

West Virginia

College Affordability Profile

The Southern Regional Education Board convened a Commission on College Affordability in the South and published a report in 2016 emphasizing that affordability is a critical factor in both access to and completion of postsecondary education. In this year's SREB College Affordability Profiles, SREB examined data for the 2021-22 academic year, the most recent year that student financial aid and net price data are available. West Virginia shows a mixed picture of college affordability, with strength in two-year institution support and overall improvements in affordability metrics. While challenges remain especially in four-year institution funding and student borrowing, the state maintains better affordability metrics than many SREB states.

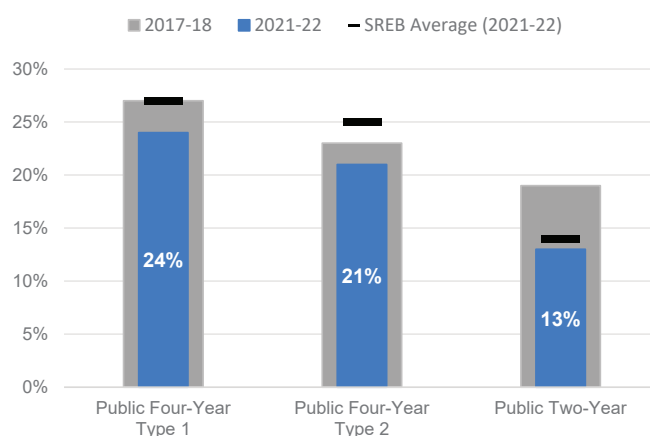
Family Income Needed for Net Price at Public Institutions

In 2021-22, the family income percentage required to pay full-time students at public four-year Type 1, four-year Type 2 and two-year institutions in West Virginia was lower than 2017-18.

In 2021-22, families in West Virginia needed, on average, 24% of their income to cover educational expenses for a full-time student at four-year Type 1 institutions and 21% at four-year Type 2 institutions. For two-year institutions, the average was 13% of family income.

The 11-percentage point gap between the four-year Type 1 and two-year institutions indicates moderate variation in affordability across institution types.

West Virginia performs better than SREB averages across all institution types, suggesting relatively good affordability compared to regional peers.



U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Student Financial Aid Files and Directory Files 2018 and 2022, 12-Month Enrollment Instructional Activity Files 2018 and 2022. American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Samples 2018 and 2022. Institutional sectors based on SREB-State Data Exchange categories.

Key terms:

Four-Year Institution Type 1: Four-year institutions that awarded at least 30 doctoral degrees in five different areas.

Four-Year Institution Type 2: All other four-year institutions.

Net Price: Total cost of attendance (includes tuition, fees, room and board, and more) minus federal, state and local government, or institutional grant and scholarship aid.

Distribution of Average Family Income

In West Virginia, families earning \$110,000 or more saw the largest increase from 2018 to 2022, with a 1-point gap in 2022, indicating lower income disparities than other SREB states.



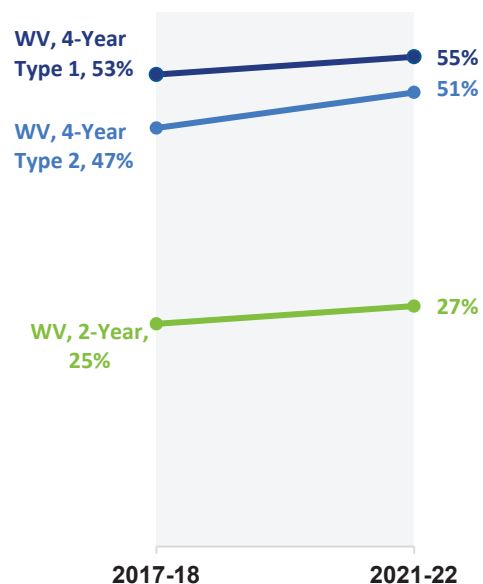
Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Student Financial Aid Files and Directory Files 2018 and 2022.

