



2022 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; views on the impact of COVID, both on and off campus; and personal career expectations.

Over the course of twenty-two years, the Panetta Institute's nationwide poll of college students has become a highly respected source of information for academics, researchers, political scientists, policymakers, and journalists interested in analyzing two decades of collected data. Given the continuity and depth of the survey, scholars and political campaigns find the Panetta Institute's poll to be one of best barometers for measuring college students' opinions.

This year's survey measures attitudes of college students at a potentially transformative moment in time, as concerns about COVID-19 recede and there is an increasing focus on the economy, specifically the cost of living. This report is based on online interviews with a representative sampling of 801 students at four-year colleges across the country, taken from April 26 to May 3, 2022.

Methodology

Hart Research contracted with an online survey vendor to administer the survey to students who are enrolled in four-year, higher-learning institutions. The screening sample was drawn from the vendor's multi-million-member respondent panel. A total of 801 interviews were completed online. All interviews were conducted from April 26 to May 3, 2022. Some demographics were weighted to achieve representative samples of four-year college students nationwide.

Key Findings

Key findings from this year's survey show:

The mood of college students has turned much more negative in the past year. There has been a precipitous drop in the proportion of students who believe the country is headed in the right direction, as well as a drop in confidence in the future of the country. More ominously, while college students are typically optimistic about their own future, this survey marks the first time they do not believe they will be better off financially than their parents.

- Thirty-four percent (34%) now say the country is headed in the right direction, a drop from 55% in 2021.
- Twenty-seven percent (27%) report that they are more confident and secure about the future of the country, down from 42% who felt this way last year.
- With economic concerns overshadowing all other issues facing college students, this marks the first time going back to 2004 when we cannot report college students having a more optimistic view in terms of being better off than their parents financially (36% say better off, 36% say worse off).

Not only has the country’s mood darkened over the past year, but so have attitudes toward Joe Biden. The President’s professional and personal ratings have both declined significantly, and with the economy topping the list, college students believe that in most areas, he is either not making a difference on issues facing the country or is making things worse.

- A year ago, Joe Biden’s job rating as president stood at 71%, now it is 52%.
- His personal ratings have gone from net positive in 2021 (51% positive, 30% negative) to net negative (34% positive, 44% negative).
- On economic issues, which are far and away the most important issue for college students, they evaluate Biden’s impact as making things worse rather than making things better.
- Sixty-five percent (65%) of Democrats and independents prefer that the Democratic Party nominate another candidate for president in 2024.

COVID’s impact remains profound, but college students, like the rest of the country, have turned their focus to the economy. However, while students remain mostly satisfied with how their school has handled the pandemic and have increased acceptance of virtual classes, COVID still has changed their college experience in many ways.

- In 2020, 63% of college students said they were more concerned about COVID than the economy (37%). Now, 72% say that the state of the economy concerns them more than COVID.
- Fifty-nine percent (59%) say the worst of COVID is behind us.
- Yet, its impact hangs over college students – 66% still say that COVID has changed their life in a very or fairly major way.
 - 42% have lost significant income due to COVID.
 - 32% have lost a close friend or family member due to COVID.
- Seventy-six percent (76%) are satisfied with how their school has dealt with COVID (83% in 2020).
- Forty-six percent (46%) believe that online classes offer the same quality as in person classes (up from 26% in 2012).

Views on the economy have turned sharply negative, with a focus on prices driving the downturn. College students are most concerned about inflation and the cost of living, and so their ratings on the nation’s economy, both currently and in the next 12 months have plummeted.

- Three in five college students (60%) say that dealing with inflation and the cost of living is the most important issue for them personally, with no other issue coming close in importance.
- Just 31% of college students say the nation's economy is excellent or good, down from 47% in 2021.
- Forty-eight percent (48%) believe the economy will get worse during the next 12 months, a 17-point increase from 2021.

Still, students remain confident in their own ability to find a job after college. However, they remain worried about finding a **well-paying** job. And college students place much greater import in a job that pays a good salary than they did a generation ago, while they are less likely to feel the same way about a job that is interesting and challenging.

- Seventy-five percent (75%) are very or fairly confident in their ability to find a job that is acceptable to them.
- But 71% worry very often or somewhat often about finding a well-paying job.
- Interest in the private sector remains higher than other industries, but roughly 2 in 5 college students remain interested in working in public health (42%) or government (38%).
- The most important quality that students are looking for in a job is one that pays a good salary or wages (with fully 52% saying this is extremely important, and up from 25% in 2005). Conversely, students are less likely to feel that a job that involves work that is interesting and challenging is extremely important (from 45% who said extremely important in 2005 down to 25% now).

Despite the tough national environment and their drop in support for Joe Biden, college students are supporting Democrats over Republicans for Congress at levels we have seen in the past. Students report motivation and focus on the election on par with prior years.

- In their vote for Congress, college students are voting for a Democratic candidate over a Republican candidate by 58% to 31%, close to their vote preference in 2020 and 2018.
- Forty-three percent (43%) describe their motivation to vote in the November elections as high (a bit lower than 2018: 46%).
- Sixty percent (60%) of students are paying a lot or some attention to the elections for Congress, again on par with 2018, which was a high-water mark (61%).

The Russian-Ukrainian war is a major focus of capitals, and while students may not prioritize the war as an issue, it has broken through on campus as well. College students are following the war closely and are concerned about the United States becoming involved directly militarily against Russia, which is something they want to avoid.

- Seventy-eight percent (78%) of college students are following the war closely, a higher degree of attention than COVID (73%), reports about the economy (58%), and this year's congressional elections (42%).

- Sixty-one percent (61%) believe that the United States will either be at war with Russia within the next year (51%) or is already at war with Russia now (10%).
- With that ominous view on the horizon, a plurality (46%) wants the United States to stay the course and remain as involved as it is now in the war between Ukraine and Russia, though sentiment is more on the side of becoming less (32%) rather than more (22%) involved.

On domestic and social issues, college students remain firm in their views that climate change is a serious problem, that immigration helps the United States more than it hurts, and that abortion should be legal. College students are passionate about climate change, and this is an area where they support policy measures that may hurt them financially in the short term but where they value the potential long-term benefits.

- Seventy-two percent (72%) believe immigration helps the United States more than it hurts (67% in 2020).
- Seventy-three percent (73%) (an all-time high) believe that abortion should be legal (up from 69%) in 2016. (The vast majority of interviewing was conducted prior to the May 2nd news of the draft Supreme Court ruling.)
- Eighty-nine percent (89%) of college students say that climate change is a very serious or somewhat serious problem (88% in 2021).
- Underscoring students' focus on the future, even as they are negatively impacted by high gas prices, students say by 64% to 36% that a long-term investment in clean energy is a greater priority than bringing gasoline prices down in the short term through increasing oil and gas production.

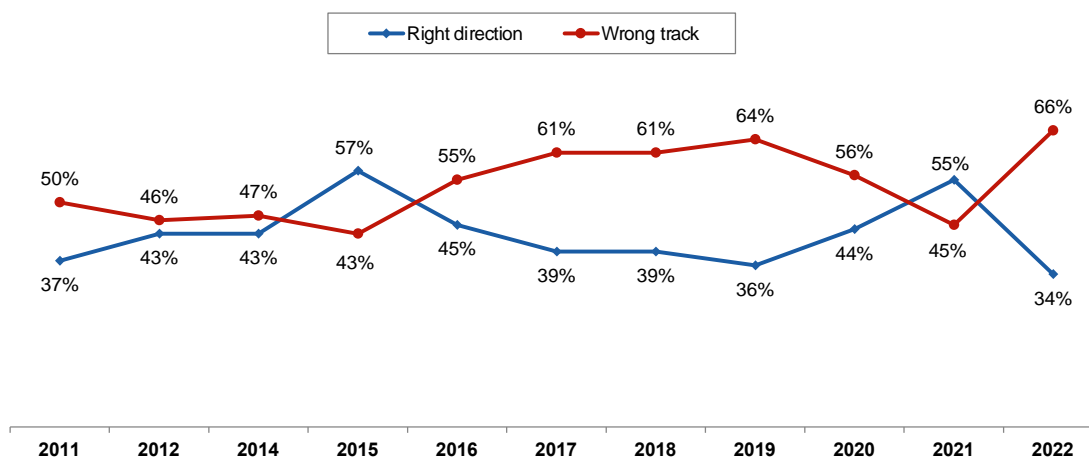
II. State of the Nation

One year ago, there were signs of hope and optimism on campus, with positive movement on several measures on the state of the nation, including right direction, which had been net negative since 2015. This sense of optimism has receded.

