OFFICE OF HIGHER EDUCATION



Educating for the Future 2026 Update

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About the Office of Higher Education

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education is a cabinet-level state agency providing students with financial aid programs and information to help them gain access to postsecondary education. The agency also serves as the state's clearinghouse for data, research and analysis on postsecondary enrollment, financial aid, finance and trends.

The Minnesota State Grant Program is the largest financial aid program administered by the Office of Higher Education, awarding more than $224 million annually in need-based grants to Minnesota residents attending eligible colleges, universities and career schools in Minnesota. The agency oversees other state scholarship programs, tuition reciprocity programs, a student loan program, Minnesota's 529 College Savings Plan, licensing and early college awareness programs for youth.

About This Report

This is a legislative-mandated report. As requested by Minnesota Statutes, section 3.197, this report cost approximately $3,176.50 to prepare, including staff time.

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Executive Summary

In 2015, the Minnesota Legislature enacted Statute 135A.012, setting an ambitious goal: by 2025, 70% of Minnesota adults aged 25–44 will hold a postsecondary certificate or degree. To address longstanding gaps in educational access and outcomes, the statute also established interim benchmarks of 30% and 50% attainment for all racial and ethnic groups.

As of the latest estimates, 63.3% of Minnesotans in the target age group have earned a postsecondary credential—up from 57.5% in 2015. However, to reach the 70% education attainment goal, an additional 101,896 adults aged 25–44 must earn a postsecondary credential.

Racial communities saw small but measurable increases in postsecondary attainment rates for 2026. White-identifying Minnesotans remain closest to the goal with a 69.2% attainment rate. This year's report marks a significant milestone: for the first time since the inception of the state's attainment goal as all racial communities have surpassed the 30% credential attainment benchmark:

- American Indian: 30.2%
- Asian: 64.9%
- Black or African American: 41.9%
- Hispanic or Latino: 39.4%
- Two or more races: 55.8%

While attainment rates continue to increase at the aggregate level, racial disparities continue to persist when observing individual ethnic communities, which call on continued targeted strategies to ensure all communities are supported in their pursuit of a higher education.

Minnesota's Attainment Goal

In 2015, the Minnesota Legislature enacted an Education Attainment Goal[1], which states that 70% of Minnesota adults (ages 25-44) will have attained a postsecondary certificate or degree by 2025. The law also set 30% and 50% educational attainment benchmarks for all races and ethnicities.

Educational attainment refers to the highest level of education an individual completes. Educational attainment of a population is the percentage or count of the persons that hold a postsecondary credential (certificate, associate degree, diploma, bachelor's degree, master's degree, graduate certificate, doctoral or professional degree). The population sampled for measuring educational attainment can vary widely depending on the source. In Minnesota, educational attainment estimates for the state's attainment goal are limited to individuals aged 25–44. This age range is used because it represents the period in which most people are actively pursuing or have recently completed postsecondary education or training. Other sources, such as the U.S. Census Bureau, report attainment for a broader population, typically those aged 25–64.

The report uses data obtained from the American Community Survey and analyzed by the Minnesota Demographic Center, with supplemental data provided by the Minnesota Office of Higher Education and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, to create state-level estimates of postsecondary attainment. Minnesota uses the 1-year American Community Survey (ACS) sample grouped into the most recent 5-year period (2020-2024) to create the attainment estimates and are referenced in the report as "2026 estimates".

Currently, the ACS does not include data on how many adults have sub-baccalaureate certificates as their highest level of education. The Census category "some college, no degree" is a catch-all category that includes individuals who are currently enrolled in college and have not finished, individuals who attended college and did not complete their education, and individuals who earned a postsecondary credential below an associate degree. To reach an estimate of the number of certificates awarded, we used student data provided by Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and the Office of Higher Education between 1990 and 2024, broken down by the age of the certificate holders to separate out certificate holders from those with some college, no degree group within ACS data.

The size of each certificate cohort changes over time based on four factors: mortality, migration, individuals' achievement of higher credentials, and age of individuals. Migration and educational achievement have greater relative impacts on the number of certificate holders than mortality does. Attainment estimates shown have been rounded to the nearest 100 persons or tenth of one percent. Subgroup totals may not add up to the "all person" totals due to rounding. These estimates contain sampling and other sources of error displayed by the margin of error unless otherwise noted. Percentages for individuals self-identifying as "other" race are not calculated.

Although the goal was not reached within the original timeframe, Minnesota has made meaningful progress and continues to prioritize this work. The efforts completed to date have strengthened partnerships, expanded

