

# Potholes on the road to college

*Managing college application among CPS students*

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The Consortium on Chicago School Research  
at the University of Chicago

The Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University

*Annual Conference*

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*A joint project of the Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago and the Chicago Public Schools' Department of Postsecondary in the Office of High School Programs.*

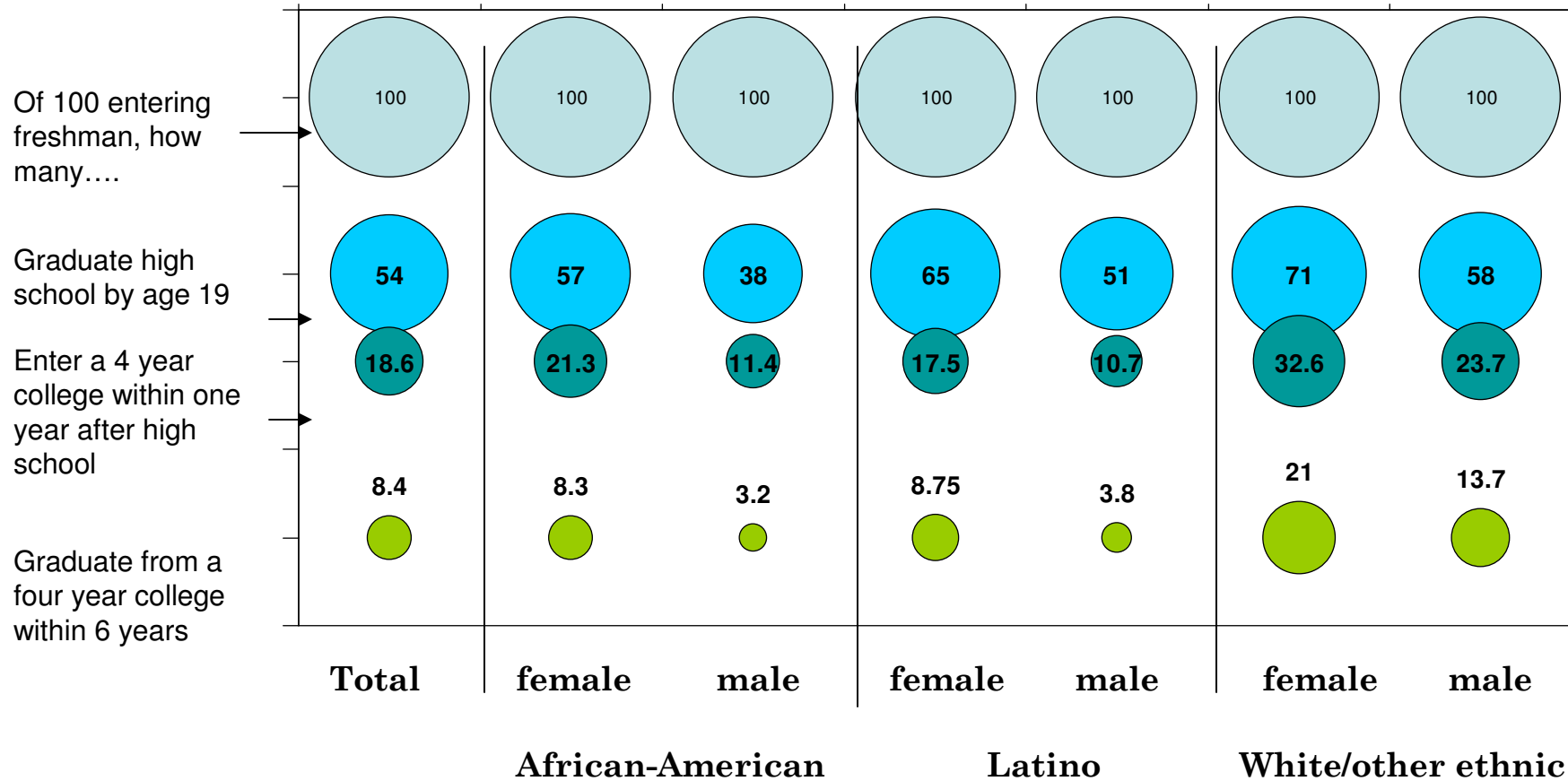
**Prior reports are available at: <http://www.consortium-chicago.org>**

# The Aspirations/Achievement GAP

- Nationwide we've seen dramatic increases in the proportion of students, particularly racial/ethnic minority and low-income students aspiring to college.
- In 2005, fully 78% of CPS graduates stated that they hoped to complete a bachelors degree or higher and an additional 14% hoped to attain a two-year or vocational degree.

**A summary of estimated progress towards a four-year college degree among a cohort of 13- year-olds in the Chicago Public Schools:**

**How many of every 100 13 year olds can be expected to graduate from high school by age 19, enter a four year college, and graduate from a four year college within 6 years (by age 24 or 25)**



Estimates are derived from the proportion of CPS 13 year-olds in 1998-1999 who graduated by age 19, the proportion of CPS graduates in 2002-2003 who entered a four year college in the year after graduation (excluding special education students and graduates from alternative high school) and the proportion of CPS graduates from two previous cohorts (1988 and 1989) who graduated from college within 6 years. The estimates vary by only 1 percentage point if the proportion of students enrolling in four-year colleges ultimately increases by up to 5% or if graduation rates from four year colleges ultimately rise by the same amount. (Roderick, Nagoaka & Allensworth, 2006, 2006 update).

