The Gen Z Persona Equation

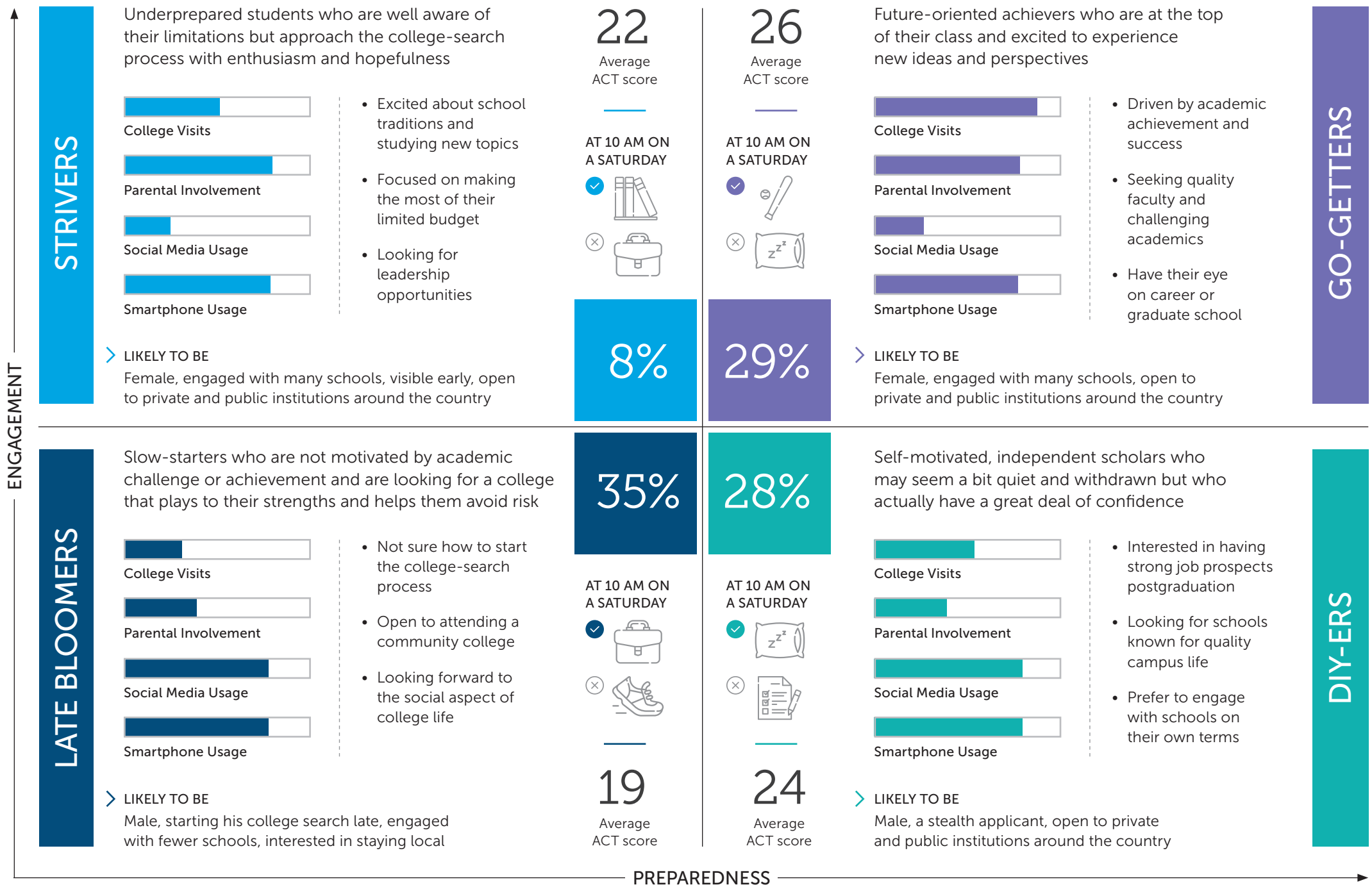## How Data Science Reveals Key Differences Among Your Students

While students in Generation Z have many shared characteristics, they are certainly not a monolith. We decided to take a closer look at this much-analyzed generation in order to surface the differences that matter to the college-search process.

