

DATA POINT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Changes in Pell Grant Participation and Median Income of Recipients

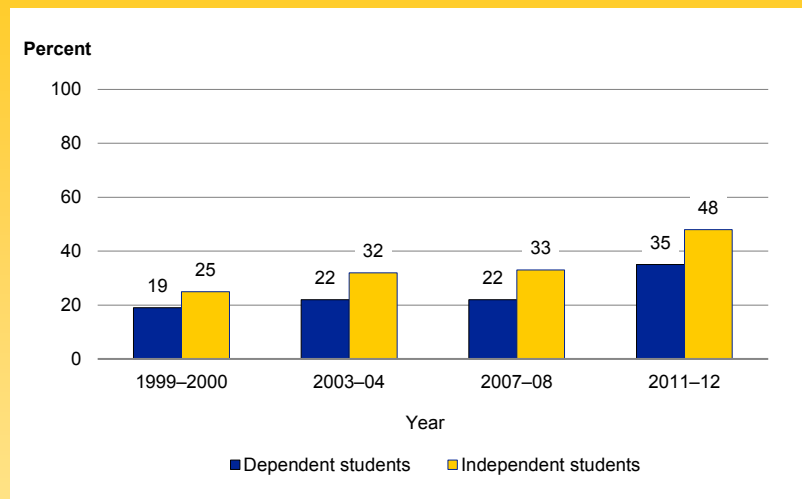
This report is based on data from four iterations of the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), a large, nationally representative sample survey of students that focuses on how they finance their education. NPSAS includes data on federal Pell Grant awards, which are need-based grants awarded to low-income students, primarily undergraduates.

This Data Point examines how Pell Grant receipt and recipients' income have changed over time. The main criterion for Pell Grant eligibility is income. For dependent students, Pell Grant eligibility is based on parents' income, while for independent students, it is based on students' income (plus their spouses' income, if married).

Has the percentage of students receiving Pell Grants changed over time?

- Thirty-five percent of dependent students received a Pell Grant in 2011–12, proportionally more than the 19, 22, and 22 percent observed in 1999–2000, 2003–04, and 2007–08, respectively (**figure 1**).
- The percentage of independent students who received a Pell Grant followed a similar pattern: proportionally more students received a Pell Grant in 2011–12 than in the 3 prior academic years (48 vs. 25 to 33 percent).

FIGURE 1. Percentage of students who received Pell Grants, by dependency status: 1999–2000, 2003–04, 2007–08, and 2011–12



NOTE: Students under age 24 were considered dependent unless they were married, had dependents, were veterans or on active duty, were orphans or wards of the courts, were homeless or at risk of homelessness (in 2011–12 only), or were determined to be independent by a financial aid officer using professional judgment. All estimates include students enrolled in Title IV eligible postsecondary institutions in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Puerto Rican institutions were excluded from the sampling frame for NPSAS:12. For comparability, students attending institutions in Puerto Rico were excluded from estimates derived from the earlier NPSAS collections. Standard error tables are available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2016407>.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1999–2000, 2003–04, 2007–08, and 2011–12 National Postsecondary Student Aid Studies (NPSAS:2000, NPSAS:04, NPSAS:08, and NPSAS:12).

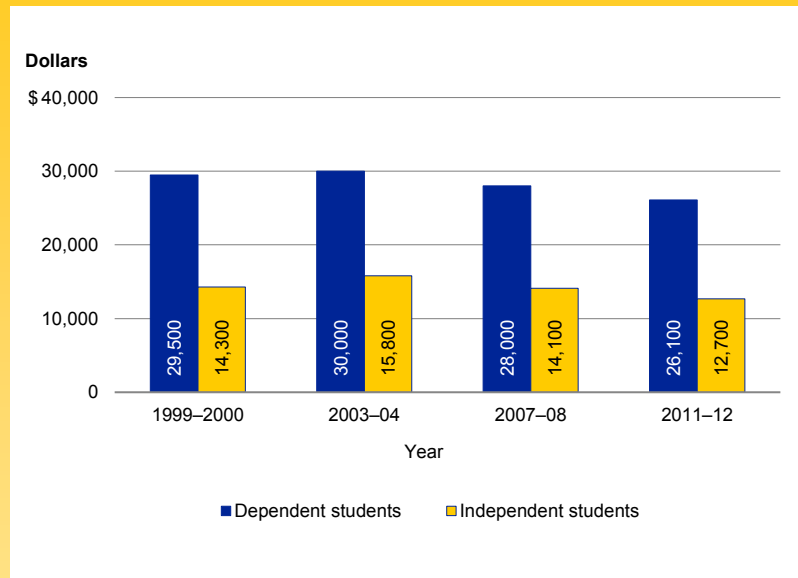
Data in this report are from the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), a nationally representative sample survey. To learn more, visit <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/npsas>. For questions about content or to view this report online, go to <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2016407>.

Has students' median family income changed over time?

While the percentage of students receiving a Pell Grant in 2011–12 is greater than in prior waves, students' median income has declined over the same period.

- Adjusting for inflation, the median family income of dependent Pell Grant recipients was lower (\$26,100) in 2011–12 than in each of the 3 prior academic years examined (ranging from \$28,000 to \$30,000) (**figure 2**).
- As with dependent students' family income, the inflation-adjusted median income of independent Pell Grant recipients was lower in 2011–12 than in 1999–2000, 2003–04, and 2007–08.

FIGURE 2. Median family income in constant (2010) dollars of Pell Grant recipients, by dependency status: 1999–2000, 2003–04, 2007–08, and 2011–12



NOTE: Students under age 24 were considered dependent unless they were married, had dependents, were veterans or on active duty, were orphans or wards of the courts, were homeless or at risk of homelessness (in 2011–12 only), or were determined to be independent by a financial aid officer using professional judgment. Dependent students' family income was their parents' income. Independent students' family income was their income and their spouses' income, if any. Total income in 1998, 2002, 2006, and 2010 was used because it was used for federal need analysis for 1999–2000, 2003–04, 2007–08, and 2011–12, respectively. All estimates include students enrolled in Title IV eligible postsecondary institutions in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Puerto Rican institutions were excluded from the sampling frame for NPSAS:12. For comparability, students attending institutions in Puerto Rico were excluded from estimates derived from the earlier NPSAS collections. Standard error tables are available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2016407>.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1999–2000, 2003–04, 2007–08, and 2011–12 National Postsecondary Student Aid Studies (NPSAS:2000, NPSAS:04, NPSAS:08, and NPSAS:12).

This NCES Data Point presents information on education topics of interest. It was authored by Nicole Ifill and Erin Dunlop Velez of RTI International. Estimates based on samples are subject to sampling variability, and apparent differences may not be statistically significant. All noted differences are statistically significant at the .05 level.

In the design, conduct, and data processing of National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) surveys, efforts are made to minimize the effects of nonsampling errors, such as item nonresponse, measurement error, data processing error, or other systematic error.