

Trends & TudesSM

Keeping you informed of current topics in youth and education research.

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◆ EDITORS ◆

Kelly Bagnaschi
 Youth & Education
 800.866.7655 Ext. 7164
 kbagnaschi@harrisinteractive.com

Dana Markow, Ph.D.
 Director, Youth & Education Research
 212.539.9676
 dmarkow@harrisinteractive.com



YOUTH AND EDUCATION
The Harris Poll® PEOPLE

Exploring The College Experience

Harris Interactive’s perspective on youth and the youth market is not limited to kids and teens; we explore a full range of life experiences from infancy to young adulthood. Since 2001, Harris Interactive has produced the *360 Youth College Explorer*[™], a biannual survey of America’s college students conducted in conjunction with 360 Youth, the marketing and media arm of Alloy Inc. This edition of *Trends & Tudes* highlights findings from the most recent survey wave, the Fall 2002 report.

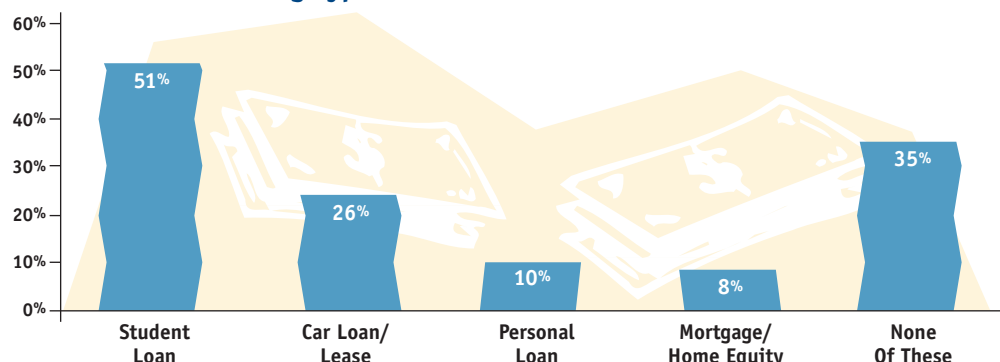
Today’s college students are a diverse group, and the *360 Youth College Explorer* is the only multi-client study of college students conducted among all types of 18- to 30-year-old college students, including full- and part-time students, as well as those working towards 2- or 4-year degrees.

Money and Spending

College students today are active consumers. Overall, college students’ discretionary purchases total more than \$53 billion per year. Two-thirds of college students (65%) have their own major credit card. While 41% of freshmen have their own credit card, by senior year ownership nearly doubles to 79%.

However, worries about money are a major theme for today’s college students. Half of students worry they may not be able to find a job (51%), that there are too many people living in poverty (51%) and that the economy is weak (49%). Half depend upon a student loan and these students expect to owe over \$25,000 upon graduation. Compared to a year ago, the proportion of spending accounted by non-discretionary expenditures has increased from 62% to 75%. This is most likely a result of increasing tuition costs. As incomes have not risen substantially, the pressure of tuition costs forces students to spend less as consumers. Compared to a year ago, a greater proportion of today’s college students’ non-discretionary spending is on tuition/room and board (53% vs. 61%).

Which Of The Following Types Of Loans Do You Have?



SOURCE: 360 Youth College Explorer powered by Harris Interactive

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Editorial: Our Take On It

by Dana Markow, Ph.D.

Director,
Youth & Education Research

Previous issues of *Trends & Tudes* have focused on elementary and high school students. But the teen years extend into college. And in this day and age, the period of adolescence often extends beyond high school graduation. To obtain a full picture of adolescents as they move towards adulthood, we should not overlook the diverse population of today's college students.

While we often concentrate on the spending and market power of kids and teens, there are many product and life decisions that are made independently for the first time as a college student. Purchasing changes from largely discretionary (and fun) in the teen years to mostly non-discretionary in college. Beyond the basics of having to pay for tuition, food and housing, new college students often find themselves purchasing essential consumer product categories for the first time. While brand preferences may start well before the college years, this is when lifelong spending patterns and habits truly emerge.

