

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



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Executive Director
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Achievement Council



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

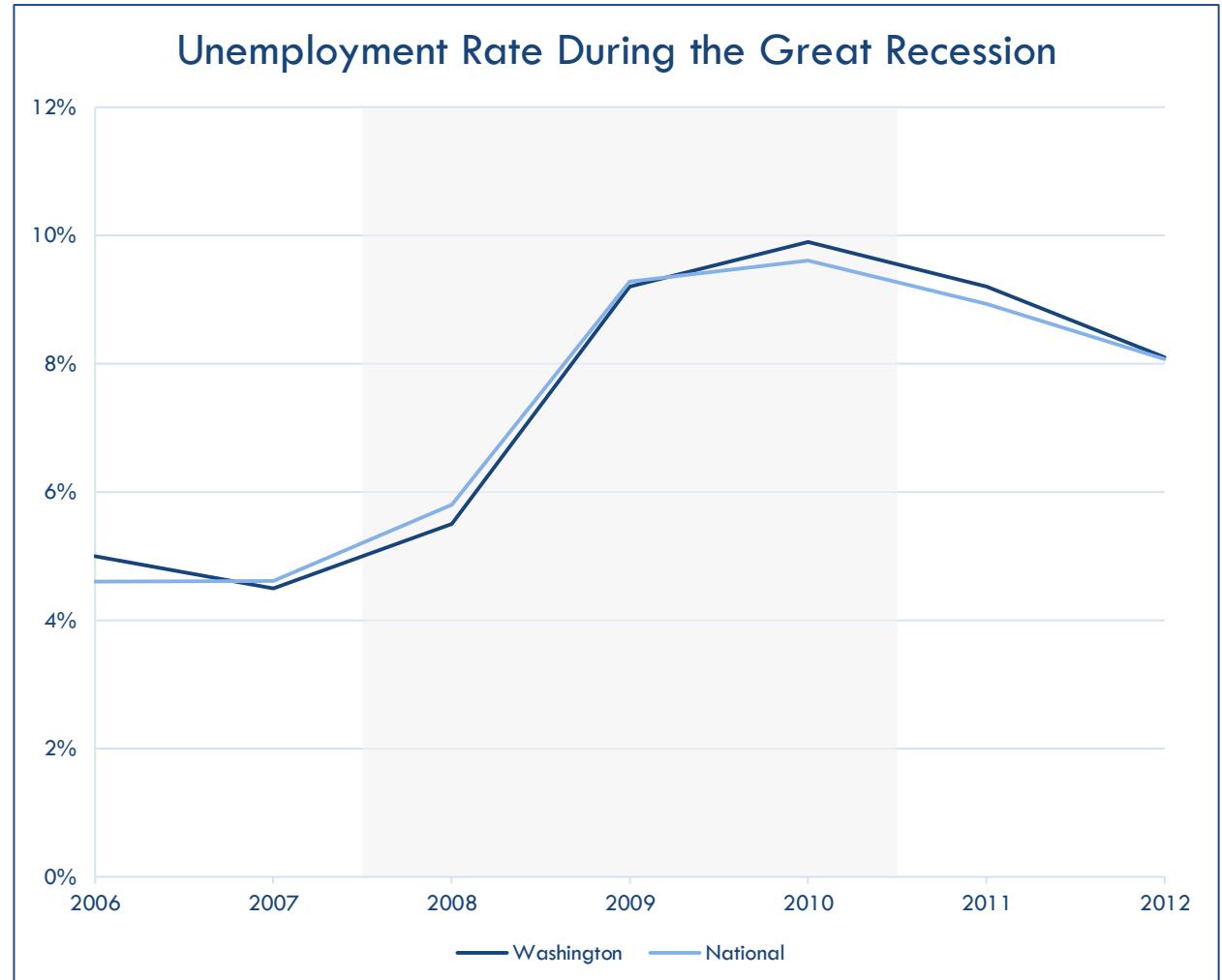
Strategic Priorities for Recovery

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



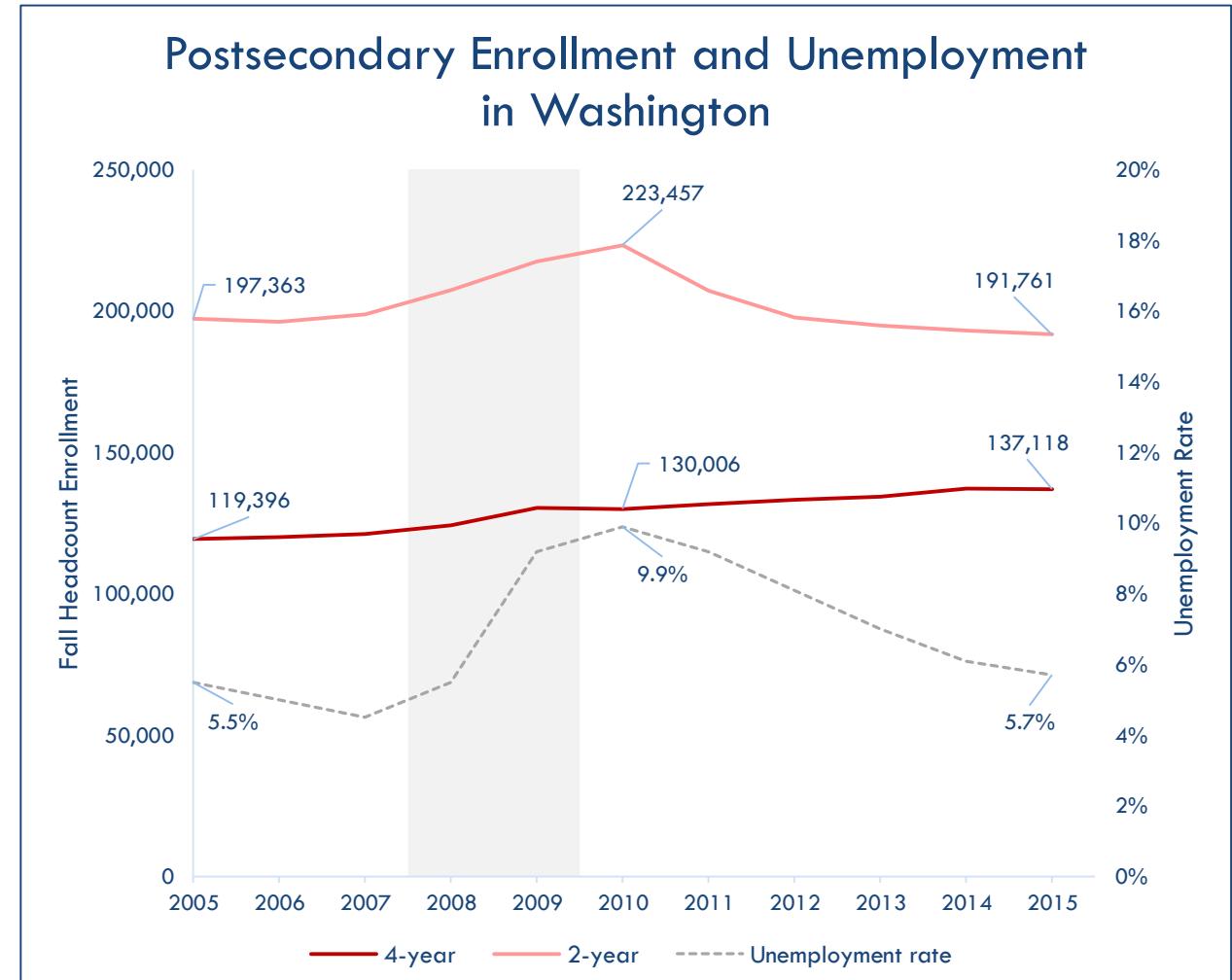
How the Great Recession Impacted Higher Education

