sallie

How America Pays for College

Sallie's national study of college students and parents

Conducted by Ipsos

2026

About Sallie℠

We're Sallie, the smarter way to college. Sallie supports student success at every step of the higher education journey.

From comparing schools to finding free money through scholarships and grants, and exploring responsible financing, Sallie is the go-to partner providing tools and resources to help students and families make confident decisions. Because doing college smarter changes everything.

We've been around as Sallie Mae®, helping millions of students plan and pay for school. We still offer Sallie Mae student loans and savings products, but we're evolving our offerings to better support students and families throughout all stages of their higher education journeys. As Sallie, we simply do more.

Resources

Take on school with Sallie Smart Takes℠ guidance

Sallie Smart Takes are everything students and families need to tackle big and small decisions, so they can stay on track, explore their options, and take on school the smart way.

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Getting ready for college starts with finding the right match. Scout℠ College Search is a free, easy way to explore and compare schools by location, majors, campus life, and more.

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With a Sallie Mae® High-Yield Savings Account, Sallie Mae® Certificate of Deposit, Sallie Mae® Money Market, or a SmartyPig® by Sallie Mae savings account, students and families have easy ways to grow their money and save for all their goals.

All things college start here

Get study help, money tips, and real college talk from @SallieMae and @HeySallie across platforms, and follow us on TikTok at @hey.sallie.

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About this study

Sallie's *How America Pays for College 2026* report examines how enrolled college students and parents of college students approach education financing and the strategies they use to pay for college. The report considers a variety of funding sources, including parent and student income and savings, scholarships, grants, and borrowed funds, and evaluates trends in paying strategies over time.

This 19th edition highlights the role of scholarships and federal financial aid in funding college education. Moreover, the report explores how college families make decisions about college enrollment and financing, where families get their information and which sources they trust, and their perspectives on higher education.

Sallie has again partnered with Ipsos, a global independent insights and analytics company, to conduct this study.

How America Pays for College 2026 reflects the results of an online survey, conducted in English, with:

• 1,000 parents of 18 to 24-year-old undergraduate students

• 1,000 undergraduate students, ages 18 to 24

The research was conducted between April 22, 2026, and May 26, 2026.

Dollar and proportional amounts in this report are averages that reflect composite representations intended to illustrate how the "typical" family paid for college. The composite is a computed formula that spreads individual responses across all survey respondents. The geographic regions discussed mirror those used by the U.S. Census Bureau. For details on methodology, including sampling, weighting, and credibility intervals, see the technical notes section at the end of this report.

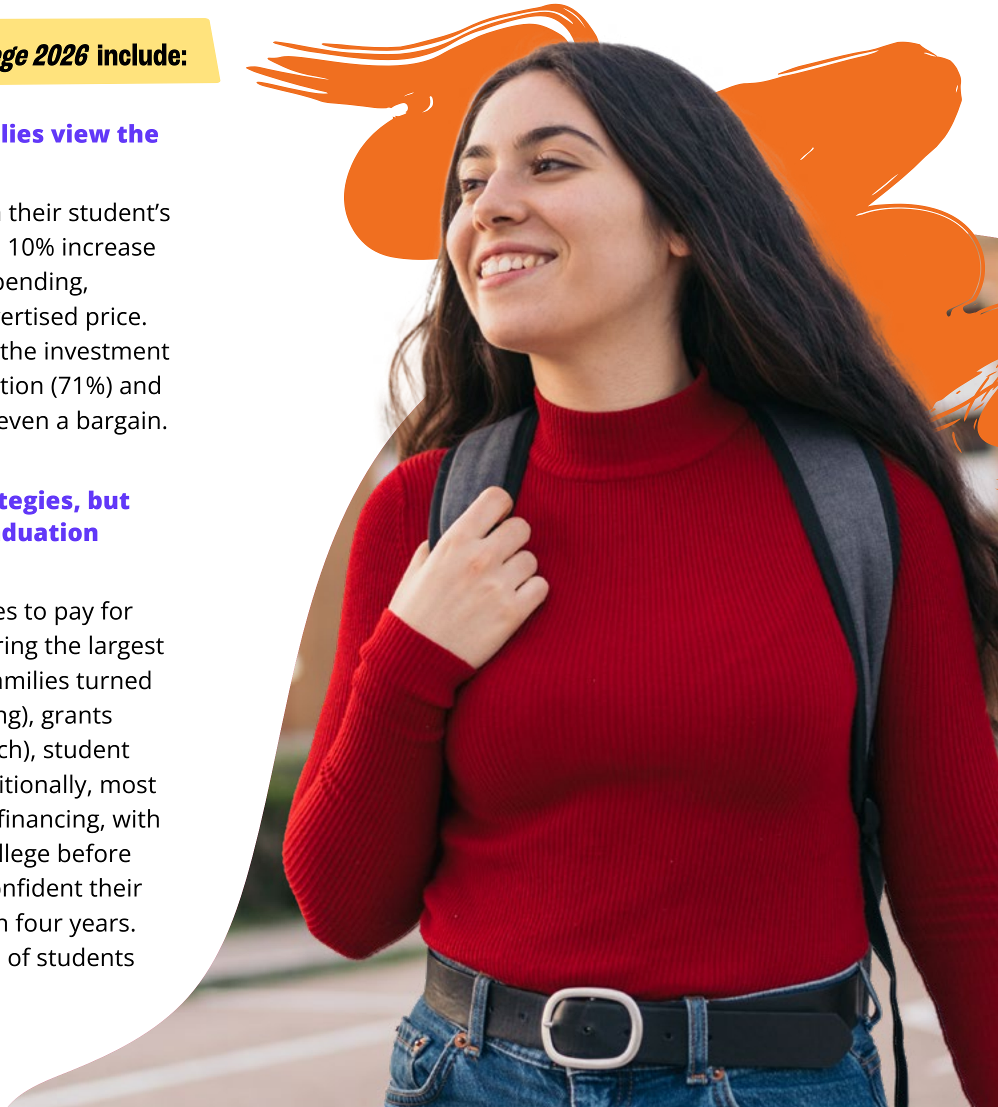
Executive summary

The 19th edition of *How America Pays for College 2026* finds families remain deeply committed to higher education, viewing it as a valuable investment in their student's future (91%) and expressing a willingness to stretch financially to secure the best opportunities for their student (80%).

Families spent an average of $34,019 on college costs—including tuition, fees, books, technology, meals, housing, and other related expenses—for the 2025-2026 academic year, up from $30,837 last year, marking a 10% increase from the prior year. Families paid $16,624 out of pocket, from both parent and student income and savings which covered nearly half (49%) of college costs. Scholarships and grants covered 27% of college costs, while student and parent borrowing covered 22% and gifts from friends or family contributed another 2%. Nearly three quarters of families (74%) completed the FAFSA® to access financial aid.

The research also highlights opportunities to better support families throughout the college financing journey. While many approach planning with confidence, misconceptions about scholarships, uncertainty around financial aid, and limited conversations about borrowing continue to influence financial decisions. Together, these findings reinforce the importance of pairing financial resources with trusted guidance to help families confidently navigate paying for college.

Key findings in *How America Pays for College 2026* include:



College spending has increased, and families view the investment as worthwhile.

On average, college families spent $34,019 on their student's education for the 2025-2026 academic year, a 10% increase from the prior year. Despite the increase in spending, most families (52%) paid less than the full advertised price. Additionally, the majority of families perceive the investment as worthwhile, believing their students' education (71%) and experience (72%) are appropriately priced or even a bargain.

Families used varied college funding strategies, but planning and optimism exceed actual graduation completion rates.

College families relied on a variety of resources to pay for college, with parent income and savings covering the largest share at 39%. To cover the remaining costs, families turned to scholarships (15% of total reported spending), grants (12%), parent and student borrowing (11% each), student income and savings (10%), and gifts (2%). Additionally, most families took a proactive approach to college financing, with 58% developing a plan to cover all years of college before enrolling. Furthermore, 84% of families felt confident their student would earn a Bachelor's degree within four years. Despite this planning and optimism, only 61% of students complete their degree within six years.[1]

Scholarships helped make college more affordable, yet misconceptions and missed applications limited their impact.

Six in 10 families (61%) reported receiving a scholarship with an average award of $8,291 for the 2025-2026 academic year. Among scholarship users, 59% of students received a scholarship from their college, 35% from the state or local government, and 33% from a community organization, nonprofit, or company. However, many students missed out on these opportunities. In fact, three out of four students who did not receive a scholarship had simply never applied. Many families mistakenly believe that scholarships are only for students with outstanding grades or exceptional talents (48%), are reserved for freshman applicants (41%), or aren't worth pursuing if the parents have higher incomes (35%).

Most families submitted the FAFSA®, but many still needed support.

74% of college families completed the FAFSA® for the 2025-2026 academic year, with most families (57%) receiving the amount of aid they expected. While 81% found the FAFSA® process easy, a marked improvement from last year's 72%, more than half (56%) still needed support, most often turning to friends and family (22%), the school's financial aid office (21%), or the FAFSA® Help Page (17%). About one-quarter of families (26%) didn't submit the FAFSA®, most often because they believed their family income was too high (26%), were unaware of the FAFSA® (19%), or assumed they wouldn't qualify for reasons unrelated to finances (16%). Additionally, awareness about the FAFSA® opening date remains low, with only 25% of families knowing that the FAFSA® opens in October.

Borrowing opens doors to college, but key financial topics were often overlooked.

For the 2025-2026 academic year, 47% of college families borrowed to cover expenses, and for 68% of them, borrowing was always part of their plan. Borrowing expanded college opportunities, enabling 38% of students to reach for higher-cost schools. That said, fewer than half of families discussed the total cost of all years of college (44%), expected starting salaries after graduation (38%), or who would be responsible for repaying student loans (31%).

Two-thirds of families support federal loan limits and are looking to schools to make college more affordable.

Nearly 6 in 10 families (58%) believe unlimited federal student lending has contributed, at least in part, to rising college costs. Two-thirds (66%) support limits on federal student borrowing. Students and families believe colleges should address new federal loan limits by lowering tuition and fees (53%), offering more scholarships (38%), and providing more generous financial aid (36%).

Families weighed various factors in college decisions.

College families prioritized price (40%), proximity to home (39%), in-state status (39%), and academic programs (38%) when choosing a school. While financial (35%) and academic (36%) factors were nearly equal as final deciding factors, cost remained a central focus, with 79% of families eliminating schools based on price at multiple stages. While students ultimately decided which school to attend in most families (66%), decisions about how to pay for that school were more often made jointly with a parent (39%). Regardless of who the final decision-maker was, most families felt confident they made the right choice regarding the student's current school (89%) and how to pay for it (84%).

Families show a strong commitment to higher education.

College families overwhelmingly view higher education as a worthwhile investment in their student's future (91%) and believe a college degree creates opportunities (88%). This conviction is fueled by strong motivations and beliefs: 82% believe a college degree will lead to higher incomes and 69% believe a college degree is essential for career success today. In fact, a Bachelor's degree provides a median lifetime return on investment of nearly $1.8 million compared to high school completion over a 40-year career.[2] To secure this opportunity, 80% are willing to stretch their resources, and 75% would rather borrow than not attend college.

How America Pays for College 2026 reveals that college families remain steadfast in their commitment to higher education. Most approach financing with careful planning and optimism, using a wide range of funding strategies such as savings, scholarships, aid, and borrowing to bridge the financial gap. However, misconceptions discourage many from applying for scholarships, families often need help completing the FAFSA®, and details about borrowing sometimes go undiscussed. These gaps highlight an opportunity to support families with practical tools, information, and resources.

Through resources like Scholly® Scholarships, Sallie's FAFSA® Guide, Scout℠ College Search, and educational content that helps families understand their options, Sallie equips students and families with the information and tools they need to confidently plan, pay for, and succeed in college. As the college financing landscape continues to evolve, combining financial solutions with trusted guidance can help more families turn their educational goals into reality.

[1] National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, Yearly Progress and Completion Report 2025, https://nscresearchcenter.org/yearly-progress-and-completion/

[2] Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, The Major Payoff: Evaluating Earnings and Employment Outcomes Across Bachelor's Degrees, October 16, 2025, https://cew.georgetown.edu/major-payoff/

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Data Tables

Table 1. The role of various funding sources to pay for college

Frequency of sources and average amounts used

		2026		2025	
		Percent of families using each source	Average amount among users	Percent of families using each source	Average amount among users
Borrowed	**Parent borrowing**	**22%**		**21%**	
	Federal PLUS Loans	13%	$7,735	11%	$10,286
	Private education loan	10%	$8,247	9%	$7,029
	Home equity loan or HELOC	7%	$6,649	6%	$5,817
	Parent credit cards	11%	$4,429	11%	$3,900
	Retirement account loan	8%	$6,705	7%	$5,672
	Parent other loans	9%	$4,367	9%	$5,736
	Student borrowing	**29%**		**31%**	
	Federal student loans	25%	$9,186	27%	$8,255
	Private student loan	12%	$7,849	12%	$7,425
	Student credit cards	9%	$2,483	10%	$2,386
	Student other loans	8%	$3,742	9%	$3,673
Non-borrowed	**Parent income and savings**	**73%**		**74%**	
	Parent current income	59%	$10,552	58%	$9,550
	College savings plan (529)	34%	$9,506	32%	$9,932
	Retirement savings withdrawal	18%	$6,964	17%	$5,350
	Other parent savings or investments	34%	$6,550	34%	$5,812
	Student income and savings	**56%**		**57%**	
	Student current income	38%	$3,347	41%	$2,880
	Student savings	34%	$3,191	35%	$2,850
	Federal work-study	21%	$2,506	19%	$2,122
	Other student savings or investments	19%	$3,037	20%	$2,342
	Scholarships and grants	**78%**		**76%**	
	Scholarships	61%	$8,291	60%	$8,004
	Grants	59%	$7,108	57%	$6,180
	Relatives or friends	**13%**		**12%**	

Base: Parents and students

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Table 2a. Composite of college funding sources

Average value contributed from each source, by income level

		Total	Income <$50k	Income $50k–<$100k	Income $100k–<$150k	Income $150k+
Borrowed	**Parent borrowing**					
	Federal PLUS loans	$994	$843	$790	$1,437	$1,263
	Private education loan	$827	$783	$859	$916	$790
	Home equity loan or HELOC	$500	$614	$496	$279	$558
	Parent credit cards	$490	$396	$470	$618	$675
	Retirement account loan	$513	$258	$801	$397	$563
	Parent other loans	$411	$377	$478	$320	$470
	Student borrowing					
	Federal student loans	$2,305	$2,251	$2,360	$2,789	$1,523
	Private student loan	$950	$1,026	$995	$885	$771
	Student credit cards	$230	$299	$184	$308	$93
	Student other loans	$309	$281	$339	$348	$268
Non-borrowed	**Parent income and savings**					
	Parent current income	$6,277	$5,150	$6,053	$6,980	$9,337
	College savings plan (529)	$3,241	$1,581	$2,100	$4,231	$9,298
	Retirement savings withdrawal	$1,304	$1,153	$1,315	$1,666	$1,301
	Other parent savings or investments	$2,265	$1,936	$2,267	$2,189	$3,458
	Student income and savings					
	Student current income	$1,299	$1,199	$1,369	$1,129	$1,692
	Student savings	$1,101	$1,099	$1,131	$1,066	$1,161
	Federal work-study	$540	$606	$543	$485	$474
	Other student savings or investments	$597	$682	$566	$602	$513
	Other					
	Grants	$4,186	$5,084	$4,907	$2,791	$1,917
	Scholarships	$5,077	$5,108	$4,717	$5,476	$5,175
	Relatives or friends	$604	$537	$548	$597	$903
	Total paid:	$34,019	$31,259	$33,288	$35,505	$42,200

Base: Parents and students

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Table 3a. Composite of college funding sources

Average percent of total cost of attendance met by each source, by income level

		Total	Income <$50k	Income $50k–<$100k	Income $100k–<$150k	Income $150k+
Borrowed	**Parent borrowing**					
	Federal PLUS loans	3%	3%	2%	4%	3%
	Private education loan	2%	3%	3%	3%	2%
	Home equity loan or HELOC	1%	2%	1%	1%	1%
	Parent credit cards	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%
	Retirement account loan	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%
	Parent other loans	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
	Student borrowing					
	Federal student loans	7%	7%	7%	8%	4%
	Private student loan	3%	3%	3%	2%	2%
	Student credit cards	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%
	Student other loans	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Non-borrowed	**Parent income and savings**					
	Parent current income	18%	16%	18%	20%	22%
	College savings plan (529)	10%	5%	6%	12%	22%
	Retirement savings withdrawal	4%	4%	4%	5%	3%
	Other parent savings or investments	7%	6%	7%	6%	8%
	Student income and savings					
	Student current income	4%	4%	4%	3%	4%
	Student savings	3%	4%	3%	3%	3%
	Federal work-study	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%
	Other student savings or investments	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%
	Other					
	Grants	12%	16%	15%	8%	5%
	Scholarships	15%	16%	14%	15%	12%
	Relatives or friends	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%

Base: Parents and students

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Table 2b. Composite of college funding sources

Average value contributed from each source, by race/ethnicity

		Total	Race/ethnicity			
			White	Black	Hispanic	Other
Borrowed	**Parent borrowing**					
	Federal PLUS loans	$994	$677	$1,274	$1,401	$1,368
	Private education loan	$827	$697	$597	$1,351	$749
	Home equity loan or HELOC	$500	$479	$362	$417	$969
	Parent credit cards	$490	$411	$427	$688	$580
	Retirement account loan	$513	$622	$365	$338	$531
	Parent other loans	$411	$317	$430	$457	$763
	Student borrowing					
	Federal student loans	$2,305	$2,051	$2,410	$2,582	$2,873
	Private student loan	$950	$1,049	$459	$1,277	$486
	Student credit cards	$230	$203	$255	$285	$219
	Student other loans	$309	$342	$264	$314	$192
Non-borrowed	**Parent income and savings**					
	Parent current income	$6,277	$6,023	$6,659	$5,804	$7,978
	College savings plan (529)	$3,241	$4,075	$1,769	$1,983	$3,701
	Retirement savings withdrawal	$1,304	$1,335	$1,623	$1,232	$841
	Other parent savings or investments	$2,265	$2,508	$2,125	$1,666	$2,458
	Student income and savings					
	Student current income	$1,299	$1,311	$1,438	$1,246	$1,142
	Student savings	$1,101	$1,258	$609	$1,019	$1,184
	Federal work-study	$540	$523	$498	$612	$534
	Other student savings or investments	$597	$669	$516	$548	$451
	Other					
	Grants	$4,186	$3,666	$5,223	$4,661	$4,362
	Scholarships	$5,077	$5,442	$4,593	$4,325	$5,458
	Relatives or friends	$604	$558	$526	$636	$889
	Total paid:	$34,019	$34,215	$32,421	$32,840	$37,726

Base: Parents and students

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Table 3b. Composite of college funding sources

Average percent of total cost of attendance met by each source, by race/ethnicity

		Total	Race/ethnicity			
			White	Black	Hispanic	Other
Borrowed	**Parent borrowing**					
	Federal PLUS loans	3%	2%	4%	4%	4%
	Private education loan	2%	2%	2%	4%	2%
	Home equity loan or HELOC	1%	1%	1%	1%	3%
	Parent credit cards	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%
	Retirement account loan	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%
	Parent other loans	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%
	Student borrowing					
	Federal student loans	7%	6%	7%	8%	8%
	Private student loan	3%	3%	1%	4%	1%
	Student credit cards	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
	Student other loans	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Non-borrowed	**Parent income and savings**					
	Parent current income	18%	18%	21%	18%	21%
	College savings plan (529)	10%	12%	5%	6%	10%
	Retirement savings withdrawal	4%	4%	5%	4%	2%
	Other parent savings or investments	7%	7%	7%	5%	7%
	Student income and savings					
	Student current income	4%	4%	4%	4%	3%
	Student savings	3%	4%	2%	3%	3%
	Federal work-study	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%
	Other student savings or investments	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%
	Other					
	Grants	12%	11%	16%	14%	12%
	Scholarships	15%	16%	14%	13%	14%
	Relatives or friends	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%

Base: Parents and students

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Table 2c. Composite of college funding sources

Average value contributed from each source, by school type

		Total	School type		
			2-year public	4-year public	4-year private
Borrowed	**Parent borrowing**				
	Federal PLUS loans	$994	$355	$824	$1,760
	Private education loan	$827	$416	$812	$994
	Home equity loan or HELOC	$500	$227	$587	$503
	Parent credit cards	$490	$397	$466	$571
	Retirement account loan	$513	$360	$388	$812
	Parent other loans	$411	$370	$361	$533
	Student borrowing				
	Federal student loans	$2,305	$893	$2,444	$3,087
	Private student loan	$950	$693	$825	$1,393
	Student credit cards	$230	$151	$188	$362
	Student other loans	$309	$176	$277	$463
Non-borrowed	**Parent income and savings**				
	Parent current income	$6,277	$4,217	$6,215	$7,942
	College savings plan (529)	$3,241	$1,599	$3,268	$4,365
	Retirement savings withdrawal	$1,304	$1,201	$1,148	$1,726
	Other parent savings or investments	$2,265	$1,735	$2,225	$2,817
	Student income and savings				
	Student current income	$1,299	$1,083	$1,138	$1,788
	Student savings	$1,101	$858	$987	$1,506
	Federal work-study	$540	$439	$413	$834
	Other student savings or investments	$597	$817	$438	$740
	Other				
	Grants	$4,186	$3,004	$4,043	$5,284
	Scholarships	$5,077	$2,053	$4,220	$8,847
	Relatives or friends	$604	$346	$620	$706
	Total paid:	$34,019	$21,388	$31,886	$47,032

