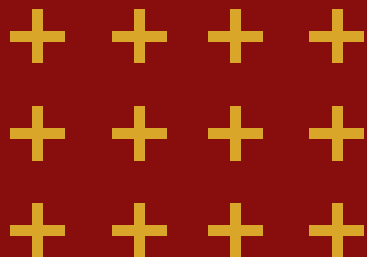


CARNEGIE

Rapid Report: FAFSA Delay Student Impact Survey

A STUDENT SURVEY BROUGHT TO YOU BY CARNEGIE AND  collegexpress

MAY 2024



about this research

Each May after deadline day, Carnegie hosts a graduating seniors survey with its CollegeXpress audience that includes a wealth of questions regarding the college search journey. During this year's survey, a section was added about FAFSA challenges and effects. While Carnegie will complete a full graduating seniors report later in the year, the immediacy of the insights regarding FAFSA and decision timelines prompted this rapid report. This survey was in field May 6-12 and received over 3,000 responses.

Some students are making decisions without financial aid offers, while many more are waiting to hear from their top choices. We gathered feedback from more than 3,000 students about this year's FAFSA challenges.



The rate of students who did not commit to a college by May 1 doubled in 2024.

In typical enrollment years, Carnegie's graduating seniors report found that 94% (2023) to 95% (2019) of CollegeXpress' graduating seniors had committed to a school by May 1. In 2024, that number was just 88%, meaning **nearly 1 in 9 prospects is still making their decision**. As a comparison, this is the same rate of indecision as was seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, the percentage of students who had committed by this time was also 88%.

COLLEGE COMMITMENT

Have you fully committed* to a college or university yet?

student insights

AUDIENCE	YES**	NO
All Respondents	88%	12%
Women	90%	11%
Men	85%	15%
Other	83% (-)	18%
LGBTQIA+	89%	11%
Straight/CIS	88%	12%
Asian	85%	15%
Black/African American	84%	16%
Hispanic/Latinx	84%	16%
Other/Mixed Race	84%	16%
White	91%	9%
Low Income	82% (-)	18%
Lower Middle-income	86%	14%
Upper Middle-income	91%	9%
High Income	93% (+)	7%
Liberal	90%	10%
Conservative	91%	9%
Moderate	87%	13%
Non-political	84%	16%
Christian	91%	9%
Catholic	86%	14%
Other Religion	86%	15%
Atheist/Non-religious	87%	13%
High Achiever	91%	9%
Above Average Grades	89%	11%
Average Grades	82% (-)	18%
Below Average Grades	77% (-)	23%

SCHOOL PREFERENCE	YES**	NO
All Respondents	88%	12%
East North Central	88%	12%
West North Central	92% (+)	8%
Middle Atlantic	85%	15%
Mountain	91%	10%
New England	90%	10%
Pacific	83% (-)	17%
South Atlantic	89%	11%
East South Central	85%	15%
West South Central	90%	11%
Small Public	86%	14%
Small Private	91%	9%
Small Religious	95% (+)	5%
Small CC/Trade	84%	16%
Midsize Public	82% (-)	18%
Midsize Private	84%	16%
Midsize Religious	88%	12%
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	81% (-)	19%
Large Public	85%	15%
Large Private/Religious	92% (+)	8%
Mega Public	95% (+)	5%