Income Required for Median Tuition and Fees at Public Institutions for Families Making Less Than \$30,000

The percentage of income required for median tuition and fees at public institutions was higher at four-year institutions than two-year institutions in 2021-22 for West Virginia families making less than \$30,000.

In 2021-22, families earning less than \$30,000 needed 55% of their income to cover median tuition and fees at four-year Type 1 institutions and 51% at Type 2 institutions. For two-year institutions, the percentage was lower, with families requiring 27% of their income to cover the median tuition and fees.

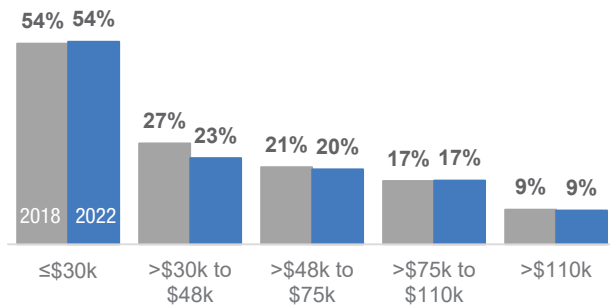
The 28-percentage point gap between four-year Type 1 and two-year institutions indicates disparities in accessibility. While two-year institutions remain relatively affordable, the universal increase in required income percentages suggest growing affordability challenges for families making less than \$30,000.



U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Student Charges Data Files and Directory Files 2018 and 2022, 12-Month Enrollment Instructional Activity Data Files 2018 and 2022. American Community Survey Public Use Micro Sample Files 2018 and 2022.

Net Price as a Percentage of Income for Public Four-Year Type 1 Institutions

The percentage of income that West Virginia families needed to pay for educational expenses at four-year Type 1 institutions remained stable from 2018 to 2022 for most income categories.



U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Student Financial Aid Files and Directory Files 2018 and 2022, 12-Month Enrollment Instructional Activity Files 2018 and 2022. American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Samples, 2018 and 2022. Institutional types based on SREB-State Data Exchange categories.

The percentage of income needed to pay for four-year Type 1 institutions in West Virginia was larger for families making less than \$30,000 than for any other income category.

The 45-percentage point gap between highest and lowest income groups in 2022 indicates significant inequity in affordability.

While some income brackets saw improvements, the burden on lower-income families remains unchanged and severe.

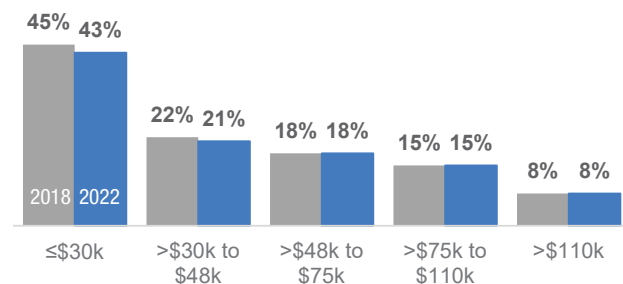
Net Price as a Percentage of Income for Public Four-Year Type 2 Institutions

The percentage of income that West Virginia families needed to pay for educational expenses at four-year Type 2 institutions remained stable from 2018 to 2022 for most income category.

The data shows a remarkable stability across all income brackets, with only a slight improvement in the lower-middle income group.

The 35-percentage point gap between highest and lowest income groups in 2022 indicates significant inequity in affordability, though less severe than four-year Type 1 institutions.

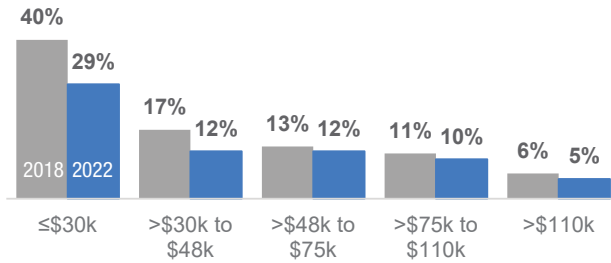
The pattern shows persistent inequities but with lower overall burden compared to four-year Type 1 institutions.



