

Deadline update: first-year application trends through March 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 final 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, March 1, 2023). We will release a final summary of these trends 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 March, 2023, 1,244,476 distinct first-year applicants had applied to 841 returning members (an increase of 21% from 1,028,422 in 2019–20).
 - a. Total application volume through March 1 rose 30% from 2019–20 (5,434,484) to 2022–23 (7,057,980). Applicants were also applying to more members in 2022–23 than in 2019–20 (+8% from 5.3 to 5.7 applications per applicant).
2. Underrepresented minority (URM)¹ applicants increased by 31% over 2019–20, while first-generation (“first-gen”) applicants increased by 36%, over twice 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 (49% vs. 11%).
3. About 54% 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 seven 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 (55% versus 18%). China, India, Ghana, Nigeria, 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 (40%) and a slight rebound in 2021–22 (44%), trends through March 1 suggest a leveling-off of reporting in 2022–23 (43% 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 March 1 of this season.
6. Applications to public members grew more than those to private members from 2019–20 (+39%, relative to +24% for private members).

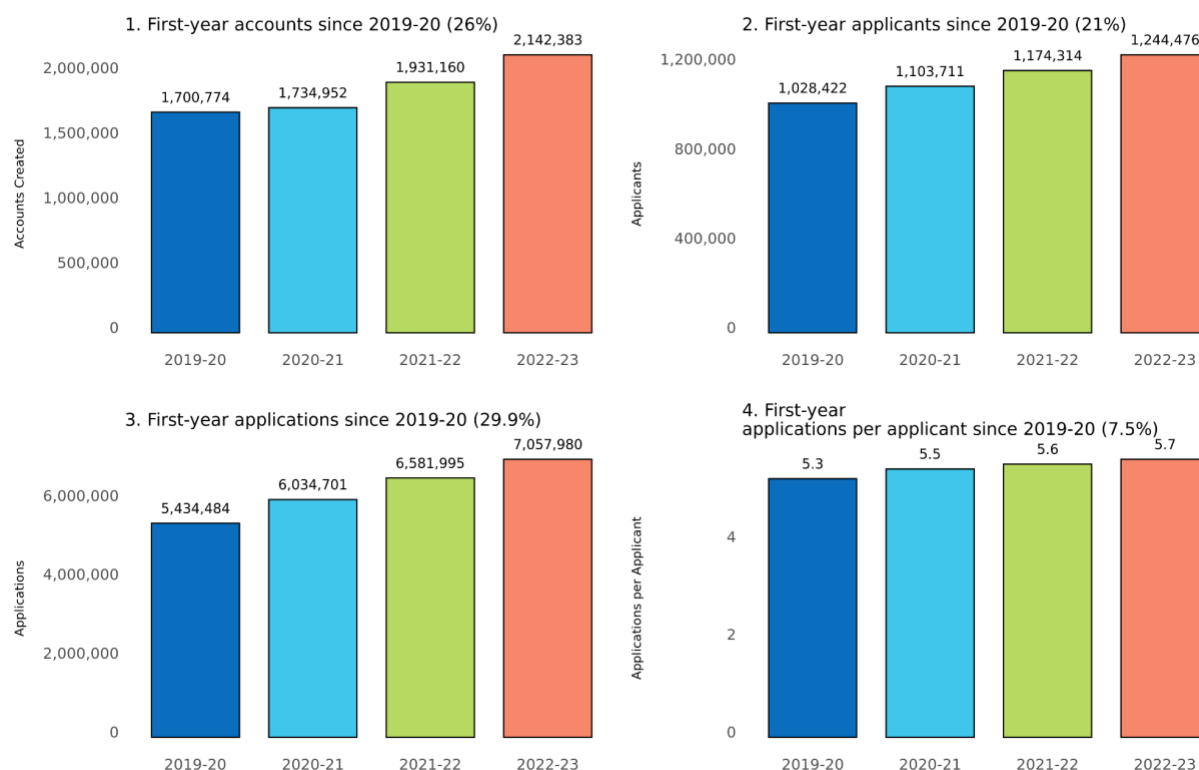
¹ We use the term underrepresented minority (URM) in alignment with conventions employed by the [National Science Foundation](#). In this report, applicants identifying as Black or African American, Latinx, Native American or Alaska Native, or Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander are classified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

