

Graduate Study in Psychology 2018

Summary Report: Admissions, Applications, and Acceptances

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Graduate Study in Psychology Summary Report: Admissions, Applications, and Acceptances

The 2018 Graduate Study in Psychology Summary Report reflects data collected from more than 500 departments and programs offering master's and doctoral degrees in psychology and related training. Participating departments and programs are listed in the annual *Graduate Study in Psychology* book; published each August as a joint effort of the APA Office of Graduate and Postgraduate Education & Training and the APA Office of Publications and Databases. The 2018 report features aggregate data from the 2015-2016 academic year that are summarized in the following areas: survey participation; admissions review, application fees, and applications & acceptances by level and subfield. Where meaningful, descriptive statistics are reported by type of department (e.g., university-based, professional school) and/or institution type (e.g., public, not-for-profit), as reported by the department.

Tables and figures contained in this report are reflective of the self-reporting of participants. As such, analyses are drawn from the subset of those departments and may not be generalizable to the population of graduate departments with psychology offerings. Where indicated, some data are reported at the departmental level and others at the program level. Information on master's programs housed within doctoral departments or part of doctoral degrees (i.e., non-terminal master's degrees) is included in doctoral department data. Master's-level information in departments where the master's is the highest degree offered and some terminal-level master's program information are presented by that level of training. Tuition and financial data are reported in the local currency; U.S. dollars for departments in the United States and Canadian dollars for Canadian departments. Please direct any questions to Daniel Michalski, PhD dmichalski@apa.org or Caroline Cope, MA ccope@apa.org with the APA Office of Graduate and Postgraduate Education & Training.

This report was produced by the Office of Graduate and Postgraduate Education and Training and reviewed by the Center for Workforce Studies within the APA Education Directorate. We are grateful for the support of Arthur C. Evans, Jr., PhD, Chief Executive Officer of the APA, Jasper Simons, Executive APA Publisher, and Jaime Diaz-Granados, PhD, Executive Director of the APA Education Directorate. Most importantly, we recognize the department chairs, program directors, faculty, and staff who take the time each winter to participate in the Graduate Study in Psychology survey and assist prospective psychology students with selecting programs.

Method

Each January, the APA Education Directorate contacts chairs of graduate psychology departments regarding the upcoming annual Graduate Study in Psychology survey. In February, chairs (or their authorized department contacts) receive a secure URL to access and complete the survey. Up to five reminders are sent to departments until the survey is completed. Departments not updating information for two subsequent years are removed from the database and their information not included in the updated version of the book. Information not updated in a single year is incorporated in that year's edition, but notated that data are from the prior year in the publication.

Survey Participation

For the 2018 survey, 477 departments offering graduate degree programs in psychology or related training (e.g., mental health counseling, marriage and family therapy) provided complete responses to the survey providing data from the 2015-2016 academic year. Table 1 breaks out the participation by the self-reported type of college/school/institution in which the department is housed. A substantial majority of departments (62%) were located within a comprehensive university college of arts and sciences followed by those within a university college/schools of education (17%). These departments were comprised of 1,438 programs in 2018 as shown in Table 2. Among the 533 departments supplying partial information for the survey, master’s level only training was offered by nearly a quarter (23%) of responding departments, 40% reported doctoral only offerings and more than one third of departments (37%) offering both master’s and doctoral programs.

Table 1. Departmental Participation in 2018 Graduate Study in Psychology Survey by Department Location

| Type of Department | N | % |
|---|------------|--------------|
| University College of Arts and Sciences | 297 | 62.3 |
| University College/School of Education | 82 | 17.2 |
| Free-standing Professional School | 36 | 7.5 |
| University-based Professional School | 25 | 5.2 |
| Medical School/Health Sciences University | 8 | 1.7 |
| Other | 29 | 6.1 |
| Total | 477 | 100.0 |

Notes. N=477. Values may total to greater than 100 percent due to rounding. Departments not identifying an institutional location were excluded from analysis.

Table 2. Program Participation in 2018 Graduate Study in Psychology Survey by Department Location

