

Issue Tables

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Choosing a Postsecondary Institution: Considerations Reported by Students

Introduction

In the United States, aspiring postsecondary students have more than 6,000 postsecondary institutions from which to choose (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] 2009). This set of issue tables draws on 2003–04 data from the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:04/06) to highlight what students report as considerations in choosing a postsecondary institution and the reasons they give for enrolling where they do.

These tables present the characteristics of high school graduates attending public 2-year, public 4-year, and private not-for-profit 4-year colleges. For each type of institution, the tables include students' demographic characteristics, factors they considered before selecting an institution, and reasons they reported for choosing the institution in which they enrolled. Results are analyzed separately for students who were recent high school graduates and those who were not recent high school graduates.¹

The tables are presented as follows:

Table 1 shows the percentage distribution of students who were and were not recent high school graduates by type of institution.

Tables 2 and 3 present results for beginning postsecondary students who were recent high school graduates (i.e., graduating in 2003 or 2004). Table 2 displays students' demographic characteristics (gender, race/ethnicity, dependency status, parents' education, and

¹ To be 2003–04 beginning postsecondary students, students had to have entered postsecondary education for the first time some time between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004. For purposes of this study, 2003–04 beginning postsecondary students are considered “recent high school graduates” if they graduated from high school in 2003 or 2004 and “not recent high school graduates” if they graduated before 2003.

family income level). Table 3 shows the factors reported by students as influencing their enrollment decisions.

Tables 4 and 5 present results for beginning postsecondary students who were not recent high school graduates (i.e., graduating before 2003). Table 4 displays students' demographic characteristics. Table 5 shows the factors influencing enrollment decisions.

Data

The tables are based on data from the 2003–04 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:04/06). This survey examines students who first entered postsecondary education between July 1, 2003, and June 30, 2004, and tracks them through their postsecondary education and into the labor force. BPS:04/06 students were first interviewed when they first enrolled in postsecondary education in 2003–04; they were subsequently interviewed in 2006, and will be interviewed again in 2009. For further information on BPS:04/06 please visit <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/bps/>.

References

U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. Table P27. *Number of Title IV postsecondary institutions that offered career education programs by credential levels awarded and state: United States, 2006*. From Career/Technical Education (CTE) Statistics. Retrieved May 5, 2009, from <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ctes/tables/P27.asp>.

National Center for Education Statistics

Table 1. Percentage distribution of 2003–04 beginning postsecondary students who were recent high school graduates (graduated in 2003 or 2004) and not recent high school graduates (graduated prior to 2003), by type of institution: 2004–06

Date of high school graduation	Public 2-year		Public 4-year ¹		Private not-for-profit 4-year ²	
	Pct.	95% CI	Pct.	95% CI	Pct.	95% CI
Total	100.0	[†]	100.0	[†]	100.0	[†]
Recent graduates (graduated in 2003 or 2004)	52.5	[49.7–55.2]	88.0	[86.1–89.8]	85.9	[83.2–88.5]
Not recent graduates (graduated prior to 2003)	47.5	[44.8–50.3]	12.0	[10.2–13.9]	14.1	[11.5–16.8]

† Not applicable.

¹ Public 4-year institutions include both public 4-year nondoctorate-granting and public 4-year doctorate-granting institutions.

² Private not-for-profit 4-year institutions include both private not-for-profit 4-year nondoctorate-granting and private not-for-profit 4-year doctorate-granting institutions.

NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. See the Technical Notes for the definition of 95% CI (confidence interval). This table shows, for example, that 52.5 percent of beginning postsecondary students attending public 2-year institutions in 2003–04 were recent high school graduates.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2004/06 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:04/06).

National Center for Education Statistics

Table 2. Percentage distribution of 2003–04 beginning postsecondary students who were recent high school graduates, by type of institution and student characteristics: 2004–06

