Clinical Exam Passage Rate Figures

Figure 2. 2018–2021 Clinical exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rates by race/ethnicity

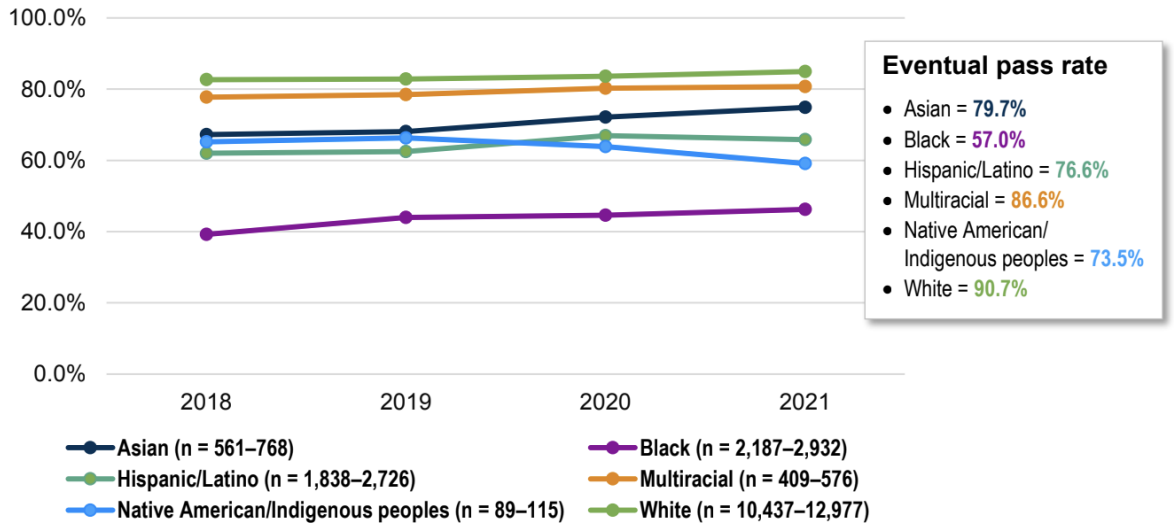


Figure A. 2018–2021 Clinical exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rates by age

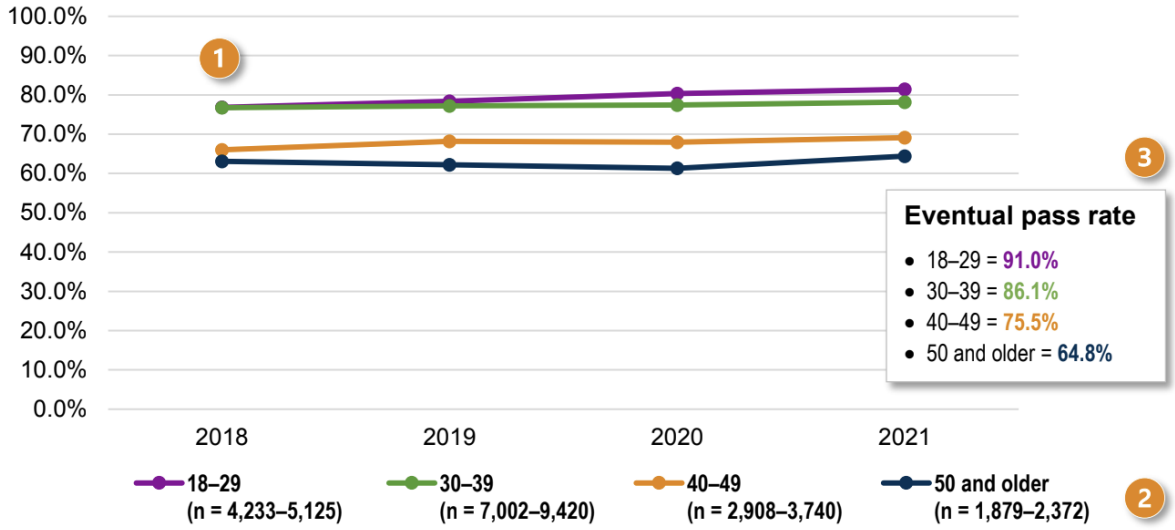


Figure 6. 2018–2021 Clinical exam first-time pass rates by race/ethnicity and gender

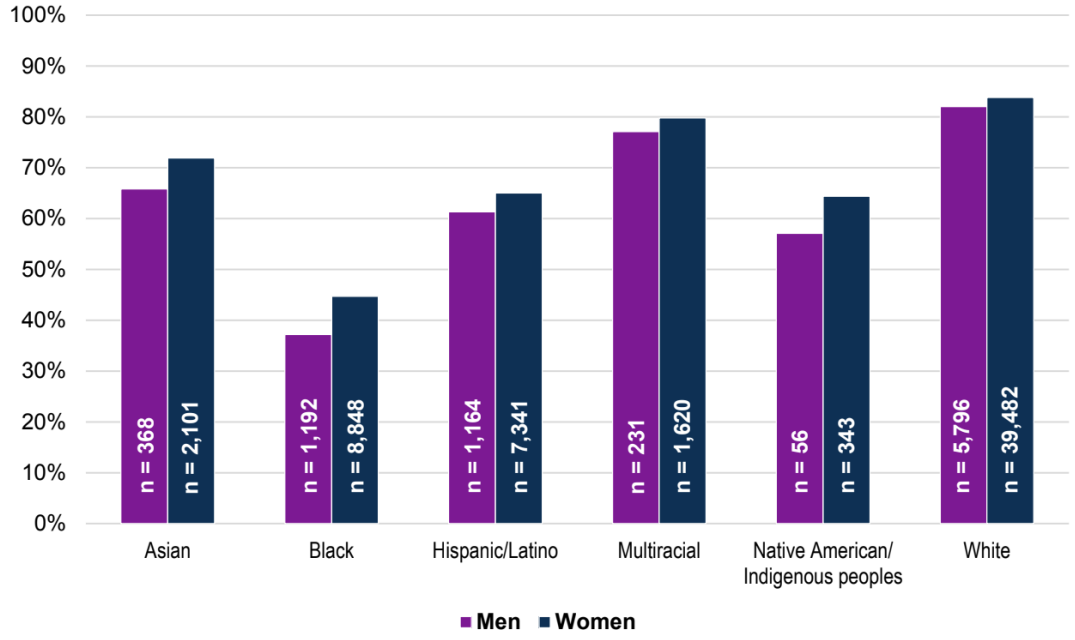


Figure 7. 2018–2021 Clinical exam first-time pass rates by race/ethnicity and age

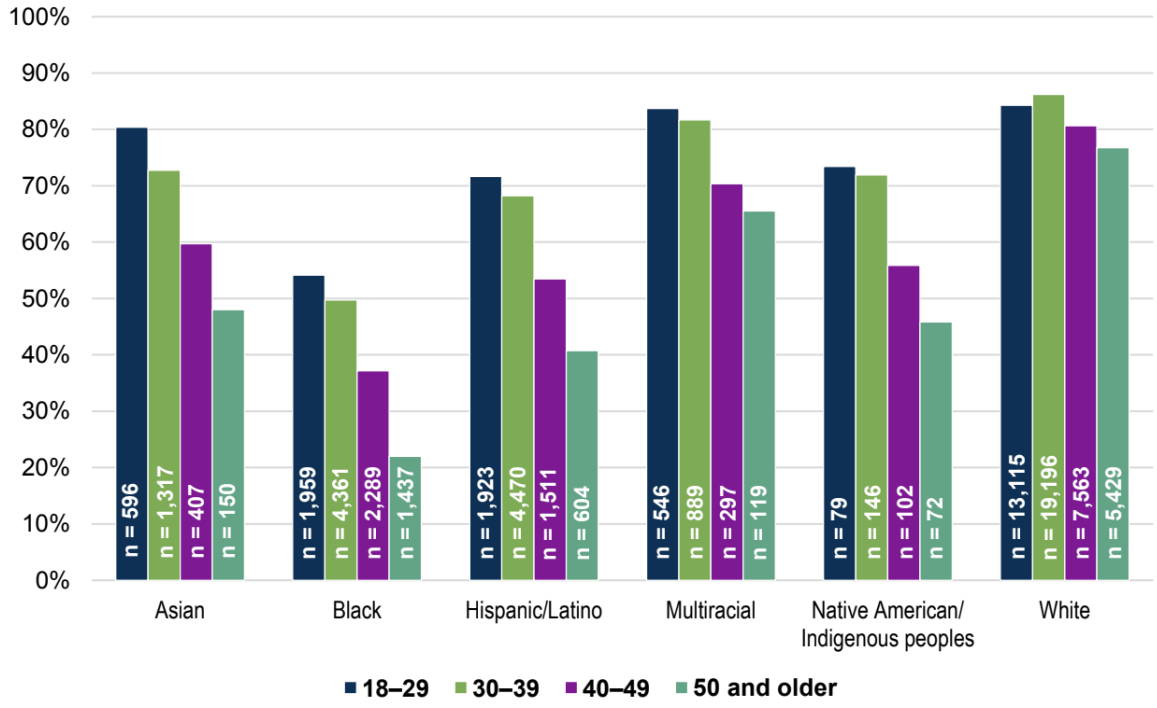
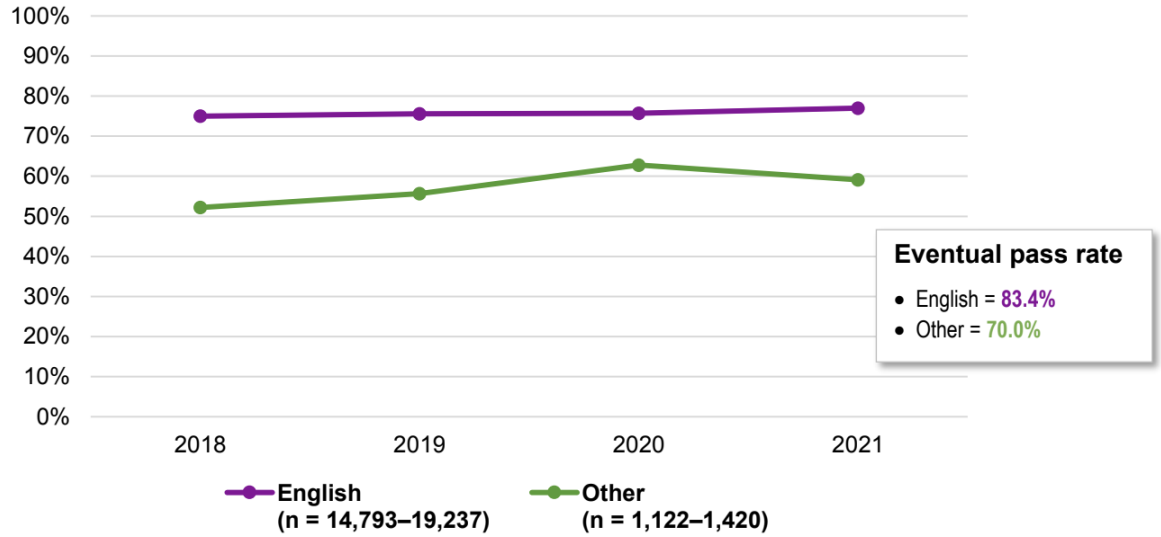


Figure 5. 2018–2021 Clinical exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rates by primary language



Master's Exam Passage Rate Figures

Figure 9. 2018–2021 Masters exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rates by race/ethnicity

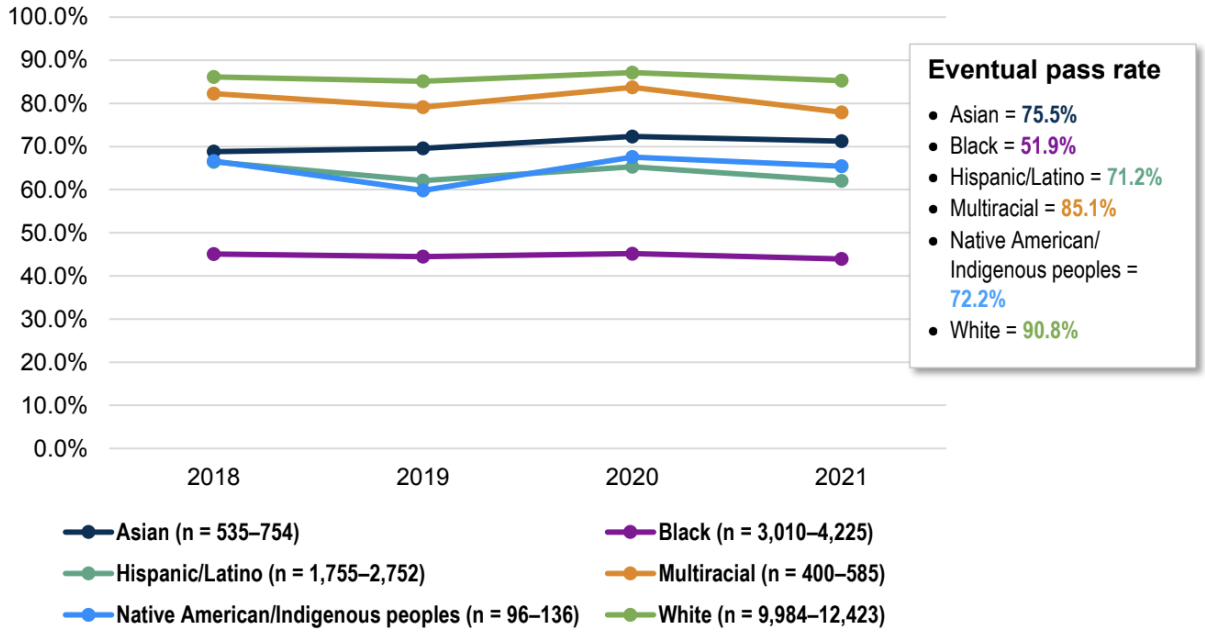


Figure 11. 2018–2021 Masters exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rates by age

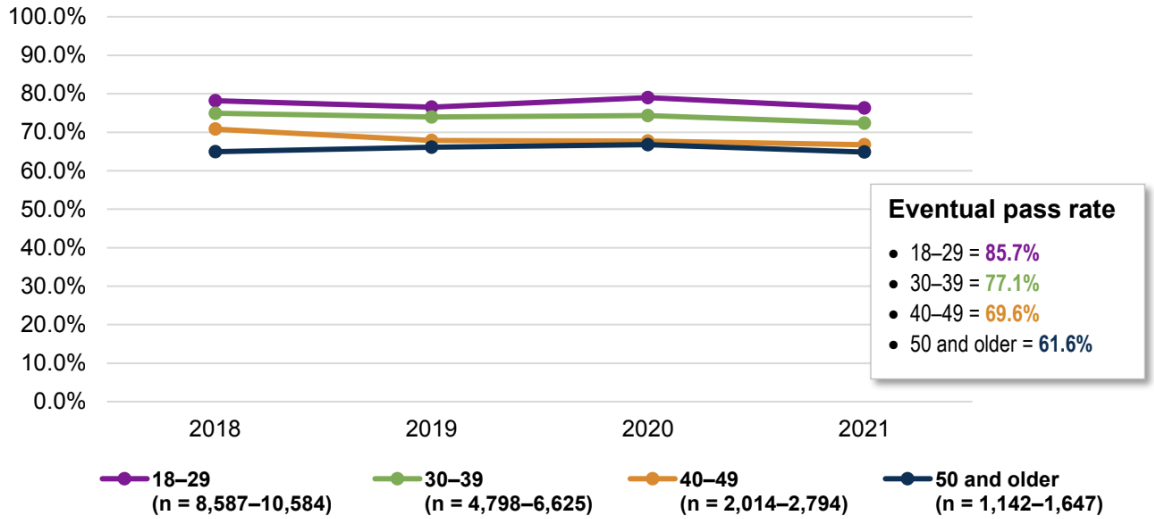


Figure 14. 2018–2021 Masters exam first-time pass rates by race/ethnicity and age

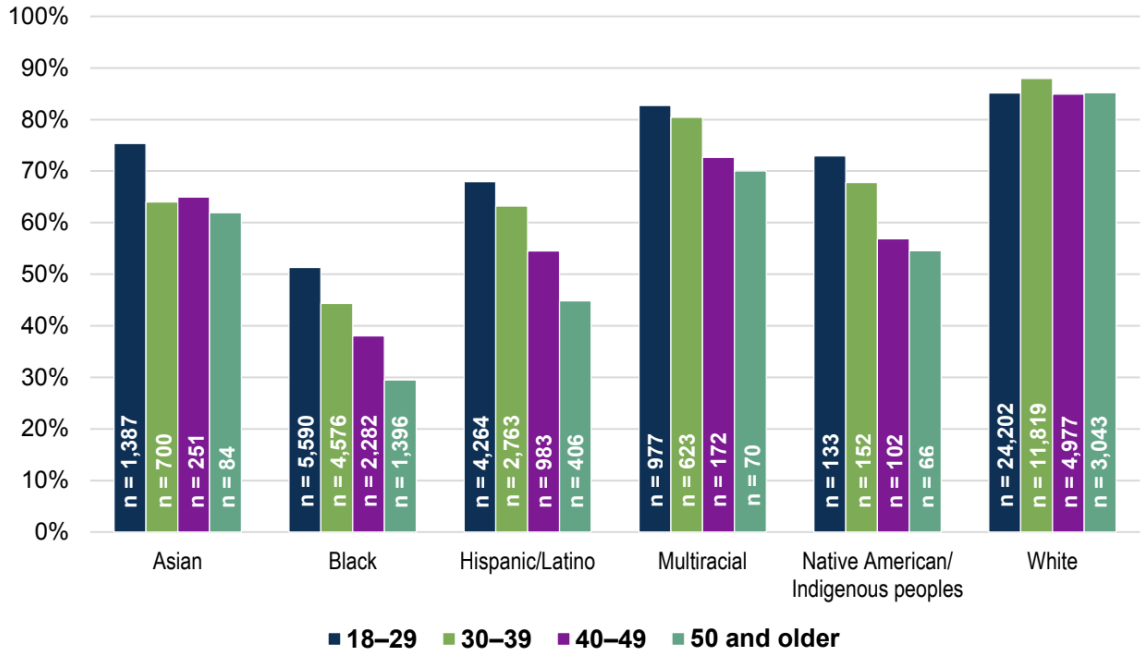
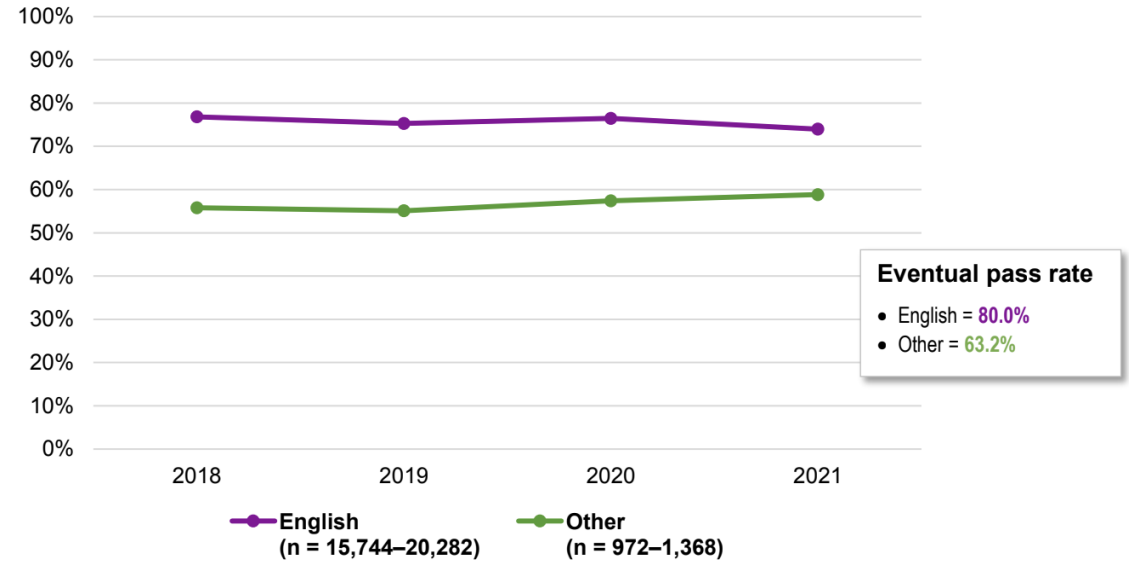


Figure 12. 2018–2021 Masters exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rates by primary language



2022 ASWB Exam Pass Rate Analysis

FINAL REPORT

To the social work community:

At the core of the social work profession is the ability to acknowledge and honor individuals, not in isolation, but as part of their families and communities. This work—and the ability of social workers to lead change—is built on the foundation of professional standards, legally defined in regulation, that ensure competent and ethical practice. In this way, social work serves as a light for society. It is only natural that the Association of Social Work Boards remains true to its values by leading change within the profession. ASWB plays a key role in supporting and serving the social work community to advance safe, competent, and ethical practices to strengthen public protection. One important way we do this is by developing and maintaining social work licensing examinations that meet rigorous standards, ensuring that they are relevant and reflective of current social work practice.

Now, as part of our commitment to fair and uniform exams for all, ASWB is offering additional insight for our profession. For the first time, ASWB is sharing an in-depth analysis of pass rate data for the social work licensing exams, based on demographic information self-reported by test-takers. We have invested in gathering and analyzing these data through a collaboration with our partners at Human Resources Research Organization, a psychometric consulting firm. We are publishing the findings as part of the association's commitment to participating in data-driven conversations around diversity, equity, and inclusion.

This report, the *2022 ASWB Exam Pass Rate Analysis,* is an important starting point in a collective process to better help all test-takers be equally prepared for success on the examinations. By establishing a baseline, these data will enable a conversation about how the profession collectively gets from where we are now to where we want to be. In this new analysis, we observe that pass rates for some demographic groups are lower than for others, highlighting the need to identify potential steps that ASWB can take to address these differences while adhering to the public protection mandate that guides its mission.

ASWB continues to refine its exam development processes and is taking actions that will enhance its already validated examination program, including:

- Continuing to evaluate all aspects of the licensing exam development process, beginning with an in-depth review of item generation, and then implementing a comprehensive, user-centered investigation of test-takers' experiences
- Offering a collection of free resources designed for social work educators to help them understand the exams and candidate performance so they can better prepare their students for the exams and to increase access to exam resources
- Bringing a greater diversity of voices into the exam creation process through the Social Work Workforce Coalition
- Hosting community input sessions to expand the range of perspectives involved in the creation of the next iteration of the exams
- Launching the Social Work Census, an in-depth survey of social workers, to better understand who today's social work practitioners are and what they do

These actions, like this report, represent initial steps that reflect social work values and uphold ASWB's mission to protect the public from harm. The association looks forward to supporting all test-takers in their journey toward licensure and remains committed to serving its member boards by

investing in identifying and enhancing opportunities for social workers to obtain and maintain licensure.

We invite all interested members of the profession to join ASWB on this journey. It is in the power of our collective action that meaningful change can truly take hold.

In partnership,

Roxroy A. Reid, MSW, Ph.D., LCSW
President

Stacey Hardy-Chandler, Ph.D., J.D., LCSW
Chief Executive Officer

August 2022

ASWB Exam Pass Rate Analysis

FINAL REPORT

Contents

INTRODUCTION 1

METHODOLOGY 3

INTERPRETING FIGURES 7

CLINICAL EXAM FINDINGS 10
- Test-taker population 10
- Pass rates 13

MASTERS EXAM FINDINGS 21
- Test-taker population 21
- Pass rates 24

BACHELORS EXAM FINDINGS 32
- Test-taker population 32
- Pass rates 35

ASSOCIATE EXAM FINDINGS 43
- Test-taker population 43
- Pass rates 46

ADVANCED GENERALIST EXAM FINDINGS 53
- Test-taker population 53
- Pass rates 56

DISCUSSION 64

REFERENCES 68

APPENDIX A – EXAMINATION CATEGORIES 70

APPENDIX B – CLINICAL EXAM: ADDITIONAL STATISTICS 72

APPENDIX C – MASTERS EXAM: ADDITIONAL STATISTICS 76

APPENDIX D – BACHELORS EXAM: ADDITIONAL STATISTICS 80

APPENDIX E – ASSOCIATE EXAM: ADDITIONAL STATISTICS 84

APPENDIX F – ADVANCED GENERALIST EXAM: ADDITIONAL STATISTICS 87

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1979, the Association of Social Work Boards is the nonprofit organization composed of the social work regulatory boards and colleges of all 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and all 10 Canadian provinces. ASWB provides support and services to the social work regulatory community to advance safe, competent, and ethical practices to strengthen public protection. As a part of that work, ASWB develops and maintains the social work licensing examinations that are used to test a social worker's competence to practice ethically and safely. In 2021, ASWB administered 66,982 exams to licensure applicants at test centers worldwide.