Currently, there are 15.3 million college students in the United States. These numbers are expected to increase in this decade, continuing a trend in increasing enrollment (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). Who comes to mind when

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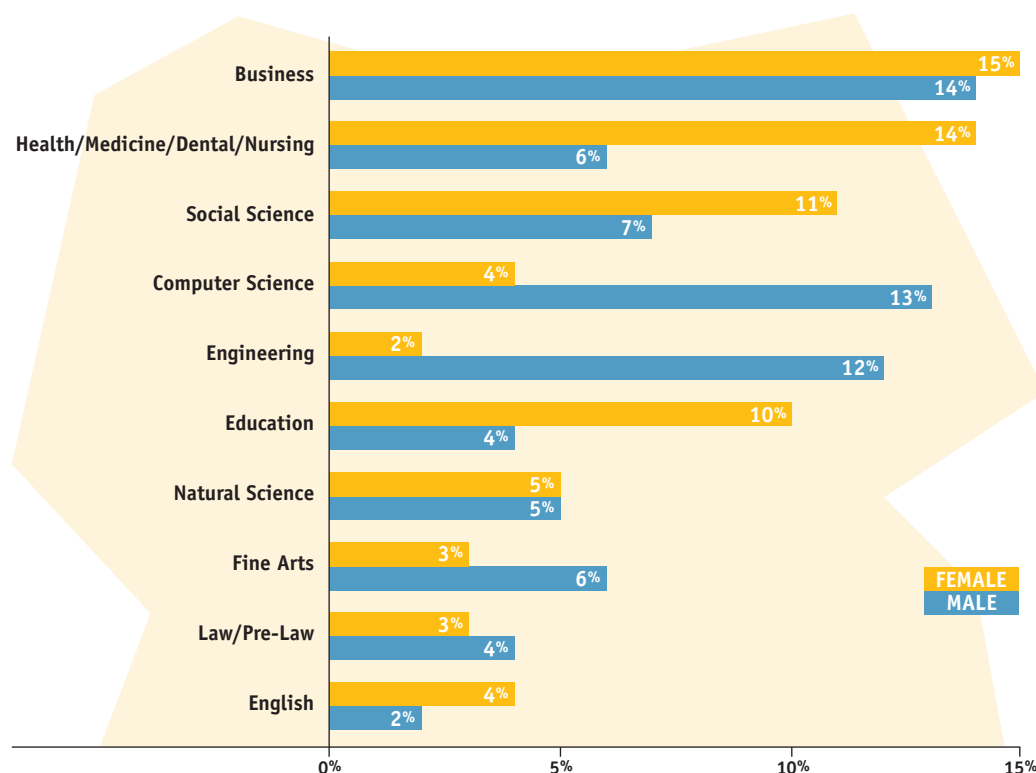
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Courses and Majors

College students lead busy lives – both on- and off-campus. Full-time college students average 4.5 courses simultaneously, while part-time students maintain an average course load of 2.2. Their choice of majors also reflects diverse interests. Business (15%), health (10%) and social science (9%) majors top the list. In contrast, only one percent of college students are majoring in mathematics, foreign languages or agriculture. Most freshmen have a major or concentration – only seven percent are currently undecided.

Several majors show marked gender differences. Male students are more likely than female students to major in computer science (13% vs. 4%) and engineering (12% vs. 2%). Female students are more likely than their male counterparts to major in health areas (14% vs. 6%) and education (10% vs. 4%).

What Is Your Major?



SOURCE: 360 Youth College Explorer powered by Harris Interactive

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you think of a college student? If it's a 20-year-old going to school full time, working towards a four-year degree, living in a dorm room, you're missing a big part of the picture. In fact, the proportion of "non-traditional" college students (e.g. older, part-time, financially independent, working full time while enrolled, single parent, non-standard high school diploma) has been increasing during the past two decades. Nearly 40 percent of today's college students are 25 or older. More than 11 million are between the ages of 18 and 30. Of these students, over one-third (34%) is working on a two-year degree and 29 percent are attending school part time. Over half of today's college students are women, as has been the case since 1978 (NCES, 2002).