Characteristic	Public 2-year		Public 4-year ¹		Private not-for-profit 4-year ²	
	Pct.	95% CI	Pct.	95% CI	Pct.	95% CI
Total	100.0	[†]	100.0	[†]	100.0	[†]
Gender						
Male	47.5	[44.9–50.1]	43.9	[41.8–45.9]	42.2	[39.5–44.9]
Female	52.5	[49.9–55.1]	56.1	[54.1–58.2]	57.8	[55.1–60.5]
Race/ethnicity ³						
White	63.4	[59.3–67.5]	70.1	[67.6–72.6]	73.2	[69.7–76.8]
Black	12.2	[9.8–14.7]	8.4	[6.0–10.8]	8.7	[6.1–11.3]
Hispanic	14.5	[12.2–16.8]	9.7	[8.6–10.9]	8.9	[6.6–11.2]
Asian	4.9	[3.6–6.2]	6.4	[5.5–7.2]	5.2	[4.4–6.1]
Other	4.9	[4.0–5.9]	5.4	[4.4–6.4]	3.9	[3.1–4.8]
Dependency status ⁴						
Dependent	93.2	[91.8–94.6]	97.9	[97.4–98.5]	98.6	[98.0–99.2]
Independent	6.8	[5.4–8.2]	2.1	[1.5–2.6]	1.4	[0.8–2.0]
Parents' education						
High school or less	32.8	[30.3–35.3]	19.3	[17.8–20.8]	14.7	[12.9–16.6]
Some postsecondary education	31.0	[28.6–33.3]	22.3	[20.8–23.8]	20.2	[18.3–22.1]
Bachelor's degree	20.0	[17.9–22.1]	29.6	[27.9–31.4]	28.5	[26.5–30.6]
Graduate degree or higher	13.8	[12.1–15.5]	27.5	[26.0–29.1]	36.0	[33.6–38.4]
Do not know parents' education level	2.5	[1.7–3.3]	1.3	[0.8–1.7]	0.6	[0.2–0.9]
Income level ⁵						
Lowest	24.4	[22.5–26.3]	17.9	[16.8–19.0]	17.1	[15.6–18.6]
Low middle	28.8	[26.1–31.4]	22.9	[21.6–24.3]	23.1	[21.0–25.2]
High middle	28.7	[26.3–31.1]	29.4	[27.9–30.9]	24.7	[22.7–26.6]
Highest	18.2	[16.0–20.3]	29.8	[28.1–31.5]	35.2	[33.1–37.3]

† Not applicable.

¹ Public 4-year institutions include both public 4-year nondoctorate-granting and public 4-year doctorate-granting institutions.

² Private not-for-profit 4-year institutions include both private not-for-profit 4-year nondoctorate-granting and private not-for-profit 4-year doctorate-granting institutions.

³ Black includes African American, Hispanic includes Latino, Asian includes Pacific Islander, and Other includes American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, or two or more races.

⁴ Independent students are age 24 or over and students under age 24 who are married, have dependents, are veterans, are orphans or wards of the court, or were determined to be independent by a financial aid officer using professional judgment. Other undergraduates under age 24 are considered to be dependent.

⁵ See Glossary for full definition.

NOTE: For purposes of this study, 2003–04 beginning postsecondary students are considered “recent high school graduates” if they graduated from high school in 2003 or 2004 and are considered “not recent high school graduates” if they graduated from high school prior to 2003. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. See the Technical Notes for the definition of 95% CI (confidence interval). This table shows, for example, that 47.5 percent of beginning postsecondary students in 2003–04 who were recent high school graduates who attended public 2-year institutions were male.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2004/06 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:04/06).

National Center for Education Statistics

Table 3. Percentage of 2003–04 beginning postsecondary students who were recent high school graduates, by type of institution and enrollment choice factors: 2004–06

