

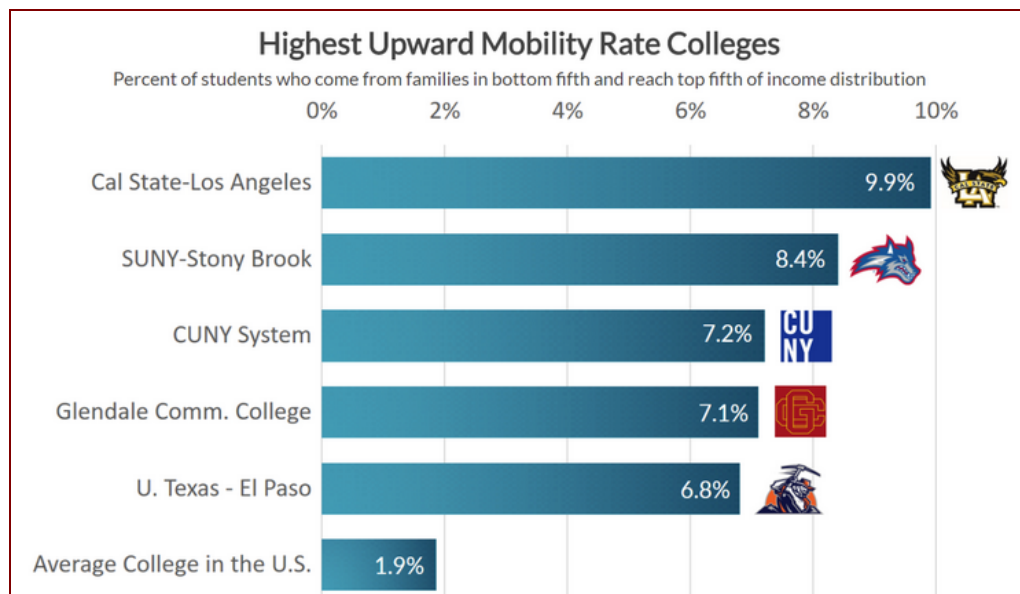
New York's Public Colleges: An Engine for Economic Mobility

Earning a four-year college degree is now considered essential for achieving a “middle-class” lifestyle. Even as many new graduates have difficulty landing good, full-time jobs in a weak labor market,¹ their chances are greater than those of their peers without degrees.

A new study² has provided us with the ability to figure out which colleges are most effective at helping young people from lower-income families get jobs and careers that will put them on the path to a higher-income future: what the study calls “intergenerational mobility.” The study delves deeply into colleges’ effects on income mobility, and we are not going to review those findings here. But the authors published the raw data they collected in a form that allows us to analyze intergenerational mobility school by school and state by state.

The publicly available data from this study looked at all those born in 1980, 1981, and 1982, who were in college during academic years 1999-2004.³ The data provided family income status from the students’ pre-college years, and personal income status from when those graduates were 32 to 34 years old, and thus into the beginnings of a career that would likely predict their future earnings. All the analyses in this paper are based on the over 83,000 individuals who fit these criteria and who attended schools in New York for most of their college careers.

While we will be comparing results only within New York, the study’s *national* income-mobility analysis highlights SUNY & CUNY, our public institutions:⁴



¹ See “Uphill Employment Battle for New York’s Recent College Graduates,” Fiscal Policy Institute, August 2017, <http://fiscalpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/NY-grads-17-Final.pdf>.

² Raj Chetty, John N. Friedman, Emmanuel Saez, Nicholas Turner and Danny Yagan. Mobility Report Cards: The Role of Colleges in Intergenerational Mobility, January 2017, <http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/>

³ Subjects were also restricted to students for whom the researchers were able to obtain family incomes from when the students were 15 to 19 years old, and for whom they were able to obtain individual earnings in 2014 (for more details about the data, see the end notes here or the original paper)

