

College pay off and equal access to higher education*

In this project we tend to use available data to answer the following questions that we have discussed in the course.

- Does everyone have an equal opportunity to go to college?
- What is the role of social class and gender in college enrollment?
- Does it pay to go to college?

Does everyone have an equal opportunity to go to college?

Table 1. Average college costs for residents' undergraduates at 4-year colleges by type of school: 1990-2000

Year	Public		Private	
	Tuition & required fees (1)	Room and board	Tuition & required fees	Room and board
1990-91	\$2,035	\$3,289	\$10,348	\$4,750
1999-2000 est.	\$3,644	\$4,985	\$18,237	\$7,106

(1) for in-state students

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States 2000, Table 311, p. 191.

Calculate the average yearly cost (tuition, room, and board) for attending public and private collages or universities and the difference in cost between public and private institutions.

Sum of yearly cost of attending college 1990-91 and 1999-2000			
	Public	private	difference
1990-1991	_____	_____	_____
1999-2000	_____	_____	_____

Briefly describe the differences in cost for public and private colleges for 1990-1991 and 1999-2000.

Table 2 presents data on full-time college enrollment of 18 – to 24-year old dependent family members. Young adults who are out on their own are not included in these data. Calculate the percentage of these students who attend college for each income level and for both sexes.

Table 2: Full-time college enrollment of primary family members, 18-24 years old by family income and sex, 1996

Income level	male		female	
	Number in college (1,000)	Percent	Number in college (1,000)	Percent
Less than \$10,000	41		53	
\$10,000-\$19,000	64		119	
\$20,000-\$29,000	110		203	
\$30,000-\$39,000	144		237	
\$40,000-\$49,000	137		182	
\$50,000-\$74,999	358		453	
\$75,000 and over	441		555	
Not reported	160		191	
Total	1,455		1,993	

Source: Current Population Reports, P. 20-500, October 1996 (update), table 15, p.61

Which group has the lowest percent of enrollment?
For males _____ for females _____

How does the patterns of enrollment differ for males and females? What might account for the differences?

How is the variable of income related to the ability of young people to enter college?

What variables besides income do you think are associated with whether or not a person attends college?

Does everyone have an equal opportunity to go to college?

Table 3 represents data that will help you to answer the question, “does a college education pay off financially?”

Table 3: Sex and mean earnings by highest degree earned in 1999

Year of school completed	Sex	
	Male	Female
Not a high school graduate	\$19,155	\$11,353
High school graduate	\$28,742	\$17,898
Some college	\$32,005	\$19,327
Bachelor’s degree	\$55,057	\$31,452

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2000, table 252, p. 158.

What is the difference in mean earnings between the lowest and highest educational groups?

For males _____ For females _____

For which sex is the differential (the gap) greater? _____

According to the table, how much more on average does a college graduate with four years of college earn than a high school graduate?

For males _____ for females _____

What factors might help explain the differences in the income data for males and females?

Does it pay to go to college? Based on the data presented, what can you conclude?

Extra Credit:

Transfer the data from the tables into an excel sheet. Create one bar chart or diagram or pie chart for each table. Make sure all the variables are labeled correctly.

* Adapted from Gai Berlage and William Egelman. 2003. *Understanding Social Issues: Critical Analysis and Thinking*. Allyn and Bacon.