

Evergreen New Student Survey 2005 Research Methodology

The Evergreen New Student Survey was designed to gather information that can be used in planning academics and student support services at The Evergreen State College. The survey is intended to provide a mechanism for understanding the goals, skills, confidence, and characteristics of new students. All new first-time, first-years students and new transfer students are asked to participate in the survey.

This document explains the survey research methodology and compares the demographics of respondents with the population of new students. For the actual results of the survey, refer to the webpage: www.evergreen.edu/institutionalresearch/nss2005results.htm.

The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment administered the Evergreen New Student Survey in 2003 and 2005 with plans to continue administering the survey every two years. This allows for comparisons between years and continual improvement of the survey instrument itself.

The survey design of the Evergreen New Student Survey (New Student Survey) was facilitated through the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. The 2003 survey was vetted initially with representatives from Student Affairs and Academics, with faculty, and with a focus group of students. To prepare for the second administration, the survey was circulated among members of the Enrollment Coordinating Committee, the Academic Information Technology Priorities Group (one of the subgroups that make up the Information Technology Collaborative Hive), faculty, and other data users in Academics and Student Affairs.

Part of a Longitudinal Study

The New Student Survey both serves as a stand-alone survey and a component of a larger longitudinal effort to understanding the student experience. While the New Student Survey is a beginning-of-the-year survey administered only to new students, the Evergreen Student Experience Survey is an end-of-the-year survey of a sample of the undergraduate population stratified by class standing. Students who participated in the New Student Survey are also asked to participate in the survey, regardless of whether they were initially selected in the random sample.¹ This allows for comparisons between the responses of students on the New Student Survey when they are new to Evergreen with their responses on the Evergreen Student Experience Survey at the end of their first year.

Both Evergreen surveys provide an ongoing opportunity to understand the student population. The results are a rich data source that can be mined to increase understanding of factors related to student retention and attrition, student choices and needs, and students' level of skill in different areas and Evergreen's contribution to those skills. The survey helps Evergreen understand and respond to student needs, expectations, and aspirations.

Comparing the Evergreen New Student Surveys 2003 and 2005

The survey has been revised and some questions have been added since the 2003 administration of the survey. In some cases, it is possible to make direct comparisons between questions which were asked both in 2003 and 2005. In other cases, slight changes to the language or scales and the addition of new questions and replacement of old questions has rendered year-to-year comparisons problematic. In making changes to the survey, the concern for the ability to track trends in responses was balanced with the need to rephrase questions

¹ Additionally, all students who were enrolled in the Tribal: Reservation-based/Community-Determined Program in 2005 were asked to participate in the Evergreen Student Experience Survey for an assessment specific to that program.

for clarity, gather data in a different manner, or add questions that were not asked on the original survey.

Caveats

There are some things that the Evergreen New Student Survey does not do. It does not provide comparisons to new students at other peer institutions. Prior to the Evergreen New Student Survey, the institution participated in the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP). Participation in this survey did allow for comparisons; however, this benefit was balanced against the costs of the survey, including declining response rates as some students found questions either irrelevant or offensive. Additionally, the CIRP was administered only to new freshmen, which means that there was no information from new transfer students, who make up a larger proportion of the incoming class at Evergreen. Finally, there were data needs among various offices that could not be tacked onto a standardized survey. Instead, Evergreen's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment embarked on an effort to craft questions that would be relevant to the Evergreen community. For comparisons to peer institutions, Evergreen participates in the National Survey of Student Engagement.

Evergreen New Students' Participation in the Survey

The incoming class of fall 2005 was comprised of 605 first-time, first-years and 807 transfer students. The definition of "transfer student" at Evergreen includes students who have transferred from either two- or four-year institutions as well as "Returning Greeners," students who have attended Evergreen previously but not for at least one year and who have transfer credits. Returning Greeners with transfer credits were excluded from the survey, as they are not completely new to The Evergreen State College. All new students (excluding Returning Greeners) were sought for their participation in the survey (N=1,381). Of the 1,381, there was only one student for whom there was no e-mail address or mailing address who therefore could not be contacted.

