First-generation College Students in 2020

**DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT**

- **26%** of undergraduates had parents with no postsecondary education.
- **54%** of undergraduates had parents who did not have a bachelor’s degree. This is the definition of first-generation that is used in this fact sheet.
- **60%** of undergraduates whose parents did not have a bachelor’s degree were also the first sibling in their family to go to college.

**MEDIAN PARENTAL INCOME OF FINANCIALLY DEPENDENT STUDENTS**

- **First-generation** students’ parents’ median income was **$41,000** in both 2016 and 2020.
- **Continuing-generation** students’ parents’ income increased from **$90,000** in 2016 to **$103,000** in 2020.

**Percentage of Undergraduates with Selected Characteristics**

- Attended college full time:
  - First-generation: 47%
  - Continuing-generation: 52%
- Had dependents:
  - First-generation: 27%
  - Continuing-generation: 11%
- Veteran:
  - First-generation: 2%
  - Continuing-generation: 3%
- Female:
  - First-generation: 56%
  - Continuing-generation: 63%

**Percentage of Undergraduates who were First-generation, by Race/ethnicity**

- Hispanic or Latinx/a/o: 73%
- Black or African American: 65%
- AI, AN, NH, or PI*: 64%
- White: 46%
- Asian: 44%

**Dependents who were First-generation, by College Sector**

- Private for-profit 2-year: 60%
- Private for-profit 4-year: 70%
- Private nonprofit 2-year: 72%
- Public 2-year: 64%
- Public 4-year: 48%
- Private nonprofit 4-year: 41%

**Percentage of Undergraduates who were First-generation, by Type of Minority-serving Institution**

- American Indian/Alaska Native-serving: 76%
- Black/African American-serving, non-HBCU: 66%
- Hispanic/Latinx/a/o-serving: 64%
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs): 60%
- Not minority-serving: 47%
- Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander-serving: 39%

“AI, AN, NH, or PI*” is American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander. First-generation student is defined as an undergraduate whose parents do not have a bachelor’s degree. Parents’ median income is based on financially dependent students only. Fact sheet represents undergraduate students enrolled in Title IV eligible postsecondary institutions in academic year 2019–20. Race/ethnicity categories are mutually exclusive. NASPA recognizes that each racial identity is defined by diverse populations. While aggregation is a useful tool to understand patterns, there are opportunities for continued study to disaggregate the data further. Percentages are rounded. Data sources are 2019–20 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:20), National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, and 2015–16 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:16), National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education. NPSAS:20 was released in 2023 and is the most recent iteration of NPSAS. The number of survey respondents was about 81,000, representing a population of 17.1 million undergraduates. Fact sheet produced by RTI International.

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