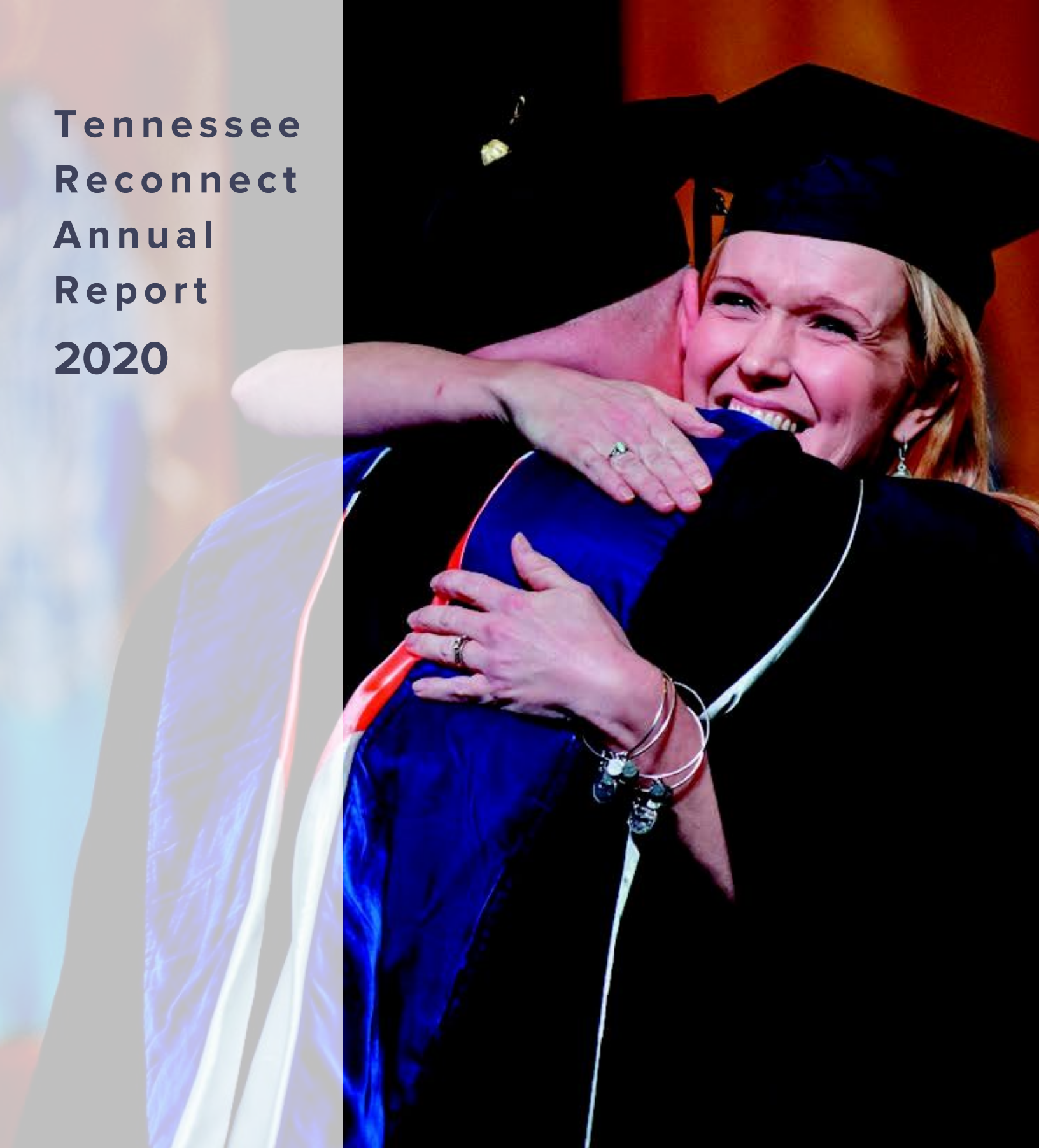


Tennessee
Reconnect
Annual
Report
2020



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Table of Contents

List of Figures 4

List of Tables 4

Executive Summary 5

Introduction 6

Program Description 6

Tennessee Reconnect Applicants..... 10

Tennessee Reconnect Recipients 14

Tennessee Reconnect Outcomes 20

Program Finances..... 22

Conclusion..... 23

Appendix A: Reconnect Recipients by Institution, 2018 – 2019..... 26

Appendix B: Reconnect Grant Eligible Institutions 27

List of Figures

Figure 1: Tennessee Reconnect Grant Applicant Demographics.....	10
Figure 2: Tennessee Reconnect Grant Applicants by County.....	11
Figure 3: Reconnect Grant Applicant Concerns, by Age	12
Figure 5: Tennessee Reconnect Grant Applicants and Recipients by Adjusted Gross Income (AGI)	16
Figure 6: Prior Enrollments of Reconnect Grant Recipients	16
Figure 7: Prior Enrollments of Reconnect Grant Recipients, by Institution.....	17
Figure 8: Percent of Applicants Receiving the Tennessee Reconnect Grant in 2018 – 2019, by County	18
Figure 9: Outcomes for Tennessee Reconnect Grant Recipients.....	20

