

The Truth About College Admission

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The Truth About College Admission: A Family Guide to Getting In and Staying Together



May 28, 2026



GRATITUDE

What was the admission process like when you applied to college?



College





zoom

facebook

Federal Student Aid
An OFFICE of the U.S. DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION



Discord

SCOIR



COALITION
FOR COLLEGE

The
New York
Times



Instagram

College Admission



SATS
financial aid

Portfolio

application

essay



reddit

CollegeBoard



ACT



NACAC

National Association for
College Admission Counseling

common
app

The College Admissions Landscape

A complex journey. Many paths. No single formula.

ACADEMIC FOUNDATION

- Rigorous Coursework
- Grades
- Standardized Tests
- Teacher Recommendations
- Academic Passion

EXTRACURRICULAR INVOLVEMENT

- Activities
- Leadership
- Community Service
- Jobs/Internships
- Special Talents

TELL YOUR STORY

- Personal Statement
- Essays
- Supplemental Essays
- Interviews

SHOW WHO YOU ARE

- Authenticity
- Resilience
- Growth
- Impact

THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

- Applications
- Deadlines
- Holistic Review
- Patience

THE MANY CHOICES

LOCATIONS

SIZES

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

CAMPUS CULTURE

COST & AID

CAREER GOALS

RESEARCH
EXPLORE
VISIT
ASK QUESTIONS

START HERE

Self-awareness
Interests
Values
Goals

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Focus on what you can control
Be honest. Be you.
Seek support and advice
Keep perspective

BUILD YOUR PROFILE

YOUR BEST FIT
Where you can learn,
grow, and belong

FACTORS BEYOND YOUR CONTROL

- Institutional Priorities
- Yield Management
- Applicant Pool
- Timing & Luck

According to a survey from the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), “**more than half** of the roughly 1,000 students polled said applying to college was their ***most stressful academic experience to date***. And about three-quarters reported fearing that one small application error could lessen their admission chances.

More than 60% of students reported that college application advice had **overwhelmed** them, and nearly half said they **felt pressured to apply to colleges they weren't interested in attending.**”

BUT FIRST.....

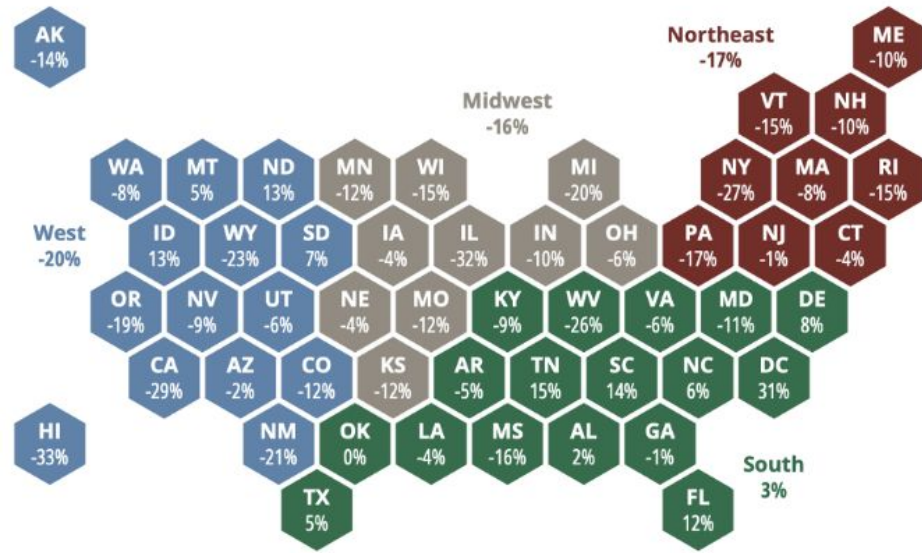
THE STATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Shifting Confidence in Higher Education Among Demographic Groups, 2015-2023

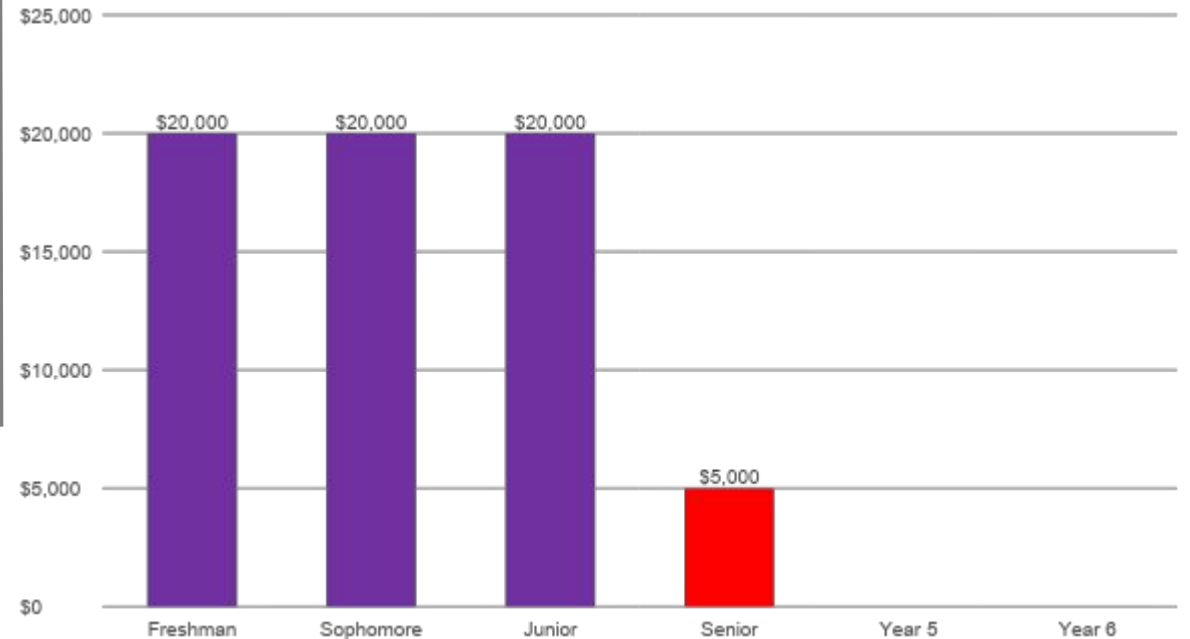
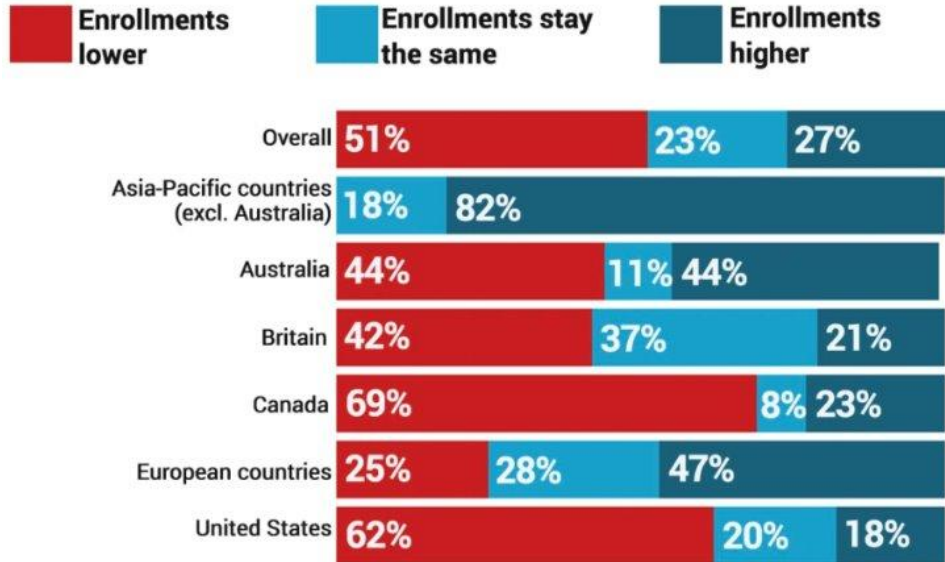
% of U.S. adults with "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in higher education

	2015 %	2018 %	2023 %	2015-2023 change pct. pts.
Party identification				
Republicans	56	39	19	-37
Independents	48	44	32	-16
Democrats	68	62	59	-9
Education				
No college degree	54	45	29	-25
College degree only	57	50	47	-10
Postgraduate degree	67	60	50	-17
Gender				
Men	52	45	33	-19
Women	61	51	39	-22
Age				
18 to 34	60	51	42	-18
35 to 54	55	49	39	-16
55 and older	55	46	31	-24

Figure 17. Projected percent change in high school graduates, 2023 to 2041



Notes: Total high school graduates include public and private schools. In these projections, the U.S. includes the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Future work will explore projected trends for the U.S. Territories and Freely Associated States.