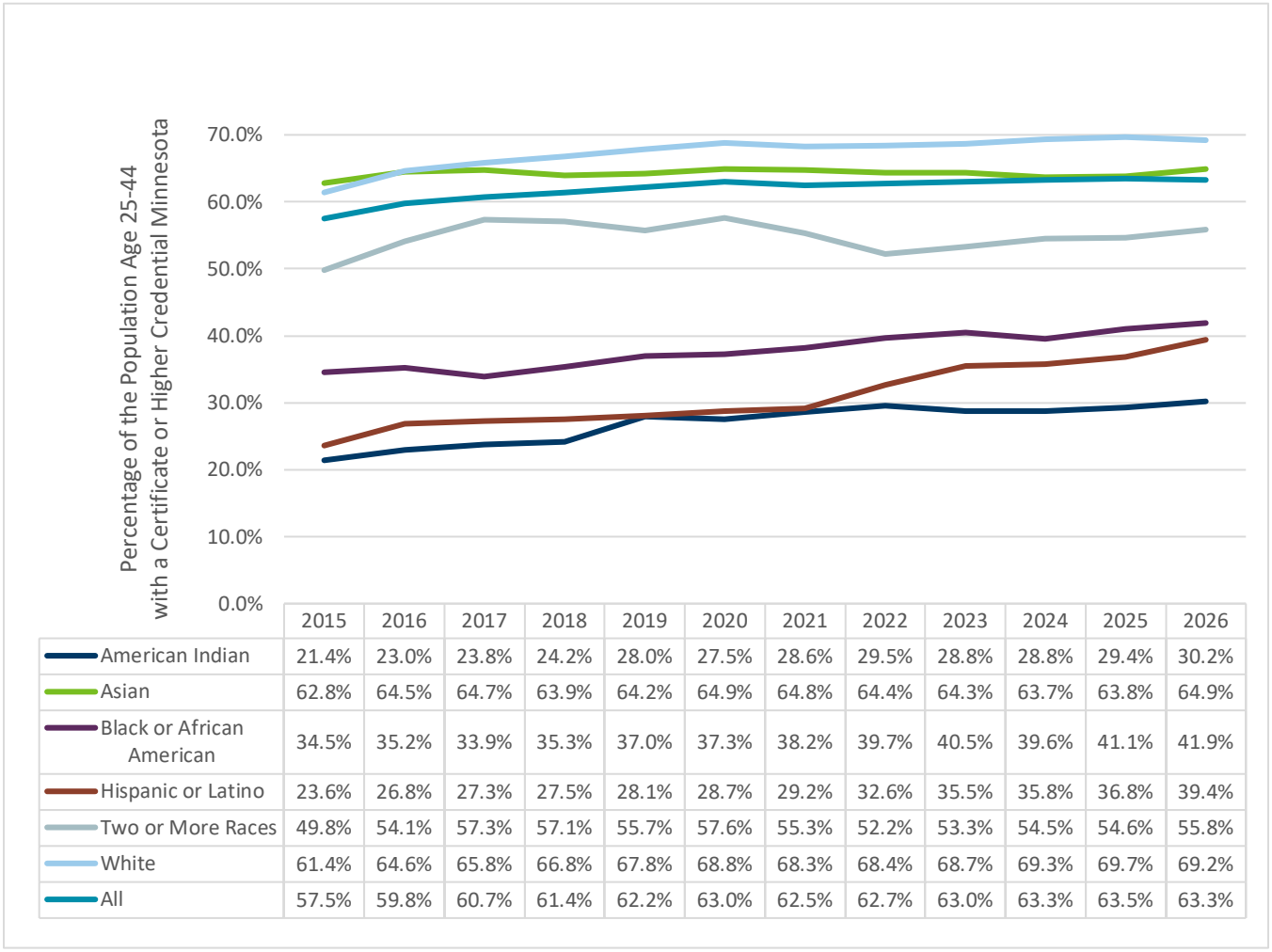
[1] https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/2021/2021-10-26%2009:38:36+00:00/cite/135A.012/pdf

capacity, and advanced the state's long-term strategy. Continued attention, investment, and collaboration are underway, reflecting an ongoing commitment to achieving the goal and supporting positive outcomes for Minnesotans.

Education Attainment Estimates

Current estimates on Minnesota's educational attainment show that 63.3% of Minnesotans aged 25-44 years have completed a postsecondary credential (Figure 1). This percentage has increased compared to 2015 estimates (57.5%). Table 1 shows the percent of the population in Minnesota between the ages of 25 and 44 who have obtained a certificate or higher credential since the creation of the attainment goal. Subtle increases in attainment were seen in 2026, but the Hispanic or Latino community saw the biggest increase with about three percentage points gained.

Figure 1: Minnesotans Aged 25-44 with a Certificate or Higher Credential between Years 2015 to 2026 by Racial Community

