

## Postbaccalaureate Enrollment

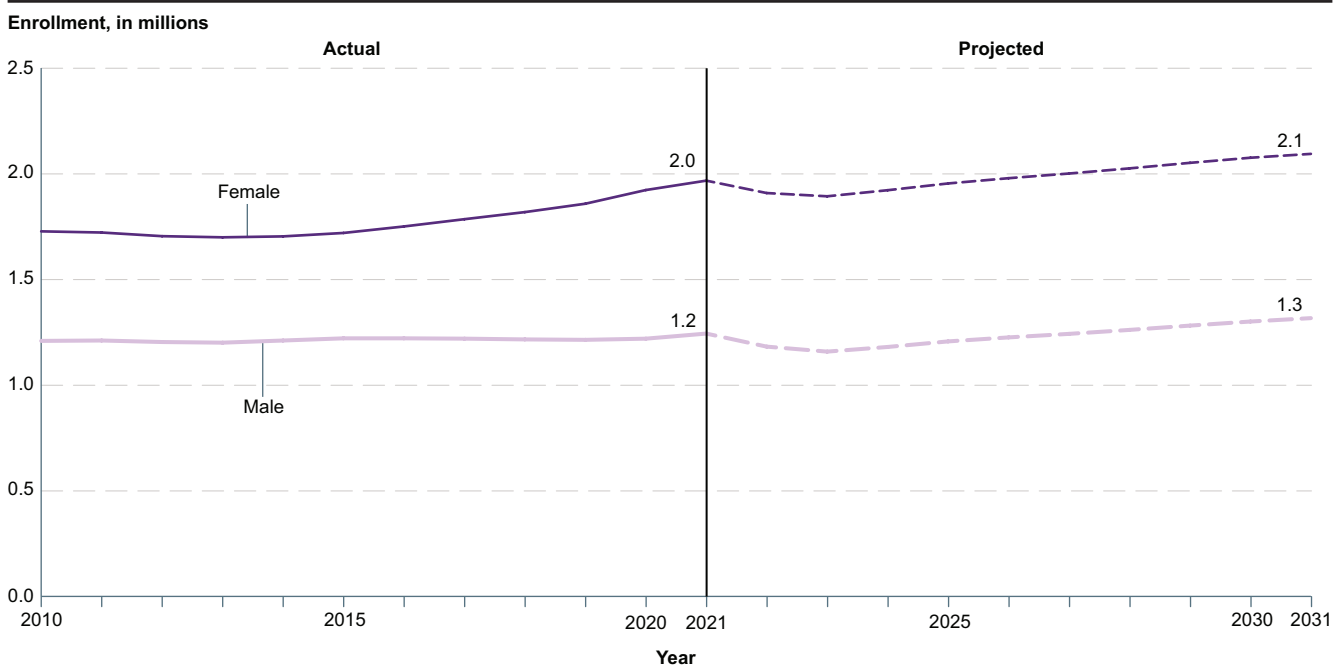
Between fall 2010 and fall 2021, total postbaccalaureate enrollment increased by 9 percent (from 2.9 million to 3.2 million students). By 2031, total postbaccalaureate enrollment is projected to increase by 6 percent (from 3.2 million to 3.4 million students).

In fall 2021, some 3.2 million students were enrolled at the postbaccalaureate level<sup>1</sup> in degree-granting institutions in the United States.<sup>2</sup> Postbaccalaureate degree programs include master’s and doctoral programs as well as professional doctoral programs such as law, medicine, and dentistry. Between 2010 and 2019, total postbaccalaureate

enrollment increased by 5 percent (from 2.9 million to 3.1 million students), and this trend continued during the coronavirus pandemic, increasing another 5 percent to 3.2 million in 2021. By 2031, postbaccalaureate enrollment is projected to increase by 6 percent (from 3.2 million to 3.4 million students).<sup>3</sup>

### Postbaccalaureate Enrollment by Sex

Figure 1. Actual and projected postbaccalaureate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by sex: Fall 2010 through fall 2031



NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Postbaccalaureate degree programs include master’s and doctoral programs, as well as professional doctoral programs such as law, medicine, and dentistry. Degree-granting institutions grant associate’s or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Projections 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.

