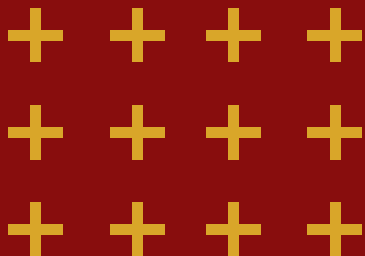


CARNEGIE

Graduating Seniors Report 2024

A STUDENT SURVEY BROUGHT TO YOU BY CARNEGIE AND  collegexpress

AUGUST 2024



about this research

As part of an effort to offer high-value data to the industry, Carnegie held a 2024 graduating seniors survey.

Carnegie is uniquely positioned to conduct this research on a regular basis because of its CollegeXpress platform and the wide range of student voices it represents. Information from this report will be used to monitor trends over time for comparison and as a complement to the FAFSA changes research delivered in May 2024.

By understanding incoming student needs, perceptions, and behaviors, higher education institutions will find greater success in making critical human connections that stretch from first inquiry to longstanding alum.

At the core of this data are insights ranging from communication tactics to student success preparation; personality shifts to engagement timing. This document also includes comparisons to the 2023 study, which included many of the same measures and the same methodology for gathering respondents.

Research Methodology

Graduating seniors from Carnegie's CollegeXpress service completed an incentivized, online survey after the May 1 deadline, sent to them via email. Available on laptops and mobile devices, the survey contained approximately 10 minutes of questions about the journey to college, decision-making, and student personality. Carnegie tracks this data over time to understand student trends and offer national comparisons for clients engaged in prospect research.

3K

Student Voices

GRADUATING SENIORS
CX USERS

38

Respondent Breakouts

DEMOGRAPHICS
STUDENT HISTORY
PSYCHOGRAPHICS

11

Institution Type Breakouts

SIZE X TYPE
CROSSTABS

APPROACH

Quantitative Survey
Distribution: Email List
05/06/24–05/13/24
Confidence Level: 99%
Max Confidence Interval: 2.22

SURVEY STATISTICAL DETAILS

Total Email List Size: 100,000
Total Surveys Started: 3,639
Outside Inclusion Parameters: 312
Incomplete/Speeding: 92
Final Sample: 3,235

REPORT CONTENTS

Background (Page 2)
College Selection (Page 8)
College Choice (Page 20)
Search Journey (Page 38)
Insights (Page 63)

GRADUATING SENIORS

SAMPLE

Who completed the survey.

background

GENDER

Woman:	64%
Man:	32%
Genderqueer:	2%
Nonbinary:	2%

LGBTQIA+ STATUS

LGBTQIA+:	17%
CIS/Straight:	83%

RACE (ALL THAT APPLY)

American Indian/Alaska Native:	3%
Asian:	9%
Black or African American:	20%
Hispanic or Latinx:	21%
Middle Eastern/North African:	1%
Pacific Islander:	1%
White/Caucasian:	62%
Other:	2%

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Lower Income:	24%
Lower Middle-income:	28%
Upper Middle-income:	37%
Upper Income:	11%

POLITICAL AFFILIATION

Liberal:	25%
Conservative:	22%
Moderate:	25%
Non-political:	28%

RELIGION

Christian:	37%
Catholic:	20%
Other Religious:	25%
Atheist/Non-religious:	18%

GRADES

High Achiever (All 'A's+):	37%
Above Average ('A's and 'B's):	41%
Average (Mostly 'B's):	16%
Below Average:	6%

LOCATION*

East North Central:	14%
West North Central:	8%
Middle Atlantic:	13%
Mountain:	7%
New England:	5%
Pacific:	14%
South Atlantic:	20%
East South Central:	4%
West South Central:	15%

*East North Central = WI, IL, IN, MI, OH; West North Central = ND, SD, NE, KS, MN, IA, MO; Middle Atlantic = NY, NJ, PA; Mountain = MT, ID, NV, UT, AZ, WY, CO, NM; New England = CT, RI, MA, ME, NH, VT; Pacific = WA, OR, CA, AK, HI; South Atlantic = FL, GA, SC, NC, VA, WV, MD, DE, DC; East South Central = KY, TN, MS, AL; West South Central = TX, OK, AR, LA

INSTITUTIONAL BREAKOUTS

Another way to consider this data.

INSTITUTIONAL TYPE AND SIZE COMBINATIONS FOR THIS STUDY

Small Public: Respondent indicated they are attending a 4-year public institution that has fewer than 5,000 students.	6%
Small Private: Respondent indicated they are attending a 4-year private institution that has fewer than 5,000 students.	9%
Small Religious: Respondent indicated they are attending a 4-year religious institution that has fewer than 5,000 students.	9%
Small CC/Trade: Respondent indicated they are attending a community college or trade school that has fewer than 5,000 students.	5%
Midsized Public: Respondent indicated they are attending a 4-year public institution that has 5,000-15,000 students.	18%
Midsized Private: Respondent indicated they are attending a 4-year private institution that has 5,000-15,000 students.	6%
Midsized Religious: Respondent indicated they are attending a 4-year religious institution that has 5,000-15,000 students.	4%
Midsized/Large CC/Trade: Respondent indicated they are attending a community college or trade school that has more than 5,000 students.	5%
Large Public: Respondent indicated they are attending a 4-year public institution that has 15,000-25,000 students.	16%
Large Private/Religious: Respondent indicated they are attending a private or religious institution that has more than 15,000 students.	4%
Mega Public: Respondent indicated they are attending a 4-year public institution that has more than 25,000 students.	18%

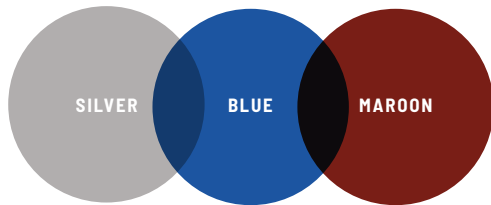
background

CARNEGIE MOTIVATOR PROFILES

Unlocking message segmentation opportunities.

After years of research on the Carnegie archetype system, patterns emerged in relationships between concepts. Natural groupings of archetypes interact and can act as a baseline drive factor: The Carnegie Motivator. There are three Carnegie Motivator profiles, with any person having one area dominant in their personality. This dominant Motivator is the key to unlocking psychographics-based messaging. This CX audience has the following **Motivator prevalence breakdown:**

[STRENGTH]

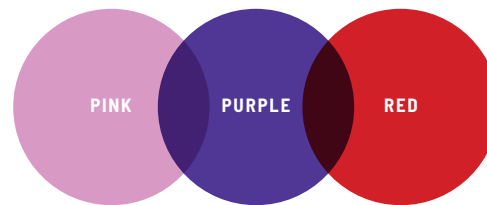


People with a dominant Strength Motivator are likely to be daring, powerful, and resilient. Others will see them as assertive, tenacious, and at times even rebellious.

If a person possesses a significant expression of Strength, they may be fueled by the need for growth, a desire to disrupt the norm, or the act of overcoming challenges.

35% of this sample.

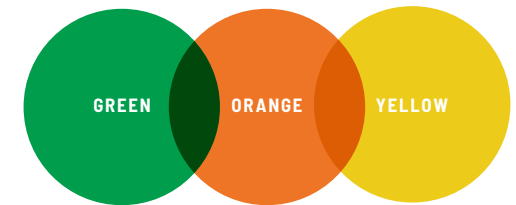
[VITALITY]



People with a dominant Vitality Motivator are likely to be sophisticated, cheerful, and supportive. Others will see them as refined, enthusiastic, and often even selfless. If a person possesses a significant expression of Vitality, they may be fueled by their many life experiences, the joy of entertaining, and the act of showing others compassion.

29% of this sample.

[CREATIVITY]



People with a dominant Creativity Motivator are likely to be creative, adventurous, and transformative.

Others will see them as imaginative, inquisitive, and innovative. If a person possesses a significant expression of Creativity, they may be fueled by the act of self-expression, questing toward the unknown, and a need to invent the future.

36% of this sample.

background

GRADUATING SENIORS

Change over time statistics require careful response weighting.

Because a sample cannot be identical year-over-year, Carnegie controls for changes in respondent demographics using a process called "statistical weighting" when doing comparisons. In this document, results from the 2023 study have been weighted in order to reflect the 2024 demographics reported here. As such, some of the results from the 2023 study will look slightly different than the report from the previous year. When reviewing results, the 2024 "All Respondent" average will include (UP) or (DOWN) indicators when a change year-over-year is significant.

GRADUATING SENIORS

COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

To how many colleges and universities did you apply? To how many were you accepted?

college selections

AUDIENCE	APPLICATIONS	ACCEPTANCES	ACCEPTANCE RATE
All Respondents (Weighted 2023)	7.41	5.50	74%
All Respondents (2024)	7.00 (DOWN)	5.41	77% (UP)
Women	7.19	5.64	78%
Men	6.71	5.04 (-)	75%
Other	6.11 (-)	4.69 (-)	77%
LGBTQIA+	7.79 (+)	5.77 (+)	74%
Straight/CIS	6.84	5.34	78%
Asian	9.59 (+)	5.96 (+)	62% (-)
Black/African American	9.29 (+)	7.10 (+)	76%
Hispanic/Latinx	7.17	5.19 (-)	72% (-)
Other/Mixed Race	7.11	5.44	77%
White	5.72 (-)	4.82 (-)	84% (+)
Low Income	7.69 (+)	5.87 (+)	76%
Lower Middle-income	6.59 (-)	5.26	80% (+)
Upper Middle-income	6.57 (-)	5.20	79%
High Income	7.87 (+)	5.46	69% (-)
Liberal	8.40 (+)	6.09 (+)	73% (-)
Conservative	5.55 (-)	4.58 (-)	83% (+)
Moderate	7.04	5.50	78%
Non-political	6.93	5.42	78%
Christian	6.08 (-)	4.97 (-)	82% (+)
Catholic	7.36 (+)	5.68	77%
Other Religion	7.65 (+)	5.76 (+)	75%
Atheist/Non-religious	7.57 (+)	5.53	73% (-)
High Achiever	7.93 (+)	6.02 (+)	76%
Above Average Grades	6.55 (-)	5.23	80% (+)
Average Grades	6.36 (-)	4.95 (-)	78%
Below Average Grades	5.82 (-)	3.97 (-)	68% (-)

* Average scores with (+) indicate a statistically significantly higher score than the respondent average. Scores with (-) indicate a statistically lower score.

GRADUATING SENIORS

COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

To how many colleges and universities did you apply? To how many were you accepted?

college selections

AUDIENCE	APPLICATIONS	ACCEPTANCES	ACCEPTANCE RATE
All Respondents	7.00	5.41	77%
East North Central	6.63 (-)	5.59	84% (+)
West North Central	4.99 (-)	4.19 (-)	84% (+)
Middle Atlantic	8.99 (+)	6.74 (+)	75%
Mountain	5.45 (-)	4.58 (-)	84% (+)
New England	8.39 (+)	6.09 (+)	73% (-)
Pacific	7.89 (+)	5.34	68% (-)
South Atlantic	7.48 (+)	5.66	76%
East South Central	6.73	5.90 (+)	88% (+)
West South Central	5.82 (-)	4.65 (-)	80% (+)
Small Public	6.55 (-)	5.27	80% (+)
Small Private	8.33 (+)	6.36 (+)	76%
Small Religious	5.71 (-)	5.01 (-)	88% (+)
Small CC/Trade	3.68 (-)	3.12 (-)	85% (+)
Midsize Public	6.81	5.56	82% (+)
Midsize Private	9.25 (+)	6.72 (+)	73% (-)
Midsize Religious	7.54 (+)	5.80 (+)	77%
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	4.18 (-)	3.08 (-)	74%
Large Public	7.13	5.40	76%
Large Private/Religious	8.22 (+)	5.71	69% (-)
Mega Public	7.69 (+)	5.72	74%
Strength Motivated	6.87	5.49	80% (+)
Vitality Motivated	6.96	5.46	78%
Creativity Motivated	7.14	5.29	74%

* Average scores with (+) indicate a statistically significantly higher score than the respondent average. Scores with (-) indicate a statistically lower score.



DATA INSIGHT

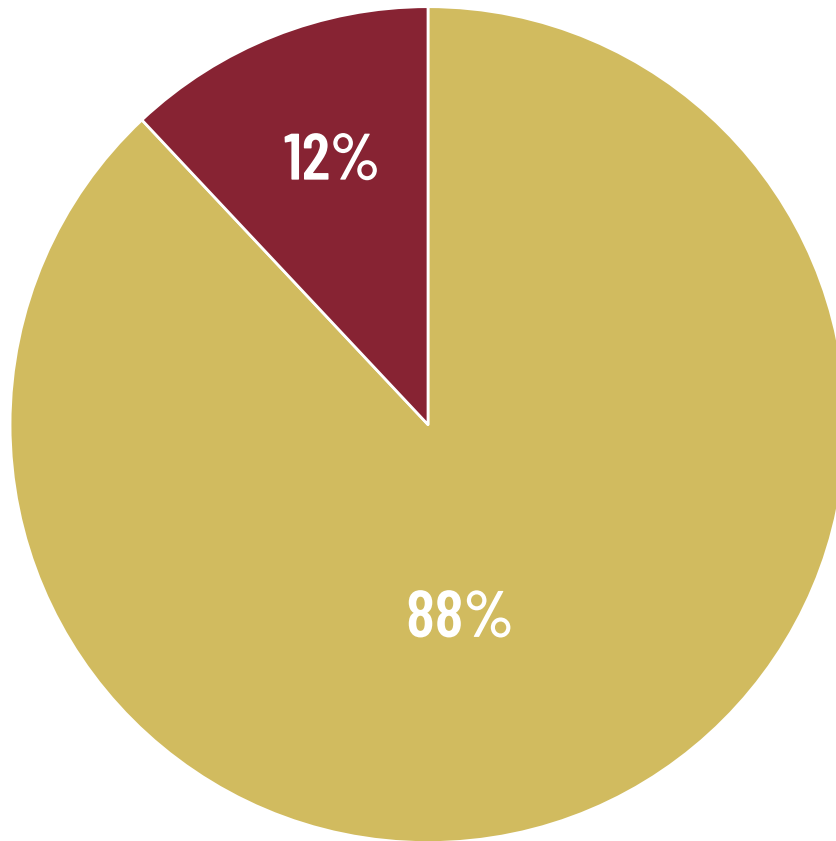
Applications were down slightly in 2024, while acceptance rates rose. The highest application rate seen for the CX userbase was 9.50 in Fall 2020. Importantly, some measure of acceptance rate is related to the types of institutions certain groups apply to. For example, some may be surprised high achieving students do not have a higher acceptance rate, but this is due to typically applying to more competitive schools.

GRADUATING SENIORS

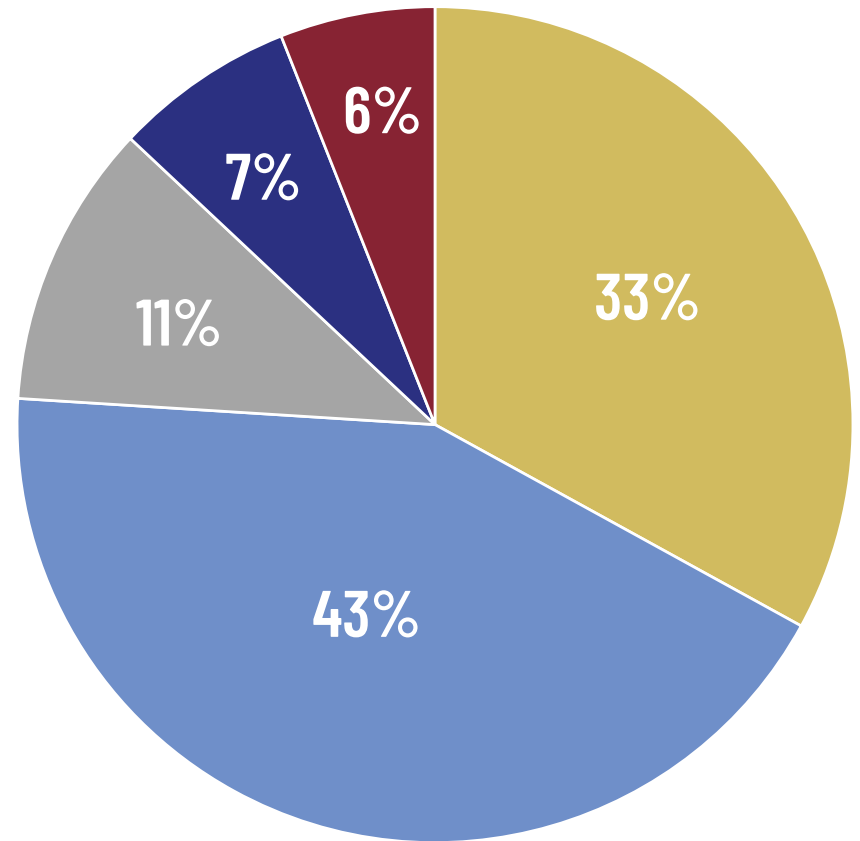
COLLEGE COMMITMENT

Have you fully committed to a school yet? If not, when do you intend to fully commit?

college selections



■ Committed ■ Not Committed



■ ASAP ■ End of May ■ End of June ■ End of July ■ Later

** For full breakouts and analysis of this question compared to 2023, please refer to Carnegie's FAFSA Rapid Report, which explores this information in depth considering the unprecedented delays to the financial aid system during the 2024 cycle.*

GRADUATING SENIORS

DISTANCE

How far from where you currently live is the college you selected to attend?

college selections

AUDIENCE	50 MILES 1 HOUR	150 MILES 2.5 HOURS	300 MILES 5 HOURS	600 MILES 10 HOURS	FARTHER IN USA	OUTSIDE USA	TRAVEL FLEXIBILITY
All Respondents (Weighted 2023)	47%	25%	14%	6%	8%	1%	2.06
All Respondents (2024)	40%	26%	15%	9%	10%	1%	2.25 (UP)
Women	39%	27%	15%	10%	9%	0%	2.24
Men	40%	25%	16%	9%	11%	1%	2.27
Other	43%	27%	11%	4%	14%	2%	2.24
LGBTQIA+	41%	26%	14%	7%	11%	1%	2.22
Straight/CIS	39%	26%	15%	10%	9%	1%	2.26
Asian	44%	21%	13%	6%	16%	1%	2.31
Black/African American	38%	26%	16%	12%	8%	0%	2.26
Hispanic/Latinx	48%	18%	14%	9%	10%	1%	2.17
Other/Mixed Race	44%	27%	11%	7%	11%	1%	2.17
White	35%	30%	16%	10%	9%	0%	2.28
Low Income	48%	24%	13%	8%	7%	1%	2.05 (-)
Lower Middle-income	43%	25%	16%	8%	8%	0%	2.13 (-)
Upper Middle-income	36%	29%	14%	10%	11%	0%	2.32 (+)
High Income	25%	24%	21%	12%	17%	1%	2.75 (+)
Liberal	33%	26%	17%	9%	15%	1%	2.49 (+)
Conservative	38%	28%	16%	10%	8%	0%	2.22
Moderate	41%	25%	16%	9%	8%	1%	2.21
Non-political	45%	26%	13%	9%	7%	1%	2.11 (-)
Christian	39%	28%	15%	9%	8%	0%	2.20
Catholic	42%	25%	15%	9%	10%	0%	2.21
Other Religion	42%	23%	15%	10%	9%	1%	2.24
Atheist/Non-religious	34%	27%	15%	10%	13%	1%	2.42 (+)
High Achiever	36%	27%	15%	10%	12%	1%	2.36 (+)
Above Average Grades	38%	28%	15%	10%	9%	0%	2.24
Average Grades	45%	22%	18%	7%	7%	0%	2.11 (-)
Below Average Grades	54%	20%	9%	10%	6%	2%	2.00 (-)

* Average scores with (+) indicate a statistically significantly higher score than the respondent average. Scores with (-) indicate a statistically lower score.