Regulatory boards and colleges use the exam, along with requirements such as a degree from an accredited social work educational program and supervised experience, to help make licensing decisions. ASWB has processes in place to ensure the exams remain relevant and reflective of current social work practice and follow industry standards for validity and reliability.

On November 9, 2021, ASWB's Board of Directors made the decision to gather, analyze, and release performance data for its examinations as part of an effort to integrate data equity principles into ASWB's work. These principles include providing access to the data found in this report, ensuring reporting is clear and accessible, and working to include more stakeholder voices in future data collection.

The Board's decision also reflects a desire to contribute to the larger conversation about diversity, equity, and inclusion. This report serves as a preliminary step in informing potential actions that ASWB and the social work community can take to address differences in pass rates for different groups while still adhering to the public protection mandate that guides ASWB's mission.

The *2022 Analysis of ASWB Examination Pass Rates: Final Report* is organized into three major sections:

- **Methodology** details the methods, procedures, and decision criteria that the independent team of researchers and psychometricians at Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) used to organize and analyze ASWB's exam performance data.
- **Findings** presents data on the population and performance of test-takers from each of the five exams ASWB administers—Clinical, Masters, Bachelors, Associate, and Advanced Generalist. Refer to Appendix A for more on how each exam category is defined. These data reflect both aggregate counts and pass rates, as well as counts and pass rates broken out by demographic group.
- **Discussion** summarizes inferences suggested by the findings across all exams. It discusses their impact on the profession and how they inform potential future initiatives and research.

METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

This report includes findings from the analysis of test-taker performance data across ASWB's five exams (Clinical, Masters, Bachelors, Associate, and Advanced Generalist) administered between 2011 and 2021, with a particular focus on two time periods: 2011 to 2021 and 2018 to 2021.

By reviewing exam participation and pass rates between 2011 and 2021, the report provides an approximately 10-year period to evaluate changes across time. This metric captures the number of test-takers who have passed the exam between 2011 and 2012 and establishes a robust baseline for comparison to data in future reports.

Data are also presented for the four-year period from 2018 to 2021 to correspond with the current exam blueprint. This blueprint is based on the examination content outlines developed through a survey of the profession as reported in the *2017 Analysis of the Practice of Social Work*. The introduction of a new exam blueprint can result in slight changes to exam content. Focusing on test-takers between 2018 and 2021 allows for more direct comparisons across similar testing experiences.

Data formatting and analysis

Several preparatory steps were conducted before beginning the analyses. First, raw data for all the exams needed to be converted into a usable format. Before processing, raw data were organized by exam administration and therefore included multiple administration instances for some test-takers (i.e., test-takers who had attempted an exam more than once were present multiple times within the same dataset). To address this, analysts developed indicators in the dataset for each test-taker's first attempt, last attempt within a year, and most recent attempt over the 10-year period so that each test-taker was counted only once in the analysis.

Second, it was necessary to identify and define the focal variables for categorizing test-takers for the purposes of analysis. Focal variables, in this context, largely refer to demographic characteristics such as gender, race/ethnicity, age, and primary language. These variables also include other indicators, such as the state or province where test-takers were approved to take the exam and the school from which test-takers earned a social work degree (Note: State/Province and school analyses are available at aswb.org and are not included as part of this report.) When computing rates for demographic groups, individuals were aggregated based on their self-reported demographic information. For some categories, the decision was made to combine subgroups that have traditionally been grouped for analytical purposes and to ensure a sufficient sample size for reporting purposes. For example, test-takers who reported "Puerto Rican" as their race/ethnicity were included as part of the "Hispanic/Latino" group for analyses. Test-taker age was another variable that had to be defined and computed; this was achieved by subtracting test-takers' birth year from their exam administration year.

Once all focal variables were defined and incorporated into the datasets, participation counts and pass rates could be computed for each exam. In general, participation counts were computed by obtaining frequencies of administrations, whereas pass rates were computed by obtaining the pass-fail status for each test-taker by administration. The participation counts and pass rates were calculated for subsets of the data by constraining the data based on (a) the exam attempt indicators previously created and (b) exam year. This way, an individual test-taker would be counted only once when computing each statistic.

Participation counts and pass rates for the various demographic groups were calculated by filtering the data according to the focal variable(s) of interest. For instance, when computing the pass rates for different race/ethnicity categories, the data were first filtered by exam attempt (i.e., first-time vs. repeat) and year or time period, where applicable, and then organized according to the test-takers' race/ethnicity category. The resultant pass rate reflects the percentage of those test-takers within each group who passed the exam the first time they took it or who eventually passed the exam during the target time period.

When computing participation counts and pass rates for intersecting demographic groups (race/ethnicity by gender and race/ethnicity by age), data were first separated by race/ethnicity and then counts and pass rates were computed for either gender or age within each race/ethnicity category.

Participant counts

Two types of participant counts were calculated for this report. Each type of participant count is described in greater detail below:

- **First-time** participation counts reflect the number of test-takers who took an exam for the first time during the target time period regardless of whether they passed the exam. Every test-taker is accounted for only once in the dataset and only for the first exam attempt.
- **Eventual** participant counts reflect the number of test-takers who took the exam over a target time period, but takes into account only test-takers' most recent attempt within that period. For example, a test-taker may have taken the exam multiple times between 2018 and 2021, with the final attempt occurring in 2021. Only the most recent attempt in 2021, however, would be included in the eventual count for the time period between 2018 and 2021. This number reflects the number of test-takers who took the exam, not the number of examinations administered.

Pass rates

Two types of pass rates were calculated for this report. Each type of pass rate is described in greater detail below:

- **First-time** pass rates reflect the percentage of test-takers who took an exam for the first time during the target time period and passed the exam.
- **Eventual** pass rates reflect the percentage of test-takers, both repeat and first-time, who tested during the target time period and eventually passed the exam. For those test-takers who took the exam more than once during the target time period (i.e., repeat test-takers), only the most recent attempt is included in the analysis. For example, a test-taker may have taken the exam multiple times between 2018 and 2021, eventually passing in 2021. Only the most recent attempt in 2021, however, would be included in the calculation of the eventual pass rate for the time period between 2018 and 2021.

Additional considerations

There are additional considerations that are important to note here before proceeding to a presentation of the findings. First, despite two types of outcomes being computed for the purposes of this report (i.e., first-time and eventual), more emphasis will be placed on the presentation of first-time participant counts and pass rates than eventual counts and pass rates. This decision was guided by the fact that findings corresponding with test-takers' first attempts, despite being lower overall for all groups, reflect the most methodologically "clean" data. This, in turn, allows for the most equivalent comparisons across groups because every test-taker in the dataset, regardless of how many exam attempts, attempted an exam at least once. In contrast, the analyses for eventual counts and pass rates are more methodologically "noisy" because of their inclusion of test-takers' "most recent attempt," which can vary widely from test-taker to test-taker. Thus, findings related to counts and pass rates for these types of outcomes are likely to be influenced not only by variation in the number of times test-takers may have attempted an exam, but also by extraneous factors (e.g., practice effects, changes in mood/anxiety with repeated attempts, increases in length of time since graduation), which can accumulate over repeated attempts and affect performance in non-systematic ways. Eventual counts and pass rates are still helpful in that they highlight how many individuals eventually pass the exam regardless of number of attempts. For making the most direct comparisons, however, particularly with respect to how demographic groups are performing on the exam, findings related to test-takers' first attempts are easier to interpret. The exception to this is findings for the Associate and Advanced Generalist exams, which will largely focus on eventual pass rates because of the low sample sizes for those exams.

Second, when interpreting the findings presented in this report, it is important to keep in mind the limitations of the available data. The demographic variables depicted in the findings are based on self-reporting and limited by the response options available to each test-taker at the time of exam administration. The options may not reflect the various ways that individuals identify and describe themselves. This is particularly the case for categories related to gender and race/ethnicity. While some categories currently include response options that allow the test-taker to fill in a response, these options were introduced more recently into registration forms and were therefore not consistently available to all test-takers during the target time periods. One demographic variable reported by test-takers is primary language, which they indicate when registering for the exam. The social work licensing exams are currently offered only in English. Some jurisdictions allow special arrangements for test-takers who indicate that English is not their primary language; these may include extra time on the exam and the use of one or two dictionaries. The findings reported are based on self-reporting of primary language, however, not on the use of special arrangements.

Finally, the current dataset reflects low sample sizes associated with some demographic groups, such as test-takers from historically marginalized racial/ethnic communities (e.g., Native American/Indigenous peoples), test-takers in higher age categories, and test-takers whose primary language is not English. Small samples were also an issue for the Advanced Generalist and Associate exams regardless of demographic group. Although sample sizes are included for all reported findings to help inform and guide comparisons, it is recommended that findings for groups with small sample sizes (less than 50 test-takers) be interpreted with caution. To protect the privacy of individual test-takers, findings are not reported for samples where the number of test-takers is less than 10.

INTERPRETING FIGURES

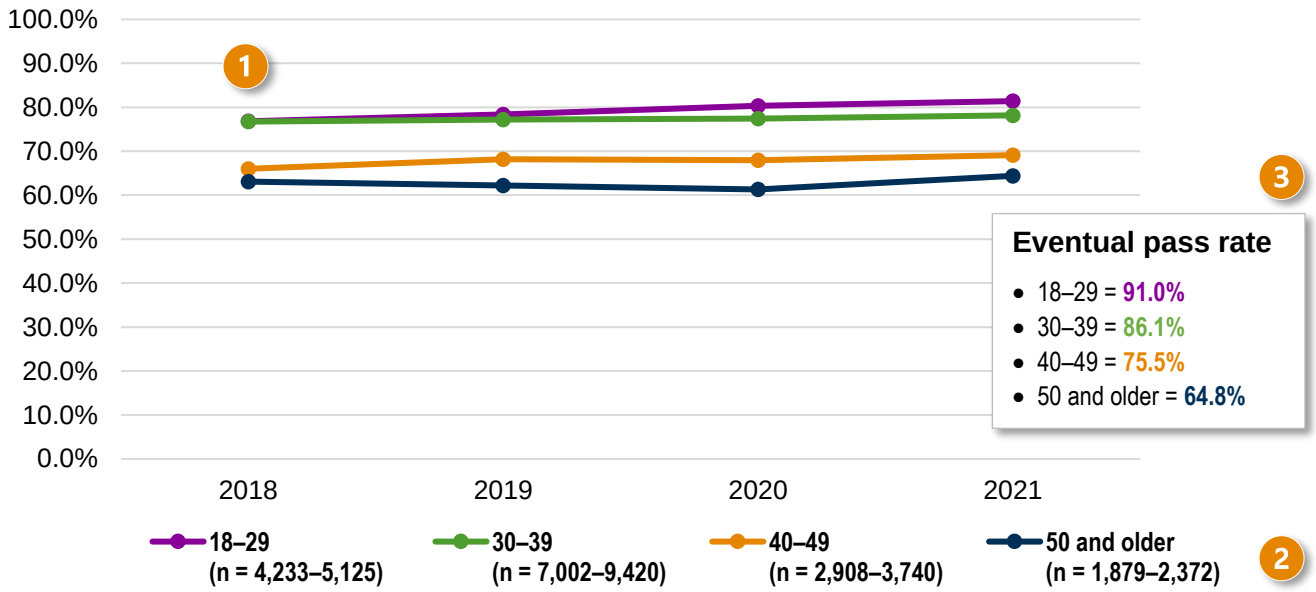
INTERPRETING FIGURES

To help guide readers in interpreting the figures presented in this report, examples are provided below.

Line graphs

In this report, line graphs are used to depict trends in pass rates across time, either from 2011 to 2021 or from 2018 to 2021, depending on the exam. Several pieces of information are incorporated into each line graph, designated here by a number in an orange circle.

Figure A. 2018–2021 Clinical exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rates by age



1. **First-time pass rates** are reported on a year-by-year basis for the target time period using individual lines to represent different demographic subgroups. The lines are presented to reflect longitudinal trends over the target time period. First-time pass rates by year, where applicable, are provided in supplementary tables in the appendices.

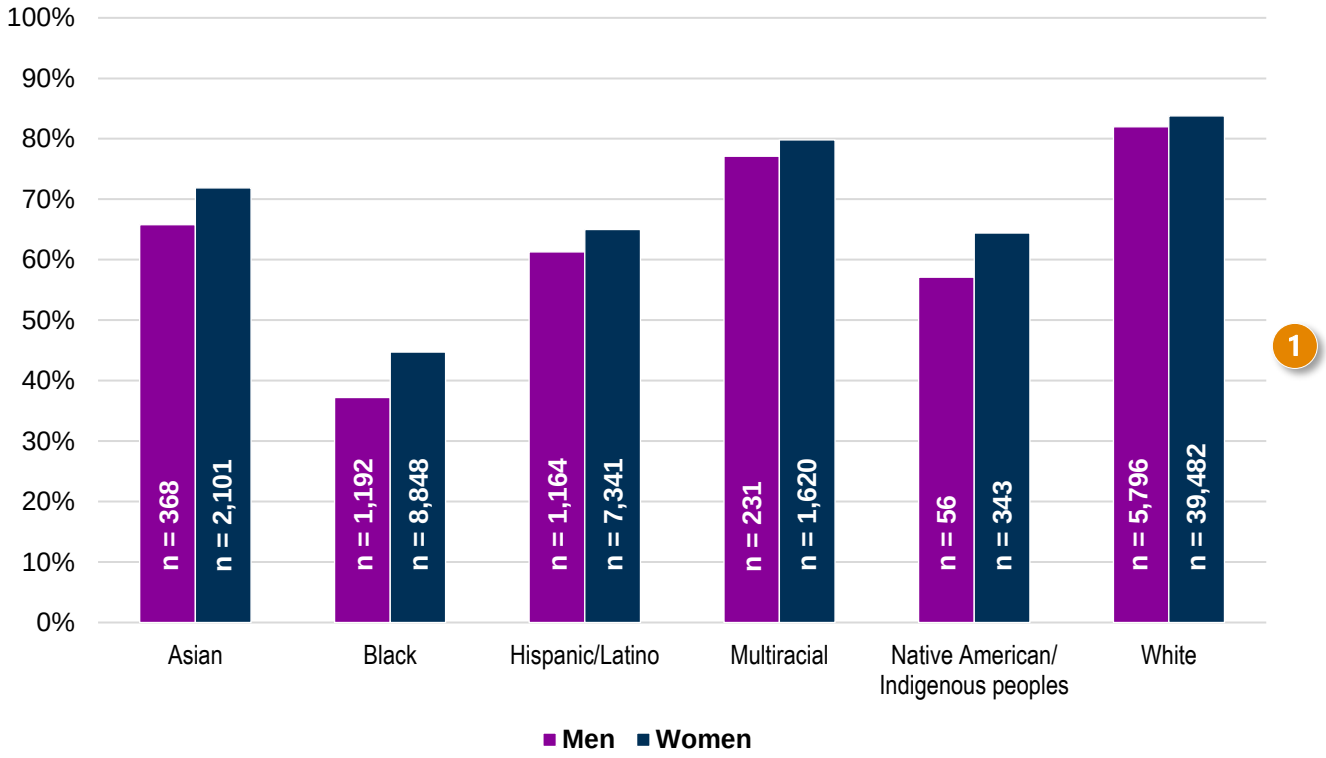
2. **The legend** provides information about which demographic subgroups are represented in the graph. Alongside each subgroup is a range, which reflects the number of test-takers from each subgroup who took the exam during the target time period. For example, "n=4,233–5,125" below "18–29" means that the annual number of first-time test-takers in that age category between 2018 and 2021 ranged from 4,233 to 5,125. These ranges are given to provide context for interpreting the graph, particularly in cases where the sample sizes are low, which could show more volatility in longitudinal trends.

3. **Eventual pass rates** are reported for test-takers in a call-out box to the right of the graph. These pass rates reflect the most recent exam attempt by test-takers over the target time period. In the example above, an eventual pass rate of 91 percent for test-takers in the 18–29 age category means that, for test-takers in that age category who took the exam between 2018 and 2021, 91 percent eventually passed the exam. This includes both first-time and repeat test-takers.

Bar charts

In this report, bar charts are used to depict aggregated pass rates within a target time period. Pass rates featured in bar charts may reflect either first-time or eventual pass rates and are aggregated from either 2011 to 2021 or 2018 to 2021, depending on the sample size of the test-taker population. Eventual pass rates and 10-year aggregates are typically reported when test-taker populations are small. Bar charts are also used to report on intersectional findings. Refer to the figure title to determine which pass rate and target time period are being reported.

Figure B. 2018–2021 Clinical exam first-time pass rates by race/ethnicity and gender



1 **Bar charts** feature the sample size of each demographic subgroup superimposed on the bars themselves. These sample sizes reflect the total number of test-takers who took the exam within the target time period. These samples could reflect either the total number of first-time test-takers within a target time period or the total number of eventual test-takers (i.e., first-time and repeat) within a target time period. Refer to the figure title to determine which sample is being referenced in the chart.

CLINICAL EXAM FINDINGS

CLINICAL EXAM FINDINGS

Test-taker population

Test-taker population overall

Between 2011 and 2021, the number of Clinical exam first-time test-takers has steadily increased from 9,100 test-takers in 2011 to 20,657 test-takers in 2021 (a 127 percent increase). The slight drop in the number of test-takers in 2020 to 16,801 was likely caused by the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions that reduced capacity in testing centers to accommodate social distancing.

Table 1. 2011–2021 number of Clinical exam first-time test-takers

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total test-takers	9,100	9,604	10,879	12,217	13,044	14,007	16,095	16,022	17,207	16,801	20,657

Test-taker population by race/ethnicity

From 2011 to 2021, white test-takers made up the largest proportion of Clinical exam first-time test-takers, comprising approximately 75 percent in 2011, but decreasing to 63 percent by 2021.

This decrease in the proportion of white first-time test-takers corresponded with an increase in the overall proportion of first-time test-takers from historically marginalized communities, which grew from 20.6 percent in 2011 to 34.5 percent in 2021. (Note: For the purposes of this report, "historically marginalized communities" includes test-takers who reported their race/ethnicity as Asian, Black, Hispanic/Latino, multiracial, and Native American/Indigenous peoples.) The largest increase in the proportion of first-time test-takers was observed for Hispanic/Latino test-takers, which grew 8 percent from 2011 to 2021.

Table 2. 2011–2021 number of Clinical exam first-time test-takers by race/ethnicity

Race/ Ethnicity	In 2011	Proportion of test-takers	In 2021	Proportion of test-takers	Total 2011–2021	Proportion increase/ decrease 2011–2021
Asian	162	2%	768	4%	4,805	+2%
Black	1,079	12%	2,932	14%	20,858	+2%
Hispanic/Latino	466	5%	2,726	13%	14,988	+8%
Multiracial	119	1%	576	3%	3,423	+2%
Native American/ Indigenous peoples	57	1%	115	1%	911	0%
White	6,855	75%	12,977	63%	105,758	-12%
Total	9,100	--	20,657	--	155,633	--

Note. Percentages may not total 100 percent because test-takers who selected options such as Prefer not to say or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

Test-taker population by gender

The number of individuals taking the Clinical exam more than doubled from 2011 to 2021, but the proportion of men and women taking the exam remained approximately the same, with women making up a larger proportion (87 percent) compared to men (13 percent).

Table 3. 2011–2021 number of Clinical exam first-time test-takers by gender

Gender	In 2011	Proportion of test-takers	In 2021	Proportion of test-takers	Total 2011–2021	Proportion increase/ decrease 2011–2021
Men	1,212	13%	2,618	13%	20,586	0%
Women	7,888	87%	18,007	87%	134,969	0%
Total	9,100	--	20,657	--	155,633	--

Note. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

Pass rates

The sections that follow provide findings related to first-time and eventual pass rates for individuals taking the Clinical exam. Figures show first-time pass rate trends, as well as eventual pass rates aggregated over the target time period. Refer to Methodology for more information on the distinction between first-time and eventual pass rates.

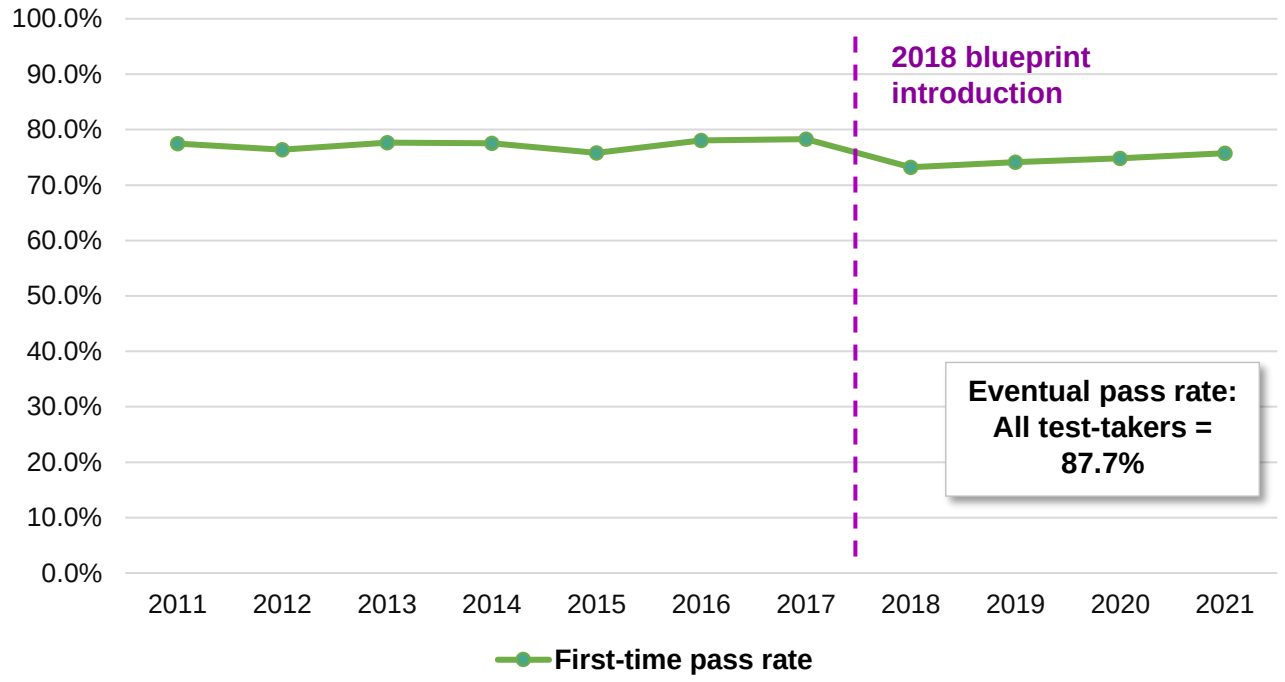
First-time pass rate numbers by year are not reported in the figures below but can be found in Appendix B.

First-time and eventual pass rates

From 2011 to 2021, most test-takers (76.1 percent) passed the Clinical exam on their first attempt. Refer to Table B1 in Appendix B for first-time pass rate numbers by year. When taking into account the number of test-takers who passed the exam regardless of whether it was their first or a subsequent attempt (i.e., eventual pass rate), even more test-takers (87.7 percent) passed the Clinical exam during this time period.

First-time pass rates decreased slightly (~5 percent) between 2017 and 2018. This decrease most likely occurred because of the introduction of a new exam blueprint. Refer to Methodology for more information on exam blueprints.

