

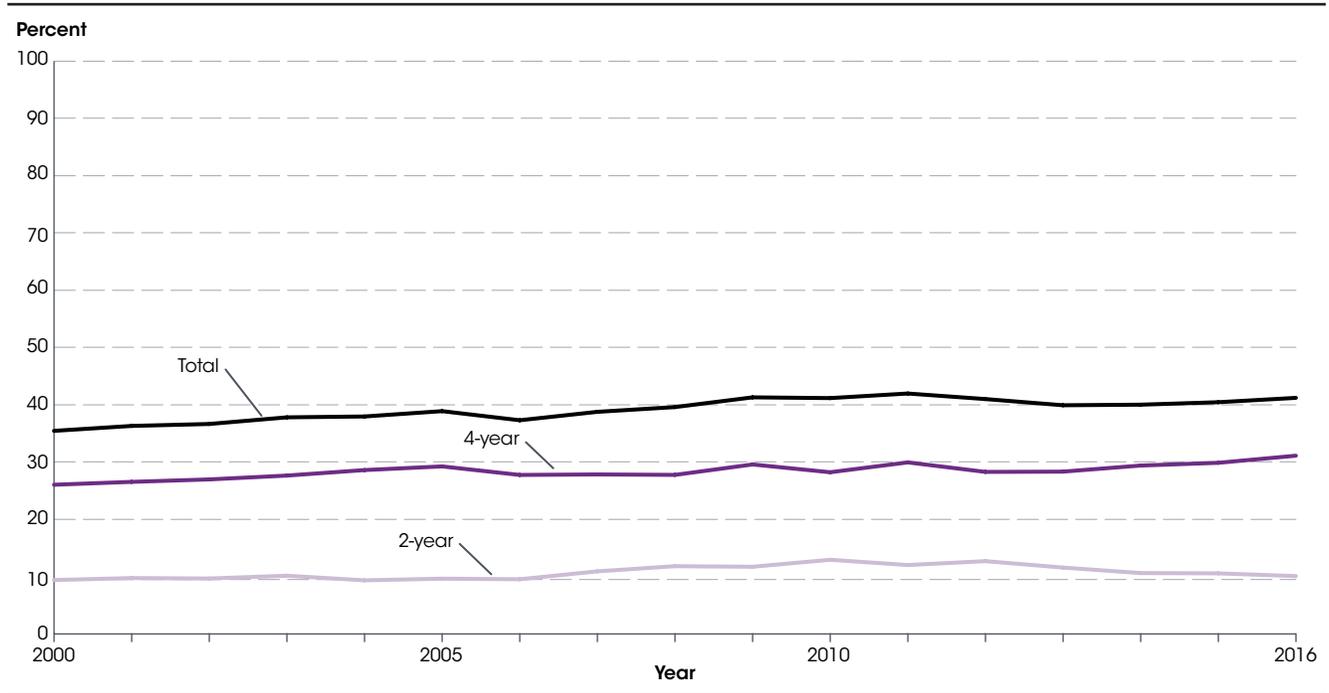
College Enrollment Rates

The overall college enrollment rate for young adults increased from 35 percent in 2000 to 41 percent in 2016. During this time period, the enrollment rate increased by 3 percentage points for White young adults, 6 percentage points for Black young adults, and 17 percentage points for Hispanic young adults. In 2016, the rate for White young adults (42 percent) was higher than the rate for Black young adults (36 percent), but not measurably different from the rate for Hispanic young adults (39 percent).

The college enrollment rate has increased since 2000. Different factors, such as changes in the labor market and the economy, may have contributed to this increase.^{1,2} In this indicator, *college enrollment rate* is defined as the percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds (referred to as “young adults” in this indicator) enrolled as undergraduate or

graduate students in 2- or 4-year colleges. The Immediate College Enrollment Rate indicator, in contrast, presents data on the percentage of high school completers who enroll in 2- or 4-year colleges in the fall immediately following high school.