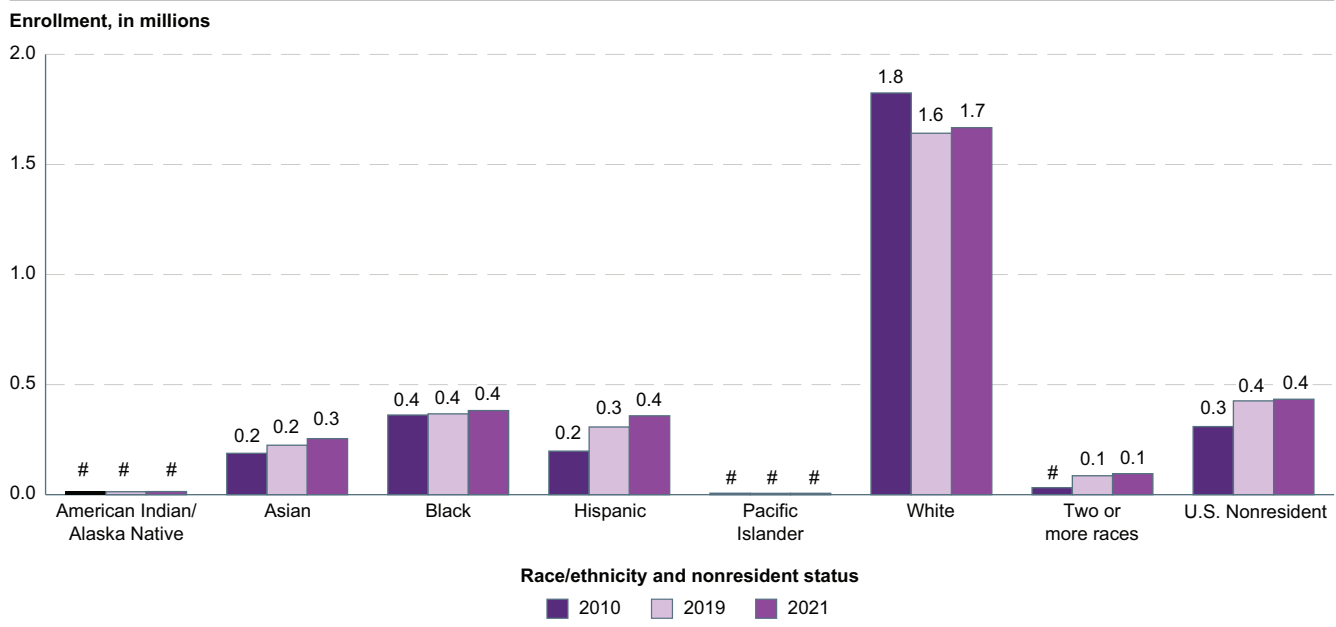
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2011 through Spring 2022, Fall Enrollment component; and Enrollment in Degree-Granting Institutions Projection Model, through 2031. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, table 303.80.

In fall 2021, female students made up 61 percent of total postbaccalaureate enrollment (2.0 million students) and male students made up 39 percent (1.2 million students). Between 2010 and 2021, female enrollment increased by 14 percent (from 1.7 million to 2.0 million students),

whereas male enrollment increased by 3 percent (approximately 1.2 million students in both years).<sup>4</sup> Between 2021 and 2031, female and male enrollments are projected to increase by 6 percent each (to 2.1 million and 1.3 million students, respectively).

**Postbaccalaureate Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity and Nonresident Status**

**Figure 2. Postbaccalaureate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity and nonresident status: Fall 2010, fall 2019, and fall 2021**



# Rounds to zero.

NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Postbaccalaureate degree programs include master's and doctoral programs, as well as professional doctoral programs such as law, medicine, and dentistry. Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. In the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), data for the nonresident category are collected alongside data for racial/ethnic categories. Race/ethnicity categories exclude U.S. nonresidents. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2011 through Spring 2022, Fall Enrollment component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, table 306.10.

