

Deadline update: first-year application trends through February 1

February 15, 2023

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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 fourth 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, February 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.

Contents

[Key findings](#)

[Overall trends](#)

[Applicant subgroup trends](#)

[Trends in test score reporting](#)

[Trends by member characteristics](#)

[Conclusion](#)

Key findings

1. Through February, 2023, 1,215,022 distinct first-year applicants had applied to 841 returning members (an increase of 21% from 1,006,531 in 2019–20).
 - a. Total application volume through February 1 rose 30% from 2019–20 (5,274,166) to 2022–23 (6,833,836). Applicants were also applying to more members in 2022–23 than in 2019–20 (+8% from 5.2 to 5.6 applications per applicant), but this has remained level since the 2021–22 season.
2. Underrepresented minority (URM)¹ applicants increased by 31% over 2019–20, while first-generation (“first-gen”) applicants increased by 36%, 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 (48% vs. 11%).
3. About 55% 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 meaningful 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 (53% versus 18%). 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 (74%) to 2020–21 (41%) and a slight rebound in 2021–22 (45%), trends through February 1 suggest a leveling-off of reporting in 2022–23 (44% 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 February 1 of this season.
6. Applications to public members grew more than those to private members from 2019–20 (+38%, relative to +24% for private members).

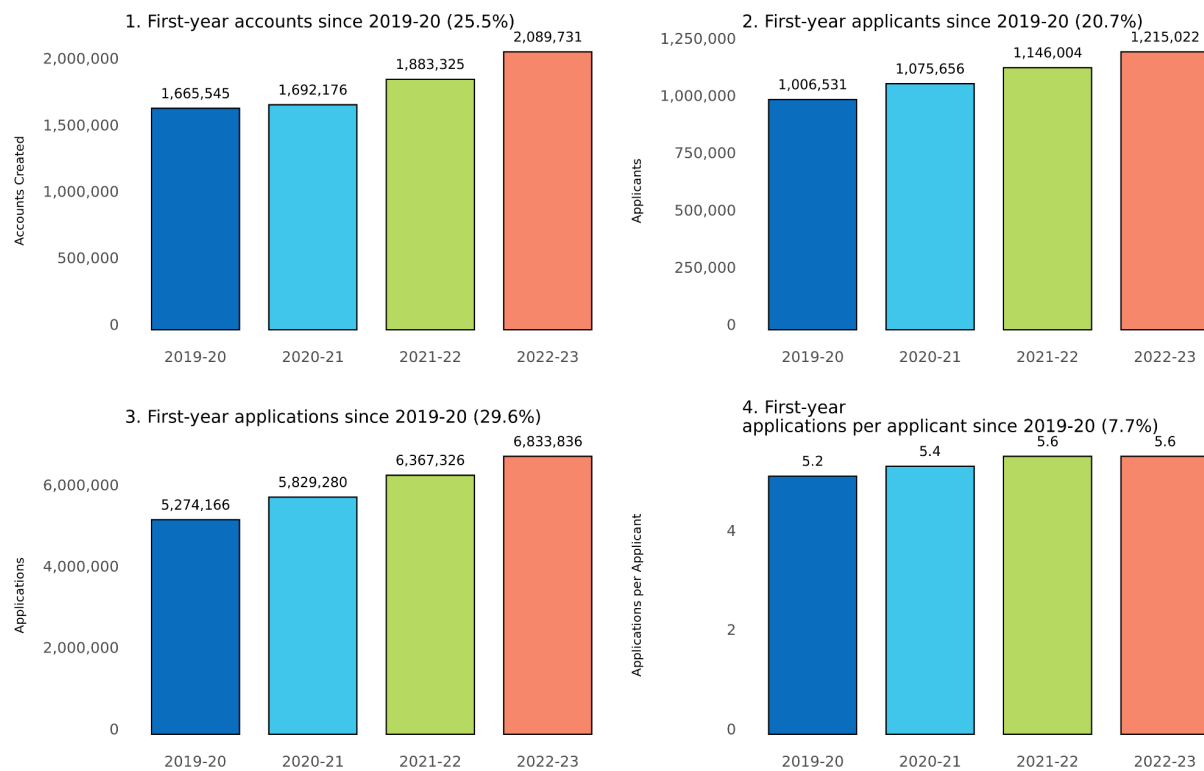
¹ We use the term underrepresented minority (URM) in alignment with conventions employed by the [National Science Foundation](#). In this report, applicants identifying as Black or African American, Latinx, Native American or Alaska Native, or Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander are classified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

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

Overall trends

Through February 1, the overall numbers of accounts created by high school seniors (+26%), applicant counts (+21%), total applications (+30%), and applications per applicant (+8%) 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