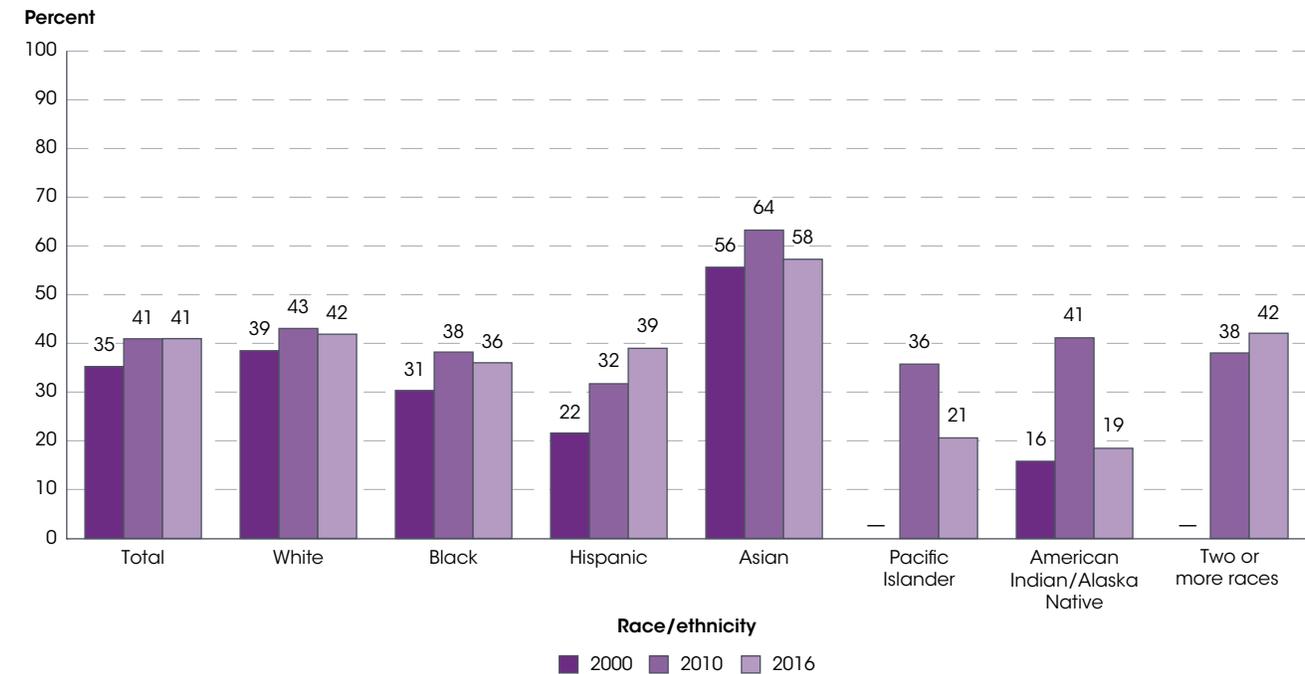
Figure 1. Enrollment rates of 18- to 24-year-olds in colleges, by level of institution: 2000 through 2016



NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the civilian noninstitutionalized population.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), October Supplement, 2000 through 2016. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 302.60.

The overall college enrollment rate for young adults increased from 35 percent in 2000 to 41 percent in 2016. During this period, the rate increased at 4-year institutions (from 26 to 31 percent) but did not change measurably at 2-year institutions. Over a more recent time period, the

overall college enrollment rate in 2010 was not measurably different from the rate in 2016, but the rate at 4-year institutions was lower in 2010 (28 percent) than in 2016 (31 percent), and the rate at 2-year institutions was higher in 2010 (13 percent) than in 2016 (10 percent).

Figure 2. Enrollment rates of 18- to 24-year-olds in colleges, by race/ethnicity: 2000, 2010, and 2016

— Not available.

! Interpret data with caution. The coefficient of variation (CV) for this estimate is between 30 and 50 percent.

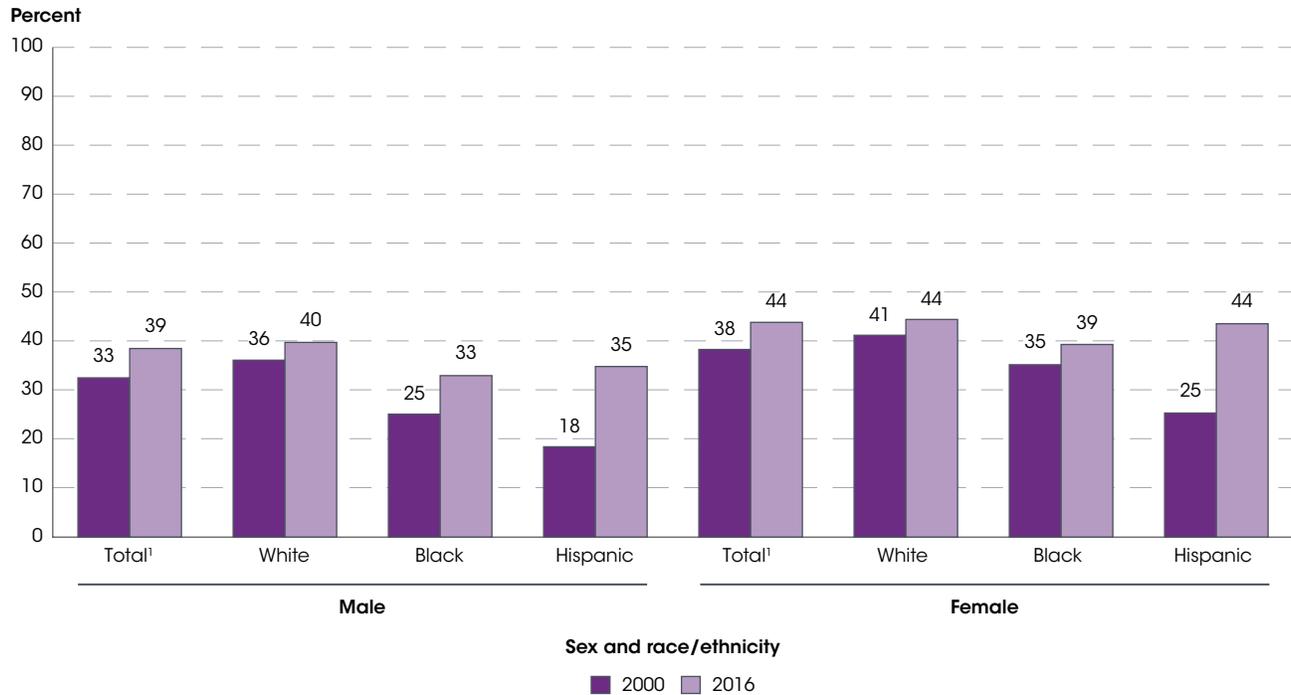
NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the civilian noninstitutionalized population. Separate data for Pacific Islanders and persons of Two or more races were not available in 2000. In 2000, data for individual race categories include persons of Two or more races. Prior to 2003, data for Asians include Pacific Islanders. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), October Supplement, 2000, 2010, and 2016. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 302.60.