Figure 1. 2011–2021 Clinical exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rate



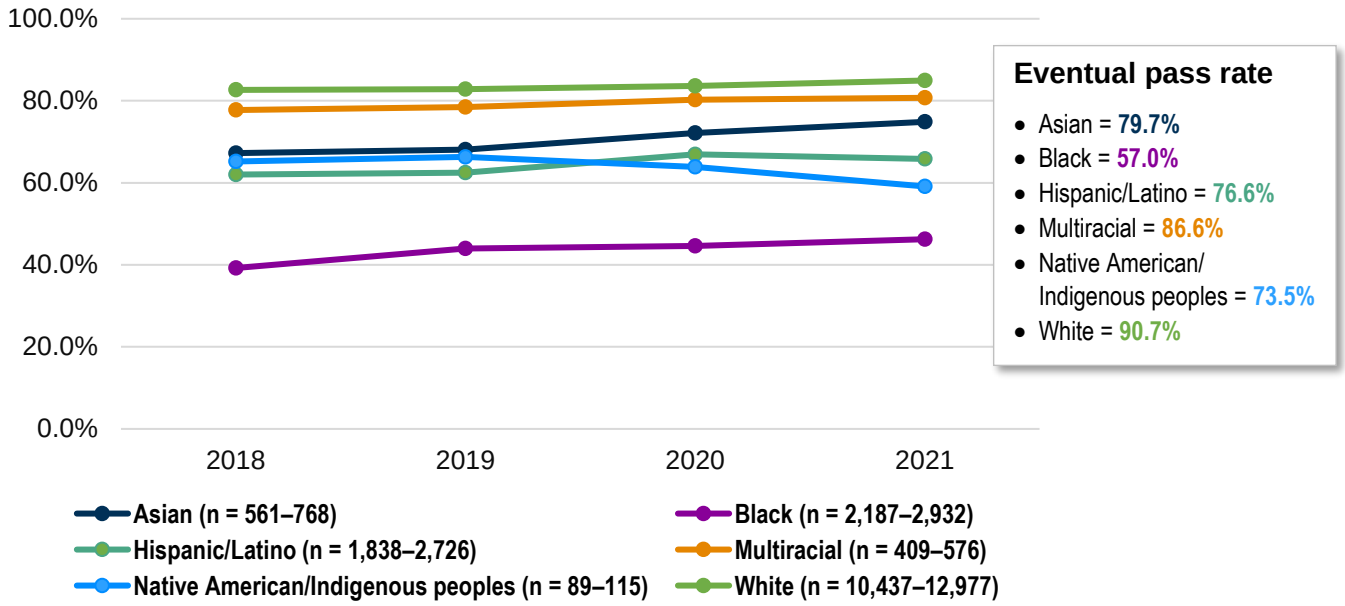
Pass rates by race/ethnicity

When considering the Clinical exam performance of test-takers by race/ethnicity, first-time pass rates have historically been highest for white test-takers, averaging 83.9 percent during the 2018–2021 time period, followed by multiracial (79.9 percent), Asian (72 percent), Hispanic/Latino (65.1 percent), Native American/Indigenous peoples (62.9 percent), and Black (45 percent) test-takers. Refer to Table B2 in Appendix B for first-time pass rate numbers by year. Eventual pass rates were higher overall across all race/ethnicity groups but demonstrated the same pattern as described for first-time pass rates.

By comparison, first-time pass rates for white test-takers have remained relatively stable during the four-year period, increasing 2.3 percent between 2018 and 2021. Black test-takers displayed some of the most significant growth in first-time pass rates, increasing 7 percent from 2018 to 2021. Asian test-takers also demonstrated a substantial increase (7.6 percent) in pass rates during this same time period; however, the number of Asian test-takers was notably smaller than the number of Black test-takers, so comparisons between these two groups may be difficult. Pass rates grew slightly for Hispanic/Latino and multiracial test-takers between 2018 and 2021, increasing by approximately 4 percent and 3 percent respectively.

Native American/Indigenous peoples test-takers showed a decrease of 6 percent in first-time pass rates between 2018 and 2021. This finding should be interpreted with caution because the relatively small sample size of this population may reflect more variation in pass rates from year to year compared to groups with larger sample sizes.

Figure 2. 2018–2021 Clinical exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rates by race/ethnicity

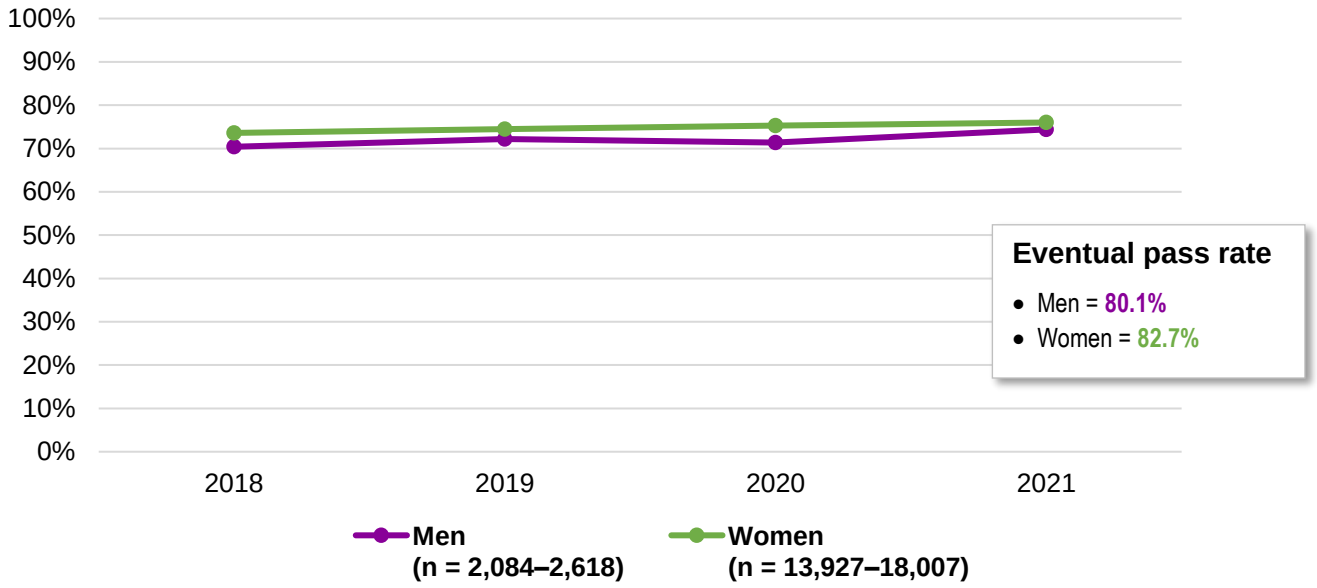


Note. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

Pass rates by gender

Reviewing Clinical exam performance by gender, pass rates were slightly higher for women than for men. This was the case for each year from 2018 to 2021, as well as when averaging across the four-year time period, for which the first-time pass rate was 75.3 percent for women and 72.8 percent for men. Refer to Table B3 in Appendix B for first-time pass rate numbers by year. Eventual pass rates were higher overall for both women and men but demonstrated the same pattern as described for first-time pass rates.

Figure 3. 2018–2021 Clinical exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rates by gender

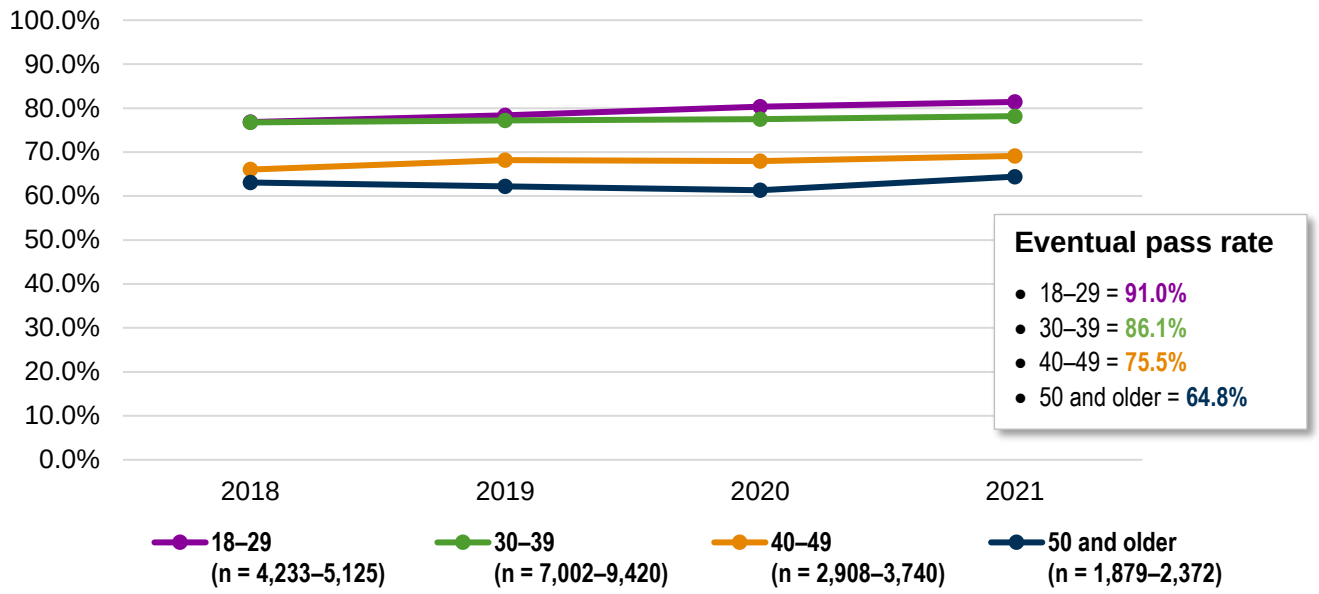


Note. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

Pass rates by age

Reviewing Clinical exam performance by age, pass rates were higher for test-takers in lower age categories than for higher age categories. Averaging across 2018 to 2021, the first-time pass rate was 80.1 percent for test-takers between the ages of 18 and 29, 77.7 percent for those between the ages of 30 and 39, 68.5 percent for those between the ages of 40 and 49, and 62.8 percent for those 50 years and older. Refer to Table B4 in Appendix B for first-time pass rate numbers by year. Eventual pass rates were higher across all age categories but demonstrated the same pattern as described for first-time pass rates.

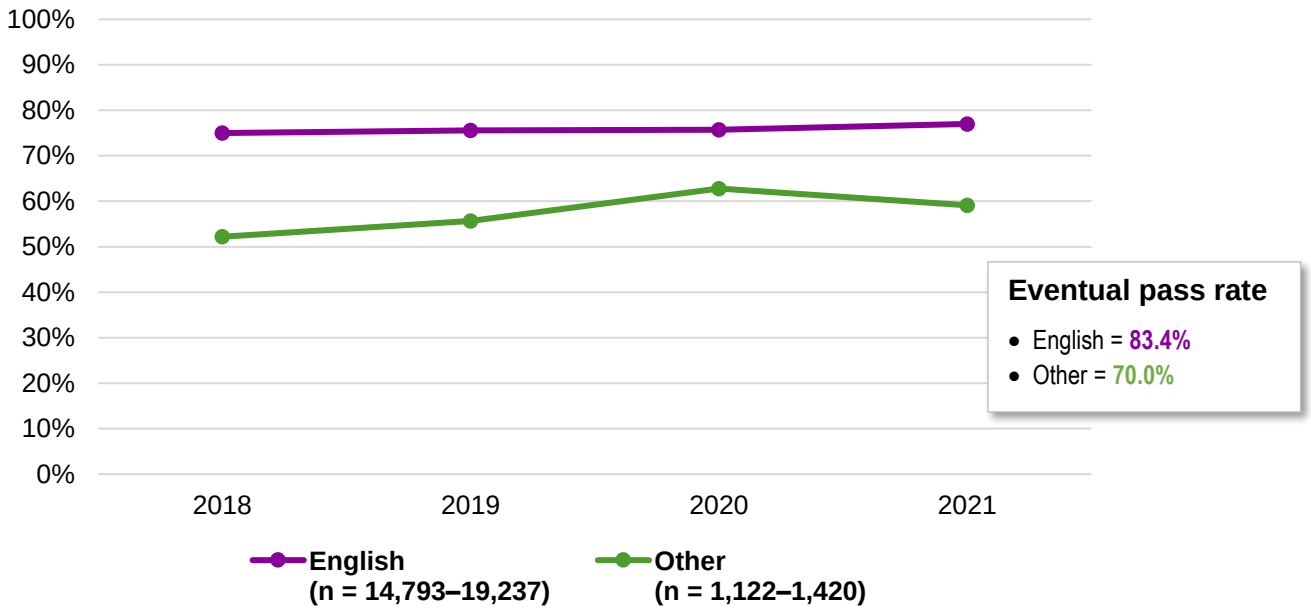
Figure 4. 2018–2021 Clinical exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rates by age



Pass rates by primary language

Reviewing Clinical exam performance by primary language, pass rates were higher for test-takers who indicated their primary language was English than for those who indicated their primary language was not English. This trend was observed for first-time pass rates by individual year from 2018 to 2021, and over the four-year time period, in which the first-time pass rate was 76.2 percent for test-takers whose primary language was English and 59.1 percent for those whose primary language was not English. Refer to Table B5 in Appendix B for first-time pass rate numbers by year. Eventual pass rates were higher overall for both groups of test-takers but demonstrated the same pattern as described for first-time pass rates.

Figure 5. 2018–2021 Clinical exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rates by primary language

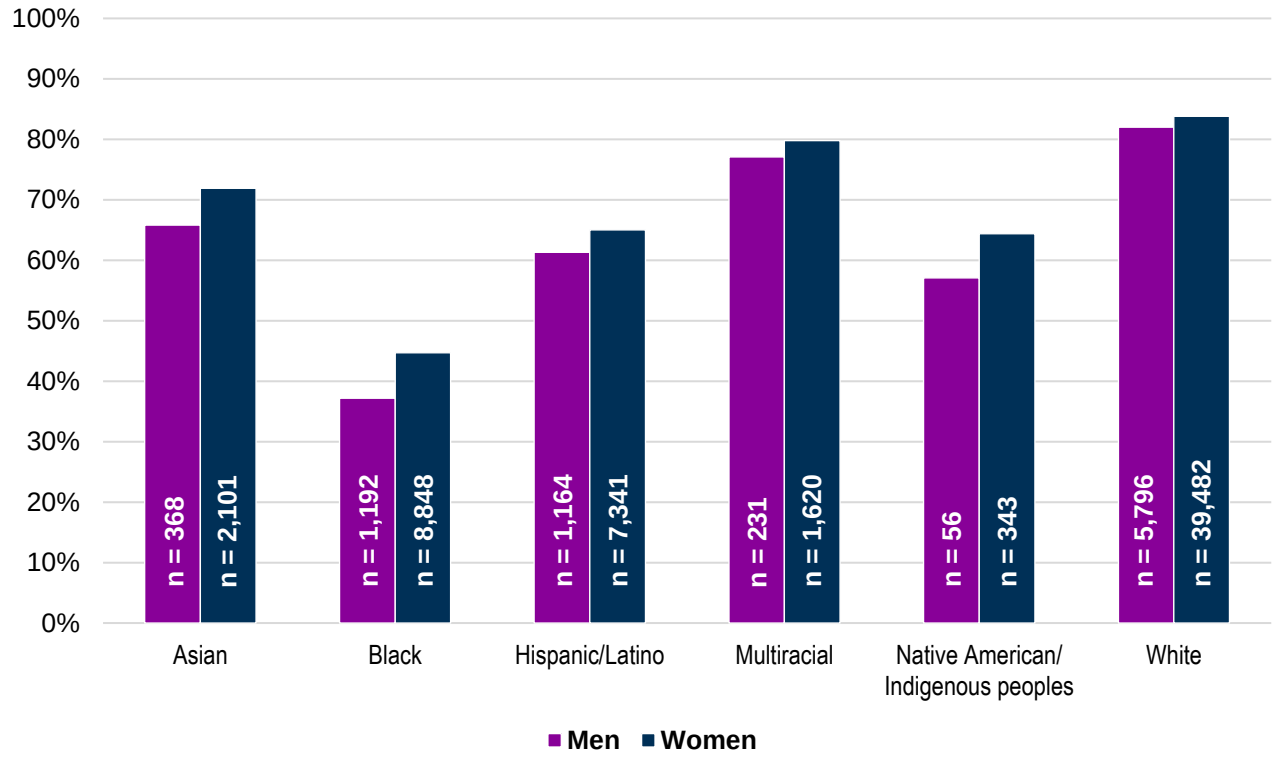


Pass rates by race/ethnicity and gender

Across all race/ethnicity subgroups, women had slightly higher first-time pass rates on the Clinical exam than men. Averaging across 2018 to 2021, the smallest difference in first-time pass rates between genders was observed for white test-takers (1.8 percent). The largest gender differences were observed for Black, Native American/Indigenous peoples, and Asian test-takers, with first-time pass rates for female test-takers being 7.5, 7.3, and 6.1 percent higher, respectively, than the first-time pass rates for male test-takers.

Overall, the patterns observed across gender and race/ethnicity were consistent with the general race/ethnicity findings for first-time pass rates on the Clinical exam, with the highest pass rates occurring for white test-takers and the lowest occurring for Black test-takers regardless of gender. Refer to Table B6 in Appendix B for first-time pass rate numbers by year.

Figure 6. 2018–2021 Clinical exam first-time pass rates by race/ethnicity and gender



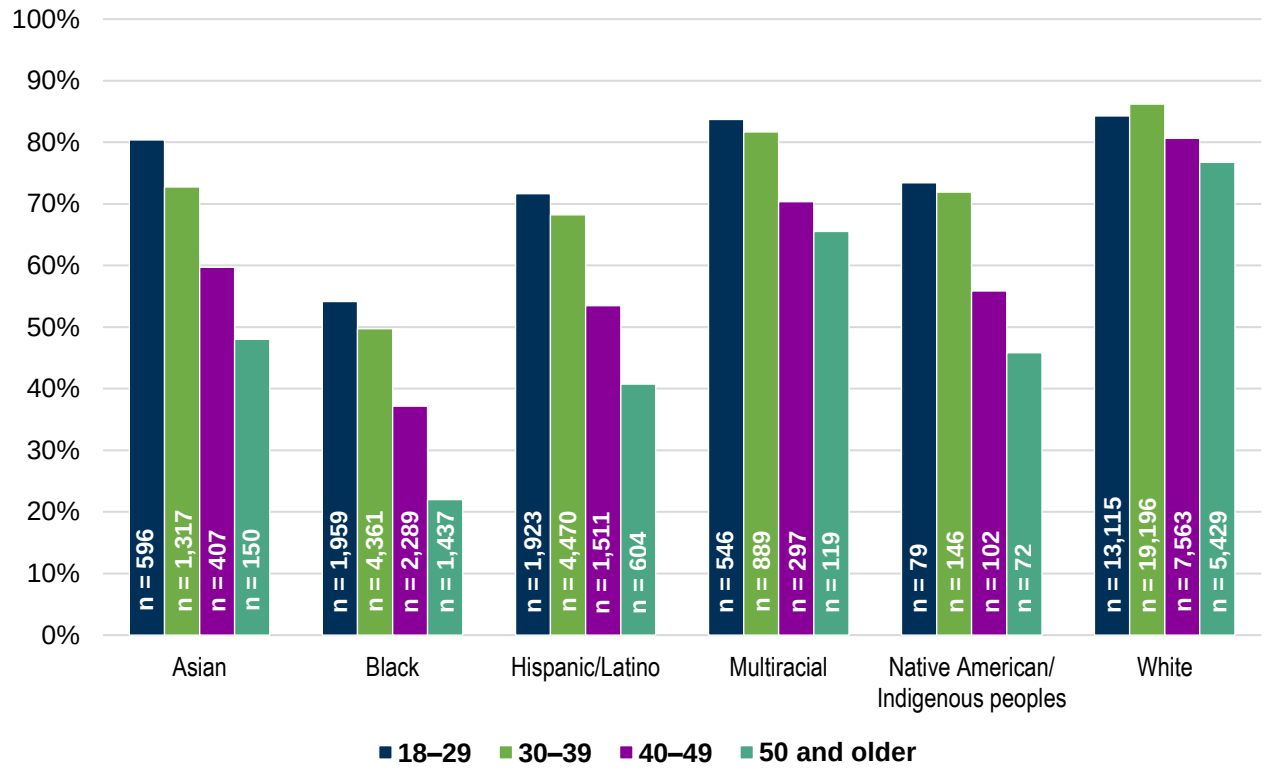
Note. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

Pass rates by race/ethnicity and age

Across most race/ethnicity subgroups, test-takers in the youngest age category (18 to 29 years old) had the highest first-time pass rates on the Clinical exam compared to test-takers in other age categories. The exception to this trend was for white test-takers between 30 and 39 years old; this group had a higher first-time pass rate (86.2 percent) than white test-takers in other age categories.

Within race/ethnicity subgroups, first-time pass rates mostly decreased as age categories increased, with the largest differences among age categories consistently occurring between test-takers who were 18 to 29 years old and test-takers who were 50 years and older. Refer to Table B7 in Appendix B for first-time pass rate numbers by year. The smallest difference in first-time pass rates between these two age categories was observed for white test-takers (7.5 percent), while the largest differences between these categories were observed for Asian (32.4 percent) and Black test-takers (32.2 percent).

Figure 7. 2018–2021 Clinical exam first-time pass rates by race/ethnicity and age



Note. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

MASTERS EXAM FINDINGS

MASTERS EXAM FINDINGS

Test-taker population

Test-taker population overall

Between 2011 and 2021, the number of Masters exam first-time test-takers has steadily increased from 11,260 in 2011 to 21,650 in 2021 (a 92 percent increase). The slight drop in the number of test-takers in 2020 to 16,716 was likely caused by the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions that reduced capacity in testing centers to accommodate social distancing.

Table 4. 2011–2021 number of Masters exam first-time test-takers

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total test-takers	11,260	12,732	13,110	14,184	15,214	15,496	16,884	16,812	18,231	16,716	21,650

Test-taker population by race/ethnicity

From 2011 to 2021, white test-takers made up largest proportion of Masters exam first-time test-takers, comprising approximately 69 percent in 2011, but decreasing to 57 percent by 2021.

This decrease in the proportion of white first-time test-takers corresponded with an increase in the overall proportion of first-time test-takers from historically marginalized communities, which grew from 27.4 percent in 2011 to 39.1 percent in 2021. (Note: For the purposes of this report, "historically marginalized communities" includes test-takers who reported their race/ethnicity as Asian, Black, Hispanic/Latino, multiracial, and Native American/Indigenous peoples.) The largest increase in the proportion of first-time test-takers was observed for Hispanic/Latino test-takers, which grew 6 percent from 2011 to 2021.

Table 5. 2011–2021 number of Masters exam first-time test-takers by race/ethnicity

Race/ Ethnicity	In 2011	Proportion of test-takers	In 2021	Proportion of test-takers	Total 2011–2021	Proportion increase/ decrease 2011–2021
Asian	351	3%	754	3%	5,510	0%
Black	1,686	15%	4,225	20%	30,646	+5%
Hispanic/Latino	782	7%	2,752	13%	17,093	+6%
Multiracial	202	2%	585	3%	3,959	+1%
Native American/ Indigenous peoples	66	1%	136	1%	947	0%
White	7,747	69%	12,423	57%	108,550	-12%
Total	11,260	--	21,650	--	172,289	--

Note. Percentages may not total 100 percent because test-takers who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

Test-taker population by gender

The number of individuals taking the Masters exam approximately doubled from 2011 to 2021, but the proportion of men and women taking the exam remained relatively the same, with women comprising 87.5 percent and men 12.5 percent.

Table 6. 2011–2021 number of Masters exam first-time test-takers by gender

Gender	In 2011	Proportion of test-takers	In 2021	Proportion of test-takers	Total 2011–2021	Proportion increase/ decrease 2011–2021
Men	1,448	13%	2,593	12%	21,604	-1%
Women	9,809	87%	19,040	88%	150,613	+1%
Total	11,260	--	21,650	--	172,289	--

Note. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

Pass rates

The sections that follow provide findings for first-time and eventual pass rates for individuals taking the Masters exam. Figures provide information related to first-time pass rate trends, as well as eventual pass rates aggregated over the target time period. Refer to Methodology for more information on the distinction between first-time and eventual pass rates.

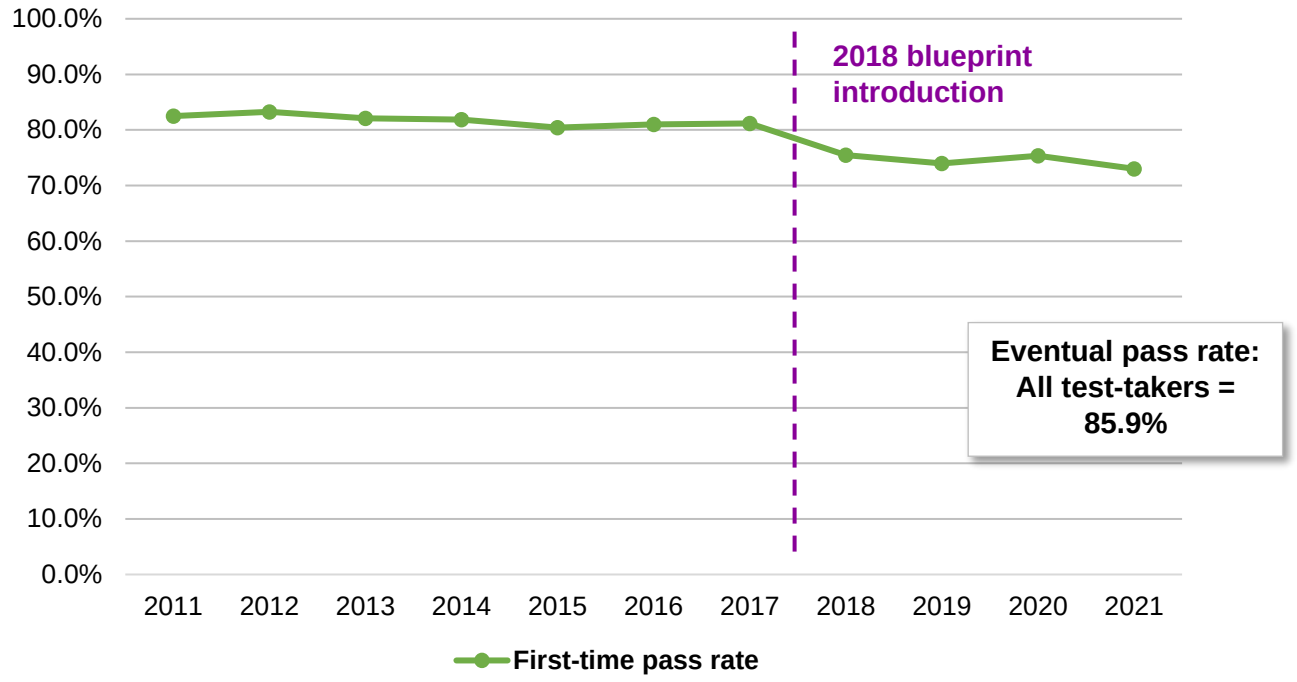
First-time pass rate numbers by year are not reported in the figures below but can be found in Appendix C.

