



2020 Survey of America's College Students

Conducted on Behalf of:
**The Panetta Institute for
Public Policy**

By Hart Research Associates

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I. Introduction

Every spring, the Panetta Institute for Public Policy commissions a nationwide survey of college students to help guide its curriculum and programs. Conducted by Hart Research Associates, the study explores the attitudes and opinions of college students on many topics, including current national and international issues, social, political, and economic trends, level of political involvement, and personal career expectations.

In its twentieth year of this nationwide poll of college students, the Panetta Institute's survey has become a highly respected source of information for academics, researchers, political scientists, policy makers, and journalists interested in tracking the views of the country's next generation of voters and decision makers in being able to draw from two decades of collected data. Given the research's continuity and depth, scholars and political campaigns find this survey to be one of best barometers for measuring college students' opinions.

At such a challenging and potentially transformational moment, as well as a presidential election year, this year's survey is particularly important. This report summarizes the major findings of this year's poll based upon online interviews with 800 students at four-year colleges across the country from April 29 to May 5, 2020.

Key Findings

Key findings from this year's survey show:

- **College students have been deeply impacted by COVID-19 with the coronavirus being the top issue facing the country in their minds, and no other issue comes close:**
 - Most college students believe that their life has changed in a major way by COVID-19 at 79%, of which of 35% students say their life has changed in a very major way with 44% stating in a fairly major way.
 - Nearly one in two (47%) students say that their family has lost a significant amount of income due to the coronavirus.

- Nearly two in five (39%) students say responding to the coronavirus is the most important issue to them personally, and a distant second most important issue, improving the healthcare system, is related to that (11%).
 - Concerns about COVID-19 are real and personal for college students, with 70% saying that they are worried about someone in their immediate family catching the coronavirus (and 3% say that this has already happened).
 - Yet, while college students are worried about themselves, they are even more worried about the country, with 80% saying they believe that the coronavirus will have a great deal or quite a bit of an impact on the country, compared with 54% who say the same for their own life.
- **Students have strong feelings on the impact of the coronavirus both on and off their university campus.** Students clearly miss the human interaction that a vibrant campus life provides:
- 83% say they were satisfied with how their college or university dealt with the coronavirus.
 - A majority (58%) of these university students say that online classes are worse than in-person classes.
 - In fact, 74% report that they miss attending classes in person a great deal or a fair amount.
 - Additional aspects of college life students miss most includes hanging out with friends (84% miss this a great deal or a fair amount), having independence from their family (72%), and meeting new people with diverse backgrounds and experiences (72%).
 - What this means for the future is unclear, as just 52% of students expect their institution to offer in-person classes in the fall. If that is the case, 64% of underclassmen say they have seriously considered demanding a reduction in tuition, while 42% are considering taking time off until in-person classes resume.
 - Despite a desire to return to in-person classes, looking beyond campus, two in three (67%) college students worry more that the United States will move too quickly in loosening restrictions that require most Americans to shelter in place, and more lives will be lost.

- **A majority of students believe that the country is off on the wrong track, but that proportion has declined from 64% to 56% since 2019.** This is particularly notable given the challenging times, which sometimes cause the country to come together:
 - At the same time, students' assessment of the country's economic outlook has plummeted since last year, with just 38% saying the economy is excellent or good, down from 59% in 2019.
 - But students remain confident in their own ability to find a job that is acceptable to them upon graduation, with 71% saying this is the case, unchanged from last year.
- **Student loans continue to have a profound impact on college students:**
 - A majority of college students have taken out student loans (56%). Among them, 86% expect to have student loan debt after they graduate.
 - Their debt will stay with students and impact them long after they leave campus—60% expect it will take six years or longer to pay off the debt and 59% believe the debt will have a high impact on the job they pursue upon graduation.
- **Interest in working in public service after graduation remains high in spite the financial challenges facing college students:**
 - College students continue to express high interest in working in government (44%), with similar levels of interest for working in public health (41%) and essential jobs related to COVID-19 (39%).
 - Roughly three in five (61%) students say that they are interested in a program that provides financial assistance for college in exchange for two years of national service as well as a similar program that would be focused on healthcare or frontline responders (57%).
- **On international issues:**
 - While college students are clearly focused on COVID-19, they continue to believe that climate change is a serious problem (85%), though there is a decline in those who say it is very serious

- When it comes to immigration, 63% support Congress continuing the DACA program.
- **Looking ahead to the November elections:**
 - Donald Trump’s standing has improved slightly on campus, but his ratings professionally and personally remain quite low. Fully 65% of college students disapprove of the job that Trump is doing (down from 70% last year) and 64% view him negatively personally (down from 68% last year).
 - In a head-to-head matchup, likely Democratic nominee Joe Biden leads Donald Trump by a 60%-to-31% margin. Out of 10 issues measured, there is no single issue, including the economy, on which Trump has an advantage over Biden. Biden holds advantages over Trump of more than 30 points on college affordability (35 points), healthcare (33 points), and working with Congress (32 points). And on the most important issue of the moment, the coronavirus, college students rate Joe Biden as doing a better job than Donald Trump by 47% to 21%.
 - Fully 84% of college students report that they are registered to vote, an all-time high, and 85% of college students say they definitely (59%) or will probably vote (26%) in the presidential election.
 - A majority (57%) of college students favor allowing all voters to vote by mail.

Methodology

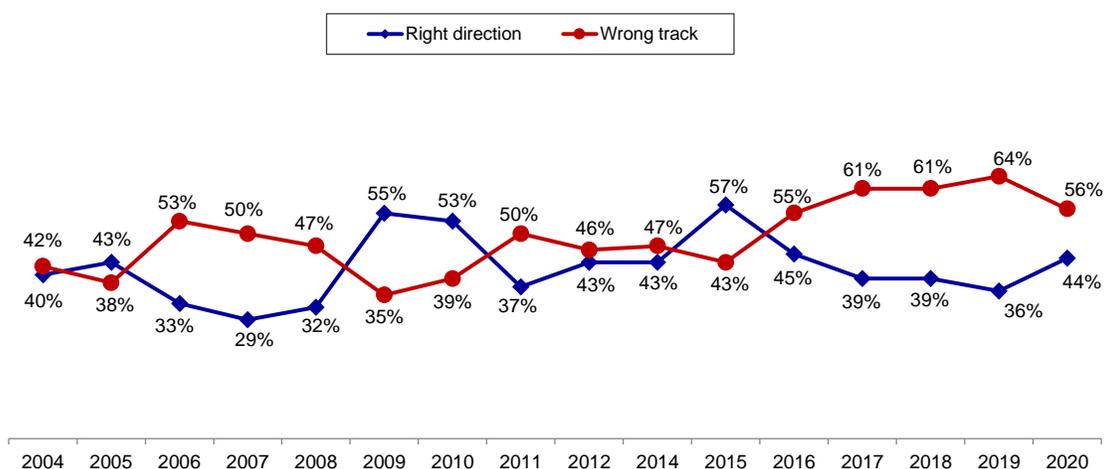
Hart Research contracted with an online survey vendor to administer the survey to students who are enrolled in a four-year higher-learning institution. The screening sample was drawn from the vendor’s multi-million-member respondent panel. A total of 800 interviews were completed online. All interviews were conducted from April 29 to May 5, 2020. Some demographics were weighted to achieve representative samples of four-year college students nationwide.

II. State of the Nation

This marks the first year since 2015 that the proportion of college students saying the country is off on the wrong track has decreased, dropping from 64% to 56%. There are also some signs of optimism when students evaluate the country's system of checks and balances. Confidence in the nation's ability to work effectively has slightly increased to 60% this year, a five-point increase from last year.

College students still believe that the country is off on the wrong track, but there is slight improvement...

Assessment of the Nation's Direction



The change in sentiment over the direction of the country is a very surprising finding given that students are clearly aware of and concerned about the coronavirus. An overwhelming 85% say that they follow coverage of the coronavirus very or fairly closely. And a majority of students (63%) say they are more concerned about the coronavirus than the state of the economy (37%).

