



Student Affairs

# Degree Search Parent Survey

University of Arizona Degree Search Website Parents Survey

Student Affairs Marketing | February 13, 2013

## Degree Search Parents Survey - Executive Summary

This survey was run between January 9 - February 1, 2013, mailed out via the Parents & Family Association email list; response was n=464.

- **464 parents had college-aged students**, and of those, **275 (59.3%) also had high school students**.
- Students' **Personal Interest** in a major is the **most strongly ranked (65.9%) important factor** in the degree exploration process from parents' perspective, followed closely by **Employment Opportunities (59.1%)**.
  - Parents also consider the **college, average salary, and national rankings** to be important, but seem least concerned with various fee, time, and credit requirements.
  - 36 parents shared that additional important factors in the process included **student aptitude (25%)**, cost/location (19%), grad school prospects (17%), and opportunities for study abroad and internships (17%).
- **20.1%** of parents had **heard of** the Degree Search website, and of those 93 people, **64.9% had used it**.
  - Parents most often used Degree Search to **assist their students in the degree exploration process**; those who had not used the site often had students who had used it, but as a parent had no reason to.
- The degree exploration process, from the parent's perspective, consists **mostly of student research with a degree of advisory parental assistance**.
  - For college students, parents report that research on majors is conducted either entirely or mostly by the student, whereas for high schoolers the research was split more equally between students and parents.
  - From the parents' point of view, the **average level of parental influence** in the degree choice decision for **college students is 37.4%**, and for **high school students is 42.3%**.
- Parents perceive very highly that students chose or are choosing their majors based on the **students' own interests and talents**, and that **they seek parental feedback** and advice in the selection process.
  - Students selected universities **based on reputation**, then location, and finally cost/scholarship.
  - College students are perceived by parents as knowing more clearly or wanting to change the major they want to study, whereas high school students have a harder time selecting, and choose based on work/study time.
- When researching majors, **parents most often used official university websites**, followed by **friends and family**, as well as college/high school personnel.
- **86.2%** of parents have **college students who have declared a major**, and 74.5% of them had decided upon a major when first entering college
  - **65% of college students were still studying the majors** that they declared upon starting university. 75% of parents perceived that their students were happy with their majors
  - **61% of high school parents shared that their children were undecided**. However, only 25.5% of parents of college-aged children stated that their students were undecided upon entering university, implying that the **latter years of high school may be a key decision period**.

## Important Factors in Degree Exploration

Parents were first asked whether they had any college-aged or high school children - 464 parents (100%) had college-aged students, and 275 parents (59.3%) additionally had high school aged children.

All parents were then asked to rank a series of factors based on their importance in the process of exploring majors with their students, from their point of view.

**Q03-20: From your point of view, please rank the top five (5) factors below in order of importance when choosing a major/degree with your student:**

Top Factors in Degree Search (Parents)*	
<b>Q14: Personal Interest</b>	<b>65.9%</b>
<b>Q15: Employment Opportunities</b>	<b>59.1%</b>
<b>Q10: College (that offers degree)</b>	<b>28.3%</b>
<b>Q04: Average Salary Range</b>	<b>26.8%</b>
<b>Q23: National Ranking of Degree</b>	<b>23.1%</b>
<b>Q06: Admission Requirements</b>	<b>20.0%</b>
Q07: Degree Type (BA/BS/BFA)	<b>16.2%</b>
Q16: Time required to graduate	<b>12.2%</b>
Q14: Trending Majors	<b>8.2%</b>
Q05: Base Salary Range	<b>6.7%</b>
Q12: Pre-Major Requirements	<b>5.3%</b>
Q11: Research Opportunities	<b>5.0%</b>
Q08: Math Requirements	<b>4.3%</b>
Q20: Other	<b>3.5%</b>
Q13: Additional Fees Required	<b>2.6%</b>
Q17: Credits Required	<b>2.3%</b>
Q18: Study Time Required	<b>1.9%</b>
Q09: Second Language Required	<b>1.6%</b>

