



# **Who Are Our Students? Using CIRP to Develop a Better Understanding Of Student Diversity**

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# What is CIRP?

## *Cooperative Institutional Research Program: Freshman Survey*

- CIRP was initiated in 1966 as a continuing longitudinal study of the American higher education system. During the past 39 years, CIRP has generated an array of normative, substantive, and methodological research about a wide range of issues in American higher education.
- The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) in the Graduate School of Education & Information Studies at University of California, Los Angeles, developed the survey. CIRP is the nation's largest and oldest empirical study of higher education, involving data on some 1,800 institutions and over 11 million students. It is regarded as the most comprehensive source of information on college students.
- A major purpose of the CIRP survey is to collect demographic and attitudinal information on incoming freshmen students. The annual report of the CIRP Freshman Survey provides normative data on each year's entering college students.

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## Data Collection

- CIRP 2003 was a group-administered survey of first-time, full-time freshmen students.
- The survey was conducted during June, July and August in five separate sessions of freshman orientation.
- The total enrollment of first-time, full-time freshmen for the fall 2003 semester was 610. Of the 479 freshmen who attended an orientation session, 420 completed surveys.

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## The student diversity environment at University of Massachusetts Boston.

- UMass Boston sponsors and supports cultural diversity by helping ethnic and international communities to articulate and celebrate their cultural values and identities, and by recognizing the contributions and achievements of members of these communities.
- UMass Boston is committed to meeting the needs of as many individuals as possible and to creating an environment that fosters diversity. As such, there are a number of special resources available on campus to accommodate and support students, and to ensure the inclusion of all people in the UMass Boston community.
- The Office of International Student Services, housed in the University Advising Center, provides immigration counseling, student request processing, academic advising for undeclared undergraduates, orientation and cultural programming for students on non-immigrant visas.

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## Some Definitions

**Immigrant** – The student is a foreign national who is a permanent U.S. resident or the student is a naturalized U.S. citizen.

**Other Citizen** – The student is a native born U.S. citizen.

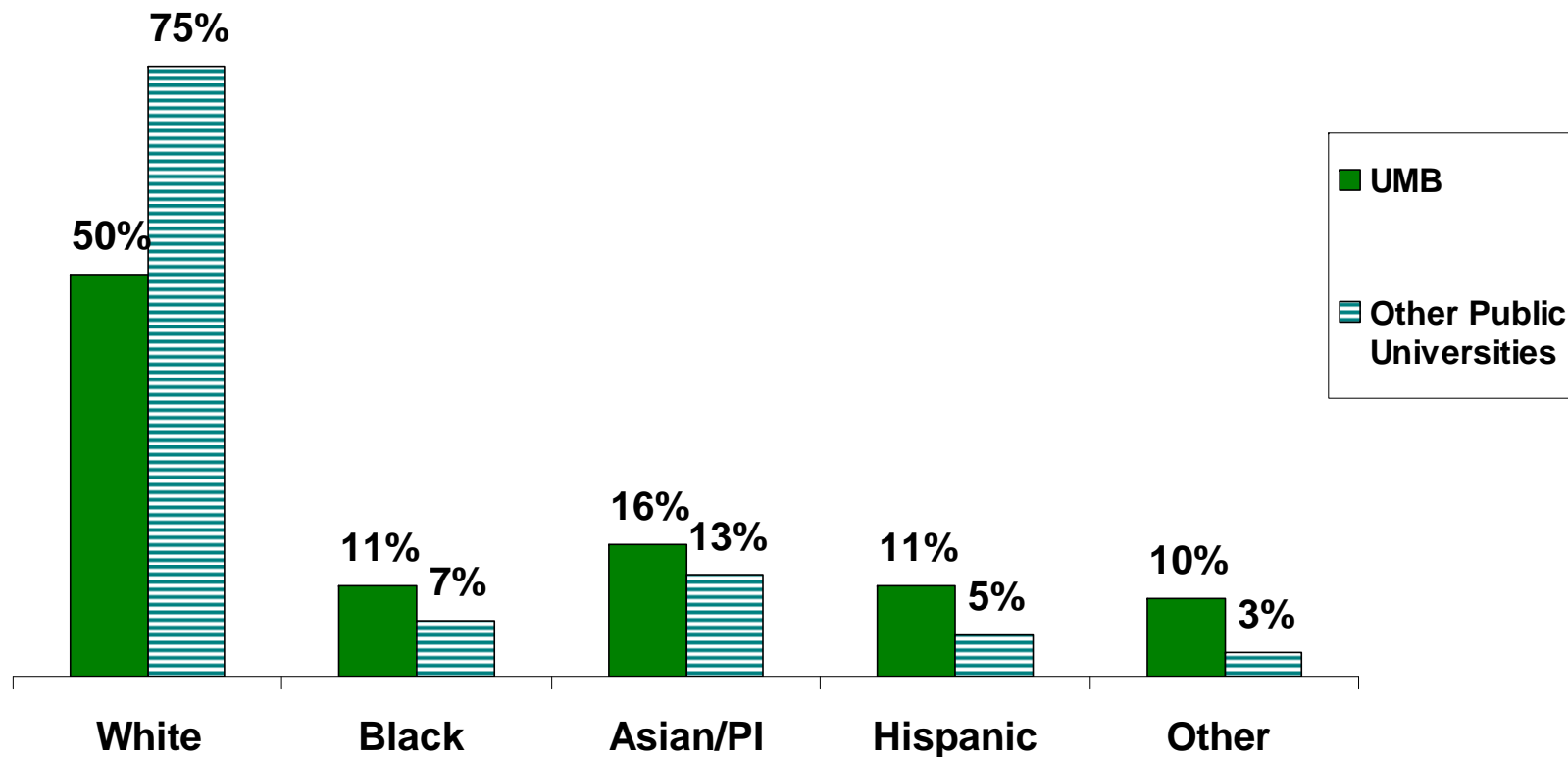
**NNSE** – The student usually spoke a language other than English at home as a child.

**EPS** - The student usually spoke English at home as a child.

**International Students** – are not included in this study.

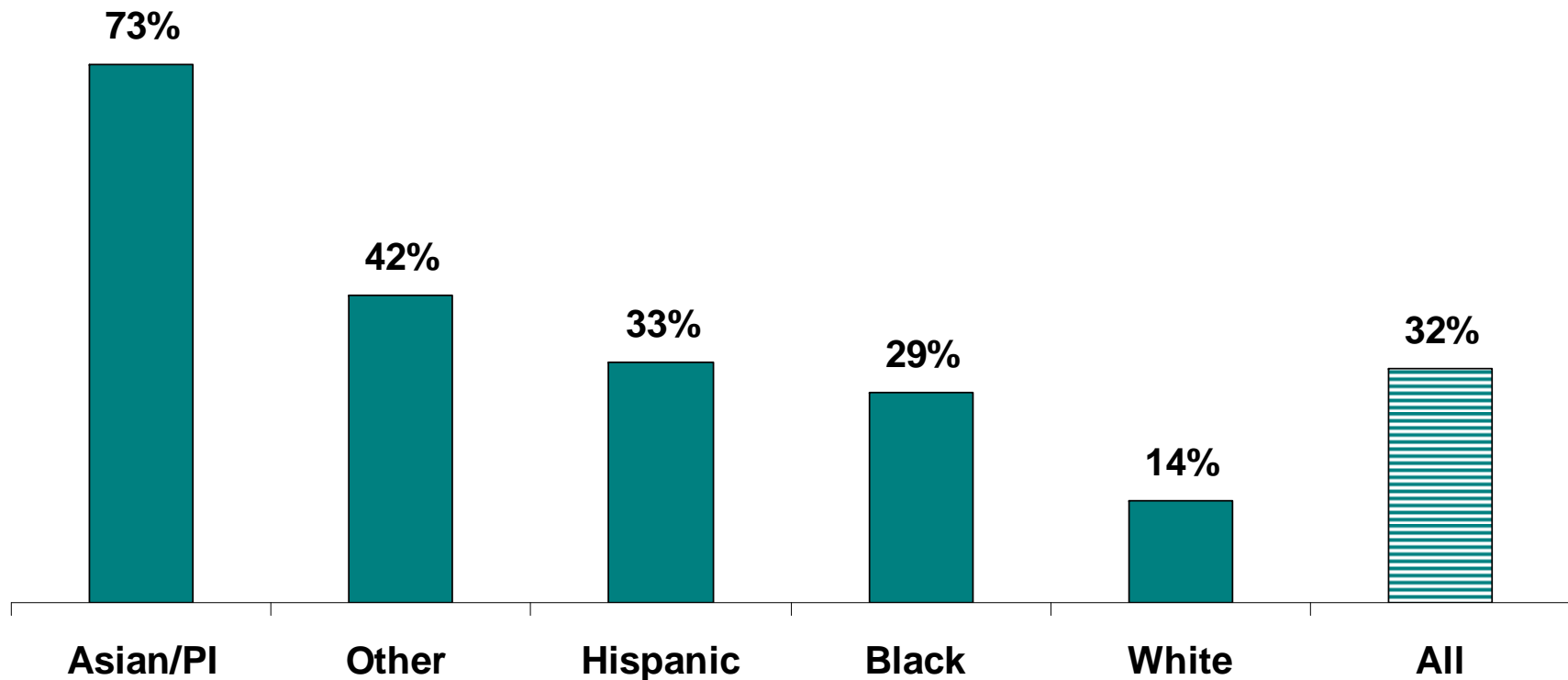
We have known for a while that our institution is more racially and ethnically diverse than most other public universities, and this showed in our CIRP data.

Race/Ethnicity of Respondents

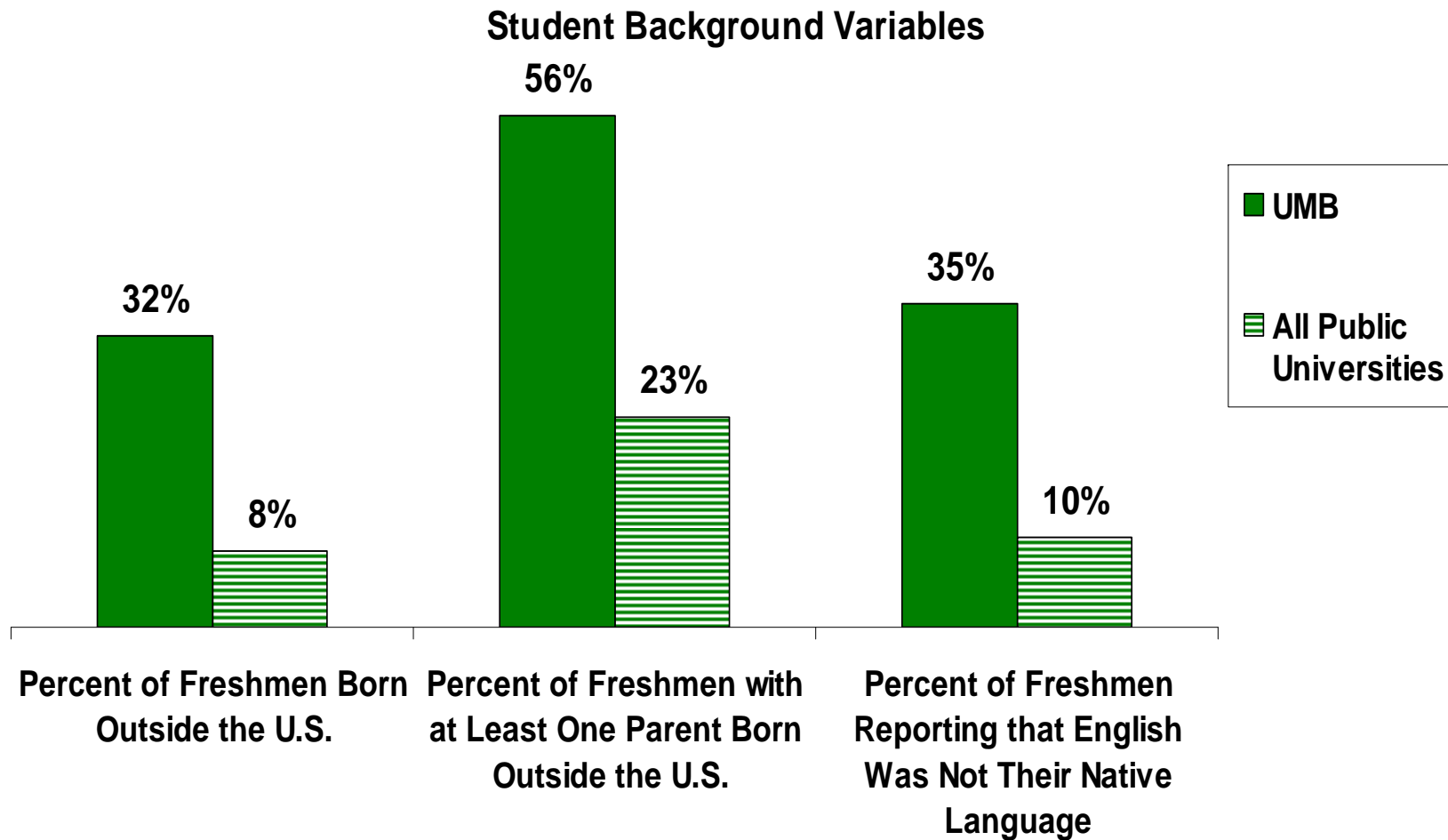


We've also known that within the standard reporting groups, we have an additional layer of diversity, and CIRP confirmed this.

Percent of Immigrants within Racial/Ethnic Group



Indeed, we found several related measures on which our students differed from the other public universities.