While it is too early to tell if sentiments about the country's direction are stabilizing or shifting in a new direction, students are clearer about the future of the country. As students' sentiments about the country's direction have become a bit less pessimistic, their uncertainty and concern about the future has not. Nearly seven in 10 (68%) students report that they are more uncertain and concerned about the country's future, while 32% say that they are more confident and secure about it. To

further explore their outlook on the country's future, we presented a series of challenges the nation would face over the next few years and asked them which concerned them the most. Students are most concerned about unemployment and recession (38%), the coronavirus (28%), and the country's weak political leadership (25%).

Impeachment of President Trump and the Presidential Primary

While the coronavirus has taken the center stage of current affairs, interest around politics is still very high. Roughly three in five students report that they were very or fairly closely following the impeachment of President Trump (63%) and the presidential primaries (59%). The same high level of interest is seen across partisan lines, with 66% of Democrats and 64% of independents saying they were following Trump's impeachment closely, along with 55% of Republicans. Meanwhile, majorities of Democrats (62%), independents (53%), and Republicans (59%) say they were following the presidential primaries closely.

Domestic Issues

College students continue to prioritize national challenges their generation is facing versus international issues.

With the unprecedented challenges the coronavirus has brought to the nation, from the economy to how they receive their education, it is to be expected that most students would prioritize responding to the coronavirus, evident by the 64% who say it's one of the top three issues for them personally. This feeling is shared across party lines, with Democrats most likely to mention the coronavirus (69%), along with independents (59%) and Republicans (57%).

With the coronavirus front and center in the country's focus, other issues not directly tied to the coronavirus see a dip in importance among students since last year. The most notable declines include addressing climate change dropping eight points from 41% to 33%, preventing gun violence dropping 18 points from 39% to

21%, and dealing with the costs of college education dropping seven points from 33% to 26%.

On the other hand, issues that are more closely connected to the coronavirus did not experience declines. Improving the healthcare system remained exactly the same as last year, standing at 45%, and is the only issue that comes close to the coronavirus on the issue agenda. Improving the job situation was the only issue that saw a spike in importance, likely because it impacts students' employment prospects, and it grew six points from 31% to 37%.

After the coronavirus, Democrats are most likely to prioritize healthcare (51%), while Republicans are most likely to prioritize the job situation (55%). Democrats are also much more likely than Republicans to cite climate change as a top issue for them (44% to 15%).

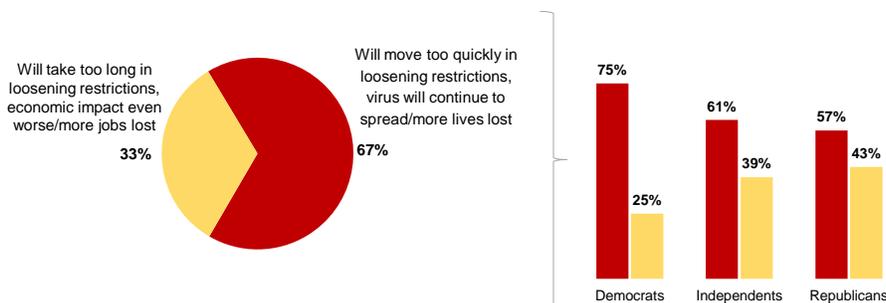
The Issue Agenda Impacted by Coronavirus
Proportions who select each as one of the top three issues for them personally

	All College Students (2019) %	All College Students (2020) %
Responding to the coronavirus	NA	64
Improving the healthcare system	45	45
Improving the job situation	31	37
Addressing climate change	41	33
Dealing with the costs of college education	33	26
The national debt	26	24
Income inequality	30	22
Preventing gun violence	39	21
Dealing with immigration	31	16
Trade with other countries	12	13
Dealing with North Korea	12	NA

While students' emphasis has increased on improving the job situation along with a major focus on the coronavirus, by two to one, they are more worried that, in response to COVID-19, the United States will move too quickly in loosening restrictions than take too long. And this viewpoint is held across party lines, including majorities of Democrats (75%), independents (61%), and Republicans (57%).

College students worry more that the United States will move too quickly to re-open and loosen restrictions rather than take too long.

Which worries you more about the United States responding to the coronavirus and restrictions that require most Americans to shelter in place and only leave their homes for essential needs?

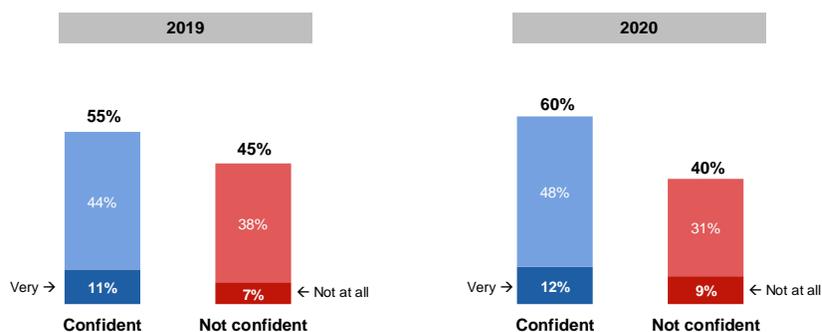


Confidence in Democratic Institutions

College students generally believe that democracy in the United States is working and have confidence in our system of checks and balances, but there are sizable proportions of students who have doubts on each measure. A majority (58%) of college students say democracy is working well in the country and 42% say it is not working well. Similarly, confidence in the system of checks and balances is at 60%, while 40% say they are not that confident or not confident at all in this system.

Students remain confident in our system of checks and balances and the three branches of government.

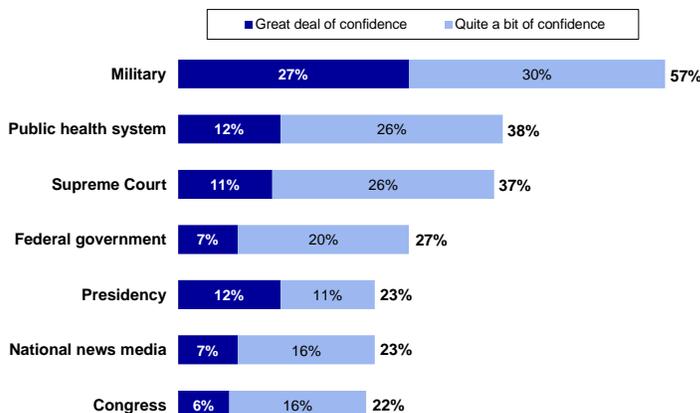
How confident are you that our system of checks and balances between the three branches of government—the presidency, the Congress, and the Supreme Court—is working effectively?



However, looking at individual institutions, we find little movement since last year, and fairly low levels of confidence. The military is the only institution in which a majority (57%) of students have confidence. For the first time the survey also

measured confidence in the public health system, and only 38% of students said they had confidence in it.

Confidence in Institutions



Results across the three branches of government by party reveal a different story. Majorities of Republicans are confident in the Supreme Court (52%) and the presidency (51%), while confidence among Democrats and independents is quite low across all three branches of government. Confidence in Congress is low across party lines.

Confidence in Three Branches of Government by Party Identification

	All College Students			
	%	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Independents</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
		%	%	%
Supreme Court	37	31	35	52
The presidency	23	10	18	51
Congress	22	19	25	28

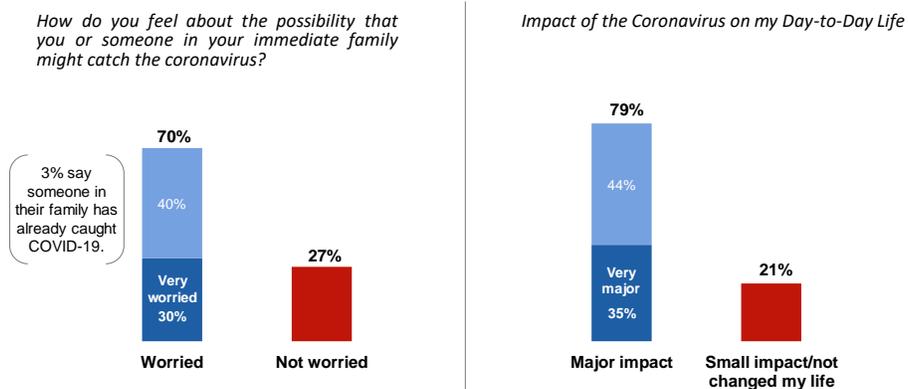
III. Impact of the Coronavirus

Like the rest of the country, college students report that they are deeply impacted by COVID-19. The virus's impact is seen in many ways, from how closely students are following news about COVID-19 to their own personal concerns about the virus. On campus, students provide relatively high levels of satisfaction with how their institution responded to the coronavirus in the spring, but for a generation that relies so much on digital communications, students clearly miss the human touch and full college experience that social distancing and online classes cannot provide. And there are real questions about what this means for college students and where they will be in the fall.