Enrollment choice factors	Public 2-year		Public 4-year ¹		Private not-for-profit 4-year ²	
	Pct.	95% CI	Pct.	95% CI	Pct.	95% CI
Before selecting a college						
Considered campus safety	30.5	[27.3–33.8]	56.2	[54.0–58.3]	65.6	[63.2–67.9]
Considered graduation rate of enrolled students	26.1	[22.9–29.2]	48.9	[46.6–51.1]	62.5	[60.2–64.7]
Consulted published list of college rankings	19.1	[17.1–21.1]	41.3	[39.2–43.3]	55.7	[52.7–58.6]
Reasons for enrolling in institution ³						
Affordable/financial	72.7	[70.4–75.0]	66.4	[64.7–68.1]	34.5	[32.0–37.1]
Personal/family reasons	39.3	[37.3–41.4]	45.5	[43.8–47.2]	43.0	[40.8–45.2]
Location	83.1	[81.1–85.1]	78.8	[77.3–80.3]	73.9	[71.7–76.1]
Reputation	34.6	[32.3–36.9]	58.5	[56.3–60.7]	76.6	[74.2–79.0]
Program/coursework	38.0	[35.2–40.8]	57.2	[55.3–59.1]	67.0	[64.9–69.2]
Other reasons	12.3	[10.6–14.1]	16.4	[15.1–17.7]	28.2	[26.1–30.2]
Not enrolled in first-choice institution	25.6	[23.8–27.3]	28.9	[27.1–30.7]	29.5	[27.2–31.7]
Reasons for not enrolling in first-choice institution						
Not admitted to first choice	33.7	[29.6–37.8]	45.3	[41.6–49.0]	52.2	[47.5–56.8]
Admitted, reasons for not attending first choice ⁴						
Not enough aid	33.8	[28.7–38.8]	44.5	[40.0–49.0]	48.5	[42.5–54.5]
Too expensive	50.6	[45.6–55.6]	58.1	[53.9–62.3]	49.8	[43.4–56.1]
Location	36.5	[31.6–41.4]	36.5	[32.3–40.6]	28.6	[23.2–34.1]
Personal/family reasons	42.0	[36.3–47.7]	38.2	[33.2–43.3]	36.1	[30.1–42.1]
Other reasons	28.3	[23.6–33.1]	21.9	[18.4–25.4]	27.0	[22.7–31.4]

¹ Public 4-year institutions include both public 4-year nondoctorate-granting and public 4-year doctorate-granting institutions.

² Private not-for-profit 4-year institutions include both private not-for-profit 4-year nondoctorate-granting and private not-for-profit 4-year doctorate-granting institutions.

³ Multiple reasons could be given.

⁴ Among those who were admitted to their first-choice institution, reasons selected for not attending. Multiple reasons could be given.

NOTE: For purposes of this study, 2003–04 beginning postsecondary students are considered “recent high school graduates” if they graduated from high school in 2003 or 2004 and are considered “not recent high school graduates” if they graduated from high school prior to 2003. See the Technical Notes for the definition of 95% CI (confidence interval). This table shows, for example, that 30.5 percent of beginning postsecondary students in 2003–04 who were recent high school graduates who attended public 2-year institutions considered campus safety before selecting a college.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2004/06 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:04/06).

National Center for Education Statistics

Table 4. Percentage distribution of 2003–04 beginning postsecondary students who were not recent high school graduates, by type of institution and student characteristics: 2004–06

Characteristic	Public 2-year		Public 4-year ¹		Private not-for-profit 4-year ²	
	Pct.	95% CI	Pct.	95% CI	Pct.	95% CI
Total	100.0	[†]	100.0	[†]	100.0	[†]
Gender						
Male	40.1	[37.6–42.5]	49.5	[43.3–55.6]	47.8	[40.8–54.8]
Female	59.9	[57.5–62.4]	50.5	[44.4–56.7]	52.2	[45.2–59.2]
Race/ethnicity ³						
White	59.6	[55.0–64.1]	65.6	[58.8–72.5]	51.1	[42.0–60.1]
Black	15.4	[12.7–18.1]	11.5	[6.0–16.9]	27.2	[16.4–38.0]
Hispanic	16.3	[13.5–19.1]	9.4	[5.8–13.1]	15.0	[7.9–22.2]
Asian	3.7	[2.6–4.7]	8.9	[5.0–12.8]	4.6	[1.9–7.3]
Other	5.1	[3.7–6.4]	4.6	[2.0–7.1]	2.1	[0.7–3.5]
Dependency status ⁴						
Dependent	31.7	[28.9–34.6]	53.3	[46.7–60.0]	43.6	[35.3–51.9]
Independent	68.3	[65.4–71.1]	46.7	[40.0–53.3]	56.4	[48.1–64.7]
Parents' education						
High school or less	47.6	[44.0–51.2]	35.7	[30.2–41.2]	38.0	[31.0–45.1]
Some postsecondary education	24.9	[22.1–27.7]	22.2	[18.0–26.5]	20.9	[14.4–27.5]
Bachelor's degree	14.6	[12.7–16.5]	22.6	[17.9–27.3]	19.9	[13.6–26.2]
Graduate degree or higher	9.1	[7.5–10.6]	16.1	[12.0–20.3]	16.2	[10.7–21.8]
Do not know parents' education level	3.8	[2.8–4.9]	3.3	[1.5–5.1]	4.9	[0.9–8.8]
Income level ⁵						
Lowest	34.0	[29.5–38.4]	25.9	[19.7–32.2]	32.9	[22.5–43.4]
Low middle	28.3	[24.3–32.2]	30.8	[23.5–38.1]	25.0	[15.8–34.3]
High middle	22.4	[18.4–26.3]	23.1	[17.1–29.1]	18.4	[10.7–26.1]
Highest	15.4	[12.6–18.2]	20.1	[14.3–25.9]	23.6	[12.8–34.4]

† Not applicable.

