

## Immediate Transition to College

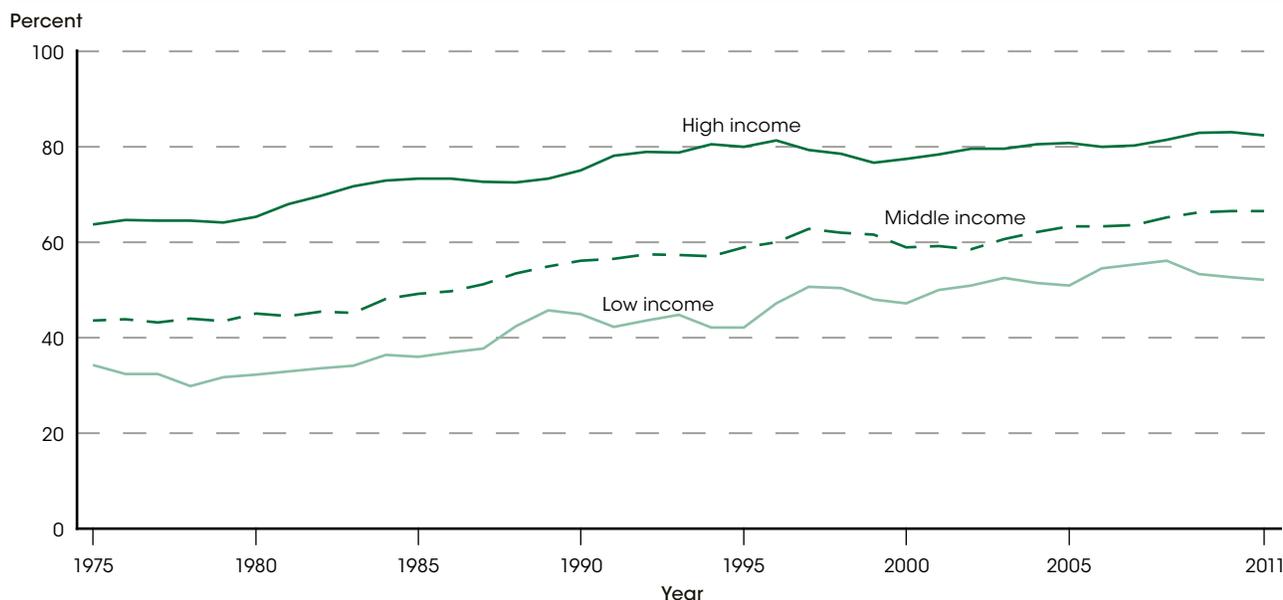
*Between 1975 and 2011, the immediate college enrollment rate increased from 51 percent to 68 percent. In 2011, the immediate enrollment rate for high school completers from low-income families (52 percent) was 30 percentage points lower than the rate for completers from high-income families (82 percent, based on a 3-year moving average).*

The *immediate college enrollment rate* in this indicator is defined as the annual percentage of high school completers (including GED recipients) of a given year who enroll in 2- or 4-year colleges in the fall immediately after completing high school. Between 1975 and 2011, the immediate college enrollment rate increased from 51 percent to 68 percent. This rate increased from 1975 to 1997 (51 to 67 percent), declined from 1997 to 2001 (to 62 percent), then increased from 2001 to 2011 (to 68 percent). The immediate college enrollment rates for both males and females increased between 1975 and 2011: the rate for males increased from 53 to 65 percent and the rate for females from 49 to 72 percent. Thus, the enrollment pattern has shifted over time to higher enrollment rates for females than for males.

In each year between 1975 and 2011, the immediate college enrollment rates for high school completers from

low- and middle-income families were lower than that of high school completers from high-income families. Due to some short-term data fluctuations associated with small sample sizes, estimates for the income groups were calculated based on 3-year moving averages, except in 1975 and 2011 when estimates were calculated on 2-year moving averages. Low income refers to the bottom 20 percent of all family incomes, high income refers to the top 20 percent of all family incomes, and middle income refers to the 60 percent in between. In 2011, the immediate college enrollment rate for high school completers from low-income families was 52 percent, 30 percentage points lower than the rate for completers from high-income families (82 percent). The immediate college enrollment rate for completers from middle-income families (66 percent) was 16 percentage points lower than the rate for their peers from high-income families.

