

Post-School Status Report
2006 Special Education Graduates

Prepared for

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Special Education Section

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**The Center for Change in Transition Services
Seattle University**

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History of the Post-school Data Collection: Past and Present

Collecting data on the post-school experiences of students with disabilities is not a new endeavor. Prior research related to post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities began in the 1960s and received more recent attention through the Transition Initiative and the National Longitudinal Transition Study 1 and NLTS 2 (Blackorby, J., & Wagner, M., 1996; Wagner, M., Newman, L., Cameto, R., & Levine, P, 2005).

Washington State was one of a handful of states collecting data from young people and their families in the 1980's and 1990's (Affleck, Edgar, Levine, & Kortering, 1990; Blackorby, Edgar, & Kortering, 1991; Edgar, Levine, & Maddox; 1988; Neel, Meadows, Levine, & Edgar, 1988). Post-school follow-up data were collected during the 1980's in many studies including the Decade Study, (Edgar E., 1995). This study followed youth from six large school districts for ten years (1983-1993) after leaving high school. Numerous studies built upon the state level expertise in post-school data research over the next years with these data used as a crucial foundation for seeking and attaining federal and state grants.

In 1990 Washington State was awarded a Transition Systems Change grant from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services to fund the newly formed Center for Change in Transition Services (CCTS). The Center for Change in Transition Services was located at the University of Washington (1990-2004) and is now at Seattle University (2004-present). Currently CCTS is a State Needs Grant funded by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Washington State is a leader in this endeavor, having collected and reported post-school outcomes consistently since 1998.

Based on Indicator #14 in the State Performance Plan (SPP) of the Annual Performance Report (APR), states are now required to collect and report the post-school outcomes for youth in special education to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). The parameters for Indicator #14 are: "Percent of youth who had IEPs, are no longer in secondary school and who have been competitively employed, enrolled in some type of postsecondary school, or both, within one year of leaving high school." The measurement for Indicator 14 is as follows: Percent = [(# of youth who had IEPs, are no longer in secondary school and who have been competitively employed, enrolled in some type of postsecondary school, or both, within one year of leaving high school) divided by the (# of youth assessed who had IEPs and are no longer in secondary school)] times 100. WA State defines this measurement as "engagement." The percent of graduates engaged in WA State in high school for 2006 is 84%. At the time of the telephone survey the engagement rate was 75%.

Methodology & Data Collection

What are the Post-school Data?

This study is a continuation of the studies initiated in 1998 by the Center for Change in Transition Services in collaboration with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Continuing a data collection process established with the 1998 baseline report¹ provides a rich database in which to inform statewide improvement efforts in secondary special education. The questions addressed in this study were determined in 1998 by the members of the project advisory board² and enhanced and revised over the years.

All school districts except for twelve pilot districts returned paper/pencil surveys to the Center for Change in Transition Services (CCTS), Seattle University. The twelve districts piloted a web-based survey, to be used statewide for the 2007 surveys, and submitted post-school data electronically versus paper copies. The data from the surveys are entered into a statistical program for analysis. The data in this study are most often discussed as numbers and percentages. These numbers may overlook the individual stories of the youth from whom the data are gathered. In addition to the data, the surveys provide rich information about the lives of special education graduates and non-graduates. The combination of the data and the stories from the youth and their families can inform practices and provide information for improvement.

How are the Data Collected?

The transition portion of the students' final Individualized Education Program (IEP) is reviewed and information is collected regarding demographic information and transition planning and goals for post-school outcomes. This information is gathered in the spring prior to the student leaving the district. The special education teacher or IEP coordinator typically gathers this information and completes the demographic information, the measurable postsecondary goal, and the recommended adult agency linkages. The telephone interview is completed in December or January the year after the student leaves high school with the student or a family member of the student. Staff from the participating local districts conducts the telephone interviews. It is recommended that someone familiar with the special education process and transition services conduct the calls. Youth and families often ask for information from the school district regarding services or support³ and it is helpful to have the interviewer knowledgeable about special education and transition services. In addition to gathering the information for the survey, school district personnel report that they often provide families and the young person with contact information if they need assistance in finding employment or training, seeking health care or finding a place to live.

This study is designed to compare the post-school outcomes with the post-school goals identified on the final IEP within one year of the youth leaving high school. The information can be used for training purposes in developing and writing the IEP, providing transition services and developing linkages with adult service agencies. Beginning with the 2005 graduates, transition planning was to begin at age 16, earlier when appropriate, and provide a coordinated set of activities to promote movement from school to post-school activities. The information from the post-school survey provides information regarding the connection

¹ See "Biennial Performance Report for Part B," Fiscal Years 1997-1999, www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/Publications/perfrpt.pdf, p.12.

² Eric Andreassen, Puyallup School District, Sandra Owen, Pullman School District, Teresa Clifford, Puget Sound ESD, Eugene Edgar, University of Washington (project staff) and Jim Rich, OSPI.

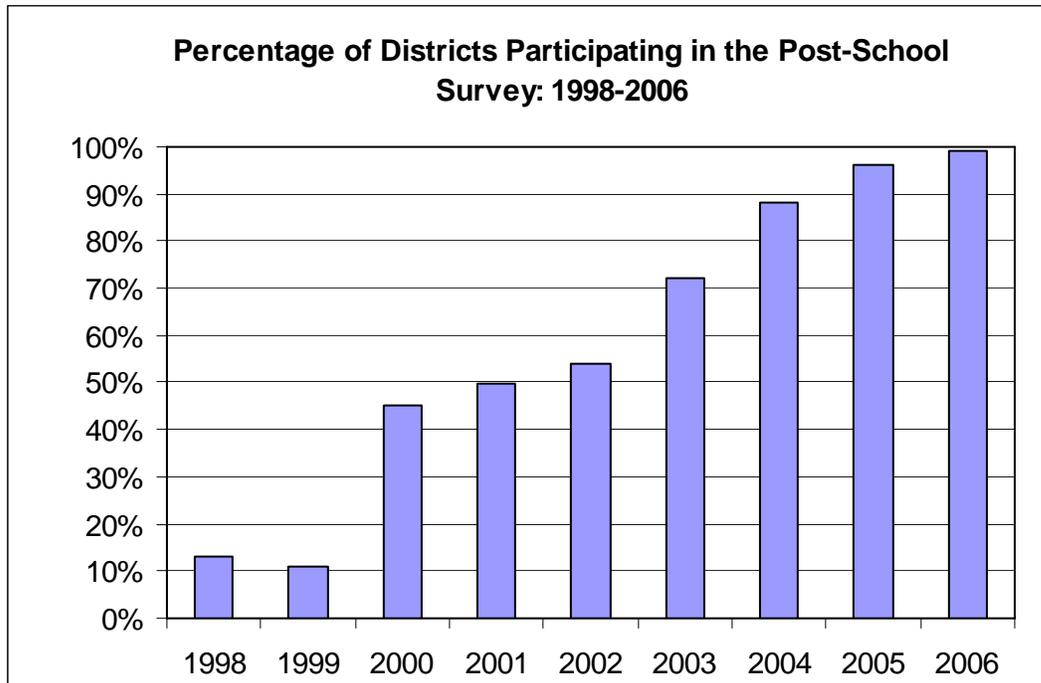
³ Agency information by county is available at http://www.seattleu.edu/ccts/agnecy_connections/agencyconnections.asp.

between post-school goals as identified on the IEP and the post-school outcome for the youth six months after exiting.

Contact Rate & Demographics of Respondents

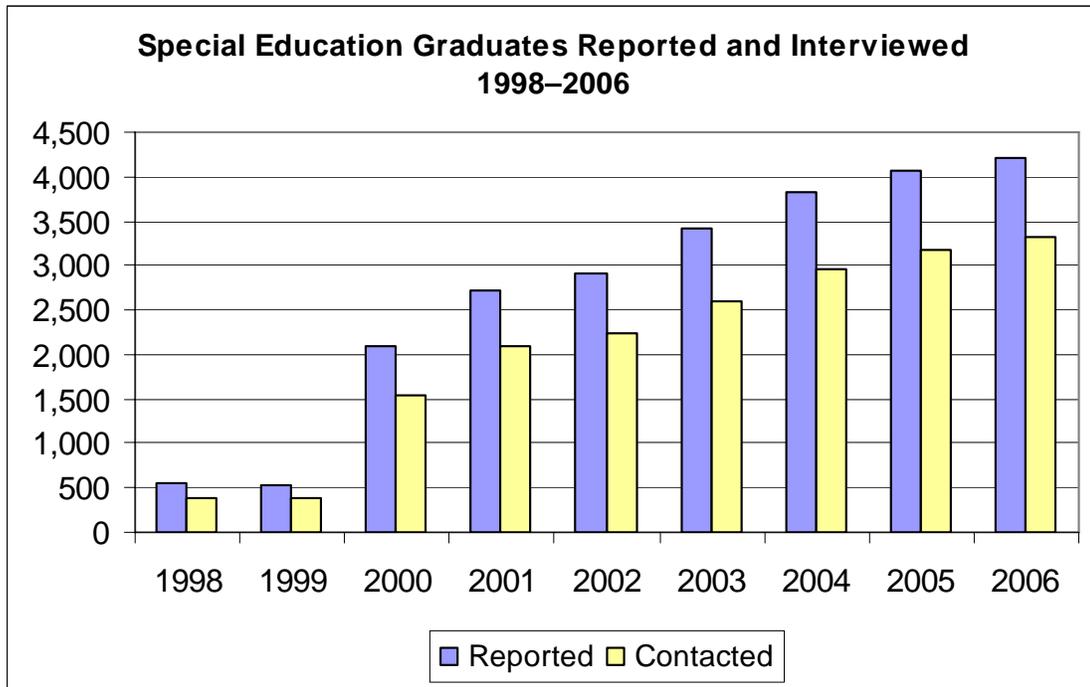
There were 247 school districts that participated of the 248 districts in the state with high schools, compared to 238 school districts that participated in 2005. Included in the 247 school districts are 20 districts that reported they had no special education graduates. The school districts that participated are listed in Appendix A. Figure 1 shows that the percentage of school districts that have participate since 1998.

