

Racial/Ethnic Enrollment in Public Schools

Between fall 2010 and fall 2021, the percentage of public school students who were Hispanic increased from 23 to 28 percent. The percentage of public school students who were White decreased from 52 to 45 percent, and the percentage of students who were Black decreased from 16 to 15 percent.

Total enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools increased from 49.5 million to 50.8 million students between fall 2010 and fall 2019. During the coronavirus pandemic, enrollment dropped by about 3 percent from 50.8 million students in fall 2019 to 49.4 million students in fall 2020 and fall 2021.^{1,2} Total enrollment is projected to continue decreasing to 46.9 million by fall 2031 (the last year of projected data available).³ In addition, racial/ethnic distributions of public school students across the country have shifted.

Overall Public School Racial/Ethnic Composition

Of the 49.4 million students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools in fall 2021,⁴

- 22.4 million were White;
- 14.1 million were Hispanic;
- 7.4 million were Black;
- 2.7 million were Asian;
- 2.3 million were of Two or more races;
- 0.5 million were American Indian/Alaska Native; and
- 182,000 were Pacific Islander.

Between fall 2010 and fall 2021, public school enrollment decreased among students who were

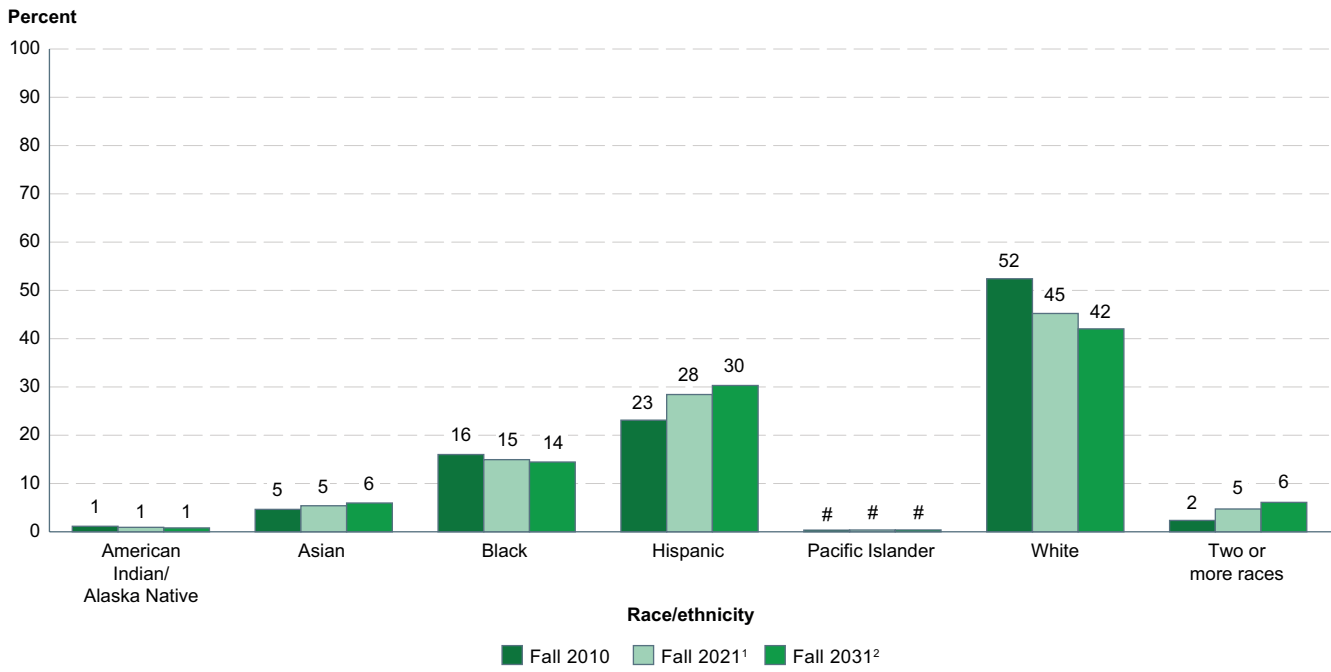
- White (from 25.9 million to 22.4 million);
- Black (from 7.9 million to 7.4 million); and
- American Indian/Alaska Native (from 0.6 million to 0.5 million).

