

APIDA STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS AND OUTCOMES AT CSUN

Although the Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) community comprises 50+ ethnicities with their own unique historical context, migration patterns, and racialization in the U.S., the field of higher education often assumes that the experiences of the APIDA community are as a monolithic group. CSUN's Office of Institutional Research disaggregated the APIDA undergraduate data for the campus into regional groupings and national origin/detailed ethnicities to examine heterogeneity in demographic profiles and academic outcomes.

Key Findings

- 1. CSUN serves a diverse APIDA undergraduate population from varying regional and ethnic groups.** CSUN enrolled 13,396 APIDA undergraduate students from 2009 to 2021. Filipino/a/x students comprised the largest APIDA regional and ethnic group (38.3%).
- 2. Students in one of the Southeast Asian subgroups (Khmer, Hmong, Lao, Mien, Montagnard, Viet) had the highest proportion of Pell eligibility (69.9%) and first-generation college status (78.3%) compared to other APIDA regional groups.**
- 3. Disaggregating to the regional group level alone may still hide disparities at the national origin/detailed ethnicity groups.** For example, South Asian as a regional group has a Pell-eligibility proportion of 54.0%; however, this may obscure the wide variance between Indian (40.6%) and Bangladeshi (82.2%) students.
- 4. Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (NHPI) students have among the lowest academic outcomes compared to the other APIDA regional groups.** Whereas 84.6% of the first-time freshman (FTF) APIDA aggregate continue on to a third term at CSUN, only 72.1% of the FTF NHPI students continue on to a third term.
- 5. There is wide variability in academic outcomes among FTF APIDA students by national origin.** Korean, NHPIs, Nepalese, and Lao students are among the FTF APIDA ethnic groups with the lowest academic outcomes.
- 6. There is also wide variability among the FTT APIDA regional groups in academic outcomes.** Students from NHPI, South Asian (SA), and Southeast Asian group 1 (SEA1) ethnic groups are among the FTT APIDA subgroups with the poorest academic outcomes.
- 7. Patterns of academic outcomes for regional groups and/or national origin may vary by FTF or FTT student status—pointing to a need to analyze interaction effects.** For example, FTF Viet students tended to have better academic outcomes than the FTF APIDA aggregate, whereas FTT Viet students, on average, had poorer academic outcomes than the FTT APIDA aggregate.



OVERVIEW

This report examines demographic characteristics and academic outcomes among Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) students at CSUN, both collectively as a pan-ethnic group and by national origin/detailed ethnicity. Specifically, the report seeks to address three main questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of APIDA students at CSUN?
2. Among APIDA students at CSUN, do academic outcomes differ by national origin/detailed ethnicity?
3. What system of categorization/disaggregation can be implemented at CSUN to best represent and serve APIDA student needs?

APIDA Definition

There are many terms that are used to denote Asian and Pacific Islander populations, including (but not limited to): Asian Pacific American (APA), Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI), and Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander (AANHPI). We use Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) as a pan-ethnic classification that consciously includes South Asians (Desi) as part of the community. There is a great diversity of identities and ethnicities encompassed under the APIDA term, including East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and Pacific Islander.

There are conflicting views on the appropriateness and oversimplification of any racial classification. Thus, we acknowledge that the terms students use to describe themselves are part of a dynamic process of self-determination and self-identification. Moreover, it is important to recognize that there is great heterogeneity in the historical contexts that shape the experiences within the APIDA ethnic groups (e.g., certain

Southeast Asian American ethnic groups being relatively new to the United States).

For the current report, we have disaggregated the APIDA ethnic groups into regional groups as classified by the [Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence \(api.gov.org\)](https://www.asian-pacific-institute.org/), with two modifications: 1) the Filipinx ethnic group has been disaggregated into their own separate category (FIL) because of their longer history in the United States compared to the other Southeast Asian ethnic groups and the relative size of this group at CSUN, and 2) due to the shared sociopolitical identity as refugees caused by the aftermath of the Viet Nam war, Khmer Rouge Genocide in Cambodia, and the U.S. Secret War in Laos, Khmer, Hmong, Lao, Mien, Montagnard, and Viet ethnic groups have been grouped as one-half of the Southeast Asia region (SEA1) and the remaining ethnic groups in the Southeast Asia region are grouped separately (SEA2), Burmese, Indonesian, Malaysian, Singaporean, and Thai.

East Asian (EA): Chinese, Iwo Jiman, Japanese, Korean, Okinawan, Taiwanese, Tibetan

Filipinx (FIL): Filipino/a/x

Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Pacific Islander (NHPI): Carolinian, Chamorro/Guamanian, Chuukese, Fijian, Gilbertese, I-Kiribati, Kosraean, Maori, Mariana Islander, Marshallese, Niue Islander, Ni-Vanuatu, Palauan, Papua New Guinean, Pohnpeian, Saipanese, Samoan, Solomon Islander, Tahitian, Tokelauan, Tongan, Yapese

South Asian/Desi (SA): Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Indian, Maldivian, Nepalese, Pakistani, Sri Lankan

Southeast Asian (SEA1): Khmer, Hmong, Lao, Mien, Montagnard, Viet

Southeast Asian (SEA2): Burmese, Indonesian, Indo Chinese Malaysian, Singaporean, Thai

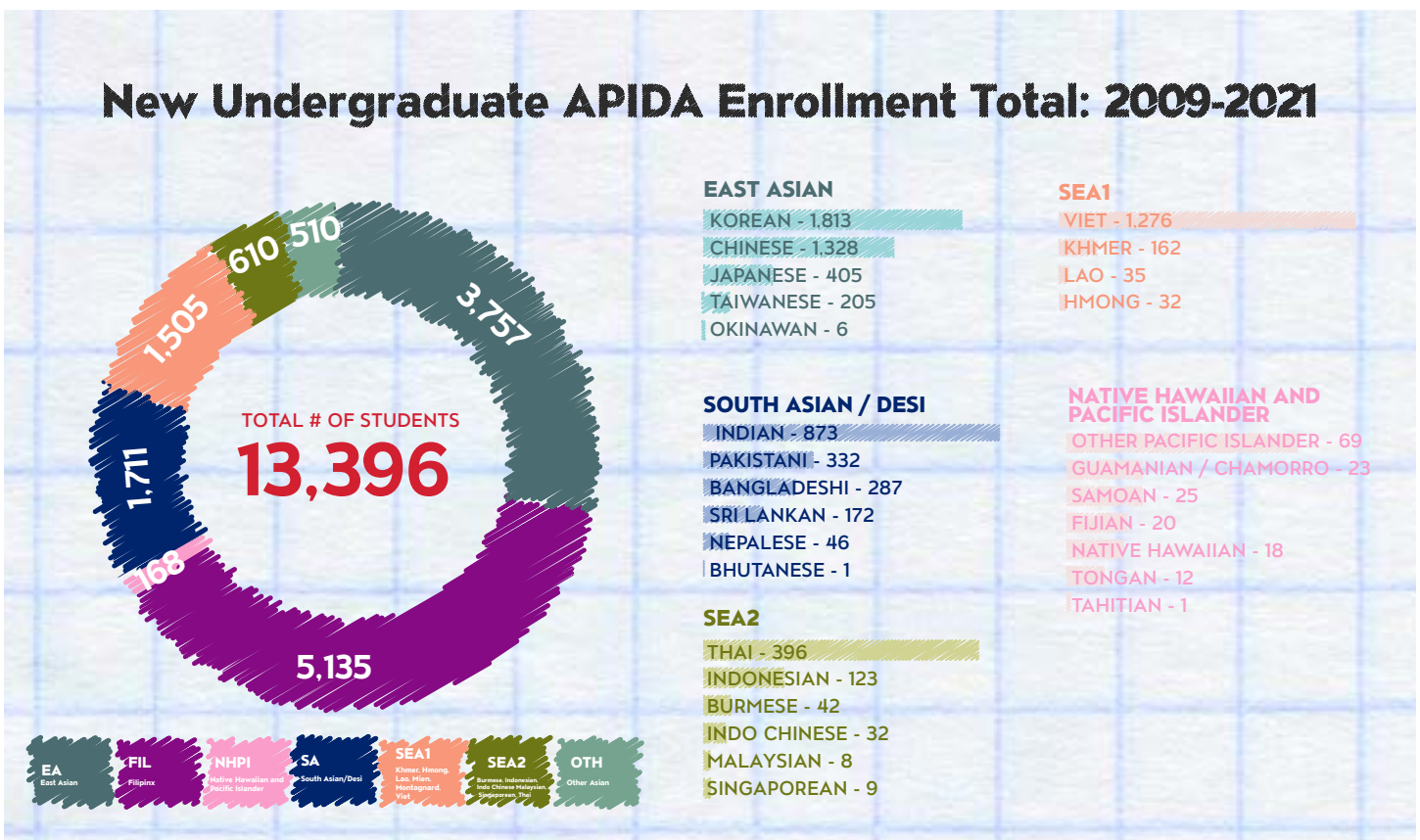
Other Asian (OTH): Other Asian, Decline to State, Not Specified, Two or more Ethnicities

Although some Southwest Asian and North African (SWANA) groups reside within the Asia region, we do not include them in this disaggregation because: 1) they may not self-identify as part of the APIDA population and 2) there is research to indicate that they deserve separate analyses as SWANA.

We acknowledge that notions of ethnic and national identity labels carry political, social, and familial meanings that can be controversial. Most importantly, we recognize the limitations and imperfections of disaggregating by regional group.

DATA

The current report uses a dataset compiled by the CSUN Office of Institutional Research that contains detailed student information for new incoming undergraduate cohorts (first-time freshmen and new transfers) from 2009 to 2021¹. The dataset includes student demographics (e.g., parent education, sex, detailed ethnicity) and academic outcomes (e.g., first-year CSUN GPA, retention, academic standing). After filtering for only APIDA-identifying individuals who are not international students (F and J visas), the dataset includes 13,396 students². [Data were disaggregated by specific APIDA ethnicities as captured by the CSU system common application form \(Cal State Apply\)](#)³



¹ Because we are looking at student outcomes, we include only those cohorts for which we have at least 1 year of academic data at the time this report was written.

² Research suggests demographics and outcomes between U.S.-born APIDA students and international APIDA students are not similar because of different backgrounds and experiences.