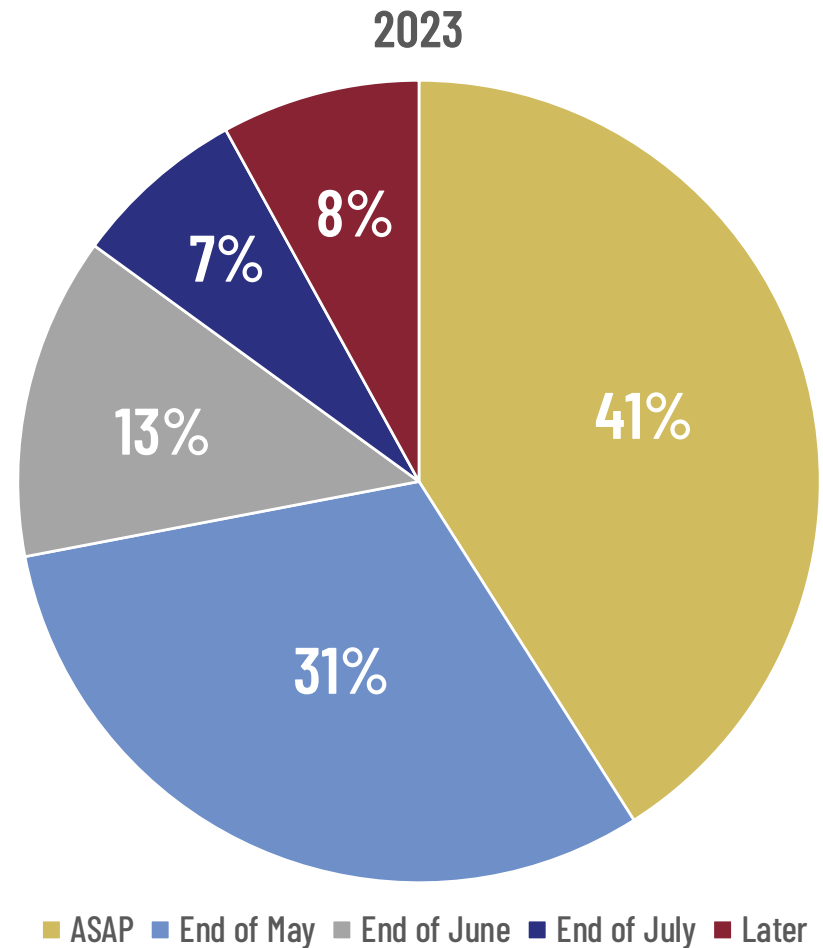
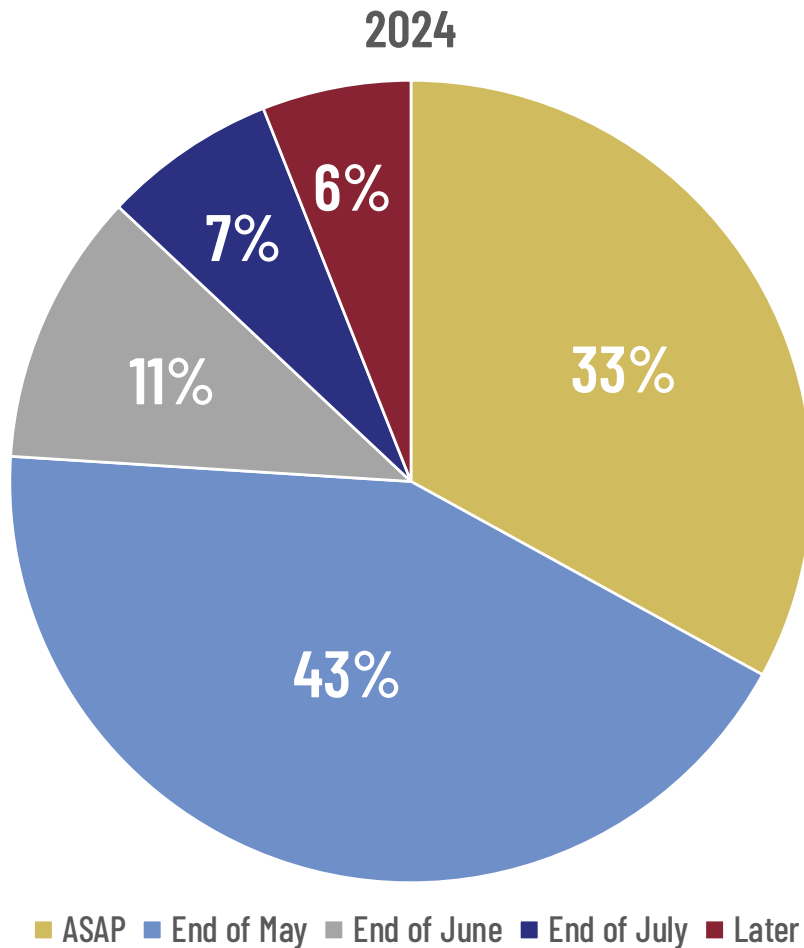
* Students asked about commitments were in reference to informing a school with the intent to enroll. This has been the consistent instructions across this research since 2019.

** "Yes" percentages with (+) indicate a statistically significantly higher score than the respondent average. Scores with (-) indicate a statistically lower score.

COLLEGE COMMITMENT DATE

When do you intend to fully commit? (Uncommitted respondents only)

student insights



FAFSA DELAY IMPACT

TOPIC KNOWLEDGE

(After description of FAFSA delays) How much have you heard about this topic before today?

student insights

AUDIENCE	NOTHING AT ALL	ONLY A LITTLE	HEARD SOME	HEARD A LOT	PRIMARY TOPIC I FOLLOW	AVERAGE SCORE*
All Respondents	7%	8%	21%	43%	21%	3.64
Women	7%	7%	20%	44%	23%	3.68
Men	8%	9%	22%	43%	19%	3.55
Other	8%	9%	24%	37%	22%	3.57 (-)
LGBTQIA+	6%	5%	18%	45%	26%	3.80 (+)
Straight/CIS	8%	8%	21%	43%	20%	3.60
Asian	6%	7%	26%	41%	21%	3.65
Black/African American	10%	8%	19%	38%	26%	3.61
Hispanic/Latinx	7%	9%	17%	44%	24%	3.69
Other/Mixed Race	7%	7%	21%	45%	20%	3.63
White	7%	7%	22%	45%	19%	3.62
Low Income	9%	9%	18%	35%	29%	3.66
Lower Middle-income	7%	7%	19%	44%	23%	3.68
Upper Middle-income	6%	7%	22%	46%	19%	3.65
High Income	7%	10%	26%	50%	8%	3.40 (-)
Liberal	4%	5%	19%	48%	24%	3.82 (+)
Conservative	9%	8%	23%	44%	16%	3.51 (-)
Moderate	7%	8%	21%	41%	22%	3.63
Non-political	9%	9%	21%	41%	21%	3.57 (-)
Christian	8%	8%	25%	41%	19%	3.56 (-)
Catholic	8%	8%	19%	45%	20%	3.62
Other Religion	8%	8%	17%	46%	22%	3.68
Atheist/Non-religious	6%	7%	19%	44%	25%	3.76
High Achiever	5%	5%	20%	46%	24%	3.79 (+)
Above Average Grades	6%	8%	21%	45%	20%	3.64
Average Grades	11%	10%	22%	38%	20%	3.45 (-)
Below Average Grades	23%	12%	20%	28%	18%	3.08 (-)

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

Note: throughout this document, "Average Scores" refer to the scale average (e.g., 1-5) of the question, where the column to the far left is a score of 1 and far right is a 5.

