

THE

STATE OF OUR NATION'S YOUTH

2012-2013



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ALGER 
ASSOCIATION

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The 2012–2013 *State of Our Nation's Youth* report is an effort by the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans, in collaboration with Hart Research Associates and NORC at the University of Chicago, to give voice to the perspectives and concerns of today's young people and the future leaders of our country. The report aims to inform our educational system, policy makers, media, and the public at large on the issues facing and shaping the next generation of Americans. We are deeply grateful to the Members of the Horatio Alger Association for their support of the Association's mission and for the vision and generosity of the following individuals:



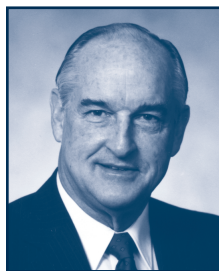
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The primary source of data for the report is the 2012–2013 *State of Our Nation's Youth* survey. Hart Research Associates, led by Founder Peter D. Hart, Allan Rivlin, Corrie Hunt, and James Hazzard, developed and administered the survey. Hart Research Associates' expertise, vision, and hard work are reflected in the richness of the data and the wealth of information they contain on today's high school students and recent graduates.

This report was prepared by NORC, and authored by Gregory Wolniak, Kristen Neishi, Jesse Rude, and Zachary Gebhardt. NORC analyzed the data discussed in the report and supported Hart Research Associates in developing the survey. NORC's Isabel Guzman-Barron made many valuable contributions during the preparation of the report, including formatting exhibits and tables and coordinating the publication and printing processes.

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Finally, we are indebted to the young men and women who took the time to participate in the 2012–2013 *State of Our Nation's Youth* survey.

INTRODUCTION

The Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans, Inc., is proud to present the results of the 2012–2013 *State of Our Nation's Youth* survey. This year's *State of Our Nation's Youth* marks the beginning of a new era in the survey by expanding its scope to include survey responses of 1,500 young people, both high school students and high school graduates, ranging from ages 14 to 23. The 2012 report is the 11th in the series and includes data on young people presently in college and in the early phases of their careers. By comparison, from 1997 to 2008 the Association conducted surveys among 1,000 young people between the ages of 13 and 19. The Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans is pleased to present the findings of the survey and shed light on the perceptions and feelings of American youth for the benefit of our young people and our nation's future.

In 1947 Dr. Norman Vincent Peale and Dr. Kenneth Beebe founded the Horatio Alger Association to recognize and celebrate successful Americans who overcome adversity through hard work and persistence. The Association continues that great work by presenting the Horatio Alger Award each year to Americans who have risen from humble beginnings to achieve success through our nation's free-enterprise system and serve as role models to young people across the country. Through the generosity of the Association's membership, the Horatio Alger Association has awarded almost \$100 million since 1984 in need-based college scholarships to more than 16,000 at-risk young people across the nation. These students, like the membership of the Horatio Alger Association, have overcome some of life's most difficult challenges.

The *State of Our Nation's Youth* report was created by the Association to give voice and attention to the opinions, concerns, thoughts, and aspirations of the young people of the United States. The Association is pleased to work with Hart Research Associates and NORC at the University of Chicago in conducting this year's survey and report. With their collaboration, the 2012–2013 report incorporates the responses of young people across the country to clearly reflect the current political, social, economic, educational, and personal State of Our Nation's Youth.

Overview of Findings

The 2012 *State of Our Nation's Youth* report provides a valuable update to previous editions. This year's report examines how young people are handling and reacting to the economic, technological, political, and social changes that have occurred in recent years. Including recent high school graduates in the 2012 *State of Our Nation's Youth* survey provides important insight into the differences between current high school students and those who are up to seven years post-high school graduation; it speaks to the unique life transition that occurs following high school, as many young people begin a new phase of life outside of their family homes. The 2012 report also identifies attitudes and behaviors related to college. For many youth, the act of going to college and earning a degree—gaining admissions, selecting a school, financing the costs of attendance, and ultimately progressing toward graduation—is the defining life event during the 14–23 age span. This year's report also uncovers several trends in the lives of young adults based on comparing the 2012 survey responses to those from previous years, spanning more than a decade in some instances.

Overall, four important themes emerge from this year's *State of Our Nation's Youth* survey. First, the economy weighs heavily on today's youth. When presented with a list of issues and asked to identify which would be most important to how they vote in the upcoming election, high school students and graduates put the economy and jobs well ahead of issues related to health care, the environment, terrorism, and national security. Furthermore, Hispanics and individuals from lower-income households feel financial concerns most acutely. The economy becomes even more of a concern as youth transition beyond high school; recent graduates express greater concern over personal finances and financially helping their parents. Recent high school graduates who are not enrolled in college and unemployed most often indicate a lack of employment opportunities as the main reason for not working.

Second, while education is another leading concern among today's youth, evidence points to positive gains in high school students' grades (more students report receiving A's on their report cards than in past years), and more favorable ratings of the quality of their schools. What's more, today's youth overwhelmingly plan to complete a two- or four-year college degree and are setting themselves up to do so: students are increasingly taking college-preparatory classes and a large majority intend to transition into

college immediately following high school. However, the context surrounding education is not all positive. Despite increasing rates of advanced coursework during high school, relatively large shares of today's college enrollees need remediation, and a postsecondary education continues to be increasingly difficult to finance. Three in four high school students with college aspirations worry about their ability to pay for college.

Third, today's youth value family relationships, religion, and contributing to the greater good above personal or material gain. When presented with a host of issues and asked to identify how important each is when thinking about their educational and career goals, for high school students and graduates alike, helping others who are in difficulty and raising a family are more often considered highly important than things such as being well-off financially or achieving success in business. Roughly one-half of high school students and graduates report that religion and spirituality are very important aspects of their lives. In addition, relationships with family—with mothers in particular—are most important in the lives of today's youth. These values are reflected in responses indicating that spending time with family takes precedence over socializing with friends and indicating the frequency of volunteer work and participation in religious and spiritual activities.

Finally, despite their concerns and uncertainty toward the future, today's high school students and recent high school graduates believe that they ultimately determine their own success in life and possess hope and optimism toward the future of our country. Together these qualities characterize today's young people as eager, ready, and willing to meet challenges, with a steadfast belief in their ability to seize opportunities for achieving happiness and success in life.

SELECTED KEY FINDINGS

Factors important for a successful life

- **High school students and recent graduates emphasize concern for the well-being of others.** A majority of high school students and graduates indicate it is essential or very important to help others during times of difficulty (77% for both), to promote racial understanding (60% and 64%, respectively), and to serve society or their own communities (58% and 66%, respectively).
- **Religion and spirituality play a central role in the lives of many youth.** Roughly one-half of high school students (48%) and recent graduates (49%) consider religion and spirituality to be very important in their lives.
- **Young people firmly believe that they control their pathway to success.** Nearly all high school students and recent graduates (96% for both) agree that their own actions shape their ability to succeed. Likewise, a strong majority (81% and 85%, respectively) disagree that luck is more important than hard work for achieving success.

Views on family and relationships

- **Relationships with family members are critical to the lives of most of the nation's youth.** A large majority of high school students (80%) and recent graduates (79%) indicate that the most valuable and essential relationship in their life involves a family member, and most often that family member is their mother (47%).
- **On average, high school students and recent graduates believe that at about 21 years of age, a person should achieve financial independence from parents.** National data, however, indicate that most Americans do not become fully independent of their parents' financial support until age 26. Thus today's high school students and recent graduates underestimate when financial independence tends to actually occur.

- **On average, high school students and graduates expect that at roughly 26 years of age, they will be ready to get married.** This estimate is not far from the actual age that Americans get married. National survey data show that the median age of first marriage is 28.4 years for men and 26.5 for women.

Spending time outside of school and work

- **Spending time with family takes precedence over socializing with friends.** Nearly all high school students and recent graduates devote time to their families (99% and 98%, respectively) and friends (95% and 94%, respectively) during a typical month. On a daily basis, spending time with family is more likely to occur (86% and 68%, respectively) than is socializing with friends (52% and 44%, respectively).
- **High school students engage in physical activity more often than recent high school graduates.** While a similarly large proportion of high school students (96%) and recent graduates (92%) engage in some level of physical activity each month, almost twice as many high school students (62%) say they exercise or play sports on a daily basis compared to recent graduates (35%).
- **Participating in religious and spiritual activities and volunteer work routinely occurs on a monthly basis.** In any given month, a strong majority of high school students and recent graduates devote time to religious and spiritual activities (74% and 65%, respectively) and volunteer work (76% and 62%, respectively). Fewer than 15% of both students and graduates engage in these activities daily.

Staying in touch and aware

- **An overwhelming majority of young adults show interest in staying informed of the nation's developments by spending time gathering news about the country on a daily basis.** High school students spend an average of 39 minutes a day accessing news while high school graduates spend a marginally greater amount of time, averaging 45 minutes a day.
- **Compared to four years ago, more high school students identify online media to be among their most important sources of news.** Just under one-half (48%) of current high school students identify an

online source as one of their most important means of gathering news; a considerable jump from 32% in 2008. More than half (56%) of recent high school graduates consider an online source to be their top news source.

- **Coinciding with the rise in importance of online sources, compared to four years ago fewer of today's high school students rely on television programming as their top news sources.** Although still viewed as an important news source for a majority of 2012 respondents, current high school students are less likely than their 2008 counterparts to cite a television program as their top news source (66% vs. 71%). Even fewer recent high school graduates (60%) indicate that television is among their most important sources for news.

Facing challenges

- **Several issues appear less problematic to high school students in 2012 than in 2008.** A smaller proportion of high school students in 2012 than in 2008 consider issues related to their finances (46% vs. 56%), health (36% vs. 49%), personal safety (34% vs. 53%), and family (12% vs. 19%) to be a problem for them. Despite such progress, issues spanning financial, health, safety, and relationships are deemed problematic for more than one in three youth.
- **Recent graduates are considerably more likely than current high school students to express concerns over finances and health.** A higher percentage of recent graduates cite problems regarding their personal financial situation (63% vs. 46%), pressure to help their parents out financially (48% vs. 37%), and health concerns or health care (50% vs. 36%). This trend may suggest that financial and health concerns become more problematic with age, particularly in the initial years following high school graduation.
- **Some of the problems experienced by today's youth vary by race/ethnicity and family income.** Compared to the overall population of respondents in 2012, a higher proportion of Hispanics and those of below-average income cite problems related to their finances, health, and personal safety.
- **High school students report more incidents of online harassment in 2012 than in 2008.** Almost one-quarter (23%) of recent high school students say they have experienced some form of online harassment, up from 16% in 2008. A slightly higher percentage of females experience this type of harassment compared to males (25% vs. 19%).

Outlook on politics and the future of the country

- **High schools students' interest in the 2012 presidential election is markedly lower than in 2008.** A moderate majority (57%) of high school students state they care about the outcome of the 2012 presidential race, 38% say they do not care, and 5% are not sure. The proportion of students who care about this year's election results has shrunk dramatically from 75% of students who said they cared in 2008.
- **High school students identify the state of the economy and education as their most important issues when it comes to voting in the 2012 election.** The economy and jobs is the leading issue of consideration for high school students (56%) and graduates (58%) as they decide which candidate to vote for in the 2012 election. Education trails only slightly; roughly one-third of high school students (32%) and graduates (36%) indicate that it is a top issue of concern. These findings mark a shift away from interest in the war and the environment, which were considered more important issues among 2008 high school students.
- **High school students' optimism about the country's future has increased slightly since 2008.** Sixty percent of high school students find themselves mainly hopeful and optimistic as they think about the future of our country, up from 53% of students who felt a similar way in 2008. At 54% expressing hope and optimism, today's high school graduates are more similar to the 2008 high school students with regard to their level of confidence in the nation's future.

High schools

- **High school students report getting more A's on their report cards than in past years since 2001.** Almost two in five (37%) current high school students say their last report card consisted of mostly A's. This compares to roughly one in five students who received similarly high marks in 2008, signifying a 13 percentage-point increase.
- **A large majority of high school students participate in student clubs or groups.** Three-quarters of high school students (76%) report participating in a student club or group at least once a month. Participation occurs on a daily basis for 21%, weekly for 39%, and monthly for 16% of students.

- **When asked to rate the quality of their schools, today's high school students more often give their schools a grade of an A, reflecting modest improvements over previous years.** One in three high school students indicate that the quality of their schools is worthy of receiving an A. This is a sizable increase from past years when about one in five students gave their schools A's.
- **Most of today's high school students attend publicly funded schools.** More than three-quarters of high school students (77%) report attending regular public schools. Although public magnet and charter schools have become more widespread in recent years, only 8% of current high school students attend these schools.

College preparation and enrollment

- **Today's youth greatly value a college degree.** Nearly all (97%) high school students plan to complete a two- or four-year degree, up from 93% in 2008. At 92%, a similarly high percentage of high school graduates say they plan to complete a college degree or have done so already.
- **High school students' course-taking behaviors shift toward more Advanced Placement and other college-preparatory classes.** Today's high school students are roughly two times more likely than their 2008 counterparts to take an Advanced Placement course (41% vs. 21%) and other college-preparatory classes (29% vs. 16%).
- **Despite more advanced coursework during high school, a considerable share of college-enrolled students report needing remediation services during college.** Among high school graduates who were enrolled in college at the time of the survey, 28% say they were required to do remediation work as a prerequisite to their regular college-level coursework.
- **Most young adults transition, or plan to transition, into college immediately after graduating high school.** Among high school students who aspire to a college degree, a strong majority (86%) say they plan to transition to college immediately after high school. Likewise, among high school graduates who subsequently went on to college, an equally high proportion (87%) say they entered college right after completing high school.

- **Amid ballooning college costs, high school students who aspire to a college degree are cautiously optimistic about having enough funds to pay for college.** Among high school students aspiring to college, only 18% have major concerns about lacking sufficient resources to pay for college, while a slight majority (57%) have some concerns but ultimately believe they will have enough funds to cover the costs. One in four (25%) say they have no concerns because they are confident they will have enough funds.
- **Grants and scholarships, often awarded on a competitive basis, is the most common means of paying for school among college-enrolled high school graduates.** Non-repayable forms of financial aid—including grants and scholarships—are used to pay for college among 65% of the college enrollees surveyed. Family resources (41%) are the next most common source of college funding, followed closely by personal resources (37%), and loans or other forms of financial aid that require repayment (36%).

