



COLLEGE STUDENTS TODAY

*A National
Portrait*

FOR MEDIA USE ONLY



American Council on Education
The Unifying Voice for Higher Education

© November 2005



American Council on Education

ACE and the American Council on Education are registered marks of the American Council on Education.

American Council on Education
One Dupont Circle NW
Washington, DC 20036

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Additional copies of this publication are available for purchase online at www.acenet.edu/bookstore, or by sending a check or money order for \$25 per copy, plus \$6.95 shipping and handling (for more than one copy, call the number below), to the following address:

ACE Fulfillment Service
Department 191
Washington, DC 20055-0191
Phone: (301) 632-6757 Fax: (301) 843-0159
www.acenet.edu

When ordering, please specify Item #310695.

Table of Contents

2	Preface
3	Postsecondary Education Institutions in the United States
4	Undergraduates in the United States
6	Undergraduates Younger than 25
8	Undergraduates Aged 25 or Older
10	Female Undergraduates
12	Male Undergraduates
14	White Undergraduates
16	African-American Undergraduates
18	Hispanic Undergraduates
20	Asian-American Undergraduates
22	American Indian Undergraduates
24	Foreign Undergraduates
26	Low-Income Undergraduates
28	Undergraduates with Foreign-Born Parents
30	Graduate and Professional Students in the United States



Preface

61%
of undergraduates
in the United
States are
**younger
than 25.**

The American Council on Education (ACE), as part of its continuing commitment to access, equity, and diversity in U.S. higher education, is pleased to present this national portrait of college students in the United States. **ACE is grateful to the Microsoft Corporation for its generous support of this publication.**

It is difficult for those outside higher education to imagine the complex mosaic that is the U.S. college student population. The diversity of these students is startling, even to those who work on college campuses. For example, 25 years ago, only 17 percent of American college students were minorities. Today, a third of the student population is nonwhite. Thirty-five years ago, only a quarter of college students were aged 25 or older. Today, approximately 39 percent of students are aged 25 or older. Beyond these basic demographics, today's college students are diverse in terms of income, family structure, and immigration status, among many other characteristics.

College Students Today: A National Portrait is designed to help members of the education, policy and business communities, as well as the general public, quickly gain a general understanding of this rich diversity. Drawing upon data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, 2003–04, each section that follows profiles a major subgroup within higher education. ACE offers this national portrait in the hope that it will spark interest in additional information about American higher education and the U.S. student population. For access to ACE's broad array of research, publications, and online information resources, please visit www.acenet.edu.

39% of undergraduates
in the United States are
aged 25 or older.

14% of undergraduates are
African American.

A National Portrait

Postsecondary Education Institutions

in the United States

▶ There are more than **6,400** Title IV program-participating institutions in the United States, with a total enrollment of more than **17.5 million** undergraduates.

▶ **2,500** are four-year institutions.

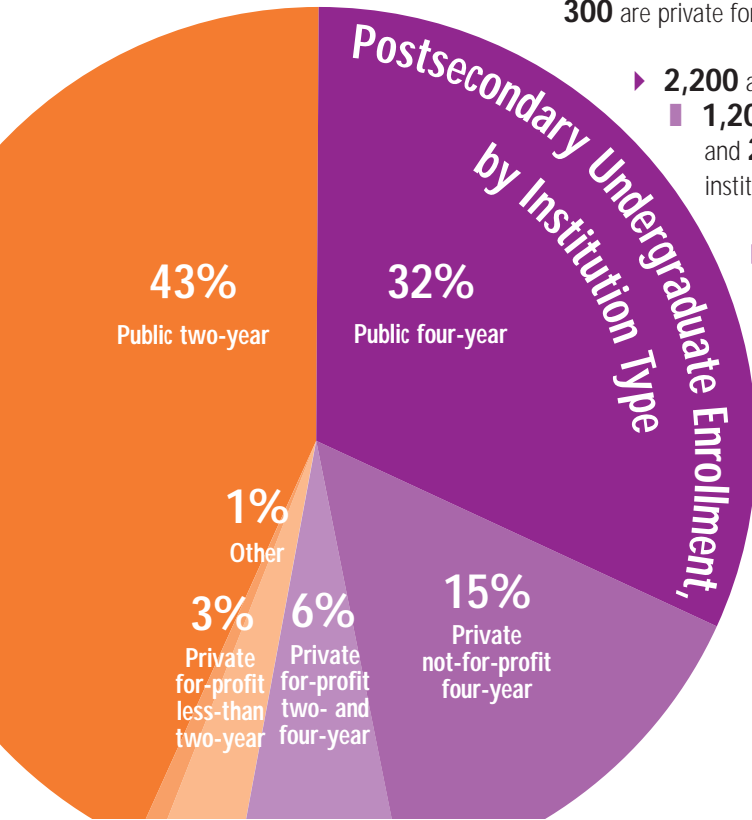
■ **1,600** are private not-for-profit, **600** are public, and more than **300** are private for-profit institutions.

▶ **2,200** are two-year institutions.

■ **1,200** are public, **800** are private for-profit, and **200** are private not-for-profit institutions.

▶ **1,700** are less-than-two-year institutions.

■ **1,300** are private for-profit, fewer than **300** are public, and **100** are private not-for-profit institutions.



Note: Throughout this report, details may not add to totals due to rounding. All data in this report are from the 2003–04 academic year and refer to students enrolled for credit at accredited institutions.

A National Portrait

Undergraduates in the United States

- ▶ **87 percent of all postsecondary students in the United States are undergraduates.**
- ▶ **58** percent of undergraduates are women.

- ▶ **36** percent of undergraduates are students of color.
 - **14** percent are African American, **13** percent are Hispanic, **6** percent are Asian American,* **1** percent are American Indian, and **2** percent are of other races and ethnicities.