¹ Public 4-year institutions include both public 4-year nondoctorate-granting and public 4-year doctorate-granting institutions.

² Private not-for-profit 4-year institutions include both private not-for-profit 4-year nondoctorate-granting and private not-for-profit 4-year doctorate-granting institutions.

³ Black includes African American, Hispanic includes Latino, Asian includes Pacific Islander, and Other includes American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, or two or more races.

⁴ Independent students are age 24 or over and students under age 24 who are married, have dependents, are veterans, are orphans or wards of the court, or were determined to be independent by a financial aid officer using professional judgment. Other undergraduates under age 24 are considered to be dependent.

⁵ See Glossary for full definition.

NOTE: For purposes of this study, 2003–04 beginning postsecondary students are considered “recent high school graduates” if they graduated from high school in 2003 or 2004 and are considered “not recent high school graduates” if they graduated from high school prior to 2003. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding. See the Technical Notes for the definition of 95% CI (confidence interval). This table shows, for example, that 40.1 percent of beginning postsecondary students in 2003–04 who were not recent high school graduates who attended public 2-year institutions were male.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2004/06 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:04/06).

National Center for Education Statistics

Table 5. Percentage of 2003–04 beginning postsecondary students who were not recent high school graduates, by type of institution and enrollment choice factors: 2004–06

Enrollment choice factors	Public 2-year		Public 4-year ¹		Private not-for-profit 4-year ²	
	Pct.	95% CI	Pct.	95% CI	Pct.	95% CI
Before selecting a college						
Considered campus safety	23.0	[20.9–25.1]	32.8	[27.5–38.0]	32.3	[25.3–39.2]
Considered graduation rate of enrolled students	19.0	[16.9–21.1]	28.5	[23.1–33.8]	29.8	[22.5–37.1]
Consulted published list of college rankings	10.6	[8.6–12.6]	21.6	[16.8–26.5]	24.2	[16.9–31.4]
Reasons for enrolling in institution ³						
Affordable/financial	62.8	[59.9–65.6]	54.1	[48.2–60.0]	26.1	[19.6–32.7]
Personal/family reasons	31.9	[29.4–34.4]	41.9	[35.4–48.3]	32.2	[23.2–41.2]
Location	85.2	[83.3–87.2]	81.4	[76.1–86.7]	66.9	[57.9–75.8]
Reputation	33.0	[30.6–35.4]	44.2	[38.3–50.1]	51.7	[43.0–60.5]
Program/coursework	46.8	[43.6–50.1]	46.6	[41.1–52.2]	62.9	[56.5–69.4]
Other reasons	10.7	[9.2–12.3]	11.8	[8.2–15.3]	27.3	[20.2–34.4]
Not enrolled in first-choice institution	11.8	[10.1–13.5]	17.1	[12.6–21.5]	16.2	[10.4–22.0]
Reasons for not enrolling in first-choice institution						
Not admitted to first choice	30.0	[21.6–38.4]	30.0	[18.1–42.0]	43.9	[24.4–63.4]
Admitted, reasons for not attending first choice ⁴						
Not enough aid	25.7	[17.8–33.5]	27.9	[11.8–43.9]	15.1	[1.6–28.7]
Too expensive	40.2	[30.6–49.8]	47.3	[30.9–63.8]	32.5	[10.7–54.3]
Location	35.0	[26.5–43.4]	38.0	[19.5–56.5]	25.9	[1.5–50.3]
Personal/family reasons	47.9	[37.6–58.2]	50.7	[35.2–66.3]	23.7	[7.5–40.0]
Other reasons	25.9	[17.6–34.2]	15.2	[2.6–27.9]	38.2	[7.3–69.2]

¹ Public 4-year institutions include both public 4-year nondoctorate-granting and public 4-year doctorate-granting institutions.

² Private not-for-profit 4-year institutions include both private not-for-profit 4-year nondoctorate-granting and private not-for-profit 4-year doctorate-granting institutions.

³ Multiple reasons could be given.

⁴ Among those who were admitted to their first-choice institution, reasons selected for not attending. Multiple reasons could be given.