The 2021 survey marked the first time since 2015 that a majority of college students believed the country was headed in the right direction. Now, the mood on campus is net negative by nearly 2 to 1, with 66% of students saying the country is off on the wrong track, and just 34% believing America is heading in the right direction. The drop in right direction since last year is across the political spectrum, including Democrats (-24), independents (-24), and Republicans (-16).

After a brief reversal last year, college students once again are more likely to believe things in the nation are off on the wrong track.

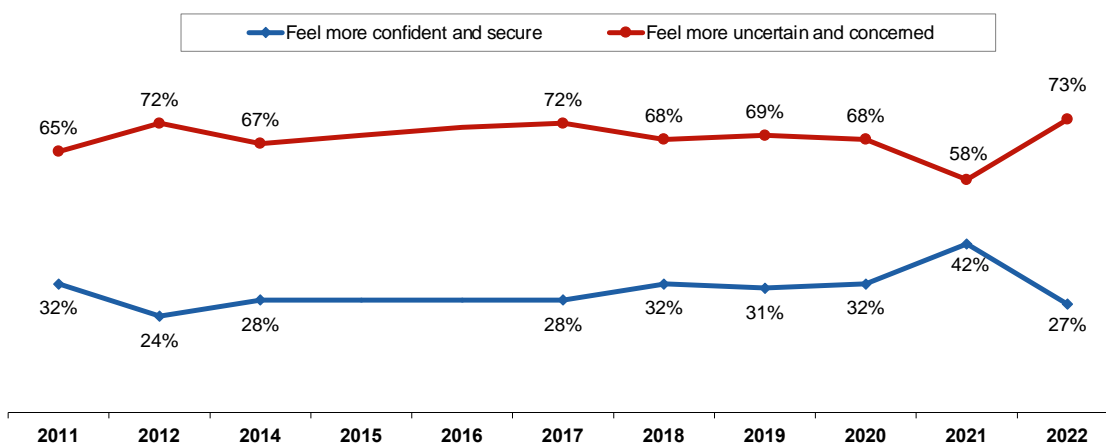
Assessment of the Nation's Direction



College students have also become much more pessimistic about the future of the country, and a record high proportion of students (73%) now are more uncertain and concerned about the country's future. This marks a 15-point increase from last year's survey, when the outlook had become much more positive. More than seven in ten Democrats (71%), independents (72%), and Republicans (79%) say that they are more uncertain and concerned about the future of the country.

College students have become much more uncertain and concerned about the future of the country after last year's improved outlook.

Expectations for the Future of the Country



While a majority of college students continue to believe that democracy in the United States is working well (58% compared to 57% in 2021 and 58% in 2020), 62% are worried about the future of democracy in the next 10 or 20 years. This concern is expressed nearly equally among both Republicans (63%) and Democrats (62%).

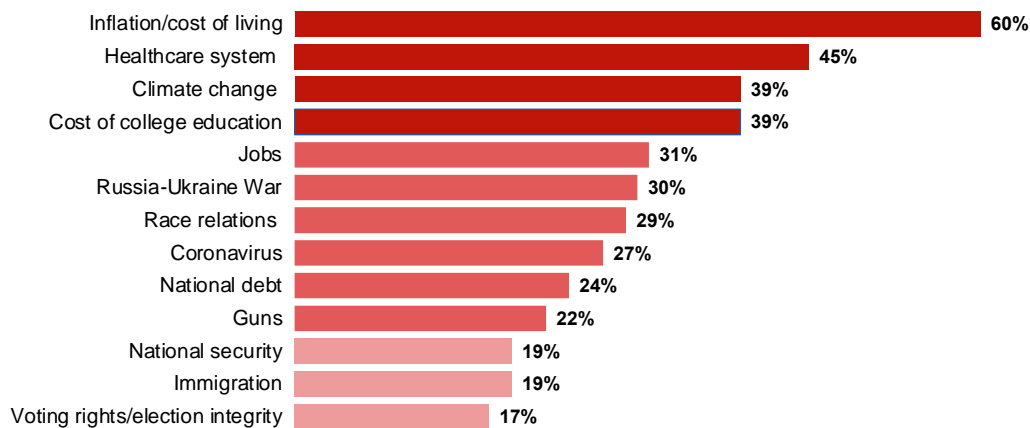
The Issue Agenda

Over the past two years, COVID-19 was the dominant issue facing the country, but while waves of the pandemic continue, college students' focus has turned to the economy, specifically to inflation and the cost of living.

Overall, 60% of college students say that dealing with inflation and the cost of living is one of the most important issues for them personally. No other issue comes close, with improving the healthcare system (45%), climate change (39%), and the cost of college (39%) in decidedly second-tier status. COVID-19, which has been the predominant issue facing the country, is now viewed as most important by 27% of college students, on par with race relations and the national debt (29% and 24% respectively). Cost of living is overwhelmingly the top issue of concern for Republicans (72%) and independents (62%), while for Democrats, the cost of living (54%) is joined by improving the healthcare system (52%) and addressing climate change (50%).

Inflation and the cost of living is the top issue for college students, followed by healthcare, climate change, and the cost of college.

FOUR Most Important Issues to Me Personally

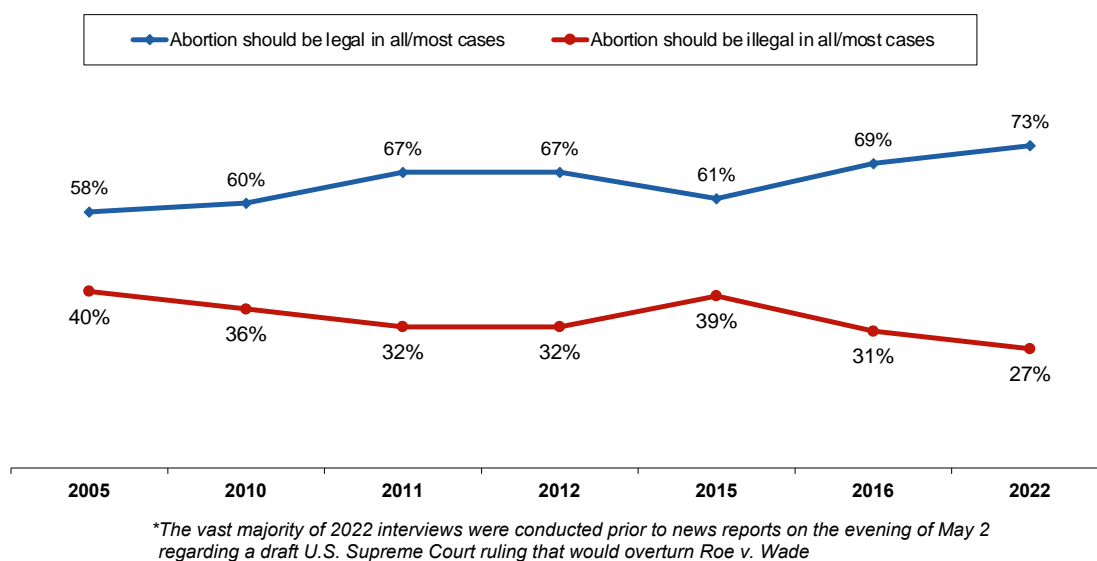


To further underscore the dramatic shift in priorities facing the country, when asked in the 2020 Panetta Institute survey to select which concerned them more about the country, college students chose COVID-19 over the state of the economy by 63% to 37%. Now, 72% say the state of the economy is the greater concern, while 28% chose COVID-19.

Abortion

A record high 73% of college students believe that abortion should be legal all or most of the time. While the vast majority of interviews for this year's survey were conducted prior to the leaked draft United States Supreme Court ruling that suggests that the court could overturn this constitutional right, the data here suggests that a final verdict from the Court expressing this opinion would not be well received on campus. Fully 77% of women and 68% of men believe that abortion should be legal, as well as 88% of Democrats and 68% of independents. A majority of Republicans (57%) believe that abortion should be illegal.