FAFSA DELAY IMPACT

TOPIC KNOWLEDGE

(After description of FAFSA delays) How much have you heard about this topic before today?


SCHOOL PREFERENCE	NOTHING AT ALL	ONLY A LITTLE	HEARD SOME	HEARD A LOT	PRIMARY TOPIC I FOLLOW	AVERAGE SCORE*
All Respondents	7%	8%	21%	43%	21%	3.64
East North Central	4%	7%	17%	48%	24%	3.80 (+)
West North Central	8%	7%	24%	41%	20%	3.58 (-)
Middle Atlantic	4%	4%	21%	48%	23%	3.82 (+)
Mountain	9%	11%	23%	41%	17%	3.46 (-)
New England	7%	5%	21%	43%	24%	3.70
Pacific	8%	8%	21%	43%	20%	3.59 (-)
South Atlantic	8%	7%	21%	41%	24%	3.66
East South Central	8%	12%	21%	45%	14%	3.46 (-)
West South Central	10%	10%	20%	40%	20%	3.49 (-)
Small Public	12%	12%	20%	35%	21%	3.43 (-)
Small Private	4%	4%	18%	49%	25%	3.89 (+)
Small Religious	3%	6%	21%	46%	24%	3.81 (+)
Small CC/Trade	19%	19%	23%	24%	16%	2.99 (-)
Midsize Public	6%	7%	23%	41%	23%	3.66
Midsize Private	7%	6%	16%	47%	24%	3.76
Midsize Religious	4%	7%	20%	52%	18%	3.75
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	18%	13%	35%	24%	10%	2.95 (-)
Large Public	7%	7%	19%	48%	20%	3.67
Large Private/Religious	13%	6%	22%	35%	24%	3.52 (-)
Mega Public	5%	6%	19%	49%	21%	3.76

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



DATA INSIGHT

Clearly, students are taking note of this situation, especially considering such a high number saying it's a primary topic of their focus. As such, schools should continue to offer students information and reassurance whenever possible. Avoiding the topic will only make an institution appear out of touch with its audiences.



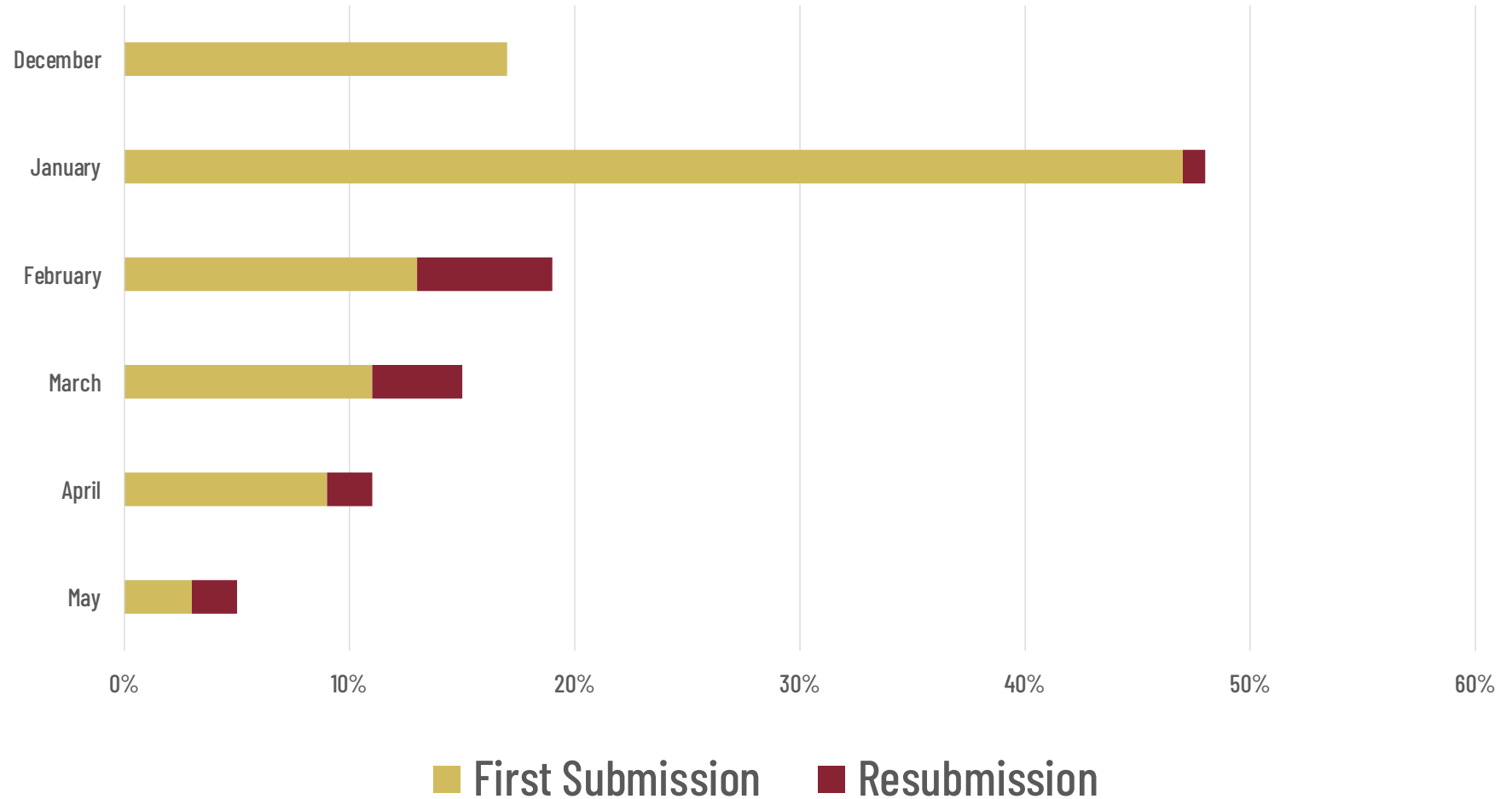
The aid FAFSA unlocks is a critical lifeline for many students. About 90% of our respondents filled it out for Fall 2024.

