

Three-Year Persistence and Attainment Among Subbaccalaureate Occupational Students: 2006 and 2014

This Data Point examines postsecondary students' persistence and attainment rates using data from the 2006 and 2014 administrations of the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Studies (BPS:04/06 and BPS:12/14). These studies are follow-ups to the 2003–04 and 2011–12 National Postsecondary Student Aid Studies and track the paths of first-time beginning students through education and the labor market. BPS:04/06 included a sample of about 23,000 beginning students, and BPS:12/14 included about 25,000 beginning students.¹ The Data Point focuses on students who enter postsecondary education with the intention of earning a credential,² looking at the rate at which these credential-seeking students remain in school or attain a credential within 3 years—that is, their *persistence and attainment* rate.

A previous National Center for Education Statistics Data Point³ found that among students who started their postsecondary education in 2003–04, the 6-year persistence and attainment rate was higher for students who were seeking a bachelor's degree than for students seeking a subbaccalaureate credential (certificate or associate's degree), but that the persistence and attainment rate was not measurably different among subbaccalaureate students who were seeking a credential in an occupational versus academic field.

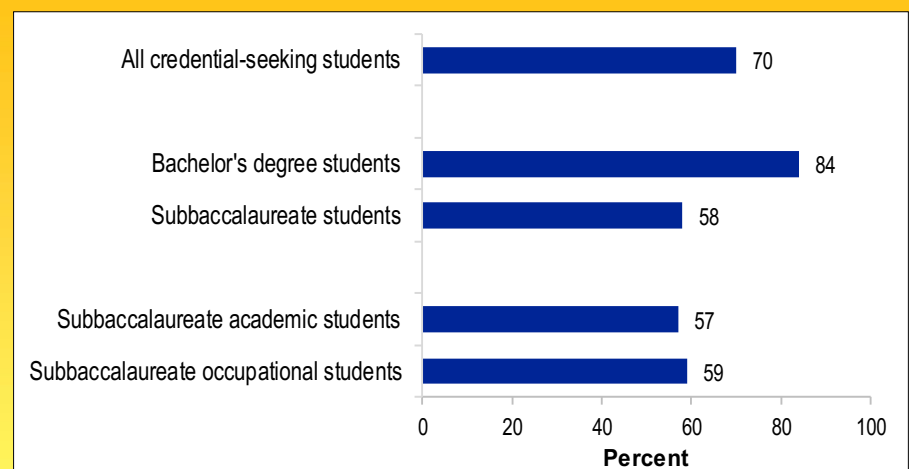
This Data Point looks at a more recent student cohort—those who began school in 2011–12—examining their persistence and attainment rates over 3 years. The Data Point also compares the 3-year persistence and attainment rates for this more recent 2011–12 cohort with those from the 2003–04 cohort.

The findings in this study for 3-year persistence and attainment among the 2011–12 cohort mirror those of the previous study:

The 3-year persistence and attainment rate was lower for subbaccalaureate students than for bachelor's degree students, but rates were not measurably different for subbaccalaureate academic and occupational students.

Among credential-seeking students who started in 2011–12, 70 percent were still enrolled or had attained a credential as of 2014 (**figure 1**). This persistence and attainment rate was lower for students seeking a subbaccalaureate credential (58 percent) than for those seeking a bachelor's degree (84 percent).

FIGURE 1. Persistence and attainment rate of 2011–12 beginning credential-seeking students after 3 years, by initial program level and curriculum area: 2014



NOTE: Subbaccalaureate students are those seeking a credential below the bachelor's degree level (certificate or associate's degree). Academic students are those seeking a credential in foreign languages, interdisciplinary studies, letters/English, liberal/general studies, mathematics, philosophy and religion, science, or social and behavioral sciences. Occupational students are those seeking a credential in agriculture and natural resources; business and marketing; communications and arts; computer and information sciences; education; engineering and architecture; health sciences; manufacturing, construction, repair, and transportation; personal services; or public, legal, social, and protective services. More precise estimates and standard errors can be found at <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ctes/tables/B09.asp>.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2004/06 and 2012/14 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Studies (BPS:04/06 and BPS:12/14).

To learn more about the data collection used in this report, visit <https://www.nces.gov/surveys/bps/>. For questions about content or to view this report online, go to <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2019045>.

However, among subbaccalaureate students, there was no measurable difference in the 3-year persistence and attainment rates of those seeking a credential in an academic field and those seeking a credential in an occupational field (57 and 59 percent, respectively).

The 3-year persistence and attainment rate increased from the 2003–04 cohort to the 2011–12 cohort; however, rates did not measurably increase within different credential-seeking groups.

The overall persistence and attainment rate of 70 percent among the cohort of 2011–12 credential-seeking students was measurably higher than the 68 percent rate among the cohort of 2003–04 credential-seeking students (figure 2).