A relatively high proportion of new Evergreen students participate in the Evergreen New Student Survey -- 62.4% of the entire new student population in 2005 responded to the survey. This was up from 59.6% responding in the 2003 administration of the survey. Almost 70% of first-time, first-year students responded to the survey and 57.3% of new transfer students responded.

Summary of Respondents, Population, and Response Rates

	Respondents	Population	Percent of Population Responded
First-time, First-year Students	417	605	68.9%
Transfer Students*	445	776	57.3%
Total New Students	862	1381	62.4%

*Excluding Returning Greeners with transfer credits.

Methods of Contacting Students

As new students registered for fall classes, they were contacted via e-mail if they had a valid e-mail address. The e-mail had a link to a web version of the survey. If an e-mail address was not available, students were contacted via mail and also during orientation sessions. Students who did have an e-mail address, but who did not respond to the first e-mail via the web or did not fill out a survey at an Evergreen orientation workshop were also contacted via mail. All new students were contacted by e-mail and/or mail, with the exception of one student for whom a valid address could not be obtained. This student may have been contacted at one of the orientations or New Student Advising Workshops.

As mentioned above, some students were contacted during new student orientation events. Institutional Research staff attended orientations and workshops including the First Year Advising Day, New Student Advising Workshops, Academic Fair, and Tacoma Orientation in order to provide additional opportunities for students to participate in the survey. During these events, students were given time to complete and return the survey. Surveys were also

distributed to staff who organized the orientation for students new to the Tribal: Reservation-based Community-Determined Program for distribution.

Students were informed that if they completed the survey, their name would be entered into a drawing for a \$200 gift certificate at the Evergreen Bookstore. A random drawing was conducted in November 2005.

The chart below shows the number and percentage of surveys returned by response type. Fall 2005 was the first time that a web survey was used in the administration of the Evergreen New Student Survey. This option was not available at the time of the 2003 New Student Survey. A total of 40.1% of the responses came via the web. This was the most common mode of response, followed by responses via paper survey completed in a First-Year Advising Workshop (23.0%), and a paper survey returned via the mail (22.5%).

Mode of Response

	N	%
Web Survey	346	40.1%
First-Year Advising Workshop	198	23.0%
Mail Survey	194	22.5%
New Student Advising Workshop	110	12.8%
Tacoma Orientation	14	1.6%
<i>Total</i>	<i>862</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

The most common form of survey response among first-time, first-year students was a paper survey at a proctored First-Year Advising Workshop (43.2%). The largest proportion of transfer students responded via web (51.9%).

Mode of Response by Admission Type

	Number of First-time, First-year Responses	Percent of First-time, First-year Responses	Number of Transfer Student Responses	Percent of Transfer Student Responses
Web Survey	115	27.6%	231	51.9%
First-Year Advising Workshop	180	43.2%	18	4.0%
Mail Survey	81	19.4%	113	25.4%
New Student Advising Workshop	41	9.8%	69	15.5%
Tacoma Orientation	0	0.0%	14	3.1%
<i>Total</i>	<i>417</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>445</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

