

Deadline update: first-year application trends through January 1

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Introduction

Common App is committed to expanding access and opportunity for all students, particularly those historically underrepresented in higher education. By analyzing up-to-date application activity from our expansive data warehouse, we can uncover and bring attention to these trends as they emerge. Communicating these trends to our community is of the utmost importance as we strive to streamline and make more accessible the college admissions process.

This report represents the third release in the 2022–23 “Deadline Update” series at Common App — the largest, most comprehensive source of higher education application data available in the U.S. Each update in this series highlights year-over-year application activity for first-year applicants through a specific date (in this case, January 1, 2023). We will release these Deadline Updates monthly through March 2023, as well as a final season summary in August.

Note: Since Fall 2020 trends were anomalous due to the global pandemic, we compare data since 2019–20 in all displays. As the Common App membership has grown over this period, we restrict analyses to applicants and applications to those members that have been a part of the membership since 2019–20 (referred to hereafter as “returning members”) in an effort to provide a more direct year-over-year comparison. These analyses reflect trends for 841 returning members and associated applicants.

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Key findings

1. Through January 1, 2023, 1,079,936 distinct first-year applicants had applied to 841 returning members (an increase of 20% from 903,553 in 2019–20).
 - a. Total application volume through January 1 rose 24% from 2019–20 (4,317,709) to 2022–23 (5,346,600). Applicants were also applying to more members in 2022–23 than in 2019–20 (+4% from 4.8 to 5.0 applications per applicant).
2. Underrepresented minority (URM)¹ applicants increased by 30% over 2019–20, while first-generation (“first-gen”) applicants increased by 35%, nearly three times the rate of continuing-generation applicants over the same period. Students reporting eligibility for a Common App fee waiver² increased at over four times the rate of students not reporting fee waiver eligibility (47% vs. 11%).
3. About 56% of domestic applicants at this point in the season resided in the most affluent quintile (i.e., top 20%) of ZIP codes nationwide, compared to just six percent from the bottom quintile. These trends were similar to those observed in prior years’ early applying periods, but represent a slight shift from November (when 61% of applicants resided in the most affluent zip codes). This likely reflects application activity for regular decision deadlines, which we have shown in [our research](#) to reflect more socioeconomically diverse applicant pools than early decision and early action.
4. The number of distinct applicants residing outside the United States increased at nearly triple the rate of applicants in the United States since 2019–20 (45% versus 17%). China, India, Nigeria, Ghana, and Canada were the leading countries for international applicants.
5. After a steep decline in standardized test score reporting rates from 2019–20 (78%) to 2020–21 (44%) and a slight rebound in 2021–22 (48%), trends through January 1 suggest a leveling-off of reporting in 2022–23 (47% of applicants have reported a score in an application this season). The stark differences in test score reporting by student demographics (URM, first-gen, fee waiver recipient, and sex) reported in last season’s Deadline Updates persisted through January 1 of this season.
6. Applications to public members grew more than those to private members from 2019–20 (+39%, relative to +13% for private members).

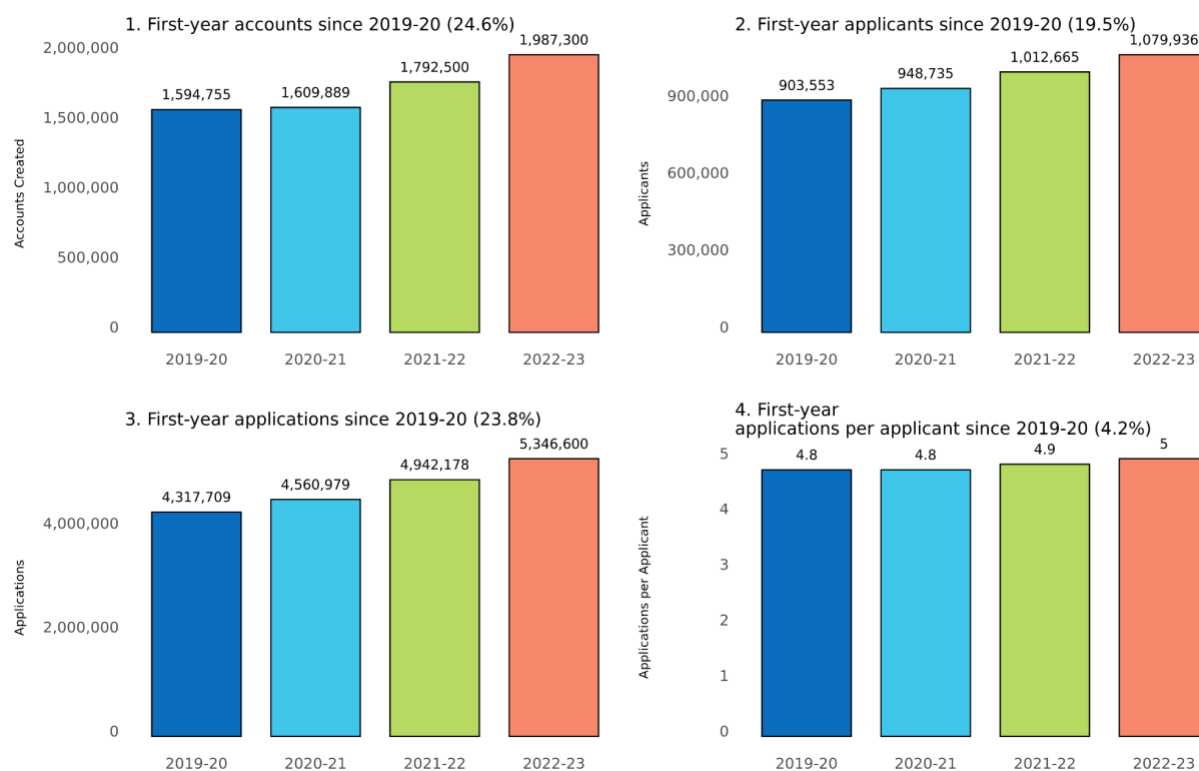
¹ We use the term underrepresented minority (URM) in alignment with conventions employed by the [National Science Foundation](#). In this report, applicants identifying as Black or African American, Latinx, Native American or Alaska Native, or Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander are classified as URM applicants.