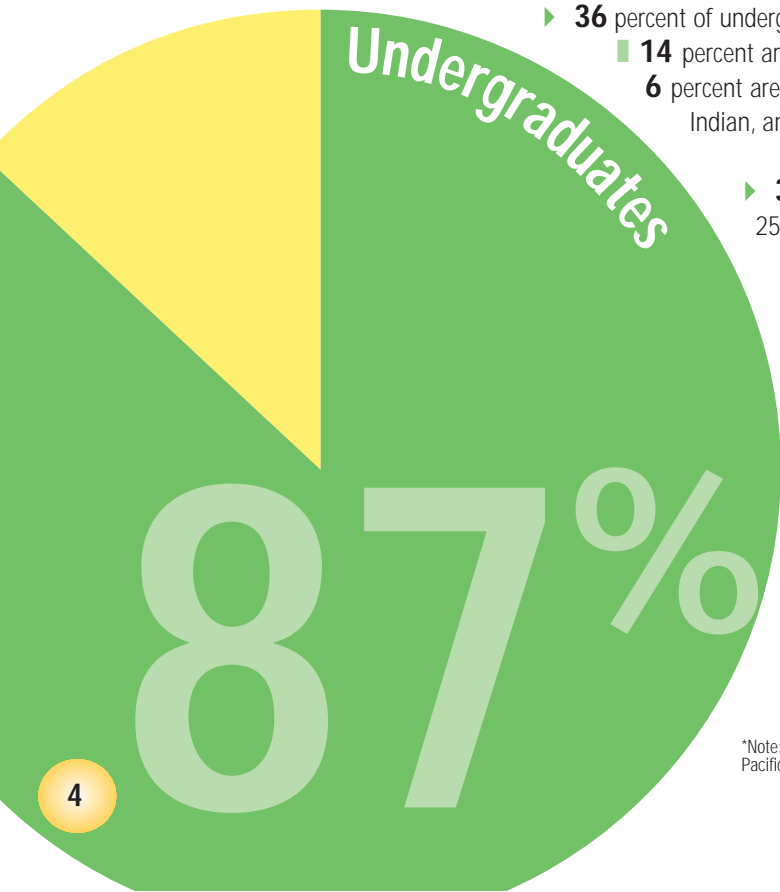
- ▶ **39** percent of undergraduates are aged 25 or older.

- ▶ **34** percent of undergraduates are married and/or have children.

- **15** percent are married with children, **11** percent are single parents, and **8** percent are married with no children.

- ▶ **43** percent of undergraduates attend public or private not-for-profit four-year colleges and universities, **40** percent attend community colleges, **8** percent attend private for-profit institutions, and **9** percent attend other types of institutions.

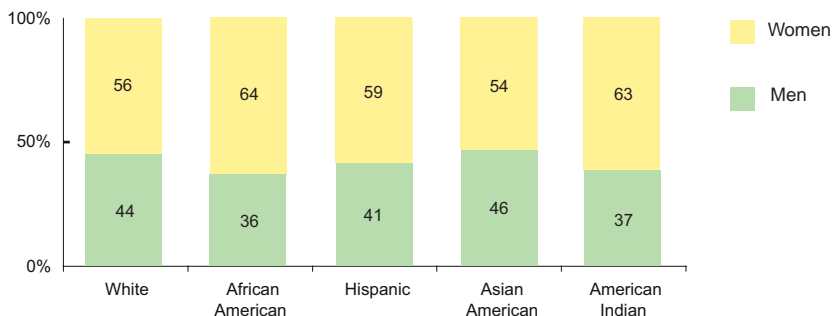
*Note: Throughout this report, the "Asian American" category includes Pacific Islanders.





- ▶ **53** percent of undergraduates are enrolled in something other than a bachelor's degree program.
 - **36** percent are in associate degree programs, **10** percent are in non-degree/certificate programs, and **7** percent are in certificate programs.
- ▶ **59** percent of undergraduates attend on less than a full-time, full-year basis.
 - **23** percent attend part time for the full academic year, **22** percent attend part time for part of the year, and **14** percent attend full time for part of the year.

Undergraduates, by Race/Ethnicity and Gender



Note: Details may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. National Postsecondary Student Aid Study: 2003–04.

A National Portrait

Undergraduates Younger than 25 in the United States

▶ **61 percent of undergraduates in the United States are younger than 25.**

▶ **55 percent** of undergraduates younger than 25 are women.

▶ **34 percent** of undergraduates younger than 25 are students of color.

■ **13 percent** are Hispanic, **13 percent** are African American, **6 percent** are Asian American, **1 percent** are American Indian, and **2 percent** are of other races and ethnicities.

▶ **10 percent** of undergraduates younger than 25 are married and/or have children.

■ **4 percent** are single parents, **4 percent** are married with no children, and **2 percent** are married with children.

▶ **53 percent** of undergraduates younger than 25 attend public or private not-for-profit four-year colleges and universities, **34 percent** attend community colleges, **5 percent** attend private for-profit institutions, and **8 percent** attend other types of institutions.

Undergraduates
Younger than 25

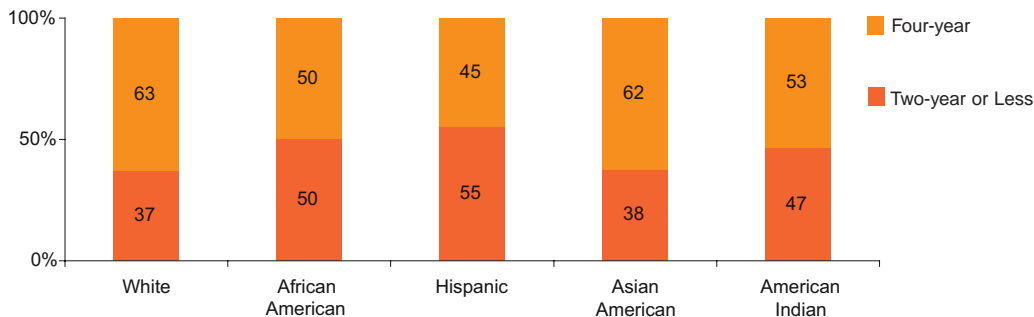
61%



- ▶ **44** percent of undergraduates younger than 25 are enrolled in something other than a bachelor's degree program.
 - **32** percent are in associate degree programs, **7** percent are in non-degree/certificate programs, and **5** percent are in certificate programs.