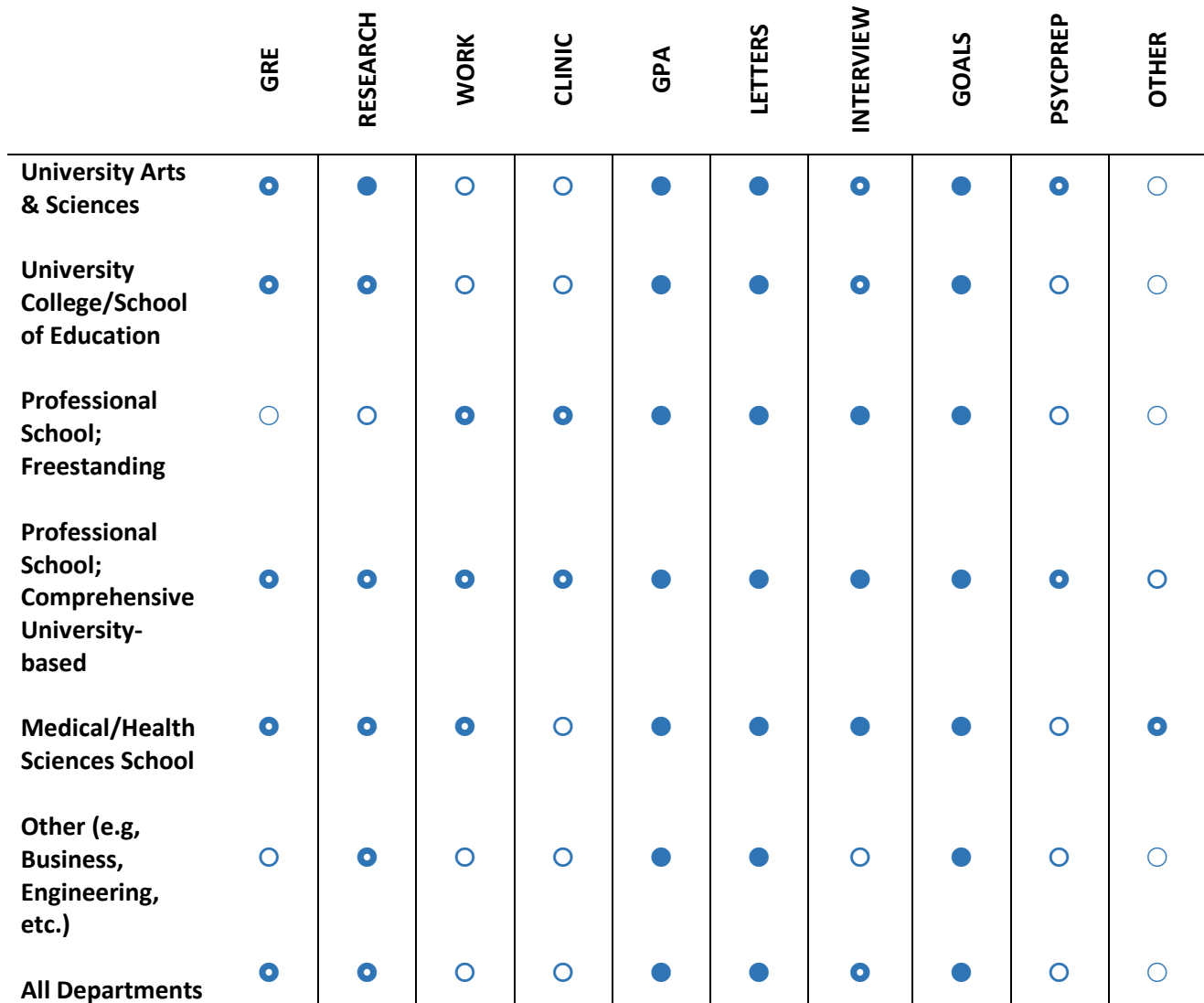
| Type of Department | N | % |
|---|--------------|--------------|
| University College of Arts and Sciences | 987 | 67.2 |
| University College/School of Education | 238 | 16.6 |
| Free-standing Professional School | 91 | 6.3 |
| University-based Professional School | 58 | 4.0 |
| Medical School/Health Sciences University | 19 | 1.3 |
| Other | 65 | 4.5 |
| Total | 1,438 | 100.0 |

Notes. N=1,438. Departments not identifying an institutional location were excluded from analysis.

Admissions Review

Departments were asked to rate the importance of 10 criteria in their application review process on a three-point scale (low-medium-high). Figure 1 summarizes the relative importance of each criterion by type of psychology department and across all departments. The filled in area of the icons for each cell increases commensurately with the level of importance; thus, completely filled in circles represent the highest level of importance (e.g., GPA for all departments) while fine-weight circle outlines correspond to the least level of aggregate importance (e.g., OTHER for most departments). Across all departments, Undergraduate GPA (GPA), recommendation letters (LETTERS), and statement of academic/career goals (GOALS) consistently scored as the most important admissions review criteria across all department locations. Anecdotal variance between freestanding professional schools (typically training graduates for professional/applied careers) and other institutions was most prominent with test scores (GRE); with the former department type largely scoring this criterion as low in importance. Although in aggregate, “Other” departments emphasize test scores less compared to other department types, applicants should interpret this cautiously and recognize potential importance differences given department and program goals (e.g., training for applied/professional practice or research/academic careers). Results indicate that in comparison to other departments, preparation in psychology (PSYCPREP) is notably important for those housed within university colleges of arts and sciences and university-based professional schools; perhaps reflecting training offerings within the scope of APA accreditation in which training in discipline-specific knowledge and profession-wide competencies receive greater focus as part of the recently implemented [Standards of Accreditation \(SOA\)](#). Across most department types, work and clinical experience is rated as less important, except at professional schools; both university-based and freestanding professional schools. In addition to GPA, LETTERS, and GOALS, university colleges of arts and sciences place high importance on candidates’ research experience as would be expected in departments conferring primarily PhD and MS degrees.

