

# How America **Completes** College

Understanding what helps  
students graduate

Conducted by Ipsos



2024

**sallie**<sup>SM</sup>

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Sallie Mae helps families make informed decisions about planning and paying for school, and offers resources like private loans and savings accounts. But when it comes to higher education, there's so much more that students need.

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## About this study

The second edition of Sallie Mae's *How America Completes College 2024* report focuses on the experiences of current undergraduate students and considers the real-time barriers to graduation. This year's report identifies key factors impacting a student's journey from accessing higher education to completing their degree or program of study.

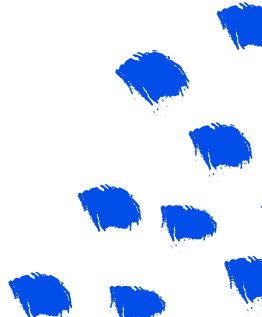
Additionally, we examine the reasons Non-Completers—young adults who started but did not finish their degrees or program of study—left school and use these learnings to evaluate the current college experience and identify students at risk of non-completion.

The results are based on an online survey managed by Ipsos, in English, with:

- 1,029 young adults, ages 18 to 30, currently enrolled in a 2- or 4-year program
- 427 young adults, ages 18 to 30, who started a 2- or 4-year degree but withdrew before completing the program

The research was conducted between June 2, 2023 and June 26, 2023.

For details on methodology, including sampling, weighting, and credibility intervals, see the Technical Notes section at the end of this report.



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**64%**

of college students  
have never considered  
leaving school

**12%**

considered leaving,  
but not seriously

**24%**

seriously considered  
leaving school or are  
at risk of dismissal

## Key Insights

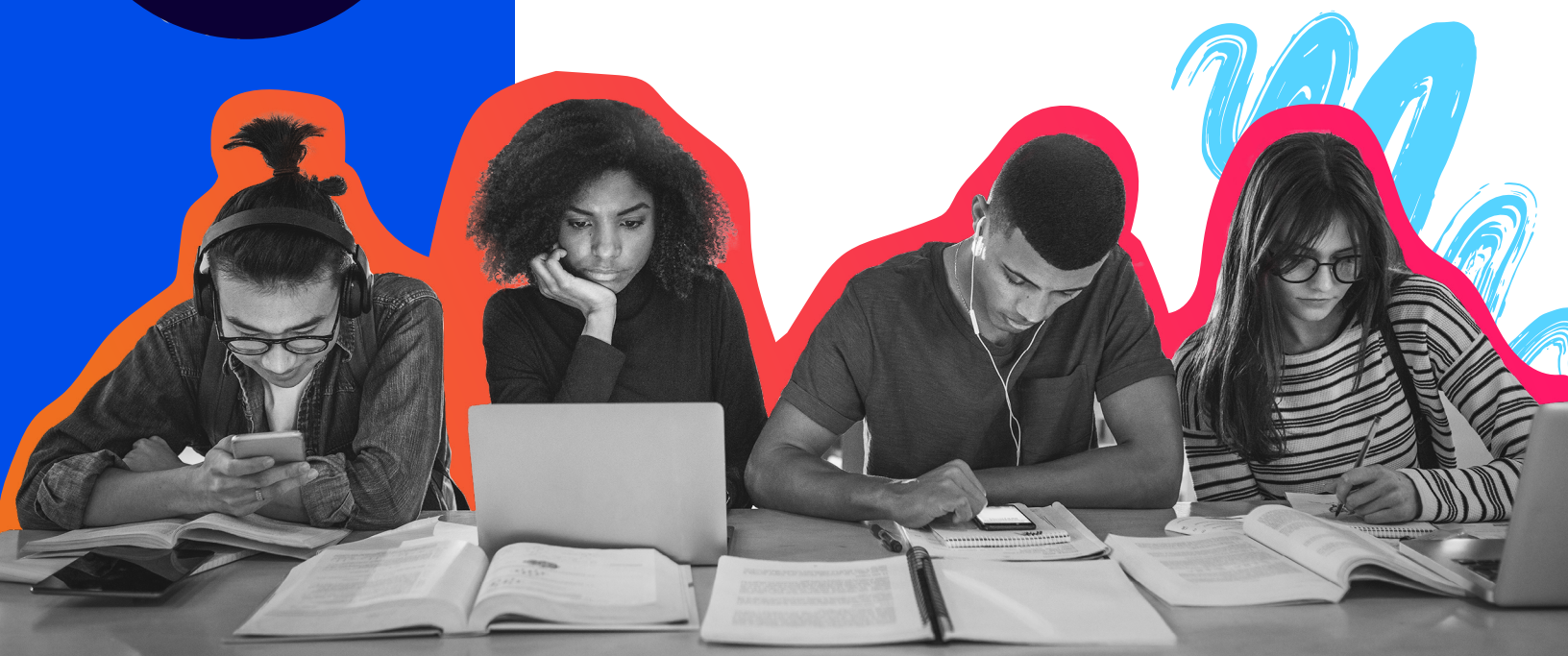
# Current Students

## One in four current undergraduates are at risk of non-completion

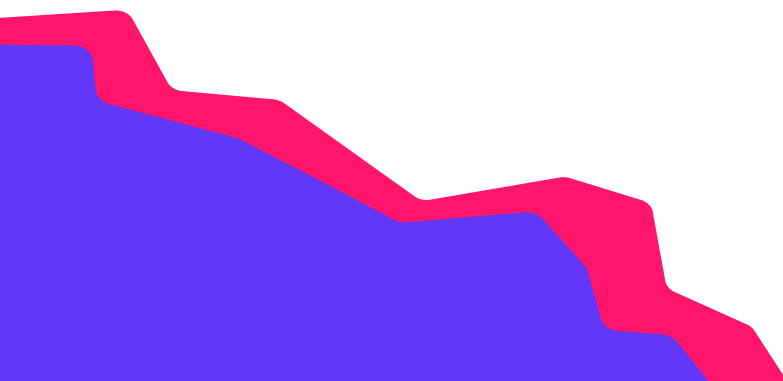
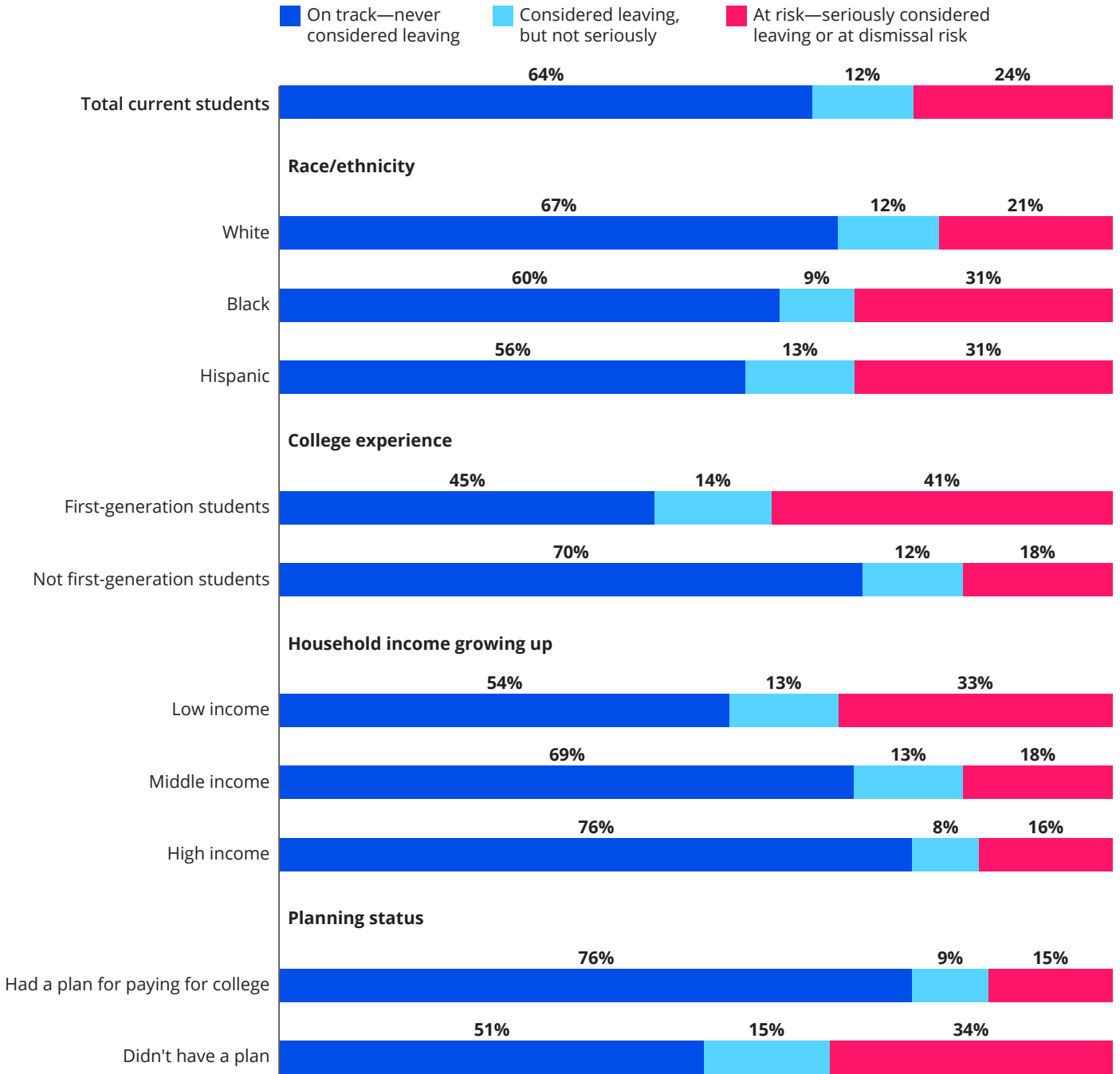
Sixty-four percent of currently enrolled undergraduate students reported being on a successful path, never having considered leaving school or being at risk of dismissal. We will refer to this group as “on track” throughout this report. Twelve percent of students reported having considered leaving school, but not seriously. Lastly, 24% of undergraduate students are “at risk”: they have seriously considered leaving school or have been at risk of dismissal.

Students who are the first in their family to attend college are twice as likely to have seriously considered leaving college than students from families with college experience (41% vs. 18%). Compared with all other segments (e.g., race, household income, etc.), first-generation students are most at risk of non-completion.

For the purposes of our analysis, we will focus on two groups of current students: those who are on track and those who are at risk. In the data, the segment of current students who have considered leaving, but not seriously, tends to fall somewhere between those who are on track and at risk.



**Current students: On track or at risk?**





## On-track and at-risk students have demographic and behavioral differences

There are demographic and behavioral differences between on-track and at-risk students, including race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, household income, and college experience within the household.