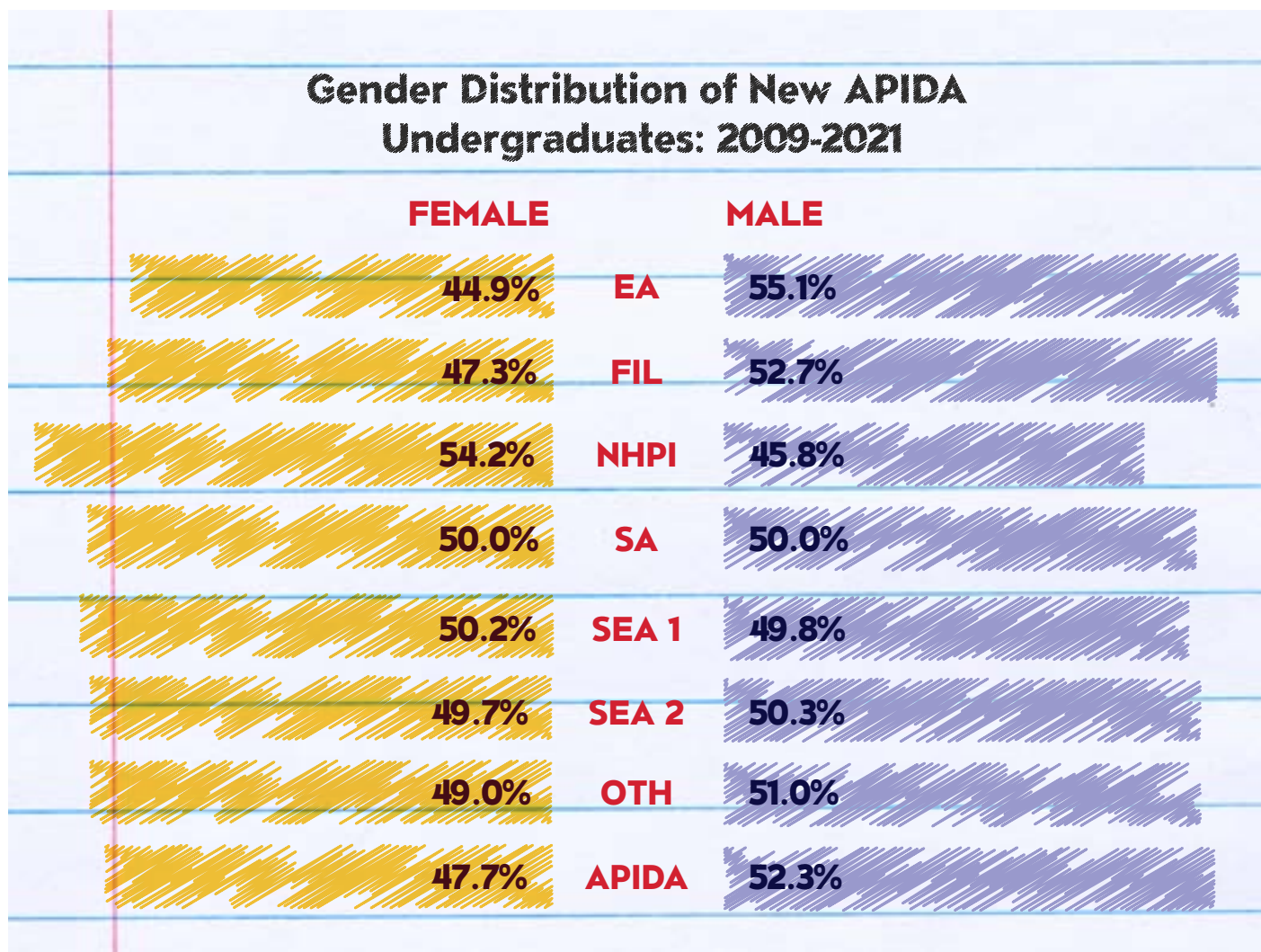
³ Some APIDA ethnicity groups may not be represented in this brief because of the limited options provided in the CSU system common application form.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Typically, the APIDA experience is conflated as a monolith. The false and widely held belief that all APIDA individuals are academically and socioeconomically successful – the model minority myth – conceals inequities within certain communities and access to institutional support due to the perceived overall group success. Therefore, in the following section, demographic characteristics (gender, first-generation status, Pell eligibility) in the CSUN APIDA undergraduate student population are disaggregated to examine diversity amongst the regional and detailed ethnicity groups.

Gender

With regard to gender identity, students have historically been given an option to select from two choices (male; female). It is important to note that this variable lacks in information to contextualize experiences outside the binary.⁴ For the entry cohorts under study here (Fall 2009 to Fall 2021), there has been a greater proportion of males than females in the APIDA aggregate and most APIDA regional groups (EA, FIL, OTH, SEA2).⁵ The NHPI and SEA1 group had a larger proportion of females than males and the SA group had a roughly even distribution by gender. It is important to note that the gender balance in certain groups is quite small (SEA1, SEA2, OTH).

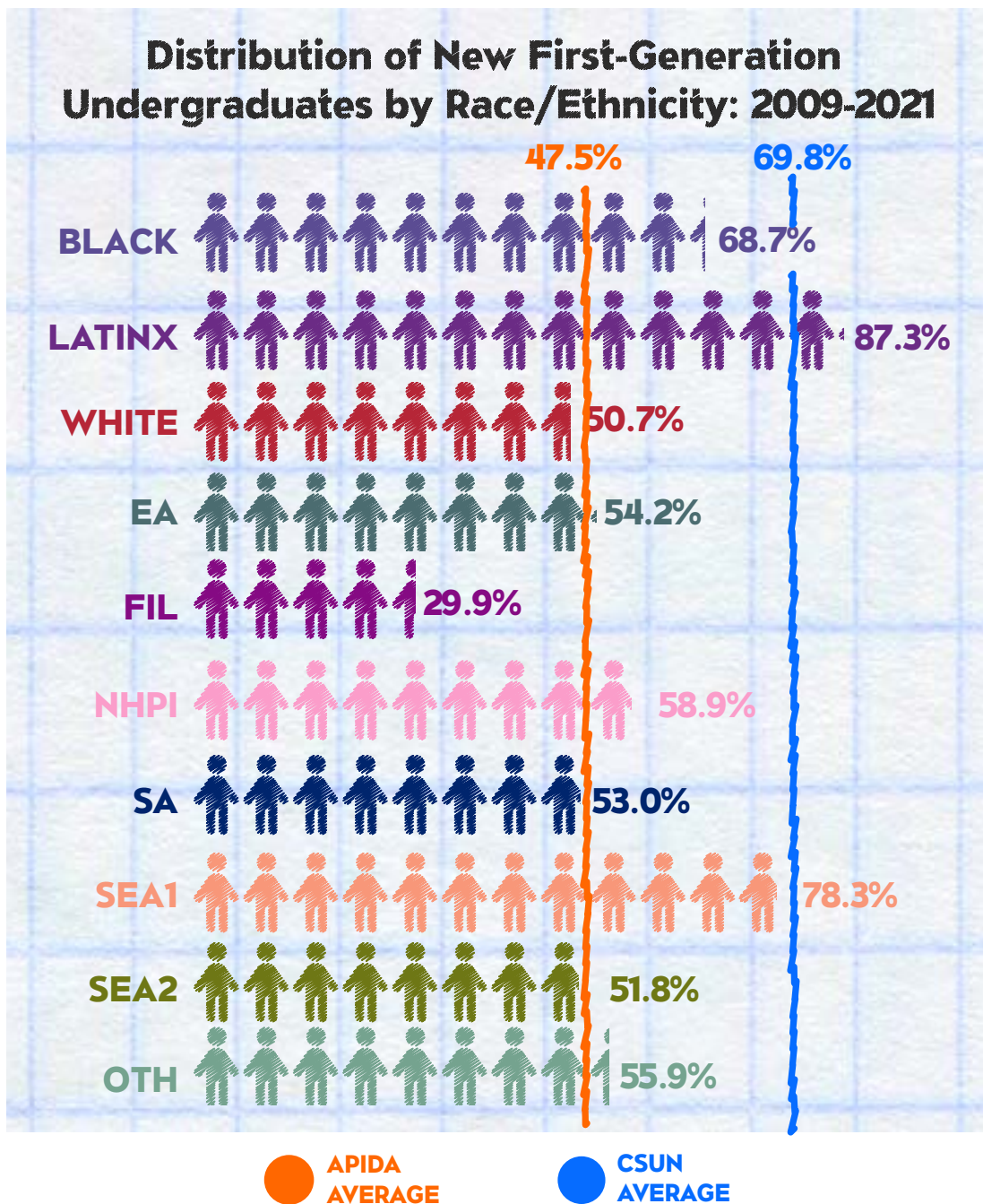


⁴The CSU common application was updated with additional gender identity options beginning with the Fall 2020 entry cohort, but these are not reflected in the historical data presented here.

⁵The APIDA group differs from other broad racial/ethnic groups at CSUN, in which female-identifying students are typically the majority.

