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Pathways to Graduate School: 4.

A Data Overview of U.S. Prospective Graduate Students by Federal Pell Grant Eligibility and Gender

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Pathways to Graduate School: 4. A Data Overview of U.S. Prospective Graduate Students by Pell Grant Eligibility and Gender

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Abstract

Today, the Federal Pell Grant program is ubiquitous in conversations about how to pay for undergraduate education. Since 1982, it has supported more than 212 million students, making it a cornerstone of higher education access in the United States. However, what happens next for Pell Grant recipients who earn bachelor's degrees—especially when pursuing graduate study—remains largely unexplored. This knowledge gap leaves questions unanswered about how gender and financial need shape the path beyond college. The 673,573 individuals who are U.S. citizens, who provided gender and their undergraduate Pell Grant eligibility information, and who 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) 50% of Pell-eligible PGS were White, and 75% of non-Pell-eligible PGS were White; (b) fewer Pell-eligible PGS were enrolled in college; (c) more Pell-eligible PGS were enrolled at in-state institutions; (d) substantially more Pell-eligible PGS were first-generation college students compared to their non-Pell-eligible peers; (e) more men than women in both Pell eligibility profiles majored in the physical sciences and engineering than in the life sciences; (f) more than 90% of PGS of both Pell eligibility profiles earned a 3.0 or higher grade point average in their undergraduate majors; and (g) most PGS were considering at least one

graduate school in their states of residence. The report concludes with recommendations for future research and practical applications, particularly in the graduate school application process.

Keywords: Pell Grant, federal grants, 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
Barron's	*Barron's Profile of American Colleges*
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

> It [the Higher Education Act of 1965] means that a high school senior anywhere in this great land of ours can apply to any college or any university in any of the 50 States and not be turned away because his family is poor. (Johnson, 1965)

For almost 60 years, the U.S. government has strived to make college possible for all students by removing or mitigating financial stumbling blocks. When President Lyndon Johnson signed the Higher Education Act of 1965, Title IV created landmark legislation for federal financial aid by establishing the Educational Opportunity Grants (EOG) program, which allocated financial aid to colleges. In 1972, the EOG program split into the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, which continued to allocate funds to colleges, and the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant (BEOG), which provided financial support directly to students. In 1980, the BEOG program became known as the Pell Grant, named after Senator Claiborne Pell.

Pell Grants are a key tool in promoting college access, reducing college dropout rates and improving student outcomes (e.g., college graduation; Protopsaltis & Parrott, 2017). The Pell Grant program is the single largest source of federal grant aid for postsecondary education students. The College Board's *Trends in College Pricing 2023* report (Ma & Pender, 2023) has provided critical insights into the scope and financial impact of Pell Grants over time: (a) From 1981–1982 to 2021–2022, an estimated 212 million students received $869 billion in Pell Grants; (b) in 2022–2023, 6 million undergraduate students, representing 30% of undergraduates, received $27.2 billion in Pell Grant support; and (c) in 2022–2023, the maximum Pell Grant was $7,205.

The Pell Grant program has been crucial in supporting economically disadvantaged students. The Congressional Research Service (2023) reported, "Although there is no absolute income threshold that determines who is eligible or ineligible for Pell Grants, an estimated 97% of Pell Grant recipients had a total family income at or below $60,000 in academic year 2020–2021" (p. i). For context, the total cost of attending Harvard University for an undergraduate living on campus that year was $72,357 (tuition, health services, board, room, and student services fee; Harvard University, 2024). This amount exceeded the total family income of many Pell Grant recipients by $12,000, underscoring the financial challenges that economically disadvantaged students face, even with Pell Grant support.

To determine eligibility for a Pell Grant, an undergraduate student must demonstrate financial need by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).[1] To maintain their Pell Grant during their undergraduate studies, students need to (a) annually complete the FAFSA form and (b) make satisfactory academic progress, as represented by their grade point average (GPA) and credits earned per year (Federal Student Aid, n.d.-b).

The Pell Grant program serves a diverse group of students. Radford et al. (2016), in their report "First-Time Postsecondary Students in 2011–12: A Profile," provided a portrait of the first-time postsecondary students who received a Federal Pell Grant in 2011–2012 by selected characteristics such as gender, race/ethnicity, family educational attainment, and income:

- **Gender.** Fifty-two percent of women and 45% of men received a Pell Grant.
- **Race/Ethnicity.** Seventy-four percent of Black students received a Pell Grant, along with 62% of Hispanic students, 41% of Asian students, and 39% of White students.
- **Family Educational Attainment.** Sixty-nine percent of students who reported being the first person in their immediate family to go to college received a Pell Grant, while 44% of students who were not the first person in their immediate family received one.
- **Family Income.** Eighty-eight percent of dependent students with parent income in 2010 of less than $30,000 received a Pell Grant, and 68% of students with parent income of $30,000 to $59,999 received one.

Students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, first-generation college students, women, and students from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups, particularly Black and Hispanic students, are more likely to rely on Pell Grants to afford higher education, leaving them especially vulnerable to financial challenges that may hinder their ability to continue their education.

Most graduate students are not eligible for Pell Grants.[2] This is concerning, as Radford et al. (2016) also reported that among first-time postsecondary students in 2011–2012 who expected to complete an advanced degree,[3] 44% received a Pell Grant. It is still too soon to know the final educational outcomes for those students—did their expectations of earning an advanced degree come to fruition, or did a different outcome transpire? Was there a mismatch between expectations and reality?

Academic and nonacademic circumstances could contribute to or detract from achieving graduate and professional degree goals. One factor may be having limited individual or family

income. Being an economically disadvantaged student[4] has been found to influence some undergraduate experiences, such as institutional choice (Hoxby & Avery, 2013), college major (Startz, 2024), and academic achievement (Carnevale & Smith, 2018). Although being economically disadvantaged (e.g., a Pell Grant recipient) has not been found to impact enrolling in graduate school 1 year after college (Wei & Horn, 2009), less attention has been paid to students' journeys to graduate school. For example, when selecting programs to apply to and perhaps enroll at, PGS may consider program quality features like the reputation of the graduate program and the institution, faculty's reputation, faculty's research interests, research facilities, alumni career paths, and the social climate, as well as financial considerations, such as availability of financial aid, distance from home, cost of living, and the affordability of housing. When the admissions offers are in, paying for education may be a critical deciding factor.

While President Johnson's dream for high school seniors not to be turned away from any college is still a work in progress, we must keep examining how the educational journeys of those who received a Pell Grant and those who did not compare. Only by understanding their undergraduate journeys and emerging graduate school choices through these profiles can key stakeholders collaborate to craft policies and practices to open up possibilities—such as earning a graduate degree—that might have seemed unimaginable to students.

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 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.[5] 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.[6] 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 Pell-Eligible and Non-Pell-Eligible 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

The 1,001,576 million individuals in this study are evenly distributed among those who reported being Pell-eligible (33% or 331,008), those who were non-Pell-eligible (34% or 342,565), and individuals who reported not knowing whether they were eligible (33%, or n = 328,003; see Table 1).

Table 1. Federal Pell Grant Eligibility by Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021

Variable	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019	2019–2020	2020–2021	Total
Pell-eligible	60,633	83,530	77,155	64,509	45,181	331,008
Women	37,891	52,916	49,847	41,804	29,879	212,337
Men	22,742	30,614	27,308	22,705	15,302	118,671
Non-Pell-eligible	55,138	83,466	78,456	69,568	55,937	342,565
Women	35,832	55,505	52,618	46,606	38,044	228,605
Men	19,306	27,961	25,838	22,962	17,893	113,960
Don't know if Pell-eligible	58,555	82,590	75,733	63,893	47,232	328,003
Women	34,549	50,018	45,798	38,597	29,003	197,965
Men	24,006	32,572	29,935	25,296	18,229	130,038

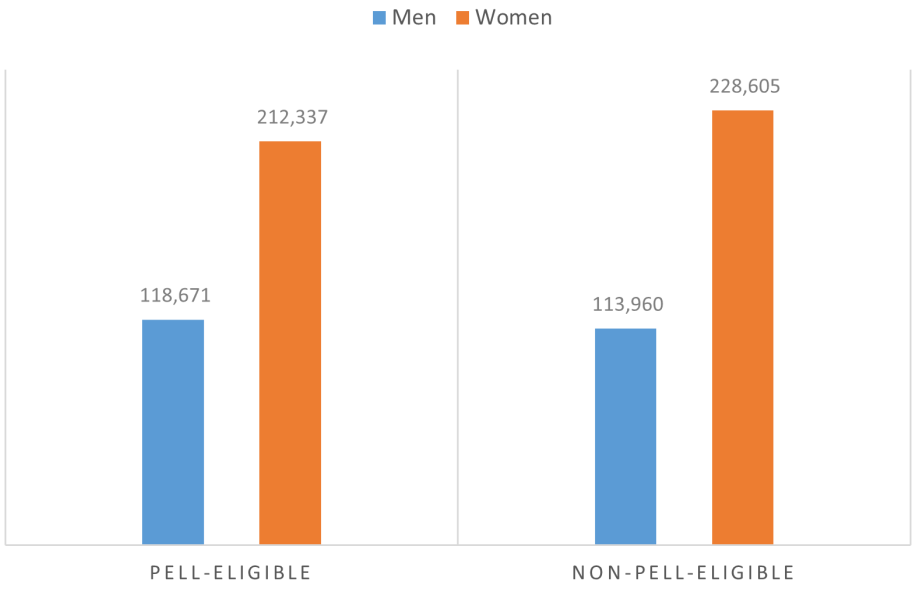
Note. These individuals had scores on all three GRE General Test measures over the period of July 1, 2016, to June 30, 2021, and responded to the questions about gender, citizenship, and Pell Grant eligibility on the GRE registration form and the Background Information Questionnaire.

Tables A2–A6 provide data for all three groups. The did-not-know group often resembles the non-Pell-eligible group in terms of characteristics or outcomes, but both groups tend to differ from the Pell-eligible group. The did-not-know group was excluded from the analyses presented in the body of the report due to the challenges their lack of clarity regarding Pell Grant eligibility posed for drawing precise conclusions and developing targeted recommendations. This decision ensures that the focus remains on groups with clearly defined eligibility status, allowing for more robust and actionable findings. Analyses of Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible individuals are presented in the body of the report (n = 673,573).

Gender

Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible profiles have similar gender distributions. Approximately two-thirds of each profile identified as women,[7] with the remaining one-third identifying as men. Pell-eligible PGS were 64% women and 36% men, and non-Pell-eligible PGS were 67% women and 33% men (see Figure 1 and Table 1).

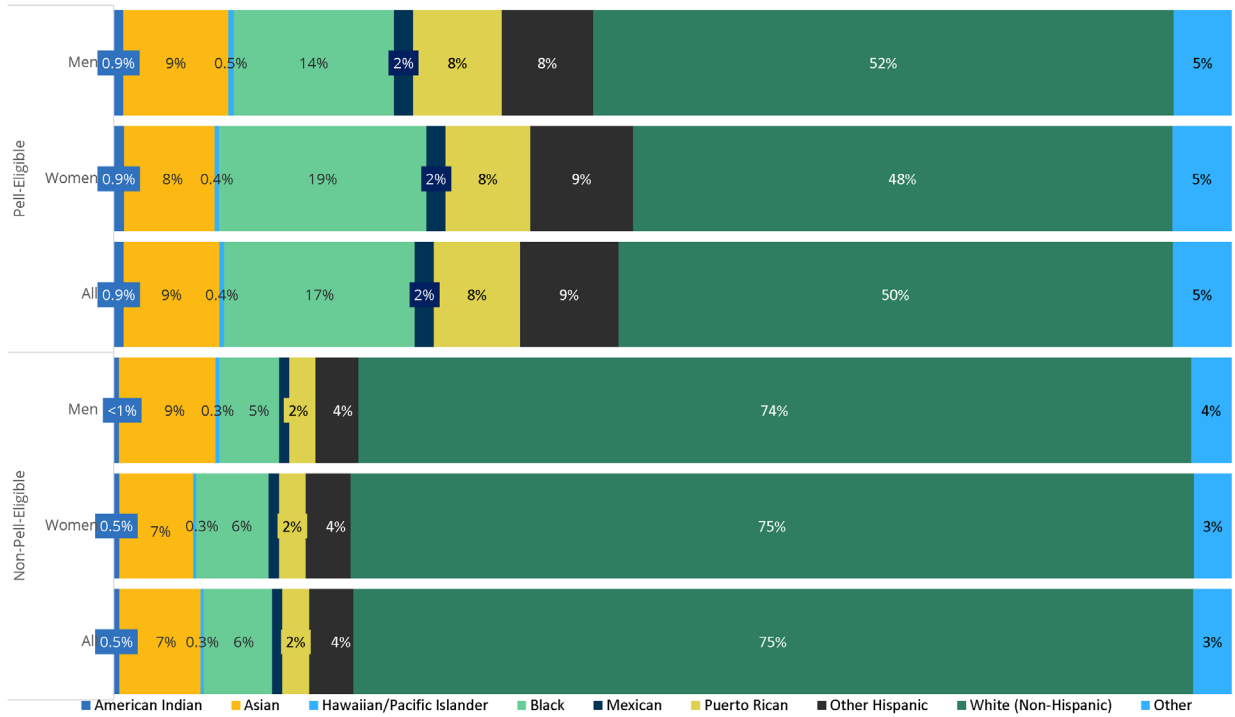
Figure 1. Pell Grant Eligibility by Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021



Race/Ethnicity

The race/ethnicity[8] profiles of Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible PGS reveal two key differences (see Figure 2 and Table A2). First, 50% of Pell-eligible PGS were White, compared to 75% of non-Pell-eligible PGS—a 25 percentage point difference. Second, 17% of Pell-eligible PGS were Black, compared to 6% of non-Pell-eligible PGS—an 11 percentage point difference. Aside from these differences, the racial/ethnic composition of the two groups was similar. Within each profile, gender differences were minimal.