Personal Impact of the Coronavirus

Fully 85% of college students are following coverage of the coronavirus closely, including 48% who are following it very closely. No other news story reaches nearly this level of attention among college students, with reports about the condition of the U.S. economy a distant second (66% following closely).

College students report that COVID-19 has changed their life in a major way, and most worry about someone in their family catching the virus.



While the direct impact of COVID-19 is more likely to be felt among older Americans or those with underlying medical conditions, college students are feeling its impact as well. Seven in 10 students (70%) say they are worried that someone in their immediate family might catch the coronavirus (and 3% say a family member has already caught it). This level of concern is on par with data among Americans

overall from a recent NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* Poll (73% of Americans report that they are worried about this). College students who are more worried about a family member catching the coronavirus include students from a lower- or lower-middle-class family (78%), as well as liberals (80%), Democrats (78%), and progressives (75%).

Nearly eight in 10 college students (79%) say that their day to day life has changed in a very major (35%) or fairly major way (44%) due to the coronavirus. And 74% say that their plans for the summer have changed in a very (34%) or fairly major way (40%). While at different stages of their college careers, seniors (70%) and first-year students (72%) are nearly as likely to say that their summer plans have changed in a major way, with juniors reporting the highest levels of disruption (78%). Underscoring that for most college students the impact of COVID-19 has more to do with non-health issues, for those who say their life has changed in a major way, COVID-19's impact on them personally is much more about personal freedom, financial, or educational impact.

How Has Your Life Changed in a Major Way <i>Proportions who select each aspect of their life</i>	
	%
Personal freedom or ability to see friends or family	79
Employment or internship opportunities	64
Future education	62
Financially	61
Health	26

Along with huge spikes in the country's unemployment rate, the economic and financial impact of COVID-19 is being felt among college students as well. Nearly half (47%) of students say that their family has lost a significant amount of income due to the coronavirus. And this economic pain is being felt in a greater degree among students from lower- or lower-middle-class families (63%), and families of

color, including African Americans (58%), Asian Americans (54%), and Latinxs (52%).

While college students report that their own lives have been hugely disrupted by COVID-19, they are also self-aware and acknowledge that its impact will be even greater to the country overall. Overall, 54% of college students say they personally will be impacted a great deal or quite a bit by the coronavirus, compared with 80% who feel this way about the country. In fact, college students are more likely to say that their generation (70%) and colleges and universities (70%) will also be impacted more long-term than they will be themselves.

Impact of the Coronavirus on University Campuses

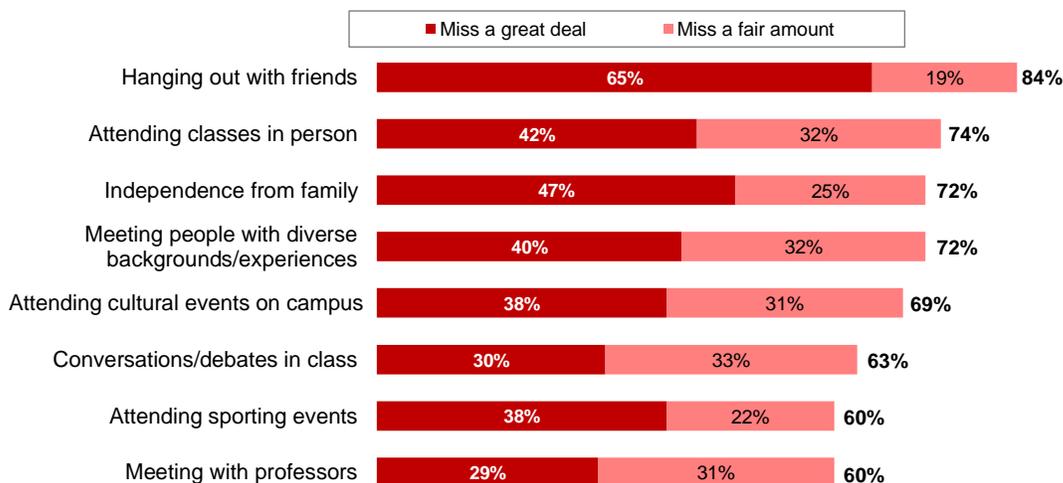
While college students rate their campus with generally high levels of satisfaction for how their institution handled COVID-19 this spring, there are real concerns about the value of distance learning (which the vast majority are now experiencing), what the campus of the future will look like, and whether or not it will include them.

More than four in five college students say they are satisfied (83%) with how their college or university dealt with the coronavirus. But satisfaction is more on the somewhat satisfied (51%) than very satisfied (32%) side, which signals some concern about the future. Among the vast majority of students who experienced the move to online classes in the spring, 58% say these classes are worse than in-person classes, while 20% say they are about the same, and 22% say they are better. Confidence in cybersecurity protections that their institution put in place to protect personal information and security is a bit of a better story, but only 54% of students report having high confidence in their institution on this measure.

It is not only attending classes in person that college students miss now that most campuses are closed. Students miss the entirety of the college experience, from hanging out with friends, to newfound independence from family, to debates in classes, to meeting with professors. In addition, majorities of students report missing a number of other aspects of college life on campus a great deal or a fair amount.

Attending in-person classes is one of the things that college students miss most now that campuses are closed.

How much do you miss this aspect of student life now that campuses are closed?

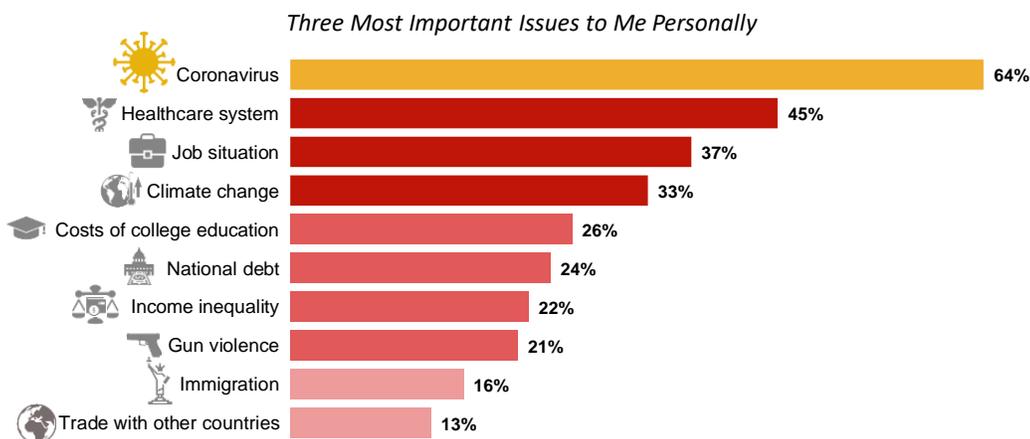


And looking ahead to the fall, non-seniors are unsure as to whether their college or university will be offering classes in person or not. A bare majority (52%) expect that their school will start the fall with in-person classes, while 48% believe that classes will start online. Students attending private schools are much more likely to believe their school will start classes in person (64% to 36%) while those attending state schools are evenly divided between classes starting in person (49%) or online (51%). There is also a partisan tilt to this expectation, as Democrats are more likely to believe classes will start online than in person (53% to 47%), while majorities of independents and Republicans are more likely to believe that classes will start in person (57% and 59% respectively).

