

# Applied and Enrolled, Attrition, and Persistence Report

September 2023



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# Executive Summary

## Purpose

This research brief focuses on four metrics of student's progression through college: number of applicants, applied and enrolled rate, attrition rate, and persistence rate. Through the disaggregation of success metrics by academic year and amongst student groups and programs of study, the college may better identify areas for more targeted interventions.

## Key Findings

- Columbia College applicants declined during the COVID-19 pandemic but are now trending to pre-pandemic levels. Over the past five years, female applicants represent the largest percentage of total applicants.
- Roughly 40-45% of applicants do not enroll within a year after applying. Students aged 20+ have lower applied and enrolled rates compared to students 19 and younger.
- The attrition rate spiked in Fall 2020 to 21.5% due to the COVID-19 but is roughly 9.5% each Fall term. Younger students and full-time students are less likely to drop all of their courses.
- Fall to Spring persistence rates have declined from 68.7% in Fall 2018 to 60.3% in Fall 2022. One of the largest declines in persistence rates was among students 17 and younger dropping from 74.9% in Fall 2018 to 57.0% in Fall 2022.

## Conclusion

Based on many of the findings presented in this brief, trends within and gaps between academic programs of study were less consistent compared to differences between student groups.

# Introduction

The research brief focuses on student's success metrics related to a student's start and progression through college. Metrics are disaggregated based on student populations and programs of study over the past five academic years. Through the disaggregation of success metrics amongst student populations and program of study the college can better identify trends over time and where gaps exist. The success metrics included in this report include:

## Number of Applicants

The number of applicants each year includes only students that obtained a student ID. This is to better combat fraudulent applicants. The program of study for this metric and the applied and enrolled rate is based on the program that a student selects during the application process. This selection may not reflect their program of study after meeting with a counselor.

## Applied and Enrolled Rate

The applied and enrolled rate measures the percent of applicants that enrolled at Columbia College within a year. **Note that the applied and enrolled rate for 2022-23 is still in progress as applicants in 2022-23 may enroll in 2023-24.**

## Attrition Rate

Attrition is defined as a student that attempted credit courses and withdrew from *all* of the courses that they enrolled in during the fall semester. It is important to note that the courses that a student enrolls in may not reflect program specific courses for the term when looking at attrition by program of study.

## Persistence Rate

Persistence is defined as a student that enrolls at Columbia College and enrolls in a subsequent primary term at the college. The focus of this brief is on *Fall-Spring persistence*.

# Number of Applicants

Figure 1 illustrates the number of applicants by academic year. The number of Columbia College applicants decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic and have begun to increase back to their pre-pandemic levels.

