

# Washington Equity Report Snapshot

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October 2020

## The Story of Washington Postsecondary Education

Washington is working to increase educational attainment so that 70 percent of adults ages 25 to 44 have a postsecondary credential.

Ongoing inequities have limited the educational attainment of some groups in the state. Racial minorities and people with lower incomes tend to have lower educational attainment and are further from the state attainment goal. Equity gaps in educational attainment are the product of many disparities in student outcomes by gender, race, and income along the educational pipeline. A detailed examination of equity gaps in education in Washington State can be found in the full Equity Landscape Report by Kwakye, Kibort-Crocker, and Pasion (2020).

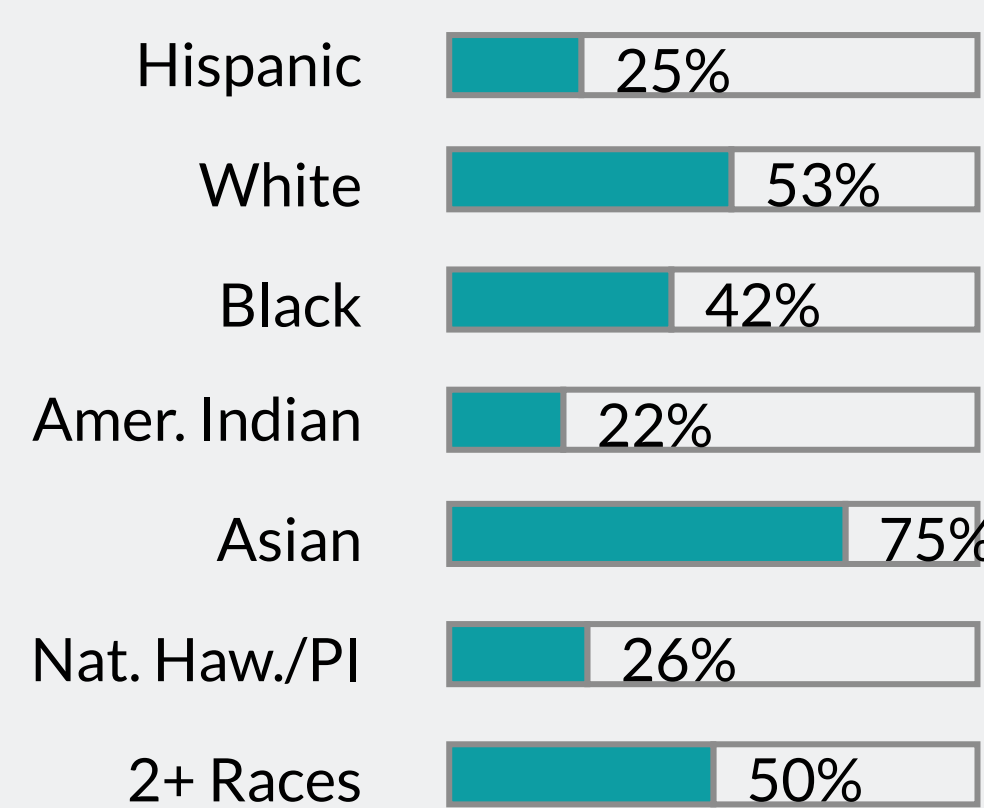
70%

Statewide  
postsecondary  
attainment goal

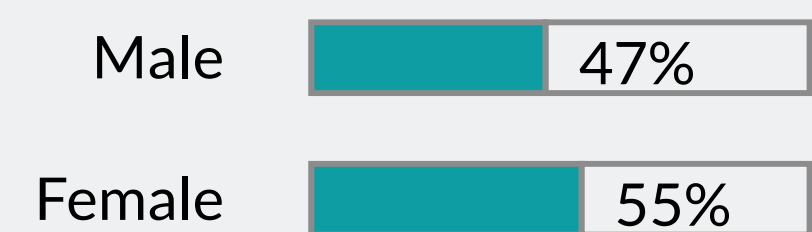
62%

Current statewide  
attainment level

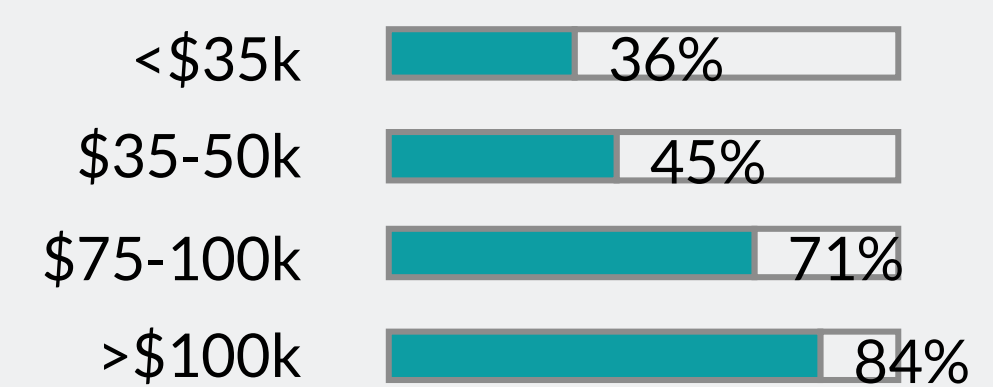
### Attainment by race



### Gender



### Income



Even before college, students have different rates of participation and success in activities that lead to postsecondary access. Males, students of color, and low-income students are all less likely to participate in dual credit courses that may help prepare them for postsecondary programs. They also tend to have lower high school graduation rates.

Disparities in high school educational outcomes lead to equity gaps in postsecondary enrollment for some students. Female students outnumber male students at both 2-year and 4-year public institutions. Students of color are less likely to enroll immediately following high school. And non-low income students far outnumber low-income students at public institutions. Not only are some groups underrepresented at our public institutions, they also tend to experience lower rates of early success. They are less likely to persist beyond their first year, leading to a lower likelihood of graduating and obtaining postsecondary credentials.

Furthermore, labor market outcomes vary for different groups in Washington. Those with lower educational attainment tend to have higher rates of unemployment and lower incomes. Additionally, people of color are more likely to have higher unemployment rates, and there is a large income gap between genders. Addressing equity gaps in education can help diminish barriers and improve outcomes for Washington residents so they will have the opportunity to lead productive and financially rewarding lives and contribute to the economic success and social wellbeing of our state.

*The full Equity Landscape Report is on Washington Student Achievement Council's website.*



# Assessing Equity in Postsecondary Access

Improving educational attainment begins well before college. Beyond academic preparation, activities that create a college-going culture can encourage postsecondary enrollment after high school. Understanding the experiences and behaviors of high school students can help identify barriers to college access that lead to inequitable postsecondary outcomes.



Students of color and low-income students are less likely to take **dual credit** courses than their classmates. For example, American Indian (4%), Hispanic (5%), and Black (7%) students are less likely to take Running Start courses than their White peers (10%).



