

# Tennessee Promise Students at Community Colleges and TCATs: The Fall 2015 Cohort

## Summary

The first wave of Tennessee Promise students arrived in Fall 2015, when 14,679 Promise students enrolled at community colleges and Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs). By Spring 2017, after four semesters of eligibility, 2,919 Promise students had earned a degree, diploma, or certificate.

In sum, Promise encouraged full-time and first-time enrollment. For example, from Fall 2014 to Fall 2015, the number of first-time freshmen at community colleges grew by **24.7%** (an increase of 4,300 students).

Moreover, the success rate for Promise students was higher than for other students. By the start of Fall 2017, the success rate for Promise students was **58.3%**. After four semesters of eligibility, **14.5%** of Promise students at community colleges had earned a degree or certificate, compared to 5.5% of non-Promise students.

While the number of students increased across the ACT spectrum, the highest enrollment growth occurred at the lower end of the ACT score range. Additionally, three distinct groups of students emerged within the first Promise cohort, based on differences in the value of their Promise award in Fall 2015. Lastly, the federal financial aid application was a common barrier for participation in Promise in Fall 2015. But recent FAFSA changes, like the ability to use the prior year's tax information, may promote participation.

## About the 2015 Promise Cohort

In Fall 2015, 13,287 Promise students enrolled at TBR community colleges. Additionally, 1,392 Promise students enrolled at TCATs.

**Promise Student Diversity:** The first Promise cohort included students from diverse backgrounds.

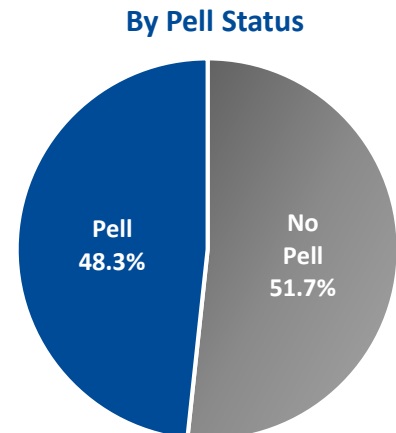
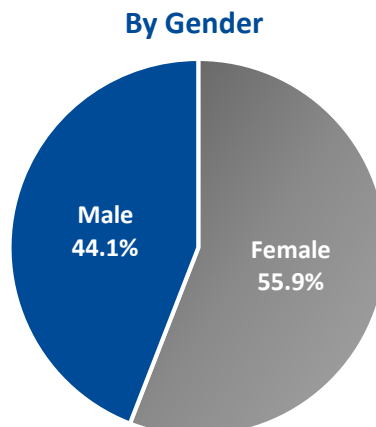
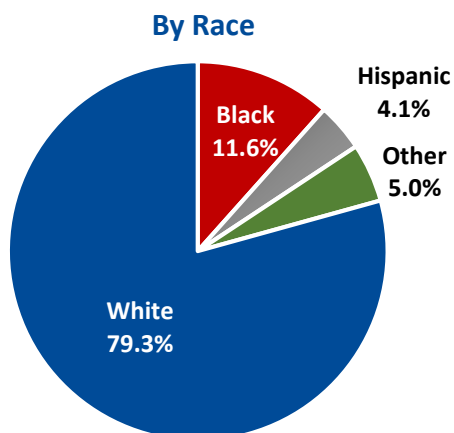
At community colleges, **55.9%** of Promise students were female, **11.6%** of Promise students were Black, and **48.3%** were Pell recipients. At TCATs, **26.1%** of Promise students were female, **11.6%** of Promise students were Black, and **31.3%** were Pell recipients.

**Promise Awards:** In Fall 2015, the average Promise award at community colleges was \$588. However, **43.6%** of Promise students (5,788 students) received \$0 from Promise in Fall 2015, as their tuition and fees were covered by other forms of aid.

For students who received Promise funding above \$0, the average award in Fall 2015 was \$1,042.

- **28.0%** of Promise students (3,715 students) received small awards, averaging \$532. For these students, tuition and fees were mostly covered by other forms of aid, like the HOPE scholarship.
- **16.3%** of Promise students (2,169 students) received larger awards, averaging \$2,015. Students in this group accounted for 16.3% of the Promise cohort but 56% of Promise award dollars.

## Promise Students at Community Colleges



## Promise Outcomes

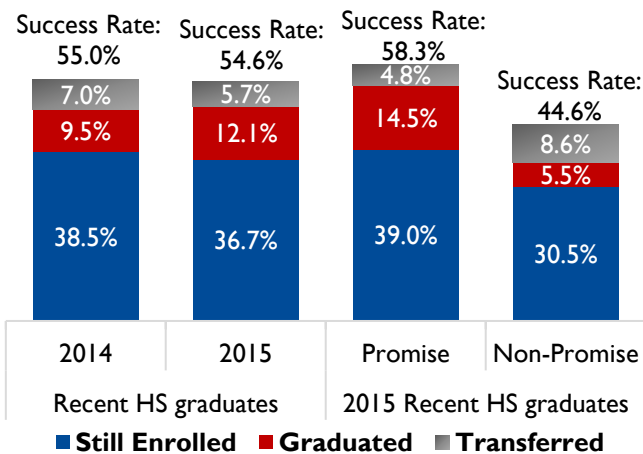
### 1 Promise encouraged greater full-time and first-time freshmen enrollment.

In Fall 2015, 87,929 students enrolled at community colleges, an increase of 865 students over Fall 2014. But the full-time equivalent headcount grew by 3,098 students in Fall 2015. Additionally, from Fall 2014 to Fall 2015, the number of first-time freshmen grew by **24.7%** at community colleges (an increase of 4,300 students) and **20.0%** at TCATs (an increase of 1,741 students).

### 2 The success rate for Promise students was higher than for non-Promise students.

At community colleges, the success rate for 2015 Promise students was **58.3%** after four semesters.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, **14.5%** of Promise students earned a degree or certificate by Spring 2017, compared to 5.5% of non-Promise students and 9.5% of pre-Promise students from the Fall 2014 cohort.

#### Success at Community Colleges



At TCATs, the graduation rate for Promise students was **71.8%**, compared to 67.5% for non-Promise freshmen.

### 3 The highest enrollment growth occurred at the lower end of the ACT score spectrum.

The average ACT score for freshmen at community colleges changed only slightly, from 19.2 in Fall 2014 to 19.0 in Fall 2015. However, the number of first-time freshmen with ACT scores below 19 grew by **85.3%** (an increase of 3,825 students).

<sup>1</sup> Based on data from TBR, TSAC, THEC, and the National Student Clearinghouse.

<sup>2</sup> Based on Fall 2015 Promise awards at community colleges.

### 4 The success rate was highest for students who received mid-value Promise awards.

Three distinct groups of students emerged within the first Promise cohort, based on differences in the value of their Promise award in Fall 2015.<sup>2</sup>

#### Student Success by Promise Awards

Group	Number of Students	Average Promise Award	Average ACT Score	Received Credential after Four Semesters
A	5,788	\$0	18.7	11.4%
B	3,715	\$532	21.1	22.5%
C	2,169	\$2,015	17.4	5.9%

Success rates were highest for students who received small Promise awards in Fall 2015 (Group B). In fact, **22.5%** of students in this group had earned a degree or certificate after four semesters. This rate of success was notably higher than the success rates for students who received large Promise awards (Group C) or Promise students who received no funding from Promise in Fall 2015 (Group A).<sup>3</sup>

### 5 Recent FAFSA changes may promote greater access to Promise.

In Fall 2015, 4,791 non-Promise students enrolled at community colleges.<sup>4</sup> The vast majority of these students were eligible for Promise but did not complete key requirements for participation.