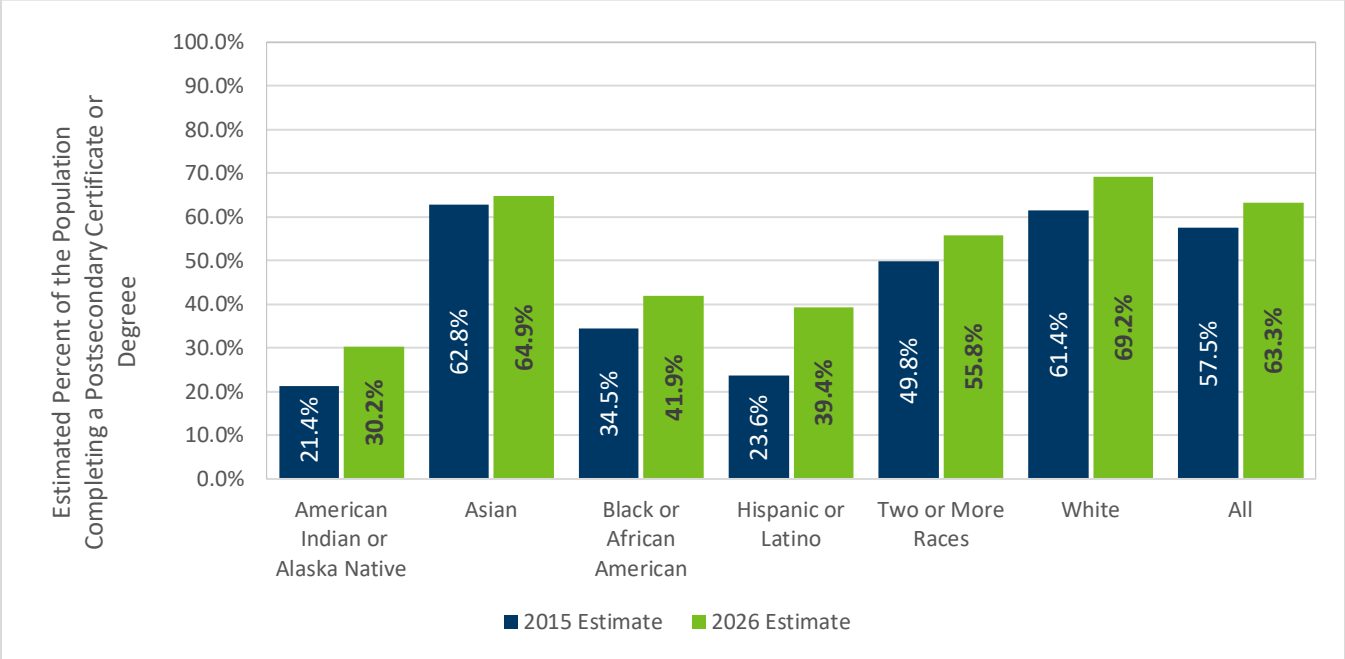


	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
American Indian	21.4%	23.0%	23.8%	24.2%	28.0%	27.5%	28.6%	29.5%	28.8%	28.8%	29.4%	30.2%
Asian	62.8%	64.5%	64.7%	63.9%	64.2%	64.9%	64.8%	64.4%	64.3%	63.7%	63.8%	64.9%
Black or African American	34.5%	35.2%	33.9%	35.3%	37.0%	37.3%	38.2%	39.7%	40.5%	39.6%	41.1%	41.9%
Hispanic or Latino	23.6%	26.8%	27.3%	27.5%	28.1%	28.7%	29.2%	32.6%	35.5%	35.8%	36.8%	39.4%
Two or More Races	49.8%	54.1%	57.3%	57.1%	55.7%	57.6%	55.3%	52.2%	53.3%	54.5%	54.6%	55.8%
White	61.4%	64.6%	65.8%	66.8%	67.8%	68.8%	68.3%	68.4%	68.7%	69.3%	69.7%	69.2%
All	57.5%	59.8%	60.7%	61.4%	62.2%	63.0%	62.5%	62.7%	63.0%	63.3%	63.5%	63.3%

White-identifying Minnesotans continue to have the highest attainment rate at 69.2%. Asian and multiracial-identifying communities (two or more races) have surpassed the 50% benchmark with 64.9% and 55.8% attainment rates. This year's report marks a first for the state of Minnesota as all racial communities are seen to have surpassed the 30% benchmark since the goal's inception:

- American Indian: 30.2%
- Asian: 64.9%
- Black or African American: 41.9%
- Hispanic or Latino: 39.4%
- Two or more races: 55.8%

Figure 2: Percentage of the Population Age 25-44 with a Certificate or Higher Credential Minnesota, 2015 and 2026 Estimates by Basic Race Community



Source: IPUMS microdata version of U.S. Census Bureau 2020-2024 American Community Survey for Associate or Higher Degree, with tabulations by the MN State Demographic Center. Holders of certificates as their highest post-secondary award were estimated using a cohort analysis method applied to administrative data on certificates awarded (supplied by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system and the Minnesota Office of Higher Education) and produced by the MN State Demographic Center.

Notes: Estimates have been rounded to the nearest 100 or whole percent. Parts may not add to total due to rounding. Users are cautioned that these estimates contain sampling and other sources of error, not shown here. Race was imputed for certificates earned in which the race of the individual was unknown. Percentages were not calculated for the small group of individuals self-identifying as "other" race.

Table 1: Percentage of the Population Age 25-44 with a Certificate or Higher Credential Minnesota, 2015 and 2026 Estimates by Basic Race Community Including Margin of Error