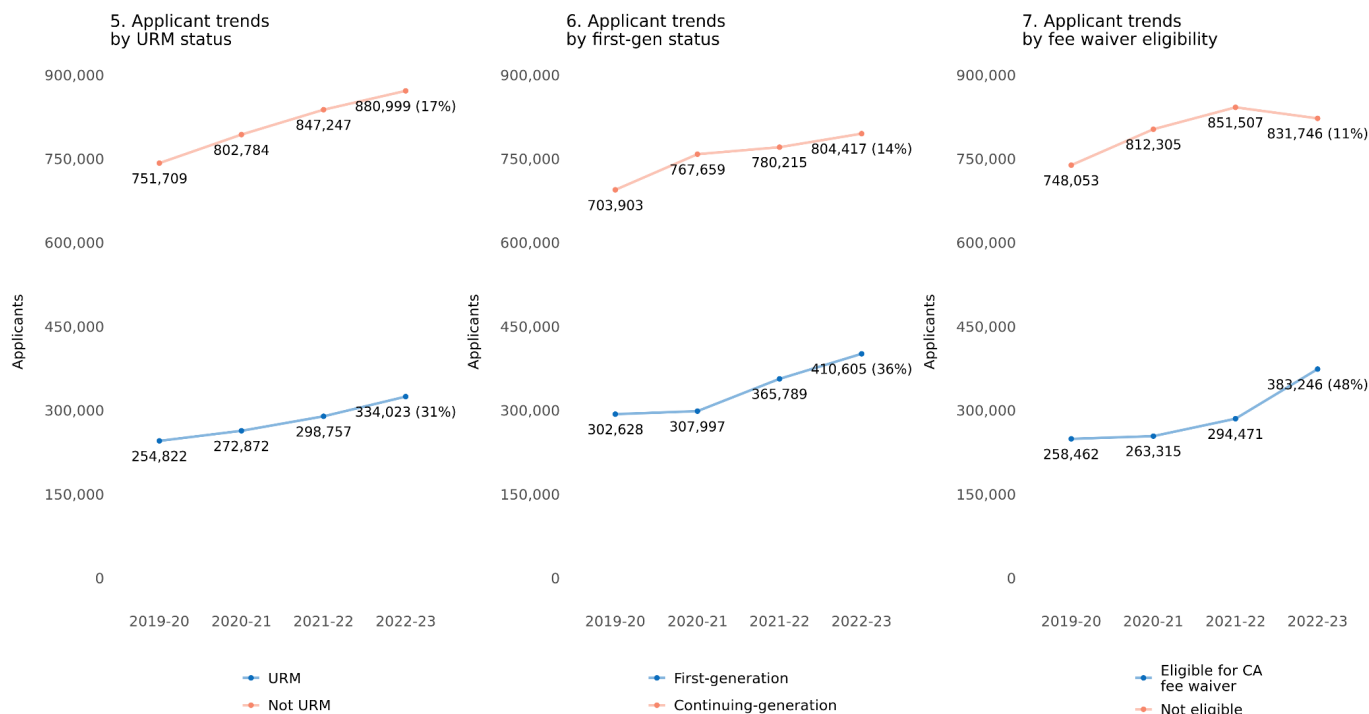
Applicant subgroup trends

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 31% over the 2019–20 (pre-pandemic) total through February 1. This increase was greater than that for non-URM applicants across the same time period (+17%), indicating diversification of the applicant pool along this dimension (the 2019–20 pool was 25.3% URM, and it is 27.5% URM in 2022–23).

Figure 6 highlights a large increase in the number of first-generation applicants (+36%), which was more than double that for continuing-generation applicants (+14%) 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 (+48%) — over four 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.

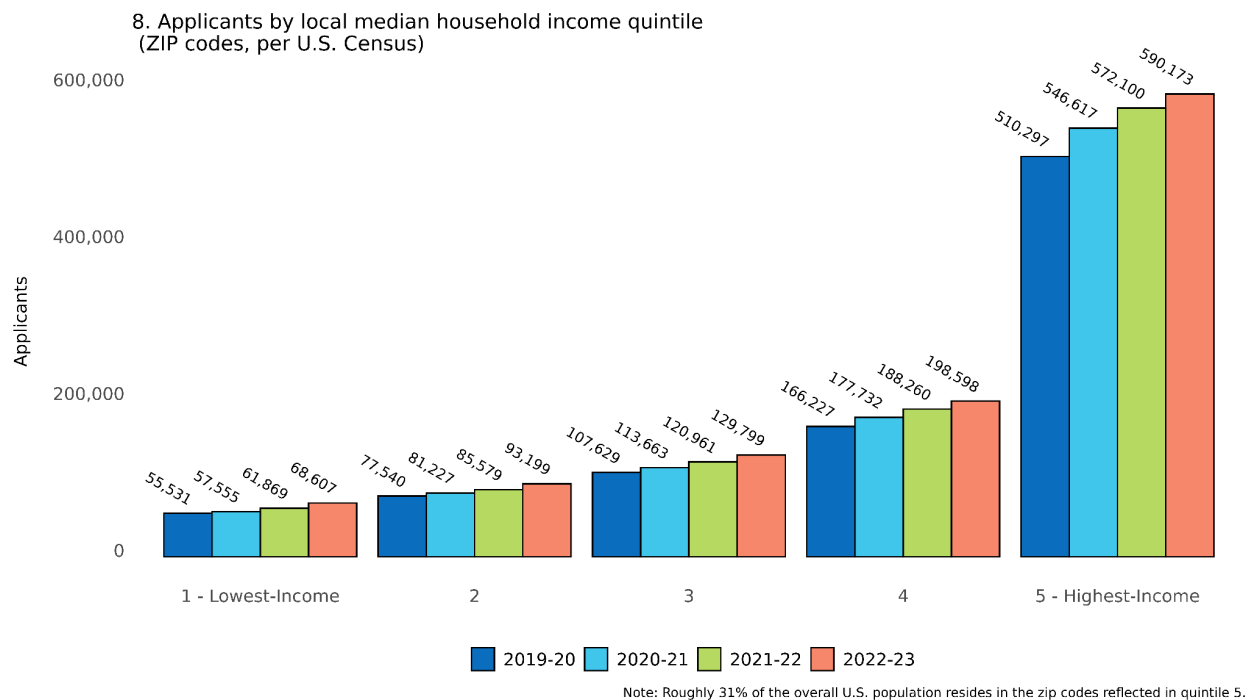
Among URM and first-generation applicants, we observe similar growth rates since last season (+16% and +17%, respectively). For fee waiver-eligible students, this one-year increase (+35%) marks the largest observed over this period.