Figure 1. Columbia College Applicants by Academic Year from 2018-19 to 2022-23

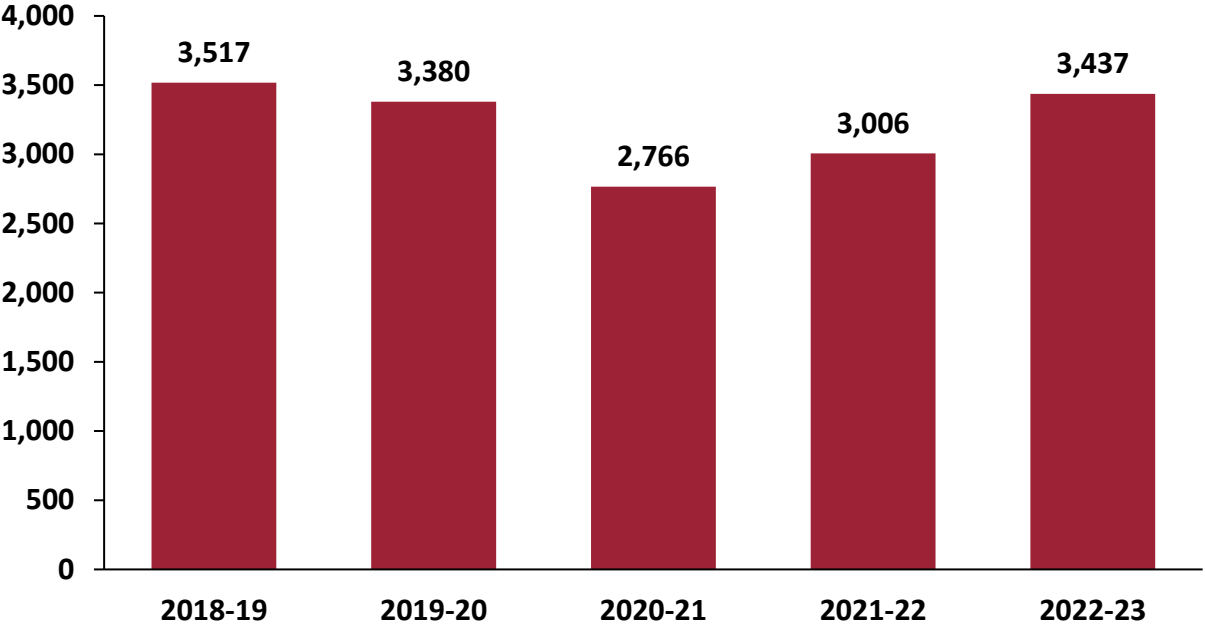


Table 1. shows percentage of applicants broken down by student groups and program of study. The percentage of male applicants (39.9%) is significantly lower than the percentage of female applicants (56.7%) in 2022-23. The percentage of applicants that are 17 or younger has increased from 15.6% in 2018-19 to 23.2% in 2022-23. The percentage of applicants between the ages of 20 and 29 has seen the largest decrease from 32.4% in 2018-19 to 24.8% in 2022-23. The ethnicity of applicants has remained relatively similar over time with roughly 30% of applicants represented people of color and 70% of applicants were white.

Applicants with a program of study including Special Populations (primarily 9-12 students), Still Deciding, and Lifelong Learners makes up a large percentage of applicants. Healthcare, Emergency Services, and Social and Behavioral Sciences are the most popular among applicants.

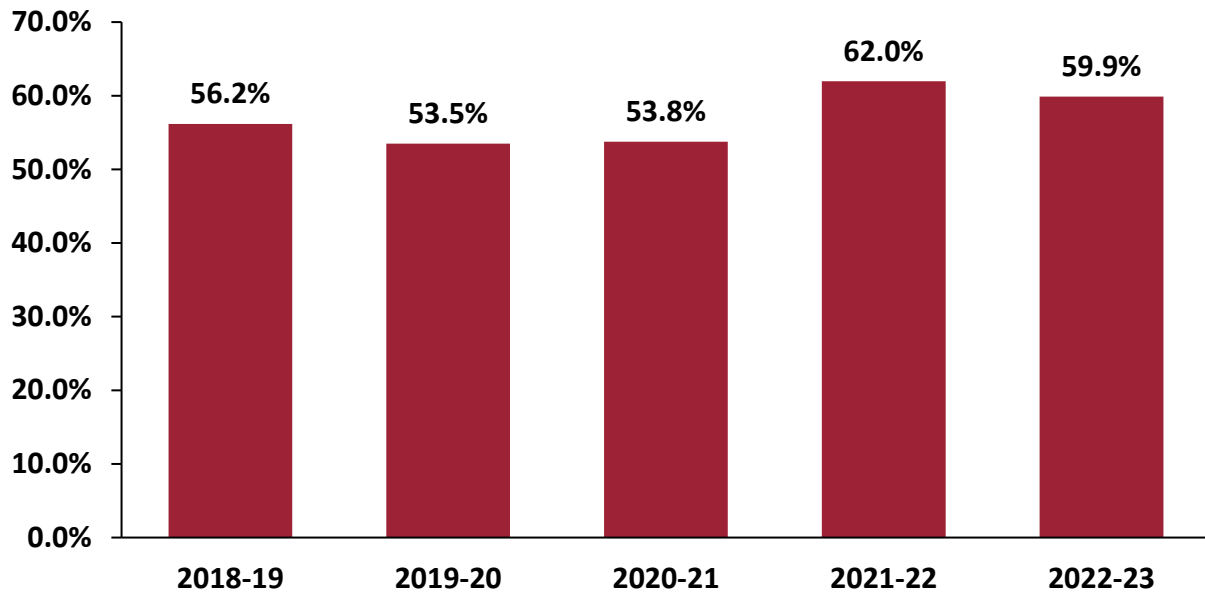
**Table 1. Columbia College Applicants by Academic Year and Demographic from 2018-19 to 2022-23**