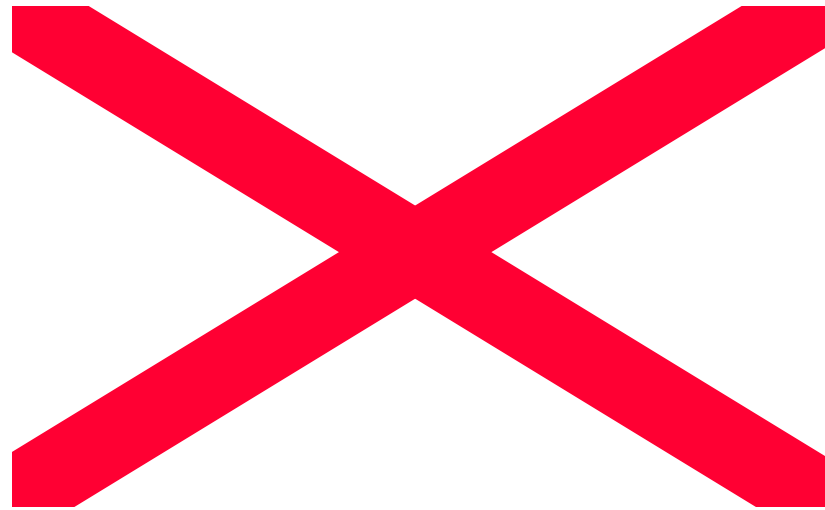
# Critical issues of access: From High School to the Future

- Low GPA and ACT scores are seriously constraining CPS students' access to four-year and selective or very selective colleges.
- Low GPAs in particular are driving the low college access among males.

Roderick, Melissa; Nagaoka, Jenny; and Allensworth, Elaine (2006). *From high school to the future: An analysis of the college attendance patterns, college qualifications, and college graduation rates of Chicago Public School graduates*. Chicago, IL: Consortium on Chicago School Research.

**But constrained access is not  
a full explanation.....**

**Differences in academic qualification do not explain differences in college participation among racial/ethnic groups.**



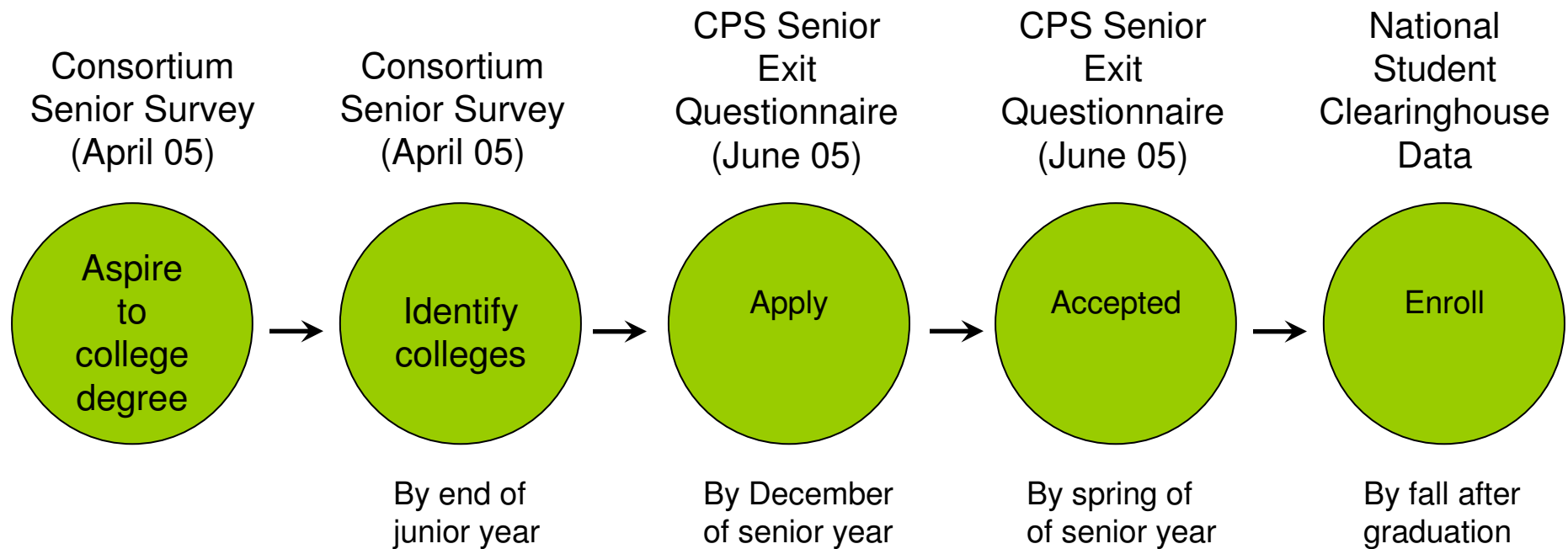
# What else is driving patterns in enrollment?

***1. Constrained application: How effectively are CPS graduates participating in the college application process?***

***2. Constrained search: Are students aspiring to, identifying and applying to colleges that meet their levels of qualifications?***

- A qualitative study following 105 students through the process
- Linked quantitative analysis.