NOTE: For purposes of this study, 2003–04 beginning postsecondary students are considered “recent high school graduates” if they graduated from high school in 2003 or 2004 and are considered “not recent high school graduates” if they graduated from high school prior to 2003. See the Technical Notes for the definition of 95% CI (confidence interval). This table shows, for example, that 23.0 percent of beginning postsecondary students in 2003–04 who were not recent high school graduates who attended public 2-year institutions considered campus safety before selecting a college.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2004/06 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:04/06).

Glossary

This glossary includes descriptions of the variables used in the tables of this report, all of which are found in the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:04/06), generated by the Data Analysis System, available to the public online at <http://nces.ed.gov/das/>. The index below organizes the variables by category. The glossary items are listed in alphabetical order by variable name in the DAS (displayed in bold letters along the right-hand column).

Glossary Index

Student Characteristics

Dependency status	DEPEND
Gender	GENDER
Parents' education	PAREduc
Race/ethnicity	RACE
Income level	PCTALL
Date of high school graduation.....	HSGRADYY

Institutional Characteristics

Type of institution	SECTOR9
---------------------------	---------

Factors in Enrollment Choice

Reason(s) for not enrolling in first-choice institution: Not admitted	ACPTF04
Considered campus safety.....	CONSIDRA
Considered graduation rate or enrolled students	CONSIDRB
Consulted published list of college rankings.....	PUBLST04
Not enrolled in first-choice institution.....	NPFST04
Reasons for enrolling in institution: Program/coursework.....	RAD04A
Reasons for enrolling in institution: Reputation.....	RAD04B
Reasons for enrolling in institution: Affordable/financial	RAD04C
Reasons for enrolling in institution: Location	RAD04D
Reasons for enrolling in institution: Personal/family reasons.....	RAD04E
Reasons for enrolling in institution: Other reasons	RAD04X
Reason(s) for not attending first-choice institution: Too expensive	RNAD04B
Reason(s) for not attending first choice institution: Not enough aid	RNAD04C
Reason(s) for not attending first choice institution: Location	RNAD04D
Reason(s) for not attending first choice institution: Personal/family reasons.....	RNAD04E
Reason(s) for not attending first choice institution: Other reasons	RNAD04X

Glossary Entries

Reason(s) for not enrolling in first-choice institution: Not admitted ACPTF04

Students were not accepted by their first choice of schools. Includes only those who applied to more than one school. In the interview, students were asked “Were you accepted at your first choice of schools?” Answer: No.

Considered campus safety CONSIDRA

Students considered campus safety before choosing their institution. One of a series of variables indicating student-reported considerations. Specifically, students were asked in the interview: “Before choosing [your institution], did you get information about any of the following? (Please check all that apply.)” Answer: Campus safety.

Considered graduation rate or enrolled students CONSIDRB

Students considered schools’ graduation rates before choosing their institution. One of a series of variables indicating student-reported considerations. Specifically, students were asked in the interview: “Before choosing [your institution], did you get information about any of the following? (Please check all that apply.)” Answer: Graduation rate.

Dependency status DEPEND

Student’s dependency status during the 2003–04 academic year. For federal financial aid purposes, all students are considered to be dependent unless they meet one of the following criteria for independence: age 24 or older on December 31, 2003; a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces; enrolled in a graduate or professional program beyond a bachelor’s degree; married; orphan or ward of the court; have legal dependents other than a spouse. Students under 24 who do not meet any of these conditions but are receiving no parental support may be classified as independent by campus financial aid officers using their professional judgment. Categorized as follows:

Dependent
Independent

Gender GENDER

Male
Female

Date of high school graduation HSGRADYY

The year the student graduated from high school. The year indicates the actual year, not the academic year. In this report, students who graduated from high school in 2003 or later are considered recent graduates. If a student graduated before 2003, the student is not considered a recent high school graduate.

Recent high school graduate
Not a recent high school graduate

Not enrolled in first-choice institution NPFST04

The school that the student attended was not the student’s first choice. Specifically, students were asked in the interview, “Was [your institution] your first choice?” Answer: No.