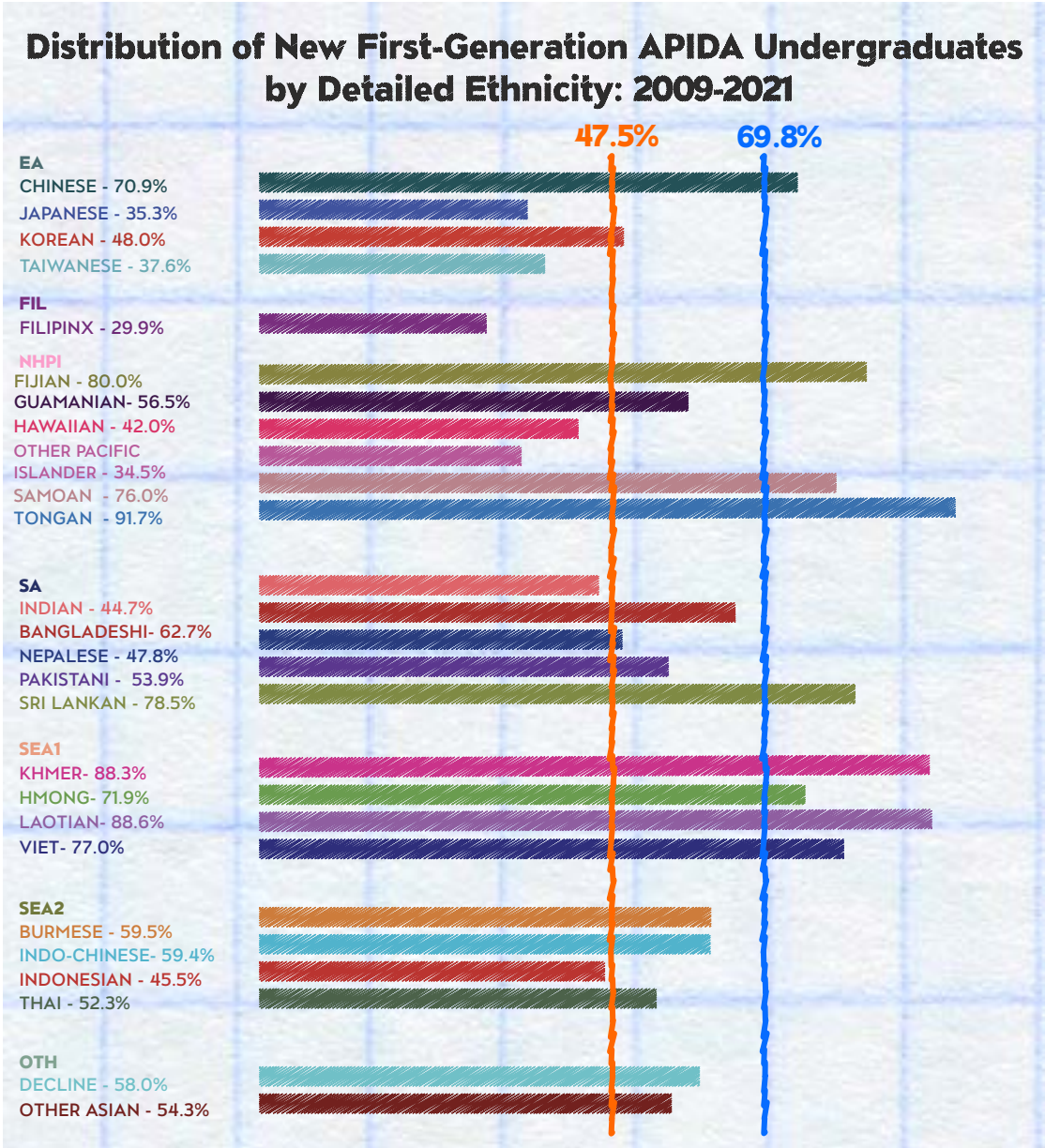
First-Generation Students

The aggregate race/ethnicity data depict APIDA students at CSUN as the least likely major racial/ethnic group to be a first-generation college student⁶. However, the disaggregated APIDA regional group data reveal substantial variation within the CSUN APIDA student population. Specifically, the particularly low rate of first-generation status among Filipinx students (29.9%) - the largest APIDA group in total number - seems to be driving the overall average for APIDA students down, such that all other groups show a first-generation rate above the APIDA aggregate average (47.5%). In fact, the SEA1 group shows a first-generation rate above the campus average (78.3%). These findings align with [previous research](#) highlighting varying educational inequities (e.g., lower education degree attainment) and historical contexts (e.g., SEA1s being relatively new in the U.S. context compared to other APIDA groups) among APIDA regional subgroups.



⁶ We define first-generation college student as a person whose parent(s) did not complete a college degree.

Interestingly, when the data are disaggregated even further by detailed ethnicity and national origin, many national origin groups have greater proportions of first-generation students than the overall APIDA aggregate. Note that there are differences even within regional groups. For example, EA as a regional group has a proportion of 54.2% first-generation students; but within this group there is wide variability between Japanese (35.3%) and Chinese (70.9%) students. As such, the variation within the regional groups highlights the need to also disaggregate by detailed ethnicity and national origin to best represent the APIDA student population. Tongan (91.7%), Lao (88.6%), Khmer (88.3%), Fijian (80.0%), Sri Lankan (78.5%), Viet (77.0%), and Samoan (76.0%) students are among the APIDA ethnic groups most likely to be first-generation (certain ethnic groups have group sizes below 30 and should thus be interpreted with caution)⁷.



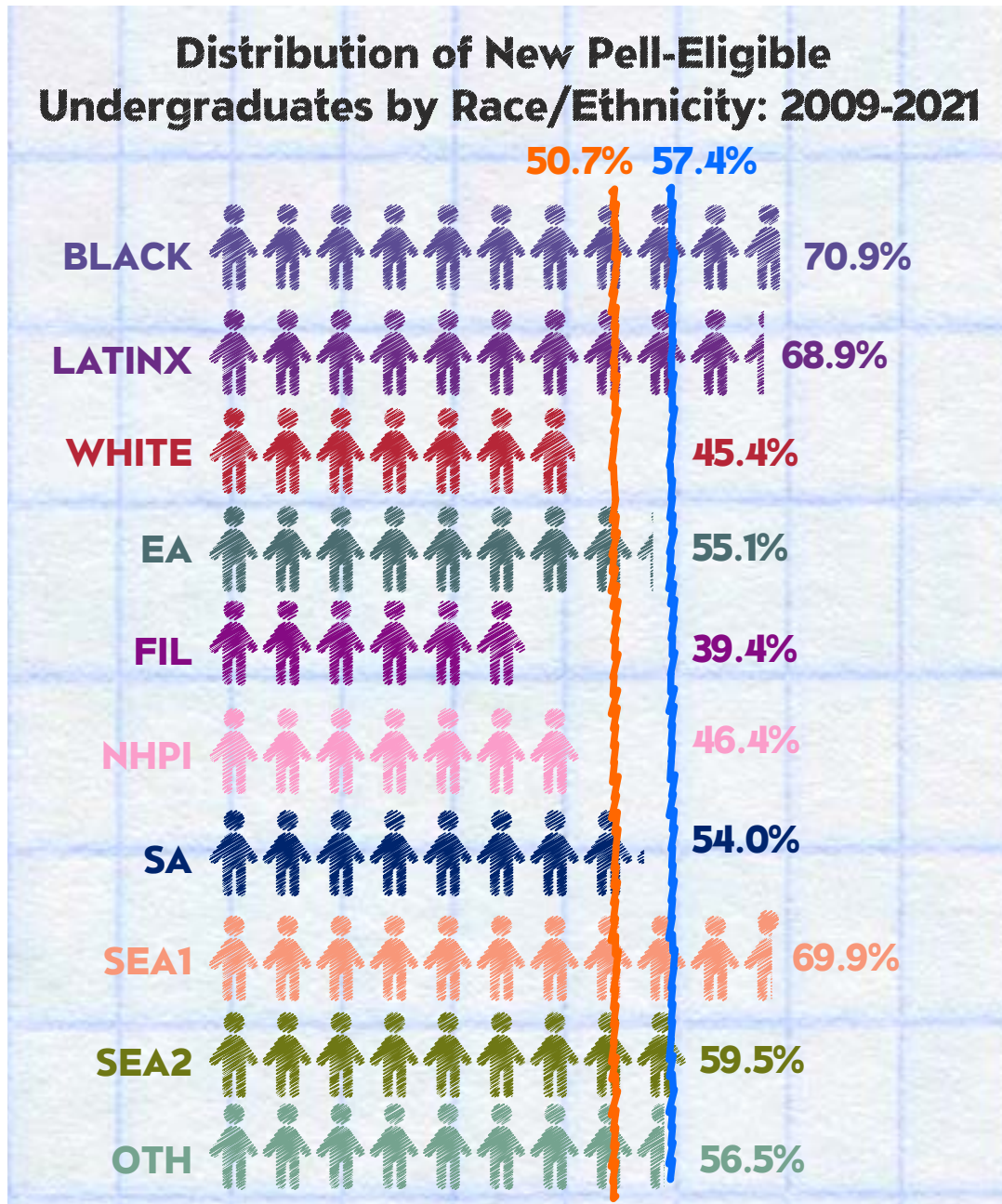
APIDA AVERAGE

CSUN AVERAGE

⁷ National origin groups with group sizes below 30 include Fijian, Guamanian, Hawaiian, Samoan, and Tongan. Groups with sizes below 10 are excluded from these analyses.

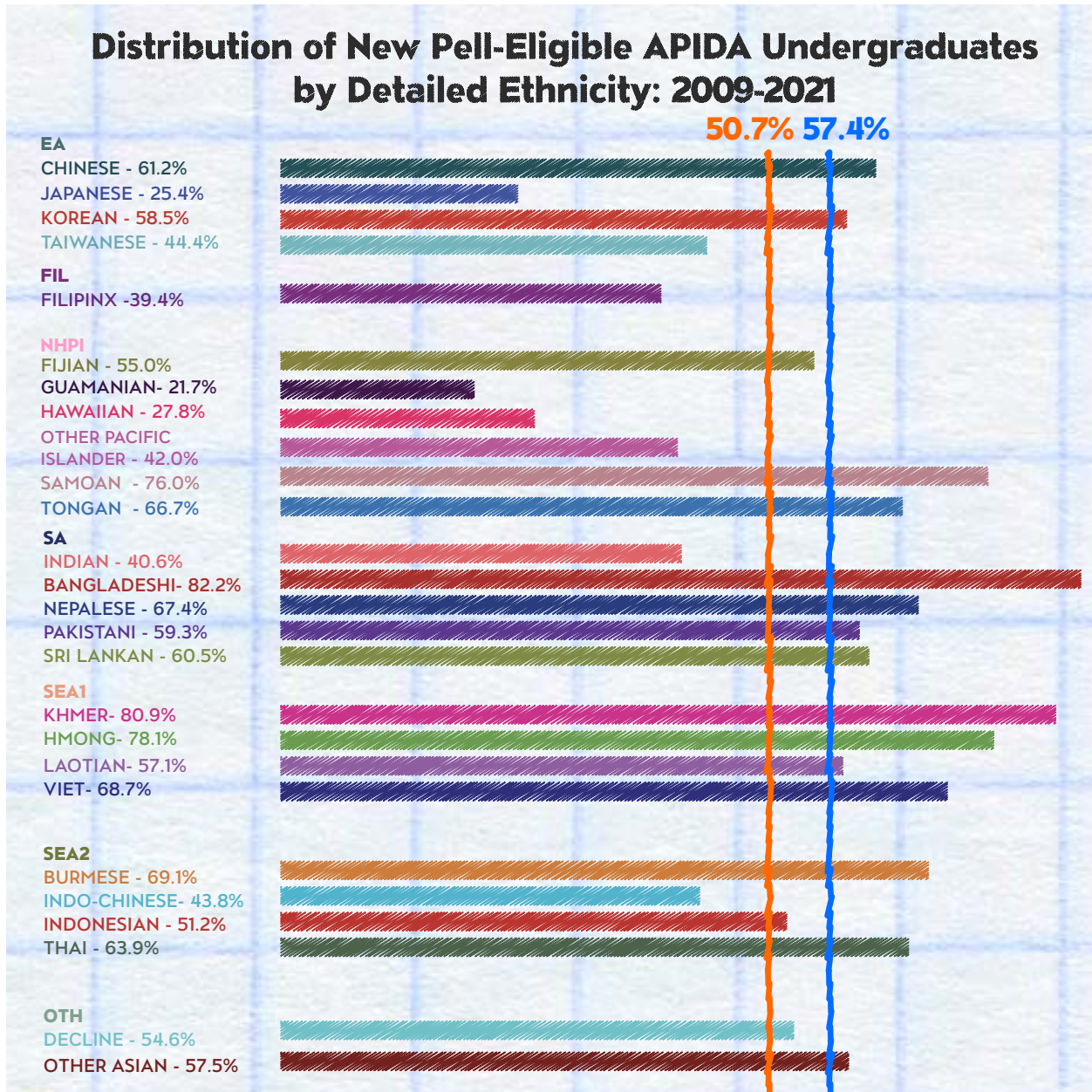
Pell Eligibility

The disaggregated APIDA data also reveal substantial variation in Pell eligibility⁸ between the regional groups that would be unnoticed if only the APIDA aggregate were presented. All regional groups except FIL (39.4%) and NHPI (46.4%) have Pell eligibility proportions above the APIDA aggregate (50.7%). Both SEA1 (69.9%) and SEA2 (59.5%) students have Pell eligibility proportions above the CSUN average (56.8%). Most notably, the SEA1 region has the highest proportion of Pell-eligible students across the APIDA regional groups. [These findings match up with the low-income and poverty rates found within the SEA1 community.](#)



⁸Students who demonstrate exceptional financial need are classified as Pell eligible.