Many underclassmen are seriously reevaluating their plans due to changes that their school has made because of COVID-19. Fully 64% of college students say they have seriously considered demanding their school reduce tuition while classes are being offered online. Two in five students (42%) report that they will seriously consider taking time off until in-person classes resume, and 27% are seriously considering transferring to a more affordable school.

COVID-19's impact will not only be felt on campus, but long after students graduate. Two in five students (41%) say they will graduate from college later than they had previously planned due to the coronavirus, and this is much more likely to be the case for Latinx (57%) and African-American (54%) students. And 20% of college students say they plan to change their career or profession due to COVID-19, with those more likely to say this has altered their career path being African Americans (35%), seniors (30%), and those from upper- or upper-middle-class families (29%).

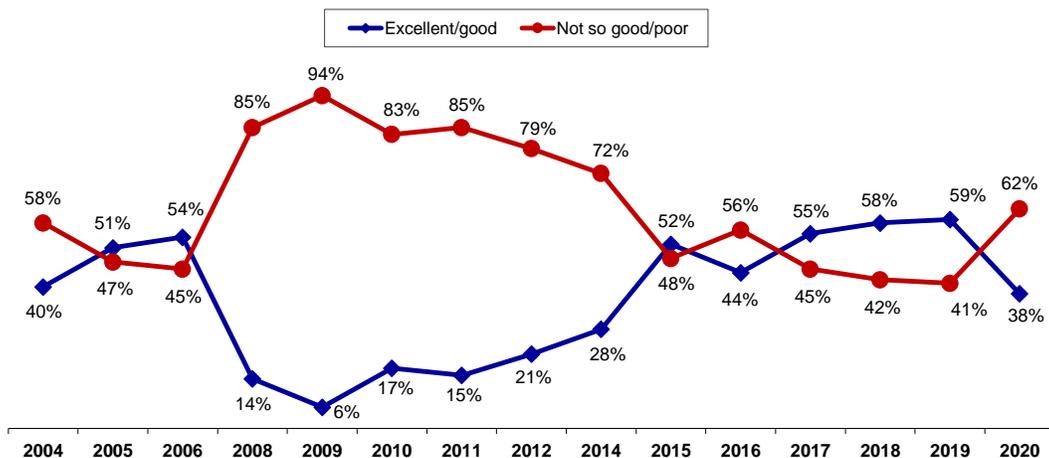
COVID-19 is far and away the most important issue for college students.



IV. Economic Outlook

With the economic slowdown from COVID-19 and the highest unemployment rate seen since the Great Depression, students' view of the nation's economy has tumbled. Three in five students (62%) think the state of the nation's economy is not so good or poor, the highest number since 2014, and a reversal of the steady economic optimism that students have expressed since 2017. Almost half (49%) of all students think the nation's economy will get worse during the next twelve months, and just 38% of students expect that the nation's economy will get better. Party affiliation influences the economic outlook of students, with over half of Republicans (51%) and Trump voters (54%) saying the nation's economy is excellent or good. Republicans are also more likely to think that the economy will get better in the next twelve months (56%) than Democrats (32%) or Independents (29%).

The State of the Economy



Surprisingly, despite this negative view of the state of the nation's economy, 71% of students are confident they will get a job that is acceptable to them, the same proportion as in 2019. Republicans are again far more optimistic that they will get a job that is acceptable to them, with 82% saying they are very or fairly confident. Though students are confident that they will get a job, 71% of students worry often about finding a good-paying, quality job after college. Those studying the humanities report the highest levels of worry, with 78% worrying very or somewhat often. Other students who worry more often about finding a good-paying quality job after college

include women (75%) and students from lower- to lower-middle-class families (81%).

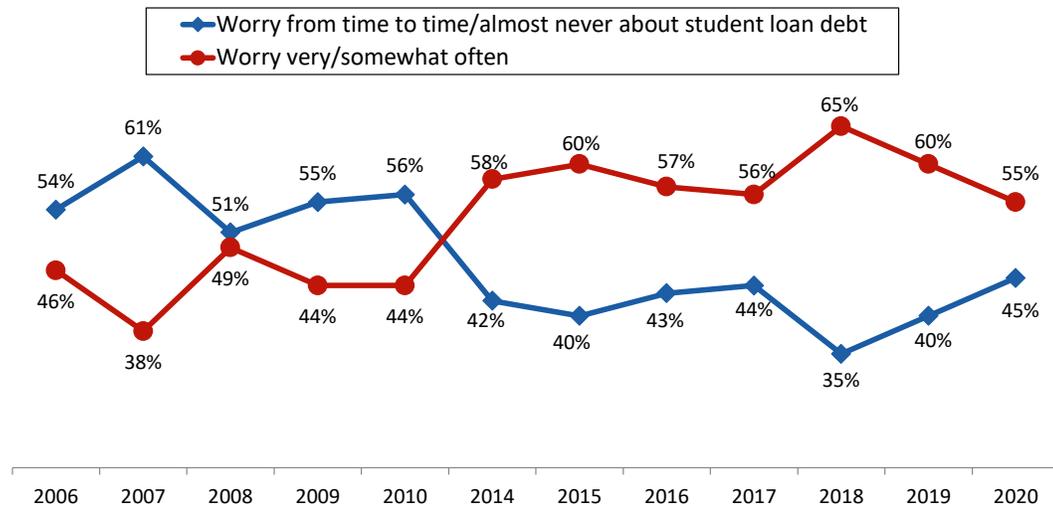
As has been documented in prior Panetta Institute polling, college students continue to struggle to afford the high cost of college tuition. Nearly a quarter (24%) of students say they needed to take time off in college because they could not afford to pay tuition, and 40% of students say they work at least 20 hours a week to pay their tuition. Students who come from lower- to lower-middle-class backgrounds are more likely to work at least 20 hours a week to pay their tuition (47%) than those from upper- or upper-middle-class backgrounds (29%). Of students who say they will change their career due to the coronavirus outbreak, 61% say they work at least 20 hours a week to pay tuition, 21 points more than students overall. Of this group, 49% say they needed to take time off because they could not afford to pay tuition, twice as many as students overall. Students considering changing their careers due to COVID-19 work more and struggle more than other students to afford tuition and are more sensitive to changes in the economy and job market.

Impact of Student Loan Debt

Student loan debt continues to weigh heavily on college students, though students this year express marginally less financial stress as parents and family members shoulder more of the burden. This year 68% of students say their parents or family members are paying some or all of their college tuition, a nine-percentage-point increase from 2019. Nearly four in five students from upper-class to upper-middle-class families (79%) report that family members pay some or all of their tuition. Conversely, fewer students are paying some or all of their own tuition: 60% this year compared with 66% in 2019. Slightly fewer, 67%, of students are also relying on scholarships to pay for some or all of their tuition, down from 71% in 2019. Despite getting more help from parents and family members, approximately half of all students have taken out student loans to pay for some or all of their tuition, and 86% of students expect that by the time they graduate they will have student loan debt. Almost all students at private colleges who have taken out student loans (92%) expect to have student loan debt after graduation and overall students expect to have, on average, almost \$33,000 of student loan debt after graduation. Those

enrolled in private schools expect to have an average of about \$38,500 of debt after graduation, significantly higher than the approximate \$30,000 in debt expected by students enrolled in state schools. Of those with college debt, 60% expect that it will take six years or more to pay off their loans.

