

# 2018 *Inside Higher Ed* Survey of High School Guidance Counselors

## Survey Analysis

September 2018



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HIGHER ED

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# Introduction

In this report, Hanover Research analyzes results from the 2018 *Inside Higher Ed* Survey of High School Guidance Counselors. In total, 535 respondents completed the survey and provided quality survey responses. The report includes topline results and results segmented by percent of students receiving free and reduced price meals and school type (public vs. private).

## THE REPORT CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS:

**Methodology and Key Findings.** We summarize the methodology of the study and present high-level key findings.

- **Section I: College Visits.**
- **Section II: College Selection and Application.**
- **Section III: Advanced Coursework.**
- **Section IV: Standardized Testing.**
- **Section V: College Choice.**
- **Section VI: Affirmative Action.**
- **Section VII: Waiting List.**
- **Section VIII: Image of Higher Education.**

### Goals:

To understand high school guidance counselors perceptions of college admissions and to determine what they believe parents and students think about current college admissions criteria and processes

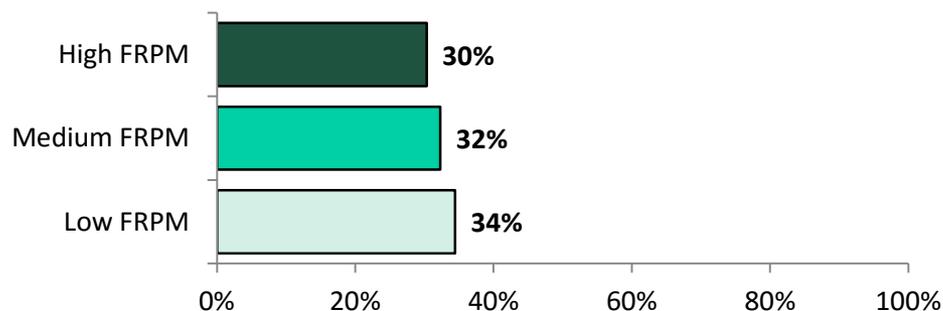
### Approach:

Online survey of high school guidance counselors in August, 2018.

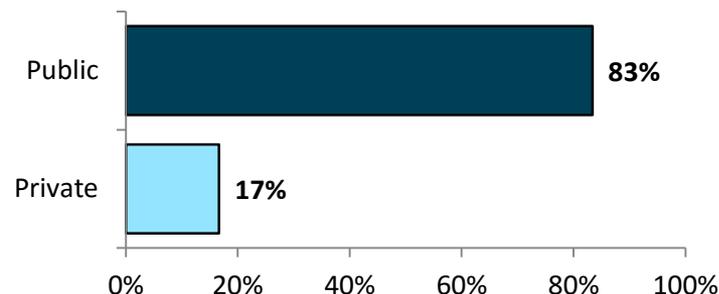
# Methodology Notes

- In the following report, results are **segmented** by proportion of students at the respondents' school who receive free and reduced price meals (FRPM) (Low = 0%-30%, Medium = 40%-60%, and High = 70%-100%) and by the type of school the respondent currently works at (public vs. private). Please see figures below for a breakdown of respondent groups.
- Statistically significant differences (95% confidence level) between groups are noted with an asterisk (\*); however, for some charts sample sizes may be small and results should be interpreted with caution.
- The survey was fielded online using the Qualtrics software platform in August, 2018.
- After data collection, Hanover identified and removed low-quality respondents.
- "Don't Know or Not Applicable" responses, and equivalent, are often excluded from the figures and analysis in order to focus on respondents who did express an opinion.

**Approximately what proportion of your students receive Free or Reduced Price Meals (FRPM)?**  
(n=496)



**Do you currently work for a public or private school?**  
(n=511)



# Key Findings: College Visits

- While the vast majority of high school guidance counselors surveyed state that their school receives visits from colleges at least occasionally, they also indicate that **they wish more colleges recruited at their school**. Most respondents indicate that their high school "Occasionally" or "Regularly" receives visits from competitive public and private colleges from outside the state (93%) and from local or regional colleges (95%). However, 70 percent of high school guidance counselors surveyed still state that they wish more colleges recruited at their high school.
- Respondents' **perceptions** of and **preferences** for **college visits** differs based on the **proportion of students receiving FRPM at their school**. Specifically, respondents from schools with a low (vs. high) proportion of students receiving FRPM more frequently report receiving regular visits from competitive public and private colleges from outside the state seeking to recruit students (51% vs. 38% respectively). Guidance counselors' responses do not differ substantially based on school type.

Over **90%** of respondents report their school occasionally or regularly receives **college visits**

**BUT**

**70%** also want **more colleges** to recruit at their high school



**38%** of respondents at **high FRPM schools** report they regularly receive visits from competitive out-of-state institutions compared to **51%** of respondents at **low FRPM schools**

# Key Findings: College Selection and Application

- In the tradeoff between academic rigor and price when deciding what colleges to apply to, most **students and parents are more concerned with price**. Sixty-four percent of guidance counselors surveyed indicate that they believe **parents regularly tell students at their high school not to apply to some colleges based on their sticker price**, and 57 percent state that many students and parents want to apply only to colleges at which they will **not need to borrow money**. Additionally, 65 percent of respondents agree that Only about half of respondents acknowledged that their students focus on finding the most academically rigorous colleges they can get into.
- Respondents' perceptions of students' and parents' preferences for **affordability** differ based on school type and FRPM status. Guidance counselors' responses suggest that this preference for affordability over academic rigor is more prevalent in schools with a high (vs. medium or low) proportion of students who receive FRPM and at public (vs. private) schools.



*Respondents believe financial factors impact college selection:*

**Students** focus on **affordability** more than academic rigor (**65%**)

**Parents** tell students not to apply to some colleges based on **sticker price** (**64%**)

**Students/parents** want to apply only to colleges at which they will **not need to borrow money** (**57%**)

# Key Findings: College Selection and Application (*cont.*)

- Despite a slight preference for low cost over academic rigor, students and parents overall appear to be most concerned with **outcomes of a college education**. Seventy-two percent of respondents agree that most students and parents are heavily focused on whether college will prepare students for jobs.
- High school guidance counselors believe students and parents are **knowledgeable and realistic** about their (their child's) college options.
- Respondents from schools with a **low** (vs. medium or high) proportion of students receiving **FRPM or a private** (vs. public) school rate students and parents as **more knowledgeable about college options**.

Students are somewhat or very **knowledgeable** about their range of options for college (**65%**)

Students are somewhat or very **realistic** about their odds of admission at the colleges they wish to attend (**58%**)



Guidance counselors believe parents of students at **high FRPM schools** are less **knowledgeable** about college options (**59%**) but more **realistic** about their child's odds of admissions (**65%**)

# Key Findings: Advanced Coursework

- Overall, most high school guidance counselors surveyed believe that high school students see **AP/IB courses as essential for college admission** and that students at their school have sufficient access to these courses. However, schools with a **high proportion of students receiving FRPM may not provide sufficient AP/IB courses to meet student needs**. Over half of respondents fear that students at their high school may pass up important opportunities to focus on AP/IB courses (55%).
- Respondents from schools with a **high** (vs. low) proportion of students receiving **FRPM are less likely to agree that their school has sufficient AP/IB courses to meet students demand** (58% vs. 69%) and more likely to state that they worry that an insufficient number of AP/IB courses at their school limits college opportunities for students (49% vs. 37%).

**Students** believe taking AP/IB courses is essential for college admissions (**67%**)

**AND**

**Their school** offers sufficient AP/IB courses to meet student demand (**63%**)



**58%** of respondents at **high FRPM schools** report believe their school offers sufficient AP/IB courses to meet student demand

# Key Findings: Standardized Testing

- A sizeable proportion of respondents indicate that students at their high school believe:
  - Taking as many AP/IB courses as possible is essential for college admissions (67%)
  - Students **hesitate** to apply to colleges where they may be a good fit if their **test scores are below the average** of a given college (63%)
  - Students and parents **understand holistic admissions**.
    - Private school respondents more frequently indicate that students understand holistic admissions (69% vs. 56%).

## 59% of respondents wish all colleges were test-optional

- Most respondents express that they, as well as students, would prefer college applications to be test-optional. Most guidance counselors surveyed maintain that students who are aware of test-optional colleges (64%) or are minority or disadvantaged students (58%) like the option of applying to college without SAT or ACT courses/scores.
- Only about half of guidance counselors surveyed think students at their school are aware of which colleges are test-optional.
- Most high school guidance counselors acknowledge that the ACT and SAT writing tests provide useful information about students' writing ability. Slightly more than half of respondents agree that the SAT and ACT writing tests provide good information about students' writing ability (55%).
- Under half of guidance counselors state that they do not see a strong correlation between their high school's best writers and those who do well on the writing tests. A similar proportion agree that the College Board and ACT should drop the writing portion of their tests (43%).

# Key Findings: College Choice

- Respondents indicate that **it has become harder for students to be admitted to the flagship university or other top research universities in-state**. Over half of respondents believe students are more likely to apply to private colleges (53%), out-of-state colleges (54%), or community colleges (74%), but responses differ by school type.
- Guidance counselors from schools with a **high** (vs. medium or low) proportion of students receiving **FRPM more frequently state that students are more likely to apply to community colleges (84% vs. 74% and 66% respectively)**. However, they less frequently state that students are more likely to apply to private colleges (40% vs. 58% and 57% respectively).
- Similarly, respondents from **public** (vs. private) schools **more frequently indicate that students are more likely to apply to community colleges (78% vs. 57%)** and less frequently indicate that students are more likely to apply to private colleges (49% vs. 72%).

*Over the past three years, respondents believe:*

①

Students are more likely to apply to **community colleges (74%)**

②

Admittance to the **flagship state university** has become more difficult **(72%)**



**84%** of respondents at **high FRPM schools** report that students are more likely to apply to **community colleges**

# Key Findings: Affirmative Action

- Guidance counselors believe that under-represented minority students benefit from affirmative action as it is currently practiced.
- Fifty-three percent agree that if colleges are barred from considering race/ethnicity in admissions decisions, many of the under-represented students at their high school would likely end up at colleges that are academically less strong than those they currently attend.
  - Respondents from schools with a high or medium (vs. low) proportion of students receiving FRPM are more likely to agree (56% and 60% vs. 43% respectively) with

**56%** of respondents agree that under-represented minority students benefit from affirmative action

**AND**

**60%** also agree colleges need to work harder to recruit minority students



**65%** of respondents at high FRPM schools agree colleges need to work harder to recruit minority students

# Key Findings: Affirmative Action (*cont.*)

- Respondents are almost **split** in whether they or their **Asian-American students believe college admissions discriminate against Asian-American applicants**.
  - When asked if Asian-American students at their high school appear to need better academic credentials than other students to get into competitive colleges, 43 percent of respondents agreed while 36 percent disagreed. Similarly, when asked if they think that Asian-American students at their school believe that the admissions system discriminates against them, 37 percent of respondents agreed while 40 percent disagreed.
- Overall, most guidance counselors surveyed believe **students benefit from legacy status but do not think it is a reasonable factor in college admissions**. Sixty-five percent of respondents attest that students at their high school who have legacy status appear to have much better chances of admission than do other student applying to competitive colleges. However, only 44 percent of respondents agree that legacy status is a reasonable factor in college admissions.

**43%** of respondents **agree** that Asian-American students appear to need better academic credentials to get into competitive colleges while **36% disagree**

**44%** of respondents agree that **legacy status** is a reasonable factor in college admissions

**BUT**

**71%** also agree colleges need to work harder to recruit **first generation** college students

# Key Findings: Image of Higher Education

- While most respondents overall do not agree that their students perceive higher education as hostile to minority students and conservatives, respondents from schools with a medium proportion of students receiving FRPM do more frequently agree with these statements.
  - Counselors from schools with a medium proportion of respondents who receive FRPM agree more frequently that their students perceive higher education as a place dominated by liberals (47% vs. 35% of high FRPM) and hostile to conservatives (45% vs. 32% of low).
  - Respondents from schools with a low (vs. medium or high) proportion of students who receive FRPM less frequently indicate that they believe most students at their high school perceive higher education as hostile to minority students (27% vs. 42% and 39% respectively).

*Less than one-half of respondents agree that most of the students at their high school perceive higher education as:*

A place dominated by liberals (45%)

Hostile to conservatives (37%)

Hostile to minority students (36%)

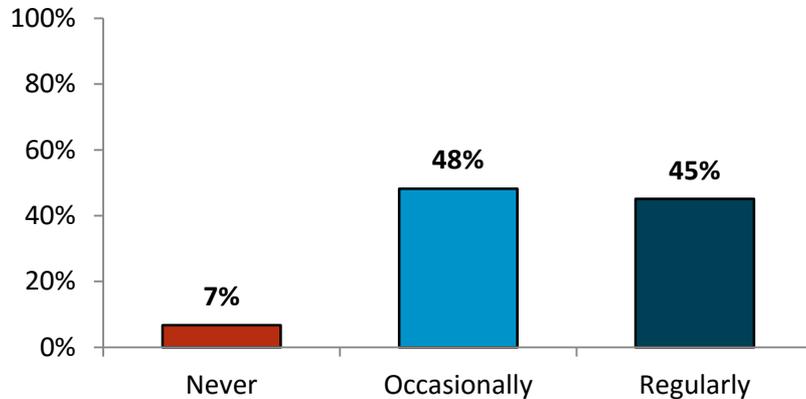


**27%** of respondents at low FRPM schools report that students perceive higher education as hostile to minority students

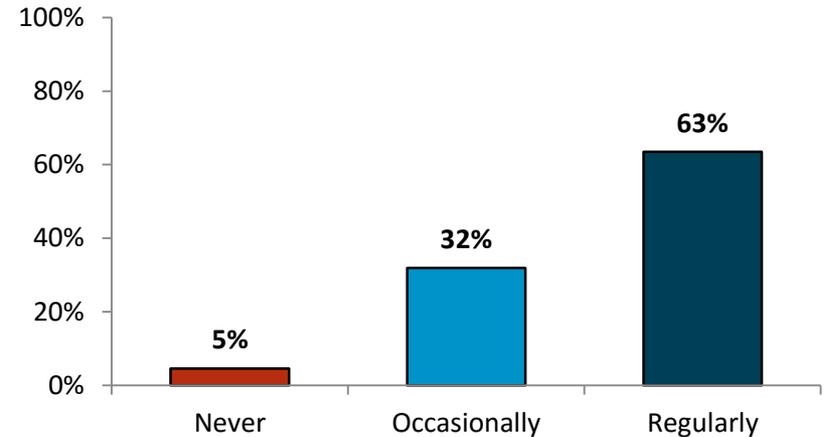
# SECTION I: COLLEGE VISITS

# College Visits—Topline

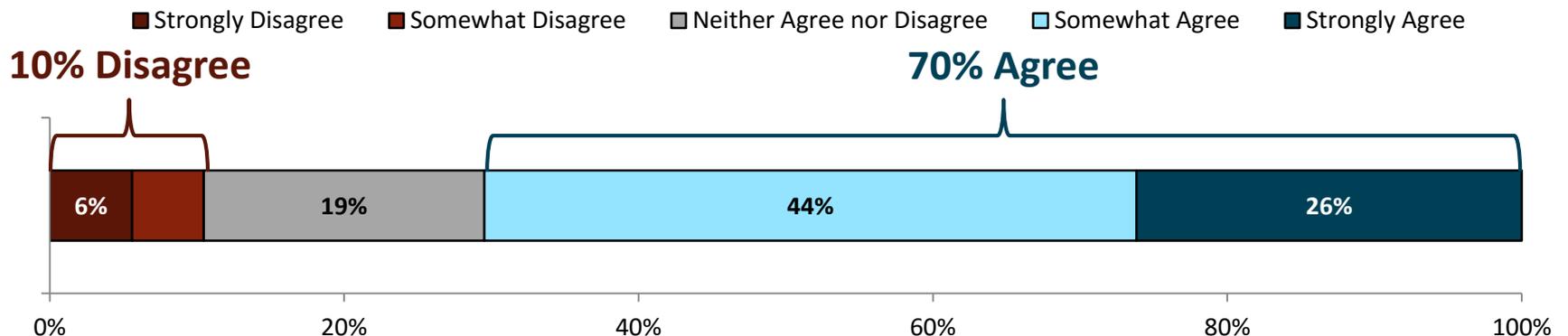
My high school receives visits from competitive public and private colleges from outside the state seeking to recruit students. (n=523)



My high school receives visits from local or regional colleges. (n=526)



I wish more colleges recruited at my high school. (n=535)

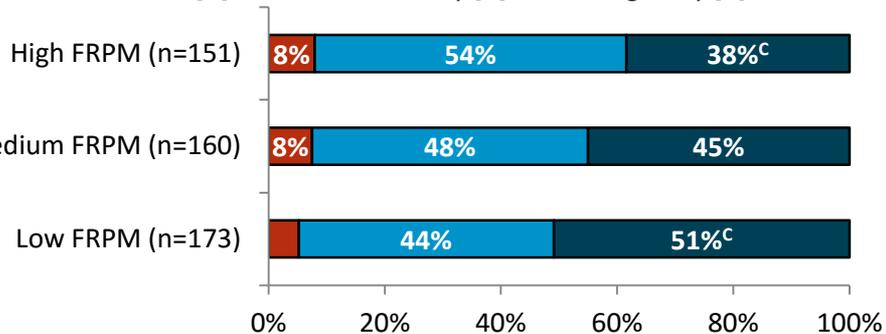


# College Visits—By FRPM

**My high school receives visits from competitive public and private colleges from outside the state seeking to recruit students.**

*By FRPM*

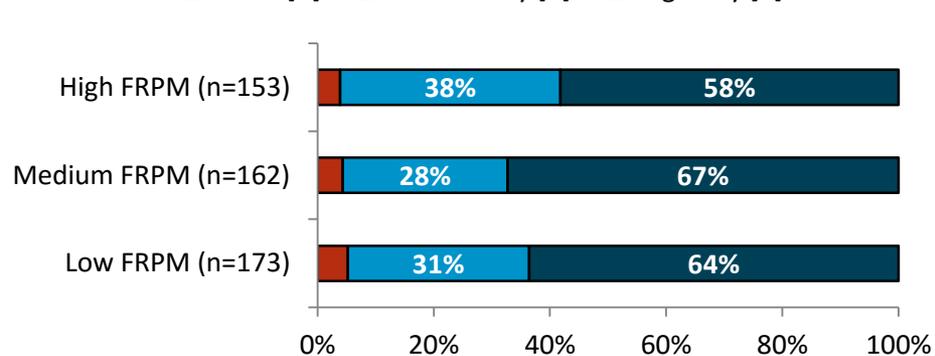
■ Never [A] ■ Occasionally [B] ■ Regularly [C]\*



**My high school receives visits from local or regional colleges.**

*By FRPM*

■ Never [A] ■ Occasionally [B] ■ Regularly [C]