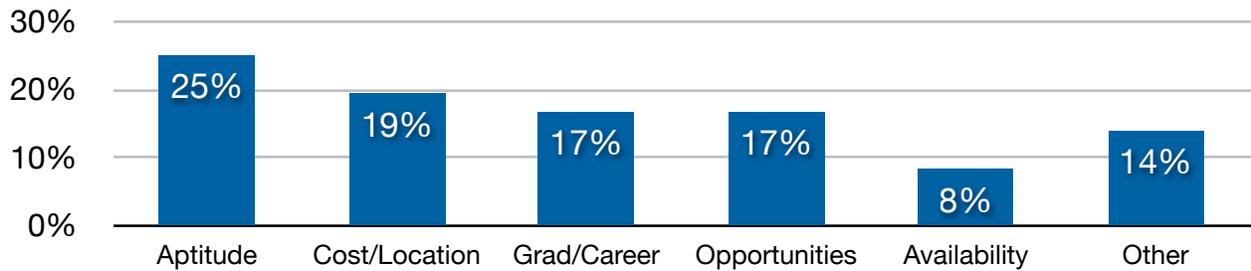
*Data Source: SA Marketing Degree Search Parents Survey 2013*

*\* Rankings were evaluated on a point-attribution system based on the number of 1st-5th place rankings received by each individual criterion.*

The most strongly ranked factor in the degree exploration process, from parents' point of view, is their student's Personal Interest in the major/degree topic (237 parents selected Personal Interest as the #1 important factor), followed closely by potential Employment Opportunities offered by the major. Parents were also interested in the offering college itself, average salary ranges for graduates, national rankings, and admission requirements. They seem to be least concerned with various fee, credit, and time requirements associated with the major.

3.5% of respondents indicated an 'Other' non-listed factor that they deemed important to the process:

**Q21: Please specify ‘Other’ referenced in the previous question:**



25% of parents who noted a non-listed factor stated that student aptitude for a subject was also important in the degree exploration process -- other parents noted additional factors such as program cost/location, career or graduate school prospects, and opportunities within the major for study abroad and internships.

## Degree Search Website

Parents were asked whether or not they had heard of or used the UA Degree Search website (degreesearch.arizona.edu) -- 20.1% of respondents had heard of the site, and of those 93 people, 64.9% had used it.

**Q22/23: Have you heard of / used the site “degreesearch.arizona.edu”?**

	Yes - %	Yes - #
Have you heard of the site “degreesearch.arizona.edu”?	20.1%	93
Have you used the site “degreesearch.arizona.edu”?	64.9%	59

*Data Source: SA Marketing Degree Search Parents Survey 2013*

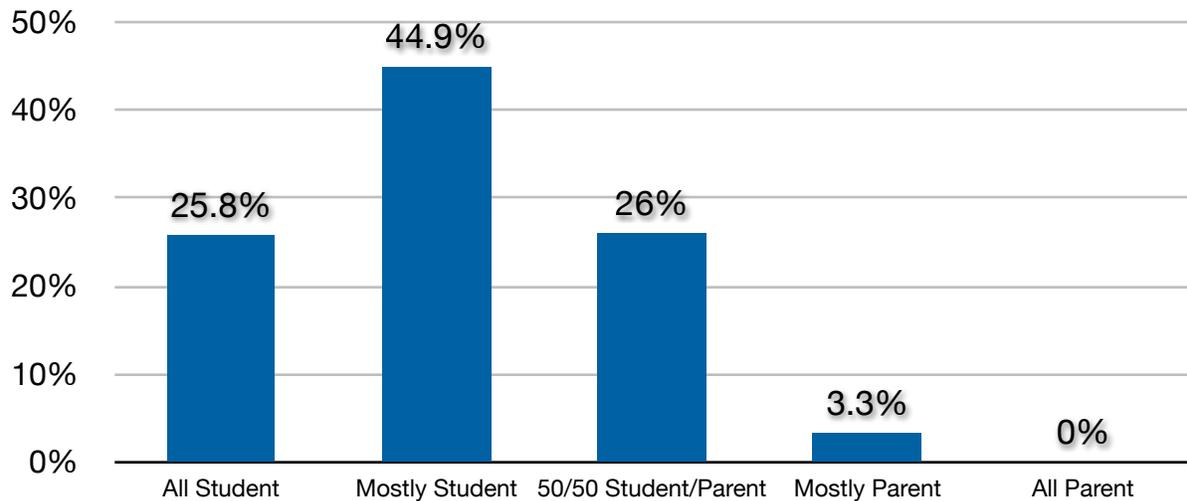
Those parents who had used Degree Search before predominantly did so to explore UA major offerings, often to directly assist their child in the decision process, to discover more information about prerequisites and requirements, or generally out of curiosity about degree progression. Some parents recommended the site to their children, while others discovered it because their children had used it and informed them about it. Parents who had not used Degree Search most often mentioned that their students had used the site, but that they as a parent have had no reason to use it.