	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>
<b>Total Applicants</b>	3,517	3,380	2,766	3,006	3,437
<b>Gender</b>					
Female	55.8%	55.1%	59.1%	56.3%	56.7%
Male	41.8%	42.3%	38.2%	40.6%	39.9%
<b>Age Group</b>					
17 or less	15.6%	17.8%	20.6%	23.5%	23.2%
18 to 19	23.4%	23.0%	24.5%	19.8%	19.3%
20 to 29	32.4%	32.7%	28.5%	24.3%	24.8%
30 to 49	19.4%	18.3%	20.6%	23.0%	22.8%
50+	9.2%	8.2%	5.7%	9.5%	9.8%
<b>Ethnicity</b>					
People of Color	28.3%	29.1%	28.2%	29.0%	30.5%
White	71.1%	69.4%	69.8%	70.0%	68.5%
<b>First-Generation Status</b>					
First-Generation	60.6%	58.6%	56.3%	57.1%	57.1%
Not First-Generation	27.6%	29.6%	33.4%	31.9%	29.0%
Unknown Status	11.9%	11.8%	10.3%	10.9%	13.8%
<b>Foster Youth</b>	5.0%	4.3%	4.4%	4.5%	4.8%
<b>Program of Study</b>					
Arts and Humanities	4.9%	4.6%	3.6%	3.8%	3.8%
Automotive and Welding	3.9%	3.3%	3.0%	2.8%	2.6%
Business and Entrepreneurship	10.5%	9.1%	8.7%	6.9%	4.8%
Children and Teaching	6.8%	6.6%	6.2%	4.8%	4.9%
Culinary and Hospitality	2.8%	2.8%	2.3%	1.9%	2.0%
Emergency Services	7.0%	8.3%	9.0%	6.2%	6.1%
English and Communication Studies	1.9%	1.6%	1.6%	1.5%	1.7%
Forestry and Natural Resources	4.2%	4.3%	4.5%	4.0%	2.7%
General Education	2.9%	2.4%	1.7%	1.5%	1.7%
Healthcare	8.3%	8.2%	10.7%	7.2%	6.2%
Kinesiology and Athletics	1.3%	1.4%	1.7%	0.8%	0.6%
Lifelong Learning and Com Ed	0.3%	0.9%	0.5%	5.6%	7.2%
Social and Behavioral Sciences	7.0%	6.5%	6.5%	6.0%	5.3%
Special Populations	12.2%	15.1%	17.4%	21.7%	19.6%
STEM Studies	6.4%	7.6%	9.1%	5.7%	3.5%
Still Deciding	19.7%	17.2%	13.5%	19.8%	27.3%

# Applied and Enrolled Rate

Figure 2 shows the Applied and Enrolled Rate by academic year. The college has seen an increase in the applied and enrolled rate but it is important to recognize that the college had less applicants in 2022-23. Each year, roughly 40-45% of applicants do not enroll within a year.

**Figure 2. Columbia College Applied and Enrolled Rate by Academic Year from 2018-19 to 2022-23**



In Table 2 we can see the Applied and Enrolled Rate broken down by demographic category, applicant characteristics, and program of study. While females make up a larger percentage of total applicants, the applied-enrolled rate for females (58.4%) is slightly less compared to males (61.9%) for 2022-23. It appears that this flipped post-COVID. Applicants that are 17 or younger are the most likely to enroll (76.0%) while students in the 20 to 29 age group and 30 to 49 age group are least likely (53.5% and 51.0%, respectively). Applied and enrolled rate varied most across age. Over the past five years the gap in the applied and enrolled rate between People of Color and White applicants has decreased from a gap of 8.1% in 2018-19 to 2.6% in 2022-23.

The applied and enrolled rate is highest amongst the Special Populations which aligns with the high rates for applicants aged 17 or younger. Over the past five years the programs of study with the lowest applied and enrolled rate are Arts and Humanities, Automotive and Welding, Business and Entrepreneurship, Culinary and Hospitality, and STEM Studies.