# Basic Pathway to College

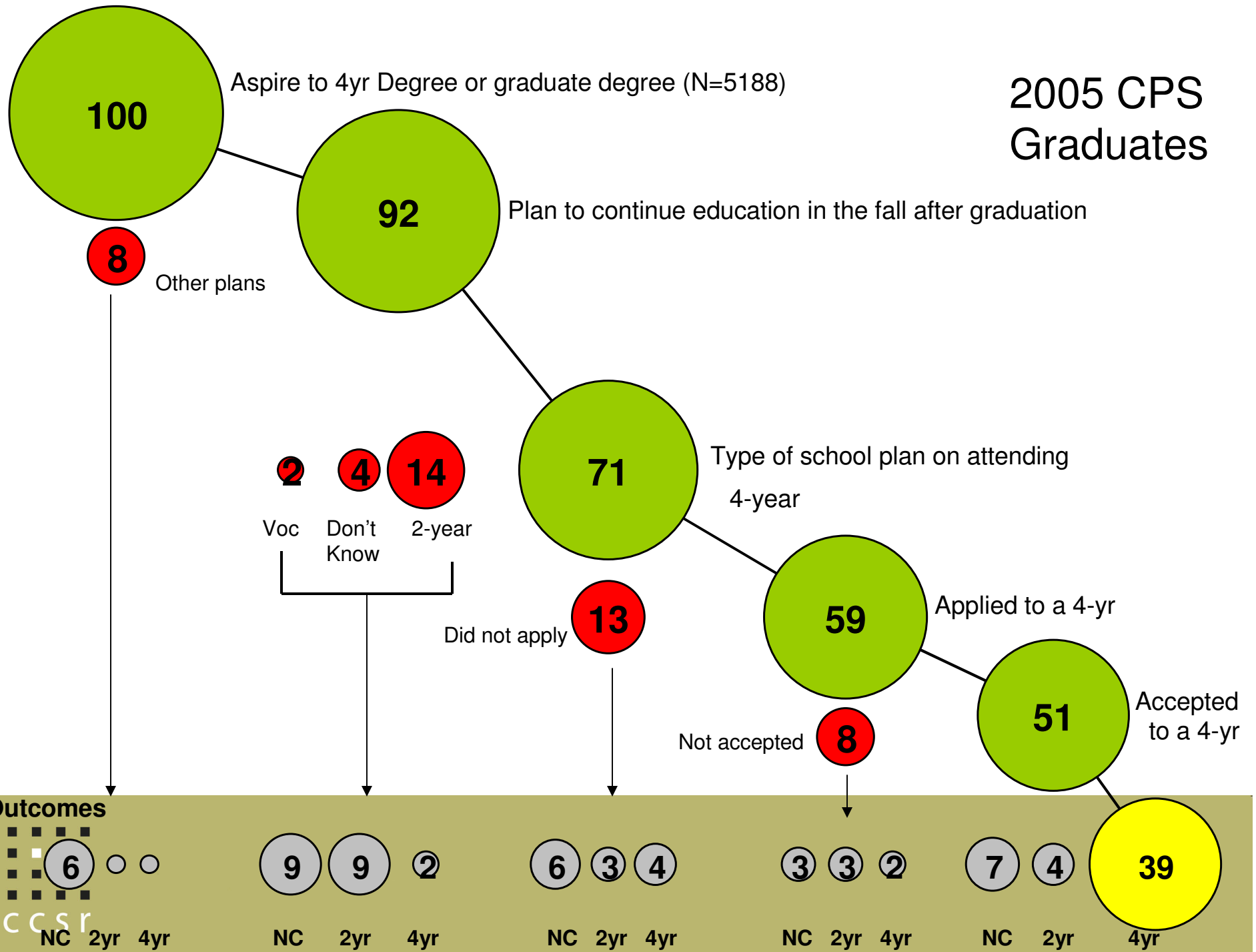


Apply for financial aid

# Students in Analyses

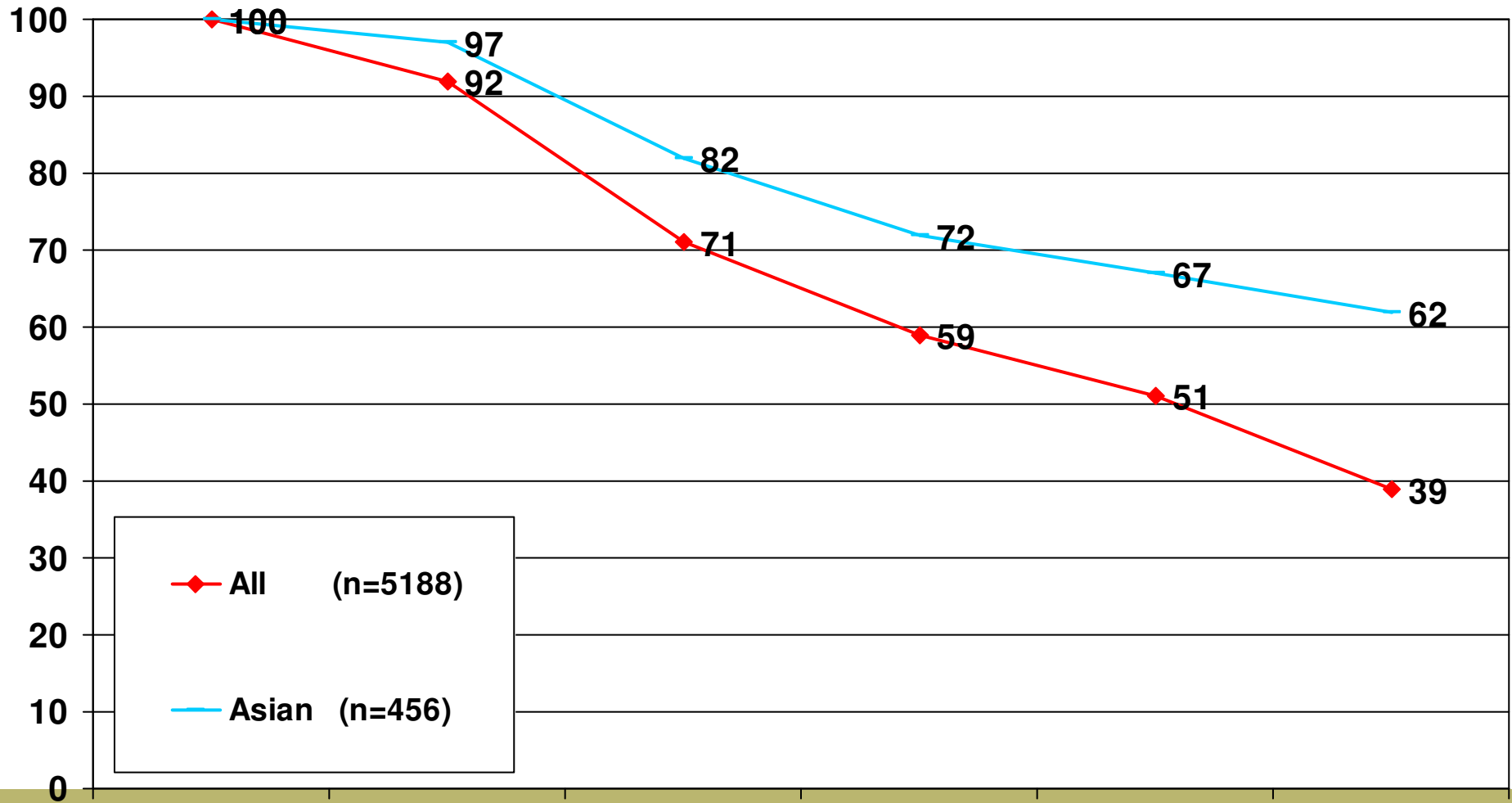
	N	ACT	GPA (unweighted)
CPS seniors in spring 2005	19,186	17.0	2.18
NSC – CPS 2005 graduates	17,608	17.2	2.26
SEQ – CPS seniors	16,374	17.3	2.32
2005 CCSR senior survey	9,723	17.3	2.34
Students in all sources	8,774	17.5	2.43
<b>Students in all sources with necessary information, not in special education</b>	<b>6,220</b>	<b>18.24</b>	<b>2.50</b>

