



*Advancing Global Higher Education*

# Social Media Monitoring and the Admissions Process

Results of the AACRAO July 2017 60-Second Survey



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## Introduction

Harvard University made national news recently when offers of admission were rescinded for “at least ten students”<sup>1</sup> based on obscene social media content posted to a Facebook page. Harvard’s official Facebook group for the class of 2021 was the platform where the admitted students became acquainted but was not where the remarks were posted. The group had formed their own messaging group. The Harvard Facebook group page includes the following statement: “As a reminder, Harvard College reserves the right to withdraw an offer of admission under various conditions including if an admitted student engages in behavior that brings into question his or her honesty, maturity, or moral character.”

This month’s survey, included as Appendix A, evolved from the Harvard University news story. We aimed to acquire an understanding of how prevalent the practice is for institutions to review the social media of applicants and/or react to becoming aware of social media posts by prospective or admitted students. The survey intended to capture the frequency of active or passive monitoring of social media for applicant behavior that, to use Harvard’s phrase, “. . . brings into question his or her honesty, maturity, or moral character.” Given this approach and the anecdotal data collected through the free-text questions, the data presented here should be considered within the context that some who took the survey responded that there was not enough clarification on that purpose. Some may have responded to the questions about social media monitoring through the lens of routine marketing and admissions Q&A processes rather than for questionable posts from prospect, applicants and recently admitted students, as such the data may be skewed.

Additionally, as with other 60-Second surveys, we received more than one response from a few dozen institutions. That data appears to identify a general misunderstanding as to whether or not social media is monitored or considered during the admissions process. In these instances, one respondent would indicate that the institution does not monitor social media where another respondent from the same institution indicated that the institution does, in fact, monitor social media. This mismatch in responses existed across departments (e.g., between the registrar’s office and the admissions office) and within enrollment management (e.g., between the director of admissions and vice president of enrollment management). The data was cleaned by retaining the data only for the person most closely tied to the responsibility and/or the most senior position within admissions or enrollment management.

After the data was cleaned, we were left with responses from 534 institutions representing several combinations of control, size, and type (Appendix B) as well as several countries (Appendix C).

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2017/6/5/2021-offers-rescinded-memes/>



## Key Findings

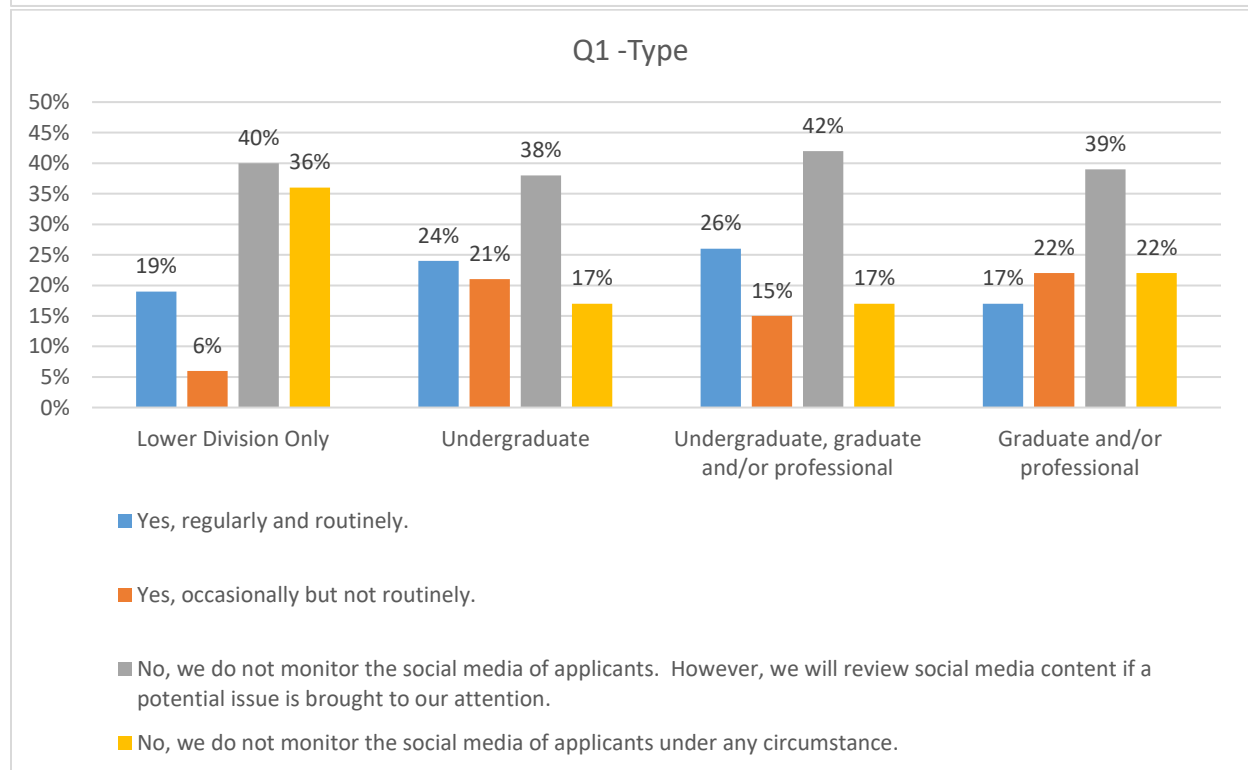
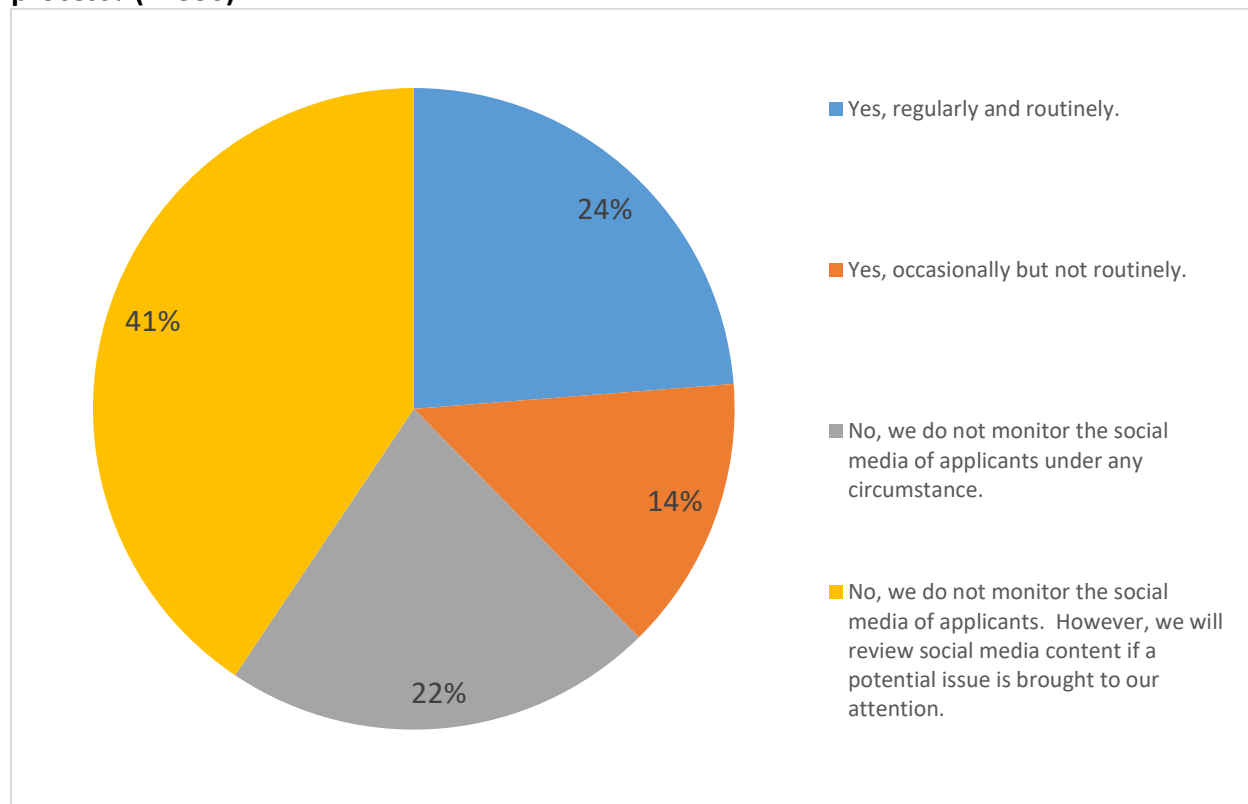
- Collectively, almost three-quarters either monitor social media as part of the admissions decision making or will review social media brought to their attention.
  - One-quarter do so “regularly and routinely”; and private, not-for-profit institutions are more likely than other types to do so.
  - Forty-one percent (41%) will review social media content if a potential issue is brought to the attention of the institution.
- Twelve (12%) percent of those who do not monitor social media as part of the admissions process are considering doing so.
- In the aggregate of those who monitor social media at all, nearly one-quarter monitor both the institution-sponsored social media and the personal social media of applicants. Facebook is the most monitored.
- Among those who monitor social media, eleven percent (11%) have denied admission based on social media content; seven percent (7%) have rescinded an offer of admission; and half monitor the social media of admitted students.
- About one-in-ten who monitor social media have a formal policy on how to do so.

The remainder of this report contains figures summarizing the aggregate results and disaggregated results by institutional size, type, and control. Questions regarding this or any other AACRAO research should be directed to Wendy Kilgore, AACRAO Director of Research, at [wendyk@aacrao.org](mailto:wendyk@aacrao.org).

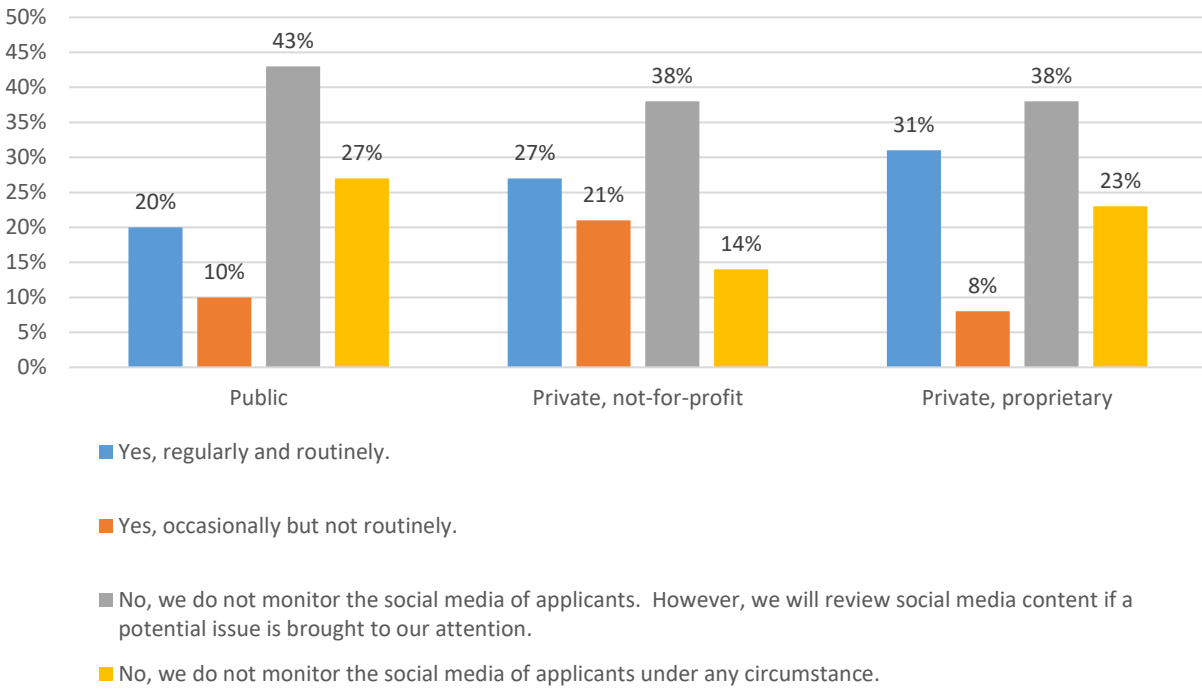


## Results

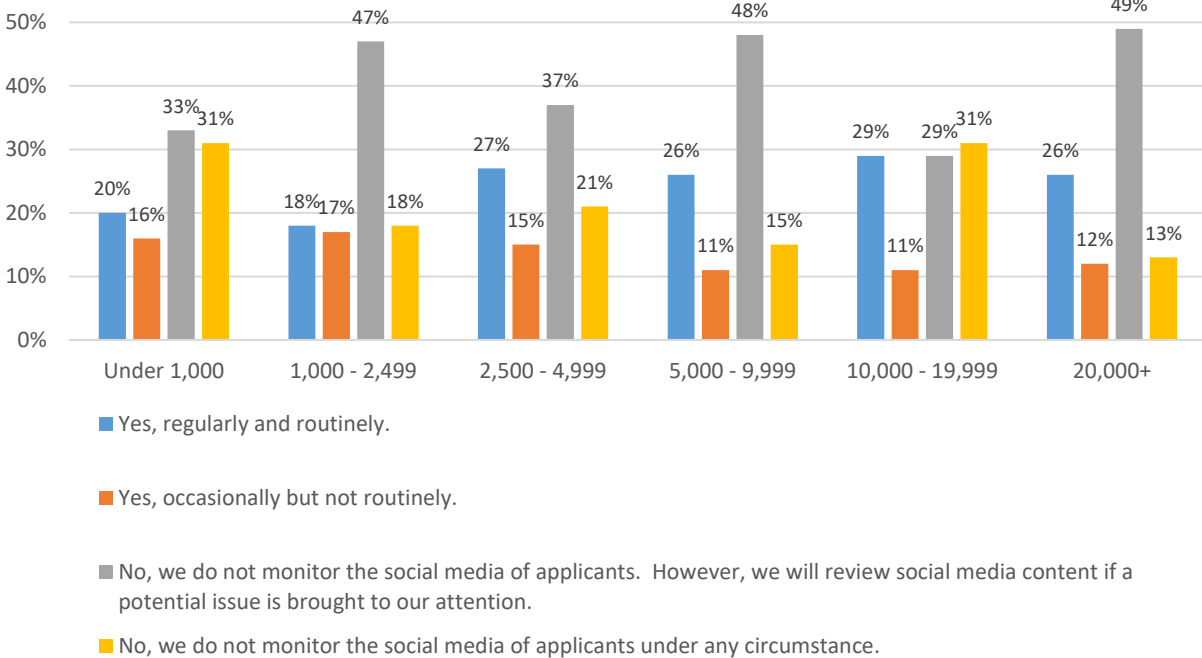
### Q1 -Does your institution monitor social media for any stage of the admissions decision process? (n=530)



