



The Princeton Review 2016 College Hopes & Worries Survey Report

The Princeton Review, one of the nation's best known education services companies, has conducted this survey of college applicants and parents of applicants since 2003. The survey has been published in company's annual *Best Colleges* book and on www.princetonreview.com.

The 2016 survey appeared in *The Best 380 Colleges: 2016 Edition* (Penguin Random House, August 2015) and on www.princetonreview.com where respondents completed the survey from August 2015 through early March 2016.

Findings are based on responses from 10,434 people: 80% (8,347) were students applying to colleges and 20% (2,087) were parents of college applicants. Respondents came from all 50 states and DC, plus more than 20 countries abroad.

The company awards a \$2,000 college scholarship check to one survey participant chosen at random and it sends a complimentary copy of a Princeton Review book to 25 participants chosen at random. Winners of books in 2016 could chose either *Colleges That Pay You Back*, *Colleges That Create Futures*, or *Paying for College Without Going Broke*.

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About The Princeton Review

The Princeton Review is a leading tutoring, test prep and college admission services company. Every year, it helps millions of college- and graduate school-bound students achieve their education and career goals through online and in person courses delivered by a network of more than 4,000 teachers and tutors, online resources, and its more than 150 print and digital books published by Penguin Random House. The Princeton Review is headquartered in Natick, MA and is an operating business of Match Group (NASDAQ: MTCH). For more information, visit www.princetonreview.com. Follow the company on Twitter [@theprincetonrev](https://twitter.com/theprincetonrev).

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2016 Survey Questions / Findings

In this report, the percent of respondents overall (students plus parents) choosing an answer is shown to the left of each answer choice. To the right of each answer choice, the percent of students and the percent of parents choosing that answer are shown in parentheses.

The pluralities (answer choices selected by the highest percent of respondents) or the majorities (answer choices selected by 51 percent or more of respondents) are underlined.

The first question, "What would be your 'dream' college...?" was fill-in-the-blank. The remaining questions were all multiple-choice. Some questions have been asked annually or for several past years.

1) What would be your "dream" college? What college would you most like to attend (or see your child attend) if chance of being accepted or cost were not an issue?"

For this fill-in-the-blank question, respondents entered in names of more than 500 colleges, universities and other post-secondary institutions as their "dream college." Some schools were named by more than 200 respondents: others by only a few.

The colleges most named by students as their "dream college" were:

1/ Stanford Univ., 2/ Harvard College, 3/ New York Univ., 4/ Univ. of California, Los Angeles
5 / Princeton Univ., 6/ Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 7/ Columbia Univ.,
8/ Univ. of California – Berkeley, 9/ Yale Univ., 10/ Univ. of Southern California

The colleges most named by parents as their "dream college" for their child were:

1/ Stanford Univ., 2/ Harvard College, 3/ Princeton Univ., 4/ Massachusetts Institute of Technology,
5/ Duke Univ., 6/ Univ. of Michigan--Ann Arbor, 7/ Univ. of Notre Dame, 8/ New York Univ., 9/ Univ.
of Pennsylvania, 10/ Univ of Southern California

2) How many colleges will you (your child) apply to?

The plurality (42%) of respondents said they/their child would apply to 5 to 8 colleges (down 1% from 2015). Twenty-six percent said they/their child would apply to 9 or more colleges (up 1% from 2015).

32% One to 4 (31% Students, 34% Parents)
42% Five to 8 (42% Students, 45% Parents)
19% Nine to 12 (19% Students, 17% Parents)
07% Thirteen or more (08% Students, 04% Parents)
Combined: 26% applying to 9 or more.

3) What is / will be the toughest part of your (your child's) college application experience?

The plurality (37%) of respondents chose the answer, "Taking the SAT, ACT or AP exams" (up 3% from 2015). However, nearly as many respondents (32%) chose the answer, "Completing applications for admission and financial aid": that was the answer most chosen by parents (36%).

09% Researching colleges: choosing schools to apply to (08% Students, 12% Parents)
37% Taking SAT, ACT, or AP exams (38% Students, 33% Parents)
32% Completing applications for admission and financial aid (31% Students 36% Parents)
22% Waiting for decision letters: choosing which college to attend (23% Students, 19% Parents)

4) Which college admission exam do you wish you (your child) could take if all of the following options were available? (Note the new redesigned SAT won't be offered until March 2016, but imagine all three tests were current options as you make your answer choices. For information about the current and the new redesigned SAT, go to www.princetonreview.com/satchanges. For information about the ACT, go to www.princetonreview.com/college/act-information.

Among respondents overall, in 2015 and in 2016, the ACT has been the more preferred test if all three tests were options. The plurality (44%) would prefer to take (or see their child take) the ACT (up 5% from 2015). However, 33% would prefer to take the new redesigned SAT (up 9% from 2015) while 23% would have preferred to take the (old) SAT (down 14% from 2015).