Employment and careers

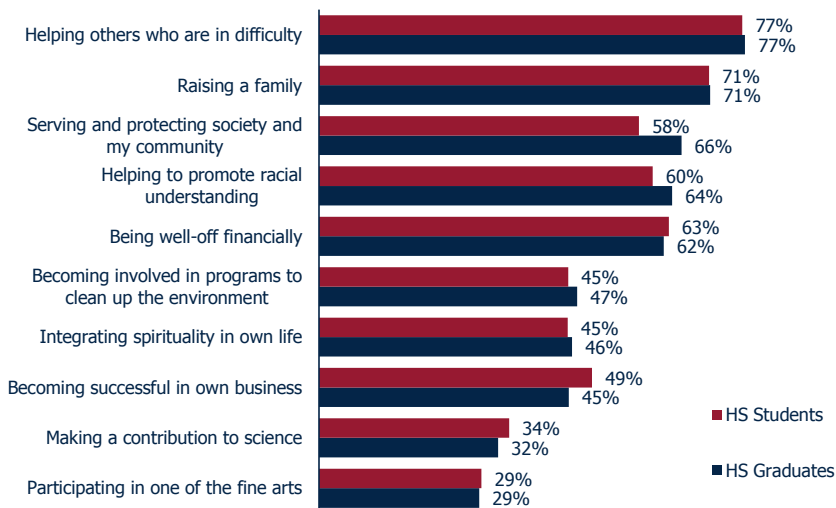
- **Rates of employment among high school and college-enrolled students are slightly higher than recent national estimates showing student employment at its lowest rate in over 20 years.** Sizable shares of both groups still report being unemployed and actively searching for work. More than three-quarters (77%) of high school students report not having a job, including 39% who indicate they are searching for work. Just under half (47%) of enrolled college students report not having a job, including 32% who are looking for work opportunities.
- **The majority (64%) of high school graduates who were not currently enrolled in college are employed; three in ten (28%) are unwillingly out of work.** For the 28% who are looking for but unable to find work, a lack of employment opportunities is to blame: most (58%) of these graduates state that they have been unable to find any job while far smaller shares (21%) have been unable to find the job they want.
- **Recent high school graduates are more likely to define their career goals in the private sector than the public sector, yet interest in public-sector careers is also high.** A large majority of high school graduates indicate that it is likely they will work for a private business (74%) and/or start their own business or work for themselves (69%). A slightly smaller share say it is likely they will hold a career in the nonprofit sector (62%).

FINDINGS

1. FACTORS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LIFE

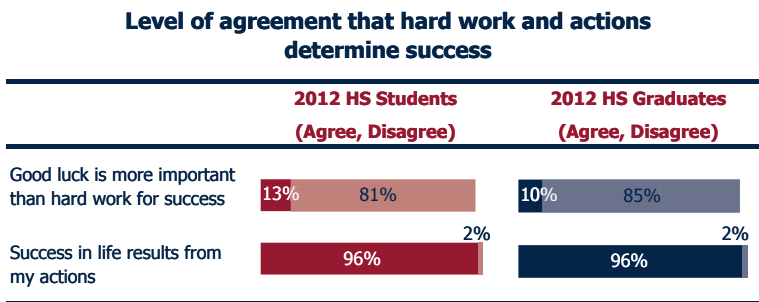
The high school students and graduates who participated in the 2012 *State of Our Nation's Youth* survey regard helping others and raising a family as critically important considerations when making life-altering decisions. When asked to rate the importance of a number of different factors, a large majority of high school students and graduates (77% each) indicate that helping others who are in difficulty is either essential or very important. A similarly large percentage of both groups (71% each) indicate raising a family along with being financially prosperous (63% and 62%, respectively) are essential or very important in their life. Well over one-half of high school students and graduates consider other social factors such as helping to promote racial understanding (60% and 64%, respectively) and serving and protecting society and their community (58% and 66%, respectively) as essential or very important in their lives. Almost one-half of both groups indicate it is essential or very important for them to become successful in business (49% and 45%, respectively), help with environmental programs (45% and 47%, respectively), and integrate spirituality in their life (45% and 46%, respectively). Alternatively, contributing to science and participating in the fine arts are of less concern to high school students and graduates; roughly one in three regard these factors as essential or important.

Factors essential or very important when thinking about your future



A strong sense of control over achieving success

In terms of achieving success, young people overwhelmingly believe they control their own destinies. At 96%, high school students and graduates almost universally agree that their ability to achieve success is the result of their actions. Similarly, more than four in five high school students (81%) and high school graduates (85%) disagree that luck is more important than hard work for achieving success. Based on terminology used in psychologist Carol Dweck’s 2006 book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, it appears that *State of Our Nation’s Youth* participants possess a “growth” mindset—a key ingredient for overcoming challenges and achieving success in school and in professional and personal life.

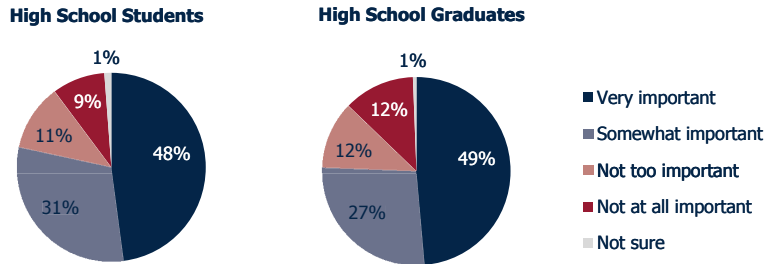


Religion and spirituality occupy an important role in the lives of youth

Religion and spirituality play an important role in the lives of young Americans. Nearly one-half of high school students (48%) and graduates (49%) consider religion or spirituality to be a very important aspect of their life. An additional 31% of high school students and 27% of graduates consider religion or spirituality to be somewhat important.

The 2008 Pew Forum Study on the U.S. Religious Landscape indicates that women (in comparison to men) and African Americans (in comparison to the overall U.S. population) demonstrate more or stronger religious beliefs. Consistent with these findings, among participants in this year’s *State of Our Nation’s Youth* study, females are slightly more likely than males to rate religion or spirituality as very important in their life (53% vs. 44%) and African Americans, by a wide margin, are more likely than the overall population of 2012 participants to consider religion or spirituality as very important (66% vs. 48%).

Importance of religion or spirituality in life



2. VIEWS ON FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIPS

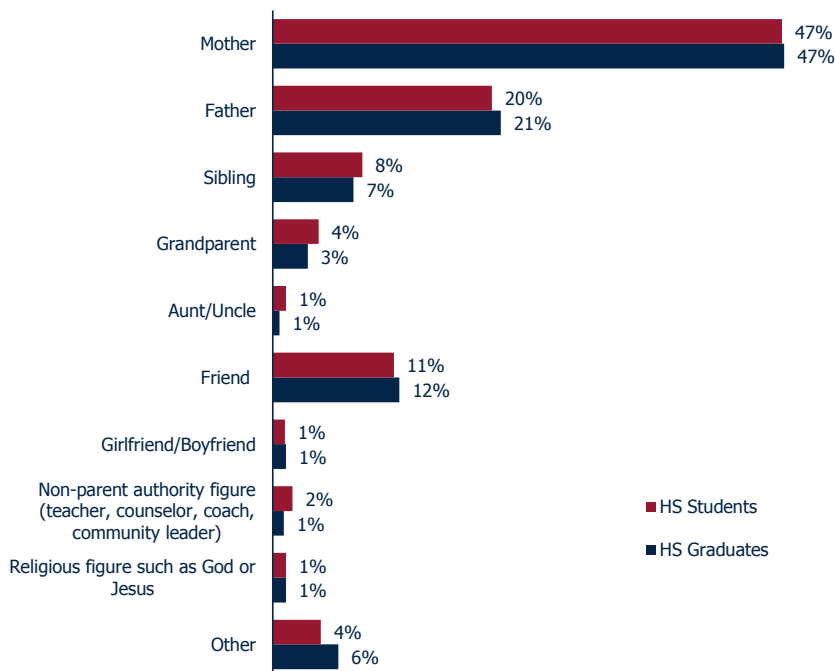
Relationship with family members is valued most

Contrary to the concerns of many adults who worry that today’s adolescents value their friends above their families, data from this year’s *State of Our Nation’s Youth* survey show that high school students and high school graduates place great stock in their families. When asked, “Who is the one person you would identify as the most valuable and essential relationship in your life right now?” an overwhelming majority of high school students and high school graduates (80% and 79%, respectively) chose a family member.

Among those who listed a family member, most identify their relationship with their “Mother” (47% of both high school students and graduates) as their most valuable and essential relationship. Dads were listed half as often as moms (roughly one-fifth of high school students and graduates selected “Father”), perhaps reflecting the fact that one in six respondents live in households headed by a single mother, compared to roughly 2% living in households headed by a single father. There are significant differences in these responses by gender, with females more likely to choose mothers and males more likely to choose fathers with regard to their most valuable and essential relationship: most (54%) females chose “Mother,” compared to 39% of males; whereas 13% of females chose “Father,” compared to 28% of males.

Although youth are often stereotyped by the mainstream media as deeply influenced by romantic and peer relationships, collectively parents beat out peers 5 to 1 as the most influential and important relationship. And only one in 100 high school students identify a “Girlfriend/Boyfriend” as their most valued relationship.

Most valued or essential relationship among high school students and graduates

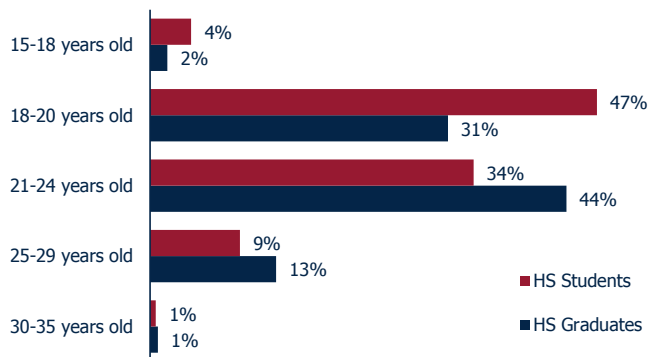


Financial independence

Most high school students and recent graduates (85% and 77%, respectively) believe that children should be financially independent of their parents before they reach the age of 25. The average estimates of the exact age are 20.5 for high school students and 21.4 for graduates. The two groups differ in that a greater proportion of high school students agree that financial independence should occur between the ages of 18 and 20 (47% vs. 31%, respectively), whereas high school graduates are more likely to concur that such independence should be achieved between ages 21 and 24 (44% vs. 34%, respectively). Despite these differences, compared to national figures indicating that most Americans do not become fully

independent of their parents' financial support until age 26, it appears that both groups of respondents are underestimating the number of years it takes to become financially independent. Particularly interesting is that more than three in four (76%) high school graduates report living with parents or other members of their family. According to a March 2012 report from the Pew Research Center, this statistic should not be alarming as the share of living at home is on the rise, and is at the highest level since the 1950s.

Age at which high school students and graduates believe financial independence should be achieved



Age at marriage

High school students and recent graduates provide very similar estimates of the age when they will be “ready to get married.” Overall, both samples put the estimate at roughly 26 years old. Although no significant differences in this estimate are apparent by respondent gender, national data indicate that men marry later than women. Data from the 2009 American Community Survey reflect the median age of first marriage is 28.4 for men and 26.5 for women.

3. SPENDING TIME OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL AND WORK

The 2012 *State of Our Nation's Youth* survey asked respondents to indicate how often they participate in different activities outside of any school or work responsibilities. Nearly all high school students (99%) and graduates (98%) spend time with their family at least on a monthly basis, reinforcing the finding previously discussed that a large majority of high school students and graduates identify a family member as their most valuable and essential relationship. This occurs on a daily basis for more than four in five (86%) high school students and nearly seven in ten (68%) high school graduates. By contrast, 12% of high school students and 21% of high school graduates spend time with their family only once or twice a week. Given that high school students are more likely than high school graduates to live in the same home as their family (97% vs. 76%, respectively), it is not surprising that these groups differ in how often they spend time with family members. Nevertheless, with virtually all respondents managing to spend some amount of time with their families each month, these results provide further indication that family remains an integral part of young people's lives.

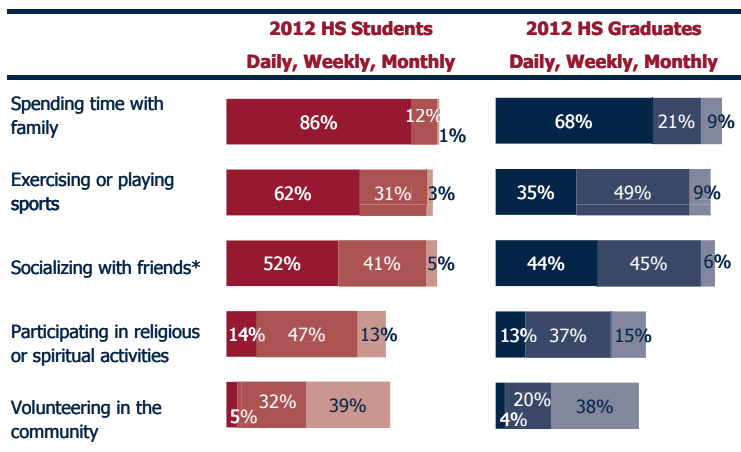
Building and maintaining friendships is often regarded as important to adolescents' social well-being. Spending time with friends occurs daily for most high school students (52%) as well as for a sizable share of high school graduates (44%). For roughly two in five high school students and graduates (41% and 45%, respectively), spending time with friends occurs once or twice a week. Few expressed socializing only once a month (5% and 6%, respectively).

Three-quarters of high school students (74%) and two-thirds of graduates (65%) devote time to religious or spiritual activities in a typical month. Far greater shares of high school students and graduates attend religious events or participate in spiritual activities once or twice a week (47% and 37%, respectively) compared to daily (14% and 13%, respectively) or just once or twice a month (13% and 15%, respectively). Adding to the previously discussed finding that nearly one-half of all *State of Our Nation's Youth* respondents regard religion or spirituality as a very important aspect of their lives, most respondents incorporate religious or spiritual activities into their routines at least once a month. Religion and spirituality clearly occupy important roles in the lives of young Americans.

