

Arts Credits Earned in High School and Postsecondary Enrollment: Differences by Background Characteristics

DATA POINT
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This Data Point uses data from the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLs:09), a national study of more than 23,000 ninth-graders in 2009. The cohort took follow-up surveys in 2012, 2013, and 2016. This Data Point uses data on high school graduates from the high school transcript collection of the study, conducted in 2013, and the postsecondary transcript collection, conducted in 2017-18. The analysis is based on about 12,900 HSLs:09 ninth-graders who graduated from high school by August 2013 and had complete transcripts.

In a survey by Americans for the Arts, a majority of U.S. adults agreed that the arts are part of a well-rounded K-12 education.¹ Taking at least one arts course in high school has been linked to higher school engagement as well as other positive cognitive, behavioral and social outcomes.² For these reasons, many states and local education agencies require arts credits for high school graduation. In 2013, 25 states required that high school students must have completed at least 0.5 credits in arts to graduate.³ Further, many districts have district-specific requirements for credits earned that may require higher credits than state requirements.

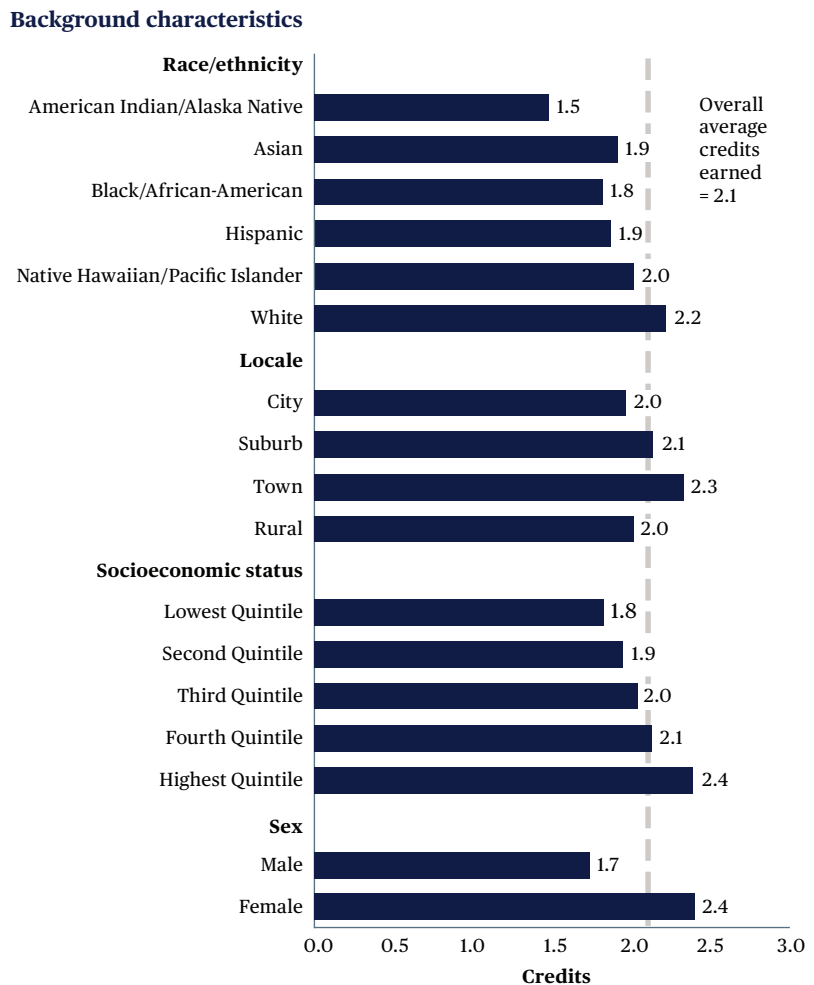
Most 2013 high school graduates earned some credit in arts (87 percent)⁴ and average credits earned were 2.1⁵ (FIGURE 1).

How did arts credit earning in high school vary by background characteristics?

While most students earned some credits in arts courses in high school, there were differences by race/ethnicity.⁶ White students earned more arts credits on average than all other groups except for Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students.

Students living in towns earned on average the most arts credits, compared to students in cities and rural areas.

FIGURE 1. Average high school arts credits earned by 2013 high school graduates, by selected background characteristics



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLs:09) Postsecondary Education Transcript Study and Student Financial Aid Records Restricted-Use Data File.

There were differences in average arts credits earned based on family socioeconomic status (SES).⁷ Students from higher SES families generally earned more arts credits than students from lower SES families.

Female students earned more arts credits on average (2.4) than males (1.7).

How did postsecondary enrollment vary by arts credit earning?