² See our [website](#) for a listing of eligibility criteria for Common App fee waiver eligibility.

Overall trends

Through January 1, the overall numbers of accounts created by high school seniors (+25%), applicant counts (+20%), total applications (+24%), and applications per applicant (+4%) each increased from 2019–20. **Figures 1–4** display year-over-year trends in each category across the three most recent seasons.

Figures 1–4. Accounts, applicants, applications, applications per applicant increased since 2019–20



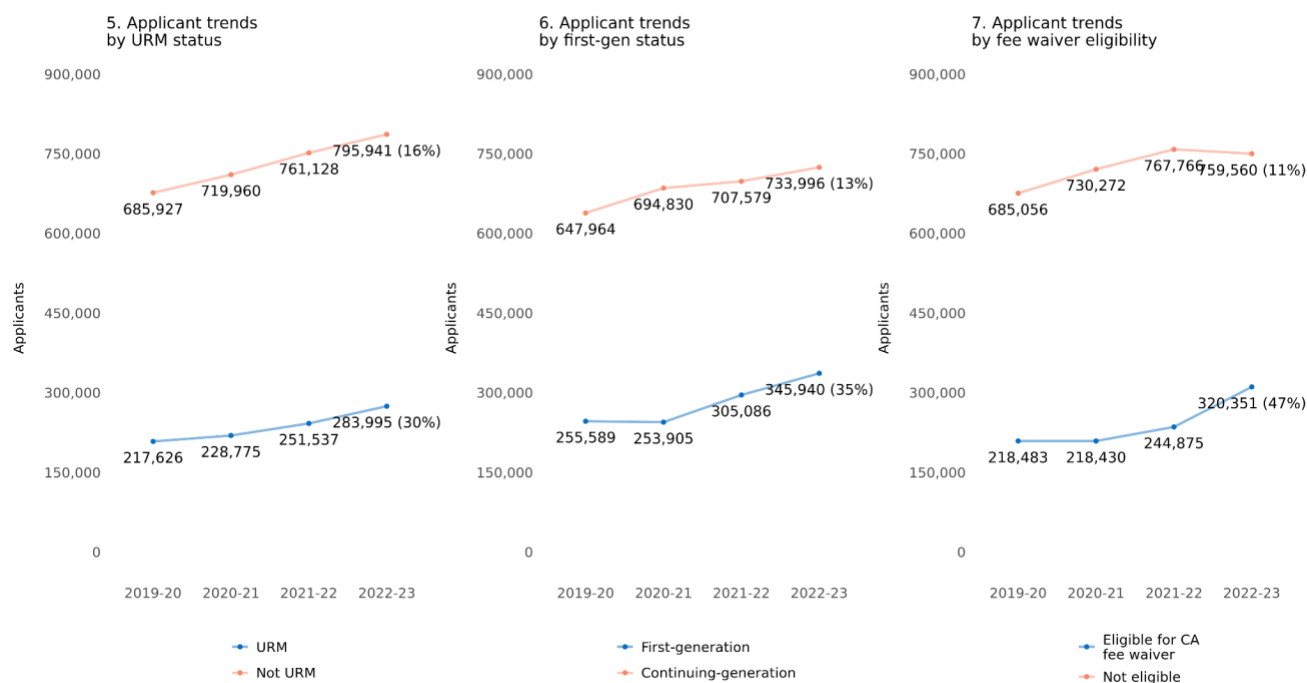
Applicant subgroup trends

Trends by demographic subgroup

Consistent with results from our [previous reports](#), applicant growth among underrepresented subgroups has strengthened since 2020–21, when we first saw a concerning stagnation among URM, first-generation, and fee waiver applicants on the platform.

Figures 5–7 below showcase applicant trends over time by URM, first-generation, and Common App fee waiver recipient status.

Figures 5–7. Growth since 2019–20 was largest among underrepresented subgroups



We show in **Figure 5** that the number of URM applicants increased 30% over the 2019–20 (pre-pandemic) total through January 1. This increase was greater than that for non-URM applicants across the same time period (+16%), indicating diversification of the applicant pool along this dimension.

Figure 6 highlights a large increase in the number of first-generation applicants (+35%), which was more than double that for continuing-generation applicants (+13%) since 2019–20. This significant growth is well-aligned with Common App’s mission of promoting access for underrepresented students.

Finally, in **Figure 7** we observe an increase in the number of applicants reporting eligibility for a Common App fee waiver³ since 2019–20 (+47%) – over three times the increase observed in applicants not reporting eligibility (11%). This trend likely reflects a change in the fee waiver eligibility question, implemented in 2022–23 to simplify the fee waiver request process.