Importantly, 46% of our sample said financial aid and scholarships are critical to affording college, and another 34% said it was highly important. Along with 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 say they are still waiting to hear about their aid** package at a school to which they were admitted.

FAFSA DELAY IMPACT

FAFSA SUBMISSION

Approximately when did you submit your FAFSA? (If you had to resubmit, please select both dates)



FAFSA DELAY IMPACT

WAITING ON AID

Are you still waiting on financial aid offers from any institutions to which you were admitted?

student insights

AUDIENCE	YES*	NO
All Respondents	46%	55%
Women	46%	54%
Men	44%	56%
Other	50%	51%
LGBTQIA+	46%	55%
Straight/CIS	46%	55%
Asian	39% (-)	61%
Black/African American	56% (+)	44%
Hispanic/Latinx	50%	50%
Other/Mixed Race	49%	51%
White	41%	59%
Low Income	54% (+)	46%
Lower Middle-income	51% (+)	49%
Upper Middle-income	43%	57%
High Income	25% (-)	75%
Liberal	42%	58%
Conservative	45%	56%
Moderate	46%	54%
Non-political	49%	51%
Christian	48%	52%
Catholic	45%	55%
Other Religion	44%	56%
Atheist/Non-religious	43%	57%
High Achiever	39% (-)	62%
Above Average Grades	45%	55%
Average Grades	58% (+)	42%
Below Average Grades	63% (+)	37%

SCHOOL PREFERENCE	YES*	NO
All Respondents	46%	55%
East North Central	45%	55%
West North Central	42%	58%
Middle Atlantic	40% (-)	60%
Mountain	47%	53%
New England	40% (-)	60%
Pacific	45%	55%
South Atlantic	46%	54%
East South Central	49%	52%
West South Central	52% (+)	48%
Small Public	48%	52%
Small Private	30% (-)	70%
Small Religious	32% (-)	68%
Small CC/Trade	66% (+)	34%
Midsize Public	54% (+)	46%
Midsize Private	36% (-)	64%
Midsize Religious	35% (-)	65%
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	67% (+)	33%
Large Public	49%	51%
Large Private/Religious	42%	58%
Mega Public	44%	57%

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

SELECTED QUOTES

Please describe any issues you had while submitting your FAFSA.

SIGNATURES

The most common note was about issues with signatures being submitted, especially for parents, and that there was no way to resolve the issue for an extended period of time.

"The signatures kept having an error and going away, so I had to keep trying over and over."

"The parent verification was a mess, there were problems with signatures."

"The signature thing was very frustrating for me."

GENERAL DELAYS

Students were unhappy that they had to wait so long for outcomes, especially considering the pressure for school aid.

"The website didn't work for the longest time so now everything I did was delayed and some schools didn't care."

"I had to wait a long time to submit. Then to resubmit."

"I still haven't heard back about it. I submitted months ago. It feels like it would just be easier some other way."

FREEZING AND SUBMISSION ERRORS

Many students noted that the system submitted in error, or had other issues.

"It said the website was too busy, and it submitted my stuff halfway through and there was no way to fix it."

"It submitted early so I had to revise but it took them forever to open that."

"Website kept freezing, then submitted the wrong things."

CONFUSION

Some students were unsure on how to send FAFSA data to schools.

"There wasn't a lot of instructions to help, so it was mostly confusing."

"I still don't know if all my schools got it."

"My family and I are still confused on how it works."

Frustrations with colleges are intertwined with frustrations about FAFSA.