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, 2017–2021) 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 February 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 (55%) of applicants came from ZIP codes in the top income quintile (20%), and just 6% of the applicant pool came from ZIP codes in the bottom quintile. While growth in the lower two quintiles since 2019–20 (+22%) outpaced growth in the highest quintile (+16%), 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

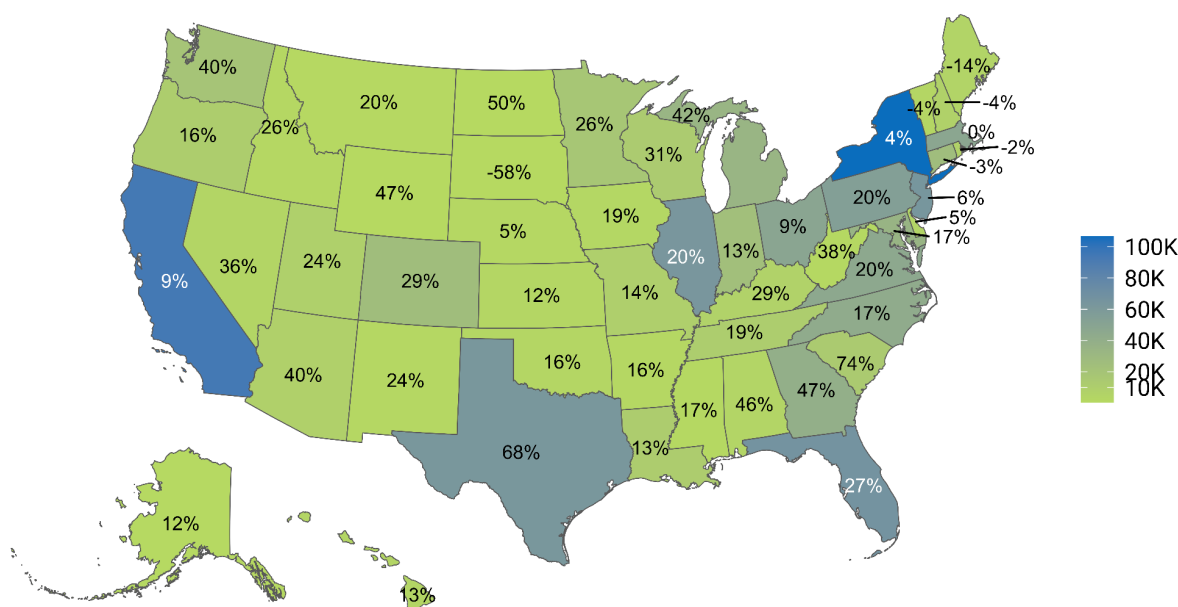
We continue to observe meaningful variation in applicant trends across states. The map of the United States in **Figure 9** is colored to reflect overall applicant counts in 2022–23, while the

Deadline update: First-year application trends through February 1
February 15, 2023

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 74% over 2019–20, followed by Texas at 68%. 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 (-3%, -2%, -4%, -4%, and -14%, respectively).

