

Section 14

Student Characteristics

Gender

- 54 percent of all beginning postsecondary students are female. (table 14.1)
- Students from the lowest (63 percent) and middle socioeconomic quartiles (56 percent) were more likely to be female than those from the highest quartiles (48 percent). (table 14.1)
- Financially independent students were more likely to be female (61 percent) than were dependent students (52 percent). (table 14.1)
- Two-thirds (69 percent) of the students who began postsecondary education at age 30 or older were female. (table 14.1)

Socioeconomic Status

- About one quarter of black, non-Hispanic (25 percent) and Hispanic (26 percent) students came from the lowest socioeconomic quartiles, compared to only 12 percent of white, non-Hispanic students. (table 14.3)
- White, non-Hispanic (44 percent) and Asian/Pacific Islander (41 percent) students were more likely than black, non-Hispanic (17 percent), and Hispanic (20 percent) students to come from the highest socioeconomic quartiles. (table 14.3)

Parental Education Levels

- A negative relationship existed between age of entry into postsecondary education and parental education levels. Specifically, students who entered at the age of 18 or younger were three times more likely than their counterparts ages 20–29, (43 percent compared with 16 percent) and more than six times as likely as those 30 and older (43 percent compared with 7 percent) to have one or more parents who had attained a bachelor's degree. (table 14.6) In part, this reflects lower levels of educational attainment of earlier generations.
- Hispanic students (28 percent) were more likely to have parents who had not graduated from high school than American Indian/Alaskan Native (3 percent), black, non-Hispanic (9 percent), and white, non-Hispanic students (8 percent). Both Asian/ Pacific Islander (45 percent) and white, non-Hispanic (35 percent) students were more likely than black, non-Hispanic (25 percent) and Hispanic students (20 percent) to have one or more parents who had attained a bachelor's degree. (table 14.6)

Risk Factors

- A negative relationship existed between parental education and the likelihood of a student delaying entry into postsecondary education. Students whose parents had not graduated from high school were twice as likely (66 percent) as students whose parents had some postsecondary education (24 percent), and four times as likely as students whose parents had attained a bachelor's degree (16 percent) to delay enrollment. (table 14.8)
- Students who entered postsecondary education at age 20 or older were more likely not to have finished high school or to have obtained a GED (20–29—16 percent, 30 or older—22 percent) than those who entered when they were less than 20 (18 years or younger—2 percent, 19 years—5 percent). (table 14.8)
- The likelihood of working full time while enrolled generally increased with age of entry into postsecondary education. For instance, one-fifth (20 percent) of students who began at age 18 or younger worked full time while enrolled in 1989–90, compared to about half (46 percent) of those who started at age 20 or older. (table 14.8)
- The overall proportion of students initially attending part time increased with age, with only 11 percent of those who began at age 18 or younger enrolled part time, while 62 percent of students who began at age 30 or older had done so. (table 14.8)

Table 14.1—Percentage distribution of 1989–90 beginning postsecondary students according to gender, by demographic characteristics

	Male	Female
Total	46.0	54.0
Age when began at first institution		
18 years or younger	45.9	54.1
19 years	56.2	43.8
20–29 years	50.6	49.4
30 years or older	31.2	68.8
Socioeconomic status		
Lowest quartile	37.2	62.8
Middle quartiles	43.9	56.1
Highest quartile	51.7	48.3
Race–ethnicity of student		
American Indian/Alaskan Native	72.4	27.6
Asian/Pacific Islander	40.6	59.4
Black, non-Hispanic	37.3	62.7
Hispanic	45.9	54.1
White, non-Hispanic	47.1	52.9
Marital status when began at first institution		
Not married	48.2	51.8
Married	35.6	64.4
Separated	23.3	76.8
Parental education		
Less than high school diploma	32.2	67.8
High school diploma	45.8	54.3
Some postsecondary	45.6	54.4
Bachelor's or higher	51.8	48.2
Dependency status in 1989–90		
Dependent	48.4	51.6
Independent	39.3	60.7

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1990 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study—Second Follow-up (BPS:90/94), Data Analysis System.