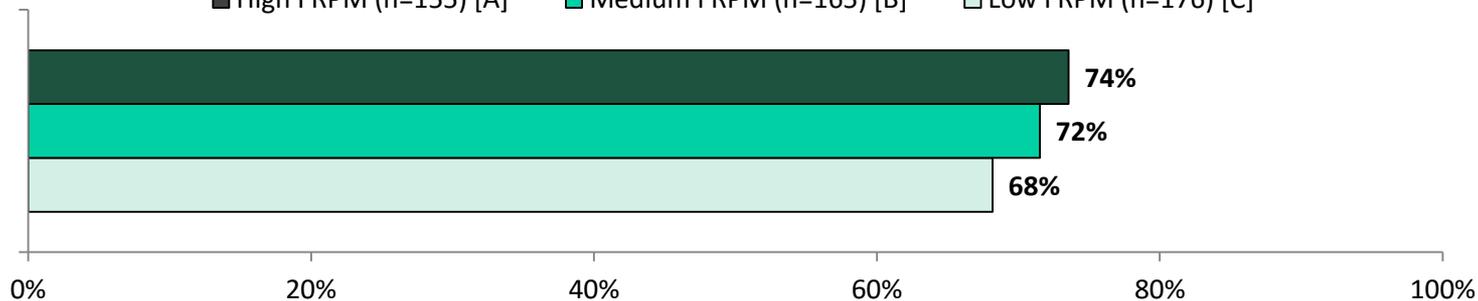


**I wish more colleges recruited at my high school.**

*% "Somewhat Agree" + "Strongly Agree"*

*By FRPM*

■ High FRPM (n=155) [A] ■ Medium FRPM (n=165) [B] ■ Low FRPM (n=176) [C]

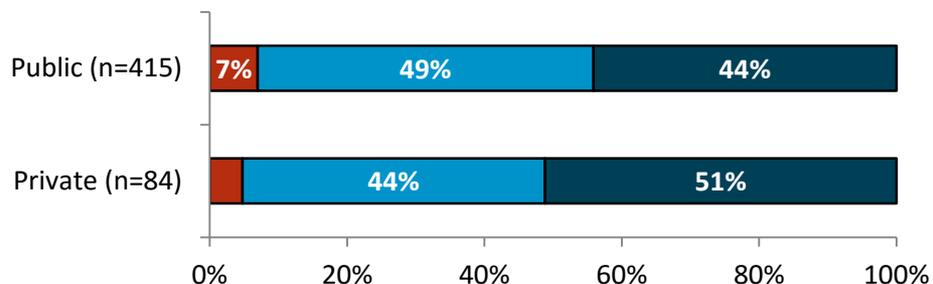


# College Visits—By School Type

**My high school receives visits from competitive public and private colleges from outside the state seeking to recruit students.**

*By School Type*

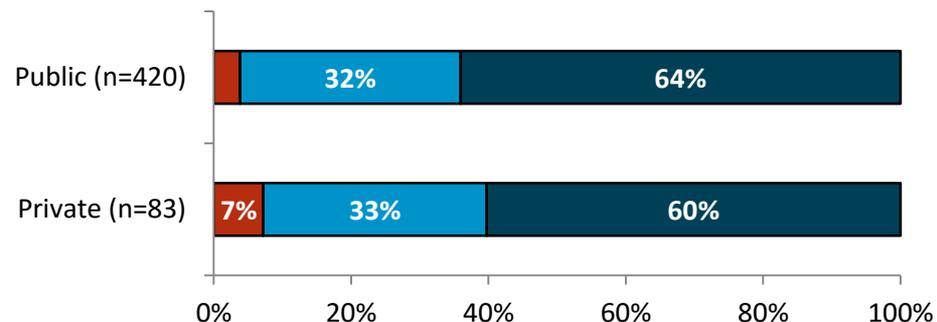
Never Occasionally Regularly



**My high school receives visits from local or regional colleges.**

*By School Type*

Never Occasionally Regularly

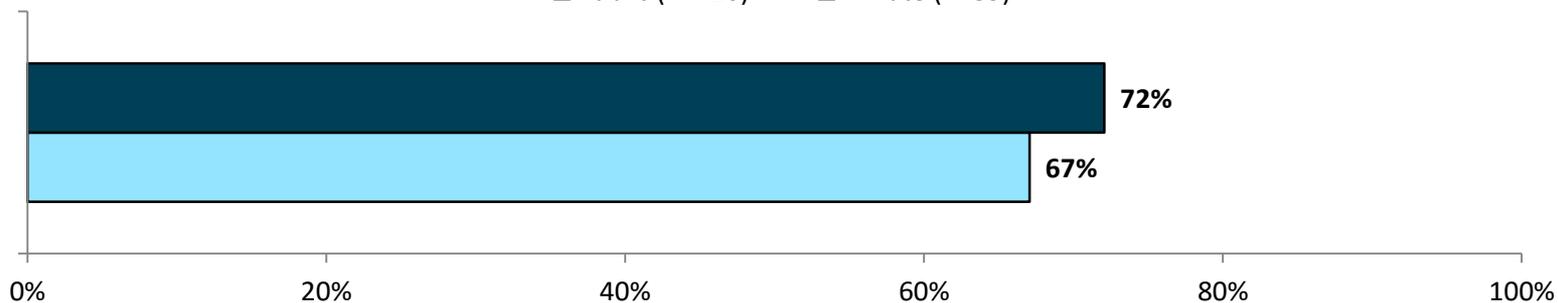


**I wish more colleges recruited at my high school.**

*% "Somewhat Agree" + "Strongly Agree"*

*By School Type*

Public (n=426) Private (n=85)

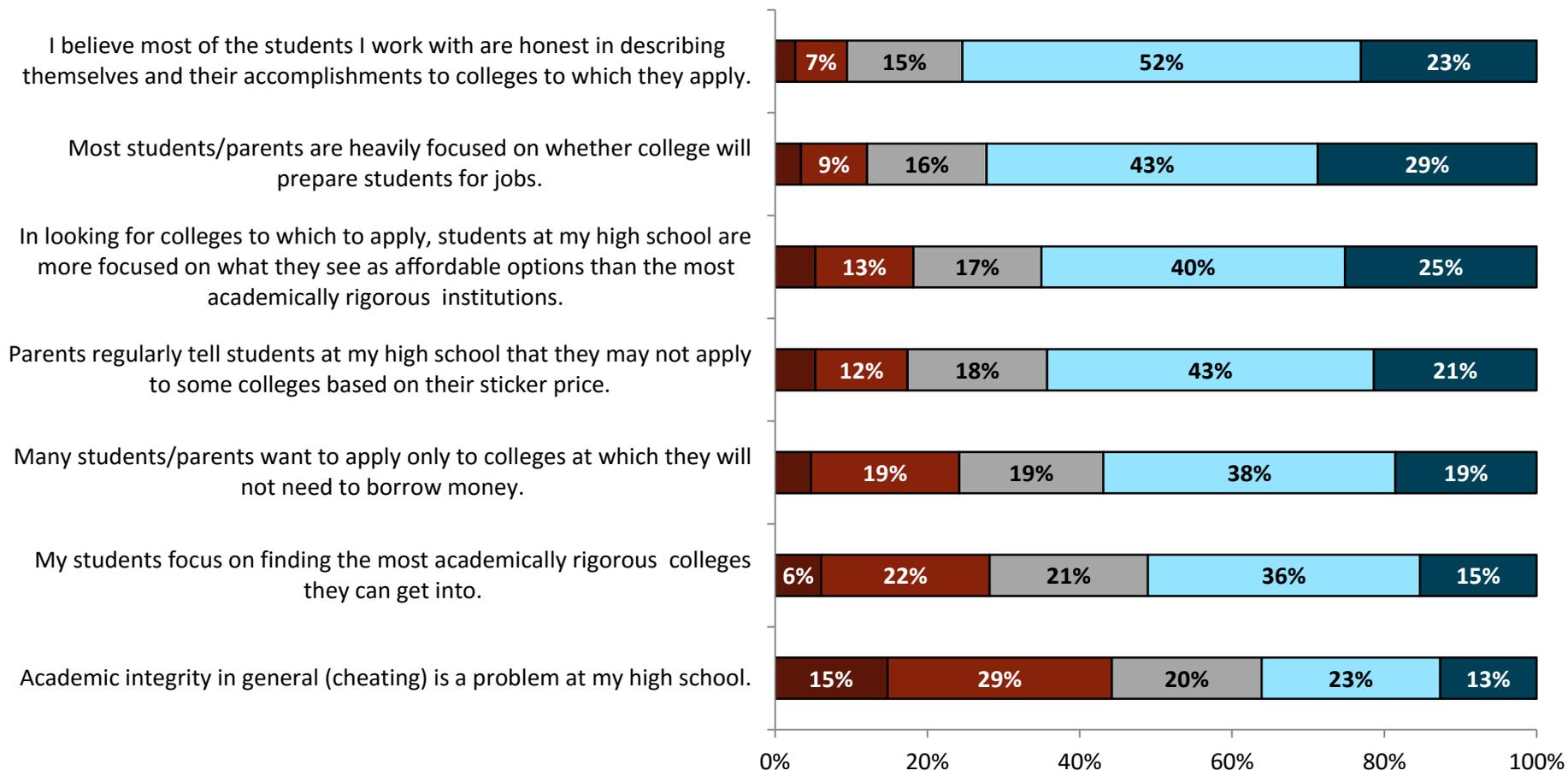


# SECTION II: COLLEGE SELECTION AND APPLICATION

# College Selection and Application—Topline

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:  
(n=529)

■ Strongly Disagree   
 ■ Somewhat Disagree   
 ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree   
 ■ Somewhat Agree   
 ■ Strongly Agree



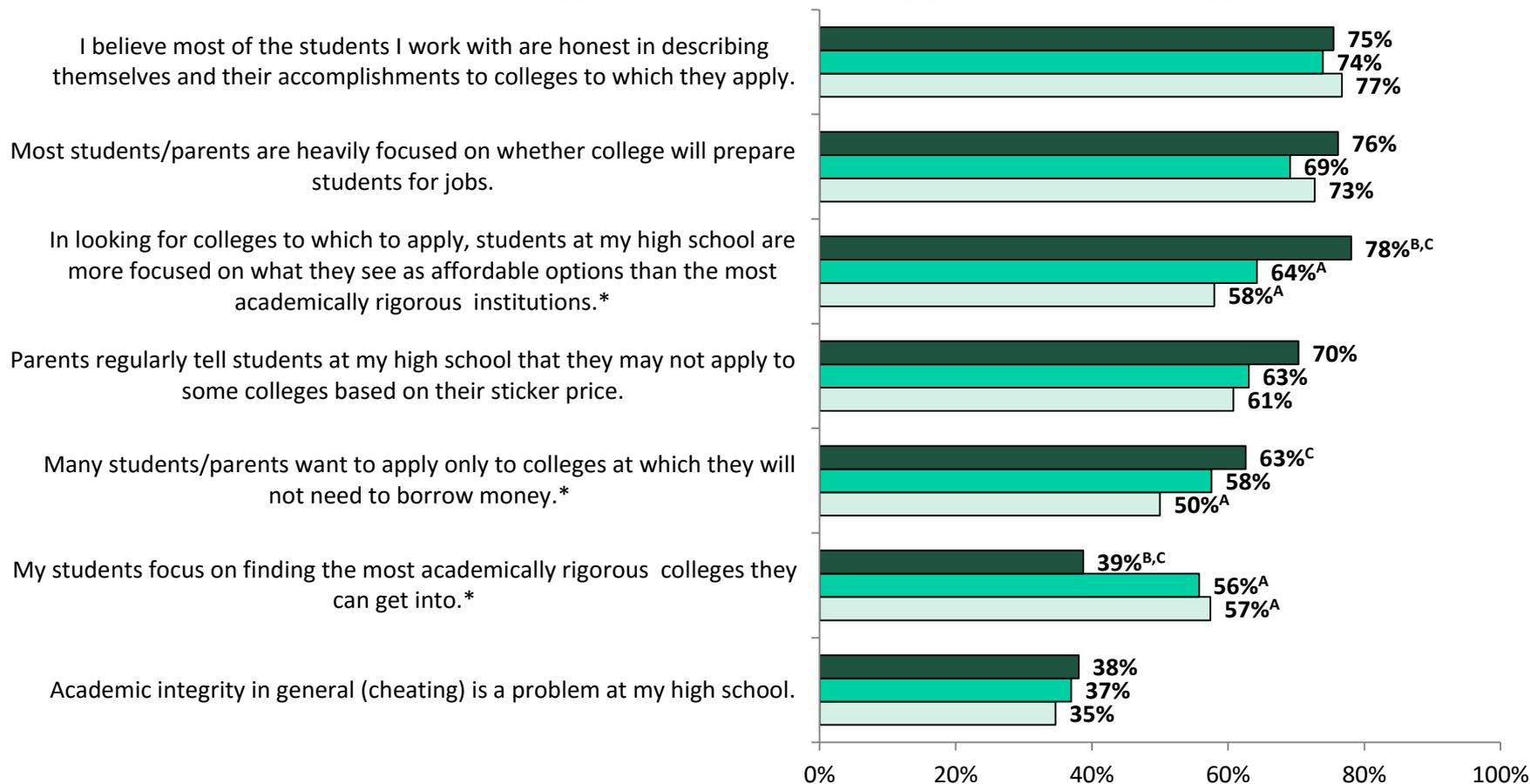
# College Selection and Application—By FRPM

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

% “Somewhat Agree” + “Strongly Agree”

By FRPM

■ High FRPM (n=155) [A]   ■ Medium FRPM (n=165) [B]   ■ Low FRPM (n=176) [C]

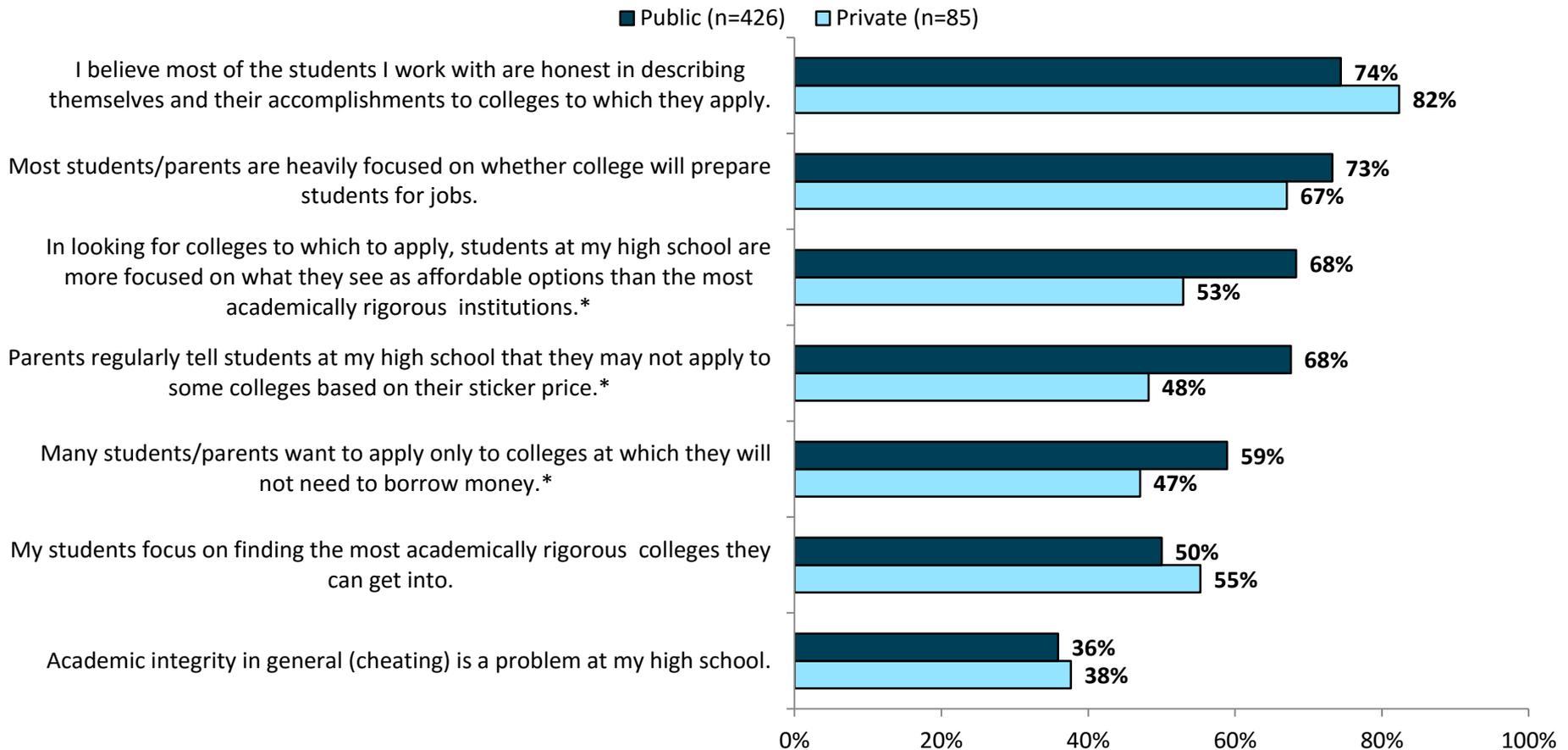


# College Selection and Application—By School Type

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

% "Somewhat Agree" + "Strongly Agree"

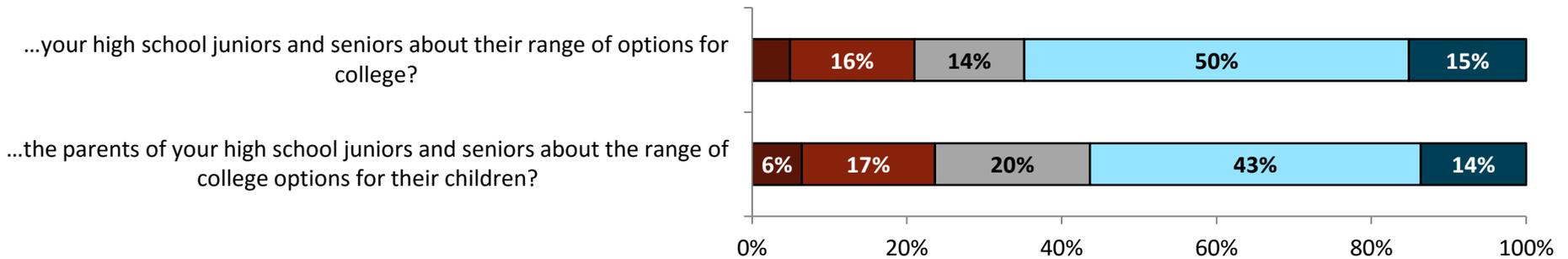
By School Type



# College Selection and Application—Topline

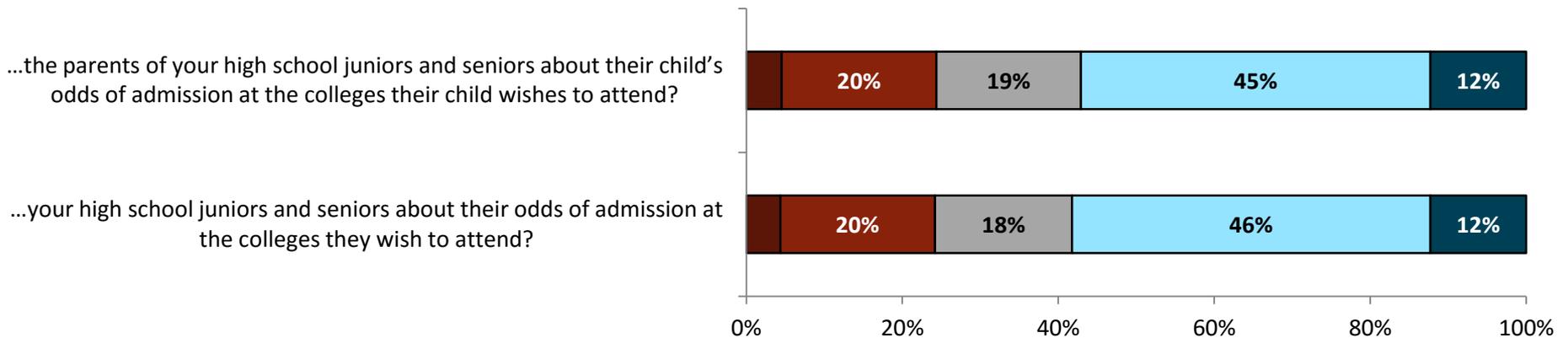
## How knowledgeable are... (n=529)

