

Undocumented Students in Higher Education

June 2024

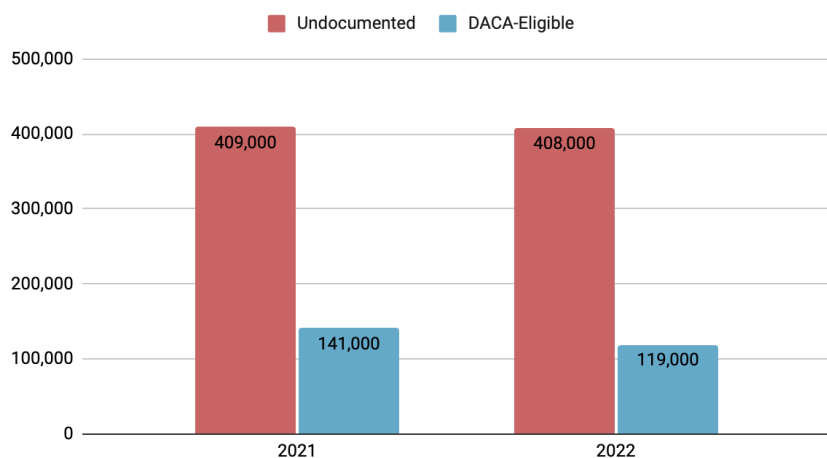
There are approximately **408,000 undocumented students** enrolled in U.S. institutions of higher education. The number of undocumented students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities has remained roughly stable since [2021](#). However, the percentage of undocumented students who have DACA or who are DACA-eligible continues to decline, as [ongoing legal challenges](#) to the program, alongside the 2007 arrival cut-off, preclude new applicants from qualifying for the program. In 2021, there were 141,000 DACA-eligible students enrolled in higher education, accounting for approximately 0.7% of all enrolled college students. In 2022, the number of DACA-eligible students dropped to 119,000, approximately 0.65% of all college students.

While there are fewer DACA recipients in higher education, most undocumented students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities arrived in the country as young children (ages 0-9) or adolescents (ages 10-16) and attended primary and/or secondary school in the United States.

All DACA/DACA-eligible students arrived in the U.S.

before the age of 16, with the vast majority – 89% – arriving by the age of 9. Overall, about 71% of all undocumented students arrived in the U.S. before the age of 17.

Undocumented and DACA-Eligible Students in Higher Education, 2021 versus 2022

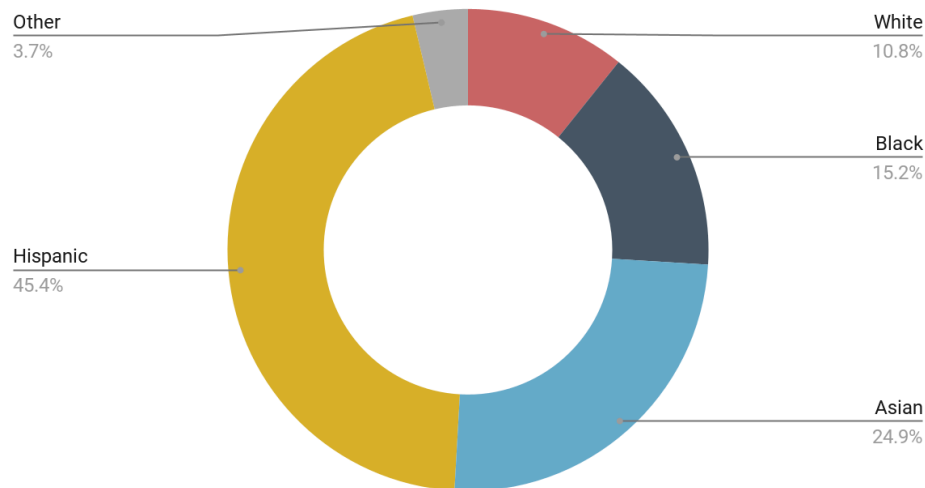


Age of Arrival	Share of Undocumented Postsecondary Students	Share of DACA-Eligible Postsecondary Students
Child (0-9)	31.1%	89.0%
Adolescent (10-16)	39.8%	11.0%
Young Adult/Adult (17+)	29.1%	0.0%

Who are the Undocumented Students in Higher Education?

Undocumented students are a heterogeneous community, representing the broad range of immigrants in the U.S. They are enrolled in every kind of institution – including community colleges, private colleges and universities, and large state universities – and pursue a range of degree and credential programs.

Undocumented Students in Higher Education by Race



Degrees and Programs

Approximately 88% of undocumented students are enrolled as undergraduates, and 12% are enrolled in graduate or professional schools. 27.4% of undocumented graduate students are pursuing degrees in STEM fields.

Undocumented Students in Higher Education by State

As with the overall undocumented population, undocumented students in higher education are concentrated in a small number of states. Three-quarters of undocumented students come from 12 states, and most of those hail from four states: California, Texas, Florida, and New York. But the spread of the undocumented student population across states is changing. California, Georgia, Florida, and New Jersey all saw increases in their undocumented student population between 2021 and 2022.

Top 5 States Enrolling Undocumented Students (2022)

- California (87,000)
- Texas (57,000)
- Florida (43,000)
- New York (27,000)
- New Jersey (21,000)

This report was based on data from the 1-year sample of the 2022 American Community Survey (ACS). Analysis was provided by the [American Immigration Council \(AIC\)](#). The Council strives to strengthen the United States by shaping immigration policies and practices through innovative programs, cutting-edge research, and strategic legal and advocacy efforts grounded in evidence, compassion, justice and fairness.