American Indian (40%), Native Hawaiian (45%), and Hispanic students (46%) have lower **FAFSA completion** rates than their white peers (51%).

Low-income students, who are more likely to need financial assistance, are not completing FAFSA at equal rates to their non-low income counterparts.



There are inequities in **high school graduation rates**.

- Students of color graduate at lower rates.
- Males are less likely to graduate than females.
- There is an **18 percentage point gap** in graduation rates between low-income (72%) and non-low income students (90%).



The **FAFSA error rate** for low-income students is also more than double the rate of their non-low income peers.

FAFSA completion rate

**48%**

Low-income students

**55%**

Non-low income students

FAFSA error rate

**3.4%**

Low-income students

**1.3%**

Non-low income students

High school graduation rates

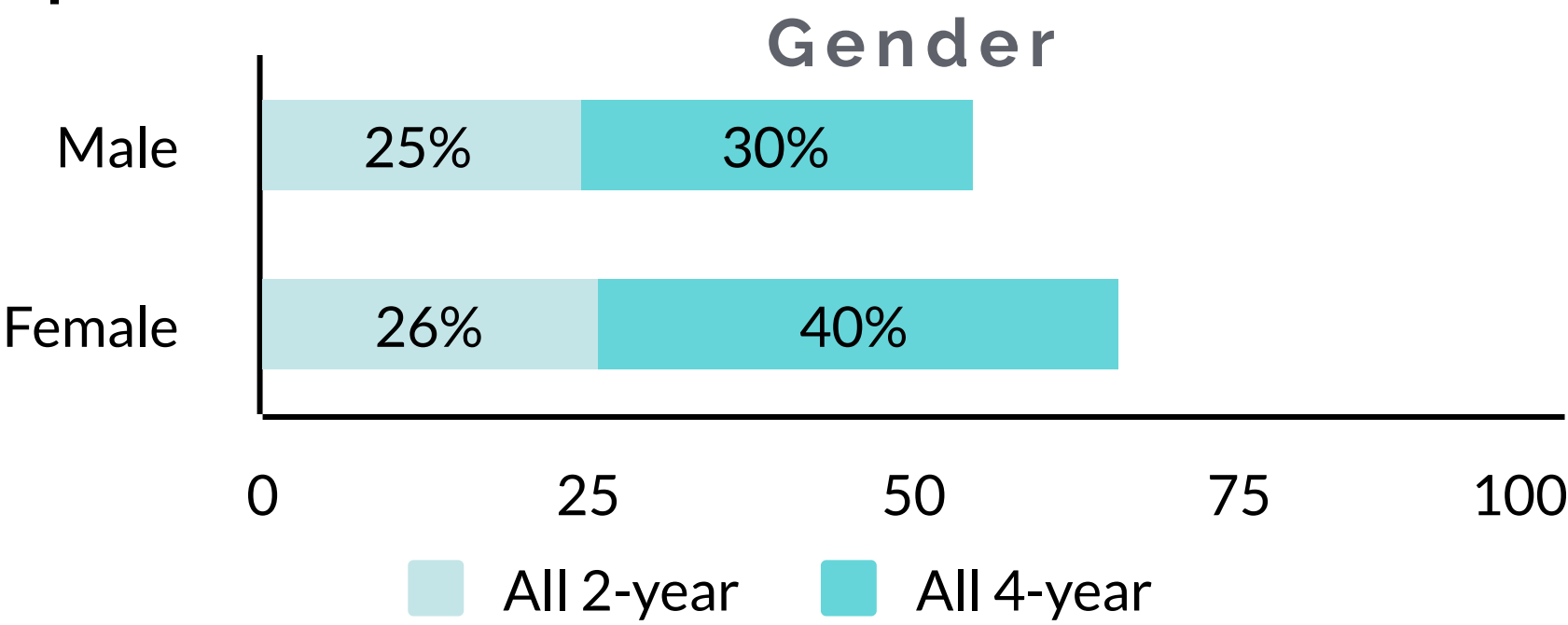


# Assessing Equity in Postsecondary Enrollment

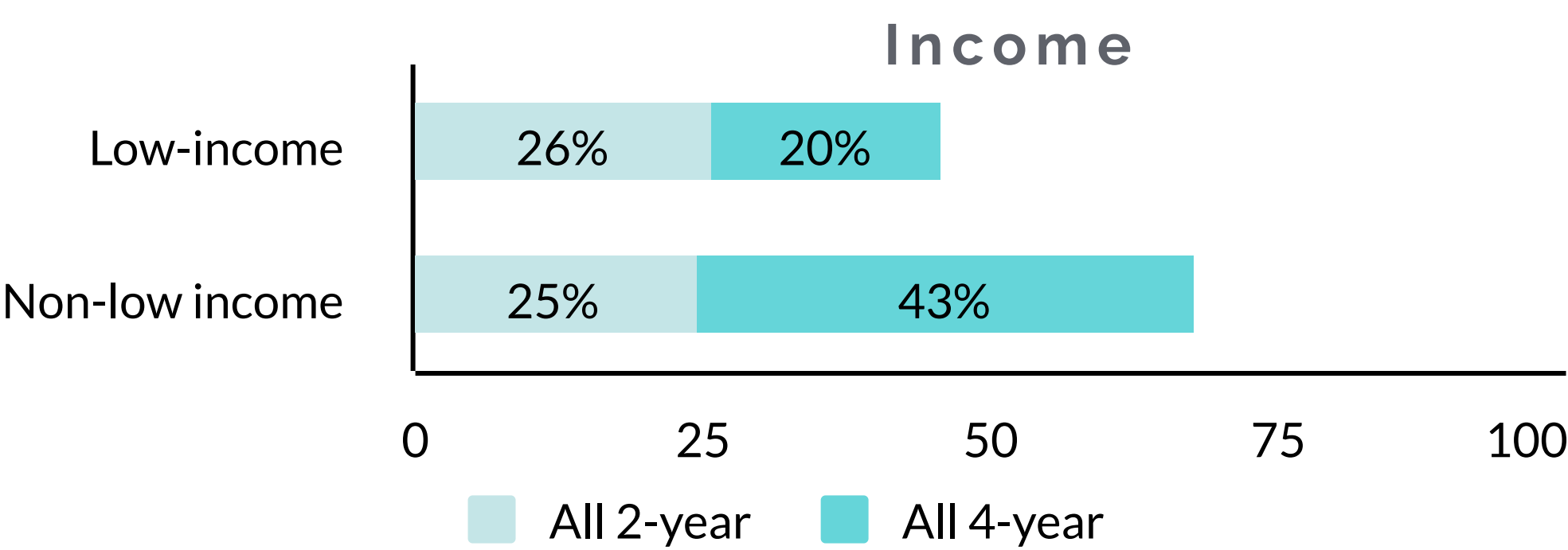
Overall postsecondary enrollment has increased over time, and historically underrepresented groups have made considerable gains in participation in postsecondary programs. But there are still equity gaps in enrollment that have endured. Addressing enrollment barriers for underrepresented student groups can increase their participation in postsecondary programs while also making progress towards Washington’s attainment goal.