Parent's education**PAREduc**

Indicates the highest level of education achieved by the student's mother or father. Categorized as follows:

- High school or less
- Some postsecondary education
- Bachelor's degree
- Graduate degree or higher
- Do not know parents' education level

Income level**PCTALL**

Indicates income percentiles for all students in 2002. Calculated separately for dependent (PCTDEP) and independent students (PCTINDEP) and then combined into this variable. Each ranking thus compares the student only to other students of the same dependency status. For dependent students, income earned by the parent(s) is used to calculate family income; for independent students, income earned by the student and/or spouse is used. Categorized as follows:

- Lowest: $1 < X \leq 25$
- Low middle: $25 < X \leq 50$
- High middle: $50 < X \leq 75$
- Highest: $75 < X \leq 100$

Consulted published list of college rankings**PUBLST04**

Students consulted a published list of college rankings before selecting a college to attend. Specifically, students were asked in the interview, "Before selecting a college, did you consult a published list of college rankings?" Answer: Yes.

Race/ethnicity**RACE**

Student's race/ethnicity with Hispanic or Latino origin as a separate category. Based on the census race categories. All of the race categories exclude Hispanic origin unless specified. Categorized as follows:

White	A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East.
Black	A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.
Hispanic	A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.
Asian	A person having origins in any of the peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent. This includes people from China, Japan, Korea, the Philippine Islands, India, and Vietnam.
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	A person having origins in the Pacific Islands, including Hawaii and Samoa.

Race/ethnicity—continued	RACE
American Indian/Alaska Native	A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.
More than one race/Other	A person having origins in more than one race or in a race not listed above.
Reasons for enrolling in institution: Program/coursework	RAD04A
Students reported that the program of study was a reason they decided to attend their institution. One of a series of variables indicating student-reported considerations. Specifically, students were asked in the interview: “Why did you decide to attend [your institution]? (Please check all that apply.)”	
Answer: Program of study	
Reasons for enrolling in institution: Reputation	RAD04B
Students reported that reputation of the school was a reason they decided to attend their institution. One of a series of variables indicating student-reported considerations. Specifically, students were asked in the interview: “Why did you decide to attend [your institution]? (Please check all that apply.)”	
Answer: Reputation (of program/faculty/school)	
Reasons for enrolling in institution: Affordable/financial	RAD04C
Students reported that cost was a reason they decided to attend their institution. One of a series of variables indicating student-reported considerations. Specifically, students were asked in the interview: “Why did you decide to attend [your institution]? (Please check all that apply.)”	
Answer: Cost (affordability/other financial reasons)	
Reasons for enrolling in institution: Location	RAD04D
Students reported that location was a reason they decided to attend their institution. One of a series of variables indicating student-reported considerations. Specifically, students were asked in the interview: “Why did you decide to attend [your institution]? (Please check all that apply.)”	
Answer: Location	
Reasons for enrolling in institution: Personal/family reasons	RAD04E
Students reported that they chose their institution for personal or family reasons. One of a series of variables indicating student-reported considerations. Specifically, students were asked in the interview: “Why did you decide to attend [your institution]? (Please check all that apply.)”	
Answer: Personal/family reasons	
Reasons for enrolling in institution: Other reasons	RAD04X
Students reported that they decided to attend their institution for reasons other than those offered in the interview. One of a series of variables indicating student-reported considerations. Specifically, students were asked in the interview: “Why did you decide to attend [your institution]? (Please check all that apply.)”	
Answer: Other reasons	
Reason(s) for not attending first-choice institution: Too expensive	RNAD04B
Students reported that they did not attend the school that was their first choice because it was too expensive. One of a series of variables indicating student-reported considerations. Specifically, students were asked in the interview: “Why did you not attend the school that was your first choice? (Please check all that apply.)”	
Answer: Too expensive	

Reason(s) for not attending first choice institution: Not enough aid **RNAD04C**

Students reported that they did not attend the school that was their first choice because they did not receive enough financial aid. One of a series of variables indicating student-reported considerations. Specifically, students were asked in the interview: “Why did you not attend the school that was your first choice? (Please check all that apply.)” Answer: Did not receive enough financial aid

Reason(s) for not attending first choice institution: Location **RNAD04D**

Students reported that they did not attend the school that was their first choice because of the location. One of a series of variables indicating student-reported considerations. Specifically, students were asked in the interview: “Why did you not attend the school that was your first choice? (Please check all that apply.)” Answer: Location

Reason(s) for not attending first choice institution: Personal/family reasons **RNAD04E**

Students reported that they did not attend the school that was their first choice because of personal reasons. One of a series of variables indicating student-reported considerations. Specifically, students were asked in the interview: “Why did you not attend the school that was your first choice? (Please check all that apply.)” Answer: Personal/family reasons