Figure 1. Importance of Admissions Review Criteria by Department Location

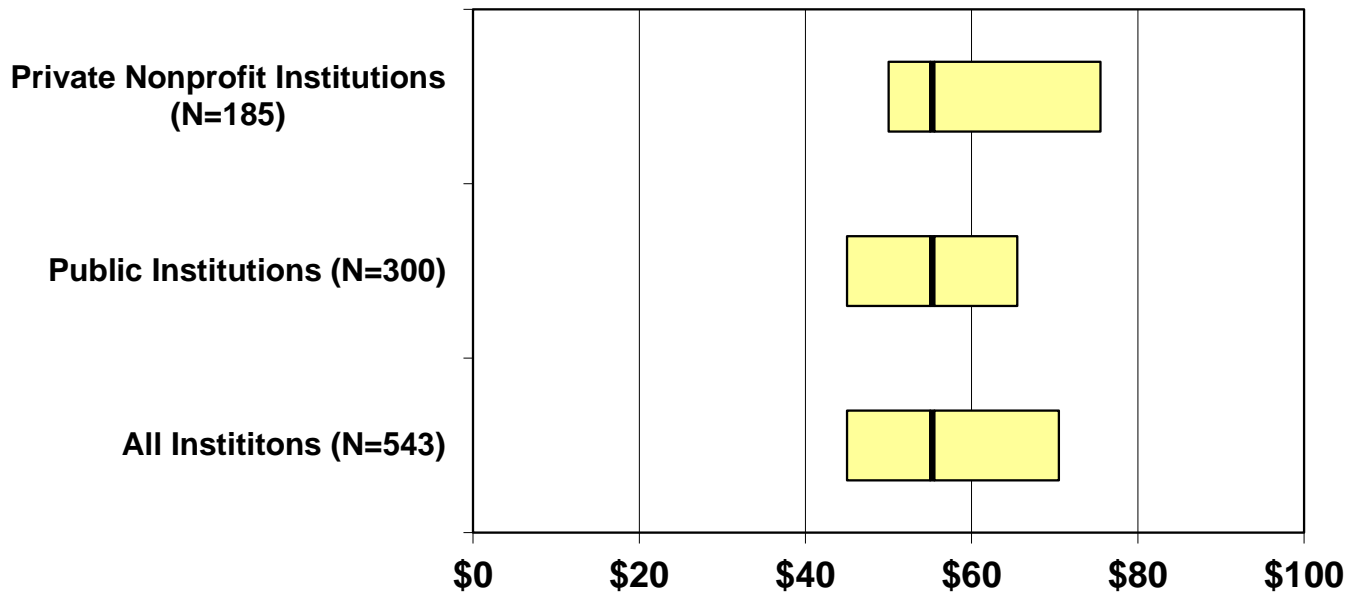


N=525. Notes. Respondents were asked to rate each item on a 3-point scale: Low; Medium; and High. Responses missing across the entire question block were excluded from analysis. Missing responses to individual criteria were coded as having zero importance to admissions review for that department. Filled in area of circle increases commensurately with the importance of criteria based on aggregate mean values.

Application Fees

A total of 543 departments provided information about application fees required of prospective students by the institution. These fees ranged in dollars from \$0 to \$125 per application in 2018, with a mean of \$57 (SD= \$24.53) and a median of \$55 as was also reported in 2017. Ninety-six percent of responding departments required a separate application fee for each program to which a prospective student applied (when permitted), but some allowed applications to multiple programs within a department or school on a single fee. Figure 2 presents the interquartile ranges for application fees across all participating departments and split by public versus private and not-for-profit institutions where permissible.