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





How the Great Recession Impacted Higher Education

Tuition prices rose dramatically

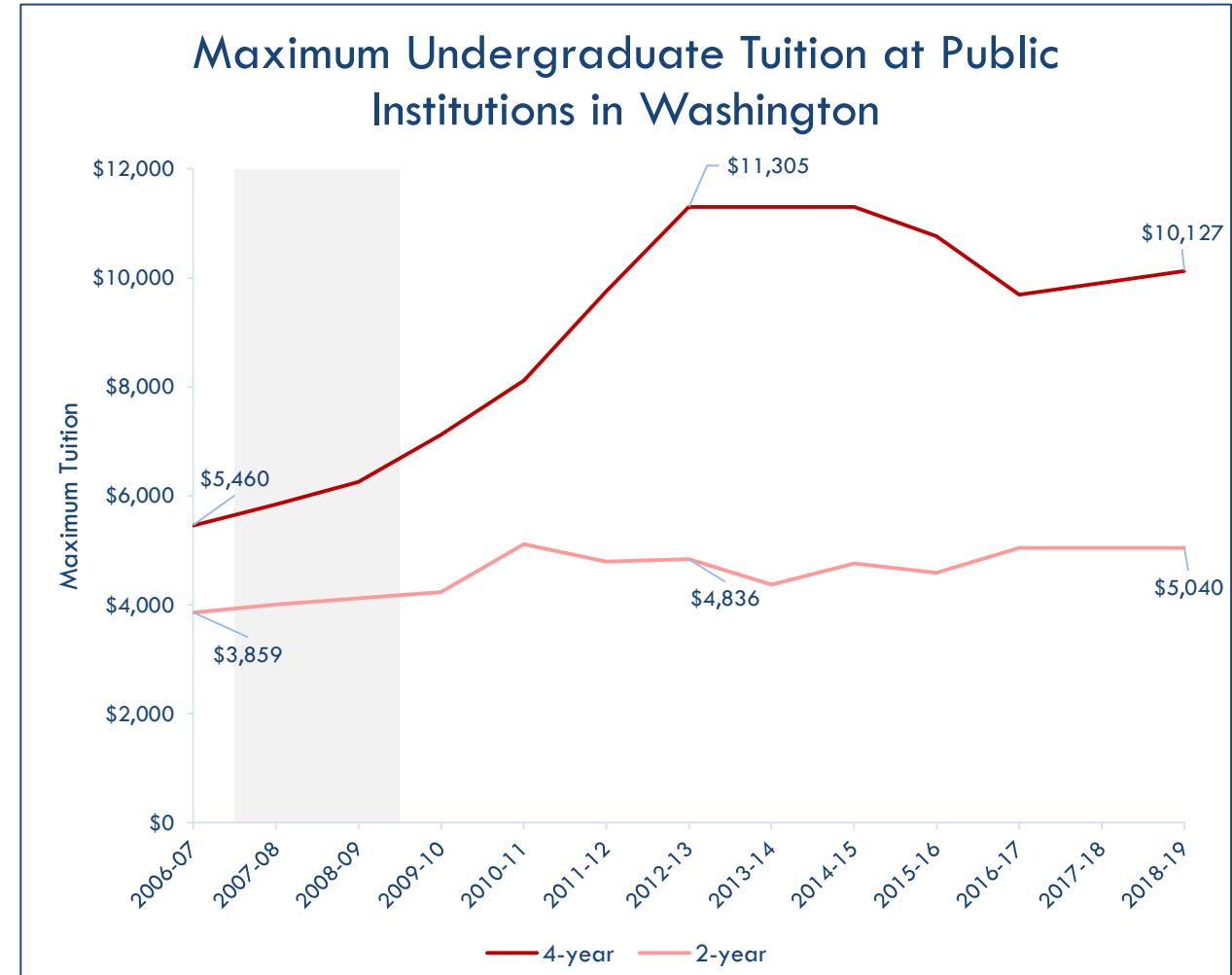
- Nationally, average tuition increased by 27% at 4-year institutions and 24% at 2-year institutions

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





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

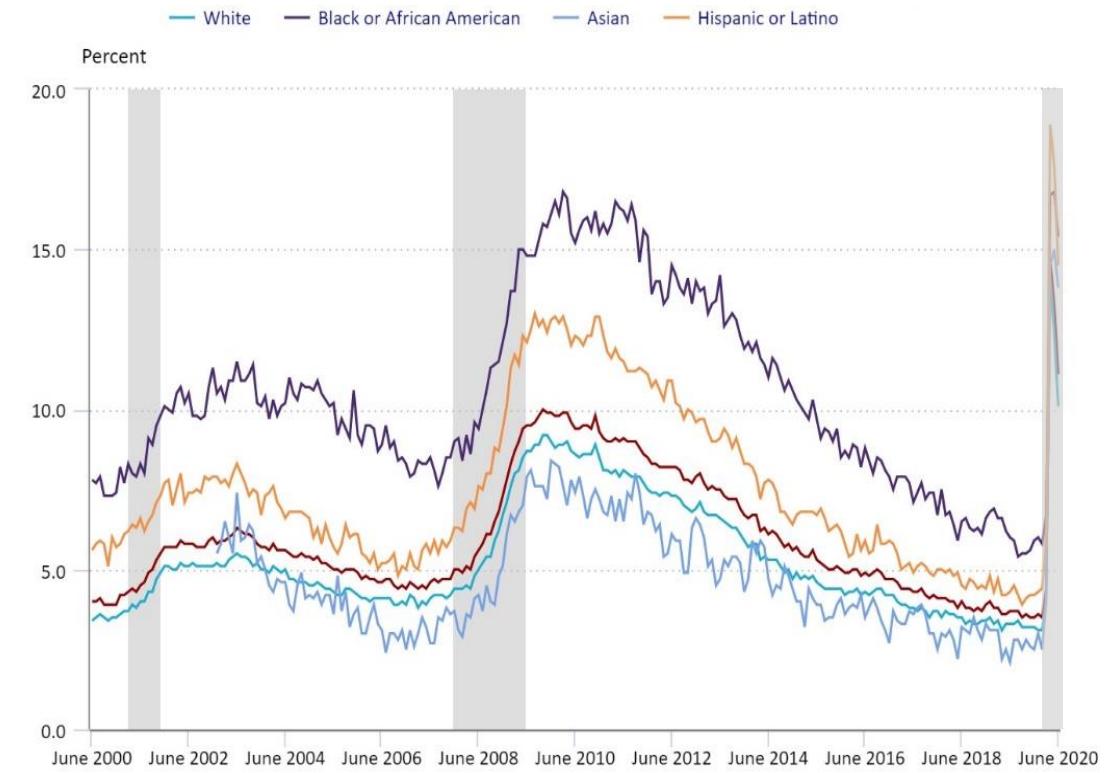
Unemployment rates were higher for Black and Hispanic people

- 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)

