

Racial/Ethnic Enrollment in Public Schools

Between fall 2012 and fall 2022, the percentage of public school students who were Hispanic increased from 24 to 29 percent. The percentage of public school students who were White decreased from 51 to 44 percent, and the percentage of students who were Black decreased from 16 to 15 percent.

Of the 49.6 million students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools in fall 2022,¹

- 22.1 million were White;
- 14.4 million were Hispanic;
- 7.4 million were Black;
- 2.7 million were Asian;
- 2.5 million were of Two or more races;
- 449,000 were American Indian/Alaska Native; and
- 182,000 were Pacific Islander.

This indicator examines how the racial/ethnic distribution of public school students has varied over time as well as differences in the racial/ethnic composition of the schools students attend.^{2,3}

Overall Public School Racial/Ethnic Composition

Between fall 2012 and fall 2022, public school enrollment decreased among students who were

- White (from 25.4 million to 22.1 million);
- Black (from 7.8 million to 7.4 million); and
- American Indian/Alaska Native (from 534,000 to 449,000).

In fall 2022, enrollments for these groups were lower than they had been prior to the coronavirus pandemic in fall 2019 (6 percent, 3 percent, and 7 percent, respectively). For Pacific Islander students, enrollment in public schools was 2 percent lower in fall 2022 (182,000) than in fall 2019.

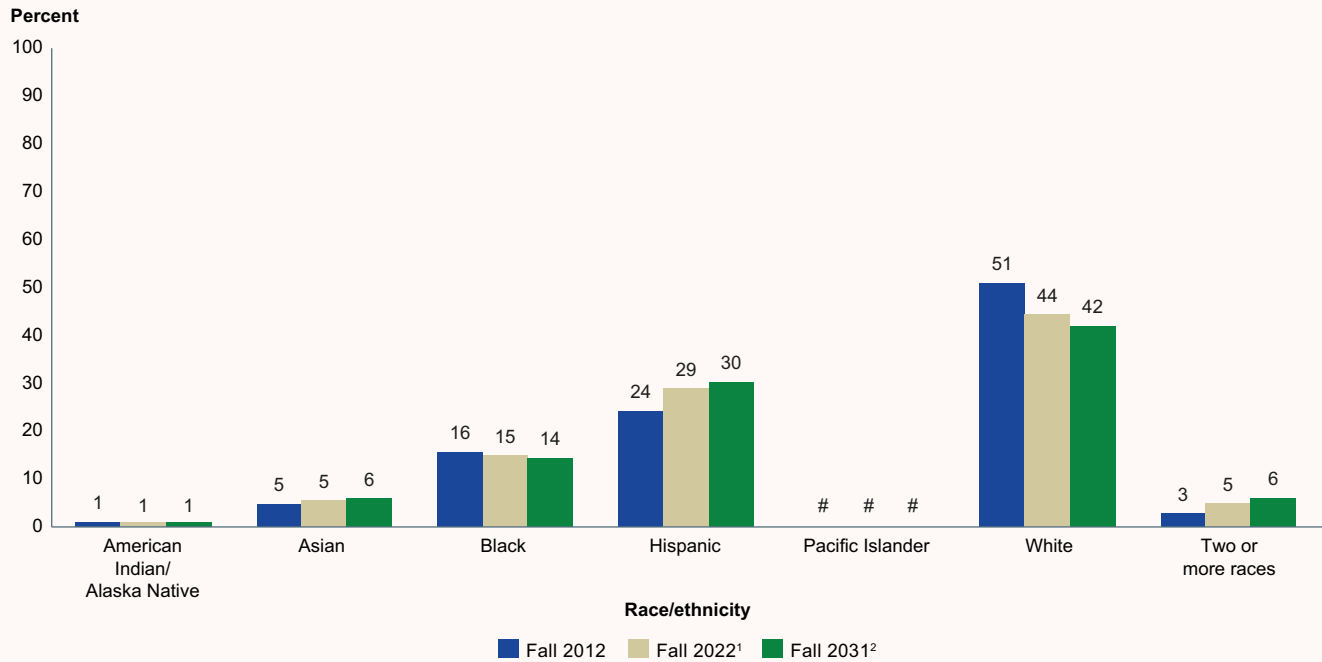
In contrast, public school enrollment increased between fall 2012 and fall 2022 among students who were

- Hispanic (from 12.1 million to 14.4 million);
- Asian (from 2.4 million to 2.7 million); and
- of Two or more races (1.4 million to 2.5 million).