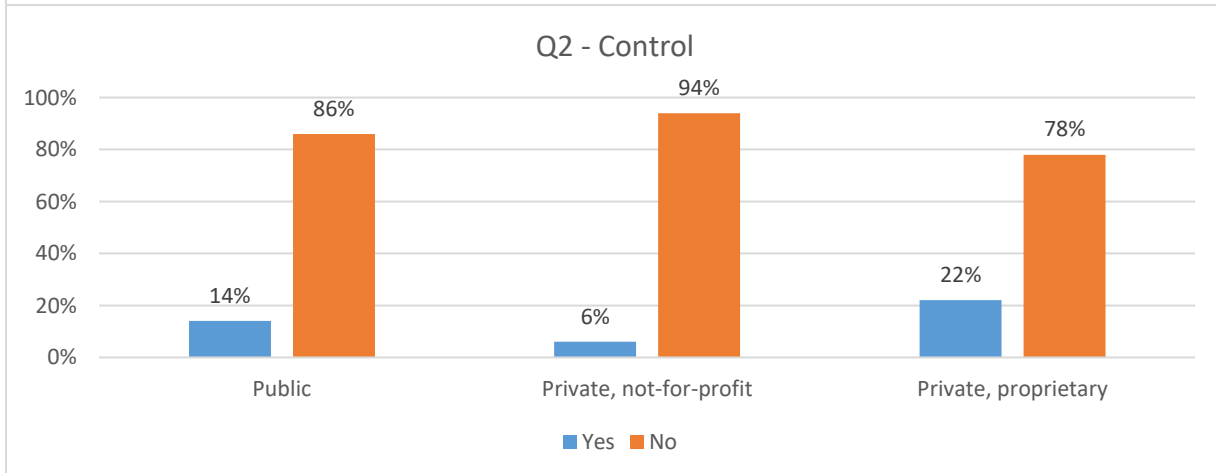
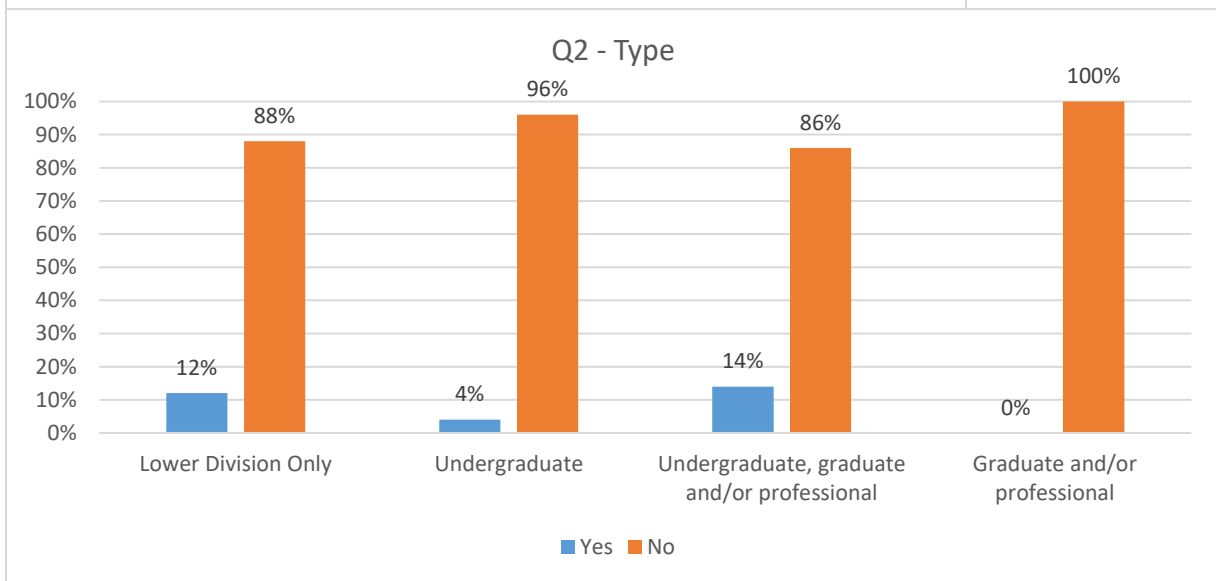
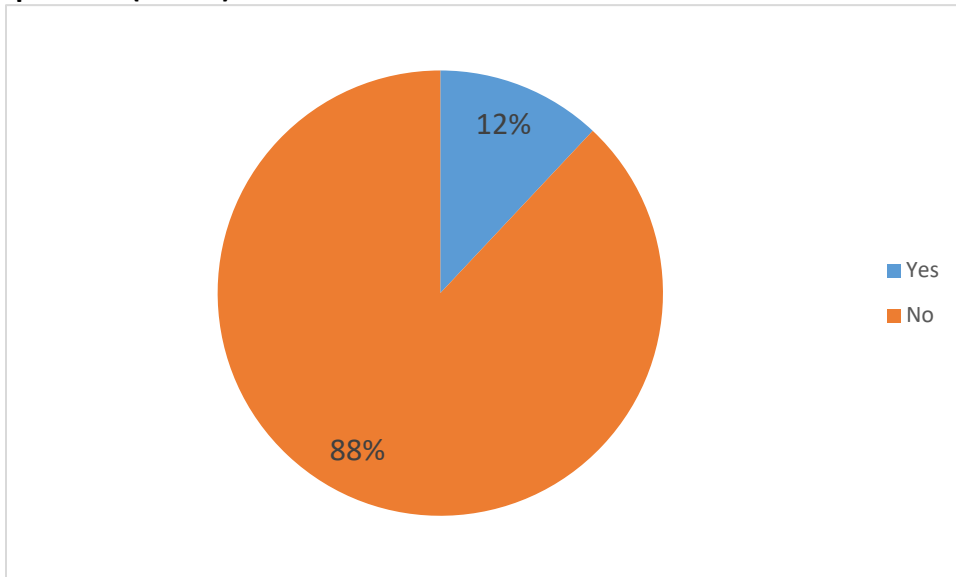
### Q1 - Control

