



Educating for the Future 2025 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 \$2,779.56 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, 63.5% of Minnesotans in the target age group have earned a postsecondary credential—up from 57.5% in 2015. However, to reach the 70% goal by the end of 2025, an additional 99,514 adults aged 25–44 must complete a credential.

While overall attainment is rising, significant racial disparities persist. White-identifying Minnesotans lead with a 69.7% attainment rate, nearing the statewide goal. Asian (63.8%) and multiracial identifying (54.6%) communities have exceeded the 50% benchmark. Yet other communities remain below target: the American Indian community stands at 29.4%, just shy of the 30% benchmark; the Black or African American community at 41.1%; and the Hispanic or Latino community at 36.8%. These gaps underscore the need for targeted strategies to ensure equitable progress across all populations

Minnesota's Attainment Goal

In 2015, the Minnesota Legislature enacted an Education Attainment Goal¹, which states that 70% of Minnesota adults (ages 25-44) will have attained a postsecondary certificate or degree by 2025. The law also sets 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 holds 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 persons aged 25-44 years. The Legislature chose this age group because age 25-44 is the primary age range at which individuals are pursuing or have completed postsecondary education or training. The population reported by other sources, for example the U.S. Census Bureau, uses the population aged 25-64 years.

While meaningful progress was made between 2015 and 2025, work to increase the number of adults in Minnesota with a postsecondary credential continues to be necessary. To meet current and projected workforce needs as well as to increase the economic stability of Minnesota families, a new attainment goal and strategic plan for increasing postsecondary preparation and access will be set in 2026.

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 (2019-2023) to create the attainment estimates and are referenced in the report as "2025 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 2023, 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

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

margin of error unless otherwise noted. Percentages for individuals self-identifying as “other” race are not calculated.

Industry-Recognized Credentials

The language within Minnesota Laws 2023 Chapter 44² (H.F.No.1126; see Appendix A) changed the state’s attainment goal in statute, effective August 1, 2023, to add industry-recognized credentials (also known as workforce credentials) in Minnesota’s education attainment goal. There are three types of industry-recognized credentials now included in the education attainment goal calculation: certificates, licenses, and certifications, which are defined below.

- Certificate: A certificate may be awarded by either an educational institution or independent education and training provider associated with specific programs of study.
- License: A license is a type of credential that is generally awarded by a government-regulated agency. This award may be granted by a federal entity but usually comes from the state level. Unlike the two other credentials, a license is required before an individual may work in specific professions.
- Certification: A certification is a type of nontraditional award to an individual that demonstrates proficiency and knowledge, through examination, in a specific industry or trade. As opposed to a certificate, obtaining a certification award is not dependent on completing an education or training program. Instead, evaluating candidates for certification relies on independent, third-party professional and industry-based groups. These national organizations develop and maintain relevant proficiency standards that are assessed and sanctioned by industry-approved examination facilities, independent of any educational institution or training program.