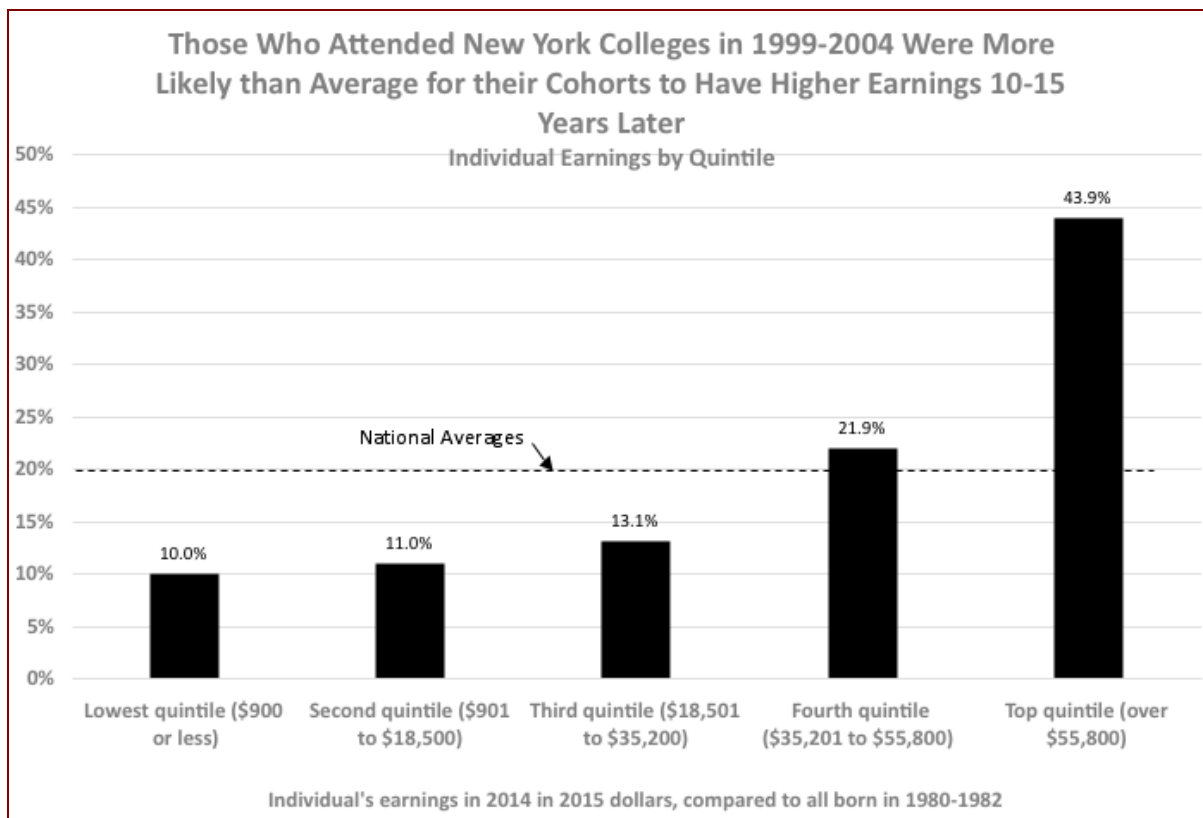
⁴ Chetty et al., *ibid.*

New York’s Public Colleges “Move” Most Low-Income Students

New York has several world-class four-year colleges, including some that are public.⁵ Our analysis shows that for the majority of students from low- and middle-income families, it is the state’s public colleges that have the potential to move them toward a better economic outcome.

On average, colleges improve student’s economic outcomes. Of course, not everyone can improve their income quintile standing (there are always 20 percent in each quintile), but the results for all New York colleges show there is a college advantage, compared to the averages for all people in the same birth cohorts across the nation. See Figure 1.

Figure 1



⁵ The detailed data in the report lists SUNY colleges at Binghamton, Geneseo, and Stony Brook as “highly selective.” See Appendix 1.