# 2005 CPS Graduates





# The Traditional Pathway: by Race/Ethnicity

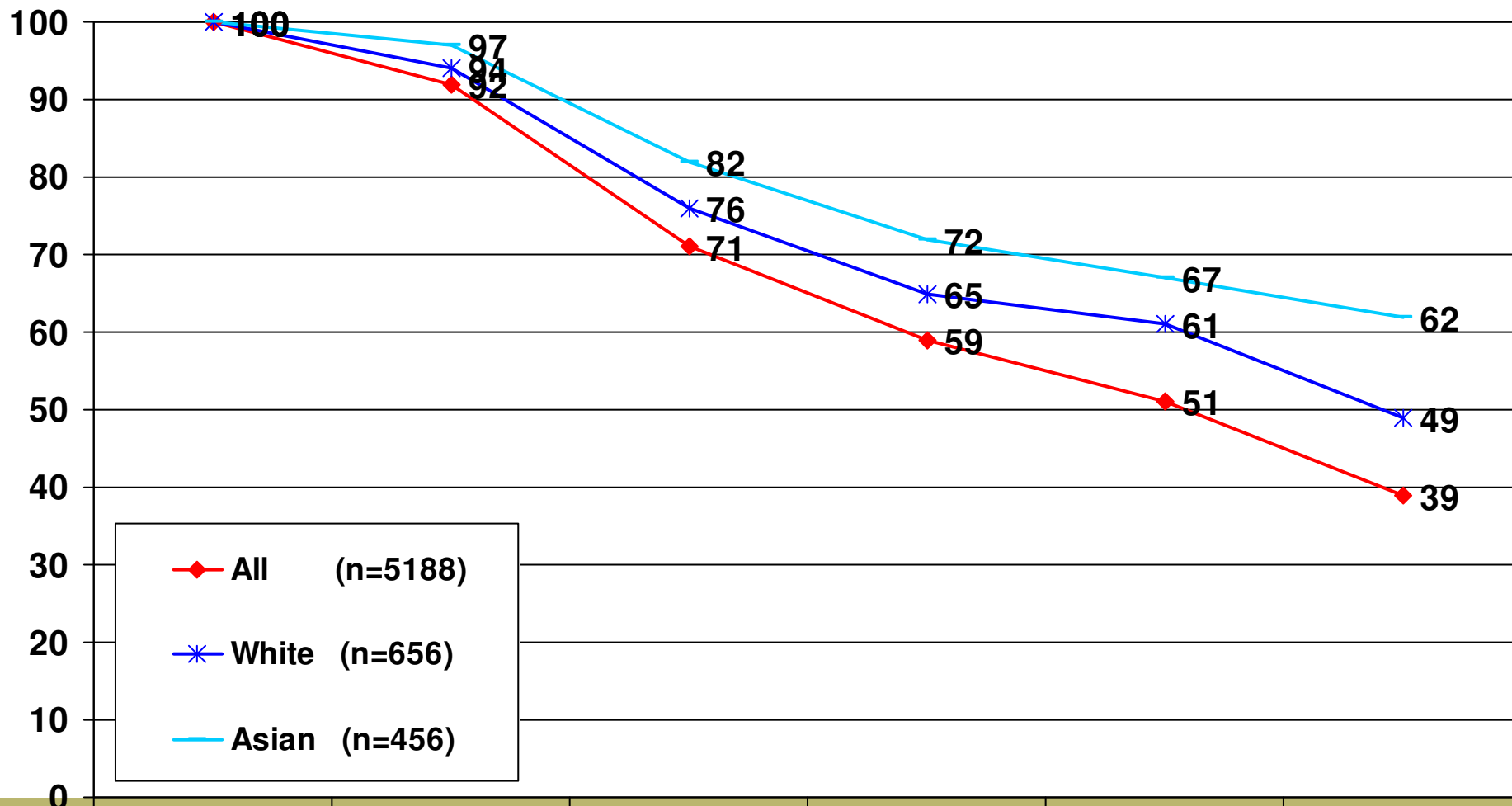


**All (n=5188)**  
 **Asian (n=456)**

**Aspires for at least a 4-yr degree**  
 **Planned to continue education in the fall**  
 **Planned to attend a 4-yr school**  
 **Applied to a 4-yr school**  
 **Accepted by a 4-yr school**  
 **Enrolled in a 4-yr school**

