



The Princeton Review 2019 College Hopes & Worries Survey Report

[The Princeton Review](#)[®], one of the nation's best-known education services companies, has conducted the [College Hopes & Worries Survey](#) annually since 2003. Approximately 165,000 people have participated in the survey since its inception. (See end* of this report for year-over-year figures.). About 80% have been students applying to colleges; 20% have been parents of applicants. Survey participants have primarily been users of the company's site and readers of its annual *Best Colleges* book in which the survey questionnaire is published every year.

The survey has 16 questions, the majority of which have been asked annually or for several years. The questions have multiple-choice answers with the exception of one question, "What would be your 'dream' college?," that invites a fill-in-the-blank answer.

The 2019 survey findings are based on responses from 11,900 people: 78% (9,282) were students applying to colleges and 22% (2,618) were parents of applicants. Respondents came from all 50 states and Washington D.C., plus countries abroad. The survey appeared in *The Best 384 Colleges: 2019 Edition* (Penguin Random House, August 2018) and on <https://www.princetonreview.com/> where respondents completed the survey online from August 2018 through late February 2019.

The company awards a \$2,000 college scholarship to one survey participant and Princeton Review books to 25 participants (all chosen at random). In 2019, respondents were offered their choice of *The Best Value Colleges*, *Colleges That Create Futures*, or *Paying for College*.

Contact: Jeanne Krier, Publicist for The Princeton Review, 212-539-1350, krierpr@gmail.com for:

- Interviews with The Princeton Review Editor-in-Chief Robert Franek who can discuss the survey findings over the years. He can also offer seasonal advice for college applicants and their parents in various stages of the application process from dealing with college acceptance/rejection/waitlist letters to deciphering financial aid offers, and student rights with respect to May 1st National Decision Day. A bio on Robert is [here](#).
- Reports of past years' College Hopes & Worries Survey findings.

The Princeton Review's March 6, 2019 release on the 2019 survey findings, and a downloadable infographic depicting selected findings are accessible [here](#).

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 more than 150 print and digital books published by Penguin Random House. The Princeton Review is headquartered in New York, NY. The Princeton Review is not affiliated with Princeton University. For more information, visit www.PrincetonReview.com. Follow the company on Twitter [@ThePrincetonRev](https://twitter.com/ThePrincetonRev).

2019 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, the percent of students and the percent of parents choosing that answer are in parentheses. The pluralities (answer choices selected by the highest percent of respondents) or the majorities (answer choices selected by 51 percent or greater of respondents) are underlined.

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 hundreds of colleges, universities, and other post-secondary institutions as their "dream college." Some schools were named by more than 300 respondents, some by only one.

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

1. Stanford University
2. Harvard College
3. Princeton University
4. New York University
5. University of California—Los Angeles
6. Massachusetts Institute of Technology
7. Columbia University
8. University of Pennsylvania
9. Yale University
10. University of Michigan—Ann Arbor

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

1. Stanford University
2. Harvard College
3. Princeton University
4. Massachusetts Institute of Technology
5. New York University
6. Cornell University
7. University of California—Los Angeles
8. University of Michigan—Ann Arbor
9. Yale University
10. University of Notre Dame

Since 2013, Stanford University has been school most named by both students and parents. It has been #1 on both the student and the parent list for the past seven years (2019 back to 2013). Over that same period, Harvard College has consistently been the #2 most-named school.

In previous years, Stanford has been most named by students three additional times and by parents four additional times. Harvard has been most named by students and by parents four times. In 2005, 2006, and 2007, NYU was #1 on the student list.

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

The plurality (42%) of respondents (slightly more than the 40% in 2018) said they/their child would apply to 5 to 8 colleges. 28% said they/their child would apply to 9 or more colleges.

30% One to 4 (30% Students, 29% Parents)
42% Five to 8 (41% Students, 47% Parents)
20% Nine to 12 (20% Students, 19% Parents)
08% Thirteen or more (09% Students, 05% Parents)
Combined: 28% 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 SAT[®], ACT[®], or AP[®] exams (up 5% from 2018), while 33% said "Completing applications for admission and financial aid" (down 2% from 2018). Among parents, however, "Completing applications..." was the slightly more selected answer choice (this has been the case over the years).

10% Researching colleges: choosing which schools to apply to
(09% Students, 15% Parents)
37% Taking SAT, ACT, or AP exams (38% Students, 33% Parents)
33% Completing applications for admission and financial aid (32% Students 33% Parents)
20% Waiting for the decision letters; choosing which college to attend
(21% Students, 19% Parents)

4) Which college admission exam do you (your child) plan to take (or have taken)?