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Table 3c. Composite of college funding sources

Average percent of total cost of attendance met by each source, by school type

		Total	School type: 2-year public	School type: 4-year public	School type: 4-year private
Borrowed	**Parent borrowing**				
Borrowed	Federal PLUS loans	3%	2%	3%	4%
Borrowed	Private education loan	2%	2%	3%	2%
Borrowed	Home equity loan or HELOC	1%	1%	2%	1%
Borrowed	Parent credit cards	1%	2%	1%	1%
Borrowed	Retirement account loan	2%	2%	1%	2%
Borrowed	Parent other loans	1%	2%	1%	1%
Borrowed	**Student borrowing**				
Borrowed	Federal student loans	7%	4%	8%	7%
Borrowed	Private student loan	3%	3%	3%	3%
Borrowed	Student credit cards	1%	1%	1%	1%
Borrowed	Student other loans	1%	1%	1%	1%
Non-borrowed	**Parent income and savings**				
Non-borrowed	Parent current income	18%	20%	19%	17%
Non-borrowed	College savings plan (529)	10%	7%	10%	9%
Non-borrowed	Retirement savings withdrawal	4%	6%	4%	4%
Non-borrowed	Other parent savings or investments	7%	8%	7%	6%
Non-borrowed	**Student income and savings**				
Non-borrowed	Student current income	4%	5%	4%	4%
Non-borrowed	Student savings	3%	4%	3%	3%
Non-borrowed	Federal work-study	2%	2%	1%	2%
Non-borrowed	Other student savings or investments	2%	4%	1%	2%
Non-borrowed	**Other**				
Non-borrowed	Grants	12%	14%	13%	11%
Non-borrowed	Scholarships	15%	10%	13%	19%
Non-borrowed	Relatives or friends	2%	2%	2%	2%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Table 2d. Composite of college funding sources

Average value contributed from each source, by family borrowing status

		Total	Family borrowing status: Borrowed	Did not borrow
Borrowed	**Parent borrowing**			
	Federal PLUS loans	$994	$2,092	-
	Private education loan	$827	$1,741	-
	Home equity loan or HELOC	$500	$1,051	-
	Parent credit cards	$490	$1,031	-
	Retirement account loan	$513	$1,079	-
	Parent other loans	$411	$864	-
	Student borrowing			
	Federal student loans	$2,305	$4,850	-
	Private student loan	$950	$1,999	-
	Student credit cards	$230	$484	-
	Student other loans	$309	$649	-
Non-borrowed	**Parent income and savings**			
	Parent current income	$6,277	$5,535	$6,949
	College savings plan (529)	$3,241	$1,829	$4,520
	Retirement savings withdrawal	$1,304	$1,467	$1,157
	Other parent savings or investments	$2,265	$2,025	$2,483
	Student income and savings			
	Student current income	$1,299	$1,538	$1,082
	Student savings	$1,101	$1,237	$979
	Federal work-study	$540	$705	$390
	Other student savings or investments	$597	$647	$552
	Other			
	Grants	$4,186	$4,034	$4,324
	Scholarships	$5,077	$4,260	$5,816
	Relatives or friends	$604	$911	$327
	Total paid:	$34,019	$40,029	$28,576

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Table 3d. Composite of college funding sources

Average percent of total cost of attendance met by each source, by family borrowing status

		Total	Family borrowing status	
			Borrowed	Did not borrow
Borrowed	**Parent borrowing**			
	Federal PLUS loans	3%	5%	-
	Private education loan	2%	4%	-
	Home equity loan or HELOC	1%	3%	-
	Parent credit cards	1%	3%	-
	Retirement account loan	2%	3%	-
	Parent other loans	1%	2%	-
	Student borrowing			
	Federal student loans	7%	12%	-
	Private student loan	3%	5%	-
	Student credit cards	1%	1%	-
	Student other loans	1%	2%	-
Non-borrowed	**Parent income and savings**			
	Parent current income	18%	14%	24%
	College savings plan (529)	10%	5%	16%
	Retirement savings withdrawal	4%	4%	4%
	Other parent savings or investments	7%	5%	9%
	Student income and savings			
	Student current income	4%	4%	4%
	Student savings	3%	3%	3%
	Federal work-study	2%	2%	1%
	Other student savings or investments	2%	2%	2%
	Other			
	Grants	12%	10%	15%
	Scholarships	15%	11%	20%
	Relatives or friends	2%	2%	1%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Which of the following cost categories did you include in the total amount you reported spending on college? Select all that apply.

a. Tuition
b. Room and board (on-campus or off)
c. Mandatory fees
d. Meal plan
e. Food or eating out outside of the meal plan
f. Health insurance and medical expenses
g. Books and course materials
h. Apartment or dorm expenses (e.g., rent, furniture, decor, storage, dining wares, etc.)

Additional answer options continue on next page

Table 4: Cost categories included in total spending amount (Part 1)

	N	Tuition	Books and course materials	Mandatory fees	Room and board	Meal plan	Technology	Food or eating out outside of the meal plan	Apartment or dorm expenses
Total	**1372**	**85%**	**55%**	**56%**	**53%**	**43%**	**33%**	**27%**	**24%**
Parent	**675**	89%	63%	58%	55%	45%	39%	33%	26%
Student	**697**	82%	48%	53%	51%	41%	27%	22%	23%
Income									
<$50k	**408**	83%	55%	55%	46%	37%	34%	25%	24%
$50k-<$100k	**509**	84%	53%	52%	53%	38%	32%	29%	27%
$100k-<$150k	**253**	90%	59%	53%	58%	48%	30%	28%	22%
$150k+	**190**	89%	56%	67%	60%	59%	40%	26%	25%
Race/ethnicity									
White	**712**	87%	58%	58%	57%	44%	33%	25%	27%
Black	**272**	81%	52%	47%	48%	37%	30%	27%	21%
Hispanic	**272**	84%	48%	53%	49%	41%	34%	33%	23%
Other	**116**	88%	60%	58%	52%	51%	36%	25%	19%
Family college experience									
First in family	**229**	85%	52%	47%	49%	35%	27%	29%	25%
Second generation	**1137**	86%	56%	58%	54%	45%	35%	27%	24%
Borrowing status									
Borrowed	**688**	83%	52%	54%	55%	45%	34%	28%	29%
Did not borrow	**684**	88%	59%	57%	51%	40%	33%	27%	20%
School type									
4-year public/state college/university	**750**	88%	59%	59%	58%	43%	34%	29%	27%
4-year private college/ university	**333**	86%	49%	53%	63%	53%	29%	25%	25%
2-year public/ community college	**258**	80%	58%	53%	23%	26%	37%	26%	16%
Region									
Northeast	**282**	86%	46%	53%	61%	44%	28%	27%	22%
Midwest	**309**	90%	57%	61%	54%	38%	31%	25%	27%
South	**525**	85%	57%	57%	51%	45%	37%	30%	26%
West	**256**	82%	60%	51%	50%	42%	35%	25%	22%

Base: Parents and students who reported total spending for college

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Which of the following cost categories did you include in the total amount you reported spending on college? Select all that apply.

i. Transportation around campus and the surrounding area
j. Travel to and from home
k. Technology (e.g., computer, software, internet, streaming, etc.)
l. Extracurriculars and activities (e.g., clubs, sports, Greek life, etc.)
m. Internship or career-related expenses
n. Study abroad or specific academic programs
o. Other
p. None of these

Table 4: Cost categories included in total spending amount (Part 2)

	N	Transportation around campus/the surrounding area	Travel to and from home	Health insurance and medical expenses	Extracurriculars and activities	Internship or career-related expenses	Study abroad or specific academic programs	Other	None of these
Total	**1372**	**21%**	**21%**	**17%**	**14%**	**10%**	**9%**	**0%**	**1%**
Parent	**675**	21%	23%	16%	14%	8%	7%	0%	1%
Student	**697**	21%	20%	17%	13%	12%	10%	0%	1%
Income									
<$50k	**408**	19%	20%	18%	13%	12%	11%	0%	1%
$50k-<$100k	**509**	22%	21%	17%	15%	8%	7%	0%	0%
$100k-<$150k	**253**	20%	22%	14%	11%	8%	10%	-	0%
$150k+	**190**	24%	25%	17%	17%	15%	8%	1%	1%
Race/ethnicity									
White	**712**	21%	22%	15%	13%	11%	7%	0%	0%
Black	**272**	18%	12%	16%	15%	9%	10%	-	1%
Hispanic	**272**	23%	25%	17%	14%	8%	13%	0%	2%
Other	**116**	20%	20%	23%	17%	9%	8%	-	-
Family college experience									
First in family	**229**	20%	24%	17%	12%	12%	12%	-	1%
Second generation	**1137**	21%	20%	16%	14%	9%	8%	0%	1%
Borrowing status									
Borrowed	**688**	21%	24%	18%	15%	12%	10%	0%	0%
Did not borrow	**684**	21%	19%	16%	13%	8%	7%	0%	1%
School type									
4-year public/state college/university	**750**	22%	22%	18%	16%	8%	7%	0%	1%
4-year private college/ university	**333**	16%	20%	16%	11%	12%	8%	-	1%
2-year public/ community college	**258**	27%	22%	10%	14%	10%	10%	1%	1%
Region									
Northeast	**282**	17%	21%	17%	12%	8%	8%	0%	1%
Midwest	**309**	19%	19%	12%	13%	11%	9%	-	0%
South	**525**	24%	22%	17%	14%	8%	10%	0%	1%
West	**256**	21%	22%	19%	15%	13%	8%	1%	1%

Base: Parents and students who reported total spending for college

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Of the total cost of attendance, how much money did [Student: you] [Parent: your child] use to pay for college this year from grants (federal, state, or school based)? Your best estimate is fine.

Table 5. Grant use and average amounts

	N	% of total families	Average amount among users
Total	**2000**	**59%**	**$7,108**
Parent	**1000**	57%	$6,775
Student	**1000**	60%	$7,434
Income			
<$50k	**658**	71%	$7,114
$50k-<$100k	**748**	59%	$8,161
$100k-<$150k	**333**	50%	$5,589
$150k+	**237**	36%	$5,394
Race/ethnicity			
White	**1038**	54%	$6,769
Black	**405**	70%	$7,447
Hispanic	**386**	65%	$7,102
Other	**171**	53%	$8,234
Family college experience			
First in family	**334**	62%	$7,921
Second generation	**1654**	58%	$6,861
Borrowing status			
Borrowed	**969**	62%	$6,479
Did not borrow	**1031**	55%	$7,743
School type			
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	55%	$7,299
4-year private college/university	**464**	58%	$9,037
2-year public/ community college	**425**	66%	$4,546
Region			
Northeast	**401**	56%	$6,968
Midwest	**440**	58%	$7,876
South	**778**	60%	$7,165
West	**381**	60%	$6,510

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Of the total cost of attendance, how much money did [Student: you] [Parent: your child] use to pay for college this year from scholarships (received from the school, outside organizations and businesses, or state programs)? Your best estimate is fine.

Table 6. Scholarship use and average amounts

	N	% of total families	Average amount among users
Total	**2000**	**61%**	**$8,291**
Parent	**1000**	56%	$8,347
Student	**1000**	66%	$8,242
Income			
<$50k	**658**	64%	$7,997
$50k-<$100k	**748**	57%	$8,210
$100k-<$150k	**333**	66%	$8,311
$150k+	**237**	56%	$9,170
Race/ethnicity			
White	**1038**	64%	$8,404
Black	**405**	62%	$7,411
Hispanic	**386**	53%	$8,021
Other	**171**	57%	$9,537
Family college experience			
First in family	**334**	54%	$7,514
Second generation	**1654**	63%	$8,495
Borrowing status			
Borrowed	**969**	62%	$6,823
Did not borrow	**1031**	60%	$9,672
School type			
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	60%	$7,054
4-year private college/university	**464**	69%	$12,848
2-year public/ community college	**425**	53%	$3,866
Region			
Northeast	**401**	62%	$9,183
Midwest	**440**	64%	$8,920
South	**778**	63%	$7,892
West	**381**	54%	$7,521

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: You said that [Parent: your child] [Student: you] received $ in scholarships to pay for college this year. How much of this amount was...?

a. Awarded by the state/local government
b. Awarded by the college
c. Awarded by a community or nonprofit organization, or a company (e.g., business, charity, employer, club, etc.)
d. Don't know

Table 7. Scholarship sources

		Awarded by the state/ local government		Awarded by the college		Awarded by a community or nonprofit organization/company	
	N	% of families	Average amount among users	% of families	Average amount among users	% of families	Average amount among users
Total	**1214**	**35%**	**$3,090**	**59%**	**$7,950**	**33%**	**$2,747**
Parent	**585**	32%	$2,784	55%	$8,605	33%	$3,187
Student	**629**	37%	$3,326	61%	$7,426	33%	$2,351
Income							
<$50k	**415**	37%	$3,917	52%	$6,777	33%	$2,746
$50k-<$100k	**438**	38%	$2,562	60%	$8,164	35%	$2,535
$100k-<$150k	**213**	31%	$2,824	62%	$9,080	33%	$2,492
$150k+	**130**	28%	$2,448	68%	$8,220	31%	$2,546
Race/ethnicity							
White	**642**	30%	$3,721	59%	$8,096	30%	$2,671
Black	**251**	45%	$2,497	54%	$7,823	38%	$3,467
Hispanic	**223**	45%	$2,708	61%	$6,898	39%	$2,699
Other*	**98**	27%	$1,861	58%	$9,417	32%	$1,943
Family college experience							
First in family	**191**	38%	$2,347	49%	$9,735	32%	$2,478
Second generation	**1019**	34%	$3,300	61%	$7,585	34%	$2,812
Borrowing status							
Borrowed	**608**	40%	$2,219	60%	$5,983	40%	$2,432
Did not borrow	**606**	30%	$4,191	57%	$9,936	27%	$3,192
School type							
4-year public/state college/ university	**651**	33%	$3,334	55%	$5,129	31%	$3,629
4-year private college/university	**317**	31%	$3,977	67%	$13,853	31%	$2,489
2-year public/ community college	**222**	43%	$1,803	50%	$2,962	39%	$1,527
Region							
Northeast	**256**	33%	$2,370	65%	$8,928	32%	$2,535
Midwest	**275**	35%	$2,753	64%	$7,932	36%	$3,060
South	**480**	35%	$3,697	54%	$7,770	31%	$3,142
West	**203**	37%	$2,965	55%	$7,116	36%	$1,972

Base: Parents and students who reported using scholarships
*Small base size

Return to the "Table of tables"

Table 8a. Scholarship perceptions

	N	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Earning a scholarship is something to be proud of	**2000**	60%	27%	9%	2%	1%	1%
The scholarship(s) we received make(s) it possible for me/my child to go to college*	**2000**	46%	30%	14%	5%	3%	1%
Students can apply for scholarships only before their freshman year of college	**2000**	22%	19%	18%	15%	20%	6%
Scholarships are only available for students with exceptional grades or abilities	**2000**	19%	29%	19%	18%	14%	1%
It's not worth applying for scholarships if the parents make too much money	**2000**	17%	18%	17%	20%	25%	3%

Base: Parents and students
*Parents and students who used scholarships to cover the cost of this academic year

Return to the "Table of tables"

Table 8b. Scholarship perceptions (% Strongly or somewhat agree)

	N	Earning a scholarship is something to be proud of	The scholarship(s) we received make(s) it possible for me/my child to go to college*	Scholarships are only available for students with exceptional grades or abilities	Students can apply for scholarships only before their freshman year of college	It's not worth applying for scholarships if the parents make too much money
Total	**2000**	**87%**	**76%**	**48%**	**41%**	**35%**
Parent	**1000**	91%	75%	47%	38%	34%
Student	**1000**	83%	77%	49%	43%	37%
Income						
<$50k	**658**	84%	72%	47%	42%	32%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	88%	82%	49%	40%	37%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	91%	81%	47%	41%	33%
$150k+	**237**	88%	69%	51%	40%	40%
Race/ethnicity						
White	**1038**	88%	75%	46%	38%	34%
Black	**405**	80%	75%	47%	42%	33%
Hispanic	**386**	89%	79%	55%	48%	39%
Other	**171**	85%	80%	48%	39%	37%
Family college experience						
First in family	**334**	82%	73%	49%	41%	32%
Second generation	**1654**	88%	77%	48%	41%	36%
Borrowing status						
Borrowed	**969**	86%	76%	50%	46%	39%
Did not borrow	**1031**	88%	77%	47%	35%	31%
School type						
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	87%	76%	45%	37%	35%
4-year private college/ university	**464**	88%	78%	51%	46%	35%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	86%	75%	51%	40%	34%
Region						
Northeast	**401**	85%	74%	52%	46%	39%
Midwest	**440**	89%	77%	44%	38%	31%
South	**778**	87%	77%	48%	38%	33%
West	**381**	86%	76%	49%	41%	38%

Base: Parents and students
*Parents and students who used scholarships to cover the cost of this academic year

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Did [Parent: your child] [Student: you] apply for any scholarships this year?

Table 9. Application rates among those not using scholarships

	N	Yes	No	Don't know
Total	**786**	**26%**	**67%**	**7%**
Parent	**415**	22%	68%	11%
Student	**371**	31%	67%	3%
Income				
<$50k	**243**	29%	59%	12%
$50k-<$100k	**310**	23%	73%	4%
$100k-<$150k	**120**	28%	66%	6%
$150k+	**107**	26%	70%	4%
Race/ethnicity				
White	**396**	24%	68%	8%
Black	**154**	25%	70%	6%
Hispanic	**163**	29%	64%	7%
Other*	**73**	30%	66%	4%
Family college experience				
First in family	**143**	27%	61%	13%
Second generation	**635**	26%	69%	5%
Borrowing status				
Borrowed	**361**	35%	59%	6%
Did not borrow	**425**	18%	74%	8%
School type				
4-year public/state college/ university	**418**	25%	69%	6%
4-year private college/university	**147**	28%	64%	8%
2-year public/ community college	**203**	23%	68%	9%
Region				
Northeast	**145**	28%	69%	4%
Midwest	**165**	20%	72%	8%
South	**298**	27%	63%	10%
West	**178**	27%	68%	5%

Base: Parents and students who did not report using scholarships
*Small base size

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: What encouraged [Parent: your child] [Student: you] to apply for scholarships this year? Select all that apply.

Table 10. Reasons for applying for scholarships

N	212
Scholarship amount seemed realistic	43%
Easy application process	42%
Recommendation from a teacher, counselor, or coach	34%
Scholarship amount was large	30%
Matched my background, identity, or community (e.g., first-generation immigrant, religion, etc.)	27%
Confidence in the chance of winning scholarship	24%
Aligned with my intended major or career field	23%
Other	1%

Base: Families in which the student did apply for scholarships

Q: Which of the following best describes your process with scholarships?

Table 11. Scholarship process

N	212
[Parent: Child] [Student: I] handled most or all scholarship research and application	42%
Parents and [Parent: child] [Student: I] divided the work of researching and applying to scholarships	34%
Parent fully handled most or all scholarship research and applications	24%

Base: Families in which the student did apply for scholarships

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Why didn't [Parent: your child] [Student: you] apply for scholarships this year?

Table 12. Reasons for not applying for scholarships

N	522
Didn't think there were scholarships for [Parent: my child] [Student: me]	23%
Didn't think [Parent: my child would] [Student: I'd] win	22%
Didn't find any legitimate scholarships	19%
Missed deadline	16%
Didn't know about any scholarships	15%
Too much effort to complete the applications	14%
Didn't have time	13%
Didn't think the amount of money offered was worth it	13%
Didn't have the required information	11%
Did not trust that my data was safe	8%
Had a problem with application/too complicated	7%
Other	9%

Base: Families in which the student did **not** apply for scholarships

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: As you may know, some scholarships have to be applied for and others are given to students based on other factors (e.g., merit scholarships from your college, etc.). How many scholarships did [Parent: your child] [Student: you] apply for? Your best estimate is fine.

Table 13. Number of scholarships applied for

	N	Average
Total	**1426**	**5.1**
Parent	**680**	3.8
Student	**746**	6.3
Income		
<$50k	**489**	5.4
$50k-<$100k	**513**	4.6
$100k-<$150k	**249**	5.5
$150k+	**157**	5
Race/ethnicity		
White	**741**	5.2
Black	**293**	5.2
Hispanic	**270**	5
Other	**122**	5.1
Family college experience		
First in family	**236**	5.1
Second generation	**1186**	5.1
Borrowing status		
Borrowed	**740**	5.6
Did not borrow	**686**	4.6
School type		
4-year public/state college/ university	**761**	5.1
4-year private college/ university	**362**	5.3
2-year public/ community college	**272**	4.8
Region		
Northeast	**302**	4.5
Midwest	**313**	5.1
South	**564**	5.5
West	**247**	5.2

Base: Families who used scholarships to cover the cost of this academic year or did not use scholarships, but applied

Q: How many of those scholarships did [Parent: your child] [Student: you] win? [Parent: Your best guess is fine.]