Figure 2. Pell Grant Eligibility by Racial/Ethnic Group and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021

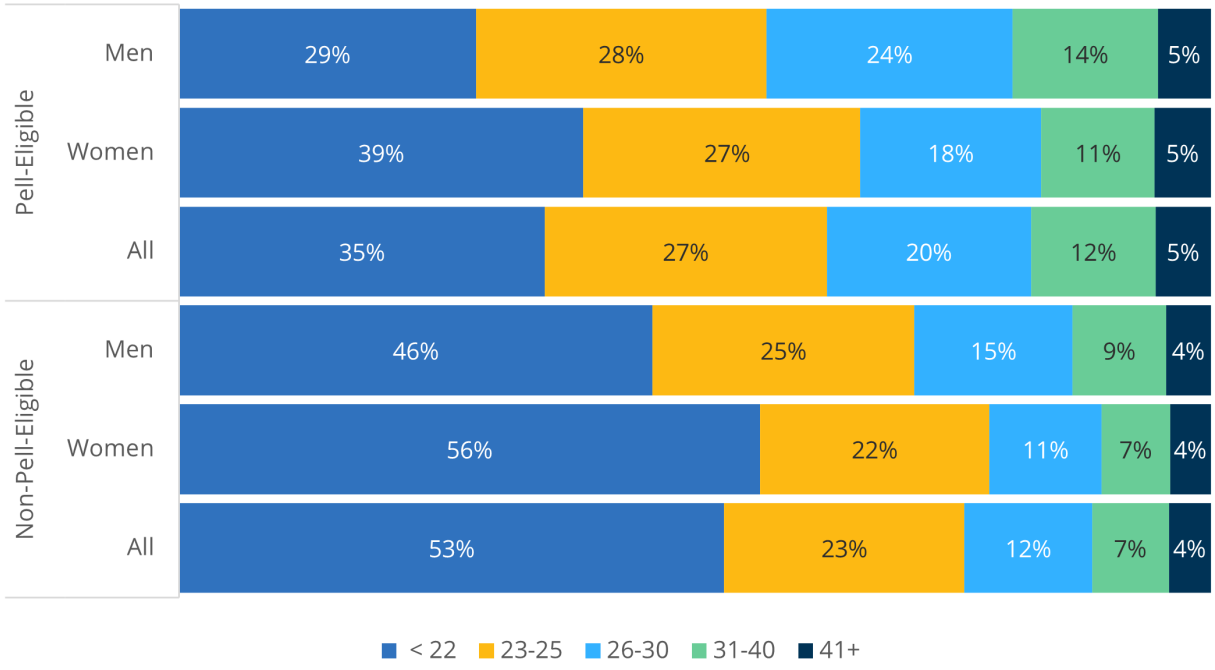


Racial/ethnic groups are defined as follows: AIAN = American Indian or Alaskan Native; Asian = Asian or Asian American; NHOPI = Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; Black = Black or African American; Mexican = Mexican, Mexican American, or Chicano; Puerto Rican = Puerto Rican; other Hispanic =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

Age Group

Concerning age, there are notable differences both across and within each profile (see Figure 3 and Table A2). Across the two profiles, 35% of Pell-eligible PGS were 22 years old or younger, compared to 53% for non-Pell-eligible PGS—an 18 percentage point difference. Within each profile, there was a 10 percentage point difference between women and men in the 22-year-old or younger group.

Figure 3. Pell Grant Eligibility by Age Group and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021



There were moderate differences across the two groups regarding being 26–30 years of age. Twenty percent of Pell-eligible PGS were 26–30 years, compared to 12% of non-Pell-eligible PGS—an 8 percentage point difference. Within the Pell-eligible group, there were moderate gender differences, with 24% of men being this age, compared to 18% of women.

Communicates Better in English

Most PGS (94%) in both Pell eligibility profiles indicated that they communicated better in English than in any other language; there were no differences in gender (see Table A2). For those who reported not speaking better in English than in any other language, when asked about their native languages,[9] Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Arabic, Vietnamese, Russian, Farsi, French, and Tagalog were among the native languages PGS reported.

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).

Most Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible PGS (94%–95%) reported not having a documented disability (see Table A2). Among those who did report a disability, the most common was a learning disability. Notably, 47% of non-Pell-eligible PGS reported having a learning disability, compared to 35% of Pell-eligible PGS. Within each profile, gender differences were minimal.

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.

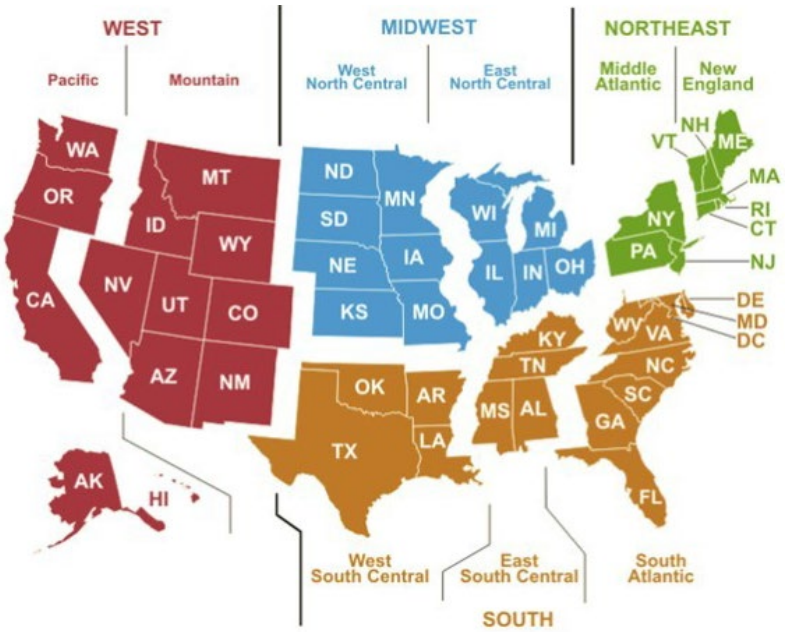
Gevelber (2014) wrote, “Think geographic, not just demographic. . . . Location data provides a reliable window into the mindsets, intentions, and concerns of an audience—sometimes even more so than demographic data.” Graduate schools interested in shaping their applicant pools may benefit from a better 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, four U.S. Census regions and nine divisions (see Figure 4),[10] and congressional districts. With the exception of the census data, the data presented are limited to the 10 areas with the highest representations of PGS.

Figure 4. U.S. Census Regions and Divisions. Data are From the U.S. Census Bureau



Home States

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). The states with the highest representation of PGS largely overlap with nine of the 10 most populous states, with Michigan being the exception.

More than half of the Pell-eligible (58%) and non-Pell-eligible (53%) PGS resided in California, Texas, New York, Florida, or Georgia (see Table 2). Illinois, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Virginia were also among the top 10 for both groups, although their rankings varied due to differences in the number of people. Notably, Pell-eligible men were the only group with Utah in their top 10 states of residence.

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. Seven of the 10 largest CBSAs in the United States exhibit a high density of PGS.

The CBSAs with the greatest concentration of Pell-eligible (30%) and non-Pell-eligible (30%) PGS had a high degree of overlap (see Table 3). The two groups had eight CBSAs in common: (a) Atlanta–Sandy Springs–Roswell, GA; (b) Dallas–Fort Worth–Arlington, TX; (c) Washington–Arlington–Alexandria, DC/VA/MD/WV; (d) Houston–Pasadena–The Woodlands, TX; (e) Chicago–Naperville–Elgin, IL/IN; (f) Los Angeles–Long Beach–Anaheim, CA; (g) New York–Newark–Jersey City, NY/NJ; and (h) San Francisco–Oakland–Fremont, CA.

Pell-eligible men and women resided uniquely in Miami–Fort Lauderdale–West Palm Beach, FL, and San Diego–Chula Vista–Carlsbad, CA, while their non-Pell-eligible peers resided uniquely in Boston–Cambridge–Newton, MA/NH, and Philadelphia–Camden–Wilmington, PA/NJ/DE/MD.

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 Pell Grant eligibility.

There are minimal differences in the U.S. Census regions and divisions where the two Pell eligibility profiles reside (see Table A3). For both profiles, the South region is the most popular (~40%). For Pell-eligible PGS, the West had the next highest concentration (25%), followed by the Northeast (17%) and the Midwest (15%). The non-Pell-eligible PGS were fairly evenly distributed across the other three regions—West (19%), Midwest (20%), and Northeast (19%). Within each profile, gender differences were minimal.

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

Variable	Pell-eligible			Non-Pell-eligible		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Highest representation (highest to lowest)						
1	CA	CA	CA	CA	CA	CA
2	TX	NY	TX	TX	TX	TX
3	NY	TX	NY	NY	NY	NY
4	FL	FL	FL	FL	FL	FL
5	GA	GA	GA	IL	GA	GA
6	UT	NC	NC	GA	IL	IL
7	NC	IL	IL	NC	NC	NC
8	IL	PA	PA	VA	OH	OH
9	OH	OH	OH	PA	PA	PA
10	PA	VA	VA	OH	VA	VA
Percentage	58	59	58	53	53	53
Top 10 *n*	67,853	125,948	192,321	59,941	120,409	180,350
50 states + DC	117,343	212,337	329,680	112,776	228,605	341,381

Note. These analyses are restricted to the 50 states and Washington, DC. Blue shading indicates states common to both groups. Gray shading indicates states unique to one gender within a group.

Table 3. The 10 Core-Based Statistical Areas With the Highest Representation of Prospective Graduate Students by Pell Eligibility and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021

Variable	Pell-eligible			Non-Pell-eligible		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Highest concentration (highest to lowest)						
1	NYC Area	NYC Area	NYC Area	NYC Area	NYC Area	NYC Area
2	LA Area	LA Area	LA Area	DC Area	DC Area	DC Area
3	ATL Area	ATL Area	ATL Area	LA Area	IL Area	IL Area
4	IL Area	IL Area	IL Area	IL Area	LA Area	LA Area
5	DC Area	MIA Area	MIA Area	BOS Area	ATL Area	ATL Area
6	MIA Area	DAL Area	DAL Area	ATL Area	BOS Area	BOS Area
7	DAL Area	HOU Area	DC Area	DAL Area	DAL Area	DAL Area
8	HOU Area	DC Area	HOU Area	SF Area	PHI Area	PHI Area
9	SF Area	SD Area	SF Area	PHI Area	HOU Area	SF Area
10	SD Area	SF Area	SD Area	HOU Area	SF Area	HOU Area
Percentage	29	31	30	30	30	30
Top 10 *n*	34,214	65,914	100,128	33,941	67,451	101,432
50 states + DC	117,343	212,337	329,680	112,776	228,605	341,381

Note. These analyses are restricted to the 50 states and Washington, DC. Blue shading indicates core-based statistical areas common to both groups. Pink shading indicates core-based statistical areas unique to one of the groups. ATL Area = Atlanta–Sandy Springs–Roswell, GA. BOS Area = Boston–Cambridge–Newton, MA/NH. DAL Area = Dallas–Fort Worth–Arlington, TX. DC Area = Washington–Arlington–Alexandria, DC/VA/MD/WV. HOU Area = Houston–Pasadena–The Woodlands, TX. IL Area = Chicago–Naperville–Elgin, IL/IN. 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. PHI Area = Philadelphia–Camden–Wilmington, PA/NJ/DE/MD. SD Area = San Diego–Chula Vista–Carlsbad, CA. SF Area = San Francisco–Oakland–Fremont, CA. SJ Area = San Jose–Sunnyvale–Santa Clara, CA.

The nine U.S. Census divisions show a finer-grain picture of the country. For both Pell eligibility profiles, more than one-quarter of PGS resided in the South Atlantic region (see Table A3). For Pell-eligible PGS, the Pacific was the next most populous region (17%). For non-Pell-eligible PGS, the East North Central (14%) and the Middle Atlantic (14%) had the next highest concentrations. Moreover, gender differences are minimal within each profile.

U.S. Congressional Districts

There are notable differences in congressional district representation across and within both profiles (see Table 4). Ten congressional districts represent 6%–7% of their population. Two key points emerge from the data. When looking across the profiles, MA District 07 is the only congressional district common to both Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible groups. Together, these groups reside in 19 congressional districts spanning 12 states and the District of Columbia. Within the profiles, men and women have congressional districts in common as well as unique ones, which increases the number of congressional districts and states to 27 districts spanning 13 states and the District of Columbia.

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

Graduate programs are interested in knowing what prospective students are engaged in at the time of application. PGS bring a diverse range of educational and work backgrounds. This section elucidates two areas 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 both Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible profiles, PGS were predominantly currently enrolled in college or unenrolled college graduates with a bachelor's degree (see Table A4). Across the two profiles, there were moderate differences—7 percentage points—in being currently enrolled in college: 38% for Pell-eligible and 45% for non-Pell-eligible PGS. There were minimal differences across the two profiles for being unenrolled college graduates (40% vs. 37%). Within each profile, there were minimal gender differences.

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

Variable	Pell-eligible			Non-Pell-eligible		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Congressional district representation (highest to lowest)						
1	UT District 03	NY District 08	UT District 03	DC District 00	DC District 00	DC District 00
2	UT District 01	FL District 02	FL District 02	MA District 07	MA District 07	MA District 07
3	ID District 02	NY District 13	NY District 08	VA District 08	MI District 06	MI District 06
4	MA District 07	UT District 03	UT District 01	TX District 10	NY District 12	TX District 10
5	FL District 02	FL District 03	NY District 13	MI District 06	TX District 10	NY District 12
6	UT District 04	GA District 05	MA District 07	WA District 07	NC District 04	VA District 08
7	UT District 02	MA District 07	ID District 02	NY District 12	NY District 03	NC District 04
8	NY District 13	NY District 06	FL District 03	VA District 11	NC District 02	NC District 02
9	DC District 00	NY District 14	GA District 05	IL District 05	FL District 03	WA District 07
10	FL District 03	NY District 09	FL District 10	CA District 50	VA District 08	IL District 05
Percentage	7	6	6	7	6	6
Top 10 *n*	8,616	11,980	19,772	7,404	12,993	20,157
50 states + DC	117,343	212,337	329,680	112,776	228,605	341,381

Note. These analyses are restricted to the 50 states and Washington, DC. Blue shading indicates that congressional districts are common to both groups. Pink shading indicates congressional districts unique to one of the groups. Gray shading indicates congressional districts unique to one gender within a group.