List of Tables

Table 1: Average Reconnect Award by Institution.....	22
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Executive Summary

The 2020 Tennessee Reconnect Annual Report highlights findings from year one of Tennessee's adult Promise program. This report is divided into four sections: (1) Tennessee Reconnect Applicants (2) Tennessee Reconnect Recipients (3) Tennessee Reconnect Outcomes, and (4) Program Finances. Key findings from the report are summarized below.

- In its first year of implementation, 41,832 individuals applied for the Tennessee Reconnect grant. Of these applicants, 18,217 enrolled in an eligible institution and received Tennessee Reconnect grant funding.
- Women make up a larger share of grant recipients relative to both overall and adult student populations at Reconnect eligible institutions. In the first year of the program, 71% of Reconnectors were women.
- Tennessee Reconnect received applications from every county in the state, with the largest number of applications coming from urban areas. Take-up rates (the percent of applicants that ultimately enrolled and received the Tennessee Reconnect grant) varied by county, with the highest take-up rate at 61% (Meigs County) and the lowest at 22% (Lewis County).
- Reconnectors overwhelmingly identified finances as their number one anticipated challenge in pursuing a degree or credential. Reconnectors also cited family responsibilities, work demands, time management, and academic preparation as anticipated challenges, though these concerns were ranked significantly lower.
- More than half (58%) of Reconnect grant recipients reported having dependents.
- Black students make up a larger share of both Tennessee Reconnect applicants and recipients when compared to the adult population of Tennessee (15.4%). 21% of Reconnectors were Black. Hispanic students are proportionally represented based on Tennessee's demographic makeup; 4% of Reconnectors were Hispanic.
- 95.4% of grant recipients already had some college experience. Most of these students had prior experience with Tennessee community colleges.
- The first year of the program saw a success rate of 61%, with over 2,000 students completing a certificate or degree, 248 of whom maintained enrollment in pursuit of another credential.

Introduction

This report provides insights on the applicants and recipients of the Tennessee Reconnect grant during the academic year 2018 – 2019. An overview of the application process and eligibility requirements for the Tennessee Reconnect grant is provided below. The following pages provide descriptive findings from the first year of the grant program. Due to the nature of the grant, students who receive a Tennessee Reconnect grant are descriptively quite different from recipients of other lottery funded scholarships.

Program Description

The Tennessee Reconnect grant is a last-dollar grant that allows eligible adults to complete an associate degree or certificate program free of tuition and mandatory fees at a public community college or Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT). The grant can also be used at eligible public and private universities towards an associate degree; in this case, it is not a last-dollar grant.

In addition to providing financial aid, Tennessee Reconnect students are provided with an individualized Reconnect Success Plan that matches Reconnectors with resources and information based on their specific needs. Included in the Reconnect Success Plan is information on how to connect to a Reconnect Navigator. Navigators provide potential adult students, as well as adults already enrolled, with institution-neutral college navigation services. They also connect Reconnectors to wraparound supports, such as affordable childcare and transportation.

To be eligible for the Tennessee Reconnect grant, an applicant must:

1. Be a Tennessee resident for at least one year
2. Be a U.S. Citizen or eligible non-citizen
3. Qualify as an independent student on the FAFSA
4. Comply with United States Selective Service requirements, if applicable
5. Not be incarcerated
6. Not have previously earned an associate or baccalaureate degree (not applicable if student wants to enroll in TCAT)
7. Not be in default on student loan
8. Be in good financial standing with the institution.
9. If attending community college, be admitted to an eligible institution and enrolled at least part time (minimum 6 hours) in courses leading to a certificate or associate degree
10. If attending TCAT, be admitted and enrolled full time at a TCAT, and in pursuit of a certificate or diploma

Eligibility is determined by an applicant's chosen institution once prospective students have completed: the Tennessee Reconnect application, the FAFSA, and an application for an eligible institution. To maintain Tennessee Reconnect eligibility, students must renew the FAFSA and complete the Tennessee Reconnect application for each year they plan to receive the Reconnect grant, maintain continuous enrollment, enroll in at least 6 hours per semester (at a community college), and maintain a 2.0 GPA at a community college or satisfactory academic progress at a TCAT.