■ Very Unknowledgeable      ■ Somewhat Unknowledgeable      ■ Neither Knowledgeable nor Unknowledgeable  
■ Somewhat Knowledgeable      ■ Very Knowledgeable



## How realistic are...

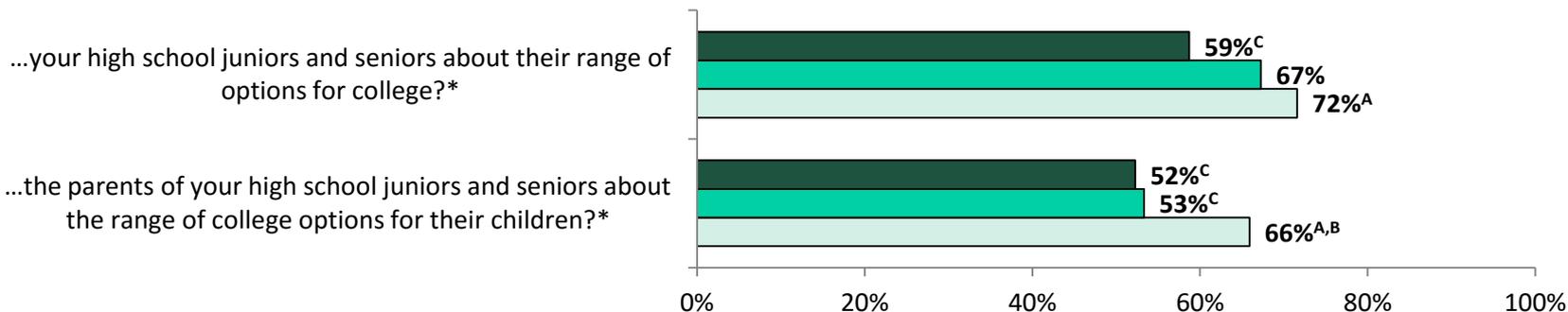
■ Very Unrealistic      ■ Somewhat Unrealistic      ■ Neither Realistic nor Unrealistic      ■ Somewhat Realistic      ■ Very Realistic



# College Selection and Application—By FRPM

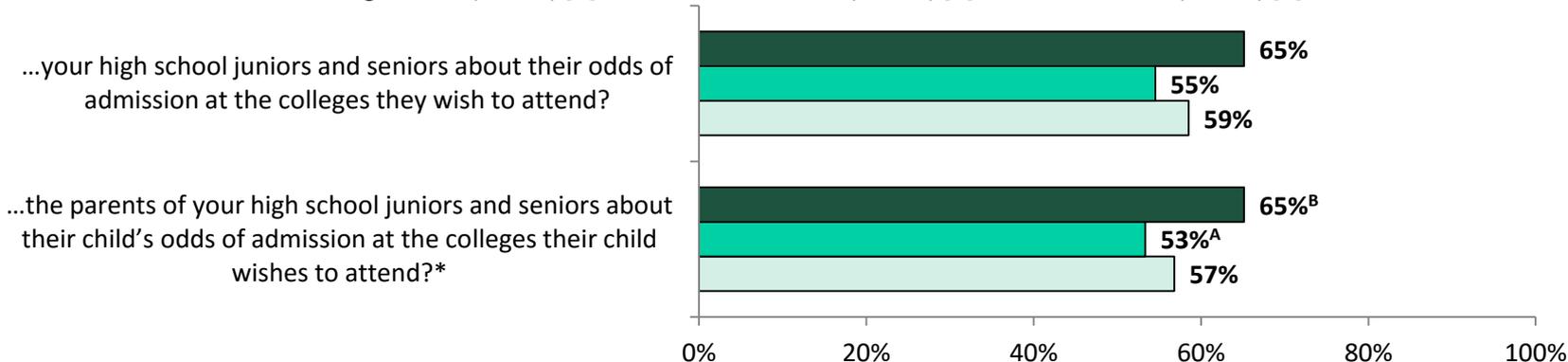
**How knowledgeable are...**  
 % “Somewhat Knowledgeable” + “Very Knowledgeable”  
 By FRPM

■ High FRPM (n=155) [A]   ■ Medium FRPM (n=165) [B]   ■ Low FRPM (n=176) [C]



**How realistic are...**  
 % “Somewhat Realistic” + “Very Realistic”  
 By FRPM

■ High FRPM (n=155) [A]   ■ Medium FRPM (n=165) [B]   ■ Low FRPM (n=176) [C]



# College Selection and Application—By School Type

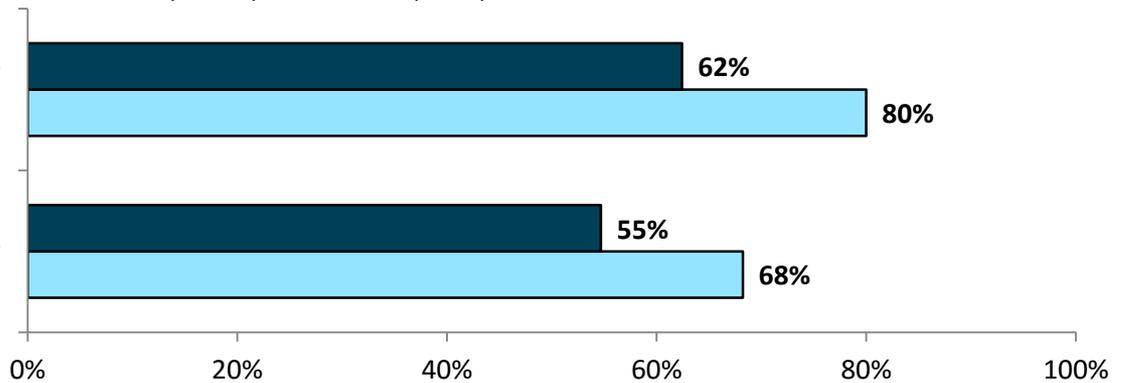
## How knowledgeable are you...

% "Somewhat Knowledgeable" + "Very Knowledgeable"

By School Type

Public (n=426) Private (n=85)

...your high school juniors and seniors about their range of options for college?\*



...the parents of your high school juniors and seniors about the range of college options for their children?\*

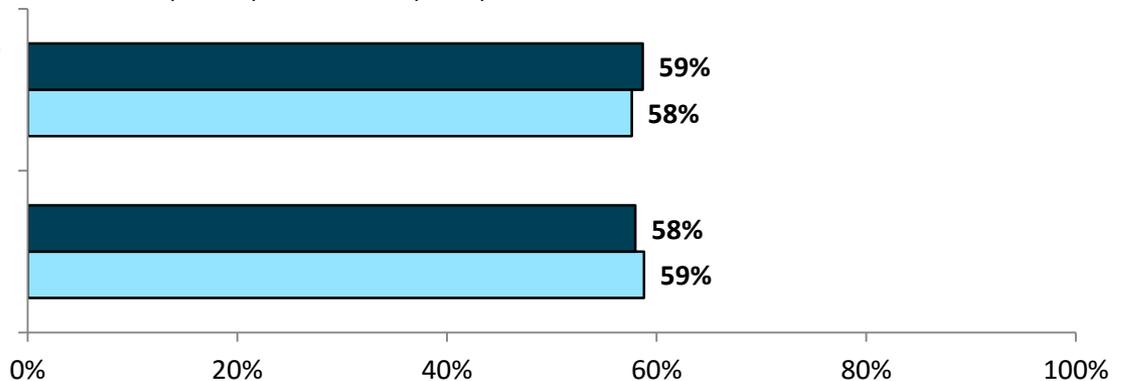
## How realistic are...

% "Somewhat Realistic" + "Very Realistic"

By School Type

Public (n=426) Private (n=85)

...your high school juniors and seniors about their odds of admission at the colleges they wish to attend?



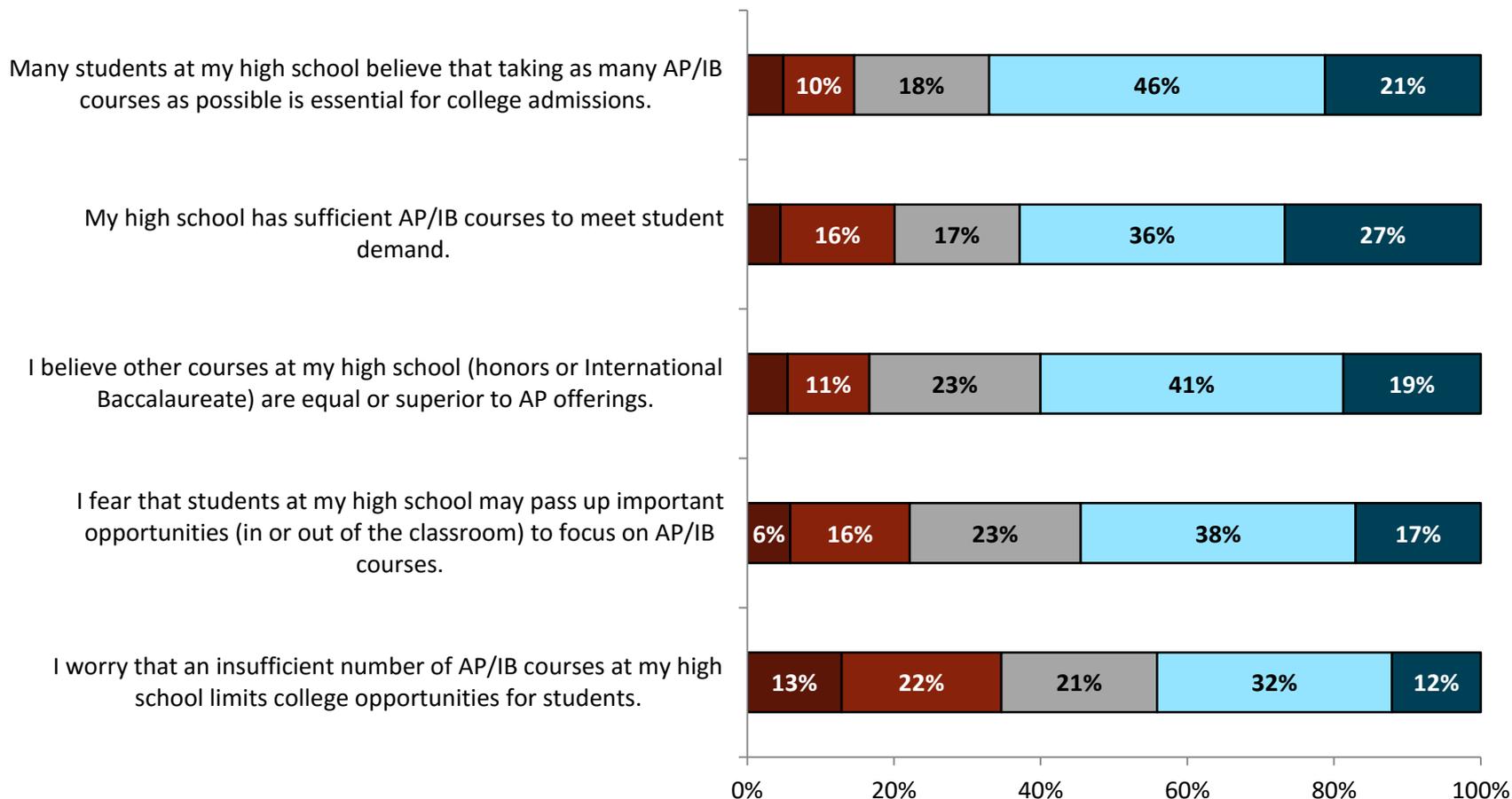
...the parents of your high school juniors and seniors about their child's odds of admission at the colleges their child wishes to attend?

# SECTION III: ADVANCED COURSEWORK

# Advanced Coursework—Topline

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:  
(n=528)

■ Strongly Disagree   
 ■ Somewhat Disagree   
 ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree   
 ■ Somewhat Agree   
 ■ Strongly Agree



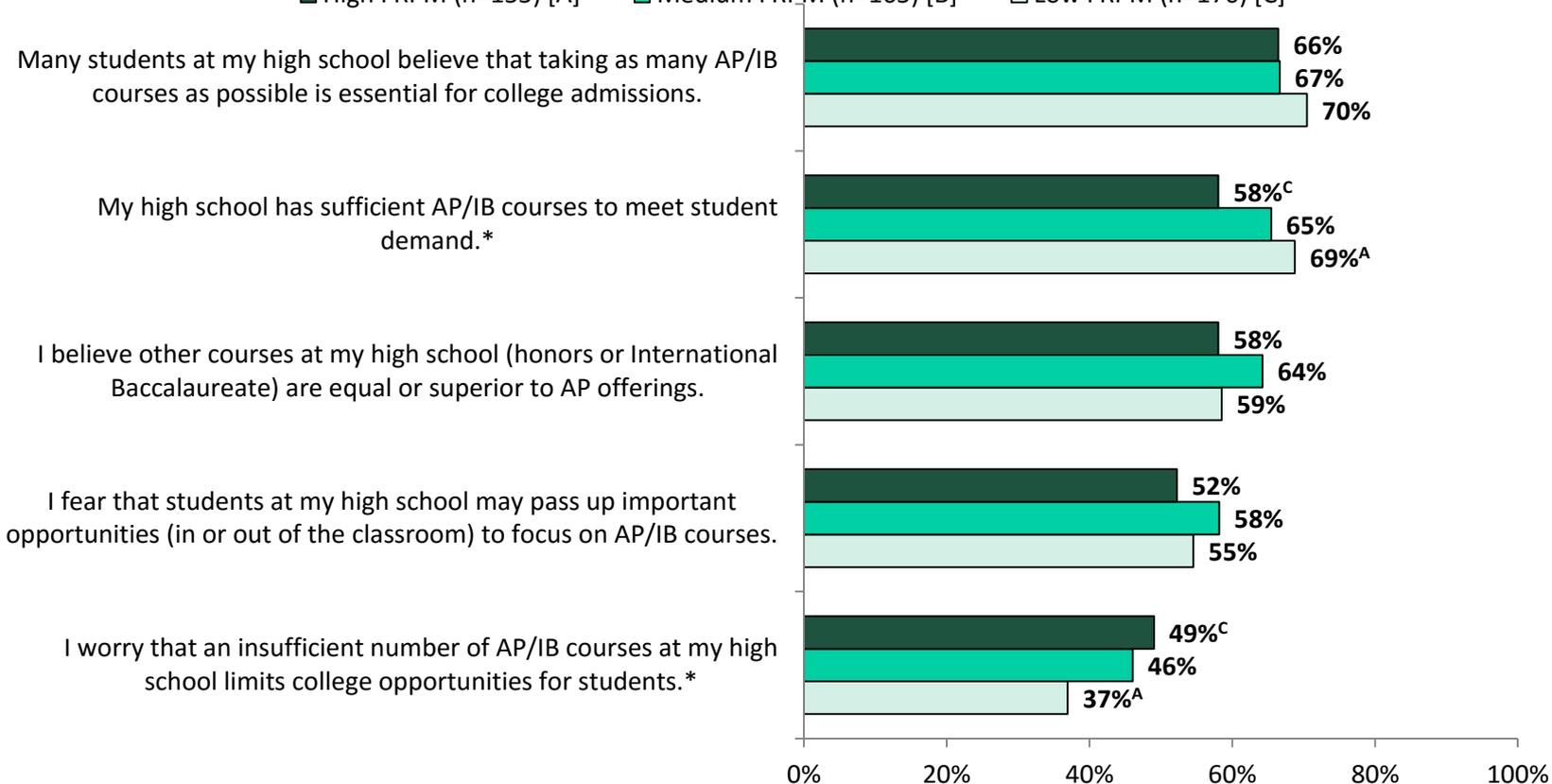
# Advanced Coursework—By FRPM

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

% “Somewhat Agree” + “Strongly Agree”

By FRPM

■ High FRPM (n=155) [A]   ■ Medium FRPM (n=165) [B]   ■ Low FRPM (n=176) [C]



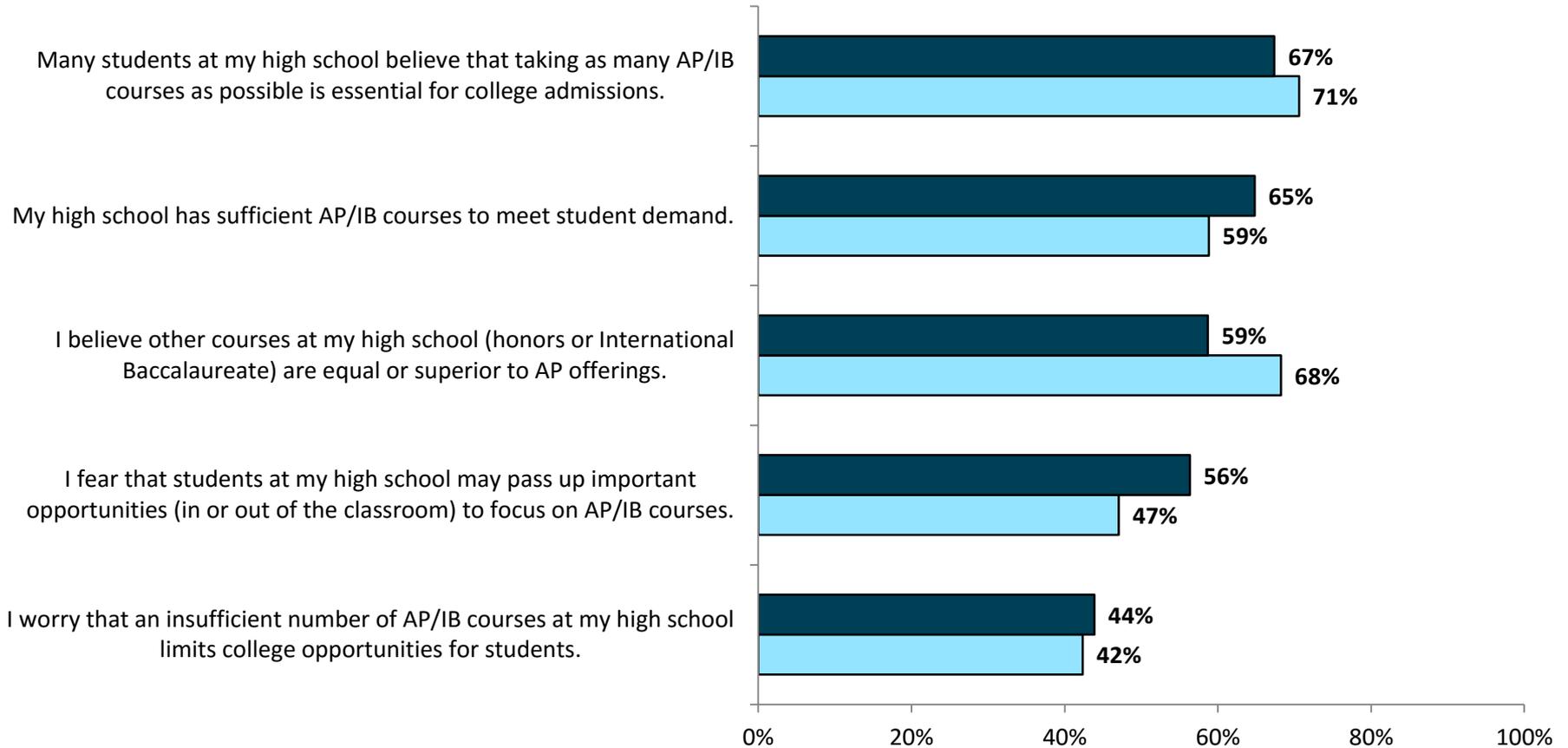
# Advanced Coursework—By School Type

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

% "Somewhat Agree" + "Strongly Agree"