Of the U.S. resident postbaccalaureate students enrolled in fall 2021,

- 1.7 million were White;
- 382,100 were Black;
- 358,200 were Hispanic;
- 254,600 were Asian;
- 95,400 were of Two or more races;
- 14,100 were American Indian/Alaska Native; and
- 6,200 were Pacific Islander.

Trends in postbaccalaureate enrollment between fall 2010 and 2021 varied across racial/ethnic groups. During this period, enrollment decreased for

- American Indian/Alaska Native students (by 18 percent, from 17,100 to 14,100 students);
- White students (by 9 percent, from 1.8 million to 1.7 million students); and
- Pacific Islander students (by 5 percent, from 6,500 to 6,200 students).

In contrast, between fall 2010 and 2021, enrollment increased for

- students of Two or more races (by 201 percent, from 31,700 to 95,400 students);
- Hispanic students (by 81 percent, from 197,800 to 358,200 students); and
- Asian students (by 36 percent, from 187,800 to 254,600 students).

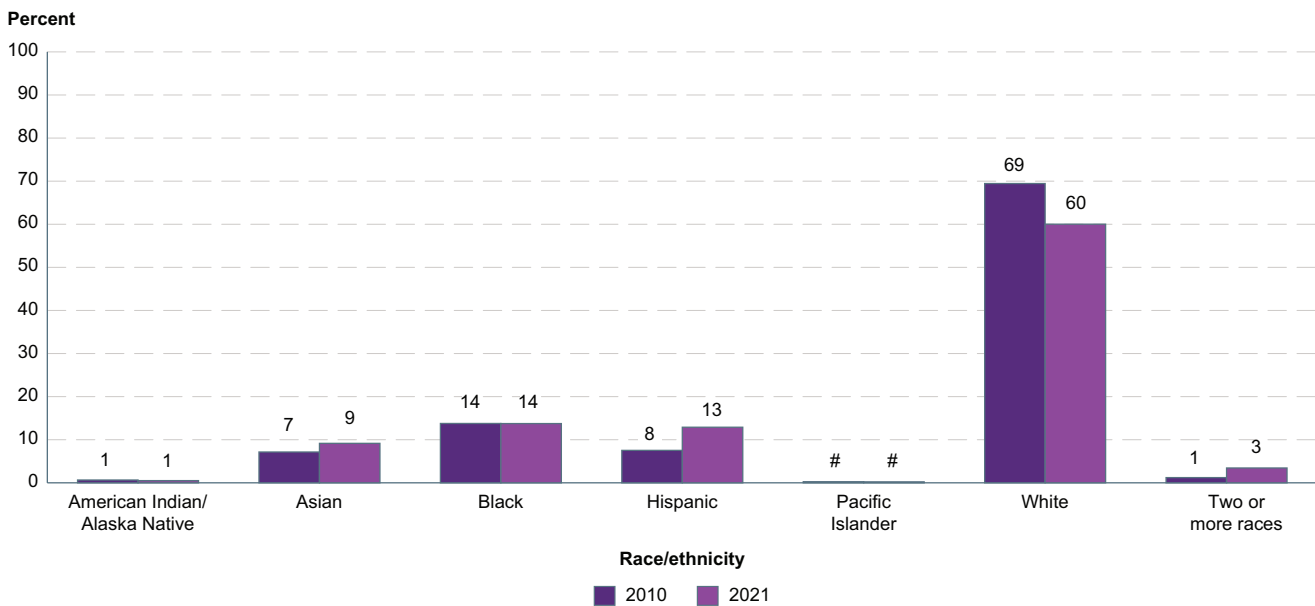
Compared with enrollment in 2010, the number of Black students enrolled was 6 percent higher in 2021 (361,900 vs. 382,100). After declining by 2 percent from fall 2011 to fall 2016, the number of Black students enrolled increased by 5 percent by fall 2021.

Postbaccalaureate enrollment in fall 2021 was higher than just prior to the pandemic in fall 2019 for all racial/ethnic groups, including those that saw general declines over the period from 2010 to 2021. The difference between enrollments in fall 2021 and fall 2019 ranged from 2 percent higher for White students to 17 percent higher for Hispanic students.