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

Overall trends

Through March 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



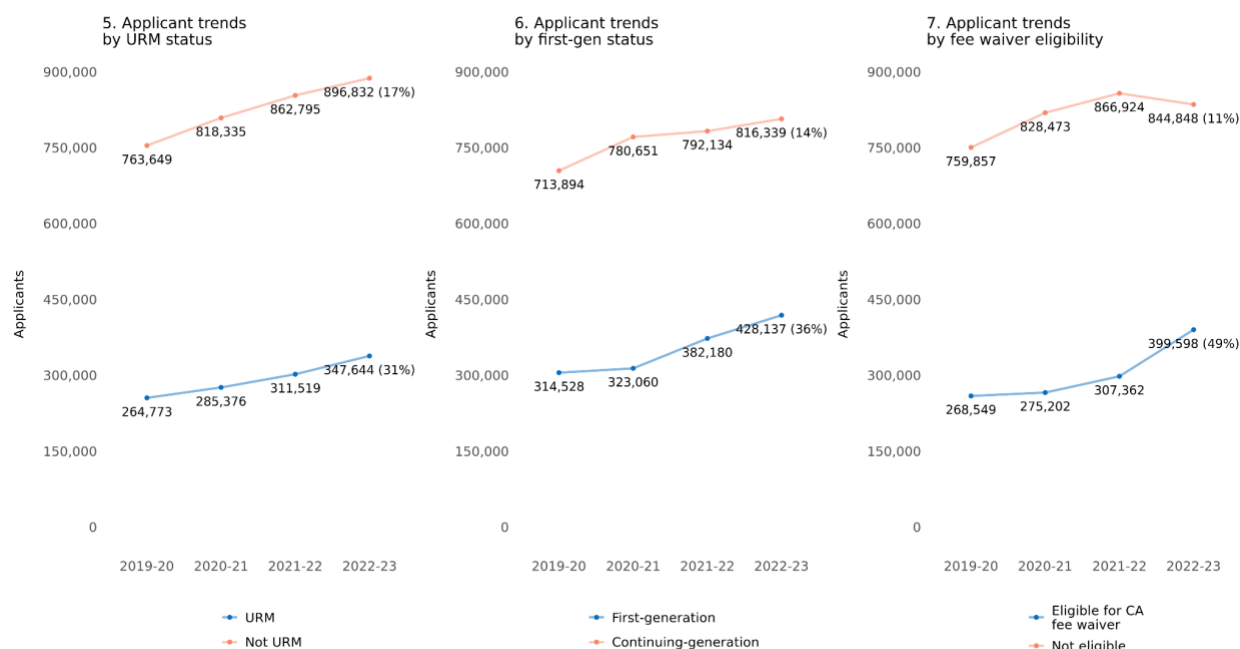
Applicant subgroup trends

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 March 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 25.7% URM, and it is 27.9% 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 (+49%) – 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.

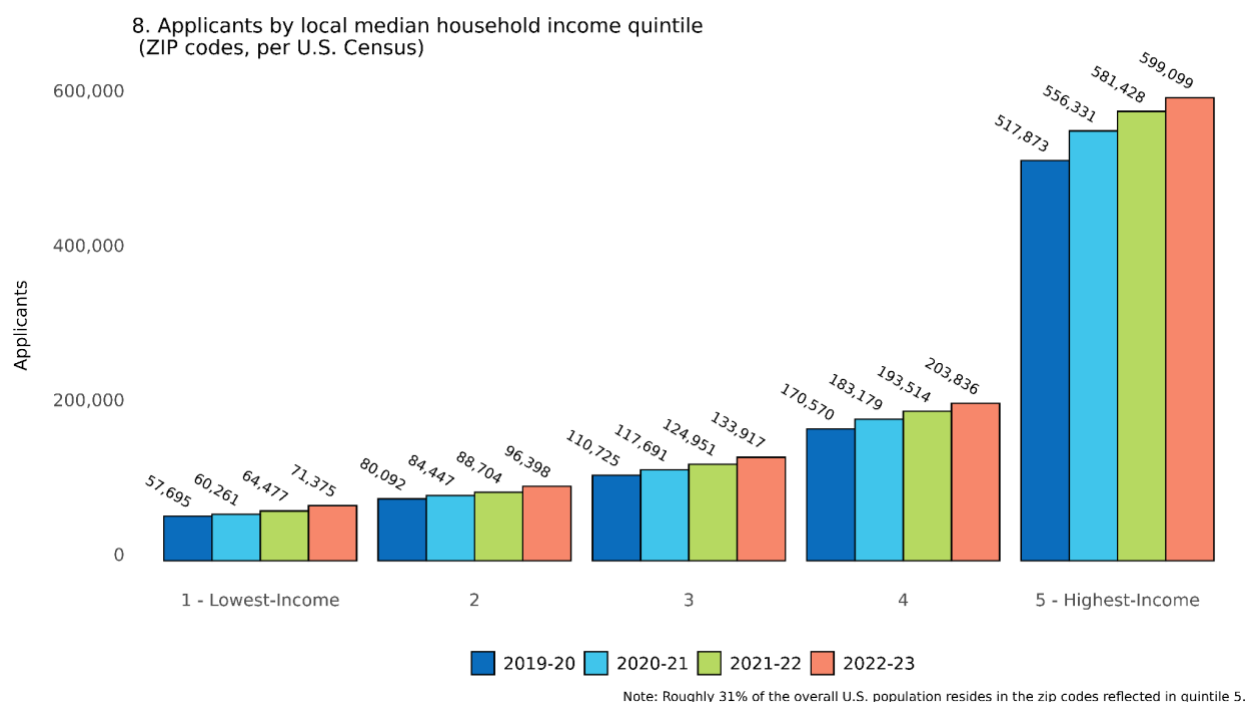
Among URM and first-generation applicants, we observe similar growth rates since last season (+12% for each applicant subgroup). For fee waiver-eligible students, this one-year increase (+30%) marks the largest observed over this period.

