

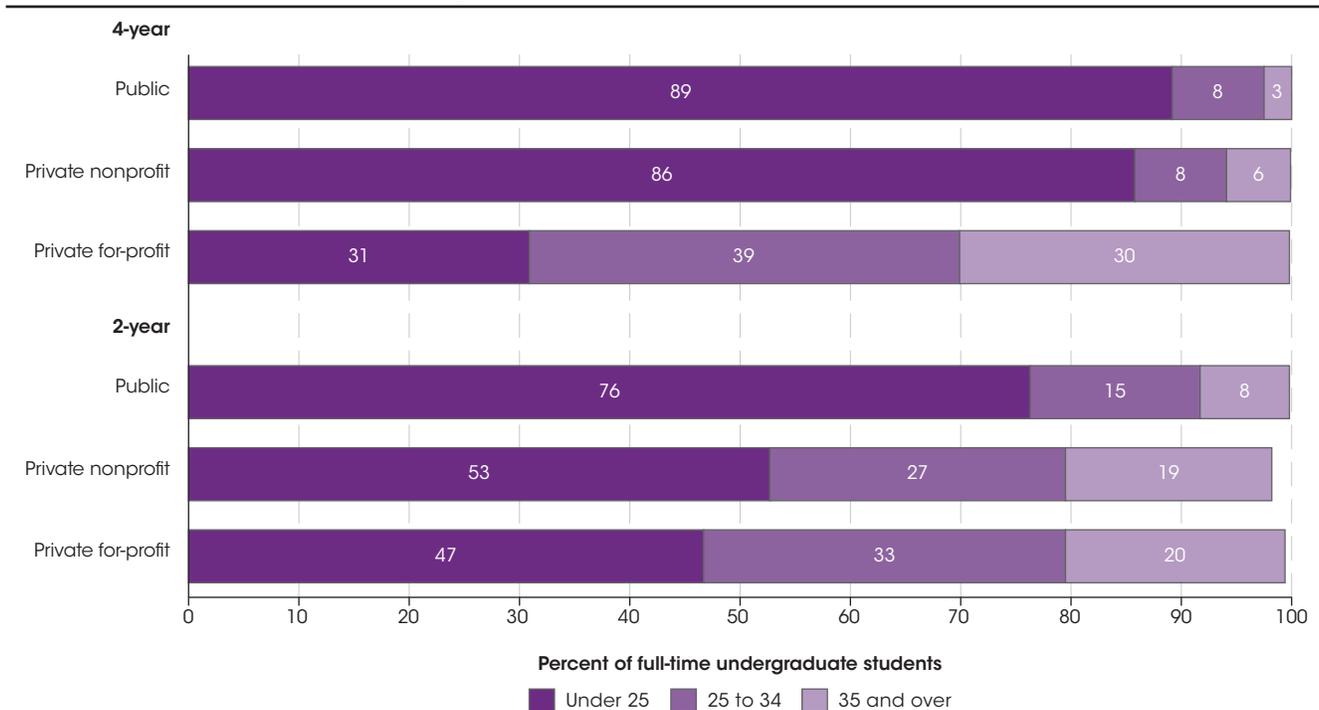
# Characteristics of Postsecondary Students

*Some 10.5 million undergraduate students attended 4-year institutions in fall 2015, while 6.5 million attended 2-year institutions. Some 77 percent of undergraduate students at 4-year institutions attended full time, compared with 39 percent at 2-year institutions.*

In fall 2015, there were 17.0 million undergraduate students and 2.9 million postbaccalaureate (graduate) students attending degree-granting postsecondary institutions<sup>1</sup> in the United States. Some 10.5 million undergraduate students (62 percent) attended 4-year institutions, while 6.5 million (38 percent) attended

2-year institutions. Of the undergraduate students at 4-year institutions, 8.1 million (77 percent) attended full time. Of the undergraduate students at 2-year institutions, 2.5 million (39 percent) attended full time and 4.0 million (61 percent) attended part time.