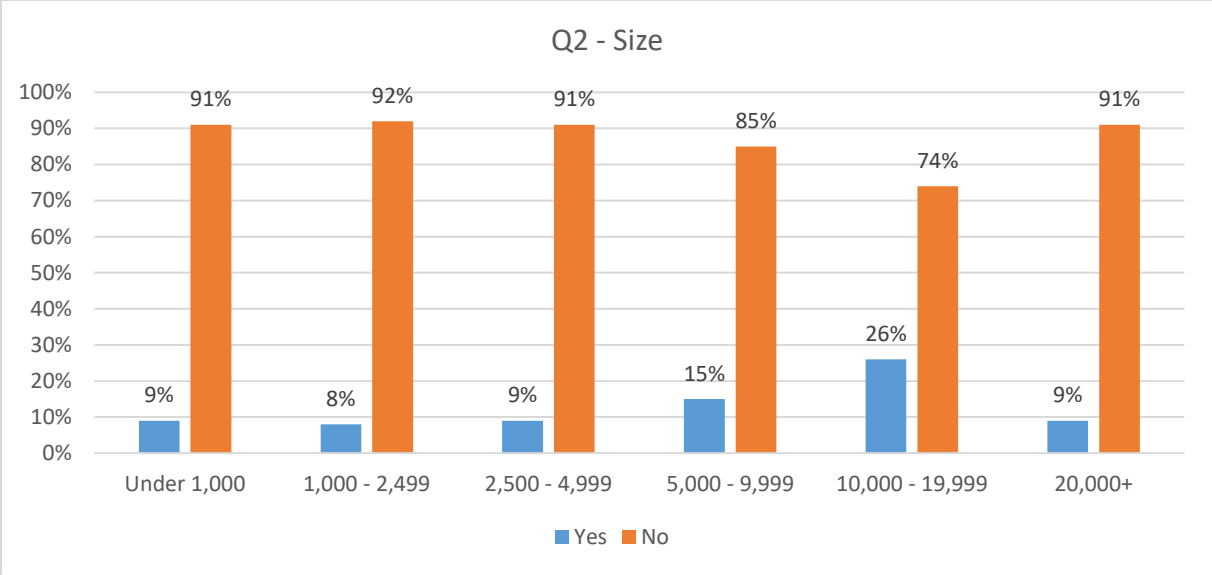


### Q1 - Size

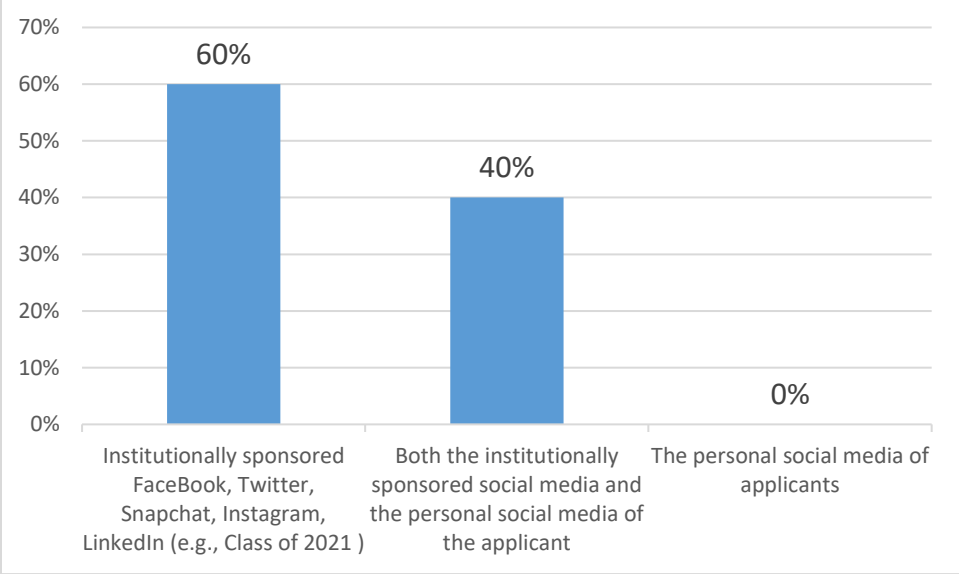


**Q2 Is your institution considering doing so? (Asked of those who said “No” to the first question (n=215).**

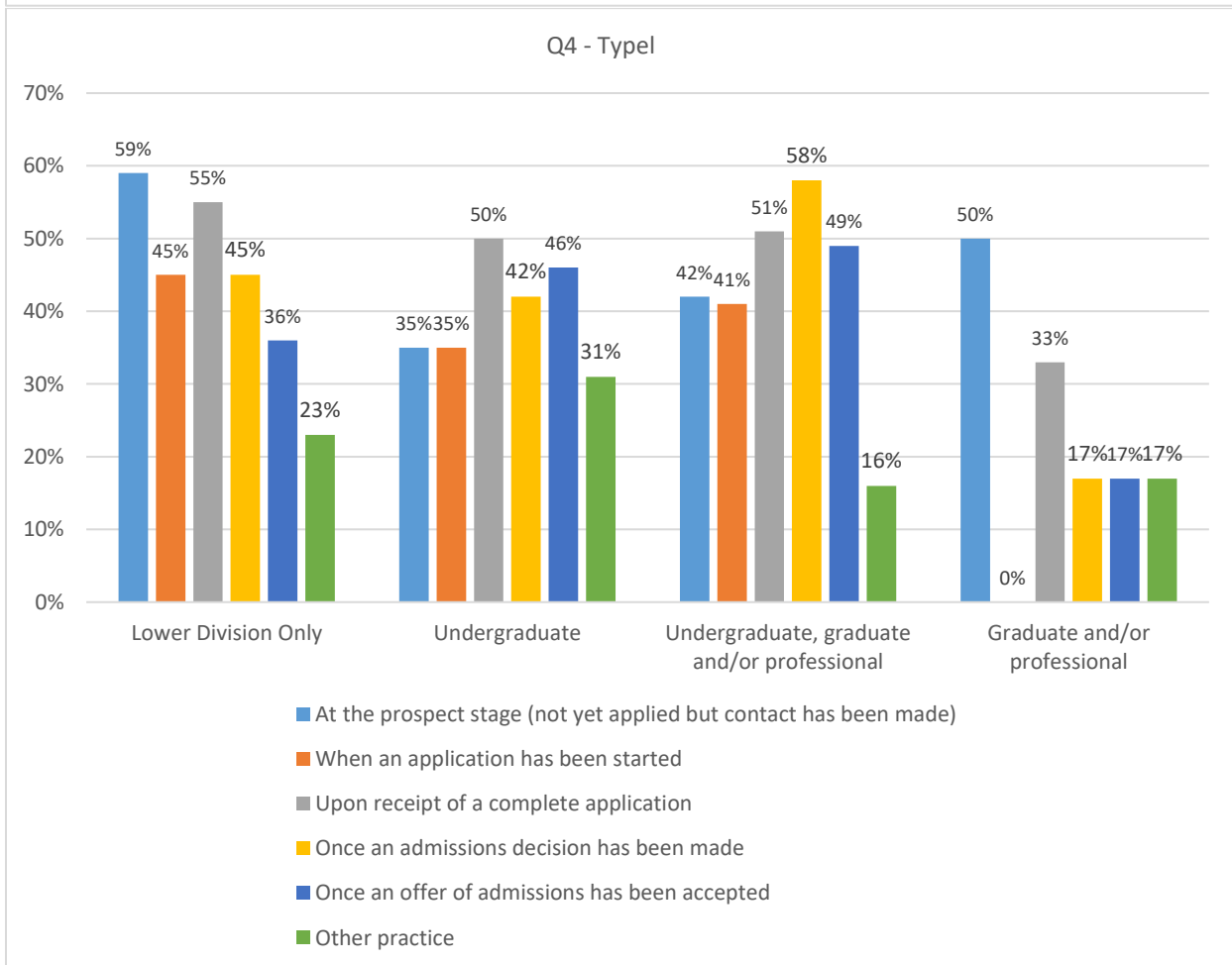
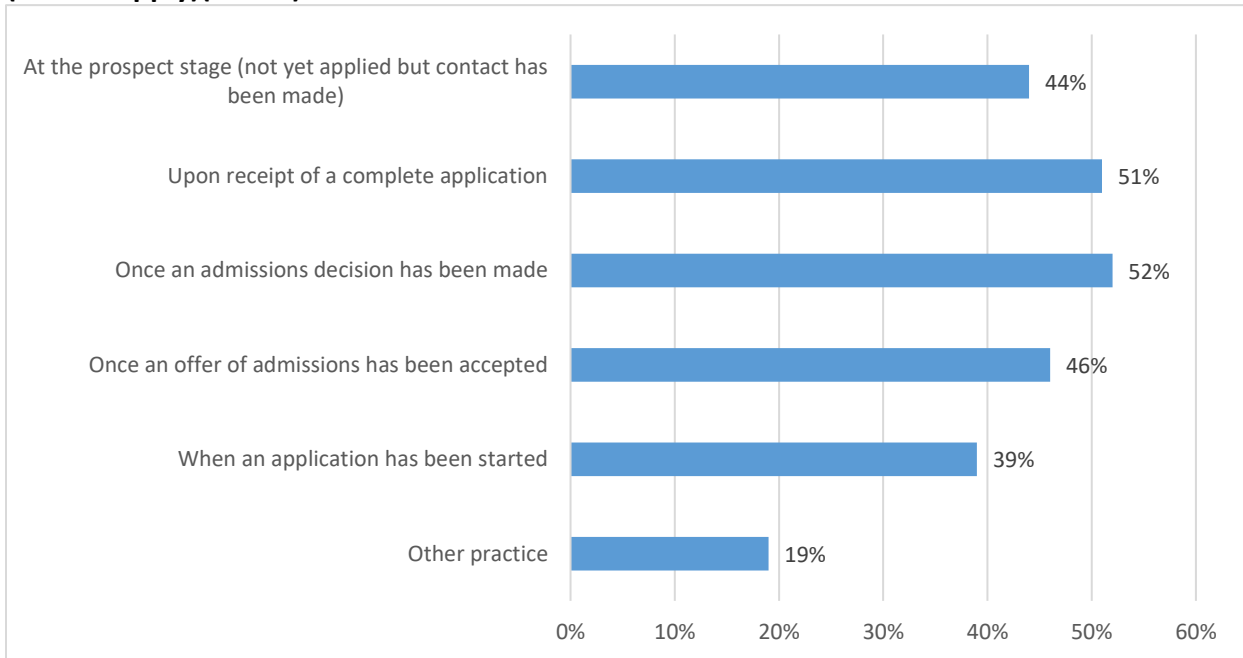


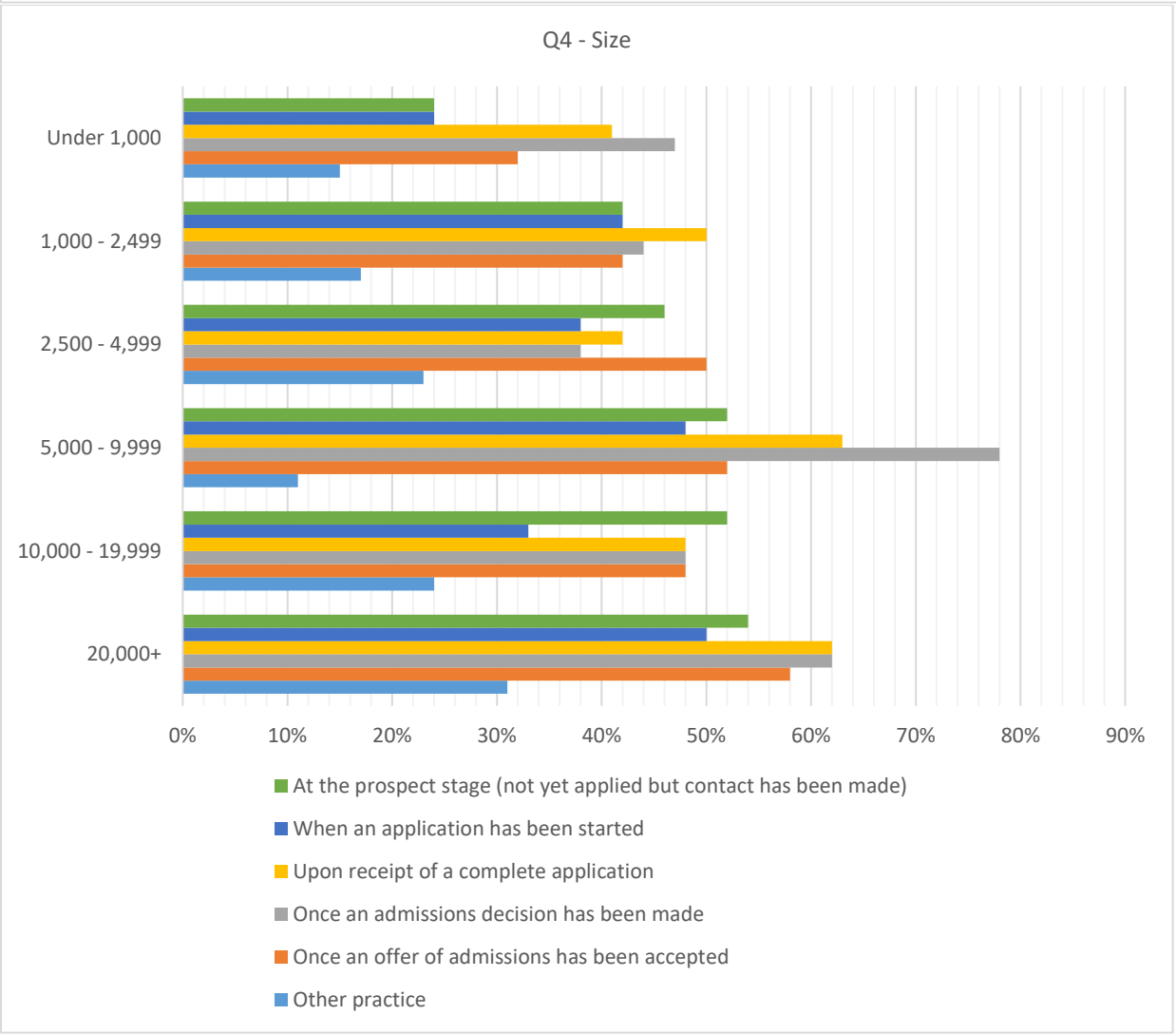
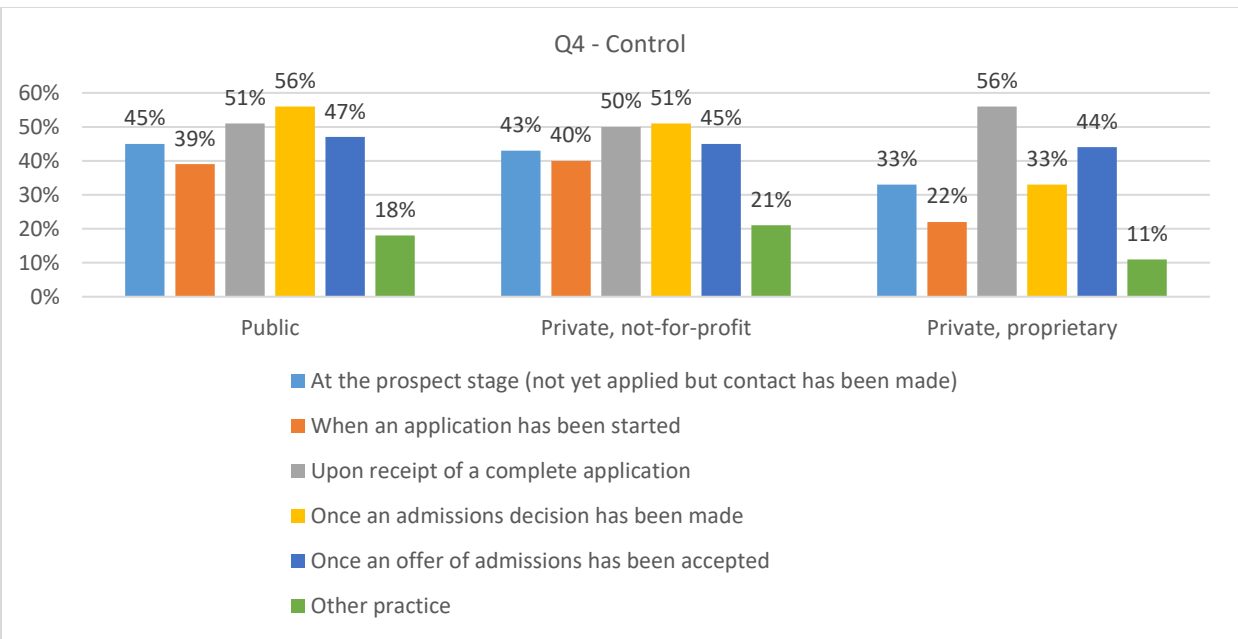