- ▶ **46** percent of undergraduates younger than 25 attend on less than a full-time, full-year basis.
 - **17** percent attend part time for the full academic year, **15** percent attend part time for part of the year, and **14** percent attend full time for part of the year.

Undergraduates Younger than 25, by Race/Ethnicity and Institution Level



Note: Details may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.
 Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. National Postsecondary Student Aid Study: 2003–04.

A National Portrait

Undergraduates Aged 25 or Older in the United States

- ▶ **39 percent of undergraduates in the United States are aged 25 or older.**
- ▶ **62 percent** of undergraduates aged 25 or older are women.

- ▶ **42 percent** of undergraduates aged 25 or older are students of color.
 - **20 percent** are African American, **13 percent** are Hispanic, **5 percent** are Asian American, **1 percent** are American Indian, and **2 percent** are of other races and ethnicities.

- ▶ **69 percent** of undergraduates aged 25 or older are married and/or have children.

- **33 percent** are married with children, **21 percent** are single parents, and **14 percent** are married with no children.

- ▶ **51 percent** of undergraduates aged 25 or older attend community colleges, **29 percent** attend public and private not-for-profit four-year colleges and universities, **12 percent** attend private for-profit institutions, and **9 percent** attend other types of institutions.

Undergraduates
Aged 25 or Older

39%



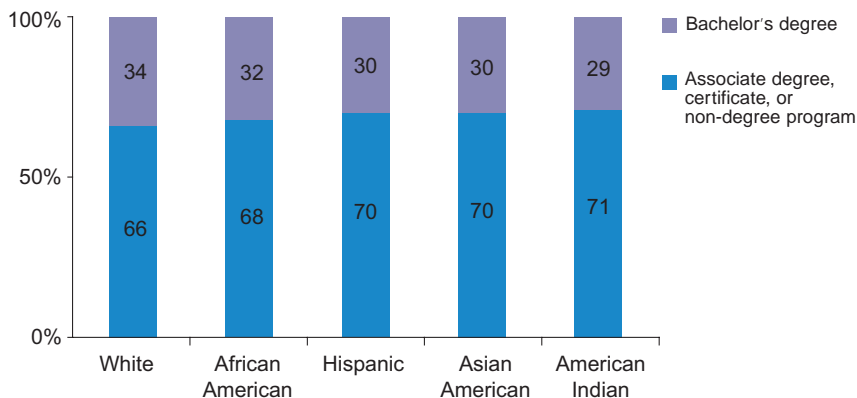
▶ **67** percent of undergraduates aged 25 or older are enrolled in something other than a bachelor's degree program.

- **43** percent are in associate degree programs, **15** percent are in non-degree/certificate programs, and **10** percent are in certificate programs.

▶ **80** percent of undergraduates aged 25 or older attend on less than a full-time, full-year basis.

- **32** percent attend part time for the full academic year, **35** percent attend part time for part of the year, and **13** percent attend full time for part of the year.

Undergraduates Aged 25 or Older, by Race/Ethnicity and Degree Program



Note: Details may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. National Postsecondary Student Aid Study: 2003–04.

A National Portrait

Female Undergraduates in the United States

- ▶ **58 percent of undergraduates in the United States are women.**
- ▶ **37** percent of female undergraduates are students of color.
 - **16** percent are African American, **13** percent are Hispanic, **6** percent are Asian American, **1** percent are American Indian, and **2** percent are of other races and ethnicities.
- ▶ **42** percent of female undergraduates are aged 25 or older.
- ▶ **39** percent of female undergraduates are married and/or have children.
 - **16** percent are single parents, **15** percent are married with children, and **8** percent are married with no children.
 - **73** percent of female undergraduates aged 25 or older are married and/or have children, compared with **14** percent of female undergraduates younger than 25.
- ▶ **41** percent of female undergraduates attend public or private not-for-profit four-year colleges and universities, **41** percent attend community colleges, **8** percent attend private for-profit institutions, and **9** percent attend other types of institutions.

Female Undergraduates

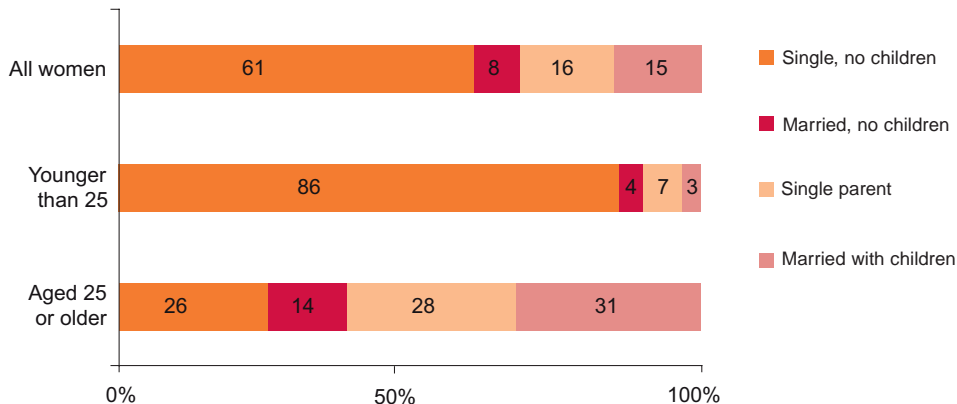
58%



- ▶ **55** percent of female undergraduates are enrolled in something other than a bachelor's degree program.
 - **38** percent are in associate degree programs, **10** percent are in non-degree/certificate programs, and **7** percent are in certificate programs.

- ▶ **60** percent of female undergraduates attend on less than a full-time, full-year basis.
 - **24** percent attend part time for the full academic year, **23** percent attend part time for part of the year, and **13** percent attend full time for part of the year.