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



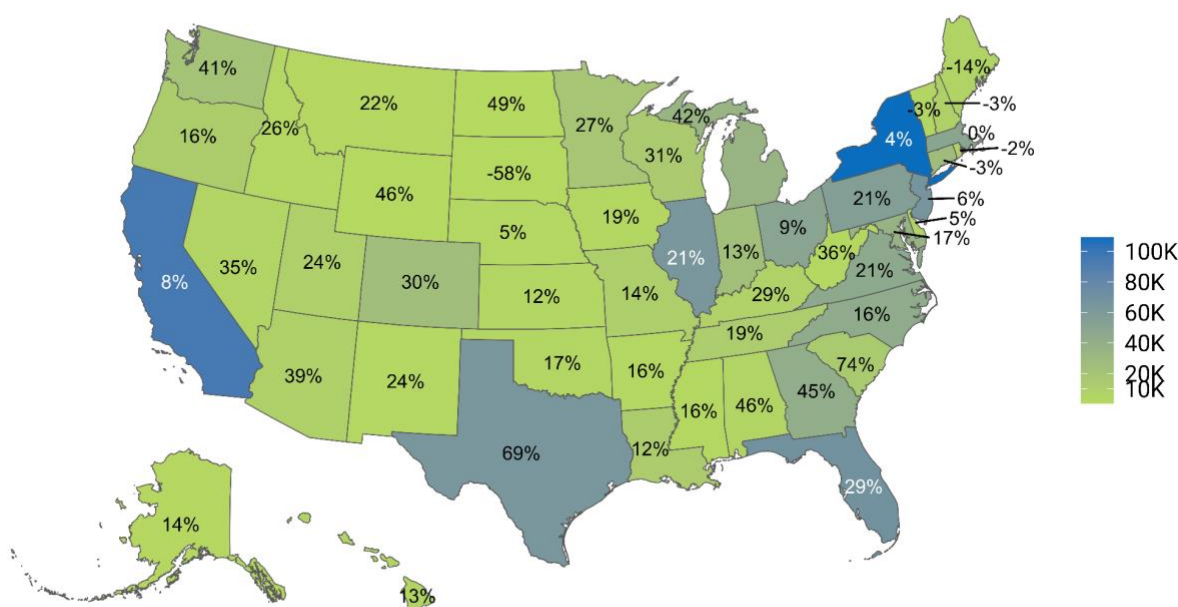
We reported in previous research that students applying to early deadlines (which comprises a large share of applications submitted through March 1) generally reside in more affluent communities than students who apply via regular and rolling deadlines. The results in Figure 8 reflect this trend, as a majority (54%) of applicants came from ZIP codes in the top income quintile (20%), and just 7% 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 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 69%. 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%, -3%, -3%, and -14%, respectively).

