

HIGHER EDUCATION, INEQUALITY AND OPPORTUNITY: SELECTIVE COLLEGE POLICIES IN A NATIONAL CONTEXT

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Overview

- Selective colleges in context
- Higher education's place in the fight against inequality
- Policies that might (or might not) help

Selective colleges in perspective

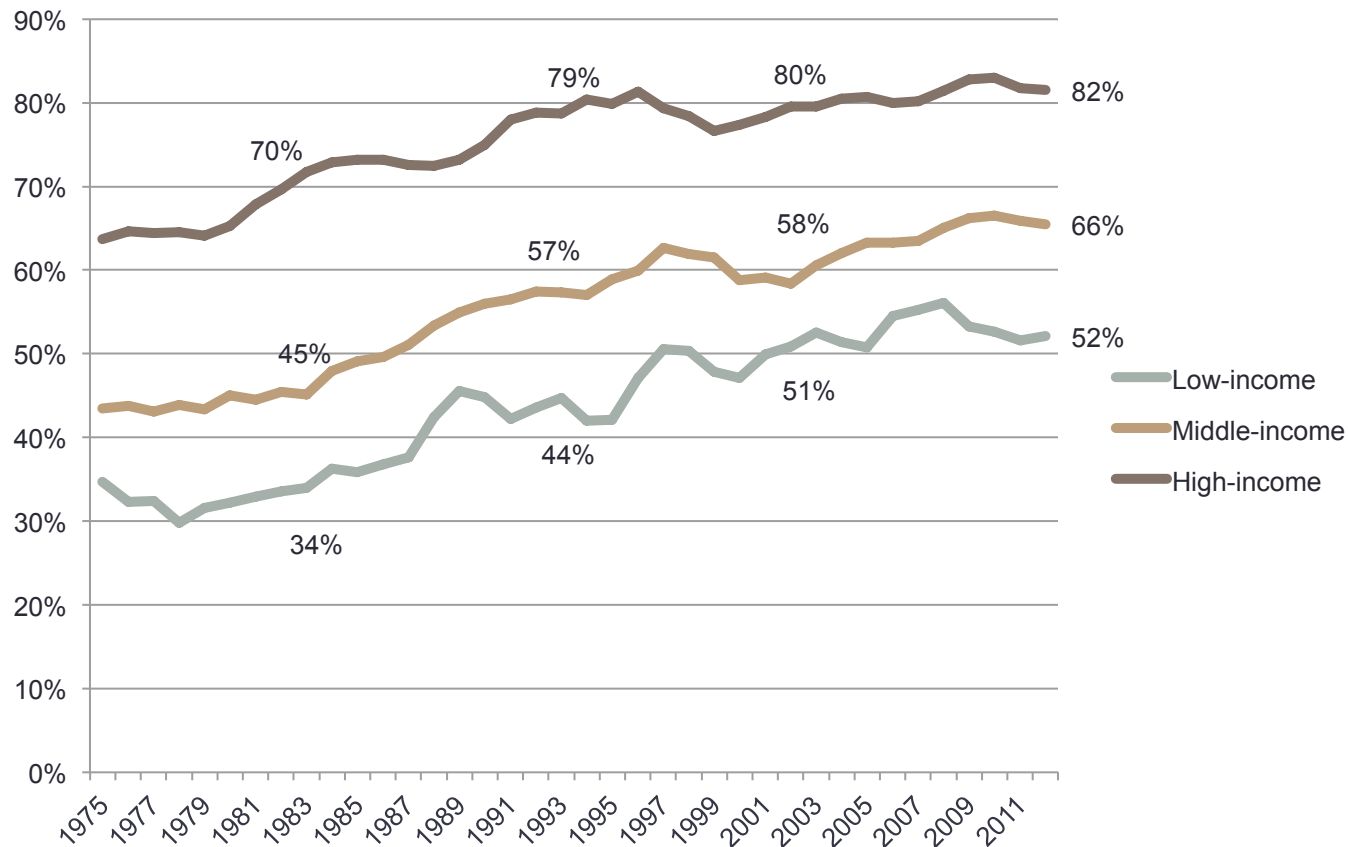
	Number of students	Percentage of undergraduates	25% of enrollment as percentage of all Pell recipients
Top 80 liberal arts colleges	157,000	1%	0 – 1%
Schools accepting < 50% of applicants	3,200,000	18%	9 – 12%
All undergraduates (fall enrollment)	18,000,000	100%	