First-time and eventual pass rates

From 2011 to 2021, most test-takers (78.5 percent) passed the Masters exam on their first attempt. Refer to Table C1 in Appendix C for first-time pass rate numbers by year. When taking into account the number of test-takers who passed the exam regardless of whether it was their first or a subsequent attempt (i.e., eventual pass rate), even more test-takers (85.9 percent) passed the Masters exam during this time period.

First-time pass rates decreased slightly (~6 percent) between 2017 and 2018. This is most likely because of the introduction of a new exam blueprint. Refer to Methodology for more information on exam blueprints.

Figure 8. 2011–2021 Masters exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rate

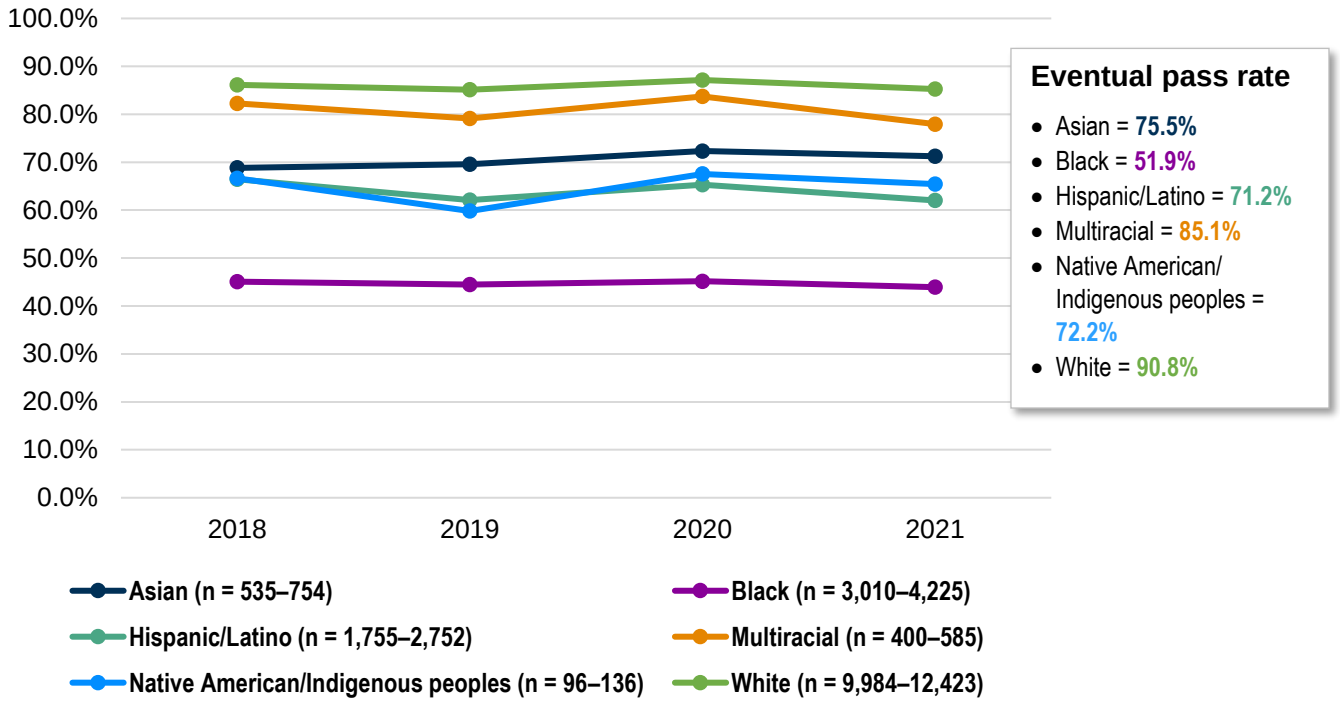


Pass rates by race/ethnicity

When considering the Masters exam performance of test-takers by race/ethnicity, first-time pass rates have historically been highest for white test-takers, averaging 85.8 percent during the 2018–2021 time period, followed by multiracial (80 percent), Asian (71 percent), Native American/Indigenous peoples (64.4 percent), Hispanic/Latino (63 percent), and Black (44.5 percent) test-takers. Refer to Table C2 in Appendix C for first-time pass rate numbers by year. Eventual pass rates were higher overall across all race/ethnicity groups but demonstrated the same pattern as described for first-time pass rates.

First-time pass rates have also remained relatively stable from 2018 to 2021 for several race/ethnicity groups, decreasing less than 1 percent for white test-takers, 1.1 percent for Black test-takers, and 1.3 percent for Native American/Indigenous peoples test-takers. The largest decrease in first-time pass rates was observed for test-takers identifying as Hispanic/Latino or multiracial, with pass rates decreasing 4.4 percent from 2018 to 2021 for both groups. In contrast, Asian test-takers showed a 2.4 percent increase in first-time pass rates from 2018 to 2021.

Figure 9. 2018–2021 Masters exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rates by race/ethnicity

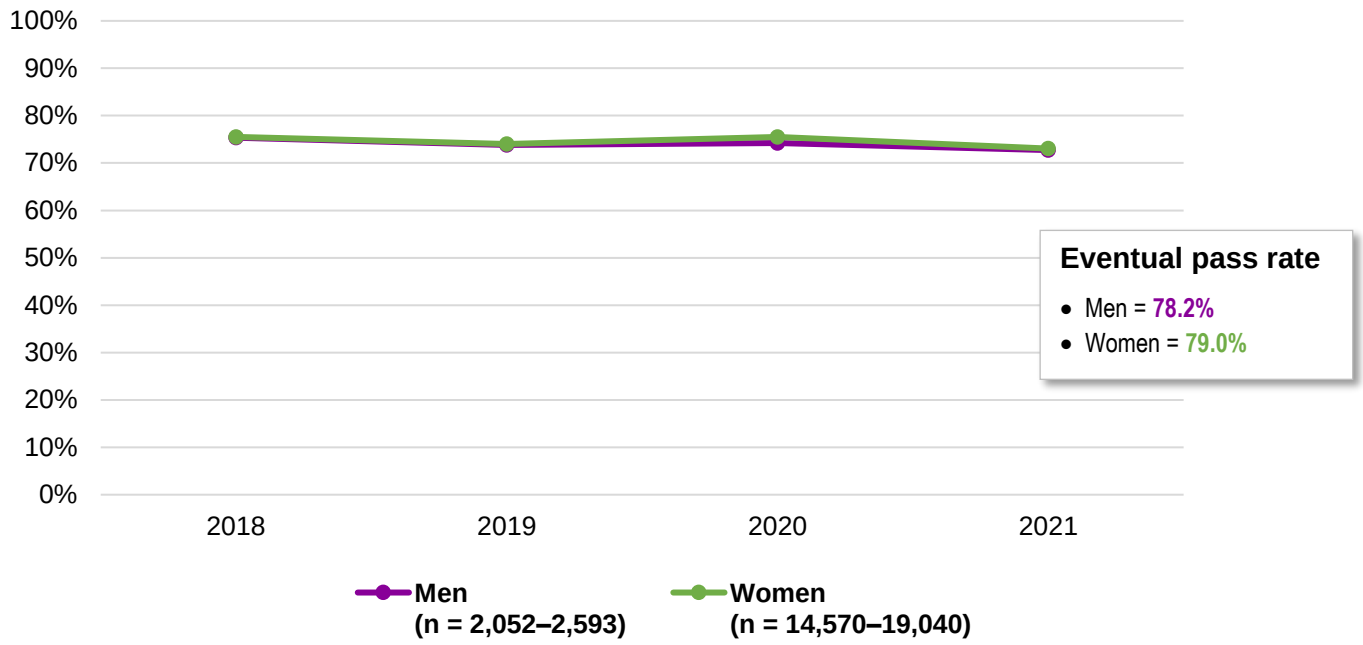


Note. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

Pass rates by gender

Reviewing Masters exam performance by gender, pass rates were slightly higher for women than for men. This included pass rates by individual year from 2018 to 2021, as well as the four-year average of first-time pass rates, which was 74.1 percent for women and 73.5 percent for men. Refer to Table C3 in Appendix C for first-time pass rate numbers by year. Eventual pass rates were higher overall for both women and men but demonstrated the same pattern as described for first-time pass rates.

Figure 10. 2018–2021 Masters exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rates by gender

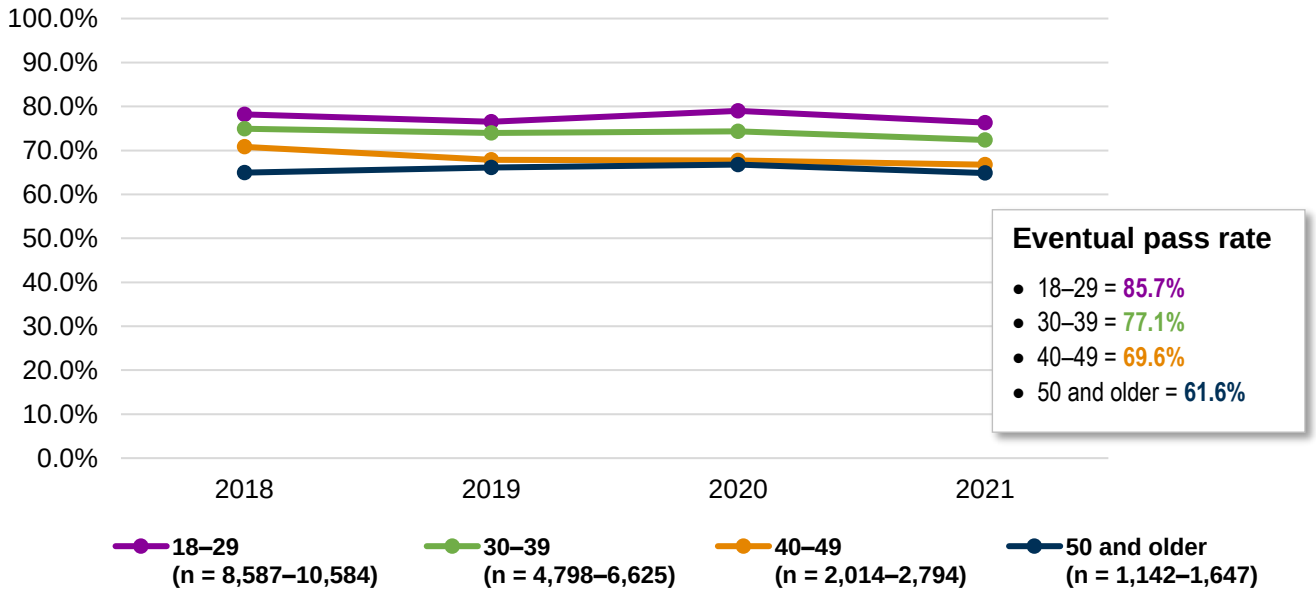


Note. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

Pass rates by age

Reviewing Masters exam performance by age, pass rates were higher for test-takers in lower age categories than in higher age categories. Averaging across 2018 to 2021, the first-time pass rate was 77.2 percent for test-takers between the ages of 18 and 29, 73.4 percent for those between 30 and 39, 67.4 percent for those between 40 and 49, and 65.8 percent for those 50 years and older. Refer to Table C4 in Appendix C for first-time pass rate numbers by year. Eventual pass rates were higher across all age categories but demonstrated the same pattern as described for first-time pass rates.

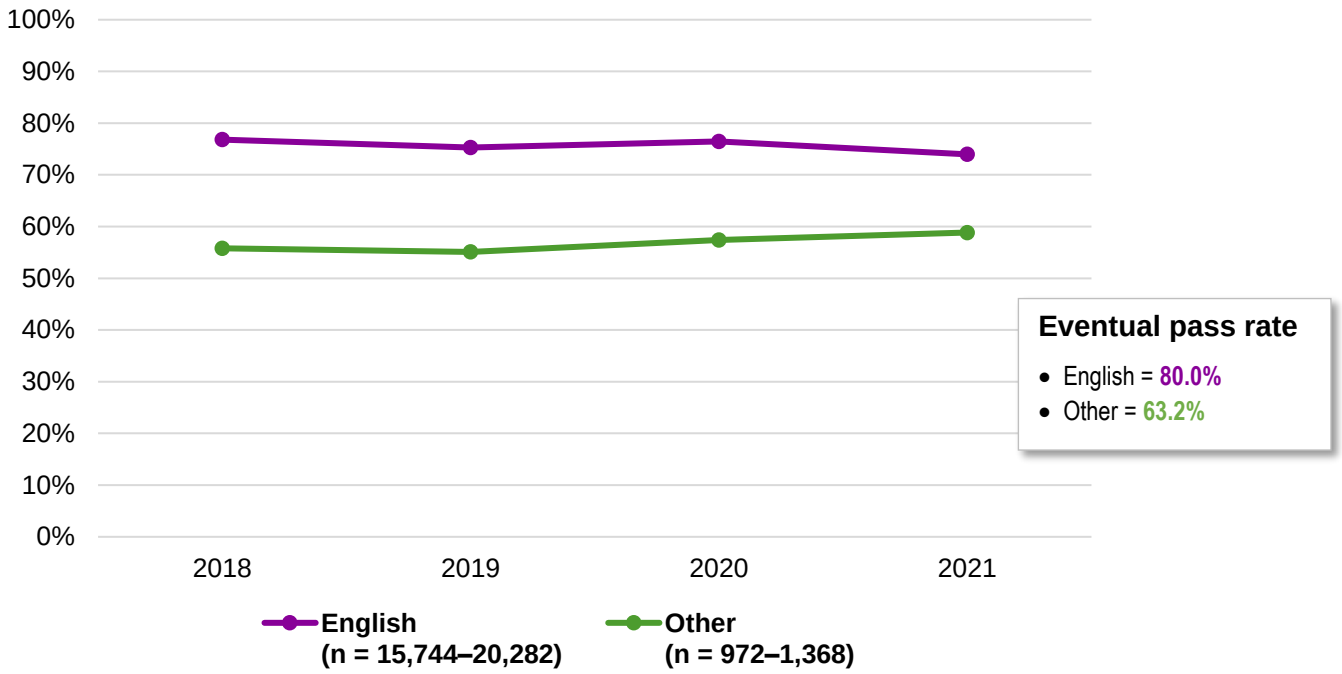
Figure 11. 2018–2021 Masters exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rates by age



Pass rates by primary language

Reviewing Masters exam performance by primary language, pass rates were higher for test-takers who indicated their primary language was English than for those who indicated their primary language was not English. This trend was observed for first-time pass rates by individual year from 2018 to 2021, as well as the average across the four-year time period, for which the first-time pass rate was 75.1 percent for test-takers whose primary language was English and 57.2 percent for those whose primary language was not English. Refer to Table C5 in Appendix C for first-time pass rate numbers by year. Eventual pass rates were higher overall for both groups of test-takers but demonstrated the same pattern as described for first-time pass rates.

Figure 12. 2018–2021 Masters exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rates by primary language



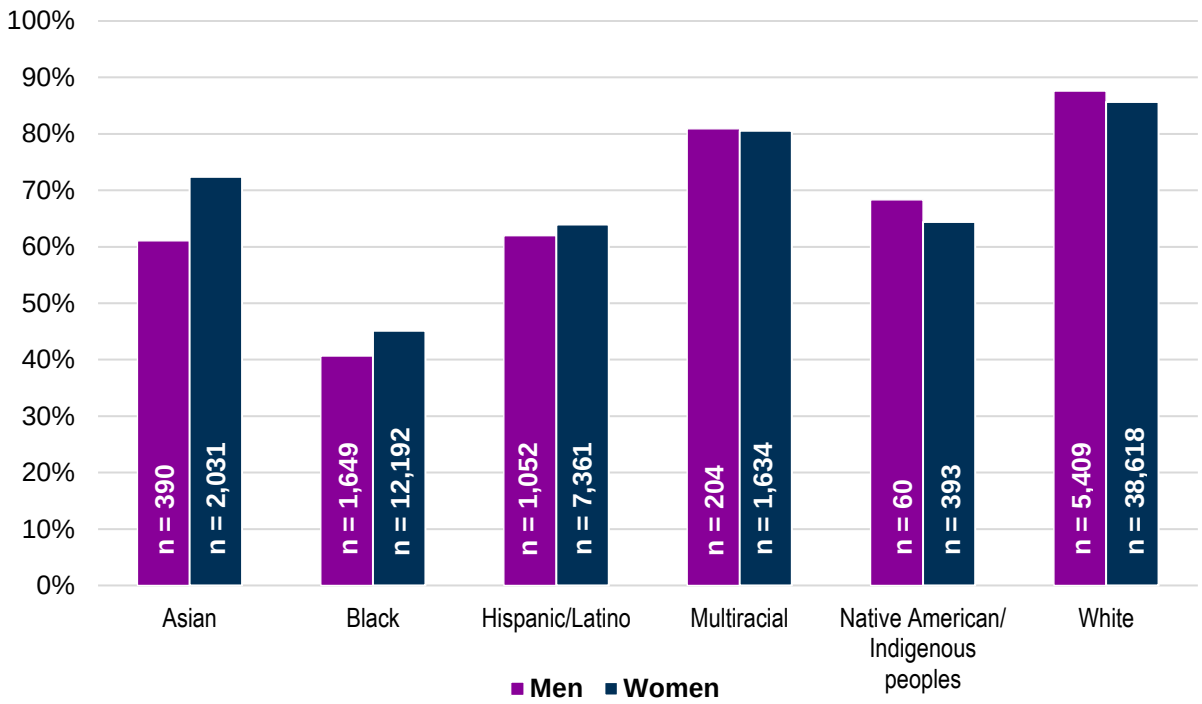
Pass rates by race/ethnicity and gender

From 2018 to 2021, women who identified as Asian, Black, and Hispanic/Latino had higher first-time pass rates on the Masters exam than men. For other race/ethnicity groups (i.e., multiracial, Native American/Indigenous peoples, and white), men had slightly higher pass rates than women.

Averaging across 2018 to 2021, the smallest difference in first-time pass rates between genders was observed for multiracial test-takers (less than 1 percent). The largest gender difference was observed for Asian test-takers, with the first-time pass rate for women being 11.4 percent higher than that for men. For both Black and Hispanic/Latino test-takers, first-time pass rates for women were 4.5 percent and 2 percent higher, respectively, than first-time pass rates for men. For Native American/Indigenous peoples and white test-takers, first-time pass rates for men were 4 percent and 2 percent higher, respectively, than first-time pass rates for women.

Overall, the patterns observed across gender and race/ethnicity were consistent with the general race/ethnicity findings for first-time pass rates on the Masters exam, with the highest pass rates occurring for white test-takers and the lowest occurring for Black test-takers regardless of gender. Refer to Table C6 in Appendix C for first-time pass rate numbers by year.

Figure 13. 2018–2021 Masters exam first-time pass rates by race/ethnicity and gender



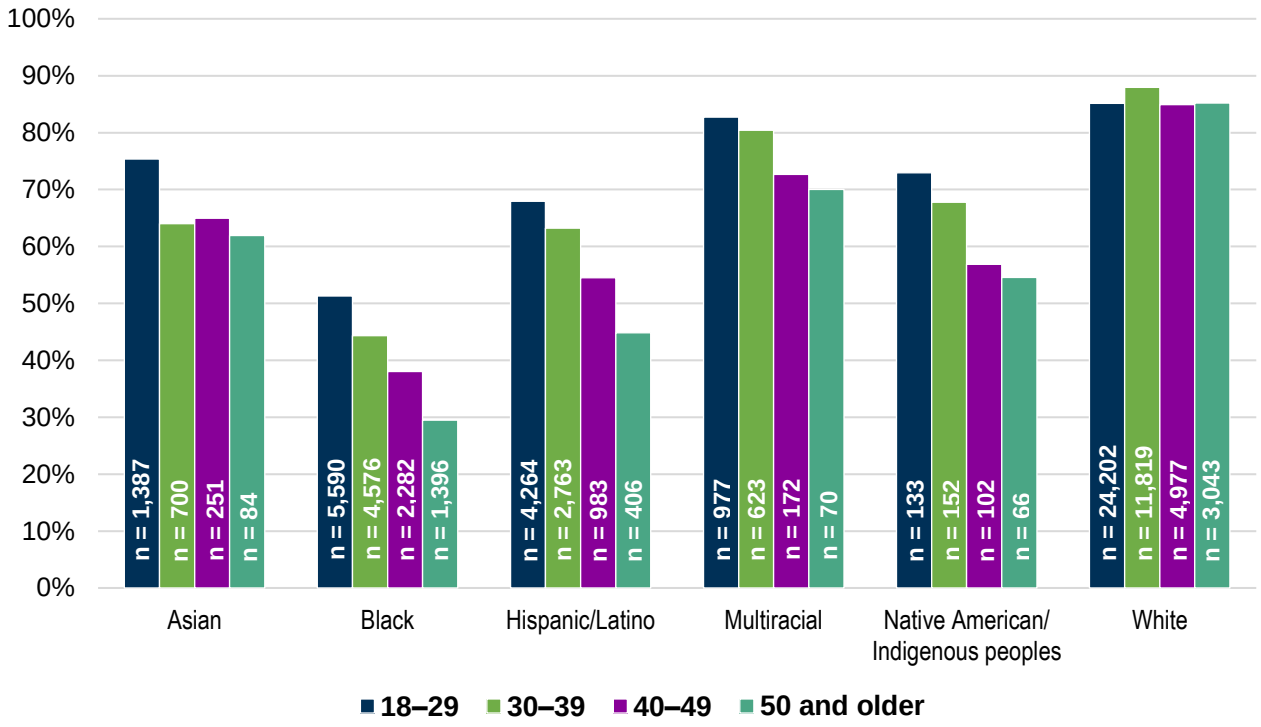
Note. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

Pass rates by race/ethnicity and age

Across most race/ethnicity subgroups, test-takers in the youngest age category (18 to 29 years old) had the highest first-time pass rates on the Masters exam compared to test-takers in other age categories. The exception to this trend was for white test-takers between 30 and 39 years old; this group had a higher first-time pass rate (88 percent) than white test-takers in other age categories.

Within race/ethnicity subgroups, first-time pass rates mostly decreased as age categories increased, with the largest differences among age categories predominantly occurring between test-takers who were 18 to 29 years old and those 50 and older. Refer to Table C7 in Appendix C for first-time pass rate numbers by year. The smallest difference in first-time pass rates between these two age categories was observed for white test-takers (less than 1 percent), while the largest differences between these categories were observed for Hispanic/Latino (23.1 percent) and Black test-takers (21.8 percent).

Figure 14. 2018–2021 Masters exam first-time pass rates by race/ethnicity and age



Note. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

BACHELORS EXAM FINDINGS

BACHELORS EXAM FINDINGS

Test-taker population

Test-taker population overall

Between 2011 and 2021, the number of Bachelors exam first-time test-takers increased slightly from 3,164 test-takers in 2011 to 3,494 test-takers in 2021 (a 10.4 percent increase). The slight drop in the number of test-takers in 2020 to 2,709 was likely caused by the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions that reduced capacity in testing centers to accommodate social distancing.

Table 7. 2011–2021 number of Bachelors exam first-time test-takers

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total test-takers	3,164	3,251	3,595	3,873	4,083	4,113	4,462	3,711	3,583	2,709	3,494

Test-taker population by race/ethnicity

From 2011 to 2021, white test-takers made up the largest proportion of Bachelors exam first-time test-takers, comprising approximately 73 percent of the test-taker population in 2011, but decreasing to 69 percent by 2021.

This decrease in the proportion of white first-time test-takers corresponded with an increase in the overall proportion of first-time test-takers from historically marginalized communities, which grew from 25.1 percent in 2011 to 27.9 percent in 2021. (Note: For the purposes of this report, "historically marginalized communities" includes test-takers who reported their race/ethnicity as Asian, Black, Hispanic/Latino, multiracial, and Native American/Indigenous peoples.)

