

## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** In the wake of COVID-19, there is an urgent need for a diverse public health work force to address problems presented or exacerbated by the global pandemic. Educational programs that create our work force both train and shape the makeup of access through graduate applications. The Graduate Record Exam has a number of standing issues, with additional barriers created by the pandemic. We trace the GRE waiver movement over several years, focusing on the gradual adoption in CEPH accredited programs and the rapid expansion of temporary waivers as a response to testing access.

**Methods:** We documented the GRE waiver status for all CEPH accredited program concentrations / degrees on several dates between October 28th, 2019 to September 20th, 2020, including whether a GRE waiver was temporary or permanent.

**Results:** We found that while GRE waiver use has expanded over 825% in 11 months, the coverage within and between programs is inconsistent. Doctoral degrees and concentrations such as biostatistics lag in the adoption of waivers, temporary or permanent.

**Conclusions:** Going forward, we need to consider gaps in waivers during the pandemic and how this data can be used to shape our future use of the GRE.

## ISSUES WITH THE GRE

### Biased against women and people of color



- Large gaps in GRE scores between men, women, and URM<sup>1,2,3</sup>
- Reducing focus of GRE scores in admissions greatly increases diversity of applicants<sup>1,4,5</sup>

### Cost barrier



- Financial burden: test costs costs \$205 (USA) - \$231.30 (China) and \$27 per school submission
- Additional \$150 for ETS to report only their highest cumulative score

### Poor predictor of academic success



- Not a good predictor of academic success, correlating mostly with first semester grades<sup>6,7,8</sup>
- Several studies observed highest-ranked students had lowest GRE scores and students withdrawing from school had higher quantitative GRE scores<sup>9,10</sup>

