



The Next NPSAS: Improving State-Level Financial Aid Data Analysis

2017-18 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study,
Administrative Collection (NPSAS:18-AC)



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What is NPSAS?



- ▶ Legislatively mandated data collection to make sense of the federal government's \$200 Billion per year investment in financing students' postsecondary educations
- ▶ Heavily used by policymakers, analysts, and researchers to understand programs like the Pell Grant and the Stafford Loan
- ▶ Two purposes: (1) To examine how students and their families pay for college and (2) To examine the characteristics of students enrolled in all levels of postsecondary education.

NPSAS Pros and Cons



- ▶ NPSAS is the only source of nationally representative financial aid data that can be used to examine many subgroups of interest
- ▶ It is not limited to students who enter in the fall, “traditionally aged” students, or first-time, full-time students
- ▶ Detailed data on financial aid programs, the price of college, net price, and related measures

Advantages



- ▶ NPSAS includes demographic characteristics that allow for nuanced research questions compared to institution-level data collections
- ▶ NPSAS can be used to address specific policy proposals (example: Prior-Prior Year)
- ▶ Ample sample size to address many questions on student aid and other research questions at a national level
- ▶ Others?

Limitations (up to now)



- ▶ Many policies change between NPSAS's 4-year cycle
- ▶ NPSAS studies generally do not have state-representative samples
- ▶ A time lag between the year the study is fielded and the data are released
- ▶ The inclusion/exclusion of Puerto Rico has led to confusion

NPSAS Pros and Cons

Administrative Collection



→ Advantages

- More frequent data releases of nationally representative data
- State representation
- A potential for larger Graduate student sample

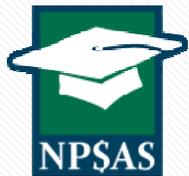
→ Disadvantages

- Higher measurement error in key measures
- Loss of key measures
- Limitations in the representation by sector within states
- Graduate sample not state representative or large enough to conduct analyses by program/discipline of study

NCES Postsecondary Sample Surveys



The Cross-Sectional Foundation:



National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS)

Study of student financial aid and demographics

The Longitudinal Complements:



Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS)

Study of persistence and attainment



Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (B&B)

Study of workforce outcomes, family formation, and graduate school

History and Timeline



NPSAS and Postsecondary Longitudinal Studies

NPSAS
1987

NPSAS
1990

NPSAS
1993

NPSAS
1996

NPSAS
2000

NPSAS
2004

NPSAS
2008

NPSAS
2012

NPSAS
2016

1987

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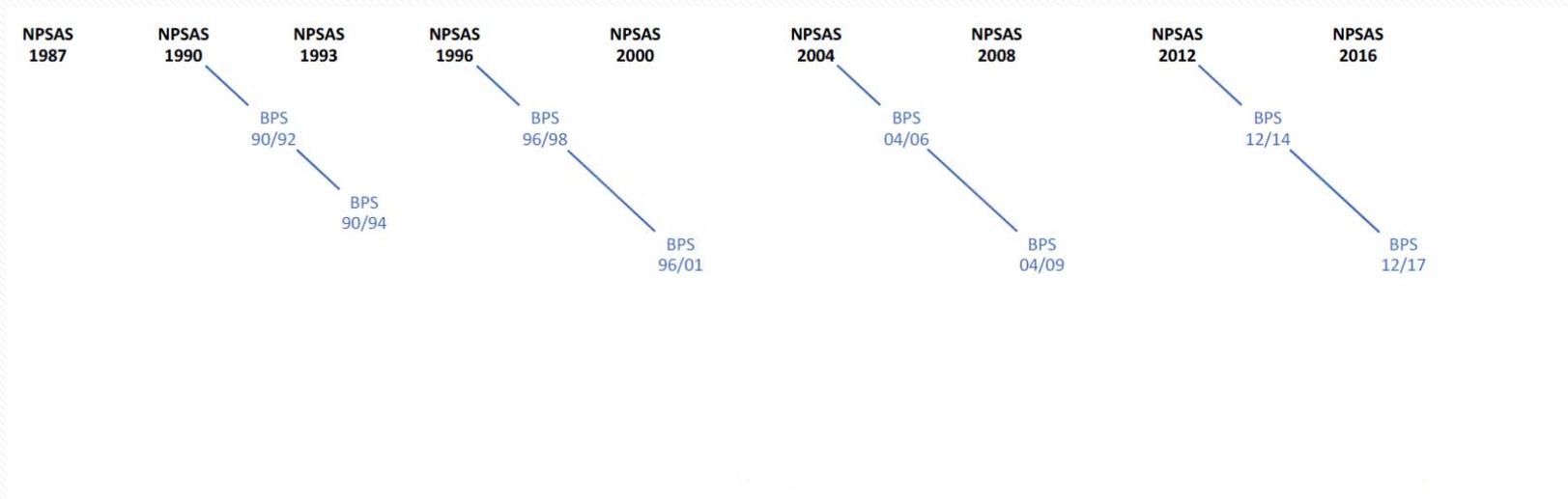
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2016