Distribution of first-year students

	Community college	Very selective	Moderately selective	Minimally selective	Open admission	Other (including for-profit)
TOTAL	52%	5%	11%	3%	7%	22%
Independent	56%	1%	4%	2%	7%	31%
Dependent	47%	9%	19%	5%	7%	12%
Lowest income	52%	4%	14%	4%	9%	17%
2nd quartile	50%	8%	18%	5%	7%	12%
3rd quartile	48%	10%	20%	5%	7%	10%
Highest income	36%	17%	26%	6%	5%	9%

Source: NCES, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study

Percentage of recent high school completers enrolling in college, by family income, 1975 - 2012



Source: NCES, Digest of Education Statistics 2013, Table 302.30

Higher education: inequality and mobility

- Colleges and universities could do more but can't solve the problems.
- Allocation of resources: more to those who are already ahead?
- Limited access / success → greater wage gap
- Sorting of students into different institutions
- Perpetuation of inequality? Fostering mobility?

Before College:

Growing gaps in family income, test scores, parental inputs, family structure, social connectedness

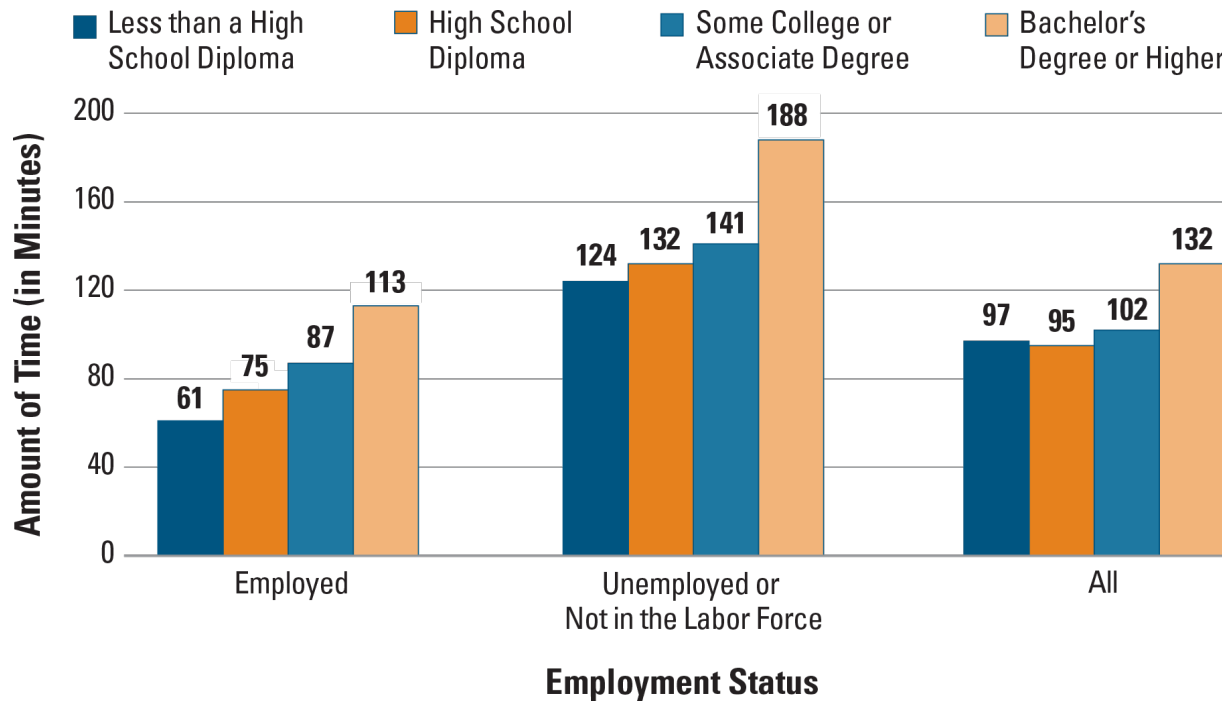
(Robert Putnam, Charles Murray,
Duncan and Murnane, *Wither Opportunity*)

