

ATTITUDES TOWARD POLITICS AND PUBLIC SERVICE:
A NATIONAL SURVEY
OF COLLEGE UNDERGRADUATES

Top Line Data

Margin of error for the total sample is +/- 3.45% at a 95% confidence level.

Margin of error for sub-samples is slightly higher.

All percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth of one point.

N=800

1. Are you currently attending a four-year college or university?
Yes..... 800 100.0%

2. Are you now, or are you planning to become a United States citizen in the near future?
Yes..... 800 100.0%

3. Could you please tell me your age?
Under 18..... 19 2.4%
18-20 464 58.0%
21-24 317 39.6%

4. Are you registered to vote?
Yes..... 567 72.6%
No..... 208 26.6%
Don't Know/Refused..... 6 0.8%

n=781

5. Can you please tell me the main reason why you have not registered to vote?

Reason Given:
Too busy/Not Enough Time..... 91 43.8%
Vote won't count/Not interested in voting..... 19 9.1%
Indifference/Don't care 18 8.7%
Moved to another state 18 8.7%
Not a citizen 11 5.3%
Don't know how or where to register..... 8 3.8%
No reason..... 7 3.4%
Don't know enough about the issues..... 7 3.4%
Don't know..... 11 5.3%
Other..... 18 8.7%

n=208

6. [Asked of respondents of voting age] How likely is it that you will be voting in the upcoming general election for President? Will you definitely be voting, probably be voting, would you be 50-50, or do you think you probably won't be voting in the next election?

Definitely be voting	391	50.1%
Probably be voting	201	25.7%
50-50	92	11.8%
Probably won't be voting	88	11.3%
Don't know	9	1.2%

n=781

7. [Asked of respondents of voting age] If you had the option of voting in person or on the Internet, how likely is it that you would be voting in the upcoming general election for President? Would you definitely be voting, probably be voting, would you be 50-50, or do you think you probably would not be voting in the next election?

Definitely be voting	470	60.2%
Probably be voting	195	25.0%
50-50	62	7.9%
Probably won't be voting	47	6.0%
Don't know	7	0.9%

n=781

8. Generally, do you feel like you have enough time to be involved in activities other than schoolwork or a job, or would you say you do not have enough time?

Have enough time	481	60.1%
Don't have enough time.....	309	38.6%
Don't know/Refused.....	10	1.3%

9. I am now going to read you a short list of activities that some college students participate in. After I read each item, please tell me whether you have taken part in this activity in the last 12 months.

	<u>HAVE</u>	<u>HAVE NOT</u>
a. Volunteered for community service	476	324
.....	59.5%	40.5%
b. Played organized sports.....	383	417
.....	47.9%	52.1%
c. Joined a government, political or issues-related organization	127	673
.....	15.9%	84.1%
d. Joined an organization that does not deal with politics or issues.....	493	307
.....	61.6%	38.4%

	<u>HAVE</u>	<u>HAVE NOT</u>
e. Ran for elected position in a student group or other organization	224	576
.....	28.0%	72.0%
f. Volunteered/plan to volunteer in a political campaign this year.....	52	748
.....	6.5%	93.5%

10. As you know there are many different factors that motivate people. What follows is a list of things that could motivate college students to take part in an activity other than school or work. After I read each one, please tell me whether you think it is a very effective, somewhat effective, not very effective or not at all effective factor in motivating you to take part in an activity other than school or work.

	<u>VERY EFFECTIVE</u>	<u>S'WHAT EFFECTIVE</u>	<u>NOT VERY EFFECTIVE</u>	<u>NOT AT ALL EFFECTIVE</u>	<u>DON'T KNOW</u>
a. Involvement of friends	420 52.5%	331 41.4%	39 4.9%	10 1.2%	-- --
b. Likelihood of making money	478 59.8%	261 32.6%	51 6.4%	10 1.2%	-- --
c. Giving back to the community/ making a difference	309 38.6%	415 51.9%	66 8.2%	9 1.1%	1 0.1%
d. Family or cultural influences or values	341 42.6%	359 44.9%	84 10.5%	13 1.6%	3 0.4%
e. Way of getting academic credit	402 50.2%	305 38.1%	71 8.9%	19 2.4%	3 0.4%
f. Way to meet people with common interests	244 30.5%	434 54.2%	102 12.8%	20 2.5%	-- --
g. As a resume builder	346 43.2%	352 44.0%	85 10.6%	16 2.0%	1 0.1%
h. Enjoyment of activity	555 69.4%	222 27.8%	17 2.1%	6 0.8%	-- --
i. Ability to see tangible results	321 40.1%	394 49.2%	69 8.6%	15 1.9%	1 0.1%

11. Thinking some more about factors that motivate or inspire people -- which one person would you say inspires you most?

