

INSIDE
HIGHER ED

2021 Survey of

College and University Admissions Directors

A SURVEY BY *INSIDE HIGHER ED* AND HANOVER RESEARCH

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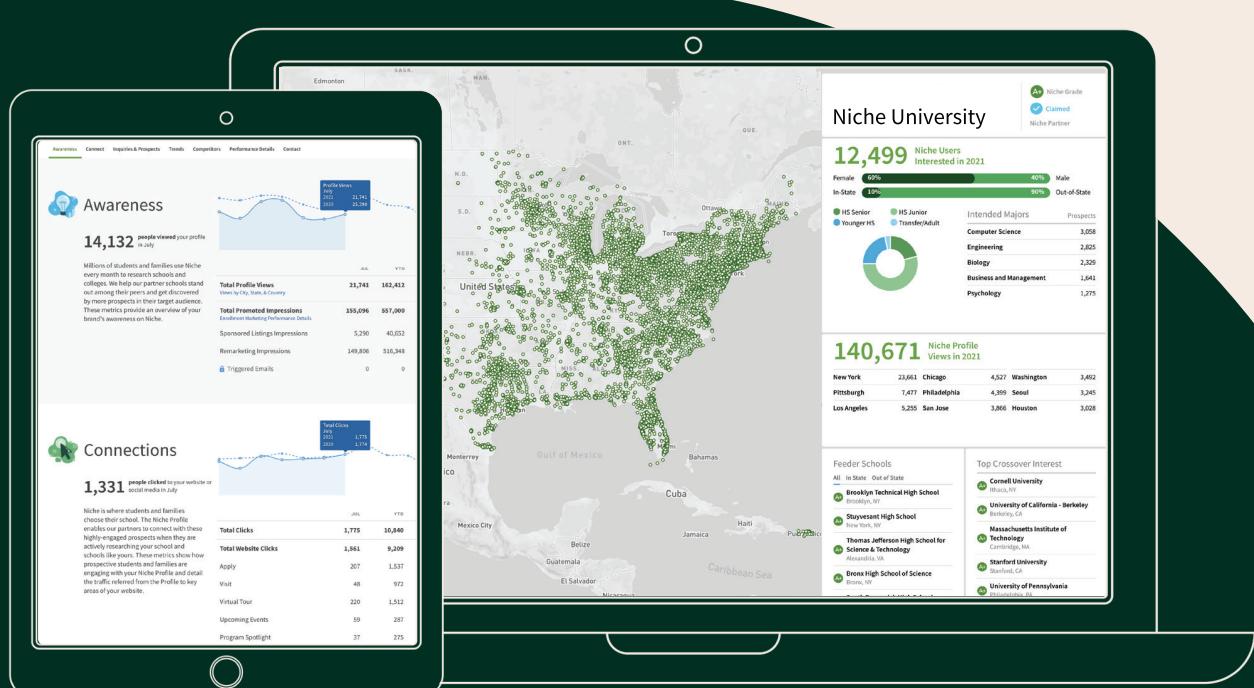
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INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Inside Higher Ed has partnered with Hanover Research to develop and disseminate a survey to college and university enrollment officers to understand how they view enrollment trends and challenges facing higher education in the U.S. this year.

This survey was administered online in August of 2021 using the Qualtrics platform. Written analysis for the overall results are found throughout the report, along with some analysis based on sector and some longitudinal narrative in the appendix for specified sections. Results for the following segmentations can be found in the accompanying data supplement: Sector, Public Degrees, Private Degrees, and Region.

Currently serving as an enrollment officer (in an admissions office role or as a director of admissions, admissions officer, or associate director of admissions) at a 4-year private, 4-year public, 2-year public, or for-profit institution.

After data collection, Hanover identified and removed low-quality respondents. Sample sizes vary across questions as some questions only pertain to a subset of respondents. Conclusions drawn from a small sample size ($n < 20$) should be interpreted with caution. "Don't Know or Not Applicable" responses, and equivalent, are often excluded from the figures and analysis in order to focus on respondents who did express an opinion. For full aggregate and segmented results, please consult the accompanying data supplement. Due to small sample sizes, some sectors have been excluded. The 2018 Carnegie Classification was used to determine sector classifications. For simplicity and clarity, this analysis refers to all respondents as "enrollment officers" or simply "officers." The longitudinal results are narrative-based only and do not contain language indicating significant differences between years.

INSTITUTION TYPE & RESPONDENT ROLE

	All Institutions, by Sector				Public			Private Nonprofit		
	All	Public	Private Nonprofit	For-profit*	Doctoral	Master's/Bacc.	Associate	Doctoral/Master's	Bacc.	Associate*
Total sample size	206	72	131	3	22	27	24	74	57	2

Note: An asterisk (*) indicates that data is not reported for these groups due to small sample size.

Which of the following best describes your primary role at your institution?

