



The Condition of Education 2020

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The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) published its annual Condition of Education in May of 2020. This report contains key indicators on all levels of education in the United States and summarizes important developments and trends. The 2020 iteration highlighted the inequities in Internet access across the country, particularly for minority and low-income families. In postsecondary education, concern centers on degree completion for current students and financial difficulties incurred by those who dropout with student loan debt. In this brief, we describe important areas of the national education landscape for elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education. We focus on changes over time and add some additional data from outside sources to create relevance for Missouri's education landscape.

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Special points of interest:

- 3.6 million children in the U.S. lack access to the Internet.
- Only 50 percent of Missouri's recent high school graduates completed a degree within six years; nationally, the rate is 62 percent
- The median earnings of 25- to 34-year-olds with a Bachelor's degree (\$54,700) were 51 percent higher than the earnings of workers with some college, but no degree (\$36,300).
- For those who completed high school, median earnings were 25 percent higher over those who did not finish high school.

The NCES and Condition of Education Report

The NCES, located within the U.S. Department of Education and the Institute of Education Sciences, is the primary federal entity for collecting, analyzing, and reporting education-related data in the United States and internationally. The Condition of Education report has been published annually since 1975 and fulfills a congressional mandate to provide a picture of the current educational climate based on the latest data. This year's Condition of Education publication has 47 indicators on areas including prekindergarten to postsecondary education, labor force outcomes, and international comparisons to education benchmarks and includes data through 2018. The report is intended to help policymakers, practitioners, data users, and the public monitor educational progress.

K-12 Education

Enrollment

Observing the trend in student enrollment may be important because it allows the state, districts, and schools to equip themselves with adequate resources to serve all students. The NCES predicts that total K-12 public school enrollment will increase by one percent (50.7 to 51.1 million students) in the next ten or so years.¹ The NCES does not make projections on the future growth of charter schools though charter school enrollment increased by 5 percentage points from 2000 to 2017, from 1 to 6 percent (0.4 to 3.1 million students).²

When looking at state-level trends of public school enrollment, NCES predicts North Dakota will see the largest growth (16 percent increase) whereas New Mexico will see the largest decline (12 percent decrease).³ K-12 enrollment in Missouri is projected to stay constant with a net change of 0 percent.⁴ Among neighboring states, Illinois and Kansas

are projected to have decreased enrollment (-7 percent and -4 percent respectively) whereas states such as Iowa, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Tennessee are projected to have enrollment increases ranging from 1-4 percent.⁵

Free- or Reduced-Price Lunch

The NCES reported Black, Hispanic, and American Indian/Alaska Native students are equally likely to be from households of high poverty and three to five times more likely than white and Asian students.⁶ Students from low-income households typically perform at lower levels in achievement tests. Because students of color are more likely to be from high poverty households, they are more likely to perform at a lower level on achievement tests than white and Asian students. Having said this, examining free or reduced-price lunch percentages is important because it allows us to see which racial/ethnic groups of students have been and continue to be marginalized. It can further direct the eyes of policymakers and district/school leaders on how to provide an equitable education for those who continue to be marginalized by implementing an equitable funding formula and reducing food insecurity in local communities.

NAEP Scores

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which occurs every two years, and tests representative sampled students of grades four, eight, and 12 in reading and math and allows us to compare Missouri students' academic performance with other students nationally.⁷ This is especially important when different standardized assessments are administered from state to state. Trend lines of NAEP scores for grades four and eight are shown below.⁸ As mentioned in the previously published PRiME NAEP Policy Brief, the 2019 scores of Missouri's FRL-eligible students are the lowest in the past 16 years while the scores of FRL-ineligible students have been slowly trending upward.⁹

Internet Access

In 2018, 94 percent of 3- to 18-year-olds had internet access at home; 88 percent through a computer and 6 percent through a smartphone.¹⁰ The percentage of children with internet access also varied by race/ethnicity, income level, and parents' education attainment; however, the percentage was higher for white and Asian children, for children from higher-income households, and for children who have parents/guardians who attained higher levels of education. On the other hand, Black, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, and American Indian students were less likely to have internet access at home.¹¹ In the