KEY QUOTES

- + "I knew it was an issue, but [institution redacted] didn't work with me at all and basically said "good luck."
- + "I still haven't heard from most of my schools about aid. I feel like they are using this as an excuse to drag their feet."
- + "Some schools told me FAFSA was required to get any scholarships. But it didn't work so now I'm probably missing out on a lot of money and the schools don't seem to care. Most of mine didn't even change their deadline and I had to make a decision blind to how much aid I'm getting. I probably just won't attend anywhere at this point."
- + "I'm dissapointed with the whole situation and the people at [institution redacted] kind of just throw up their hands and say they can't do anything about it. I know it's not their fault, but they aren't helping, either."
- + "Some places gave me estimates and others didn't. I obviously chose a school that gave me a guarantee."

FAFSA DELAY IMPACT

IMPACT ON ENROLLMENT

How much did the FAFSA delays impact your enrollment decision?

student insights

AUDIENCE	NOT AT ALL	SLIGHTLY	MODERATELY	HIGHLY	COMPLETELY	AVERAGE SCORE*
All Respondents	44%	23%	17%	11%	5%	2.12
Women	42%	24%	17%	12%	6%	2.15
Men	47%	21%	17%	10%	5%	2.04
Other	43%	14%	24%	13%	5%	2.23 (+)
LGBTQIA+	39%	23%	21%	13%	5%	2.22 (+)
Straight/CIS	45%	23%	16%	11%	5%	2.09
Asian	44%	25%	18%	10%	4%	2.05
Black/African American	34%	24%	22%	13%	7%	2.34 (+)
Hispanic/Latinx	33%	23%	19%	16%	8%	2.43 (+)
Other/Mixed Race	43%	19%	18%	13%	7%	2.23 (+)
White	51%	23%	14%	9%	4%	1.92 (-)
Low Income	32%	22%	21%	16%	10%	2.50 (+)
Lower Middle-income	40%	22%	19%	13%	6%	2.23 (+)
Upper Middle-income	47%	25%	16%	9%	3%	1.97 (-)
High Income	69%	19%	8%	3%	1%	1.47 (-)
Liberal	40%	24%	19%	12%	6%	2.19
Conservative	52%	23%	14%	8%	3%	1.89 (-)
Moderate	42%	22%	18%	12%	6%	2.19
Non-political	43%	22%	17%	13%	6%	2.16
Christian	46%	23%	16%	10%	4%	2.03 (-)
Catholic	40%	25%	17%	12%	6%	2.20
Other Religion	43%	21%	17%	13%	6%	2.17
Atheist/Non-religious	44%	22%	18%	10%	7%	2.13
High Achiever	44%	23%	16%	12%	5%	2.12
Above Average Grades	45%	23%	17%	11%	5%	2.09
Average Grades	43%	23%	19%	10%	5%	2.13
Below Average Grades	40%	22%	18%	11%	9%	2.25 (+)

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

FAFSA DELAY IMPACT

IMPACT ON ENROLLMENT

How much did the FAFSA delays impact your enrollment decision?

