

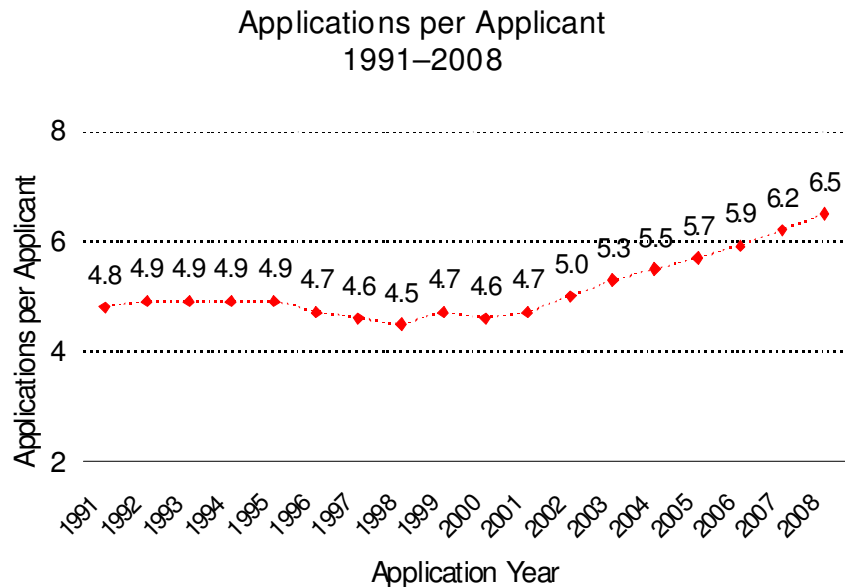
## National Applicant Trends—2008

This paper is an update to a report regarding national applicant trends that was first published in 2003 and has been updated annually since then. This update incorporates data from the fall 2008 application cycle for ABA-approved law schools.

The following trends are discussed in this report.

- Applicants are applying to more schools (long-term trend).
- Applicants applied earlier in the admission-year cycle (short-term trend) until 2005, at which point the trend appeared to reverse.
- Non-Asian minorities, especially blacks, are applying later in the admission-year cycle than whites and Asians (long-term trend).
- Older applicants are applying later in the admission-year cycle (long-term trend).
- Male applicants applied later in the admission-year cycle (short-term trend).
- Credentials are generally declining later in the admission-year cycle (long-term trend).

### Applicants are applying to more schools (long-term trend)



The preceding chart shows that applications per applicant ranged from 4.8 to 4.9 during the five-year period from 1991 through 1995 and between 4.5 and 4.7 during the five-year period from 1996 through 2000. For 2001 there were 4.7 applications per applicant, but by 2008 the number had increased to 6.5. While this may not seem like a large change, consider the following example:

*If there were 100,000 applicants in each of those seven years, the number of applications would have increased by 180,000 from 2001 to 2008, an increase of more than 900 applications per school on average, with no increase in the total number of applicants nationwide!*

It is likely that this long-term trend is a result of applicants' desire to increase their likelihood of acceptance during periods of high applicant volume by applying to more schools. A lesser factor may be that the increased usage of electronic applications has made it easier to apply.

It seems likely that this ratio will remain high as long as applicants perceive that volumes remain high.

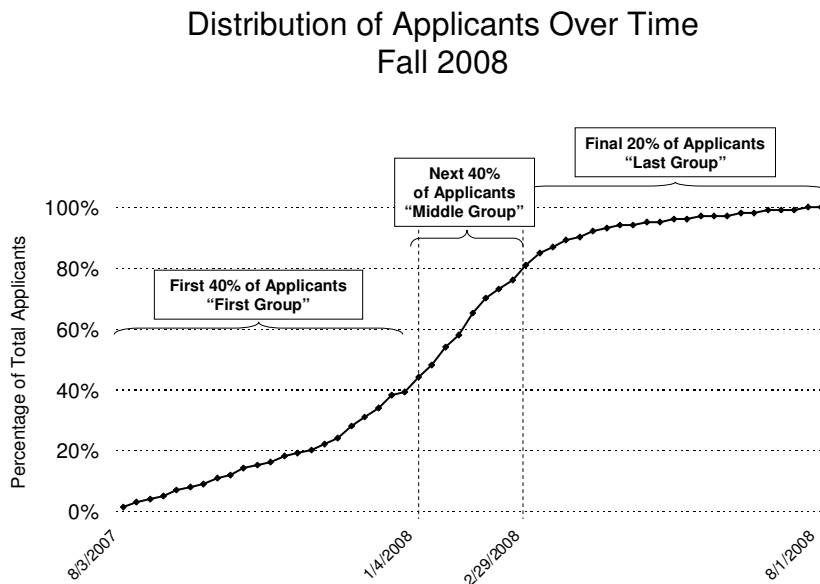
#### **Applicants applied earlier in the admission-year cycle (short-term trend).**

