

SUMMARY

The first wave of Tennessee Promise students arrived in Fall 2015, when **13,287** Promise students enrolled at community colleges. By Fall 2017, after five semesters of eligibility, **2,857** of these Promise students had earned a degree or certificate.

The overall success rate for Promise students at community colleges was **52.2%**, meaning more than half of students earned a degree or certificate, transferred, or were still enrolled after five semesters. Specifically, **2,857** Promise students (**21.5%** of the 2015 Promise cohort) had earned a degree or certificate. Promise students earned **2,578 Associate degrees** and **433 certificates**, including, but not limited to:

- **199** awards in computer and information sciences, engineering, or engineering-related technology;
- **173** awards in health-related professions; and
- **2,107** awards in Associate degree programs that prepare students to transfer to a four-year university.

This summary explores key findings about the participation and success of Promise students. For example, while the number of students increased across the ACT spectrum in Fall 2015, the highest enrollment growth occurred at the lower end of the ACT score range. Additionally, three distinct groups of students have emerged, based on differences in the value of their Promise awards. Lastly, the federal financial aid application was a common barrier for participation in Promise in 2015. 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, Promise encouraged greater 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).

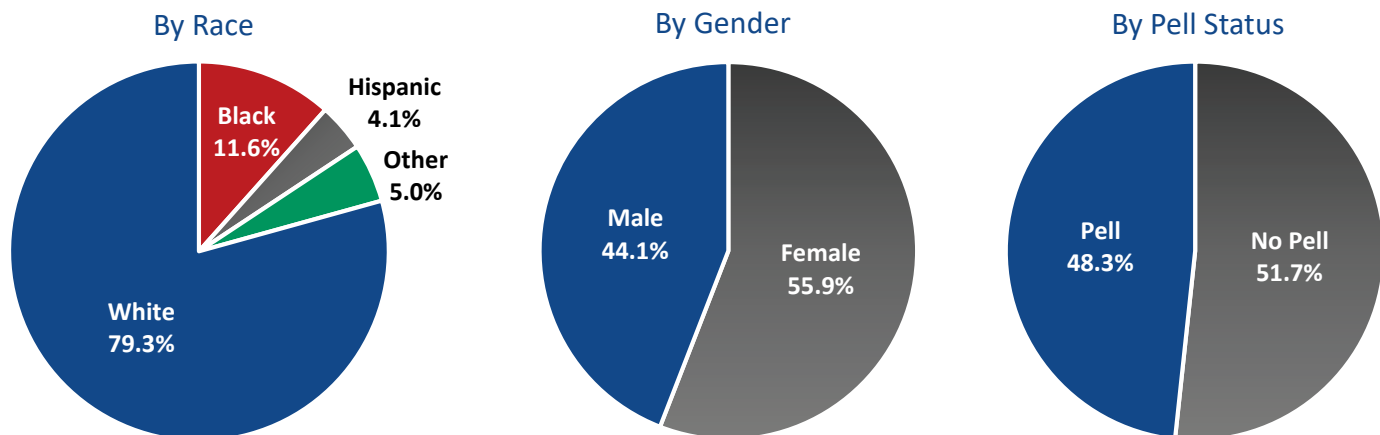
Promise Student Diversity: The first Promise cohort included students from diverse backgrounds. At community colleges:

- **55.9%** of Promise students were female;
- **79.3%** of Promise students were white;
- **11.6%** of Promise students were Black;
- **4.1%** of Promise students were Hispanic; and
- **48.3%** of Promise students 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 other forms of aid covered their tuition and fees. For students who received Promise funding above \$0, the average award in Fall 2015 was \$1,042. Specifically:

- **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.

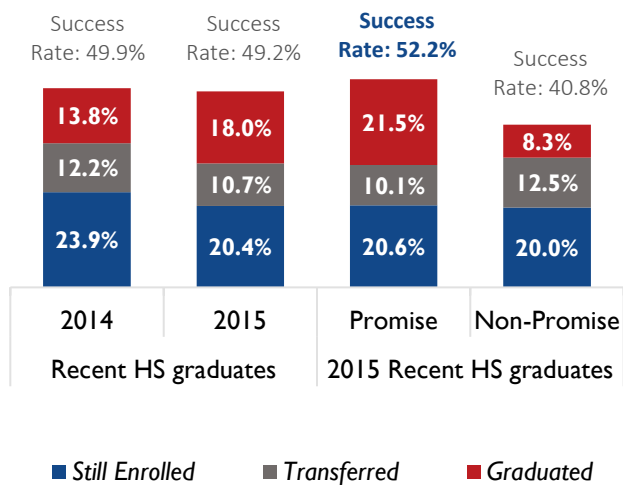
In Fall 2015, 87,929 students enrolled at community colleges, an increase of 865 students over Fall 2014. But the full-time equivalent headcount grew by 3,098 students in Fall 2015. Additionally, from Fall 2014 to Fall 2015, the number of first-time freshmen grew by **24.7%** at community colleges (an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

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

At community colleges, the overall success rate for Promise students was **52.2%** after five semesters. This means more than half of the students from the first Promise cohort had earned a degree or certificate, transferred, or remained enrolled after five semesters of Promise eligibility.¹

In total, **21.5%** of Promise students (**2,857 students**) earned a degree or certificate, compared to 13.8% of students from the 2014 cohort.²

Success at Community Colleges



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 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).

4 The success rate was highest for students who received small 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 2015.³

Student Success by Promise Awards

Group	Number of Students	Average Promise Award	Average ACT Score	Overall Success Rate	Received Credential
A	5,788	\$0	18.7	45.8%	16.9%
B	3,715	\$532	21.1	66.8%	32.3%
C	2,169	\$2,015	17.4	40.7%	11.3%

Success rates were highest for students who received small Promise awards in Fall 2015 (Group B). In fact, **32.3%** of students in this group had earned a degree or certificate after five semesters, compared to 11.3% of students who received large Promise awards (Group C).⁴

Further, of the 246 students in Group C who earned a credential, **25.2%** earned a short-term or long-term certificate, and **79.7%** earned an Associate degree. (By comparison, of the 1,199 students in Group B who earned a credential, **93.7%** earned an Associate degree.)

5 Recent FAFSA changes may promote greater access to Promise.

In Fall 2015, **4,791** non-Promise students enrolled at community colleges. 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. For example, **10.7%** of non-Promise students did not meet the deadline for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Additionally, **38.0%** of non-Promise students did not complete the FAFSA verification process, which requires students to submit additional information about their financial aid application.

However, recent changes to the FAFSA are expected to lower some of these barriers. These changes include the earlier availability of the FAFSA application, 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. These changes were fully applied for the 2017-18 FAFSA, and upcoming data analysis will determine the effects of these changes for the Fall 2017 cohort.

¹ Based on data from TBR, TSAC, THEC, and the National Student Clearinghouse.

² 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.

³ Based on Fall 2015 Promise awards at community colleges.

⁴ An additional 1,615 Promise students received awards outside of these three groups.