Distribution of family income

	Share of aggregate income					
Year	Lowest fifth	Second fifth	Third fifth	Fourth fifth	Highest fifth	Top 5%
1983	4.9%	11.2%	17.2%	24.5%	42.4%	15.3%
1993	4.1%	9.9%	15.7%	23.3%	47.0%	20.3%
2003	4.1%	9.6%	15.5%	23.2%	47.6%	20.5%
2013	3.8%	9.3%	15.1%	23.0%	48.8%	21.2%

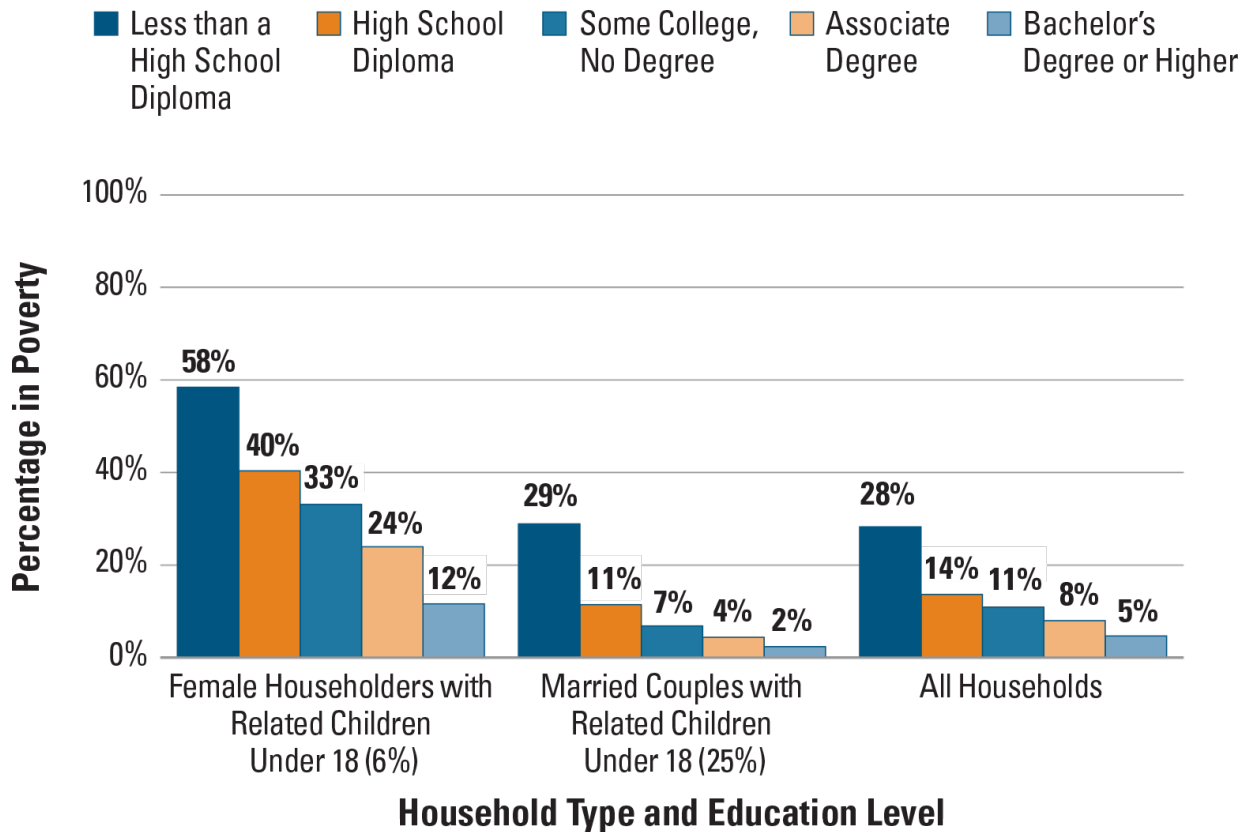
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Table F-2

