

# INDICATORS OF HIGHER EDUCATION EQUITY IN THE UNITED STATES

## Welcome to: *The Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States: 2022 Historical Trend Report*

### INDICATORS OF HIGHER EDUCATION EQUITY IN THE UNITED STATES



THE PELL INSTITUTE  
for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education

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The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education of the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) and the University of Pennsylvania Alliance for Higher Education and Democracy (PennAHEAD) announce the release of Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States: 2022 Historical Trend Report. A virtual webinar release was held through an Inside Higher Education Webinar on May 17, 2022. On May 18, 2022 the report was officially delivered to the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) Board and was accompanied by Shared Solutions Dialogue of policy options designed to address the equity issues raised by the statistics tracked in the Indicators reports. The theme of this years release events and Shared Solutions Dialogues is: *Re-Imagining Access to Higher Education as a Human Right*.

This 2022 edition is the 8th in the current series, begun in 2015. This publication brings together again in partnership the Pell Institute with the Alliance for Higher Education and Democracy of the University of Pennsylvania (PennAHEAD). Both organizations have a core mission to promote a more open, equitable, and democratic system of higher education. The Pell Institute, with its historical and ongoing ties to the federal TRIO programs, has a special mission to promote more opportunity for low-income and first-generation students, and students with disabilities. These reports draw from multiple sources of existing data to provide, in one place, indicators that describe trends in equity in postsecondary enrollment, choice, and degree attainment, as well as indicators of college affordability.

**Purposes of the Indicators Project.** The purposes of this equity indicators project are to: 1) Report the status of higher education equity in the United States and identify changes over time in measures of equity; 2) Identify policies and practices that promote and hinder progress; and 3) Illustrate the need for increased support of policies, programs, and practices that not only improve overall attainment in higher education but also create greater equity in higher education opportunity and outcomes.

**Focus on Inequities by Family Income, Socioeconomic Status (SES), and Race/Ethnicity.** The first *Indicators* report in 2015 focused on equity in higher education based on measures of family income. Recognizing the need to also address inequity based on other interrelated demographic characteristics, reports since 2016 include selected indicators that

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[Report \(.pdf\)](#)

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highlight differences by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status (SES). In these reports, SES is primarily measured by an index comprised of family income, parents' education, and parents' occupation developed by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

**Inclusion of State Data.** The 2018 *Indicators* report added data describing higher education equity by U.S. state. The 2019 to 2022 *Indicators* reports continue and expand the inclusion of state data. Considering indicators of equity by state is essential given the many differences across the 50 states in historical, demographic, economic, and political characteristics, as well as the characteristics of their K-12 and higher education systems.

**Inclusion of Dependency Status.** *Indicators* reports 2015 to 2019 presented a number of indicators for all students and for dependent students. In the 2020 and 2022 *Indicators* report, we added disaggregation by dependency status (dependent, independent without dependents, and independent with dependents) where data are available.

**Inclusion of TRIO Data.** The 2021 and 2022 *Indicators* reports also include historical data on the Federal TRIO programs. Data are presented for each of the programs on numbers served, percent of eligible students served, funding levels, and characteristics of students served. Data presented also include the results of the most recent evaluations on college entrance and completion.

**Methodological Issues.** This *Indicators* report presents data as far back as comparable data warrant, often beginning with 1970. The Methodological Appendix provides additional notes, tables, and figures that help with understanding the trend data in the body of the report. Throughout the report, we include methodological notes concerning the qualifications and limitations of the data over time.

**The Search for Solutions Shared Dialogues, Essays and Blog.** In addition to providing longitudinal indicators of equity, the *Indicators* project is also intended to advance conversations about effective policies and practices for improving equity in higher education opportunities and outcomes. To this end, the *Indicators* reports periodically include essays intended to connect the indicators to current policy debates. Reflecting the UNESCO [Right to Higher Education \(RTHE\)](#) theme, the 2022 *Indicators* report includes a brief essay entitled: ***The Right to Higher Education: Key Challenges in the U.S. Context and Suggested Principles in a Global Context***. In 2018, the *Indicators* project launched the *Improving Equity in Higher Education Search for Solutions Blog* hosted by [PennAHEAD](#) to further advance the discussion of creating meaningful improvements in higher education equity.

**Online Tools.** To download the Excel files used to produce the figures in this report, find links to the 2016 to 2022 reports, and access the Search for Solutions Shared Dialogues Essays that periodically accompany the *Indicators* reports, please visit the labeled tabs on the [Equity Indicators Website](#) hosted by the Pell Institute.

**PEO Archive.** To access the data from the Postsecondary Education Opportunity (PEO) newsletters used in this report, visit the [PEO Archive](#). The data was compiled by Tom Mortenson, updated by Nicole Brunt, and can be accessed for free by registering in the COE'S Community of Practice. After registering, your username and password will be your digital library card to access current and past PEO newsletters, state reports, spreadsheets, presentations, and posters.

**Coming Soon Infographics and Interactive Data Tool.** By Fall 2022, we will be adding additional data visualizations and infographic stories for selected Indicators to the Indicators website. The Infographics and Interactive Data Tool will be accessed at the [Equity Indicators Website](#).

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