Mother.....	214	26.8%
Father.....	168	21.0%

Friend	72	9.0%
Parents	71	8.9%
Grandparent.....	26	3.2%
Sibling.....	21	2.6%
Aunt/uncle.....	10	1.2%
Other family member.....	14	1.8%
Family and Friends – total.....		74.5%
Self	24	3.0%
College professor	24	3.0%
Teacher (not college)	21	2.6%
Jesus Christ	14	1.8%
Activist.....	6	0.8%
Coach	5	0.6%
Musician.....	5	0.6%
No One	5	0.6%
Other Educator.....	5	0.6%
Other Religious Figure.....	5	0.6%
God.....	4	0.5%
Professional Athlete.....	4	0.5%
Priest/Pastor	3	0.4%
Other Political Figure.....	3	0.4%
Scientist.....	3	0.4%
College Administrator/Dean.....	2	0.2%
Other Arts and Sciences.....	2	0.2%
T.V. Personality	2	0.2%
U.S. Senator/ Congressman	2	0.2%
Actor.....	1	0.1%
Buddha	1	0.1%
Business Leader	1	0.1%
Motivational Speaker.....	1	0.1%
Other World Leader.....	1	0.1%
Philosopher.....	1	0.1%
President.....	1	0.1%
Other.....	14	1.8%
Don't know	44	5.5%

12. Thinking about national issues for a moment, can you please tell me which issue concerns you most?

Education – general.....	64	8.0%
Education – student aid	21	2.6%
Education – school funding.....	18	2.2%
Education – school vouchers.....	7	0.9%
Education – teacher testing	4	0.5%
Education—national standards.....	3	0.4%
Education – total.....		14.6%
Crime – youth violence/violence.....	31	3.9%
Crime – gun control.....	24	3.0%
Crime – drugs.....	12	1.5%
Crime – general	9	1.1%
Crime – death penalty	3	0.4%

Crime—mandatory sentencing.....	3	0.4%
Crime – total		10.3%
Economy.....	49	6.1%
Abortion	46	5.8%
Environment	43	5.4%
Health Care.....	43	5.4%
Poverty/Welfare/Homelessness.....	36	4.5%
Foreign Affairs/Foreign Policy	33	4.1%
Civil Rights/Equal Rights	29	3.6%
Elian Gonzalez	28	3.5%
Budget Deficit/Debt	21	2.6%
Social Security/Medicare	20	2.5%
Elections/Campaigns.....	19	2.4%
Family Values	19	2.4%
Gas Prices.....	15	1.9%
Taxes	14	1.8%
Military Spending.....	11	1.4%
Affirmative Action	10	1.2%
Government Apathy	10	1.2%
Restrictive Gun Legislation.....	10	1.2%
Gay Rights.....	7	0.9%
Campaign Finance Reform.....	6	0.8%
Nothing.....	6	0.8%
Technology/Internet	6	0.8%
Religion/God in Pubic Schools	5	0.6%
Immigration.....	4	0.5%
Work Standards/Sweatshops	4	0.5%
Women’s Issues.....	4	0.5%
Supreme Court.....	3	0.4%
Affordable Housing.....	1	0.1%
Agriculture	1	0.1%
Elderly Issues	1	0.1%
Other – specify	5	0.6%
Don’t know.....	92	11.5%

13a. Now, I am going to select an issue that has been coming up a lot in the survey so far – Education. In your opinion, which of the following groups would be most effective at improving Education?

National government.....	140	17.5%
State and local government.....	484	60.5%
Private sector.....	110	13.8%
Volunteer organizations.....	52	6.5%
Don’t know	14	1.8%

13b. Now, I am going to select an issue that has been coming up a lot in the survey so far – Crime and Violence. In your opinion, which of the following groups would be most effective at decreasing Crime and Violence?