Female Undergraduates, by Age and Family Status



Note: Details may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. National Postsecondary Student Aid Study: 2003–04.

A National Portrait

Male Undergraduates in the United States

▶ **42 percent of undergraduates in the United States are men.**

▶ **33 percent** of male undergraduates are students of color.

■ **12 percent** are African American, **12 percent** are Hispanic, **7 percent** are Asian American, **1 percent** are American Indian, and **2 percent** are of other races and ethnicities.

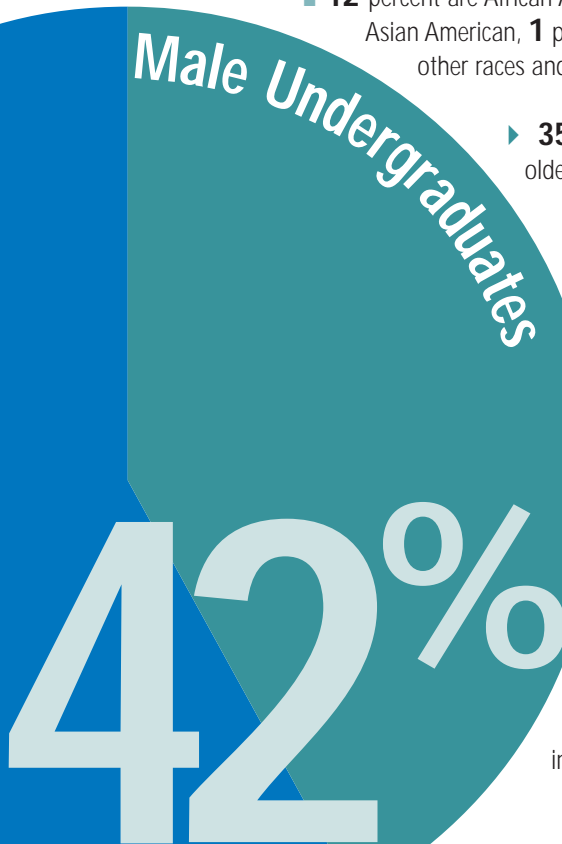
▶ **35 percent** of male undergraduates are aged 25 or older.

▶ **25 percent** of male undergraduates are married and/or have children.

■ **12 percent** are married with children, **7 percent** are married with no children, and **6 percent** are single parents.

■ **94 percent** of male undergraduates younger than 25 are single and have no children, compared with **40 percent** of men aged 25 or older.

▶ **46 percent** of male undergraduates attend public or private not-for-profit four-year colleges and universities, **39 percent** attend community colleges, **7 percent** attend private for-profit institutions, and **8 percent** attend other types of institutions.

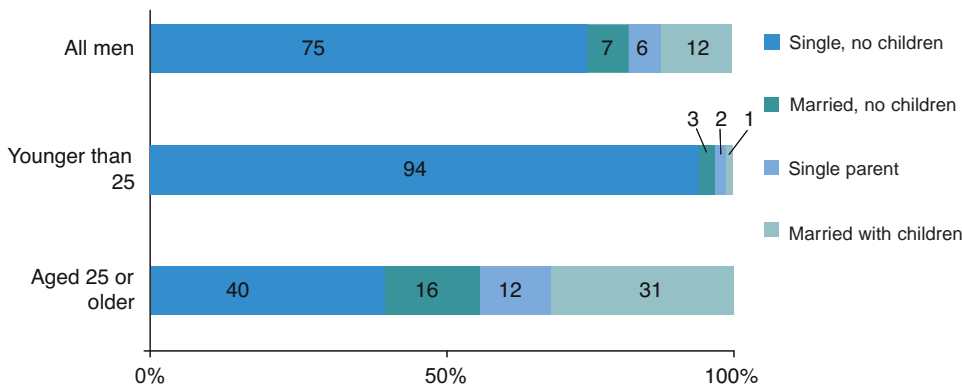




- ▶ **50** percent of male undergraduates are enrolled in something other than a bachelor's degree program.
 - **34** percent are in associate degree programs, **10** percent are in non-degree/certificate programs, and **6** percent are in certificate programs.

- ▶ **57** percent of male undergraduates attend on less than a full-time, full-year basis.
 - **22** percent attend part time for part of the academic year, **21** percent attend part time for the full academic year, and **15** percent attend full time for part of the year.

Male Undergraduates, by Age and Family Status



Note: Details may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.
 Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. National Postsecondary Student Aid Study: 2003–04.

A National Portrait

White Undergraduates in the United States

▶ **63 percent of undergraduates are white, non-Hispanic.**

▶ **56** percent of white undergraduates are women.

▶ **37** percent of white undergraduates are aged 25 or older.

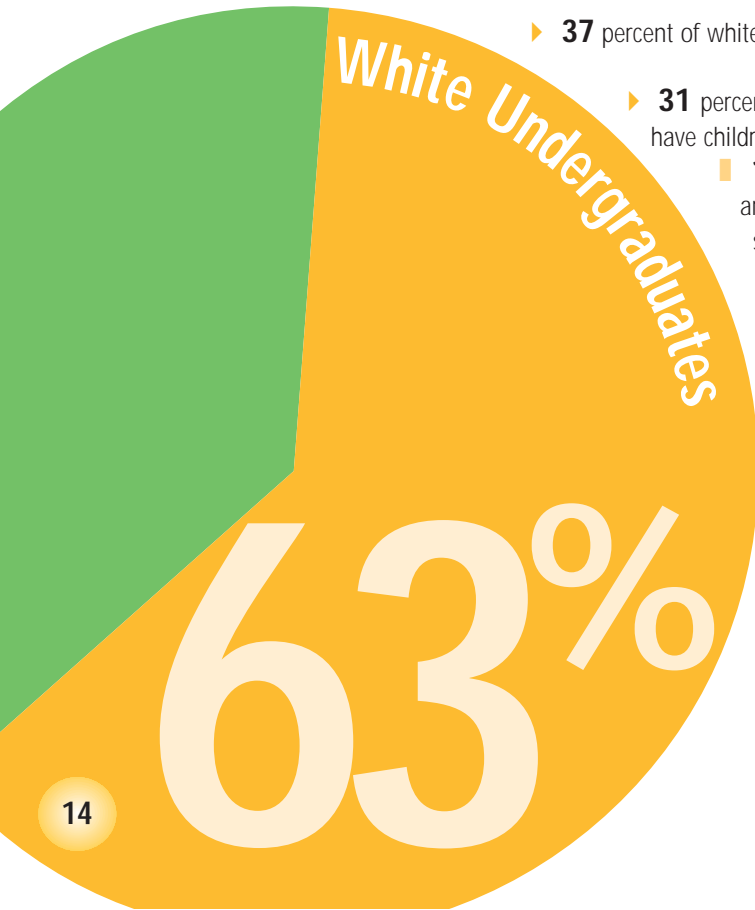
▶ **31** percent of white undergraduates are married and/or have children.

