

IPEDS Survey Methodology: Web Content

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Data Collection Release Levels

NCES releases the annual data collection in three levels: Preliminary, provisional, and final.

Preliminary Data

NCES provides IPEDS keyholders with access to IPEDS preliminary data through the IPEDS DCS soon after the close of data collection period. Preliminary data undergo an initial review and validation process, including following up with institutions. However, the data have not been extensively reviewed or edited, such that blank responses are left blank (i.e., data are unimputed).

Provisional Data

NCES completes an extensive quality control process when the provisional data is released to the public. Along with additional follow-up with institutions, blank data are imputed, using the Nearest Neighbor method to estimate missing data (see [Imputation Procedures section](#)). The review process takes approximately 3 additional months after the preliminary data are released.

Final Data

In the following collection year, institutions may revise their data should an error be detected by the institution. Institutions update their data through the IPEDS Prior Year Revision System and the incorrect provisional data is updated with the revisions. Final data for each component are released approximately 12 months after the provisional release of the data.