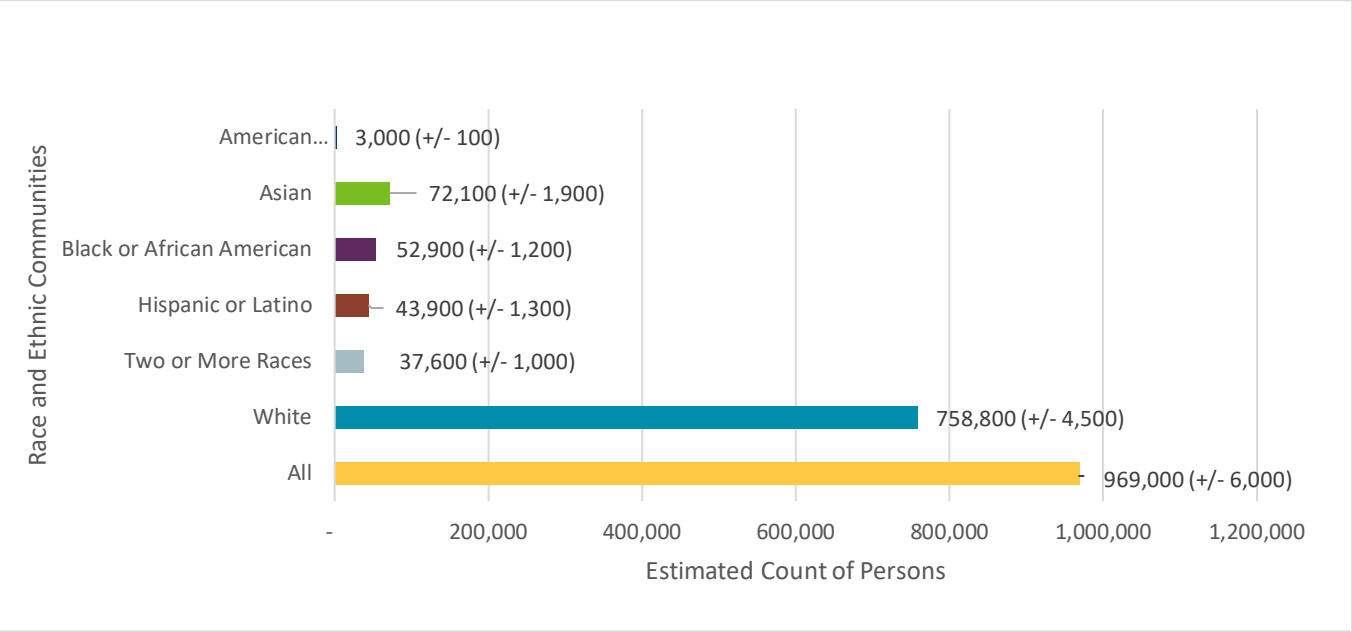
Basic Race Community	Percent of Persons with Certificate or Higher Credential, 2015 Estimates	Margin of Error 2015 Estimates	Percent of Persons with Certificate or Higher Credential 2026 Estimates	Margin of Error 2026 Estimates
American Indian	21.4%	2.3%	30.2%	1.7%
Asian	62.8%	1.4%	64.9%	3.4%

Basic Race Community	Percent of Persons with Certificate or Higher Credential, 2015 Estimates	Margin of Error 2015 Estimates	Percent of Persons with Certificate or Higher Credential 2026 Estimates	Margin of Error 2026 Estimates
Black or African American	34.5%	1.7%	41.9%	1.9%
Hispanic or Latino	23.6%	3.0%	39.4%	2.3%
Two or More Races	49.8%	0.4%	55.8%	3.1%
White	61.4%	1.8%	69.2%	0.8%
All	57.5%	0.4%	63.3%	0.8%

Source: IPUMS microdata version of U.S. Census Bureau 2020-2024 American Community Survey for Associate or Higher Degree, with tabulations by the MN State Demographic Center. Holders of certificates as their highest post-secondary award were estimated using a cohort analysis method applied to administrative data on certificates awarded (supplied by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system and the Minnesota Office of Higher Education) and produced by the MN State Demographic Center.

Notes: Estimates have been rounded to the nearest 100 or whole percent. Parts may not add to total due to rounding. Users are cautioned that these estimates contain sampling and other sources of error, not shown here. Race was imputed for certificates earned in which the race of the individual was unknown. Percentages were not calculated for the small group of individuals self-identifying as "other" race.

Figure 3: Estimated Count of Persons Aged 25-44 with a Certificate or Higher Credential, Minnesota, 2026 Estimates by Basic Race Community



Source: IPUMS microdata version of U.S. Census Bureau 2020-2024 American Community Survey for Associate or Higher Degree, with tabulations by the MN State Demographic Center.

As of this report, the overall population in Minnesota, aged 25-44, of each racial and ethnic communities are as follows:

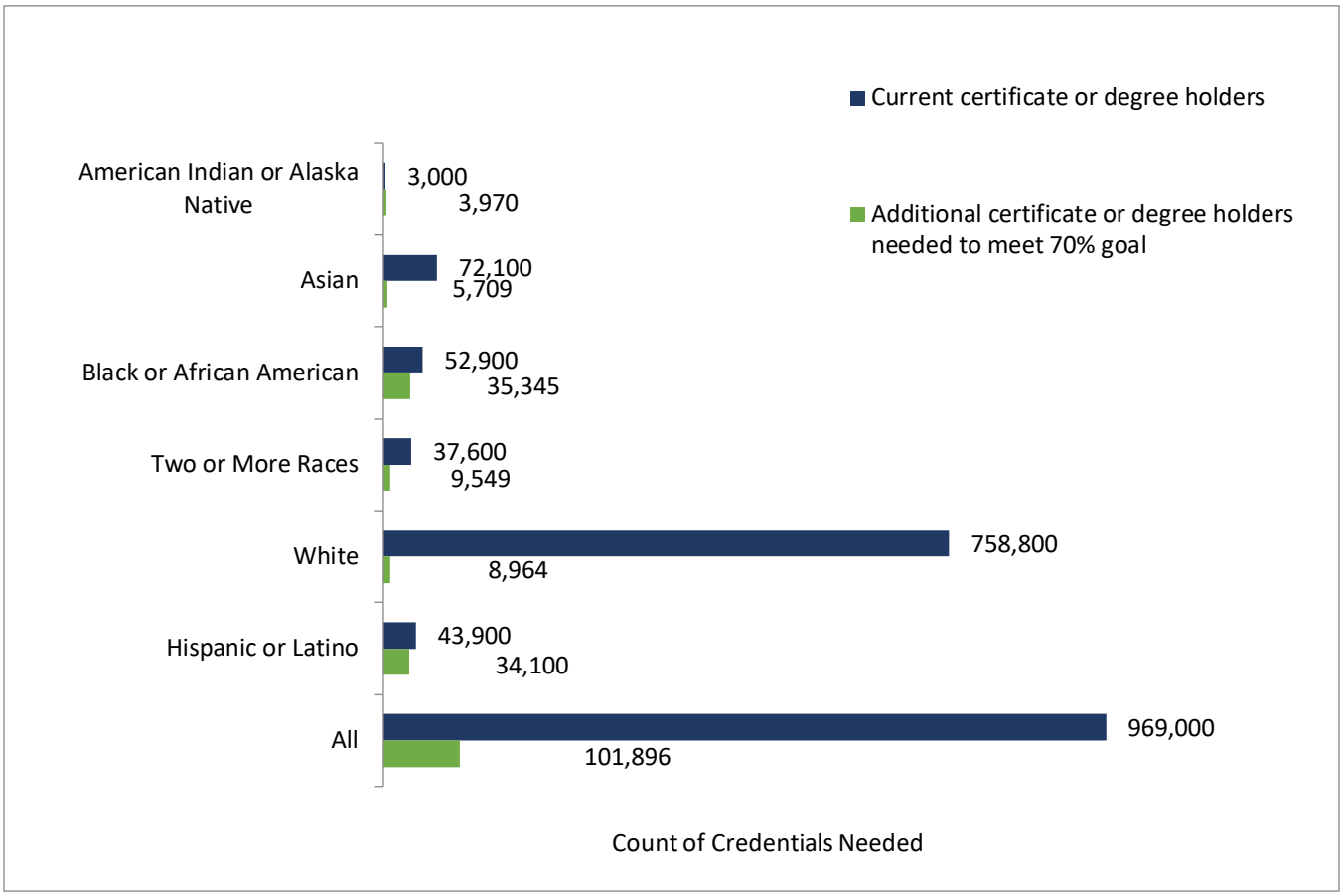
- American Indian-identifying community: 10,000.