■ **14** percent are married with children, **9** percent are married with no children, and **8** percent are single parents.

▶ **48** percent of white undergraduates attend public or private not-for-profit four-year colleges and universities, **38** percent attend community colleges, **6** percent attend private for-profit institutions, and **8** percent attend other types of institutions.

▶ **84** percent of white undergraduates are enrolled in degree programs.

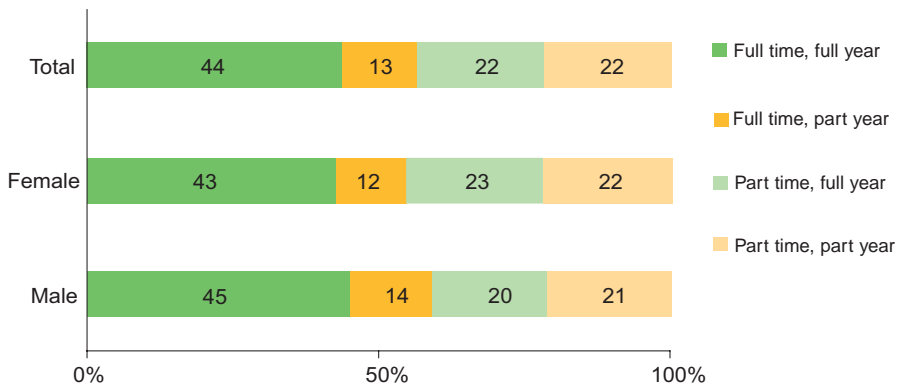
■ **50** percent are in bachelor's degree programs and **34** percent are in associate degree programs.





- ▶ **56** percent of white undergraduates attend on less than a full-time, full-year basis.
 - **22** percent attend part time for the full academic year, **22** percent attend part time for part of the year, and **13** percent attend full time for part of the year.

White Undergraduates, by Attendance Pattern and Gender



Note: Details may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.
 Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. National Postsecondary Student Aid Study: 2003–04.

African-American Undergraduates in the United States

- ▶ **14 percent of undergraduates are African American.**
- ▶ **64** percent of African-American undergraduates are women.
- ▶ **50** percent of African-American undergraduates are aged 25 or older.

African-American Undergraduates

14%

- ▶ **44** percent of African-American undergraduates are married and/or have children.

- **26** percent are single parents, **13** percent are married with children, and **5** percent are married with no children.

- ▶ **44** percent of African-American undergraduates attend community colleges, **35** percent attend public or private not-for-profit four-year colleges and universities, **13** percent attend private for-profit institutions, and **8** percent attend other types of institutions.

- ▶ **83** percent of African-American undergraduates are enrolled in degree programs.

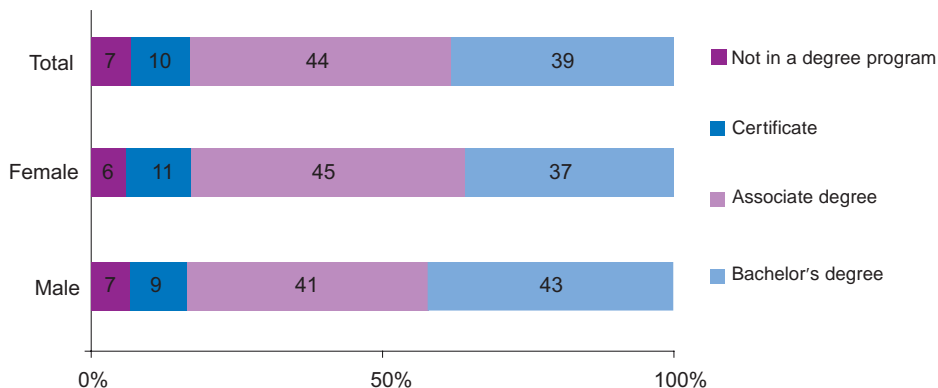
- **44** percent are in associate degree programs and **39** percent are in bachelor's degree programs.



▶ **65** percent of African-American undergraduates attend on less than a full-time, full-year basis.

- **25** percent attend part time for the full academic year, **23** percent attend part time for part of the year, and **17** percent attend full time for part of the year.

African-American Undergraduates, by Degree Program and Gender



Note: Details may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. National Postsecondary Student Aid Study: 2003–04.

A National Portrait

Hispanic Undergraduates in the United States

- ▶ **13 percent of undergraduates are Hispanic.**
- ▶ **59 percent** of Hispanic undergraduates are women.
- ▶ **39 percent** of Hispanic undergraduates are aged 25 or older.
- ▶ **35 percent** of Hispanic undergraduates are married and/or have children.
 - **14 percent** are married with children, **14 percent** are single parents, and **7 percent** are married with no children.
- ▶ **46 percent** of Hispanic undergraduates attend community colleges, **34 percent** attend public or private not-for-profit four-year colleges and universities, **12 percent** attend private for-profit institutions, and **9 percent** attend other types of institutions.
- ▶ **77 percent** of Hispanic undergraduates are enrolled in degree programs.
 - **40 percent** are in associate degree programs and **37 percent** are in bachelor's degree programs.