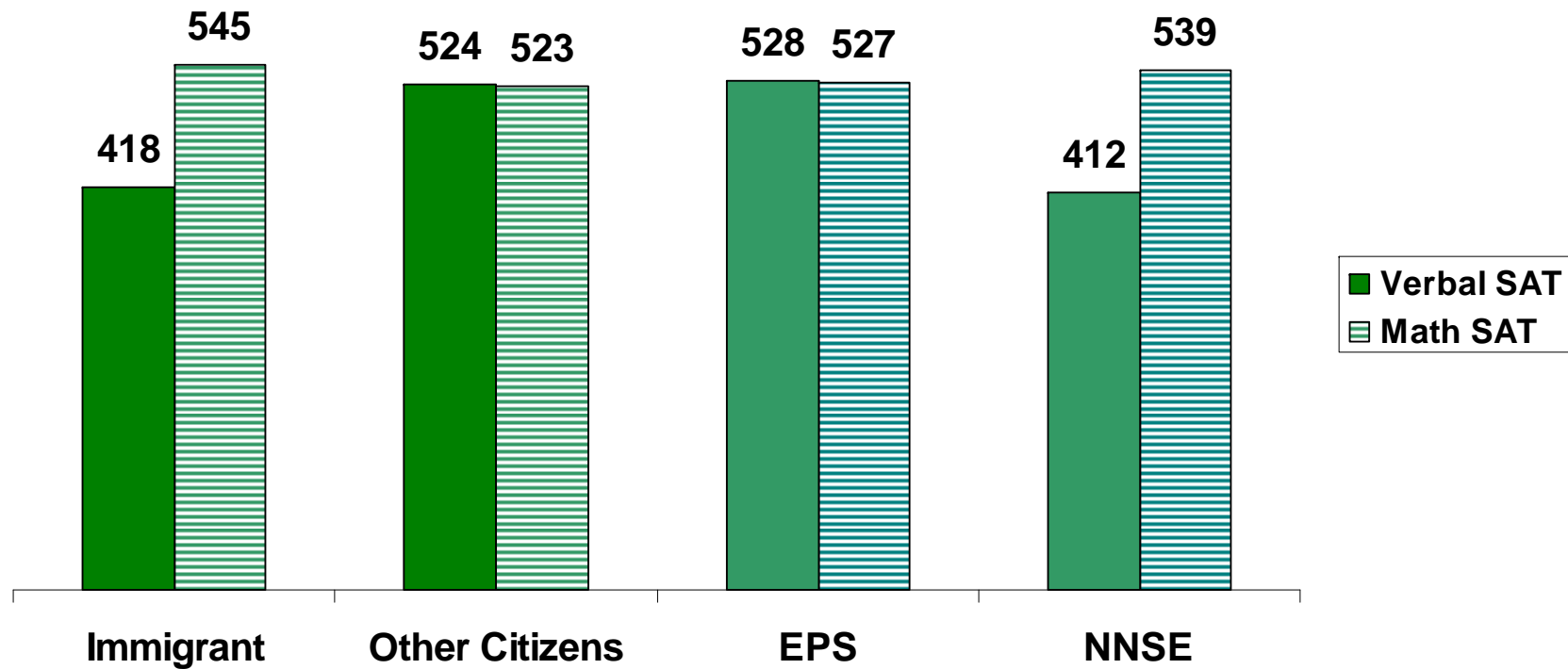
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## Key Question

- **We began to wonder if the mean CIRP scores of our students really represented the group as a whole, or if there were real differences between immigrants and other citizen groups.**
- **If the groups really were different, the means that CIRP reported to us wouldn't be presenting an accurate picture of the different behaviors and needs of our students.**

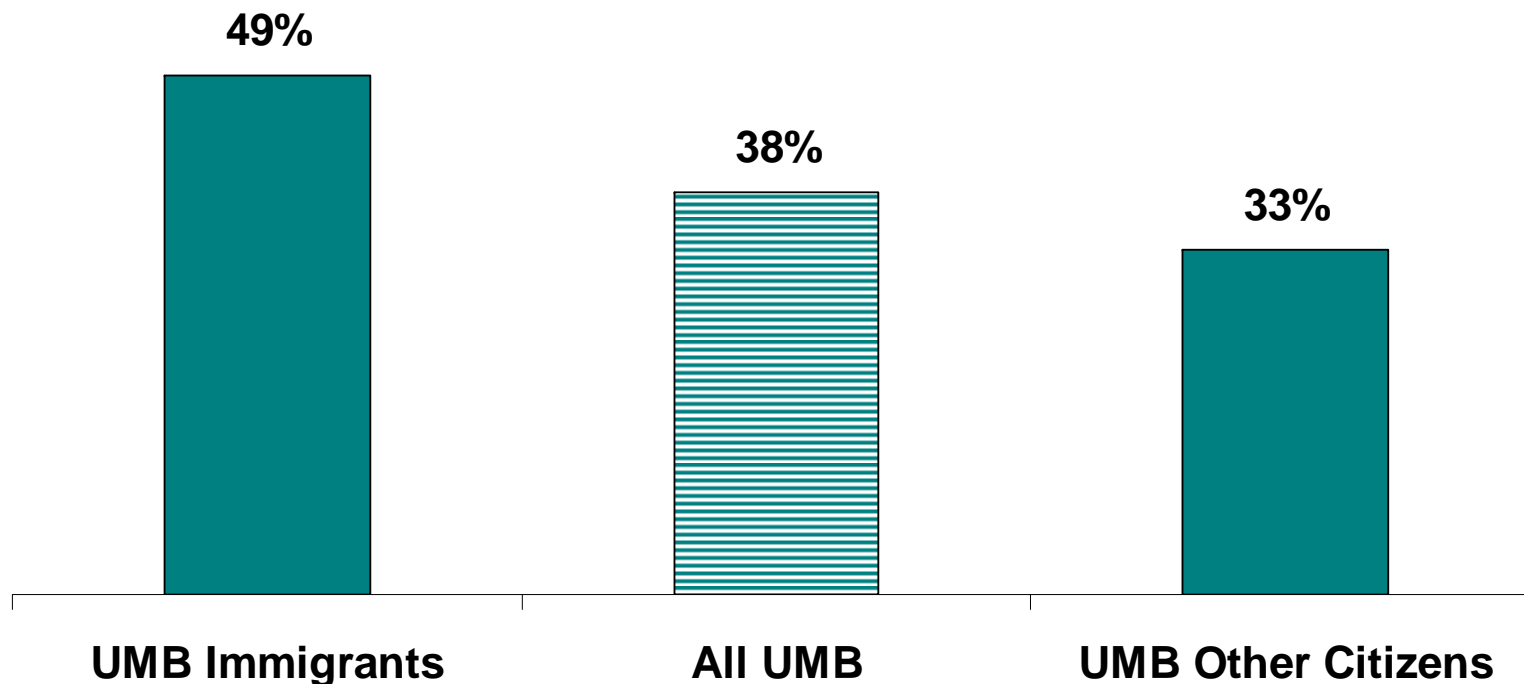
We found that SAT scores differed markedly for these different groups, but only for the Verbal section.

Mean SAT Scores by Immigration and Language Status



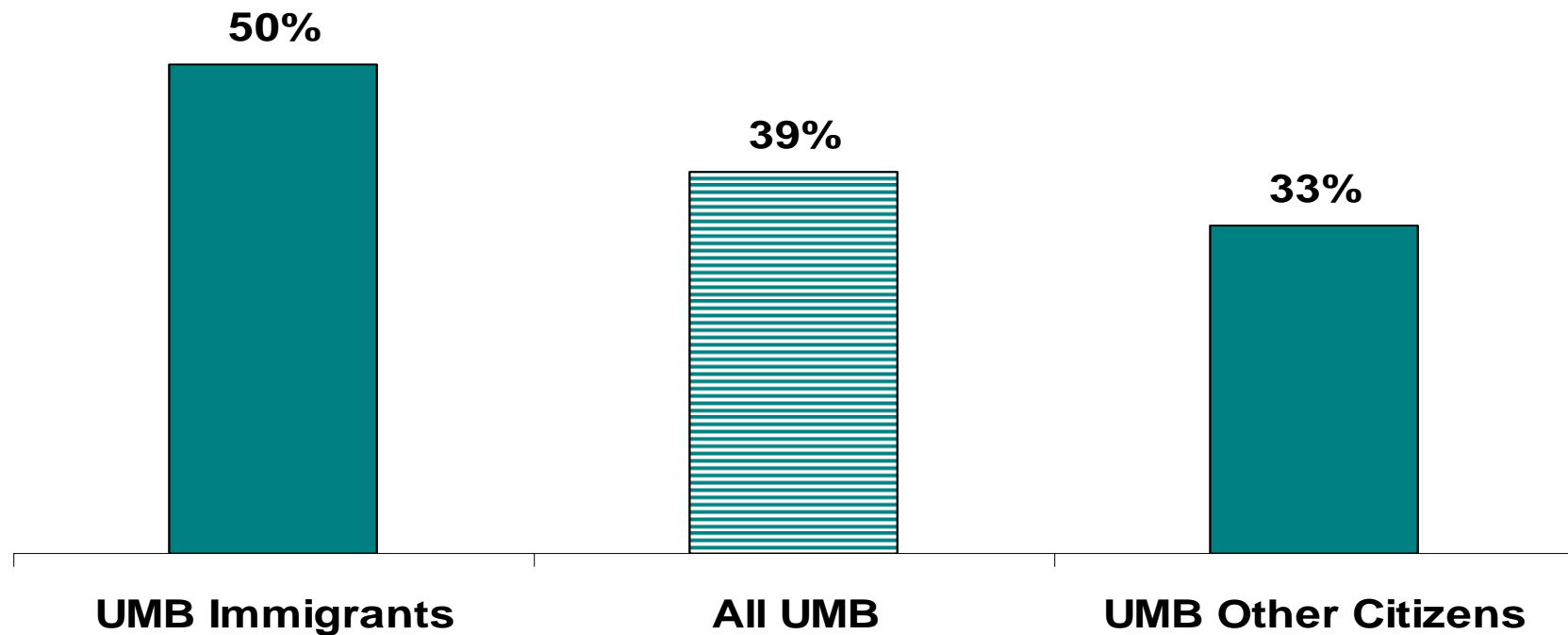
There were also marked differences in high school grades with more of the immigrant groups reporting higher high school grades.

**Percent of Students Reporting an Average High School Grade of B+ or Better**



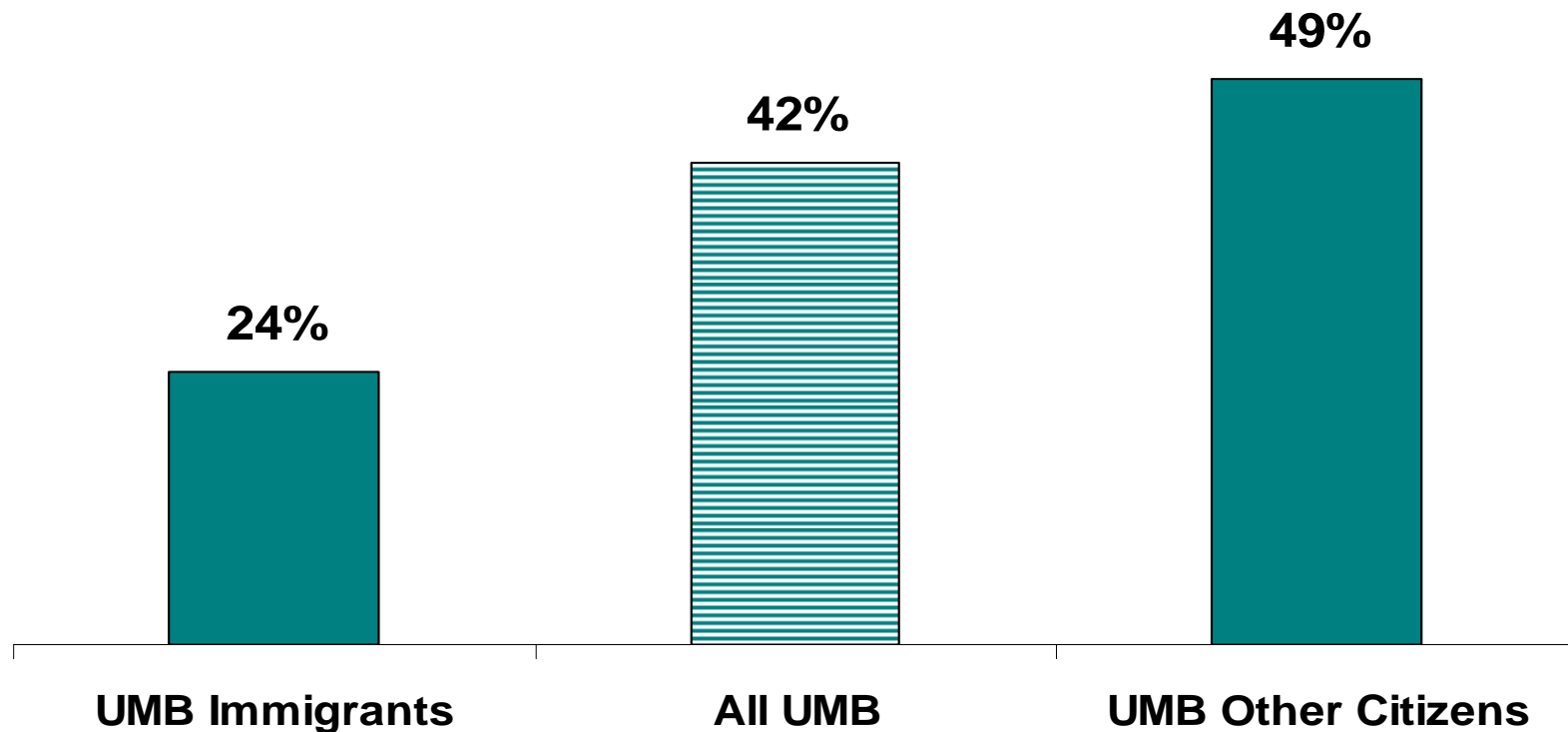
To explain the grade differences, we looked at how the students spent their time in high school, and found that the immigrants spent more time studying or doing homework.