Table 14. Number of scholarships won

	N	Average
Total	**1307**	**1.8**
Parent	**617**	1.6
Student	**690**	1.9
Income		
<$50k	**461**	1.7
$50k-<$100k	**466**	1.8
$100k-<$150k	**220**	1.7
$150k+	**143**	1.7
Race/ethnicity		
White	**660**	1.9
Black	**273**	1.8
Hispanic	**261**	1.6
Other	**113**	1.5
Family college experience		
First in family	**221**	1.7
Second generation	**1082**	1.8
Borrowing status		
Borrowed	**683**	1.8
Did not borrow	**624**	1.7
School type		
4-year public/state college/ university	**695**	1.7
4-year private college/ university	**325**	1.9
2-year public/ community college	**257**	1.7
Region		
Northeast	**268**	1.7
Midwest	**289**	1.8
South	**526**	1.8
West	**224**	1.6

Base: Families who applied for at least one scholarship

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: How did you [Parent: or your child] hear about the scholarship [Parent: they] [Student: you] applied for? Select all that apply.

Table 15. Source of scholarship information

	N	From a college (e.g., professor, financial aid officer, etc.)	From a high school (e.g., teacher, coach, guidance office, etc.)	Used a scholarship search tool online	Used Google or another search engine	From a family member (e.g., parent or other relatives)	From a friend or peer	Used AI chat (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, Grok, etc.)	Other
Total	**1307**	**48%**	**41%**	**36%**	**27%**	**25%**	**20%**	**14%**	**2%**
Parent	**617**	46%	45%	30%	23%	17%	17%	13%	3%
Student	**690**	51%	37%	40%	31%	32%	22%	14%	1%
Income									
<$50k	**461**	45%	36%	36%	30%	24%	21%	15%	1%
$50k-<$100k	**466**	51%	44%	35%	28%	28%	17%	11%	2%
$100k-<$150k	**220**	51%	37%	40%	26%	23%	22%	16%	1%
$150k+	**143**	51%	49%	30%	23%	22%	20%	15%	1%
Race/ethnicity									
White	**660**	51%	42%	34%	27%	25%	18%	11%	3%
Black	**273**	46%	42%	34%	30%	24%	22%	13%	1%
Hispanic	**261**	45%	36%	37%	25%	27%	21%	19%	1%
Other	**113**	45%	41%	43%	30%	22%	22%	15%	1%
Family college experience									
First in family	**221**	44%	43%	37%	32%	20%	20%	12%	2%
Second generation	**1082**	50%	40%	35%	26%	27%	20%	14%	2%
Borrowing status									
Borrowed	**683**	44%	41%	37%	31%	28%	23%	16%	1%
Did not borrow	**624**	53%	40%	34%	24%	22%	16%	11%	3%
School type									
4-year public/state college/university	**695**	48%	40%	39%	28%	21%	20%	13%	3%
4-year private college/ university	**325**	52%	40%	36%	30%	32%	19%	14%	1%
2-year public/ community college	**257**	47%	48%	27%	21%	21%	17%	15%	1%
Region									
Northeast	**268**	49%	40%	29%	22%	24%	18%	16%	1%
Midwest	**289**	52%	45%	30%	24%	25%	15%	9%	1%
South	**526**	51%	38%	40%	34%	25%	19%	12%	2%
West	**224**	41%	41%	38%	24%	26%	26%	18%	2%

Base: Families who applied for at least one scholarship

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Of the total cost of attendance, how much of your [Parent: child's] college funding came from relatives or friends? (money that does not have to be repaid) Your best estimate is fine.

Table 16. Use of funds from relatives & friends

	N	% of total families
Total	**2000**	**13%**
Parent	**1000**	9%
Student	**1000**	17%
Income		
<$50k	**658**	14%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	14%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	11%
$150k+	**237**	11%
Race/ethnicity		
White	**1038**	11%
Black	**405**	16%
Hispanic	**386**	17%
Other	**171**	10%
Family college experience		
First in family	**334**	12%
Second generation	**1654**	13%
Borrowing status		
Borrowed	**969**	20%
Did not borrow	**1031**	6%
School type		
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	12%
4-year private college/university	**464**	14%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	12%
Region		
Northeast	**401**	16%
Midwest	**440**	11%
South	**778**	11%
West	**381**	14%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Of the total cost of attendance, how much money did [Student: you] [Parent: your child] use to pay for college this year from each of the following sources? Your best estimate is fine.

a. Federal work-study

b. Your [Parent: child's] savings

c. [Parent] Your child's current income or earnings
[Student] Your current income

d. Other student savings or investments

Table 17. Use of student income & savings

	N	% of total families
Total	**2000**	**56%**
Parent	**1000**	42%
Student	**1000**	71%
Income		
<$50k	**658**	61%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	57%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	57%
$150k+	**237**	42%
Race/ethnicity		
White	**1038**	55%
Black	**405**	58%
Hispanic	**386**	59%
Other	**171**	53%
Family college experience		
First in family	**334**	56%
Second generation	**1654**	56%
Borrowing status		
Borrowed	**969**	66%
Did not borrow	**1031**	47%
School type		
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	53%
4-year private college/university	**464**	61%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	57%
Region		
Northeast	**401**	53%
Midwest	**440**	60%
South	**778**	53%
West	**381**	61%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Of the total cost of attendance, how much money did [Parent: you] [Student: your parents] use to pay for college this year from each of the following sources? Your best estimate is fine.

a. Parent current income or earnings
b. Dedicated college savings fund, such as a 529 plan, pre-paid plan, or a Coverdell ESA
c. Retirement savings withdrawal (including 401(k), Roth IRA, or other IRA)
d. Other parent savings or investments

Table 18. Use of parent income & savings

	N	% of total families
Total	**2000**	**73%**
Parent	**1000**	76%
Student	**1000**	70%
Income		
<$50k	**658**	63%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	72%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	84%
$150k+	**237**	88%
Race/ethnicity		
White	**1038**	72%
Black	**405**	69%
Hispanic	**386**	74%
Other	**171**	79%
Family college experience		
First in family	**334**	66%
Second generation	**1654**	75%
Borrowing status		
Borrowed	**969**	72%
Did not borrow	**1031**	74%
School type		
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	73%
4-year private college/university	**464**	77%
2-year public/community college	**425**	66%
Region		
Northeast	**401**	81%
Midwest	**440**	70%
South	**778**	71%
West	**381**	71%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q. Were any types of loans, or other types of credit or borrowed money, used to pay for college this year? Some examples may include student loans, home equity, or credit cards. Please select all that apply.

a. I borrowed to pay for college
b. [Parent: My child] [Student: My parent(s)] borrowed to pay for college
c. Someone else borrowed
d. Did not borrow money to pay for college this year (2025-2026)
e. Not sure

Table 19. Who contributed borrowed funds

	Family borrowed‡		Who borrowed±			
	N	Yes %	N	Parent only %*	Student only %*	Both %*
Total	**2000**	**47%**	**922**	**35%**	**51%**	**13%**
Parent	**1000**	43%	**427**	44%	40%	15%
Student	**1000**	51%	**495**	27%	61%	12%
Income						
<$50k	**658**	48%	**312**	33%	55%	12%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	49%	**359**	37%	50%	13%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	49%	**159**	37%	48%	15%
$150k+	**237**	39%	**86**	35%	50%	12%
Race/ethnicity						
White	**1038**	45%	**456**	33%	56%	11%
Black	**405**	51%	**201**	34%	48%	17%
Hispanic	**386**	50%	**187**	36%	49%	15%
Other	**171**	48%	**78**	46%	39%	15%
Family college experience						
First in family	**334**	47%	**162**	36%	52%	12%
Second generation	**1654**	47%	**756**	35%	51%	14%
Borrowing status						
Borrowed	**969**	100%	**922**	35%	51%	13%
Did not borrow	**1031**	-	**-**	-	-	-
School type						
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	45%	**486**	31%	53%	14%
4-year private college/ university	**464**	55%	**251**	36%	50%	14%
2-year public/community college	**425**	38%	**163**	41%	52%	7%
Region						
Northeast	**401**	53%	**212**	36%	51%	12%
Midwest	**440**	52%	**215**	33%	54%	13%
South	**778**	45%	**352**	34%	52%	13%
West	**381**	43%	**143**	38%	47%	15%

‡Base: Parents and students
±Base: Parents of college students and college students in families who borrowed
*Categories are mutually exclusive. These are percentages of families who borrow.

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Of the total cost of attendance, how much money did [Parent: you] [Student: your parents] use to pay for college this year from each of the following borrowed sources? Your best estimate is fine.

a. Federal Parent PLUS Loan
b. Private education loans in your [Student: parent's] name, not including loans where [Parent: you are] [Student: your parent is] only a cosigner
c. Home equity loan, line of credit, or mortgage refinance
d. Credit cards in your [Student: parent's] name
e. Retirement account loans (including 401(k), Roth IRA, or other IRA)
f. Other loans in your [Student: parent's] name

Table 20. Use of parent borrowed funds

	N	% of total families
Total	**2000**	**22%**
Parent	**1000**	25%
Student	**1000**	19%
Income		
<$50k	**658**	21%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	24%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	25%
$150k+	**237**	18%
Race/ethnicity		
White	**1038**	19%
Black	**405**	25%
Hispanic	**386**	25%
Other	**171**	28%
Family college experience		
First in family	**334**	22%
Second generation	**1654**	22%
Borrowing status		
Borrowed	**969**	46%
Did not borrow	**1031**	-
School type		
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	20%
4-year private college/university	**464**	27%
2-year public/community college	**425**	18%
Region		
Northeast	**401**	25%
Midwest	**440**	23%
South	**778**	20%
West	**381**	21%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Of the total cost of attendance, how much money did [Parent: your child] [Student: you] use to pay for college this year from each of the following borrowed sources? Your best estimate is fine.

a. Federal student loans, such as the Subsidized or Unsubsidized Direct Loan Program
b. [Parent] Private education loans in your child's name, including loans where you or anyone else is a cosigner
[Student] Private education loans in your name, including loans where your parent or anyone else is a cosigner
c. Credit cards in your [Parent: child's] name
d. Other loans in your [Parent: child's] name (not including money from income, savings, or scholarships)

Table 21. Use of student borrowed funds

	N	% of total families
Total	**2000**	**29%**
Parent	**1000**	23%
Student	**1000**	36%
Income		
<$50k	**658**	31%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	30%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	30%
$150k+	**237**	23%
Race/ethnicity		
White	**1038**	29%
Black	**405**	32%
Hispanic	**386**	31%
Other	**171**	25%
Family college experience		
First in family	**334**	29%
Second generation	**1654**	29%
Borrowing status		
Borrowed	**969**	61%
Did not borrow	**1031**	-
School type		
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	29%
4-year private college/university	**464**	35%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	22%
Region		
Northeast	**401**	32%
Midwest	**440**	34%
South	**778**	28%
West	**381**	25%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Which, if any, of the following topics have you discussed with your [Parent: child] [Student: parents]? Please select all that apply.

Table 22. Education/student loan topics of discussion

	N	What all years of college will cost	The starting salary for jobs in your field of study	Payment options that do not need to be paid back	The need for continued education beyond undergrad to achieve career goals	Who will be responsible for paying back the student loans	Who will be responsible for paying back education loans borrowed by the parent	The maximum amount you are willing to borrow	Federal loan forgiveness programs	Income-based repayment plans	Loan consolidation or refinancing	Other	None of these
Total	**2000**	**44%**	**38%**	**37%**	**32%**	**31%**	**24%**	**23%**	**18%**	**18%**	**14%**	**0%**	**9%**
Parent	**1000**	45%	40%	40%	34%	33%	23%	20%	18%	18%	13%	1%	11%
Student	**1000**	42%	36%	34%	29%	28%	24%	25%	18%	18%	16%	0%	8%
Income													
<$50k	**658**	37%	36%	39%	32%	28%	21%	21%	19%	17%	16%	1%	9%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	43%	38%	39%	32%	31%	25%	24%	19%	19%	14%	-	9%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	52%	41%	36%	31%	35%	29%	26%	18%	20%	15%	-	11%
$150k+	**237**	52%	42%	28%	33%	33%	21%	20%	13%	14%	9%	0%	8%
Race/ethnicity													
White	**1038**	46%	40%	38%	33%	32%	24%	21%	16%	19%	13%	0%	10%
Black	**405**	29%	32%	36%	28%	29%	19%	22%	24%	16%	16%	0%	13%
Hispanic	**386**	44%	37%	38%	29%	30%	29%	25%	19%	19%	17%	1%	7%
Other	**171**	48%	41%	32%	33%	30%	22%	27%	17%	14%	11%	-	6%
Family college experience													
First in family	**334**	37%	37%	37%	27%	30%	22%	22%	18%	19%	13%	1%	11%
Second generation	**1654**	46%	39%	37%	33%	31%	24%	23%	18%	18%	15%	0%	9%
Borrowing status													
Borrowed	**969**	45%	37%	37%	30%	42%	32%	29%	24%	26%	21%	0%	4%
Did not borrow	**1031**	42%	39%	37%	33%	21%	17%	17%	13%	11%	8%	0%	14%
School type													
4-year public/state college/university	**1069**	47%	40%	35%	32%	31%	24%	22%	18%	17%	14%	1%	9%
4-year private college/university	**464**	42%	37%	38%	33%	32%	25%	24%	18%	19%	15%	0%	8%
2-year public/community college	**425**	39%	37%	41%	30%	30%	20%	21%	17%	17%	12%	0%	13%
Region													
Northeast	**401**	43%	39%	34%	29%	32%	23%	24%	14%	15%	11%	0%	9%
Midwest	**440**	46%	37%	38%	33%	38%	27%	24%	17%	17%	13%	-	7%
South	**778**	41%	38%	37%	33%	28%	22%	21%	20%	19%	16%	0%	10%
West	**381**	46%	40%	37%	30%	28%	25%	24%	20%	18%	14%	1%	10%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Was borrowing always part of your paying-for-college plan?

Table 23. Planned to borrow

	N	Yes, we always planned to borrow	No, we did not plan to borrow	Not sure
Total	**963**	**68%**	**24%**	**8%**
Parent	**439**	71%	23%	7%
Student	**524**	66%	26%	9%
Income				
<$50k	**328**	65%	28%	7%
$50k-<$100k	**378**	66%	25%	9%
$100k-<$150k	**163**	74%	18%	8%
$150k+*	**89**	74%	22%	4%
Race/ethnicity				
White	**484**	67%	23%	11%
Black	**206**	75%	21%	4%
Hispanic	**193**	63%	32%	6%
Other*	**80**	76%	21%	4%
Family college experience				
First in family	**170**	68%	24%	8%
Second generation	**788**	68%	24%	7%
School type				
4-year public/state college/ university	**505**	73%	22%	5%
4-year private college/university	**262**	64%	23%	13%
2-year public/community college	**170**	66%	31%	3%
Region				
Northeast	**220**	71%	22%	7%
Midwest	**226**	70%	22%	8%
South	**363**	65%	26%	8%
West	**154**	68%	25%	7%

Base: Parents and students in families who reported using any type of borrowed money
*Small base size

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Did [Parent: your child] [Student: you] consider attending more expensive schools than you otherwise would have considered as a result of access to loans, or other types of credit or borrowed money?

Table 24. Implications of access to borrowed funds

	N	Yes	No	Not sure
Total	**969**	**38%**	**55%**	**7%**
Parent	**443**	32%	60%	8%
Student	**526**	43%	52%	6%
Income				
<$50k	**329**	43%	52%	5%
$50k-<$100k	**380**	33%	59%	8%
$100k-<$150k	**164**	37%	58%	6%
$150k+*	**90**	43%	51%	6%
Race/ethnicity				
White	**487**	32%	59%	8%
Black	**208**	40%	53%	7%
Hispanic	**193**	50%	46%	4%
Other*	**81**	35%	59%	6%
Family college experience				
First in family	**170**	37%	52%	11%
Second generation	**794**	38%	56%	6%
School type				
4-year public/state college/ university	**511**	34%	57%	9%
4-year private college/university	**262**	38%	57%	5%
2-year public/community college	**170**	44%	51%	5%
Region				
Northeast	**222**	38%	54%	9%
Midwest	**226**	38%	54%	8%
South	**367**	36%	58%	6%
West	**154**	40%	55%	5%

Base: Parents and students in families who reported using any type of borrowed money
*Small base size

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Do you anticipate receiving loan forgiveness on your federal loans after you finish college and meet eligibility guidelines?

Table 25. Anticipating loan forgiveness

N	307
Yes	43%
No	32%
Not sure	25%

Base: Students who report using federal student loans

Q: Why do you anticipate receiving loan forgiveness on your federal loans?

Table 26. Reason for anticipating loan forgiveness

N	137
Planning to work in public service (e.g., teachers, social workers, law enforcement, etc.)	43%
The government will forgive student loans	38%
My future company will pay for it	11%
I won't make enough money to repay my loans	8%

Base: Students who used federal student loans and anticipate receiving loan forgiveness

Q: Regardless of whether you have borrowed to pay for college or not, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statements below.

Table 27a. Attitudes on borrowing

	N	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
There should be limits on how much debt federal student loan borrowers can take on	**2000**	30%	36%	22%	9%	4%
College costs have risen because people can borrow from the government whatever a school says it costs to attend	**2000**	23%	34%	26%	11%	6%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Table 27b: Attitudes on borrowing (% Strongly or somewhat agree)

	N	There should be limits on how much debt federal student loan borrowers can take on	College costs have risen because people can borrow from the government whatever a school says it costs to attend
Total	**2000**	**66%**	**58%**
Parent	**1000**	70%	62%
Student	**1000**	61%	54%
Income			
<$50k	**658**	60%	53%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	68%	59%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	71%	61%
$150k+	**237**	67%	64%
Race/ethnicity			
White	**1038**	66%	56%
Black	**405**	62%	61%
Hispanic	**386**	70%	59%
Other	**171**	63%	57%
Family college experience			
First in family	**334**	68%	59%
Second generation	**1654**	65%	57%
Borrowing status			
Borrowed	**969**	63%	61%
Did not borrow	**1031**	68%	54%
School type			
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	64%	58%
4-year private college/university	**464**	66%	58%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	68%	57%
Region			
Northeast	**401**	67%	59%
Midwest	**440**	62%	55%
South	**778**	66%	58%
West	**381**	67%	58%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Who will be responsible for repaying this borrowed money or for making payments now or in the future?

Table 28. Responsibility for repaying parent education loans

N	322
Parent(s) and student will share responsibility	43%
Parent(s) is/are solely responsible	36%
Parent(s) will make payments until the student is financially stable	11%
Student is solely responsible	10%

Base: Parents and students in families where the parent(s) borrowed from any source

Q: Who will be responsible for repaying this borrowed money or for making payments now or in the future?

Table 29. Responsibility for repaying student loans

N	596
Student is solely responsible	57%
Parent(s) and students will share responsibility	35%
Parent(s) will make payments until the student is financially stable	5%
Parent(s) is/are solely responsible	2%
Other	1%

Base: Parents and students in families where the student borrowed from any source

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Before [Parent: my child] [Student: I] enrolled, my family created a plan for paying for all years of college.