By School Type

Public (n=426) Private (n=85)

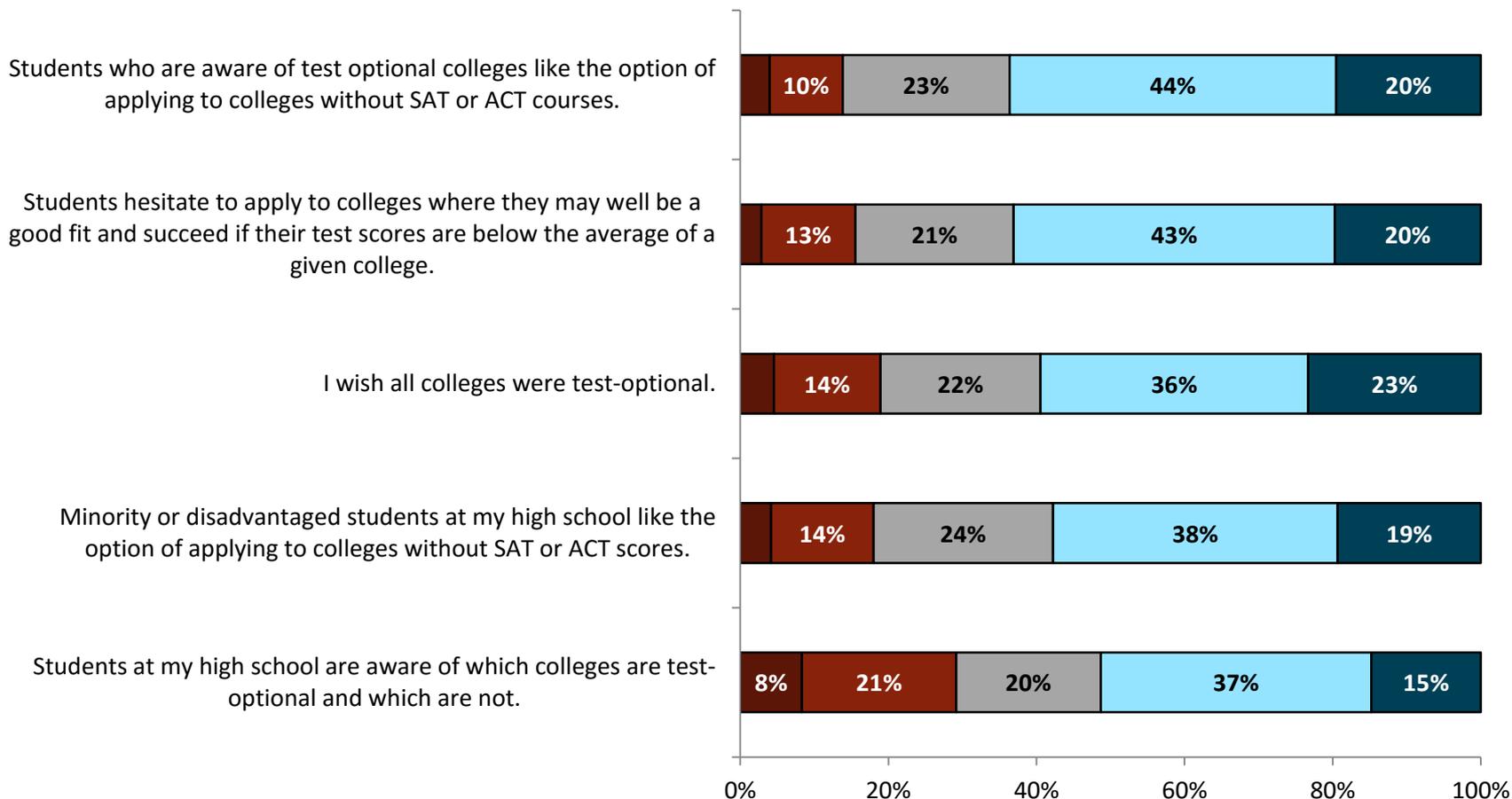


# SECTION IV: STANDARDIZED TESTING

# Standardized Testing—Topline

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:  
(n=528)

■ Strongly Disagree   
 ■ Somewhat Disagree   
 ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree   
 ■ Somewhat Agree   
 ■ Strongly Agree



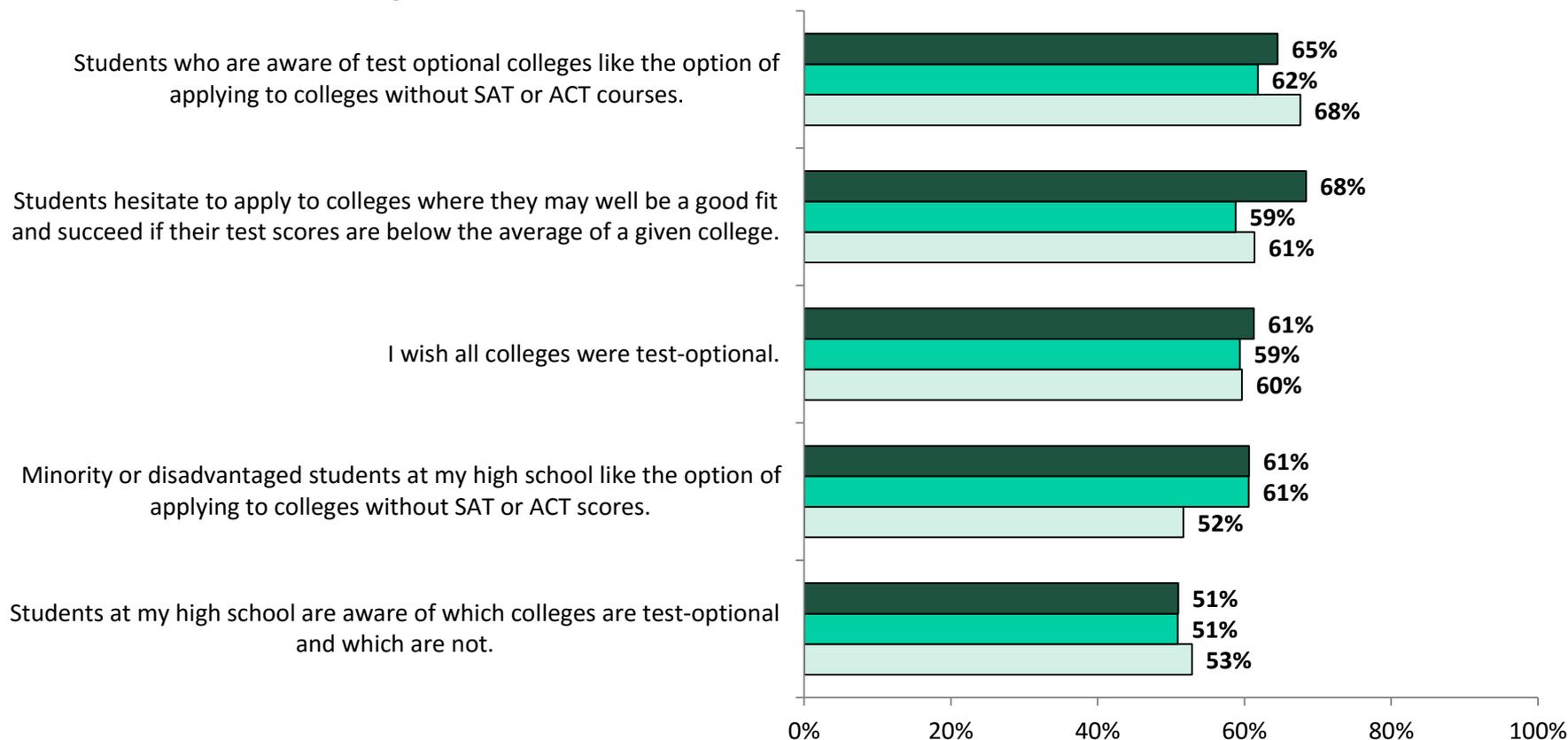
# Standardized Testing—By FRPM

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

% "Somewhat Agree" + "Strongly Agree"

By FRPM

■ High FRPM (n=155) [A]   ■ Medium FRPM (n=165) [B]   ■ Low FRPM (n=176) [C]

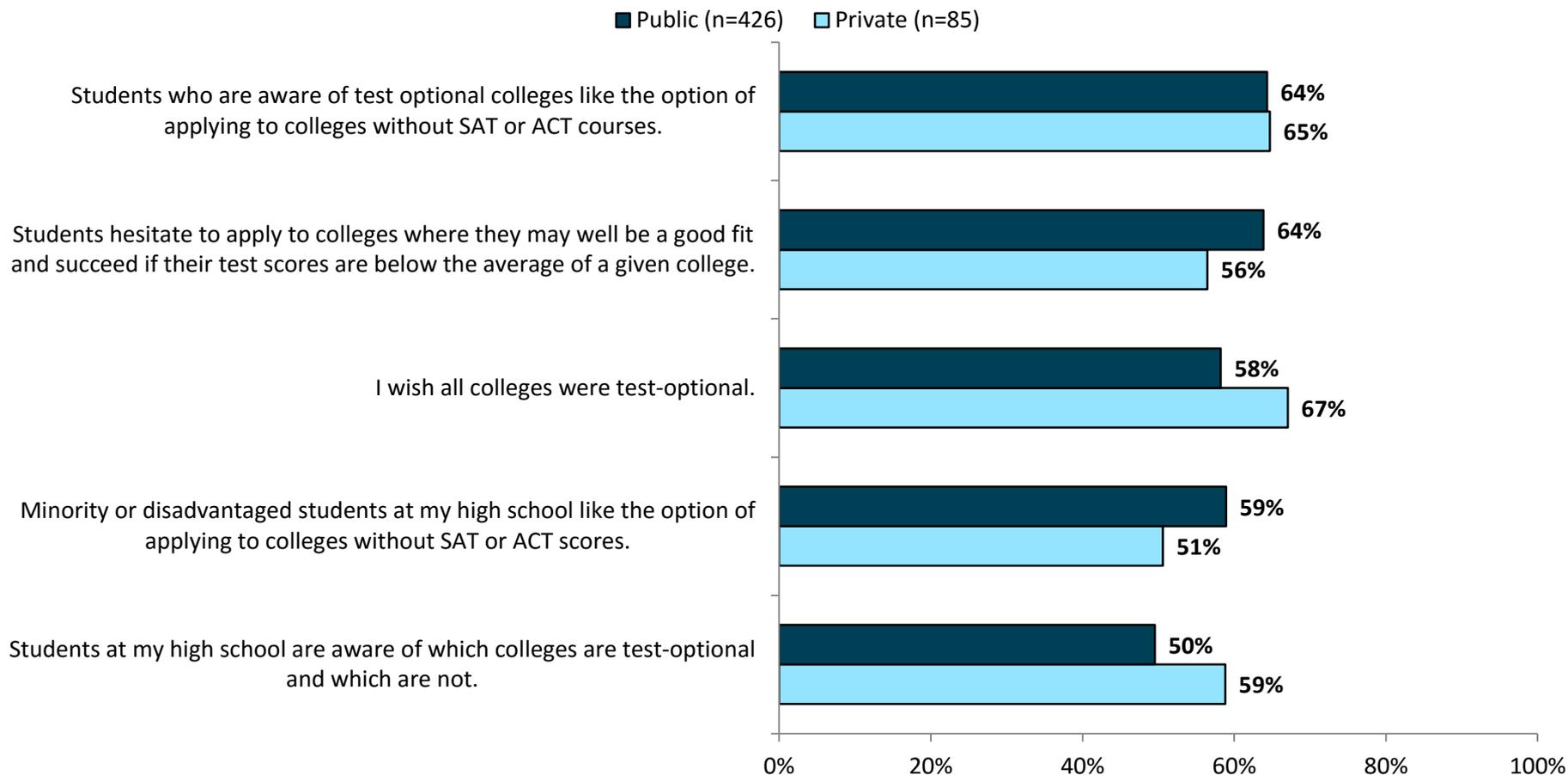


# Standardized Testing—By School Type

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

% "Somewhat Agree" + "Strongly Agree"

By School Type



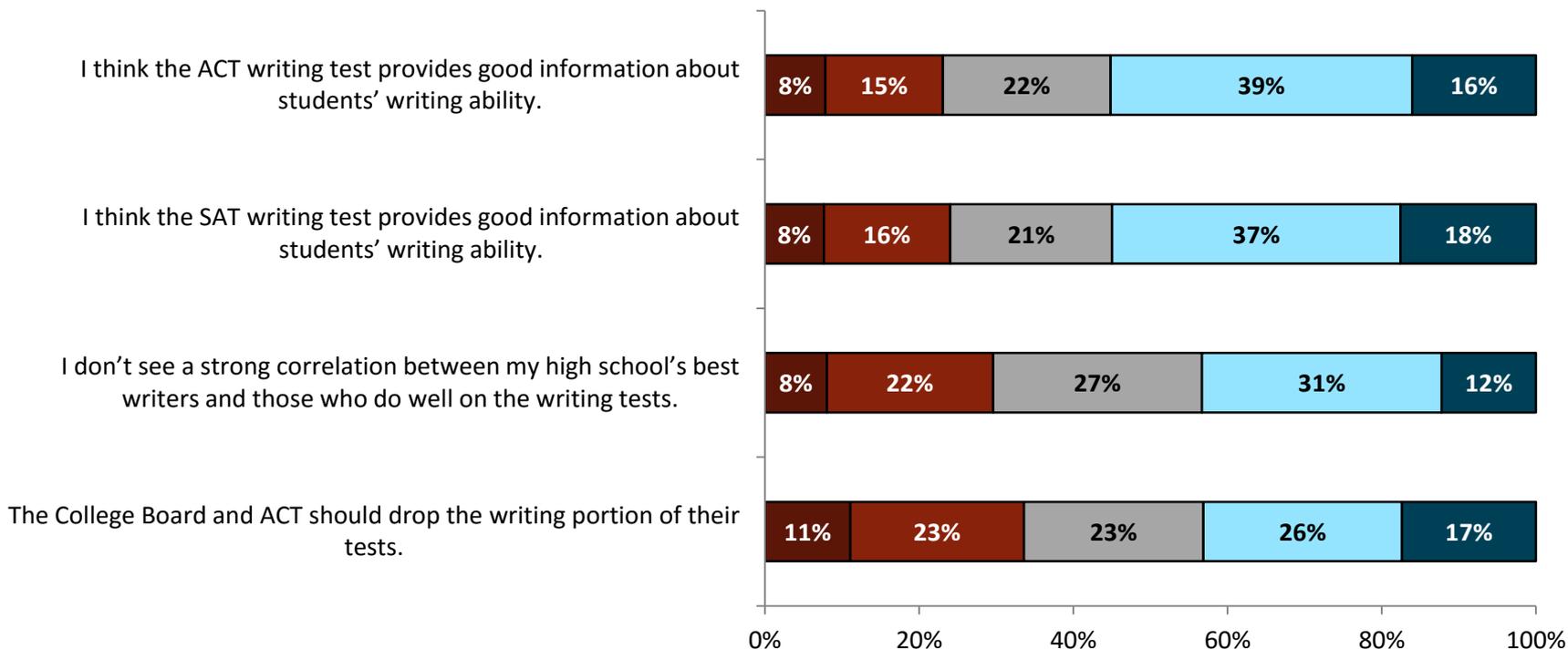
# Standardized Testing—Topline

Only a minority of colleges, even among those that require that the SAT or ACT, require the essay portion. In recent years, several colleges and universities have dropped the essay requirement. As an alternative, one school requires that students submit a graded high school paper instead.

Please reflect on the information presented above and indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

(n=524)

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Neither Agree nor Disagree   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree



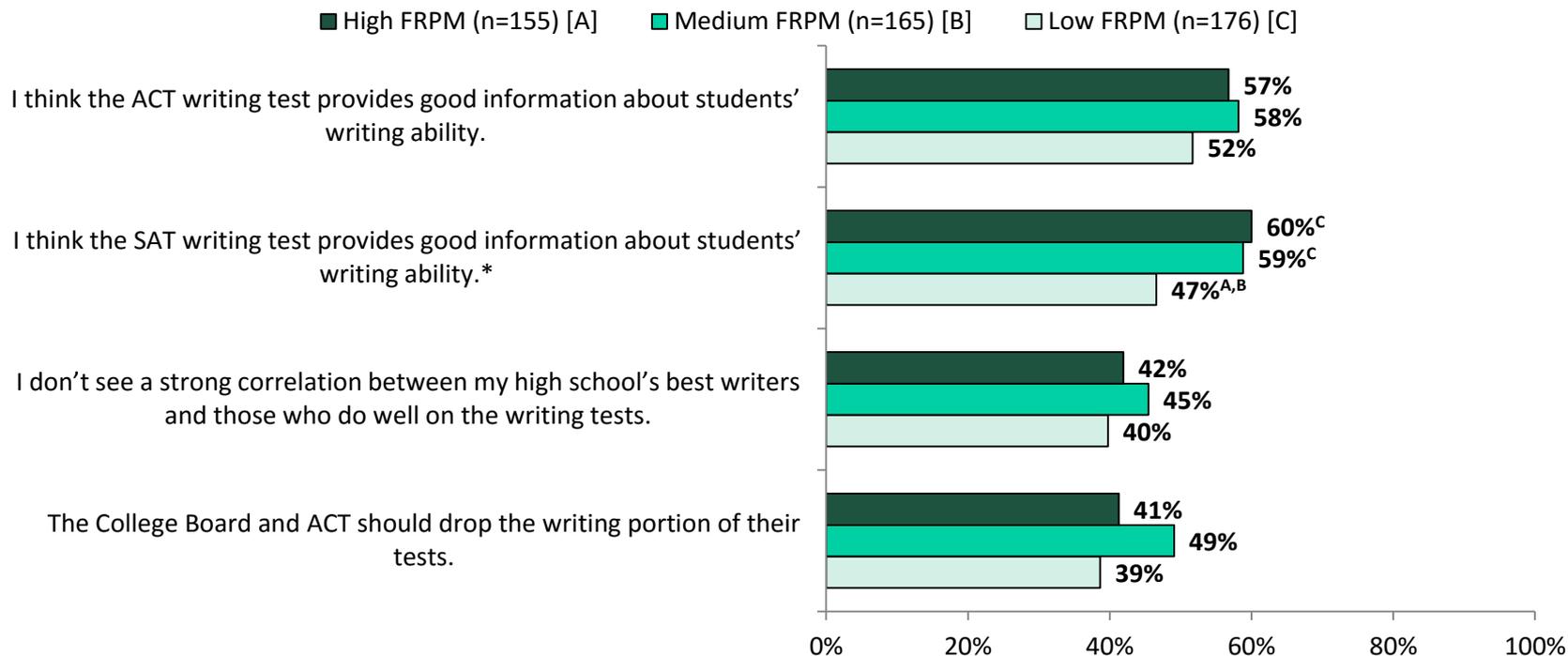
# Standardized Testing—By FRPM

Only a minority of colleges, even among those that require that the SAT or ACT, require the essay portion. In recent years, several colleges and universities have dropped the essay requirement. As an alternative, one school requires that students submit a graded high school paper instead.

