

Postsecondary outcomes of International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme graduates in the United States

Research summary

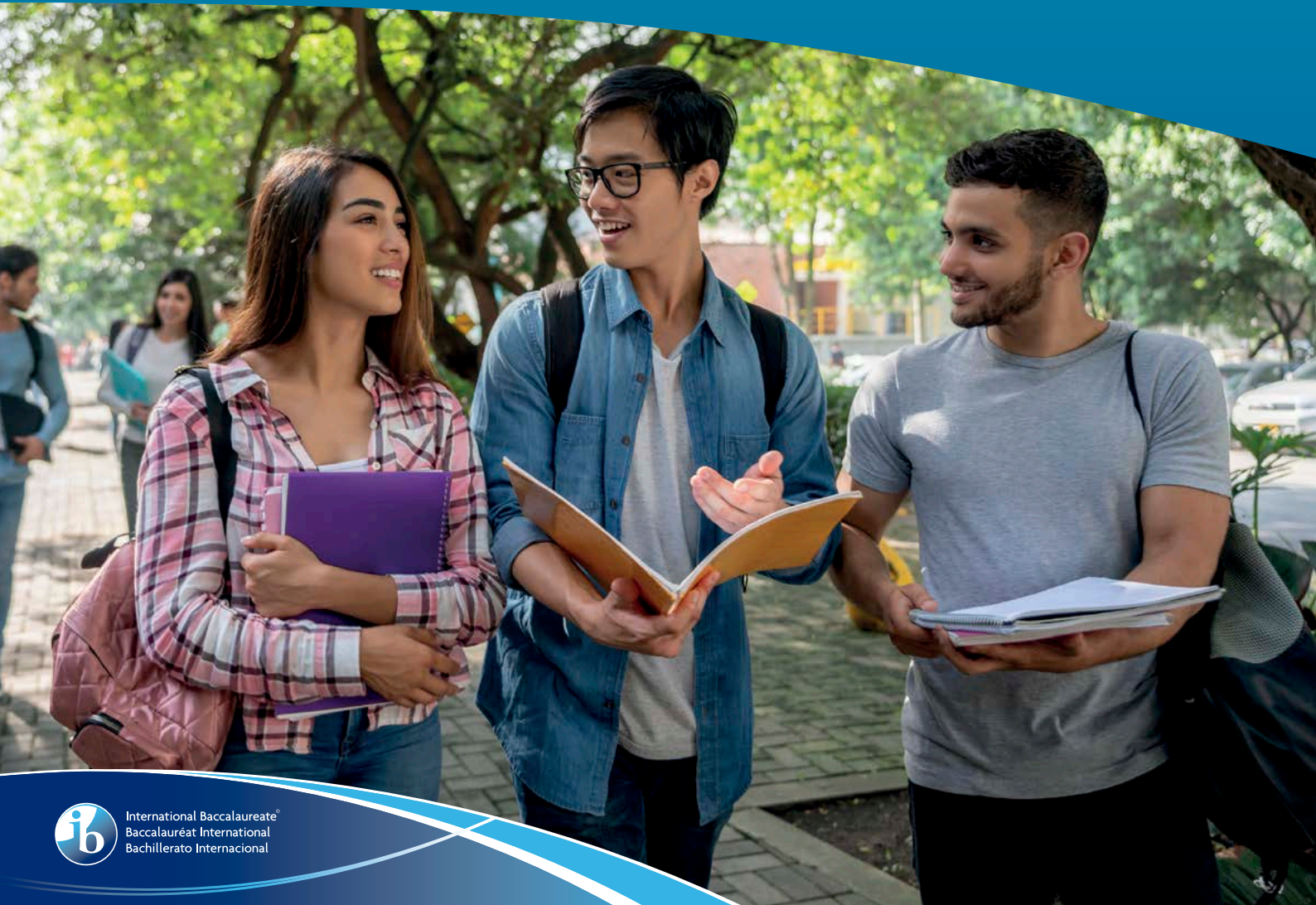
June 2024

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National Student Clearinghouse

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Background

Attending and completing postsecondary education is associated with a wide variety of positive outcomes. In the United States (US), college graduates tend to earn significantly more than those with high school diplomas and also experience lower unemployment and greater job security (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023; Autor, 2014). College can also equip individuals with valuable skills for career success and empower students to become well-rounded and informed citizens (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Additionally, college graduates tend to enjoy better physical and mental health, with lower rates of chronic diseases and mental health issues (Adler & Ostrove, 1999).

