

Vermont's Postsecondary Landscape: Equity by the Numbers

Equity: The recognition and repair of structural injustice in social, economic, and political systems.

For the prosperity of all Vermont residents, the vitality of its communities, and the strength of its economy, Vermont must address structural injustice in postsecondary education and training. Vermonters facing marginalization, discrimination, and systemic oppression experience unique roadblocks in their pursuit of postsecondary credentials that their advantaged peers do not. Institutional barriers are too often invisible to the people who do not experience them. These barriers are not uniform -- and neither are the solutions.

The collection of statistics below is a partial snapshot of inequities hindering educational attainment for Vermonters who are people of color, low-income, immigrants, in foster care, indigenous, and formerly or currently incarcerated.

Affordability



Cost

Before financial aid, an average low-income Vermont family would spend **95 percent** of its household income to send one person to college.



Debt

After financial aid, the average student debt upon graduating from a 4-year Vermont institution in 2017 was **\$30,651**.



Funding

In fiscal year 2019, the state spent only **\$152.47** per person to fund public postsecondary institutions and financial aid.



Perception

Only **34 percent** of Vermonters without a postsecondary degree or credential find postsecondary programs affordable.

Lived Experience



Eligibility

Vermonters in adult and juvenile corrections facilities are **ineligible** for federal financial aid and may remain ineligible upon release.



Attainment

22 percent of Vermont's indigenous population holds a bachelor's degree, compared to **37 percent** of their white peers.



Stability

Students in foster care, where LGBTQ+ youth are both over-represented and experience a higher number of placements, lose **4-6 months** of educational progress every time they change high schools.



Recognition

Although New Americans in Vermont are **56 percent** more likely to hold a graduate degree than U.S.-born Vermonters, credentials earned in home countries may not be recognized in Vermont.



Connectivity

1 in 4 Vermonters do not have access to fixed, high-speed broadband internet, which disproportionately affects those in rural areas.



Aspiration

66 percent of first-generation students in the Class of 2016 planned to continue their education beyond high school, compared to **85 percent** of their non first-generation peers.

Resources

Cost

Source: Vermont Student Assistance Corporation. (2018). VSAC Higher Education Fact Sheets for Vermont Counties. Accessed May 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.vsaac.org/about/how-we-influence-policy>

Note: Calculation based on average family income for VSAC Vermont Incentive Grant recipients.

Additional Reading: [Vermont Basic Needs Budgets and Livable Wage](#); [College Affordability: What Is It and How Can We Measure It](#)

Debt

Source: Institute for College Access and Success. (2018). *Student Debt and the Class of 2017*. Percentage of Graduates with Debt and Average Debt of Those Loans, By State. Accessed May 2019. Retrieved from: https://ticas.org/sites/default/files/pub_files/classof2017.pdf

Additional Reading: [Buried in Debt: A National Survey Report on the State of Loan Borrowers in 2018](#)

Funding

Source: University of Illinois Grapevine. 2019. *State Fiscal Support for Higher Education per \$1,000 in Personal Income and Per Capita*, Table 4 (includes funds distributed to VSAC, VSC, & UVM). Accessed April 2019. <https://education.illinoisstate.edu/grapevine/tables/>

Note: Includes funds distributed to VSAC, the Vermont State Colleges, and the University of Vermont.

Additional Reading: [Unkept Promises: State Cuts to Higher Education Threaten Access and Equity](#)

Perception

Source: Advance Vermont. (2018). *Statewide Higher Education Survey*. Accessed May 2019.

Additional Reading: [Varying Degrees: New America's Annual Survey on Higher Education](#)

Eligibility

Source: U.S Department of Education Office of Federal Student Aid. (2019). *Federal Student Aid for Students in Adult Correctional and Juvenile Justice Facilities*. Accessed May 2019. Retrieved from: <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/sites/default/files/aid-info-for-incarcerated-individuals.pdf>

Additional Reading: [Investing in Futures: Economic and Fiscal Benefits of Postsecondary Education in Prison](#); [Don't Stop Now](#)

Stability

Source: Vermont Judiciary. (2017). *LGBTQ Youth in Foster Care*. Vermont Juvenile Court Improvement Program. Accessed May 2019. Retrieved from: https://www.vermontjudiciary.org/sites/default/files/documents/LGBTQ_InfoBulletin.pdf

Additional Reading: [Foster Care to College: Fostering Success for the Future](#)

Connectivity

Source: BroadbandNow. (2019). Internet Access in Vermont. Accessed May 2019. Retrieved from: <https://broadbandnow.com/Vermont>

Additional Reading: [Grade Increase: Tracking Distance Education in the United States](#); [Post-Traditional Students in Higher Education](#)

Attainment

Source: Lumina Foundation. (2018). *A Stronger Nation*. Accessed May 2019. Retrieved from:

<http://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/report/2019/#state/VT>

Note: The term 'indigenous' is synonymous with the U.S. Census Bureau's racial categorization of 'American Indian and Alaska Native.' The term 'white' refers to the U.S. Census Bureau's racial categorization of 'White alone.'

Additional Reading: [Challenges and Opportunities in Achieving the National Postsecondary Degree Attainment Goals](#); [Creating Visibility and Healthy Learning Environments for Native Americans in Higher Education](#)

Recognition

Source: New American Economy. (2016). *The Contributions of New Americans in Vermont*. Accessed May 2019. Retrieved from:

<http://research.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/nae-vt-report.pdf>

Additional Reading: [Giving Credit Where Credit is Due: Bridging the Gap for Foreign-Educated Immigrants](#); [The Contributions of New Americans in Vermont](#)

Aspiration

Source: Vermont Student Assistance Corporation. (2018). *A First Look: Vermont Senior Survey Class of 2016*. Accessed May 2019. Retrieved from:

<https://www.vsaac.org/sites/default/files/uploads/Research/Senior%20Survey%202016%20In%20School%20A%20First%20Look.pdf>

Note: The term 'first-generation' refers to students who report that neither of their parents earned a 4-year degree.

Additional Reading: [First-Generation Students Success: A Landscape Analysis of Programs and Services at 4-Year Institutions](#)



Advance Vermont is a statewide partnership of leaders from business, education, government, nonprofits, and philanthropy rallying to increase educational attainment in Vermont for the benefit of our residents, communities, and economy. Our mission is to advance the civic and economic vitality of Vermont by growing the number of Vermonters with postsecondary credentials, increasing equity in educational attainment, and strengthening connections among education, training, and employment.

To connect with Advance Vermont, please visit advancevermont.org or reach out to advancevermont@vsac.org