Figure 1: Percentage of Districts Participating in the Post-school Survey 1998-2006



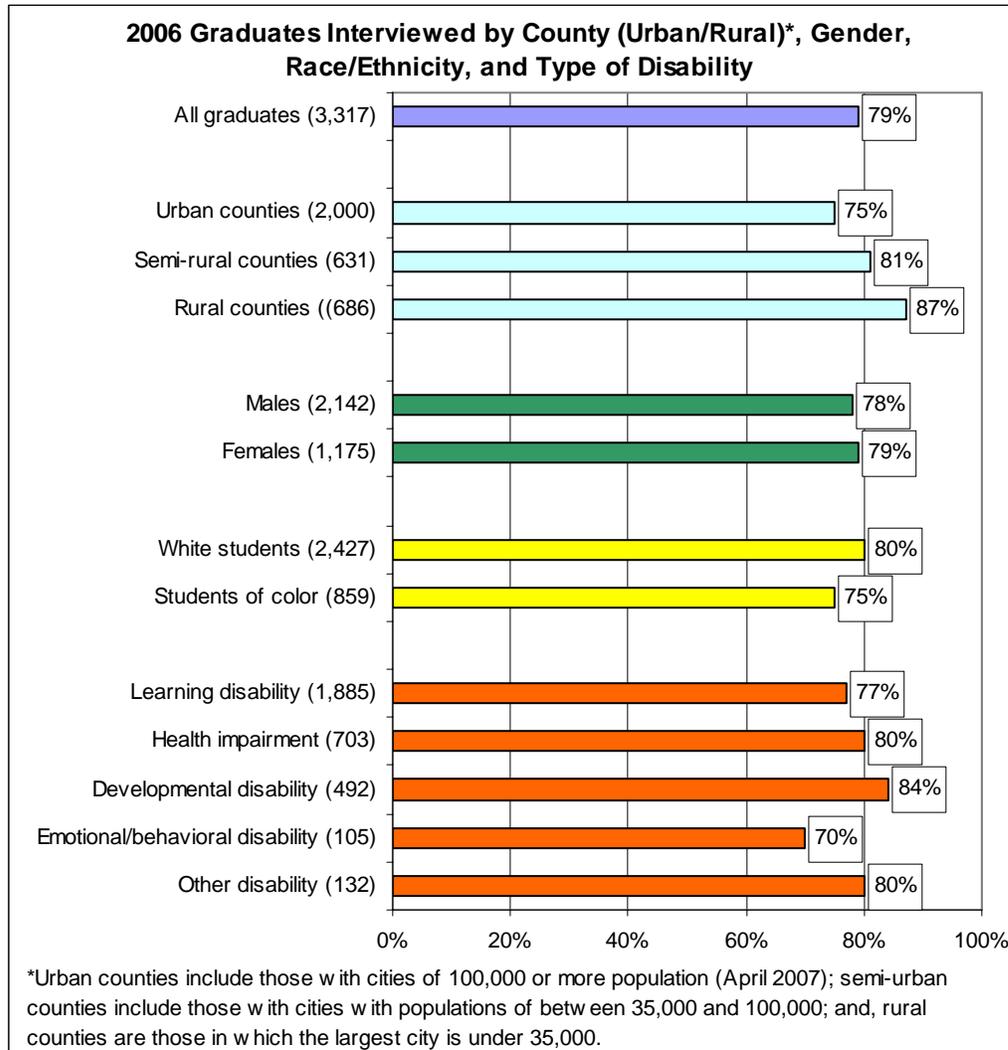
The contact rate, which is the percent of graduates reported who are also surveyed, has steadily increased over the last six school years, from 73% in 2000 to 79% in 2006 (Figure 2). At the same time, and perhaps more importantly, districts are reporting on more graduates. There has been a 100% increase in the number of graduates included in the study between 2000 and 2006.

Figure 2: Special Education Graduates Reported & Interviewed 1998-2006



For the 2006 study, graduation is defined as leaving high school with a diploma or aging out of special education services at age 21. Information was collected from 4,223 IEPs in the 247 participating school districts in Washington State. Attempts were made to survey all 4,223 youth through telephone contacts. After multiple attempts, 3,317 youth (79%) were contacted. Figure 3 below represents the contact rate by County (Urban/Rural), Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Type of Disability. The number of districts that participated in this study and the high rate of contact with the graduates are very positive and provide valuable information for youth who complete high school. Although it is more difficult to contact graduates in larger districts, it is possible to increase the contact rate with planning and efforts toward identifying contact information in the spring prior to graduation.

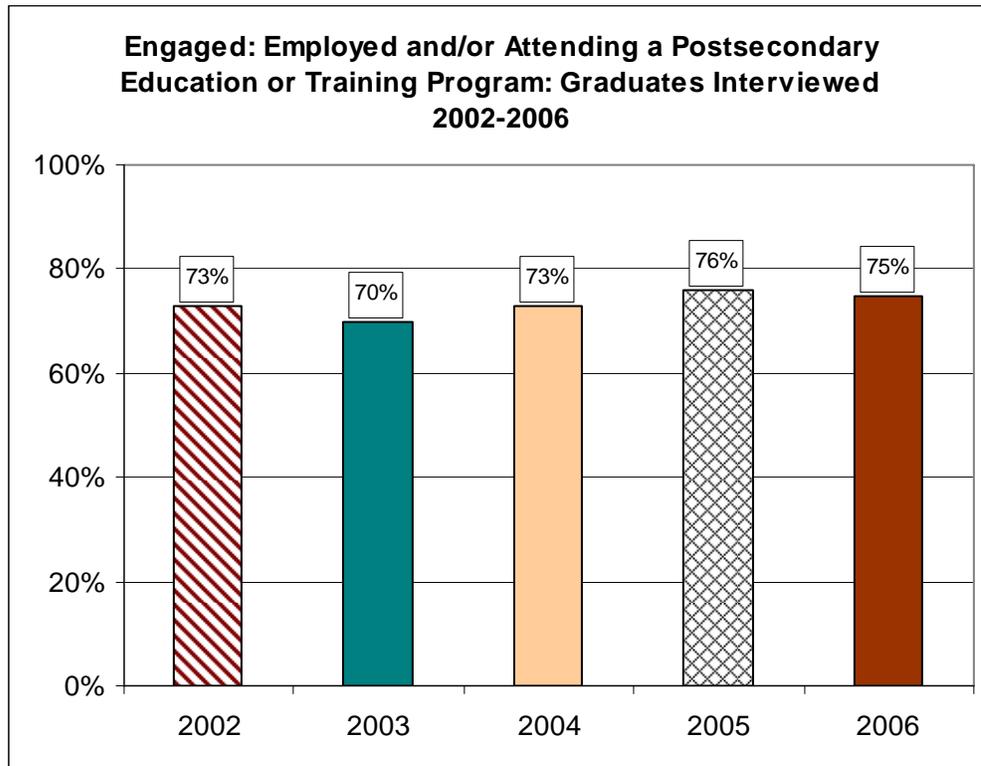
Figure 3: 2006 Graduates Interviewed by County, Gender, Race, & Disability



How Many Students Were Engaged?

For the 2006 graduates 75% of the youth contacted were productively engaged in either postsecondary education/training, employment, or both at the time of the interview. The engagement rate for graduates only includes outcomes for those youth who indicated they are *currently* attending postsecondary education/training, employment, or both. In addition, the engagement rate only includes outcomes for youth with an exit status of diploma or aged out. Beginning with the 2007 leavers the outcomes and engagement rate will be aggregated and disaggregated by exit status (graduates and non-graduates). Figure 4 represents the engagement rate for graduates by year from 2002-2006.