**Q3 What social media is your institution considering monitoring? (n=25)**

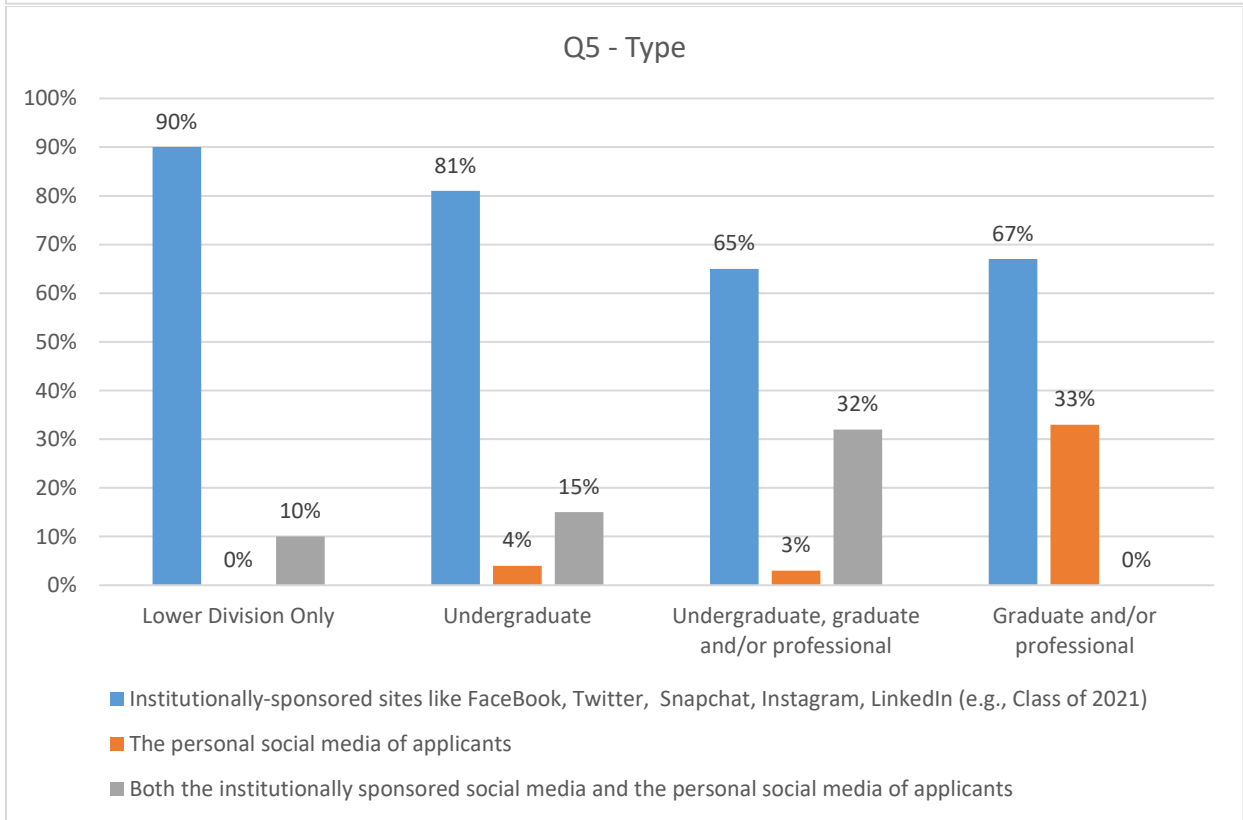
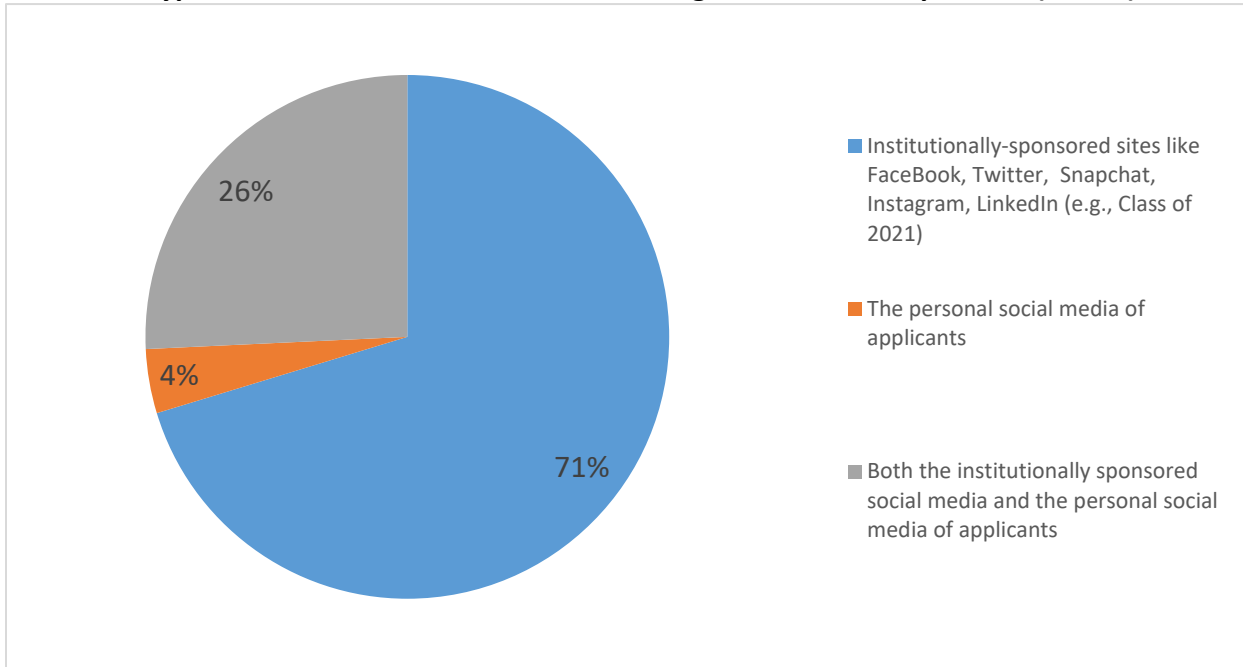


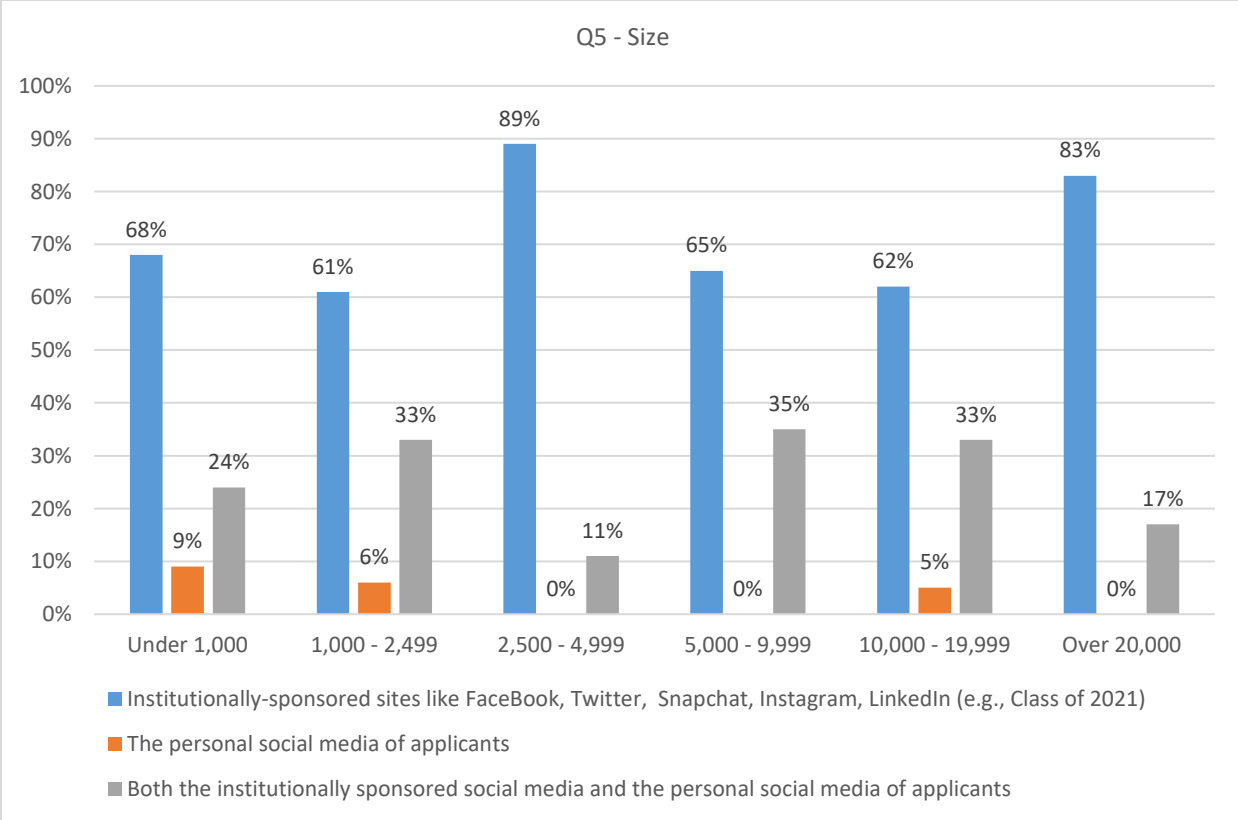
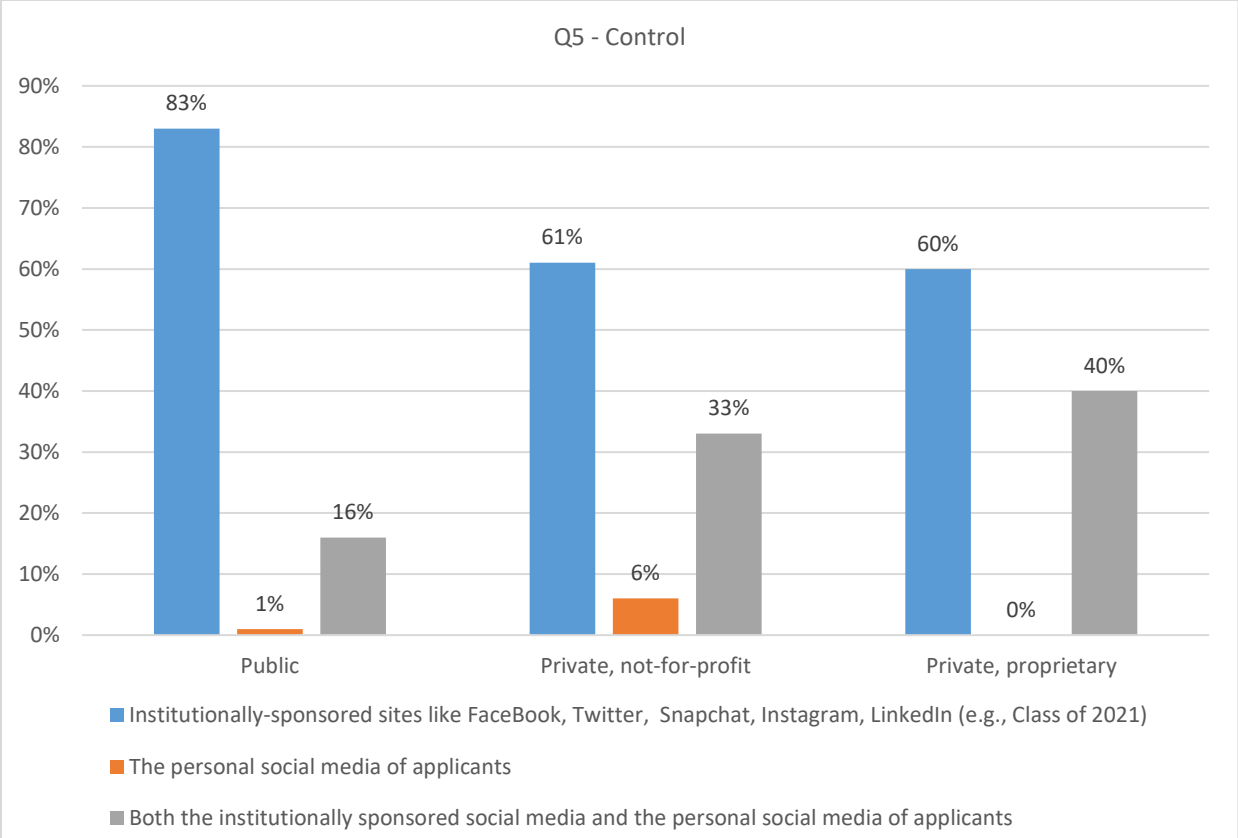
**Q4 At what stage, or stages, of the admissions decision process do you monitor social media?  
(all that apply)(n=170)**



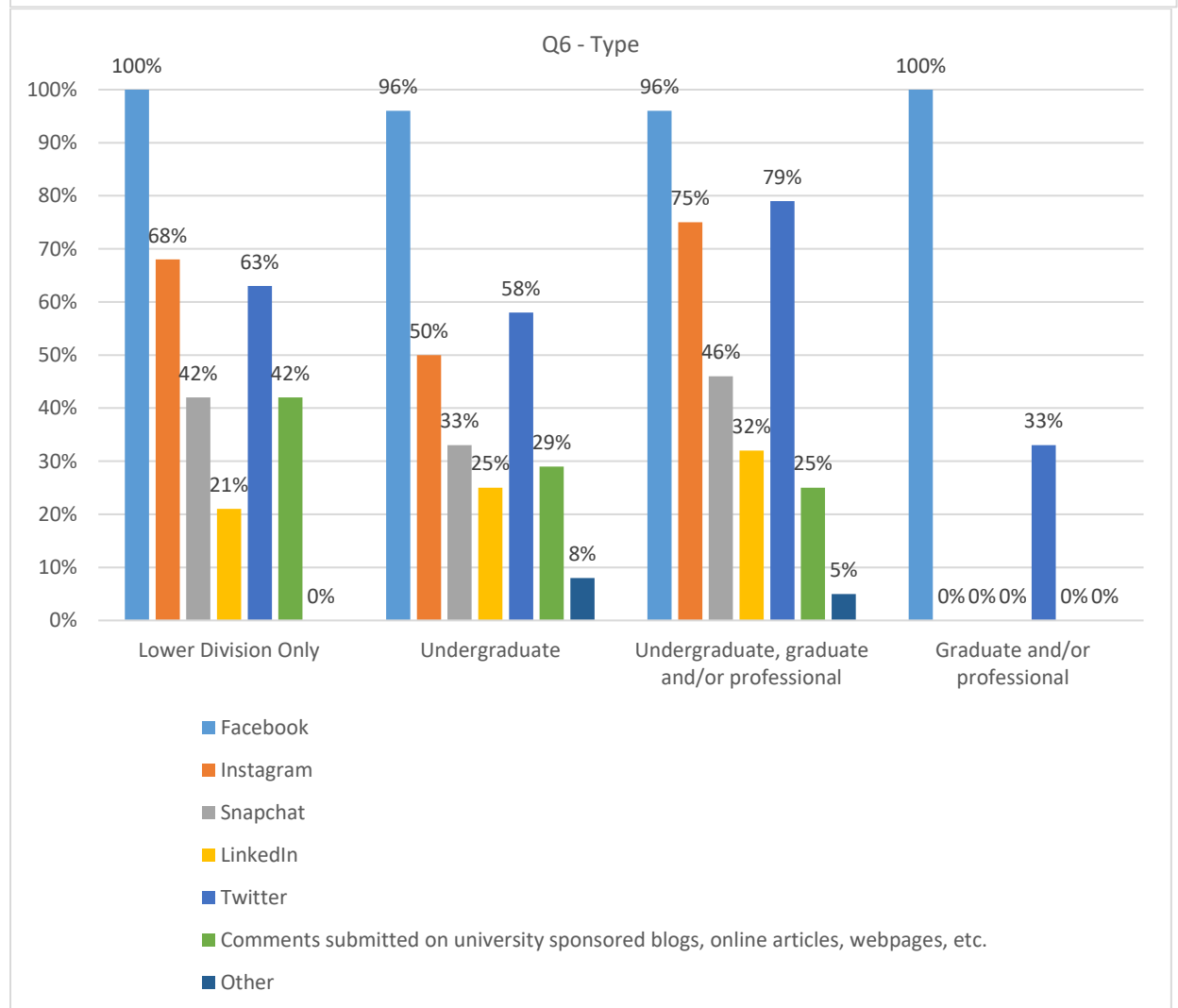
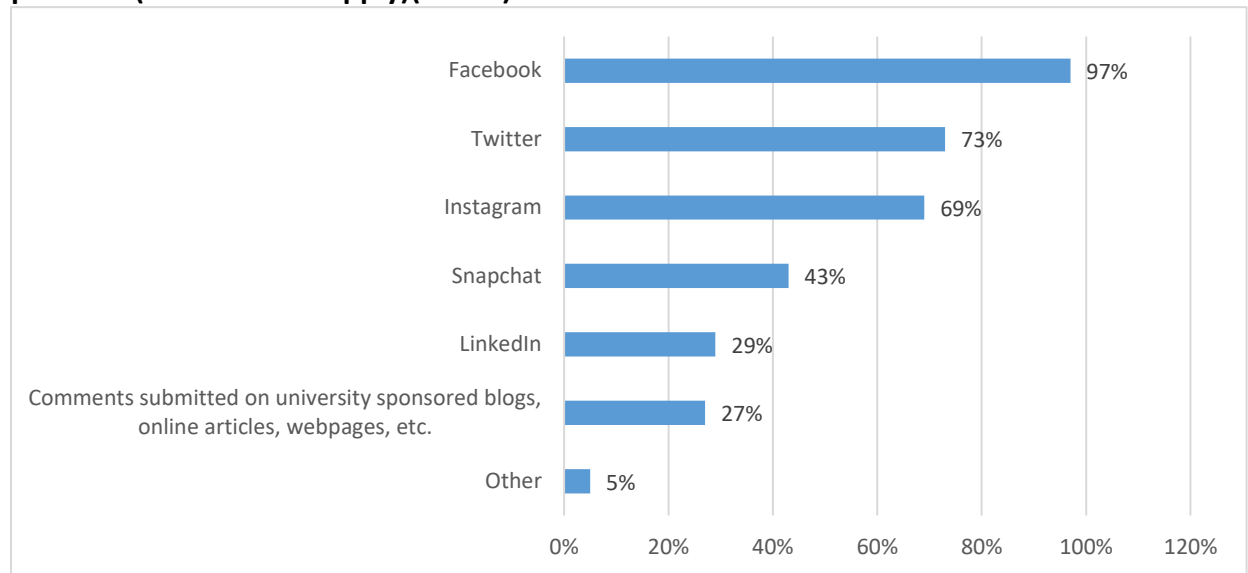


