

# Lessons on Recovery: The Value and Potential of Higher Education in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis

[Read the full report here](#)

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# Who We Are



We advance educational opportunities and attainment in Washington. In pursuit of our mission, the **Washington Student Achievement Council:**

- Leads statewide strategic planning to improve educational coordination and transitions
- Supports Washingtonians through the administration of financial aid, a college savings plan, and support services
- Advocates for the economic, social, and civic benefits of postsecondary education



# The Council



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# Lessons on Recovery

## How can we position our state for a strong recovery from the COVID-19 crisis?

### Understanding the Impact

1. What we know about higher education and the labor market from the Great Recession
2. Contrasting the crises: Great Recession vs. COVID-19
3. What we are learning about higher education and the labor market during the COVID-19 crisis

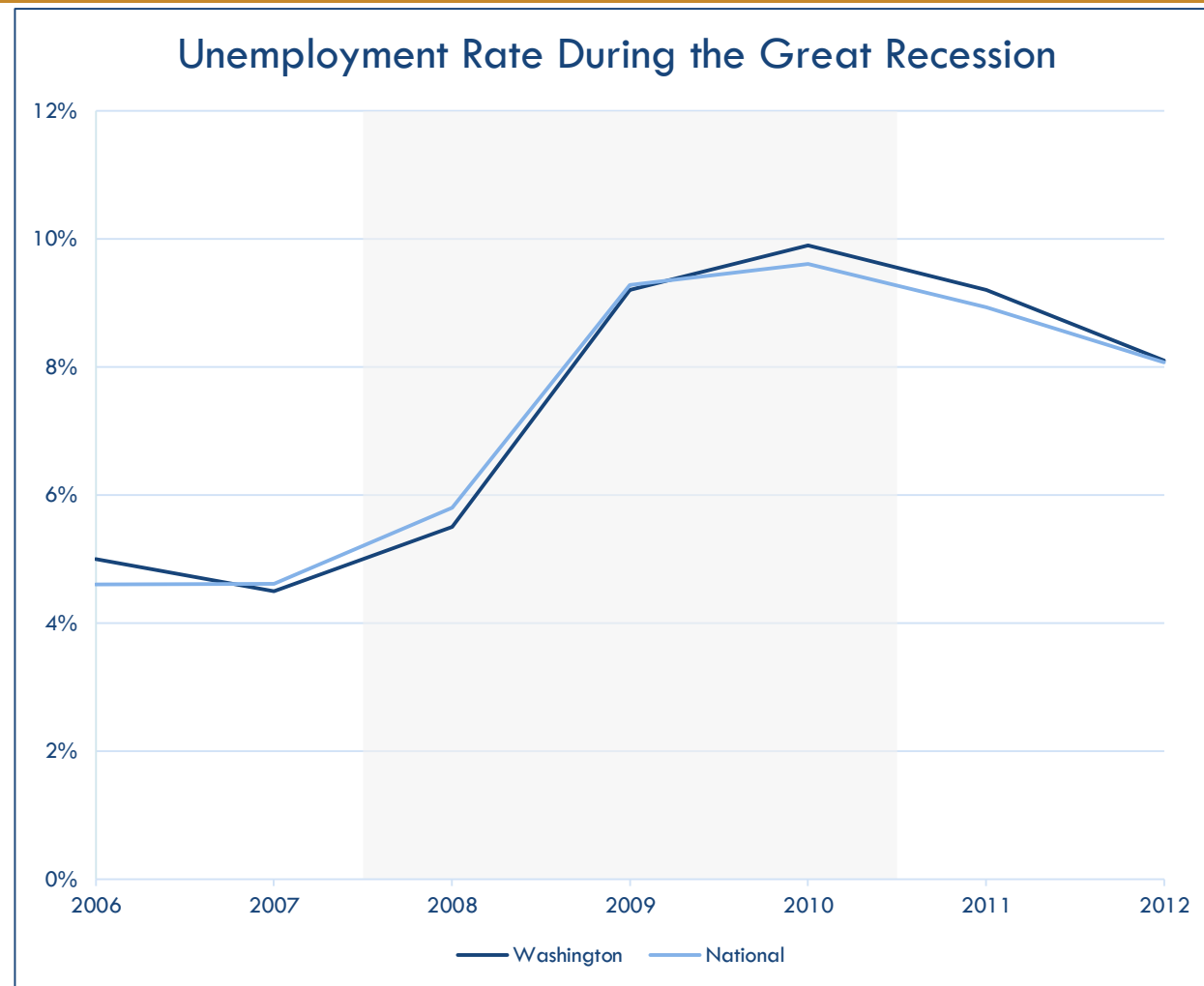
### Strategic Priorities for Recovery

1. Enrollment
2. Affordability
3. Digital Learning
4. Student Supports



# Great Recession

- The Great Recession began in December 2007 and lasted through June 2009
- The financial crisis was caused by an array of factors
- The impact on families across the country was severe
- New realities in the labor market drove transformation in higher education



# What We Learned From the 2008 Great Recession





# How the Great Recession Impacted Higher Education

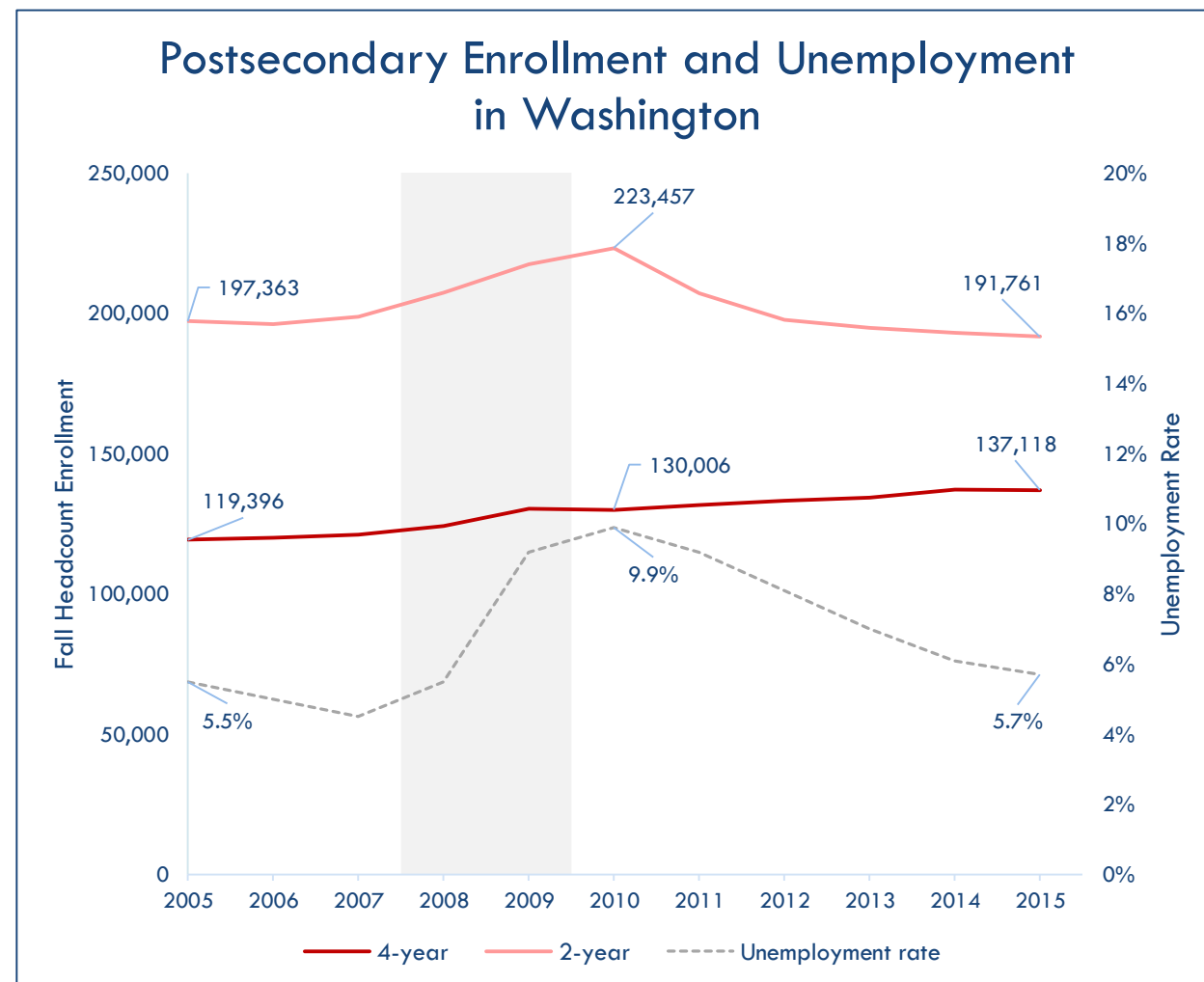
## Unemployment during the Great Recession brought a surge in college enrollment

- Nationally, postsecondary enrollment grew from 17.2 million in 2006 to 20.4 million in 2011

## Enrollment growth occurred largely at 2-year institutions

## Enrollment gains were made among historically underrepresented groups

Source: IPEDS, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics





# How the Great Recession Impacted Higher Education

## Tuition prices rose dramatically

- Nationally, average tuition increased by 27% at 4-year institutions and 24% at 2-year institutions