High school graduates expected to peak in 2025

Reported numbers of graduates from 2009 to 2023 and projections from 2024 to 2041.



Chart: Ben Unglesbee/Higher Ed Dive • Source: [Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education](#) • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

TheUpshot

Nearly 20 Percent Fewer International Students Traveled to the U.S. in August

The data shows the steepest decline in August international student arrivals since the pandemic.

Decline in new grant funding in 2025

Math, physics, chem.	-\$289 mil.
STEM education	-\$223 mil.
Biology	-\$156 mil.
Engineering	-\$127 mil.
Geosciences	-\$101 mil.
Computer science	-\$85 mil.
Technology	-\$18 mil.
Social sciences	-\$16 mil.

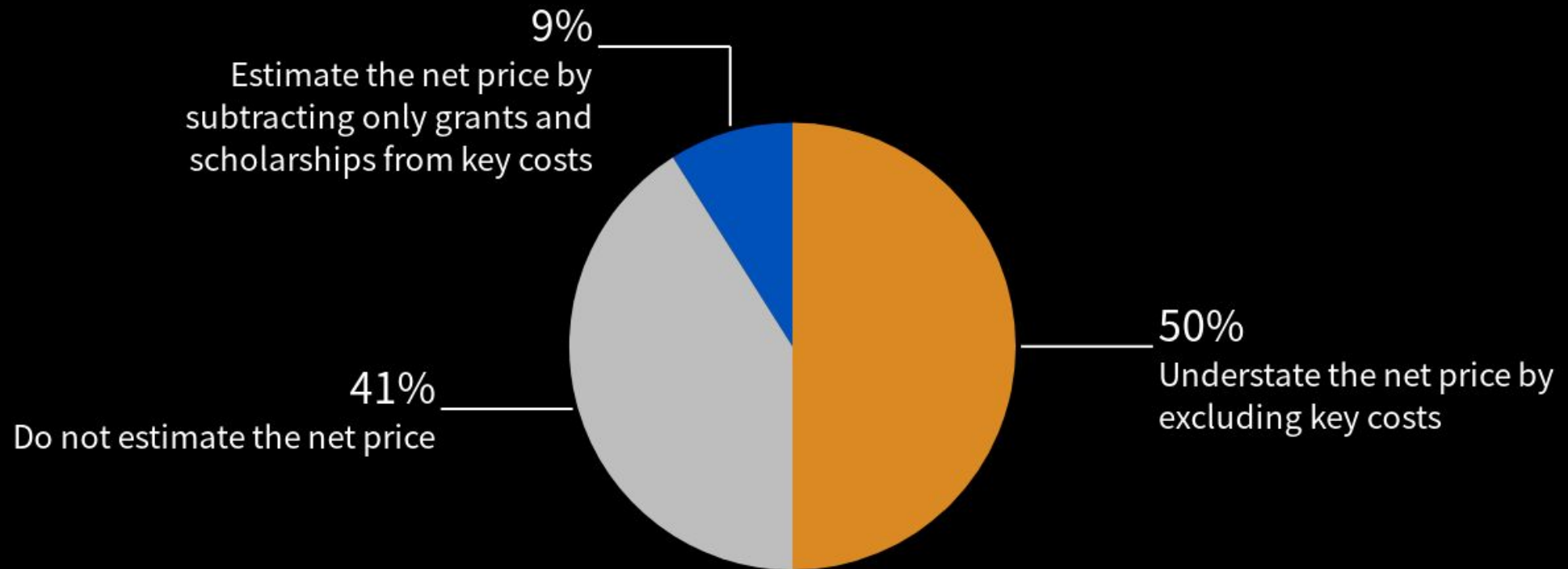
Source: N.S.F.



Cost Transparency

Very Few Colleges Estimate Net Price

Only 9% of schools accurately estimate how much a student will need to pay to attend



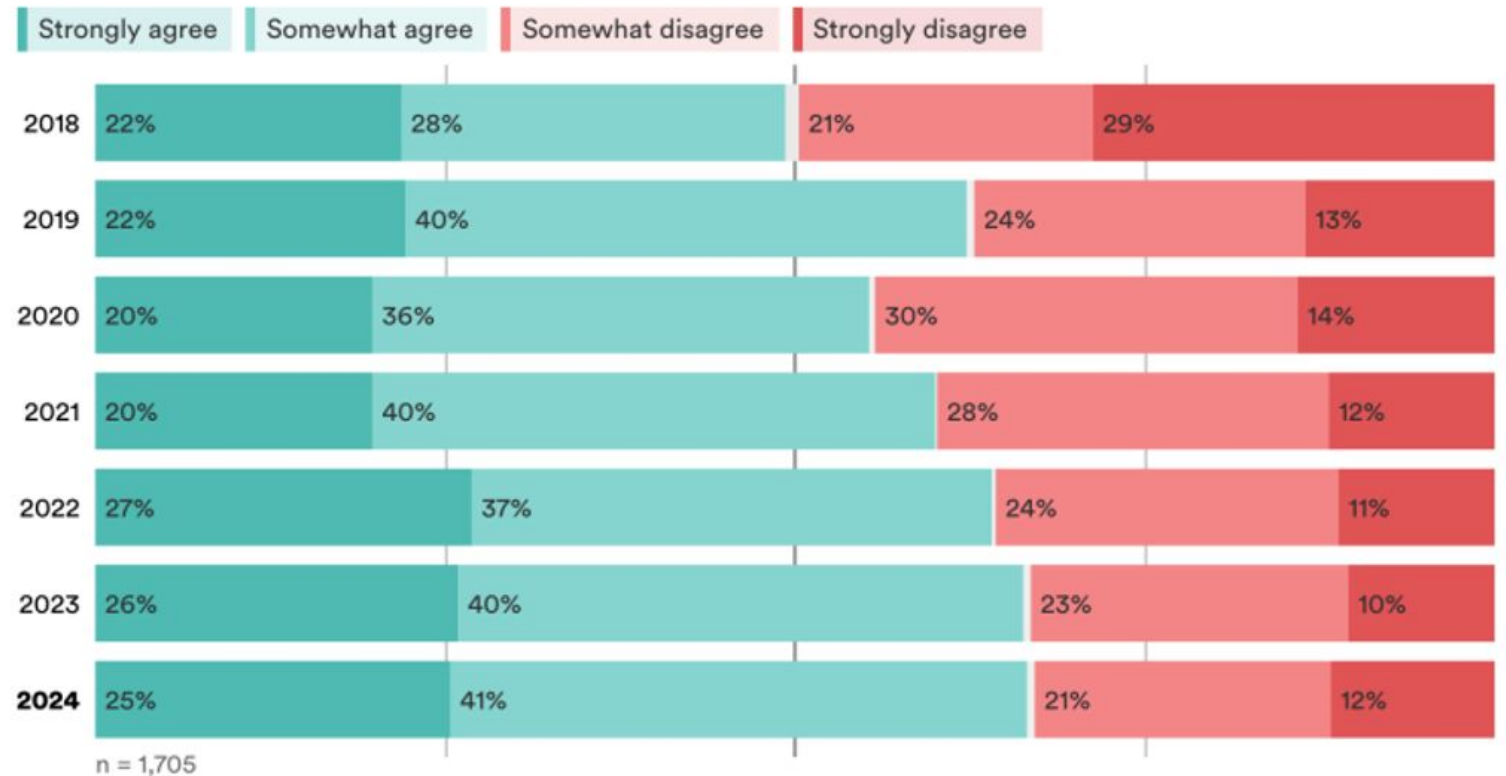
Source: US Government Accountability Office

Bloomberg

The college degree is facing an identity crisis.