Previous research has found that International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (DP) graduates enroll, persist and graduate from college at higher rates than students who did not participate in the DP (Pilchen et al., 2020; Bergeron, 2015; Halic, 2013; Caspary, 2011). To further investigate and extend previous research, this study explores the postsecondary outcomes of DP students from US high schools who attend US higher education institutions.

Data sources

The study combined data from multiple sources: the National Student Clearinghouse (administrative records for over 97% of postsecondary students in the US), the IB, and the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. Specifically, this study examines the postsecondary outcomes of DP students (both DP candidates and DP course students) who graduated from US high schools in 2016 ($n = 51,609$).

The sample included **DP candidates** ($n = 26,426$)—students pursuing the full DP with all of its required courses and components. This category of students was further disaggregated into Diploma recipients and Diploma non-recipients. The study also included **DP course students** ($n = 25,183$), students participating in one to five individual DP courses and taking one or more DP examination.



Findings

DP graduates have higher immediate college enrollment rates than the national average and favor four-year institutions

Overall, 74% of the DP students who graduated from US high schools in 2016 enrolled in a postsecondary institution immediately after high school graduation, a higher rate than the US national average (64% in 2016). DP students were also more likely to enroll in a four-year institution (65% compared with 43% nationally) and were less likely to enroll in a two-year institution (9% compared with 21% nationally). While all DP student groups performed well above the national average, Diploma recipients in particular had impressive enrollment outcomes, with 80% enrolling in college immediately after high school and 76% choosing four-year institutions.