Figure 2. Application Fees for Graduate Psychology Admissions

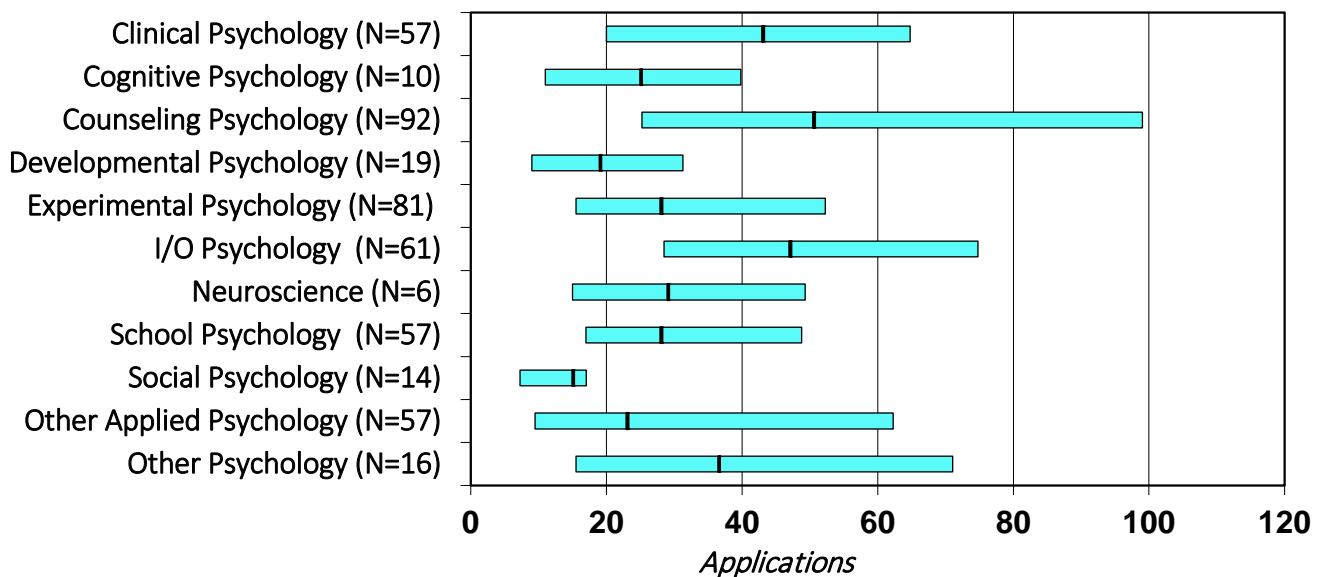


Notes. N=543. Graph includes first quartile, median, and third quartile values. All: Mean= \$57 (SD= \$24.53); Public: Mean= \$56 (SD= \$21.10); Private: Mean= \$54 (SD= \$26.29). Institutions not clearly identified as either public or nonprofit were excluded from those categorical analyses.

Applications and Acceptances

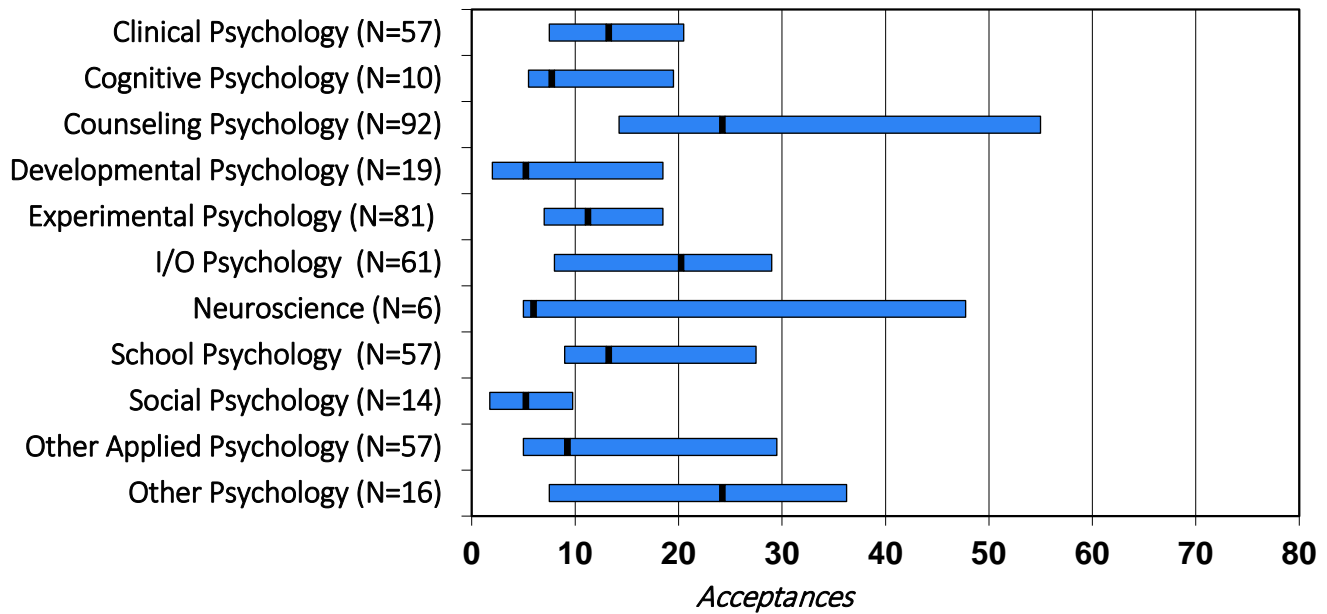
Figure 3 presents the interquartile ranges of applications by broad psychology subfields; descriptions of these subfields are provided in the appendix. The majority of departments offering terminal master’s degrees in these subfields received median number of applications between 20 and 40 for the most recent application cycle, except clinical counseling, and I/O psychology reporting median applications near 50. Interquartile ranges varied, with the greatest amount found in clinical psychology, counseling psychology, industrial/organizational psychology, other applied psychology, and other psychology. Acceptances are shown in Figure 4 and featured similar ranges, but with median acceptances falling between 5 and 20, except in counseling and other psychology. Figure 5 plots the interquartile master’s-level acceptance rates; defined as the ratio of acceptances to applications. . Median acceptance rates for most subfields at the master’s level hovered between 35% and 65%, but the median social psychology acceptance rates was at 29%. The median acceptance rate for the other psychology subfields (69%) was highest in comparison, but encompassed one of the widest interquartile ranges extending from 49% to 80%.