CCSR

# The Traditional Pathway: by Race/Ethnicity

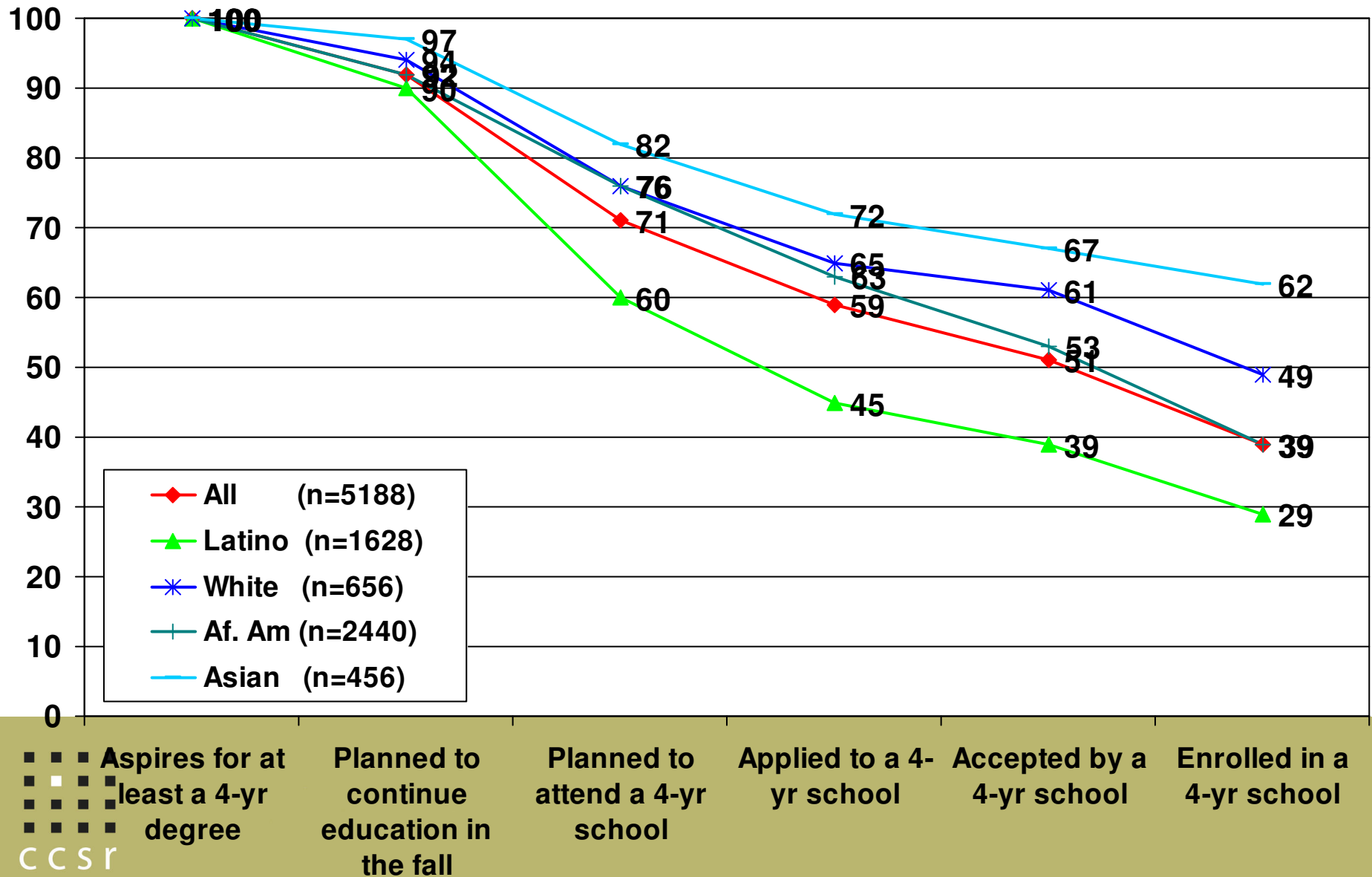


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CCSR



# The Traditional Pathway: by Race/Ethnicity



# Clara: A Highly Qualified Student

- International Baccalaureate
- 24 on the ACT
- 3.9 GPA (4.7 weighted)
- Class Valedictorian
- Puerto Rican
- Strong family press for college; little history of college-going in family
- Access to a very selective college or university

*“This young lady is a rare individual. The only problem of weakness I see in this student is the pressure she places on herself.” (Clara’s English teacher)*

*“She has extremely high expectations of herself and has a strong work ethic that allows her to meet her high standards. She is determined to always do her best in all aspects of life. At the same time, she always helps her peers.” (Clara’s math teacher)*

# Clara in Spring of Junior Year

## *CPS Says: College Search*

- College Search
  - Originally interested in the Illinois Institute of Art (proprietary school)
  - Late in Junior year, changes her mind about art school, but is unable to formulate a new plan or college search
- Support
  - Strong family push for college
  - Had one pivotal conversation with a teacher
  - Has not spoken to a counselor
    - went to the counseling office once and describes staff as “grouchy”

# Clara in Fall of Senior Year

## *CPS Says: College Applications*

- Applications:
  - Plans to complete 8 applications: Columbia, Illinois Institute of Art, DePaul, Loyola, UIC, and several local two-year and non-selective schools.
  - “Definitely” going to Columbia College
- Support
  - Visiting a lot of colleges with her mom
  - Has not had a one-on-one conversation with an adult at her school about her plans

# Clara in Winter of Senior Year

## *CPS Says: Applications Finished*

- Applications/Acceptances
  - Completed applications at Loyola, UIC, Columbia College in Chicago, and the Illinois Institute of Art
  - Accepted to Loyola and “definitely” plans to attend
- Finance
  - Very confused about FAFSA; thought she’d have it done in April/May
- Support
  - Has not seen a counselor

Interviewer: So you're definitely going to Loyola?

**Clara:** Uh, Dominican. (laughs)

Interviewer: Ah, that's what I want to know. Last time I talked to you, you were like I mean I'll give you the list that you told me. 'Cause Loyola you had been accepted to.

**Clara:** Yeah. And Columbia. Columbia was like the first.

Interviewer: Dominican is not on this list. Last time you said Loyola, UIC, and Columbia.



**Clara:** (laughs) Yeah.

Interviewer: What happened?

**Clara:** Um, well my mom we passed by the school and I'm like this is a nice school. What is that? And then we looked and it's like Dominican University. So my mom like started looking up stuff she's like, "I think you'd like this school." And so we looked at it, the web page and then we signed up for the tour and I was like I really love this school.

