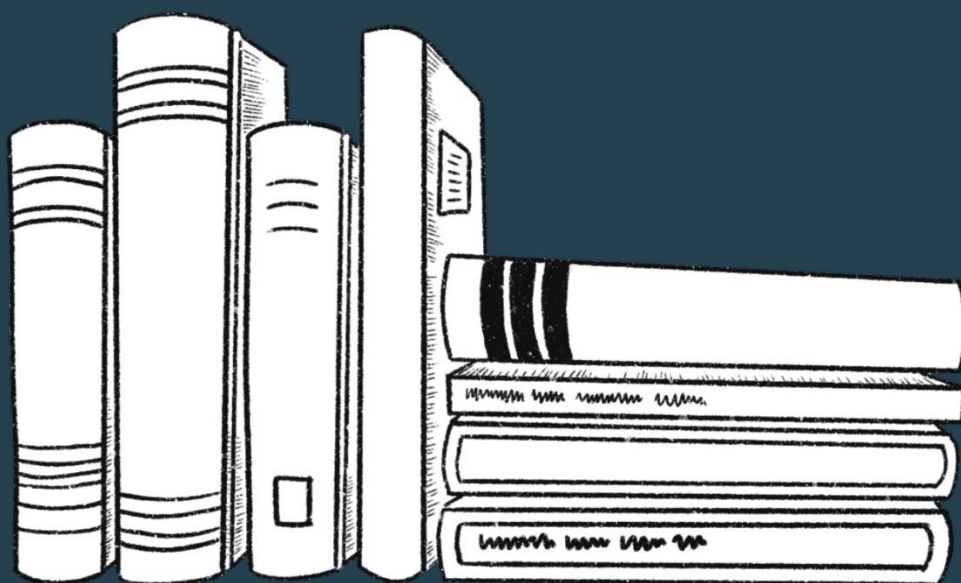


# Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario



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## **Access Programs in Ontario: OPAIP and Pathways to Education**

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## Executive Summary

Improving access to postsecondary education (PSE) is an ongoing effort in Ontario. To further these improvements, HEQCO conducted evaluations of two prominent access programs funded by the Ontario government: Pathways to Education and the Ontario Postsecondary Access and Inclusion Program (OPAIP). The purpose of this report is to identify how these programs improve access for underrepresented students in Ontario and where additional support is needed.

The Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU) introduced OPAIP in 2018 to address non-financial barriers to postsecondary education. The program is structured around three pillars: outreach, access and transition, and retention. Pathways to Education Canada is a national non-profit organization which works to break the cycle of poverty through education. Pathways supports low-income high school students toward graduation and postsecondary access through a combination of financial, academic, social and one-on-one supports. Pathways to Education Canada receives partial funding from MCU.

Our evaluations included a scan of available data to better understand the current state of access for underrepresented students in Ontario; reviews of OPAIP and Pathways programming; and consultation with key stakeholders involved in OPAIP and Pathways. The results reveal important strengths of both programs and areas where gaps remain.

Our scan of available data reveals a near complete lack of demographic data collection in the postsecondary sector at an administrative level, both provincially and institutionally. In the absence of province-wide, identity-based data, longitudinal educational outcomes are unavailable. In addition, limited and inconsistent data definitions make it challenging for program staff to identify and target students who may benefit from support. The lack of reliable, identity-based administrative data presents a barrier to accurately and fully contextualizing the access problem that OPAIP and Pathways are designed to solve. This barrier includes a lack of data pertaining to race, Indigenous identity, disability type, LGBTQ+ identity and/or immigration status.

Our consultation with OPAIP and Pathways stakeholders surfaced key findings that are present across the programs. Both create networks of support for students that provide guidance as well as social and academic support to help students prepare for and navigate PSE. Both programs provide exposure to postsecondary and career pathways through aspects of their programming such as on-campus visits and individual support in the PSE application process. The programs use a variety of approaches to track outcomes and gauge success, including informal conversations with students and metrics such as participation rates. However, comprehensive program evaluation and tracking of PSE outcomes are hampered by a lack of reliable administrative data and an inability to access institutional or provincial data. Program delivery is also hindered by unpredictability in the timing of funding releases. This affects staffing and long-term planning, and ultimately compromises program delivery. Finally, programs need greater capacity to be responsive to community needs. As Ontario campuses continue to diversify, so should the supports that serve students.

## Recommendations

Reflecting on these findings, we offer the following recommendations to MCU:

### **Enable access to reliable data to facilitate outcomes tracking**

Mandate the collection of reliable, consistent demographic data through the Ontario College Application Service (OCAS) and Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC). Provide staff at Pathways and PSE institutions with access to OEN-linked PSE data to enable tracking of educational outcomes. Ensure greater consistency in reporting by providing more clarity about tracking, demographic definitions and reporting requirements to institutions receiving OPAIP funding.

### **Establish consistent funding timelines to strengthen program administration and delivery**

Ensure funding is distributed according to a predictable schedule to support staff retention and program delivery at both Pathways and OPAIP.

### **Facilitate the development of supports that are specific to community needs**

Outline goals and reporting requirements that encourage institutions and program administrators to create culturally responsive supports. Explore opportunities to subsidize internet access and provide technological devices to students in low-income communities to help address connectivity challenges related to COVID-19 or future connectivity challenges.