History and Timeline



NPSAS and Postsecondary Longitudinal Studies

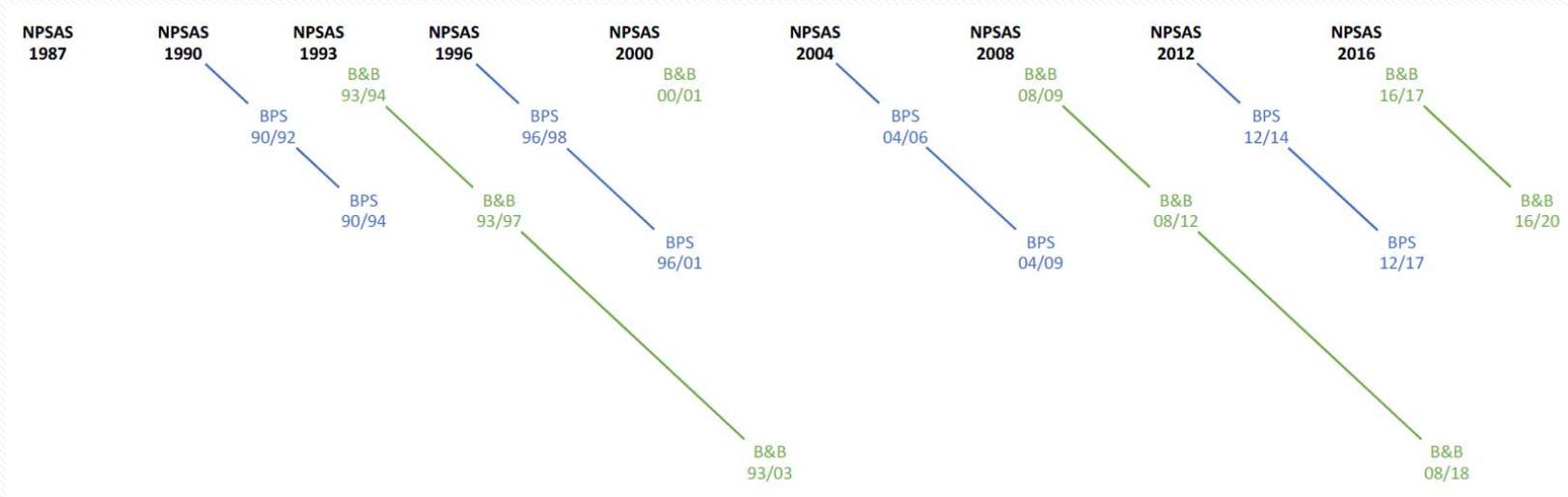


1987 > > > > > > > > > > > 2016

History and Timeline



NPSAS and Postsecondary Longitudinal Studies



1987 > > > > > > > > > > > 2016

NPSAS Target Population



Undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in Title IV participating institutions by institution sector

- Students enrolled in all types of institutions;
- Students with and without financial aid; and
- Students in all attendance statuses (e.g., full- and part-time)

Typical NPSAS Sample Sizes



2,000 Institutions



120,000 Students

- 100,000 undergraduates / 20,000 graduates
- Sample represents approximately 25 million undergraduates and 4 million graduates

The Dark Art of Weighting



How do we get 120,000 students to represent 29 million students? ...weights

- Institutional-level
- Student-level response
- Poststratification – using known “gold standard” estimates

NPSAS Data Sources



Student Interview



Administrative Data Sources

- Student records from postsecondary institutions
- ED financial aid systems
 - FAFSA Central Processing System / Pell Grant recipient file / NSLDS
- Other external data sources
 - National Student Clearinghouse / Testing companies / VBA

NPSAS Advantages



- NPSAS is the only source of nationally representative financial aid data that can be used to examine many subgroups of interest
- NPSAS includes demographic characteristics that allow for nuanced research questions
- Ample sample size to address many research topics at a national level
- Provides detailed data on financial aid programs, the price of college, net price, and related measures

NPSAS Limitations



- Many policies change between NPSAS's 4-year cycle
- A time lag between the year the study is conducted and the release of data (NPSAS:16 data will be released early next year)
- NPSAS studies generally do not have state-representative data

State Representative Estimates in NPSAS: Previous Experiments



NPSAS:04 (*12 States*)

California

Connecticut

Delaware

Georgia

Illinois

Indiana

Minnesota

Nebraska

New York

Oregon

Tennessee

Texas

NPSAS:08 (*6 States*)

California

Georgia

Illinois

Minnesota

New York

Texas

State Representative Estimates in NPSAS: Previous Experiments (cont.)



