

GRE® RESEARCH REPORT

Pathways to Graduate School: 3.

A Data Overview of U.S. Prospective Graduate Students by Parental Education and Gender



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Pathways to Graduate School: 3. A Data Overview of U.S. Prospective Graduate Students by Parental Education and Gender

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Abstract

Having parents with higher educational attainment is associated with many positive academic outcomes for students (e.g., college enrollment, degree attainment). This study aims to raise awareness and promote understanding of the characteristics, aspirations, and graduate degree intentions of students who are considering graduate school, particularly through the lens of parental education and gender. Three distinct groups are profiled: no parent bachelor of arts (BA), one parent BA, and one parent BA+. The 980,903 individuals who are U.S. citizens, provided gender and parent educational attainment information, and had scores on all three GRE® General Test measures are the subjects for this descriptive study, one of a series of five such reports. GRE General Test data from July 1, 2016, to June 30, 2021, supplemented with U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Census data, are analyzed. These individuals, referred to as prospective graduate students (PGS), are examined through six core questions: (a) Who were the PGS? (b) Where did they reside? (c) What were their education and work experiences? (d) What were their undergraduate experiences? (e) What were their plans for graduate study? and (f) What were their emerging graduate school choice sets? Key findings include the following: (a) The percentage of White PGS increased as parental education increased; (b) more than 50% of PGS from all three parental education groups live in 10 states; (c) Federal Pell Grant eligibility decreased as parental education increased; (d) approximately half of PGS in each parental education group majored in a science, technology, engineering, or mathematics field, with notable gender differences; (e) more than 90% of PGS across all parental education groups reported a B or higher undergraduate major grade point average; (f) a master's degree was the most common degree objective among all three parental education profiles; (g) most PGS were considering attending at least one graduate school in their home state; and (h) 41% of PGS

included at least one minority-serving institution in their graduate school choice sets. The report concludes with recommendations for future research and practical applications, particularly in the graduate school application process.

Keywords: parent education level, graduate school applications, test measures, GRE[®], prospective graduate students, demographics, work experience, undergraduate experience, graduate enrollment, graduate program

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Series Preface

This research report is one of five in the Pathways to Graduate School: A Data Series on U.S. Prospective Graduate Students series, which examines prospective graduate students (PGS) who are U.S. citizens at a time in their educational trajectory that is not commonly explored—when they are considering applying to graduate school. This series is intended to supplement the ETS (2022) report “A Snapshot of the Individuals Who Took the *GRE*® General Test July 2016–June 2021,” which presents analyses for all GRE test takers.

The series is intended for individuals and organizations involved in graduate education, such as graduate education institutions, graduate school admissions offices, organizations focused on diversity and inclusion, policymakers and government agencies, and education researchers and analysts who may apply descriptions of domestic subpopulations of the overall GRE test taker population to inform their understanding of and support for various groups within the PGS population. Each report examines the same six questions:

1. Who were the PGS?
2. Where did the PGS reside?
3. What were their education and work experiences?
4. What were their undergraduate experiences?
5. What were PGS’ plans for graduate study?
6. What were their emerging graduate school choice sets?

The five profiles of U.S. citizens are (a) women PGS, (b) PGS by Hispanic subgroup and gender, (c) PGS by parental education and gender, (d) PGS by Pell Grant eligibility and gender, and (e) PGS by Black students and gender.

A total of 1.2 million PGS who took the GRE General Test from 2016 to 2021 and responded to questions on the GRE registration form and the Background Information Questionnaire provided data for the series. The GRE data were supplemented with data from the U.S. Department of Education to enrich the descriptions of postsecondary institutions and the U.S. Census Bureau to enhance the profile of where individuals reside. The data are descriptive rather than inferential, so observed differences should not be considered definitive or conclusive.

List of Series Abbreviations

AANAPISI	Asian American Native American Pacific Islander–serving institution
AAU	American Association of Universities
ACE	American Council on Education
ADHD	attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder
American Indian	American Indian or Alaskan Native
ANNH	Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian–serving institution
Asian	Asian or Asian American
B&B	Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study
BA/BS	bachelor of arts/bachelor of science
<i>Barron’s</i>	<i>Barron’s Profile of American Colleges</i>
BIQ	Background Information Questionnaire
Black	Black or African American
Carnegie	Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education
CBSA	core-based statistical area
doctorate	doctoral degree, e.g., PhD, EdD
GPA	grade point average
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
HSI	Hispanic-serving institution
IPEDS	Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System
master’s	master’s degree, e.g., MA, MS, MEd
Mexican	Mexican, Mexican American, or Chicano
MSI	minority-serving institution
NASNTI	Native American–serving nontribal institution
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
no parent bach	no parent earned a bachelor’s degree
NSF	National Science Foundation
one parent bach	at least one parent earned a bachelor’s degree
one parent bach+	at least one parent earned a graduate degree
other	other race/ethnicity
other Hispanic	other Hispanic, Latino, or Latin American
PBI	predominantly Black institution
PGS	prospective graduate students
STEM	science, technology, engineering, and math
TCU	tribal college or university
White	White (non-Hispanic)

Introduction

LEGACY (noun). A gift by will especially of money or other personal property: Bequest something transmitted by or received from an ancestor or predecessor or from the past a candidate for membership in an organization (such as a school or fraternal order) who is given special status because of a familial relationship to a member. (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

Legacy, according to Merriam-Webster (n.d.), has three definitions. With the 2023 U.S. Supreme Court's decisions in *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. (SFFA) v. President & Fellows of Harvard College (Harvard)* and *SFFA v. University of North Carolina (UNC)*, the third meaning is in the news (e.g., Miller & Bhatia, 2023). The decisions raised questions about ending the long-standing practice of legacy admissions at the undergraduate level, which overtly privileges college and university alumni's children.

However, the second definition of *legacy*—what is transmitted across generations—holds profound implications for education, particularly the pursuit of advanced degrees. This legacy is not as overt as legacy admissions but plays a pivotal role in shaping educational trajectories. What do our ancestors or predecessors transmit to the next generation about education? For instance, what do grandparents and parents/guardians (parents)¹ communicate to their offspring about continuing their education beyond the baccalaureate? Some families may have explicit conversations, while pursuing a graduate or professional degree may be a tacit assumption in others. At what grade level—elementary school, middle school, high school, college—if ever, do families plant the seeds for graduate education and begin cultivating their students? What resources do families devote to nurturing these future graduate students—sending them to private high schools and colleges, participating in extracurricular activities, traveling, or setting aside financial resources? In households with parents who earned graduate degrees, what habits of mind, skills and dispositions, and exposure to career opportunities do students pick up almost through osmosis over their lives? What insights and advice can parents with graduate degrees provide their students to help them navigate the journey to graduate school? What role do their social networks play in the future success of their student (e.g., admission to a graduate program or access to a prime research project or lab)?

Having parents with higher educational attainment is associated with many positive academic outcomes for individuals (e.g., college enrollment, degree attainment; Cataldi, Bennett

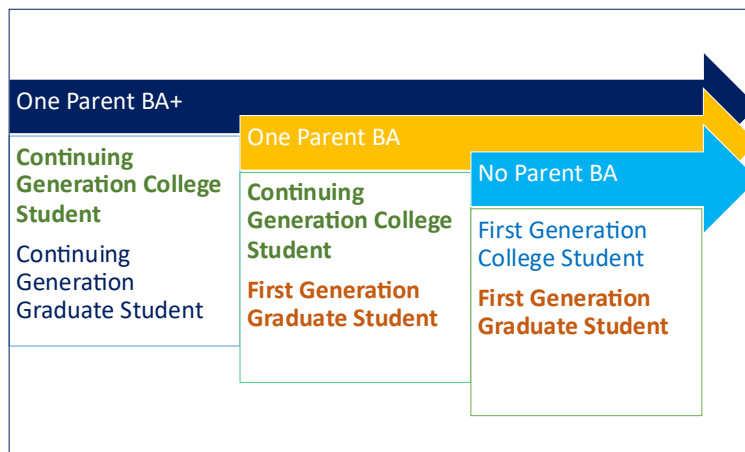
& Chen, 2018). Among 2021 U.S. doctoral recipients, 51% reported having at least one parent with a graduate or professional degree (National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, 2021, Table 5.5)—nearly double the 29% of 2015–2016 bachelor’s degree recipients with similarly educated parents (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2016–2020). Both figures starkly contrast to the broader U.S. population aged 25 years or older, among which only 14% hold a graduate or professional degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2024). These disparities highlight the increasing prevalence of advanced parental education among those pursuing higher academic degrees, raising a critical question: Are these students benefiting from an inherited academic legacy that sets them apart?

Defining Parent Educational Attainment

This study categorizes parental education into three discrete categories (see Figure 1). For each category, students’ classification as first generation or continuing generation is presented for the undergraduate and graduate levels.

- **No Parent With a Bachelor’s Degree (No Parent Bachelor of Arts [BA]).** This includes PGS who reported that their parents had achieved the following levels of education: less than a high school diploma, high school diploma or equivalency, some postsecondary education, or an associate’s degree. A PGS who is no parent BA would be a first-generation college student and a first-generation graduate student.
- **One Parent With a Bachelor’s Degree (One Parent BA).** This includes PGS who reported that at least one parent earned a bachelor’s degree in any field. A PGS who is a one parent BA would be a continuing-generation college student and a first-generation graduate student.
- **One Parent With a Bachelor’s Degree+ (One Parent BA+).** This includes PGS who reported that at least one parent earned a graduate or professional degree in any field. A PGS who is one parent BA+ would be a continuing-generation college student and a continuing-generation graduate student.

Figure 1. Parental Education and Student Educational Generation Status at the Undergraduate and Graduate Levels



The Graduate Education Pathway

The path to graduate school is often traced back to a critical moment when students first contemplate pursuing an advanced degree. However, little research has focused on potential graduate students' unique characteristics and aspirations, particularly through the lens of parental education and gender. This study seeks to fill that gap by highlighting how familial background shapes graduate school aspirations and choices.

By understanding students' diverse educational journeys and the influence of their parents' educational backgrounds, key stakeholders can better craft policies and practices that create new possibilities—possibilities that might have seemed unattainable to students from less-privileged educational backgrounds.

In preparing for this study, a content analysis of the questions on the *GRE*[®] test registration form and the Background Information Questionnaire (BIQ) was conducted. Following this, consideration was given to how ETS's data from these questions could be presented to offer potential insights for individuals and organizations involved in graduate education, such as graduate education institutions, graduate school admissions offices, organizations focused on diversity and inclusion, policymakers and government agencies, and education researchers and analysts. It was concluded that presenting the data in response to a series of questions would be the most effective way to provide a snapshot of the period from July 2016 to June 2021. In presenting this research, it is important to emphasize, and encourage

readers to remember, Emdin’s (2012) wisdom that “yes, there is difference but difference is not deficient” (p. 1).

Six grand questions guided this work:

1. Who were the PGS? This section examines key demographic characteristics, such as age, if they communicate better in English than any other language, and whether they have a documented disability.
2. Where did the PGS reside? This analysis explores their geographic distribution, including their residence by U.S. Census region and the most populous states, core-based statistical areas (CBSAs), and congressional districts.
3. What were their education and work experiences? Their enrollment statuses and work experiences are presented here.
4. What were their undergraduate experiences? This section delves into the characteristics of their baccalaureate institutions, their experiences related to family educational attainment, Federal Pell Grant eligibility, and their academic achievements, such as their undergraduate fields of study and grade point averages (GPAs), both overall and within their major.
5. What were PGS’ plans for graduate study? The focus here is on their aspirations for graduate education, including their intended field of study, mode of study (part-time/full-time), attendance plans, and preferred geographic region for pursuing graduate school.
6. What were their emerging graduate school choice sets? This section discusses the set of graduate schools under consideration, including factors such as geographic location and the potential to pursue graduate studies at their baccalaureate institution or a flagship university within their state. Furthermore, the characteristics of these institutions (e.g., public/private) are analyzed, along with the intensity of particular institutional characteristics within the choice sets.

This report takes a descriptive approach, comparing women PGS from different racial and ethnic groups in relation to the six key research questions to illuminate their distinct characteristics, experiences, and pathways toward graduate education.

Methodology

To answer the six research questions about PGS, data from the ETS GRE Program were analyzed. The GRE data are unique in their focus on the period before application to graduate programs. Other well-known national data sets focus on enrollment and degree completion, such as the National Center for Education Statistics' Baccalaureate and Beyond Study; the National Student Clearinghouse education data; and the National Science Foundation's Survey of Earned Doctorates, which examines doctoral degree completion. The Council of Graduate Schools' report *Graduate Enrollment and Degrees: 2011 to 2021* (Zhou, 2022) focused on the more than 2 million applications U.S. graduate schools received in fall 2021. It is not possible, however, to convert applications into numbers of individual applicants.

When individuals register for the GRE, in addition to providing their gender and state of residence, they complete the self-report BIQ, with questions on demographic background, undergraduate institution and experiences, and preferences for graduate study. Each year, the GRE Program publishes a snapshot report that presents analyses for all GRE test takers. The Pathways to Graduate School: A Data Series on U.S. Prospective Graduate Students reports are intended to supplement the ETS (2022) report on the snapshot of individuals who took the GRE General Test from July 2016 to June 2021.

The 1,093,466 individuals who (a) took the GRE General Test between June 30, 2016, and July 1, 2021, and consented to have their data used in research; (b) had valid scores for all three test sections (analytical writing, verbal reasoning, and quantitative reasoning); (c) self-identified as U.S. citizens; (d) had gender data; and (e) reported information about their race/ethnicity are the subjects for this study. Individuals who took the GRE multiple times were counted once, and the BIQ data from the most recent registration were included. As women are the focus of this study, the analyses were run on the 698,298 women who had complete baseline data.

The most common reason for taking the GRE, cited by 99%, was to gain admission to graduate school, with the next most common reason being a requirement for fellowship or scholarship applications (8%). It is appropriate to refer to these women as PGS, as the majority (87%) selected only one of the seven provided response options to the question of why they were taking the GRE.

Variable Response Rates

The data in the following six sections pertain to U.S. individuals who provided both gender and Federal Pell Grant data, along with their responses to each item. Owing to differing response rates for each item, the groups of respondents may vary. Descriptive statistics were computed for each item based on all available responses, and missing values were excluded from the analysis.

The GRE registration form and the 21-item BIQ have required- and optional-response questions. The four BIQ questionnaire items that require an answer ask registrants about their country of citizenship, about their educational status at the time of the GRE exam, whether they communicate better (or as well) in English than in any other language, and about their intended field of graduate study.

Generally, item response rates for almost all the optional-response items used in the study were above 75% (see Table A1). The exception is the undergraduate institution name, with a 62% item response. Accordingly, this response rate moderates the findings on characteristics of the undergraduate institutions attended. Additionally, this low item response rate impacts the derived variables that present information on whether individuals were considering applying to their undergraduate institutions for graduate school.

Other Variable Notes

Federal Pell Grant Eligibility

Individuals responded to the question “If you are a United States citizen, were you eligible for a Pell Grant as an undergraduate?” The response options were “Yes,” “No,” and “I don’t know.” This is the only question on the BIQ to offer an “I don’t know” option. Two rationales are provided for including an “I don’t know” option. The first is to allow people to indicate what Sudman and Bradburn (1973) referred to as memory error, which is forgetting an episode entirely. The second reason is that the U.S. financial aid system has been burdened by decades of students and families experiencing a lack of clear and transparent information about how they pay for college. For example, Burd et al. (2018), writing for New America in “Decoding the Cost of College: The Case for Transparent Financial Aid Award Letters,” reported in their analyses of 515 award letters from unique institutions that many institutions fail to differentiate types of aid—70% of award letters grouped all aid together. So, it is possible that an

individual who received financial aid may not have been provided with the level of detail to know if they had a Federal Pell Grant.

Field of Study

One exception to not including missing data in the analyses was for the undergraduate and intended graduate fields of study. The undergraduate field of study was not a required response item, whereas the intended field of graduate study was. To present comparable analyses to those given in ETS (2022) and to compare continuing in the same field of study in graduate school, the missing data for the undergraduate field of study were included in the reported categories as “undecided or no major provided.” The “undecided or no major provided” response is more common for intended graduate majors than for undergraduate fields. Although no formal analysis was conducted, one possible explanation is that students are encouraged to take the GRE while still undergraduates and in “study mode,” allowing them to bank their scores for future use as they await greater clarity with regard to their graduate school plans.

Graduate Institution Choices

Individuals have two options for indicating which universities or graduate programs they want their scores sent to when they register or after they take the exam. Some individuals may not have sent their scores to institutions when the data were captured. It is reasonable to deduce that individuals sent their scores only to graduate programs in which they hoped to have an option to enroll.

Parental Education

Parents’ educational attainment is classified at three levels. No parent with a bachelor’s includes individuals who reported that their parents had achieved the following levels of education: less than high school diploma, high school diploma or equivalency, some postsecondary education, or an associate’s degree (a first-generation college student and first-generation graduate student). One parent with a bachelor’s includes individuals who reported that at least one parent earned a bachelor’s degree in any field (a continuing-generation college student and a first-generation graduate student). One parent with a bachelor’s+ includes individuals who reported that at least one parent earned a graduate or professional degree in any field (a continuing-generation college student and a continuing-generation graduate student).

State of Permanent Residence

Individuals provided two sources of information about where they were living. The first source, a required response on the registration form, was their address—for example, the specific location where they could receive correspondence. The second source was their state of permanent residence, an optional response on the BIQ. The response rate for the permanent residence question was lower than the response rate for the address question. The match rate of responses for the 640,629 individuals who responded to both questions was 99%, so these analyses assume that state address is comparable to state of permanent residence.

Supplementing the GRE Data

At the individual level, the residential information provided at registration was augmented by matching zip codes with data from the U.S. Census. This included CBSAs and congressional districts. Examining CBSAs rather than a single city, such as Cambridge, MA, captures a larger geographic area, such as Boston–Cambridge–Newton, MA/NH. The U.S. Census Bureau (2023) defined a CBSA as

the county or counties (or equivalent entities) associated with at least one core (urbanized area or urban cluster) of at least 10,000 population, plus adjacent counties having a high degree of social and economic integration with the core as measured through commuting ties.

At the institutional level, the GRE data were supplemented with data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) to understand better the types of institutions PGS attended as undergraduates and the kinds of institutions they aspire to attend for their graduate education. Institutional characteristics, such as whether the institution was under public or private control, its Carnegie classification, and the size of the student body served, were included. In addition to IPEDS, other enhancements to the institutional data included adding single-sex colleges, regional comprehensive universities, or flagship state university status. At the undergraduate level, information from *Barron's Profile of American Colleges* indexes to undergraduate institutions according to their degree of admissions selectivity was incorporated. For undergraduate and graduate institutions, membership in the American Association of Universities (AAU) and minority-serving institution status data from the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Institute at the Rutgers Graduate School of Education were added to the data set.

Analyses

Because the study uses a convenience sample, its results are not necessarily generalizable to all U.S. women who aspire to attend graduate or first professional school. At the same time, the sheer size of the data pool for this study enables us to provide insights into the aspirations and characteristics of many, and even most, women PGS from 2016 to 2021.

The intention of the Pathways to Graduate School: A Data Series on U.S. Prospective Graduate Students reports aligns with the qualities of quantitative descriptive analyses presented by Loeb et al. (2017), who stated,

Quantitative descriptive analysis characterizes the world or a phenomenon by identifying patterns in data to answer questions about who, what, where, when, and to what extent. Descriptive analysis is data simplification. Good description presents what we know about capacities, needs, methods, practices, policies, populations, and settings in a manner that is relevant to a specific research or policy question. (p. 1)

This exploratory study aims to identify and describe the experiences of U.S. women overall and across the nine racial groups of women. Descriptive analyses—frequencies and cross-tabulations—of self-reported data are presented. These descriptive analyses answer the six research questions about who, where, and to what extent. Please note that the group differences presented have not been statistically tested and should be interpreted cautiously. Although the group statistics presented from the PGS sample offer valuable insights, readers need to consider how these trends may reflect their own institutions' unique context and data, fostering a deeper understanding of the patterns within their specific institutions or programs.

The body of the report presents selected data in graph and table format, and the appendix provides six data tables (Tables A1–A6) aligned to the six research questions.

Limitations

All data have limitations, and the data analyzed for this study of U.S. citizens who are PGS are no exception. Following are key limitations to keep in mind when thinking about the results of this study: (a) the representativeness of the individuals whose data are presented in this report, (b) the possible difference between the emerging choice set and the final choice set, (c) the high yet variable item response rates, (d) variables that may not reflect the most current standards or classifications, and (e) the graduate school pathway factors that are beyond the scope of the data available for this study.