Compared to prior to the pandemic in fall 2019, enrollment in fall 2022 was 1 percent higher for Asian students, 2 percent higher for Hispanic students, and 12 percent higher for students of Two or more races.

FIGURE 1.

Percentage distribution of student enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by race/ethnicity: Fall 2012, fall 2022, and fall 2031



Rounds to zero.

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

² Data for fall 2031 are projected based on historical enrollment data through fall 2021 only.

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. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Figures are plotted based on unrounded data. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding in the data labels.

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,” 2012–13 and 2022–23; and National Elementary and Secondary Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity Projection Model, through 2031. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2023*, table 203.50.

These enrollment trends produced changes in the overall composition of U.S. public school students. Specifically, between fall 2012 and fall 2022, there was a decrease in the percentages of students who were

- White (from 51 to 44 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 24 to 29 percent);
- Asian (from 4.8 to 5.5 percent); and
- of Two or more races (from 3 to 5 percent).

In both fall 2012 and fall 2022, Pacific Islander students made up less than one-half of 1 percent of public elementary and secondary enrollment.

Between fall 2022 and fall 2031,⁴ the share of total public school enrollment is projected to continue decreasing for students who are

- White (from 44 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 29 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 of public school students.

Public School Racial/Ethnic Composition by State

Changes in the racial/ethnic composition of public elementary and secondary school enrollment between fall 2012 and fall 2022 differed by state.⁵ Compared with fall 2012, the percentage of public school students in fall 2022 who were Black

- was lower by more than 3 percentage points in Louisiana (3 percent), South Carolina (4 percent), and the District of Columbia (11 percent);
- was lower by 3 percentage points or less in 31 states; and
- was higher by 3 percentage points or less in the 17 remaining states.

Compared with fall 2012, the percentage of public school students in fall 2022 who were Hispanic

- was higher in all 50 states and the District of Columbia; and
- ranged from 1 percentage point higher in West Virginia to 10 percentage points higher in Hawaii.

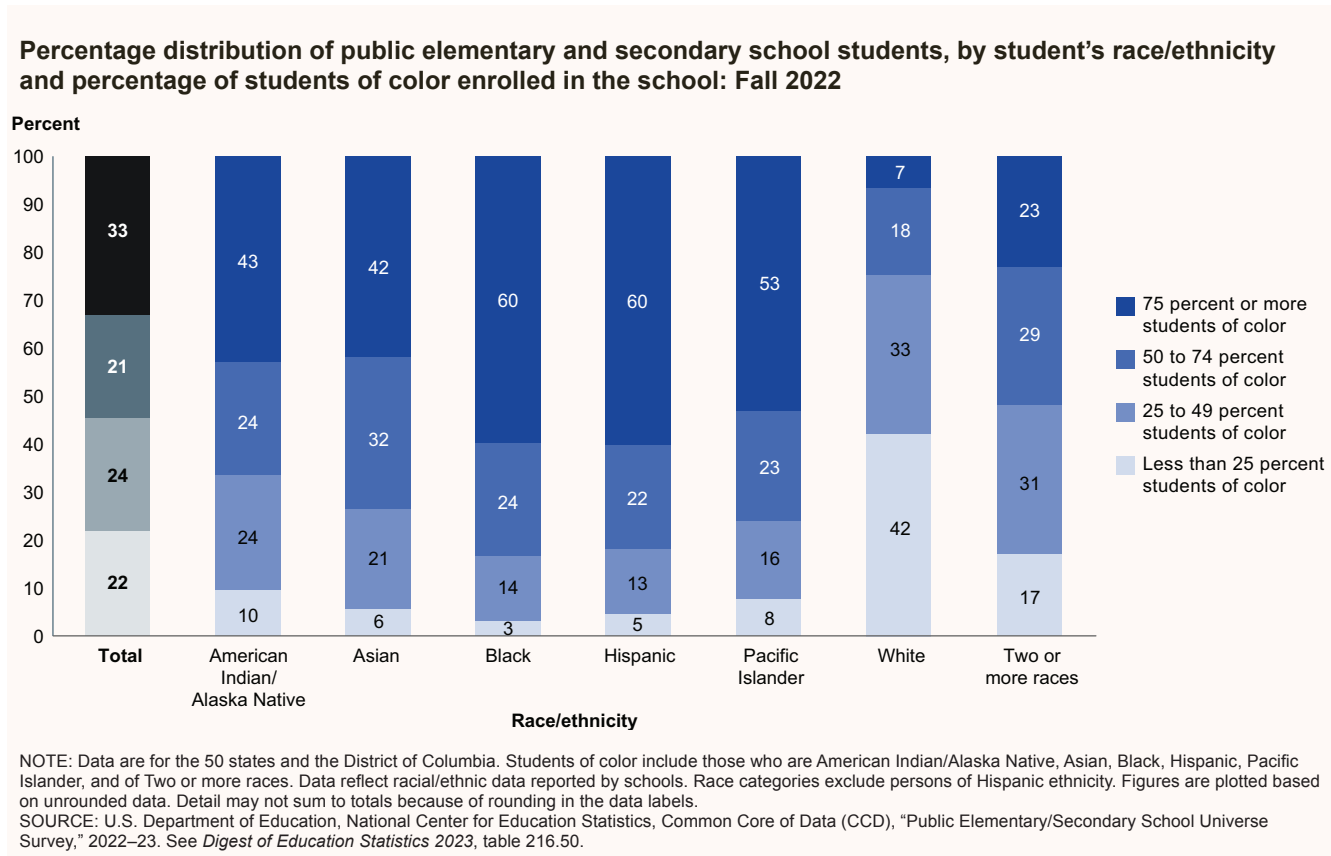
Compared with fall 2012, the percentage of public school students in fall 2022 who were White

