

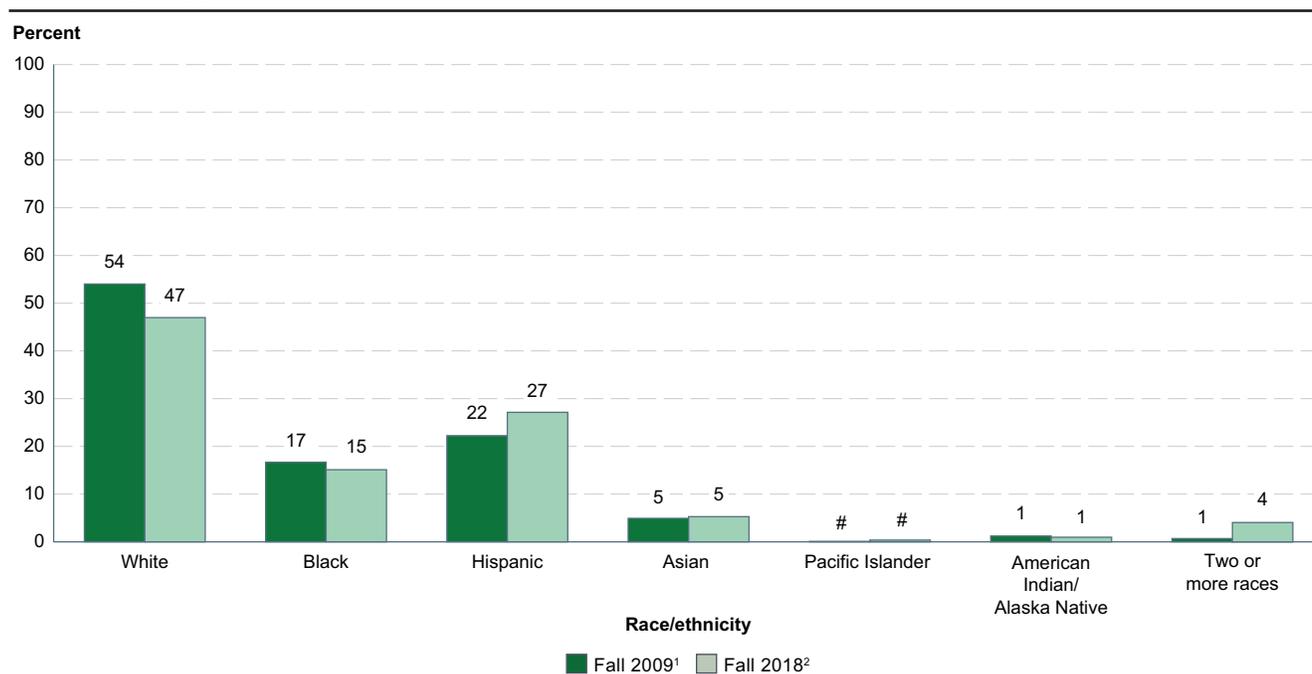
## Racial/Ethnic Enrollment in Public Schools

*Between fall 2009 and fall 2018, the percentage of public school students who were Hispanic increased from 22 to 27 percent. The percentage of public school students who were White decreased from 54 to 47 percent, and the percentage of students who were Black decreased from 17 to 15 percent.*

Total enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools increased from 49.4 million students to 50.7 million students between fall 2009 and fall 2018.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, racial/ethnic distributions of public school students across the country have shifted.

**Figure 1. Percentage distribution of students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools, by race/ethnicity: Fall 2009 and fall 2018**



# Rounds to zero.

<sup>1</sup> For fall 2009, data on students who were Pacific Islander and of Two or more races were reported by only a small number of states. Therefore, the data are not comparable to figures for 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Includes imputations for prekindergarten enrollment in California and Oregon.

NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary and Secondary Education," 2009–10 and 2018–19. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 203.50.