Compared to other activities, young people are less frequently engaged in volunteer work. A 2010 analysis by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that young Americans aged 16 to 24 volunteer at lower rates than older age groups. Nevertheless, the 2012 *State of Our Nation's Youth* respondents report giving back to their communities through volunteering at impressively high rates: three in four (76%) high school students and three in five (62%) high school graduates spend time volunteering during a typical month. Higher proportions of high school students and graduates volunteer once or twice a month (39% and 38%, respectively) as opposed to weekly (32% and 20%, respectively) or daily (5% and 4%, respectively). High school students are more likely than graduates to volunteer, and do so more frequently, suggesting that this may be one activity that diminishes as young people transition beyond high school.

Obesity rates among children and young adults have increased dramatically nationwide, more than doubling since the 1980s, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Such an alarming trend has become a national concern, prompting First Lady Michelle Obama to launch the comprehensive *Let's Move!* initiative in 2010 to encourage a healthier lifestyle through physical activity and eating a wholesome diet. While high percentages of high school students (96%) and graduates (92%) in the 2012 *State of Our Nation's Youth* study engage in physical activity such as exercising or playing sports each month, the frequency by which they do so varies by age. More than one-half of high school students (62%) incorporate exercise or sports activities into their everyday routine, whereas a significantly smaller percentage of high school graduates (35%) exercise on a daily basis. High school graduates are more likely than high school students to exercise only once or twice a week (49% vs. 31%). These findings suggest that physical activity declines with age or in the absence of a structured curriculum, as exercising or playing sports is more often a part of high school students' daily regimen compared to high school graduates.

Time spent on activities outside of school and work



*Socializing with friends was only asked of high school students and high school graduates who were enrolled in school.

4. STAYING IN TOUCH AND AWARE

News and media occupy a central and ever-changing position in the lives of young Americans. The news and media—whether printed, broadcasts, or published online—simultaneously reflect and shape modern culture. The 2012 *State of Our Nation's Youth* study asked today's high school students and graduates: "About how many minutes each day do you spend getting news about what is going on in the country?" Study participants were also asked to select their most important sources for getting news about what is going on in the country. Answers to these questions together provide an interesting glimpse into the role of news media in the lives of today's youth.

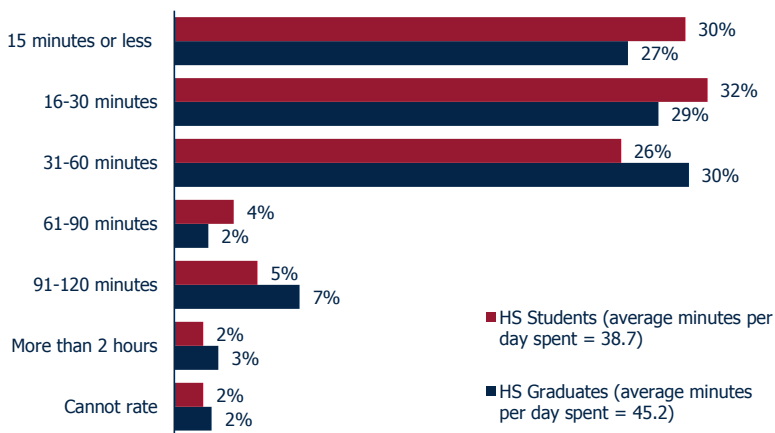
Time spent accessing news

High school graduates in the 2012 *State of Our Nation's Youth* study report spending an average of 45 minutes a day getting news relevant to the country, while average daily news consumption is slightly lower among high school students at 39 minutes per day. These estimates mirror those reported in a 2010 study by the Pew Research Center indicating young adults (ages 18 to 29) spend on average 45 minutes a day consuming news, and that the amount of time spent increases with age. The finding that high

school students in the *State of Our Nation's Youth* study average fewer minutes per day than high school graduates may reflect the behavioral changes that accompany aging.

Males and females spend similar amounts of time accessing and consuming news. However, differences exist across racial/ethnic groups: compared to the overall population of high school graduates, African Americans spend more time per day focusing on news (55 vs. 45 minutes).

Time per day spent accessing news and other information



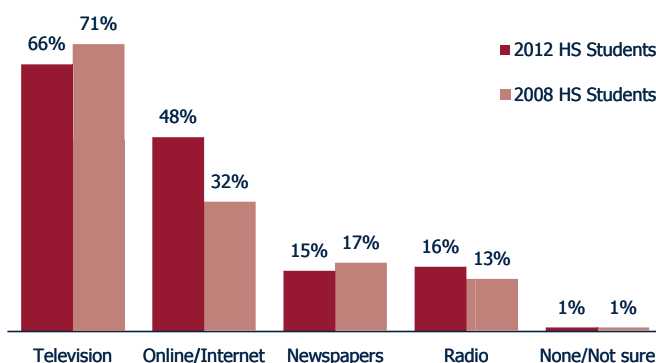
Accessing news online is on the rise at the expense of traditional media

Over the past decade, continual advances in technology have produced an unprecedented array of information sources. The availability of digital and online media sources such as social networking sites, news websites, blogs, podcasts, and mobile internet devices has expanded at a rapid pace. Data from the 2012 *State of Our Nation's Youth* study suggest such advancements have consequences for how young people gather and consume information. The data reveal a growing reliance on online news sources and a simultaneous decline in the usage of television media.

In 2008, nearly one-third (32%) of high school students identified an online source to be among the two most important ways they gather news. By 2012, this percentage jumped to almost one-half (48%) of high school students. Among 2012 high school students and graduates, news websites

are the most popular online source (23% and 27%, respectively), followed closely by social networking sites (21% and 24%, respectively). Blogs occupy a smaller space among young people in the modern media landscape; blogs are an important source of news for 6% of high school students and roughly 10% of graduates.

Most important news sources among high school students



The importance of online news sources is likely to stay high or even grow as virtually all high school students and graduates (99% overall) indicate they access the internet from at least one of the following: a personal computer, school computer, or a cell phone or tablet. Among these, a personal or family computer is the most prevalent means of accessing the internet: 95% of high school students and 91% of high school graduates access the internet via a personal or family computer.

Coinciding with the rise in online usage is a trailing off in the proportion of students relying on television programming as their top news source. In the 2008 *State of Our Nation's Youth* survey, 71% of high school students cited television programming as among their most important sources for news. Though still a popular means of getting information in 2012, the share has fallen to 66% among high school students. Roughly 60% of high school graduates indicate television is their most important news source, a finding consistent with a 2010 Pew Research Center report citing television as a stable source of news for 58% of Americans. Local and cable news shows are the two most commonly identified television sources among all 2012 *State of Our Nation's Youth* respondents, whereas network news and comedy news shows are the least popular.

Radio and newspapers are less often identified as important news sources among 2012 high school students and graduates: newspapers are cited as most important among 15% of high school students and 16% of graduates; radio is cited among 16% of high school students and 14% of graduates. Radio and newspaper were the top news sources for comparable shares of high school students in 2008 (17% and 13%, respectively), indicating little change in the most traditional forms of news media.

When considering these findings, it is important to keep in mind that many people gather their news from more than one source. Among *State of Our Nation's Youth* respondents, the majority (55%) identify more than one source of news as most important. This finding is supported by national data from the 2010 Pew study showing that 36% of Americans get their news from both digital and traditional sources, 39% rely solely on traditional media sources, and only 9% rely solely on internet and mobile technology.

5. FACING CHALLENGES

American youth today face a variety of challenges, from concerns about making ends meet and securing health care coverage to interpersonal tensions with family members, peers, and teachers. Data from the *State of Our Nation's Youth* survey reveal a growing optimism among young people in the United States. High school students are less likely than they were four years ago to characterize certain issues as problems. For example, a smaller proportion of high school students in 2012 than in 2008 consider the following issues as either “major” or “minor” problems: concerns about personal safety (34% vs. 53%, respectively), family problems or not getting along with parents (43% vs. 56%, respectively), health concerns (37% vs. 49%, respectively), and personal financial concerns (46% vs. 56%). While such issues appear to be less concerning now than before, there remain a considerable share of respondents who do find these issues problematic. More than one in three high school students and graduates indicate problems that span financial, health, safety, and interpersonal facets of their lives.

Furthermore, one issue for American youth that has become more worrisome over time is the phenomenon of online bullying. In 2008, roughly one in six (16%) high school students reported that someone had intentionally posted something mean or hurtful about them online. By 2012, almost one-quarter of the high school students say they experienced some form of online harassment. The jump in online bullying over this four-year period suggests that, despite their relative optimism on many issues, the current generation of high school students faces new pressures created by a social life increasingly lived online. Young women may be particularly vulnerable to internet harassment: one-quarter of females (25%) report that someone had posted something mean or hurtful about them online, compared to a slightly lower percentage of males (19%). A 2011 report by the American Academy of Pediatrics Council on Communications and Media noted that, while communication skills and social connection may be enhanced by social media, it is critical to recognize that “a large part of this generation’s social and emotional development is occurring while on the Internet and on cell phones.” Among the myriad challenges young people face in today’s society, we must collectively stay aware of the role of social media.

Recent high school graduates feel some of these concerns more acutely than high school students do. Recent high school grads are more likely than current high school students to experience financial problems such as personal financial hardship (63% vs. 46%, respectively) and pressure to financially support their parents (48% vs. 37%, respectively). Concerns about health and healthcare are also more prevalent among recent graduates (50% vs. 36%, respectively). These differences suggest that some issues become more problematic with age, particularly in the years immediately after high school when youth are transitioning into lives that are more independent.

**Problems and challenges faced by
high school students and graduates**

	2012				2008	
	HS Students		HS Graduates		HS Students	
	(Major Problem, Minor Problem)		(Major Problem, Minor Problem)		Major Problem	Minor Problem
Personal financial concerns, such as finding money to make ends meet	15%	31%	28%	35%	23%	33%
Pressure to look a certain way	11%	33%	10%	28%	15%	35%
Family problems or not getting along with parents	12%	31%	11%	25%	19%	37%
Pressure to financially help out parents	11%	26%	18%	29%	NA	NA
Health concerns, including cost of or availability of healthcare	10%	27%	23%	27%	18%	31%
Concerns about personal safety	9%	25%	10%	24%	17%	36%
Relating to friends and peers	8%	29%	8%	24%	NA	NA
Interacting with teachers, professors, and other authority figures besides parents	7%	25%	7%	20%	NA	NA

In addition to discussing overall percentages such as these, it is important to highlight variation in perceptions of problems and challenges across demographic subgroups such as sex, race/ethnicity, and income. In terms of sex, nearly one-half of females (48%) report the pressure to look a certain way is a major or minor problem for them compared to just over one in three males. Females also more often express concerns about personal safety compared to males (38% vs. 31%).

The gravity of a number of problems voiced by today's youth varies by race/ethnicity. In particular, Hispanic youth are more likely to report major or minor problems compared to the overall population of 2012 respondents in terms of: health or healthcare (55% vs. 41%, respectively), personal safety (44% vs. 34%, respectively), pressure to help parents financially (52% vs. 40%, respectively), and family problems, including not getting along with parents (50% vs. 40%, respectively).

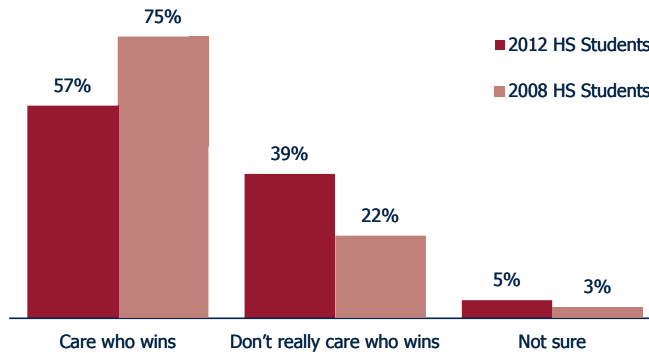
Furthermore, respondents differ in their levels of concern based on their perceived level of income. As one would expect, compared to their wealthier counterparts, those who report below average income levels are twice as likely to cite major concerns over personal finances (39% vs. 18%) and pressure to help their parents financially (25% vs. 13%). Lower income youth are also more likely to indicate high levels of concern about their health or healthcare issues (25% vs. 14%, respectively). Overall, these findings demonstrate that Hispanics and those with below average income are more likely to express problems pertaining to finances, health, and safety.

6. OUTLOOK ON POLITICS AND THE FUTURE OF THE COUNTRY

Interest in the presidential election plummets

Americans generally exhibit strong, consistent interest in who wins the presidency. In September 2011, a national poll done by the Pew Center found that a large majority (81%) of Americans cared “a good deal” about the outcome of the presidential election, down roughly 4 percentage points from October 2007. In contrast to the nation as a whole, when asked about their level of interest in the outcome of the 2012 presidential election, only 57% of high school students examined in the 2012 *State of Our Nation's Youth* survey report caring about who wins, down from 75% in 2008. Nearly two in five (39%) high school students report that they “do not really care who wins” the 2012 presidential election. Today's high school students and graduates reflect similar levels of interest in the election, with 61% indicating they care who wins. While most high school students in the 2012 survey will not be of voting age by the November presidential election, the contrast with 2008 suggests a significant decline in interest in presidential politics.