Nearly half of non-Promise students were ineligible due to issues with their financial aid application.

- **10.7%** of non-Promise students did not meet the FAFSA application deadline.
- **38.0%** of non-Promise students did not complete the FAFSA verification process, which requires students to submit additional information about their aid application.

However, recent FAFSA changes are expected to lower some of these barriers. These changes include making the FAFSA application available earlier, the ability to use the prior year's tax information, and the use of the IRS Data Retrieval tool, which pulls information directly into the application and reduces the need for verification.

<sup>3</sup> An additional 1,615 Promise students received awards outside of these three primary groups.

<sup>4</sup> Non-Promise students are defined as full-time, first-time freshmen, recent high school graduates who did not take part in Tennessee Promise in the 2015 cohort.



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*of* TENNESSEE

# Tennessee Promise Students at Community Colleges and TCATs

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The Fall 2015 Cohort

# 2015 Promise students at community colleges

**Female Students**

**55.9%**

**Male Students**

**44.1%**

**White Students**

**79.3%**

**Black Students**

**11.6%**

**Hispanic Students**

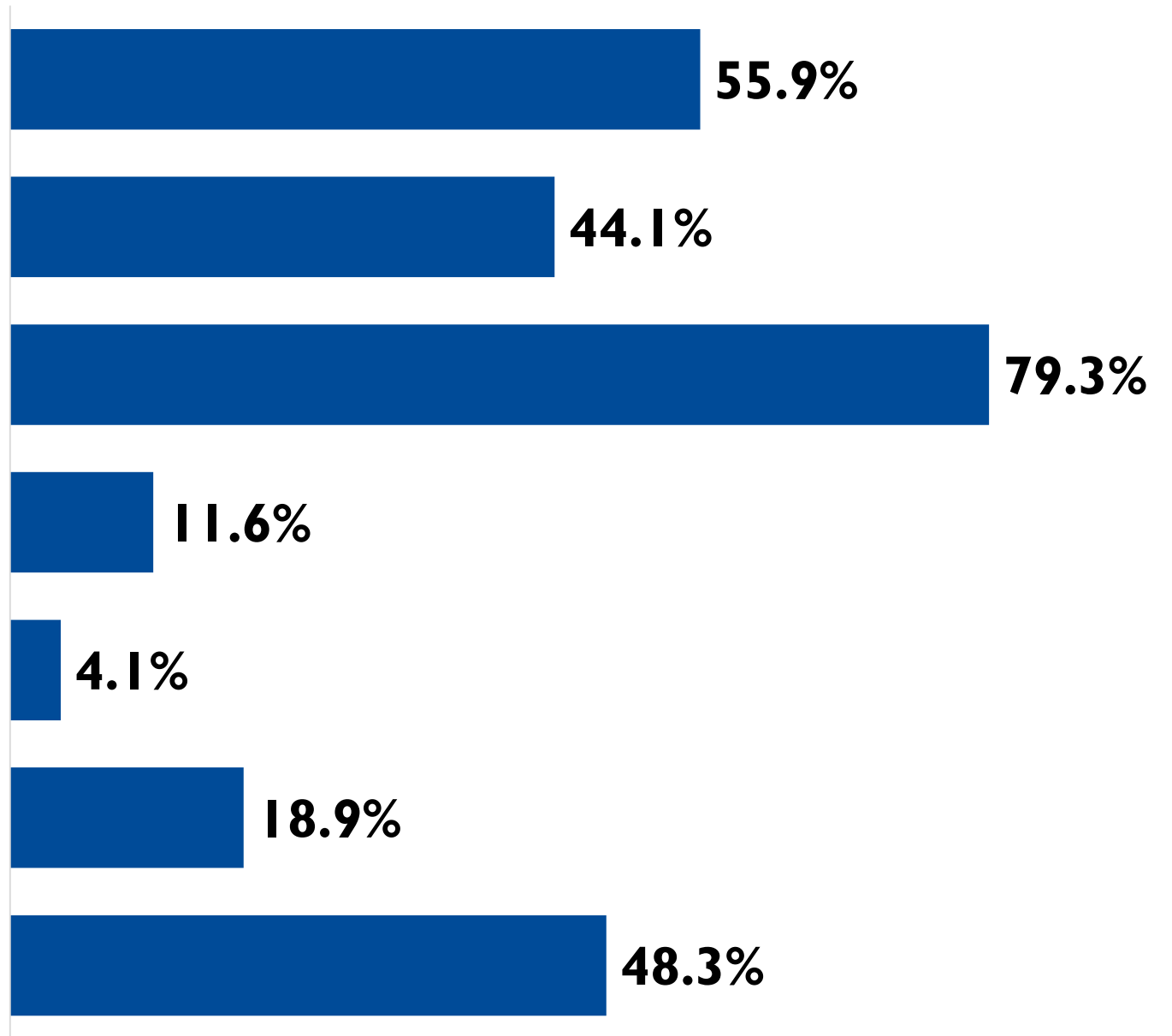
**4.1%**

**Underrepresented Minorities**

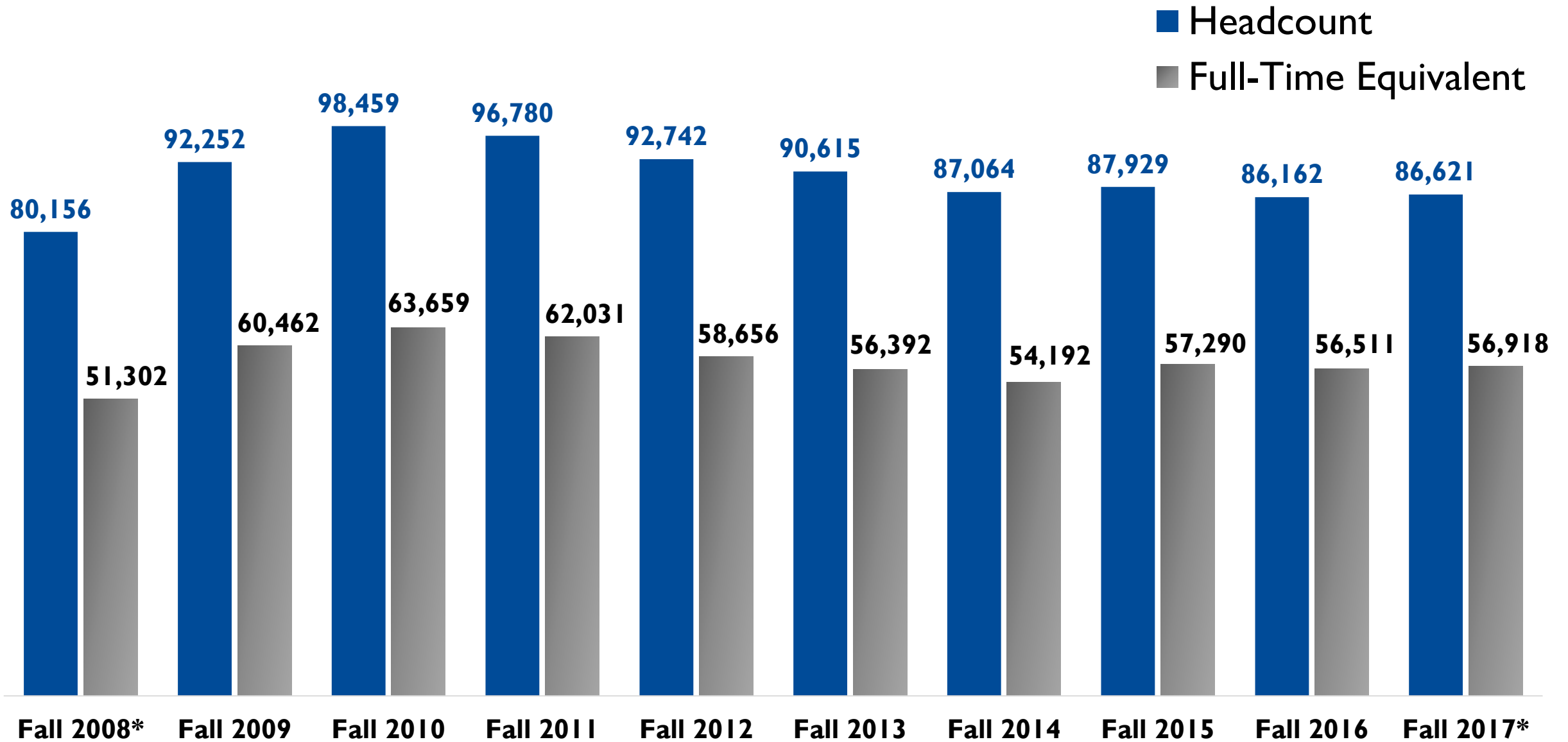
**18.9%**

**Pell Recipients**

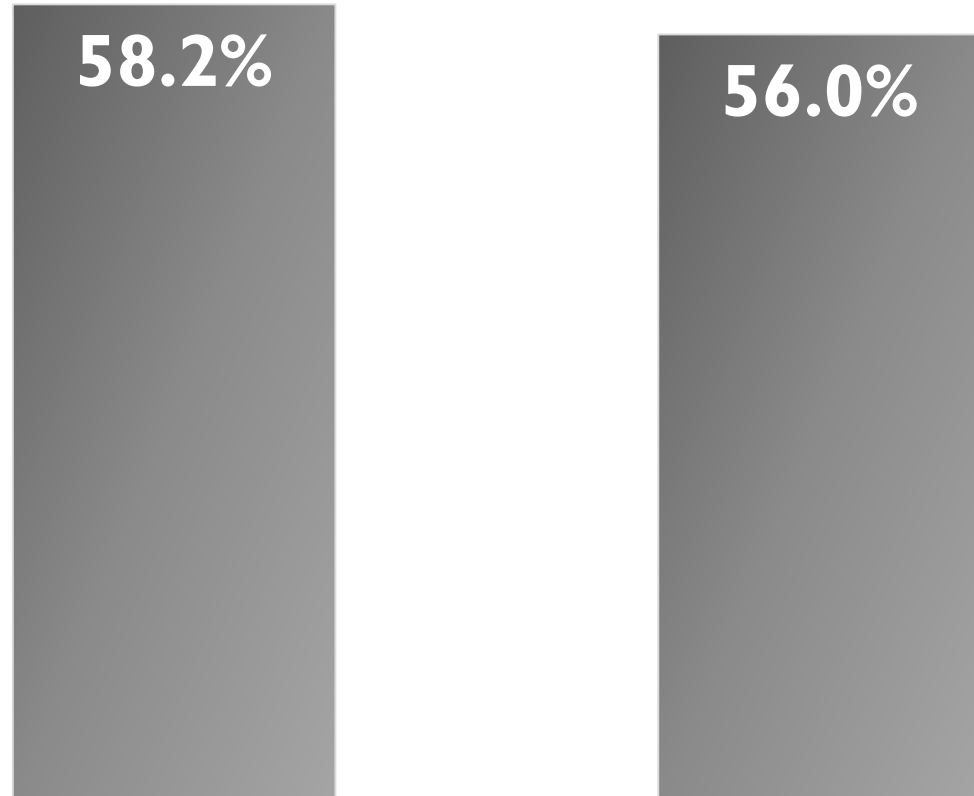
**48.3%**



# Enrollment trends for community colleges



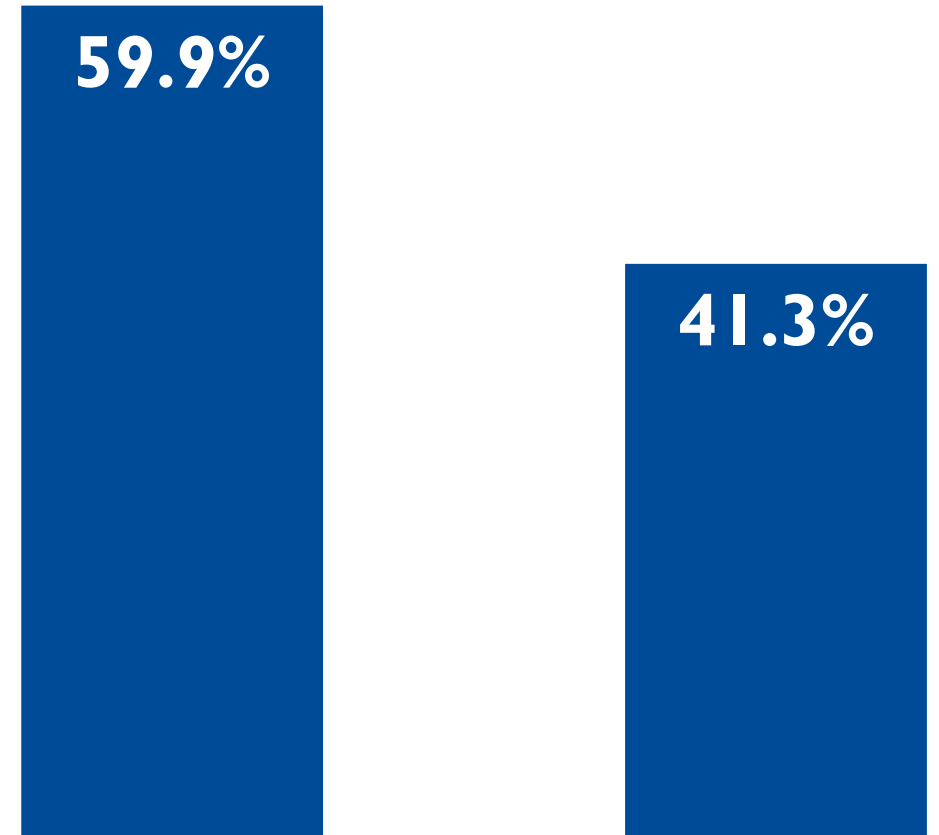
\* Fall 2008 and Fall 2017 are Census data; all other terms are end-of-term data. Fall 2017 are preliminary.



