

Getting Inside their Heads: Research Insights into College-Bound Students

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Carving New Pathways II
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Agenda:

1. Introduction
2. *College Applicant Survey*
3. Demographics

4. Key Decision Factors
5. Psychographics
6. Conclusions



PART 1: INTRODUCTION



Academica Group

- The **largest company in Canada** dedicated entirely to research and marketing for PSE.
- We know more about Canadian PSE applicants — **and how to recruit them** — than any other organization in the country.
- Prior to 2003, **Acumen Research Group**
- 12 years of PSE market research

Academica Group

- **X2clicks™** – Drupal-based open source CMS
- **SkoolPool™** – Facebook app for applicants, more than 10,000 users added to their profiles, more than 7,000 institutions (the future of research)
- ***Academica's Top Ten™*** – a FREE daily newsbrief for more than 2,500 subscribers
- **iPSE™** – a brand new “video jukebox” and ecommunity portal for student recruitment (being launched tomorrow at CAUCE)

Academica Group

- Half our research is educational policy research for EPI, CMSF, HRDSC, MTCU, etc.
- Clients include every Ontario college and university, more than 100 across Canada
- *College Applicant Survey*[™] (CAS)
- *University Applicant Survey*[™] (UAS)
- Now combined in the national UCAS[™]

Part 2:

The College Applicant Survey (CAS)



Marjorie McColm

Director, Academic Excellence

George Brown College:

“The applicant survey report is considered **a key source of information** for the College when planning services and communication strategies for our students.”

College Applicant SurveyTM

- Best source of comparator data and benchmarks on applicant perceptions
- 5 years of trend data (back to 2003) (to 1997 for university applicants)
- Grew to be province-wide in Ontario with COU and ACAATO
- National since 2005
- Surveys ~100,000 Canadian applicants
- Online instrument with >340 data points

*College Applicant Survey*TM

- Applicant demographics, geographics, and psychographics
- Perceptions of college and university reputations and brands
- Key decision factors, perceived strengths and weaknesses of institutions
- Use and influence of information sources
- Comparative appeal of marketing materials

Richard Fisher,
Chief Marketing Officer
York University:

“Academica surveys 100,000
Canadian PSE applicants, analyzes
trends and segment variations, and
provides **the most useful and
actionable data I have seen** in my
years at York.”

Today's Data: **2007 CAS**TM

- OCAS selected random sample and oversaw the email invitation distribution
- 53,922 email invitations sent on March 27, 2007
- Reminders on April 10 & 23
- Taken offline on May 3
- \$4,000 in prize incentives (laptops, gift cards, colour Palm pilot)

Today's Data: **2007 CAS™**

- 15,538 completed the survey for a 28.8% response rate
- Confidence interval of +/- 0.7%, 19 times out of 20

Part 3:

Demographics



Typical OCAS Applicant

On average:

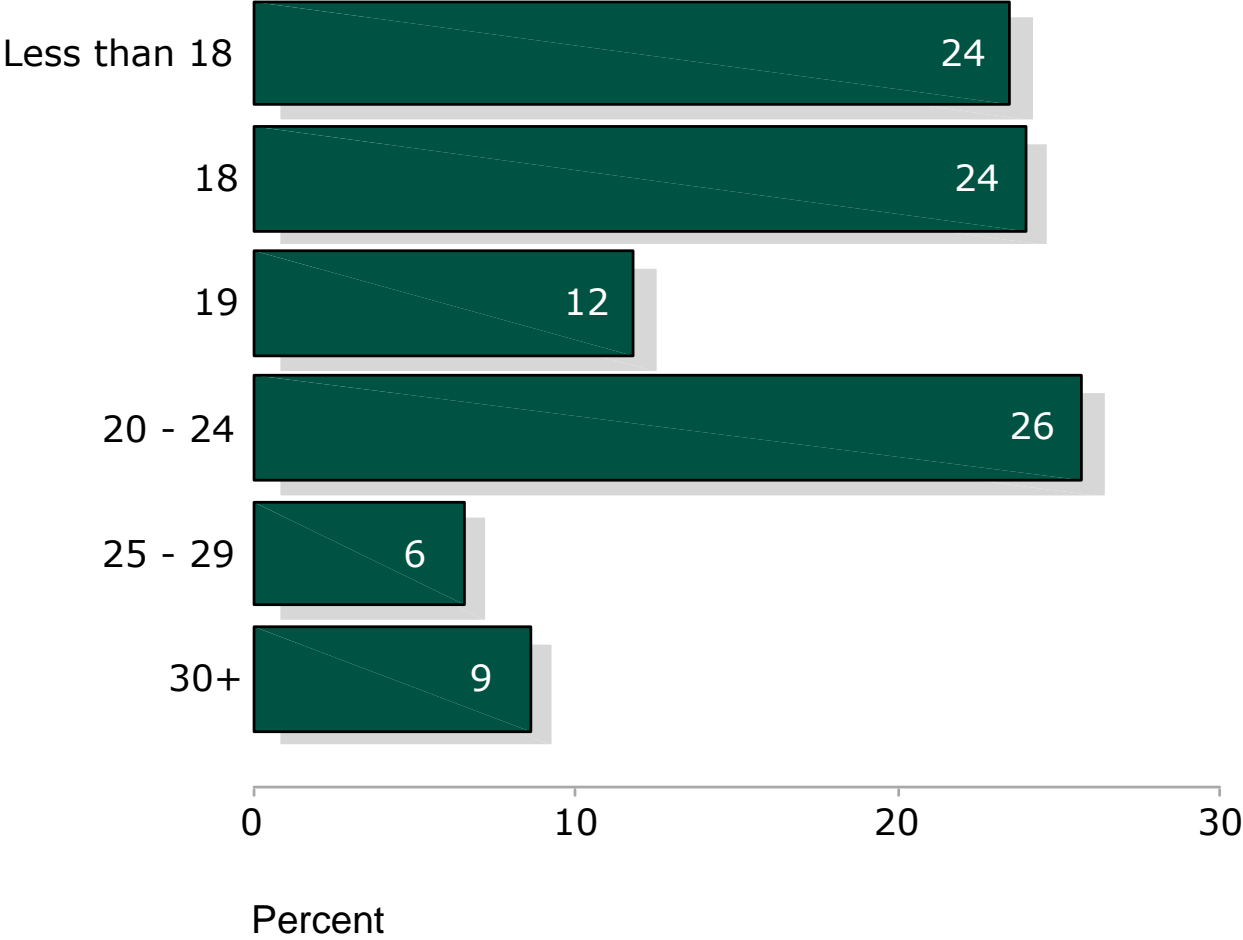
- White, female teen
- B high-school grade average
- Lives in the GTA or Metro Toronto, plans to commute from home
- Employed – likely part-time
- From a lower-income household

Typical OCAS Applicant

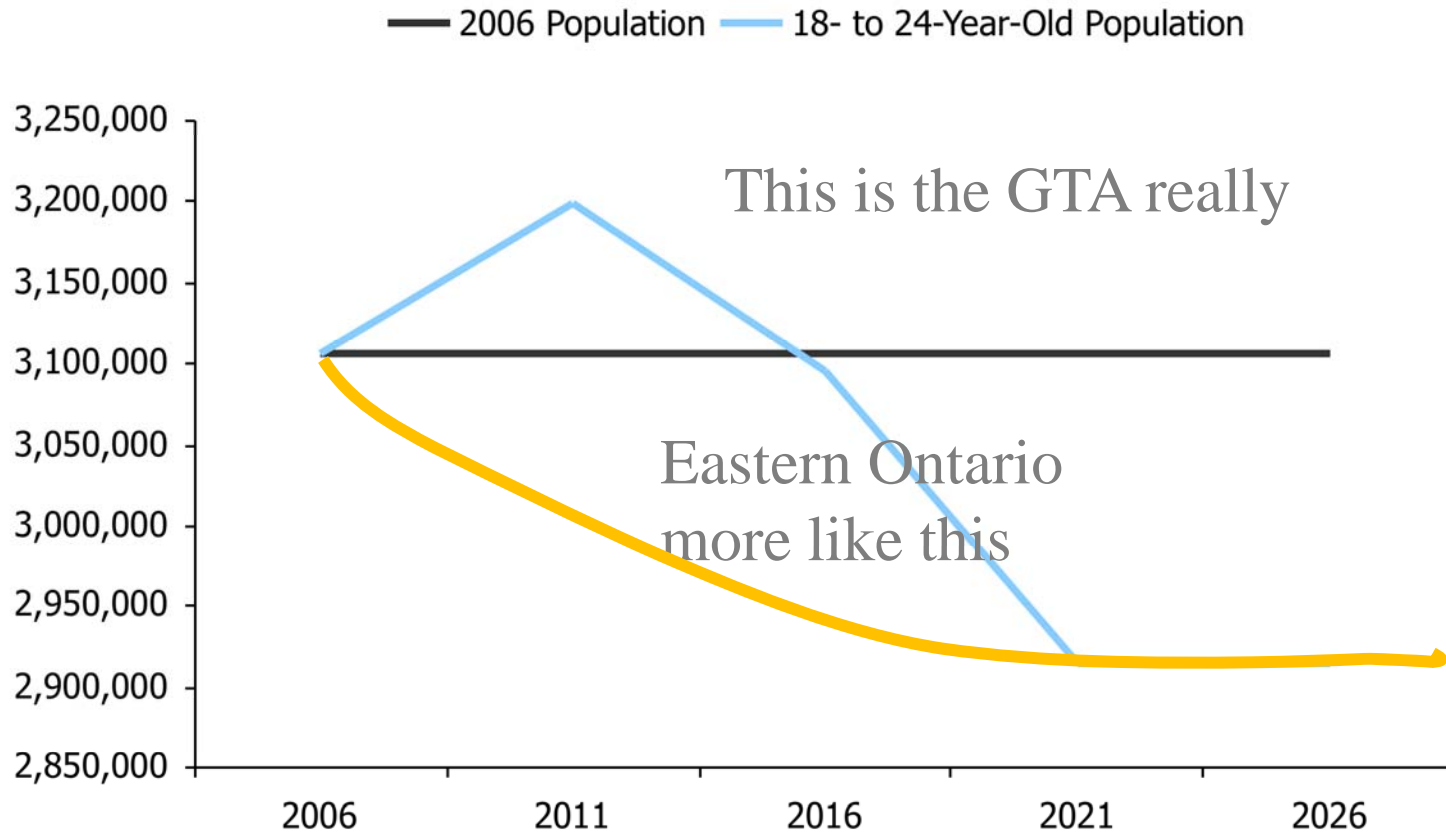
On average:

- With parents who have some PSE
- One in six also applies to university

Age

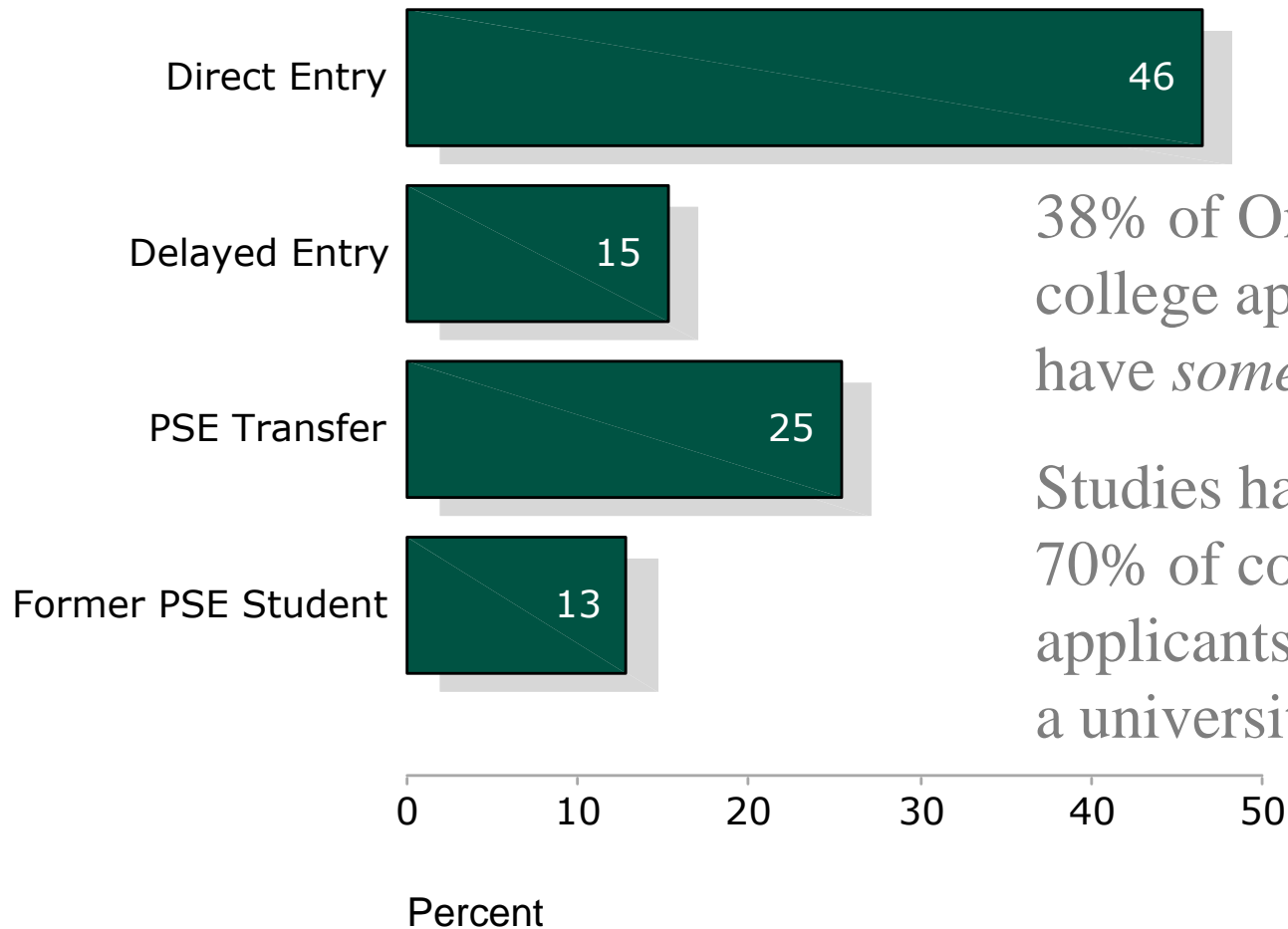


Declining Demographics



Statistics Canada, CANSIM, table 052-0004 and Catalogue no. 91-520-X. Last modified: 2005-12-21.

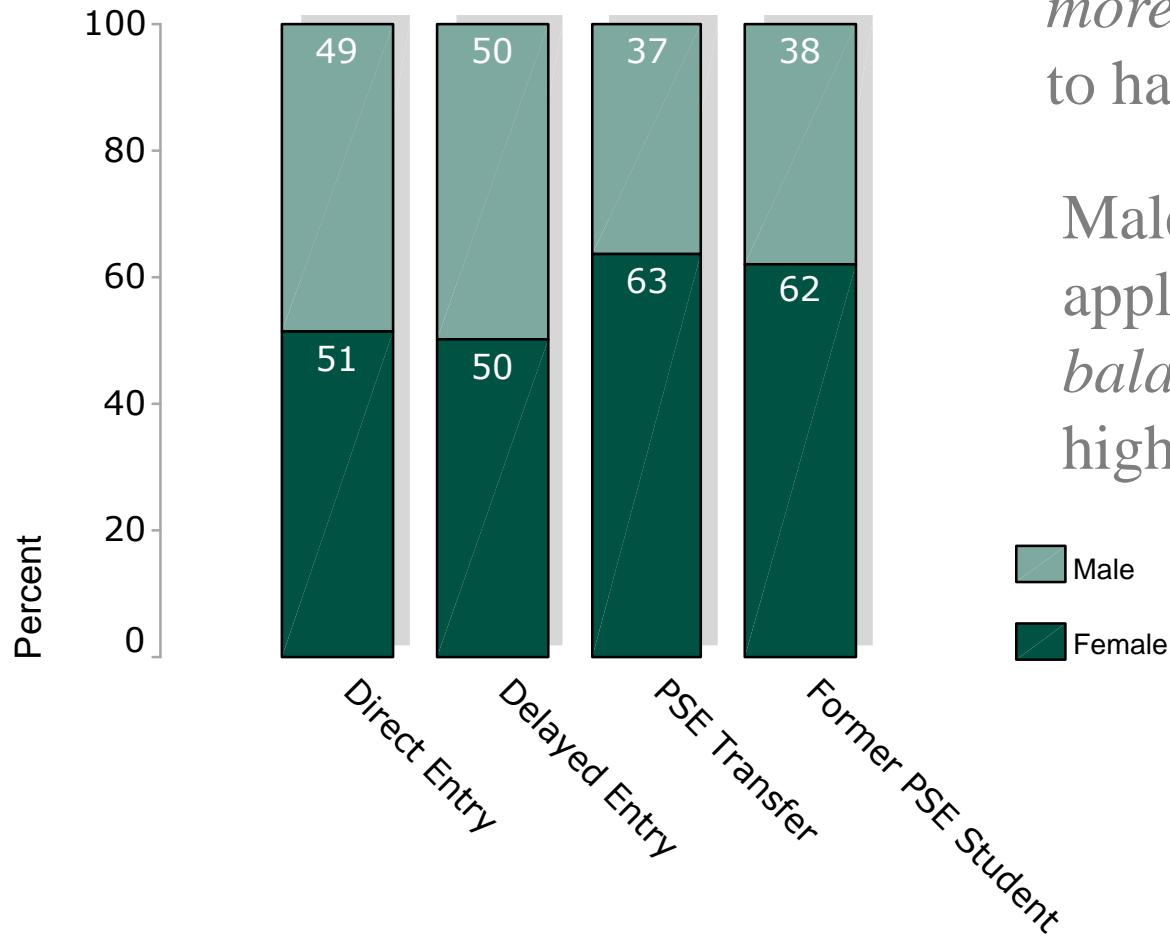
Applicant Background



38% of Ontario college applicants have *some* prior PSE

Studies have found that 70% of college applicants over 25 have a university degree