# Clara at the End of Senior Year

- **Acceptance/Choice**

- Going to a somewhat selective local Catholic college.
- Also accepted to Loyola, UIC, Columbia, Illinois Institute of Art, Northeastern, and two city colleges

- **Finance**

- Bulk of tuition covered by need- and merit-based aid

- **Support**

- Wishes her school made college visits mandatory

## 2005 Grads (n=6220): College Access vs. Selection

Enrolled in:

Access To	Enrolled in:						
	Very Selective	Selective	Some-what Selective	Non-selective	Two-Year	No College	Total
Very Selective	281	191	203	31	35	118	859 (13%)
Selective	84	145	345	89	150	247	1060 (17%)
Somewhat Selective	29	55	431	183	342	551	1591 (26%)
Nonselective	2	9	154	84	302	497	1048 (17%)
Two-Year	1	5	90	89	468	952	1605 (26%)
Total	401 (6%)	410 (7%)	1240 (20%)	480 (8%)	1307 (21%)	2382 (38%)	6220 (100%)

Clara

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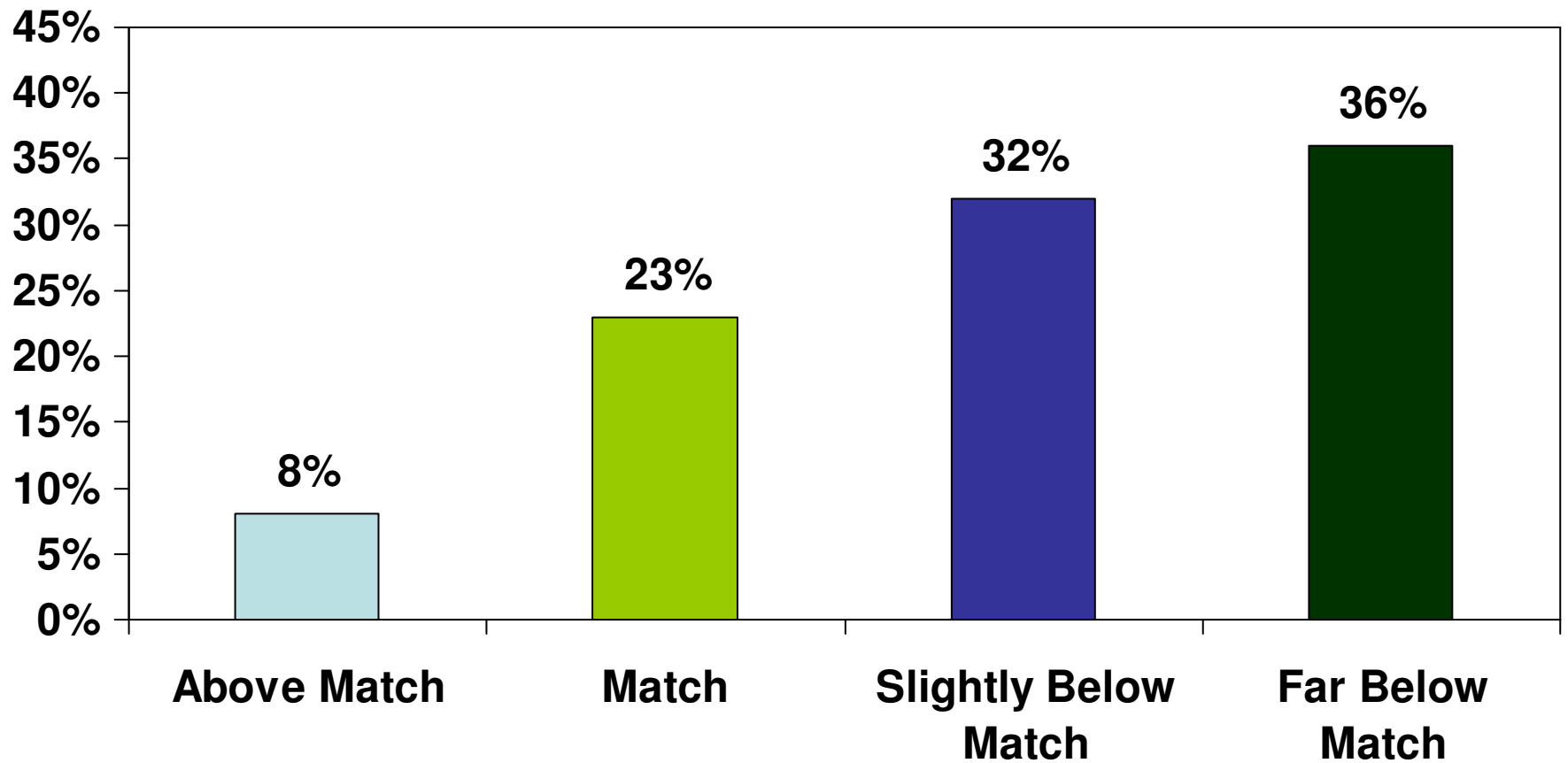
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	Very Selective	Selective	Somewhat Selective	Non-selective	Two-Year	No College	Total	
Access To	Very Selective <b>33%</b>	281	191	203	31	35	118	859 (13%)
	Selective <b>22%</b>	84	145	345	89	150	247	1060 (17%)
	Somewhat Selective <b>32%</b>	29	55	431	183	342	551	1591 (26%)
	Nonselective <b>24%</b>	2	9	154	84	302	497	1048 (17%)
	Two-Year <b>41%</b>	1	5	90	89	468	952	1605 (26%)
	Total	401 (6%)	410 (7%)	1240 (20%)	480 (8%)	1307 (21%)	2382 (38%)	6220 (100%)

# Most CPS graduates make choices below their qualifications



# Summary

- Most CPS graduates want a B.A. or graduate degree
- Poor academic qualifications pose a major barrier to postsecondary access for many students
- Lack of effective participation in the college selection process is a critical barriers for enrollment.
- Less than a third of CPS graduates make choices that match their qualifications or exceed their qualifications