According to T.C.A. § 49-4-944(f)(1), a student is eligible to receive the Tennessee Reconnect grant until he or she has earned a degree or certificate or until five years have passed since the date of initial enrollment as a Tennessee Reconnect grant student (whichever occurs first). However, if a student completes a certificate program at a TCAT using the TCAT Reconnect grant and then enrolls in an associate degree program at an eligible institution, the student can continue to receive grant funds for another five years.

Because it is a last-dollar grant, the amount of the Tennessee Reconnect award is based on the other gift aid a student receives. Some students maintain their Tennessee Reconnect eligibility by completing all requirements but do not receive any funding from Tennessee Reconnect, as their tuition and fees are covered by other sources of grant aid (e.g., Pell grant or Tennessee Student Assistance Award). These students are still considered Tennessee Reconnect students, even though they do not receive Tennessee Reconnect funds.

Report Notice

While the Reconnect programs offered through the TCATs and Community Colleges function on many of the same principles, they operate as unique and distinct aid. This report exclusively focuses on those students who have applied for the Tennessee Reconnect grant at one of the state's thirteen community colleges or a small selection of private and 4-year schools. Future iterations of this report will aim to incorporate more information from those Reconnect students who use the grant to attend a TCAT.

This report is divided into four sections:

- **Tennessee Reconnect Applicants** presents data on the applications received for the Tennessee Reconnect grant during the 2018 – 2019 school year.
- **Tennessee Reconnect Recipients** gives descriptive data for the students who received a Tennessee Reconnect grant in the 2018 – 2019 school year. This includes students who were eligible for Reconnect grant dollars but had all tuition expenses covered by other forms of aid and were thus “paid \$0” by TSAC.
- **Tennessee Reconnect Outcomes** provides data on the first cohort of Tennessee Reconnect students, including information on graduation and re-enrollment.
- **Program Finances** presents spent in the first year of Reconnect. This includes average awards by individual and institution.

Data

Data in this report come from the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation (TSAC), and the American Community Survey. The data used in each section are outlined below.

Privacy Notice

Throughout this report, THEC complies with federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requirements to protect students' personally identifiable information. Therefore, when tables are presented, individual cells containing five or fewer observations are suppressed. The suppressed counts are included in table totals. All cases in which observations are suppressed are identified with a note directly beneath the respective table.



Section 1:

Tennessee Reconnect

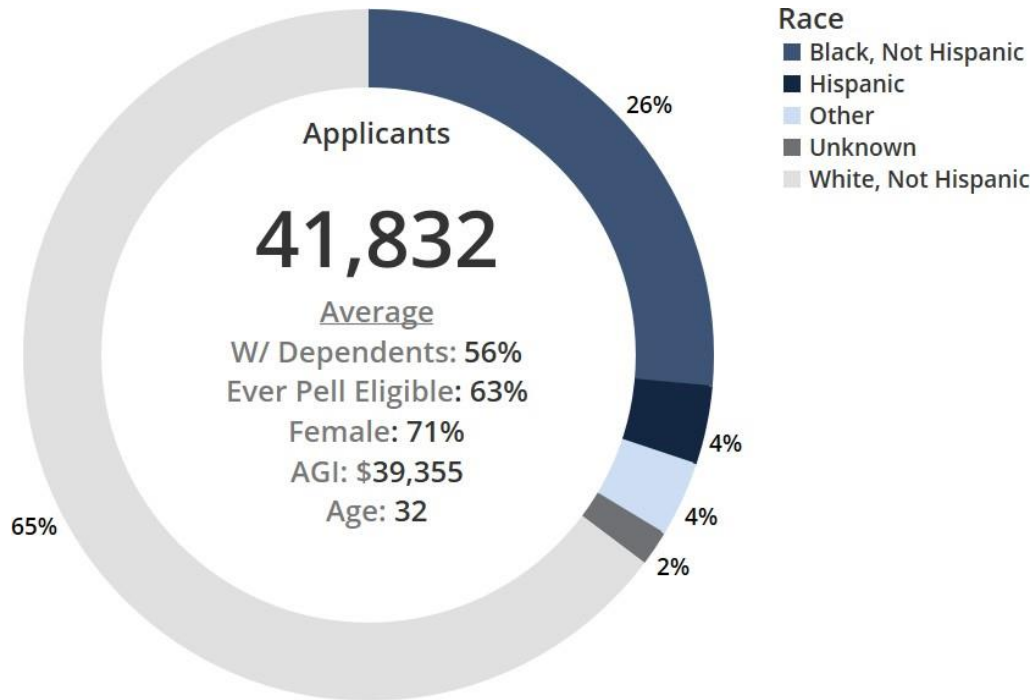
Applicants

Tennessee Reconnect Applicants

This section examines the characteristics of those who filed Tennessee Reconnect grant applications in the program’s first year. The number of applications received in the first year was highly impressive, with more than 41,000 people applying for the Reconnect grant for the 2018 – 2019 academic year. Details on the demographic makeup, county of residence, and anticipated challenges are detailed in **Figures 1, 2, and 3** below.