When Pell eligibility is disaggregated by detailed ethnicity and national origin, once again noticeable differences within the regional groups that are illuminated. For example, SA as a regional group has a Pell eligibility proportion of 54.0%; but this does not provide the most accurate snapshot of the CSUN SA community when we compare Indian (40.6%) and Bangladeshi (82.2%) students.



APIDA AVERAGE

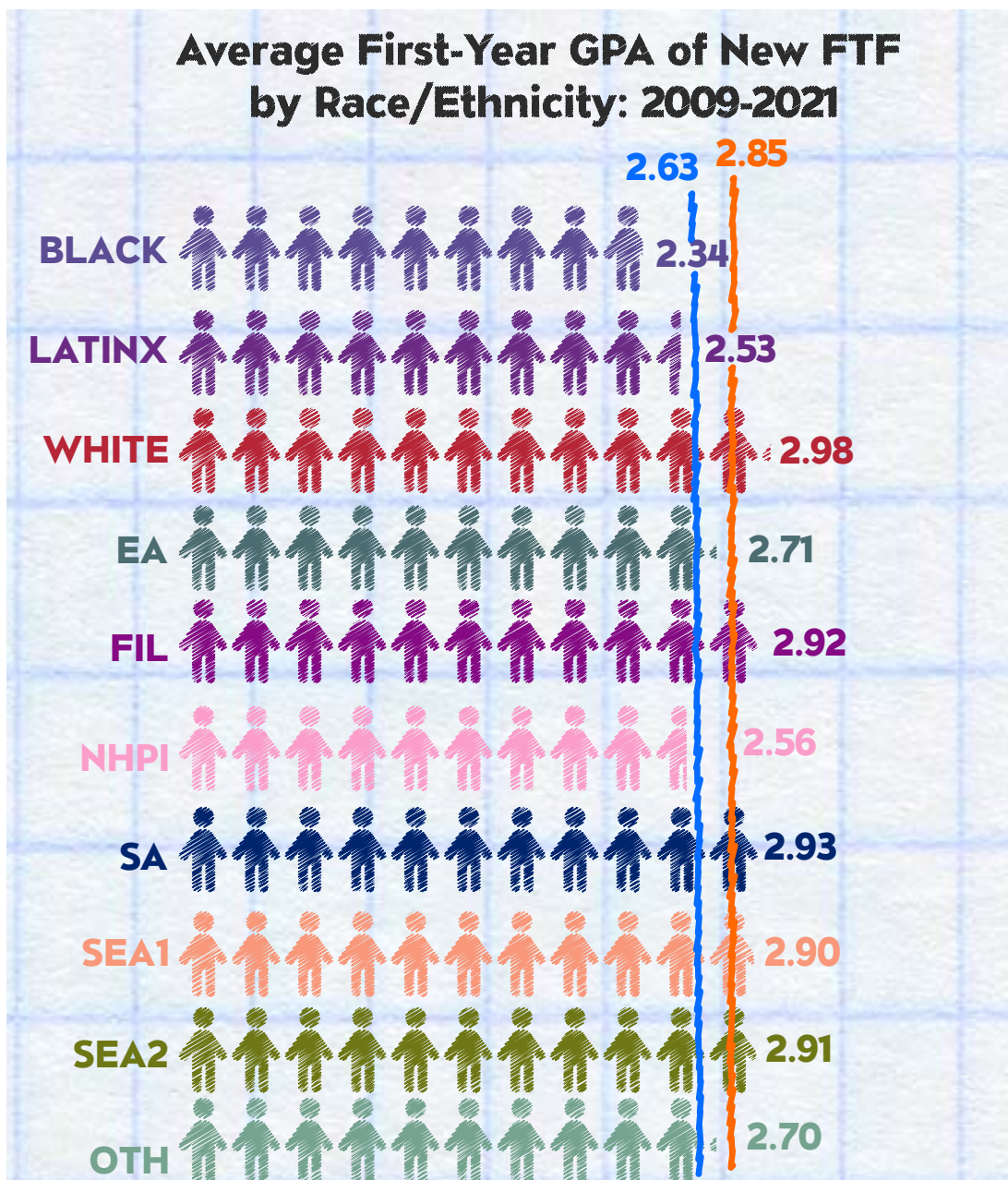
CSUN AVERAGE

ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

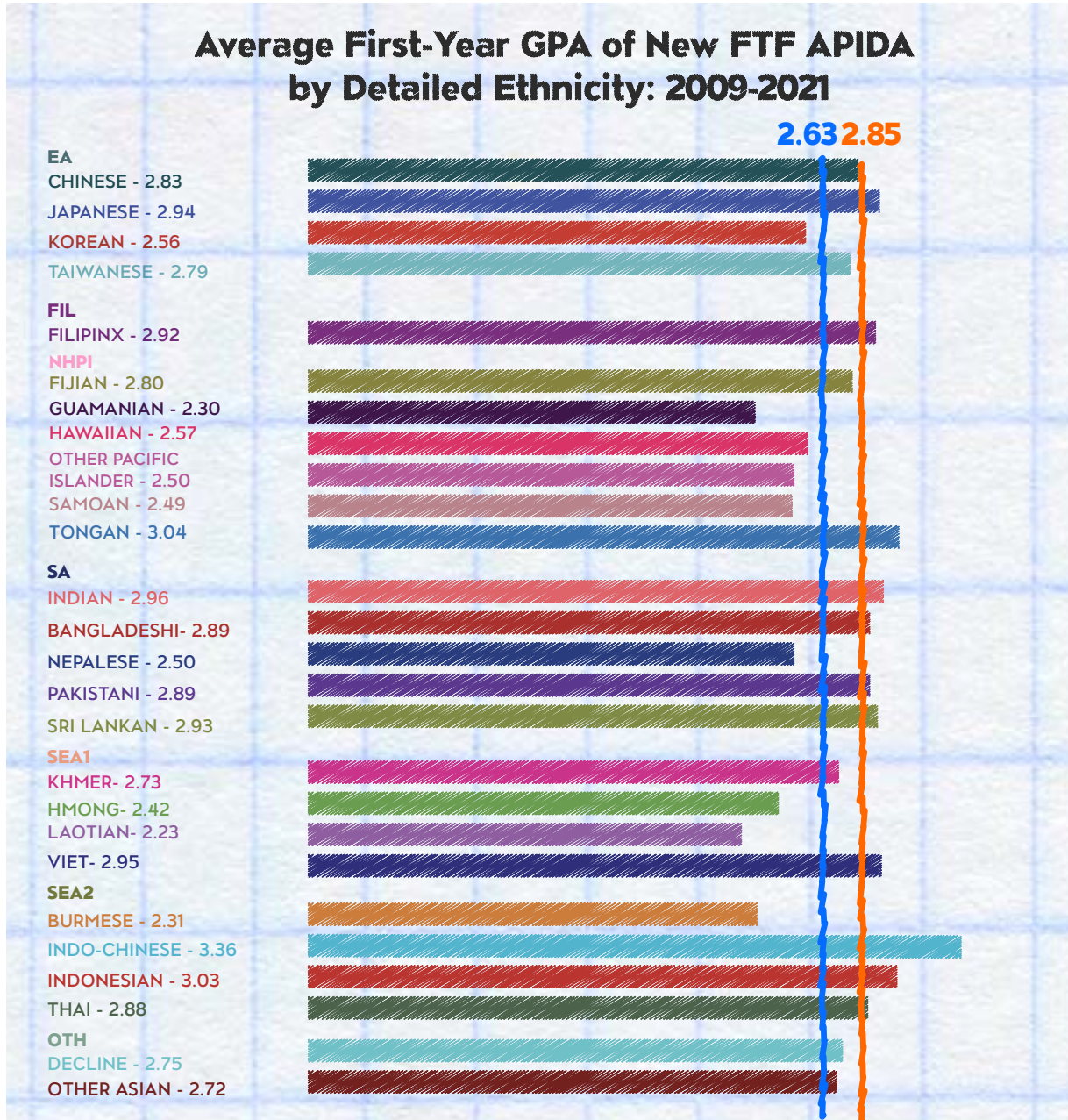
The following section examines academic outcomes among first-time freshmen (FTF) and new transfer students (FTT). Specifically, the following sections investigate first-year CSUN GPA, retention rates, and graduation rates across the regional and national origin/ detailed ethnicity groups.

First-year CSUN GPA: First-time freshmen

FTF APIDA students as an aggregate have a higher overall average first-year GPA at CSUN (2.85) than Black (2.34) and Latinx (2.53) FTF, but lower than White students (2.98). Note that there is variation between the regional groups ranging from the SA (2.93), FIL (2.92), SEA2 (2.91), and SEA1 (2.90) on the high end (though all below the average for White FTF) to the NHPI group (2.56) on the low end, below the campus average (2.63).



When FTF APIDA first-year CSUN GPA is further disaggregated by detailed ethnicity and national origin, certain ethnic groups have noticeably poorer academic outcomes than others in their respective regional groups. For example, EA as a regional group has an average first-year GPA of 2.71; however, this fails to accurately distinguish the difference between Korean (2.56) and Japanese (2.94) students.