The primary limitation of this study is that respondents are limited to U.S. citizens who took the GRE between 2016 and 2021. It is understood that this group does not encompass the entirety of PGS. Individuals who did not or will not submit GRE scores for graduate school admission are excluded, and it is not known what portion of the national pool this represents. Nevertheless, while the required elements of a graduate school application may vary depending on degree level or institutional type, the GRE has been a key component of many graduate school admissions applications for the past 75 years.

Another limitation of this study is the possible difference between PGS' emerging and final choice sets. There could be additions and deletions. Additions could include new graduate programs that require GRE scores and those that do not. At a later time, PGS may elect not to apply to some graduate programs where they sent their GRE scores. These changes to the choice set composition could potentially alter the choice set proportions reported in the study. Additionally, it is acknowledged that individuals' plans and interests may change even if they initially apply to graduate schools.

The methodology section discussed issues regarding item response rates for the GRE registration form and the 21-item BIQ. In particular, converting the question about the current or most recent undergraduate institution from open response to forced choice could potentially change the findings on the undergraduate institutional experience.

In two instances, the variable definitions used in this study may not reflect the most current standards or classifications, as they were based on the conventions and data available at the time of analysis. The variables follow:

- **Gender.** Gender is a required response on the GRE registration form. The options at the time were binary: female and male.² Henceforth individuals who identify as female will be referred to as women.
- **Racial/Ethnic Group.** The BIQ asked respondents, "If you are a United States citizen, how do you describe yourself? (Select one)," offering nine response options: (a) American Indian or Alaskan Native (American Indian); (b) Asian or Asian American (Asian); (c) Black or African American (Black); (d) Mexican, Mexican American, or Chicano (Mexican); (e) Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders (Hawaiian/Pacific Islander); (f) Puerto Rican; (g) other Hispanic, Latino, or Latin American (other Hispanic); (h) White (non-Hispanic) (White); or (i) other.³ It is

important to note that the “other” option did not allow respondents to provide additional details. Additionally, the survey’s single-select design allowed individuals to select only one option, potentially limiting their ability to represent their racial or ethnic identity fully. Individuals who identify with multiple races or ethnicities are able to choose one or “other.” These response options may not permit individuals to represent their identity as they want, and the data may not reflect the nation’s current diversity or citizenship status.

This study is a secondary data analysis using an internal ETS data source—the GRE Program data. We leveraged the rich data set to answer our questions. Yet the GRE data, while providing great insights into PGS’ experiences, accomplishments, and plans, did not contain some of the information we would have liked to have had to enrich and contextualize the findings and add greater insight into this part of the educational journey. These include additional personal data (e.g., marital status, parenthood, and income), significant influences or supporters (e.g., undergraduate faculty, family, or friends), additional educational or work accomplishments (e.g., publications), educational debt (undergraduate and/or graduate), alternative sources of funding (e.g., employer educational assistance programs), and career aspirations.

Results

Research Question 1: Who Were the Prospective Graduate Students?

Individuals and organizations working in the graduate school application space may consider prospective applicants in two ways. Active participants are individuals already engaged in the admissions process, preparing or submitting their applications. Graduate schools gather demographic information for this group to understand trends in who is applying and to ensure that they meet diversity, equity, and inclusion goals. Institutions can use the data to tailor support to different populations and inform strategies to retain students from diverse backgrounds throughout the application process. Prospective applicants who have not yet entered the application process but are potential candidates are targets for outreach. Graduate programs and organizations rely on demographic data to identify populations that may be underrepresented in their applicant pool, allowing them to develop outreach efforts that resonate with specific communities.

For this study, age, ability to communicate in English, and disability status are all statuses that can shape women PGS' undergraduate experiences and could factor into their considerations for their graduate school experiences (see Table A2).

General Profile

In this study, a total of 980,903 individuals were analyzed, providing a robust data set for examining the impact of parental education on graduate school aspirations. When looking at the distribution of participants by parental education, 33% reported that neither parent had earned a bachelor's degree (no parent BA), 31% reported having at least one parent with a bachelor's degree (one parent BA), and 37% had at least one parent with a graduate or professional degree (one parent BA+; see Table 1).

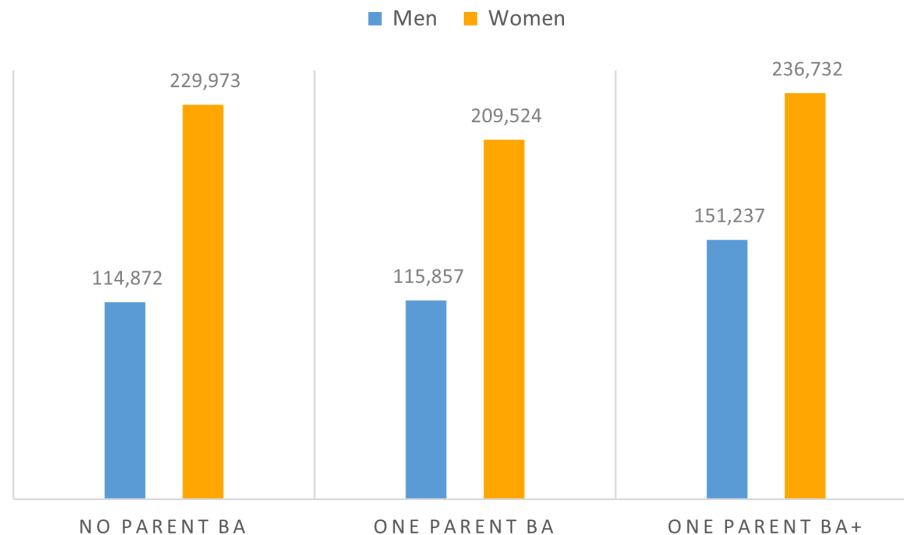
Table 1. Parental Education of Individuals Who Took the GRE by Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021

Test taker profile	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019	2019–2020	2020–2021	Total
No parent BA	86,791	80,782	73,566	60,968	42,738	344,845
Women	57,096	53,350	49,138	40,993	29,396	229,973
Men	29,695	27,432	24,428	19,975	13,342	114,872
One parent BA	72,076	75,928	70,735	60,525	46,117	325,381
Women	45,555	48,523	45,708	39,195	30,543	209,524
Men	26,521	27,405	25,027	21,330	15,574	115,857
One parent BA+	80,444	90,639	84,739	74,268	57,879	387,969
Women	47,982	55,259	52,047	45,432	36,012	236,732
Men	32,462	35,380	32,692	28,836	21,867	151,237

Note. These individuals had scores on all three GRE General Test measures over the period of July 1, 2016, to June 30, 2021, and responded to the questions about gender, citizenship, and parent educational attainment on the GRE registration form and the Background Information Questionnaire. BA = bachelor of arts.

Across all three parental education groups, the gender distribution followed a consistent pattern. Approximately two-thirds of the individuals in each group identified as women⁴ (61%–67%), while one-third identified as men. However, as parental education increased, so did the proportion of men: 33% in the no parent BA group, 36% in the one parent BA group, and 39% in the one parent BA+ group (see Figure 2). This trend suggests a subtle but notable shift in gender dynamics as parental attainment rises.

Figure 2. Prospective Graduate Students' Parental Education by Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021



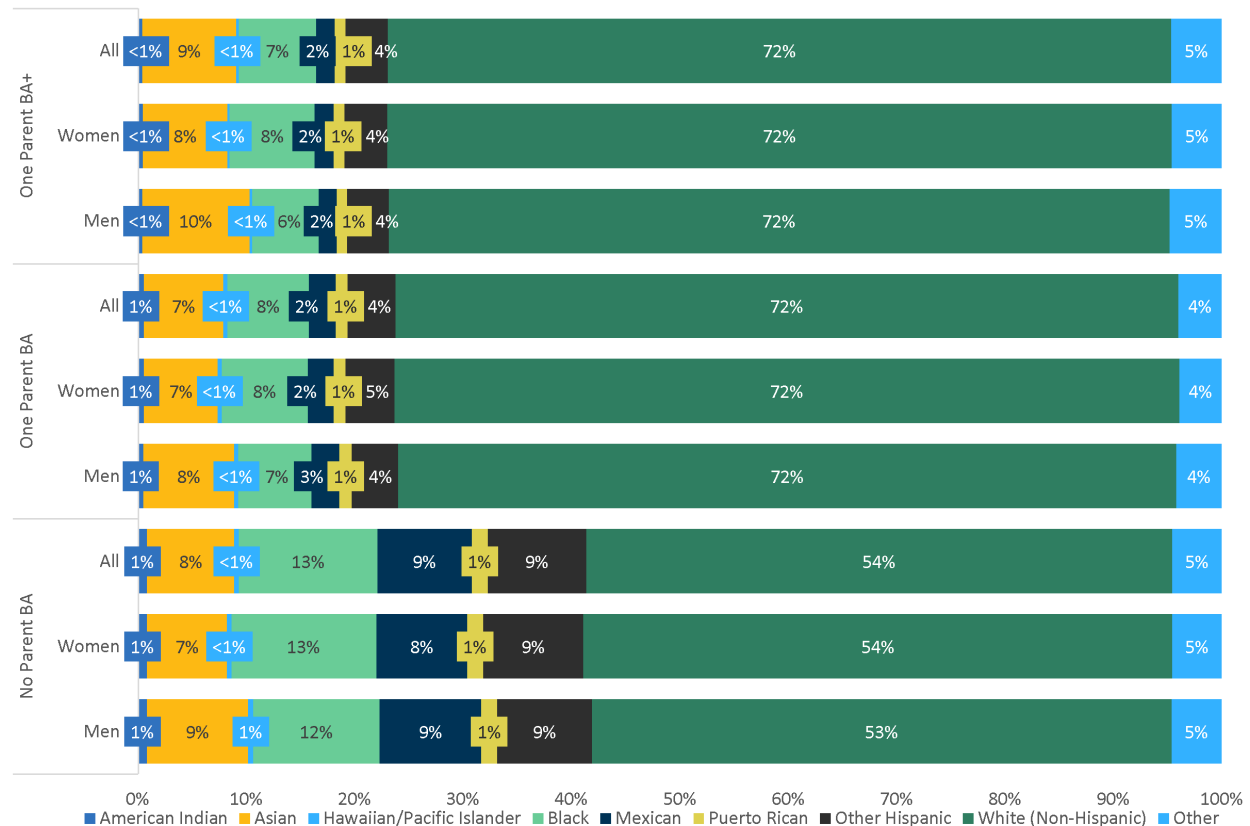
These individuals had scores on all three GRE General Test measures over the period of July 1, 2016, to June 30, 2021, and responded to the questions about gender, citizenship, and parent educational attainment on the GRE registration form and Background Information Questionnaire. BA = bachelor of arts.

Race/Ethnicity

For each level of parental education, White PGS consistently represented the largest racial/ethnic group.⁵ However, a substantial 18 percentage point difference emerged between those in the no parent BA group and those in the other two categories. Specifically, White students composed 54% of all no parent BA participants and 72% of the one parent BA and one parent BA+ groups (see Figure 3 and Table A2). There were also moderate differences in the representation of Mexican students between the no parent BA group and the other two parental education groups (9%, 2%, and 2%, respectively). Across the three parental education groups, there were slight differences in the representation of American Indian PGS, Asian PGS, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander PGS, Black PGS, Puerto Rican PGS, other Hispanic PGS, and other PGS.

Interestingly, there were no notable gender differences within the three parental education groups, highlighting a consistent gender distribution across all parental education levels.

Figure 3. Prospective Graduate Students' Parental Educational Attainment by Racial/Ethnic Group and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021



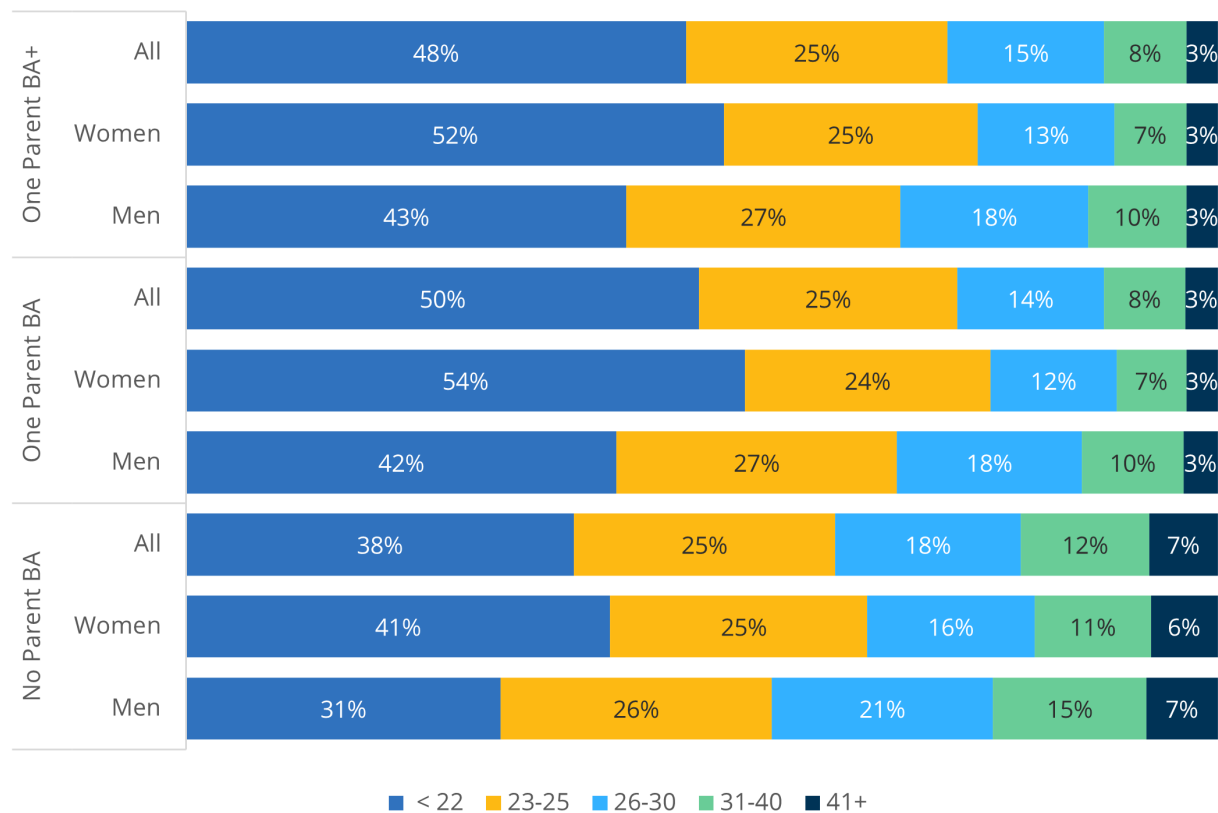
Racial/ethnic groups are defined as follows: American Indian = American Indian or Alaskan Native; Asian = Asian or Asian American; Hawaiian/Pacific Islander = Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; Black = Black or African American; Mexican = Mexican, Mexican American, or Chicano; Puerto Rican = Puerto Rican; other Hispanic = other Hispanic, Latino, or Latin American; White = White (non-Hispanic). BA = bachelor of arts.

Age Group

For each level of parental education, PGS aged 22 years or younger represented the largest group, followed by individuals aged 23–25 years, 26–30 years, 31–40 years, and 41 years or older. However, there was a considerable difference—12 percentage points—between those aged 22 years or younger in the no parent BA group and those in the other two categories. Aged 22 years or younger PGS represented 38% of all no parent BA participants, while they composed 50% of the one parent BA group and 48% of the one parent BA+ group.

Within each parental education group, notable gender differences emerged in the age distribution, particularly among PGS aged 22 years or younger. In this age group, women were substantially more represented than men, suggesting that younger women may be pursuing graduate education at higher rates across all parental education levels (see Figure 4, Table A2).

Figure 4. Prospective Graduate Students' Parental Educational Attainment by Age Group and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021



BA = bachelor of arts.

Communicates Better in English

The vast majority of PGS (94%) in each parental education group indicated that they communicated better in English than in any other language, with minimal differences by gender. Those who reported that they do not communicate better in English than in any other language listed Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Arabic, Vietnamese, Russian, Farsi, French, and Tagalog as some of their native languages (see Table A2).⁶

Documented Disability

The Americans With Disabilities Act defines a person with a disability as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (Civil Rights Division, n.d.). These include both visible disabilities—those disabilities that have a visible indicator, such as use of a screen reader—and invisible disabilities, or those disabilities that do not have a visible indicator, such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Individuals could indicate one of the following: none, blind/visually impaired, deaf/hard of hearing, physical disability, learning disability, multiple disabilities, or other. For the other disability category, the BIQ did not have the option to provide more information, for example, if they had a neurodevelopmental or cognitive disability or condition (e.g., autism, ADHD, or brain injury) or an emotional or mental health concern or condition (e.g., depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder).

Across all parental education levels, approximately 5% of PGS reported having a documented visible or invisible disability (see Table A2). Of the PGS who responded affirmatively, a learning disability was the most common disability across all three parental education groups. Self-reports of having a learning disability increased as parental education increased (32% to 44% to 50%). While there were minimal differences in reporting other types of disabilities (e.g., blind/visually impaired), it was interesting that learning disability was the only diagnosis that increased in prevalence as parental education increased. In contrast, the prevalence of other disabilities decreased with higher parental education. There were no notable gender differences within the three parental education groups.

Research Question 2: Where Did Prospective Graduate Students Reside?

If we look at an aerial view of the 3.1 million square miles composing the contiguous United States, where might we find PGS? The simple answer is, everywhere. And yet, the U.S. population is not evenly distributed across the country. Where are there significant representations of individuals seeking advanced education? Examining geographic data can inform both admissions and advocacy work.

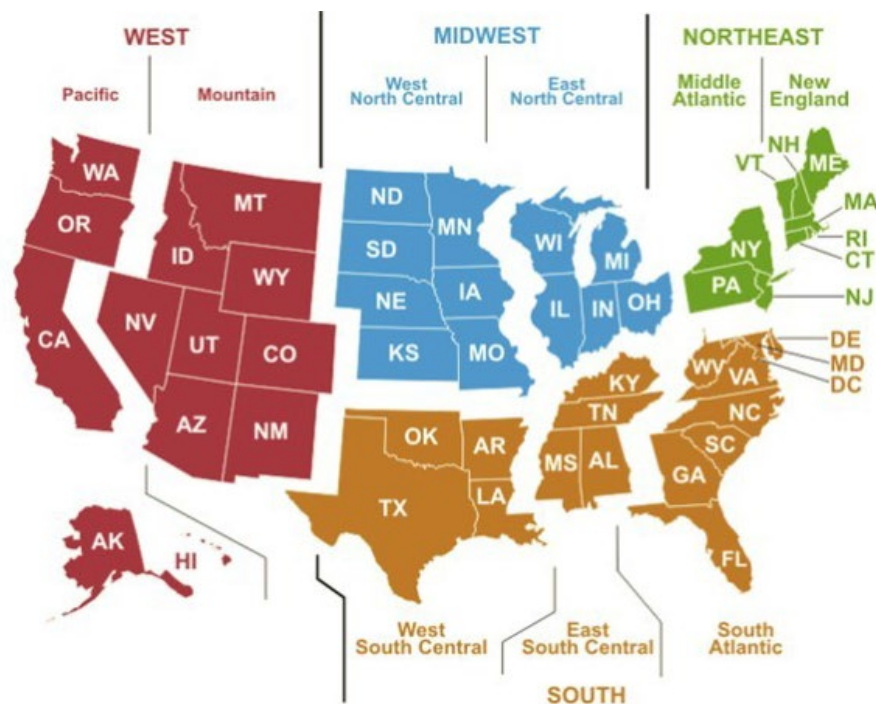
Gewelber (2014) wrote, “Think geographic, not just demographic. . . . Location data provides a reliable window into the mindsets, intentions, and concerns of an audience—sometimes even more so than demographic data.” Graduate schools interested in shaping their applicant pools may benefit from a better understanding of where PGS reside. Equipped with this

intelligence, graduate schools may refine their strategies to target future graduate students, perhaps in their undergraduate years or even through workforce connections. Insights gained from geographic data may also help with market segmentation when recruiting.