Of course, not every late teen/young adult goes to college. College students represent only one-third of 18- to 24-year-olds. How do college students differ from their counterparts not in school? One important difference is their future income. College graduates in their mid-20s to mid-30s earn more than those who only have high school diplomas. Men with at least bachelor's degrees earn 60 percent more than those with only a high-school diploma or GED. A college education has an even greater economic impact on women. Female college graduates earn 95 percent more than women

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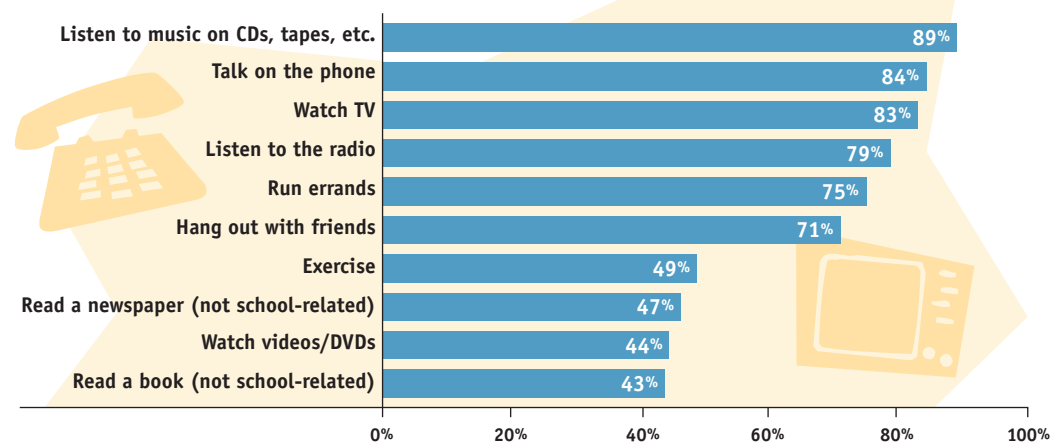
Students' Lives

Students' lives consist of more than just schoolwork. As with high school students, music remains an important soundtrack of college students' lives, with 89% listening to CDs and tapes and downloading music at least a few times a week. Socializing is essential for college students as well, with talking on the phone and hanging out with friends being frequent activities. But their free time is not just music and friends. In addition to classes and schoolwork, two-thirds (67%) of today's college students have a paid job. Many are balancing the demands of home, work, and education at the same time.

Nine in ten (93%) college students access the Internet at least once a month. Among online students, nearly all (99%) are frequent Internet users. However, watching television remains a major activity, with most (83%) viewing TV at least a few times a week. Reading for pleasure is also a common activity for more than four in 10 college students. Finally, contributing to their community is important for college students as well. Ten percent of students take part in volunteer work at least a few times a week, and this proportion rises to over one-third (35%) who volunteers at least a few times a month.

How Often Do You Take Part In The Following Activities?

(Percentage who say "Daily/A few times per week")



SOURCE: 360 Youth College Explorer powered by Harris Interactive

These are just a few of the findings from the 360 Youth College Explorer. The study covers a wide spectrum of areas, including income and spending, students' hopes and worries, financial services, technology and wireless, entertainment, snack foods and beverages, personal care products, "Road Rules for Advertisers," brand loyalty and retail preferences. Complete results are available on a subscription basis. For more information, please contact Larry Brown at 800.866.7655, x7135.

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without a college education. This discrepancy between college graduates and those with less education has been increasing over the past two decades (NCES, 2002).

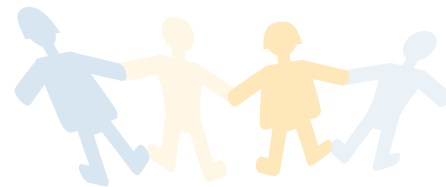
Given this financial reality, one might expect differences in the expectations and worries between college students and their counterparts not in school. In fact, the *360 Youth College Explorer* report shows many similarities between 18- to 24-year-olds who are in school and those who are not. In terms of their hopes for the future, they are equally likely to want to be a millionaire, cure a disease, start a big company, be a movie star or even be president of the United States. So although their hopes and dreams may be similar, hard data show that their ability to achieve their desires is dependent upon obtaining a college degree.

Money is the number one worry for both college students and non-college students. Nearly eight in 10 worry about not having enough money and half are concerned that they may not be able to find a job. Other top concerns include pollution, going to war and a weak economy. One worry where the two groups differ is homelessness. For example, 18- to 24-year-olds who are not in college are more likely than college students to worry that they will be homeless (20% vs. 10%).