**Note:** Q23 is a free response question -- review raw data for all 91 unique responses.

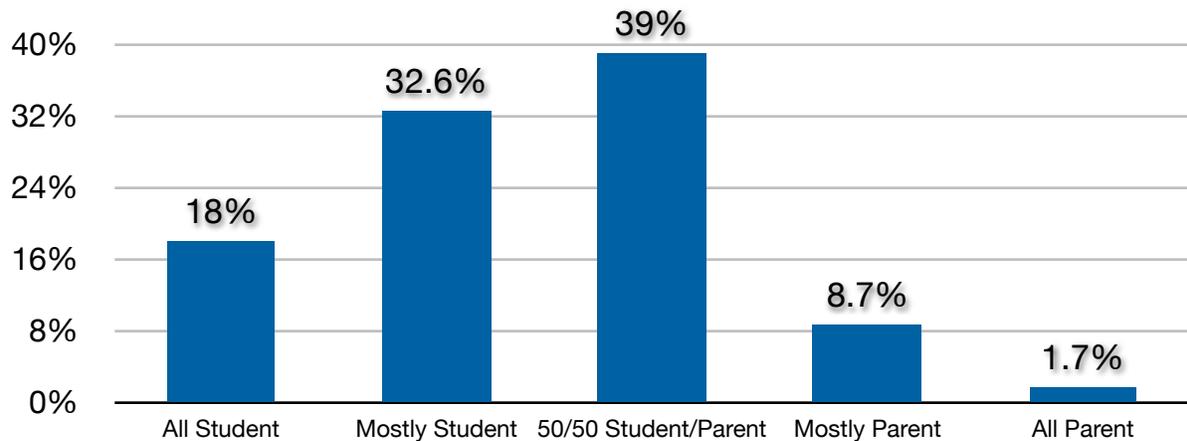
## Parental Influence

Parents were asked who spend the most time they spend (or spent) researching majors with their college students, and if applicable, their high school students.

**Q27: Who spent the most time researching the major your [college] student is studying in university?**



**Q59: Who spent the most time researching the major your [high school] student is planning to study in university?**



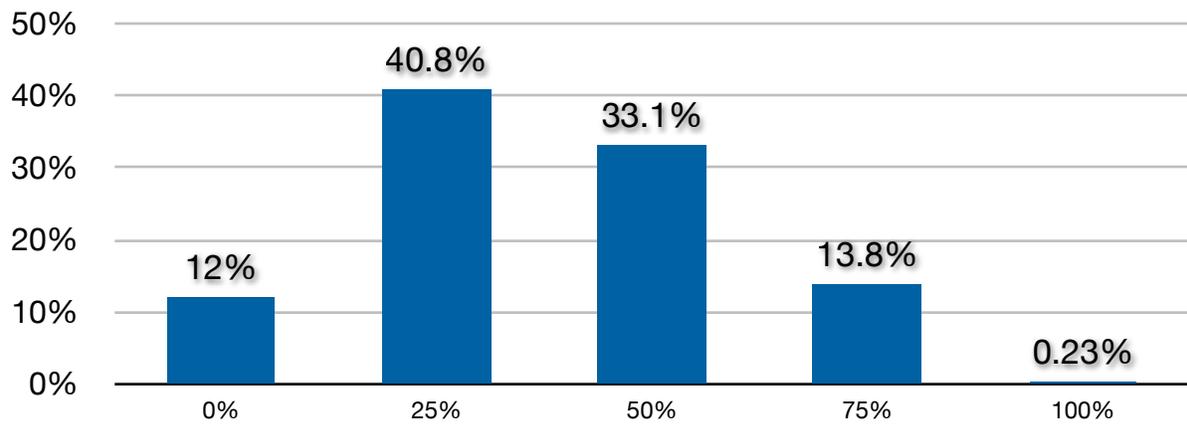
*Data Source: SA Marketing Degree Search Parents Survey 2013*

The degree exploration process, from the parent’s perspective, consists mostly of student research with a degree of parental (or other) assistance. Parents of college-aged students reported more often that the research on majors is conducted either entirely or mostly by the student, whereas parents of high-school children reported more often that the research was split more equally between students and parents.