- **At-risk students are more likely to be the first in their family to attend college:** 56% of at-risk students say their parents did not earn a college degree, while only 25% of on-track students say they are first-generation students.
- **At-risk students are more likely to be Hispanic or Black:** 28% of at-risk students are Hispanic vs. 19% of students who are on track; 14% of at-risk students are Black compared with 10% of on-track students.
- **At-risk students are more likely to be LGBTQ+:** 16% of at-risk students are gay or lesbian compared to 5% of students who are on track.
- **At-risk students were more likely to grow up in lower-income households:** 57% of at-risk students reported they grew up in low or low-middle income households, and 35% of on-track students reported the same.
- **At-risk students are more likely to work off campus and work more hours:** 57% of students who are at risk reported working off campus while in school compared to just 38% of on-track students. More than half of at-risk students who have a job (53%) work more than 20 hours a week vs. 25% of on-track students.
- **At-risk students are more likely to be enrolled in 2-year institutions:** 37% of at-risk students are enrolled in a 2-year college or program compared to 18% of students who are on track.
- **At-risk students are nearly 3 times more likely to have transferred schools:** 27% of at-risk students report having transferred schools compared to just 10% of on-track students.



57%

of at-risk students reported working off campus while in school.

## Students who are on track committed to and planned for college early on

**97%**

of on-track students were very or somewhat committed to college when in high school.

More than 7 in 10 of on-track students (73%) say they have always known they would go to college compared with 44% of at-risk students.

More than a third of at-risk students (36%) decided to go to college as a junior or senior in high school or after leaving high school. Nearly all on-track students (90%) started college right after high school, while 20% of students who are at risk started college more than a year after their high school graduation.

Among on-track students, an overwhelming majority (97%) were very or somewhat committed to attending college when in high school vs. 75% of at-risk students. More than half (52%) of at-risk students indicated they chose to apply to college partly due to external pressures, such as family expectations or to help support their family. Fewer on-track students (38%) mentioned external reasons for attending college.

Early commitment to the college path likely contributed to higher propensity to prepare and plan for the financial realities of college among students who are on track. Nearly half (46%) of these students say their families developed a plan to pay for all years of college before the student enrolled compared with just 25% of at-risk students.

## Earning a 4-year degree in 4 years?

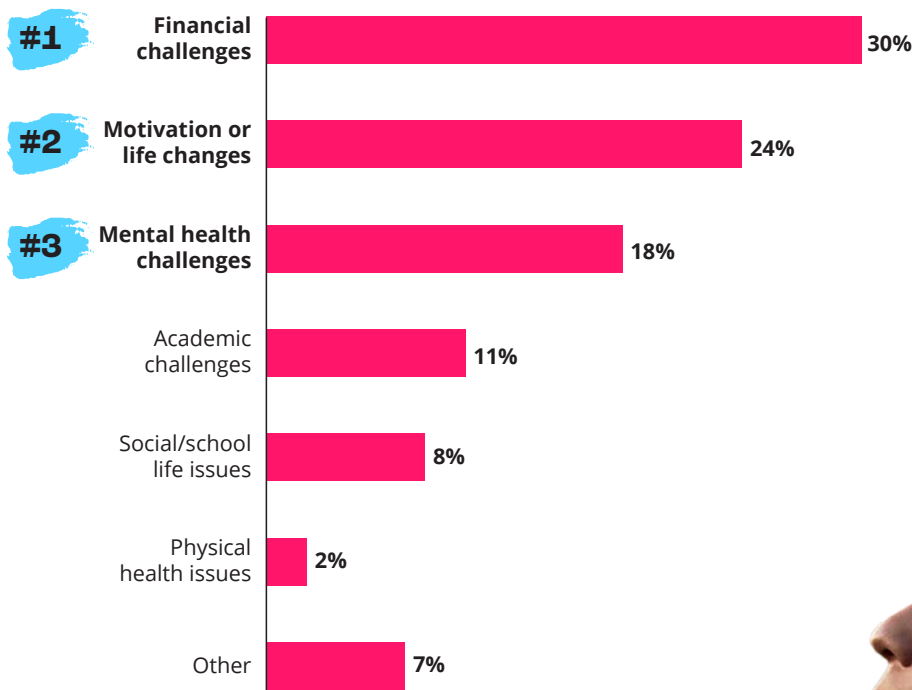
While **78%** of students express the ambition to complete their 4-year undergraduate degree within 4 years, the reality is only **62%** actually graduate within a 6-year time frame<sup>1</sup>. Notably, students deemed on track exhibit a higher confidence level (84%) in achieving this goal than their at-risk counterparts (59%).

<sup>1</sup> Completing College 2023 Report; National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (NSCRC); <https://nscresearchcenter.org/completing-college/>

# Finances, change in motivation, and mental health are top reasons at-risk students have considered leaving school

Current students who have seriously considered leaving college pointed to financial challenges (30%), changes in motivation (24%), and mental health (18%) as primary reasons they have considered leaving school.

**Current at-risk students: Primary reasons for considering leaving school**



# #1 Risk Factor Financial challenges

Even before entering college, few at-risk students reported being prepared to cover the cost of college (30%) or confident about their families' ability to pay (35%).

Further, about half of at-risk students said it is difficult for them to meet the cost of tuition (53%) and the cost of additional college expenses, such as textbooks, living costs or food (50%). Among on-track students, 21% and 26% reported the same difficulties, respectively.

Moreover, 42% of at-risk students give fair or poor ratings to the financial support they are receiving from their college, including scholarships or advice on how to pay.

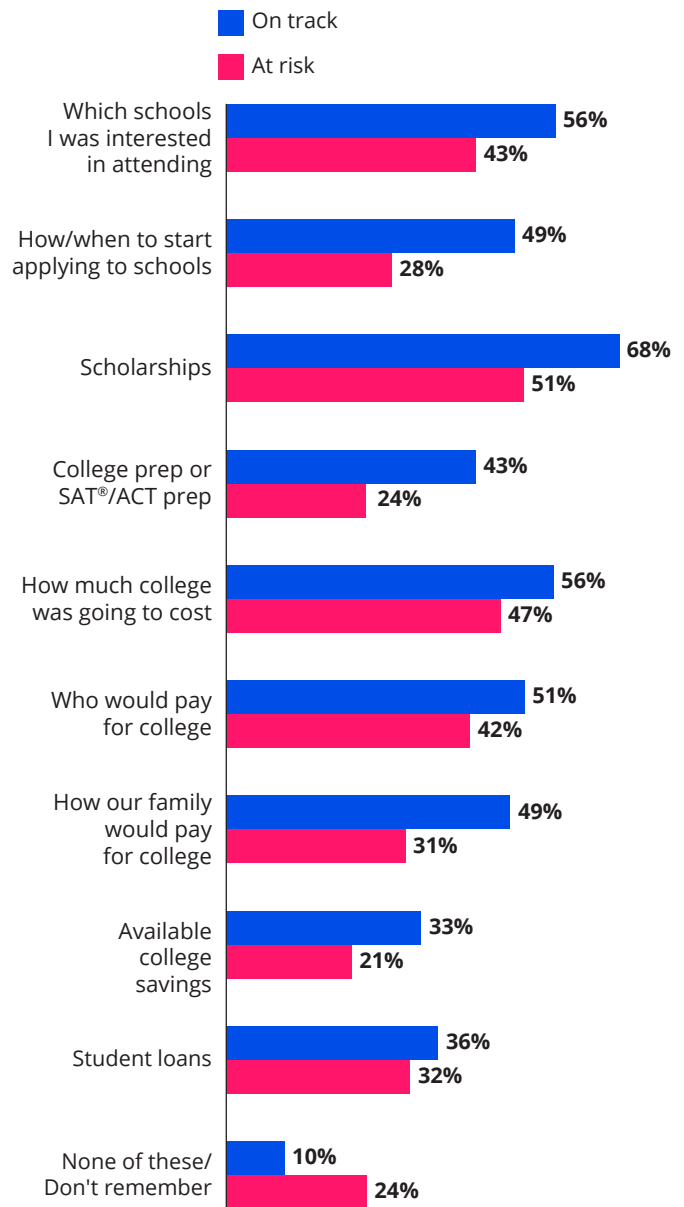
Paying for college can be a daunting task for many families, particularly those who have a limited understanding of the process and few resources. Proactive planning can be the key to helping families assess their situation and make thoughtful decisions about paying for college that work for today and for the future.

Roughly 25% of at-risk students reported they had a plan to pay for all years of school before they enrolled compared with 46% of on-track students. (Notably, the level of planning is low even among the students who are on-track to completion.)

Before enrolling, on-track students were more likely to discuss a range of college-related topics with their family than students who are at risk: 90% of on-track students discussed any of the topics measured in our research vs. 76% at-risk students.

While financial topics, including scholarships, how much college was going to cost, and who would pay for college were among the more frequently discussed, half or fewer at-risk students reported having these conversations.

**Current students: Pre-college family conversations**



## #2 Risk Factor

# Motivation and focus

On-track students were more likely to come into college with higher degree of clarity around their career aspirations, which likely contributes to their continued motivation and focus on the college path.

More than 7 in 10 on-track students (73%) started college with an idea for the exact career/major they wanted to pursue or an understanding of the general field they wanted to work in after graduation compared with 56% of at-risk students. Moreover, 30% of at-risk students (vs. 18% of on-track students) indicated their interest changed after they enrolled.

Both groups agree having a career plan or direction before they graduate is important to being successful in their professional life (81% of on-track students and 82% of at-risk students agree). However, on-track students express significantly higher levels of confidence in their overall career direction (82% are confident vs. 67% of at-risk students) and their ability to enter their chosen career after they graduate than those who are at risk (81% are confident vs. 65% of at-risk students). On-track students also said finding the right major or career path was easier (55% rated very easy or easy) than at-risk students (44%). Only 50% of at-risk students rate the school resources for helping them pick a major or career as excellent or good.

The vast majority of both on-track (96%) and at-risk (91%) students agree college is an investment in their future. However, students who are on track are more likely than those who are at risk to believe in the connection between a college education and opportunity or earning potential. For example:

**93%** of on-track students agree a college degree opens up opportunities that wouldn't be available otherwise vs. 76% of at-risk students

**88%** of on-track students believe attending college will help them obtain their dream job vs. 78% of at-risk students

**87%** of on-track students agree higher education will lead to a better job vs. 75% of at-risk students

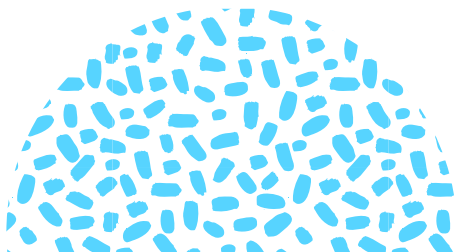
Percent of students who started college with a specific career or a general field in mind

**73%**

of students who are on track

**56%**

of students who are at risk



# #3 Risk Factor

## Mental health

Mental health is an enormously important issue impacting young people. Overall, 50% of current students rated their mental health as excellent or good; 35% rated it as fair, and 15% rated it as poor or very poor. For comparison, 66% of current students rated their physical health as excellent or good.

