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## **Methodology: Best Public Affairs Schools Rankings**

Find out how U.S. News ranks graduate public affairs programs.

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**THE RANKINGS OF PUBLIC** affairs programs, published in 2021, are based solely on peer assessment survey results. In fall 2020 and early 2021, U.S. News surveyed deans, directors and department chairs representing 285 master's programs in public affairs and administration. Two surveys were sent to each school.

Respondents were asked to rate the academic quality of master's programs on a scale of 1 (marginal) to 5 (outstanding). They were instructed to select "don't know" if they did not have enough knowledge to rate a program. Scores for each school were totaled and divided by the number of respondents who rated that school. All public affairs programs surveyed appear in the rankings in descending order based solely on their average peer assessment score. The response rate was 63.6%.

The lists of schools, individuals surveyed and specialty areas evaluated were provided by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration, known as NASPAA, and by the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management.

The rankings of programs in public affairs specialty areas, such as [environmental policy and management](#) and [public policy analysis](#), are based solely on ratings by educators at peer schools. Public affairs schools' deans and other academics were asked to nominate up to 15 programs for excellence in each specialty.

Schools in the specialty rankings are numerically ranked in descending order based solely on the number of nominations they received, as long as the school or program received seven or more nominations in that specialty area. This means that schools ranked at the bottom of each specialty ranking received at least seven nominations.

Nominees for the specialty rankings were drawn only from the 285 master's programs in public affairs and administration that were surveyed. For example, a school such as [Yale University](#) – which offers a degree in environmental management through its School of the Environment but not a degree in public affairs – is not included.

Schools in the overall ranking of public affairs programs, which is based solely on the 5-point peer assessment score, are numerically ranked from highest to lowest based on their score.

Students interested in earning Master of Public Administration and Master of Public Policy degrees can visit the [NASPAA website](#) for more information on the schools offering degrees in public affairs, policy and administration.

*Searching for a grad school? Get our [complete rankings](#) of Best Graduate Schools.*