

## Background

Between January 15 and February 17, 2026, **123 nursing applicants** shared their experiences navigating the Texas nursing school application process. The purpose of the survey was to better understand what applicants experience, what barriers they encounter, what information they wish they had earlier, and how a centralized application service may support or complicate their journey.

## Respondent Characteristics and School Locations

At the time of application (N=123), 60.2% were undergraduate students (n=74), 17.1% were not enrolled in school (n=21), 11.4% were graduate students (n=14), and 11.4% were high school students (n=14).

Respondents represented nearly every region of Texas. Based on reported ZIP codes (N=121), the largest representation came from North Texas/DFW (31.4%), followed by San Antonio/South-Central (26.4%), Houston/Gulf Coast (14.9%), and West Texas/El Paso (11.6%). Smaller representation came from Central Texas (3.3%), Austin Corridor (5.0%), Panhandle (2.5%), Big Country (1.7%), South Plains (1.7%), Permian Basin (0.8%), and 0.8% from out-of-state locations.

Among respondents reporting current school location (N=88), North Texas/DFW accounted for 29.5%, San Antonio/South-Central 20.5%, Houston/Gulf Coast 13.6%, and West Texas/El Paso 9.1%, with 8.0% attending school outside Texas or internationally. Among respondents with both valid residence and school data (N=86), 69% attended school within the same region as their home ZIP, while 31% attended in a different Texas region or outside the state.

## Application Goals and Outcomes

Regarding program type (N=106), 80.2% applied to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) programs (n=85), 30.2% applied to Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) programs (n=32), 9.4% to Licensed Vocational Nurse programs (n=10), 7.5% to graduate nursing degrees (n=8), 5.7% to advanced practice programs (n=6), 3.8% to RN-to-BSN programs (n=4), and 0.9% to CNA programs (n=1).

Approximately 29.2% (n=31 of 106) applied to more than one Texas nursing program, with a median of two programs and a range of 2–9. About 10.1% (n=11 of 109) applied outside Texas.

Among those reporting outcomes (N=106), 92.5% (n=98) received at least one acceptance, 7.5% (n=8) were waitlisted, 9.4% (n=10) were not accepted, and 6.6% (n=7) were still awaiting a decision (select-all responses). While 81% reported being accepted only, 8% experienced both acceptance and rejection across programs.

## Application Barriers

Among open-ended responses regarding barriers (N=53), 42% cited cost or financial strain. Examples included application fees, transcript fees, entrance exam costs, background checks, and cumulative costs when applying to multiple programs. Time and scheduling constraints were mentioned by 19%, and 17%

referenced prerequisite or course retake challenges. Approximately 15% described confusion about inconsistent requirements across schools.

When asked about affordability (N=74), 47.3% (n=35) said the process was affordable, 35.1% (n=26) said somewhat affordable, 14.9% (n=11) said not affordable, and 2.7% (n=2) were unsure. In total, 82% described the process as at least somewhat affordable. However, comments indicate affordability concerns increased when applying to multiple programs.

### **Influencers of Application Decisions**

Family members were cited as an influence by 51% of respondents. Friends influenced 27.8%, college advisors 14.4%, colleagues 11.1%, nursing school alumni 12.2%, and recruiters 8%. Approximately 20% reported that no one influenced their decision. In terms of information sources, 51% relied on nursing school websites, 52% on word-of-mouth referrals, 49% on internet searches, 19% on social media, and 12% referenced NursingCAS or the Texas Board of Nursing.

### **Desired Information**

Among respondents describing information they wished they had (N=45), 27% wanted clearer program logistics (cohort schedules, start dates, clinical placements), 20% requested better cost and financial aid information, 18% wanted clearer acceptance criteria and transparency around competitiveness, 16% wanted clearer timelines and document requirements, and 11% sought more information about program outcomes such as NCLEX pass rates and job placement.

### **Thoughts on a Central Application Service**

Among open-ended reactions to a centralized service (N=55), approximately 49% identified convenience as the primary benefit. However, concerns included manual course entry burden, transcript verification delays, unclear navigation, and customer service issues. When asked for recommendations to improve the Texas process (N=53), 53% emphasized improving technology and usability, 25% recommended standardizing requirements across schools, 21% requested increased transparency around selection criteria and timelines, 17% suggested reducing or waiving fees, and 15% recommended improved communication and support.