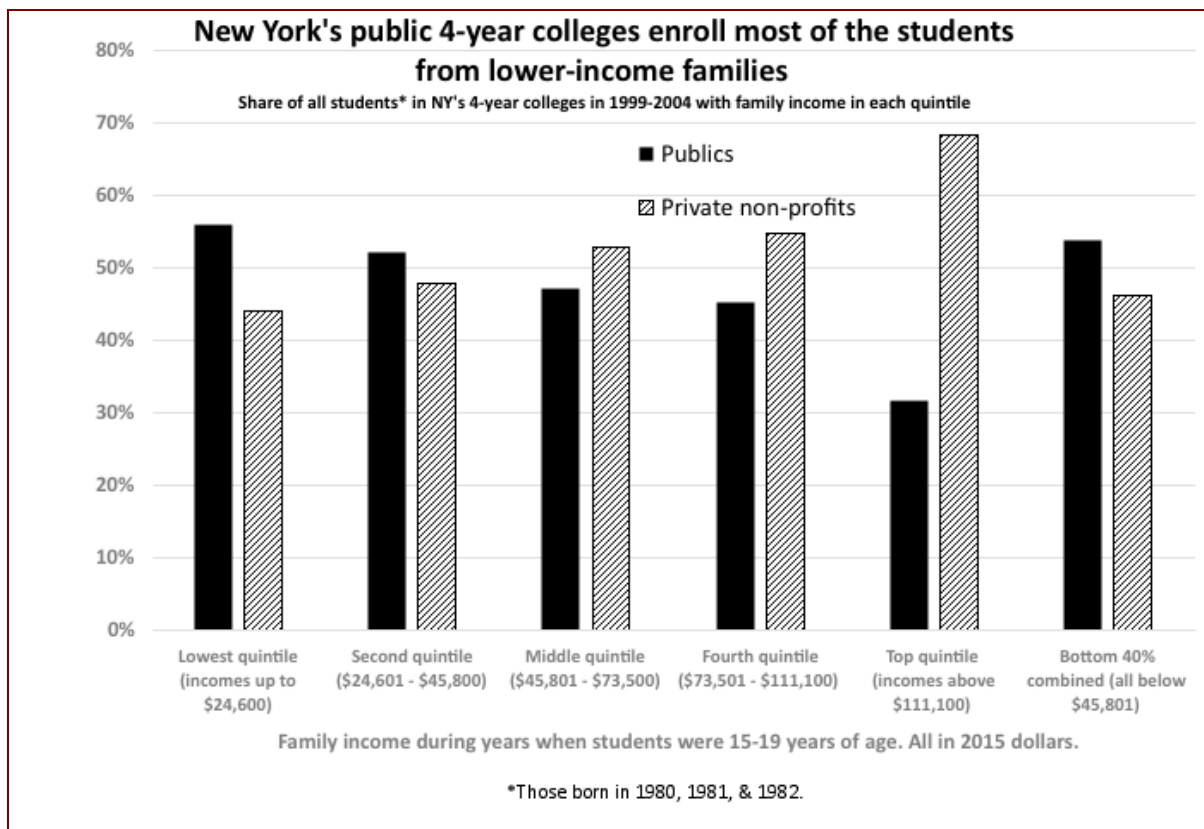
Among New York’s private 4-year colleges, 45 percent of students come from families in the top quintile of family income—more than from the bottom three quintiles (35 percent). But among the public 4-year colleges, the situation is reversed: nearly half (49 percent) have parents in the bottom three quintiles of family income, and only 28 percent have parents in the top quintile. See Table 1.

Table 1

Share of Students from Each Family Income Quintile, New York's Four-Year Colleges						
College type	Lowest	Second	Middle	Fourth	Highest	Bottom three quintiles
Public	14.4%	17.0%	17.9%	22.5%	28.3%	49.2%
Private non-profit	8.4%	11.5%	14.8%	20.2%	45.0%	34.7%