Figure 1 displays demographic information on adults who submitted Reconnect grant applications. The applicant pool had a larger share of women than the general adult population in Tennessee (71% vs 52%)¹. Over half of all applicants had dependents and the average applicant age was 32 years old.

Figure 1: Tennessee Reconnect Grant Applicant Demographics

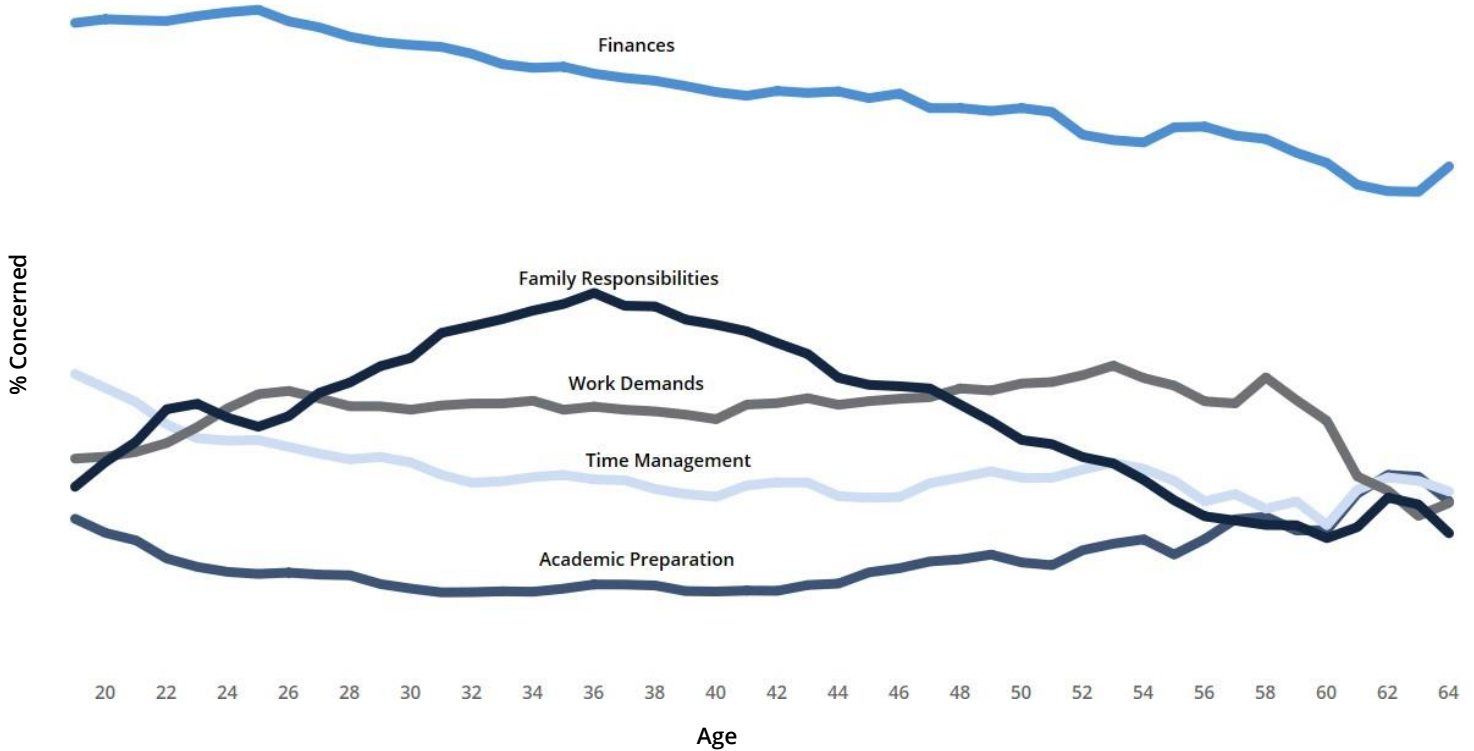


Notes: Demographic data come from the FAFSA and THEC SIS. Pell eligibility comes from the THEC SIS and indicates a student who has ever been Pell eligible. Given that many Reconnect applicants have prior enrollment histories, this indicator could include Pell eligibility from prior enrollment

¹ Data for Tennessee demographics come from the 2018 American Community Survey.