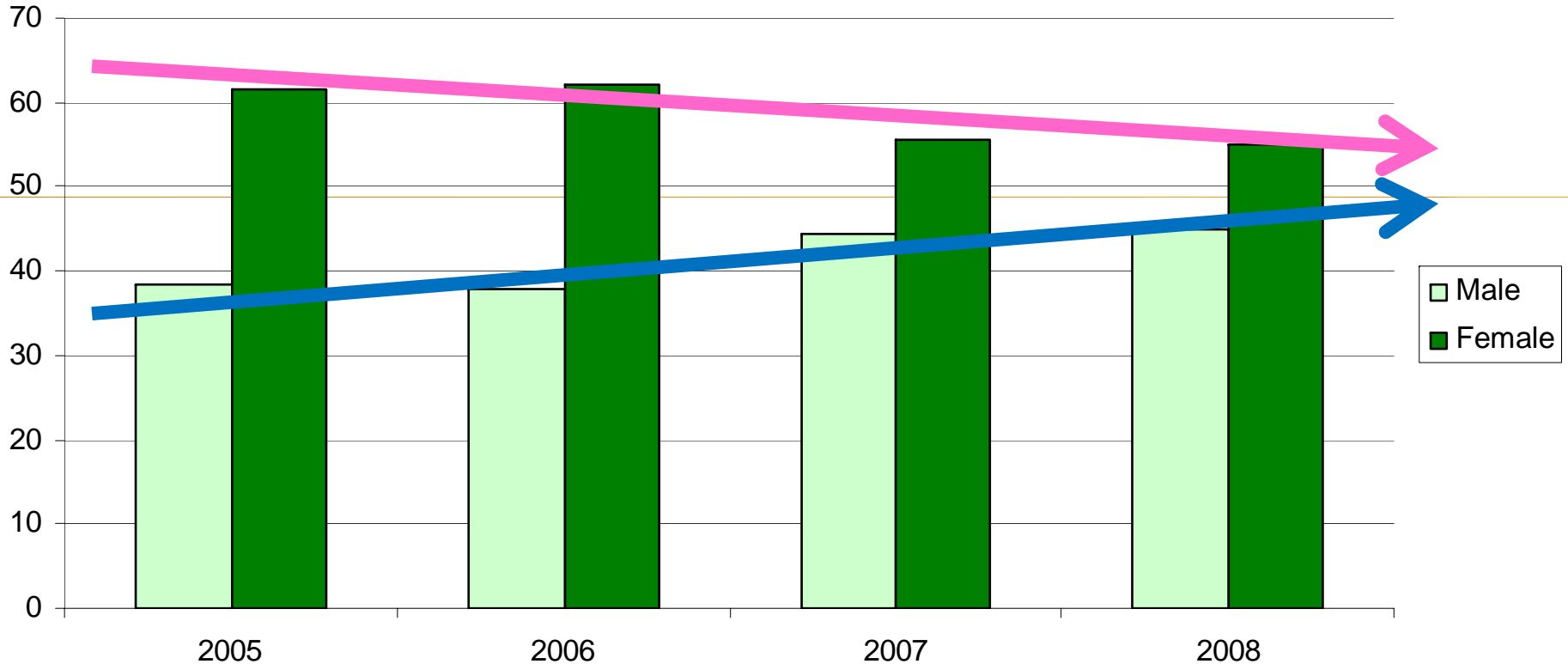
Gender



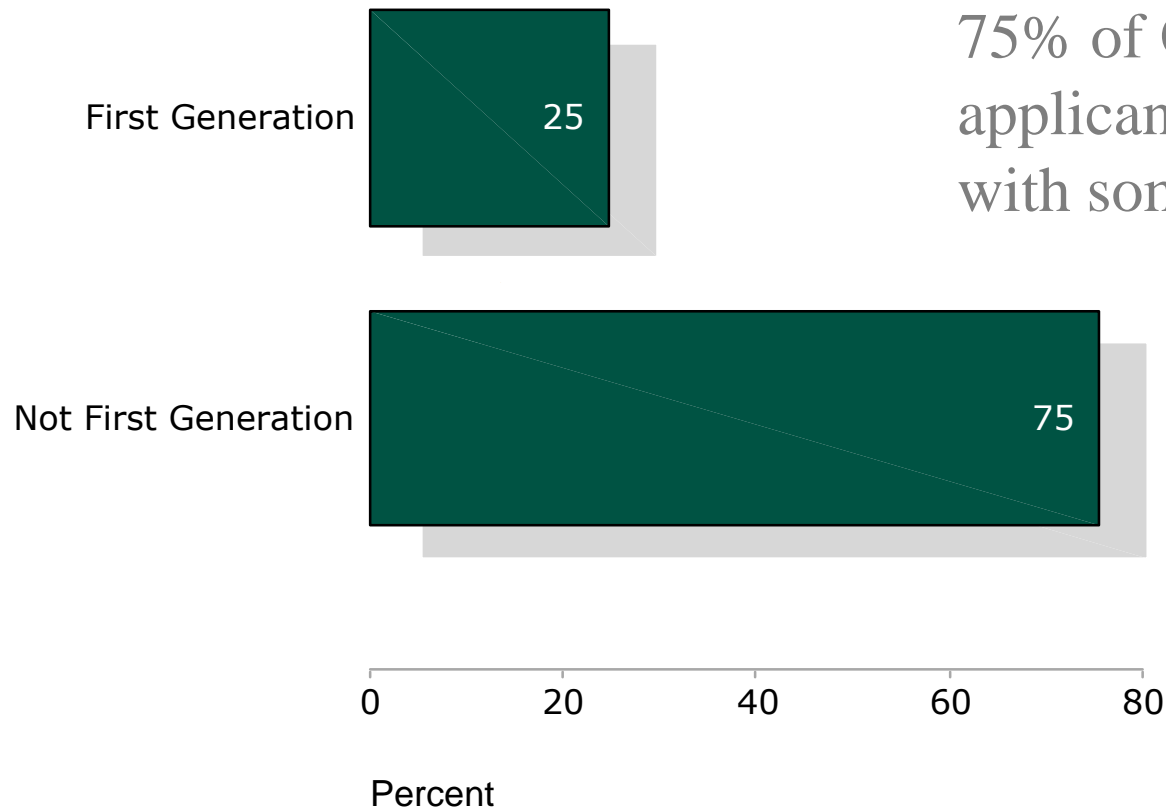
Females are *more* likely to have prior PSE

Male/Female applicants are *balanced* out of high school

Gender (Trends 2005-08)



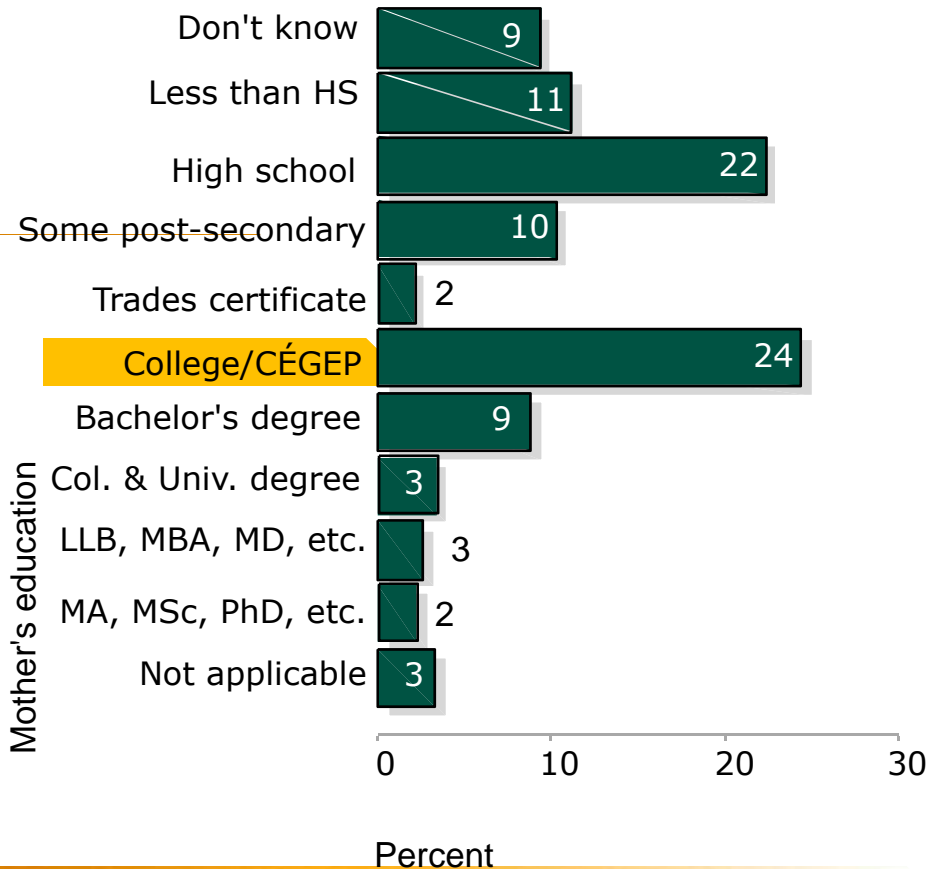
First Generation PSE



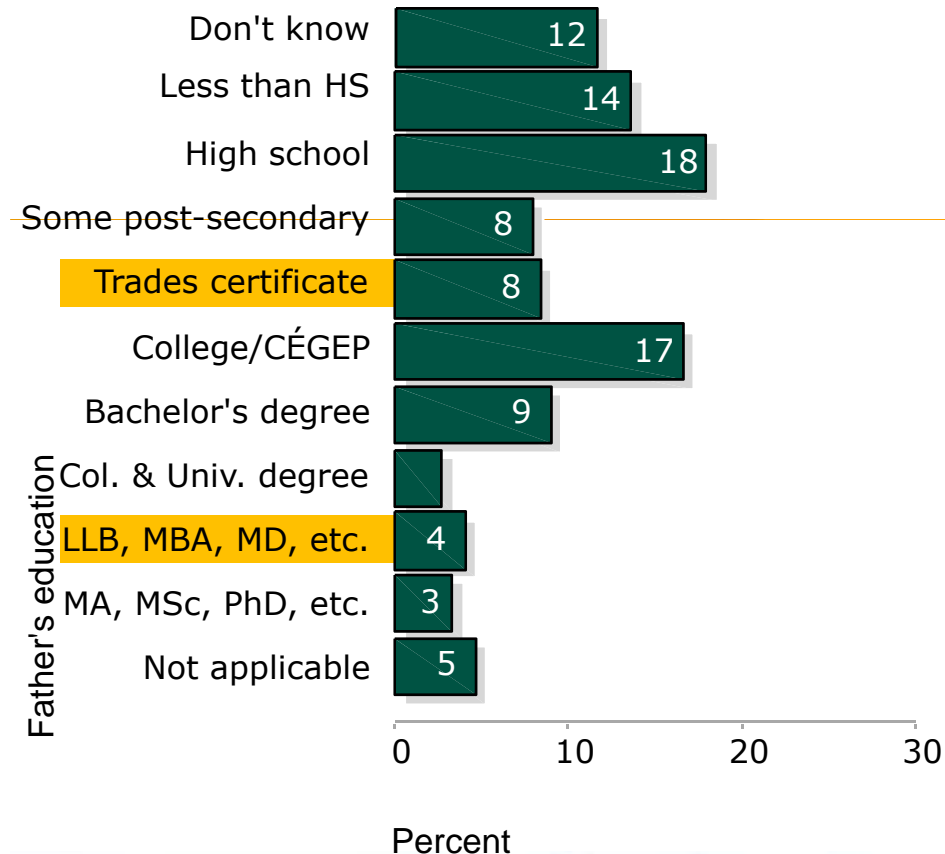
75% of Ontario college applicants have parents with some PSE