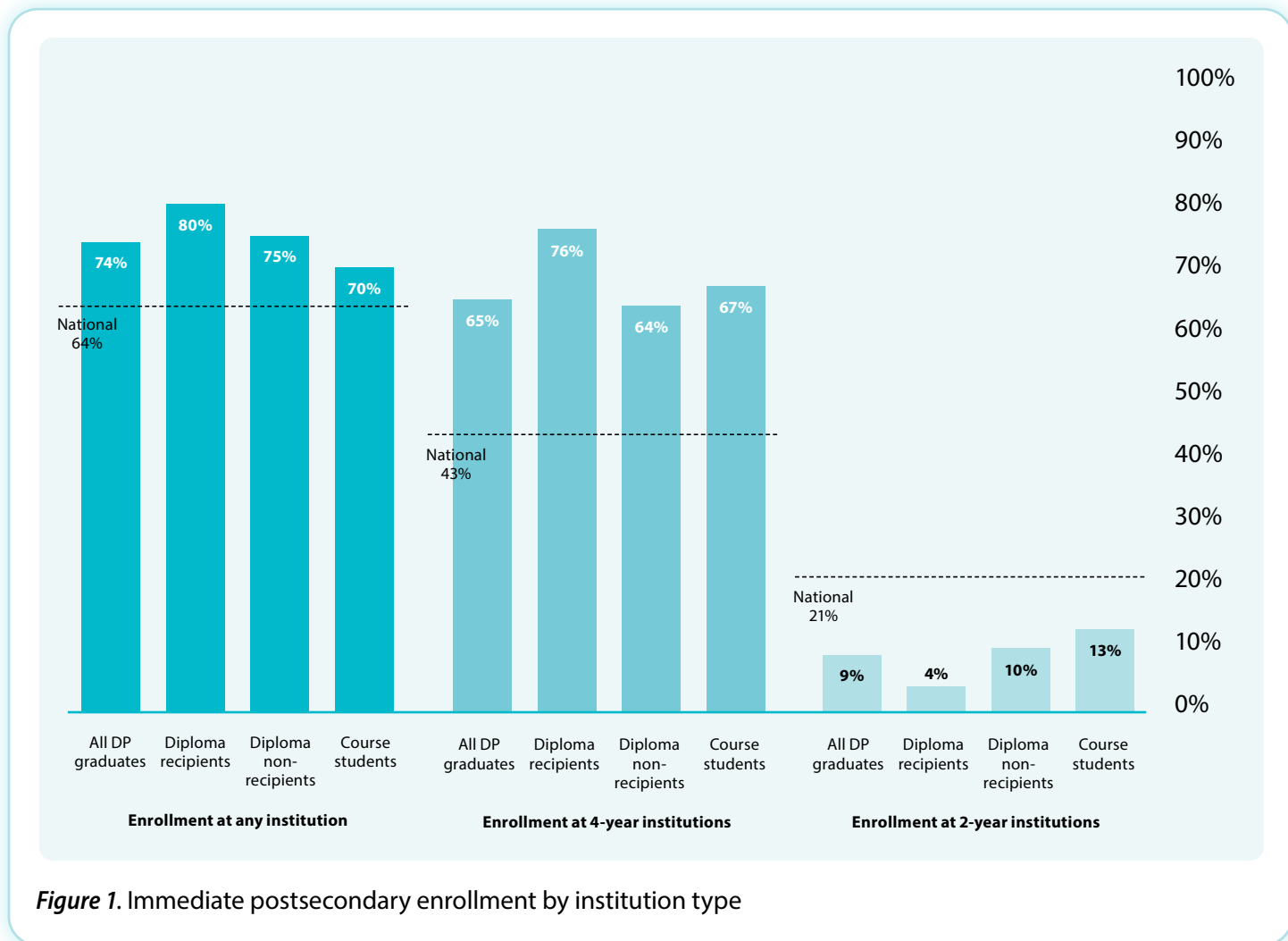


Figure 1. Immediate postsecondary enrollment by institution type

DP graduates tend to enroll in “More selective” postsecondary institutions

A larger proportion of DP graduates in each category enrolled in “More selective” four-year institutions than in “Selective” or “Inclusive” institutions. Overall, almost half of all DP graduates enrolled in “More selective” institutions (46%), the highest tier of Carnegie selectivity classification.



Figure 2. Postsecondary enrollments by institutional selectivity (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education)

DP graduates persist at much higher rates than the national average

DP graduates persisted at four-year institutions at considerably higher rates than the national average. 88% of DP graduates who enrolled in four-year institutions immediately after high school were enrolled in the same institution the following year. All categories of DP graduates had persistence rates that were more than 10% above the national average of 72%.