Please reflect on the information presented above and indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

% “Somewhat Agree” + “Strongly Agree”

By FRPM

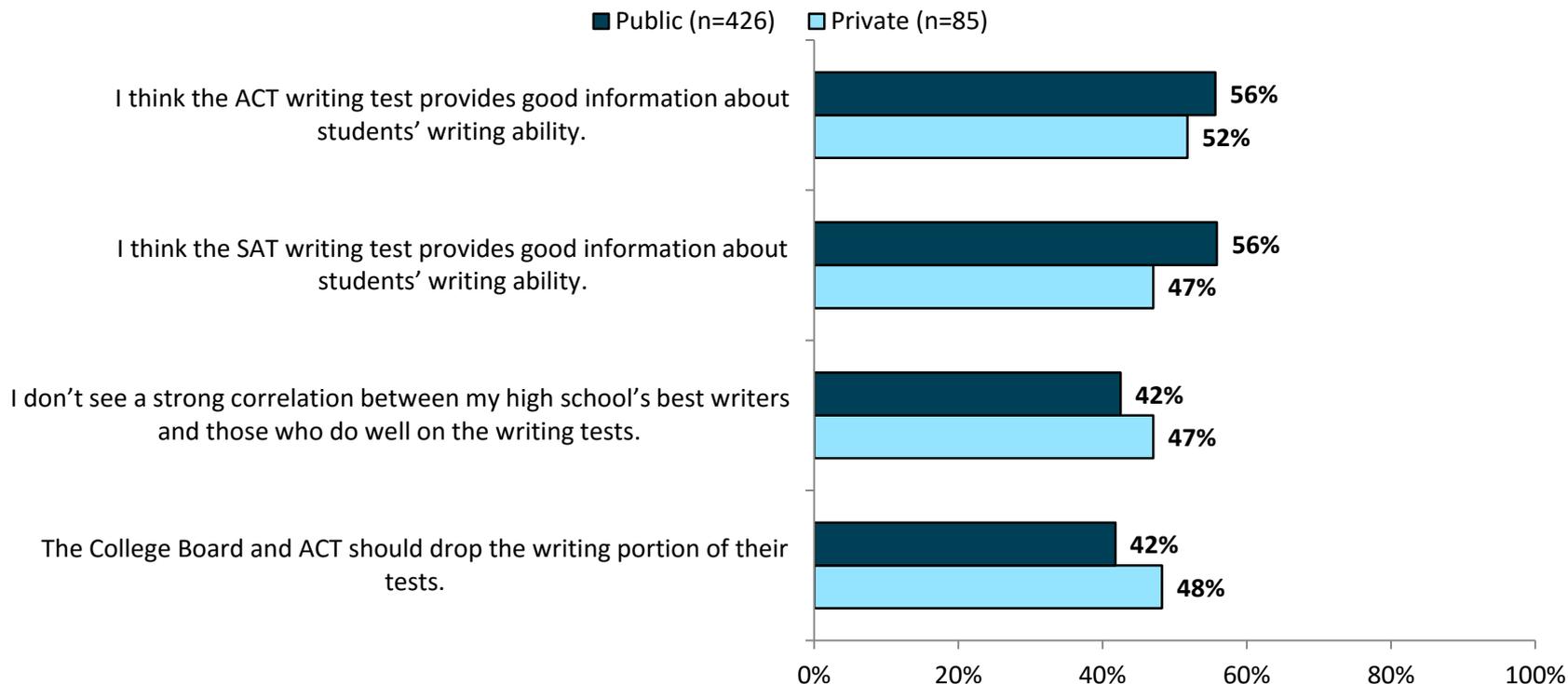


# Standardized Testing—By School Type

Only a minority of colleges, even among those that require that the SAT or ACT, require the essay portion. In recent years, several colleges and universities have dropped the essay requirement. As an alternative, one school requires that students submit a graded high school paper instead.

Please reflect on the information presented above and indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

*% "Somewhat Agree" + "Strongly Agree"*  
*By School Type*

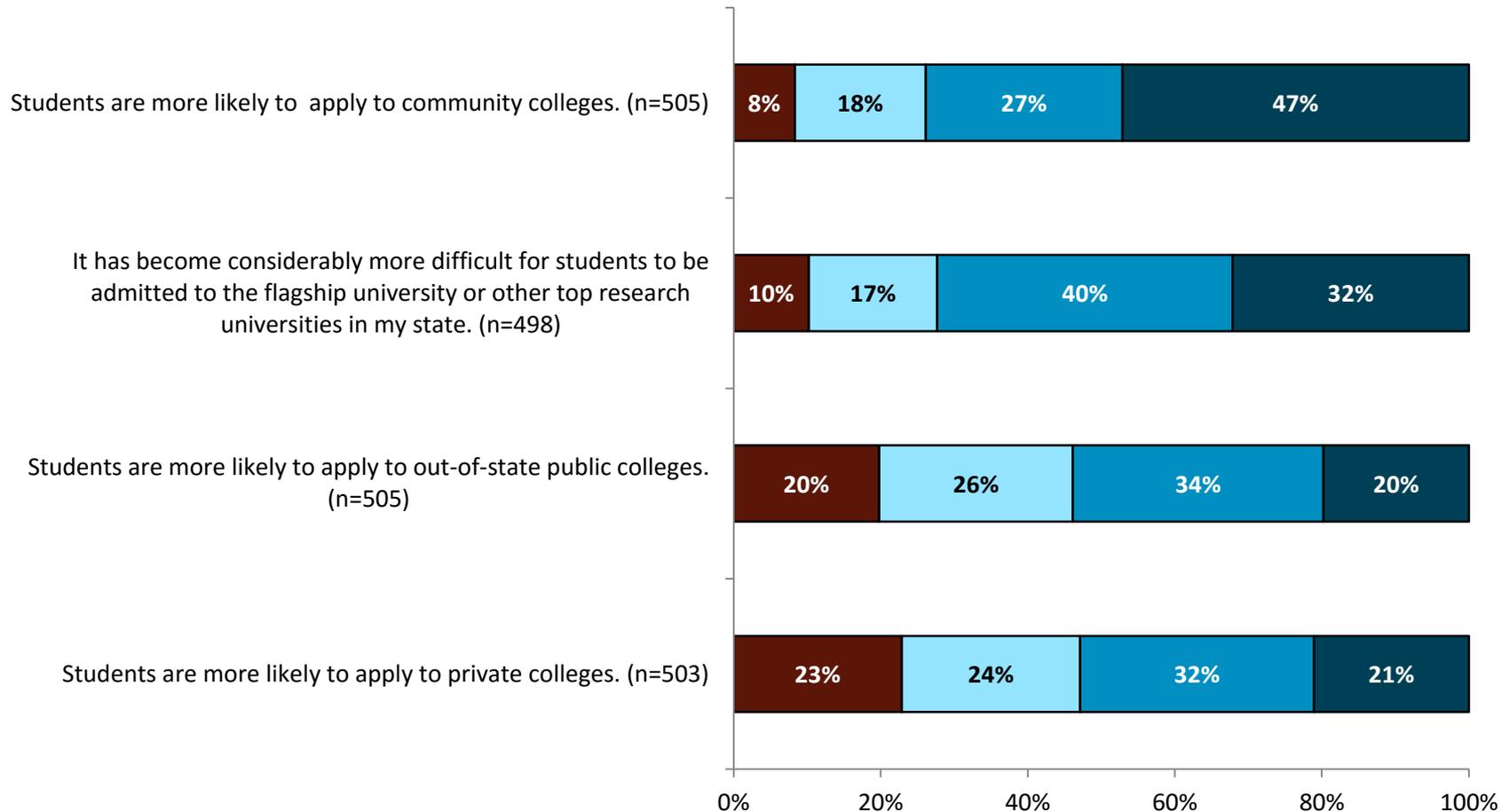


# SECTION V: COLLEGE CHOICE

# College Choice—Topline

In the past three years, to what extent have you noticed the following behaviors and outcomes among your high school students who apply to college(s)?

■ Not at All True   ■ Slightly True   ■ Moderately True   ■ Very True



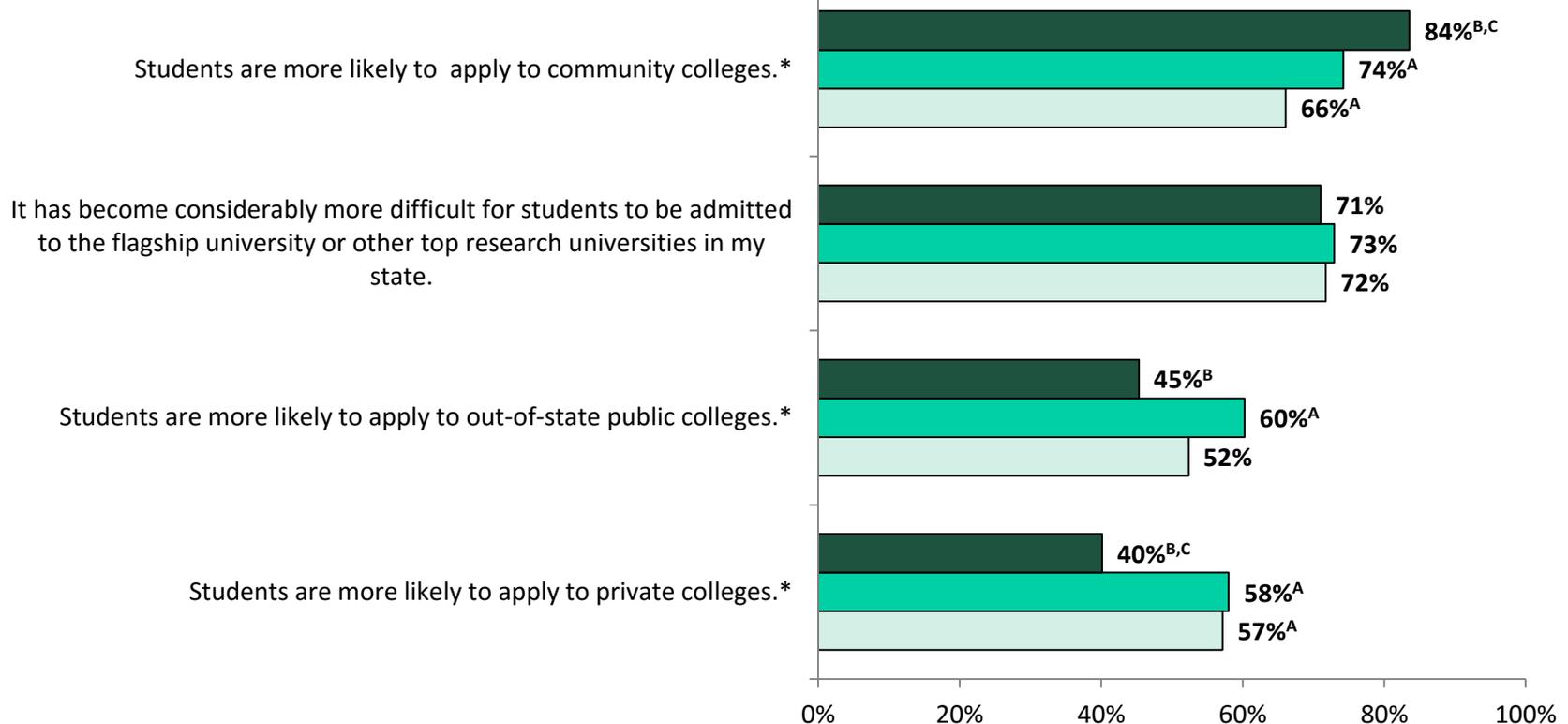
# College Choice—By FRPM

In the past three years, to what extent have you noticed the following behaviors and outcomes among your high school students who apply to college(s)?

% “Moderately True” + “Very True”

By FRPM

■ High FRPM (n=145-152) [A]    ■ Medium FRPM (n=159-162) [B]    ■ Low FRPM (n=170-175) [C]

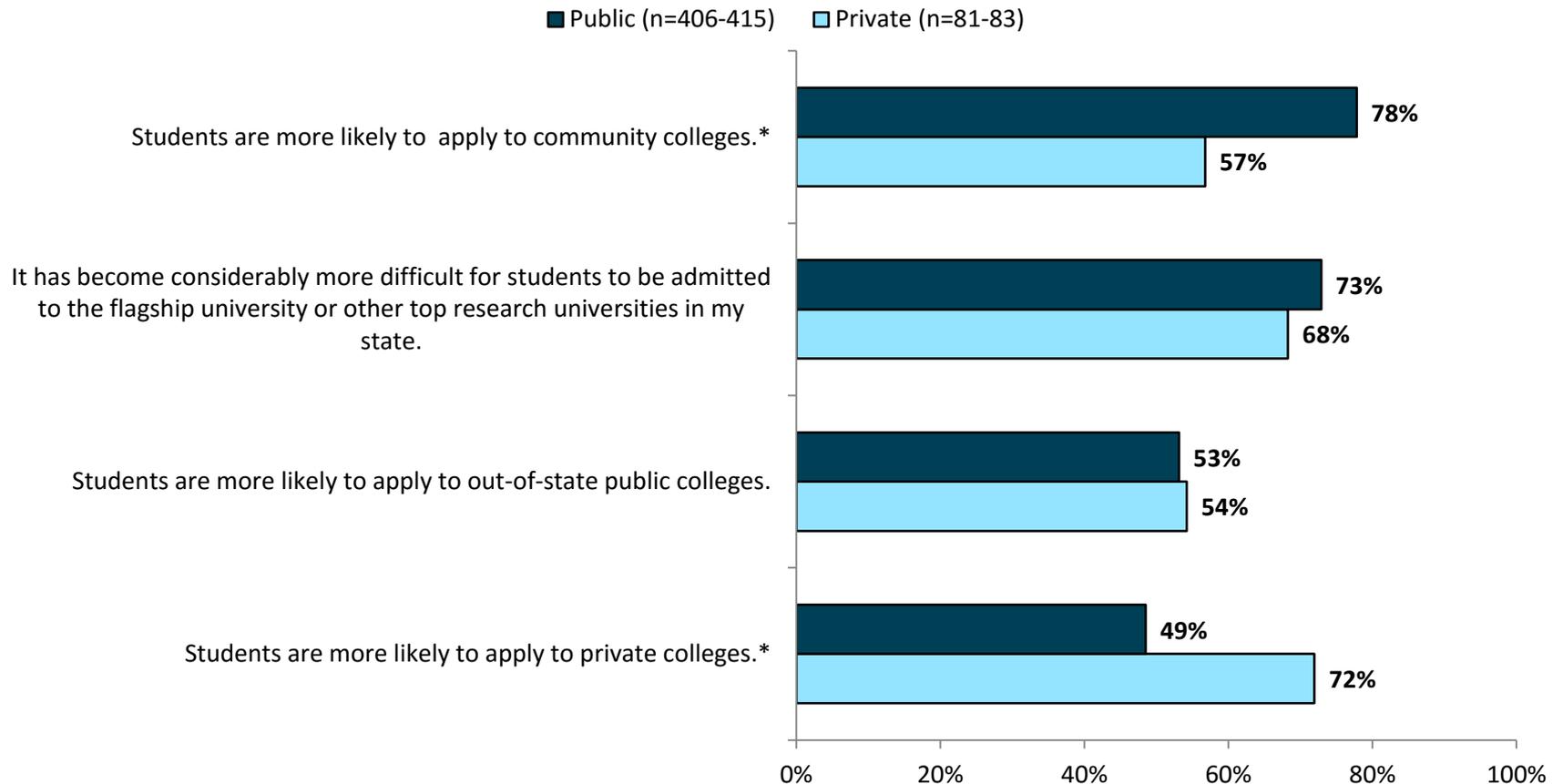


# College Choice—By School Type

In the past three years, to what extent have you noticed the following behaviors and outcomes among your high school students who apply to college(s)?