Figure 1: Percentage Distribution of Public School Students Race/Ethnicity: School Poverty Level, Fall 2017

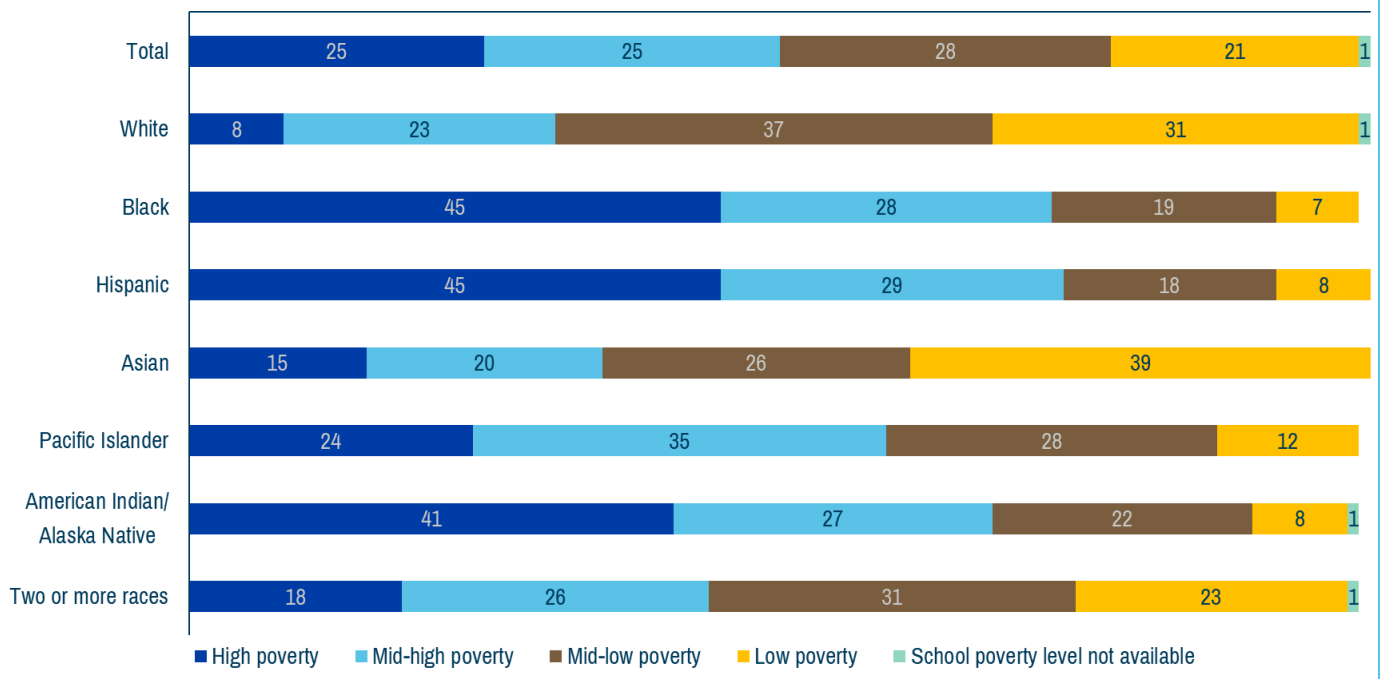
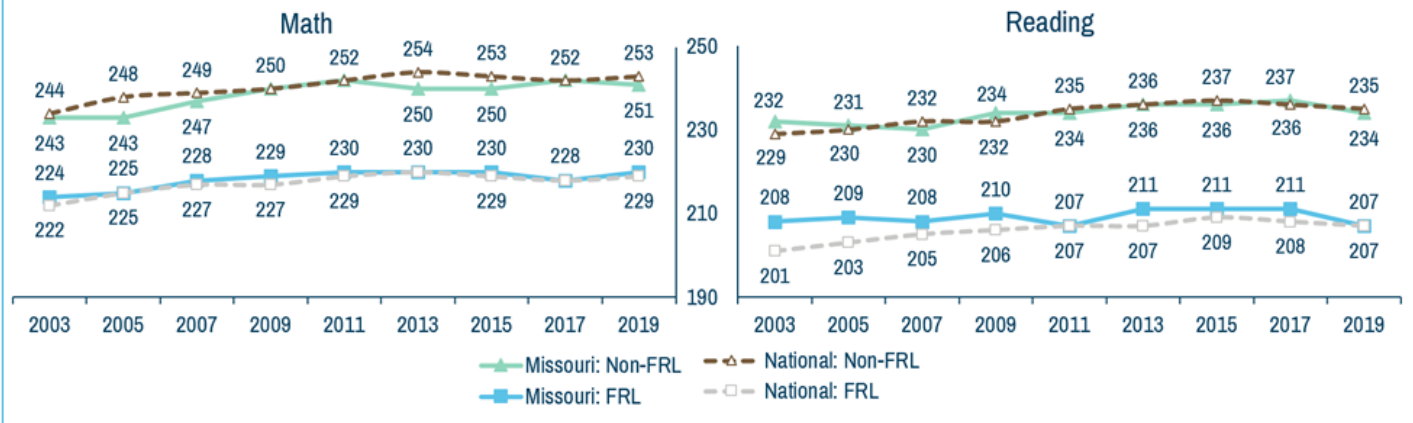