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

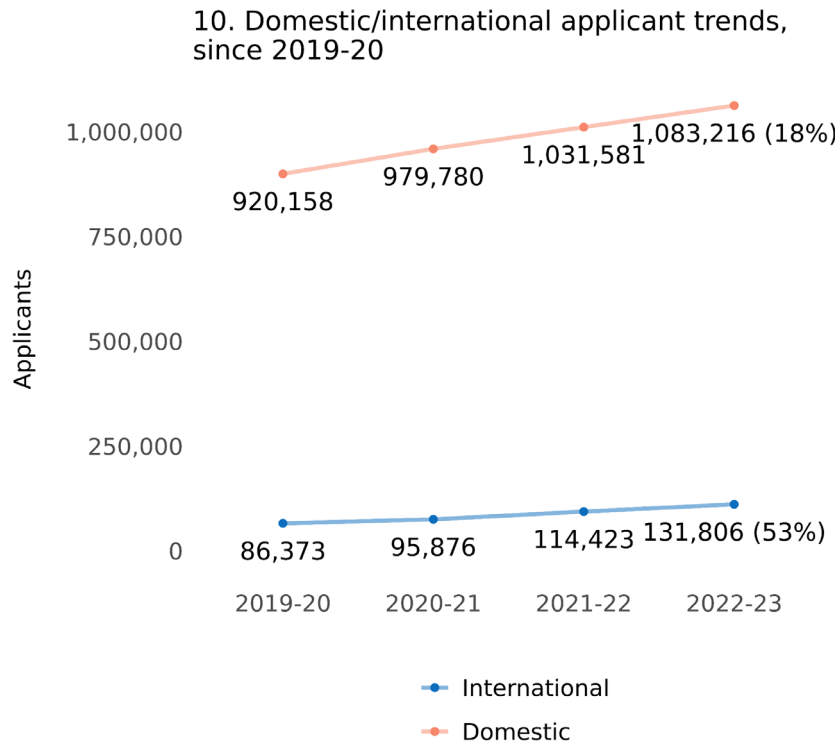
9. Applicant trends by U.S. state since 2019-20



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 (53%) nearly tripled that for domestic applicants (18%). 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 53% since 2019–20

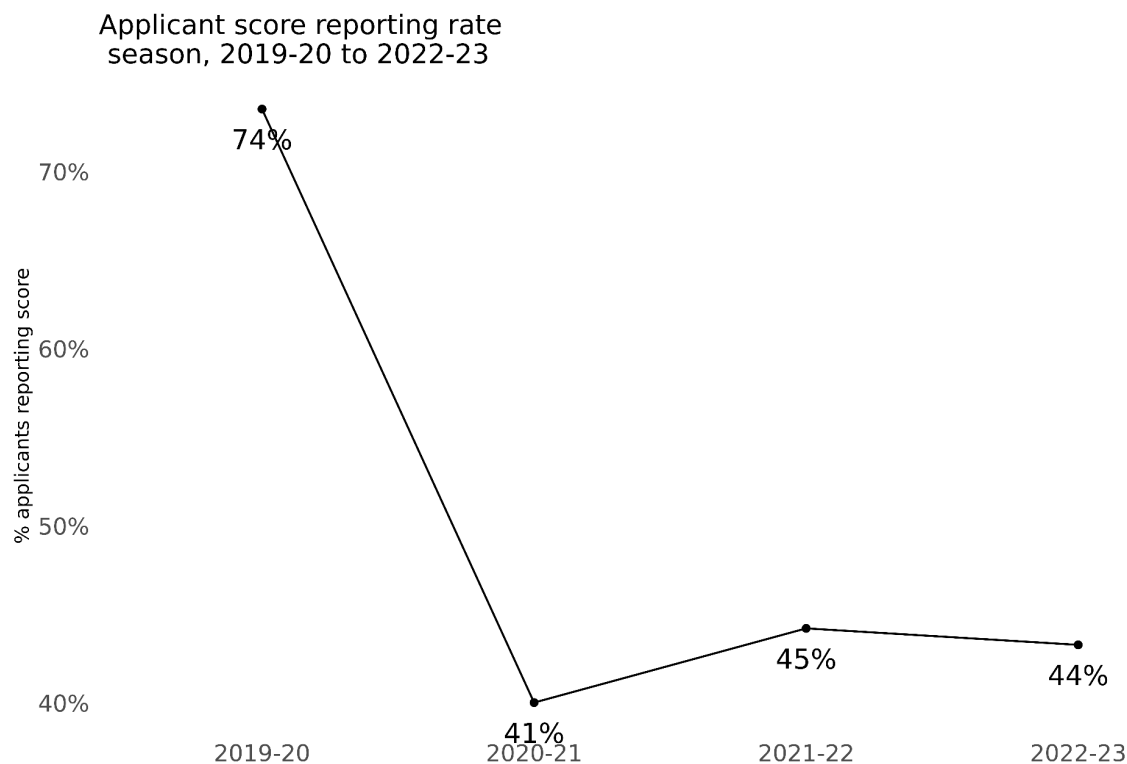


Trends in applicants' test score reporting behaviors

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.