Parental Education

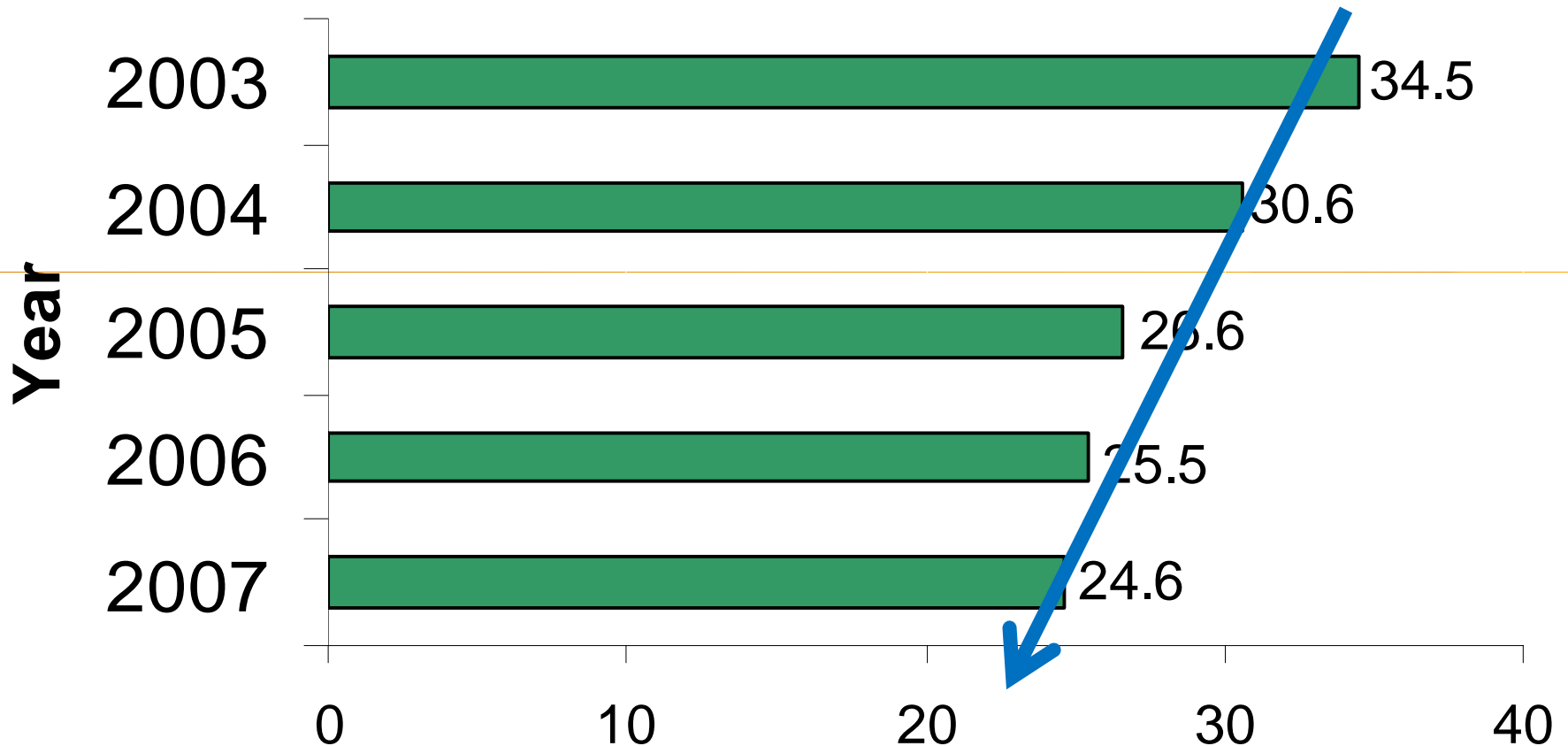
Mother



Father

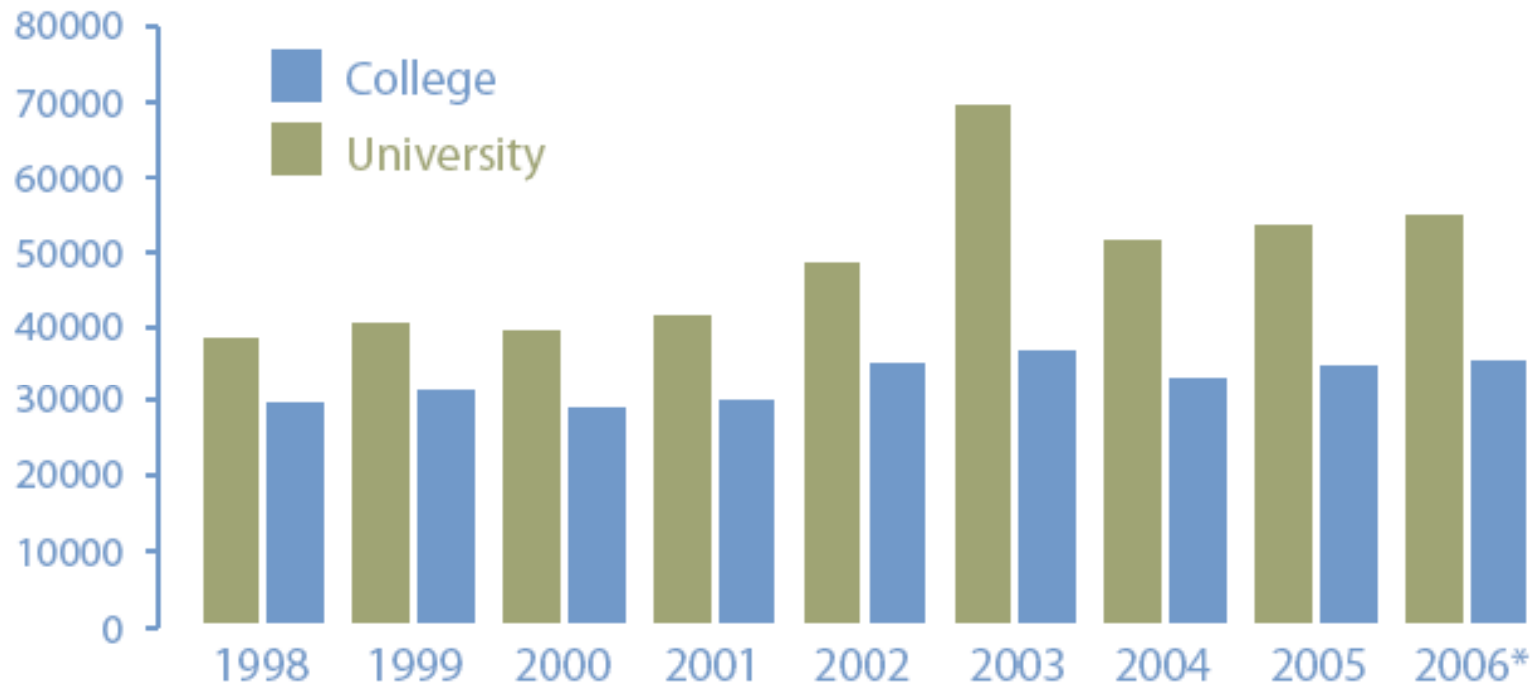


First Generation (Trend)



University vs College

Numbers of first-year fall registrants coming directly from high school in Ontario's colleges and universities, 1998-2006