% "Moderately True" + "Very True"

By School Type



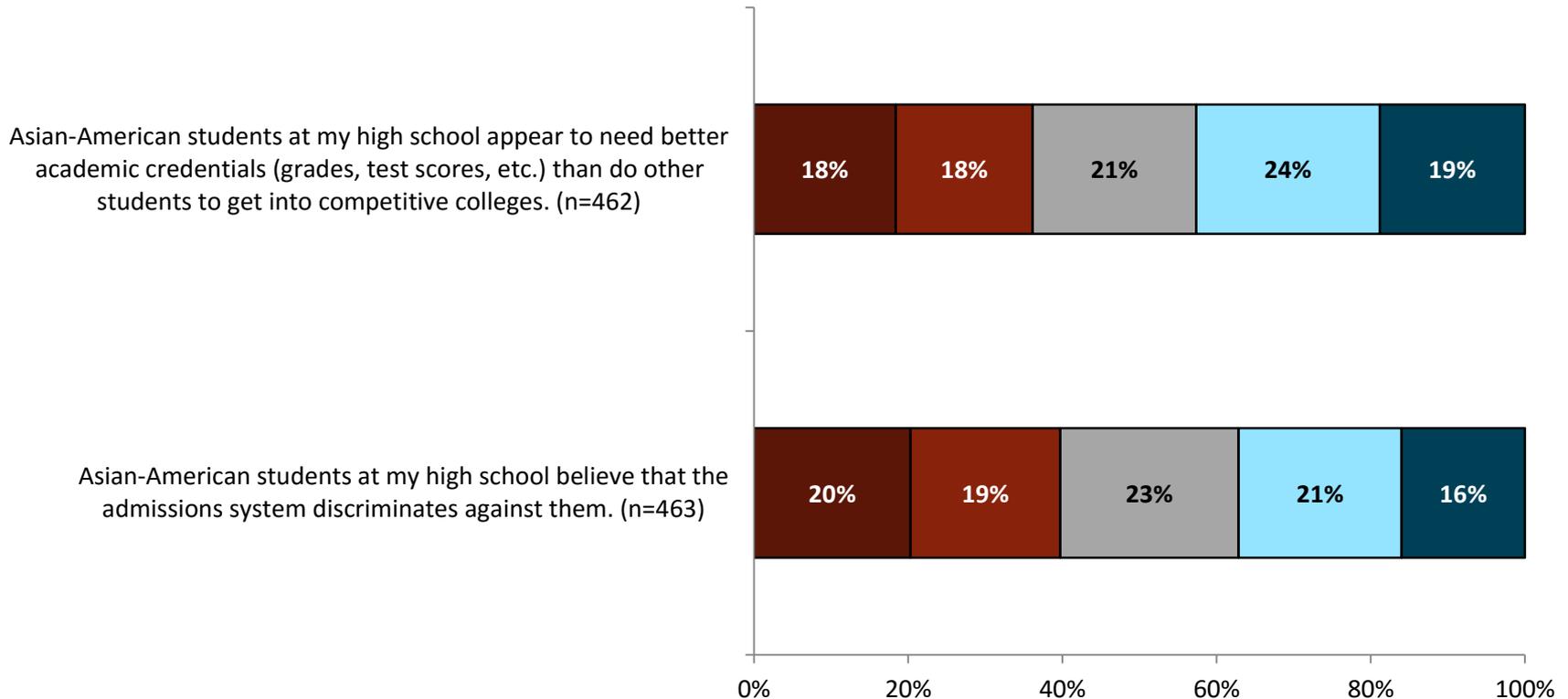
# SECTION VI: AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

# Affirmative Action—Topline

Affirmative action remains a hot topic of discussion in education and political circles. This summer, the Trump administration withdrew Obama-era guidance on how colleges could legally recruit minority students. Some Asian-Americans are suing Harvard University, charging that its affirmative action programs discriminate against Asian-American applicants.

Please reflect on the information presented above and indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

■ Strongly Disagree   ■ Somewhat Disagree   ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree   ■ Somewhat Agree   ■ Strongly Agree



# Affirmative Action—By FRPM

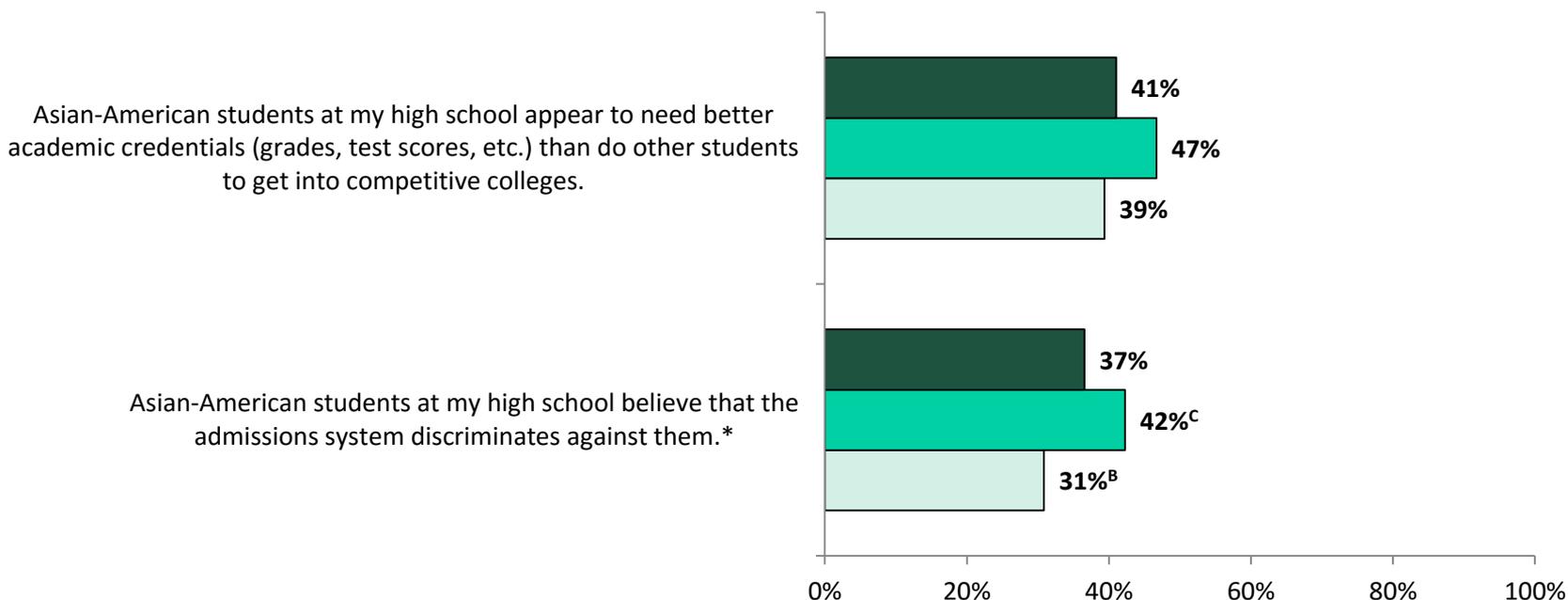
Affirmative action remains a hot topic of discussion in education and political circles. This summer, the Trump administration withdrew Obama-era guidance on how colleges could legally recruit minority students. Some Asian-Americans are suing Harvard University, charging that its affirmative action programs discriminate against Asian-American applicants.

Please reflect on the information presented above and indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

% "Somewhat Agree" + "Strongly Agree"

By FRPM

■ High FRPM (n=134) [A] ■ Medium FRPM (n=149-152) [B] □ Low FRPM (n=160-162) [C]



# Affirmative Action—By School Type

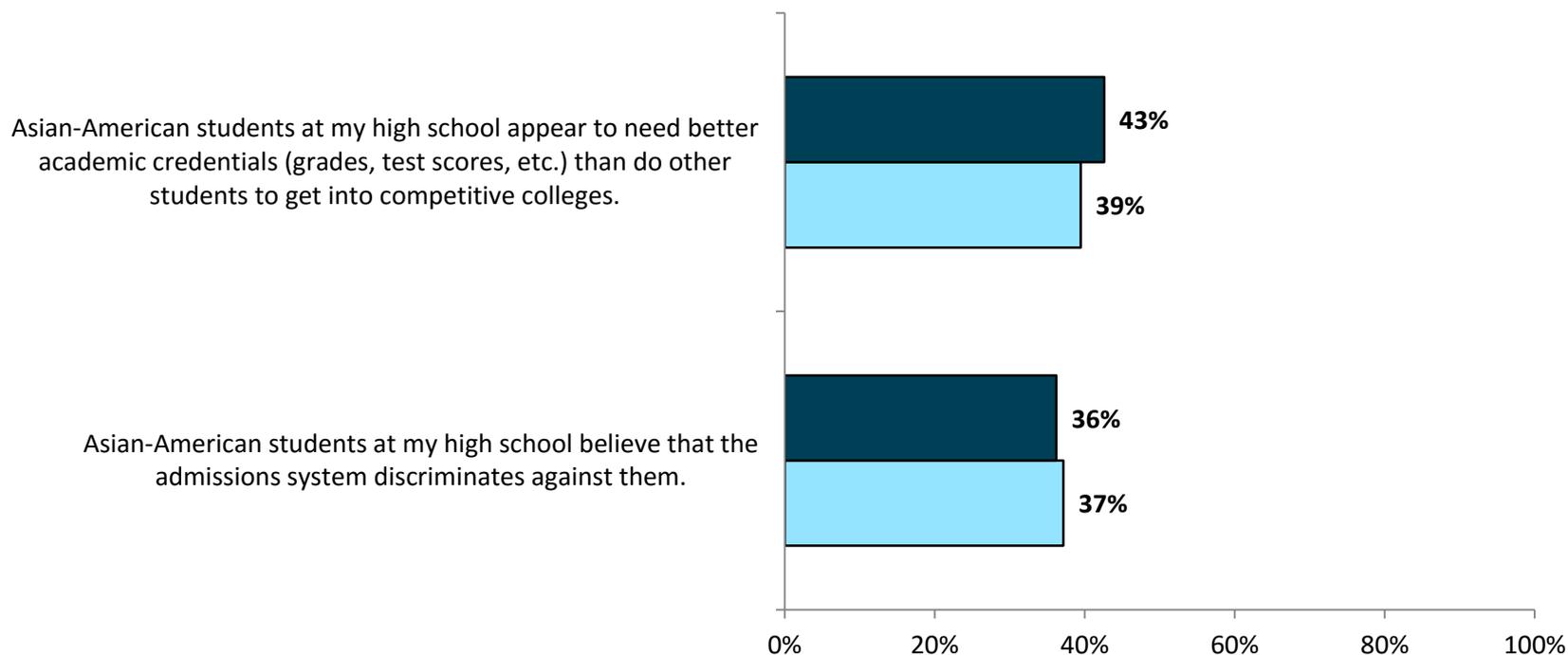
Affirmative action remains a hot topic of discussion in education and political circles. This summer, the Trump administration withdrew Obama-era guidance on how colleges could legally recruit minority students. Some Asian-Americans are suing Harvard University, charging that its affirmative action programs discriminate against Asian-American applicants.

Please reflect on the information presented above and indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

% "Somewhat Agree" + "Strongly Agree"

By School Type

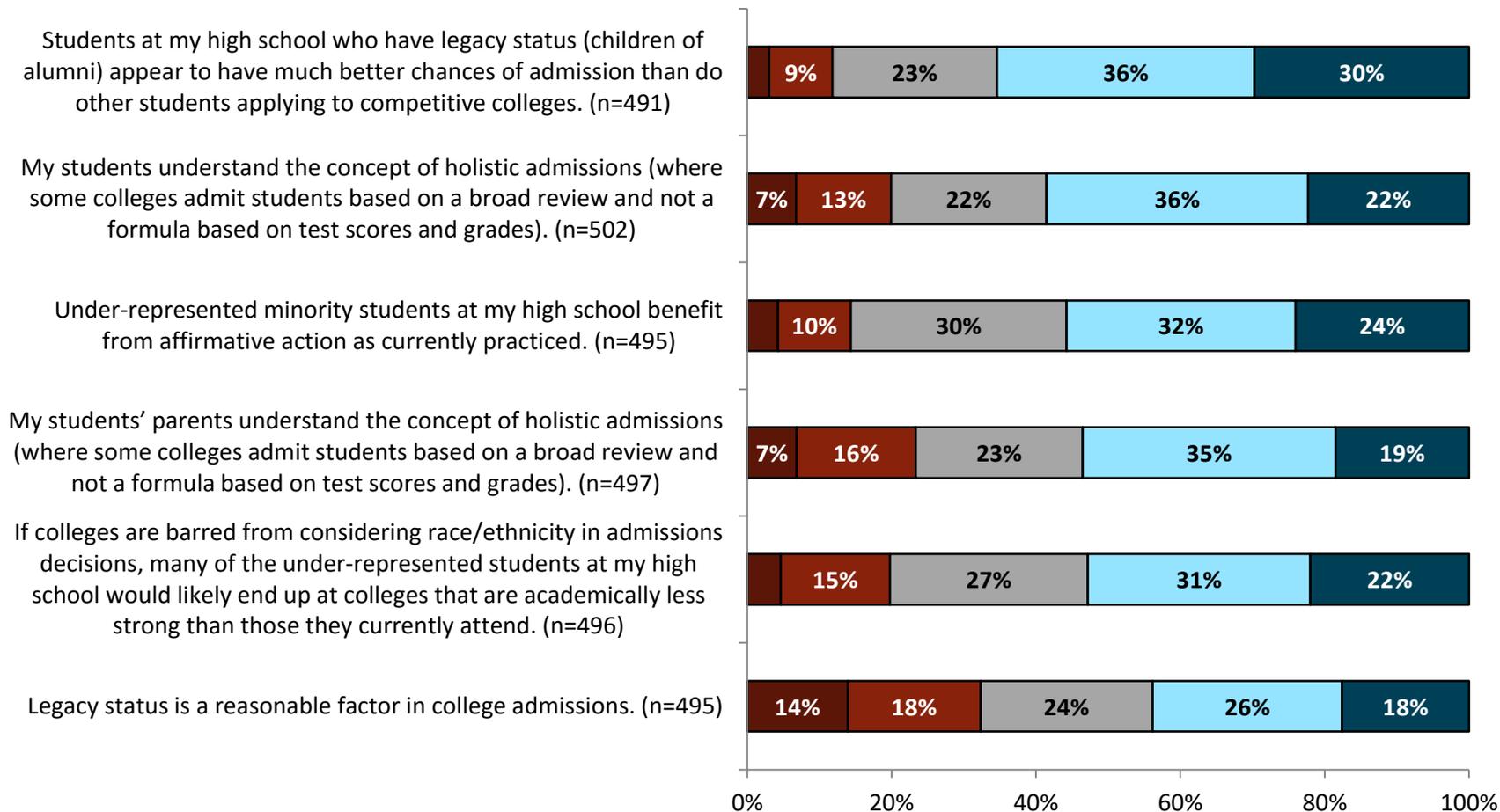
Public (n=378) Private (n=78)



# Affirmative Action—Topline

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

■ Strongly Disagree  
 ■ Somewhat Disagree  
 ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree  
 ■ Somewhat Agree  
 ■ Strongly Agree



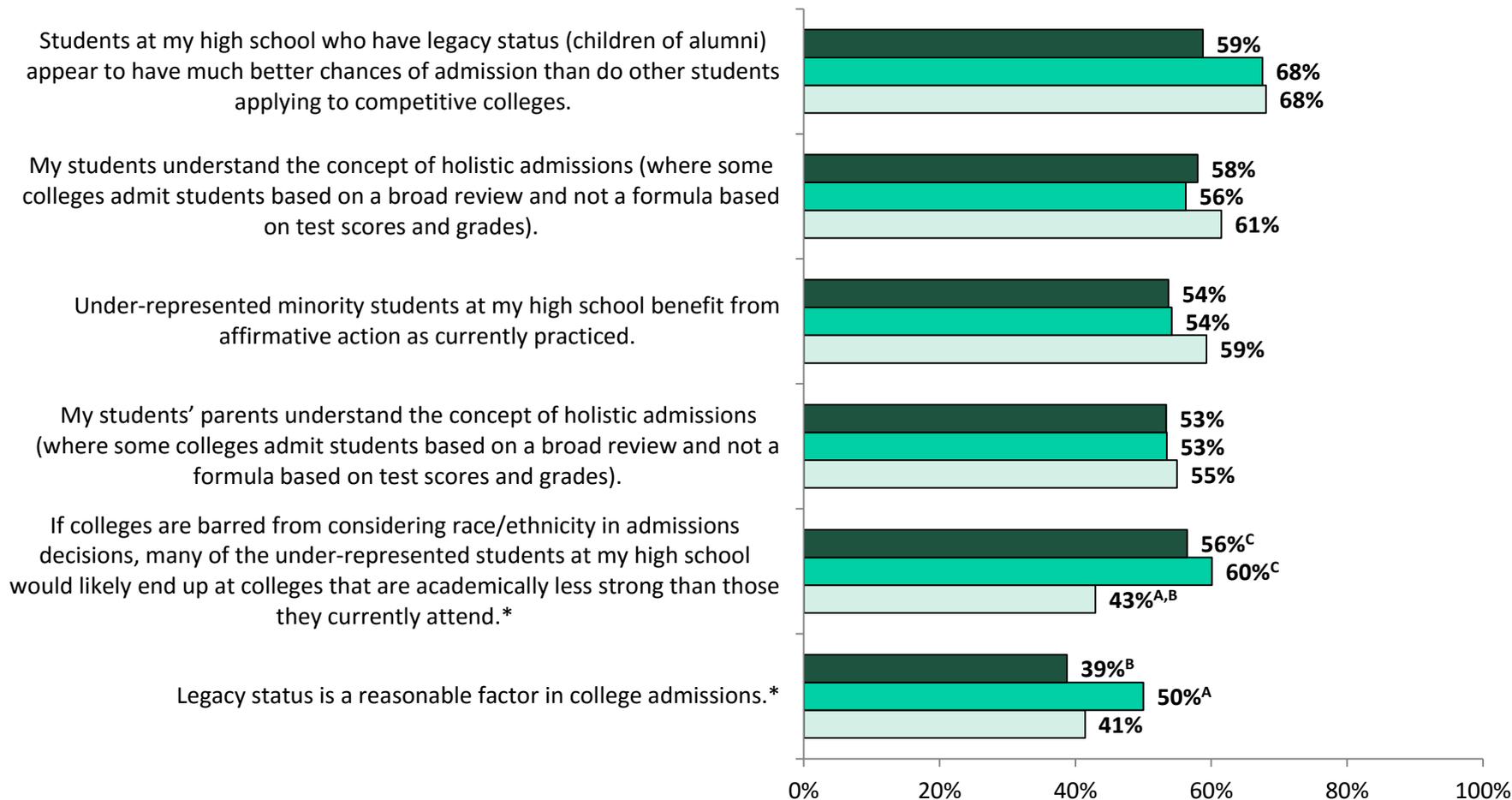
# Affirmative Action—By FRPM

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

% "Somewhat Agree" + "Strongly Agree"

By FRPM

■ High FRPM (n=147-150) [A] ■ Medium FRPM (n=155-160) [B] □ Low FRPM (n=169-174) [C]