High school students' level of concern over the outcome of the upcoming presidential election



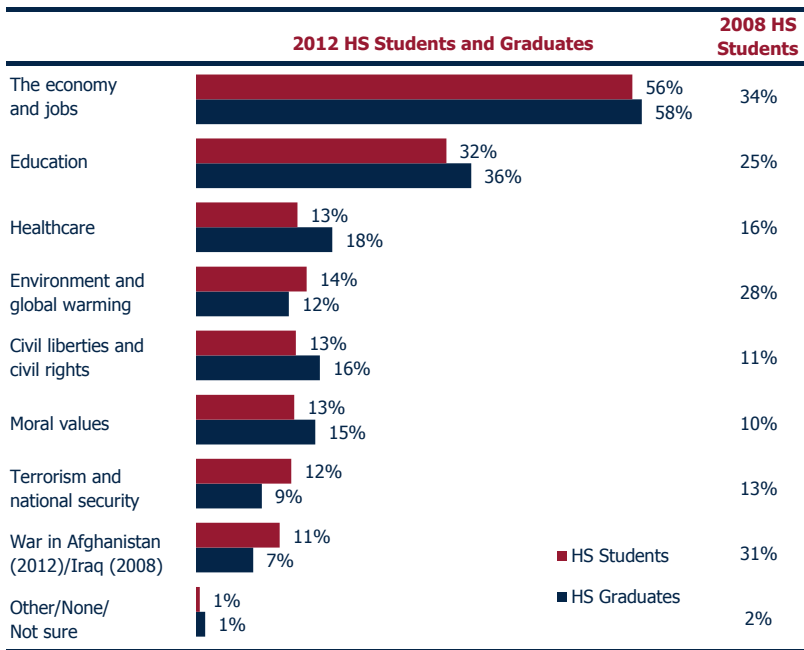
Issues most important when deciding whom to vote for

At the same time that interest in the presidential election is in decline among respondents, high school students' priorities in choosing a presidential candidate have also shifted. In 2008, only 34% of high school students surveyed chose the economy and jobs as their issues of highest concern when deciding whom to vote for. By 2012, this proportion increased to 56%. Similarly, among high school graduates, 58% say the economy and jobs are one of their top issues. Education is also a top issue for both high school students and graduates, and increased in importance since 2008. Nearly one in three high school students (32%) and graduates (36%) cite education as a high-priority issue. Among high school students, this number increased by 11 percentage points (from 25%) since 2008.

Given the 2010 healthcare legislation and the surrounding media attention, the proportion of respondents selecting it as a top concern is surprisingly small, and substantially trails the share of students selecting the economy and education as their top concerns. Only 13% of today's high school students and 18% of graduates consider healthcare one of the most critical issues in the upcoming election. High school students who singled out healthcare as among the most important issues are down 3% from 2008. The nation's youth differ considerably from the general population in this area: the Pew Center in September 2011 reported that 25% of American voters viewed healthcare as the most important issue in the 2012 election.

Concern for the nation’s military conflicts show the greatest decline since 2008. In the 2008 study, 31% of high school students cited the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as a top issue. In 2012, with a continually weakening job market and following the conclusion of the war in Iraq, the priorities of high school students and graduates have shifted to economics: only 11% of high school students and 7% of graduates report the war in Afghanistan is a top priority.

Most important issues in voting decision among high school students and graduates

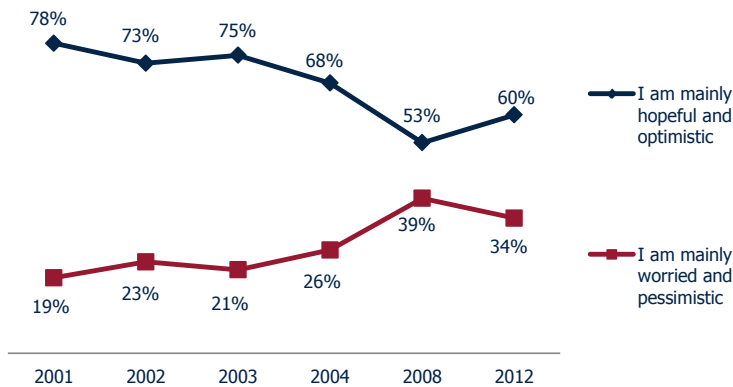


Reclaiming optimism on the future of the country

High school students in the 2012 *State of Our Nation’s Youth Survey* are regaining hope and optimism in thinking about the future of the country. After falling to 53% of high school students in 2008, 60% of students now describe themselves as hopeful and optimistic. If this trend continues, levels of optimism may approach those reported in 2004 and earlier, which ranged from 68% to 78%. Among high school graduates, just over half (54%) say they are hopeful or optimistic about the future.

While this trend shows evidence of improvement, 24% of high school students remain “worried and pessimistic,” as do 37% of high school graduates. While many young people find themselves pessimistic about the nation’s future, an interesting trend emerges when comparing the attitudes of high school students from four years ago to those of today’s high school students. Accompanying the increase in optimism has been a decrease in interest about the outcome of the presidential election.

High school students’ outlook for the future*



*Source: *State of Our Nation’s Youth* survey, 2001–2012

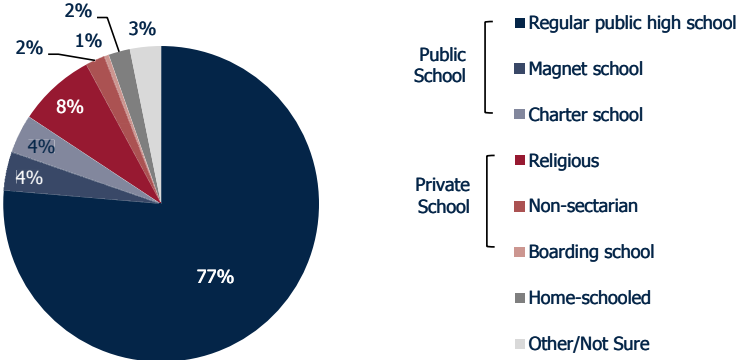
7. HIGH SCHOOLS

Public schools dominate the education landscape as private schools decline

The past decade has accompanied declines in the share of secondary students attending private schools, while enrollment in public schools has been on the rise. Recent reports from the U.S. Department of Education indicate a considerable shift between 1999 and 2009, with enrollment in public secondary schools increasing by a sizable 11% and private secondary enrollment dropping slightly by about one-half percent. Among the factors contributing to this shift are the economic recession, significant increases in the cost of private schooling, and growing popularity of public charter schools; while educating fewer than 5% of students, charter school enrollment has more than tripled from 1999 to 2009.

Reflecting the nation as a whole, a large majority of high school students measured in the 2012 *State of Our Nation's Youth* survey attend publicly funded schools (84%). While national interest in and availability of magnet and charter schools has risen in recent years, these schools account for only 8% of the students surveyed, while 77% of students attend regular public schools. Private schools, mostly religiously affiliated, educate 10% of this year's *State of Our Nation's Youth* high school respondents. Alternative forms of education, such as home-schooling, are the least common, educating only 2% of survey respondents.

Type of schools attended by high school students



High schools achieve better scores when graded by students

Researchers and policymakers devote considerable attention to examining the educational implications of different school characteristics and school sectors. Through the *State of Our Nation's Youth* survey, students are given a rare opportunity to lend their voices to this important conversation.

When asked to rate the quality of their schools, today's high school students reflect improvements from previous years. From 2001 to 2008, students' ratings of the quality of their schools were relatively static; roughly one in five students gave their schools a grade of an A. This year, one in three high school students (33%) give their schools such high marks, indicating that students are increasingly satisfied with the quality of their education. The most common grade given to schools is a B (42%), whereas roughly half as many students (20%) indicate their schools perform at a

level worthy of a C grade. Only 6% give their schools the lowest grades of D or F. In terms of grade point averages (GPA), high school students give their schools a 3.0, or an overall B average. This year’s rating compares favorably to past years, which ranged from 2.7 to 2.9.

This positive trend is an unexpected finding amidst the numerous budget cutbacks implemented in education systems in many states. Such cuts have forced several districts to increase class sizes, reduce their services, programs, and supplies, lay off or eliminate personnel, and even shorten the school year. Consequently, more than eight in ten districts are inadequately funded according to a report by the American Association of School Administrators. Yet, compared to past years, today’s high school students reflect favorably on the quality of their schools. As discussed in detail below, compared to past years, higher percentages of high school students are receiving A’s: It may be that the rising grades students *give* to their schools reflects the rising grades students *receive*.

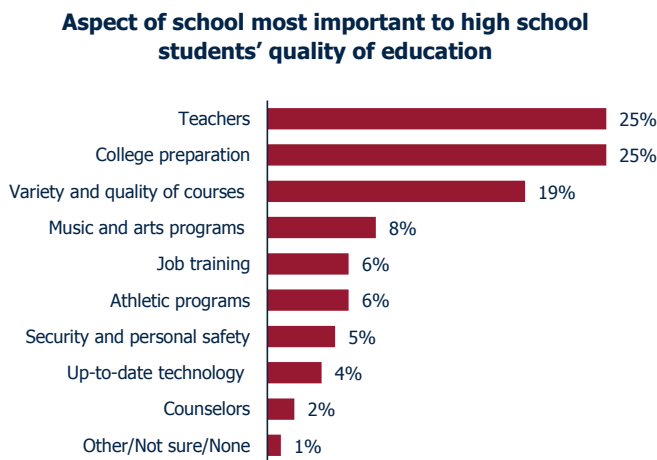
How high school students grade their schools							
Grade (Numeric Rating)	HS Students						
	2012 %	2008 %	2005 %	2004 %	2003 %	2002 %	2001 %
A (4)	33	18	21	21	21	17	20
B (3)	42	46	51	52	56	51	48
C (2)	20	25	22	21	19	22	22
D (1)	4	7	4	4	2	6	6
F (0)	2	4	2	2	2	3	4
Average rating	3.0	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.7	2.7

If you could give your current school a grade from A to F, what grade would you give it?

Attitudes toward the quality of their schools differ by high school students’ race/ethnicity. African American youth rate the quality of their schools lower than that of the overall population of high school students; African Americans are less likely to give their school an A (19% vs. 33%). Differences exist by income level as well, where students from households with below-average income are less likely to give their high schools high ratings compared to students from households with above-average income.

For example, only 18% of high school students who reported below average family incomes award their schools A’s compared to 33% of students from average income families and 37% of students from above average income families. Likewise, *State of Our Nation’s Youth* participants who attend private schools are almost twice as likely than the overall population of high school students to give their schools A’s (60% vs. 33%).

When asked to identify the aspect of their current school that is most important to the quality of education received, students place the most value on academics rather than school resources or extracurricular programming. The two most common responses among high school students include college preparation (25%) and teachers (25%), followed by the variety of high quality courses offered (19%). Less than 10% of students cite aspects of their school pertaining to enrichment programs or non-academic features as most important to the quality of their education: music and arts programs (8%), athletic programs (6%), job training (6%), security and personal safety (5%), current technology (4%), and counselors (2%). Today’s youth clearly value factors widely recognized to play a role in student learning and achievement.



Receiving A's is on the rise among high school students

When it comes to describing their grades from a most recent report card, more high school students are earning A's. Since 2001, the distribution of grades that high school students reportedly receive has been relatively consistent, with only small changes occurring in the shares of students earning grades A through F. 2012 marks the first year since 2001 that the distribution of students in a given grade category has shifted by more than 10 percentage points: the 37% of high school students who report earning mostly A's on their last report card marks a sizable 13 percentage point increase over the 2008 *State of Our Nation's Youth* survey. Accompanying this trend are smaller percentages of high school students reporting a mix of B's and C's: 13% in 2012 versus 22% in 2008.

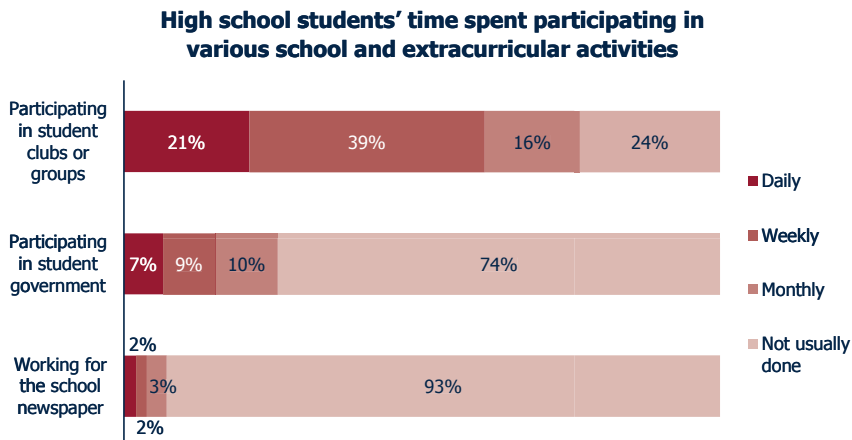
Before concluding that this year’s upward shift in grades suggests our nation’s high school students are academically stronger than in the past, it is important to recognize that a number of other factors could be contributing to these trends; grade inflation and higher accountability standards are two explanations researchers and educators have given in recent years.

High school students’ grades received on their last report card							
	HS Students						
	2012 %	2008 %	2005 %	2004 %	2003 %	2002 %	2001 %
Mostly A’s	37	25	26	28	32	22	20
Mix of A’s and B’s	36	36	38	36	35	35	33
Mostly B’s	7	6	7	6	7	8	8
Mix of B’s and C’s	13	22	20	21	19	23	26
Mostly C’s or below	6	10	9	9	7	12	13
Not sure/cannot recall	<1	1	-	-	-	-	-

Which of these choices comes closest to describing the grades you received on your last report card?

High school students are highly engaged in student clubs

Today’s high school students lead highly engaged lives outside of the classroom setting. More than three-quarters (76%) of 2012 high school students report participating in student clubs or groups at least once a month or more, while only one in four (24%) cite that clubs or groups are not part of their usual activities. How often students report that they participate in groups or clubs varies from daily for 21% of students, weekly for 39%, and monthly for 16%. More than one-quarter (26%) of high school students participate in student government on a daily (7%), weekly (9%), or monthly (10%) basis, and roughly 7% of students contribute to their school’s student newspaper.