66 percent of female students **enroll in college within one year** of high school graduation, compared to 55 percent of male students.



Low-income students are half as likely to enroll in 4-year institutions within one year as their non-low income classmates

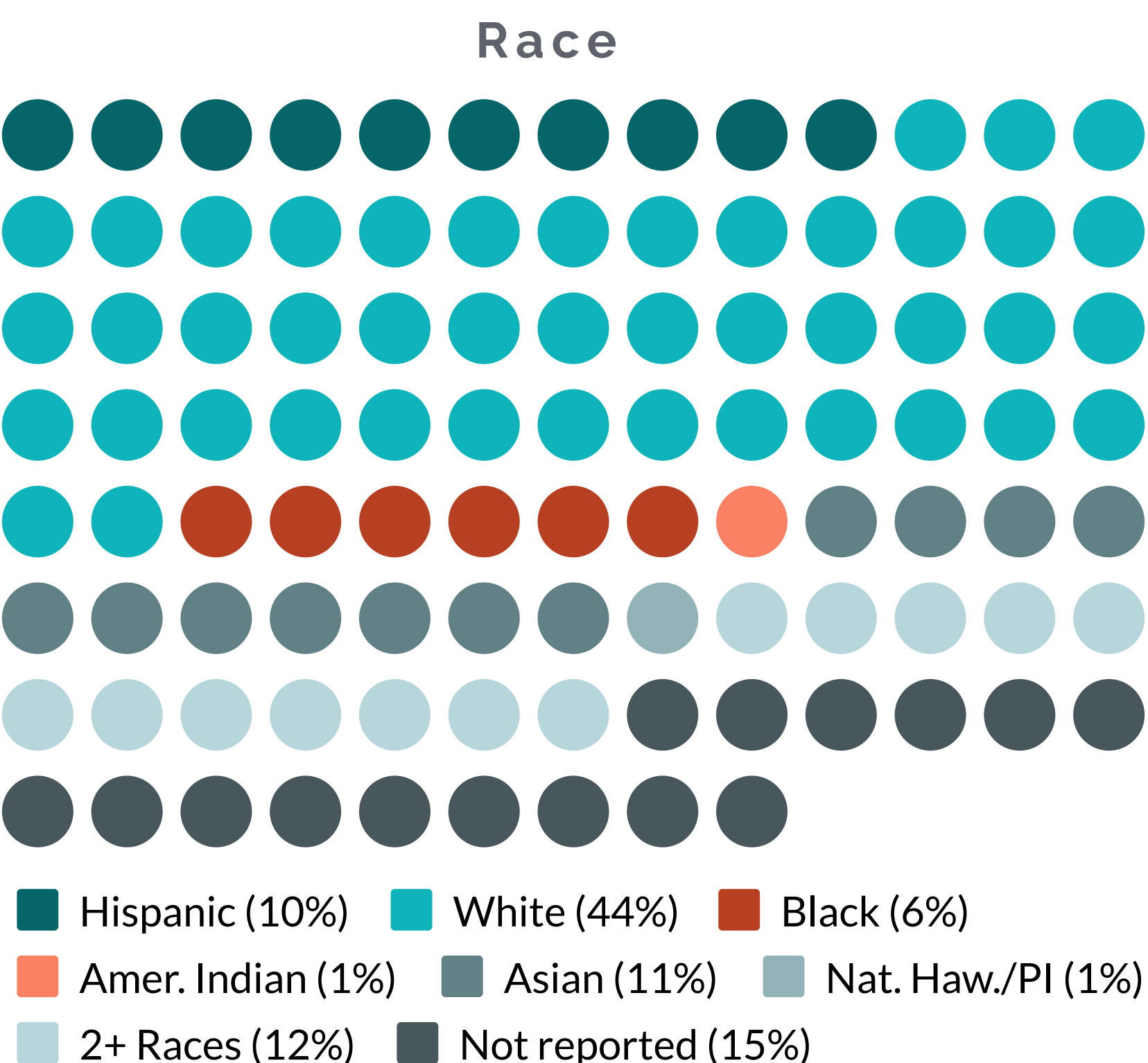
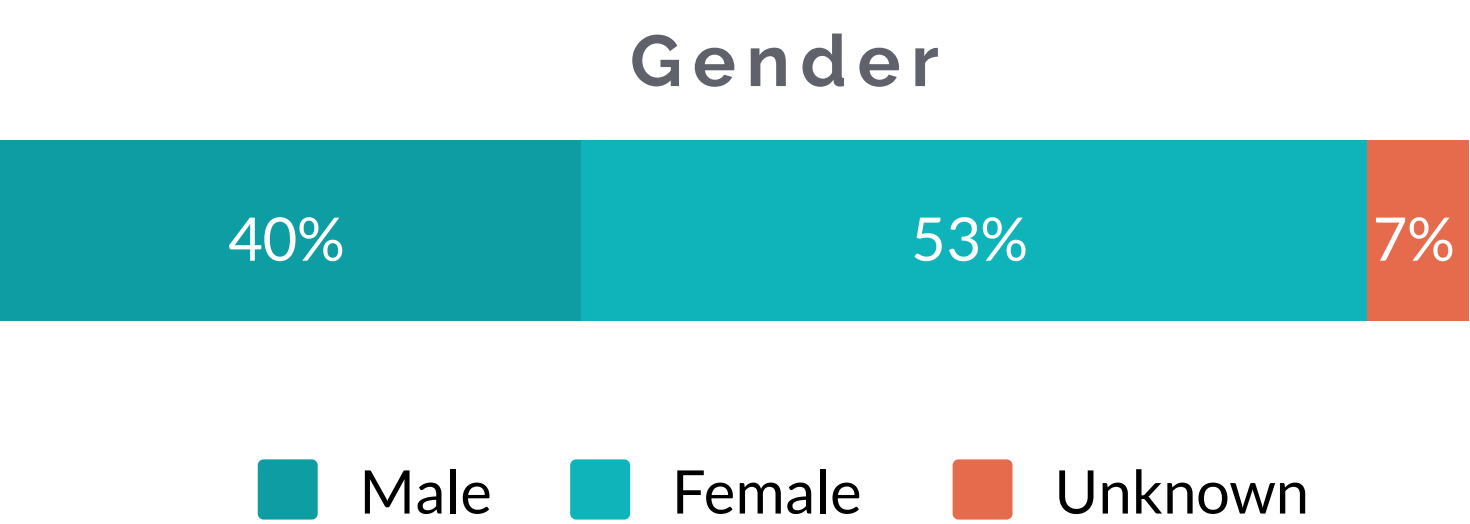


There is a major difference in the rate of immediate enrollment in postsecondary programs by racial group—ranging from 37 percent for Native Hawaiian students to 82 percent for Asian students.