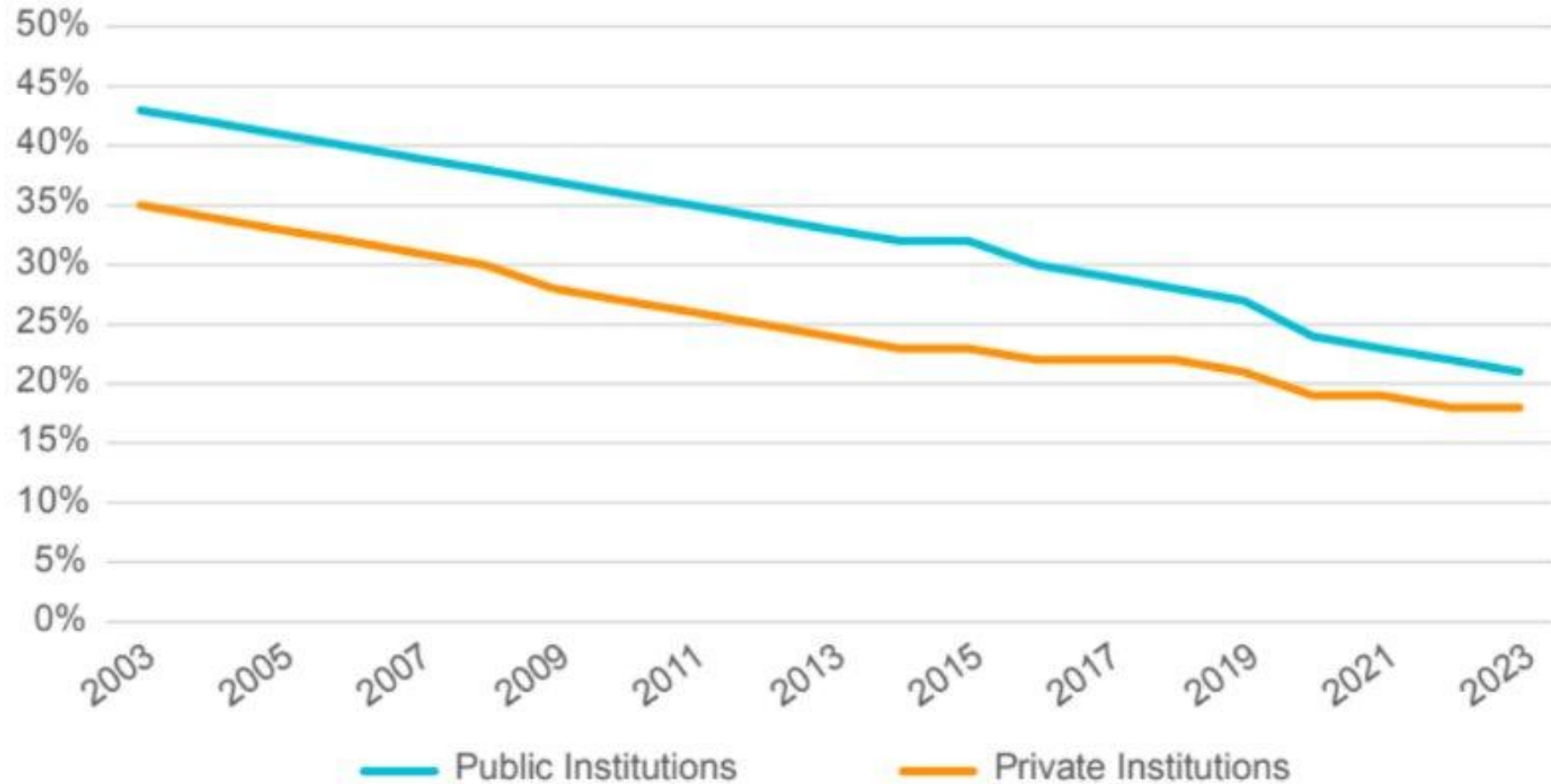
- In recent years, several states have stopped requiring a four-year degree for most jobs in their state governments. The private sector, too, has moved toward skill-based hiring, with Delta, General Motors, Google, Apple, and IBM, among others, dropping the B.A. prerequisite for many positions.
- Between 2017 and 2019, some 46% of middle-skill jobs and 31% of high-skill occupations experienced a “degree reset,” according to research by the Burning Glass Institute.
- The shift has also fed the notion that college, and the bachelor’s degree in particular, isn’t necessary for success in life.

How much do you agree or disagree that there are lots of well-paying, stable jobs that people can find with only a high school diploma or GED?



Source: New America/Gallup

National Yield Rates



Source: *The Eduventures Analysis of National Center for Education Statistics data, 2003-2023. IPEDS: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System*

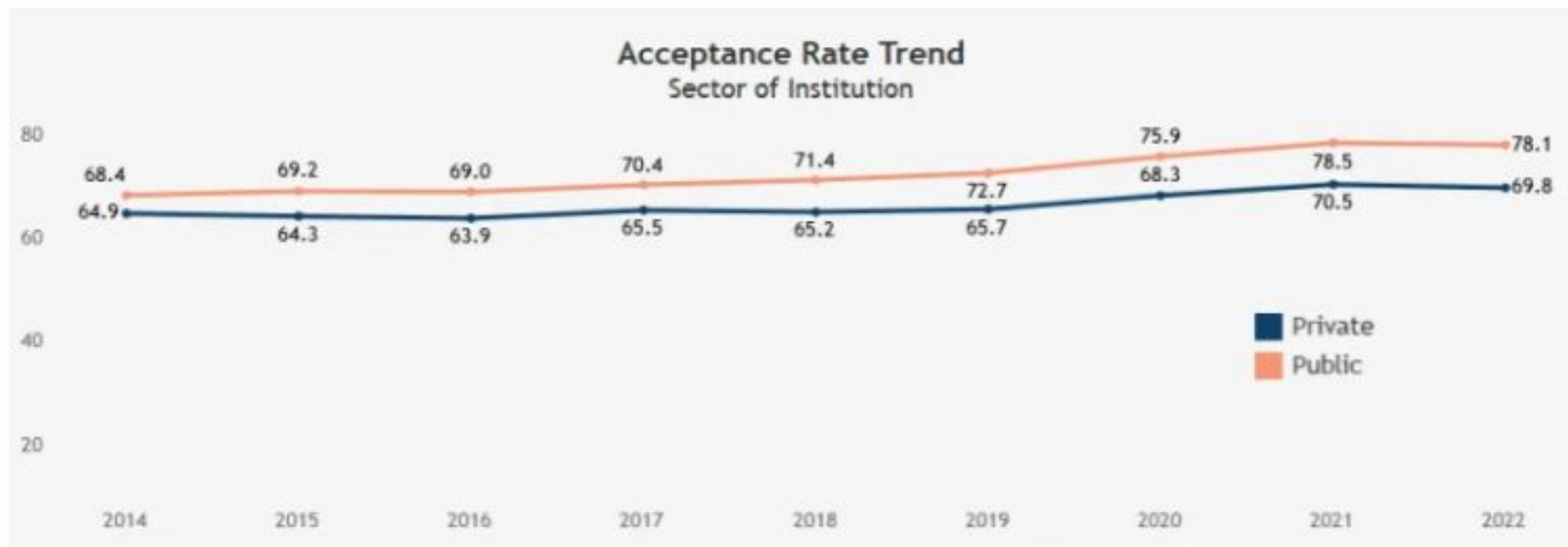
Less predictable yield models

- More defers
- Bigger waitlists
- Summer dominos



How do public colleges compare to private colleges?

From 2014 to 2022, the average acceptance rate at public four-year colleges increased by 10 percentage points from 68 percent to 78 percent. In comparison, the average rate at private colleges has increased only 5 percentage points.