Number of minutes per day mothers spend on children under the age of 18, by employment status and education level, 2003–2012



Source: The College Board, *Education Pays 2013*

Percentage of individuals ages 25 and older living in households in poverty, by household type and education Level, 2011



Source: The College Board, *Education Pays 2013*

Money matters

Over the past four decades, high-income families have gone from spending slightly more than four times as much as low-income families on education and enrichment activities for their children to spending nearly seven times as much (Duncan & Murnane, 2011).

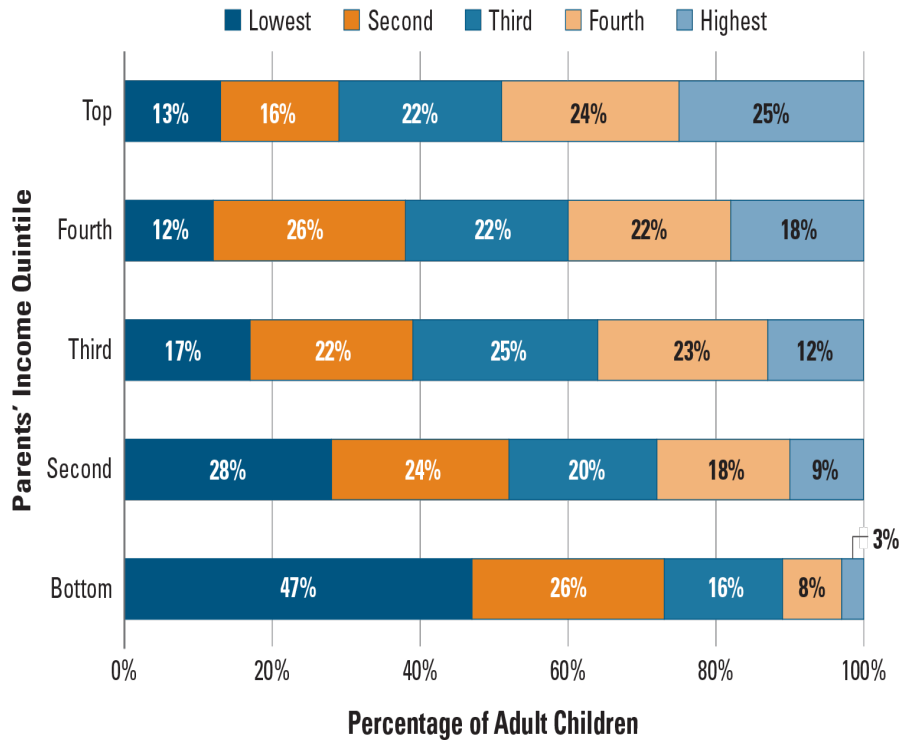
Social mobility: Family income quintiles of adult children, by parents' family income quintile, 2000 to 2008

Parents' Income Quintile	Family Income Quintile of Adult Children				
	Lowest	Second	Third	Fourth	Highest
Top	8%	10%	19%	23%	40%
Fourth	9%	20%	23%	24%	24%
Third	14%	20%	23%	24%	19%
Second	25%	24%	18%	20%	14%
Bottom	43%	27%	17%	9%	4%