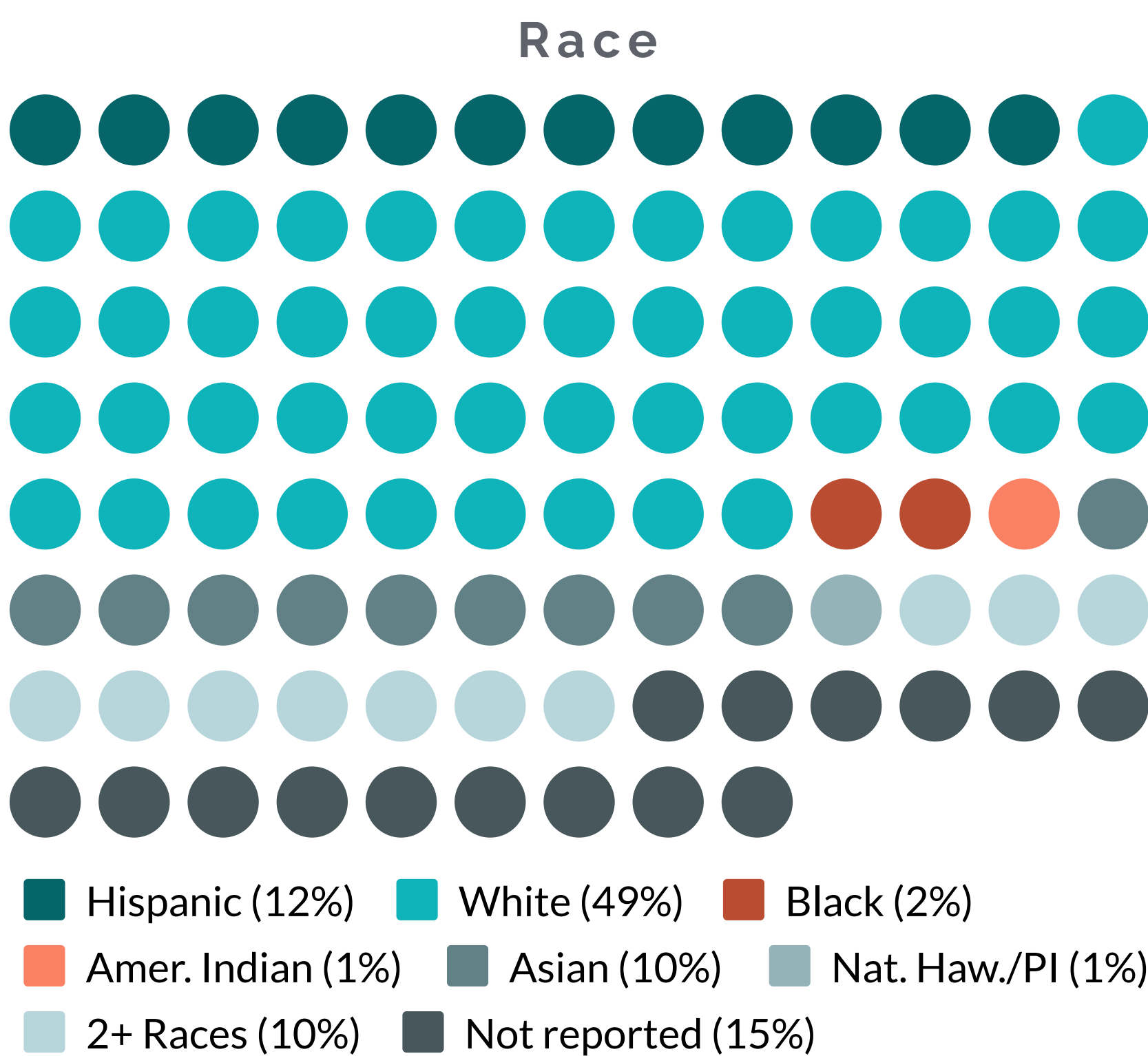
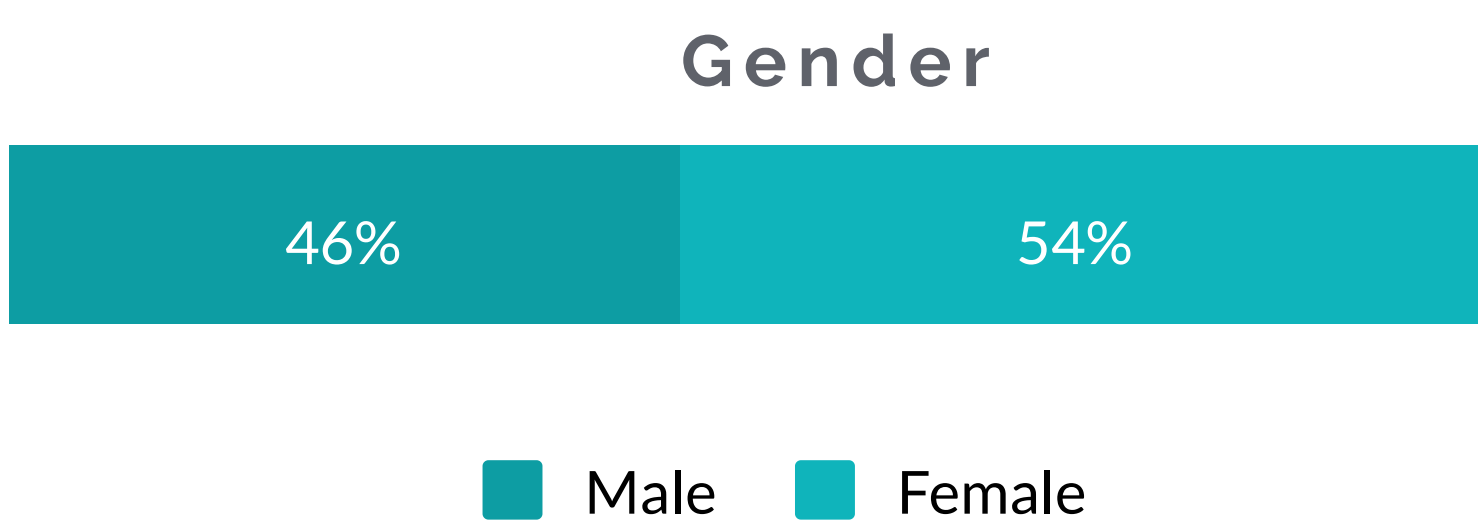
## Who is enrolled in public 2-year institutions?