THE COLLEGE SYSTEM
of TENNESSEE

Tennessee Promise Students at Community Colleges

The Fall 2015 Cohort
after Five Semesters

2015 Promise students at community colleges

Female Students

55.9%

Male Students

44.1%

White Students

79.3%

Black Students

11.6%

Hispanic Students

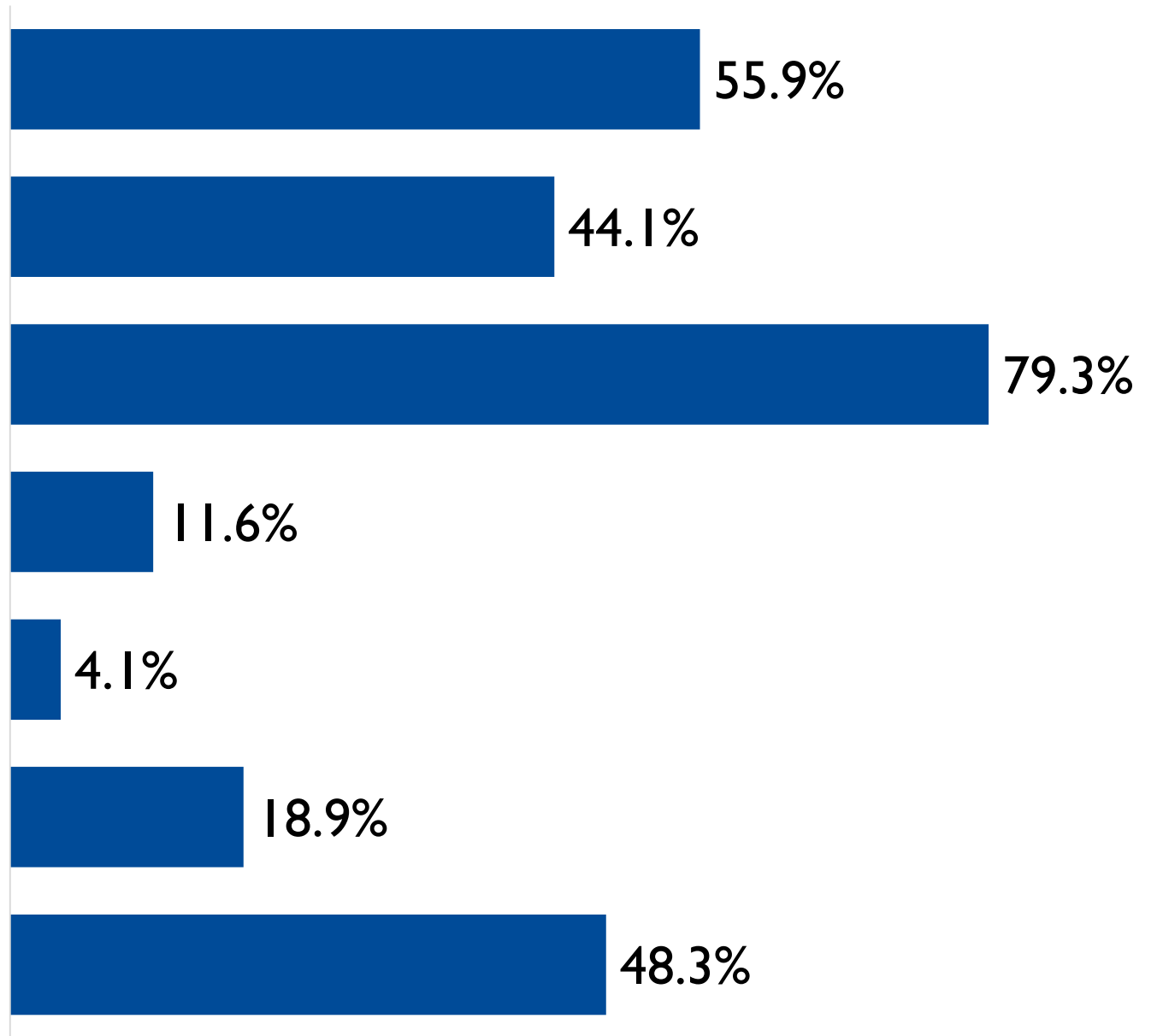