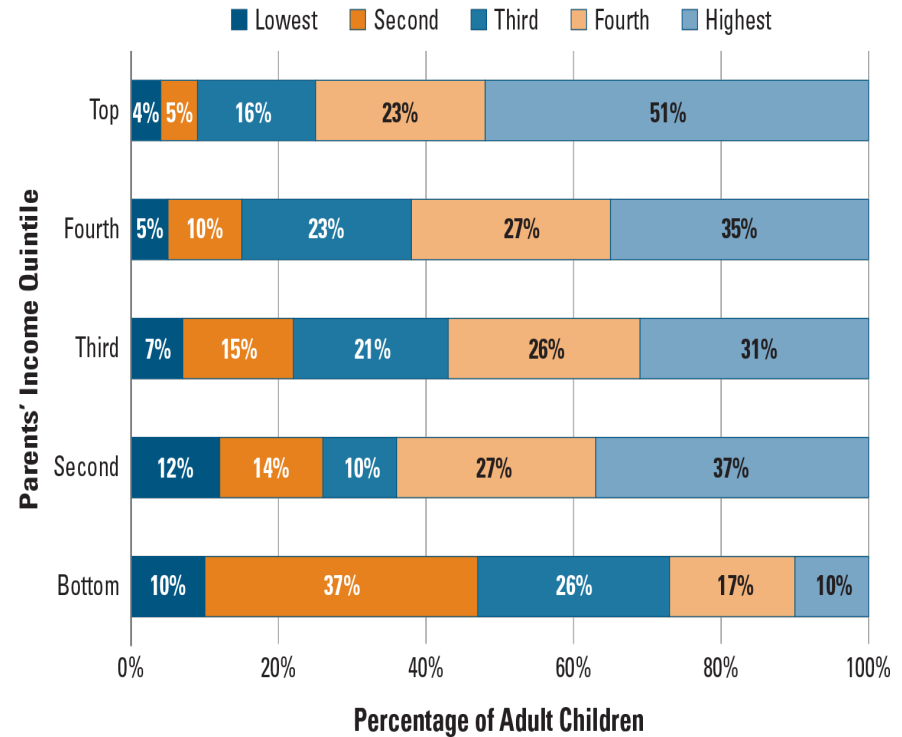
Source: The College Board, *Education Pays 2013*

Social mobility: Family income quintiles of adult children, by education and parents' family income quintile, 2000 to 2008

Non-College Graduate Adult Children



Four-Year College Graduate Adult Children



What can selective colleges do?

- Admissions process
- Financial aid
- Campus environment
- Community outreach
- Produce graduates who make a difference

What can society do about higher education?