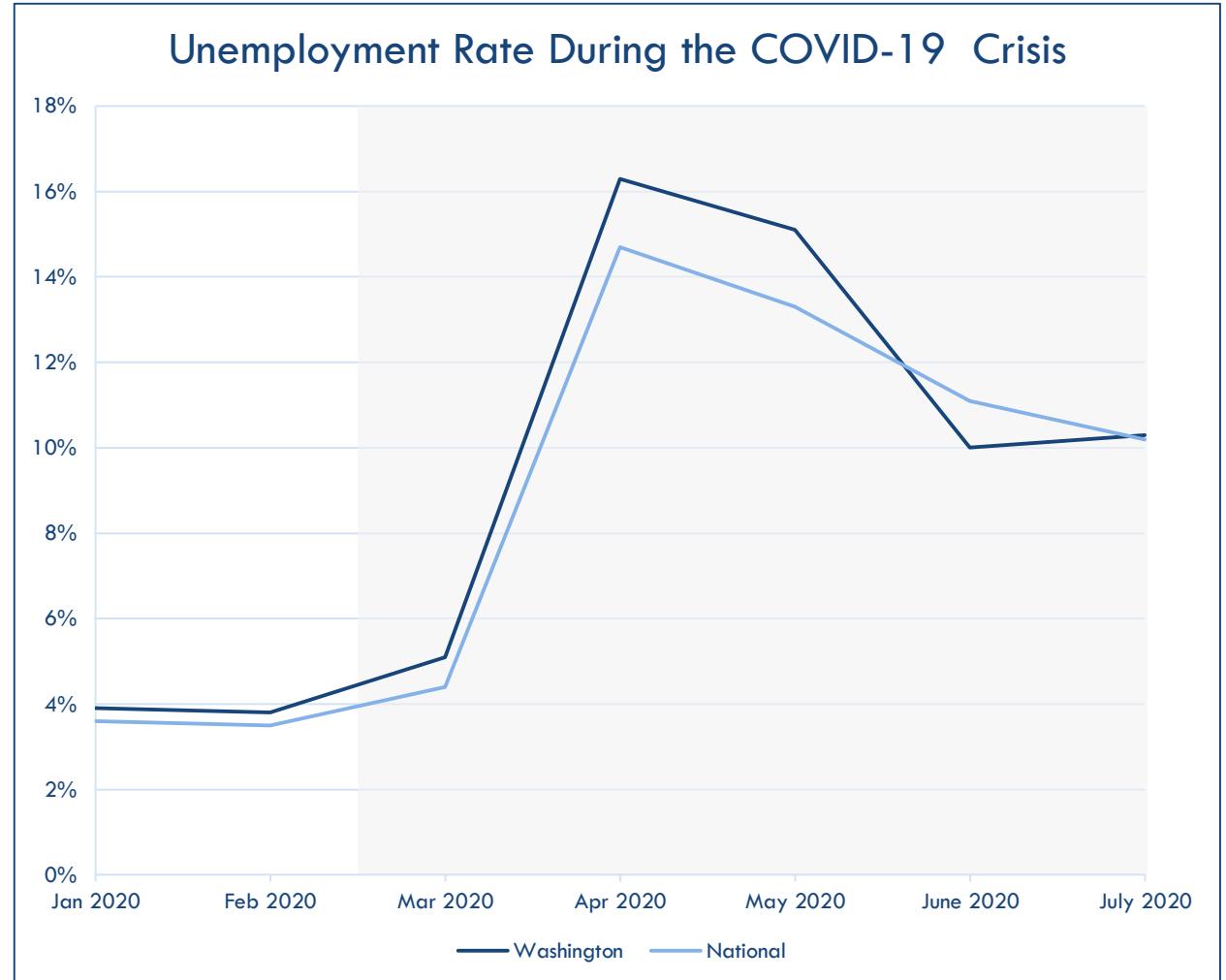
National Unemployment Rate by Race/Ethnicity (Seasonally Adjusted)





COVID-19

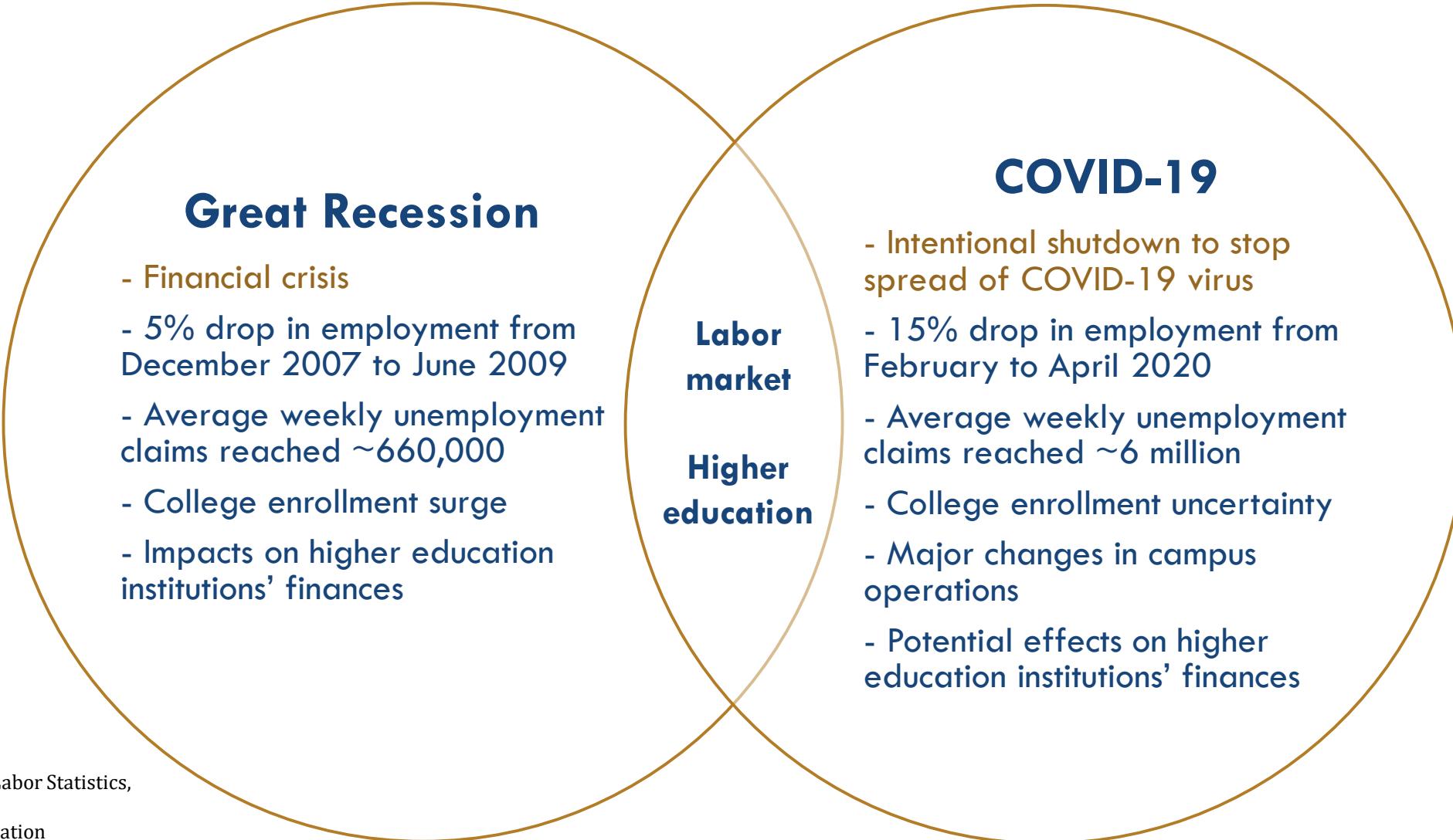
- States shut down their economies in response to the public health crisis
- Major impacts on the labor market and institutions of higher education
- The total extent of the damage on lives and livelihoods is unknown



