

PUBLIC AWARENESS: RACIAL DISPARITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION



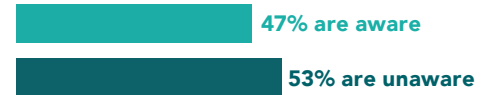
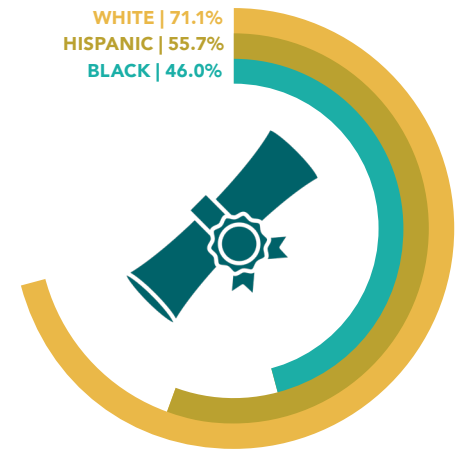
A national survey conducted by Higher Learning Advocates¹ suggests that the public lacks awareness of achievement gaps in postsecondary education.

When asked whether Hispanic and Black college students attending four-year public institutions were less likely to complete their degree than their white peers, a majority (51%) of survey respondents answered “no.” The truth is that students of color graduate at rates 15 to 25 percentage points lower than white students.

The national survey also found that **less than half (47%) of Americans are aware that Hispanic and Black college students are less likely to complete their degree than their white peers.** One hundred percent of “insiders,”³ in contrast, were able to correctly identify that students of color are less likely to complete their degree than their white peers. Respondents with a bachelor’s degree (62%) were most likely to answer correctly, and respondents 65 and older were least likely to answer correctly.

Like many of today’s students, students of color often struggle to access and complete their postsecondary degree due to financial barriers, family obligations, lack of student support services, work obligations, and other challenges; therefore, students of color continue to have poorer student outcomes compared to their white peers. Federal policies must work to address these gaps that persist in higher education.

Graduation Rates²



OTHER SURVEY RESULTS

62% of respondents believed that most first-year students live on campus

13% of first-year students actually live on campus.



81% of Americans were aware that **3 in 10**



college students are the first in their family to attend a higher education institution.

72% of the public identified that **4 in 10**

independent college students live at or below the poverty line. This awareness was highest among 35-49 year-olds.

¹ This survey was conducted between September 28-30, 2018 and data within this document were accurate at that time. The data include a nationally representative survey of 1,000 Americans conducted by Gfk Research, along with a survey of beltway “insiders” conducted by Whiteboard Advisors, including individuals who have served or are currently serving as key policy and political roles: Current and former White House and U.S. Department of Education leaders; Current and former Congressional policymakers and staff; Higher education institution leaders; and Leaders of education associations, organizations and think tanks.

² Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education. 2019. Table 5.3. <https://1xfsu31b52d33idlp13twtos-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Race-and-Ethnicity-in-Higher-Education.pdf>

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OTHER SURVEY RESULTS (CONTINUED)

RESPONDENTS 65 AND OLDER

JUST 27% were aware that a majority of college students are financially independent



ONLY 62% knew that **40%** of independent students live at or below the poverty line.

FEDERAL POVERTY LINE

Respondents 65 and older were also less likely to correctly identify statistics on the number of college students who are over 25 or working while in school.



18- TO 24-YEAR-OLDS

84%  were aware that the majority of college students work while learning.

ACROSS AGE GROUPS

The public was less aware that many students balance parenthood with school or that first-year students must find a way to commute to campus.



INSIDERS

VS.

GENERAL PUBLIC

In contrast to the public survey, insiders answered each question with **accuracy** significantly higher and more consistent than the accuracy range of the general public.

ACCURACY 85%-100%



ACCURACY 37%-81%

Higher Learning Advocates is a non-profit advocacy organization working to shift federal policy to better support the success of today's students. While more students are participating in higher education than ever before, there is a vast and growing disconnect between federal policy and the needs of today's students, employers, and communities. We are working toward federal policies that create transparent pathways to success, incentivize innovation, protect students and taxpayers, and improve student outcomes. Please visit our website to check out additional survey results⁴ and for more information.

⁴Survey Reveals Gap Between Public and Policymakers When it Comes to Understanding Today's College Students. 2018. <https://higherlearningadvocates.org/news/survey-reveals-gap-between-public-and-policymakers-when-it-comes-to-understanding-todays-college-students-2/>

For more information about Higher Learning Advocates' work on racial disparities in higher education please contact **Emily Bouck West**, Deputy Executive Director, Higher Learning Advocates at ebouckwest@higherlearningadvocates.org.