Full-Time Work Experience

Individuals decide 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 both Pell-eligible (52%) and non-Pell-eligible (57%) PGS reported less than 1 year of postundergraduate work experience (see Table A4). There were no notable differences across the groups or 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 a key dimension of their undergraduate experiences: their status as first-generation college students, offering insight into the familial 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 Pell Grant eligibility, 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 (National Center for Education Statistics [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.

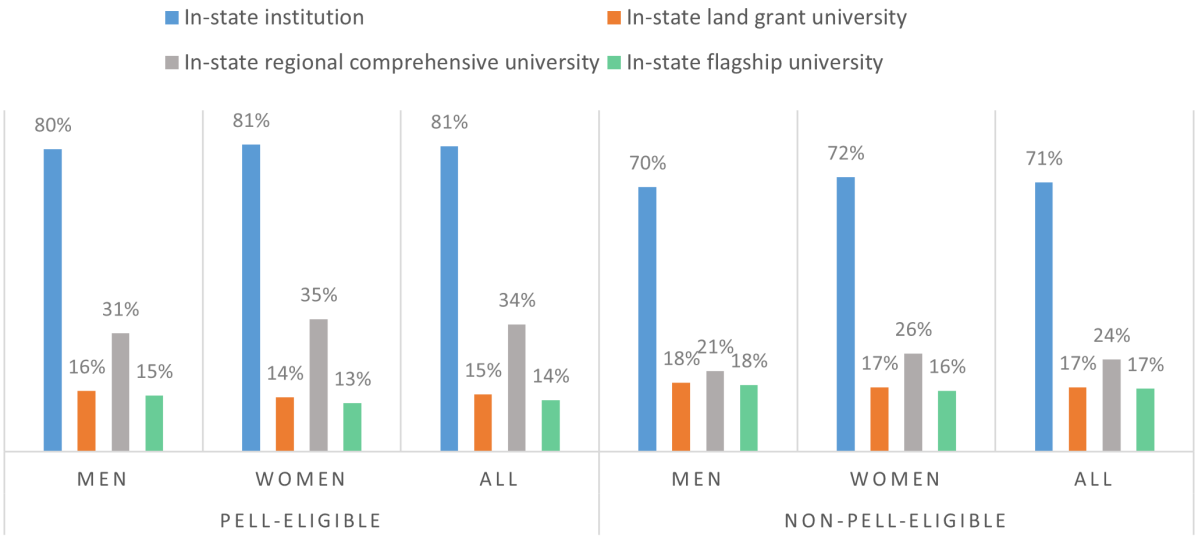
Baccalaureate Institutions in Their Home States

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 5 and Table A5). State land grant universities, regional comprehensive universities, and flagship universities are subsets of the broader category of in-state institutions.

Pell-eligible PGS attended a baccalaureate institution in their states of residence at a considerably higher rate than their non-Pell-eligible peers did (81% vs. 71%). There was minimal difference in both groups' attendance at the state land grant institution in their states of residence (15% of Pell-eligible vs. 17% of non-Pell-eligible).

Figure 5. Pell Grant Eligibility by Attendance at an Undergraduate Institution in Their State of Residence and by Institutional Type 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.

The two groups differed substantially in attendance at a regional comprehensive university—10 percentage points—between Pell-eligible (34%) and non-Pell-eligible (24%). Both profiles were comparable in pursuing a baccalaureate degree at the flagship university in their states of residence (14% of Pell-eligible vs. 17% of non-Pell-eligible). For all four institutional profiles, within each group, there were minimal gender differences.

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 Pell-eligible (76%) and non-Pell-eligible (71%) PGS attended public universities, with minimal gender differences within each group (see Table A5). Additionally, more than half of PGS in each Pell eligibility profile (52%) attended institutions with 20,000 or more students (the largest institution size listed). Within each group, there were minimal gender differences.

Minority-Serving Institutions

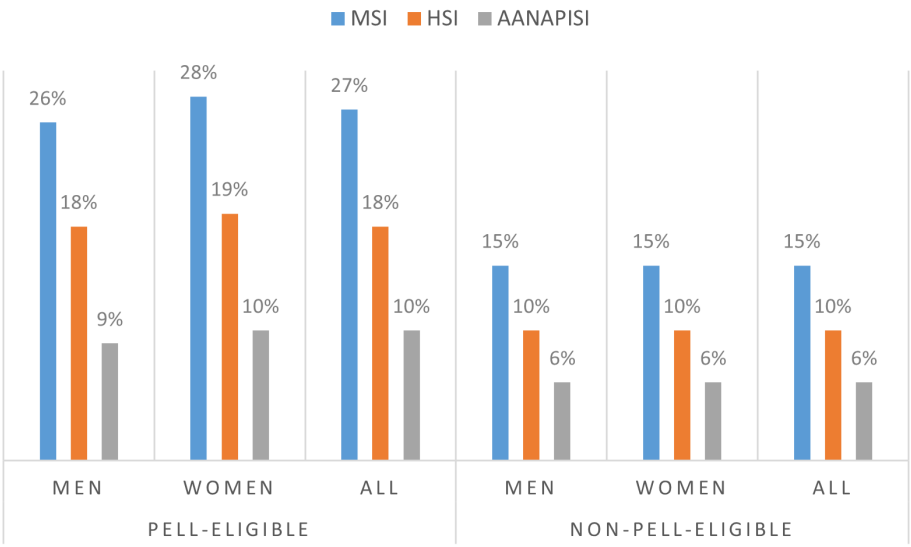
Today, millions of students of color, many of whom may be from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and the first in their families to attend college, enroll at an MSI (American Council on Education [ACE], n.d.-b). Students of all races/ethnicities attend MSIs. The 771 MSIs compose a category of educational 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 two critical differences between Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible PGS in attending an MSI as an undergraduate. First, attendance at an MSI was considerably higher for Pell-eligible (27%) compared to non-Pell-eligible PGS (15%; see Figure 6 and Table A5). Second, a similar pattern was observed for attending an HSI, with 18% of Pell-eligible PGS attending one compared to 10% of non-Pell-eligible PGS attending one. There were minimal differences between the two groups in attendance at an AANAPISI. Within each group, there were minimal gender differences in attending an MSI and the types of MSI.

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.[11] Among Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible PGS, approximately 1% of all PGS attended a single-sex college as an undergraduate (see Table A5).

Figure 6. Pell Grant Eligibility Status by Attendance at Minority-Serving Institutions Overall, at Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and at Asian American Native American Pacific Islander–Serving Institutions 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. HSI = Hispanic-serving institution. MSI = minority-serving institution.

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).

Most Pell-eligible (68%) and non-Pell-eligible (71%) PGS attended an undergraduate institution with a Carnegie classification at the doctoral level. For both groups, PGS attendance at master's-level and baccalaureate-level institutions was comparable (see Table A5).

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).

Attendance at undergraduate institutions ranked as "competitive" was notably higher for Pell-eligible PGS than for non-Pell-eligible PGS (38% vs. 31%; see Table A5). There were slight differences between Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible PGS, with a difference of less than 5 percentage points in their attendance at "very competitive," "highly competitive," and "most competitive" institutions. Additionally, within groups, there were minimal gender differences.

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).[12] In 2020, AAU institutions awarded 48% of all research doctoral degrees and 20% of all undergraduate degrees in science, technology, engineering, and 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).

There was a moderate difference in attending an AAU institution as an undergraduate between Pell-eligible PGS (20%) and non-Pell-eligible (26%) PGS (see Table A5). Within the non-Pell-eligible groups, men and women differed by 6 percentage points, with a higher proportion of men (30%) than women (24%) attending/having attended an AAU institution.

How Did Prospective Graduate Students Experience Their Undergraduate Education?

In addition to gender and race/ethnicity, other dimensions of PGS experiences may influence how they navigate their undergraduate and graduate school experiences. Parental educational attainment may be one such factor.

Parent Educational Attainment

Parent/guardian (parent) educational attainment is positively correlated with children's educational attainment. For example, data from the Survey of Earned Doctorate reveal that among all individuals who received a doctorate in 2021, 47% of women had at least one parent who earned a master's degree, professional doctorate, or research doctoral degree; 25% had at least one parent with a bachelor's degree; and 27% had at least one parent whose highest level of education was some college or less (National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, 2021, Table 5-5).

Substantially more Pell-eligible PGS reported no parent with a bachelor's degree compared to their non-Pell-eligible peers (55% vs. 19%), a 35 percentage point difference (see Figure 7 and Table A5). There were moderate differences in having one parent with a bachelor's degree, with 26% of Pell-eligible compared to 34% of non-Pell-eligible PGS. The two groups differed in having one parent with a bachelor's+, with 20% of Pell-eligible PGS and 47% of non-Pell-eligible PGS—a 27 percentage point gap. Within each group, there were minimal gender differences. For a more comprehensive analysis of parental education, see the third Pathways to Graduate School series report (Millett, 2025c).

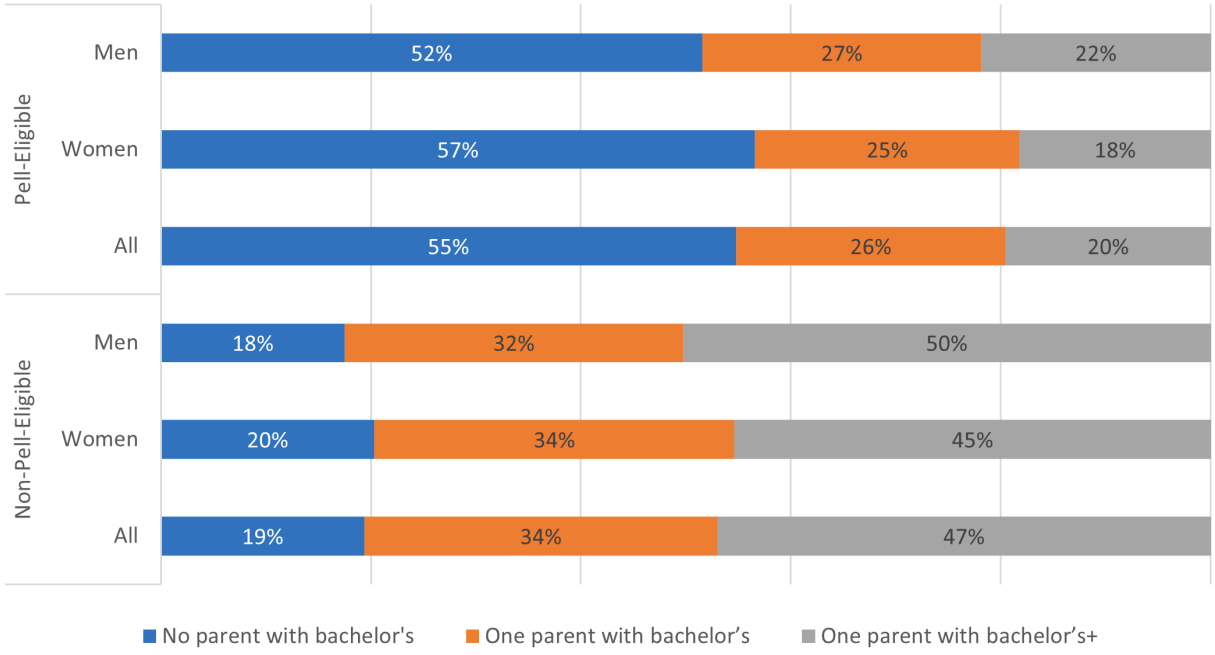
What Were Prospective Graduate Students' Undergraduate Academic Accomplishments?

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

Undergraduate Major Field

In their analyses of 1999–2000 college graduates by Pell Grant status, Wei and Horn (2009) reported some differences in their fields of study. They noted that a higher percentage of non-Pell-Grant recipients majored in business compared to their Pell Grant recipient peers, while a higher percentage of Pell Grant recipients majored in education and the social and behavioral sciences compared to nonrecipients.

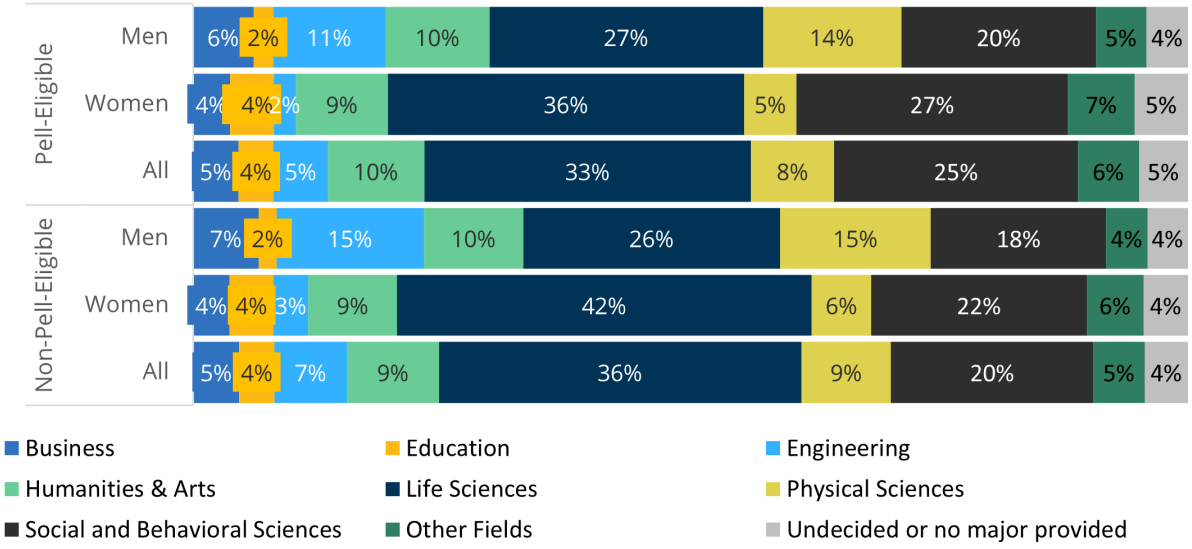
Figure 7. Pell Grant Eligibility by Parent Educational Attainment and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021



No parent with 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 associate's degree (a first-generation college student and first-generation graduate student). One parent with 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 first-generation graduate student). One parent with 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).