Table 8. 2011–2021 number of Bachelors exam first-time test-takers by race/ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	In 2011	Proportion of test-takers	In 2021	Proportion of test-takers	Total 2011–2021	Proportion increase/ decrease 2011–2021
Asian	55	2%	97	3%	793	+1%
Black	515	16%	446	13%	5,614	-3%
Hispanic/Latino	174	6%	293	8%	2,634	+2%
Multiracial	36	1%	100	3%	710	+2%
Native American/ Indigenous peoples	15	1%	40	1%	313	0%
White	2,308	73%	2,406	69%	28,968	-4%
Total	3,164	--	3,494	--	40,038	--

Note. Percentages may not total 100 percent because test-takers who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

Test-taker population by gender

The number of individuals taking the Bachelors exam slightly increased from 2011 to 2021, but the proportion of men and women taking the exam has remained approximately the same, with women making up 90.5 percent compared to 9.4 percent for men.

Table 9. 2011–2021 number of Bachelors exam first-time test-takers by gender

Gender	In 2011	Proportion of test-takers	In 2021	Proportion of test-takers	Total 2011–2021	Proportion increase/ decrease 2011–2021
Men	300	9%	327	9%	3,995	0%
Women	2,862	91%	3,166	91%	36,026	0%
Total	3,164	--	3,494	--	40,038	--

Note. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

Pass rates

The sections that follow provide findings related to first-time and eventual pass rates for individuals taking the Bachelors exam. Figures provide information related to first-time pass rate trends, as well as eventual pass rates aggregated over the target time period. Refer to Methodology for more information on the distinction between first-time and eventual pass rates.

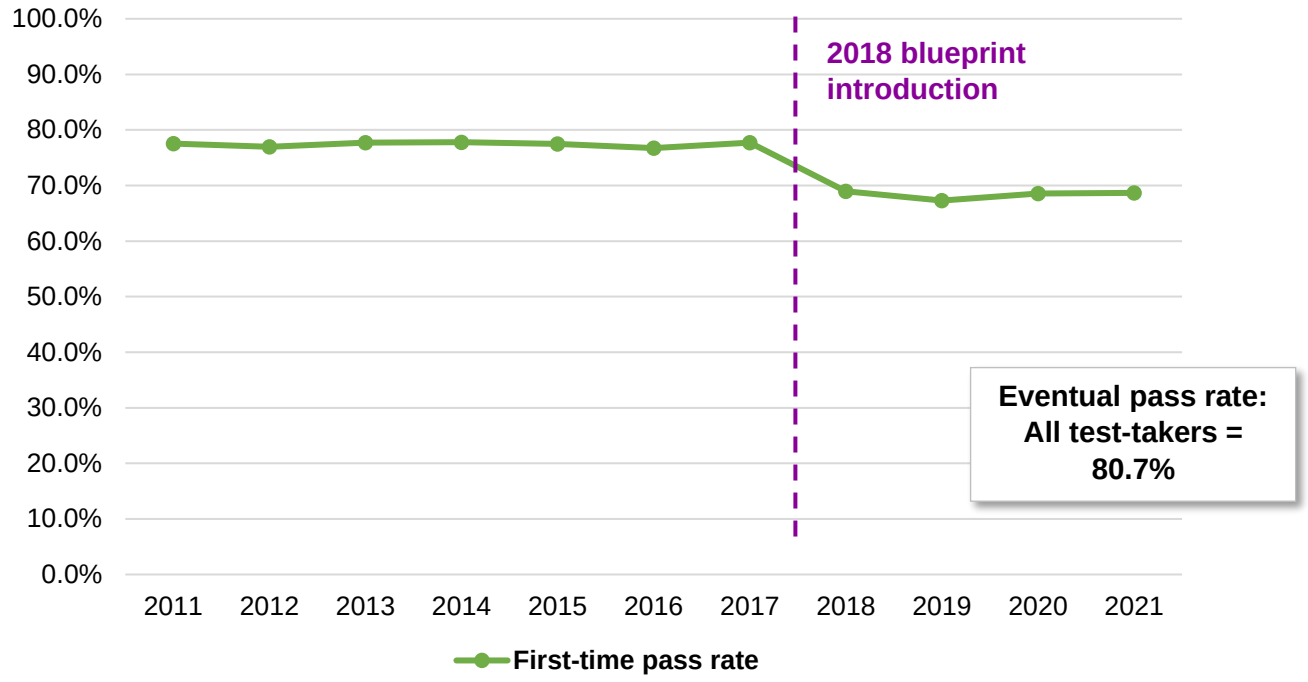
First-time pass rate numbers by year are not reported in the figures below but can be found in Appendix D.

First-time and eventual pass rates

From 2011 to 2021, most test-takers (74.4 percent) passed the Bachelors exam on their first attempt. Refer to Table D1 in Appendix D for first-time pass rate numbers by year. When taking into account the number of test-takers who passed the exam regardless of whether it was their first or a subsequent attempt (i.e., eventual pass rate), even more test-takers (80.7 percent) passed the Bachelors exam during this time period.

First-time pass rates decreased slightly (~9 percent) between 2017 and 2018. This is most likely because of the introduction of a new exam blueprint. Refer to Methodology for more information on exam blueprints.

Figure 15. 2011–2021 Bachelors exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rate

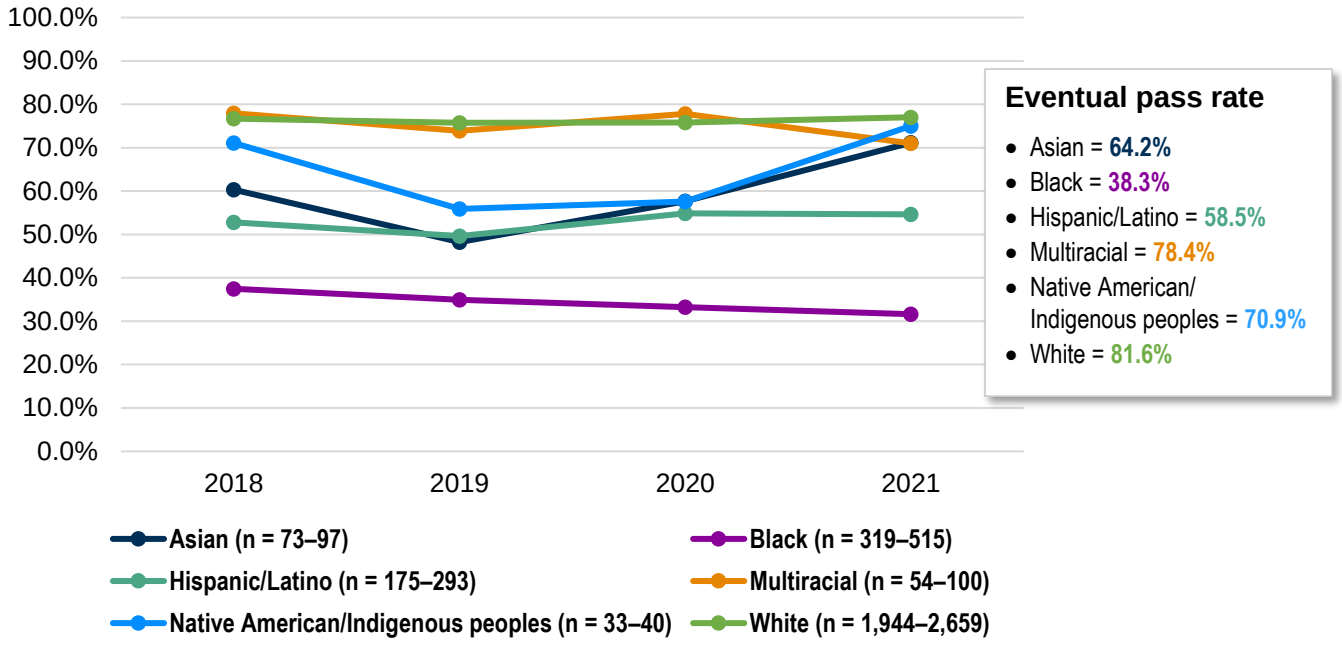


Pass rates by race/ethnicity

When considering the Bachelors exam performance of test-takers by race/ethnicity, first-time pass rates were highest for white test-takers, averaging 76.2 percent during the 2018–2021 time period, followed by multiracial (73.5 percent), Native American/Indigenous peoples (63.6 percent), Asian (59.6 percent), Hispanic/Latino (52.8 percent), and Black (33.3 percent) test-takers. Refer to Table D2 in Appendix D for first-time pass rate numbers by year. Eventual pass rates were higher overall across all race/ethnicity groups, but demonstrated the same pattern as described for first-time pass rates.

First-time pass rates have remained somewhat stable from 2018 to 2021 for several race/ethnicity groups, decreasing less than 1 percent for white test-takers, and increasing 1.9 percent and 3.9 percent for Hispanic/Latino and Native American/Indigenous peoples test-takers, respectively. The largest decreases in first-time pass rates were observed for test-takers identifying as multiracial or Black, with pass rates decreasing 6.9 percent for multiracial test-takers and 5.9 percent for Black test-takers from 2018 to 2021. Asian test-takers showed 10.9 percent increase in first-time pass rates of 10.9 percent from 2018 to 2021. This increase should be interpreted with caution, however, because of the relatively small sample size of this population each year which could cause more volatility in pass rates compared to groups with larger sample sizes.

Figure 16. 2018–2021 Bachelors exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rates by race/ethnicity

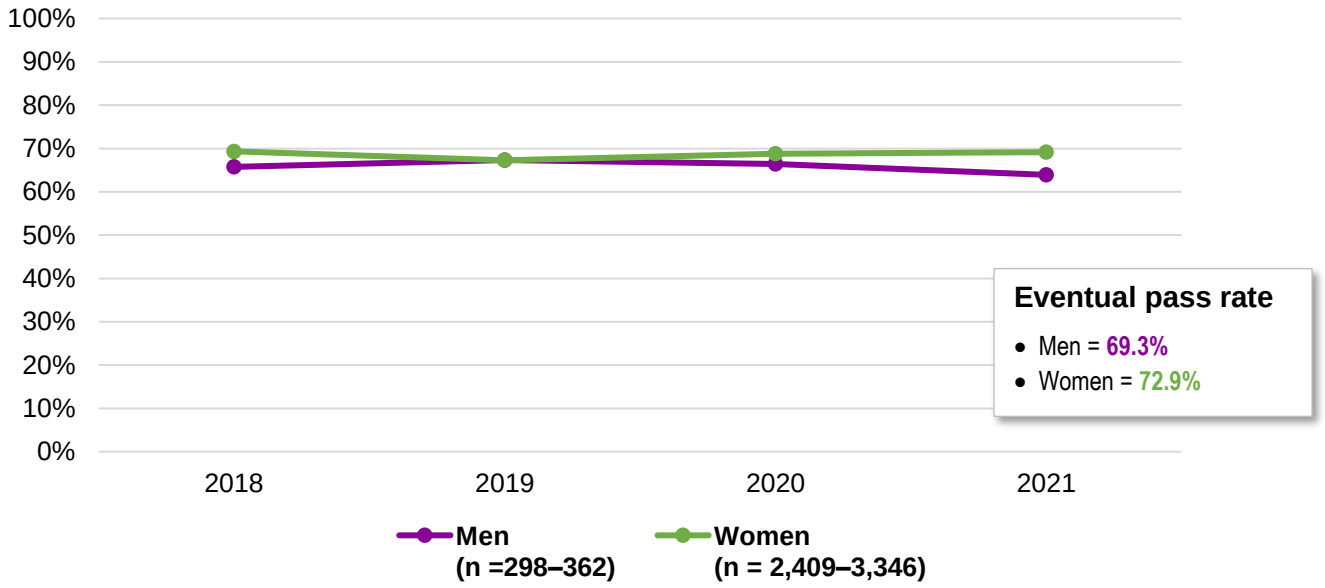


Note. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

Pass rates by gender

Reviewing Bachelors exam performance by gender, pass rates were slightly higher for women than for men. This applied when reviewing pass rates by individual year from 2018 to 2021, as well as the four-year average, for which the first-time pass rate was 68.4 percent for women and 65.9 percent for men. Refer to Table D3 in Appendix D for first-time pass rate numbers by year. Eventual pass rates were higher overall for both women and men but demonstrated the same pattern as described for first-time pass rates.

Figure 17. 2018–2021 Bachelors exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rates by gender

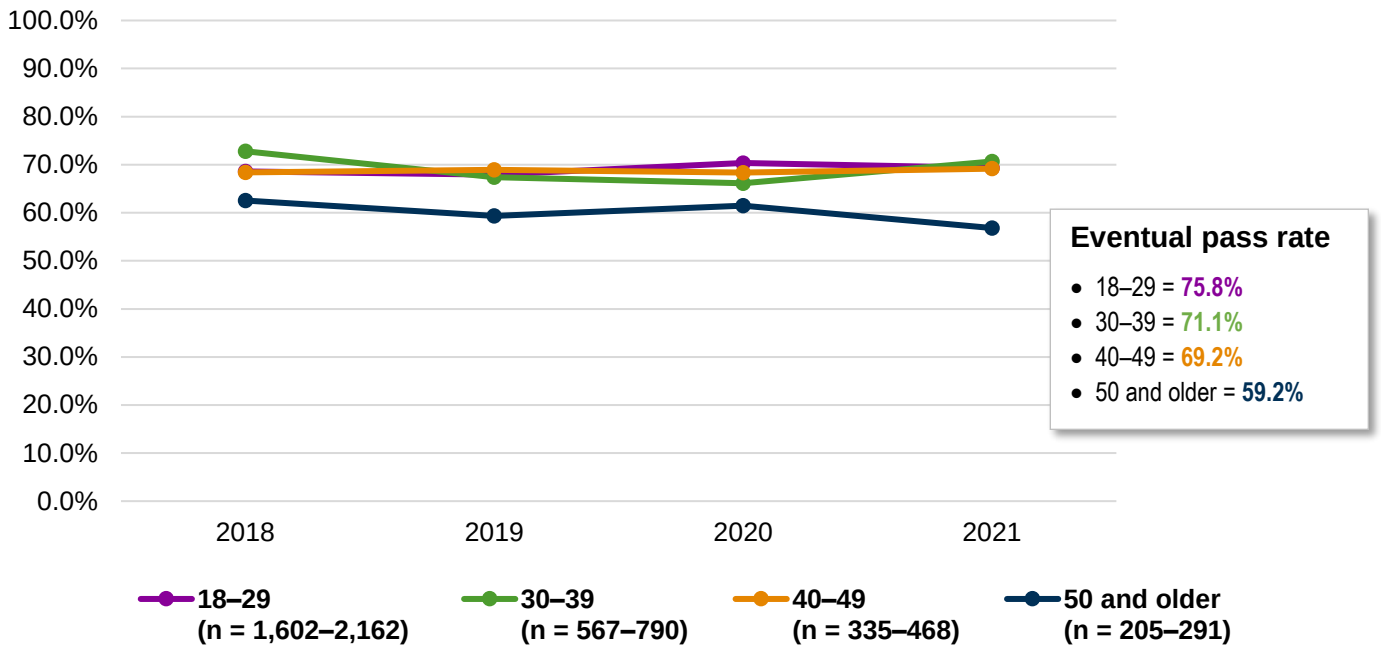


Note. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

Pass rates by age

Reviewing Bachelors exam performance by age, pass rates tended to be higher for test-takers in lower age categories than for those in higher age categories with some exceptions. Averaging across 2018 to 2021, the first-time pass rate was 69.1 percent for test-takers between 18 and 29, 68.2 percent for those between 30 and 39, 68.9 percent for those between 40 and 49, and 59 percent for those 50 and older. Refer to Table D4 in Appendix D for first-time pass rate numbers by year. Eventual pass rates were higher across all age categories but demonstrated similar patterns as described for first-time pass rates, with the exception being that the eventual pass rate for test-takers between the ages of 30 and 39 was higher (71.1 percent) than for those between 40 and 49 (69.2 percent).

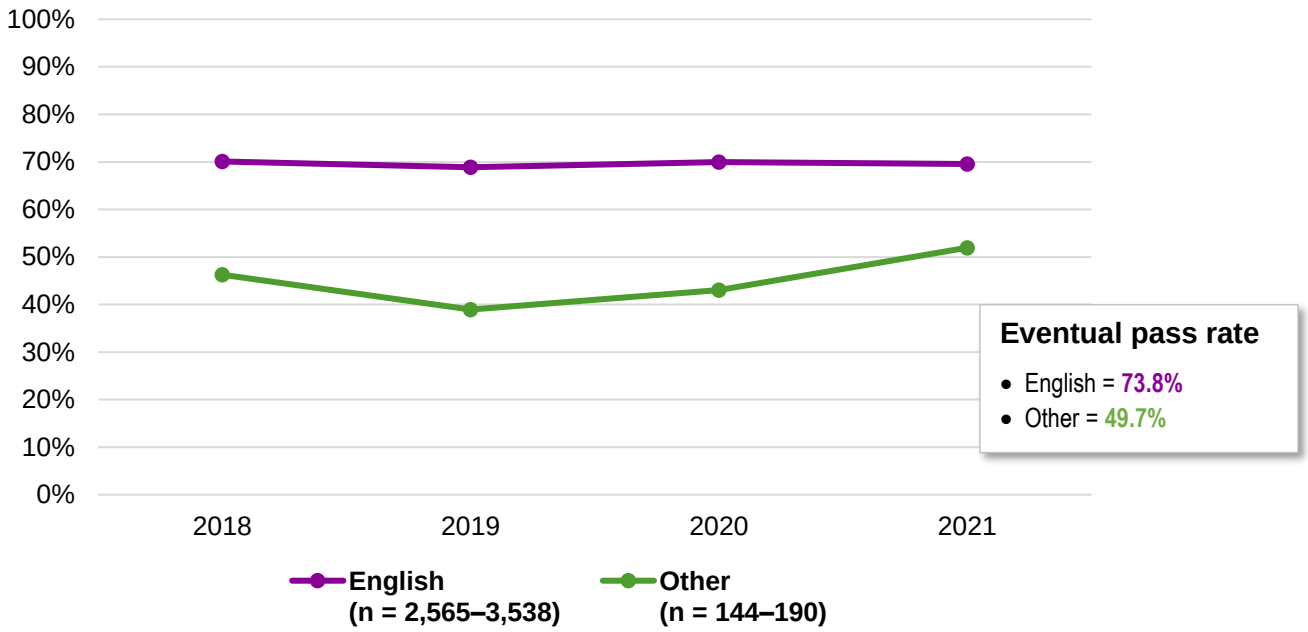
Figure 18. 2018–2021 Bachelors exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rates by age



Pass rates by primary language

Reviewing Bachelors exam performance by primary language, pass rates were higher for those who indicated that their primary language was English than for those who indicated that their primary language was not English. This trend was observed for first-time pass rates by individual year from 2018 to 2021, as well as the four-year average, for which the first-time pass rate was 69.4 percent for test-takers whose primary language was English and 44.6 percent for those whose primary language was not English. Refer to Table D5 in Appendix D for first-time pass rate numbers by year. Eventual pass rates were higher overall for both groups of test-takers but demonstrated the same pattern as described for first-time pass rates.

Figure 19. 2018–2021 Bachelors exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rates by primary language



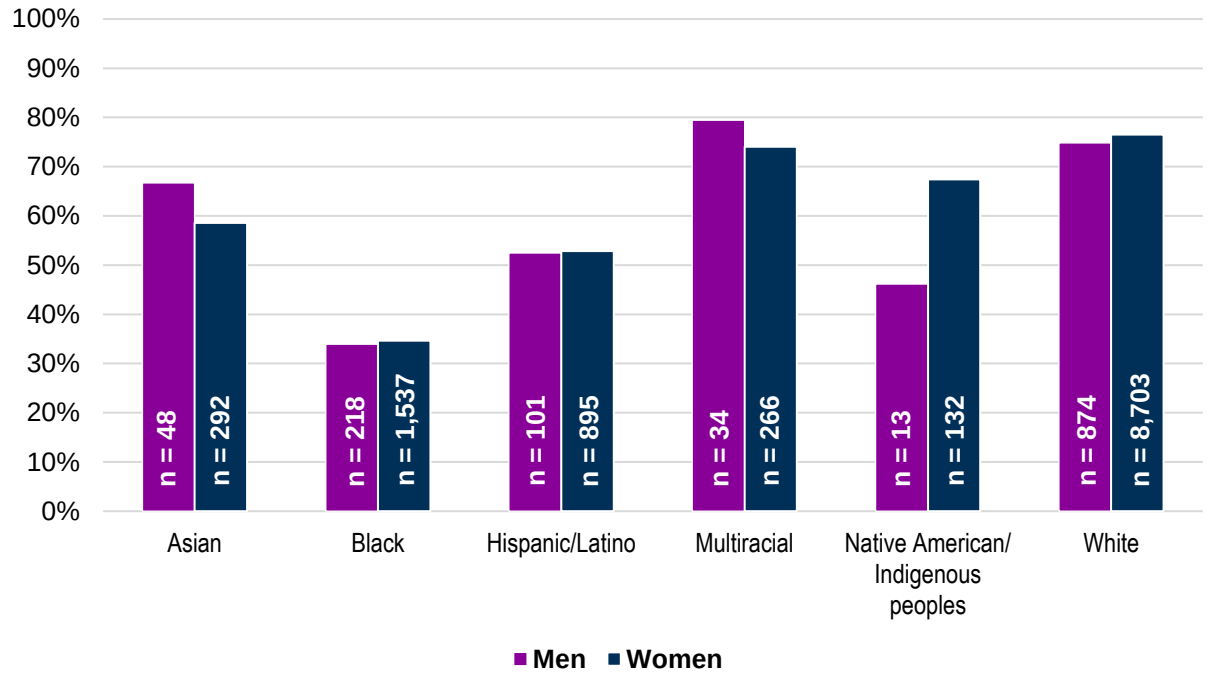
Pass rates by race/ethnicity and gender

Note: First-time pass rates by race/ethnicity and gender should be interpreted with caution for male Asian, multiracial, and Native American/Indigenous peoples test-takers because these samples are too small (i.e., less than 50) to confirm consistent patterns.

From 2018 to 2021, women who reported their race/ethnicity as Black, Hispanic/Latino, Native American/Indigenous peoples, and white had higher first-time pass rates on the Bachelors exam than men. For Asian and multiracial groups, men had higher pass rates than women. Averaging across 2018 to 2021, the smallest differences in first-time pass rates between genders were observed for Black and Hispanic/Latino test-takers (both less than 1 percent). The difference between genders for white test-takers was also relatively small, with the first-time pass rate for women being 1.7 percent higher than that for men. The largest gender difference was observed for Native American/Indigenous peoples test-takers, with the first-time pass rate for women being 21.3 percent higher than for men; however, the sample size for Native American/Indigenous peoples test-takers, particularly men, was very small (13 test-takers between 2018 and 2021), so findings should be interpreted with caution. For both Asian and multiracial test-takers, first-time pass rates for men were 8.1 percent and 5.4 percent higher, respectively, than for women.

Overall, the patterns observed across gender and race/ethnicity were consistent with the general race/ethnicity findings for first-time pass rates on the Bachelors exam, with the highest pass rates occurring for white test-takers and the lowest being observed for Black test-takers regardless of gender. Refer to Table D6 in Appendix D for first-time pass rate numbers by year.