Key Data Points:

- Four-year college acceptance rate: 73%
- Public college acceptance rate: 78%
- Private college acceptance rate: 70%

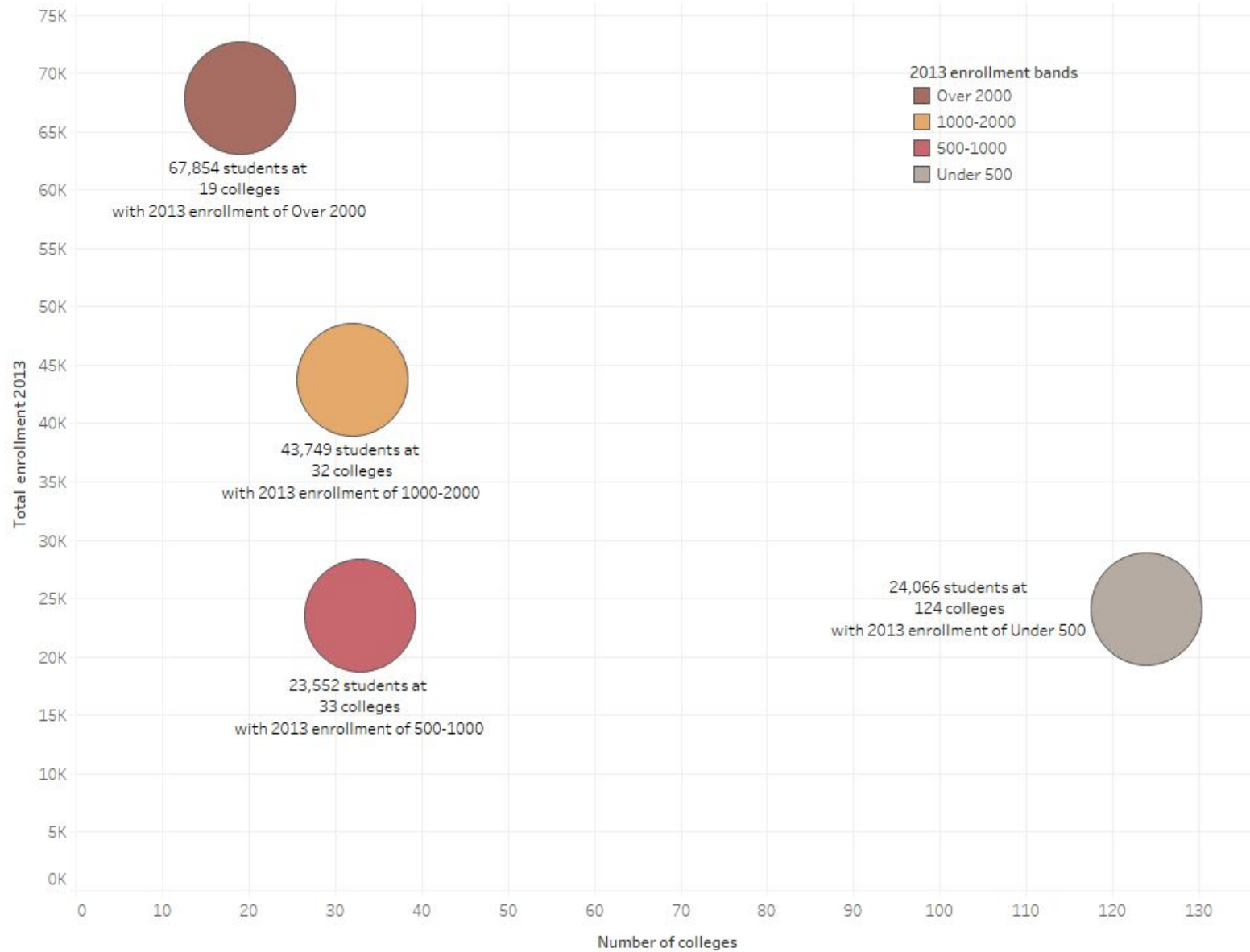


Dear Colleague,

I hope you are having a great start to the new year! Later today, we will distribute honors invitations and scholarship decisions to a select group of admitted Rutgers University–New Brunswick students.

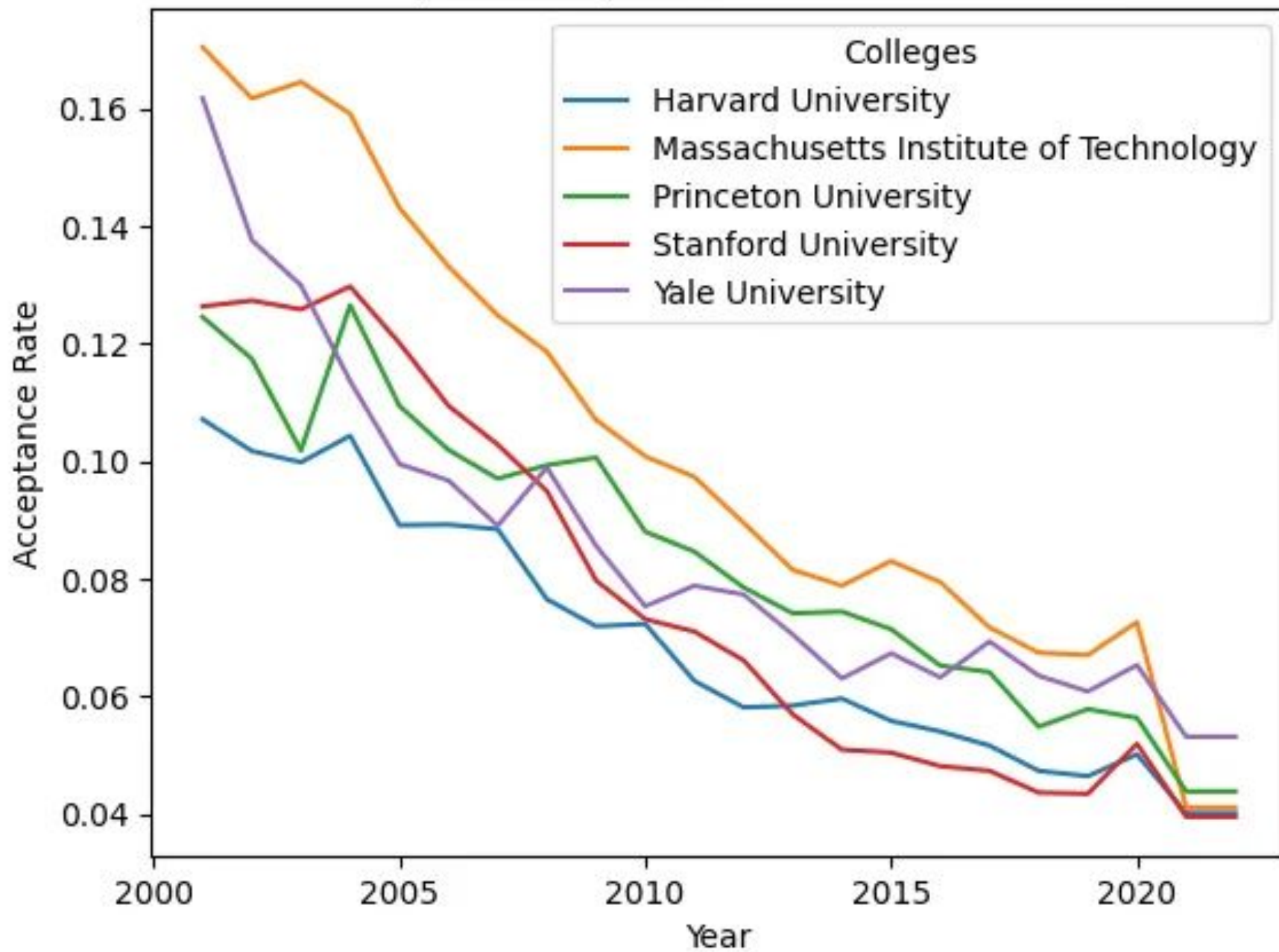
As I noted before we released our first round of decisions, this year, Rutgers–New Brunswick received over 68,000 first-year applications, a 66% increase from fall 2023. While we are thrilled about this significant increase in applications and interest in Rutgers–New Brunswick, the increase has led to a more competitive applicant pool. The average GPA of our fall 2024 admitted students is 4.0, with an average SAT score of 1422.