**2014**

**2015**

**First-Time Full-Time Freshmen**

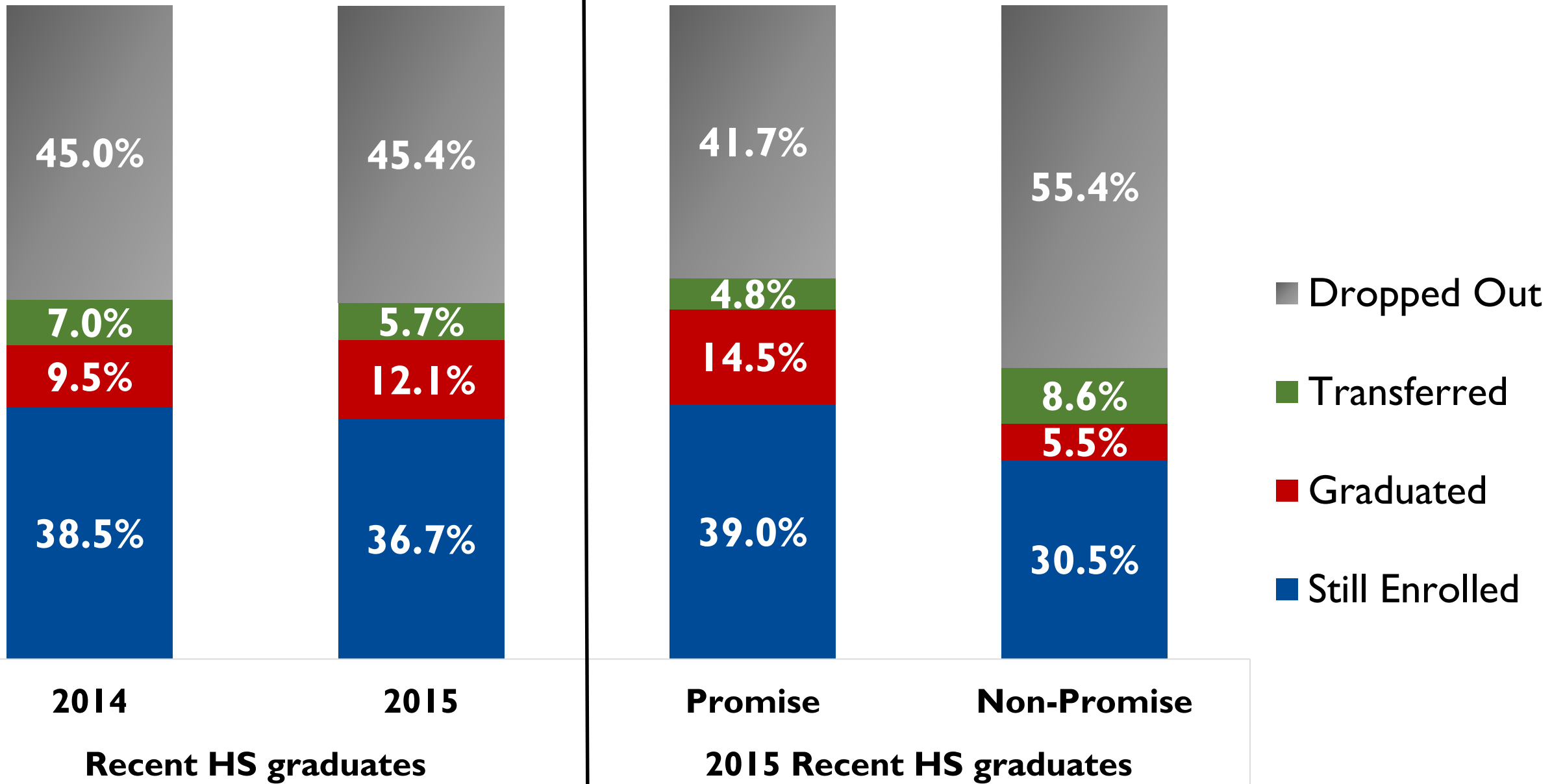


**Promise**

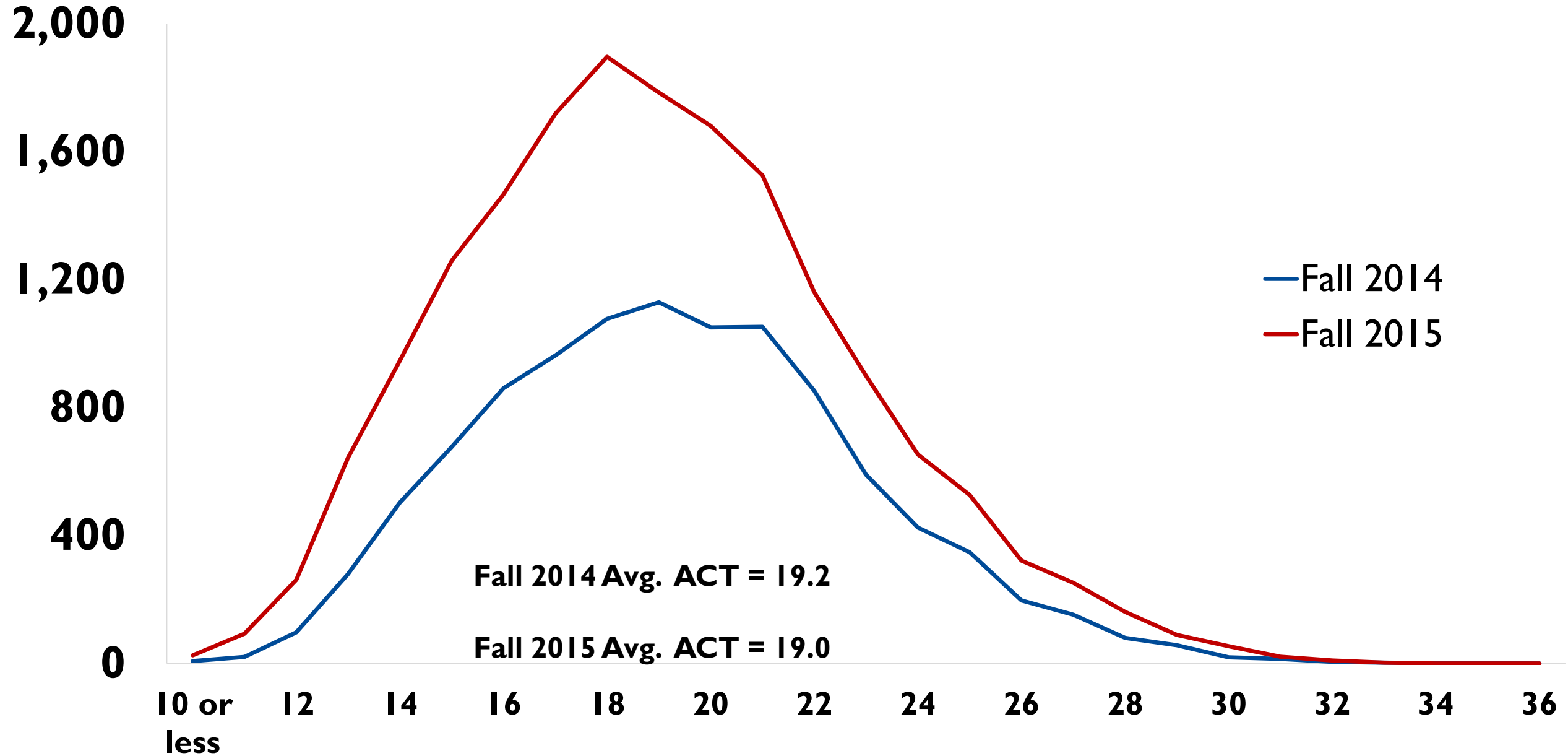
**Non-Promise**

**2015 Recent HS Graduates**

# Enrollment status after four semesters



# Enrollment by ACT scores for first-time freshmen



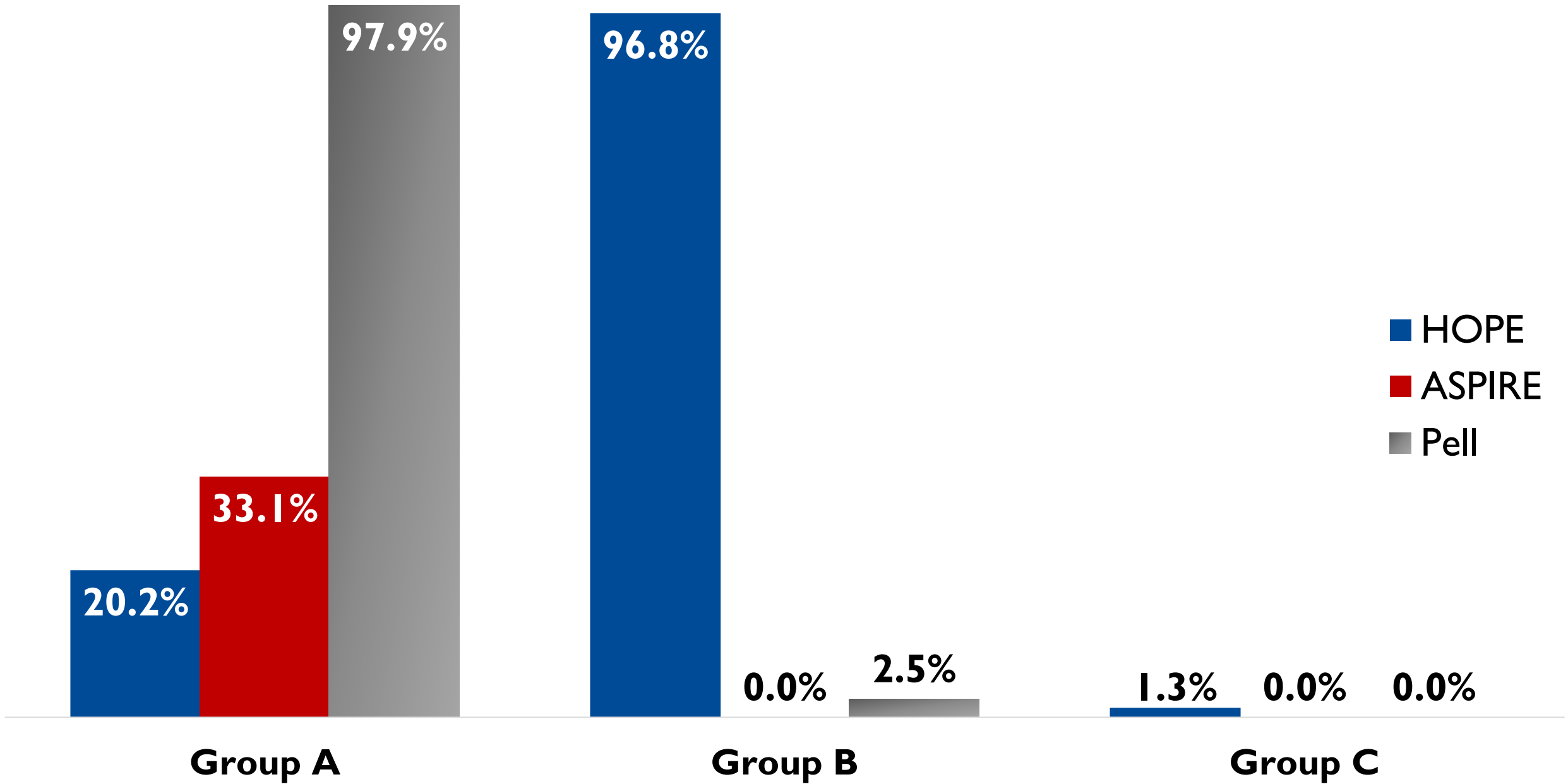
\*ACT scores for first-time, full-time freshmen, recent high school graduates.