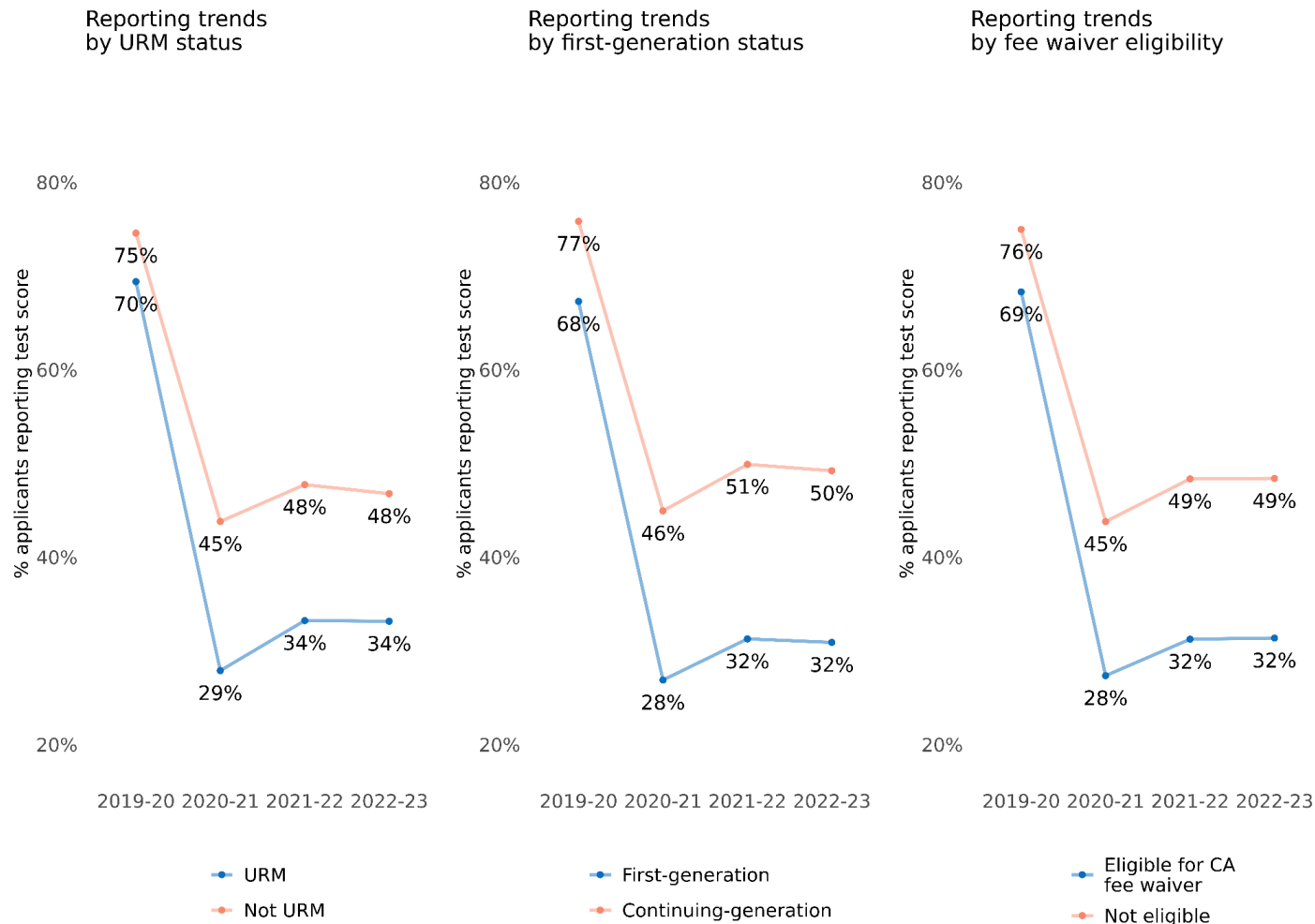
In **Figure 11**, we show that after a sharp decline from 2019–20 (74%) to 2020–21 (41%) and then a slight rebound in 2021–22 (45%), we saw no meaningful change in 2022–23 (44%). We will continue to monitor this trend throughout the application season.

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 February 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

Through February 1, we saw that the majority of applications were submitted to private members. The rate of application growth for public members since 2019–20 (+38%) was still more than that for private members (+24%). **Figure 15** highlights year-over-year trends in applications by institutional type.