Table 30. Plan to pay for college

	N	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Total	**2000**	**24%**	**34%**	**17%**	**12%**	**13%**
Parent	**1000**	26%	36%	16%	12%	10%
Student	**1000**	22%	32%	18%	12%	17%
Income						
<$50k	**658**	18%	30%	21%	12%	21%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	23%	36%	17%	13%	11%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	29%	33%	15%	13%	10%
$150k+	**237**	37%	41%	8%	7%	6%
Race/ethnicity						
White	**1038**	25%	35%	15%	13%	13%
Black	**405**	22%	31%	21%	12%	14%
Hispanic	**386**	22%	36%	16%	10%	16%
Other	**171**	24%	32%	24%	11%	10%
Family college experience						
First in family	**334**	20%	31%	19%	12%	18%
Second generation	**1654**	25%	35%	16%	12%	12%
Borrowing status						
Borrowed	**969**	21%	37%	15%	13%	14%
Did not borrow	**1031**	27%	32%	18%	11%	13%
School type						
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	25%	32%	16%	13%	14%
4-year private college/university	**464**	25%	39%	16%	9%	12%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	20%	30%	21%	14%	15%
Region						
Northeast	**401**	28%	36%	14%	11%	11%
Midwest	**440**	22%	33%	18%	15%	12%
South	**778**	26%	31%	18%	10%	15%
West	**381**	19%	38%	17%	13%	13%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Which of the following types of "extra" expenses, if any, were included in your plan for paying for all years of college? Please select all that apply.

a. Meal plan
b. Food or eating out outside of the meal plan
c. Health insurance and medical expenses
d. Books and course materials
e. Apartment or dorm expenses (e.g., rent, furniture, décor, storage, dining wares, etc.)
f. Travel around campus and the surrounding area
g. Travel to and from home
h. Technology (e.g., computer, software, internet, streaming, etc.)
i. Extracurriculars and activities (e.g., clubs, sports, Greek life)
j. Internship or career-related expenses
k. Study abroad or specific academic programs
l. Other
m. None of these

Table 31. Extra expenses included in plan to pay

	N	Books/course materials	Technology	Food	Meal plan	Apartment or dorm expenses	Travel to and from home	Health insurance and medical expenses	Extracurriculars and activities	Travel around campus and the surrounding area	Study abroad/other programs	Internship/career-related expenses	Other	None of these
Total	**1129**	**53%**	**42%**	**39%**	**38%**	**38%**	**29%**	**25%**	**23%**	**23%**	**14%**	**14%**	**0%**	**5%**
Parent	610	57%	47%	44%	40%	42%	30%	28%	23%	22%	11%	13%	1%	6%
Student	519	48%	37%	33%	36%	33%	27%	21%	22%	24%	18%	15%	0%	3%
Income														
<$50k	310	48%	41%	32%	32%	30%	18%	21%	21%	18%	12%	16%	1%	7%
$50k-<$100k	432	53%	41%	40%	34%	37%	30%	28%	21%	25%	12%	15%	0%	4%
$100k-<$150k	200	55%	41%	47%	45%	44%	36%	23%	26%	28%	20%	12%	1%	4%
$150k+	172	59%	49%	40%	48%	42%	33%	25%	24%	20%	17%	11%	0%	3%
Race/ethnicity														
White	605	54%	45%	38%	38%	40%	30%	25%	22%	22%	16%	12%	0%	6%
Black	219	46%	38%	40%	42%	35%	31%	26%	23%	25%	11%	19%	1%	5%
Hispanic	218	54%	37%	43%	34%	36%	25%	24%	26%	22%	12%	17%	0%	1%
Other*	87	49%	46%	38%	40%	34%	26%	24%	20%	22%	12%	10%	-	4%
Family college experience														
First in family	165	43%	37%	32%	36%	40%	31%	27%	21%	23%	9%	17%	-	8%
Second generation	959	55%	44%	41%	39%	37%	28%	25%	23%	22%	16%	14%	1%	4%
Borrowing status														
Borrowed	539	48%	44%	41%	36%	39%	28%	26%	21%	26%	15%	15%	1%	2%
Did not borrow	590	57%	41%	38%	40%	37%	29%	24%	24%	20%	13%	13%	0%	7%
School type														
4-year public/state college/university	608	52%	45%	45%	39%	42%	31%	23%	21%	23%	11%	13%	0%	6%
4-year private college/university	290	51%	38%	39%	43%	39%	29%	26%	26%	25%	21%	15%	0%	3%
2-year public/ community college	204	59%	41%	26%	25%	25%	23%	29%	17%	20%	11%	17%	0%	4%
Region														
Northeast	234	57%	41%	44%	39%	39%	28%	29%	24%	24%	16%	16%	1%	3%
Midwest	229	55%	46%	36%	43%	41%	30%	24%	22%	25%	17%	16%	0%	6%
South	452	50%	40%	40%	41%	39%	25%	27%	24%	19%	12%	11%	1%	6%
West	214	51%	45%	36%	28%	31%	34%	18%	19%	25%	15%	16%	-	4%

Base: Parents and students who had a plan to pay for all years of college *Small base size

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Thinking about those extra expenses that you incorporated into your plan, how easy or difficult was it to estimate how much they would cost?

Table 32. Ease of incorporating extra expenses in plan

	N	Very easy	Somewhat easy	Neither easy nor difficult	Somewhat difficult	Very difficult	Not sure
Total	**1077**	**26%**	**40%**	**14%**	**16%**	**3%**	**1%**
Parent	**574**	27%	40%	12%	17%	3%	1%
Student	**503**	26%	41%	15%	14%	3%	1%
Income							
<$50k	**292**	28%	41%	15%	13%	3%	1%
$50k-<$100k	**413**	26%	44%	12%	15%	3%	1%
$100k-<$150k	**191**	28%	37%	16%	16%	2%	1%
$150k+	**166**	23%	36%	12%	22%	5%	3%
Race/ethnicity							
White	**569**	25%	40%	13%	16%	3%	2%
Black	**209**	27%	38%	20%	12%	2%	0%
Hispanic	**215**	32%	39%	9%	16%	3%	0%
Other*	**84**	19%	47%	17%	15%	3%	-
Family college experience							
First in family	**157**	27%	39%	15%	12%	5%	2%
Second generation	**916**	26%	40%	13%	16%	3%	1%
Borrowing status							
Borrowed	**525**	24%	42%	12%	17%	4%	1%
Did not borrow	**552**	28%	38%	16%	14%	3%	1%
School type							
4-year public/state college/ university	**578**	28%	38%	15%	15%	3%	1%
4-year private college/university	**281**	22%	42%	12%	18%	4%	2%
2-year public/ community college	**192**	29%	43%	13%	13%	2%	-
Region							
Northeast	**226**	24%	42%	11%	16%	5%	2%
Midwest	**216**	21%	43%	13%	21%	2%	1%
South	**429**	28%	41%	16%	11%	3%	1%
West	**206**	30%	36%	14%	18%	3%	-

Base: Parents and students who had a plan to pay for all years of college and planned for extra expenses
*Small base size

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Overall, did those expenses end up costing more or less than you expected?

Table 33. Expected cost of extra expenses

	N	Much more than we expected	Somewhat more than we expected	About what we expected	Somewhat less than we expected	Much less than we expected	Not sure
Total	**1077**	**11%**	**33%**	**45%**	**7%**	**3%**	**1%**
Parent	**574**	10%	33%	51%	4%	2%	1%
Student	**503**	13%	33%	39%	10%	4%	2%
Income							
<$50k	**292**	9%	37%	42%	8%	2%	2%
$50k-<$100k	**413**	12%	29%	46%	10%	3%	0%
$100k-<$150k	**191**	14%	36%	42%	3%	4%	1%
$150k+	**166**	9%	33%	49%	5%	3%	3%
Race/ethnicity							
White	**569**	11%	31%	47%	7%	2%	2%
Black	**209**	10%	29%	50%	8%	3%	-
Hispanic	**215**	14%	40%	36%	7%	4%	-
Other*	**84**	5%	35%	51%	7%	3%	0%
Family college experience							
First in family	**157**	12%	32%	44%	9%	2%	1%
Second generation	**916**	11%	33%	45%	6%	3%	1%
Borrowing status							
Borrowed	**525**	14%	36%	37%	8%	3%	1%
Did not borrow	**552**	8%	30%	53%	6%	2%	1%
School type							
4-year public/state college/ university	**578**	9%	27%	53%	8%	2%	1%
4-year private college/university	**281**	13%	39%	37%	6%	3%	2%
2-year public/ community college	**192**	14%	34%	42%	8%	2%	1%
Region							
Northeast	**226**	15%	39%	37%	5%	2%	2%
Midwest	**216**	11%	33%	46%	7%	1%	1%
South	**429**	10%	30%	49%	7%	3%	1%
West	**206**	9%	33%	46%	9%	4%	0%

Base: Parents and students who had a plan to pay for all years of college and planned for extra expenses
*Small base size

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Which of the following have you used as a source of information about paying for college? Please select all that apply.

a. College's financial aid office or financial aid counselor
b. High school counselor or related professional
c. The federal or state government (e.g., StudentAid.gov, Federal Student Aid)
d. Private lenders (e.g., Sallie Mae, SoFi, College Ave, Citizens, etc.)
e. Companies that provide pay-for-college resources (e.g., Niche, College Raptor, Sallie)
f. Independent financial advisors or planners
g. Social media or online forums (e.g., TikTok, Instagram, Reddit, Facebook, College Confidential, etc.)
h. YouTube or podcasts
i. AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot, etc.)
j. Friends or family members
k. None of these

Table 34. Sources of information about paying for college

	N	College's financial aid office/financial aid counselor	Federal or state government	Friends or family members	High school counselor/related professional	Social media or online forums	AI tools	Private lenders	YouTube or podcasts	Independent financial advisors or planners	Companies that provide pay-for-college resources	None of these
Total	**2000**	**50%**	**46%**	**39%**	**28%**	**24%**	**18%**	**15%**	**14%**	**14%**	**13%**	**6%**
Parent	**1000**	57%	50%	33%	28%	16%	17%	16%	10%	16%	12%	8%
Student	**1000**	44%	41%	45%	29%	32%	20%	14%	19%	12%	15%	4%
Income												
<$50k	**658**	51%	49%	33%	31%	26%	19%	12%	16%	13%	14%	5%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	51%	45%	39%	28%	22%	17%	15%	13%	14%	13%	7%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	53%	42%	48%	26%	27%	25%	17%	16%	13%	17%	4%
$150k+	**237**	44%	45%	40%	26%	17%	17%	20%	14%	18%	11%	10%
Race/ethnicity												
White	**1038**	51%	45%	41%	27%	22%	16%	16%	13%	14%	13%	7%
Black	**405**	50%	47%	33%	31%	26%	19%	14%	14%	14%	13%	5%
Hispanic	**386**	48%	47%	36%	26%	25%	22%	14%	18%	14%	17%	5%
Other	**171**	51%	42%	42%	32%	24%	20%	10%	16%	14%	9%	6%
Family college experience												
First in family	**334**	47%	48%	35%	32%	21%	17%	12%	13%	12%	9%	6%
Second generation	**1654**	51%	45%	40%	27%	24%	19%	16%	15%	14%	15%	6%
Borrowing status												
Borrowed	**969**	50%	48%	37%	29%	28%	23%	22%	18%	15%	16%	2%
Did not borrow	**1031**	50%	43%	40%	27%	19%	14%	9%	11%	13%	12%	10%
School type												
4-year public/state college/university	**1069**	50%	48%	41%	29%	21%	17%	15%	13%	15%	13%	6%
4-year private college/university	**464**	53%	42%	39%	25%	27%	20%	17%	14%	14%	15%	6%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	50%	45%	36%	31%	22%	19%	13%	17%	13%	11%	7%
Region												
Northeast	**401**	46%	43%	36%	24%	29%	20%	19%	16%	14%	14%	7%
Midwest	**440**	52%	53%	38%	31%	21%	18%	14%	12%	14%	12%	4%
South	**778**	53%	45%	40%	28%	21%	17%	13%	14%	14%	14%	7%
West	**381**	48%	43%	39%	30%	25%	19%	15%	16%	14%	13%	6%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: How trustworthy do you consider each of the following as a source of information about paying for college?

Table 35a. Trustworthiness of sources of information about paying for college

	N	Very trustworthy	Somewhat trustworthy	Neither trustworthy nor untrustworthy	Somewhat untrustworthy	Very untrustworthy	I don't know
College's financial aid office or financial aid counselor	**2000**	40%	40%	13%	4%	1%	2%
High school counselor or related professional	**2000**	30%	42%	18%	5%	2%	3%
The federal or state government (e.g., StudentAid.gov, Federal Student Aid)	**2000**	33%	41%	15%	7%	2%	2%
Friends or family members	**2000**	31%	40%	21%	5%	2%	2%
Independent financial advisors or planners	**2000**	24%	41%	21%	7%	1%	6%
Companies that provide pay-for-college resources (e.g., Niche, College Raptor, Sallie)	**2000**	19%	32%	26%	11%	4%	8%
Private lenders (e.g., Sallie Mae, SoFi, College Ave, Citizens, etc.)	**2000**	17%	34%	26%	12%	5%	6%
AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot, etc.)	**2000**	14%	28%	25%	14%	13%	5%
Social media or online forums (e.g., TikTok, Instagram, Reddit, Facebook, College Confidential, etc.)	**2000**	12%	24%	28%	20%	12%	4%
YouTube or podcasts	**2000**	12%	26%	28%	19%	9%	7%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Table 35b. Trustworthiness of sources of information about paying for college (% Very or somewhat trustworthy)

	N	College's financial aid office/financial aid counselor	High school counselor or related professional	The federal or state government	Friends or family members	Independent financial advisors or planners	Companies that provide pay-for-college resources	Private lenders	AI tools	Social media or online forums	YouTube or podcasts
Total	**2000**	**81%**	**72%**	**74%**	**71%**	**65%**	**51%**	**51%**	**43%**	**36%**	**37%**
Parent	**1000**	84%	75%	76%	70%	67%	49%	53%	44%	31%	34%
Student	**1000**	78%	68%	71%	72%	63%	53%	48%	41%	41%	41%
Income											
<$50k	**658**	77%	70%	76%	64%	62%	54%	50%	41%	37%	39%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	83%	76%	75%	74%	67%	52%	52%	45%	37%	37%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	84%	68%	73%	74%	68%	52%	50%	47%	39%	41%
$150k+	**237**	81%	70%	69%	74%	65%	43%	51%	36%	29%	30%
Race/ethnicity											
White	**1038**	81%	72%	72%	74%	66%	51%	51%	39%	33%	34%
Black	**405**	77%	71%	74%	64%	65%	59%	52%	51%	44%	44%
Hispanic	**386**	84%	74%	81%	68%	64%	50%	54%	48%	40%	43%
Other	**171**	76%	68%	69%	69%	65%	45%	43%	44%	32%	36%
Family college experience											
First in family	**334**	76%	69%	75%	66%	64%	51%	48%	43%	33%	38%
Second generation	**1654**	82%	73%	74%	72%	66%	51%	51%	43%	37%	37%
Borrowing status											
Borrowed	**969**	79%	72%	71%	70%	68%	54%	58%	48%	41%	42%
Did not borrow	**1031**	82%	72%	76%	71%	62%	49%	44%	38%	32%	33%
School type											
4-year public/state college/university	**1069**	81%	71%	74%	70%	64%	49%	48%	41%	31%	32%
4-year private college/university	**464**	80%	71%	74%	72%	71%	55%	56%	46%	43%	44%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	81%	74%	76%	72%	60%	52%	49%	43%	35%	39%
Region											
Northeast	**401**	76%	70%	70%	71%	67%	53%	56%	43%	41%	43%
Midwest	**440**	83%	73%	75%	76%	70%	54%	48%	44%	34%	35%
South	**778**	82%	71%	76%	68%	67%	54%	53%	43%	35%	38%
West	**381**	80%	74%	73%	71%	58%	43%	44%	41%	35%	34%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: For the current 2025-2026 academic year, did you/your family complete the FAFSA®? FAFSA® stands for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

Table 36. Completed FAFSA® application 2025-2026

	N	Yes	No, I started one but did not submit it	No, I have not started or submitted one	Don't know
Total	**2000**	**74%**	**8%**	**15%**	**3%**
Parent	**1000**	76%	6%	15%	3%
Student	**1000**	72%	11%	14%	3%
Income					
<$50k	**658**	76%	7%	13%	3%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	71%	10%	16%	3%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	76%	10%	12%	2%
$150k+	**237**	74%	5%	19%	2%
Race/ethnicity					
White	**1038**	72%	8%	17%	3%
Black	**405**	75%	10%	12%	3%
Hispanic	**386**	78%	9%	11%	2%
Other	**171**	74%	9%	14%	3%
Family college experience					
First in family	**334**	72%	8%	17%	3%
Second generation	**1654**	75%	9%	14%	3%
Borrowing status					
Borrowed	**969**	79%	10%	10%	2%
Did not borrow	**1031**	70%	7%	19%	4%
School type					
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	75%	7%	16%	3%
4-year private college/university	**464**	72%	9%	16%	4%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	78%	9%	10%	3%
Region					
Northeast	**401**	74%	8%	16%	2%
Midwest	**440**	77%	7%	14%	3%
South	**778**	73%	10%	15%	3%
West	**381**	73%	8%	15%	5%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: For the current 2025-2026 academic year, how easy or difficult was it to fill out the FAFSA®?

Table 37. Ease of filling out the FAFSA® for 2025-2026 academic year

	N	Very easy	Somewhat easy	Somewhat difficult	Very difficult	Not sure
Total	**1669**	**41%**	**39%**	**15%**	**3%**	**2%**
Parent	**835**	38%	43%	15%	3%	2%
Student	**834**	44%	36%	14%	4%	1%
Income						
<$50k	**556**	43%	39%	14%	3%	1%
$50k-<$100k	**622**	40%	43%	13%	4%	1%
$100k-<$150k	**281**	43%	34%	19%	2%	1%
$150k+	**190**	40%	37%	16%	5%	3%
Race/ethnicity						
White	**849**	39%	39%	16%	4%	2%
Black	**346**	48%	41%	9%	2%	1%
Hispanic	**335**	43%	41%	13%	2%	1%
Other	**139**	40%	36%	18%	4%	3%
Family college experience						
First in family	**277**	35%	43%	16%	4%	2%
Second generation	**1385**	43%	38%	14%	3%	1%
Borrowing status						
Borrowed	**865**	37%	41%	16%	4%	1%
Did not borrow	**804**	46%	37%	13%	2%	2%
School type						
4-year public/state college/ university	**882**	40%	39%	16%	4%	2%
4-year private college/university	**386**	45%	40%	11%	3%	1%
2-year public/ community college	**367**	42%	39%	16%	3%	1%
Region						
Northeast	**337**	39%	39%	16%	5%	1%
Midwest	**366**	44%	38%	14%	2%	2%
South	**655**	44%	39%	11%	4%	2%
West	**311**	37%	41%	19%	2%	1%

Base: Parents and students who submitted or filled out the FAFSA® for 2025-26 academic year

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: For the current 2025-2026 academic year, did the amount you received in financial aid align with what you expected to receive?

Table 38. Financial aid amount expectations vs reality

	N	Yes, received the amount I expected	No, received less than expected	No, received more than expected	I had no expectations on what amount I would receive in financial aid
Total	**1495**	**57%**	**19%**	**7%**	**17%**
Parent	**770**	57%	16%	6%	20%
Student	**725**	57%	21%	9%	14%
Income					
<$50k	**501**	63%	14%	9%	14%
$50k-<$100k	**548**	57%	20%	9%	15%
$100k-<$150k	**253**	56%	24%	4%	17%
$150k+	**174**	46%	23%	3%	28%
Race/ethnicity					
White	**768**	56%	18%	8%	19%
Black	**300**	61%	19%	7%	14%
Hispanic	**305**	59%	21%	9%	11%
Other	**122**	52%	19%	3%	26%
Family college experience					
First in family	**246**	54%	18%	10%	18%
Second generation	**1243**	58%	19%	7%	17%
Borrowing status					
Borrowed	**760**	55%	25%	7%	12%
Did not borrow	**735**	59%	12%	8%	22%
School type					
4-year public/state college/ university	**798**	54%	19%	7%	21%
4-year private college/university	**347**	56%	23%	8%	13%
2-year public/ community college	**326**	65%	11%	8%	16%
Region					
Northeast	**300**	56%	23%	7%	14%
Midwest	**335**	61%	15%	8%	16%
South	**580**	56%	19%	7%	18%
West	**280**	57%	17%	7%	20%

Base: Parents and students who submitted the FAFSA® for 2025-26 academic year

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: In comparison to other years, do you expect to receive more or less financial aid for the upcoming academic year (2026-27)?

Table 39. Financial aid amount expectations compared to previous years

	N	I expect to receive more for the upcoming year	I expect to receive less for the upcoming year	I do not expect any changes from previous years
Total	**1495**	**25%**	**17%**	**58%**
Parent	**770**	21%	15%	64%
Student	**725**	29%	20%	51%
Income				
<$50k	**501**	29%	18%	53%
$50k-<$100k	**548**	24%	18%	58%
$100k-<$150k	**253**	22%	19%	59%
$150k+	**174**	21%	14%	65%
Race/ethnicity				
White	**768**	19%	19%	62%
Black	**300**	36%	18%	47%
Hispanic	**305**	30%	16%	54%
Other	**122**	27%	12%	61%
Family college experience				
First in family	**246**	30%	12%	58%
Second generation	**1243**	24%	19%	57%
Borrowing status				
Borrowed	**760**	30%	21%	49%
Did not borrow	**735**	20%	14%	66%
School type				
4-year public/state college/ university	**798**	24%	16%	61%
4-year private college/university	**347**	24%	20%	56%
2-year public/ community college	**326**	27%	19%	54%
Region				
Northeast	**300**	28%	22%	50%
Midwest	**335**	20%	17%	63%
South	**580**	26%	17%	58%
West	**280**	25%	16%	60%

Base: Parents and students who submitted the FAFSA® for 2025-26 academic year

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Why didn't you submit the FAFSA® for the current academic year 2025-2026?

Table 40. Reasons for not submitting FAFSA®

N	452
Believe family income is too high	26%
Didn't know about it	19%
Don't qualify for non-financial reasons	16%
Completed in a previous year and did not receive much aid	16%
Missed deadline	14%
Didn't have information required for the application	12%
Didn't have time	12%
Had problem with application/too complicated	12%
Don't know	4%
Other	5%

Base: Parents and students who did not complete FAFSA®

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Have you completed the FAFSA® for the upcoming 2026-2027 academic year?