Concern about Student Loan Debt



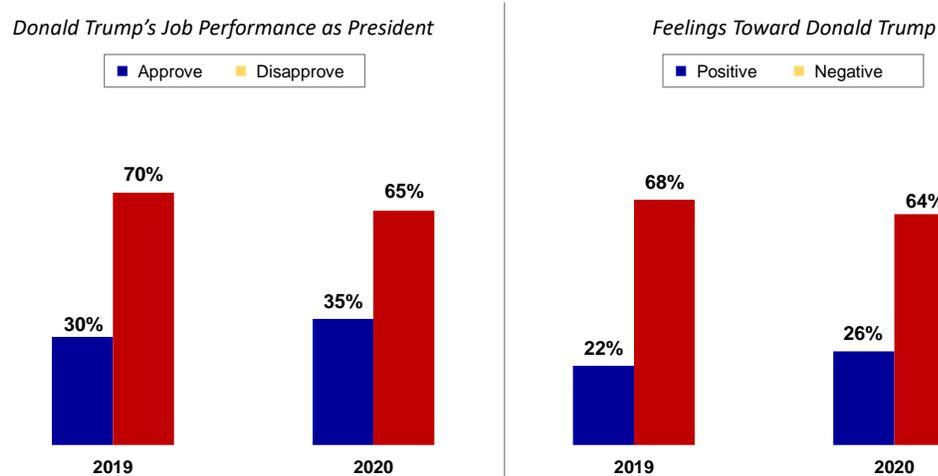
Though the proportion has declined somewhat, over half (55%) of students worry about having too much student debt. About three in five students say that their student loan debt will impact the type of job they are likely to pursue after graduation. Students of the humanities are the least likely to consider their student debt when deciding what jobs to pursue after graduation, maybe contributing to their extended expected timelines for paying off their loans: just 47% say their student loans will have an impact on this choice, compared with 56% among the students of the social sciences and 65% among business students.

V. The Political Landscape

College students continue to have fairly low levels of satisfaction with the country's political leadership and Donald Trump, though these ratings have improved somewhat since last year. Students report high interest in the 2020 elections and most plan to vote, with students favoring Joe Biden and congressional Democrats by two to one over Donald Trump and congressional Republicans.

Satisfaction with the country's political leadership has improved compared with a lower point in last year's survey, from 34% then to 43% today. And even though 57% of college students are dissatisfied, this marks the highest level of satisfaction since the 2016 Panetta Institute survey.

Donald Trump's standing on campus remains very low but has improved modestly since last year.



There are huge partisan divisions here, as 73% of Republicans say they are satisfied with the country's political leadership, but this drops to 46% among Independents, and just 25% of Democrats share this view. A gender gap emerges here as well, with 52% of men on campus reporting satisfaction with the country's political leadership, but only 35% of women feeling similarly. While satisfaction increased, college students are net negative to leading national figures of both parties, particularly Donald Trump. Of all surveyed, 26% have positive feelings toward Donald Trump, while 64% are negative.

The likely Democratic nominee Joe Biden fares better on campus; 39% view him positively and 40% are negative to the former vice president. But Biden's personal ratings have declined markedly since last year's survey, prior to when he was a declared candidate, and he was in net positive terrain (49% positive, 29% negative).

Congressional leaders of both parties, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (14% positive, 28% negative) and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (24% positive, 36% negative) are both viewed more negatively than positively among college students.

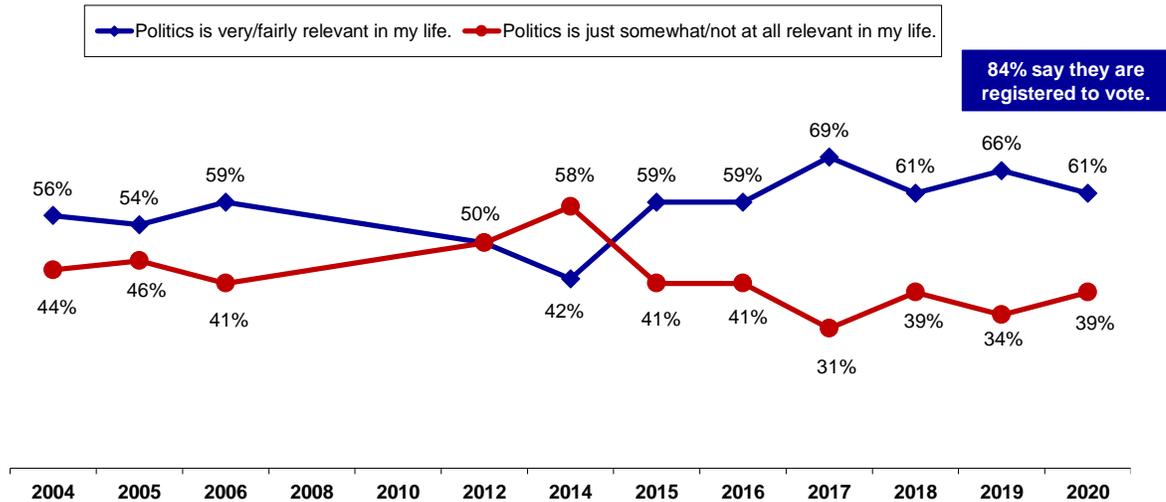
Feelings toward Selected Public Figures among All College Students			
	<u>Positive</u> %	<u>Negative</u> %	<u>Differential</u> ±
Joe Biden	39	40	-1
Nancy Pelosi	24	36	-12
Mitch McConnell	14	28	-14
Donald Trump	26	64	-38

Donald Trump's standing on campus remains quite low, but his job rating has improved compared with prior years. With a 35% approval rating, this marks his high among college students, and a five-point improvement compared with last year (30%). Four in five (80%) Republicans approve of the job Trump is doing as president, compared with 36% among independents, and just 11% of Democrats. There is also a gender gap here, with 47% of men approving, compared with only 25% of women. Trump's job rating is also higher with whites (43%), those attending private schools (43%), and those majoring in business (40%).

Looking to the November elections, 61% of college students say that politics is very or fairly relevant in their life. While this is down somewhat from last year (66%), it is still on the higher end of a trend that we have seen grow over time, with relevance above 60% since Donald Trump took office. Republicans (64%) and

Democrats (63%) are nearly equally likely to report that politics has a high degree of relevance in their life.

Three in five college students believe that politics is relevant in their lives.



The 2020 Presidential Election

Nearly three in four college students (74%) report that they are following the 2020 presidential race closely, which is on par with the 2016 election (74%). Seniors (79%) are most likely to be following the race closely, while first-year students are least likely to be doing so (68%). Democrats and Republicans are equally as likely to be following the race closely (77%), and men (80%) are more likely than women (69%) to be doing so.

Fully 84% of college students report that they are registered to vote, an all-time high. And 85% of college students say they definitely (59%) or will probably (26%) vote in the presidential election, which overall tracks with likelihood of voting in 2008 at this time (88%), but, in 2008, 70% said that they definitely planned to vote. Republicans (90%) and Democrats (88%) are nearly equally likely to say they plan to vote in the presidential election, as are men (86%) and women (85%). Asian-American and African-American college students are somewhat less likely to say they

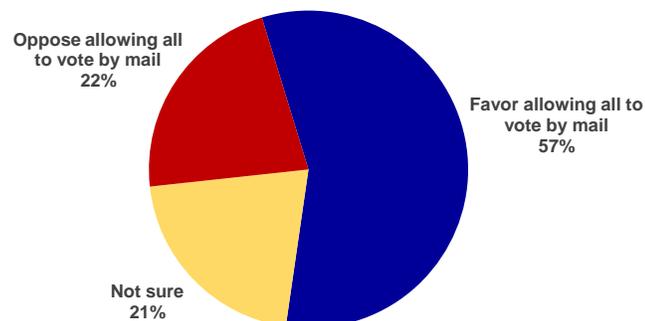
plan to vote (78% and 75% respectively) compared with white (91%) and Latinx (83%) college students.

How Americans, including college students, will be able to vote in November remains to be seen. For now, 44% of students say they plan to vote in person on Election Day, while another 18% say they plan to vote early in person. Nearly four in 10 voters (38%) say they plan to vote by mail (27%) or by absentee ballot (11%). Republicans are more likely to plan to vote in person (71% either on Election Day or early) while Democrats are split, with 55% voting in person and 45% either by mail (32%) or absentee ballot (13%). Those in the West, where voting by mail is more prevalent, are more likely to say they plan to vote by mail or absentee (52%).