**Figure 1. Percentage of full-time undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by institutional level and control and student age: Fall 2015**



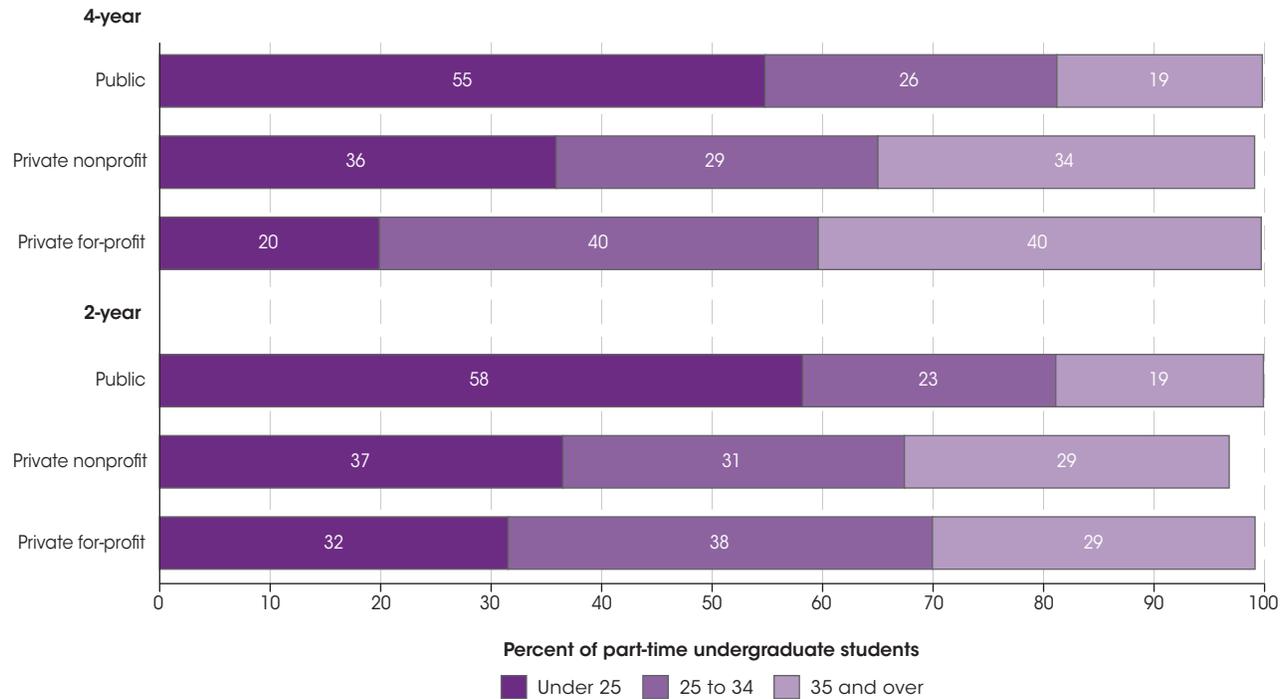
NOTE: Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding and the exclusion of students whose age was unknown.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2016, Fall Enrollment component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 303.50.

At 4-year institutions, the percentage of full-time undergraduate students in fall 2015 who were young adults (i.e., under the age of 25) was higher at public and private nonprofit institutions than at private for-profit institutions. At public and private nonprofit 4-year institutions, most of the full-time undergraduates (89 and 86 percent, respectively) were young adults. At private for-profit 4-year institutions, however, just 31 percent of full-time undergraduate students were in this age group.

adults was higher at public institutions than at private nonprofit and private for-profit institutions. Of the full-time undergraduate students enrolled at public 2-year institutions, 76 percent were young adults, 15 percent were ages 25 to 34, and 8 percent were age 35 and over. At private nonprofit 2-year institutions, 53 percent of full-time undergraduate students were young adults. At private for-profit 2-year institutions, 47 percent of full-time students were in this age group.