**Q5 - What type of social media are monitored during the admissions process?(n=168)**

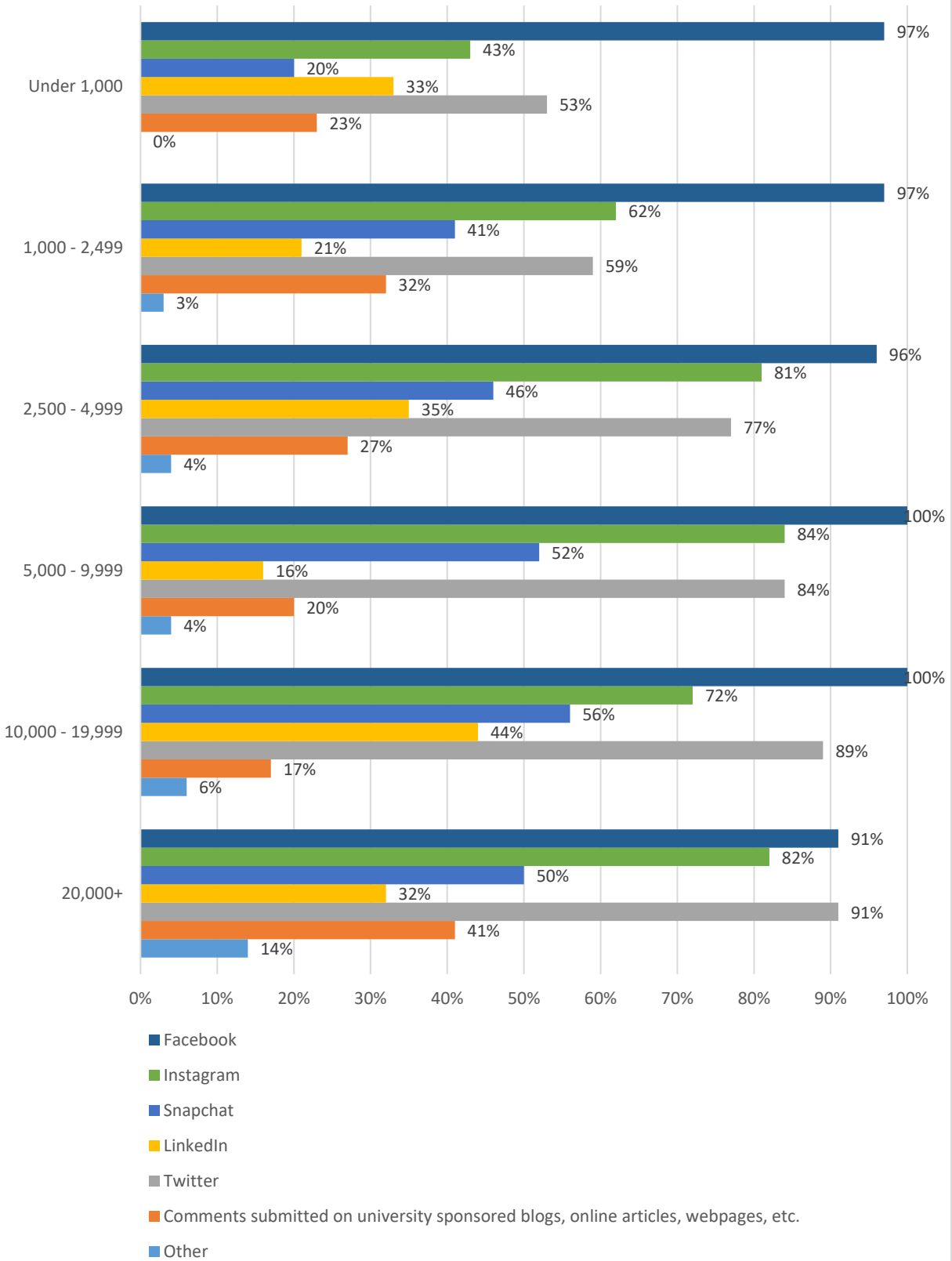




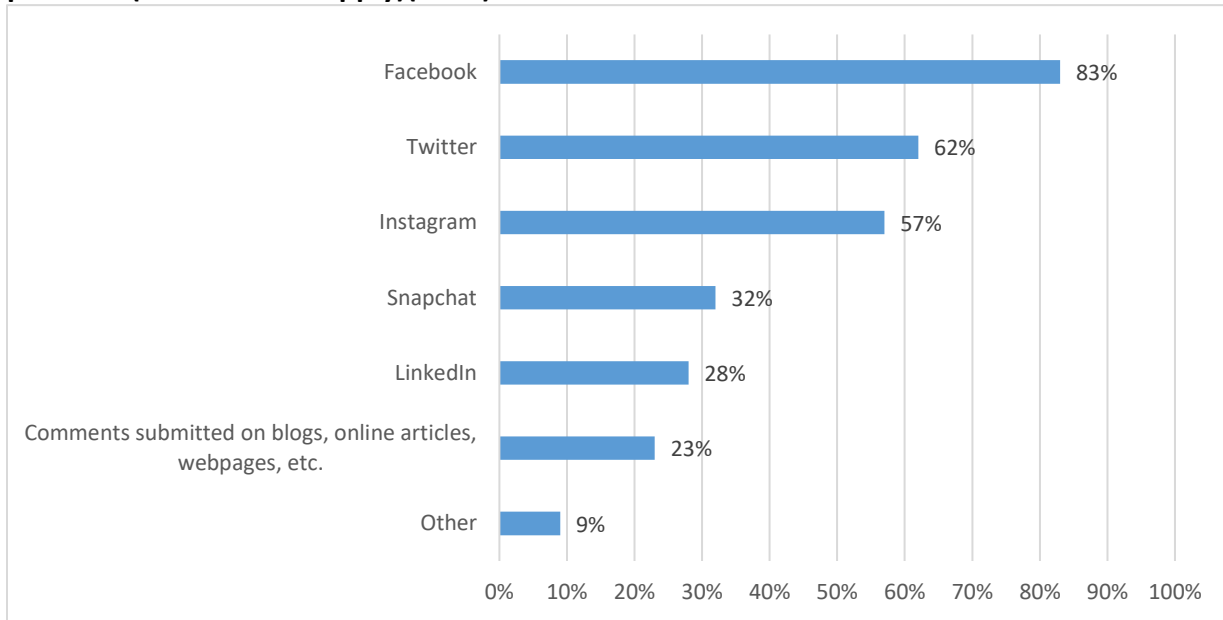
**Q6 - What institutionally-sponsored social media are monitored during the admissions process? (check all that apply)(n=530)**



