

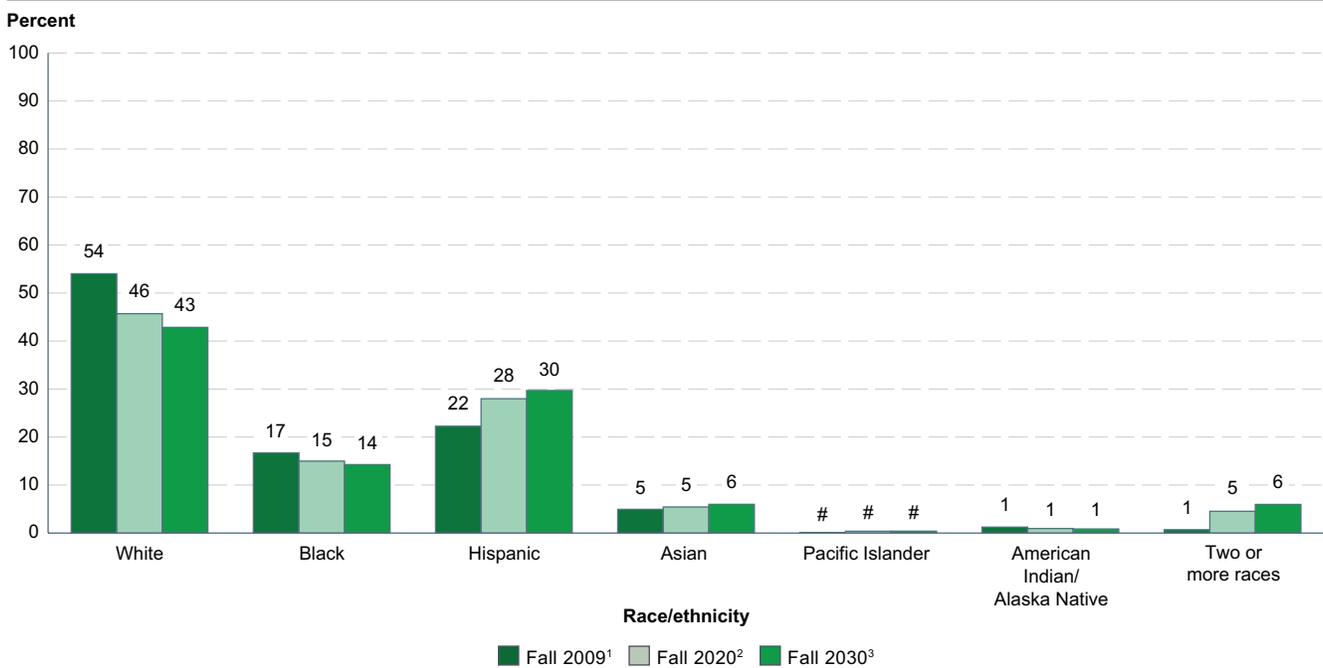
Racial/Ethnic Enrollment in Public Schools

Between fall 2009 and fall 2020, the percentage of public school students who were Hispanic increased from 22 to 28 percent. The percentage of public school students who were White decreased from 54 to 46 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 to 50.8 million students between fall 2009 and fall 2019. From fall 2019 to fall 2020, enrollment dropped by 3 percent to 49.4 million students.^{1, 2} Total enrollment is projected to have

rebounded to 50.1 million students in fall 2021 and then decrease again to 47.3 million students by fall 2030 (the last year of projected data available).³ In addition, racial/ethnic distributions of public school students across the country have shifted.

Figure 1. Percentage distribution of student enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by race/ethnicity: Fall 2009, fall 2020, and fall 2030



Rounds to zero.

¹ 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 later years.

² Includes imputations for nonreported enrollment for all grades in Illinois. Also includes imputations for nonreported prekindergarten enrollment in California and Oregon.

³ Data for fall 2030 are projected.

NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Details may not sum to 100 percent 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 2020–21; and National Elementary and Secondary Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity Projection Model, through 2030. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 203.50.

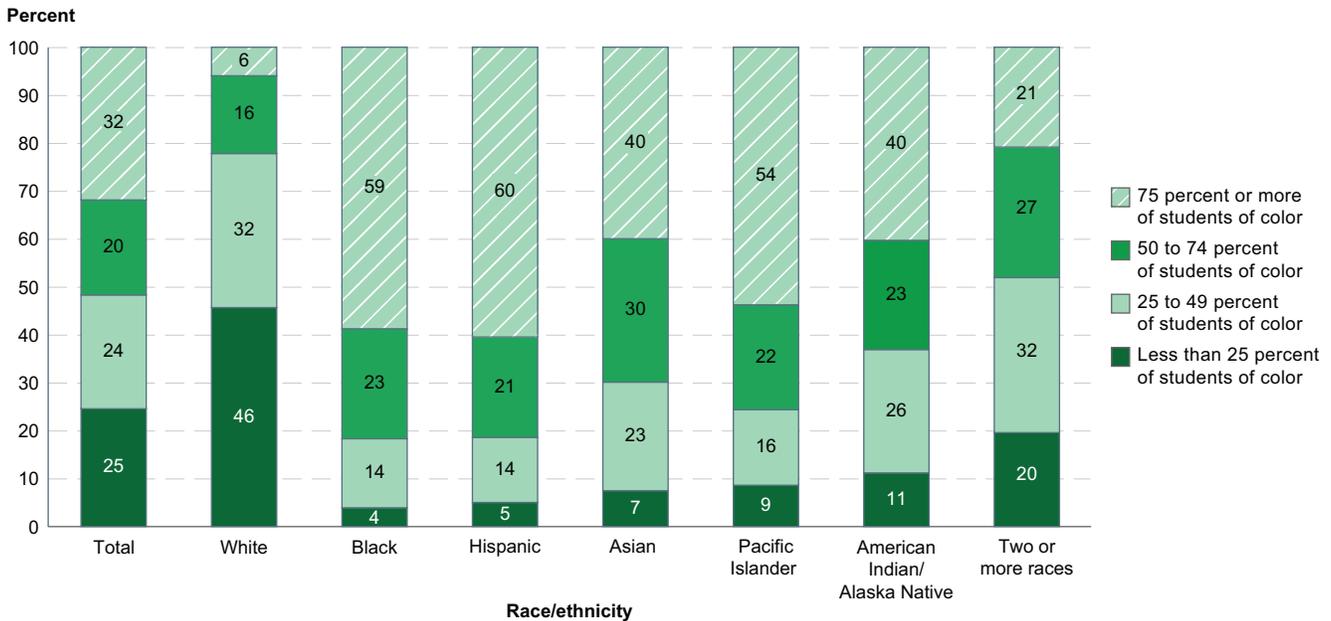
Of the 49.4 million students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools in fall 2020, some 22.6 million were White, 13.8 million were Hispanic, 7.4 million were Black, 2.7 million were Asian, 2.2 million were of Two or more races, 0.5 million were American Indian/Alaska Native, and 180,000 were Pacific Islander. Between fall 2009 and fall 2020, public school enrollment among White students decreased from 26.7 million to 22.6 million. Similarly, the number of Black students decreased from 8.2 million to 7.4 million. In contrast, the number of Hispanic students increased from 11.0 million to 14.1 million between fall 2009 and fall 2019 before dropping to 13.8 million in fall 2020. These enrollment trends produced changes in the overall composition of U.S. public school students. Specifically, between fall 2009 and fall 2020, the percentages of students who were White and Black decreased (from 54 to 46 percent and 17 to 15 percent, respectively), while the percentage of students who were Hispanic increased from 22 to 28 percent. In both fall 2009 and fall 2020, Asian students made up 5 percent of public elementary and secondary enrollment, and American Indian/Alaska Native students made up 1 percent. In fall 2020, students who were of Two or more races made up 5 percent of enrollment, and Pacific Islander students made up less than one half of 1 percent.⁴