GRADUATING SENIORS

DISTANCE

How far from where you currently live is the college you selected to attend?

college selections

AUDIENCE	50 MILES 1 HOUR	150 MILES 2.5 HOURS	300 MILES 5 HOURS	600 MILES 10 HOURS	FARTHER IN USA	OUTSIDE USA	TRAVEL FLEXIBILITY
All Respondents	40%	26%	15%	9%	10%	1%	2.25
East North Central	42%	32%	11%	8%	6%	1%	2.07 (-)
West North Central	42%	28%	14%	8%	8%	0%	2.11 (-)
Middle Atlantic	41%	24%	18%	11%	6%	0%	2.18
Mountain	36%	18%	13%	14%	19%	0%	2.61 (+)
New England	36%	30%	10%	10%	14%	1%	2.38 (+)
Pacific	43%	18%	12%	10%	17%	1%	2.43 (+)
South Atlantic	36%	30%	18%	8%	8%	1%	2.25
East South Central	42%	33%	16%	5%	4%	1%	1.98 (-)
West South Central	39%	24%	18%	10%	8%	1%	2.26
Small Public	40%	29%	14%	8%	10%	0%	2.19
Small Private	30%	24%	16%	12%	18%	1%	2.68 (+)
Small Religious	33%	29%	14%	13%	11%	0%	2.41 (+)
Small CC/Trade	78%	11%	6%	2%	2%	1%	1.39 (-)
Midsize Public	39%	33%	17%	7%	4%	1%	2.05 (-)
Midsize Private	30%	18%	17%	12%	23%	1%	2.83 (+)
Midsize Religious	33%	29%	15%	7%	15%	0%	2.42 (+)
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	80%	10%	5%	2%	3%	1%	1.39 (-)
Large Public	38%	30%	18%	9%	6%	1%	2.17
Large Private/Religious	24%	14%	21%	18%	23%	0%	3.02 (+)
Mega Public	36%	29%	14%	12%	9%	0%	2.32
Strength Motivated	37%	27%	16%	11%	9%	1%	2.29
Vitality Motivated	42%	26%	13%	9%	9%	0%	2.18
Creativity Motivated	40%	25%	16%	9%	10%	1%	2.26

* Average scores with (+) indicate a statistically significantly higher score than the respondent average. Scores with (-) indicate a statistically lower score.



DATA INSIGHT

Travel flexibility statistically increased in the 2024 cycle, however, 2/3 of respondents still ended up selecting an institution within 150 miles of their hometown. As many institutions continue to look for ways to expand enrollment reach, it is important to focus long distance efforts on high opportunity areas with niche focus like ZIP Codes or even individual households that match the demographic and behavioral needs of the institution, mixed with travel flexibility and accessibility.

GRADUATING SENIORS

INSTITUTIONAL TYPE

What type of college did you select to attend?

college selections

AUDIENCE	4-YEAR PUBLIC	PRIVATE	RELIGIOUS	COMMUNITY COLLEGE	TRADE SCHOOL
All Respondents (2023 Weighted)	58%	18%	13%	11%	1%
All Respondents (2024)	58%	18%	14%	9%	1%
Women	58%	18%	14%	10%	1%
Men	57%	18%	16%	8%	1%
Other	56%	26%	6%	10%	2%
LGBTQIA+	61%	23%	5%	9%	1%
Straight/CIS	57%	17%	16%	9%	1%
Asian	60%	23%	7%	10%	0%
Black/African American	62%	19%	12%	6%	1%
Hispanic/Latinx	55%	16%	13%	14%	1%
Other/Mixed Race	63%	17%	11%	7%	1%
White	55%	18%	17%	9%	1%
Low Income	52%	18%	14%	14%	2%
Lower Middle-income	59%	16%	13%	11%	1%
Upper Middle-income	59%	18%	16%	7%	1%
High Income	61%	23%	11%	5%	0%
Liberal	59%	24%	9%	7%	1%
Conservative	53%	12%	23%	10%	1%
Moderate	58%	19%	13%	10%	1%
Non-political	59%	17%	13%	10%	1%
Christian	57%	14%	18%	10%	1%
Catholic	52%	17%	19%	11%	0%
Other Religion	59%	20%	11%	9%	1%
Atheist/Non-religious	63%	24%	6%	7%	1%
High Achiever	59%	21%	15%	5%	0%
Above Average Grades	59%	17%	14%	9%	1%
Average Grades	53%	17%	14%	16%	2%
Below Average Grades	54%	11%	8%	23%	5%

GRADUATING SENIORS

INSTITUTIONAL TYPE

What type of college did you select to attend?

college selections

AUDIENCE	4-YEAR PUBLIC	PRIVATE	RELIGIOUS	COMMUNITY COLLEGE	TRADE SCHOOL
All Respondents	58%	18%	14%	9%	1%
East North Central	58%	17%	16%	10%	0%
West North Central	55%	14%	20%	9%	2%
Middle Atlantic	45%	34%	17%	4%	1%
Mountain	60%	16%	13%	11%	1%
New England	49%	33%	15%	3%	0%
Pacific	57%	14%	11%	18%	1%
South Atlantic	61%	20%	10%	8%	1%
East South Central	61%	12%	14%	10%	3%
West South Central	65%	8%	16%	9%	1%
Small Public	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Small Private	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%
Small Religious	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%
Small CC/Trade	0%	0%	0%	87%	13%
Midsize Public	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Midsize Private	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%
Midsize Religious	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	0%	0%	0%	94%	6%
Large Public	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Large Private/Religious	0%	68%	32%	0%	0%
Mega Public	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Strength Motivated	54%	18%	17%	10%	1%
Vitality Motivated	58%	17%	15%	9%	1%
Creativity Motivated	60%	19%	11%	8%	1%



DATA INSIGHT

These numbers are similar to previous CX studies for attendance type. This information, in tandem with the size information on the following pages, was used to create the institutional type breakouts when the cell sizes for particular combinations were significant in size. When not large enough, options were collapsed into broader categories.

GRADUATING SENIORS

INSTITUTIONAL SIZE

What size of college did you select to attend?

college selections

AUDIENCE	<1,000	1,000-5,000	5,000-15,000	15,000-25,000	>25,000	SIZE INDEX
All Respondents (2023 Weighted)	3%	23%	33%	22%	19%	3.31
All Respondents (2024)	3%	25%	32%	19%	20%	3.28
Women	3%	24%	34%	19%	20%	3.28
Men	3%	27%	29%	20%	21%	3.28
Other	7%	23%	32%	18%	20%	3.22
LGBTQIA+	3%	22%	36%	19%	20%	3.30
Straight/CIS	3%	26%	32%	19%	20%	3.27
Asian	2%	17%	28%	24%	29%	3.62 (+)
Black/African American	1%	23%	40%	22%	13%	3.23
Hispanic/Latinx	4%	20%	33%	21%	21%	3.35
Other/Mixed Race	3%	22%	34%	20%	23%	3.39 (+)
White	4%	29%	30%	17%	20%	3.19 (-)
Low Income	4%	25%	38%	19%	15%	3.17 (-)
Lower Middle-income	4%	24%	34%	19%	19%	3.24
Upper Middle-income	3%	28%	29%	18%	22%	3.29
High Income	2%	20%	27%	25%	27%	3.55 (+)
Liberal	2%	23%	32%	20%	24%	3.41 (+)
Conservative	4%	29%	29%	18%	20%	3.22
Moderate	3%	25%	32%	19%	21%	3.31
Non-political	4%	24%	36%	20%	16%	3.20
Christian	4%	27%	32%	20%	18%	3.21
Catholic	3%	27%	32%	18%	20%	3.26
Other Religion	3%	25%	32%	19%	21%	3.30
Atheist/Non-religious	3%	20%	33%	21%	23%	3.40 (+)
High Achiever	3%	25%	27%	19%	26%	3.41 (+)
Above Average Grades	4%	25%	34%	20%	18%	3.25
Average Grades	4%	25%	40%	18%	14%	3.14 (-)
Below Average Grades	4%	28%	40%	19%	9%	3.00 (-)

* Average scores with (+) indicate a statistically significantly higher score than the respondent average. Scores with (-) indicate a statistically lower score.

GRADUATING SENIORS

INSTITUTIONAL SIZE

What size of college did you select to attend?

college selections

AUDIENCE	<1,000	1,000-5,000	5,000-15,000	15,000-25,000	>25,000	SIZE INDEX
All Respondents	3%	25%	32%	19%	20%	3.28
East North Central	5%	23%	36%	16%	20%	3.23
West North Central	4%	31%	29%	19%	16%	3.12 (-)
Middle Atlantic	2%	31%	35%	18%	13%	3.09 (-)
Mountain	3%	24%	32%	18%	24%	3.38 (+)
New England	3%	30%	29%	24%	14%	3.18 (-)
Pacific	4%	20%	32%	22%	22%	3.38 (+)
South Atlantic	2%	26%	31%	19%	23%	3.36
East South Central	4%	22%	41%	16%	17%	3.20
West South Central	4%	23%	29%	22%	23%	3.35
Small Public	9%	91%	0%	0%	0%	1.91 (-)
Small Private	8%	92%	0%	0%	0%	1.92 (-)
Small Religious	11%	89%	0%	0%	0%	1.89 (-)
Small CC/Trade	20%	80%	0%	0%	0%	1.80 (-)
Midsize Public	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	3.00 (-)
Midsize Private	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	3.00 (-)
Midsize Religious	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	3.00 (-)
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	0%	0%	75%	19%	6%	3.32
Large Public	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	4.00 (+)
Large Private/Religious	0%	0%	0%	66%	34%	4.34 (+)
Mega Public	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	5.00 (+)
Strength Motivated	3%	28%	32%	17%	19%	3.19 (-)
Vitality Motivated	3%	25%	33%	19%	20%	3.27
Creativity Motivated	3%	22%	32%	22%	22%	3.36 (+)

* Average scores with (+) indicate a statistically significantly higher score than the respondent average. Scores with (-) indicate a statistically lower score.



DATA INSIGHT

Institutional size preferences have been relatively unchanged since last year, with this variable often being tied to availability regionally, seen here with several significant differences by region. Other individual factors like race, income, and school achievement were also significant in this year's model, allowing for some understanding of how various audience groups perceive the benefits of larger or smaller school sizes.

GRADUATING SENIORS

COLLEGE LIST PREFERENCE

In what position was the college you selected on your list of places to which you applied?

college selections

AUDIENCE	AT THE BOTTOM	NEAR THE BOTTOM	SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE	NEAR THE TOP	AT THE TOP	AVERAGE SCORE*
All Respondents (2023 Weighted)	3%	5%	13%	29%	51%	4.23
All Respondents (2024)	1%	3%	11%	30%	55%	4.34 (UP)
Women	1%	3%	11%	30%	56%	4.36
Men	1%	3%	13%	30%	53%	4.30
Other	2%	4%	12%	27%	55%	4.30
LGBTQIA+	2%	3%	11%	29%	55%	4.33
Straight/CIS	1%	3%	12%	30%	55%	4.34
Asian	3%	5%	19%	32%	41%	4.04 (-)
Black/African American	1%	3%	15%	30%	51%	4.25
Hispanic/Latinx	2%	3%	13%	35%	48%	4.23 (-)
Other/Mixed Race	2%	3%	11%	25%	59%	4.38
White	1%	2%	9%	29%	60%	4.45 (+)
Low Income	1%	3%	13%	28%	55%	4.34
Lower Middle-income	2%	2%	10%	29%	57%	4.38
Upper Middle-income	1%	3%	12%	31%	53%	4.32
High Income	1%	3%	10%	32%	54%	4.34
Liberal	1%	3%	11%	32%	52%	4.31
Conservative	1%	3%	9%	26%	61%	4.42
Moderate	2%	2%	12%	31%	53%	4.31
Non-political	1%	2%	13%	30%	54%	4.33
Christian	2%	2%	10%	27%	59%	4.40
Catholic	1%	4%	12%	34%	50%	4.28
Other Religion	2%	2%	12%	31%	53%	4.32
Atheist/Non-religious	1%	3%	13%	30%	54%	4.32
High Achiever	2%	3%	11%	30%	55%	4.35
Above Average Grades	1%	2%	10%	30%	56%	4.39
Average Grades	1%	4%	14%	30%	51%	4.25
Below Average Grades	2%	3%	17%	25%	52%	4.21 (-)

* Average scores with (+) indicate a statistically significantly higher score than the respondent average. Scores with (-) indicate a statistically lower score.

GRADUATING SENIORS

COLLEGE LIST PREFERENCE

In what position was the college you selected on your list of places to which you applied?

college selections

AUDIENCE	AT THE BOTTOM	NEAR THE BOTTOM	SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE	NEAR THE TOP	AT THE TOP	AVERAGE SCORE*
All Respondents	1%	3%	11%	30%	55%	4.34
East North Central	1%	2%	12%	25%	61%	4.44 (+)
West North Central	1%	2%	6%	30%	62%	4.51 (+)
Middle Atlantic	1%	4%	9%	35%	51%	4.30
Mountain	1%	1%	11%	33%	54%	4.38
New England	1%	4%	12%	30%	53%	4.30
Pacific	2%	5%	14%	31%	48%	4.19 (-)
South Atlantic	2%	3%	14%	30%	52%	4.28
East South Central	1%	3%	12%	28%	56%	4.36
West South Central	1%	2%	11%	28%	58%	4.40
Small Public	2%	2%	15%	27%	54%	4.28
Small Private	0%	2%	11%	31%	57%	4.42
Small Religious	2%	2%	9%	27%	60%	4.42
Small CC/Trade	4%	6%	13%	27%	50%	4.13 (-)
Midsize Public	1%	2%	13%	29%	55%	4.36
Midsize Private	1%	1%	9%	33%	56%	4.44 (+)
Midsize Religious	1%	7%	12%	33%	47%	4.19 (-)
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	6%	5%	19%	21%	50%	4.03 (-)
Large Public	1%	3%	13%	32%	51%	4.30
Large Private/Religious	1%	1%	7%	31%	61%	4.51 (+)
Mega Public	1%	3%	8%	32%	57%	4.42
Strength Motivated	1%	3%	12%	29%	55%	4.34
Vitality Motivated	2%	3%	11%	30%	55%	4.33
Creativity Motivated	1%	2%	11%	31%	54%	4.36

* Average scores with (+) indicate a statistically significantly higher score than the respondent average. Scores with (-) indicate a statistically lower score.



DATA INSIGHT

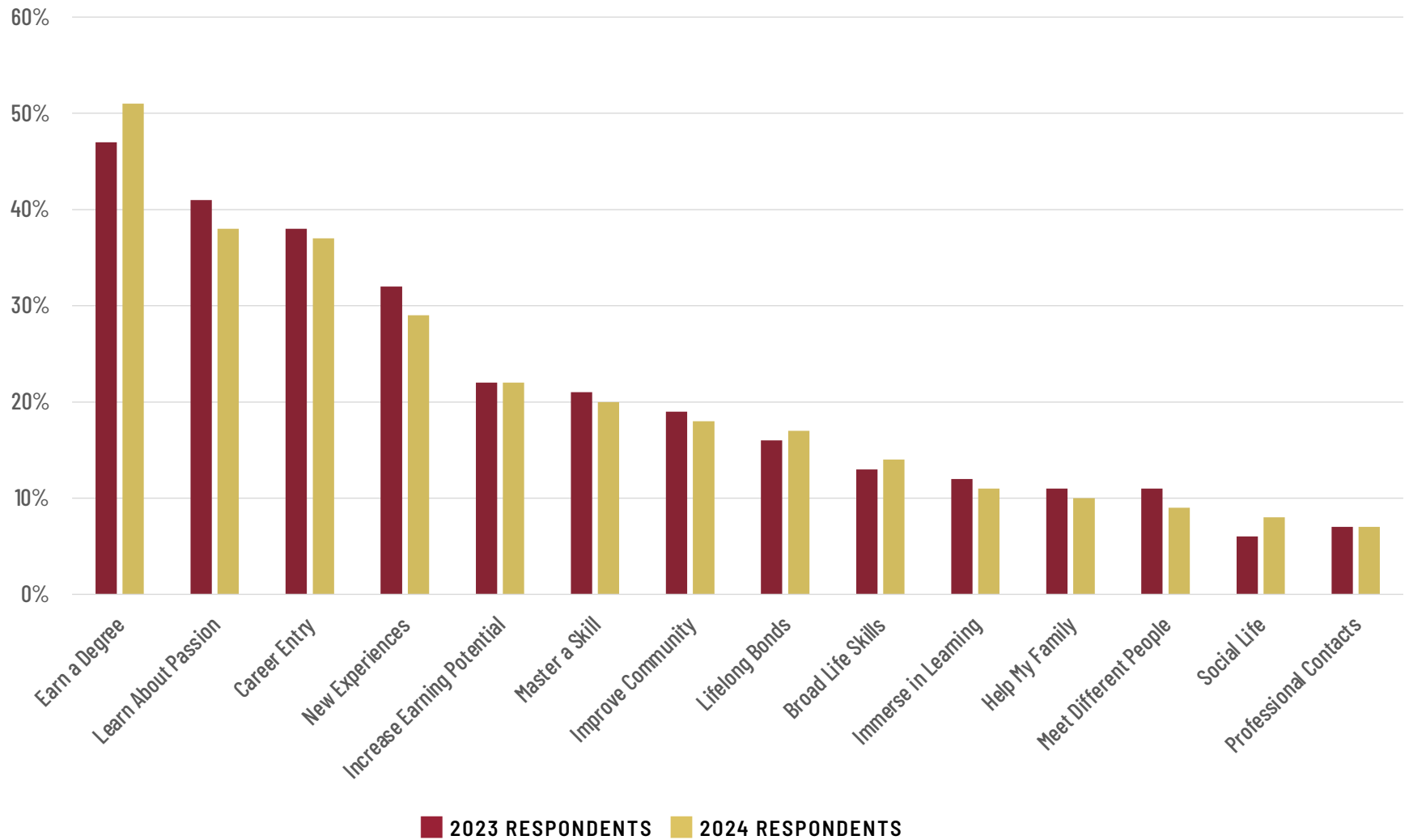
Slightly more students in 2024's graduating class are getting to attend their top choice school or one near the top of their list. This tracks with the slight increase in acceptance rate seen on pages 9 and 10. However, a lot of that gain was related to racial differences in respondents, with White respondents pulling away from the rest of the comparison group. This could be related to many top schools going race blind due to the Supreme Court decision affecting affirmative action.

