# Z McLaughlin \& Associates National Undergraduate Study 

Sponsored By:


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## Methodology


#### Abstract

McLaughlin \& Associates conducted a national survey of 800 undergraduate students from September $19^{\text {th }}$ to $26^{\text {th }}, 2021$. All student participants were under the age of 25 and attend either a four-year private or public college or university on a full-time basis. This study's universe is the "conventional" four-year undergraduate, therefore excluding undergraduates who either attend a two-year school, technical school, junior college or trade school, are over the age of $\mathbf{2 4}$ or attend on a part-time basis.

All interviews were conducted online and respondents were carefully selected and screened from a nationwide representative platform of individuals who elect to participate in online surveys. Data for this survey have been stratified by age, race/ethnicity, gender and geography using the most recent National Center for Education Statistics Report (2018) to reflect the actual demographic composition of four-year, full-time undergraduate students in the United States. According to the NCES Statistics, there are approximately $8,156,367$ undergraduates who fall within these parameters.

Because the sample is based on those who initially self-selected for participation rather than a probability sample, no estimates of sampling error can be calculated. However, a confidence interval of $95 \%$ was calculated in order to produce an error estimate of $+/-3.5 \%$ for the 800 respondents. This error estimate should be taken into consideration in much the same way that analysis of probability polls takes into account the margin of sampling error. The error estimate increases for crosstabulations. Totals may not add up to exactly $100 \%$ due to rounding, refusals and the ability for respondents to give multiple answers to certain questions. All surveys may be subject to multiple sources of error, including, but not limited to question wording and ordering, sampling error, coverage error and measurement error. This study is the seventh iteration of our undergraduate research on behalf of the William F. Buckley, Jr. Program at Yale. | School Type | Total | School Geo. | Total |
| :--- | :---: | :--- | :---: |
| Private | $34 \%$ | East | $18 \%$ |
| Public | $66 \%$ | Midwest | $21 \%$ |
| Class Year | Total | South | $36 \%$ |
| Freshman | $19 \%$ | West | $25 \%$ |
| Sophomore | $29 \%$ | Top 5 Majors | Total |
| Junior | $27 \%$ | Math/Enginer | $23 \%$ |
| Senior | $25 \%$ | Soc./Beh. Sc. | $20 \%$ |
| Ethnicity | Total | Humanities | $16 \%$ |
| White | $54 \%$ | Business | $15 \%$ |
| Black | $13 \%$ | Nat'l Sciences | $12 \%$ |
| Hispanic | $20 \%$ | Party ID | Total |
| Asian | $7 \%$ | Republican | $17 \%$ |
| Age | Total | Democrat | $40 \%$ |
| $18-19$ | $33 \%$ | Ind./Other | $32 \%$ |
| $20-21$ | $44 \%$ | Not Registered | $5 \%$ |
| Over 21 | $23 \%$ | Ideology | Total |
| Gender | Total | Liberal | $41 \%$ |
| Male | $43 \%$ | Moderate | $32 \%$ |
| Female | $55 \%$ | Conservative | $20 \%$ |


## Part One -

## The Constitution, First Amendment, Free Speech and Intellectual Diversity

Fifty-five percent (55\%) say the Constitution is a very important document that needs to be followed and respected, compared to $31 \%$ who say it is outdated. The "important" response is up slightly from $52 \%$ last year, but lower than the high of 63\% from 2019.


By an overwhelming margin of $80 \%$ to $13 \%$, students say the First Amendment is an important amendment that still needs to be followed and respected rather than it being outdated and can no longer be applied in today's society. This "important" response is also higher than the $72 \%$ last year, but lower than the high of $84 \%$ reported in 2019 and 2016.


A slight plurality, $45 \%$, oppose speech codes on campus, while $42 \%$ favor them. This is a net change of 10-points from last year when $48 \%$ favored speech codes and $41 \%$ opposed them. Current opinions are similar to those from 2017 to 2019 when majorities opposed speech codes.


## By a $79 \%$ to 15\% margin, students say their college or university generally does a

 good job encouraging free speech and intellectual diversity among students.Which comes closer to your opinion?