Private, four-year colleges in IPEDS in 2013 showing no enrollment in Fall, 2023

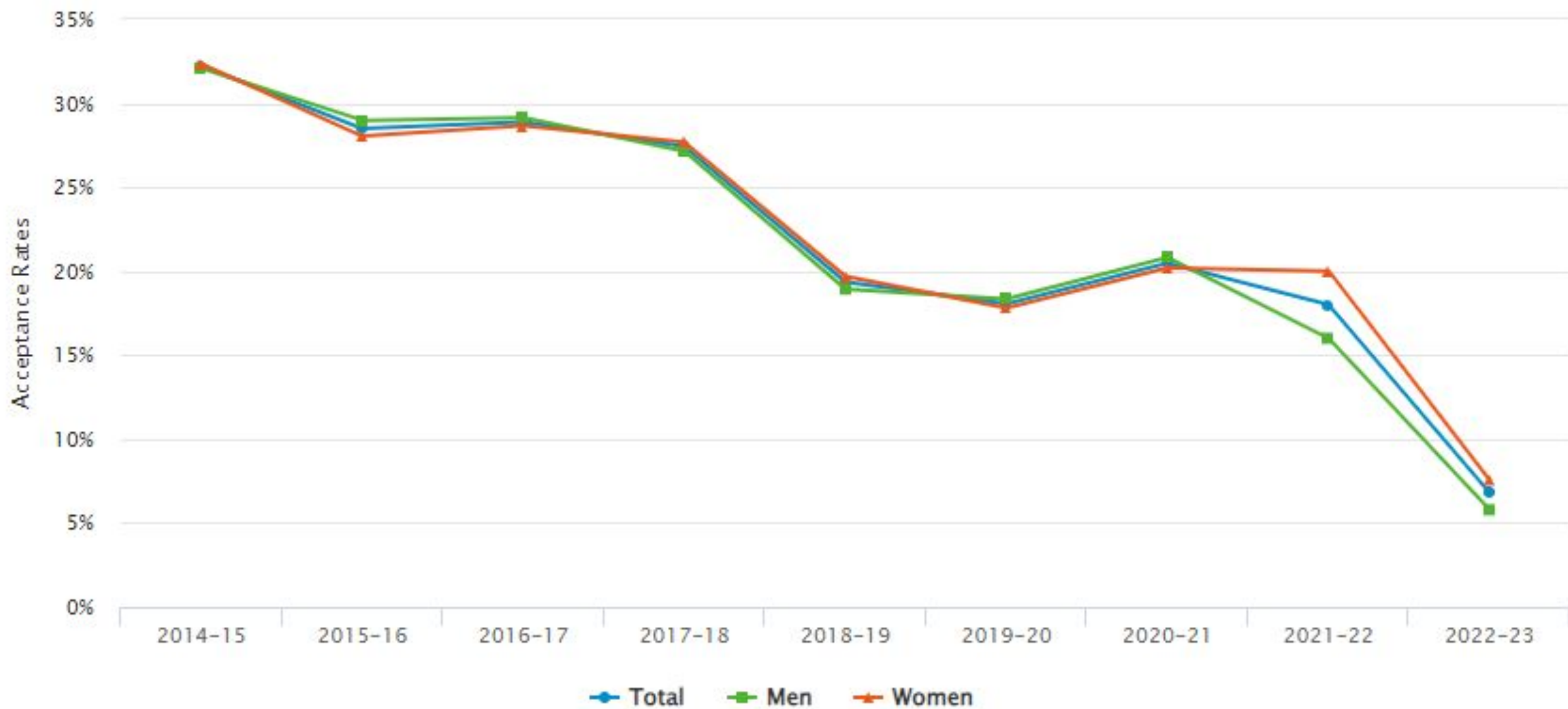


208 closures in last 12 years. 160,000 students.

Change in Acceptance Rate Over the Years



Acceptance Rate Changes of Northeastern University



THE COLLEGE ENROLLMENT LANDSCAPE

A CEO's View: Complexity, Tensions, and Tough Choices

Our mission is clear. The path is not.

THE DEMOGRAPHIC CLIFF

Fewer traditional college-age students

VOLATILITY AHEAD

MARKET PRESSURES

- Discounting
- Intense Competition
- Consolidation
- Resource Constraints

EVOLVING STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

- Affordability
- Flexibility
- Career Outcomes
- Well-being
- Belonging

FOUNDATIONS

- Data & Analytics
- Enrollment Tech
- People & Culture

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT UNCERTAINTY

- Visa Challenges
- Policy Shifts
- Geopolitical Tensions
- Safety Concerns

RANKINGS & REPUTATION

- U.S. News
- Niche
- ROI Perception

INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES

- Access & Opportunity
- Academic Excellence
- Financial Sustainability
- Diversity of Thought

HOW STUDENTS FIND US

- DIGITAL
- SOCIAL MEDIA
- HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELORS
- DIRECT OUTREACH
- INFLUENCERS
- COMMUNITY VOICES

MISSION SUCCESS
STUDENT TRANSFORMATION
IMPACT

LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- Rising Skepticism
- Value Questioned
- Trust Eroding

POLARIZATION POLITICS MISTRUST

COST OF COLLEGE

- Tuition & Fees
- Living Expenses
- Debt Concerns
- ROI Scrutiny

DEI SCRUTINY & POLICY RISK

- Legislative Actions
- Public Backlash
- Mission vs. Compliance
- Chilling Effect

RACE-CONSCIOUS ADMISSION

- Legal Uncertainty
- Equity Goals
- Campus Impact
- Public Debate

PRICE SENSITIVE FAMILIES

ENROLLMENT STRATEGY IMPERATIVES

- ✓ Data-Informed Decisions
- ✓ Agile & Adaptive Strategies
- ✓ Cross-Campus Alignment
- ✓ Authentic Storytelling
- ✓ Long-Term Sustainability

TENSIONS TO NAVIGATE

- ACCESS vs. EXCELLENCE
- INCLUSION vs. MERIT
- AFFORDABILITY vs. QUALITY
- TRADITION vs. INNOVATION
- LOCAL NEEDS vs. GLOBAL REACH

UNCERTAINTY IS THE ONLY CERTAINTY

Higher Education Jeopardy

125,000–175,000

- Projected one-year cost of attendance in 2040 (4-year private colleges)

61

- Percentage of new high school graduates who started college last year

41

- Percentage of college students who graduate in 4 years

14

- Percentage of four-year colleges that deny more students than they admit

What shapes admission decisions?

PERCENTAGE OF COLLEGES ATTRIBUTING DIFFERENT LEVELS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACTORS IN ADMISSION DECISIONS: FIRST-TIME FRESHMEN, Fall 2023

	N	Considerable Importance	Moderate Importance	Limited Importance	No Importance
High school grades in college prep courses	185	76.8	15.1	4.9	3.2
Total high school grades (all courses)	185	74.1	18.9	5.4	1.6
Strength of high school curriculum	185	63.8	22.7	10.3	3.2
Positive character attributes	184	28.3	37.5	18.5	15.8
Essay or writing sample	185	18.9	37.3	26.5	17.3
Student's interest in attending	185	15.7	27.6	25.4	31.4
Counselor recommendation	185	11.9	40.0	27.6	20.5
Teacher recommendation	185	10.8	40.5	28.1	20.5
Extracurricular activities	185	6.5	44.3	30.8	18.4
High school class rank	183	5.5	22.4	43.2	29.0
Admission test scores (ACT, SAT)	185	4.9	25.4	38.9	30.8
Portfolio	185	4.9	10.8	24.3	60.0
Interview	185	4.3	8.6	32.4	54.6
Work	185	2.2	30.8	40.0	27.0
State graduation exam scores	185	1.6	6.5	18.4	73.5
Subject test scores (AP, IB)	185	1.1	22.2	25.9	50.8

SOURCE: NACAC's Factors in the Admission Decision Survey, Fall 2023

Institutional Priorities

PERCENTAGE OF COLLEGES ATTRIBUTING DIFFERENT LEVELS OF INFLUENCE TO STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS IN ADMISSION DECISIONS: FIRST-TIME FRESHMEN, Fall 2023

	N	Considerable Influence	Moderate Influence	Limited Influence	No Influence
First-generation status	181	7.0	9.7	28.1	55.1
State or country of residence	185	7.0	9.7	28.1	55.1
Gender	180	2.8	9.4	12.8	75.0
High school attended	185	1.6	17.8	34.1	46.5
Ability to pay	185	1.6	7.6	13.0	77.8
Alumni relations	185	0.5	3.8	30.3	65.4

SOURCE: NACAC's Factors in the Admission Decision Survey, Fall 2023

Standardized Testing

 Brown University

[Brown University to reinstate test requirement, retain Early Decision, further study legacy preferences](#)

After months of committee analysis and deliberation, Brown's president accepted the recommendations of a group charged to examine whether...