Among the many ways to champion change in graduate education is to advocate for resources and policies that can ease students' journeys. The U.S. president is the only elected official with every prospective graduate student in their constituency. It is imperative that elected officials at all levels—local, county, state, and federal—know who is in their districts and what they need. U.S. Census data can help determine the federal funding state governments and local communities receive; the need for new higher education institutions and programs; and representation in state legislatures and the U.S. House of Representatives, where critical graduate education issues can be voted on.

The data presented in this section include home state, CBSAs, the four U.S. Census regions and nine divisions (see Figure 5 and Table A3),⁷ and congressional districts. Except for the census data, the other data presented are limited to the 10 most populated areas.

Figure 5. U.S. Census Regions and Divisions



Data are from the U.S. Census Bureau (2022).

Home States

There are multiple viewpoints to examine U.S. states, whether by population size, the number of bachelor's degrees awarded, or the overall educational attainment of residents. In 2022, the most populous states were California, Texas, Florida, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio, Georgia, North Carolina, and Michigan (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). From an education perspective, the 10 states that awarded the greatest number of bachelor's degrees in 2019–2020 overlapped considerably with the most populous states, except for Arizona and Massachusetts, replacing Georgia and North Carolina (NCES, 2021, Table 319.10).

Another perspective considers residents' educational attainment. According to the Saint Louis Federal Reserve's FRED data, Massachusetts (47%), Colorado (44%), Vermont (44%), New Jersey (43%), Maryland (43%), Connecticut (42%), Virginia (42%), New Hampshire (40%), New York (40%), and Washington (39%) were the 10 states with the most educated populations (Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 2024). While there is some overlap between the most populous states and those awarding the most bachelor's degrees, states like Vermont and Virginia stand out for their high levels of educational attainment despite not being among the most populous states.

More than 50% of PGS from all three parental education groups resided in one of the 10 states with a high representation of PGS (see Table 2). The three PGS groups shared residency in eight states: California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Texas. Ohio was a common state of residence for PGS in the no parent BA and one parent BA groups, while Virginia was shared by those in the one parent BA and one parent BA+ groups. Notably, only the one parent BA+ group had a significant number of individuals residing in Massachusetts, the state with the highest proportion of residents holding a bachelor's degree or higher. Within the three groups, men and women lived in similar states.

Core-Based Statistical Areas

The 10 largest CBSAs in the United States in 2022 were (a) New York–Newark–Jersey City, NY/NJ/PA; (b) Los Angeles–Long Beach–Anaheim, CA; (c) Chicago–Naperville–Elgin, IL/IN/WI; (d) Dallas–Fort Worth–Arlington, TX; (e) Houston–Pasadena–The Woodlands, TX; (f) Washington–Arlington–Alexandria, DC/VA/MD/WV; (g) Philadelphia–Camden–Wilmington, PA/NJ/DE/MD; (h) Atlanta–Sandy Springs–Alpharetta, GA; (i) Miami–Fort Lauderdale–Pompano Beach, FL; and (j) Phoenix–Mesa–Chandler, AZ.

Table 2. The 10 States With the Highest Representation of Prospective Graduate Students by Parental Education and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021

	No parent BA			One parent BA			One parent BA+		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Highest representation (highest to lowest)									
1	California	California	California	California	California	California	California	California	California
2	Texas	New York	New York	Texas	Texas	Texas	New York	New York	New York
3	New York	Texas	Texas	New York	New York	New York	Texas	Texas	Texas
4	Florida	Florida	Florida	Florida	Florida	Florida	Florida	Florida	Florida
5	North Carolina	North Carolina	North Carolina	North Carolina	North Carolina	North Carolina	Illinois	Illinois	Illinois
6	Georgia	Georgia	Georgia	Illinois	Georgia	Georgia	Virginia	Georgia	Pennsylvania
7	Illinois	Illinois	Illinois	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania	North Carolina	Massachusetts
8	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania	Pennsylvania	Georgia	Illinois	Illinois	Massachusetts	Pennsylvania	Virginia
9	Ohio	Ohio	Ohio	Ohio	Ohio	Ohio	North Carolina	Massachusetts	North Carolina
10	New Jersey	New Jersey	New Jersey	Virginia	New Jersey	Virginia	Georgia	Virginia	Georgia
Percentage	58	60	60	53	54	53	53	54	54
Top 10 <i>n</i>	67,037	138,543	205,580	61,391	113,939	175,242	80,039	127,647	207,686
50 states + DC	114,872	229,973	344,845	115,857	209,524	325,381	151,237	236,732	387,969

Note. These analyses are restricted to the 50 states and Washington, DC. Dark blue shading denotes that a state is one of the states with the highest representation of prospective graduate students for all three groups. Pink shading indicates that a state is one of the states with the highest representation of prospective graduate students for two groups, and orange indicates that the state has the highest representation for one group. Gray shading indicates that a state is unique to one gender within a group. BA = bachelor of arts.

There is a high level of overlap between the 10 largest CBSAs and the CBSAs where PGS reside. Nearly one-third of individuals in the three parental education groups resided in these CBSAs, and the three groups resided in eight of the largest CBSAs (see Table 3).

The no parent BA and one parent BA PGS groups have the Miami area in common, while the Philadelphia area was common to one parent BA and one parent BA+. The San Diego area was unique to the no parent BA group, while the San Francisco area was unique to the one parent BA+ group.

There were a few gender differences within two of the three parental education groups. In the no parent BA group, men and women had eight CBSAs in common, but men were more likely to reside in the San Francisco and San Diego areas, while women were concentrated in the Philadelphia and Boston areas. In the one parent BA group, men and women had nine CBSAs in common, with men also residing in the San Francisco area and women in the Miami area.

U.S. Census Regions and Divisions

The South is the most populous region in the United States, with 38.9% of the nation's population, followed by the West (23.6%), the Midwest (20.6%), and the Northeast (17%; U.S. Census Bureau, 2024). This demographic landscape is crucial for understanding PGS distribution by parental education.

Across all parental education levels, minimal differences exist in the U.S. Census regions and divisions where they reside (see Table A3). Most PGS (~40%) lived in the South region, followed by the West. The nine U.S. Census divisions show a finer-grained picture of the country. For each of the three parental education groups, more than one-fifth of PGS resided in the South Atlantic region (see Table A3). The next most populous regions had some variability. For no parent BA PGS, the Pacific was the next most populous region (17%); for one parent BA, the East North Central (14%) and Middle Atlantic (14%) regions were most populous; and for one parent BA+, the Middle Atlantic (15%) was most populous. Moreover, gender differences were minimal within each profile.

U.S. Congressional Districts

There are notable differences in congressional district representation both across and within the three parental education groups (see Table 4). The 10 most populous congressional districts for each group account for 5%–8% of the population.

Table 3. The 10 Core-Based Statistical Areas With the Highest Representation of Prospective Graduate Students by Parental Education and Gender, July 2016–June 2021

	No parent BA			One parent BA			One parent BA+		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Highest representation (highest to lowest)									
1	NYC Area	NYC Area	NYC Area	NYC Area	NYC Area	NYC Area	NYC Area	NYC Area	NYC Area
2	LA Area	LA Area	LA Area	LA Area	LA Area	LA Area	DC Area	DC Area	DC Area
3	CHI Area	CHI Area	CHI Area	CHI Area	CHI Area	CHI Area	LA Area	CHI Area	LA Area
4	DAL Area	ATL Area	ATL Area	DC Area	ATL Area	DC Area	BOS Area	LA Area	CHI Area
5	HOU Area	MIA Area	MIA Area	DAL Area	DC Area	ATL Area	CHI Area	BOS Area	BOS Area
6	DC Area	DAL Area	DAL Area	ATL Area	DAL Area	DAL Area	SFO Area	ATL Area	ATL Area
7	MIA Area	HOU Area	HOU Area	BOS Area	BOS Area	BOS Area	ATL Area	PHL Area	SFO Area
8	ATL Area	DC Area	DC Area	HOU Area	PHL Area	PHL Area	PHL Area	SFO Area	PHL Area
9	SFO Area	PHL Area	PHL Area	PHL Area	HOU Area	HOU Area	DAL Area	DAL Area	DAL Area
10	SD Area	BOS Area	BOS Area	SFO Area	MIA Area	MIA Area	HOU Area	HOU Area	HOU Area
Percentage	30	32	31	29	29	29	32	33	32
Top 10 <i>n</i>	34,890	73,138	107,741	33,380	61,635	94,679	47,999	77,589	122,266
50 states + DC	114,872	229,973	344,845	115,857	209,524	325,381	151,237	236,732	387,969

Note. These analyses are restricted to the 50 states and Washington, DC. Dark blue shading denotes that a core-based statistical area is one of the core-based statistical areas (CBSAs) with the highest representation of prospective graduate students for all three groups. Pink shading indicates that a core-based statistical area is one of the CBSAs with the highest representation of prospective graduate students for two groups, and orange indicates that the core-based statistical area has the highest representation for one group. Gray shading indicates that a core-based statistical area is unique to one gender within a group. ATL Area = Atlanta–Sandy Springs–Roswell, GA. BA = bachelor of arts. BAL Area = Baltimore–Columbia–Towson, MD. BOS Area = Boston–Cambridge–Newton, MA/NH. CHI Area = Chicago–Naperville–Elgin, IL/IN. DAL Area = Dallas–Fort Worth–Arlington, TX. DC Area = Washington–Arlington–Alexandria, DC/VA/MD/WV. HOU Area = Houston–Pasadena–The Woodlands, TX. LA Area = Los Angeles–Long Beach–Anaheim, CA. MIA Area = Miami–Fort Lauderdale–West Palm Beach, FL. NYC Area = New York–Newark–Jersey City, NY/NJ. PHL Area = Philadelphia–Camden–Wilmington, PA/NJ/DE/MD. SD Area = San Diego–Chula Vista–Carlsbad, CA. SF Area = San Francisco–Oakland–Fremont, CA.

Table 4. The 10 U.S. Congressional Districts with the Highest Representation of Prospective Graduate Students by Parental Education and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021

	No parent BA			One parent BA			One parent BA+		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Highest representation (highest to lowest)									
1	CA Dist. 51	NY Dist. 11	NY Dist. 11	UT Dist. 03	TX Dist. 10	DC Dist. 00	MA Dist. 07	MA Dist. 07	DC Dist. 00
2	MA Dist. 07	NY Dist. 08	NY Dist. 08	UT Dist. 01	NC Dist. 02	MA Dist. 07	DC Dist. 00	DC Dist. 00	MA Dist. 07
3	NY Dist. 13	NY Dist. 03	NY Dist. 03	TX Dist. 10	MA Dist. 07	UT Dist. 03	NY Dist. 12	NY Dist. 12	NY Dist. 12
4	TX Dist. 10	NY Dist. 06	FL Dist. 02	MA Dist. 07	DC Dist. 00	VA Dist. 08	VA Dist. 08	VA Dist. 08	UT Dist. 03
5	FL Dist. 02	NY Dist. 14	NY Dist. 06	DC Dist. 00	MD Dist. 08	NY Dist. 12	MD Dist. 08	MD Dist. 08	VA Dist. 08
6	NY Dist. 11	FL Dist. 02	NY Dist. 14	WA Dist. 07	NY Dist. 03	WA Dist. 07	MI Dist. 06	MI Dist. 06	MI Dist. 06
7	FL Dist. 03	NY Dist. 04	NY Dist. 13	NC Dist. 02	MI Dist. 06	MI Dist. 06	WA Dist. 07	WA Dist. 07	MD Dist. 08
8	NY Dist. 08	NY Dist. 05	NY Dist. 04	MI Dist. 06	NC Dist. 04	MD Dist. 08	NY Dist. 10	NY Dist. 10	WA Dist. 07
9	CA Dist. 28	NY Dist. 13	CA Dist. 51	ID Dist. 02	GA Dist. 05	CO Dist. 02	NC Dist. 04	NC Dist. 04	NC Dist. 04
10	UT Dist. 01	NY Dist. 09	MA Dist. 07	VA Dist. 08	NY Dist. 04	CA Dist. 50	UT Dist. 03	UT Dist. 03	CO Dist. 02
Percentage	5	5	5	6	5	5	8	8	8
Top 10 <i>n</i>	5,529	12,564	17,669	7,116	10,696	17,383	12,333	17,776	29,884
50 states + DC	114,872	229,973	344,845	115,857	209,524	325,381	151,237	236,732	387,969

Note. These analyses are restricted to the 50 states and Washington, DC. Dark blue shading denotes that a congressional district is one of the congressional districts with the highest representation of prospective graduate students for all three groups. Pink shading indicates that a congressional district is one of the congressional districts with the highest representation of prospective graduate students for two groups, and orange indicates that the congressional district has the highest representation for one group. Gray shading indicates that a congressional district is unique to one gender within a group. BA = bachelor of arts.

Three key points emerge from the data. First, Massachusetts District 07 is the only congressional district common to all three parental education groups. Second, these groups collectively reside in 20 districts spanning 11 states and Washington, DC. There are nine overlapping districts for one parent BA and one parent BA+. Except for Massachusetts District 07, the congressional districts for the no parent BA group do not overlap with the other two parental education groups. Last, within each profile, the overlap of the congressional districts where men and women live varies; there are four overlapping districts for the no parent BA group, five for the one parent BA group, and all 10 in common for the one parent BA+ group. This total number of unique congressional districts across all groups increases to 30, spanning 14 states and the District of Columbia.

Research Question 3: What Were Their Education and Work Experiences?

Graduate programs are interested in knowing what PGS are engaged in at the time of application. PGS bring a diverse range of educational and work backgrounds. This section elucidates two areas that graduate programs typically consider: the applicants' current educational status and work experience. Both experiences play a critical role in shaping PGS' readiness for graduate education (see Table A4).

Current Educational Level

For all three parental education groups, PGS were predominantly currently enrolled in college or unenrolled college graduates with a BA/bachelor of science (BS; see Table A4). There was a moderate difference between those presently enrolled in college in the no parent BA group (37%) and those in the other two categories (44% and 42%, respectively). Within each profile, there were minimal gender differences.

Full-Time Work Experience

Individuals decide for themselves whether to enroll in graduate school directly from undergraduate studies or to take a break. Those who take time off between undergraduate studies and graduate school may gain work experience and prepare for graduate school. More than half of the individuals in the three parental education groups reported less than 1 year of work experience upon completing their undergraduate degrees (see Table A4). Fewer PGS with no

parent BA status reported less than 1 year of work experience than the other two groups (51% vs. 57%–55%). There were no notable differences within the groups.

Research Question 4: What Were Their Undergraduate Experiences?

Diverse undergraduate experiences shape the academic journeys of PGS. Understanding these pathways begins by examining the institutions they attended, providing essential context for their postsecondary education. This section also explores their eligibility for Pell Grants, offering insight into the socioeconomic factors influencing their academic decisions. Additionally, the majors they pursued and their academic performance, such as grades, are analyzed to paint a fuller picture of their readiness for advanced study. Together, these factors provide a comprehensive view of the diverse academic profiles of PGS by parental education, offering valuable information for graduate admissions committees and organizations interested in fostering equitable access to graduate education (see Table A5).

What Are the Profiles of Their Baccalaureate Institutions?

There are approximately 2,600 4-year, degree-granting, postsecondary institutions in the United States (NCES, 2021, Table 317.10). Like the women profiled in this report, higher education institutions have multiple identities—academic, athletic, and research. Several baccalaureate institution profiles are of interest. Women PGS self-reported their undergraduate institutions when they registered for the GRE. The first profile examines if women attended an undergraduate institution in their state of residence and particular types of institutions in their state of residence. The next set are two conventional institutional characteristics: control and size. The third set considers whether women attended a minority-serving institution (MSI) or a single-sex college. The final set focuses on the range of institutional diversity using the Carnegie classification, *Barron's* selectivity measures, and membership in the AAU.

Baccalaureate Institutions in Their Home States

An individual may elect to earn a bachelor's degree at a higher education institution in the state where they reside for several reasons, such as privileges tied to admissions (e.g., Texas Top 10% Plan), being eligible for in-state tuition, proximity to home, and academic offerings. Within a state, there is variation among public higher education institutions, from the state flagship (usually the most prominent public university in the state, with a high research profile

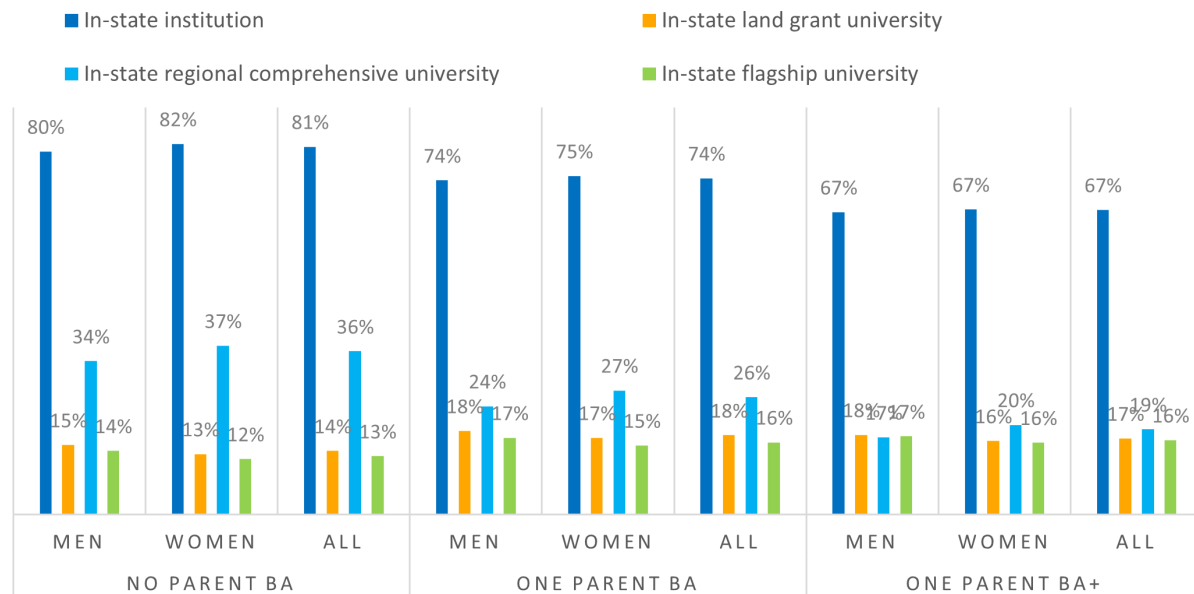
and the most doctoral programs) to regional comprehensive universities usually founded as teacher's colleges, night schools, veteran's education centers, or technical colleges (Orphan, 2018) to state land grant universities created by the Morrill Act of 1862 with an "original mission . . . to teach agriculture, military tactics, and the mechanic arts as well as classical studies so members of the working classes could obtain a liberal, practical education" (Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, n.d., "What Is a Land-Grant University," para. 2). In some states, colleges and universities hold multiple designations, such as in New Jersey, where Rutgers–New Brunswick is the state's land grant and its public flagship university, and Montclair State University is one of the public regional comprehensive universities. By contrast, in North Carolina, North Carolina State University, Raleigh is the land grant college, North Carolina Central University is the public regional comprehensive university, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC Chapel Hill) is the public flagship.

Four different profiles of the baccalaureate experience, categorized by state of residence, are presented: attending an in-state institution within their state of residence, a state land grant university within their state of residence, a regional comprehensive university within their state of residence, or a flagship university within their state of residence (see Figure 6 and Table A5). State land grant universities, regional comprehensive universities, and flagship universities are subsets of the broader category of in-state institutions.

For each parental education group, three-fourths of PGS were attending a public or private baccalaureate institution in their state of residence. However, a substantial 14 percentage point difference emerged between those in the no parent BA group and those in the other two categories. Specifically, students attending an in-state institution made up 81% of all no parent BA participants. In comparison, they composed 74% of the one parent BA group and 67% of the one parent BA+ group.

There were minimal differences across the three parental education groups regarding attending state land grant institutions in their states of residence. It ranged from 14% for no parent BA PGS to 18% for one parent BA PGS and 17% for one parent BA+ PGS.

Figure 6. Prospective Graduate Students' Parental Education by Attendance at Undergraduate Institutions in Their State of Residence and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021



Apart from the University of Idaho, the University of North Dakota, and the University of South Dakota, there is no overlap between the state flagship university and the regional comprehensive universities in a state. BA = bachelor of arts.

The parental education groups differed considerably in their enrollment at regional comprehensive universities in their states of residence. The percentage enrolled decreased as parental education increased. Thirty-six percent of all no parent BA PGS were enrolled at a regional comprehensive university, compared to 26% of one parent BA PGS and 19% of one parent BA+ PGS.