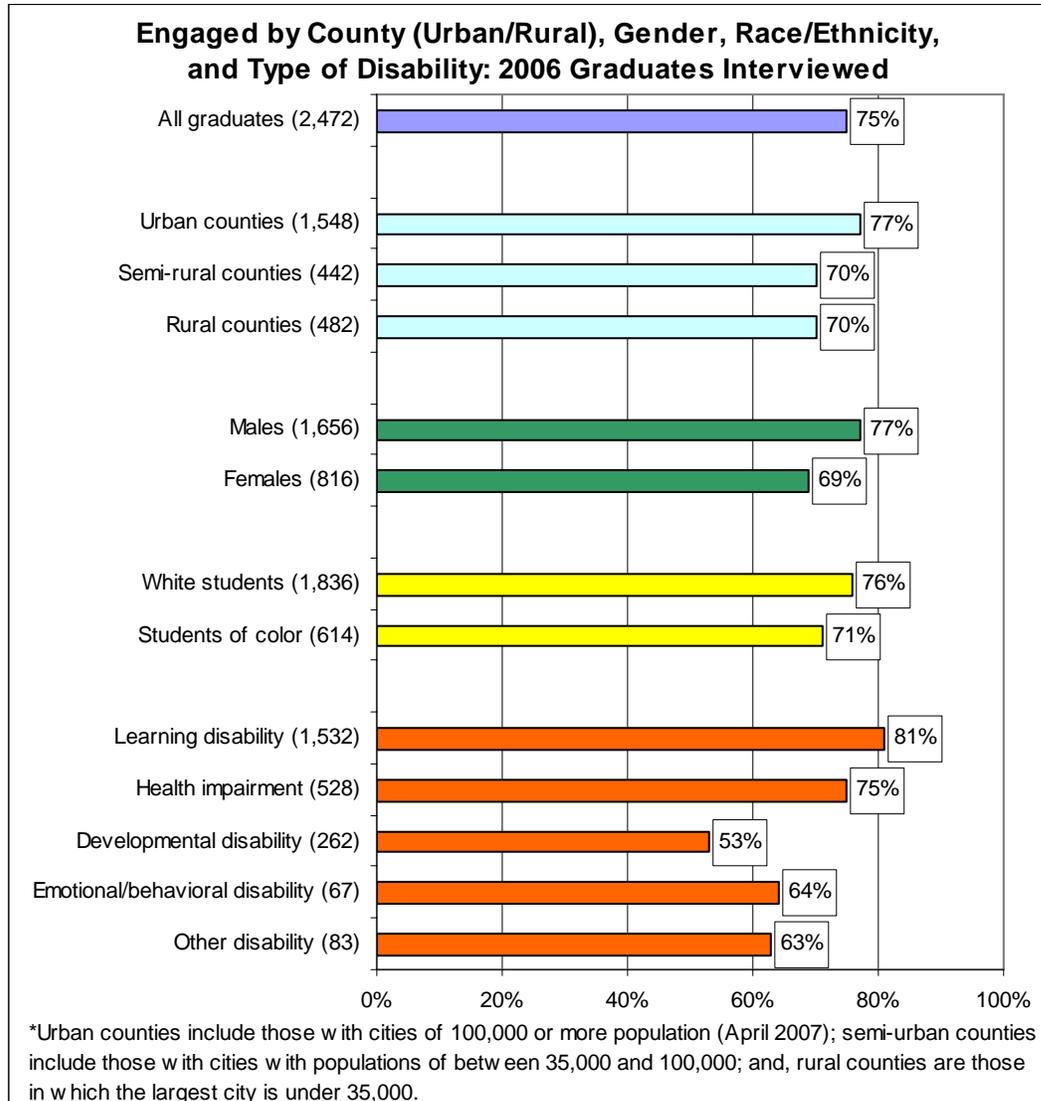
Figure 4: Percentage Engaged of Graduates Interviewed 2002-2006



How many students were engaged by county, gender, race/ethnicity and disability?

Although 75% of graduates are engaged, when rates of engagement are disaggregated by demographic information there are differences within each variable. For example, males are engaged at a higher rate than females, 77% compared to 69% (Figure 5). Differences in the rate of engagement are more significant when compared by disability categories. Youth with learning disabilities are engaged at a rate of 81% while youth with developmental disabilities are engaged at 53% and youth who are emotionally/behaviorally disabled are engaged at a rate of 64%.

Figure 5: Engaged by County, Gender, Race, & Disability



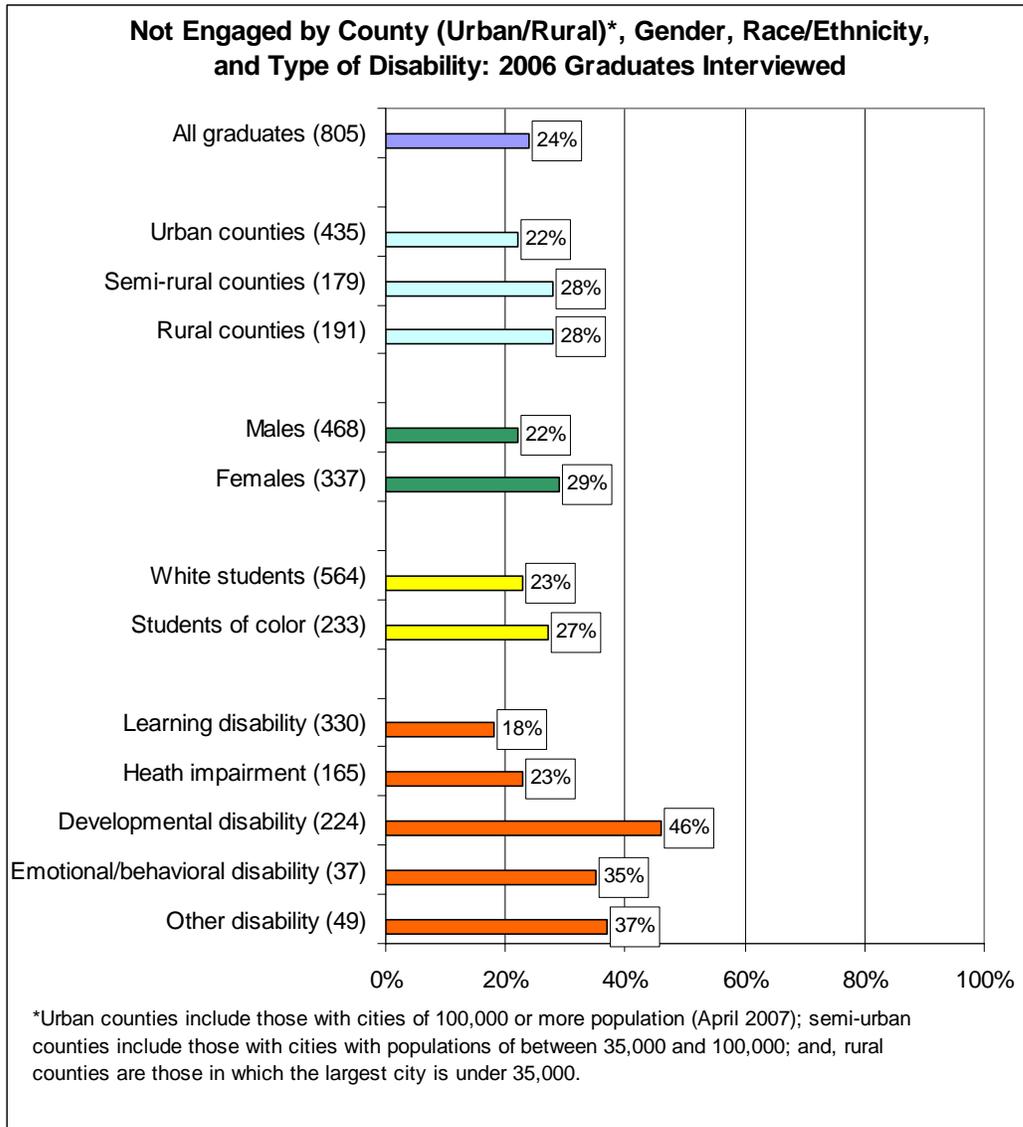
How many youth were not engaged by county, gender, race/ethnicity and disability?

When looking at youth that are not employed or attending post-secondary education or training programs within one year of leaving high school, youth with development disabilities were the least successful compared to other disabilities. The percent of young people not engaged in either work and/or education/training programs is 46%.

Developmental disabilities include the following disability categories: autism, mental retardation, and multiple disabilities.

In addition to differences by disabilities there is also a difference by gender. A higher percentage of females are not engaged in either work and/or education/training programs when compared to males, 29% versus 22% of males.

Figure 6: Not Engaged by County, Gender, Race, & Disability



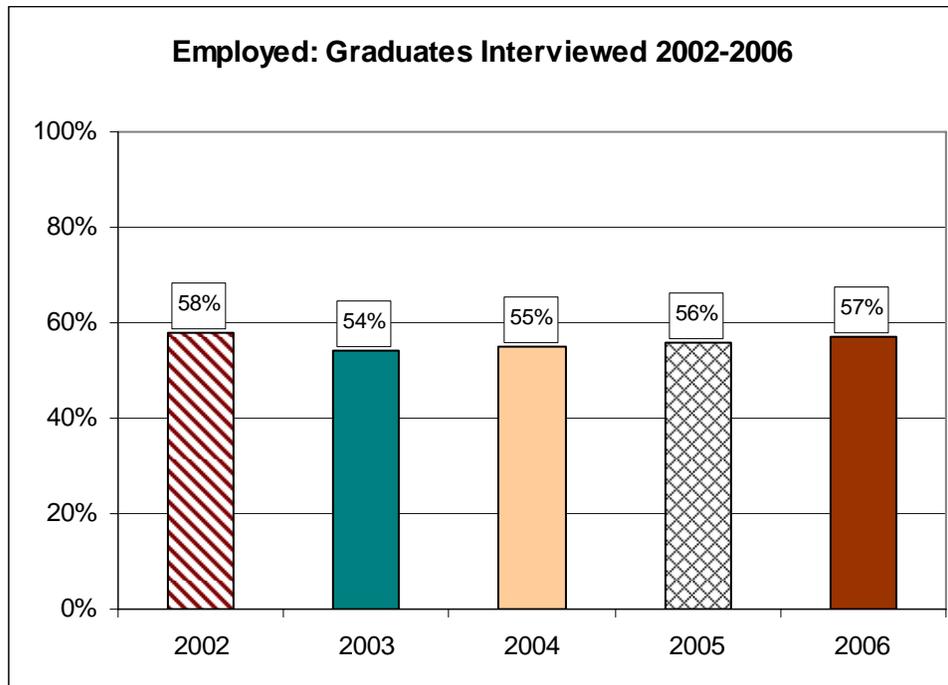
Post-school Outcomes

Outcome: Employment

Of the 3,317 youth contacted, 57% or 1,894 youth were employed at the time of the follow-up interview. As seen in Figure 7 the percentage of youth employed has been steadily rising since 2003.

How many youth are employed?