Figure 9. Applicant counts in most states increased since 2019–20

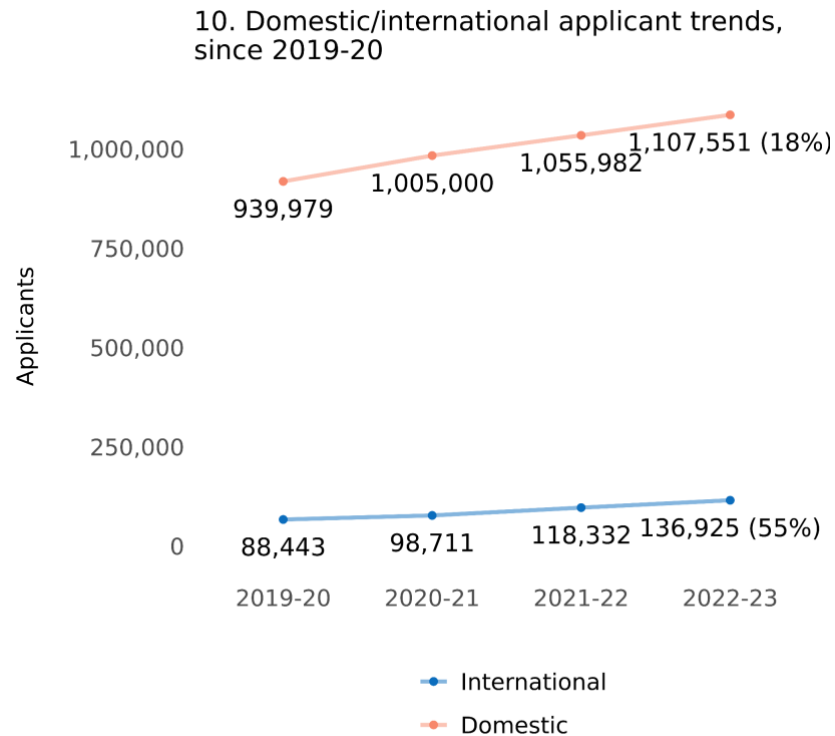
9. Applicant trends by U.S. state since 2019-20



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 (55%) 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, Ghana, Nigeria, and Canada.

Figure 10. International applicants increased 55% since 2019–20

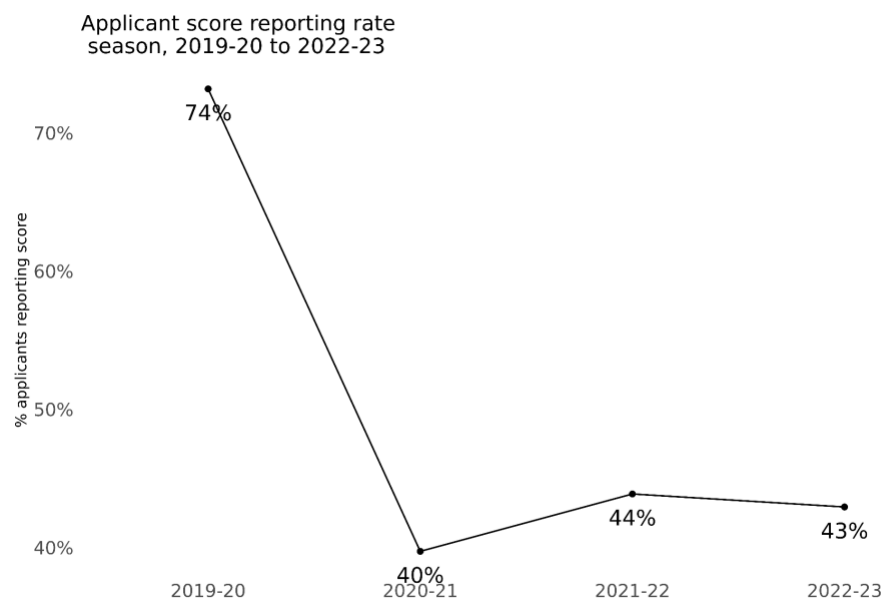


Trends in applicants' test score reporting behaviors

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.