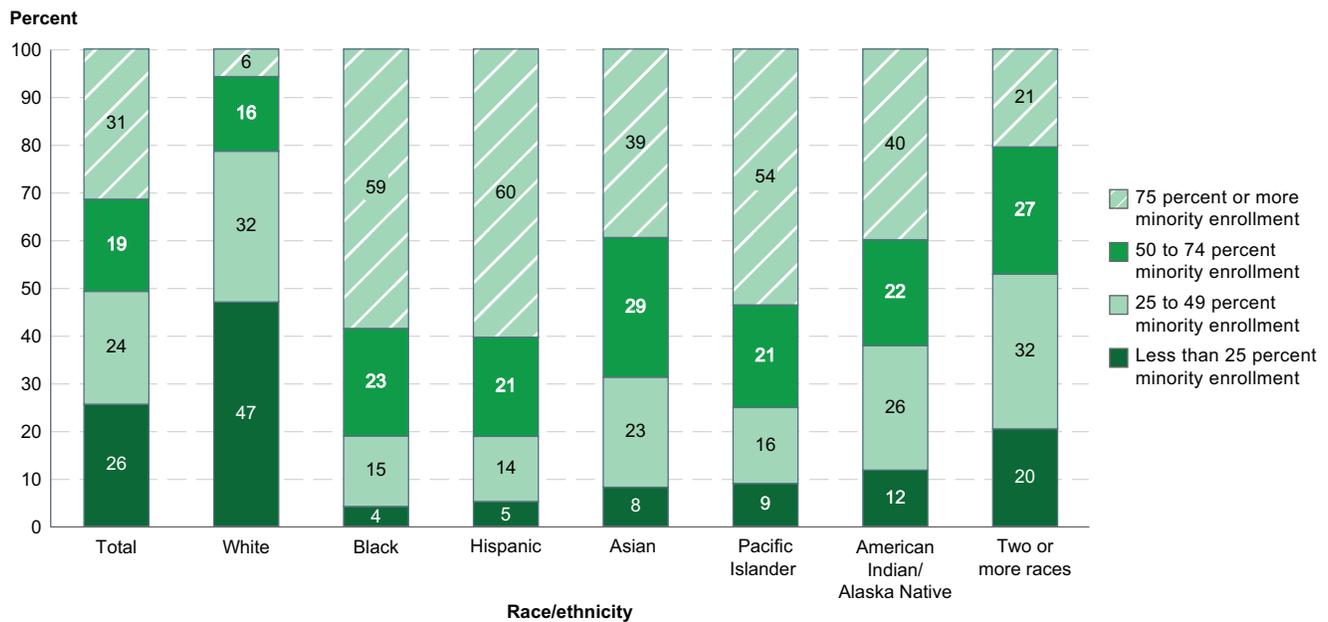
In fall 2018, of the 50.7 million students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools, 23.8 million were White, 13.8 million were Hispanic, 7.7 million were Black, 2.7 million were Asian, 2.1 million were of Two or more races, 0.5 million were American Indian/Alaska Native, and 186,000 were Pacific Islander. Between fall 2009 and fall 2018, public school enrollments among White students decreased from 26.7 million to 23.8 million. Similarly, the number of Black students decreased from 8.2 million to 7.7 million. In contrast, the number of Hispanic students increased from 11.0 million to 13.8 million. These enrollment trends produced changes in the overall composition of U.S. public school students.

