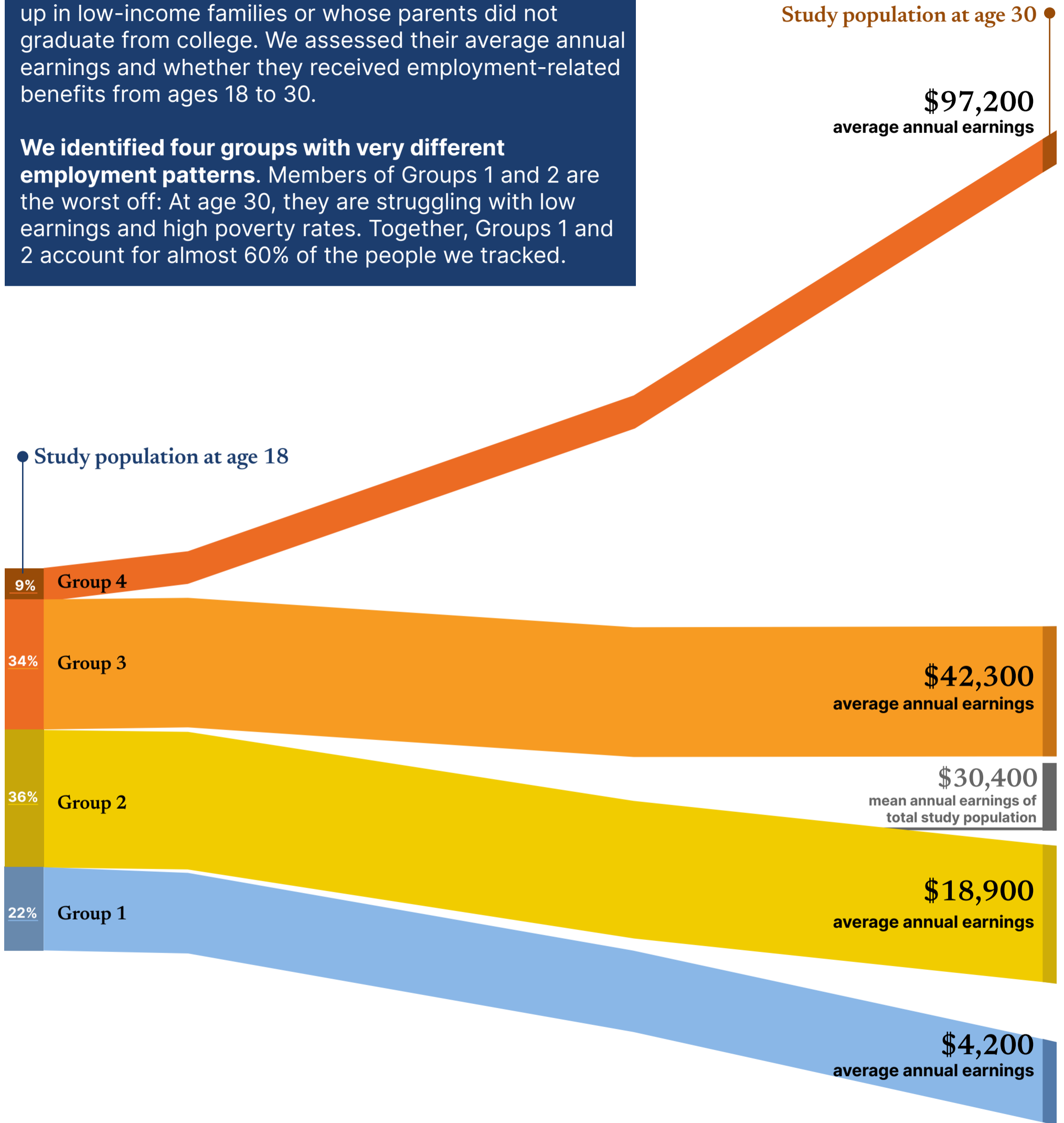


More than half of adults who grew up in families with lower levels of income and education earn less than \$20,000 per year at age 30

We tracked the employment history of people who grew up in low-income families or whose parents did not graduate from college. We assessed their average annual earnings and whether they received employment-related benefits from ages 18 to 30.

We identified four groups with very different employment patterns. Members of Groups 1 and 2 are the worst off: At age 30, they are struggling with low earnings and high poverty rates. Together, Groups 1 and 2 account for almost 60% of the people we tracked.



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997, a nationally representative survey of people born between 1980 and 1984. Our full analysis is available here: [Diverging employment pathways among young adults.](#)

Note: Families are defined as having “lower levels of income” if they earned below 200% of the federal poverty line, or about \$60,000 for a family of four in 2023 dollars.