How the COVID-19 Crisis Differs from the Great Recession



Contrasting the Crises



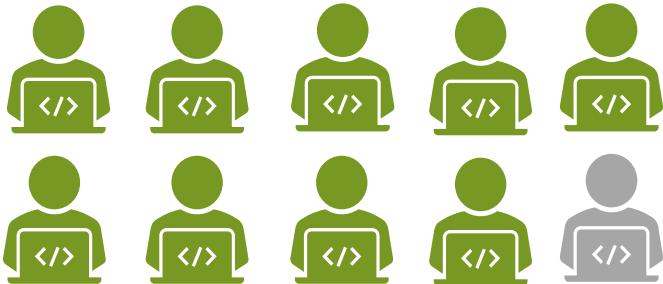
What We are Learning About the COVID-19 Crisis



How COVID-19 is Impacting Higher Education

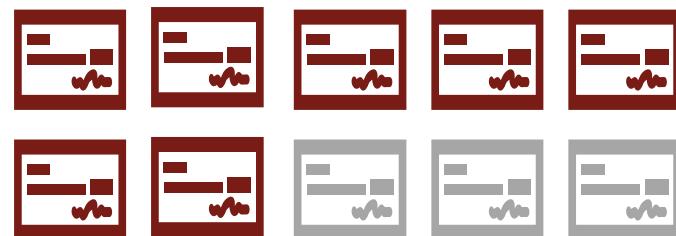
Emerging qualitative evidence reveals many levels of challenges to institutions and students.

Students struggled academically



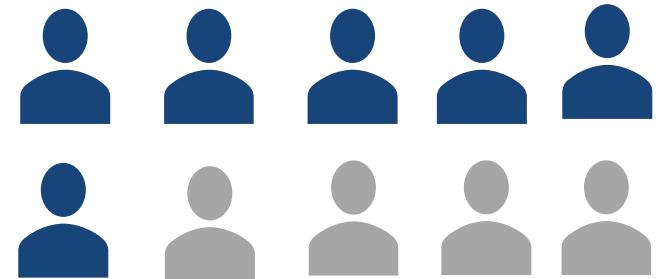
In Spring 2020, 9 in 10 students reported concern over the abrupt shift to online learning

Students struggled financially



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

Students' basic needs were jeopardized

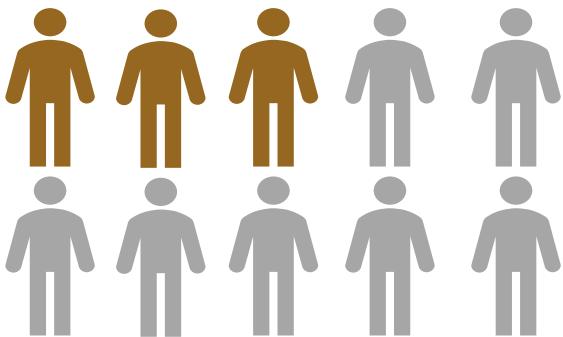


In Spring 2020, almost 6 in 10 college students faced basic needs insecurity



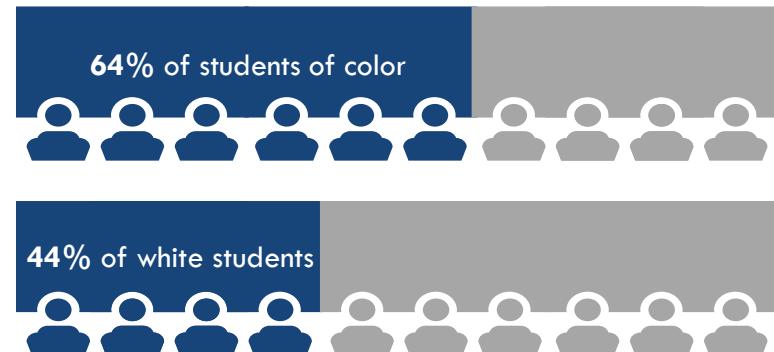
How COVID-19 is Impacting Higher Education

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



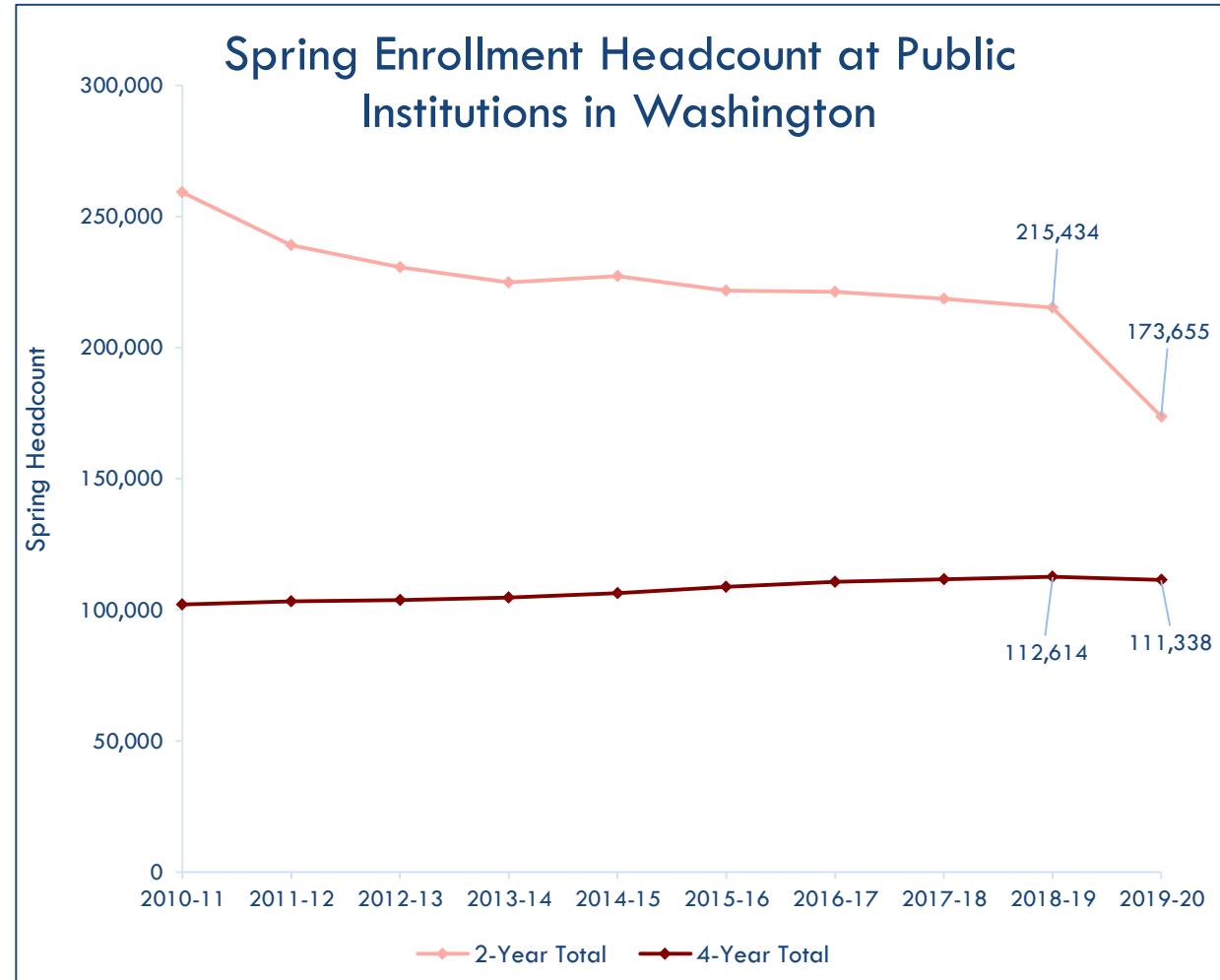
How COVID-19 is Impacting Higher Education