### At home GRE exacerbates digital divide

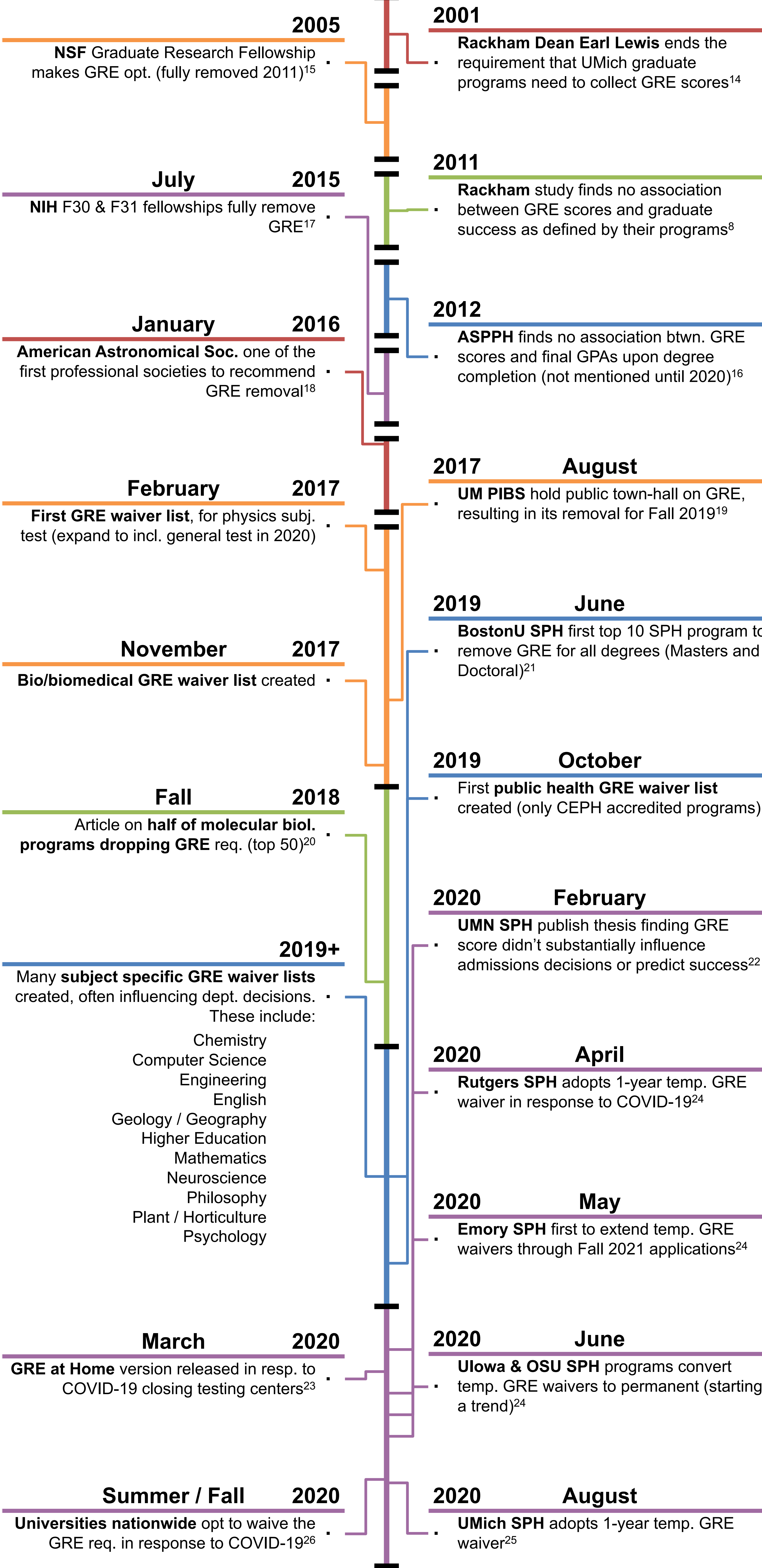


- Additional requirements to take the test, including access to a desktop or laptop and stable internet connection<sup>11</sup>
- 25% American adults lack access to high-speed internet, 20% of students at a large Midwestern had difficulty accessing education technology<sup>12,13</sup>