Figure 3 displays the self-reported concerns of Reconnect applicants. On the Reconnect application, students are asked to evaluate what they expect to be challenging during their enrollment. This figure shows the percent of people who responded yes to each category, by age group. Finances were by far the biggest concern of Reconnect applicants across all age groups, followed by family responsibilities and work demands. Some challenges vary by age. In particular, family responsibilities seemed to be of much higher concern for applicants age 25-50 than for those outside this range. Academic preparation was, on average, of lower concern to students than the perceived challenges that faced them outside the classroom.

Figure 3: Reconnect Grant Applicant Concerns, by Age



Note: Applicants were also given the choice to identify access to campus services, physical or learning disabilities, and using required technology as anticipated challenges, but these categories were identified the least as pertinent challenges. The figure does not display data for applicants less than 18 years of age or over 65 years of age.



Section 2:

Tennessee Reconnect

Recipients

Tennessee Reconnect Recipients

This section explores the characteristics of Tennessee Reconnect grant recipients by examining the demographics, county of residence, and prior college experience of this group. Also provided is a comparison of grant recipients² and grant applicants.

The number of Tennessee Reconnect grant recipients greatly exceeded anticipated first year take-up. While optimistic projections suggested 10,000-12,000 students would use the grant in its first year, over 18,000 ultimately did so.

A table displaying Tennessee reconnect recipients by campus is located in Appendix A.

²This group also includes students who received a \$0 payment. More details on \$0 payments can be found in the Program Finances section of this report.

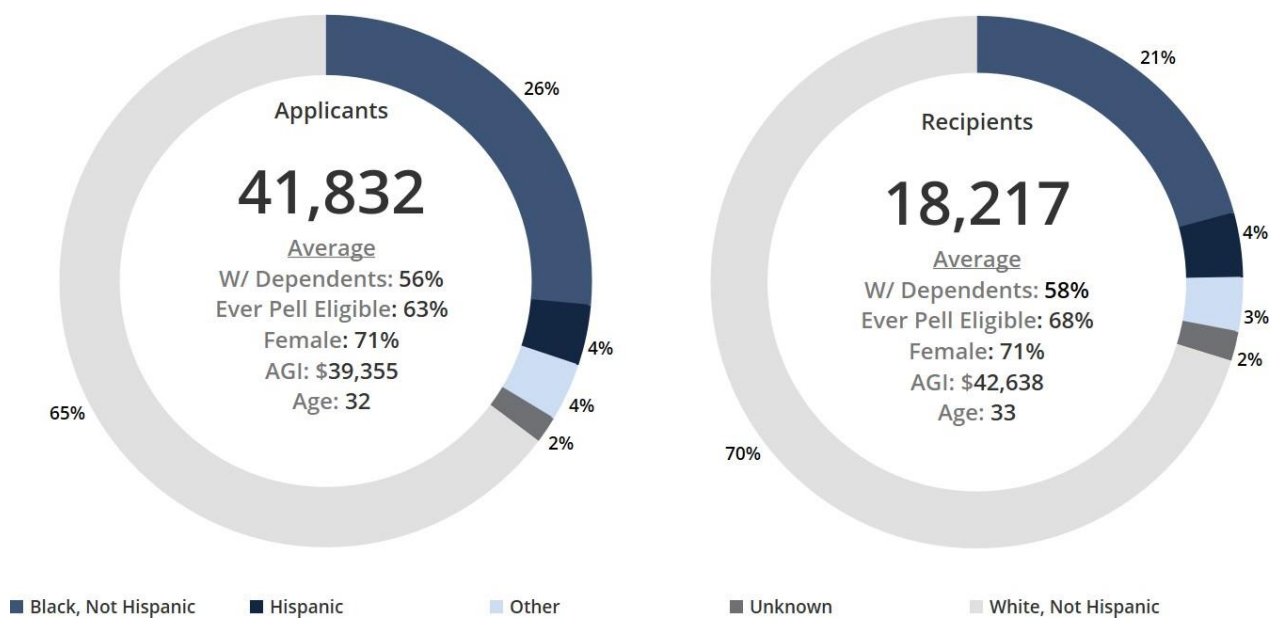
Figure 4 provides a comparison of Tennessee Reconnect grant applicants to Tennessee Reconnect grant recipients for the first cohort.

Black students represent a larger portion of both applicants and recipients when compared to the adult population of Tennessee (15.4%)³, with 21% of Reconnectors identifying as Black. However, the proportion of Black applicants is greater than that of Black recipients, indicating that the program take-up rate among Black students is lower than other racial groups.