In fall 2021, degree-granting postsecondary institutions enrolled 433,500 nonresident<sup>5</sup> postbaccalaureate

students, a 40 percent increase from the 309,300 students enrolled in 2010. After declining by 11 percent from fall 2019 to fall 2020—during the first year of the coronavirus pandemic—nonresident postbaccalaureate enrollment increased by 14 percent in fall 2021 and was 2 percent higher than in fall 2019 (433,500 vs. 426,100). Fall 2020 marked the lowest single-year count of nonresident students enrolled in postbaccalaureate studies in the United States since 2013.

**Figure 3. Percentage distribution of postbaccalaureate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity: Fall 2010 and fall 2021**



# Rounds to zero.

NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Postbaccalaureate degree programs include master’s and doctoral programs, as well as professional doctoral programs such as law, medicine, and dentistry. Degree-granting institutions grant associate’s or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Race/ethnicity categories exclude nonresidents. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2011 and 2022, Fall Enrollment component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, table 306.10.

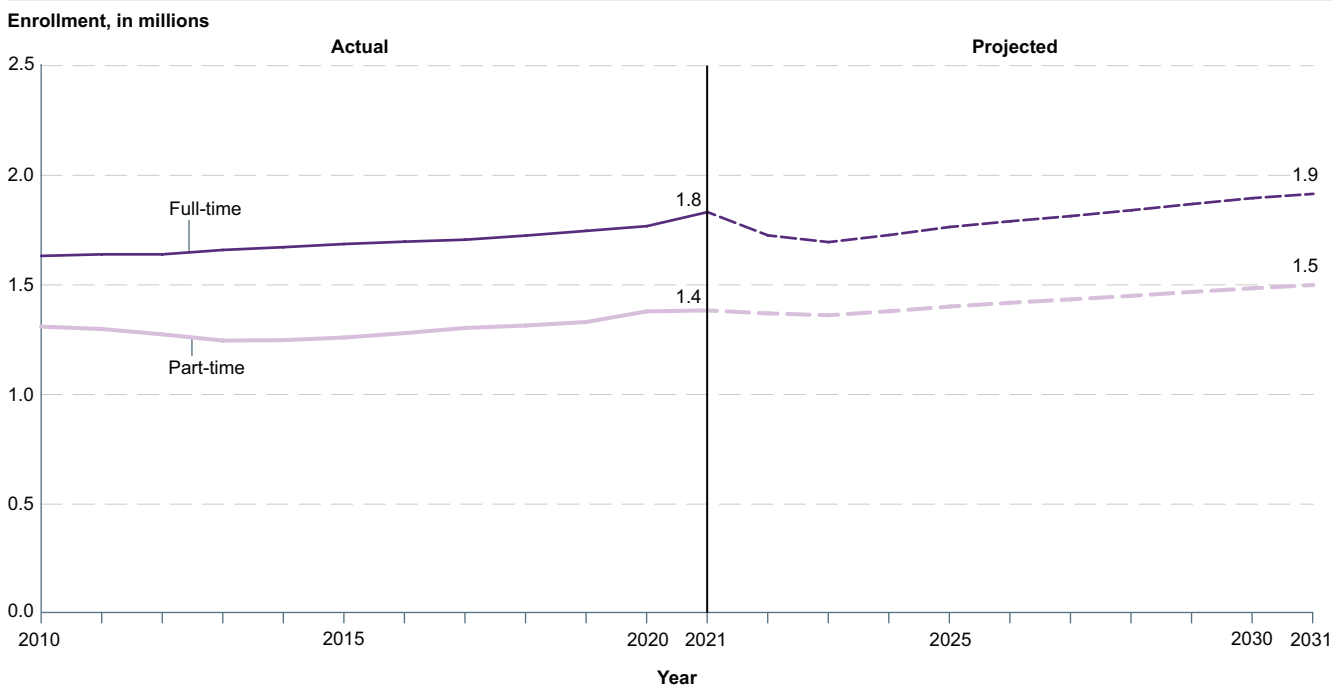
Of the 2.8 million U.S. resident postbaccalaureate students enrolled in fall 2021 (i.e., excluding nonresident students), about 60 percent were White. This percentage was lower than the percentage of postbaccalaureate students who were White in fall 2010 (69 percent). Conversely, the following racial/ethnic groups made up a larger percentage of postbaccalaureate students in fall 2021 than in fall 2010:

- Hispanic (13 vs. 8 percent);
- Asian (9 vs. 7 percent); and
- Two or more races (3 vs. 1 percent).