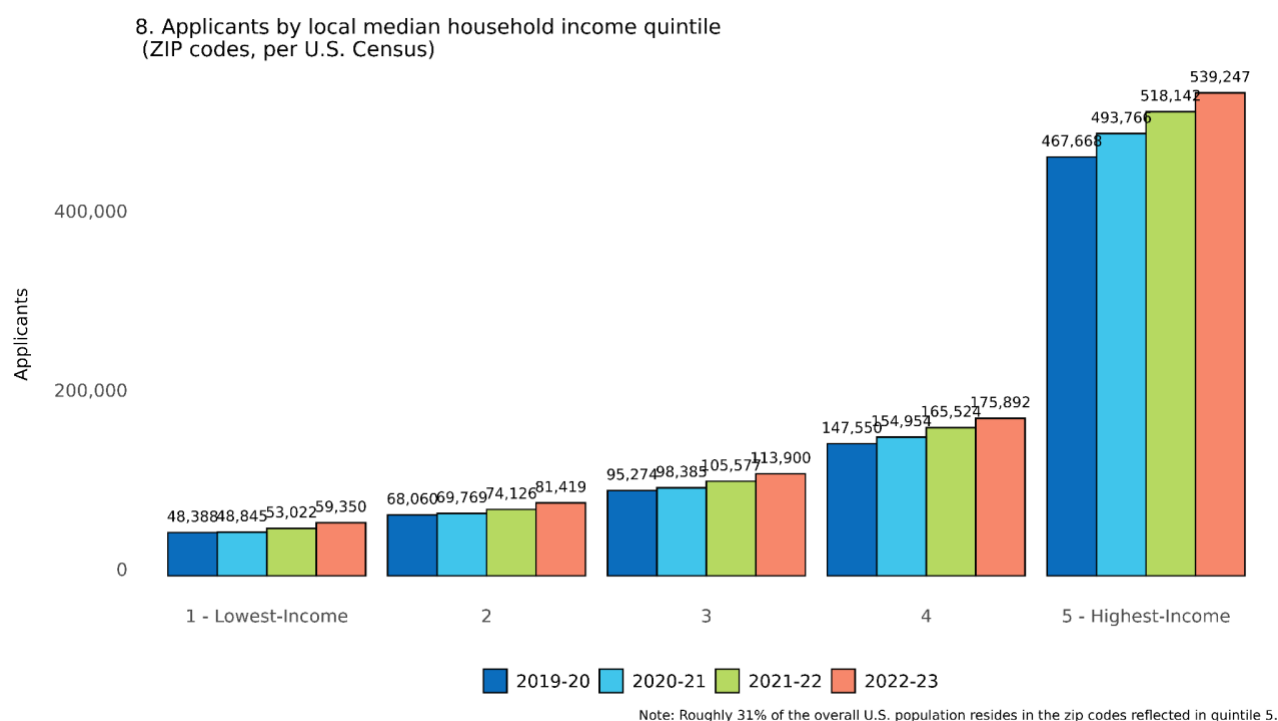
Among URM and first-generation applicants, we observe smaller growth rates since last season (+13% for each). For fee waiver-eligible students, by contrast, this one-year increase (+31%) marks the largest observed over this period.

³ We previously reported trends by Common App fee waiver receipt, using receipt of this fee waiver as a proxy for low-income status. However, many members do not require fees in their applications, or offer member-specific fee waivers. As a result, many low-income students may not require a fee waiver to submit applications and may be undercounted in the measure as previously defined. This season, we are instead reporting trends based on applicants’ demonstrated eligibility for a Common App fee waiver, based on criteria available [here](#).

Trends by community characteristics

To develop a clearer understanding of the socioeconomic characteristics of applicants applying to college through Common App, we linked ZIP code-level median household income data from the American Community Survey (5-year estimates, 2015–2019) to each applicant residing in the United States. We grouped communities (ZIP codes) into 5 quintiles, where quintile 1 comprised the 20% of ZIP codes with the lowest median household incomes, and quintile 5 represented the 20% of ZIP codes with the highest median household incomes in the United States. **Figure 8** presents domestic applicant counts by season and median household income quintile.

Figure 8. Growth was similar across quintiles of ZIP code-level median household income



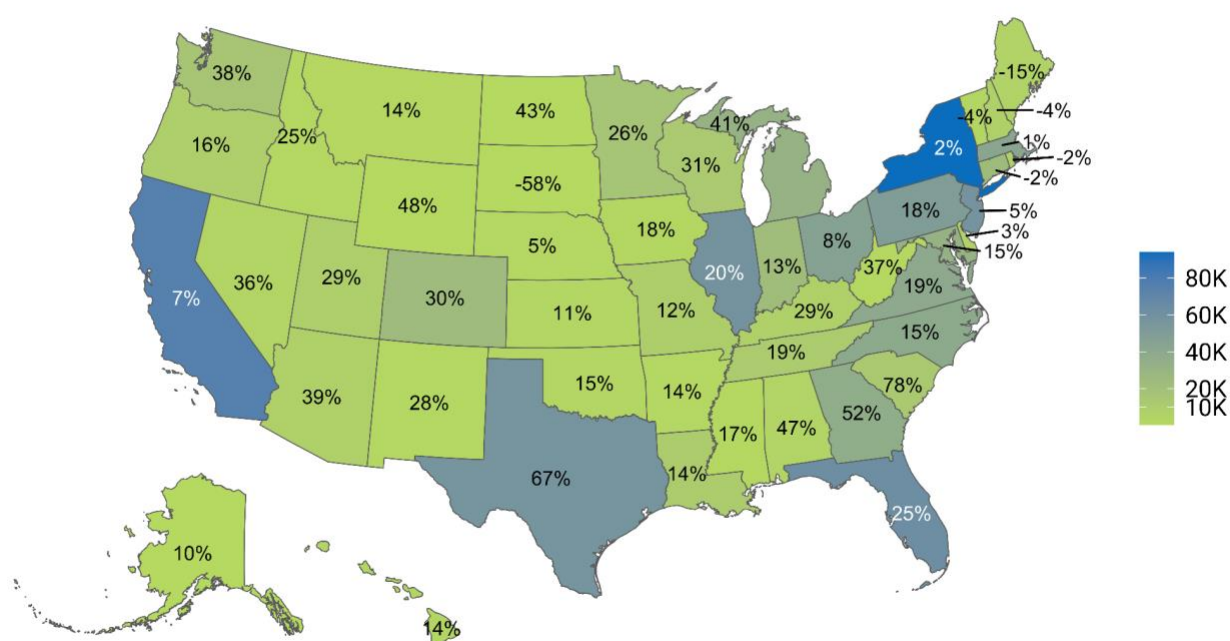
We reported in previous research that students applying to early deadlines (which comprises a large share of applications submitted through January 1) generally reside in more affluent communities than students who apply via regular and rolling deadlines. The results in Figure 8 reflect this trend, as a majority (56%) of applicants came from ZIP codes in the top income quintile (20%), and just 5% of the applicant pool came from ZIP codes in the bottom quintile. While growth in the lower two quintiles since 2019–20 (+26%) outpaced growth in the highest quintile (+19%), the distribution of applicants across the five quintiles was similar across years. These findings reflect that, despite increased representation in recent Common App applicant pools for first-generation students, URM students, and fee waiver-eligible students (see above), the income profile of communities from which applicants are applying has not meaningfully changed. These trends reiterate the imperative that more work is necessary to engage and support students from lower-income communities in the college admissions process.