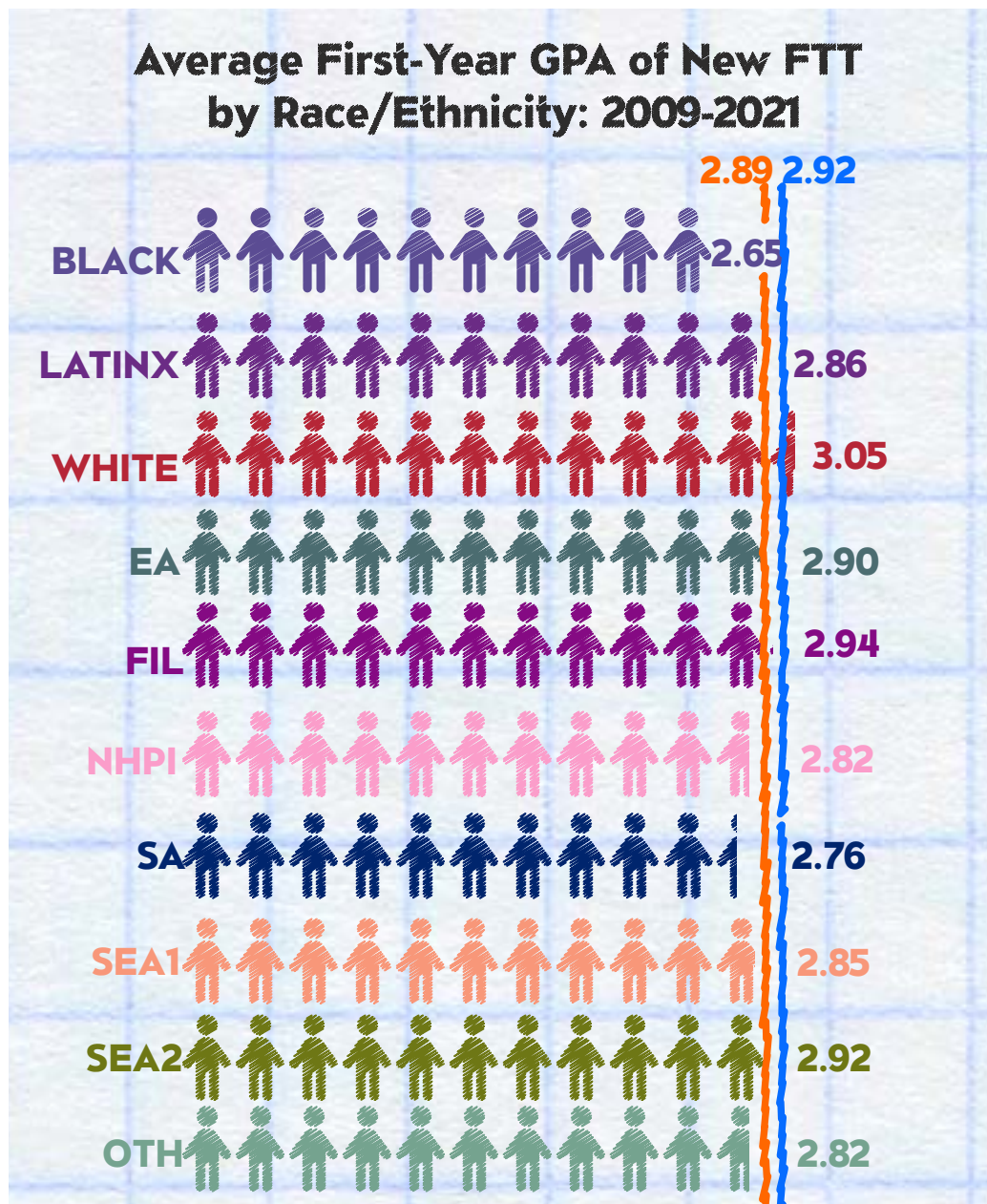


**APIDA
AVERAGE**

**CSUN
AVERAGE**

First-year CSUN GPA: Transfers

FTT APIDA students as an aggregate have a higher overall average first-year GPA at CSUN (2.89) than Black (2.65) and Latinx (2.86) FTT, but lower than White students (3.05). Again, there is variation between the regional groups. In contrast with the FTF APIDA students, FIL (2.94), SEA2 (2.92), and EA (2.90) FTT have average first-year GPA above the FTT APIDA aggregate. Notably, the FTT SA regional group has the lowest first-year GPA across the FTT APIDA regions, whereas the FTF SA regional group had nearly the highest first-year GPA across the FTF APIDA regions.

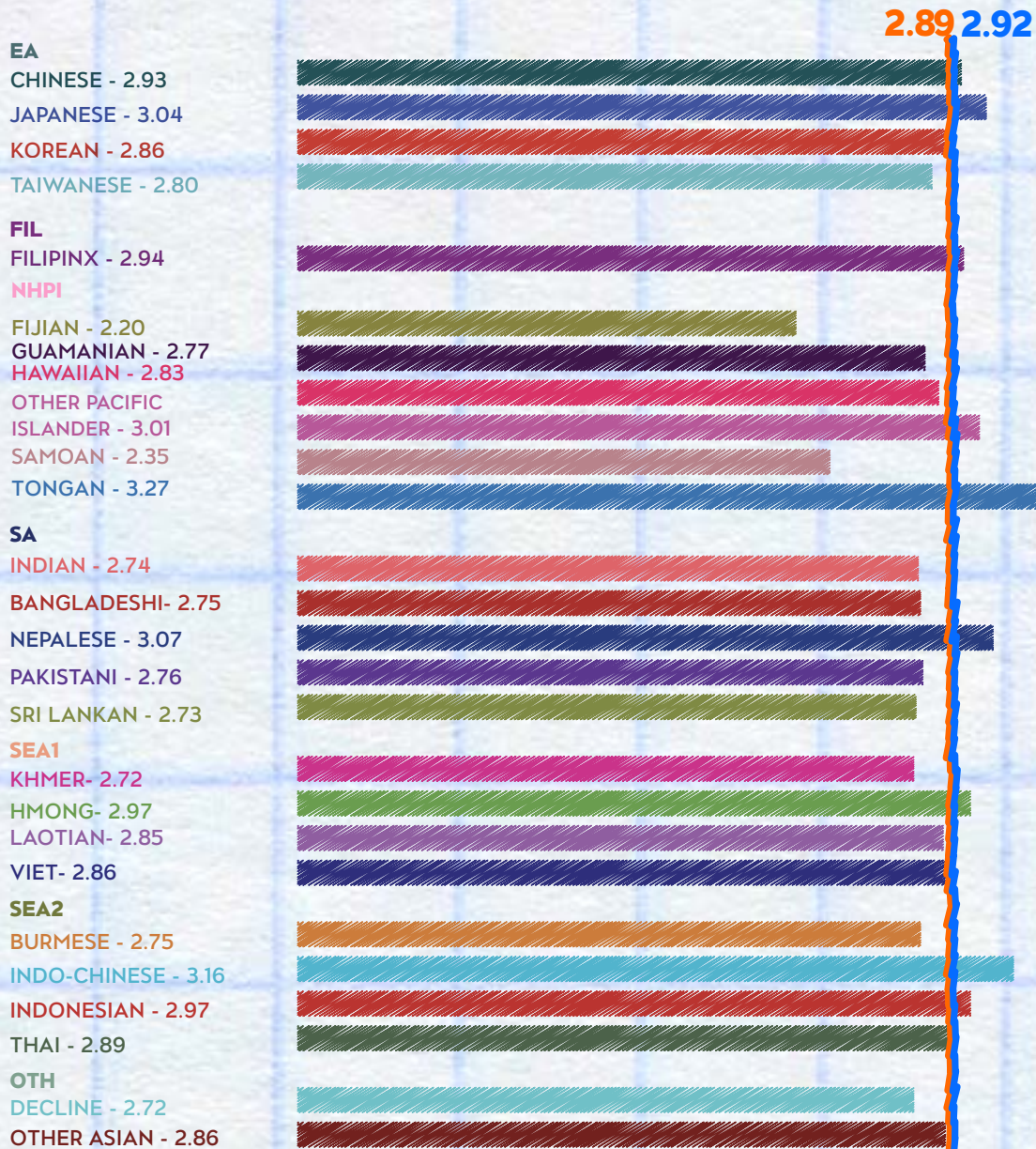


APIDA AVERAGE

CSUN AVERAGE

When FTT APIDA first-year CSUN GPA is further disaggregated by detailed ethnicity and national origin, many ethnic groups have lower average first-year GPAs than the APIDA aggregate and CSUN average. Comparable to the disaggregated regional group findings on first-year GPA, SA ethnic groups have some of the lowest average first-year GPA out of all the APIDA ethnic groups.