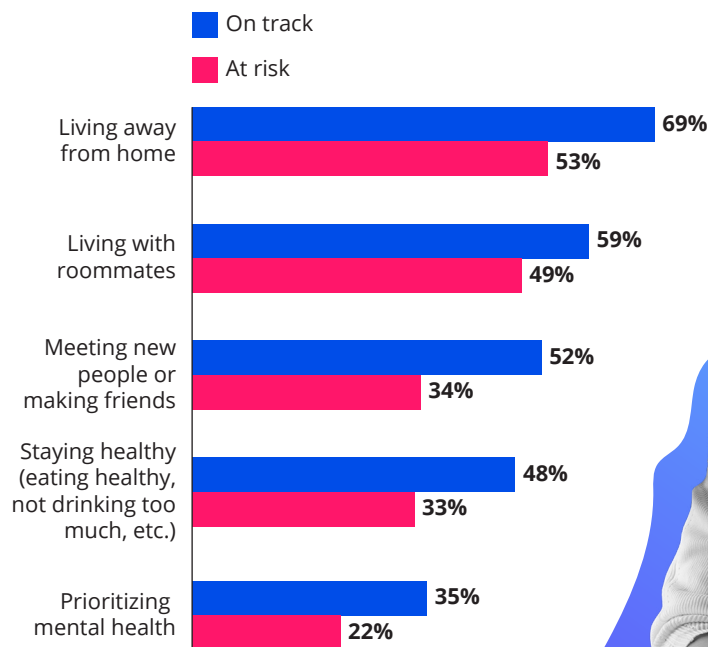
There is a correlation between the mental health self-assessment and having seriously considered leaving school: 31% of at-risk students rated their mental health as excellent or good compared with 61% of on-track students.

When asked how easy or difficult they have found some of the social aspects of college life, at-risk students were less likely to report an easy experience. A third or fewer of at-risk students shared it was easy for them to make friends (34%), stay healthy (33%) or prioritize their mental

health (22%). While on-track students reported significantly more ease across all measured attributes, it's clear even students who are on track can use some help with staying healthy physically and mentally while at school.

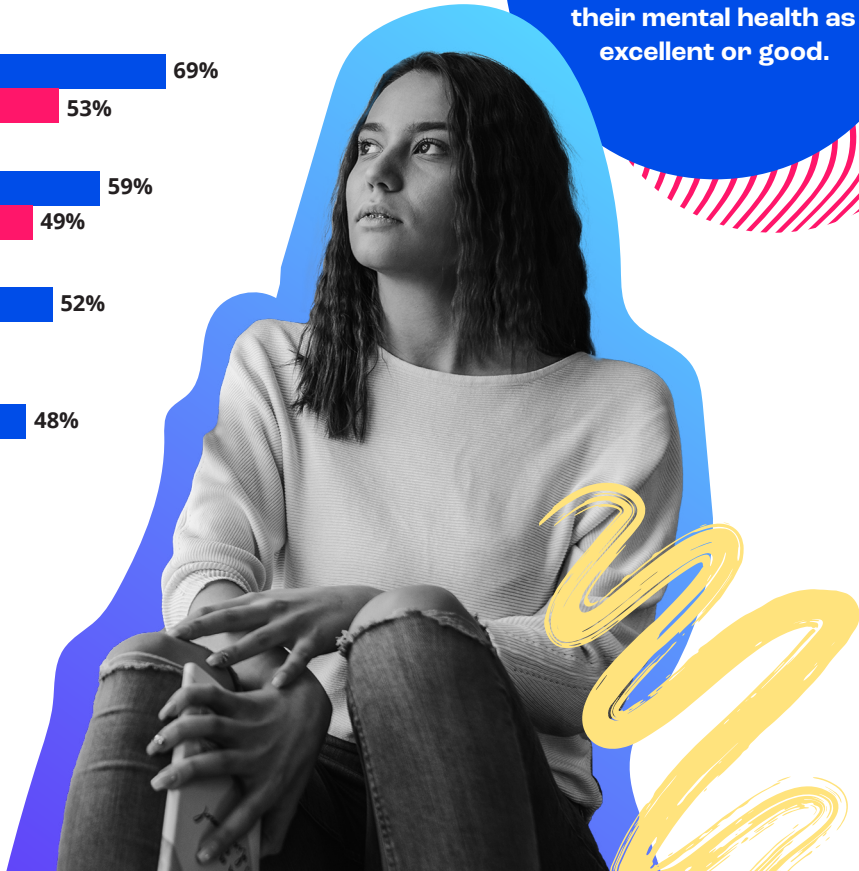
To add to the challenge, slightly more than half of students across segments rate the mental health resources or the counseling center available to them on campus as excellent or good (58% of on-track students and 54% of at-risk students).

**Current students: Assessing social aspects of college and mental health (% easy and very easy)**



NOTE: Data shown excludes N/A responses

**31%**  
of at-risk students rated their mental health as excellent or good.



## First-generation students require additional support in college

Fifty-two percent of first-generation college students have considered leaving college, with 41% considering it seriously. This statistic alone indicates first-generation students represent a unique cohort of the college population that requires special focus and attention.

Majority of first-generation students (88%) believe college is an investment in their future. An equal portion (87%) named career-related reasons for choosing to go to college. A significant 60% also indicated external factors played a role in their decision to continue their education. More specifically:

**24%** wanting to earn a degree to help support their family

**21%** a family expectation

**19%** wanting to be the first in their family to go

In comparison, just 36% of students whose parents earned a degree mentioned these external reasons.

**38%**

of first-generation college students are confident in their ability to cover the cost of college.



First-generation students were significantly less likely than their peers from college-educated households to take steps to prepare for college. For example, only 18% of first-generation students said they discussed how and when to start applying to school with their family vs. 51% of students from college-educated households, and just 32% of first-generation families talked about scholarships vs. 71% of college-educated households. Thirty-seven percent of first-generation students toured a college campus before enrolling and 36% met with a high school counselor vs. 63% and 56% of students from college-educated households, respectively.

Despite being less likely to have prepared for college, the majority of first-generation students reported feeling confident about their ability to graduate (81%). Overall, first-generation students rated most academic aspects of their college experience similarly to their peers from college-educated households.

Some first-generation students had difficulties with certain aspects of college life and mental health:

**58%** found it difficult to prioritize mental health vs. 44% among students from college-educated households

**25%** rated living away home as difficult vs. 11% of students from college-educated households

First-generation students also had more difficulties with the financial aspects of their college experience. Financial challenges were by far the most common primary reason for considering leaving school among this group of students, named by 42%. Just 38% of first-generation students said they are confident in their or their family's ability to cover the cost of college. Sixty-one percent of first-generation students who considered leaving indicated additional financial resources would help them stay in school.

Overall, more first-generation students reported experiencing financial difficulties than students from college-educated households. For example:

**42%** said it was difficult to support themselves and/or their family while in school vs. 36% among students from college-educated households

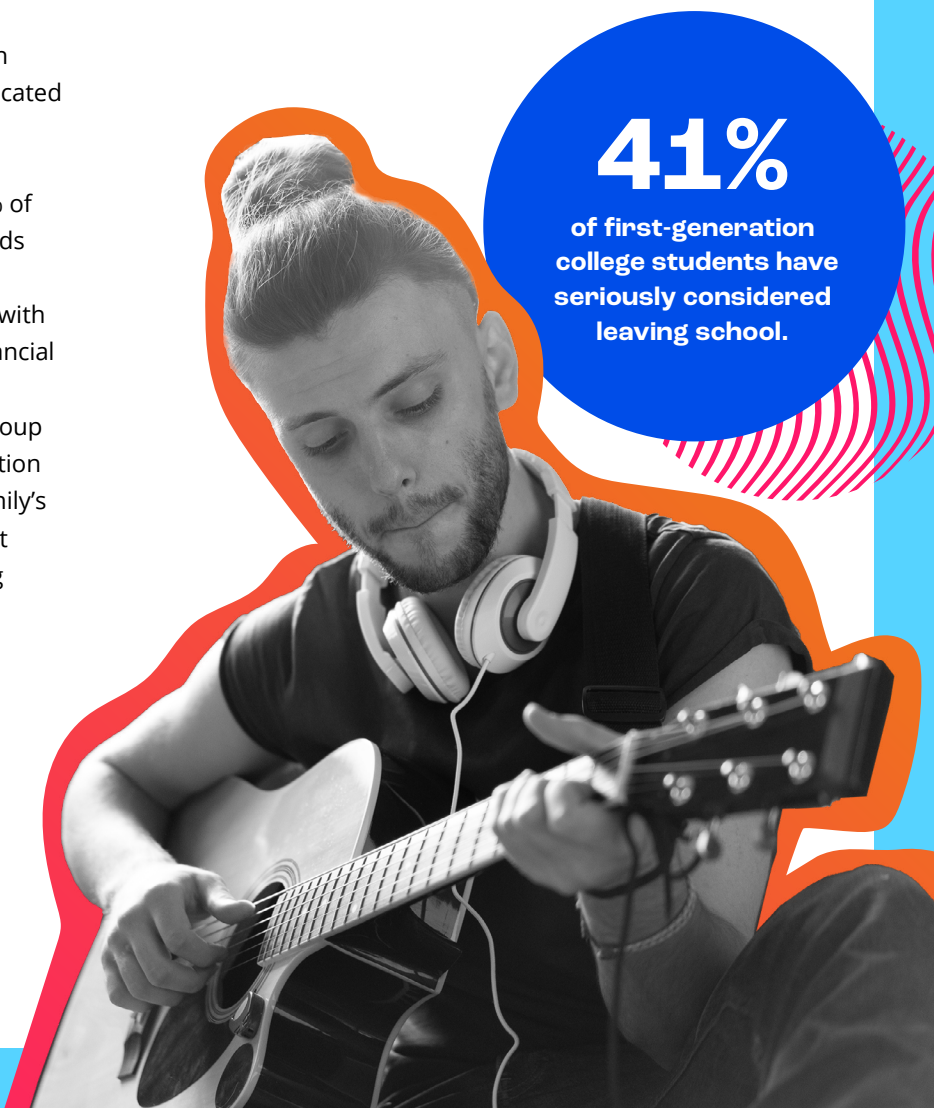
**41%** said it was difficult to meet the cost of college tuition vs. 31% of students from college-educated households

**40%** said it was difficult to cover the cost of additional expenses, such as textbooks, living costs, food, etc. vs. 32% of students from college-educated households

**19%** of first-gen students rated commuting to classes as difficult vs. 9% of students from college-educated households

**41%**

of first-generation college students have seriously considered leaving school.



