 percent) of 15- to 17-year-olds were enrolled below the modal grade for their age, that is, the grade that is most common for a given age (Table C). Enrollment below the mode in school could be due to late entry into school or to repeating grades after entering school.<sup>16</sup> In 1994, when they were 6- to

<sup>16</sup> State laws differ on the minimum enrollment age and some parents choose to start their children later. Many states have recently moved the enrollment cut-off date forward (for example, from December 31 to September 1).

8-year-olds, 19 percent of the aforementioned cohort of 15- to 17-year-olds was below modal grade.<sup>17</sup> In the intervening years, about 1 in 10 students were retained in grade (not promoted to the next grade) in a given year.

Among those aged 6 to 8 years in 2003, 24 percent of boys and 19 percent of girls were below modal grade. Boys also experience a higher rate of retention throughout their school years. At ages 15 to 17 in 2003, 35 percent of boys enrolled in school were below modal grade, compared with 26 percent of girls.

<sup>17</sup> From Historical Table A-3, "The Population 6 to 17 Years Old Enrolled Below Modal Grade: 1971 to 2003" at <<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/school.html>>.

Asian students had the lowest proportion below modal grade among 6- to 8-year-olds (7 percent), compared with non-Hispanic White, Black, or Hispanic children in this age group.<sup>18</sup> In the 15- to 17-year-old student population, 37 percent of Black students, 33 percent of Hispanic students, and about one-quarter of non-Hispanic White and Asian students were below modal grade.

## DROPOUT RATES

During the 1-year period ending October 2003, 429,000, or 3.8 percent, of all students in the 10th, 11th, or 12th grades dropped out of high school. The annual high school dropout rate is an estimate of the proportion of students who are not enrolled in school and who are not high school graduates in a single year. The 2003 dropout rate is not statistically different from the 2002 rate (3.3 percent); it is statistically different from the 2001 rate (4.7 percent).

In 2003, the high school dropout rates of Blacks and Hispanics (about 5 percent) were higher than that of non-Hispanic Whites (3 percent).<sup>19</sup> The rates for boys and girls, each around 4 percent were not statistically different from each other (Table D).

The likelihood of dropping out of high school was higher for students from lower-income families. While 6 percent of high school students from families with incomes below \$20,000 dropped out of school in this 1-year period, the rate from families with incomes of \$50,000 or more was 2 percent.

<sup>18</sup> The percentages below modal grade among non-Hispanic White, Black, and Hispanic students aged 6 to 8 were not statistically different.

<sup>19</sup> The dropout rate of Asians was not statistically different from the dropout rates of non-Hispanic Whites or Blacks.

Table D.  
**Annual High School Dropout Rates by Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin, Family Income, and Grade Level: October 2003<sup>1</sup>**

Characteristic	Dropout rate
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>3.8</b>
<b>Sex</b>	
Male.....	4.0
Female.....	3.6
<b>Race and Hispanic Origin</b>	
White alone.....	3.7
White alone non-Hispanic ..	3.0
Black alone.....	4.5
Asian alone.....	2.4
Hispanic (of any race) .....	6.5
<b>Family Income (Annual)</b>	
Less than \$20,000.....	6.1
\$20,000-\$49,999.....	4.0
\$50,000 and over .....	1.8
<b>Grade Level</b>	
10th grade.....	1.6
11th grade.....	2.7
12th grade.....	8.4

<sup>1</sup> The annual high school dropout rate is an estimate of the proportion of students who drop out of school in a single year. The dropout rates are for those who dropped out of high school in 10th, 11th, or 12th grades.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October 2003.

The risk of dropping out varied by the student's grade level. Two percent of 10th graders dropped out of school, compared with 3 percent of 11th graders and 8 percent of 12th graders.

## TRANSITIONS OF 18- TO 24-YEAR-OLDS

By the time students reach age 18, some will have dropped out of school, some will still be in high school, and some will have graduated. Among those who have completed high school, many will go on to college.

