

Uplifting Historically Marginalized Adults under G3's Financial Aid Program

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Summary and Motivation

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed disproportionate effects on the country's population of Historically Marginalized Adults in post-secondary education. Historically Marginalized Adults (HMAs) include Black, Hispanic, American Indian, and Alaskan Native students. The Virginia Community College System serves a majority HMA population with 42% of students identifying as Black, Hispanic, American Indian, or Alaskan Native. In efforts to combat the effects of COVID-19 on VCCS enrollment and retention, particularly on HMAs, the *Get a Skill, Get a Job, Get Ahead* (G3) Program was established as a pandemic workforce recovery strategy.

The G3 Program focuses on five integral components as tools to increase student participation and advancement in obtaining longer-term credentials and degrees.

1. Last-dollar scholarship
2. Living stipend
3. Stackable credentials in five high-demand fields
4. Front-loaded instruction in industry skills
5. Dedicated Advising

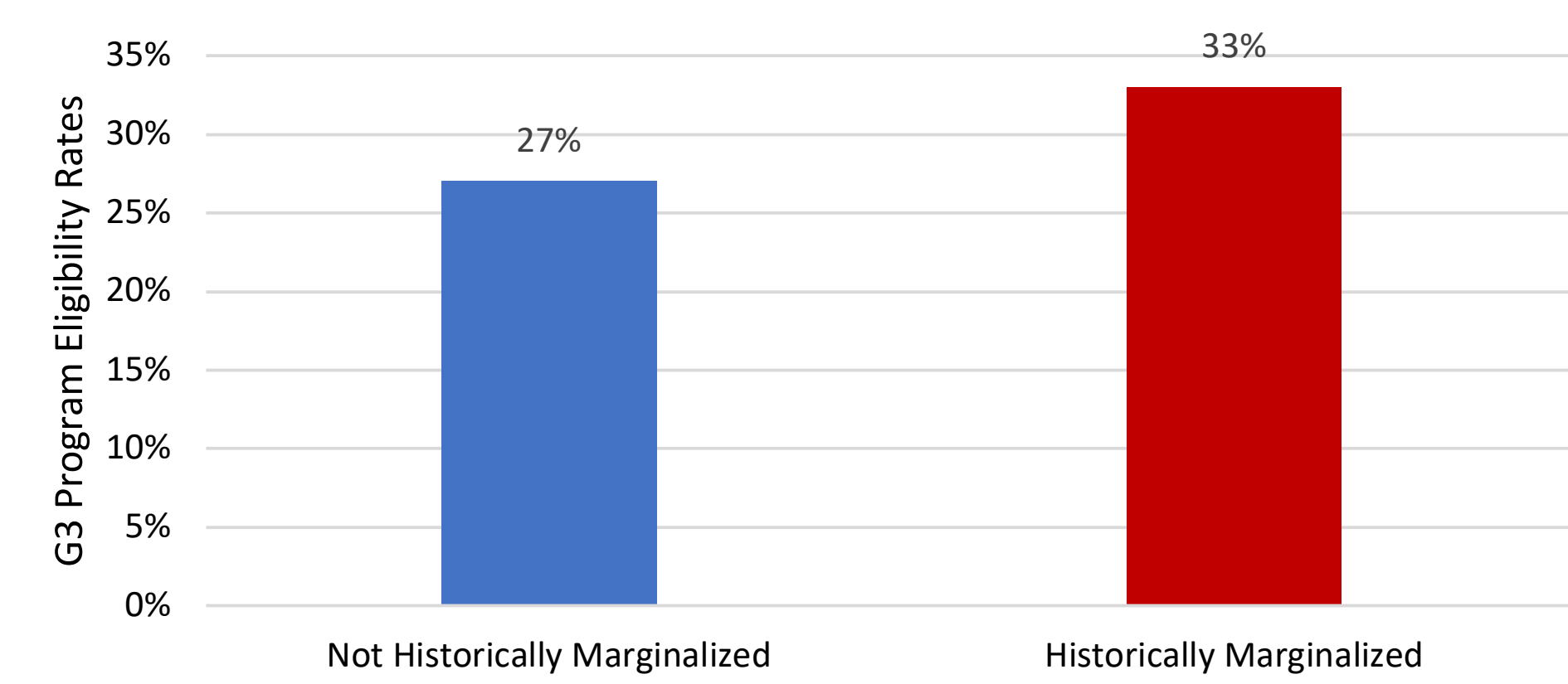
Receiving funding from the G3 Program requires that a student (1) be eligible for Virginia in-state tuition; (2) have a total household income less than or equal to 400% of the federal poverty level (about \$100,000 for a family of four); (3) be enrolled or accepted for enrollment at a Virginia public community college and in an approved program; (4) be enrolled in a minimum of 6 credit hours per semester; and (5) have applied for federal and state financial aid programs for which they may be eligible.