**Figure 1. Percentage of high school completers who were enrolled in 2- or 4-year colleges by the October immediately following high school completion, by family income: 1975–2011**



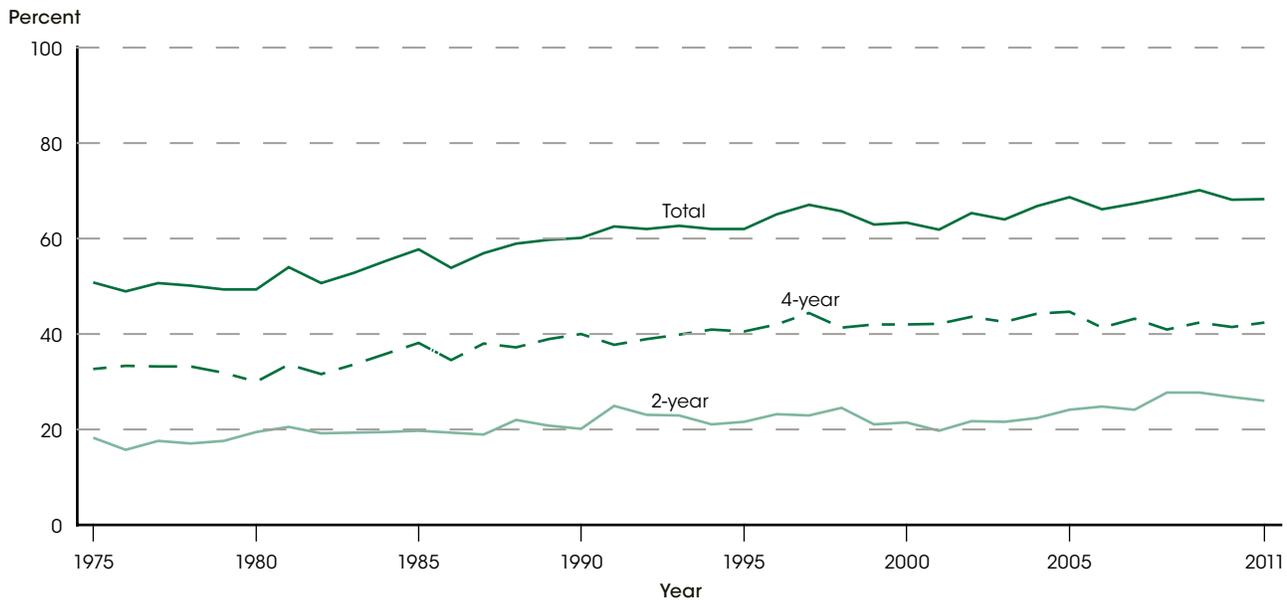
NOTE: Due to some short-term data fluctuations associated with small sample sizes, percentages for the income groups were calculated based on 3-year moving averages. High school completers include GED recipients.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), October Supplement, 1975–2011. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, table 236.

For more information, see the Reader's Guide and the Guide to Sources.

The 30 percentage point gap between the immediate enrollment rates of high school completers from high-income families and from low-income families in 2011 was not measurably different from the gap in 1975. There were patterns of increases and decreases in the gap during this period. This gap increased from 1975 to 1983 (from 29 to 38 percentage points), declined from 1983 to 1989 (to 28 percentage points), did not measurably change from 1990 to 1993 (ranging from 30 to 36 percentage points), and then narrowed from 1994 to 2011 (from 38 to 30 percentage points). Between 1975 and 2011, the gap between immediate college enrollment rates of high school completers from middle-income families and low-income families ranged from 8 to 17 percentage points. The low-income to middle-income gap in 2011 (14 percentage points) was not measurably different from the gap in 1975 (9 percentage points).

Between 1995 and 2011, immediate college enrollment rates increased for White (65 to 69 percent), Black (53 to 65 percent), and Hispanic (52 to 63 percent) high school completers. The estimates for racial/ethnic groups are also based on 2- or 3-year moving averages. Separate data on Asian high school completers have been collected since 2003. In each year between 2003 and 2011, the immediate college enrollment rate for Asians was higher than the rates for Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics. Between 2003 and 2011, the immediate college enrollment rate for Asian completers did not measurably change, ranging from 80 to 90 percent. The immediate college enrollment rate for Whites was also higher than the rate for Hispanics in every year during this period and higher than the rate for Blacks in every year from 2003 to 2009. In 2010 and 2011, there was no measurable difference between the rates for Whites and for Blacks.

**Figure 2. Percentage of high school completers who were enrolled in 2- or 4-year colleges by the October immediately following high school completion, by level of institution: 1975–2011**



NOTE: High school completers include GED recipients.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), October Supplement, 1975–2011. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, table 234.

Overall, the immediate college enrollment rates of high school completers going to both 2- and 4-year colleges increased between 1975 and 2011. In 1975, about 18 percent of high school completers enrolled at a 2-year college immediately after high school, while 26 percent did so in 2011. Similarly, in 1975 some 33 percent of high school completers enrolled at a 4-year college immediately

after high school, compared with 42 percent in 2011. In each year during this period, the immediate college enrollment rate at 4-year colleges was higher than that at 2-year colleges. For example, in 2011 the immediate college enrollment rate at 4-year colleges was 60 percent higher than that at 2-year colleges.

**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2012*, tables 234, 235, 236

**Glossary:** Educational attainment, High school completer