- Reduce pre-college inequality
- Reduce labor market inequality

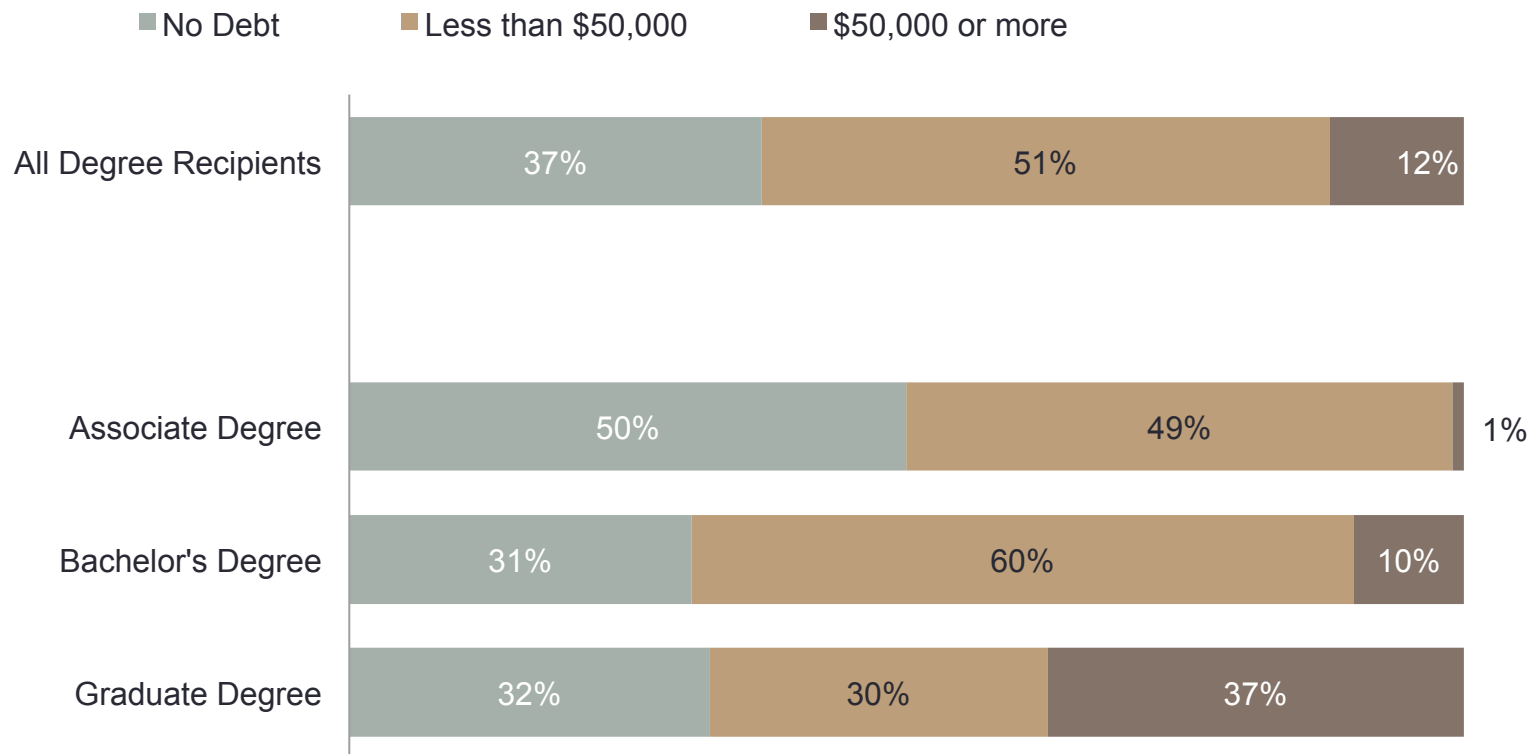
What can society do about higher education?

- Focus on community colleges and broad access public four-year institutions
- Funding
- Academic support
- Social support
- CUNY: ASAP
- Alternative pathways