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

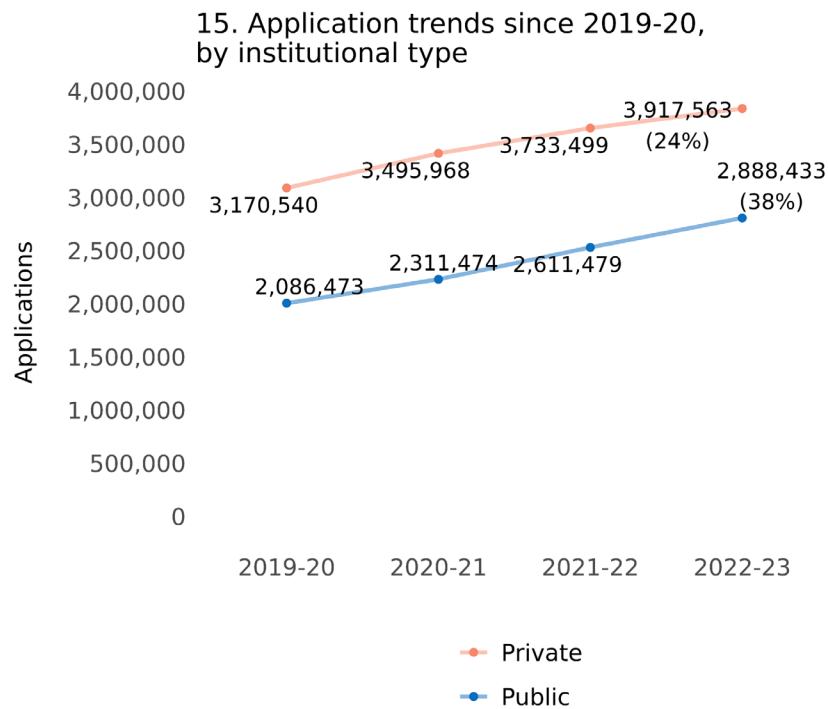
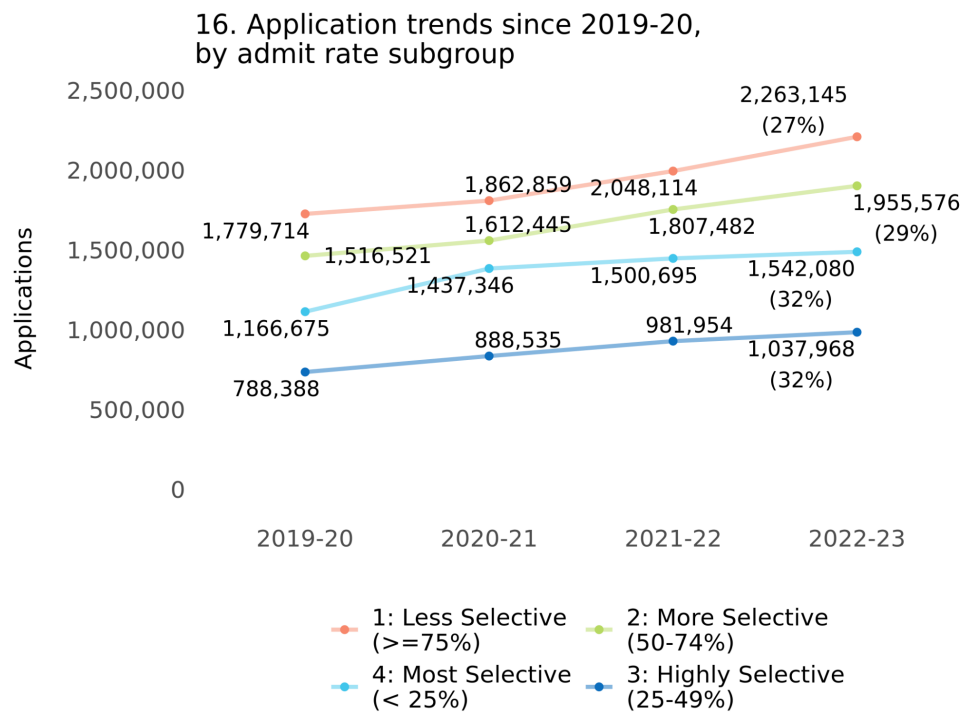


Figure 16 presents trends in application volume by member selectivity, as measured by undergraduate admit rates reported in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). We observe that the vast majority of applications were submitted to member institutions with admit rates at or above 50% (over 3 million through February 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 February 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