## GRE WAIVER HISTORY

### Influential Events

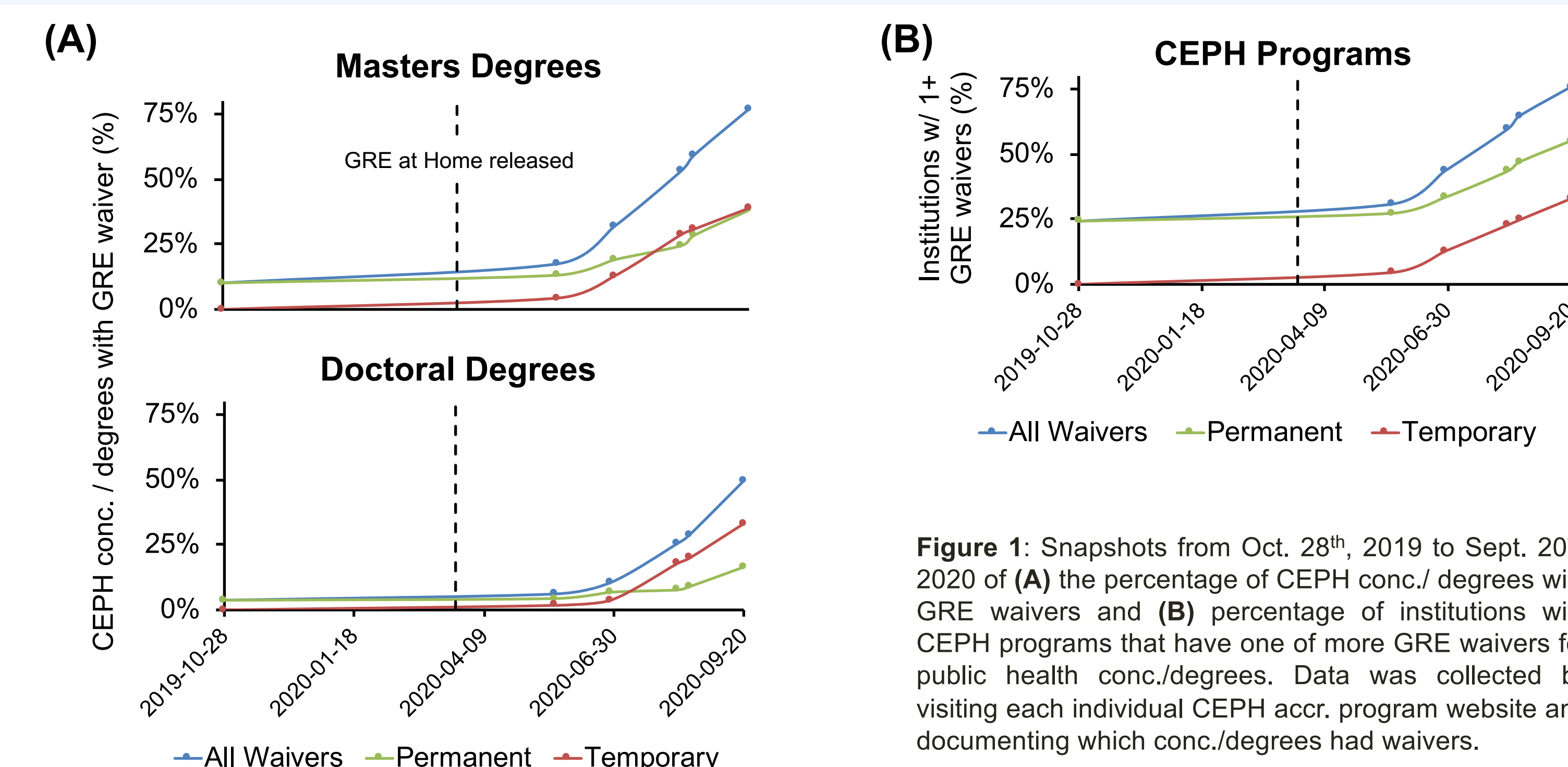
### UM / Public Health Specific



## PUBLIC HEALTH GRE WAIVER SNAPSHOTS

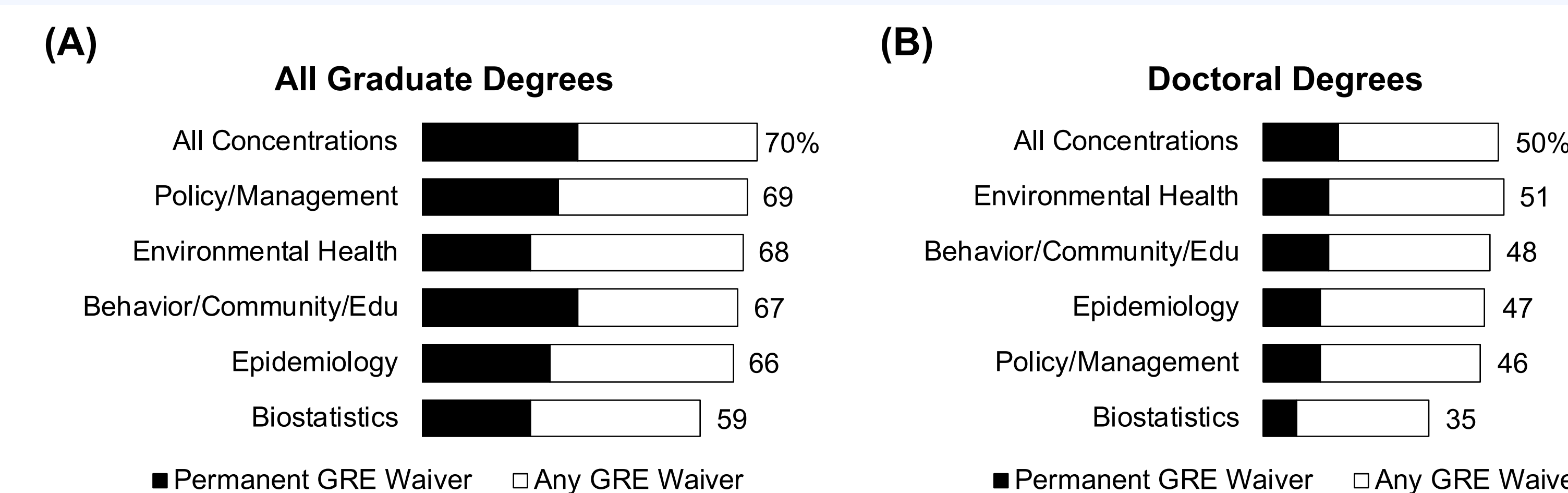
### 1. GRE waiver coverage expanded rapidly due to COVID-19

- 825% increase in public health degrees/concentrations with GRE waivers since last year
- 76% of CEPH accredited programs currently offer at least one GRE waiver



### 2. GRE waiver coverage not evenly spread among degrees and concentrations

- 59% of biostatistics degree programs offer a GRE waiver, but only 23% are permanent
- 50% of doctoral degrees offer a GRE waiver and only 16% offer a permanent waiver



## DISCUSSION / MOVING FORWARD

- Several SPH programs are now converting their temp. waivers to permanent
- Important to implement, at the very least, temporary GRE waivers currently
- Temp. waivers are a low stakes opportunity that can be used to test relevance
- We have the opportunity to test how removing a barrier to public health education will affect the professionals we create

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