Director of admissions	21%
Associate director of admissions	3%
Admissions officer	6%
Other admissions office role	69%

KEY FINDINGS

- Concerns over reduced enrollment are pervasive. This year, over 90 percent of enrollment officials say they are either moderately or very concerned about meeting new student enrollment goals. By May 2021, only a third (32 percent) of respondents say their institution had met its enrollment goals; by July, this number increased to just under half (48 percent). Further, private institutions are meeting enrollment goals earlier than are public institutions; by July 2021 two-thirds of enrollment officers from private institutions report having met their goals, while only 38 percent of officers from public institutions say the same.
- Most officers say that campus closures hurt their recruiting efforts either a moderate amount (38 percent) or a great deal (34 percent), but nearly three-quarters say they do not expect their institution to respond to lower admission numbers by admitting students it probably would not have admitted in prior years. Further, over three-quarters (77 percent) also say their institutions have not offered students incentives to enroll after certain dates.
- On the other hand, half of all officers (48 percent) say they expect undergraduate enrollment to be higher in the Fall of 2021 than it was in the Fall of 2020. Enrollment expectations differ significantly by sector; for example, officers from private institutions say significantly more than do officers from public institutions that enrollment will be higher this year. Conversely, compared with private institution officers (27 percent), significantly more public institution officers expect enrollment to be lower (27 percent vs. 43 percent).
- The pandemic has not substantially changed officers' perceptions of the students their institutions are admitting; approximately three-quarters of officers say the coronavirus pandemic did not change (34 percent) or minorly changed (37 percent) which students their institutions admitted. However, nearly all (99 percent) of those who feel there have been some changes in the admitted student population also feel that these changes are at least slightly likely to continue. Further, three-quarters (76 percent) of officers say that their institution assumes that some (or many) students will continue to utilize video instead of campus visits.
- Officials say their institutions will increase recruitment efforts this year (2021-22) for four groups in particular. Over 80 percent of officers say they are very likely to increase recruitment for minority and transfer students, while approximately three-quarters (78 percent) say the same for full-time undergraduates and first-generation college students. Comparatively, only a quarter (26 percent) say they are likely to increase recruitment efforts for part-time undergraduates. Surprisingly (given the widespread reliance on distance and asynchronous learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020), only 38 percent of officials say they are likely to increase recruitment efforts for online students.

KEY FINDINGS (cont.)

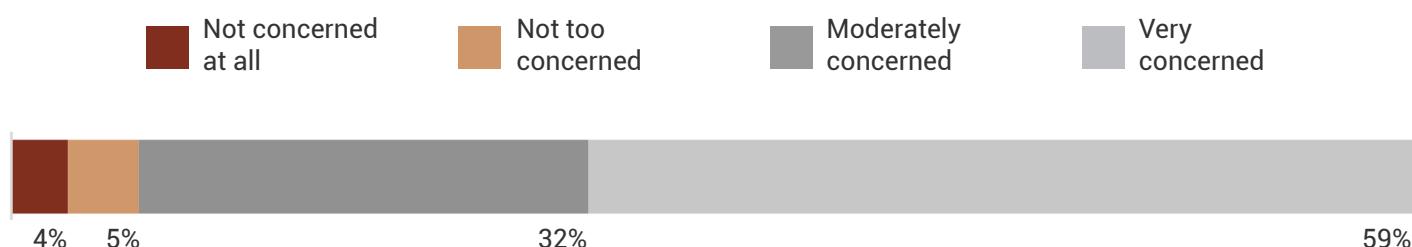
- There are several significant differences in recruitment approaches by sector. Notably, twice as many officers from public than from private institutions are likely to increase recruitment efforts for students older than 24 (65 percent vs. 33 percent) and three times as many public than private officers are likely to increase efforts for part-time undergraduates (47 percent vs. 15 percent).
- Over 95 percent of officers say their institutions were either test-optional or test-blind before the COVID-19 pandemic or that they have recently changed their application process to be test-optional or test-blind. Of those institutions that changed their application process, over half (55 percent) say they admitted more Black, Latinx, and Native American students.
- Approximately a third of officers from institutions that changed their application processes to be test-optional or test-blind say the experience of admitting students without test scores was somewhat positive. Another quarter (24 percent) say the experience was very positive, while a third (32 percent) are neutral. The policy change is popular across both the public and private sectors, however – there are no significant differences in support for these policies by sector, and three-quarters of officers (overall) say they would somewhat (20 percent) or strongly (59 percent) support their institution remaining test-optional or test-blind permanently.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT AND RECRUITING

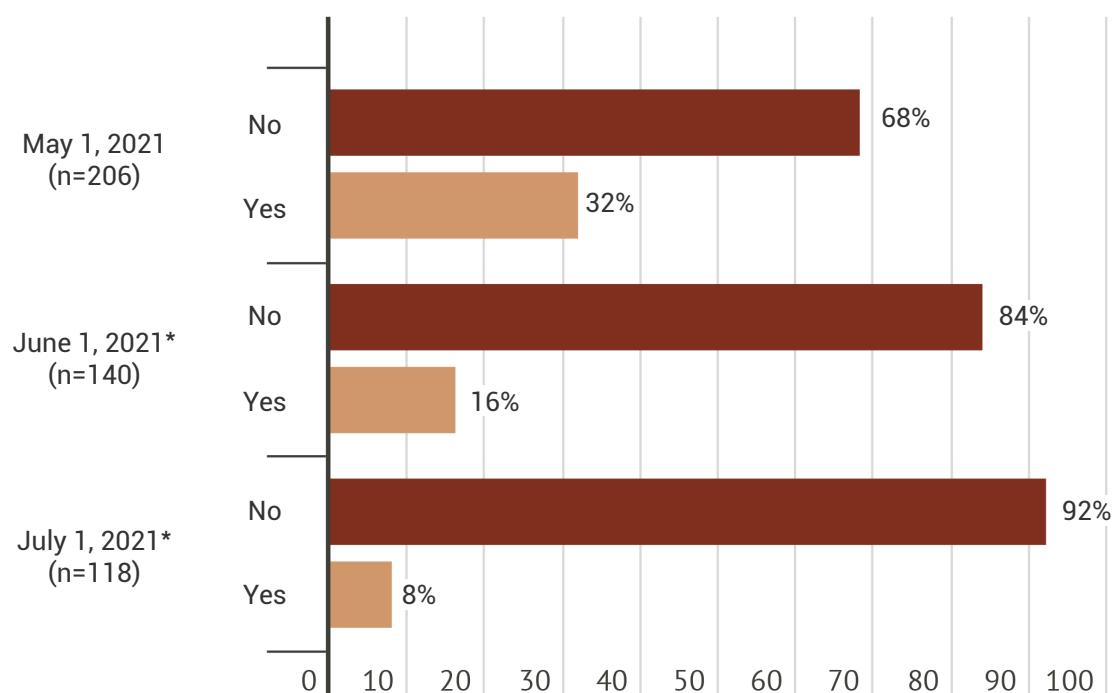
Most enrollment officers say they were moderately or very concerned about meeting their institution's new student enrollment goals for the class of 2021.