Reason(s) for not attending first choice institution: Other reasons **RNAD04X**

Students reported that they did not attend the school that was their first choice for reasons other than those offered in the interview. One of a series of variables indicating student-reported considerations. Specifically, students were asked in the interview: “Why did you not attend the school that was your first choice? (Please check all that apply.)” Answer: Other reasons

Type of institution **SECTOR9**

Type of National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) sample institution attended during 2003–04 for first-time beginning students. Categorized as follows:

Public 2-year

Public 4-year (nondoctorate-granting and doctorate-granting institutions)

Private not-for-profit 4-year (nondoctorate-granting and doctorate-granting institutions)

Technical Notes

Confidence Intervals

The 95% confidence interval (CI) is a measure of the margin of error introduced by the survey sample. The definition of the 95% CI is the interval around the sample estimate that, were the sample to be replicated numerous times, is likely to contain the true population parameter 95% of the time. For a random variable with a normal distribution, the 95% CI for a mean is $\bar{X} \pm t_p * \sigma_{\bar{x}}$, where \bar{X} is the sample mean, t_p is a Student or normal distribution constant for the 95% probability, and $\sigma_{\bar{x}}$ is the standard error of the mean. In comparing two estimates in the table, if the confidence intervals for the two estimates of the same parameter for different groups do not overlap, the user can assume that the two estimates are significantly different ($p < .05$). For a 95% CI, $t_p = 1.96$.

CIs are bound at the minimum and maximum possible values for percentages and at the minimum possible value for amounts. This means that CIs are bound at zero for percentages and amounts, and at the upper bound, CIs are bound at 100 for percentages. This bounding may result in asymmetrical intervals. Bounding will be apparent for low estimates (i.e., near zero), or high estimates (i.e., near 100).

Data Analysis System (DAS)

The estimates presented in the report were produced using the BPS:04/06 DAS, a web-based software application that enables users to generate tables for most of the postsecondary surveys conducted by NCES. The DAS produces the design-adjusted standard errors necessary for testing the statistical significance of differences in the estimates. The DAS also contains a detailed description of how each variable was created and includes the wording of questions for items coming directly from the interview.

With the DAS, users can replicate or expand on the tables presented in this report. The output from DAS includes the table estimates (e.g., percentages or means), the

proper standard errors,¹ and weighted sample sizes for the estimates. If the number of valid cases is too small (i.e., fewer than 30 cases) to produce a reliable estimate, DAS prints the message “low-N” instead of the estimate.

In addition to tables, DAS users may conduct analyses using weighted least squares regression or logistic regression. Many options are available for output with the regression results. For example, a Winsor filter can be used to eliminate cases with extreme values by deleting a certain percentage of cases from the top and bottom of the range. For a description of all the options available, users should access the DAS website: <http://nces.ed.gov/dasolv2>. If users are new to DAS, the DAS User Help Center provides online tutorials offering step-by-step instructions in how to use all the functions of DAS: <http://nces.ed.gov/dasol/help>.

DAS can be accessed electronically at <http://nces.ed.gov/DAS>. For more information, contact:

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Dataset Methodology

For an overview of the BPS:04/06 survey methodology used see Appendix B–BPS:04/06 Technical Notes and Methodology of the BPS:04/06 First Look Report, which can be found here: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2007/2007169.pdf>.

For an in-depth report on the methodology of the BPS:04/06 survey see the 2004/06 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:04/06) Methodology Report, which can be found here: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2008/2008184.pdf>.

¹ BPS samples are not simple random samples; therefore, simple random sample techniques for estimating sampling errors cannot be applied to these data. DAS takes into account the complexity of the sampling procedures and calculates standard errors appropriate for such samples. The method for computing sampling errors used by DAS involves approximating the estimator by replication of the sampled population. The procedure used is a bootstrap technique.

Quality of Estimates: Unit Response Rates and Bias Analysis

NCES Statistical Standard 4-4-1 states that: “Any survey stage of data collection with a unit or item response rate less than 85 percent must be evaluated for the potential magnitude of nonresponse bias before the data or any analysis using the data may be released.” (U.S. Department of Education [ED] 2003). No items included in this set of issue tables have a response rate of less than 85 percent. The unit response rate for NPSAS:04 study respondents, which includes the BPS:04/06 sample, was 96 percent.