Trends across U.S. states

We continue to observe meaningful variation in applicant trends across states. The map of the United States in **Figure 9** is colored to reflect overall applicant counts in 2022–23, while the labels reflect percentage change in applicant counts since 2019–20. Overall, we observe applicant growth across much of the United States. Looking at state-by-state growth, we see that many states saw meaningful growth since 2019–20, with a few notable exceptions. South Carolina saw the greatest growth of 78% over 2019–20, followed by Texas at 67%. South Dakota, a state with historically low applicant volume, demonstrated a meaningful decline in applicants (-58%), while Connecticut, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine each saw declines (-2%, -2%, -4%, -4%, and -15%, respectively).

Figure 9. Applicant counts increased across the country since 2019–20

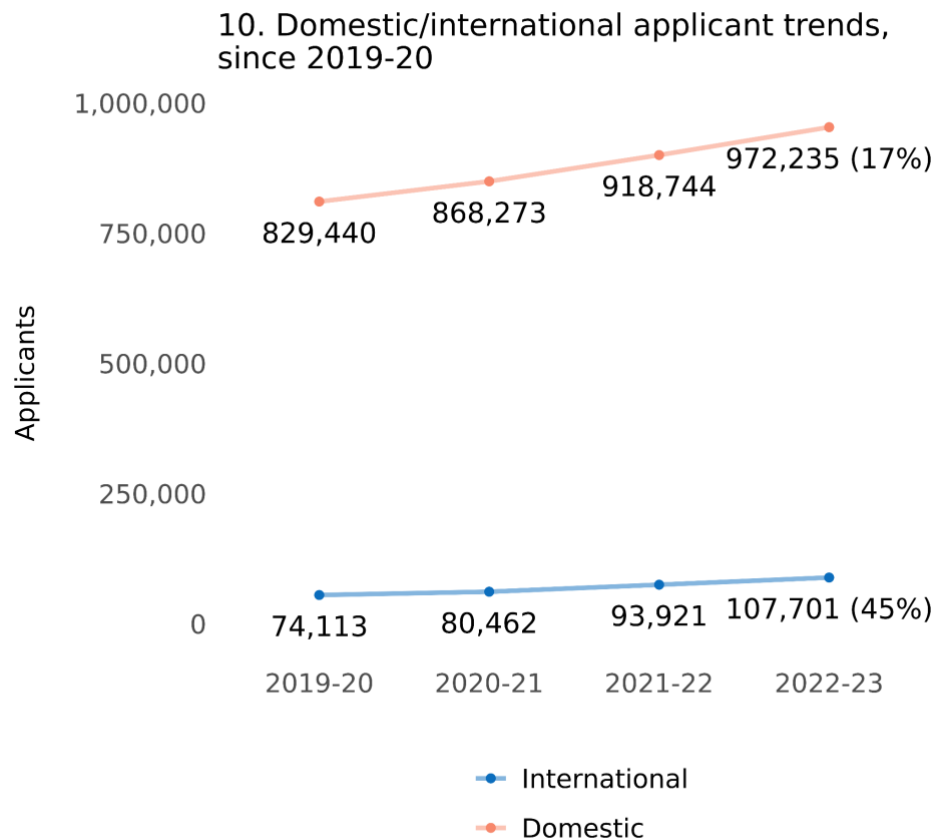
9. Applicant trends by U.S. state since 2019-20



Trends for international and domestic applicants

Figure 10 presents a graph of applicant totals, grouped by domestic/international residence and season. We observe that the number of applicants in both categories increased each year, though the rate of growth for applicants outside the U.S. since 2019–20 (45%) nearly tripled that for domestic applicants (17%). The top five home countries outside the U.S., in descending order by applicant volume, were China, India, Nigeria, Ghana, and Canada.