For 18- to 24-year-olds in 2003, 3.2 million, or 12 percent, were in the "dropout pool," which is the population that is no longer enrolled and has not completed

high school. The dropout pool measure is to some extent a summary of the year-to-year dropout rates and re-enrollments during the high school years. Men were more likely than women to have dropped out (14 percent compared with 10 percent). In 2003, Hispanics were most likely to be in the dropout pool (28 percent), followed by Blacks (14 percent), non-Hispanic Whites (7 percent), and Asians (5 percent).

Some of the students who had not graduated from high school were still enrolled and working towards graduating. About 6 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds were still enrolled in October 2003, although most of these students were 18 or 19 years old (Table C).

In 2003, 18 percent of the population 18 and 19 years old were still enrolled in high school. Young men were more likely than young women of this age group to be enrolled (21 percent compared with 15 percent) and Blacks (26 percent) were more likely than Hispanics (19 percent), non-Hispanic Whites, and Asians (both around 15 percent).

During the past three decades, the percentage of 18- and 19-year-olds who were enrolled in high school increased from 10 percent in 1973, to 13 percent in 1983, to about 17 percent in 1993 and 2003. These increases reflect the general trend of students starting elementary school at older ages and taking longer to complete their primary and secondary schooling.

In 2003, 82 percent of people 18 to 24 years old were high school graduates. The proportion was higher for women than for men (85 percent compared with 80 percent). Also within this age group, higher proportions of non-Hispanic Whites (88 percent) and Asians



(90 percent) than of Blacks (77 percent) and Hispanics (65 percent) were high school graduates.<sup>20</sup>

In the fall of 2003, 46 percent of high school graduates 18 to 24 years old were enrolled in college. The proportion of women enrolled in college was higher than that of men (49 percent and 43 percent, respectively). Asians had the highest proportion of high school graduates enrolled in college at 67 percent, above the rates for non-Hispanic Whites (47 percent), Blacks (42 percent), and Hispanics (36 percent).

Among the 2003 high school graduating class of approximately 3 million students, 64 percent went immediately to college.<sup>21</sup> Higher proportions of women than men did so (67 percent compared with 61 percent). Differences were apparent among the proportions of non-Hispanic White (66 percent), Black (58 percent), and Asian (84 percent) recent graduates who went directly to college. The proportion of Hispanic recent graduates who went directly to college (59 percent) was not statistically different from the proportions for non-Hispanic Whites and Blacks. Intervening factors, such as financial resources, family obligations, and inadequate college preparedness, may affect some groups disproportionately more than others, resulting in differences in ultimate college completion rates.

<sup>20</sup> The percentages of non-Hispanic Whites and Asians who were high school graduates were not statistically different.

<sup>21</sup> For more information on the 2003 high school graduating class, see CPS October 2003 School Enrollment Detailed Table 13, "Enrollment and Employment Status of Recent High School Graduates 16 to 24 Years Old, by Type of School, Attainment Level for People Not Enrolled, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: October 2003" at <<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/school.html>>.

## COLLEGE

In October 2003, 16.6 million students were enrolled in colleges across the country (Table E), up from 14.4 million students a decade earlier.

The number of college students in the traditional age group (under 25 years old) continued at the record high level of 10 million set in 2002 (Figure 5). This peak was fueled by the growth of the population aged 18 to 24, which has been increasing since 1993. Even if the proportion of students who continue to college soon after high school rises no further, the number of college students under age 25 will increase markedly over the next decade, as the larger birth cohorts of the late 1980s and the 1990s reach college age.

In 2003, 6.1 million nontraditional college-age students (aged 25 or older) were enrolled in college, composing about 37 percent of all college students, a proportion that has remained fairly constant since the late 1980s.

Women accounted for 56 percent of all college students, continuing the majority they have represented since 1979. In 2003, women constituted 55 percent in the traditional college-age student population and 58 percent of nontraditional college-age students. Among students 35 and older, 63 percent were women, higher than the proportion of women in the population 35 and older (53 percent).