### **Comparing NursingCAS and Non-NursingCAS Users**

Among valid responses (N=89), 55% (n=49) reported using NursingCAS, 33% (n=29) did not, and 12% (n=11) were unsure or missing. NursingCAS users were more likely to apply to multiple Texas programs (47% vs. 29%), though this difference was not statistically significant ( $p=.18$ ). There was no difference in applying outside Texas (14% in both groups). NursingCAS users were less likely to describe the process as “very easy” (22% vs. 45%) and were less likely to describe the process as affordable (24% vs. 45%), though these differences were not statistically significant.

# Texas Nursing Program Application Experience Survey

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- **Purpose:** Understand applicant experiences, barriers, and improvement ideas for Texas centralized application services
- **Fielding window:** January 15 – February 17, 2026 (N = 123)
- **Outreach strategies:** NAC, Roundtable Participants, Statewide Nursing Organizations, Student Led Organizations

**Special Thank You to Celestina Martinez, TX Nursing Students' Association for Guidance and Support!**

# Respondent Residence

Region	N	% of ZIPs	Example Cities
North Texas / DFW	38	31.4%	McKinney, Dallas, Fort Worth, Arlington, Denton, Frisco
Houston / Gulf Coast	18	14.9%	Houston, Katy, Sugar Land, Pasadena, Baytown
West Texas / El Paso	14	11.6%	El Paso
San Antonio / South-Central	32	26.4%	San Antonio, Seguin, New Braunfels
Austin Corridor	6	5.0%	Austin, Round Rock
Panhandle	3	2.5%	Amarillo, Canyon
Central Texas	4	3.3%	Temple, Killeen, Waco
Big Country	2	1.7%	Abilene
South Plains	2	1.7%	Lubbock
Permian Basin	1	0.8%	Midland, Odessa
Out-Of-State	1	0.8%	Cary, North Carolina
<b>Total (ZIPs reported)</b>	<b>121</b>		

# Current School City/Town (n=88)

Region	Combined Count	% of Total (N=88)
North Texas / DFW	26	29.5%
San Antonio/ South-Central	18	20.5%
Houston / Gulf Coast	12	13.6%
West Texas / El Paso	8	9.1%
Central Texas / Austin Corridor	7	8.0%
Big Country	4	4.5%
Panhandle	3	3.4%
Central Texas	1	1.1%
South Plains	1	1.1%
Brazos Valley	1	1.1%
Out-of-State/International	7	8.0%



# Respondent Residence and School Location

Most applicants attend school within the same broad region where they reside, though cross-region movement does occur.

**Among respondents with both valid ZIP and school-city data (N = 86):**

- **69% (59 of 86)** attended a school in the same region as their home ZIP.
- **31% (27 of 86)** attended a school in a different Texas region or outside the state.

# What was your school status when you applied to a nursing program?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
High school student	11.38%	14
<b>Undergraduate student</b>	<b>60.16%</b>	<b>74</b>
Graduate student	11.38%	14
Not enrolled in school at the time	17.07%	21
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>123</b>

# Which type(s) of Texas nursing program(s) did you apply to?

(Select all that apply)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)	0.9%	1
Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN)	9.4%	10
<b>Registered Nurse (RN) – Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN)</b>	<b>30.2%</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Registered Nurse (RN) – Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN)</b>	<b>80.2%</b>	<b>85</b>
RN-to-BSN program	3.8%	4
Advanced Practice Nursing program (e.g., Nurse Practitioner, Nurse Midwife, CRNA)	5.7%	6
Graduate Nursing Degree program (e.g., Masters or PhD)	7.5%	8
I am not sure / I don't know	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	12.20%	15
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>8106</b>

# What was the outcome of your nursing program application(s)? (Select all that apply)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Accepted	92.5%	98
Waitlisted	7.5%	8
Not accepted	9.4%	10
Still awaiting a decision	6.6%	7
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>106</b>

## Noteworthy Combinations (Select All)

- Accepted only: 86 (81%)
- Accepted + Not accepted: 8 (8%)
- Still awaiting a decision only: 5 (5%)