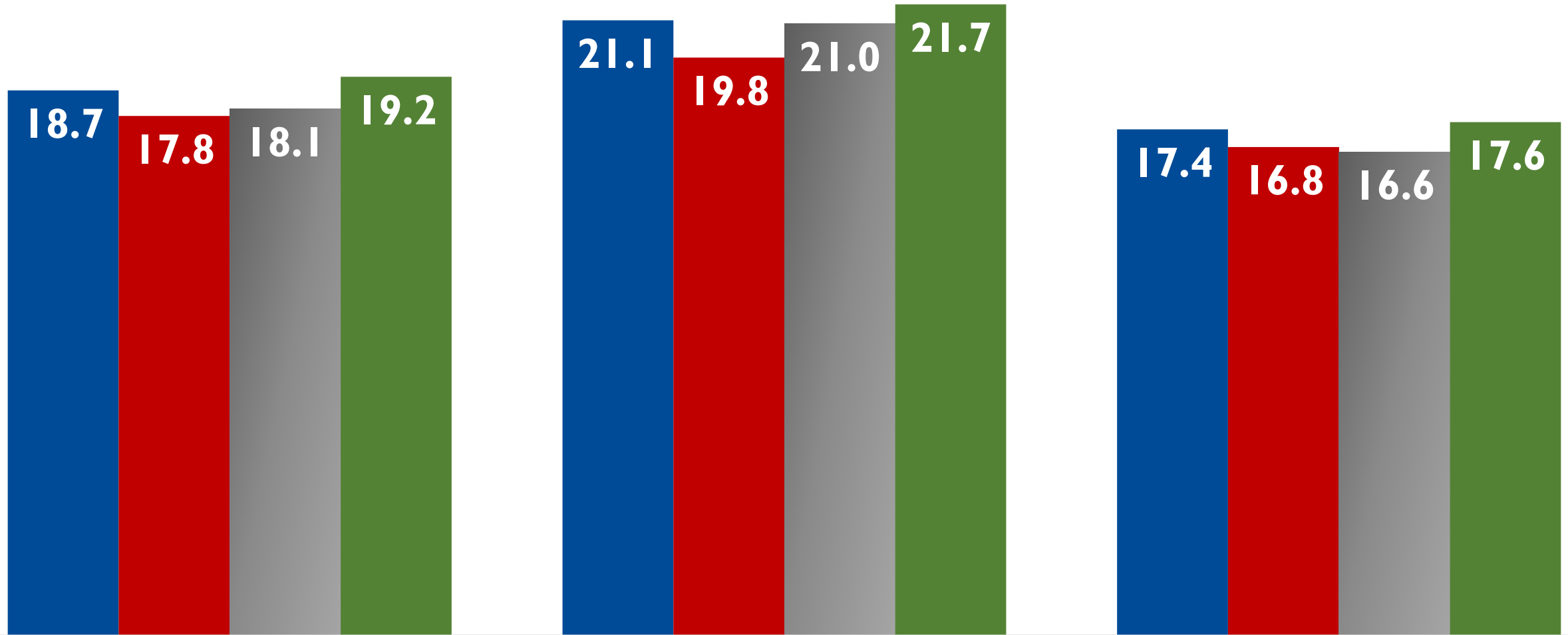
# Promise award pools

Promise Pool	Average Award	Number of Students	Total \$ amount	Percent of Promise spending
Group A	\$0	5,788 (43.6%)	\$0	0%
Group B	\$532	3,715 (28.0%)	\$1.98 million	25%
Group C	\$2,015	2,169 (16.3%)	\$4.37 million	56%
Other	Every value outside of above pools	1,615 (12.1%)	\$1.46 million	19%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>13,287</b>	<b>\$7.81 million</b>	<b>100%</b>