My college or university generally does a good job encouraging free speech and intellectual diversity among students OR
My college or university generally does a bad job encouraging free speech and intellectual diversity among students


|  | Good Job | Bad Job |
| :--- | :---: | :---: |
| Private School | 72 | 21 |
| State School | 83 | 11 |
| Underclassmen (Freshman/Sophomores) | 78 | 16 |
| Upperclassmen (Junior/Seniors) | 80 | 13 |
| Liberal | 81 | 12 |
| Moderate | 84 | 14 |
| Conservative | 72 | 23 |
| White | 80 | 14 |
| Black | 76 | 18 |
| Hispanic | 77 | 16 |
| Asian | 85 | 11 |
| Men | 75 | 20 |
| Women | 83 | 11 |
| Major - Mathematics/Engineering | 82 | 14 |
| Major - Social/Behavioral Sciences | 76 | 15 |
| Major - Humanities | 82 | 14 |
| Major - Business | 81 | 14 |
| Major - Natural Sciences | 82 | 13 |
| Major - Arts | 76 | 15 |
| Major - Healthcare | 86 | 10 |

## Similarly, by a 70\% to 20\% margin, students say their college or university does a good job preventing offensive or insensitive dialogue among students.

Which comes closer to your opinion?
My college or university generally does a good job preventing offensive or insensitive dialogue among students OR
My college or university generally does a bad job preventing offensive or insensitive dialogue among students


|  | Good Job | Bad Job |
| :--- | :---: | :---: |
| Private School | 72 | 20 |
| State School | 69 | 20 |
| Underclassmen (Freshman/Sophomores) | 70 | 20 |
| Upperclassmen (Juniors/Seniors) | 70 | 19 |
| Liberal | 70 | 22 |
| Moderate | 76 | 18 |
| Conservative | 69 | 18 |
| White | 71 | 20 |
| Black | 66 | 26 |
| Hispanic | 69 | 17 |
| Asian | 68 | 20 |
| Men | 69 | 19 |
| Women | 72 | 20 |
| Major - Mathematics/Engineering | 70 | 17 |
| Major - Social/Behavioral Sciences | 74 | 19 |
| Major - Humanities | 74 | 18 |
| Major - Business | 74 | 15 |
| Major - Natural Sciences | 63 | 29 |
| Major - Arts | 64 | 29 |
| Major - Healthcare | 77 | 14 |

When given a choice about which is more important, by a two to one margin, students say it is more important for their school to encourage free speech and intellectual diversity (62\%) than to prevent offensive or insensitive dialogue (31\%).


## Part Two -

## Expression in the Classroom

Fifty percent (50\%) say they have often felt intimidated in sharing their ideas, opinions or beliefs in class because they were different than those of their professors, while $45 \%$ have not often felt intimidated. While this gap has tightened from last year when $53 \%$ often felt intimidated and $43 \%$ did not, responses to this question are relatively stable as the average "intimidated" response over the last seven years has been $50 \%$.

> Have you felt intimidated in sharing your ideas, opinions or beliefs in class because they were different than those of your professors?


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| Trend Line | $\mathbf{9 / 1 5}$ | $\mathbf{9 / 1 6}$ | $\mathbf{9 / 1 7}$ | $\mathbf{1 0 / 1 8}$ | $\mathbf{1 0 / 1 9}$ | $\mathbf{9 / 2 0}$ | $\mathbf{9 / 2 1}$ |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| Often | $49 \%$ | $53 \%$ | $44 \%$ | $53 \%$ | $50 \%$ | $53 \%$ | $50 \%$ |
| Not Often | $50 \%$ | $45 \%$ | $53 \%$ | $45 \%$ | $46 \%$ | $43 \%$ | $45 \%$ |


|  | Often | Not Often |
| :--- | :---: | :---: |
| Private School | 53 | 44 |
| State School | 48 | 46 |
| Underclassmen (Freshman/Sophomores) | 53 | 42 |
| Upperclassmen (Juniors/Seniors) | 47 | 49 |
| Liberal | 46 | 50 |
| Moderate | 47 | 49 |
| Conservative | 62 | 34 |
| White | 47 | 48 |
| Black | 61 | 35 |
| Hispanic | 54 | 42 |
| Asian | 48 | 46 |
| Men | 51 | 45 |
| Women | 49 | 46 |
| Major - Mathematics/Engineering | 50 | 48 |
| Major - Social/Behavioral Sciences | 51 | 45 |
| Major - Humanities | 52 | 46 |
| Major - Business | 51 | 43 |
| Major - Natural Sciences | 54 | 38 |
| Major - Arts | 52 | 43 |
| Major - Healthcare | 47 | 44 |

An identical 50\% have often felt intimidated in sharing their ideas, opinions or beliefs because they were different than their classmates or peers, while $47 \%$ have not often felt intimidated. This is again a slightly tighter margin than last year ( $51 \%$ to $46 \%$ ) and close to the average "intimated" response of $52 \%$ historically.