Fall 2019 headcount



## Who is enrolled in public 4-year institutions?

Fall 2019 headcount





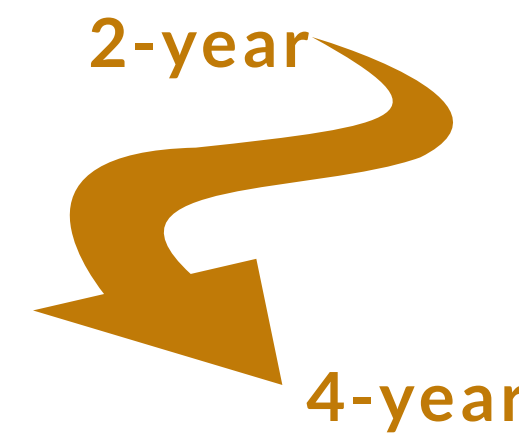
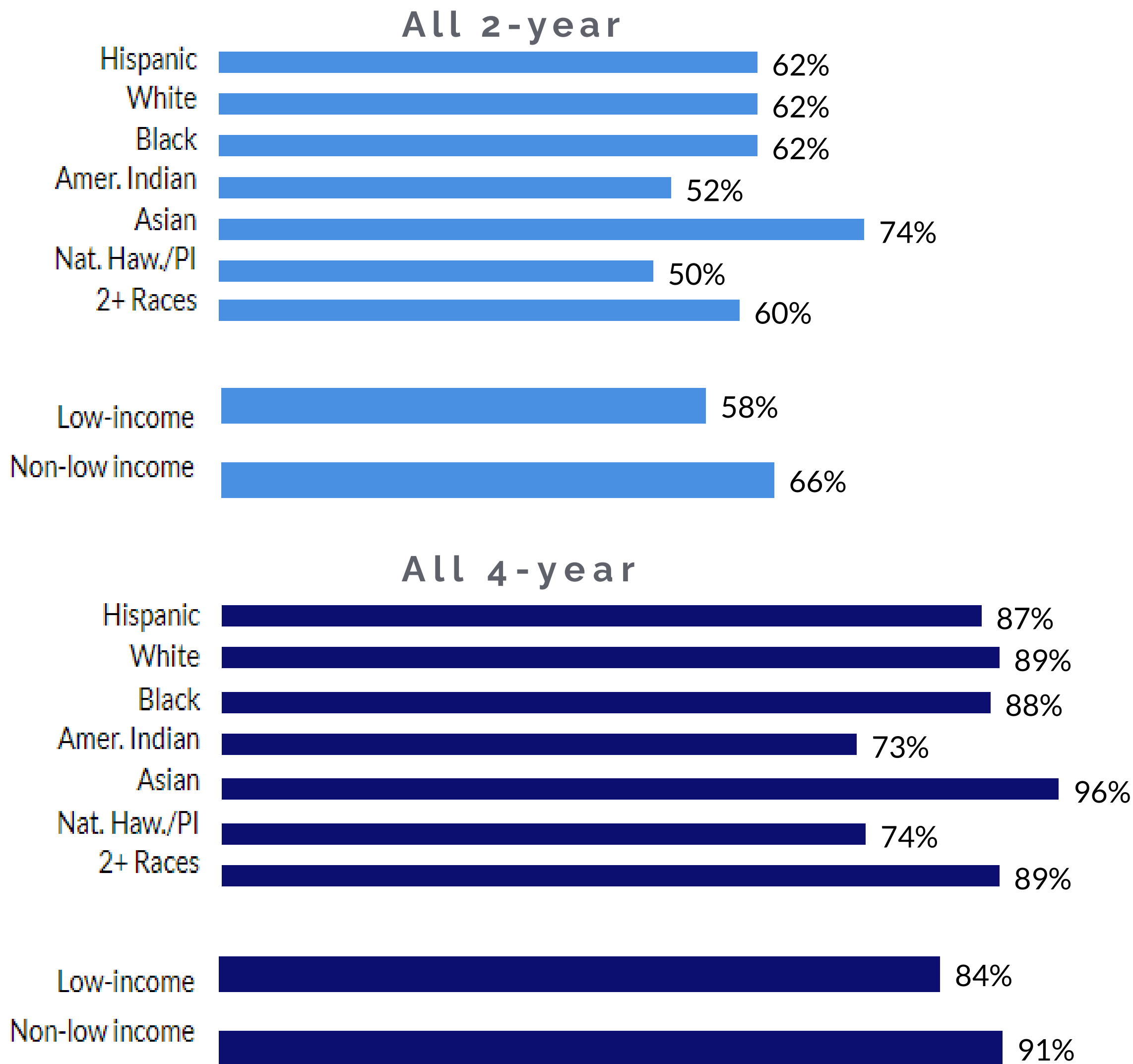
## Assessing Equity in Postsecondary Success

Beyond underrepresentation on college campuses in general, some groups fare worse in college, which leads to lower chances of postsecondary credential attainment. Students who do not complete a postsecondary credential do not fully benefit from the returns to higher education. Roughly 20 percent of adults ages 25 to 44 in Washington have some college experience but no degree. Improving early success indicators, like persistence and transfer rates, can lead to higher completion rates and closing equity gaps by gender, race, and income.



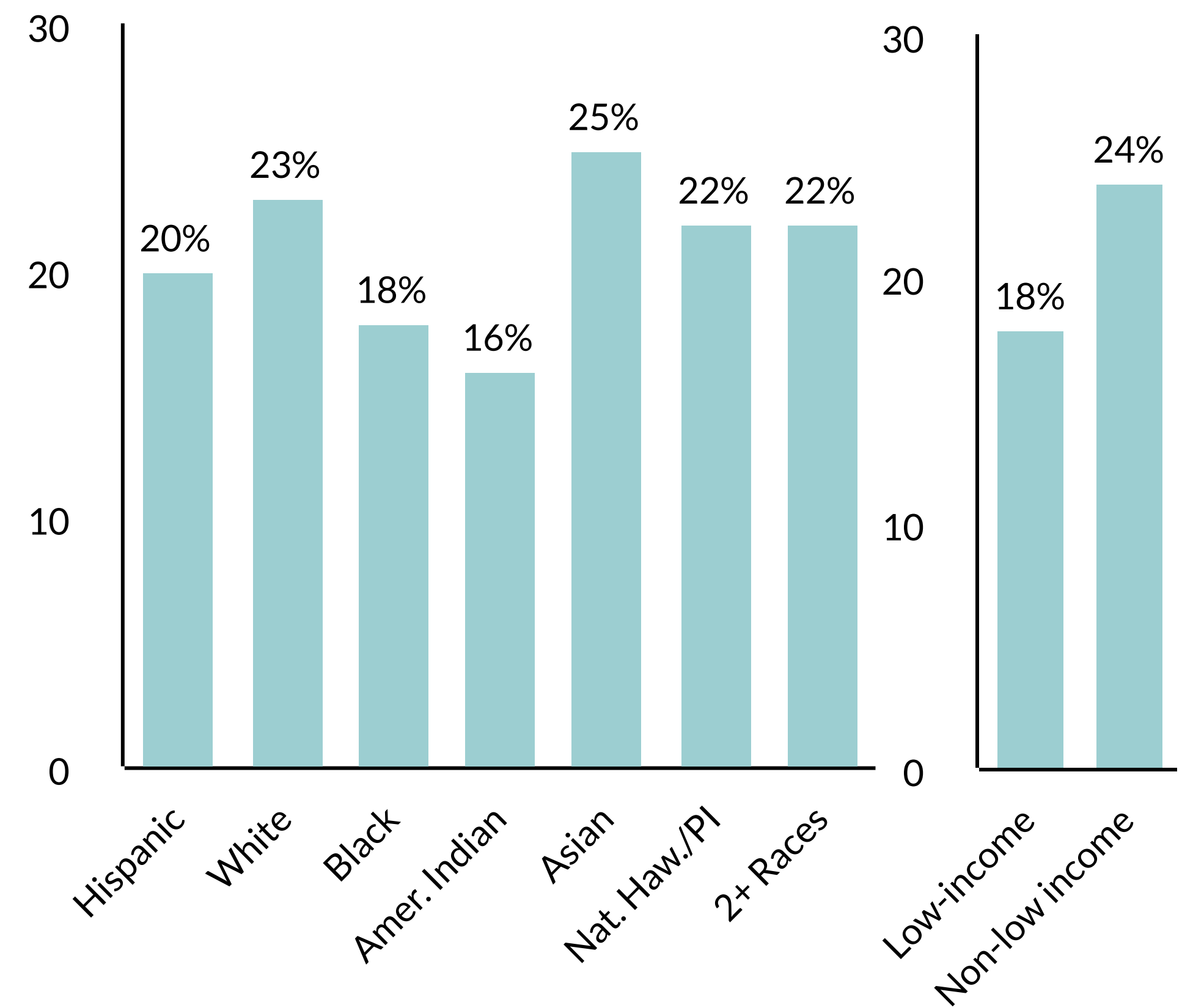
Students of color and low-income students are less likely to **persist** beyond their first year of college.

