



Perceptions of College Admissions Practices

The April 2019 AP-NORC Center Poll

Conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research with funding from The Associated Press and NORC at the University of Chicago

Interviews: 4/11-14/2019 with 1,108 adults

Margin of error: +/- 4.1 percentage points at the 95% confidence level among all adults

The March 2019 NORC Poll

Conducted and funded by the Higher Education Analytics Center, NORC at the University of Chicago

Interviews: 3/28-4/1/2019 with 1,009 adults

Margin of error: +/- 4.3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level among all adults

NOTE: All results show percentages among all respondents, unless otherwise labeled.

COL1.

In general, how fair do you think the college admissions process is for students who are applying?

| | AP-NORC 4/11-14/2019 |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Very/somewhat fair NET | 38 |
| Very fair | 5 |
| Somewhat fair | 33 |
| Neither fair nor unfair | 25 |
| Very/somewhat unfair NET | 36 |
| Somewhat unfair | 27 |
| Very unfair | 9 |
| DON'T KNOW | 1 |
| SKIPPED ON WEB/REFUSED | -- |

N=

1,108

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EDU1.

You may have seen the recent news stories about the college admissions cheating scandal focused on preferential or special treatment. In reality, colleges receive thousands of applications and have to consider many admission factors.

How important do you think these applicant factors are to 4-year colleges when they review and consider college applications?

[ITEMS RANDOMIZED]

| 3/28-4/1/2019 | Extremely/ very important NET | Very important | Important | Moderately important | Slightly/ not important NET | Slightly important | Not important | DK | SKP/ REF |
|---|--|-------------------|-----------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|----|-------------|
| High school grades (such as GPA) | 81 | 47 | 34 | 13 | 5 | 4 | 1 | * | 1 |
| College admission scores (such as SAT, ACT) | 75 | 44 | 31 | 17 | 7 | 4 | 3 | * | 1 |
| Extracurricular activities in high school (such as debate team, 4H, student government) | 52 | 21 | 31 | 29 | 18 | 11 | 7 | * | 1 |
| Special talent in sports / varsity athlete | 54 | 27 | 27 | 27 | 18 | 9 | 8 | * | 1 |
| Special talent in the arts (such as music, acting, fine arts) | 49 | 18 | 31 | 31 | 19 | 13 | 7 | 1 | 1 |
| Racial background to ensure diversity | 40 | 17 | 23 | 24 | 35 | 13 | 22 | - | 1 |
| Gender to ensure diversity | 35 | 12 | 23 | 29 | 35 | 12 | 23 | - | 1 |

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| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------|----|----|-----------|-----------|----|----|---|---|
| Legacy status – an older family member of the applicant graduated from the college | 37 | 17 | 19 | 20 | 41 | 15 | 26 | 1 | 1 |
| Financial background – the applicant will be able to pay full tuition | 46 | 23 | 23 | 25 | 28 | 12 | 15 | * | 1 |
| Financial donation made to the college by the applicant’s family | 44 | 27 | 17 | 15 | 40 | 12 | 28 | * | 1 |

N=1,009

EDU2.

Now, whether you have gone to college or not, how important do you think these applicant factors should be to 4-year colleges when they review and consider college applications?

[ITEMS RANDOMIZED IN SAME ORDER AS EDUC1]

| 3/28-4/1/2019 | Extremely/ very important NET | Very important | Important | Moderately important | Slightly/ not important NET | Slightly important | Not important | DK | SKP/ REF |
|---|--|-------------------|-----------|---------------------------------|--|-----------------------|------------------|----|-------------|
| High school grades (such as GPA) | 76 | 43 | 33 | 18 | 5 | 3 | 2 | * | 1 |
| College admission scores (such as SAT, ACT) | 68 | 36 | 32 | 21 | 9 | 6 | 3 | * | 1 |
| Extracurricular activities in high school (such as debate team, 4H, student government) | 44 | 15 | 29 | 32 | 23 | 13 | 10 | - | 1 |
| Special talent in sports / varsity athlete | 32 | 13 | 19 | 33 | 34 | 19 | 15 | * | 1 |