The percentages of U.S. resident postbaccalaureate students who were Black (14 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native (1 percent) and Pacific Islander (less than one-half of 1 percent) in fall 2021 were similar to the percentages in 2010.

**Postbaccalaureate Enrollment by Attendance Status**

**Figure 4. Actual and projected postbaccalaureate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by attendance status: Fall 2010 through fall 2031**



NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Postbaccalaureate degree programs include master’s and doctoral programs, as well as professional doctoral programs such as law, medicine, and dentistry. Degree-granting institutions grant associate’s or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Projections 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.  
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2011 through Spring 2022, Fall Enrollment component; and Enrollment in Degree-Granting Institutions Projection Model, through 2031. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, table 303.80.

In fall 2021, there were 1.8 million full-time postbaccalaureate students and 1.4 million part-time postbaccalaureate students enrolled at degree-granting U.S. postsecondary institutions. Between 2010 and 2021,

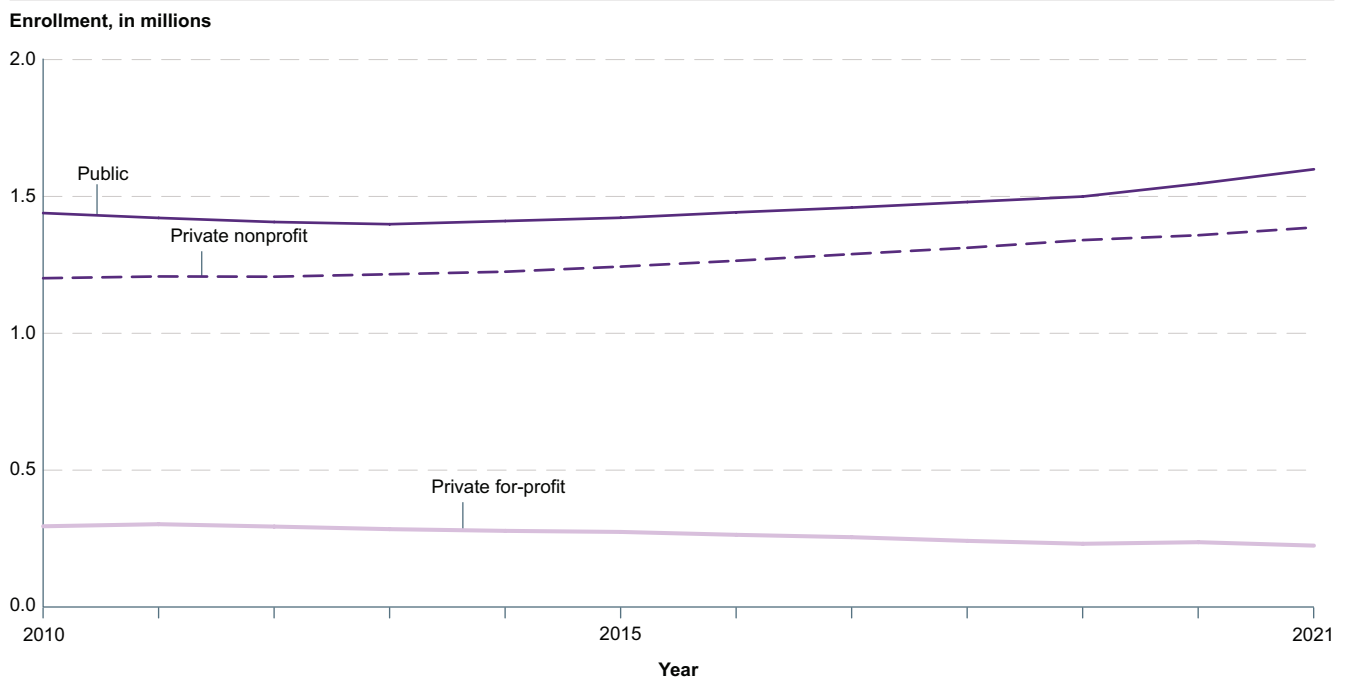
- full-time enrollment increased by 12 percent (from 1.6 million to 1.8 million students); and
- part-time enrollment increased by 6 percent (from 1.3 million to 1.4 million students).