- Asian-identifying community: 111,100.
- Black or African American-identifying community: 126,100.
- Communities that identify as two or more races: 67,400.
- Hispanic or Latino-identifying community: 111,400.
- White-identifying community: 1,097,000.

For the State to reach the education attainment goal, an additional 101,896 Minnesotans are needed to attain a postsecondary credential (Figure 4). Of the additional credentials needed, Minnesota's racial and ethnic communities would need to contribute the following counts to assist in the State's goal:

- American Indian-identifying community: 3,970.
- Asian-identifying community: 5,709.
- Black or African American-identifying community: 35,345.
- Communities that identify as two or more races: 9,549.
- Hispanic or Latino-identifying community: 34,100.
- White-identifying community: 8,964.

Figure 4: Persons with a Certificate or Higher Credential and Number Needed to Reach 70% Goal, Minnesota, Ages 25-44 by Racial Communities, 2026 Estimates



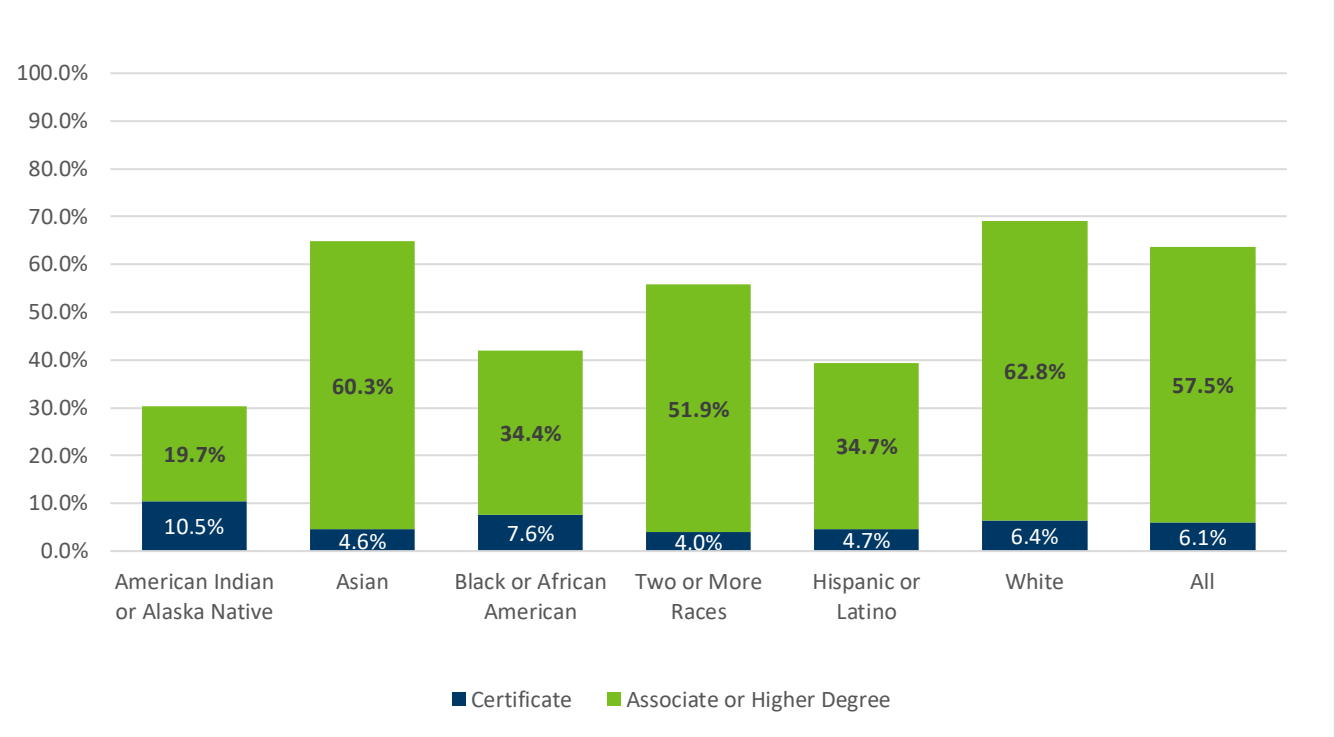
Source: IPUMS microdata version of U.S. Census Bureau 2020-2024 American Community Survey for Associate or Higher Degree, with tabulations by the MN State Demographic Center. Holders of certificates as their highest post-secondary award were estimated using a cohort analysis method applied to administrative data on certificates awarded (supplied by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system and the Minnesota Office of Higher Education) and produced by the MN State Demographic Center.