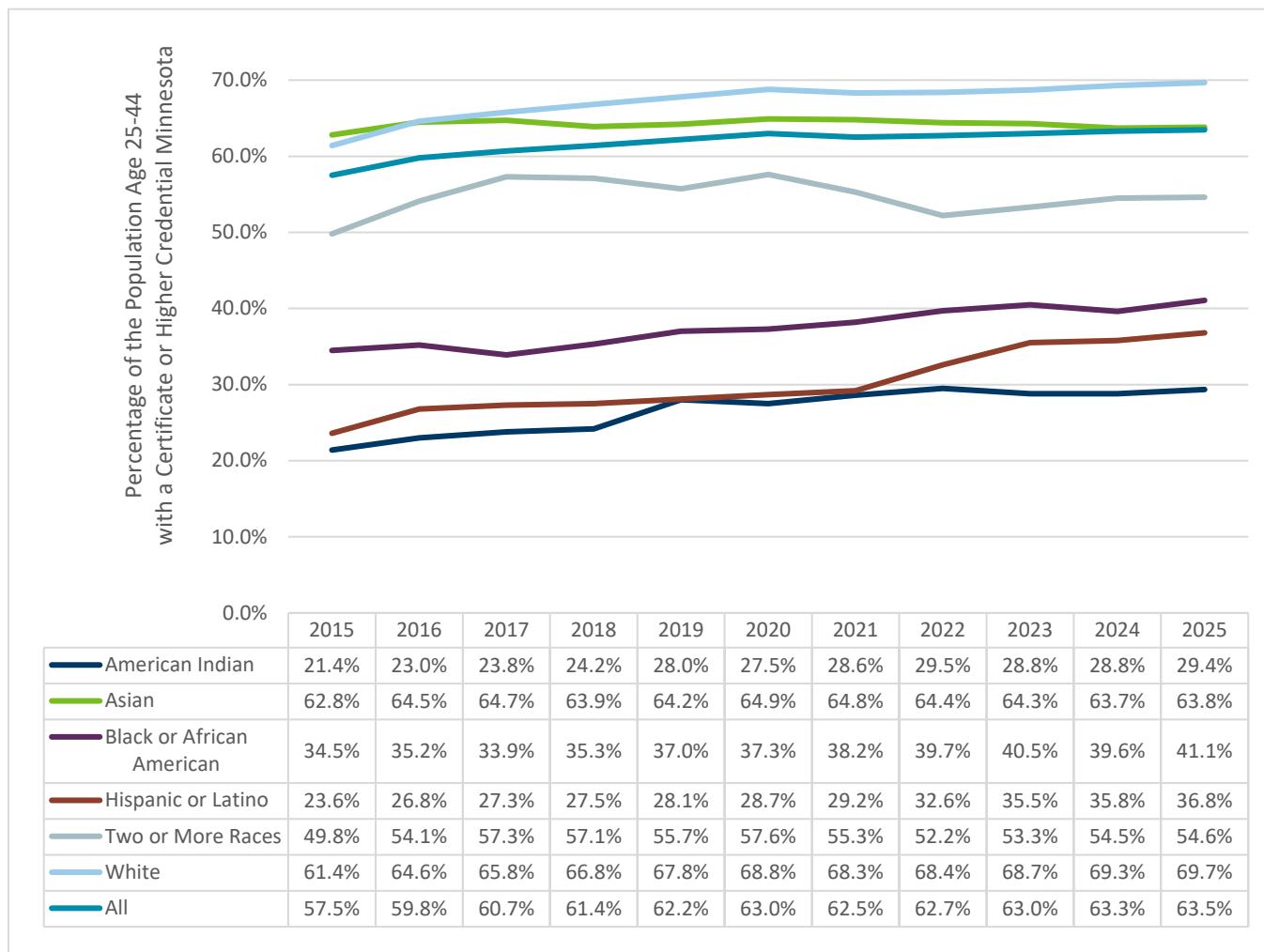
Additional data collection is needed to include industry-recognized credentials in population attainment estimates, and therefore, were not included in this year’s annual update.

² <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/laws/2023/0/Session+Law/Chapter/44/>

2025 Educational Attainment Estimates

Current estimates on Minnesota's educational attainment show that 63.5% 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. Among the Minnesota population age 25 to 44 years, the portion who have obtained a certificate or higher credential steadily increased from 2015 to 2019 but has remained at about 63% from 2020 to 2025.