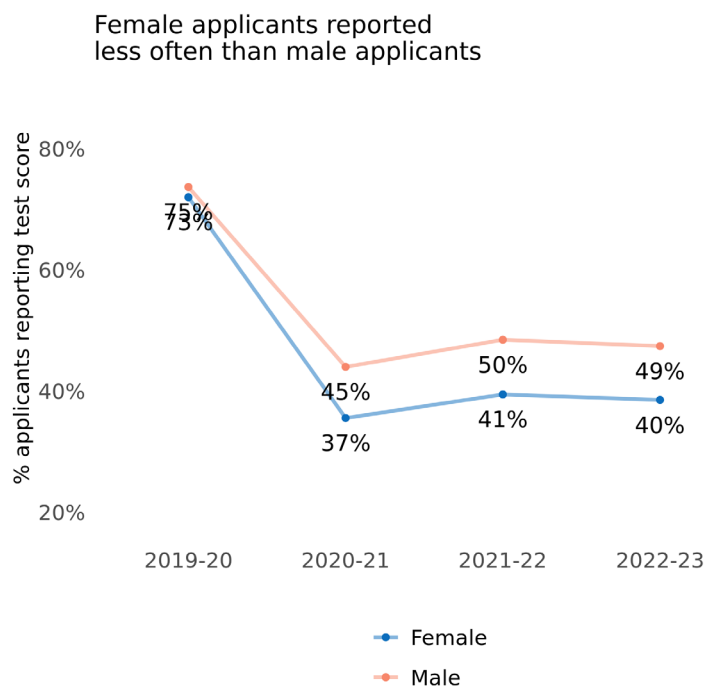


Figure A2. Test score reporting rates were higher in more affluent zip codes

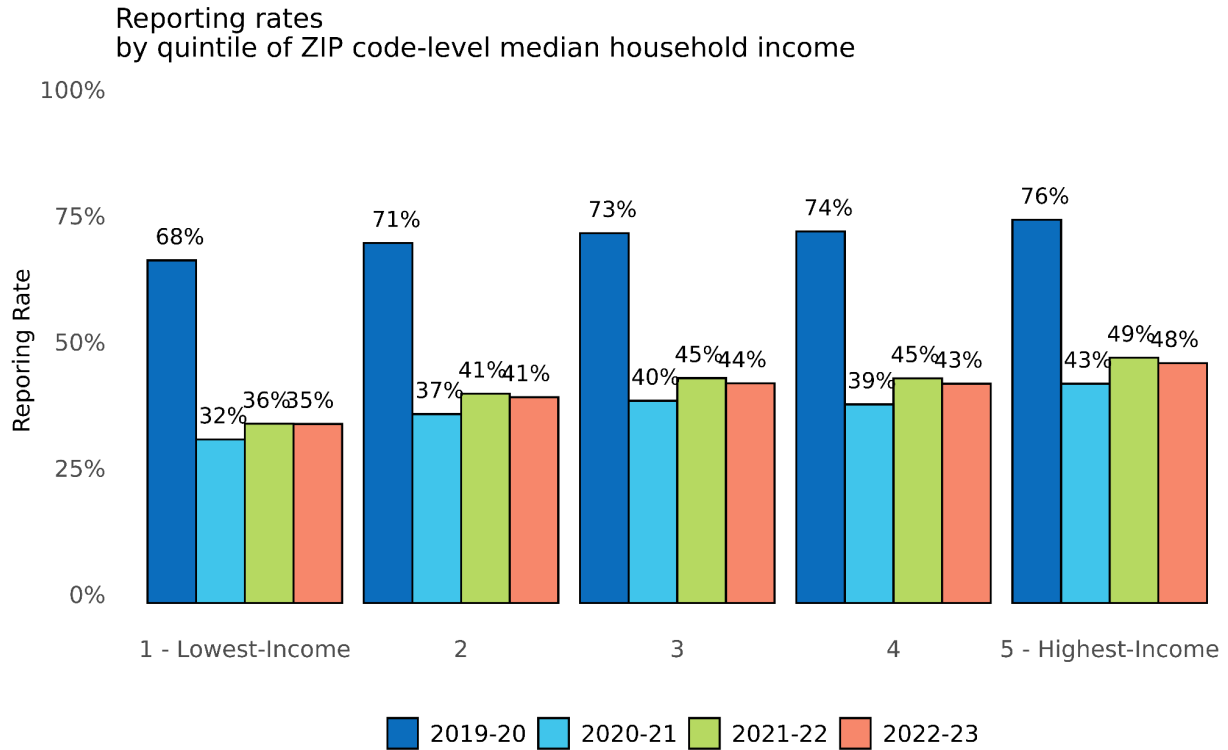


Table A1. Application trends varied by member region and institutional control

	Private				Public			
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Mid-Atlantic	1,122,963	1,230,752	1,282,015	1,347,048	470,284	479,505	548,485	606,744
Midwestern	486,086	520,470	564,508	601,407	551,077	619,024	704,075	770,124
New England	676,466	757,013	821,150	857,076	239,581	243,739	264,040	278,978
Southern	435,092	495,143	546,148	564,324	615,551	708,331	804,051	900,384
Southwestern	73,692	88,418	101,072	109,106	28,851	37,921	47,909	62,029
Western	376,241	404,172	418,606	438,602	181,129	222,954	242,919	270,174