By December of the years 2001 through 2004, the applicant count was 26 percent, 28 percent, 31 percent, and 33 percent of the preliminary final applicant counts, respectively. Again, applicants were most likely applying earlier because they recognized the competitive environment. The electronic submission of applications also sped up the process.

However, starting in 2004, applicant counts began to level off and to decrease slightly by 2007. The early-December application percentages were 33 percent in 2005, 31 percent in 2006, 28 percent in 2007, and 28 percent in 2008. So, it appears this trend has run its course.

**Non-Asian minorities, especially blacks, are applying later in the admission-year cycle than whites and Asians (long-term trend).**

The trend of non-Asian minorities applying later in the admission-year cycle has persisted for a number of years. To illustrate this trend, data from the 2008 application cycle are discussed and graphed below. For purposes of this discussion and the discussions regarding age and gender that follow, the applicant pool was divided into three groups based on when they first applied to a school. The groups are divided into the first 40 percent of all applicants, who first applied by early January; the second 40 percent, who first applied between early January and the end of February; and the final 20 percent, who first applied after February. These groups will be referred to as the “first group,” the “middle group,” and the “last group,” respectively. [See chart below.]

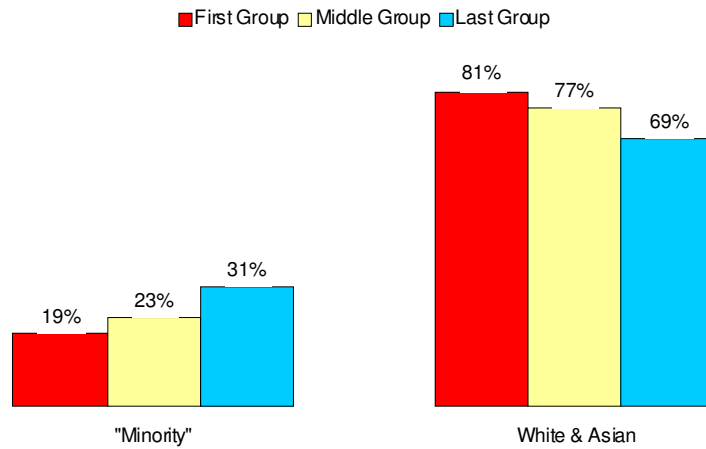


The first group of applicants applied to at least one school by 1/4/08. The composition of this group of applicants was 81 percent white and Asian and 19 percent for all other ethnic groups. Black applicants comprised 9 percent of the total.

The middle group of applicants applied to at least one school between 1/5/08 and 2/29/08. The composition of this group of applicants was 77 percent white and Asian and 23 percent for all other ethnic groups. Blacks represented 11 percent of the total.

The last group of applicants applied between 3/1/08 and 8/8/08. This group was 69 percent white and Asian and 31 percent for all other ethnic groups. Blacks made up 16 percent of the total. These results are shown on the next two charts.

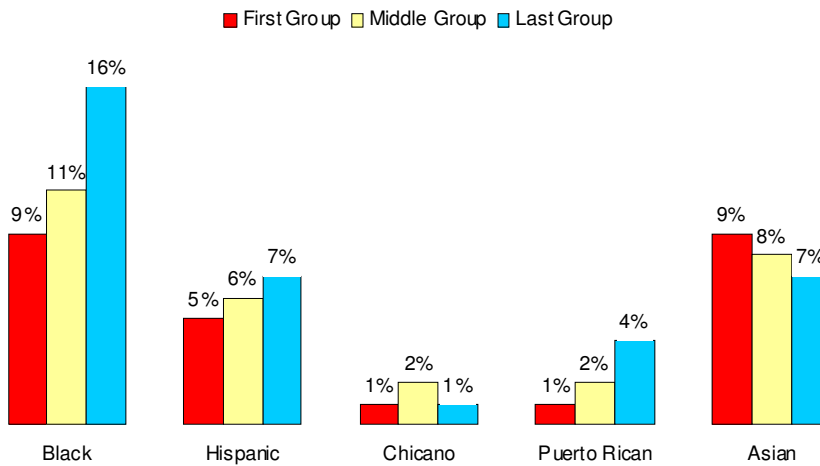
## Composition of Applicant Pool by Summarized Ethnic Group & Date of Application Fall 2008 Applicants