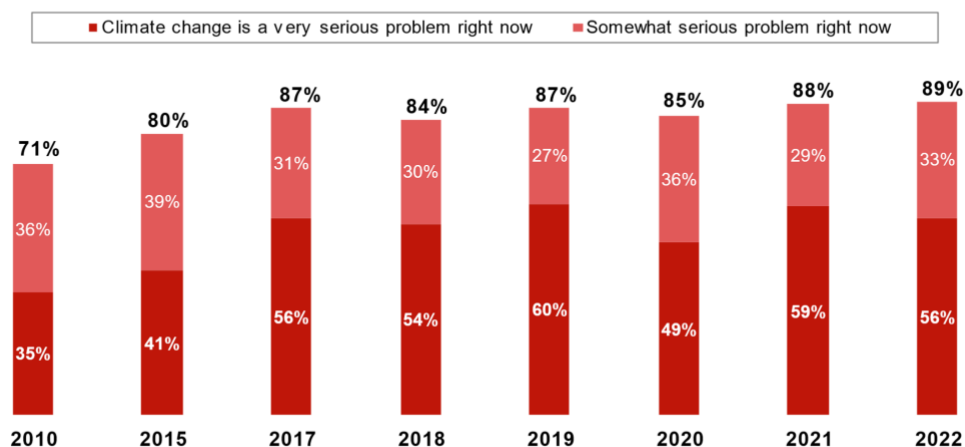
A record high proportion of college students believe that abortion should be legal.



Climate Change

College students are very focused on climate change, rating it as their second most important issue to address, (39%) and below only inflation and the cost of living (60%) and healthcare (45%). College students remain firm in their view that climate change is a serious problem with 89% of students believing that climate change is a very or somewhat serious problem right now and 56% saying it is a very serious problem. There are significant subgroup differences when looking at party identification. 72% of Democrats believe that climate change is a very serious problem, while only 20% of Republicans agree. Overall, 18% of Democrats cite climate change as their most important issue to them personally, with just 3% of Republicans sharing this view.

A record number of students believe that climate change is a problem right now.



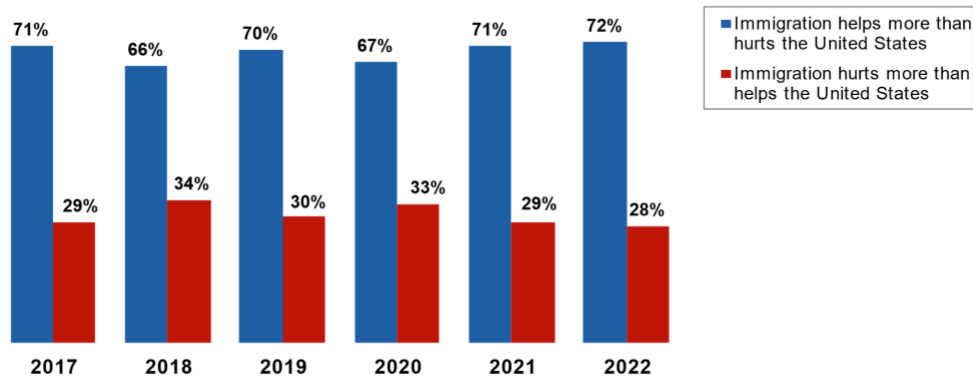
While the cost of living and gas prices are top concerns for college students, when it comes to addressing climate change, students are more focused on the future and making investments to address climate change. By 64% to 36%, students say that increasing investment in clean energy sources to become energy independent in the long term is a more important priority than bringing down gas prices in the short term. Majorities of Democrats (77%) and independents (62%) prioritize energy independence in the long term, while a majority of Republicans (63%) prioritize the short-term approach of bringing down gas prices.

Immigration

Seven in ten students (72%) believe that immigration helps the United States more than it hurts, which is a record high on this measure. There are significant differences across campus, with 83% of Democrats and 72% of independents taking the view that immigration helps, while Republicans are split with 55% believing it hurts more than it helps and 45% stating it helps more than it hurts.

Seven in 10 college students say that immigration helps more than it hurts.

Impact of Immigration on the United States



While students may take different points of view about America’s involvement internationally, these views do not carry over to views on immigration. In fact, among students who do not want the United States to be engaged internationally, 74% say that immigration helps more than it hurts, which is an even higher proportion than those who want the United States to take a leadership role (68%).

III. International Issues

Broadly, college students continue to see problems facing their generation as being more national than international in scope. And students also prefer that America engage in world affairs, but not in a leadership role. Despite this, students are following the war between Russia and Ukraine closely, though they prefer the United States not to become more involved.

A majority of college students want the United States to be engaged in the world, but not in a leadership role, with this proportion increasing from 48% to 57% over the past year, and since Russia’s actions against Ukraine. There has been a 9 point drop over this year among those who want the United States to take a leadership role, while a steady 13% believe the United States should not be engaged at all.

There has also been an impact on students’ perceptions on America’s involvement in world affairs. Most want the United States to stay the course in its level of involvement in world affairs broadly (56%) with a near even split between those who want the United States to be more active (22%) or less active (23%). In

2017 31% of students wanted the United States to become less active with 18% encouraging more action in world affairs by the United States.

United States Involvement in World Affairs			
	Become MORE active	Stay as active	Become LESS active
	%	%	%
All College Students	22	56	23
Democrats	24	54	21
Independents	18	57	24
Republicans	20	56	23
Biden voters	29	55	16
Trump voters	18	55	27

Russia and Ukraine

The Russian-Ukrainian war is a major focus of governments, and while students may not prioritize the war as an issue, it has broken through on campus as well. The war has caused students to reconsider the relationship between Russia and the United States. Despite the war, students' beliefs about United States' involvement in world affairs has been consistent with a preference for the United States to be involved, but not as a leader.

Students believe that Russia has become the largest threat to the United States (40%). More than three in four students (78%) are following the war closely which is drawing a higher degree of attention than COVID (73%), the economy (58%) and this year's congressional elections (42%). However, when students prioritize issues that matter to them, they are more focused closer to home and are more likely to mention domestic issues like the cost of living ahead of the war. The war has not fundamentally changed views among students as to whether challenges facing their generation are more likely to be national (54%) than international (46%) in scope.

Still, college students believe that the war between Russia and Ukraine has the potential to significantly impact both international relations and domestic life. Fully 93% believe that it is likely that the war will increase the costs of goods and services like gasoline, 72% say it is likely that the United States will be hit by a cyber-attack from Russia, 70% say the United States will send combat troops into Ukraine, and 58% believe the war will involve nuclear weapons. Not only do majorities believe each of these is likely to occur, but at a time when agreement across partisan lines is rare, majorities of Democrats, independents, and Republicans believe each of these events is likely to occur.

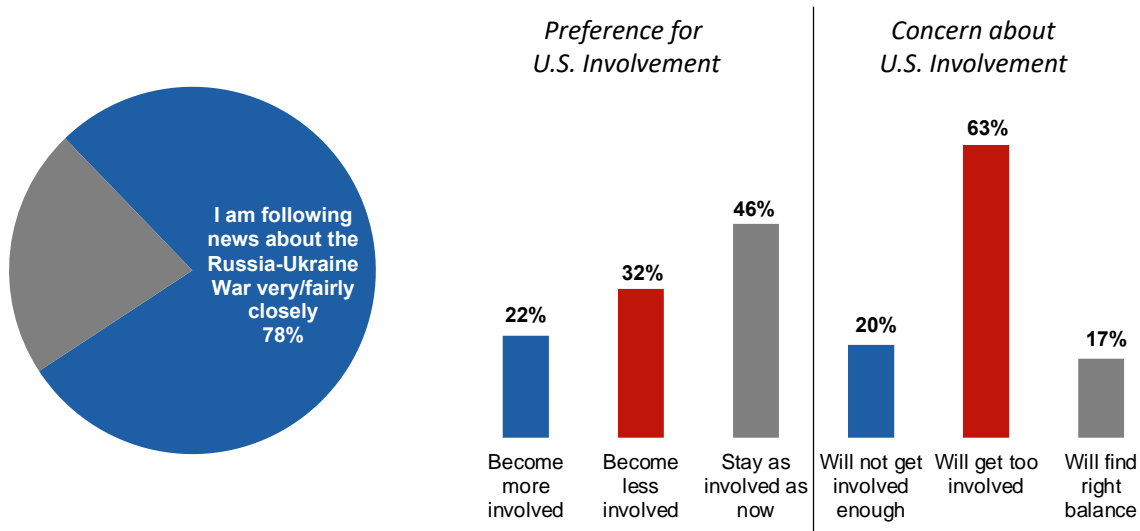
How Likely are the Following to Happen due to the War Between Russia and Ukraine?