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) often creates barriers for the enrollment of students. The largest reasons people may not complete FAFSA include not knowing they could complete one, not knowing how to complete one, and, most prominently, thinking they were ineligible and unqualified. As a result, the students most likely to benefit from financial aid are less likely to apply for it. College-intending students belonging to the lowest-income quartile believe their ineligibility for FAFSA stemmed from low academics, a part-time schooling status, low credit scores, or high incomes. As a result, FAFSA attempted to overcome barriers for FAFSA application accessibility through events, mailings, and outreach. Around 70% of college-intending students file for FAFSA yearly. 1/3 of the students who do not apply for FAFSA qualify for a Pell Grant (Page, L. C., & Scott-Clayton, 2016).

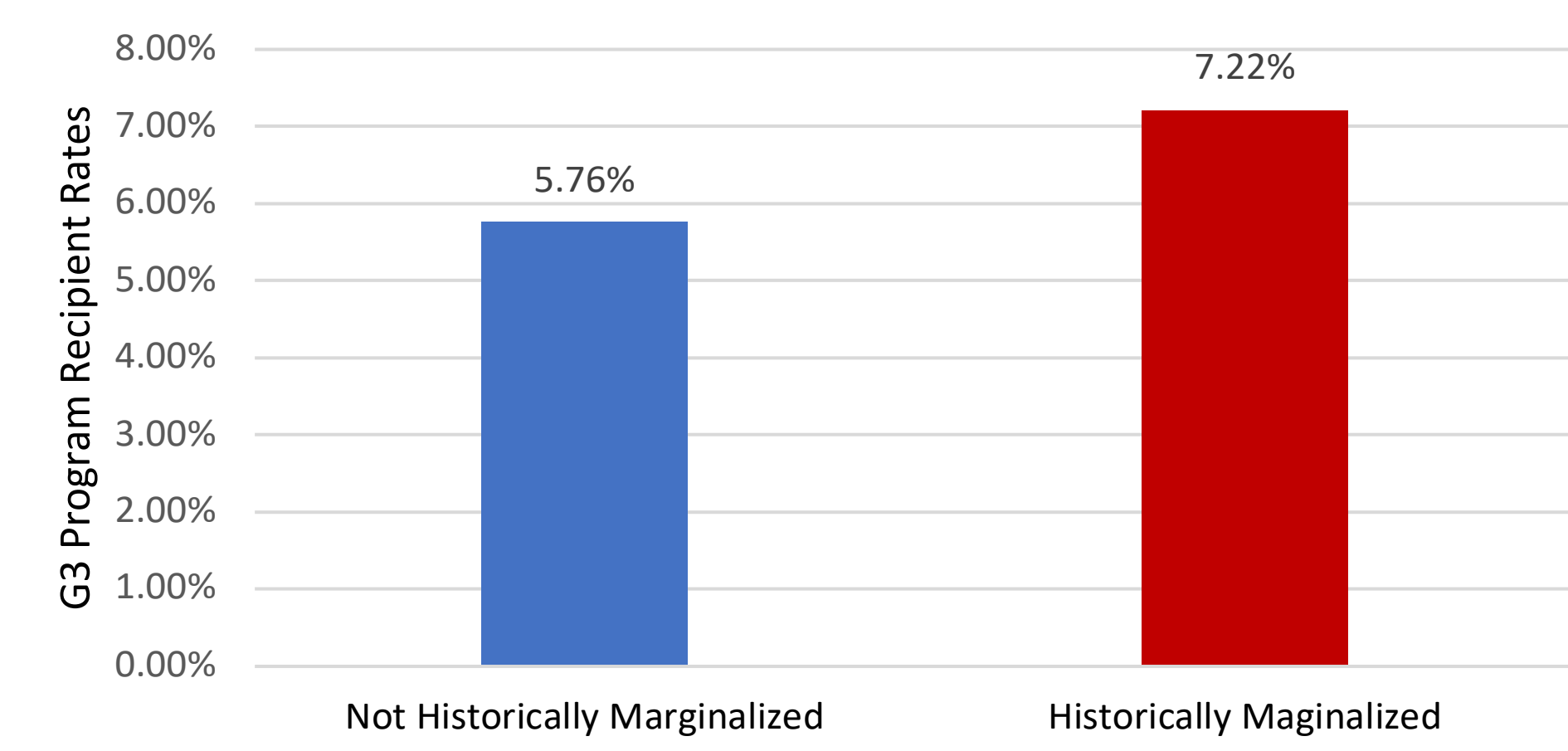
FAFSA's consistent lack of accessibility suggests an underlying obstacle in financially serving Historically Marginalized Students in post-secondary education. As the G3 Program hopes to assist in offering more accessibility and aid to students, particularly Black and Latino students, the program ought to consider its effectiveness in overcoming the pitfalls of a major federal funding program and overall accessibility.