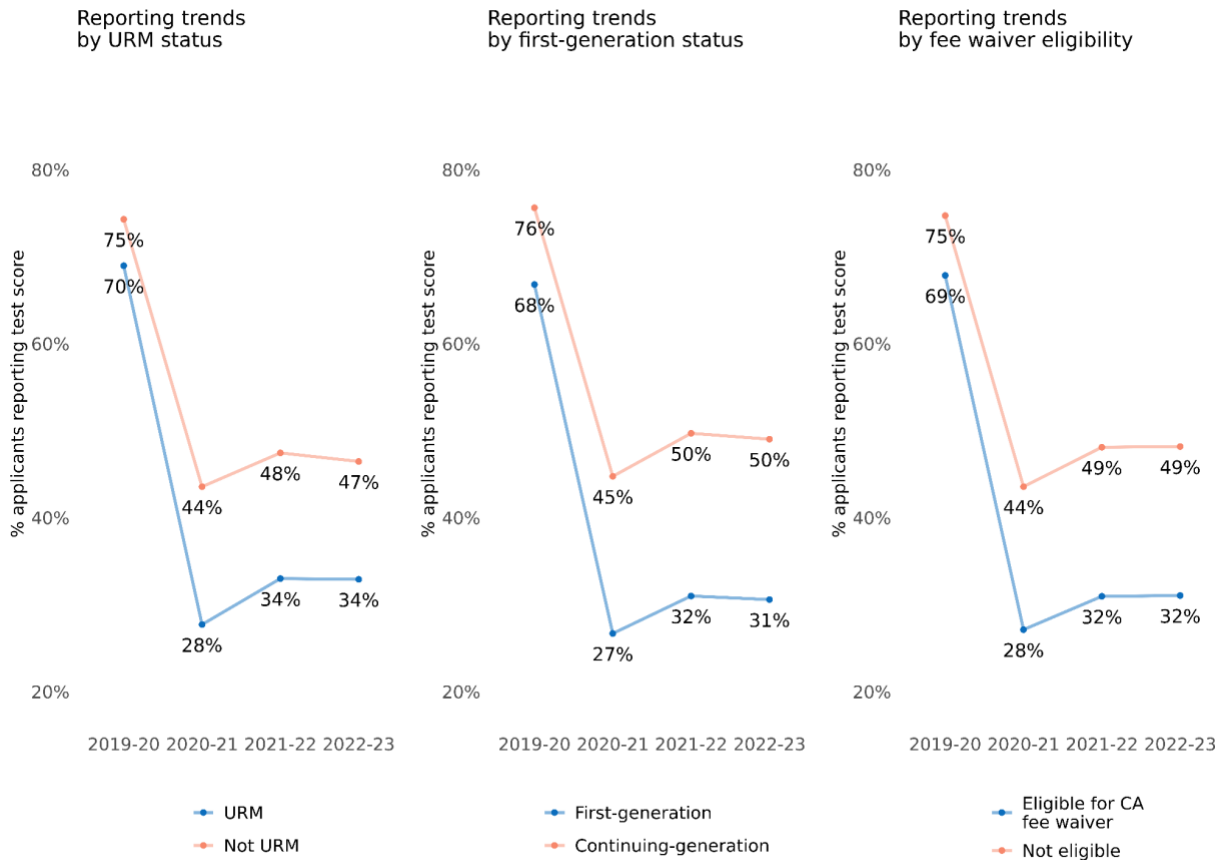
In **Figure 11**, we show that after a sharp decline from 2019–20 (74%) to 2020–21 (40%) and then a slight rebound in 2021–22 (44%), we saw no meaningful change in 2022–23 (43%). We will continue to monitor this trend throughout the application season.

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 March 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 March 1, we saw that the majority of applications were submitted to private members. The rate of application growth for public members since 2019–20 (+39%) was greater 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