Average First-Year GPA of New APIDA FTT by Detailed Ethnicity: 2009-2021

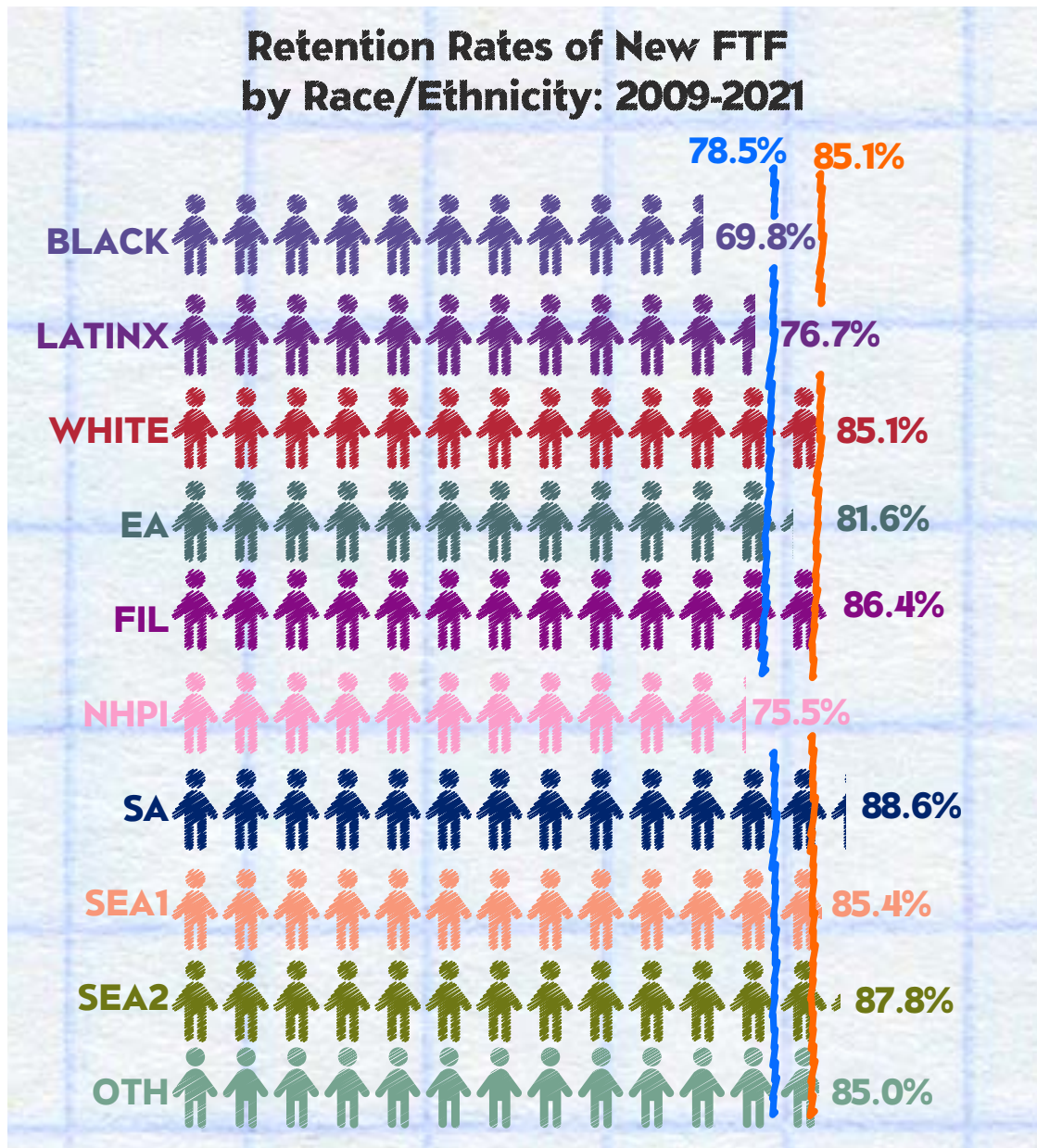


APIDA AVERAGE

CSUN AVERAGE

Retention Rates: First-time freshmen

When we examine retention rate⁹ by the broader race/ethnicity groups, the FTF APIDA aggregate has a higher proportion of students retained into the third term (85.1%) than Black (69.8%) and Latinx (76.7%) students, and similar to White (85.1%) students. SA (88.6%), SEA2 (87.8%), and FIL (86.4%) FTF all have third-term retention rates above the FTF APIDA aggregate. NHPI students have the lowest third term retention rate (75.5%) across the FTF APIDA regions, similar to retention rates for Latinx FTF.

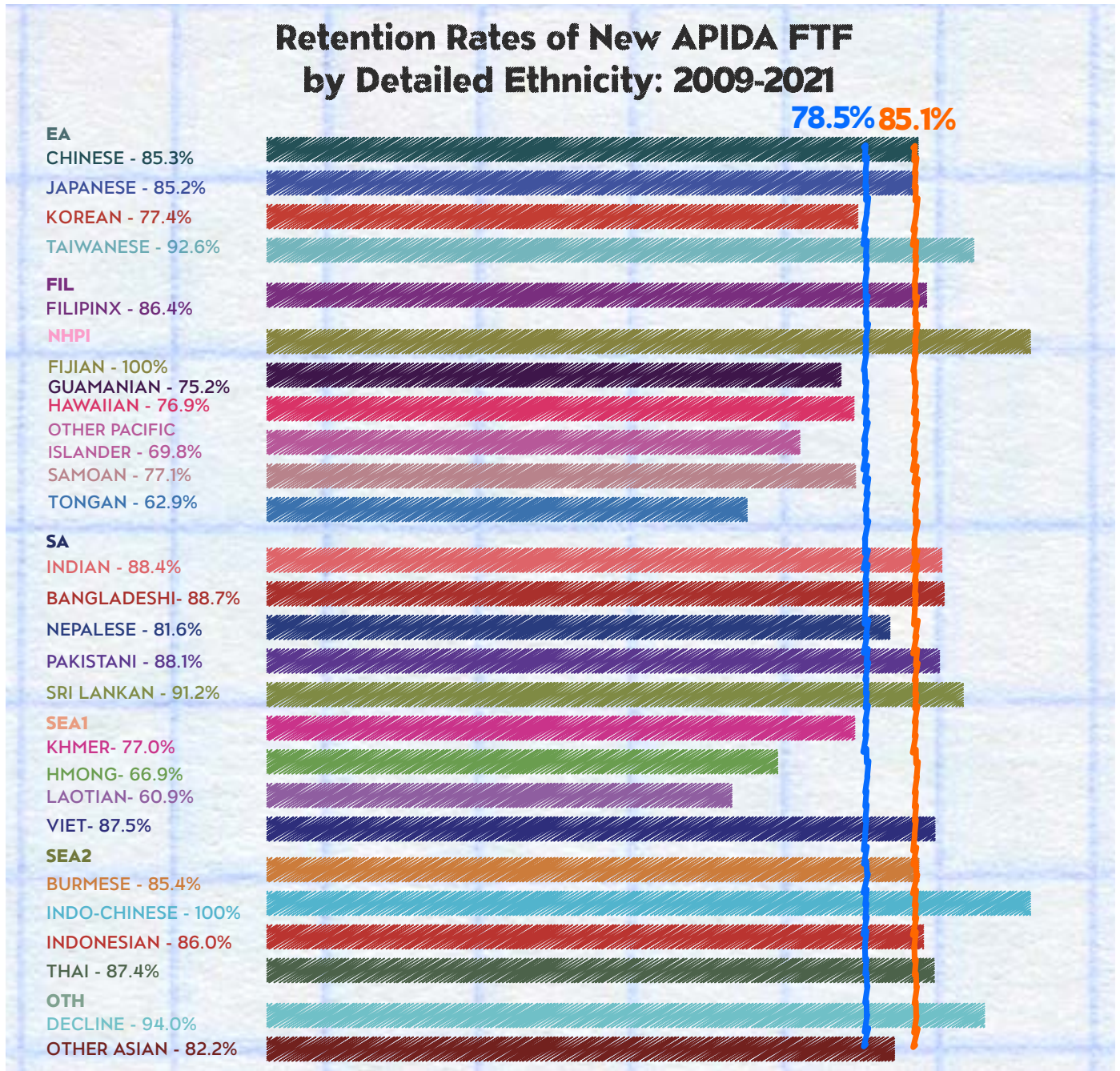


APIDA AVERAGE

CSUN AVERAGE

⁹Retention rate was operationalized as re-enrollment in the third term (i.e., first term of the second year).

When APIDA FTF third-term retention rate is further disaggregated by detailed ethnicity and national origin, wide variations within the regional groups emerge. For example, Korean (77.4%), and Lao (60.9%), FTF all have third term retention rates strikingly lower than their respective regional groups.