National government.....	176	22.0%
State and local government.....	419	52.4%
Private sector.....	86	10.8%
Volunteer organizations.....	108	13.5%
Don't know	11	1.4%

13c. Now, I am going to select an issue that has been coming up a lot in the survey so far – Homelessness. In your opinion, which of the following groups would be most effective at decreasing Homelessness?

National government.....	209	26.1%
State and local government.....	259	32.4%
Private sector.....	106	13.2%
Volunteer organizations.....	214	26.8%
Don't know	12	1.5%

13d. Now, I am going to select an issue that has been coming up a lot in the survey so far – Money in Politics. In your opinion, which of the following groups would be most effective at reforming the system so there is less Money in Politics?

National government.....	491	61.4%
State and local government.....	114	14.2%
Private sector.....	113	14.1%
Volunteer organizations.....	61	7.6%
Don't know	21	2.6%

13e. Now, I am going to select an issue that has been coming up a lot in the survey so far –preserving the environment. In your opinion, which of the following groups would be most effective at preserving the environment in the United States?

National government.....	314	39.2%
State and local government.....	170	21.2%
Private sector.....	134	16.8%
Volunteer organizations.....	172	21.5%
Don't know	10	1.2%

14. In general, which do you think is the better way to solve important issues facing the country – through political engagement or through community volunteerism?

Political engagement.....	287	35.9%
Community volunteerism	483	60.4%
Don't know	30	3.8%

15. In general, which do you think is the better way to solve important issues facing your community – through political engagement or through community volunteerism?

Political engagement.....	110	13.8%
Community volunteerism	681	85.1%
Don't know	9	1.1%

16. Now I want to talk to you about this subject for another moment. I am going to read you a short list of individuals and institutions, and after I read each one I am going to ask you how much you trust them. Please tell me whether you trust them to do the right thing all of the time, most of the time, only some of the time, or never. Here's the first one:

	<u>ALL OF THE TIME</u>	<u>MOST OF THE TIME</u>	<u>SOME OF THE TIME</u>	<u>NEVER</u>	<u>DON'T KNOW</u>
a. Your representative in the state legislature (where you are registered)	52 6.5%	370 46.2%	328 41.0%	22 2.8%	28 3.5%
b. Your city or town government	53 6.6%	416 52.0%	299 37.4%	25 3.1%	7 0.9%
c. The Federal government	33 4.1%	254 31.8%	449 56.1%	62 7.8%	2 0.2%
d. Your state government	41 5.1%	365 45.6%	368 46.0%	22 2.8%	4 0.5%
e. The Administration at your College or university	119 14.9%	362 45.2%	269 33.6%	48 6.0%	2 0.2%
f. Your local Member Congress serving in Washington	61 7.6%	342 42.8%	335 41.9%	39 4.9%	23 2.9%
g. Private companies	24 3.0%	206 25.8%	473 59.1%	85 10.6%	12 1.5%
h. The student government at your college or university	120 15.0%	393 49.1%	222 27.8%	61 7.6%	4 0.5%

17. Now I am going to read a list of statements about politics and public service provided by college students. After I read each one, please tell me whether you strongly agree with the statement, somewhat agree with the statement, somewhat disagree with the statement, or strongly disagree with the statement. Here is the first one:

	<u>STRONGLY AGREE</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT AGREE</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT DISAGREE</u>	<u>STRONGLY DISAGREE</u>	<u>DON'T KNOW</u>
a. I feel like I need more practical information about politics before I get involved.	392 49.0%	304 38.0%	72 9.0%	27 3.4%	5 0.6%
b. The media does not seem concerned with what students think about the major political issues.	218 27.3%	376 47.0%	167 20.9%	31 3.9%	8 1.0%
c. Political candidates, campaigns, and institutions do not seem concerned with what students think about the major political issues.	183 22.9%	394 49.2%	191 23.9%	26 3.2%	6 0.8%
d. Volunteering in the community is easier than volunteering in politics.	432 54.0%	256 32.0%	62 7.8%	26 3.2%	24 3.0%
e. I would get more involved in politics if my friends were involved.	86 10.8%	258 32.2%	231 28.9%	222 27.8%	3 0.4%
f. Elected officials seem to be motivated by selfish reasons.	213 26.6%	379 47.4%	173 21.6%	27 3.4%	8 1.0%
g. Politics is not relevant to my life right now.	86 10.8%	169 21.1%	241 30.1%	302 37.8%	2 0.2%
h. It would be very difficult for college students to make a real difference in politics or government. n=400	37 9.2%	105 26.2%	146 36.5%	109 27.3%	3 0.8%
h. It would be very difficult for college students to make a real difference in the community. n=400	11 2.8%	52 13.0%	138 34.5%	198 49.5%	1 0.2%