The majority (70%) plan to take or have taken the SAT, while 30% plan to take or have taken the ACT.

70% The SAT (71% Students, 69% Parents)
30% The ACT (29% Students, 31% Parents)

5) How likely is it that you (your child) will take both the ACT and the SAT?

A majority (70%) of respondents said it is Somewhat, Very or Extremely likely that they (or their child) would take both the ACT and the SAT.

36% Extremely (36% Students, 38% Parents)
16% Very (16% Students, 16% Parents)
18% Somewhat (19% Students, 17% Parents)
Combined 70% Extremely, Very, or Somewhat Likely
17% Not Very (17% Students, 16% Parents)
13% Not at All (12% Students, 13% 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, 59% of respondents viewed the support from their college advisors / counselors as Good or Excellent (with 19% of that cohort rating it as Excellent). Since 2016 when this question was introduced in the survey, respondents' ratings have generally been consistent.

19% Excellent (20% Students, 17% Parents)

40% Good (40% Students, 39% Parents)

Combined: 59% Excellent or Good

30% Fair (29% Students, 31% Parents)

11% Poor (11% Students, 13% 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?

Eight out of 10 respondents (83%) estimated their college costs will be more than \$50,000 and 37% of that cohort estimated them to be more than \$100,000. Parents' estimates of costs were (and have consistently been) higher than students': 57% of parents estimated the costs as more than \$100,000 while 31% of students had this estimate.

37% More than \$100,000 (31% Students, 57% Parents)

26% \$75,000 to \$100,000 (26% Students, 23% Parents)

20% \$50,000 to 75,000 (23% Students, 12% Parents)

Combined: 83% said More than \$50,000

11% \$25,000 to \$50,000 (13% Students, 06% Parents)

06% Less than \$25,000 (07% Students, 02% Parents)

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

99% of respondents said financial aid would be Somewhat, Very, or Extremely necessary. Within that cohort, 64% deemed it Extremely necessary. For thirteen years running (since 2007, the first year this question was asked on the survey), 51% said Extremely necessary.

64% Extremely (63% Students, 66% Parents)

24% Very (25% Students, 20% Parents)

11% Somewhat (11% Students, 12% Parents)

Combined: 99% said Extremely, Very, or Somewhat necessary.

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

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

The plurality (42%) said "Level of debt...to pay for the degree" was their biggest concern. This has been the biggest concern among the plurality for seven years (2013 to 2019). For the six years prior (2007 to 2012), the biggest concern among the plurality was "Will get into their first-choice college but won't be able to afford to attend." In 2003 (the first year of

the survey), the biggest concern among 54% (the majority) was "Won't get into first-choice college."

- 20% Won't get into first-choice college (20% Students, 21% Parents)
- 31% Will get into first-choice college, but won't be able to afford to attend (31% Students, 32% Parents)
- 42% Level of debt I (my child) will take on to pay for the degree (42% Students, 40% Parents)
- 07% Will attend a college I (my child) may not be happy about (07% Students, 07% Parents)

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

Stress levels have consistently been high among respondents. This year 73% gauged their stress levels as Very High or High (with 29% of that cohort gauging it to be Very High). In 2003, only 56% reported Very High or High levels of stress.

- 29% Very High (30% Students, 24% Parents)
- 44% High (45% Students, 43% Parents)
Combined: 73% Very High or High (up 17% from 2003)
- 25% Average (23% Students, 30% Parents)
- 02% Low (02% Students, 03% 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 relatively close to home. The plurality (47%) of parents said they would like their child to attend a college *less than* 250 miles from home, with another 31% preferring it be 500 miles or less 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 more than 1,000 miles from home. Consistently, the pattern has been that parents want their children to attend a college closer to home, and students want to attend a school that is farther away.

- 35% Less than 250 miles (31% Students, 47% Parents)
- 31% 250 to 500 miles (32% Students, 31% Parents)
- 19% 500 to 1,000 miles (21% Students, 13% Parents)
- 15% More than 1,000 miles (16% Students, 09% 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?

In 2019 (and 2018), the plurality (42%) of respondents overall chose the answer "college that's best for the student's career interests" – a shift from almost all previous years in which the plurality had chosen "college that's the best overall fit." Nine percent of respondents said they'd choose the "most affordable college." Eight percent said they'd choose the college with the "best academic reputation."