### Persistence rates



Students of color and low-income students are less likely to **transfer** from public 2-year to public 4-year institutions than their peers.

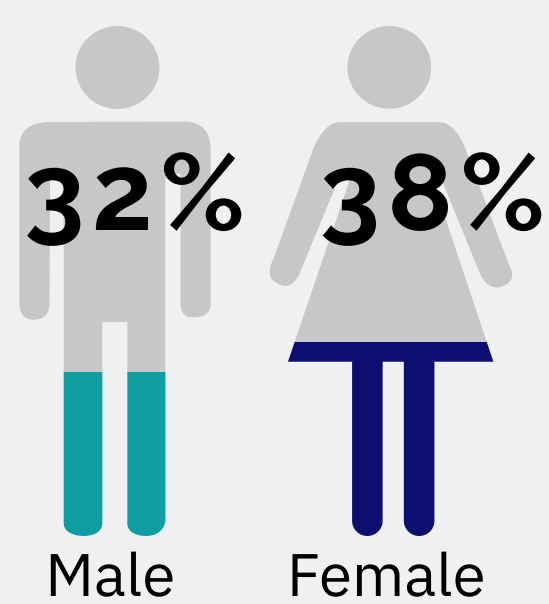
### Transfer rates



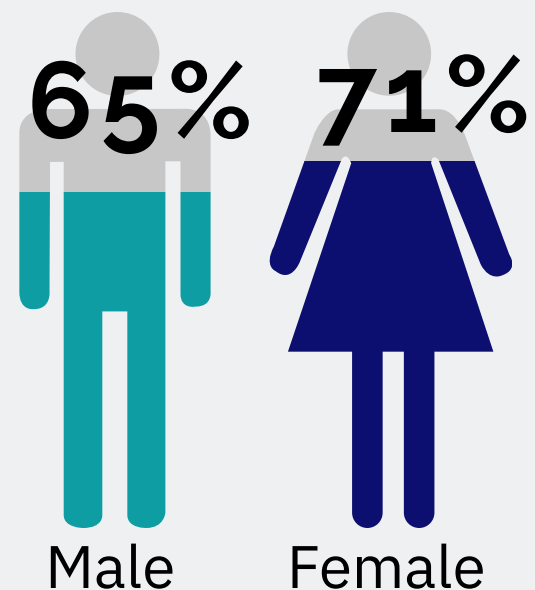
## Postsecondary graduation rates

within 3 years for 2-year, and within 6 years for 4-year institutions

### All 2-year

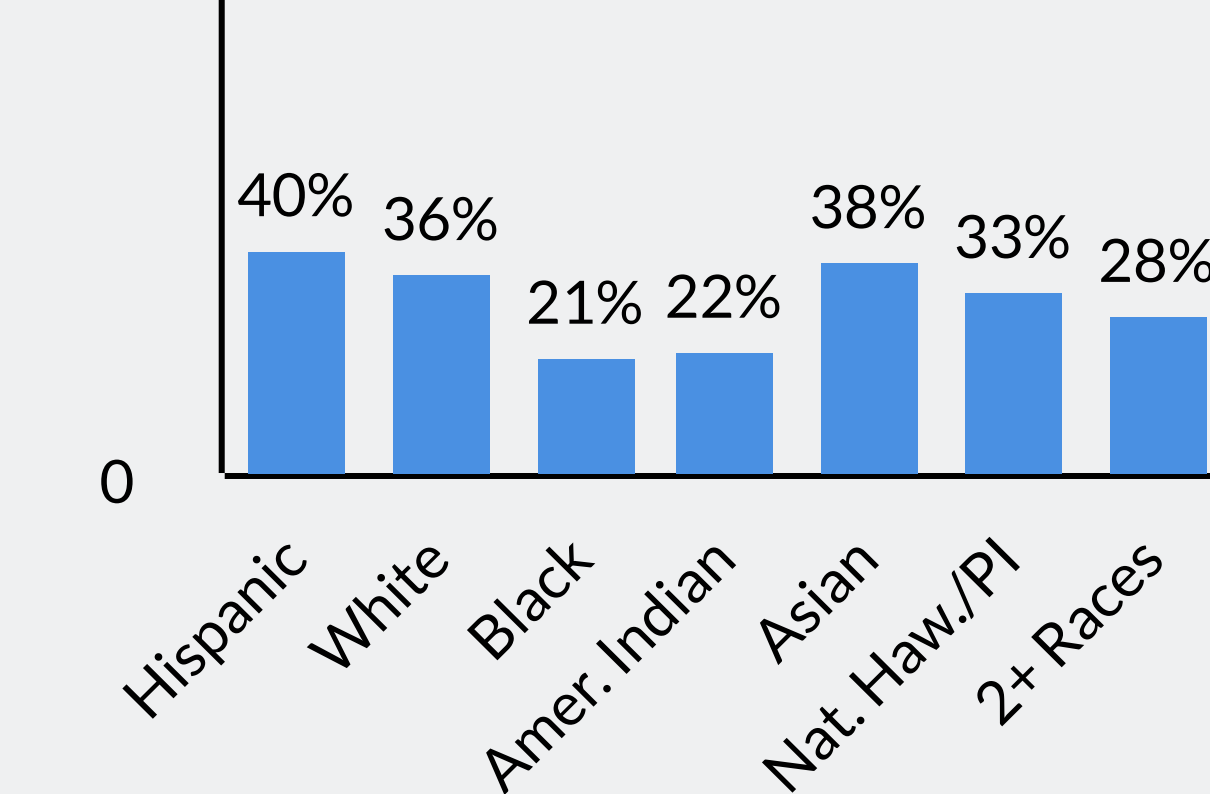


### All 4-year

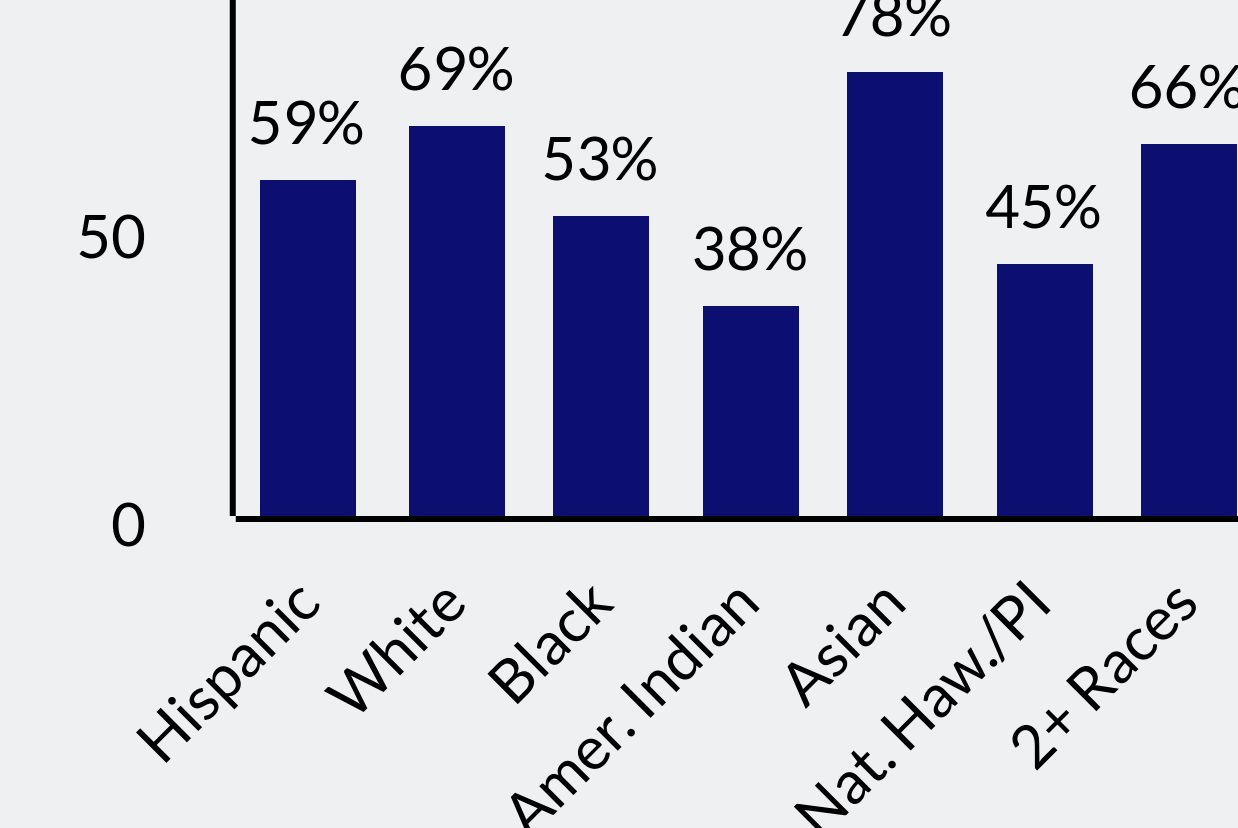