3 weeks ago



 The Texas Tribune

[UT-Austin reverts to requiring standardized test scores for admissions](#)

The decision comes after the university switched to test-optional admissions during the pandemic.

2 weeks ago



 AOL.com

[University of California system drops SAT, ACT requirements for applicants](#)

The University of California system will no longer require SAT and ACT standardized test results for in-state freshmen applicants.



 YaleNews

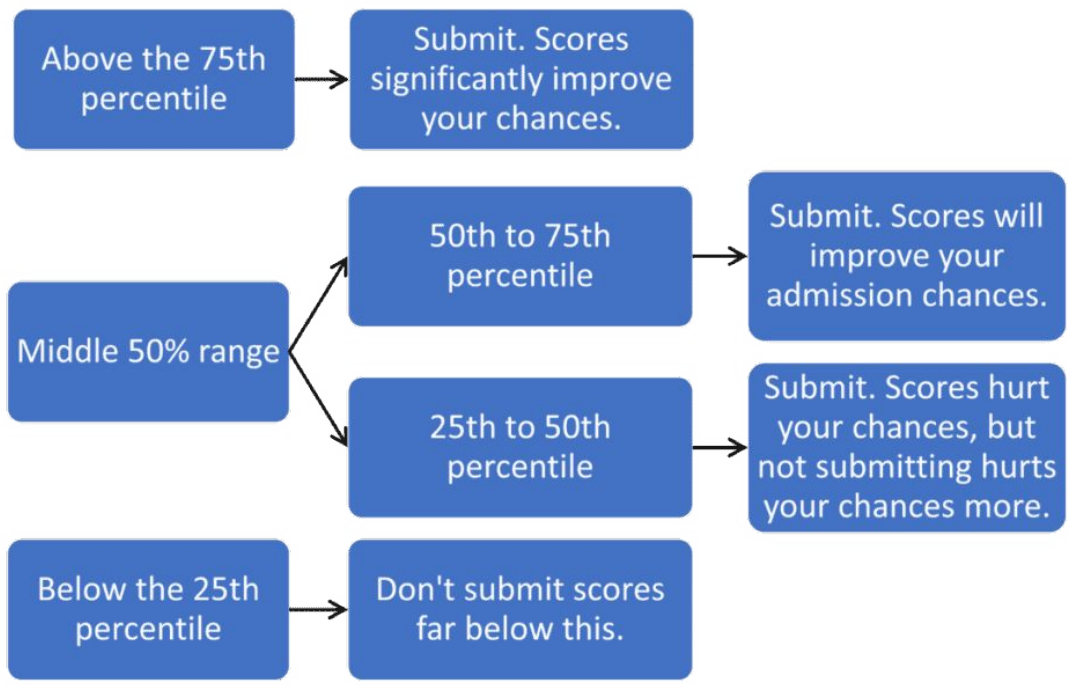
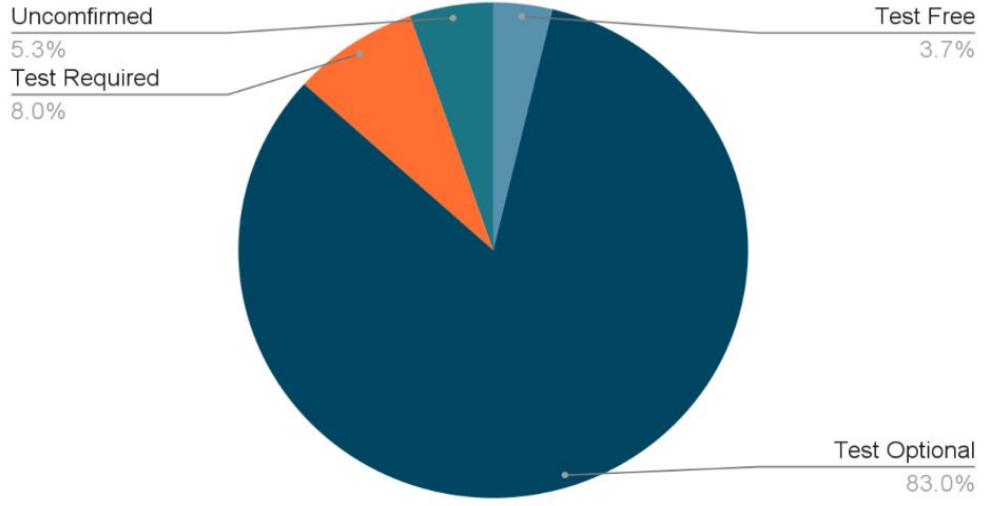
[Yale announces new test-flexible admissions policy](#)

This week Yale's office of undergraduate admissions announced a new policy on standardized testing for first-year and transfer applicants.