While the percentage of students who were ever Pell eligible increases from the applicant to the recipient pool, the average gross income of recipients is higher than that of applicants.

The proportion of females is larger in both the applicant and recipient pools (71%) when compared with the percent of adults in Tennessee who are female (52%). The proportion of Reconnectors who are female is approximately 10% higher than the overall adult population at Tennessee’s community colleges and TCATs.

Figure 4: Tennessee Reconnect Grant Applicant and Recipient Demographics



Notes: Demographic data come from the FAFSA. Pell eligibility comes from the THEC Student Information System and indicates a student who has ever been Pell eligible. Given that many Reconnect grant applicants have prior enrollment histories, this indicator could include Pell eligibility from prior enrollment.

³ Data for overall Tennessee demographics come from the 2018 American Community Survey.

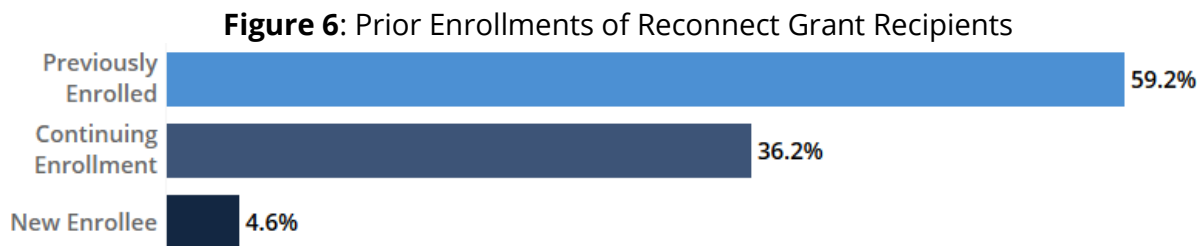
Figure 5 shows the percentage of Reconnect grant applicants and recipients by adjusted gross income (AGI). Among both applicants and recipients, the lowest income bracket makes up the largest proportion of each group. Nearly 70% of Reconnect grant recipients have an AGI below \$50,000.

Figure 5: Tennessee Reconnect Grant Applicants and Recipients by Adjusted Gross Income (AGI)

	Applicants	Recipients
Between \$0 and \$24,999	42%	37%
Between \$25,000 and \$49,999	31%	32%
Between \$50,000 and \$74,999	14%	16%
Between \$75,000 and \$99,999	8%	9%
\$100,000 or more	5%	6%

Notes: Data are limited to applicants who filed the FAFSA. FAFSA records were found for 85% of all applicants.

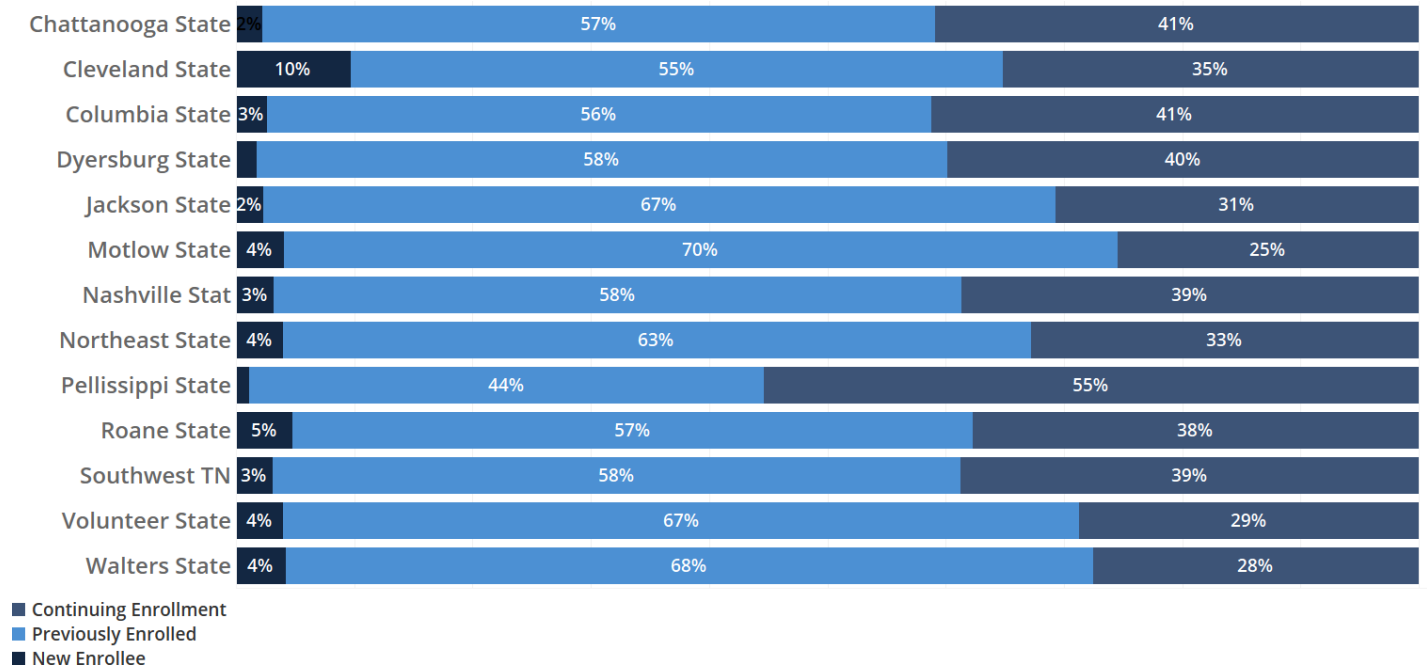
Figure 6 provides a breakdown of the prior enrollments of Reconnect recipients. The vast majority of Reconnect grant recipients (95%) had prior enrollment experiences. Over one third of all Reconnectors were enrolled within the year prior to receiving the grant, while many more were returning to school after years away. About 5% of Reconnectors had no previous enrollment record.