Of the 16.6 million college students enrolled in 2003, 68 percent were non-Hispanic White, 13 percent were Black, 7 percent were Asian, and 10 percent were Hispanic. Similar to the trends in the elementary and high school levels, the composition of college students has shifted during the

past two decades. In 1983, it was 86 percent White, 10 percent Black, 4 percent other races (including Asian), and 4 percent Hispanic.<sup>22</sup>

About one-third of college students were enrolled part-time in 2003. Nontraditional college-age students were much more likely than their younger counterparts to attend college part-time (56 percent compared with 16 percent). A larger proportion of female than of male students attended part-time (33 percent compared with 28 percent). The proportions of non-Hispanic White (31 percent), Black (34 percent), and Hispanic (34 percent) students who attended part-time were larger than that for Asian students (22 percent).<sup>23</sup>

Most college students (60 percent) worked while attending school. Female college students were more likely to be employed part-time than full-time (31 percent and 29 percent), while men were more likely to be employed full-time than part-time (32 percent and 28 percent). Non-Hispanic White (63 percent) college students were more likely to be employed than Black (52 percent), Asian (49 percent), and Hispanic students (57 percent).<sup>24</sup>

Most college students were enrolled at the undergraduate level (13 million or 80 percent). Of undergraduates, one-third attended 2-year institutions. Among students attending 2-year institutions,

<sup>22</sup> The definition of the race categories for 1983 and 2003 differ and are not exactly comparable. Data for non-Hispanic Whites and for Asians were not published in 1983.

<sup>23</sup> The percentages of Hispanic and non-Hispanic White students who attended college part-time were not statistically different, nor were those of Hispanic students and Black students.

<sup>24</sup> The percentages of Black and Hispanic students who were employed while enrolled in college were not statistically different, nor were those of Black and Asian students.

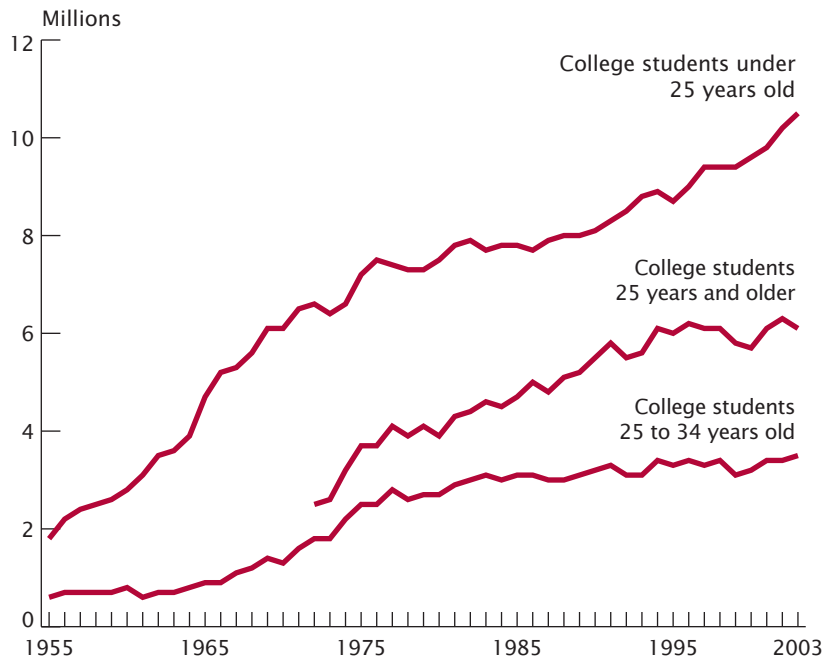
Table E.  
**College Enrollment by Selected Characteristics: October 2003**