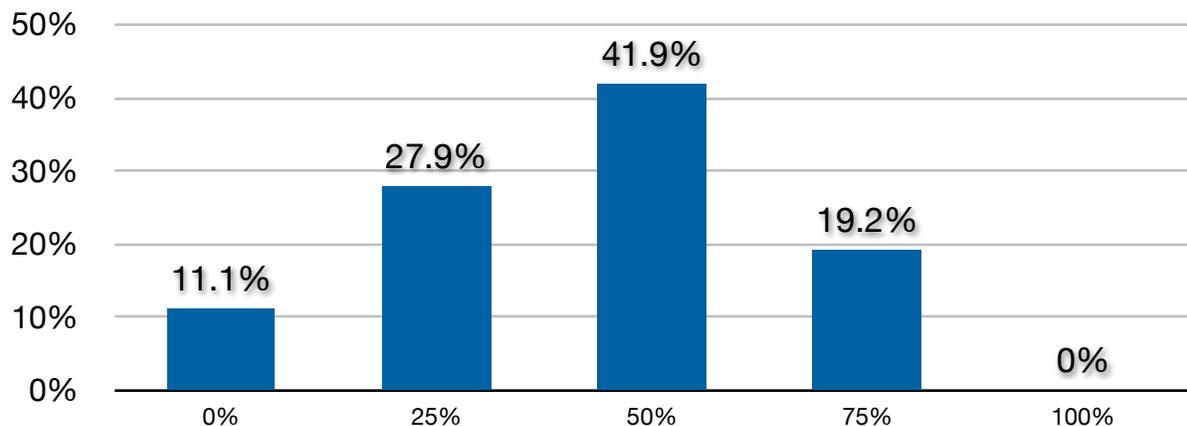
This data implies that parents may have more influence in the degree exploration and decision process while their students are in high school (a potentially key decision period in the process, as explored in the *Undecided Students* section of this report).

Parents were also asked about the level of influence that they believed they had over their students' choice of major (both for college and high school students).

**Q52: From your point of view, please indicate the level of influence that you had over your [college] student's choice of major/degree:**



**Q84: From your point of view, please indicate the level of influence that you have over your [high school] student's choice of major/degree:**



*Data Source: SA Marketing Degree Search Parents Survey 2013*

From the parents' point of view, the average level of parental influence in the degree choice decision for college students is 37.4%. For high school students, the parental influence level is a marginally higher 42.3%. Based on free response commentary throughout the survey, this influence appears to come in an advisory capacity.

## Parent Perception of Student Opinion

Parents were asked to rate their level of agreement with a series of statements about their college and high school aged children during the degree exploration process -- note that these are parent, not student, perspectives.

**Q33-35 / Q61-67: Based on your experience with your student during his/her degree exploration experience, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:**

College-aged Students:	
<b>Q33: My student chose a major/degree/university based on his/her interests and talents.</b>	<b>4.37</b>
<b>Q30: My student knew what degree/major s/he wanted to study.</b>	<b>3.81</b>
<b>Q35: My student sought my advice and feedback when selecting a major/degree.</b>	<b>3.72</b>
Q32: My student expressed a desire to change majors/degrees down the road.	<b>2.77</b>
Q31: My student had a hard time choosing between all the different degrees/major offerings.	<b>2.32</b>
Q34: My student chose a major/degree based on the amount of work and study time involved.	<b>2.13</b>

High School Students:	
<b>Q65: My student is choosing a major/degree based on his/her interests and talents.</b>	<b>4.31</b>
<b>Q67: My student seeks my advice and feedback when selecting a major/degree.</b>	<b>3.73</b>
<b>Q64: My student is undecided</b>	<b>3.27</b>
Q62: My student has a hard time choosing between all the different degrees/major offerings.	<b>2.86</b>
Q61: My student knows what degree/major s/he wants to study.	<b>2.72</b>
Q66: My student is choosing a major/degree based on the amount of work and study time involved.	<b>2.38</b>
Q63: My student expressed a desire to change majors/degrees down the road.	<b>2.03</b>

*Data Source: SA Marketing Degree Search Parents Survey 2013*

Parents perceive very highly that their college and high school students chose or are choosing their majors based on the students' own interests and talents, and that they seek parental feedback and advice in the selection process. The next asked about the bases on which college and high school students chose (or are choosing) their university.