At 2-year institutions, the percentage of full-time undergraduate students in fall 2015 who were young

**Figure 2. Percentage of part-time undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by institutional level and control and student age: Fall 2015**



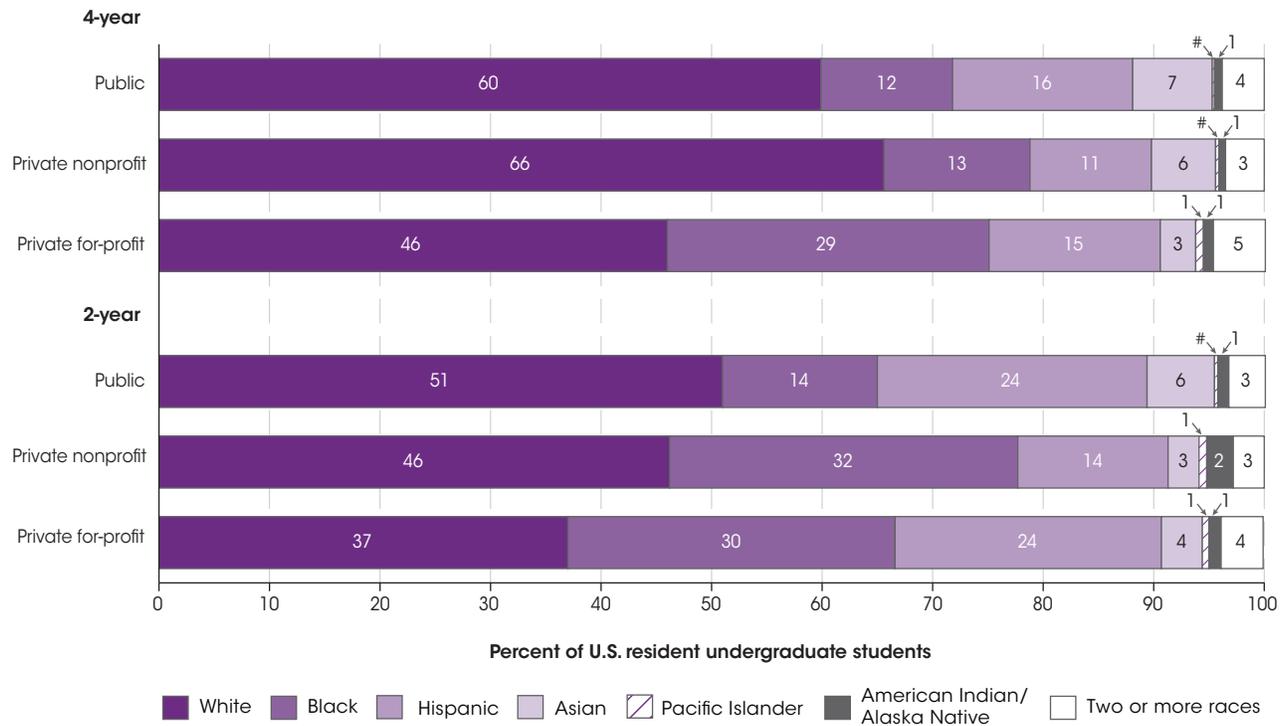
NOTE: Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding and the exclusion of students whose age was unknown.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2016, Fall Enrollment component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 303.50.

The percentage of part-time undergraduate students who were young adults in fall 2015 was higher at public 4-year institutions and private nonprofit 4-year institutions than at private for-profit 4-year institutions. Young adult students made up 55 percent of part-time undergraduates attending public 4-year institutions, 36 percent of part-time undergraduates attending private nonprofit 4-year institutions, and 20 percent of part-time undergraduates attending private for-profit 4-year institutions. Students older than young adults accounted for nearly one-half of the part-time enrollment at public 4-year institutions, nearly two-thirds of the part-time enrollment at private

nonprofit 4-year institutions, and over three-quarters of the part-time enrollment at private for-profit 4-year institutions.

At 2-year institutions, the percentage of part-time students in fall 2015 who were young adults was higher at public and private nonprofit institutions than at private for-profit institutions. Among 2-year institutions, the percentage of part-time students who were young adults was 58 percent at public institutions, 37 percent at private nonprofit institutions and 32 percent at private for-profit institutions.