Between fall 2020 and fall 2030, the percentages of public elementary and secondary students who are White and Black are projected to continue decreasing (from 46 to 43 percent and 15 to 14 percent, respectively). In contrast, the percentage of students who are Hispanic is projected to continue increasing (from 28 to 30 percent). In addition,

the percentages of students who are Asian and of Two or more races are projected to increase (each from 5 to 6 percent). Similar to fall 2020, American Indian/Alaska Native students are projected to make up 1 percent of enrollment in fall 2030. Pacific Islander students are projected to make up less than one half of 1 percent.

Changes in the racial/ethnic composition of public school enrollment between fall 2009 and fall 2020 differed by state.⁵ In all 50 states, the percentage of public school students who were White was lower in fall 2020 than in fall 2009. The differences ranged from 15 percentage points in Washington to 3 percentage points in West Virginia and Mississippi. However, in the District of Columbia, the percentage of public school students who were White was 6 percentage points higher in fall 2020 (13 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 2020 than in fall 2009. The difference was largest in Hawaii (12 percentage points) and smallest in West Virginia, Vermont, Maine, and Alaska (1 percentage point each). In 40 states and the District of Columbia, the percentage of public school students who were Black was lower in fall 2020 than in fall 2009. The largest difference of 15 percentage points occurred in the District of Columbia, but the difference was 3 percentage points or less in 35 of the 40 states. In the remaining 10 states, however, the percentage of public school students who were Black was higher in fall 2020 than in fall 2009. In all 10 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 percentage of students of color enrolled in the school: Fall 2019