Table 14.2—Percentage distribution of 1989–90 beginning postsecondary students according to age when began at first institution, by demographic characteristics

	18 years or younger	19 years	20–29 years	30 years or older
Total	61.2	12.1	17.2	9.5
Gender				
Male	60.3	14.6	18.7	6.4
Female	61.9	9.9	15.9	12.3
Socioeconomic status				
Lowest quartile	19.9	9.6	41.3	29.1
Middle quartiles	55.5	13.2	20.3	11.0
Highest quartile	82.8	11.8	4.8	0.7
Race–ethnicity of student				
American Indian/Alaskan Native	56.8	11.5	28.5	3.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	60.8	15.9	19.4	3.9
Black, non-Hispanic	52.5	16.6	22.2	8.7
Hispanic	56.0	13.9	23.1	7.0
White, non-Hispanic	62.8	11.1	15.8	10.3
Marital status when began at first institution				
Not married	69.9	13.6	13.7	2.8
Married	6.3	1.7	37.3	54.7
Separated	6.1	1.7	64.5	27.7
Parental education				
Less than high school diploma	29.6	10.3	32.7	27.3
High school diploma	55.2	12.8	23.8	8.3
Some postsecondary	66.7	14.4	14.6	4.3
Bachelor's or higher	79.2	11.5	8.0	1.3
Dependency status in 1989–90				
Dependent	79.2	14.6	6.1	0
Independent	9.1	4.8	49.0	37.0

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1990 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study—Second Follow-up (BPS:90/94), Data Analysis System.

Table 14.3—Percentage distribution of 1989–90 beginning postsecondary students according to socio-economic status, by demographic characteristics

	Lowest quartile	Middle quartiles	Highest quartile
Total	14.7	45.7	39.7
Gender			
Male	11.8	43.6	44.6
Female	17.1	47.4	35.5
Age when began at first institution			
18 years or younger	4.8	41.3	53.9
19 years	11.7	49.6	38.8
20–29 years	35.1	53.8	11.1
30 years or older	44.6	52.6	2.7
Race–ethnicity of student			
American Indian/Alaskan Native	27.1	55.0	17.9
Asian/Pacific Islander	22.8	36.1	41.2
Black, non-Hispanic	25.3	57.9	16.9
Hispanic	26.2	54.0	19.8
White, non-Hispanic	11.8	43.9	44.3
Marital status when began at first institution			
Not married	10.6	44.0	45.4
Married	37.3	59.1	3.6
Separated	55.1	42.5	2.4
Parental education			
Less than high school diploma	48.8	45.8	5.5
High school diploma	16.0	62.0	22.0
Some postsecondary	8.2	53.6	38.2
Bachelor's or higher	2.2	24.1	73.7
Dependency status in 1989–90			
Dependent	5.5	42.7	51.8
Independent	40.8	53.9	5.3

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1990 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study—Second Follow-up (BPS:90/94), Data Analysis System.

Table 14.4—Percentage distribution of 1989–90 beginning postsecondary students according to race–ethnicity of student, by demographic characteristics

	American Indian/ Alaskan Native	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Black, non- Hispanic	Hispanic	White, non- Hispanic
Total	0.7	4.0	8.8	7.6	78.8
Gender					
Male	1.1	3.6	7.2	7.6	80.6
Female	0.4	4.4	10.3	7.6	77.3
Age when began at first institution					
18 years or younger	0.6	3.7	7.8	7.4	80.5
19 years	0.6	4.9	12.6	9.3	72.4
20–29 years	1.1	4.2	11.8	10.9	72.0
30 years or older	0.2	1.5	8.3	5.9	84.0
Socioeconomic status					
Lowest quartile	1.4	6.3	15.2	13.6	63.6
Middle quartiles	0.9	3.2	11.2	9.0	75.8
Highest quartile	0.3	4.2	3.8	3.8	87.9
Marital status when began at first institution					
Not married	0.7	3.5	9.4	8.1	78.2
Married	0.3	3.7	6.2	7.3	82.5
Separated	0.9	1.5	7.6	10.4	79.7
Parental education					
Less than high school diploma	0.3	7.2	7.8	21.8	63.0
High school diploma	1.2	2.5	9.6	7.2	79.5
Some postsecondary	0.2	2.9	10.7	6.4	79.9
Bachelor's or higher	0.8	5.3	6.3	4.4	83.1
Dependency status in 1989–90					
Dependent	0.7	4.6	8.5	7.6	78.5
Independent	0.7	2.3	9.9	7.5	79.6

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1990 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study—Second Follow-up (BPS:90/94), Data Analysis System.