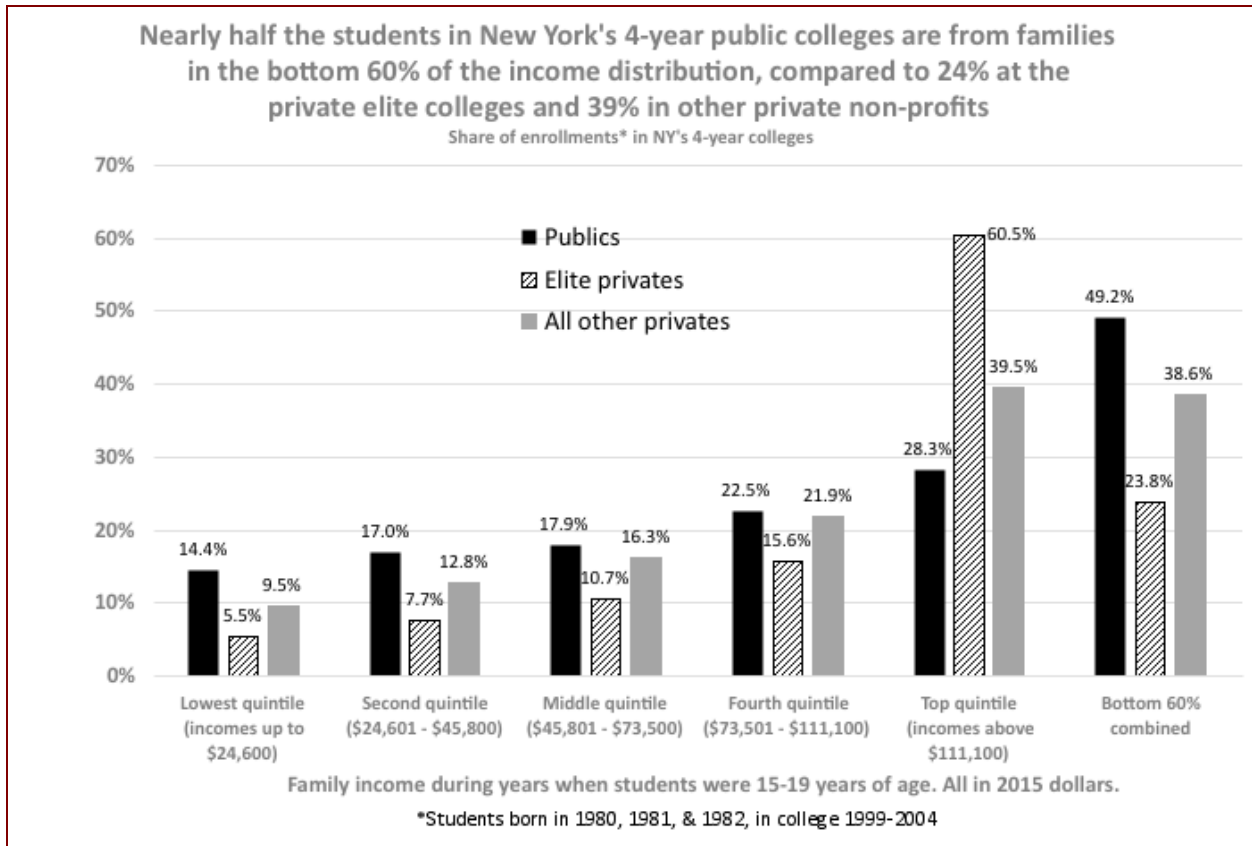
The private non-profit colleges in New York enroll nearly half of all students from families in the bottom two quintiles of family income, but the state’s four-year public schools, the State University of New York (SUNY) campuses and the City University of New York (CUNY) colleges, do more than their share of enrolling students from poorer families. See Figure 2.

Figure 2



Looking at enrollment another way, Figure 3 breaks out enrollment at what education experts call private “elite” colleges. These are New York’s two “Ivies” (Columbia and Cornell), plus Barnard, Colgate, Cooper Union, Hamilton College, New York University, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and Vassar. Altogether these account for about a quarter of the 48,000 New York private-college students in this study. See Figure 3.

Figure 3



Moving Up

We look now at “mobility,” the comparison between a student’s family income quintile as he or she approaches college age and their personal income quintile 10-15 years post-college, in 2014 at age 32-34. As noted in Chetty et al., looking at income as these graduates enter their thirties is a strong indicator of their future income prospects.