Figure 2: Grade 4 NAEP Poverty (FRL) Scale Score Achievement Differences, 2003-19



midst of the COVID-19 public health crisis, what seems to be a small percentage can create consequential inequities as 6 percent of nearly 60 million students in the U.S. is approximately 3.6 million students who lack internet access.¹² Among those who reported not having internet access at home, more than a third of respondents indicated the internet being too expensive as a reason.¹³

In Missouri, urban and suburban areas have better access to wired and wireless internet than rural areas where many counties are either underserved or unserved.¹⁴ Remote learning becomes especially difficult when the internet access is sparsely available in rural areas. With schools and libraries closed as a result of the pandemic, the “digital divide” exists in urban areas as well. Districts such as St. Louis Public Schools are directing students and families to local internet service providers who

provide free internet service to those who are eligible.

School Finance

Public schools spent \$12,794 per pupil in 2016-17, an increase of 20 percent since about 20 years ago.¹⁵ Of the total K-12 public school revenues, states provide 47 percent, local sources provide 45 percent, and federal sources provide 8 percent.¹⁶ In Missouri, the state provides 33 percent, and local sources provide 46 percent (compared to the U.S. average of 37 percent).¹⁷ Based on these percentages, education is still very much a local issue with states and municipalities providing the bulk of the financial support through property taxes, state income tax, sales tax, and corporate tax.

When the state budget cuts occur, charter schools in St. Louis and Kansas City areas and districts in rural Missouri may face the largest hits as they are more likely to depend

Figure 3: Grade 8 NAEP Poverty (FRL) Scale Score Achievement Differences, 2003-19