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





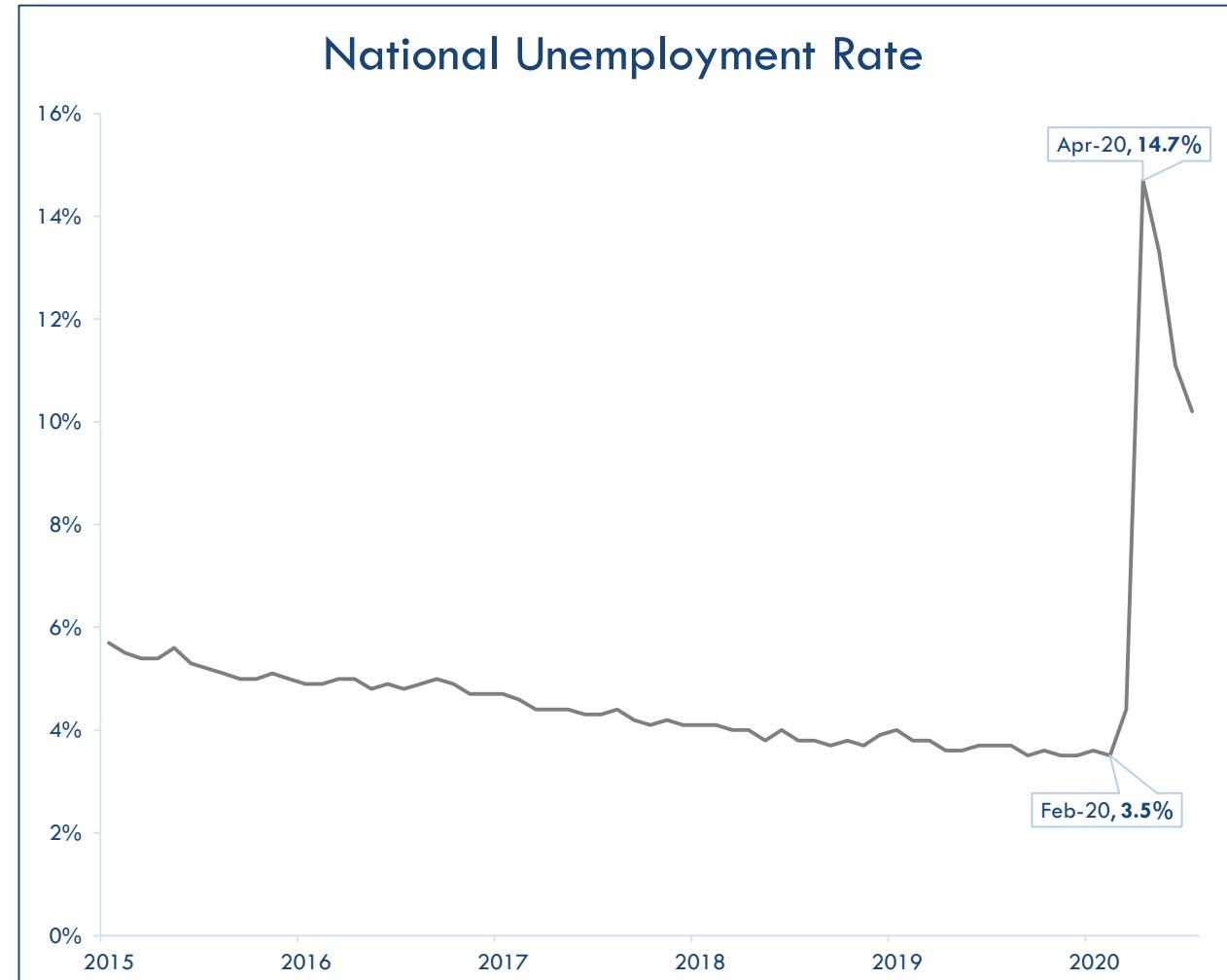
How COVID-19 is Impacting the Labor Market

The unemployment rate spiked across the board

Those with lower educational attainment experienced higher levels of unemployment

The burden has been uneven

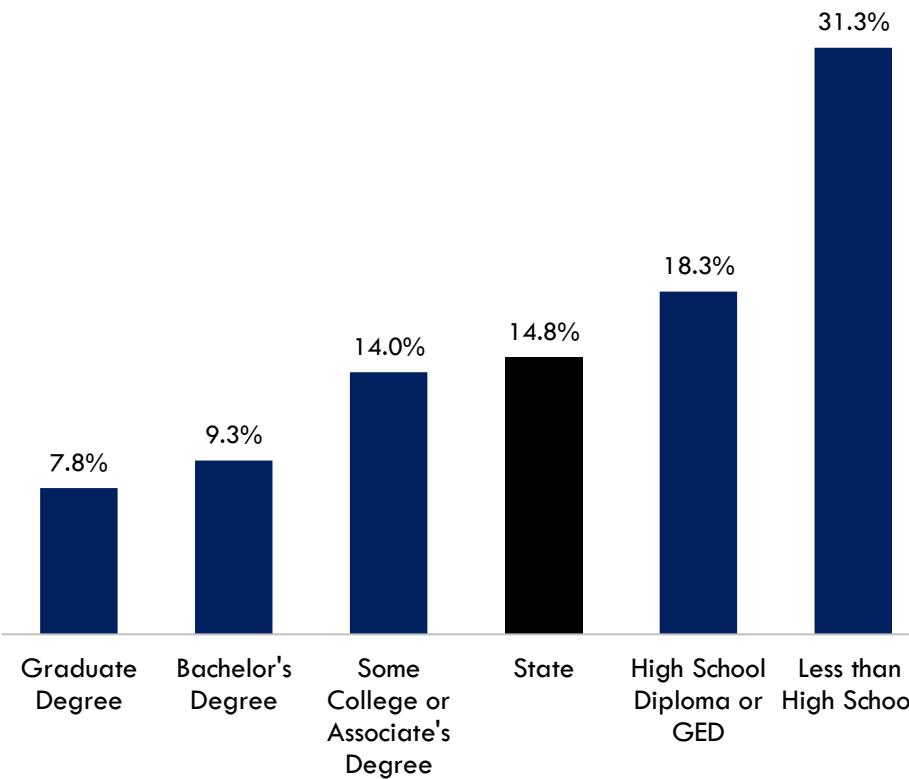
- Young people have had higher rates of unemployment (25% in May 2020) than workers over age 25 (12% in May 2020)