Nearly six in ten (58\%) say they are now more comfortable expressing their ideas, opinions and beliefs in the classroom compared to their time in high school. Only 19\% say they are less comfortable and $20 \%$ say no different.


When given a list of hot-button issues, students are most likely to cite politics (38\%) and race (30\%) as the ones they feel most uncomfortable speaking about and are off limits for discussion. Abortion (26\%), religion (26\%) and sexual preference (25\%) were next highest, with gender being the lowest at 19\%. Notably, nearly three in ten (28\%) say no topic is off limits for discussion in the classroom.

There are certain topics I feel uncomfortable speaking about and are off limits in the classroom for me
personally. They tend to deal with the following topics...
(Multiple Responses Accepted)


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|  | Politics | Race | Nothing |
| :--- | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Private School | 37 | 30 | 30 |
| State School | 39 | 31 | 27 |
| Underclassmen (Fresh./Soph.) | 39 | 30 | 25 |
| Upperclassmen (Juniors/Seniors) | 38 | 31 | 30 |
| Liberal | 33 | 28 | 34 |
| Moderate | 40 | 31 | 24 |
| Conservative | 49 | 37 | 23 |
| White | 42 | 31 | 28 |
| Black | 33 | 37 | 20 |
| Hispanic | 33 | 26 | 28 |
| Asian | 39 | 23 | 26 |
| Men | 42 | 33 | 25 |
| Women | 37 | 32 | 30 |
| Major - Mathematics/Engineering | 37 | 34 | 26 |
| Major - Social/Behavioral Sciences | 37 | 30 |  |
| Major - Humanities | 30 | 31 | 32 |
| Major - Business | 47 | 42 | 17 |
| Major - Natural Sciences | 45 | 32 | 24 |
| Major - Arts | 39 | 32 | 26 |
| Major - Healthcare | 43 | 35 | 27 |

# Part Three Insensitive \& Offensive Speech 

Almost half (48\%) disagree that offensive political opinions - whether in the classroom or on social media - should be reported to school administrators, while 39\% agree.


By a greater than two to one margin, students say people can be forgiven for insensitive or offensive comments that are made in the past if they apologize and commit to being more understanding (64\%) rather than believing there is never an excuse for insensitive or offensive comments, no matter how long ago they were made and people who are caught making them should face consequences (29\%).

## There are instances where celebrities, athletes, politicians and everyday people have made insensitive or offensive comments in

 the past - oftentimes revealed through old videos or social media posts. Which comes closer to your opinion?People can be forgiven for insensitive or offensive comments they made in the past if they apologize and commit to being more understanding.

OR
There is NEVER an excuse for insensitive or offensive comments, no matter how long ago they were made. People who are caught making such statements should face consequences.


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|  | Forgiven | Never Excuse |
| :--- | :---: | :---: |
| Private School | 63 | 30 |
| State School | 64 | 28 |
| Underclassmen (Freshman/Sophomores) | 59 | 32 |
| Upperclassmen (Juniors/Seniors) | 68 | 25 |
| Liberal | 66 | 29 |
| Moderate | 64 | 30 |
| Conservative | 71 | 23 |
| White | 69 | 24 |
| Black | 51 | 43 |
| Hispanic | 56 | 36 |
| Asian | 67 | 19 |
| Men | 68 | 26 |
| Women | 62 | 31 |
| Major - Mathematics/Engineering | 65 | 29 |
| Major - Social/Behavioral Sciences | 63 | 30 |
| Major - Humanities | 62 | 33 |
| Major - Business | 66 | 30 |
| Major - Natural Sciences | 64 | 29 |
| Major - Arts | 56 | 32 |
| Major - Healthcare | 62 | 30 |

However, students are more divided when it comes to humor. By a $50 \%$ to $41 \%$ margin, students say society should reevaluate certain types of humor and joking because it risks offending people rather than believing jokes are a part of everyday human interaction and we should not abandon humor even if people sometimes get offended.