student insights

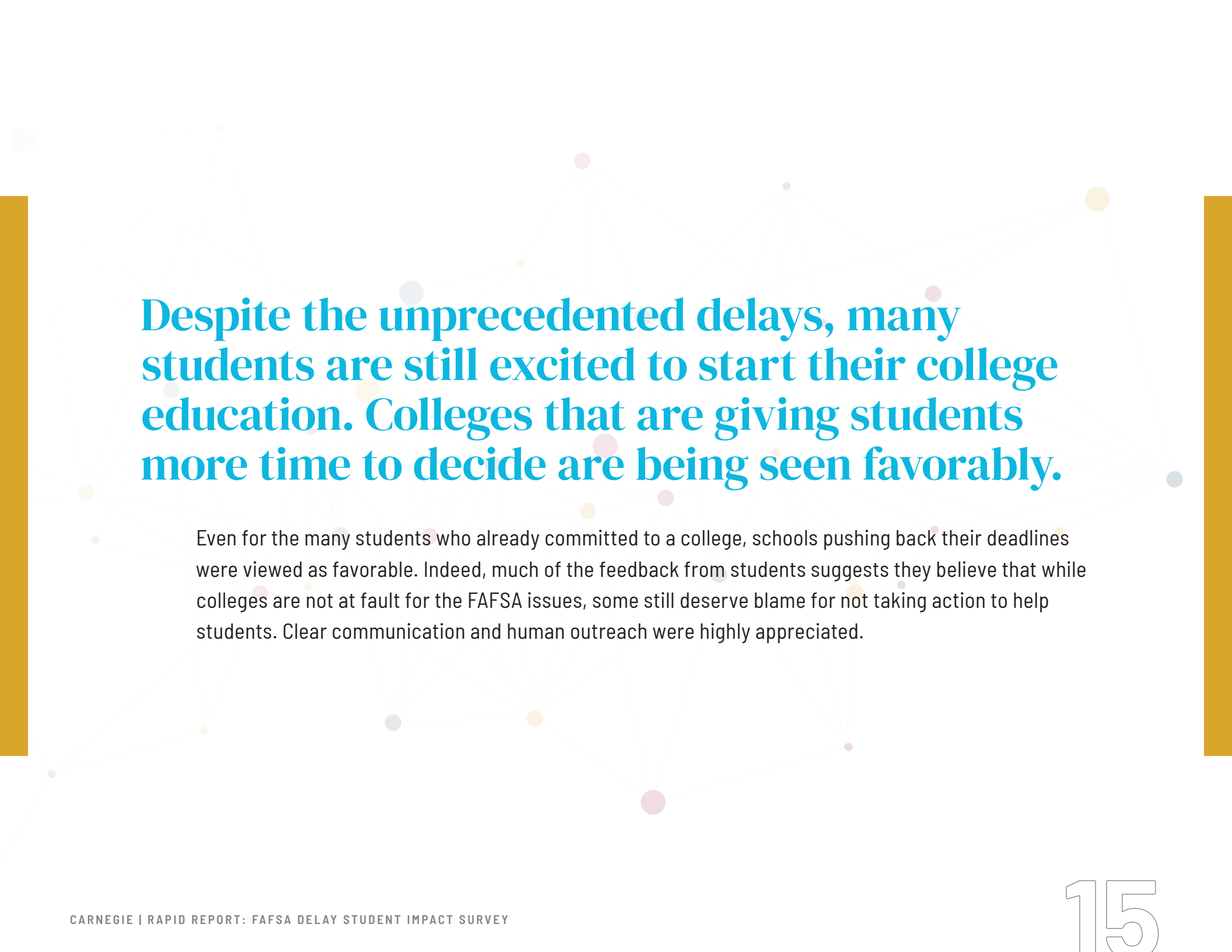
AUDIENCE	NOT AT ALL	SLIGHTLY	MODERATELY	HIGHLY	COMPLETELY	AVERAGE SCORE*
All Respondents	44%	23%	17%	11%	5%	2.12
East North Central	47%	21%	16%	10%	7%	2.09
West North Central	50%	24%	12%	12%	3%	1.95 (-)
Middle Atlantic	36%	26%	19%	12%	7%	2.30 (+)
Mountain	54%	18%	15%	7%	6%	1.93 (-)
New England	41%	20%	21%	14%	5%	2.23 (+)
Pacific	41%	23%	19%	12%	5%	2.17
South Atlantic	41%	25%	18%	12%	5%	2.16
East South Central	47%	25%	12%	12%	5%	2.03
West South Central	46%	22%	17%	11%	5%	2.06
Small Public	41%	24%	16%	10%	9%	2.20
Small Private	40%	21%	20%	13%	6%	2.23 (+)
Small Religious	46%	30%	14%	8%	3%	1.92 (-)
Small CC/Trade	46%	24%	15%	12%	3%	2.02 (-)
Midsize Public	42%	24%	14%	12%	7%	2.16
Midsize Private	42%	22%	18%	13%	5%	2.17
Midsize Religious	44%	22%	14%	13%	7%	2.17
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	50%	21%	18%	8%	3%	1.93 (-)
Large Public	41%	24%	18%	13%	5%	2.16
Large Private/Religious	44%	21%	14%	14%	7%	2.19
Mega Public	48%	19%	19%	10%	5%	2.06

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



DATA INSIGHT

With at least a small impact on more than half of prospects, schools should take note of how data, models, and other projections were likely skewed during this enrollment cycle. This mirrors the "oddity" of COVID years, indicating that the industry continues to see rocky enrollment cycles for clean data interpretation. As such, more expertise in understanding abnormal data will be a critical addition to marketing and enrollment teams and skills training. Historically underserved student populations identify that FAFSA delays impact their enrollment decisions more than the average respondent. Institutions should consider targeted outreach and clear communication to support these students through the next year.



Despite the unprecedented delays, many students are still excited to start their college education. Colleges that are giving students more time to decide are being seen favorably.

Even for the many students who already committed to a college, schools pushing back their deadlines were viewed as favorable. Indeed, much of the feedback from students suggests they believe that while colleges are not at fault for the FAFSA issues, some still deserve blame for not taking action to help students. Clear communication and human outreach were highly appreciated.

FREQUENCY OF DEADLINE CHANGES

Of the colleges you were considering, how many moved back their commitment date?

student insights

AUDIENCE	NONE OF THEM	VERY FEW	ABOUT HALF	MOST OF THEM	ALL OF THEM	AVERAGE SCORE*
All Respondents	20%	22%	20%	26%	12%	2.87
Women	20%	22%	20%	26%	11%	2.87
Men	21%	22%	20%	25%	12%	2.85
Other	24%	21%	17%	27%	11%	2.79
LGBTQIA+	20%	22%	18%	25%	14%	2.91
Straight/CIS	20%	22%	21%	26%	11%	2.85
Asian	15%	23%	19%	27%	16%	3.05 (+)
Black/African American	19%	25%	21%	24%	12%	2.84
Hispanic/Latinx	22%	22%	15%	29%	12%	2.87
Other/Mixed Race	21%	22%	19%	26%	12%	2.87
White	21%	21%	22%	25%	11%	2.84
Low Income	22%	23%	18%	26%	12%	2.82
Lower Middle-income	21%	22%	19%	27%	11%	2.85
Upper Middle-income	20%	21%	21%	26%	12%	2.89
High Income	17%	26%	23%	22%	12%	2.88
Liberal	20%	23%	18%	28%	11%	2.88
Conservative	21%	20%	23%	25%	11%	2.85
Moderate	19%	22%	21%	27%	10%	2.87
Non-political	21%	23%	19%	24%	13%	2.85
Christian	21%	21%	21%	26%	11%	2.86
Catholic	19%	22%	19%	27%	12%	2.89
Other Religion	20%	24%	22%	23%	11%	2.82
Atheist/Non-religious	21%	21%	18%	27%	13%	2.89
High Achiever	20%	23%	18%	28%	12%	2.90
Above Average Grades	21%	22%	20%	25%	11%	2.83
Average Grades	21%	21%	23%	23%	12%	2.84
Below Average Grades	17%	21%	28%	28%	8%	2.89