Proportion who says Extremely or Somewhat Likely to Happen

	All College			
	<u>Students</u> %	<u>Democrats</u> %	<u>Independents</u> %	<u>Republicans</u> %
The costs of goods and services like gasoline will increase	93	93	93	95
The United States will be hit by a major cyber-attack from Russia	72	71	67	77
The United States will send American combat troops to fight in Ukraine	70	69	71	69
The war will involve nuclear weapons	58	61	57	54

Students do see the war as shifting our international concerns, with 40% now viewing Russia as the greatest threat to the United States internationally, up from just 13% last year. And 61% of students believe that the United States will either be at war with Russia within the next year (51%) or is already at war with Russia now (10%). With that ominous view on the horizon, a plurality (46%) wants the United States to stay the course and remain as involved as it is now in the war between Ukraine and Russia, though sentiment is more on the side of becoming less (32%) rather than more (22%) involved.

College students are paying attention to the war between Ukraine and Russia, but do not want the United States to get more involved.



IV. The Political Landscape

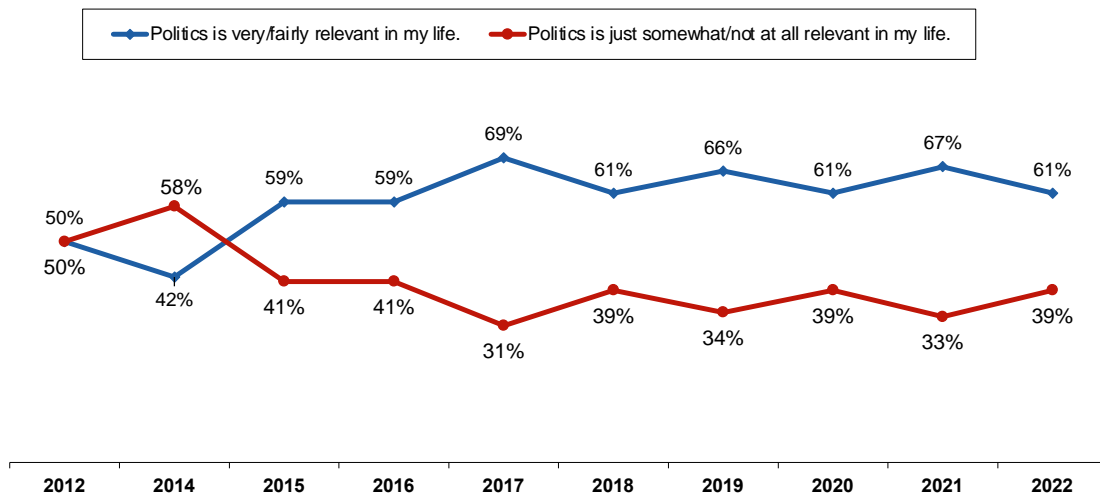
Most college students continue to believe that politics is relevant to their life, but their satisfaction with the country's political leadership has dropped precipitously in just a year. Attitudes toward Joe Biden have fallen a year into his presidency, with college students indicating disappointment that many of the expectations they had for the Biden presidency have yet to be fulfilled. Still, college students continue to support Democrats in the midterm elections, though there are warning signs for Democrats in that Republicans on campus are more motivated than college Democrats to vote this November.

Politics & Elections

Three in five college students (61%), believe that politics is very (16%) or fairly (45%) relevant to their life. Republicans are slightly more likely than Democrats to say that politics is relevant in their life (69% and 65% respectively), while independents are less likely to feel this way (47%). While this marks a decline from last year's survey (67%), since 2017, at least 61% of college students in each survey believe that politics is relevant, which marks an increase from earlier surveys. Since 2017, on average, 64% of students have said that politics is relevant in their life, compared to 54% on average from surveys conducted from

2004 to 2016.

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



When asked which party is better at being relevant and understanding their needs, college students are twice as likely to say the Democratic Party is better than the Republican Party (35% to 17%), but it is telling that 24% of students say that neither party is good at being relevant to their needs. Among independents, 34% say that neither party is good on this measure, compared to just 13% who say the Democratic Party is better and 12% who say the Republican Party is better.

Satisfaction with the quality of the country's political leadership has also declined from last year, and this drop is more dramatic. In 2021, a majority of college students (54%) reported that they were satisfied with the country's political leadership, the highest level recorded going back to 2011 (56%). In this year's survey, just 41% of college students are satisfied, including 51% of Democrats, 37% of independents, and 23% of Republicans. While the decline in satisfaction among Republicans is just 5 points from last year, satisfaction among independents has dropped by 15 points, and 17 points among Democrats.

The level of dissatisfaction with the country's political leadership on campus is shared across party lines, but much more so with Democrats than Republicans, with a majority of Democrats preferring that the Democratic Party nominate another candidate for president than Joe Biden in 2024 (63%). And Biden's personal ratings among Democrats are just OK (50% positive, 26% negative). Meanwhile, a majority of Republicans do prefer that the Republican Party nominate Donald Trump (59%), but two in five Republicans (41%) prefer another nominee to Trump. Trump's personal ratings among Republicans are much better than Biden's are with Democrats (69% positive, 13% negative).

College students who identify as either Republicans or Democrats were asked to characterize those who identify the other major political party more as political opponents with whom compromise is possible, or a party that is overly dependent on their extreme base for support. Underscoring the challenges and political polarization facing the country, majorities of Republicans and Democrats take the view that the other party is overly dependent on their extreme base (58% of Republicans view Democrats this way, 70% of Democrats view Republicans this way).

And while 74% of college students overall believe that Joe Biden won the 2020 presidential election legitimately, including 93% of Democrats and 66% of independents, just 37% of Republicans believe this to be the case.

There is no national political figure tested in the survey for which college students have more positive than negative feelings. The Democratic Party is the only entity measured in this year's survey with net positive ratings, but just by 3 points (37% positive, 34% negative), and this is despite a majority of college students identifying as Democrats (52%). Comparatively, college students are more than twice as likely to view the Republican Party as negative than positive (24% positive, 53% negative).

Feelings toward Selected Public Figures and Institutions

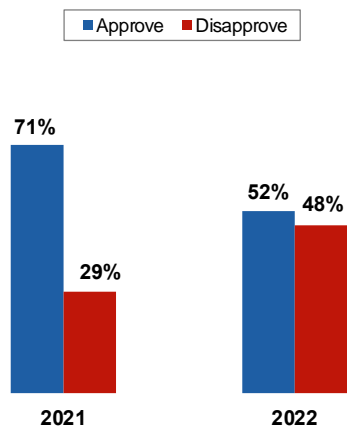
	<u>Positive</u> %	<u>Negative</u> %	<u>Differential</u> ±
The Democratic Party	37	34	+3
Kamala Harris	32	41	-9
Chuck Schumer	12	21	-9
Joe Biden	34	44	-10
Kevin McCarthy	10	20	-20
Nancy Pelosi	18	44	-26
Mitch McConnell	12	39	-27
The Republican Party	24	53	-29
Donald Trump	26	61	-35

President Biden

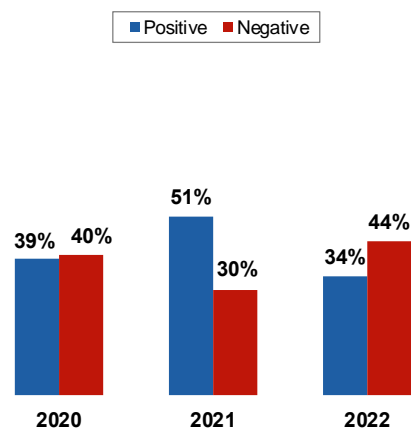
Joe Biden's job rating as president has declined in just one year from 71% to 52% among college students. And students are now more likely to feel negative than positive toward Joe Biden personally (34% positive, 44% negative), a stark contrast to positive feelings toward Biden on campus in last year's survey (51% positive, 30% negative) conducted during the first months of the Biden presidency. Biden's current standing is similar to his position in 2020, during the presidential nomination period when he was running against Bernie Sanders.