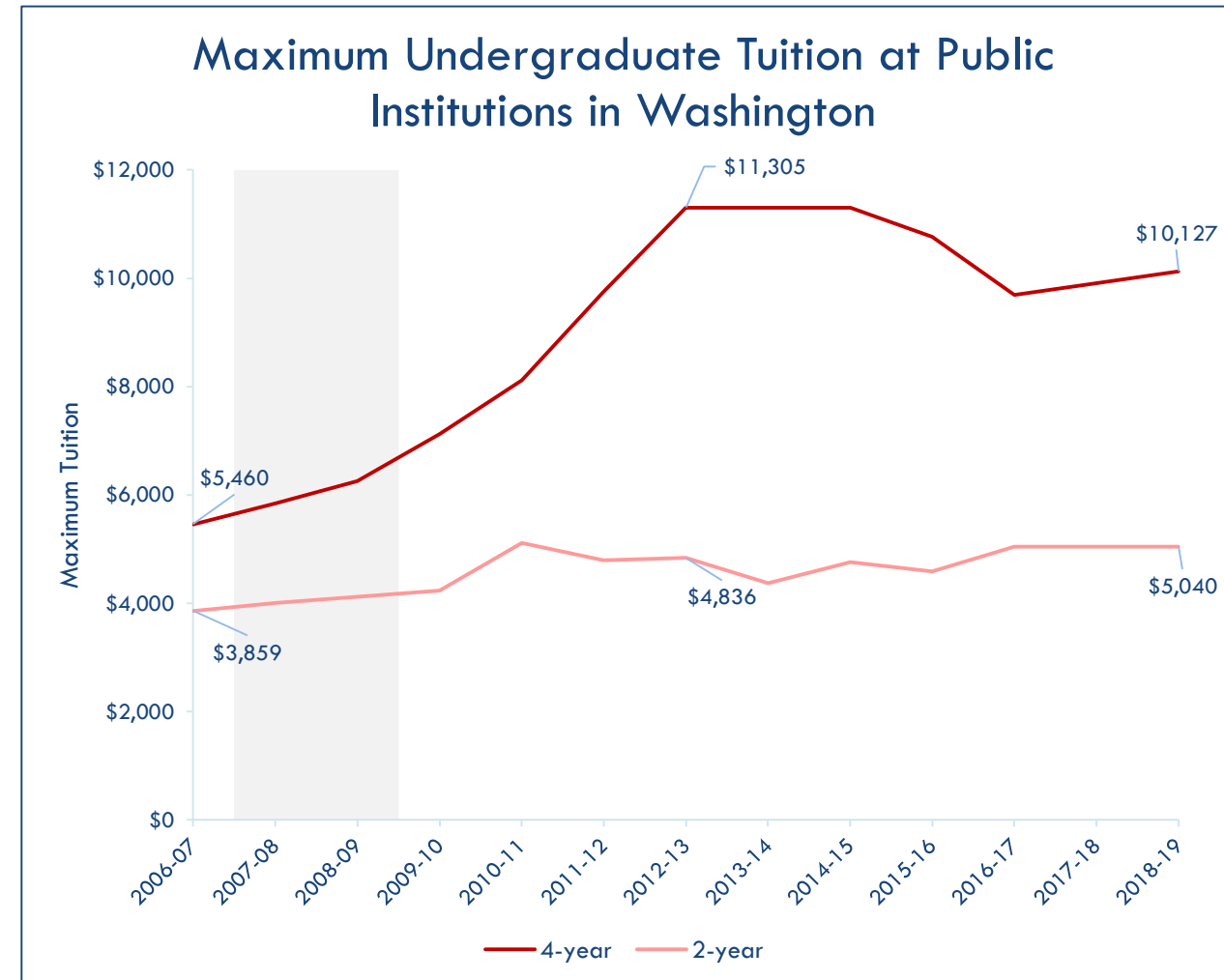
## Financial aid support increased

- Spending on Pell almost doubled between 2008 and 2010
- Spending on state financial aid in Washington grew by 34% between 2010-11 and 2011-12

## Student debt grew

- Outstanding student debt grew from \$545 million in 2007 to \$800 million in 2010
- In 2008, 70% of Black students received student loans, compared to 53% of white students

Source: Long (2013), WSAC analysis of IPEDS, Braga (2016), Federal Reserve, NCES







# How the Great Recession Impacted the Labor Market

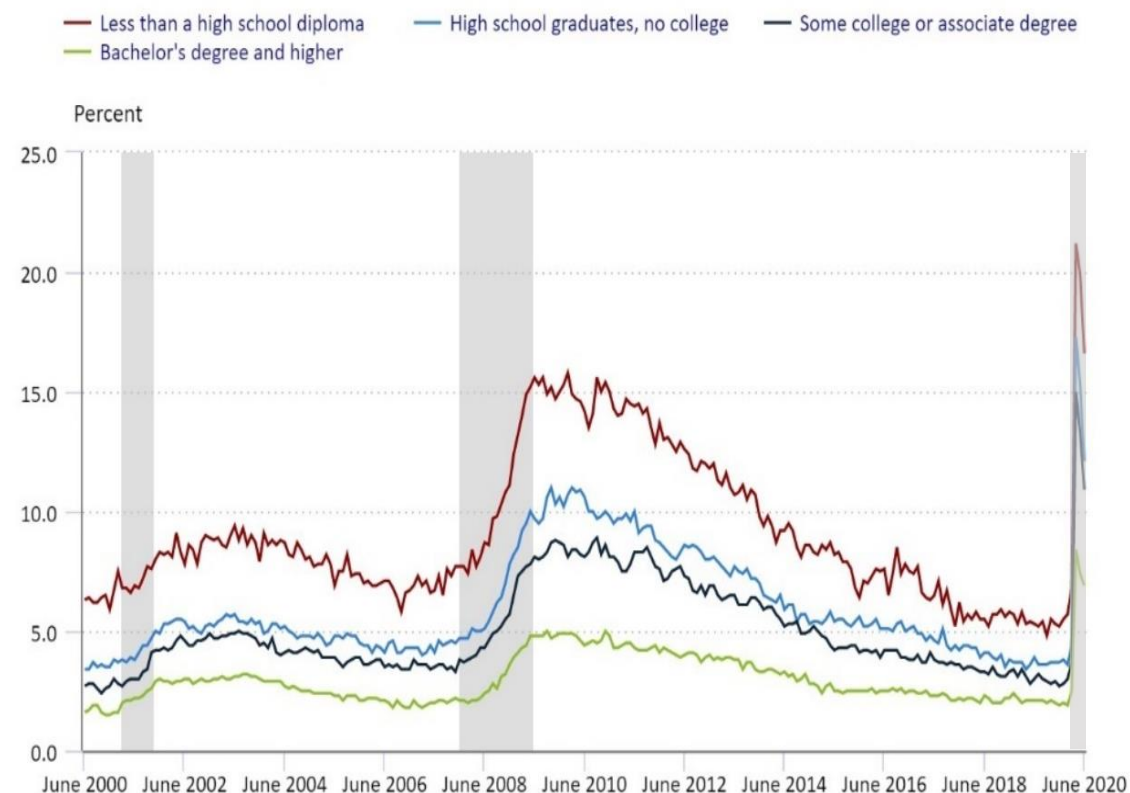
## The unemployment rate was higher for those without a postsecondary credential

- 10% of workers with only a high school diploma were unemployed, compared to 5% of those with at least a bachelor's degree

## Post-recession recovery did not favor those without a postsecondary credential

- During the Great Recession, some jobs were lost permanently
- Workers with only a high school education or less held an estimated 4 out of 5 of those jobs

National Unemployment Rates by Education Level for Workers Over 25 Years Old (Seasonally Adjusted)