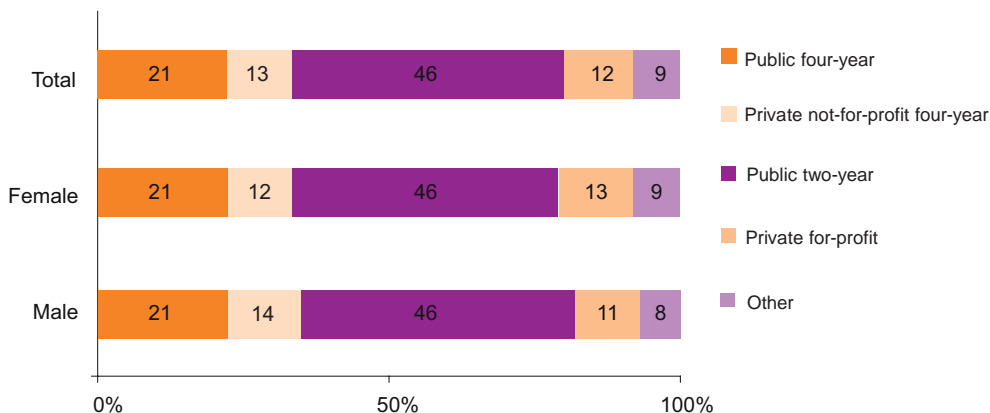
Hispanic Undergraduates

13%



- ▶ **65** percent of Hispanic undergraduates attend on less than a full-time, full-year basis.
 - **26** percent attend part time for the full academic year, **24** percent attend part time for part of the year, and **15** percent attend full time for part of the year.

Hispanic Undergraduates, by Institution Type and Gender



Note: Details may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.
 Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. National Postsecondary Student Aid Study: 2003–04.

A National Portrait

Asian-American Undergraduates in the United States

- ▶ **6 percent of undergraduates are Asian American.**
- ▶ **54 percent** of Asian-American undergraduates are women.
- ▶ **35 percent** of Asian-American undergraduates are aged 25 or older.
- ▶ **25 percent** of Asian-American undergraduates are married and/or have children.
 - **12 percent** are married with children, **9 percent** are married with no children, and **5 percent** are single parents.
- ▶ **42 percent** of Asian-American undergraduates attend public or private not-for-profit four-year colleges and universities, **40 percent** attend community colleges, **6 percent** attend private for-profit institutions, and **12 percent** attend other types of institutions.
- ▶ **82 percent** of Asian-American undergraduates are enrolled in degree programs.
 - **48 percent** are in bachelor's degree programs and **34 percent** are in associate degree programs.

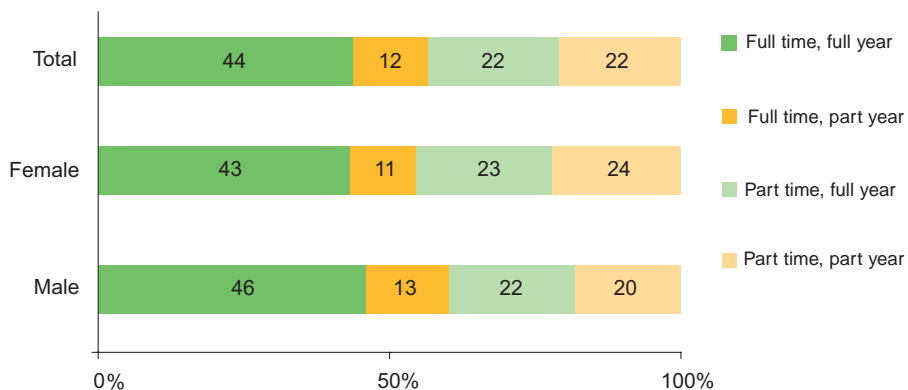
Asian-American Undergraduates





- ▶ **56** percent of Asian-American undergraduates attend on less than a full-time, full-year basis.
 - **22** percent attend part time for the full academic year, **22** percent attend part time for part of the year, and **12** percent attend full time for part of the year.

Asian-American Undergraduates, by Attendance Pattern and Gender



Note: Details may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. National Postsecondary Student Aid Study: 2003–04.

A National Portrait

American Indian Undergraduates in the United States

- ▶ **1 percent of undergraduates are American Indian.**
- ▶ **63 percent** of American Indian undergraduates are women.
- ▶ **51 percent** of American Indian undergraduates are aged 25 or older.
- ▶ **42 percent** of American Indian undergraduates are married and/or have children.
 - **17 percent** are married with children, **13 percent** are single parents, and **11 percent** are married with no children.
- ▶ **45 percent** of American Indian undergraduates attend community colleges, **37 percent** attend public or private not-for-profit four-year colleges and universities, **5 percent** attend private for-profit institutions, and **13 percent** attend other types of institutions.
- ▶ **81 percent** of American Indian undergraduates are enrolled in degree programs.
 - **41 percent** are in associate degree programs and **40 percent** are in bachelor's degree programs.