While the differences across the three parental education groups were minimal for attending flagship universities in their states of residence, 13% of no parent BA PGS enrolled at a flagship university, compared to 16% each of one parent BA and one parent BA+ individuals.

For each institutional profile, women and men in each parental education group have similar enrollment levels.

Institution Control and Student Body Size

Institution control is a classification for whether an institution operates as part of a state government (public) or independently of the state government (private). Private institutions can be either nonprofit or for-profit. In fall 2021, 77% of undergraduate students nationally enrolled at public institutions, 18% at nonprofit private institutions, and 5% at for-profit institutions (NCES, 2022, Table 306.50). Control is associated with the student body size. Eighty-four percent of the institutions that compose the 120 largest degree-granting colleges and universities are public universities, followed by private nonprofit (9%) and private for-profit (7%; NCES, 2021, Table 312.10).

Most PGS in all three parental education groups attended public universities, but attendance decreased as parental education increased (77% to 73% to 65%, respectively; see Table A5). Conversely, attendance at private universities increased as parental education increased (23% to 27% to 34%, respectively). Each of the three parental education groups had low enrollment at private for-profit institutions. Almost half of PGS in each parental education profile attended institutions with 20,000 or more students (the largest institution size listed; 49%–52%). There were minimal gender differences within each group regarding the types of institution PGS attended.

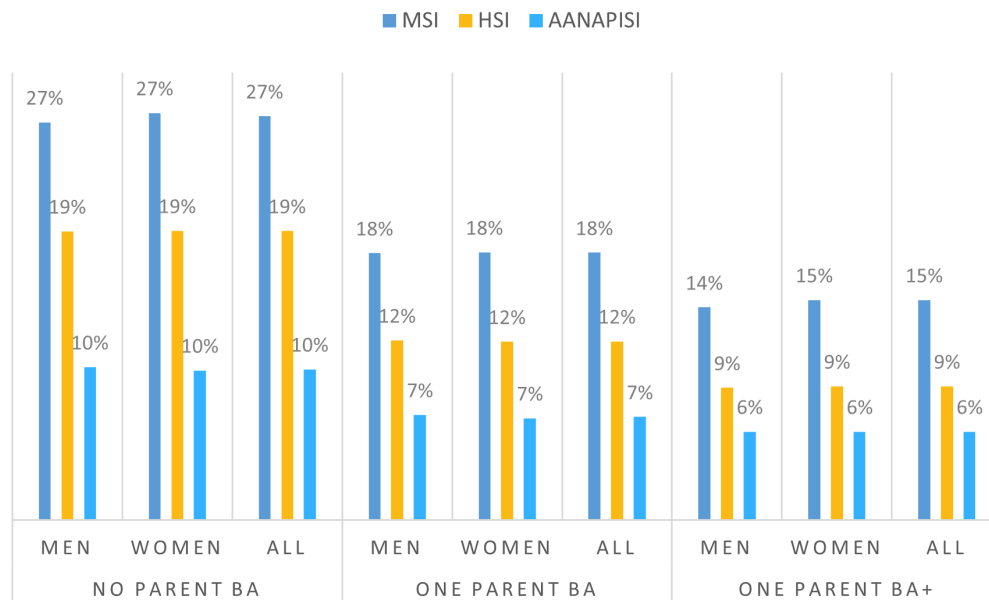
Minority-Serving Institutions

Today, millions of students of color, many of whom may be from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and the first in their families to attend college, enroll at an MSI (American Council on Education [ACE], n.d.-b). Students of all races/ethnicities attend MSIs. The 771 MSIs compose a category of educational establishments based on historical origin or enrollment criteria (typically the percentage of enrolled minorities at a particular school; Conrad & Gasman, 2017). Institutions may have more than one MSI designation. For this research, the umbrella term MSI subsumes Asian American Native American Pacific Islander–serving institutions (AANAPISIs), Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian–serving institutions (AANHs), Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs), historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Native American–serving nontribal institutions (NASNTIs), predominantly Black institutions, and tribal colleges and universities.

There were a few notable differences in MSI attendance as undergraduates among the parental education groups. First, while the majority of students in each parental education group

did not attend an MSI for their undergraduate education, students in the no parent BA group had a higher rate of MSI attendance compared to the other two groups (27%, 18%, and 15%, respectively; see Figure 7 and Table A5). Second, across all parental education groups, HSIs were the most popular type, followed by AANAPISIs. Attendance patterns at HSIs mirrored the overall MSI attendance, with enrollment decreasing as parental education increased (19% to 12% to 9%, respectively). Gender differences within each parental education group were minimal.

Figure 7. Prospective Graduate Students' Parental Education by Attendance at Minority-Serving Institutions by Institutional Type and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016-June 2021



Minority-serving institution is the overarching term for the various types of institutions. Some institutions have multiple affiliations. Hispanic-serving institutions and Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-serving institutions are two types of minority-serving institution. AANAPISI = Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-serving institution. BA = bachelor of arts. HSI = Hispanic-serving institution. MSI = minority-serving institution.

Single-Sex Colleges

Today there are 36 single-sex women's colleges and 62 single-sex men's colleges listed by the National Center for Education Statistics College Navigator.⁸ Among all three parental

education groups, approximately 1% of all PGS attended a single-gender college as an undergraduate (see Table A5). One percent of women enrolled in a women's college.

Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education

The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education highlights important similarities and differences among institutions focusing on mission and function. This classification shows the range of institutional diversity in the U.S. higher education system. The basic classification is doctoral universities, master's colleges and universities, baccalaureate colleges, baccalaureate/associate colleges, associate colleges, special focus institutions, and tribal colleges (ACE, n.d.-a).

For each parental education group, most PGS attended an undergraduate institution with a Carnegie classification at the doctoral level (see Table A5). As parental education increased, so did attendance at doctoral-level institutions (65% to 70% to 73%, respectively). Given this pattern, it is unsurprising that as parental education increased, attendance at a master's-level undergraduate institution decreased (28% to 22% to 17%, respectively). There were minimal differences in attending baccalaureate colleges across the three parental education groups. Few gender-related differences emerged.

Barron's Profile of American Colleges

Barron's Profile of American Colleges indexes colleges according to their degree of undergraduate admissions selectivity (Barron's College Division Staff [BCDS], 2015). It considers the median entrance examination scores for the first-year class, class rank, GPA required for admission, and the percentage of accepted applicants (BCDS, 2015). The approximately 200 institutions ranked most competitive and highly competitive typically enroll students ranked in the top 35% of their high school class with a B or higher high school GPA. For example, *Barron's*-ranked institutions in Connecticut would be Charter Oak College (other), the University of Hartford (competitive), Fairfield University (very competitive), Trinity College (highly competitive), and Yale University (most competitive).

The distribution of undergraduate institution selectivity shifts as parental education increases (see Table A5). Initially skewed, it becomes more evenly distributed across selectivity tiers as parental education levels rise. For example, in the no parent BA group, 41% of students attended competitively ranked institutions, 29% attended very competitive institutions, 13%

attended highly competitive colleges, and 8% attended most competitive institutions. In contrast, for the one parent BA Group, 25% of students attended competitively ranked institutions, 30% attended very competitive institutions, 21% attended highly competitive schools, and 20% attended most competitive schools.

When looking across the three parental education groups, attendance at undergraduate institutions ranked as “competitive” decreased as parental education increased (41% to 33% to 25%, respectively), and attendance at “highly competitive” and “most competitive” institutions increased as parental education increased (13% to 18% to 21%, respectively, and 8% to 11% to 20%, respectively). Gender differences were marginal.

Association of American Universities Member University

The 63 U.S. member universities of the AAU are “on the leading edge of innovation, scholarship, and solutions that contribute to scientific progress, economic development, security and well-being” (American Association of Universities [AAU], n.d.-b, para. 1).⁹ In 2020, AAU institutions awarded 48% of all research doctoral degrees and 20% of all undergraduate degrees in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) and social sciences (AAU, n.d.-a). The AAU universities conduct critical research and receive 63% of the funding from federal agencies to perform research in the national interest (AAU, n.d.-a).

Fewer than one-quarter of PGS attended an AAU institution as an undergraduate (see Table A5). Across the three parental education groups, attendance differed, increasing as parental education increased (18% to 23% to 30%, respectively). Men and women attended AAU institutions at similar rates.

How Did Prospective Graduate Students Experience Their Undergraduate Education?

In addition to their gender and race/ethnicity, other dimensions of PGS’ lived experiences may influence how they navigate their undergraduate and graduate school experiences. Being Federal Pell Grant–eligible as an undergraduate may be one such factor.

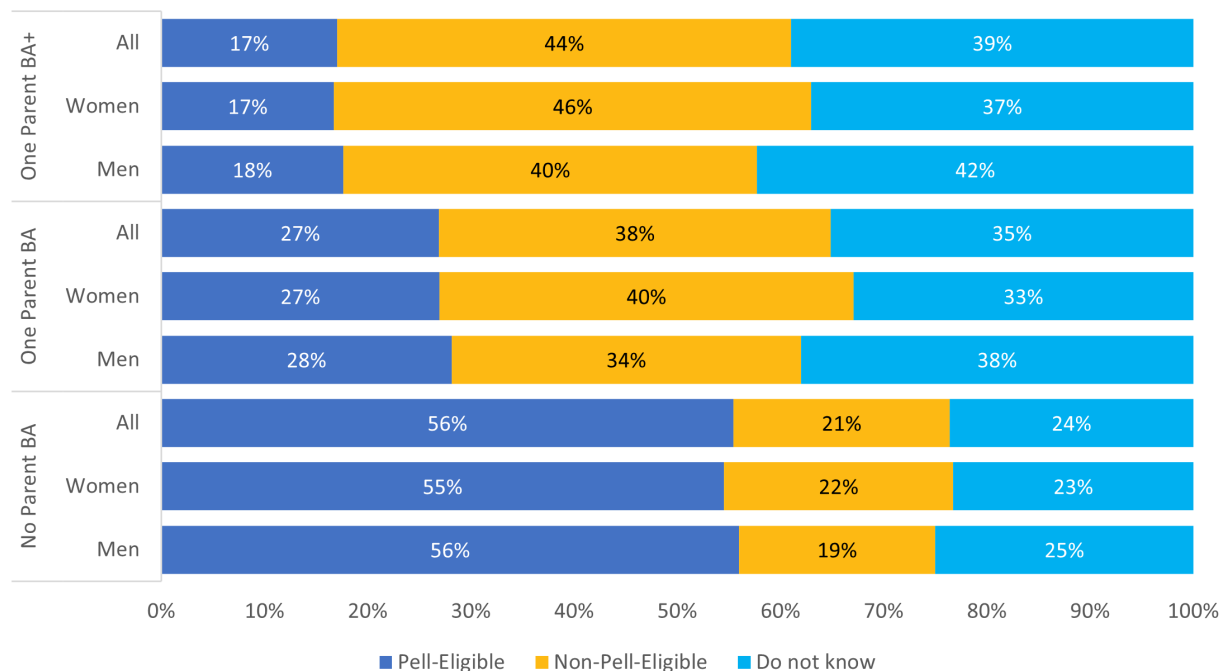
Federal Pell Grant Eligibility

PGS were not asked to provide information about their income, their parents’ income, or other financial assets. Instead, they were asked whether they participated in the Federal Pell Grant program as undergraduates, a proxy measure for economically disadvantaged status. A

detailed discussion of Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible experiences can be found in the Pathways to Graduate School fourth report (Millett, 2025c).

The majority of no parent BA PGS (56%) reported being eligible to receive a Pell Grant as undergraduates (see Figure 8 and Table A5). This was a 29 percentage point difference from one parent BA PGS (27%) and a 39 percentage point difference from one parent BA+ PGS (17%). For the one parent BA and one parent BA+ groups, women were moderately more likely to report not receiving a Pell Grant than men (34% vs. 40% and 40% vs. 46%, respectively).

Figure 8. Prospective Graduate Students' Parental Education by Undergraduate Pell Grant Eligibility and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021



BA = bachelor of arts.

What Were Prospective Graduate Students' Academic Accomplishments?

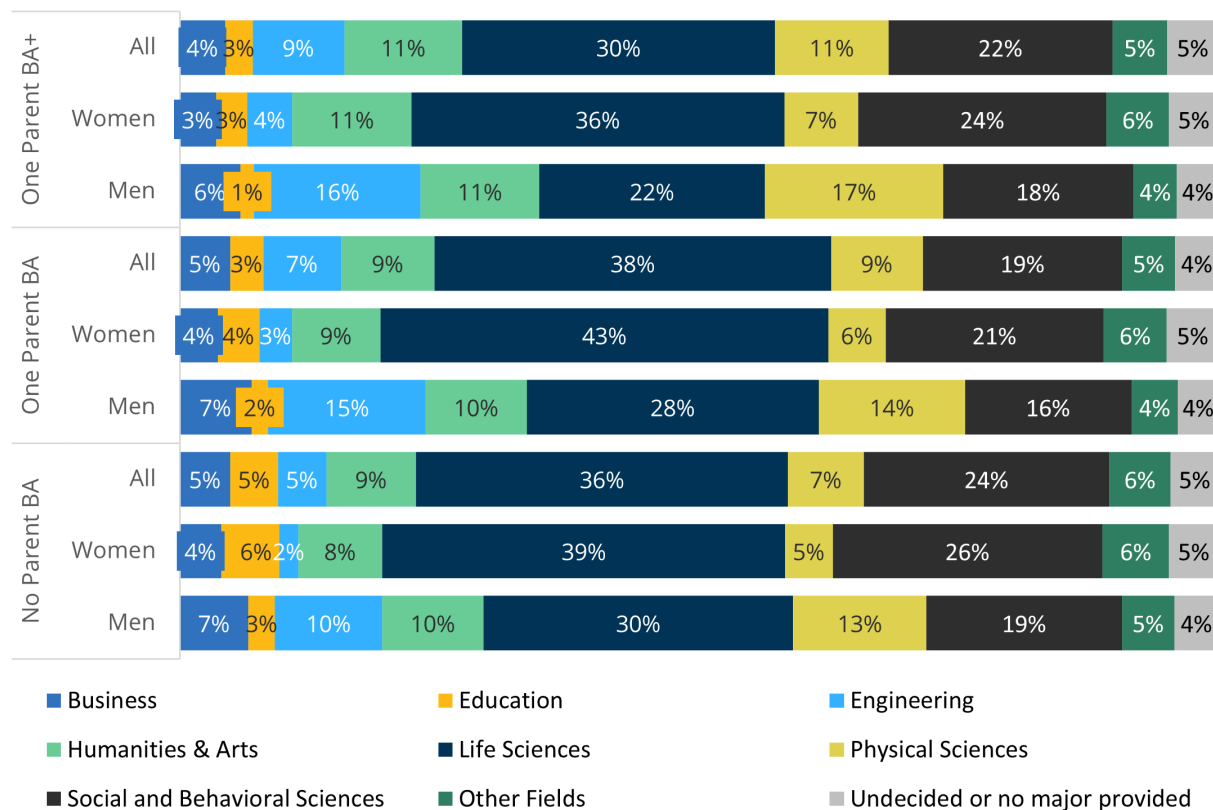
PGS reported on two of their undergraduate academic accomplishments—what they studied and the grades they achieved.

Undergraduate Major Field

Nationally, 36% of bachelor's degrees are conferred in STEM fields, followed by business (19%), other fields (17%), social sciences (13%), humanities (11%), and education (4%; NCES, 2021, Table 322.30).

There are three key points for undergraduate major fields. First, there are minimal differences across the three parental education groups in choice of major field (see Figure 9 and Table A5). Majoring in the life sciences is the one exception. While PGS with no parent BA and one parent BA majored in the life sciences at reasonably similar rates (36% and 38%, respectively), one parent BA+ PGS did so at a notably lower rate (30%).

Figure 9. Prospective Graduate Students' Parental Education by Undergraduate Field of Study and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021



Other fields include, among others, architecture and environmental design, communications and journalism, family and consumer services, law, library and archival studies, public administration, religion and theology, and social

work. Those who indicated undecided, indicated any department not listed, or did not respond to the question or who provided an invalid answer are included in the undecided or no major provided category. BA = bachelor of arts.

While nearly half of PGS from each of the parental education groups majored in STEM, there were moderate differences (48%, 54%, and 50%, respectively). As noted, moderate differences exist between the three groups for majoring in the life sciences, which focus on living things. There are minimal differences across the groups in those who majored in engineering (5%, 7%, and 9%, respectively) and the physical sciences (7%, 9%, and 11%, respectively), which focus on nonliving things. Within each parental educational group, men majored in engineering and the physical sciences at considerably higher rates than women, and the reverse pattern—women majoring at clearly higher rates—held in the life sciences.

Social and behavioral sciences were the second most popular majors for each parental education group (24%, 20%, and 22%, respectively). Within the no parent BA and one parent BA+ groups, women majored in the social and behavioral sciences more often than men.

Undergraduate Grade Point Average

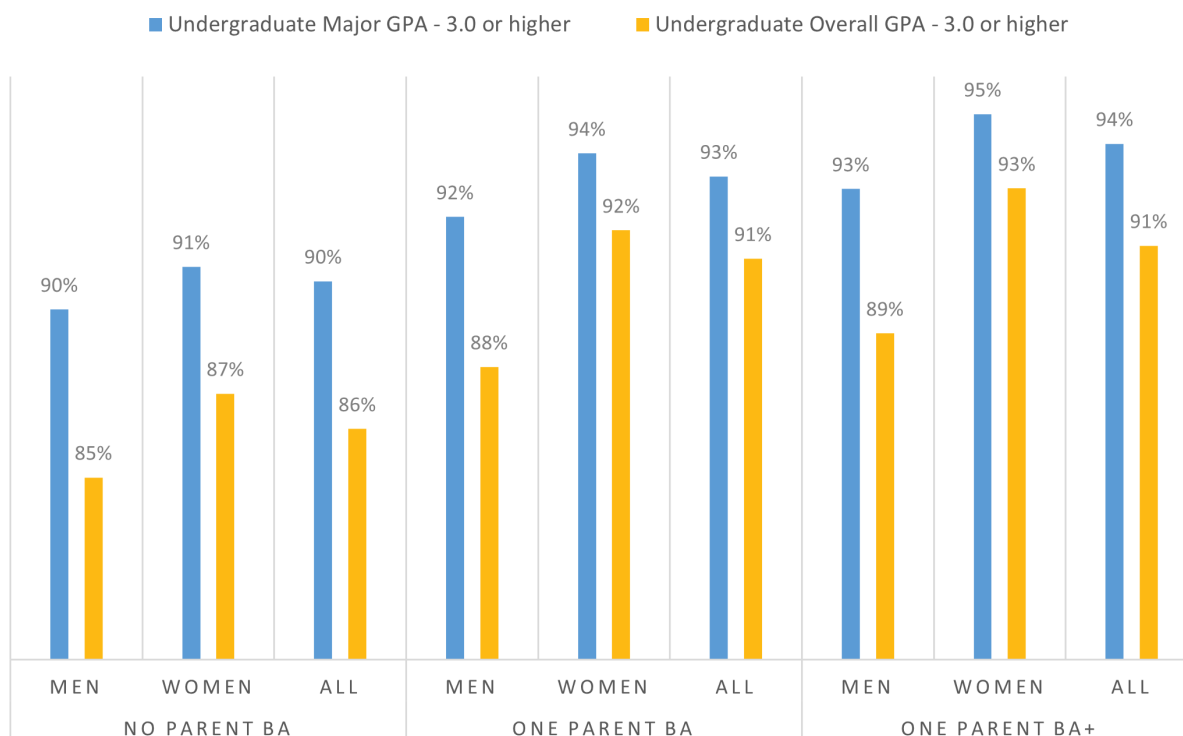
Unlike for undergraduate admissions, department faculty typically make graduate school admissions decisions (Kent & McCarthy, 2016). Although there is no universal minimum GPA admissions committees require, PGS may consult popular forums (e.g., Quora, Academic Stack Exchange, or Forbes Advisor) that suggest (a) at least a 3.0 GPA, with some variation for more competitive programs, and (b) that graduate school admissions committees tend to prioritize undergraduate major GPA above overall GPA, with possible exceptions if an applicant is applying to a different field than their undergraduate major.