# How the Great Recession Impacted the Labor Market

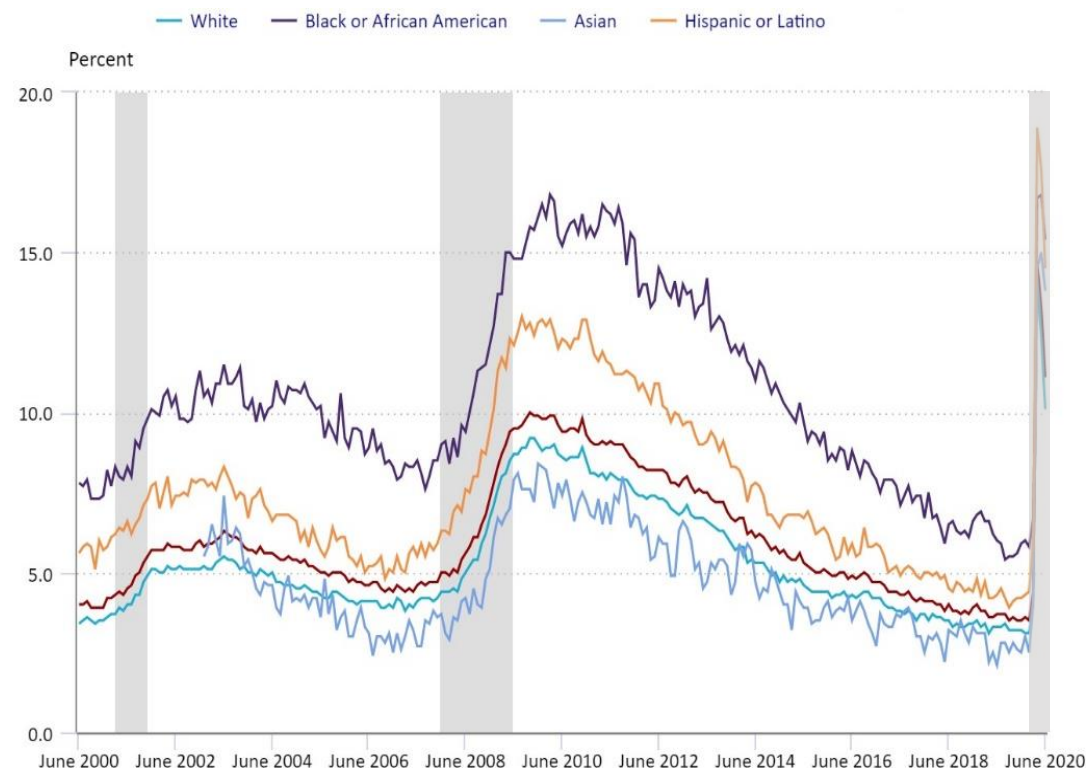
## Unemployment rates were higher for Black and Hispanic people

- The national unemployment rate was 15% for Black Americans and 12.3% for Hispanic Americans, compared to 8.5% for white Americans and 7% for Asian Americans (in May 2009)

## Post-recession employment remained uneven

- 5 years after the recession, unemployment was still higher for Black Americans (11%) and Hispanic Americans (8%) than white and Asian Americans (5%) (in June 2014)

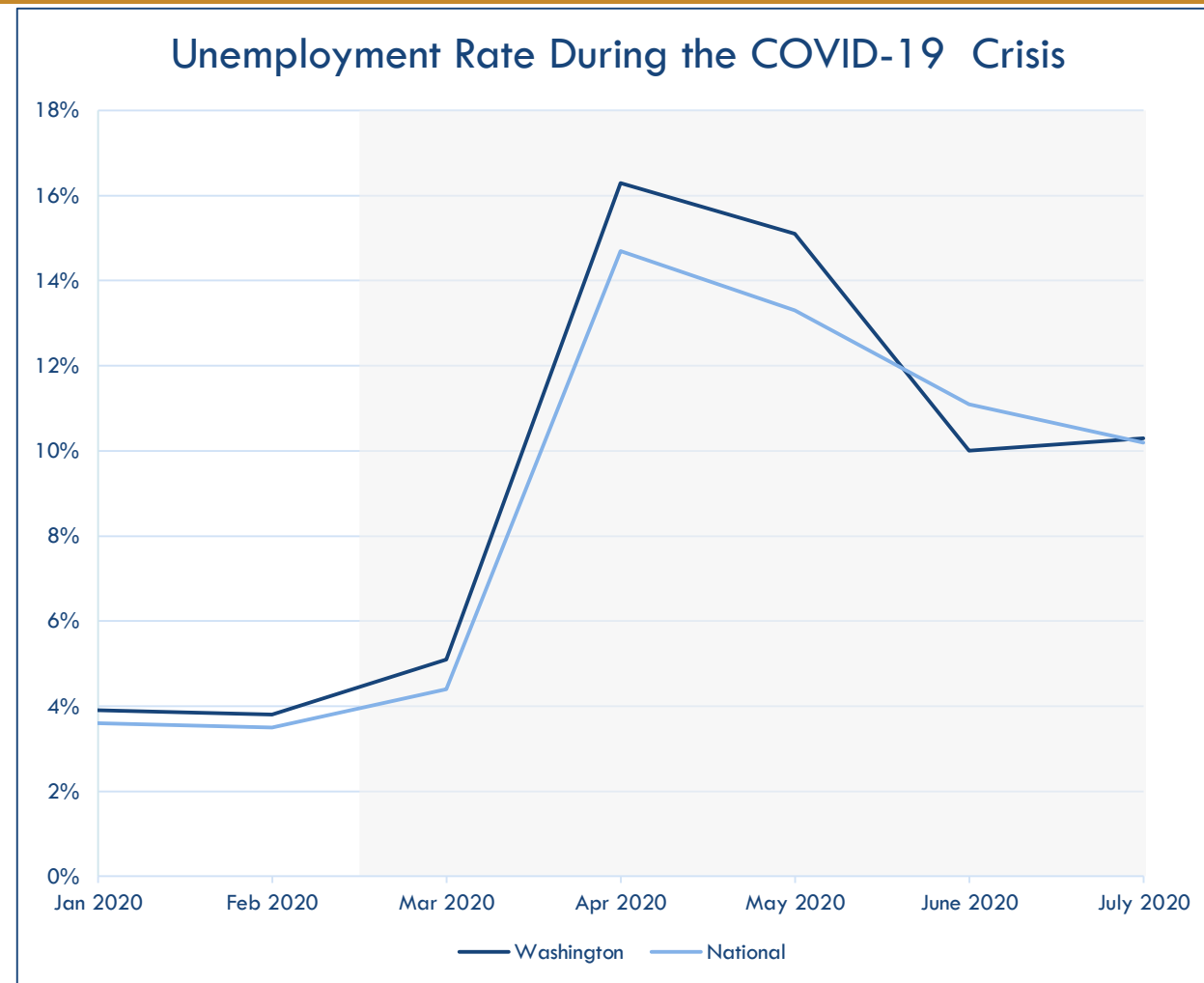
National Unemployment Rate by Race/Ethnicity  
(Seasonally Adjusted)





# COVID-19

- States shut down their economies in response to the public health crisis
- Major impacts on the labor market and institutions of higher education
- The total extent of the damage on lives and livelihoods is unknown

