



The Princeton Review College Hopes & Worries 2014 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 2014 survey appeared in The Princeton Review book, *The Best 378 Colleges: 2014 Edition* (Random House, August 2013) in a paper version readers mailed or faxed to the company. The survey also ran on www.princetonreview.com where users completed the survey online during the 2013-14 school year through February 19, 2014.

Findings for the 2014 survey are based on responses from 14,150 people: 71% (10,116) were students applying to colleges and 29% (4,034) were parents of college applicants. Respondents came from all 50 states and DC, plus the Virgin Islands, Guam, Puerto Rico, and more than 13 countries abroad.

The company awards a \$2,000 college scholarship check to one survey participant chosen at random, and it sends 25 participants 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 Best Value Colleges*.

Press Contacts:

Jeanne Krier, Publicist, The Princeton Review, 212-539-1350, pressoffice@review.com
Kristen O'Toole, Editor, The Princeton Review, 888-347-7737 ext 1405, kotoole@review.com

2014 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 / Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 6/ Princeton Univ., 7 / Univ. of California--Los Angeles, 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/ Massachusetts Institute of Technology 5/ Univ. of Michigan-Ann Arbor, 6/ Univ. of Notre Dame,
7/ Duke Univ., 8/ New York Univ., 9/ Yale Univ., 10/ Vanderbilt Univ.

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

The plurality (48%) of respondents overall said they/their child will apply to 5 to 8 colleges (up 4% from 2013) while 21% said they/their child will apply to 9 or more colleges.

31% One to 4 (30% Students, 35% Parents)
48% Five to 8 (48% Students, 47% Parents)
17% Nine to 12 (17% Students, 15% Parents)
04% Thirteen or more (05% Students, 03% Parents)
Combined: 21% applying to 9 or more.

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

The plurality (35%) of respondents overall chose the answer, ""Taking the SAT, ACT or APs"" as the toughest part of their application experience. In 2013, the plurality (34%) chose "Completing applications for admission and financial aid."

18% Researching colleges: choosing schools to apply to (17% Students, 21% Parents)
35% Taking the SAT, ACT, or APs (39% Students, 28% Parents)
31% Completing applications for admission and financial aid (28% Students 36% Parents)
16% Waiting for the decision letters: choosing which college to attend (16% Students, 15% 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?

86% of respondents overall – nearly 9 out of 10 – estimated their college cost to be more than \$50,000 (and within that cohort 42% estimated it at more than \$100,000. Parents' estimates of college costs were higher than students': 82% of parents estimated their college costs will be more than \$75,000 while 63% of students had this estimate.

42% More than \$100,000 (36% Students, 55% Parents)

27% \$75,000 to \$100,000 (27% Students, 27% Parents)
17% \$50,000 to 75,000 (20% Students, 11% Parents)
 Combined: 86% said More than \$50,000
11% \$25,000 to \$50,000 (13% Students, 06% Parents)
03% 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% said financial aid would be "extremely" or "very" necessary with 66% of that cohort saying "extremely." Seven 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."

65% Extremely (64% Students, 66% Parents)
24% Very (25% Students, 22% Parents)
 Combined 89% said Extremely or Very necessary
10% Somewhat (10% Students, 10% 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 was also the biggest concern in 2013, whereas 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."

24% Won't get into first-choice college (27% Students, 18% Parents)
34% Will get into first-choice college, but won't be able to attend due to high cost and/or insufficient financial aid (34% Students, 36% Parents)
35% Level of debt I (my child) will take on to pay for the degree (32% Students, 40% Parents)
07% Will attend a college I (my child) may not be happy about (07% Students, 06% Parents)

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

Among respondents overall, 97% reported some level of stress, and seven out of 10 (70% as compared with 69% in 2013) gauged their stress levels as "very high" or "high." More students (73%) than parents (66%) 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.

25% Very High (27% Students, 23% Parents)
45% High (46% Students, 43% Parents)
 Combined 70% Very High or High (up 14% from 2003)
27% Average (25% Students, 31% Parents)
02% Low (02% Students, 02% Parents)
01% Very Low (0% Students, 1% 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 (63%) of students said they would ideally like to attend a college more than 250 from home. Among that student cohort, 35% would prefer a college 500+ miles from home and 15% wish they could attend a college 1,000+ miles from home.

41% Less than 250 miles (37% Students, 52% Parents)

28% 250 to 500 miles (28% Students, 29% Parents)

18% 500 to 1,000 miles (20% Students, 12% Parents)

13% More than 1,000 miles (15% 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?

For the first time in 10 years, an equal percentage (42%) of respondents overall said they/their child would likely attend the college that will be "best for career interests" as chose "best overall fit." In previous years, "best overall fit" was the primary choice each year. Only about 1 of 10 respondents (09%) indicated they'd choose the college with the best academic reputation, which for 10 years has been the least chosen.

09% College with best academic reputation (11% Students, 07% Parents)

07% College that will be the most affordable (07% Students, 08% Parents)

42% College with best program for my (my child's) career interests (42% Students, 40% Parents)

42% College that will be the best overall fit (40% Students, 45% 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 83% of that cohort saying "strongly" or "very much."

38% Strongly (38% Students, 40% Parents)

45% Very Much (45% Students, 45% Parents)

16% Somewhat (16% 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)

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 majority (61%) of respondents overall said having such information would contribute to their decisions either "strongly," "very much," or "somewhat."

07% Strongly (07% Students, 06% Parents)
16% Very Much (16% Students, 15% Parents)
38% Somewhat (38% Students, 39% Parents)
Combined 61% Somewhat, Very Much or Strongly
30% Not Much (30% Students, 30% 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 825+ 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, 77% said the state of the economy has affected their decisions about college. That's down 2% from last year. More students (79%) reported this than parents (73%).

18% Yes: Extremely (17% Students, 18% Parents)
24% Yes: Very Much (25% Students, 23% Parents)
35% Yes: Somewhat (37% Students, 32% Parents)
Combined 77% Yes
23% No: Not at all. (21% Students, 27% Parents)

Question was not asked in previous years.

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 (53%) of respondents overall said they are applying to more "financial aid safety" schools" (up 3% from last year). It is a 19% increase over the 34% of respondents that selected this answer choice in 2009.

24% Am applying to colleges with "lower sticker prices" (21% Students, 31% Parents)
53% Am applying to more "financial aid safety" schools (55% Students, 46% Parents)
23% Am applying to colleges closer to home to save on travel (24% Students, 23% Parents)

In 2013

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)

In 2012

24% Am applying to colleges with "lower sticker prices" (22% Students, 29% Parents)
52% Am applying to more "financial aid safety" schools (54% Students, 47% Parents)
24% Am applying to colleges closer to home to save on travel (24% Students, 24% Parents)

Question was not asked in previous years.

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, 24% Parents)

25% The exposure to new ideas (26% Students, 23% Parents)

Combined 50% chose answers related to education and learning

51% The potentially better job and higher income (50% students, 53% 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

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

"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

*Survey respondents – year over year:

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