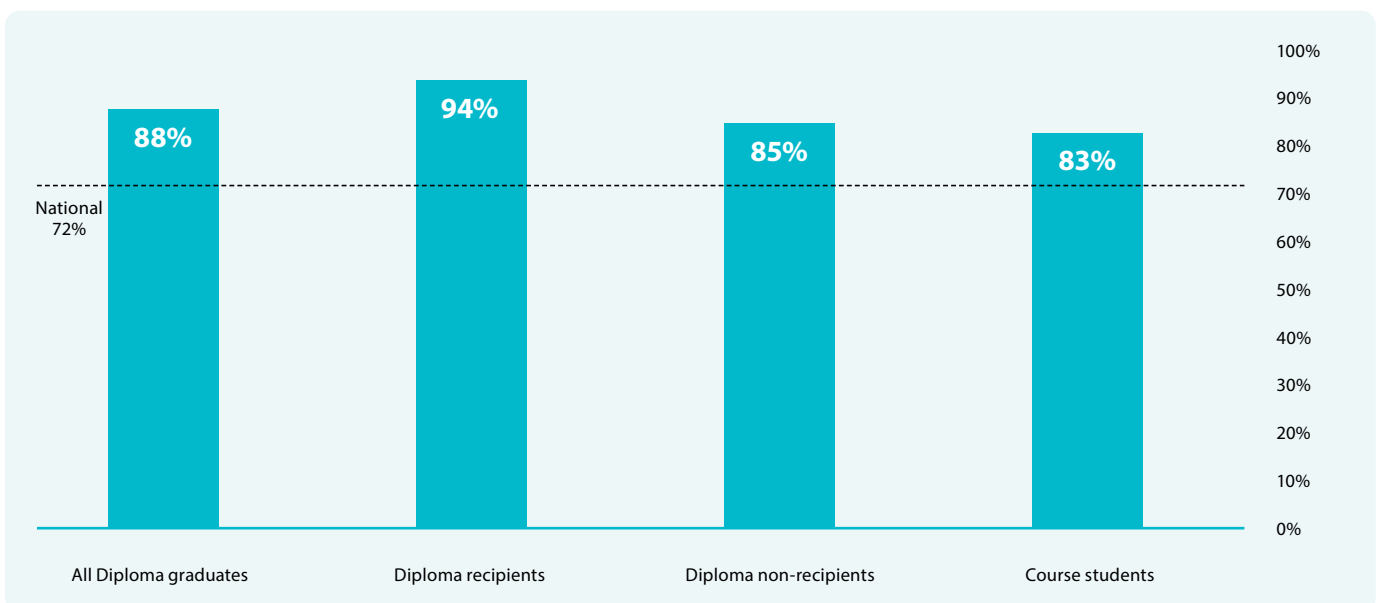


Figure 3. Persistence rates at four-year institutions



DP students choose a variety of fields of study

Out of a total of 267 fields of postsecondary study, the most popular fields of study for DP graduates were Biology or Biological Sciences (5.8%), Liberal Arts and Sciences (4.9%), Business Administration and Management (4.5%) and Psychology (4.3%).

DP students have much higher four- and six-year graduation rates compared to the national average