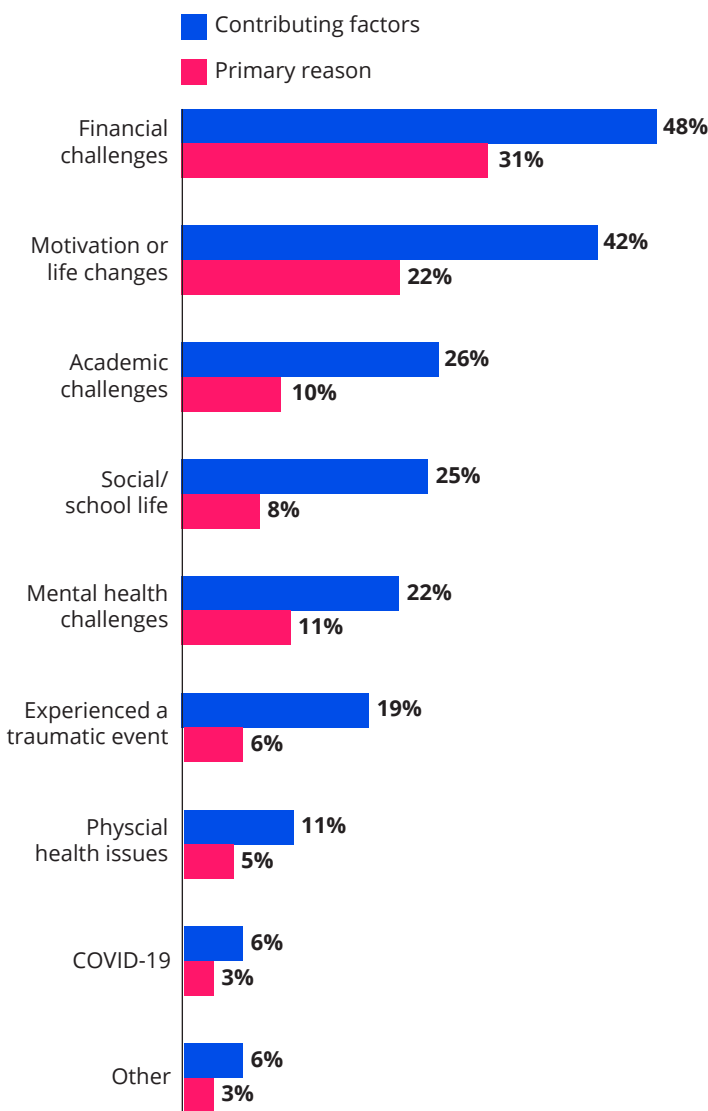


# Non-Completers

## Finances and motivation changes top the list of reasons for non-completion

Non-Completers are adults under age 30 who started college, but left without obtaining a degree or completing their program.

### Non-Completers: Reasons for leaving school



Nearly half of Non-Completers (48%) indicated financial challenges played a role in their decision to leave school. One-quarter (26%) experienced a change in their financial situation, 25% said the cost overall was simply too high, 13% reported being unable to balance school and the need to work, and an additional 7% lost their scholarship.

About 4 in 10 Non-Completers (42%) experienced a change in focus or motivation or a life change that contributed to their decision to leave school. This broad category includes 21% who reported loss of motivation or change in focus, 17% who felt continuing was not worth it or they were not gaining valuable skills for the future, 14% who experienced a change in their family situation, such as having a baby, getting married or divorced, and 8% were just not sure what major or career path to choose.

About one-quarter of Non-Completers experienced academic challenges (26%), social issues related to college life (25%), or mental health challenges (22%).



## More about Non-Completers who left for financial reasons

Financial considerations were mentioned by 31% of Non-Completers as the primary reason for leaving college and topped the list of primary drivers of non-completion in this year's study.



**I didn't complete my college degree because of the cost of college tuition and other expenses.**



**Paying for college was too difficult.**



**It was because I and my parents weren't able to raise enough funds for my education.**

Non-Completers who left school primarily for financial reasons were more likely to come from households with lower average income than Non-Completers overall. These young adults were more likely than other Non-Completers to have looked to higher education as a means to change their situation:

**89%** agreed higher education is an investment in their future vs. 83% among all Non-Completers

**76%** agreed a college degree is important to being successful in life vs. 64% among all Non-Completers

**85%** agreed higher education will lead to a better job vs. 76% of all Non-Completers

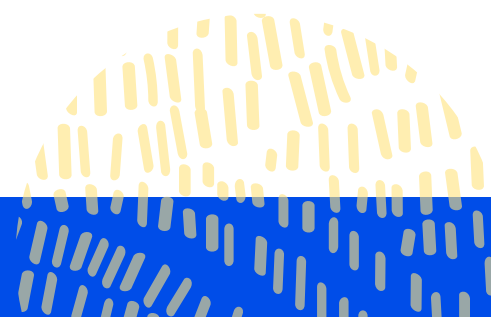
Moreover, this group of Non-Completers placed a higher value on the social experience and connections that college could provide than Non-Completers overall:

**83%** agreed the social and intellectual experience of college is equally or more important to the possibility of increased earning potential vs. 68% of all Non-Completers

**86%** agreed meeting the right people at college will help to find a job in the future vs. 79% of Non-Completers overall

Compared to all Non-Completers, the young adults who left school because of finances report an easier experience managing both the academic and social aspects of college. For example, 73% of these Non-Completers said it was easy for them to stay on track and go to class compared to just 55% of Non-Completers overall, and 72% reported it was easy to make friends or meet new people vs. 58% of Non-Completers overall. Eighty-two percent of Non-Completers who left school for financial reasons felt confident in their ability to graduate, but only 46% thought they or their family could cover the cost.

More than half of these Non-Completers (57%) rated the financial support they received from their school as fair or poor; this would include scholarships or advice on how to pay. Moreover, 65% indicated having additional financial resources would have helped them stay in school.



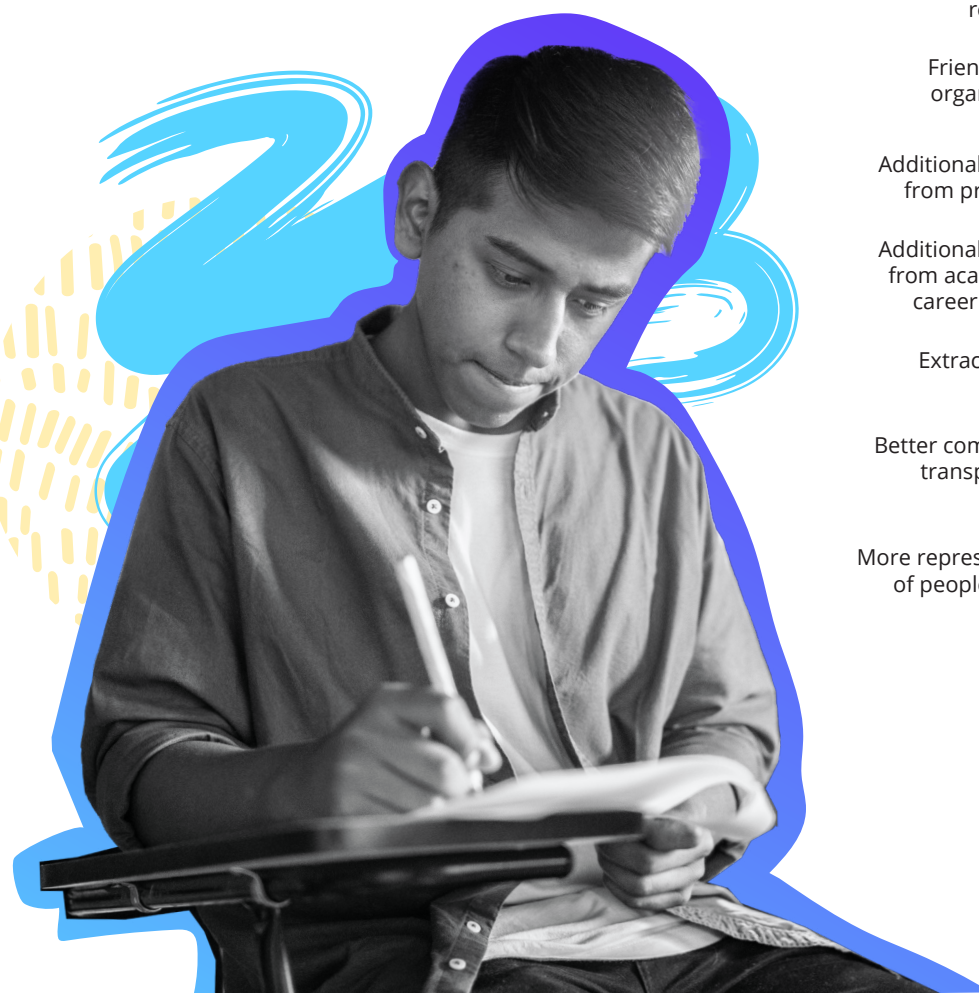
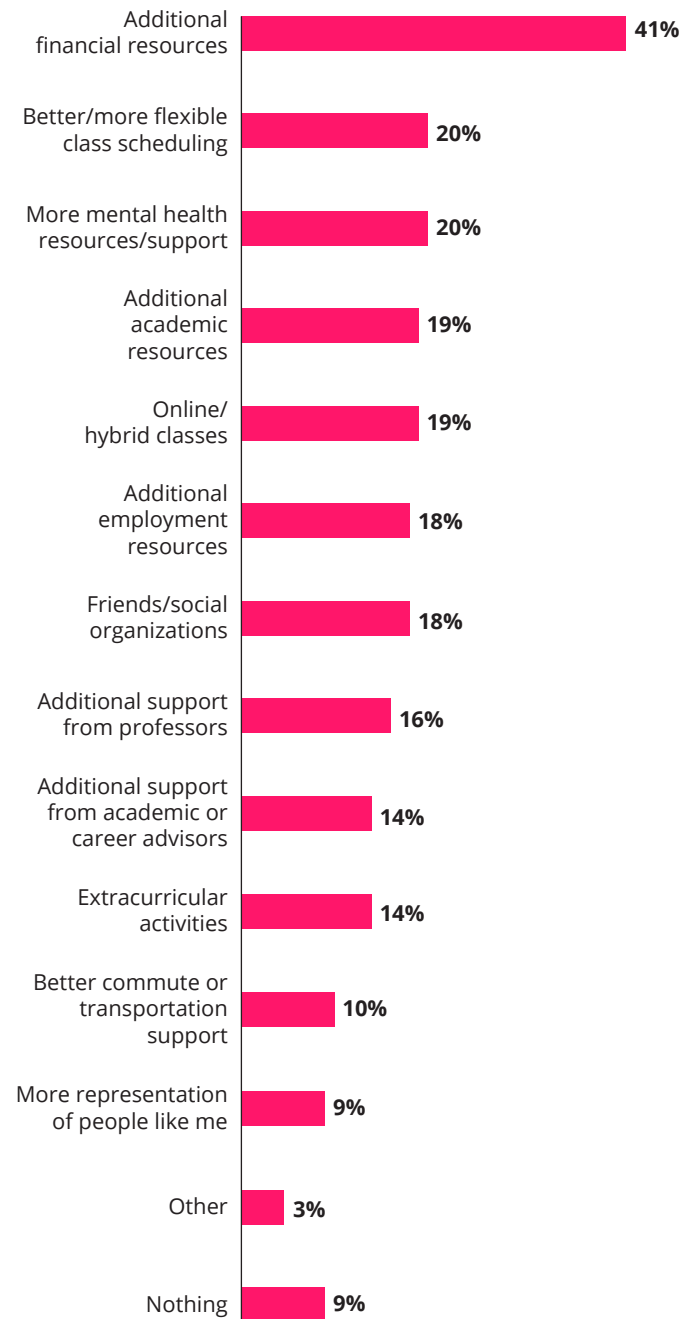
## Three in 10 Non-Completers have plans to go back to school next year