There are three key points for undergraduate major fields. First, there are minimal differences between Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible PGS in their choice of major field (see Figure 8 and Table A5). Second, within each group, gender differences in some majors are moderate to substantial. Among Pell-eligible PGS, women had a moderately higher rate of majoring in the social and behavioral sciences. Third, although *STEM* is often used as a collective term for science, technology, engineering, and math fields, it is useful to break down each component. In both Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible groups, more men than women majored in physical sciences and engineering (focusing on nonliving things), while more women than men majored in the life sciences (focusing on living things).

Figure 8. Pell Grant Eligibility by Undergraduate Major Field and Gender (U.S. Citizens), June 2016–July 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.

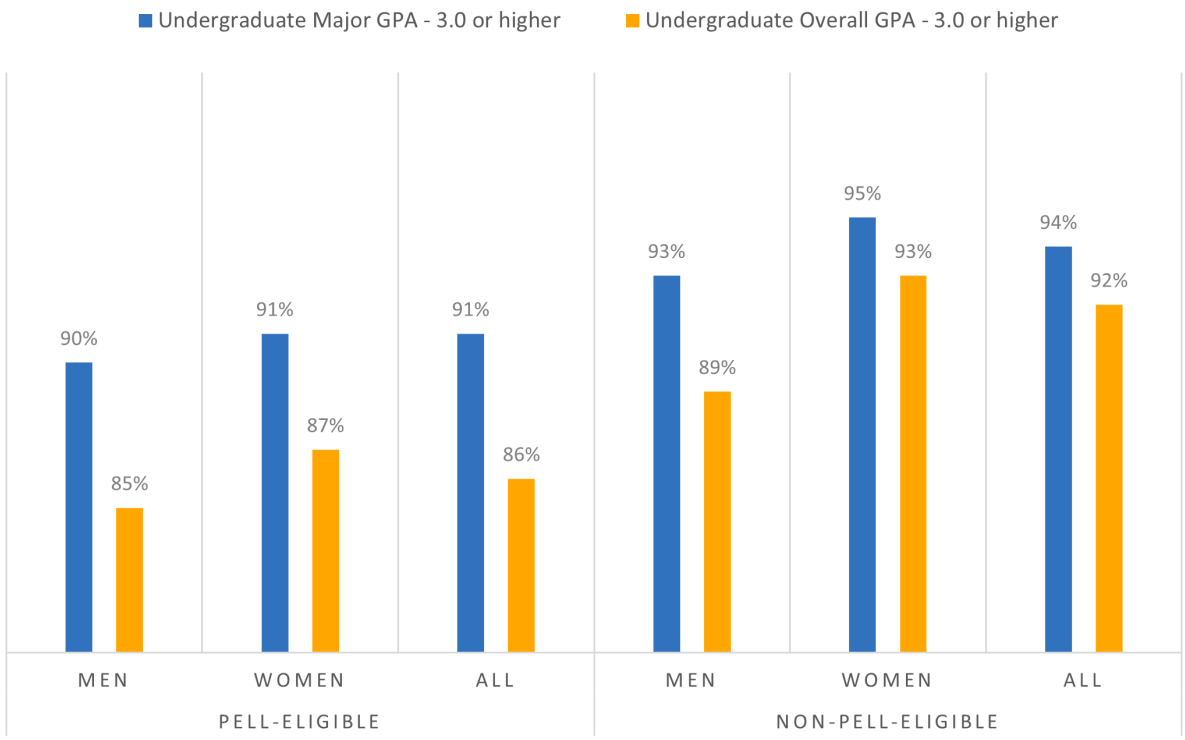
Undergraduate Grade Point Average

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 the GPAs for students who earned their bachelor's degrees during the 2007–2008 academic year (Woo et al., 2012). They reported that 39% of all PGS who did not receive a Pell Grant had a GPA of 3.0 or higher, and 33% of PGS who received a Pell Grant had a GPA of 3.0 or higher.

For both Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible groups, more than 90% achieved an undergraduate major GPA of 3.0 or higher (see Figure 9 and Table A5). There were, however, moderate differences in their overall undergraduate GPAs, with 86% of Pell-eligible PGS compared to 92% of non-Pell-eligible PGS earning a 3.0 or higher for their overall undergraduate GPAs. In both instances, within each group, there were minimal gender differences.

Figure 9. Pell Grant Eligibility by Undergraduate Major Grade Point Average of 3.0 or Higher and Overall Grade Point Average of 3.0 or Higher by Gender (U.S. Citizens), June 2016–2021



GPA = grade point average.

It is not unexpected that PGS had higher undergraduate major GPAs than their overall undergraduate GPAs, as they 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

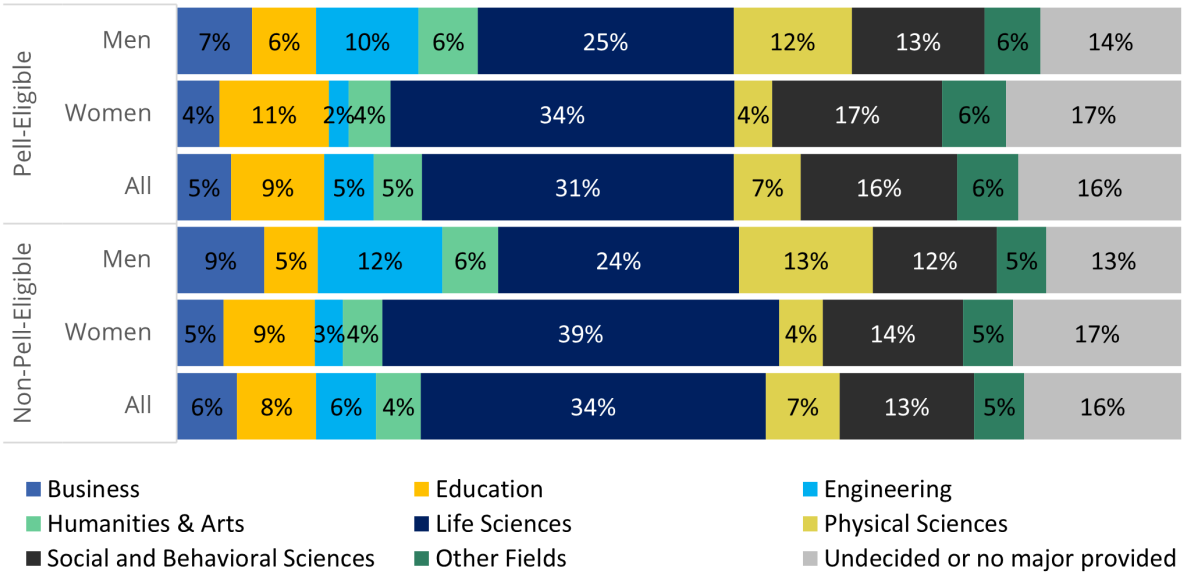
In the academic year 2020–2021, four out of five graduate degrees conferred were for master's degrees (NCES, 2022, Table 319.10). The doctoral degrees conferred included individuals who earned a PhD, an EdD, an MD, a DDS, a law degree, or another comparable degree at the doctoral level.

Almost half of both Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible PGS were considering earning a master's degree, followed by a doctorate and or master's in business administration (see Table A6). There were minimal differences between the two groups in their selection of possible graduate degrees. However, within each group, there were moderate gender differences in their interest in pursuing a master's degree, with women being more inclined to do so than men.

Intended Graduate Major Field

The intended fields of graduate study are explored, highlighting potential shifts from undergraduate- to graduate-level study. For non-Pell-eligible PGS and Pell-eligible PGS, the top four intended graduate fields were STEM, social and behavioral sciences, education, and business (see Figure 10 and Table A6). Notable changes from their undergraduate fields included (a) a decline in interest in the social and behavioral sciences, (b) an increase in interest in education, (c) a slight increase in business, and (d) a slight decrease in STEM fields. 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 10. Pell Grant Eligibility by Intended Graduate Major Field and Gender (U.S. Citizens), June 2016–July 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.

The patterns in the data observed in their undergraduate fields are repeated for their intended graduate fields. First, there are minimal differences between Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible PGS' choices of intended graduate major field (see Figure 10 and Table A6). Second, within each group, gender differences in some of the intended graduate majors are moderate to substantial. Among Pell-eligible PGS, women had a moderately higher rate of majoring in the life sciences (34% vs. 25%), while men had a higher rate of majoring in STEM fields overall (47% vs. 40%). Third, in both Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible groups, more men than women majored in physical sciences and engineering.

For both groups, approximately 60% planned to continue their graduate studies in the same field as their undergraduate major. Within each group, there were minimal gender differences.

Program Format

In the academic year 2019–2020, 64% of all postbaccalaureate students reported taking a class taught entirely online. Among 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 Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible PGS planned to enroll in an on-campus graduate program (see Table A6). Still, there was a clear difference—8 percentage points—with 67% of Pell-eligible PGS and 75% of non-Pell-eligible PGS planning to be on campus. There were gender differences within the Pell-eligible group, with 72% of men and 64% of women interested in studying on campus. More Pell-eligible PGS planned to enroll in a hybrid graduate program (19%) compared to their peers (13%).

Enrollment Preference

In fall 2021, 57% of postbaccalaureate students nationally had full-time status (NCES, 2023b, Table 303.45). Nationally, 60% of men and 55% of women attended full-time. In light of these figures, most Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible PGS planned to attend graduate school full-time (84%; see Table A6). Within each group, there were minimal gender differences.

Preferred Geographic Region for Graduate Study

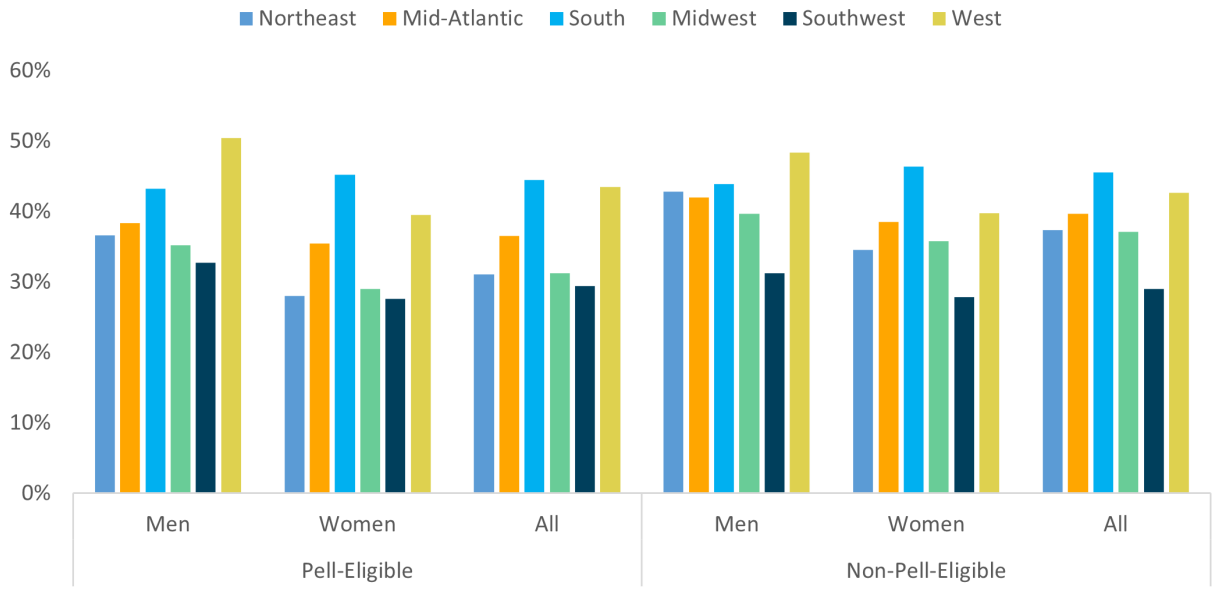
All individuals were asked a general question about the geographic regions in the United States[13] and outside of the United States where they preferred to attend graduate school. Regarding their U.S. and global options, nearly half indicated one region, and approximately 15% included two regions (see Table A6).

When considering only their six U.S. regional options, Pell-eligible PGS show a moderate, 6 percentage point difference in indicating a single, preferred region to attend graduate school compared to non-Pell-eligible PGS (54% vs. 48%). Among Pell-eligible PGS, women chose a single region more often than men did (57% vs. 50%).

For both groups, the South region of the United States was the most popular choice (44%–46%), followed by the West region (43% for both groups), and within each group, men had a greater preference for the West than women did (see Figure 11 and Table A6). There were moderate differences between the Pell-eligible PGS and non-Pell-eligible PGS in their choices of the Northeast and the Midwest—a 6 percentage point difference in both instances. Within each group, men and women differed in including the Northeast, with men doing so at a higher rate

than women. Only for Pell-eligible PGS was there a gender difference in including the Midwest, with men choosing it more than women.

Figure 11. Pell Grant Eligibility by Preferred Regions for Graduate Study Within the United States and Gender (U.S. Citizens), June 2016–July 2021



Respondents were able to indicate multiple regions.

The two groups were similar in their consideration of regions outside the United States. Canada (7%–8%) and Western Europe (9%–10%) were the most popular places of interest outside the United States.