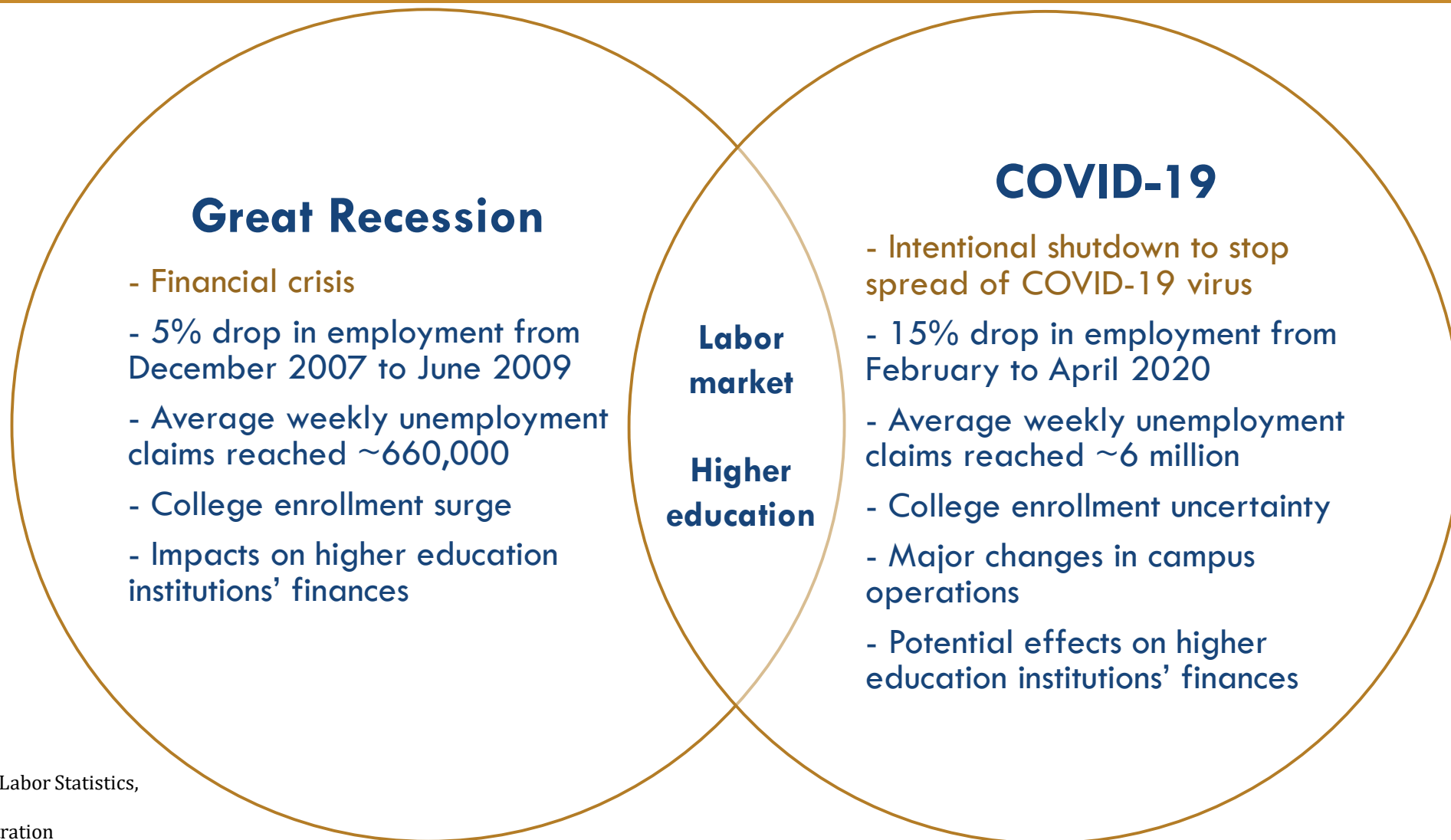


# How the COVID-19 Crisis Differs from the Great Recession





# Contrasting the Crises



# What We are Learning About the COVID-19 Crisis

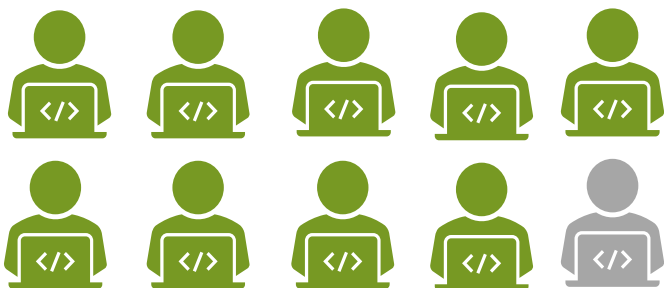




# How COVID-19 is Impacting Higher Education

**Emerging qualitative evidence reveals many levels of challenges to institutions and students.**

## Students struggled academically



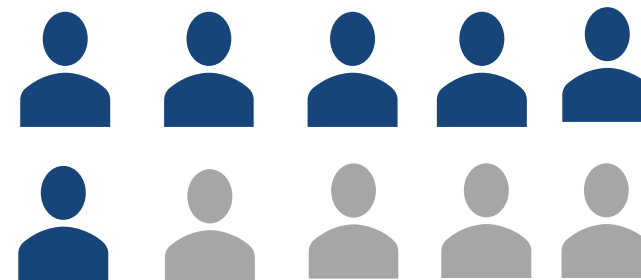
In Spring 2020, 9 in 10 students reported concern over the abrupt shift to online learning

## Students struggled financially



In Spring 2020, more than 7 in 10 students reported losing their source of income

## Students' basic needs were jeopardized

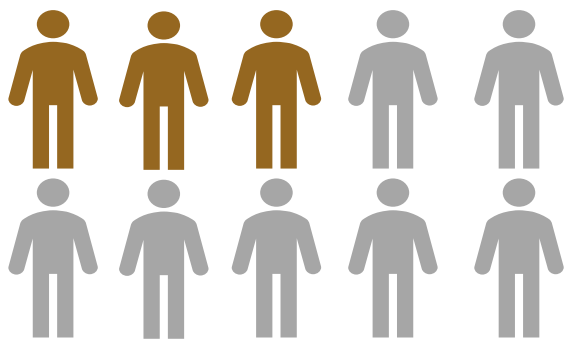


In Spring 2020, almost 6 in 10 college students faced basic needs insecurity



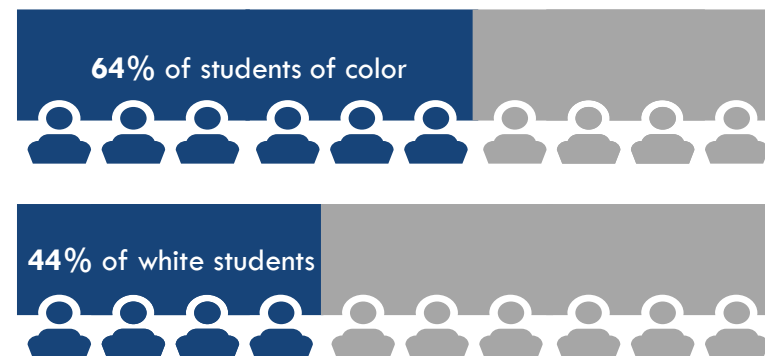
# How COVID-19 is Impacting Higher Education

## Incoming students were unsure of their college plans



30% of parents of high school seniors in Washington reported their postsecondary plans had changed since the onset of the pandemic

## The crisis imposed increased barriers for students of color



64% of students of color said their plans were being affected by COVID-19, compared to 44% of white students





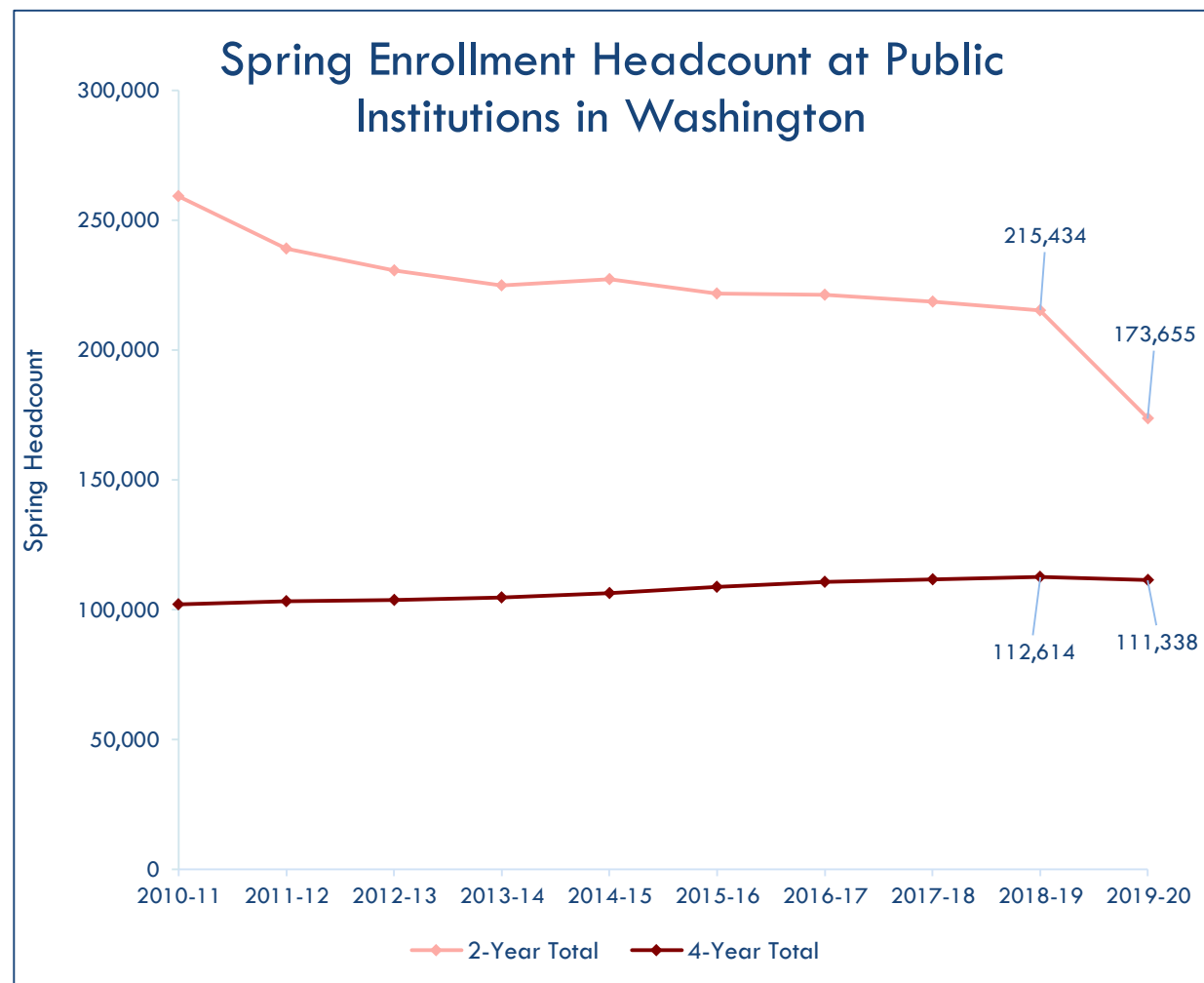
# How COVID-19 is Impacting Higher Education

## Spring 2020 enrollment data

- 2-year institutions saw a substantial drop in 2020 (down 19.4% compared to spring 2019)
- 4-year enrollment remained steady (down 1.1%)

## Students of color have been disproportionately impacted

- At 2-year institutions, the drop in enrollment was higher for some racial minority groups than white students
- At 4-year institutions, the largest declines were experienced by racial minority students