Figure 20. 2018–2021 Bachelors exam first-time pass rates by race/ethnicity and gender



Note. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

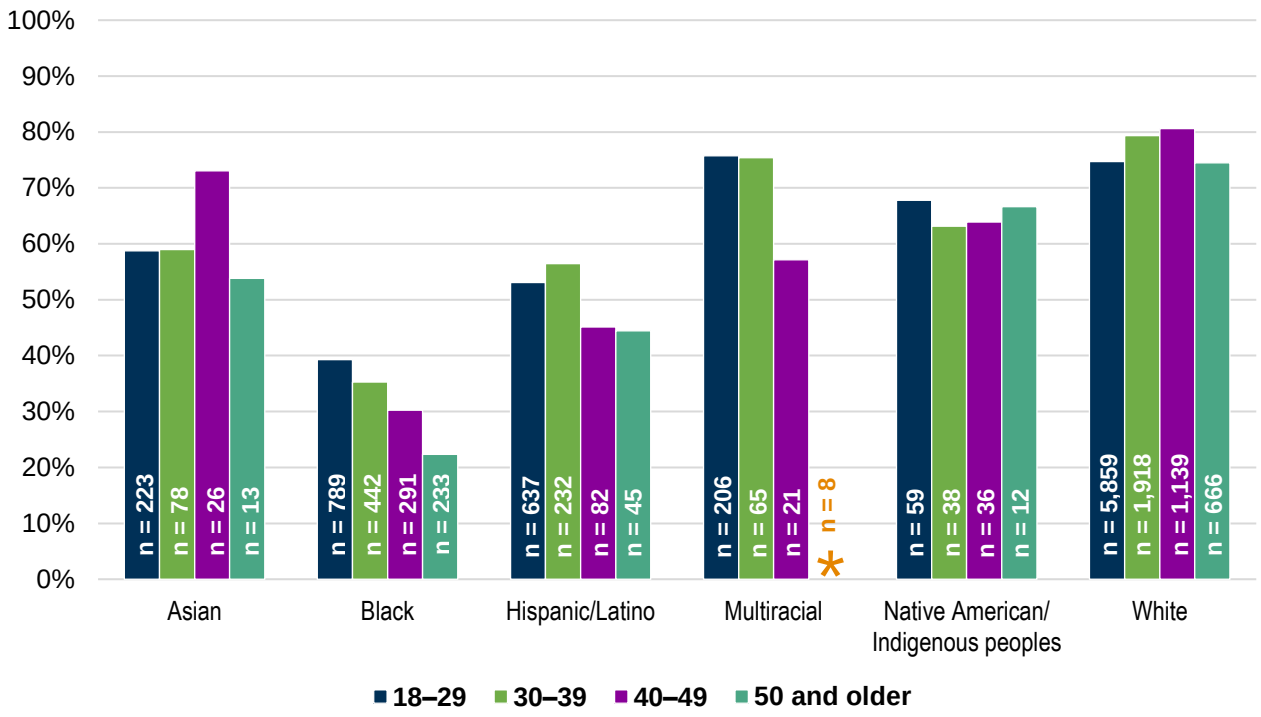
Pass rates by race/ethnicity and age

Note: First-time pass rates by race/ethnicity and age should be interpreted with caution for test-takers across age categories where the subgroup sample size is less than 50, because these samples are too small to confirm consistent patterns.

Unlike findings for the Clinical and Masters exams, first-time pass rate trends for the Bachelors exam varied when taking into account both age and race/ethnicity of test-takers, though this is likely attributable to very low sample sizes for some subgroups. There were some instances, for example, where the highest pass rates were observed for test-takers representing higher age categories. This was the case for 30- to 39-year-old Hispanic/Latino test-takers, whose average first-time pass rate was 56.5 percent, and for 40- to 49-year-old Asian and white test-takers, whose average first-time pass rates were 73.1 percent and 80.6 percent, respectively. Again, the sample size for Asian test-takers in this age category was very small, so findings should be interpreted with caution.

Overall, within race/ethnicity subgroups, first-time pass rates mostly decreased as age increased, with the largest differences occurring between test-takers who were 18 to 29 years old and those 50 years and older. Refer to Table D7 in Appendix D for first-time pass rate numbers by year. The smallest difference in first-time pass rates between these two age categories was observed for white test-takers (less than 1 percent), while the largest differences between these categories were observed for Black (17 percent) and Hispanic/Latino (8.6 percent) test-takers.

Figure 21. 2018–2021 Bachelors exam first-time pass rates by race/ethnicity and age



Note. (*) To protect the privacy of test-takers, pass rate data are not reported for samples less than 10. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as Prefer not to say or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

ASSOCIATE EXAM FINDINGS

ASSOCIATE EXAM FINDINGS

In contrast to the findings reported for the Clinical, Masters, and Bachelors exams, first-time and eventual pass rates for the Associate exam are reported for the 2011–2021 time period rather than 2018–2021 because of the small sample sizes.

Test-taker population

Test-taker population overall

From 2011 to 2021, the number of Associate exam first-time test-takers has increased 237 percent, from 91 in 2011 to 307 in 2021. The largest number of first-time test-takers was 793 in 2015. This increase was attributable to Massachusetts lifting the exemption for Department of Children and Families workers, requiring all staff to become licensed. A slight drop in test-takers occurred in 2020. This was likely caused by the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions that reduced capacity in testing centers to accommodate social distancing.

Table 10. 2011–2021 number of Associate exam first-time test-takers by year

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total test-takers	91	72	119	162	793	678	520	407	307	254	307

Test-taker population by race/ethnicity

From 2011 to 2021, white test-takers made up the largest proportion of Associate exam first-time test-takers, comprising approximately 74 percent in 2011 but decreasing to 57 percent by 2021.

This decrease in the proportion of white first-time test-takers corresponded with an increase in the overall proportion of first-time test-takers from historically marginalized communities, which grew from 19.8 percent in 2011 to 34.5 percent in 2021. (Note: For the purposes of this report, "historically marginalized communities" includes test-takers who reported their race/ethnicity as Asian, Black, Hispanic/Latino, multiracial, and Native American/Indigenous peoples.) The most marked increase in the proportion of first-time test-takers was observed for Black test-takers, which grew 7 percent from 2011 to 2021.

Table 11. 2011–2021 number of Associate exam first-time test-takers by race/ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	In 2011	Proportion of test-takers	In 2021	Proportion of test-takers	Total 2011–2021	Proportion increase/ decrease 2011–2021
Asian	0	0%	8	3%	60	+3%
Black	8	9%	48	16%	624	+7%
Hispanic/Latino	8	9%	40	13%	632	+4%
Multiracial	2	2%	8	3%	90	+1%
Native American/ Indigenous peoples	0	0%	2	1%	29	+1%
White	67	74%	176	57%	2,037	-17%
Total	91	--	307	--	3,710	--

Note. Percentages may not total 100 percent because test-takers who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

Test-taker population by gender

The number of individuals taking the Associate exam more than doubled from 2011 to 2021, but the proportion of men and women remained approximately the same, with women accounting for 86.5 percent and men 13.2 percent.

Table 12. Number of Associate exam first-time test-takers by gender

Gender	In 2011	Proportion of test-takers	In 2021	Proportion of test-takers	Total 2011–2021	Proportion increase/ decrease 2011–2021
Men	12	13%	41	13%	703	0%
Women	79	87%	265	86%	3,005	0%
Total	91	--	307	--	3,710	--

Note. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

Pass rates

The sections that follow provide findings related to first-time and eventual pass rates for individuals taking the Associate exam. Figures provide information related to first-time pass rate trends, as well as eventual pass rates aggregated over the target time period. Refer to Methodology for more information on the distinction between first-time and eventual pass rates.

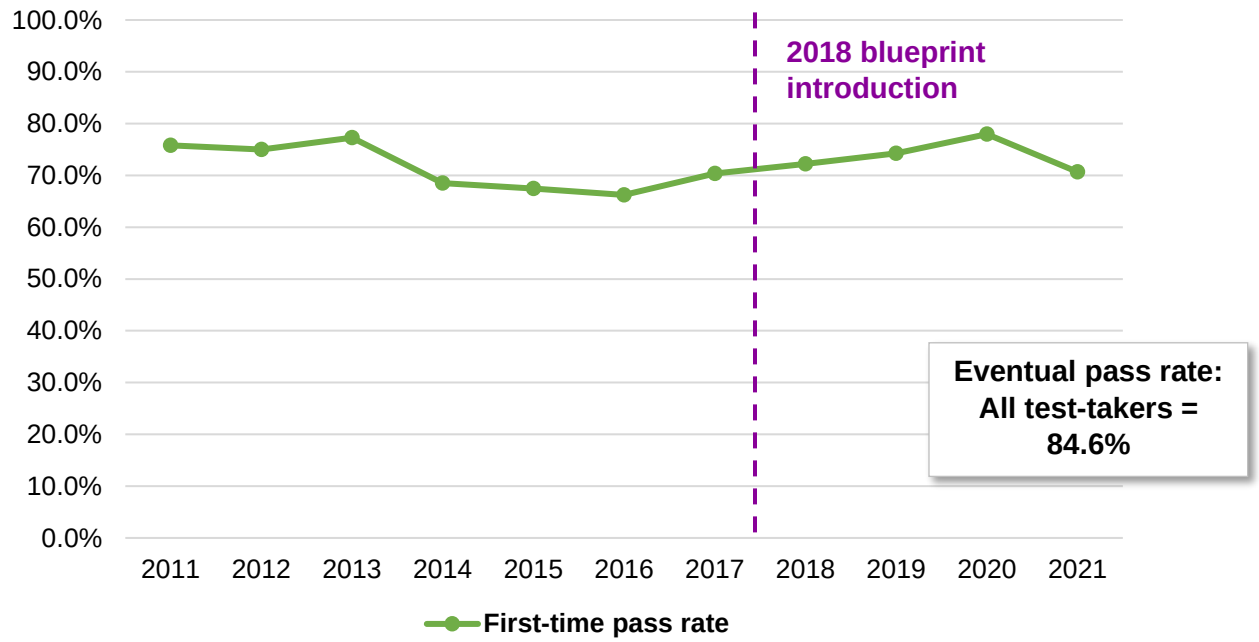
Because of the small sample sizes for many subgroups taking the Associate exam, most figures below reflect eventual pass rates rather than first-time pass rates. Eventual pass rates include more test-takers and therefore allow for more opportunities to present relevant data, while still protecting the privacy of individual test-takers. All pass rates for the Associate exam should be interpreted with caution because of the relatively small sample size each year and across the 10-year target time period.

First-time pass rates by year, where applicable, and eventual pass rates are not reported in the figures below but can be found in Appendix E.

First-time and eventual pass rates

From 2011 to 2021, most test-takers (70.4 percent) passed the Associate exam on their first attempt. Refer to Table E1 in Appendix E for first-time pass rate numbers by year. When considering the number of test-takers who passed the exam regardless of whether it was their first or a subsequent attempt (i.e., eventual pass rate), even more test-takers (84.6 percent) passed the Associate exam during this time period.

Figure 22. 2011–2021 Associate exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rate

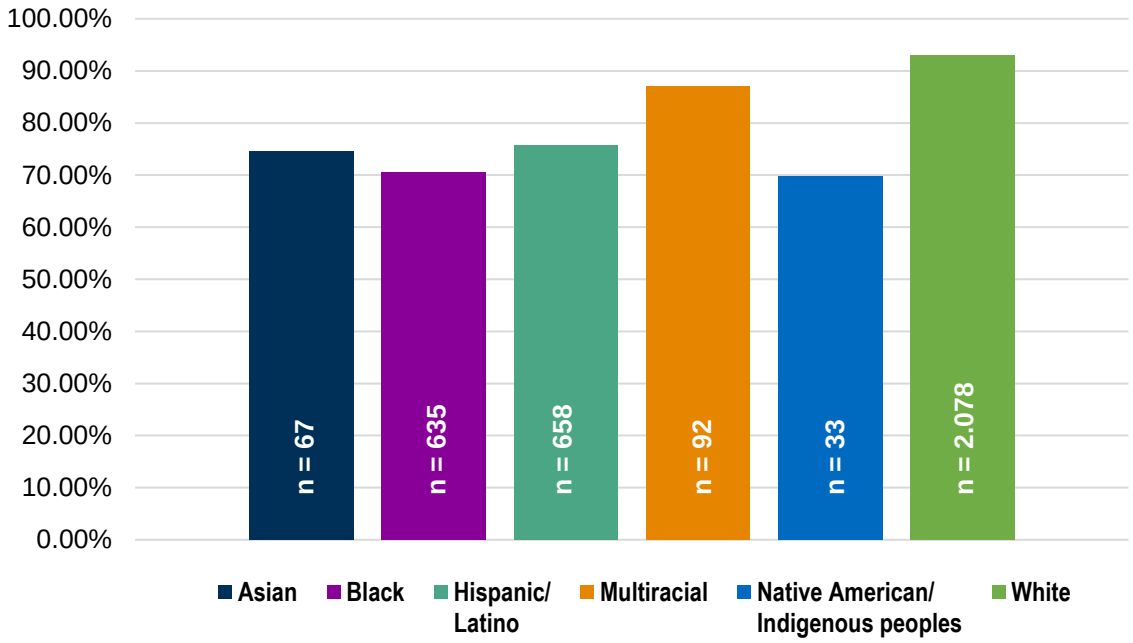


Pass rates by race/ethnicity

Note: The eventual pass rate for multiracial test-takers should be interpreted with caution as this sample is too small (i.e., less than 50) to confirm consistent patterns.

When considering the Associate exam performance of test-takers by race/ethnicity, eventual pass rates were highest for white test-takers, averaging 93 percent during the 2011–2021 time period, followed by multiracial (87 percent), Hispanic/Latino (75.8 percent), Asian (74.6 percent), Black (70.6 percent), and Native American/Indigenous peoples (69.7 percent).

Figure 23. 2011–2021 Associate exam eventual pass rates by race/ethnicity

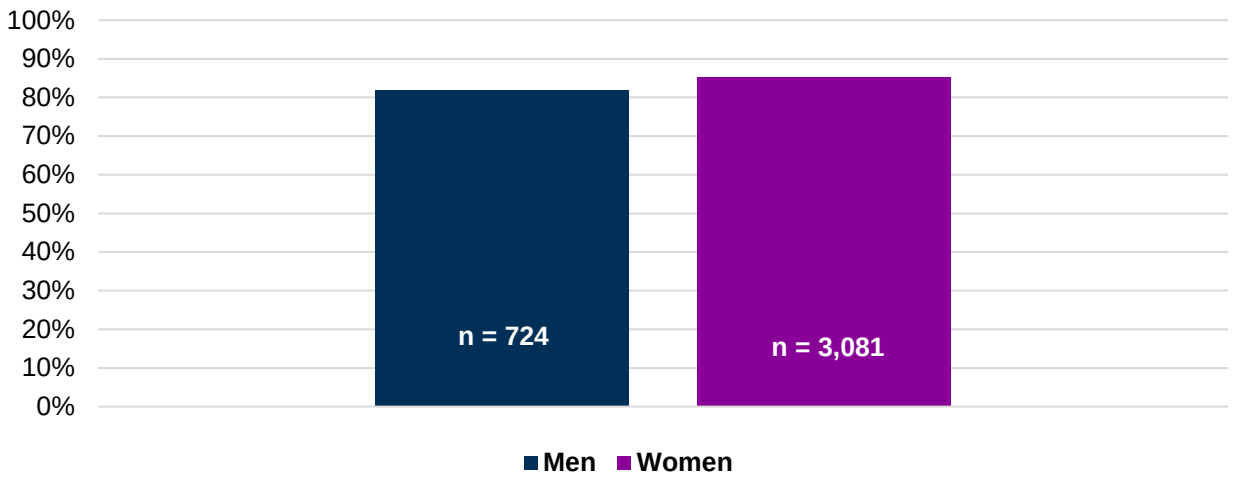


Note. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

Pass rates by gender

Reviewing Associate exam performance by gender from 2011 to 2021, eventual pass rates were slightly higher for women (85.2 percent) than for men (81.8 percent).

Figure 24. 2011–2021 Associate exam eventual pass rates by gender

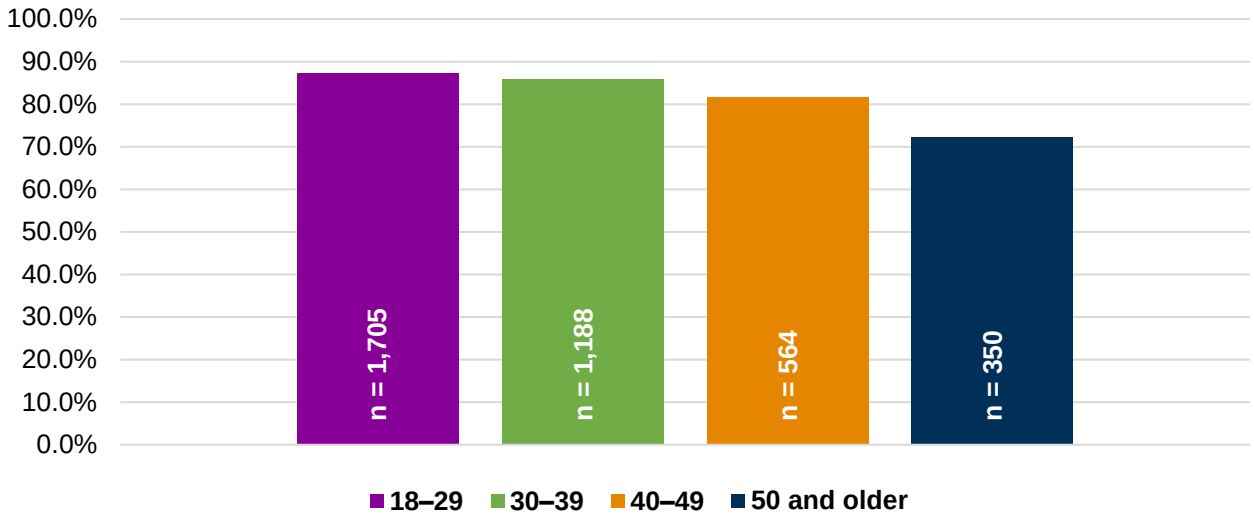


Note. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

Pass rates by age

Reviewing Associate exam performance by age from 2011 to 2021, pass rates were higher for test-takers in lower age categories than for those in higher age categories. Specifically, the eventual pass rate was 87.2 percent for test-takers between the ages of 18 and 29, 85.8 percent for those between 30 and 39, 81.6 percent for those between 40 and 49, and 72.3 percent for those 50 and older.

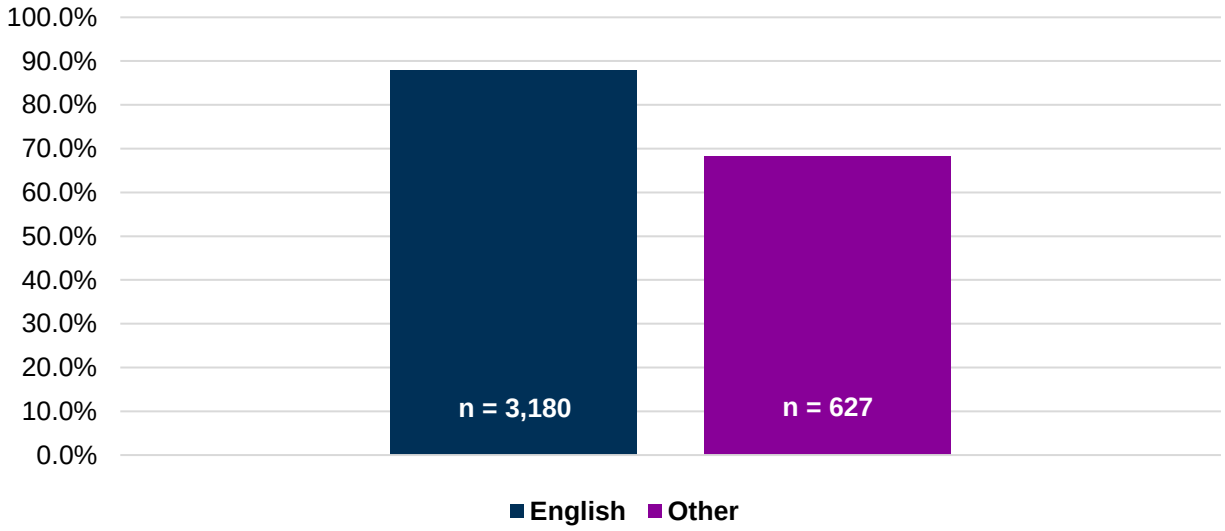
Figure 25. 2011–2021 Associate exam eventual pass rates by age



Pass rates by primary language

Reviewing Associate exam performance by primary language from 2011 to 2021, eventual pass rates were higher for test-takers who indicated their primary language was English (87.8 percent) than for those who indicated their primary language was not English (68.3 percent).

Figure 26. 2011–2021 Associate exam eventual pass rates by primary language

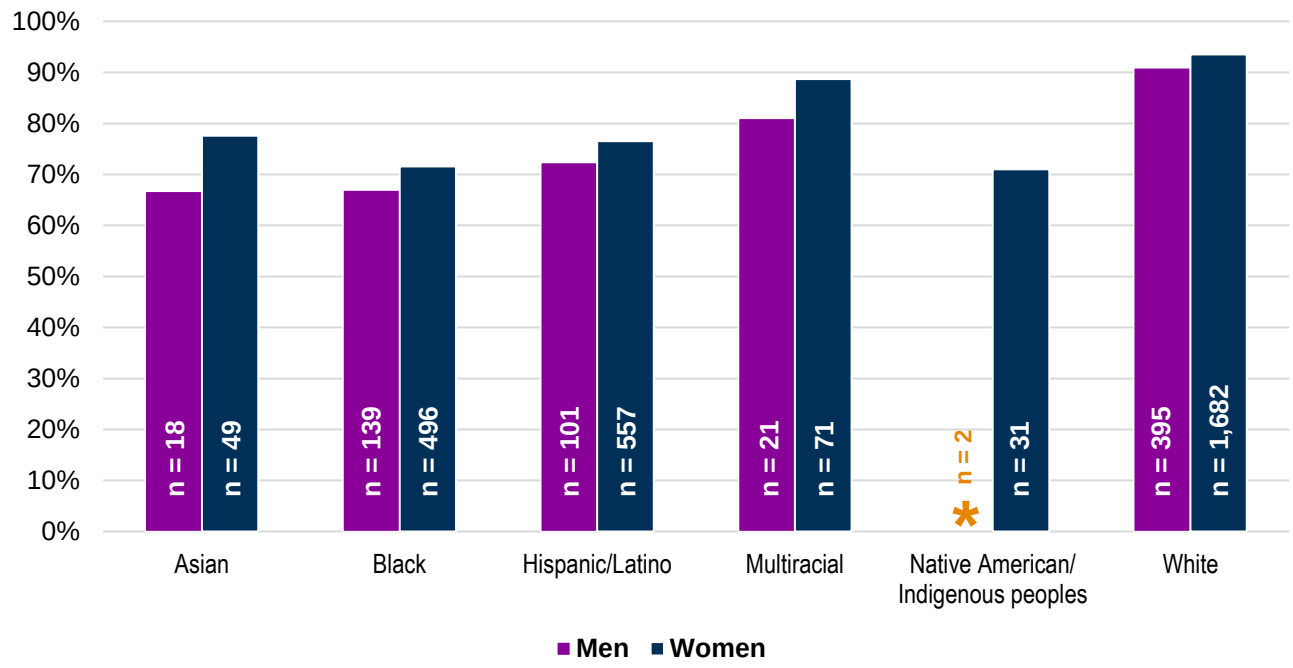


Pass rates by race/ethnicity and gender

Note: Eventual pass rates by race/ethnicity and gender should be interpreted with caution for male and female Asian, multiracial, and Native American/Indigenous peoples test-takers as these samples are too small (i.e., less than 50) to confirm consistent patterns. Data for male Native American/Indigenous test-takers are not shown because the sample size of this subgroup is less than 10.

Across all race/ethnicity categories, women had higher eventual pass rates on the Associate exam compared to men. Among groups with sample sizes greater than 10, the difference in eventual pass rates between men and women was the smallest for white test-takers (3.5 percent). Differences between men and women were slightly larger for multiracial (7.7 percent), Black (4.7 percent), and Hispanic/Latino (4.2 percent) test-takers, with the largest difference in pass rates between men and women occurring for Asian test-takers (10.1 percent). Note that the number of women across all race/ethnicity categories who took the Associate exam from 2011 to 2021 was, on average, three to four times larger than the number of men from those race/ethnicity categories who took the Associate exam during the same time; therefore, many of these differences may not be reliable. Refer to Table E2 in Appendix E for eventual pass rate numbers by gender and race/ethnicity.