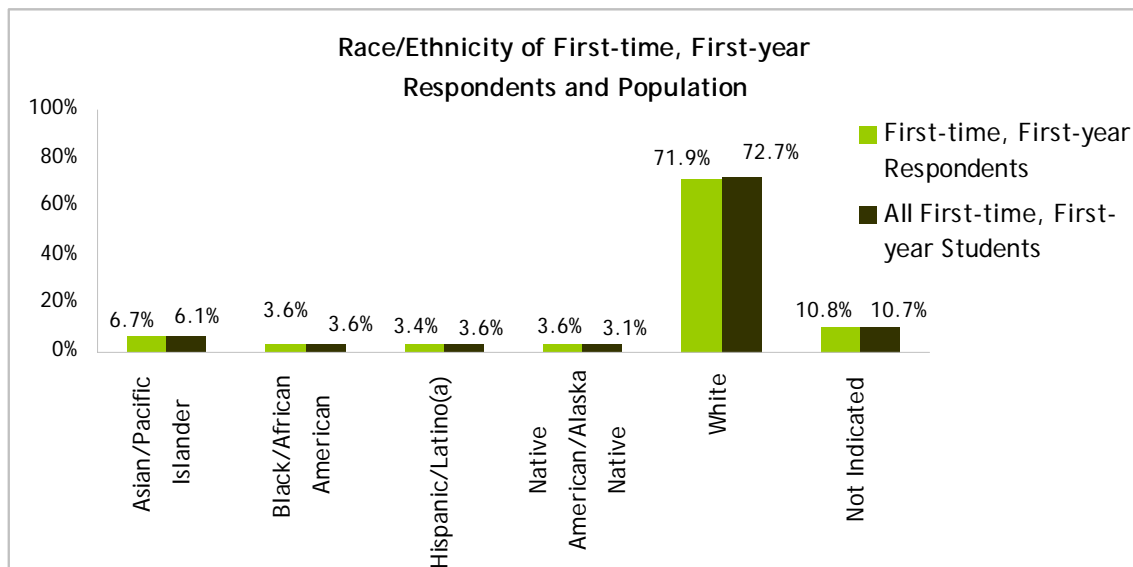
Checking for Representativeness: Comparisons of Survey Respondents' Demographics to those of the Population of New Students

In order to assess the representativeness of survey respondents and thus the generalizability of Evergreen New Student Survey results, the demographics of respondents were compared to the demographics of the overall student population. Demographic data is from the BANNER student database system, and information regarding race/ethnicity and gender comes from information collected as students apply to Evergreen. At the time of application, students are asked to identify their gender, race, and ethnicity.

First-time, First-year Respondents and Population

The differences between first-time, first-year respondents and the overall population of first-time, first-year students at Evergreen were tested using several statistical tests. Chi-square tests were used for the nominal variables: gender, race/ethnicity, residency status and admission type. A one-sample t-test was used to determine whether the slight difference in mean age between respondents and population were statistically significant. No statistically significant differences were found between the demographics of first-time, first-year respondents and the overall population of first-time, first-years.

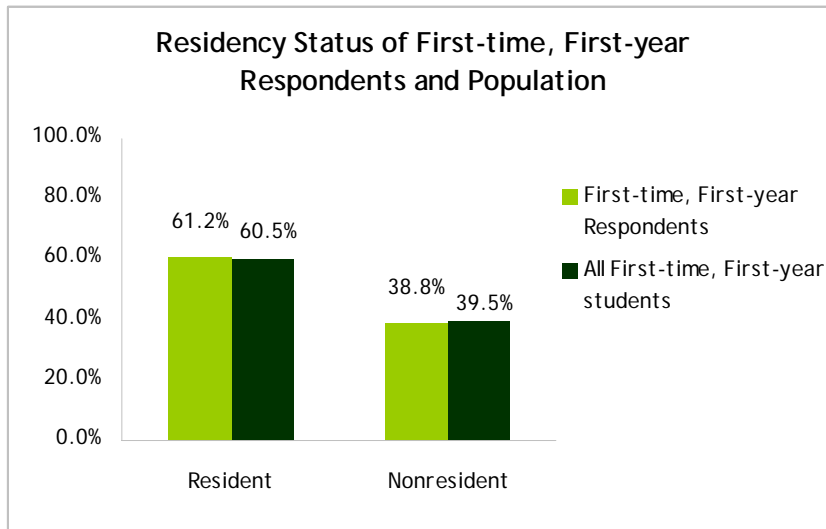
The chart below shows the slight differences between the racial/ethnic composition of first-time, first-year respondents and the overall first-time, first-year student population. These differences were not statistically significant when tested using a Chi-square test.



The table below shows the gender for respondents from BANNER, gender as reported by respondents on the survey, and gender in the BANNER system for all first-time, first-year students at Evergreen. The survey question allowed for identification with "other" instead of male or female only, while data from BANNER requires a choice of either male or female. The difference between the proportion of male and female respondents was not statistically significant from the proportion among all first-time, first-year respondents when tested using a Chi-square test.