By May only a third of respondents say that their institution had met its new student enrollment goals. Another 16 percent and 8 percent say they had met the new student enrollment goal by June or July (respectively). Of those who had not met their new student enrollment goal by either May or June, significantly more respondents in the private sector (13 percent) compared with the public sector (0 percent) had met their goal by July.

Thinking back, please indicate how concerned you were about meeting your institution's new student enrollment goals this year, that is, for the class enrolling in Fall 2021: (n=206)



Did your institution meet its new student enrollment goals this year prior to...



* Only respondents who said "no," their institution did not meet its enrollment goals prior to May 2021 answered about enrollment in June. Only respondents who said "no," their institution did not meet its enrollment goals prior to June 2021 answered about enrollment in July.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT AND RECRUITING (cont.)

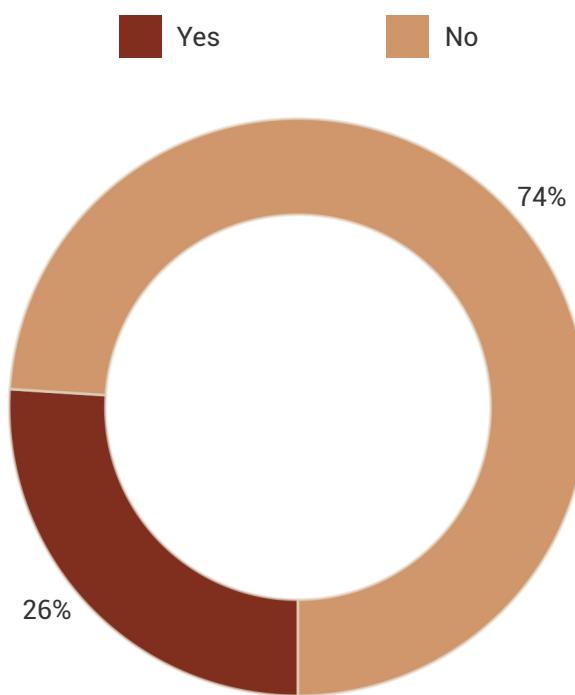
Nearly three-quarters of respondents say campus closures in Fall 2020 hurt their institution's recruiting a moderate amount or a great deal.

Over three-quarters of respondents (77 percent) say their institution has not taken advantage of the recently lifted ban on offering incentives to enroll after certain dates. Most respondents (74 percent) say they do not expect their institution to admit students it probably would not have admitted in prior years.

How much did closed campuses in the fall hurt your college in recruiting? (n=206)



Looking ahead, in the coming admissions cycle, do you expect your college to admit students it probably would not have admitted in prior years? (n=206)