GRADUATING SENIORS

MOTIVATIONS TO ATTEND

What are the most important reasons why you're attending college? (Select up to 3)

college choice



GRADUATING SENIORS

MOTIVATIONS TO ATTEND

What are the most important reasons why you're attending college? (Select up to 3)

college choice

AUDIENCE	EARN A DEGREE	LEARN ABOUT PASSION	CAREER ENTRY	NEW EXPERIENCES	INCREASE EARNING POTENTIAL	MASTER A SKILL	IMPROVE COMMUNITY
All Respondents	51%	38%	37%	29%	22%	20%	18%
Women	52%	41%	37%	32%	19%	17%	20%
Men	49%	30%	37%	26%	29%	26%	15%
Other	48%	46%	37%	23%	28%	20%	22%
LGBTQIA+	46%	45%	36%	31%	23%	15%	22%
Straight/CIS	52%	36%	37%	29%	22%	21%	17%
Asian	43%	33%	37%	34%	28%	18%	20%
Black/African American	51%	38%	34%	31%	22%	20%	19%
Hispanic/Latinx	53%	37%	36%	28%	23%	18%	19%
Other/Mixed Race	49%	33%	37%	24%	29%	22%	18%
White	52%	40%	39%	30%	20%	20%	17%
Low Income	51%	38%	36%	26%	23%	18%	22%
Lower Middle-income	51%	39%	38%	30%	22%	20%	17%
Upper Middle-income	51%	37%	38%	31%	21%	22%	17%
High Income	51%	38%	36%	32%	25%	18%	15%
Liberal	46%	43%	38%	33%	20%	16%	21%
Conservative	56%	32%	39%	26%	24%	23%	16%
Moderate	49%	37%	37%	30%	23%	21%	18%
Non-political	54%	38%	35%	29%	22%	19%	17%
Christian	54%	39%	37%	28%	21%	21%	19%
Catholic	51%	35%	36%	28%	24%	21%	17%
Other Religion	52%	35%	38%	30%	25%	18%	18%
Atheist/Non-religious	44%	43%	38%	34%	22%	17%	18%
High Achiever	50%	39%	40%	29%	21%	19%	20%
Above Average Grades	51%	39%	37%	30%	22%	19%	17%
Average Grades	54%	35%	33%	30%	26%	22%	16%
Below Average Grades	55%	28%	33%	26%	24%	21%	15%

GRADUATING SENIORS

MOTIVATIONS TO ATTEND

What are the most important reasons why you're attending college? (Select up to 3)

college choice

AUDIENCE	LIFELONG BONDS	BROAD LIFE SKILLS	IMMERSE IN LEARNING	HELP MY FAMILY	MEET DIFFERENT PEOPLE	SOCIAL LIFE	PROFESSIONAL CONTACTS
All Respondents	17%	14%	11%	10%	9%	8%	7%
Women	19%	14%	12%	9%	10%	7%	6%
Men	15%	14%	11%	11%	8%	8%	9%
Other	11%	13%	10%	7%	9%	8%	10%
LGBTQIA+	13%	12%	14%	9%	11%	9%	8%
Straight/CIS	18%	14%	11%	10%	9%	7%	7%
Asian	13%	14%	15%	13%	12%	6%	9%
Black/African American	14%	12%	10%	15%	14%	7%	6%
Hispanic/Latinx	14%	11%	14%	21%	7%	5%	8%
Other/Mixed Race	14%	12%	16%	9%	11%	6%	10%
White	21%	15%	10%	3%	7%	9%	6%
Low Income	14%	13%	11%	21%	10%	6%	7%
Lower Middle-income	17%	15%	12%	9%	9%	6%	7%
Upper Middle-income	20%	12%	12%	5%	8%	9%	6%
High Income	17%	17%	10%	0%	10%	11%	10%
Liberal	16%	11%	13%	9%	11%	11%	6%
Conservative	21%	17%	9%	5%	5%	8%	8%
Moderate	17%	13%	12%	10%	10%	6%	8%
Non-political	16%	14%	11%	12%	10%	5%	6%
Christian	20%	14%	10%	8%	9%	6%	5%
Catholic	16%	15%	13%	12%	7%	8%	7%
Other Religion	15%	12%	12%	11%	10%	8%	8%
Atheist/Non-religious	18%	13%	12%	8%	10%	9%	9%
High Achiever	18%	14%	14%	6%	8%	8%	7%
Above Average Grades	18%	15%	10%	10%	10%	7%	7%
Average Grades	16%	10%	11%	12%	10%	9%	6%
Below Average Grades	17%	14%	7%	22%	10%	9%	7%

GRADUATING SENIORS

MOTIVATIONS TO ATTEND

What are the most important reasons you're attending college? (Select up to 3)

college choice

AUDIENCE	EARN A DEGREE	LEARN ABOUT PASSION	CAREER ENTRY	NEW EXPERIENCES	INCREASE EARNING POTENTIAL	MASTER A SKILL	IMPROVE COMMUNITY
All Respondents	51%	38%	37%	29%	22%	20%	18%
East North Central	54%	43%	35%	31%	18%	20%	18%
West North Central	45%	36%	40%	33%	25%	19%	15%
Middle Atlantic	48%	36%	40%	29%	24%	21%	20%
Mountain	55%	37%	40%	29%	24%	20%	19%
New England	44%	37%	36%	28%	30%	16%	18%
Pacific	48%	36%	39%	31%	21%	18%	18%
South Atlantic	53%	38%	35%	29%	23%	21%	17%
East South Central	51%	39%	39%	28%	18%	20%	29%
West South Central	55%	38%	37%	26%	22%	21%	17%
Small Public	56%	33%	39%	31%	17%	21%	22%
Small Private	44%	42%	28%	31%	21%	19%	23%
Small Religious	50%	35%	35%	27%	18%	21%	20%
Small CC/Trade	54%	35%	38%	28%	25%	25%	15%
Midsize Public	54%	40%	36%	27%	23%	21%	18%
Midsize Private	44%	42%	35%	33%	19%	20%	15%
Midsize Religious	52%	32%	43%	32%	18%	21%	21%
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	62%	30%	41%	25%	24%	25%	13%
Large Public	51%	40%	38%	30%	25%	19%	15%
Large Private/Religious	48%	40%	34%	31%	29%	18%	22%
Mega Public	50%	37%	41%	31%	24%	17%	18%
Strength Motivated	54%	31%	38%	26%	27%	23%	17%
Vitality Motivated	52%	39%	37%	32%	19%	15%	20%
Creativity Motivated	47%	44%	37%	31%	22%	21%	18%

GRADUATING SENIORS

MOTIVATIONS TO ATTEND

What are the most important reasons you're attending college? (Select up to 3)

college choice

AUDIENCE	LIFELONG BONDS	BROAD LIFE SKILLS	IMMERSE IN LEARNING	HELP MY FAMILY	MEET DIFFERENT PEOPLE	SOCIAL LIFE	PROFESSIONAL CONTACTS
All Respondents	17%	14%	11%	10%	9%	8%	7%
East North Central	17%	12%	10%	10%	9%	7%	7%
West North Central	26%	16%	10%	7%	6%	10%	7%
Middle Atlantic	14%	12%	11%	7%	10%	10%	8%
Mountain	14%	13%	12%	7%	6%	7%	5%
New England	20%	16%	10%	7%	9%	16%	7%
Pacific	16%	14%	11%	17%	11%	7%	6%
South Atlantic	19%	15%	14%	8%	9%	6%	7%
East South Central	18%	13%	12%	7%	10%	5%	5%
West South Central	17%	14%	11%	11%	9%	6%	6%
Small Public	15%	11%	10%	12%	8%	2%	4%
Small Private	17%	16%	18%	6%	14%	4%	6%
Small Religious	26%	19%	11%	5%	8%	5%	5%
Small CC/Trade	13%	14%	8%	14%	10%	7%	3%
Midsize Public	18%	14%	9%	9%	9%	7%	5%
Midsize Private	20%	10%	16%	9%	9%	9%	14%
Midsize Religious	15%	12%	10%	9%	10%	6%	11%
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	9%	12%	11%	19%	7%	7%	4%
Large Public	16%	14%	10%	11%	7%	9%	9%
Large Private/Religious	13%	10%	14%	12%	8%	7%	7%
Mega Public	19%	14%	11%	8%	10%	11%	7%
Strength Motivated	16%	15%	10%	9%	8%	7%	7%
Vitality Motivated	22%	13%	10%	10%	10%	9%	6%
Creativity Motivated	16%	13%	14%	9%	9%	7%	7%



DATA INSIGHT

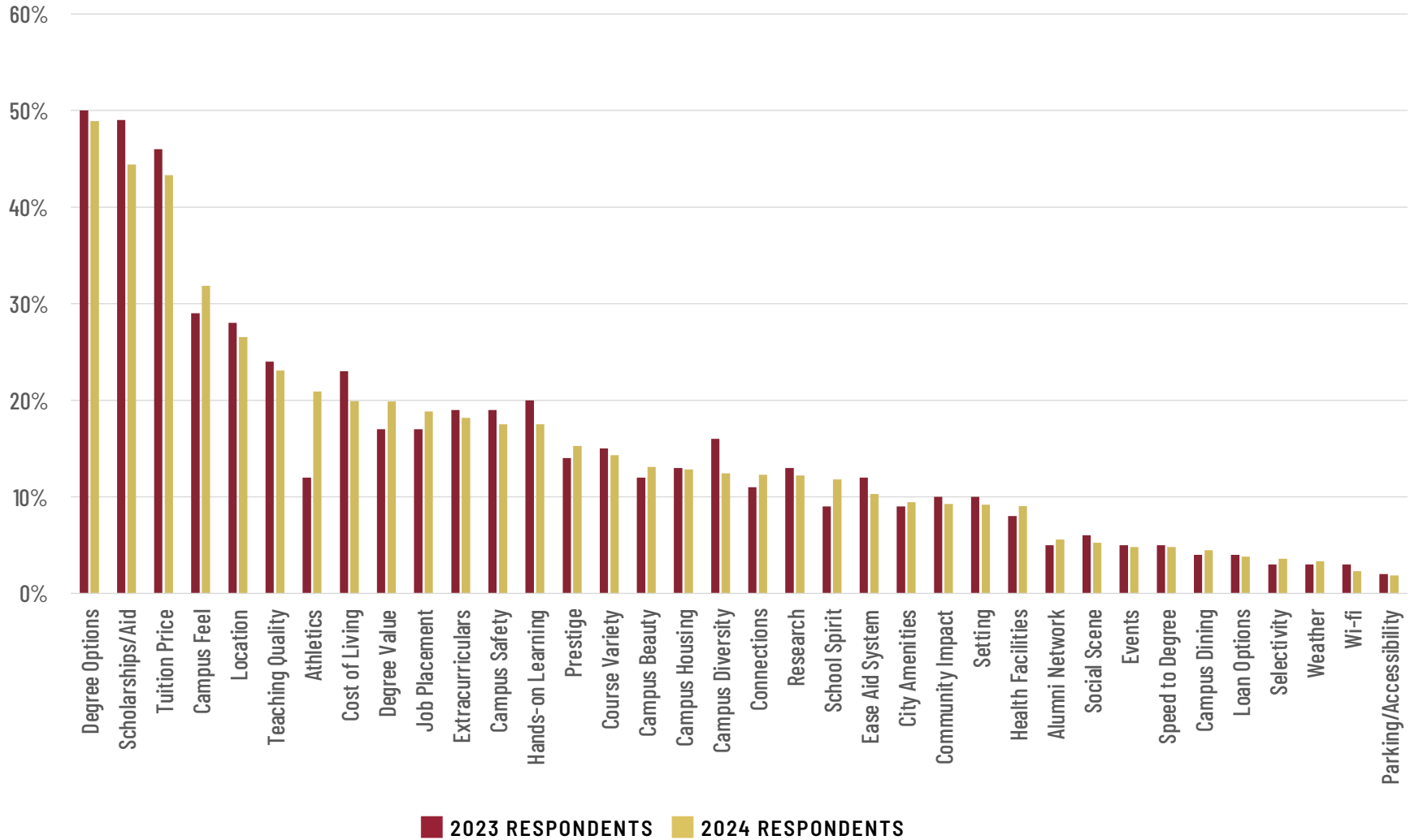
Motivations for attending higher education are relatively static overall, with most categories in the same position as 2023 and 2022 studies from Carnegie. The simple act of earning a degree or certificate is up slightly, however, suggesting that the most tangible outcome continues to outpace other reasons. As such, schools should consider how the path to that degree is as clear as possible, reducing uncertainty and requirement complexity.

GRADUATING SENIORS

FACTORS OF CHOICE

Which of these factors do you consider most important when determining if a college is right for you?

college choice

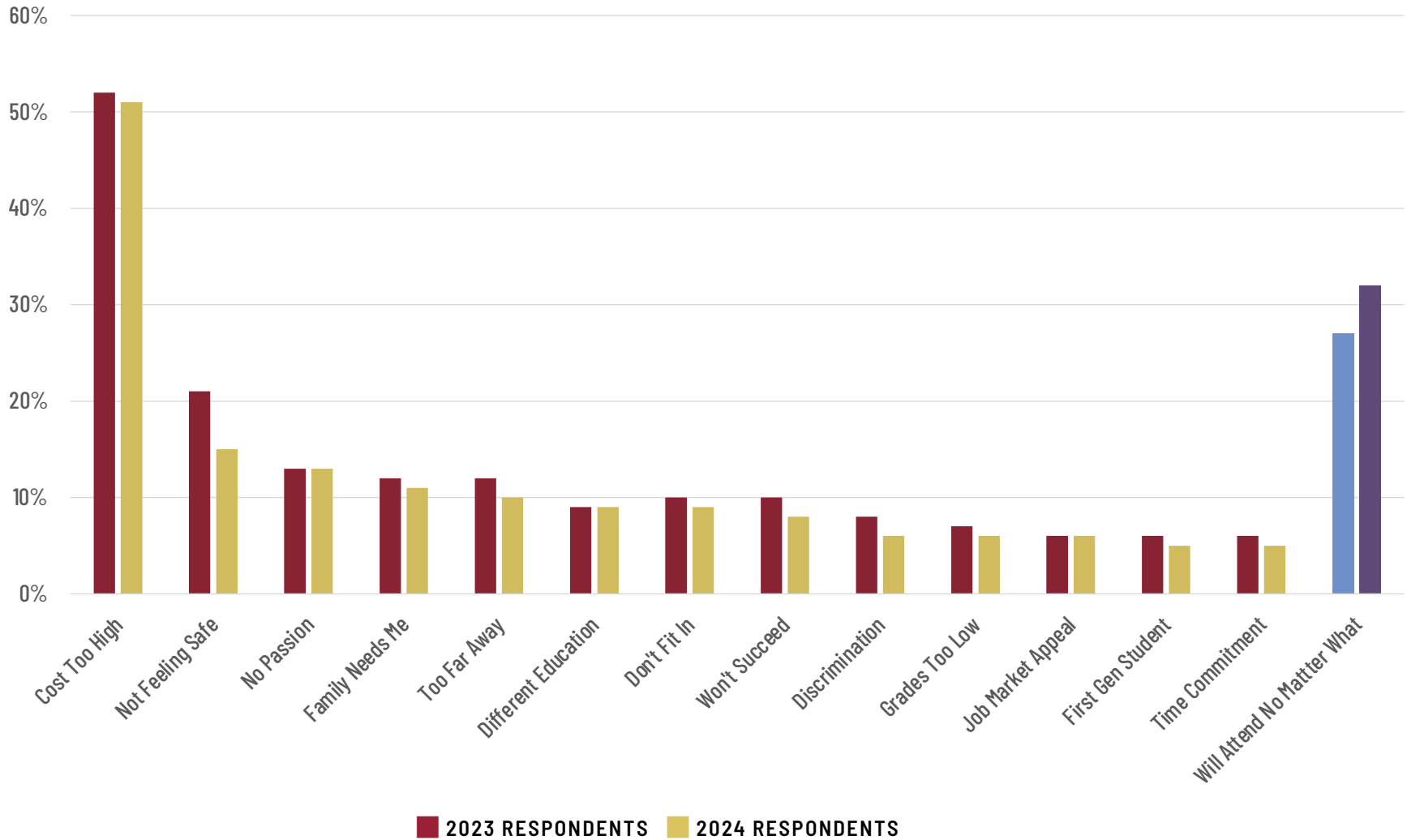


GRADUATING SENIORS

BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

Which of the following barriers would be likely to cause you to not attend/drop out? (Select up to 3)

college choice



*Category in blue (2023) and purple (2024) (Will Attend No Matter What) was an exclusive answer, meaning a respondent could not select other options from the list if chosen.