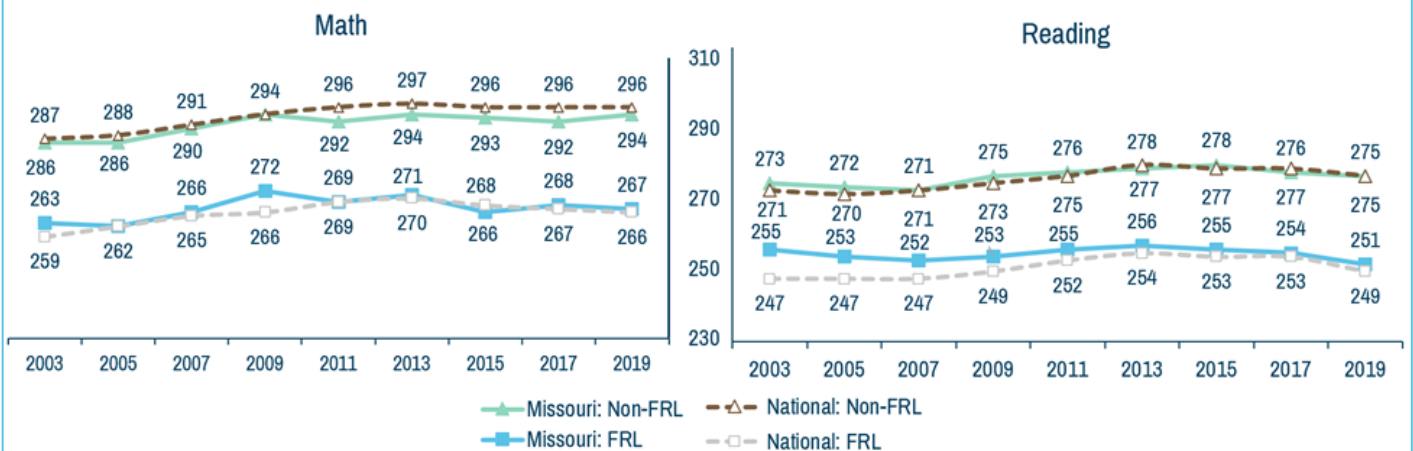
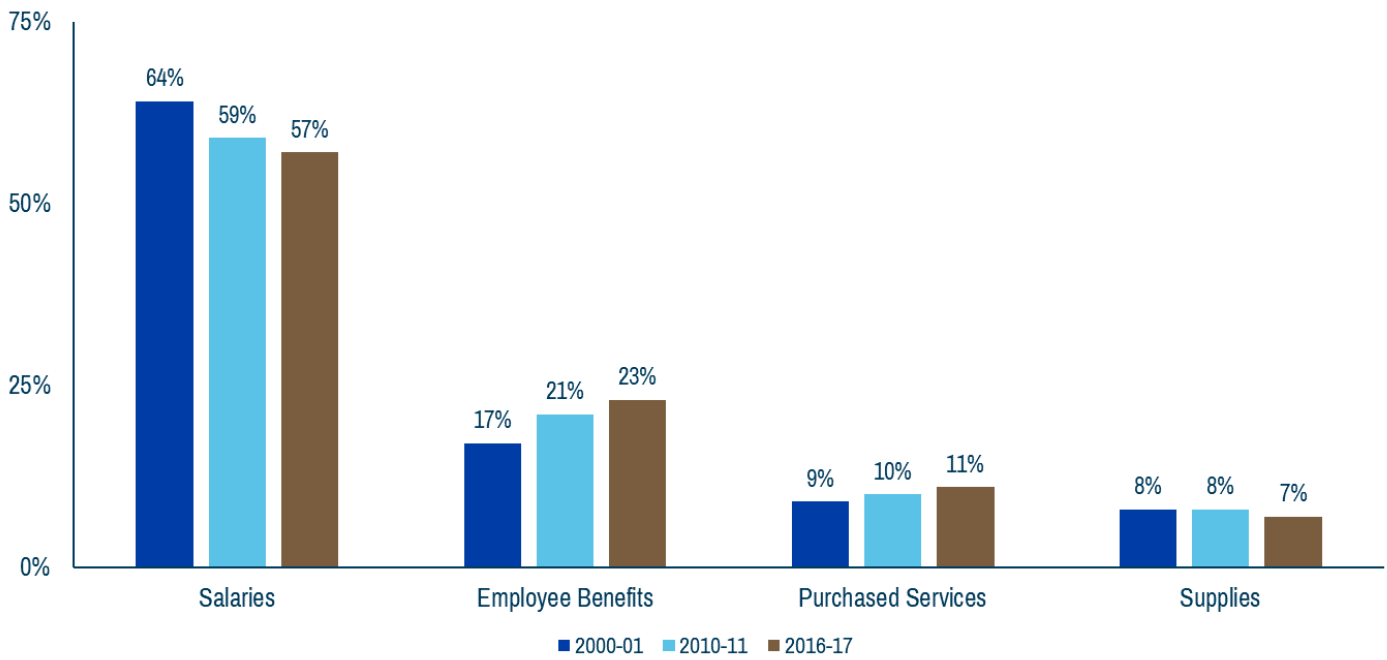