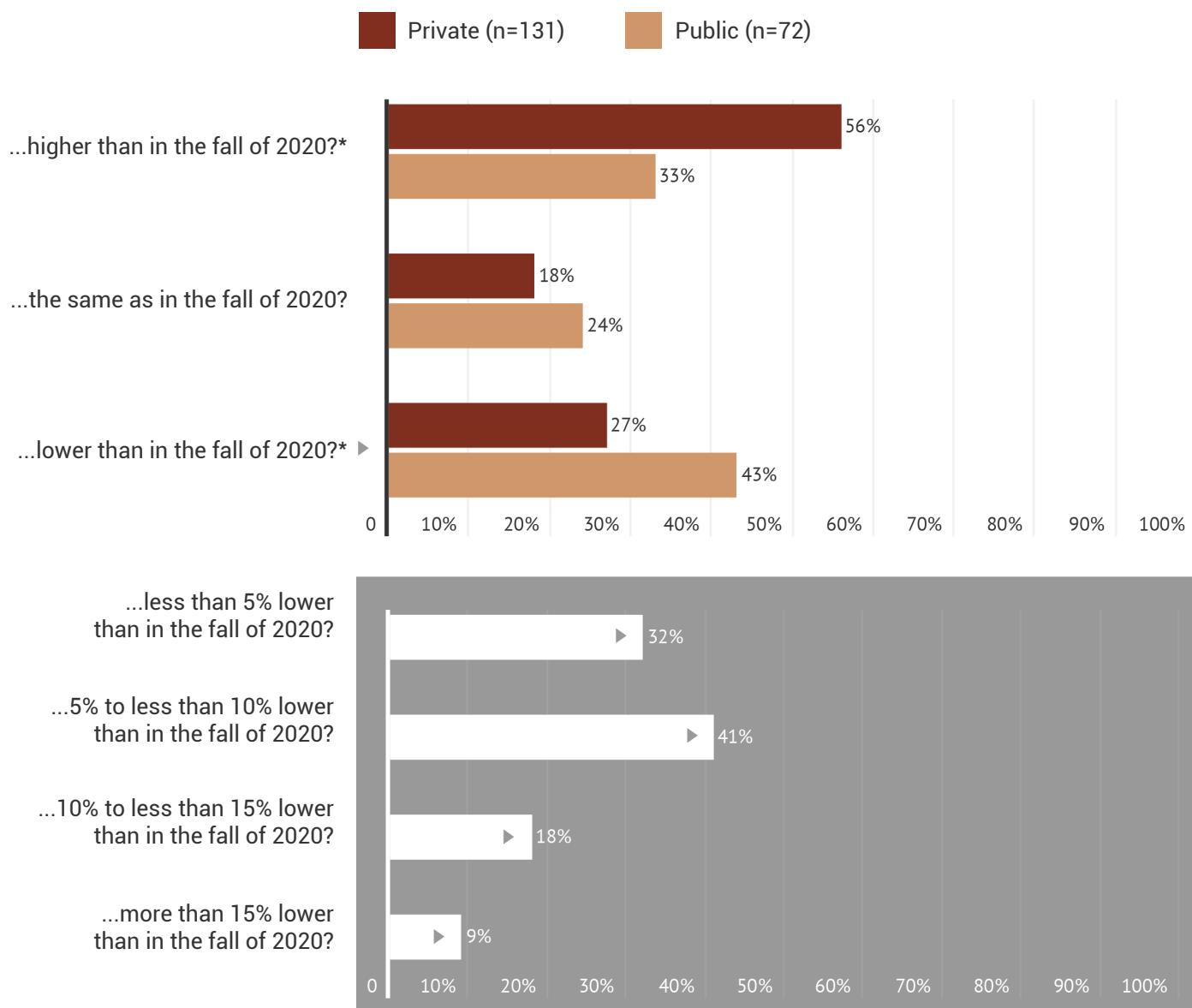


STUDENT ENROLLMENT AND RECRUITING (cont.)

Nearly half of all respondents (48 percent) expect undergraduate enrollment to be higher in the Fall of 2021 than it was in the Fall of 2020. Significantly more respondents from private (56 percent) than from public (33 percent) institutions expect higher enrollment this year.

Significantly more respondents from public (43 percent) than from private (27 percent) institutions say enrollment will be lower than in the Fall of 2020. Of these respondents, nearly three-quarters say that enrollment will be either less than 5 percent lower or 5 percent-10 percent lower than in the Fall of 2020.

Do you expect undergraduate enrollment at your college in the fall of 2021 to be...



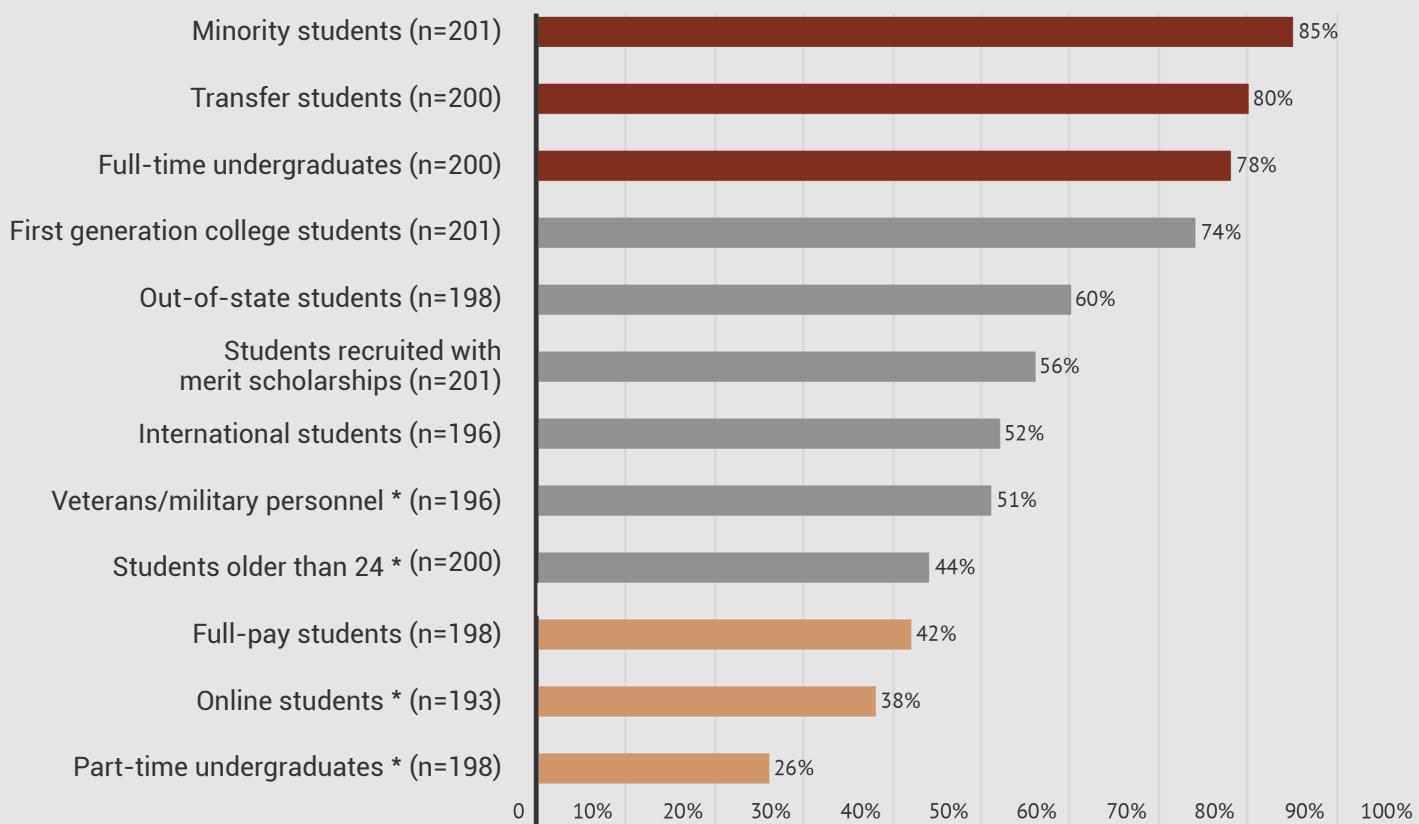
* Only respondents who said enrollment in Fall 2021 would be "lower than in the fall of 2020" answered the question regarding how much lower enrollment would be (right-most chart).