# Barriers Faced & Information Desired

## Open-Ended

### **Barriers faced (N=53)**

- Cost/fees/financial strain: 22 (42%)
- Prerequisites / retaking courses: 9 (17%)
- Time/scheduling/work-life constraints: 10 (19%)
- Unclear requirements / confusion about process: 8 (15%)
- Other mentions: paperwork burden, residency/location constraints, competitiveness

### **Info respondents wish they'd had (N=45)**

- Program logistics (schedule, cohort structure, transfer rules, timing to start): 12 (27%)
- Cost/financial aid/scholarships: 9 (20%)
- Acceptance criteria/transparency (what disqualifies, selectivity): 8 (18%)
- Program outcomes (NCLEX rates, job placement, clinical sites): 5 (11%)



# Centralized Application Service Reactions and Recommendations to Improve Texas Process

## Reactions (n=55, open-ended)

- Most common perceived benefit: convenience of one application to multiple schools (49% mentioned)
- Key concerns: one-size-fits-all approach, customer service/support, transcript verification delays, manual course entry burden (NursingCAS experiences), equity concerns around fees

## Recommendations to improve Texas process (N=53 open-ended)

- Improve tech/usability (platform reliability, glitches, user-friendly design): 28 (53%)
- Centralize/standardize across schools: 13 (25%)
- Increase transparency (requirements, selection criteria, timelines): 11 (21%)
- Reduce fees / offer waivers: 9 (17%)
- More guidance/outreach/support: 6 (11%)



# Used NursingCAS vs. Not Used NursingCAS

Dimension	Used NursingCAS	Did <i>not</i> use NursingCAS	Key Takeaway / Interpretation
% of respondents (N=89)	49 of 89 (55%)	29 of 89 (33%)	Unsure/Missing 11 (12%); more respondents used NursingCas
Applied to >1 Texas program	23 of 49 (47%)	8 of 28 (29%)	CAS users apply to multiple Texas programs at somewhat higher rates (directional, not statistically significant).
Applied outside Texas	7 of 49 (14%)	4 of 29 (14%)	No statistical difference
Perceived application difficulty	Very Easy 11 of 49 (22%)	Very Easy 13 of 29 (45%)	CAS users report more process friction.
Affordability	12 of 49 (24%)	13 of 29 (45%)	CAS users report lower affordability perception (trend, not significant).

# Opportunities to Improve CAS Experience

Topic	Comments Specific to CAS Challenges (n=13 of 49)
Manual entry of courses, transcripts, and résumé info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Entering every course by hand from multiple prior institutions</li> <li>- Manually inputting long transcripts and grades</li> <li>- Re-typing résumé content even after uploading documents</li> </ul>
Transcript handling & repeated uploads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Confusion about transfer equivalencies</li> <li>- Being asked to resend transcripts already received</li> <li>- Repeated uploads without clear explanation</li> </ul>
Application instructions/ usability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unclear where to go next in the system</li> <li>- Prompts vague about what to enter</li> <li>- Platform navigation not intuitive</li> </ul>
Back-and-forth & processing delays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Waiting for verification, then being told to redo steps</li> <li>- Communication gaps between school and platform</li> <li>- Long processing times</li> </ul>

*CAS users were less likely to describe the process as “Very Easy.”*

*CAS users reported more platform-specific friction.*

*Differences in affordability and multi-program application patterns were not statistically significant, but directional trends exist.*



# Overall, how difficult was it to apply to Texas nursing programs?

VERY DIFFICULT	SOMEWHAT DIFFICULT	NEITHER EASY NOR DIFFICULT	SOMEWHAT EASY	VERY EASY	TOTAL
6.52% (6)	28.26% (26)	14.13 (13)	19.57% (18)	30.43% (28)	92
34.78% (32)			50.00% (46)		

**Were there any parts of the application process that felt easy?**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	65.22%	60
No	14.13%	13
I don't remember	20.65%	19
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>92</b>

**Were there any parts of the application process that felt difficult?**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	46.88%	45
No	42.71%	41
I don't remember	10.42%	10
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>96</b>

Did you apply to more than one Texas nursing program?