My student chose a university based on...	College	High School
Q38: ...its reputation	<b>4.03</b>	<b>3.95</b>
Q37: ...its location	<b>3.83</b>	<b>3.84</b>
Q36: ...cost/scholarship opportunities	<b>3.31</b>	<b>3.55</b>

*Data Source: SA Marketing Degree Search Parents Survey 2013*

Parents reported that students selected universities predominantly based on reputation, then location, and finally cost/scholarship opportunities.

T-Test Comparison (high school and college)	College	High School	Significant?
Choosing a major/degree based on interests and talents.	<b>4.37</b>	<b>4.31</b>	<b>No</b>
Knowing what major/degree s/he wants or wanted to study.	<b>3.81</b>	<b>2.72</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Seeking parental advice/feedback in major selection process.	<b>3.72</b>	<b>3.73</b>	<b>No</b>
Expressing a desire to change majors down the road.	<b>2.77</b>	<b>2.03</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Having a hard time choosing between all the degree offerings.	<b>2.32</b>	<b>2.86</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Choosing a major based on amount of work or study time.	<b>2.13</b>	<b>2.38</b>	<b>Yes</b>

*Data Source: SA Marketing Degree Search Parents Survey 2013*

Running a basic t-test comparison of the results between college and high school students, there appears to be no major difference (from parents' perspectives) between the two age groups in their desire for parental feedback/advice in the degree exploration process, or the fact that they are seeking a degree based on interests and talents.

However, college-aged students are perceived by their parents as knowing more clearly what major/degree they want to study, and expressing more of a desire to potentially change majors down the road. High school students are perceived as having a harder time choosing among degree offerings, and more often seeking majors based on the amount of work or study time involved.

## Degree/Major Research Sources

Parents were asked about the resources they used or are using while researching major/degree options with their college and/or high school aged students.

When researching degrees/majors with my students, I look(ed) mostly to:	College	High School
<b>University websites (ex. arizona.edu, asu.edu, ucla.edu)</b>	<b>72.7%</b>	<b>68.2%</b>
<b>Friends and family members</b>	<b>34.5%</b>	<b>42.6%</b>
<b>University/high school personnel</b>	<b>31.9%</b>	<b>36.9%</b>
<b>University review source(s) (ex. Princeton Review or Peterson's)</b>	<b>30.3%</b>	<b>22.5%</b>
<b>Other websites</b>	<b>27.7%</b>	<b>26.9%</b>
Other print materials (either from universities or elsewhere)	<b>21.5%</b>	<b>19.3%</b>
News source(s)	<b>10.9%</b>	<b>10.0%</b>
Other	<b>10.3%</b>	<b>8.4%</b>

*Data Source: SA Marketing Degree Search Parents Survey 2013*

The most commonly used tools during the exploration process are official university websites, which parents and their students use to review requirements and compare options. Also ranked highly as an information source for parents were friends and family members, followed by school personnel. Other website, print materials, and news sources cited by parents are shared below.

Other materials and sources									
Other websites:		Other review sources:		Other print materials:		Other news sources:		Other sources:	
Field/industry-specific	19.0%	Princeton Review	30.2%	University mailers/materials	24.5%	Magazines / newspapers	20.4%	People	47.5%
Other specific sites	16.2%	US News	25.6%	Books/ magazines/ newspapers	23.6%	Online articles	18.5%	Personal experience	16.4%
Internet search	15.2%	Peterson's	15.1%	Brochures/flyers/ pamphlets	18.9%	US News	16.7%	Visits /tours	13.1%
College Board	13.3%	Other	7.0%	College visit/tour materials	9.4%	Professional journals	9.3%	Online /media	9.8%
University comparisons	10.5%	College Board	5.8%	High school hand outs	8.5%	Web search	7.4%	Books / magazines	6.6%
U.S. News website	5.7%	Fiske Guide	4.7%	College fair materials	4.7%	Media	5.6%	Other	6.6%

*Data Source: SA Marketing Degree Search Parents Survey 2013*

**Other specific websites** referenced included College Prowler, Bureau of Labour Statistics, Naviance, Occupational Outlook Handbook, Newsweek, and various blogs, rankings, and career sites. *See Q47 for all responses.*

**Other specific review sources** referenced included Newsweek, Business Week, Forbes, Barrons, Cappex, and Kuder. *See Q48 for all responses.*