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

FREQUENCY OF DEADLINE CHANGES

Of the colleges you were considering, how many moved back their commitment date?

AUDIENCE	NONE OF THEM	VERY FEW	ABOUT HALF	MOST OF THEM	ALL OF THEM	AVERAGE SCORE*
All Respondents	20%	22%	20%	26%	12%	2.87
East North Central	23%	18%	20%	29%	10%	2.83
West North Central	22%	17%	24%	25%	12%	2.87
Middle Atlantic	17%	24%	16%	30%	13%	2.97 (+)
Mountain	18%	19%	22%	26%	14%	2.98 (+)
New England	15%	29%	20%	24%	13%	2.92
Pacific	26%	20%	19%	26%	9%	2.70 (-)
South Atlantic	18%	24%	20%	26%	13%	2.92
East South Central	25%	22%	19%	20%	14%	2.76 (-)
West South Central	19%	26%	22%	23%	11%	2.80
Small Public	20%	24%	23%	20%	13%	2.81
Small Private	19%	23%	19%	28%	11%	2.87
Small Religious	17%	21%	27%	24%	11%	2.91
Small CC/Trade	16%	22%	33%	22%	8%	2.84
Midsize Public	23%	25%	16%	26%	10%	2.76 (-)
Midsize Private	12%	22%	23%	24%	20%	3.17 (+)
Midsize Religious	17%	32%	17%	28%	7%	2.76 (-)
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	19%	19%	33%	16%	13%	2.86
Large Public	25%	20%	17%	26%	13%	2.83
Large Private/Religious	18%	16%	27%	20%	19%	3.06 (+)
Mega Public	22%	21%	15%	32%	9%	2.85

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



DATA INSIGHT

As seen on page 16, there were few statistically significant differences by demographics, but when comparing institution types and location there are many to be found. This makes sense, because this type of decision is often tied to mission, which is commonly linked to institution size and type, rather than the demographics of an admit pool.

FAVORABILITY OF DEADLINE CHANGE

(After description of deadline changes) How favorably do you view this response?

student insights

AUDIENCE	HIGHLY UNFAVORABLE	SLIGHTLY UNFAVORABLE	NEUTRAL	SLIGHTLY FAVORABLE	HIGHLY FAVORABLE	AVERAGE SCORE*
All Respondents	8%	7%	37%	17%	32%	3.58
Women	9%	8%	36%	18%	31%	3.55
Men	7%	5%	39%	17%	32%	3.63
Other	6%	4%	32%	22%	36%	3.79 (+)
LGBTQIA+	6%	6%	27%	21%	40%	3.82 (+)
Straight/CIS	8%	7%	39%	17%	30%	3.53
Asian	9%	8%	30%	22%	32%	3.60
Black/African American	8%	6%	31%	18%	38%	3.73 (+)
Hispanic/Latinx	9%	8%	33%	16%	34%	3.58
Other/Mixed Race	6%	7%	38%	18%	31%	3.60
White	8%	6%	41%	17%	29%	3.52
Low Income	8%	7%	34%	16%	36%	3.64
Lower Middle-income	9%	6%	35%	18%	33%	3.59
Upper Middle-income	8%	7%	38%	18%	30%	3.55
High Income	6%	6%	45%	17%	26%	3.51
Liberal	7%	8%	26%	19%	39%	3.75 (+)
Conservative	7%	7%	44%	19%	24%	3.47 (-)
Moderate	9%	7%	38%	17%	29%	3.51
Non-political	8%	5%	38%	16%	33%	3.59
Christian	8%	6%	39%	17%	30%	3.55
Catholic	9%	6%	40%	17%	28%	3.49 (-)
Other Religion	8%	9%	37%	16%	31%	3.53
Atheist/Non-religious	7%	6%	28%	20%	40%	3.80 (+)
High Achiever	8%	6%	32%	19%	34%	3.65
Above Average Grades	7%	7%	40%	17%	30%	3.54
Average Grades	8%	7%	39%	17%	30%	3.54
Below Average Grades	9%	8%	39%	14%	31%	3.50

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

FAVORABILITY OF DEADLINE CHANGE

(After description of deadline changes) How favorably do you view this response?