Did you apply outside of Texas?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, more than one	29.2%	31
<b>No</b>	<b>70.8%</b>	<b>75</b>
Unsure	0.0%	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>106</b>

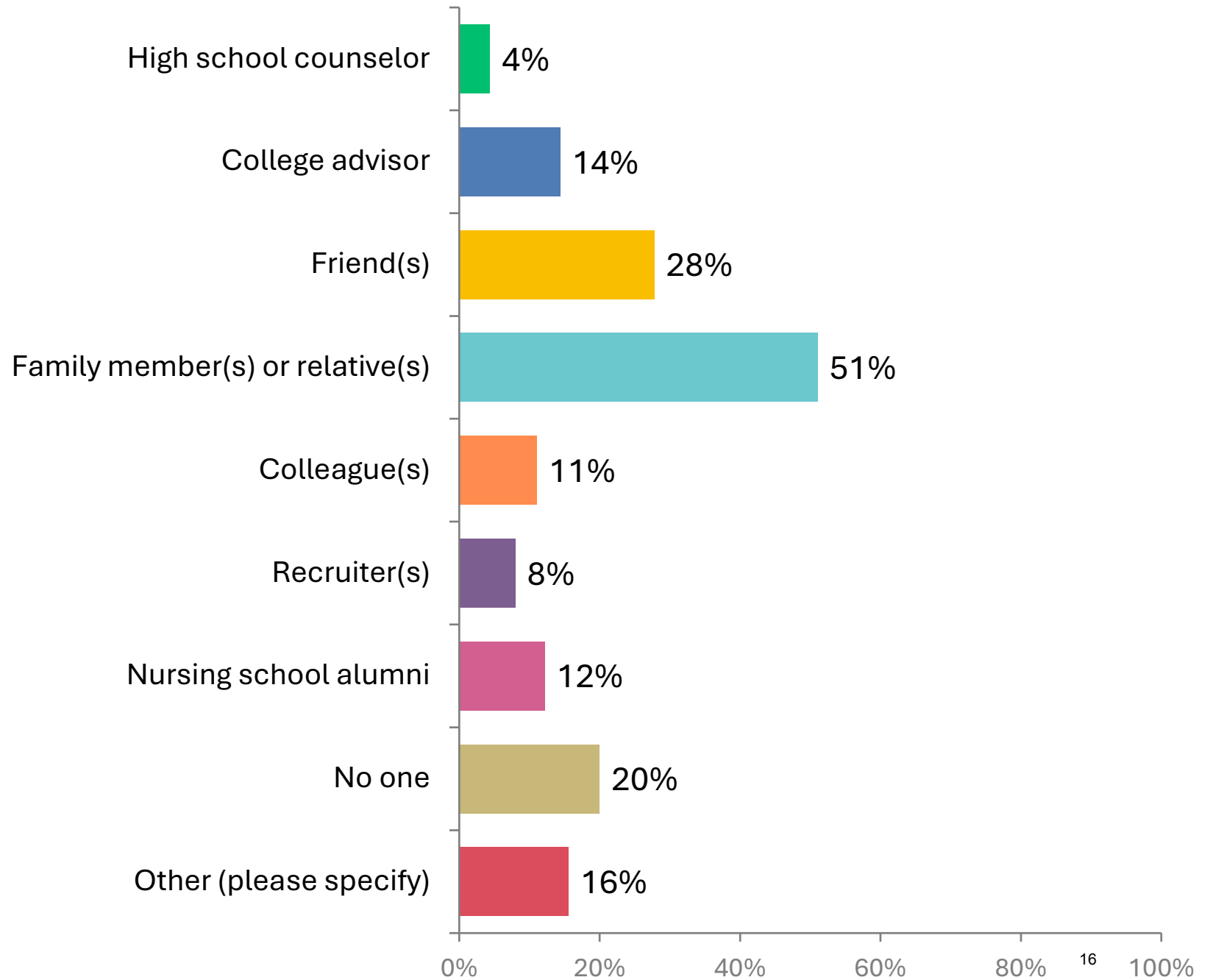
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, applied outside of Texas	10.1%	11
<b>No</b>	<b>89.9%</b>	<b>98</b>
Unsure	0.0%	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>109</b>