We look at two measures: For a given group of colleges (in this case, New York’s public colleges or private colleges):

- 1) What portion of students who started with family income in the lowest quintile wound up with personal income in the highest quintile? (Table 2)
- 2) What portion of students who started with family income in the lowest two quintiles wound up with personal income in the highest two quintiles? (Table 3)

Table 2 compares the effectiveness of the two types of schools in moving students from the lowest family income group to the highest personal income group. Nearly a third of the public-college students whose families were in the lowest group wound up with incomes in the highest group as they settled into their careers. For those who attended private colleges, the comparable number was nearly two out of five; it would appear that the private colleges have an overall advantage in this measure.

But from the point of view of lower-income families, and for consideration of the state’s investments into public college, what matters is that the public colleges move 18.2 percent of *all* low-income college students into the top quintile, compared to 17.3 percent for the privates.

Table 2

While students who attended private colleges in New York had a slightly better chance of moving from the bottom quintile of family income (in their pre-college years) to the top quintile of personal income ten years later (at ages 32-34) than those who went to public colleges, the publics "move" more of them

College type	Number with family income in lowest quintile (below \$24,600)	Share of all in lowest quintile	Number of these in top quintile at ages 32-34	Share moving from Q1 to Q5	Mobility rate*
Public	5,097	55.9%	1,656	32.5%	18.2%
Private non-profit	4,022	44.1%	1,581	39.3%	17.3%
All	9,119	100.0%	3,237	35.5%	35.5%

*Mobility rate shows the outcomes as a share of all those starting in the lowest quintile

Table 3 compares the effectiveness of the two types of schools in moving students from the lowest *two* family income groups to the highest *two* personal income groups. More than half of the public-college students whose families were in the lowest two groups wound up with incomes in the highest two groups as they settled into their careers. For those who attended private colleges, the comparable number was three out of five: giving the private colleges an overall advantage in this measure as well.

But from the point of view of lower-income families, and for consideration of the state's investments into public college, what matters is that the public colleges move 31 percent of *all* lower-income college students into the top quintiles, compared to 28.1 percent for the privates.

Table 3

While students who attended private colleges in New York had a slightly better chance of moving from the bottom two quintiles of family income (in their pre-college years) to the top two quintiles of personal income ten years later (at ages 32-34) than those who went to public colleges, the publics "move" more of them

<u>College type</u>	Number with family income in lowest two quintiles (below \$45,800)	Share of all in lowest two quintiles	Number of these in top two quintiles at ages 32-34	Share moving from Q1 or Q2 to Q4 or Q5	Mobility Rate*
Public	11,094	53.8%	6,381	57.5%	31.0%
Private non-profit	9,516	46.2%	5,784	60.8%	28.1%
All	20,610	100.0%	12,165	59.0%	59.0%

*Mobility rate shows the outcomes as a share of all those starting in the lowest two quintiles

Conclusion

As noted in Chetty et al., private colleges in general (and private “elite” colleges in particular⁶) are effective in providing students from all economic backgrounds with an entrée into the middle class. But differences arise from the starting mix of students. Whatever efforts the private colleges may make toward attracting and supporting students from low-income families, their student bodies lean toward those from better-off families. Part of this may occur from students’ or families’ self-selection and lack of awareness of financial support. Part may be due to (especially immigrant) parents’ reluctance to send their children far from home. Regardless of the causes, public colleges in New York, like their counterparts across the country, accept more students from low-income families, and thus, even if they are moderately less effective at improving their potential incomes than the private schools, boost more of them into the middle class. Nationally, 25 percent of those enrolled in public colleges are from the bottom 60 percent by family income, compared to 22.8 percent in private not-for-profit colleges (see Appendix 3)

New York has a large number and variety of four-year colleges; only Florida (85,600) had a higher number of students enrolled during the years of this study, and only California came close (78,800) to the 83,100 students included in this analysis from New York.

New York is fifth-highest among the states in the share of public-college students (31.4 percent) who come from the bottom 40 percent of family incomes (see Appendix 3); even California has only a 23.7 percent share.