A year into his presidency, Joe Biden's job rating has declined, and college students view him negatively personally.

Joe Biden's Job Performance as President



Feelings toward Joe Biden



The decline on Biden's job rating as president from last year is really across the board, with double digit decreases among Democrats (-20), independents (-16), and Republicans (-19), as well as with women (-22) and men (-15).

Joe Biden Presidential Job Rating			
	2021		
	Approve	Approve	Disapprove
	%	%	%
All students	71	52	48
Men	62	47	52
Women	77	55	45
White students	63	42	58
Black students	80	66	34
Latinx students	73	59	41
Asian American students	83	67	33
Social class: upper-middle/upper	70	54	46
Social class: middle	69	52	48
Social class: lower/lower-middle	73	50	50
Democrats	90	70	30
Independents	63	47	53
Republicans	36	17	83
Economy: Excellent/good	80	78	22
Economy: Not so good/poor	61	41	59
State school	73	51	49
Private school	61	54	46

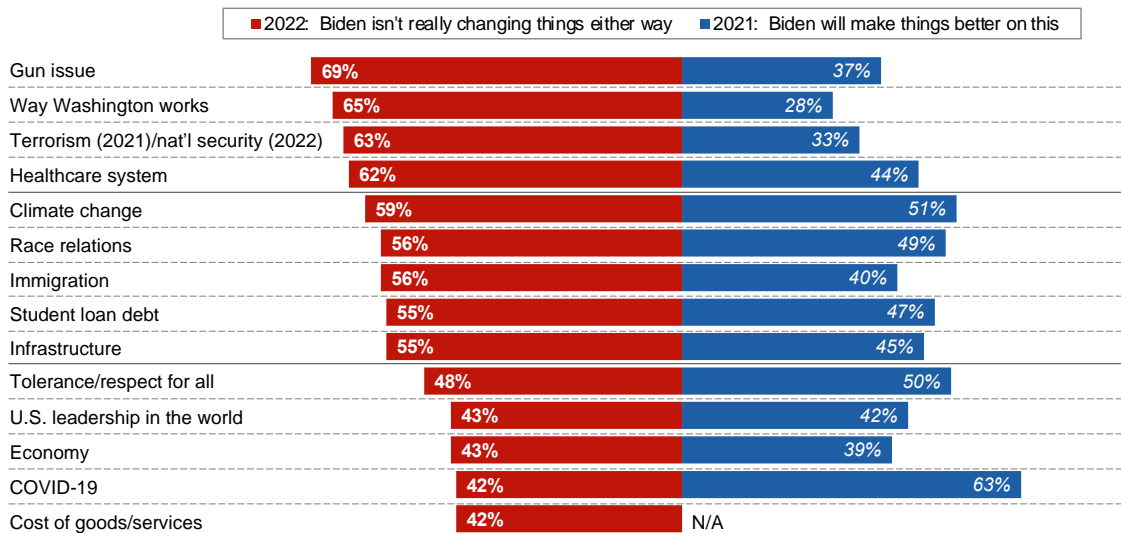
Perceptions on campus of President Biden are more mixed than overly negative, but just 4% of students describe feeling strong and confident about Biden as president, while 36% are satisfied, and a plurality (45%) say they are uncertain and disappointed. Still, among a group that voted overwhelmingly for Joe Biden in the 2020 presidential election, it is alarming that 15% feel pessimistic and frustrated with Biden as president.

The disappointment about the reality of the Biden presidency compared to the promise of what college students were hoping for last year is clear in a parallel question that was asked in both studies. Last year, many students were hopeful that Biden would make things better in the country in a number of areas, most notably on COVID-19. While Biden does receive his best marks on dealing with COVID (42% believe he has made things better, 42% not really changing things either way, 17% making things worse), these are his best ratings on any measurement, and there is not one area where a majority of students believe Biden is making things better.

Biden receives his lowest ratings on economic concerns, the most important issue facing the country today. By 42% to 15% students say Biden is making things worse on the economy overall (43% not really changing things either way). And on dealing with the cost of goods and services like gasoline and groceries, 46% of students say Biden is making things worse, only 13% say he is making things better.

Still, on most issues, the criticism of Biden is not that he is making things worse, it is more that he is not making a difference either way.

This year, the reality of the Biden presidency has not met the promise of college students' expectations last year.



College students also were provided the opportunity to say what message they would deliver to President Biden. The following verbatim responses encapsulate some of the common themes that students focused on in their notes, centering on appreciating some of his efforts, but hoping for much more, particularly on financial issues broadly, and specifically on the cost of college, and generally delivering on campaign promises that have yet to be fulfilled.

“President Biden deliver on your promises.”

“I would go more in detail about my message about the economy. We need to lower the cost of groceries and the cost of living in areas of the U.S. There are many people who are having troubles with finances and finding a place to live. Prices are steadily rising and something needs to be done.”

“That the state of the economy needs work and it needs to happen soon.”

“You relied on us young people to win the election. You needed our votes and are doing nothing to help us economically or financially. Inflation has soared, minimum wage is the same, hardly any student debt has been relieved, housing rates continue to be unsustainable. I could go on.”

“Please follow through on your campaign promises; we elected you to reverse the damages that were done from 2016-2020 and we have yet to

see the reversal. Free 2-year college, immigration reform, canceling student debt. You have so much power and ability in your hands, use it."

"I would ask him to do more to help our next generation of students to keep them from paying high, unfair tuition."

"He isn't leading the country, the people need someone to look up to and he isn't that."

The 2022 Elections

Despite college students expressing their disappointment in the Biden administration based on the expectations that they had, they are not taking this out on Democrats in the midterm elections. In fact, students are more likely to say their vote for Congress in November will be to send a signal of support for Biden than a vote of opposition (34% to 26%), while 40% say it will not be a signal either way. However, Republicans are more motivated to send a signal of opposition to Biden than Democrats are in their intention to send a signal of support (66% and 53% respectively). Independents are much more likely to say their vote will not be a signal either way on Biden (58%) but are slightly more likely to say their vote will be to send a signal of opposition than support to Biden (23% to 19%).

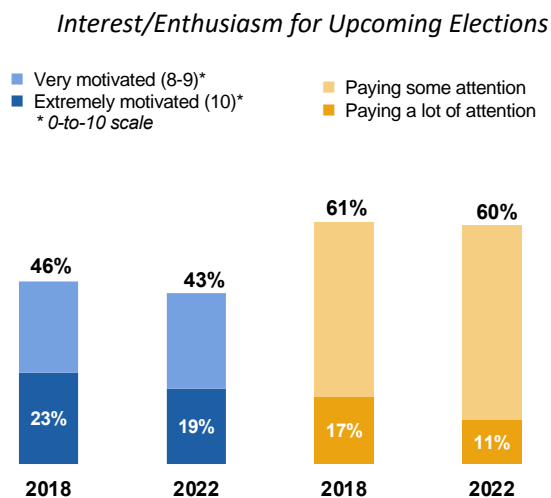
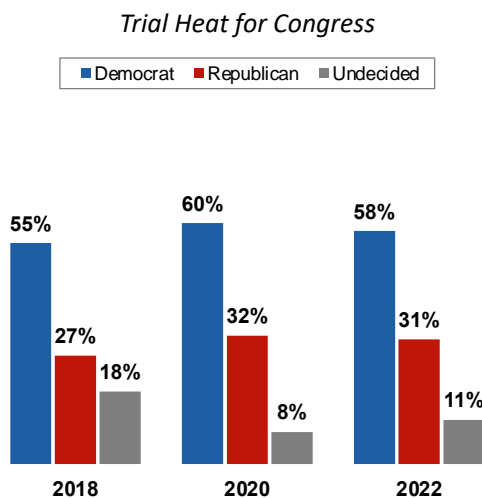
Nearly six in ten college students (58%) say they are planning to vote for the Democratic candidate for Congress in November, while 31% say they plan to vote for the Republican candidate in their district. This is on par with the Democratic advantage in 2020, when 60% of students planned to vote for the Democratic candidate and 32% for the Republican.