4.1%

Underrepresented Minorities

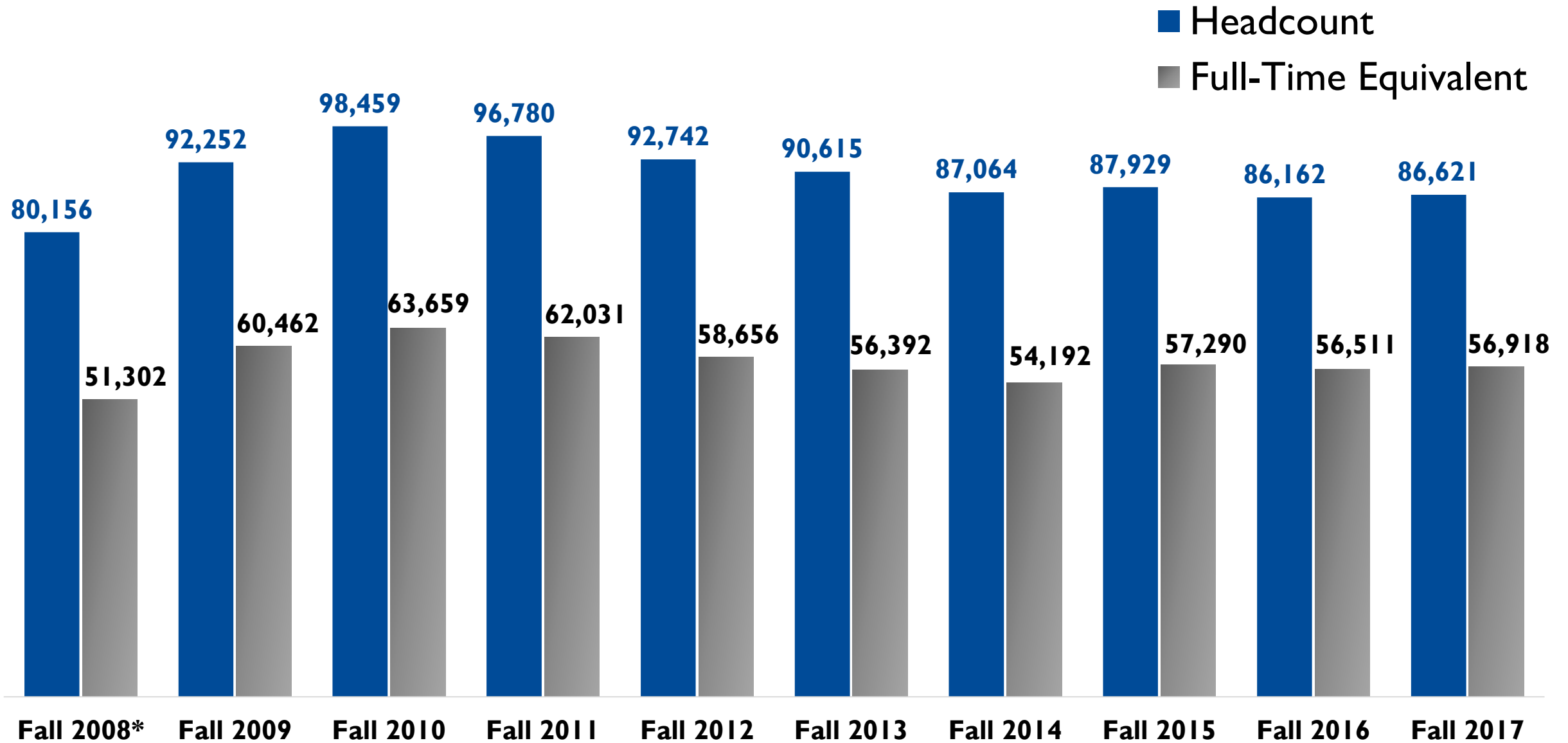
18.9%

Pell Recipients

48.3%

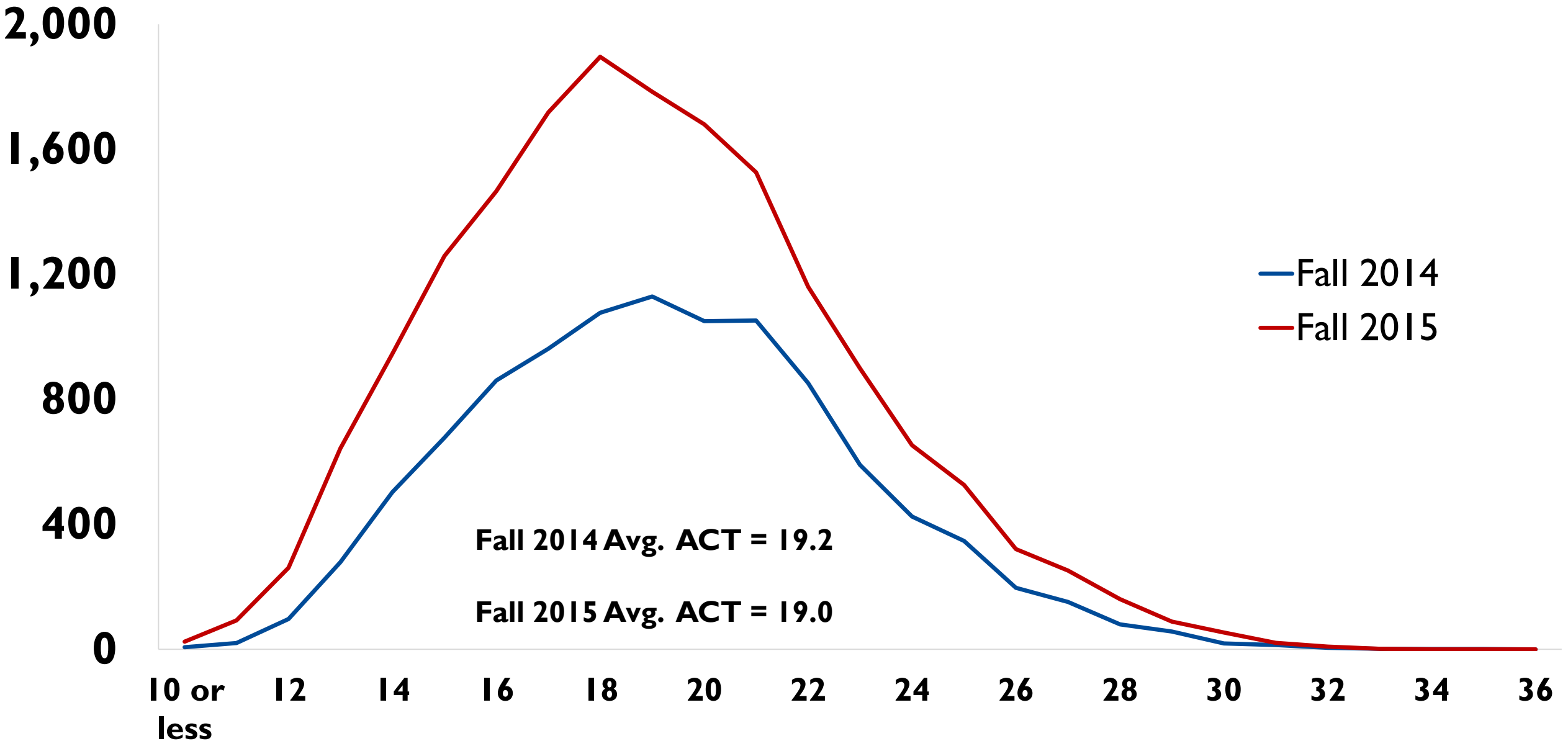


Enrollment trends for community colleges



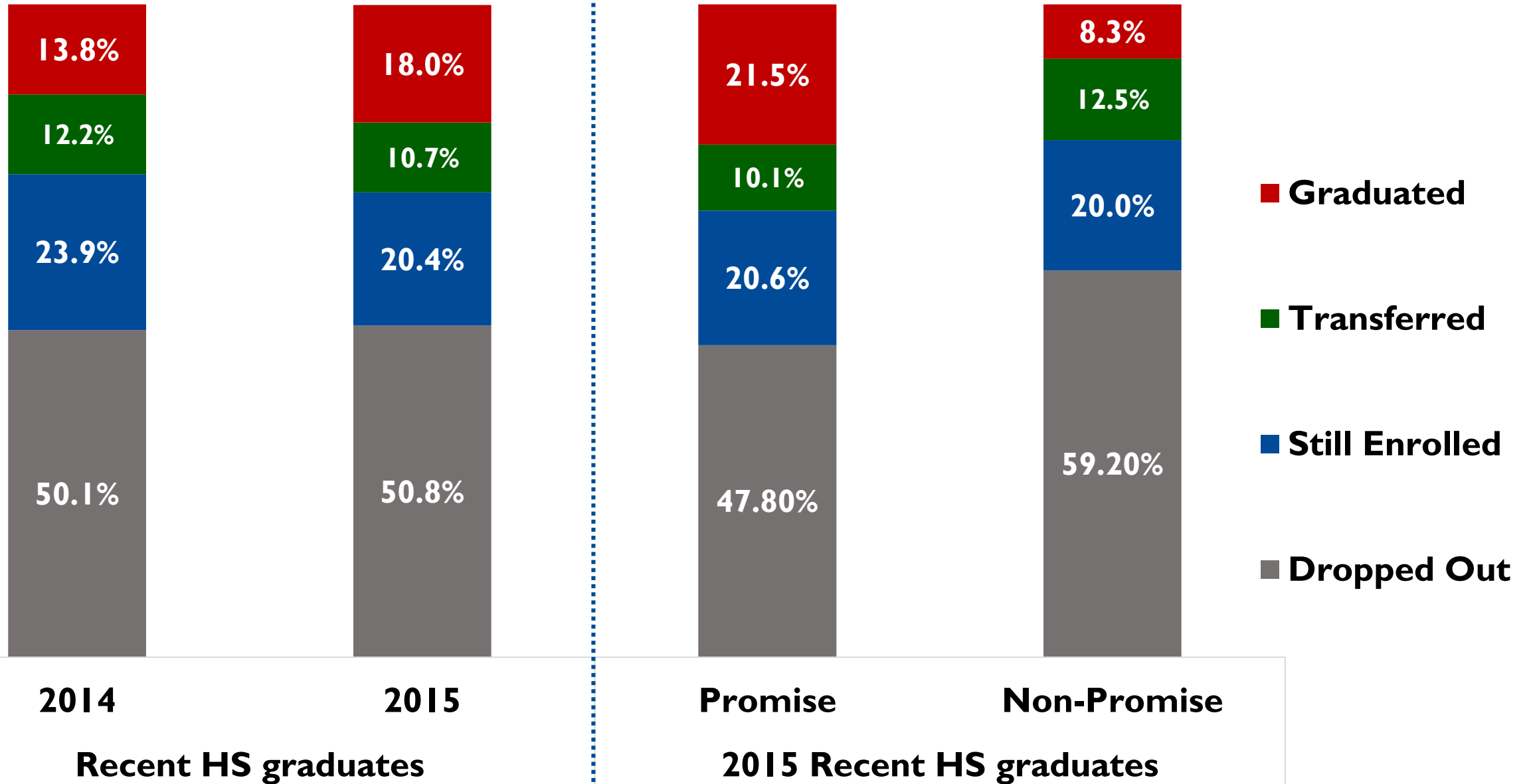
* Fall 2008 is Census data; all other terms are end-of-term data.