From Colleges Ontario, 2007 Environmental Scan

CAS Regions

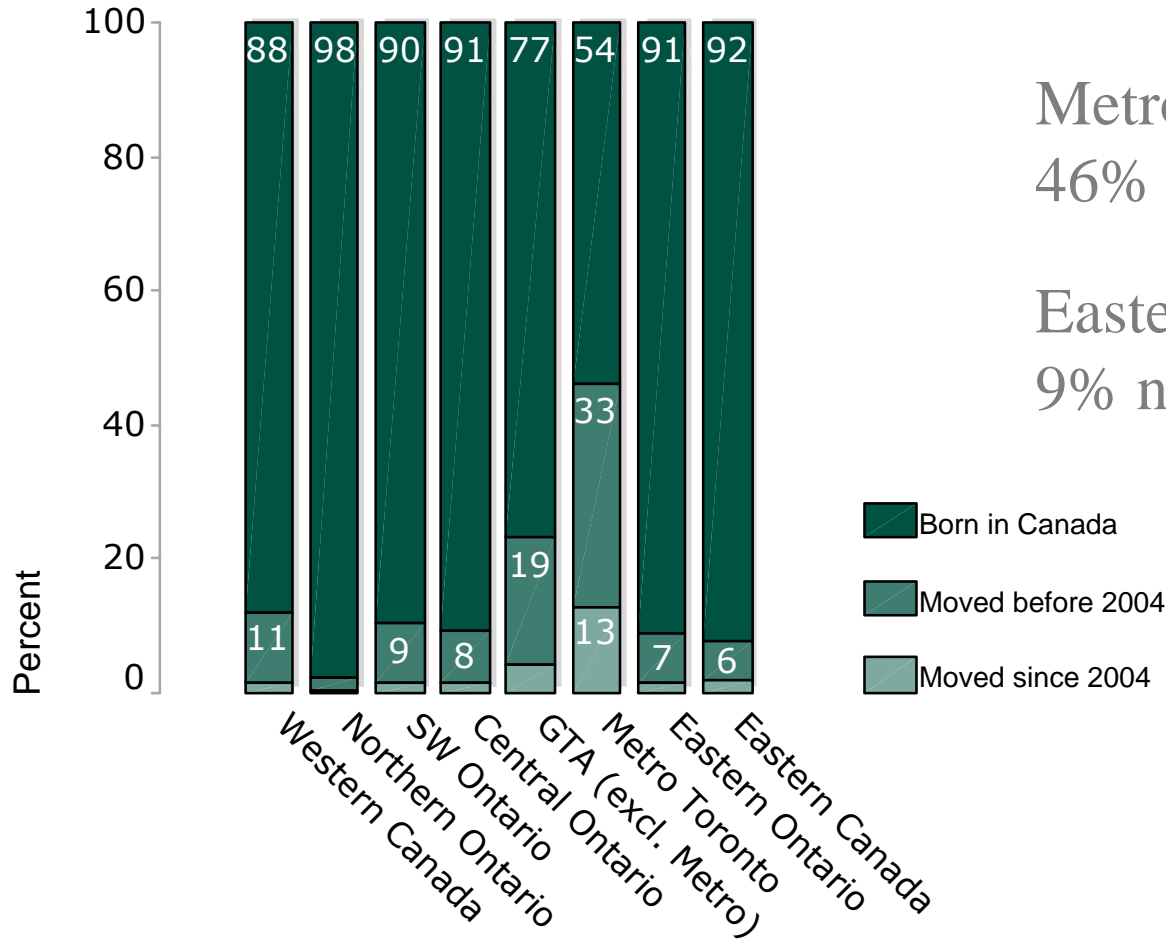


Immigration

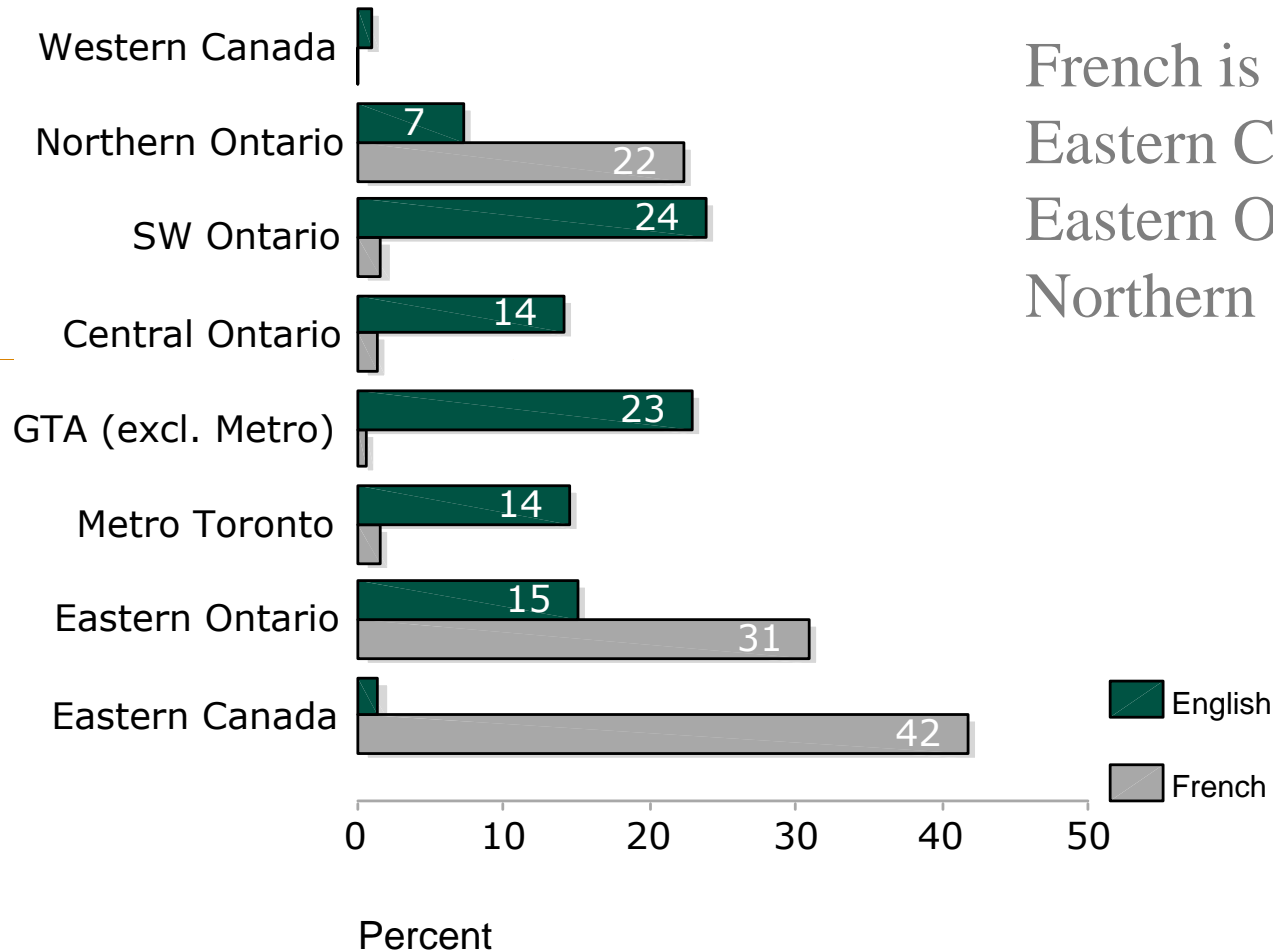
GTA has more than 20% new Canadians

Metro Toronto has 46% new Canadians

Eastern Ontario has 9% new Canadians



Language by Region



French is prominent in:
Eastern Canada,
Eastern Ontario, and
Northern Ontario

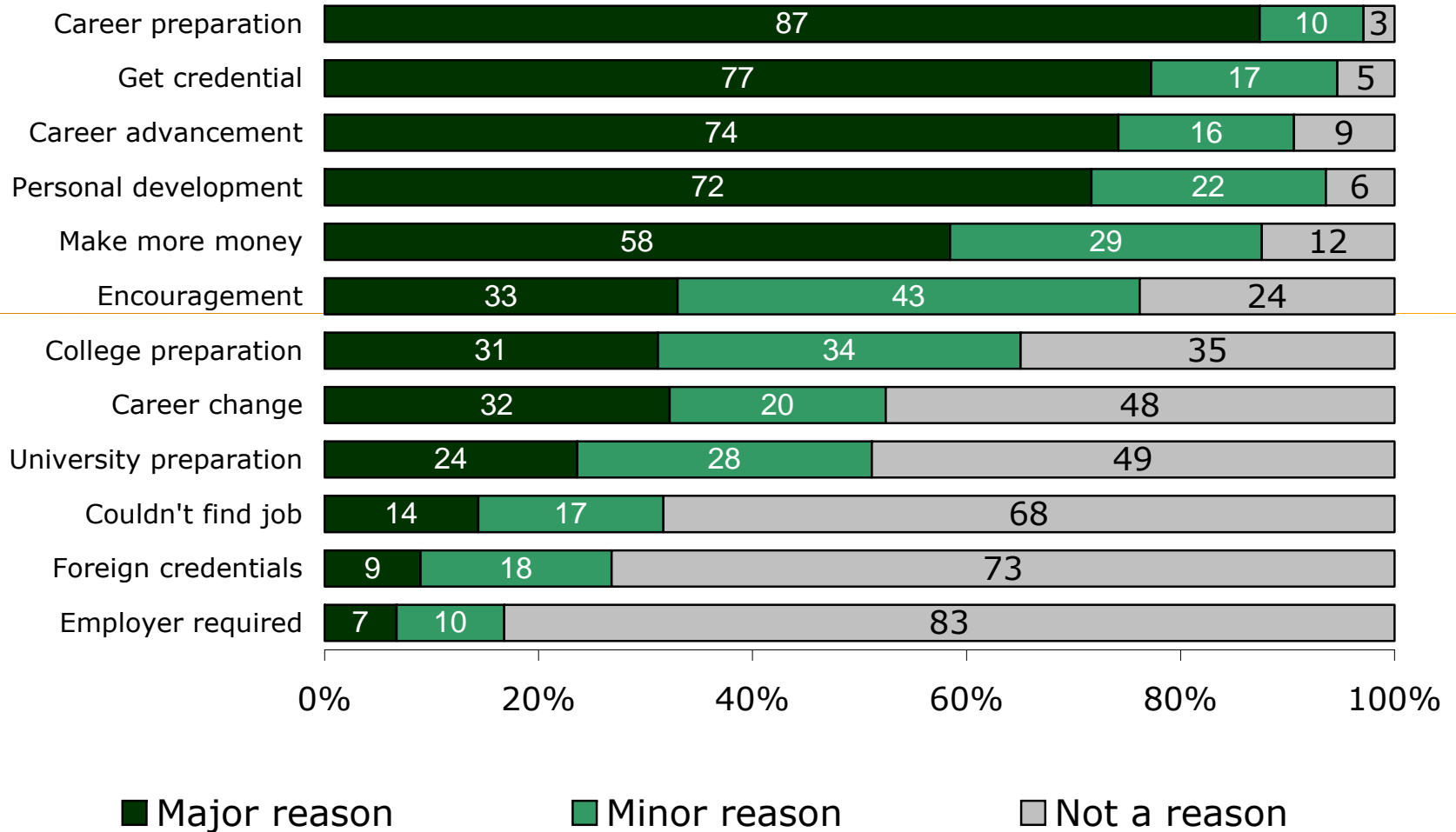
PART 4: KEY DECISION FACTORS



Key Decision Factors

- Why are these students at college?
-

Reasons for Applying



Reasons for Applying

Main reason for applying	Direct Entry	Delayed Entry	PSE Transfer	Former PSE
Career preparation	32%	27%	27%	20%
Personal development	19%	23%	15%	15%
Get credential	17%	13%	13%	9%
Career advancement	9%	11%	13%	15%
University preparation	9%	4%	5%	3%
Make more money	6%	10%	7%	8%
Career change	1%	4%	12%	20%
Couldn't find work	1%	2%	3%	8%
Encouragement	2%	3%	2%	1%
Prepare for college	2%	1%	2%	1%
Foreign credentials	~0%	~0%	~0%	1%
Employer required	~0%	~0%	1%	~0%
None of the above	2%	1%	2%	1%