**Table 2. Columbia College Applied and Enrolled Rate by Academic Year and Demographic from 2018-19 to 2022-23**

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
<b>Overall</b>	56.2%	53.5%	53.8%	62.0%	59.9%
<b>Gender</b>					
Female	56.5%	54.6%	52.9%	60.5%	58.4%
Male	55.3%	52.6%	55.6%	64.4%	61.9%
<b>Age Group</b>					
17 or less	73.8%	74.8%	67.4%	80.6%	76.0%
18 to 19	57.4%	55.3%	56.9%	63.4%	61.1%
20 to 29	46.9%	44.9%	45.4%	52.1%	53.5%
30 to 49	51.9%	46.5%	49.9%	54.1%	51.0%
50+	64.6%	52.2%	46.2%	57.5%	56.3%
<b>Ethnicity</b>					
People of Color	50.5%	48.3%	50.2%	59.8%	58.1%
White	58.6%	55.9%	56.0%	63.0%	60.7%
<b>First-Generation Status</b>					
First-Generation	55.6%	52.4%	53.6%	61.7%	58.7%
Not First-Generation	58.5%	55.2%	57.3%	63.3%	63.6%
Unknown Status	53.3%	54.5%	43.2%	59.6%	56.9%
<b>Foster Youth</b>	61.1%	64.1%	38.8%	57.5%	62.0%
<b>Program of Study</b>					
Arts and Humanities	47.1%	54.1%	49.0%	54.9%	52.7%
Automotive and Welding	41.9%	37.3%	50.0%	51.8%	55.6%
Business and Entrepreneurship	35.2%	35.4%	37.5%	46.6%	52.7%
Children and Teaching	58.8%	57.6%	52.0%	61.8%	62.9%
Culinary and Hospitality	48.0%	43.0%	54.0%	36.2%	45.6%
Emergency Services	63.0%	55.2%	57.8%	60.5%	61.9%
English and Communication Studies	51.5%	58.2%	39.5%	56.8%	66.7%
Forestry and Natural Resources	61.2%	54.2%	56.0%	58.8%	53.3%
General Education	62.7%	46.3%	61.7%	59.1%	56.1%
Healthcare	58.4%	50.0%	51.4%	54.8%	50.5%
Kinesiology and Athletics	60.9%	63.3%	68.8%	54.2%	66.7%
Lifelong Learning and Com Ed	77.8%	56.3%	53.8%	58.0%	59.3%
Social and Behavioral Sciences	50.8%	39.5%	56.9%	56.7%	53.0%
Special Populations	75.1%	77.9%	67.8%	82.8%	76.9%
STEM Studies	43.3%	41.5%	47.2%	53.5%	51.6%
Still Deciding	61.4%	55.5%	48.9%	59.6%	55.3%



# Attrition Rate

Figure 3 illustrates the attrition rate by academic year. We can observe the large spike due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Omitting 2020-21 and 2021-22 the percent of students that withdraw from all courses is roughly 9.5% each Fall term.