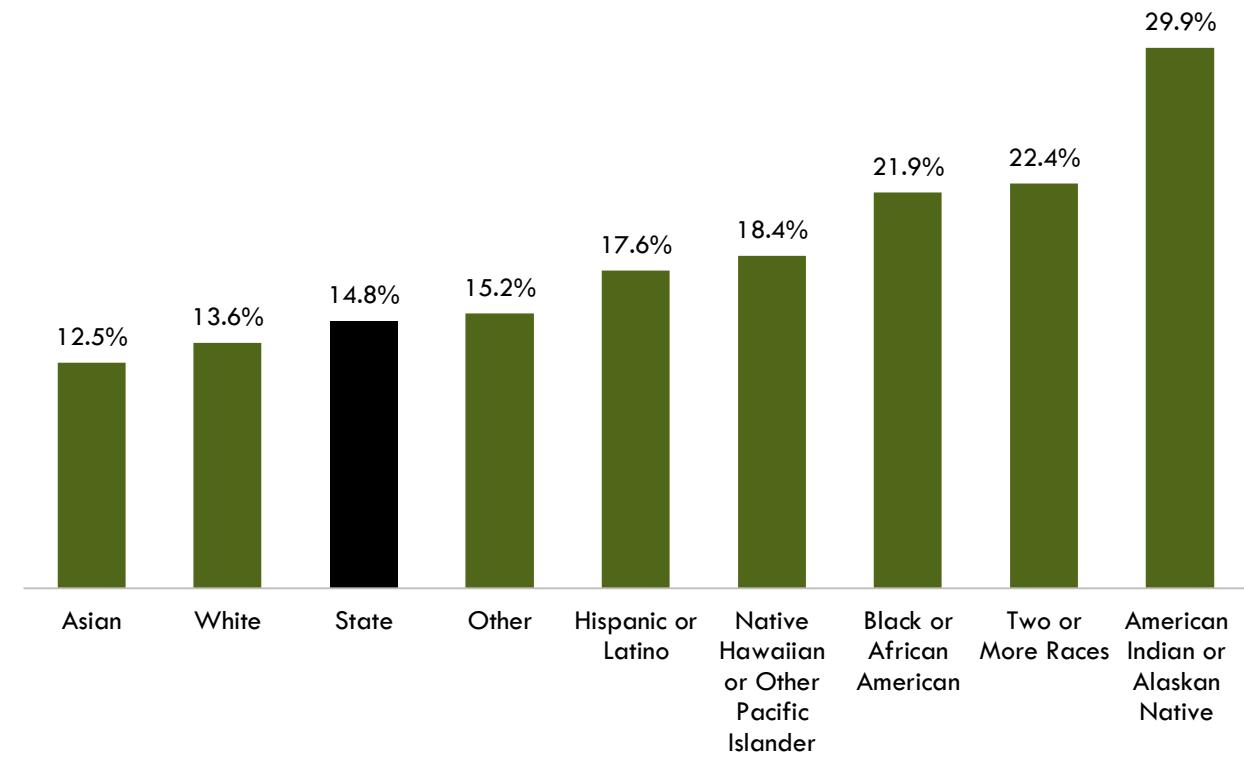


How COVID-19 is Impacting the Labor Market

*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

Proven Programs and Policies	
Provide application assistance	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.
Increase the number of high school counselors	Hiring additional counselors has been shown to help students navigate administrative barriers and transition from high school to postsecondary programs.
Encourage participation in college access programs	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	
Invest in state financial aid programs	Maintaining the Washington College Grant and other financial support for college students has been shown to improve access and affordability.
Provide students with grant aid	Helping students pay tuition, fees, and other expenses has been shown to increase enrollment, persistence, and graduation.
Streamline emergency aid procedures	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	
Use technology effectively	Implementing interactive activities in online classes has been proven effective in enhancing engagement and learning.
Foster virtual connections	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.
Incorporate best practices	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	
Offer comprehensive wraparound supports	Combining frequent advising with financial aid and academic supports has been shown to aid student retention and boost graduation rates.
Adapt successful programs to an online format	Offering effective services like coaching sessions and group check-ins in a modified format can ensure continued supports for students.
Connect students to social services	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

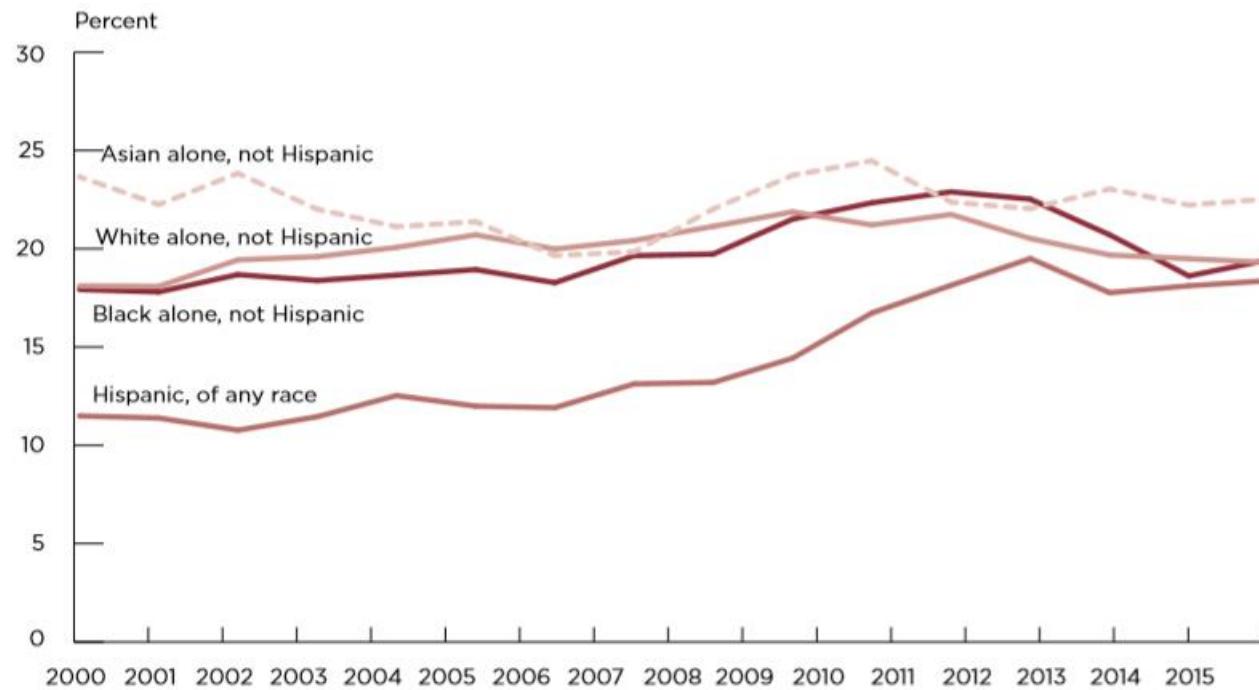
Stay tuned for future Pave the Way events