# Shares of each Promise pool receiving other aid



# Average ACT scores by Promise pool



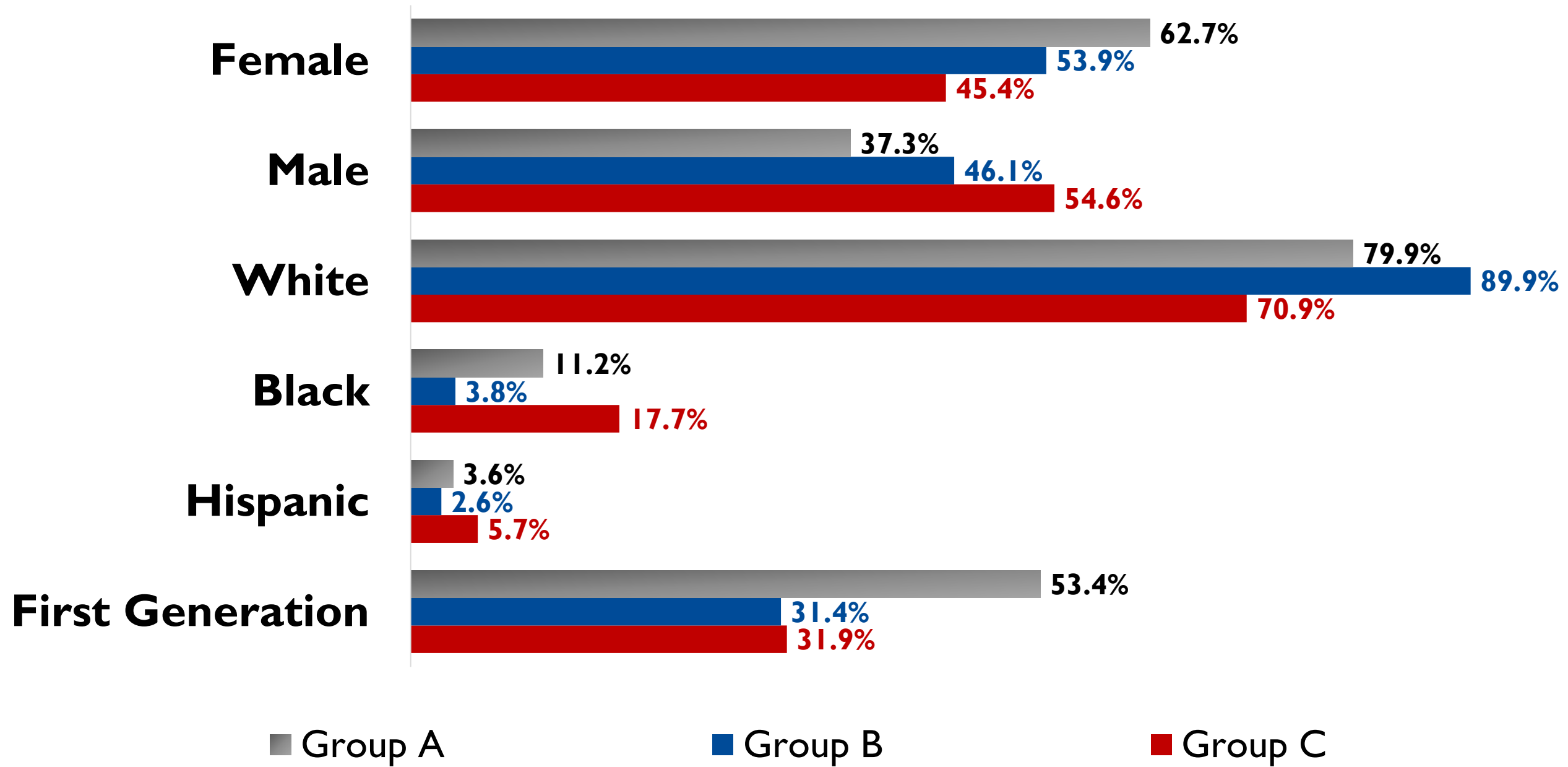
**Group A**

**Group B**

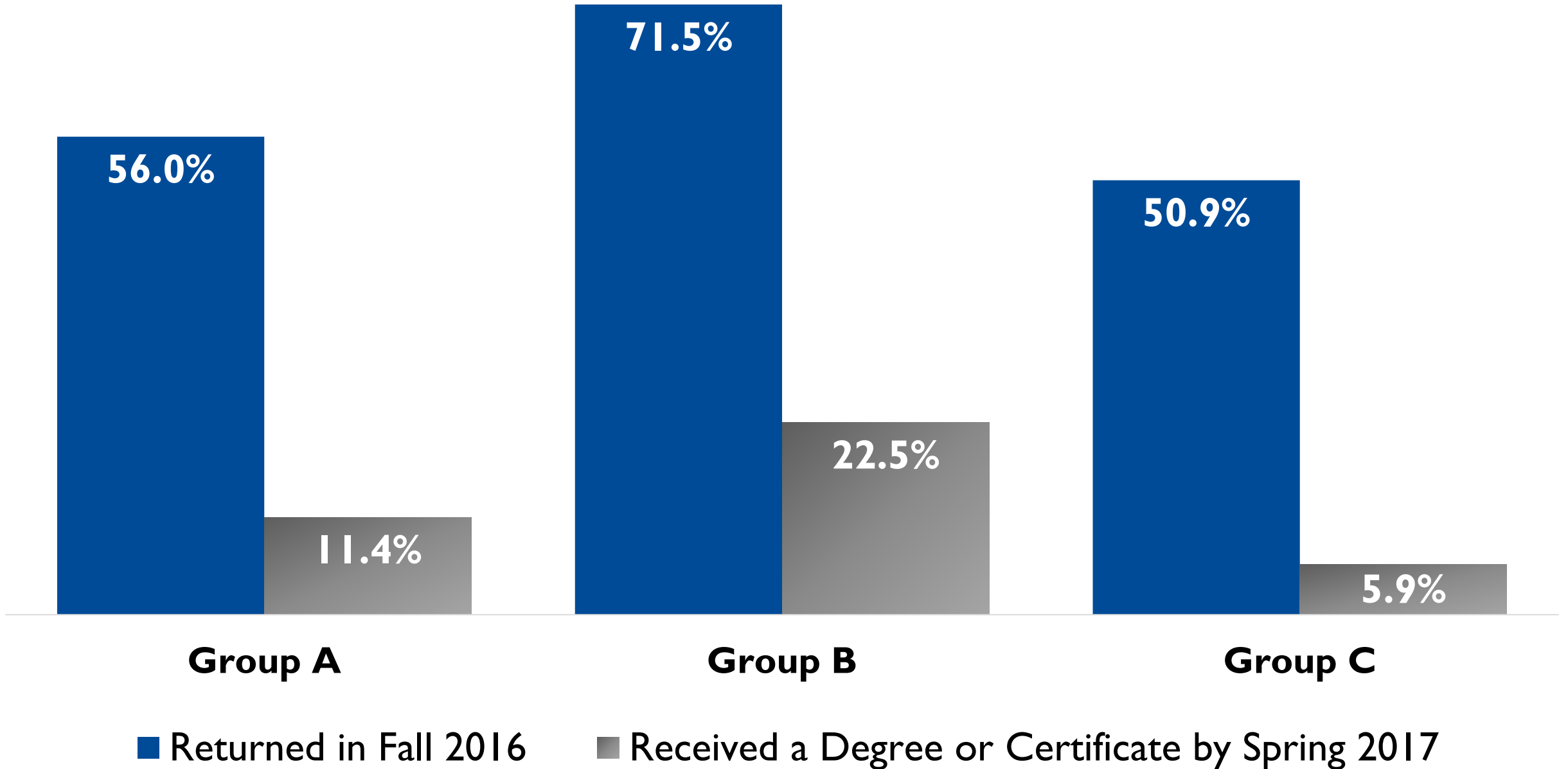
