

PACIFIC ISLANDERS AND COLLEGE READINESS

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College readiness, or the preparation needed to enter and succeed in college, is not only a crucial skill for today's students but also unevenly distributed among racial groups.¹ However, Pacific Islander (PI) students, despite achievement levels akin to other marginalized groups, continue to be neglected in representation in educational research and resources related to college access. This is due in part to the aggregation of Pacific Islanders with Asian Americans, who have long been thought of as the "model minority." That is, misinterpretations of data promote a stereotype that Asian Pacific Islander Americans achieve high enough levels of educational and economic success to not need extra services or support.²

In 1997, the federal government began distinguishing Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders (NHPI) as a racial group by separating Asian and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders into two groups.³ Pacific Islanders are defined as any "people having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands."⁴ While some research continues to inappropriately aggregate these groups, recently available data has allowed for some key patterns to emerge regarding Pacific Islanders and their educational attainment.⁵

This infographic explores Pacific Islanders and college readiness. According to national data, 80% of Pacific Islander high school students aspire to a bachelor's degree or higher; however,

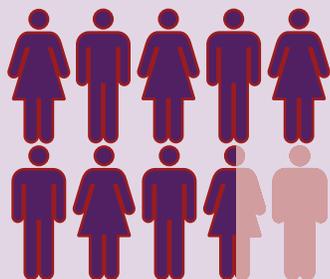
only 45% enroll in a four-year institution immediately after high school graduation.⁶ In California, 12% of NHPI students were identified as "ready for college-level" work in English at the state university system, and 9% of NHPIs were identified as "ready for college-level work" in Math.⁷ Finally, while increasing the educational opportunity for males of color is becoming a national policy priority, the mention of Pacific Islander males as in need of services akin to Blacks and Latinos remains scant.⁸ These omissions persist despite evidence that justifies the contrary. For example, remediation rates for Pacific Islander males entering their first year in college are higher than other racial groups.⁹

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Pacific Islanders are a diverse group, with varied cultures and ethnicities. Commonalities exist including rich sense of history, deep ties to families, and high educational aspirations all indicating strong cultural assets despite troubling statistics.¹⁰ NHPIs remain a small yet growing and strong cultural group in the face of research that has been historically unresponsive to their needs and realities.¹¹

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85.4%
have a
high school diploma.



U.S. population
attainment: 86.4%

14.8%
have a bachelor's
degree or higher.



U.S. population
attainment: 29.1%

4.7%
have a graduate
or professional
degree.



U.S. population
attainment: 10.9%

Aspiration-Attainment Gap

Pacific Islander high school students



Percentage who aspire for a
bachelor's degree
or higher.

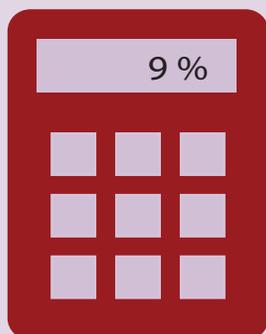


Percentage who enroll in a four-year
institution immediately after high
school graduation.

College Readiness

Based on a high school assessment of college readiness in California

Percentage who
are "ready for
college-level" work
in Math.



Percentage who
are "ready for
college-level" work
in English.