1 month ago



Testing Policies 2024



1. NLI

2. Transfer Portal

3. Future of College Athletics



EARLIER Action/Decision

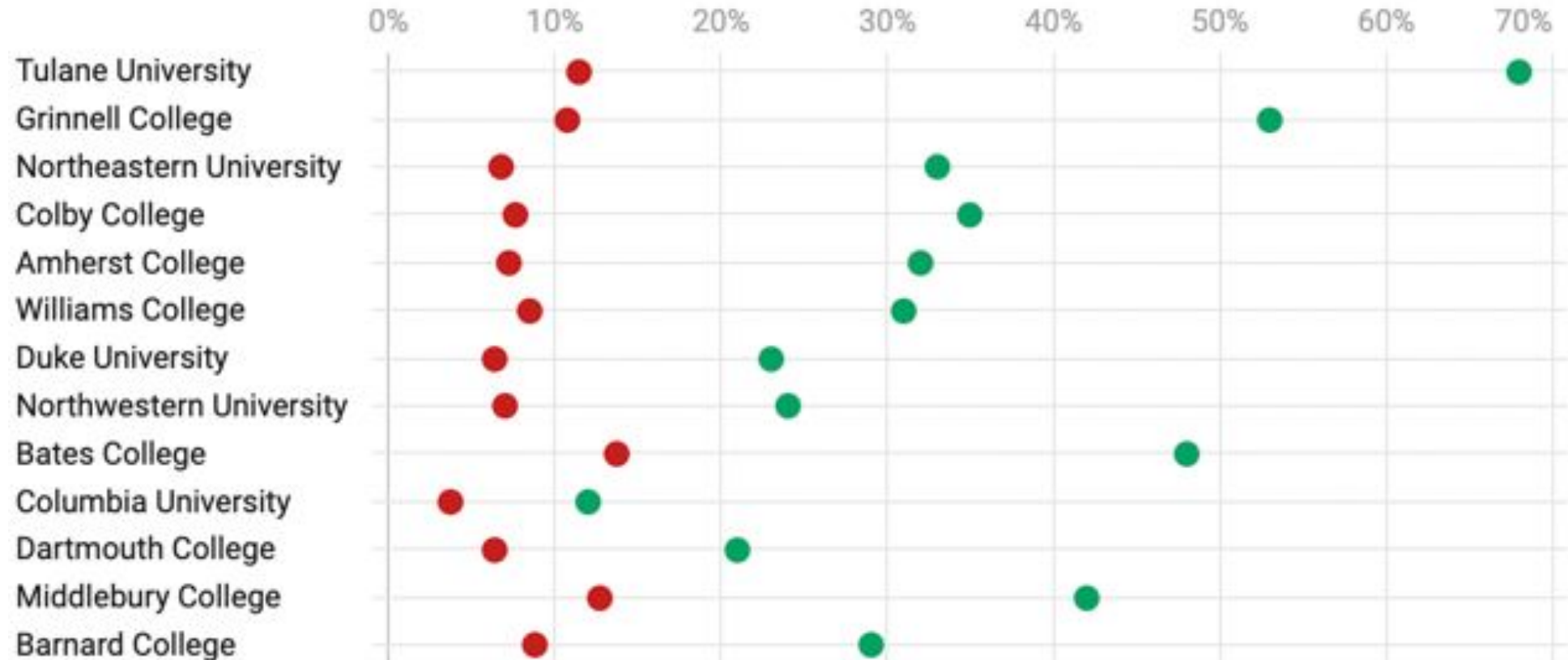


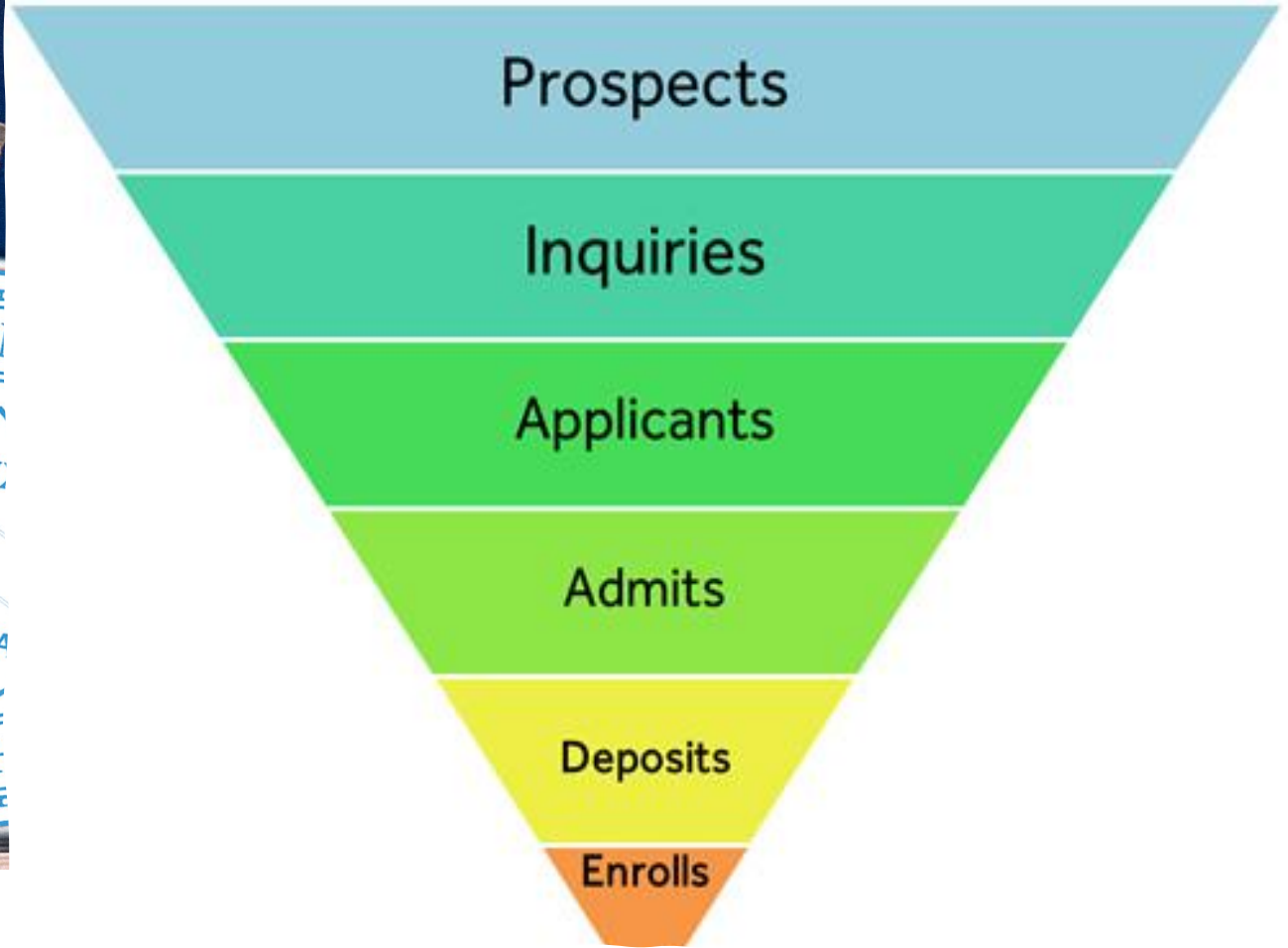
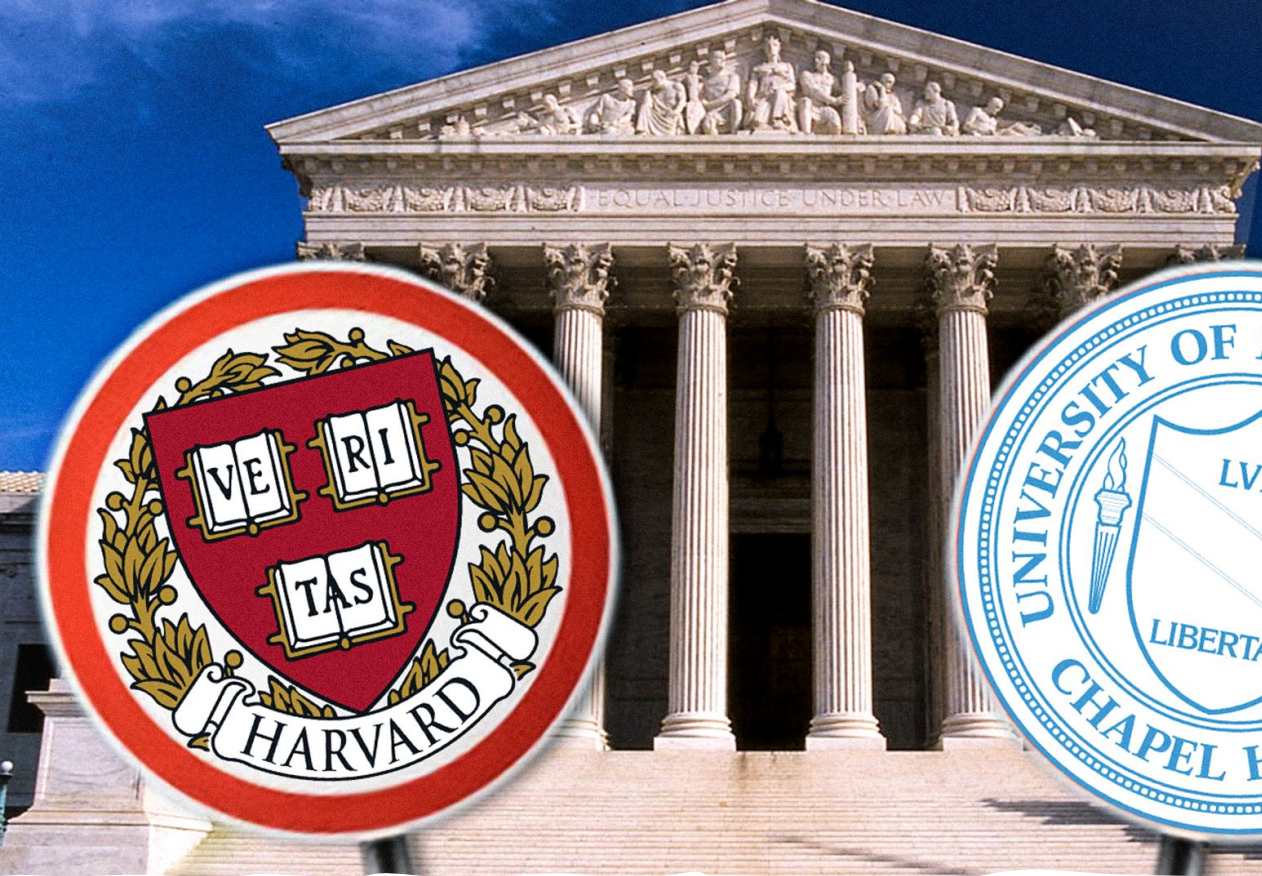
Yield/ Admit Rate Implications

The Early Decision Admissions Advantage

The thirteen universities and colleges where applying early decision makes the largest difference in an applicant's chances of being admitted.