Figure 3. Master’s Applications by Broad Subfield



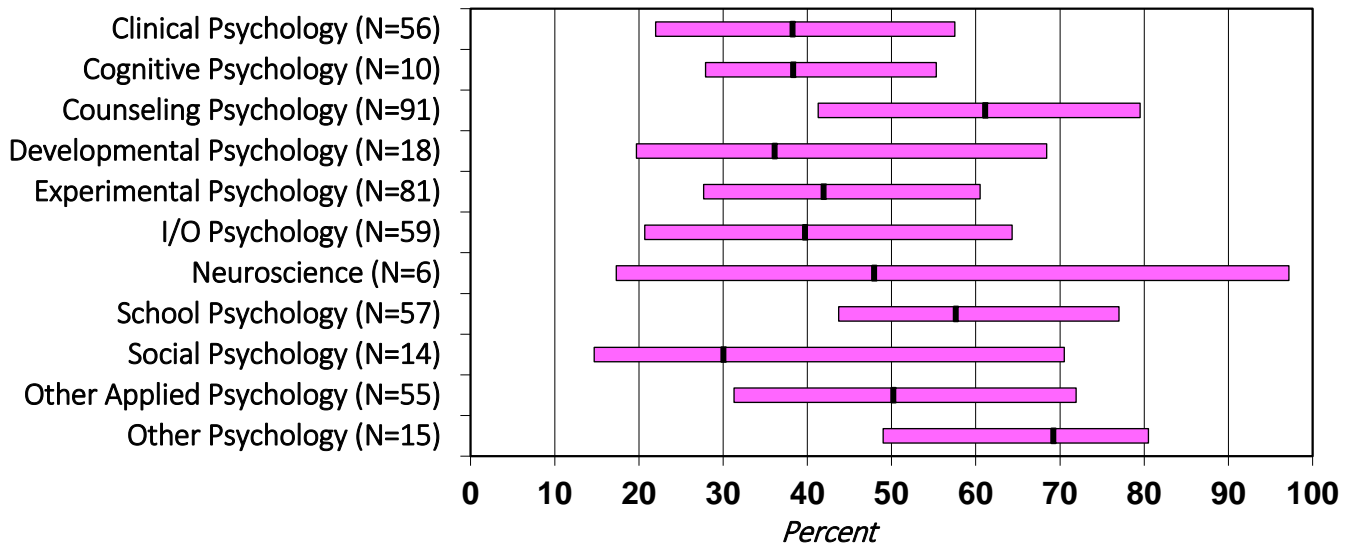
Notes. N=Programs within that subfield. Graph includes first quartile, median, and third quartile values. Subfield categories have been collapsed. Missing data were excluded from analysis.

Figure 4. Master's Acceptances by Broad Subfield



Notes. N=Programs within that subfield. Graph includes first quartile, median, and third quartile values. Subfield categories have been collapsed. Missing data were excluded from analysis.

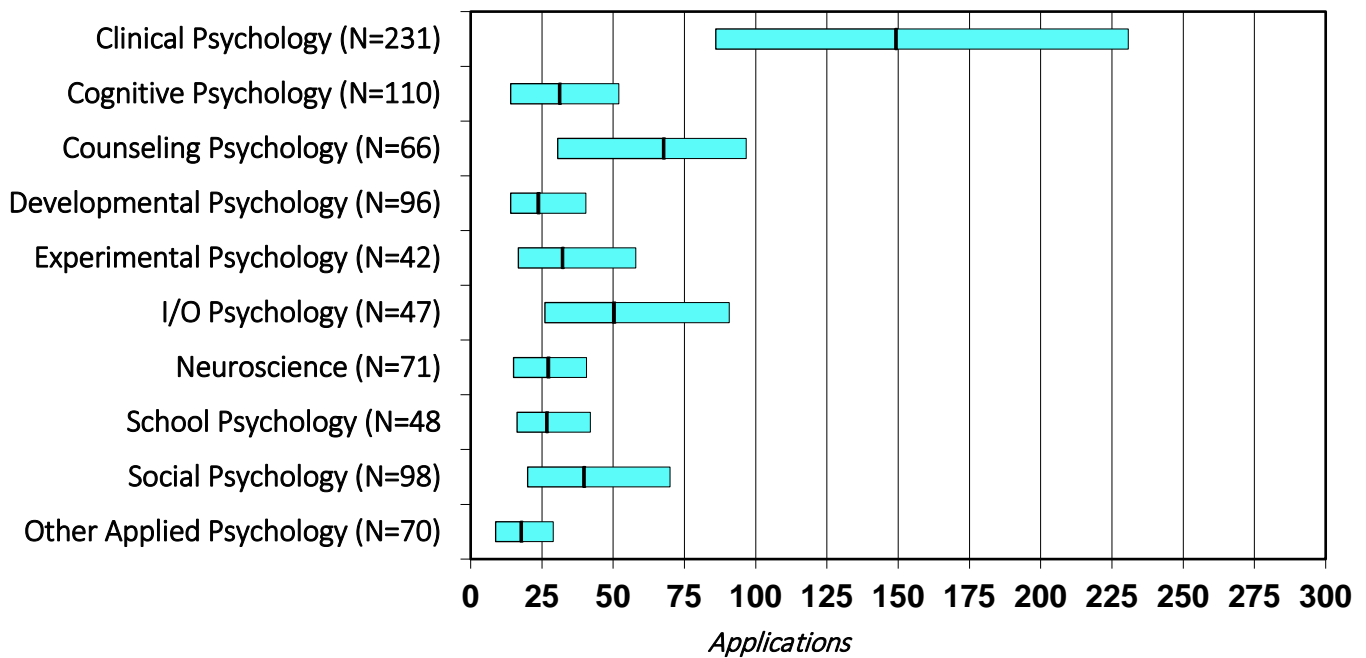
Figure 5. Master's Acceptance Rates by Broad Subfield