Enrollment by ACT scores for first-time freshmen

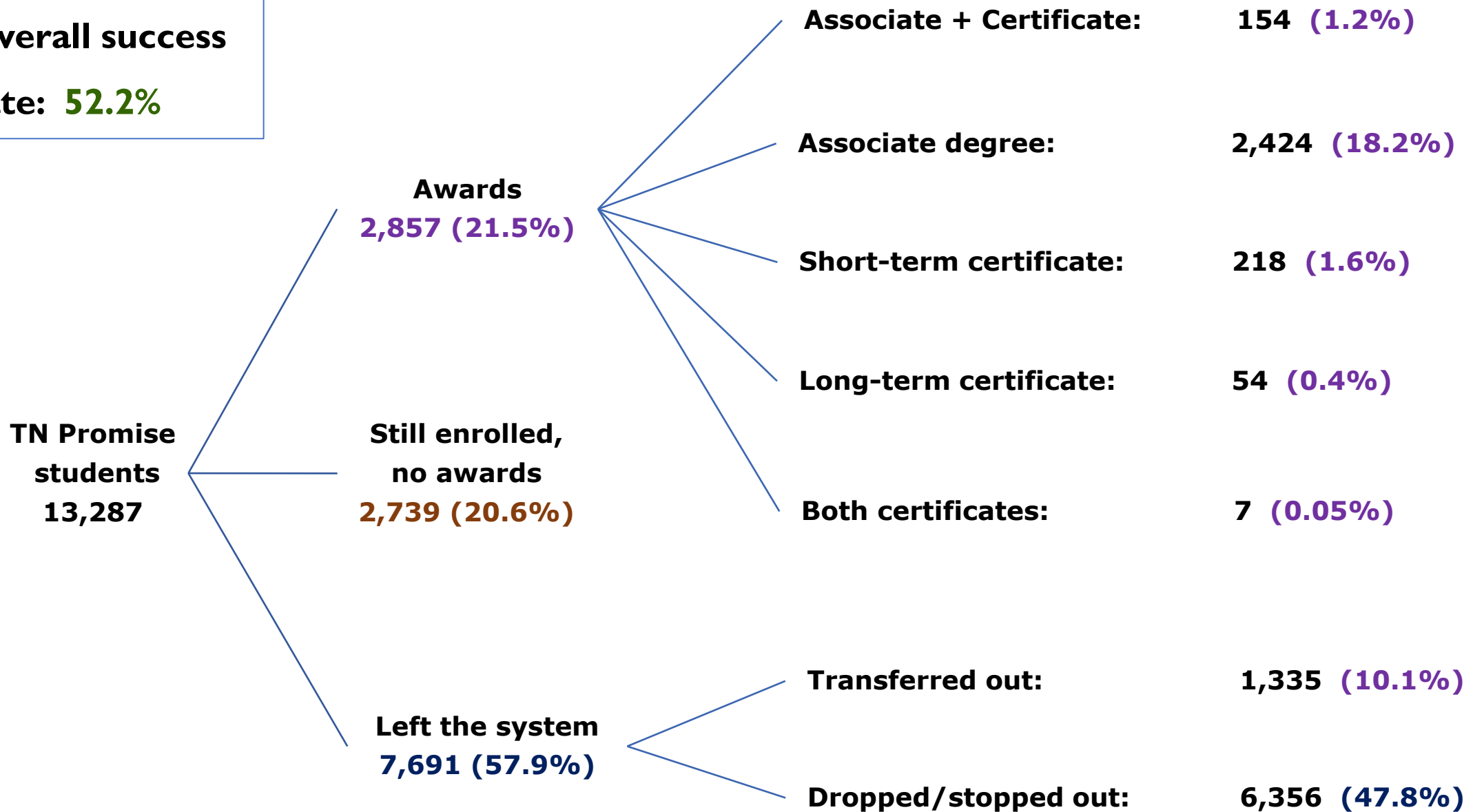


*ACT scores for first-time, full-time freshmen, recent high school graduates.