44% The ACT (44% Students, 45% Parents)
33% The new SAT (31% Students, 37% Parents)
23% The SAT (25% Students, 18% Parents)

5) If you are (your child is) planning to take the new SAT which debuts March 2016 (and will replace the current SAT), how prepared do you feel you (your child) will be to take the new test?

While 38% of respondents indicated they (their children) were not planning to take the new SAT, among the 62% that indicated they were planning to take it, the majority of that group (53%) indicated they felt "extremely" or "moderately" prepared. Twenty-nine % said they felt "somewhat" prepared while 18% said they felt "slightly" or "not at all" prepared. There was little difference between student and parent views of their (their child's) preparedness.

- 13% Extremely (13% Students, 12% Parents)
- 40% Moderately (41% Students, 37% Parents)
Combined: 53% "Extremely" or "Moderately"
- 29% Somewhat (29% Students, 30% Parents)
- 12% Slightly (12% Students, 12% Parents)
- 06% Not at all (05% Students, 09% Parents)

6) How would you rate the college application guidance and support you (your child) have (has) received from your (your child's) high school college advisor / guidance counselor?

On the whole, 60% of respondents viewed the support from their college advisors / counselors favorably (with 23% of that cohort rating them as "excellent"), while 40% rated them less favorably, (with 12% saying "poor").

- 23% Excellent (25% Students, 17% Parents)
- 37% Good (37% Students, 36% Parents)
Combined: 60% "Excellent" or "Good"
- 28% Fair (27% Students, 31% Parents)
- 12% Poor (11% Students, 16% Parents)

7) What do you estimate your (or your child's) college degree will cost, including four years of tuition, room & board, fees, books and other expenses?

Nearly 9 out of 10 respondents (85%) estimated their college cost will be more than \$50,000 and within that cohort 41% estimated it to more than \$100,000. Parents' estimates of college costs were higher than students': 58% of parents estimated the costs as more than \$100,000 while 37% of students had this estimate.

- 41% More than \$100,000 (37% Students, 58% Parents)
- 25% \$75,000 to \$100,000 (25% Students, 24% Parents)
- 19% \$50,000 to 75,000 (20% Students, 11% Parents)
Combined: 85% said "More than \$50,000"
- 10% \$25,000 to \$50,000 (12% Students, 04% Parents)
- 05% Less than \$25,000 (06% Students, 03% Parents)

8) How necessary will financial aid (education loans, scholarships or grants) be to pay for your (your child's) college education?

Eighty-eight percent of respondents said financial aid would be "extremely" or "very" necessary (slightly down, 2%, from 2015). Within that cohort, 65% said "extremely." Nine years ago (2007), the first year this question was asked on the survey, 78% of respondents said financial aid would be "extremely," or "very" necessary, with 51% saying "extremely."

- 65% Extremely (65% Students, 65% Parents)
- 23% Very (23% Students, 20% Parents)
Combined 88% said "Extremely" or "Very Necessary"
- 11% Somewhat (11% Students, 12% Parents)
- 01% Not at all (01% Students, 03% Parents)

9) What's your biggest concern about applying to or attending college?

Debt has been the biggest concern among respondents (parents and students alike) for the past three years. The plurality (39%) said "Level of debt...to pay for the degree" was their biggest concern. This was also the biggest concern among the plurality in 2014 and 2013. For the six years prior (2007 to 2012), the biggest concern among the plurality (34%) was "Will get into their first choice college but won't have sufficient funds/aid to attend it." In 2006, the biggest concern among the plurality (34%) was "Won't get into first-choice college."

- 22% Won't get into first-choice college (23% Students, 22% Parents)
- 32% Will get into first-choice college, but won't be able to attend due to high cost and/or insufficient financial aid (32% Students, 32% Parents)
- 39% Level of debt I (my child) will take on to pay for the degree (38% Students, 40% Parents)
- 07% Will attend a college I (my child) may not be happy about (07% Students, 06% Parents)

10) How would you gauge your stress level about the college application process?

Stress levels have consistently been high among respondents. This year, 98% reported stress, and seven out of 10 (72%) gauged their stress levels as "very high" or "high." In 2003, when The Princeton Review first conducted this survey, only 56% of respondents reported "very high" or "high" levels of stress. For this year, more students (73%) than parents (67%) reported high stress levels.

- 29% Very High (30% Students, 25% Parents)
- 43% High (43% Students, 42% Parents)
Combined 72% Very High or High (up 16% from 2003)
- 26% Average (24% Students, 31% Parents)
- 02% Low (03% Students, 02% Parents)
- 00% Very Low (00% Students, 00% Parents)

11) Ideally, how far from home would you like the college you (your child) attend(s) to be?

Parents want their children to attend college closer to home. The majority (51%) of parents said they would like their child to attend a college *less than* 250 miles from home. The majority (69%) of students said they would like to attend a college *more than* 250 from home. Among that student cohort, 37% would prefer a college 500+ miles from home and 16% wish they could attend a college 1,000+ miles from home (the latter two figures are each up 2% from 2015).