Many factors are related to students' enrollment in postsecondary education, including but not limited to family resources, educational expectations and plans for future careers.⁸ Credits earned in high school are just one factor in whether students enroll in further education. Credits in other course areas, which are also related to postsecondary enrollment, are not investigated in this Data Point.

Enrollment in education after high school, referred to here as postsecondary enrollment, was related to the number of arts credits earned in high school (FIGURE 2). Students who earned the most arts credits (4+) more often enrolled in postsecondary education compared to students who earned fewer arts credits or no arts credits. Fourteen percent of students who earned 4+ arts credits did not enroll in postsecondary education, which is less than the 19 percent of students who earned 2.0-3.9 credits, the 20 percent who earned .1-1.9 arts credits, and the 23 percent who earned no arts credits and did not enroll.

Students who earned 4+ arts credits enrolled in a 4-year postsecondary institution at a higher rate than students who earned fewer arts credits.

At the 2-year college level, a higher percentage of students who earned some arts credit (30 percent for .1-1.9; 31 percent for 2.0-3.9) enrolled than students who had earned 4+ arts credits (25 percent).

Endnotes

¹ 2015 Public Opinion Poll: Americans for the Arts (https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/images/2016/research/public_op_poll/POP_FullReport_July11.pdf).

² Elpus, K. (2013). *Arts Education and Positive Youth Development: Cognitive, Behavioral, and Social Outcomes of Adolescents Who Study the Arts*. National Endowment for the Arts.

³ ArtScan State Profiles (2013) <https://www.aep-arts.org/artscan/>.

⁴ Not in figure. See supplementary table at (<https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2021006>). "Arts credits" here mean visual art, drama, dance, and music, and are a sum of coursetaking across all high school years.

⁵ The range for total arts credits earned was 0 to 33 (not in figure). A large majority of students earned between 0 and 4 arts credits. The mean credit earned was 2.1 credits. See supplementary table at

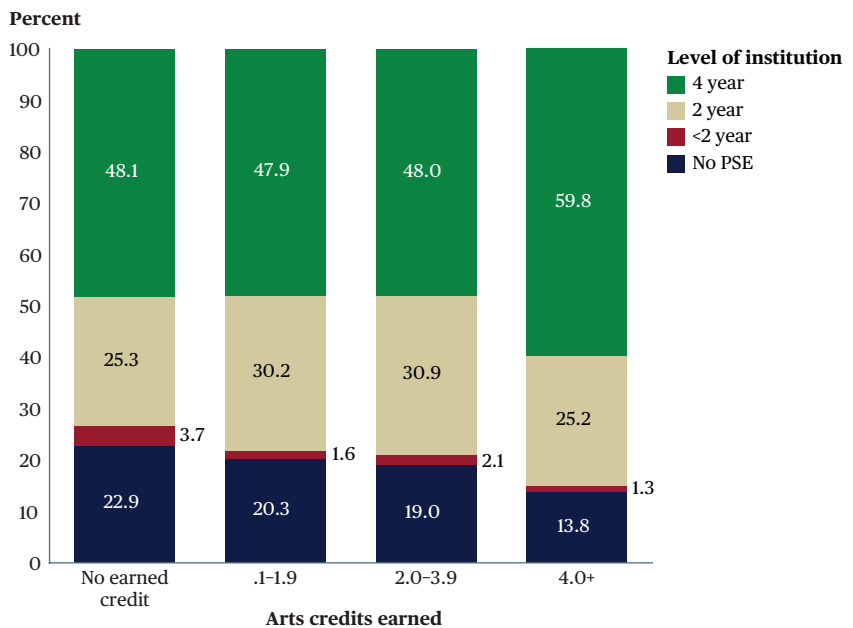
(<https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2021006>).

⁶ It is possible that lower arts credit earning may be related to fewer arts courses offered at some types of schools. For example, previous studies have reported varying access to arts education by school poverty concentration (e.g., <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/2012014rev.pdf>).

⁷ Socioeconomic status (SES) is a composite of the family's relative social position based on parents' education, occupational prestige, and family income. The lowest SES quintile is the lowest one-fifth (i.e., lowest 20 percent) of the SES distribution, and the highest SES quintile is the highest one-fifth (i.e., highest 20 percent).

⁸ Chen, X., Lauff, E., Arbeit, C.A., Henke, R., Skomsvold, P., and Hufford, J. (2017). *Early Millennials: The Sophomore Class of 2002 a Decade Later* (NCES 2017-437). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017437.pdf>.

FIGURE 2. Percent of 2013 high school graduates who enrolled in postsecondary education (PSE), by arts credits earned and level of institution: 2017



NOTE: Level indicates level of first postsecondary institution attended after high school. It is based on IPEDS variable ICLEVEL. For more information about IPEDS please see, <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/>.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HLS:09) Postsecondary Education Transcript Study and Student Financial Aid Records Restricted-use Data File.