GRADUATING SENIORS

BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

Which of the following barriers would be likely to cause you to not attend/drop out? (Select up to 3)

college choice

AUDIENCE	COST TOO HIGH	NOT FEELING SAFE	NO PASSION	FAMILY NEEDS ME	TOO FAR AWAY	DIFFERENT EDUCATION	DON'T FIT IN
All Respondents	51%	15%	13%	11%	10%	9%	9%
Women	52%	17%	13%	12%	11%	8%	8%
Men	48%	12%	13%	8%	9%	11%	9%
Other	58%	17%	9%	15%	11%	7%	12%
LGBTQIA+	55%	16%	12%	12%	9%	8%	11%
Straight/CIS	51%	15%	13%	11%	10%	9%	8%
Asian	54%	19%	16%	10%	13%	9%	13%
Black/African American	51%	17%	11%	11%	11%	8%	9%
Hispanic/Latinx	55%	15%	13%	16%	10%	9%	9%
Other/Mixed Race	52%	20%	15%	13%	11%	7%	8%
White	50%	13%	12%	9%	9%	9%	8%
Low Income	56%	15%	10%	13%	11%	8%	9%
Lower Middle-income	58%	15%	14%	13%	10%	10%	7%
Upper Middle-income	51%	15%	13%	9%	10%	9%	9%
High Income	26%	16%	13%	6%	9%	8%	10%
Liberal	52%	14%	11%	9%	10%	6%	8%
Conservative	48%	11%	13%	9%	10%	13%	7%
Moderate	52%	19%	13%	13%	10%	9%	10%
Non-political	53%	16%	14%	12%	11%	8%	9%
Christian	51%	15%	12%	11%	11%	10%	8%
Catholic	51%	14%	12%	12%	8%	9%	10%
Other Religion	50%	17%	14%	11%	11%	8%	8%
Atheist/Non-religious	52%	15%	13%	9%	9%	8%	10%
High Achiever	47%	14%	13%	10%	10%	8%	9%
Above Average Grades	54%	17%	13%	11%	10%	9%	8%
Average Grades	53%	13%	11%	10%	9%	11%	9%
Below Average Grades	57%	14%	13%	16%	10%	11%	9%

GRADUATING SENIORS

BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

Which of the following barriers would be likely to cause you to not attend/drop out? (Select up to 3)

college choice

AUDIENCE	WON'T SUCCEED	JOB MARKET APPEAL	GRADES TOO LOW	DISCRIMINATION	TIME COMMITMENT	FIRST GEN STUDENT	WILL ATTEND NO MATTER WHAT
All Respondents	8%	6%	6%	6%	5%	5%	32%
Women	8%	5%	5%	6%	4%	6%	32%
Men	7%	9%	6%	6%	7%	3%	33%
Other	13%	5%	8%	11%	7%	7%	19%
LGBTQIA+	11%	4%	6%	10%	4%	6%	29%
Straight/CIS	7%	7%	6%	5%	5%	5%	32%
Asian	11%	9%	8%	8%	5%	4%	28%
Black/African American	9%	7%	5%	13%	5%	5%	31%
Hispanic/Latinx	9%	5%	6%	7%	5%	9%	29%
Other/Mixed Race	6%	7%	5%	6%	6%	5%	28%
White	7%	6%	5%	3%	5%	4%	34%
Low Income	9%	6%	6%	7%	6%	14%	28%
Lower Middle-income	8%	5%	7%	7%	5%	4%	28%
Upper Middle-income	7%	7%	4%	6%	5%	1%	33%
High Income	9%	6%	6%	5%	4%	1%	45%
Liberal	9%	6%	5%	9%	5%	5%	33%
Conservative	7%	7%	4%	2%	5%	3%	36%
Moderate	8%	7%	6%	6%	5%	5%	28%
Non-political	9%	6%	7%	7%	5%	5%	30%
Christian	8%	7%	5%	5%	5%	4%	32%
Catholic	7%	6%	5%	6%	4%	4%	35%
Other Religion	7%	6%	6%	7%	7%	6%	29%
Atheist/Non-religious	9%	5%	7%	6%	4%	5%	32%
High Achiever	6%	6%	3%	4%	3%	3%	38%
Above Average Grades	9%	6%	5%	7%	6%	6%	29%
Average Grades	10%	8%	7%	8%	6%	5%	28%
Below Average Grades	12%	8%	19%	9%	7%	7%	22%

GRADUATING SENIORS

BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

Which of the following barriers would be likely to cause you to not attend/drop out? (Select up to 3)

college choice

AUDIENCE	COST TOO HIGH	NOT FEELING SAFE	NO PASSION	FAMILY NEEDS ME	TOO FAR AWAY	DIFFERENT EDUCATION	DON'T FIT IN
All Respondents	51%	15%	13%	11%	10%	9%	9%
East North Central	49%	12%	10%	10%	12%	8%	7%
West North Central	55%	17%	16%	9%	7%	13%	8%
Middle Atlantic	53%	17%	13%	13%	11%	8%	8%
Mountain	57%	14%	16%	14%	10%	10%	5%
New England	53%	18%	14%	9%	9%	6%	12%
Pacific	53%	14%	15%	13%	12%	11%	10%
South Atlantic	49%	16%	13%	10%	8%	8%	10%
East South Central	52%	14%	12%	13%	14%	11%	3%
West South Central	48%	15%	9%	9%	10%	8%	10%
Small Public	50%	16%	16%	9%	9%	10%	7%
Small Private	52%	16%	9%	12%	8%	7%	11%
Small Religious	53%	11%	12%	8%	6%	9%	6%
Small CC/Trade	53%	18%	14%	11%	16%	16%	10%
Midsize Public	55%	16%	15%	11%	13%	9%	9%
Midsize Private	53%	19%	12%	10%	10%	4%	5%
Midsize Religious	41%	11%	7%	8%	10%	7%	13%
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	61%	11%	16%	16%	13%	16%	9%
Large Public	49%	18%	13%	10%	11%	9%	8%
Large Private/Religious	46%	14%	10%	13%	7%	4%	6%
Mega Public	49%	14%	12%	11%	8%	8%	9%
Strength Motivated	49%	13%	12%	11%	10%	10%	7%
Vitality Motivated	51%	16%	13%	11%	12%	8%	10%
Creativity Motivated	54%	16%	13%	11%	9%	9%	9%

GRADUATING SENIORS

BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

Which of the following barriers would be likely to cause you to not attend/drop out? (Select up to 3)

college choice

AUDIENCE	GRADES TOO LOW	WON'T SUCCEED	DISCRIMINATION	NOT FEELING SAFE	FIRST GEN STUDENT	TOO FAR AWAY	WILL ATTEND NO MATTER WHAT
All Respondents	8%	6%	6%	6%	5%	5%	32%
East North Central	8%	7%	5%	5%	6%	6%	34%
West North Central	9%	7%	8%	4%	4%	4%	31%
Middle Atlantic	8%	7%	6%	6%	3%	5%	28%
Mountain	8%	7%	4%	6%	7%	5%	26%
New England	7%	3%	3%	3%	5%	4%	33%
Pacific	8%	5%	5%	6%	6%	5%	32%
South Atlantic	8%	6%	6%	7%	5%	4%	31%
East South Central	11%	5%	4%	7%	9%	7%	32%
West South Central	7%	7%	6%	8%	3%	4%	35%
Small Public	8%	4%	7%	3%	6%	5%	34%
Small Private	8%	5%	3%	8%	5%	3%	33%
Small Religious	8%	6%	5%	4%	5%	4%	34%
Small CC/Trade	9%	6%	8%	5%	9%	10%	26%
Midsize Public	10%	5%	6%	8%	5%	6%	27%
Midsize Private	8%	8%	4%	8%	4%	6%	29%
Midsize Religious	6%	7%	4%	6%	4%	2%	44%
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	9%	11%	8%	2%	7%	5%	22%
Large Public	7%	8%	6%	5%	6%	5%	30%
Large Private/Religious	7%	6%	5%	10%	3%	3%	38%
Mega Public	7%	5%	6%	5%	4%	4%	36%
Strength Motivated	6%	8%	4%	5%	5%	4%	34%
Vitality Motivated	9%	4%	5%	6%	4%	5%	31%
Creativity Motivated	9%	6%	7%	7%	5%	5%	30%



DATA INSIGHT

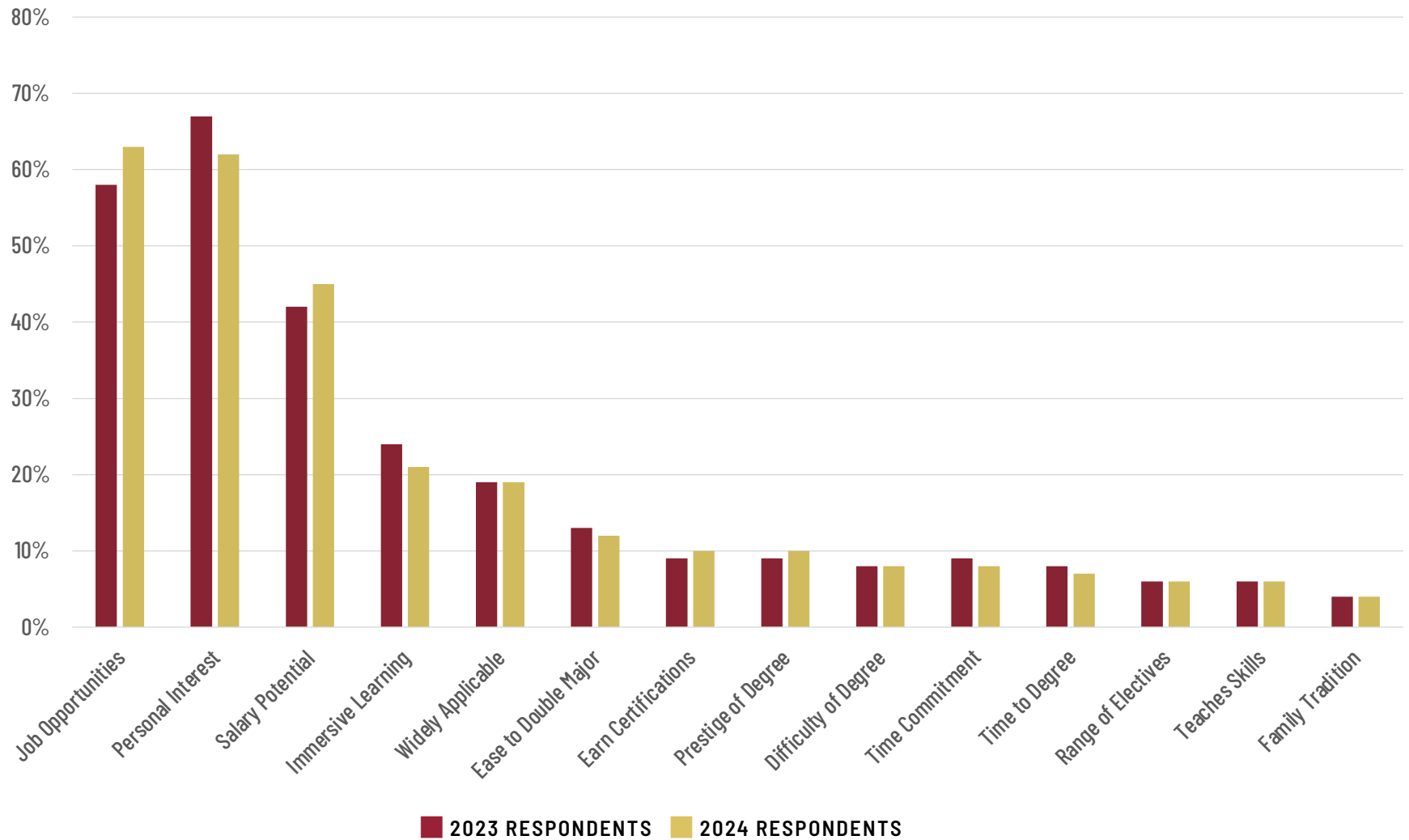
Two small but statistically significant shifts were seen in 2024. First, resilience to attend no matter what increased slightly across demographics. Second, concerns about safety on campus dropped slightly. This latter outcome is compelling because it contradicts often-reported news coverage of campus protesting from the past year that has been characterized as unsafe. Rather, this drop may be more related to a fully realized lack of safety concerns regarding COVID-19.

GRADUATING SENIORS

DEGREE SELECTION FACTORS

Regardless of the college you select, what are the most important degree factors? (Select up to 3)

college choice



GRADUATING SENIORS

DEGREE SELECTION FACTORS

Regardless of the college you select, what are the most important degree factors? (Select up to 3)

college choice

AUDIENCE	JOB OPPORTUNITIES	PERSONAL INTEREST	SALARY POTENTIAL	IMMERSIVE LEARNING	WIDELY APPLICABLE	EASE TO DOUBLE MAJOR	EARN CERTIFICATIONS
All Respondents	63%	62%	45%	21%	19%	12%	10%
Women	63%	63%	43%	23%	18%	13%	9%
Men	63%	59%	48%	16%	20%	11%	12%
Other	51%	65%	37%	30%	18%	14%	3%
LGBTQIA+	60%	69%	41%	28%	18%	14%	6%
Straight/CIS	63%	60%	46%	20%	19%	12%	11%
Asian	64%	59%	48%	22%	19%	9%	14%
Black/African American	58%	55%	44%	25%	16%	16%	7%
Hispanic/Latinx	61%	56%	48%	23%	16%	17%	11%
Other/Mixed Race	61%	60%	41%	25%	16%	13%	15%
White	65%	66%	44%	19%	22%	10%	9%
Low Income	60%	53%	47%	24%	17%	17%	7%
Lower Middle-income	63%	59%	45%	22%	18%	10%	10%
Upper Middle-income	64%	67%	43%	20%	21%	11%	10%
High Income	64%	69%	43%	18%	21%	12%	14%
Liberal	62%	69%	43%	24%	19%	14%	10%
Conservative	65%	64%	46%	18%	22%	9%	11%
Moderate	63%	55%	48%	19%	18%	14%	12%
Non-political	61%	59%	42%	24%	17%	13%	7%
Christian	64%	64%	44%	19%	18%	12%	9%
Catholic	62%	59%	48%	20%	20%	14%	12%
Other Religion	62%	56%	44%	22%	18%	11%	11%
Atheist/Non-religious	62%	68%	44%	24%	22%	13%	8%
High Achiever	63%	64%	48%	23%	20%	13%	13%
Above Average Grades	63%	63%	43%	21%	18%	12%	9%
Average Grades	61%	56%	41%	18%	20%	12%	6%
Below Average Grades	60%	49%	42%	22%	19%	12%	3%

GRADUATING SENIORS

DEGREE SELECTION FACTORS

Regardless of the college you select, what are the most important degree factors? (Select up to 3)

college choice

AUDIENCE	PRESTIGE OF DEGREE	DIFFICULTY OF DEGREE	TIME COMMITMENT	TIME TO DEGREE	RANGE OF ELECTIVES	TEACHES SKILLS	FAMILY TRADITION
All Respondents	10%	8%	8%	7%	6%	6%	4%
Women	10%	8%	7%	7%	5%	5%	4%
Men	10%	7%	9%	8%	7%	6%	4%
Other	5%	12%	5%	8%	8%	11%	0%
LGBTQIA+	8%	8%	7%	6%	5%	7%	2%
Straight/CIS	10%	8%	8%	8%	6%	5%	5%
Asian	8%	8%	11%	8%	8%	6%	5%
Black/African American	14%	11%	8%	8%	7%	7%	6%
Hispanic/Latinx	13%	8%	8%	7%	7%	5%	4%
Other/Mixed Race	12%	9%	6%	8%	6%	6%	4%
White	8%	7%	8%	7%	4%	5%	3%
Low Income	13%	11%	9%	9%	7%	6%	5%
Lower Middle-income	11%	9%	8%	8%	6%	6%	4%
Upper Middle-income	9%	6%	8%	8%	5%	5%	3%
High Income	5%	6%	7%	4%	4%	7%	5%
Liberal	8%	6%	8%	5%	4%	6%	3%
Conservative	9%	6%	8%	8%	4%	3%	5%
Moderate	12%	9%	8%	7%	6%	8%	4%
Non-political	11%	11%	7%	9%	8%	4%	5%
Christian	10%	8%	9%	8%	6%	5%	5%
Catholic	10%	8%	8%	7%	4%	5%	4%
Other Religion	11%	10%	7%	9%	7%	6%	5%
Atheist/Non-religious	9%	5%	6%	6%	6%	7%	2%
High Achiever	7%	5%	7%	6%	5%	5%	4%
Above Average Grades	11%	9%	7%	8%	6%	6%	4%
Average Grades	11%	12%	12%	8%	7%	7%	6%
Below Average Grades	19%	11%	9%	14%	10%	5%	4%

GRADUATING SENIORS

DEGREE SELECTION FACTORS

Regardless of the college you select, what are the most important degree factors? (Select up to 3)

college choice

AUDIENCE	JOB OPPORTUNITIES	PERSONAL INTEREST	SALARY POTENTIAL	IMMERSIVE LEARNING	WIDELY APPLICABLE	EASE TO DOUBLE MAJOR	EARN CERTIFICATIONS
All Respondents	63%	62%	45%	21%	19%	12%	10%
East North Central	58%	62%	43%	22%	19%	11%	10%
West North Central	65%	61%	41%	20%	22%	14%	9%
Middle Atlantic	67%	60%	47%	24%	17%	11%	12%
Mountain	62%	64%	43%	18%	25%	9%	10%
New England	67%	64%	46%	17%	16%	11%	16%
Pacific	62%	61%	41%	23%	20%	14%	10%
South Atlantic	61%	62%	45%	23%	20%	15%	10%
East South Central	62%	57%	45%	22%	20%	11%	7%
West South Central	62%	62%	49%	19%	15%	11%	7%
Small Public	63%	58%	52%	20%	15%	11%	8%
Small Private	59%	73%	36%	26%	19%	14%	13%
Small Religious	59%	67%	39%	22%	22%	15%	6%
Small CC/Trade	66%	51%	44%	13%	22%	8%	4%
Midsize Public	61%	58%	45%	22%	18%	13%	6%
Midsize Private	59%	64%	43%	27%	16%	18%	16%
Midsize Religious	63%	64%	51%	14%	15%	14%	14%
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	61%	52%	43%	19%	16%	12%	5%
Large Public	62%	60%	44%	23%	21%	11%	11%
Large Private/Religious	61%	63%	43%	22%	12%	12%	15%
Mega Public	69%	63%	50%	20%	21%	11%	12%
Strength Motivated	65%	56%	48%	19%	19%	12%	10%
Vitality Motivated	59%	63%	45%	21%	18%	12%	8%
Creativity Motivated	62%	66%	41%	24%	19%	13%	11%

GRADUATING SENIORS

DEGREE SELECTION FACTORS

Regardless of the college you select, what are the most important degree factors? (Select up to 3)

college choice

AUDIENCE	PRESTIGE OF DEGREE	DIFFICULTY OF DEGREE	TIME COMMITMENT	TIME TO DEGREE	RANGE OF ELECTIVES	TEACHES SKILLS	FAMILY TRADITION
All Respondents	10%	8%	8%	7%	6%	6%	4%
East North Central	10%	9%	9%	9%	4%	6%	5%
West North Central	7%	7%	9%	8%	7%	3%	5%
Middle Atlantic	7%	8%	7%	7%	6%	5%	3%
Mountain	14%	7%	10%	7%	5%	4%	3%
New England	6%	9%	9%	3%	7%	7%	3%
Pacific	10%	7%	11%	8%	6%	8%	3%
South Atlantic	10%	7%	6%	7%	5%	8%	3%
East South Central	11%	12%	6%	9%	5%	3%	10%
West South Central	13%	9%	5%	7%	8%	4%	4%
Small Public	11%	10%	9%	11%	7%	4%	4%
Small Private	5%	6%	11%	4%	5%	7%	2%
Small Religious	8%	10%	7%	4%	5%	6%	5%
Small CC/Trade	14%	12%	11%	13%	5%	5%	6%
Midsize Public	11%	9%	8%	9%	7%	6%	5%
Midsize Private	5%	5%	8%	7%	5%	7%	2%
Midsize Religious	7%	7%	7%	9%	8%	4%	4%
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	20%	17%	10%	12%	6%	7%	3%
Large Public	12%	9%	8%	6%	6%	6%	5%
Large Private/Religious	15%	6%	5%	6%	4%	6%	4%
Mega Public	7%	5%	5%	6%	6%	5%	3%
Strength Motivated	10%	8%	8%	9%	5%	5%	5%
Vitality Motivated	11%	8%	8%	8%	5%	6%	4%
Creativity Motivated	9%	8%	7%	6%	7%	6%	3%



DATA INSIGHT

This year saw a switch in the top category for respondents, with job opportunities gaining the number one position compared to learning about a passion. In addition, salary outcomes also increased slightly while immersive learning dropped. As such, it may be that audiences are looking at more pragmatic reasons for selecting a major in coming graduation classes. College marketers should make sure the employability of graduates with flagship degrees is covered well in outreach materials.

GRADUATING SENIORS

The aid FAFSA unlocks is a critical lifeline for many students. About 90% of respondents filled it out for Fall 2024.

