

# What It Takes to Get Into the Ivy League

An average of 7.25% of all applicants to Ivy League schools were admitted in fall 2018.



Harvard accepted just 5% of all applicants in 2018

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**MANY STUDENTS DREAM OF** attending one of the colleges in the elite Ivy League for their undergraduate education.

While getting accepted to one of the eight Ivy League school in America, including No. 1-ranked Princeton University, has long been notoriously difficult, admission at top college overall has become increasingly challenging as more students apply.

The average acceptance rate among Ivy League colleges in fall 2018 was 7.25%, U.S. News statistics reveal. The average acceptance rate at all other National Universities – schools that offer a full range of undergraduate majors,

plus master's and doctoral programs – was about 65% for the same time period.

Early applicants to Ivy League schools are admitted more often than regular applicants. However, the explanation for this difference is that early applicants tend to have more competitive credentials than applicants who submit their materials later, according to Ivy League admissions officials.

**Brown University**, for example, includes the following disclaimer on its undergraduate admissions website: "Our pool of early applicants tends to include a very high proportion of exceptionally talented students and a higher rate of admission for Early Decision applicants reflects that phenomenon. It does not imply an automatic advantage for all early candidates. We admit Early Decision applicants only when we are confident that we would offer them admission as a Regular Decision applicant."

**Each Ivy League college** offers an early admission program. Five of the eight Ivy League universities have binding early decision programs that require students who apply early to commit to attend if they are accepted. In contrast, three Ivy League undergraduate institutions – Princeton, Harvard and Yale University – have nonbinding early action programs that permit students who are admitted early to subsequently apply to other colleges. However, all three of these schools have restrictive early action programs, meaning that early applicants to these schools must abide by certain limits in terms of how and where else they apply early.

**Among the eight Ivy League schools, five provided U.S. News with information about their early acceptance rates. And at each of these five schools, early acceptance rates dwarfed regular acceptance rates.**

For instance, at **Dartmouth College**, students who applied through the college's early decision program were more than three times as likely to get in than students who applied later. The school's early decision acceptance rate was 25%, whereas its acceptance rate for regular decision applicants was only 7%. The school's overall acceptance rate for fall 2018 was 9%.

Meanwhile, the early action acceptance rate at Harvard was more than four times greater than its regular decision acceptance rate. While 14.2% of Harvard's early action candidates were admitted, only 3% of regular decision applicants were accepted. The overall acceptance rate among all Harvard hopefuls was 5%.

According to [Harvard's](#) undergraduate admissions website, the reason that early applicants are admitted at a higher rate than later applicants is because the qualifications of early applicants tend to be particularly outstanding.

The Harvard website states: "Harvard does not offer an advantage to students who apply early. Higher Early Action acceptance rates reflect the remarkable strength of Early Action pools. For any individual student, the final decision will be the same whether the student applies Early Action or Regular Decision."

Meanwhile, [Dartmouth's college](#) admissions website states that the discrepancy between its early and regular admissions rates is partly due to the fact that many early applicants are recruited athletes. "Keep in mind that the published higher percentage of applicants accepted early is somewhat misleading because it includes recruited Division 1 athletes, whose credentials have been reviewed in advance," the website states. "With recruited athletes removed from the Early Decision numbers, the statistical advantage isn't as large."

[Applicants typically need to have high test scores and top-notch grades to land a spot at an Ivy League school. The average early acceptance rate among Ivy League schools that provided their early admissions statistics to U.S. News was about 18.6% for fall 2018.](#)

The average early decision acceptance rate for non-Ivy National Universities that offer an early decision program was 55% for fall 2018 admission, according to U.S. News data. In contrast, the average early action acceptance rate at non-Ivy National Universities that offer an early action program was 69%.

Every Ivy League school besides [Columbia University](#) provided U.S. News with information about the average standardized test scores among their 2018 college freshmen. The average SAT evidence-based reading and writing score among freshmen at these schools was 731, while students scored an average of almost 755 on the math section, out of a total 800 for each part, according to 2018 data that Ivy League schools submitted to U.S. News. The average ACT score was 33.4 out of 36.

All of the Ivy League institutions besides [Princeton](#) provided U.S. News with information about the proportion of 2018 freshmen who had graduated in the top 10% of their high school classes. At each of the seven Ivy League universities that provided information about the high school class ranks of

incoming students, more than 80% of freshmen had been top-10% high school students.

Ivy League institutions may be reach school for most college hopefuls, so applicants could benefit from looking beyond these schools to less selective colleges that align with their academic and career interests. There are also plenty of highly rated, very selective schools that aren't in the Ivy League.

Students interested in applying to Ivy League schools – all among the top 20 of the U.S. News National Universities rankings – can explore the chart below. It includes important statistics to help teens prepare for the admissions process.

<b>SCHOOL (STATE)</b>	<b>OVERALL ACCEPTANCE RATE</b>	<b>EARLY DECISION OR ACTION ACCEPTANCE RATE</b>	<b>FRESHMEN IN TOP 10% OF HIGH SCHOOL CLASS (FALL 2018)</b>	<b>U.S. NEWS NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES RANK</b>
<b><u>Princeton University (NJ)</u></b>	5%	14.8% (EA)	Data not provided	1
<b><u>Harvard University (MA)</u></b>	5%	14.2% (EA)	94%	2
<b><u>Columbia University (NY)</u></b>	6%	18% (ED)	96%	3 (tie)
<b><u>Yale University (CT)</u></b>	6%	Data not provided (EA)	94%	3 (tie)
<b><u>University of Pennsylvania</u></b>	8%	Data not provided (ED)	96%	6 (tie)
<b><u>Brown University (RI)</u></b>	8%	21% (ED)	96%	14
<b><u>Dartmouth College (NH)</u></b>	9%	25% (ED)	95%	12 (tie)
<b><u>Cornell University (NY)</u></b>	11%	Data not provided (ED)	83%	17 (tie)

*U.S. News surveyed more than 1,900 colleges and universities for the 2019 survey of undergraduate programs. Schools self-reported myriad data regarding their academic programs and the makeup of their student body, among other areas, making U.S. News' data the most accurate and detailed collection of college facts and figures of its kind. The enrollment data above are correct as of Sept. 16, 2019.*

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