Q6 - Size

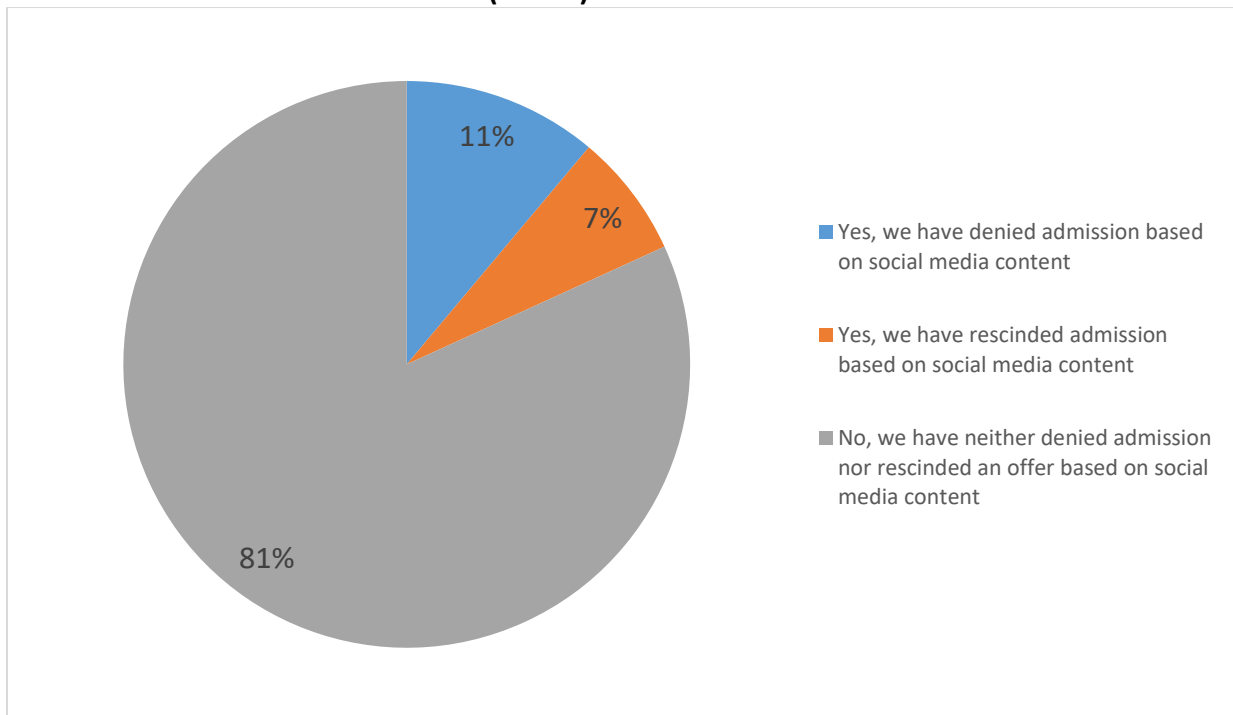


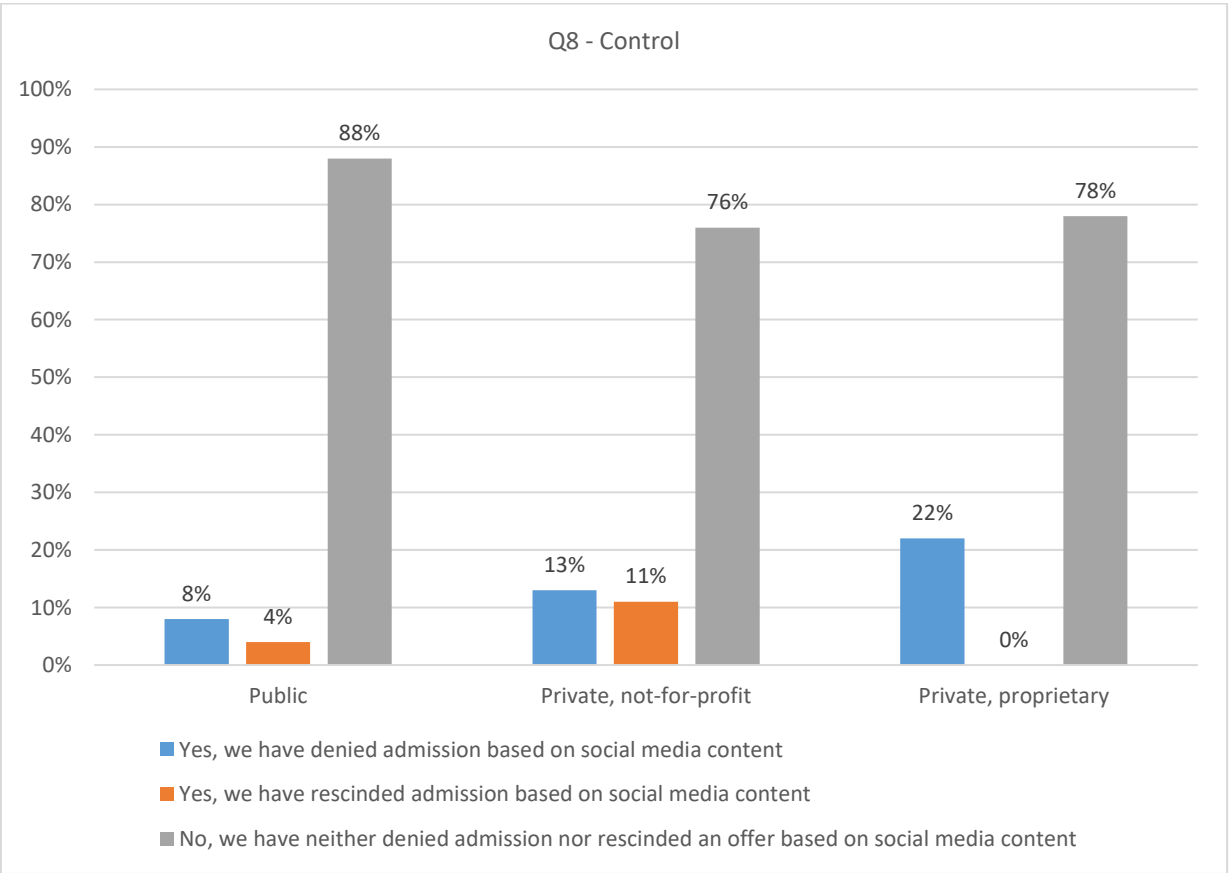
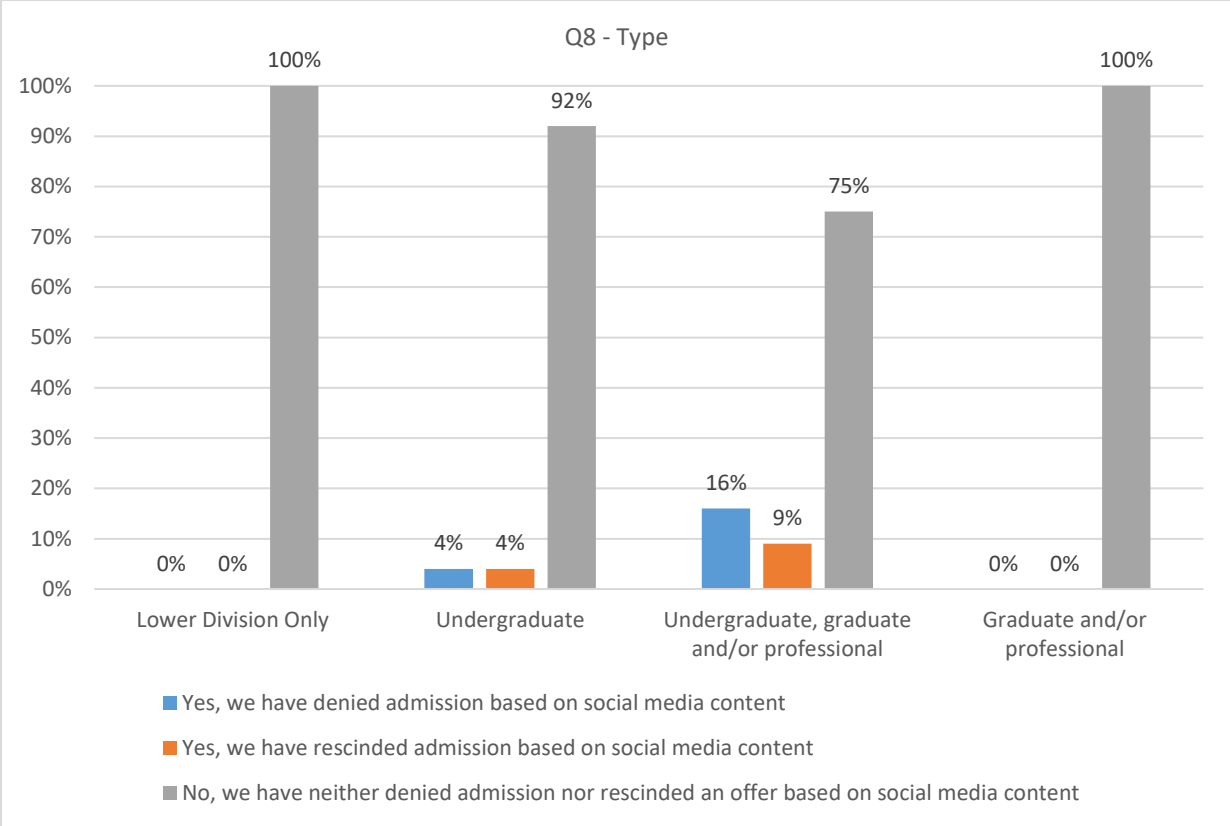
**Q7 - What personal social media of the applicants are monitored during the admissions process? (check all that apply)(n=47)**

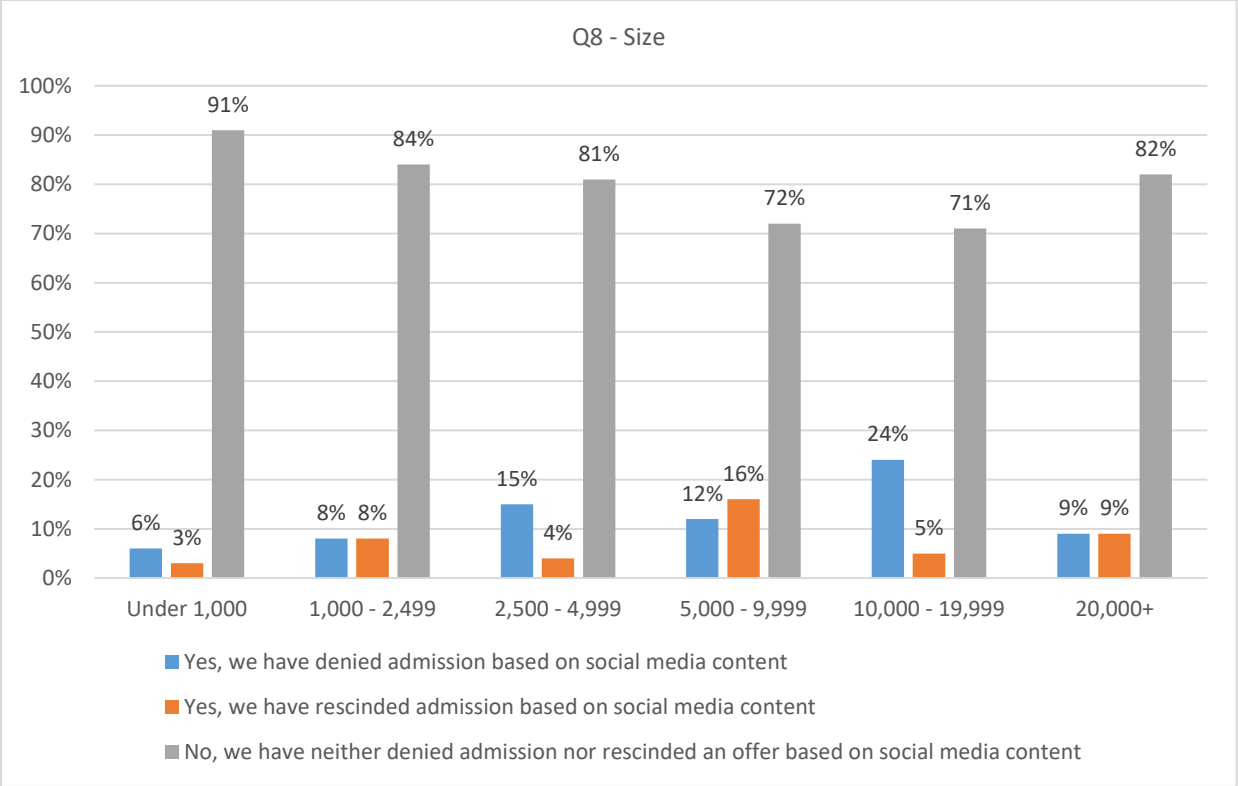


Due to the small sample size (n=47) breakouts by type, control and size are too small to add to an understanding of the practice.

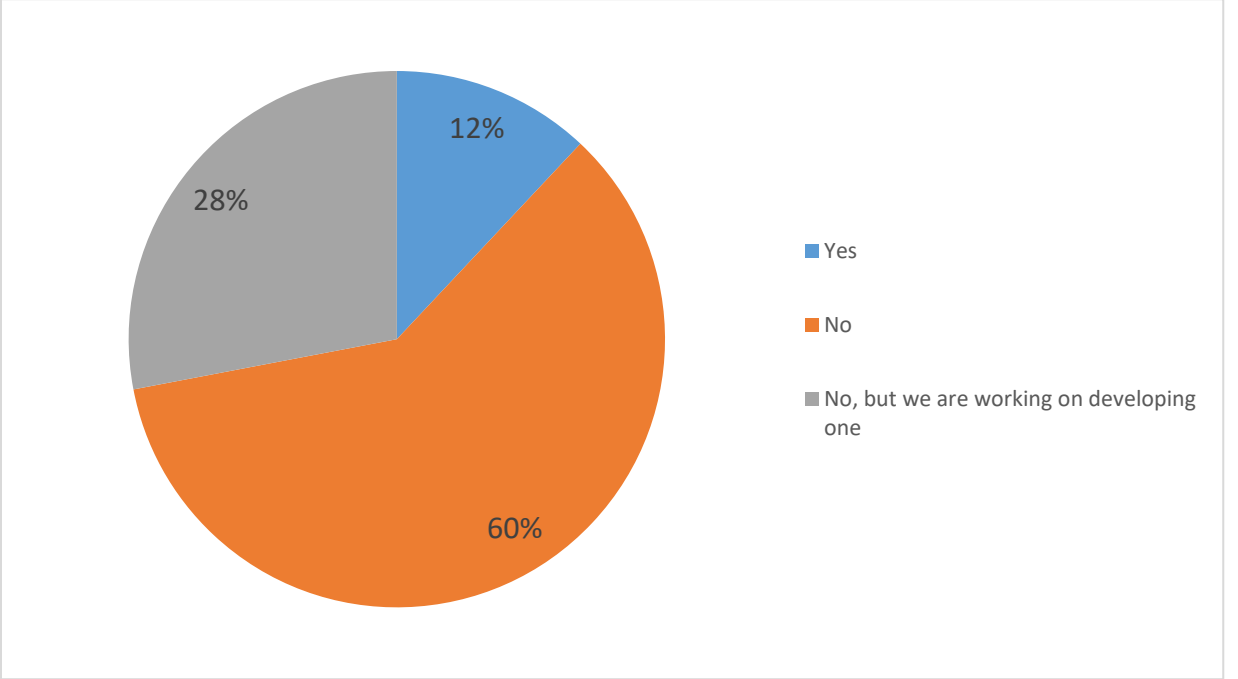
**Q8 - Has your institution ever denied admission or rescinded admissions based on information found on social media? (n=166)**