Student success after five semesters



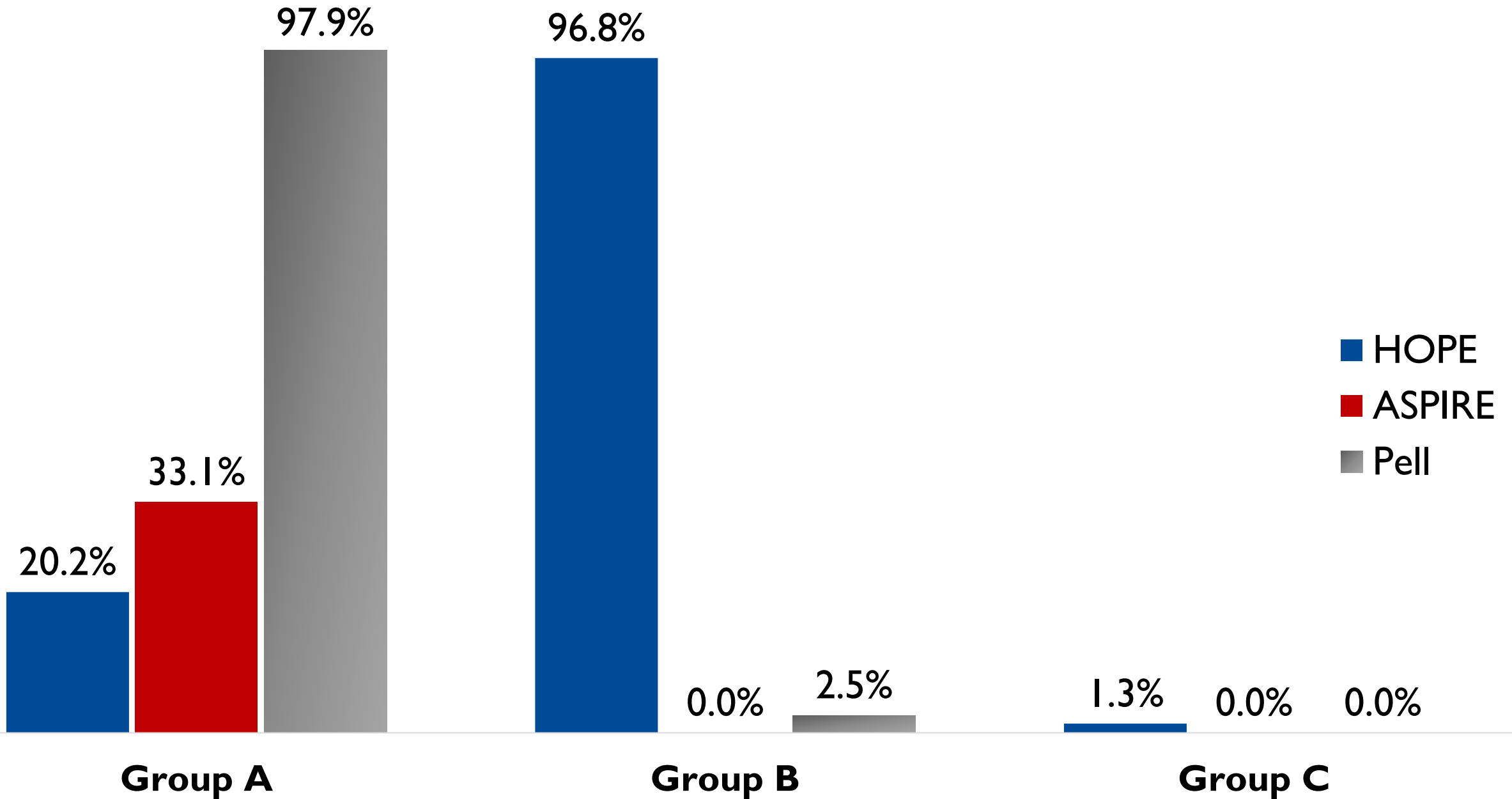
**Overall success
rate: 52.2%**



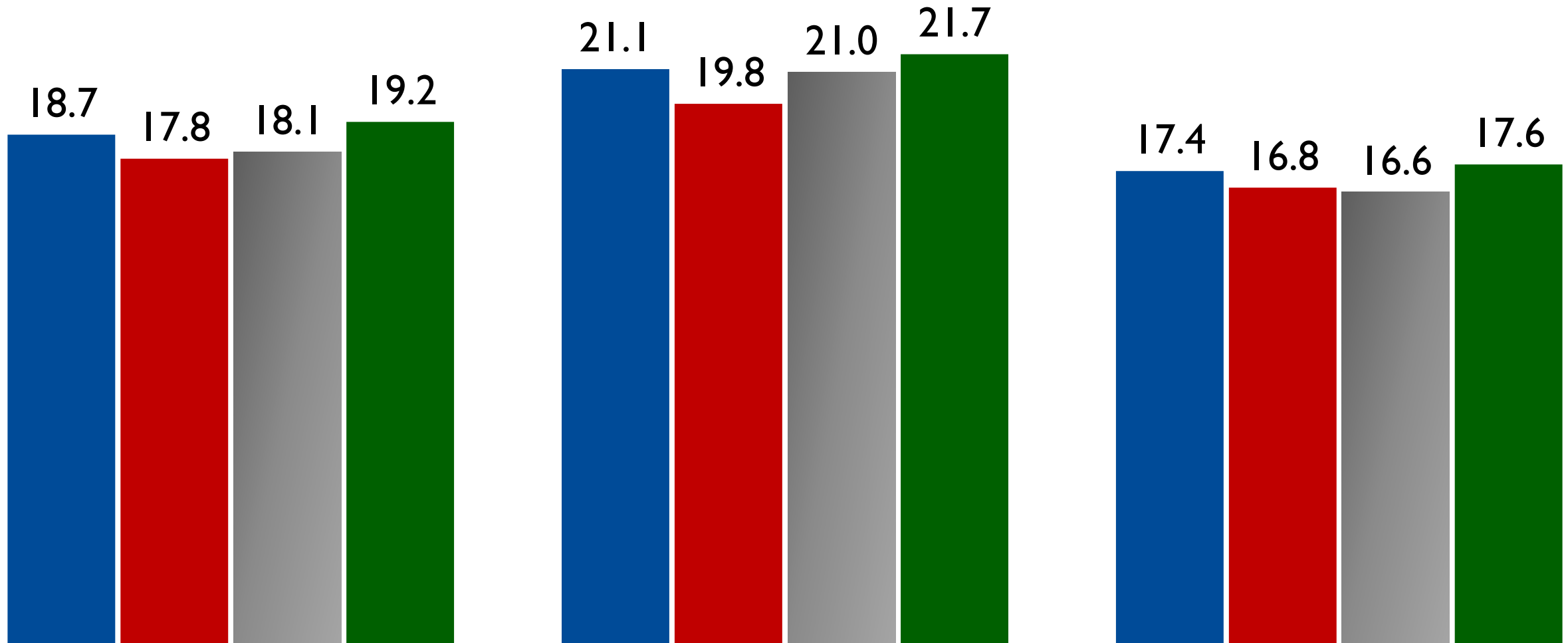
Promise award groups

Promise Pool	Average Award in Fall 2015	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%
TOTAL		13,287	\$7.81 million	100%