FOCUS OF UNDERGRADUATE RECRUITMENT

Over three-quarters of respondents agree or strongly agree that they are very likely to increase recruitment efforts for minority students, transfer students, and full-time undergraduates.

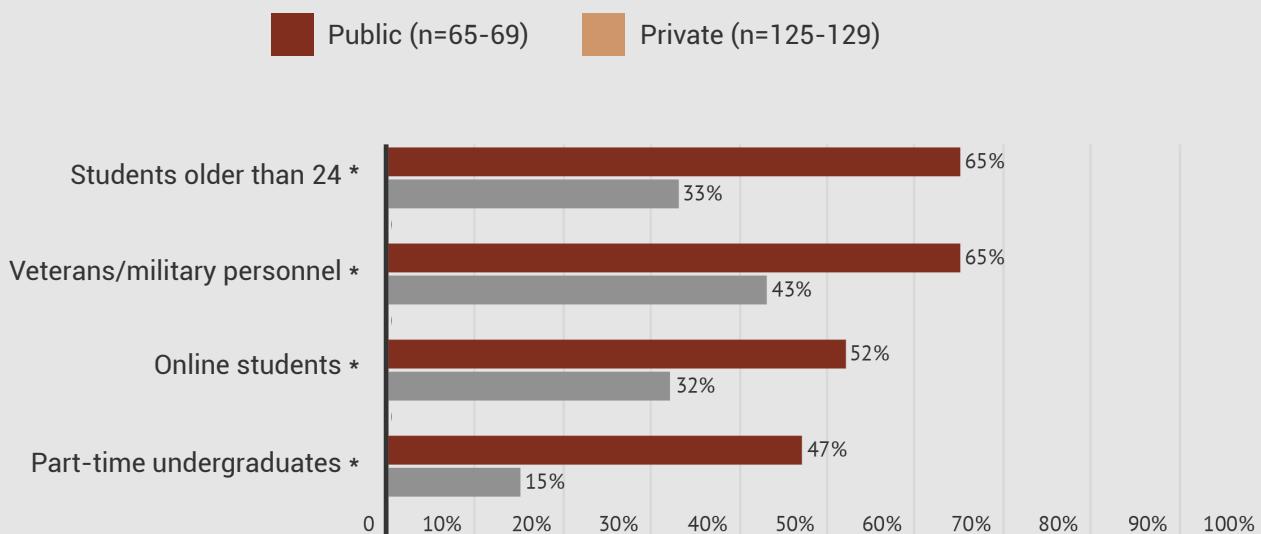
Significantly more respondents from public than from private institutions say they are likely to increase recruitment efforts for students older than 24, veterans/military personnel, online students, and part-time undergraduates.

This year (2021-2022) at my institution, I am very likely to increase my recruitment efforts for the following populations of undergraduate applicants to my institution: *



* Charts present Top 2's: % Agree + % Strongly agree

Focus of undergraduate recruitment (cont.)



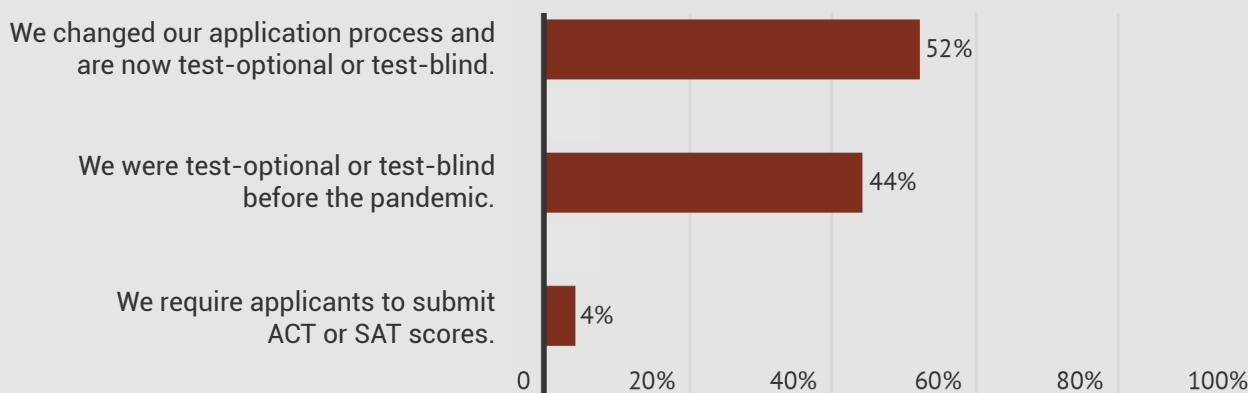
* Charts present Top 2's: % Agree + % Strongly agree