**Percent of Students Who Reported Studying or Doing Homework For 6 or More Hours each Week in High School**



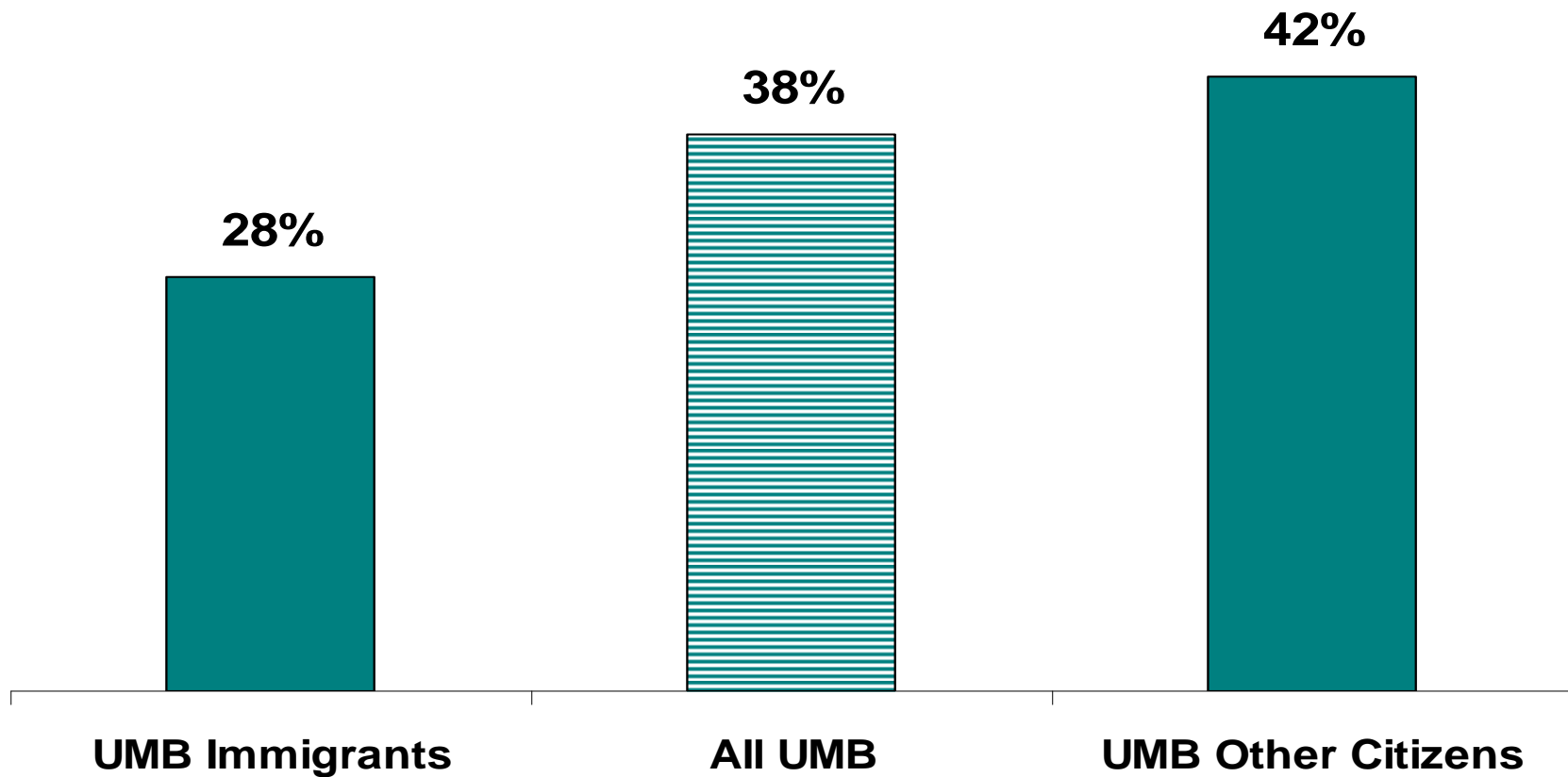
The immigrant students reported spending considerably less time socializing with friends.

**Percent of Students Who Reported Socializing With Friends For 11 Or More Hours Each Week In High School**



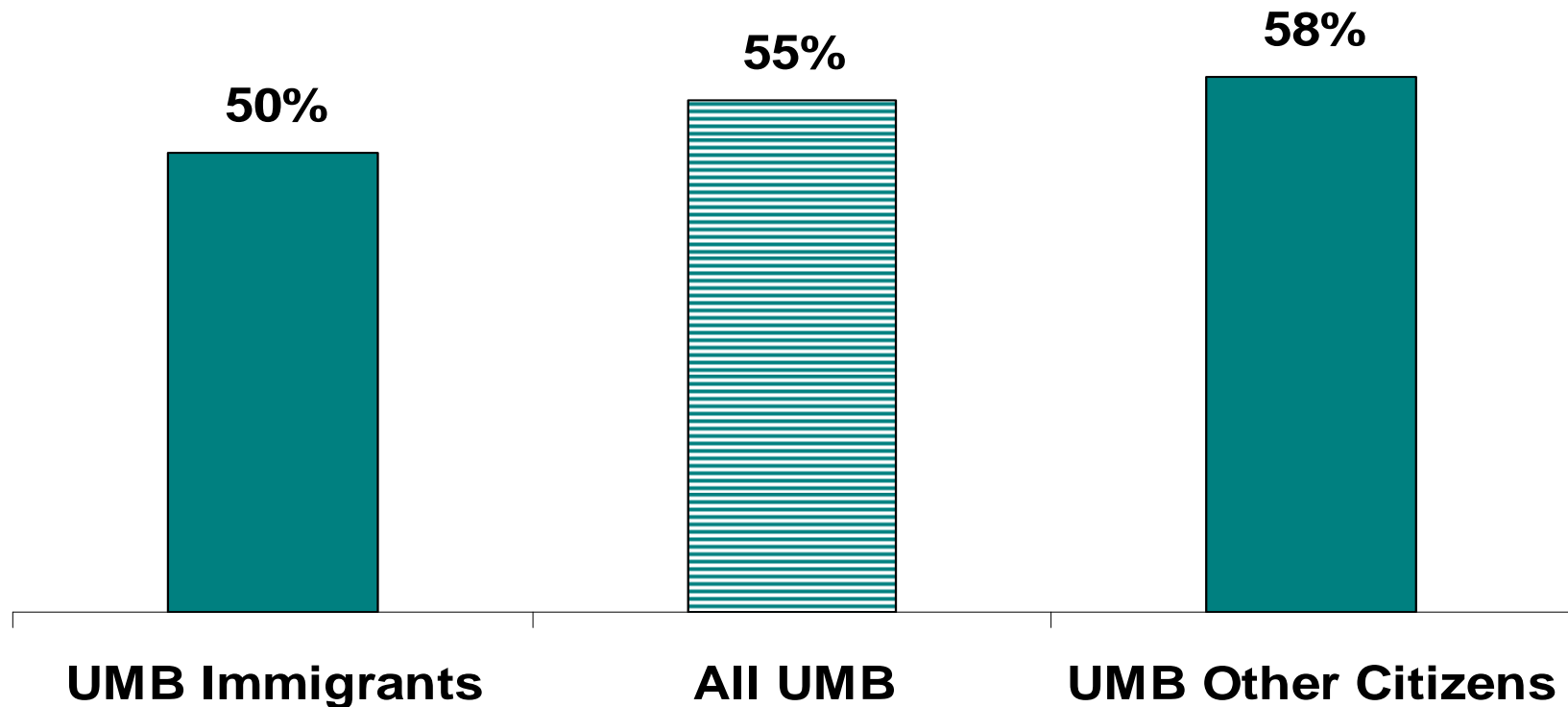
**Immigrants also reported spending less time doing sports or exercising.**

**Percent of Students Reporting 6 or More hours Weekly In High School on Exercise or Sports**



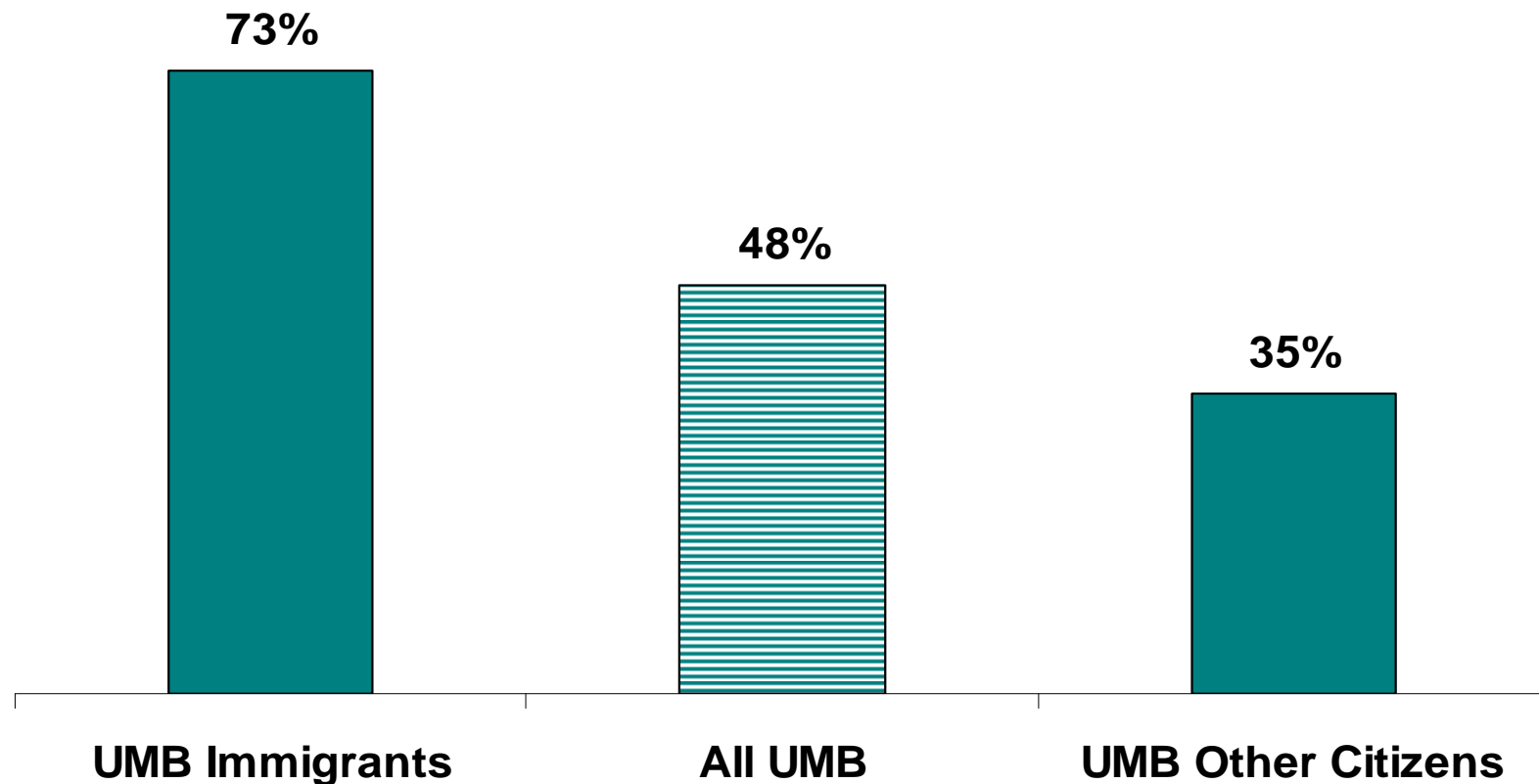
However, they spent about the same number of hours working for pay in high school.

**Percent of Students Who Reported Working for Pay For 11 or More Hours Each Week In High School**



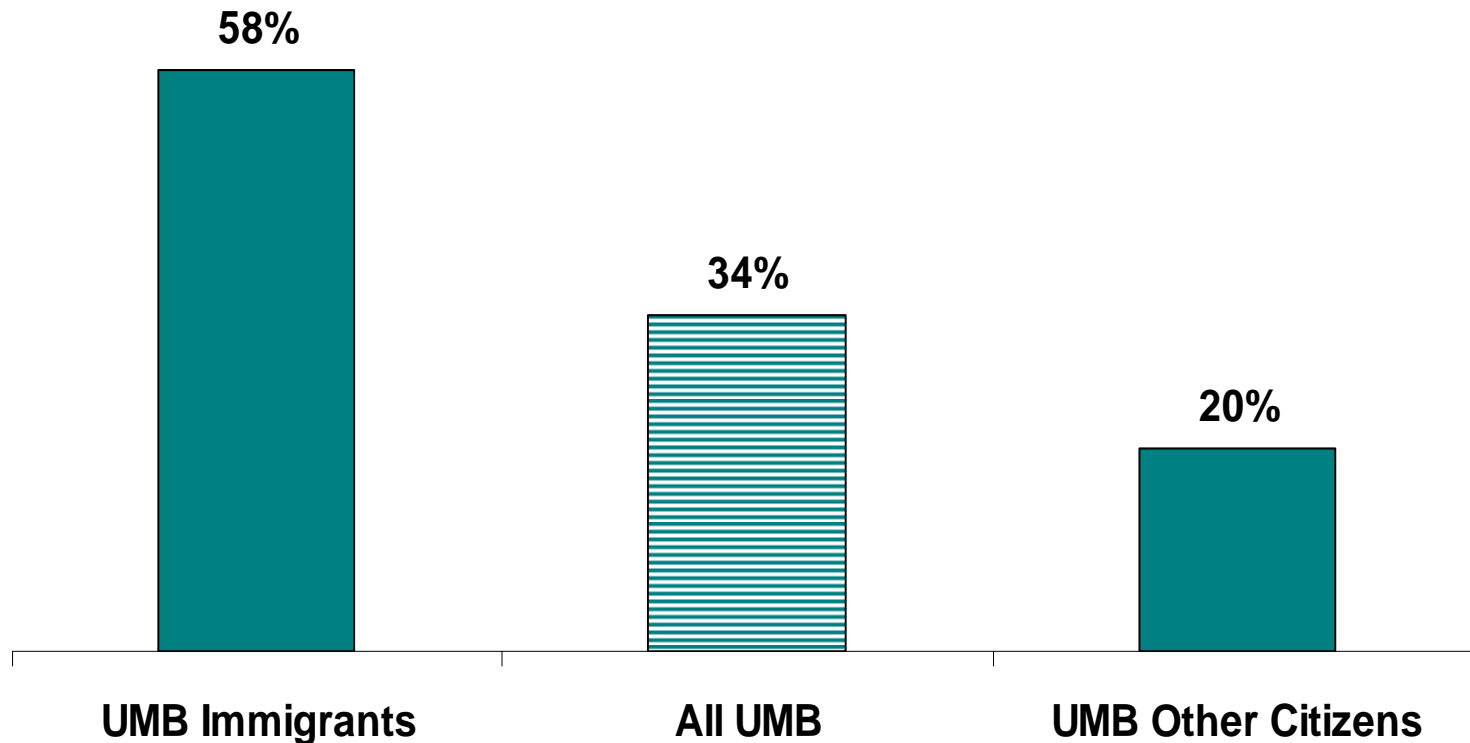
We had expected that they might work more because their families tended to be poorer than the other citizens.