Figure 10. International applicants increased 45% since 2019–20

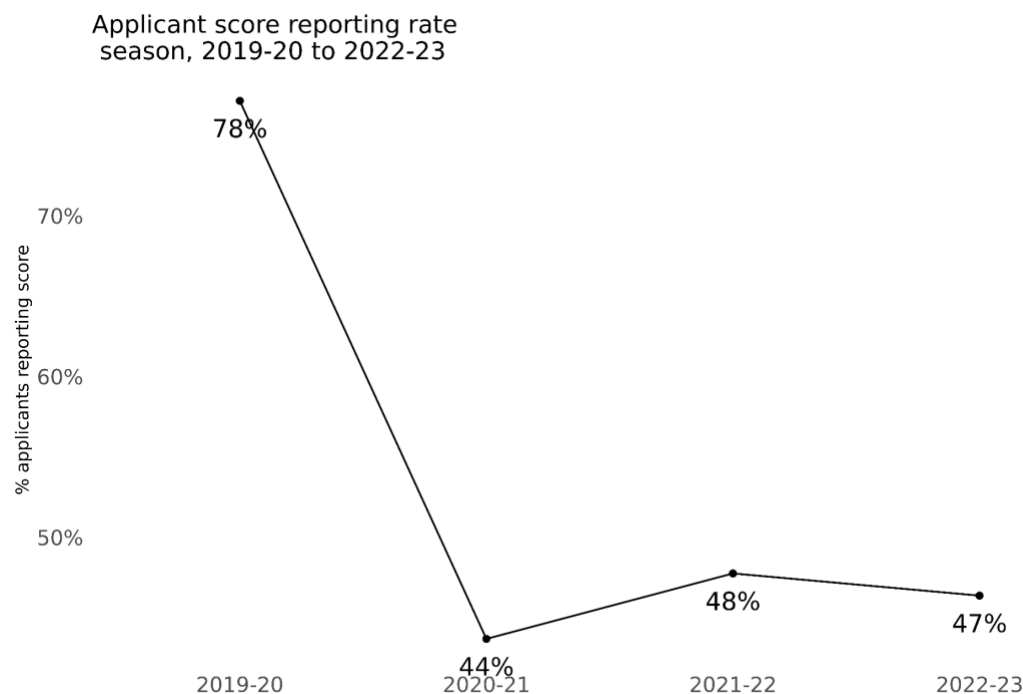


Trends in applicants' test score reporting behaviors

As reported in the past, the share of Common App members requiring standardized test scores since 2019–20 has changed dramatically — from about 55% to just 5% in 2021–22. This season, just 4% of members require a test score to submit an application.

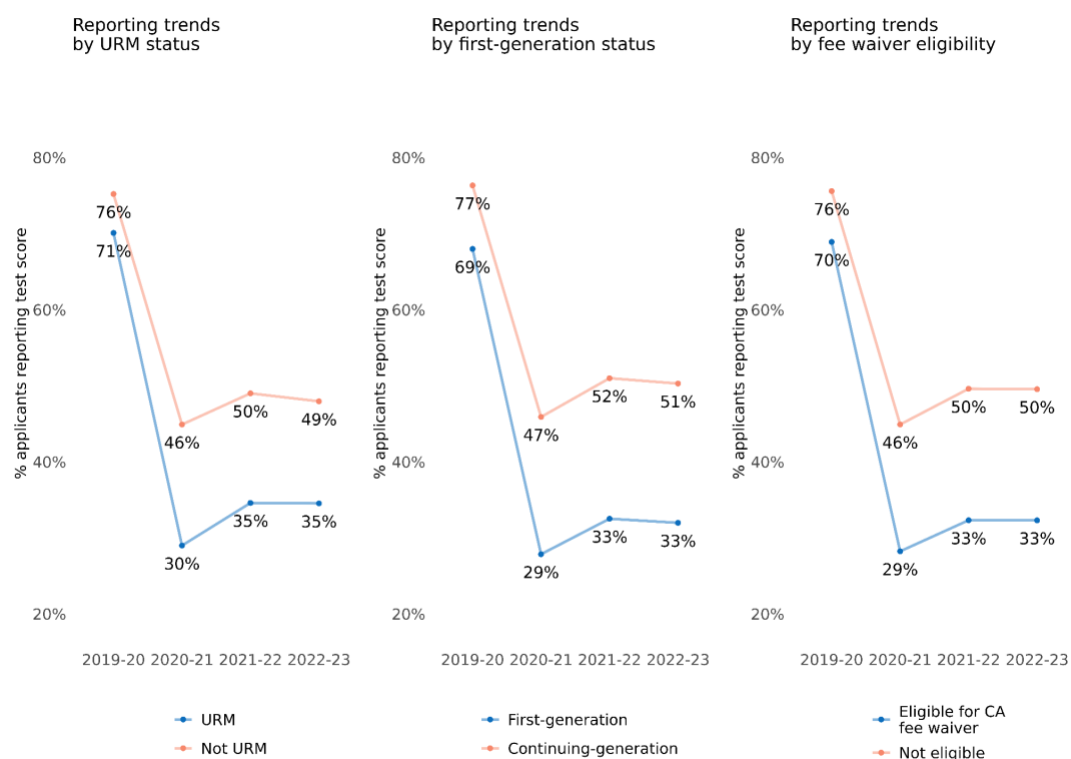
In **Figure 11**, we show a slight shift from last season's trend in score reporting: we observe no meaningful change in student test score reporting from 2021–22 to 2022–23 (48% to 47%). We will continue to monitor this trend throughout the application season.

Figure 11. Test score reporting rate is still well below 2019–20



Since we first reported them in Deadline Updates during the 2020–21 season, disparities in test score reporting rates across student demographic groups were evident and roughly consistent with previous reporting. **Figures 12–14** show that the differences in test score reporting rates that emerged in 2020–21 across URM, first-gen, and fee waiver receipt status persisted through January 1 of the 2022–23 season. Smaller differences existed prior to the pandemic in 2019–20, but their magnitude grew in 2020–21 and has remained similar since. This trend is similar in gesture for other subgroups (see **Appendix Figures A1–A2**).

Figures 12–14. Test score reporting rates varied across applicant subgroups



Trends by member characteristics

Similar to last month, we saw that the majority of early applications were submitted to public members. The rate of application growth for public members since 2019–20 (+39%) was still more than that for private members (+13%). **Figure 15** highlights year-over-year trends in applications by institutional type.