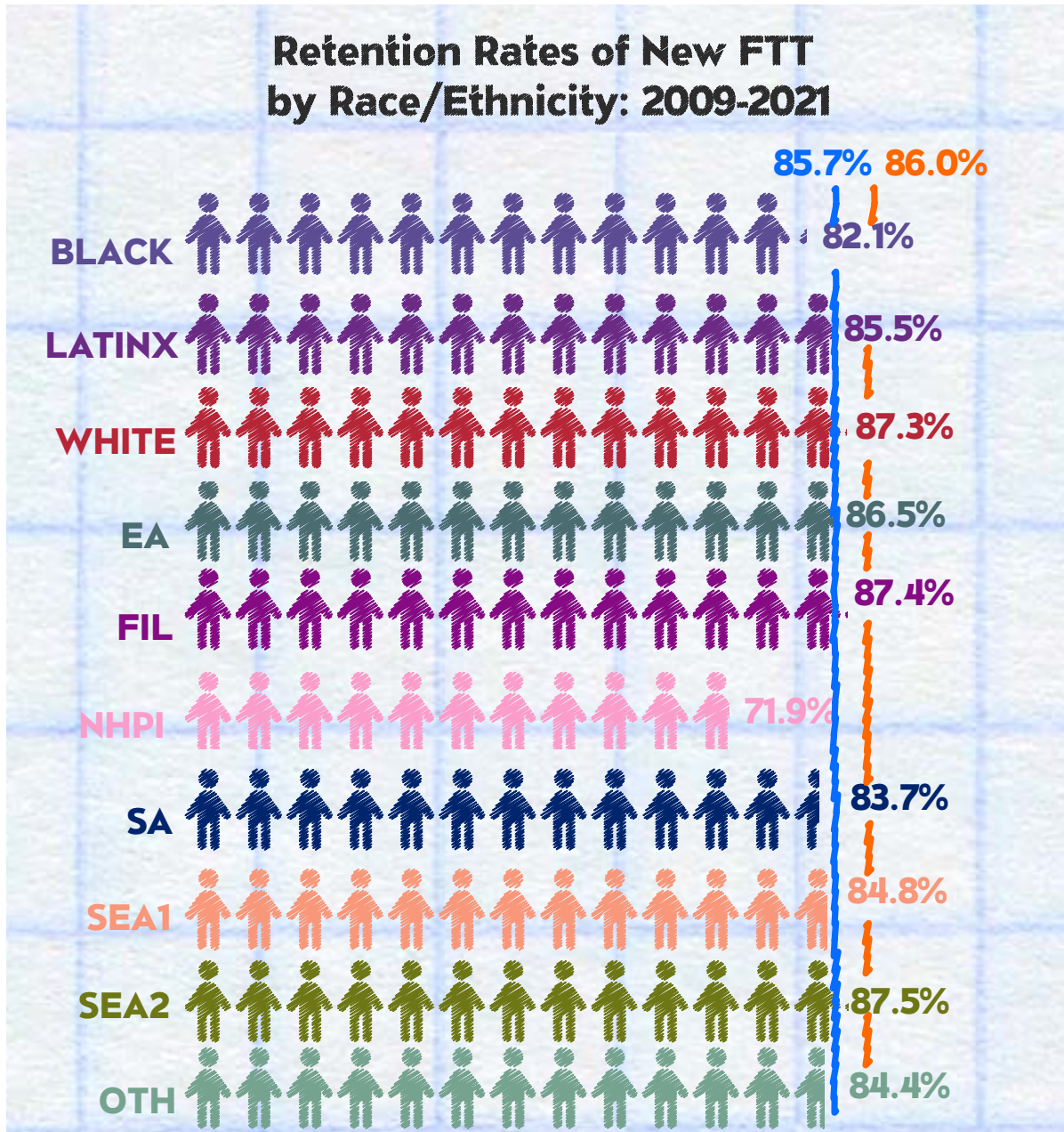


**APIDA
AVERAGE**

**CSUN
AVERAGE**

Retention Rates: Transfers

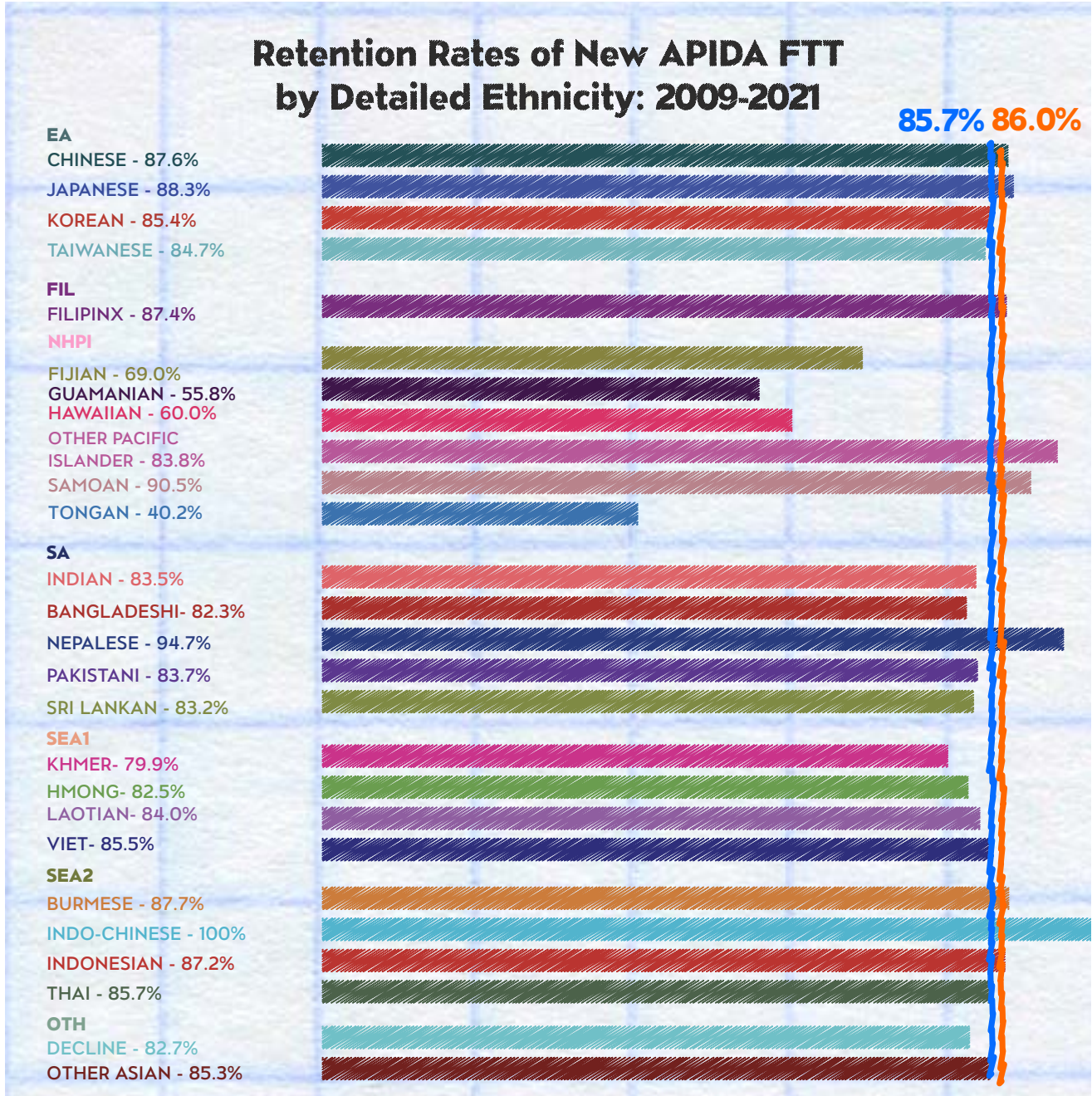
The FTT APIDA aggregate was retained into their third term (86.0%) at rates similar to FTT overall (85.7%). Among the APIDA regional groups, FIL (87.4%) and SEA2 (87.5%) FTT have the highest rates of retention, while NHPI FTT have the lowest rates by a wide margin (71.9%).



● APIDA AVERAGE

● CSUN AVERAGE

Upon further disaggregation of FTT retention rates to national origin groups, we find that the lowest rates of retention are among NHPI national origin groups, including Tongan (40.2%), Guamanian (55.8%), Hawaiian (60.0%), and Fijian (69.0%) FTT. Within the other regional groups, Khmer (79.9%) FTT and FTT who declined to share their national origin (82.7%) experienced particularly low retention rates. In contrast, the highest rates of retention were among Indo-Chinese (100%) and Nepalese (94.7%) FTT.

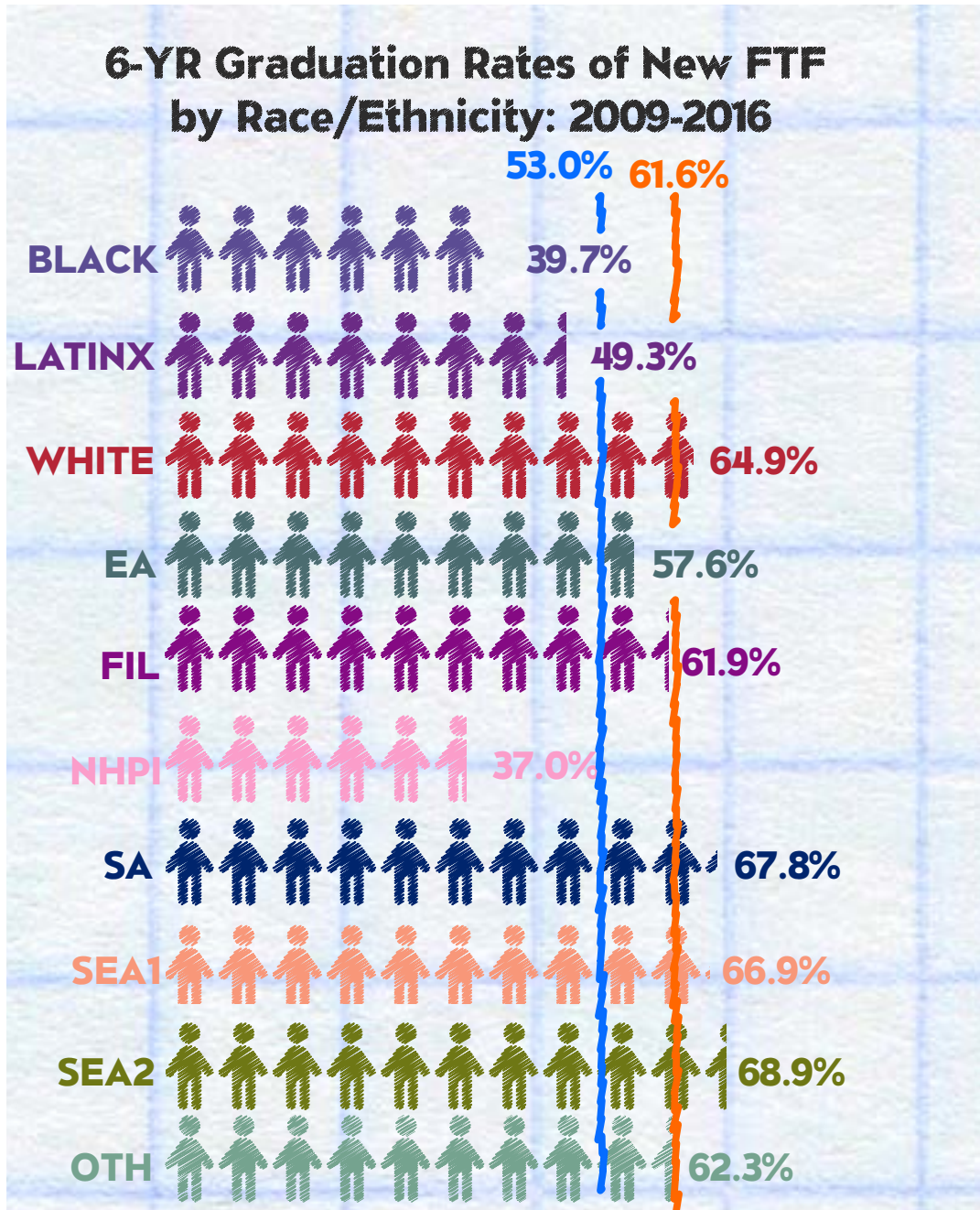


**APIDA
AVERAGE**

**CSUN
AVERAGE**

Graduation Rates: First-time freshmen

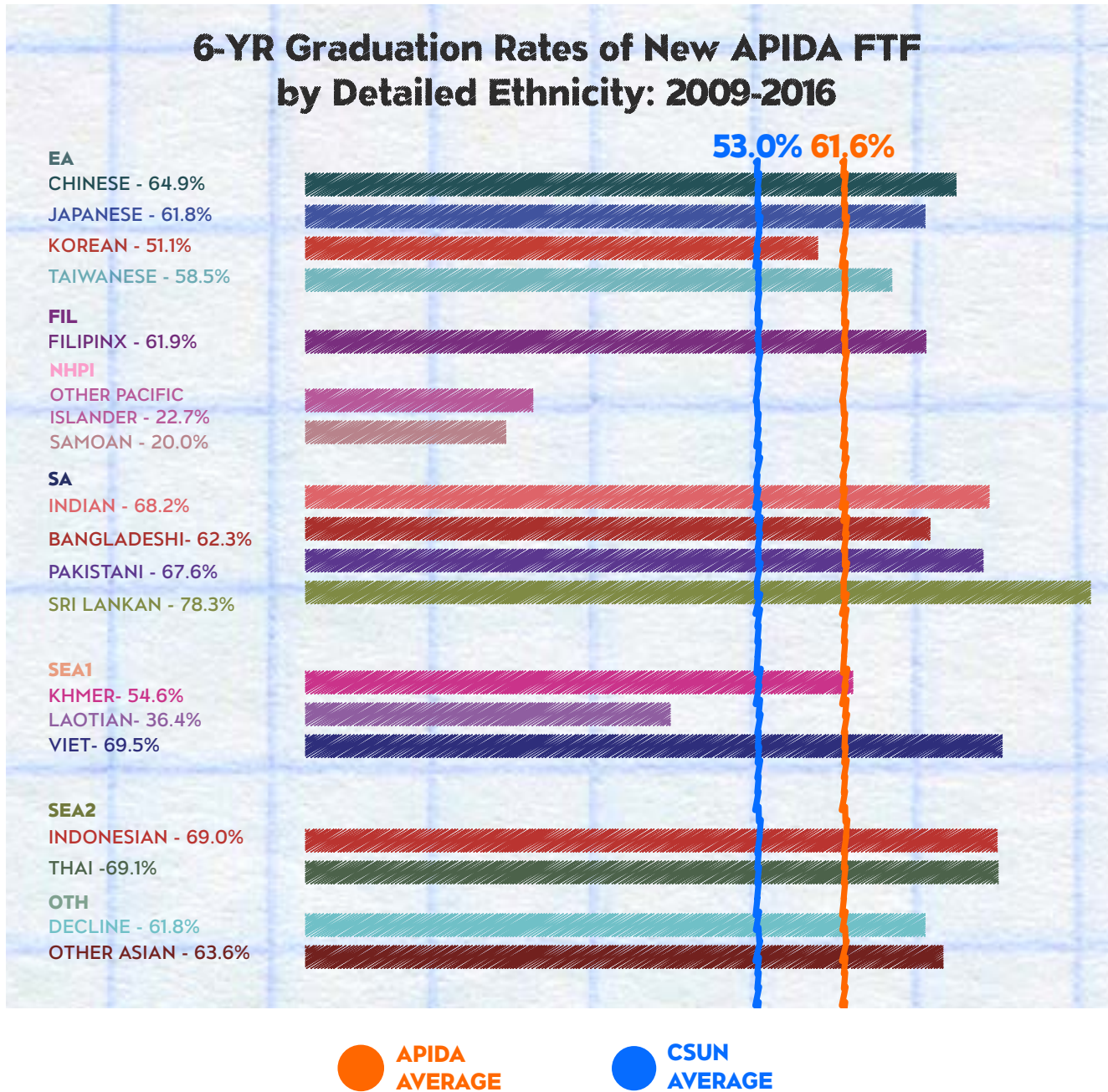
The FTF APIDA aggregate has a higher six-year graduation rate (61.6%) than Black (39.7%) and Latinx (49.3%) FTF but lower than White (64.9%) FTF. Disaggregating by APIDA regional groups reveals that NHPI students have the lowest 6-year graduation rates by a large margin (37.0%), which is lower than not only the overall average for all CSUN FTF, but also lower than any of the other race/ethnic groups. By contrast, SEA2 (68.9%), SA (67.8%) and SEA1 (66.9%) FTF have among the highest 6-year graduation rates, above that of White FTF.



