

IPEDS

Data Tools Overview

2020-21 Data Collection Cycle

On behalf of the Institute for Education Science's National Center for Education Statistics, NCES, and the Association for Institutional Research, AIR, welcome to this tutorial on tools for using and viewing Institutional Postsecondary Education Data System, or IPEDS survey data.

NCES developed several online tools for analyzing and viewing IPEDS data. This tutorial provides a general overview of some of these tools: College Navigator, the DataLab Tables Library, the Trend Generator, Data Explorer, and three functions of the Data Center: Summary Tables, downloading custom data files, and the IPEDS Data Feedback Report. Additional tutorials are available for select tools, should you want to learn more details about the specifics of each tool.

After completing this tutorial, you will know how to use IPEDS data tools to:

- Find information on colleges and universities;
- Search for data and tables in the DataLab;
- View and analyze data trends on popular topics;
- Search and download NCES customized charts and tables; and
- Use advanced data tools to create summary tables, statistical tables, and comparison reports.

IPEDS is administered by NCES and is an annual institution-level data collection system. Once data have been cleaned and processed, they are available to researchers, policy analysts, institutional administrators, and the public.

College Navigator

For the public and people interested in basic institutional information, College Navigator is the easiest resource for accessing college and university data. In fact, College Navigator was designed for prospective college students, parents, guidance counselors, and other individuals conducting college searches. The online tool has an easy-to-follow user interface, and allows visitors to search for specific institutions and narrow a college search by using a variety of filters, including institution location; institution level and control; college admissions test scores; and athletic team offerings.

After selecting an institution, a profile appears with the college's directory information including website; location; types of certificates and degrees offered; and student enrollment. More detailed profile information is available by expanding profile headers.

DataLab Tables Library

The DataLab includes a database of over 5,000 tables from NCES’s postsecondary publications organized into 14 topics. You can explore the Tables Library by topic; search for tables by keyword or publication title; or perform an advanced search by data source, year, and table release date.

“Explore by Topic” is a quick way to drill-down to a specific set of data. Many of the topics have subcategories that provide more detailed information.

Trend Generator

The Trend Generator data tool is a quick and easy way to view frequently accessed IPEDS data over time. Data are organized into expandable subject areas on the homepage. Click the subject area to view a list of questions for each topic.

After selecting a question, you will see the answer. The page shows the trend line over time, but you can also view the data as a bar chart or table. You can limit results to a subset of institutions based on frequently used variables or build a new table for additional analysis.

Data Explorer

Data Explorer is a tool used to access additional NCES tables and charts. When you select this tool, the page offers you the latest table releases by data collection cycle. Click on any of these to access the table, or search for a table using keywords. After a keyword is entered, you can use the menu options on the left to filter results by type and the menu options on the right to limit results by survey, collection year, data year or source.

IPEDS Data Center

The Data Center is the most advanced IPEDS data tool and offers the most options for analyzing IPEDS data. You can enter the Data Center from multiple links on the NCES website, but the Use the Data link on the IPEDS homepage is the easiest to remember. In the IPEDS Data Center, you can view survey data for a single institution or multiple institutions. You can also create trends, summary tables, statistical tables, and comparison reports for a user defined group of institutions. For example, the average enrollment of first-time, full-time students at public institutions in Pennsylvania with an enrollment over 5,000 students. Let us take a closer look at three IPEDS Data Center functions.

First, the Summary Tables function allows us to generate a wide range of pre-formatted reports related to a variety of commonly referenced IPEDS data such as directory information; price and admissions trends; student enrollments and demographics; and completion and graduation rates for one or more institutions in the IPEDS universe.

A second function is the ability to download survey data as complete data files or custom data files. Once downloaded, the files can be imported into a variety of statistical software packages, including SAS, SPSS, and STATA.

Finally, the IPEDS Data Feedback Report, or DFR, is a summary report of an institution's survey data. It graphically displays select survey results and includes comparisons to peer institutions. The DFR is a publicly available document and a standard report is provided to each institution's Chief Executive on an annual basis. You can create a custom DFR with additional variables and select institutions in the IPEDS Data Center.

This concludes our overview of IPEDS data tools. Please view other tutorials in the IPEDS Data Tools series for additional features and functionality. You may also want to view the Help Guide for each tool, which is available for PDF download on this page. You may also contact the IPEDS Data Tools Help Desk with additional questions.