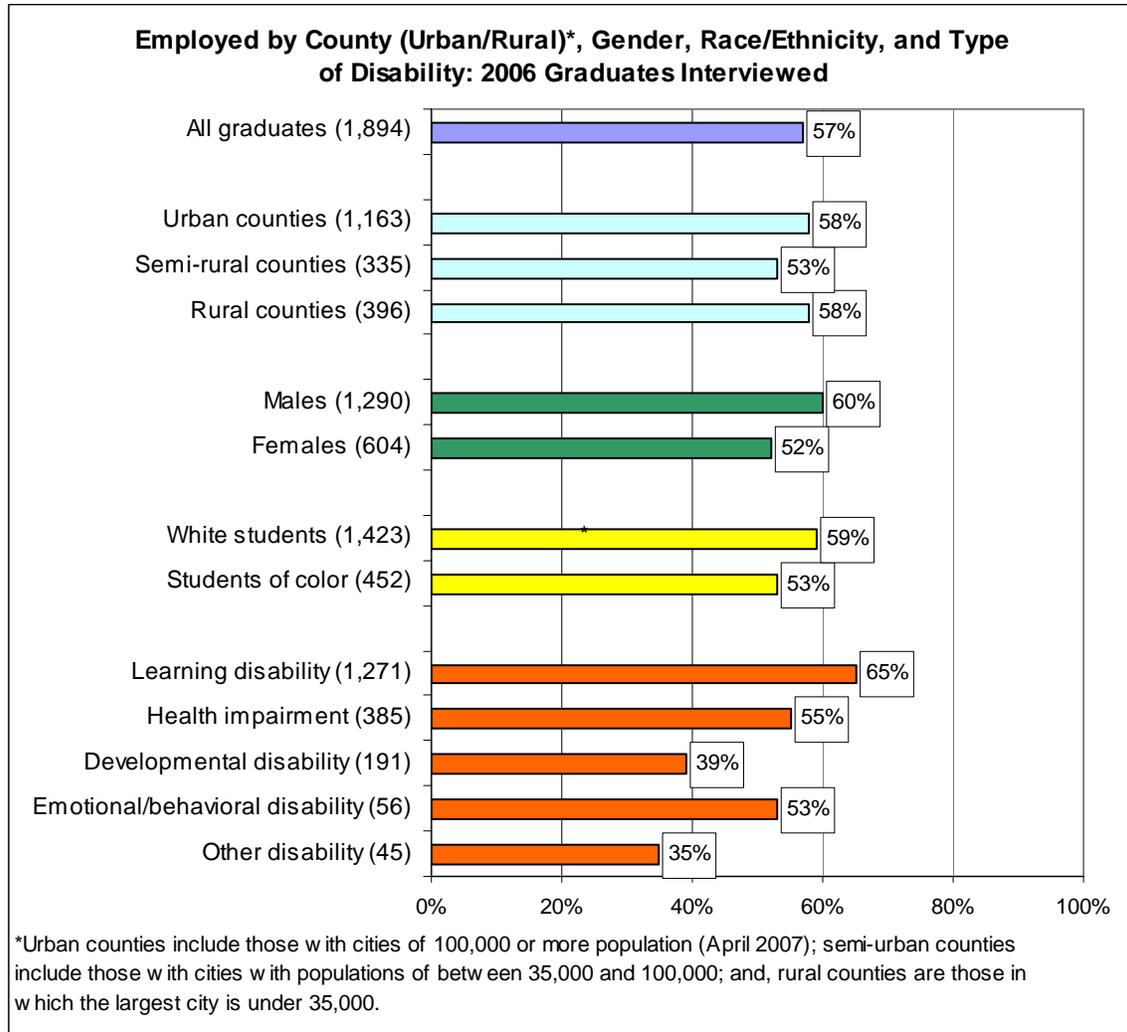
Figure 7: Percentage Employed for Graduates Interviewed 2002-2006



How many youth are employed by county, gender, race/ethnicity, and disability?

There are differences in the percentage of youth employed when disaggregated by county, gender, race/ethnicity and disability (Figure 8). Males are employed at a higher rate than females, 60% compared to 52%. White youth are employed at a higher rate than youth of color, 59% compared to 53%. Within disability categories, youth with learning disabilities continue to be employed at the highest rate when compared to all other disability categories. The greatest difference is the discrepancies between youth with learning disabilities and youth with developmental disabilities, 65% versus 39%.

Figure 8: Employed by County, Gender, Race, & Disability



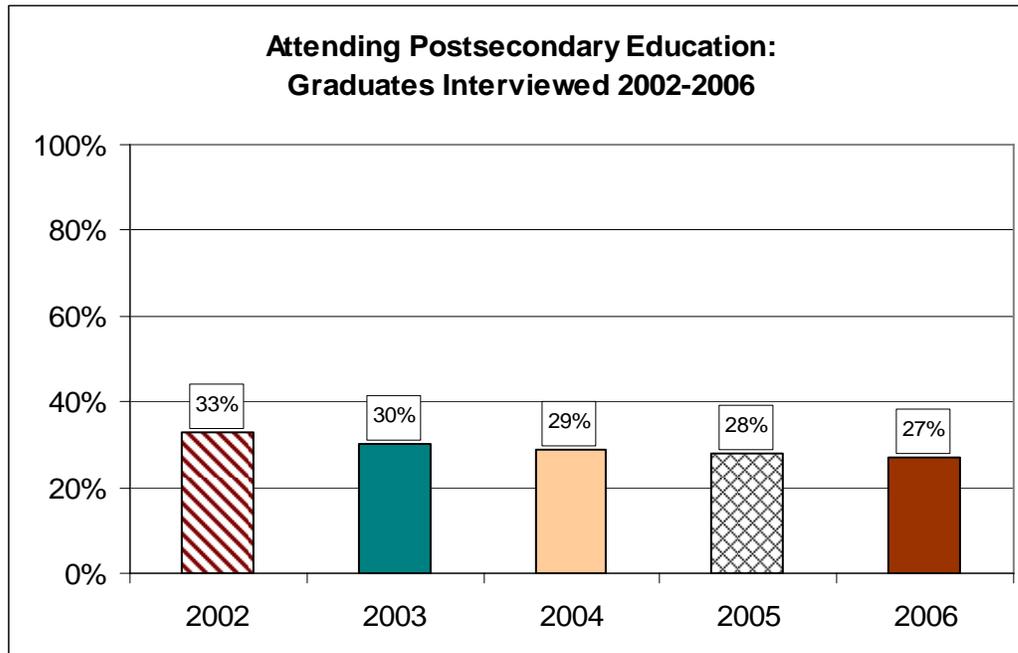
Outcome: Postsecondary Education

The definition of postsecondary education is: 1) 4-year university or college, 2) 2-year community college, and 3) vocation-technical college. Based on the National Post-school Survey Guidelines, military is now counted under employment. Prior to 2005 military was counted as both a training program and as employment.

How many youth are attending postsecondary education?

At the time of the follow-up interview, 901 out of 3,317 graduates contacted or 27% of graduates were attending a 4-year, 2-year or vocational-technical college. As represented in Figure 9, the percentage of all youth attending postsecondary education, regardless of what their postsecondary goal was, has decreased slightly throughout the years from 2002-2006.

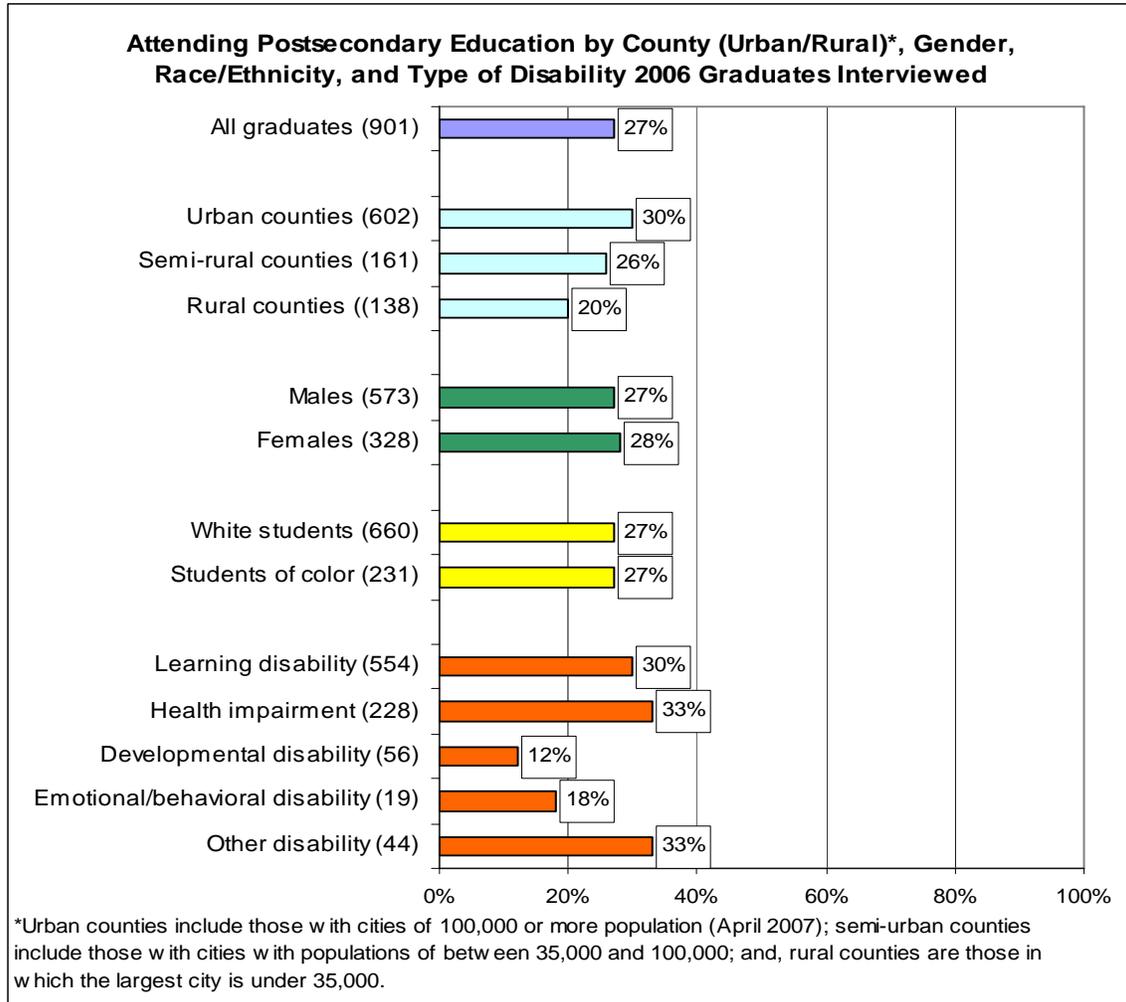
Figure 9: Percentage Attending Postsecondary Education 2002-2006



How many youth are attending postsecondary education by county, gender, race/ethnicity, and disability?