Figure 3. Columbia College Attrition Rate from Fall 2018 to Fall 2022

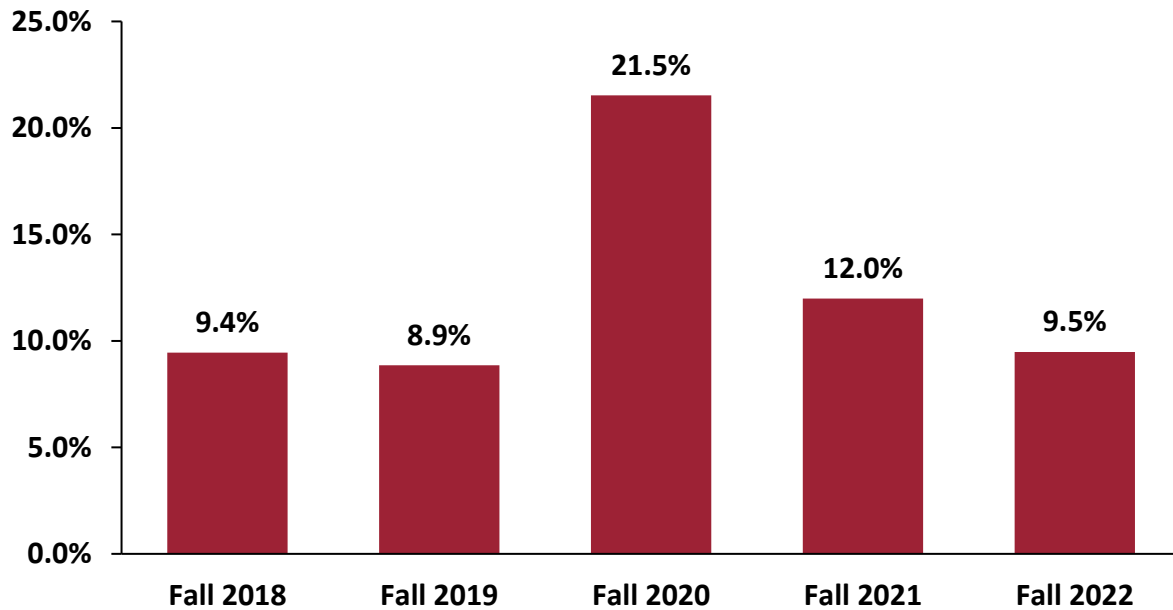


Table 3 shows the attrition rate broken down for each group. Attrition rates increase by age group. In Fall 2022, Only 5.2% of 17 or less students dropped from all of their courses compared 12.8% for 30 to 49-year-olds. The larger the load of the student the less likely they are to withdraw from all of their courses. This is somewhat intuitive as the threshold of attrition is much lower for students that only enroll in one course.

During COVID-19, students in some CTE program areas – Culinary and Hospitality, Emergency Services, and Automotive and Welding – experienced the largest attrition rates. Over the past five years there aren't any observable trends between programs of study and attrition rate with the exception that that Special Populations program of study area is lower compared to the overall.

**Table 3. Columbia College Attrition Rate Breakdown by from Fall 2018 to Fall 2022**

	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022
<b>Overall</b>	9.4%	8.9%	21.5%	12.0%	9.5%
<b>Gender</b>					
Female	10.4%	9.5%	21.0%	11.9%	9.4%
Male	8.2%	8.0%	21.6%	12.3%	9.5%
<b>Age Group</b>					
17 or less	6.7%	5.8%	17.7%	8.3%	5.2%
18 to 19	8.2%	6.9%	25.7%	12.1%	7.3%
20 to 29	8.7%	10.1%	21.0%	12.2%	10.9%
30 to 49	13.0%	9.9%	21.6%	14.9%	12.8%
50+	12.6%	14.6%	18.2%	17.3%	14.5%
<b>Ethnicity</b>					
People of Color	10.8%	9.7%	24.2%	12.5%	10.6%
White	8.8%	8.4%	20.4%	12.0%	9.0%
<b>First-Generation Status</b>					
First-Generation	9.4%	9.1%	22.5%	11.8%	8.7%
Not First-Generation	8.8%	7.8%	18.2%	9.9%	7.7%
Unknown Status	11.3%	9.7%	25.2%	16.8%	15.4%
<b>Foster Youth</b>	16.1%	13.7%	40.8%	9.4%	9.8%
<b>Fall Load</b>					
Less than Half-Time	14.6%	13.3%	34.1%	16.7%	14.5%
Half-Time	11.1%	9.7%	16.0%	11.0%	10.1%
Three-Quarters Time	7.1%	6.8%	12.1%	10.4%	7.3%
Full-Time	2.7%	3.1%	9.1%	5.7%	2.4%
<b>Program of Study</b>					
Arts and Humanities	9.4%	13.0%	24.2%	9.8%	13.8%
Automotive and Welding	4.5%	11.8%	30.8%	6.5%	7.0%
Business and Entrepreneurship	8.5%	9.2%	21.1%	13.8%	11.2%
Children and Teaching	9.2%	5.2%	17.2%	9.8%	10.1%
Culinary and Hospitality	11.4%	12.5%	34.0%	10.5%	9.7%
Emergency Services	7.3%	13.1%	31.9%	12.1%	4.6%
English and Communication Studies	4.5%	9.0%	25.8%	23.5%	7.9%
Forestry and Natural Resources	6.5%	11.4%	20.8%	10.4%	3.6%
General Education	5.5%	8.2%	23.5%	13.6%	8.7%
Healthcare	13.7%	11.2%	21.8%	12.7%	12.8%
Kinesiology and Athletics	4.3%	11.7%	15.7%	18.2%	10.7%
Lifelong Learning and Com Ed	6.0%	9.7%	21.3%	13.3%	14.9%
Social and Behavioral Sciences	7.8%	6.5%	25.5%	10.8%	13.0%
Special Populations	5.9%	5.3%	16.1%	8.2%	4.5%
STEM Studies	7.3%	8.7%	24.1%	16.7%	11.4%
Still Deciding	11.4%	10.1%	22.0%	16.2%	10.4%