64% of all DP graduates who enrolled in four-year institutions immediately after high school graduated within four years. By comparison, the national four-year graduation rate was 49%. The six-year graduation rate of DP graduates was 86%, a sizable difference compared to the national six-year graduation rate of 68%. Diploma recipients had the highest graduation rate, with 94% graduating within six years.

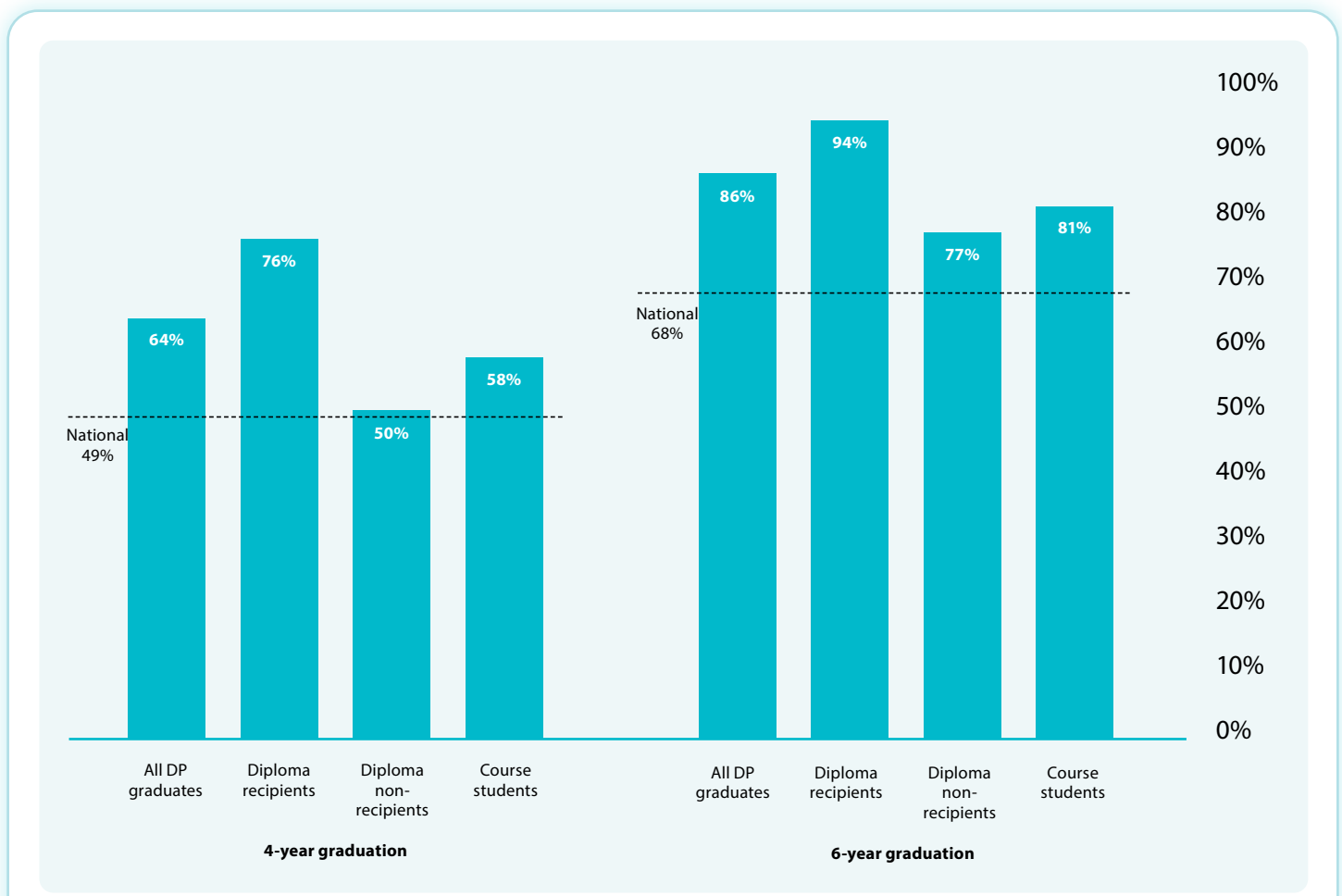
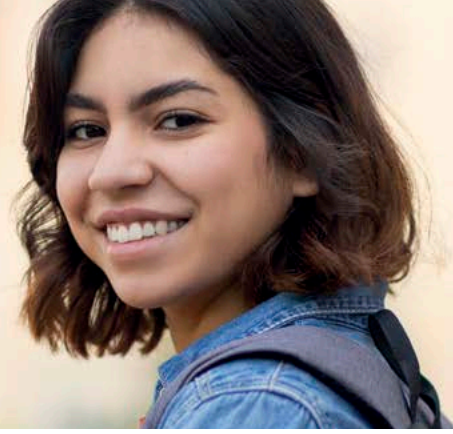