## Background

Accessible education for all students is a central goal of Ontario's postsecondary education (PSE) system. The government of Ontario funds programs created to improve PSE participation among historically underrepresented groups. Colleges and universities across Ontario have established supports, services and student pathways to address ongoing participation gaps. Despite these efforts and important gains, equitable access for all Ontarians remains a goal yet to be achieved. In this report, we synthesize HEQCO's evaluations of two programs funded by the Ontario government intended to address the equity gaps that exist in Ontario's education system: Pathways to Education (Pathways) and the Ontario Postsecondary Access and Inclusion Program (OPAIP). Our evaluations included:<sup>1</sup> a scan of similar access programs across North America; a review of available data related to access and student outcomes in Ontario; a review of OPAIP and Pathways annual reports to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU); and a survey of and interviews with program participants, staff and leaders. All survey and interview participants were directly connected to these programs and provided important perspectives regarding program strengths, challenges and opportunities.

The goal of this report is to analyze and describe the roles Pathways and OPAIP play in improving access to PSE for historically underrepresented students. While Pathways and OPAIP provide significant support for many students across Ontario, gaps remain. Our report concludes with recommendations to help close these gaps.

### Data Infrastructure for Access Evaluations in Ontario

To understand the access needs of students in Ontario, including those supported by OPAIP and Pathways programming, we examined enrolment patterns of historically underrepresented groups across the province. The purpose of our exercise was twofold: First, to identify if and how data is collected for access-seeking groups; and second, to explore what we know about access from the available data. The exercise demonstrated Ontario still has work to do to achieve equitable access and is not collecting the data needed to support that goal. Enrolment data with demographic detail at a provincial level is extremely limited, inconsistently collected and inadequate compared to well-established data-collection standards used by organizations like [Statistics Canada](#) or as outlined in the Ontario [Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism](#). To answer some fundamental high-level questions about access we used Statistics Canada data and reports from agencies such as Colleges Ontario to provide access estimates. We focused on population groups which are directly targeted by OPAIP and/or Pathways, such as low-income students, students with disabilities, racialized students, first-generation students, LGBTQ+ students and immigrant students.

Data collection for most of the identified groups is extremely poor, with imprecise categories often being used for diverse populations with vastly different PSE access challenges and outcomes. This is especially true for non-Caucasian students, who are often grouped as "visible minorities," and students with different disability types, who are often grouped as "having a disability." An analysis of these groups using the 2016 Canadian Census clearly shows why shortcuts for demographic data collection obscure and distort perceptions of the diversity of experiences within many access-seeking groups. With regards to the most recent data we could reliably analyze, we observe that disability type, race, first-generation status, Indigenous status

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<sup>1</sup> Further information regarding evaluation methods is included in Appendix A.

and low-income status influence the likelihood of attending PSE. We cannot comment on LGBTQ+ students since they are consistently left out of survey categories, leaving this group completely absent from most policy analyses.

## Ontario Programs to Improve Access to PSE

### The Ontario Postsecondary Access and Inclusion Program (OPAIP)

OPAIP was introduced by MCU in 2018 to address non-financial barriers to postsecondary education for underrepresented groups. The program replaced the more narrowly focused First-Generation Projects fund, which targeted Ontarians who were the first in their families to attend postsecondary education. OPAIP is designed to target a broader group of Ontarians, for whom intervention and support may increase the likelihood of both access to and success in PSE. OPAIP-eligible participants include, but are not limited to:

- Secondary school students with low credit accumulation and/or low achievement rates
- Adults who have not completed their Ontario Secondary School Diploma
- Students in rural or remote communities with limited access to outreach/transition supports
- Students with disabilities
- First-generation students
- Racialized students
- Indigenous students
- Newcomers to Canada
- LGBTQ+ students
- Low-income students

OPAIP provides funding to postsecondary institutions for three types of interventions:

- **Outreach** initiatives to help increase awareness and understanding of PSE pathways for those who would not otherwise consider PSE as a viable option
- **Access and transition** initiatives to promote successful academic and social transitions to PSE for eligible participants
- **Retention** initiatives to help eligible participants complete and graduate from postsecondary programs

Ontario institutions must apply to receive OPAIP funding. As of the 2020/21 academic year, 32 colleges and universities (16 of each) receive OPAIP funding and must provide four reports to MCU each year.

## Pathways to Education Canada

Pathways to Education Canada<sup>2</sup> is a national charitable organization that supports high school graduation as well as access and transitions to PSE, training and work for high school students in low-income neighbourhoods. The program was established in 2001 by social workers at a community health centre in Regent Park, a public housing development in Toronto. The program has expanded to 27 partner locations spread across eight provinces.<sup>3</sup> During the 2019/20 academic year, eight Ontario-based Pathways partner programs served 3,841 students.<sup>4</sup> Pathways operates in partnership with federal and provincial governments, community partners, schools and school boards.

Pathways offers holistic programming focusing on four pillars of support for high school students: academic, financial, social and one-on-one mentoring. A flexible design allows programming to be tailored to meet the specific student and community needs. Each participant is paired with a Student/Parent Support Worker (SPSW) for academic support, which includes tutoring and assistance with PSE applications. SPSWs also engage with students and families so that they understand postsecondary options and pathways. Financial support for participants may include transit fare (such as bus passes) and school lunch vouchers, funding for training and employment opportunities, PSE application fees or postsecondary scholarships. For every year that a student participates in the Pathways program, they can earn a scholarship of \$500 (up to a maximum of \$2,000) towards PSE or training. These scholarships are funded separately from MCU funding.

Pathways has been evaluated several times in the past decade. In 2019, Employment and Social Development Canada commissioned an evaluation of the program (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2019). The report indicated that Pathways programming contributed positively to increased graduation rates, postsecondary enrolment and labour market outcomes.

## Consultation Findings

This section highlights key findings present across our consultation with OPAIP and Pathways stakeholders.