Table 41. Completed FAFSA® application 2026-2027

	N	Yes	No, I started one but did not submit it	No, I have not started or submitted one	[Parent: My child] [Student: I] will not be enrolled in school in 2026-2027
Total	**2000**	**52%**	**15%**	**27%**	**5%**
Parent	**1000**	52%	13%	30%	5%
Student	**1000**	52%	18%	24%	6%
Income					
<$50k	**658**	53%	17%	26%	5%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	51%	16%	27%	7%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	53%	18%	25%	5%
$150k+	**237**	54%	9%	34%	4%
Race/ethnicity					
White	**1038**	51%	16%	28%	6%
Black	**405**	54%	16%	26%	5%
Hispanic	**386**	57%	15%	23%	4%
Other	**171**	49%	11%	33%	8%
Family college experience					
First in family	**334**	55%	16%	28%	2%
Second generation	**1654**	52%	15%	27%	6%
Borrowing status					
Borrowed	**969**	55%	18%	22%	5%
Did not borrow	**1031**	50%	13%	31%	6%
School type					
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	53%	14%	27%	6%
4-year private college/university	**464**	54%	14%	27%	6%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	50%	20%	27%	3%
Region					
Northeast	**401**	53%	16%	28%	3%
Midwest	**440**	51%	14%	30%	5%
South	**778**	53%	15%	26%	6%
West	**381**	52%	17%	25%	6%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Did you experience a delay in receiving a financial aid offer for the next academic year (2026-27) from [Parent: your child's] [Student: your] school this year due to delays in the FAFSA®?

Table 42. Delay in receiving financial aid offer

	N	Yes	No	Not sure
Total	**1033**	**21%**	**65%**	**14%**
Parent	**516**	15%	71%	14%
Student	**517**	27%	59%	14%
Income				
<$50k	**337**	26%	60%	14%
$50k-<$100k	**383**	19%	65%	15%
$100k-<$150k	**170**	22%	62%	16%
$150k+	**131**	11%	82%	7%
Race/ethnicity				
White	**526**	17%	65%	18%
Black	**214**	25%	67%	8%
Hispanic	**214**	24%	64%	12%
Other*	**79**	25%	61%	14%
Family college experience				
First in family	**181**	23%	66%	12%
Second generation	**849**	20%	65%	15%
Borrowing status				
Borrowed	**528**	28%	62%	10%
Did not borrow	**505**	13%	68%	19%
School type				
4-year public/state college/ university	**562**	19%	67%	14%
4-year private college/university	**249**	20%	65%	15%
2-year public/ community college	**205**	24%	62%	14%
Region				
Northeast	**213**	26%	60%	14%
Midwest	**221**	18%	67%	15%
South	**406**	19%	67%	14%
West	**193**	20%	65%	15%

Base: Parents and students who completed the FAFSA® for the next academic year (2026-27)
*Small base size

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: If you needed assistance when completing the FAFSA®, where did you/would you turn to for help? Select all that apply.

Table 43. Sources of FAFSA® assistance

	N	I did not need assistance when completing the FAFSA®	A friend or family member	School's financial aid office /financial aid counselor	FAFSA® Help Page or phone number	AI tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot, or others	The internet generally	Social media (e.g., TikTok, Instagram, Reddit, etc.)	YouTube or podcasts	Lender Help Pages or tools (e.g., Sallie Mae, SoFi, etc.)	Other
Total	**1270**	**44%**	**22%**	**21%**	**17%**	**12%**	**11%**	**9%**	**8%**	**8%**	**0%**
Parent	**616**	51%	14%	23%	21%	8%	10%	8%	6%	6%	0%
Student	**654**	38%	29%	19%	13%	15%	11%	11%	10%	9%	0%
Income											
<$50k	**433**	42%	23%	27%	15%	12%	8%	11%	9%	6%	-
$50k-<$100k	**472**	43%	20%	20%	18%	11%	14%	9%	7%	11%	0%
$100k-<$150k	**214**	44%	27%	14%	19%	12%	9%	8%	7%	9%	-
$150k+	**138**	54%	19%	15%	15%	13%	12%	8%	10%	4%	0%
Race/ethnicity											
White	**638**	46%	22%	18%	16%	12%	10%	9%	7%	8%	0%
Black	**273**	40%	18%	24%	22%	12%	10%	13%	8%	7%	1%
Hispanic	**267**	41%	27%	25%	16%	12%	11%	8%	9%	9%	-
Other*	**92**	50%	17%	18%	15%	11%	13%	9%	9%	5%	-
Family college experience											
First in family	**221**	41%	22%	25%	24%	9%	8%	10%	7%	7%	-
Second generation	**1047**	45%	22%	20%	15%	13%	11%	9%	8%	8%	0%
Borrowing status											
Borrowed	**671**	39%	21%	24%	17%	15%	11%	12%	10%	12%	0%
Did not borrow	**599**	50%	23%	18%	16%	9%	10%	7%	6%	3%	0%
School type											
4-year public/state college/university	**671**	50%	22%	19%	17%	9%	10%	6%	5%	5%	0%
4-year private college/university	**300**	42%	21%	19%	16%	16%	11%	12%	11%	12%	-
2-year public/ community college	**273**	39%	23%	28%	16%	11%	12%	12%	9%	8%	0%
Region											
Northeast	**256**	47%	18%	17%	13%	12%	12%	8%	9%	11%	-
Midwest	**268**	45%	22%	20%	15%	14%	9%	9%	8%	5%	1%
South	**508**	44%	24%	22%	18%	9%	10%	9%	6%	8%	0%
West	**238**	42%	22%	23%	19%	14%	12%	11%	10%	7%	0%

Base: Parents and students who submitted or filled out the FAFSA® for this and next academic year
*Small base size

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: To the best of your knowledge, when can families start filling out the FAFSA® for the following academic year?

Table 44. Timing of FAFSA® filing

	N	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	Don't know
Total	**2000**	**25%**	**11%**	**9%**	**14%**	**5%**	**6%**	**8%**	**22%**
Parent	**1000**	27%	9%	7%	14%	4%	6%	10%	22%
Student	**1000**	22%	14%	11%	14%	5%	5%	7%	22%
Income									
<$50k	**658**	24%	12%	10%	15%	5%	6%	10%	20%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	23%	13%	9%	13%	4%	6%	7%	25%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	32%	10%	9%	14%	5%	4%	5%	21%
$150k+	**237**	22%	9%	12%	16%	7%	5%	9%	20%
Race/ethnicity									
White	**1038**	24%	11%	9%	14%	5%	5%	7%	26%
Black	**405**	27%	10%	9%	16%	5%	4%	13%	16%
Hispanic	**386**	27%	13%	12%	13%	5%	7%	7%	17%
Other	**171**	25%	12%	9%	16%	4%	5%	7%	23%
Family college experience									
First in family	**334**	23%	12%	12%	15%	4%	3%	9%	22%
Second generation	**1654**	25%	11%	9%	14%	5%	6%	8%	22%
Borrowing status									
Borrowed	**969**	26%	13%	10%	17%	5%	6%	7%	17%
Did not borrow	**1031**	24%	10%	9%	12%	4%	6%	9%	27%
School type									
4-year public/state college/university	**1069**	28%	11%	9%	13%	4%	6%	9%	21%
4-year private college/university	**464**	22%	12%	10%	15%	4%	4%	7%	26%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	22%	11%	10%	16%	5%	7%	8%	22%
Region									
Northeast	**401**	23%	9%	10%	12%	6%	5%	9%	25%
Midwest	**440**	24%	14%	9%	13%	4%	5%	10%	20%
South	**778**	27%	10%	9%	15%	4%	7%	7%	22%
West	**381**	24%	12%	9%	15%	6%	5%	8%	22%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Who made the final decision about which school [Parent: your child] [Student: you] would attend?

Table 45. School choice decision-maker

	N	The student	The student and parent made the decision together	The parent
Total	**2000**	**66%**	**29%**	**5%**
Parent	**1000**	57%	37%	5%
Student	**1000**	74%	22%	4%
Income				
<$50k	**658**	71%	24%	5%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	67%	28%	5%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	54%	42%	5%
$150k+	**237**	62%	33%	5%
Race/ethnicity				
White	**1038**	67%	28%	5%
Black	**405**	65%	31%	4%
Hispanic	**386**	65%	31%	4%
Other	**171**	61%	34%	4%
Family college experience				
First in family	**334**	66%	30%	4%
Second generation	**1654**	66%	29%	5%
Borrowing status				
Borrowed	**969**	65%	29%	6%
Did not borrow	**1031**	66%	31%	4%
School type				
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	65%	32%	4%
4-year private college/university	**464**	68%	27%	5%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	65%	29%	6%
Region				
Northeast	**401**	63%	30%	7%
Midwest	**440**	65%	31%	4%
South	**778**	69%	28%	3%
West	**381**	63%	31%	6%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: How confident are you that you made the right decision regarding which school [Parent: your child is] [Student: you are] currently attending?

Table 46. Confidence in school choice

	N	Completely confident	Somewhat confident	Neither confident nor unconfident	Somewhat unconfident	Not at all confident
Total	**2000**	**56%**	**33%**	**8%**	**3%**	**1%**
Parent	**1000**	65%	27%	6%	1%	0%
Student	**1000**	46%	39%	10%	4%	1%
Income						
<$50k	**658**	52%	32%	11%	4%	1%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	57%	34%	6%	2%	0%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	59%	32%	7%	2%	1%
$150k+	**237**	55%	35%	7%	3%	0%
Race/ethnicity						
White	**1038**	56%	33%	8%	3%	1%
Black	**405**	57%	33%	6%	3%	1%
Hispanic	**386**	61%	31%	7%	1%	0%
Other	**171**	40%	42%	14%	3%	1%
Family college experience						
First in family	**334**	57%	30%	10%	3%	1%
Second generation	**1654**	56%	34%	7%	3%	1%
Borrowing status						
Borrowed	**969**	49%	37%	10%	3%	1%
Did not borrow	**1031**	61%	30%	6%	2%	1%
School type						
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	58%	32%	8%	2%	0%
4-year private college/university	**464**	54%	32%	9%	4%	1%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	53%	38%	7%	2%	0%
Region						
Northeast	**401**	53%	34%	9%	4%	1%
Midwest	**440**	55%	37%	6%	2%	0%
South	**778**	59%	32%	6%	3%	1%
West	**381**	53%	32%	13%	2%	1%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

**Q: [Parent] Why did your child select the college/university they are attending? Please select all that apply.
[Student] Why did you select the college/university you are attending? Please select all that apply.**

a. The school was affordable/price of the program
b. It was near home
c. In-state school
d. For the specific academic program/degree [Student: I] [Parent: my child] wanted
e. The scholarships/aid [Student: I] [Parent: my child] received for that school
f. The college campus environment (e.g., green space, urban setting, etc.)
g. [Student: I have] [Parent: My child has] friends who went to the same college/university
h. The social life

Additional answer options continue on next page

Table 47. Reasons for deciding to attend the school (Part 1)

	N	Affordability	Near home	In-state school	Specific program/ degree	Scholarships/aid	Campus environment	Friends at same college	Social life
Total	**2000**	**40%**	**39%**	**39%**	**38%**	**36%**	**33%**	**22%**	**20%**
Parent	**1000**	39%	42%	40%	41%	33%	32%	22%	16%
Student	**1000**	42%	36%	37%	34%	39%	33%	23%	24%
Income									
<$50k	**658**	42%	42%	40%	38%	38%	26%	21%	19%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	40%	39%	39%	35%	33%	32%	22%	18%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	38%	38%	38%	40%	40%	40%	28%	24%
$150k+	**237**	39%	34%	37%	43%	33%	41%	21%	23%
Race/ethnicity									
White	**1038**	41%	38%	39%	42%	37%	35%	23%	18%
Black	**405**	39%	39%	41%	25%	35%	29%	19%	24%
Hispanic	**386**	44%	41%	33%	37%	35%	32%	25%	19%
Other	**171**	33%	38%	43%	37%	34%	29%	19%	25%
Family college experience									
First in family	**334**	41%	43%	36%	36%	35%	26%	19%	19%
Second generation	**1654**	40%	38%	39%	39%	36%	35%	23%	20%
Borrowing status									
Borrowed	**969**	37%	37%	37%	37%	36%	33%	23%	22%
Did not borrow	**1031**	44%	41%	40%	39%	36%	32%	22%	18%
School type									
4-year public/state college/university	**1069**	43%	40%	47%	41%	36%	33%	24%	19%
4-year private college/ university	**464**	30%	29%	27%	40%	43%	42%	20%	21%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	53%	53%	35%	28%	28%	20%	24%	20%
Region									
Northeast	**401**	35%	33%	30%	40%	36%	40%	16%	22%
Midwest	**440**	36%	41%	40%	37%	39%	27%	26%	17%
South	**778**	42%	39%	42%	36%	37%	33%	23%	22%
West	**381**	46%	44%	39%	40%	33%	31%	23%	18%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: [Parent] Why did your child select the college/university they are attending? Please select all that apply.
[Student] Why did you select the college/university you are attending? Please select all that apply.

i. It offered online or hybrid classes
j. Prestige
k. Large school
l. Small school
m. [Student: My parents] [Parent: I] went to the same college/university
n. It was far away from home
o. [Student] I was recruited for my sport
[Parent] My child was recruited for their sport
p. Other

Table 47. Reasons for deciding to attend the school (Part 2)

	N	Online/hybrid classes	Prestige	Large school	Small school	Parents attended same college	Far from home	Recruited for sport	Other
Total	**2000**	**16%**	**13%**	**13%**	**12%**	**9%**	**8%**	**6%**	**2%**
Parent	**1000**	15%	15%	12%	11%	8%	5%	6%	3%
Student	**1000**	16%	12%	14%	13%	11%	11%	6%	1%
Income									
<$50k	**658**	18%	7%	11%	13%	7%	9%	6%	1%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	16%	12%	13%	10%	10%	8%	5%	2%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	13%	24%	14%	13%	12%	8%	10%	2%
$150k+	**237**	13%	21%	14%	15%	13%	6%	6%	1%
Race/ethnicity									
White	**1038**	15%	12%	12%	13%	10%	7%	6%	2%
Black	**405**	16%	10%	14%	9%	11%	11%	6%	1%
Hispanic	**386**	19%	18%	13%	12%	8%	10%	8%	2%
Other	**171**	11%	18%	14%	11%	6%	4%	3%	1%
Family college experience									
First in family	**334**	19%	10%	11%	8%	4%	10%	4%	2%
Second generation	**1654**	15%	15%	13%	13%	11%	8%	7%	2%
Borrowing status									
Borrowed	**969**	13%	13%	13%	13%	11%	11%	8%	1%
Did not borrow	**1031**	19%	14%	12%	11%	8%	5%	5%	3%
School type									
4-year public/state college/university	**1069**	13%	13%	16%	7%	10%	7%	5%	2%
4-year private college/ university	**464**	15%	21%	11%	17%	10%	14%	10%	2%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	26%	5%	7%	14%	8%	3%	5%	4%
Region									
Northeast	**401**	12%	21%	15%	13%	7%	9%	11%	1%
Midwest	**440**	12%	11%	15%	14%	12%	9%	4%	2%
South	**778**	19%	12%	12%	11%	9%	8%	6%	2%
West	**381**	18%	10%	10%	11%	10%	7%	4%	2%

Base: Parents and students

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Q: Have you changed your major since you began attending college?

Table 48. Changing majors

	N	Yes, I changed from one major to another	Yes, I changed from "undecided" to a specific major	No, I have not changed from one major to another	No, I'm still "undecided" or haven't selected a major
Total	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**
Parent	**-**	-	-	-	-
Student	**1000**	23%	17%	53%	7%
Income					
<$50k	**429**	24%	17%	53%	6%
$50k-<$100k	**370**	22%	20%	49%	9%
$100k-<$150k	**126**	28%	10%	54%	9%
$150k+*	**75**	18%	14%	67%	1%
Race/ethnicity					
White	**400**	23%	16%	52%	9%
Black	**258**	24%	18%	51%	6%
Hispanic	**224**	24%	14%	59%	4%
Other	**118**	19%	23%	50%	8%
Family college experience					
First in family	**214**	21%	19%	53%	7%
Second generation	**779**	24%	16%	53%	8%
Borrowing status					
Borrowed	**526**	29%	18%	45%	8%
Did not borrow	**474**	17%	15%	61%	7%
School type					
4-year public/state college/ university	**487**	23%	15%	58%	4%
4-year private college/university	**269**	24%	17%	50%	9%
2-year public/ community college	**216**	20%	20%	49%	12%
Region					
Northeast	**212**	20%	21%	52%	7%
Midwest	**186**	24%	15%	56%	5%
South	**417**	25%	18%	53%	5%
West	**185**	21%	12%	52%	15%

Base: Students
*Small base size

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Q: Which of these was the ultimate deciding factor for which school [Parent: your child] [Student: you] would attend?

Table 49. Ultimate deciding factor for which school to attend

	N	Academic considerations (e.g., prestige, program, success of graduates of this school, etc.)	Financial considerations (e.g., total cost, financial aid package, etc.)	Personal considerations (e.g., location, social life, etc.)	Not sure
Total	**2000**	**36%**	**35%**	**28%**	**2%**
Parent	**1000**	40%	30%	27%	2%
Student	**1000**	31%	40%	28%	1%
Income					
<$50k	**658**	33%	39%	26%	2%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	36%	36%	26%	2%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	33%	33%	34%	1%
$150k+	**237**	44%	25%	30%	1%
Race/ethnicity					
White	**1038**	38%	33%	27%	2%
Black	**405**	34%	38%	27%	2%
Hispanic	**386**	33%	38%	28%	1%
Other	**171**	36%	34%	29%	2%
Family college experience					
First in family	**334**	39%	33%	26%	2%
Second generation	**1654**	35%	35%	28%	2%
Borrowing status					
Borrowed	**969**	34%	36%	29%	1%
Did not borrow	**1031**	38%	34%	26%	3%
School type					
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	37%	33%	29%	1%
4-year private college/university	**464**	41%	33%	24%	2%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	26%	41%	30%	3%
Region					
Northeast	**401**	43%	31%	23%	3%
Midwest	**440**	35%	34%	30%	2%
South	**778**	37%	36%	27%	1%
West	**381**	29%	38%	31%	2%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Who made the final decision about how to pay for college this year?

Table 50. How to pay final decision-maker

	N	The student and parent made the decision together	The student	The parent
Total	**2000**	**39%**	**35%**	**26%**
Parent	**1000**	48%	20%	32%
Student	**1000**	30%	50%	20%
Income				
<$50k	**658**	35%	45%	20%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	39%	38%	23%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	47%	26%	28%
$150k+	**237**	37%	13%	51%
Race/ethnicity				
White	**1038**	39%	33%	28%
Black	**405**	39%	40%	21%
Hispanic	**386**	35%	41%	24%
Other	**171**	44%	29%	28%
Family college experience				
First in family	**334**	38%	40%	22%
Second generation	**1654**	39%	34%	27%
Borrowing status				
Borrowed	**969**	39%	38%	23%
Did not borrow	**1031**	38%	33%	29%
School type				
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	43%	31%	26%
4-year private college/university	**464**	34%	37%	29%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	37%	41%	23%
Region				
Northeast	**401**	39%	30%	32%
Midwest	**440**	43%	32%	26%
South	**778**	36%	38%	26%
West	**381**	41%	38%	21%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: How confident are you that you have made the right financial decisions regarding paying for the education at the college in which [Parent: your child is] [Student: you are] currently enrolled?

Table 51. Confidence in paying for college

	N	Completely confident	Somewhat confident	Neither confident nor unconfident	Somewhat unconfident	Not at all confident
Total	**1601**	**46%**	**38%**	**11%**	**4%**	**2%**
Parent	**801**	53%	35%	8%	3%	1%
Student	**800**	38%	41%	13%	5%	2%
Income						
<$50k	**511**	40%	37%	14%	7%	3%
$50k-<$100k	**604**	46%	41%	10%	2%	1%
$100k-<$150k	**276**	44%	39%	11%	5%	2%
$150k+	**188**	61%	30%	5%	2%	2%
Race/ethnicity						
White	**832**	48%	37%	11%	3%	1%
Black	**332**	42%	42%	11%	5%	1%
Hispanic	**308**	45%	39%	9%	4%	3%
Other	**129**	43%	36%	14%	7%	1%
Family college experience						
First in family	**266**	48%	34%	11%	6%	2%
Second generation	**1326**	45%	39%	11%	3%	2%
Borrowing status						
Borrowed	**767**	37%	42%	13%	6%	3%
Did not borrow	**834**	54%	34%	9%	2%	1%
School type						
4-year public/state college/ university	**865**	47%	37%	11%	4%	1%
4-year private college/university	**368**	43%	40%	12%	3%	2%
2-year public/ community college	**334**	49%	36%	9%	5%	1%
Region						
Northeast	**318**	43%	40%	11%	4%	2%
Midwest	**359**	43%	37%	15%	3%	2%
South	**623**	51%	36%	7%	5%	2%
West	**301**	42%	40%	13%	4%	1%

Base: Parents and students who were the primary or shared decision-maker about how to pay for college

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Thinking generally about college and higher education, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about college.