Between 2021 and 2031,

- full-time enrollment is projected to increase by 5 percent (from 1.8 million to 1.9 million students); and
- part-time enrollment is projected to increase by 8 percent (from 1.4 million to 1.5 million students).

**Postbaccalaureate Enrollment by Control of Institution**

**Figure 5. Postbaccalaureate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by control of institution: Fall 2010 through fall 2021**



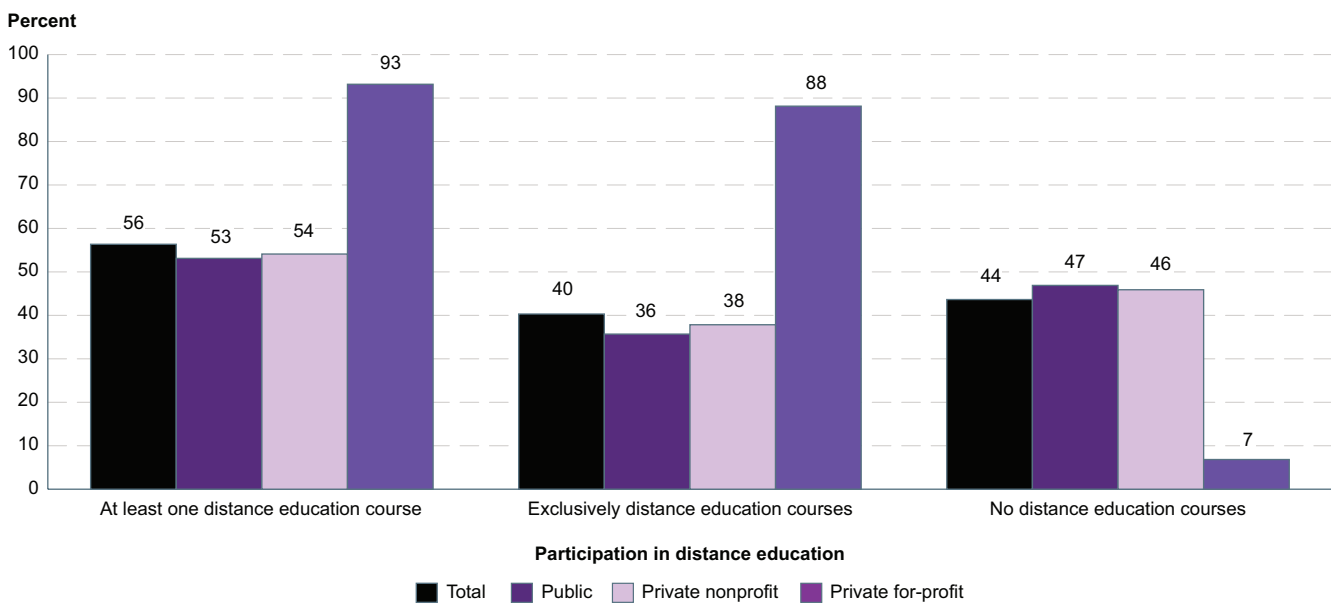
NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Postbaccalaureate degree programs include master’s and doctoral programs, as well as professional doctoral programs such as law, medicine, and dentistry. Degree-granting institutions grant associate’s or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Some data have been revised from previously published figures.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2011 through Spring 2022, Fall Enrollment component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, table 303.80.

In fall 2021, postbaccalaureate enrollment was higher at public institutions (1.6 million students) and private nonprofit institutions (1.4 million students) than at private for-profit institutions (225,800 students). Between fall 2010 and 2021, enrollment

- increased at public institutions by 11 percent (from 1.4 million to 1.6 million students);
- increased at private nonprofit institutions by 15 percent (from 1.2 million to 1.4 million students); and
- decreased at private for-profit institutions by 24 percent (from 296,400 to 225,800 students).