Figure 4: Percentage of Current Expenditures per Student, Nationally



on the state funding source such as income tax and sales tax that are more sensitive to economic downturns. On the other hand, wealthier districts in the suburbs rely more on local sources such as property taxes that are less sensitive to economic downturns. Table 1 indicates the districts in Missouri with the highest and lowest percentages of state funding.¹⁸

The state budget for each year is determined based on many projections and indicators. However, the 2018 audit of the Budget Reserve Fund showed that Missouri is currently ranked 43rd in the nation for preparedness for an economic downturn.¹⁹ With Elementary and Secondary Education making up 21 percent of the state budget for 2020-21 fiscal year, districts and schools may face budget cuts during economic downturns such as the one the state is currently experiencing.²⁰ In preparations for the economic downturns, it is in the best interest of Missouri students that the state has enough rainy day funds to minimize the impact caused by budget cuts especially for those districts that heavily rely on the state funding source.²¹

High School Graduation and Dropout Rates

The national graduation rate increased from 79 percent (2010-11) to 85 percent (2017-18).²² As graduation

rates increased, the overall dropout rate decreased over the past 12 years.²³ While white and Asian students' dropout rate remained low and constant, the dropout rate of students from historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups (Black, Hispanic, American Indian/Native Alaskan, and Pacific Islander) decreased over time although the rate is still approximately twice as high compared to white and Asian students.²⁴

In Missouri, the 2018-19 graduation rate for public high school students was about 90 percent, exceeding the 2017-2018 national average by 4 percent.²⁵ By race/ethnicity, in Missouri, there are race/ethnicity gaps in graduation, with 92 percent of white students graduating on time, compared to 86 percent of Hispanic students and 81 percent of Black students.²⁶ Nationally, the gaps between white and Hispanic students and white and Black students were eight and ten percentage points (89% vs. 81% and 89% vs. 79%).²⁷

Undergraduate Postsecondary Enrollment

National

16.6 million students enrolled in undergraduate postsecondary education in fall 2018, a decrease of 8 percent since 2010.²⁸ The decrease can be attributed to

declining enrollment in 2-year institutions, down 25 percent from 2010 to 2018 (7.7 million to 5.7 million students).²⁹ This downward trend is not unexpected as the U.S. was in a recession in 2010. Traditionally, as the economy grows stronger and unemployment goes down, postsecondary enrollment also goes down; often, older adults return to school during a recession.³⁰ For the traditional college-aged population, 18- to 24-year-olds, the college enrollment rate was not noticeably different in recent years.^{31,32} The immediate college enrollment rate, which indicates high school completers who enroll in 2-year or 4-year colleges the fall after completing high school, was also not noticeably different from 2010 to 2018.³³ Both enrollment indicators continue to be highest for students who are Asian and for female students.^{34,35,36} Stagnant enrollment in postsecondary education is, in part, due to a lack of increase in school-aged children in grades 9-12.^{37,38} Adding to the issue, state support for higher education has declined and available aid has not kept up with tuition increases, making college less affordable for additional students to enroll.³⁹