College Selection Criteria

- Why are these students at **your** college?
- 7-point scale,
-3 to Zero to +3

College Selection Criteria

Academic Factor

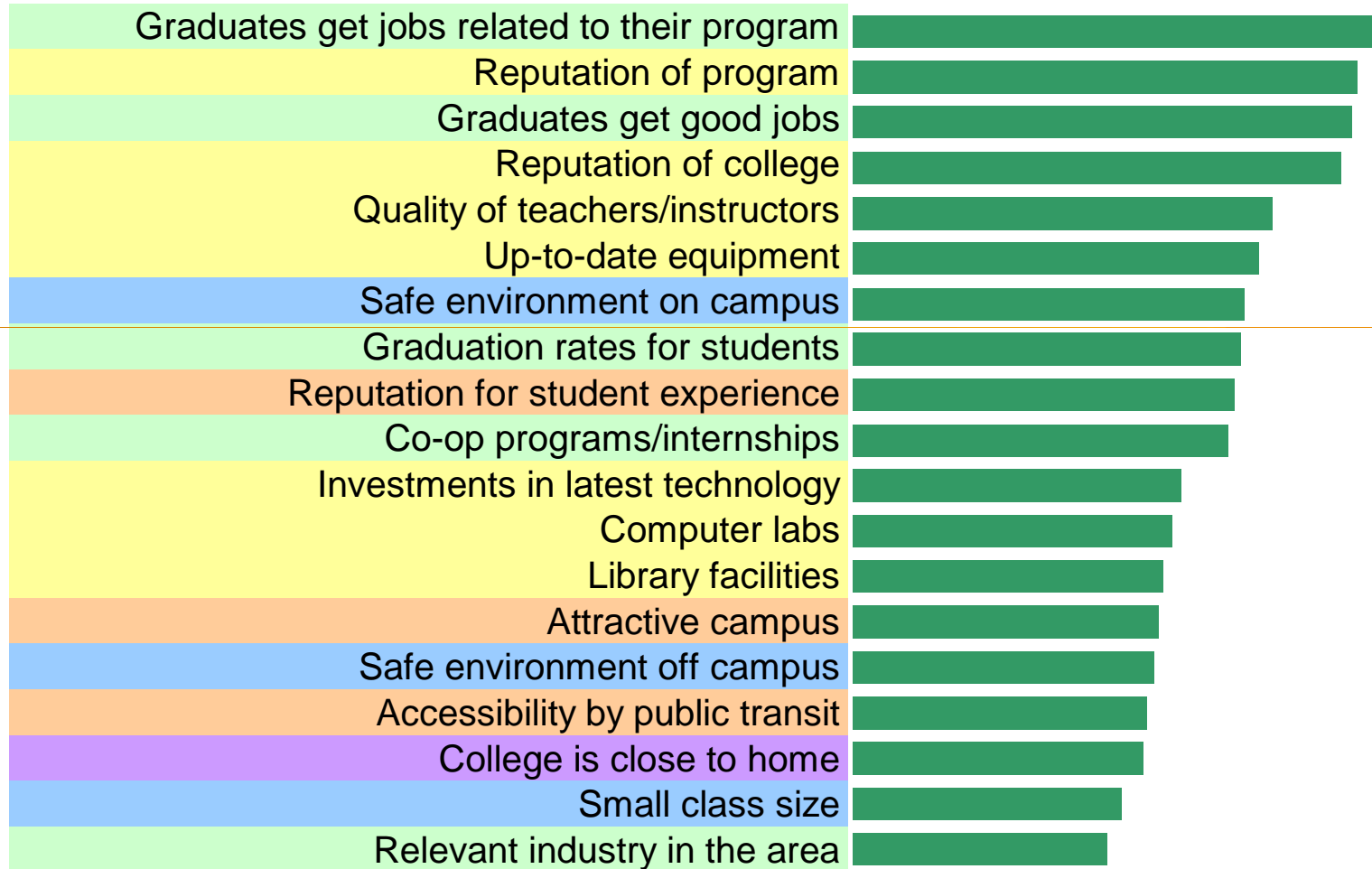
Outcome Factor

Campus Factor

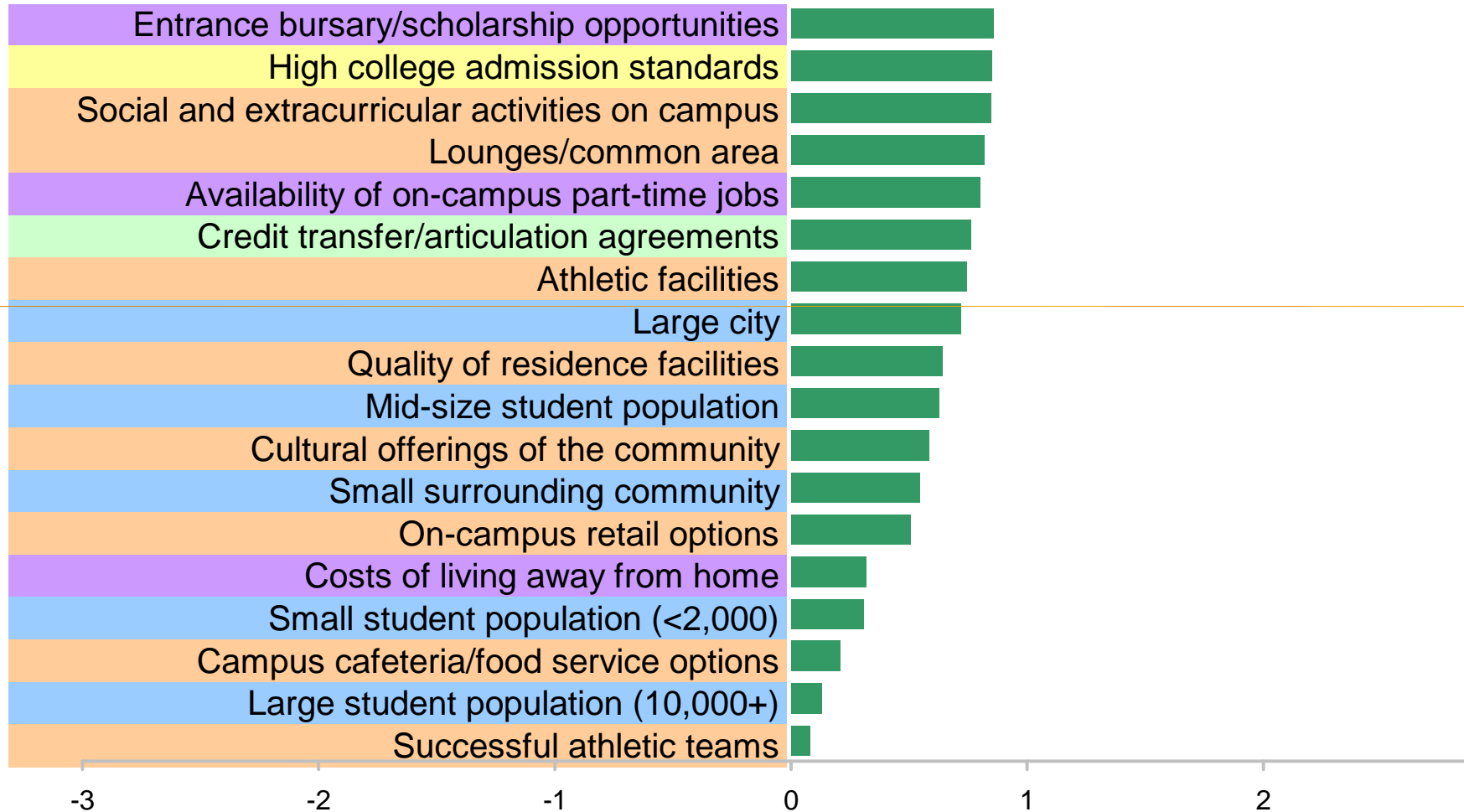
Nurturing Factor

Financial Factor

College Selection Criteria



College Selection Criteria



An Individual College

OUTCOME FACTORS

- Co-op programs/internships**
- Credit transfer/articulation agreements
- Graduates get good jobs
- Graduates get jobs related to their program
- Graduation rates for students
- Relevant industry in the area

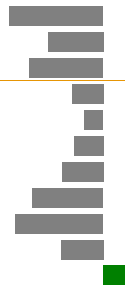


Proximity to Home

Small student population

CAMPUS FACTORS

- Accessibility by public transit**
- Athletic facilities**
- Attractive campus**
- Campus cafeteria/food service options**
- Cultural offerings of the community
- Lounges/common area**
- On-campus retail options**
- Quality of residence facilities**
- Reputation for student experience**
- Social and extracurricular activities on campus**
- Successful athletic teams