Table 14.5—Percentage distribution of 1989–90 beginning postsecondary students according to marital status when began at first institution, by demographic characteristics

	Not married	Married	Separated
Total	86.7	12.1	1.2
Gender			
Male	90.1	9.3	0.6
Female	83.7	14.6	1.7
Age when began at first institution			
18 years or younger	98.6	1.3	0.1
19 years	98.2	1.7	0.2
20–29 years	69.2	26.4	4.4
30 years or older	25.7	70.9	3.5
Socioeconomic status			
Lowest quartile	63.9	31.6	4.5
Middle quartiles	83.3	15.6	1.1
Highest quartile	98.8	1.1	0.1
Race–ethnicity of student			
American Indian/Alaskan Native	93.4	5.0	1.6
Asian/Pacific Islander	86.7	12.8	0.5
Black, non-Hispanic	90.7	8.3	1.0
Hispanic	87.4	11.1	1.5
White, non-Hispanic	86.1	12.7	1.2
Parental education			
Less than high school diploma	66.7	30.9	2.5
High school diploma	84.2	14.3	1.5
Some postsecondary	91.5	7.5	1.0
Bachelor's or higher	96.6	3.2	0.1
Dependency status in 1989–90			
Dependent	99.5	0.5	0
Independent	49.4	46.0	4.6

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1990 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study—Second Follow-up (BPS:90/94), Data Analysis System.

Table 14.6—Percentage distribution of 1989–90 beginning postsecondary students according to parental education, by demographic characteristics

	Less than high school diploma	High school diploma	Some postsecondary	Bachelor's or higher
Total	9.6	33.8	22.9	33.7
Gender				
Male	6.7	33.2	22.5	37.6
Female	12.2	34.2	23.3	30.3
Age when began at first institution				
18 years or younger	4.5	28.4	24.3	42.8
19 years	8.0	33.6	26.7	31.7
20–29 years	18.5	45.6	19.8	16.1
30 years or older	38.8	39.8	14.8	6.6
Socioeconomic status				
Lowest quartile	36.9	42.5	14.8	5.8
Middle quartiles	9.6	45.8	26.8	17.8
Highest quartile	1.3	17.9	21.1	59.8
Race-ethnicity of student				
American Indian/Alaskan Native	3.3	52.3	6.7	37.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	17.4	21.3	16.5	44.8
Black, non-Hispanic	8.8	37.7	28.6	24.9
Hispanic	28.0	32.6	19.5	20.0
White, non-Hispanic	7.7	33.9	23.1	35.3
Marital status when began at first institution				
Not married	7.3	31.1	24.1	37.6
Married	28.4	44.4	16.7	10.5
Separated	23.5	49.1	22.5	4.9
Dependency status in 1989–90				
Dependent	4.9	30.9	24.0	40.2
Independent	25.0	43.0	19.3	12.7

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1990 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study—Second Follow-up (BPS:90/94), Data Analysis System.

Table 14.7—Percentage distribution of 1989–90 beginning postsecondary students according to dependency status in 1989–90, by demographic characteristics

	Dependent	Independent
Total	74.0	26.0
Gender		
Male	77.8	22.2
Female	70.7	29.3
Age when began at first institution		
18 years or younger	96.1	3.9
19 years	89.8	10.2
20–29 years	26.5	73.5
30 years or older	0	100.0
Socioeconomic status		
Lowest quartile	27.6	72.4
Middle quartiles	69.3	30.7
Highest quartile	96.5	3.5
Race–ethnicity of student		
American Indian/Alaskan Native	74.9	25.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	85.2	14.9
Black, non-Hispanic	71.0	29.0
Hispanic	74.2	25.8
White, non-Hispanic	73.7	26.3
Marital status when began at first institution		
Not married	85.4	14.6
Married	2.9	97.1
Separated	0	100.0
Parental education		
Less than high school diploma	38.7	61.3
High school diploma	69.9	30.1
Some postsecondary	80.2	19.9
Bachelor's or higher	91.1	8.9

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1990 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study—Second Follow-up (BPS:90/94), Data Analysis System.