Shares of each Promise group receiving other aid



Average ACT scores by Promise group



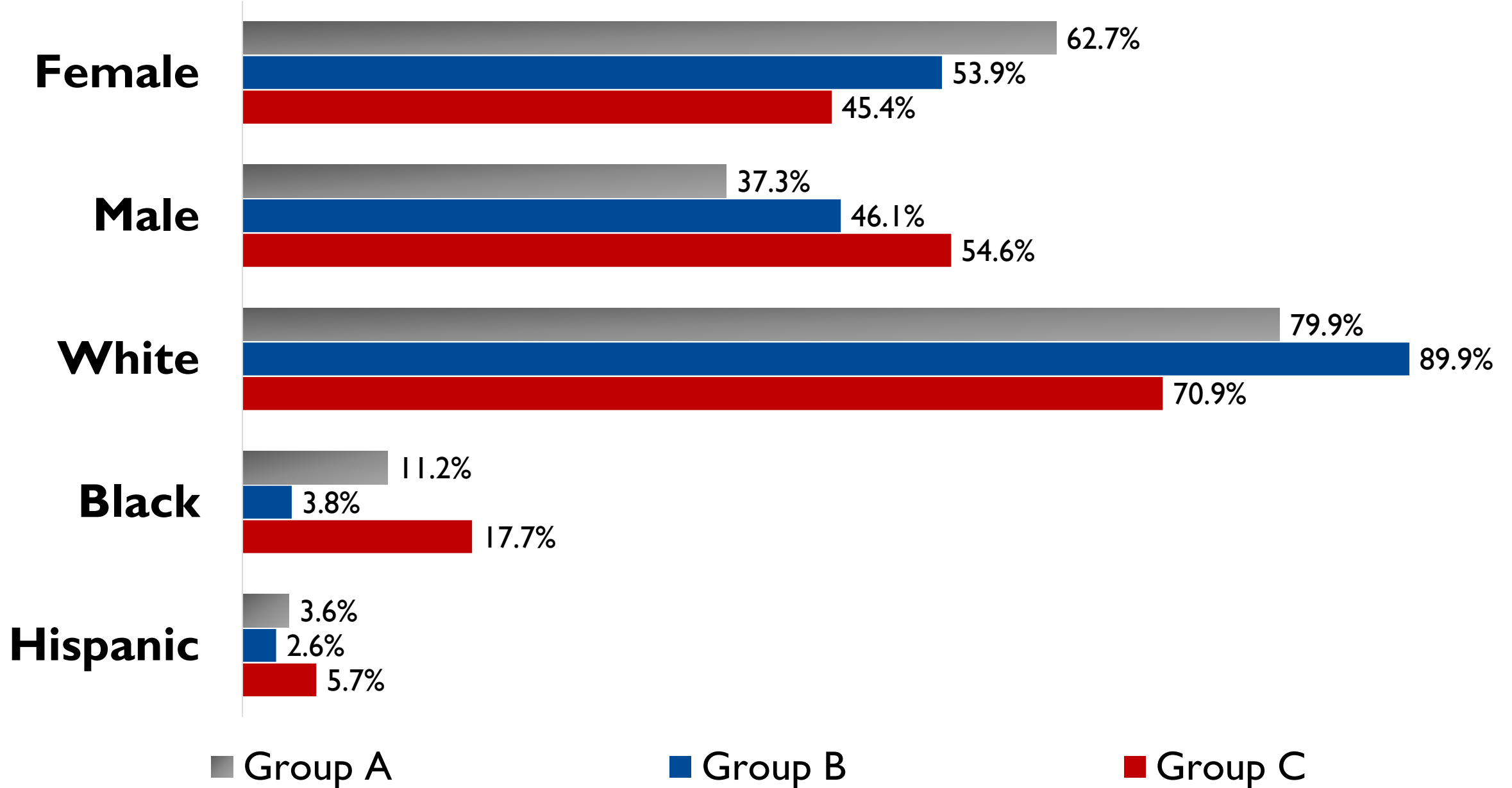
Group A

Group B