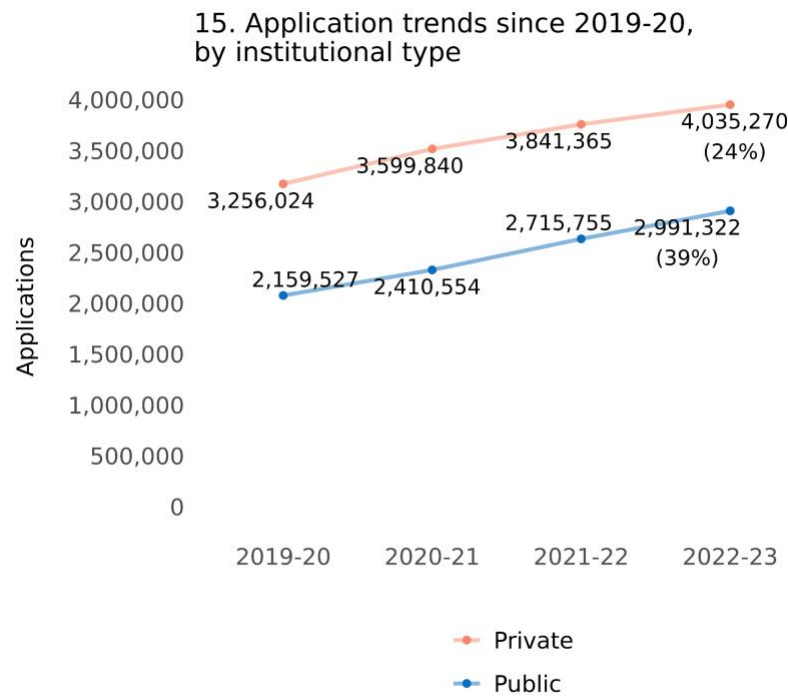
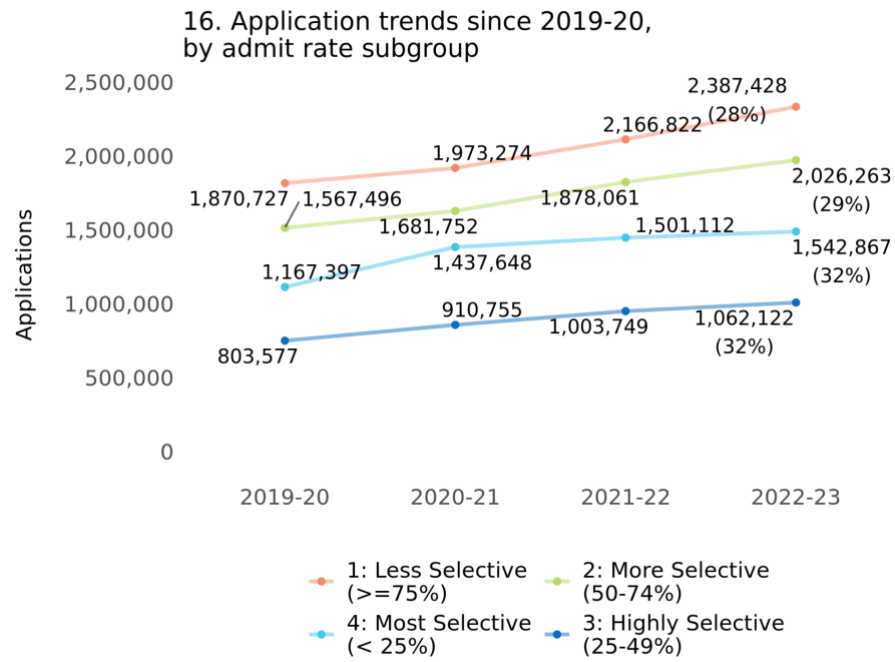


Figure 16 presents trends in application volume by member selectivity, as measured by undergraduate admit rates reported in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). We observe that the majority of applications were submitted to member institutions with admit rates at or above 50% (over 4 million through March 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 March 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 rates have fallen slightly from last season and still vary significantly across demographic subgroups.

Please stay tuned for our end-of-season update, which we will publish in August 2023.