Regardless of how they plan to vote, a majority of college students (57%) favor allowing everyone to vote by mail, while 22% oppose this, and 21% are not sure. A majority of Democrats (68%) favor allowing everyone to vote by mail, and independents (46% favor, 29% oppose) and Republicans (44% favor, 32% oppose) are more likely to favor than oppose allowing everyone to vote by mail. Those who have been impacted by COVID-19 in a very major way are more likely to favor allowing everyone to vote by mail (63% favor, 19% oppose), while those who say their life has changed in a small way or not at all are less supportive (43% favor, 34% oppose).

College students favor changing election laws to allow everyone to vote by mail.

Currently most states do not allow voting by mail except for absentee ballots. Overall, do you favor or oppose changing the election laws to allow everyone to vote by mail?



Not only are students planning to vote, but many are already engaged, matching the level of involvement in 2016. One in three college students (33%) say

they are already involved in a presidential campaign, and another 17% say they probably will get involved. Perhaps due to the fact that there is a competitive Democratic primary, Democratic students are more likely than Republican students to say they are already involved in a campaign (35% to 27%). Other students more likely to report being involved already include progressives (54%), African Americans (53%), Latinxs (45%), those who attend a school with 5,000 or fewer students (42%), students from an upper-class or upper-middle-class family (42%), and seniors (41%).

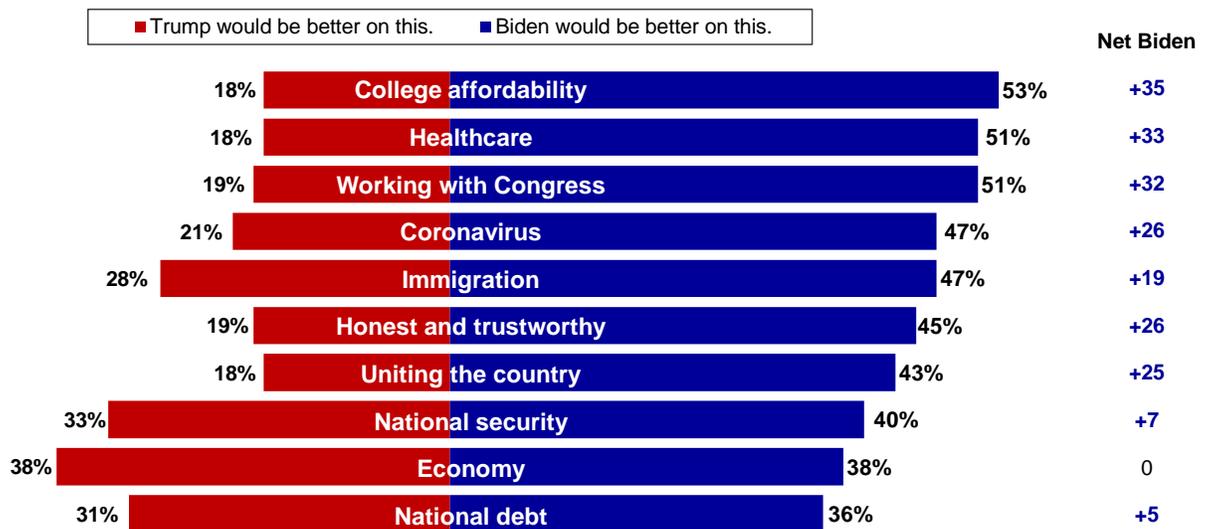
2020 Presidential Trial Heat		
	Biden	Trump
	%	%
All students	60	31
Men	53	38
Women	67	24
Whites	51	41
African Americans	77	13
Latinx	65	23
Asians	76	14
COVID-19: Life changed very major way	66	27
COVID-19: Life changed fairly major way	62	29
COVID-19: Life changed small way/not	47	42
Democrats	86	7
Independents	55	24
Republicans	15	81
Social class: upper-middle/upper	58	36
Social class: middle	55	33
Social class: lower/lower-middle	73	21
Economy: Excellent/good	49	44
Economy: Not so good/poor	67	23

The likely Democratic nominee for president, Joe Biden, holds a 60%-to-31% advantage over Donald Trump. Partisans break fairly evenly to their respective candidates, with 86% of Democrats voting for Biden and 81% of Republicans for Trump. But college students are much more likely to identify as Democrats than Republicans, by a 51%-to-27% margin, which helps account for Biden's large lead.

And independents are voting for Biden over Trump by more than two to one (55% to 24%). Joe Biden also receives greater support among college students of color, those who have been impacted in a major way by COVID-19, and students from a lower- or lower-middle-class family. Donald Trump receives more support among students who rate the country’s economy as excellent or good, but even here, he trails Joe Biden by five points (49% to 44%).

Further bolstering Joe Biden’s advantage over Donald Trump on campus is that among the 10 issues tested, there is not a single issue where Donald Trump is viewed as being better than Joe Biden. Trump is only able to break even on his perceived strong suit, the economy, while Biden holds margins greater than thirty points on college affordability (35 points ahead of Trump), healthcare (33 points), and working with Congress (32 points). And on the single most important issue, coronavirus, college students believe Joe Biden would do a better job than Donald Trump by 26 points (47% to 21%).

There is no issue on which Donald Trump has an advantage over Joe Biden, and majorities of students say Biden would be better on college affordability, healthcare, and working with Congress.



Looking to the congressional elections, the data shows a similar trend, with 60% of college students saying they plan to vote for the Democratic candidate in their district, and 32% for the Republican candidate. This 28-point Democratic

advantage tracks closely with the congressional ballot on campus in 2018 (28 points) and 2016 (32 points). While college students have consistently preferred a Democratic candidate for Congress in their district over a Republican candidate, the gap has widened over time, going back to 2002, when Democrats enjoyed only a seven-point advantage on campus. There are similar trends across subgroups from the presidential trial heat, with preference for president being a key driver. Consider that Biden voters prefer a Democratic candidate for Congress by 87% to 9%, and Trump voters prefer a Republican candidate for Congress by 82% to 13%. And Democrats prefer a Democratic candidate overwhelmingly (90% to 7%) while Republicans are just a bit less supportive of the Republican candidate (84% to 10%). Again, as is the case in the presidential trial heat, by two to one, independents prefer a Democratic candidate over a Republican candidate in their district (52% to 26%).

VI. International Issues

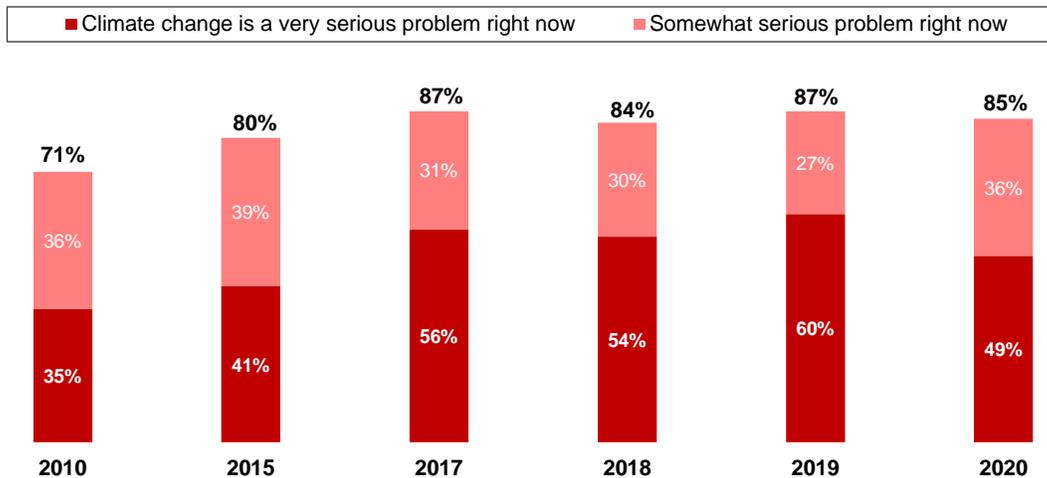
On international issues, students are sharply divided along partisan and ideological lines. From climate change, to immigration, to simply what problems they believe they will be facing in the future, students in opposite political parties and of opposite ideological beliefs think differently. Though believing that most of their problems will be national in scope, overall, students remain adamant that the international issue of climate change is a serious problem.