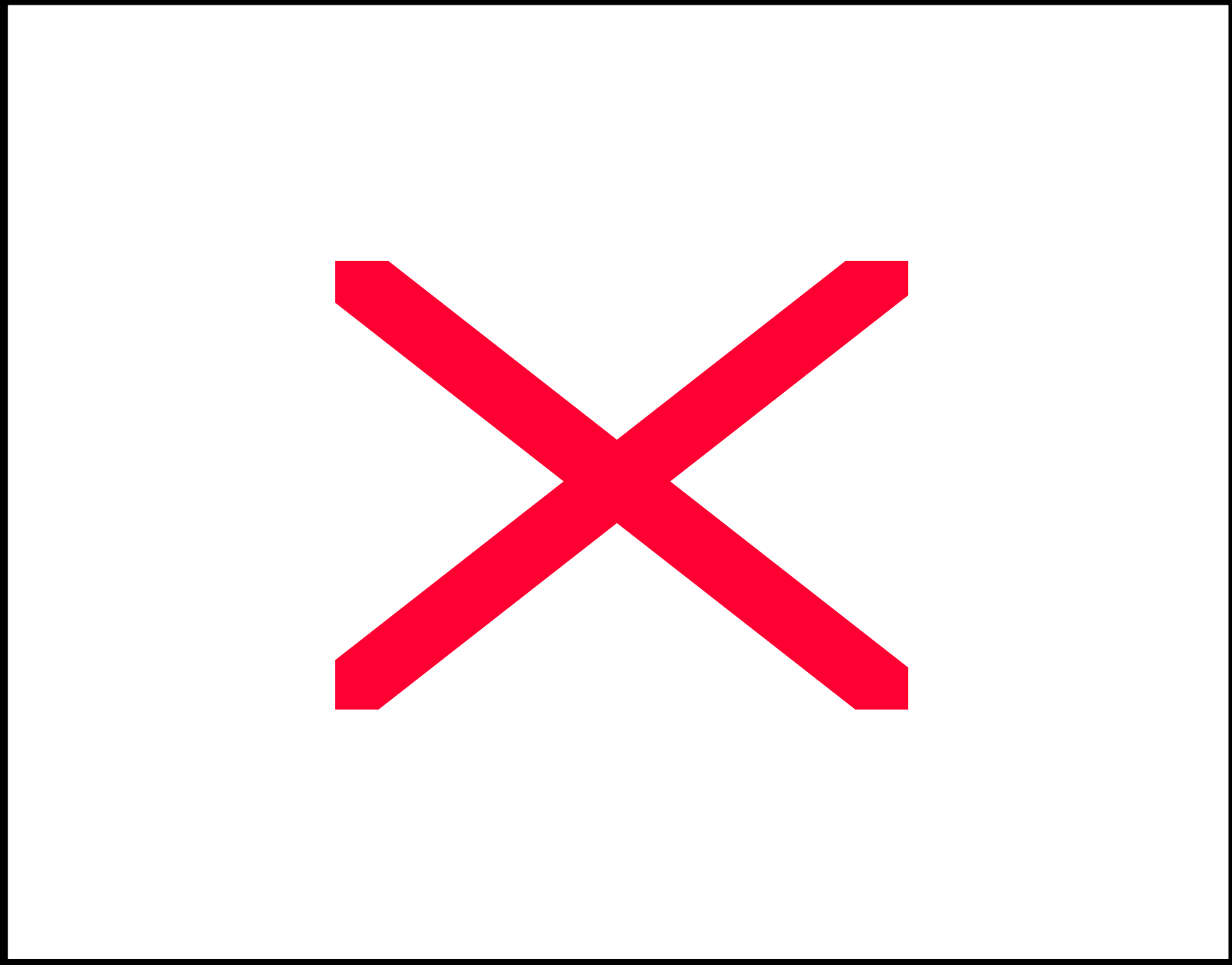
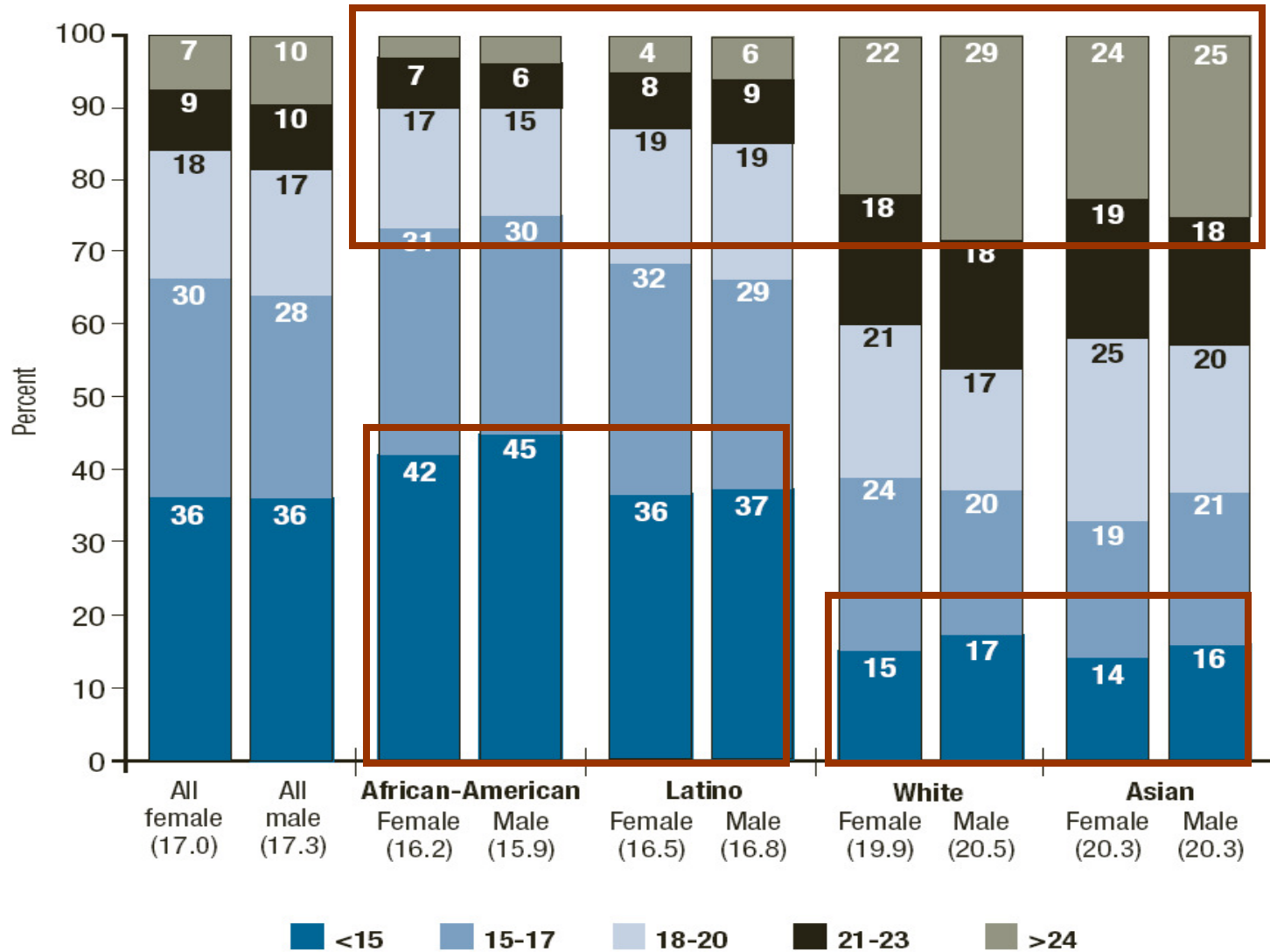