**Percent Of Students Estimating Their Parents' Total Annual Income As Less Than \$40,000**



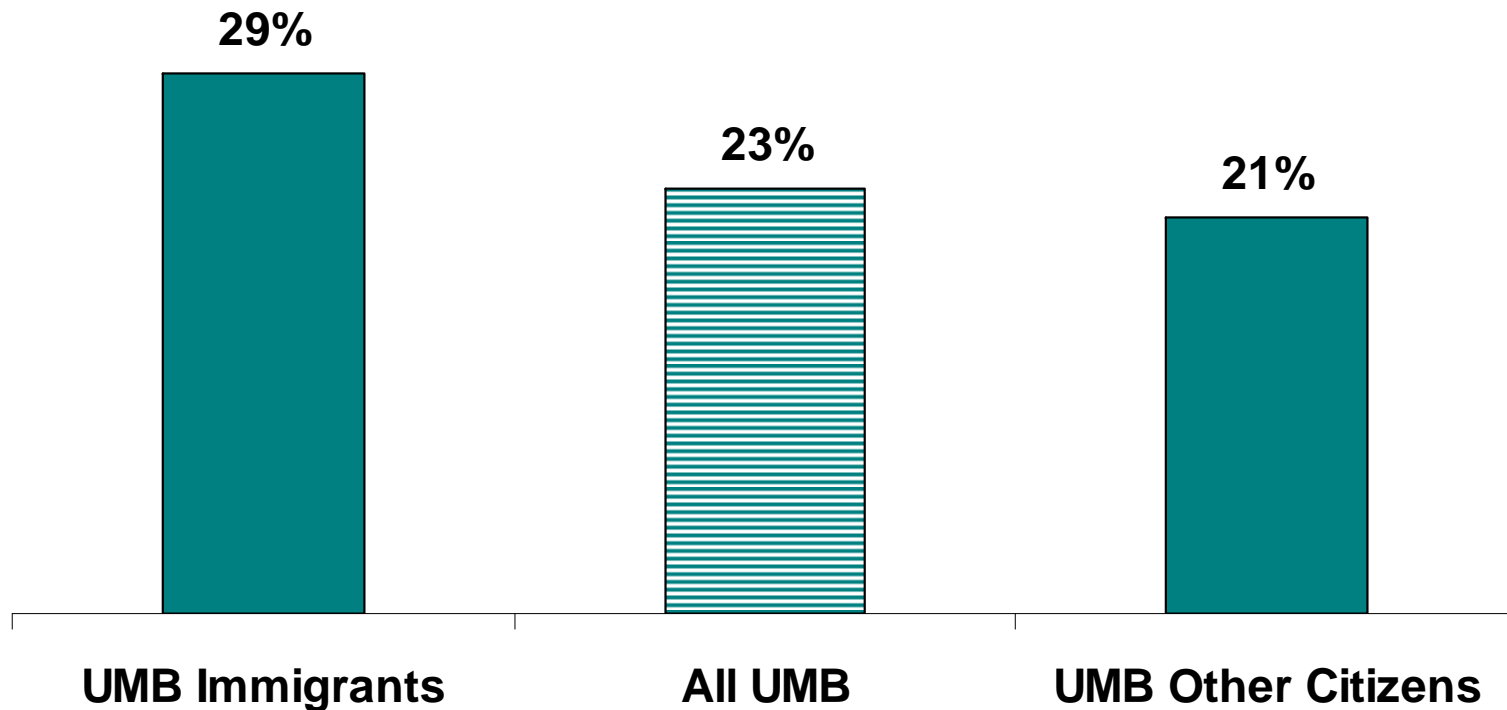
**In fact, they were almost 3 times as likely to report family income of less than \$25,000 than the other citizens.**

**Percent Of Students Estimating Their Parents' Total Annual Income As Less Than \$25,000**



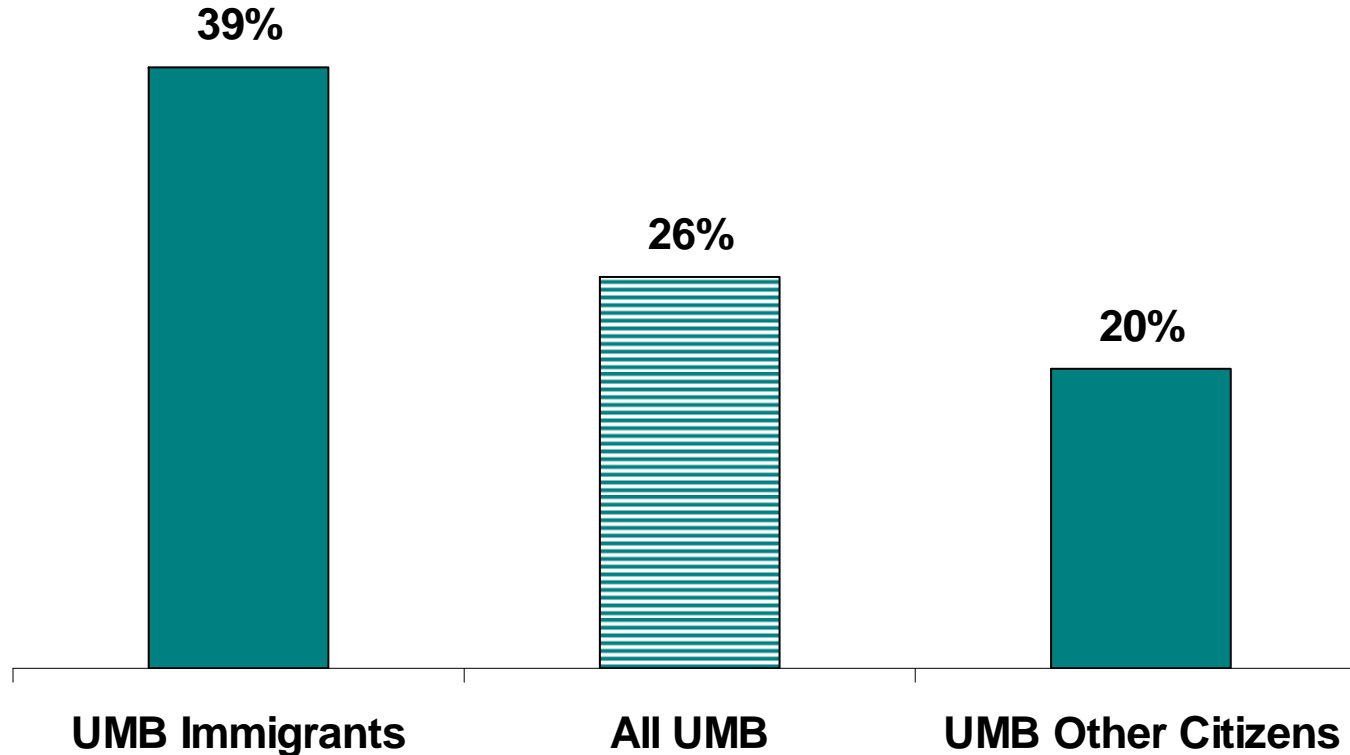
**They were as likely to have major concerns about financing their education as the other citizens.**

**Percent Of Students Who Had Major Concerns About Their Ability To Finance College**



**They were twice as likely to expect no help from their families as were the other citizens.**

**Percent Of Students Who Said They Expected No Help From Family To Cover First Year Educational Expenses**

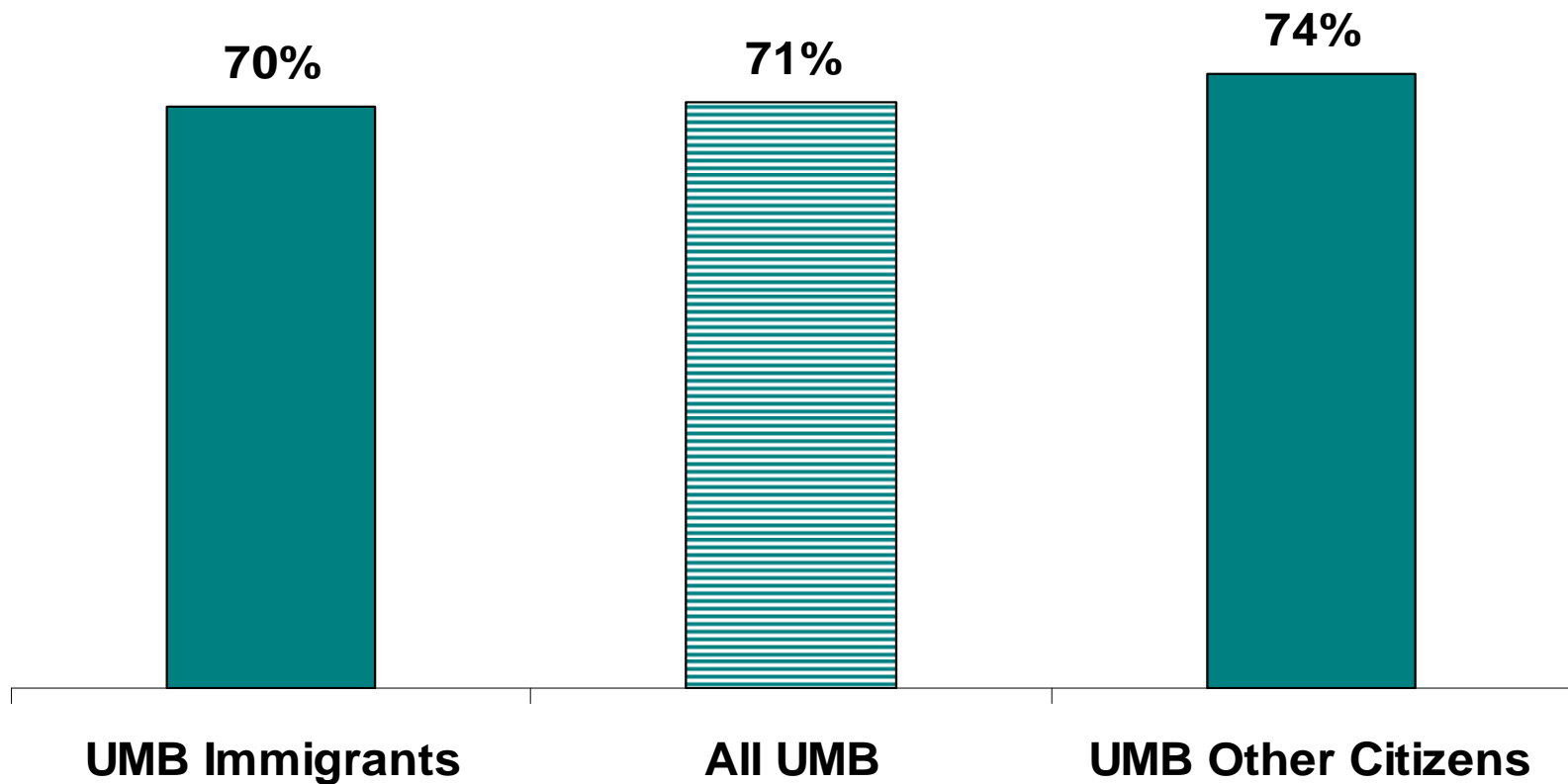


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We wondered if the immigrant students had the same reasons for going to college as the other citizens.

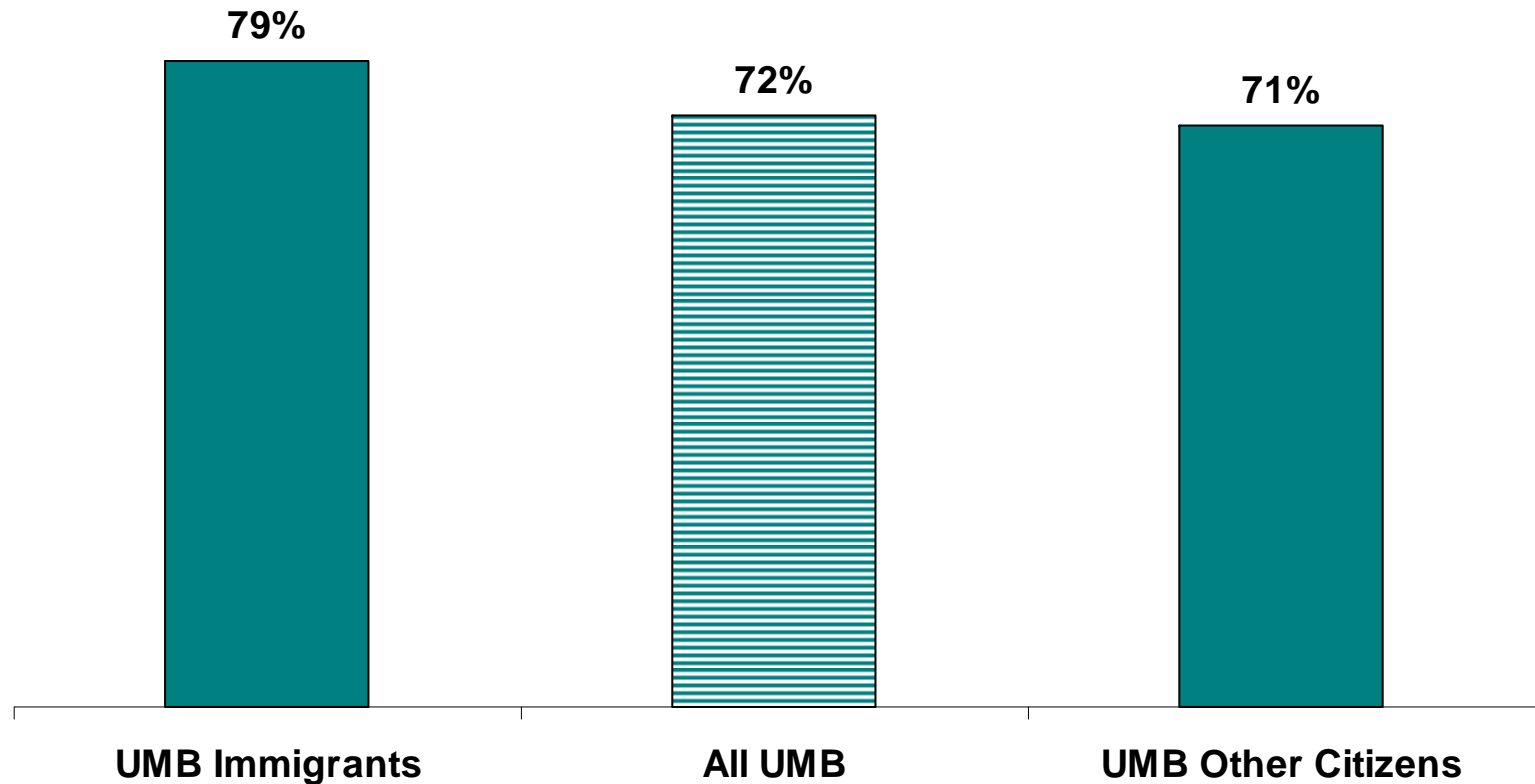
**They were just as interested in going to college so they could make more money.**