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

Altogether, 82% of both Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible PGS sent their scores to graduate institutions and thus had a choice set (see Table A7). It is not surprising that less than 100% of PGS 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 median number of institutions in a choice set was 3 per individual for Pell-eligible PGS and non-Pell-eligible PGS. The 272,009 Pell-eligible PGS had 816,027 prospective

graduate school choices, and the 281,081 non-Pell-eligible PGS had 843,243 prospective graduate school choices.

The two groups differed moderately in having choice sets with four or fewer and 5–10 prospective graduate institution choices. Seventy-eight percent of Pell-eligible PGS' choice sets had four or fewer institutions, 19% had 5–10 institutions, and 3% had 11 or more institutions. Seventy percent of non-Pell-eligible PGS choice sets had four or fewer institutions, 25% had 5–10 institutions, and 5% 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

Individual	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 12). 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.

Figure 12. U.S. map with Hypothetical Graduate School Choices

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

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

Pell-eligible PGS (78%) and non-Pell-eligible PGS (74%) were fairly similar in terms of including at least one graduate program in-state in their choice sets (see California in the example in Figure 12; see also Figure 13 and Table A7). However, there were notable differences in the representation of in-state programs in their choice sets—74% for Pell-eligible

PGS and 67% for non-Pell-eligible PGS. Within both groups, gender differences regarding including in-state institutions and their representation in the choice sets were minimal.

For both groups, the percentage of PGS including an out-of-state graduate program was lower than the percentage of PGS including an in-state program—56% for Pell-eligible PGS and 66% for non-Pell-eligible PGS (see Washington, Arizona, or Florida in the example in Figure 12). The 10 percentage point difference between the two groups is notable. Both groups had minimal gender differences in including out-of-state programs and their representation within the choice sets.

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

Eighty-seven percent of Pell-eligible PGS and 84% of non-Pell-eligible PGS included graduate programs in the census divisions where they reside in their choice sets (see Washington from the example in Figure 12). There were moderate differences between the two groups in the representation of graduate programs in the census divisions where they reside in their choice sets—6 percentage points—of 79% of Pell-eligible PGS' choice sets and 73% of non-Pell-eligible PGS' choice sets. Both groups had minimal gender differences in including graduate programs in the census divisions where they resided and their representation in the choice sets.

Approximately one-quarter of PGS from both groups included a graduate program outside their census divisions but within their census regions in the choice sets (see Arizona from the example in Figure 12). Pell-eligible PGS (21%) included one at a lower rate than non-Pell-eligible PGS (28%). For those who included these institutions in their choice sets, the institutions represented a comparable proportion in both Pell-eligible PGS (38%) and non-Pell-eligible PGS (36%) choice sets. In both Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible groups, there are minimal gender differences in the inclusion of programs outside their census division but within their census region and their representation within the choice sets.

More non-Pell-eligible PGS (48%) signaled that they may apply to an out-of-census-region graduate institution than did Pell-eligible PGS (40%; see Florida in the example in Figure 12). Within the Pell-eligible groups, men did so considerably more than women (44% vs. 38%), while the gender differences with the non-Pell-eligible group were minimal. For Pell-eligible PGS and non-Pell-eligible PGS, out-of-census-region graduate programs represented 59% of their choice sets. Within each group, men and women differed slightly.

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

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

Intend to Pursue Graduate Study at Their Undergraduate Institution

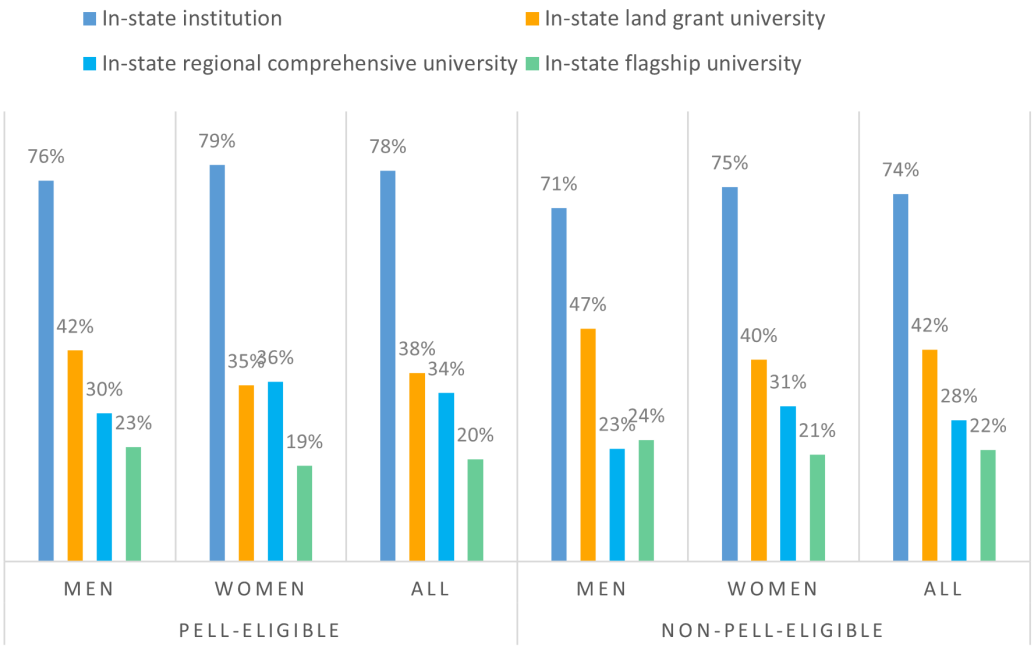
There are pros and cons to earning a graduate degree at the same institution where one received one's undergraduate degree (Bonacolta, 2021; Lovick, 2020). Some of the pros to continuing at the same place include already being a member of the academic community, possible tuition discounts, and, in some 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).

Pell-eligible PGS were considering graduate school at their undergraduate institutions at a higher rate than were their non-Pell-eligible peers (48% vs. 41%; see Table A7). However, there were minimal differences between the two groups in the proportion their undergraduate institutions represented in their choice sets—60% for Pell-eligible and 55% for non-Pell-eligible PGS. Both groups had minimal gender differences regarding including their undergraduate institutions in their choice sets and their representation within the choice sets.

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

Thirty-eight percent of Pell-eligible PGS and 42% of non-Pell-eligible PGS were considering a land grant institution in their states of residence (e.g., North Carolina State University, Raleigh; see Figure 13 and Table A7). For both profiles, more men included land grant institutions than did women. Concerning their choice sets, land grant institutions were similarly represented (47% of Pell-eligible and 45% of non-Pell-eligible), with minimal gender differences within each profile.

Figure 13. Pell Grant Eligibility Status by Inclusion of Possible Graduate School Choices by Institutional Type 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.

Pell-eligible PGS indicated a greater interest in regional comprehensive universities for graduate school than did non-Pell-eligible PGS (34% vs. 28%; e.g., North Carolina Central University; see Figure 13 and Table A7). Within each group, men and women clearly differed in their possible interest in attending a regional comprehensive university, with women including them at a higher rate than men. In each group, for those PGS who included regional comprehensive universities, they represented approximately 40% of their choice sets. However, gender differences were minimal within each group.

Twenty percent of Pell-eligible and 22% of non-Pell-eligible PGS were considering graduate school at the flagship state university in their states of residence (e.g., UNC Chapel Hill; see Figure 13 and Table A7). However, the proportion of flagship state universities in their choice sets differed. For Pell-eligible PGS, 60% of their choice sets comprised programs at the

flagship state university, compared to Pell-eligible PGS, for whom 53% of their choice sets consisted of these programs. Within both groups, men and women were similar.

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). Most Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible PGS (85%) were considering graduate school at a public institution (see Table A7). The level of interest of men and women in both groups was comparable. For those PGS in both profile groups, public graduate programs represented 75% of their choice sets.

While more non-Pell-eligible than Pell-eligible PGS may apply to a private nonprofit graduate institution (60% vs. 54%), for both groups, if PGS included a private nonprofit graduate institution, they represented 59% of their choice sets. Private for-profit graduate schools were of negligible interest to both Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible PGS (5%).

For Pell-eligible PGS (77%) and non-Pell-eligible PGS (79%), their choice sets included a university with at least 20,000 or more students. For both groups, approximately 70% of their choice sets comprised institutions with a 20,000-plus student population. Within each group, minor gender differences were observed.

Minority-Serving Institutions

Among the 771 MSIs, 454 (59%) are 4-year institutions, and not all necessarily offer graduate degrees. There is a moderate difference of 6 points in interest in possibly attending an MSI for graduate school (see Table A7). Forty-four percent of Pell-eligible PGS indicated that they may apply to at least one MSI for graduate studies, compared to 38% of non-Pell-eligible PGS. There is a 10 percentage point difference between the two groups in the percentage of MSIs in their choice sets. For Pell-eligible PGS, 54% of their choice sets comprised MSIs; for non-Pell-eligible PGS, they represented 44%.

For both groups, a closer look at the types of MSI they included reveals that HSIs and AANAPISIs were more often included in their choice sets than the other types of MSIs. There are apparent differences between Pell-eligible PGS and non-Pell-eligible PGS in their considering applying to an HSI for graduate school (30% vs. 24%), as well as in the representation of HSIs in their respective choice sets (53% vs. 43%). The two groups are

comparable in their interest in possibly attending an AANAPISI for graduate study (23% for Pell-eligible PGS and 22% for non-Pell-eligible PGS). However, the two groups differ by 7 percentage points in AANAPSIs' representation in their choice sets (43% of Pell-eligible PGS and 36% of non-Pell-eligible 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. PGS from both profiled groups indicated a limited interest in a single-sex college for graduate school (2%–3%; see Table A7). Women's colleges were included more often than were men's colleges.

Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education

Pell-eligible PGS and non-Pell-eligible PGS were similar in their graduate school plans when viewed through the lens of the Carnegie Classification (see Table A7). Eighty-nine percent of Pell-eligible and 92% of non-Pell-eligible PGS may apply to Carnegie-classified doctoral institutions. For those who may, these institutions represented 86% and 87% of their choice sets, respectively. Fewer than one-third of PGS for both groups indicated that they may apply to a Carnegie master's-classified institution, and fewer than 20% of both groups expressed possible interest in a special focus 4-year institution. One notable gender difference within each group was the higher rate of women indicating interest in applying to a Carnegie master's-granting classified institution. There was a 7 percentage point difference between Pell-eligible men and women, while there was a 10 percentage point difference among non-Pell-eligible PGS.

Association of American Universities Member University

Non-Pell-eligible PGS showed a greater interest in applying to an AAU university for graduate school than did their Pell-eligible peers (55% vs. 49%; see Table A7). Within both groups, men were more likely to express interest in applying to an AAU university. AAU universities represented 62% of the institutions in the choice sets of non-Pell-eligible PGS and 60% of the institutions in the choice sets of Pell-eligible PGS. AAU member institutions were more prevalent in men's choice sets for both groups.

Selected Highlights

The data represent a total of 673,573 individuals aspiring to graduate education, collected over a 5-year period. The report narrative focused on the 331,008 Pell-eligible individuals and the 342,565 non-Pell-eligible individuals.

Key differences and similarities between Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible PGS are highlighted across several areas. Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible PGS shared similarities in academic achievement, with more than 90% earning a 3.0 or higher GPA in their undergraduate majors and most considering at least one graduate school within their states of residence. However, key differences emerged: A higher proportion of Pell-eligible PGS were first-generation college students, enrolled at in-state institutions as undergraduates, and identified as non-White, while non-Pell-eligible PGS were more commonly currently enrolled in college when they took the GRE. Across both groups, men tended to major in physical sciences and engineering rather than life sciences.

Following are selected data highlights from the findings.

Q1. Who Were the Prospective Graduate Students?

- **Race/Ethnicity.** Fifty percent of Pell-eligible PGS were White, and 75% of non-Pell-eligible PGS were White. In contrast, the percentage of African American, Puerto Rican, and other Hispanic PGS was noticeably lower for non-Pell-eligible PGS compared to those who were Pell-eligible (17% vs. 6%, 8% vs. 2%, and 9% vs 4%, respectively).
- **Age.** The most significant proportion of PGS in both Pell eligibility profiles were 22 years old or younger.

Q2. Where Did Prospective Graduate Students Reside?

- **Regional Distribution.** For each of the two Pell eligibility profiles, PGS clustered in the South region of the United States (~40%).
- **Top 10 States.** More than 50% of Pell-eligible (58%) and non-Pell-eligible (53%) PGS lived in 10 states: California, Texas, New York, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

Q3. What Were Their Education and Work Experiences?

- **Enrollment.** Fewer Pell-eligible PGS were enrolled in college (38% vs. 45%), while it was more common for Pell-eligible PGS to be unenrolled college graduates (40% vs. 37%).
- **Work Experience.** More than half of Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible PGS reported less than 1 year of work experience upon completing their undergraduate degrees.

Q4. What Were Their Undergraduate Experiences?

- **In-State Attendance.** Pell-eligible PGS more often attended a baccalaureate institution in their states of residence than did their non-Pell-eligible peers (81% vs 71%).
- **MSI Attendance.** Attendance at an MSI was considerably higher for Pell-eligible (27%) compared to non-Pell-eligible PGS (15%).
- **First-Generation Status.** Substantially more Pell-eligible PGS reported having parents who had not earned a bachelor's degree compared to their non-Pell-eligible peers (55% vs. 19%). Additionally, more women than men reported having no parent with a bachelor's degree across both Pell eligibility profiles, while more men than women reported at least one parent possessing an advanced degree.
- **Undergraduate Majors.** Approximately half (47%–53%) of PGS in both Pell eligibility profiles indicated that they majored in a STEM field. Within STEM fields, more men than women in both Pell eligibility profiles majored in the physical sciences (focusing on nonliving things) than in the life sciences (focusing on living things).
- **GPA.** More than 90% of PGS of both Pell eligibility profiles earned a 3.0 or higher GPA in their undergraduate majors, with their overall undergraduate GPAs slightly lower.