Pathways primarily supports high school students as they work toward graduation and transition into PSE or the workforce; OPAIP programming supports both current and future postsecondary students through outreach, access/transition and retention initiatives. Despite these differences, surveys and interviews with Pathways and OPAIP stakeholders revealed several common approaches to addressing non-financial barriers to PSE. Interviewees and survey respondents

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<sup>2</sup> “Pathways to Education Canada” refers to the national organization. “Pathways to Education partners” refers to the local sites where programming takes place. For the purposes of this brief, “Pathways” is used to refer to the organization as a whole. When we refer to the local sites, we use “Pathways partner.” “Pathways alumni” refer to students who participated in Pathways activities and graduated from high school.

<sup>3</sup> Four partners in Toronto plus Kitchener, Ottawa, Hamilton and Kingston. The other partners are found in Halifax, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Saskatoon, St. John, five in Montreal, seven others in Quebec, and two in Vancouver.

<sup>4</sup> The Pathways partners in Ontario include: Ottawa, Regent Park (Toronto), Lawrence Heights (Toronto), Scarborough Village (Toronto), Rexdale (Toronto), Kingston, Kitchener and Hamilton

also highlighted gaps or challenges in programming and tracking that should be addressed to improve this support. We identify several themes that reflect these findings.

### Programs are Creating Networks of Support

Interviewees and survey respondents frequently highlighted ways in which Pathways and OPAIP programming create a network of support around students. This network includes a range of individuals who provide various services or resources that can help students achieve educational success and access PSE. This network includes schools/school boards, PSE institutions and community organizations, including Pathways. The network enables students to more easily connect to PSE and other supports within their community and institution. Moreover, the flexibility of both programs enables these networks to provide tailored programming to support individual students or specific community needs.

In both programs, this network provides students with mentorship and academic support, which interviewees and survey respondents described as key to helping students access and transition to PSE. Students engaging in Pathways or OPAIP programming are often connected with staff or other students who they can turn to for guidance or support. Pathways interviewees refer to the SPSW as an adult mentor who “is embedded in [the] student’s life” throughout high school and beyond in some cases. These individuals are deeply invested in students’ lives and success, empower students to believe in themselves, and support students in navigating educational paths and career preparation. OPAIP interviewees and respondents describe a similar, though perhaps less personal, network of support that helps facilitate a smoother transition to PSE for students and improves retention. OPAIP-funded initiatives, such as peer mentoring and tutoring programs, provide students with opportunities to build relationships with staff or peers. As an interviewee noted, a “one-to-one connection with an upper-year student...[or] with staff” allowed students to have “a resource to turn to...especially if [they are] not in residence,” which likely “made a difference as to whether [students] stayed at the [institution].” At both the high school and postsecondary level, individual relationships with staff and/or peers help students feel a greater sense of belonging by allowing them to see PSE as part of their future and feel connected once they arrive.

### Programs are Providing Exposure to Postsecondary and Career Pathways

Pathways and OPAIP play an important role in exposing students to postsecondary and career pathways. This is particularly significant for those who are less likely to be exposed to PSE within their own networks or neighbourhoods. For example, career nights with people in different fields help students learn about postsecondary and career options which can affect the future they envision for themselves. One interviewee noted: “[Students] see what a civil engineer does versus a lawyer. We want to expose them as much as we can to the possibilities.” Through partnerships with PSE institutions, Pathways students can participate in on-campus PSE activities, campus tours or career exploration events and learn about different PSE opportunities. OPAIP interviewees similarly highlight these types of outreach initiatives and how they enable students to explore their interests. For instance, an OPAIP interviewee noted that “hands-on, experiential” days can “[get students] inspired and interested” by providing them with the opportunity to “hear the faculty talk about their experience [and] why they got into the field.” Interviewees and survey respondents often note that this type of programming can help students who “wouldn’t otherwise consider PSE” to develop their interests and feel that they belong.

## Programs are Using Multiple Approaches to Assess and Enhance Student Supports

According to our interviewees and survey respondents, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods is used to track outcomes and evaluate the success of their respective programming. Stakeholders noted that they record different types of interactions with students, such as the number of students accessing services or attending programming, email correspondence with students, or referrals. Stakeholders also use pre- and post-assessments of students' academic achievement, competencies and well-being to evaluate program effectiveness. Some stakeholders use this information to set internal key performance indicators and/or to evaluate trends in participation and retention.

Pathways and OPAIP interviewees describe using qualitative methods in conjunction with tracking numerical data through interactions and attendance. For example, in both programs, qualitative data is collected through student surveys, focus group discussions and general feedback following an activity. This approach is also used to collect self-reported demographic data and can help stakeholders understand the stories that are attached to the quantitative data. Interviewees from both programs identified gathering feedback directly from students as key to understanding their experiences. As one OPAIP interviewee shared, understanding why students are “opting out of an intervention” is even considered “positive” because it allows staff to plan “more responsive, empathetic interventions for students.” This allows staff to assess how programming should continue or adapt to better meet students' needs.

## Program Evaluation is Hampered by a Lack of Reliable Data

We identified several challenges to tracking student outcomes and evaluating program success. A first major challenge to tracking and evaluation is the lack of consistent and formal processes to identify student participants. Without reliable administrative data, it is unclear if the programs are reaching students who may need support. Additionally, lack of access to OEN-linked and sociodemographic data is an obstacle to tracking student outcomes and understanding program impacts. As one OPAIP survey respondent described, “our institution currently has no mechanism to track those who engage in outreach and access initiatives and how this translates into postsecondary access. We think that this needs to happen at a systems level, through the OEN.”