**Percent of Students Who Said That Being Able to Make More Money Was A Very Important Reason For Going To College**



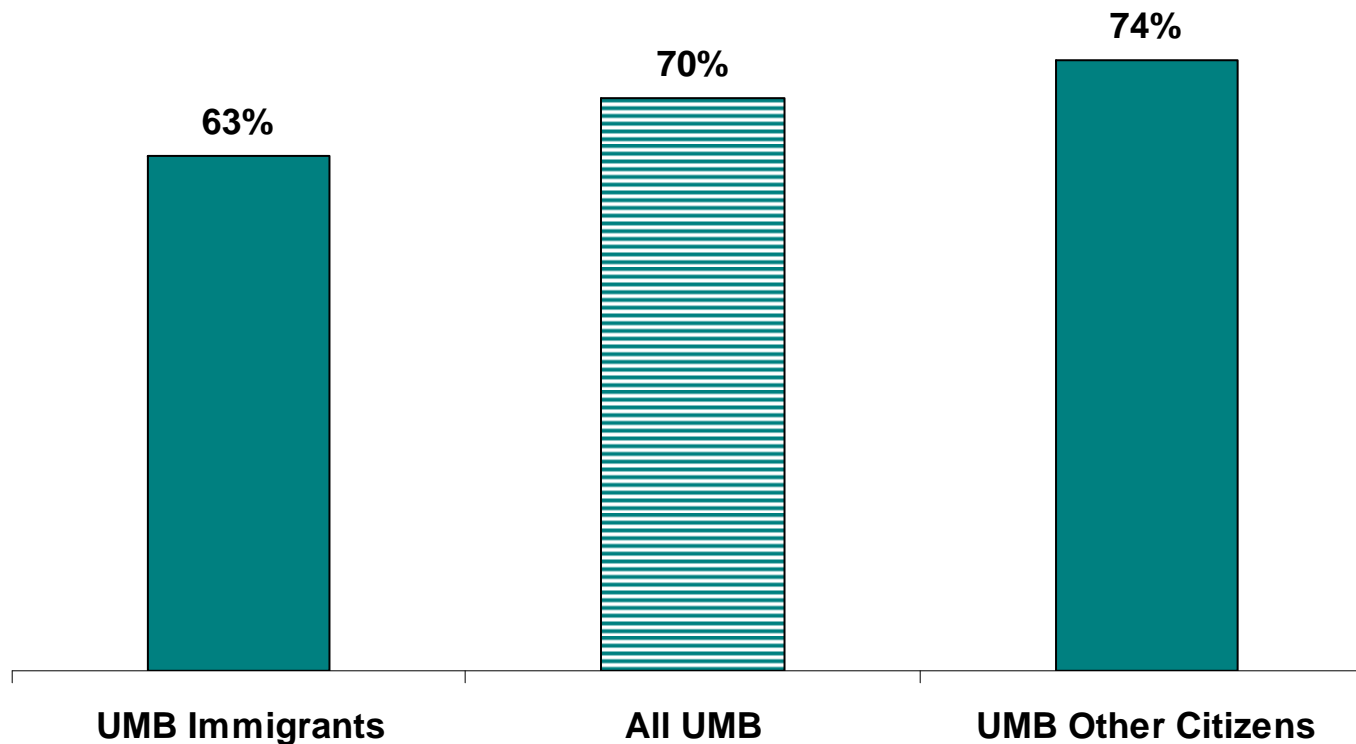
And they were as interested in going to college to get a better job as were the other citizens.

Percent of Students Who Said That Being Able To Get A Better Job Was A Very Important Reason For Going To College



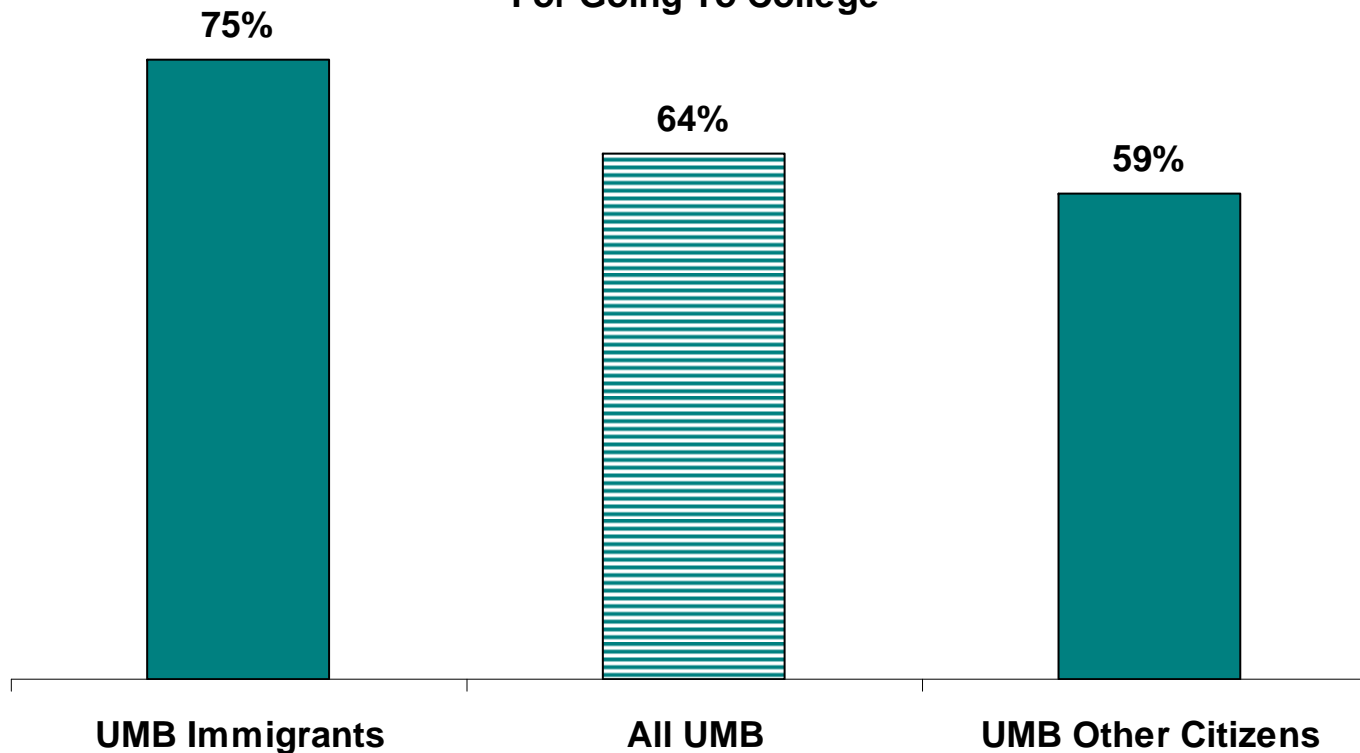
However, they were not quite as interested in going to college to prepare for a specific career as were the other citizens.

**Percent of Students Who Said That Preparing for a Specific Career Was A Very Important Reason For Going To College**



**But they were more interested in preparing for graduate or professional school.**

**Percent of Students Who Said That Preparing for Graduate Or Professional School Was A Very Important Reason For Going To College**

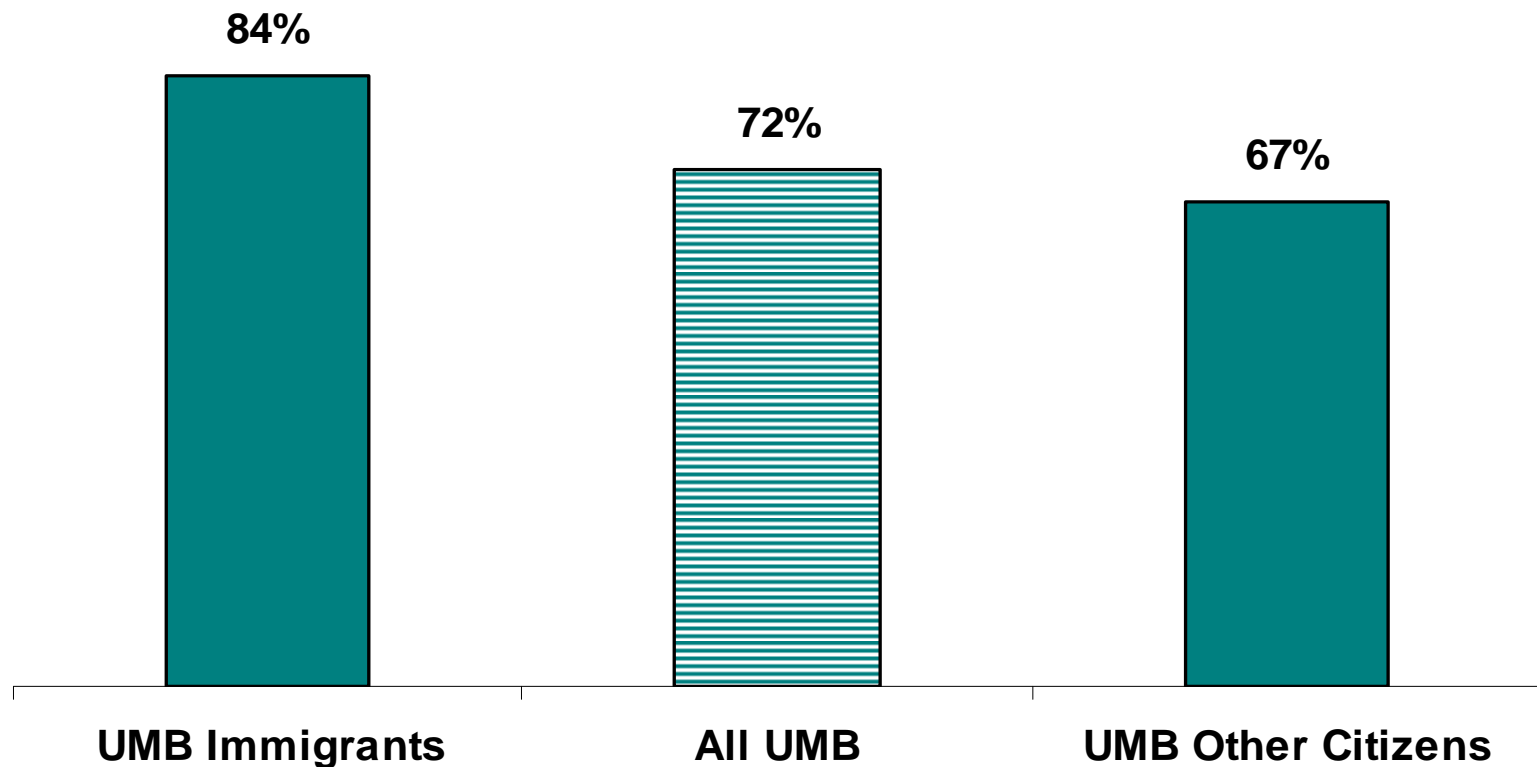


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Because immigrants had somewhat different reasons for going to college, we began to wonder whether they had different reasons for picking our institution.

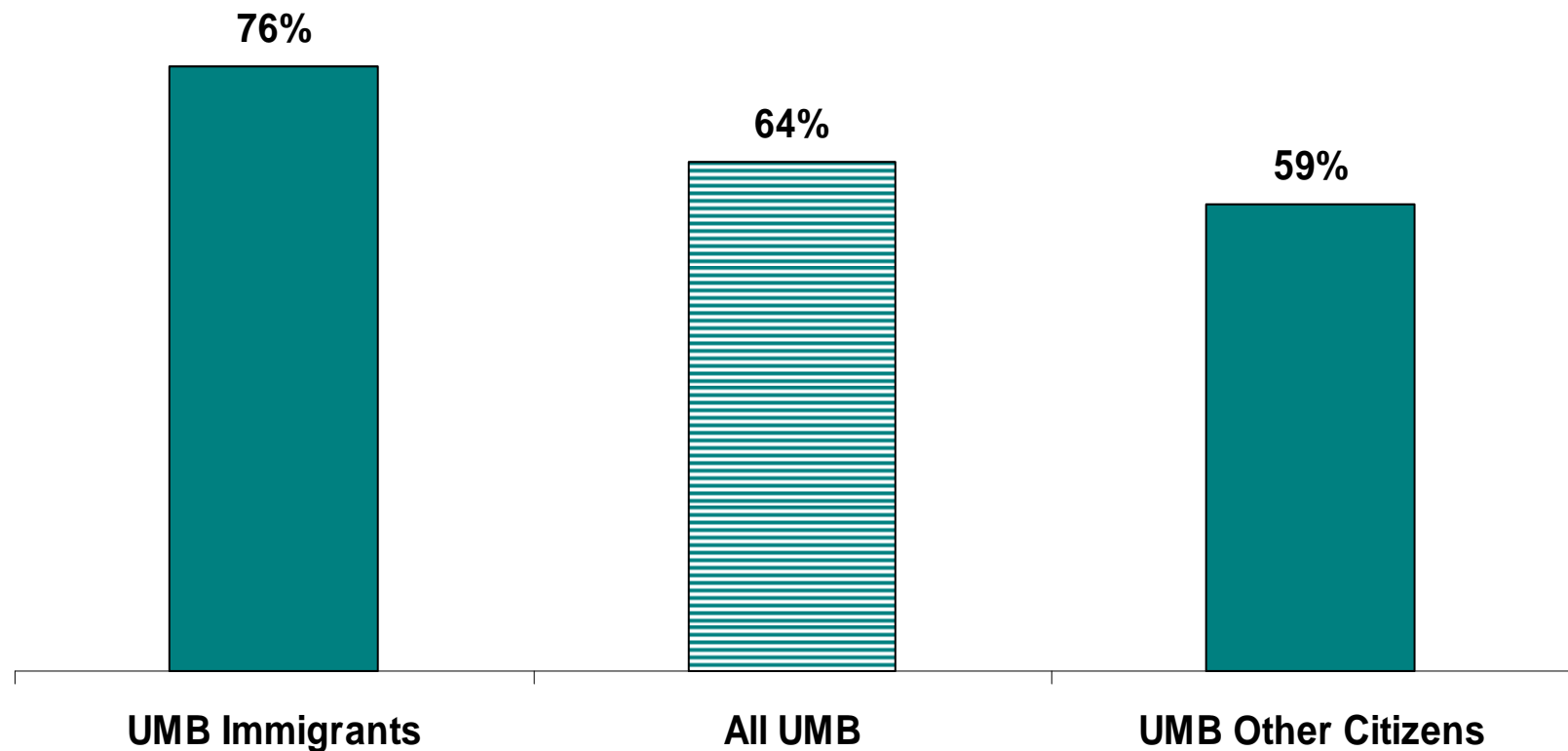
**They were more likely to say that living near home was an somewhat important or very important reason for choosing our school**