There is little doubt that New York benefits from helping move these students into better and more lucrative careers, both in terms of building a stronger state economy and in terms of many years of potential state tax revenue. It is thus astounding that state budgets have consistently neglected to fully invest in our wonderful public institutions of higher learning. Investing in our public universities and colleges would support the growing number of students enrolling in public institutions and reinforce the infrastructure that allows them to graduate successfully.

End Notes

Data: The researchers define the college each student attends as the college he or she attended for the most years in 1999-2004. They measure parents’ income as total pre-tax income at the household level when children were 15-19 years old. They measure children’s income as pre-tax individual earnings in 2014. All incomes are in 2015 dollars, adjusting for inflation using the consumer price index (CPI-U).

Acknowledgement: Many thanks to Mark Price at Keystone Research, whose publication of a similar report on Pennsylvania’s colleges (<http://keystoneresearch.org/publications/research/pennsylvanias-great-working-class-colleges>) was the inspiration for this report, and who was very willing to help me get started with data advice. He is, of course, not responsible for any errors.

⁶ See Appendix 2 for the list of private “elite” colleges

Appendix 1: New York's Public 4-year Colleges

Highly Selective

Binghamton University [SUNY]
SUNY College At Geneseo
State University Of New York At Stony Brook

Selective (City University of NY System)

CUNY Bernard M. Baruch College
CUNY Brooklyn College
CUNY Hunter College
CUNY John Jay College Of Criminal Justice
CUNY Lehman College
CUNY Medgar Evers College
CUNY Queens College
CUNY York College
City College Of New York - CUNY
College Of Staten Island/CUNY
New York City College Of Technology Of The City
University Of New York

Selective (State University of NY System)

Fashion Institute Of Technology
SUNY At Fredonia
SUNY College At Brockport
SUNY College At Buffalo
SUNY College At Cortland
SUNY College At Old Westbury
SUNY College At Oneonta
SUNY College At Oswego
SUNY College At Purchase
SUNY College Of Agriculture & Technology At
Cobleskill
SUNY College Of Technology At Alfred
SUNY Maritime College
SUNY Upstate Medical University And SUNY
College Of Environment Science And Forestry
State University Of New York At Albany
State University Of New York At Buffalo
State University Of New York At Farmingdale
State University Of New York At New Paltz
State University Of New York College At
Plattsburgh
State University Of New York College At Potsdam
State University Of New York Institute Of
Technology At Utica
SUNY College Of Agriculture & Technology At
Morrisville
SUNY College Of Technology At Canton
SUNY College Of Technology At Delhi
SUNY Empire State College

Lists and designations as in Chetty, et al.; as of 1999-2004: <http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/data>

Appendix 2: New York's Private Not-for-Profit 4-Year Colleges

Ivy League and Other Elites	Highly Selective Private	Non-Selective Private
Columbia University In The City Of New York	Bard College	Albany College Of Pharmacy And Health Sciences
Cornell University	Fordham University	American Musical & Dramatic Academy
Barnard College	Sarah Lawrence College	Culinary Institute Of America
Colgate University	Skidmore College	New School, The
Cooper Union For The Advancement Of Science & Art	St. Lawrence University	Paul Smith's College Of Arts & Sciences
Hamilton College	Syracuse University	Pratt Institute
New York University	Union College of Schenectady, NY	Trocaire College
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute		United Talmudical Seminary
University Of Rochester		Vaughn College Of Aeronautics And Technology
Vassar College		
	Selective Private	
Adelphi University	Hobart And William Smith Colleges	Niagara University
Alfred University	Hofstra University	Nyack College
Boricua College	Houghton College	Pace University
Canisius College	Iona College	Roberts Wesleyan College
Cazenovia College	Ithaca College	Rochester Institute Of Technology
Clarkson University	Keuka College	Sage Colleges
College Of Mount Saint Vincent And Manhattan College	Le Moyne College	Saint Francis College
College Of New Rochelle	Long Island University System	Saint John Fisher College
College Of Saint Rose	Manhattanville College	Saint John's University of Queens, NY
D'Youville College	Marist College	Saint Joseph's College of Brooklyn, NY
Daemen College	Marymount Manhattan College	Siena College
Dominican College Of Blauvelt	Medaille College	St. Bonaventure University
Dowling College	Mercy College	Utica College
Elmira College	Mount Saint Mary College	Wagner College
Hartwick College	Nazareth College Of Rochester	Wells College
Hilbert College	New York Institute Of Technology	Yeshiva University