With limited access to data, it is challenging to target programming to underrepresented students. One survey respondent shared that “finding the balance between collecting students' feedback and demographic information, while balancing the disclosure of personal information” is “one of the main challenges with tracking [their] OPAIP initiatives.” Without a standardized approach to collect and/or access data, programs rely on self-reported demographic data, which creates gaps when students choose not to self-report. This use of informal or anecdotal data collection methods raises concerns about the precision, reliability and continuity of the data. OPAIP interviewees noted that reporting timelines and processes heighten these challenges. This contributes to reporting requirements which are “so broad” that institutions “may be counting things differently.” For example, while one institution may consider and report student orientation as a retention activity, another may report it as a transition activity. Improving access to reliable data as well as “cleaning up definitions and metrics” used for the purpose of reporting would enable program staff to better track outcomes and would enable government to more fully assess the impact of these initiatives.

## Program Delivery is Hindered by Unpredictable Funding Timelines

OPAIP and Pathways interviewees noted that delayed and unpredictable funding timelines make it difficult to develop long-term programming. MCU funding is also organized according to the government's fiscal calendar, which does not align with the academic calendar. These issues create considerable planning and staff/program continuity challenges. Inconsistent funding timelines can also contribute to frequent staff turnover. It is challenging to have continuity in data collection and outcomes tracking if new staff are hired every year. Frequent staff turnover also makes it difficult to maintain partnerships and expand community support. Timely and predictable funding, aligned with the academic calendar, is necessary to ensure these organizations can retain staff to plan programs, track outcomes and maintain strong relationships with partners.

## Programs Need Greater Capacity to be Responsive to Needs of Specific Communities

Programs require greater capacity to provide targeted programming such as culturally responsive supports, partnerships with local communities, mental health resources and accessible technology. Several interviewees indicated that increased and targeted support is needed for Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC) students. The data available in Ontario also points toward access gaps for historically underrepresented groups that persist in spite of support programs in place across Ontario's PSE institutions. One interviewee noted that "as society and students shift" and "institutions [turn] their lens and focus to the needs of BIPOC students," "a specific identification of support for BIPOC students is important." With a specific mandate to serve BIPOC students, institutions may be more motivated to collect data to understand this population of students and report on their results. Other interviewees specifically recommended greater support for Indigenous students, such as through the development of a partnership with Indigenous communities. Pathways interviewees also noted the need for mental health supports, as staff increasingly encounter students experiencing challenges related to mental health. Inequitable access to technology and high-quality internet has worsened for students living in low-income communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Recommendations

OPAIP and Pathways to Education are part of a broader ecosystem of accessibility-related supports for underrepresented and low-income students. Although stakeholders view both programs as successful in improving access to PSE, there are several gaps that the government should address to improve impact measurement, program delivery and student supports.

### **Enable access to reliable data to facilitate outcomes tracking**

- Government should mandate the collection of reliable, consistent demographic data (e.g., race-based data, LGBTQ+ data and appropriate gender data) through the Ontario College Application Service (OCAS) and Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC). Demographic data should also be linked with the OEN to enable outcomes tracking.
- Staff at Pathways and PSE institutions should be provided access to OEN-linked PSE data which can then be linked to labour market datasets such as T1 Family Files (T1FF).

This would enable tracking of PSE outcomes. Understanding PSE student progress and outcomes will enable program refinements and enhancements that meet community needs.

- Ensure greater consistency in reporting by providing more clarity about tracking and reporting requirements to institutions receiving OPAIP funding; this could be done by creating detailed and specific demographic definitions and metrics.
  - For example, require the use of specific race categories such as those identified in Ontario's [Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism](#), and monitor categories used by Statistics Canada. Follow the tested and approved departmental standard currently used by Statistics Canada for the collection of disability type, gender of a person and sex of a person.

### **Establish consistent funding timelines to strengthen program administration and delivery**

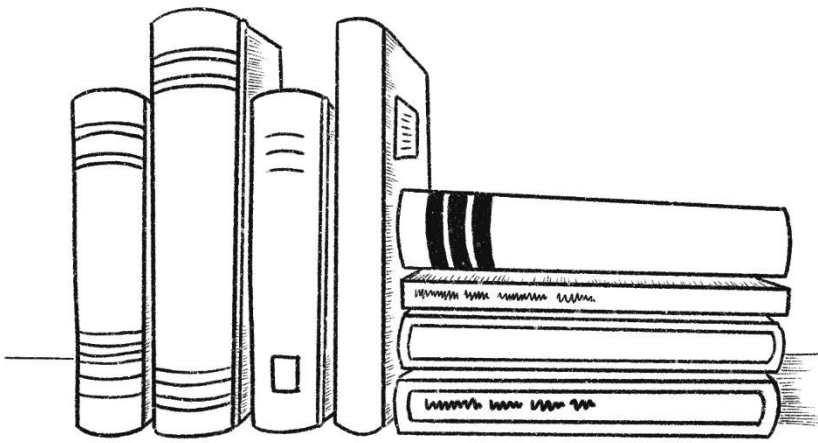
- Ensure funding is distributed according to a predictable schedule to support the retention of staff at Pathways and PSE institutions. Offering reliable support to students requires that appropriate staff capacity to plan and deliver services and sustain strong relationships with partners. Predictable funding timelines, in combination with better access to reliable data, will also enable tracking practices that can result in stronger evaluations on program returns on investment.

### **Facilitate the development of supports that are specific to community needs**

- Outline goals and reporting requirements that encourage institutions and program administrators to focus on creating supports that are responsive to the needs of underserved or underrepresented student populations in their communities.
- Explore opportunities to subsidize internet access and provide technological devices to students in low-income communities to support students in an increasingly virtual learning environment. Collaboration between multiple government ministries can help address connectivity challenges related to COVID-19 or future connectivity challenges.