# How COVID-19 is Impacting the Labor Market

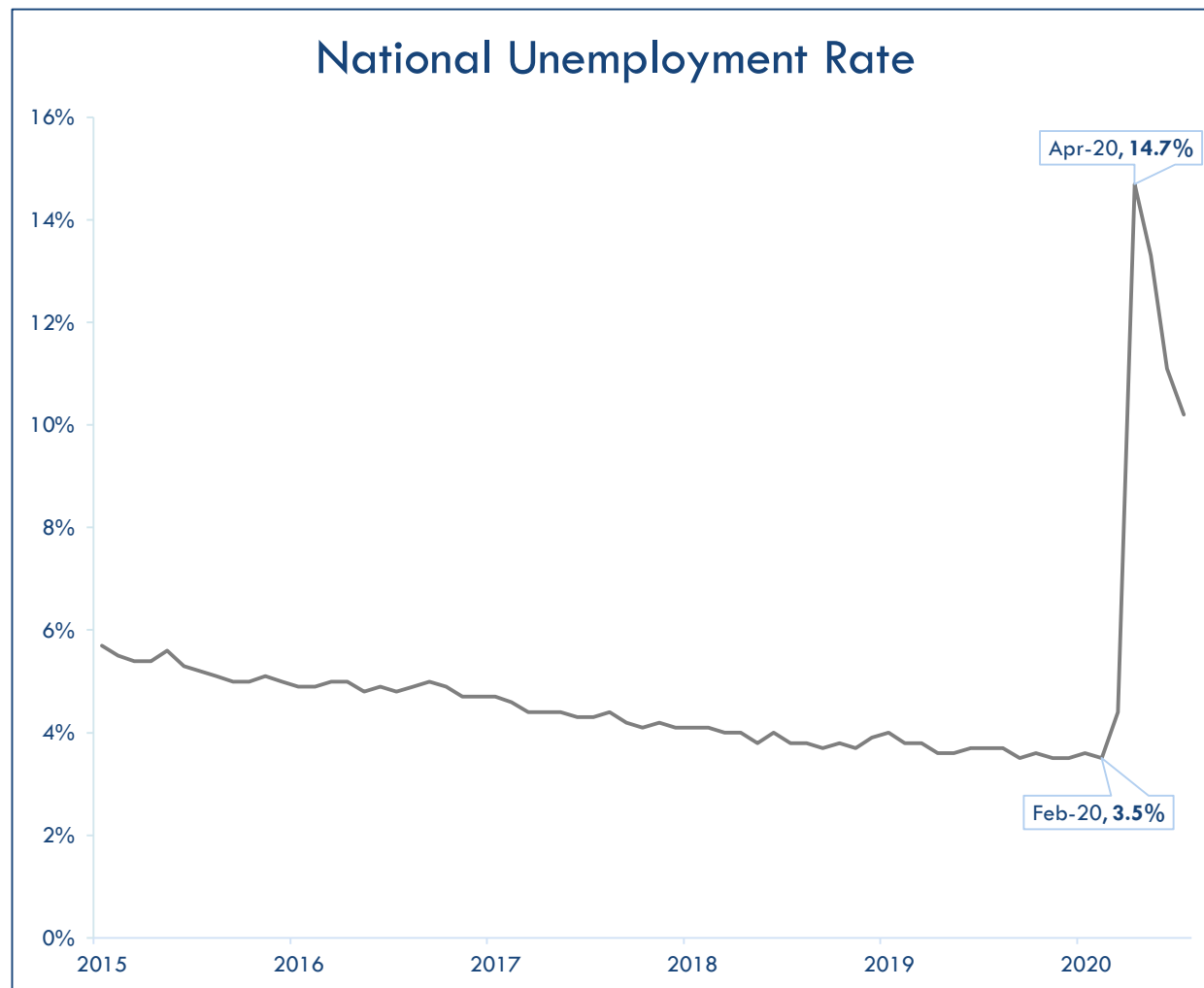
**The unemployment rate spiked across the board**

**Those with lower educational attainment experienced higher levels of unemployment**

**The burden has been uneven**

- Young people have had higher rates of unemployment (25% in May 2020) than workers over age 25 (12% in May 2020)

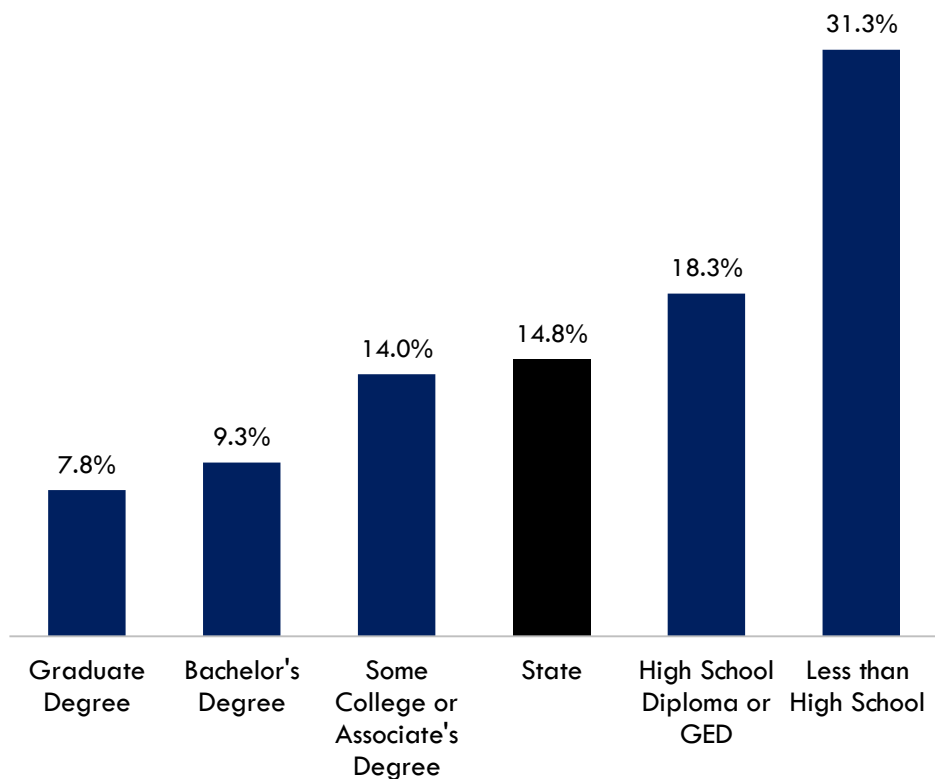
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development



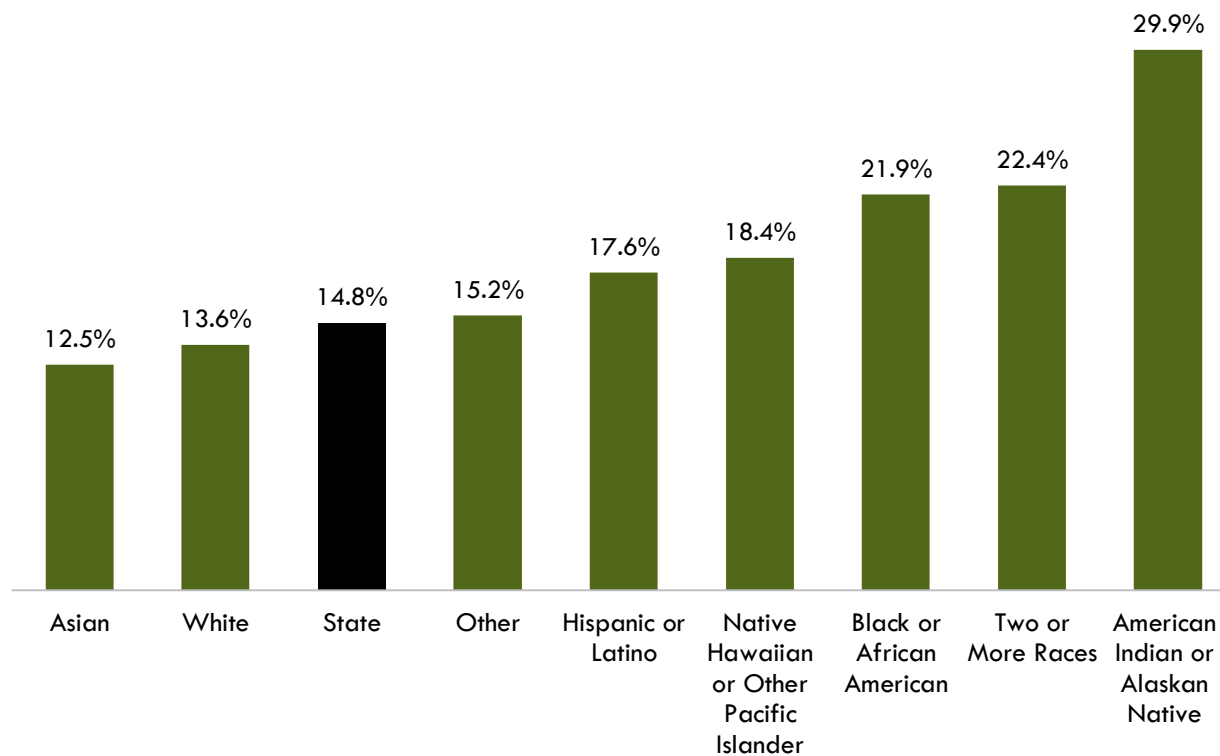


# How COVID-19 is Impacting the Labor Market

*May 2020 Unemployment Rate in Washington  
by Educational Attainment*



*May 2020 Unemployment Rate in Washington  
by Race/Ethnicity*



# Strategic Priorities for Recovery from the COVID-19 Crisis





# Strategic Priorities for Recovery



## Strengthen Postsecondary Enrollment

- Higher education has led to better outcomes in previous economic downturns and during the current crisis
- Risk of enrollment decline is already apparent at 2-year institutions
- Helping people in Washington enroll in college can improve their future circumstances and our state's ability to recover from the COVID-19 crisis

Source: Washington Student Achievement Council

Proven Programs and Policies	
<b>Provide application assistance</b>	Delivering information and direct support to help students and families fill out and submit FAFSA has been shown to increase the likelihood of college enrollment.
<b>Increase the number of high school counselors</b>	Hiring additional counselors has been shown to help students navigate administrative barriers and transition from high school to postsecondary programs.
<b>Encourage participation in college access programs</b>	Participating in programs that offer advising and support has been shown to strengthen students' college-going mindsets and confidence to enroll in college.



