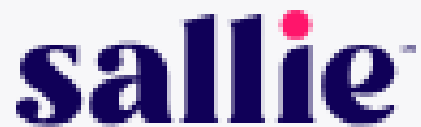


# What do students plan to do after high school?

Intent to continue with post-secondary education remains strong, although plans are varied among high school students.

- 62% plan to attend a 2- or 4-year college or university
- 14% plan to attend a career training or alternative education program
- 19% plan to attend post-secondary education but are undecided
- 5% don't intend to pursue higher education



Plans for continuing education after high school

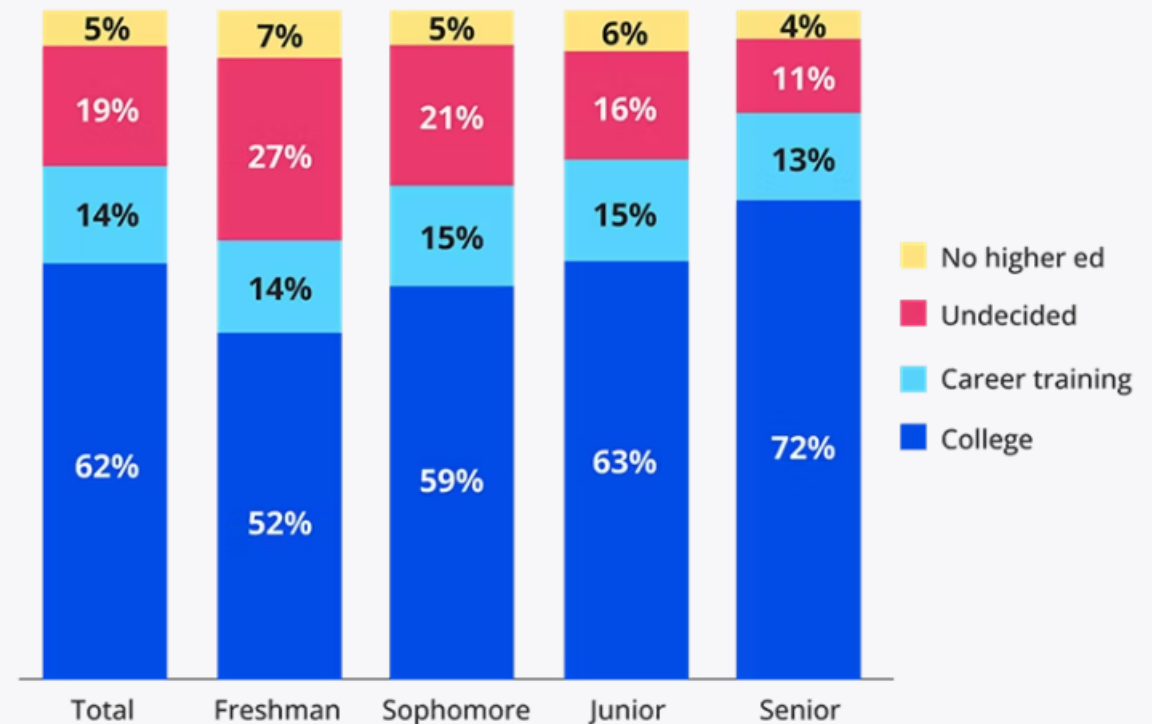
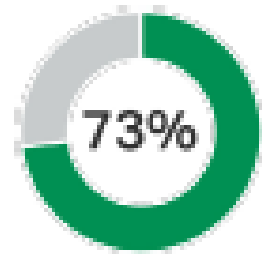


Chart base: High school students and parents of high school students.

# Key Findings



**U.S. adults continue to link college degrees to career success.**

Nearly three in four adults without a college degree (73%) say earning a two- or four-year degree is at least as important today as it was 20 years ago. This view is shared by 69% of college graduates. Similarly, 74% of employers say the importance of a college degree or credential for getting a good job in their organization will remain the same or increase over the next five years.

1,429,747

applicants

- **Underrepresented minority race/ethnicity (URM)** applicants increased by 5%.
- **First-generation applicants** increased by 6% since 2024-25.
- Growth in applicants from **below-median income** ZIP-codes continued to outpace their peers at 8% since 2024-25.
- Growth was faster for students reporting **eligibility for a Common App fee waiver** (6%) compared to those not reporting fee waiver eligibility (0%).
- **International applicants** declined while domestic applicants increased by 3%.