G3 Program Accessibility Analysis

1. Are non-HMA and HMA students eligible for G3 funding at similar rates?

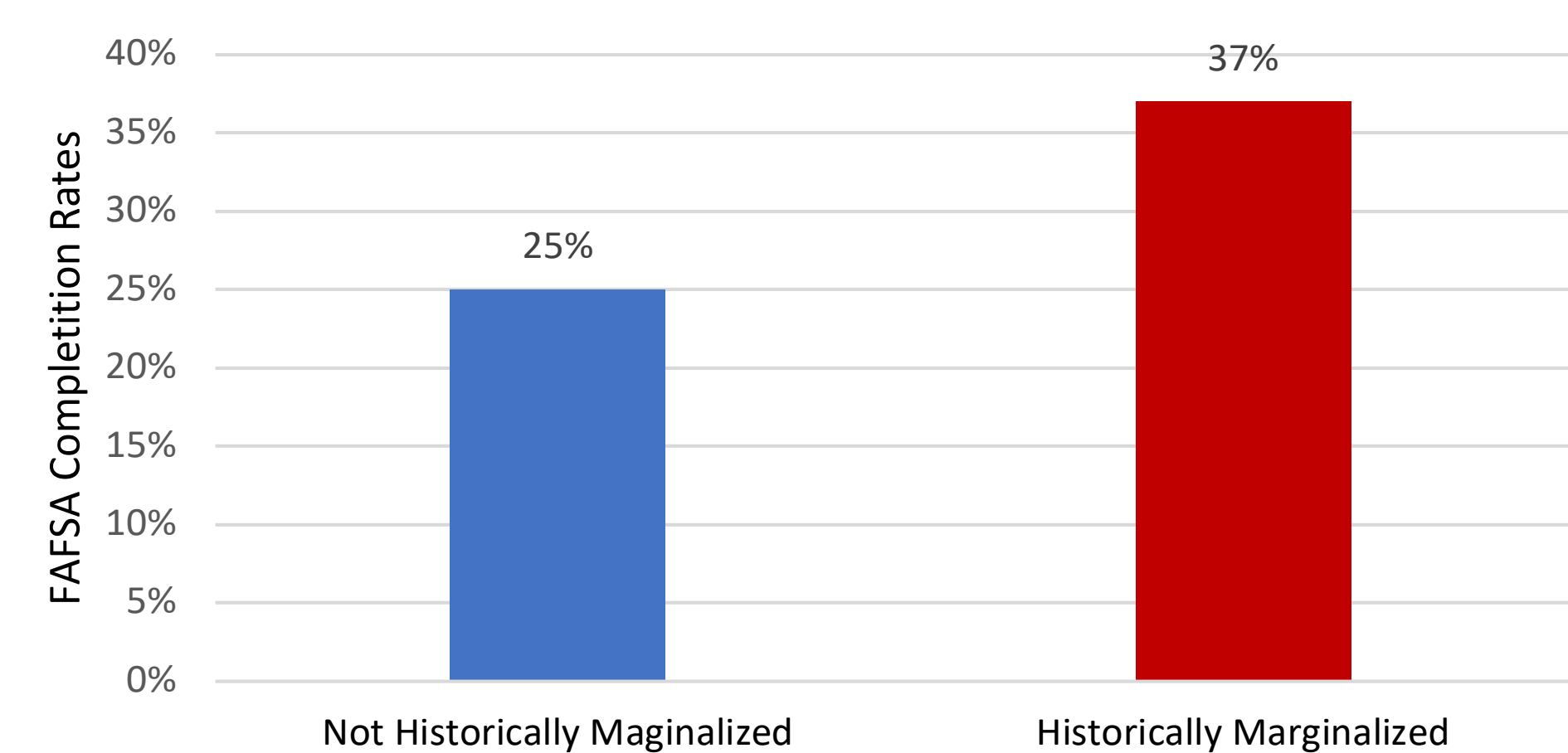


2. Do non-HMA and HMA students receive G3 funding at similar rates?



FAFSA Accessibility Analysis

3. Do non-HMA and HMA students apply for FAFSA at similar rates?

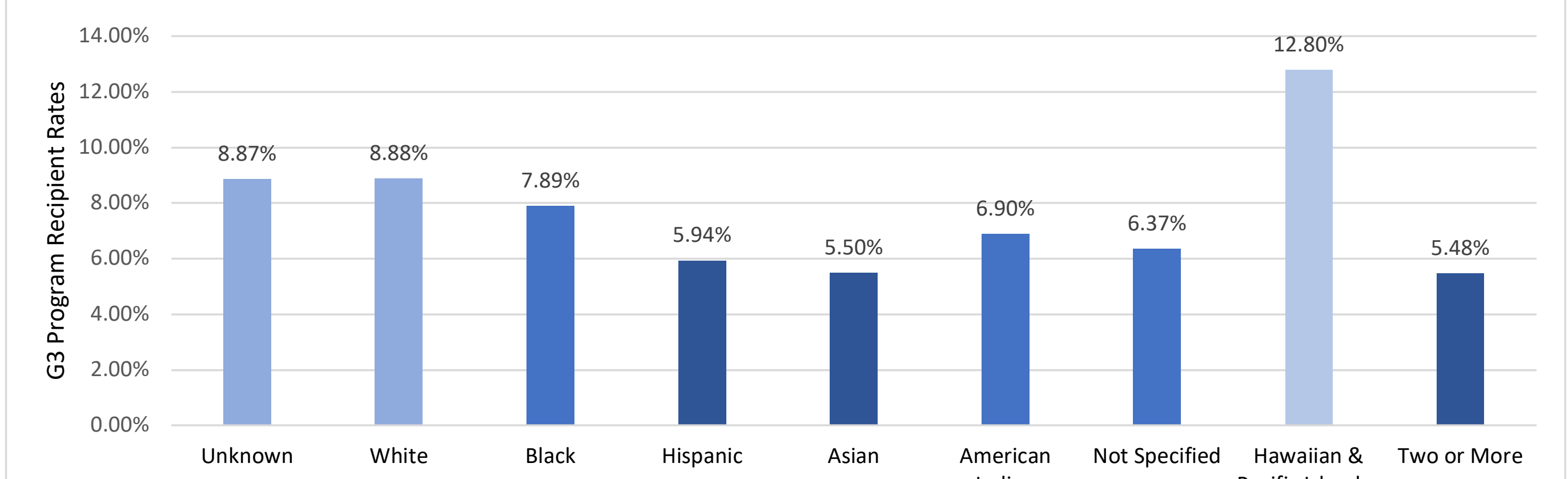


Findings

1. Eligibility for the G3 Program includes five prerequisites. Of the students who report the information aligned with the requirements of the G3 Program, 27% of Non-HMAs are eligible while 33% of HMAs are eligible. HMA students are more likely to be eligible for G3, suggesting a gap in either access or eligibility between the two groups.
2. The difference between G3 eligible students and G3 recipient students is evident. While 27% of Non-HMAs are eligible for G3, only 5.76% receive such funding. Similarly, 33% of HMAs are eligible for G3, while 7.22% of HMAs receive funding through the program.
3. An integral step in participating in the G3 program includes applying and qualifying for FAFSA. In the VCCS, 25% of non-HMA, or White, students apply for FAFSA. On the other hand, a larger percentage of HMA students apply for FAFSA at roughly 37%.

G3 Program Accessibility Analysis By Race

4. Do students across different races receive G3 funding at similar rates?



Findings & Discussion

- Students do not receive G3 funding at similar rates. While HPI and White students are most likely to receive funding while Asian, Hispanic, and Multi-Racial students are least likely to receiving funding.
- There is a disparity between the students eligible for the G3 Program and students receiving funding through the G3 Program.
- Both HMA and non-HMA students apply for FAFSA at low rates despite efforts of the G3 program. Both groups are more likely to not apply for FAFSA than to apply.
- Although HMA students are more likely to apply for FAFSA than non-HMA students, that does not necessarily mean that fewer HMA students are excluded from G3 Program eligibility. HMA students may be eligible for FAFSA and G3 at a higher rate than non-HMA students.