When asked about their plans for the future, 31% of Non-Completers indicated they will definitely return to school in the next year.

An additional 14% have concrete plans to return within the next 5 years, for a total of 45%. The vast majority of the remaining Non-Completers shared they would like to go back to school at some point in the future, but have not made real plans for doing so, and just 3% said they definitely do not plan to go back.

A range of resources may have helped many Non-Completers stay in college. Additional financial resources (41%), more flexible class scheduling including online and hybrid classes (20%), and more mental health resources and support (20%) are among the most frequently requested options.

### Non-Completers: Resources that would have helped them stay in college



# Conclusion

The higher education journey can feel like a marathon. There is the search for the right schools, the stress of applications, the emotions of acceptance, the discovery of future careers, and the challenge of figuring out how to pay. All this is to get to the first day, but that truly is just the beginning. Navigating the path to graduation is equally, if not more, important. With roughly 62%<sup>2</sup> of undergraduate students making it to commencement within six years of enrollment, it's clear that many things can get in the way of college completion.

Considering the pre- and in-college experience through the lens of on-track and at-risk students as well as Non-Completers reveals opportunities to help more students graduate.

**Financial challenges** are a primary driver of non-completion and are a top reason at-risk students have considered leaving school. First-generation students face these obstacles disproportionately more than those students with parents who completed college.

- **Planning** for higher education is a critical step to set students up for success. *How America Completes College 2024* established a positive correlation between being on track to graduate and having created a plan to pay for all years of school before the student enrolled. While many families associate planning to pay with saving for college, there are many other steps that can be part of the plan. These may include budgeting and exploring different sources of funding, understanding financial aid requirements, or simply considering the total cost of college, including all years in school and all associated expenses.
- By **maximizing free money** families can help make higher education more affordable. This means completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) every year and applying for scholarships. While misconceptions about who can apply and win scholarships exist, the reality is that millions of dollars in grants and scholarships are not utilized each year largely due to lack of applicants. In fact, it's estimated that millions of dollars in scholarships go unclaimed each year<sup>3</sup>.

**Changes in motivation** or life changes is the second most cited reason by both Non-Completers and at-risk students for either leaving or considering leaving college. Seeking out opportunities to explore careers while in high school, utilizing career services and mentor networks available through the college, or taking advantage of early internship opportunities are some of the steps students can take to identify a professional field that motivates them to finish their degree.

While much has been written about the role of **mental health** on a student's path to graduation, this topic continues to be in the forefront of the discussion of college success. *How America Completes College 2024* identified mental health challenges as one of the top reasons for non-completion and a contributing factor to considerations of leaving school. Even more importantly, many students today—including those who are on track to graduate—report struggling with certain social aspects of their college experience and report that it is difficult to prioritize their mental health. Helping our students find a balance between the pressures of college life and self-care might help more students succeed.

The journey to graduation can be daunting, but it doesn't have to be a lonely one. By addressing the financial hurdles, providing clear career paths, and prioritizing mental well-being, we can pave the way for more students to cross the finish line.

<sup>2</sup> Completing College 2023 Report; National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (NSCRC); <https://nscresearchcenter.org/completing-college/>

<sup>3</sup> National Scholarship Providers Association (NSPA); <https://www.scholarshipproviders.org/page/nsm>

### Here are some of the ways Sallie Mae is helping more students graduate:

- Sallie Mae Fund's [Completing the Dream Scholarship](#) helps students facing financial obstacles complete their post-secondary education. To date, nearly 800 scholarships have been awarded totaling nearly \$2 million.
- The Sallie Mae Fund has committed a \$1 million research endowment to Delaware State University (DSU) to help close the college completion gap. The grant will support a comprehensive three-year "[Persistence and Completion Pilot Program](#)" that will identify and study barriers to degree completion, help students return to school and complete, and help develop policy recommendations and best practices to enhance student re-engagement at DSU, HBCUs, and institutions across the country.

### Helping students maximize free money:

- Sallie Mae offers a [free step-by-step guide](#) to help families complete the FAFSA®.
- [Scholly by Sallie\\*](#) is a free resource that helps students access \$100 million in scholarships.

### Helping students get ready for and succeed in school:

- For students and families who don't know how to start talking about how they'll pay for college, [College Prep Kitchen](#) by Sallie provides them with the questions and relatable content that empowers families to begin the conversation for themselves.
- For students looking for college life hacks from their peers, [Campus Underground](#) by Sallie shares insider tips from students so they're ready for ALL things college.
- For students who need to focus on their studies without being overwhelmed by stress, [Sound Mind](#) by Sallie provides anxiety-calming study music that helps boost concentration, creativity, productivity, and memory.

\*By clicking the Scholly by Sallie link, you'll go to our trusted affiliate Scholly's site. Any information you provide will be shared with Sallie Mae and will be covered under the terms of the SLM Education Services, LLC privacy policy.

# Data Tables

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

**Table 1. Perception of higher education**

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
<b>N</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
College is an investment in my future	94%	96%	94%	91%	83%
A college degree is important to being successful in life	57%	59%	55%	53%	64%
College just isn't right for everyone	81%	83%	80%	77%	56%
College is a privileged experience	76%	75%	73%	81%	77%
Higher education will lead to a better job	84%	87%	86%	75%	76%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about college and reasons you may have decided to attend.

**Table 2. Reasons for attending college**

% strongly or somewhat agree

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
<b>N</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
A college degree opens up opportunities that wouldn't be available otherwise	88%	93%	84%	76%	80%
College is more of a social experience than a learning opportunity	30%	28%	36%	34%	55%
I wanted to attend college because I would earn more money with a college degree	78%	79%	78%	75%	80%
The social and intellectual experience of college is equally or more important to the possibility of increased earning potential	71%	72%	70%	66%	68%
Meeting the right people at college will help to find a job in the future	86%	88%	82%	81%	79%
Going to college was always something expected in my family	80%	82%	83%	74%	78%
Attending college will help me obtain my dream job	84%	88%	74%	78%	75%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. When did you decide to go to college?

**Table 3. Decision to go to college**

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
N	1029	661	122	246	427
It seems like I've always known	64%	73%	53%	44%	28%
Sometime in elementary school	2%	3%	3%	2%	3%
In junior high/middle school	7%	4%	18%	9%	5%
Freshman year of high school	3%	2%	11%	4%	9%
Sophomore year of high school	2%	2%	2%	2%	9%
Junior year of high school	4%	5%	3%	4%	12%
Senior year of high school	5%	3%	5%	10%	18%
After I left high school	9%	5%	3%	22%	14%
Not sure	3%	3%	3%	4%	2%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. When did you start your undergraduate education?

**Table 4. Starting undergraduate education**

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
N	1029	661	122	246	427
Right after finishing high school	86%	90%	92%	72%	72%
About a year after finishing high school	6%	5%	6%	8%	19%
More than a year after finishing high school	8%	5%	2%	20%	9%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. When you were in high school, how committed were you to attending college?

**Table 5. Level of commitment to attending college**

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
N	1029	661	122	246	427
Very committed	71%	81%	74%	44%	55%
Somewhat committed	20%	15%	21%	31%	38%
Not very committed	5%	3%	4%	12%	6%
Not at all committed	4%	1%	0%	13%	1%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. Who encouraged you to attend college? Please select all that apply.

**Table 6. Encouragement to attend college**

	<b>TOTAL STUDENTS</b>	<b>Never considered leaving school</b>	<b>Considered leaving but not seriously</b>	<b>Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk</b>	<b>TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
Parents	78%	82%	87%	62%	63%
Family members other than parents	48%	50%	65%	35%	30%
A teacher	42%	49%	44%	25%	31%
Friends	42%	48%	46%	24%	42%
A high school counselor or another staff member	34%	40%	29%	22%	25%
A mentor or someone I look up to outside of school or family	23%	26%	20%	17%	18%
A non-affiliated college counselor	10%	13%	2%	4%	8%
An employer	8%	9%	3%	9%	7%
Other	4%	5%	3%	3%	5%
No one	9%	8%	5%	15%	10%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. What are some of the reasons why you chose to attend college? Please select up to 3 reasons.