student insights

AUDIENCE	HIGHLY UNFAVORABLE	SLIGHTLY UNFAVORABLE	NEUTRAL	SLIGHTLY FAVORABLE	HIGHLY FAVORABLE	AVERAGE SCORE*
All Respondents	8%	7%	37%	17%	32%	3.58
East North Central	7%	7%	39%	21%	26%	3.51
West North Central	9%	6%	46%	15%	24%	3.40 (-)
Middle Atlantic	8%	8%	28%	17%	40%	3.74 (+)
Mountain	7%	7%	39%	18%	29%	3.56
New England	7%	3%	39%	18%	33%	3.67
Pacific	8%	8%	33%	16%	35%	3.64
South Atlantic	8%	6%	36%	17%	34%	3.64
East South Central	10%	7%	35%	16%	32%	3.55
West South Central	9%	7%	40%	17%	28%	3.49 (-)
Small Public	9%	6%	38%	18%	30%	3.53
Small Private	8%	6%	34%	13%	39%	3.69 (+)
Small Religious	7%	5%	40%	19%	29%	3.59
Small CC/Trade	8%	5%	43%	16%	28%	3.50
Midsize Public	6%	8%	36%	16%	33%	3.64
Midsize Private	8%	6%	30%	14%	42%	3.75 (+)
Midsize Religious	10%	4%	35%	25%	27%	3.54
Midsize/Large CC/Trade	10%	11%	39%	15%	25%	3.35 (-)
Large Public	9%	7%	35%	17%	31%	3.54
Large Private/Religious	8%	8%	40%	13%	31%	3.51
Mega Public	7%	6%	37%	21%	28%	3.57

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



DATA INSIGHT

With about half of students seeing a deadline shift as favorable, even in cases where it did not impact them, schools can consider how their decision may have influenced overall perceptions, especially from specific audiences. For example, liberal audiences scoring this more favorably as compared to conservative students speaks to how the former group thinks about collectivistic support and the latter is focused on personal responsibility.

Deadline changes and favorability were the same during COVID-19.

COMPARABLE INSIGHTS

- + The percentage of students experiencing a change in at least some deadlines in 2020 (77%) was statistically the same as 2024.
- + The percentage of students saying all their admitted schools moved the deadline (12%) was also the same.
- + Overall favorability of making the changes in 2020 (3.61 on a 5-point scale) was statistically the same as 2024.
- + In 2020, about half of students were favorable about the change, just like in 2024.
- + Much like the outcome on the number of students who have yet to enroll, the impact of FAFSA delays appears incredibly comparable to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic's first year.

INSIGHTS

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

COMMITMENTS AND REMAINING DECISIONS

Though the proportion of students who have yet to commit is double a typical enrollment cycle, the amount among CollegeXpress users is still relatively low. Importantly, the behaviors around intended commitments moving forward have changed. In a typical cycle, those who were still not committed after May 1 had greater urgency to select a school. This year, many students are willing to wait until the end of May to make a decision, likely due to at least some of their schools of interest moving back their deadline. This opens the opportunity for schools to act quickly in further fostering these prospects.

Be sure communications to students who have not yet made a decision do not assume they have declined or will be going elsewhere. Review your institutional policies on students committing after deadline day, and continue to foster positive relationships with students who are yet to have made a choice. Consider what support your institution is offering to students who are waiting on financial aid information to make a decision.

WAITING ON AID

Considering the amount of students still waiting on aid decisions, it's likely that final commitments may continue to drag throughout the summer for those students who cannot make a choice without aid. Many students see it as critical to attending, and some students expressed the feeling that if aid did not come through they would not attend any college in fall of 2024. In addition, Carnegie recommends reviewing melt rates from 2020 as more shifting than normal is likely to be seen across the summer as new aid offers come in.

Many of the frustrations students faced during FAFSA submission were not attributed to colleges and universities. However, the reaction to the problems and communication readiness of schools was important. Many

students expressed that being told that a school could do nothing to help or move forward was a deciding factor in looking elsewhere. Be sure to prepare all staff at an institution with crisis communication training and direct institutional messages about issues like these whenever possible. Human outreach, especially in situations of communicating aid package timing expectations, will be a crucial step, particularly for vulnerable populations.

IMPACT FOR STUDENTS

While a plurality of respondents said the delays didn't impact their choice of college, having at least a small impact like it did for more than half of respondents reinforces the critical role of financial aid in the college decision process. Indeed, this is an amount of impact that mirrors that of a global pandemic. While classes may not be cancelled due to an ongoing issue like COVID-19, the lower amount of decision certainty due to aid delays might mean that students are more likely to seek out transfers. Institutions should be highly aware of retention risk in this year's incoming class.

Four in five students had at least some of their admitted institutions push back a deadline for deposits, which was seen favorably in general. However, it's interesting then that so many students still have made a decision. As such, much like the enduring nature of students during COVID-19, the excitement and energy among going to college may overcome trepidation among many students. Unfortunately, this phenomenon is inconsistent across demographics, especially related to income. Low income students, already some of the most likely to be left behind, are feeling the impact of these delays the most, just like they did during COVID-19. As institutions consider how best to recruit students in a time of declining high school graduates, finding solutions for the most vulnerable students and providing education that supports their access is critical.

FAFSA DELAY IMPACT

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 ('As' and 'Bs'):	41%
Average (Mostly 'Bs'):	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



Carnegie's full report
on the graduating senior
class of 2024 will be
coming later this summer.

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