Join the Pave the Way listserv at wsac.wa.gov/pavetheway



Appendix

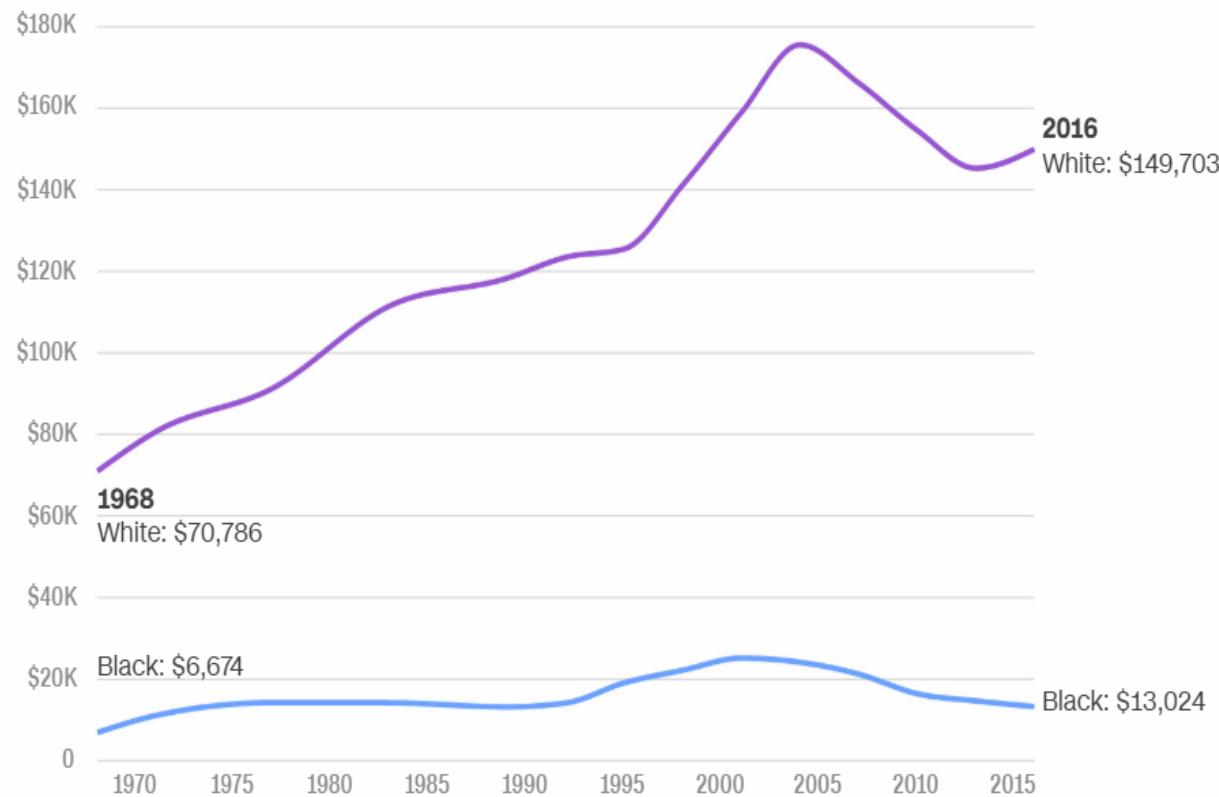
Percentage of People Ages 15 to 34 Enrolled in College by Race/Ethnicity in the U.S.





Appendix

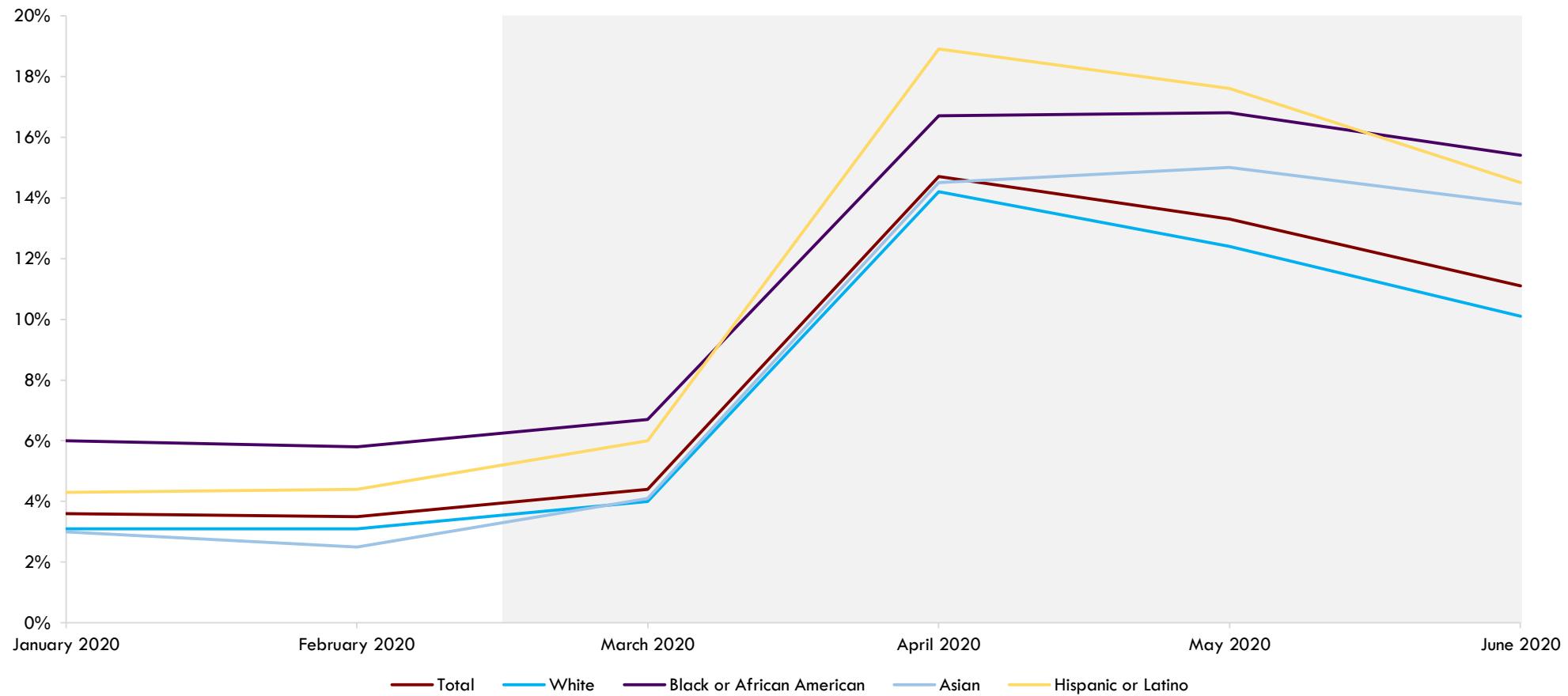
Net Worth of Typical Black and White Families in the U.S.





Appendix

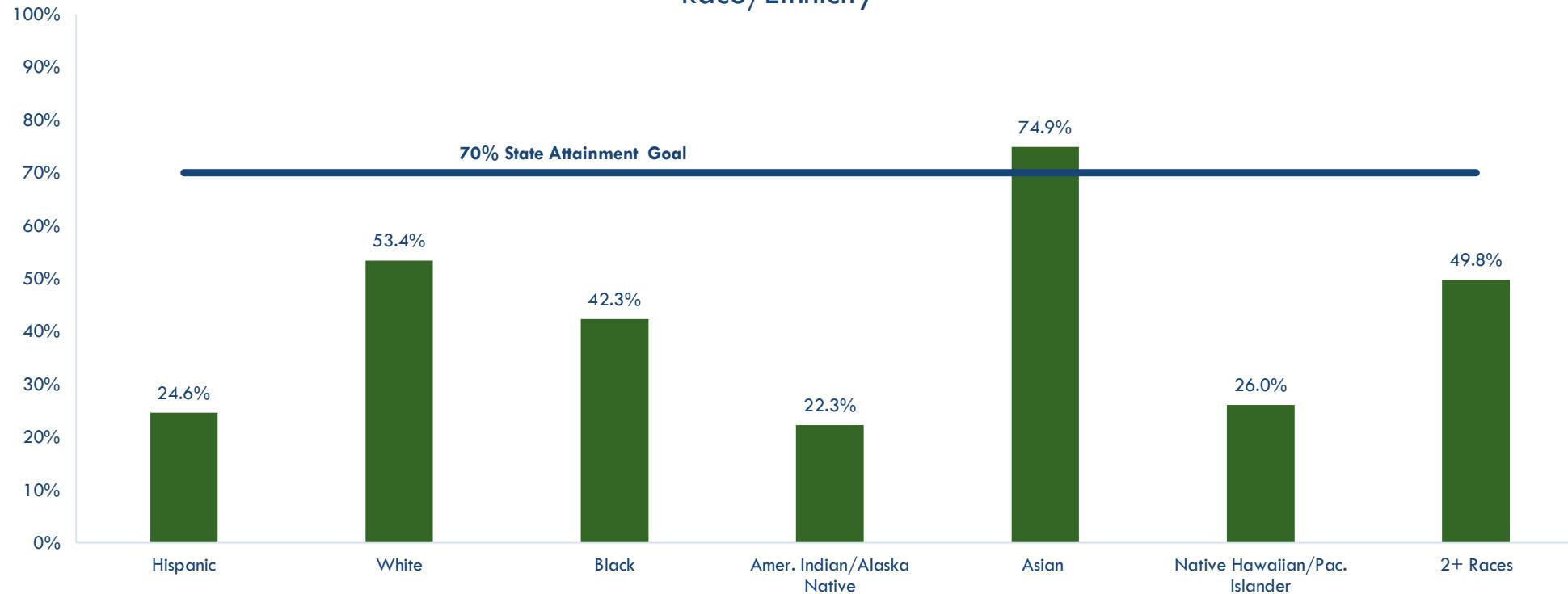
Monthly U.S. Unemployment Rate by Race/Ethnicity, Seasonally Adjusted