**Table 7. Reasons you chose to attend college**

	<b>TOTAL STUDENTS</b>	<b>Never considered leaving school</b>	<b>Considered leaving but not seriously</b>	<b>Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk</b>	<b>TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
I believed it will provide better opportunities for me in the long run	36%	35%	40%	37%	26%
To pursue a specific career	31%	34%	27%	28%	34%
The job that I want requires a college degree	31%	33%	16%	32%	16%
To expand my knowledge	29%	31%	34%	18%	33%
My family expected it of me	21%	18%	27%	26%	21%
To advance in my career	20%	22%	19%	17%	24%
To discover what I want to do long-term	20%	20%	22%	21%	13%
I believed a degree will help me earn more money	20%	17%	23%	24%	25%
To experience the social aspect of college	19%	19%	35%	14%	16%
I believed a degree will lead to a good job	17%	19%	15%	13%	25%
To experience independence	16%	15%	12%	19%	18%
I wanted to earn a degree to help support my family	10%	9%	10%	14%	15%
I wanted to earn a degree to be in a position to help people less fortunate than me	10%	10%	6%	14%	10%
To be the first in my family to go to college	6%	5%	8%	9%	8%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers



Q. Why did you select the college/university you are attending/attended?

**Table 8. Reasons for choosing your school**

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
<b>N</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
The school is affordable/price of the program	45%	42%	52%	48%	33%
The scholarships/aid I received for that school	42%	43%	34%	41%	23%
Near home	36%	35%	29%	42%	18%
For the specific academic program/degree I wanted	32%	34%	32%	26%	27%
In-state school	31%	27%	48%	33%	28%
Small school	21%	23%	19%	17%	9%
Prestige	17%	19%	18%	11%	20%
I have friends who go to/went to the same college/university	16%	12%	24%	21%	19%
The social life	15%	15%	27%	7%	27%
Far away from home	13%	12%	15%	12%	12%
It offers online or hybrid classes	9%	7%	7%	16%	17%
Large school	9%	8%	14%	8%	14%
My parents went to the same college/university	7%	8%	11%	2%	8%
I was recruited for my sport	7%	6%	3%	10%	5%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. Did you and your parent(s)/family discuss any of the following topics before you enrolled in college?  
Please select all that apply.

**Table 9. Discussion topics before college**

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
N	1029	661	122	246	427
Scholarships	62%	68%	50%	51%	40%
How much college was going to cost	54%	56%	59%	47%	43%
Which schools I was interested in attending	53%	56%	51%	43%	32%
Who would pay for college	49%	51%	50%	42%	35%
How our family would pay for college	45%	49%	56%	31%	28%
How/when to start applying to schools	44%	49%	45%	28%	29%
College prep or SAT®/ACT prep	38%	43%	38%	24%	22%
Student loans	37%	36%	49%	32%	34%
Available college savings	31%	33%	37%	21%	36%
None of these	8%	7%	12%	11%	8%
I don't remember	5%	3%	1%	13%	2%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?  
Before I enrolled, my family and I created a plan for paying for all years of college.

**Table 10. Plan for paying**

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
N	1029	661	122	246	427
Strongly agree	17%	20%	10%	12%	12%
Somewhat agree	22%	26%	19%	13%	39%
Neither agree nor disagree	18%	20%	16%	13%	18%
Somewhat disagree	15%	14%	20%	14%	13%
Strongly disagree	29%	20%	35%	49%	18%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. Before attending college, how confident did you feel about each of the following?

**Table 11. Confidence before enrolling**

% completely or somewhat confident

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
<b>N</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
My ability to get into college	88%	93%	93%	74%	80%
My ability to graduate from college	85%	94%	74%	65%	76%
My/my family's ability to cover the cost	54%	61%	51%	35%	50%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. Now that you are in college, how confident do you feel about each of the following? Once you were in college, how confident did you feel about each of the following?

**Table 12. Current confidence level**

% completely or somewhat confident

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
<b>N</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
My ability to graduate from college	88%	94%	86%	73%	71%
My/my family's ability to cover the cost	63%	69%	65%	43%	47%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. Thinking back to when you were heading to college, how prepared, if at all, did you feel...?

**Table 13. Level of preparedness for different aspects of college**

% very or somewhat prepared

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
<b>N</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
To live on my own on/off campus	70%	77%	60%	57%	69%
To pay for college	57%	69%	49%	28%	58%
For college-level course work	85%	91%	83%	71%	77%
To manage my own time and workload	79%	86%	84%	59%	72%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. Now that you are in college, how well have you adjusted to the following? Once you were in college, how well did you adjust to the following?

**Table 14. Adjusting to different aspects of college**

% adjusted very or somewhat well

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
N	1029	661	122	246	427
To live on my own on/off campus	79%	84%	70%	72%	69%
To pay for college	71%	80%	51%	55%	59%
For college-level course work	92%	95%	87%	84%	78%
To manage my own time and workload	89%	93%	88%	76%	71%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. When preparing for college, did you do any of the following in high school? Please select all that apply.

**Table 15. Steps taken in high school to prepare for college**

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
N	1029	661	122	246	427
Toured a college campus	55%	58%	52%	51%	39%
Met with my high school/guidance counselor	51%	55%	45%	41%	40%
Participated in Advanced Placement® (AP) or International Baccalaureate® (IB) courses	48%	52%	34%	41%	24%
Joined extracurricular activities to enhance college applications	42%	47%	46%	28%	31%
Talked to friends or an older sibling about what college is like	42%	45%	45%	31%	31%
Participated in dual or concurrent enrollment programs that allowed me to earn college credits while still in high school	33%	36%	32%	28%	26%
Met with a college representative about admissions or on-campus experience	33%	35%	24%	31%	25%
Talked to current college students about their school choice and experience	32%	36%	30%	24%	28%
Met with a college financial aid office representative to talk about how to pay for college	19%	21%	8%	19%	25%
Met with a career counselor	16%	17%	9%	19%	24%
Met with an independent college consultant	6%	7%	1%	6%	14%
None of the above	6%	3%	12%	11%	4%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

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Q. Thinking about when you first went to college, which of the following statements best fit your career goal/major at the time?

**Table 16. Career/major awareness at the start of college**

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
<b>N</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
I knew the career/major I wanted	40%	46%	22%	34%	52%
I knew the general field of work I wanted but not the exact job/major	27%	27%	36%	23%	25%
I thought I knew what I wanted to do, but my interests changed	22%	18%	27%	30%	18%
I didn't know what I wanted to do yet	11%	9%	16%	14%	5%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. How confident do you feel in each of the following?

**Table 17. Career confidence**

% completely or somewhat confident

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
<b>N</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
Overall career direction	77%	82%	73%	67%	70%
Ability to enter your chosen career after you graduate	77%	81%	76%	65%	73%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Having a career plan or direction before you graduate college is important to being successful in your professional life.

**Table 18. Career awareness and after school success**

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
<b>N</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
Strongly agree	32%	34%	18%	35%	36%
Somewhat agree	49%	47%	62%	47%	52%
Somewhat disagree	13%	12%	17%	14%	9%
Strongly disagree	6%	8%	3%	4%	3%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. How useful, if at all, were your college courses for helping you establish your career goals/major?

**Table 19. College courses and career**

	<b>TOTAL STUDENTS</b>	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	<b>TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>618</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>205</b>
Very useful	29%	31%	20%	28%	21%
Somewhat useful	52%	56%	53%	43%	53%
Not very useful	9%	7%	20%	9%	15%
Not at all useful	6%	2%	1%	17%	7%
Not sure	4%	4%	6%	4%	5%

Base: Students and Non-Completers who didn't know career goals going into college

Q. How would you rate your overall college experience? (Scale of 1–very negative to 10–very positive)

**Table 20. Rating overall college experience**

	<b>TOTAL STUDENTS</b>	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	<b>TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
Mean	7.55	7.94	7.15	6.67	7.27
Rating 1–3	3%	2%	1%	5%	6%
Rating 4–7	39%	29%	54%	58%	39%
Rating 8–10	58%	68%	46%	36%	55%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. How easy or difficult do you find the following school/academic-related aspects of your college experience?

**Table 21. Rating academic aspects of college**

% rating very easy or easy

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
N	1029	661	122	246	427
Registering for classes	70%	75%	53%	67%	66%
Staying on track and going to classes	65%	76%	40%	50%	55%
Managing online/hybrid classes	64%	69%	57%	57%	57%
Getting academic help when needed	62%	68%	49%	53%	55%
Finding the right major/career path	51%	55%	45%	44%	51%
Balancing social life and school	49%	54%	41%	39%	49%
Balancing extracurricular activities and school	40%	47%	33%	27%	49%
Being able to meet the cost of additional expenses (textbooks, living costs, food, etc.)	38%	46%	18%	24%	35%
Balancing work (paid or unpaid) and school	36%	40%	29%	29%	34%
Being able to meet the cost of college tuition	35%	42%	14%	24%	35%
My courses	34%	37%	30%	30%	49%
Trying to support myself and/or my family while in school	30%	35%	14%	23%	35%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. How easy or difficult do you find the following living/social-related aspects of your college experience?

**Table 22. Rating social aspects of college**

% rating very easy or easy

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
N	1029	661	122	246	427
Transiting/commuting to classes	67%	72%	56%	61%	66%
Living away from home	64%	69%	57%	53%	54%
Living with a roommate(s)	56%	59%	53%	49%	59%
Meeting new people/making friends	46%	52%	36%	34%	58%
Being able to live where I want	45%	49%	37%	38%	52%
Staying healthy (e.g., eating healthy, not drinking too much, etc.)	42%	47%	34%	33%	52%
Prioritizing mental health	28%	34%	12%	22%	44%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers; N/A answers are excluded

Q. How would you rate the following aspects of your college experience?

**Table 23. Rating available resources and support**

% excellent or good

	<b>TOTAL STUDENTS</b>	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	<b>TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
My academic program	83%	88%	80%	73%	67%
Physical campus	82%	85%	90%	73%	75%
Resources to help me succeed in my courses (tutoring, writing centers, etc.)	79%	84%	71%	70%	71%
The quality of courses	75%	80%	66%	63%	73%
The variety of courses	75%	80%	68%	63%	70%
Support from my family	76%	83%	71%	61%	66%
Support from teachers or professors	73%	78%	64%	62%	69%
Extracurricular groups	70%	75%	72%	54%	69%
Career planning resources	68%	70%	74%	61%	64%
The culture on campus	71%	75%	76%	55%	67%
Resources to help me pick a major/career	64%	70%	61%	50%	66%
Resources to help me adjust to college life	64%	67%	64%	54%	32%
Social support system	63%	67%	73%	47%	63%
Financial support from outside sources (other scholarships, parents, etc.)	63%	68%	61%	50%	49%
Financial support from the college (scholarships, advice on how to pay, etc.)	62%	67%	53%	52%	48%
The social life	61%	66%	67%	43%	64%
Mental health resources or counseling center	56%	58%	48%	54%	62%
Housing	54%	57%	54%	45%	63%
Access to alumni network	54%	57%	52%	46%	61%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. What type of degree or level of undergraduate education are you currently working toward? What type of degree or level of undergraduate education were you working toward before withdrawing?

**Table 24. Degree type**

	<b>TOTAL STUDENTS</b>	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	<b>TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
Bachelor’s Degree	80%	88%	80%	68%	75%
Associate’s Degree	17%	12%	20%	31%	18%
Certificate in a technical or vocational field	3%	0%	—	1%	8%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers



Q. Are you on track to earning your degree (pursuing your Associate's degree) in 2 years or less/(Bachelor's degree) in 4 years or less?