Figure 4. Four- and six-years graduation rates



In addition to other postsecondary outcomes¹, the researchers examined six-year graduation rates by race and ethnicity for both DP candidates and DP course students at four-year institutions. Across racial and ethnic groups, DP candidates (including both Diploma recipients and Diploma non-recipients) graduated in six years at substantially higher rates than the corresponding racial and ethnic groups nationally²:

- Asian³: 92% for DP candidates compared with 78% nationally
- Black: 81% for DP candidates compared with 46% nationally
- Hispanic: 83% for DP candidates compared with 59% nationally
- White: 91% for DP candidates compared with 68% nationally.

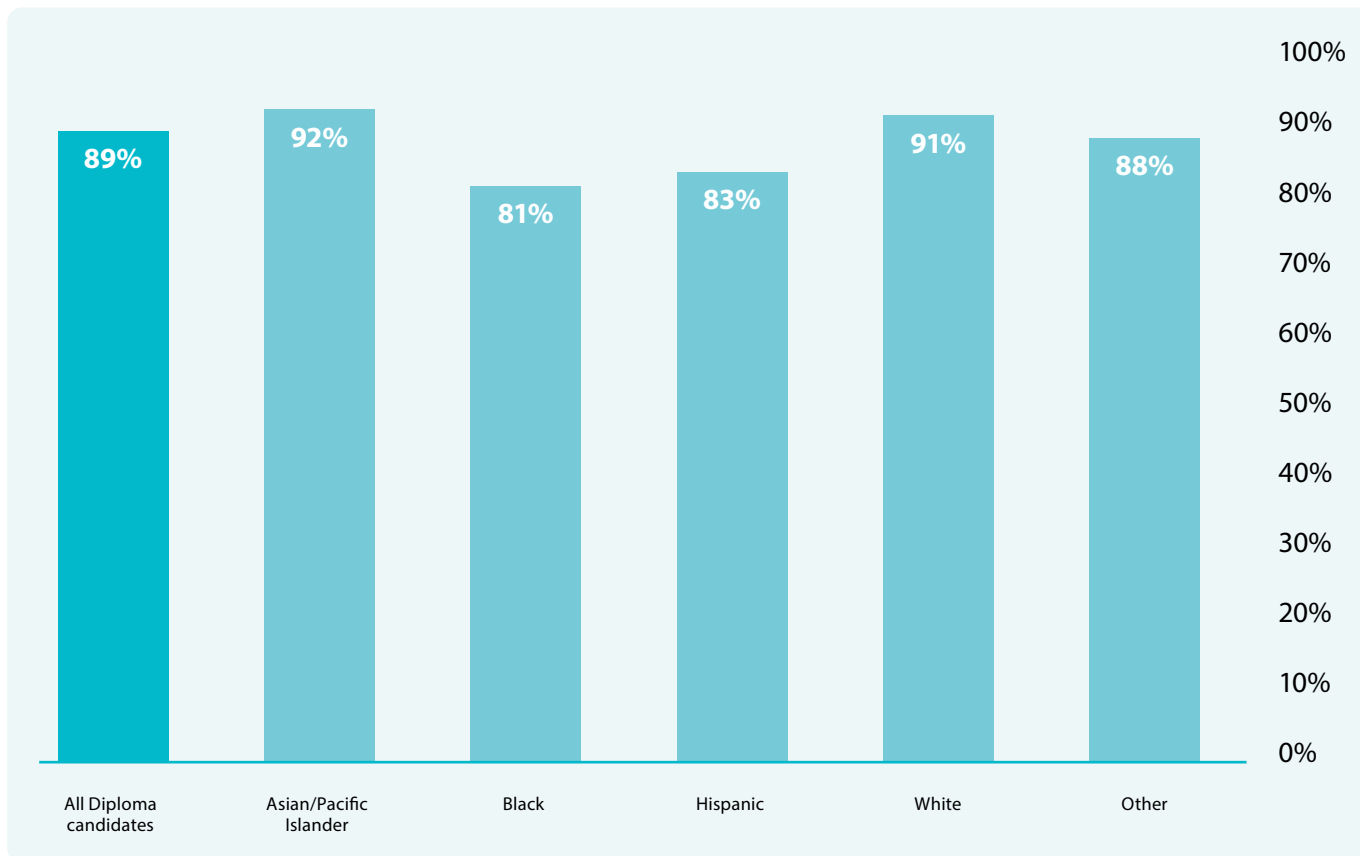


Figure 5. DP candidates' six-year graduation rates by race and ethnicity

¹ The study includes findings on postsecondary enrollment, persistence and graduation by race and ethnicity and gender. See the full report for details.

² Six-year graduation rates for first-time, full-time bachelor's degree-seeking students at four-year postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity for the 2016 national cohort are referenced from the [2023 NCES Digest of Education Statistics](#).

³ Racial and ethnic categories differ between the NSC postsecondary data used in this report (Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, Hispanic, White and Other) and the NCES reported categories (American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, White, and Two or more races).



For DP course students, all racial and ethnic groups outperformed the national six-year graduation rate for the corresponding racial and ethnic groups, although some racial and ethnic disparities persist, particularly among Black and Hispanic DP course students:

- Asian: 82% for DP course students compared with 78% nationally
- Black: 66% for DP course students compared with 46% nationally
- Hispanic: 73% for DP course students compared with 59% nationally
- White: 85% for DP course students compared with 68% nationally.