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Total students	Male	Female	Race and Hispanic origin				
				White alone		Black alone	Asian alone	Hispanic (of any race)
				Total	Non-Hispanic			
<b>Total College Enrollment</b>								
<b>Ages 15 years and over</b> . . . . .	<b>16,638</b>	<b>7,318</b>	<b>9,319</b>	<b>12,870</b>	<b>11,295</b>	<b>2,144</b>	<b>1,162</b>	<b>1,714</b>
15 to 17 years . . . . .	150	61	89	100	90	28	16	12
18 to 19 years . . . . .	3,512	1,568	1,944	2,833	2,486	374	209	379
20 to 21 years . . . . .	3,533	1,551	1,982	2,796	2,419	415	219	407
22 to 24 years . . . . .	3,320	1,578	1,742	2,521	2,225	435	264	329
25 to 29 years . . . . .	2,164	982	1,181	1,585	1,371	289	228	224
30 to 34 years . . . . .	1,330	607	723	960	832	214	108	156
35 years and over . . . . .	2,630	970	1,660	2,075	1,872	388	116	207
<b>Type of school:</b>								
2-year college . . . . .	4,384	1,782	2,603	3,320	2,741	654	221	626
15 to 19 years . . . . .	1,178	544	634	910	763	143	74	171
20 to 24 years . . . . .	1,589	700	889	1,193	959	237	87	244
25 years and over . . . . .	1,618	538	1,080	1,217	1,019	274	61	211
4-year college . . . . .	8,985	4,120	4,865	7,069	6,224	1,156	533	918
15 to 19 years . . . . .	2,455	1,079	1,376	2,003	1,795	250	152	217
20 to 24 years . . . . .	4,547	2,133	2,415	3,577	3,158	541	312	461
25 years and over . . . . .	1,983	908	1,075	1,488	1,271	365	69	240
Graduate school . . . . .	3,268	1,416	1,852	2,481	2,331	334	408	170
15 to 24 years . . . . .	745	302	443	566	545	81	85	33
25 to 34 years . . . . .	1,399	685	714	1,025	957	122	234	75
35 years and over . . . . .	1,123	429	694	889	829	131	90	61
Public: . . . . .	13,109	5,711	7,399	10,102	8,743	1,773	833	1,480
2-year . . . . .	3,999	1,619	2,381	3,032	2,499	601	194	578
4-year . . . . .	6,981	3,173	3,808	5,468	4,739	942	377	790
Graduate . . . . .	2,129	919	1,210	1,602	1,505	230	262	112
<b>Percent of students:</b>								
Employed full-time . . . . .	30.0	31.7	28.6	30.5	30.9	32.9	19.4	27.6
Employed part-time . . . . .	29.8	28.0	31.3	31.3	31.7	19.6	29.3	29.0
<b>Full-Time College Enrollment</b>								
<b>Ages 15 years and over</b> . . . . .	<b>11,490</b>	<b>5,250</b>	<b>6,240</b>	<b>8,855</b>	<b>7,810</b>	<b>1,416</b>	<b>901</b>	<b>1,139</b>
15 to 17 years . . . . .	134	57	77	94	87	21	16	8
18 to 19 years . . . . .	3,192	1,416	1,776	2,577	2,284	326	202	325
20 to 21 years . . . . .	3,067	1,375	1,692	2,485	2,164	329	178	348
22 to 24 years . . . . .	2,427	1,198	1,228	1,808	1,633	313	234	195
25 to 29 years . . . . .	1,241	607	634	847	727	192	163	122
30 to 34 years . . . . .	578	280	298	402	356	96	58	57
35 years and over . . . . .	851	317	534	642	559	138	49	84
<b>Type of school:</b>								
2-year college . . . . .	2,563	1,055	1,507	1,935	1,614	347	170	352
15 to 19 years . . . . .	973	447	526	761	637	102	70	148
20 to 24 years . . . . .	903	414	489	687	570	116	64	121
25 years and over . . . . .	687	195	492	486	407	130	36	82
4-year college . . . . .	7,305	3,421	3,884	5,776	5,105	880	461	731
15 to 19 years . . . . .	2,326	1,020	1,306	1,893	1,717	237	148	185
20 to 24 years . . . . .	4,037	1,927	2,110	3,197	2,828	462	274	408
25 years and over . . . . .	941	474	467	686	560	182	39	138
Graduate school . . . . .	1,622	774	849	1,144	1,091	189	270	57
15 to 24 years . . . . .	581	239	342	426	416	73	75	13
25 to 34 years . . . . .	738	416	321	499	476	65	163	23
35 years and over . . . . .	304	119	185	220	200	50	32	20
Public: . . . . .	9,072	4,111	4,961	6,972	6,074	1,175	663	980
2-year . . . . .	2,305	933	1,372	1,733	1,441	329	148	321
4-year . . . . .	5,693	2,650	3,043	4,485	3,902	717	337	633
Graduate . . . . .	1,074	528	546	754	731	129	178	26
<b>Percent of students:</b>								
Employed full-time . . . . .	14.6	16.4	13.0	14.1	14.0	20.0	8.5	14.6
Employed part-time . . . . .	35.2	33.1	37.0	37.6	38.4	21.5	32.2	32.6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October 2003.