Figure 15. Applications to public and private members rose since 2019–20

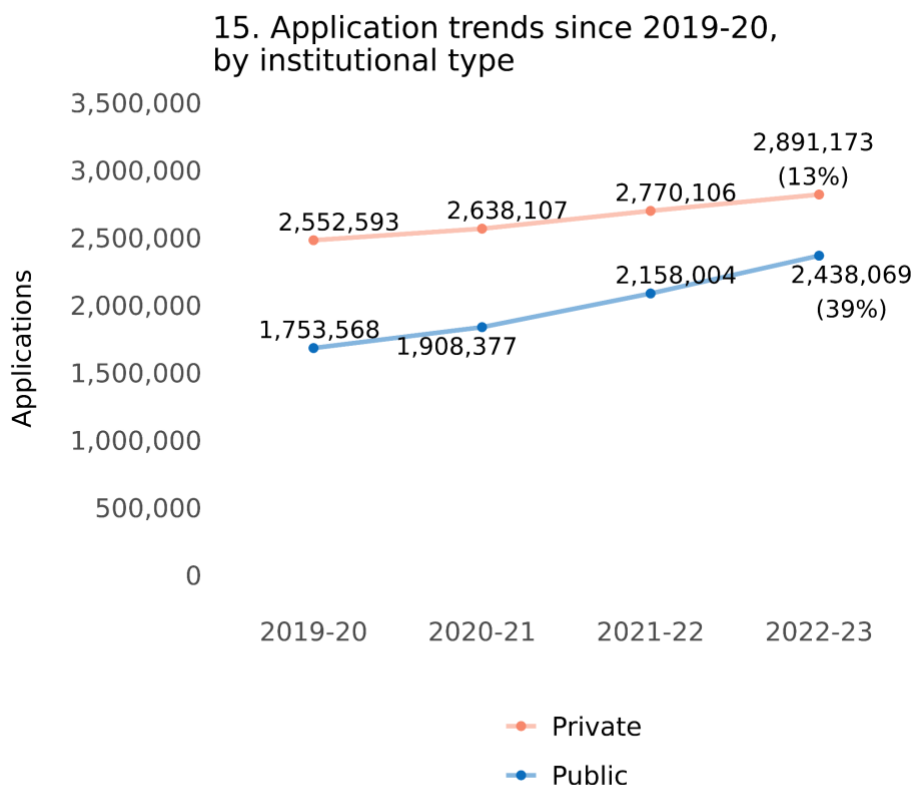
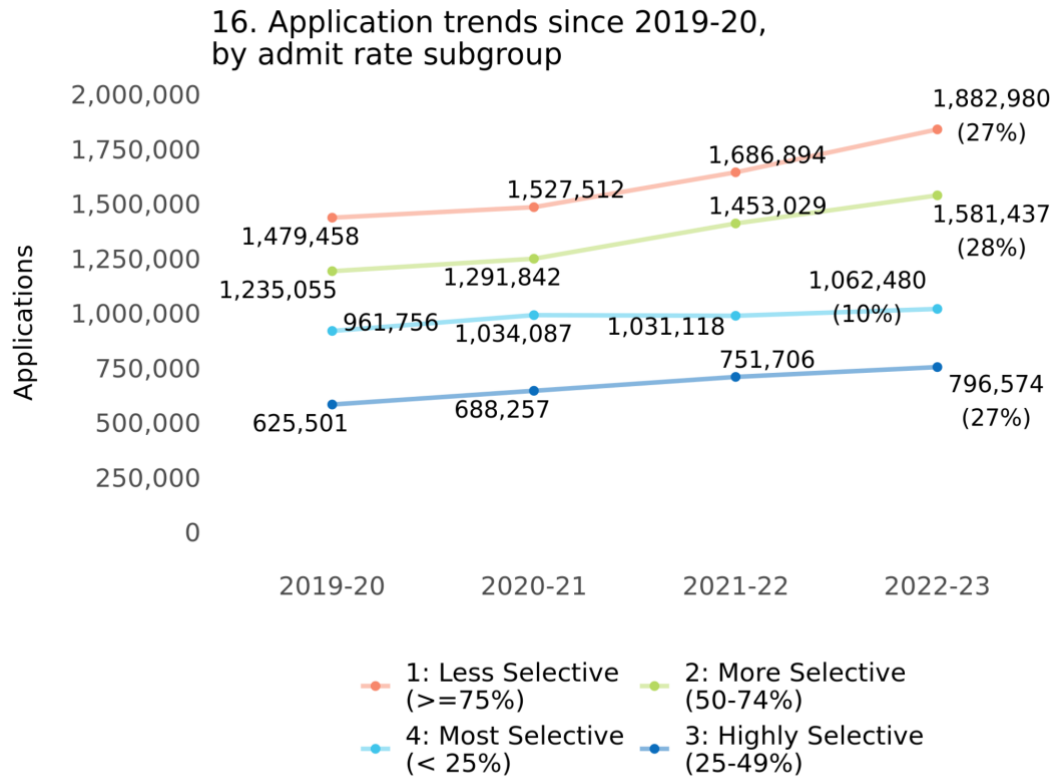


Figure 16 presents trends in application volume by member selectivity, as measured by undergraduate admit rates reported in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). We observe that the vast majority of applications were submitted to member institutions with admit rates at or above 50% (over 3 million through January 1). Note that members with no selectivity data were omitted from these analyses.

To support members' efforts to benchmark what they are observing individually against broader trends, we also provide tables of application trends by member characteristics in the Appendix (**Appendix Tables A1–A4**).

Figure 16. Applications increased across selectivity subgroups



Conclusion

When examining application trends through January 1, we see rapid growth in applicant and application totals over the past three seasons. The numbers of applicants, applications, and applications per applicant have meaningfully increased since 2019–20; URM and first-gen applicants are increasing at faster rates than their non-URM and continuing-gen counterparts; the majority of applicants continue to hail from the wealthiest ZIP codes; and test score reporting behaviors have fallen slightly from last season and still vary significantly across demographic subgroups.

Please stay tuned for additional Deadline Updates, which we will publish monthly through March 2023.