Importantly, 46% of this sample said financial aid and scholarships are critical to affording college, and another 34% said it was highly important. Despite this importance, many students expressed concern and frustration, with 13% of those who submitted the FAFSA saying they had to resubmit their form and 2% saying they had to resubmit multiple times. About **40% of respondents said they were still waiting to hear about their aid** package at a school to which they were admitted when taking the survey in May.

Carnegie explored the FAFSA issue in depth with this graduating senior class and the same CollegeXpress sample from this study in its [May Rapid Report](#).

GRADUATING SENIORS

INITIAL SEARCH

When did you first begin looking for information about colleges and universities?

college journey

AUDIENCE	BEFORE HIGH SCHOOL	1ST YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL	2ND YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL	BETWEEN 2ND AND 3RD YEAR	3RD YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL	BETWEEN 3RD AND 4TH YEAR	4TH YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL	AVERAGE SCORE*
All Respondents (2023)	14%	11%	11%	18%	20%	17%	9%	4.06
All Respondents (2024)	14%	10%	13%	18%	20%	16%	9%	4.06
Women	15%	11%	13%	19%	19%	15%	8%	3.94 (-)
Men	10%	9%	15%	15%	22%	18%	11%	4.30 (+)
Other	23%	4%	9%	20%	16%	19%	9%	3.95
LGBTQIA+	19%	11%	12%	19%	17%	15%	9%	3.82 (-)
Straight/CIS	12%	10%	14%	18%	21%	16%	9%	4.11
Asian	14%	10%	12%	12%	23%	18%	12%	4.21 (+)
Black/African American	15%	11%	11%	16%	17%	17%	13%	4.11
Hispanic/Latinx	16%	9%	12%	16%	18%	19%	11%	4.08
Other/Mixed Race	17%	11%	15%	18%	15%	17%	9%	3.89 (-)
White	11%	10%	15%	20%	22%	14%	7%	4.04
Low Income	16%	11%	10%	18%	17%	16%	13%	4.08
Lower Middle-income	13%	11%	12%	17%	21%	16%	10%	4.11
Upper Middle-income	12%	9%	15%	19%	20%	17%	8%	4.07
High Income	14%	10%	19%	16%	22%	11%	7%	3.84 (-)
Liberal	17%	10%	14%	18%	20%	14%	7%	3.81 (-)
Conservative	11%	10%	14%	21%	22%	15%	8%	4.10
Moderate	14%	12%	15%	17%	18%	15%	9%	3.94 (-)
Non-political	12%	9%	10%	17%	21%	19%	12%	4.33 (+)
Christian	14%	10%	14%	19%	19%	15%	10%	4.04
Catholic	14%	10%	14%	18%	20%	17%	8%	4.02
Other Religion	12%	10%	13%	18%	22%	15%	10%	4.16
Atheist/Non-religious	15%	11%	12%	17%	20%	17%	8%	4.01
High Achiever	16%	11%	16%	20%	19%	13%	5%	3.76 (-)
Above Average Grades	13%	10%	13%	17%	20%	17%	10%	4.13
Average Grades	10%	9%	8%	18%	22%	17%	15%	4.42 (+)
Below Average Grades	13%	8%	7%	14%	19%	21%	18%	4.55 (+)

* Average scores with (+) indicate a statistically significantly higher score than the respondent average. Scores with (-) indicate a statistically lower score.

GRADUATING SENIORS

INITIAL SEARCH

When did you first begin looking for information about colleges and universities?

college journey

AUDIENCE	BEFORE HIGH SCHOOL	1ST YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL	2ND YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL	BETWEEN 2ND AND 3RD YEAR	3RD YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL	BETWEEN 3RD AND 4TH YEAR	4TH YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL	AVERAGE SCORE*
All Respondents	14%	10%	13%	18%	20%	16%	9%	4.06
East North Central	10%	10%	13%	19%	25%	14%	8%	4.16
West North Central	10%	14%	12%	20%	21%	13%	11%	4.10
Middle Atlantic	11%	10%	17%	18%	23%	15%	7%	4.03
Mountain	14%	12%	13%	17%	14%	18%	12%	4.06
New England	14%	10%	14%	14%	26%	16%	6%	4.04
Pacific	16%	11%	11%	17%	19%	16%	9%	3.97
South Atlantic	15%	9%	14%	18%	19%	16%	9%	4.03
East South Central	11%	10%	15%	21%	18%	16%	10%	4.11
West South Central	15%	10%	12%	18%	17%	18%	11%	4.07
Small Public	15%	14%	15%	17%	15%	14%	11%	3.91 (-)
Small Private	12%	11%	18%	20%	19%	13%	7%	3.90 (-)
Small Religious	6%	9%	15%	21%	23%	18%	8%	4.32 (+)
Small CC/Trade	10%	8%	12%	17%	20%	16%	17%	4.48 (+)
Midsize Public	14%	10%	10%	17%	22%	17%	10%	4.11
Midsize Private	18%	13%	12%	16%	22%	10%	7%	3.70 (-)
Midsize Religious	17%	11%	14%	14%	19%	15%	10%	3.90 (-)
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	11%	9%	11%	15%	21%	17%	15%	4.37 (+)
Large Public	11%	8%	12%	20%	20%	19%	10%	4.27 (+)
Large Private/Religious	16%	10%	13%	17%	19%	13%	10%	3.95
Mega Public	17%	11%	15%	18%	19%	15%	6%	3.79 (-)
Strength Motivated	14%	12%	13%	17%	20%	15%	10%	4.02
Vitality Motivated	13%	9%	12%	20%	21%	15%	9%	4.07
Creativity Motivated	14%	9%	14%	18%	19%	17%	9%	4.08

* Average scores with (+) indicate a statistically significantly higher score than the respondent average. Scores with (-) indicate a statistically lower score.



DATA INSIGHT

The results in 2024 were almost identical to the 2023 study, suggesting some normalization post-COVID. During the pandemic there was a slight lengthening of the journey. A majority of students are beginning to look for information before their Junior year, and in some groups this amount is as high as two in three. As a note, higher average scores indicate a later start date.

GRADUATING SENIORS

ADVANCED SEARCH

When did you start seriously thinking about the factors you look for in an ideal college?

college journey

AUDIENCE	BEFORE HIGH SCHOOL	1ST YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL	2ND YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL	BETWEEN 2ND AND 3RD YEAR	3RD YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL	BETWEEN 3RD AND 4TH YEAR	4TH YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL	AVERAGE SCORE*
All Respondents (2023)	5%	4%	5%	12%	24%	24%	26%	5.22
All Respondents (2024)	6%	5%	8%	14%	24%	22%	22%	4.96
Women	6%	6%	8%	14%	24%	21%	20%	4.89
Men	5%	5%	7%	12%	24%	23%	24%	5.09 (+)
Other	7%	9%	3%	13%	23%	21%	25%	4.98
LGBTQIA+	8%	7%	6%	13%	23%	23%	19%	4.84 (-)
Straight/CIS	6%	5%	8%	14%	24%	22%	22%	4.98
Asian	4%	2%	8%	14%	24%	25%	23%	5.18 (+)
Black/African American	6%	6%	8%	13%	20%	21%	25%	4.98
Hispanic/Latinx	9%	7%	7%	11%	20%	20%	26%	4.94
Other/Mixed Race	9%	6%	6%	16%	21%	21%	22%	4.81 (-)
White	5%	5%	8%	14%	27%	22%	19%	4.96
Low Income	7%	6%	7%	13%	19%	21%	27%	5.00
Lower Middle-income	7%	5%	7%	13%	25%	22%	22%	4.97
Upper Middle-income	5%	5%	8%	14%	26%	22%	21%	4.99
High Income	5%	7%	11%	13%	26%	24%	14%	4.77 (-)
Liberal	6%	6%	7%	15%	25%	23%	18%	4.84 (-)
Conservative	5%	5%	8%	14%	27%	21%	21%	4.99
Moderate	7%	6%	10%	14%	22%	21%	21%	4.86
Non-political	6%	5%	6%	12%	23%	23%	26%	5.13 (+)
Christian	7%	6%	8%	13%	25%	19%	21%	4.87
Catholic	6%	6%	7%	16%	22%	23%	22%	4.98
Other Religion	5%	5%	9%	13%	24%	22%	23%	5.03
Atheist/Non-religious	5%	6%	7%	14%	23%	26%	20%	5.04
High Achiever	6%	6%	9%	15%	27%	21%	16%	4.77 (-)
Above Average Grades	5%	5%	9%	13%	23%	22%	23%	5.02
Average Grades	7%	6%	4%	12%	21%	26%	24%	5.10 (+)
Below Average Grades	6%	6%	6%	9%	17%	18%	39%	5.34 (+)

* Average scores with (+) indicate a statistically significantly higher score than the respondent average. Scores with (-) indicate a statistically lower score.

GRADUATING SENIORS

ADVANCED SEARCH

When did you start seriously thinking about the factors you look for in an ideal college?

college journey

AUDIENCE	BEFORE HIGH SCHOOL	1ST YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL	2ND YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL	BETWEEN 2ND AND 3RD YEAR	3RD YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL	BETWEEN 3RD AND 4TH YEAR	4TH YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL	AVERAGE SCORE*
All Respondents	6%	5%	8%	14%	24%	22%	22%	4.96
East North Central	7%	3%	6%	14%	24%	24%	22%	5.06
West North Central	4%	6%	7%	16%	24%	23%	20%	5.00
Middle Atlantic	5%	6%	10%	15%	25%	21%	18%	4.85 (-)
Mountain	6%	6%	9%	15%	18%	19%	27%	5.00
New England	5%	5%	7%	13%	28%	24%	17%	4.92
Pacific	8%	7%	9%	12%	21%	21%	22%	4.85 (-)
South Atlantic	6%	6%	7%	13%	25%	22%	22%	4.99
East South Central	6%	5%	13%	11%	24%	22%	19%	4.82
West South Central	6%	5%	7%	13%	24%	22%	23%	5.02
Small Public	7%	7%	11%	14%	23%	25%	14%	4.65 (-)
Small Private	2%	6%	8%	14%	29%	23%	18%	5.03
Small Religious	3%	4%	9%	14%	24%	24%	23%	5.13 (+)
Small CC/Trade	4%	2%	7%	10%	25%	20%	32%	5.38 (+)
Midsize Public	6%	8%	5%	15%	22%	21%	24%	4.98
Midsize Private	5%	7%	9%	13%	24%	25%	17%	4.88
Midsize Religious	6%	5%	16%	14%	22%	16%	22%	4.76 (-)
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	13%	4%	4%	8%	20%	21%	30%	5.00
Large Public	6%	4%	6%	12%	25%	23%	24%	5.14 (+)
Large Private/Religious	9%	6%	10%	12%	19%	22%	22%	4.80 (-)
Mega Public	8%	5%	9%	17%	25%	20%	17%	4.75 (-)
Strength Motivated	6%	5%	9%	16%	23%	20%	21%	4.90
Vitality Motivated	6%	5%	7%	12%	28%	22%	21%	5.02
Creativity Motivated	7%	6%	7%	13%	22%	24%	22%	4.96

* Average scores with (+) indicate a statistically significantly higher score than the respondent average. Scores with (-) indicate a statistically lower score.



DATA INSIGHT

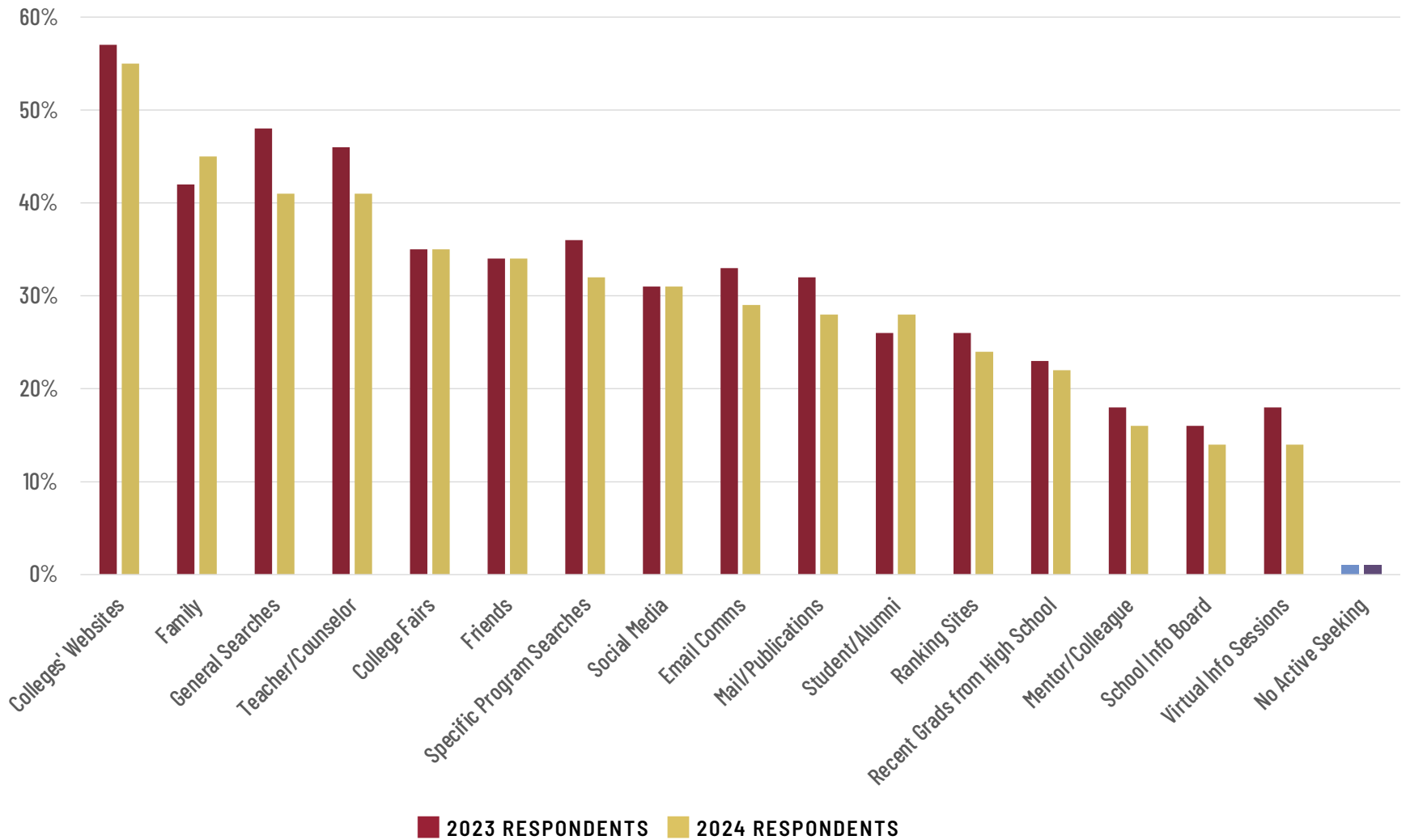
Creating factor lists happened significantly earlier for this class than 2023 and other past Carnegie studies. So initial searches remain the same while the depth of searches early on may be increasing. Many students look for a person they trust to help round out this list, but ultimately make their decisions about where to apply and attend individually. Speaking to influential audiences about factors of choice is a strong strategy in positioning an institution's top value propositions.

GRADUATING SENIORS

INFORMATION SEEKING

Where did you seek out information about colleges or universities? (All That Apply)

college journey



*Category in blue (2023) and purple (2024) (No Active Seeking) was an exclusive answer, meaning a respondent could not select other options from the list if chosen.

GRADUATING SENIORS

INFORMATION SEEKING

Where did you seek out information about colleges or universities? (All That Apply)

college journey

AUDIENCE	COLLEGES' WEBSITES	FAMILY	GENERAL SEARCHES	TEACHER/ COUNSELOR	COLLEGE FAIRS	FRIENDS	SPECIFIC PROGRAM SEARCHES	SOCIAL MEDIA	EMAIL COMMS
All Respondents	57%	48%	46%	42%	36%	35%	34%	33%	32%
Women	57%	48%	47%	41%	36%	36%	33%	34%	33%
Men	55%	46%	44%	46%	33%	32%	37%	31%	28%
Other	65%	55%	44%	41%	44%	32%	32%	35%	34%
LGBTQIA+	62%	56%	48%	39%	43%	35%	33%	35%	34%
Straight/CIS	56%	45%	45%	43%	34%	34%	34%	33%	31%
Asian	57%	56%	46%	45%	39%	32%	46%	32%	29%
Black/African American	52%	43%	48%	39%	29%	42%	27%	34%	34%
Hispanic/Latinx	53%	45%	53%	31%	33%	38%	31%	33%	32%
Other/Mixed Race	55%	50%	46%	44%	38%	35%	33%	34%	30%
White	62%	49%	42%	47%	39%	31%	35%	33%	32%
Low Income	51%	45%	53%	29%	30%	38%	32%	33%	31%
Lower Middle-income	57%	47%	46%	43%	38%	35%	33%	34%	33%
Upper Middle-income	61%	50%	41%	50%	40%	33%	36%	34%	32%
High Income	62%	53%	39%	56%	37%	27%	37%	32%	29%
Liberal	62%	56%	46%	42%	41%	34%	34%	35%	34%
Conservative	57%	45%	40%	49%	35%	29%	37%	33%	30%
Moderate	54%	43%	46%	41%	33%	36%	34%	33%	30%
Non-political	54%	45%	49%	40%	33%	38%	32%	32%	32%
Christian	57%	46%	44%	46%	35%	35%	35%	34%	32%
Catholic	53%	45%	49%	41%	33%	35%	33%	32%	32%
Other Religion	54%	45%	47%	41%	33%	35%	34%	31%	30%
Atheist/Non-religious	64%	56%	45%	40%	43%	33%	33%	35%	33%
High Achiever	64%	54%	44%	45%	41%	33%	35%	36%	34%
Above Average Grades	55%	46%	46%	42%	35%	35%	35%	33%	31%
Average Grades	51%	42%	48%	39%	29%	37%	30%	30%	30%
Below Average Grades	46%	39%	50%	37%	25%	39%	29%	31%	27%

GRADUATING SENIORS

INFORMATION SEEKING

Where did you seek out information about colleges or universities? (All That Apply)

college journey

AUDIENCE	COLLEGE MAIL	STUDENT/ALUMNI	RANKING SITES	RECENT HS GRADS	MENTOR/ COLLEAGUE	VIRTUAL INFO SESSIONS	SCHOOL INFO BOARD	NO ACTIVE SEEKING	AVERAGE SEEKING*
All Respondents	28%	28%	24%	22%	16%	14%	14%	1%	4.89
Women	30%	28%	22%	22%	14%	14%	13%	1%	4.94
Men	25%	29%	27%	24%	19%	15%	17%	1%	4.83
Other	27%	18%	37%	16%	18%	21%	12%	1%	5.17 (+)
LGBTQIA+	32%	24%	33%	23%	16%	17%	17%	0%	5.41 (+)
Straight/CIS	28%	29%	23%	22%	16%	14%	14%	1%	4.84
Asian	33%	33%	42%	29%	19%	23%	21%	1%	5.90 (+)
Black/African American	31%	25%	20%	22%	18%	16%	17%	1%	4.97
Hispanic/Latinx	29%	23%	23%	22%	15%	14%	18%	1%	4.72 (-)
Other/Mixed Race	22%	27%	27%	21%	20%	15%	15%	1%	5.00 (+)
White	28%	30%	23%	22%	15%	12%	11%	1%	4.79
Low Income	29%	23%	18%	20%	16%	13%	17%	1%	4.56 (-)
Lower Middle-income	28%	27%	22%	20%	15%	14%	15%	1%	4.85
Upper Middle-income	29%	30%	25%	23%	17%	13%	12%	1%	5.02 (+)
High Income	26%	34%	42%	30%	17%	21%	12%	1%	5.54 (+)
Liberal	30%	30%	36%	28%	18%	19%	15%	1%	5.55 (+)
Conservative	26%	31%	20%	22%	16%	11%	12%	1%	4.70 (-)
Moderate	28%	27%	24%	21%	16%	14%	15%	0%	4.84
Non-political	29%	25%	18%	19%	14%	13%	14%	1%	4.60 (-)
Christian	29%	30%	20%	23%	16%	11%	12%	1%	4.81
Catholic	30%	29%	24%	23%	15%	14%	17%	1%	4.93
Other Religion	27%	26%	24%	20%	16%	17%	14%	1%	4.89
Atheist/Non-religious	28%	25%	33%	24%	17%	18%	15%	1%	5.16 (+)
High Achiever	31%	32%	33%	25%	18%	17%	13%	0%	5.36 (+)
Above Average Grades	28%	26%	22%	21%	16%	14%	15%	1%	4.79
Average Grades	27%	25%	14%	22%	15%	11%	16%	1%	4.50 (-)
Below Average Grades	22%	18%	7%	19%	15%	8%	14%	3%	4.04 (-)

* Average scores with (+) indicate a statistically significantly higher score than the respondent average. Scores with (-) indicate a statistically lower score.