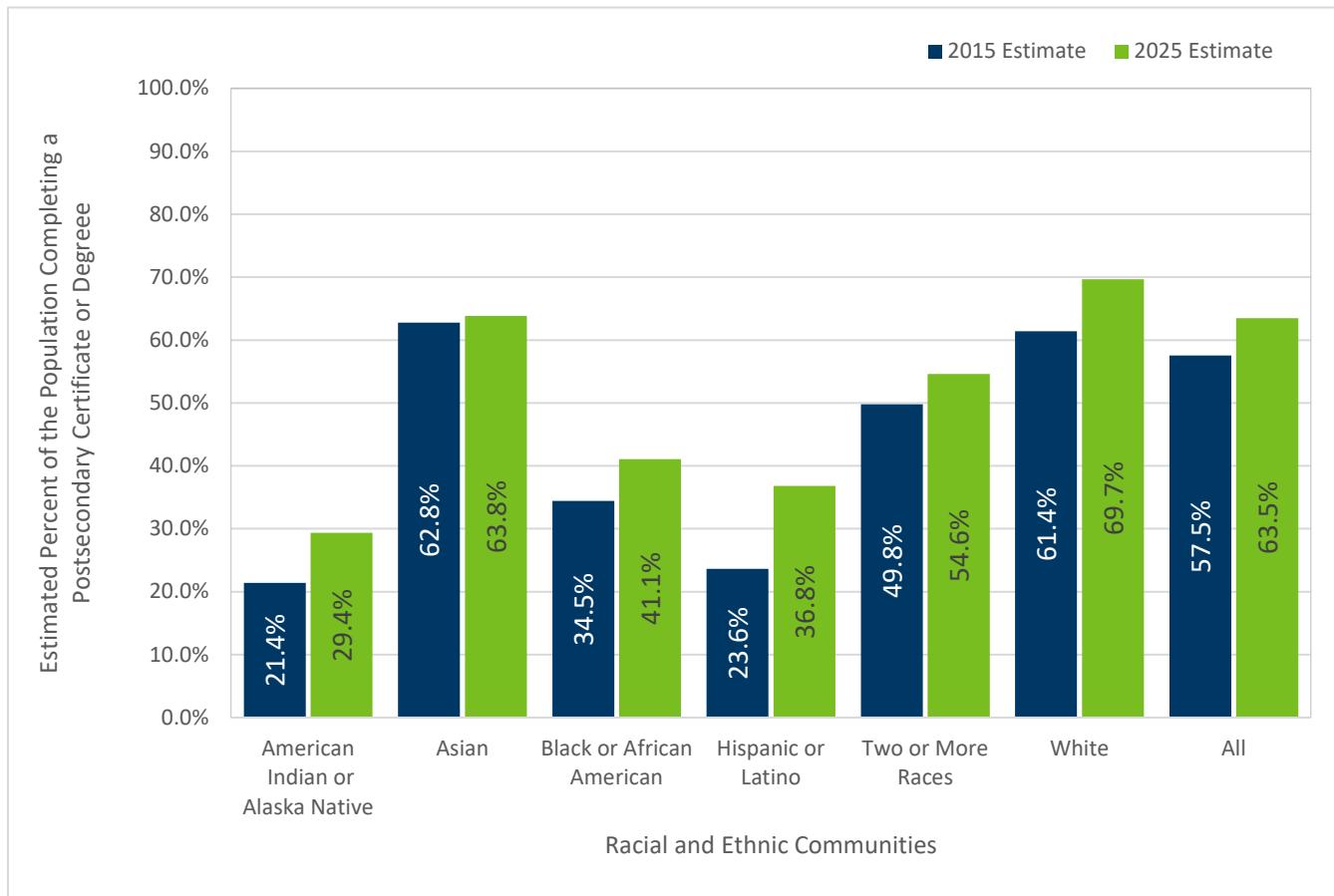
Figure 1: Minnesotans Aged 25-44 with a Certificate or Higher Credential between Years 2015 to 2025 by Racial Community



White-identifying Minnesotans continue to have the highest attainment rate at 69.7%. Asian and multiracial-identifying communities (two or more races) have surpassed the 50% benchmark with 63.8% and 54.6% attainment rates. As for the remaining communities, they remain on their way to meeting the 30 percent and 50

percent benchmarks set forth by the legislation with the American Indian community at 29.4%, the Hispanic or Latino community at 36.8%, and the Black or African American community at 41.1%.

Figure 2: Percentage of the Population Age 25-44 with a Certificate or Higher Credential Minnesota, 2015 and 2025 Estimates by Basic Race Community



Source: IPUMS microdata version of U.S. Census Bureau 2019-2023 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.