First Group applied by 1/4/08, Middle Group applied from 1/5/08 through 2/29/08, Last Group applied from 3/1/08 through 8/8/08.  
 "Minority" includes American Indian/Alaska Native, Black/African American, Chicano/Mexican American, Hispanic/Latino, Puerto Rican

A more detailed ethnic-group breakdown is shown on the next chart.

## Composition of Applicant Pool by Ethnic Group & Date of Application Fall 2008 Applicants



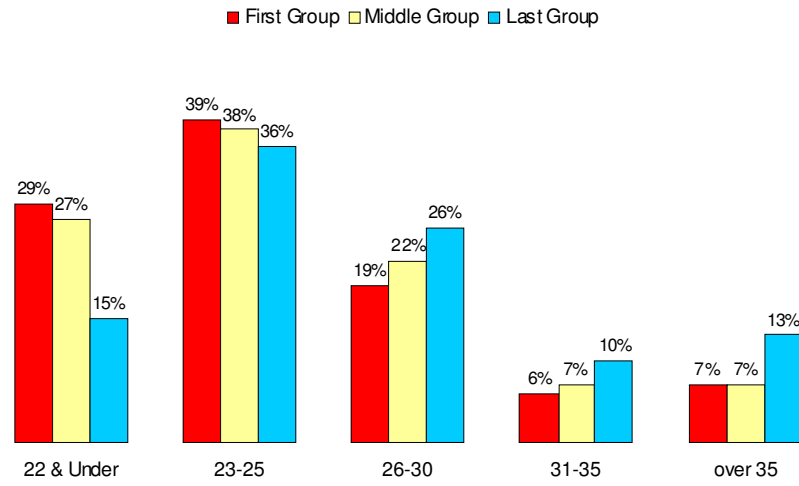
First Group applied by 1/4/08, Middle Group applied from 1/5/08 through 2/29/08, Last Group applied from 3/1/08 through 8/8/08.

White 67%, 64%, 57%

**Older applicants are applying later in the admission-year cycle (long-term trend).**

Using the same 2008 chronological breakdown described above, 68 percent of the first group of applicants were age 25 and under and 32 percent were age 26 and over. Of the middle group, 65 percent were age 25 and under and 35 percent were age 26 and over. Of the last group, 51 percent were age 25 and under and 49 percent were age 26 and over. The chart below provides a more detailed breakdown.

Composition of Applicant Pool  
by Age Group & Date of Application  
Fall 2008 Applicants

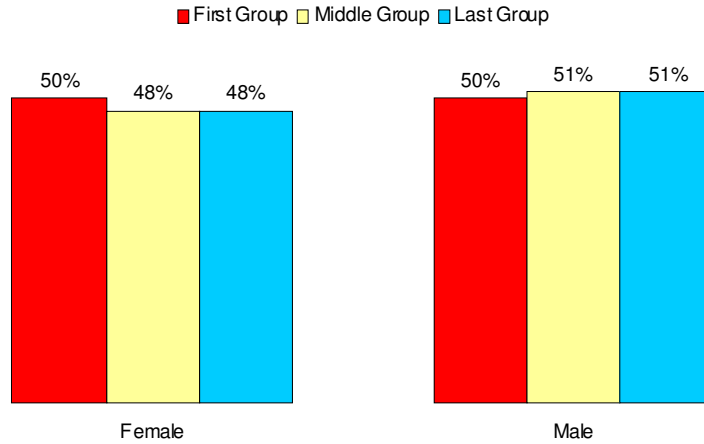


First Group applied by 1/4/08, Middle Group applied from 1/5/08 through 2/29/08, Last Group applied from 3/1/08 through 8/8/08.

**Male applicants applied later in the admission-year cycle (short-term trend).**

The gender of applicants was also examined for the same 2008 time periods (see next chart). Males and females applied in equal proportions in the first part of the year, but males became more likely to apply later in the admission-year cycle.

## Composition of Applicant Pool by Gender & Date of Application Fall 2008 Applicants



First Group applied by 1/4/08, Middle Group applied from 1/5/08 through 2/29/08, Last Group applied from 3/1/08 through 8/8/08.