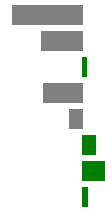


Successful Athletic teams

Small class size

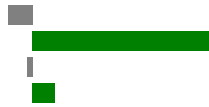
NURTURING FACTORS

- Large city**
- Large student population (10,000+)**
- Mid-size student population
- A safe environment off campus**
- A safe environment on campus
- Small class size
- Small student population (<2,000)
- Small surrounding community



FINANCIAL FACTORS

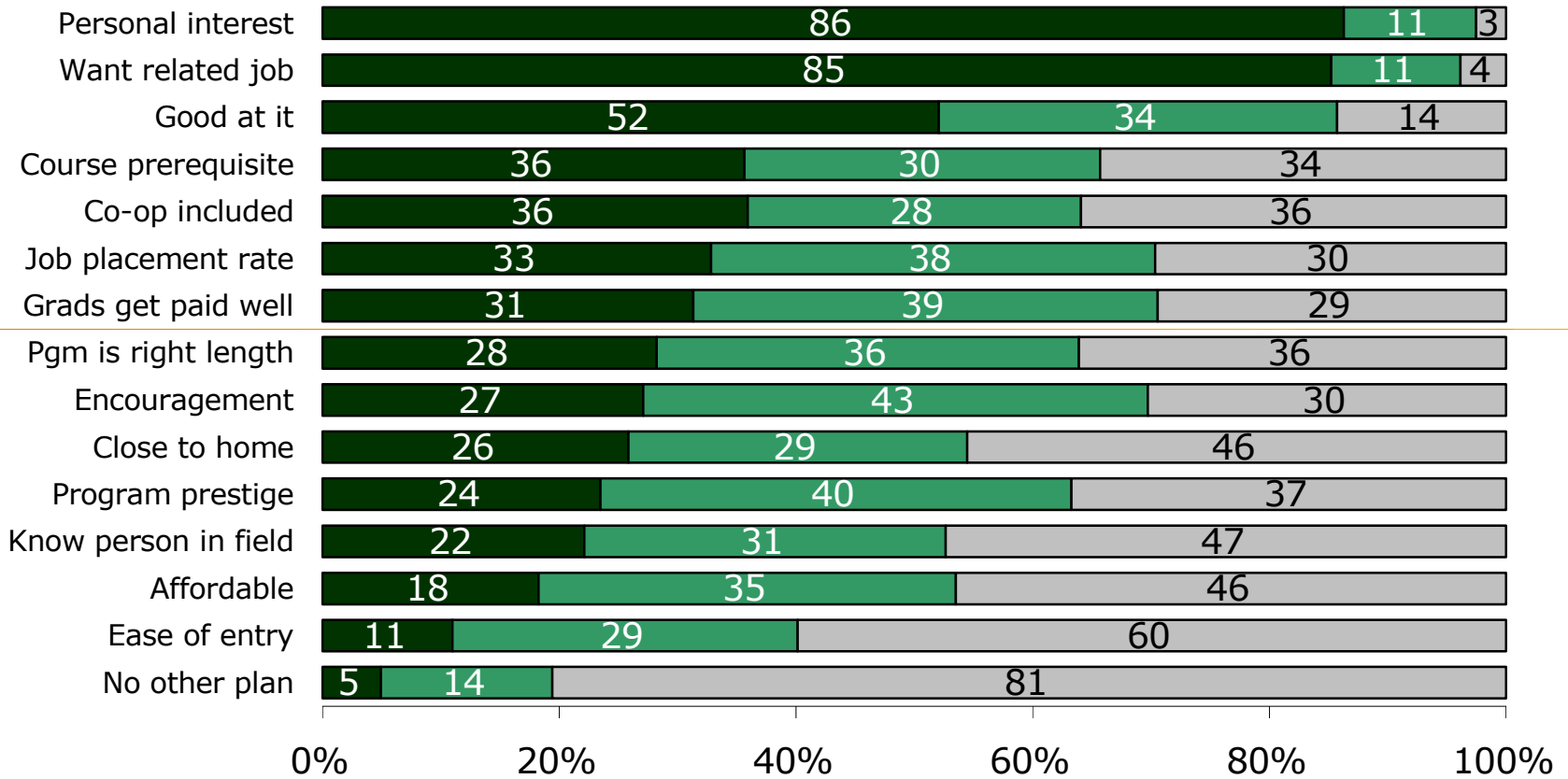
- Availability of on-campus part-time jobs
- College is close to home**
- Costs of living away from home
- Entrance bursary/scholarship opportunities



Reasons for Program Choice

- Why are these students in your class?
-

Reasons for Program Choice



■ Major reason

■ Minor reason

■ Not a reason

PART 5: PSYCHOGRAPHICS

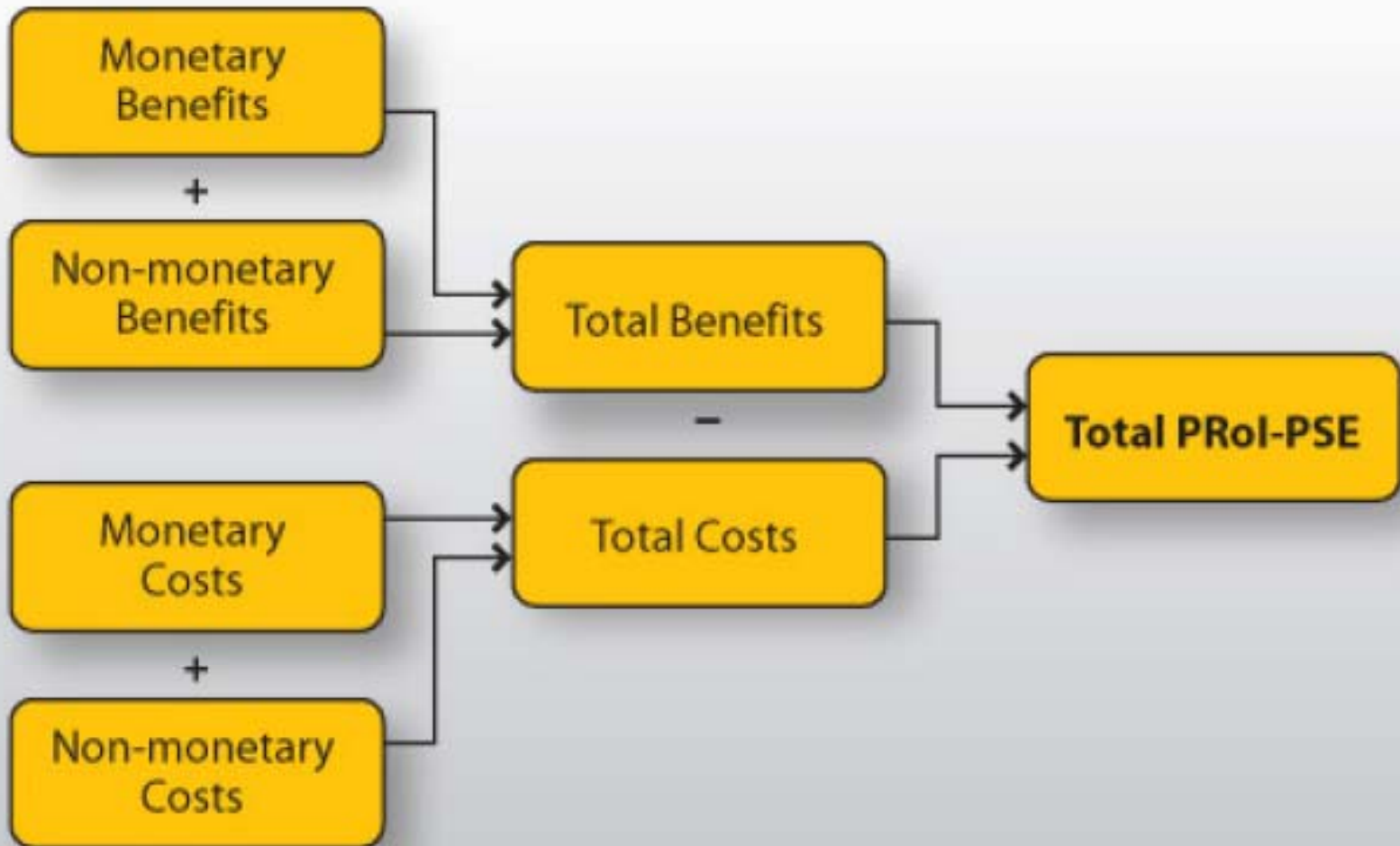


CAS Psychographics

Cluster analysis based on
3 instrument scales:

1. Perceived returns (PROI)
2. Motivation for undertaking (MUPSE)
3. Reservations / Anxieties (RAPSE)

PROI - PSE



PROI: Monetary Costs

- “I’m hesitant to undertake a PSE because of the amount of debt I’m likely to accumulate by the time I graduate.”
- “The costs of a PSE have become so high that they outweigh any future financial benefits.”
- Debt aversion

PROI: Monetary Benefits

- “I am confident that a PSE would lead me to a better paying job.”
- “People who get a PSE will make more money over their lifetime than those who just get a high school education.”
- Future employment income

PROI: Non-Monetary Costs

- “I was hesitant to pursue a PSE because it would create tensions with the people I grew up with.”
- “I was afraid that if I pursued a PSE it would confuse me about ‘who I am.’ ”
- Identity anxiety

PROI: Non-Monetary Benefits

- “People who have a PSE get jobs that are much more satisfying.”
- “If you want a rewarding career these days, you need a PSE.”
- “The best way to get a prestigious job is through a PSE.”
- Future status / leisure

College Applicant PROI

- College applicants perceive a *greater* return than university applicants
- *Indirect* college applicants perceive a somewhat greater return than those direct from high school
- First-generation, visible minority applicants are at double-jeopardy – lowest perceived ROI

Perceived Costs

- College and university applicants perceive the monetary costs similarly
- Applicants from lower HHI greatly overestimate the costs
- Males, First-Generation, and direct entry college applicants score higher on 'identity anxiety' than other groups

Perceived Benefits

- College applicants perceive not just lower costs, but *greater benefits* of a PSE than do university applicants:
 - No differences in monetary benefits
 - Difference is in **non-monetary benefits** for both direct and non-direct applicants

PROI: Regional Differences

- Applicants from Northern Ontario anticipate the *highest* return
- GTA, Metro Toronto applicants perceive highest monetary costs
- Metro (not GTA) have highest identity anxiety as well – making for the lowest anticipated overall ROI

MUPSE: Motivations

- MUPSE instrument developed and tested for several years, with two sociologists from UWO (Dr. James E. Coté and Charles Levine)
- Measures 5 types of motivations

MUPSE: Motivations

- “Pull” Motivations
 - Careerism
 - Personal development
 - Humanitarian/Altruism
- “Push” Motivations
 - Expectations
 - Default

MUPSE: Careerism

- “A PSE should be a practical means for me to achieve personal success.”
- “I am confident that a PSE will help me achieve a position of higher status in society.”