Notes. N=Programs within that subfield. Graph includes first quartile, median, and third quartile values. Subfield categories have been collapsed. Acceptance rates were not calculated for programs reporting neither application nor acceptance numbers.

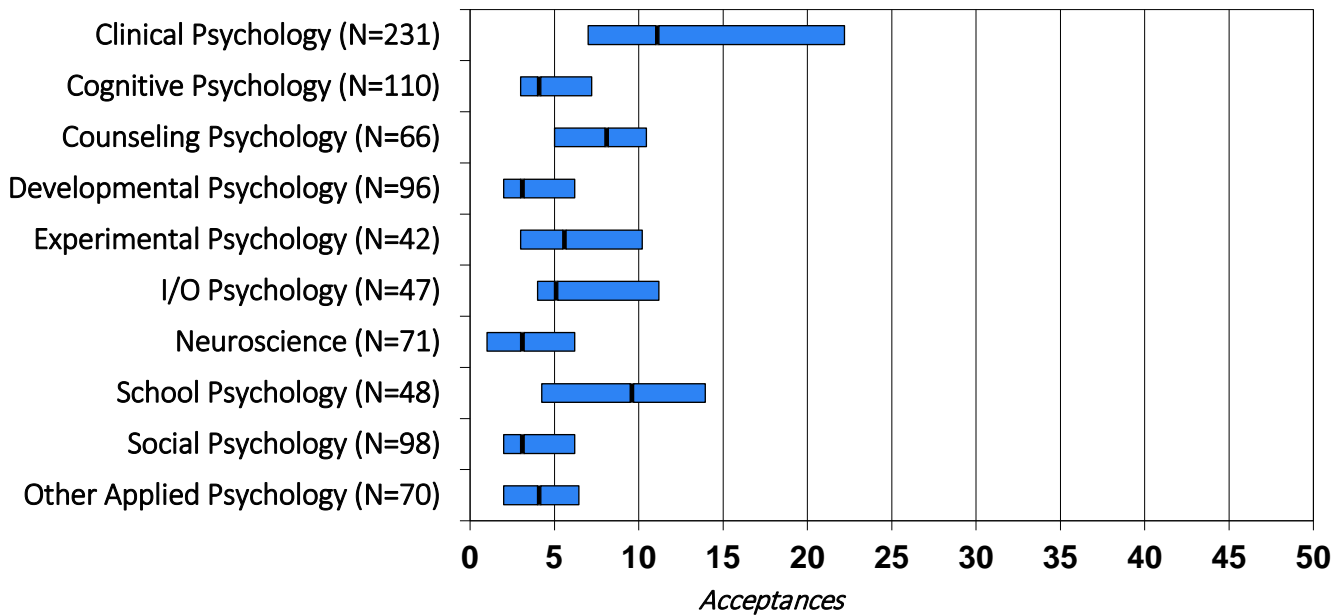
Applications for doctoral programs are presented in Figure 6 by subfield. The largest number of applications across the greatest interquartile range, were found in clinical psychology with a median of 149 applications. Counseling psychology, industrial/organizational psychology, and social psychology represented the next largest numbers of applications. Figure 7 shows the ranges of acceptances by subfield. As was also found in 2017, 2018 median acceptances for clinical psychology were 11 and median acceptances for all other subfields were below 10. Acceptance rates for doctoral programs, as shown in Figure 8, were noticeably lower in comparison to master’s programs, with the median rates for doctoral clinical psychology and social psychology at 8% for both. . The highest median acceptance rates for doctoral programs were found in school psychology and other applied psychology at 32% and 25%, respectively.