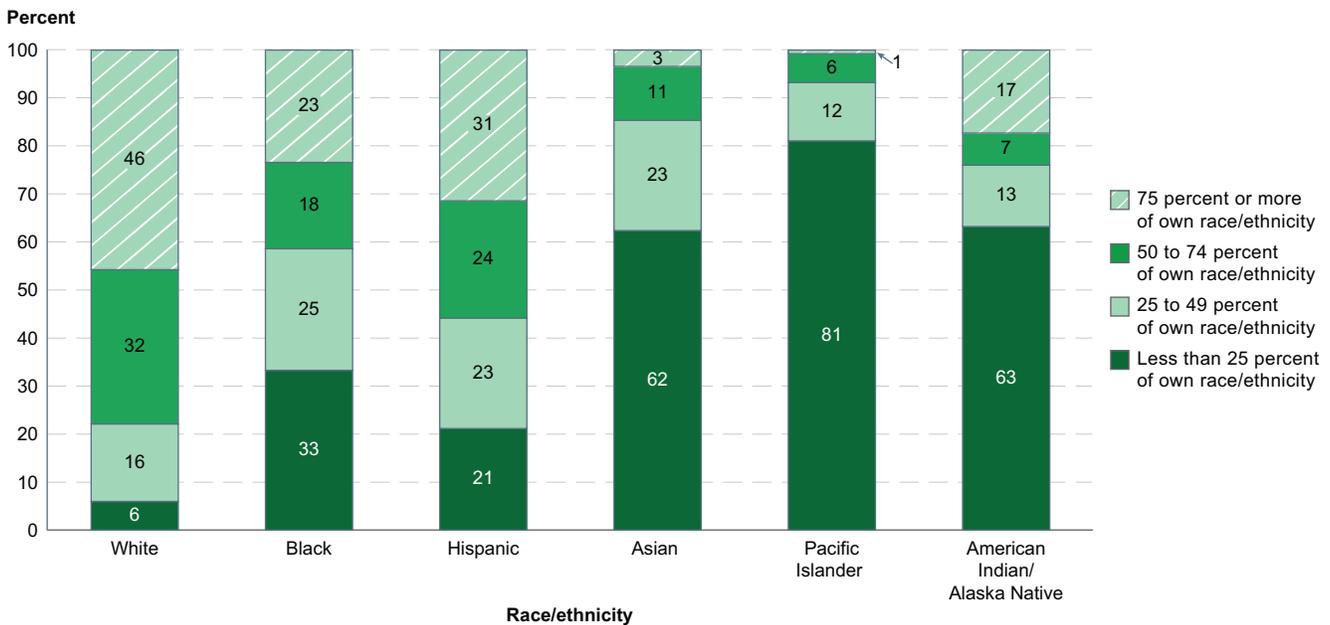


NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The term "students of color" is being used synonymously with "minority students" in *Digest* table 216.50. Students of color include those who are Black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, and of Two or more 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," 2019–20. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 216.50.

In fall 2019,⁶ about 32 percent of all public school students attended schools where students of color⁷ made up at least 75 percent of total enrollment. This represents an increase from the 27 percent of all public school students who attended such schools in fall 2009. Specifically, 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 students

of color was at least 75 percent of total enrollment. In addition, 40 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native students, 40 percent of Asian students, and 21 percent of students of Two or more races attended schools in which the combined enrollment of students of color was at least 75 percent of total enrollment. In contrast, 6 percent of White students 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 2019



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,” 2019–20. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 216.55.

As discussed in the prior paragraph, students of color disproportionately attended schools in which the combined enrollment of students of color was at least 75 percent of total enrollment in fall 2019. This does not necessarily mean that students of color attended schools with many students of their own racial/ethnic group. Students from less populous racial/ethnic groups were less likely to attend schools with many peers of the same racial/ethnic group than were students from more populous groups. In fall 2019, some 46 percent of White students were enrolled in public schools that were mostly composed of White students (i.e., at least 75 percent of enrollment was White), while 6 percent were enrolled in schools in which less than 25 percent of the students were White. Twenty-three percent of Black students were

enrolled in public schools that were mostly composed of Black students, while 33 percent were enrolled in schools in which less than 25 percent of the students were Black. Thirty-one percent of Hispanic students were enrolled in public schools that were mostly composed of Hispanic students, while 21 percent were enrolled in schools in which less than 25 percent 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 mostly 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 25 percent of the students were of their own race.⁸

Endnotes:

¹ Data for 2019 include imputations for nonreported prekindergarten enrollment in California. Data for 2020 include imputations for nonreported enrollment for all grades in Illinois, as well as imputations for nonreported prekindergarten enrollment in California and Oregon.

² 2020 is the first year in which reported fall enrollment may have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic. For more information, see [Public School Enrollment](#).

³ Data in this indicator represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

⁴ In fall 2009, students who were of Two or more races made up 1 percent of public elementary and secondary enrollment, and Pacific Islander students made up less than one half of 1 percent. However, 2009 data on these students were reported by only a small number of states; therefore, the data are not comparable with figures for fall 2020.

⁵ 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 2020, enrollment data for students not reported by race/ethnicity were prorated based on the known racial/ethnic composition of a state by grade to match the state totals. In addition, the 2020 data for Illinois were based on imputations for nonreported enrollment for all grades. Due to the different approaches to treating students for whom race/ethnicity was not reported and the imputation of the 2020 Illinois data, use caution when interpreting the state-level comparisons between fall 2009 and fall 2020.

⁶ The rest of this indicator is based on racial/ethnic data reported by schools. Fall 2019 is the most recent year for which these data are available.

⁷ The term “students of color” is being used synonymously with “minority students” in Digest table 216.50. Students of color include those who are Black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, and of Two or more races.

⁸ Ninety-nine percent of students of Two or more races were enrolled in schools where less than 25 percent of the students were of Two or more races.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, 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; and *Digest of Education Statistics 2011*, table 44

Related indicators and resources: [Characteristics of Elementary and Secondary Schools](#); [Characteristics of Public School Teachers](#); [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