● Regular Admit Rate ● Early Decision Admit Rate

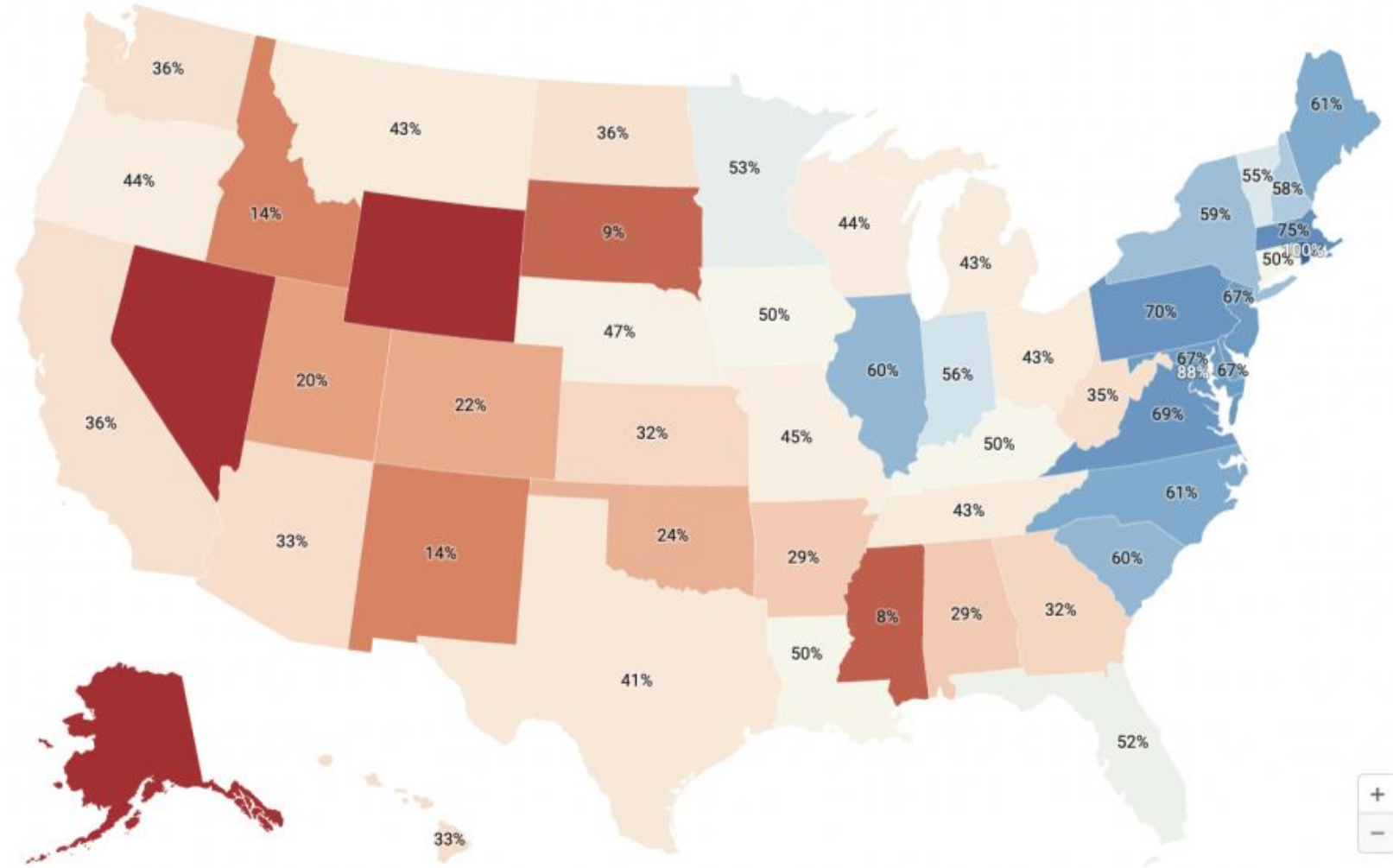




SCOTUS – Race Conscious Admission

The Share of All Colleges and Universities that Provide a Legacy Preference

Based on Question C7 in the Common Data Set, which asks whether an alumni relation is considered in the application process. CDS data for private institutions are for 2020 and for public institutions 2021.



Map: ERN • Source: Peterson's/CDS • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

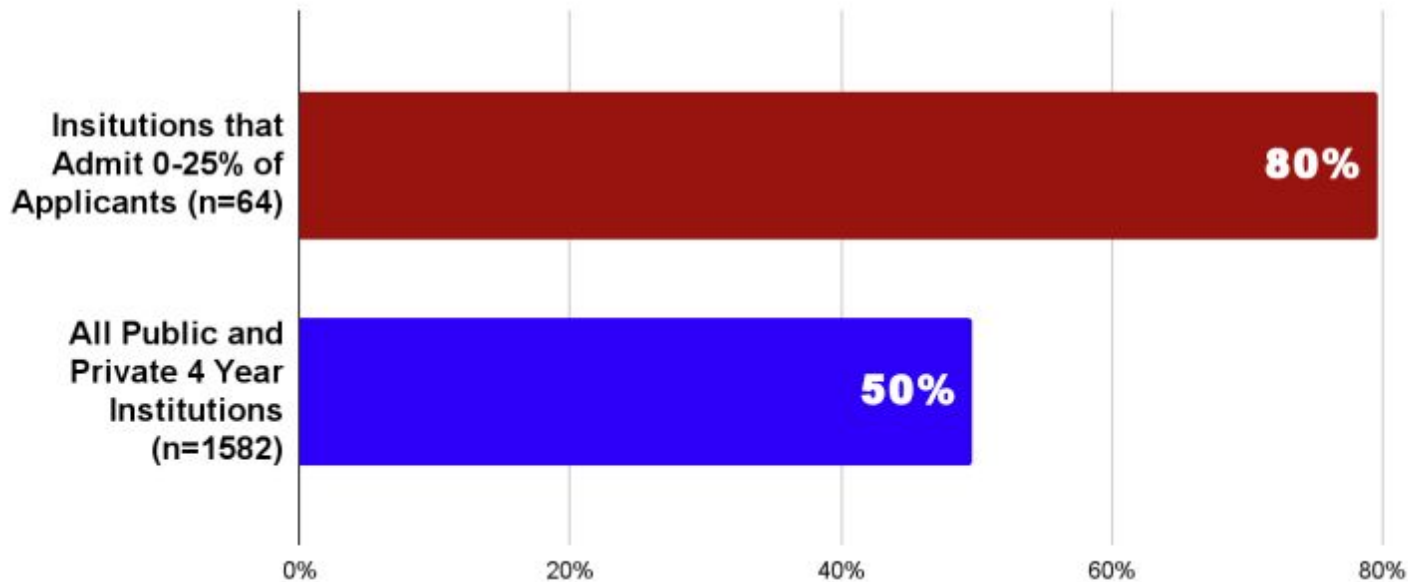
Legacy Admission

****16 flagship universities provide a legacy preference.***

Legacy Admission

The Percentage of Colleges and Universities that Provide a Legacy Preference, by Admit Rate

Source: CDS/Peterson's (Fall 2020)



- 3/4 of Americans and 89% of college admissions directors do not support the use of legacy preferences.
- 75% of public colleges & universities do not provide a legacy preference.

AI in Admission

- Data scraping
- Summary notes



The Good News?

01

**67% Four-Year
Admit rate avg.**

- Up 5 pts in 5 years

02

**Proliferating
pathways,
accelerated
masters,
credentials, etc.**

03

**Varying
campuses, start
terms, transfer
options**

What Does This Mean For You: *Practical Application for Advisors*

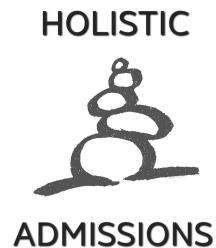
- **Early & Often:** Admission Awareness and Client Conversations
- **Set Realistic Expectations:** Balanced Lists, Aid and Scholarships
- **Know Your Limits:** When to refer to admissions specialists
- **It Takes a Village:** Intergenerational client engagement



Resources & Offerings

Presentations & Employee Benefit Packages

The Truth about
**COLLEGE
ADMISSION**



www.truthaboutcollegeadmission.com
holisticadmission@gmail.com

Personal Consulting Packages

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FUTURES

www.educationalfutures.com
bbedufutures@gmail.com

Questions & Discussion