Appendix

Figure A1. Test score reporting rates varied by legal sex

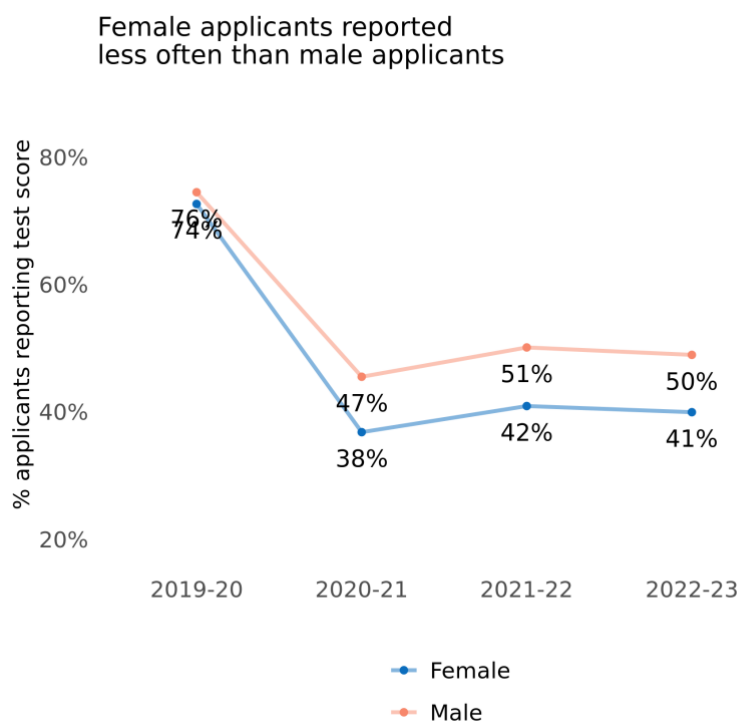


Figure A2. Test score reporting rates were higher in more affluent zip codes

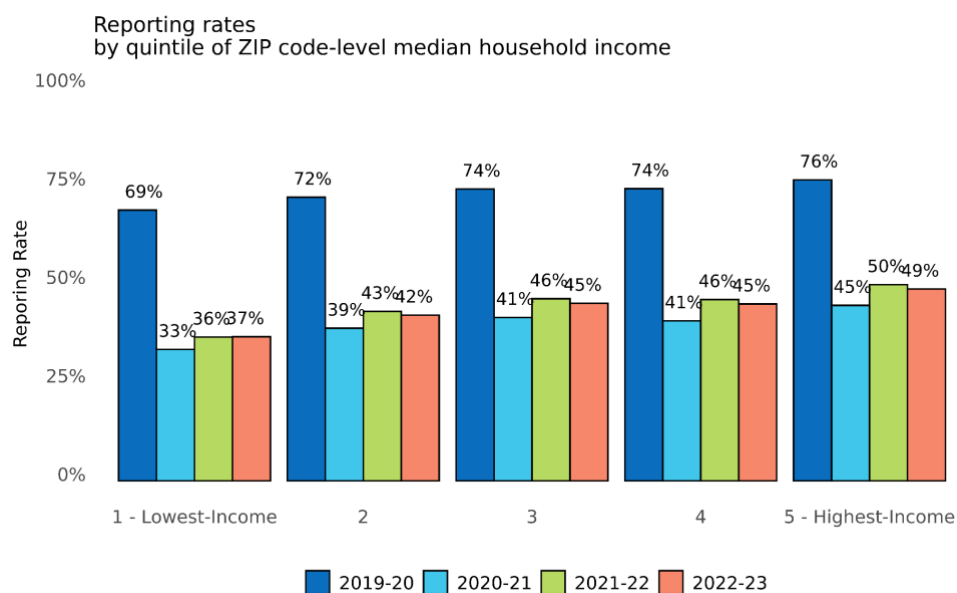


Table A1. Application trends varied by member region and institutional control

	Private				Public			
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Mid-Atlantic	901,821	894,437	927,696	961,776	384,815	381,133	438,073	504,403
Midwestern	403,478	401,495	437,955	472,447	475,966	524,099	595,368	659,465
New England	550,780	579,734	604,603	612,213	185,373	183,468	204,426	220,056
Southern	375,286	420,103	459,781	477,543	537,493	610,467	683,093	778,987
Southwestern	62,904	74,461	75,383	81,535	24,612	32,222	40,749	53,833
Western	258,324	267,877	264,688	285,659	145,309	176,988	196,295	221,325

Note:

Cells with fewer than five members are omitted.

Members without available IPEDS data are omitted.

Table A2. Application trends varied by member state and institutional control

	Private				Public			
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
California	183,636	188,214	178,938	196,292	NA	NA	NA	NA
Connecticut	99,501	98,756	100,416	108,772	45,661	42,928	50,389	57,196
District of Columbia	50,111	51,075	42,538	53,311	NA	NA	NA	NA
Florida	100,088	109,985	135,855	137,703	153,182	164,847	206,222	217,193
Georgia	57,174	64,099	70,267	76,189	NA	NA	NA	NA
Illinois	126,945	117,884	125,981	139,443	NA	NA	NA	NA
Indiana	59,011	54,332	63,962	66,251	86,236	89,334	101,901	111,427
Iowa	13,638	13,340	15,819	16,623	NA	NA	NA	NA
Kentucky	5,474	6,403	6,792	7,541	NA	NA	NA	NA
Louisiana	38,829	41,019	37,646	34,026	NA	NA	NA	NA
Maine	34,889	28,840	30,730	31,932	16,267	15,519	16,599	16,269
Maryland	46,932	43,523	44,021	46,775	21,919	20,199	21,069	23,966
Massachusetts	317,459	359,090	378,479	369,761	63,582	62,503	68,251	75,111
Michigan	18,268	20,474	24,068	26,902	103,094	127,490	146,315	161,603
Minnesota	21,924	25,863	27,989	30,551	28,731	28,919	33,533	36,038
Missouri	33,792	33,686	31,608	34,210	19,253	20,268	21,637	25,782
New Hampshire	26,334	28,053	24,844	25,191	NA	NA	NA	NA
New Jersey	82,061	83,529	89,434	96,728	53,232	42,762	50,548	57,817
New York	490,230	486,170	511,570	508,345	149,872	137,734	154,565	202,583
North Carolina	72,097	78,877	82,972	89,457	127,611	139,541	155,287	176,978
Ohio	97,141	101,702	110,607	116,999	142,791	154,385	173,304	192,995
Oregon	20,376	19,638	21,116	22,610	NA	NA	NA	NA
Pennsylvania	232,404	230,140	240,034	256,617	132,042	152,718	182,507	188,165
Rhode Island	57,485	50,755	53,154	59,147	NA	NA	NA	NA
South Carolina	9,424	12,116	13,956	14,599	NA	NA	NA	NA
Tennessee	51,934	62,140	61,262	62,805	NA	NA	NA	NA
Texas	59,028	70,803	70,550	75,966	NA	NA	NA	NA
Vermont	15,112	14,240	16,980	17,410	NA	NA	NA	NA
Virginia	35,684	41,065	46,296	49,747	106,532	114,401	108,290	121,488
Washington	25,045	26,543	27,374	28,564	NA	NA	NA	NA
Wisconsin	25,387	26,452	28,952	31,827	NA	NA	NA	NA