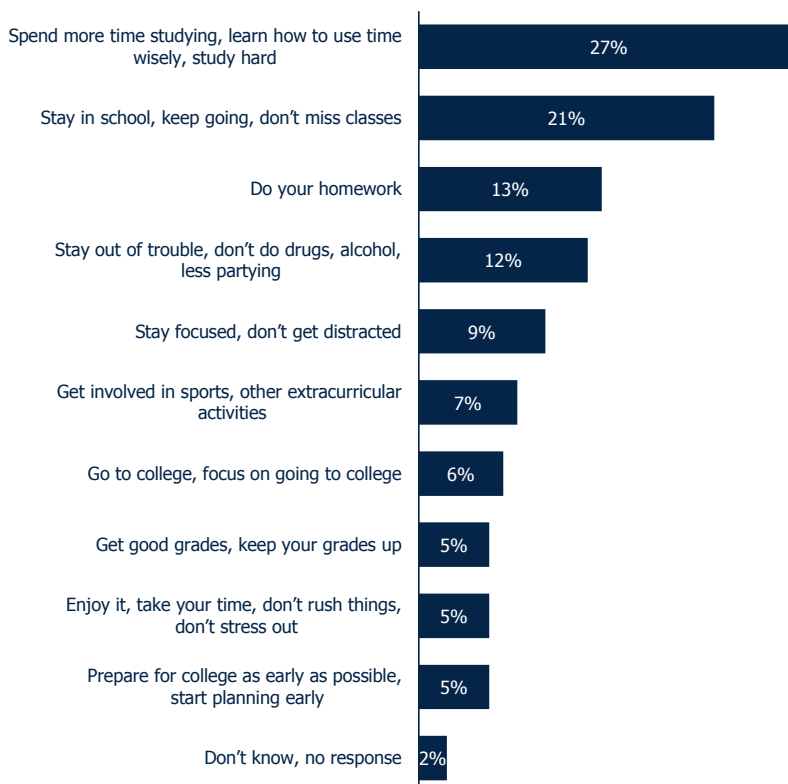


Advice to today's high school students from graduates

The 2012 *State of Our Nation's Youth* survey provided a unique opportunity for high school graduates to offer words of wisdom to today's high school students. When asked "Knowing what you know now, what advice would you give to current high school students?" several themes emerged from graduates' open-ended responses, shedding light on the aspects of the high school experience most critical to success during the transition beyond high school.

The most frequent advice given by high school graduates concerns studying: 27% advise high school students to spend more time studying, 21% highlight staying in school and avoiding missing classes, and 13% single out doing homework. Five percent provide encouragement to get good grades. Similarly, 6% advise high school students to focus on going to college, and 5% recommend preparing and planning for college as early as possible. Non-academic advice includes staying out of trouble (avoid drugs, alcohol, and too much partying, 12%), getting involved in sports and other extracurricular activities (7%), and simply taking more time to enjoy being in high school (5%). Altogether, this advice points toward recognition among graduates that their focus on academic activities during high school may not have satisfactorily prepared them to enter post-secondary education and/or the workforce.

Advice to high school students from graduates



8. COLLEGE PREPARATION AND ENROLLMENT

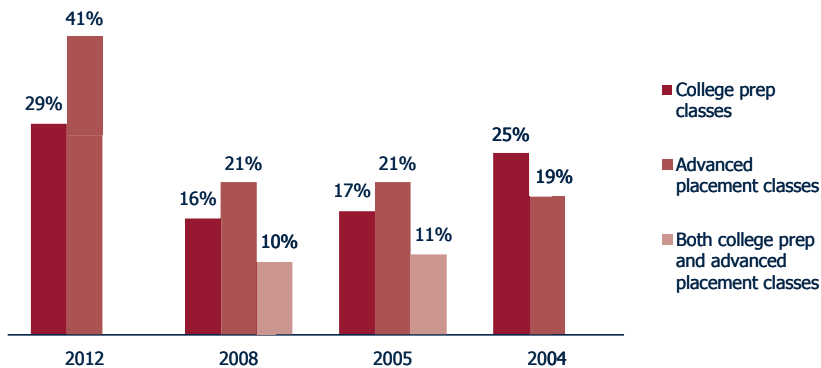
In recent decades, the U.S. has witnessed steady growth in students' educational aspirations, postsecondary participation rates, and the variety of educational options available. Yet inequality remains one of the most vexing challenges our society faces; improving college access and degree attainment for all students, regardless of background, remains a national priority. In his February 24, 2009, speech to Congress, President Obama announced his goal for the United States to reclaim our position atop the world in terms of the percentage of college-educated citizens. Achieving these national goals depends on students' aspirations, academic preparation, and ability to successfully transition into and pay for college. For the first time, information on these critical issues has been collected and examined as part of the *State of Our Nation's Youth* survey.

Aspirations, coursework, and remediation

When it comes to the desire to attain a college education, today's youth are highly motivated: 97% of high school students plan to complete a two- or four-year college degree, up from 93% in 2008 and 92% in 2004. Among those who have already graduated high school, aspirations are similar to high school students: 92% of 2012 high school graduates desire to complete a degree or have already completed a degree.

Students' growing desire for a college education is evident in the types of classes taken during high school. Sizable shares of today's high school students are preparing themselves for college while still in high school by taking Advanced Placement (41%) and other college-preparatory classes (29%). The tendency to take more advanced coursework during high school is sharply on the rise compared to previous *State of Our Nation's Youth* studies.

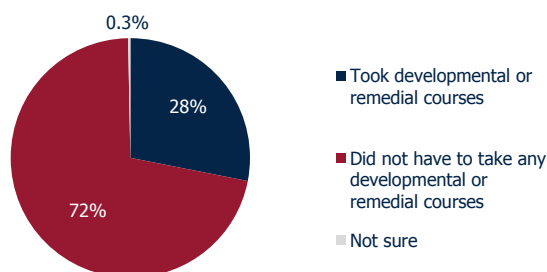
High school students taking advanced placement and college-preparation courses



Not surprisingly, Advanced Placement and college-preparatory coursework is more prevalent among students who enroll in college than among students who do not enter college following high school. Nearly half (47%) of college enrollees took Advanced Placement courses during high school and almost one in three (30%) took other college-preparatory classes. By comparison, at 21%, a significantly smaller share of high school graduates not enrolled in college took Advanced Placement courses while in high school.

An unfortunate countervailing trend to advanced college-prep coursework is the sizable share of college students requiring developmental or remedial courses to be ready for college-level courses. Typically focused on math, English, and writing skills, remedial coursework is a growing nationwide concern for colleges and students alike. Officials with ACT, Inc., the not-for-profit organization that administers the ACT test, estimated that 28% of the high school class of 2011 did not score highly enough to meet any of the ACT standards for expected college success, and an October 2011 *Wall Street Journal* article reported that two-thirds of students who graduated on time from New York City high schools were unprepared for college. Among high school graduates who were enrolled in college at the time of the *State of Our Nation's Youth* survey, 28% say they needed to take developmental or remedial courses during college. Citing the high costs associated with providing remedial education, by June 2012, twenty-two states and higher education systems had moved to reduce or eliminate funding for remedial education, putting this topic at the forefront of the nation's education policy concerns.

Enrolled college students having taken developmental or remedial courses



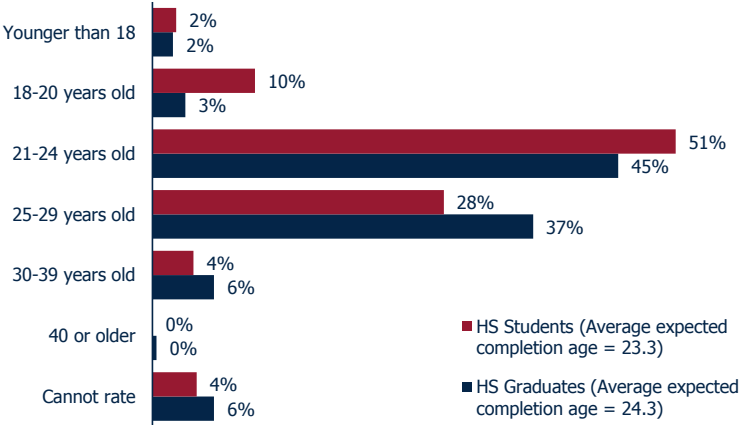
Transitioning to college immediately following graduation

When it comes to entering college, students are increasingly driven to enter college immediately following graduation. A 2012 *Condition of Education* report from the U.S. Department of Education shows a 35-year trend of increasing rates of immediate college enrollment. Among students surveyed in the *State of Our Nation's Youth* study, 86% of high school students who aspire to complete a college degree plan to enter college immediately after graduation, a share mirroring the 87% of high school graduates who ultimately did enroll immediately following high school.

A major theme from the *Condition of Education* report was the differences in immediate enrollment rates by family income: the immediate college enrollment rate of high school completers from low-income families is 30 percentage points lower than the rate among those from high-income families (52% vs. 82%), while the immediate college enrollment rate of high school completers from middle-income families is 67%. In contrast, among the high school graduates in the 2012 *State of Our Nation's Youth* study, more than 80% of graduates from each of the perceived family income levels (below-average, average, and above-average) enrolled in college immediately after high school. Only moderate differences are found between graduates from below-average and above-average family incomes (82% vs. 93%).

Broadly reflecting on their own educational trajectories, today's high school students and graduates expect to complete their formal education while in their early 20s. On average, high school students anticipate finishing their schooling at age 23. Perhaps due to the lessons learned since leaving high school, high school graduates expect they will not have completed their education until age 24. Nearly one in three (32%) high school students expect to finish after the age of 25, a significantly smaller share than the corresponding 44% of high school graduates.

Expected age at completing formal education

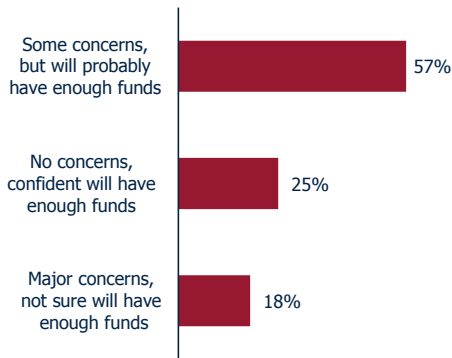


Paying for college

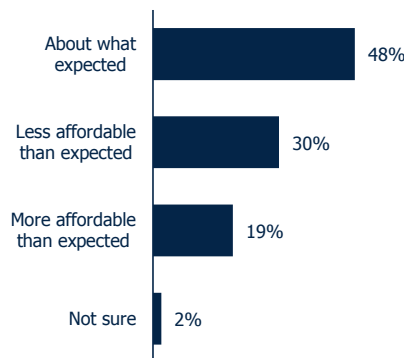
One of the greatest educational challenges students face today is paying for college amidst skyrocketing costs. To cope, students have increasingly relied on financial aid, including money awarded through grants and scholarships, as well as loans that must be repaid over time with interest. Today more than ever, students must confront the harsh realities of paying back student loans well into their adult years. The College Board's *Trends in Student Aid 2011* report indicates that from 2005 to 2011, federal grant aid to students increased by 141% in inflation-adjusted dollars, and education tax credits rose by 108%. Most concerning to students' financial futures, private education loans also grew from \$5.1 billion in 2000–01 to a high of \$22.1 billion in 2007–08, although have since declined to \$6 billion amid the nation's economic downturn and financial crisis. Based on a July 16 report by the student loan provider Sallie Mae, the immediate financial aid climate is not promising: compared to previous years, the 2011–12 academic year marks a shift in how families pay for college away from grants and scholarships and toward student and parent borrowing. Interestingly, while college costs have been on the rise, postsecondary enrollment rates are also rising. These counterintuitive trends can be explained by the concomitant rise in the costs of *not* going to college; a phenomenon an April 2012 article in *The Atlantic* labeled as “the paradox of college” resulting from a tripling of the earnings gap between college-educated and non-college-educated adults.

Reflecting this challenging context, among *State of Our Nation's Youth* participants, three in four high school students who aspire to complete a college degree have concerns about paying for it: 18% have major concerns that they will not have sufficient resources to pay for college, while 57% have some concerns but are more optimistic about having enough funds to pay for college. Among enrolled college students, 48% indicate that the cost of attendance matches their expectations, while 30% find college to be less affordable than expected. At 19%, fewer than one in five college students report that their college education has been more affordable than expected.

High school students' concerns about paying for college



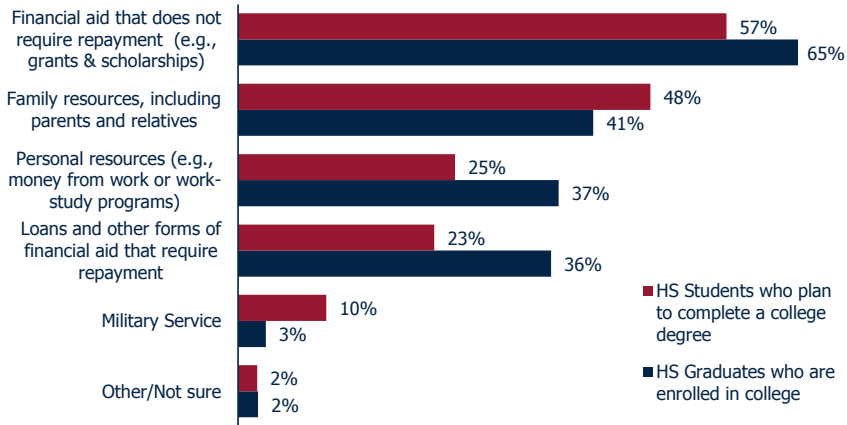
College enrollees' attitudes on college costs



High school students' expected means of paying for college differ from the actual experiences of college enrollees in their use of loans, military service, and family resources (financial help from parents and other relatives). Nearly one-half of high school students expect to draw on family resources (48%), relative to 41% of enrolled college students who actually use family resources to help cover college costs. In addition, while one in ten high school students anticipate using military service to help offset college, only 3% actually do use military service in this way. High school students may be overly optimistic about the need to use loans and other forms of financial aid that will require repayment: whereas 23% of high school students expect to draw on loans, a significantly greater share (36%) of enrolled college students rely on college loans.

In this study, Asians stand out from the general population of high school students: nine out of ten (90%) Asian respondents plan to finance college by way of grants, scholarships, or other financial aid not requiring repayment, compared to 57% of the overall population of high school students. This may suggest that, compared to the average high school student, Asian students are more successful at obtaining grants and scholarships, or are at least more optimistic about their ability to obtain non-repayable financial aid. In addition, African Americans stand out from the general population of college enrollees. At 20%, African Americans less often rely on family resources as a means of paying for college (compared to 41% of all college-enrolled students).