Most students (54%) believe that most of the problems their generation will face are national in scope, a slight decrease from the previous two years of this poll. Still, 46% of students do believe that most of the problems their generation will face are international in scope, a six-percentage-point increase from 2019, and a five-point increase from 2018. Students are divided by their political affiliation and ideology. Republican and conservative students believe the problems their generation will face will be national, while Democrats and progressives are focused on the international. Among Republican students, 60% believe that the problems their generation will face are national in scope, while 51% of Democratic and independent students agree. Of students who self-identify as conservative, 67% believe the problems will be national in scope. The almost exact opposite is true of progressives, 65% of whom believe the problems will be international in scope.

Climate Change

An international problem that continues to be a concern for students is climate change, with 85% saying that climate change is a very or somewhat serious problem. Only 3% of students say that climate change is not a problem. While the overall concern about climate change remains high, the proportion of students who say climate change is a very serious problem has declined from 60% to 49%. It is possible that due to the COVID-19 crisis, students are not as immediately concerned with climate change as they were in previous years. It is also possible that because of decreased human activity due to the COVID-19 crisis, and the subsequent decline in pollution, students are feeling more optimistic about the climate change crisis.

Students continue to believe that climate change is a problem, but, perhaps due to COVID-19, fewer say that it is a very serious problem right now.



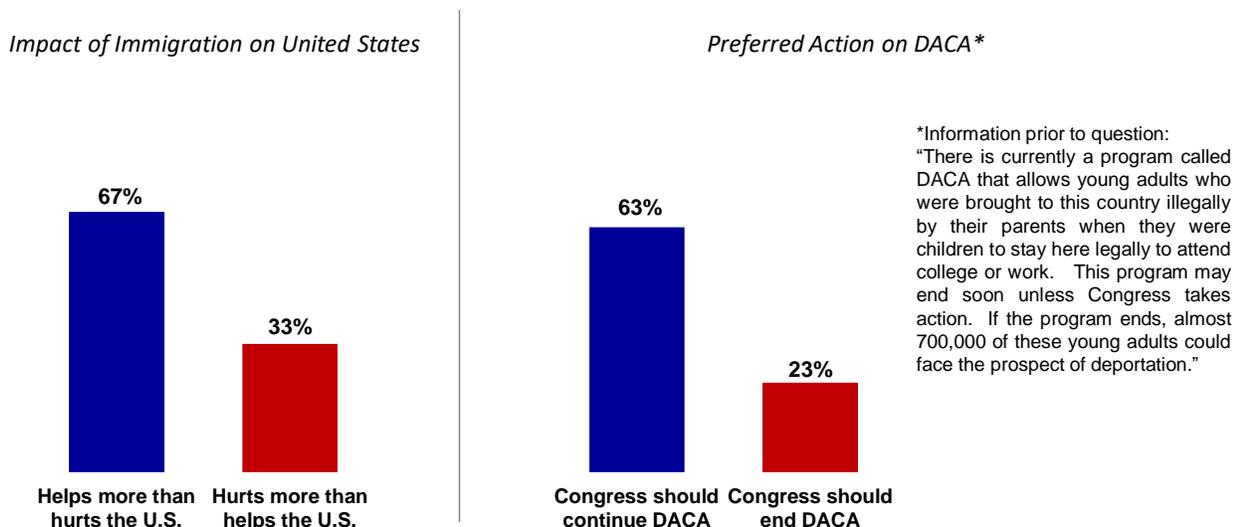
While climate change is a concern for most college students, the degree of concern varies by party and ideology. Nearly all Democrats (95%) say that climate change is a very or somewhat serious problem, while 64% of Republicans agree, a 31-point difference. Progressive or liberal students are very likely to see climate change as a serious or somewhat serious problem (96% and 93% respectively) as well as 90% of moderate students. Among conservative students, the proportion who say climate change is a very or somewhat serious issue drops to 61%.

Immigration

On the topic of immigration, students remain favorable. As seen in previous iterations of this poll, students believe that immigration helps the United States more than it hurts it by 67% to 33%. Partisanship again divides college students in their thinking on this issue. Democrats are far more likely to think immigration helps more than it hurts (78%) than are Republicans (49%), a nearly 30-point difference. Independents remain squarely in the middle with 66% saying immigration helps more than it hurts the country. Among those who will vote to reelect President Trump in November, 51% think immigration hurts the United States more than it helps it. When asked about DACA, a policy that directly impacts the lives of their peers, 63%

of students said they support the DACA program and say Congress should vote to continue the program. Party affiliation again divides students on this topic. Just 46% of Republicans support DACA while 76% of Democrats support the program, a 30-percentage-point difference.

More than three in five students believe that immigration helps more than it hurts and support Congress continuing DACA.



While overall a majority see immigration positively, there are differences among students who live in different regions of the United States. Students who live in the South are less likely than those who live in other regions to believe that immigration helps more than it hurts the United States. Sixty percent (60%) of Southerners say it helps more than it hurts, 10 points less than students in all other regions of the United States.

Similar to immigration generally, region affects students' views of the DACA program specifically. While 57% of students in the South support DACA and the continuation of the program, this is six percentage points less than support among students in the Midwest (63%). Students in the West and the Northeast are even more likely than students in other regions to support the program (67% and 69% respectively).

VII. Public Service

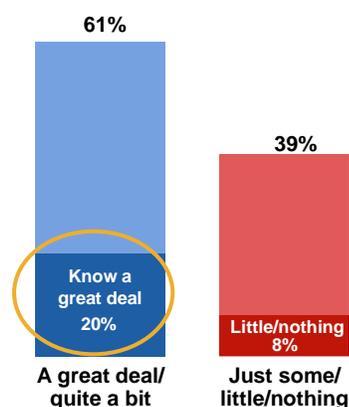
Students continue to be confident in their own knowledge of democracy and government, and most report taking classes on these subjects. While many students are interested in running for public office or working for the government, men continue to express higher levels of interest than women, despite the spike in women running for office and winning elections. COVID-19 has changed student's plans for their future. This year's poll shows an increase in the number of students interested in service-oriented programs like Teach for America or in programs that would provide financial assistance for college in exchange for national service after graduation. Over half of students express an interest in a program that would provide financial assistance in exchange for work in healthcare or as a frontline responder. Fewer students than in previous years are interested in working in the private sector or in nonprofits, and many students are interested in jobs that allow them to work from home or address big issues such as climate change and public health.

Civic Knowledge

Students are confident in their own and their peer's knowledge of democracy and government. Most students (79%) report taking classes on democracy, government, and their role as a citizen. Students across all areas of study from business (79%) to the sciences, math, and computer science (80%) report taking these classes. Three in five students (61%) say that they know a great deal, or quite a bit about our democracy, government, and how to be a good citizen, with 20% saying they know a great deal. Those studying the

social sciences and humanities are the most confident in their knowledge, with over 70% saying they know a great deal or quite a bit. Students of the sciences, math, and computer science are less confident with 58% saying they have high knowledge

How much do you know about our democracy, government, and how to be a good citizen?



of democracy and government despite taking classes on the subject. College students are less confident that their peers know as much as they personally do: 42% say that most college students know a great deal or quite a bit about our democracy, government, and how to be a good citizen.

Public Service

More than two in five college students (44%) say they would be very or fairly interested in working for the government. Interest in running for public office remains steady, with 35% indicating interest in running for federal elected office, and 37% indicating interest in running for local or state elected offices. Nearly half (48%) of students report that someone has spoken with them about getting involved in politics or public service during their time as a high school or college student.