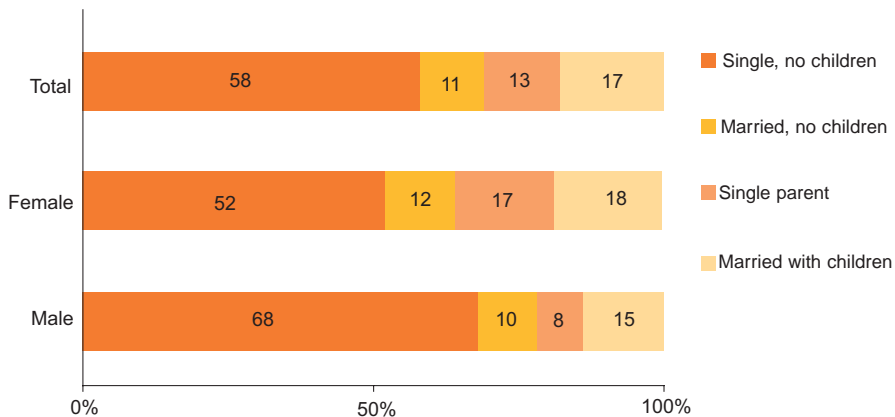
American Indian Undergraduates

1%



- ▶ **66** percent of American Indian undergraduates attend on less than a full-time, full-year basis.
 - **26** percent attend part time for part of the academic year, **23** percent attend part time for the full academic year, and **16** percent attend full time for part of the year.

American Indian Undergraduates, by Family Status and Gender



Note: Details may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. National Postsecondary Student Aid Study: 2003–04.

A National Portrait

Foreign Undergraduates in the United States

▶ **2 percent** of undergraduates in the United States are foreign students.

▶ **51 percent** of foreign undergraduates are men.

▶ **65 percent** of foreign undergraduates are aged 25 or younger.

▶ **21 percent** of foreign undergraduates are married and/or have children.

■ **11 percent** are married with no children, **6 percent** are married with children, and **4 percent** are single parents.

▶ **48 percent** of foreign undergraduates attend public or private not-for-profit four-year colleges and universities, **39 percent** attend community colleges, **3 percent** attend private for-profit institutions, and **10 percent** attend other types of institutions.

▶ **52 percent** of foreign undergraduates are enrolled in something other than a bachelor's degree program.

■ **36 percent** are in associate degree programs, **10 percent** are in non-degree/certificate programs, and **5 percent** are in certificate programs.

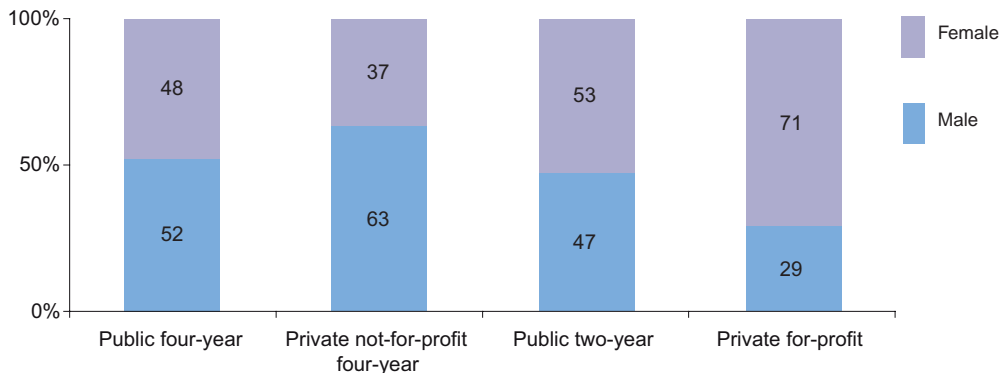
Foreign Undergraduates

2%



- ▶ **49** percent of foreign undergraduates attend on less than a full-time, full-year basis.
 - **20** percent attend full time for part of the academic year,
 - 15** percent attend part time for the full academic year, and
 - 14** percent attend part time for part of the year.

Foreign Undergraduates, by Institution Type and Gender



Note: Details may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. National Postsecondary Student Aid Study: 2003–04.

A National Portrait

Low-Income Undergraduates in the United States*

▶ **40 percent of all undergraduates in the United States are from low-income families.**

▶ **58 percent of low-income undergraduates are women.**

▶ **48 percent of low-income undergraduates are students of color.**

■ **21 percent are African American, 17 percent are Hispanic, 7 percent are Asian American, 1 percent are American Indian, and 2 percent are of other races and ethnicities.**

▶ **39 percent of low-income undergraduates are aged 25 or older.**

▶ **38 percent of low-income undergraduates are married and/or have children.**

■ **22 percent are single parents, 12 percent are married with children, and 4 percent are married with no children.**

▶ **37 percent of low-income undergraduates attend public or private not-for-profit four-year colleges and universities, 43 percent attend community colleges, and 11 percent attend private for-profit institutions.**

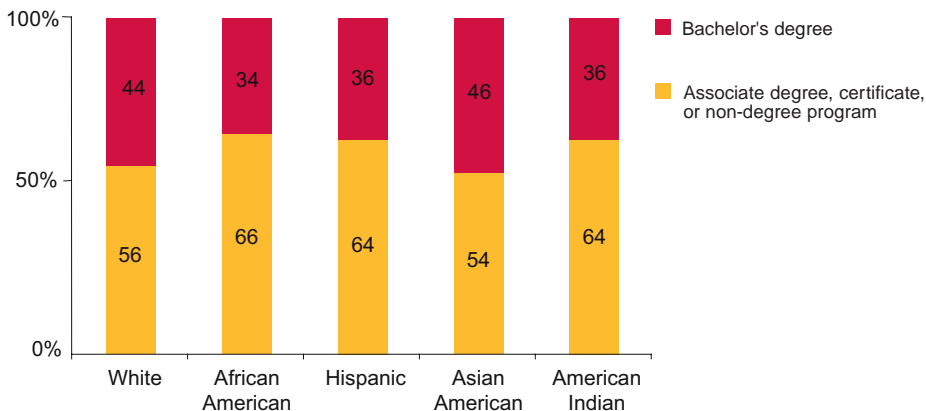
*Note: "Low-income" is defined as families whose income is 200 percent or less of the federal poverty line. For example, in 2002, that would be a family of four (including two children under age 18) who earned \$36,488 or less.



- ▶ **60** percent of low-income undergraduates are enrolled in something other than a bachelor's degree program.
 - **41** percent are in associate degree programs, **9** percent are in certificate programs, and **9** percent are in non-degree/certificate programs.