## **Conclusion**

Access to PSE in Ontario is a complex issue without a “one-size-fits-all” solution. Pathways to Education and OPAIP offer different approaches to supporting students as they navigate the transition to PSE. Our evaluations show that these programs offer important interventions for improving access in Ontario. However, the success of these programs is difficult to quantify; many questions are left unanswered in part due to the serious issues with data collection in Ontario. Access and equity research is strengthened by high-quality longitudinal data which also accurately reflects the lived experiences of Ontarians; this is not currently available in Ontario. This has real world consequences for how we approach access and equity policy. The availability of high-quality data in Ontario would strengthen the work of OPAIP and Pathways, allow government to enhance its access program and provide strong and replicable evidence for other organizations doing similar work to support Ontario's students.



# **Access Programs in Ontario: OPAIP and Pathways to Education**

Appendix

## Appendix A: Methodology

### Access landscape research

This project included a review of data for student groups that are underrepresented in Ontario's postsecondary system. We examined enrolment patterns for various groups of Ontarians where data was available and referenced what we know about access for other groups where enrolment data was not available. Further detail is provided in Appendix B.

Data for first-generation and disability enrolment was only available through Colleges Ontario's Student Graduate Profiles; figures for first-generation students were based on these reports. Current first-generation and disability enrolment numbers are not available for universities.

Figures for postsecondary credential attainment by disability were made using the General Social Survey because this survey uses the Disability Screening Questions which allows for analysis by disability type (2016). Individuals who were attending an education program at the time of the survey were excluded from this sample. All results are weighted and reflect the weighting and bootstrap procedures as indicated in the Statistics Canada User Guide.

Figures for enrolment by race, population group, Indigenous status and immigration were made using the 2016 Canadian Census Public Use Microdata File. Individuals who were on work or study permits were excluded from analyses. Variables for highest education credential attained, enrolment in education, level of education currently enrolled in, Indigenous demographics, immigration, and population group status including "visible minority" were based on Statistics Canada variables provided in the census. All results are weighted using census weighting procedures as indicated by the 2016 Census Public Use Microdata File (PUMF).

### Institutional survey and key informant interviews

HEQCO's evaluations of OPAIP and Pathways included consultation with key informants from both programs. For the OPAIP evaluation, HEQCO invited all publicly assisted Ontario colleges and universities to participate in a survey, drawing from a contact list provided by MCU. The survey was open for two weeks in November 2020. We received 35 responses, representing 16 colleges and 13 universities, three of which are not currently receiving OPAIP funding. Survey analysis was conducted in NVivo and STATA 16. All survey respondents were asked if they would like to participate in a follow-up interview with HEQCO staff. Those who expressed interest were invited to take part in a 30-minute semi-structured interview in December 2020. In total, HEQCO conducted 14 interviews with 17 people (some interviews were with multiple people from the same institution).

For the Pathways evaluation, HEQCO conducted interviews with Pathways to Education Canada leadership, Pathways partners staff, Pathways alumni and postsecondary institutional partners. Pathways to Education Canada leadership provided contact details for four Pathways partner staff and facilitated contact with program alumni. MCU provided a list of institutional contacts with Pathways relationships at publicly assisted colleges and universities in Ontario. In total, HEQCO conducted 16 semi-structured interviews with 22 individuals in March 2021. We used NVivo to analyze the interviews. We reviewed the OPAIP and Pathways interview data and open-ended OPAIP survey responses and identified common themes across the dataset.

## Appendix B: Access Landscape

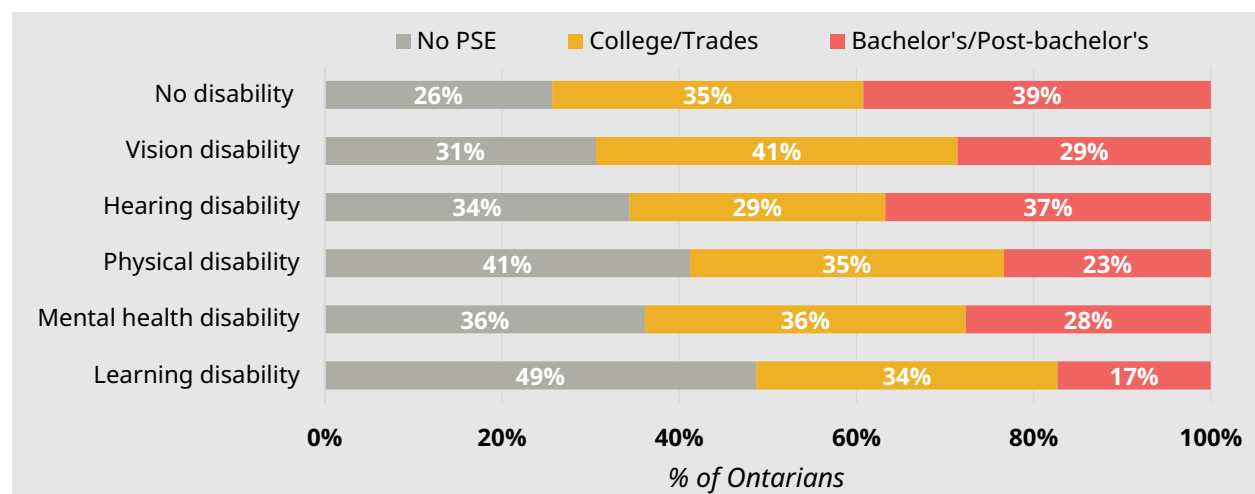
The sections below provide available information regarding access-seeking students in Ontario.