Notes: Estimates have been rounded to the nearest 100 or whole percent. Parts may not add to total due to rounding. Users are cautioned that these estimates contain sampling and other sources of error, not shown here. Race was imputed for certificates earned in which the race of the individual was unknown. Percentages were not calculated for the small group of individuals self-identifying as "other" race.

Certificate Versus Degree Attainment

The 2026 estimates mentioned in Figure 1 included the combined certificate estimates and the associate degree or higher estimates. When observing certificate versus degree attainment, 6.1% of Minnesotans aged 25-44 completed a certificate as their highest credential. At an aggregate level, American Indian-identifying adults (10.5%) Black-identifying adults (7.6%) and White-identifying adults (6.4%) have higher than average rates of certificate completion as their highest credential as shown in Figure 5. Asian-identifying adults (4.6%), Hispanic or Latino-identifying adults (4.7%), and adults identifying as two or more races (4.0%) have lower than average rates of certificate completion as the highest credential earned. These patterns remain consistent with the previous year's certificate versus degree attainment rates.

Figure 5: Percentage of Population Age 25-44 with a Certificate or Higher Credential, Minnesota, 2026 Estimates by Racial Community



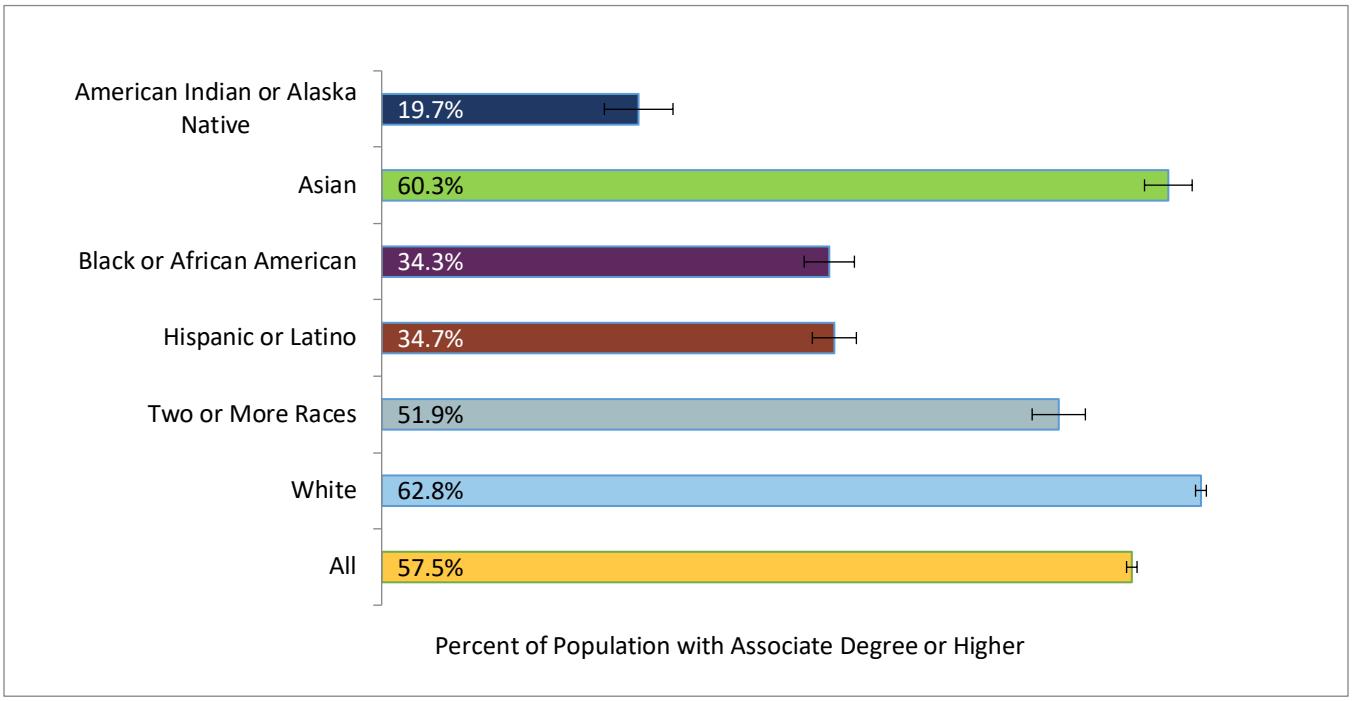
Source: IPUMS microdata version of U.S. Census Bureau 2020-2024 American Community Survey for Associate or Higher Degree, with tabulations by the MN State Demographic Center.