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	275,988	297,369	303,608	320,078	NA	NA	NA	NA
Connecticut	124,857	131,182	138,131	148,119	57,454	55,521	62,529	68,934
District of Columbia	73,421	76,780	70,259	79,338	NA	NA	NA	NA
Florida	112,748	125,980	155,330	156,366	165,577	182,532	226,398	236,075
Georgia	68,213	76,314	84,453	90,435	NA	NA	NA	NA
Illinois	157,187	161,823	173,283	185,028	NA	NA	NA	NA
Indiana	64,906	67,449	70,933	73,662	99,896	106,583	122,168	131,594
Iowa	18,025	18,806	22,385	23,439	NA	NA	NA	NA
Kentucky	6,355	7,441	7,881	8,746	NA	NA	NA	NA
Louisiana	46,997	50,842	46,537	43,169	NA	NA	NA	NA
Maine	37,474	37,581	39,895	43,037	19,812	19,294	20,111	19,626
Maryland	60,928	68,095	66,596	70,175	26,257	24,672	25,897	29,229
Massachusetts	382,801	443,135	488,289	502,672	88,472	88,349	93,798	101,589
Michigan	20,904	23,395	27,443	30,901	122,051	151,611	177,899	192,501
Minnesota	31,578	36,681	39,558	42,826	30,352	30,491	35,274	38,114
Missouri	39,894	47,337	48,310	51,186	21,359	22,907	24,536	29,207
New Hampshire	35,487	40,042	40,302	41,264	NA	NA	NA	NA
New Jersey	95,863	97,842	106,422	116,018	65,687	54,781	64,014	72,678
New York	596,206	661,225	694,593	714,632	195,522	189,636	211,490	249,084
North Carolina	87,015	102,306	109,697	116,346	152,033	173,363	192,700	215,230
Ohio	116,371	125,820	138,976	147,020	161,212	179,106	198,905	218,497
Oregon	29,276	28,976	31,478	32,452	NA	NA	NA	NA
Pennsylvania	296,422	326,810	343,992	366,885	150,770	177,960	213,106	219,476
Rhode Island	77,963	84,821	90,885	97,468	NA	NA	NA	NA
South Carolina	11,186	13,984	16,347	17,026	NA	NA	NA	NA
Tennessee	56,213	67,020	67,167	69,183	NA	NA	NA	NA
Texas	69,164	83,976	95,240	102,013	NA	NA	NA	NA
Vermont	17,884	20,252	23,648	24,516	NA	NA	NA	NA
Virginia	41,278	46,366	53,417	56,979	125,242	133,783	142,754	154,310
Washington	34,273	36,068	37,346	39,096	NA	NA	NA	NA
Wisconsin	28,569	30,078	33,273	36,156	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 ($\geq 75\%$)				More Selective (50-74%)				Highly Selective (25-49%)				Most Selective ($\leq 25\%$)			
	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	485,067	490,954	531,476	563,754	526,764	527,209	585,432	633,242	249,247	269,179	279,333	302,896	330,256	420,752	431,759	450,820
Midwestern	411,982	439,792	493,094	543,690	379,766	411,238	464,752	506,858	120,478	147,844	163,520	168,868	123,337	138,732	145,112	150,095
New England	285,182	266,821	282,223	300,956	194,331	201,214	221,618	239,857	92,630	102,425	110,561	118,430	342,112	428,599	469,111	475,162
Southern	317,620	337,166	380,502	449,816	237,762	287,050	333,299	361,164	278,929	317,820	372,470	386,040	216,332	261,438	263,928	267,688
Southwestern	25,314	31,724	40,410	50,673	39,317	48,109	57,435	65,600	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Western	254,549	296,402	320,409	354,256	138,581	137,625	144,946	148,855	28,647	29,323	31,698	33,893	135,259	163,365	164,120	171,462

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	18,572	15,688	17,960	20,974	105,007	103,094	106,056	110,360	22,661	22,379	22,426	23,856	129,414	155,797	156,814	164,578
Colorado	78,814	97,385	99,618	107,379	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Connecticut	53,774	46,915	47,857	51,459	73,940	73,291	80,122	89,351	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Florida	43,466	44,210	54,520	58,762	74,054	88,025	109,811	111,252	160,805	176,277	217,397	222,427	NA	NA	NA	NA
Georgia	40,694	45,790	48,371	62,877	22,725	24,513	30,536	30,637	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Illinois	24,145	21,429	25,184	28,535	84,509	84,833	91,460	98,986	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Indiana	78,205	80,879	85,489	89,185	67,294	71,674	82,876	89,198	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Iowa	23,306	24,978	31,034	34,073	8,138	7,452	9,221	9,619	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Kentucky	18,779	20,885	22,772	29,697	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Maine	26,575	25,387	26,992	26,667	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Maryland	38,860	35,822	36,326	38,010	19,819	19,646	20,305	24,555	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Massachusetts	106,340	100,610	109,532	119,915	81,431	81,621	88,009	96,452	75,361	84,206	90,076	94,784	207,789	264,738	294,257	292,854
Michigan	55,382	65,376	85,653	93,734	26,740	31,678	37,647	43,257	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Minnesota	12,314	12,831	14,218	15,700	40,700	41,526	46,833	51,487	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Missouri	19,368	21,794	23,393	28,587	15,742	16,838	18,382	21,676	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
New Hampshire	43,808	41,377	42,905	44,681	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
New Jersey	91,482	80,580	95,511	105,364	41,779	38,743	41,330	46,760	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
New York	153,578	148,115	151,502	161,049	330,823	327,590	355,721	383,046	112,112	124,674	137,279	148,997	195,215	250,482	261,581	270,624
North Carolina	71,767	76,881	85,633	97,417	41,597	47,524	55,545	64,707	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Ohio	147,232	154,583	167,219	186,576	78,607	92,530	104,218	110,813	50,960	57,162	65,780	67,461	NA	NA	NA	NA
Oregon	59,136	67,596	73,810	81,451	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Pennsylvania	194,322	220,147	241,844	252,873	102,295	108,774	134,098	142,604	70,416	74,015	77,935	81,019	NA	NA	NA	NA
Rhode Island	48,187	46,471	47,743	50,577	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
South Carolina	NA	NA	NA	NA	42,327	62,402	69,291	77,964	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Tennessee	NA	NA	NA	NA	15,720	16,210	16,490	18,711	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Texas	NA	NA	NA	NA	34,789	43,667	51,603	58,507	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Virginia	86,354	83,845	92,229	101,146	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Washington	21,992	23,199	23,051	25,008	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
West Virginia	12,674	13,774	14,953	17,295	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Wisconsin	20,306	21,656	23,477	24,677	50,704	57,327	66,179	73,322	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.