



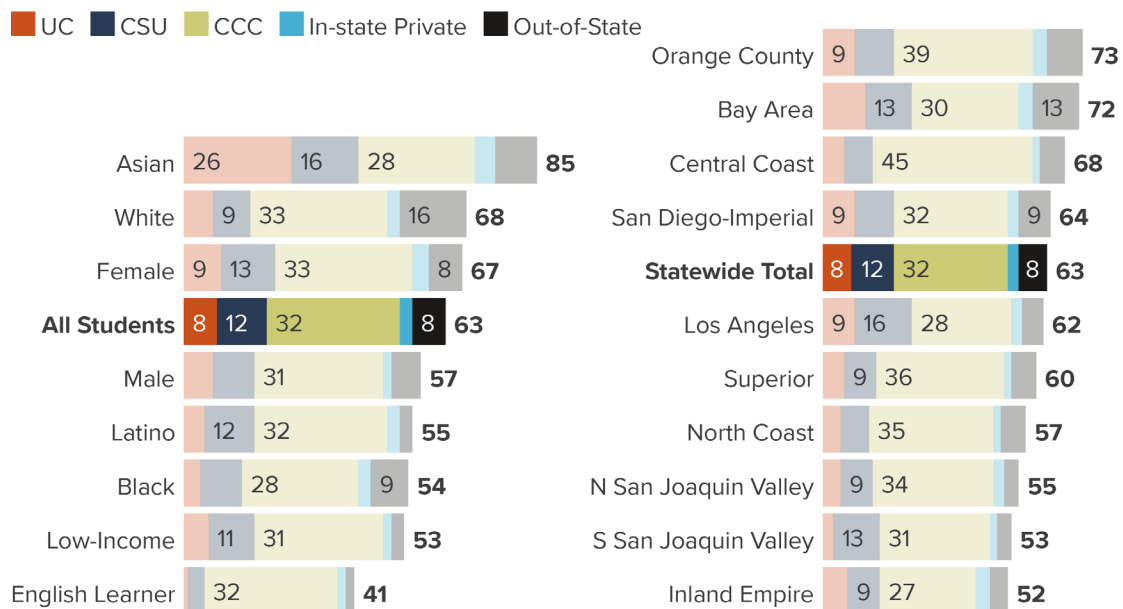
# College Access in California

Iwunze Ugo

## About three in five Californians enroll in college just after high school.

- ▶ Recent data show that just over 62% of the 435,000 students who graduated from high school in spring 2020 enrolled in college within 12 months, down from a recent peak of 67% in 2017–18.
- ▶ Enrollment rates are below average for low-income (54%) and English Learner students (42%). Just over half (55%) of Black and Latino graduates enrolled in college, compared to 68% of white students and 86% of Asian students. Women (nearly 68%) are significantly more likely to enroll than men (57%).
- ▶ College enrollment rates were highest among graduates from the Bay Area (72%), and lowest in the Inland Empire and San Joaquin Valley (53%). Southern California (67%), the Central Coast (also 67%), and the far north (59%) were close to the statewide average.

## Whether and where students go to college varies regionally and demographically



Sources: [California Department of Education, College-Going Rate \(CGR\) data](#); National Student Clearinghouse (NSC).

Notes: "All Students" includes students who graduate from a California public high school with a regular diploma as well as non-graduate completers—students with GEDs and other similar certificates, but not those who receive Special Education Certificates of Completion. Student information is unavailable in some cases due to [privacy rights](#). Regions are based on the [grouping of counties](#) in the 2020 census.

## California's community colleges are a key entry point to higher education.

- ▶ High school graduates are more likely to go to the California Community Colleges (CCC) than to enroll in the four-year public systems: 32% enroll in a CCC, while 12% go to California State University (CSU) and 8% go to the University of California (UC).
- ▶ CCC enrollment rates have fallen in recent years—they are down about 6 percentage points from a 2015 peak. Enrollment at the four-year universities has been relatively stable, increasing by 2.1 percentage points at UC and declining by 0.5 at CSU.
- ▶ Just over 3% of students enroll at private colleges and universities in California, while almost 8% leave the state to attend postsecondary institutions elsewhere in the US.

## Hundreds of thousands of students apply to UC and CSU each year.

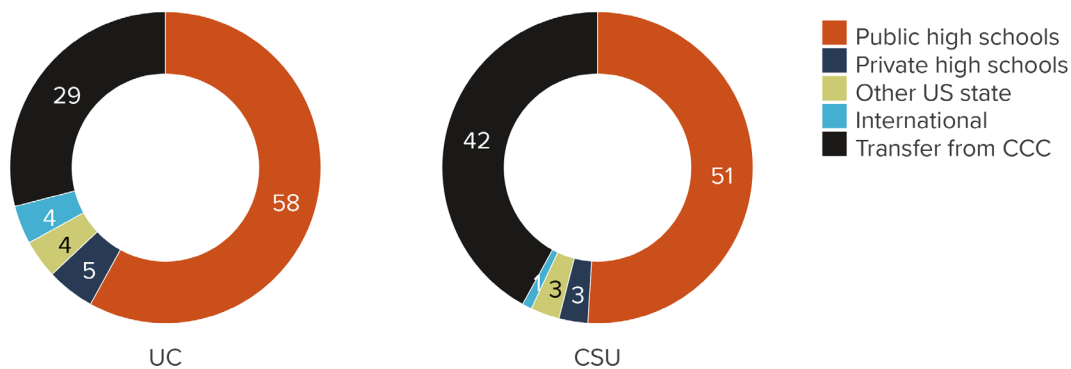
- ▶ UC received 211,000 freshman applications for fall 2022, while CSU saw 195,000. CSU applications declined at the onset of the pandemic but have risen by over 22,000 since fall 2020.
- ▶ UC accepted 27% of applicants in 2022; acceptance rates varied widely across campuses—from 9% at UCLA and 11% at UC Berkeley to nearly 90% at UC Merced.
- ▶ Acceptance rates also vary widely across CSU campuses: 2022 rates were lowest at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo (30%), San Diego State University (39%), and Long Beach State University (40%), while the other 20 schools in the system accepted an average of 86% of applicants.

## Community college transfers make up significant shares of UC and CSU enrollment.

- ▶ Transfers from community colleges to four-year universities [play an outsized role](#) in California, compared to other states. In fall 2022, students transferring from community colleges made up 29% of new enrollees at UC and 42% of new enrollees at CSU.
- ▶ A majority of new enrollees at UC (58%) and CSU (51%) graduated from California public high schools. Students from private high schools in the state made up 5.2% of new UC enrollment and 3.4% at CSU.
- ▶ Students from other US states made up 2.7% of new CSU enrollment and 3.9% at UC in 2022. International students are more likely to go to UC than CSU: in 2022, 3.7% of new UC students came from other countries, compared to less than 1% at CSU.

---

## Most new UC and CSU students graduated from California high schools



Sources: University of California; California State University.

## The state and its higher education institutions are working to expand college access.

- ▶ The state is expanding structured [dual enrollment programs](#), which enable high school students to gain valuable experience by taking—and earning credit for—community college courses.
- ▶ Initiatives such as Guided Pathways and the Golden State Pathways Program (GSPP) are designed to streamline transitions from high school to higher education and beyond.
- ▶ Associate Degrees for Transfer (ADTs) at CSU and the Transfer Admissions Guarantee (TAG) program at most UC campuses play a key role in efforts to increase transfer rates from community colleges and boost the number of students earning bachelor's degrees.

---

Supported with funding from the Sutton Family Fund.