	First-time, First-year Respondents (data from BANNER)	First-time, First-year Respondents (Self-report on survey)	All First-time, First-year Students
Male	45.6%	45.7%	49.9%
Female	54.4%	53.8%	50.1%
Other	Not available	0.50%	Not available

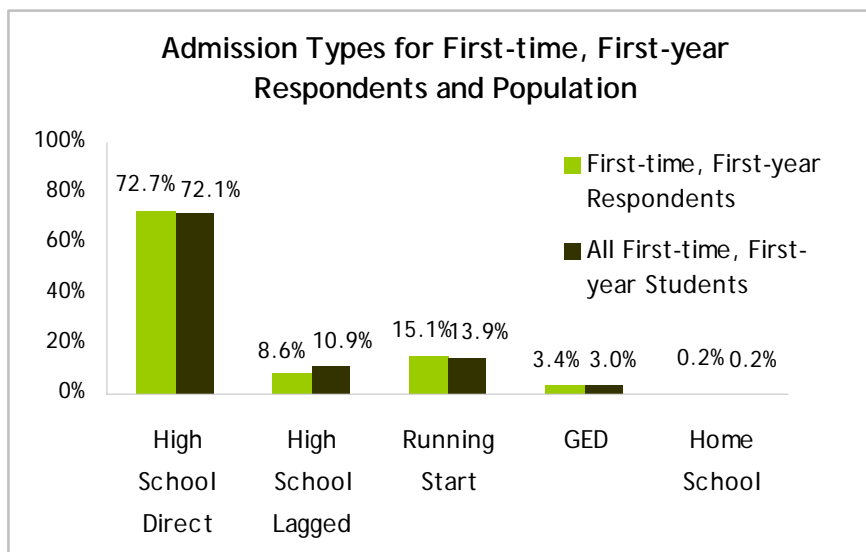
The chart below shows only a slight difference in the residency status of first-time, first-year respondents compared to the population of first-time, first-year students. The difference was not found to be statistically significant when tested using a Chi-square test.



The median age of both respondents and the population of first-time, first-year students is 18. The mean age of respondents is 18.5 compared to 18.6 for the population as a whole. The difference in mean age was not statistically significant when tested using a one-sample t-test.

Generally, all first-time, first-year students at Evergreen study at the Olympia campus. There was one respondent who was studying in the Tribal: Reservation-based/Community-Determined program according to BANNER data. Two respondents indicated on the survey that they planned to study in Tacoma and one respondent planned to study in Grays Harbor, although they were studying at the Olympia campus in Fall 2005.

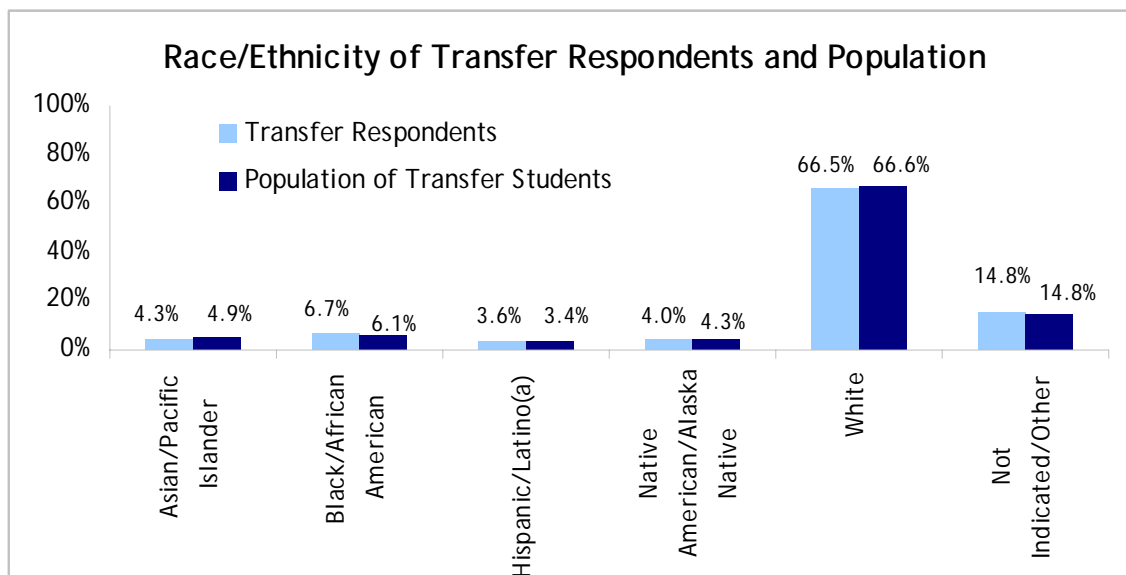
The chart below shows the slight differences between the admission types of first-time, first-year respondents compared to the population. Differences were not statistically significant when tested using a Chi-square test.