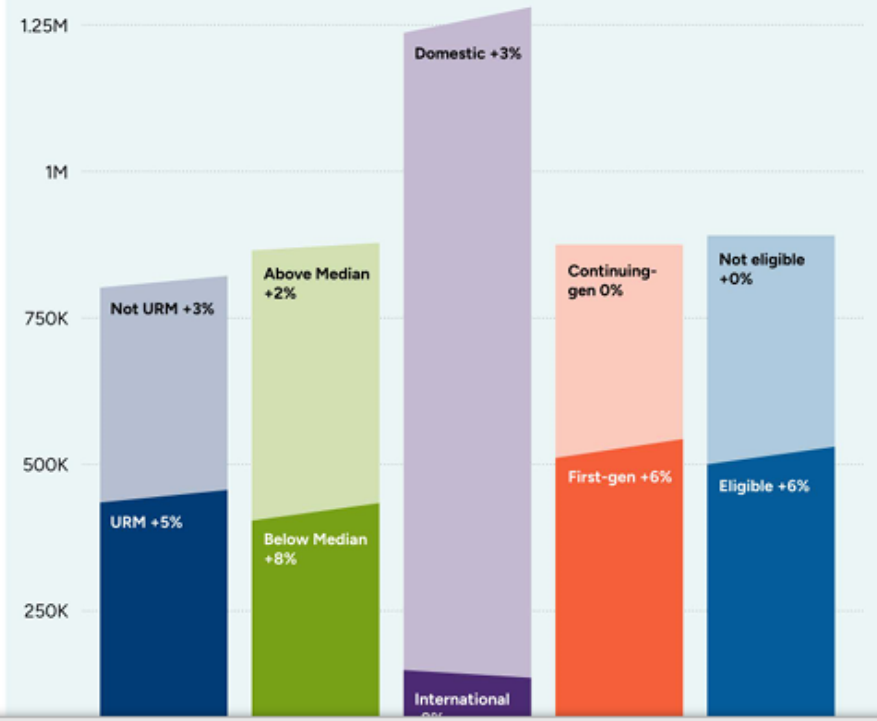
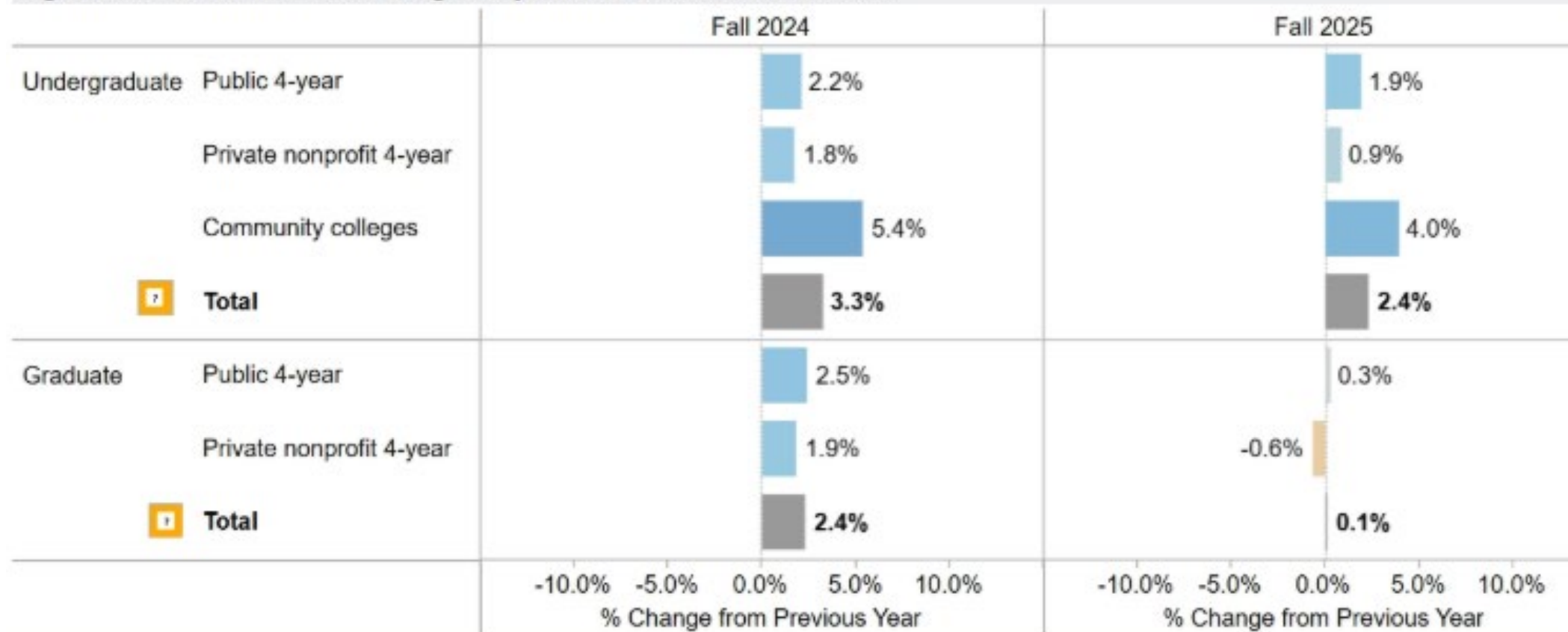