# Strategic Priorities for Recovery



## Keep College Affordable

- Maintaining affordability is essential to ensuring access to higher education
- Affordability reduces the burden on students, particularly as families face financial instability
- State financial aid programs, including the Washington College Grant, are important investments in college affordability

Proven Programs and Policies	
<b>Invest in state financial aid programs</b>	Maintaining the Washington College Grant and other financial support for college students has been shown to improve access and affordability.
<b>Provide students with grant aid</b>	Helping students pay tuition, fees, and other expenses has been shown to increase enrollment, persistence, and graduation.
<b>Streamline emergency aid procedures</b>	Providing just-in-time grants to students who experience sudden financial hardship has been shown to help them continue their education.



# Strategic Priorities for Recovery



## Invest in High-Quality Digital Learning

- Makeshift online learning was dissatisfying for many students and especially disruptive to underrepresented students
- Ensuring quality instruction is fundamental as many colleges continue to operate remotely
- Effective digital learning practices can help ensure continued academic progress

Proven Programs and Policies	
<b>Use technology effectively</b>	Implementing interactive activities in online classes has been proven effective in enhancing engagement and learning.
<b>Foster virtual connections</b>	Encouraging virtual communication outside of class time has been shown to improve academic performance and can replicate the informal learning that students benefit from on campus.
<b>Incorporate best practices</b>	Sending personal messages to students, using real-world examples in class, and encouraging reflection on learning led to higher levels of student satisfaction in online courses during Spring 2020.



# Strategic Priorities for Recovery



## Provide Students With Holistic Supports

- Comprehensive supports can help students overcome adversity and succeed in higher education
- Many students have experienced heightened challenges brought on by the COVID-19 crisis
- Services to support students' academic progress, financial stability, and personal wellbeing can help them stay on track through graduation

Proven Programs and Policies	
<b>Offer comprehensive wraparound supports</b>	Combining frequent advising with financial aid and academic supports has been shown to aid student retention and boost graduation rates.
<b>Adapt successful programs to an online format</b>	Offering effective services like coaching sessions and group check-ins in a modified format can ensure continued supports for students.
<b>Connect students to social services</b>	Helping students access public benefits and other social services can reduce their personal and financial strain and has been shown to improve their ability to succeed in school.





# Reaction Panel Discussion



**Marc Casale**  
Founder & Director  
Kinetic West



**Angela Jones**  
CEO  
Washington STEM



**John Kreig**  
Professor of Economics & Director of the  
Office of Institutional Effectiveness  
Western Washington University



**Jude Ahmed**  
Student  
Western Washington University



**Jan Yoshiwara**  
Executive Director  
State Board for Community and Technical  
Colleges



# Thank You!

## Call to Action

What are you doing in your community or organization to support students in response to COVID-19?

Share with us in the chat or email [savannak@wsac.wa.gov](mailto:savannak@wsac.wa.gov)

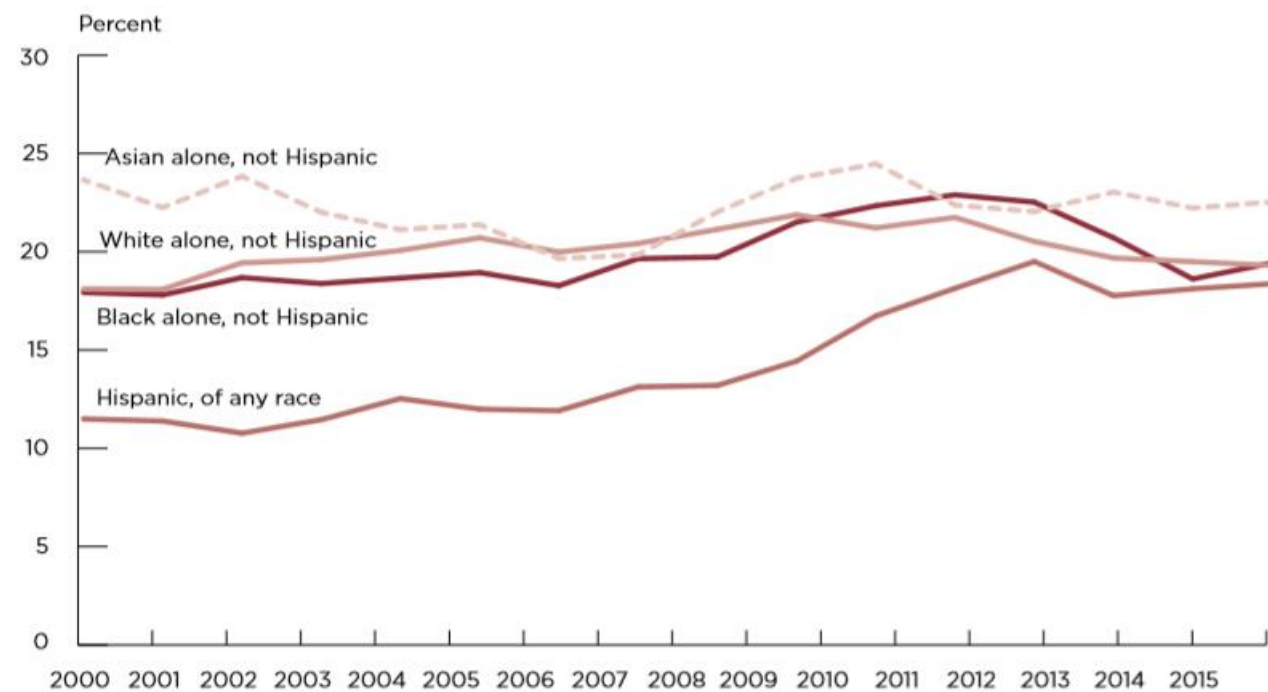
Stay tuned for future Pave the Way events

Join the Pave the Way listserv at [wsac.wa.gov/pavetheway](https://wsac.wa.gov/pavetheway)



# Appendix

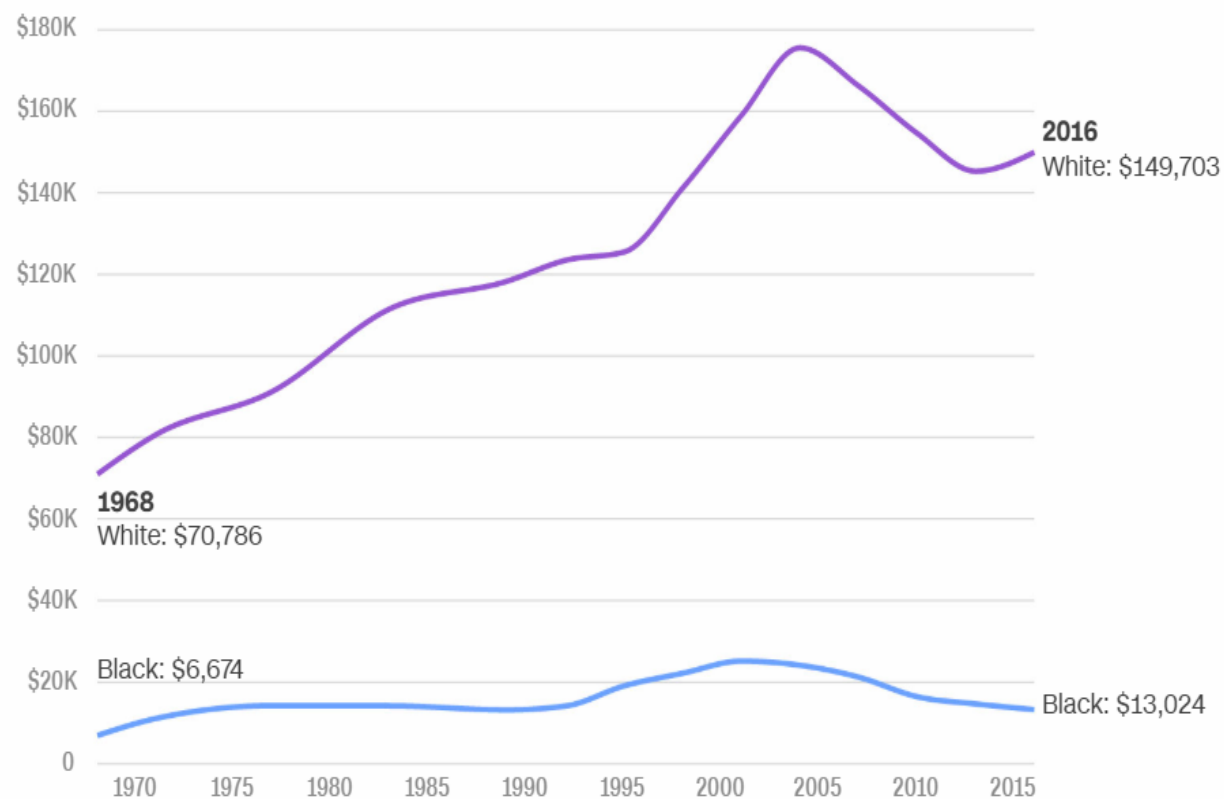
*Percentage of People Ages 15 to 34 Enrolled in College by Race/Ethnicity in the U.S.*