# Persistence Rate

Figure 4 illustrates the fall-spring persistence rate by fall term. We can see a steady decline from 68.7% in 2018-19 to 60.3% in 2022-23 (-8.4%).

Figure 4. Columbia College Fall-to-Spring Persistence from Fall 2018 to Fall 2022

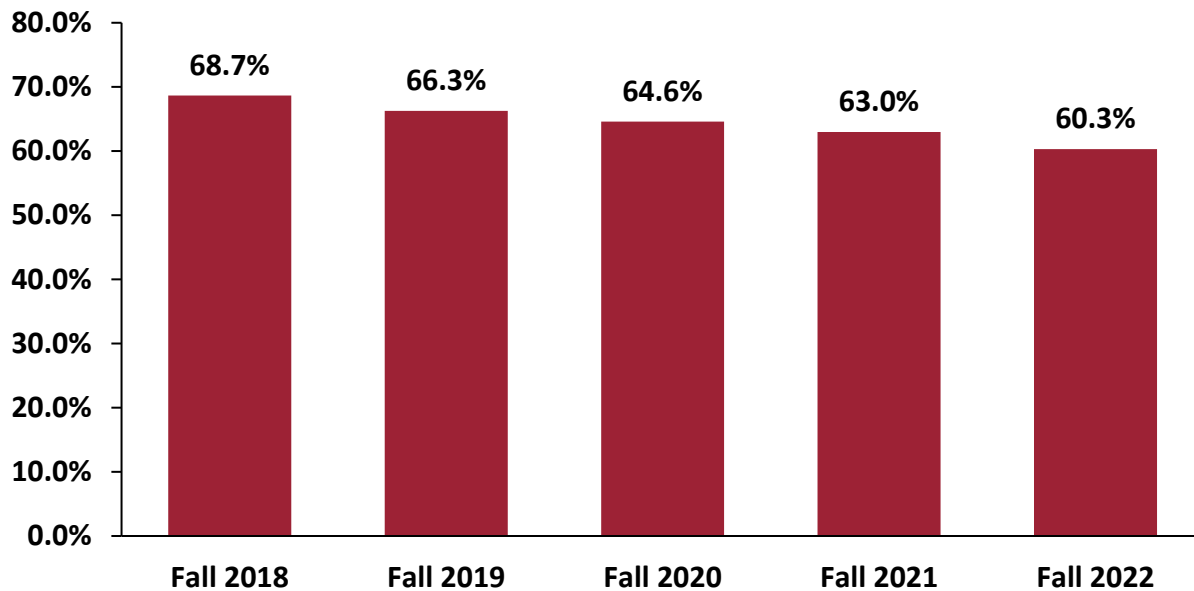


Table 4 shows the fall to spring persistence rate by student group and program of study. The persistence rate for students 17 or less has dropped over time from 74.% in Fall 2018 to 57.0% in Fall 2022. In Fall 2022, students with a full credit load had the highest persistence rate (81.4%) compared to three-quarters time (62.9%), half-time (64.4%), and less than half-time (42.6%). This pattern is reflected over the past five years. First-generation students have a slightly lower persistence rate (60.0%) compared to non-first-generation students (65.9%).