Notes: Data come from the THEC SIS. Enrollment records track to 1997 and can be found for all students who attended a Tennessee public institution. Students classified as “Continuing Enrollment” have a prior enrollment record that is within three semesters of their enrollment as a Reconnect recipient. For students enrolling in Fall of 2018, this would mean an enrollment record in Spring or Summer of 2018, or Fall of 2017. “Previously Enrolled” students are those who had enrollment records prior to receiving a Reconnect grant, but not within three semesters of their Tennessee Reconnect enrollment. New enrollees are those for whom we can find no prior record of enrollment.

Figure 7 shows the prior enrollment status of Reconnect recipients by the institution attended as a Reconnector. Some institutions enrolled a large number of Reconnectors who were continuing enrollment (Pellissippi State) while other institutions enrolled above average (4.6%) numbers of new enrollees (Cleveland State).

Figure 7: Prior Enrollments of Reconnect Grant Recipients, by Institution





Section 3: Tennessee Reconnect Outcomes

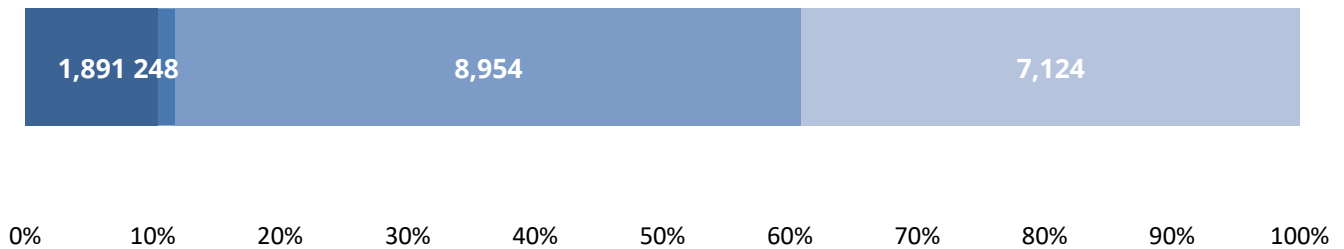
Tennessee Reconnect Outcomes

This section explores the outcomes for Tennessee Reconnect students who enrolled during the 2018 – 2019 school year. Many Reconnectors entered the program with prior enrollments and credits and were able to complete a certificate or associate degree within the academic year.

Figure 9 shows the outcomes for students receiving the Reconnect grant in 2018 – 2019. THEC uses a success rate that measures the percent of students who either received a degree or continued enrollment from year to year. The first year of the program saw a success rate of 61%, with over 2,000 students completing a certificate or degree, 248 of whom maintained enrollment in pursuit of another credential.

Figure 9: Outcomes for Tennessee Reconnect Grant Recipients

- Earned Award - not enrolled
- Earned Award - remain enrolled
- Did Not Earn Award - remain enrolled
- Did Not Earn Award - not enrolled





Section 4:

Program Finances

Program Finances

This section explores the average Reconnect grant money paid for Tennessee Reconnect recipients. As noted earlier in this report, Tennessee Reconnect is a last dollar grant.