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

- **Degree Goals.** A master's degree was the most common degree objective for both groups (55%), followed by a doctorate (40%) and a master's in business administration, juris doctor, or other degree (7%).

- **Graduate Field of Interest.** For both groups, approximately 60% planned to continue their graduate studies in the same fields as their undergraduate majors. Also, men indicated a greater possibility of continuing in their undergraduate majors than did women.
- **Geographic Preference.** The South region of the United States was the most popular choice for both profiled groups (44%–46%), followed by the West region (43%).

Q6. What Were Their Emerging Graduate School Choice Sets?

- **In-State Preference.** Most PGS were considering at least one graduate school in their state (78% for Pell-eligible and 75% for non-Pell-eligible).
- **Undergraduate Alma Mater.** Pell-eligible PGS were considering graduate school at their undergraduate institutions at a higher rate than were their non-Pell-eligible peers (48% vs. 41%), with women in each group having a slightly greater interest.
- **Flagship State University.** Twenty-two percent of non-Pell-eligible and 20% of Pell-eligible PGS were considering graduate school at the flagship state university in their states of residence. For both groups, men expressed greater interest than women.
- **MSI Preference.** Forty-four percent of Pell-eligible PGS indicated that they may apply to at least one MSI for graduate studies, and 38% of non-Pell-eligible PGS did too.

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 Pell Grant Eligibility (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021

Table	Variable description	Valid responses		Missing responses	
		No.	%	No.	%
2	State where GRE test takers resided	996,131	99.5	5,445	0.5
3	CBSA where GRE test takers resided	967,260	96.6	34,316	3.4
4	Congressional district where GRE test takers resided	985,887	98.4	15,689	1.6
A2	Age at time of taking the GRE	957,837	95.6	43,739	4.4
A2	Communicates best in English	1,000,867	99.9	709	0.1
A2	Documented disability (self-reported)	1,001,574	100.0	2	0.0
A3	U.S. Census region and division where GRE test takers resided	771,038	77.0	230,538	23.0
A4	Current educational level	992,482	99.1	9,094	0.9
A4	Full-time work experience	1,001,576	100.0	0	0.0
A5	Individual provided undergraduate institution	853,516	85.2	148,060	14.8
A5	Undergraduate institution has IPEDS information	624,781	62.4	376,795	37.6
A5	Undergraduate institution was in their state of residence	623,234	62.2	378,342	37.8
A5	Undergraduate institution is a state land grant institution in their state of residence	619,611	61.9	381,965	38.1
A5	Undergraduate institution is a regional comprehensive university in their state of residence	623,234	62.2	378,342	37.8
A5	Undergraduate institution is the flagship university in their state of residence	619,461	61.8	382,115	38.2
A5	Undergraduate institution—control—public/private/for-profit	619,461	61.8	382,115	38.2
A5	Undergraduate institution has more than 20,000 students	623,234	62.2	378,342	37.8
A5	Undergraduate institution is an MSI	623,234	62.2	378,342	37.8
A5	Undergraduate institution is a single-sex institution	623,234	62.2	378,342	37.8
A5	Undergraduate institution's *Barron's Profile of American Colleges* classification	623,234	62.2	378,342	37.8
A5	Undergraduate institution's Carnegie classification	607,970	60.7	393,606	39.3
A5	Undergraduate institution is a member of the AAU	622,371	62.1	379,205	37.9
A5	Parent educational attainment	623,234	62.2	378,342	37.8
A5	Eligible for a Federal Pell Grant as an undergraduate	975,058	97.4	26,518	2.6
A5	Federal Pell Grant–eligible and first-generation college student	975,058	97.4	26,518	2.6
A5	Undergraduate major field	961,234	96.0	40,342	4.0

Table	Variable description	Valid responses		Missing responses	
		No.	%	No.	%
A5	Undergraduate major GPA	894,329	89.3	107,247	10.7
A5	Overall undergraduate GPA	895,619	89.4	105,957	10.6
A6	Graduate degree objective	952,983	95.1	48,593	4.9
A6	Intended graduate major field	1,001,576	100.0	0	0.0
A6	Undergraduate major is the same as intended graduate major field	1,001,576	100.0	0	0.0
A6	Program format preference for graduate study	934,402	93.3	67,174	6.7
A6	Enrollment preference for graduate study	959,321	95.8	42,255	4.2
A6	Preferred geographic region for graduate study	916,141	91.5	85,435	8.5
A7	Sent at least one GRE score report to a graduate institution with an IPEDS ID	817,890	81.7	183,686	18.3
A7	Number of GRE score reports sent	817,890	81.7	183,686	18.3
A7	GSC: may apply to at least one in-state institution	811,163	81.0	190,413	19.0
A7	GSC: may apply to at least one out-of-state institution	811,163	81.0	190,413	19.0
A7	GSC : may apply to at least one institution in U.S. Census division	811,163	81.0	190,413	19.0
A7	GSC : may apply to at least one institution outside U.S. Census division but within region	811,163	81.0	190,413	19.0
A7	GSC : may apply to at least one institution outside U.S. Census region	811,163	81.0	190,413	19.0
A7	GSC : may apply to their undergraduate institution	537,275	53.6	464,301	46.4
A7	GSC : may apply to regional flagship institution in state of residence	811,163	81.0	190,413	19.0
A7	GSC : may apply to at least one regional comprehensive institution in state of residence	811,163	81.0	190,413	19.0
A7	GSC : may apply to the land grant institution in their state of residence	817,890	81.7	183,686	18.3
A7	GSC : may apply to at least one public/private/private-for-profit graduate institution	817,890	81.7	183,686	18.3
A7	GSC : may apply to at least one graduate institution with at least 20,000 students	817,890	81.7	183,686	18.3
A7	GSC : may apply to at least one graduate program at an MSI	817,890	81.7	183,686	18.3
A7	GSC : may apply to at least one graduate program at a single-gender institution	817,890	81.7	183,686	18.3
A7	GSC : may apply to at least one graduate institution with Carnegie classification	817,174	81.6	184,402	18.4
A7	GSC : may apply to at least one AAU member graduate institution	817,890	81.7	183,686	18.3

Note. N = 1,001,576. 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. Pell Grant Eligibility by Demographic Profile and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021

Variable	Pell-eligible						Non-Pell-eligible						Do not know					
	Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Race/ethnicity																		
American Indian	1,000	0.9	1,888	0.9	2,888	0.9	543	0.5	1,137	0.5	1,680	0.5	500	0.4	780	0.4	1,280	0.4
Asian	10,624	9	16,394	8	27,018	9	9,476	9	14,611	7	24,087	7	11,967	10	14,454	8	26,421	8
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	534	0.5	773	0.4	1,307	0.4	358	0.3	581	0.3	939	0.3	451	0.4	606	0.3	1,057	0.3
Black	16,212	14	37,566	19	53,778	17	5,878	5	14,252	6	20,130	6	6,180	5	10,652	6	16,832	5
Mexican	8,962	8	15,314	8	24,276	8	2,585	2	5,292	2	7,877	2	3,433	3	5,583	3	9,016	3
Puerto Rican	1,948	2	3,501	2	5,449	2	972	1	2,081	1	3,053	1	1,171	1	1,780	1	2,951	1
Other Hispanic	9,259	8	18,558	9	27,817	9	4,220	4	8,834	4	13,054	4	5,690	5	9,668	5	15,358	5
White (non-Hispanic)	58,770	52	97,621	48	156,391	50	81,662	74	166,485	75	248,147	75	87,439	71	136,347	72	223,786	72
Other	5,867	5	10,756	5	16,623	5	3,988	4	7,435	3	11,423	3	6,194	5	9,005	5	15,199	5
Age group																		
<22	34,116	29	83,142	39	117,258	35	52,262	46	128,651	56	180,913	53	51,957	40	96,916	49	148,873	45
23–25	33,436	28	56,953	27	90,389	27	28,903	25	50,804	22	79,707	23	34,651	27	49,267	25	83,918	26
26–30	28,269	24	37,245	18	65,514	20	17,450	15	24,880	11	42,330	12	24,314	19	28,678	14	52,992	16
31–40	16,698	14	23,295	11	39,993	12	10,350	9	15,118	7	25,468	7	14,247	11	16,211	8	30,458	9
≥41	6,069	5	11,530	5	17,599	5	4,895	4	9,006	4	13,901	4	4,798	4	6,756	3	11,554	4
Communicates better in English	111,480	94	198,504	93	309,984	94	107,166	94	213,700	93	320,866	94	122,545	94	185,134	94	307,679	94
10 most common native languages (other than English)																		
1	SPA	48	SPA	54	SPA	52	SPA	30	SPA	36	SPA	34	SPA	29	SPA	34	SPA	32
2	CHI	8	CHI	6	CHI	7	CHI	10	CHI	7	CHI	8	CHI	11	CHI	8	CHI	9
3	VIE	6	VIE	5	VIE	5	VIE	3	VIE	3	VIE	3	VIE	2	VIE	3	VIE	3
4	ARA	4	ARA	3	ARA	4	ARA	5	ARA	3	ARA	4	ARA	6	ARA	5	ARA	5
5	KOR	3	KOR	2	KOR	3	KOR	4	KOR	3	KOR	3	KOR	5	KOR	3	KOR	4
6	RUS	2	RUS	2	RUS	2	RUS	4	RUS	4	RUS	4	RUS	4	RUS	4	RUS	4
7	URD	2	URD	2	URD	2	FRE	3	URD	2	URD	2	FRE	3	URD	3	URD	3

Variable	Pell-eligible						Non-Pell-eligible						Do not know					
	Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
8	UND	3	UND	3	UND	3	GUJ	3	GUJ	3	FRE	2	GUJ	3	GUJ	2	FRE	2
9	FRE	2	FRE	2	FRE	2	TGL	3	TGL	3	GUJ	3	TGL	3	TGL	3	GUJ	2
10	FAS	2	FAS	2	FAS	2	TEL	2	HIN	2	TGL	3	FAS	2	FAS	2	TGL	3
Documented disability	5,471	6	8,586	5	14,057	6	4,342	5	8,259	5	12,601	5	5,514	6	8,367	6	13,881	6
If documented disability, type of disability																		
Blind/visually impaired	703	13	1,286	15	1,989	14	424	10	895	11	1,319	10	508	9	861	10	1,369	10
Deaf/hard of hearing	488	9	726	8	1,214	9	391	9	719	9	1,110	9	453	8	646	8	1,099	8
Learning disability	1,939	35	2,953	34	4,892	35	2,078	48	3,799	46	5,877	47	2,585	47	4,143	50	6,728	48
Multiple disabilities	381	7	442	5	823	6	157	4	314	4	471	4	222	4	298	4	520	4
Other	1,351	25	2,268	26	3,619	26	945	22	1,800	22	2,745	22	1,325	24	1,885	23	3,210	23
Physical disability	609	11	911	11	1,520	11	347	8	732	9	1,079	9	421	8	534	6	955	7

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

Table A3. Pell Grant Eligibility by U.S. Census Region and Division of Residence and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021

	Pell-eligible						Non-Pell-eligible						Do not know					
	Men		Women		All		Men		Women		All		Men		Women		All	
Variable	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
U.S. Census region																		
West	33,303	28	47,588	23	80,891	25	24,012	21	41,873	18	65,885	19	30,518	24	41,082	21	71,600	22
Midwest	18,328	16	32,300	15	50,628	15	22,374	20	46,923	21	69,297	20	23,478	18	36,211	18	59,689	18
Northeast	19,029	16	38,231	18	57,260	17	21,007	19	43,860	19	64,867	19	29,132	23	49,072	25	78,204	24
South	46,717	40	92,701	44	139,418	42	45,407	40	94,562	42	139,969	41	45,010	35	69,764	36	114,774	35
U.S. Census division																		
Pacific	20,982	18	33,886	16	54,868	17	16,055	14	27,763	12	43,818	13	21,533	17	29,570	15	51,103	16
Mountain	12,321	10	13,702	6	26,023	8	7,957	7	14,110	6	22,067	6	8,985	7	11,512	6	20,497	6
West North Central	5,598	5	9,546	5	15,144	5	7,154	6	15,197	7	22,351	7	6,729	5	10,024	5	16,753	5
East North Central	12,730	11	22,754	11	35,484	11	15,220	13	31,726	14	46,946	14	16,749	13	26,187	13	42,936	13
Middle Atlantic	14,667	12	30,525	14	45,192	14	15,199	13	32,308	14	47,507	14	20,941	16	36,142	18	57,083	18
New England	4,362	4	7,706	4	12,068	4	5,808	5	11,552	5	17,360	5	8,191	6	12,930	7	21,121	7
West South Central	15,004	13	28,423	13	43,427	13	13,434	12	27,922	12	41,356	12	13,370	10	20,279	10	33,649	10
East South Central	7,080	6	14,098	7	21,178	6	7,654	7	16,134	7	23,788	7	5,821	5	8,802	4	14,623	5
South Atlantic	24,633	21	50,180	24	74,813	23	24,319	22	50,506	22	74,825	22	25,819	20	40,683	21	66,502	21

Table A4. Pell Grant Eligibility by Education and Work Experience Status and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021