U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Student Financial Aid Files and Directory Files 2018 and 2022, 12-Month Enrollment Instructional Activity Files 2018 and 2022. American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Samples, 2018 and 2022. Institutional types based on SREB-State Data Exchange categories.

Net Price as a Percentage of Income for Public Two-Year Institutions

The percentage of income that West Virginia families needed to pay for educational expenses at two-year institutions decreased from 2018 to 2022 for every income category.



U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Student Financial Aid Files and Directory Files 2018 and 2022, 12-Month Enrollment Instructional Activity Files 2018 and 2022. American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Samples, 2018 and 2022. Institutional types based on SREB-State Data Exchange categories.

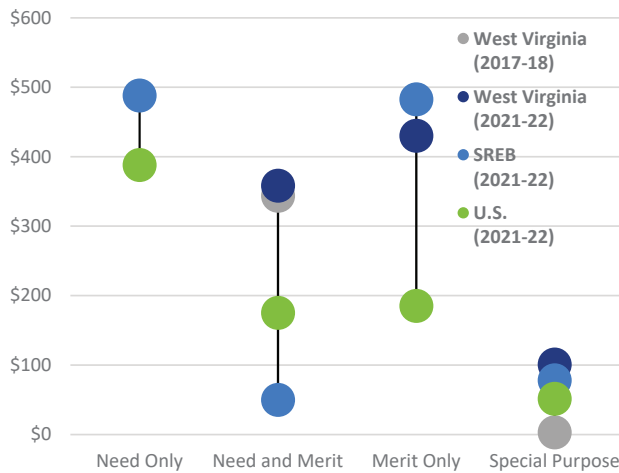
The decrease in the percentage of income needed to pay for two-year institutions in West Virginia was larger for families making less than \$30,000 than for any other income category.

The 24-percentage point gap between highest and lowest income groups in 2022 represents a reduction from the 34-percentage point gap in 2018.

State Financial Aid Per Student

West Virginia awarded more need and merit-based aid in 2021-22 per full-time-equivalent student than the SREB and national averages. Need and merit-based aid increased from 2017-18 to 2021-22.

	Need Only	Need and Merit	Merit Only	Special Purpose
West Virginia (2017-18)	NA	\$344	NA	\$3
West Virginia (2021-22)	NA	\$358	\$430	\$101
SREB (2021-22)	\$488	\$50	\$483	\$78
U.S. (2021-22)	\$388	\$175	\$185	\$51



West Virginia shows changes in aid distribution, notably introducing merit-only aid and substantially increasing special purpose aid. The state maintains higher than average need and merit combination aid while lacking pure need-based aid programs.

The overall pattern suggests a shift toward merit-based criteria and diversified aid options, though total aid amounts remain relatively modest compared to some other SREB states.

National Association of State Student Grant & Aid Programs 2018 and 2022 annual survey (results for public institutions only). U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System Instructional Activity File, 2018 and 2022, and Directory File, 2018 and 2022.

Student Borrowing at Public Institutions

In 2020-21, West Virginia graduates borrowed more than the SREB and national averages to earn degrees at four-year Type 1, four-year Type 2 and two-year Type 2 institutions.

	West Virginia 2015-16	West Virginia 2020-21	SREB Average 2020-21	U.S. Average 2020-21
Four-Year Type 1	\$23,799	\$22,500	\$20,710	\$20,550
Four-Year Type 2	\$22,018	\$21,899	\$21,912	\$20,758
Two-Year	\$10,651	\$11,264	\$10,088	\$10,653

U.S. Department of Education, College Scorecard, 2016-17 and 2021-22. U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 12-Month Enrollment Instructional Activity Data Files 2018 and 2022 and Directory Files 2018 and 2022.