Figure 5.  
**College Students: 1955 to 2003**



Note: Prior to 1973, data for the number of college students did not include people aged 35 and older.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October 2003 and previous years.

37 percent were nontraditional college ages (25 and older), and most of these nontraditional students attending 2-year institutions were women (67 percent). In comparison, of the 9 million undergraduates enrolled in 4-year institutions, 22 percent were 25 and older.

About 3 million students were enrolled in graduate school in the fall of 2003. The majority were at least 25 years old, and one-third were at least 35 years. More women than men were enrolled at the graduate level (1.9 million compared with 1.4 million). Of Asian college students, 35 percent were in graduate school in 2003—higher than the percentages of non-Hispanic White (21 percent), Black (16 percent), or Hispanic (10 percent) college students in graduate school. About 18 percent

of all graduate students were foreign born.<sup>25</sup>

The majority of people enrolled in college (at all levels) were attending public institutions (79 percent). Hispanics (86 percent) were more likely to be enrolled in public colleges than non-Hispanic Whites (77 percent), Blacks (83 percent), and Asians (72 percent).

### SOURCE OF THE DATA

Most estimates in this report come from data obtained in the October 2003 Current Population Survey (CPS). Some estimates are based on data obtained by the CPS in earlier years. The Census Bureau conducts the survey every month,

<sup>25</sup> For more information on graduate school enrollment by nativity, check DataFerrett at <<http://dataferrett.census.gov/TheDataWeb/index.html>>.

although this report uses only data from the October surveys for its estimates.

The population represented (the population universe) in the School Enrollment supplement to the October 2003 CPS is the civilian noninstitutionalized population, 3 years and over, living in the United States. The institutionalized population, which is excluded from the population universe, is composed primarily of the population in correctional institutions and nursing homes (91 percent of the 4.1 million institutionalized population in Census 2000).

### ACCURACY OF THE ESTIMATES

Statistics from surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and are significant at the 90-percent confidence level. This means the 90-percent confidence interval for the difference between the estimates being compared does not include zero. Nonsampling errors in surveys may be attributed to a variety of sources, such as how the survey was designed, how respondents interpret questions, how able and willing respondents are to provide correct answers, and how accurately the answers are coded and classified. The Census Bureau employs quality control procedures throughout the production process, including the overall design of surveys, the wording of questions, review of the work of interviewers and coders, and statistical review of reports to minimize these errors.

The Current Population Survey weighting procedure uses ratio estimation whereby sample estimates are adjusted to independent estimates of the national population by age, race, sex, and

Hispanic origin. This weighting partially corrects for bias due to undercoverage, but biases may still be present when people who are missed by the survey differ from those interviewed in ways other than age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. How this weighting procedure affects other variables in the survey is not precisely known. All of these considerations affect comparisons across different surveys or data sources.

For further information on statistical standards and the computation and use of standard errors, go to <<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/school.html>> or contact

John Finamore of the Census Bureau Demographic Statistical Methods Division on the Internet at <[dsmd.source.and.accuracy@census.gov](mailto:dsmd.source.and.accuracy@census.gov)>.

### **MORE INFORMATION**

Detailed tabulations are available that provide demographic characteristics of the population by school enrollment. The electronic version of these tables is available on the Internet at the Census Bureau's Web site <[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)>. Once on the site, in the "Subjects A-Z" area, click on "S," and then on "School-Enrollment (including college)."

### **CONTACT**

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### **USER COMMENTS**

The Census Bureau welcomes the comments and advice of data and report users. If you have any suggestions or comments, please write to:

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