**Wanting to Live Near Home was a Somewhat or Very Important Reason for Attending This College.**



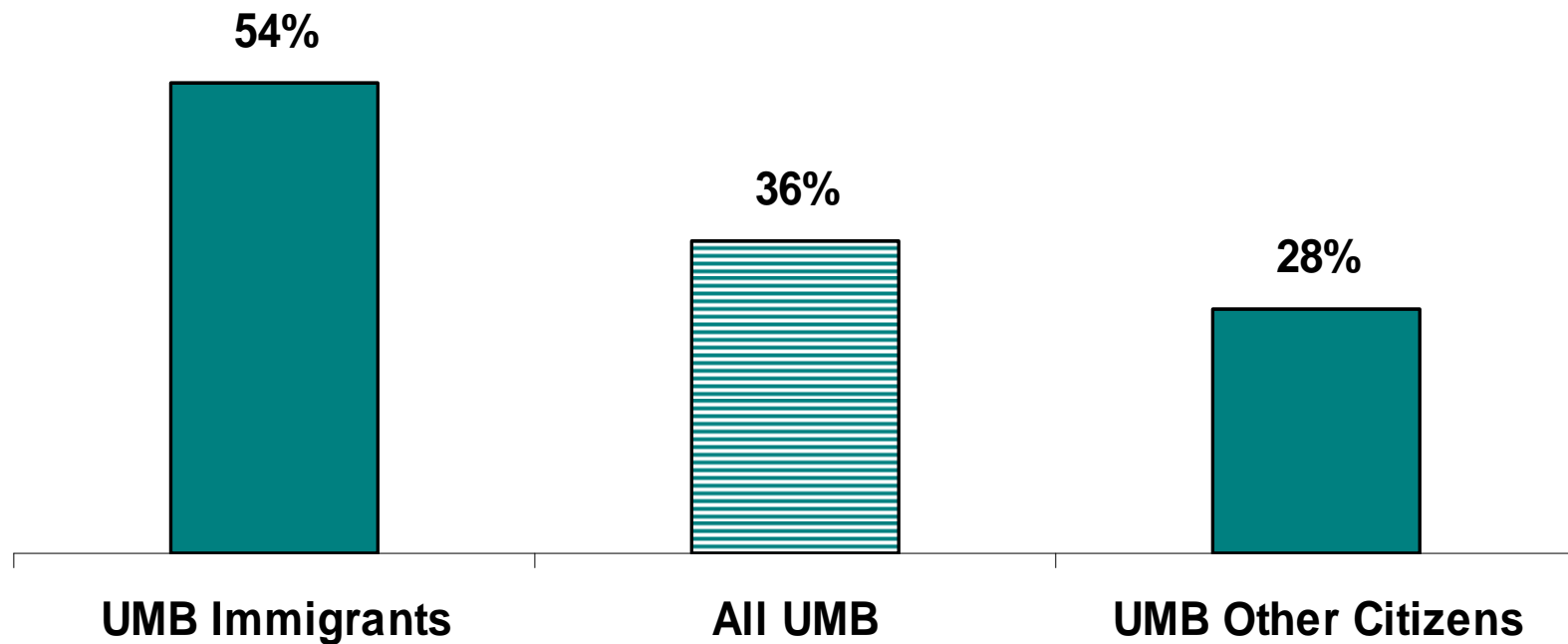
**We think that they may have picked our institution because of its diverse social groups.**

**A Very Good Reputation for its Social Activities was a Somewhat Important or Very Important Reason for Attending this College.**



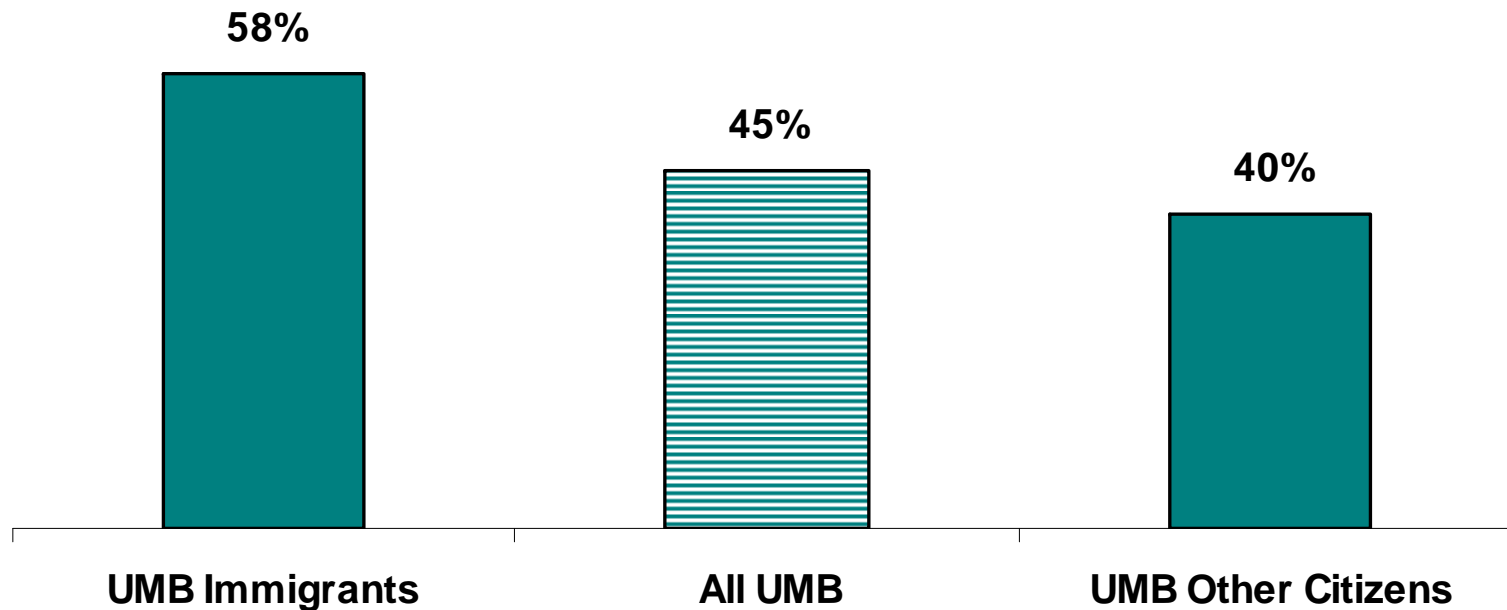
**We found that teachers' advice influenced their decision to attend this institution much more than it did the other citizens**

**That a Teacher Advised Me was a Somewhat Important or Very Important Reason for Attending this College.**



**They were also more likely to be influenced by high school guidance counselors.**

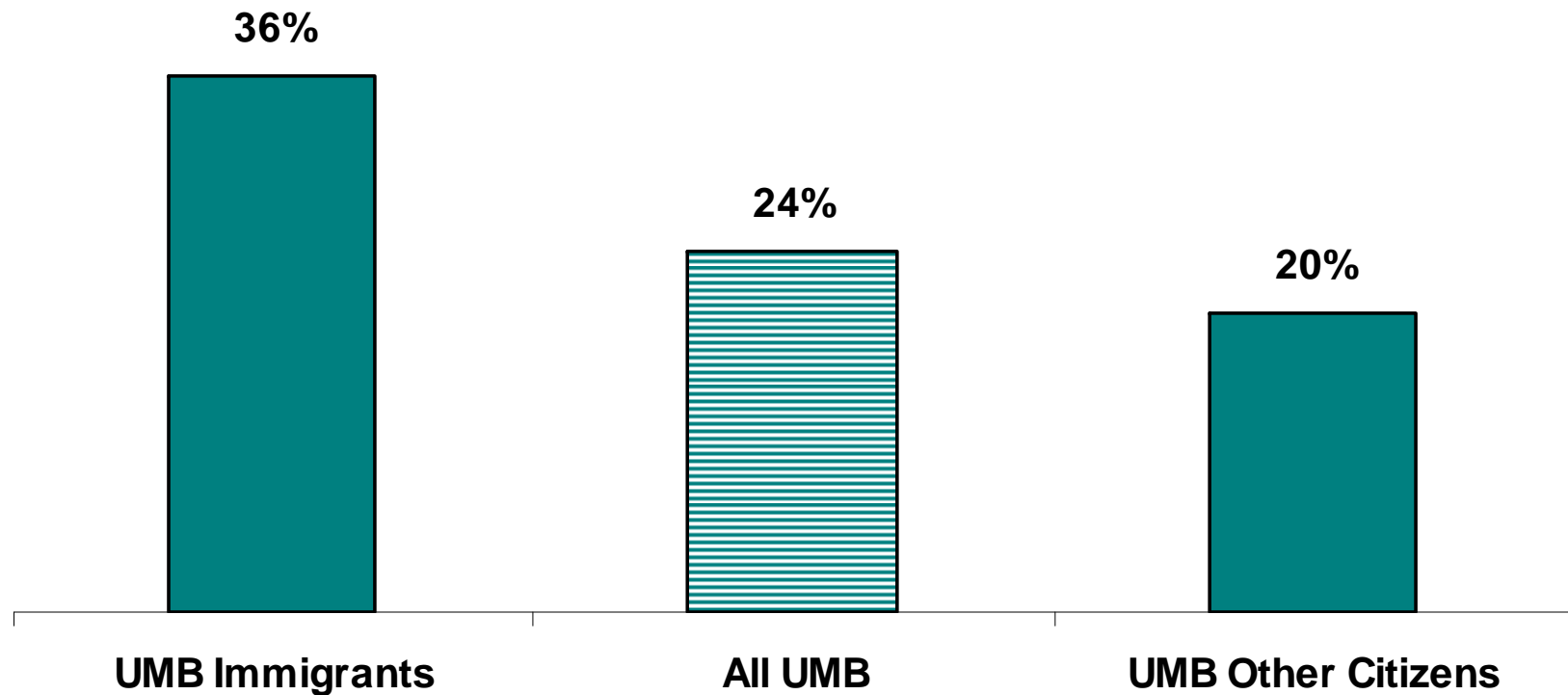
**That My High School Counselor Advised Me Was A Somewhat Important or Very Important Reason For Attending this College.**



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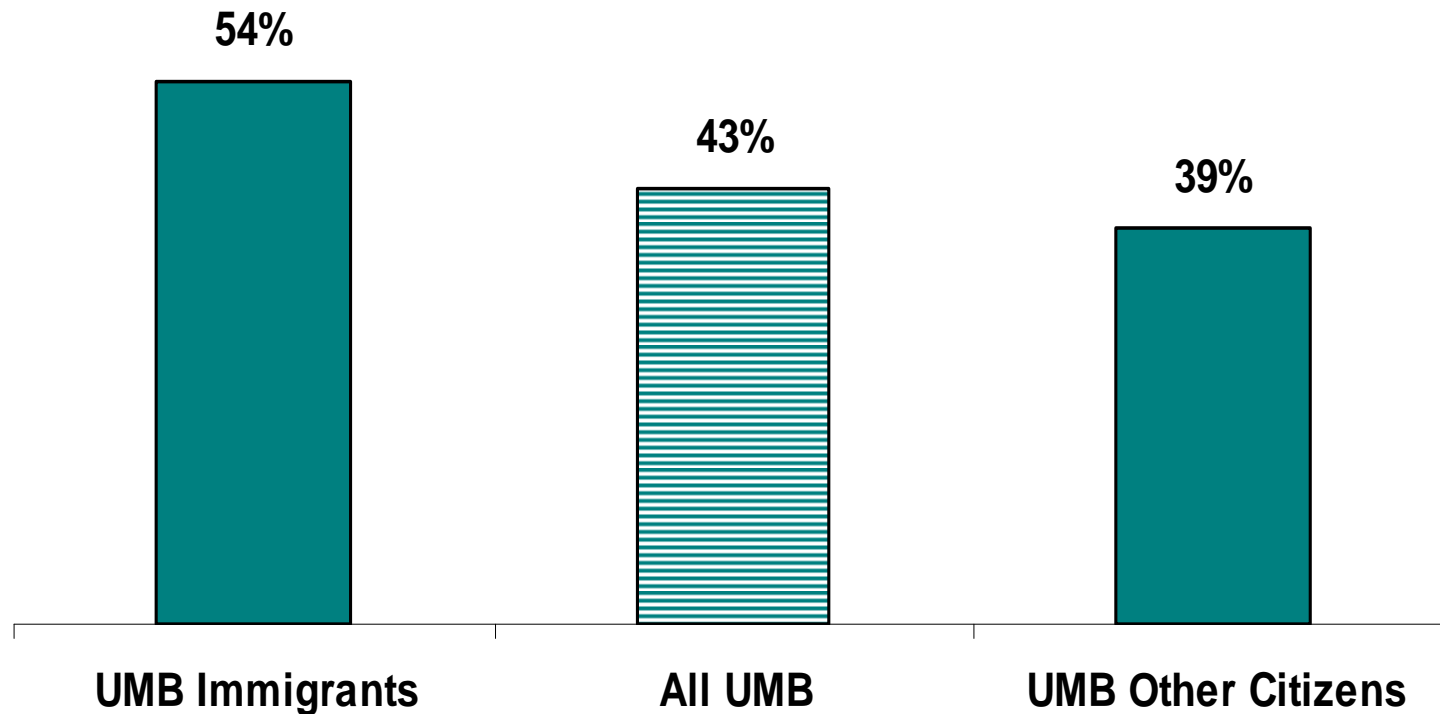
**They placed more weight on rankings in national magazines than did the other citizens.**