- was lower in all 50 states;
- ranged from 3 percentage points lower in Hawaii, West Virginia, Alaska, Montana, Mississippi, and Wyoming to 12 percentage points lower in Connecticut and Massachusetts; and
- was 5 percentage points higher in the District of Columbia (13 percent in fall 2022 vs. 8 percent in fall 2012).

Fall 2012 and fall 2022 data on the racial/ethnic composition of public school enrollment are available for some other U.S. jurisdictions as well. In fall 2022, American Indian/Alaska Native students made up 100 percent of public school enrollment among Bureau of Indian Education schools.⁶ In Puerto Rico, Hispanic students made up nearly 100 percent of public school enrollment in both fall 2012 and fall 2022. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, changes in the percentages of public school students who were of each racial/ethnic group were all 2 percentage points or less. In fall 2022, some 78 percent of students enrolled in public school in the U.S. Virgin Islands were Black, and 20 percent were Hispanic. In the Northern Mariana Islands, the percentage who were Asian was 7 percentage points lower in fall 2022 than in fall 2012 (33 vs. 40 percent). In contrast, the percentage of public school students in fall 2022 who were of Two or more races was about 7 percentage points higher than in fall 2012 (7 vs. 1 percent) in the Northern Mariana Islands.

Peer Diversity

FIGURE 2.