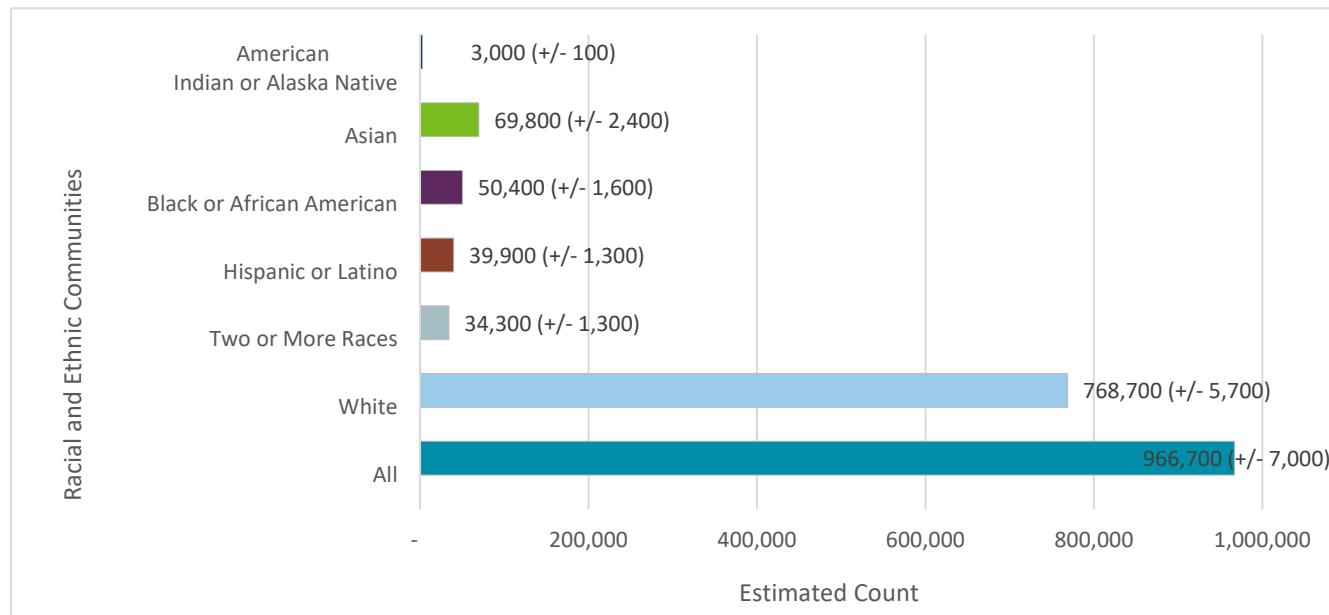
Table 1: Percentage of the Population Age 25-44 with a Certificate or Higher Credential Minnesota, 2015 and 2025 Estimates by Basic Race Community Including Margin of Error

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 2025 Estimates	Margin of Error 2025 Estimates
American Indian	21.4%	2.3%	29.4%	0.5%
Asian	62.8%	1.4%	63.8%	0.6%
Black or African American	34.5%	1.7%	41.1%	0.4%
Hispanic or Latino	23.6%	3.0%	36.8%	0.4%
Two or More Races	49.8%	0.4%	54.6%	0.5%
White	61.4%	1.8%	69.7%	0.7%
All	57.5%	0.4%	63.5%	0.5%

Source: IPUMS microdata version of U.S. Census Bureau 2019-2023 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.

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Figure 3: Estimated Count of Persons Aged 25-44 with a Certificate or Higher Credential, Minnesota, 2025 Estimates by Basic Race Community



Source: IPUMS microdata version of U.S. Census Bureau 2019-2023 American Community Survey for Associate or Higher Degree, with tabulations by the MN State Demographic Center.

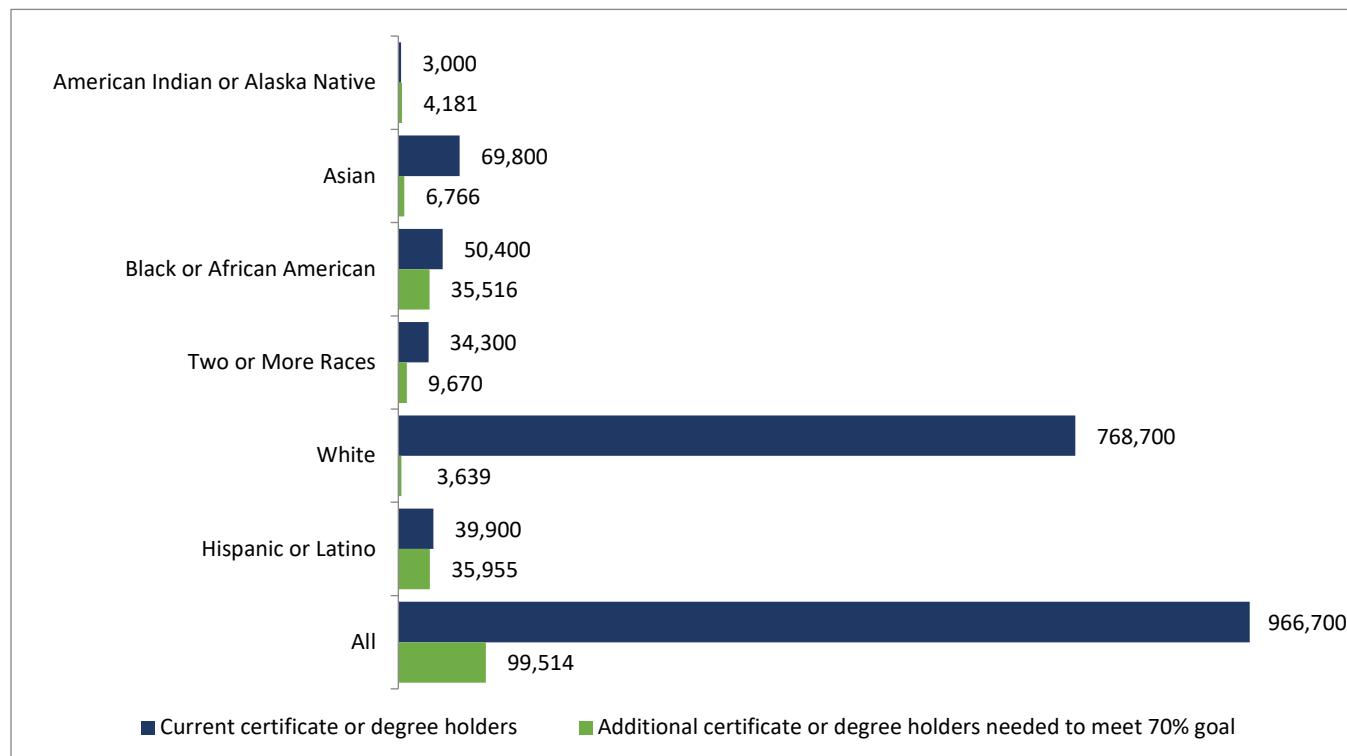
As of this report, the overall population in Minnesota, aged 25-44, of each racial and ethnic communities are as follows:

- American Indian-identifying community: 10,300.
- Asian-identifying community: 109,400.
- Black or African American-identifying community: 122,700.
- Communities that identify as two or more races: 62,800.
- Hispanic or Latino-identifying community: 108,300.
- White-identifying community: 1,103,500.

For the State to reach the education attainment goal, an additional 99,514 postsecondary credentials are needed (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: 4,181.
- Asian-identifying community: 6,766.
- Black or African American-identifying community: 35,516.
- Communities that identify as two or more races: 9,670.
- Hispanic or Latino-identifying community: 35,955.
- White-identifying community: 3,639.

Figure 4: Persons with a Certificate or Higher Credential and Number Needed to Reach 70% Goal, Minnesota, Ages 25-44 by Racial Communities, 2025 Estimates



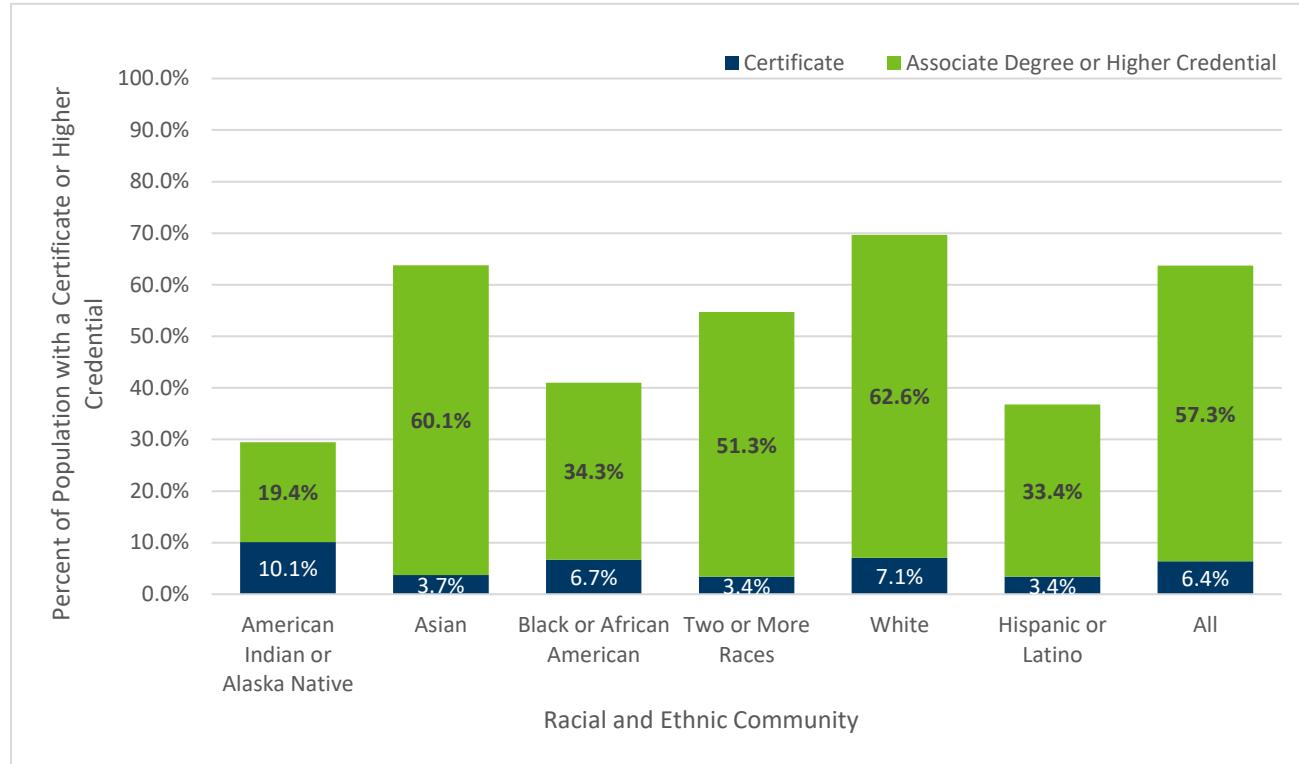
Source: IPUMS microdata version of U.S. Census Bureau 2019-2023 American Community Survey for Associate or Higher Degree, with tabulations by the MN State Demographic Center. Holders of certificates as their highest post-secondary award were estimated using a cohort analysis method applied to administrative 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 2025 estimates mentioned in Figure 1 included the combined certificate estimates and the associate degree or higher estimates. When observing certificate versus degree attainment, 6.4% of Minnesotans aged 25-44 completed a certificate as their highest credential. At an aggregate level, American Indian-identifying adults (10.1%) Black-identifying adults (6.7%) and White-identifying adults (7.1%) have higher than average rates of certificate completion as their highest credential as shown in Figure 5. Asian-identifying adults (3.7%), Hispanic or Latino-identifying adults (3.4%), and adults identifying as two or more races (3.4%) 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, 2025
Estimates by Racial Community