Specifically, the percentages of students who were White and Black decreased (from 54 to 47 percent and 17 to 15 percent, respectively), while the percentage of students who were Hispanic increased from 22 to 27 percent over the period. In both fall 2009 and fall 2018, Asian students accounted for 5 percent of public elementary and secondary enrollment, and American Indian/Alaska Native students accounted for 1 percent. In fall 2018, students who were of Two or more races accounted for 4 percent of public elementary and secondary enrollment, and Pacific Islander students accounted for less than one half of 1 percent.<sup>2</sup>

Changes in the racial/ethnic composition of public school enrollment between fall 2009 and fall 2018 differed by state.<sup>3</sup> In all 50 states, the percentage of public school students who were White was lower in fall 2018 than in fall 2009, with the difference ranging from 13 percentage points in Washington to 2 percentage points in Mississippi. However, in the District of Columbia, the percentage of public school students who were White was 5 percentage points higher in fall 2018 (12 percent) than in fall 2009 (7 percent). Across all 50 states and the District of Columbia, the percentage of public school students who were Hispanic was higher in fall 2018 than in fall 2009;

the difference was largest in Hawaii (11 percentage points) and smallest in Vermont, Maine, West Virginia, and Alaska (1 percentage point each). In 42 states and the District of Columbia, the percentage of public school students who were Black was lower in fall 2018 than in fall 2009; the largest difference occurred in the District of Columbia (13 percentage points), but the difference was 3 percentage points or less in most states (38 of the 42 states). In the remaining 8 states, however, the percentage of public school students who were Black was higher in fall 2018 than in fall 2009; in all 8 states the differences were 3 percentage points or less.

**Figure 2. Percentage distribution of public elementary and secondary school students, by student’s race/ethnicity and percent of minority enrollment in school: Fall 2018**

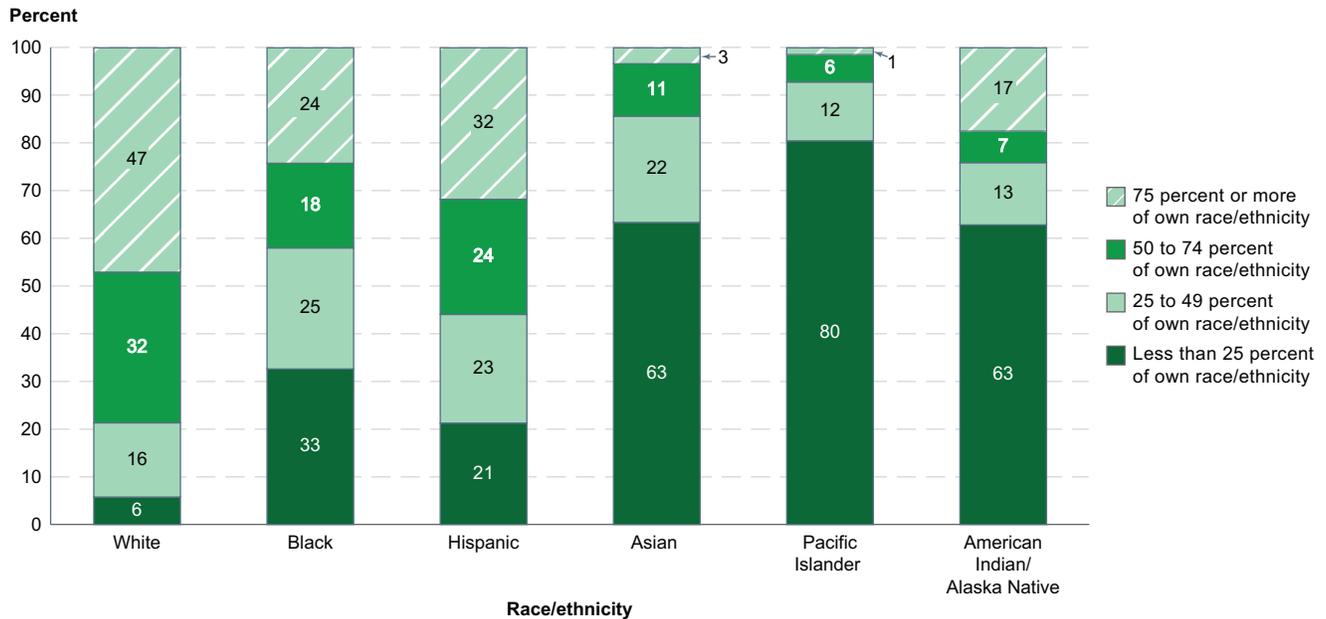


NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Minority students include students who were Black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, and of Two or more races. Data reflect racial/ethnic data reported by schools. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), “Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey,” 2018–19. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 216.50.