GRADUATING SENIORS

INFORMATION SEEKING

Where did you seek out information about colleges or universities? (All That Apply)

college journey

AUDIENCE	COLLEGES' WEBSITES	FAMILY	GENERAL SEARCHES	TEACHER/ COUNSELOR	COLLEGE FAIRS	FRIENDS	SPECIFIC PROGRAM SEARCHES	SOCIAL MEDIA	EMAIL COMMS
All Respondents	57%	48%	46%	42%	36%	35%	34%	33%	32%
East North Central	59%	47%	44%	45%	37%	32%	36%	32%	32%
West North Central	57%	46%	40%	45%	33%	31%	31%	33%	28%
Middle Atlantic	57%	51%	48%	41%	35%	41%	33%	33%	33%
Mountain	59%	45%	47%	46%	38%	31%	33%	35%	31%
New England	59%	53%	55%	43%	39%	37%	35%	36%	32%
Pacific	57%	52%	51%	40%	37%	33%	35%	34%	30%
South Atlantic	58%	48%	43%	40%	36%	35%	34%	34%	33%
East South Central	55%	42%	42%	43%	35%	38%	32%	33%	32%
West South Central	54%	45%	46%	42%	36%	36%	32%	33%	31%
Small Public	55%	42%	47%	41%	32%	38%	29%	30%	30%
Small Private	60%	52%	43%	38%	38%	34%	30%	37%	36%
Small Religious	64%	46%	40%	48%	33%	33%	34%	38%	33%
Small CC/Trade	48%	36%	52%	37%	30%	36%	32%	29%	26%
Midsize Public	53%	45%	48%	41%	34%	37%	32%	31%	31%
Midsize Private	63%	55%	47%	41%	42%	36%	32%	39%	37%
Midsize Religious	54%	46%	42%	45%	35%	32%	35%	34%	32%
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	52%	45%	57%	40%	33%	36%	32%	33%	29%
Large Public	57%	47%	46%	44%	36%	35%	35%	34%	31%
Large Private/Religious	58%	53%	47%	44%	40%	30%	34%	34%	32%
Mega Public	62%	55%	42%	45%	39%	32%	39%	32%	31%
Strength Motivated	53%	44%	44%	40%	33%	32%	32%	32%	30%
Vitality Motivated	55%	46%	48%	46%	32%	36%	37%	33%	32%
Creativity Motivated	62%	52%	46%	43%	40%	36%	34%	34%	33%

GRADUATING SENIORS

INFORMATION SEEKING

Where did you seek out information about colleges or universities? (All That Apply)

college journey

AUDIENCE	COLLEGE MAIL	STUDENT/ALUMNI	RANKING SITES	RECENT HS GRADS	MENTOR/ COLLEAGUE	VIRTUAL INFO SESSIONS	SCHOOL INFO BOARD	NO ACTIVE SEEKING	AVERAGE SEEKING*
All Respondents	28%	28%	24%	22%	16%	14%	14%	1%	4.89
East North Central	30%	29%	25%	24%	13%	12%	12%	1%	4.78 (-)
West North Central	28%	31%	21%	24%	14%	9%	11%	1%	4.80
Middle Atlantic	30%	29%	33%	22%	17%	19%	12%	1%	5.21 (+)
Mountain	23%	25%	25%	18%	19%	13%	14%	2%	4.63 (-)
New England	32%	26%	26%	26%	13%	22%	16%	1%	5.27 (+)
Pacific	23%	26%	24%	21%	19%	14%	18%	0%	4.96
South Atlantic	31%	30%	26%	24%	18%	16%	16%	1%	5.18 (+)
East South Central	32%	24%	20%	20%	15%	13%	11%	1%	4.62 (-)
West South Central	28%	26%	16%	21%	15%	11%	15%	1%	4.59 (-)
Small Public	28%	23%	15%	15%	17%	13%	16%	1%	4.60 (-)
Small Private	30%	28%	28%	20%	17%	20%	12%	1%	5.11 (+)
Small Religious	32%	25%	16%	19%	15%	7%	7%	2%	4.26 (-)
Small CC/Trade	29%	20%	8%	21%	8%	5%	15%	2%	3.96 (-)
Midsize Public	29%	24%	19%	18%	15%	11%	14%	0%	4.75 (-)
Midsize Private	32%	35%	36%	31%	21%	25%	23%	0%	5.81 (+)
Midsize Religious	34%	36%	25%	25%	17%	18%	15%	1%	5.24 (+)
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	19%	19%	12%	20%	16%	6%	19%	2%	4.27 (-)
Large Public	30%	26%	24%	23%	16%	15%	14%	1%	4.97
Large Private/Religious	22%	32%	32%	17%	18%	19%	12%	1%	4.93
Mega Public	27%	34%	36%	30%	17%	16%	14%	1%	5.44 (+)
Strength Motivated	26%	28%	22%	23%	17%	12%	14%	1%	4.62 (-)
Vitality Motivated	30%	29%	21%	23%	15%	13%	15%	1%	4.98
Creativity Motivated	30%	27%	29%	22%	16%	17%	14%	1%	5.15 (+)

*Average scores with (+) indicate a statistically significantly higher score than the respondent average. Scores with (-) indicate a statistically lower score.



DATA INSIGHT

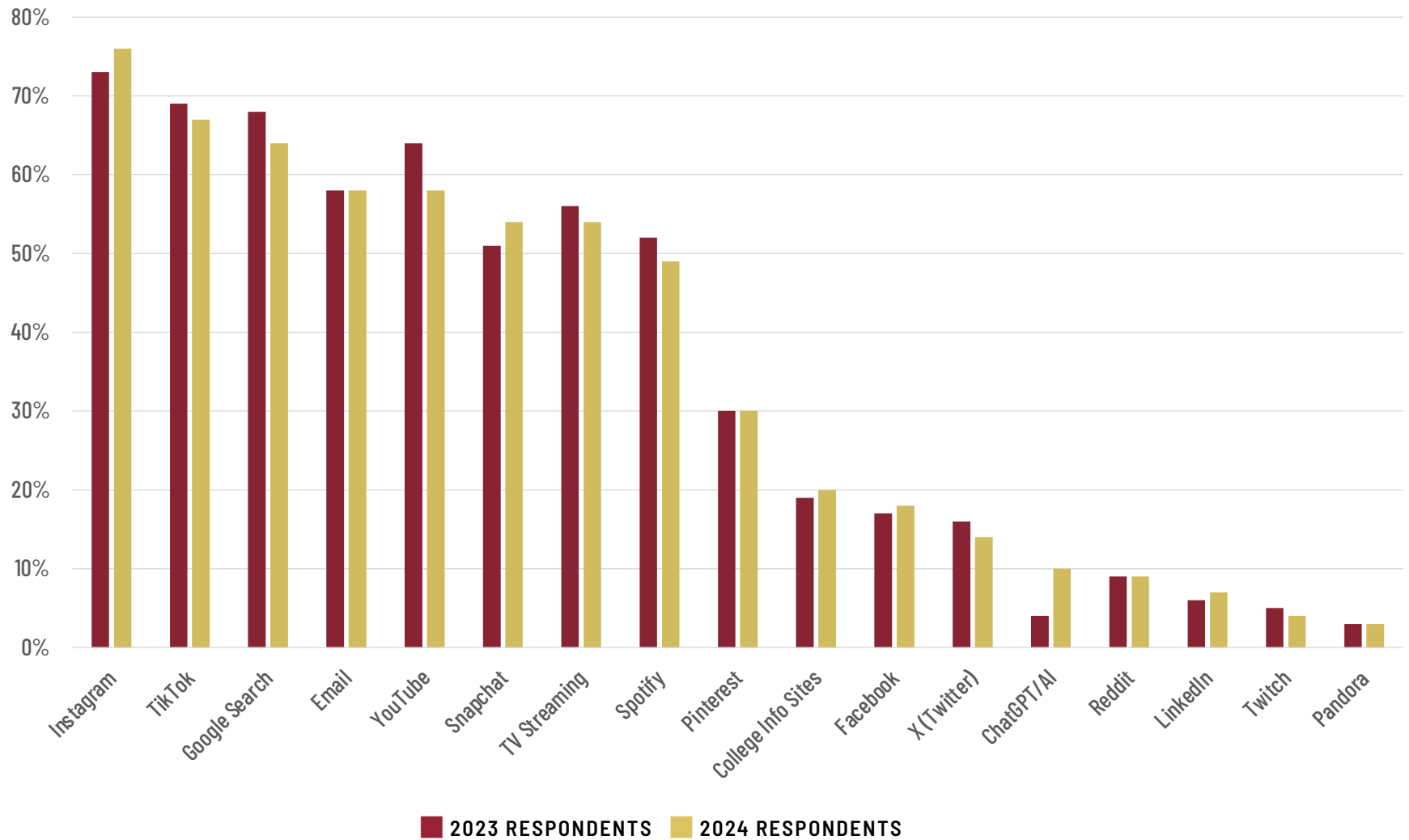
While search sources remain relatively static from 2023, the average number of sources being used to seek out information has dropped. This doesn't necessarily mean the class of 2024 was seeking out less information, but rather, that seeking is becoming more consolidated. One way this could be happening is better informational tools bringing information to a singular source, reducing the complexity of the search process. Most general search is down, while family scores went up.

GRADUATING SENIORS

PLATFORM USE

Which of these specific platforms do you use on a regular basis?

college journey



GRADUATING SENIORS

PLATFORM USE

Which of these specific platforms do you use on a regular basis?

college journey

AUDIENCE	INSTAGRAM	TIKTOK	GOOGLE SEARCH	YOUTUBE	EMAIL	SNAPCHAT	TV STREAMING	SPOTIFY	PINTEREST
All Respondents	76%	67%	64%	58%	58%	54%	54%	49%	30%
Women	80%	70%	64%	52%	64%	55%	57%	51%	42%
Men	70%	60%	65%	68%	47%	53%	47%	45%	6%
Other	56%	66%	65%	70%	44%	37%	50%	53%	44%
LGBTQIA+	73%	71%	69%	70%	56%	45%	58%	58%	45%
Straight/CIS	76%	66%	64%	55%	58%	56%	53%	47%	27%
Asian	79%	68%	74%	67%	46%	46%	41%	56%	25%
Black/African American	73%	60%	59%	63%	68%	41%	53%	33%	35%
Hispanic/Latinx	76%	64%	57%	51%	61%	40%	50%	52%	29%
Other/Mixed Race	69%	68%	64%	61%	51%	45%	52%	40%	34%
White	77%	69%	68%	56%	57%	66%	58%	54%	29%
Low Income	74%	62%	57%	54%	64%	44%	51%	46%	36%
Lower Middle-income	75%	67%	64%	59%	57%	53%	50%	48%	32%
Upper Middle-income	75%	68%	67%	58%	56%	58%	57%	49%	28%
High Income	82%	71%	72%	63%	54%	65%	58%	58%	23%
Liberal	79%	71%	69%	64%	62%	49%	57%	59%	37%
Conservative	72%	67%	63%	53%	53%	61%	52%	49%	25%
Moderate	78%	63%	64%	58%	60%	59%	55%	48%	28%
Non-political	73%	65%	62%	56%	56%	48%	51%	42%	30%
Christian	75%	68%	64%	56%	60%	57%	55%	48%	31%
Catholic	79%	63%	64%	54%	59%	59%	56%	52%	27%
Other Religion	74%	63%	61%	57%	54%	48%	47%	41%	26%
Atheist/Non-religious	76%	73%	71%	66%	59%	51%	58%	59%	37%
High Achiever	77%	73%	68%	59%	52%	54%	58%	52%	31%
Above Average Grades	76%	65%	64%	57%	60%	56%	51%	49%	32%
Average Grades	72%	59%	61%	58%	63%	50%	51%	46%	27%
Below Average Grades	78%	58%	58%	56%	65%	52%	53%	39%	26%

GRADUATING SENIORS

PLATFORM USE

Which of these specific platforms do you use on a regular basis?

college journey

AUDIENCE	COLLEGE INFO SITES	FACEBOOK	X (TWITTER)	CHATGPT/ AI	REDDIT	LINKEDIN	TWITCH	PANDORA	AVERAGE USED*
All Respondents	20%	18%	14%	10%	9%	7%	4%	3%	5.95
Women	20%	20%	10%	8%	7%	7%	2%	3%	6.12 (+)
Men	19%	15%	23%	13%	13%	8%	6%	2%	5.60 (-)
Other	25%	7%	15%	13%	23%	10%	12%	1%	5.91
LGBTQIA+	22%	13%	15%	13%	18%	8%	7%	2%	6.43 (+)
Straight/CIS	20%	19%	14%	9%	8%	7%	3%	3%	5.85
Asian	23%	15%	12%	18%	19%	16%	5%	2%	6.12 (+)
Black/African American	22%	14%	24%	8%	8%	9%	4%	3%	5.77 (-)
Hispanic/Latinx	18%	11%	13%	10%	10%	7%	4%	1%	5.54 (-)
Other/Mixed Race	25%	15%	13%	9%	9%	6%	3%	4%	5.68 (-)
White	19%	23%	12%	10%	8%	5%	3%	3%	6.17 (+)
Low Income	20%	20%	13%	8%	8%	7%	3%	3%	5.70 (-)
Lower Middle-income	21%	21%	15%	10%	10%	7%	5%	3%	5.97
Upper Middle-income	20%	16%	14%	10%	8%	6%	3%	3%	5.96
High Income	20%	12%	14%	16%	14%	10%	3%	1%	6.36 (+)
Liberal	20%	12%	15%	13%	15%	10%	3%	1%	6.36 (+)
Conservative	18%	24%	15%	10%	6%	5%	4%	4%	5.81 (-)
Moderate	21%	19%	14%	11%	10%	8%	4%	4%	6.04
Non-political	21%	18%	14%	7%	7%	6%	4%	3%	5.63 (-)
Christian	20%	22%	13%	10%	6%	6%	3%	4%	5.98
Catholic	19%	16%	14%	8%	8%	7%	2%	3%	5.90
Other Religion	21%	16%	17%	9%	9%	8%	4%	3%	5.58 (-)
Atheist/Non-religious	20%	16%	13%	14%	18%	8%	5%	1%	6.45 (+)
High Achiever	21%	16%	11%	12%	12%	8%	3%	2%	6.09 (+)
Above Average Grades	20%	19%	15%	9%	8%	8%	3%	3%	5.95
Average Grades	18%	20%	18%	8%	7%	5%	4%	3%	5.70 (-)
Below Average Grades	19%	21%	21%	9%	8%	8%	6%	4%	5.81 (-)

* Average scores with (+) indicate a statistically significantly higher score than the respondent average. Scores with (-) indicate a statistically lower score.

GRADUATING SENIORS

PLATFORM USE

Which of these specific platforms do you use on a regular basis?

college journey

AUDIENCE	INSTAGRAM	TIKTOK	GOOGLE SEARCH	YOUTUBE	EMAIL	SNAPCHAT	TV STREAMING	SPOTIFY	PINTEREST
All Respondents	76%	67%	64%	58%	58%	54%	54%	49%	30%
East North Central	74%	64%	64%	54%	55%	65%	51%	53%	27%
West North Central	71%	67%	61%	55%	59%	69%	52%	52%	35%
Middle Atlantic	74%	67%	69%	60%	60%	59%	56%	45%	28%
Mountain	77%	74%	65%	51%	48%	49%	54%	53%	30%
New England	82%	72%	66%	57%	66%	68%	61%	58%	26%
Pacific	79%	62%	63%	58%	55%	37%	53%	53%	31%
South Atlantic	77%	66%	65%	62%	60%	51%	55%	46%	32%
East South Central	72%	67%	63%	57%	56%	54%	50%	45%	36%
West South Central	74%	67%	63%	58%	61%	49%	55%	44%	30%
Small Public	74%	67%	63%	58%	53%	54%	47%	40%	26%
Small Private	77%	71%	68%	61%	57%	56%	57%	49%	26%
Small Religious	71%	69%	63%	56%	54%	59%	49%	46%	20%
Small CC/Trade	72%	54%	48%	53%	65%	57%	52%	43%	31%
Midsize Public	74%	63%	65%	56%	60%	50%	55%	48%	34%
Midsize Private	79%	73%	65%	61%	55%	56%	52%	53%	28%
Midsize Religious	76%	70%	63%	48%	53%	55%	53%	44%	29%
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	66%	55%	61%	50%	52%	41%	52%	52%	27%
Large Public	77%	65%	64%	60%	59%	52%	53%	52%	34%
Large Private/Religious	72%	65%	62%	57%	60%	49%	45%	45%	34%
Mega Public	81%	71%	70%	61%	61%	60%	60%	54%	32%
Strength Motivated	77%	62%	61%	52%	58%	59%	51%	43%	23%
Vitality Motivated	80%	67%	63%	55%	64%	58%	58%	51%	34%
Creativity Motivated	70%	70%	69%	65%	53%	46%	53%	54%	34%

GRADUATING SENIORS

PLATFORM USE

Which of these specific platforms do you use on a regular basis?

college journey

AUDIENCE	COLLEGE INFO SITES	FACEBOOK	X (TWITTER)	CHATGPT/ AI	REDDIT	LINKEDIN	TWITCH	PANDORA	AVERAGE USED*
All Respondents	20%	18%	14%	10%	9%	7%	4%	3%	5.95
East North Central	18%	19%	12%	10%	9%	7%	3%	3%	5.88
West North Central	15%	27%	16%	8%	7%	7%	4%	4%	6.09 (+)
Middle Atlantic	20%	13%	15%	11%	12%	9%	4%	2%	6.04
Mountain	19%	14%	8%	13%	7%	6%	2%	2%	5.72 (-)
New England	25%	17%	14%	9%	7%	7%	1%	3%	6.39 (+)
Pacific	21%	11%	9%	10%	10%	7%	5%	1%	5.65 (-)
South Atlantic	22%	18%	16%	11%	11%	9%	3%	4%	6.08 (+)
East South Central	28%	28%	19%	6%	11%	6%	4%	3%	6.05
West South Central	19%	22%	19%	8%	6%	6%	4%	3%	5.88
Small Public	21%	23%	13%	7%	6%	3%	4%	4%	5.63 (-)
Small Private	22%	15%	15%	11%	10%	7%	4%	1%	6.07 (+)
Small Religious	19%	17%	21%	10%	4%	5%	3%	3%	5.69 (-)
Small CC/Trade	13%	32%	13%	7%	7%	6%	3%	5%	5.61 (-)
Midsize Public	19%	21%	16%	8%	8%	7%	3%	4%	5.91
Midsize Private	25%	12%	13%	12%	11%	11%	4%	3%	6.13 (+)
Midsize Religious	27%	24%	13%	11%	7%	10%	4%	2%	5.89
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	16%	20%	9%	7%	6%	7%	1%	2%	5.24 (-)
Large Public	21%	17%	13%	10%	11%	7%	4%	3%	6.02
Large Private/Religious	16%	16%	11%	11%	11%	10%	2%	3%	5.69 (-)
Mega Public	20%	13%	13%	13%	13%	8%	4%	2%	6.36 (+)
Strength Motivated	18%	20%	20%	8%	7%	8%	3%	3%	5.73 (-)
Vitality Motivated	20%	19%	12%	10%	8%	6%	3%	2%	6.10 (+)
Creativity Motivated	22%	16%	11%	12%	13%	7%	4%	3%	6.02

* Average scores with (+) indicate a statistically significantly higher score than the respondent average. Scores with (-) indicate a statistically lower score.