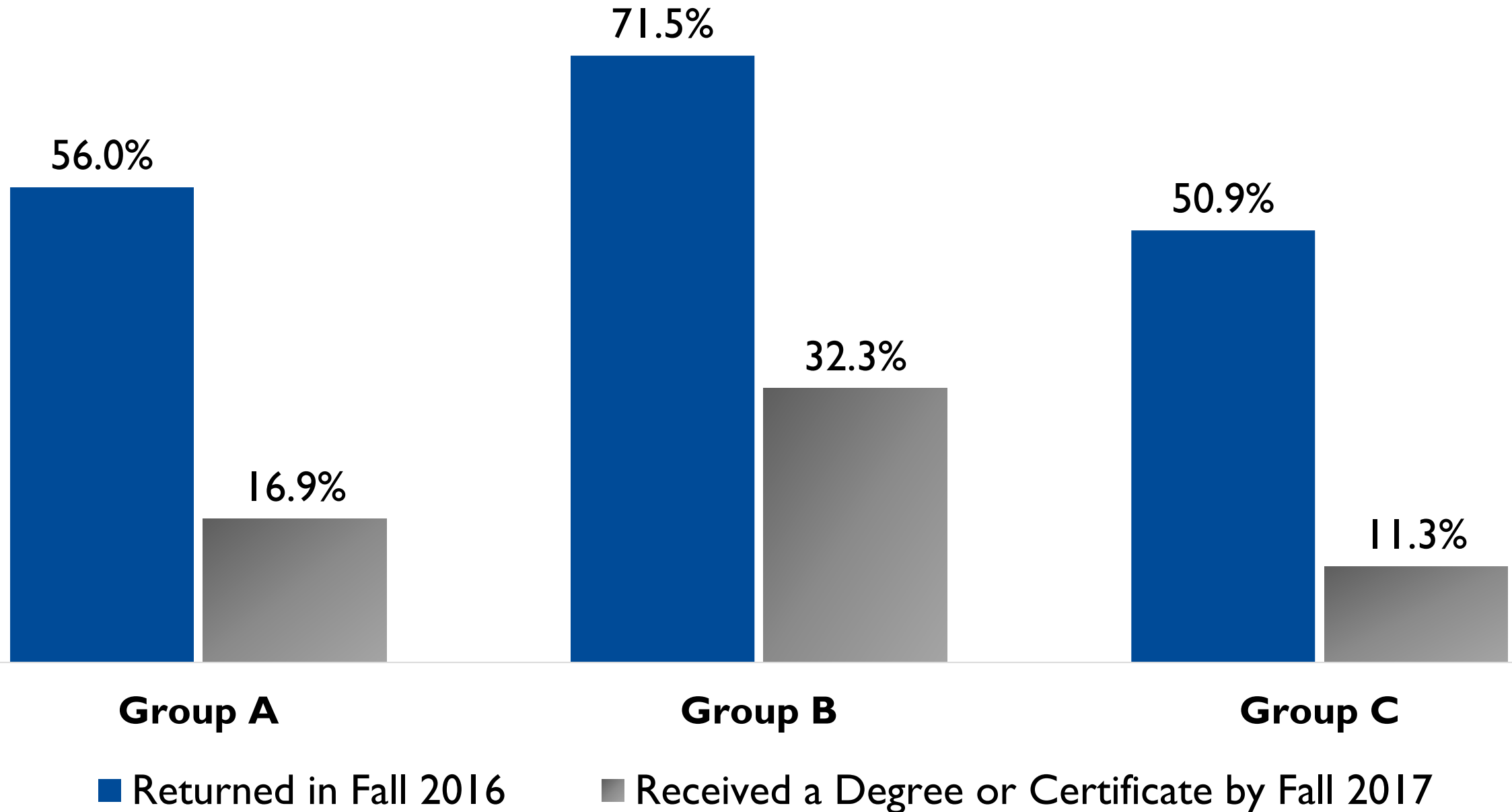
Group C

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

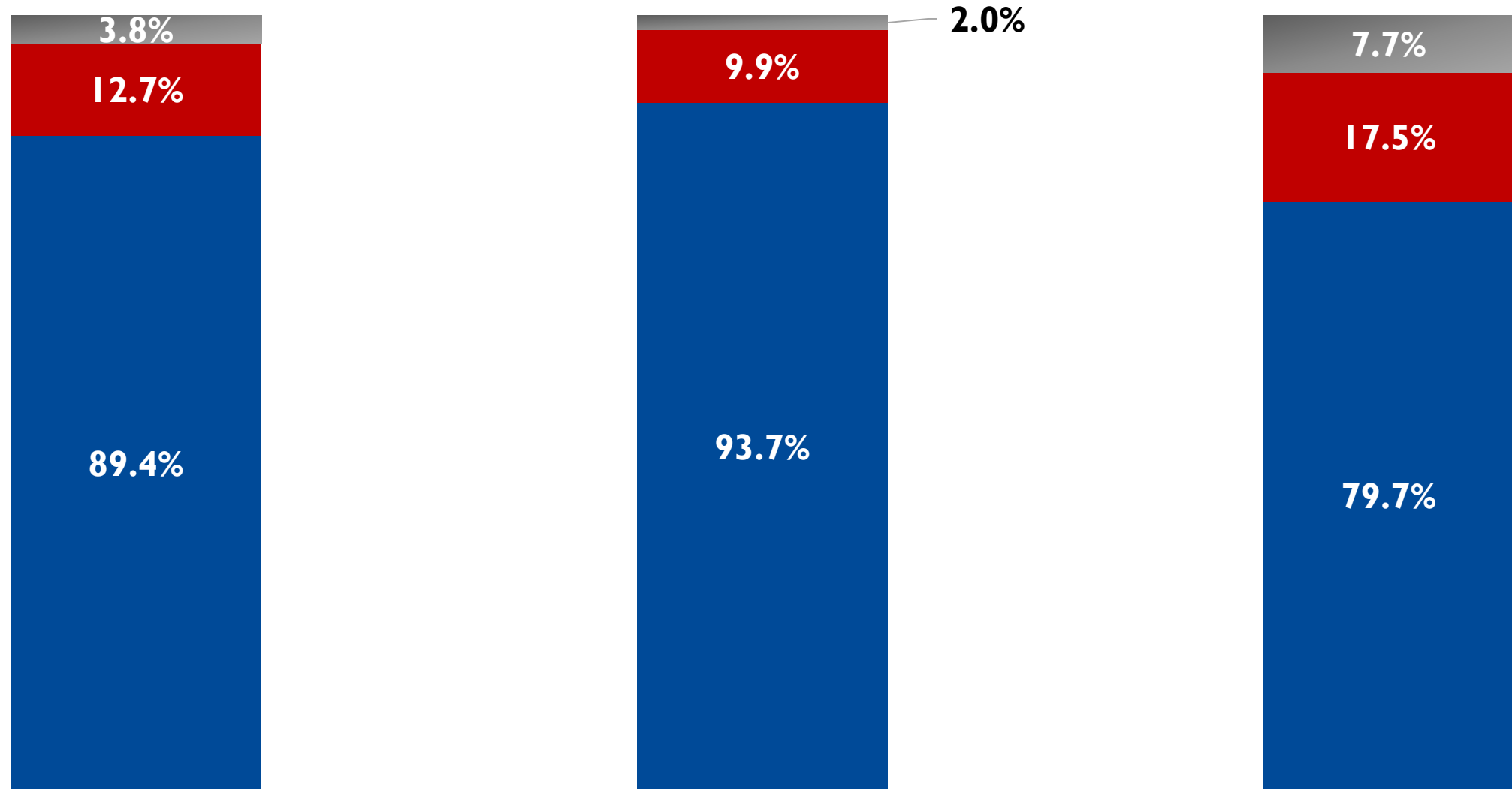
Percent of Promise students that are...