**Table 25. On track to earn degree**

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk
<b>N</b>	<b>1025</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>243</b>
Yes	78%	85%	59%	67%
No	16%	11%	27%	25%
I'm not sure	6%	4%	14%	8%

Base: Current students

Q. How many years do you expect it to take you to earn your Bachelor's degree?

**Table 26. Expected timing over 4 years for earning a bachelor's degree**

	TOTAL STUDENTS
<b>N</b>	<b>136</b>
4.5 years	45%
5 years	38%
5.5 years	5%
6 years	3%
More than 6 years	2%
I'm not sure	7%

Base: Current students not on track to earn a bachelor's degree in 4 years

Q. You mentioned you expect it will take you more than 4 years to graduate. Why do you expect it to take more time to earn your current degree?

**Table 27. Reasons for a 4 year degree taking more than 4 years**

	TOTAL STUDENTS
<b>N</b>	<b>136</b>
Needed to repeat classes	35%
Financial reasons	27%
Mental health made it difficult to stay on track	26%
Changed majors	24%
Needed to take fewer classes per semester	22%
Poor academic performance	20%
Needed to take a break from school	19%
Experienced a major life change or event	16%
Transferred schools	12%
The classes I needed to take weren't available	10%
My work conflicted with my academics	8%
Physical health made it difficult to stay on track	6%
Wanted to learn more/take more classes	3%
Couldn't decide on a major	3%
Other	14%
Not sure	6%

Base: Current students not on track to earn a bachelor's degree in 4 years

Q. Regarding academics and courses, which of the following, if any, are you experiencing/did you experience in college?  
Please select all that apply.

**Table 28. Academic challenges**

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
<b>N</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
Difficulty managing my course workload	34%	29%	49%	40%	44%
The classes I want aren't available	27%	27%	37%	25%	21%
I had to withdraw from a course	20%	16%	29%	28%	32%
I didn't know what to expect for college-level courses	19%	15%	11%	31%	24%
Difficulty registering for the classes needed to complete for my major or minor	18%	18%	26%	16%	15%
Courses are too hard	16%	12%	26%	24%	22%
Difficulty getting in touch with the professor	14%	10%	16%	23%	19%
Courses are not challenging enough	8%	8%	6%	9%	8%
I had to enroll in a remedial/developmental course	5%	2%	14%	8%	15%
None of the above	23%	29%	15%	10%	14%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. Have you found/Did you find resources at your school to help you with any of your academic challenges?

**Table 29. College resources to help with academic challenges**

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
<b>N</b>	<b>791</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>368</b>
Yes	65%	70%	62%	57%	62%
No	14%	12%	11%	22%	25%
Have not looked	21%	19%	28%	21%	13%

Base: Current students and Non-Completers who reported having academic challenges

Q. Thinking of the social aspect of college, which of the following, if any, are you experiencing/did you experience? Please select all that apply.

**Table 30. Social aspects of college**

	<b>TOTAL STUDENTS</b>	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	<b>TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
Trouble making connections	31%	28%	38%	36%	26%
Feeling like I belong	27%	27%	27%	28%	25%
Happiness to be away from home	25%	25%	31%	21%	28%
No time to be social	23%	21%	26%	24%	17%
Feeling overwhelmed by the adjustment to college social life	20%	19%	23%	19%	25%
Homesickness	17%	17%	21%	17%	19%
Culture shock	15%	15%	14%	15%	15%
A lack of racial, ethnic, or cultural diversity	11%	10%	13%	12%	14%
Fear for my physical safety while on campus	6%	6%	9%	7%	13%
Discrimination or racism	6%	4%	13%	5%	16%
Discrimination based on my sexual or gender identity	5%	4%	9%	8%	10%
None of the above	22%	23%	22%	19%	11%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. Have you done any of the following while in college? Please select all that apply.

**Table 31. Actions taken while in college**

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
N	1029	661	122	246	427
Talked with an academic advisor	65%	66%	63%	62%	33%
Attended on-campus activities	59%	64%	61%	46%	40%
Attended a professor’s office hours	50%	54%	54%	36%	25%
Attended sporting events	42%	47%	38%	29%	31%
Joined an academic organization on campus	26%	29%	21%	20%	17%
Talked with someone at the career center	26%	28%	23%	20%	19%
Joined a sports team or club	24%	27%	21%	17%	22%
Used school resources to help adjust to college or meet other students	20%	23%	17%	13%	15%
Networked with alumni	18%	21%	13%	9%	14%
Joined a community service organization on campus	16%	19%	8%	13%	13%
Joined a religious organization on campus	10%	13%	7%	5%	16%
Joined a social fraternity or sorority	10%	11%	5%	10%	13%
Joined a multicultural organization on campus	9%	10%	7%	8%	11%
Joined an LGBTQ+ organization on campus	7%	5%	19%	7%	11%
Joined a political organization on campus	6%	7%	9%	2%	9%
None of the above	11%	8%	10%	20%	9%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. Are you working/did you work while attending college? Please select all that apply.

**Table 32. Working during college**

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
N	1029	661	122	246	427
I work on campus	26%	28%	22%	20%	21%
I work off campus	44%	38%	47%	57%	47%
I work an unpaid internship	3%	4%	1%	3%	6%
I have worked before but not working right now	13%	11%	15%	15%	—
I don’t work while attending college	23%	26%	20%	15%	34%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. On average, how many hours a week do/did you work while attending college?

**Table 33. Number of hours worked during college**

	<b>TOTAL STUDENTS</b>	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	<b>TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>794</b>	<b>488</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>281</b>
Less than 10 hours a week	24%	31%	18%	13%	18%
10–19 hours	39%	42%	39%	30%	47%
20–35 hours	25%	20%	39%	31%	23%
More than 35 hours a week	10%	6%	4%	21%	11%
Don't remember	2%	2%	0%	4%	1%

Base: Current students and Non-Completers who work(ed) while attending college

Q. Did you transfer schools?

**Table 34. College transfers**

	<b>TOTAL STUDENTS</b>	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	<b>TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
Yes	15%	10%	20%	27%	12%
No	85%	90%	80%	74%	88%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. Why did you change schools?

**Table 35. Reasons for transfer**

	TOTAL STUDENTS
N	154
The cost	21%
I started at a different school to reduce cost before finishing at current school	19%
I wanted to attend a larger school	16%
The school wasn't a good cultural fit for me	16%
Poor academic performance	15%
The school didn't have the degree program I wanted	12%
I was homesick and wanted to be closer to home	11%
I transferred to my state school to save money	10%
I had a hard time adjusting socially	9%
I wanted to attend a smaller school	8%
I wanted to go to a school further away from home	8%
Courses were too difficult	8%
Courses weren't challenging enough	4%
I was waitlisted/delayed getting into the first school I wanted	4%
Disruptive or problematic behavior	2%
Other	26%

Base: Current students who transferred

Q. Has transferring schools impacted your college experience in any of the following ways? Please select all that apply.

**Table 36. Impact of transferring schools**

	TOTAL STUDENTS
N	154
Had to retake coursework/credits did not transfer to my new school	21%
Got behind academically compared to other students in my year/ my major	21%
I changed majors or minors	19%
I changed my career goals	19%
I am not on track to graduate on time because of transferring	14%
None of the above	47%

Base: Current students who transferred

Q. Have you ever...?

**Table 37. Ever considered leaving school or been at risk of dismissal**

% replied yes

	TOTAL STUDENTS
N	1029
Considered taking a break or not finishing college	34%
Been in a situation where you were almost dismissed from school	11%

Base: Current students

Q. How seriously did you consider leaving college?

**Table 38. How seriously have you considered leaving college**

	TOTAL STUDENTS
N	347
Very seriously	16%
Somewhat seriously	41%
Not very seriously	38%
Not at all seriously	6%

Base: Current students who considered leaving

Q. Why are you considering/did you consider taking a break or not finishing college? Select all that apply.

**Table 39. Reasons considering leaving school/left school**

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
<b>N</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>427</b>
Loss of motivation/change in focus	42%	41%	43%	21%
Mental health issues	42%	34%	46%	22%
The cost overall	37%	36%	37%	25%
Unable to balance work and school	23%	23%	23%	13%
Did not feel worth it to continue	23%	13%	28%	11%
Poor academic performance	22%	9%	30%	15%
Change in financial situation	21%	9%	27%	26%
Not sure what major or career path to choose	20%	18%	20%	8%
Courses are too difficult	14%	15%	14%	10%
COVID-19	13%	19%	10%	6%
Feeling like I am not getting valuable skills for the future	13%	9%	15%	6%
Traumatic personal event	11%	12%	10%	15%
The school isn't a good cultural fit for me	10%	5%	13%	5%
Change in family situation (had a baby, got married, divorce, death, etc.)	10%	3%	14%	14%
Professors/staff	8%	6%	10%	3%
Loss of scholarship	8%	7%	8%	7%
Physical health issues	7%	6%	8%	11%
Homesickness	6%	5%	7%	6%
Difficulty living on my own	6%	4%	7%	7%
Too difficult to commute/didn't have transportation	6%	2%	8%	6%
Classmates/friends	5%	4%	6%	5%
Extracurricular commitments distracted from schoolwork	3%	2%	4%	4%
Experienced discrimination	3%	1%	3%	5%
Disruptive or problematic behavior	2%	1%	2%	4%
Courses are not challenging enough	1%	0%	1%	2%
The school doesn't have the degree program I want	1%	0%	1%	3%
Other	4%	4%	4%	6%

Base: Current students who considered leaving and Non-Completers

Q. Which of these factors was the primary reason you left/are considering leaving school?

**Table 40. Primary reason to consider leaving**

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
<b>N</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>427</b>
The cost overall	21%	31%	16%	12%
Mental health issues	16%	13%	18%	11%
Loss of motivation/change in focus	16%	18%	14%	6%
Courses are too difficult	6%	5%	6%	3%
Change in financial situation	6%	2%	8%	15%
Unable to balance work and school	5%	2%	6%	3%
Poor academic performance	3%	2%	3%	5%
Not sure what major or career path to choose	3%	5%	2%	3%
Change in family situation (had a baby, got married, divorce, death, etc.)	3%	2%	4%	9%
Too difficult to commute/didn't have transportation	3%	0%	5%	0%
Feeling like I am not getting valuable skills for the future	2%	4%	1%	1%
Physical health issues	2%	3%	2%	5%
Traumatic personal event	2%	3%	1%	5%
Did not feel worth it to continue	2%	2%	3%	3%
Homesickness	1%	0%	1%	2%
The school isn't a good cultural fit for me	1%	1%	1%	1%
Loss of scholarship	1%	1%	1%	2%
COVID-19	1%	1%	2%	3%
Professors/staff	1%	1%	2%	1%
Extracurricular commitments distracted from schoolwork	1%	0%	1%	1%
The school doesn't have the degree program I want	0%	0%	0%	1%
Classmates/friends	0%	0%	0%	1%
Disruptive or problematic behavior	0%	0%	0%	1%
Difficulty living on my own	0%	0%	0%	2%
Experienced discrimination	0%	0%	0%	1%
Other	4%	4%	4%	6%