Despite record numbers of women running in and winning elections in the past three years, interest in running for office and even working in government is still sharply divided by gender. While 43% of men say they would be interested in running for a federal elected office, such as a member of Congress or a senator, just 28% of women are interested in running, a 15-point gender gap. This gap grows when students are asked about running for local or state elected office such as city council member or state legislator. Nearly half of men (48%) express interest compared with just 28% of women. Roughly equal numbers of men and women report having spoken with someone about getting involved in politics or public service; exactly half of men and 46% of women report having such a conversation. Men are even more likely than women (47% to 42%) to express an interest in working for the government, not necessarily running for public office.

National and Community Service

Generally, students show a strong interest in service and bettering their community. This year, students continue to be active in their local community, with 67% saying they volunteer their time to help serve their community. They report an increased interest in pursuing service-oriented experiences after college, such as

Teach for America, VISA, or AmeriCorps. A third of all students are interested in this path, the highest number seen in this poll since 2015. Those thinking most immediately about their post-college future, seniors, report the highest interest. Forty-two percent (42%) say they have considered pursuing a service-oriented experience. Students of the humanities and social sciences are more likely than their peers studying business or the sciences to consider a service-oriented career.

As in previous years, almost two-thirds of students express an interest in entering programs that provide them financial assistance with college in exchange for two years of national service after they graduate. Seniors are the most interested, with 68% saying they would be very or fairly interested. Equal shares of Democrats and Republicans (60%) are interested in such a program, and 82% of students who are very interested in government work would also be interested in such a program.

Majorities of college students are interested in national service programs for public service, and specifically in a program addressing healthcare and frontline responders.

Interest in a program that provides a grant or financial assistance to help pay for college tuition in exchange for **two years of national service** after you graduate, such as **teaching, serving in the military, or another form of national service**:



Interest in a program that provides a grant or financial assistance to help pay your college tuition in **exchange for work in programs** directly related to dealing with **healthcare or frontline responders**:



The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced the lives of students and how they think about their future. Of those who say that they will change their career or profession due to the coronavirus pandemic, 74% say they would be very or fairly interested in such a program. This year, students were asked if they would be interested in a program that provides them with a grant or financial assistance in exchange for work in programs that are directly related to dealing with healthcare or

frontline responders. Nearly three in five students (57%) report being interested in entering a program like this. Among those who say they would change their career or profession due to the coronavirus pandemic, 73% say they would be interested in a program like this.

As much of the workforce is required now to work from home, a majority (61%) of students say they would be interested in working in a job that allows them to work from home, and as many as 70% of students who said they would change their career due to the pandemic express interest in a job where they can work from home. Roughly two in five (41%) students express an interest in working in public health, and want to work in a job that is considered essential in dealing with the coronavirus (39%). Interest in working in the private sector dipped to 50%, the lowest percentage seen in the past eight years of this poll, and interest in working for a not-for-profit community organization or foundation fell to 43%, a nine-percentage-point drop from 2019.

Students express a strong interest in working for the government, with 44% saying they would be very or fairly interested. Republican students express the highest level of interest (49%) compared with 43% of Democrats, and 41% of independents. Over half (58%) of students who will change their career as a result of the pandemic are interested in working for the government. As climate change remains a top issue in the minds of students, 43% of students express interest in working in a job that addresses climate change. This is highest among Democrats (52%) while just 28% of Republicans express the same interest. Interest in serving in the military is at an all-time high with 24% of students expressing interest, a five-point increase from the 2019 poll. Students who express the most interest in serving in the military include Republicans (31%), students studying math and the sciences (30%), and those who say they will change their career because of the pandemic (42%).

VIII. Media Consumption

Social media and the Internet continue to have a profound role in the majority of students' lives. From frequently using it throughout the day for personal use to depending on it for political news, it is very apparent that social media has taken the place of once-dominant platforms such as television, newspapers, and even Internet news sources.

Use of Social Media

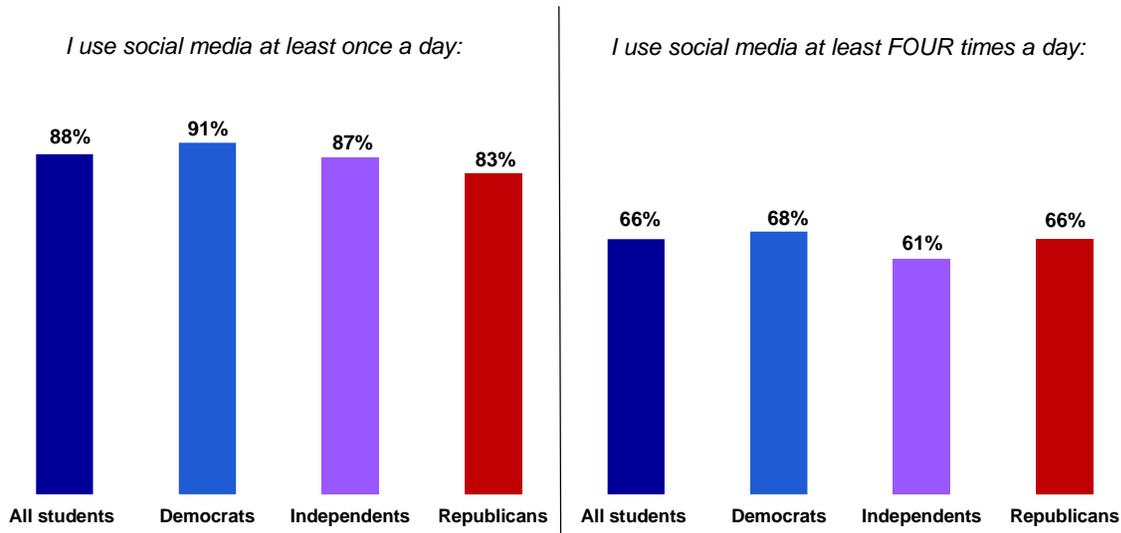
To get a clear idea of how significant social media is for college students, 88% of college students say they use it more than once a day, and among those who use it, 66% say they use their social media accounts four times a day or more. Similar levels of usage are seen for Democrats, independents, and Republicans.

With that high frequency of usage, it should not be surprising that media consumption through social media continues to be the top source on politics and civic affairs for students, with 46% once again saying they rely on this source the most. Internet news websites followed closely last year at 43%, but with the introduction of "National newspaper or its website" as an alternative option to distinguish online only news and national newspaper sources, the percentage significantly dropped to 29%. The 14% drop can likely be linked to the 16% who cite this source as the one they rely on the most. With this shift in top sources, the second top media consumption source is television, remaining steady at 36% while reliance on family and friends slightly rose to 31%.

Underscoring the continued rise of social media, the proportion of college students who have an Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter account has increased since 2018. And a majority of college students (54%) report that they have an account on the relatively new platform, TikTok. However, Facebook is the only social media platform that has dropped in the share of college students who use it, falling from 83% who said they had an account in 2019 to 73% this year. And first-year students are the least likely to have a Facebook account (68%).

Outside of social media, two other notable developments are the increase in the use of a personal assistant device like Alexa or Google Home, rising 13 points from last year to 48%, and a 10-point increase since 2018 in the proportion of students who have an online or hard copy subscription to a newspaper (30%).

Use of Social Media—by Party ID



Interestingly, when it comes to highly trusting each of these sources for political and civic affairs news, the ranking is inverted as national newspapers (53%), television news (44%), and the city newspaper (43%) (all traditional media sources) hold the top three spots, while social media (24%) is among the least trusted sources.

Social Media as a Source for Political Information

When it comes to usage of each of these sources for political information, a majority of college students (62%) say they use social media once a day or more as a source for political and civic news. And, once again, social media leads above all other sources, in this case by 18 points. Students use social media more frequently than their family or friends (44%) and television news (40%). However, students are wary of the information they get from it, as they cite it as one of their least trusted sources for political news. And even dominant social media giants like Facebook are susceptible to falling out of popularity, as it is the only social media

platform to have lost usage this year. It should also be noted that, though their reliance on traditional forms of media has decreased, a majority say they trust traditional media sources of information above any social media platforms. So while social media has overtaken traditional media in many ways, students are wary of what comes out of social media platforms and are not hesitant to switch to another platform if it does not meet their needs.

Sources of Information About Politics and Civic Affairs