Retention and graduation by Promise group



Degrees and certificates earned by Promise group



Group A

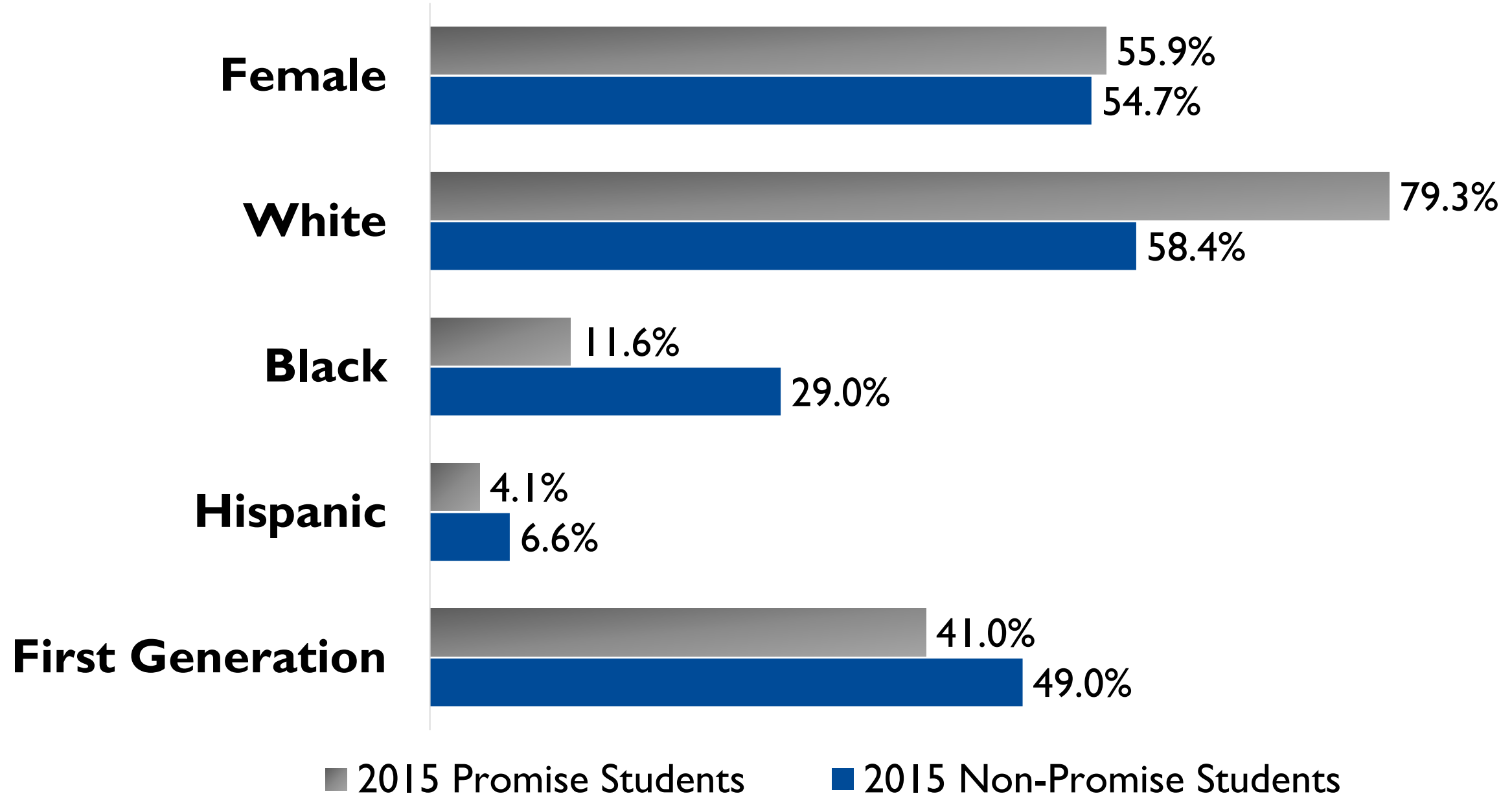
Group B

Group C

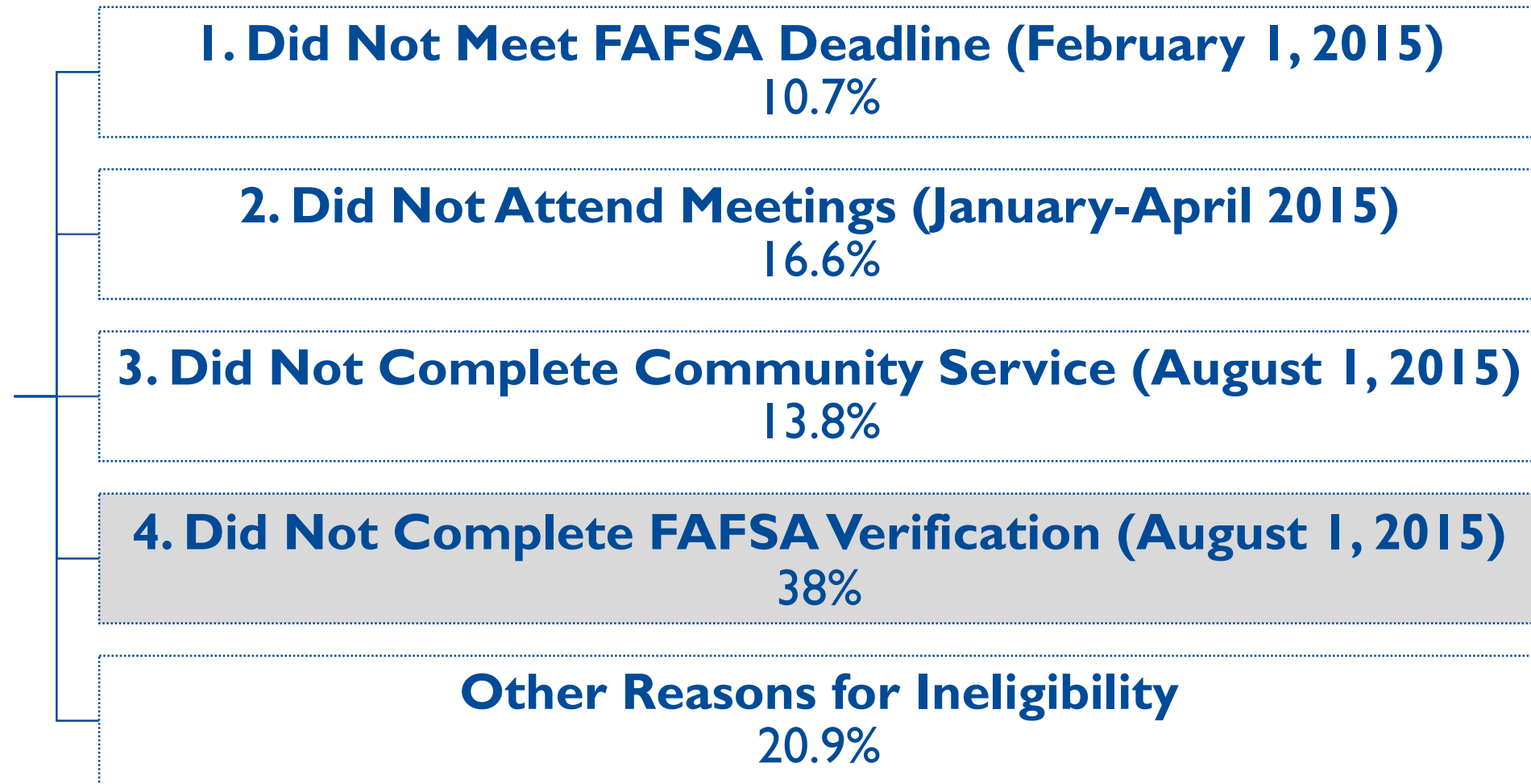
■ Associate Degree

■ Short-Term Certificate

■ Long-Term Certificate



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

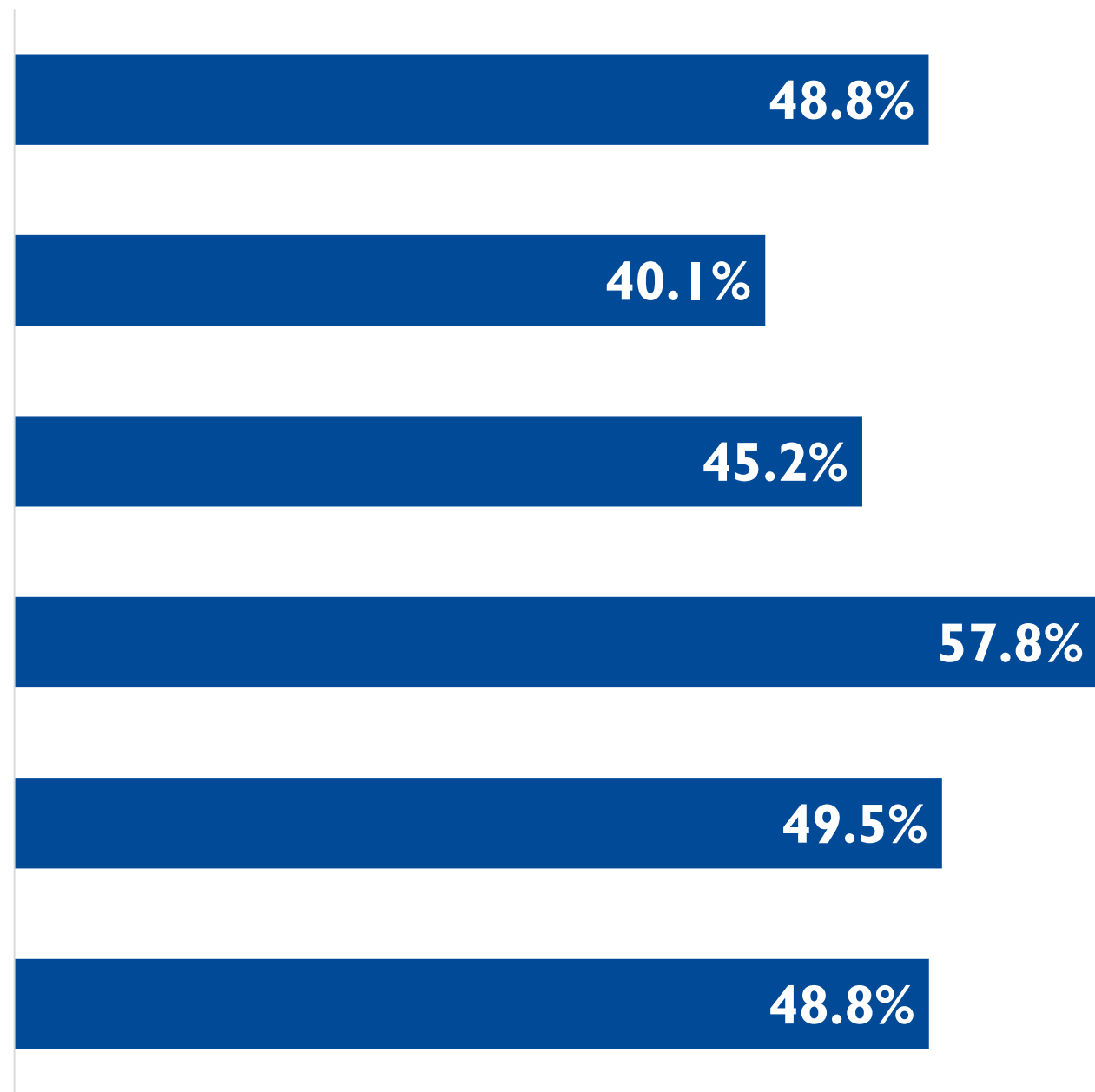
57.8%

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