Figure 6. Doctoral Applications by Broad Subfield



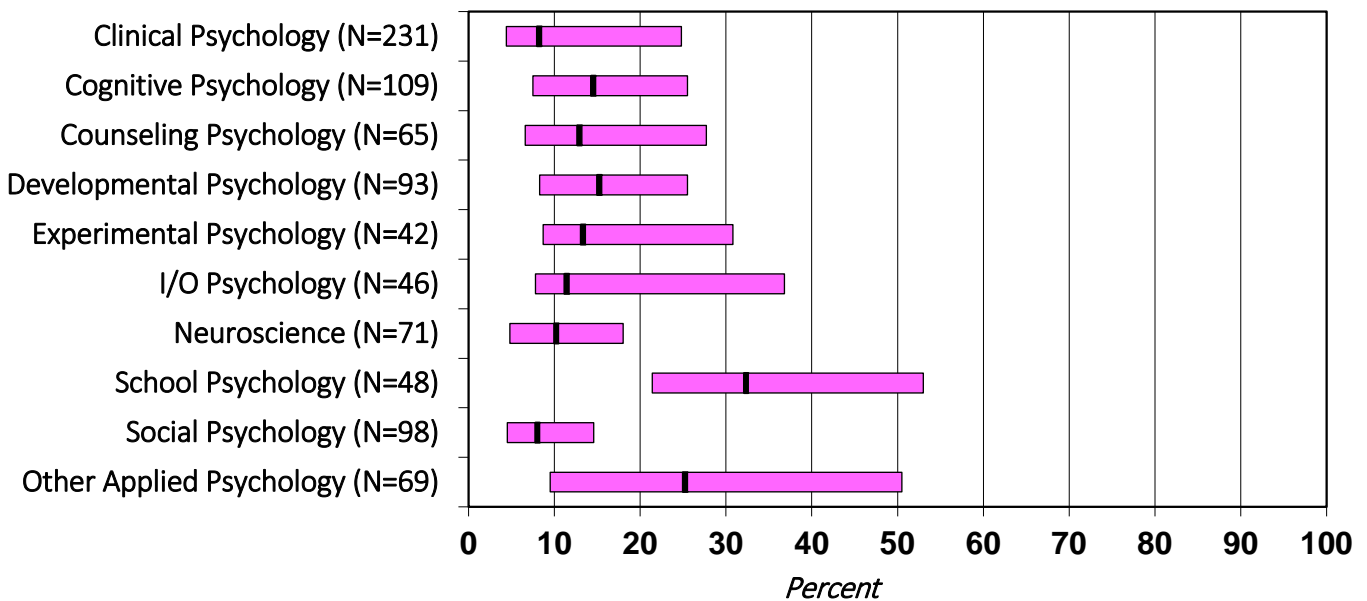
Notes. N=Programs within that subfield. Graph includes first quartile, median, and third quartile values. Subfield categories have been collapsed. The 'Other Psychology' category was excluded from analysis at the doctoral level. Missing data were excluded from analysis.

Figure 7. Doctoral Acceptances by Broad Subfield



Notes. N=Programs within that subfield. Graph includes first quartile, median, and third quartile values. Subfield categories have been collapsed. The 'Other Psychology' category was excluded from analysis at the doctoral level. Missing data were excluded from analysis.

Figure 8. Doctoral Acceptance Rates by Broad Subfield



Notes. N=Programs within that subfield. Graph includes first quartile, median, and third quartile values. Subfield categories have been collapsed. The 'Other Psychology' category was excluded from analysis at the doctoral level. Acceptance rates were not calculated for programs reporting neither application nor acceptance numbers.

Table 3 summarizes total applications, acceptances, and acceptance rates by broad subfield for both master's- and doctoral-level programs participating in the survey.

Compared to doctoral programs, acceptance rates for master's programs were substantially higher for all subfields, yet the numbers of applications were less than half of the application numbers for doctoral programs; approximately 24,000 to 69,000, respectively. Counseling psychology programs received the highest number of both applications and acceptances at the master's level with an acceptance rate of 57%. However, it is important to note that many of the participating programs in this category identify as 'Counseling' programs that grant degrees designed to train graduates for careers as licensed professional counselors in psychology-related health services. Acceptance rates were lowest for social psychology and clinical psychology at 27% and 31%, respectively.

At the doctoral level, the highest number of programs, applications, and acceptances were found in clinical psychology, but with an overall acceptance rate of 12%. Acceptance rates for doctoral programs ranged between 8% and 15% across most subfields, but were noticeably higher for school psychology (31%) and other applied psychology (21%). Although nearly than 4 out of 5 (78%) of applications to other psychology subfield programs were accepted, the low number of programs (6) limits meaningful interpretation.