# Appendix

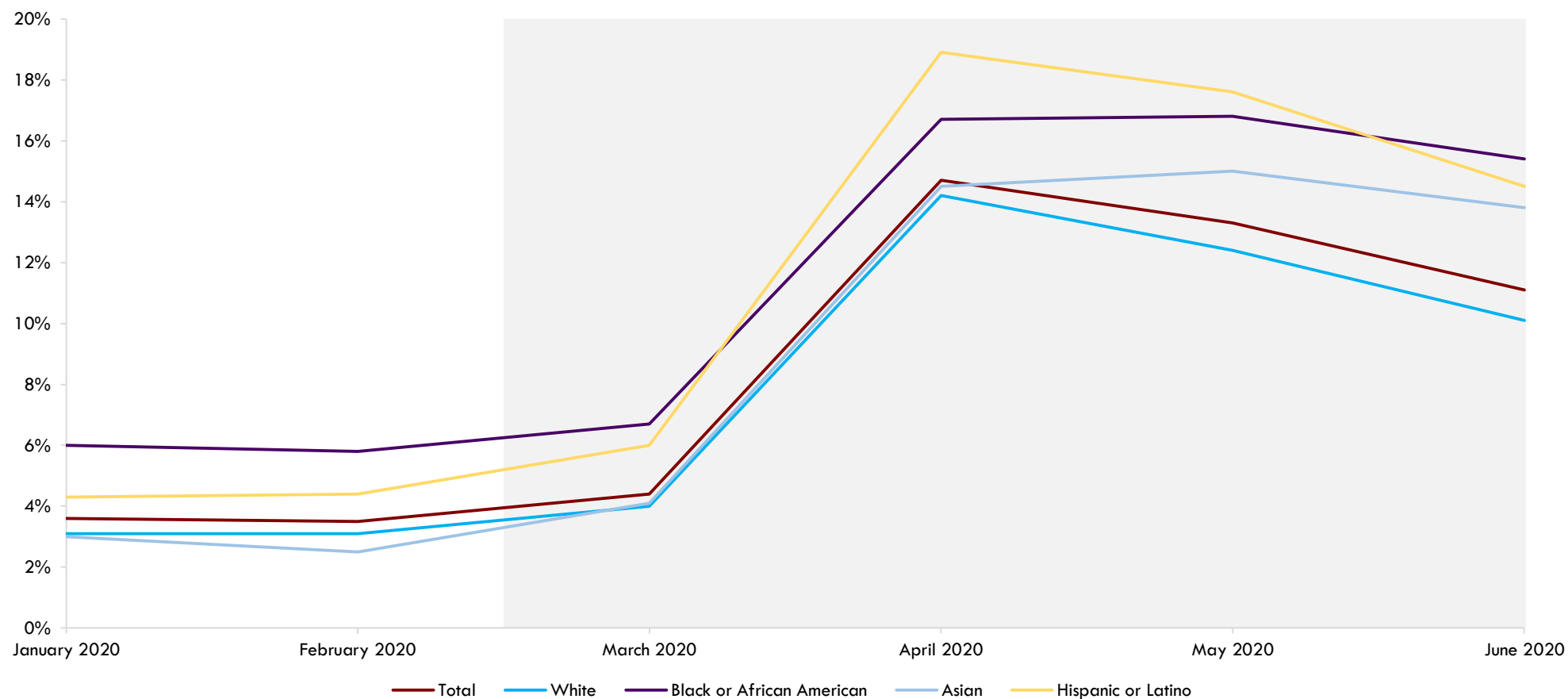
*Net Worth of Typical Black and White Families in the U.S.*





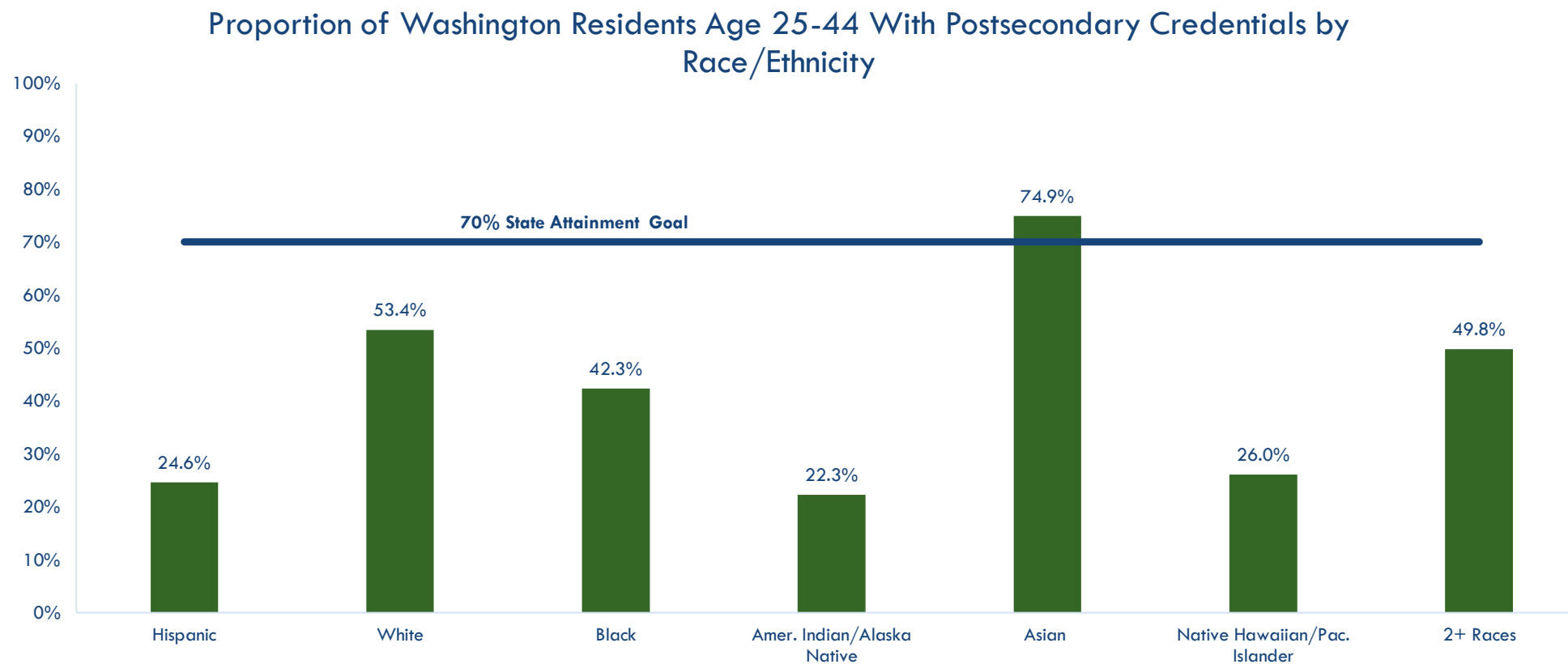
# Appendix

*Monthly U.S. Unemployment Rate by Race/Ethnicity, Seasonally Adjusted*





# Appendix





# Appendix

Spring Enrollment Headcount at 2-Year Public Institutions in Washington

Academic Year	2-Year Total	% Change
2010-11	259,412	N/A
2011-12	239,217	-7.8%
2012-13	230,807	-3.5%
2013-14	225,016	-2.5%
2014-15	227,235	1.0%
2015-16	221,826	-2.4%
2016-17	221,435	-0.2%
2017-18	218,732	-1.2%
2018-19	215,434	-1.5%
2019-20	173,655	-19.4%