**Group C**

■ ACT Composite ■ ACT Math ■ ACT English ■ ACT Reading

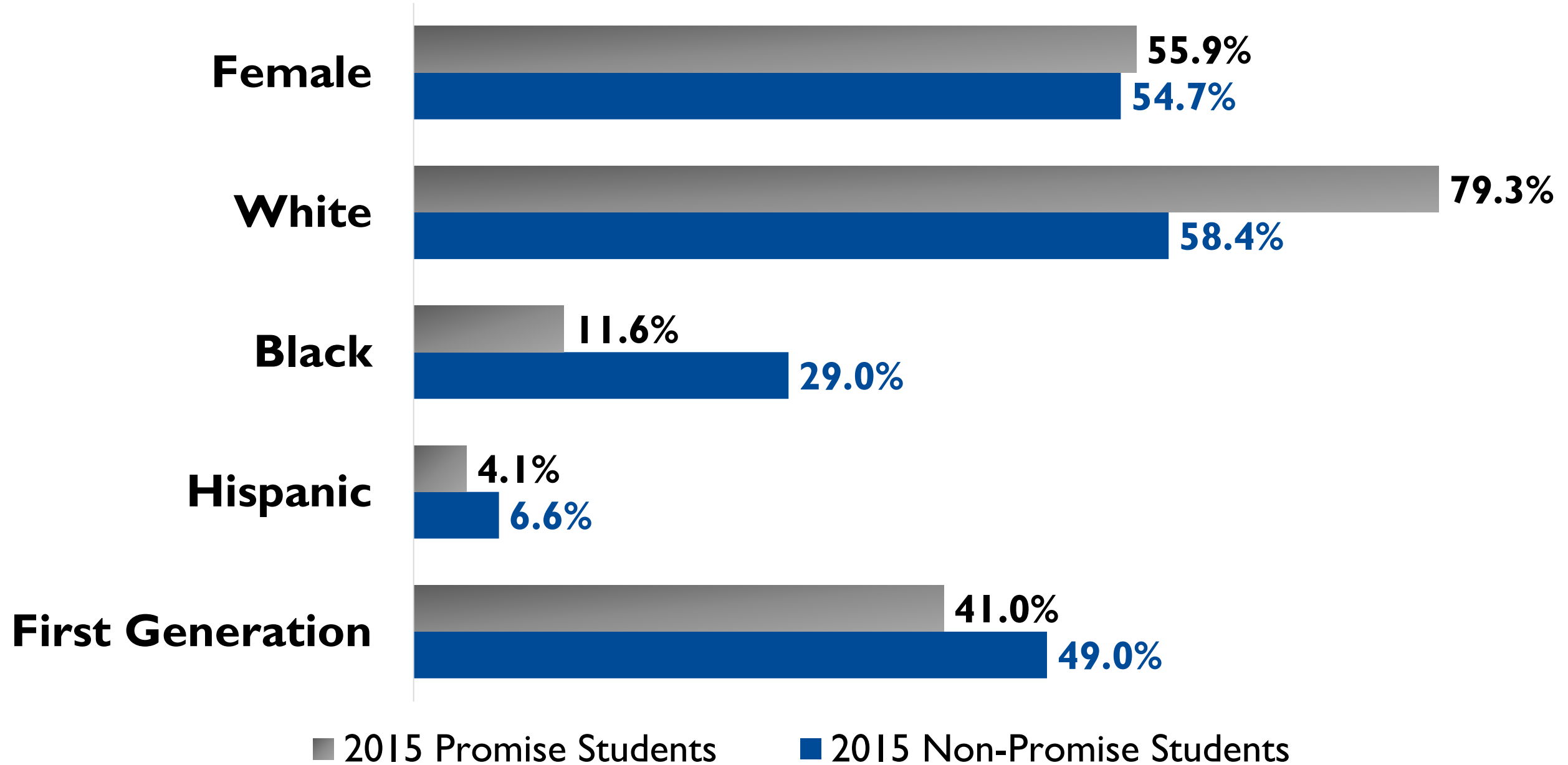
# Percent of Promise students that are...



