



2013 College Hopes & Worries Survey Report

The Princeton Review, one of the nation's best known education services companies, has conducted this survey of high school students applying to colleges and parents of college applicants since the 2002-03 school year. Respondents who complete the survey are readers of the company's annual "Best Colleges" book and users of its site, www.princetonreview.com.

The 2013 survey appeared in The Princeton Review book, *The Best 377 Colleges: 2013 Edition* (Random House, August 2012) in a paper version readers mailed or faxed to the company. The survey also ran on www.princetonreview.com where site users completed the survey online during the 2012-13 school year through March 5, 2013.

Findings for the 2013 survey are based on responses from 14,125 people: 70% (9,955) were students applying to colleges and 30% (4,170) were parents of college applicants. Respondents came from all 50 states, DC, Canada, the Virgin Islands, Guam, and Puerto Rico and more than 10 countries abroad. Notes on some of the past years' survey findings are below. For a report showing all past years' survey findings, contact Jeanne Krier at 212-539-1350.

The company awards a \$2,000 college scholarship check to one survey participant chosen at random, and it sends 25 participants also chosen at random one of the following Princeton Review books (their choice): *ACT or SAT?: Choosing the Right Exam For You*, *Paying for College Without Going Broke*, or *The Portable Guidance Counselor*.

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2013 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. The percent of students and the percent of parents choosing that answer are shown to the right and 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 in 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?"

In their answers to this fill-in-the-blank question, respondents wrote in the names of more than 500 colleges, universities and other post-secondary institutions as their "dream college" (with some schools named by only one respondent and others named by more than 500 respondents as their "dream college").

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

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

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

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

In 2012, Harvard was the most named college among student respondents and Stanford was the most named "dream college" among parent respondents.

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

The plurality (44%) of respondents overall said they/their child will apply to 5 to 8 colleges while 22% said they/their child will apply to 9 or more colleges.

34% One to 4 (34% Students, 34% Parents)
44% Five to 8 (43% Students, 45% Parents)
17% Nine to 12 (17% Students, 17% Parents)
05% Thirteen or more (06% Students, 04% Parents)
Combined: 22% applying to 9 or more.

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

The plurality (34%) of respondents overall chose the answer, "Completing applications for admission and financial aid" as the toughest part of their application experience. However, in 2012, the plurality overall (32%) chose the answer "Taking the SAT, ACT or APs".

13% Researching colleges: choosing schools to apply to (12% Students, 18% Parents)
30% Taking the SAT, ACT, or APs (31% Students, 26% Parents)
34% Completing applications for admission and financial aid (33% Students 35% Parents)
23% Waiting for the decision letters: choosing which college to attend (24% Students, 21% Parents)

4) 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?

87% of respondents overall – nearly 9 out of 10 – estimated their college cost to be more than \$50,000 (and within that cohort 45% estimated it at more than \$100,000. Parents' estimates of

college costs have consistently been higher than students': this year 84% of parents estimated their college costs will be more than \$75,000 while 63% of students had this estimate.

45% More than \$100,000 (38% Students, 60% Parents)

25% \$75,000 to \$100,000 (25% Students, 24% Parents)

17% \$50,000 to 75,000 (19% Students, 10% Parents)

Combined: 87% said More than \$50,000

11% \$25,000 to \$50,000 (14% Students, 05% Parents)

02% Less than \$25,000 (04% Students, 01% Parents)

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

Among respondents overall, 89% (a 3% increase from 2012) said financial aid would be "extremely" or "very" necessary with 66% of that cohort (a 5% increase from 2012) saying "extremely." Six years ago, in 2007, the first year this question was asked on the survey, 78% of respondents overall said financial aid would be "extremely," or very" necessary, with 51% saying "extremely."

66% Extremely (65% Students, 66% Parents)

23% Very (24% Students, 20% Parents)

Combined 89% said Extremely or Very necessary

10% Somewhat (10% Students, 12% Parents)

01% Not at all (01% Students, 02% Parents)

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

Among respondents overall, the plurality (39%)'s biggest concern is the "Level of debt...to pay for the degree." This marks a shift, as for the six years prior, from 2012 back to 2007, 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."

20% Won't get into first-choice college (22% Students, 17% Parents)

33% Will get into first-choice college, but won't be able to attend due to high cost and/or insufficient financial aid (33% Students, 33% Parents)

39% Level of debt I (my child) will take on to pay for the degree (38% Students, 42% Parents)

08% Will attend a college I (my child) may not be happy about (07% Students, 08% Parents)

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

Among respondents overall, 97% reported some level of stress, and almost seven out of 10 (69% as compared with 71% in 2012) gauged their stress levels as "very high" or "high." More students (70%) than parents (67%) reported high stress levels. In 2003, when The Princeton Review first conducted this survey, only 56% of respondents overall reported "very high" or "high" levels of stress.