**Among multi-program Texas applicants (n=31):**

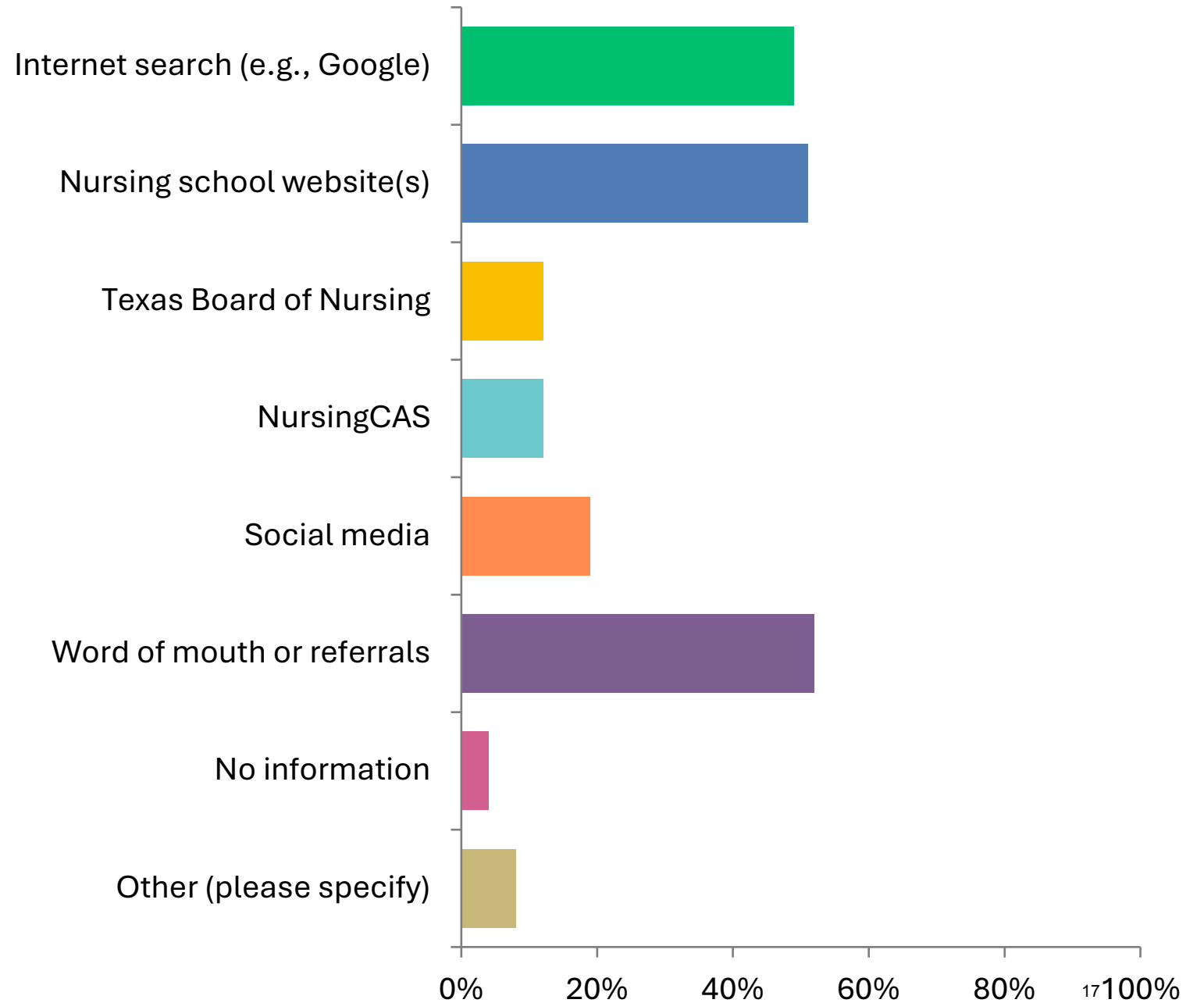
Median: 2 programs; average ~3; range 2–9

Out-of-state applying was not widespread overall (10% of respondents). Cross-state applying was modest and not statistically associated with NursingCAS use.

**Who influenced your decision to apply to the nursing program(s) you chose?**  
**(Select all that apply)**



What information influenced your decision to apply to these nursing schools?  
(Select all that apply)



# Was the nursing application process affordable for you?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	47.3%	35
Somewhat	35.1%	26
No	14.9%	11
Not sure	2.7%	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>74</b>

82% (Yes + Somewhat) found the process at least somewhat affordable.

Cost concerns increase when applying to multiple programs.

## What “Cost” Meant in Comments

- Per-application fees
- Transcript fees
- Entrance exam costs
- Background checks and document processing
- Cumulative cost when applying broadly (“fees add up”)