When disaggregating the total number of youth attending postsecondary education by gender slightly more females than males are attending, 28% versus 27%.

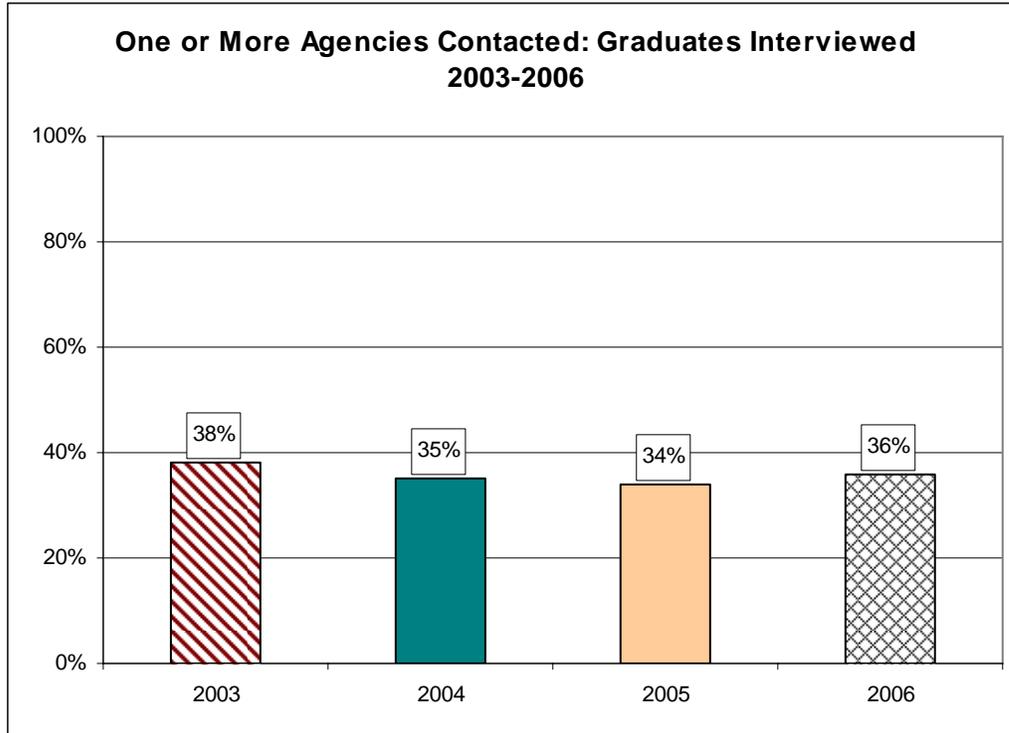
Figure 10: Attending Postsecondary Education by County, Gender, Race, & Disability



Agency Linkages

Within one year of leaving high school, youth and families were asked during the interview if a linkage or connection had been made with an adult service agency. As represented in Figure 11, the percentage of youth connecting with an adult service agency has fluctuated between 2003 and 2006. It is important to note that these percentages do not reflect a link between the agency recommended on the IEP and the agency or agencies the youth connected with. This will be discussed later in the report.

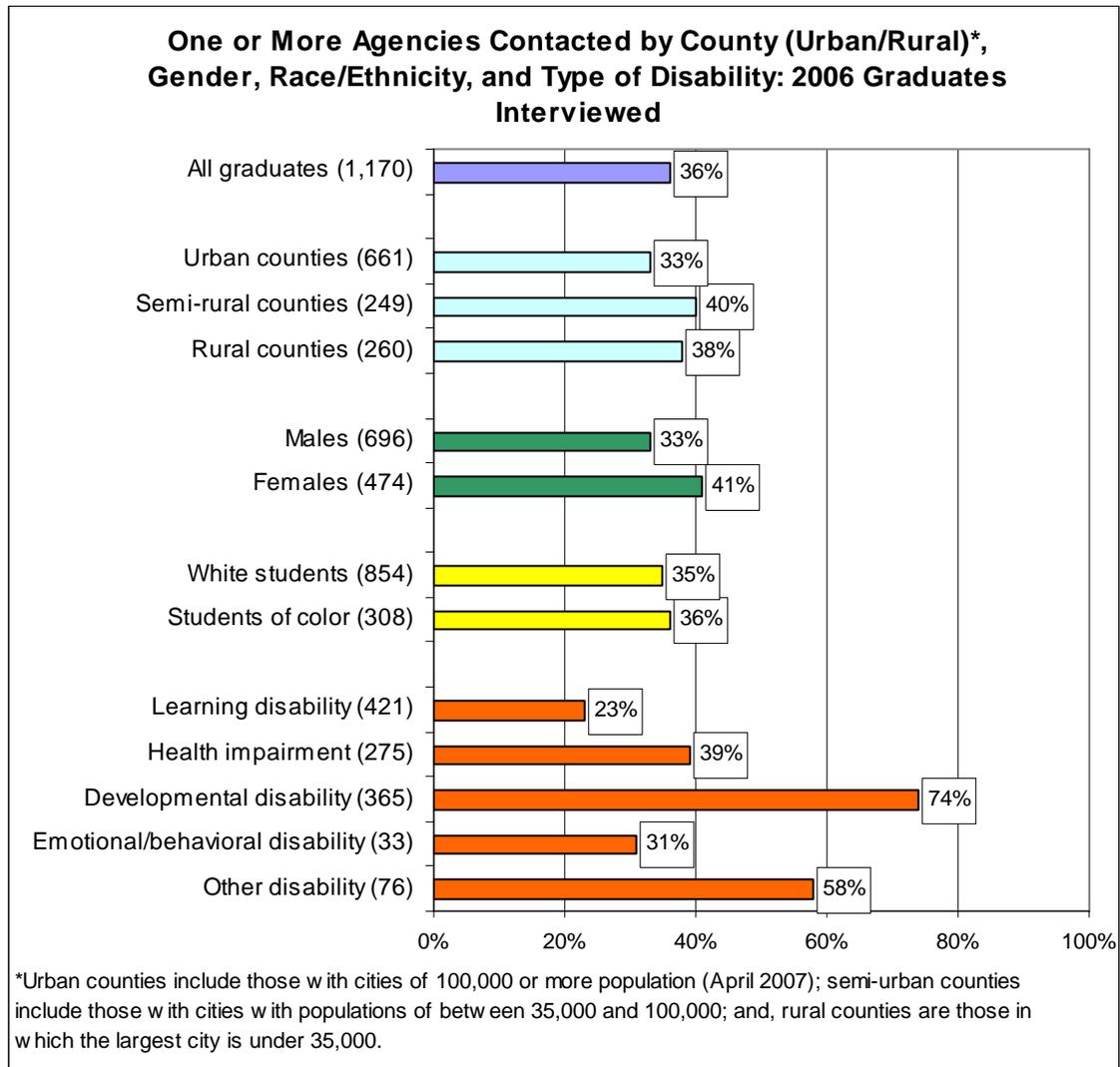
Figure 11: One more More Agencies Contacted 2003-2006



Agency contacted by County, Gender, race/ethnicity, and disability

When looking at who connected with an adult service agency by disability, 74% of youth with developmental disabilities connected with an agency, an increase from 70% of youth in 2005. The percentage of youth with learning disabilities who connected with an agency decreased from 31% in 2005 to 23% in 2006.