There are times when jokes are made that can unintentionally be insensitive or offensive. Which comes closer to your opinion?
Jokes are part of everyday human interaction and we should not abandon humor even if people sometimes get
offended.
OR
We as a society should reevaluate certain types of humor and joking because it risks offending people, oftentimes
marginalized groups.


|  | Should Not | Reevaluate |
| :--- | :---: | :---: |
| Private School | 38 | 53 |
| State School | 42 | 49 |
| Underclassmen (Freshman/Sophomores) | 40 | 52 |
| Upperclassmen (Juniors/Seniors) | 42 | 48 |
| Liberal | 27 | 66 |
| Moderate | 45 | 47 |
| Conservative | 61 | 29 |
| White | 44 | 47 |
| Black | 31 | 62 |
| Hispanic | 43 | 49 |
| Asian | 31 | 56 |
| Men | 52 | 39 |
| Women | 32 | 59 |
| Major - Mathematics/Engineering | 52 | 41 |
| Major - Social/Behavioral Sciences | 38 | 54 |
| Major - Humanities | 40 | 57 |
| Major - Business | 44 | 46 |
| Major - Natural Sciences | 38 | 51 |
| Major - Arts | 45 | 49 |
| Major - Healthcare | 40 | 51 |

## Seven in ten (71\%) agree that "insensitive or offensive comments can be harmful

 to my mental health," while 22\% disagree.
## Agree/Disagree:

"Insensitive or offensive comments can be harmful to my mental health."


A majority (56\%) says most of the time there is a difference between insensitive or offensive comments and hate speech while $37 \%$ say comments that are insensitive or offensive can also be considered as hate speech because anything that is derogatory towards a certain person or group is hate speech.


# Part Four Hate Speech 

Forty-seven percent (47\%) agree that "hate speech, no matter how racist or bigoted it is, is still technically protected under the First Amendment as free speech," which is identical to last year. Forty-one percent (41\%) disagree which is four-points lower than last year.


Four in ten (40\%) agree that "it is sometimes appropriate to shout down or disrupt a speaker on my campus," while $47 \%$ disagree. This is very similar to last year, when $40 \%$ agreed and $51 \%$ disagreed.


Thirty-six percent (36\%) agree that violence can be justified to prevent a person from using hate speech or making racially charged comments, which is statistically insignificant from the 39\% who agreed with this statement last year. The majority (54\%) disagrees.


# Part Five Race Issues 

By a $49 \%$ to $42 \%$ margin, students believe America is inextricably linked to white supremacy and most minorities remain excluded from the American promise of equality rather than believing America is moving forward and the promise of equality continues to be extended to more people. This is statistically similar to last year when the margin was $51 \%$ to $40 \%$.


When given a choice, the majority ( $52 \%$ ) says America should strive to become a more equal nation by instituting polices to ensure every citizen is treated fairly and given the same opportunities to succeed. Thirty-nine percent (39\%) believe America should strive to be a more equitable nation by instituting policies that seek to correct past racial injustices, like providing reparation to descendants of former slaves and redistributing income and property from wealthy white Americans to struggling
black and brown Americans.
Which of the following comes closer to your own personal opinion?
America should strive to become a more EQUAL nation by instituting policies to ensure every citizen is treated fairly and given the same opportunities to succeed.

## OR

America should strive to become a more EQUITABLE nation by instituting policies that seek to correct past racial injustices, like providing reparations to descendants of former slaves and redistributing income and property from wealthy white Americans to struggling Black and Brown Americans.


|  | Equal | Equitable |
| :--- | :---: | :---: |
| Private School | 52 | 40 |
| State School | 52 | 39 |
| Underclassmen (Freshman/Sophomores) | 52 | 40 |
| Upperclassmen (Juniors/Seniors) | 52 | 38 |
| Liberal | 43 | 54 |
| Moderate | 58 | 33 |
| Conservative | 69 | 22 |
| White | 57 | 35 |
| Black | 46 | 50 |
| Hispanic | 48 | 41 |
| Asian | 47 | 46 |
| Men | 54 | 37 |
| Women | 51 | 41 |
| Major - Mathematics/Engineering | 55 | 39 |
| Major - Social/Behavioral Sciences | 47 | 48 |
| Major - Humanities | 52 | 42 |
| Major - Business | 56 | 34 |
| Major - Natural Sciences | 49 | 44 |
| Major - Arts | 42 | 47 |
| Major - Healthcare | 58 | 34 |

Seven in ten (71\%) agree that "systemic racism is a big problem in society today and white people still contribute to it, whether they realize it or not," while $21 \%$ disagree.