STANDARDIZED TESTING

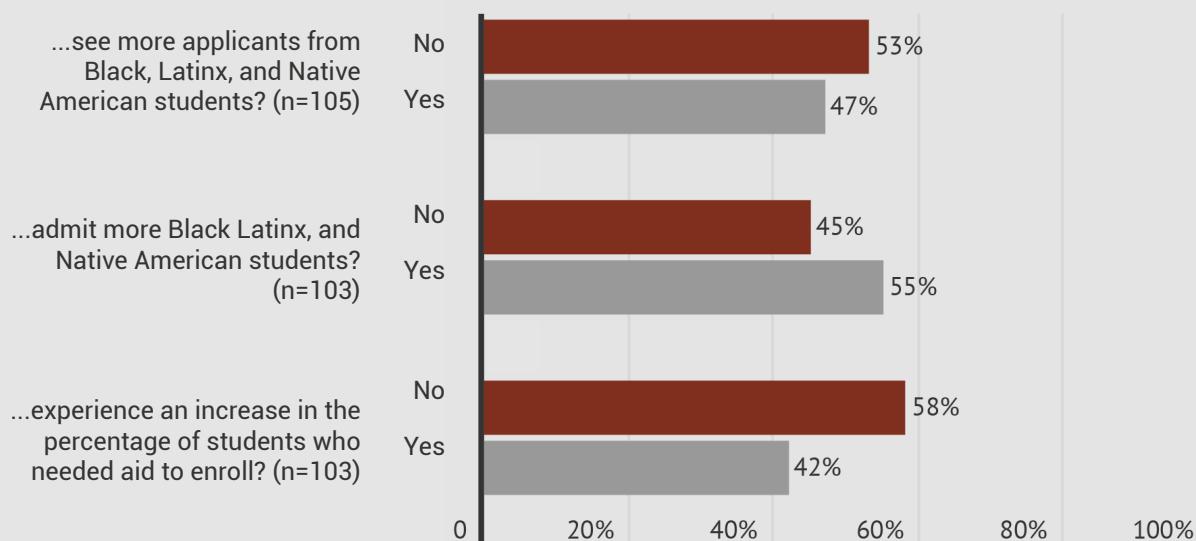
About half of respondents report that their institution has changed the application process and is now test-optional or test-blind. Another 44 percent say their institution was test-optional or test-blind before the pandemic.

47 percent of respondents whose institutions have recently switched to be test-optional or test-blind also say they have received more applications from under-represented minority students; 55% say they have admitted more of these students as well. Most respondents (70 percent) say that officers at their institution did not express concerns about increased percentages of students who need aid to enroll after going test-optional or test-blind.

Which of the following best describes your school? (n = 202)



After changing to a test-optional or test-blind process, did you... *

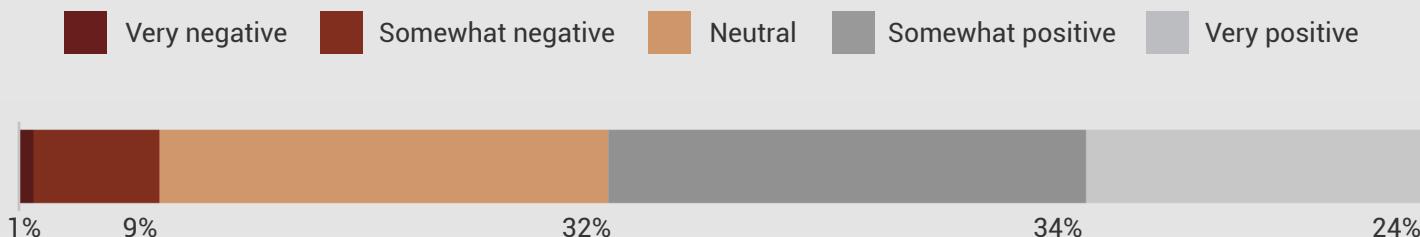


* Only respondents who reported that their institutions changed their application process to be test-optional or test-blind answered questions in the right-most chart.

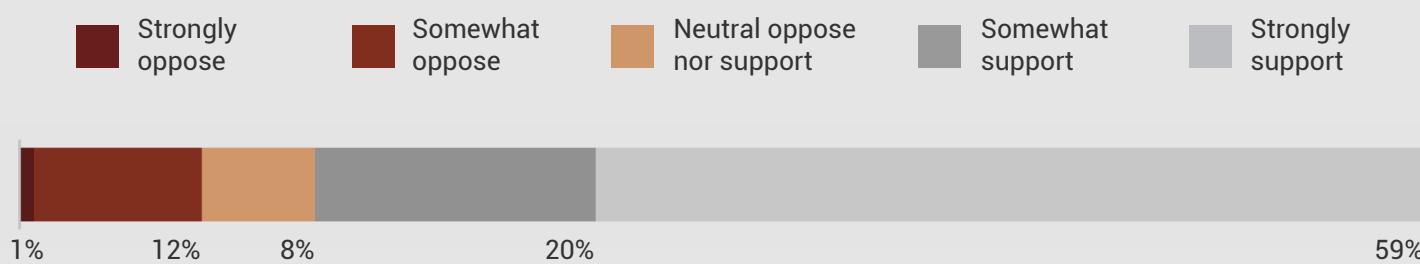
STANDARDIZED TESTING (cont.)

Over half (58 percent) of those who changed their application process to be test-optional or test-blind say the experience was at least somewhat positive. Over three-quarters (78 percent) say they would somewhat or strongly support remaining test-optional or test-blind on a permanent basis.