Missouri

Overall, Missouri's postsecondary enrollment has seen more dramatic declines in recent years than the national landscape. Enrollment data from the National Student Clearinghouse indicated a continual decline of at least 3 percent each year between Spring 2017 through Spring 2019.⁴⁰ A 4.9 percent

decrease was estimated between Spring 2019 to Spring 2020, without accounting for any effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴¹ Similar to the national decline, the immediate enrollment of Missouri's public high school graduates in public postsecondary institutions has decreased by 6.2 percent over the last 10 years (2009-2019).⁴² A small portion of this decline is due to decreased public K-12 enrollment from 2009-2017; however, Missouri only saw a decrease of .03 percent.^{43,44} Data from DESE indicated the enrollment of high school graduates in 2-year and 4-year colleges has remained steady (26 percent and 38 percent respectively) over the course of the last 3 years.⁴⁵ With a similar number of graduates entering postsecondary education after high school, Missouri's declining enrollment trends may indicate issues with existing student persistence. Paying for college is a significant factor that may be contributing to the persistence issues but academic preparation and personal issues may also be factors.

Price of Postsecondary Education

National

On average, tuition has increased 100 percent since 2001, even after accounting for inflation; however, the rate of increase has slowed in recent years.⁴⁶ Average tuition and fees at public 4-year

Table 1: Districts with Highest and Lowest % State Funding

Districts with Highest % State Funding		Districts with Lowest % State Funding	
District	% State Funding	District	% State Funding
Guadalupe Centers Schools	81.1%	Brentwood	2.3%
Gateway Science Acad./St. Louis	81.0%	Clayton	3.5%
Frontier Schools	79.5%	Kansas City 33	4.2%
Premier Charter School	78.8%	Ladue	4.5%
Lafayette Preparatory Academy	77.6%	Parkway C-2	4.7%
Lee A. Tolbert Com. Academy	77.1%	Kirkwood R-VII	6.2%
Confluence Academies	77.0%	Valley Park	6.8%
Allen Village	76.7%	South Callaway Co. R-II	7.5%
University Academy	76.7%	Westran R-I	8.3%
KIPP: Endeavor Academy	76.3%	Maplewood-Richmond Heights	8.5%

Source: 2019 Finance Data and Statistics Summary for All Districts, MO DESE

institutions increased about 12 percent between 2010–11 and 2018–19, while increases of about 17 percent were seen at private non-profit 4-year institutions.⁴⁷ In 2017–18, the average net price of attendance (total cost minus grant and scholarship aid) for first-time, full-time undergraduate students awarded loan aid and attending 4-year institutions was lowest at public institutions (\$13,700).⁴⁸ Similarly, the average net price at 2-year institutions in 2017–18 was lowest at public institutions (\$7,200).⁴⁹ The net price of attending is an important indicator as it provides a more accurate picture of how much students and families must pay or borrow for one year of postsecondary attendance. The Higher Education Act of 2008 requires all colleges to disclose net price calculators on their websites.⁵⁰ These tools assist in mitigating “sticker shock” and the discouragement of potential students who need to account for aid in deciding whether to attend postsecondary education.⁵¹

Missouri

Despite the national trend in increasing costs, Missouri’s four-year public institutions have kept costs down. The average published 2019–20 in-state tuition and fees for public four-year institutions in Missouri (\$9,020) is less than the U.S. average (\$10,440) and has not increased in the last five years.⁵² While the average published in-state tuition and fees for Missouri’s two-year institutions has risen 14 percent in the last five years, the current Missouri average (\$3,780) nearly matches the national average (\$3,730).⁵³ The relatively stable tuition costs are due to the Missouri Higher Education Student

Funding Act (HESFA), which sets specific parameters on public higher education institutions’ ability to increase tuition and required fees.^{54,55} The HESFA was passed in 2007 and later revised in 2018.^{56,57} Keeping costs down is good news in terms of affordability; however, not all Missouri resident students are treated equally in the state. Immigrants protected under DACA (Deferred Action of Childhood Arrivals) are not only ineligible to receive financial aid but are also currently forced to pay the international tuition rate under Missouri law.^{58,59} As many DACA students are students of color, their ineligibility serves as an example of how they continue to be marginalized in our state.