To provide context for the data in this study, the U.S. Department of Education, through the Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study, presented GPAs for individuals who earned their bachelor's degrees during the 2007–2008 academic year by selected characteristics (Woo et al., 2012). Sixty-seven percent of bachelor's degree recipients whose parents' highest level of education was high school or less had a GPA of 3.0 or higher. For bachelor's degree recipients whose parents had a bachelor's degree, 72% achieved a GPA of 3.0 or higher, and 76% of their peers whose parents earned a graduate or first professional degree had a GPA of 3.0 or higher.

More than 90% of PGS across all three parental education groups reported a 3.0 or higher undergraduate major GPA (see Figure 10 and Table A5). A similar pattern was observed for

overall undergraduate GPA, with the majority of PGS also achieving a 3.0 or higher. In both cases, within each group, there were minimal gender differences.

Figure 10. Prospective Graduate Students' Parental Education by Undergraduate Major Grade Point Average and Undergraduate Overall Grade Point Average and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021



BA = bachelor of arts. GPA = grade point average.

It is not unexpected that PGS had higher undergraduate major GPAs than their overall undergraduate GPAs, as students may do better in their major courses compared to general education courses and electives.

Research Question 5: What Were Prospective Graduate Students' Plans for Graduate Study?

Understanding PGS' aspirations and goals can help individuals and organizations interested in graduate education better align their offerings with student expectations. This information can also be helpful when advising students to consider where they might go. PGS

were asked several broad questions about their plans, covering key aspects such as their intended degrees, fields of study, and preferred learning modalities, including online and in-person formats. Additionally, they provided insights into their anticipated enrollment status—full-time or part-time—and geographic preferences for where they planned to pursue their graduate education. These insights offer a comprehensive picture of PGS’ graduate education objectives (see Table A6).

Graduate Degree Objective

In the academic year 2020–2021, four out of five graduate degrees conferred were for master’s degrees (NCES, 2022, Table 319.10). The doctoral degrees conferred included individuals who earned a PhD, an EdD, an MD, a DDS, a law degree, or another comparable degree at the doctoral level.

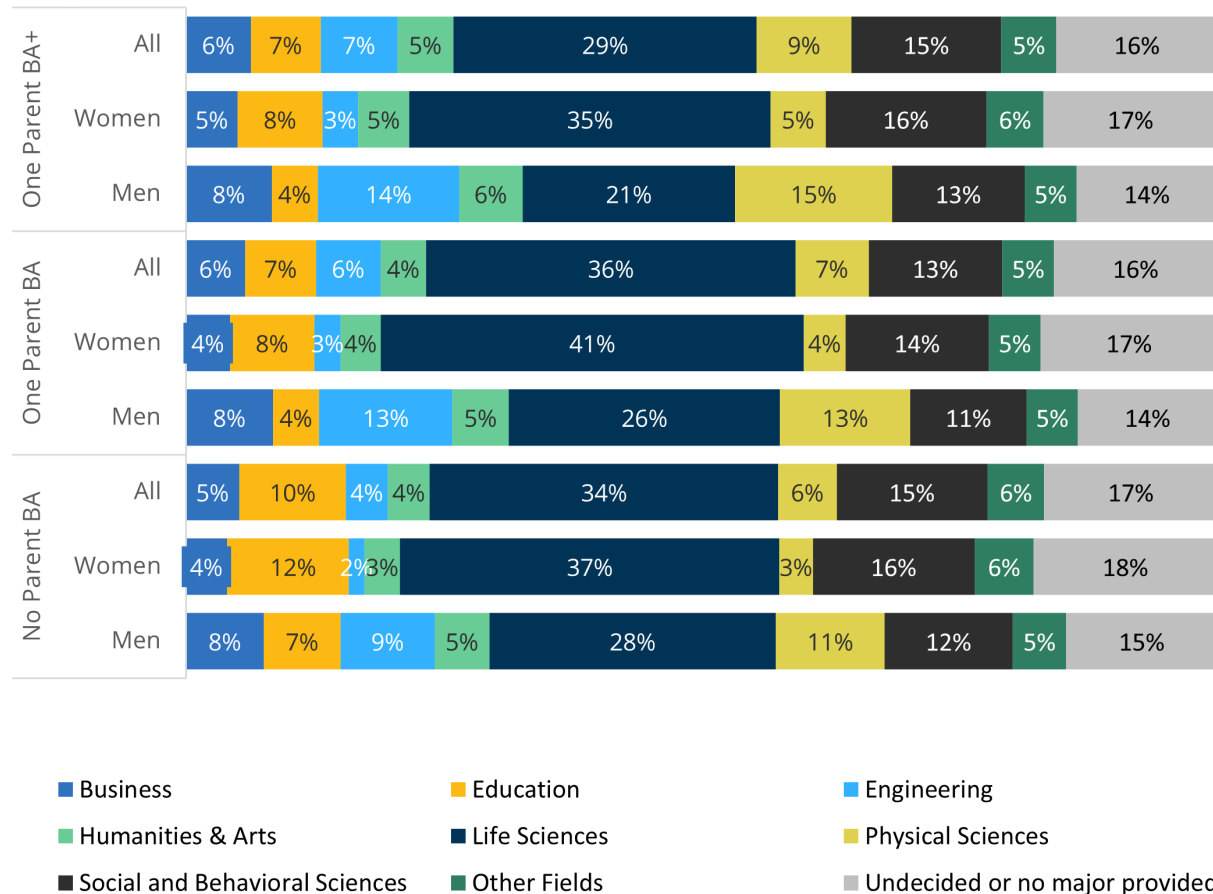
A master’s degree was the most common objective across all three parental education groups (56%, 56%, and 53%, respectively), with a doctorate being the next most popular (38%, 38%, and 40%, respectively; see Table A6). Within each of the three parental education groups, there were moderate gender differences in aspiring to a master’s degree, with women in each group more often indicating interest. Additionally, more men than women in the no parent BA group aspired to a doctorate (40% vs. 38%).

Intended Graduate Major Field

The intended fields of graduate study are examined while considering the possible shift in field of study from the undergraduate to the graduate level.

Responses indicating PGS’ intended graduate major largely followed the distributions as their undergraduate majors. While a bit less prevalent than at the undergraduate level, plans to pursue graduate studies in STEM were still popular among the three parental education groups (42%, 49%, and 46%, respectively; see Figure 11 and Table A6). Social and behavioral sciences was again the second most popular major, but the overall percentages were smaller for intended graduate major than they were for undergraduate major. There was an increased interest in education and a slight increase in business. It is valuable to note that admissions test requirements at either the graduate school or department level may drive some of the observed outcomes.

Figure 11. Prospective Graduate Students Parental Education by Intended Graduate Field Of Study and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021



Other fields include, among others, architecture and environmental design, communications and journalism, family and consumer services, law, library and archival studies, public administration, religion and theology, and social work. Those who indicated undecided, indicated any department not listed, or did not respond to the question or who provided an invalid answer are included in the undecided or no major provided category. BA = bachelor of arts.

A closer look at the component parts of the STEM fields once again showed that PGS with no parent BA and one parent BA planned to major in the life sciences at reasonably similar rates (34% and 36%, respectively), while one parent BA+ PGS did so at a notably lower rate (29%). Again, similar to their undergraduate years, women's propensity to study the life sciences and men's favoring the physical sciences and engineering were reflected in their considerations for graduate studies.

Across the three groups, approximately 45% planned to continue their graduate studies in the same field as their undergraduate major, with minimal differences by gender.

Program Format

In the academic year 2019–2020, 64% of all postbaccalaureate students reported taking a class taught entirely online. For those who reported taking an online class, 46% reported that their entire degree program was online (NCES, 2022, Table 311.32).

Within this broader context, most PGS planned to be on campus for their graduate studies across all three parental education groups (see Table A6). The interest in on-campus study increased as parental education increased (66% to 74% to 76%, respectively). Among no parent BA PGS, men preferred on-campus enrollment more than women. A combination of on-campus and online education also differed across the three parental education groups, with 20% of no parent BA PGS selecting it, compared to 14% of the one parent BA group and 12% of the one parent BA+ group.

Enrollment Preference

In fall 2021, 57% of postbaccalaureate students nationally had full-time status, with 60% of men and 55% of women attending full-time (NCES, 2023b, Table 303.45).

In light of these figures, most PGS preferred full-time enrollment across all three parental education groups (83%, 84%, and 84%, respectively; see Table A6). Within each parental education group, there were few differences between genders.

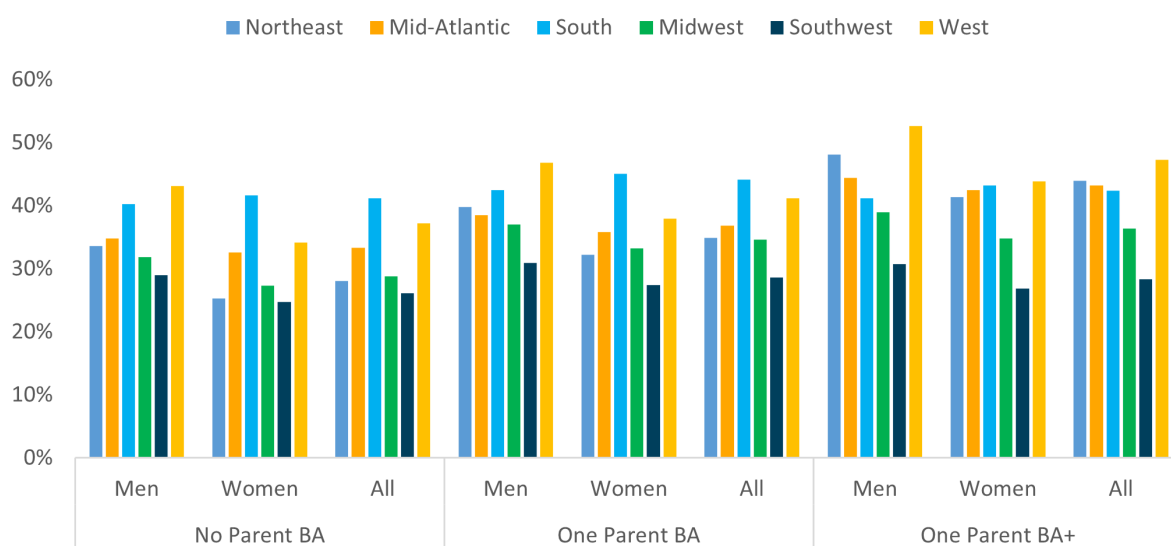
Preferred Geographic Region for Graduate Study

All individuals were asked a general question about the geographic regions in the United States¹⁰ and outside of the United States where they preferred to attend graduate school.

Regarding their U.S. and global options, the three parental education groups substantially differed in the percentage who indicated one preferred region (see Table A6). Most PGS in each of the three parental education groups indicated a single, preferred region in which to attend graduate school, with that percentage decreasing as parental education increased—from 60% to 51% to 43%, respectively. Within the no parent BA group, men chose a single preferred region less often than women (56% vs. 62%).

Generally, PGS preferred staying in the United States rather than studying in other countries. For each of the three parental education groups, more than 40% of PGS included the South (see Figure 12 and Table A6). PGS preference for graduate study in the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, and West regions increased as parental education increased. Within the three parental education groups, there were moderate differences in preference for the Northeast and the West, with men indicating a higher preference than women.

Figure 12. Prospective Graduate Students’ Parental Education by Preferred Regions to Attend Graduate School Within the United States and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021



Respondents were able to indicate multiple regions. BA = bachelor of arts.

All three groups most often selected Western Europe, Canada, and Australia/New Zealand compared to the other regions outside of the United States. There were moderate differences across the three parental education groups regarding including Western Europe (6%, 9%, and 13%, respectively).

Research Question 6: What Were Their Emerging Graduate Program Choice Sets?

This section focused on the early construction of PGS’ graduate program choice sets (see Table A7). In constructing their choice sets—the collections of graduate institutions to which

they may apply—individuals weigh varied factors, for instance, the number of programs to apply to. According to one commonly used discussion forum, graduate school applicants may refer to the rule of thumb when applying to a degree program, which is to consider applying to four to six programs (GradCafe Editor, 2024). Another set of factors is related to the characteristics of the prospective programs. The Council of Graduate Schools (2021) suggested that individuals consider program fit, financial investment, student support services, location, and professional development and career support.

Although insights into how PGS settled on specific graduate programs and their exhaustive or final collections of institutions in their choice sets are unavailable for this study, information regarding the graduate schools and departments they were considering is accessible. Two caveats may have shaped the parameters of the choice set presented. First, on test day, individuals can designate up to four graduate institutions and departments and fellowship sponsors to receive scores as part of the test fee. Individuals who elect to send their GRE General Test scores to additional institutions or to send their scores after test day can do so by ordering additional score reports for a fee (ETS, n.d.). Second, PGS may apply to graduate programs that do not require GRE scores, and thus these programs would not be reflected in the observed emerging choice set.

Graduate programs and schools are typically divisions in a college or university that award graduate degrees. For example, the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, which has master's and doctoral programs, is part of the University of Texas at Austin. The data presented in this section describe the college or university (e.g., the University of Texas at Austin) rather than specific graduate programs. An institution is counted only once per individual, even if the individual sent scores to multiple graduate programs at a single university (e.g., the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs and the Graduate School at the University of Texas at Austin).

Choice Set Size

Eighty-two percent of PGS from the three parental education groups sent their scores to graduate programs (see Table A7). It is not surprising that fewer than 100% of women sent score reports, as GRE scores are good for 5 calendar years from when individuals take the test. Even though the BIQ does not ask questions about the costs of applying to graduate programs or the ease or hardship of paying those costs, women most likely cover the cost of applications, which

in a field like psychology can range from \$0 to \$125 per application plus the cost of official transcripts (Weiss & Tamura, 2023). According to the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (2018), the average cost of a transcript ranges from \$5.00 to \$9.99. If or how these costs may have factored into choice set construction (e.g., number or type of programs) has yet to be discovered.

The 866,177 PGS with graduate school choice sets had approximately 3.2 million choices with a median of three graduate institutions per person. When the three groups of parental education and choice sets are viewed, differences surface. In the no parent BA group, the median number of graduate institutions considered per individual was 3. In their choice sets, 77% included four or fewer institutions, 19% had 5–10 institutions, and 3% included 11 or more. As parental education increases, so does the number of choices in the graduate school choice sets. The median number of graduate institutions in the one parent BA group was 3. In their choice sets, 71% included four or fewer institutions, 24% had 5–10 institutions, and 5% included 11 or more. For those in the one parent BA+ group, their median number of institutions was 3, and in their choice sets, 68% had four or fewer institutions, 26% had 5–10 institutions, and 6% had 11 or more institutions.

In addition to presenting whether women included a graduate school with a certain institutional characteristic (yes/no), the intensity of this characteristic in the graduate school choice set is presented (see Table A7). An example may best illustrate the difference (see Table 5). Consider two women, each of whom has four graduate programs in her choice set. If the women’s preference for a graduate program at a private institution is considered, the fact that each chose at least one private graduate school would be reported. This would mask that for Prospective Graduate Student 1, three out of four (75%) graduate programs were at private institutions, whereas for Prospective Graduate Student 2, two were graduate programs at private institutions (50%).

Table 5. Hypothetical Example of Graduate School Choices

Prospective Graduate Student	Graduate school choice			
	1	2	3	4
Prospective Graduate Student 1: Public/private institution	Public	Private	Private	Private
Prospective Graduate Student 2: Public/private institution	Public	Public	Private	Private

Where in the United States Would They Like to Go to Graduate School?

PGS' graduate school choice sets provide us with a second opportunity to learn about their geographic preferences. Here PGS' choice is restricted to U.S. institutions to learn if they include a constellation of graduate schools across the country for their choice sets or if they narrow their geographic considerations. There may be a precedent for geographic narrowing based on selecting an undergraduate institution. In their transition from high school to college, the majority (56.2%) of public, 4-year college students attend an institution under an hour's drive away from home (fewer than 50 miles), and nearly 70% attend within 2 hours of their homes (fewer than 100 miles; Wozniak, 2018). Two patterns have been observed when individuals graduate from college (EAB, 2018). Graduates of state universities tend to remain close to their alma maters—often staying within state lines. The typical graduate lives within 330 miles of the university, and 40% stay within 50 miles. The second pattern is for graduates of elite universities to move to major economic hubs—usually near their alma maters.

Let us consider a woman who lived in California and who applied to four graduate programs—one each in California, Washington, Arizona, and Florida (see Figure 13). As she resides in California, this choice would be in-state as well as within the U.S. Census Pacific Division and Region where she resides. A graduate institution in Washington would be considered out-of-state and in the same U.S. Census division and region. The institution in Arizona would be considered out-of-state, in the same U.S. Census division, and out of the region. The Florida-based institution would be out-of-state and out of U.S. Census division and region.

Pursuing Graduate Study at In-State or Out-of-State Colleges or Universities

Most PGS were considering at least one graduate school in the state where they resided (71%–80%; California in the example; see Figure 14). Yet, when the graduate school choices of PGS by parental education are compared, differences surface. Nearly 80% of no parent BA PGS were considering a graduate school in-state. This rate decreased as parental education increased. Seventy-five percent of one parent BA PGS indicated at least one graduate program in-state. One parent BA+ PGS had the lowest rate of expressing interest in an in-state graduate program (71%). Within each level of parental education, gender differences were minimal.

Figure 13. U.S. map with hypothetical graduate school choices

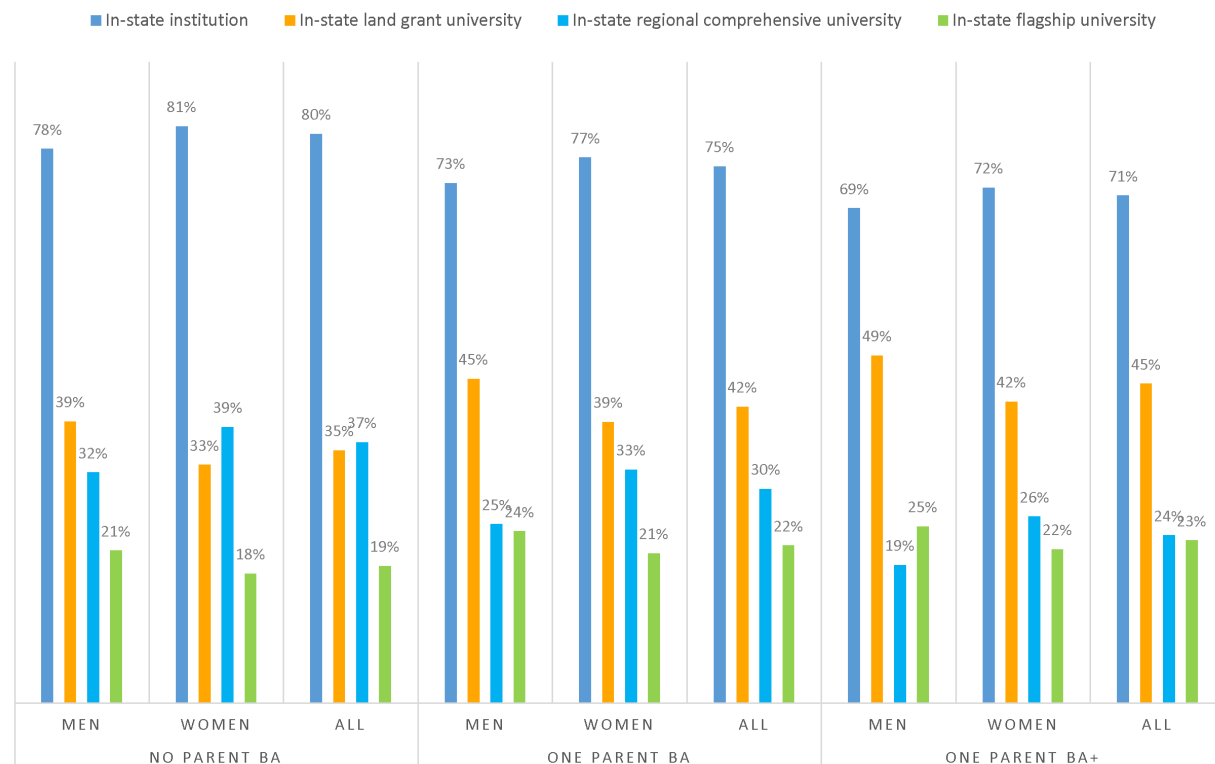
In this figure, California is the prospective graduate students' state of residence.