Means of paying for college: Expectations of high school students versus experiences of college enrollees



9. EMPLOYMENT AND CAREERS

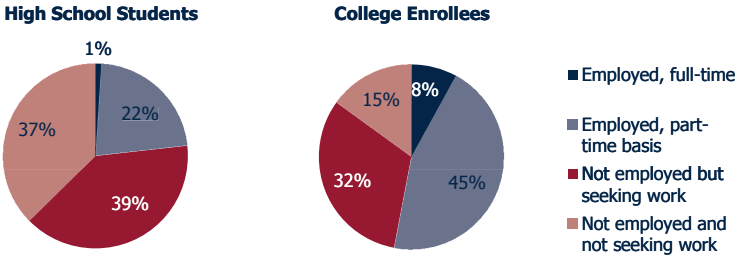
Since 2007, a large portion of the news regarding our nation’s economy has focused on “the Great Recession” and the implications this has had for nearly all Americans. While the economy is reported to be gaining strength and overall labor market conditions have improved this year, high unemployment remains. The average unemployment rate of 8.2% (as of June 2012) and a shrinking economy have had profound effects on the composition of the American workforce and numerous reports have shown that certain segments of the population have suffered more during this economic downturn. Young adults aged 16 to 24 are cited in a 2010 report by the Pew Research Center to have borne a disproportionate share of the job losses as a result of the recession. Along with youth, African Americans, Hispanics, and those with only a high school degree or no degree have experienced more job losses than their counterparts. Men have also experienced greater job loss than women. It is within the context of a bleak economic climate that information on employment and career prospects has been gathered from today’s young adults as part of the 2012 *State of Our Nation’s Youth* study.

Student employment has dropped amid economic downturn

According to newly released data from the U.S. National Center for Education Statistics, the number of students employed during high school has dropped to its lowest mark in more than 20 years. Only 16% of current high school students hold jobs, about half the proportion (32%) of students in 1990 holding jobs. Similarly, the percentage of full-time college students who work has dropped from 52% in 2000 to 40% in 2012. Job availability is the main issue at play according to a recent study by the National Bureau of Economic Research. Job sectors traditionally offering students their first jobs—fast food restaurants, movie theaters, clothing stores, and other large retailers—have shifted toward hiring recent college graduates or older Americans forced to re-enter the labor market out of financial need.

Students participating in the 2012 *State of Our Nation's Youth* study are faring slightly better than the nation as a whole: 23% of high school students and 53% of enrolled college students say they are employed at the time of the survey. More than three in four (77%) high school students surveyed do not have a job, including 39% who are actively seeking work and 37% who choose not to work. Twenty-two percent work part-time, while only 1% works full time. Among enrolled college students, 45% work part-time and 8% hold a full-time position. Just under half (47%) of enrolled college students are not employed: 32% are looking for work, while 15% are not.

Employment status of high school and college enrollees

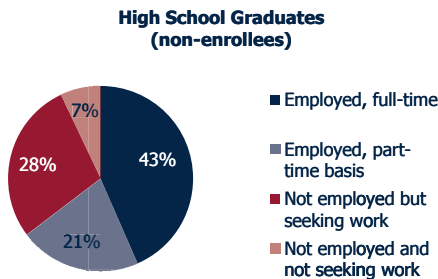


While Hispanics and African Americans are two groups the 2010 Pew Research Center report found to have faced a disproportionate loss of jobs in recent years, the *State of Our Nation's Youth* study did not find significant differences in the employment rates among today's Hispanic and African American high school students. Among all high school students who participated in the *State of Our Nation's Youth* survey, 23% report working. Similarly, 17% of Hispanic students and 15% of African American students report working.

Lack of job opportunities impedes employment among high school graduates

Among high school graduates who were not enrolled in college at the time of the *State of Our Nation's Youth* survey, nearly two-thirds (64%) are employed: 43% with full-time jobs and 21% with part-time positions (21%). The non-enrolled high school graduates who report not working consist of 28% who are actively pursuing work and 7% who are not willfully unemployed. In other words, the vast majority of non-working, non-enrolled high school graduates are actively seeking work. Among those who are not employed but actively seeking work, a lack of employment opportunities is the leading reason given for their joblessness: 58% state they have been unable to find a job and 21% have not been able to find the job they want. Family responsibilities hindering work (12%) and volunteering instead of working (2%) are far less common reasons for being unemployed.

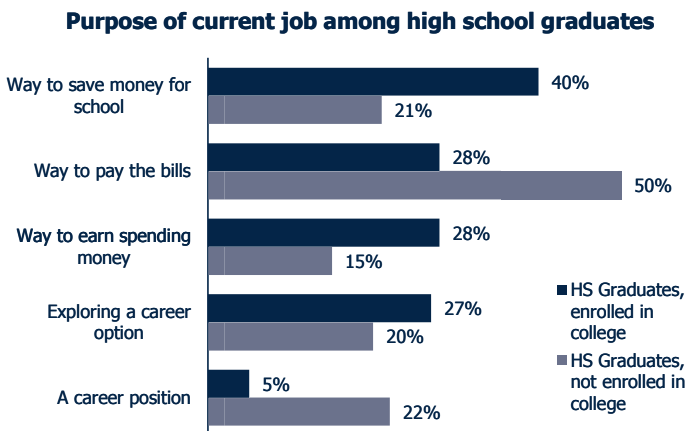
Employment status among non-college-enrolled high school graduates



Reasons for working among high school graduates

For high school graduates, holding a job while attending college could serve a variety of purposes and for many young adults it is a time when new financial responsibilities take hold. Among the college-enrolled *State of Our Nation's Youth* participants, 40% describe the purpose of their job as a way to save money for school. This finding is not surprising given that 37% of this same population also report that they plan to or are using personal resources to pay for their college education. Paying bills (28%), earning spending money (28%), and working to explore career options (27%) are the next most popular responses that college-enrolled students use to describe their jobs. Only 5% consider their jobs actual career positions.

For high school graduates not enrolled in college, employment takes on a different meaning. One-half of this group describes their current job as a way for them to pay their bills. About one in five non-enrolled high school graduates characterize their current job as the following: a career position (22%), a way to save money for school (21%), and a means of exploring a career option (20%). At 15%, the least common way of depicting a current job is as a means to earn spending money. As was the case among college enrollees, most non-enrolled high school graduates cite financial needs as being more important than career-related purposes for working.

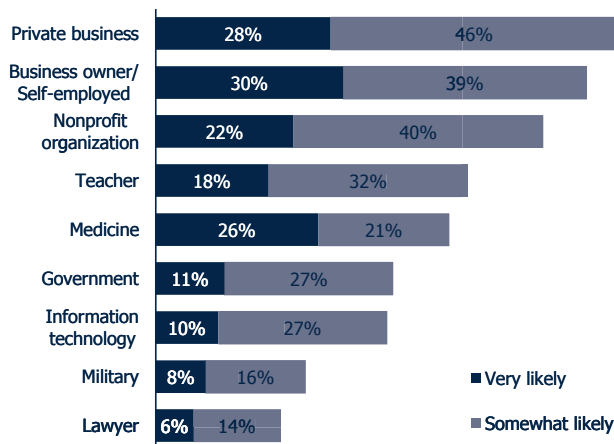


Working in the private sector defines the career goals of high school graduates

As high school graduates embark on the early stages of their professional lives, they aspire to work in a wide range of careers within the public and private sectors, and at various levels of prestige and pay. This year’s *State of Our Nation’s Youth* survey shows that certain types of careers appear to be more attractive than others. When asked to rate the likelihood that they would end up working in a number of different areas of employment, a large majority of high school graduates indicate that it is likely (either very likely or somewhat likely) they will work for a private business (74%) or start their own business or work for themselves (69%). Holding a career in the nonprofit sector is found to be of nearly equal interest among high school graduates, with 62% of respondents stating that working for a nonprofit organization is a likely option. One in two high school grads (50%) consider teaching a likely career path, followed closely by working in medicine (47%). Smaller shares of high school graduates indicate they are somewhat or very likely to pursue a career in government (39%), information technology (37%), the military (24%), or the legal profession (20%).

It is often widely assumed that men and women vary in terms of their career interests, and these findings support that assumption. Females are more likely than males to imagine themselves in the following careers: medicine (57% vs. 38%), nonprofit organizations (70% vs. 54%), and teaching (57% vs. 42%). Males, on the other hand, are more likely than females to imagine themselves in a government (46% vs. 33%), information technology (46% vs. 30%), and military job (33% vs. 15%).

Likelihood of pursuing different careers among high school graduates



RESEARCH METHODS

The 2012 Horatio Alger *State of Our Nation's Youth* survey was conducted as a collaborative effort between Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc., and NORC at the University of Chicago.

From March 15 to April 1, 2012, telephone interviews were conducted with 1,503 current and former high school students, including 1,003 currently enrolled high school students and 500 recent high school graduates. To qualify as a high school student, respondents must be currently enrolled in high school and over the age of 12. To qualify as a recent high school graduate, respondents must be younger than 24 and have graduated from high school; 348 were currently enrolled in higher education at the time of the survey.

The sample of current and former high school students was based on a compiled list provided by American Student Lists. Selected telephone numbers were called randomly with the sample structured to ensure appropriate geographic representation. Within each household, students were selected by a procedure designed to provide an approximate balance of respondents by sex and age.

The data's margin of sampling error at the 95% confidence level is +/- 3.1 percentage points within the high school student population and +/- 4.4 percentage points within the high school graduate population. Margins of error for subgroups are larger, and sampling error is just one form of error or bias that can affect survey results. Sampling weights were calculated to adjust for sample design aspects such as differential response rates across various demographic groups, including sex and race/ethnicity. The weighted data, which thus reflect the U.S. general population, were used for all analyses. All differences reported between subgroups are at the 95% (or higher) level of statistical significance, meaning that there is only a 5% (or less) probability that the observed differences could be attributed to chance variation in sampling.

About Hart Research Associates

Founded in 1971, Hart Research Associates is one of the leading survey research firms in the United States and has been at the cutting edge of change in the field of public opinion for more than three decades. In that time, Hart Research has conducted well over 5,000 public opinion surveys and has administered and analyzed interviews among more than three million individuals. They have also undertaken more than 5,000 focus group sessions. Peter D. Hart Research has also become well known for helping diverse public interest groups—nonprofits, social cause organizations, political organizations, and labor unions—refine their approach to membership cultivation, image development, strategic planning, and communications. Hart Research brings a great deal of creative thinking to designing research strategically and framing the results in ways that clients can use to solidify and expand their membership support.

About NORC at the University of Chicago

NORC at the University of Chicago is an independent research organization headquartered in downtown Chicago with additional offices on the University of Chicago's campus, the D.C. Metro area, Atlanta, Boston, and San Francisco. NORC also supports a nationwide field staff as well as international research operations. With clients throughout the world, NORC collaborates with government agencies, foundations, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and businesses to provide data and analysis that support informed decision making in key areas including health, education, economics, crime, justice, energy, security, and the environment. NORC's more than 70 years of leadership and experience in data collection, analysis, and dissemination—coupled with deep subject matter expertise—provides the foundation for effective solutions.

DATA TABLES

Distribution of High School Students and Graduates by Age, Sex, Race/Ethnicity, and Living Area		
	HS Students %	HS Graduates %
Age¹		
14 years	10	-
15 years	26	-
16 years	26	-
17 years	26	<1
18 years	11	11
19 years	1	22
20 years	-	29
21 years	-	24
22 years	-	9
23 years	-	4
Sex		
Male	51	48
Female	49	52
Race/Ethnicity²		
Hispanic or Spanish speaking origin	16	19
White, Non-Hispanic	63	60
African American, Non-Hispanic	15	15
Asian, Non-Hispanic	2	4
Other/Not sure	4	3
Area of Living³		
Large city	11	16
Medium-to-small city	27	25
Suburb near a city	29	22
Small town not near a city	19	19
Rural or country area	13	17
Not sure	1	1

¹ How old are you?

² Are you from a Hispanic or Spanish-speaking background? IF NO, ASK: What is your race: White or Caucasian, Black or African American, Asian, or something else?

³ What is the best way to describe the area in which you live?

Distribution of High School Students and Graduates by Family Income and Education Levels

	2012	
	HS Students %	HS Graduates %
Family Income Level (compared to other American families)¹		
Far below average	2	5
Slightly below average	15	24
Just about average	41	38
Slightly above average	32	27
Far above average	4	2
Not sure	6	4
Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Education²		
Completed college degree	63	50
Didn't complete college degree	33	46
Not sure	4	4

¹ Compared with other American families, would you say that your family's income is far below average, slightly below average, just about average, slightly above average, or far above average?

² Based on the combined responses to two questions: Did either of your parents or legal guardians attend college? Did either of your parents or legal guardians complete a two- or four-year college degree?

Family Household Structure of High School Students

	2012 HS Students %
Two-Parent Household	78
Mother and Father	76
Mother or Father and Stepparent	3
Single-Parent Household	18
Mother only	16
Father only	2
Non-Parent Household	3

How would you describe your current living situation?

Living Situation after High School, by College Enrollment Status

	2012 HS Graduates	
	Enrolled in College %	Not Enrolled in College %
Parents or family member(s)	73	84
Roommate(s)	21	3
Spouse or significant other	2	9
Live alone	3	4
Not sure	0	1

How would you describe your current living situation?

Factors Important when Thinking about Education and Career Goals						
	2012					
	Essential %	Very Important %	Somewhat Important %	Just a Little Important %	Not Important at All %	Not Sure %
Helping others who are in difficulty						
HS Students	24	52	20	3	<1	<1
HS Graduates	20	57	20	2	1	<1
Helping to promote racial understanding						
HS Students	20	41	31	5	3	1
HS Graduates	19	46	27	3	6	<1
Serving and protecting society and my community						
HS Students	17	41	34	5	3	<1
HS Graduates	16	49	27	5	3	<1
Becoming involved in programs to clean up the environment						
HS Students	13	32	41	8	6	0
HS Graduates	9	38	39	7	7	0
Making a contribution to science						
HS Students	12	22	39	11	14	2
HS Graduates	7	25	40	12	14	<1
Being well-off financially						
HS Students	21	42	28	5	3	<1
HS Graduates	18	44	26	5	6	0
Becoming successful in own business						
HS Students	16	34	29	9	11	<1
HS Graduates	14	31	32	8	14	1
Raising a family						
HS Students	26	45	20	4	5	<1
HS Graduates	19	52	19	4	5	<1

<i>Continued.</i>						
	2012					
	Essential %	Very Important %	Somewhat Important %	Just a Little Important %	Not Important at All %	Not Sure %
Integrating spirituality in own life						
HS Students	16	29	31	9	14	2
HS Graduates	15	31	29	8	15	2
Participating in one of the fine arts						
HS Students	12	18	29	11	30	<1
HS Graduates	8	21	30	11	30	<1

Thinking about your educational and career goals, please tell me how important each of the following is to you.