**Figure 3. Percentage distribution of U.S. resident undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by institutional level and control and student race/ethnicity: Fall 2015**



# Rounds to zero.

NOTE: 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. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

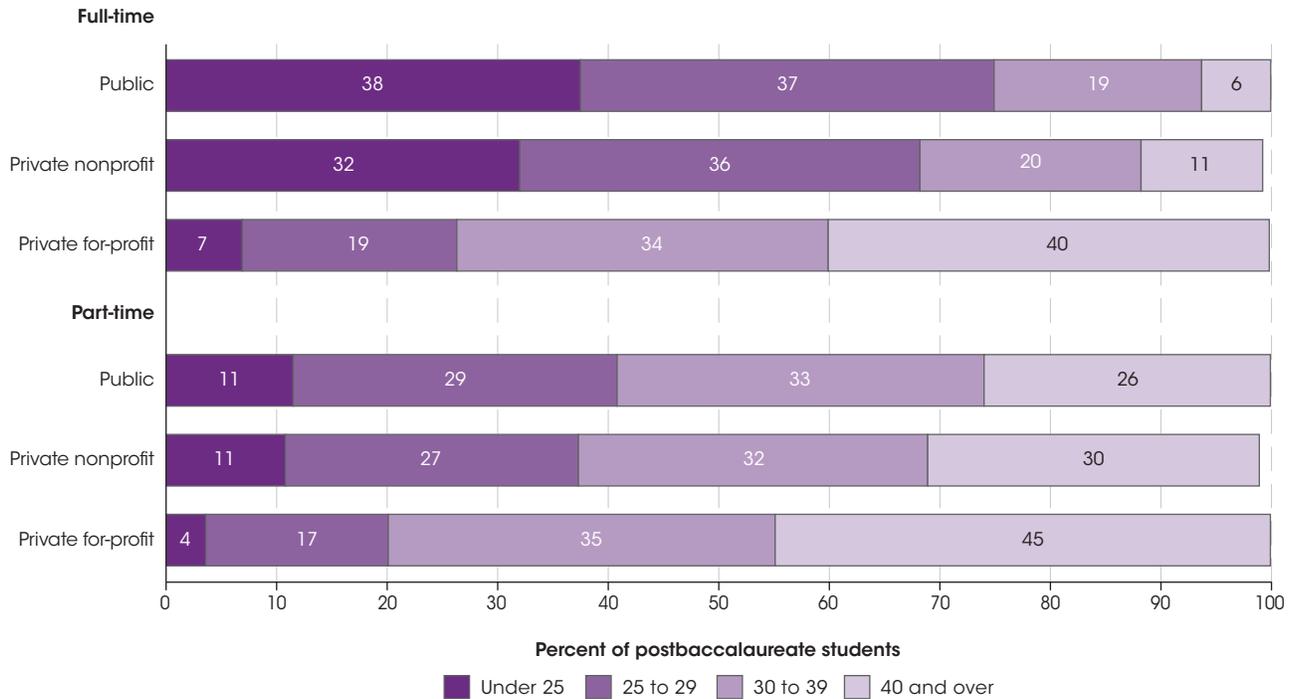
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2016, Fall Enrollment component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 306.50.

Attendance patterns for U.S. resident undergraduate students (full- and part-time) differed by race/ethnicity in fall 2015.<sup>2</sup> Sixty-six percent of undergraduate students at private nonprofit 4-year institutions in 2015 were White, which was higher than the percentage of White students at public 4-year institutions (60 percent) and at private for-profit 4-year institutions (46 percent). A higher percentage of the students at private for-profit 4-year institutions were Black (29 percent) than at private nonprofit (13 percent) and public 4-year institutions (12 percent). The percentages of students at public 4-year institutions and private for-profit 4-year institutions who were Hispanic (16 and 15 percent, respectively) were higher than the percentage at private nonprofit 4-year institutions (11 percent). The percentages of undergraduate students at public 4-year institutions and private nonprofit 4-year institutions who were Asian (7 and 6 percent,

respectively) were higher than the percentage at private for-profit 4-year institutions (3 percent).

In fall 2015, the percentages of both White and Asian U.S. resident undergraduate students at public 2-year institutions (51 and 6 percent, respectively) were higher than the percentages at private nonprofit 2-year institutions (46 and 3 percent, respectively) and at private for-profit 2-year institutions (37 and 4 percent, respectively). In contrast, the percentage of students at private nonprofit 2-year institutions who were Black (32 percent) was higher than the percentages at private for-profit 2-year institutions and public 2-year institutions (30 and 14 percent, respectively). A higher percentage of the students at public and private for-profit 2-year institutions were Hispanic (both 24 percent) than at private nonprofit 2-year institutions (14 percent).