**Table 4. Columbia College Fall to Spring Persistence from Fall 2018 to Fall 2022**

	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022
<b>Overall</b>	<b>68.7%</b>	<b>66.3%</b>	<b>64.6%</b>	<b>63.0%</b>	<b>60.3%</b>
<b>Gender</b>					
Female	69.0%	66.3%	64.9%	66.8%	61.2%
Male	68.4%	65.8%	64.6%	58.9%	59.2%
<b>Age Group</b>					
17 or less	74.9%	76.0%	68.9%	62.5%	57.0%
18 to 19	76.9%	71.6%	73.7%	72.3%	70.2%
20 to 29	65.0%	61.6%	59.8%	61.2%	56.2%
30 to 49	59.0%	58.1%	62.7%	55.7%	55.3%
50+	72.4%	69.3%	56.0%	61.7%	68.0%
<b>Ethnicity</b>					
People of Color	64.7%	63.9%	65.2%	56.7%	56.0%
White	70.0%	67.1%	64.3%	65.7%	62.1%
<b>First-Generation Status</b>					
First-Generation	68.2%	65.9%	62.1%	63.9%	60.0%
Not First-Generation	72.3%	69.0%	67.0%	70.4%	65.9%
Unknown Status	63.0%	62.9%	68.4%	44.5%	50.6%
<b>Foster Youth</b>					
	55.4%	61.9%	64.8%	72.9%	62.5%
<b>Fall Load</b>					
Less than Half-Time	51.7%	50.5%	53.4%	45.6%	42.6%
Half-Time	65.9%	63.4%	75.2%	67.1%	64.4%
Three-Quarters Time	73.7%	68.2%	81.5%	75.3%	62.9%
Full-Time	84.9%	83.0%	90.0%	81.4%	81.4%
Non-Credit	77.0%	78.4%	33.8%	65.4%	65.3%
<b>Program of Study</b>					
Arts and Humanities	73.8%	62.4%	60.3%	68.8%	62.0%
Automotive and Welding	56.7%	65.8%	46.2%	74.0%	70.9%
Business and Entrepreneurship	60.3%	56.4%	68.7%	59.0%	64.1%
Children and Teaching	67.2%	60.8%	61.9%	67.6%	63.2%
Culinary and Hospitality	65.9%	51.0%	51.0%	45.5%	54.1%
Emergency Services	59.1%	47.7%	52.1%	60.1%	54.6%
English and Communication Studies	64.7%	60.8%	77.4%	58.5%	67.3%
Forestry and Natural Resources	66.7%	58.7%	55.2%	68.0%	71.4%
General Education	77.0%	68.4%	67.8%	61.2%	67.1%
Healthcare	70.0%	63.7%	55.9%	60.8%	59.8%
Kinesiology and Athletics	72.7%	61.9%	62.7%	63.6%	64.3%
Lifelong Learning and Com Ed	76.1%	76.7%	54.3%	73.1%	65.0%
Social and Behavioral Sciences	72.8%	67.9%	71.1%	62.9%	62.2%
Special Populations	74.3%	75.8%	67.3%	60.8%	54.7%
STEM Studies	80.2%	71.9%	71.1%	70.0%	65.7%
Still Deciding	66.5%	66.1%	64.2%	65.8%	62.8%

## Conclusion

Based on many of the findings presented in this brief, trends within and gaps between academic programs of study were less consistent compared to differences between student groups. For example, the attrition rate is closely related to course retention rates. The attrition rate is more of a *student-centered* metric whereas course retention rates are more *course-centered*. If more variability is observed between student groups the focus as a college in terms of intervention may be less centered on instructional programs of study and more so on student support services for particular groups of students.

## Key Findings

- Columbia College applicants have declined due to the COVID-19 pandemic but are showing signs of returning to pre-pandemic levels. Over the past five years, female applicants represent a larger percentage of total applicants.
- Roughly 40-45% of applicants do not enroll within a year after applying. Students aged 20+ have lower applied and enrolled rates compared to students 19 and younger.
- The attrition rate spiked in Fall 2020 to 21.5% due to the COVID-19 but is roughly 9.5% each Fall term. Younger students and students that have a full-load are less likely to drop all of their courses.
- Fall to Spring persistence rates have declined from 68.7% in Fall 2018 to 60.3% in Fall 2022. One of the largest declines in persistence rates was among students 17 and younger dropping from 74.9% in Fall 2018 to 57.0% in Fall 2022.

## Focus Areas:

- Increase the number of male applicants
- Focus on increasing the applied-enrolled rate for students 20+
- Identify students at risk of withdrawing from courses
- Increase the persistence rates, particularly for students that are 17 and younger