### Students with Disabilities

Current enrolment data for students with disabilities is not reported publicly by Ontario universities. Annual reports by Colleges Ontario provide high-level statistics on students with a disability. Between 2016 and 2019, 17% of enrolled college students reported having a disability (Colleges Ontario, 2020, Fig. 13). Differentiation by disability type is not reported.

To provide an estimate of historical participation in PSE, we used the 2016 General Social Survey (GSS). The GSS reported that students with disabilities are less likely to obtain a postsecondary credential in Ontario than those without. More specifically, students with learning and physical disabilities in Ontario are the least likely to acquire a postsecondary credential, especially a bachelor's or post-bachelor's credential (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

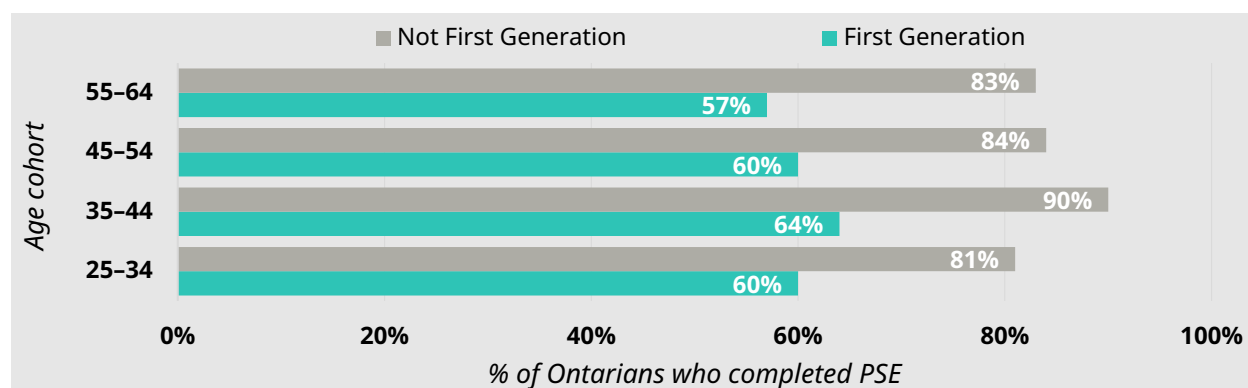
Figure 1: Percentage of Ontarians by highest postsecondary credential and disability type



## First-generation Students

Data for first-generation students in PSE is not collected at an administrative level. Previous HEQCO reports have highlighted an attainment gap between high school students from families in which neither parent participated in postsecondary education and their peers whose parents have credentials; Deller et al. (2019) noted that when students do participate, first-generation youth are more likely to pursue two-year college programs rather than four-year university degrees. Parental education remains a major determinant of postsecondary participation. This is illustrated in Figure 2 below. This estimate relies on Statistics Canada's Longitudinal International Survey of Adults linked to the Intergenerational Family File (Chatoor et. al, 2019).

Figure 2: Percentage of Ontarians who completed PSE by parental education and age cohort