Figure 27. 2011–2021 Associate exam eventual pass rates by race/ethnicity and gender



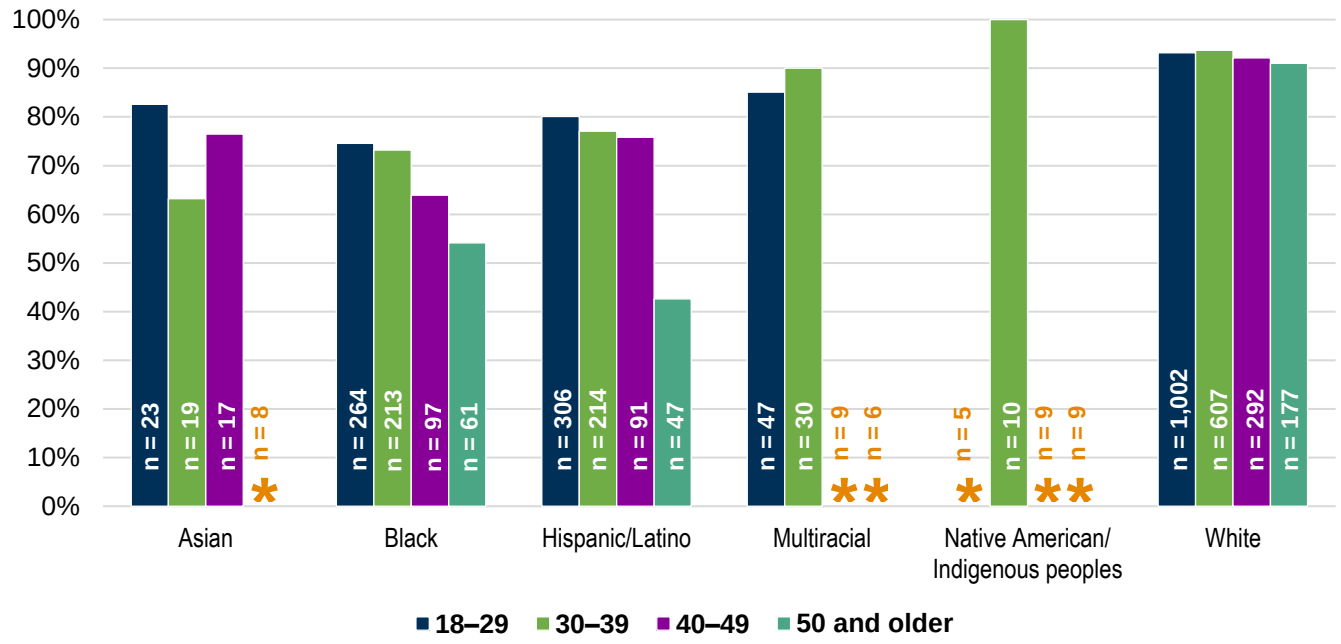
Note. (*) To protect the privacy of test-takers, pass rate data are not reported for numbers less than 10. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

Pass rates by race/ethnicity and age

Note: Eventual pass rates by age and race/ethnicity should be interpreted with caution for Asian, multiracial, and Native American/Indigenous peoples test-takers across all age categories because these samples are too small (i.e., less than 50) to confirm consistent patterns.

Within race/ethnicity subgroups, eventual pass rates tended to decrease as age categories increased, with the largest differences occurring between test-takers who were 18 to 29 years old and those 50 and older. Where comparisons between groups could be drawn, the smallest difference in eventual pass rates between these two age categories was observed for white test-takers (2.2 percent). Larger differences between these categories were observed for Hispanic/Latino (37.5 percent) and Black (20.5 percent) test-takers. Note that, for these race/ethnicity categories, the sample sizes of test-takers who were 18 to 29 years old were approximately four to seven times larger than the sample sizes of test-takers who were 50 years and older. Thus, conclusions based on pass rate differences between these groups may be unreliable. Refer to Table E3 in Appendix E for eventual pass rate numbers by age and race/ethnicity.

Figure 28. 2011–2021 Associate exam eventual pass rates by race/ethnicity and age



Note. (*) To protect the privacy of test-takers, pass rate data are not reported for numbers less than 10. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

ADVANCED GENERALIST EXAM FINDINGS

ADVANCED GENERALIST EXAM FINDINGS

Similar to the Associate exam findings, first-time and eventual pass rates for the Advanced Generalist exam are reported for the 2011–2021 time period rather than 2018–2021 because of the small sample sizes.

Test-taker population

Test-taker population overall

From 2011 to 2021, the number of Advanced Generalist exam first-time test-takers decreased 73 percent, from 630 test-takers in 2011 to 173 in 2021. The largest number of test-takers occurred in 2011 when 630 individuals took the exam for the first time. This number dropped to 150 in 2012 and remained relatively consistent until 2020, when another slight drop in test-takers occurred. This was likely caused by the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions that reduced capacity in testing centers to accommodate social distancing.

Table 13. 2011–2021 number of Advanced Generalist exam first-time test-takers by year

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total test-takers	630	150	162	159	197	177	164	146	127	134	173

Test-taker population by race/ethnicity

From 2011 to 2021, white test-takers made up the largest proportion of Advanced Generalist exam first-time test-takers, comprising approximately 59 percent in 2011 and increasing to 72 percent by 2021.

This increase in the proportion of white first-time test-takers corresponded with a decrease in that of first-time test-takers from historically marginalized communities, which dropped from 38 percent in 2011 to 26.9 percent of the test-taker population in 2021. (Note: For the purposes of this report, "historically marginalized communities" includes test-takers who reported their race/ethnicity as Asian, Black, Hispanic/Latino, multiracial, and Native American/Indigenous peoples.) The most marked change in the proportion of first-time test-takers was observed for Black test-takers, which decreased 18 percent between 2011 and 2021.

Table 14. 2011–2021 number of Advanced Generalist exam first-time test-takers by race/ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	In 2011	Proportion of test-takers	In 2021	Proportion of test-takers	Total 2011–2021	Proportion increase/ decrease 2011–2021
Asian	6	1%	7	4%	48	+3%
Black	212	34%	28	16%	438	-18%
Hispanic/Latino	11	2%	6	4%	56	+2%
Multiracial	10	2%	6	4%	43	+2%
Native American/ Indigenous peoples	1	<1%	0	0%	12	<1%
White	373	59%	125	72%	1,562	+13%
Total	630	--	173	--	2,219	--

Note. Percentages may not total 100 percent because test-takers who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

Test-taker population by gender

The number of individuals taking the Advanced Generalist exam more than doubled from 2011 to 2021, but the proportion of men and women taking the exam remained approximately the same, with 87.7 percent women and 12.2 percent men.

Table 15. 2011–2021 number of Advanced Generalist exam first-time test-takers by gender

Gender	In 2011	Proportion of test-takers	In 2021	Proportion of test-takers	Total 2011–2021	Proportion increase/ decrease 2011–2021
Men	77	12%	21	12%	271	0%
Women	553	88%	152	88%	1,947	0%
Total	630	--	173	--	2,219	--

Note. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

Pass rates

The sections that follow provide findings related to first-time and eventual pass rates for individuals taking the Advanced Generalist exam. Figures provide information related to first-time pass rate trends, as well as eventual pass rates aggregated over the target time period. Refer to Methodology for more information on the distinction between first-time and eventual pass rates.

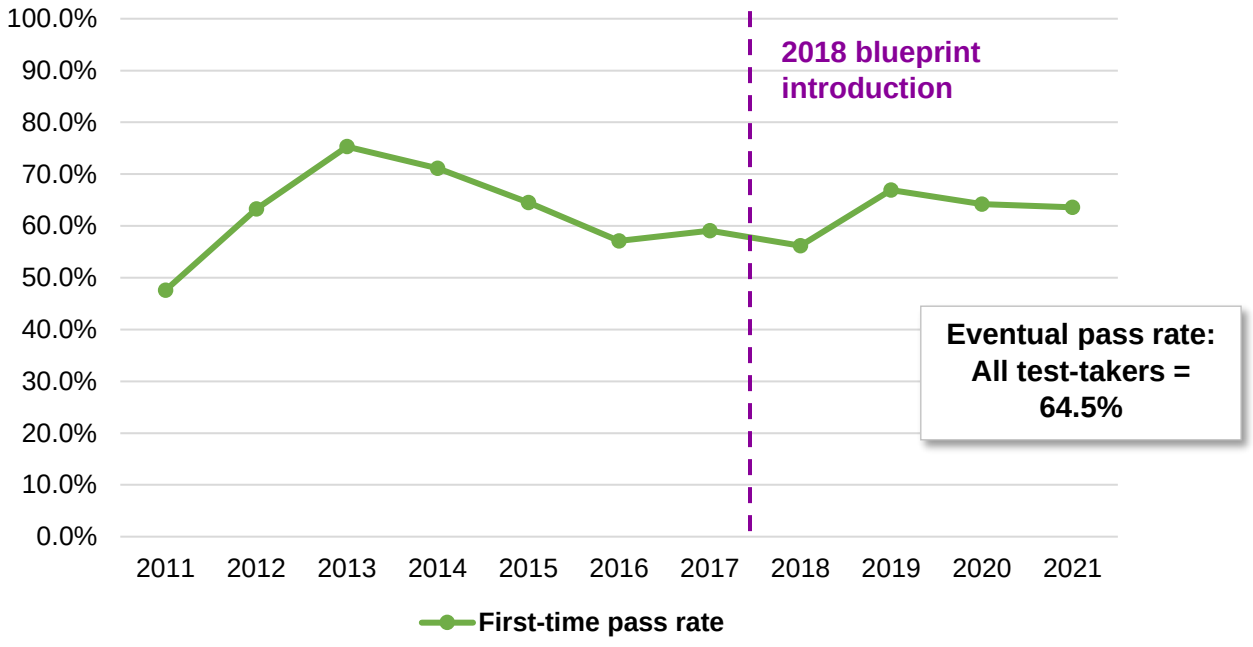
Because of the small sample sizes for many subgroups who took the Advanced Generalist exam, most figures below reflect eventual pass rates rather than first-time pass rates. Eventual pass rates include more test-takers and therefore allow for more opportunities to present relevant data while still protecting the privacy of individual test-takers. All pass rates for the Advanced Generalist exam should be interpreted with caution because of the relatively small sample size of this test-taking population each year and across the 10-year target time period.

First-time pass rates by year, where applicable, and eventual pass rates are not reported in the figures below but can be found in Appendix F.

First-time and eventual pass rates

From 2011 to 2021, more than half of test-takers (59.4 percent) passed the Advanced Generalist exam on their first attempt. Refer to Table F1 in Appendix F for first-time pass rate numbers by year. Considering the total number of test-takers who passed the exam regardless of whether it was their first or a subsequent attempt (i.e., eventual pass rate), even more test-takers (64.5 percent) passed the Advanced Generalist exam during this time period.

Figure 29. 2011–2021 Advanced Generalist exam first-time pass rates by year and eventual pass rate

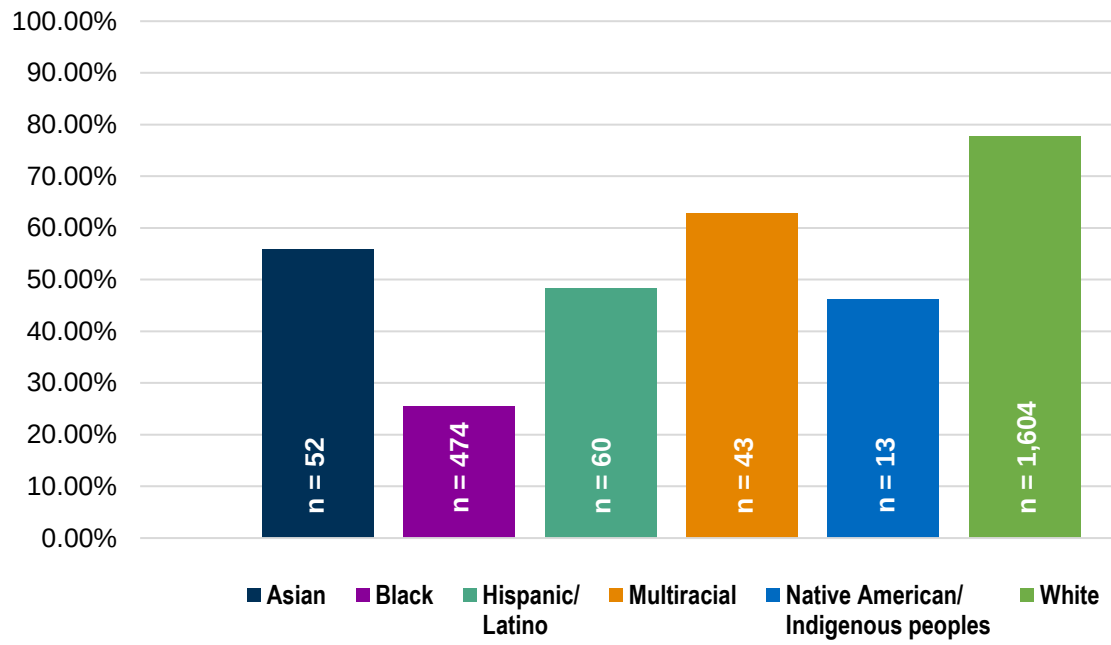


Pass rates by race/ethnicity

Note: The eventual pass rate for multiracial and Native American/Indigenous peoples test-takers should be interpreted with caution because these sample sizes are too small (i.e., less than 50) to confirm consistent patterns.

When considering the Advanced Generalist exam performance of test-takers by race/ethnicity, eventual pass rates were highest for white test-takers, averaging 77.7 percent during the 2011–2021 time period, followed by multiracial (62.8 percent), Asian (55.8 percent), Hispanic/Latino (48.3 percent), Native American/Indigenous peoples (46.2 percent), and Black (25.5 percent) test-takers.

Figure 30. 2011–2021 Advanced Generalist exam eventual pass rates by race/ethnicity

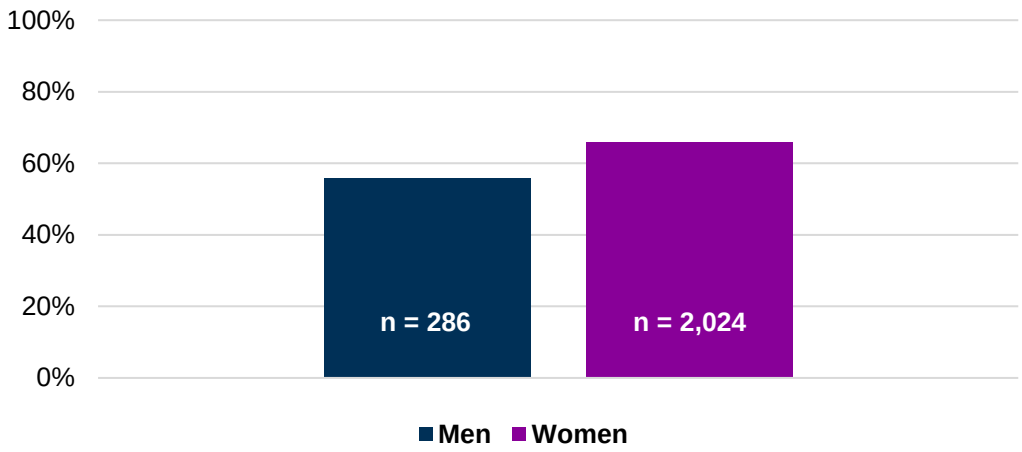


Note. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

Pass rates by gender

Reviewing Advanced Generalist exam performance by gender from 2011 to 2021, eventual pass rates were higher for women (65.7 percent) than for men (55.9 percent).

Figure 31. 2011–2021 Advanced Generalist exam eventual pass rates by gender

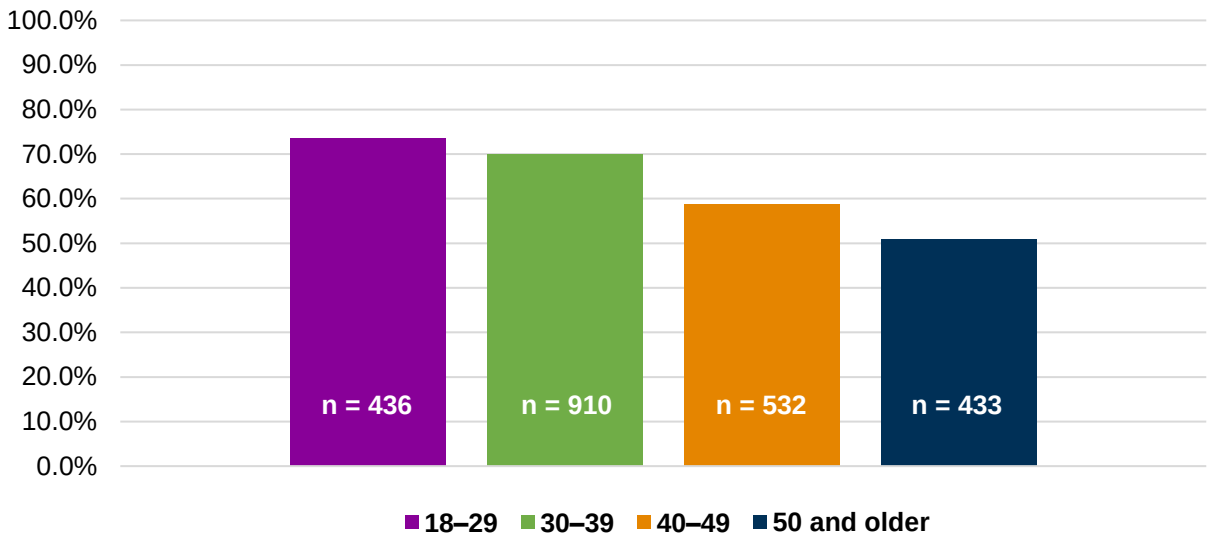


Note. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

Pass rates by age

Reviewing Advanced Generalist exam performance by age from 2011 to 2021, pass rates were higher for test-takers in lower age categories than for those in higher age categories. Specifically, the eventual pass rate was 73.6 percent for test-takers between the ages of 18 and 29, 70 percent for those between 30 and 39, 58.8 percent for those between 40 and 49, and 50.8 percent for those 50 and older.

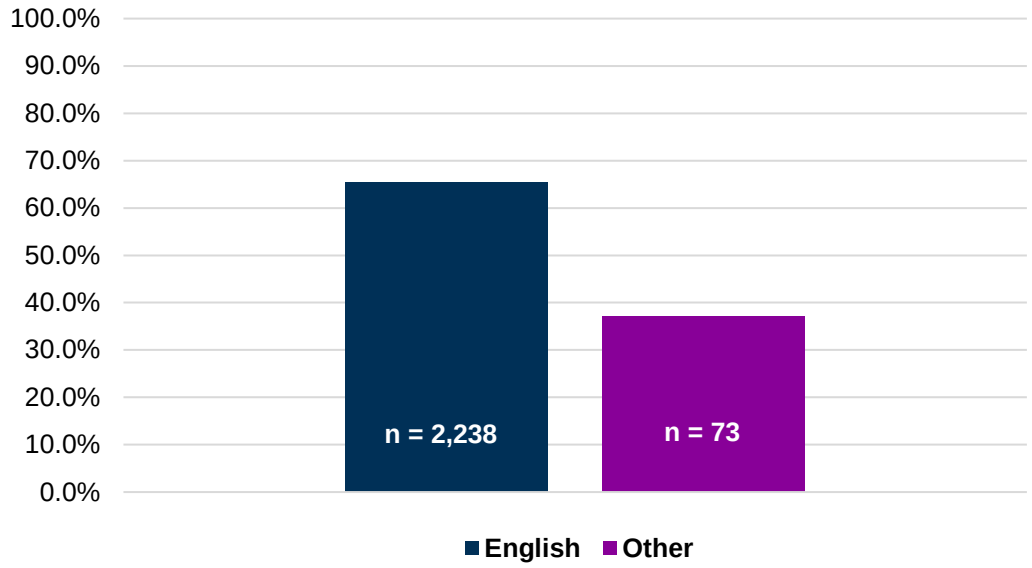
Figure 32. 2011–2021 Advanced Generalist exam eventual pass rates by age



Pass rates by primary language

Reviewing Advanced Generalist exam performance by primary language from 2011 to 2021, eventual pass rates were higher for test-takers who reported that their primary language was English (65.4 percent) than for those who reported that their primary language was not English (37 percent).

Figure 33. 2011–2021 Advanced Generalist exam eventual pass rates by primary language

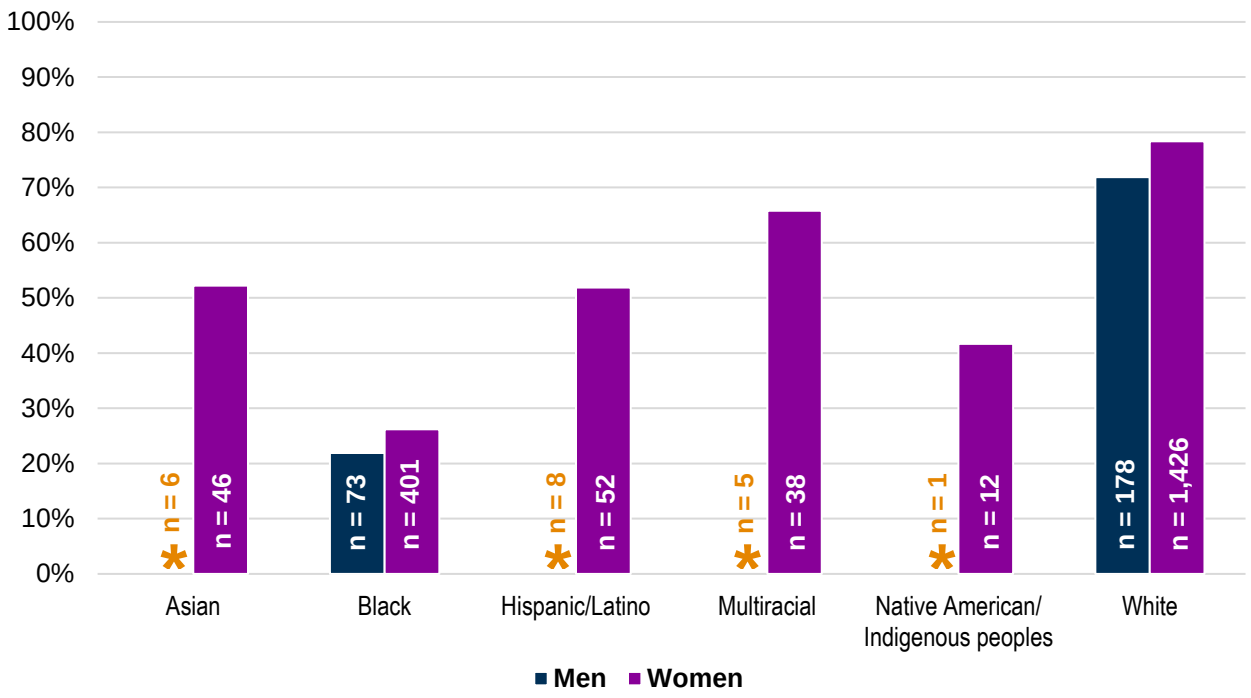


Pass rates by race/ethnicity and gender

Note: Eventual pass rates by race/ethnicity and gender should be interpreted with caution for female Asian, multiracial, and Native American/Indigenous peoples test-takers because these sample sizes are too small (i.e., less than 50) to confirm consistent patterns.

Across all race/ethnicity categories where data are reported, women had higher eventual pass rates than men on the Advanced Generalist exam. Among groups with sample sizes greater than 10, the difference in eventual pass rates between men and women was 6.5 percent for white test-takers and 4.3 percent for Black test-takers. It should be noted that the number of women from these two race/ethnicity categories who took the Advanced Generalist exam from 2011 to 2021 was, on average, four to eight times larger than the number of men from these race/ethnicity categories who took the Advanced General exam during the same period. Therefore, conclusions based on these differences may not be reliable. Refer to Table F2 in Appendix F for eventual pass rate numbers by gender and race/ethnicity.

Figure 34. 2011–2021 Advanced Generalist exam eventual pass rates by race/ethnicity and gender



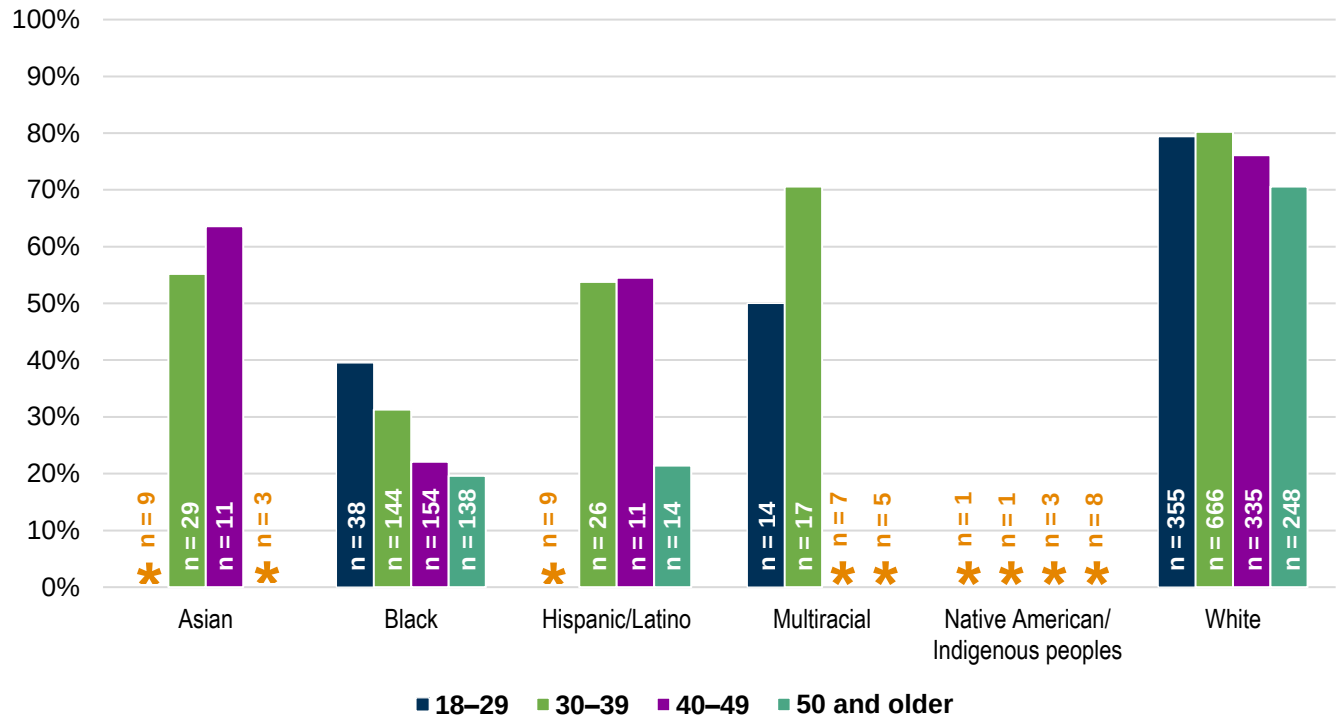
Note. (*) To protect the privacy of test-takers, pass rate data are not reported for numbers less than 10. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

Pass rates by race/ethnicity and age

Note: Eventual pass rates by race/ethnicity and age should be interpreted with caution for Asian, Hispanic/Latino, multiracial, and Native American/Indigenous peoples test-takers across all age categories and for Black test-takers in the 18- to 29-year-old age category because these sample sizes are too small (i.e., less than 50) to confirm consistent patterns.