● APIDA AVERAGE

● CSUN AVERAGE

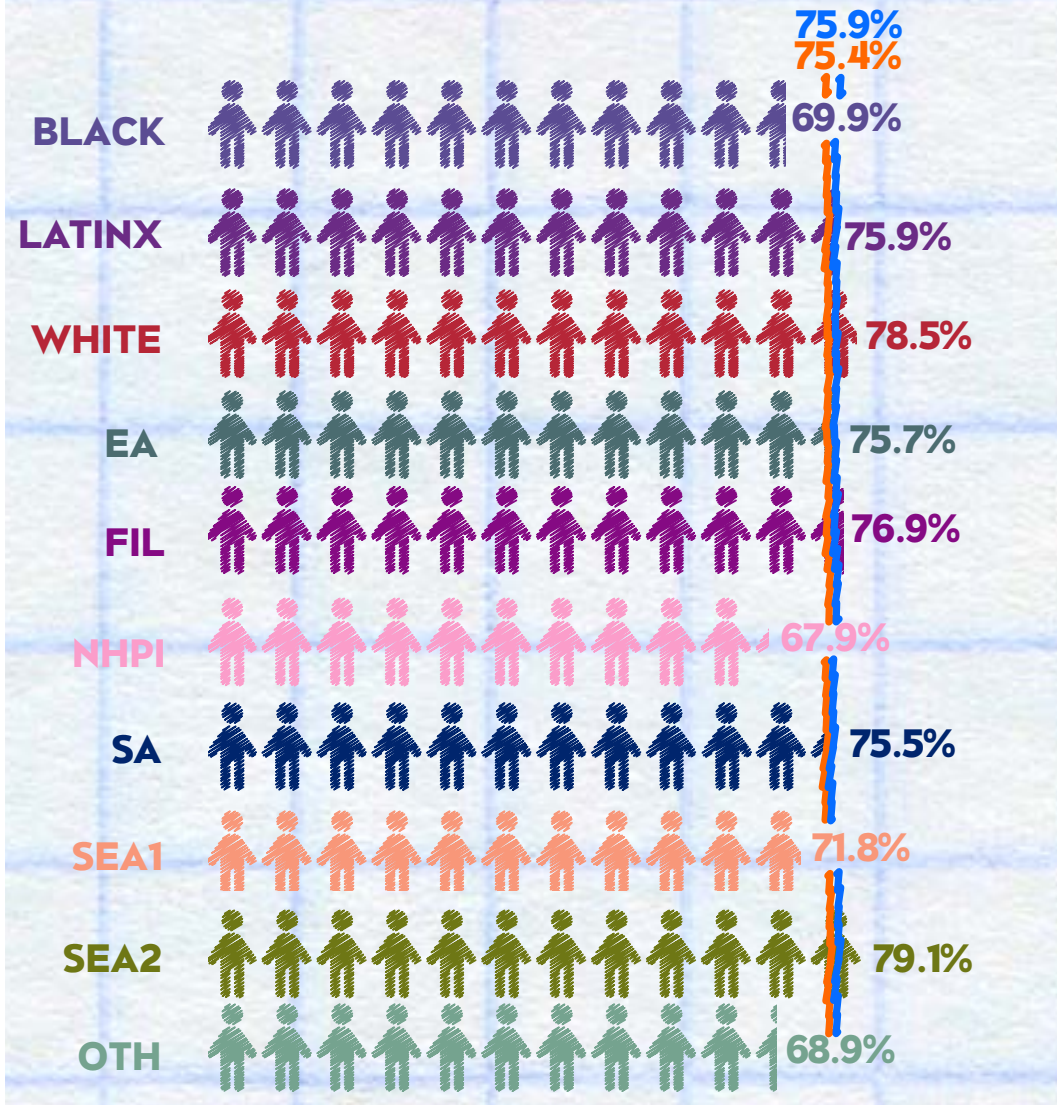
Disaggregating the six-year graduation rates further reveals wide variability, even within regional groups. Of particular note is that at least one national origin group within each regional group has 6-year graduation rates below the APIDIA average.



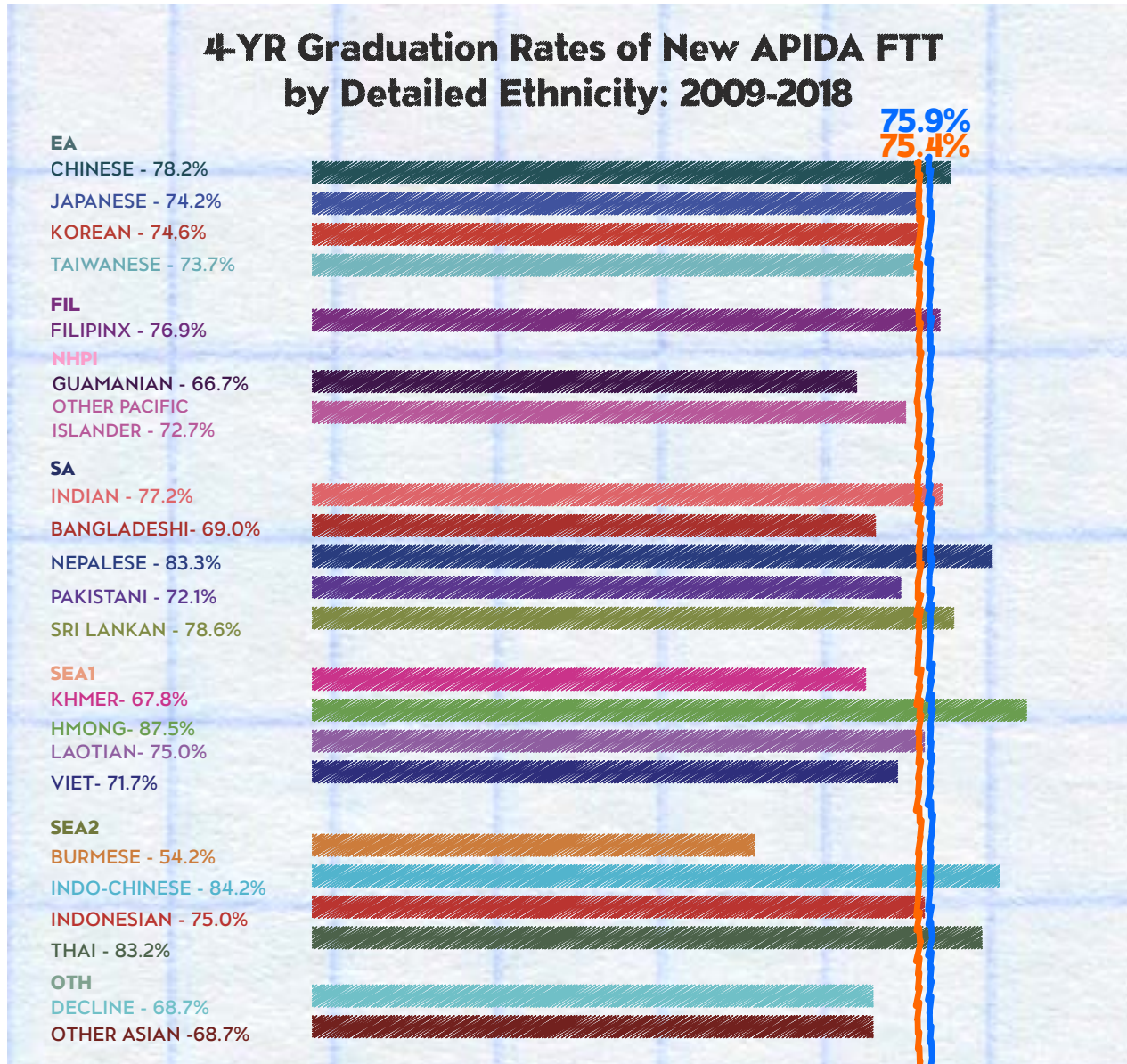
Graduation Rates: Transfers

As an aggregate, APIDA FTT students have a higher four-year graduation rate (75.4%) than Black (69.9%) students, roughly equal with Latinx (75.9%) students, but lower than White (78.5%) students. When four-year graduation rates are disaggregated by APIDA regional groups. FIL (76.9%) and SEA2 (79.1%) students have higher four-year graduation rates than both the FTT APIDA aggregate and FTT CSUN average (75.9%). NHPI (67.9%) and OTH (68.9%) FTT have among the lowest 4-year graduation rates, comparable to that of Black FTT.

4-YR Graduation Rates of New FTT by Race/Ethnicity: 2009-2018



Further disaggregation of APIDA FTT four-year graduation rates reveals additional variability. For example, Hmong (87.5%), Indo-Chinese (84.2%), Nepalese (83.3%), and Thai (83.2%) FTT have among the highest 4-year graduation rates, while Burmese (54.2%) FTT have the lowest rates by a wide margin. These findings point to the need to continue identifying subgroups within larger disaggregated groups for more accurate understanding.



TAKEAWAYS



The current report aimed to unpack the APIDA pan-ethnic label and disaggregate by ethnicity/national origin to better understand variations in student demographics and academic outcomes among APIDA students at CSUN. Indeed, it is evident that disparities are hidden when aggregating the APIDA student population as one ethnic group. When disaggregating by regional grouping and national origin/detailed ethnicity, notable variations and patterns are observable. Therefore, caution must be taken when analyzing and reporting on the APIDA student population so as not to misrepresent certain national origin groups and sub-communities. Our findings underscore the diversity in student demographics and academic outcomes across the APIDA regional groups and detailed ethnicities and emphasize the need to examine further disaggregated data when possible.