- 35% Less than 250 miles (31% Students, 51% Parents)
- 32% 250 to 500 miles (32% Students, 30% Parents)
- 19% 500 to 1,000 miles (21% Students, 13% Parents)
- 14% More than 1,000 miles (16% Students, 06% Parents)

12) When it comes to choosing which college you (or your child) will attend, which of the following do you think it is most likely to be?

Among respondents overall, an equal percent (41%) said they'd chose the college that's the "best overall fit" as said they'd choose the college "best for their (their child's) career interests." However, a larger number of students (42%) than parents (38%) said they'd choose the college "best for their career interests." Only about 1 of 10 respondents (09%) said they'd choose the college with the "best academic reputation" or the "most affordable" college.

- 09% College with best academic reputation (09% Students, 07% Parents)
- 09% College that will be the most affordable (09% Students, 09% Parents)
- 41% College with best program for my (my child's) career interests (42% Students, 38% Parents)
- 41% College that will be the best overall fit (40% Students, 46% Parents)

13) If you (your child) had a way to compare colleges based on their reputation with regard to specific majors or programs (i.e. which schools had excellent departments for "x"), how much would this contribute to your (your child's) decision to apply to or attend a school?

A solid majority (99%) of respondents said having information about colleges' reputations with regard to majors/departments would contribute "strongly," "very much," or "somewhat" to their application/acceptance decisions with 83% of that cohort saying "strongly" or "very much."

38% Strongly (38% Students, 38% Parents)
45% Very Much (44% Students, 47% Parents)
16% Somewhat (17% Students, 14% Parents)
Combined 99% Somewhat, Very Much or Strongly
01% Not Much (01% Students, 01% Parents)
00% Not at All (00% Students, 00% Parents)

14) If you (your child) had a way to compare colleges based on their commitment to environmental issues (from academic offerings to practices concerning energy use, recycling, etc.), how much would this contribute to your (your child's) decision to apply to or attend a school?

A majority (61%) of respondents said having information about colleges' commitment to environmental issues would contribute "strongly," "very much," or "somewhat" to their application/attendance decisions. (This is slightly up, 1% from 2015.)

06% Strongly (06% Students, 06% Parents)
15% Very Much (16% Students, 13% Parents)
40% Somewhat (40% Students, 39% Parents)
Combined 61% Somewhat, Very Much or Strongly
30% Not Much (30% Students, 32% Parents)
09% Not at All (08% Students, 10% Parents)

Note: Princeton Review resources for parents and students on this subject include: Green Rating scores (from 60 to 99) that the company annually tallies for more than 800 colleges. The scores appear in school profiles at www.princetonreview.com and in various Princeton Review books. The company also publishes a free downloadable book, *The Princeton Review Guide to Green Colleges* annually in April at <http://www.princetonreview.com/green-guide>

15) What will be the biggest benefit of your (your child) attending college and earning a college diploma?

The plurality (44%) view the main benefit of a college degree as "a potentially better job and higher income" (down 4% from the plurality of 48% that chose this answer in 2015). Thirty-two percent consider "exposure to new ideas" and 24% see "education" as the primary benefit.

24% The education (24% Students, 25% Parents)
32% The exposure to new ideas (33% Students, 27% Parents)
Combined 56% chose answers related to education and learning
44% The potentially better job and higher income (43% students, 48% Parents)

16) On the whole, do you believe college will be "worth it" for you/your child?

Respondents almost unanimously (99%) view college as worth their investment, as did respondents to the 2015 survey.

99% Yes (99% Parents, 99% Students).
01% No (01% Parents, 01% Students).

(Optional) What advice would you give to college applicants or parents of applicants going through this experience next year

On this open-ended question, "Start early" has been the advice most given by students and parents every year. About 50% of respondents say this. See samplers of students' and of parents' advice on the "College Hopes & Worries Survey" area of Princeton Review site at www.princetonreview.com/college-hopes-worries

*Survey respondents – year over year:

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|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2015-16 / 10,434 people: | 8,347 students and 2,087 parents |
| 2014-15 / 12,062 people: | 9,650 students and 2,412 parents |
| 2013-14 / 14,150 people: | 10,116 students and 4,034 parents |
| 2012-13 / 14,125 people: | 9,955 students and 4,170 parents |
| 2011-12 / 10,650 people: | 7,455 students and 3,195 parents |
| 2010-11 / 12,185 people: | 8,219 students and 3,966 parents |
| 2009-10 / 12,174 people: | 9,132 students and 3,042 parents |
| 2008-09 / 15,722 people: | 12,715 students and 3,007 parents |
| 2007-08 / 10,388 people: | 8,776 students and 1,612 parents |
| 2006-07 / 5,854 people: | 4,594 students and 1,260 parents |
| 2005-06 / 4,902 people: | 3,890 students and 1,012 parents |
| 2004-05 / 3,930 people: | 2,885 students and 1,045 parents |
| 2003-04 / 3,339 people: | 3,036 students and 303 parents |
| 2002-03 / 1,003 people: | 901 students and 102 parents |