Appendix

Figure A1. Test score reporting rates varied by legal sex

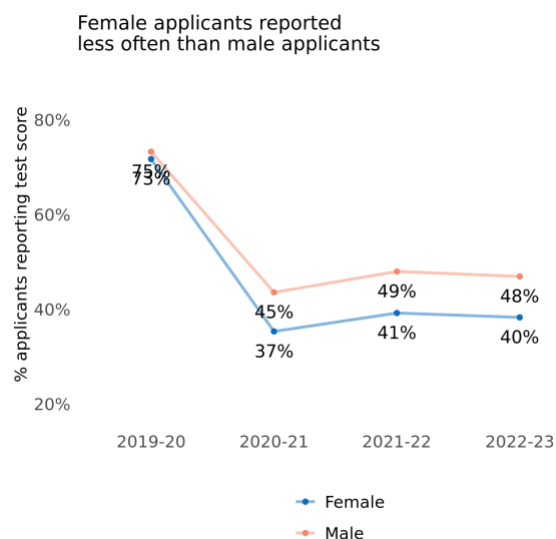


Figure A2. Test score reporting rates were higher in more affluent zip codes

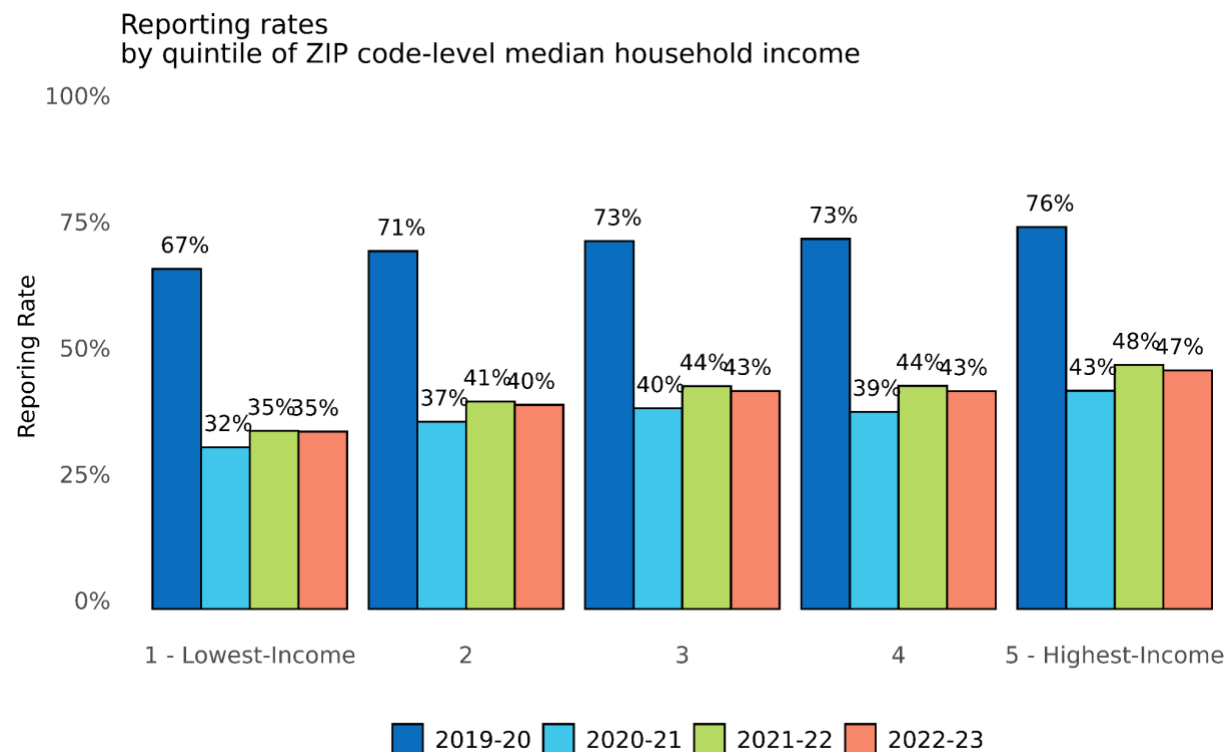


Table A1. Application trends varied by member region and institutional control

	Private				Public			
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Mid-Atlantic	1,155,736	1,269,006	1,320,515	1,390,039	489,985	506,683	575,019	633,143
Midwestern	499,413	537,789	584,511	623,922	564,991	638,253	726,313	791,179
New England	691,241	774,887	839,226	874,949	251,448	257,762	278,219	293,021
Southern	450,407	516,799	567,691	587,706	635,992	737,539	834,243	929,673
Southwestern	76,031	90,567	103,370	112,139	30,460	40,397	51,335	65,644
Western	383,196	410,792	426,052	446,515	186,651	229,920	250,626	278,662

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	280,427	301,092	307,543	324,134	NA	NA	NA	NA
Connecticut	128,109	134,157	141,286	152,268	59,993	57,657	64,606	70,569
District of Columbia	77,682	82,211	73,727	85,648	NA	NA	NA	NA
Florida	118,858	135,641	164,291	165,657	173,325	196,187	240,828	249,552
Georgia	70,985	80,077	87,844	94,588	NA	NA	NA	NA
Illinois	160,911	167,566	179,235	191,916	NA	NA	NA	NA
Indiana	66,350	69,216	72,924	75,738	100,885	107,735	123,257	132,726
Iowa	18,897	19,836	23,641	24,912	NA	NA	NA	NA
Kentucky	6,560	7,721	8,154	9,118	NA	NA	NA	NA
Louisiana	47,957	52,268	48,052	44,841	NA	NA	NA	NA
Maine	38,121	38,302	40,741	43,947	21,170	21,019	21,514	21,150
Maryland	62,358	69,513	68,239	71,990	27,077	25,537	26,793	30,385
Massachusetts	390,928	453,847	499,443	512,635	94,367	96,221	102,712	110,253
Michigan	21,755	24,563	28,816	32,405	125,964	156,403	184,070	198,986
Minnesota	32,459	37,642	40,636	44,024	30,568	30,934	35,747	38,556
Missouri	40,533	48,324	49,381	52,648	22,374	24,095	25,990	30,854
New Hampshire	36,480	41,334	41,302	42,345	NA	NA	NA	NA
New Jersey	100,044	102,548	111,906	121,533	71,273	61,415	71,474	79,643
New York	612,120	679,303	713,315	733,823	203,588	200,071	220,832	257,809
North Carolina	88,678	104,114	111,799	118,276	156,231	177,705	197,844	219,699
Ohio	119,830	129,714	143,859	152,654	165,328	184,992	205,017	224,364
Oregon	30,000	29,769	32,411	33,464	NA	NA	NA	NA
Pennsylvania	303,397	335,428	353,151	377,045	155,786	186,917	221,648	229,006
Rhode Island	79,392	86,526	92,453	98,847	NA	NA	NA	NA
South Carolina	11,411	14,565	17,106	17,568	NA	NA	NA	NA
Tennessee	57,021	67,969	68,118	70,439	NA	NA	NA	NA
Texas	71,274	85,838	97,094	104,447	NA	NA	NA	NA
Vermont	18,211	20,721	24,001	24,907	NA	NA	NA	NA
Virginia	43,652	49,306	56,736	60,853	127,003	136,392	144,963	156,602
Washington	35,120	37,068	38,560	40,426	NA	NA	NA	NA
Wisconsin	29,459	31,289	34,938	37,692	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	512,080	523,112	566,624	600,581	546,628	552,698	609,943	657,298	254,531	276,622	284,380	311,027	330,369	420,801	431,830	450,926
Midwestern	426,708	458,877	514,772	566,337	389,684	425,609	481,337	523,305	122,891	150,729	167,358	173,047	123,403	138,788	145,124	150,258
New England	306,261	291,002	306,220	325,481	198,863	207,698	228,481	246,399	93,298	103,353	111,582	118,949	342,255	428,688	469,277	475,269
Southern	334,792	359,196	403,502	473,740	250,164	305,919	351,154	379,737	285,041	327,742	383,215	395,883	216,402	261,481	264,063	268,019
Southwestern	26,591	33,564	43,003	53,461	41,505	50,163	59,774	68,398	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Western	264,295	307,523	332,701	367,828	140,652	139,665	147,372	151,126	28,907	29,634	32,049	34,351	135,566	163,430	164,154	171,505