How was the experience of admitting students without test scores? * (n = 103)



Would you oppose or support your college remaining test-optional or test-blind permanently? * (n = 102)



* Only respondents who reported that their institutions changed their application process to be test-optional or test-blind answered these questions.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Three-fifths (60 percent) of respondents are at least slightly worried about potential limitations being placed on affirmative action programs if the Supreme Court takes the Harvard University case. The lawsuit contends that Harvard discriminates against Asian Americans *. In June 2021, the Supreme Court asked the Department of Justice to offer its views on the case, effectively postponing the decision regarding whether (and when) the case will be heard **.

How worried are you about the Supreme Court potentially limiting affirmative action programs if it takes the Harvard University case? (n = 199)



* <https://admissionscase.harvard.edu/lawsuit>

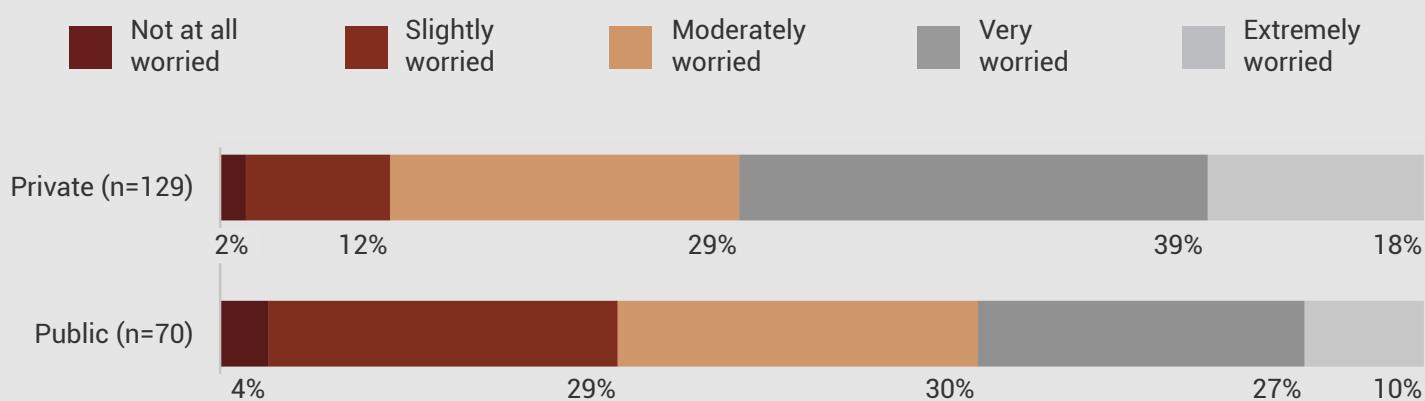
** <https://www.cnn.com/2021/06/14/politics/supreme-court-harvard-admissions-lawsuit/index.html>

PREPARED FOR THE PANDEMIC?

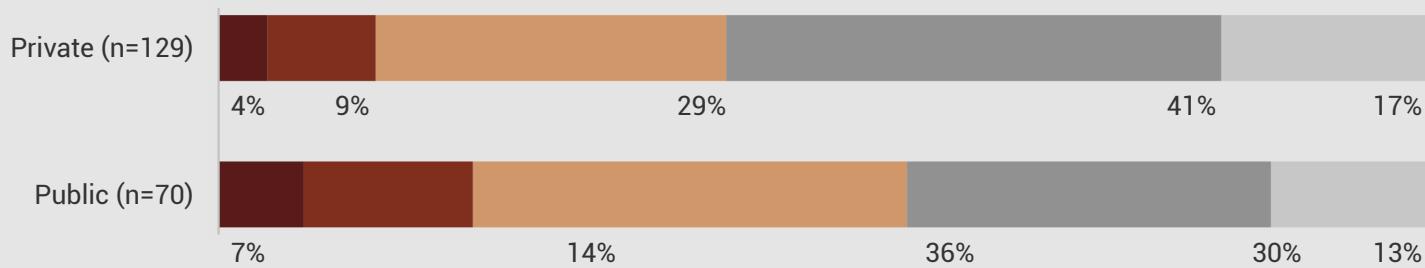
Significantly more respondents from private than from public institutions say both their institutions and admissions offices were well- or very well-prepared to respond to the coronavirus pandemic.

For example, compared with about a third of respondents from public institutions (37 percent), over half of respondents from private institutions (57 percent) say their institution was well-prepared or very-well prepared to respond to the pandemic.

How prepared was your college to respond to the coronavirus pandemic?



How prepared was your admissions office to respond to the coronavirus pandemic?