Table 52a. Attitudes towards college, scale 1-5

	N	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
College is an investment in my [Parent: child's] future	**2000**	60%	31%	6%	3%	1%
Earning a college degree will create opportunities for [Parent: my child that they] [Student: me that I] wouldn't have otherwise	**2000**	54%	34%	8%	3%	1%
[Parent] I wanted my child to attend college because my child will earn more money with a college degree [Student] I wanted to attend college because I will earn more money with a college degree	**2000**	44%	38%	13%	3%	2%
I am willing to stretch myself financially to obtain the best opportunity for my [Parent: child's] future	**2000**	42%	39%	11%	6%	3%
I would rather borrow to pay for college than [Parent: have my child] not be able to attend at all	**2000**	41%	34%	14%	7%	4%
A college degree is necessary for career success today	**2000**	35%	34%	16%	12%	4%
[Parent] I would send my child to college for the intellectual and social experience regardless of whether my child earned more money with a college degree [Student] I would go to college for the intellectual and social experience regardless of whether I earned more money with a college degree	**2000**	25%	34%	20%	14%	6%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Table 52b. Attitudes toward college (% Strongly or somewhat agree)

	N	College is an investment in my [Parent: child's] future	Earning a college degree will create opportunities for [Parent: my child that they] [Student: me that I] wouldn't have otherwise	[Parent] I wanted my child to attend college because my child will earn more money with a college degree [Student] I wanted to attend college because I will earn more money with a college degree	I am willing to stretch myself financially to obtain the best opportunity for my [Parent: child's] future	I would rather borrow to pay for college than [Parent: have my child] not be able to attend at all	A college degree is necessary for career success today	[Parent] I would send my child to college for the intellectual and social experience regardless of whether my child earned more money with a college degree [Student] I would go to college for the intellectual and social experience regardless of whether I earned more money with a college degree
Total	**2000**	**91%**	**88%**	**82%**	**80%**	**75%**	**69%**	**59%**
Parent	**1000**	93%	90%	82%	86%	79%	72%	60%
Student	**1000**	88%	86%	82%	75%	72%	66%	59%
Income								
<$50k	**658**	89%	85%	79%	76%	70%	68%	57%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	90%	88%	81%	82%	76%	67%	60%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	94%	93%	88%	86%	80%	70%	68%
$150k+	**237**	92%	89%	82%	79%	82%	73%	53%
Race/ethnicity								
White	**1038**	90%	87%	80%	79%	77%	65%	56%
Black	**405**	87%	86%	81%	81%	69%	72%	61%
Hispanic	**386**	93%	90%	85%	83%	77%	75%	64%
Other	**171**	93%	90%	85%	82%	72%	69%	64%
Family college experience								
First in family	**334**	88%	86%	79%	78%	71%	70%	55%
Second generation	**1654**	91%	89%	83%	81%	77%	68%	61%
Borrowing status								
Borrowed	**969**	89%	86%	81%	82%	81%	71%	61%
Did not borrow	**1031**	91%	90%	83%	79%	71%	67%	57%
School type								
4-year public/state college/university	**1069**	93%	90%	83%	82%	78%	68%	59%
4-year private college/university	**464**	91%	87%	82%	81%	78%	71%	61%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	85%	85%	80%	75%	68%	67%	57%
Region								
Northeast	**401**	89%	87%	82%	81%	77%	68%	63%
Midwest	**440**	91%	88%	83%	81%	78%	65%	54%
South	**778**	91%	89%	82%	81%	75%	69%	59%
West	**381**	91%	89%	80%	78%	72%	72%	61%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Prior to enrolling, did [Parent: your child] [Student: you] consider pursuing career training, trade school, or an apprenticeship rather than a 2- or 4-year college/university? Please select all that apply.

Table 53. Considering alternatives to college

	N	Considered a career training program	Considered a trade school	Considered an apprenticeship	Did not consider a 2- or 4-year college/ university	Did not consider any other option
Total	**2000**	**24%**	**24%**	**15%**	**6%**	**52%**
Parent	**1000**	23%	22%	14%	2%	58%
Student	**1000**	25%	25%	16%	9%	46%
Income						
<$50k	**658**	28%	27%	17%	6%	44%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	23%	24%	15%	7%	50%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	21%	18%	14%	5%	59%
$150k+	**237**	21%	20%	13%	3%	65%
Race/ethnicity						
White	**1038**	21%	21%	14%	7%	56%
Black	**405**	27%	29%	17%	6%	44%
Hispanic	**386**	29%	27%	19%	3%	45%
Other	**171**	21%	21%	12%	5%	55%
Family college experience						
First in family	**334**	26%	27%	16%	4%	50%
Second generation	**1654**	23%	23%	15%	6%	53%
Borrowing status						
Borrowed	**969**	27%	29%	19%	7%	42%
Did not borrow	**1031**	21%	19%	12%	5%	61%
School type						
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	20%	20%	13%	4%	60%
4-year private college/university	**464**	24%	18%	13%	9%	53%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	31%	38%	23%	4%	34%
Region						
Northeast	**401**	17%	21%	17%	7%	58%
Midwest	**440**	24%	25%	15%	7%	50%
South	**778**	27%	25%	14%	4%	51%
West	**381**	25%	23%	15%	7%	49%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: When considering which colleges [Parent: your child] [Student: you] might attend, did you eliminate any schools based on cost at any of the following steps in the college application process?

Table 54a. Elimination of colleges based on cost (% saying yes at each point)

	N	Before deciding which colleges to research	Before deciding which college to apply to	After finding out which colleges [Parent: your child was] [Student: you were] admitted to, but before looking at financial aid packages	After looking at the financial aid packages
Total	**2000**	**58%**	**60%**	**53%**	**63%**
Parent	**1000**	51%	51%	46%	54%
Student	**1000**	66%	69%	59%	72%
Income					
<$50k	**658**	60%	60%	58%	71%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	58%	61%	49%	58%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	59%	62%	58%	65%
$150k+	**237**	56%	55%	43%	57%
Race/ethnicity					
White	**1038**	53%	56%	48%	59%
Black	**405**	67%	68%	57%	72%
Hispanic	**386**	64%	63%	58%	68%
Other	**171**	58%	61%	61%	62%
Family college experience					
First in family	**334**	56%	57%	55%	64%
Second generation	**1654**	59%	61%	52%	63%
Borrowing status					
Borrowed	**969**	64%	65%	57%	68%
Did not borrow	**1031**	53%	55%	48%	59%
School type					
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	58%	61%	52%	60%
4-year private college/university	**464**	51%	52%	50%	64%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	67%	68%	54%	68%
Region					
Northeast	**401**	63%	60%	53%	61%
Midwest	**440**	58%	64%	51%	65%
South	**778**	58%	59%	55%	64%
West	**381**	54%	59%	50%	61%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Table 54b. Elimination of colleges based on cost (cumulative % saying yes after each point)

	N	Before deciding which colleges to research	Before deciding which college to apply to	After finding out which colleges [Parent: your child was] [Student: you were] admitted to, but before looking at financial aid offers	After looking at the financial aid offers
Total	**2000**	**58%**	**67%**	**75%**	**79%**
Parent	**1000**	51%	56%	65%	70%
Student	**1000**	66%	78%	85%	89%
Income					
<$50k	**658**	60%	70%	80%	84%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	58%	68%	73%	75%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	59%	70%	80%	84%
$150k+	**237**	56%	60%	67%	77%
Race/ethnicity					
White	**1038**	53%	63%	71%	76%
Black	**405**	67%	78%	83%	85%
Hispanic	**386**	64%	71%	80%	84%
Other	**171**	58%	65%	76%	79%
Family college experience					
First in family	**334**	56%	66%	75%	77%
Second generation	**1654**	59%	68%	75%	80%
Borrowing status					
Borrowed	**969**	64%	75%	82%	85%
Did not borrow	**1031**	53%	61%	69%	74%
School type					
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	58%	67%	74%	78%
4-year private college/university	**464**	51%	61%	72%	78%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	67%	76%	81%	85%
Region					
Northeast	**401**	63%	70%	75%	80%
Midwest	**440**	58%	71%	77%	81%
South	**778**	58%	66%	75%	79%
West	**381**	54%	65%	74%	78%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: [Parent] Which, if any, of these did your child do before deciding to enroll in the college they are attending? Please select all that apply.
[Student] Which, if any, of these did you do before deciding to enroll in the college you are attending? Please select all that apply.

Table 55. College visit before enrolling

	N	Visited the college/campus in person	Met with an admissions officer from the college or university	Spoke to a current student or graduate of the college or university	Took a virtual tour of the college campus	None of the above
Total	**2000**	**71%**	**54%**	**41%**	**30%**	**5%**
Parent	**1000**	80%	61%	40%	32%	3%
Student	**1000**	61%	46%	42%	28%	7%
Income						
<$50k	**658**	66%	53%	40%	28%	6%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	70%	53%	38%	30%	4%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	75%	53%	47%	35%	3%
$150k+	**237**	82%	54%	44%	31%	3%
Race/ethnicity						
White	**1038**	72%	54%	41%	30%	5%
Black	**405**	72%	51%	38%	36%	3%
Hispanic	**386**	65%	56%	44%	28%	5%
Other	**171**	74%	50%	39%	27%	5%
Family college experience						
First in family	**334**	71%	56%	33%	28%	5%
Second generation	**1654**	71%	53%	43%	31%	4%
Borrowing status						
Borrowed	**969**	70%	53%	45%	32%	2%
Did not borrow	**1031**	72%	54%	38%	28%	7%
School type						
4-year public/state college/university	**1069**	76%	54%	39%	32%	5%
4-year private college/university	**464**	68%	52%	46%	30%	4%
2-year public/community college	**425**	64%	56%	38%	25%	5%
Region						
Northeast	**401**	74%	52%	47%	31%	4%
Midwest	**440**	71%	54%	43%	28%	4%
South	**778**	71%	56%	39%	32%	3%
West	**381**	67%	51%	38%	27%	8%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Did you [Parent: or your child] use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot, or others as a part of the application and decision-making process for college?

Table 56. Artificial Intelligence (AI) for research and decision-making

	N	Yes	No	Don't know
Total	**2000**	**26%**	**70%**	**4%**
Parent	**1000**	22%	70%	8%
Student	**1000**	30%	69%	1%
Income				
<$50k	**658**	26%	71%	3%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	24%	72%	5%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	32%	65%	3%
$150k+	**237**	27%	67%	6%
Race/ethnicity				
White	**1038**	22%	72%	5%
Black	**405**	30%	67%	3%
Hispanic	**386**	30%	66%	4%
Other	**171**	30%	68%	3%
Family college experience				
First in family	**334**	27%	66%	7%
Second generation	**1654**	26%	71%	4%
Borrowing status				
Borrowed	**969**	34%	63%	3%
Did not borrow	**1031**	19%	76%	6%
School type				
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	23%	73%	5%
4-year private college/university	**464**	29%	69%	3%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	26%	67%	7%
Region				
Northeast	**401**	25%	72%	3%
Midwest	**440**	27%	70%	3%
South	**778**	25%	70%	5%
West	**381**	27%	67%	6%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: How did you [Parent: or your child] use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot or others as part of the application and decision-making process for college? Please select all that apply.

Table 57. Artificial Intelligence (AI) use cases

N	503
To research colleges	42%
To research majors and career, including job placement and potential earnings	36%
To estimate the cost of college	33%
To explore what classes or coursework are required for certain majors	32%
To research financial aid	31%
To compare financial aid offers	30%
To decide which school to attend	28%
To research or apply for scholarships	27%
To research student loans	26%
To create a plan for how to pay for college	25%
To fill out college applications or Common Application	24%
To compare career outcomes of graduates from different schools	23%
To prepare for SAT®/ACT® or other standardized tests required for college admission	21%
To write or edit college essays or personal statements	20%
To take virtual tours of college campuses	19%
Other	1%

Base: Parents and students who used AI as part of the application and decision-making process for college

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Did you get a financial aid offer/award letter for academic year 2025-26 from the school [Parent: your child is] [Student: you are] attending?

Table 58. Financial aid offer received

	N	Yes	No	Not sure
Total	**2000**	**71%**	**25%**	**4%**
Parent	**1000**	70%	26%	4%
Student	**1000**	72%	25%	3%
Income				
<$50k	**658**	77%	19%	4%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	71%	26%	3%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	70%	26%	4%
$150k+	**237**	59%	39%	2%
Race/ethnicity				
White	**1038**	67%	28%	5%
Black	**405**	80%	18%	2%
Hispanic	**386**	75%	23%	2%
Other	**171**	69%	28%	3%
Family college experience				
First in family	**334**	75%	21%	4%
Second generation	**1654**	70%	27%	4%
Borrowing status				
Borrowed	**969**	77%	20%	3%
Did not borrow	**1031**	66%	30%	5%
School type				
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	70%	26%	4%
4-year private college/university	**464**	71%	26%	3%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	71%	24%	4%
Region				
Northeast	**401**	71%	26%	4%
Midwest	**440**	74%	22%	4%
South	**778**	71%	25%	3%
West	**381**	68%	28%	4%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Which of these were included in the financial aid offer/award letter your family received for academic year 2025-26? Check all that apply.

Table 59. Contents of a financial aid offer letter

	N	Scholarship amount offered by the school	Federal grant amount	Federal loan amount	Cost of attendance	Family's out-of-pocket cost	Federal work-study amount	Parent PLUS loan amount	Other ways to finance the out-of-pocket cost	Other	None of the above	Don't know
Total	**1458**	**55%**	**54%**	**39%**	**38%**	**28%**	**18%**	**15%**	**14%**	**1%**	**1%**	**3%**
Parent	**717**	54%	58%	40%	39%	32%	14%	15%	15%	2%	1%	3%
Student	**741**	56%	51%	39%	37%	23%	21%	14%	14%	1%	1%	3%
Income												
<$50k	**522**	51%	60%	39%	39%	21%	19%	15%	15%	1%	0%	3%
$50k-<$100k	**554**	52%	54%	37%	37%	30%	16%	13%	14%	2%	1%	4%
$100k-<$150k	**232**	64%	50%	48%	40%	31%	17%	14%	15%	2%	1%	2%
$150k+	**137**	66%	44%	37%	36%	34%	17%	20%	13%	-	2%	3%
Race/ethnicity												
White	**715**	61%	52%	39%	42%	29%	17%	13%	14%	2%	0%	3%
Black	**324**	46%	60%	36%	32%	22%	18%	21%	15%	1%	2%	4%
Hispanic	**302**	49%	57%	43%	35%	29%	18%	13%	14%	1%	1%	3%
Other	**117**	58%	53%	39%	37%	27%	19%	14%	17%	3%	-	1%
Family college experience												
First in family	**259**	45%	63%	30%	34%	22%	14%	14%	13%	1%	0%	3%
Second generation	**1192**	58%	52%	42%	39%	29%	19%	15%	15%	2%	1%	3%
Borrowing status												
Borrowed	**774**	51%	55%	54%	42%	33%	21%	22%	17%	1%	0%	1%
Did not borrow	**684**	60%	54%	24%	34%	21%	14%	7%	11%	2%	1%	5%
School type												
4-year public/state college/university	**778**	58%	56%	43%	40%	27%	15%	14%	13%	2%	1%	3%
4-year private college/ university	**350**	65%	49%	43%	40%	33%	22%	16%	17%	0%	1%	3%
2-year public/ community college	**301**	38%	61%	30%	31%	17%	16%	12%	12%	3%	1%	4%
Region												
Northeast	**301**	62%	49%	43%	39%	29%	18%	15%	14%	2%	1%	3%
Midwest	**321**	50%	52%	43%	43%	30%	16%	18%	14%	1%	0%	4%
South	**575**	58%	57%	36%	38%	26%	17%	13%	15%	1%	0%	3%
West	**261**	50%	57%	38%	33%	27%	18%	13%	15%	3%	1%	3%

Base: Parents and students who received a financial aid offer from the school student is attending

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: How easy was it for you to understand the information provided in the financial aid offer/award letter you received from [Parent: the school your child is attending] [Student: your school]?

Table 60. Ease of understanding of the financial aid offer

	N	Very easy	Somewhat easy	Neither easy nor difficult	Somewhat difficult	Very difficult
Total	**1458**	**36%**	**42%**	**14%**	**8%**	**1%**
Parent	**717**	37%	39%	16%	7%	1%
Student	**741**	34%	45%	12%	8%	1%
Income						
<$50k	**522**	36%	43%	14%	6%	1%
$50k-<$100k	**554**	36%	42%	14%	9%	1%
$100k-<$150k	**232**	32%	42%	15%	9%	1%
$150k+	**137**	41%	41%	13%	5%	1%
Race/ethnicity						
White	**715**	35%	43%	14%	7%	1%
Black	**324**	40%	39%	14%	7%	0%
Hispanic	**302**	38%	40%	15%	8%	1%
Other	**117**	28%	52%	9%	10%	1%
Family college experience						
First in family	**259**	35%	37%	19%	8%	1%
Second generation	**1192**	36%	44%	12%	8%	1%
Borrowing status						
Borrowed	**774**	30%	46%	13%	11%	1%
Did not borrow	**684**	42%	39%	15%	4%	0%
School type						
4-year public/state college/ university	**778**	33%	43%	15%	8%	1%
4-year private college/university	**350**	35%	45%	12%	7%	1%
2-year public/ community college	**301**	43%	35%	14%	9%	0%
Region						
Northeast	**301**	33%	45%	12%	10%	1%
Midwest	**321**	35%	45%	13%	7%	0%
South	**575**	37%	43%	13%	6%	1%
West	**261**	35%	37%	18%	10%	1%

Base: Parents and students who received a financial aid offer from the school student is attending

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Did you accept the financial aid offer/award letter?

Table 61. Acceptance of financial aid offer

	N	Accepted the entire award offered	Accepted some of the aid offered and refused some items	Did not accept any of the award offered
Total	**1458**	**80%**	**19%**	**1%**
Parent	**717**	84%	15%	1%
Student	**741**	76%	23%	1%
Income				
<$50k	**522**	79%	20%	1%
$50k-<$100k	**554**	81%	19%	0%
$100k-<$150k	**232**	77%	22%	2%
$150k+	**137**	83%	14%	3%
Race/ethnicity				
White	**715**	80%	19%	1%
Black	**324**	78%	20%	3%
Hispanic	**302**	83%	17%	-
Other	**117**	76%	24%	-
Family college experience				
First in family	**259**	81%	18%	1%
Second generation	**1192**	80%	19%	1%
Borrowing status				
Borrowed	**774**	77%	22%	1%
Did not borrow	**684**	83%	16%	1%
School type				
4-year public/state college/ university	**778**	80%	19%	1%
4-year private college/university	**350**	79%	20%	1%
2-year public/ community college	**301**	80%	19%	1%
Region				
Northeast	**301**	84%	15%	1%
Midwest	**321**	78%	22%	1%
South	**575**	78%	20%	2%
West	**261**	81%	19%	0%

Base: Parents and students who received a financial aid offer from the school student is attending

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Did you know that some financial aid award letters can include loans?

Table 62. Aware that financial aid award letter can include loans

	N	Yes	No
Total	**1458**	**81%**	**19%**
Parent	**717**	81%	19%
Student	**741**	81%	19%
Income			
<$50k	**522**	79%	21%
$50k-<$100k	**554**	80%	20%
$100k-<$150k	**232**	86%	14%
$150k+	**137**	86%	14%
Race/ethnicity			
White	**715**	82%	18%
Black	**324**	79%	21%
Hispanic	**302**	82%	18%
Other	**117**	78%	23%
Family college experience			
First in family	**259**	79%	21%
Second generation	**1192**	82%	18%
Borrowing status			
Borrowed	**774**	85%	15%
Did not borrow	**684**	77%	23%
School type			
4-year public/state college/ university	**778**	81%	19%
4-year private college/university	**350**	84%	16%
2-year public/ community college	**301**	76%	25%
Region			
Northeast	**301**	80%	20%
Midwest	**321**	87%	14%
South	**575**	81%	19%
West	**261**	78%	22%

Base: Parents and students who received a financial aid offer from the school student is attending

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: You said you were offered student loans as part of your financial aid offer/award letter. Which of the following comes closest to your opinion about the loans that are offered as part of your financial aid offer/award letter?

Table 63. Opinions on loans in financial aid offers

	N	Loans must be taken out if they are part of the financial aid offer/award letter	Loans are optional if they are part of the financial aid offer/award letter
Total	**704**	**21%**	**79%**
Parent	**354**	17%	83%
Student	**350**	24%	76%
Income			
<$50k	**246**	22%	79%
$50k-<$100k	**255**	20%	81%
$100k-<$150k	**131**	19%	81%
$150k+*	**67**	24%	76%
Race/ethnicity			
White	**342**	19%	81%
Black	**159**	24%	76%
Hispanic	**148**	23%	77%
Other*	**55**	15%	85%
Family college experience			
First in family	**103**	17%	83%
Second generation	**598**	22%	78%
Borrowing status			
Borrowed	**506**	22%	78%
Did not borrow	**198**	17%	84%
School type			
4-year public/state college/ university	**400**	17%	83%
4-year private college/university	**186**	27%	74%
2-year public/ community college	**108**	19%	81%
Region			
Northeast	**160**	26%	74%
Midwest	**174**	19%	81%
South	**258**	20%	81%
West	**112**	19%	81%

Base: Parents and students whose financial aid offer included student loans
*Small base size

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Some colleges and universities have committed to standardizing financial aid offer/award letters to increase transparency and make it easier for families to compare aid and award offers between different institutions. To what extent do you support or oppose this action?