There were no measurable differences, however, in the persistence and attainment rates for 2011–12 and 2003–04 students who initially sought a bachelor’s degree, a subbaccalaureate credential, or a subbaccalaureate credential in either an academic or occupational field.

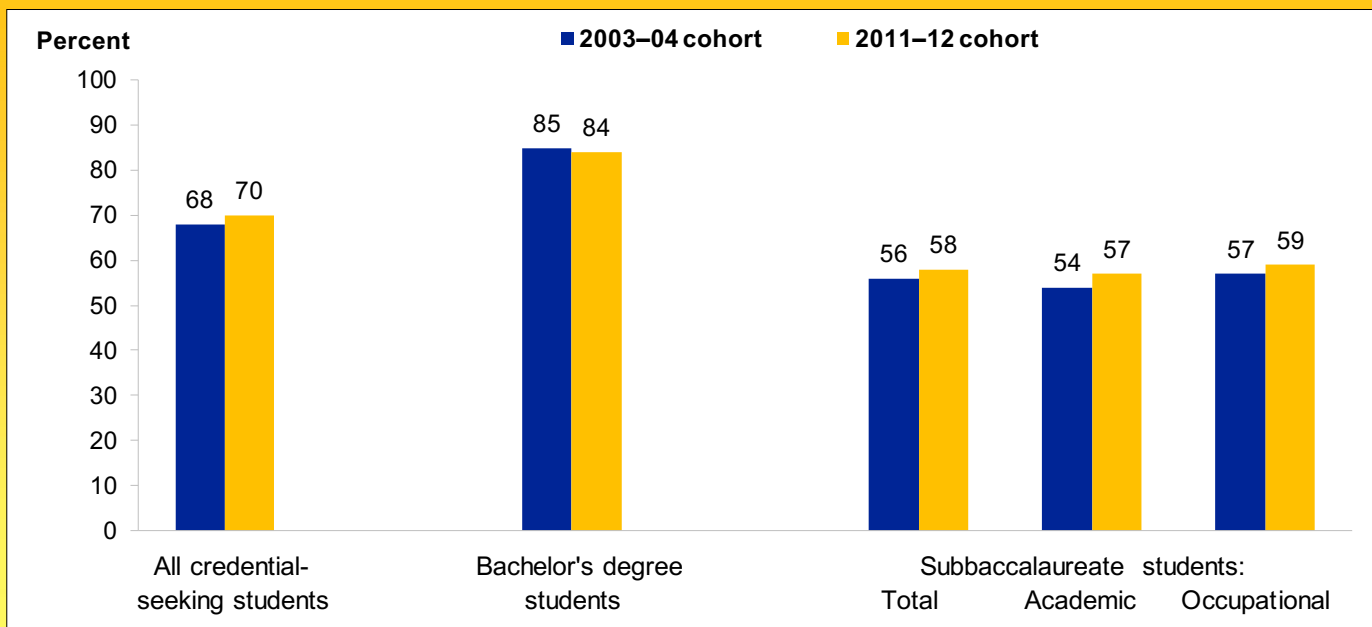
Endnotes

¹ The BPS:12/14 sample did not include Puerto Rico, but the BPS:04/06 did. To ensure comparability across cohorts, this analysis excluded Puerto Rico from BPS:04/06.

² Due to changes in data definitions, credential-seeking students were a larger proportion of the BPS:11/12 sample than the BPS:04/06 sample (98 versus 91 percent, respectively); findings were similar for all students as for credential-seeking students (not shown in figures; see tables at <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ctes/tables/B09.asp>).

³ The previous Data Point can be found at <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2016083>.

FIGURE 2. Persistence and attainment rate of 2003–04 and 2011–12 beginning credential-seeking students after 3 years, by initial program level and curriculum area: 2006 and 2014



NOTE: Subbaccalaureate students are those seeking a credential below the bachelor’s degree level (certificate or associate’s degree). Academic students are those seeking a credential in foreign languages, interdisciplinary studies, letters/English, liberal/general studies, mathematics, philosophy and religion, science, or social and behavioral sciences. Occupational students are those seeking a credential in agriculture and natural resources; business and marketing; communications and arts; computer and information sciences; education; engineering and architecture; health sciences; manufacturing, construction, repair, and transportation; personal services; or public, legal, social, and protective services. More precise estimates and standard errors can be found at <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ctes/tables/B09.asp>. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2004/06 and 2012/14 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Studies (BPS:04/06 and BPS:12/14).

This National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Data Point presents information on education topics of current interest. It was authored by Lisa Hudson of NCES. Estimates based on samples are subject to sampling variability, and apparent differences may not be statistically significant. All stated differences are statistically significant at the .05 level, with no adjustments

for multiple comparisons. In the design, conduct, and data processing of NCES surveys, efforts are made to minimize effects of nonsampling errors, such as item nonresponse, measurement error, data processing error, or other systematic error.