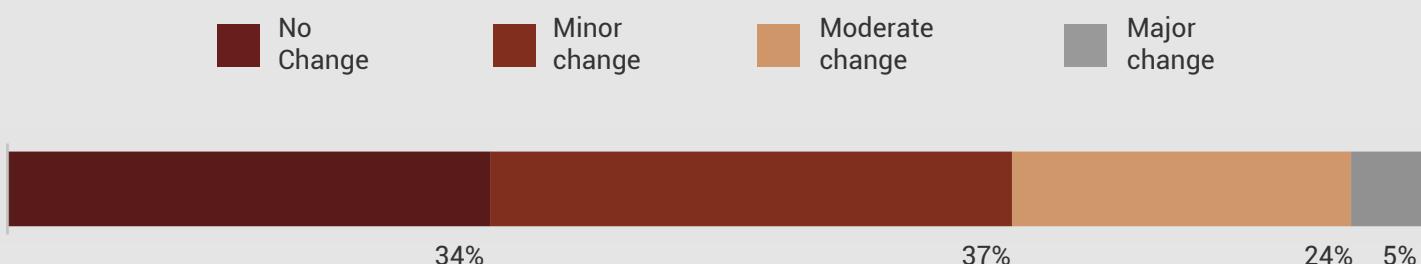


CORONAVIRUS RECOVERY

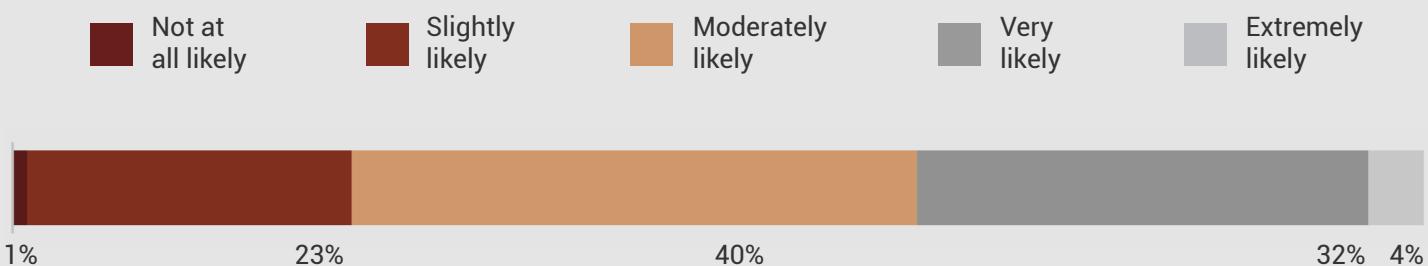
Two-thirds of respondents say that the coronavirus pandemic caused a minor, moderate, or major change to which students their institution admitted. A third of those who felt there was at least a minor change say it is very or extremely likely that the changes will continue.

Respondents from private and public institutions did not differ in their opinions on these questions.

How much, if at all, do you think the coronavirus pandemic changed which students you admitted? (n = 199)



How likely is it that these changes will continue? * (n = 131)



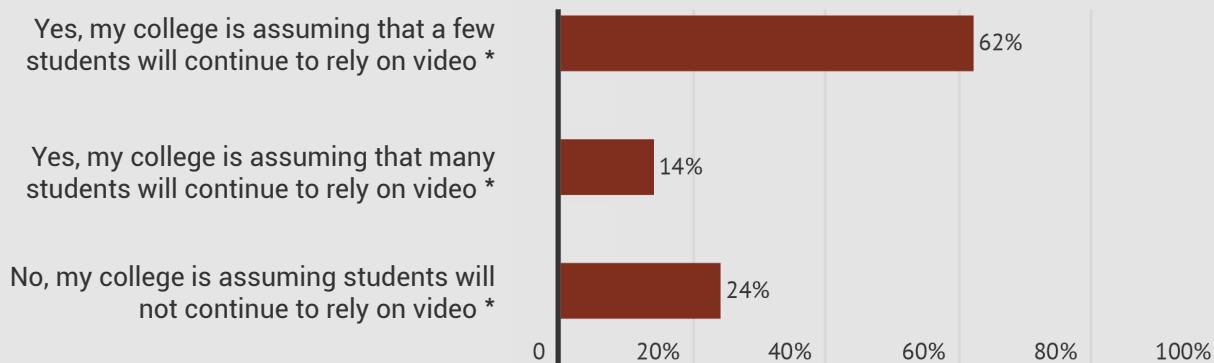
* Only respondents who reported minor, moderate, or major change (left-most chart) answered the question about whether the changes were likely to continue (right-most chart).

CORONAVIRUS RECOVERY (cont.)

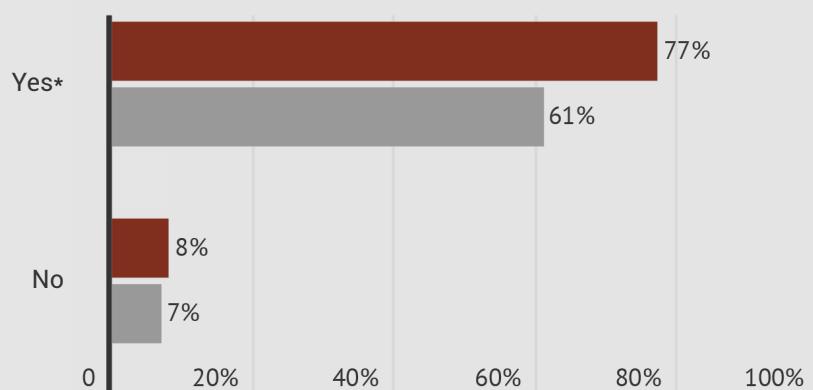
About three-fifths (62 percent) of respondents say that their institution expects a few students to continue to rely on video instead of campus visits. A quarter (24 percent) say that students will not continue to rely on video.

Compared to respondents from public institutions (61 percent), significantly more respondents from private institutions (77 percent) agree that the pandemic will lead more private institutions to close or merge.

Is your college assuming that students will continue to rely on video instead of campus visits? (n = 199)



After changing to a test-optional or test-blind process, did you... *



* Item has been abbreviated. Please consult the accompanying data supplement for unabridged item text.

ABOUT INSIDE HIGHER ED

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ABOUT HANOVER RESEARCH

Founded in 2003, Hanover Research is a global research and analytics firm that delivers market intelligence through a unique, fixed-fee model to more than 1,200 clients. Headquartered in Arlington, Virginia, Hanover employs high-caliber market researchers, analysts, and account executives to provide a service that is revolutionary in its combination of flexibility and affordability. Hanover was named a Top 50 Market Research Firm by the American Marketing Association in 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018, and has also been twice named a Washington Business Journal Fastest Growing Company.

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