Table 64. Support for standardizing aid and award offers

	N	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Neither support nor oppose	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	I don't know enough about this
Total	**2000**	**37%**	**30%**	**20%**	**4%**	**2%**	**8%**
Parent	**1000**	39%	29%	20%	2%	1%	8%
Student	**1000**	34%	31%	19%	6%	3%	7%
Income							
<$50k	**658**	34%	29%	24%	4%	2%	7%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	37%	30%	18%	5%	3%	6%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	37%	30%	17%	5%	1%	11%
$150k+	**237**	44%	32%	15%	2%	1%	7%
Race/ethnicity							
White	**1038**	38%	27%	19%	4%	3%	10%
Black	**405**	36%	30%	26%	3%	1%	4%
Hispanic	**386**	39%	35%	15%	5%	2%	5%
Other	**171**	31%	36%	21%	5%	0%	7%
Family college experience							
First in family	**334**	36%	30%	22%	3%	2%	7%
Second generation	**1654**	37%	30%	19%	5%	2%	8%
Borrowing status							
Borrowed	**969**	36%	31%	20%	6%	3%	5%
Did not borrow	**1031**	38%	29%	19%	2%	2%	10%
School type							
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	40%	28%	19%	4%	1%	8%
4-year private college/university	**464**	33%	34%	16%	5%	3%	9%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	36%	28%	25%	4%	2%	6%
Region							
Northeast	**401**	35%	31%	16%	6%	3%	9%
Midwest	**440**	34%	32%	20%	4%	1%	9%
South	**778**	40%	27%	21%	3%	2%	7%
West	**381**	36%	32%	20%	4%	2%	7%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Did you appeal or ask your school for additional financial aid?

Table 65. Financial aid appeal

	N	Yes	No
Total	**1458**	**33%**	**67%**
Parent	**717**	27%	73%
Student	**741**	39%	61%
Income			
<$50k	**522**	33%	67%
$50k-<$100k	**554**	33%	67%
$100k-<$150k	**232**	37%	63%
$150k+	**137**	27%	73%
Race/ethnicity			
White	**715**	31%	69%
Black	**324**	34%	66%
Hispanic	**302**	37%	63%
Other	**117**	32%	68%
Family college experience			
First in family	**259**	33%	67%
Second generation	**1192**	33%	67%
Borrowing status			
Borrowed	**774**	42%	58%
Did not borrow	**684**	24%	77%
School type			
4-year public/state college/ university	**778**	29%	71%
4-year private college/university	**350**	37%	63%
2-year public/ community college	**301**	35%	65%
Region			
Northeast	**301**	41%	59%
Midwest	**321**	29%	71%
South	**575**	31%	70%
West	**261**	34%	66%

Base: Parents and students who received a financial aid offer from the school student is attending

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Was your appeal granted?

Table 66. Financial aid appeal granted

N	461
Yes, I received additional aid	70%
No	16%
Still waiting on a response	8%
I don't know	6%

Base: Parents and students who received a financial aid offer from the school student is attending and appealed for more aid

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: How would you rate the value of the education [Parent: your child is] [Student: you are] receiving compared with the price you are paying?

Table 67. Rating of the value of college education compared to the price

	N	Excellent value, worth every penny	Somewhat of a bargain	The price is appropriate for the education received	Somewhat overpriced	Significantly overpriced
Total	**2000**	**24%**	**12%**	**35%**	**21%**	**8%**
Parent	**1000**	25%	11%	40%	19%	5%
Student	**1000**	23%	14%	30%	23%	11%
Income						
<$50k	**658**	27%	12%	33%	21%	7%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	23%	15%	37%	18%	7%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	23%	9%	33%	25%	11%
$150k+	**237**	19%	11%	36%	27%	7%
Race/ethnicity						
White	**1038**	24%	14%	33%	21%	9%
Black	**405**	27%	10%	35%	22%	6%
Hispanic	**386**	23%	12%	37%	22%	6%
Other	**171**	21%	12%	38%	20%	9%
Family college experience						
First in family	**334**	25%	13%	39%	18%	5%
Second generation	**1654**	24%	12%	34%	22%	9%
Borrowing status						
Borrowed	**969**	20%	14%	30%	25%	10%
Did not borrow	**1031**	27%	11%	39%	17%	6%
School type						
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	20%	12%	39%	21%	7%
4-year private college/university	**464**	26%	14%	26%	23%	11%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	29%	11%	38%	17%	6%
Region						
Northeast	**401**	22%	13%	30%	24%	11%
Midwest	**440**	22%	14%	37%	21%	7%
South	**778**	26%	12%	36%	19%	7%
West	**381**	23%	12%	37%	21%	9%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Aside from the education [Parent: your child is] [Student: you are] receiving, how would you rate the value of your/their college experience (facilities, campus life, housing, meal plan, etc.) compared with the price you are paying?

Table 68. Rating of the value of college experience compared to the price

	N	Excellent value, worth every penny	Somewhat of a bargain	The price is appropriate for the education received	Somewhat overpriced	Significantly overpriced
Total	**2000**	**22%**	**12%**	**38%**	**20%**	**8%**
Parent	**1000**	24%	10%	43%	19%	5%
Student	**1000**	19%	14%	34%	22%	11%
Income						
<$50k	**658**	24%	11%	40%	17%	8%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	20%	15%	39%	19%	7%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	21%	9%	37%	24%	8%
$150k+	**237**	21%	9%	34%	27%	10%
Race/ethnicity						
White	**1038**	21%	11%	39%	19%	10%
Black	**405**	26%	14%	30%	23%	7%
Hispanic	**386**	20%	12%	42%	19%	7%
Other	**171**	17%	13%	40%	24%	6%
Family college experience						
First in family	**334**	25%	11%	42%	16%	6%
Second generation	**1654**	20%	12%	37%	21%	9%
Borrowing status						
Borrowed	**969**	19%	14%	32%	24%	11%
Did not borrow	**1031**	23%	10%	45%	17%	6%
School type						
4-year public/state college/university	**1069**	20%	11%	40%	22%	7%
4-year private college/university	**464**	24%	13%	31%	21%	12%
2-year public/community college	**425**	24%	11%	46%	13%	6%
Region						
Northeast	**401**	20%	12%	38%	20%	11%
Midwest	**440**	19%	16%	35%	22%	9%
South	**778**	25%	11%	38%	19%	7%
West	**381**	20%	10%	42%	22%	7%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Which of these statements best describes how much you paid for college in the current academic year, 2025-2026?

Table 69. Paying the full advertised price

	N	Paid the full advertised price	Paid less than the full advertised price	Not sure
Total	**2000**	**39%**	**52%**	**9%**
Parent	**1000**	37%	52%	12%
Student	**1000**	42%	51%	7%
Income				
<$50k	**658**	35%	54%	11%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	41%	51%	9%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	38%	53%	9%
$150k+	**237**	51%	44%	5%
Race/ethnicity				
White	**1038**	37%	53%	10%
Black	**405**	45%	46%	9%
Hispanic	**386**	42%	51%	8%
Other	**171**	37%	53%	10%
Family college experience				
First in family	**334**	35%	53%	13%
Second generation	**1654**	41%	51%	8%
Borrowing status				
Borrowed	**969**	42%	50%	8%
Did not borrow	**1031**	37%	53%	11%
School type				
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	40%	50%	10%
4-year private college/university	**464**	37%	56%	7%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	40%	47%	13%
Region				
Northeast	**401**	44%	49%	7%
Midwest	**440**	34%	56%	10%
South	**778**	40%	52%	8%
West	**381**	38%	50%	12%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Which of the following best describes your [Parent: college student's] current living arrangements?

Table 70. Living arrangements

	N	Lives with parents or other relatives	Lives on campus with roommates	Lives off campus in apartment/ house with roommates/ housemates	Lives on campus alone	Lives off campus in apartment/ house alone
Total	**2000**	**36%**	**32%**	**17%**	**9%**	**6%**
Parent	**1000**	35%	36%	18%	7%	5%
Student	**1000**	37%	28%	16%	11%	7%
Income						
<$50k	**658**	38%	26%	18%	10%	8%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	39%	32%	16%	8%	5%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	30%	37%	18%	11%	5%
$150k+	**237**	31%	39%	17%	7%	7%
Race/ethnicity						
White	**1038**	37%	31%	19%	7%	6%
Black	**405**	30%	32%	17%	13%	9%
Hispanic	**386**	38%	32%	14%	9%	6%
Other	**171**	37%	38%	12%	10%	3%
Family college experience						
First in family	**334**	37%	30%	16%	11%	5%
Second generation	**1654**	36%	33%	18%	8%	6%
Borrowing status						
Borrowed	**969**	29%	37%	17%	12%	6%
Did not borrow	**1031**	42%	28%	17%	6%	6%
School type						
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	32%	36%	20%	8%	5%
4-year private college/university	**464**	25%	40%	16%	14%	6%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	65%	11%	12%	4%	8%
Region						
Northeast	**401**	33%	35%	17%	9%	5%
Midwest	**440**	33%	34%	15%	9%	9%
South	**778**	34%	29%	20%	10%	7%
West	**381**	45%	32%	14%	6%	3%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: [Parent: Is your child] [Student: Are you] working while attending school in the 2025-2026 school year?

Table 71. Working students

	N	No	Yes, all year	Yes, only during school breaks	Yes, during school term, but not during breaks
Total	**2000**	**33%**	**30%**	**24%**	**14%**
Parent	**1000**	32%	32%	25%	11%
Student	**1000**	33%	27%	23%	16%
Income					
<$50k	**658**	33%	29%	24%	15%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	32%	32%	22%	13%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	32%	27%	27%	14%
$150k+	**237**	32%	30%	27%	11%
Race/ethnicity					
White	**1038**	32%	33%	23%	12%
Black	**405**	32%	25%	26%	18%
Hispanic	**386**	33%	26%	26%	15%
Other	**171**	39%	27%	23%	10%
Family college experience					
First in family	**334**	33%	31%	23%	14%
Second generation	**1654**	33%	30%	25%	13%
Borrowing status					
Borrowed	**969**	27%	27%	30%	15%
Did not borrow	**1031**	37%	32%	19%	12%
School type					
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	35%	30%	23%	12%
4-year private college/university	**464**	32%	25%	28%	16%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	29%	39%	20%	14%
Region					
Northeast	**401**	35%	25%	28%	12%
Midwest	**440**	27%	36%	22%	15%
South	**778**	32%	30%	23%	16%
West	**381**	37%	29%	24%	10%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: Where [Parent: does your child] [Student: do you] work? Please select all that apply.

Table 72. Where students work

	N	Off campus	On campus	Working a paid internship	Working an unpaid internship
Total	**1374**	**69%**	**20%**	**15%**	**9%**
Parent	**696**	74%	17%	13%	6%
Student	**678**	64%	23%	17%	12%
Income					
<$50k	**443**	70%	17%	12%	12%
$50k-<$100k	**531**	70%	17%	16%	8%
$100k-<$150k	**232**	65%	26%	15%	6%
$150k+	**159**	68%	26%	21%	12%
Race/ethnicity					
White	**725**	73%	19%	14%	7%
Black	**279**	70%	15%	15%	11%
Hispanic	**265**	63%	21%	18%	14%
Other	**105**	56%	27%	18%	8%
Family college experience					
First in family	**227**	77%	10%	13%	9%
Second generation	**1140**	67%	23%	16%	10%
Borrowing status					
Borrowed	**722**	61%	22%	16%	14%
Did not borrow	**652**	77%	17%	14%	5%
School type					
4-year public/state college/ university	**718**	72%	19%	14%	7%
4-year private college/university	**324**	59%	26%	19%	12%
2-year public/ community college	**302**	79%	12%	13%	8%
Region					
Northeast	**267**	65%	23%	20%	12%
Midwest	**326**	67%	23%	14%	8%
South	**538**	75%	15%	13%	8%
West	**243**	64%	21%	16%	11%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: How would you describe the status of [Parent: your child's] [Student: your] career goals?

Table 73. Student's career goals

	N	Know exactly the career to pursue	Know the general field but not the exact job	Have a sense of a preferred work environment but not the role	Have multiple ideas of goals but haven't narrowed them down yet	Don't know yet what [Parent: they] [Student: I] would like to do
Total	**2000**	**40%**	**35%**	**14%**	**9%**	**2%**
Parent	**1000**	44%	35%	10%	9%	2%
Student	**1000**	35%	36%	17%	9%	3%
Income						
<$50k	**658**	39%	33%	15%	11%	3%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	41%	39%	11%	7%	2%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	39%	35%	15%	8%	3%
$150k+	**237**	40%	33%	15%	11%	1%
Race/ethnicity						
White	**1038**	37%	38%	14%	8%	3%
Black	**405**	39%	31%	13%	15%	1%
Hispanic	**386**	49%	33%	10%	7%	1%
Other	**171**	36%	35%	16%	9%	3%
Family college experience						
First in family	**334**	45%	30%	14%	9%	2%
Second generation	**1654**	38%	37%	13%	9%	2%
Borrowing status						
Borrowed	**969**	35%	37%	17%	9%	2%
Did not borrow	**1031**	44%	34%	10%	9%	3%
School type						
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	40%	38%	11%	9%	2%
4-year private college/university	**464**	39%	36%	14%	9%	2%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	38%	32%	17%	10%	3%
Region						
Northeast	**401**	40%	39%	13%	7%	1%
Midwest	**440**	38%	36%	12%	11%	3%
South	**778**	41%	35%	14%	9%	2%
West	**381**	39%	33%	15%	9%	4%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Q: When thinking about paying for college, how confident are you about each of the following economic factors?

Table 74a. Parent economic concerns

	N	Very confident	Somewhat confident	Neither confident nor unconfident	Somewhat unconfident	Very unconfident
Our funds will not run out before our child has completed college	**1000**	25%	30%	24%	15%	6%
We will be able to deal with recently implemented limits to federal loans for new borrowers	**1000**	22%	32%	33%	9%	4%
That I and/or my child's other parent will not experience a change in our financial situation (i.e., job loss)	**1000**	21%	32%	28%	13%	6%
Scholarship and grant money will be available for all years of attendance	**1000**	19%	36%	24%	14%	7%
The value of my savings or investments will improve or remain stable	**1000**	18%	33%	28%	15%	6%
Federal student aid (grants, student loans, loans for parents) will be available	**1000**	17%	40%	26%	11%	5%
Loan rates will be stable	**1000**	12%	23%	30%	23%	13%
School tuition will stay the same	**1000**	12%	24%	24%	25%	15%

Base: Parents

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Table 74b: Parent economic concerns (% Very or somewhat confident)

	N	Our funds will not run out before our child has completed college	We will be able to deal with recently implemented limits to federal loans for new borrowers	That I and/or my child's other parent will not experience a change in our financial situation (i.e., job loss)	Scholarship and grant money will be available for all years of attendance	The value of my savings or investments will improve or remain stable	Federal student aid (grants, student loans, loans for parents) will be available	Loan rates will be stable	School tuition will stay the same
Total	**1000**	**55%**	**54%**	**53%**	**55%**	**51%**	**58%**	**35%**	**36%**
Parent	**1000**	55%	54%	53%	55%	51%	58%	35%	36%
Student	**-**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Income									
<$50k	**229**	48%	43%	45%	49%	36%	56%	28%	31%
$50k-<$100k	**378**	56%	57%	53%	58%	53%	59%	33%	35%
$100k-<$150k	**207**	60%	63%	67%	63%	64%	61%	47%	44%
$150k+	**162**	62%	60%	53%	53%	55%	60%	37%	39%
Race/ethnicity									
White	**638**	54%	53%	53%	53%	47%	53%	31%	30%
Black	**147**	59%	56%	51%	62%	58%	65%	35%	43%
Hispanic	**162**	55%	54%	54%	54%	50%	61%	40%	44%
Other*	**53**	56%	62%	52%	62%	65%	68%	46%	41%
Family college experience									
First in family	**120**	53%	51%	53%	54%	44%	53%	31%	32%
Second generation	**875**	56%	56%	53%	56%	53%	59%	36%	37%
Borrowing status									
Borrowed	**443**	57%	55%	54%	57%	51%	61%	39%	39%
Did not borrow	**557**	54%	54%	52%	54%	51%	55%	32%	33%
School type									
4-year public/state college/university	**582**	59%	53%	55%	56%	52%	58%	35%	33%
4-year private college/ university	**195**	56%	64%	62%	61%	57%	59%	39%	44%
2-year public/ community college	**209**	42%	48%	34%	47%	41%	53%	27%	31%
Region									
Northeast	**189**	53%	51%	49%	49%	53%	56%	33%	40%
Midwest	**254**	61%	54%	53%	55%	51%	59%	34%	28%
South	**361**	57%	58%	57%	60%	51%	59%	36%	39%
West	**196**	50%	51%	50%	53%	48%	56%	35%	34%

Base: Parents
*Small base size

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**Q: [Parent] How confident are you that your child will complete their Bachelor's degree in four years?
[Student] How confident are you that you will complete your Bachelor's degree in four years?**

Table 75. Confidence in completing Bachelor's degree in four years

	N	Completely confident	Somewhat confident	Neither confident nor unconfident	Somewhat unconfident	Not at all confident
Total	**1356**	**58%**	**26%**	**9%**	**5%**	**2%**
Parent	**688**	66%	25%	6%	2%	1%
Student	**668**	49%	28%	13%	7%	3%
Income						
<$50k	**379**	48%	27%	14%	8%	2%
$50k-<$100k	**493**	61%	26%	9%	3%	0%
$100k-<$150k	**267**	61%	27%	6%	4%	2%
$150k+	**196**	63%	26%	5%	3%	4%
Race/ethnicity						
White	**747**	60%	26%	8%	4%	2%
Black	**238**	51%	31%	10%	5%	2%
Hispanic	**236**	59%	27%	9%	5%	0%
Other	**135**	52%	24%	16%	7%	2%
Family college experience						
First in family	**190**	59%	24%	11%	4%	2%
Second generation	**1155**	58%	26%	9%	5%	2%
Borrowing status						
Borrowed	**679**	54%	28%	10%	6%	3%
Did not borrow	**677**	62%	24%	9%	4%	1%
School type						
4-year public/state college/ university	**869**	58%	26%	10%	5%	1%
4-year private college/university	**367**	61%	23%	9%	6%	3%
2-year public/ community college	**108**	52%	37%	9%	2%	-
Region						
Northeast	**304**	64%	22%	8%	6%	1%
Midwest	**299**	56%	26%	9%	7%	2%
South	**500**	61%	24%	10%	3%	2%
West	**253**	49%	33%	10%	4%	3%

Base: Students and parents of students working towards Bachelor's degree

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Q: Has your family discussed how they would pay for any additional years of college (beyond four years) for [Parent: your child to complete their] [Student: you to complete your] degree, if needed?

Table 76. Discussed paying for additional years of college

N	570
Yes	42%
No	51%
Not sure	7%

Base: Students and parents of students working towards Bachelor's degree who are not completely confident in completing four years

Q: Before [Parent: your child] [Student: you] enrolled, how confident did you feel in each of the following areas?

Table 77a. Pre-enrollment confidence

	N	Completely confident	Somewhat confident	Neither confident nor unconfident	Somewhat unconfident	Not at all confident	Not applicable
Understanding the differences between grants, scholarships, work-study, and student loans	**2000**	36%	40%	13%	6%	4%	2%
Understanding the total cost of attending college (tuition, fees, room and board, travel, etc.)	**2000**	35%	43%	13%	6%	2%	1%
Creating a realistic plan for paying for all years of college	**2000**	31%	39%	15%	8%	4%	3%
Understanding how student loans work, including interest, borrowing limits, and repayment options	**2000**	30%	37%	14%	10%	5%	5%
Comparing financial aid offers from different colleges	**2000**	30%	37%	17%	7%	3%	6%
Understanding likely earnings after graduation in desired field	**2000**	30%	38%	19%	8%	3%	2%
Understanding monthly loan payments and debt after graduation	**2000**	30%	34%	16%	9%	4%	7%
Understanding what I/my student could reasonably pay back each month	**2000**	29%	37%	18%	7%	3%	6%

Base: Parents and students

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Table 77b. Pre-enrollment confidence (% Completely or somewhat confident)

	N	Understanding differences between grants, scholarships, work-study, and student loans	Understanding total cost of college	Creating plan to pay for all years of college	Understanding how student loans work	Comparing financial aid offers	Understanding likely earnings after graduation	Understanding monthly loan payments and debt after graduation	Understanding what I/my student could reasonably pay back each month
Total	**2000**	**76%**	**78%**	**70%**	**67%**	**67%**	**68%**	**64%**	**65%**
Parent	**1000**	81%	83%	75%	73%	68%	72%	70%	70%
Student	**1000**	71%	72%	65%	61%	66%	65%	58%	61%
Income									
<$50k	**658**	72%	75%	64%	64%	64%	68%	60%	59%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	79%	78%	73%	72%	72%	70%	68%	70%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	78%	81%	73%	68%	68%	66%	66%	70%
$150k+	**237**	76%	81%	72%	63%	67%	70%	60%	65%
Race/ethnicity									
White	**1038**	77%	78%	70%	66%	65%	67%	63%	67%
Black	**405**	72%	77%	70%	67%	71%	71%	64%	65%
Hispanic	**386**	78%	78%	70%	70%	71%	71%	67%	65%
Other	**171**	69%	76%	69%	65%	62%	66%	59%	62%
Family college experience									
First in family	**334**	71%	73%	67%	63%	63%	68%	66%	64%
Second generation	**1654**	77%	79%	70%	68%	68%	68%	63%	66%
Borrowing status									
Borrowed	**969**	75%	76%	68%	72%	70%	69%	68%	67%
Did not borrow	**1031**	76%	79%	71%	63%	65%	67%	60%	64%
School type									
4-year public/state college/university	**1069**	75%	77%	69%	66%	64%	68%	62%	64%
4-year private college/ university	**464**	78%	80%	70%	67%	72%	69%	67%	68%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	73%	77%	69%	70%	65%	66%	65%	65%
Region									
Northeast	**401**	75%	81%	68%	69%	71%	69%	66%	65%
Midwest	**440**	79%	82%	72%	69%	70%	71%	65%	67%
South	**778**	77%	77%	71%	68%	69%	71%	67%	67%
West	**381**	71%	73%	68%	63%	58%	60%	57%	62%

Base: Parents and students

Q: How confident do you feel in each of the following areas today?