MUPSE: Careerism

- Careerism is a powerful motivator for almost all applicants
- Particularly first-generation males, visible minority females
- Whether pursuing professional programs or general arts

MUPSE: Personal Devel.

- Emphasis on personal growth, studying and learning for its own sake
- “A university education should help me to understand the complexities of life.”
- The ideal traditional scholar
- Most strongly correlated to successful learning outcomes in PSE

MUPSE: **Personal Devel.**

- University direct applicants score higher for personal development than college applicants (direct or indirect)
- Particularly older, female applicants to smaller, liberal arts institutions

MUPSE: **Altruism**

- “A PSE should enable me to help people who are less fortunate.”
- “I am hopeful that my PSE will help me contribute to the welfare of others.”
- Improving the world, changing the system.

MUPSE: **Altruism**

- Older applicants, university applicants rate altruistic motivations higher:
 1. Indirect university
 2. Indirect college
 3. Direct university
 4. Direct college

MUPSE: **Expectation**

- Parental and societal pressures, not an internal locus of control
- “There were considerable pressures on me from my friends to get a PSE.”
- “My parent(s) would be very disappointed in me if I didn’t go on to PSE.”
- No correlation, pro or con, PSE success

MUPSE: **Expectation**

- Highest expectation scores among direct university applicants, visible minorities
- Lowest scores among indirect college applicants
- Parental pressure to attend PSE not significant for college applicants, or among university applicants in northern, central or eastern Ontario. Significant in southwestern and highest in the GTA

MUPSE: Default

- “I don’t think I would really get anything out of a PSE, but it beats the alternatives.”
- “I often ask myself why I would bother getting a PSE.”
- These are almost entirely unmotivated students, greatly at risk at any institution

RAPSE: **Reservations**

- RAPSE - Reservations about Attending Post-Secondary Education
-
- Indecision about PSE
 - Perceived alternatives to PSE

RAPSE: **Indecision**

- “I don’t feel that I am emotionally prepared to go to college or university yet.”
- “I’m hesitant to pursue a PSE because I really don’t know what I want to do with my life yet.”

RAPSE: **Indecision**

- Highest indecision measured among *direct* university applicants
- College applicants demonstrated *lower* indecision
- Direct applicants scored lower than indirect applicants

RAPSE: PSE Alternatives

- “I think I could find a rewarding job without a PSE.”
- “You can learn enough about the real world without a PSE.”

RAPSE: PSE Alternatives

- University applicants (direct and indirect) saw more alternatives to pursuing a PSE than college applicants
- Confident? Sheltered? Privileged?
- White males see most alternatives

Psychographic Clusters

- Cluster analysis of the 3 subscales
- PROI, motivations and reservations combine to identify 4 distinct clusters:
 1. Careerists
 2. Scholars
 3. Drifters
 4. Conflicted

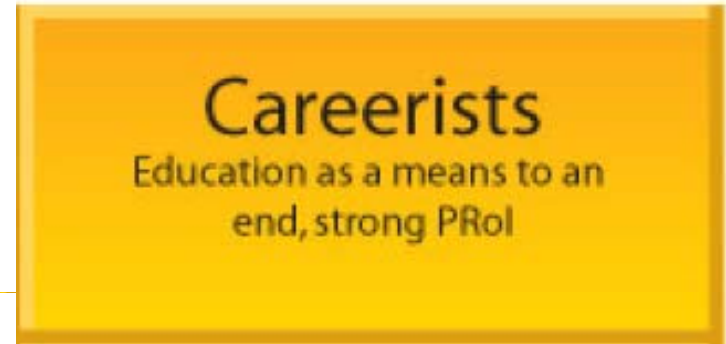
Psychographic Clusters

- High school grade averages do not vary significantly between the clusters
- Longitudinal studies of the MUPSE have found it correlates better with academic success than high school grade averages

Psychographic Clusters



Careerists



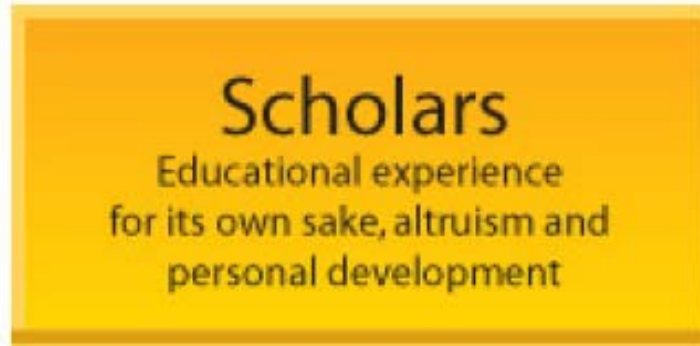
Careerists

- Well-developed personal appreciation for the monetary and socio-economic benefits of pursuing PSE
- Likely aware of alternatives to PSE, but place little stock in them
- Rather than being pushed by familial expectation, Careerists are drawn to PSE
- 43% of college applicants, only 34% of university applicants

Careerists

- Highest household incomes
- More likely to move away to go to PSE
- Employment outcomes, high admission averages, “leaders of tomorrow” attracts them
- Like information sources they can read and digest – website, viewbooks

Scholars



Scholars

- Driven by a sense that there is so much that needs to be learned and understood
- Fulfilment is through the amelioration of society, and helping those in need
- Scholars consider PSE as an experience in and of itself.
- 33% of university applicants, just 22% of college applicants

Scholars

- Lower household incomes
- Least impacted by friends, family, teachers – independent minded
- Attracted by small class sizes, nurturing qualities, student experience
- Seem most impacted by in-person communications vehicles

Drifters



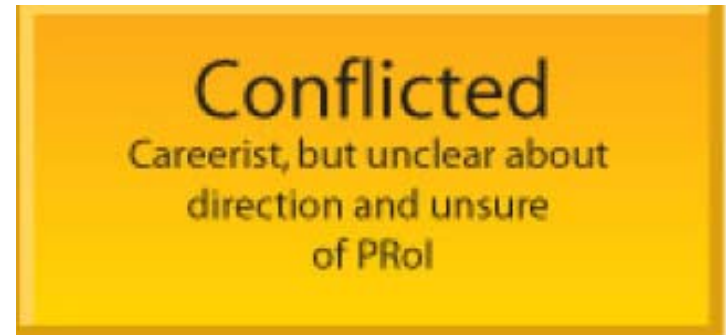
Drifters

- Identify more with the notion that PSE is a monetary and non-monetary cost in the long-run, but apply anyway
- Likely apply due to parental or familial expectation or the sense that other options are no more viable
- 19% of university applicants, 14% of college applicants
- Higher proportion among direct-entry applicants than indirect applicants

Drifters

- Often commuters
- Often in the workforce or unemployed at time of application
- Least clear “ultimate PSE intention”
- Drawn by social/campus factors, ease of admittance
- Particularly impacted by high school teachers and guidance counsellors

Conflicted



Conflicted

- Essentially defined by not espousing characteristics of the other three groups
- Have idiosyncratic motivations for applying or are applying with few positive intentions
- An apparent conflict between their low lukewarm to negative attitudes toward PSE and their pursuit of one.

Conflicted

- Very focused on career outcomes, but unsure that PSE will contribute
- Just 13% of university applicants, but 21% of college applicants

PART 6: CONCLUSIONS



Societal Bias for University

- There is real and measurable parental pressure for Ontario's youth to attend university, more than college
- This correlates with parent and teacher influence, but not guidance counsellors
- Shifting enrolment toward universities
- Universities wind up with a greater proportion of “Drifters” because of expectation pressures

The “Gap Year”

- Indirect applicants can be the most focused and motivated
- The UK tradition of a “gap year” may not be a bad idea for many Ontario students

The “Boy Problem”

- Males are more careerist, less comfortable with additional education, more prone to identity anxiety
- Males see more alternatives to PSE

Students are Pragmatists

- College education is a means to an end
- Focused on career outcomes
- High expectations for ROI
- Particularly expect non-monetary benefits from attending college – rewarding, satisfying, prestigious employment



DISCUSSION

Academica's *Top Ten*

- A FREE daily email newsletter
- The day's Canadian PSE news before breakfast
- Subscribed to by 2,500 college and university faculty, administration, professionals, as well as media and government policy advisors
- News from more than 2,000 online sources, national and regional media
- Updates on our latest research findings, white papers, presentations

"One of my 'First Three' every morning – along with coffee and voicemail!"

– TERRY GALLIVAN,
Associate Director Admissions & Recruitment
Dalhousie University

"A must read!"

– DAVID DAUPHINEE,
Editor, Western News
University of Western Ontario

"I don't know how I did my job before it!"

– ERIN MILLAR,
Editor, Maclean's University Website

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