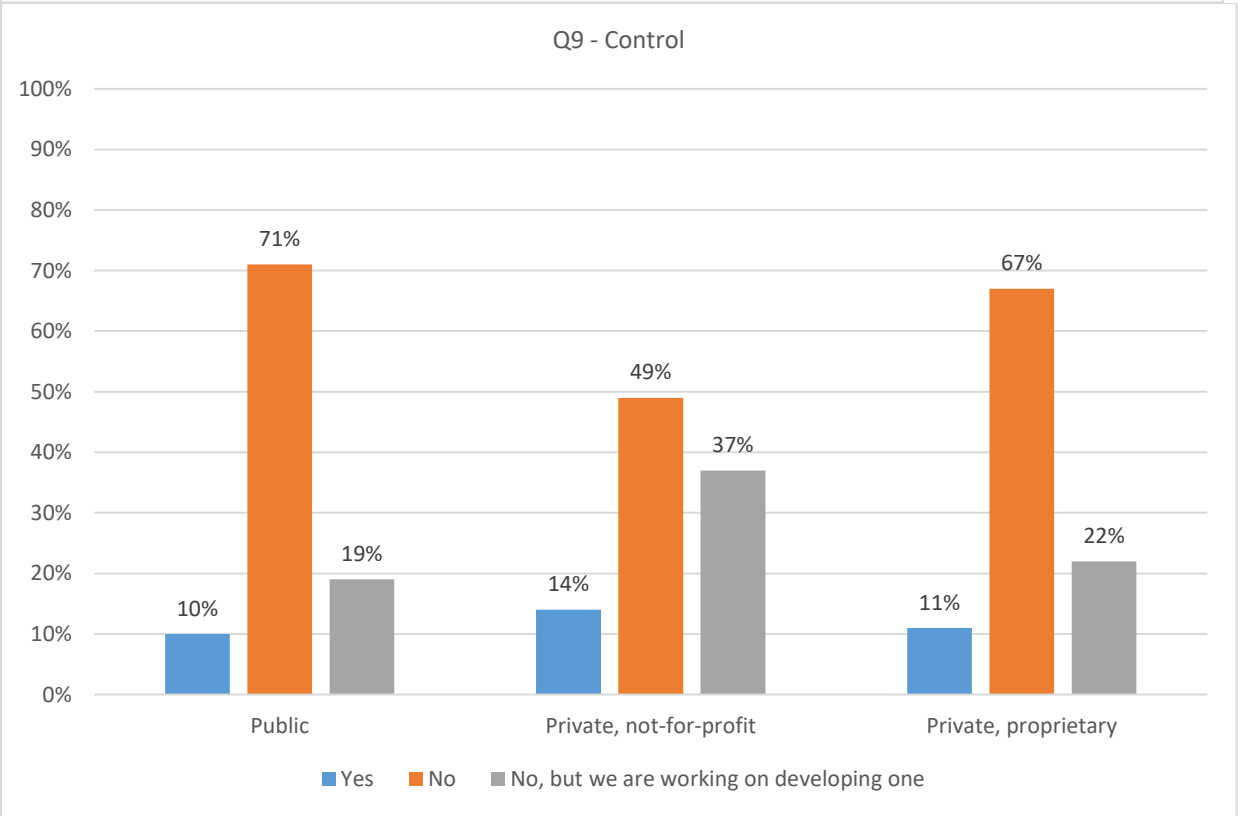
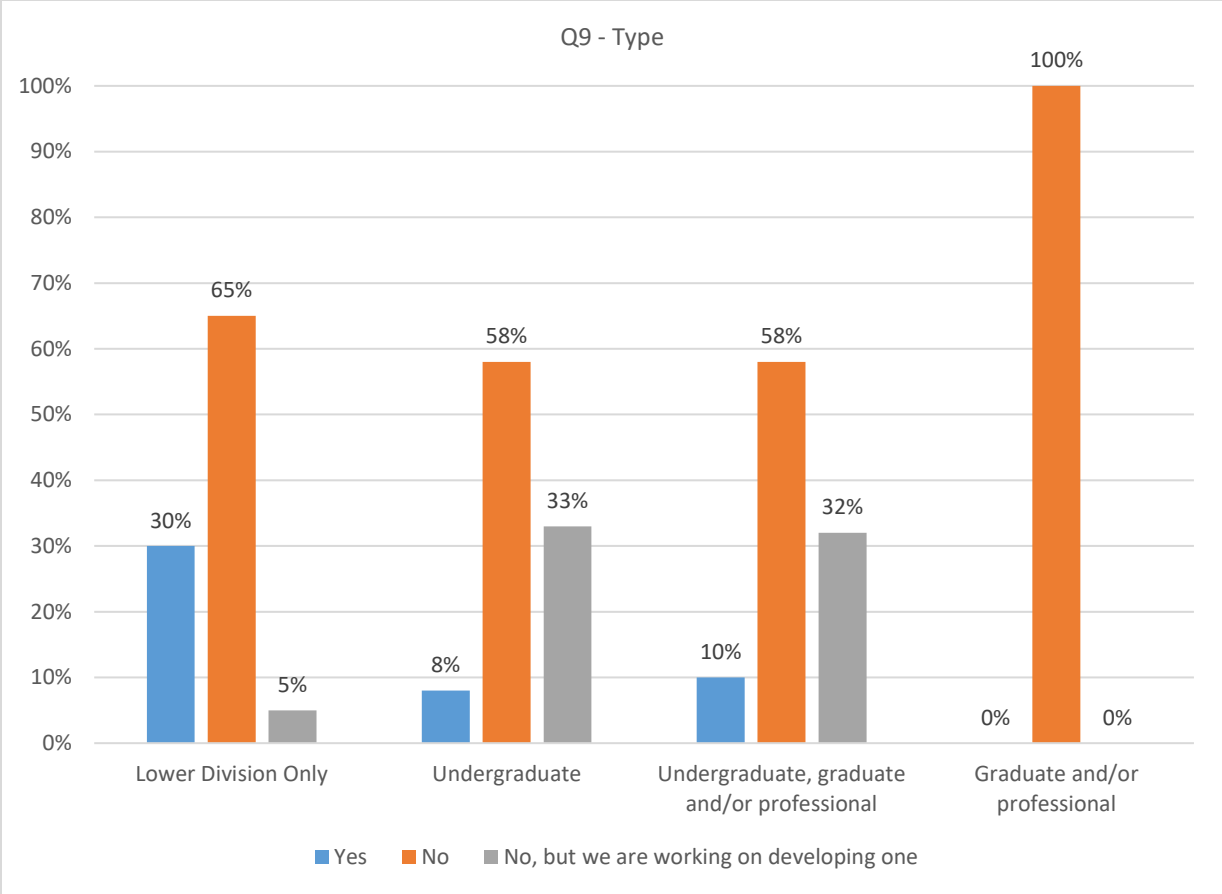


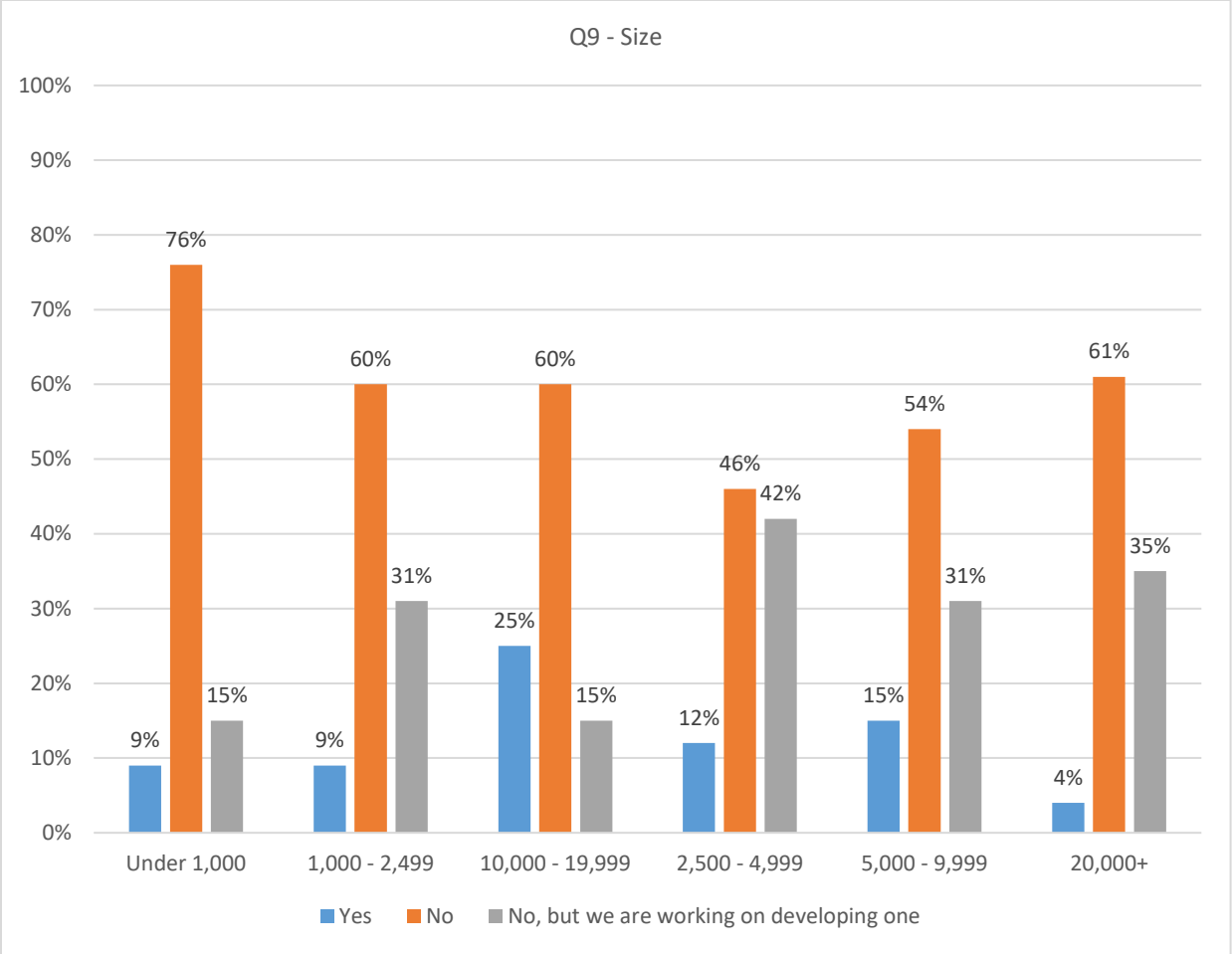




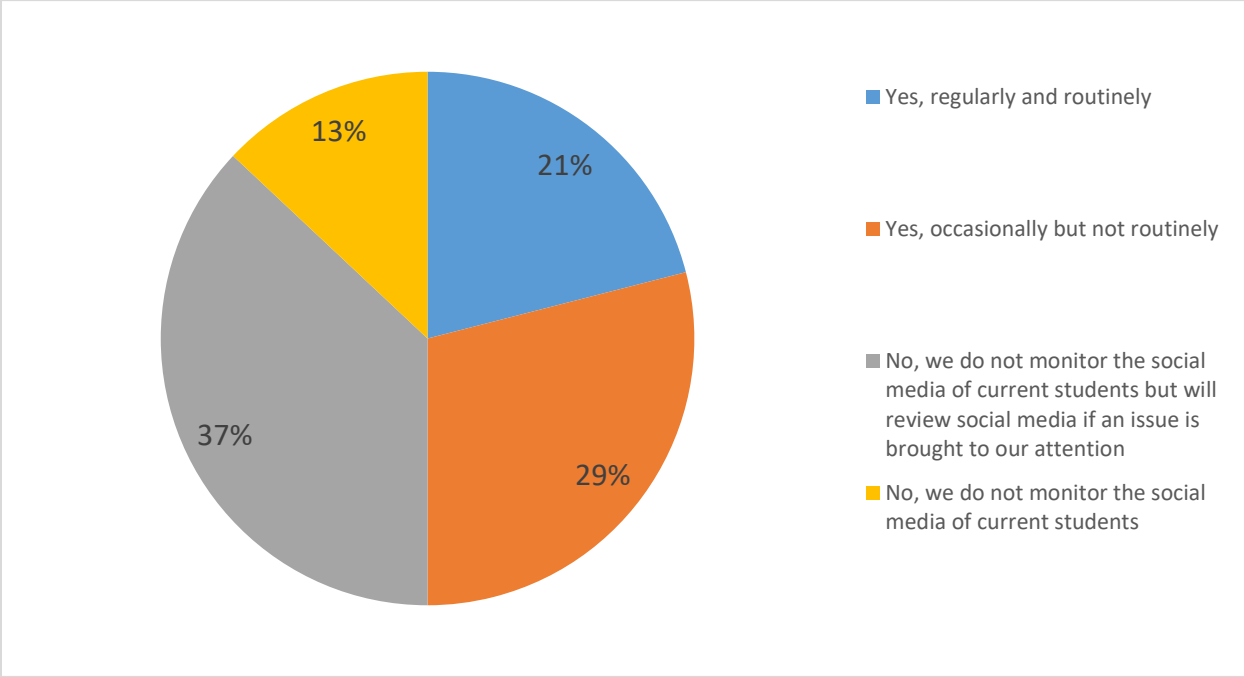
**Q9 - Does your institution have a formal policy on how social media is monitored as part of the admissions process?(n=163)**