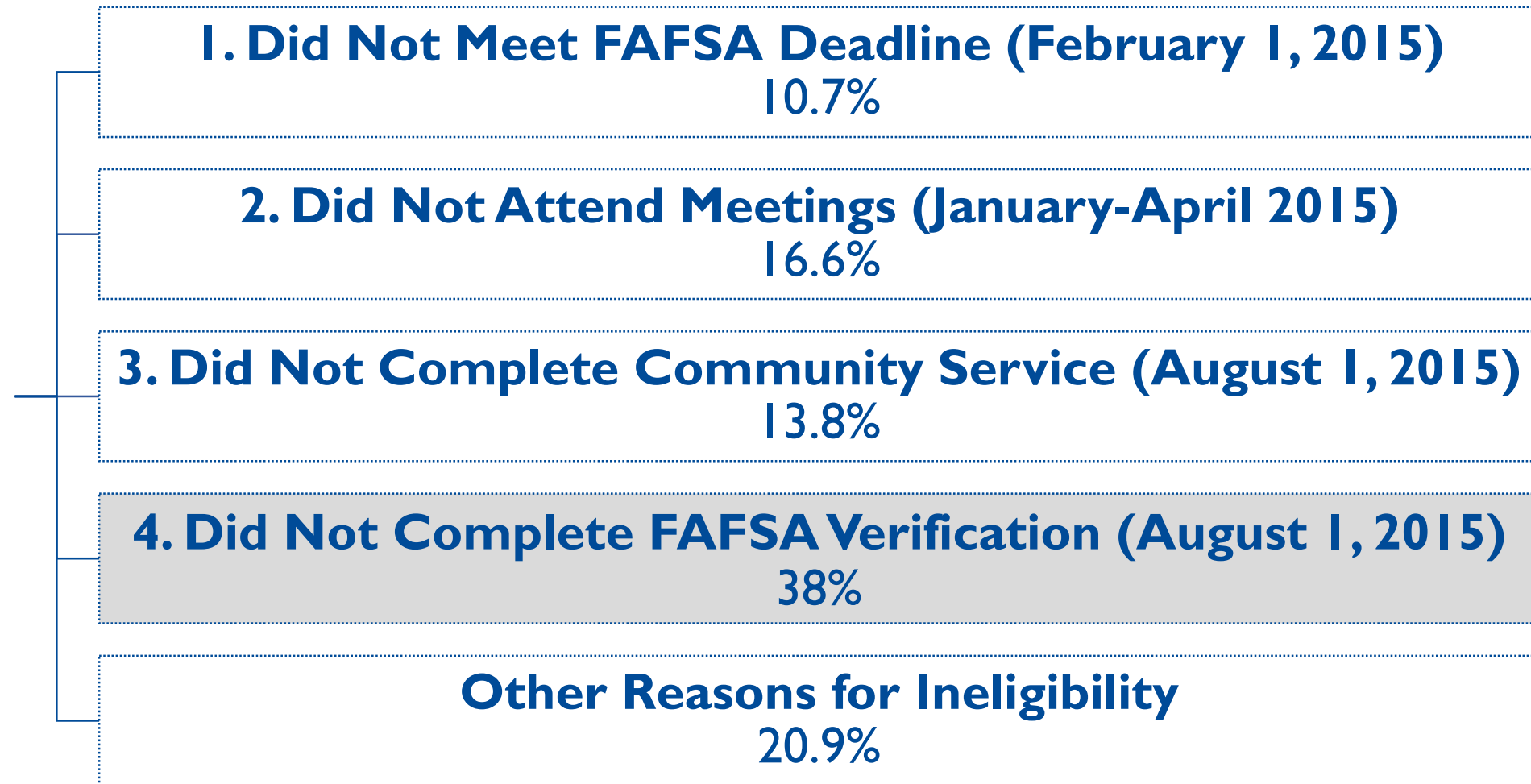
# Student success by Promise pool



# Percent of community colleges students that are...



## Non-Promise Students at Community Colleges



# Non-Promise students who are first generation

**All Non-Promise Students**

**48.8%**

**Did Not Meet FAFSA Deadline**

**40.1%**

**Did Not Attend Meetings**

**45.2%**

**Did Not Complete Community Service**

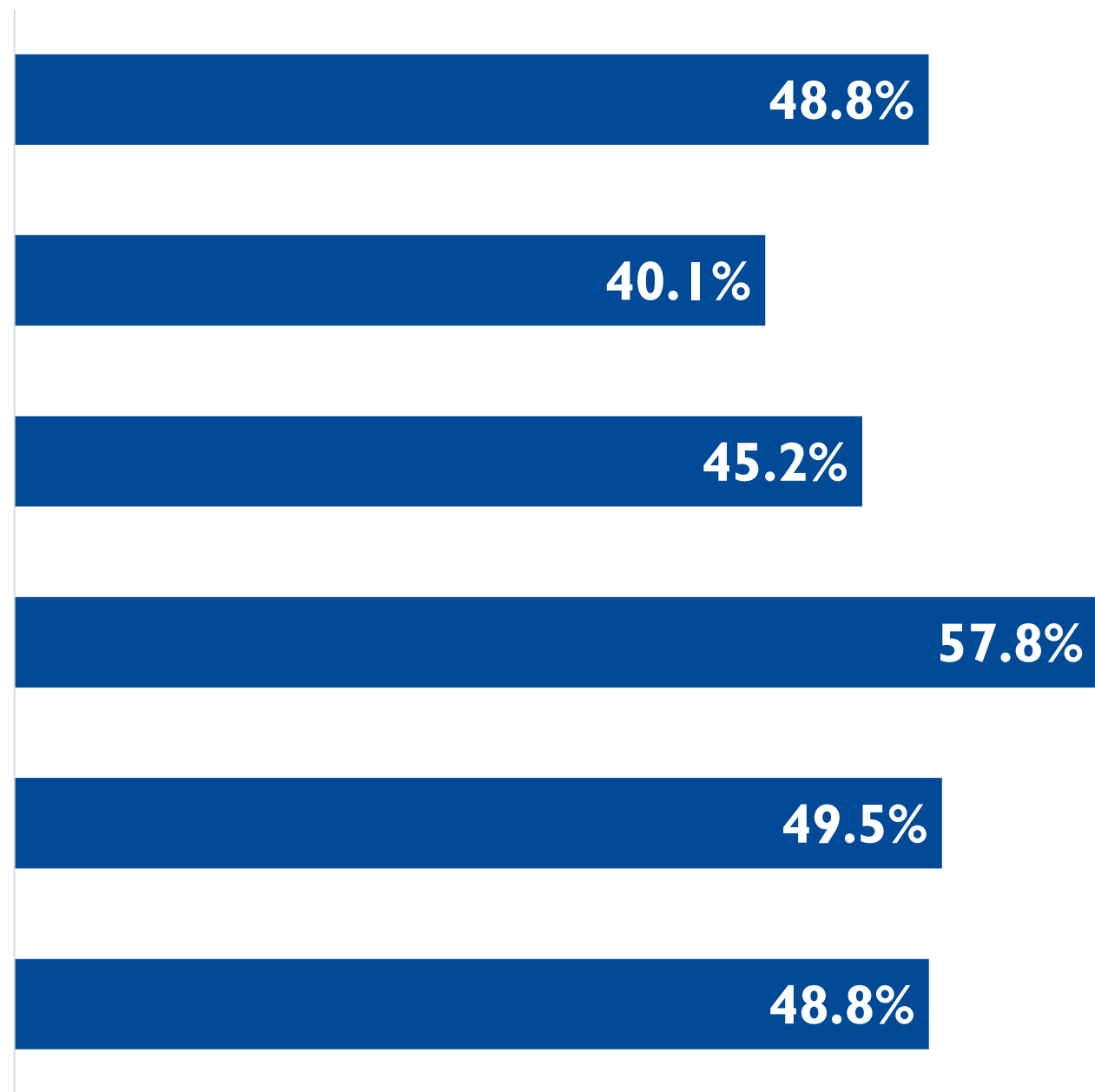
**57.8%**

**Did Not Complete FAFSA Verification**

**49.5%**

**Other Reasons for Ineligibility**

**48.8%**





# Average income of non-Promise students

**All Non-Promise Students**

**\$32,044**

**Did Not Meet FAFSA Deadline**

**\$40,927**

**Did Not Attend Meetings**

**\$39,766**

**Did Not Complete Community Service**

**\$26,493**

**Did Not Complete FAFSA Verification**

**\$28,053**

**Other Reasons for Ineligibility**

**\$33,107**