	<u>STRONGLY AGREE</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT AGREE</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT DISAGREE</u>	<u>STRONGLY DISAGREE</u>	<u>DON'T KNOW</u>
i. Being involved in politics while in college is not considered to be very “cool.”	24 3.0%	114 14.2%	340 42.5%	302 37.8%	20 2.5%
j. I am waiting until I am older before I become politically engaged.	60 7.5%	229 28.6%	255 31.9%	245 30.6%	11 1.4%
k. Political involvement rarely has any immediate, tangible results.	78 9.8%	330 41.2%	277 34.6%	103 12.9%	12 1.5%
l. Political activity is enjoyable.	57 7.1%	368 46.0%	245 30.6%	107 13.4%	23 2.9%

18. Now I am going to read another list. This list, also compiled by students, describes ways to get college students more involved in politics and public service. After I read each one, please tell me whether you think each would be a very effective, somewhat effective, not very effective, or not at all effective way to get college students more involved in politics and public service.

	<u>VERY EFFECTIVE</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE</u>	<u>NOT VERY EFFECTIVE</u>	<u>NOT AT ALL EFFECTIVE</u>	<u>DON'T KNOW</u>
a. If as part of the required curriculum, public schools spent more time teaching the basics about how to get involved in politics, activism and the issues of the day.	214 26.8%	461 57.6%	105 13.1%	18 2.2%	2 0.2%
b. If elected officials held open town meetings that dealt specifically with the issues that students care about most. n=400	139 34.8%	44 11.0%	215 53.8%	2 0.5%	-- --
b. If the Presidential candidates agreed to a televised debate that dealt specifically with the issues that students care about most. n=400	169 42.2%	180 45.0%	43 10.8%	7 1.8%	1 0.2%
c. If the process of registering and voting by absentee ballot were made easier so that students can vote from college.	491 61.4%	253 31.6%	44 5.5%	8 1.0%	4 0.5%

	<u>VERY EFFECTIVE</u>	<u>SOMEWHAT EFFECTIVE</u>	<u>NOT VERY EFFECTIVE</u>	<u>NOT AT ALL EFFECTIVE</u>	<u>DON'T KNOW</u>
d. If students were made more aware of real-life examples of how they can make a difference, such as the United Students Against Sweatshops group who created “codes of conduct” for the companies that license their logos - beginning to end the low pay and unsafe conditions of many workers.	312 39.0%	408 51.0%	68 8.5%	10 1.2%	2 0.2%
e. If Federal and state governments offered loan forgiveness or signing bonuses to qualified students who commit to government work for a period of 3 to 5 years after college.	358 44.8%	346 43.2%	79 9.9%	15 1.9%	2 0.2%
f. If there were a student-oriented political action committee or network that focused on organizing student groups, training students for political involvement and helping young people get elected to local, state and Federal offices.	211 26.4%	483 60.4%	96 12.0%	7 0.9%	3 0.4%
g. If there were an easy-to-find website dedicated to providing students with political information, including ways they can get involved.	298 37.2%	392 49.0%	95 11.9%	14 1.8%	1 0.1%
h. If students had direct contact with more political candidates, campaigns and institutions.	345 43.1%	409 51.1%	42 5.2%	3 0.4%	1 0.1%
i. If as part of the curriculum, colleges and universities created partnerships with local and state governments and offered academic credit to students who actively participated in public service activities.	444 55.5%	314 39.2%	32 4.0%	9 1.1%	1 0.1%

The following questions are for statistical purposes only.