Most PGS were also considering at least one graduate program outside their state of residence (Washington, Arizona, or Florida in the example). However, there was a considerable difference—15 percentage points—between those in the no parent BA group and those in the other two categories. Out-of-state institutions were included in 54% of no parent BA PGS' choice sets, compared to 64% of the one parent BA group and 69% of the one parent BA+ group. For each parental education group, out-of-state institutions represented approximately 75% of their choice sets.

Pursuing Graduate Study in Their U.S. Census Division or Region

The preference for selecting a possible graduate school out-of-state but in the census division where they reside (Washington in the example) was fairly consistent across the three parental education groups (see Table A7). The percentages of their choice sets represented by these schools were similar across the three groups.

Figure 14. Prospective graduate students' parental education by inclusion of possible graduate school choices in their state of residence and by institutional types by racial/ethnic group (U.S. citizens), July 2016–June 2021



Apart from the University of Idaho, the University of North Dakota, and the University of South Dakota, there is no overlap between the state flagship university and the regional comprehensive universities in a state. BA = bachelor of arts.

The preference for selecting a graduate school out of the census division while still in the census region (Arizona in the example) increases as parental education increases (21% to 26% to 28%, respectively). The percentages of their choice sets represented by out-of-census-division institutions were similar across the groups (~36%).

Including an institution out of their census division in their choice sets (Florida from the example) differed across the three parental education groups. Thirty-eight percent of no parent BA PGS included an institution out of the census region, compared to 46% of one parent BA PGS and 53% of one parent BA+ PGS. Within the no parent BA group, men had a higher rate of including at least one institution out of their census region. For those PGS who included an

institution out of their census region, these institutions represented less than half of their choice sets.

What Are the Profiles of the Institutions in Their Graduate School Choice Sets?

Now that PGS' geographic preferences for where to pursue graduate studies are known, the next consideration is the types of institutions included in their choice sets.

Intend to Pursue Graduate Studies at Their Undergraduate Institution

There are pros and cons to earning a graduate degree at the same institution where one received one's undergraduate degree (Bonacolta, 2021; Lovick, 2020). Some of the pros to continuing at the same place include already being a member of the academic community, possible tuition discounts, and, in some cases, finishing or continuing one's undergraduate research. In addition, PGS would not incur relocation costs and could retain existing networks outside of the university community. Some cons are that one may be restricting one's network, limiting one's exposure to how academic departments are run in other places, and potentially limiting one's international experience. While the reason for excluding them from their undergraduate institutions is unknown, one factor may be that it offers limited or no graduate programs (e.g., a Carnegie classification baccalaureate college).

Across all three groups, PGS showed moderate interest in applying to their undergraduate institutions for graduate study (see Table A7). Among them, no parent BA PGS indicated the highest preference (49%), followed by one parent BA PGS (43%) and one parent BA+ PGS (39%). This inverse pattern was reflected in the shares of undergraduate institutions in their respective choice sets, which were 61%, 55%, and 53%.

Land Grant Institutions, Regional Comprehensive Universities, and Flagship Universities in Their State of Residence

Approximately 41% of PGS expressed interest in attending a land grant institution in their state of residence for graduate school (e.g., North Carolina State University, Raleigh). Interest ranged from 35% for no parent BA PGS to 42% for one parent BA PGS to 45% for one parent BA+ PGS (see Figure 14 and Table A7). In each group, men indicated a greater interest. Land grant institutions represented approximately 46% of institutions if they were included in a choice set.

Interest in pursuing graduate studies at a regional comprehensive institution in their state of residence varied across the three parental education groups (e.g., North Carolina Central University). No parent BA PGS expressed the greatest interest, followed by one parent BA PGS, then one parent BA+ PGS (37%, 30%, and 24%, respectively). For all three groups, women indicated a greater interest in studying at a regional comprehensive institution. Regional comprehensive universities, if included in a choice set, ranged from 22% to 16% to 12% of the institutions.

In general, the flagship state university in their state of residence was a less popular choice for PGS (e.g., UNC Chapel Hill). The three parental education groups had similar interest in these institutions for possible graduate school attendance (19%, 22%, and 23%, respectively). Across the three groups, flagship institutions accounted for approximately 40% of the institutions in their choice sets.

Institution Control and Student Body Size

In fall 2021, 50% of postgraduate students nationally enrolled at public institutions, 43% at nonprofit private institutions, and 7% at for-profit institutions (NCES, 2022, Table 306.5). The three groups—no parent bach, one parent BA, and one parent BA+—were nearly comparable in their plans to apply to at least one public graduate institution (85%, 86%, and 84%, respectively). And for each of the three groups, public institutions represented 78% and higher of the institutions in their choice sets. There are no noteworthy gender differences.

There is more variance among the groups when considering a private institution for graduate study. Interest increased as parental education increased: 54% of no parent BA PGS, 59% of one parent BA PGS, and 64% of one parent BA+ PGS included at least one private institution. Despite the range of possibilities of applying (yes/no), the representation of private institutions in PGS' choice sets was relatively comparable.

Across the three groups, there was limited interest in applying to a private for-profit institution for graduate study (~5%). For those who indicated interest, the institutions represented approximately 25% of their choice sets. This selection pattern may be due to private for-profit graduate programs having different GRE requirements for admissions.

In terms of the sizes of the institutions where they might like to earn their graduate degrees, as a group, 79% of PGS included an institution with at least 20,000 students. The three groups were moderately different, ranging from 74% of no parent BA PGS to 79% of one parent

BA PGS and 82% of one parent BA+ PGS. For those PGS who did include a large-sized institution, they accounted for roughly 70% of the institutions in their choice sets.

Minority-Serving Institutions

Among the 771 MSIs, 454 (59%) are 4-year institutions, and not all necessarily offer graduate degrees. When looking at the presence of at least one MSI in their graduate school choice sets, 41% of PGS included at least one. The three groups were somewhat comparable—44% of no parent BA PGS, 40% of one parent BA PGS, and 38% of one parent BA+ PGS. However, they differed in the representation of MSIs in their choice sets. MSIs, if included in the choice sets, ranged from representing 55% of the no parent BA group choice sets to 46% of the one parent BA choice sets to 42% of the one parent BA+ choice sets.

A closer look at the types of MSIs PGS were considering for graduate school echoes what was observed at the undergraduate level (see Table A7). PGS indicated the most interest in HSIs and AANAPISIs. There were moderate differences in interest across the three parent education groups, with 31% of no parent BA PGS, 26% of one parent BA, and 24% of one parent BA+ PGS including an HSI in their choice sets. There were no noteworthy gender differences. In terms of HSI representation in their choice sets, there were differences ranging from representing 55% of institutions in no parent BA PGS choice sets to 41% for one parent BA+ PGS.

AANAPISIs were the second most frequently included MSI. All three groups included them nearly equally (23%, 22%, and 24%, respectively), with slight gender variation. Like HSIs, AANAPISI representation in their choice sets ranged from 44% of choices for no parent BA PGS to 34% for one parent BA+ PGS.

Single-Sex Colleges

Single-sex colleges are primarily bachelor's degree institutions that award master's degrees and postbaccalaureate certificates, and a few award doctoral degrees. Across the three groups, 2%–3% of PGS included single-sex institutions, and when they did, it was most often a women's college (see Table A7). Single-gender institutions typically accounted for 25% of the institutions in their choice sets.

Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education

Institutions classified as Carnegie doctoral-granting institutions were prevalent in all three groups' choice sets (overall 91%; see Table A7). Including a Carnegie doctoral-granting institution in their choice sets was positively associated with parental education, ranging from 87% of no parent BA PGS to 91% of one parent BA PGS to 93% of one parent BA+ PGS. For those who included a doctoral institution in their choice sets, these institutions represented approximately 86% of institutions.

Interest in attending a Carnegie master's-classified institution varied by parental education group. No parent BA PGS included a master's-classified institution in their choice sets at a higher rate than one parent BA PGS (30%) and one parent BA+ (24%). Within each parental education group, women included a master's-classified institution in their choice sets at a higher rate than men. There were moderate differences between no parent BA PGS and the other two parental education groups in the representation of master's institutions in their choice sets, ranging from 53% to 45% to 44%, respectively.

Fewer than one-quarter of PGS included at least one graduate institution with a Carnegie classification of special focus 4-year (e.g., Relay Graduate School of Education, Pardee RAND Graduate School). However, for the one parent BA group and one parent BA+ groups, women more often included one in their choice sets than did men. For those who included a special focus 4-year institution in their choice sets, these institutions represented approximately 38% of institutions.

Association of American Universities Member University

Approximately 50% of PGS included at least one AAU member institution in their choice sets (see Table A7). However, including an AAU member varied by parental education level, showing a positive relation with higher parental education. Specifically, there was a 17 percentage point difference: 45% of no parent BA PGS included an AAU institution, compared to 53% of one parent BA PGS and 62% of one parent BA+ PGS. This pattern was also reflected in the representation of AAU institutions within choice sets, ranging from 57% of institutions in the no parent BA PGS choice sets to 59% of institutions in the one parent BA PGS choice sets to 65% in the one parent BA+ PGS choice sets. Across all three groups, men showed a greater interest in AAU institutions, and when these institutions were included in their choice sets, they accounted for a larger share.

Selected Highlights

The data represent 980,903 individuals aspiring to graduate education, collected over 5 years. Among PGS, 33% were classified as no parent BA, 31% as one parent BA, and 37% as one parent BA+.

Several key patterns emerge across PGS from different parental education backgrounds. First, the percentage of White PGS increased as parental education levels rose. More than 50% of PGS from all three parental education groups live in 10 states. Pell Grant eligibility decreased as parental education increased. Approximately half of PGS in each parental education group majored in STEM, with notable gender differences in disciplines. More than 90% of PGS across all parental education groups reported earning a B or higher for their undergraduate major GPAs. A master's degree was the most common graduate degree objective among all three groups. Most PGS were considering attending at least one graduate school in their home states, and 41% included at least one MSI in their graduate school choice sets.

Following are selected data highlights from the findings.

Q1. Who Were the Prospective Graduate Students?

- **Race/Ethnicity.** The percentage of White PGS increased by 18 percentage points as parental education increased, while the percentage of Mexican PGS decreased by 7 percentage points.
- **Age.** The largest proportions of PGS in each of the three parental education groups were 22 years old or younger.

Q2. Where Did Prospective Graduate Students Reside?

- **Top 10 States.** More than 50% of PGS from all three parental education groups resided in 10 states. California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Texas were eight states where all three groups lived.
- **Regional Distribution.** Most PGS (~40%) lived in the South region, followed by the West.

Q3. What Were Their Education and Work Experiences?

- **Enrollment.** For all three parental education groups, PGS were predominantly currently enrolled in college or unenrolled college graduates with a BA or BS.

- **Work Experience.** More than half of the individuals in the three parental education groups reported less than 1 year of work experience upon completing their undergraduate degrees.

Q4. What Were Their Undergraduate Experiences?

- **In-State Attendance.** For each parental education group, three-fourths of PGS were attending a public or private baccalaureate institution in their state of residence. However, a substantial, 14 percentage point difference emerged between those in the no parent BA group and those in the other two categories.
- **MSI Attendance.** No parent BA PGS enrolled at an MSI attended at higher rates than their peers in the other two parent education groups (27%, 18%, and 15%, respectively).
- **Pell Grant Eligibility.** The majority of no parent BA PGS (56%) were eligible to receive a Pell Grant. Pell eligibility decreased as parental education increased (56% to 27% to 17%, respectively).
- **Undergraduate Majors.** Approximately half of PGS in each parental education group majored in a STEM field (48%, 54%, and 50%, respectively). The social and behavioral sciences were the second most popular major (24%, 20%, and 22%, respectively). Within STEM fields, there were gender differences in undergraduate majors.
- **GPA.** More than 90% of PGS across all parental education groups reported a B or higher undergraduate major GPA. A similar pattern was observed for overall undergraduate GPA, with most PGS also achieving a B or higher.

Q5. What Were Prospective Graduate Students' Plans for Graduate Study?

- **Degree Goals.** A master's degree was the most common degree objective across all three parental education groups. Across all three parental education groups, more women than men aspired to a master's degree.
- **Graduate Field of Interest.** Across the three groups, approximately 45% planned to continue their graduate studies in the same field as their undergraduate majors.

Q6. What Were Their Emerging Graduate School Choice Sets?

- **In-State Preference.** Most PGS were considering attending at least one graduate school in their home states (71%–80%).
- **Undergraduate Alma Mater.** Across all three parental education groups, PGS showed moderate interest in applying to their undergraduate institutions for graduate study.
- **Flagship State University.** Pursuing graduate studies at the flagship state university in their state of residence was of limited interest to PGS in all three parental education groups.
- **MSI Preference.** Forty-one percent of PGS included at least one MSI in their graduate school choice sets. The three groups were somewhat comparable in including an MSI in their choice sets. However, they differed in the representation of MSIs in their choice sets.

Application of Research

The detailed profiles of PGS provide a foundation for enhancing how different segments of the prospective graduate student population are understood and supported. This research offers valuable insights that may help various audiences, including graduate schools, admissions offices, faculty, policymakers, and organizations advocating for diversity and inclusion in graduate education, reassess their own data and practices. Following are several key ways in which these stakeholders may apply the findings to inform how they evaluate and utilize their own data.

Graduate Schools

In the United States, 1,836 institutions award master's degrees, and 1,066 award doctoral degrees (NCES, 2022). Universities and colleges offering graduate programs may use the findings from this research to reassess their data regarding PGS. Institutions could explore the following:

- How does an institution's current student pool compared to the demographic and academic profiles outlined in this research?
- What insights can an institution gain about their challenges in attracting certain groups of students, particularly underrepresented populations?

Institutions may use these data as they analyze their recruitment strategies, potentially identifying areas for improvement in outreach to local, regional, or national student populations. By comparing the PGS data with their own admissions and enrollment data, schools may discover trends they had yet to consider, helping them refine their efforts to build a more diverse and inclusive graduate student body.

Graduate School Admissions Offices

Admissions offices play a vital role in analyzing trends in their applicant pools. The findings from the PGS profiles may inform how they assess their data, offering new ways to

- evaluate the geographic and academic backgrounds of their applicants
- understand whether they are reaching the prospective students who align with their institution's strategic priorities

This research may help admissions teams examine their recruitment data through a new lens, focusing on regions or demographics that may be underrepresented in their applicant pools. By examining their data in the context of the broader national trends revealed in the PGS research, they may more effectively target outreach efforts and refine their recruitment strategies in collaboration with faculty.

Graduate Programs and Faculty

Faculty are deeply involved in the graduate admissions process, particularly at the departmental level. The insights from this research may help faculty analyze their program data in several ways:

- **Selection of Applicants.** Faculty may use the findings to review how their applicant pool compares to national trends in academic preparation, research interests, and demographic diversity. This comparison may lead to a better understanding of gaps or opportunities in their admissions process.
- **Admissions Criteria.** The research may prompt faculty to reassess their admissions criteria, exploring whether they are attracting students who align with the department's research priorities and long-term goals.
- **Recruitment and Outreach.** Faculty may look at where their current applicants come from and assess whether there are untapped feeder institutions or geographic

regions. The data may inform how faculty evaluate their recruitment efforts and suggest new partnerships with other institutions or organizations.

By examining their own admissions data in light of these broader trends, faculty may better understand how to attract academically prepared students who are aligned with the department's research goals.

Policymakers and Government Agencies

Policymakers responsible for shaping higher education policies may use this research to guide how they analyze existing data on graduate education access and financial aid programs. The profiles of PGS may provide a broader context for understanding issues related to

- equity in access to graduate education, particularly among underrepresented groups
- the effectiveness of existing financial aid programs in ensuring that support reaches the students who are most in need of financial support

By comparing the national trends to their data on program effectiveness, policymakers may make informed decisions about where to allocate resources and which policy adjustments may be necessary to improve access and equity in graduate education.

Organizations Focused on Diversity and Inclusion

Advocacy groups promoting equity in higher education may use these findings to reexamine their data and refine their focus. The PGS data may inform how they evaluate the effectiveness of their diversity efforts and how well they are reaching key populations, such as

- first-generation students, Black and Hispanic students, or women in STEM
- students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds or rural areas

By analyzing their data through the lens of the PGS findings, these organizations may assess whether they are effectively directing resources and support. They may also identify new opportunities for outreach or scholarship programs aimed at underserved populations.

Undergraduate Institutions

The findings from this research may help undergraduate institutions as they analyze their data related to student outcomes and graduate school preparation. Institutions may

- evaluate their students' academic preparation and career aspirations in light of broader trends among PGS

- compare where their graduates are applying for graduate school with national trends and assess whether their students are aiming for the right types of institutions

These data may inform how undergraduate institutions improve their advising and graduate school preparation services, ensuring that their students are well prepared for the subsequent stage of education. They may also identify potential gaps in support for students considering graduate education and develop programs to address these needs.

Future Research

Building on the current findings, several promising areas for future research could deepen our understanding of PGS and the dynamics of graduate education access, diversity, and success. This future research would help fill key gaps and extend the utility of the data.

Education Researchers and Analysts

Individuals focused on higher education issues, such as equity, access, and diversity, could explore new dimensions of the PGS experience. Future research could aim to

- better understand how diverse student populations, including students from underrepresented socioeconomic backgrounds, international students, and students with disabilities, navigate graduate education opportunities
- explore how factors beyond race—such as age, geographic background, and interdisciplinary experience—impact access and success in graduate education

Connect GRE Data to Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems

The variability in the maturity of statewide longitudinal data systems across the United States offers a rich area for research. Identifying states with well-developed systems that connect high school and undergraduate academic data could enable deeper insights into students' educational trajectories. Specifically, this approach could reveal

- how high school academic experiences, such as specific coursework or extracurricular activities, influence students' decisions to pursue graduate education
- which factors in a student's undergraduate experience (e.g., GPA, field of study, institutional type) are most predictive of applying to graduate school

Connect GRE Data to National Student Clearinghouse Data

Linking GRE data with the National Student Clearinghouse could provide a more complete picture of students' paths through higher education. This approach would allow researchers to

- measure how many PGS ultimately enroll in graduate programs, where they choose to attend, and whether they persist to graduation
- analyze trends in graduate program completion rates across different demographic groups or fields of study, helping to identify areas where interventions could improve retention and success

Conduct a Non–U.S. Citizen Study

The current study excluded individuals who self-reported not being U.S. citizens, limiting the analysis to domestic populations. Future research could

- investigate the experiences of non-U.S. citizens navigating the graduate school application process, who may face distinct challenges related to visa requirements, financial aid, or access to specific academic programs
- conduct comparative studies between U.S. citizens and noncitizens, which could reveal important insights into how international students' experiences differ from those of domestic students and how policies could better address their needs

Expand the Graduate School Choice Set Information

The current study was limited to graduate schools where PGS sent their GRE scores, excluding GRE-optional or GRE-not-required programs from analysis. This omission creates a potential gap in understanding the full range of options PGS consider. Future research could

- include data from GRE-optional and GRE-not-required programs to analyze whether including these institutions changes the size and diversity of the choice sets
- examine how the growing trend of graduate programs removing GRE requirements impacts student decisions and overall program competitiveness

Conduct Qualitative Research

The present study focuses primarily on quantitative data, which provides a broad view of the “what” in the graduate school application process. Adding a qualitative component could provide critical insights into the “why” behind these choices:

- Why are so many PGS choosing in-state graduate programs? What financial, social, and academic factors drive these decisions?
- How do personal motivations, career goals, or perceptions of institutional prestige influence which graduate schools students apply to and ultimately attend?

By pursuing these new lines of inquiry, future research can build on the current study’s findings and significantly advance the understanding of how students navigate the graduate school application process and succeed in their academic and professional pursuits.