Powered by data from over 2.6 million unique students, we utilized statistical analysis tools to isolate and categorize demographic and behavior patterns. This analysis revealed four distinct student segments and six distinct affinity groups. Together, these groupings form student personas that can be used to test and inform marketing strategies.

Segments

Segments—as we are defining them here—are mutually exclusive student groupings based on distinct behaviors and characteristics. A segment forms the foundation of a student's persona. Students within each segment are defined primarily by their level of engagement with and preparedness for the college-search process.

Signals of engagement include things like parental involvement, number of college inquiries, and number of search responses, while signals of preparedness include things like tests taken, test scores, inquiry timing, and number of campus visits.

ENGAGEMENT / PREPAREDNESS

STRIVERS

Underprepared students who are well aware of their limitations but approach the college-search process with enthusiasm and hopefulness

- College Visits
- Parental Involvement
- Social Media Usage
- Smartphone Usage

- Excited about school traditions and studying new topics
- Focused on making the most of their limited budget
- Looking for leadership opportunities

LIKELY TO BE
Female, engaged with many schools, visible early, open to private and public institutions around the country

22 Average ACT score

AT 10 AM ON A SATURDAY

8%

GO-GETTERS

Future-oriented achievers who are at the top of their class and excited to experience new ideas and perspectives

- College Visits
- Parental Involvement
- Social Media Usage
- Smartphone Usage

- Driven by academic achievement and success
- Seeking quality faculty and challenging academics
- Have their eye on career or graduate school

LIKELY TO BE
Female, engaged with many schools, open to private and public institutions around the country

26 Average ACT score

AT 10 AM ON A SATURDAY

29%

LATE BLOOMERS

Slow-starters who are not motivated by academic challenge or achievement and are looking for a college that plays to their strengths and helps them avoid risk

- College Visits
- Parental Involvement
- Social Media Usage
- Smartphone Usage

- Not sure how to start the college-search process
- Open to attending a community college
- Looking forward to the social aspect of college life

LIKELY TO BE
Male, starting his college search late, engaged with fewer schools, interested in staying local

35%

AT 10 AM ON A SATURDAY

19 Average ACT score

DIY-ERS

Self-motivated, independent scholars who may seem a bit quiet and withdrawn but who actually have a great deal of confidence

- College Visits
- Parental Involvement
- Social Media Usage
- Smartphone Usage

- Interested in having strong job prospects postgraduation
- Looking for schools known for quality campus life
- Prefer to engage with schools on their own terms

LIKELY TO BE
Male, a stealth applicant, open to private and public institutions around the country

28%

AT 10 AM ON A SATURDAY

24 Average ACT score

PREPAREDNESS

Affinity Groups

Affinity Groups are the second component of a student's persona. Unlike segments, they are not mutually exclusive. Viewed together, segments and affinities paint a more complete picture of a student's identity, allowing you to determine the best way to serve that individual student.

Analytical
Meticulous planners who know what they want in the short and long term

LOOKING FOR
College with STEM research opportunities

LIKELY TO BE
Male, engaged with a high number of schools, visible early

Altruist
Tireless advocates with a keen focus on making the world a better place

LOOKING FOR
College committed to volunteering

LIKELY TO BE
Female, engaged with a low number of schools, interested in health or education

Independent
Self-starters who are not very interested in parental involvement

LOOKING FOR
College with compelling social activities

LIKELY TO BE
Female, engaged with a low number of schools

Dreamer
First-generation students focused on career preparation and personal growth

LOOKING FOR
College with strong aid package and diversity

LIKELY TO BE
Female, minority, starting the college search late

International
Overseas applicants with a strong desire to expand their horizons

LOOKING FOR
Top research university in a metropolitan area

LIKELY TO BE
Female, engaged with a high number of schools

Religious
Self-described leaders who are seeking a higher calling

LOOKING FOR
College with a religious affiliation

LIKELY TO BE
Female, engaged with a high number of schools, open to parental involvement

Segment ✛ Affinity Groups ═ Student Persona

EAB