Lists and designations as in Chetty, et al., as of 1999-2004: <http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/data/>

Appendix 3: National Comparison

	Student counts, 4-year colleges			Share of students from families in bottom 40% of income	
	Public	Private	All	Public	Private
AK	3,343	0	3,343	21.4%	
AL	15,860	2,432	18,292	23.0%	25.2%
AR	10,481	1,870	12,351	32.7%	21.0%
AZ	12,056	96	12,152	14.1%	32.7%
CA	60,677	18,128	78,805	23.7%	16.0%
CO	19,092	1,854	20,945	14.7%	13.2%
CT	7,779	7,184	14,963	14.2%	11.1%
DC	350	6,456	6,806	56.4%	13.8%
DE	3,450	740	4,190	7.3%	19.9%
FL	75,162	10,476	85,638	33.8%	26.8%
GA	25,864	7,627	33,491	21.9%	20.6%
HI	5,860	1,383	7,243	27.3%	30.4%
IA	10,158	6,296	16,453	12.2%	16.7%
ID	5,984	3,862	9,846	22.7%	13.7%
IL	24,733	19,199	43,932	16.5%	18.3%
IN	30,324	9,610	39,934	15.1%	12.0%
KS	12,559	1,857	14,416	15.5%	26.6%
KY	15,876	2,913	18,789	22.5%	23.1%
LA	23,817	2,421	26,237	32.0%	29.2%
MA	11,460	27,525	38,985	15.7%	13.1%
MD	16,446	4,024	20,470	26.1%	11.5%
ME	4,616	2,163	6,779	26.2%	13.6%
MI	36,008	10,102	46,110	13.8%	23.5%
MN	34,622	8,502	43,124	20.1%	12.4%
MO	16,985	9,938	26,923	17.7%	19.6%
MS	7,894	1,149	9,043	29.5%	28.5%
MT	5,518	407	5,926	24.2%	21.0%
NC	24,107	9,715	33,822	20.2%	19.0%
ND	5,451	503	5,954	21.2%	20.5%
NE	6,819	2,143	8,962	17.1%	16.4%
NH	4,308	2,769	7,077	12.6%	13.0%
NJ	16,054	6,576	22,629	21.3%	20.9%
NM	8,016	0	8,016	36.5%	
NV	8,233	0	8,233	25.3%	
NY	35,357	47,776	83,134	31.4%	19.9%
OH	35,816	15,978	51,794	18.4%	14.0%
OK	13,293	2,282	15,576	26.5%	20.4%
OR	8,185	2,902	11,087	16.5%	13.8%

PA	40,196	30,501	70,697	18.6%	13.8%
RI	2,873	7,731	10,603	16.2%	17.8%
SC	12,949	3,364	16,313	19.9%	23.2%
SD	4,322	722	5,044	23.5%	18.6%
TN	15,979	7,173	23,152	22.3%	17.4%
TX	56,392	13,400	69,792	28.1%	18.0%
UT	15,417	6,436	21,852	14.7%	8.8%
VA	24,531	5,385	29,916	14.3%	15.7%
VT	1,701	2,240	3,940	11.5%	13.7%
WA	19,059	4,329	23,388	17.5%	11.9%
WI	28,945	6,183	35,129	13.6%	14.2%
WV	10,547	1,124	11,671	25.0%	22.8%
WY	1,407	0	1,407	16.1%	
US	896,931	347,445	1,244,376	25.0%	22.8%

Fiscal Policy Institute analysis of data from *Chetty, et al.*; as of 1999-2004: <http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/data/>