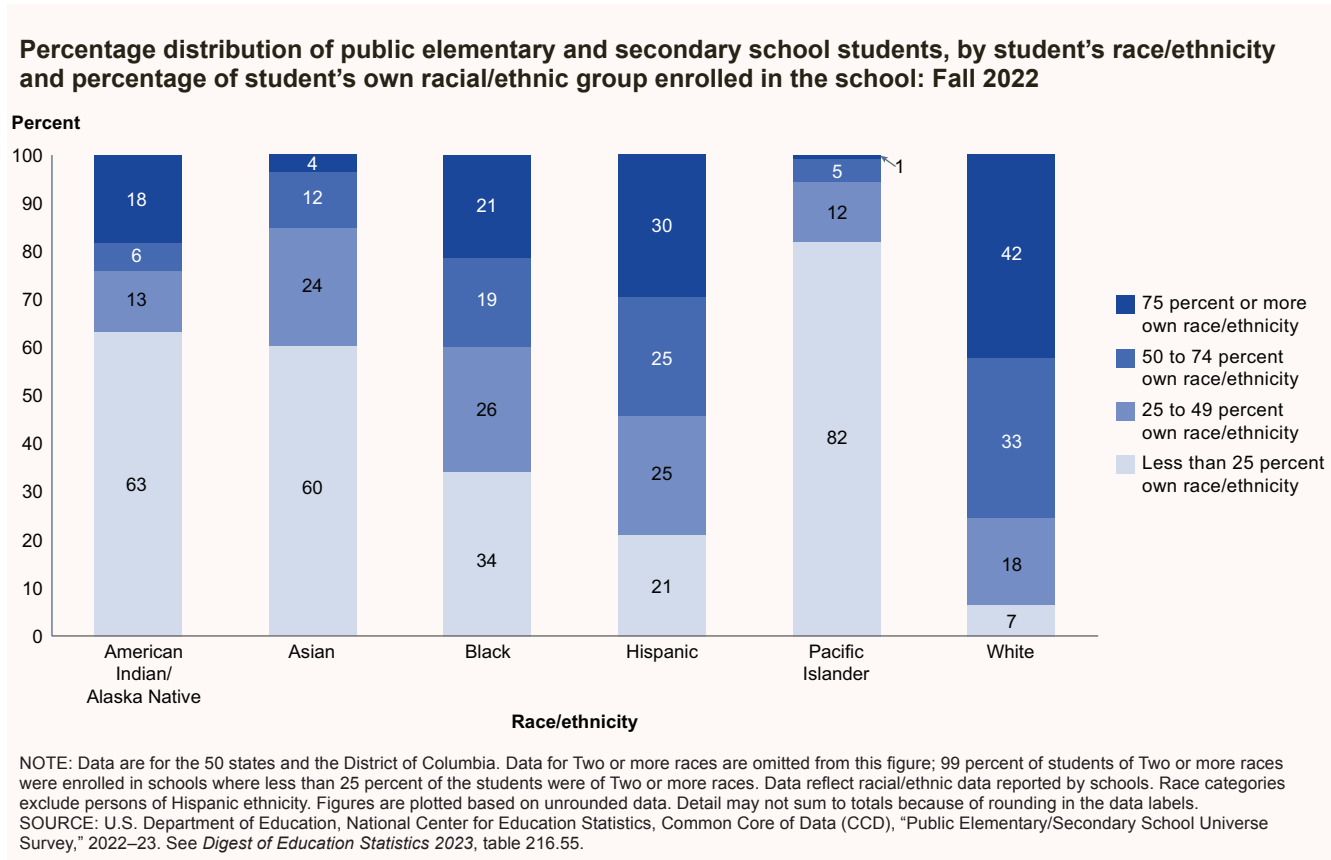


In fall 2022, about 33 percent of all public elementary and secondary school students attended schools where students of color⁷ made up at least 75 percent of total enrollment. This represents an increase from the 28 percent of all public school students who attended such schools in fall 2012. In fall 2022, 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 (60 percent)
- Black (60 percent)
- Pacific Islander (53 percent)

In addition, 43 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native students, 42 percent of Asian students, and 23 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, 7 percent of White students attended such schools.

FIGURE 3.



As discussed in the prior paragraph, compared with 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 2022. This does not necessarily mean that students of color attended schools with many students of their own racial/ethnic group. In fall 2022, the percentages of students who attended schools that were mostly composed of their own racial/ethnic group (i.e., at least 75 percent) were⁸

- 42 percent for White students;
- 30 percent for Hispanic students;
- 21 percent for Black students;
- 18 percent for American Indian/Alaska Native students;
- 4 percent for Asian students; and
- 1 percent for Pacific Islander students.

It was less common for students from less populous racial/ethnic groups to attend schools with many peers of the same racial/ethnic group compared to students from more populous racial/ethnic 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 For general technical notes related to data analysis, data interpretation, rounding, and other considerations, please refer to the [Reader's Guide](#).

² Data in this indicator represent the 50 states and the District of Columbia, unless otherwise noted.

³ 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 and 2022 include imputations for nonreported prekindergarten enrollment in California and Oregon.

⁴ Projections for 2023-24 through 2031-32 are based on historical data through fall 2021 only.

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.

⁶ Data on the racial/ethnic composition of public school enrollment were not available for Bureau of Indian Education schools in fall 2012.

⁷ Students of color include those who are American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, 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 2023*, tables [203.50](#), [203.70](#), [216.50](#), and [216.55](#); *Digest of Education Statistics 2022*, table [216.50](#); *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, 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/High school](#)