Figure 12: One or More Agencies Contacted by County, Gender, Race, & Disability



Post-school Goals

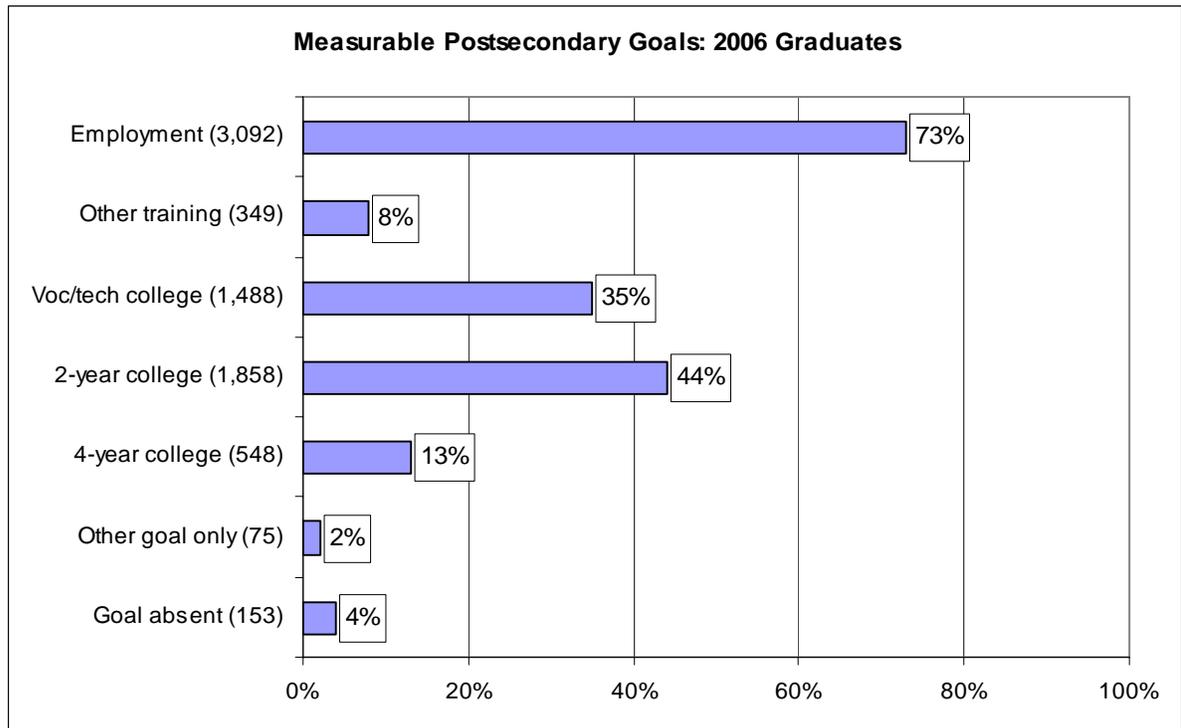
What Information is Gathered From the Final IEP?

Information gathered from the transition portion of the final IEP includes demographic information about the youth including age, gender, ethnicity, disability, and exit status. Information is gathered from the transition portion of the IEP to identify the goals for the student after high school or the measurable postsecondary goal. This includes whether the youth wants to 1) attend postsecondary education or training, such as a 4-year, 2-year, vocational/technical or other training program; 2) gain employment (independent or supported); 3) live independently; and/or 4) identifies an adult service agency as a necessary linkage.

All goals

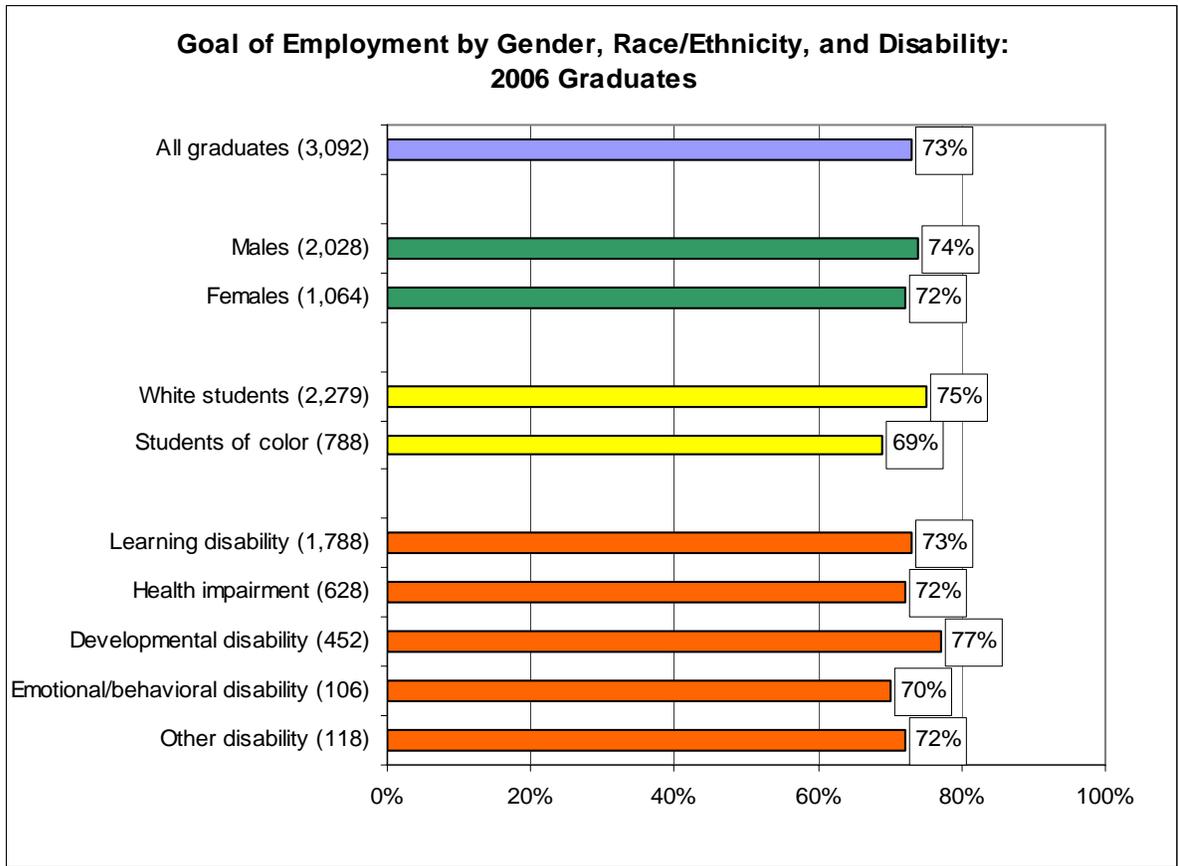
The figure below includes overlapping goals. 88% of the 'other goal only' includes independent or supported living.

Figure 13: Measurable Postsecondary Goals



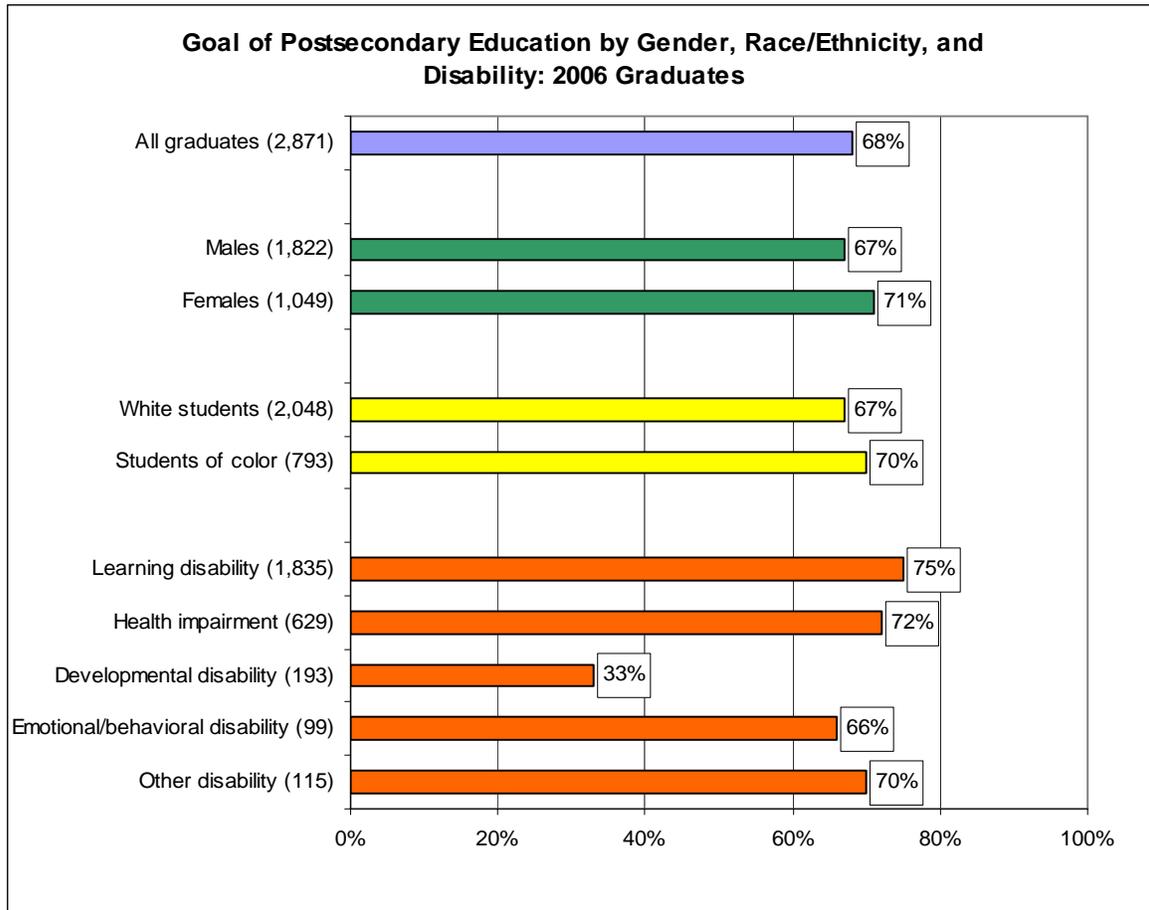
How many youth had the goal of employment by gender, race/ethnicity, and disability?