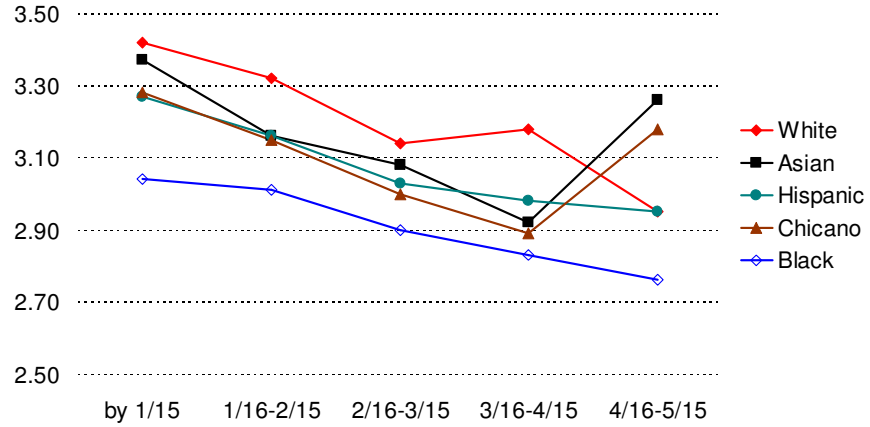
### **Credentials are generally declining later in the admission-year cycle (long-term trend).**

An examination of applicant credentials (GPAs and LSAT scores) reveals that the credentials of applicants generally tend to decline throughout most of the admission-year cycle. That is, on average, applicants who apply early in the cycle have better credentials than those who apply later in the cycle. This trend is true across every ethnic and gender group, with a few exceptions by ethnic group late in the cycle (after mid-April). There are, of course, some applicants with excellent credentials who apply late in the cycle.

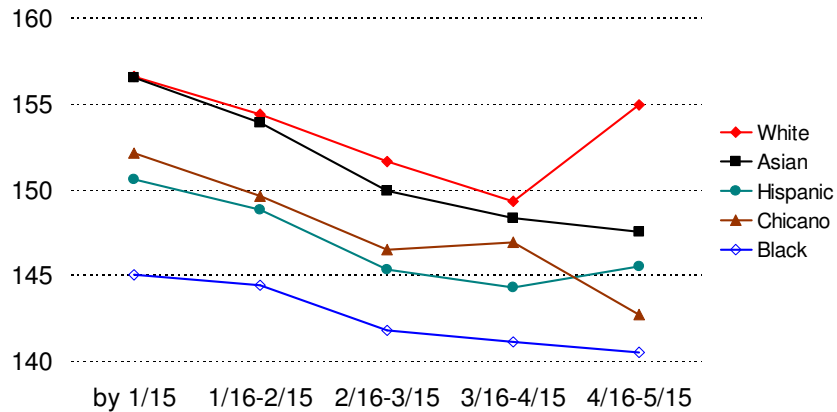
The two charts that follow show the changes in average GPA and average LSAT score across a portion of the application cycle for various ethnic groups. Data for these charts were derived from the LSAC Monthly Applicant Summary reports and, therefore, are based on different time periods than the preceding charts. The percentage of the total applicant pool represented within the dates used for these two charts is as follows:

By 1/15/08:	53 percent
1/16/08 – 2/15/08:	23 percent
2/16/08 – 3/15/08:	15 percent
3/16/08 – 4/15/08:	6 percent
4/16/08 – 5/15/08:	3 percent

Average GPA of Applicant Pool  
by Ethnic Group & Date of Application  
Fall 2008 Applicants



Average LSAT Score of Applicant Pool  
by Ethnic Group & Date of Application  
Fall 2008 Applicants



**A few caveats**

Because this paper deals with national trends, it is not possible to draw conclusions about how these trends impact individual schools. Schools may want to examine whether similar application patterns exist in their environment and adjust their admission process, if appropriate.

The chronological data used for this paper were derived from the dates on which schools identify applicants to LSAC via ACES or ACES<sup>2</sup>. This differs somewhat from the dates on which each school actually receives its applications. However, this should not have any significant impact on the trends discussed as long as most schools identify their applicants to LSAC in a relatively consistent and timely manner.

Due to the batch processing of many applications by the Ontario Law School Application Service (OLSAS), it was not possible to do a similar analysis regarding applicants to Canadian member schools.

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