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SCHOOL ENROLLMENT IN THE UNITED STATES: 1972

(Advance data, October 1972 survey)

Of the 8.3 million persons 14 to 34 years old enrolled in college in October 1972, 727,000 were Negroes. College enrollment of blacks increased by 211 percent between 1964 (the first year for which data on fall college enrollment of blacks are available) and 1972. Negro students comprised 9 percent of all college students in October 1972 compared to 5 percent in 1964. These results are based on the Current Population Survey conducted in October 1972 by the Bureau of the Census.

In October 1972, 60.1 million persons 3 to 34 years old were enrolled in school. The number of elementary school students (kindergarten through eighth grade) dropped since the fall of 1971 to a total of 35.4 million because of a decline in the number of births in the United States during the 1960's. However, because of increasing enrollment rates, the number of pupils enrolled in nursery school reached an all-time high of 1.3 million. There were 15.2 million students enrolled in high school and 8.3 million in college.

Enrollment in college has increased considerably in the past 10 years, with nearly all of the increase occurring in public colleges. The number of students attending private colleges was about 2 million in 1972, only about 600,000 greater than in 1962; but the number of students attending public colleges increased from 2.8 to 6.3 million between 1962 and 1972.

Even though the level of college enrollment has been increasing over the past 10 years, there is evidence from this survey that a lower proportion of men of college age are now attending college than during the late 1960's. For example, the college enrollment rate of 18-and 19-year-old men in 1972 was 38 percent, the same level as in 1962; whereas, 44 percent of men in this age group were attending college in 1969. The enrollment rate of men 20 and 21 years old was higher in 1972, 36 percent, than in 1962, 29 percent; however, in 1969, the rate had been 45 percent. Although enrollment rates for 20-and 21- year olds were lower than for 18- and 19-year olds in 1962, there is no clear evidence that the enrollment rates were different in 1969 or 1972.

The college enrollment rate for women has increased greatly during the past 10 years, and women made up a larger proportion of all college students. In 1962, 21 percent of women between the ages of 18 and 21 were enrolled in college; the rate increased to 30 percent in 1972, which is an increase of 9 percentage points for women compared to 3 percentage points for men. Women made up 35 percent of all college students in 1962 compared to 42 percent in 1972. During the past 4 years, the college enrollment rate for men 20 and 21 years old declined by 8 percentage points, but the rates increased for women by 5 percentage points.

Data on the school enrollment of persons of Spanish origin indicate that persons of college age in this ethnic group were less likely to be in school or to have finished high school than was the total population of college age. About 21 percent of persons of Spanish origin 18 to 24 years old were enrolled in school compared to 29 percent of the total college age population. About 40 percent of persons of Spanish origin compared to 17 percent of the total population 18 to 24 years old were high school dropouts; that is, they were not enrolled in school and had not graduated from high school in October 1972.

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Enrollment statistics shown in this report refer to the civilian noninstitutional population reported as enrolled in regular public and private schools and colleges by the middle of October, when the Current Population Survey was conducted. The statistics include both full-time and part-time students and persons who were working in addition to attending school. Children enrolled in "Head Start" programs or similar programs sponsored by local agencies to provide preschool education to young children are counted as enrolled in nursery school or kindergarten as appropriate. These figures may differ from figures on school enrollment reported by other sources, largely because (1) the Bureau of the Census collects data by household interviews, whereas information from other sources is generally based on reports from school systems and institutions of higher learning; and (2) there are often differences in definitions and time references. Also, enrollment as of October, will usually be lower than enrollment for the whole school year because the latter provides a cumulative count of persons who enter school at different times throughout the year.

Since the figures presented in this report are based on sample data, they may differ from the figures that would have been obtained from a complete census. The sampling variation may be relatively large where the numbers shown are small. A more complete statement on the variability due to sampling, as well as more detailed information about the fall enrollment figures, will be issued in a later report in this series.