Higher education policy issues

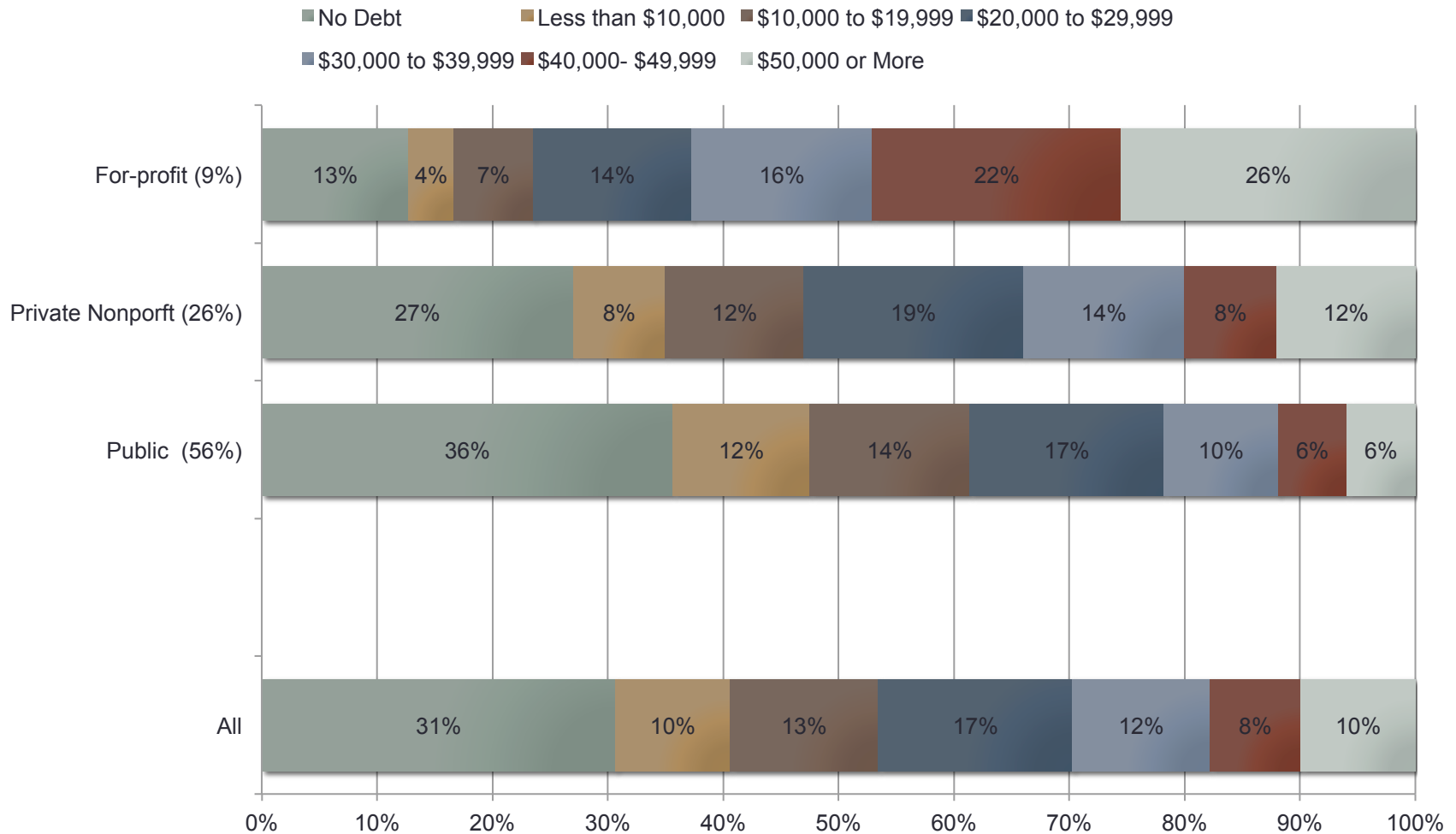
- Should community college be free?
- Should all college be free?
- Cheap and quick?
- Alternative pathways
- Simplifying student aid
- What about student debt?

Cumulative debt among degree recipients by level of degree, 2011-12



Source: The College Board, *Trends in Student Aid 2014*

Cumulative debt among bachelor's degree recipients by sector, 2011-12



Source: The College Board, *Trends in Student Aid 2014*

A fair society

- Improved neighborhoods, schools, and resources for families
- Recognize different capacities to learn and different interests, motivations and habits
- Differentiating is equitable and efficient
- Is all elitism bad?

Our leaders

- Ronald Reagan: “Why should we subsidize intellectual curiosity?” (Campaign speech, 1980)
- Rick Scott: “Is it a vital interest of the state to have more anthropologists? I don’t think so.” (2011)
- Scott Walker: The mission of higher education – remove “search for truth” and “improve human condition.” Replace with “meet the state’s workforce needs.” (2015)
- Barack Obama: “I promise you folks can make a lot more, potentially, with skilled manufacturing or the trades than they might with an art history degree.” (2014)
- Barack Obama: “How do we make sure that everybody has the tools to succeed in an economy where they constantly have to adapt?” (2015)