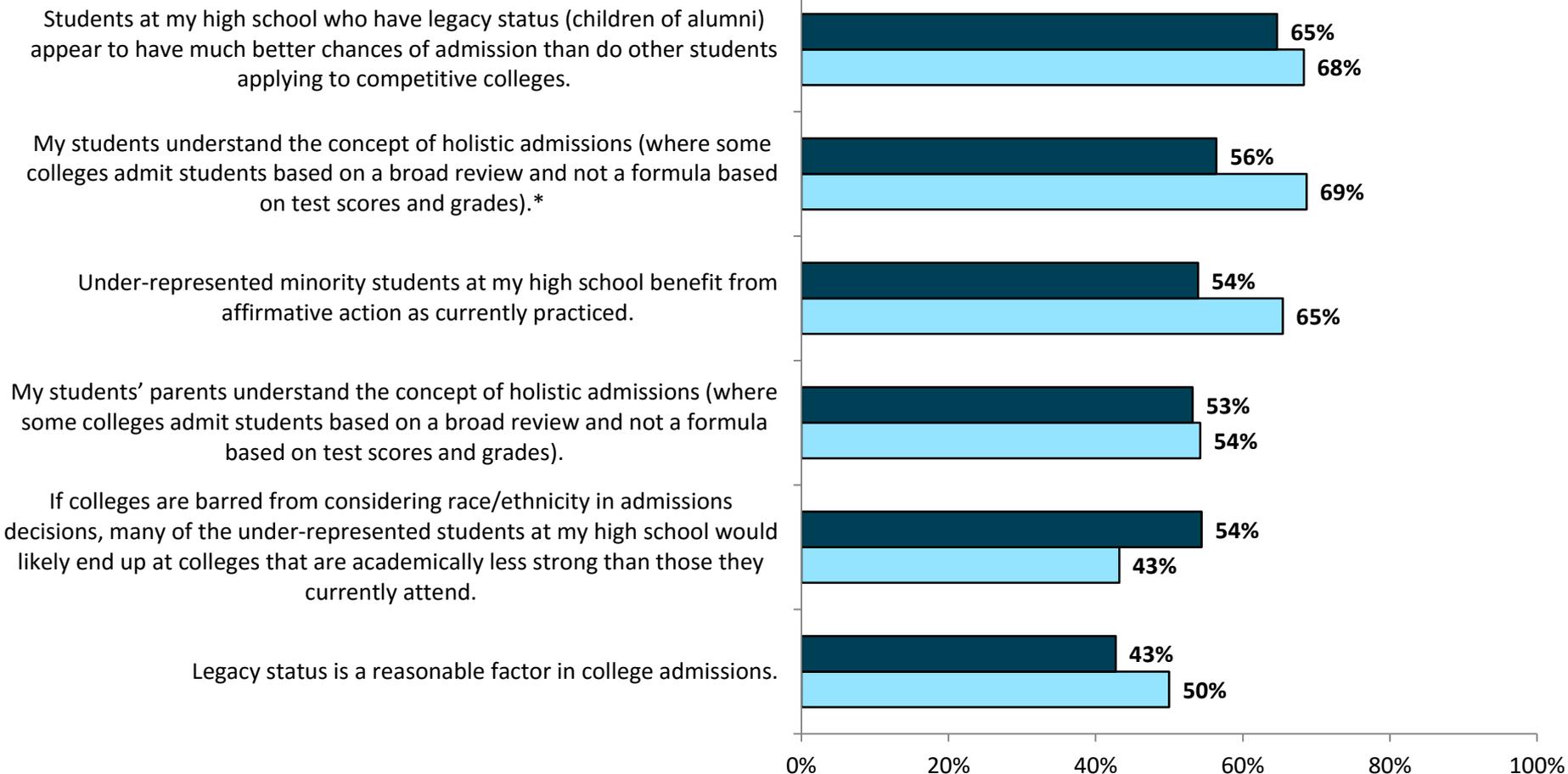
# Affirmative Action—By School Type

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

% "Somewhat Agree" + "Strongly Agree"

By School Type

■ Public (n=402-413)    □ Private (n=81-83)

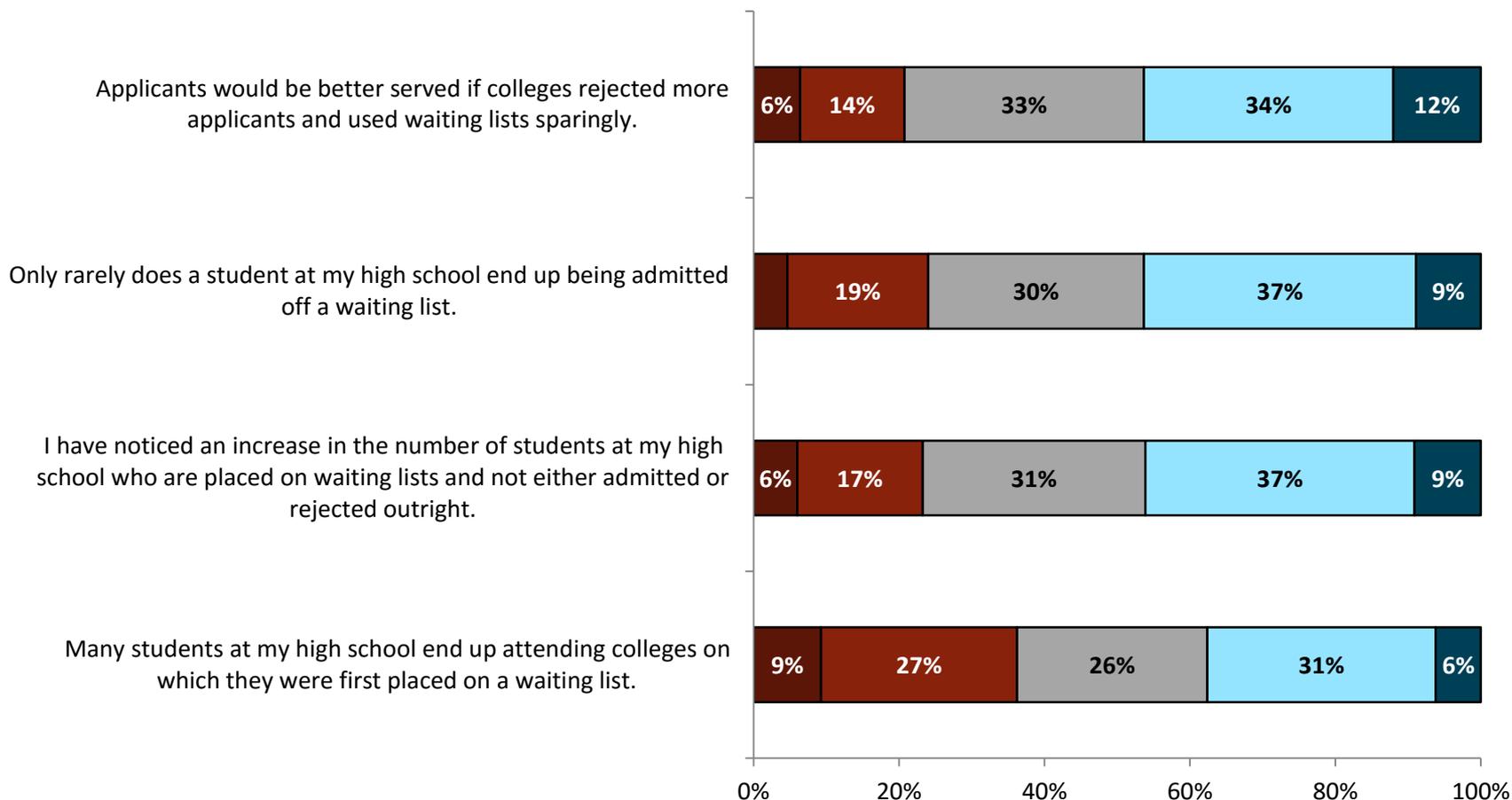


# SECTION VII: WAITING LIST

# Waiting List—Topline

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:  
(n=516)

Strongly Disagree   Somewhat Disagree   Neither Agree nor Disagree   Somewhat Agree   Strongly Agree



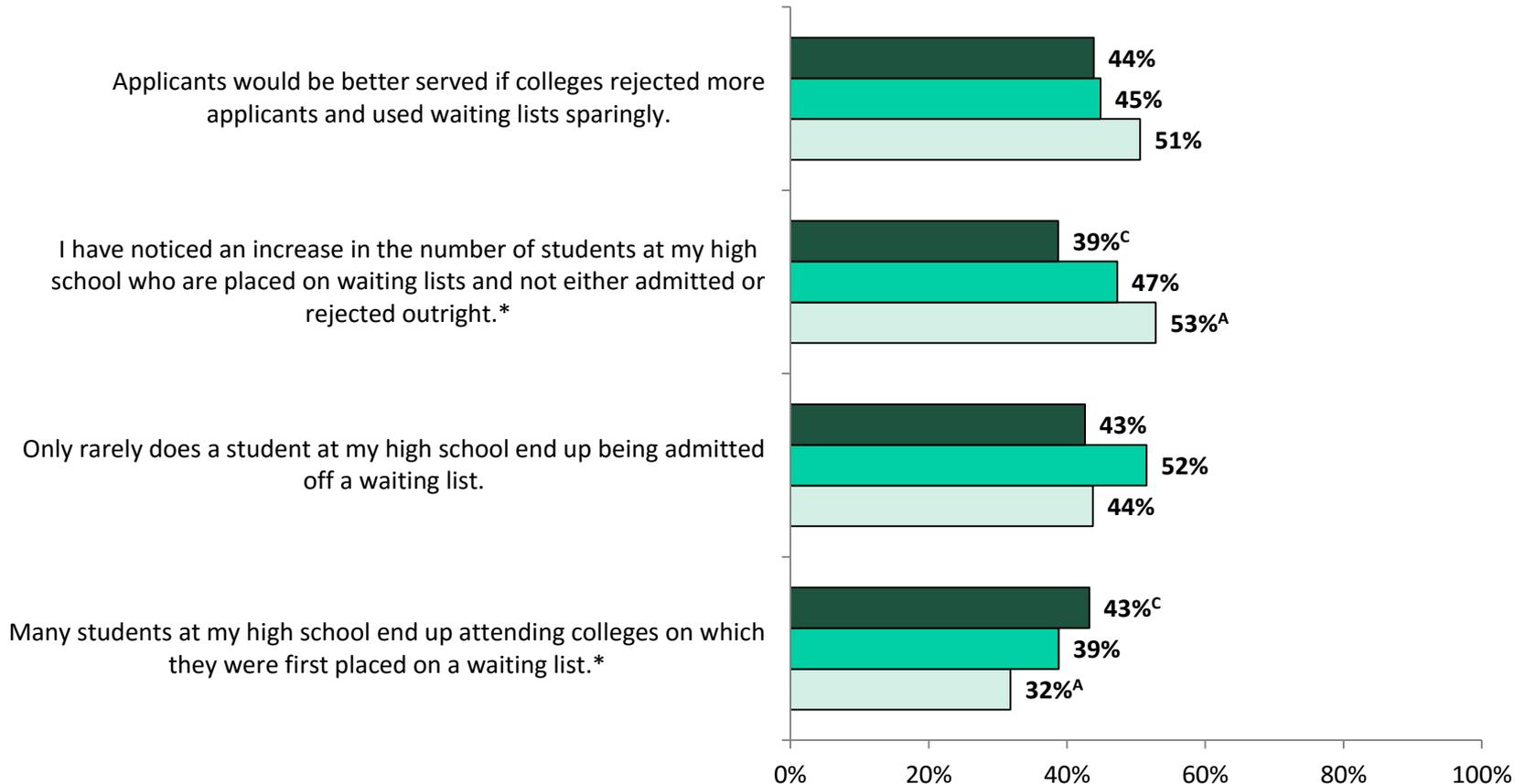
# Waiting List—By FRPM

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

% "Somewhat Agree" + "Strongly Agree"

By FRPM

■ High FRPM (n=155) [A] ■ Medium FRPM (n=165) [B] □ Low FRPM (n=176) [C]

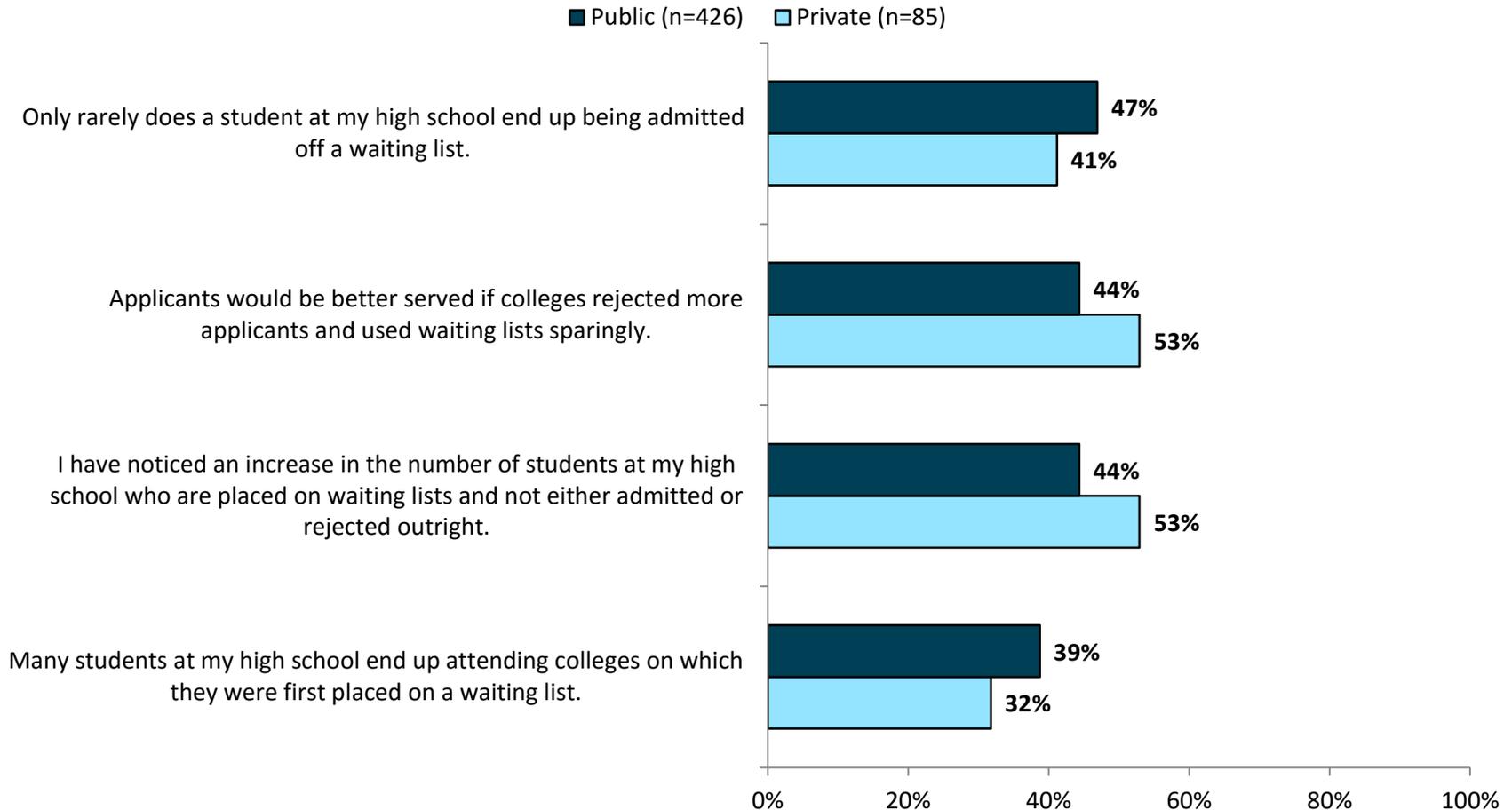


# Waiting List—By School Type

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

% "Somewhat Agree" + "Strongly Agree"

By School Type

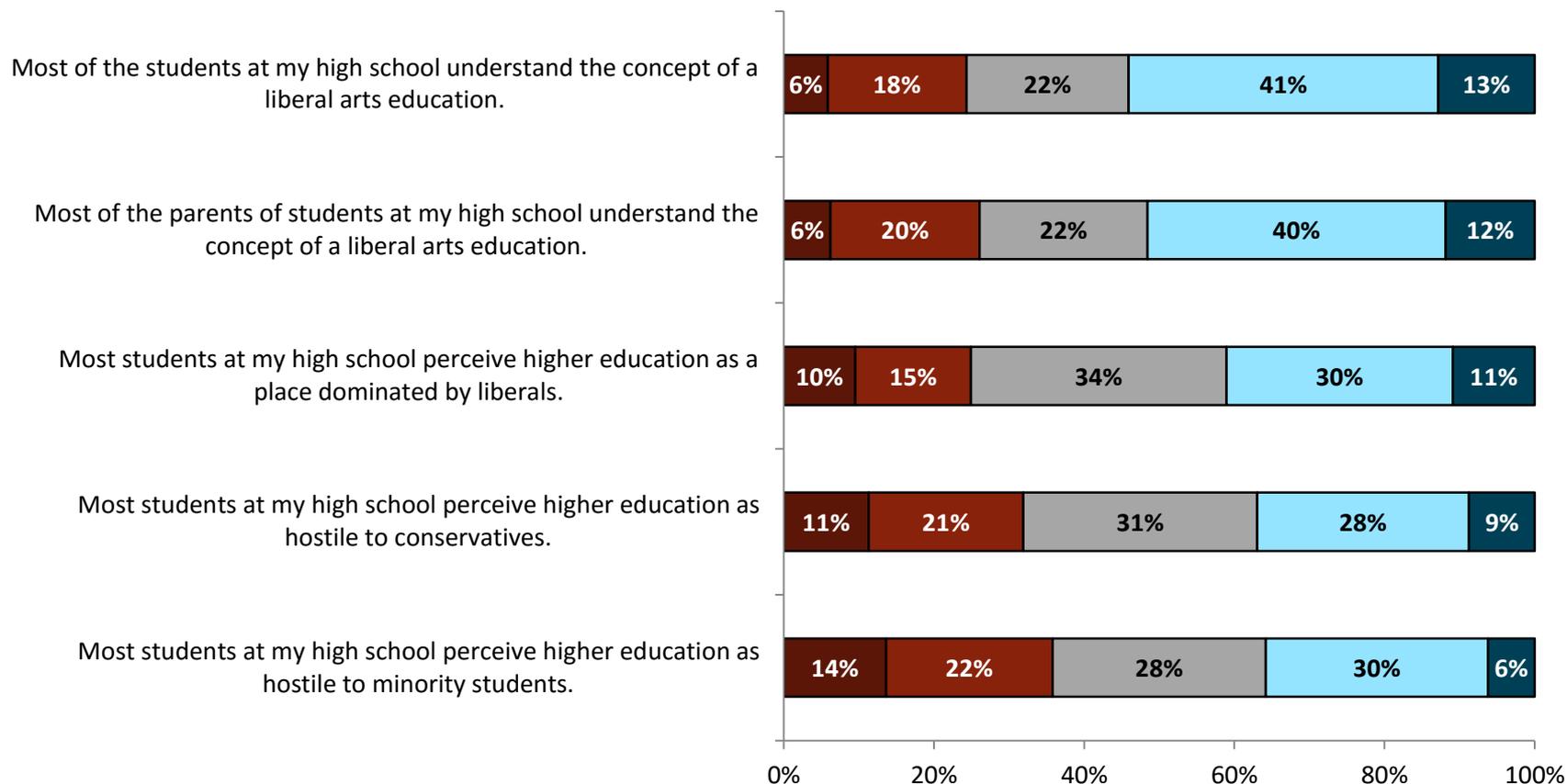


# SECTION VIII: IMAGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

# Image of Higher Education—Topline

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:  
(n=514)