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	20,787	17,547	19,929	23,019	106,745	104,708	107,784	112,032	22,783	22,551	22,593	24,096	129,685	155,826	156,835	164,620
Colorado	79,717	98,655	100,971	108,904	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Connecticut	57,045	49,870	51,000	55,421	76,358	75,331	82,092	91,044	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Florida	46,912	49,177	59,841	64,355	79,666	98,106	118,876	120,622	165,605	184,545	226,402	230,232	NA	NA	NA	NA
Georgia	44,220	50,113	52,354	67,526	24,376	26,603	32,347	33,082	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Illinois	25,338	22,984	26,950	30,582	86,903	89,884	96,647	104,134	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Indiana	79,880	82,815	87,603	91,366	68,011	72,635	83,808	90,185	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Iowa	24,451	26,541	33,033	36,304	8,709	8,048	10,006	10,439	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Kentucky	19,988	22,379	24,356	31,262	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Maine	28,281	27,495	28,881	28,712	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Maryland	40,197	37,181	37,896	39,700	20,732	20,571	21,276	25,832	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Massachusetts	118,237	114,874	124,668	133,967	83,046	85,357	92,149	100,502	75,762	84,710	90,744	95,197	207,829	264,761	294,296	292,878
Michigan	57,421	67,848	88,601	96,719	27,755	33,058	39,480	45,353	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Minnesota	12,694	13,285	14,734	16,268	41,375	42,453	47,862	52,548	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Missouri	20,282	23,003	24,758	30,169	16,407	17,689	19,465	23,117	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
New Hampshire	45,955	44,012	44,797	46,989	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
New Jersey	99,321	89,600	105,738	115,347	43,702	41,061	44,042	49,254	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
New York	164,341	159,490	163,992	173,658	342,988	342,721	369,717	396,335	113,073	126,648	138,799	150,948	195,306	250,515	261,639	270,691
North Carolina	75,789	80,970	90,498	101,281	43,095	49,230	57,592	66,862	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Ohio	152,264	161,455	174,748	194,136	80,928	95,167	107,445	114,424	51,157	57,392	65,982	67,752	NA	NA	NA	NA
Oregon	60,653	69,236	75,776	83,527	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Pennsylvania	201,316	230,454	252,558	265,101	106,945	115,602	140,636	149,577	70,546	74,147	78,117	81,206	NA	NA	NA	NA
Rhode Island	49,939	48,342	49,415	52,329	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
South Carolina	NA	NA	NA	NA	43,344	63,996	69,890	79,135	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Tennessee	NA	NA	NA	NA	16,273	16,801	17,109	19,443	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Texas	NA	NA	NA	NA	36,748	45,434	53,498	60,706	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Virginia	89,281	87,833	96,046	105,417	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Washington	22,764	24,113	24,137	26,242	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
West Virginia	13,493	14,716	16,040	18,324	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Wisconsin	20,959	22,408	24,510	25,660	51,845	58,877	68,173	74,081	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.