**Figure 4. Percentage of full-time and part-time postbaccalaureate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by institutional control and student age: Fall 2015**

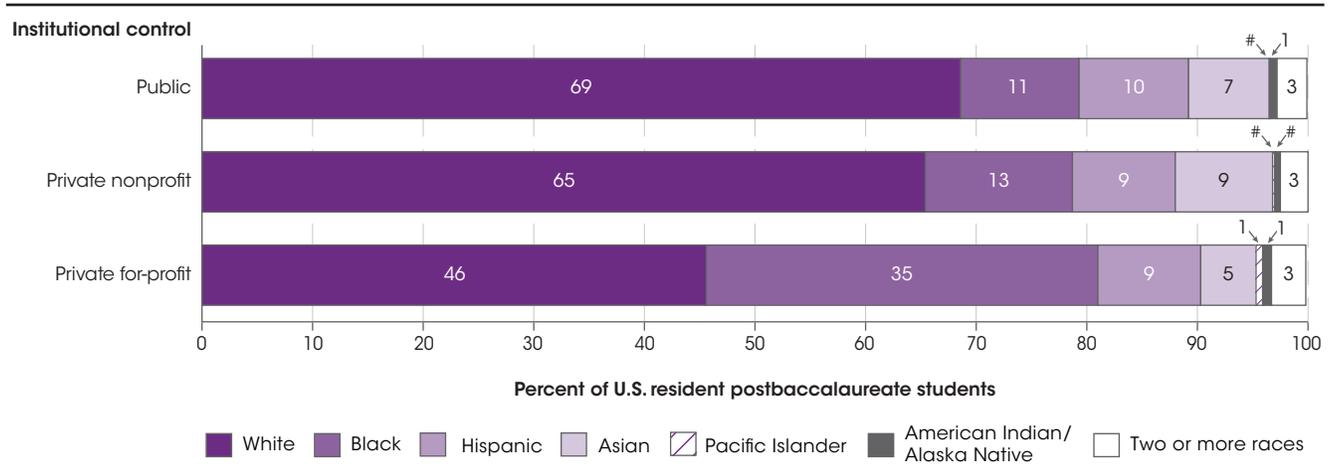


NOTE: Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding and the exclusion of students whose age was unknown.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2016, Fall Enrollment component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 303.50.

In fall 2015, some 48 percent of graduate students attended public institutions, 42 percent attended private nonprofit institutions, and 9 percent attended private for-profit institutions. The majority of full-time graduate students at public institutions were young adults (38 percent) and adults ages 25 to 29 (37 percent); the same was true at private nonprofit institutions (32 percent were young adults and 36 percent were adults

ages 25 to 29). In contrast, full-time graduate students at private for-profit institutions were older: 34 percent were ages 30 to 39 and 40 percent were age 40 and older. Among part-time graduate students, adults age 30 and over comprised 80 percent of the students at private for-profit institutions, 62 percent at private nonprofit institutions, and 59 percent at public institutions.

**Figure 5. Percentage distribution of U.S. resident postbaccalaureate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by institutional control and student race/ethnicity: Fall 2015**



# Rounds to zero.

NOTE: 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. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2016, Fall Enrollment component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, table 306.50.

Approximately two-thirds of U.S. resident graduate students at public and private nonprofit institutions were White, compared with less than one-half of the students at private for-profit institutions. Thirty-five percent of graduate students at private for-profit institutions were Black, compared with 13 percent at private nonprofit institutions and 11 percent at public institutions.

Hispanic students accounted for 10 percent of graduate enrollment at public institutions and 9 percent each at private nonprofit and private for-profit institutions. Asian students accounted for 9 percent of graduate enrollment at private nonprofit institutions, 7 percent at public institutions, and 5 percent at private for-profit institutions.

**Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup> Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this indicator, comparisons by race/ethnicity exclude nonresident alien students.

**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, tables 303.50 and 306.50

**Related indicators and resources:** Undergraduate Enrollment, Postbaccalaureate Enrollment, Community Colleges [*The Condition of Education 2008 Spotlight*]

**Glossary:** College, Control of institutions, Enrollment, Full-time enrollment, Part-time enrollment, Postbaccalaureate enrollment, Postsecondary institutions (basic classification by level), Private institution, Public school or institution, Racial/ethnic group, Undergraduate students