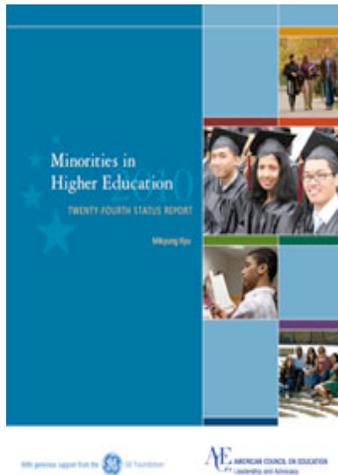


## New Data Indicate Educational Attainment Continues to Flat-Line

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Young Hispanics and African Americans have made no appreciable progress in postsecondary attainment as compared to their older peers, and attainment rates have dipped for the youngest group (aged 25-34), according to a [new report](#) released today by the American Council on Education (ACE).

These flat-lining attainment rates indicate that today's young adults are no better educated than the baby boom generation, according to *Minorities in Higher Education 2010 – Twenty-Fourth Status Report*. The report, made possible by generous support from the GE Foundation, goes on to unpack important differences among racial/ethnic and gender groups that tend to be obscured by the aggregated attainment data.

Widely recognized as the most authoritative national source of information on advances made by students of color in higher education, the report summarizes trends in high school completion, college enrollment, college persistence, degrees conferred and higher education employment. The report uses data from the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics and the U.S. Census Bureau.

Among the key findings:

- Each generation of younger women in the United States is continuing to reach higher levels of postsecondary attainment, while the attainment levels of younger men are falling.
- The strides made by women are mostly driven by Asian Americans and whites. Although other women of color have made generational gains while their male peers have stagnated or fallen, these minority women have not achieved the comparable gains in postsecondary educational attainment that Asian-American or white women have.
- Younger whites (aged 25-34) also have made strides past their older peers. However, their gains are not only smaller than those of Asian Americans but also attributable only to women.
- Among all racial/ethnic groups in the United States, Hispanics—the fastest growing population—continue to exhibit the lowest educational attainment levels. Young Hispanic men lag behind Hispanic women, and the gap is growing wider.

### Special Essay on Hispanic Population

Because of the worrisome nature of the low educational attainment levels among Hispanics, the report includes a special essay on this population. The essay analyzes characteristics of the Hispanic population, with a focus on Hispanic immigrants, to identify for policy makers and educators the unique challenges of and opportunities for improving the educational attainment of this group.

Among the barriers to attaining further education for Hispanic immigrants identified in the report are:

- The lack of a high school credential;
- Interrupted schooling prior to immigration;

- Immigrating at an older age;
- Lack of English fluency;
- Substantial economic needs for immigration;
- Placement in low-wage, low-skilled jobs; and
- Lack of legal status for some.

Understanding these disincentives and concentrating policy attention and resources on them are important steps in raising educational levels of Hispanics.

"Our nation stands at the intersection of bold new goals for educational attainment on one hand, and a pattern of low educational attainment for Hispanic students on the other," said ACE President Molly Corbett Broad. "For the future of these students and of our nation, we must take this opportunity to act. The costs of leaving behind generations of the fastest growing population in this country are too great."

"The essay paints a more nuanced portrait of the 47 million Hispanics living in the U.S.," said Mikyung Ryu, assistant director of ACE's Center for Policy Analysis and author of the report. "In particular, Hispanic immigrant adults have received little attention in higher education policy. Current debates around increased educational attainment or economic sustainability don't seem to recognize the opportunity this key subgroup may represent."

## **Additional Findings**

### ***High School Completion***

- As of 2008, Asian Americans and whites had the highest rates of high school completion, at 91 and 88 percent respectively, followed by African Americans at 78 percent and American Indians at 71 percent.
- Although Hispanics made the largest gains and narrowed gaps between themselves and both whites and African Americans from 1988-2008, they continue to have the lowest rate of completion at 70 percent.

### ***College Enrollment***

- Colleges and universities became more diverse during the past decade, with minority share of the student body rising from 25 to 30 percent and the white share shrinking from 68 to 59 percent. Minority enrollment during this period continued to become more concentrated in two-year colleges compared with four-year institutions (36 and 26 percent, respectively).
- Enrollment rates for traditional college-aged whites increased from 31 percent in 1988 to 45 percent in 2008—the largest increase—while rates for young African Americans rose from 22 to 34 percent. Hispanics had the smallest improvement over this timeframe, from 17 to 28 percent.
- From 1997-2007, the number of enrolled minority students of any age grew from 3.6 million to 5.4 million (52 percent) while the number of white students increased from 9.7 million to 10.8 million (12 percent). Among minorities, Hispanics had the largest gains, both in growth rates and in absolute numbers, followed by African Americans.

### ***College Persistence***

- For the 2003 freshmen cohort, Asian Americans led all races/ethnicities with persistence rates of 89 percent for students who began at four-year institutions and 67 percent for those who started at two-year institutions.
- African Americans had the lowest persistence rates of all groups, 73 percent for those who began at four-year institutions and 47 percent for those who started at two-year colleges.

### ***Degrees Conferred***

- Total number of undergraduate degrees awarded increased 39 percent during the decade, with minorities leading the growth in associate degrees. However, despite enrollment gains by minorities during the decade, 66 percent of undergraduate degrees were awarded to white students in 2007.
- In 2007, women earned approximately 62 percent of all associate degrees and 57 percent of all bachelor's degrees. Among minorities, women earned 65 percent of associate degrees and 61 percent of bachelor's degrees.
- The number of master's degrees earned by women of color doubled from 1997-2007, and the number of doctoral degrees they earned increased 63 percent. Women now earn more graduate degrees than men.
- For combined STEM fields (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), men continued to outnumber women in bachelor's degrees awarded in 2007, at 65 and 35 percent respectively. However, women outnumbered men in biological/biomedical sciences, as well as in most non-STEM fields.

### ***Faculty, Administrators and Presidents***

- From 1997-2007, minority representation in faculty, administration and presidential posts increased steadily, from 13 to 17 percent in faculty positions and from 14 to 18 percent in administrative positions. Minority share of presidential appointments rose from 8 to 13 percent from 1986-2006.
- As of 2006, women accounted for 23 percent of presidential posts overall, up from 10 percent in 1986.

"ACE continually raises the bar in its analysis of minorities in higher education," said Bob Corcoran, president and chairman of the GE Foundation. "This year's report further reinforces the urgency of responding to today's challenges in the U.S. education system, an important focus area for the GE Foundation."

For the sixth year, the [Status Report](#) includes a CD-ROM which features data tables and highlights from the report as well as charts suitable for use in presentations.

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