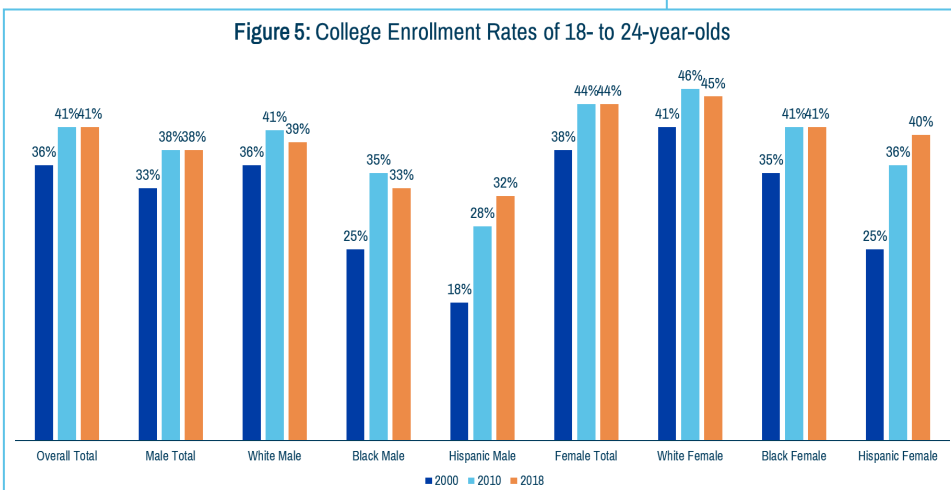
The price of attending postsecondary education is an important indicator; yet, it is only one component of the bigger picture of costs for Missouri’s students. In 2017–18, 44 percent of first-time full-time undergraduate students were awarded loan aid nationally with the average annual loan amount totaling \$7,200.⁶⁰ However, the six-year graduation rate was 62 percent across all institutions.⁶¹ In Missouri, only half of recent high school graduates completed a degree within six years.⁶² Ultimately, while public colleges in Missouri have remained affordable, many of Missouri’s students are not persisting to graduation. Many are also likely incurring debt without the benefit of a completed degree and, potentially, creating a long-term financial burden.

Annual Earnings & Educational Attainment

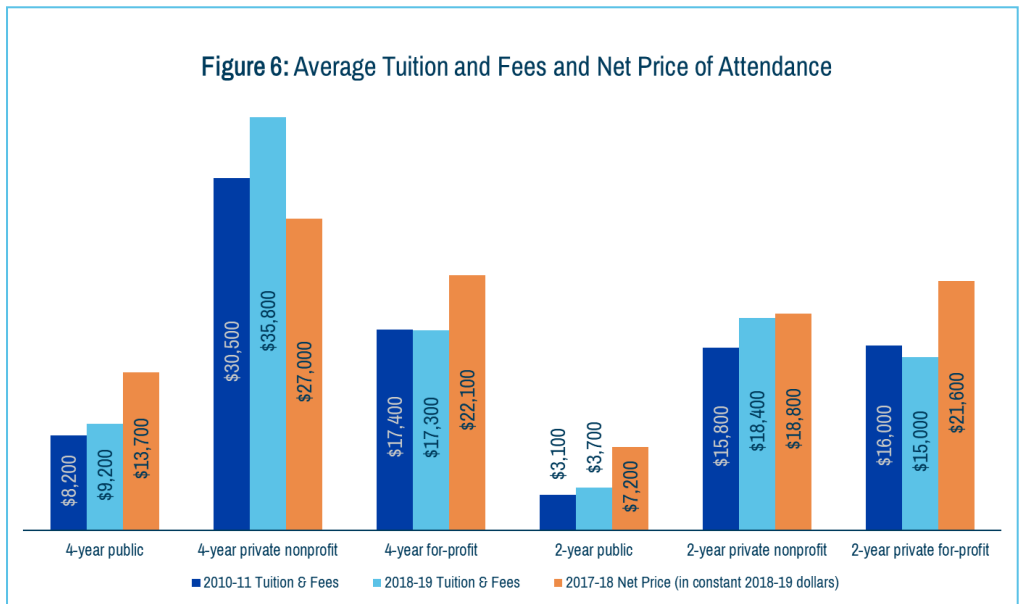
In 2019, 94 percent of 25- to 29-year-olds had completed high school, while 39 percent had completed a Bachelor’s degree.⁶³ Data has consistently reinforced college graduates have higher mean earnings as compared to non-graduates.