Nine in ten Democrats and Republicans (91% for each) plan to vote for their party's candidate for Congress, while independents favor the Democratic candidate by a 37% to 30% margin. Perceptions of the economy do have an impact on congressional vote, as those who rate the economy as excellent or good are more likely to vote for the Democratic candidate (71% Democratic candidate, 17% Republican candidate) than are those who view the economy as not-so-good or poor (53% Democratic candidate, 36% Republican candidate).

Preference for Congress			
	Democratic candidate %	Republican candidate %	Differential
All students	58	31	D+27
Men	51	36	D+15
Women	63	27	D+36
White students	51	38	D+13
Black students	71	15	D+56
Latinx students	68	23	D+45
Asian American students	59	27	D+32
Democrats	91	5	D+86
Independents	37	30	D+7
Republicans	6	91	R+85
Economy: Excellent/good	71	17	D+54
Economy: Not so good/poor	53	36	D+17
Biden approve	79	11	D+68
Biden disapprove	36	51	R+15

One encouraging sign for Republicans, and a note of caution for Democrats, is that Republican college students are more motivated to vote in the midterm elections than are Democrats (54% of Republicans say they are an “8” or higher on the motivation scale compared to 44% for Democrats). And Republicans are also more likely than Democrats to be paying close attention to the elections (68% to 59%).

Despite more negative attitudes toward President Biden, college students prefer Democrats to control Congress and are as motivated to vote as they have been in prior elections.



V. Impact of the Coronavirus

Even while the COVID-19 pandemic has become less of an issue to address overall, it continues to impact the lives of college students across the United States. And the pandemic's impact has redefined the new normal on campus and changed their college experience in many ways.

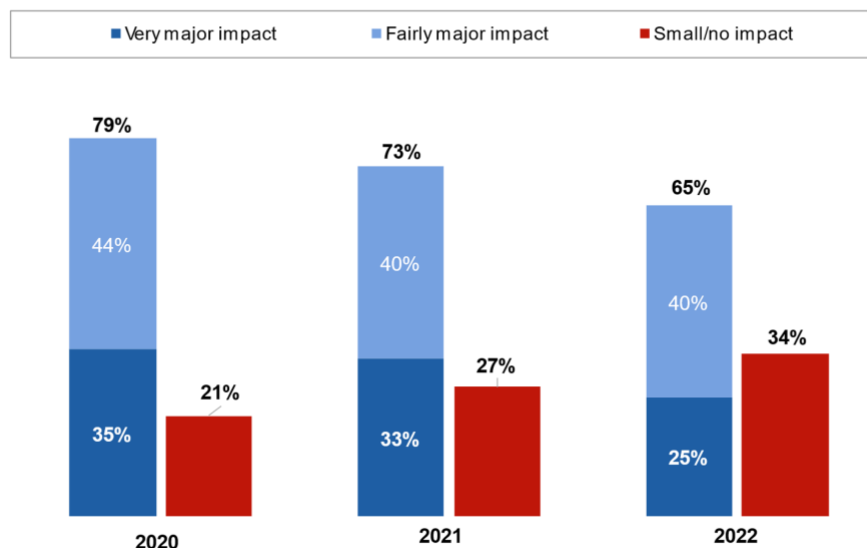
Personal Impact of the Coronavirus

The ongoing pandemic has altered the lives of many college students in the United States. With more uncertainty surrounding the economy, two in five college students (42%) report a loss of significant family income due to COVID19 over the past year. Black and Hispanic students are more likely to have experienced a significant loss in income (55% and 52% respectively).

Forty-one percent (41%) of those who reported losing a significant amount of income also reported losing a friend or family member as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is compared to 32% of college students overall having lost a close friend or family member due to the pandemic. Again, we see Black (43%) and Hispanic (42%) students having lost more as a result of the pandemic than students overall.

When it comes to how the COVID-19 pandemic impacts students' day-to-day lives, almost two in three students (65%) report that the pandemic is having a very or fairly major impact on their day-to-day life. Over time, COVID's impact has decreased gradually, with 79% of students in 2020 feeling a very or fairly major impact on their day-to-day life and decreasing to 73% in 2021.

While COVID's impact has diminished, two in three college students still say COVID has impacted their life in a very/ fairly major way.



When it comes to vaccination status, there are notable subgroups differences. with 89% of Democrats being vaccinated and 63% of Republicans having taken the vaccine.

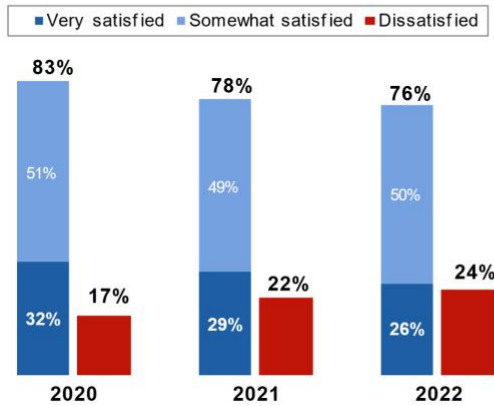
Impact of the Coronavirus on University Campuses

Many schools have implemented rigorous COVID-19 protocols in an attempt to prevent the virus' spread and regain normalcy on campus, and most students are satisfied with the efforts their institution has taken. While students are more likely than they were before the pandemic to view online classes as the same as in-person, most students still see a difference and prefer in-person classes.

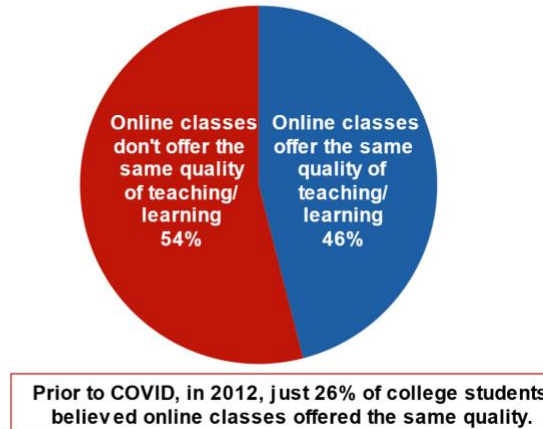
Three in four students (76%) are satisfied with how their college or university has dealt with COVID-19, however in 2020, 83% were satisfied. Students who attend larger schools with more than 20,000 students are less satisfied with how their school managed the pandemic (67%) compared to colleges and universities with less than 20,000 students (78%). There are also divisions along party lines, with Democrats (80%) and Biden voters (79%) feeling more satisfied with their college or university compared to Republicans (65%) and Trump voters (also 65%).

Students remain mostly satisfied with how their school has handled COVID. Most still believe online classes do not offer the same quality as in-person classes.

How satisfied are you with the way your college or university has dealt with the coronavirus?



Do online classes offer the quality of teaching and learning opportunities that in-person classes do?



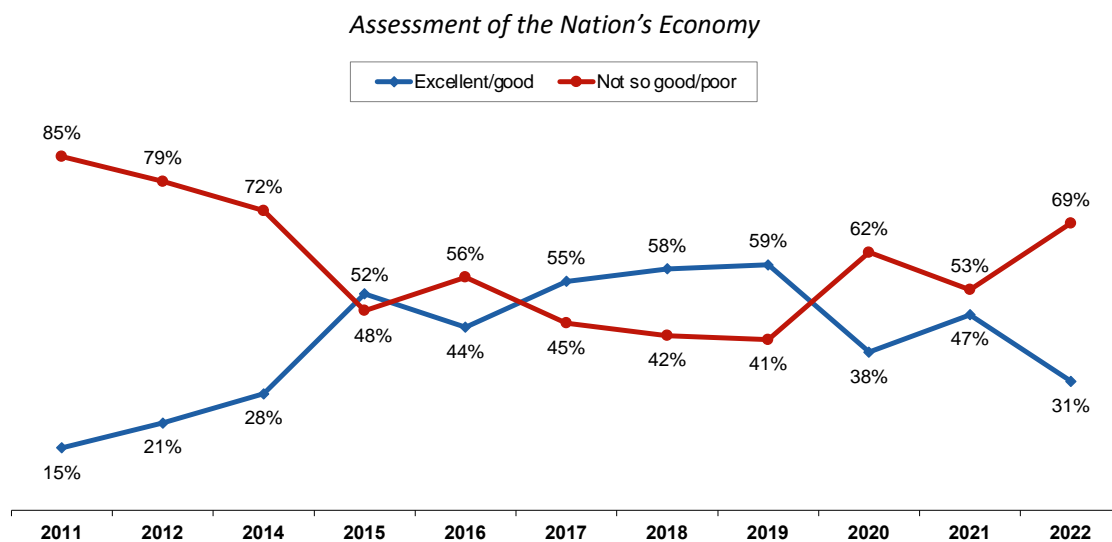
College students still believe that online classes are not the same as in-person classes, but over time, and with improvements in technology and the necessity of virtual learning through the pandemic, this is now more of a divided result. In 2012, just 26% of college students felt that online classes offered the same quality as in-person classes, and that has increased to 46% now.