Table 3. Sum of Applications, Acceptances, and Overall Acceptance Rates by Degree Level & Broad Subfield

| | | Master's | | | Doctoral | | |
|----------------------------|-----|--------------|-------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Subfield | | Applications | Acceptances | Acceptance Rate | Applications | Acceptances | Acceptance Rate |
| Clinical Psychology | N | 58 | 57 | 31.4% | 231 | 231 | 12.1% |
| | Sum | 3,085 | 970 | | 39,781 | 4,806 | |
| Cognitive Psychology | N | 10 | 10 | 37.4% | 110 | 110 | 11.9% |
| | Sum | 281 | 105 | | 4,518 | 539 | |
| Counseling Psychology | N | 92 | 92 | 56.8% | 66 | 66 | 11.4% |
| | Sum | 6,874 | 3,902 | | 5,191 | 592 | |
| Developmental Psychology | N | 19 | 19 | 51.5% | 96 | 96 | 14.9% |
| | Sum | 452 | 233 | | 2,919 | 434 | |
| Experimental Psychology | N | 81 | 81 | 44.1% | 42 | 42 | 12.1% |
| | Sum | 3,668 | 1,619 | | 2,388 | 288 | |
| Industrial/Org. Psychology | N | 61 | 61 | 38.2% | 47 | 47 | 12.8% |
| | Sum | 3,237 | 1,238 | | 2,826 | 362 | |
| Neuroscience | N | 6 | 6 | 65.4% | 71 | 71 | 10.3% |
| | Sum | 188 | 123 | | 2,570 | 265 | |
| School Psychology | N | 57 | 57 | 55.4% | 48 | 48 | 31.3% |
| | Sum | 2,106 | 1,166 | | 1,768 | 553 | |
| Social Psychology | N | 14 | 14 | 27.2% | 98 | 98 | 7.9% |
| | Sum | 375 | 102 | | 5,156 | 409 | |
| Other Applied Psychology | N | 57 | 57 | 51.8% | 70 | 70 | 21.4% |
| | Sum | 2,842 | 1,473 | | 1,482 | 317 | |
| Other Psychology | N | 16 | 16 | 65.9% | 6 | 6 | 77.6% |
| | Sum | 1,249 | 823 | | 634 | 492 | |
| Total | N | 471 | 470 | 48.3% | 885 | 885 | 13.1% |
| | Sum | 24,357 | 11,754 | | 69,233 | 9,057 | |

Notes. N=Aggregate programs in subfield. Sum=Total number of applications and acceptances by subfield. Acceptance rate is calculated as the ratio of acceptances to applications within that category. Subfield categories have been collapsed (see Appendix 2, Table II for categories).

Appendix

I. Application Review Criteria

Figure 1 of the report presents ten criteria used by departments for application reviews and plots those by level of importance by institutional location of the department. The table below defines each of the criterion.

| Review Criteria | Description |
|-----------------|--|
| GRE | Scores from the GRE general and/or subject tests |
| Research | Prior research experience |
| Work | Employment/volunteer history and experience |
| Clinic | Prior clinical experience |
| GPA | Undergraduate GPA |
| Letters | Recommendation letters from faculty/supervisors |
| Interview | Candidate interview |
| Goals | Statement of students' academic and career goals |
| Psycprep | Academic history in psychology and coursework |
| Other | Other criteria unique to department's review |

II. Subfields

Survey respondents were provided a complete list of subfields as shown in the left column of the table below. These categories were then collapsed into broader subfields as shown on the right for reporting purposes.

| Subfield Response Options | Collapsed Subfield |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Experimental Psychology (Applied) | Experimental Psychology |
| Experimental Psychology (General) | |
| Biological | Neuroscience |
| Comparative Psychology | |
| Neuropsychology | |
| Neuroscience | |
| Physiological | |
| Psychopharmacology | |
| Health* | |
| Personality | Social Psychology |
| Social | |
| Child and Adolescent | Developmental Psychology |
| Developmental | |
| Human Development and Family Studies | |
| Geropsychology | |
| Clinical | Clinical Psychology |
| Health* | |
| Primary Care | |
| Psychoanalytic | |
| Consulting | |
| Industrial/Organizational | I/O Psychology |
| Counseling Psychology | Counseling Psychology |
| Community Counseling | |
| Family Psychology | |
| Marriage and Family Therapy | |
| Mental Health Counseling | |
| Rehabilitation | |
| Cognitive Psychology | Cognitive Psychology |
| Human Factors | |
| Psycholinguistics | |
| School Psychology | School Psychology |
| School Counseling | |
| Applied Behavior Analysis | Other Applied Psychology |
| Community Psychology | |
| Educational Psychology | |
| Forensic Psychology | |
| Sport Psychology | |
| Quantitative Psychology | |
| Behavioral | |
| Environmental | |
| General Psychology | Other Psychology |
| Humanistic | |
| Multicultural | |

*Depending on the nature of training, clinically-oriented Health programs are included in the collapsed Clinical subfield. Other Health programs are included in Social/Personality category.