



Only 23% of High Schoolers Believe the College Admissions Process Is Fair

Half of Students (50%) Believe Test-Optional Policies Make College More Accessible

Mar. 3, 2022 (Seattle, WA) - According to a new survey, less than a quarter (23%) of high school students agree that the college admissions process is a fair one. While 30% of students believe the process is unfair, almost half of students (47%) are neutral on the issue. The survey of 1,000 actively enrolled high schoolers also found that 50% of students believe test-optional admissions policies increase college accessibility.

When asked about college admissions topics, 44% of students believe schools should take steps to help underserved populations pursue higher education and 43% believe colleges and universities should be required to be transparent about applicants, admissions, and enrollees to encourage fairness. Over 1 in 3 students (39%) say college entrance exams should be an optional part of the college admissions process.

"Increased transparency in the college admissions process is a starting point for supporting all applicants and those who represent underserved populations. Schools could do more to share the demographic breakdown of applicants, of those who are accepted, and of those who actually enroll," said Melissa Venable, Ph.D., education advisor for BestColleges.com.

"Additionally, test-optional policies may encourage applications, including those from underserved groups."

The majority of high school students (62%) say the college admissions process is overwhelming. While about a tenth of students (11%) do not feel the process is overwhelming, 28% are indifferent about whether it is overwhelming. More than half of students (54%) also say they feel pressure to attend college after high school.

Most high school students (66%) have sought or received information about the college admissions process from their school's faculty and/or staff. More than half of high schoolers (59%) have sought or received information from family, while 43% have sought or received information from friends.

Two in five (40%) have sought or received their information about college admissions on the Internet including social media, or other media such as books and TV.

The factors that high school students are most concerned about in terms of their impact on their ability to be accepted to and attend college are their grades and/or GPA (38%), application and entrance exam fees (30%), and choosing a school (26%).

"It's encouraging that most students are seeking information about the college admissions process from their high school's faculty and staff," said Venable. "School counselors, teachers, and other personnel can provide support in choosing a school and potentially provide information students need to make their decision, which can be overwhelming for some."

White students were three times more likely than Black students to not be concerned about their ability to be accepted to and attend a college (12% vs. 4%). Meanwhile Black students were twice as likely as Latino/a students to say they do not plan to attend college at all (12% vs. 6%).

Methodology

The survey was conducted from January 31-February 4, 2022. Student respondents were fielded by Lucid LLC. Survey participants included 1,000 currently enrolled high school students nationwide. Respondents were 16-19 years of age.

The respondents for the survey were screened by various quality checks, including systems like Relevant ID, and responses were manually reviewed to ensure consistency and accuracy.