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| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------|----|----|-----------|-----------|----|----|---|---|
| Special talent in the arts (such as music, acting, fine arts) | 41 | 13 | 28 | 32 | 25 | 15 | 10 | * | 1 |
| Racial background to ensure diversity | 27 | 11 | 16 | 25 | 47 | 13 | 34 | * | 1 |
| Gender to ensure diversity | 27 | 11 | 16 | 24 | 48 | 13 | 34 | - | 1 |
| Legacy status – an older family member of the applicant graduated from the college | 11 | 4 | 6 | 17 | 71 | 21 | 50 | 1 | 1 |
| Financial background – the applicant will be able to pay full tuition | 23 | 9 | 14 | 28 | 47 | 16 | 31 | * | 1 |
| Financial donation made to the college by the applicant’s family | 13 | 5 | 8 | 15 | 71 | 15 | 56 | * | 1 |

N=1,009

STUDY METHODOLOGY

The surveys were conducted by the Higher Education Analytics Center at NORC and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, with funding from The Associated Press and NORC at the University of Chicago. Data were collected using AmeriSpeak Omnibus®, a bi-monthly multi-client survey using NORC’s probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The surveys were part of a larger study that included questions about other topics not included in this report.

During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97% of the U.S.

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household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings.

Interviews for these surveys were conducted between March 28 and April 1, 2019, and April 11 and 14, 2019 with adults age 18 and over representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Panel members were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak. In the first survey, 1,009 completed the survey—899 via the web and 110 via telephone. Interviews were offered in English. The final stage completion rate is 25.3%, the weighted household panel response rate is 34.2%, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 85.1%, for a cumulative response rate of 7.4%. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

For the second survey, 1,108 completed the survey — 1,010 via the web and 98 via telephone. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish, depending on respondent preference. The final stage completion rate is 18.6%, the weighted household panel response rate is 34.2%, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 85.1%, for a cumulative response rate of 5.4%. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.1 percentage points at the 95% confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

Once the sample has been selected and fielded, and all the study data have been collected and made final, a poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any non-coverage or under- and oversampling resulting from the study-specific sample design. Poststratification variables included age, gender, Census division, race/ethnicity, and education. Weighting variables were obtained from the 2018 Current Population Survey. The weighted data reflect the U.S. population of adults age 18 and over.

ABOUT THE HIGHER EDUCATION ANALYTICS CENTER AT NORC

The Higher Education Analytics Center at NORC leverages its extensive experience conducting research on higher education to bring effective and affordable research and data collection offerings to institutions of higher education and other organizations related to higher education.

The Higher Education Analytics Center's focus is informed by its institutional mission and non-profit status. The aim is to provide post-secondary institutions and related organizations with the data and insights necessary to improve their function and inform their policy decisions to the benefit of students, alumni, educators, academic leaders, and the institutions, themselves. All work is approached with deep technical and methodological expertise, a spirit of collaboration, and a commitment to scientific integrity.

Learn more at <http://www.norc.org/About/Departments/Pages/higher-education-analytics-center.aspx>

ABOUT THE ASSOCIATED PRESS-NORC CENTER FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS RESEARCH

The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research taps into the power of social science research and the highest-quality journalism to bring key information to people across the nation and throughout the world.

- The Associated Press (AP) is the world's essential news organization, bringing fast, unbiased news to all media platforms and formats.
- NORC at the University of Chicago is one of the oldest objective and non-partisan research institutions in the world.

The two organizations have established The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals.

The founding principles of The AP-NORC Center include a mandate to carefully preserve and protect the scientific integrity and objectivity of NORC and the journalistic independence of AP. All work conducted by the Center conforms to the highest levels of scientific integrity to prevent any real or perceived bias in the research. All of the work of the Center is subject to review by its advisory committee to help ensure it meets these standards. The Center will publicize the results of all studies and make all datasets and study documentation available to scholars and the public.

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