In contrast, public school enrollment increased between fall 2010 and fall 2021 among students who were

- Hispanic (from 11.4 million to 14.1 million);
- Asian (from 2.3 million to 2.7 million); and
- of Two or more races (1.2 million to 2.3 million).

Among all seven racial/ethnic groups, students of Two or more races were the only group for whom enrollment did not drop between fall 2019 and fall 2020.

Figure 1. Percentage distribution of student enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by race/ethnicity: Fall 2010, fall 2021, and fall 2031



Rounds to zero.

¹ Includes imputations for nonreported prekindergarten enrollment in California and Oregon.

² Data for fall 2031 are projected.

NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Projections in this figure were calculated after the onset of the coronavirus pandemic and take into account the expected impacts of the pandemic. Some data have been revised from previously published figures. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Detail 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,” 2010–11 and 2021–22; and National Elementary and Secondary Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity Projection Model, through 2031. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, table 203.50.

These enrollment trends produced changes in the overall composition of U.S. public school students. Specifically, between fall 2010 and fall 2021, there was a decrease in the percentages of students who were

- White (from 52 to 45 percent);
- Black (from 16 to 15 percent); and
- American Indian/Alaska Native (from 1.1 to 0.9 percent).

During this same time period, there was an increase in the percentage of students who were

- Hispanic (from 23 to 28 percent);
- Asian (from 4.6 to 5.4 percent); and
- of Two or more races (from 2 to 5 percent).

In both fall 2010 and fall 2021, Pacific Islander students made up less than one-half of 1 percent of public elementary and secondary enrollment.

Between fall 2021 and fall 2031, the percentages of public elementary and secondary students enrolled in public schools are projected to continue decreasing for students who are

- White (from 45 to 42 percent);
- Black (from 15 to 14 percent); and
- American Indian/Alaska Native (from 0.9 to 0.8 percent).

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). Pacific Islander students are projected to make up less than one-half of 1 percent.

Public School Racial/Ethnic Composition by State

Changes in the racial/ethnic composition of public elementary and secondary school enrollment between fall 2010 and fall 2021 differed by state.⁵ Compared with fall 2010, the percentage of public school students in fall 2021 who were Black

- was lower by more than 3 percentage points in Tennessee (3 percent), Louisiana (3 percent), South Carolina (4 percent), and the District of Columbia (13 percent);⁶
- was lower by 3 percentage points or less in 33 states; and
- was higher by 3 percentage points or less in the 14 remaining states.

Compared with fall 2010, the percentage of public school students in fall 2021 who were Hispanic

- was higher in all 50 states and the District of Columbia; and
- ranged from 1 percentage point higher in West Virginia and Maine to 13 percentage points higher in Hawaii.