Table 14.8—Percentage of 1989–90 beginning postsecondary students with component persistence risk factors when they began at first institution, by demographic characteristics

	Persistence risk factors when began at first institution						Worked full time while enrolled
	GED, cert. of completion ¹	Delayed post-secondary entry	Financially ² independent	Had children	Single parent	Enrolled part time	
Total	6.4	33.0	37.7	13.9	5.4	23.9	28.3
Gender							
Male	5.5	31.2	35.3	7.8	2.0	22.8	34.5
Female	7.2	34.4	39.7	19.1	8.3	24.9	23.0
Age when began at first institution							
18 years or younger	1.7	3.1	14.4	1.3	0.8	11.1	20.4
19 years	4.7	40.0	37.3	2.6	1.5	25.4	28.9
20–29 years	15.8	94.8	87.7	32.6	16.6	49.7	47.0
30 years or older	21.8	100.0	98.3	77.7	20.0	62.0	45.0
Socioeconomic status							
Lowest quartile	19.0	75.4	83.7	42.8	21.7	43.8	39.8
Middle quartiles	7.1	38.8	42.6	15.8	4.6	29.5	29.6
Highest quartile	1.0	10.5	15.4	1.4	0.5	11.0	22.8
Race–ethnicity of student							
American Indian/Alaskan Native	22.5	52.0	46.7	3.8	0	0	33.8
Asian/Pacific Islander	6.7	29.2	34.7	9.1	1.4	21.5	18.6
Black, non-Hispanic	6.2	37.2	42.5	17.7	12.0	23.7	21.2
Hispanic	8.4	37.0	46.8	14.1	6.3	42.6	27.9
White, non-Hispanic	6.1	32.1	36.3	13.7	4.7	22.2	29.6
Marital status when began at first institution							
Not married	4.2	22.8	28.6	5.6	5.6	18.5	25.5
Married	18.7	94.1	94.3	70.6	†	59.8	48.1
Separated	32.3	91.0	92.5	53.3	53.3	45.8	27.8
Parental education							
Less than HS diploma	15.9	65.7	76.1	38.4	15.8	41.2	39.5
High school diploma	6.6	40.0	44.2	15.5	5.6	29.8	31.3
Some postsecondary	4.3	24.2	30.0	9.4	3.7	19.9	23.9
Bachelor's or higher	2.8	15.6	19.5	3.3	1.3	12.6	23.4
Dependency status in 1989–90							
Dependent	2.2	13.3	19.3	0.1	0.1	14.5	22.2
Independent	18.4	88.9	90.8	55.3	20.9	51.9	46.2

—Too few cases for a reliable estimate.

†Not applicable.

¹Includes a few students with no high school credential.

²For federal tax purposes.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1990 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study—Second Follow-up (BPS:90/94), Data Analysis System.

Table 14.9—Percentage distribution of 1989–90 beginning postsecondary students according to age when began at first institution, by first institution attended, first degree working toward, and highest degree attained