Source: LISA-IFF, 2014

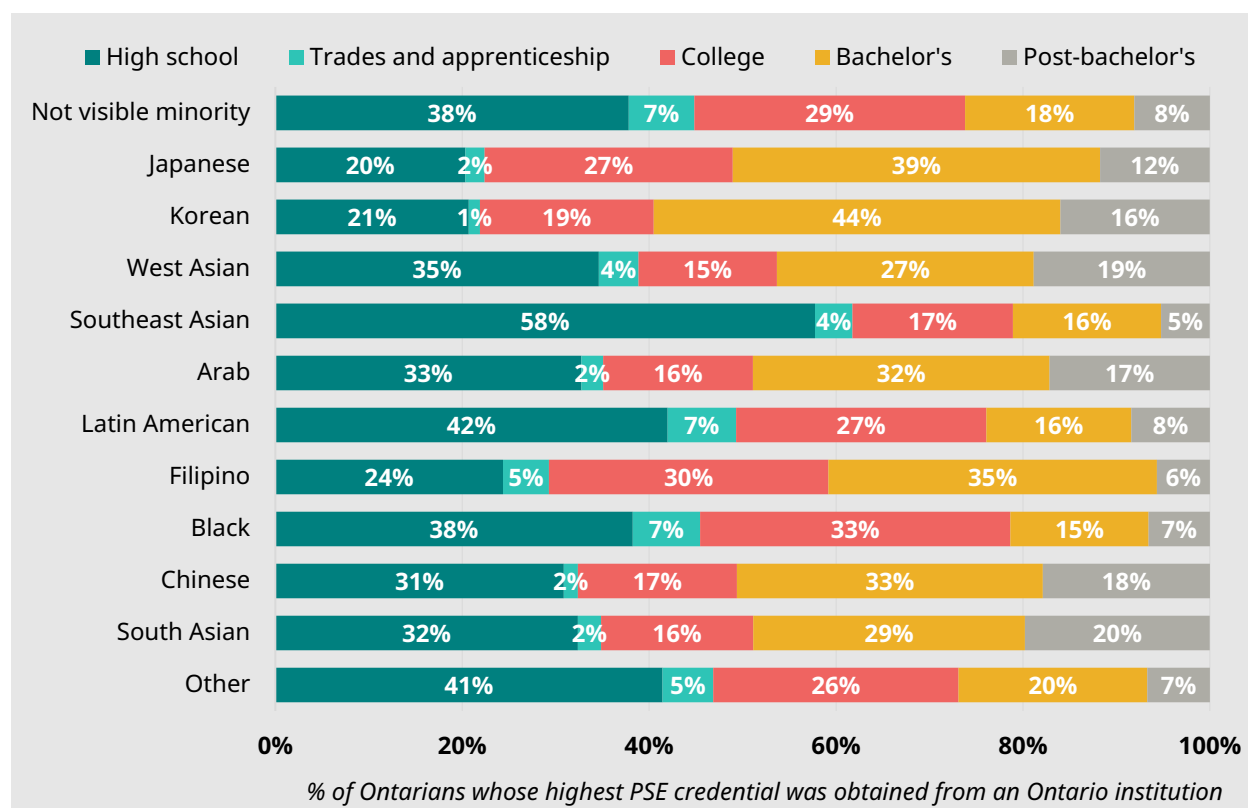


## Racialized Students

There is no reliable data available to track PSE credentials earned by race in Ontario. Since this data is not collected (or is collected but not reported) by Ontario institutions, we rely on the 2016 Canadian Census to provide estimates for people belonging to “visible minority” groups, defined as “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour” (Canadian Census, 2016).

The 2016 Census data reveals differences in PSE credentials earned across Ontario’s adult population: 34% of adult visible minorities in Ontario have no postsecondary credential compared to 38% of Ontario adults who are not visible minorities. “Visible minorities” however, is not a homogenous grouping; for example, for 44% of Koreans, 15% of Black Canadians, and 29% of South Asians, the highest credential obtained is a bachelor’s degree. However, for 42% of Latin Americans, 24% of Filipinos, and 58% of Southeast Asians, the highest credential earned is a high school diploma (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Highest credential of Ontarians who received their highest credential in an Ontario PSE institution, by visible minority status



Source: Canadian Census (PUMF), 2016.

Because data on race is not reliably or consistently collected by PSE institutions, we used the 2016 Census to provide an estimate of postsecondary enrolment in Ontario by race. Visible minorities account for 35% of college students and 42% of university students. South Asians, Chinese and Black Canadians are the largest population groups in both colleges and universities among those considered visible minorities (Table 1). Additionally, estimates using the 2016 Census show significant variability of PSE participation among groups traditionally

aggregated into the “visible minority” categorization, suggesting data collection on race should reflect this diversity moving forward.

*Table 1: Percentage of Ontario students by race enrolled in college or university*

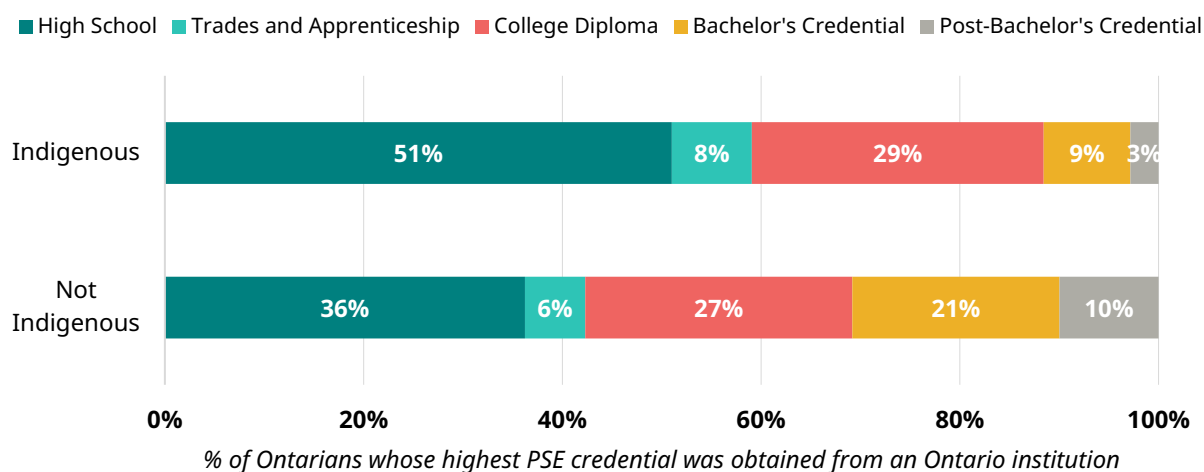
Population group	College	University
Not visible minority	65.1%	58.5%
South Asian	9.3%	13.6%
Chinese	4.3%	9.1%
Black	7.2%	5.7%
Filipino	4.2%	2.3%
Latin American	2.5%	1.3%
Arab	1.9%	2.8%
Southeast Asian	1.0%	1.1%
West Asian	1.9%	2.0%
Korean	0.5%	1.3%
Japanese	0.1%	0.2%
Other	1.9%	2.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Canadian Census (PUMF), 2016.*

## Indigenous Students

There is no reliable administrative data on Indigenous students' postsecondary participation in Ontario. For this report we used the 2016 Canadian Census for estimates. Figure 4 illustrates that a larger proportion of Indigenous individuals have no postsecondary credential than non-Indigenous individuals in Ontario. Using the 2016 Census, we estimated that among currently enrolled students in Ontario, Indigenous students account for 3.7% of college students and 1.9% of university students. Notably, due to the lack of data, we are unable to differentiate PSE participation and enrolment beyond the "Indigenous" category, which is an aggregation of many diverse Indigenous and First Nations groups in Ontario.