Figure 2.1 Enrollment Changes by Award Level and Sector

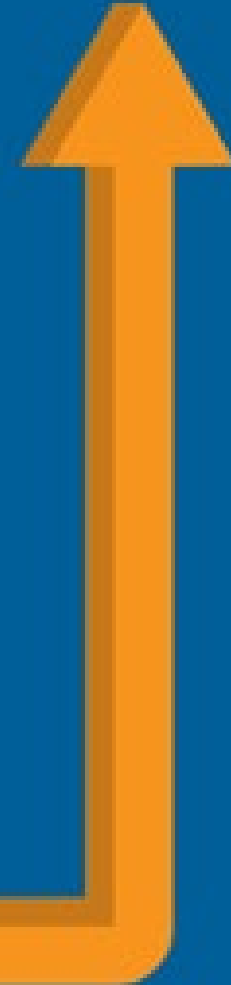


**BREAKING NEWS**

HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2026

# BREAKS RECORD

FOR FAFSA COMPLETION



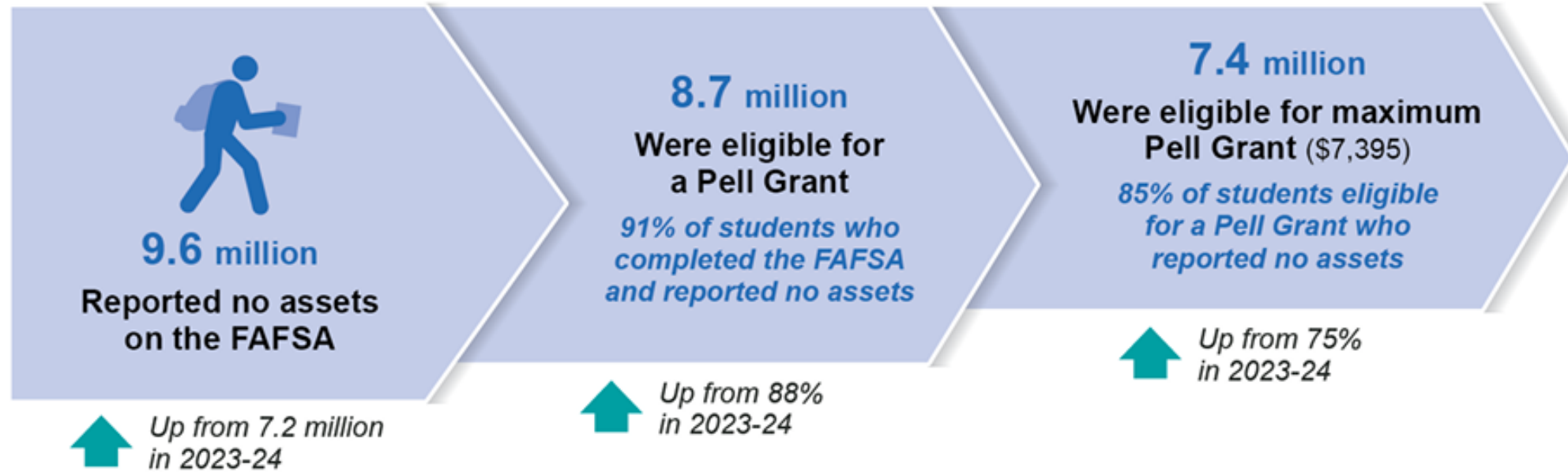


**1.7 Million More Max Pell  
Eligible Students so far, for the  
2025-26 FAFSA Cycle**



**A 27% Increase, Compared to 2023-  
24, Pre-FAFSA Simplification**

**Figure 3: Pell Grant Eligibility for Students with No Reported Assets in School Year 2024–25 Compared with School Year 2023–24**



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Education Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) data. | GAO-26-107928

Note: Data for the 2024–25 FAFSA school year are as of March 31, 2025, and data for the 2023–24 FAFSA school year are as of March 31, 2024. Data for both school years include undergraduate students whose FAFSA applications were completed and processed. Numbers are rounded to the nearest hundred thousand. Students are considered as having reported “no assets” if they either reported \$0 in assets or they were not required to report assets.