In fall 2018, about 31 percent of all public school students attended schools where minority students<sup>4</sup> comprised at least 75 percent of the student population; this represents an increase from the 27 percent of all public school students who attended such schools in fall 2009. Considering students from different racial/ethnic groups separately, more than half of Hispanic (60 percent), Black (59 percent), and Pacific Islander (54 percent)

students attended public schools in which the combined enrollment of minority students was at least 75 percent of total enrollment in fall 2018. In contrast, less than half of American Indian/Alaska Native students (40 percent), Asian students (39 percent), students of Two or more races (21 percent), and White students (6 percent) attended such schools.

**Figure 3. Percentage distribution of public elementary and secondary school students, by student's race/ethnicity and percentage of own racial/ethnic group enrolled in the school: Fall 2018**



NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Data for Two or more races are omitted from this figure; 99 percent of students of Two or more races were enrolled in schools where less than 25 percent of the students were of their own race. Data reflect racial/ethnic data reported by schools. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey," 2018–19. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 216.55.

As discussed in the preceding paragraph, minority students disproportionately attended schools in which the combined enrollment of minority students was at least 75 percent of total enrollment in fall 2018. This does not necessarily mean, however, that minority students attended schools with many students of their own racial/ethnic background. Students from less populous racial/ethnic groups, in particular, were less likely to attend schools with many peers of the same racial/ethnic group, compared with students from more populous groups. In fall 2018, some 47 percent of White students were enrolled in public schools that were predominantly composed of students of their own race (i.e., 75 percent or more of enrollment was White), while 6 percent of White students were enrolled in schools in which less than a quarter of the students were White. About 24 percent of

Black students were enrolled in public schools that were predominantly Black, while 33 percent of Black students were enrolled in schools in which less than a quarter of the students were Black. Similarly, 32 percent of Hispanic students were enrolled in public schools that were predominantly Hispanic, while 21 percent were enrolled in schools in which less than a quarter of the students were Hispanic. In comparison, lower percentages of students who were American Indian/Alaska Native (17 percent), Asian (3 percent), and Pacific Islander (1 percent) were enrolled in public schools that were predominantly composed of students of their own racial/ethnic group. Instead, more than half of students of these races were enrolled in public schools in which less than a quarter of the students were of their own race.

**Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup> Data in this indicator represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

<sup>2</sup> In fall 2009, students who were of Two or more races accounted for 1 percent of public elementary and secondary enrollment, and Pacific Islander students accounted for less than one half of 1 percent. However, for this year, data on these students were reported by only a small number of states; therefore, the data are not comparable with figures for fall 2018.

<sup>3</sup> In fall 2009, state-level data on the racial/ethnic distribution of public school enrollment were based on students for whom race/

ethnicity was reported, which may be less than the total number of students in the state. However, in fall 2018, enrollment data for students not reported by race/ethnicity were prorated by state to match the state totals. Due to the different approaches to treating students for whom race/ethnicity was not reported, use caution when interpreting the state-level comparisons between fall 2009 and fall 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Minority students include students who were Black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, and of Two or more races.

**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, tables 203.50, 203.70, 216.50, and 216.55; *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 216.50; *Digest of Education Statistics 2014*, table 216.50; *Digest of Education Statistics 2011*, table 44

**Related indicators and resources:** [Characteristics of Elementary and Secondary Schools](#); [Public Charter School Enrollment](#); [Public School Enrollment](#); [Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups](#)

**Glossary:** Elementary school; Enrollment; Public school or institution; Racial/ethnic group; Secondary school