The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce indicated only 23.1 percent of those with some college earn more than the median Bachelor’s degree-holder.⁶⁴ Further, those who complete a Bachelor’s degree earn 31 percent more than those with an Associate’s degree and 84 percent more than those with a high school diploma.⁶⁵ The NCES reported the median earnings of 25- to 34-year-olds with a Bachelor’s degree (\$54,700) were

Figure 5: College Enrollment Rates of 18- to 24-year-olds

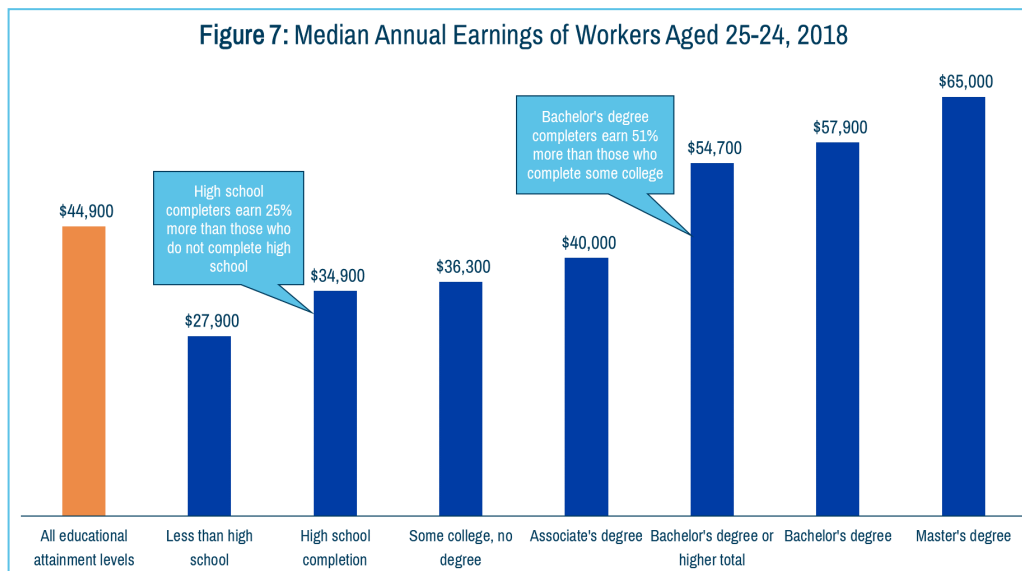


51 percent higher than the earnings of workers with some college, but no degree (\$36,300).⁶⁶ A measurable difference in the median earnings (25 percent) was also seen for those who completed high school over those who did not finish high school.⁶⁷ Those who did not finish high school were also more likely to not be working or enrolled in school between the ages of 18 and 24 (41 percent compared to 12 percent).⁶⁸ These statistics are an important reminder - degree completion pays off at all levels.



Final Thoughts

Overall, the Condition of Education 2020 provides a good cross-section of where our education system stands today on a national level, but it is also helpful to describe Missouri's schools, students, and educational landscape in comparison to other states and national trends. A main takeaway for K-12 education is the number of students, 3.6 million, without internet access at home and the disparities in access by racial and socioeconomic groups. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, lack of reliable access to the internet may influence student learning and performance and widen the achievement gap. For postsecondary education, degree completion continues to be an area of concern for students nationally and in Missouri. Students who fail to complete a degree have a lower earning potential and often incur debt to attend college. We will dive deeper into both Missouri's K-12 educational standing and postsecondary standing in the upcoming weeks and months.



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