D1. [Asked of respondents who are registered to vote] Do you consider yourself to be a Democrat, Republican or are you Independent?

Democrat.....	190	33.5%
Republican	156	27.5%
Independent.....	185	32.6%
Other.....	7	1.2%
Don't know	29	5.1%
n=567		

D2. [Asked of respondents who are registered to vote] If the election for President were held today and the candidates were: Democrat Al Gore and Republican George W. Bush – for whom would you vote?

Al Gore.....	254	44.8%
George W. Bush.....	231	40.7%
Don't know	82	14.5%
n=567		

D3. [Asked of respondents who are registered to vote] If the election for President were held today and the candidates were: Democrat Al Gore, Republican George W. Bush and Reform Party Candidate Pat Buchanan – for whom would you vote?

Al Gore.....	240	42.3%
George W. Bush.....	215	37.9%
Pat Buchanan	38	6.7%
Don't know	74	13.1%
n=567		

D4. Would you consider your parents or immediate family members to be politically engaged?

Yes.....	517	64.6%
No.....	266	33.2%
Don't know/Refused.....	17	2.1%

D5. Have you ever met or had contact with a political candidate or elected official (local, state or federally elected) that is not a member of your family?

Yes.....	530	66.2%
No.....	268	33.5%
Don't know/Refused.....	2	0.2%

D6. Which of the following best describes the area where you grew up – a city of 100,000 or more, a suburb of a city of 100,000 or more, a small city, a town or, a rural area?

City of 100,000 or more.....	166	20.8%
Suburb	235	29.4%
Small city	185	23.1%
Town	108	13.5%
Rural area	105	13.1%
Don't know/Refused.....	1	0.1%

D7. In which year of college are you?

First Year/Freshman	233	29.1%
Second Year/Sophomore	189	23.6%
Third Year/Junior.....	155	19.4%
Fourth Year/Senior.....	191	23.9%
Fifth Year	31	3.9%
Refused.....	1	0.1%

D8. Have you decided upon a major yet? What is your major?

English.....	70	11.0%
Engineering Sciences	62	9.7%
Earth and Planetary Sciences	58	9.1%
Romance Languages and Literatures	51	8.0%
Biology	50	7.8%
Chemistry	49	7.7%
Computer Science	24	3.8%
Religion	23	3.6%
Sociology.....	21	3.3%
Government/Political Science.....	19	3.0%
Chemistry and Physics	17	2.7%
History.....	15	2.4%
Economics	15	2.4%
Environmental Science.....	13	2.0%
Music.....	12	1.9%
Special Major	11	1.7%
Art.....	10	1.6%
Folklore and Mythology.....	9	1.4%
Philosophy.....	9	1.4%
Biochemical Sciences.....	8	1.3%
Sanskrit and Indian Studies.....	8	1.3%
Near Eastern Civilizations and Languages.....	6	0.9%
Anthropology	5	0.8%
Slavic Languages and Literatures	5	0.8%
Physics.....	4	0.6%
Linguistics.....	3	0.5%
Astronomy/Astrophysics.....	1	0.2%

Classics.....	1	0.2%
Literature.....	1	0.2%
Psychology.....	1	0.2%
No Major Decided.....	54	8.5%
Other.....	3	0.5%

(Note—51 students [10.3%] indicated that they have a double major- responses were not double counted)

D9. Please indicate your race:

White.....	621	77.7%
African American.....	75	9.4%
Asian.....	33	4.1%
Hispanic.....	30	3.8%
Native American.....	12	1.5%
Other.....	16	2.0%
Refused.....	13	1.6%

D13. Please indicate your gender:

Male.....	400	50.0%
Female.....	400	50.0%

D10. What college or university do you attend? (Coded by type of institution according to the listings in U.S. News and World Report)

National University.....	516	64.5%
National Liberal Arts.....	33	4.1%
Midwestern University.....	90	11.2%
Northern University.....	25	3.1%
Southern University.....	72	9.0%
Western University.....	19	2.4%
Midwestern Liberal Arts College.....	10	1.2%
Northern Liberal Arts College.....	16	2.0%
Southern Liberal Arts College.....	11	1.4%
Western Liberal Arts College.....	3	0.4%
Refused.....	5	0.6%

END