Within race/ethnicity subgroups, eventual pass rates tended to decrease as age categories increased, with the largest differences among age categories predominantly occurring between test-takers who were 18 to 29 years old and test-takers who were 50 and older. Where comparisons between groups could be drawn, the difference in eventual pass rates between these two age categories was 8.8 percent for white test-takers and 18.1 percent for Black test-takers. Note that for Black test-takers, the number of individuals who were 50 years and older was approximately three and a half times larger than the number of test-takers who were 18 to 29 years old. Thus, conclusions based on the difference between these groups may be unreliable. Refer to Table F3 in Appendix F for eventual pass rate numbers by age and race/ethnicity.

Figure 35. 2011–2021 Advanced Generalist exam eventual pass rates by race/ethnicity and age



Note. (*) To protect the privacy of test-takers, pass rate data are not reported for numbers less than 10. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION

This report provides data on test-taker participation and performance on the ASWB social work licensing exams between 2011 and 2021. Although the findings for each exam are independent of each other, trends across all five exams can be observed. These trends merit additional evaluation and ongoing discussion to better understand their implications.

Demographic changes in the test-taker population

Several findings show that the proportion of test-takers from historically marginalized communities (defined for this report as those reporting their race/ethnicity as Asian, Black, Hispanic/Latino, multiracial, or Native American/Indigenous peoples) increased from 2011 to 2021. This finding suggests that more test-takers from these communities are actively seeking social work licensure. The proportion of white test-takers, however, remains the largest across the exams. Similar trends can be observed when examining the proportion of test-takers by gender. Most test-takers—like most social workers— are women.

Further research should be done to expand understanding of the demographic makeup of the profession and the communities that social workers serve. This research may include exploring differences in how social workers are recruited to the profession and evaluating the amount and type of support social work students receive as they enter the profession. It may also be valuable to identify and, where possible, address the challenges that social workers face in seeking licensure and to learn why some may be more likely to engage with or avoid the licensure process.

Pass rates by race/ethnicity

Across all five exams, differences were observed in pass rates among racial/ethnic subgroups, the largest being between white test-takers and Black test-takers, who tend to have the lowest pass rates of all racial/ethnic groups.

Variations in exam performance across different racial/ethnic groups are not unique to the ASWB examinations. Other professional licensure tests, such as the Praxis® exam for teacher licensure (Nettles et al., 2011), Nursing Council Licensure Exam (NCLEX-RN®; Lockie, 2013), the North American Pharmacist Licensure Examination (NAPLEX®; Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017), and the bar exam (American Bar Association, 2022) have also reported different pass rates for historically marginalized groups, suggesting systemic issues affecting all licensure candidates. Census data have consistently shown that individuals from historically marginalized groups disproportionately experience socioeconomic hardship related to lower household income, higher poverty rates, inequities in educational resources and attainment, and lower rates of health coverage, wealth, and home ownership (Shrider et al., 2021). Accordingly, historically marginalized groups may be more likely to experience challenges in the period leading up to exam administration, including but not limited to access to comprehensive, accurate, and effective exam preparation resources; sufficient time or availability to prepare for taking an exam; and adequate financial resources to pay for the exam.

Other issues may affect test-takers during the administration of the exam itself, such as the experience of stereotype threat. Stereotype threat is a phenomenon stemming from an individual's fears that performance on a task may confirm or reinforce preexisting negative stereotypes about the racial, ethnic, gender, and/or cultural group of which the individual is a member (Steele & Aronson, 1995). For example, knowing that an exam is intended to measure one's intellectual ability or priming

one's identification with a racial or ethnic group (for whom negative stereotypes regarding test performance may exist) has been shown to affect exam performance negatively for individuals from those groups (Walton & Spencer, 2009). These factors act independently of test-takers' actual competence or ability and, in some cases, altogether disappear when reframing the objective of the test (e.g., gathering feedback vs. assessing performance; Spencer et al., 2016) or helping test-takers reappraise their anxiety (Johns et al., 2008).

Future research should be focused on investigating the challenges, restrictions, and constraints that some members of historically marginalized groups may experience. It is important to explore ways to best support test-takers through all stages of the exam process and ensure that those who seek licensure have a fair and equitable path to success.

Pass rates by age

Another trend observed in the data concerns differences in pass rates based on the age of test-takers. Specifically, test-takers in the lowest age category—those between the ages of 18 and 29 years old—tended to have higher pass rates than test-takers in higher age categories, particularly those over 50 years old. Test-takers of any age may have unique challenges based on multiple factors and responsibilities, including family, finances, and other commitments outside their profession that may make it difficult to prioritize exam preparation. However, the findings suggest that social workers in higher age categories may be experiencing these challenges at a higher rate than their counterparts in lower age categories. Test-takers who recently graduated from a social work program may be more likely to pass the exams compared to test-takers who, despite being experienced professionals, may have graduated from social work school years earlier and are less likely to have benefited from recent instruction specifically targeted at preparing for the exam.

Future research should focus on gaining more context and insight about the lived experiences of test-takers in higher age categories to identify challenges they may face. An early step might be to examine higher age categories at a more granular level. The challenges to licensure faced by social workers in their 50s may be different from those faced by social workers in their 60s or 70s. Future research should explore differences within and across these groups and identify tailored responses to help address these specific challenges.

Pass rates by demographic intersections

Test-takers represent combinations of specific demographic characteristics (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, gender identity, age, disability, primary language), the intersections of which often result in additional, multiplicative hardships for individuals and groups (Crenshaw, 1989). For example, while Black test-takers tended to have lower pass rates when compared to test-takers from other races/ethnicities, pass rates for Black male test-takers were lower than pass rates for Black female test-takers. A similar trend was observed when comparing Black test-takers in higher age categories to Black test-takers in lower age categories. On the other hand, for certain exams (e.g., Clinical, Masters), the gender differences in pass rates are smaller for Hispanic/Latino test-takers compared to test-takers from other historically marginalized groups. Therefore, it is vital to consider these intersections, particularly within-group variations, when seeking to further understand the varied lived experiences of test-takers, whether related to recruitment, schooling, exam preparation, or administration, and how those experiences can potentially affect exam performance and eventual licensure.

Future research should actively consider the role of intersectionality in all aspects of the social work professional pipeline and should expand data collection and inquiry to gain clearer insight into how various groups experience the exam and what resources would be most effective in improving outcomes for test-takers with intersecting identities.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of social work licensure, and therefore the licensing exams, is to advance safe, competent, and ethical practices to strengthen public protection. Nevertheless, obtaining a social work license has implications for an individual. For example, becoming licensed may help individuals in securing employment, a promotion, or a salary increase. Because supervisory, managerial, and director positions often require licensure, individuals who pass an exam and obtain a social work license have greater career advancement opportunities.

The licensure process is subject to the many systemic factors affecting individuals, particularly those from historically marginalized communities. These systemic factors, combined with implicit factors such as stereotype threat, can affect test-takers at any point along their personal and professional trajectory and culminate in passing or failing a licensing exam.

Ensuring equal opportunity for all to demonstrate their competence on the licensing exams cannot be accomplished solely through the examination program itself. The systemic nature of the challenges will require acknowledging multiple variables and investigating the internal and external factors that may contribute to variation in participation and pass rates. At the same time, the social work examinations must continue to reflect the highest standards of validity and reliability, and further research should be conducted to continue to inform the conversation around diversity, equity, and inclusion.

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

American Bar Association. (2022). *Summary bar pass data: Race, ethnicity, and gender*. https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/legal_education_and_admissions_to_the_bar/statistics/2022/2022-bpq-national-summary-data-race-ethnicity-gender-fin.pdf

Chisholm-Burns, M., Spivey, C., Byrd, D., McDonough, S., & Phelps, S. (2017). Examining the association between the NAPLEX, Pre-NAPLEX, and pre- and post-admission factors. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, *81*(5), Article 86. https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe81586

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, *1989*(1), 139–167. https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8

Lockie, N., Van Lanen, R., & McGannon, T. (2013). Educational implications of nursing students' learning styles, success in chemistry, and supplemental instruction participation on NCLEX-RN performance. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, *29*(1), 49-58. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.profnurs.2012.04.003

Nettles, M. T., Scatton, L. H., Steinberg, J. H., & Tyler, L. L. (2011). Performance and passing rate differences of African American and white prospective teachers on Praxis examinations: A joint project of the National Education Association (NEA) and Educational Testing Service (ETS). *ETS Research Report Series*, *2011*(1), i-82. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2333-8504.2011.tb02244.x

Shrider, E. A., Kollar, M., Chen, F., & Semega, J. (2021). *Income and poverty in the United States: 2020*. U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports (P60-273). U.S. Government Publishing Office, Washington, DC. https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2021/demo/p60-273.pdf

Spencer, S.J., Logel, C., & Davies, P.G. (2016). Stereotype threat. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *67*, 415–437. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-073115-103235

Steele, C.M., & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, *69*(5), 797–811. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.69.5.797

Walton, G. M., & Spencer, S. J. (2009). Latent ability: Grades and test scores systematically underestimate the intellectual ability of negatively stereotyped students. *Psychological Science*, *20*(9),1132–1139. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2009.02417.x

APPENDIX A
EXAMINATION CATEGORIES

APPENDIX A

EXAMINATION CATEGORIES

Exam	Requirements	Purpose
Associate	Social work degree not required	For use in jurisdictions that issue licenses to applicants who do not possess a social work degree
Bachelors	Bachelor's degree in social work	Basic generalist practice of baccalaureate social work
Masters	Master's degree in social work	Practice of master's social work including the application of specialized knowledge and advanced practice skills
Advanced Generalist	Master's degree in social work; two years (or commensurate experience as defined by the jurisdiction) of experience in nonclinical settings	Practice of advanced generalist social work that occurs in nonclinical settings and may include macro-level practice
Clinical	Master's degree in social work; two years (or commensurate experience as defined by the jurisdiction) of experience in clinical settings	Practice of clinical social work requiring the application of specialized clinical knowledge and advanced clinical skills

APPENDIX B

CLINICAL EXAM: ADDITIONAL STATISTICS

APPENDIX B

CLINICAL EXAM: ADDITIONAL STATISTICS

Table B1. 2011–2021 Clinical exam first-time pass rates by year

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Pass rate	77.5%	76.4%	77.6%	77.6%	75.8%	78.1%	78.3%	73.2%	74.2%	74.8%	75.8%

Table B2. 2018–2021 Clinical exam first-time pass rates by year by race/ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate
Asian	574	67.2%	561	68.1%	567	72.1%	768	74.9%
Black	2,187	39.2%	2,293	44.0%	2,634	44.6%	2,932	46.2%
Hispanic/Latino	1,838	62.0%	2,071	62.5%	1,873	67.0%	2,726	65.8%
Multiracial	409	77.8%	436	78.4%	430	80.2%	576	80.7%
Native American/ Indigenous peoples	89	65.2%	98	66.3%	97	63.9%	115	59.1%
White	10,437	82.7%	11,205	82.8%	10,684	83.7%	12,977	85.0%

Table B3. 2018–2021 Clinical exam first-time pass rates by year by gender

Gender	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate
Men	2,084	70.4%	2,250	72.2%	2,227	71.4%	2,618	74.4%
Women	13,927	73.6%	14,947	74.5%	14,571	75.3%	18,007	76.0%

Table B4. 2018–2021 Clinical exam first-time pass rates by year by age

Age	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate
18–29	4,233	76.8%	4,477	78.4%	4,724	80.3%	5,125	81.4%
30–39	7,002	76.7%	7,663	77.2%	7,269	77.5%	9,420	78.2%
40–49	2,908	66.0%	3,073	68.2%	2,926	68.0%	3,740	69.1%
50 and older	1,879	63.1%	1,994	62.2%	1,882	61.3%	2,372	64.4%

Table B5. 2018–2021 Clinical exam first-time pass rates by year by primary language

Primary language	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate
English	14,793	75.0%	15,927	75.6%	15,679	75.7%	19,237	77.0%
Other	1,229	52.2%	1,280	55.7%	1,122	62.8%	1,420	59.1%

Table B6. 2018–2021 Clinical exam first-time pass rates by race/ethnicity and gender

Race/Ethnicity	Men		Women	
	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate
Asian	368	65.8%	2,101	71.9%
Black	1,192	37.2%	8,848	44.7%
Hispanic/Latino	1,164	61.3%	7,341	65.0%
Multiracial	231	77.1%	1,620	79.8%
Native American/ Indigenous peoples	56	57.1%	343	64.4%
White	5,796	82.0%	39,482	83.8%

Table B7. 2018–2021 Clinical exam first-time pass rates by race/ethnicity and age

Race/Ethnicity	18 – 29		30 – 39		40 – 49		50 and older	
	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate
Asian	596	80.4%	1,317	72.7%	407	59.7%	150	48.0%
Black	1,959	54.2%	4,361	49.8%	2,289	37.2%	1,437	22.0%
Hispanic/Latino	1,923	71.7%	4,470	68.3%	1,511	53.5%	604	40.7%
Multiracial	546	83.7%	889	81.7%	297	70.4%	119	65.5%
Native American/ Indigenous peoples	79	73.4%	146	71.9%	102	55.9%	72	45.8%
White	13,115	84.3%	19,196	86.2%	7,563	80.7%	5,429	76.8%

Note. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

APPENDIX C

MASTERS EXAM: ADDITIONAL STATISTICS

APPENDIX C

MASTERS EXAM: ADDITIONAL STATISTICS

Table C1. 2011–2021 Masters exam first-time pass rates by year

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Pass rate	82.5%	83.3%	82.1%	81.9%	80.4%	81.0%	81.2%	75.5%	74.0%	75.3%	73.0%

Table C2. 2018–2021 Masters exam first-time pass rates by year by race/ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate
Asian	558	68.8%	575	69.6%	535	72.3%	754	71.2%
Black	3,010	45.0%	3,355	44.5%	3,254	45.2%	4,225	43.9%
Hispanic/Latino	1,755	66.4%	2,031	62.1%	1,878	65.3%	2,752	62.0%
Multiracial	400	82.3%	427	79.2%	430	83.7%	585	77.9%
Native American/ Indigenous peoples	96	66.7%	107	59.8%	114	67.5%	136	65.4%
White	10,474	86.2%	11,160	85.1%	9,984	87.1%	12,423	85.3%

Table C3. 2018–2021 Masters exam first-time pass rates by year by gender

Gender	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate
Men	2,234	75.3%	2,293	73.8%	2,052	74.2%	2,593	72.7%
Women	14,570	75.5%	15,925	74.0%	14,662	75.5%	19,040	73.1%

Table C4. 2018–2021 Masters exam first-time pass rates by year by age

Age	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate
18–29	8,858	78.2%	9,433	76.5%	8,587	79.0%	10,584	76.3%
30–39	4,798	74.9%	5,228	73.9%	4,821	74.3%	6,625	72.4%
40–49	2,014	70.8%	2,232	67.8%	2,113	67.7%	2,794	66.8%
50 and older	1,142	65.0%	1,338	66.1%	1,195	66.8%	1,647	64.8%

Table C5. 2018–2021 Masters exam first-time pass rates by year by primary language

Primary language	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate
English	15,751	76.8%	17,033	75.3%	15,744	76.5%	20,282	74.0%
Other	1,061	55.8%	1,198	55.1%	972	57.4%	1,368	58.8%

Table C6. 2018–2021 Masters exam first-time pass rates by race/ethnicity and gender

Race/Ethnicity	Men		Women	
	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate
Asian	390	61.0%	2,031	72.4%
Black	1,649	40.6%	12,192	45.1%
Hispanic/Latino	1,052	62.0%	7,361	63.9%
Multiracial	204	80.9%	1,634	80.5%
Native American/ Indigenous peoples	60	68.3%	393	64.4%
White	5,409	87.6%	38,618	85.6%

Table C7. 2018–2021 Masters exam first-time pass rates by race/ethnicity and age

Race/Ethnicity	18 – 29		30 – 39		40 – 49		50 and older	
	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate
Asian	1,387	75.3%	700	64.0%	251	64.9%	84	61.9%
Black	5,590	51.3%	4,576	44.3%	2,282	38.0%	1,396	29.5%
Hispanic/Latino	4,264	67.9%	2,763	63.2%	983	54.5%	406	44.8%
Multiracial	977	82.7%	623	80.4%	172	72.7%	70	70.0%
Native American/ Indigenous peoples	133	72.9%	152	67.8%	102	56.9%	66	54.5%
White	24,202	85.1%	11,819	88.0%	4,977	84.9%	3,043	85.2%

Note. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

APPENDIX D

BACHELORS EXAM: ADDITIONAL STATISTICS

APPENDIX D

BACHELORS EXAM: ADDITIONAL STATISTICS

Table D1. 2011–2021 Bachelors Exam first-time pass rates by year

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Pass rate	77.5%	77.0%	77.7%	77.8%	77.5%	76.7%	77.7%	69.0%	67.3%	68.5%	68.7%

Table D2. 2018–2021 Bachelors exam first-time pass rates by year by race/ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate
Asian	73	60.3%	85	48.2%	85	57.6%	97	71.1%
Black	515	37.5%	475	34.9%	319	33.2%	446	31.6%
Hispanic/Latino	254	52.8%	274	49.6%	175	54.9%	293	54.6%
Multiracial	77	77.9%	69	73.9%	54	77.8%	100	71.0%
Native American/ Indigenous peoples	38	71.1%	34	55.9%	33	57.6%	40	75.0%
White	2,659	76.7%	2,573	75.7%	1,944	75.8%	2.406	77.0%

Table D3. 2018–2021 Bachelors exam first-time pass rates by year by gender

Gender	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate
Men	362	65.7%	349	67.3%	298	66.4%	327	63.9%
Women	3,346	69.3%	3,233	67.3%	2,409	68.8%	3,166	69.1%

Table D4. 2018–2021 Bachelors exam first-time pass rates by year by age

Age	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate
18–29	2,162	68.6%	2,145	67.9%	1,602	70.3%	2,010	69.4%
30–39	790	72.8%	763	67.4%	567	66.1%	766	70.6%
40–49	468	68.4%	412	68.9%	335	68.4%	454	69.2%
50 and older	291	62.5%	263	59.3%	205	61.5%	264	56.8%

Table D5. 2018–2021 Bachelors exam first-time pass rates by year by primary language

Primary language	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate
English	3,538	70.1%	3,393	68.9%	2,565	70.0%	3,315	69.6%
Other	173	46.2%	190	38.9%	144	43.1%	179	52.0%

Table D6. 2018–2021 Bachelors exam first-time pass rates by race/ethnicity and gender

Race/Ethnicity	Men		Women	
	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate
Asian	48	66.7%	292	58.6%
Black	218	33.9%	1,537	34.6%
Hispanic/Latino	101	52.5%	895	52.8%
Multiracial	34	79.4%	266	74.1%
Native American/ Indigenous peoples	13	46.2%	132	67.4%
White	874	74.8%	8,703	76.5%

Table D7. 2018–2021 Bachelors exam first-time pass rates by race/ethnicity and age

Race/Ethnicity	18 – 29		30 – 39		40 – 49		50 and older	
	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate
Asian	223	58.7%	78	59.0%	26	73.1%	13	53.8%
Black	789	39.3%	442	35.3%	291	30.2%	233	22.3%
Hispanic/Latino	637	53.1%	232	56.5%	82	45.1%	45	44.4%
Multiracial	206	75.7%	65	75.4%	21	57.1%	8	--
Native American/ Indigenous peoples	59	67.8%	38	63.2%	36	63.9%	12	66.7%
White	5,859	74.7%	1,918	79.4%	1,139	80.6%	666	74.5%

Note. To protect the privacy of test-takers, pass rate data are not reported for samples n <10. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

APPENDIX E

ASSOCIATE EXAM: ADDITIONAL STATISTICS

APPENDIX E

ASSOCIATE EXAM: ADDITIONAL STATISTICS

Table E1. 2011–2021 Associate exam first-time pass rates by year

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Pass rate	75.8%	75.0%	77.3%	68.5%	67.5%	66.2%	70.4%	72.2%	74.3%	78.0%	70.7%

Table E2. 2011–2021 Associate exam eventual pass rates by race/ethnicity and gender

Race/Ethnicity	Men		Women	
	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate
Asian	18	66.7%	49	77.6%
Black	139	66.9%	496	71.6%
Hispanic/Latino	101	72.3%	557	76.5%
Multiracial	21	81.0%	71	88.7%
Native American/ Indigenous peoples	2	--	31	71.0%
White	395	90.9%	1,682	93.5%

Note. To protect the privacy of test-takers, pass rate data are not reported for samples n <10.

Table E3. 2011–2021 Associate exam eventual pass rates by race/ethnicity and age

Race/Ethnicity	18–29		30–39		40–49		50 and older	
	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate
Asian	23	82.6%	19	63.2%	17	76.5%	8	--
Black	264	74.6%	213	73.2%	97	63.9%	61	54.1%
Hispanic/Latino	306	80.1%	214	77.1%	91	75.8%	47	42.6%
Multiracial	47	85.1%	30	90.0%	9	--	6	--
Native American/ Indigenous peoples	5	--	10	100.0%	9	--	9	--
White	1,002	93.2%	607	93.7%	292	92.1%	177	91.0%

Note. To protect the privacy of test-takers, pass rate data are not reported for samples n <10. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as *Prefer not to say* or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.

APPENDIX F

ADVANCED GENERALIST EXAM: ADDITIONAL STATISTICS

APPENDIX F

ADVANCED GENERALIST EXAM: ADDITIONAL STATISTICS

Table F1. 2011–2021 Advanced Generalist exam first-time pass rates by year

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Pass rate	47.6%	63.3%	75.3%	71.1%	64.5%	57.1%	59.1%	56.2%	66.9%	64.2%	63.6%

Table F2. 2011–2021 Advanced Generalist exam eventual pass rates by race/ethnicity and gender

Race/Ethnicity	Men		Women	
	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate
Asian	6	--	46	52.2%
Black	73	21.9%	401	26.2%
Hispanic/Latino	8	--	52	51.9%
Multiracial	5	--	38	65.8%
Native American/ Indigenous peoples	1	--	12	41.7%
White	178	71.9%	1,426	78.4%

Note. To protect the privacy of test-takers, pass rate data are not reported for samples n <10.

Table F3. 2011–2021 Advanced Generalist exam eventual pass rates by race/ethnicity and age

Race/Ethnicity	18–29		30–39		40–49		50 and older	
	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate	n	Pass rate
Asian	9	--	29	55.2%	11	63.6%	3	--
Black	38	39.5%	144	31.3%	154	22.1%	138	19.6%
Hispanic/Latino	9	--	26	53.8%	11	54.5%	14	21.4%
Multiracial	14	50.0%	17	70.6%	7	--	5	--
Native American/ Indigenous peoples	1	--	1	--	3	--	8	--
White	355	79.4%	666	80.2%	335	76.1%	248	70.6%

Note. To protect the privacy of test-takers, pass rate data are not reported for samples n <10. Data shown may not reflect all test-takers because those who selected options such as Prefer not to say or filled in their own identifiers were excluded from this analysis. These options were not available to test-takers at all points during the target time period. ASWB has altered the response options available on the exam registration forms and will continue to evaluate these options to ensure test-takers may accurately respond.


ASWB
Association of Social Work Boards