Table 78a. Current confidence

	N	Completely confident	Somewhat confident	Neither confident nor unconfident	Somewhat unconfident	Not at all confident	Not applicable
Understanding the differences between grants, scholarships, work-study, and student loans	**2000**	41%	39%	12%	4%	2%	2%
Understanding the total cost of attending college (tuition, fees, room and board, travel, etc.)	**2000**	41%	38%	13%	5%	2%	1%
Creating a realistic plan for paying for all years of college	**2000**	37%	37%	15%	6%	2%	2%
Understanding how student loans work, including interest, borrowing limits, and repayment options	**2000**	37%	36%	13%	7%	2%	4%
Comparing financial aid offers from different colleges	**2000**	36%	36%	15%	5%	2%	6%
Understanding likely earnings after graduation in desired field	**2000**	35%	39%	16%	6%	3%	2%
Understanding monthly loan payments and debt after graduation	**2000**	35%	36%	13%	7%	2%	7%
Understanding what I/my student could reasonably pay back each month	**2000**	35%	36%	14%	7%	2%	6%

Base: Parents and students

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Table 78b. Current confidence (% Completely or somewhat confident)

	N	Understanding differences between grants, scholarships, work-study, and student loans	Understanding total cost of college	Creating plan to pay for all years of college	Understanding how student loans work	Comparing financial aid offers	Understanding likely earnings after graduation	Understanding monthly loan payments and debt after graduation	Understanding what I/my student could reasonably pay back each month
Total	**2000**	**80%**	**79%**	**74%**	**73%**	**72%**	**74%**	**71%**	**71%**
Parent	1000	85%	84%	78%	78%	73%	75%	74%	74%
Student	1000	75%	74%	70%	68%	71%	73%	68%	69%
Income									
<$50k	658	75%	72%	67%	67%	67%	72%	66%	65%
$50k-<$100k	748	84%	82%	78%	77%	77%	76%	78%	76%
$100k-<$150k	333	83%	86%	78%	79%	77%	74%	73%	77%
$150k+	237	82%	84%	75%	72%	69%	74%	65%	71%
Race/ethnicity									
White	1038	81%	81%	74%	73%	71%	76%	71%	71%
Black	405	74%	77%	77%	73%	71%	73%	71%	69%
Hispanic	386	82%	80%	71%	76%	75%	75%	74%	74%
Other	171	79%	75%	73%	71%	70%	65%	66%	67%
Family college experience									
First in family	334	78%	72%	68%	69%	68%	73%	70%	70%
Second generation	1654	81%	81%	76%	74%	73%	74%	72%	72%
Borrowing status									
Borrowed	969	80%	78%	73%	76%	73%	76%	74%	74%
Did not borrow	1031	81%	81%	75%	71%	72%	72%	69%	68%
School type									
4-year public/state college/university	1069	79%	79%	74%	72%	71%	72%	70%	69%
4-year private college/ university	464	81%	82%	77%	76%	75%	77%	76%	76%
2-year public/ community college	425	81%	77%	69%	72%	71%	72%	67%	69%
Region									
Northeast	401	79%	81%	75%	72%	75%	75%	70%	72%
Midwest	440	82%	81%	76%	74%	74%	73%	75%	72%
South	778	82%	80%	74%	74%	73%	77%	75%	72%
West	381	78%	76%	71%	71%	67%	68%	63%	68%

Base: Parents and students

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Q: What are the top types/sources of information, if any that [Not confident: would] make you feel [Not confident: more] confident about the education financing decisions you've made?

Table 79. Sources of information instilling confidence

	N	Clear understanding of total costs	Clear understanding of financial aid	Trusted guidance or advice	Clear understanding of funding options to cover the financial gap	Understanding student's career/earnings outcomes post-graduation	Proactive planning and information gathering	Clear understanding of loan repayment terms/monthly payments after graduation	Ability to compare offers from multiple schools	Helpful tools or calculators	Other	None of the above
Total	**1601**	**44%**	**37%**	**29%**	**28%**	**26%**	**24%**	**23%**	**17%**	**14%**	**1%**	**3%**
Parent	**801**	50%	40%	27%	29%	23%	28%	22%	15%	11%	1%	4%
Student	**800**	38%	33%	32%	27%	29%	20%	25%	19%	16%	0%	3%
Income												
<$50k	**511**	41%	38%	30%	31%	28%	20%	22%	16%	16%	0%	2%
$50k-<$100k	**604**	42%	38%	31%	30%	22%	25%	24%	15%	12%	0%	4%
$100k-<$150k	**276**	45%	34%	30%	27%	29%	24%	29%	20%	15%	2%	3%
$150k+	**188**	53%	35%	22%	22%	29%	30%	19%	20%	9%	-	5%
Race/ethnicity												
White	**832**	48%	35%	29%	25%	25%	22%	23%	17%	13%	1%	4%
Black	**332**	33%	35%	29%	33%	28%	19%	27%	22%	14%	0%	3%
Hispanic	**308**	39%	41%	33%	33%	27%	28%	20%	14%	15%	-	2%
Other	**129**	46%	39%	23%	32%	28%	31%	23%	15%	13%	-	2%
Family college experience												
First in family	**266**	41%	33%	30%	30%	26%	21%	22%	18%	11%	-	3%
Second generation	**1326**	44%	38%	29%	28%	26%	25%	23%	16%	14%	1%	3%
Borrowing status												
Borrowed	**767**	41%	35%	28%	30%	27%	21%	32%	18%	14%	0%	2%
Did not borrow	**834**	46%	38%	31%	27%	25%	26%	15%	16%	14%	1%	5%
School type												
4-year public/state college/university	**865**	46%	40%	27%	29%	25%	24%	23%	17%	14%	1%	3%
4-year private college/ university	**368**	45%	31%	32%	28%	28%	20%	27%	18%	11%	1%	3%
2-year public/ community college	**334**	37%	35%	31%	28%	27%	27%	19%	14%	17%	0%	5%
Region												
Northeast	**318**	41%	37%	34%	25%	25%	24%	25%	18%	14%	0%	5%
Midwest	**359**	45%	39%	28%	30%	29%	21%	26%	15%	10%	0%	2%
South	**623**	42%	34%	30%	27%	24%	25%	22%	17%	14%	1%	3%
West	**301**	49%	38%	25%	32%	27%	25%	21%	16%	15%	1%	4%

Base: Parents and students who were the primary or shared decision-maker about how to pay for college

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Q: As you may know, beginning on July 1, 2026, the federal government is capping Parent PLUS loans for new borrowers at $20,000 per year per student, with a $65,000 lifetime limit per student. These changes do not affect families who have already taken out Parent PLUS loans, but will affect families taking out these loans for the first time for Fall 2026 and beyond. Were you aware of these changes to federal loans?

Table 80. Awareness of federal Parent PLUS change

	N	Yes, I was fully aware	Yes, I was somewhat aware	No
Total	**2000**	**22%**	**25%**	**53%**
Parent	**1000**	19%	24%	57%
Student	**1000**	25%	27%	48%
Income				
<$50k	**658**	22%	27%	51%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	21%	25%	55%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	24%	28%	48%
$150k+	**237**	24%	21%	56%
Race/ethnicity				
White	**1038**	18%	25%	57%
Black	**405**	29%	24%	47%
Hispanic	**386**	26%	25%	49%
Other	**171**	25%	30%	46%
Family college experience				
First in family	**334**	23%	25%	52%
Second generation	**1654**	22%	26%	53%
Borrowing status				
Borrowed	**969**	26%	29%	45%
Did not borrow	**1031**	19%	22%	59%
School type				
4-year public/state college/university	**1069**	20%	27%	53%
4-year private college/university	**464**	25%	21%	54%
2-year public/community college	**425**	21%	27%	52%
Region				
Northeast	**401**	22%	28%	50%
Midwest	**440**	20%	28%	52%
South	**778**	24%	23%	53%
West	**381**	21%	26%	54%

Base: Parents and students

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Q: How did you learn about these new federal borrowing limits?

a. The news (e.g., The New York Times, Fox News, The Washington Post, OAN, etc.)
b. College's financial aid office/financial aid counselor
c. Information from your high school
d. Social media or internet forums (e.g., TikTok, Instagram, Reddit, Facebook, College Confidential, etc.)
e. YouTube or podcasts
f. A friend or family member
g. AI tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Grok, or others
h. Information from private lenders (e.g., Sallie Mae, SoFi, etc.)
i. Other

Table 81. Sources of information for new federal borrowing limits

	N	College's financial aid office/financial aid counselor	The news	Social media or internet forums	A friend or family member	Information from your high school	Information from private lenders	AI tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Grok or others	YouTube or podcasts	Other
Total	**969**	**38%**	**32%**	**28%**	**27%**	**20%**	**17%**	**16%**	**16%**	**1%**
Parent	**438**	46%	38%	19%	21%	20%	17%	13%	14%	2%
Student	**531**	32%	27%	36%	32%	21%	17%	19%	18%	0%
Income										
<$50k	**321**	39%	25%	27%	25%	20%	18%	19%	19%	0%
$50k-<$100k	**366**	37%	33%	28%	30%	21%	13%	16%	13%	1%
$100k-<$150k	**163**	41%	36%	30%	24%	20%	22%	16%	15%	2%
$150k+	**113**	33%	42%	31%	23%	20%	19%	10%	20%	2%
Race/ethnicity										
White	**457**	35%	31%	28%	28%	20%	14%	16%	13%	1%
Black	**225**	34%	25%	30%	25%	20%	17%	21%	24%	1%
Hispanic	**200**	47%	34%	27%	24%	17%	24%	17%	14%	1%
Other*	**87**	38%	42%	26%	29%	30%	19%	12%	22%	2%
Family college experience										
First in family	**175**	35%	31%	27%	28%	20%	15%	18%	17%	0%
Second generation	**790**	39%	33%	29%	26%	20%	18%	16%	15%	1%
Borrowing status										
Borrowed	**532**	37%	33%	30%	26%	21%	20%	21%	19%	1%
Did not borrow	**437**	39%	30%	26%	28%	19%	14%	10%	13%	1%
School type										
4-year public/state college/university	**515**	43%	32%	28%	28%	16%	15%	15%	15%	1%
4-year private college/university	**225**	33%	33%	26%	23%	25%	22%	18%	18%	1%
2-year public/community college	**204**	35%	34%	30%	29%	23%	15%	16%	16%	1%
Region										
Northeast	**199**	35%	44%	24%	30%	20%	13%	14%	14%	0%
Midwest	**211**	37%	27%	28%	28%	18%	16%	13%	17%	1%
South	**380**	37%	30%	31%	29%	21%	20%	16%	16%	1%
West	**179**	44%	28%	28%	18%	21%	18%	22%	17%	3%

Base: Parents and students who are fully aware of Parent PLUS loan change *Small base size

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Q: What are the top actions, if any, that you feel schools should take in response to new federal borrowing limits? Please select up to three.

Table 82. Desired school actions in response to federal borrowing limits

	N	Lower tuition and fees	Offer more scholarships	Offer more generous financial aid	Provide recommendations on how to cover the financial gap	Cut non-essential fees (e.g., activity fees, technology fees)	Expand work-study opportunities	Offer more online or hybrid programs to reduce costs	Provide a recommendation for the best lenders to work with	Other	Schools should not take any action	I don't know
Total	**2000**	**53%**	**38%**	**36%**	**23%**	**22%**	**20%**	**17%**	**15%**	**0%**	**1%**	**8%**
Parent	**1000**	57%	42%	37%	23%	19%	21%	19%	12%	0%	1%	9%
Student	**1000**	49%	34%	35%	24%	25%	20%	16%	17%	0%	1%	8%
Income												
<$50k	**658**	53%	37%	35%	24%	23%	20%	18%	16%	0%	1%	8%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	50%	36%	34%	24%	23%	23%	17%	17%	0%	1%	8%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	58%	39%	43%	23%	20%	17%	20%	10%	0%	1%	9%
$150k+	**237**	54%	42%	36%	21%	24%	18%	13%	12%	1%	1%	9%
Race/ethnicity												
White	**1038**	53%	37%	38%	23%	23%	19%	16%	12%	1%	1%	9%
Black	**405**	52%	40%	33%	24%	17%	20%	16%	14%	0%	1%	10%
Hispanic	**386**	52%	38%	35%	26%	20%	24%	22%	21%	0%	2%	5%
Other	**171**	53%	39%	35%	21%	29%	21%	15%	14%	-	0%	8%
Family college experience												
First in family	**334**	52%	37%	33%	27%	17%	21%	15%	16%	-	1%	10%
Second generation	**1654**	53%	38%	37%	23%	23%	20%	18%	14%	0%	1%	8%
Borrowing status												
Borrowed	**969**	51%	38%	37%	26%	22%	21%	19%	17%	0%	1%	4%
Did not borrow	**1031**	54%	38%	35%	21%	22%	20%	16%	13%	1%	1%	12%
School type												
4-year public/state college/university	**1069**	56%	42%	38%	23%	23%	20%	17%	14%	1%	1%	7%
4-year private college/ university	**464**	48%	33%	36%	24%	22%	20%	18%	16%	0%	1%	9%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	52%	37%	34%	22%	20%	20%	18%	14%	-	0%	11%
Region												
Northeast	**401**	45%	41%	40%	20%	20%	20%	18%	18%	0%	1%	10%
Midwest	**440**	62%	41%	35%	23%	17%	18%	14%	14%	1%	1%	7%
South	**778**	53%	34%	34%	26%	22%	22%	18%	14%	0%	1%	8%
West	**381**	52%	39%	36%	23%	28%	19%	18%	13%	0%	1%	9%

Base: Parents and students

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Q: How would you rate schools overall for the job they have done providing information and advice about new federal borrowing limits?

Table 83. Rating schools job in providing information and advice

	N	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very poor	I don't know
Total	**2000**	**18%**	**38%**	**25%**	**9%**	**6%**	**6%**
Parent	**1000**	17%	40%	25%	7%	3%	8%
Student	**1000**	18%	35%	25%	11%	8%	3%
Income							
<$50k	**658**	21%	36%	25%	8%	5%	5%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	15%	42%	25%	8%	5%	4%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	15%	36%	27%	12%	6%	6%
$150k+	**237**	19%	30%	21%	14%	8%	9%
Race/ethnicity							
White	**1038**	17%	36%	24%	10%	7%	7%
Black	**405**	24%	35%	25%	9%	2%	4%
Hispanic	**386**	16%	44%	25%	7%	5%	3%
Other	**171**	13%	37%	28%	10%	6%	6%
Family college experience							
First in family	**334**	20%	37%	26%	8%	4%	5%
Second generation	**1654**	17%	38%	24%	10%	6%	5%
Borrowing status							
Borrowed	**969**	17%	41%	24%	10%	7%	3%
Did not borrow	**1031**	18%	34%	26%	9%	5%	8%
School type							
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	16%	38%	25%	9%	6%	6%
4-year private college/university	**464**	18%	36%	22%	12%	8%	5%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	21%	37%	28%	8%	2%	6%
Region							
Northeast	**401**	17%	39%	20%	10%	7%	6%
Midwest	**440**	17%	36%	27%	11%	5%	4%
South	**778**	21%	35%	26%	7%	6%	6%
West	**381**	13%	42%	25%	10%	5%	5%

Base: Parents and students

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Q: How much responsibility, if any, do you feel that each of the following have for making college more affordable for students and families going forward?

Table 84a. Responsibility for making college more affordable

	N	A great deal of responsibility	A lot of responsibility	Some responsibility	A little responsibility	No responsibility at all
Colleges and universities	**2000**	37%	37%	21%	4%	1%
The federal government	**2000**	35%	32%	24%	7%	2%
State governments	**2000**	30%	35%	27%	7%	2%
Individual students and their families	**2000**	17%	30%	32%	13%	7%
Private lenders (e.g., banks, credit unions, private loan companies)	**2000**	15%	24%	34%	19%	8%

Base: Parents and students

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Table 84b. Responsibility for making college more affordable (% A great deal or a lot of responsibility)

	N	Colleges and universities	The federal government	State governments	Individual students and their families	Private lenders (e.g., banks, credit unions, private loan companies)
Total	**2000**	**74%**	**67%**	**64%**	**48%**	**39%**
Parent	**1000**	75%	65%	64%	49%	36%
Student	**1000**	73%	69%	65%	47%	43%
Income						
<$50k	**658**	68%	63%	61%	43%	37%
$50k-<$100k	**748**	77%	71%	68%	50%	43%
$100k-<$150k	**333**	78%	65%	65%	49%	38%
$150k+	**237**	79%	70%	64%	52%	40%
Race/ethnicity						
White	**1038**	76%	64%	62%	47%	38%
Black	**405**	70%	71%	70%	51%	41%
Hispanic	**386**	76%	73%	68%	48%	44%
Other	**171**	67%	63%	59%	47%	32%
Family college experience						
First in family	**334**	67%	68%	65%	44%	40%
Second generation	**1654**	76%	67%	64%	49%	39%
Borrowing status						
Borrowed	**969**	72%	66%	63%	47%	42%
Did not borrow	**1031**	76%	68%	66%	49%	37%
School type						
4-year public/state college/ university	**1069**	75%	68%	66%	45%	36%
4-year private college/university	**464**	77%	64%	60%	53%	43%
2-year public/ community college	**425**	70%	69%	66%	43%	39%
Region						
Northeast	**401**	74%	63%	63%	50%	40%
Midwest	**440**	71%	65%	61%	46%	37%
South	**778**	75%	68%	66%	50%	41%
West	**381**	76%	69%	64%	44%	39%

Base: Parents and students

Return to the "Table of tables"

Technical Notes

Target Population

Ipsos conducted the *How America Pays for College* survey online between Wednesday, April 22, 2026 and Tuesday, May 26, 2026. Ipsos interviewed 2,000 individuals: 1,000 parents of 18 to 24-year-old undergraduate students and 1,000 18 to 24-year-old undergraduate students.

Sample Design

The sample for this study was randomly drawn from Ipsos' online panel, partner online panel sources, and "river" sampling, and does not rely on a population frame in the traditional sense. Ipsos used fixed sample targets, unique to the study, in drawing sample. This sample design was a disproportionate stratified sample of parents of college students and college students. After a sample has been obtained, Ipsos calibrates respondent characteristics to be representative of the U.S. population using standard procedures such as raking-ratio adjustments. The source of these population targets is 2024 American Community Survey data. The sample was stratified by additional variables, such as region and student enrollment status.

Weighting

To correct for the disproportionate stratified sample, both the parent and the student samples were weighted using a statistical technique called raking, in which all of the population marginal profiles of interest are replicated in the sample. The sample of parents was weighted by gender, age, race/ethnicity, region, education, and by college information (region, size, and type). The sample of students was weighted by gender, age, race/ethnicity, region, and by college information (region, size and type). All of the demographic profiles used for both parents and students in the weights were sourced from the 2023 Current Population Survey (CPS). The National Center for Educational Statistics provided additional data for the college information weights.

Bayesian Credibility Intervals

The calculation of credibility intervals assumes that Y has a binomial distribution conditioned on the parameter θ\, i.e., Y|θ~Bin(n,θ), where n is the size of our sample. In this setting, Y counts the number of "yes," or "1," observed in the sample, so that the sample mean ((y ̅) is a natural estimate of the true population proportion θ. This model is often called the likelihood function, and it is a standard concept in both the Bayesian and the Classical framework. The Bayesian 1 statistics combines both the prior distribution and the likelihood function to create a posterior distribution. The posterior distribution represents our opinion about which are the plausible values for θ adjusted after observing the sample data. In reality, the posterior distribution is one's knowledge base updated using the latest survey information. For the prior and likelihood functions specified here, the posterior distribution is also a beta distribution (π(θ/y)~β(y+a,n-y+b)), but with updated hyper-parameters.

Our credibility interval for θ is based on this posterior distribution. As mentioned above, these intervals represent our belief about which are the most plausible values for θ given our updated knowledge base. There are different ways to calculate these intervals based on π(θ/y). Since we want only one measure of precision for all variables in the survey, analogous to what is done within the Classical framework, we will compute the largest possible credibility interval for any observed sample. The worst case occurs when we assume that a=1 and b=1 and y=n/2. Using a simple approximation of the posterior by the normal distribution, the 95% credibility interval is given by approximately 2.7.

Calculating *How America Pays for College*

The primary goal of the *How America Pays for College* national survey is to understand how and what the "typical American family" is paying for a college education. To enable this understanding and for these figures to be tracked over time, Ipsos has continued to calculate figures for total cost for college, and the use and value of the variety of funding sources, in the same way as they have been calculated in previous waves.