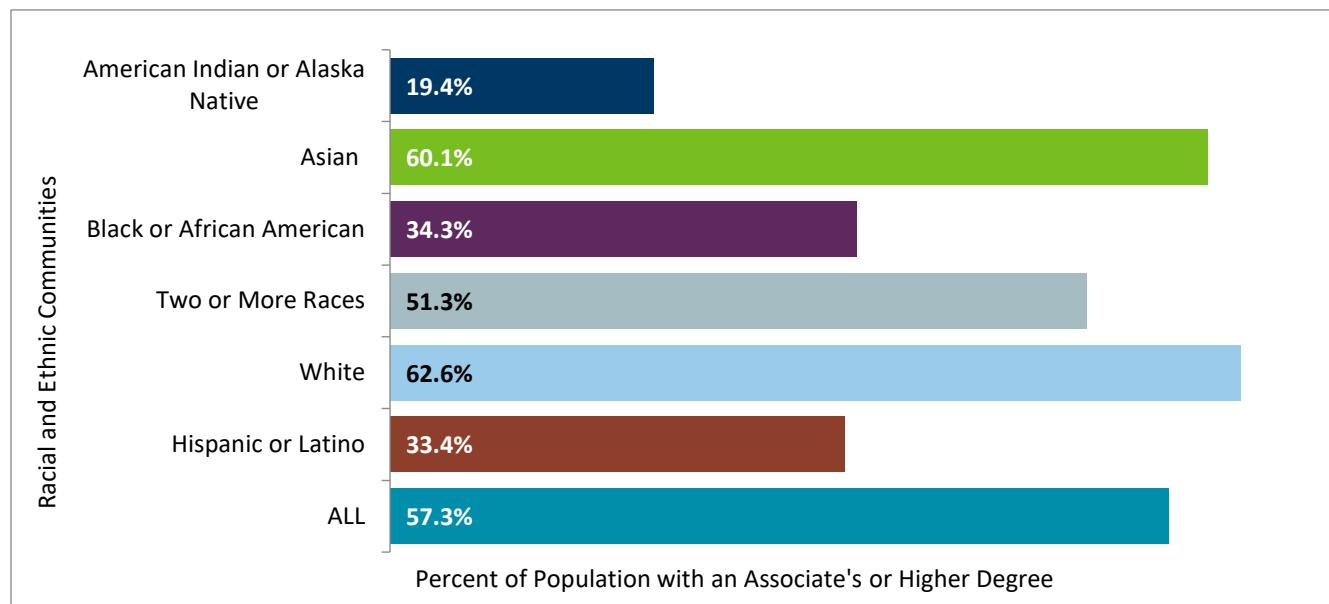
Source: IPUMS microdata version of U.S. Census Bureau 2019-2023 American Community Survey for Associate or Higher Degree, with tabulations by the MN State Demographic Center.