Figure 14: Goal of Employment by Gender, Race, & Disability



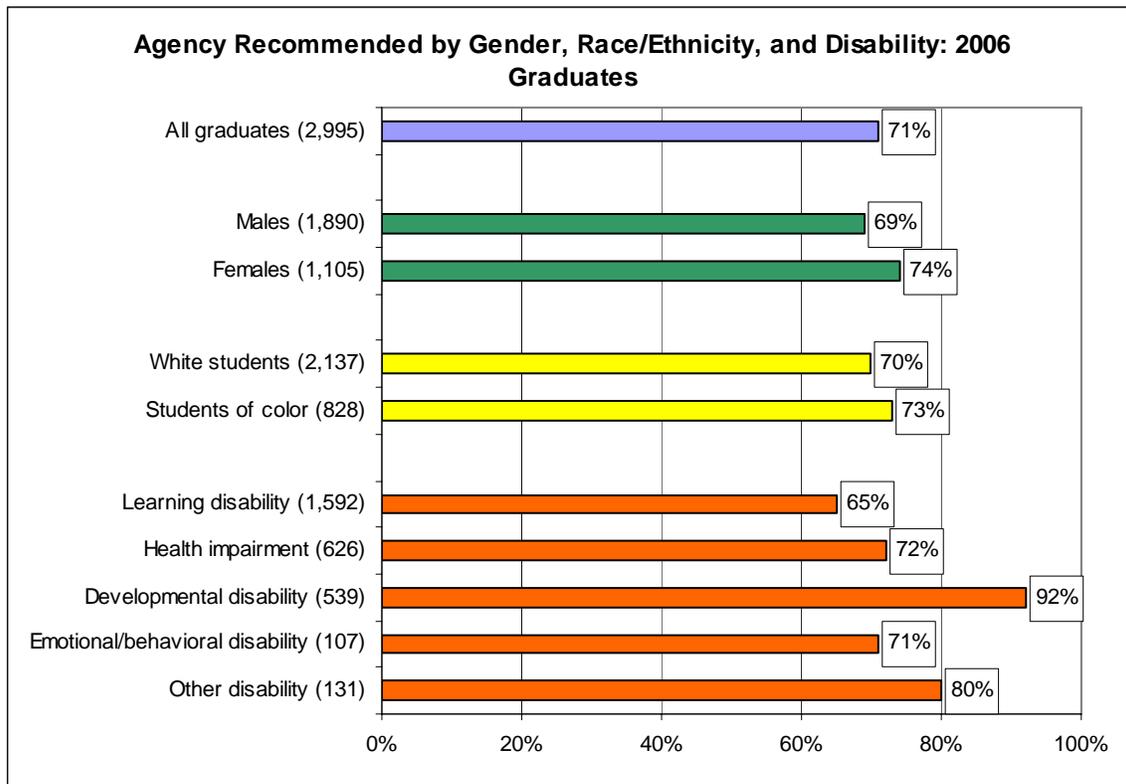
How many had the goal of postsecondary education by gender, race/ethnicity and disability?

Figure 15: Goal of Postsecondary Education by Gender, Race, & Disability



How many had an Agency Recommended by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Disability?

Figure 16: Agency Recommended by Gender, Race, & Disability

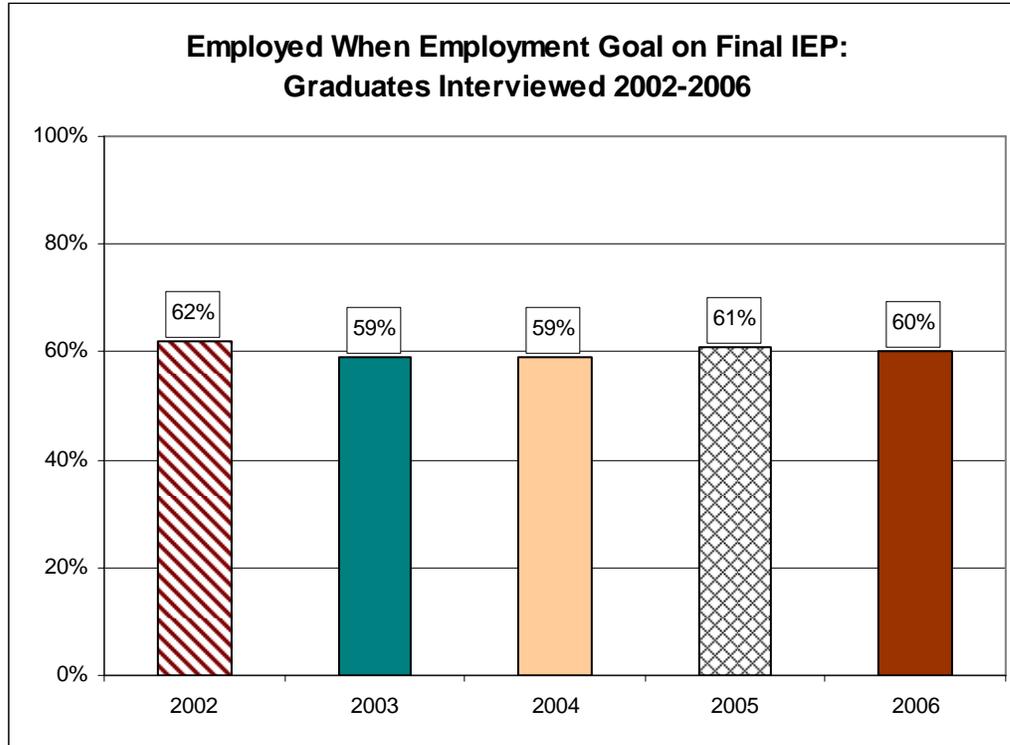


Survey Results (Goal vs. Outcome)

Employment

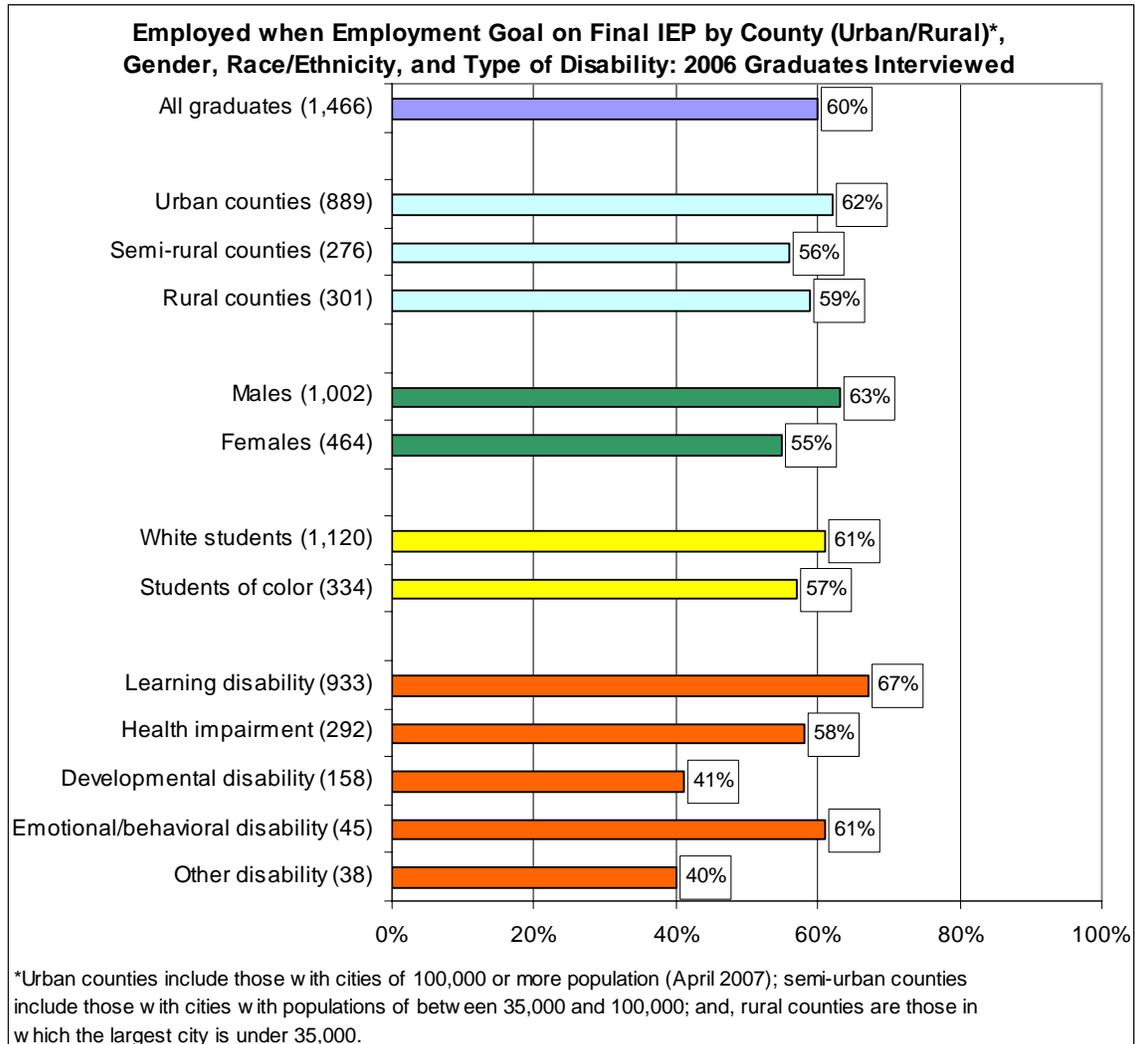
How many are employed when employment was the goal?

Figure 17: Employed When Employment Goal on Final IEP 2002-2006



How many employed when employment was the goal by county, gender, race/ethnicity and disability?