From 2000 to 2016, college enrollment rates increased for White (from 39 to 42 percent), Black (from 31 to 36 percent), and Hispanic young adults (from 22 to 39 percent). The rates in 2016 were not measurably different from the rates in 2000 for Asian and American Indian/Alaska Native young adults.³ More recently, college enrollment rates were higher in 2016 than in 2010 for Hispanic young adults (39 vs. 32 percent) and lower in 2016 than in 2010 for American Indian/Alaska Native young adults (19 vs. 41 percent). There was no measurable difference between the 2010 and 2016 college enrollment rates for White, Black, Asian, and Pacific Islander young adults and young adults of Two or more races.

In 2016, the college enrollment rate was higher for Asian young adults (58 percent) than for White (42 percent),

Black (36 percent), and Hispanic young adults (39 percent); and the rate for White young adults was higher than the rate for Black young adults. This pattern has held for every year since 2000. While the enrollment rate for White young adults was also higher than the rate for Hispanic young adults for every year between 2000 and 2015 (for example, 42 vs. 37 percent in 2015), there was no measurable difference between White and Hispanic enrollment rates in 2016. The 2016 enrollment rate was also higher for Asian young adults than for Pacific Islander young adults (21 percent), American Indian/Alaska Native young adults (19 percent), and young adults of Two or more races (42 percent).

Figure 3. Enrollment rates of 18- to 24-year-olds in colleges, by sex and race/ethnicity: 2000 and 2016

¹ Includes other racial/ethnic groups not shown separately.

NOTE: Data are based on sample surveys of the civilian noninstitutionalized population. In 2000, data for individual race categories include persons of Two or more races. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), October Supplement, 2000 and 2016. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 302.60.

Between 2000 and 2016, college enrollment rates increased overall for both young adult males (from 33 to 39 percent) and young adult females (from 38 to 44 percent). Among young adult males, enrollment rates were higher in 2016 than in 2000 for Whites (40 vs. 36 percent), Blacks (33 vs. 25 percent), and Hispanics (35 vs. 18 percent). Among young adult females, rates were also higher in 2016 than in 2000 for Whites (44 vs. 41 percent) and Hispanics (44 vs. 25 percent). The rate for Black young adult females in 2016 was not measurably different from the rate in 2000.

In every year since 2000, college enrollment rates for young adults were higher for females than for males. This pattern was observed for young adults overall

and for White and Hispanic young adults specifically. For example, in 2016 the male-female gap in college enrollment rates was 5 percentage points for young adults overall, 5 percentage points for White young adults, and 9 percentage points for Hispanic young adults. Among Black young adults, the college enrollment rate was higher for females than for males in most years since 2000, except in 2007, 2012, 2015, and 2016, when the rates were not measurably different. While in 2000 the enrollment rate for Black females (35 percent) was 10 percentage points higher than the rate for Black males (25 percent), there was no measurable difference between the rates for Black females and Black males in 2016.

Endnotes:

¹ Fry, R. (2009). *College Enrollment Hits All-Time High, Fueled by Community College Surge*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. Retrieved May 3, 2017, from <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2009/10/29/college-enrollment-hits-all-time-high-fueled-by-community-college-surge/>.

² Brown, J.R., and Hoxby, C.M. (Eds.). (2014). *How the Financial Crisis and Great Recession Affected Higher Education*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

³ Separate data for Pacific Islanders and persons of Two or more races were not available in 2000. Prior to 2003, data for Asians include Pacific Islanders. Information from *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 101.20, based on the Census Bureau Current Population Reports, indicates that 96 percent of all Asian/Pacific Islander 18- to 24-year-olds are Asian.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 302.60

Glossary: College, Enrollment, Racial/ethnic group

Related indicators and resources: [College Participation Rates](#) [*Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups*]; [Immediate College Enrollment Rate](#); [Snapshot: College Participation Rates for Racial/Ethnic Subgroups](#) [*Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups*]; [Undergraduate Enrollment](#)