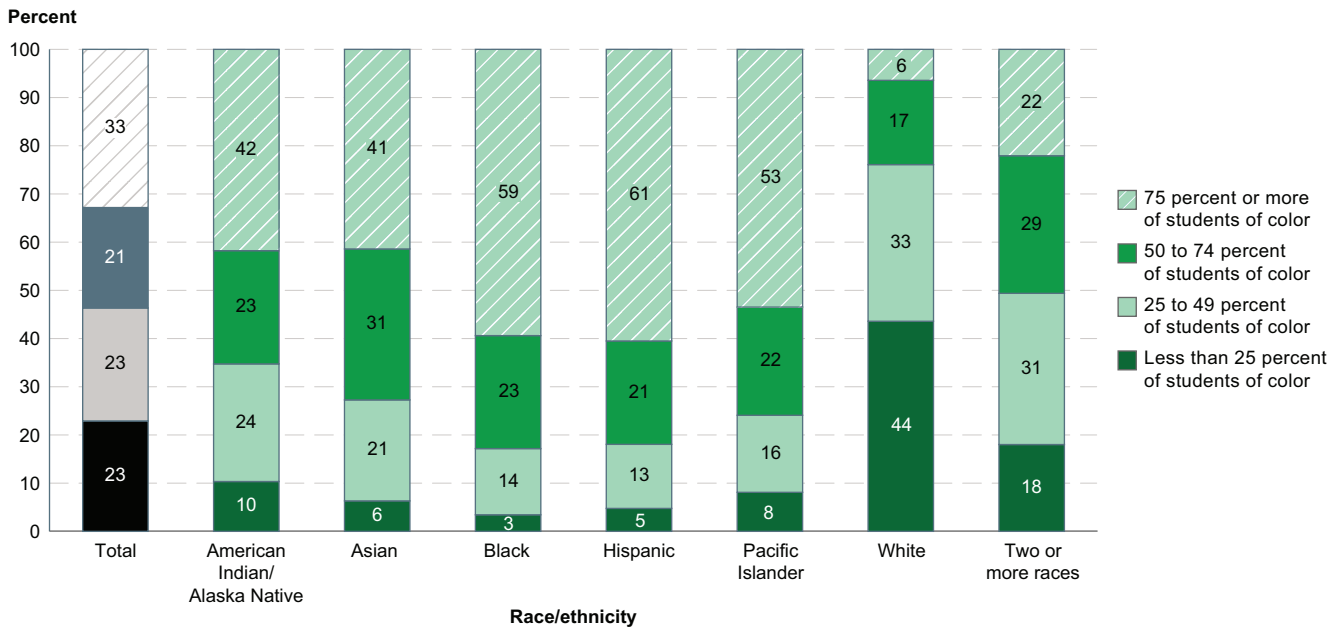
Compared with fall 2010, the percentage of public school students in fall 2021 who were White

- was lower in all 50 states;
- ranged from 3 percentage points lower in Hawaii, West Virginia, and Mississippi to 13 percentage points lower in Connecticut and Washington; and
- was 6 percentage points higher in the District of Columbia (13 percent in fall 2021 vs. 7 percent in fall 2010).

Fall 2010 and fall 2021 data on the racial/ethnic composition of public school enrollment are available for some other U.S. jurisdictions as well. In fall 2010 and fall 2021, American Indian/Alaska Native students made up 100 percent of public school enrollment among Bureau of Indian Education schools. In Puerto Rico, Hispanic students made up nearly 100 percent of public school enrollment in both years. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, changes in the percentages of public school students who were of each racial/ethnic group were all 1 percentage point or less. In fall 2021, some 77 percent of students enrolled in public school in the U.S. Virgin Islands were Black, and 21 percent were Hispanic. In Guam, the percentage of public school students who were Pacific Islander was about 4 percentage points higher in fall 2021 than in fall 2010 (73 vs. 69 percent). In both fall 2021 and fall 2010, Asian students made up about 22 percent of public school enrollment in Guam. In the Northern Mariana Islands, the percentage of public school students who were Pacific Islander was about 3 percentage points lower in fall 2021 than in fall 2010 (58 vs. 61 percent), and the percentage who were Asian was about 2 percentage points lower in fall 2021 than in fall 2010 (36 vs. 38 percent). In contrast, the percentage of public school students in fall 2021 who were of Two or more races was about 5 percentage points higher than in fall of 2010 (5 vs. 0.4 percent) in the Northern Mariana Islands.