Transfer Respondents and Population

The differences between transfer respondents and the overall population of new transfer students at Evergreen were tested using several statistical tests. Chi-square tests were used for the nominal variables: gender, race/ethnicity, residency status and admission type. A one-sample t-test was used to determine whether the slight difference in mean age between respondents and population were statistically significant. There was a statistically significant difference in the proportion of males and females, with females overrepresented among transfer respondents. Respondents were also older on average than the population as whole; this difference was also statistically significant.

The chart below shows the slight differences between the racial/ethnic composition of transfer respondents and the overall transfer student population. These differences were not statistically significant when tested using a Chi-square test.

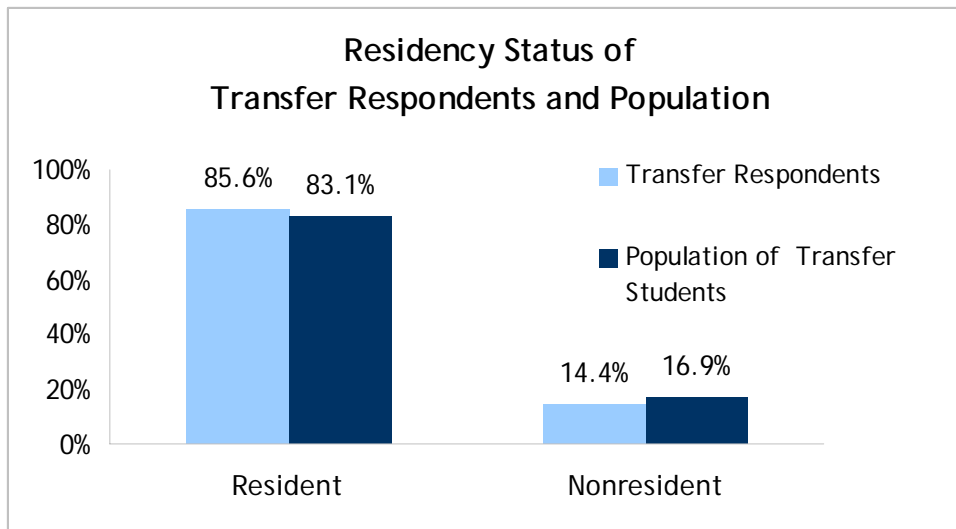


The table below shows the gender for respondents from BANNER, gender as reported by respondents on the survey, and gender in the BANNER system for all transfer students at Evergreen. The survey question allowed for identification with "other", while data from BANNER requires a choice of either male or female. The difference between the proportion of male and female respondents was statistically significant² from the proportion among all transfer students when tested using a Chi-square test.

	Transfer Respondents (data from BANNER)	New Student Survey Respondents (Self-report on survey)	Population of Transfer Students
Male	32.8%	32.1%	39.9%
Female	67.2%	67.4%	60.1%
Other	Not available	0.50%	Not available

The chart on the next page shows only slight differences in the residency status of transfer respondents compared to the population of new transfer students. The difference was not statistically significant when tested using a Chi-square test.

² Asymp. Sig. = 0.002
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The median age of respondents is 25 compared to 24 for the entire population of transfer students. The mean age of respondents is 28.8 and 27.6 for the population as a whole. The difference in mean age was found to be statistically significant when tested using a one-sample t-test.

The chart below shows the slight differences between the admission types of transfer respondents compared to the population. Differences were not statistically significant when tested using a Chi-square test.