Notes: Estimates have been rounded to the nearest 100 or whole percent. Parts may not add to total due to rounding. Users are cautioned that these estimates contain sampling and other sources of error, not shown here. Race was imputed for certificates earned in which the race of the individual was unknown. Percentages were not calculated for the small group of individuals self-identifying as "other" race.

Associate or Higher Degree Attainment by Detailed Race and Ethnic Communities

The overall attainment rate of Minnesotans with an associate degree or higher is 57.5% (Figure 6). Asian-identifying and White-identifying Minnesotans have the highest associate degree or higher attainment rate at 60.3% and 62.8%, respectively. The attainment rates for associate degree or higher for the remaining racial and ethnic communities are: 51.9% for individuals who identify as two or more races; 34.3% for the Black or African American-identifying community, 34.7% for the Hispanic or Latino-identifying community, and 19.7% for the American Indian-identifying community.

Figure 6: Percentage of Population Age 25-44 with an Associate or Higher Degree, Minnesota, 2026 by Racial and Ethnic Community



Source: IPUMS microdata version of U.S. Census Bureau 2020-2024 American Community Survey for Associate or Higher Degree, with tabulations by the MN State Demographic Center.

Notes: Estimates have been rounded to the nearest 100 or whole percent. Parts may not add to total due to rounding. Users are cautioned that these estimates contain sampling and other sources of error, not shown here. Race was imputed for certificates earned in which the race of the individual was unknown. Percentages were not calculated for the small group of individuals self-identifying as "other" race.

The Minnesota Office of Higher Education uses data obtained from the American Community Survey (ACS) to disaggregate education attainment numbers, by detailed race and ethnic populations, for those who have attained an associate degree or higher credential. At this time, disaggregated data by detailed racial and ethnic communities are not available for certificate estimates. At a disaggregated level, large disparities continue to

persist for Minnesota's ethnic communities. For example, while the Hispanic or Latino-identifying community have an overall education attainment rate of 34.7% (not including certificates), the educational attainment rate for the following communities show significant variations: (Figure 7):

- Hispanic or Latino, Mexican: 31.5%.
- Hispanic or Latino, Puerto Rican: 46.4%.
- Hispanic or Latino, all other ethnic communities: 38.8%.

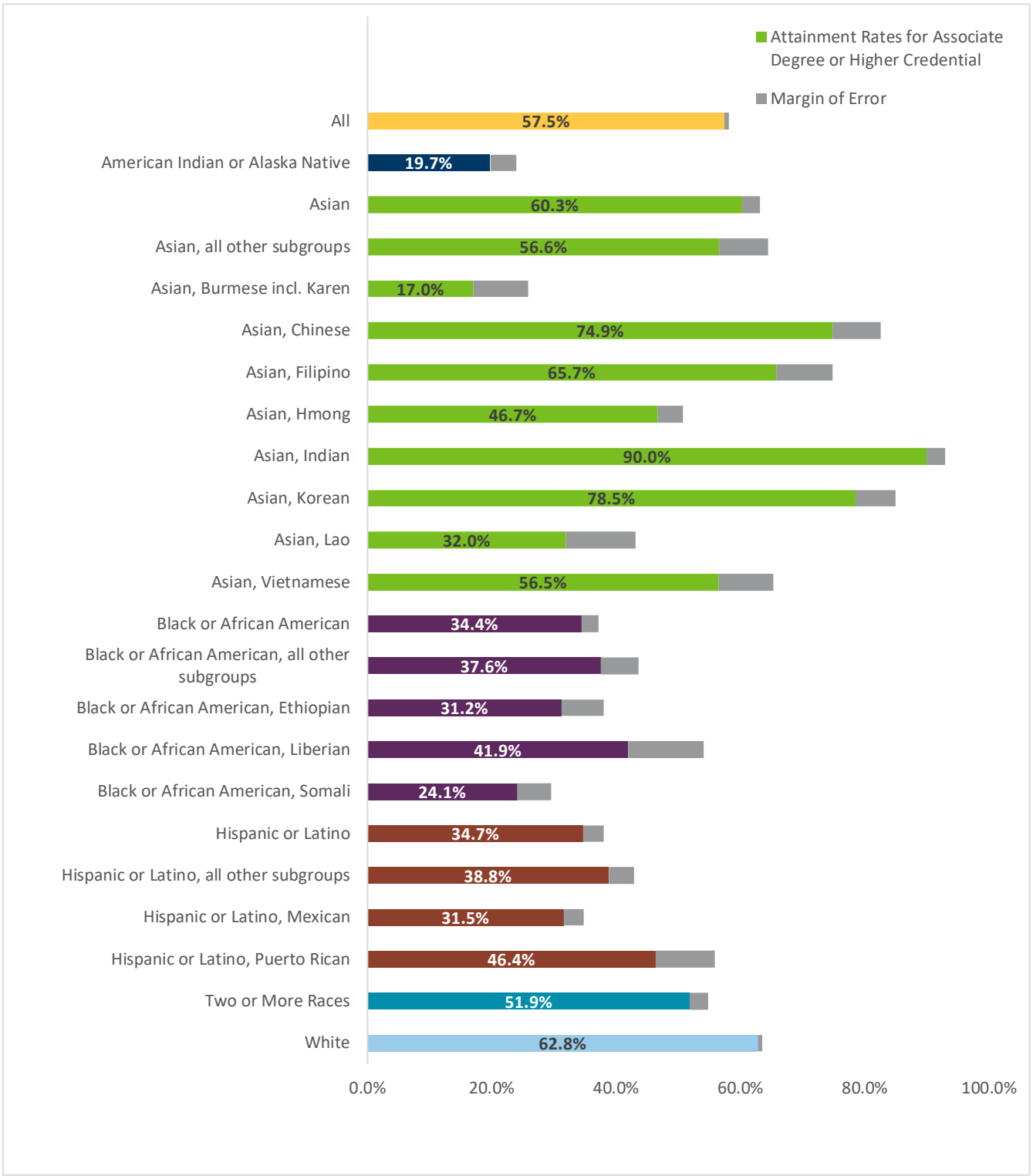
The importance of data disaggregation is further highlighted when observing the attainment rates of Minnesota's Asian communities. Despite the Chinese, Indian, and Korean communities meeting the education attainment goal of 70%, the aggregated rate for the Asian population is 60.3%. When the community is further disaggregated, we see large disparities present amongst the varying Asian ethnic communities within Minnesota.