	Pell-eligible						Non-Pell-eligible						Do not know					
	Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total	
Variable	*n*	%	*n*	*n*	%	*n*	*n*	%	*n*	*n*	%	*n*	*n*	%	*n*	*n*	%	*n*
Current educational level																		
Currently enrolled in college	44,643	38	80,250	38	124,893	38	47,577	42	105,761	46	153,338	45	48,067	37	78,999	40	127,066	39
Unenrolled college graduate (BA/BS)	48,557	41	82,553	39	131,110	40	44,748	39	81,587	36	126,335	37	57,758	44	80,473	41	138,231	42
Unenrolled master's program graduate	12,684	11	26,516	12	39,200	12	11,718	10	22,828	10	34,546	10	13,051	10	21,613	11	34,664	11
Enrolled in graduate school	7,904	7	13,110	6	21,014	6	5,471	5	9,186	4	14,657	4	5,728	4	7,788	4	13,516	4
Other	4,883	4	9,908	5	14,791	4	4,446	4	9,243	4	13,689	4	5,434	4	9,092	5	14,526	4
Full-time work experience (years)																		
<1	54,274	52	93,348	52	147,622	52	54,418	54	114,694	59	169,112	57	55,765	51	86,439	53	142,204	52
1–2	23,202	22	42,604	24	65,806	23	20,241	20	40,073	20	60,314	20	23,509	21	37,254	23	60,763	22
3–4	10,518	10	17,761	10	28,279	10	9,290	9	16,176	8	25,466	9	11,498	10	16,255	10	27,753	10
5–7	7,297	7	11,470	6	18,767	7	6,985	7	10,495	5	17,480	6	9,063	8	10,986	7	20,049	7
≥8	8,826	8	14,992	8	23,818	8	9,073	9	14,191	7	23,264	8	10,262	9	12,557	8	22,819	8

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

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

	Pell-eligible						Non-Pell-eligible						Do not know					
	Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total	
Variable	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Individual provided undergraduate institution	77,354	65	132,426	62	209,780	63	74,402	65	141,692	62	216,094	63	81,944	63	116,963	59	198,907	61
Undergraduate institution has IPEDS information	77,203	65	132,295	62	209,498	63	74,196	65	141,446	62	215,642	63	81,581	63	116,513	59	198,094	60
Undergraduate institution in their state of residence	61,049	80	106,614	81	167,663	81	51,446	70	101,922	72	153,368	71	56,555	70	83,028	72	139,583	71
Undergraduate institution: state land grant institution in their state of residence	12,183	16	18,270	14	30,453	15	13,020	18	23,155	17	36,175	17	13,452	17	16,916	15	30,368	16
Undergraduate institution: regional comprehensive university in their state of residence	23,876	31	46,038	35	69,914	34	15,669	21	36,410	26	52,079	24	16,555	20	28,333	24	44,888	23
Undergraduate institution: flagship university in their state of residence	11,349	15	16,847	13	28,196	14	12,980	18	22,683	16	35,663	17	13,052	16	16,249	14	29,301	15
Undergraduate institution: control: public	59,032	76	99,182	75	158,214	76	52,658	71	101,035	71	153,693	71	56,767	70	78,569	67	135,336	68
Undergraduate institution: control: private nonprofit	17,986	23	32,821	25	50,807	24	21,431	29	40,202	28	61,633	29	24,692	30	37,782	32	62,474	32
Undergraduate institution: control: private for-profit	185	0	292	0	477	0	107	0	209	0	316	0	122	0	162	0	284	0
Undergraduate institution: >20,000 students	42,462	55	65,823	50	108,285	52	39,585	53	72,097	51	111,682	52	42,885	53	57,121	49	100,006	50
Undergraduate institution: MSI	20,078	26	36,876	28	56,954	27	11,061	15	21,845	15	32,906	15	13,577	17	20,491	18	34,068	17
AANAPISI	7,332	9	12,918	10	20,250	10	4,439	6	8,499	6	12,938	6	5,948	7	8,754	8	14,702	7
ANNH	332	0.4	477	0.4	809	0.4	191	0.3	345	0.2	536	0.2	295	0.4	359	0.3	654	0.3
HSI	13,961	18	24,719	19	38,680	18	7,240	10	14,339	10	21,579	10	9,174	11	14,009	12	23,183	12
HBCU	2,216	2.9	5,376	4.1	7,592	3.6	822	1.1	2,070	1.5	2,892	1.3	660	0.8	1,275	1.1	1,935	1.0
NASNTI	342	0.4	587	0.4	929	0.4	336	0.5	529	0.4	865	0.4	349	0.4	416	0.4	765	0.4
PBI	830	1.1	1,777	1.3	2,607	1.2	360	0.5	795	0.6	1,155	0.5	325	0.4	579	0.5	904	0.5
TCU	2	0.0	2	0.0	4	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.0	1	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Undergraduate institution: single sex	293	0.4	1,687	1.3	1,980	0.9	249	0.3	1,821	1.3	2,070	1.0	252	0.3	1,526	1.3	1,778	0.9
Men’s college	201	0.3	11	0.0	212	0.1	185	0.2	6	0.0	191	0.1	173	0.2	0	0.0	173	0.1
Women’s college	92	0.1	1,676	1.3	1,768	0.8	64	0.1	1,815	1.3	1,879	0.9	79	0.1	1,526	1.3	1,605	0.8
Undergraduate institution: Carnegie classification																		
Doctoral universities	54,309	70	88,634	67	142,943	68	54,138	73	99,506	70	153,644	71	57,823	71	78,477	67	136,300	69

Variable	Pell-eligible						Non-Pell-eligible						Do not know					
	Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Master's colleges and universities	17,891	23	34,278	26	52,169	25	13,178	18	30,005	21	43,183	20	15,573	19	27,304	23	42,877	22
Baccalaureate colleges	4,861	6	9,118	7	13,979	7	6,797	9	11,757	8	18,554	9	8,112	10	10,610	9	18,722	9
Undergraduate institution: *Barron's*																		
Most competitive	8,041	11	11,987	9	20,028	10	12,863	18	18,007	13	30,870	15	13,558	17	14,756	13	28,314	15
Highly competitive	11,912	16	17,309	14	29,221	14	14,032	19	24,134	17	38,166	18	16,246	20	20,439	18	36,685	19
Very competitive	20,981	28	36,778	29	57,759	28	21,630	30	43,353	31	64,983	31	24,923	31	36,975	32	61,898	32
Competitive	27,364	37	49,844	39	77,208	38	20,646	28	45,075	33	65,721	31	21,449	27	35,664	31	57,113	29
Other	6,202	8	12,278	10	18,480	9	3,486	5	7,930	6	11,416	5	3,746	5	6,362	6	10,108	5
Undergraduate institution: AAU	17,438	23	24,838	19	42,276	20	21,974	30	33,818	24	55,792	26	23,597	29	27,143	23	50,740	26
Parent Educational Attainment																		
No Parent Bach	59,189	52	115,158	57	174,347	55	19,671	18	45,727	20	65,398	19	25,959	21	48,044	25	74,003	23
One Parent Bach	30,464	27	51,268	25	81,732	26	36,153	32	77,157	34	113,310	34	40,725	32	64,427	33	105,152	33
One Parent Bach+	25,084	22	37,067	18	62,151	20	56,426	50	102,021	45	158,447	47	59,632	47	80,886	42	140,518	44
Federal Pell Grant–eligible and first-generation college student	59,189	52	115,158	57	174,347	55	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Undergraduate major field—detailed																		
Business	7,211	6	7,886	4	15,097	5	7,547	7	8,405	4	15,952	5	8,473	7	7,420	4	15,893	5
Education	2,357	2	9,328	4	11,685	4	2,024	2	10,067	4	12,091	4	1,975	2	8,381	4	10,356	3
Engineering	13,402	11	4,676	2	18,078	5	16,909	15	7,974	3	24,883	7	20,581	16	7,131	4	27,712	8
Humanities and arts	12,419	10	19,757	9	32,176	10	11,357	10	20,461	9	31,818	9	13,730	11	19,526	10	33,256	10
Life sciences	32,610	27	76,031	36	108,641	33	29,441	26	95,270	42	124,711	36	31,556	24	76,175	38	107,731	33
Physical sciences	16,481	14	11,075	5	27,556	8	17,249	15	13,652	6	30,901	9	20,264	16	11,574	6	31,838	10
Social and behavioral sciences	23,219	20	57,985	27	81,204	25	20,069	18	49,505	22	69,574	20	21,133	16	44,814	23	65,947	20
Other field	6,041	5	14,285	7	20,326	6	4,730	4	13,147	6	17,877	5	5,580	4	11,879	6	17,459	5
Undecided or no major provided	4,931	4	11,314	5	16,245	5	4,634	4	10,124	4	14,758	4	6,746	5	11,065	6	17,811	5
Undergraduate major field—STEM fields aggregated																		
Business	7,211	6	7,886	4	15,097	5	7,547	7	8,405	4	15,952	5	8,473	7	7,420	4	15,893	5
Education	2,357	2	9,328	4	11,685	4	2,024	2	10,067	4	12,091	4	1,975	2	8,381	4	10,356	3

Variable	Pell-eligible						Non-Pell-eligible						Do not know					
	Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
STEM fields	62,493	53	91,782	43	154,275	47	63,599	56	116,896	51	180,495	53	72,401	56	94,880	48	167,281	51
Humanities and arts	12,419	10	19,757	9	32,176	10	11,357	10	20,461	9	31,818	9	13,730	11	19,526	10	33,256	10
Social and behavioral sciences	23,219	20	57,985	27	81,204	25	20,069	18	49,505	22	69,574	20	21,133	16	44,814	23	65,947	20
Other field	6,041	5	14,285	7	20,326	6	4,730	4	13,147	6	17,877	5	5,580	4	11,879	6	17,459	5
Undecided or no major provided	4,931	4	11,314	5	16,245	5	4,634	4	10,124	4	14,758	4	6,746	5	11,065	6	17,811	5
Undergraduate major field—STEM yes/no	62,493	53	91,782	43	154,275	47	63,599	56	116,896	51	180,495	53	72,401	56	94,880	48	167,281	51
Undergraduate major GPA																		
3.7–4.0	57,582	53	105,606	56	163,188	55	62,434	60	135,742	66	198,176	64	64,147	56	107,188	62	171,335	60
2.7–3.6	46,861	43	76,568	41	123,429	41	39,097	37	66,332	32	105,429	34	47,421	41	61,302	36	108,723	38
0.0–2.6	4,125	4	6,710	4	10,835	4	2,775	3	3,594	2	6,369	2	3,392	3	3,453	2	6,845	2
≥3.0	98,024	90	171,366	91	269,390	91	96,847	93	194,903	95	291,750	94	105,662	92	161,554	94	267,216	93
Undergraduate overall GPA																		
3.7–4.0	45,877	42	86,583	46	132,460	45	53,680	51	120,431	58	174,111	56	53,460	46	92,836	54	146,296	51
2.7–3.6	55,175	51	91,147	48	146,322	49	46,001	44	79,905	39	125,906	41	55,814	48	74,036	43	129,850	45
0.0–2.6	7,525	7	11,010	6	18,535	6	4,885	5	5,707	3	10,592	3	6,048	5	5,499	3	11,547	4
≥3.0	92,098	85	164,225	87	256,323	86	93,470	89	191,465	93	284,935	92	101,112	88	158,261	92	259,373	90

Note. AANAPISI = Asian American Native American Pacific Islander–serving institution. AAU = Association of American Universities. ANNH = Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian–serving institution. 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. Pell Grant Eligibility by Plans for Graduate School and Gender (U.S. Citizens), July 2016–June 2021

Variable	Pell-eligible						Non-Pell-eligible						Do not know					
	Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Graduate degree objective																		
Doctorate	49,374	43	76,326	38	125,700	40	45,240	42	81,352	37	126,592	39	47,675	39	65,685	35	113,360	37
Master's	56,009	49	116,345	57	172,354	54	54,047	50	124,716	57	178,763	55	63,956	52	110,566	59	174,522	56
MBA	5,735	5	5,801	3	11,536	4	6,758	6	7,270	3	14,028	4	8,035	7	6,746	4	14,781	5
JD	622	1	897	0.4	1,519	0.5	644	1	931	0.4	1,575	0.5	565	0.5	573	0.3	1,138	0.4
Other	2,205	2	3,413	2	5,618	2	2,087	2	3,738	2	5,825	2	2,414	2	3,258	2	5,672	2
Intended graduate major field—detailed																		
Business	8,895	7	9,074	4	17,969	5	9,936	9	10,600	5	20,536	6	11,222	9	9,329	5	20,551	6
Education	7,573	6	23,039	11	30,612	9	6,062	5	20,901	9	26,963	8	6,034	5	17,320	9	23,354	7
Engineering	12,118	10	4,185	2	16,303	5	14,146	12	6,324	3	20,470	6	17,453	13	5,608	3	23,061	7
Humanities and arts	6,993	6	8,899	4	15,892	5	6,314	6	9,016	4	15,330	4	7,300	6	8,169	4	15,469	5
Life sciences	30,210	25	72,676	34	102,886	31	27,372	24	90,249	39	117,621	34	29,709	23	73,175	37	102,884	31
Physical sciences	13,986	12	8,062	4	22,048	7	15,153	13	9,990	4	25,143	7	18,129	14	8,782	4	26,911	8
Social and behavioral sciences	15,697	13	35,882	17	51,579	16	14,086	12	31,886	14	45,972	13	14,771	11	29,065	15	43,836	13
Other field	6,580	6	13,538	6	20,118	6	5,600	5	11,455	5	17,055	5	6,367	5	10,358	5	16,725	5
Undecided or no major provided	16,619	14	36,982	17	53,601	16	15,291	13	38,184	17	53,475	16	19,053	15	36,159	18	55,212	17
Intended graduate major field—STEM fields aggregated																		
Business	8,895	7	9,074	4	17,969	5	9,936	9	10,600	5	20,536	6	11,222	9	9,329	5	20,551	6
Education	7,573	6	23,039	11	30,612	9	6,062	5	20,901	9	26,963	8	6,034	5	17,320	9	23,354	7
STEM fields	56,314	47	84,923	40	141,237	43	56,671	50	106,563	47	163,234	48	65,291	50	87,565	44	152,856	47
Humanities and arts	6,993	6	8,899	4	15,892	5	6,314	6	9,016	4	15,330	4	7,300	6	8,169	4	15,469	5
Social and behavioral sciences	15,697	13	35,882	17	51,579	16	14,086	12	31,886	14	45,972	13	14,771	11	29,065	15	43,836	13
Other field	6,580	6	13,538	6	20,118	6	5,600	5	11,455	5	17,055	5	6,367	5	10,358	5	16,725	5
Undecided or no major provided	16,619	14	36,982	17	53,601	16	15,291	13	38,184	17	53,475	16	19,053	15	36,159	18	55,212	17
Intended graduate major field—STEM yes/no	56,314	47	84,923	40	141,237	43	56,671	50	106,563	47	163,234	48	65,291	50	87,565	44	152,856	47