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Appendix

Table A1. Counts and Percentages for Valid and Missing Data for Prospective Graduate Students by Parental Education (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021

Table	Variable description	Valid responses		Missing responses	
		No.	%	No.	%
2	State where GRE test takers resided	1,052,120	99.4	6,075	0.6
3	CBSA where GRE test takers resided	1,021,302	96.5	36,893	3.5
4	Congressional district where GRE test takers resided	1,041,252	98.4	16,943	1.6
A2	Age at time of taking the GRE	1,016,303	96.0	41,892	4.0
A2	Communicates best in English	1,057,492	99.9	703	0.1
A2	Documented disability (self-reported)	1,057,524	99.9	671	0.1
A3	U.S. Census region and division where GRE test takers resided	831,953	78.6	226,242	21.4
A4	Current educational level	1,048,083	99.0	10,112	1.0
A4	Full-time work experience	1,058,194	100.0	1	0.0
A5	Individual provided undergraduate institution	912,615	86.2	145,580	13.8
A5	Undergraduate institution has IPEDS information	667,360	63.1	390,835	36.9
A5	Undergraduate institution was in their state of residence	665,645	62.9	392,550	37.1
A5	Undergraduate institution is a state land grant institution in their state of residence	661,479	62.5	396,716	37.5
A5	Undergraduate institution is a regional comprehensive university in their state of residence	665,645	62.9	392,550	37.1
A5	Undergraduate institution is the flagship university in their state of residence	661,479	62.5	396,716	37.5
A5	Undergraduate institution—control—public/private/for-profit	661,479	62.5	396,716	37.5
A5	Undergraduate institution has more than 20,000 students	665,645	62.9	392,550	37.1
A5	Undergraduate institution is an MSI	665,645	62.9	392,550	37.1
A5	Undergraduate institution is a single-sex institution	665,645	62.9	392,550	37.1
A5	Undergraduate institution's <i>Barron's Profile of American Colleges</i> classification	665,645	62.9	392,550	37.1
A5	Undergraduate institution's Carnegie classification	649,551	61.4	408,644	38.6
A5	Undergraduate institution is a member of the AAU	664,730	62.8	393,465	37.2
A5	Parent educational attainment	665,645	62.9	392,550	37.1
A5	Eligible for a Federal Pell Grant as an undergraduate	975,058	92.1	83,137	7.9

Table	Variable description	Valid responses		Missing responses	
		No.	%	No.	%
A5	Federal Pell Grant–eligible and first-generation college student	975,058	92.1	83,137	7.9
A5	Undergraduate major field	1,019,468	96.3	38,727	3.7
A5	Undergraduate major GPA	954,972	90.2	103,223	9.8
A5	Overall undergraduate GPA	956,590	90.4	101,605	9.6
A6	Graduate degree objective	1,010,189	95.5	48,006	4.5
A6	Intended graduate major field	1,058,195	100.0	0	0.0
A6	Undergraduate major is the same as intended graduate major field	1,058,195	100.0	0	0.0
A6	Program format preference for graduate study	990,696	93.6	67,499	6.4
A6	Enrollment preference for graduate study	1,016,228	96.0	41,967	4.0
A6	Preferred geographic region for graduate study	990,696	93.6	67,499	6.4
A7	Sent at least one GRE score report to a graduate institution with an IPEDS ID	866,177	81.9	192,018	18.1
A7	Number of GRE score reports sent	866,177	81.9	192,018	18.1
A7	GSC: may apply to at least one in-state institution	858,692	81.1	199,503	18.9
A7	GSC: may apply to at least one out-of-state institution	858,692	81.1	199,503	18.9
A7	GSC : may apply to at least one institution in U.S. Census division	858,692	81.1	199,503	18.9
A7	GSC : may apply to at least one institution outside U.S. Census division but within region	858,692	81.1	199,503	18.9
A7	GSC : may apply to at least one institution outside U.S. Census region	858,692	81.1	199,503	18.9
A7	GSC : may apply to their undergraduate institution	574,830	54.3	483,365	45.7
A7	GSC : may apply to regional flagship institution in state of residence	858,692	81.1	199,503	18.9
A7	GSC : may apply to at least one regional comprehensive institution in state of residence	858,692	81.1	199,503	18.9
A7	GSC : may apply to the land grant institution in their state of residence	866,177	81.9	192,018	18.1
A7	GSC : may apply to at least one public/private/private-for-profit graduate institution	866,177	81.9	192,018	18.1
A7	GSC : may apply to at least one graduate institution with at least 20,000 students	866,144	81.9	192,051	18.1
A7	GSC : may apply to at least one graduate program at an MSI	866,177	81.9	192,018	18.1
A7	GSC : may apply to at least one graduate program at a single-gender institution	866,177	81.9	192,018	18.1
A7	GSC : may apply to at least one graduate institution with Carnegie classification	865,447	81.8	192,748	18.2
A7	GSC : may apply to at least one AAU member graduate institution	866,177	81.9	192,018	18.1

Note. $N = 1,058,195$. AAU = Association of American Universities. CBSA = Core-based statistical area. GPA = grade point average. GSC = graduate school choice. IPEDS = Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. MSI = minority-serving institution.

Table A2. Demographic Profile of Prospective Graduate Students by Parental Education and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021

Variable	No parent BA						One parent BA						One parent BA+					
	Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Race/ethnicity																		
American Indian	955	1	1,863	1	2,818	1	579	1	1,164	1	1,743	1	628	0	1,018	0	1,646	0
Asian	10,294	9	16,447	7	26,741	8	9,304	8	13,744	7	23,048	7	14,227	10	17,704	8	31,931	9
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	560	1	860	0	1,420	0	461	0	720	0	1,181	0	380	0	492	0	872	0
Black	12,864	12	29,691	13	42,555	13	7,492	7	16,028	8	23,520	8	8,793	6	17,728	8	26,521	7
Mexican	10,399	9	18,567	8	28,966	9	2,841	3	4,824	2	7,665	2	2,388	2	3,938	2	6,326	2
Puerto Rican	1,605	1	3,305	1	4,910	1	1,294	1	2,215	1	3,509	1	1,405	1	2,280	1	3,685	1
Other Hispanic	9,693	9	20,536	9	30,229	9	4,752	4	9,120	5	13,872	4	5,529	4	8,995	4	14,524	4
White (non-Hispanic)	59,184	53	120,645	54	179,829	54	79,962	72	146,254	72	226,216	72	103,783	72	163,872	72	267,655	72
Other	5,111	5	10,050	5	15,161	5	4,619	4	7,883	4	12,502	4	6,873	5	10,385	5	17,258	5
Age group																		
<22	35,019	31	94,488	41	129,507	38	48,319	42	113,412	54	161,731	50	64,523	43	123,359	52	187,882	48
23–25	30,149	26	57,208	25	87,357	25	31,449	27	49,824	24	81,273	25	40,140	27	58,131	25	98,271	25
26–30	24,629	21	37,372	16	62,001	18	20,762	18	25,613	12	46,375	14	27,465	18	31,412	13	58,877	15
31–40	17,089	15	25,877	11	42,966	12	11,419	10	14,164	7	25,583	8	14,431	10	16,498	7	30,929	8
≥41	7,916	7	14,886	6	22,802	7	3,832	3	6,361	3	10,193	3	4,572	3	7,173	3	11,745	3
Communicates better in English	107,460	94	214,961	94	322,421	94	108,979	94	195,637	93	304,616	94	142,780	94	221,544	94	364,324	94
10 most common native languages (other than English)																		
1	SPA	49	SPA	56	SPA	54	SPA	33	SPA	37	SPA	35	SPA	27	SPA	30	SPA	28
2	CHI	9	CHI	6	CHI	7	CHI	8	CHI	5	CHI	6	CHI	11	CHI	8	CHI	9
3	VIE	7	VIE	6	VIE	6	VIE	3	VIE	3	VIE	3	ARA	5	ARA	5	ARA	5
4	ARA	3	ARA	3	ARA	3	ARA	7	ARA	5	ARA	6	KOR	6	KOR	4	KOR	5
5	KOR	2	KOR	2	KOR	2	KOR	5	KOR	3	KOR	4	RUS	5	RUS	6	RUS	6
6	URD	1	RUS	1	RUS	1	RUS	3	RUS	4	RUS	4	URD	3	URD	4	URD	3

Variable	No parent BA						One parent BA						One parent BA+					
	Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
7	UND	3	URD	2	URD	2	URD	3	URD	3	URD	3	FRE	3	FRE	3	FRE	3
8	FRE	2	UND	3	UND	3	TGL	5	TGL	5	TGL	5	FAS	3	FAS	3	FAS	3
9	GUJ	1	GUJ	1	FRE	2	GUJ	4	GUJ	4	GUJ	4	TEL	3	TEL	2	TEL	3
10	FAS	1	FAS	1	GUJ	1	FAS	3	FAS	2	FAS	3	TAM	3	TAM	2	TAM	3
Documented disability	4,615	5	7,950	4	12,565	5	4,350	5	7,735	5	12,085	5	7,037	6	10,693	6	17,730	6
If documented disability, type of disability																		
Blind/visually impaired	661	14	1,351	17	2,012	16	506	12	963	12	1,469	12	608	9	967	9	1,575	9
Deaf/hard of hearing	526	11	777	10	1,303	10	372	9	681	9	1,053	9	494	7	765	7	1,259	7
Learning disability	1,437	31	2,641	33	4,078	32	1,891	43	3,432	44	5,323	44	3,532	50	5,271	49	8,803	50
Multiple disabilities	309	7	368	5	677	5	180	4	272	4	452	4	286	4	434	4	720	4
Other	1,135	25	2,055	26	3,190	25	1,019	23	1,737	22	2,756	23	1,589	23	2,383	22	3,972	22
Physical disability	547	12	758	10	1,305	10	382	9	650	8	1,032	9	528	8	873	8	1,401	8

Note. ARA = Arabic. BA = bachelor of arts. CHI = Chinese. FAS = Farsi. FRE = French. GUJ = Gujarati. KOR = Korean. RUS = Russian. SPA = Spanish. TEL = Telugu. TGL = Tagalog. UND = language not listed. URD = Urdu. VIE = Vietnamese.

Table A3. U.S. Census Geographic Profile of Prospective Graduate Students by Parental Education and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021

Variable	No parent BA						One parent BA						One parent BA+					
	Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
U.S. Census region																		
West	29,223	26	49,627	22	78,850	23	27,148	24	40,303	19	67,451	21	35,909	24	48,137	21	84,046	22
Midwest	19,030	17	38,522	17	57,552	17	21,939	19	41,465	20	63,404	20	27,417	18	44,349	19	71,766	19
Northeast	21,146	19	47,236	21	68,382	20	20,823	18	40,458	19	61,281	19	30,955	21	51,077	22	82,032	21
South	44,458	39	93,492	41	137,950	40	44,618	39	85,737	41	130,355	40	54,489	37	90,525	39	145,014	38
U.S. Census division																		
Pacific	20,991	18	37,257	16	58,248	17	17,311	15	27,153	13	44,464	14	23,203	16	32,070	14	55,273	14
Mountain	8,232	7	12,370	5	20,602	6	9,837	9	13,150	6	22,987	7	12,706	9	16,067	7	28,773	8
West North Central	5,516	5	11,087	5	16,603	5	7,016	6	13,159	6	20,175	6	8,251	6	13,289	6	21,540	6
East North Central	13,514	12	27,435	12	40,949	12	14,923	13	28,306	14	43,229	13	19,166	13	31,060	13	50,226	13
Middle Atlantic	16,657	15	38,093	17	54,750	16	15,270	13	29,980	14	45,250	14	21,522	14	36,213	15	57,735	15
New England	4,489	4	9,143	4	13,632	4	5,553	5	10,478	5	16,031	5	9,433	6	14,864	6	24,297	6
West South Central	14,689	13	30,101	13	44,790	13	14,189	12	26,335	13	40,524	13	14,880	10	24,217	10	39,097	10
East South Central	6,857	6	14,436	6	21,293	6	6,766	6	12,899	6	19,665	6	7,986	5	13,631	6	21,617	6
South Atlantic	22,912	20	48,955	21	71,867	21	23,663	21	46,503	22	70,166	22	31,623	21	52,677	23	84,300	22

Note. BA = bachelor of arts.

Table A4. Education and Work Experiences of Prospective Graduate Students by Parental Education and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021

Variable	No parent BA						One parent BA						One parent BA+					
	Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Current educational level																		
Currently enrolled in college	39,963	35	87,076	38	127,039	37	47,894	41	95,695	46	143,589	44	61,621	41	101,215	43	162,836	42
Unenrolled college graduate (BA/BS)	46,904	41	85,886	37	132,790	39	47,945	41	78,432	37	126,377	39	63,132	42	93,155	39	156,287	40
Unenrolled master's program graduate	14,340	12	30,509	13	44,849	13	10,387	9	19,471	9	29,858	9	14,372	10	23,779	10	38,151	10
Enrolled in graduate school	7,978	7	14,542	6	22,520	7	5,483	5	8,126	4	13,609	4	6,656	4	9,050	4	15,706	4
Other	5,687	5	11,960	5	17,647	5	4,148	4	7,800	4	11,948	4	5,455	4	9,533	4	14,988	4
Full-time work experience (years)																		
<1	49,914	49	102,591	52	152,505	51	56,092	55	105,052	59	161,144	57	70,513	54	110,539	55	181,052	55
1–2	22,271	22	44,763	23	67,034	22	21,369	21	38,149	21	59,518	21	27,322	21	44,645	22	71,967	22
3–4	10,646	10	19,226	10	29,872	10	9,348	9	15,073	8	24,421	9	13,053	10	18,946	9	31,999	10
5–7	7,828	8	12,977	7	20,805	7	7,097	7	9,504	5	16,601	6	9,671	7	12,309	6	21,980	7
≥8	11,145	11	19,257	10	30,402	10	7,982	8	11,177	6	19,159	7	10,517	8	13,639	7	24,156	7

Note. BA = bachelor of arts. BS = bachelor of science.

Table A5. Undergraduate Experiences Prospective Graduate Students Will Bring to Graduate School by Parental Education and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021

Variable	No parent BA						One parent BA						One parent BA+					
	Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
Individual provided undergraduate institution	73,422	64	143,495	62	216,917	63	76,855	66	131,649	63	208,504	64	98,337	65	143,602	61	241,939	62
Undergraduate institution has IPEDS information	73,246	64	143,335	62	216,581	63	76,659	66	131,406	63	208,065	64	97,917	65	143,082	60	240,999	62
Undergraduate institution in their state of residence	58,387	80	117,168	82	175,555	81	56,222	74	97,622	75	153,844	74	64,777	67	95,906	67	160,683	67
Undergraduate institution: state land grant institution in their state of residence	9,984	15	16,931	13	26,915	14	12,769	18	20,076	17	32,845	18	15,717	18	21,180	16	36,897	17
Undergraduate institution: regional comprehensive university in their state of residence	24,534	34	53,338	37	77,872	36	18,226	24	35,448	27	53,674	26	16,449	17	28,188	20	44,637	19
Undergraduate institution: flagship university in their state of residence	10,299	14	17,537	12	27,836	13	12,911	17	20,115	15	33,026	16	16,786	17	22,576	16	39,362	16
Undergraduate institution: control: public	57,276	78	108,607	76	165,883	77	56,673	74	95,555	73	152,228	73	64,750	66	93,064	65	157,814	65
Undergraduate institution: control: private nonprofit	15,789	22	34,431	24	50,220	23	19,845	26	35,621	27	55,466	27	33,060	34	49,852	35	82,912	34
Undergraduate institution: control: private for-profit	181	0	297	0	478	0	141	0	230	0	371	0	107	0	166	0	273	0
Undergraduate institution: >20,000 students	38,187	52	67,686	47	105,873	49	41,716	54	67,425	51	109,141	52	52,751	54	73,305	51	126,056	52
Undergraduate institution: MSI	19,468	27	38,806	27	58,274	27	13,688	18	23,533	18	37,221	18	13,939	14	21,049	15	34,988	15
AANAPISI	7,468	10	14,259	10	21,727	10	5,390	7	8,986	7	14,376	7	5,797	6	8,479	6	14,276	6
ANNH	321	0	510	0	831	0	269	0	402	0	671	0	277	0	357	0	634	0
HSI	14,099	19	27,469	19	41,568	19	9,195	12	15,615	12	24,810	12	8,685	9	12,814	9	21,499	9
HBCU	1,664	2	4,286	3	5,950	3	1,010	1	2,268	2	3,278	2	1,127	1	2,368	2	3,495	1
NASNTI	290	0	548	0	838	0	381	0	583	0	964	0	398	0	489	0	887	0
PBI	682	1	1,500	1	2,182	1	432	1	864	1	1,296	1	462	0	842	1	1,304	1
TCU	1	0	2	0	3	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Undergraduate institution: single sex	249	0	1,729	1	1,978	1	271	0	1,589	1	1,860	1	333	0	2,226	2	2,559	1
Men's college	155	0	4	0	159	0	184	0	4	0	188	0	263	0	10	0	273	0
Women's college	94	0	1,725	1	1,819	1	87	0	1,585	1	1,672	1	70	0	2,216	2	2,286	1
Undergraduate institution: Carnegie classification																		
Doctoral universities	49,166	67	91,794	64	140,960	65	54,999	72	90,870	69	145,869	70	72,489	74	102,436	72	174,925	73

Variable	No parent BA						One parent BA						One parent BA+					
	Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
Master's colleges and universities	19,087	26	41,847	29	60,934	28	15,365	20	30,119	23	45,484	22	15,078	15	25,795	18	40,873	17
Baccalaureate colleges	4,829	7	9,376	7	14,205	7	6,218	8	10,246	8	16,464	8	10,269	10	14,747	10	25,016	10
Undergraduate institution: <i>Barron's</i>																		
Most competitive	6,631	9	10,246	7	16,877	8	9,673	13	12,866	10	22,539	11	20,791	22	25,619	18	46,410	20
Highly competitive	9,762	14	16,710	12	26,472	13	14,148	19	21,604	17	35,752	18	21,230	22	28,566	20	49,796	21
Very competitive	20,539	29	40,442	29	60,981	29	23,445	31	42,297	33	65,742	32	27,795	29	42,858	30	70,653	30
Competitive	27,706	39	57,881	42	85,587	41	23,257	31	43,624	34	66,881	33	22,487	23	37,135	26	59,622	25
Other	6,245	9	13,703	10	19,948	10	4,212	6	8,005	6	12,217	6	3,722	4	6,352	5	10,074	4
Undergraduate institution: AAU	15,158	21	24,118	17	39,276	18	20,016	26	28,577	22	48,593	23	32,471	33	40,344	28	72,815	30
Federal Pell Grant–eligible																		
Yes	59,189	56	115,158	55	174,347	56	30,464	28	51,268	27	81,732	27	25,084	18	37,067	17	62,151	17
No	19,671	19	45,727	22	65,398	21	36,153	34	77,157	40	113,310	38	56,426	40	102,021	46	158,447	44
Do not know	25,959	25	48,044	23	74,003	24	40,725	38	64,427	33	105,152	35	59,632	42	80,886	37	140,518	39
Federal Pell Grant–eligible and first-generation college student	59,189	56	115,158	55	174,347	56	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Undergraduate major field—detailed																		
Business	7,563	7	9,081	4	16,644	5	7,873	7	7,505	4	15,378	5	8,773	6	8,047	3	16,820	4
Education	2,899	3	12,712	6	15,611	5	1,834	2	8,314	4	10,148	3	1,977	1	8,267	3	10,244	3
Engineering	11,907	10	4,168	2	16,075	5	17,465	15	6,546	3	24,011	7	24,308	16	10,259	4	34,567	9
Humanities and arts	11,172	10	18,552	8	29,724	9	11,128	10	17,815	9	28,943	9	17,159	11	26,874	11	44,033	11
Life sciences	34,247	30	89,442	39	123,689	36	32,639	28	90,818	43	123,457	38	33,108	22	84,798	36	117,906	30
Physical sciences	14,515	13	10,399	5	24,914	7	16,646	14	11,413	5	28,059	9	25,743	17	16,631	7	42,374	11
Social and behavioral sciences	21,605	19	59,436	26	81,041	24	18,387	16	44,909	21	63,296	19	27,597	18	56,119	24	83,716	22
Other field	5,799	5	14,646	6	20,445	6	5,171	4	12,699	6	17,870	5	6,309	4	14,128	6	20,437	5
Undecided or no major provided	5,165	4	11,537	5	16,702	5	4,714	4	9,505	5	14,219	4	6,263	4	11,609	5	17,872	5
Undergraduate major field—STEM fields aggregated																		
Business	7,563	7	9,081	4	16,644	5	7,873	7	7,505	4	15,378	5	8,773	6	8,047	3	16,820	4
Education	2,899	3	12,712	6	15,611	5	1,834	2	8,314	4	10,148	3	1,977	1	8,267	3	10,244	3

Variable	No parent BA						One parent BA						One parent BA+					
	Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
STEM fields	60,669	53	104,009	45	164,678	48	66,750	58	108,777	52	175,527	54	83,159	55	111,688	47	194,847	50
Humanities and arts	11,172	10	18,552	8	29,724	9	11,128	10	17,815	9	28,943	9	17,159	11	26,874	11	44,033	11
Social and behavioral sciences	21,605	19	59,436	26	81,041	24	18,387	16	44,909	21	63,296	19	27,597	18	56,119	24	83,716	22
Other field	5,799	5	14,646	6	20,445	6	5,171	4	12,699	6	17,870	5	6,309	4	14,128	6	20,437	5
Undecided or no major provided	5,165	4	11,537	5	16,702	5	4,714	4	9,505	5	14,219	4	6,263	4	11,609	5	17,872	5
Undergraduate major field—STEM yes/no	60,669	53	104,009	45	164,678	48	66,750	58	108,777	52	175,527	54	83,159	55	111,688	47	194,847	50
Undergraduate major GPA																		
3.7–4.0	54,001	51	114,138	55	168,139	54	60,203	57	119,084	63	179,287	61	82,075	60	140,749	67	222,824	64
2.7–3.6	47,480	45	86,800	42	134,280	43	43,001	40	65,290	35	108,291	37	51,120	37	65,581	31	116,701	34
0.0–2.6	4,359	4	7,162	3	11,521	4	3,030	3	3,906	2	6,936	2	3,507	3	3,486	2	6,993	2
≥3.0	94,904	90	189,063	91	283,967	90	97,928	92	176,872	94	274,800	93	127,012	93	199,323	95	326,335	94
Undergraduate overall GPA																		
3.7–4.0	42,866	40	94,334	45	137,200	44	50,683	48	103,599	55	154,282	52	69,800	51	124,396	59	194,196	56
2.7–3.6	55,344	52	102,163	49	157,507	50	50,298	47	78,736	42	129,034	44	60,966	44	80,432	38	141,398	41
0.0–2.6	7,680	7	11,546	6	19,226	6	5,433	5	6,161	3	11,594	4	6,419	5	5,734	3	12,153	3
≥3.0	89,496	85	181,915	87	271,411	86	93,747	88	173,180	92	266,927	91	122,061	89	195,774	93	317,835	91

Note. AANAPISI = Asian American Native American Pacific Islander–serving institution. AAU = Association of American Universities. ANNH = Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian–serving institution. BA = bachelor of arts. GPA = grade point average. HBCU = historically Black college or university. HSI = Hispanic-serving institution. IPEDS = Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. MSI = minority-serving institution. NASNTI = Native American–serving nontribal institution. PBI = predominantly Black institution. STEM = science, technology, engineering, and math. TCU = tribal college or university.