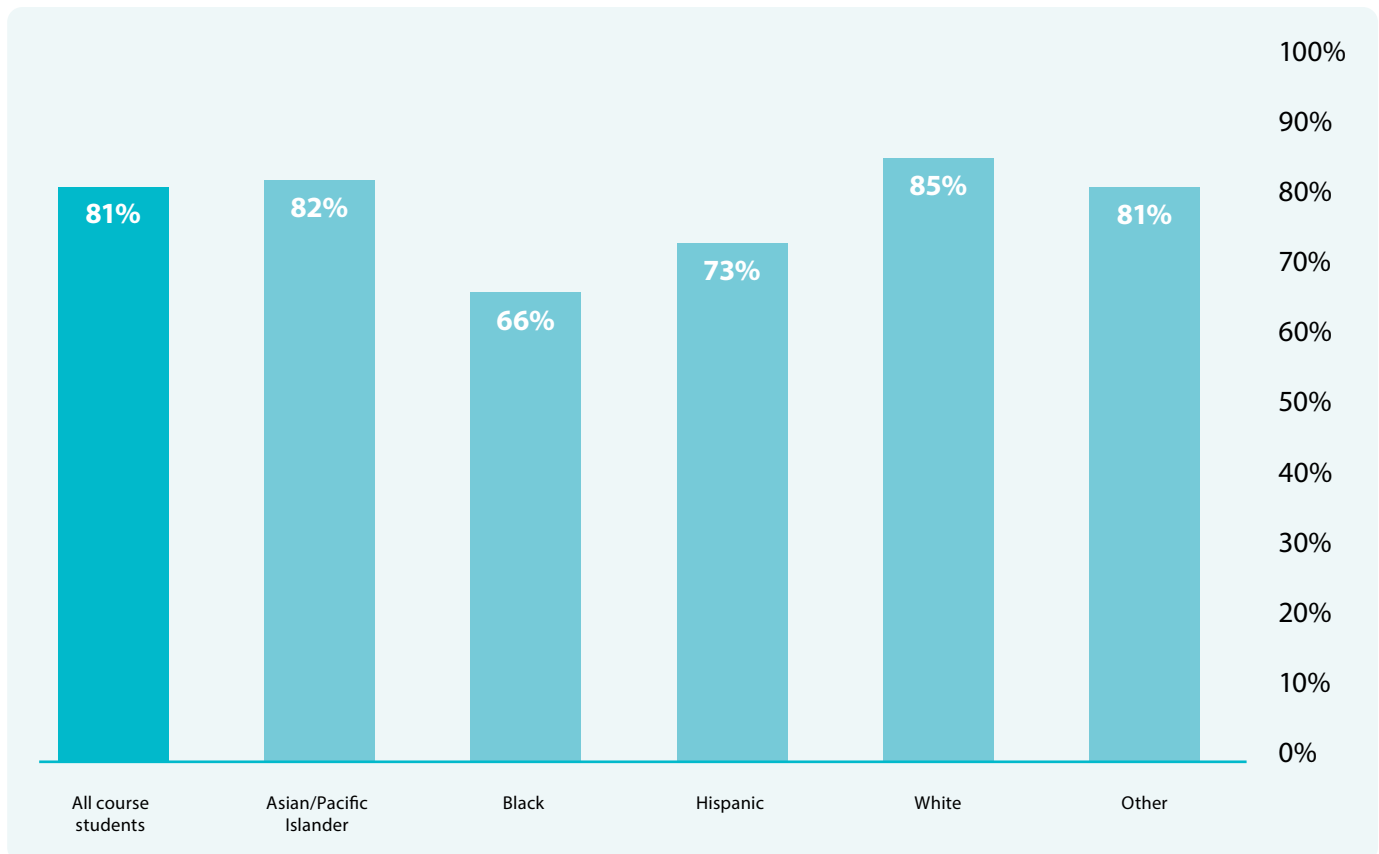


Figure 6. DP course students' six-year graduation rates by race and ethnicity

Summary

This study finds that US DP students experienced substantially better postsecondary outcomes than the average US high school student. 74% percent of US DP graduates enrolled in college immediately after graduating from high school compared to 64% of all US high school graduates. DP students were also more likely than the national average to enroll in a four-year postsecondary institution and to attend a “More selective” four-year institution. Of the DP graduates who enrolled in college immediately after high school, 88% returned to the same institution the following year compared to 72% of all US students. Additionally, DP graduates had much higher four- and six-year graduation rates (64% and 86% respectively) compared to US students nationally (49% and 68% respectively). For both DP candidates and DP course students, these positive findings held when examining six-year graduation rates across racial and ethnic groups.

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This summary was developed by Emily VanderKamp. A copy of the full report is available at: www.ibo.org/en/research/. For more information on this study or other IB research, please email research@ibo.org.

To cite the full report, please use the following: Leake, J. & Townsend, M. (2024). *Postsecondary outcomes of International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme graduates in the United States*. International Baccalaureate Organization.