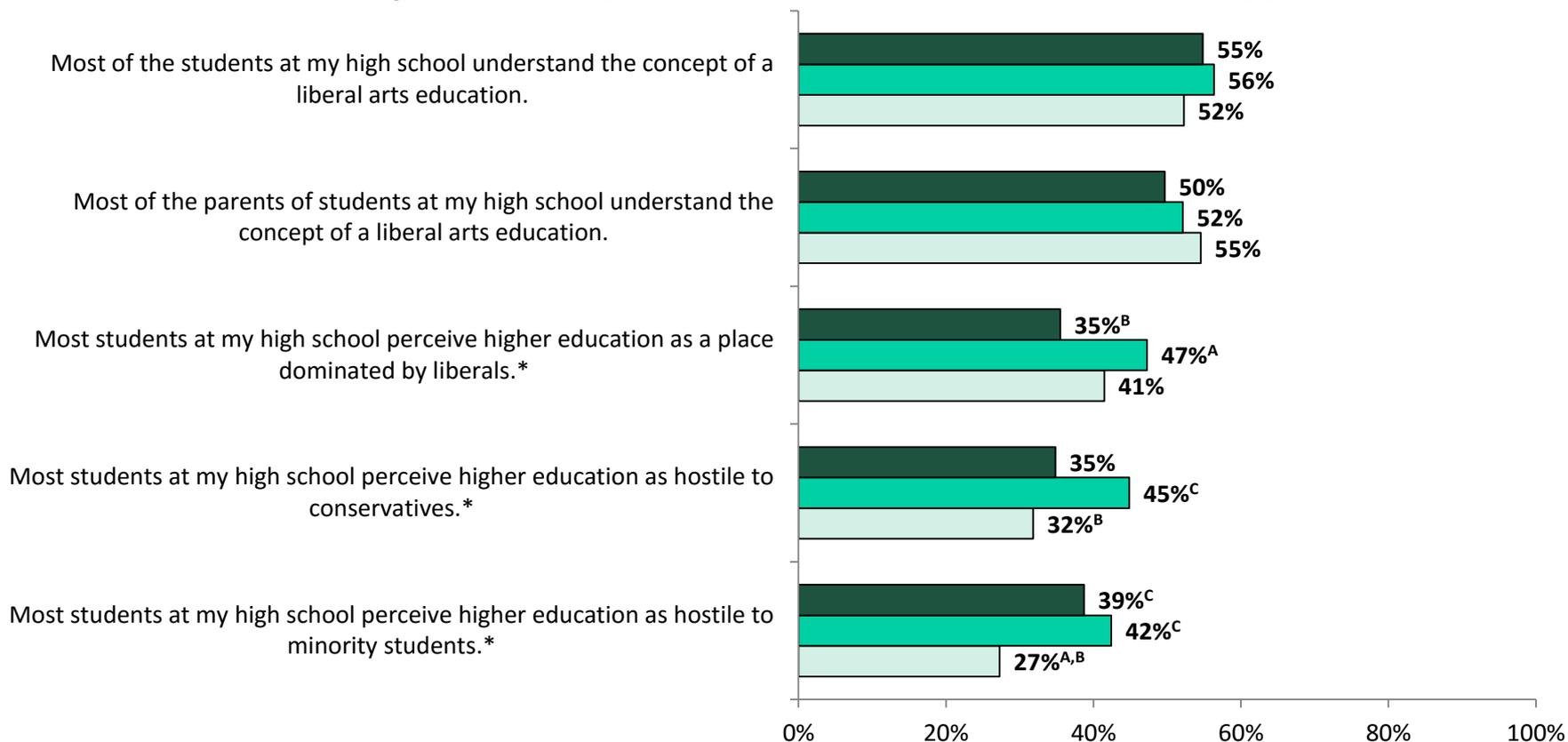
■ Strongly Disagree  
 ■ Somewhat Disagree  
 ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree  
 ■ Somewhat Agree  
 ■ Strongly Agree



# Image of Higher Education—By FRPM

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:  
 % "Somewhat Agree" + "Strongly Agree"  
 By FRPM

■ High FRPM (n=155) [A]   ■ Medium FRPM (n=165) [B]   ■ Low FRPM (n=176) [C]

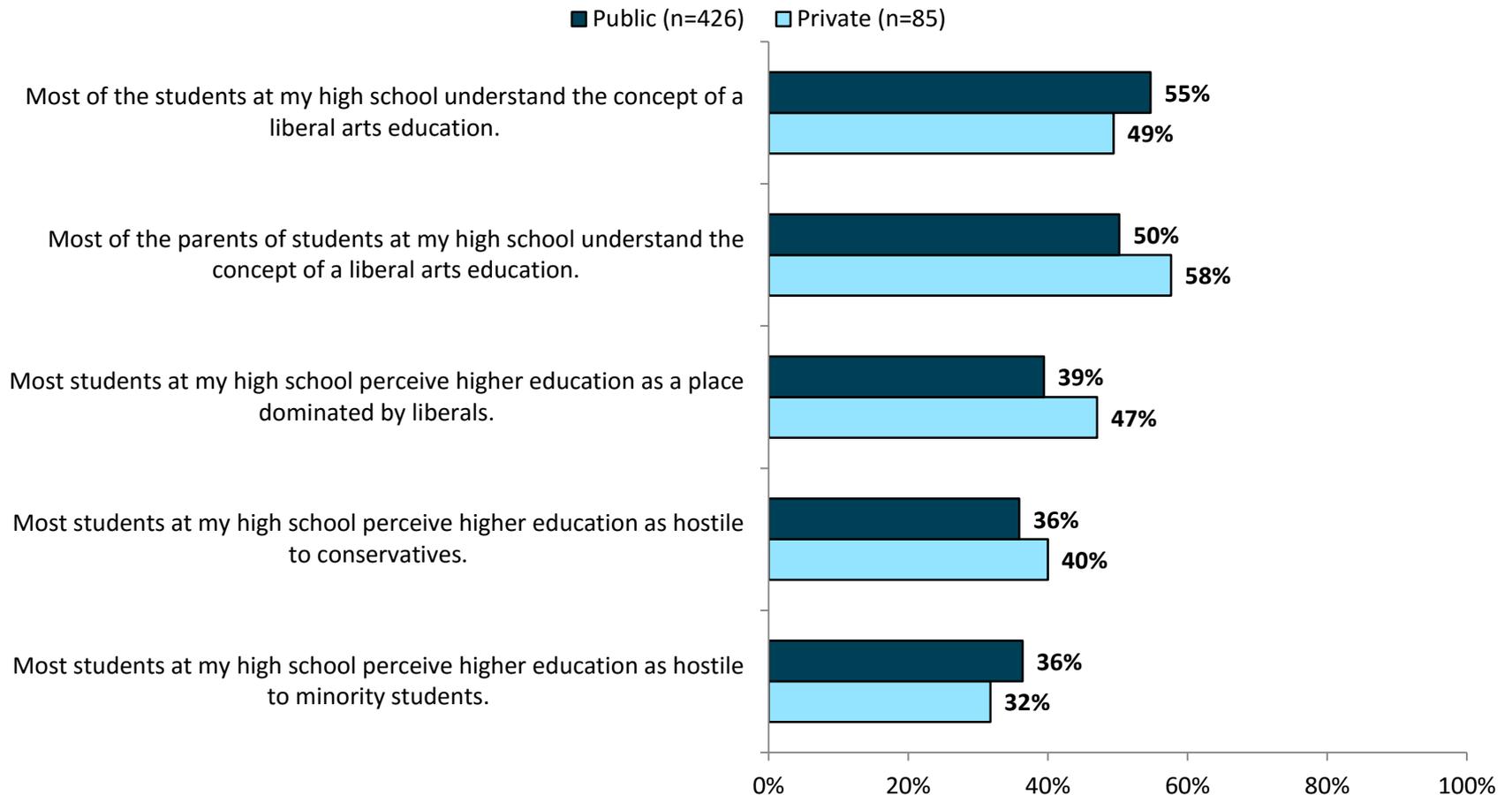


# Image of Higher Education—By School Type

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

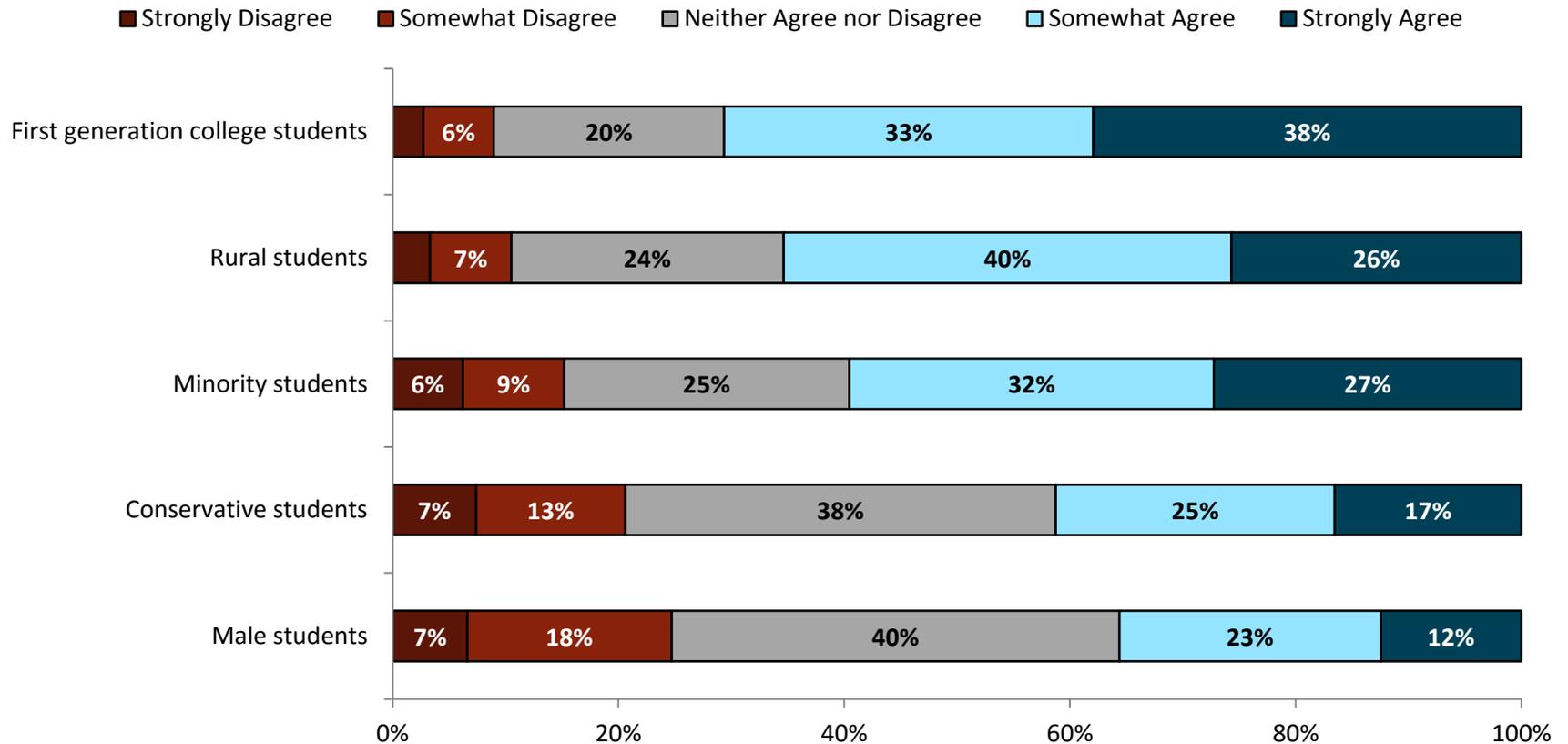
% "Somewhat Agree" + "Strongly Agree"

By School Type



# Image of Higher Education—Topline

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:  
Colleges need to work harder to recruit:  
(n=514)



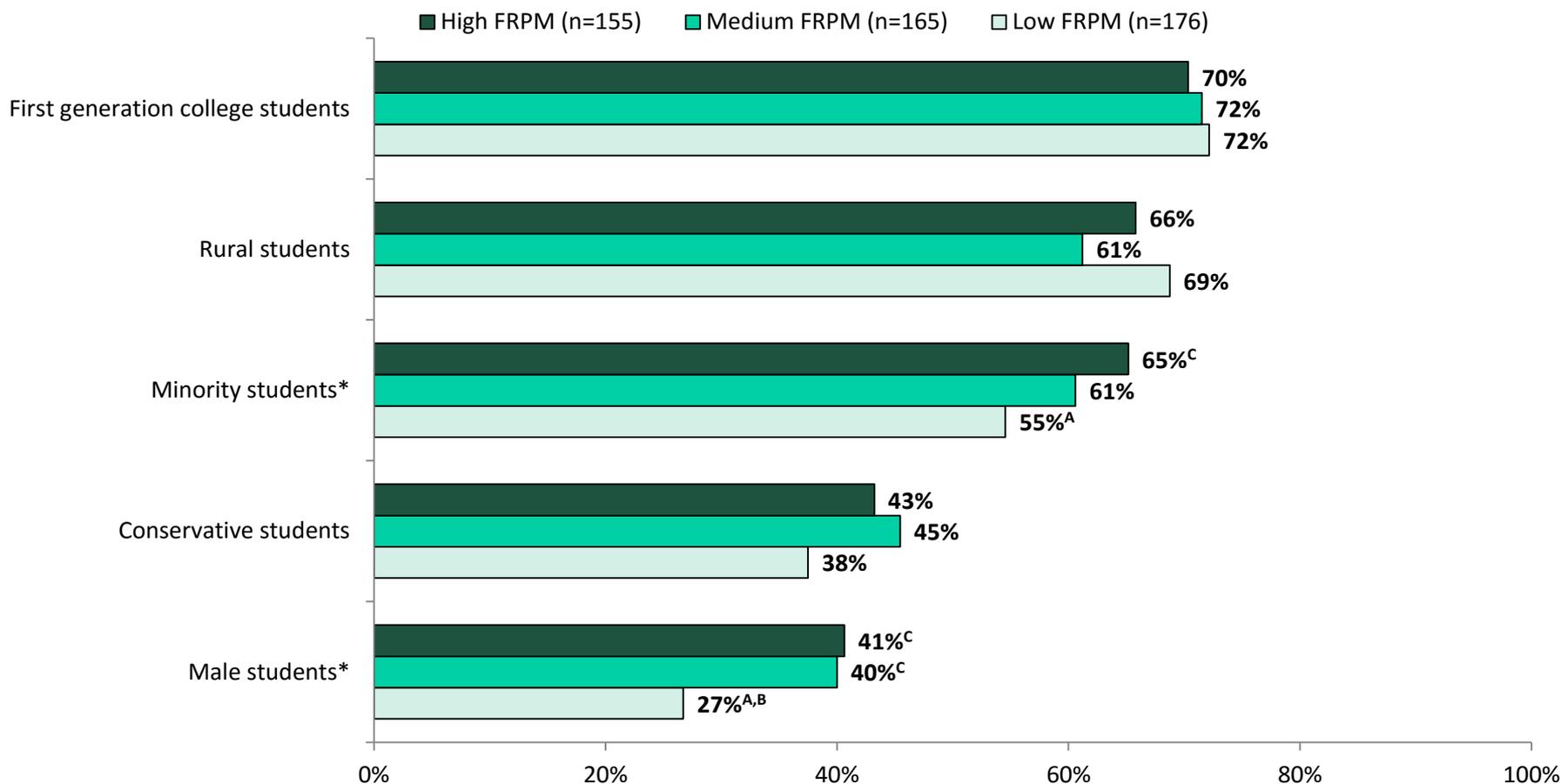
# Image of Higher Education—By FRPM

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

**Colleges need to work harder to recruit:**

% "Somewhat Agree" + "Strongly Agree"

By FRPM



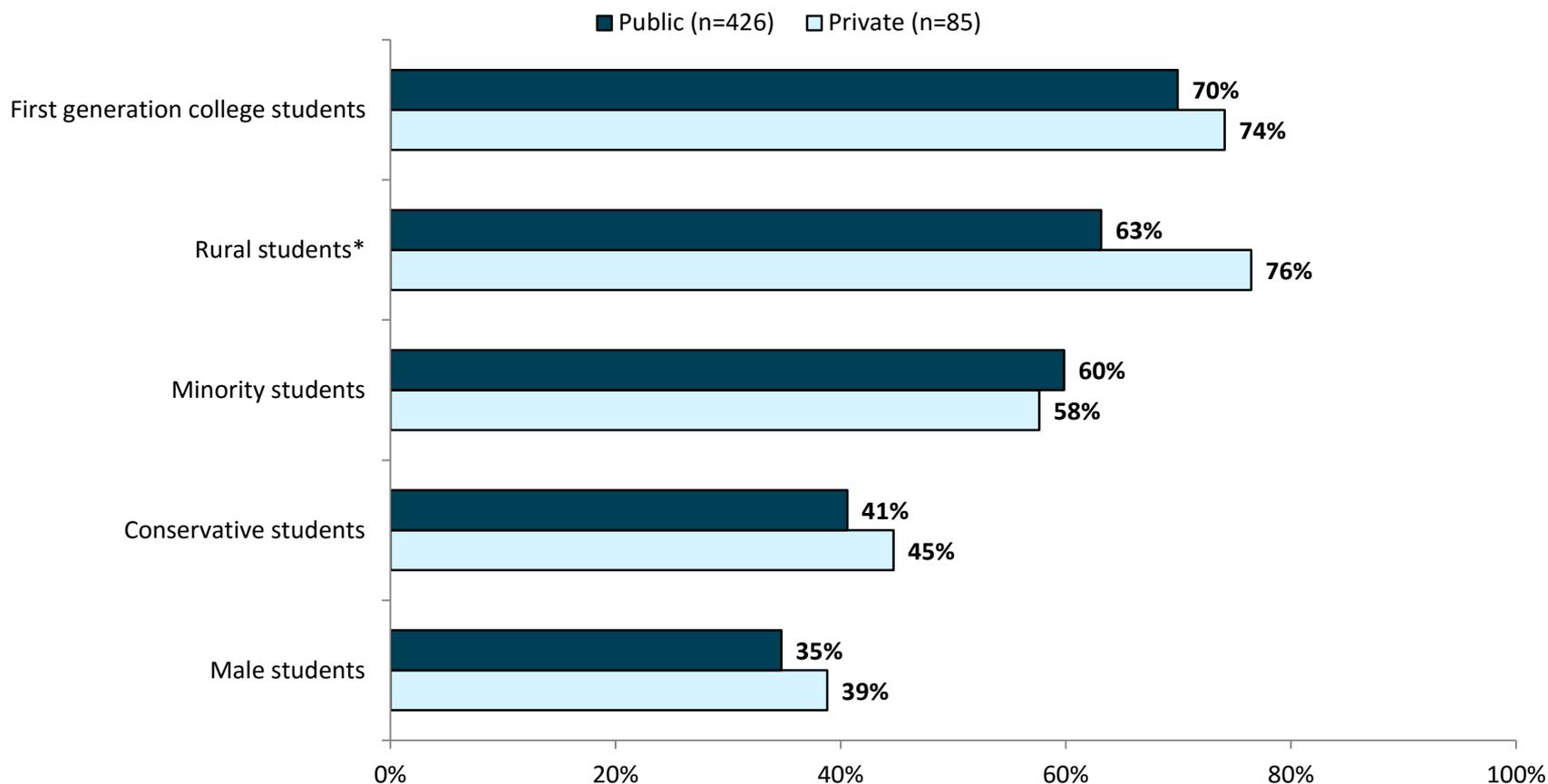
# Image of Higher Education—By School Type

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements:

**Colleges need to work hard to recruit:**

% "Somewhat Agree" + "Strongly Agree"

By School Type



# INSIDE HIGHER ED

**HR** HANOVER  
RESEARCH