VI. Economic Outlook

With inflation at historic levels, college students' views of the economy have dropped to their lowest level since 2014. After rebounding from the economic slowdown and soaring unemployment rates during the early pandemic, college students have been feeling the economic pinch of rising prices, and their confidence in both their own economic future and that of the country has cratered. This is highlighted by the fact that for the first time in the Panetta Institute Poll's history, we find that college students do not believe they will be better off financially than their parents.

Almost seven in ten (69%) college students say that the nation's economy is not-so-good or poor, a 16-point increase from 2021 (53%). This is the lowest assessment of the national economy we have recorded since 2014. This pessimism is concentrated among Republican college students (83% not-so-good/poor), compared to just 65% among Democrats and 67% among Independents – a marked shift from 2014, when Republicans rated the economy only 6 points worse than did Democrats.

Views on the economy have declined and are at their lowest point since 2014.

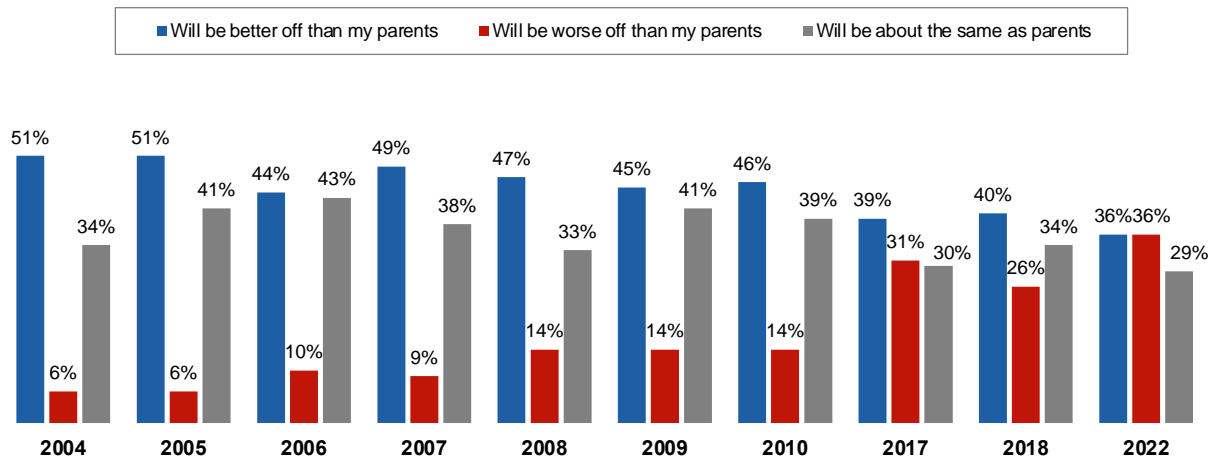


Looking ahead, when asked whether they believe the nation's economy will get better, worse, or stay the same in the next year, close to half (48%) think the economy will get worse – a return to the economic anxiety last measured in the first months of the COVID lockdown in 2020 (49%). The dueling partisan realities seen in general attitudes about the economy persist here, with both higher levels of Trump voters (64%) and Republicans (62%) expecting the economy to get worse over the next twelve months, in contrast to Biden voters (41%) and Democrats (42%).

These negative projections persist beyond the next year, and for the first time in the poll's history, college students do not believe they will be better off financially than their parents – 36% say better off, 36% say worse off.

For the first time, college students do not believe that they will be better off financially than their parents.

Students' Expectations for their Financial Situation



Among these students, freshmen are notably more optimistic (+8) compared to sophomores (-3), juniors (-3), and seniors (0). STEM (+15) and Business (+5) majors are more optimistic that they will be better off than their parents than students studying social sciences (-9) and humanities (-13). Students coming from lower/lower-middle class families remain optimistic, however, that they will be better off than their parents. Much of the negativity stems from more than four in ten (42%) white students thinking they will be worse off than their parents – a marked change from the last time the question was asked, in 2018 (+4). We have also measured a large swing since 2018 among both Democrats and especially Republicans – in 2018, Democrats were +10 and Republicans were +32, while today both are underwater at -4 and -10, respectively. This collapse among Republicans, in concert with their general negative attitudes on the economy, point towards political polarization and control of the White House coloring students' economic outlook.

Financial Future Compared to Parents			
	<u>Better Off</u>	<u>Worse Off</u>	<u>About the same</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
All College Students	36	36	29
Freshmen	42	34	23
Sophomores	30	33	36
Juniors	35	38	27
Seniors	36	36	27
Social Sciences	32	41	26
Humanities	31	44	25
Science/Math/CS	43	28	28
Business	37	33	30
Upper/Upper-Middle Class	31	35	34
Middle Class	34	36	29
Lower/Lower-middle class	44	35	22
Democrats	35	39	26
Republicans	29	39	32
Men	43	30	27
Women	31	39	30
White students	29	42	30
Latinx students	40	32	28
Black students	52	26	22
Asian American students	43	27	30

Job Prospects

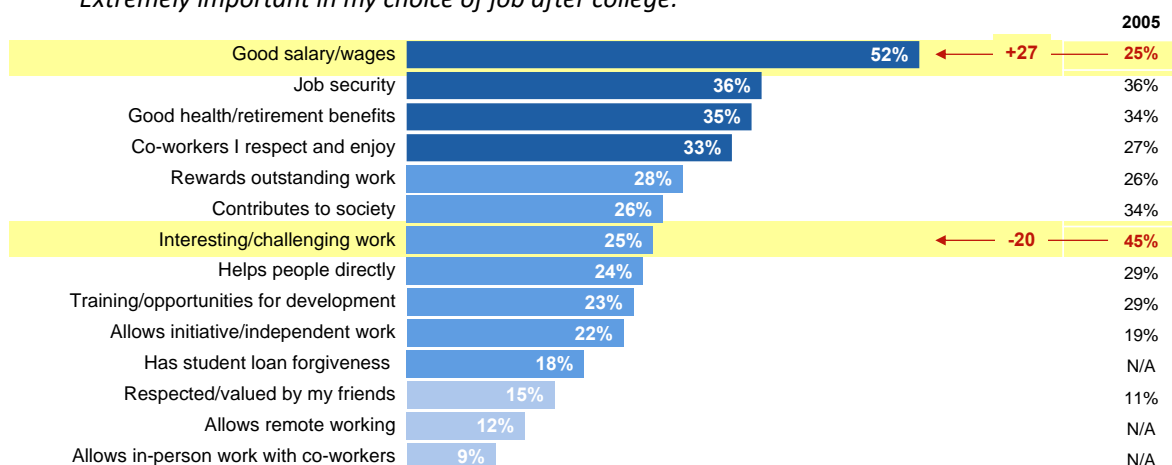
Despite their deep pessimism about the economy, college students remain confident as ever that they will be able to find a job that is acceptable to them after graduation. Three quarters (75%) of students are very or fairly confident they will be able to find an acceptable job, which is in line with last year's record number (76%). Interest in the private sector remains higher than for other industries, but roughly 2 in 5 college students remain interested in working in public health (42%) or government (38%).

Seniors are particularly interested in working in government (47%) compared to freshman or sophomores (33%) – a similar distinction we saw in last year’s survey.

Marking a profound change in attitudes from a generation ago, and likely a sign of the financial distress that students have experienced growing up, the most important quality that students are looking for in a job is one that pays a good salary or wage (with fully 52% saying this is extremely important, and up from 25% in 2005). This is true across political identification and race, though students coming from a lower/lower-middle class family value a good salary even more (63%). Conversely, students are less likely to feel that a job that involves work that is interesting and challenging is extremely important (from 45% who said extremely important in 2005 down to 25% now), with little variation across political party, race, and socio-economic class. With students seeing inflation and the cost of living as by far the most important issue to them personally (60%), finding a job that pays a good salary has become the top priority.