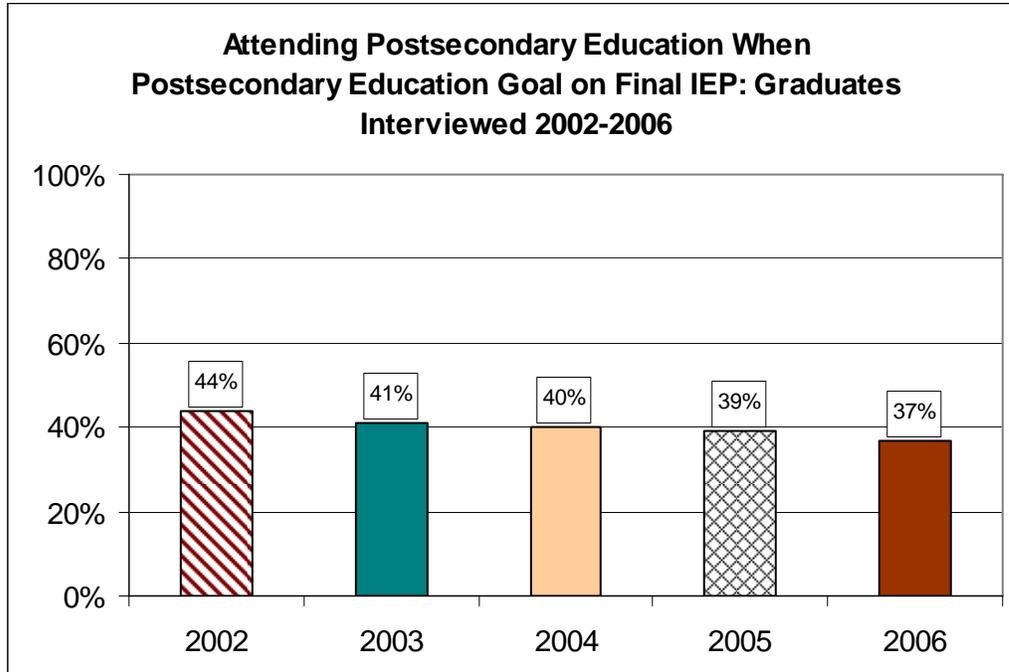
Figure 18: Employed when Employment Goal on Final IEP by County, Gender, Race, & Disability



Postsecondary Education

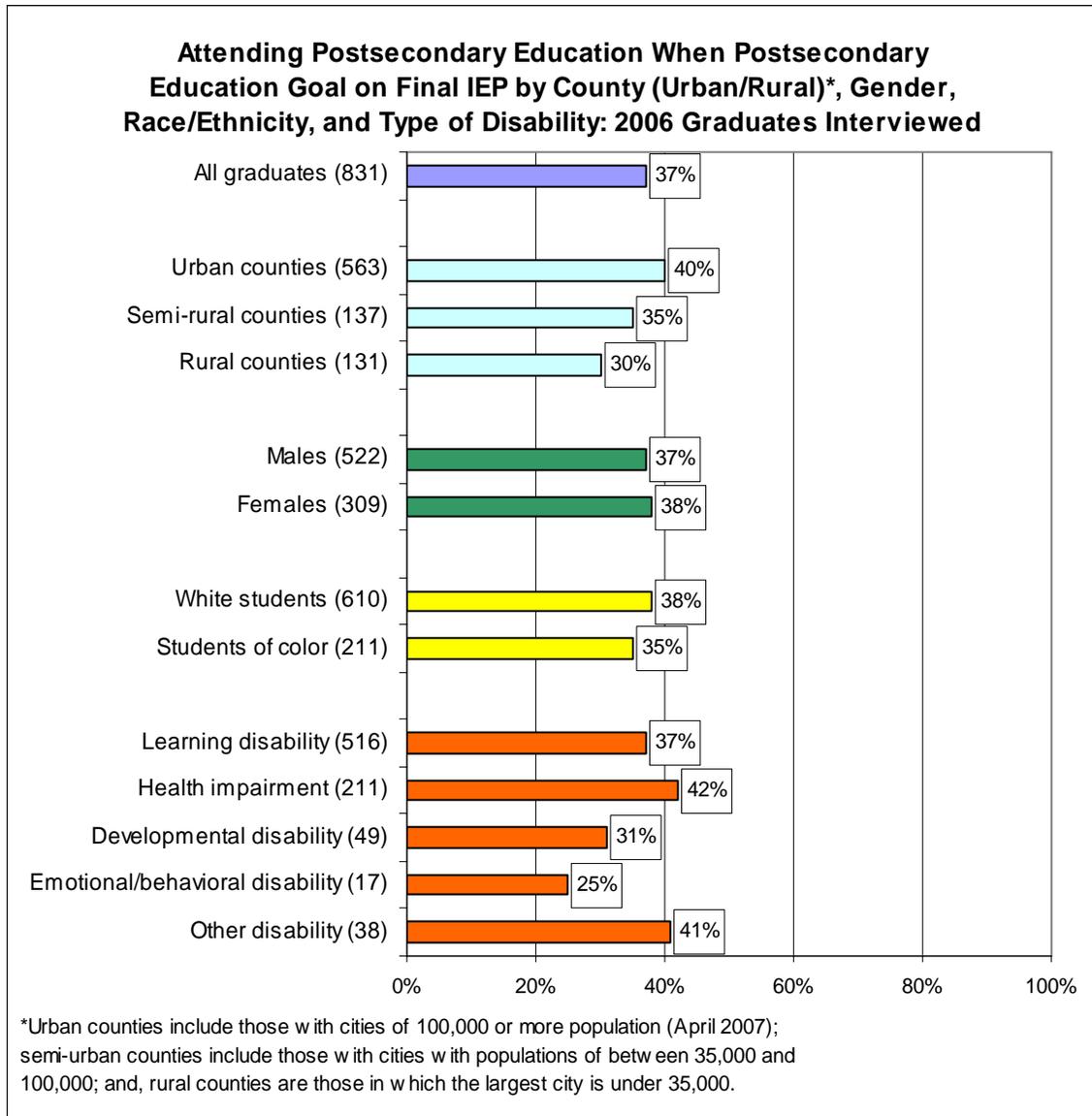
How many are attending when postsecondary education was the goal?

Figure 19: Attending Postsecondary Education When Postsecondary Education Goal on Final IEP 2002-2006



How many attending postsecondary education when it was the goal by county, gender, race/ethnicity, and disability?

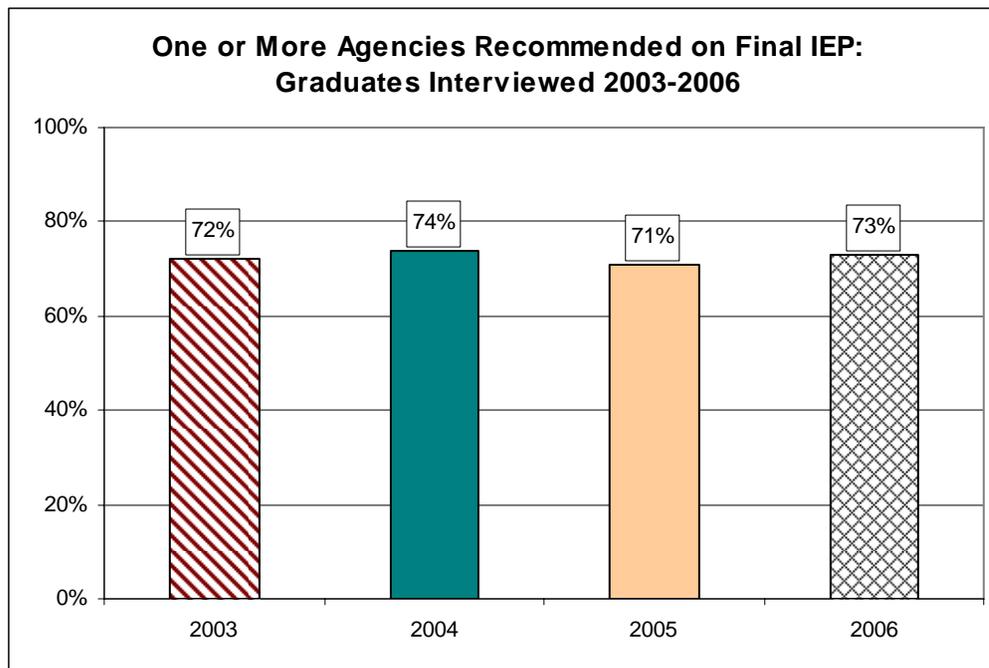
Figure 20: Attending Postsecondary Education When Postsecondary Education Goal on Final IEP by County, Gender, Race, & Disability



Agency Linkages

How many had an agency recommended on the final IEP?

Figure 21: One or More Agencies Recommended on Final IEP



Conclusion: Using Post-school Data for Program Improvement

Beyond the requirements of collecting and reporting these data is the importance of using this information for program improvement. The post-school outcome data are reported at the state, regional, county and district level. Goals are developed at the state and local level to improve programs and outcomes, practices and procedures, and cross agency coordination, collaboration and policy. CCTS works with districts to enhance the examination and use of the data for program improvement and goal setting to increase post-school outcomes. Districts are encouraged to share their post-school data results with teachers and special education staff.

Based on the APR/SPP requirement, the majority of states are now collecting post-school outcome data. However, this was not the case a few years ago, at which time less than half of the states across the nation collected some type of post-school data for employment and postsecondary training. Many of the states currently use other sources rather than collecting these data within the educational system. With a history of over 20 years of research in the area of post-school data and consistent collection over the last eight years, Washington State is a leader in post-school outcome research. Participating school districts' contributions are critical to this effort and they are commended for their work. Districts that gather these data through the examination of IEPs and telephone surveys with the youth and families report that this is powerful information in which to evaluate and improve programs.

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