Of 2015-16 bachelor’s degree (BA) recipients, 41% completed their degrees within four years of first enrolling in college; 59% finished within five years. For 16%, more than 10 years elapsed between starting college and completing a BA.

The share of graduates who completed their BAs within four or five years ranged from 63% of those who first enrolled at age 19 or younger to 38% of those who first entered at age 30 or older.

About two-thirds of those whose parents had at least a BA graduated within five years; less than half of those whose parents did not have a BA finished this quickly.

On-time completion is highly correlated with academic preparation: 62% of BA recipients with high school GPAs of 3.5 or higher graduated within four years, compared with 26% of those with GPAs below 3.0.

Having dependent children is associated with longer time to degree: 66% of those with no dependent children at the time they completed their degrees graduated within five years, compared with 20% of those with dependent children.

Among those who graduated from private nonprofit colleges and universities, 55% completed their degrees within four years and another 13% graduated within five years. These figures were 38% and 21% for public four-year college students. Thirty percent of those who completed their degrees at for-profit institutions did so in less than five years.

Also important:

Since all students age 24 or older are considered independent, almost all students who earned a BA while they were still considered dependent were in school for five years or less.

Figure 13 reports time elapsed between first postsecondary enrollment and completion of a bachelor’s degree. Many students leave school temporarily and are not enrolled for this entire period.

NOTE: Percentages in parentheses on the vertical axis represent shares of degree recipients in each group, or as noted, shares of those for whom the data on the grouping are available.

Sources: NCES, NPSAS, 2016; calculations by the authors.