Table A6. Plans for Graduate School of Prospective Graduate Students by Parental Education and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021

Variable	No parent BA						One parent BA						One parent BA+					
	Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Graduate degree objective																		
Doctorate	47,190	43	80,270	36	127,460	38	44,717	40	71,836	36	116,553	38	60,271	42	87,017	39	147,288	40
Master's	55,036	50	130,302	59	185,338	56	56,939	51	118,148	59	175,087	56	70,590	49	123,467	55	194,057	53
MBA	5,730	5	5,924	3	11,654	4	6,647	6	5,963	3	12,610	4	8,948	6	8,694	4	17,642	5
JD	483	0	687	0	1,170	0	444	0	565	0	1,009	0	884	1	1,106	0	1,990	1
Other	2,019	2	3,643	2	5,662	2	2,113	2	3,389	2	5,502	2	3,058	2	4,109	2	7,167	2
Intended graduate major field—detailed																		
Business	8,672	8	9,114	4	17,786	5	9,762	8	8,893	4	18,655	6	12,559	8	11,862	5	24,421	6
Education	8,541	7	27,117	12	35,658	10	5,189	4	17,197	8	22,386	7	6,749	4	19,449	8	26,198	7
Engineering	10,496	9	3,554	2	14,050	4	14,964	13	5,315	3	20,279	6	20,741	14	8,201	3	28,942	7
Humanities and arts	6,069	5	7,920	3	13,989	4	6,350	5	8,115	4	14,465	4	9,267	6	11,719	5	20,986	5
Life sciences	31,892	28	84,594	37	116,486	34	30,436	26	85,978	41	116,414	36	31,173	21	82,940	35	114,113	29
Physical sciences	12,107	11	7,419	3	19,526	6	14,633	13	8,448	4	23,081	7	23,010	15	12,603	5	35,613	9
Social and behavioral sciences	14,272	12	36,086	16	50,358	15	13,076	11	29,114	14	42,190	13	19,441	13	36,843	16	56,284	15
Other field	5,938	5	13,062	6	19,000	6	5,718	5	10,513	5	16,231	5	7,594	5	13,164	6	20,758	5
Undecided or no major provided	16,885	15	41,107	18	57,992	17	15,729	14	35,951	17	51,680	16	20,703	14	39,951	17	60,654	16
Intended graduate major field—STEM fields aggregated																		
Business	8,672	8	9,114	4	17,786	5	9,762	8	8,893	4	18,655	6	12,559	8	11,862	5	24,421	6
Education	8,541	7	27,117	12	35,658	10	5,189	4	17,197	8	22,386	7	6,749	4	19,449	8	26,198	7
STEM fields	54,495	47	95,567	42	150,062	44	60,033	52	99,741	48	159,774	49	74,924	50	103,744	44	178,668	46
Humanities and arts	6,069	5	7,920	3	13,989	4	6,350	5	8,115	4	14,465	4	9,267	6	11,719	5	20,986	5
Social and behavioral sciences	14,272	12	36,086	16	50,358	15	13,076	11	29,114	14	42,190	13	19,441	13	36,843	16	56,284	15
Other field	5,938	5	13,062	6	19,000	6	5,718	5	10,513	5	16,231	5	7,594	5	13,164	6	20,758	5
Undecided or no major provided	16,885	15	41,107	18	57,992	17	15,729	14	35,951	17	51,680	16	20,703	14	39,951	17	60,654	16

Variable	No parent BA						One parent BA						One parent BA+					
	Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Intended graduate major field—STEM yes/no	54,495	47	95,567	42	150,062	44	60,033	52	99,741	48	159,774	49	74,924	50	103,744	44	178,668	46
Undergraduate major is the same as intended graduate major field	70,969	62	133,937	58	204,906	59	74,559	64	128,000	61	202,559	62	93,986	62	137,526	58	231,512	60
Program format																		
On-campus	76,198	70	138,290	64	214,488	66	82,076	75	142,402	73	224,478	74	109,018	77	164,651	75	273,669	76
Online	6,928	6	16,464	8	23,392	7	5,297	5	9,477	5	14,774	5	5,521	4	9,054	4	14,575	4
A combination of both	18,593	17	46,394	21	64,987	20	13,931	13	29,633	15	43,564	14	15,454	11	27,813	13	43,267	12
Undecided	7,212	7	15,916	7	23,128	7	7,834	7	14,361	7	22,195	7	10,851	8	17,328	8	28,179	8
Enrollment preference																		
Full-time	90,978	82	183,900	83	274,878	83	92,123	83	171,448	85	263,571	84	119,539	83	190,401	84	309,940	84
Part-time	11,269	10	20,540	9	31,809	10	9,470	9	13,674	7	23,144	7	10,937	8	15,090	7	26,027	7
Undecided	8,499	8	17,608	8	26,107	8	9,760	9	16,256	8	26,016	8	14,038	10	20,698	9	34,736	9
Preferred region for graduate study (may select more than one)																		
U.S. regions																		
Northeast	36,172	34	54,231	25	90,403	28	42,678	40	62,261	32	104,939	35	66,375	48	88,821	41	155,196	44
Mid-Atlantic	37,455	35	69,705	33	107,160	33	41,353	39	69,184	36	110,537	37	61,298	44	91,336	42	152,634	43
South	43,249	40	89,219	42	132,468	41	45,599	42	87,042	45	132,641	44	56,802	41	92,858	43	149,660	42
Midwest	34,282	32	58,435	27	92,717	29	39,747	37	64,192	33	103,939	35	53,778	39	74,726	35	128,504	36
Southwest	31,108	29	53,018	25	84,126	26	33,189	31	52,836	27	86,025	29	42,410	31	57,628	27	100,038	28
West	46,329	43	73,259	34	119,588	37	50,253	47	73,326	38	123,579	41	72,601	53	94,311	44	166,912	47
Non-U.S. regions																		
Canada	8,525	8	10,907	5	19,432	6	10,215	10	12,901	7	23,116	8	16,518	12	19,145	9	35,663	10
Africa	1,371	1	1,688	1	3,059	1	1,345	1	1,729	1	3,074	1	2,031	1	2,462	1	4,493	1
Asia	2,840	3	2,509	1	5,349	2	3,100	3	2,588	1	5,688	2	5,043	4	4,002	2	9,045	3
Australia/New Zealand	4,780	4	6,729	3	11,509	4	5,693	5	8,430	4	14,123	5	8,807	6	11,203	5	20,010	6
Latin America	2,682	2	4,160	2	6,842	2	2,377	2	3,755	2	6,132	2	3,512	3	4,887	2	8,399	2
Middle East	1,298	1	1,269	1	2,567	1	1,337	1	1,395	1	2,732	1	2,196	2	2,148	1	4,344	1

Variable	No parent BA						One parent BA						One parent BA+					
	Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Western Europe	9,506	9	11,294	5	20,800	6	12,266	11	15,314	8	27,580	9	20,372	15	24,334	11	44,706	13
Eastern Europe and Russia	2,728	3	3,126	1	5,854	2	2,875	3	3,424	2	6,299	2	4,291	3	4,613	2	8,904	3
Count ALL regions																		
1	59,713	56	132,743	62	192,456	60	51,372	48	100,886	52	152,258	51	56,727	41	96,550	45	153,277	43
2	14,660	14	30,672	14	45,332	14	15,644	15	31,264	16	46,908	16	20,323	15	35,824	17	56,147	16
3	9,687	9	18,017	8	27,704	9	11,614	11	20,968	11	32,582	11	16,842	12	26,713	12	43,555	12
4	5,943	6	9,435	4	15,378	5	7,349	7	11,796	6	19,145	6	11,344	8	16,542	8	27,886	8
5	3,261	3	5,104	2	8,365	3	4,097	4	6,397	3	10,494	3	6,600	5	9,430	4	16,030	5
≥6	14,261	13	18,262	9	32,523	10	17,275	16	21,787	11	39,062	13	26,142	19	29,864	14	56,006	16
Number of U.S. regions																		
0	290	0	502	0	792	0	381	0	430	0	811	0	478	0	622	0	1,100	0
1	62,013	58	136,690	64	198,703	62	53,596	50	104,611	54	158,207	53	59,642	43	101,099	47	160,741	46
2	14,855	14	30,848	14	45,703	14	16,269	15	32,630	17	48,899	16	22,318	16	38,538	18	60,856	17
3	10,568	10	18,748	9	29,316	9	12,961	12	22,227	12	35,188	12	19,110	14	29,387	14	48,497	14
4	5,627	5	8,821	4	14,448	4	7,053	7	11,075	6	18,128	6	11,144	8	15,817	7	26,961	8
5	2,372	2	3,791	2	6,163	2	2,956	3	4,761	2	7,717	3	4,636	3	6,684	3	11,320	3
6	11,800	11	14,833	7	26,633	8	14,135	13	17,364	9	31,499	10	20,650	15	22,776	11	43,426	12
All regions outside U.S.																		
Yes	15,363	14	21,235	10	36,598	11	18,636	17	25,224	13	43,860	15	29,792	22	37,277	17	67,069	19
Number of regions outside U.S.																		
0	92,162	86	192,998	90	285,160	89	88,715	83	167,874	87	256,589	85	108,186	78	177,646	83	285,832	81
1	7,783	7	11,893	6	19,676	6	9,508	9	13,653	7	23,161	8	14,911	11	20,075	9	34,986	10
2	3,333	3	4,445	2	7,778	2	4,258	4	5,671	3	9,929	3	7,042	5	8,707	4	15,749	4
3	1,795	2	2,377	1	4,172	1	2,316	2	3,041	2	5,357	2	3,823	3	4,452	2	8,275	2
4	969	1	1,089	1	2,058	1	1,057	1	1,282	1	2,339	1	1,723	1	1,812	1	3,535	1
5	450	0	487	0	937	0	461	0	567	0	1,028	0	710	1	718	0	1,428	0
≥6	1,033	1	944	0	1,977	1	1,036	1	1,010	1	2,046	1	1,583	1	1,513	1	3,096	1

Note. BA = bachelor of arts. JD = juris doctor. MBA = master of business administration. STEM = science, technology, engineering, and math.

Table A7. Characteristics of the Institutions in the Graduate School Choice Sets of Prospective Graduate Students by Parental Education and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021

Variable	No parent BA			One parent BA			One parent BA+		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Percentage PGS who sent at least one GRE score report to a graduate institution with an IPEDS ID	82	82	82	82	83	82	81	82	82
Number of PGS who sent at least one GRE score report to a graduate institution with an IPEDS ID	93,692	187,670	281,362	94,485	173,210	267,695	123,039	194,081	317,120
Total number of GRE score reports	324,642	621,561	946,203	360,753	670,607	1,031,360	509,226	799,070	1,308,296
Median number of graduate institutions	3.46	3.31	3.36	3.82	3.87	3.85	4.14	4.12	4.13
Mean number of graduate institutions	3.00	2.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
Minimum number of graduate institutions	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum number of graduate institutions	57	49	57	56	53	56	56	57	57
Percentage with ≤ 4 prospective graduate institution choices	77	78	77	72	70	71	68	68	68
Percentage with 5–10 prospective graduate institution choices	19	19	19	23	25	24	26	27	26
Percentage with ≥ 11 prospective graduate institution choices	4	3	3	5	5	5	6	6	6
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one in-state institution (Y/N)	78	81	80	73	77	75	69	72	71
Percentage in-state institutions in choice set	74	76	75	68	68	68	64	65	64
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one out-of-state institution (Y/N)	57	53	54	65	64	64	70	69	69
Percentage out-of-state institutions in choice set	75	73	73	77	74	75	80	77	78
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one institution in U.S. Census division (Y/N)	86	89	88	84	87	86	81	84	83
Percentage institutions in U.S. Census division in choice set	78	81	80	73	75	75	69	71	70
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one institution outside their U.S. Census division but within their region (Y/N)	21	20	21	26	26	26	27	28	28
Percentage institutions outside U.S. Census division but within region in choice set	37	38	37	36	36	36	35	35	35
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one institution outside of their U.S. Census region (Y/N)	41	36	38	49	45	46	55	51	53
Percentage institutions outside U.S. Census region in choice set	59	57	58	60	57	58	62	59	61
Percentage PGS who may apply to their undergraduate institution (Y/N)	47	50	49	42	44	43	38	39	39
Percentage undergraduate institutions in choice set	61	61	61	57	54	55	54	52	53
Percentage PGS who may apply to regional flagship institution in state of residence (Y/N)	21	18	19	24	21	22	25	22	23

Variable	No parent BA			One parent BA			One parent BA+		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Percentage regional flagship institutions in state of residence in choice set	43	44	43	41	40	40	39	39	39
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one regional comprehensive institution in state of residence (Y/N)	32	39	37	25	33	30	19	26	24
Percentage regional comprehensive institutions in state of residence in choice set	19	24	22	14	17	16	10	13	12
Percentage PGS who may apply to the land grant institution in their state of residence (Y/N)	39	33	35	45	39	42	49	42	45
Percentage land grant institutions in their state of residence in choice set	47	48	48	47	46	46	44	43	44
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one public graduate institution (Y/N)	86	85	85	86	86	86	84	83	84
Percentage public graduate institutions in choice set	78	78	78	76	74	75	73	72	72
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one private nonprofit graduate institution (Y/N)	53	54	54	57	60	59	63	65	64
Percentage private nonprofit graduate institutions in choice set	59	60	60	58	58	58	60	61	60
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one private for-profit graduate institution (Y/N)	5	5	5	4	6	6	3	5	4
Percentage private for-profit graduate institutions in choice set	27	28	28	24	25	25	24	24	24
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one graduate institution with at least 20,000 students (Y/N)	77	73	74	81	78	79	83	81	82
Percentage graduate institutions with at least 20,000 students in choice set	73	69	70	73	67	69	73	68	70
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one MSI graduate institution (Y/N)	43	44	44	39	41	40	37	39	38
Percentage MSI graduate institutions in choice set	53	55	55	46	45	46	42	42	42
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one AANAPISI graduate institution (Y/N)	24	22	23	23	22	22	24	24	24
Percentage AANAPISI graduate institutions in choice set	42	46	44	36	37	37	33	35	34
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one ANNH graduate institution (Y/N)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Percentage ANNH graduate institutions in choice set	42	45	44	38	37	37	35	35	35
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one HSI graduate institution (Y/N)	31	31	31	26	27	26	23	25	24
Percentage HSI graduate institutions in choice set	52	55	54	45	45	45	41	41	41
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one NASNTI graduate institution (Y/N)	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
Percentage NASNTI graduate institutions in choice set	43	46	45	38	41	40	37	39	38
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one PBI graduate institution (Y/N)	2	3	3	2	3	2	2	3	2
Percentage PBI graduate institutions in choice set	37	38	38	34	33	34	32	32	32
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one HBCU graduate institution (Y/N)	3	5	4	3	4	3	2	3	3
Percentage HBCU graduate institutions in choice set	45	46	46	38	35	36	38	35	36

Variable	No parent BA			One parent BA			One parent BA+		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one TCU graduate institution (Y/N)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Percentage TCU graduate institutions in choice set		100	100	100	100	100			
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one single-sex college (Y/N)	2	3	3	2	4	3	1	3	2
Percentage single-sex colleges in choice set	21	29	28	19	25	23	20	24	23
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one men's college (Y/N)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Percentage men's colleges in choice set	35	29	34	45	39	42	32	40	35
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one women's college (Y/N)	2	3	3	2	4	3	1	3	2
Percentage women's colleges in choice set	21	29	28	19	25	23	20	24	23
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one graduate institution with Carnegie doctoral classification (Y/N)	89	86	87	93	91	91	94	93	93
Percentage graduate institutions with Carnegie doctoral classification in choice set	88	83	85	89	83	85	92	87	89
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one graduate institution with Carnegie master's classification (Y/N)	28	36	33	24	33	30	19	27	24
Percentage graduate institutions with Carnegie master's classification in choice set	51	54	53	46	45	45	46	43	44
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one graduate institution with Carnegie classification special focus 4 year (Y/N)	16	19	18	15	23	20	11	20	17
Percentage graduate institutions with Carnegie classification special focus 4 year in choice set	41	40	40	38	37	37	36	35	35
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one AAU member graduate institution (Y/N)	51	42	45	59	51	53	67	59	62
Percentage AAU member graduate institutions in choice set	62	55	57	65	54	59	71	61	65

Note. AANAPISI = Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-serving institution. ANNH = Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-serving institution. AAU = American Association of Universities. BA = bachelor of arts. HBCU = historically Black college or university. HSI = Hispanic-serving institution. IPEDS = Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. MSI = minority-serving institution. N/A = not applicable. NASNTI = Native American-serving nontribal institution. PBI = predominantly Black institution. PGS = prospective graduate students. TCU = tribal college or university. Y/N = yes/no.

Notes

¹ Hereafter, parents will be used to reflect parents or guardians.

² In 2022, the gender question was revised. *A Snapshot of the Individuals Who Took the GRE General Test July 2018–June 2023* (ETS, 2024) presents gender data using the revised gender question.

³ These race/ethnicity categories match those provided in *A Snapshot of the Individuals Who Took the GRE General Test July 2016–June 2021* (ETS, 2022).

⁴ For a more comprehensive analysis of the experiences of women PGS, refer to the fifth Pathways to Graduate School series report (Millett, 2025a).

⁵ For a more comprehensive analysis of the experiences of Black PGS, refer to the fifth Pathways to Graduate School series report (Millett, 2025d), and for Hispanic PGS, refer to the second report (Millett, 2025b).

⁶ On the BIQ, individuals were asked “What is your native language?” It is acknowledged that within the field of applied linguistics, using the term *first language* rather than *native language* would address concerns surrounding the “native speaker bias.”

⁷ The U.S. Census Bureau does not include Puerto Rico or other U.S. territories in any census region or division.

⁸ College Navigator is the data source. Note that many of the men’s colleges are religious institutions. See <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>

⁹ This list is from July 2022. As of July 2023, 69 AAU member universities are in the United States.

¹⁰ Note that these regions do not align precisely with the U.S. Census divisions and regions presented in other report sections. These regions are from the BIQ. The Northeast region includes Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. The Mid-Atlantic region includes Washington, DC, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. The South region includes Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. The Midwest region includes Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The Southwest region includes Arizona, Arkansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. The West region includes Alaska, California, Colorado, Hawai‘i, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

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