Peer Diversity

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 2021



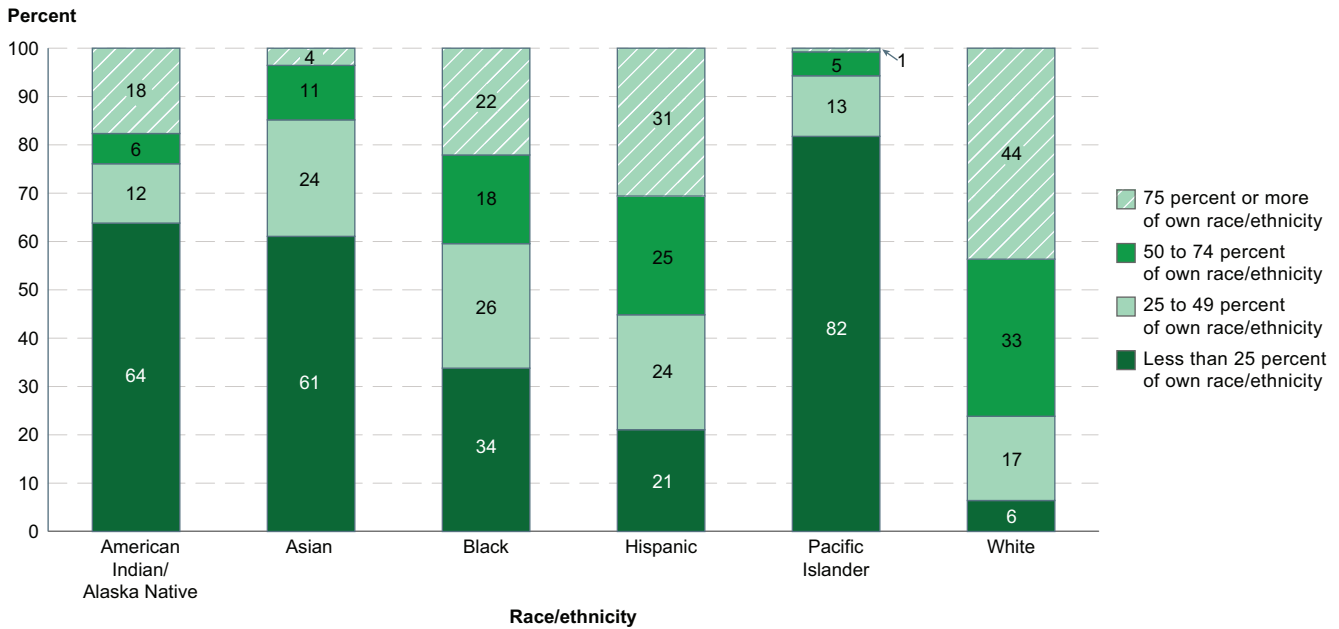
NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The term “students of color” is being used synonymously with “non-White students” in *Digest* table 216.50. Students of color include those who are Black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, and of Two or more 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,” 2021–22. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, table 216.50.

In fall 2021, about 33 percent of all public elementary and secondary 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 2010. In fall 2021, more than half of students from the following racial/ethnic groups attended public schools in which the combined enrollment of students of color was at least 75 percent of total enrollment:

- Hispanic (61 percent)
- Black (59 percent)
- Pacific Islander (53 percent)

In addition, 42 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native students, 41 percent of Asian students, and 22 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 student’s own racial/ethnic group enrolled in the school: Fall 2021



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 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,” 2021–22. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, table 216.55.

As discussed in the prior paragraph, compared to White students, a higher proportion of students of color attended schools in which the combined enrollment of students of color was at least 75 percent of total enrollment in fall 2021. This does not necessarily mean that students of color attended schools with many students of their own racial/ethnic group. In fall 2021, the percentages of students who attended schools that were mostly composed of their own racial/ethnic group (i.e., at least 75 percent) were⁸

- 44 percent for White students;
- 31 percent for Hispanic students;
- 22 percent for Black students;
- 18 percent for American Indian/Alaska Native students;
- 4 percent for Asian students; and
- 1 percent for Pacific Islander students.

Students from less populous racial/ethnic groups attended schools with many peers of the same racial/ethnic group less frequently than did students from more populous groups. Specifically, more than half of students who were American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, or Pacific Islander were enrolled in public schools in which less than 25 percent of the students were of their own race/ethnicity.

Endnotes:

¹ Data for 2019 include imputations for nonreported prekindergarten enrollment in California. Data for 2020 include imputations for nonreported prekindergarten enrollment in Oregon. Data for 2021 include imputations for nonreported prekindergarten enrollment in California and Oregon.

² The year 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, unless otherwise noted.

⁴ Enrollment counts for individual racial/ethnic groups do not sum to the total here because of rounding.

⁵ 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, data include imputations for nonreported prekindergarten enrollment.

⁶ Percentage point changes are calculated using unrounded data.

⁷ The term “students of color” is being used synonymously with “non-White students” in *Digest* tables 216.50 and 216.55. Students of color include those who are Black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, and of Two or more races.

⁸ Data for Two or more races are omitted from this discussion; 99 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 2022*, 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

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