

TENNESSEE

College Affordability

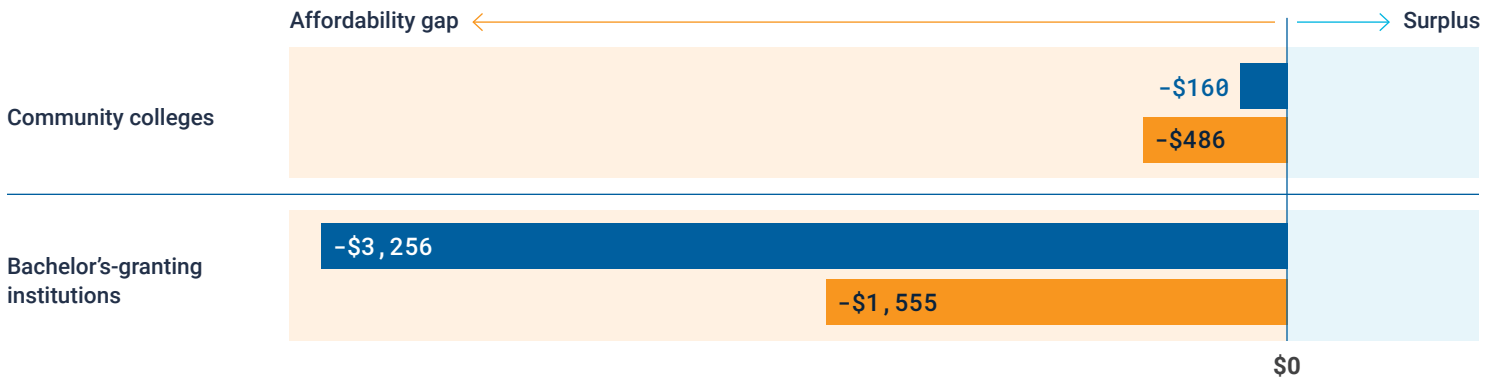
NCAN's Affordability Gap research highlights how public colleges remain unaffordable for low- and moderate-income students. When the price of postsecondary education—including emergency expenses—exceeds the average available grants, loans, Federal Work Study, summer earnings, and expected family contribution, NCAN refers to the remaining amount as the “affordability gap.” This gap reflects unmet costs after accounting for key financial resources.

College affordability

Average affordability at public colleges (2022–23)

Public colleges remain unaffordable, on average, for low- and middle-income students across the country.

● Tennessee ● National

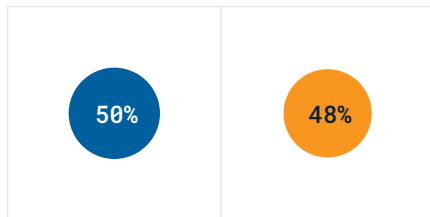


Affordability landscape

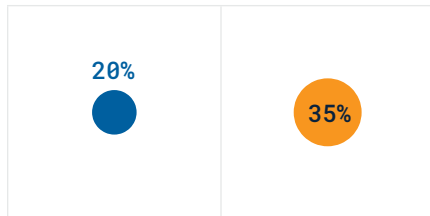
Percent of affordable institutions (2022–23)

● Tennessee ● National

Community colleges



Bachelor's-granting institutions



Federal aid

Pell Grant awards

The Pell Grant is the foundation of need-based aid, serving around seven million students each year. The majority of Pell recipients come from families with incomes of less than \$40,000.



22,440

students in Tennessee are Pell Grant recipients.



Tennessee receives

\$119,924,544

in Pell Grant funding each year.

Economic value

Impact of postsecondary education on state economies

Investing in higher education strengthens our skilled workforce and drives economic gains for individuals, states, and our nation as a whole.



Postsecondary graduates in Tennessee contribute

\$124,264

more to state GDP annually, compared to those with no education beyond high school.

41%

of jobs in Tennessee are projected to require postsecondary education by 2031.

Sources: College affordability: National College Attainment Network, 2025. "The Affordability Gap." Affordability landscape: National College Attainment Network, 2025. "The Affordability Gap." Federal aid: Federal Student Aid, Pell Grant Program 2022-23 End of Year Report. Economic value: Top—National College Attainment Network, 2023. "The Economic Value of Postsecondary Education." Bottom—Georgetown University Center for Education and the Workforce, 2024. "After Everything: Projections of Jobs, Education, and Training Requirements through 2031."