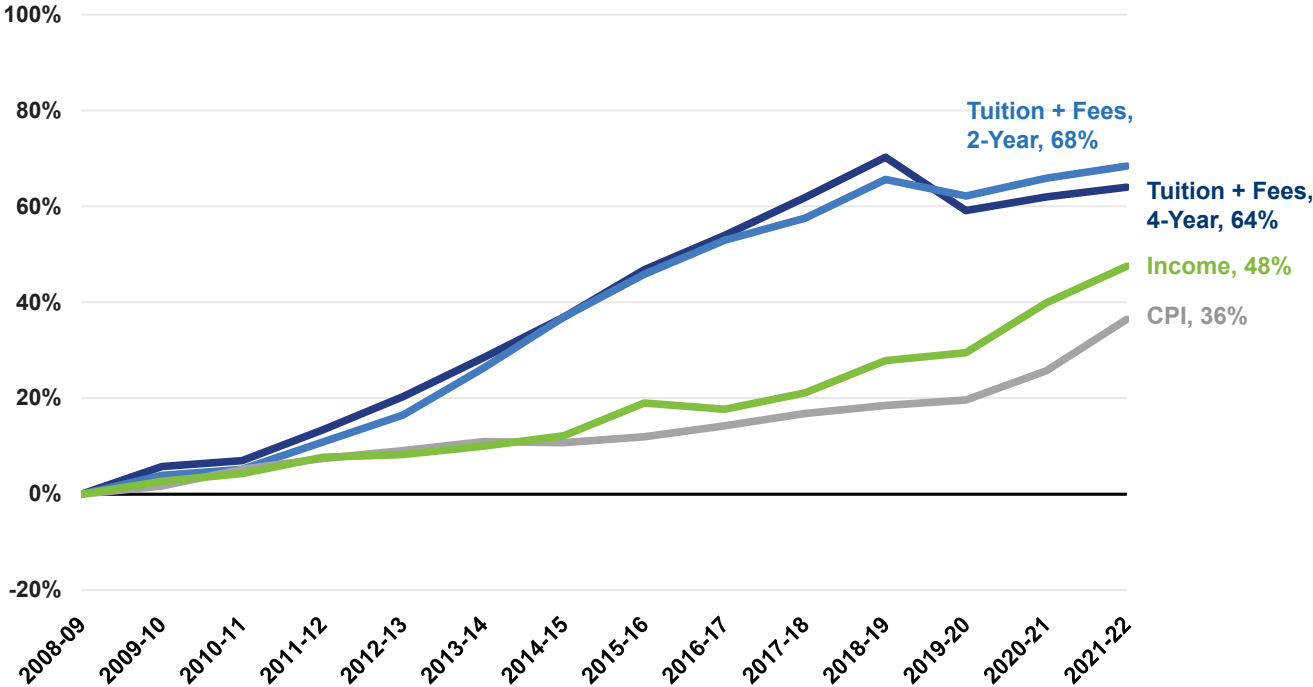
In 2020-21, graduates from four-year Type 1 universities in West Virginia borrowed an average of \$22,500, while graduates from four-year Type 2 institutions borrowed \$21,899. Although these amounts were lower than those borrowed in 2015-16, they exceeded the SREB and national averages for 2020-21.

Meanwhile, students at public two-year colleges borrowed an average of \$11,264 in 2020-21— higher than the average in 2015-16 but below the SREB and national averages for the same year. The improvements at four-year institutions suggest positive trends in managing student debt, though the increases at two-year institutions indicate growing affordability challenges.

Changes in Tuition and Fees, CPI and Family Income

The data indicates decreasing college affordability in West Virginia, with tuition increases outpacing both income growth and inflation across four-year and two-year institutions.

Tuition and fee increase outpaced income growth by nearly 20%, highlighting a regressive college affordability. Both institution types show parallel growth patterns suggesting systemic increases.