- Asian, Burmese including Karen: 17.0%.
- Asian, Chinese: 74.9%.
- Asian, Filipino: 65.7%
- Asian, Hmong: 46.7%
- Asian, Indian: 90.0%.
- Asian, Korean: 78.5%.
- Asian, Lao: 32.0%.
- Asian, Vietnamese: 56.5%.
- Asian, all other ethnic communities: 56.6%.

When we observe the Black or African American-identifying community (34.4%), we also see continuing disparities.

- Black or African American, Ethiopian: 31.2%.
- Black or African American, Liberian: 41.9%.
- Black or African American, Somali: 24.1%.
- Black or African American, all other ethnic communities: 37.6%.

Figure 7: Educational Attainment for Associate Degree or Higher Credential Disaggregated by Detailed Race and Ethnic Communities, 2026 Estimates



Source: IPUMS microdata version of U.S. Census Bureau 2020-2024 American Community Survey for Associate or Higher Degree, with tabulations by the Minnesota State Demographic Center.

Table 2: Educational Attainment for Associate Degree or Higher Credential Disaggregated by Detailed Race and Ethnic Communities, 2026 Estimates

Race and Ethnic Community	Count of Persons Age 25-44	Count of Persons Aged 25-44 with an Associate Degree or Higher	Percent of Persons Aged 25-44 with an Associate Degree or Higher	Margin of Error[2]
American Indian or Alaska Native	10,000	2,000	19.7%	4.2%
Asian	111,100	67,000	60.3%	2.8%
Asian, all other subgroups	14,100	8,000	56.6%	7.8%
Asian, Burmese incl. Karen	4,700	800	17.0%	8.8%
Asian, Chinese	10,000	7,500	74.9%	7.7%
Asian, Filipino	5,200	3,400	65.7%	9.0%
Asian, Hmong	37,800	17,700	46.7%	4.1%
Asian, Indian	20,500	18,500	90.0%	3.0%
Asian, Korean	7,700	6,100	78.5%	6.5%
Asian, Lao	2,900	900	32.0%	11.2%
Asian, Vietnamese	7,500	4,200	56.5%	8.8%
Black or African American	126,100	43,400	34.4%	2.7%
Black, all other subgroups	80,100	30,100	37.6%	6.1%
Black, Ethiopian	14,500	4,500	31.2%	6.8%
Black, Liberian	7,300	3,000	41.9%	12.1%
Black, Somali	24,200	5,800	24.1%	5.4%
Hispanic or Latino	111,400	38,700	34.7%	3.3%
Hispanic, all other subgroups	34,700	13,500	38.8%	4.1%
Hispanic, Mexican	60,000	19,000	31.5%	3.2%
Hispanic, Puerto Rican	4,700	2,200	46.4%	9.5%

[2] Margins of error vary across demographic groups due to differences in sample size, response rates, and weighting adjustments. Smaller populations or groups with lower survey participation tend to have higher margins of error because fewer responses lead to less statistical precision. Additionally, when survey weights are applied to correct for underrepresentation, they can increase variability and further widen the margin of error.

Race and Ethnic Community	Count of Persons Age 25-44	Count of Persons Aged 25-44 with an Associate Degree or Higher	Percent of Persons Aged 25-44 with an Associate Degree or Higher	Margin of Error[2]
Two or More Races	67,400	35,000	51.9%	3.0%
White	1,097,000	688,900	62.8%	0.7%
White, all other subgroups	1,089,300	684,000	62.8%	0.6%
White, Russian	7,700	4,900	62.8%	6.8%
ALL	**1,529,800**	**878,900**	**57.5%**	**0.7%**

Conclusion

While meaningful progress was made between 2015 and 2026, work to increase the number of adults in Minnesota with a postsecondary credential continues to be necessary. Minnesota has made meaningful progress toward its higher education attainment goal, yet the final stretch demands renewed commitment and targeted action. With 63.5% of adults aged 25–44 holding a postsecondary credential, the 70% benchmark is within the state's reach but not without addressing persistent racial disparities.

To meet the statewide goal and honor the spirit of Statute 135A.012, Minnesota must continue to invest in inclusive strategies that expand access, support completion, and close racial and ethnic gaps. Achieving this vision will not only fulfill a legislative mandate—it will strengthen the state's workforce, economy, and future.



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