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 57.3% (Figure 6). Asian-identifying and White-identifying Minnesotans have the highest associate degree or higher attainment rate at 60.1% and 62.6%, respectively. The attainment rates for associate degree or higher for the remaining racial and ethnic communities are: 51.3% for individuals who identify as two or more races; 34.3% for the Black or African American-identifying community, 33.4% for the Hispanic or Latino-identifying community, and 19.4% for the American Indian-identifying community.

Figure 6: Percentage of Population Age 25-44 with an Associate or Higher Degree, Minnesota, 2025 by Racial and Ethnic Community



Source: IPUMS microdata version of U.S. Census Bureau 2019-2023 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 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 33.4% (not including certificates), the educational attainment rate for the following communities show significant variations: (Figure 7):

- Hispanic or Latino, Mexican: 29.1%.
- Hispanic or Latino, Puerto Rican: 48.2%.
- Hispanic or Latino, Salvadoran: 18.5%.
- Hispanic or Latino, all other ethnic communities: 40.2%.

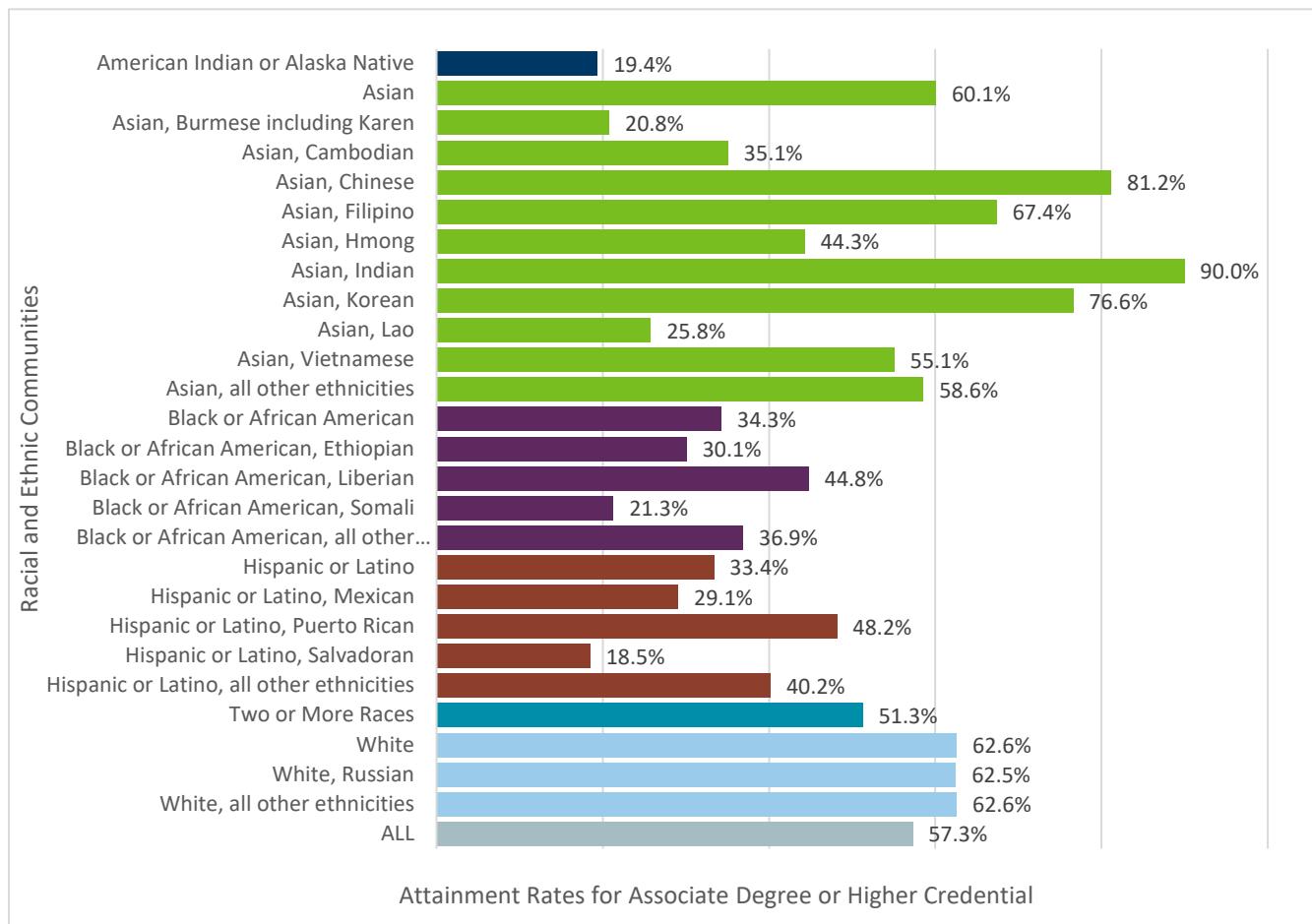
The importance of data disaggregation is further highlighted when observing the attainment rates of Minnesota's Asian communities. Despite the Chinese, Indian, and Korean communities meeting the education attainment goal of 70%, the aggregated rate for the Asian population is 60.1%. When the community is further disaggregated, we see large disparities present amongst the varying Asian ethnic communities within Minnesota.