College students place the greatest import on a job that pays a good salary, a dramatic increase from a generation ago, while they are less likely to prioritize work that is interesting and challenging.

Extremely important in my choice of job after college:



Remote Work

As college students look for jobs, they appreciate the flexibility of remote work, but are eager to return to the office; however, they do not prioritize either when compared to other qualities in a job. Almost half (47%) describe working mostly in person in an office with some opportunity for remote work as their ideal work situation. After that, working fully in person in an office or doing mostly remote work with some opportunities for being in person in an office garner equal (23% each) support from college students, while working fully remotely places a distant last, with only 6% of students surveyed describing it as their ideal work situation. Students rated the ability to work either in a remote location, outside of the office, the majority

of the time or work in an office with co-workers for at least some of the time the lowest among qualities that some people look for in a job. Overall, college students are looking forward to returning to the office, and while they hope to retain some of the flexibility of remote work, it is a significantly lower priority than the issues of pay, discussed earlier.

Personal Finances and Student Loan Debt

Student loans remain a defining issue for the personal finances of college students, with 55% of students having taken out student loans to pay for some or all of their tuition. The burden of student loans will likely have a significant impact on what jobs students pursue after graduation.

Seven in ten students (71%) worry very often or somewhat often about finding a good-paying job, while 58% worry very or somewhat often about having too much student loan debt. These worries are particularly acute for students from lower and lower middle-class families, as well as students studying social sciences and humanities. This anxiety comes in an environment where four in ten (41%) students have skipped meals because they could not afford them; more than 3 in 10 (35%) have avoided a necessary medical or dental procedure because of the cost; and a fifth (21%) of students have needed to take time off from college because they could not afford to pay tuition, including 30% of Latinx and 28% of Black students.

Almost half (47%) of current college students will be graduating with student loans despite 37% of college students working at least 20 hours a week to pay their tuition and seven in ten (71%) having gotten scholarships to pay for some or all of their tuition. For those with student loan debt after graduation, they expect to enter the job market with on average \$35,520 in student loan debt alone. Over a quarter of students (28%) expect to graduate with over \$50,000 in debt. Students who attended private colleges expect to graduate with \$45,767 in debt, more than their peers in state schools who expect an average of \$32,313. In fact, almost six in 10 (58%) students with debt say their debt will impact the type of job they are likely to pursue, either a great deal or quite a bit. This debt burden casts a long shadow on the students' lives post-graduation, with 61% expecting it to take more than 10 years to pay off their debt – this is especially true for students coming from lower and lower-middle class families (73%).

The Impact of Student Loan Debt



55% have taken out student loans.

85% of those who have taken out loans expect to have debt after graduation.

\$35,520 is the average amount of debt.

61% expect it will take six years or longer to pay off.

58% say their debt will have a high impact on the job they pursue upon graduation.

VII. Public Service

Despite the COVID 19 pandemic, students had higher rates of volunteering than in the past two years, however, the number of students that have been involved in community activities and volunteer programs has decreased over the span of 10 years. Students also continue to study democracy and government in their college curriculums with similar levels as last year. Student's interest in public service careers increased since last year, but fewer students reported that someone had ever spoken with them about getting involved in politics or public service.

The awareness and outreach about students getting involved in politics or public service has also decreased from 2021 (48%) to 2022 (42%). And the decline is seen across all areas of study, including Social Science (-10), Humanities (-8), Science, Math, and CS (-9), and Business (-2) all reporting lower levels of conversations about someone encouraging them to get involved in public service.

Although there was a decrease in students speaking about getting involved in public service, those considering pursuing any service-oriented experiences after graduating has increased slightly from last year from 24% to 26%. Men decreased consideration for service-oriented experiences in 2021 from 27% to 24% while women increased their consideration from 2021 (25%) to 2022 (28%).

Civic Engagement

For the past 2 years during their time at high school or college, 79% of students had taken courses focusing on American democracy, government, and their role as a citizen. Students who major in the social sciences (87%) are more likely to have taken a civics class in high school or college than Science, Math, and CS by at least +10 (76%). This also holds true for state college and universities (82%) and private institutions (71%).

Classes on Civic Engagement		
	YES	NO
	%	%
All College Students	79	21
Social Sciences	87	13
Humanities	84	16
Science/Math/CS	76	24
Business	81	19
State	82	18
Private	71	29

Only 3 out of 10 students are interested in pursuing a career as a member of Congress or the Senate (30%). The majority of college students (70%) would not be interested in running for a federal elected office with the number of interested students decreasing since 2020 (32%) and 2021 (35%). Subgroup differences for those interested in running for federal positions are widespread across groups. We see more men (36%) being interested in pursuing a career in federal elected offices than women (27%) and Black students (49%) having an overwhelming larger interest in running than their White (21%), Hispanic (41%), or Asian (36%) counterparts. While Democrats have had no change in interest since 2021 (30%) independents (-8) and Republicans (-15) had steep decreases in student's interest in running for federal office. We see similar trend lines for interest in running for office among students that voted for Biden (+5) and Trump (-7).

When asked about possible interest in running for a local or state elected office such as city council member or state legislator, students were more interested in local level positions (38%) than at the federal level. Those that attend a larger school with more than 20,000 students (22%) are much less likely to be interested in pursuing a career in local offices than those who go to a school with less than 5,000 students (51%).

Interest in running for LOCAL office

	Interested %	Not interested %
All College Students	38	62
Less than 5,000 Students	51	49
5,000 to 20,000 students	43	57
More than 20,000 students	22	78
College	42	58
University	35	65

National and Community Service

This year, almost seven out of ten students (69%) have participated in community and local volunteer activities despite the pandemic, increasing from 64% last year. Social Science (78%) and Humanities (77%) majors are more likely to have been involved in community activities compared to science, math, and CS majors (67%) along with Business students (65%). Those who attend a college or university with at least 5,000 students are less likely to have been involved with community activities compared to students that attend smaller institutions (71%). Overall students increased their involvement in community activities in the past year from 64% to 69%. Democrats (+6), Independents (+2) and Republicans (+4) all increased their involvement. Women were also more involved in community activities in 2022 (75%) than in 2021 (67%).

On a national level, when asked how interested students would be in pursuing a career featuring college tuition forgiveness in exchange for two years of national service after graduating, more than half (54%) of students are very or fairly interested. Science, Math and CS students are the most interested in these programs (58%) as those students who expect to have student loan debt (87%).

Interest in student loan forgiveness program and expected debt after graduating

	Expected to have debt %	Very or fairly interested in the program %
All College Students	85	54
Science, Math, CS	87	58
Humanities	86	51
Business	82	56
Social Sciences	81	52

VIII. Media Consumption

How students receive information about politics and civic affairs continues to evolve as social media platforms further consolidate their position as the primary source of information for college students.

Today, nearly six in ten college (57%) students get most of their information from social media such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter – a highwater mark in this survey’s history. Since last year, social media (+6) increased its share among college students more than any other source of information. As social media has grown, we have also measured an almost identical fall in use of internet news websites – dropping from 55% in 2016 to 34% today, as social media use jumped from 32% in 2016 to 57% today. Going forward, that trend is likely to continue as freshmen (64%) and sophomores (62%) both rely on social media significantly more than do juniors (51%) and seniors (52%).

Among traditional news sources, a similar number of college students compared to last year use television (31%) and a national newspaper (17%) as their primary news source. Just 27% of college students have an online or hard copy subscription to a newspaper. More Republicans (36%) than Democrats (27%) rely on family or friends as their primary news source – a gap similar to that between Biden (25%) and Trump (31%) voters, and between progressive or liberal students (26%) and conservative or libertarian voters (34%).

Not only is social media the dominant source of news for college students, but it has also become a ubiquitous part of social life, with more than 9 in 10 (91%) college students using social media at least once a day or more often, and, for the first time, half (50%) have used an online dating app or website. Among social media platforms, TikTok (71%) has surpassed Facebook (69%) and is the third most common platform behind Instagram (88%) and Snapchat (81%). Notably, differences among class year in TikTok use have flattened with seniors (68%) using the app just as much as freshmen (69%) which was not the case last year when 76% of first-year students had an account, compared to just 57% for seniors.