Figure 4: Highest credential of Ontarians by self-reported Indigenous status



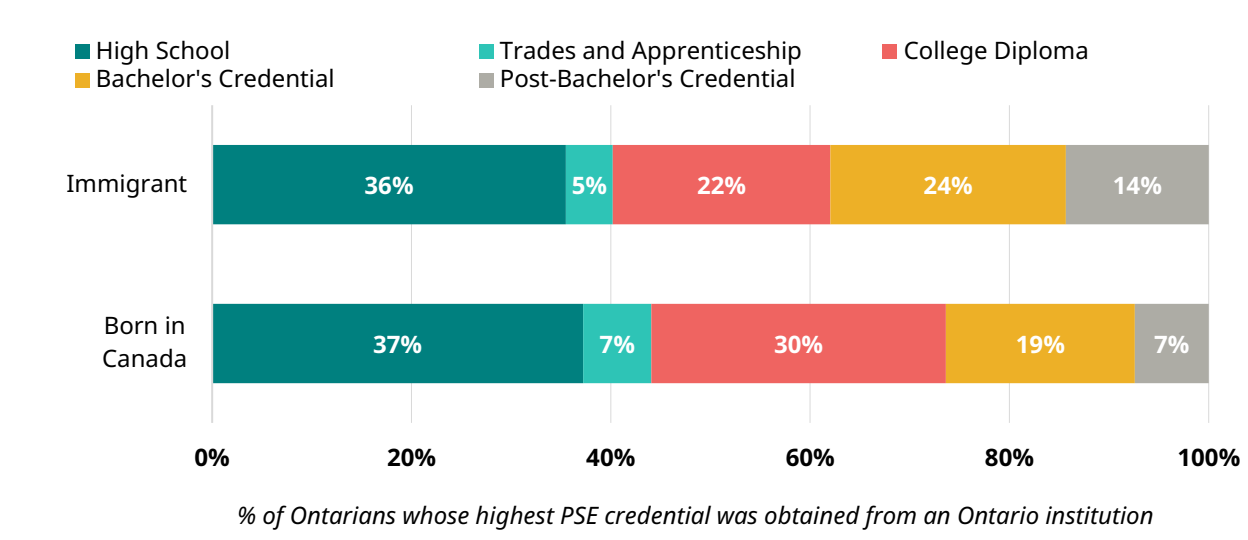
Source: Canadian Census (PUMF), 2016.



## Immigrants

Administrative data provides some information on international students, but is not reliable for analysis, so we used the census to provide estimates. Figure 5 illustrates credential attainment using the 2016 Canadian Census which indicates 36% of adult Ontario immigrants had no PSE credential compared to 37% of adult Ontarians who were born in Canada. Among currently enrolled students in Ontario, immigrants accounted for 31% of college students and 29% of university students.

Figure 5: Highest credential of Ontarians by immigration status



Source: Canadian Census (PUMF), 2016.

## LGBTQ+ Students

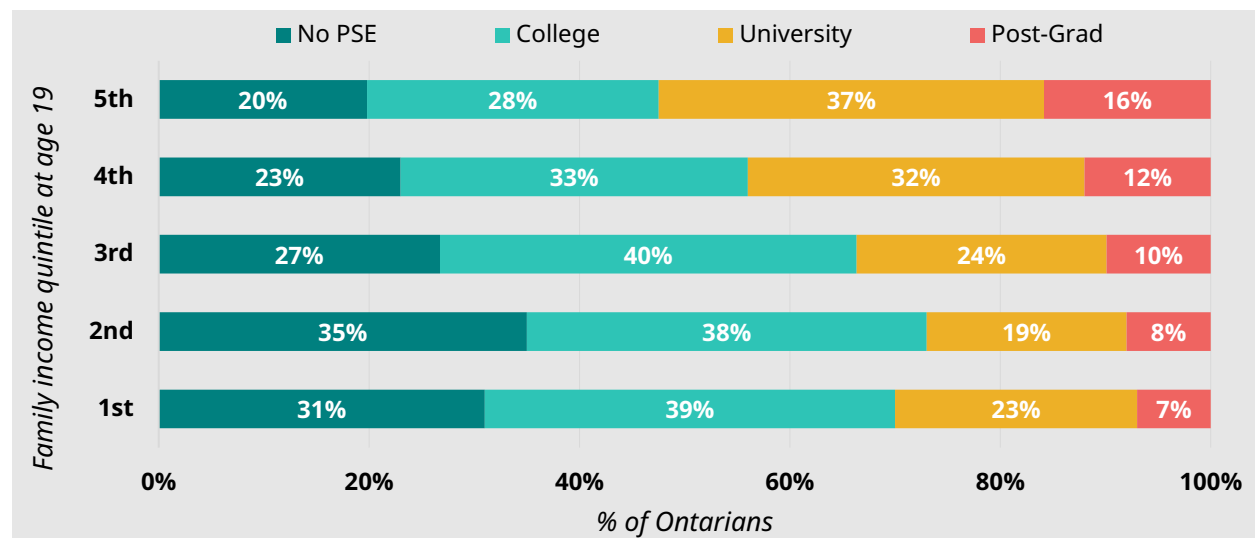
There is no administrative, federal or provincial data available on the enrolment patterns of LGBTQ+ students. School climate surveys, such as the one conducted by the Toronto District School Board, suggest that students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender are less likely to graduate from high school (Brown, 2014). In September 2020, Statistics Canada introduced the Survey on Individual Safety in the Postsecondary Student Population (SISPSP), which includes questions on sexual orientation. The SISPSP survey found 11% of all postsecondary students in all provinces identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual or had another sexual orientation other than heterosexual. Aside from this national survey, a near complete absence of reliable data is observed for LGBTQ+ students.



## Low-income Students

Because we did not have access to family income data for this evaluation, we turned to the literature to explore the relationship between income and enrolment. Previous HEQCO and Statistics Canada work has shown students from families in the lower income quintiles are less likely to pursue higher education than their peers from high-income families and that family income is strongly correlated with parental education (Deller et al., 2019).

Figure 6: Ontarians by level of PSE credential completed and by family income quintile at age 19



Source: LISA, 2014, in Deller et al., 2019.



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