- ▶ **61** percent of low-income undergraduates attend on less than a full-time, full-year basis.
 - **24** percent attend part time for the full academic year, **21** percent attend part time for part of the year, and **16** percent attend full time for part of the year.

Low-Income Students, by Race/Ethnicity and Degree Program



Note: Details may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.
 Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. National Postsecondary Student Aid Study: 2003–04.

Undergraduates with Foreign-Born Parents

▶ **12 percent of all undergraduate students in the United States are first-generation Americans.**

▶ **58** percent of undergraduates with foreign-born parents are women.

▶ **33** percent of undergraduates with foreign-born parents are aged 25 or older.

▶ **27** percent of undergraduates with foreign-born parents are married and/or have children.

■ **10** percent are married with children, **10** percent are single parents, and **7** percent are married with no children.

▶ **38** percent of undergraduates with foreign-born parents attend public or private not-for-profit four-year colleges and universities, **43** percent attend community colleges, **9** percent attend private for-profit institutions, and **10** percent attend other types of institutions.

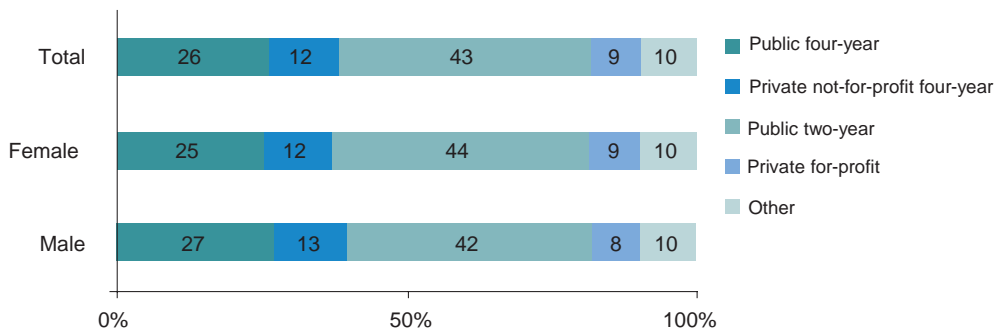
Undergraduates
with Foreign-Born Parents

12%



- ▶ **54** percent of undergraduates with foreign-born parents are enrolled in something other than a bachelor's degree program.
 - **35** percent are in associate degree programs, **12** percent are in non-degree/certificate programs, and **7** percent are in certificate programs.
- ▶ **60** percent of undergraduates with foreign-born parents attend on less than a full-time, full-year basis.
 - **23** percent attend part time for the full academic year, **23** percent attend part time for part of the year, and **14** percent attend full time for part of the year.

Undergraduates with Foreign-Born Parents, by Institution Type and Gender



Note: Details may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.
 Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. National Postsecondary Student Aid Study: 2003–04.

A National Portrait

Graduate and Professional Students in the United States

▶ **13 percent** of all postsecondary students are graduate or professional students.

▶ **58 percent** of graduate and professional students are women.

▶ **62 percent** of graduate and professional students are enrolled in master's degree programs, **14 percent** are in doctoral degree programs, and **12 percent** are in professional programs in fields such as law and medicine.

▶ **31 percent** of graduate and professional students are students of color.

■ **11 percent** are Asian American, **10 percent** are African American, **8 percent** are Hispanic, **1 percent** are American Indian, and **2 percent** are of other races and ethnicities.

▶ **49 percent** of graduate and professional students are aged 30 or older.

▶ **11 percent** of graduate and professional students are not U.S. citizens.

■ **7 percent** are foreign students and **4 percent** are permanent residents.

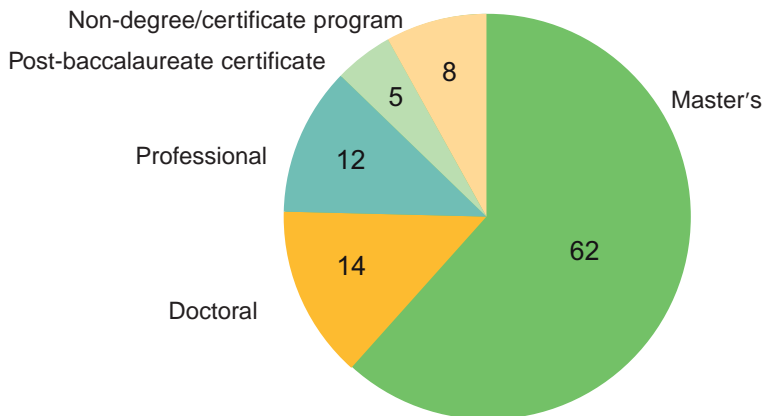
Graduate and
Professional Students

13%



- ▶ **51** percent of graduate and professional students are married and/or have children.
 - **24** percent are married with children, **19** percent are married with no children, and **8** percent are single parents.

Graduate and Professional Students, by Degree Program



Note: Details may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. National Postsecondary Student Aid Study: 2003–04.

About ACE

The American Council on Education (ACE) represents all sectors of higher education including public, private, two-year, and four-year institutions. It represents approximately 1,600 accredited, degree-granting colleges and universities and also includes 200 higher education–related associations, organizations, foundations, and corporations. Three strategic priorities drive the Council's activities: **representation, leadership development, and service.**

Core Values

ACE values inclusiveness and diversity, recognizes higher education's responsibility to society, and embraces the belief that widespread access to excellent postsecondary educational opportunities is the cornerstone of a democratic society.

Vision

ACE aims to foster greater collaboration and new partnerships within and outside the higher education community to help colleges and universities anticipate and address the challenges of the 21st century and contribute to a stronger nation and a better world.

Mission

ACE, the major coordinating body for all the nation's higher education institutions, seeks to provide leadership and a unifying voice on key higher education issues and to influence public policy through advocacy, research, and program initiatives.



www.acenet.edu

Microsoft®

The American Council on Education (ACE) is grateful to Microsoft for its generous support of this project.

ISBN 0-8268-0005-X \$25.00