24% Very High (24% Students, 24% Parents)

45% High (46% Students, 43% Parents)

Combined 69% Very High or High (up 13% from 2003)

28% Average (27% Students, 31% Parents)
03% Low (03% Students, 02% Parents)
00% Very Low (0% Students, 0% Parents)

8) 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 (52%) of parents said they would ideally like their child to attend a college less than 250 miles from home, while the majority (61%) of students said they would ideally like to attend a college more than 250 from home. Among that student cohort, 33% would prefer a college 500+ miles from home and 14% wish they could attend a college 1,000+ miles from home.

43% Less than 250 miles (39% Students, 52% Parents)
29% 250 to 500 miles (28% Students, 29% Parents)
17% 500 to 1,000 miles (19% Students, 12% Parents)
11% More than 1,000 miles (14% Students, 07% Parents)

9) 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?

While the plurality (45%) of respondents overall said they/their child would likely attend the college that will be the "best overall fit," only about 1 of 10 respondents (09%) indicated they'd choose the college with the "best academic reputation." Since 2005, a rising % of respondents (37% in 2013 vs. 24% in 2005) have selected the answer choice "best...for my (my child's) career interests).

09% College with best academic reputation (09% Students, 08% Parents)
09% College that will be the most affordable (09% Students, 08% Parents)
37% College with best program for my (my child's) career interests (38% Students, 36% Parents)
45% College that will be the best overall fit (44% Students, 48% Parents)

10) 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?

99% of respondents overall said having such information would contribute "strongly," "very much," or "somewhat" to their decisions with 81% of that cohort saying "strongly" or "very much." This is the first year this question has been on the survey.

36% Strongly (35% Students, 40% Parents)
45% Very Much (45% Students, 43% Parents)
18% Somewhat (18% Students, 16% Parents)
Combined 99% Somewhat, Very Much or Strongly
01% Not Much (02% Students, 01% Parents)
00% Not at All (00% Students, 00% Parents)

11) 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 solid majority (62%) of respondents overall said having such information would contribute "strongly," "very much," or "somewhat" to their decisions. Students have generally placed slightly higher value on information about colleges' commitments to the environment than parents have.

07% Strongly (07% Students, 06% Parents)

15% Very Much (16% Students, 14% Parents)

40% Somewhat (39% Students, 41% Parents)

Combined 62% Somewhat, Very Much or Strongly

29% Not Much (29% Students, 29% Parents)

09% Not at All (09% 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 and reports for 700+ colleges which appear in school profiles in various Princeton Review books and on its website; and a free downloadable guide, *The Princeton Review Guide to Green Colleges* which the Company teams up with the United States Green Building Council to make available to students annually in April

<http://www.princetonreview.com/green-guide.aspx>.

12) Has the state of the economy affected your (your child's) decisions about applying to or attending college?

Among respondents overall, 79% said the state of the economy has affected their decisions about college. That's up 4% from 2012. More students (81%) reported this than parents (74%).

20% Yes: Extremely (20% Students, 20% Parents)

26% Yes: Very Much (26% Students, 24% Parents)

33% Yes: Somewhat (35% Students, 30% Parents)

Combined 79% Yes

21% No: Not at all. (19% Students, 26% Parents)

13) If your answer to the previous question was one of the "Yes" choices, how would you describe the major way the economy has affected your (your child's) college application decisions?

The plurality (50%) of respondents overall said they are applying to more "financial aid safety" schools." While that figure is down 2% from 2012, it's a 16% increase over the 34% of respondents that selected this answer choice in 2009.

24% Am applying to colleges with "lower sticker prices" (22% Students, 29% Parents)

50% Am applying to more "financial aid safety" schools (53% Students, 46% Parents)

26% Am applying to colleges closer to home to save on travel (25% Students, 25% Parents)

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

Among respondents overall, the majority, 51% saw the main benefit of a college degree as a potentially better job, higher income and income: while 24% saw the "education" and 25% saw "exposure to new ideas" as the major benefit.

24% The education (24% Students, 23% Parents)

25% The exposure to new ideas (25% Students, 25% Parents)

Combined 50% chose answers related to education and learning

51% The potentially better job and higher income (51% students, 52% Parents)

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

Respondents unanimously view college as worth their investment.

100% Yes (100% Parents, 100% Students).

00% No

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

"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.aspx

*Number of survey respondents – year over year:

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