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Come See Us At Kid Power!

Harris Interactive is proud to be a sponsor of Kid Power 2003, May 6-9, in Orlando. We will be leading a conference session on May 7. For more information on this event, go to www.kidpowerx.com



Recent Research for Public Release

From time to time, the Harris Interactive Youth Research team is fortunate to work with media, leading foundations and non-profit organizations, and we often are able to release the results of these studies publicly.

University of Rochester Survey on Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)

Recently, Harris Interactive conducted an online survey of adolescents (14 to 19 year olds) on behalf of The University of Rochester Division of Adolescent Medicine. The survey examined adolescents' use of and knowledge about Complementary and Alternative Medicine. CAM refers to a wide variety of therapies that include herbal medicine, acupuncture and massage therapy, among others. This study of adolescent CAM use is one of the first that has been done with a nationally representative sample. Harris Interactive's online research methodology and the Harris Poll Online panel of teens helped make this national study of over 1,200 teens feasible. The findings will be announced at the Society for Adolescent Medicine annual meeting in Seattle in March, and will also be presented at the Pediatric Academic Societies meeting in Seattle in May.

Stay tuned for highlights from this interesting study in an upcoming issue of *Trends & Tudes*.

All Harris Interactive press releases, including those from *The Harris Poll*® and research teams outside of the youth and education area, are available at www.harrisinteractive.com/news/

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College students and non-students also differ in some of their activities and outlooks. College students are more likely than non-students to spend time hanging out with friends at least a few times a week (78% vs. 60%), and less likely to listen to the radio (76% vs. 89%), watch TV (82% vs. 93%) and read a newspaper (44% vs. 57%).

In fact, there is much evidence to show that traditional media are less able to reach college students, particularly residential students. College marketers often rely on more targeted media that can permeate the college campus, such as college newspapers, media boards, sampling and events.

In the perennial debate over when is the "best time of life," these 18- to 24-year-olds appear to agree that this occurs in the final period before entering the "real world." When asked what their ideal age is, 30 percent of 18- to 24-year-olds who are not in school want to be younger than they are now. In contrast, only 20 percent of college students in this age group would like to be younger.

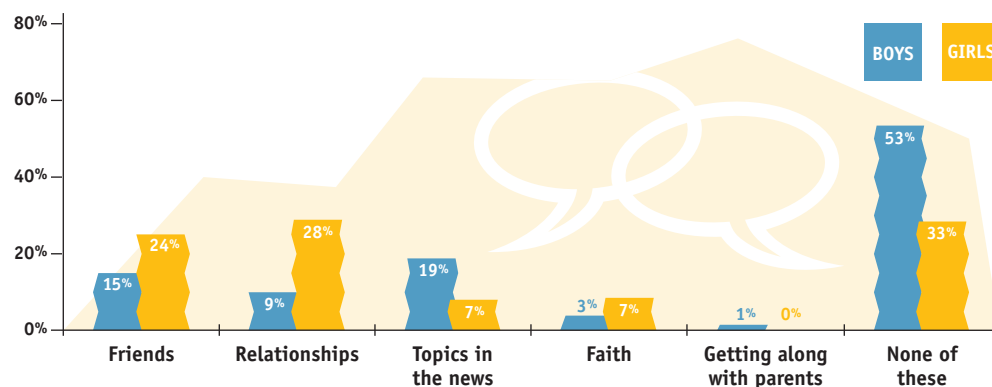
Ask a Question...

Have a burning question you would like to ask kids and teens? Here's your chance to submit a free question for our upcoming YouthQuerySM youth omnibus. Just send us an email with your suggestion. We will pick one question each month and then publish the results in the next issue of this newsletter.

...Get an answer

Shanon Davis from Tommy Nelson submitted the following question:

Which Topic Are You Most Interested In Reading About?



SOURCE: Harris Interactive YouthQuery Omnibus

To view previous issues of *Trends & Tudes*, please visit our website at http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters_k12.asp

Contact Us:

To discuss this newsletter or your upcoming research project, call

Larry Brown

Manager, Client Development

800.866.7655 x7135 or email

lbrown@harrisinteractive.com

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