Note:

Cells with fewer than five members are omitted.

Members without available IPEDS data are omitted.

Table A3. Application trends varied by member region and selectivity group

	Less Selective (>=75%)				More Selective (50-74%)				Highly Selective (25-49%)				Most Selective (<=25%)			
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Mid-Atlantic	403,023	399,994	432,495	459,610	428,134	417,706	466,702	498,266	173,801	179,875	181,615	209,187	280,228	276,368	283,052	296,766
Midwestern	365,686	385,038	432,101	480,364	322,050	341,221	385,302	423,043	92,894	112,228	120,885	126,229	97,524	85,589	93,202	100,501
New England	223,927	204,869	219,224	235,841	150,659	151,978	168,206	186,913	73,931	79,147	83,915	73,856	286,295	325,942	336,384	334,376
Southern	267,829	280,958	317,028	381,672	202,943	243,415	282,752	310,094	253,341	283,794	328,579	345,689	188,666	222,403	214,515	219,075
Southwestern	21,646	27,175	34,676	44,119	32,027	38,559	46,578	53,981	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Western	197,347	229,478	251,370	281,385	99,242	98,963	103,489	109,144	15,880	15,628	17,090	18,925	90,917	100,500	88,775	97,356

Note:

Selectivity calculated as undergraduates admitted as a percent of applications

Cells with fewer than five members are omitted.

Members without available IPEDS data are omitted.

Table A4. Application trends by member state and selectivity group

	Less Selective (>=75%)				More Selective (50-74%)				Highly Selective (25-49%)				Most Selective (<=25%)			
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
California	12,793	10,392	11,940	13,777	71,838	70,928	71,698	77,274	12,122	11,633	11,599	12,753	86,636	94,965	83,442	92,314
Colorado	65,556	80,375	83,027	90,458	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Connecticut	43,757	37,861	38,320	42,177	61,068	59,364	65,887	75,355	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Florida	37,919	36,813	45,997	49,516	62,925	72,815	91,896	94,621	152,426	165,204	204,184	210,759	NA	NA	NA	NA
Georgia	32,179	37,017	38,727	52,153	18,117	18,660	23,297	23,218	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Illinois	19,269	16,548	19,704	23,229	70,592	68,148	73,681	80,321	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Indiana	70,485	71,936	75,449	79,148	56,138	57,694	66,569	72,766	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Iowa	19,970	21,270	26,893	29,699	6,765	6,267	7,620	7,967	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Kentucky	17,202	19,167	20,869	26,920	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Maine	21,882	20,304	22,035	21,901	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Maryland	31,450	28,116	28,682	30,696	16,186	15,819	16,228	19,615	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Massachusetts	79,781	74,423	82,146	89,747	58,404	57,387	61,527	69,028	63,236	70,592	74,585	62,396	179,397	218,986	228,343	223,516
Michigan	48,817	57,780	74,264	82,303	23,782	27,971	33,047	37,987	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Minnesota	10,834	11,123	12,321	13,406	35,924	37,030	41,930	45,987	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Missouri	17,465	19,257	20,694	25,211	14,206	14,833	15,996	18,760	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
New Hampshire	34,763	31,989	33,236	35,267	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
New Jersey	74,927	65,525	77,377	84,868	33,483	29,253	30,899	35,173	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
New York	122,303	114,044	116,258	124,934	265,730	256,085	280,775	295,265	77,712	80,687	89,512	103,277	174,357	173,088	179,590	187,452
North Carolina	63,118	65,475	72,367	83,143	36,305	40,830	47,596	56,093	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Ohio	132,312	136,198	148,625	167,681	67,886	77,955	87,930	93,895	39,076	41,380	46,761	47,818	NA	NA	NA	NA
Oregon	40,981	47,113	52,678	59,892	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Pennsylvania	168,664	187,304	205,152	214,028	84,985	88,829	109,416	116,341	51,574	53,118	54,492	57,683	NA	NA	NA	NA
Rhode Island	38,887	36,311	38,107	40,914	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
South Carolina	NA	NA	NA	NA	38,925	57,700	64,272	72,409	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Tennessee	NA	NA	NA	NA	13,007	13,194	12,723	14,979	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Texas	NA	NA	NA	NA	28,151	34,901	41,745	48,412	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Virginia	65,745	62,867	68,699	77,817	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Washington	15,136	16,384	16,023	17,391	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
West Virginia	10,739	11,593	12,721	14,843	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Wisconsin	18,900	19,685	21,395	22,879	40,429	44,921	51,546	57,951	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Note:

Selectivity calculated as undergraduates admitted as a percent of applications

Cells with fewer than five members are omitted.

Members without available IPEDS data are omitted.