- 08% College with best academic reputation (08% Students, 08% Parents)
- 09% College that will be the most affordable (09% Students, 08% Parents)

42% College with best program for my (my child's) career interests (43% Students, 41% Parents)

41% College that will be the best overall fit (40% Students, 43% Parents)

13) If you (your child) had a way to compare colleges based on their reputation with regard to their career services offerings, how much would this contribute to your (your child's) decision to apply to or attend a school?

Colleges' career services offerings are also impacting decisions about whether to apply to the schools. A solid majority (68%) of respondents said having information about colleges' career services would contribute to their decisions about applying to or attending a college with 24% of that cohort saying information on such offerings would contribute Strongly.

24% Strongly (23% Students, 27% Parents)

44% Very Much (44% Students, 46% Parents)

Combined 68% Strongly or Very Much

29% Somewhat (29% Students, 24% Parents)

03% Not Much (03% Students, 03% Parents)

<01% Not at All (01% Students, 00% Parents)

Note: The Princeton Review's resources for students and parents on college career services include four topic-related ranking lists. One, published in *The Best 384 Colleges*, names the 20 colleges in the book with "Best Career Services." Others, published in *The Best Value Colleges*, name the 25 colleges in that book for "Best Career Placement," "Best Schools for Internships," and "Best Alumni Network." Each school profile in this book also has a section detailing career information with stats on grads' employment, job placement and salaries, and an ROI rating score that The Princeton Review tallies for each school on a scale of 60-99. Further information is at www.princetonreview.com

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

How "green" colleges are matters to applicants and their parents. A majority (64%) of respondents said having information about a college's commitment to environmental issues would contribute to their application decisions with 23% indicating it would contribute Strongly. (This has been indicated in the survey findings since 2008 when The Princeton Review first asked respondents about the subject. The level of interest has remained consistent over the years.)

07% Strongly (07% Students, 05% Parents)

16% Very Much (17% Students, 14% Parents)

41% Somewhat (42% Students, 39% Parents)

Combined 64% Somewhat, Very Much or Strongly

28% Not Much (27% Students, 30% Parents)

08% Not at All (07% Students, 12% Parents)

Note: The Princeton Review's resources for parents and students on this subject include: Green Rating scores (from 60 to 99) that the company annually tallies for more than 600 colleges. The scores appear in school profiles at www.princetonreview.com, in various

Princeton Review books and in the company's annual "Guide to Green Colleges" that has been made available for free since 2009. The current guide is accessible [here](#).

15) What will be the biggest benefit of your (your child) getting a college degree?

The plurality (43%) view the main benefit of a college degree as "a potentially better job and higher income," up 2% from 2018. (This has been a consistent finding in the survey for nine years.) 32% consider "exposure to new ideas" and 25% see "the education" overall as the primary benefit.

25% The education (24% Students, 26% Parents)

32% The exposure to new ideas (34% Students, 27% Parents)

Combined 59% chose answers related to education and learning

43% The potentially better job and higher income (42% students, 47% Parents)

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

Since this question was first asked on the survey in 2014, respondents have overwhelmingly viewed college as worth their investment.

99% Yes (99% Students, 99% Parents)

01% No (01% Students, 01% Parents)

(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 who proffer advice say this. Peruse samplers of respondents' advice by clicking on the tabs, "Parent Advice" and "Student Advice" on the "College Hopes & Worries Survey" main page [here](#).

*Survey respondents – year over year:

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2018 - 19 / 11,900: | 9,282 students and 2,618 parents |
| 2017 - 18 / 10,958: | 9,345 students and 1,613 parents |
| 2016 - 17 / 10,519: | 8,499 students and 2,020 parents |
| 2015 - 16 / 10,434: | 8,347 students and 2,087 parents |
| 2014 - 15 / 12,062: | 9,650 students and 2,412 parents |
| 2013 - 14 / 14,150: | 10,116 students and 4,034 parents |
| 2012 - 13 / 14,125: | 9,955 students and 4,170 parents |
| 2011 - 12 / 10,650: | 7,455 students and 3,195 parents |
| 2010 - 11 / 12,185: | 8,219 students and 3,966 parents |
| 2009 - 10 / 12,174: | 9,132 students and 3,042 parents |
| 2008 - 09 / 15,722: | 12,715 students and 3,007 parents |
| 2007 - 08 / 10,388: | 8,776 students and 1,612 parents |
| 2006 - 07 / 5,854: | 4,594 students and 1,260 parents |
| 2005 - 06 / 4,902: | 3,890 students and 1,012 parents |
| 2004 - 05 / 3,930: | 2,885 students and 1,045 parents |
| 2003 - 04 / 3,339: | 3,036 students and 303 parents |
| 2002 - 03 / 1,003: | 901 students and 102 parents |