**Other print materials** referenced included College Board, business journals, catalogs, internet site printouts, and materials from people (such as counselors and advisors). *See Q49 for all responses.*

**Other news sources** referenced included Newsweek, Wall Street Journal, blogs, LinkedIn, college fairs, and people. *See Q50 for all responses.*

**Other sources** (in general) referenced included people (employers, counselors, friends, family, faculty, etc), tours, and research (both online and in person). *See Q51 for all responses.*

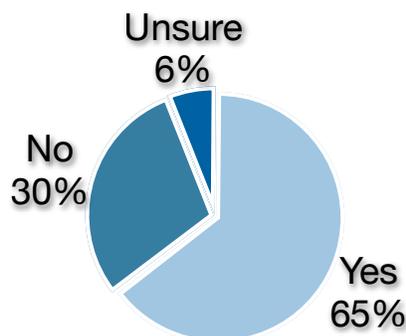
## Undecided Students

Parents of college-aged students were asked whether or not their children have declared a major, as well as whether or not the student was undecided when s/he first entered university.

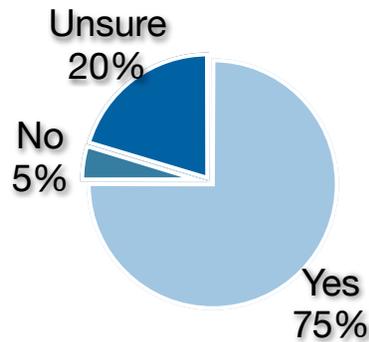
	Yes	No/ Unsure
Q28: Has your student declared a major?	86.2%	13.8%
Q29: When my student entered university, s/he was undecided about his/her major.	25.5%	74.5%

86.2% of parents have college students who have declared a major, and 74.5% of them had decided upon a major when first entering college (compare to high school undecided rates below). Parents were also asked about whether their students had changed majors, and whether they seemed to be happy with their degree decisions.

### Q53: Is your student still studying the major that s/he was studying upon starting university?



**Q54: Is your student currently happy with the major that s/he is studying?**



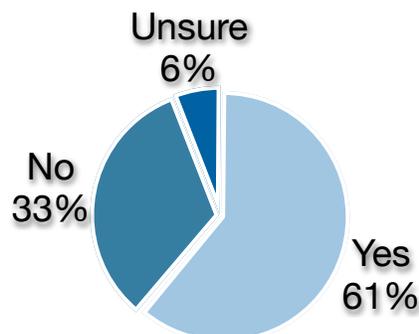
65% of college students were still studying the majors that they declared upon starting university. 75% of parents perceived that their students were happy with their majors, and a comparison of this data below reveals that this group is comprised of both students who kept their original majors, and those who decided to change them in college.

**Q53/54 Cross-tab: Happiness of students who kept/changed major:**

	Happy with current major:	Not happy with current major:
Still studying starting major:	240	7
Changed major during college:	80	10

Parents with high school students were asked about whether or not their children had decided on a college major yet -- 61% of parents shared that their children were undecided. However, only 25.5% of parents of college-aged children stated that their students were undecided upon entering university, implying that the latter years of high school may be a key decision period.

**Q60: My [high school] student is undecided about his/her major:**



## Additional Comments

Parents were provided with a free response 'additional comments' question at the end of the college and high school sections. **Please review the unique responses of Q55 and Q85 in the raw data sheets for additional input.**

## College Student Demographics

457 parents answered about their college-aged children - students were predominantly underclassmen (82.8%) from public high schools (75.7%). The balance between males and females was relatively equal. *Minor deviations from 100% in the charts below occur due to small numbers of respondents indicating 'Prefer not to respond'.*

Freshmen	Sophomores	Juniors	Seniors
41.8%	41.0%	9.6%	6.8%

Public High School	Private High School
75.7%	24.1%

Female	Male
56.7%	42.9%

## High School Student Demographics

172 parents answered about their high school children - students were generally equal across high school grade levels 9-12, predominantly from public high schools (76.2%). The balance between males and females was relatively equal. *Minor deviations from 100% in the charts below occur due to small numbers of respondents indicating 'Prefer not to respond'.*

Freshmen	Sophomores	Juniors	Seniors
19.2%	22.1%	30.8%	27.3%

Public High School	Private High School
76.2%	23.3%

Female	Male
51.2%	48.3%

## Parent Respondent Demographics

All parent respondents were asked for their gender, and state and city of residence.

