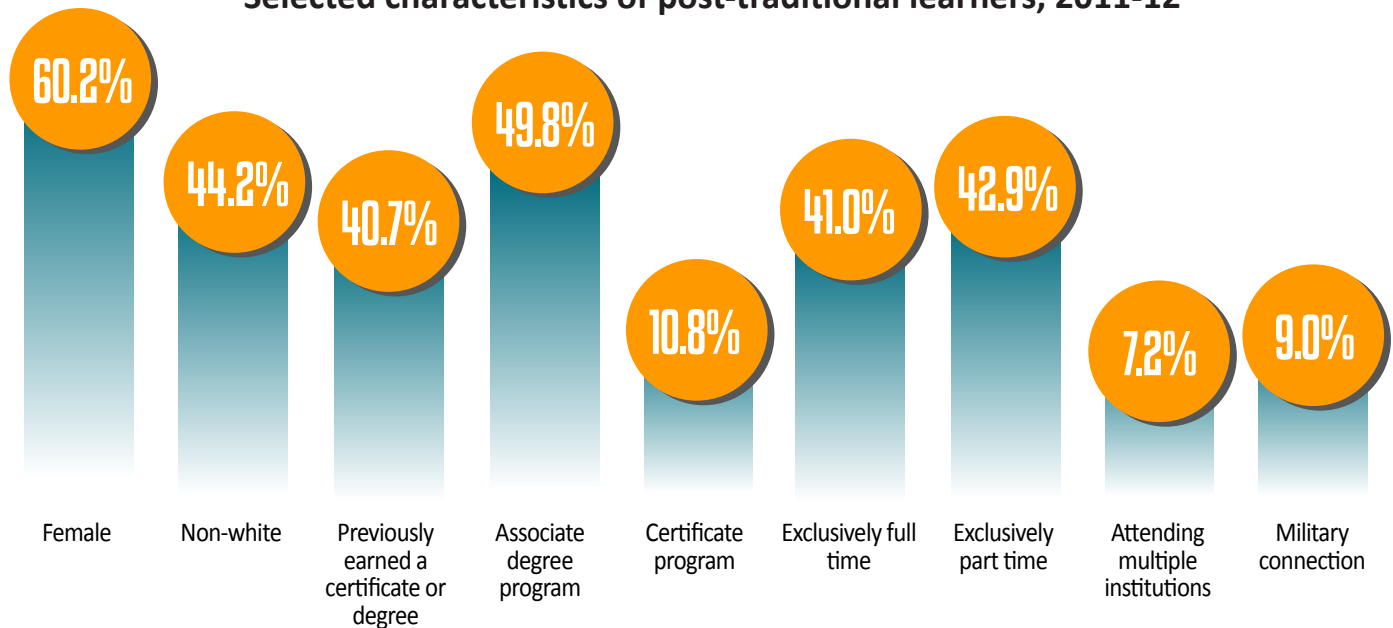


'Post-traditional' learners

Better data tracking, policy alignment and links to workforce programs are needed to effectively address the diverse educational and career needs of "post-traditional" learners.

Selected characteristics of post-traditional learners, 2011-12



Source: American Council on Education, ["The Post-Traditional Learners Manifesto Revisited: Aligning Postsecondary Education with Real Life for Adult Student Success,"](#) 2017.



According to a new study by the American Council on Education (ACE), post-traditional learners are individuals with diverse life experiences, defining them as "individuals already in the workforce who lack a postsecondary credential, yet are determined to pursue further knowledge and skills while balancing work, life and education responsibilities." There are about 98 million people who fit this definition, according to the 2016 Current Population Survey of the U.S. Census Bureau. Post-traditional learners have diverse backgrounds, such as being immigrants, veterans, single mothers, at-risk youth or having limited literacy and English language skills. About 60 percent of post-traditional learners were enrolled in undergraduate programs, most of whom (53 percent) were likely to attend public two-year institutions. Postsecondary learning models need to be tailored to meet the complex background and learning needs of those individuals. The majority of post-traditional learners (70 percent) are employed, financially independent, and seeking career-oriented credentials. Nearly half (45 percent) work while enrolled full time. The report recommended a better data-tracking system and alignment of education programs for post-traditional learners with workforce programs and policies to make college affordable for them.

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