**Postbaccalaureate Enrollment by Distance Education Enrollment**

**Figure 6. Percentage of postbaccalaureate students enrolled at degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by participation in distance education and control of institution: Fall 2021**



NOTE: Data are for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Postbaccalaureate degree programs include master’s and doctoral programs, as well as professional doctoral programs such as law, medicine, and dentistry. Degree-granting institutions grant associate’s or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Distance education uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the student and the instructor synchronously or asynchronously. Technologies used for instruction may include the following: the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcasts, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communication devices; audio conferencing; and videocassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, only if the videocassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with the technologies listed above.  
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2022, Fall Enrollment component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, table 311.15.

Distance education<sup>6</sup> courses and programs provide flexible learning opportunities to postbaccalaureate students. In fall 2021, some 1.8 million postbaccalaureate students were enrolled in at least one distance education course, including 1.3 million who took distance education courses exclusively.<sup>7</sup> As a percentage of total postbaccalaureate enrollment, participation in distance education in fall 2021 was lower than in fall 2020, the first fall of the coronavirus pandemic, but higher than in fall 2019. Specifically, the percentage of postbaccalaureate students enrolled in at least one distance education course was

- 42 percent in 2019;
- 71 percent in 2020; and
- 56 percent in 2021.

The percentage of postbaccalaureate students who took distance education courses exclusively was

- 33 percent in 2019;
- 52 percent in 2020; and
- 40 percent in 2021.

Among students who took distance education courses exclusively in 2021, some 47 percent (608,500 students)

were enrolled at institutions located in the same state in which they resided and 48 percent (622,500 students) were enrolled at institutions in a different state.<sup>8</sup> In comparison, in 2020 some 52 percent were enrolled at institutions in the same state, and 41 percent were enrolled at institutions in a different state.

In fall 2021, the percentage of postbaccalaureate students who took distance education courses varied by control of institution (i.e., public, private nonprofit, or private for-profit) at which those students were enrolled. For example, the percentage of students who were enrolled exclusively in distance education was

- 88 percent at private for-profit institutions;
- 38 percent of students at private nonprofit institutions; and
- 36 percent of students at public institutions.

The percentage of students who did not take any distance education courses was higher for those enrolled at public (47 percent) and private nonprofit (46 percent) institutions than for those enrolled at private for-profit (7 percent) institutions.

**Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup> Postbaccalaureate enrollment includes both degree/certificate-seeking and non-degree-/non-certificate-seeking students.

<sup>2</sup> Data in this indicator represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

<sup>3</sup> Projections were calculated after the onset of the coronavirus pandemic and take into account the expected impacts of the pandemic.

<sup>4</sup> Although male enrollment increased by 3 percent between 2010 and 2021 (from 1.21 million to 1.24 students), enrollment in both years rounds to 1.2 million students.

<sup>5</sup> In the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), data for the nonresident category are collected alongside data for racial/ethnic categories. Race/ethnicity categories exclude nonresident status.

<sup>6</sup> Distance education uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor

and to support regular and substantive interaction between the student and the instructor synchronously or asynchronously. Technologies used for instruction may include the following: the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcasts, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communication devices; audio conferencing; and videocassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, only if the videocassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with the technologies listed above.

<sup>7</sup> In comparison, 28 percent of undergraduate students (4.4 million students) took distance education courses exclusively. See indicator on [Undergraduate Enrollment](#).

<sup>8</sup> Some students taking distance education courses exclusively, such as those who are residing outside the United States and those whose location is unknown, are not included in this comparison.

**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, tables 303.80, 306.10, and 311.15; *Digest of Education Statistics 2021*, table 311.15; *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, table 311.15; *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 306.10

**Related indicators and resources:** [Characteristics of Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions](#); [Postbaccalaureate Enrollment](#) [*Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups*]; [Trends in Student Loan Debt for Graduate School Completers](#) [*The Condition of Education 2018 Spotlight*]; [Undergraduate Enrollment](#); [Undergraduate Enrollment](#) [*Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups*]

**Glossary:** Control of institutions; Distance education; Enrollment; Full-time enrollment; Part-time enrollment; Postbaccalaureate enrollment; Private institution; Public school or institution; Racial/ethnic group