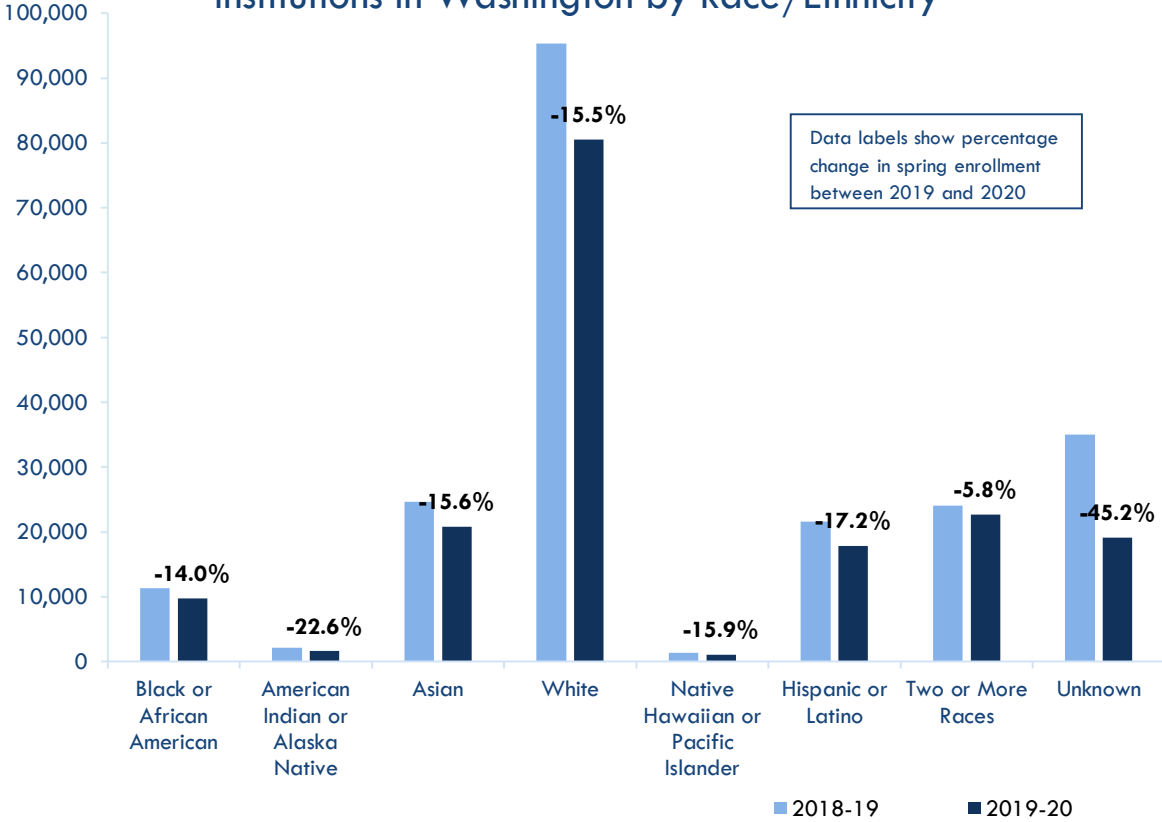
Spring Enrollment Headcount at 4-Year Public Institutions in Washington

Academic Year	4-Year Total	% Change
2010-11	102,074	N/A
2011-12	103,190	1.1%
2012-13	103,698	0.5%
2013-14	104,681	0.9%
2014-15	106,476	1.7%
2015-16	108,833	2.2%
2016-17	110,607	1.6%
2017-18	111,601	0.9%
2018-19	112,614	0.9%
2019-20	111,338	-1.1%

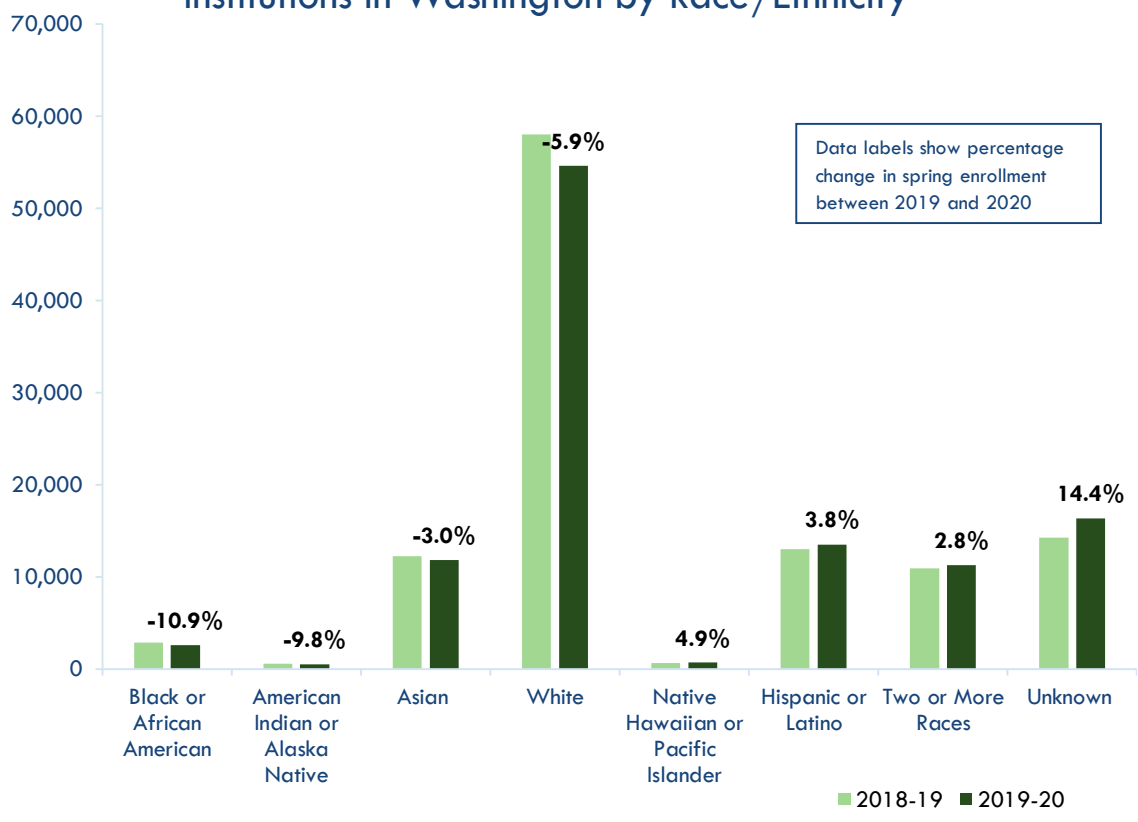


# Appendix

Spring Enrollment Headcount Trends at 2-Year Public Institutions in Washington by Race/Ethnicity



Spring Enrollment Headcount Trends at 4-Year Public Institutions in Washington by Race/Ethnicity



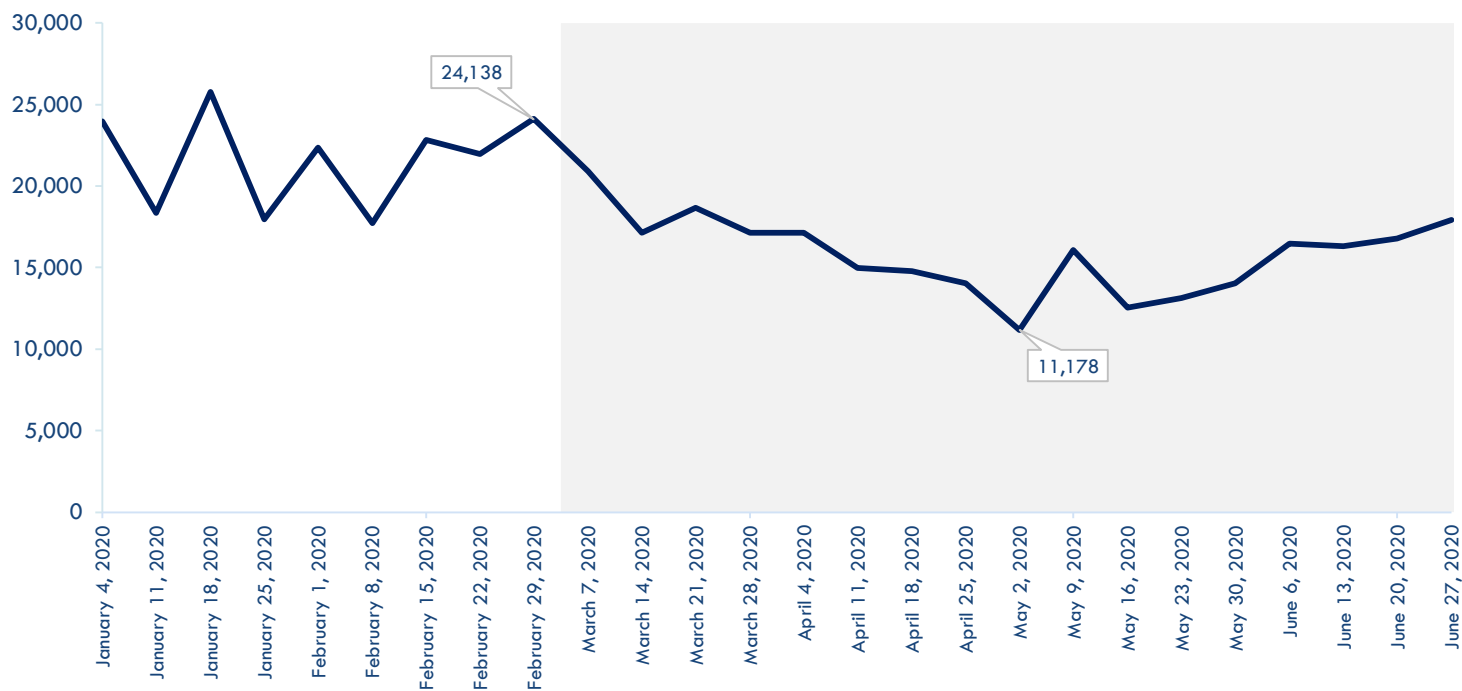
Source: Education Research and Data Center and State Board of Community and Technical Colleges





# Appendix

New Job Postings in Washington State, Weekly Totals in 2020



Source: Labor Insights, Burning Glass Technologies