DATA INSIGHT

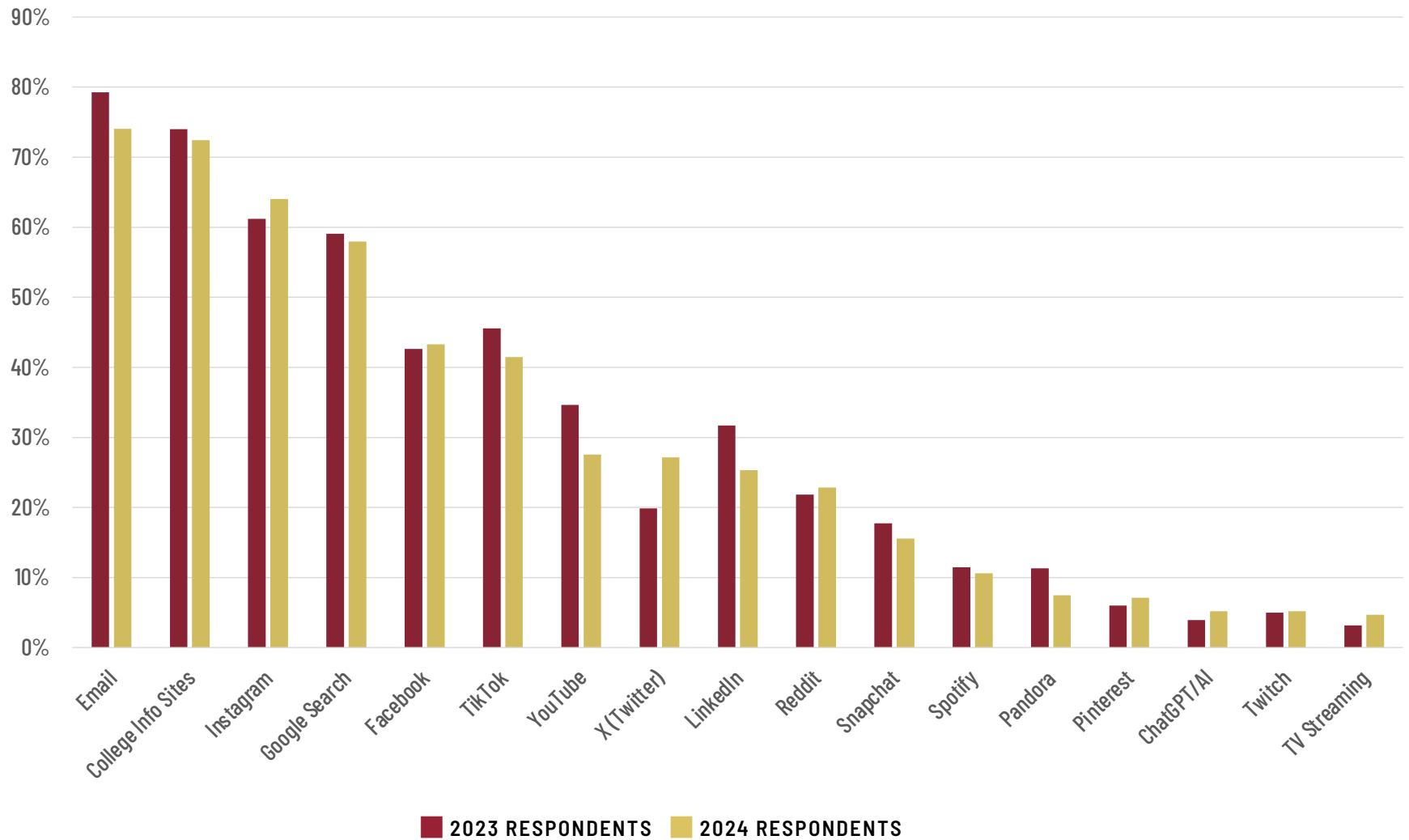
The overall number of platforms has not changed significantly for this class compared to the last. There are small shifts across some platforms, but the only large change was a more than doubling in the amount of respondents who selected ChatGPT/AI, though this category is still relatively low on the list. Instagram and TikTok continue to be the platforms that this generation is using the most.

GRADUATING SENIORS

PLATFORM ADVERTISING

Of the platforms you use regularly, where do you recall seeing college/university advertising?

college journey

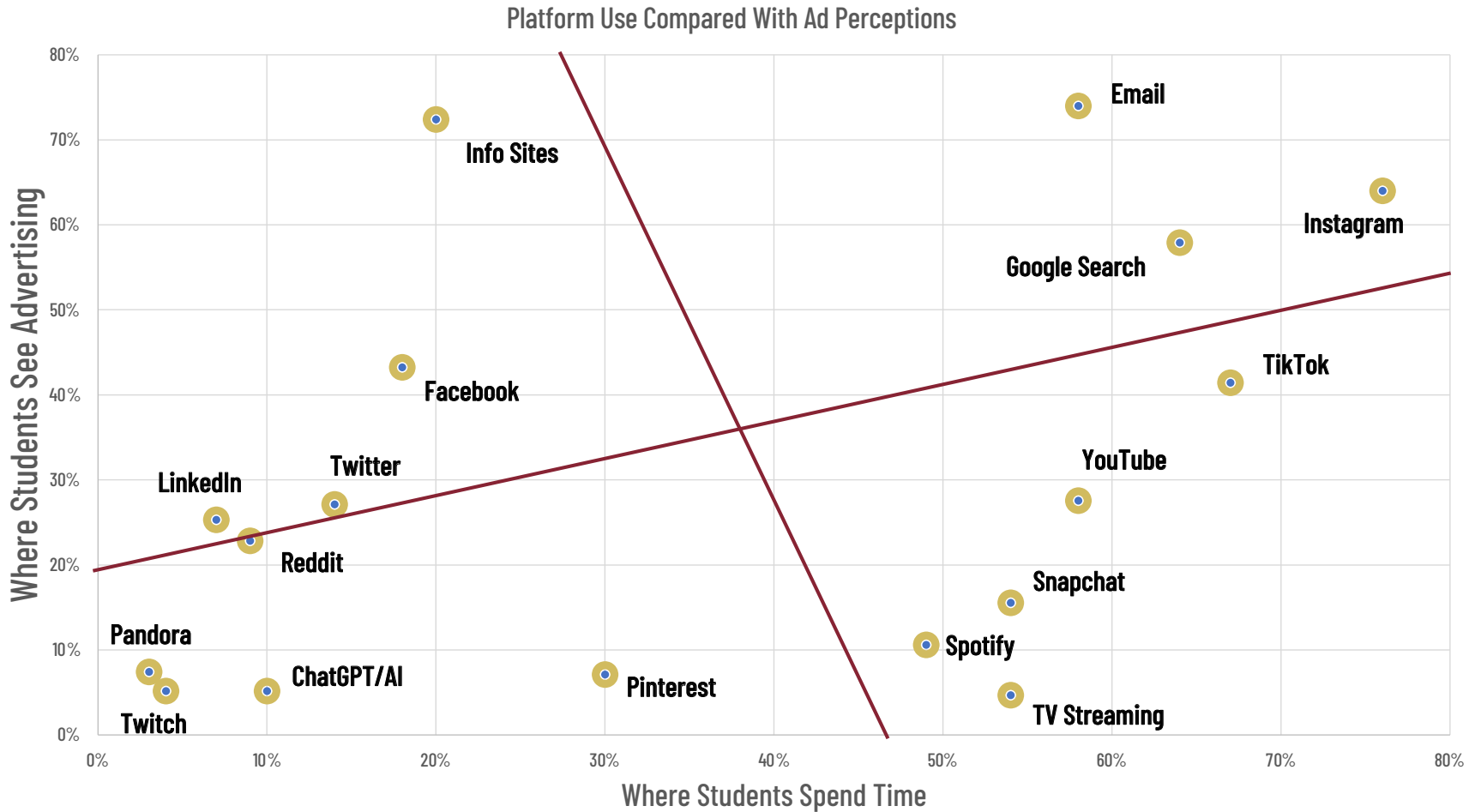


GRADUATING SENIORS

USE VERSUS AD PERCEPTION

Comparing platform use and ad perception data to create quadrant analysis.

college journey



READING QUADRANT ANALYSIS

Assessment areas in the top right quadrant are those where strong use matches with high ad recall, indicating these are platforms that are valuable and currently well used by colleges. The bottom right are platforms where recall has not paced with use. This is either because the advertising there is not yet consistent enough from colleges, or the quality is too low for recall. The top left are platforms with strong recall but not a lot of use. Outside of college information sites, which were meant for college advertising, the other platforms are those where current efforts might be overused. The bottom left are platforms without much use or ad recall, and are simply platforms to watch for future changes.

GRADUATING SENIORS

SOCIAL MEDIA TRUST: INSTITUTIONS

How much do you trust the information you see about colleges from those colleges on social media?

college journey

AUDIENCE	NO TRUST AT ALL	SLIGHT TRUST	SOME TRUST	HIGH TRUST	COMPLETE TRUST	AVERAGE SCORE*
All Respondents (2023 Weighted)	2%	15%	49%	28%	6%	3.21
All Respondents (2024)	4%	18%	50%	25%	4%	3.08 (DOWN)
Women	3%	18%	49%	27%	4%	3.10
Men	3%	18%	51%	24%	4%	3.06
Other	7%	21%	54%	16%	2%	2.85 (-)
LGBTQIA+	4%	19%	51%	23%	3%	3.02
Straight/CIS	4%	18%	50%	26%	4%	3.09
Asian	4%	20%	47%	26%	4%	3.07
Black/African American	2%	19%	53%	23%	3%	3.05
Hispanic/Latinx	4%	17%	51%	24%	4%	3.07
Other/Mixed Race	4%	24%	45%	22%	5%	2.99
White	4%	16%	50%	27%	3%	3.10
Low Income	4%	18%	52%	22%	4%	3.05
Lower Middle-income	4%	16%	51%	25%	4%	3.08
Upper Middle-income	3%	19%	48%	27%	3%	3.09
High Income	4%	17%	49%	27%	3%	3.09
Liberal	3%	17%	50%	28%	3%	3.10
Conservative	4%	15%	49%	27%	5%	3.14
Moderate	4%	20%	50%	25%	2%	3.03
Non-political	3%	19%	51%	23%	4%	3.06
Christian	4%	17%	49%	27%	4%	3.10
Catholic	4%	17%	50%	25%	4%	3.07
Other Religion	4%	20%	52%	21%	4%	3.01
Atheist/Non-religious	3%	17%	48%	29%	3%	3.13
High Achiever	4%	18%	46%	29%	4%	3.13
Above Average Grades	3%	19%	52%	24%	3%	3.05
Average Grades	3%	16%	54%	22%	4%	3.08
Below Average Grades	6%	19%	52%	22%	2%	2.94 (-)

* Average scores with (+) indicate a statistically significantly higher score than the respondent average. Scores with (-) indicate a statistically lower score.

SOCIAL MEDIA TRUST: INSTITUTIONS

How much do you trust the information you see about colleges from those colleges on social media?

college journey

AUDIENCE	NO TRUST AT ALL	SLIGHT TRUST	SOME TRUST	HIGH TRUST	COMPLETE TRUST	AVERAGE SCORE*
All Respondents	4%	18%	50%	25%	4%	3.08
East North Central	4%	20%	45%	27%	4%	3.06
West North Central	3%	16%	56%	24%	3%	3.07
Middle Atlantic	2%	18%	54%	23%	3%	3.06
Mountain	4%	19%	50%	26%	1%	3.02
New England	5%	16%	46%	30%	3%	3.11
Pacific	3%	20%	49%	24%	4%	3.05
South Atlantic	3%	17%	50%	26%	4%	3.12
East South Central	3%	18%	50%	26%	3%	3.09
West South Central	5%	16%	49%	25%	5%	3.08
Small Public	3%	22%	47%	24%	5%	3.07
Small Private	3%	14%	53%	27%	3%	3.14
Small Religious	3%	14%	50%	30%	3%	3.16
Small CC/Trade	8%	22%	49%	19%	3%	2.88 (-)
Midsize Public	4%	17%	52%	23%	4%	3.06
Midsize Private	4%	16%	48%	27%	4%	3.12
Midsize Religious	2%	19%	52%	25%	2%	3.07
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	3%	22%	52%	21%	3%	2.98
Large Public	3%	21%	48%	25%	3%	3.03
Large Private/Religious	5%	18%	53%	23%	2%	3.00
Mega Public	3%	16%	48%	29%	4%	3.16
Strength Motivated	4%	19%	49%	25%	3%	3.04
Vitality Motivated	4%	18%	48%	26%	5%	3.11
Creativity Motivated	3%	17%	52%	25%	3%	3.08

* Average scores with (+) indicate a statistically significantly higher score than the respondent average. Scores with (-) indicate a statistically lower score.



DATA INSIGHT

Trust in social media information from an institution is at a measured low for Carnegie national studies, after seeing a steady decline since the first time the question was asked in 2019. This is a strong indication of how people are judging online content and reality. There were almost no significant demographic or institutional type differences, indicating a strong agreement from audience types about this perception.

GRADUATING SENIORS

SOCIAL MEDIA TRUST: USER CONTENT

How much do you trust the information you see about colleges from students/alums on social media?

college journey

AUDIENCE	NO TRUST AT ALL	SLIGHT TRUST	SOME TRUST	HIGH TRUST	COMPLETE TRUST	AVERAGE SCORE*
All Respondents (2023 Weighted)	3%	12%	42%	40%	4%	3.33
All Respondents (2024)	1%	9%	40%	40%	10%	3.48 (UP)
Women	1%	9%	39%	40%	11%	3.51
Men	2%	9%	43%	39%	8%	3.41
Other	2%	10%	38%	43%	7%	3.43
LGBTQIA+	1%	8%	37%	44%	11%	3.56
Straight/CIS	1%	9%	41%	39%	10%	3.47
Asian	2%	10%	32%	47%	10%	3.52
Black/African American	0%	8%	37%	40%	14%	3.59
Hispanic/Latinx	1%	8%	42%	39%	10%	3.49
Other/Mixed Race	3%	10%	44%	33%	10%	3.37
White	1%	9%	42%	39%	9%	3.45
Low Income	2%	9%	41%	37%	11%	3.47
Lower Middle-income	1%	9%	41%	40%	10%	3.49
Upper Middle-income	1%	9%	40%	40%	10%	3.49
High Income	1%	8%	40%	44%	6%	3.45
Liberal	1%	8%	34%	45%	12%	3.61(+)
Conservative	1%	8%	42%	41%	8%	3.47
Moderate	1%	10%	45%	34%	10%	3.41
Non-political	2%	10%	40%	38%	10%	3.44
Christian	1%	9%	42%	39%	8%	3.45
Catholic	1%	10%	41%	38%	9%	3.44
Other Religion	2%	10%	41%	37%	11%	3.46
Atheist/Non-religious	1%	7%	35%	45%	12%	3.61(+)
High Achiever	1%	8%	38%	43%	11%	3.54
Above Average Grades	1%	9%	41%	39%	9%	3.47
Average Grades	1%	10%	43%	35%	11%	3.44
Below Average Grades	3%	11%	45%	33%	8%	3.31(-)

* Average scores with (+) indicate a statistically significantly higher score than the respondent average. Scores with (-) indicate a statistically lower score.

SOCIAL MEDIA TRUST: USER CONTENT

How much do you trust the information you see about colleges from students/alums on social media?

college journey

AUDIENCE	NO TRUST AT ALL	SLIGHT TRUST	SOME TRUST	HIGH TRUST	COMPLETE TRUST	AVERAGE SCORE*
All Respondents	1%	9%	40%	40%	10%	3.48
East North Central	2%	10%	39%	39%	10%	3.44
West North Central	0%	8%	43%	41%	8%	3.48
Middle Atlantic	1%	10%	39%	38%	13%	3.54
Mountain	3%	10%	41%	40%	7%	3.40
New England	3%	8%	41%	35%	14%	3.48
Pacific	2%	8%	38%	40%	12%	3.52
South Atlantic	1%	8%	41%	40%	11%	3.53
East South Central	1%	12%	43%	37%	8%	3.41
West South Central	1%	9%	41%	42%	6%	3.42
Small Public	2%	12%	39%	37%	11%	3.43
Small Private	1%	9%	37%	41%	12%	3.56
Small Religious	2%	8%	41%	41%	8%	3.46
Small CC/Trade	3%	13%	38%	40%	7%	3.34 (-)
Midsize Public	1%	9%	44%	37%	9%	3.43
Midsize Private	1%	8%	35%	39%	18%	3.65 (+)
Midsize Religious	1%	8%	36%	38%	17%	3.62 (+)
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	0%	12%	47%	35%	6%	3.35 (-)
Large Public	2%	8%	42%	38%	10%	3.47
Large Private/Religious	2%	10%	34%	43%	12%	3.53
Mega Public	1%	8%	40%	44%	8%	3.50
Strength Motivated	1%	9%	43%	37%	10%	3.45
Vitality Motivated	2%	9%	38%	41%	12%	3.52
Creativity Motivated	1%	10%	39%	41%	9%	3.47

* Average scores with (+) indicate a statistically significantly higher score than the respondent average. Scores with (-) indicate a statistically lower score.