Arizona	California	Illinois	Texas	Other
48.1%	26.3%	2.8%	2.3%	20.5%

Female	Male
66.6%	32.9%

## Appendix A - T Test Data

<p>Q33/65:</p> <p>T-test</p> <p>Mean 1: 4.31  Mean 2: 4.37  N1: 172  N2: 388  Std Dev.1: 1.06  Std Dev.2: 1  z for 95% CI= 1.96  declare p larger than alpha=0.05 not significant.</p> <p>mean1 eq: 4.31 (variance= 1.124) (se= 0.0808)  mean2 eq: 4.37 (variance= 1) (se= 0.0508)  Single sided probability that the two variances are equal p=0.17882  Difference between means:  M1-M2=4.31-4.37=-0.06  sd=1.6836; se=0.0954  95% CI of difference:  -0.2471 &lt;-0.06&lt; 0.1271 (Wald)  t-difference: -0.629  df-t: 310.6; p= 0.26508  (left p: 0.7349; two sided: 0.5302)  Difference not significant at 5%</p>	<p>Q30/61:</p> <p>T-test</p> <p>Mean 1: 3.81  Mean 2: 2.72  N1: 388  N2: 172  Std Dev.1: 1.34  Std Dev.2: 1.55  z for 95% CI= 1.96  declare p larger than alpha=0.05 not significant.</p> <p>mean1 eq: 3.81 (variance= 1.796) (se= 0.068)  mean2 eq: 2.72 (variance= 2.403) (se= 0.1182)  Single sided probability that the two variances are equal p=0.98916  Difference between means:  M1-M2=3.81-2.72=1.09  sd=2.3185; se=0.1364  95% CI of difference:  0.8227 &lt;1.09&lt; 1.3573 (Wald)  t-difference: 7.993  df-t: 288.6; p= 1  (left p: 0; two sided: 0)</p>
<p>Q32/63:</p> <p>Mean 1: 2.03  Mean 2: 2.77  N1: 172  N2: 388  Std Dev.1: 1.09  Std Dev.2: 1.63  z for 95% CI= 1.96  declare p larger than alpha=0.05 not significant.</p> <p>mean1 eq: 2.03 (variance= 1.188) (se= 0.0831)  mean2 eq: 2.77 (variance= 2.657) (se= 0.0828)  Single sided probability that the two variances are equal p=1  Difference between means:  M1-M2=2.03-2.77=-0.74  sd=2.5502; se=0.1173  95% CI of difference:  -0.9699 &lt;-0.74&lt; -0.5101 (Wald)  t-difference: -6.31  df-t: 472.3; p= 0  (left p: 1; two sided: 0)</p>	<p>Q31/62</p> <p>Mean 1: 2.32  Mean 2: 2.86  N1: 388  N2: 172  Std Dev.1: 1.34  Std Dev.2: 1.47  z for 95% CI= 1.96  declare p larger than alpha=0.05 not significant.</p> <p>mean1 eq: 2.32 (variance= 1.796) (se= 0.068)  mean2 eq: 2.86 (variance= 2.161) (se= 0.1121)  Single sided probability that the two variances are equal p=0.92754  Difference between means:  M1-M2=2.32-2.86=-0.54  sd=2.2788; se=0.1311  95% CI of difference:  -0.797 &lt;-0.54&lt; -0.283 (Wald)  t-difference: -4.119  df-t: 301.6; p= 2.0E-5  (left p: 1; two sided: 0)</p>

Q34/66:

Mean 1: 2.38  
Mean 2: 2.13  
N1: 172  
N2: 388  
Std Dev.1: 1.27  
Std Dev.2: 1.22  
z for 95% CI= 1.96  
declare p larger than alpha=0.05 not significant.

mean1 eq: 2.38 (variance= 1.613) (se= 0.0968)  
mean2 eq: 2.13 (variance= 1.488) (se= 0.0619)  
Single sided probability that the two  
variances are equal p=0.26176

Difference between means:  
M1-M2=2.38-2.13=0.25  
sd=2.0439; se=0.1149  
95% CI of difference:  
0.0247 <0.25< 0.4753 (Wald)  
t-difference: 2.175  
df-t: 315.6; p= 0.98479  
(left p: 0.0152; two sided: 0.0304)

## Appendix B - Raw Data (attached)