Base: Current students who considered leaving and Non-Completers



Q. What resources would help you stay in college?/ What resources would have helped you decide to stay in college, if any?  
Please select all that apply

**Table 41. Resources that would have helped**

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
N	347	123	224	427
Additional financial resources	38%	40%	36%	41%
More mental health resources/support	30%	29%	31%	20%
Friends/social organizations	29%	31%	29%	18%
Better/more flexible class scheduling	28%	25%	30%	20%
Additional support from academic or career advisors	20%	12%	25%	14%
Online/hybrid classes	19%	13%	23%	19%
Extracurricular activities	14%	7%	18%	14%
Additional support from professors	14%	13%	14%	16%
Additional employment resources	11%	12%	11%	18%
Better commute or transportation support	11%	12%	11%	10%
Additional academic resources	9%	8%	10%	19%
More representation of people like me	7%	7%	7%	9%
Other	5%	5%	5%	3%
Nothing	8%	9%	7%	9%

Base: Current students who considered leaving and Non-Completers

Q. What is/was the household income in the household in which you grew up? Your best estimate is fine.

**Table 42. Household income growing up**

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
N	1029	661	122	246	427
Low income	15%	13%	11%	24%	9%
Low-middle income	26%	22%	36%	33%	23%
Middle income	36%	38%	38%	27%	55%
High-middle income	21%	25%	11%	14%	12%
High income	3%	3%	4%	1%	1%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. What is the highest level of education either of your parents have completed?

**Table 43. Parents' level of education**

	<b>TOTAL STUDENTS</b>	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	<b>TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
8th grade or less	3%	2%	5%	3%	2%
Some high school	3%	1%	2%	8%	2%
High school graduate (12) or GED	15%	11%	18%	26%	9%
Some college	11%	9%	13%	17%	21%
Trade/Technical/Vocational Training	2%	2%	2%	3%	6%
College graduate, Associate's degree	6%	7%	6%	4%	18%
College graduate, Bachelor's degree	30%	34%	32%	18%	35%
Postgraduate work/degree	25%	30%	20%	14%	6%
Don't know	2%	1%	0%	7%	1%
Prefer not to answer	3%	3%	2%	1%	1%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. When growing up, how often did you have access to the following?

**Table 44. Conditions growing up**

% always or most of the time

	<b>TOTAL STUDENTS</b>	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	<b>TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
Enough food in the house	93%	96%	94%	85%	83%
Stable housing	91%	94%	90%	81%	84%
A safe home environment	89%	92%	83%	85%	84%
Reliable transportation	89%	93%	85%	81%	82%
A safe neighborhood to play/walk around	89%	91%	82%	87%	82%
Quality health care	89%	93%	86%	81%	81%
Reliable internet	87%	92%	83%	76%	82%
Healthy food (e.g. fresh fruits and vegetables)	87%	89%	92%	78%	82%
Quality schools/education	87%	90%	88%	77%	81%
Extracurricular activities (e.g. sports, clubs, theatre, etc.)	84%	85%	87%	81%	79%
Social support	78%	84%	69%	68%	76%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. How would you rate your current mental health and current physical health?

**Table 45. Mental health rating**

	<b>N</b>	<b>TOTAL STUDENTS</b>	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	<b>TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS</b>
		<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
Excellent		20%	24%	7%	16%	16%
Good		30%	36%	27%	15%	43%
Fair		34%	30%	48%	39%	31%
Poor		12%	7%	18%	25%	8%
Very poor		3%	3%	1%	4%	3%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

**Table 46. Physical health rating**

	<b>N</b>	<b>TOTAL STUDENTS</b>	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	<b>TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS</b>
		<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
Excellent		24%	28%	18%	17%	19%
Good		42%	45%	51%	30%	45%
Fair		27%	22%	25%	43%	28%
Poor		6%	4%	6%	10%	6%
Very poor		1%	1%	—	1%	2%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. Which of the following best describes how you think of yourself? Please select all that apply.

**Table 47. How do you describe yourself**

	<b>N</b>	<b>TOTAL STUDENTS</b>	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	<b>TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS</b>
		<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
Straight		69%	73%	63%	62%	76%
Bisexual		15%	15%	15%	15%	11%
Cisgender		13%	14%	14%	10%	7%
Gay or lesbian		8%	5%	7%	16%	3%
Non-binary		4%	3%	6%	4%	3%
Transgender		1%	1%	1%	3%	4%
Other		4%	3%	10%	5%	3%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. Which of the following best describes your current living arrangements/living arrangements when you were in college?

**Table 48. Living arrangements**

	<b>TOTAL STUDENTS</b>	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	<b>TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
With parents or other relatives	28%	23%	33%	38%	21%
On campus with roommates	26%	30%	33%	11%	36%
On campus alone	9%	11%	5%	5%	8%
Off campus in apartment/house with roommates/housemates	29%	31%	23%	26%	21%
Off campus in apartment/house alone	8%	4%	6%	20%	14%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. Which of the following best describes your college attendance in the 2022–2023 school year/when you were in school?

**Table 49. Mode of learning**

	<b>TOTAL STUDENTS</b>	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	<b>TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
Only online classes	5%	5%	2%	7%	6%
Only in-person classes	55%	63%	46%	37%	43%
Hybrid schedule	40%	32%	52%	56%	51%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. In the 2022–2023 school year, were you a college...?

**Table 50. Year in school**

	<b>TOTAL</b>	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk
<b>N</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>
Freshman	27%	32%	12%	22%
Sophomore	42%	40%	42%	48%
Junior	22%	18%	40%	23%
Senior	8%	9%	6%	8%

Base: Current students

Q. What was the last school year you attended college?

**Table 51. Last school year attended**

	<b>N</b>	<b>TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS</b>
		<b>457</b>
Between 2010 and 2015		3%
Bewteen 2015 and 2019		8%
2019–20		7%
2020–21		20%
2021–22		34%
2022–23		29%

Base: Non-Completers

Q. When did you withdraw from college?

**Table 52. When withdrew from college**

	<b>N</b>	<b>TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS</b>
		<b>457</b>
During or after my first semester		9%
During or after my first year		26%
During or after my second year		34%
During or after my third year		16%
During or after my fourth year or more		6%
Just shy of graduation (less than one year/ semester of graduation)		8%
No answer		2%

Base: Non-Completers

Q. Do you plan to go back and complete your college education?

**Table 53. Plans for returning to college**

	<b>N</b>	<b>TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS</b>
		<b>457</b>
Definitely, in the next year		31%
Definitely, in the next 5 years		14%
Definitely, at some point		27%
Maybe, in the future		25%
No, don't plan to go back		3%

Base: Non-Completers

Q. After graduation, how quickly do you expect to get a job in your chosen field?

**Table 54. Expectations for finding a job after graduation**

	TOTAL STUDENTS	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk
<b>N</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>
Expect to have a job lined up before I graduate	33%	33%	34%	32%
Within 3 months of graduating	17%	18%	11%	18%
Within 6 months of graduating	13%	13%	6%	16%
Within a year of graduating	14%	12%	20%	18%
More than a year after graduating	8%	10%	5%	3%
I don't have an expectation	16%	15%	25%	15%

Base: Current students

Q. After leaving school, how quickly were you able to get a job?

**Table 55. When found a job after leaving school**

	TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS
<b>N</b>	<b>427</b>
I already had a job lined up when I left school	18%
Within 3 months	33%
Within 6 months	19%
Within a year	13%
More than a year after leaving school	5%
I have not been able to find a job yet	14%

Base: Non-Completers

Q. After graduation, what salary do you expect from your first job in your chosen field?  
 In your first job after leaving college, what was your salary?

**Table 56. Starting salary**

	<b>TOTAL STUDENTS</b>	Never considered leaving school	Considered leaving but not seriously	Seriously considered leaving or dismissal risk	<b>TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>1029</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>427</b>
Unpaid internship	2%	2%	3%	1%	7%
Less than \$15,000	2%	2%	1%	2%	27%
\$15,000 to \$29,999	8%	7%	12%	8%	36%
\$30,000 to \$49,999	16%	13%	22%	20%	11%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	34%	33%	33%	38%	4%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	25%	24%	23%	26%	2%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	10%	13%	5%	4%	3%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%
\$200,000 or more	3%	3%	1%	1%	0%
Unemployed	—	—	—	—	10%

Base: Current students + Non-Completers

Q. After withdrawing from college, what actions did you take within that first year?

**Table 57. Actions taken within first year**

	<b>TOTAL NON-COMPLETERS</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>427</b>
Found a career I wanted to progress in	13%
Took the first job I could find	40%
Enrolled in online professional certificate training programs (e.g. Coursera, Udemy, Grow with Google, etc.)	13%
Sought out alternative education plans (e.g. a trade or vocational school)	8%
Worked on my mental health	32%
Worked on my physical health	22%
Moved back in with my parents	32%
Other	3%
None of the above	8%

Base: Non-Completers

# Technical Notes

These are the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted on behalf of Sallie Mae between June 2 and June 26, 2023. For this survey, a sample of 1,029 current college students ages 18 – 30 and 427 adults who started but did not complete college ages 18 – 30 from the continental U.S., Alaska, and Hawaii were interviewed online in English.

The sample was randomly drawn from The Generation Lab Student Panel and General Youth Panel and does not rely on a population frame in the traditional sense. The Student panel includes students from across the country, including those attending community colleges, HBCUs, and women-only colleges. The General Youth Panel is recruited to closely resemble a probability-based sample through academically-guided, advertisement-based, geographic recruitment with quota sampling. After a sample has been obtained, Ipsos calibrates respondent characteristics to be representative of the U.S. Population for college students and adults who have not completed college using standard procedures such as raking-ratio adjustments. The source

of these population targets is U.S. Census 2021 American Community Survey data. The sample drawn for this study reflects fixed sample targets on demographics. Post-hoc weights were made to the population characteristics on gender, race/ethnicity, and type of educational institution.

Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online non-probability polls. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error and measurement error. Where figures do not sum to 100, this is due to the effects of rounding. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll has a credibility interval of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points for all respondents. Ipsos calculates a design effect (DEFF) for each study based on the variation of the weights, following the formula of Kish (1965). This study had a credibility interval adjusted for design effect of the following ( $n = 1,456$ ,  $DEFF = 1.5$ , adjusted Confidence Interval =  $\pm 4.6$  percentage points).