**The Rankings in National Magazines Were a Somewhat Or Very Important Reason for Attending this College.**



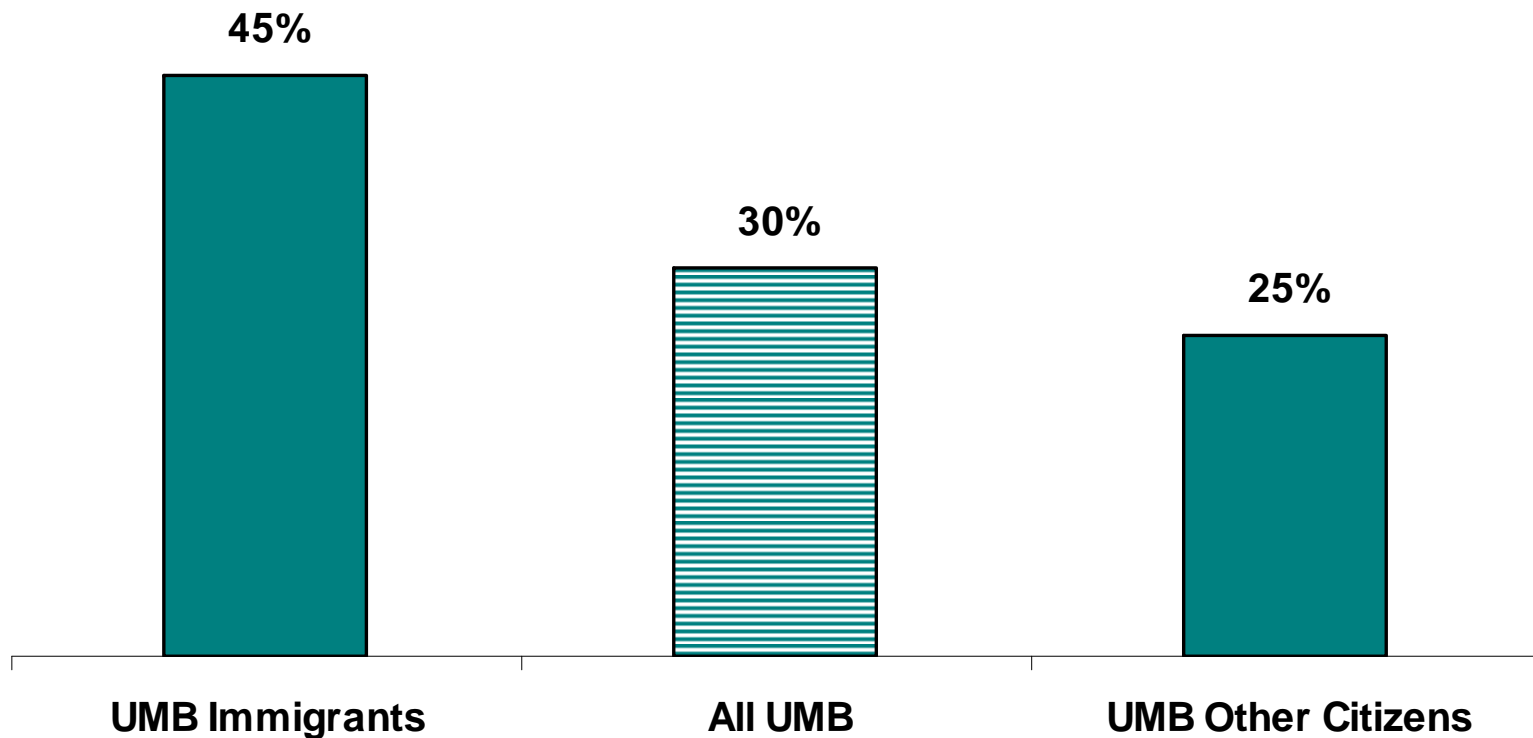
**They were more likely to be influenced by information on our website than were the other citizens.**

**Information from a Website Was a Somewhat Important Or Very Important Reason for Attending this College.**



**Financial assistance was much more of a concern to the immigrants than the other citizens when they were not offered aid.**

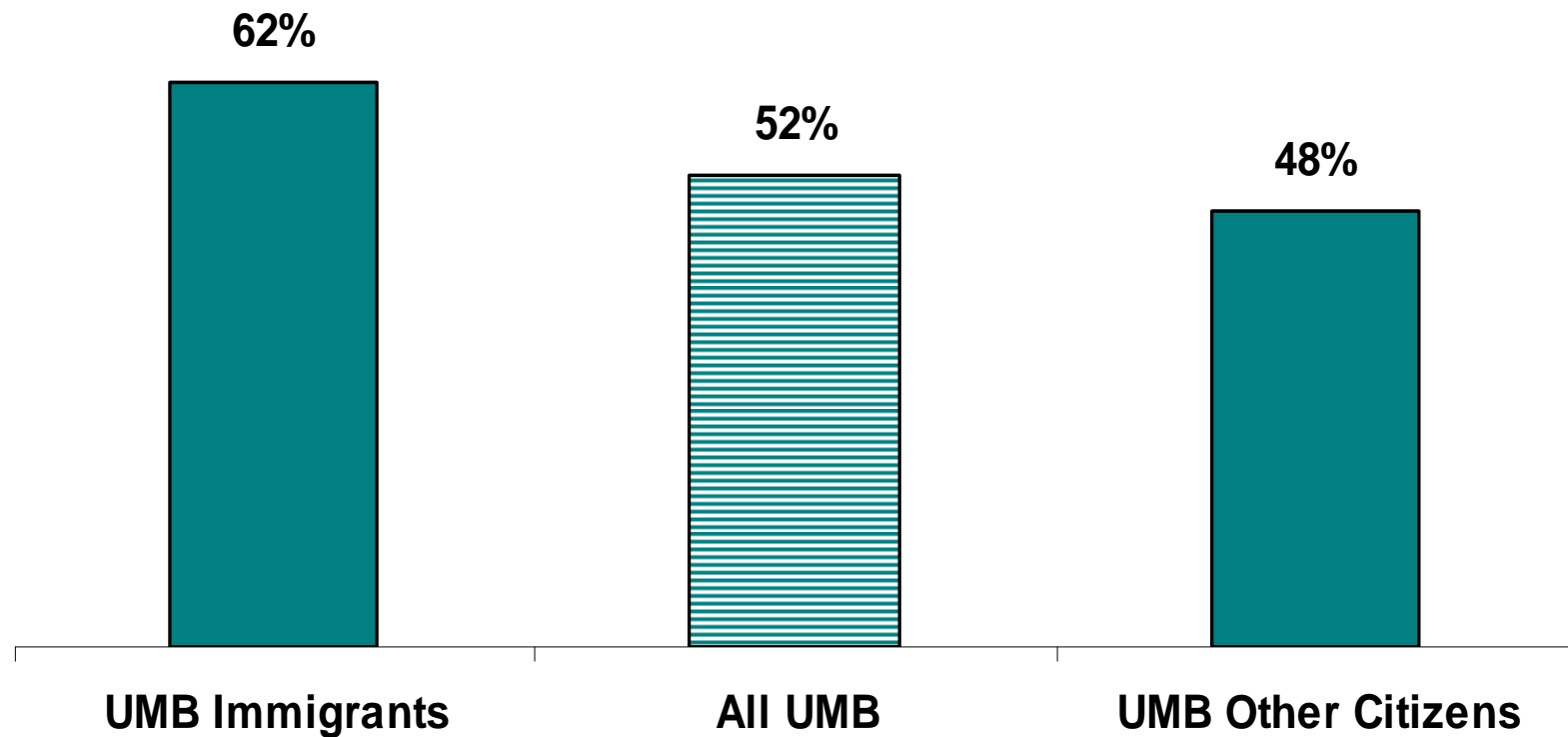
**That I Was Not Offered Aid at My First Choice Was a Somewhat Important or Very Important Reason for Attending this College.**



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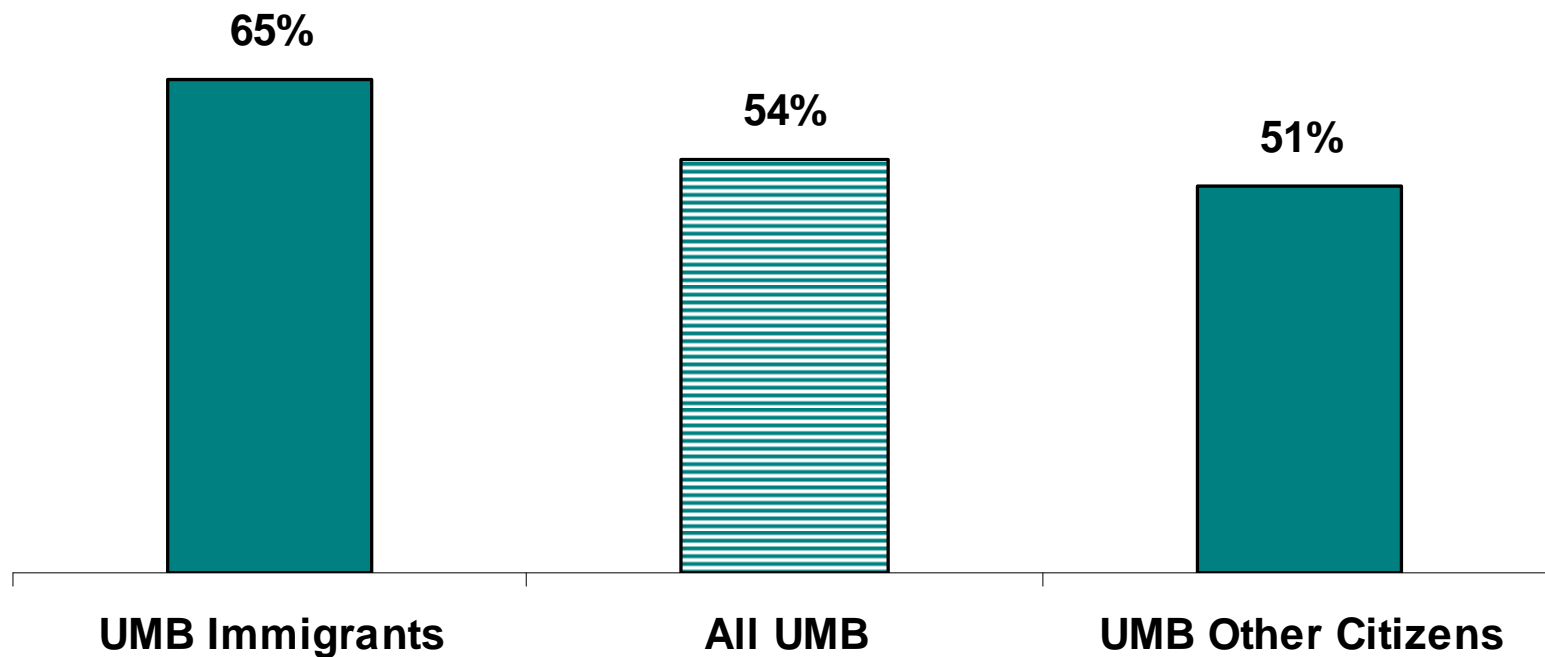
**And it was more influential when they were.**

**That I Was Offered Financial Assistance Was a Somewhat Or Very Important Reason for Attending this College.**



**Special educational programs were more of a factor for immigrants. This may be related to a special program we have called Directions for Student Potential.**

**That this College Offers Special Educational Programs Was A Somewhat or Very Important Reason for Attending.**

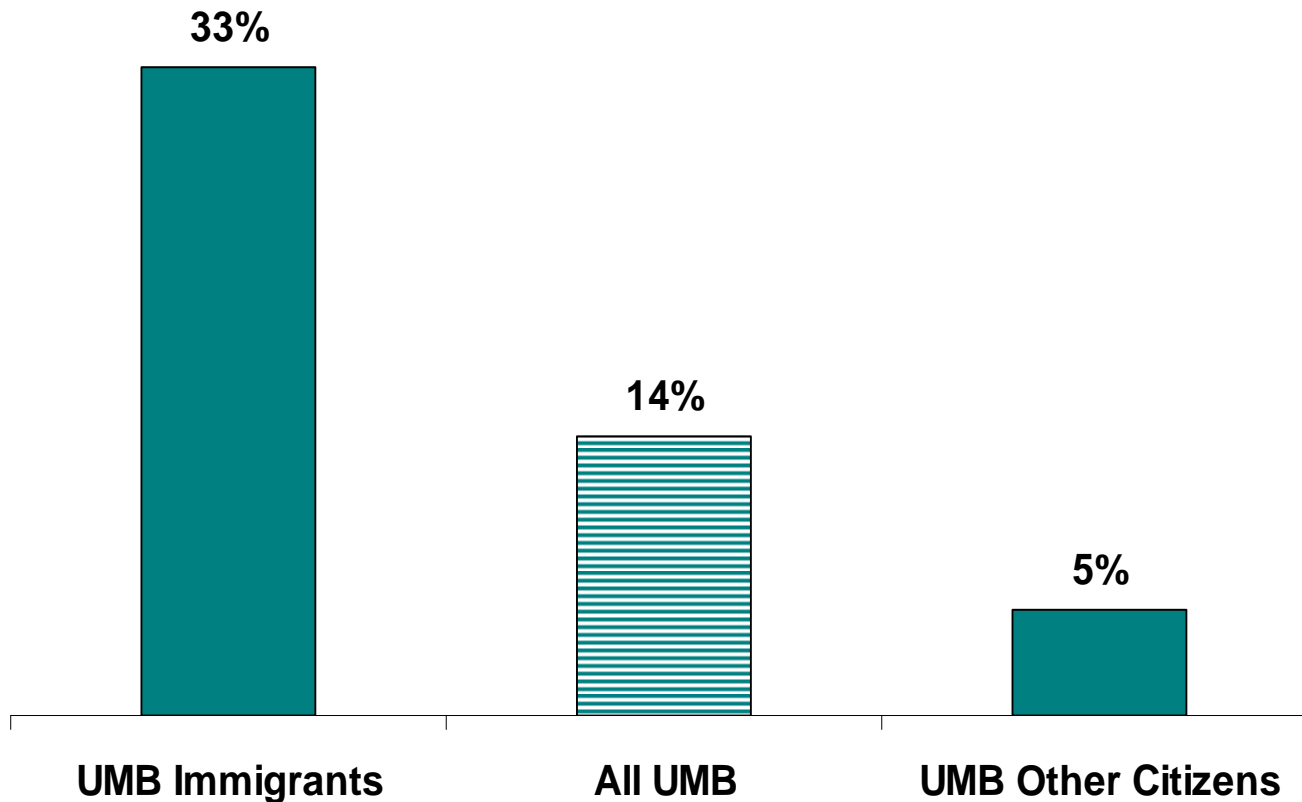


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We wondered whether they had different ideas about what their academic needs would be once they arrived.