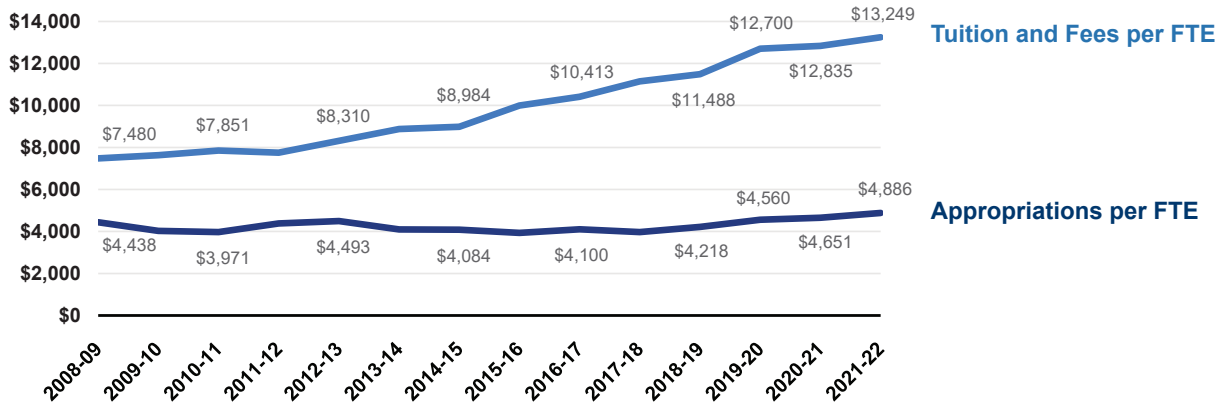


Consumer Price Index retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis: Bureau of Labor Statistics, South urban area, 2021. Tuition and fees retrieved from the U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Institutional Characteristics Files, 2008 to 2021. Median family income retrieved from the U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Detailed Tables, Table B19113, 2023.

Dollars per FTE Student from State Appropriations and Tuition and Fees

Operational funds consisted mostly of tuition and fees for West Virginia's public four-year institutions in 2021-22.

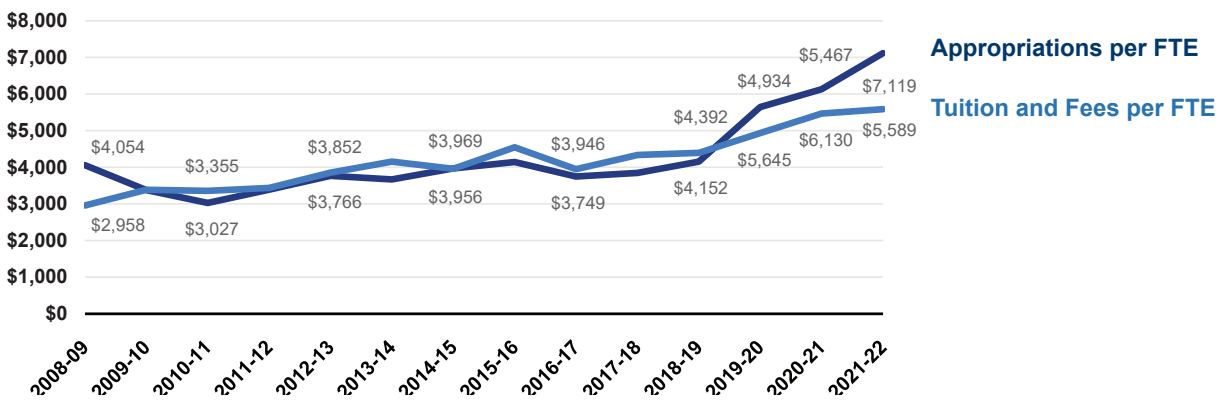
While tuition and fees increased by 77% since 2008-09, state appropriations showed minimal growth of about 10%. By 2021-22, tuition and fees were nearly triple the level of state appropriations, indicating a shift of postsecondary education costs from state funding to student responsibility.



Source: SREB-State Data Exchange

Operational funds consisted mostly of state and local appropriations for West Virginia's public two-year institutions in 2021-22.

West Virginia maintained higher state appropriations than tuition and fees at two-year institutions. By 2021-22, appropriations exceeded tuition and fees by \$1,530, suggesting strong state commitment to two-year institution affordability. Both funding sources show substantial growth since 2008-09, with state support growing more rapidly than tuition and fee increases.