Variable	Pell-eligible						Non-Pell-eligible						Do not know					
	Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Undergraduate major is the same as intended graduate major field	74,040	62	121,459	57	195,499	59	71,611	63	137,545	60	209,156	61	80,055	62	115,425	58	195,480	60
Program format																		
On-campus	80,604	72	128,301	64	208,905	67	81,298	76	157,617	74	238,915	75	88,858	74	129,131	71	217,989	72
Online	6,007	5	13,627	7	19,634	6	5,446	5	11,207	5	16,653	5	5,559	5	8,906	5	14,465	5
A combination of both	18,111	16	42,197	21	60,308	19	12,910	12	29,754	14	42,664	13	15,225	13	28,109	15	43,334	14
Undecided	7,559	7	15,031	8	22,590	7	7,147	7	14,733	7	21,880	7	10,637	9	16,428	9	27,065	9
Enrollment preference																		
Full-time	96,571	84	172,150	84	268,721	84	90,192	82	186,103	85	276,295	84	99,030	80	155,068	82	254,098	81
Part-time	9,462	8	16,033	8	25,495	8	10,225	9	16,878	8	27,103	8	10,523	9	13,945	7	24,468	8
Undecided	8,277	7	15,870	8	24,147	8	8,921	8	16,663	8	25,584	8	13,906	11	19,504	10	33,410	11
Preferred region for graduate study (may select more than one)																		
U.S. regions																		
Northeast	40,426	37	54,654	28	95,080	31	44,784	43	72,455	35	117,239	37	51,934	44	65,501	37	117,435	40
Mid-Atlantic	42,358	38	69,268	35	111,626	37	43,907	42	80,699	39	124,606	40	51,259	44	74,696	42	125,955	43
South	47,751	43	88,283	45	136,034	44	45,889	44	97,161	46	143,050	46	48,367	41	75,226	42	123,593	42
Midwest	38,891	35	56,677	29	95,568	31	41,511	40	75,040	36	116,551	37	44,677	38	59,788	33	104,465	35
Southwest	36,144	33	53,881	28	90,025	29	32,641	31	58,408	28	91,049	29	36,340	31	47,964	27	84,304	28
West	55,690	50	77,165	40	132,855	43	50,608	48	83,265	40	133,873	43	60,388	51	76,063	43	136,451	46
Non-U.S. regions																		
Canada	10,433	9	12,434	6	22,867	7	9,952	10	13,683	7	23,635	8	12,201	10	13,143	7	25,344	9
Africa	1,867	2	2,275	1	4,142	1	1,207	1	1,679	1	2,886	1	1,611	1	1,780	1	3,391	1
Asia	3,793	3	3,306	2	7,099	2	2,876	3	2,720	1	5,596	2	4,051	3	2,848	2	6,899	2
Australia/New Zealand	6,206	6	7,843	4	14,049	5	5,348	5	8,461	4	13,809	4	7,268	6	8,923	5	16,191	5
Latin America	3,475	3	5,097	3	8,572	3	2,130	2	3,824	2	5,954	2	2,890	2	3,726	2	6,616	2
Middle East	1,847	2	1,818	1	3,665	1	1,287	1	1,439	1	2,726	1	1,760	1	1,560	1	3,320	1
Western Europe	13,346	12	15,214	8	28,560	9	13,081	13	18,484	9	31,565	10	15,933	14	17,432	10	33,365	11

Variable	Pell-eligible						Non-Pell-eligible						Do not know					
	Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Eastern Europe and Russia	3,719	3	4,127	2	7,846	3	2,566	2	3,438	2	6,004	2	3,708	3	3,666	2	7,374	2
Count ALL regions																		
1	53,267	48	108,200	55	161,467	53	46,677	45	102,457	49	149,134	47	51,390	44	86,581	48	137,971	47
2	15,114	14	29,039	15	44,153	14	14,807	14	34,188	16	48,995	16	17,173	15	29,255	16	46,428	16
3	11,900	11	19,635	10	31,535	10	12,296	12	24,934	12	37,230	12	13,799	12	21,020	12	34,819	12
4	7,491	7	11,100	6	18,591	6	8,168	8	14,369	7	22,537	7	8,870	8	12,174	7	21,044	7
5	4,317	4	6,105	3	10,422	3	4,558	4	7,891	4	12,449	4	5,031	4	6,869	4	11,900	4
≥6	18,293	17	21,245	11	39,538	13	18,107	17	25,666	12	43,773	14	21,276	18	22,879	13	44,155	15
Number of U.S. regions																		
0	352	0	549	0	901	0	335	0	458	0	793	0	424	0	510	0	934	0
1	54,670	50	110,687	57	165,357	54	47,683	46	104,624	50	152,307	48	52,972	45	89,069	50	142,041	48
2	17,096	15	31,909	16	49,005	16	16,723	16	37,515	18	54,238	17	19,550	17	32,424	18	51,974	18
3	13,182	12	20,882	11	34,064	11	13,867	13	26,867	13	40,734	13	15,439	13	22,492	13	37,931	13
4	7,252	7	10,232	5	17,484	6	8,079	8	13,871	7	21,950	7	8,409	7	11,457	6	19,866	7
5	3,136	3	4,541	2	7,677	3	3,262	3	5,731	3	8,993	3	3,530	3	4,939	3	8,469	3
6	14,694	13	16,524	8	31,218	10	14,664	14	20,439	10	35,103	11	17,215	15	17,887	10	35,102	12
All regions outside U.S.																		
Yes	19,271	17	24,561	13	43,832	14	18,393	18	27,546	13	45,939	15	22,520	19	26,340	15	48,860	16
Number of regions outside U.S.																		
0	91,111	83	170,763	87	261,874	86	86,220	82	181,959	87	268,179	85	95,019	81	152,438	85	247,457	84
1	8,686	8	12,253	6	20,939	7	9,075	9	14,523	7	23,598	8	10,736	9	13,537	8	24,273	8
2	4,642	4	5,699	3	10,341	3	4,602	4	6,758	3	11,360	4	5,369	5	6,331	4	11,700	4
3	2,576	2	3,122	2	5,698	2	2,378	2	3,398	2	5,776	2	3,030	3	3,351	2	6,381	2
4	1,329	1	1,498	1	2,827	1	1,019	1	1,304	1	2,323	1	1,411	1	1,405	1	2,816	1
5	623	1	662	0	1,285	0	391	0	534	0	925	0	618	1	584	0	1,202	0
≥6	1,415	1	1,327	1	2,742	1	928	1	1,029	0	1,957	1	1,356	1	1,132	1	2,488	1

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

Variable	Pell-eligible			Non-Pell-eligible			Do not know		
	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	81	82	82	80	81	81
Number of PGS who sent at least one GRE Score Report to a graduate institution with an IPEDS ID	97,645	174,364	272,009	92,776	188,305	281,081	104,343	160,457	264,800
Total number of GRE score reports	292,935	523,092	816,027	278,328	564,915	843,243	313,029	481,371	794,400
Median number of graduate institutions	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
Mean number of graduate institutions	3.55	3.29	3.38	3.92	3.94	3.93	3.82	3.85	3.84
Minimum number of graduate institutions	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum number of graduate institutions	55	53	55	55	57	57	56	56	56
Percentage with ≤4 prospective graduate institution choices	76	78	78	70	69	70	72	71	71
Percentage with 5–10 prospective graduate institution choices	20	19	19	24	26	25	23	24	24
Percentage with ≥11 prospective graduate institution choices	4	3	3	5	5	5	5	5	5
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one in-state institution (Y/N)	76	79	78	71	75	74	72	75	74
Percentage in-state institutions in choice set	72	75	74	67	67	67	68	69	69
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one out-of-state institution (Y/N)	60	55	56	67	66	66	65	63	64
Percentage out-of-state institutions in choice set	76	74	75	79	75	77	78	76	77
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one institution in U.S. Census division (Y/N)	85	88	87	82	86	84	83	86	84
Percentage institutions in U.S. Census division in choice set	76	80	79	71	74	73	73	75	74
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one institution outside their U.S. Census division but within their region (Y/N)	23	21	21	27	27	27	25	25	25
Percentage institutions outside U.S. Census division but within region in choice set	37	38	38	36	36	36	36	36	36
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one institution outside of their U.S. Census region (Y/N)	44	38	40	51	46	48	50	46	48
Percentage institutions outside U.S. Census region in choice set	60	58	59	61	58	59	62	58	60
Percentage PGS who may apply to their undergraduate institution (Y/N)	46	49	48	40	42	41	40	43	42
Percentage undergraduate institutions in choice set	60	61	60	57	54	55	58	56	57
Percentage PGS who may apply to regional flagship institution in state of residence (Y/N)	23	19	20	24	21	22	23	19	21
Percentage regional flagship institutions in state of residence in choice set	59	61	60	55	52	53	56	53	54
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one regional comprehensive institution in state of residence (Y/N)	30	36	34	23	31	28	23	30	27

Variable	Pell-eligible			Non-Pell-eligible			Do not know		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Percentage regional comprehensive institutions in state of residence in choice set	42	43	43	41	40	41	41	41	41
Percentage PGS who may apply to the land grant institution in their state of residence (Y/N)	42	35	38	47	40	42	45	38	40
Percentage land grant institutions in their state of residence in choice set	47	48	47	46	45	45	46	45	45
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one public graduate institution (Y/N)	87	85	85	85	85	85	84	83	83
Percentage public graduate institutions in choice set	78	78	78	75	74	74	75	73	74
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one private nonprofit graduate institution (Y/N)	54	54	54	59	61	60	60	62	61
Percentage private nonprofit graduate institutions in choice set	58	60	59	60	59	59	61	61	61
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one private for-profit graduate institution (Y/N)	5	5	5	3	6	5	3	5	5
Percentage private for-profit graduate institutions in choice set	27	29	28	25	25	25	24	25	25
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one graduate institution with at least 20,000 students (Y/N)	80	75	77	82	78	79	81	77	79
Percentage graduate institutions with at least 20,000 students in choice set	74	70	72	73	67	69	73	68	70
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one MSI graduate institution (Y/N)	43	45	44	36	38	38	38	41	39
Percentage MSI graduate institutions in choice set	52	55	54	44	44	44	46	47	47
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one AANAPISI graduate institution (Y/N)	24	23	23	22	21	22	24	23	23
Percentage AANAPISI graduate institutions in choice set	40	44	43	35	36	36	37	39	38
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	40	43	42	36	36	36	38	38	38
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one HSI graduate institution (Y/N)	30	30	30	23	25	24	25	27	26
Percentage HSI graduate institutions in choice set	50	54	53	44	43	43	45	46	46
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one NASNTI graduate institution (Y/N)	4	5	5	2	3	3	2	3	3
Percentage NASNTI graduate institutions in choice set	48	48	48	37	34	34	36	34	34
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one PBI graduate institution (Y/N)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
Percentage PBI graduate institutions in choice set	40	45	43	41	40	40	38	42	40
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one HBCU graduate institution (Y/N)	3	4	3	2	3	2	2	2	2
Percentage HBCU graduate institutions in choice set	38	39	39	33	32	32	33	32	33
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	N/A	100	N/A	100	100	N/A	N/A	N/A
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one single-sex college (Y/N)	2	3	2	2	4	3	2	4	3

Variable	Pell-eligible			Non-Pell-eligible			Do not know		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Percentage single-sex colleges in choice set	38	47	41	32	36	33	38	43	40
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	22	30	28	20	24	24	20	25	24
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one women's college (Y/N)	2	3	2	2	4	3	2	4	3
Percentage women's colleges in choice set	22	30	28	20	24	24	20	25	24
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one graduate institution with Carnegie doctoral classification (Y/N)	91	88	89	93	91	92	92	90	91
Percentage graduate institutions with Carnegie doctoral classification in choice set	89	85	86	91	84	87	90	84	87
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one graduate institution with Carnegie master's classification (Y/N)	25	32	30	21	31	28	23	33	29
Percentage graduate institutions with Carnegie master's classification in choice set	50	53	52	47	45	45	49	47	48
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one graduate institution with Carnegie classification special focus 4 year (Y/N)	14	18	17	13	22	19	13	21	18
Percentage graduate institutions with Carnegie classification special focus 4 year in choice set	41	41	41	38	36	37	38	36	37
Percentage PGS who may apply to at least one AAU member graduate institution (Y/N)	55	45	49	61	52	55	61	52	56
Percentage AAU member graduate institutions in choice set	64	57	60	69	57	62	68	57	62

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] Dependent students must report their parents' information when completing a FAFSA.
[2] Federal Student Aid (n.d.-a) indicates that "a student enrolled in a postbaccalaureate teacher certification program might receive a Federal Pell Grant."
[3] In this study, advanced degree includes post-BA or postmaster's certificates, master's degrees, professional practice doctoral degrees, and research/scholarship and other doctoral degrees.
[4] In educational research, receiving a Federal Pell Grant is often a proxy for being from an economically disadvantaged family.
[5] 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.
[6] 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).
[7] For a more comprehensive analysis of the experiences of women PGS, refer to the fifth Pathways to Graduate School series report (Millett, 2025d).
[8] For a more comprehensive analysis of Black PGS' experiences, refer to the fifth Pathways to Graduate School series report (Millett, 2025a), and for Hispanic PGS, refer to the second report (Millett, 2025b).
[9] 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."
[10] The U.S. Census Bureau does not include Puerto Rico or other U.S. territories in any census region or division.
[11] College Navigator is the data source. Note that many of the men's colleges are religious institutions. See https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/
[12] This list is from July 2022. As of July 2023, 69 AAU member universities are in the United States.
[13] 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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