- Asian, Burmese including Karen: 20.8%.
- Asian, Cambodian: 35.1%.
- Asian, Chinese: 81.2%.
- Asian, Filipino: 67.4%.
- Asian, Hmong: 44.3%.
- Asian, Indian: 90.0%.
- Asian, Korean: 76.6%.
- Asian, Lao: 25.8%.
- Asian, Vietnamese: 55.1%.
- Asian, all other ethnic communities: 58.6%.

When we observe the Black or African American-identifying community (34.3%), we also see continuing disparities.

- Black or African American, Ethiopian: 30.1%.
- Black or African American, Liberian: 44.8%.
- Black or African American, Somali: 21.3%.
- Black or African American, all other ethnic communities: 36.9%.

Figure 7: Educational Attainment for Associate Degree or Higher Credential Disaggregated by Detailed Race and Ethnic Communities, 2025 Estimates



Source: IPUMS microdata version of U.S. Census Bureau 2019-2023 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/Ethnicity Groups, 2025 Estimates

Racial 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 ³
AMERICAN INDIAN or ALASKA NATIVE	10,300	2,000	19.4%	2.6%
ASIAN	109,400	65,800	60.1%	1.8%
Asian, Burmese incl. Karen	4,800	1,000	20.8%	19.4%
Asian, Cambodian	3,700	1,300	35.1%	-2.0%
Asian, Chinese	10,100	8,200	81.2%	9.8%
Asian, Filipino	4,600	3,100	67.4%	16.3%
Asian, Hmong	35,000	15,500	44.3%	10.1%
Asian, Indian	21,000	18,900	90.0%	1.8%
Asian, Korean	7,700	5,900	76.6%	15.2%
Asian, Lao	3,100	800	25.8%	4.9%
Asian, Vietnamese	7,800	4,300	55.1%	9.5%
Asian, all other subgroups	11,600	6,800	58.6%	-3.1%
BLACK or AFRICAN AMERICAN	122,700	42,100	34.3%	1.9%
Black or African American, Ethiopian	9,300	2,800	30.1%	7.7%
Black or African American, Liberian	2,900	1,300	44.8%	16.6%
Black or African American, Somali	17,800	3,800	21.3%	7.7%
Black or African American, all other subgroups	92,700	34,200	36.9%	9.9%
HISPANIC or LATINO	108,300	36,200	33.4%	1.7%
Hispanic or Latino, Mexican	65,200	19,000	29.1%	13.6%

³ 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.

Racial 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 ³
Hispanic or Latino, Puerto Rican	5,600	2,700	48.2%	18.0%
Hispanic or Latino, Salvadoran	2,700	500	18.5%	12.3%
Hispanic or Latino, all other subgroups	34,800	14,000	40.2%	6.0%
TWO or MORE RACES	62,800	32,200	51.3%	2.0%
WHITE	1,103,500	691,100	62.6%	0.4%
White, Russian	4,800	3,000	62.5%	3.2%
White, all other subgroups	1,098,600	688,100	62.6%	5.2%
ALL	1,516,900	869,400	57.3%	0.4%

Conclusion

While meaningful progress was made between 2015 and 2025, work to increase the number of adults in Minnesota with a postsecondary credential continues to be necessary. Minnesota has made meaningful progress toward its 2025 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. Communities of color, particularly American Indian, Black or African American, and Hispanic or Latino Minnesotans, continue to face systemic barriers that hinder equitable attainment.

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



2025