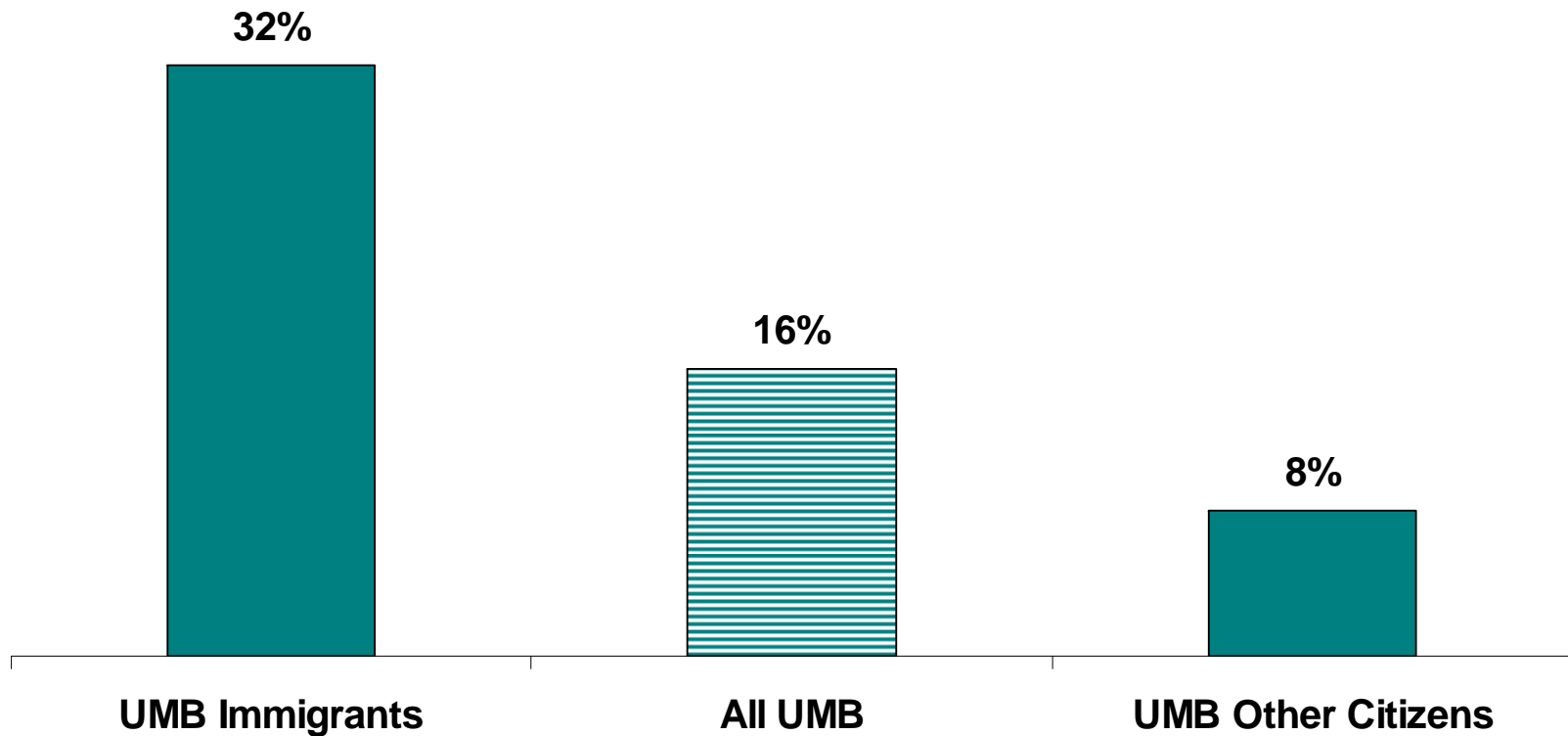
Students were asked if they 'will need' special tutoring or remedial work in subjects. The responses were quite different.

Percent of Students Reporting That They Will Need Special Tutoring or Remedial Work in English



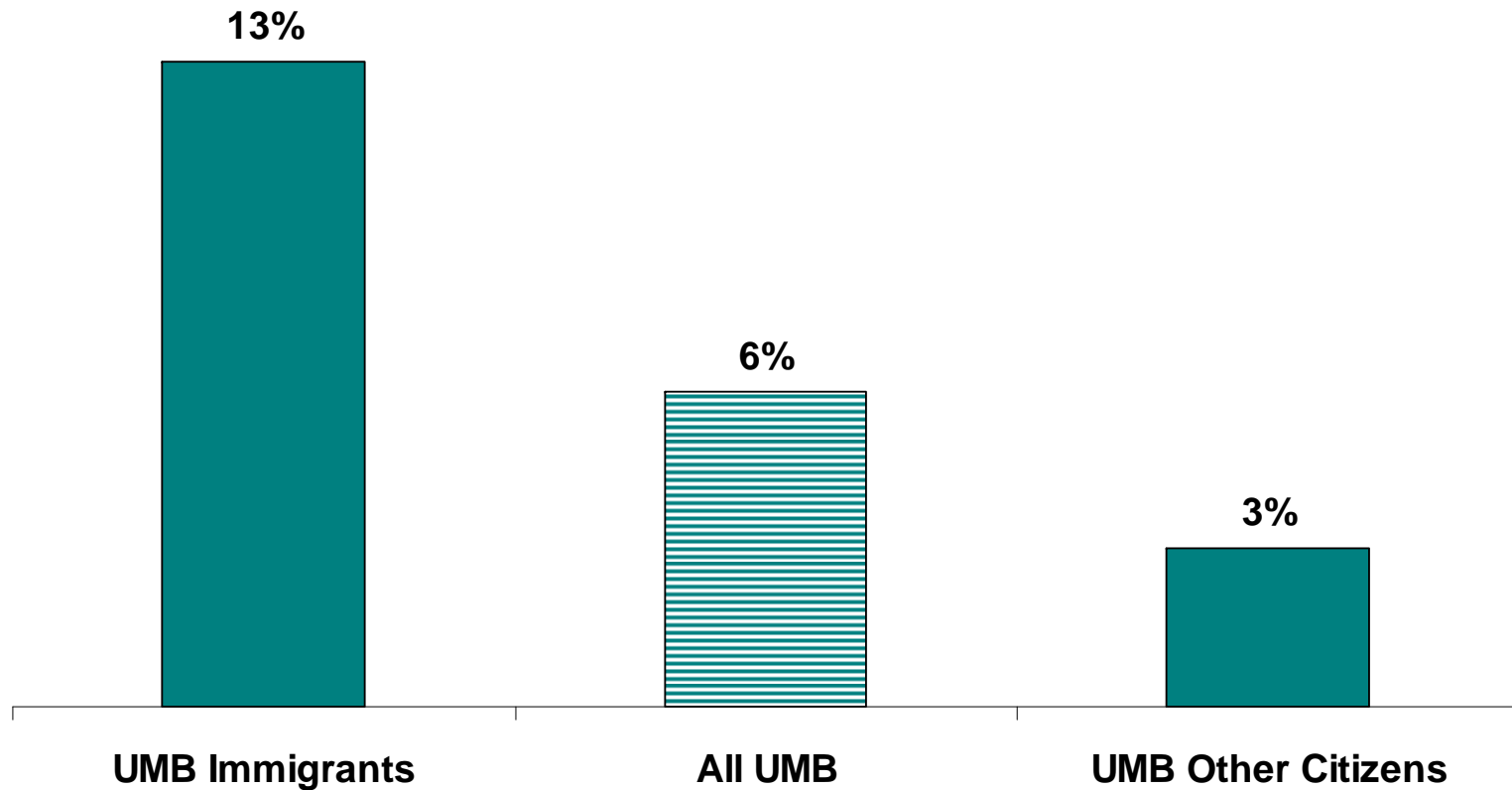
**We had expected differences in subjects related to language issues.**

**Percent of Students Reporting that They Will Need Special Tutoring Or Remedial Work in Writing**

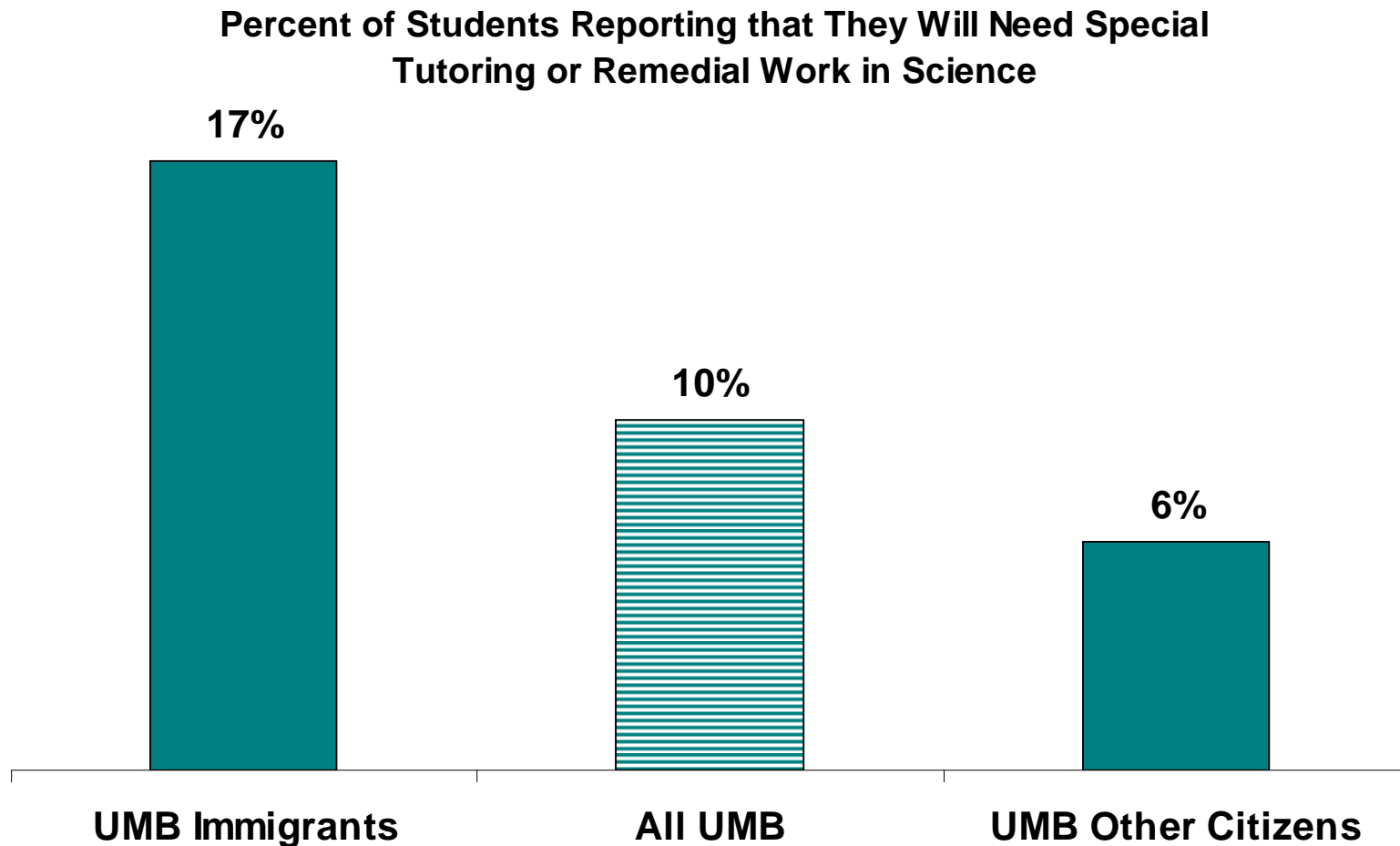


Although the differences in Reading were not as pronounced as those for English or Writing.

Percent of Students Reporting that They Will Need Special Tutoring or Remedial Work in Reading



**But we were surprised to see the same pattern for science.  
There were no differences in the math expectations.**



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## Conclusions

- **We found that immigrants and other citizens were different in high school**
  - **Lower Verbal SATs**
  - **Higher high school grades**
  - **Different ways of spending time**
    - **Studying**
    - **Socializing**
    - **Exercising**
    - **But not for working for pay**
- **They had different family financial situations**
  - **Poorer**
  - **Less likely to expect help from family**
  - **But not significantly more concerned about financing school**

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## Conclusions (cont.)

- **They had somewhat different reasons for going to college**
  - **Not as interested in preparation for a specific career**
  - **More interested in preparing for graduate school**
- **They had really different reasons for choosing this particular college**
  - **Wanting to live near home**
  - **Good reputation for social life**
  - **Teacher recommendations**
  - **Guidance Counselor recommendations**
  - **National rankings**
  - **Website information**
  - **Financial Aid**
    - **Not getting it somewhere else**
    - **Getting it here**
  - **Special educational programs**

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## Conclusions (cont.)

- **They also had different expectations for needing tutoring or remedial help once they arrived on campus.**
  - English
  - Writing
  - Reading
  - Science

**We need to understand that we can't generalize about the needs of our students based on simple averages. Means can hide very different needs and behaviors for subgroups.**

**We need to look for additional layers of diversity beyond those we have become comfortable with. We also need to be able to suggest how to better serve different kinds of students.**

**This isn't a situation that is unique to UMass Boston**