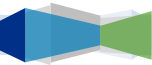
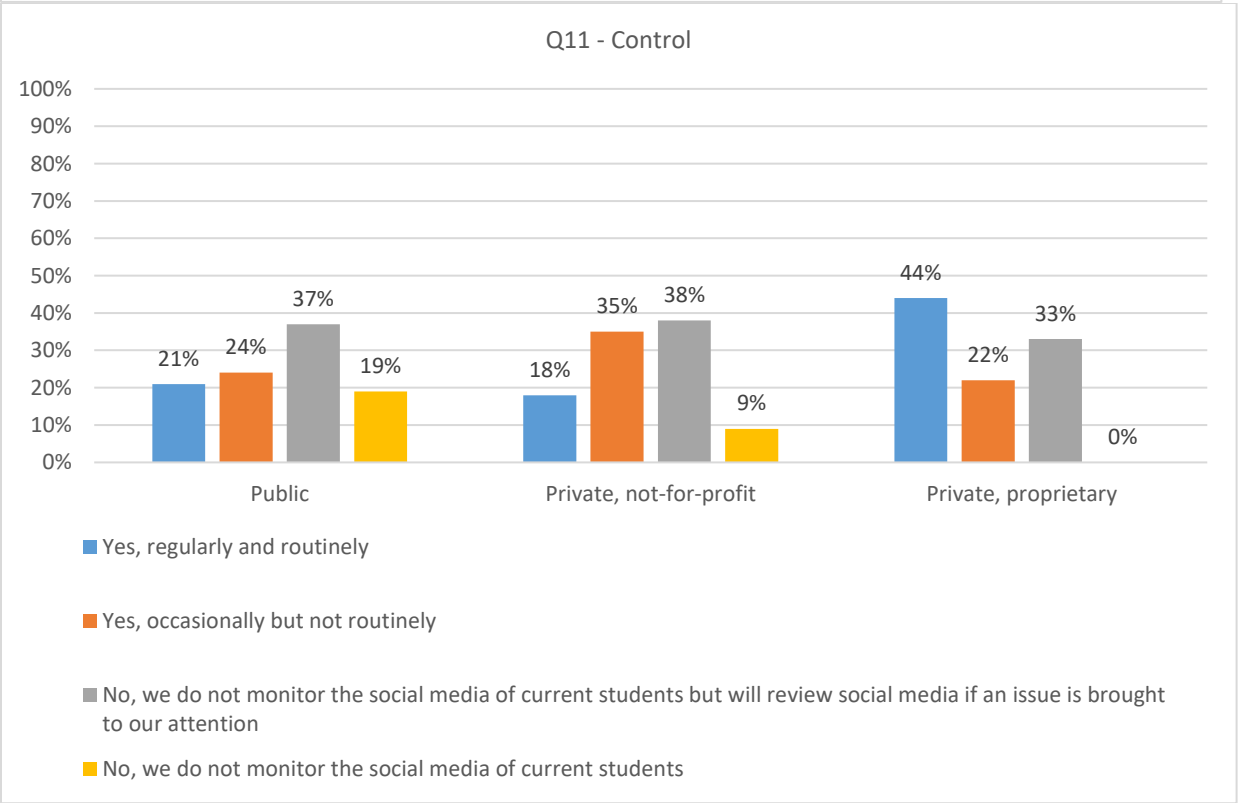
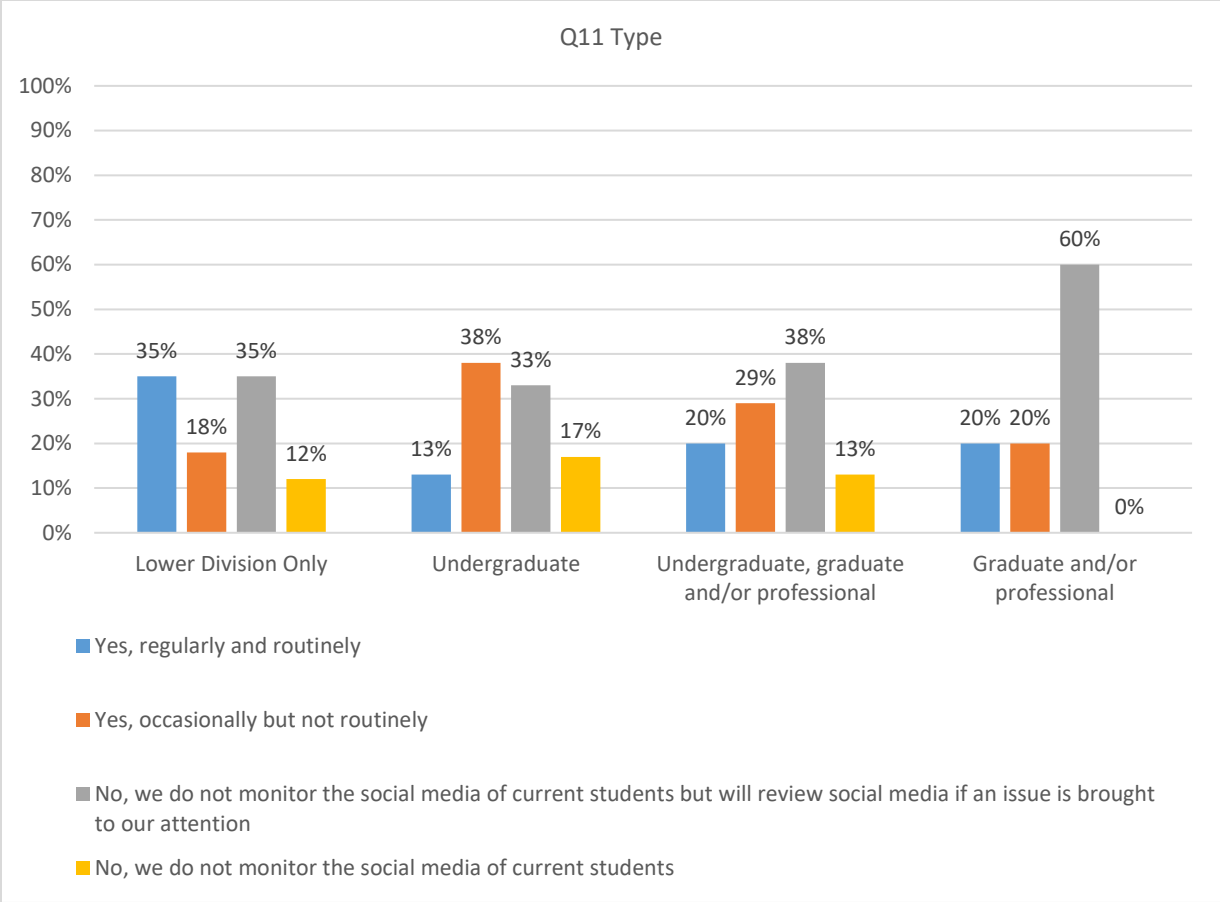


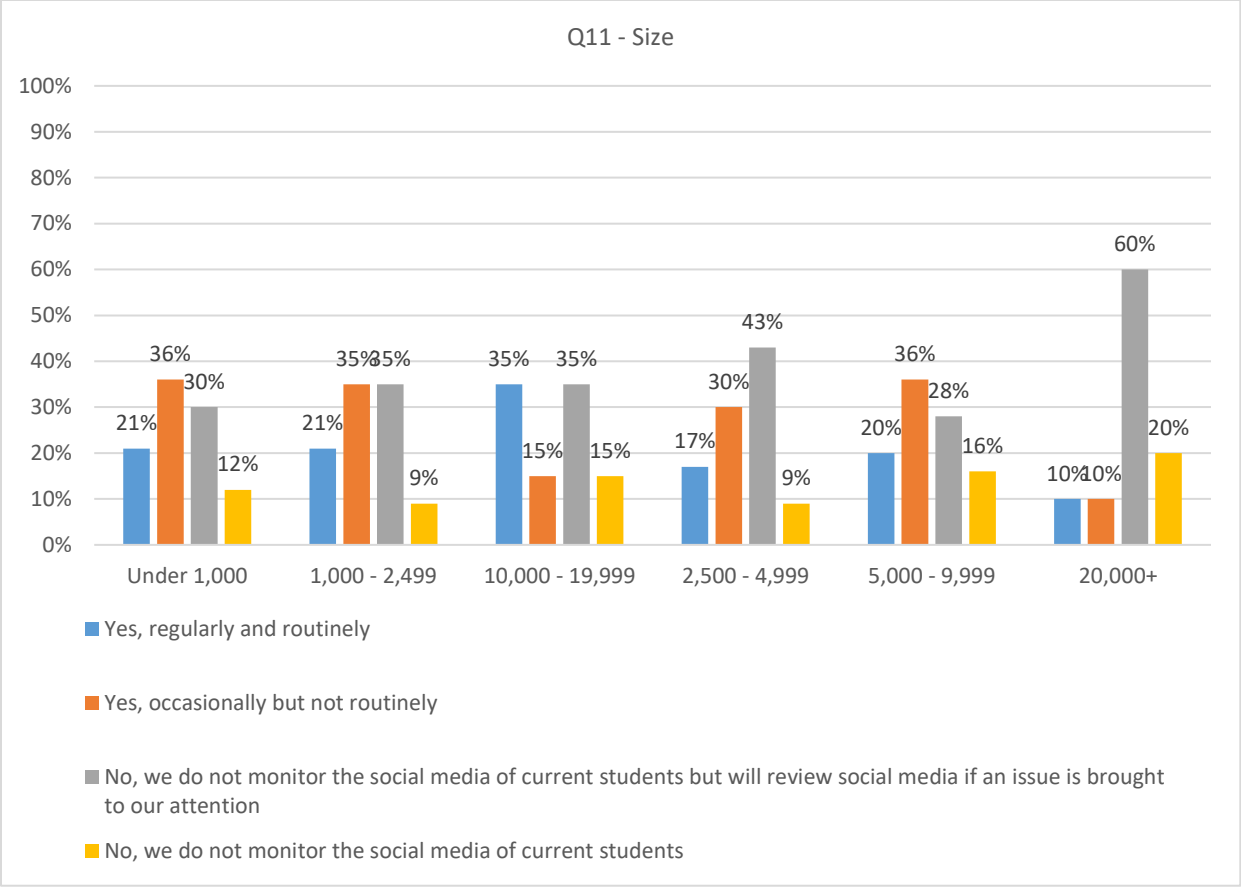




**Q11 - Does your institution monitor social media for currently enrolled students?(n=155)**







## Appendix A: AACRAO July 2017 60-Second Survey

### Introduction:

Dear \${m://FirstName},

We are interested in understanding how prevalent the practice is for institutions to review social media and/or react to being made aware of social media posts from prospects or admitted students. This month's 60-Second survey addresses this subject. As a reminder, data will only be reported in the aggregate. Individual institutional practices will not be identified.

### Follow this link to the Survey:

[\\${l://SurveyLink?d=Take the Survey}](#)

As with most 60-Second Surveys, this invitation has been sent to all AACRAO members at your institution. If you are not sure if others at your institution will respond to this survey, please coordinate with them so that only one response is submitted for this survey. If more than one submission is valid for your institution, please send me an email indicating that fact.

Regards,  
Wendy Kilgore, Ph.D.  
Director of Research  
AACRAO

### Survey

**Q1 AACRAO 60-Second Survey: Admissions and Social Media** Does your institution monitor social media for any stage of the admissions decision process?

- Yes, regularly and routinely.
- Yes, occasionally but not routinely.
- No, we do not monitor the social media of applicants. However, we will review social media content if a potential issue is brought to our attention.
- No, we do not monitor the social media of applicants under any circumstance.

**Q2** Is your institution considering doing so?

- Yes
- No

**Q3** What social media is your institution considering monitoring?

- Institutionally sponsored FaceBook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, LinkedIn (e.g., Class of 2021 )
- The personal social media of applicants
- Both the institutionally sponsored social media and the personal social media of the applicant

**Q4** At what stage, or stages, of the admissions decision process do you monitor social media? (check all that apply)

- At the prospect stage (not yet applied but contact has been made)
- When an application had been started
- Upon receipt of a complete application



- Once an admissions decision has been made
- Once an offer of admissions has been accepted
- Other practice, please describe. \_\_\_\_\_

Q5 What type of social media are monitored during the admissions process?

- Institutionally-sponsored sites like FaceBook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, LinkedIn (e.g., Class of 2021)
- The personal social media of applicants
- Both the institutionally sponsored social media and the personal social media of applicants

Q6 What institutionally-sponsored social media are monitored during the admissions process? (check all that apply)

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- LinkedIn
- Twitter
- Comments submitted on university sponsored blogs, online articles, webpages, etc.
- Other. Please describe. \_\_\_\_\_

Q7 What personal social media of the applicants are monitored during the admissions process? (check all that apply)

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- LinkedIn
- Twitter
- Comments submitted on blogs, online articles, webpages, etc.
- Other. Please describe. \_\_\_\_\_

Q8 Has your institution ever denied admission or rescinded admissions based on information found on social media?

- Yes, we have denied admission based on social media content
- Yes, we have rescinded admission based on social media content
- No, we have neither denied admission nor rescinded an offer based on social media content

Q9 Does your institution have a formal policy on how social media is monitored as part of the admissions process?

- Yes
- No
- No, but we are working on developing one



Q10 How is an applicant and/or prospect notified of the policy? (check all that apply)

Note: This question was misconfigured. It did not support “check all that apply” Data was not included in the report for this reason and the fact that there were only 17 responses.

- The information is included in the application itself
- Notified via a separate email on the topic
- It is posted on our prospective student webpage
- Other. Please describe. \_\_\_\_\_

Q11 Currently Enrolled Students Does your institution monitor social media for currently enrolled students?

- Yes, regularly and routinely
- Yes, occasionally but not routinely
- No, we do not monitor the social media of current students but will review social media if an issue is brought to our attention
- No, we do not monitor the social media of current students

Q12 Please include any additional comments you may have about this topic here.



## Appendix B: Respondent Count by Institution Type, Size and Control

Type	Count
Lower Division Only	123
Undergraduate	71
Undergraduate, graduate and/or professional	322
Graduate and/or professional	18
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>534</b>

Size	Count
Under 1,000	98
1,000 - 2,499	126
10,000 - 19,999	70
2,500 - 4,999	87
5,000 - 9,999	82
20,000+	71
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>534</b>

Control	Count
Public	296
Private, not-for-profit	212
Private, proprietary	26
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>534</b>



## Appendix C: Respondent Country, State/Province

Country/State or Province	Count
<b>Armenia</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Bahamas</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Bulgaria</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Canada</b>	<b>28</b>
AB	5
BC	9
MB	1
NS	1
ON	10
QC	1
SK	1
<b>Costa Rica</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Cote d'Ivoire</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Hong Kong</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Lebanon</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Mexico</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Peru</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>United Arab Emirates</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>United States</b>	<b>492</b>
AK	2
AL	8
AR	7
AZ	6
CA	47
CO	9
CT	3
DC	2
DE	1
FL	19
GA	17
GU	1
HI	2
IA	8
ID	2
IL	27
IN	9
KS	14



KY	7
LA	3
MA	19
MD	6
ME	6
MI	13
MN	13
MO	16
MP	1
MS	3
MT	6
NC	14
ND	6
NE	9
NJ	5
NM	7
NV	2
NY	26
OH	22
OK	8
OR	6
PA	19
PR	5
SC	11
TN	11
TX	20
UT	2
VA	11
VT	1
WA	8
WI	15
WV	5
WY	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>534</b>

