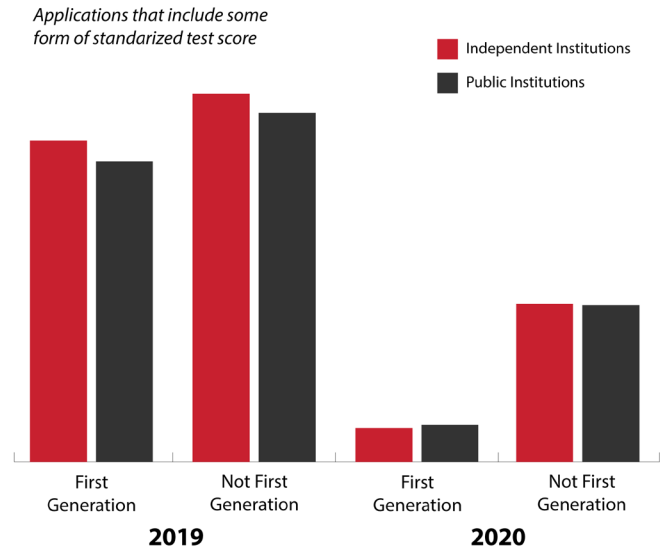


# The Truth About: Test-Optional Policies

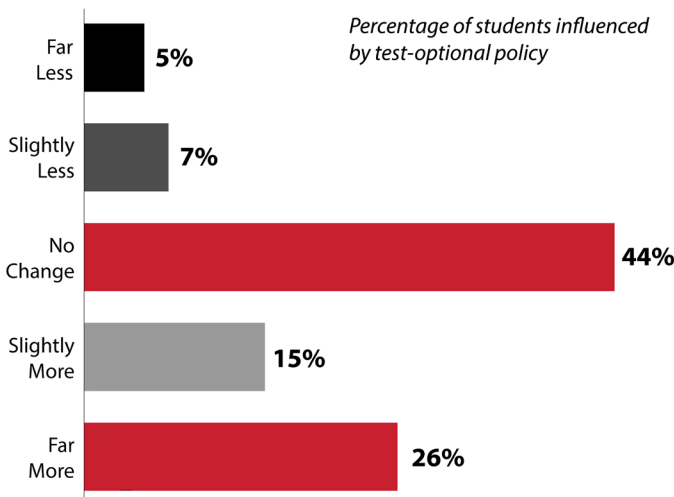


## The Pandemic Shift

When COVID-19 halted in-person education activities, including standardized tests like the **ACT and SAT**, many students were unable to take standardized tests for their fall 2020 applications. This caused the number of applications with standardized test scores to **drop**, especially among first-generation students. With the rising number of institutions adopting test-optional policies prior to the pandemic (**45 percent** of four-year institutions by fall 2019) colleges and universities recognized a need for flexibility in their application process. Thus, the pandemic shifted many institutions toward an unexpected experiment with test-optional policies.



Source: CommonApp (February 2021)



Source: Carnegie Dartlet, "COVID-19 Impact on Fall 2021" (2020)

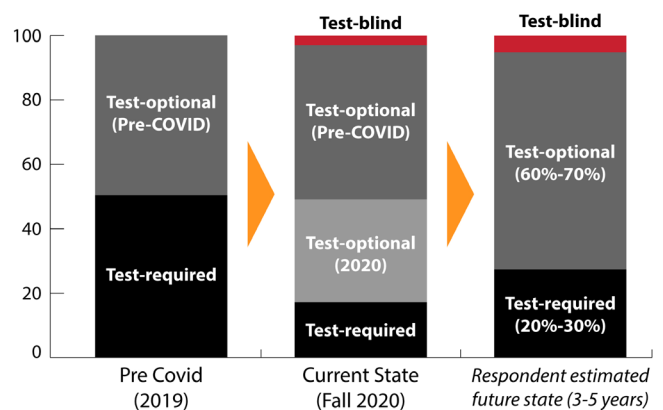
## A Mark in Favor of Test Optional Policies

The temporary adoption of test-optional policies appears to have been viewed **favorably** by some applicants, likely attributing to the **increased number** of applications at institutions with such policies. These changes have prompted higher education professionals to begin discussing the viability of **test-blind** policies, an extension of the longstanding **conversation** about the use of standardized tests.

## The Future of Test-Optional

Though it is unlikely that **test-optional policies** will be the new norm of college admissions anytime soon, a popular college guide has chosen to drop the use of standardized scores as a ranking metric. This move allows room for speculation as to whether other college guides will follow. Some universities have opted to **extend** their test-optional policies for the next application cycle and **possibly longer** if other testing options do not surface. These changes are generating curiosity as to how the use of such scores will be **weighed** in the future of college admissions. Test-optional policies and their effects may represent a **paradigm shift** in the college admissions process.

Institutions' admissions testing policies over time



Note: Includes only four year or above institutions  
Source: ACT, "Summary Findings Survey of Higher Education Enrollment and Admissions Officers" (February 2021)