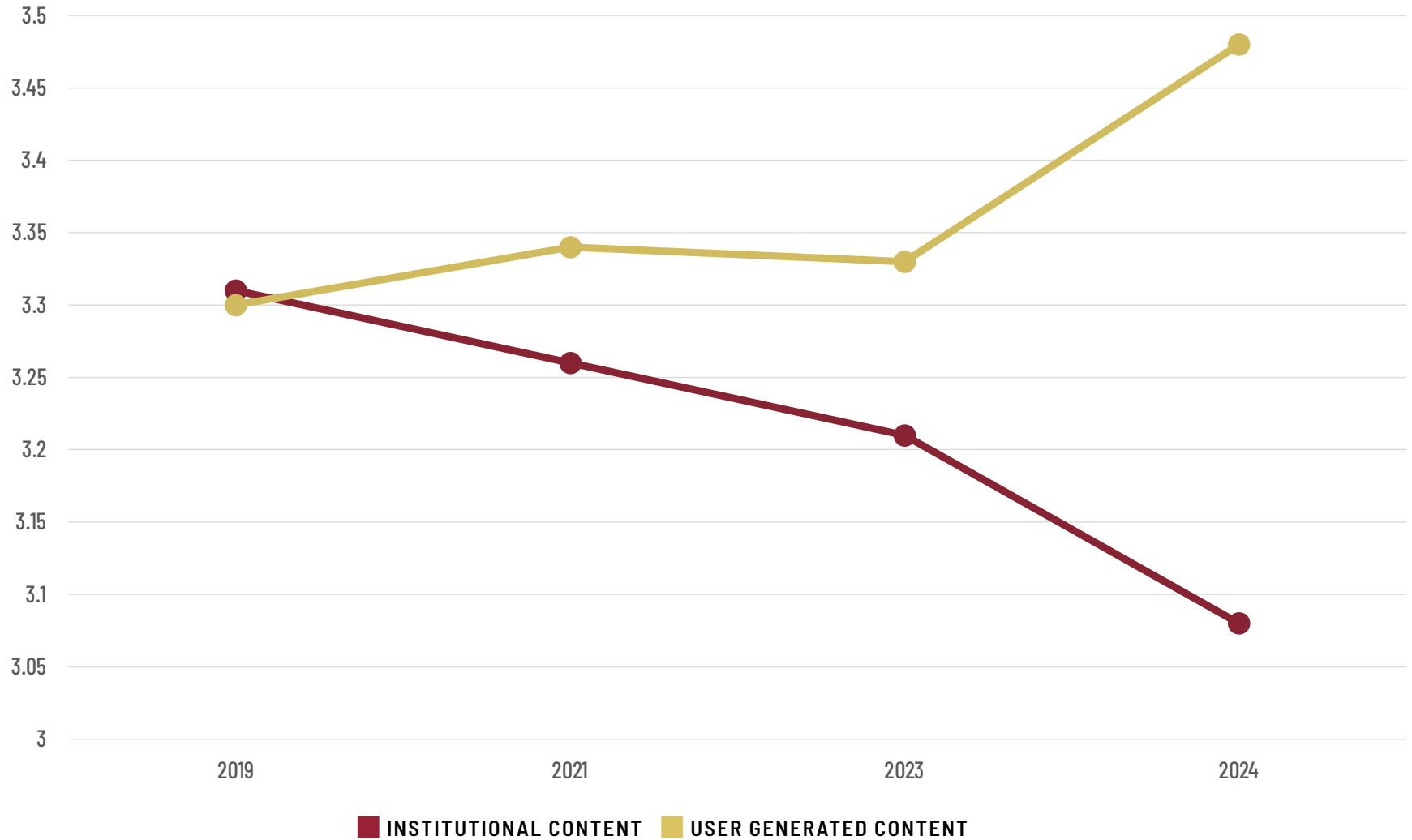


DATA INSIGHT

Trust of current and graduated students is quite high and has increased since 2023. This is a typical outcome in social media trust, however, as the experience of a real end user (or in this case, student), is often seen as less biased compared to an institution's own content. As such, the perception of bias from institutions creates more trust in content from unofficial sources and influencers.

THE TRUST GAP ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Showing the shift over time of trust end users have for content created by different sources.

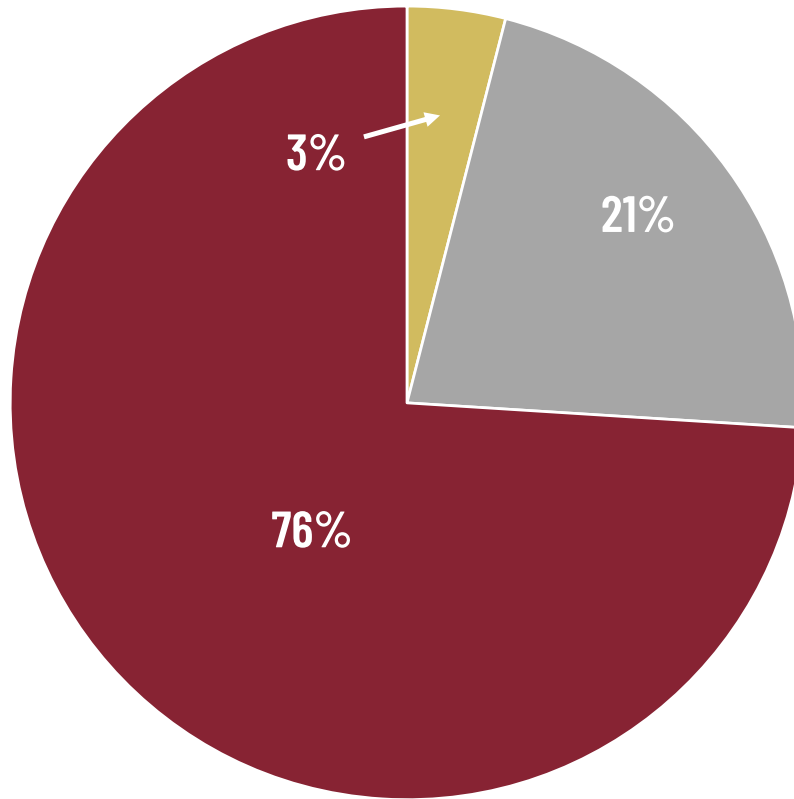


college journey

CHATGPT/AI USE

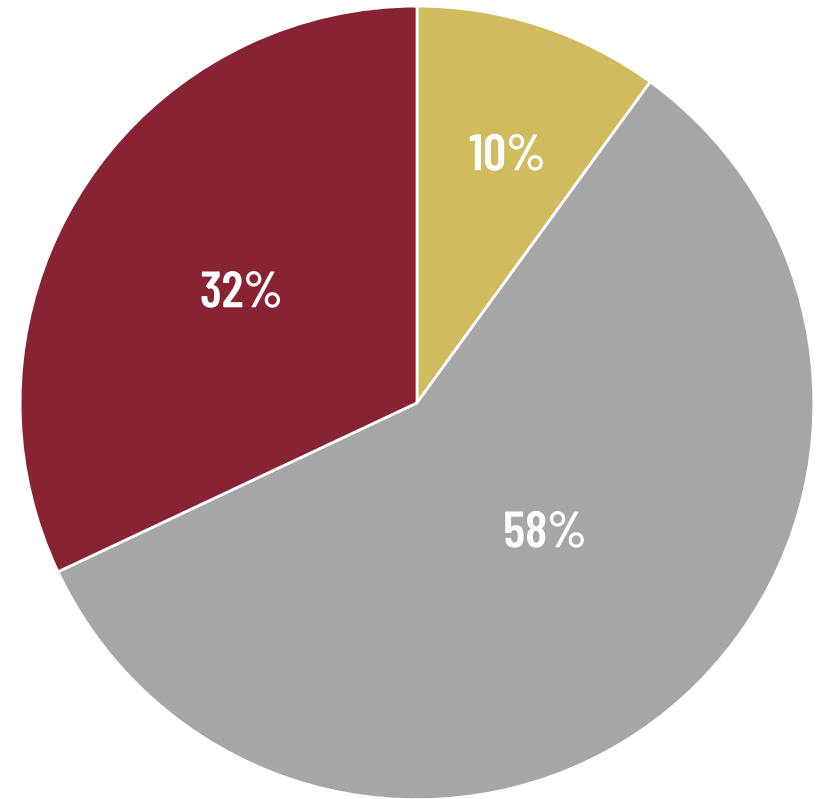
Did you use AI to help search out college information?

2023 (Weighted)



■ Used for Search ■ Used for Fun ■ Never Used

2024



■ Used for Search ■ Used for Fun ■ Never Used

college journey

GRADUATING SENIORS

COLLEGE PREPARATION

How prepared do you feel to attend college this year?

college journey

AUDIENCE	NOT PREPARED AT ALL	SLIGHTLY PREPARED	SOMEWHAT PREPARED	HIGHLY PREPARED	COMPLETELY PREPARED	AVERAGE SCORE*
All Respondents (2023 Weighted)	3%	10%	44%	34%	9%	3.38
All Respondents (2024)	2%	9%	44%	35%	10%	3.40
Women	2%	9%	46%	34%	9%	3.37
Men	2%	9%	42%	36%	12%	3.46
Other	3%	17%	40%	32%	9%	3.27
LGBTQIA+	4%	12%	41%	33%	10%	3.34
Straight/CIS	2%	9%	45%	35%	9%	3.41
Asian	4%	12%	46%	31%	8%	3.27
Black/African American	3%	11%	50%	26%	9%	3.28
Hispanic/Latinx	3%	12%	44%	32%	9%	3.33
Other/Mixed Race	2%	13%	38%	35%	12%	3.41
White	2%	7%	43%	39%	10%	3.47
Low Income	4%	14%	47%	28%	9%	3.24 (-)
Lower Middle-income	3%	10%	47%	30%	9%	3.33
Upper Middle-income	2%	7%	43%	40%	9%	3.48
High Income	1%	7%	37%	41%	14%	3.61 (+)
Liberal	2%	8%	44%	36%	10%	3.44
Conservative	1%	7%	42%	41%	9%	3.50
Moderate	2%	11%	42%	36%	10%	3.40
Non-political	4%	12%	49%	27%	9%	3.27
Christian	2%	9%	45%	36%	9%	3.39
Catholic	2%	8%	45%	36%	10%	3.43
Other Religion	2%	10%	46%	33%	9%	3.37
Atheist/Non-religious	3%	11%	42%	33%	12%	3.40
High Achiever	2%	7%	41%	40%	11%	3.53 (+)
Above Average Grades	2%	10%	45%	34%	8%	3.36
Average Grades	4%	11%	48%	29%	10%	3.30
Below Average Grades	7%	16%	53%	18%	7%	3.02 (-)

* Average scores with (+) indicate a statistically significantly higher score than the respondent average. Scores with (-) indicate a statistically lower score.

GRADUATING SENIORS

COLLEGE PREPARATION

How prepared do you feel to attend college this year?

college journey

AUDIENCE	NOT PREPARED AT ALL	SLIGHTLY PREPARED	SOMEWHAT PREPARED	HIGHLY PREPARED	COMPLETELY PREPARED	AVERAGE SCORE*
All Respondents	2%	9%	44%	35%	10%	3.40
East North Central	2%	10%	47%	34%	8%	3.37
West North Central	3%	6%	44%	36%	12%	3.47
Middle Atlantic	2%	9%	46%	36%	7%	3.38
Mountain	1%	9%	42%	38%	10%	3.46
New England	1%	6%	41%	42%	10%	3.52 (+)
Pacific	3%	12%	43%	31%	11%	3.33
South Atlantic	3%	8%	44%	35%	11%	3.43
East South Central	3%	14%	41%	36%	6%	3.28 (-)
West South Central	2%	11%	46%	32%	10%	3.36
Small Public	4%	11%	46%	24%	15%	3.34
Small Private	2%	6%	47%	35%	10%	3.46
Small Religious	1%	8%	44%	39%	9%	3.47
Small CC/Trade	5%	14%	44%	27%	9%	3.20
Midsize Public	3%	12%	44%	33%	8%	3.30
Midsize Private	2%	10%	36%	42%	10%	3.49
Midsize Religious	3%	6%	43%	39%	10%	3.47
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	4%	14%	46%	26%	11%	3.26 (-)
Large Public	2%	9%	47%	33%	10%	3.40
Large Private/Religious	4%	5%	46%	38%	7%	3.39
Mega Public	1%	7%	44%	38%	10%	3.48
Strength Motivated	2%	8%	40%	39%	11%	3.49
Vitality Motivated	3%	10%	47%	33%	8%	3.33
Creativity Motivated	2%	10%	47%	32%	9%	3.36

* Average scores with (+) indicate a statistically significantly higher score than the respondent average. Scores with (-) indicate a statistically lower score.



DATA INSIGHT

Overall feelings of preparedness have now been steady for three straight years, with strong numbers feeling at least somewhat confident. Importantly, the factors that predicted feelings of preparedness have not changed since 2023: grades and income strongly predict whether or not a student feels ready, and low grades and income are associated with lower predicted self-efficacy. Therefore, these groups should be considered for special outreach and attention when preparing audiences for school.

GRADUATING SENIORS

INSIGHTS

Key information and recommendations based on the data in this report.

INTRODUCTION

Relative consistency in the results of this year's report and last year's tells us that we may be entering the "new normal" that was promised for so many years after the COVID-19 pandemic. However, with many other changes and current events surrounding the college decision process and students' journeys through it, distinct shifts in their responses this year give indications of where the market has settled for the time being and where it may be headed.

- Students reported fewer barriers to college attendance and an increased resilience; that is, the desire to attend college no matter what.
- Students may be more confident that they will receive an acceptance, resulting in a lower overall application rate (a confidence that is justified by colleges' higher acceptance rates).
- Students expressed increased willingness to look further from home for schools, but the prevailing desire to stay close to home.
- Students remain pragmatic about the decision to go to college but shifts in decision factors indicate increasing reliance on emotions, fit, and feel to make the final choice.
- There is continued distrust in college-produced content for social media compared to user-generated content and information gleaned from personal resources such as friends and family.

Let's dive into some of these a little deeper.

FEWER BARRIERS AND GREATER RESILIENCE

For college and university practitioners, the data on pages 27-31 of this report should instill some confidence that we and the students we serve are still in control of the college process; a process that has been fraught with confusion and anxiety around the barrier that remains at the top of the list. "Cost Too High," although still selected by over half of the survey respondents, saw a reduction this year in the overall percentage of students who indicated this was a barrier to their college journey. Other barriers saw similar decreases that, when viewed alongside the increase in students indicating they intended to attend college "no matter what," indicate movement in the right direction to reduce barriers and increase resilience. The work we have done to support students over the last year, from the time they raise their hand to the time they enroll, is contributing to a more confident and resilient pool of college-going students. Likely, much credit should also be given to friends, family, school counselors, and most of all, the students themselves who have navigated the college process. Carnegie hopes this is motivation to continue to do good work to smooth the way for students and empower them to earn the credentials that will set them up for success.

INSIGHTS

Key information and recommendations based on the data in this report.

INCREASED CONFIDENCE IN ACCEPTANCE

Research conducted over the last five years showed a rise in the number of applications students submitted, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. That has been steadily decreasing as students regain confidence in their eventual college options. As noted in last year's Graduating Seniors Report insights, this should continue to enable enrollment managers to have confidence in their funnel data and conversion rates as application inflation continues to go down. Despite a lower application rate, acceptance rates increased. This may be due to a combination of factors such as an uncertain yield year due to FAFSA changes, making up ground lost during prior years, or increased demands for enrollment to fulfill institutional needs. Whatever the reason, students' confidence was rewarded this year with increased acceptance rates which will likely motivate continued decreases in application rates in future years. Institutions that saw decreased application rates, and admitted more students but yielded fewer should be cautious about this trend which may indicate continued yield and retention challenges going forward. If this is your institution, consider your current market position, brand recognition, affinity strategies, and financial aid model. These should all be working together to boost your institution's individual application number allowing you to admit and yield the most qualified students.

DESIRE TO STAY CLOSE TO HOME

As demographics shift and schools prepare for significant drops in high school graduates, many are looking beyond their local markets and regions to cultivate more national reach and awareness. For some schools, this may work. Travel flexibility is higher than average for private and religious schools of all sizes. For all other institutional types, travel flexibility, according to the respondents of this survey, is at or below average, meaning that broad national reach is likely out of reach. Where national brand recognition does not already exist, it is in an institution's best interest to continue to cultivate its local and regional markets (up to 150-200 miles from campus) while exploring areas further away using highly data-driven and specific tactics. It will also be important to craft a strong value proposition that is differentiated, relevant, and clear. Cultivate existing connections where possible, and confidently abandon markets that do not show promise after two to three years of intentional outreach. Yearly market opportunity research can support a data-driven and nimble approach such as this.

GRADUATING SENIORS

INSIGHTS

Key information and recommendations based on the data in this report.

A NEED TO FEEL

Although pragmatism and practicality are characteristics that have come to be associated with college-going cohorts over the last few years, campus feel and finding the right fit institution are still critical to students' college decisions. Increasingly, students share that they are attending college to "earn a degree." Interestingly though, many other motivations saw a decrease in response rate in this year's report except for those related to less tangible outcomes. "Lifelong Bonds" and "Social Life" both increased in response rate, the latter of which overtook "Professional Contacts" in position. When looking more specifically at factors of choice for schools, many factors also saw dips in the percentage of responses, but among those that increased were things like "Campus Feel," "Athletics," "Prestige," "Connections," and "School Spirit." In institutions' efforts to give students the information they need to know to make a decision, schools must be conscious of students' need to feel that their decision is the right one. This is accomplished through language, imagery, style, design, and digital interfaces that all support a strong and unique brand perception.

PERSONAL AND AUTHENTIC CONNECTIONS

Carnegie has conducted research on students' perceptions of social media and found that students often feel these platforms are personal and interactions on these sites or apps are meant for informal connections rather than professional ones, such as those with a college or university. We see the dissonance between a perception that a platform is for personal use and the use of that platform by professional organizations (e.g., colleges and universities) play out in increasing levels of distrust of content produced by colleges and universities and shared through social media. At the same time, trust in user-generated content and personal connections such as friends and family has grown. Institutions that understand their current perceptions in the market will be more effective at capitalizing on positive perceptions for a strong word-of-mouth marketing strategy.

CONCLUSION

Overall, we see comparable results year over year in the Graduating Seniors Reports. Nuanced changes such as those noted above indicate that the institutions that will be most successful (and efficient) are those that have data at their fingertips and are willing and able to make strategic changes as needed. Differentiation will remain key in a "buyers" market where acceptance rates are high and students are able to be more selective. Students are growing increasingly savvy about the content they consume and whether it is able to tell them what they want to know. They need to understand how an institution aligns with their desires, personality, goals, and motivations, and they want to hear it first-hand from the people who have lived the experience. A consistent, unique, and authentic brand will be critical to not only capturing students' attention but also moving their hearts and minds in the direction of your institution.



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