Importance of Religion or Spirituality					
	2012				
	Very Important %	Somewhat Important %	Not Too Important %	Not at All Important %	Not Sure %
HS Students	48	31	11	9	1
HS Graduates	49	27	12	12	<1

How important is religion or spirituality in your life?

Luck, Hard Work, and the Ability to Achieve Success						
	2012					
	Strongly Agree %	Somewhat Agree %	Neither Agree nor Disagree %	Somewhat Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Not Sure %
Good luck is more important than hard work for success¹						
HS Students	4	9	5	25	57	<1
HS Graduates	3	7	5	23	62	<1
Success in life results from my actions²						
HS Students	79	17	1	1	<1	<1
HS Graduates	77	18	1	1	1	<1

¹ *In my life, good luck is more important than hard work for success.*

² *My ability to achieve success in life results from my actions.*

Interest in the Upcoming 2012 Presidential Election			
	HS Students		HS Graduates
	2012 %	2008 %	2012 %
Care who wins	57	75	61
Don't really care who wins	39	22	35
Not sure	5	3	4

Do you care who wins the presidential election this November, or do you not really care?

Level of Trust that the Government in Washington Does What Is Right		
	2012	
	HS Students %	HS Graduates %
Just about always	5	2
Most of the time	42	29
Only some of the time	49	60
Never	3	7
Not sure	1	2

How much of the time do you think that you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?

Most Important Issues to Consider when Voting in the Presidential Election			
	HS Students		HS Graduates
	2012 %	2008 %	2012 %
The economy and jobs	56	34	58
Education	32	25	36
Healthcare	13	16	18
Environment and global warming	14	28	12
Civil liberties and civil rights	13	11	16
Moral values	13	10	15
Terrorism and national security	12	13	9
War in Afghanistan (2012)/Iraq (2008)	11	31	7
Other/None/Not sure	<1	2	1

If you were going to vote in the presidential election this November, which ONE or TWO of the following issues would be the most important to you in deciding who to vote for?

Outlook toward the Future of the Country							
	HS Students						HS Graduates
	2012 %	2008 %	2004 %	2003 %	2002 %	2001 %	2012 %
Hopeful and optimistic	60	53	68	75	73	78	54
Worried and pessimistic	34	39	26	21	23	19	37
Not sure	6	8	6	4	4	3	9

When you think about the future of the country, would you say that you are mainly hopeful and optimistic, or mainly worried and pessimistic?

Most Valuable Relationship		
	2012	
	HS Students %	HS Graduates %
Family Member	80	79
Mother	47	47
Father	20	21
Sibling	8	7
Grandparent	4	3
Aunt/Uncle	1	<1
Peer	12	13
Friend	11	12
Girlfriend/Boyfriend	1	1
Non-Parent Authority Figure (e.g., teacher, counselor, coach, community leader)	2	1
Religious figure – God, Jesus	1	1
Other type of individual not listed above	4	6

Who is the one person you would identify as the most valuable and essential relationship in your life right now?

Age when One Should Become Financially Independent of Parents

	2012	
	HS Students %	HS Graduates %
15-18 years old	4	2
18-20 years old	47	31
21-24 years old	34	44
25-29 years old	9	13
30-35 years old	<1	<1
Cannot rate / outside of normal range	5	9
Average expected age	20.5	21.4

At what age do you think a child is grown and ready to be financially independent and a parent's responsibility to financially help a child ends?

Expected or Actual Age to Be Married

	2012	
	HS Students %	HS Graduates %
18-20 years old	4	4
21-24 years old	20	19
25-29 years old	49	49
30 or more	15	17
Cannot rate	12	11
Average expected age	26.0	25.9

At what age do you imagine you will be ready to get married? OR At what age did you get married?

Time Spent Participating in Various Activities						
	2012					
	Daily %	2-3 Times/ Week %	Once a Week %	1-2 Times/ Month %	Not Usually Done %	Not Sure %
Volunteering in the community						
HS Students	5	16	17	39	24	<1
HS Graduates	4	9	11	38	37	<1
Spending time with family						
HS Students	86	10	2	1	<1	0
HS Graduates	68	15	6	9	2	<1
Participating in religious or spiritual activities						
HS Students	14	24	23	13	26	-
HS Graduates	13	16	20	15	35	<1
Exercising or playing sports						
HS Students	62	24	7	3	4	<1
HS Graduates	35	37	12	9	8	<1

I'm going to mention some activities to you. For each one, please tell me how often you participate in it during a typical month.

Time Spent per Day Accessing News about the Country		
	2012	
	HS Students %	HS Graduates %
15 minutes or less	30	27
16-30 minutes	32	29
31-60 minutes	26	30
61-90 minutes	4	2
91-120 minutes	5	7
More than 2 hours	2	3
Cannot rate	2	2
Average time spent per day (in minutes)	38.7	45.2

About how many minutes each day do you spend getting news about what is going on in the country?

Ways of Accessing the Internet		
	2012	
	HS Students %	HS Graduates %
A personal or family computer	95	91
Computers at school	84	67
On a personal cell phone or tablet	65	72

I'm going to read you a few ways that people might access the Internet. For each, please tell me whether you use that device or location to access the Internet: Computers at your school; A personal or family computer where you live; On your personal cell phone or tablet.

Top Sources of News and Media about the Country			
	HS Students¹		HS Graduates
	2012 %	2008 %	2012 %
Television	66	71	60
Local television news	28	33	27
Cable television news	23	26	20
Network news	11	12	12
Comedy news shows	9	7	9
Online/Internet	48	32	56
News websites	23	20	27
Online social networking	21	NA	24
Online blogs	6	13	10
Newspapers	15	17	16
Radio	16	13	14
None/Not sure	1	1	<1

Which one or two of the following would you say are important sources for you in getting news about what is going on in the country?

¹ The number and phrasing of response options differed between 2012 and 2008 surveys, and caution should be employed when comparing the percentages. 2012 response options included: Local television news; News Web sites; Cable television news; Online social networking; Printed newspapers; The radio; Network news; Comedy news shows; Online blogs; None; Not sure. 2008 response options included: Local television news; Cable television news; News Web sites; Newspapers; Online blogs; The radio; Network news; Comedy news shows; Not sure.

Problems and Issues Faced			
	HS Students		HS Graduates
	2012 %	2008 %	2012 %
Family problems or not getting along with parents			
Major problem	12	19	11
Minor problem	31	37	25
Not a problem	57	44	64
Not sure	-	-	<1
Pressure to look a certain way			
Major problem	11	15	10
Minor problem	33	35	28
Not a problem	55	49	63
Not sure	<1	1	-
Pressure to financially help out parents			
Major problem	11	NA	18
Minor problem	26	NA	29
Not a problem	64	NA	52
Not sure	<1	NA	<1
Concerns about personal safety			
Major problem	9	17	10
Minor problem	25	36	24
Not a problem	65	47	66
Not sure	<1	-	-
Health concerns, including cost of or availability of healthcare			
Major problem	10	18	23
Minor problem	27	31	27
Not a problem	63	50	50
Not sure	<1	1	<1
Personal financial concerns, such as finding money to make ends meet¹			
Major problem	15	23	28
Minor problem	31	33	35
Not a problem	54	43	38
Not sure	<1	1	-
Relating to friends and peers			
Major problem	8	NA	8
Minor problem	29	NA	24
Not a problem	63	NA	67
Not sure	<1	NA	<1
Interacting with teachers, professors, and other authority figures besides parents			
Major problem	7	NA	7
Minor problem	25	NA	20
Not a problem	68	NA	73
Not sure	<1	NA	<1

I am going to list problems that some people your age face. For each one I read, please tell me whether it is a major problem for you, a minor problem for you, or not a problem for you.

¹ Prior to 2012, the item was phrased "Financial pressure."

Incidents with Mean or Hurtful Online Postings

	HS Students		HS Graduates
	2012 %	2008 %	2012 %
No, no one has ever posted anything mean or hurtful	76	82	79
Yes, someone has posted something mean or hurtful	24	16	20
Not sure	1	2	1

Has anyone ever intentionally posted something mean or hurtful about you online, such as on a Google-plus page, a Facebook page, or an instant messenger, or has that not happened to you?

Type of High School Attended

	2012	
	HS Students %	HS Graduates %
Public school	84	89
Regular public high school	77	83
Charter or magnet school	8	5
Private school	10	8
Religious	8	7
Non-religious	2	<1
Boarding school	<1	<1
Taught by parents/home schooled	2	2
Other/Not Sure	3	2

What type of school do (did) you attend?

High School Students' Ratings of the Quality of Current School

Grade (Numeric Rating)	HS Students	
	2012 %	2008 %
A (4)	33	18
B (3)	42	46
C (2)	20	25
D (1)	4	7
F (0)	2	4
Average rating	3.0	2.7

If you could give your current school a grade from A to F, what grade would you give it?

Aspects of Current High School Important to Quality of Education

	2012
	HS Students %
College preparation	25
Teachers	25
Variety and quality of courses	19
Music and arts programs	8
Athletic programs	6
Job training	6
Security and personal safety	5
Up-to-date technology	4
Counselors	2
Other/Not sure/None	1

Which of the following aspects of your current school do you think are most important for the quality of education you are receiving?

High School Students' Grades on Last Report Card

	HS Students	
	2012 %	2008 %
Mostly A's	37	25
Mix of A's and B's	36	36
Mostly B's	7	6
Mix of B's and C's	13	22
Mostly C's	4	5
Mostly below C's	2	5
Not sure/refused	<1	1

Which of these choices comes closest to describing the grades you received on your last report card?

High School Graduates' Grades Received on Last Report Card, by College Enrollment Status

	2012 High School Graduates		
	Total %	Enrolled in College %	Not Enrolled in College %
Mostly A's	27	33	13
Mix of A's and B's	39	41	36
Mostly B's	11	10	14
Mix of B's and C's	16	14	22
Mostly C's	4	2	9
Mostly below C's	1	<1	3
Not sure/refused	1	0	3

Which of these choices comes closest to describing the grades you received on your last report card?

High School Students' Time Spent Participating in Activities

	2012 HS Students					
	Daily %	2-3 Times/ Week %	Once a Week %	1-2 Times/ Month %	Not Usually Done %	Not Sure %
Socializing with friends outside of school	52	31	10	5	2	-
Participating in student clubs or groups	21	23	16	16	24	<1
Participating in student government	7	5	4	10	74	<1
Working for the school newspaper	2	<1	1	3	93	<1

I'm going to mention some activities to you. For each one, please tell me how often you participate in it during a typical month.

High School Graduates' Advice to Current High School Students

	2012
	HS Graduates %
Spend more time studying, learn how to use time wisely, study hard	27
Stay in school, keep going, don't miss classes	21
Do your homework	13
Stay out of trouble, don't do drugs, alcohol, less partying	12
Stay focused, don't get distracted	9
Get involved in sports, other extracurricular activities	7
Go to college, focus on going to college	6
Get good grades, keep your grades up	5
Enjoy it, take your time, don't rush things, don't stress out	5
Prepare for college as early as possible, start planning early	5
Don't know, no response	2

Knowing what you know now, what advice would you give to current high school students? The categories shown were coded from open-ended responses.

Plan to Complete a College Degree or Certificate

	HS Students							HS Graduates
	2012 %	2008 %	2005 %	2004 %	2003 %	2002 %	2001 %	2012 %
Yes	97	93	94	92	94	89	88	84
Yes-already completed	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
No	2	4	3	3	3	6	5	6
Not sure	1	3	3	5	3	5	3	2

Do you plan to complete a college degree or certificate at some point in your life?

High School Students' Participation in College Preparation or Advanced Coursework

	HS Students			
	2012 %	2008 %	2005 %	2004 %
College prep classes	29	16	17	25
Advanced placement classes	41	21	21	19
Both college prep and advanced placement classes	NA	10	11	NA
International baccalaureate program	2	NA	NA	NA
None of the above	36	52	51	55
Not sure/refused	1	1	-	1

Are you currently taking, or have you ever taken, any college prep classes, or participated in an advanced placement or international baccalaureate program? Prior to 2012, the question was phrased: Are you currently taking any college prep classes or advanced placement classes? If 'Yes' are you taking college prep classes, advanced placement classes, or both?

High School Graduates' Participation in College Preparation or Advanced Coursework by College Enrollment

	2012 HS Graduates		
	Total %	Enrolled in College %	Not Enrolled in College %
College prep classes	28	30	22
Advanced placement classes	39	47	21
International baccalaureate program	2	3	-
None of the above	39	30	59
Not sure/refused	<1	<1	<1

Are you currently taking, or have you ever taken, any college prep classes, or participated in an advanced placement or international baccalaureate program? Prior to 2012, the question was phrased: Are you currently taking any college prep classes or advanced placement classes? If 'Yes' are you taking college prep classes, advanced placement classes, or both?

Remediation, Developmental Coursework, and Difficulty of Courses among College Enrollees

	2012
	HS Graduates Enrolled in College %
Remediation/Development Coursework Required¹	
Yes, took developmental/remedial courses	28
No, did not have to take any developmental/remedial courses	72
Not sure	<1
Difficulty of College Courses²	
Much more difficult than expected	8
Somewhat more difficult than expected	38
Exactly as expected	25
Somewhat easier than expected	24
Much easier than expected	3
Not sure	1

¹ National studies are finding that quite a lot of students are being asked to take non-credit courses in college in order to be placed in college-level math and English courses. In order to have a complete understanding of how often this happens, would you please tell me whether you were required to take any non-credit developmental or remedial courses by your college, in order to qualify for college-level course work in any particular subject?

² In terms of what you needed to know and do to get a good grade, were your college courses much more difficult than you expected, somewhat more difficult than you expected, somewhat easier than you expected, much easier than you expected, or exactly what you expected?