What We Learned

- NPSAS state-representative estimates are **expensive** (mainly due to the student interview component and the larger sample sizes necessary)
- States see the **value** in the data

Creative Thinking



NCES has explored ideas for creative ways to get state estimates, such as:



States paying for state-representative estimates



Using administrative data exclusively

State Representation Using Administrative Data Sources



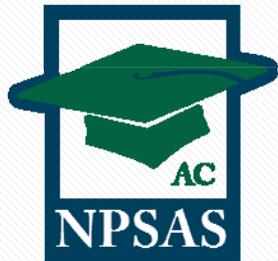
Student Interview



Administrative Data Sources

- Student records from postsecondary institutions
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NPSAS:18-AC Overview



2017-18 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, Administrative Collection (NPSAS:18-AC)

- Nationally representative and consistent with past NPSAS studies
- State representative (including DC and PR) for undergraduates
- Representative within states for undergraduates attending Public 2-year and Public 4-year institutions

NPSAS:18-AC Overview (cont.)



Administrative Data Only - No Student Interview

- Institution student records
- ED financial systems (FAFSA CPS, Pell, NSLDS)
- External data sources (NSC, College Board, ACT, VBA)



Larger sample sizes

NPSAS:18-AC

3,000 Institutions

400,000 Students

“Traditional NPSAS”

2,000 Institutions

120,000 Students

NPSAS:18-AC Benefits



More Frequent National Data

→ National estimates every 2 years instead of 4

NPSAS Forecast



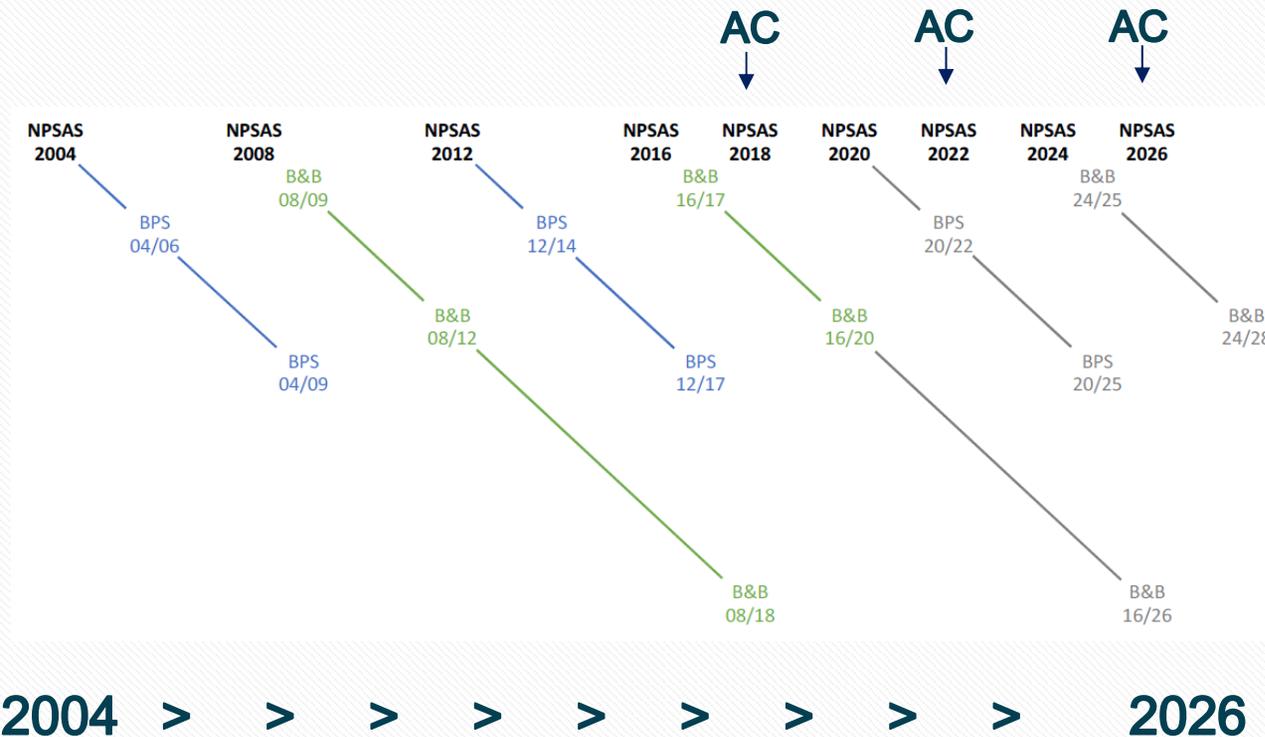
NPSAS and Postsecondary Longitudinal Studies