	18 years or younger	19 years	20–29 years	30 years or older
Total	61.2	12.1	17.2	9.5
Level and control of first institution				
4-year				
Public	83.0	9.2	5.3	2.5
Private, not-for-profit	84.8	8.2	4.3	2.8
Private, for-profit	—	—	—	—
2-year				
Public	48.2	14.1	23.4	14.2
Private, not-for-profit	73.1	12.5	11.9	2.5
Private, for-profit	35.1	17.9	34.0	12.9
Less-than-2-year				
Public	26.4	20.4	28.1	25.1
Private, not-for-profit	9.1	9.0	60.9	21.0
Private, for-profit	25.1	14.3	42.0	18.6
Level of first institution				
4-year	83.6	8.9	4.9	2.6
2-year	48.1	14.4	23.8	13.7
Less-than-2-year	24.7	15.4	39.8	20.1
Control of first institution				
Public	61.0	12.4	16.6	10.0
Private, not-for-profit	81.8	8.7	6.3	3.1
Private, for-profit	28.8	15.6	39.1	16.5
Degree working toward at first institution				
None	32.3	17.6	23.2	27.0
Certificate	30.2	12.3	38.0	19.5
Associate's degree	49.3	15.1	23.1	12.5
Bachelor's degree	80.9	10.0	6.8	2.2
Highest degree attained				
None	51.5	14.3	21.4	12.8
Certificate	34.0	14.7	32.9	18.4
Associate's degree	68.4	13.6	12.6	5.5
Bachelor's degree	90.4	5.8	3.1	0.6

—Too few cases for a reliable estimate.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1990 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study—Second Follow-up (BPS:90/94), Data Analysis System.

Table 14.10—Percentage distribution of 1989–90 beginning postsecondary students according to level of first institution, by selected demographic and institutional characteristics

	4-year	2-year	Less-than- 2-year
Total	42.2	49.2	8.6
Gender			
Male	42.8	50.4	6.8
Female	41.6	48.2	10.2
Age when began at first institution			
18 years or younger	57.7	38.8	3.5
19 years	30.8	58.2	10.9
20–29 years	12.1	68.0	19.9
30 years or older	11.5	70.5	18.0
Socioeconomic status			
Lowest quartile	16.2	63.1	20.7
Middle quartiles	34.2	56.2	9.7
Highest quartile	60.8	36.2	3.0
Control of first institution			
Public	38.4	59.1	2.5
Private, not-for-profit	86.9	10.9	2.2
Private, for-profit	0	36.9	63.1
Degree working toward at first institution			
None	15.0	82.3	2.6
Certificate	3.2	45.2	51.6
Associate's degree	9.1	89.9	1.0
Bachelor's degree	76.5	23.2	0.3
Race-ethnicity of student			
American Indian/Alaskan Native	29.3	52.5	18.2
Asian/Pacific Islander	50.7	45.2	4.0
Black, non-Hispanic	36.0	49.6	14.4
Hispanic	24.0	67.2	8.8
White, non-Hispanic	44.4	47.6	8.0
Dependency status in 1989–90			
Dependent	52.0	43.3	4.7
Independent	13.9	66.2	19.8

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1990 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study—Second Follow-up (BPS:90/94), Data Analysis System.

Table 14.11—Percentage distribution of 1989–90 beginning postsecondary students according to control of first institution, by selected demographic and institutional characteristics

	Public	Private, not-for-profit	Private, for-profit
Total	74.0	15.8	10.2
Gender			
Male	76.5	16.2	7.2
Female	71.8	15.4	12.7
Age when began at first institution			
18 years or younger	74.0	21.2	4.8
19 years	75.5	11.3	13.1
20–29 years	71.1	5.8	23.1
30 years or older	77.3	5.2	17.5
Socioeconomic status			
Lowest quartile	71.4	6.7	21.8
Middle quartiles	75.6	12.0	12.4
Highest quartile	73.2	23.5	3.4
Level of first institution			
4-year	67.4	32.5	0
2-year	88.9	3.5	7.7
Less-than-2-year	21.4	4.0	74.6
Degree working toward at first institution			
None	93.3	5.2	1.5
Certificate	49.0	4.5	46.5
Associate's degree	85.3	6.8	7.9
Bachelor's degree	73.3	25.7	1.0
Race-ethnicity of student			
American Indian/Alaskan Native	65.1	13.9	21.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	79.5	15.4	5.1
Black, non-Hispanic	68.4	11.4	20.2
Hispanic	77.3	9.8	13.0
White, non-Hispanic	74.2	17.0	8.9
Dependency status in 1989–90			
Dependent	74.7	19.1	6.1
Independent	72.1	6.1	21.8

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1990 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study—Second Follow-up (BPS:90/94), Data Analysis System.