Table 1 shows the average payment received by Reconnect students over the course of the 2018 – 2019 school year. The average recipient received \$2,417 in Reconnect dollars, excluding \$0 payments.⁴

Table 1: Average Reconnect Award by Institution 2018-19

Institution	Average Award
Community Colleges	
Chattanooga State	\$2,340
Cleveland State	\$2,607
Columbia State	\$2,430
Dyersburg State	\$2,391
Jackson State	\$2,421
Motlow State	\$2,659
Nashville State	\$2,400
Northeast State	\$2,444
Pellissippi State	\$2,441
Roane State	\$2,488
Southwest TN	\$2,101
Volunteer State	\$2,361
Walters State	\$2,360
Public 4-Years	
Austin Peay State University	\$2,663
Privates and Proprietary	
Bethel University	\$2,445
Bryan College	\$3,438
Christian Brothers University	\$2,906
Cumberland University	\$2,773
John A Gupton College	\$2,778
Lincoln Memorial University	\$2,619
South College	\$1,991
Southern Adventist University	\$2,971
Trevecca Nazarene University	\$2,648
Tusculum University	\$3,234
Union University	\$2,855
Overall	\$2,417

Notes: This figure excludes \$0 payments, as well as institutions with fewer than five Reconnectors receiving payments greater than \$0.

⁴ Including \$0 payments, where the tuition was covered by other gift aid, the average award amount was \$1,620.

Conclusion

The first year of the Tennessee Reconnect program exceeded expectations in terms of applications received, students served, and credentials earned. Further, individuals from high-need populations make up a significant portion of Reconnect grant recipients, with Black adults making up 21% of recipients, 58% of recipients having dependents, and almost 70% of grant recipients making below \$50,000. Students receiving the Tennessee Reconnect grant in its first year saw a success rate of 61%. Over 2,000 Reconnectors were awarded a certificate or degree last year, with about 250 of those students maintaining enrollment in pursuit of an additional credential.

The Tennessee Reconnect program will continue to build on these successes through the programs and partnerships that encourage adults to enroll in an eligible program and once enrolled, support them through to completion. Through partnerships with state agencies, industry, and community-based organizations, more than 1,000 individuals across the state have been trained as Reconnect Ambassadors. These individuals work to connect friends, family, co-workers, clients, and others to Tennessee Reconnect. Additionally, through Navigate Reconnect, adult students across the state receive one-on-one navigation services from our Reconnect Navigators to help them enroll in and complete a postsecondary program.

Future iterations of the Tennessee Reconnect Annual Report will provide further insight into the impact of the program over time, including more robust data for applicant ineligibility, adults working while enrolled, longer-term completion, and employment outcomes. These additional analyses will enable THEC to utilize existing programmatic infrastructure to support adult students' postsecondary aspirations and provide interventions that increase student success.

Appendices

Appendix A: Reconnect Recipients by Institution, 2018 – 2019

Institution	Count
Community Colleges	
Pellissippi State	2,284
Nashville State	1,990
Volunteer State	1,954
Southwest TN	1,783
Motlow State	1,515
Roane State	1,395
Chattanooga State	1,293
Northeast State	1,021
Walters State	970
Jackson State	954
Columbia State	840
Dyersburg State	735
Cleveland State	631
Public 4-Year Universities	
Tennessee State University	7
Austin Peay State University	32
Private and Proprietary	
South College	421
Union University	122
Bethel University	73
Lincoln Memorial University	34
Trevecca Nazarene University	29
Cumberland University	28
Tusculum University	27
John A Gupton College	21
Southern Adventist University	17
Christian Brothers University	10
Bryan College	8
Welch College	6
King University	*
Johnson University	*
Hiwassee College	*
Martin Methodist College	*
Lane College	*
Grand Total	18,217

Tennessee Reconnect Annual Report | 2020
Tennessee Higher Education Commission

Appendix B: Reconnect Grant Eligible Institutions

Community Colleges

Chattanooga State Community College
Cleveland State Community College
Columbia State Community College
Dyersburg State Community College
Jackson State Community College
Motlow State Community College
Nashville State Community College
Northeast State Community College
Pellissippi State Community College
Roane State Community College
Southwest Community College
Volunteer State Community College
Walters State Community College

Public 4-Year Universities

Austin Peay University
Tennessee State University

Independent Colleges and Universities

Baptist College of Health Sciences
Bethel University
Bryan College
Carson-Newman University
Christian Brothers
Cumberland University
Hiwassee College
John A. Gupton College
Johnson University
King University
Lane College
LeMoyne-Owen College
Lincoln Memorial University
Martin Methodist College
Southern Adventist University
Trevecca Nazarene University
Tusculum University
Union University
Welch College

Proprietary Colleges

South College