Figure 2-2

**Less than a third of Latino and African-American graduates score an 18 or higher**

Average ACT scores of 2002 and 2003 CPS graduates by race/ethnicity and gender



# Nearly 60 percent of CPS graduates have a 2.5 unweighted GPA or less in their core classes.

Unweighted GPA in core classes for 2002 and 2003 graduates

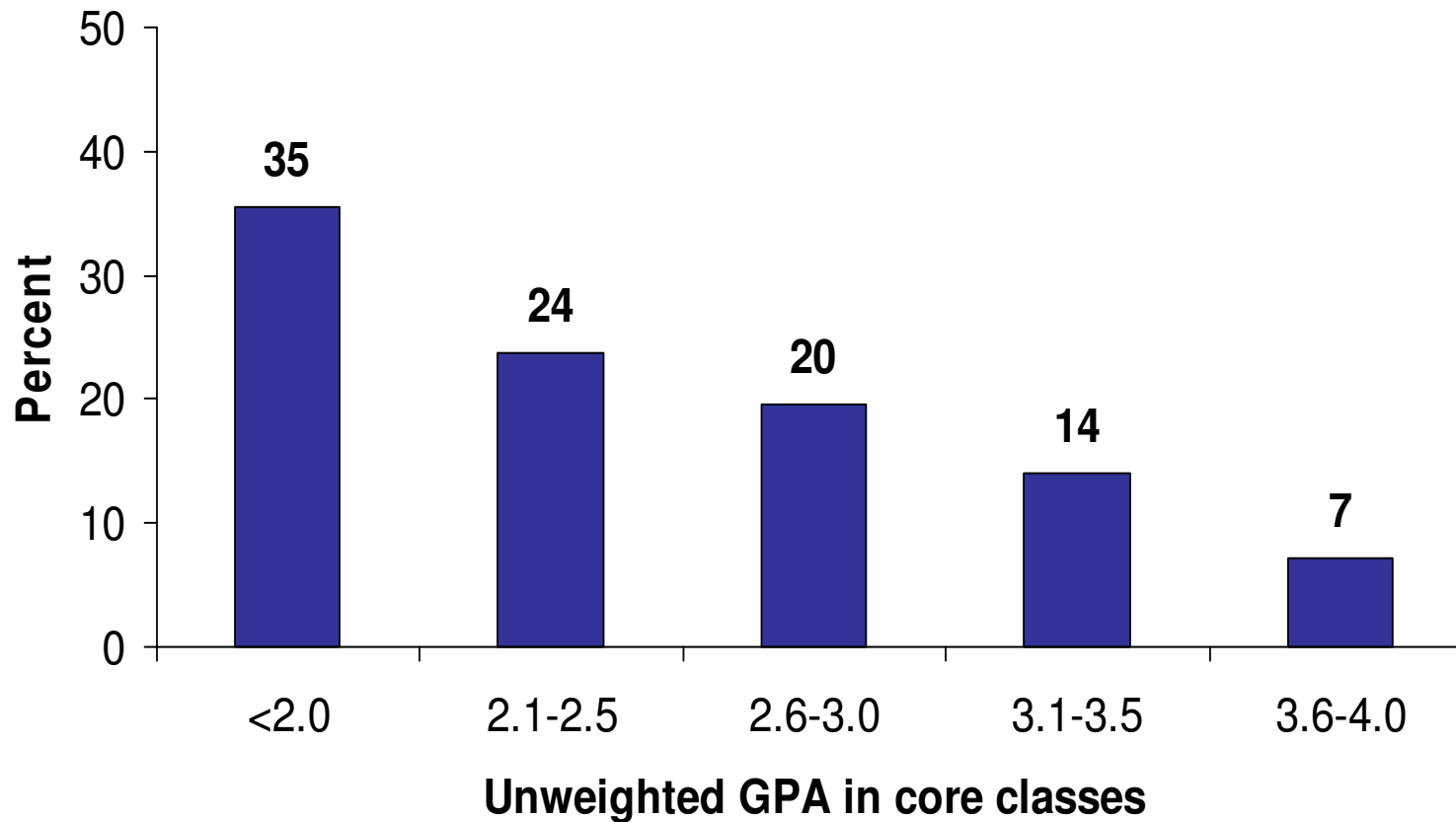


Figure 2-4

**Male graduates have substantially lower GPAs than female graduates;  
only 55 percent have a GPA higher than 2.0**

Average GPA of 2002 and 2003 CPS graduates by race/ethnicity and gender