Source: SREB-State Data Exchange

West Virginia Fast Facts

Postsecondary Enrollment: According to 2021 fall enrollment, 44% of students in West Virginia were enrolled in public four-year Type 1 institutions, 28% were enrolled at public four-year Type 2 institutions, 26% were enrolled in public two-year colleges and 2% were enrolled at technical institutions.

FAFSA: As of July 5, 2024, West Virginia’s high school class of 2024 had a FAFSA completion rate of 46%, an 18% decrease from the rate on the same date in 2023.

Federal Student Aid: In 2021-22, 27% of students receiving any form of federal student aid were awarded Pell Grants, while 46% received federal student loans.

Education Attainment: In 2022, 45.4% of West Virginia’s working adult population (ages 25 to 64) held a postsecondary credential, placing the state 8.9 percentage points below the national average of 54.3%. This figure includes short-term credentials, which account for 9.1% of West Virginia’s credential attainment rate, including certificates and industry-recognized certifications.

Workforce Needs: By 2031, 59% of jobs in West Virginia will require a postsecondary credential. West Virginia ranks 48th among states in the percentage of jobs projected to require such credentials.

Sources: Postsecondary Enrollment: U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Systems, 2022.

FAFSA: FAFSA Tracker – National, Retrieved November 2024. <https://national.fafsatracker.com/schoolView/48>.

Federal Student Aid: SREB analysis of National Center for Education Statistics student financial aid database, 2021-22.

Educational attainment: Lumina Foundation, A Stronger Nation, Retrieved November 2024.

<https://www.luminafoundation.org/stronger-nation/report/#/progress/state/WV>.

Workforce Needs: Georgetown University, After Everything: Projections of Jobs, Education, and Training Requirements through 2031, Retrieved November 2024. <https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/projections2031/>.

West Virginia Institutions by Type

Public Four-Year Type 1

West Virginia University

Public Four-Year Type 2

Bluefield State College

Concord University

Fairmont State University

Glenville State College

Marshall University

Shepherd University

West Liberty University

West Virginia State University

West Virginia University Institute
of Technology

Public Two-Year

Blue Ridge Community and Technical College

BridgeValley Community and Technical College

Eastern West Virginia Community and
Technical College

Mountwest Community and Technical College

New River Community and Technical College

Pierpont Community and Technical College

Potomac State College of West Virginia University

Southern West Virginia Community and
Technical College

West Virginia Northern Community College

West Virginia University at Parkersburg

Notes

Type 1 four-year institutions award at least 30 doctoral degrees in five different areas. **Type 2** includes all other four-year institutions. The **public two-year category** includes institutions that primarily award associate degrees; the list may include two-year institutions that award bachelor's degrees. The **technical college category** includes postsecondary institutions that offer programs of less than two-years duration below the baccalaureate level and occupational and vocational schools with programs that do not exceed 1800 contact hours. This profile does not report data for the technical college category if less than 3% of students are enrolled in this sector.

Institutions are listed as they were categorized in the 2021-22 Data Exchange Survey and if they submitted the data required for this profile.

This profile is based on data reported to IPEDS by institutions during the 2021-22 academic year. Some IPEDS surveys collect data for the prior academic year; for instance, the 2022-23 Student Financial Aid survey collected data for the 2021-22 academic year.

Institutions or states may have updated data previously reported, or adjusted methodology to calculate a statistic. As a result, some data in the current profile may differ from data reported in past Affordability Profiles for the same time period.

See the technical guide at <https://www.sreb.org/state-affordability-profiles> for detailed sources and explanatory notes.

SREB College Affordability Profiles detail data and trends specific to each SREB state to assist policy-makers with decisions on postsecondary affordability and attainment. For additional resources, including recommendations of the Commission on College Affordability in the South and the SREB Fact Book on Higher Education, visit [SREB.org/Affordability](https://www.sreb.org/Affordability).