Males have lower graduation rates than females.

### All 2-year



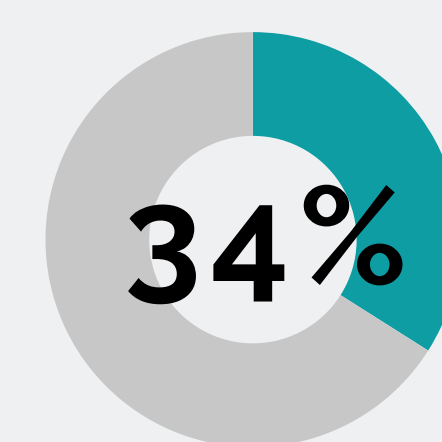
### All 4-year



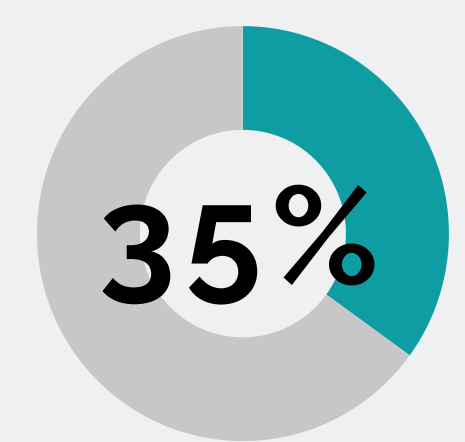
Students of color are less likely to graduate.

### All 2-year

Low-income students

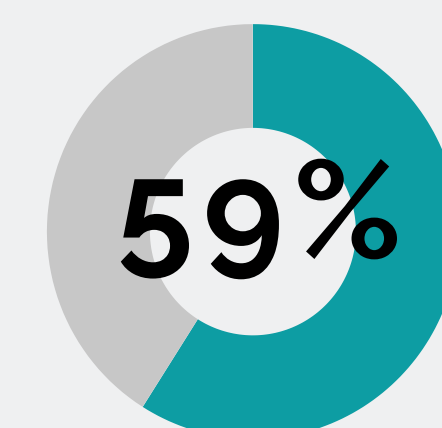


Non-low income students

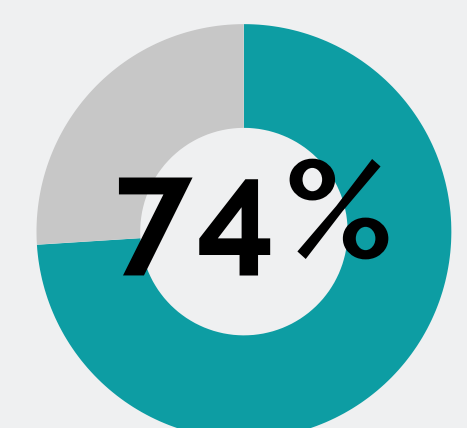


### All 4-year

Low-income students



Non-low income students



Low-income students graduate at lower rates than non-low income students.