NPSAS Forecast



NPSAS and Postsecondary Longitudinal Studies





“Apples to Apples” Cross-State Comparisons

- Will complement individual states' own data capabilities

Analysis Flexibility

- Institutions can be classified in different ways beyond typical NPSAS sectors

NPSAS:18-AC Challenges



No Student Interview

- Loss of some variables
- Certain other variables' precision affected

Institution Burden

- Larger sample sizes = more student records
- Shorter cycle between NPSAS studies

Institution Participation is Critical!!!

- Achieving state representation requires high levels of institution participation

Research and Policy Issues

Addressed with NPSAS:18-AC Data



- ▶ Student demographics
- ▶ Academic preparation and programs
- ▶ Financial aid
- ▶ Price of attendance
- ▶ Student borrowing

Example Policy Questions Addressed with NPSAS:18-AC Data



- ▶ How does student borrowing vary among states and sectors within states?
- ▶ What is the relationship between federal loans and need-based grants and their state equivalents?
- ▶ What is the relationship between state merit-aid programs and federal borrowing and Pell grants?
- ▶ What are the effects of the emerging “free” community college policies being adopted by states?

Example Policy Questions Addressed with NPSAS:18-AC Data (cont.)

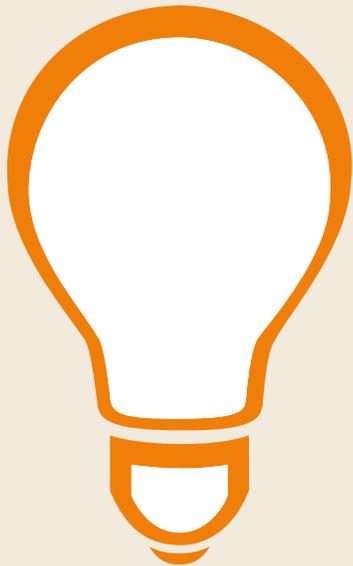


- ▶ Which states most effectively serve military veterans and how do they do so?
- ▶ What is the influence of decentralized tuition setting authority in a state?
- ▶ What are the costs associated with certain college majors that specifically address states' workforce needs?

Data Availability



- ▶ Publicly available data – DataLab
<https://nces.ed.gov/datalab/>
- ▶ Restricted data – Restricted-Use Data File (RUF)
- ▶ Data released – tentatively early 2020



What type of data products would serve you most in your research and policymaking?

How can we make NPSAS:18-AC data as useful as possible to states?

Reducing Institution Burden



Postsecondary Data Portal
(PDP) Website

Minimize instrument changes

Maintain consistency across
data collections

Conscious
efforts for relief



Outreach Initiatives and Goals



Build Awareness of NPSAS and NCES Sample Studies

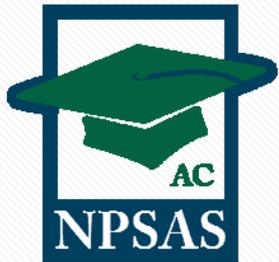
- General knowledge of the studies and their purposes
- How data are used for research and to affect policy
- Access to datasets

Staying In Tune With Institutions

- Needs of and issues facing institutions
- Ways we can “give back”

Engagement With the Higher Ed Community

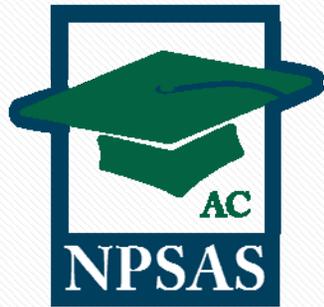
- Researchers
- Data users
- Policy makers



Do you have suggestions for how we should collaborate with state agencies?

Are NASSGAP estimates able to be useful state control totals?
Other ideas?

NPSAS:18-AC Takeaways



- **NPSAS:18-AC** will have valuable enhancements, especially for states
- State-representative estimates: **important** but getting there presents unique **challenges**
- States can be our **partners** in these efforts
- **Questions?**

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