Educational Aspirations among High School Students Who Plan to Complete a College Degree

	2012
	HS Students Who Plan to Complete a Degree %
Graduate or professional degree	48
Four-year college degree	43
Two-year/community college degree	5
Vocational/technical certificate or diploma	2
Other/Not sure	2

What is the highest degree you intend to earn in your lifetime—a vocational or technical certificate or diploma, a two-year or community college degree, a four-year college degree, or a graduate or professional degree?

Plans to Complete a Postsecondary Degree among High School Graduates

	2012
	HS Graduates %
Plan to complete a 2- or 4-year college degree	84
Already completed degree/certificate	8
Do not plan to complete a 2- or 4-year college degree	6
Not sure	2

Do you plan to complete a two- or four-year college degree or certificate at some point in your life or have you already completed a two- or four-year college degree or certificate?

Plans to Enter College Immediately after High School Graduation

	2012	
	HS Students Who Plan to Complete a College Degree ¹ %	HS Graduates Enrolled in College ² %
Plan to enter (Entered) immediately after graduation	86	87
Do not plan to (Did not) enter immediately after graduation	11	13
Not sure	3	-

¹ *Do you plan to enter college in the school year immediately after you graduate from high school?*

² *Did you enter college the school year immediately after you graduated from high school?*

Concerns about Paying for College among High School Students Who Plan to Complete Degree

	2012
	HS Students Who Plan to Complete a College Degree %
Major concerns, not sure will have enough funds	18
Some concerns, but will probably have enough funds	57
No concerns, confident will have enough funds	25
Not sure	<1

How concerned are you about your or your family's ability to finance your college education?

Attitudes Toward Paying for College among College Enrollees

	2012
	HS Graduates Enrolled in College %
More affordable than expected	19
About what expected	48
Less affordable than expected	30
Not sure	2

Would you say that college is more affordable than you expected, costs about what you expected, or is less affordable than you expected?

Resources Used or Expected to Use to Pay for College

	2012	
	HS Students Who Plan to Complete a College Degree %	HS Graduates Enrolled in College %
Financial aid that does not require repayment (e.g., grants & scholarships)	57	65
Family resources, including parents and relatives	48	41
Personal resources (e.g., money from work or work-study programs)	25	37
Loans and other forms of financial aid that require repayment	23	36
Military Service	10	3
Other/Not sure	2	2

Which of the following do you expect to use (or have you used) to pay for college?

Expected or Actual Age upon Completion of Formal Education		
	2012	
	HS Students %	HS Graduates %
Less than 18	2	2
18-20 years old	10	3
21-24 years old	51	45
25-29 years old	28	37
30-39 years old	4	6
40 or older	-	<1
Cannot rate	4	6
Average expected age	23.3	24.3

At what age do you imagine you personally will be finished with school and your formal education? If you have already finished school and completed your formal education, at what age did you receive your degree?

Employment Status among High School Students	
	2012
	HS Students %
Employed	23
On a full-time basis	1
On a part-time basis	22
Not employed	77
Looking for work	39
Not looking for work	37
Not sure/refused	<1

Are you currently employed? IF NOT EMPLOYED: Are you currently looking for work? IF EMPLOYED: Are you employed full time or part time?

Employment Status among High School Graduates by College Enrollment

	2012 HS Graduates		
	Total	Enrolled in College	Not Enrolled in College
Employed	56	53	64
On a full-time basis	19	8	43
On a part-time basis	38	45	21
Not employed	43	47	35
Looking for work	31	32	28
Not looking for work	12	15	7
Not sure/refused	<1	<1	1

Are you currently employed? IF NOT EMPLOYED: Are you currently looking for work? IF EMPLOYED: Are you employed full time or part time?

Main Reason for Not Working among High School Graduates

	2012
	HS Graduates Who Are Not Employed %
Been unable to find a job	35
Do not need to work	14
Have not yet found a job that's desired	14
Family responsibilities prevent working	12
Studying, my studies, going to school	11
Volunteering instead of working	5
Personal health reasons that prevent working	1
Other reason not listed above	4
Not sure	3

Which of the following would you say is the main reason you are not currently working for pay?

Reasons for Working among High School Graduates by College Enrollment

	2012 HS Graduates		
	Total %	Enrolled in College %	Not Enrolled in College %
Way to pay the bills	35	28	50
Way to save money for school	33	40	21
Way to earn spending money	23	28	15
Exploring a career option	25	27	20
A career position	11	5	22

Which of these best describe your job—a career position, a way to explore a career option, a way to save money for school, a way to pay the bills, or a way to earn spending money?

Perceived Likelihood of Pursuing a Range of Careers among High School Graduates

	2012 HS Graduates				
	Very Likely %	Somewhat Likely %	Not Very Likely at All %	Never Thought about That %	Not Sure %
Starting own business, working for self	30	39	20	9	1
Working for a private business	28	46	14	11	<1
Working in medicine	26	21	34	18	<1
Working for a nonprofit organization	22	40	21	15	2
Being a teacher	18	32	31	19	<1
Working for the government	11	27	34	26	1
Working in information technology	11	27	35	27	1
Serving in the military	8	16	43	32	1
Becoming a lawyer	6	14	46	33	<1

I'm going to name a number of different areas of employment. For each one, tell me how likely you think it is that you will end up doing it in your life.

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HORATIO ALGER ASSOCIATION



THE HORATIO ALGER ASSOCIATION OF DISTINGUISHED AMERICANS, a nonprofit organization, was founded in 1947 to combat a growing attitude among young people that economic opportunity was a thing of the past. The Association strives to motivate and educate our nation’s young people about the economic and personal opportunities afforded them through the American free-enterprise system. Each year, the Association celebrates the “Horatio Alger heroes” of today by presenting outstanding individuals with the Horatio Alger Award, and it encourages the “heroes” of the future by providing college scholarships to at-risk youth. The Association has awarded almost \$100 million in scholarships to more than 16,000 Americans.

MISSION

- To induct as lifetime Members of the Association contemporary role models whose experiences exemplify that opportunities for a successful life are available to all individuals who are dedicated to the principles of integrity, hard work, perseverance, and compassion for others.
- To provide scholarship assistance to at-risk young people who have demonstrated integrity, determination in overcoming adversity, academic potential, and the personal aspiration to make a unique contribution to society.
- To mentor scholarship recipients and educate all youth about the limitless possibilities that are available through the American free-enterprise system, while underscoring the importance of service to others.

MEMBERSHIP & AFFILIATES

Horatio Alger Members: The Horatio Alger Award and induction into the Association are conferred each year on ten Americans who have triumphed over adversity to achieve success in their respective fields. Members have made outstanding contributions in the fields of science, medicine, business, entertainment, athletics, government, industry, law, religion, education, and the arts. Members serve as role models to youth, inspiring them by example and encouraging them through educational opportunities.

Life Partners: The spouses of Members actively participate in the programs of the Association and provide meaningful support on behalf of the Association's educational mission.

International Horatio Alger Award: In 2003, the Horatio Alger Association began presenting an Award each year to a citizen of another country who serves as a role model and embodies the ideals promoted by the Association. At the present time, all recipients of the International Award have been citizens of Canada.

Horatio Alger Association of Canada: To facilitate the involvement of international Awardees, the Association established a nonprofit organization with the mission of providing need-based scholarships to Canadian students.

Horatio Alger Friends of Distinction: Friends are individuals, foundations, and corporations who are not Members of the Association, but who become formally affiliated with and recognized by the Horatio Alger Association for their support of its mission and educational programs.

The Horatio Alger Endowment Fund: The endowment fund was created to ensure that the Association provides scholarships to young people in perpetuity.

The Horatio Alger Association Archives at Boston University: The Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University serves as the official repository of the historic and biographical archives of the Association, its Members, and its mission.

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

To inspire and encourage American youth along the path to success, Horatio Alger Members sponsor the following programs:

Horatio Alger National Scholarships: Each year more than 100 students receive Horatio Alger National Scholarships valued at \$20,000 each. Recipients have exhibited integrity, academic promise, and perseverance in overcoming personal adversity. National Scholarship recipients attend the National Scholars Conference, held annually in Washington, D.C., to learn about the federal government and the American free-enterprise system through meetings with Association Members.

Horatio Alger State Scholarship Programs: In response to Members who wanted to do more to help students in their home states, the Association

began awarding State Scholarships in 2000. Many Members and friends joined in this endeavor, which spread rapidly. In 2011 the Association began awarding State Scholarships in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. These scholarships are supported by individual Members, friends, and the Association itself. In addition to helping more students achieve a college education, conducting a nationwide scholarship program allows the Association to reach more people with its messages of hope and opportunity through the free-enterprise system.

Dennis R. Washington Achievement Scholarship: Dennis R. Washington provided a generous \$20 million grant for Horatio Alger National and State Scholars to pursue a graduate-level education. This graduate program awards grants valued up to \$30,000 annually to deserving Horatio Alger Scholar Alumni.

Horatio Alger Collegiate Partners: A premier network of colleges and universities from across the country works in partnership with the Association to provide special scholarship and financial aid opportunities for Horatio Alger Scholars who attend their schools.

Horatio Alger Internship and Placement Service: Horatio Alger Scholars are provided with opportunities to gain practical work experience while attending college, with the possibility of permanent placement following graduation.

Horatio Alger Alumni Association: The Alumni Association enables Horatio Alger scholarship recipients who have completed their studies to maintain contact with each other and to remain involved with the Association through Alumni conferences, a newsletter, mentoring programs, and a variety of other activities. The Association annually awards the Alumnus of the Year Award to recognize an Alumnus who has excelled academically, professionally, and in service to his or her community.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

The Horatio Alger Association shares information about its educational activities and mission with millions of Americans through its web site, public service announcements, special events, and publications. The web site features information about the Association's mission, Members, and scholarship activities. Among the many options featured on the site, viewers may obtain biographical information about Association Members, and students may apply for Horatio Alger scholarships online (www.horatioalger.org).

2012 HORATIO ALGER EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS OVERVIEW

TOTAL SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

Estimated Total Financial Commitment 1984 - 2012	\$100,000,000
Undergraduate Scholarships Awarded 1984 - 2012	16,088
# of National Scholars 1984 - 2012	2,287
# of State & Specialized Scholars 2000 - 2012	11,452
# of Military Scholars since 2006	2,349
Washington Achievement Grants Awarded (Graduate Studies) 2008 - 2011	24
Washington Total Graduate Financial Commitment 2008 - 2011	\$1,260,000
Total Financial Commitment	\$1,260,000
Average income for Scholars	\$21,410
Average # in family	3.7
# of High Schools represented 1984 - 2012	5,540
Graduation rate for Horatio Alger National Scholars	76%
National Graduation Rate	56%
National Graduation Rate for low income students	23%
Graduation rate for State Scholars	69%
Average College GPA for Scholar Graduates	3.22
Average College GPA for Current Scholars	3.23

2012 NATIONAL SCHOLARS

Number of Recipients	104
Total number of applications in 2012	33,809
Average High School GPA	3.75
Average SAT Score (out of 2400) (National Ave: 1509)	1607
Average ACT Score (out of 36) (National Ave: 21.1)	24.7
Average Household Income	\$16,140
Average number in Household	3
Scholars Working during the School Year	76%

2012 STATE SCHOLARS

Number of Recipients	621
Average High School GPA	3.59
Average Household Income	\$21,108
Average number in Household	3.3

FIELD OF STUDY

Top 5 Majors for National Scholars:

- 1) Business
- 2) Social Science
- 3) Biological & Biomedical Sciences
- 4) Health Professions & Related Clinical Sciences
- 5) Psychology

EDUCATIONAL FACTS

- Most Horatio Alger Scholars are the first generation in their family to attend college
- In 2012, 2,981 scholars are at public colleges and 1,177 are at private colleges
- In 2012, 3,722 scholars are at a 4 year college and 440 are at a community college
- 90% of National Scholars received the Federal Pell Grant in 2012
- 33% of National Scholars have reported continuing with a graduate degree

PUBLICATIONS

Only in America Opportunity Still Knocks annually announces the Horatio Alger Award recipients and National Scholarship recipients.

Quotations: Success Secrets of Power Thinkers is a collection of inspirational quotations and biographical information from the Members of the Horatio Alger Association.

Ad Astra Per Aspera – To the Stars through Difficulties: A 60-Year History of the Horatio Alger Association recounts the Association’s development from its formation in 1947 to contemporary times.

Investing in People and Communities explores aspects of good governance and effective management that contribute to the strength of America’s charitable sector. It also features insights from the Association’s current and past Presidents & CEOs about their approach to philanthropy.

Horatio Alger: A Century of Covers and Illustrations is a hardbound book featuring full-color and black-and-white illustrations that appeared in original books by the Association’s namesake, Horatio Alger, Jr.

Horatio Alger, Jr. – A Biography outlines the life and career of the writer Horatio Alger, Jr.

Biennial Report is the Association’s flagship document. It offers a comprehensive overview of the Association, with current information about its mission, Members, governance, sponsors, educational programs, and outreach to the American public.

The Forum is the Association’s semiannual magazine, which provides current information about Members, Association activities, and educational programs.

Strive and Succeed is the Association’s student newsletter, which provides current information about the National Scholars, Association activities, and educational programs.

An Investment in America’s Future – Association Profile provides a broad overview of the Association, including information about its Members, educational programs, alumni activities, development, and public outreach.

The Investing in America's Future series are printed articles intended to inform Members and friends about current trends in education and to highlight the ongoing importance of helping young people achieve higher education.

A Commitment to Our Scholars documents ways the Association currently supports young people in addition to its scholarship programs, and it outlines plans to increase assistance in the immediate future to foster lifelong relationships with its Scholars.

Legacy of Achievement is a newsletter produced to acknowledge major gifts from donors and to convey the stories of young people whose lives have been changed by support from the Association. It also provides regular updates on the "Investing in America's Future" Campaign for the Endowment Fund.

Collegiate Partners Program describes the Collegiate Partners Program and provides interested schools with a participation form.

The Success Factors Study reports the results of the Association's multi-year research to determine the factors that enable Horatio Alger Scholars to succeed in spite of adversity.

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