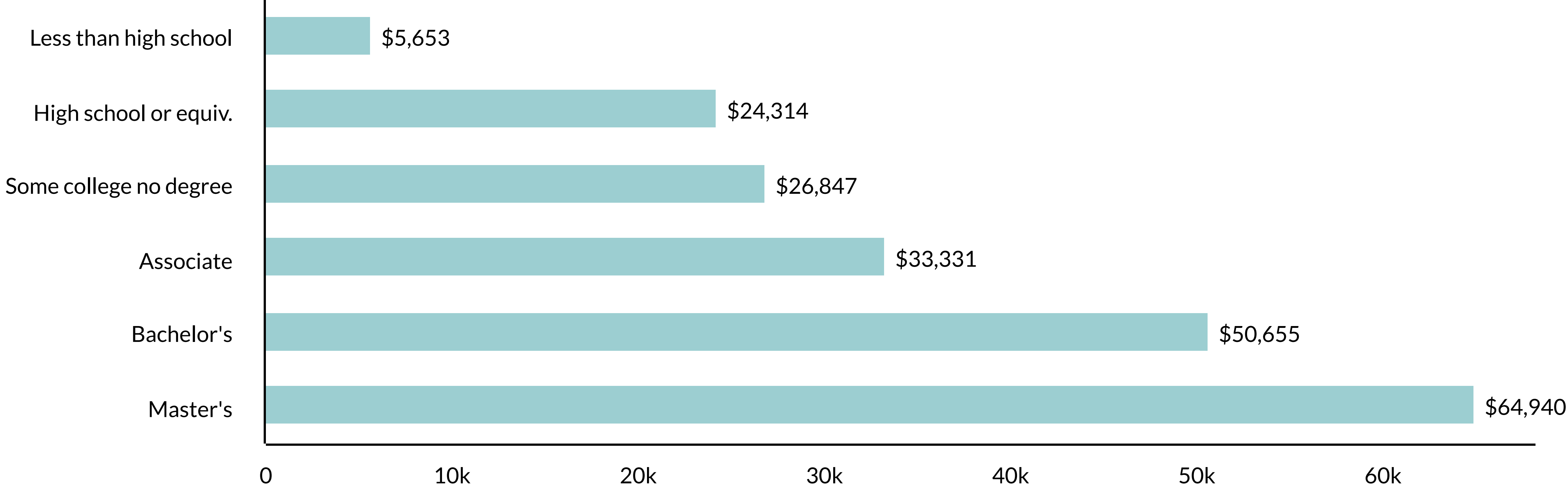
# Measuring Equity in Labor Market Outcomes

Disparities along the educational pipeline that result in equity gaps in educational attainment have profound consequences on people’s lives and livelihoods. A postsecondary credential is a valued asset in the labor market. Without it, employment can be less stable, and wages tend to be lower, leading to a poorer quality of life. Addressing the educational attainment gaps that manifest as disparities in unemployment and earnings can help make our state a more equitable place.



Higher education is correlated with **higher income**—those with higher educational attainment are more likely to be employed in high-paying jobs. Higher earnings allow individuals to live economically sustaining lives. Bachelor’s degree holders earn about \$1.5 million more than those with only a high school diploma over their lifetime.

Median income in Washington

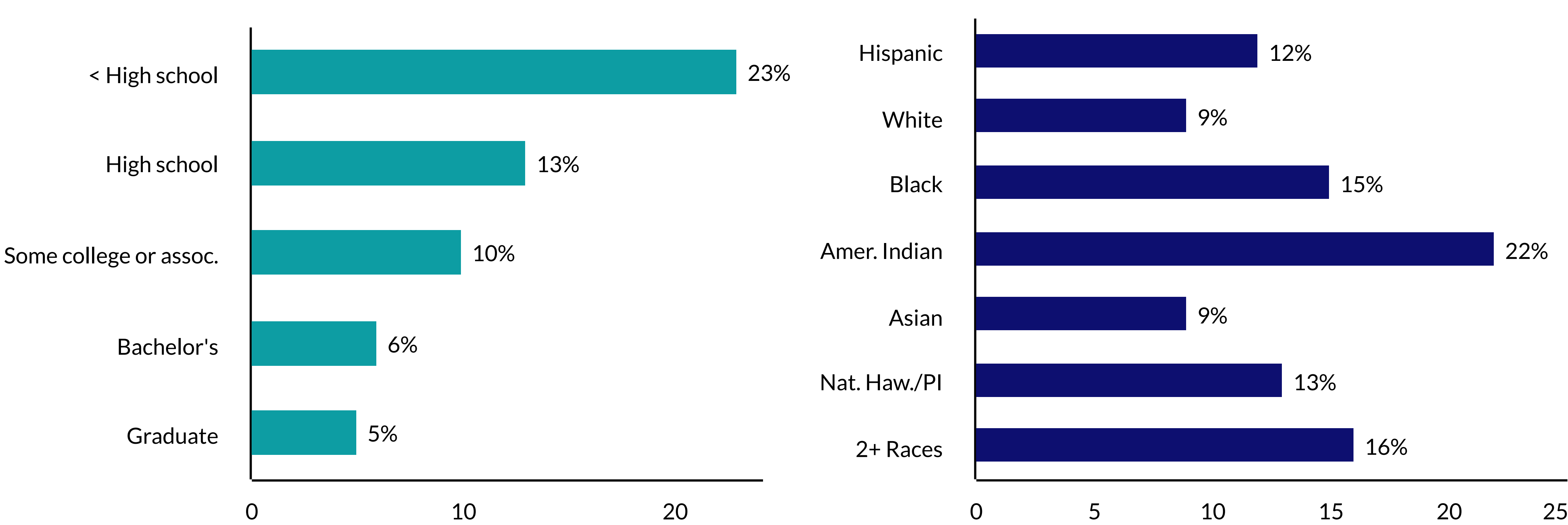


The **unemployment rate** is more than twice as high for those with only a high school diploma than those with a bachelor’s degree, and more than three times as high for those with less than a high school education.

Unemployment rates vary widely for different racial groups in Washington. American Indian people have the highest rate (22%). The unemployment rate is more than six percentage points higher for Black people than White people in the state.

Despite inflated unemployment due to the current COVID-19 crisis, the patterns mirror historical ones and trends seen nationally. Higher levels of educational attainment tend to open up employment opportunities and offer additional protection from job loss during economic downturn.

Washington unemployment rate (July 2020)





# Closing Equity Gaps in Washington

There are no quick fixes to address equity gaps in postsecondary education. However, there are some promising strategies to improve educational outcomes for students who have been historically underrepresented in higher education, including racial minorities and low-income students. Innovative and intentional strategies to address equity gaps in education will improve outcomes for students in Washington and help the state meet its educational attainment goal.

## Evidence from Research to Help Address Equity Gaps in Postsecondary Education

- Providing students with financial aid, especially in the form of grants, has been shown to boost college enrollment, persistence, and completion for low-income students and students of color.
- Holistic, cohort-based learning that includes intensive mentoring, financial aid, faculty support, and professional development has been shown to increase postsecondary retention, grade point average, and matriculation into advanced degree programs for students of color.
- Combining student supports like advising and academic coaching with scholarships has also been shown to have a positive impact on low-income students' success rates in college.
- Hiring more effective high school counselors to help students transition to postsecondary programs has been shown to increase enrollment and persistence, especially among low-income students.
- Increasing high school teacher and school counselor diversity that reflects students' identities has been shown to be improve postsecondary enrollment rates for students of color.