Appendix

Proportion of Washington Residents Age 25-44 With Postsecondary Credentials by Race/Ethnicity





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%

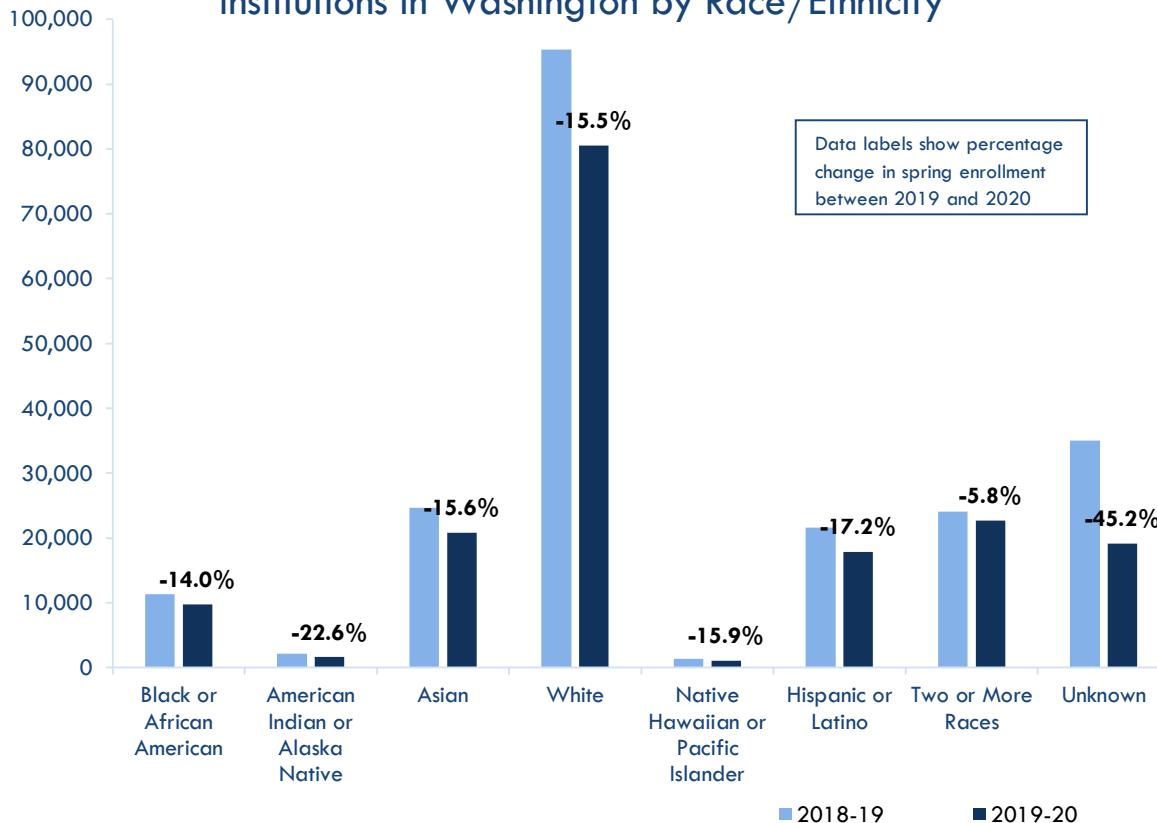
Spring Enrollment Headcount at 4-Year Public Institutions in Washington

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%

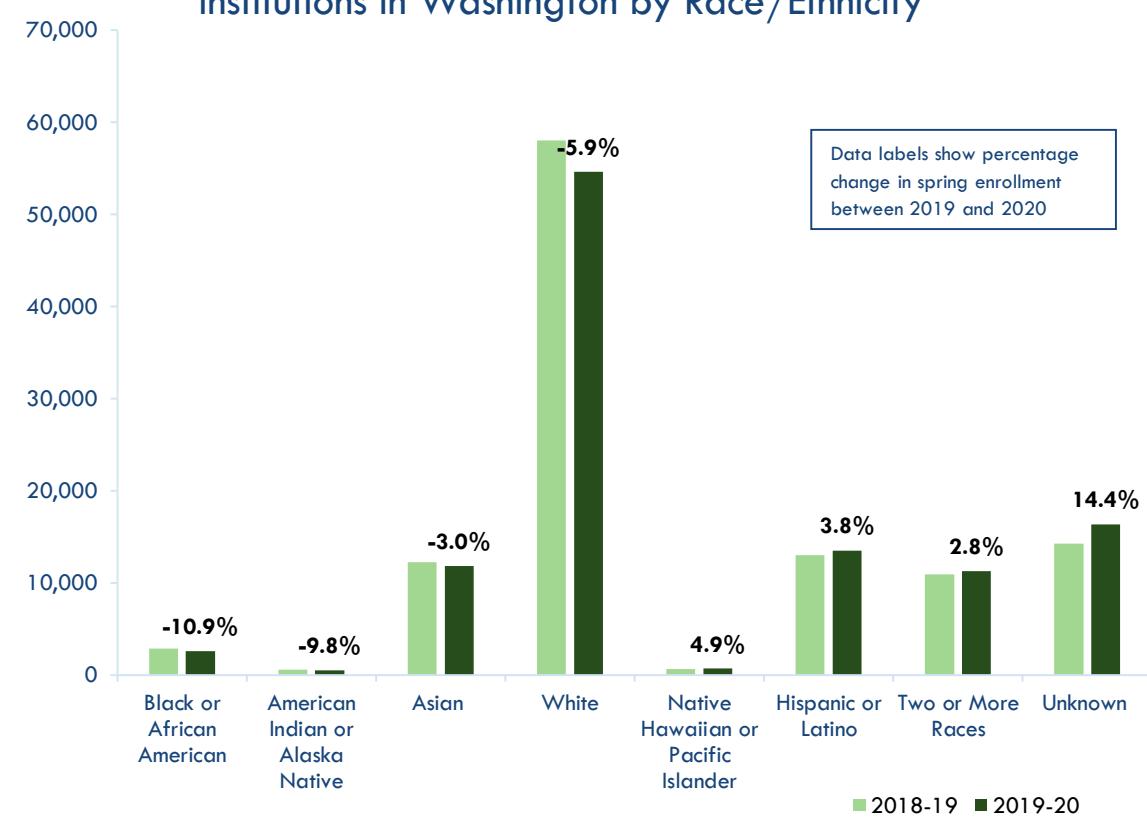


Appendix

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





Appendix

New Job Postings in Washington State, Weekly Totals in 2020