## Agree/Disagree:

"Systemic racism is a big problem in society today and white people still contribute to it, whether they realize it or not."


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|  | Agree | Disagree |
| :--- | :---: | :---: |
| Private School | 72 | 23 |
| State School | 71 | 20 |
| Underclassmen (Freshman/Sophomores) | 72 | 18 |
| Upperclassmen (Juniors/Seniors) | 71 | 24 |
| Liberal | 90 | 6 |
| Moderate | 66 | 28 |
| Conservative | 51 | 44 |
| White | 67 | 27 |
| Black | 85 | 10 |
| Hispanic | 70 | 20 |
| Asian | 79 | 15 |
| Men | 65 | 27 |
| Women | 76 | 17 |
| Major - Mathematics/Engineering | 68 | 23 |
| Major - Social/Behavioral Sciences | 83 | 15 |
| Major - Humanities | 78 | 18 |
| Major - Business | 70 | 22 |
| Major - Natural Sciences | 77 | 18 |
| Major - Arts | 76 | 14 |
| Major - Healthcare | 73 | 20 |

Similarly, 66\% agree that "most white Americans need to be re-educated about the true history of America and what it means to be actively anti-racist," while 26\% disagree.


Six in ten (59\%) favor allowing the teaching of critical race theory in all high school and colleges, which says America is founded on white supremacy and most laws and institutions in America today are inherently racist, while $28 \%$ oppose it.


Fifty-six percent (56\%) of students say they have learned about critical race theory before, including $16 \%$ who say they learned about it in high school, $28 \%$ who say they learned about it in college and 19\% who learned about it in both high school and college.

And have you ever learned about critical race theory in college or high school?
(Multiple Responses Accepted)


By a close $46 \%$ to $44 \%$ margin, students believe we should defund police departments because they are failing many communities rather than believing we can reform the criminal justice system, but defunding police departments is a mistake. This is a significant net shift of 10-points from last year when $52 \%$ wanted to defund police departments and $40 \%$ did not.


## Part Six -

## Miscellaneous Issues

A slight plurality (44\%) says socialist principles have the potential to be good for America while $36 \%$ say socialism is too radical. This is nearly identical to last year when the margin was $44 \%$ to $37 \%$.


Students also remain divided on the national debt. While $82 \%$ say the national debt is a problem, there is an identical split where $41 \%$ say it is a huge problem that needs to be addressed immediately either through spending reforms or revenue raising measures and $41 \%$ say it is a problem but there are other issues that need to be addressed more immediately, such as combatting climate change, reducing income inequality and dealing with racial injustices. Last year $88 \%$ said the national debt was a problem with $44 \%$ saying it was a huge problem and $44 \%$ saying it was a problem but other issues needed to be addressed. Currently, only $6 \%$ say the national debt is not a concerning problem.


Thirty-seven percent (37\%) say men are more privileged than women on their campus while a higher $43 \%$ say men and women are generally equal. Only 8\% say women are more privileged than men.


After hearing about a recent study finding that men are dropping out of college at a much higher rate than women and enrollment rates for poor and working-class white men are lower than enrollment rates for black, Latino and Asian men, $48 \%$ favor instituting programs and scholarships to encourage enrollment for white men, similar to programs for minorities. Thirty-one percent (31\%) oppose it and a large $21 \%$ are unsure.

## A recent study has found that men are dropping out of college at a much higher rate than women and

 women make up nearly $60 \%$ of the student body in many schools. This same study has found that college enrollment rates for poor and working-class white men are actually lower than enrollment rates for Black, Latino and Asian men of similar socioeconomic status. Considering this, would you favor or oppose colleges and universities instituting programs and scholarships to encourage enrollment for white men, similar to programs for minorities?

|  | Favor | Oppose |
| :--- | :---: | :---: |
| Private School | 48 | 28 |
| State School | 48 | 33 |
| Underclassmen (Freshman/Sophomores) | 49 | 31 |
| Upperclassmen (Juniors/Seniors) | 47 | 32 |
| Liberal | 41 | 38 |
| Moderate | 55 | 28 |
| Conservative | 54 | 29 |
| White | 47 | 32 |
| Black | 51 | 32 |
| Hispanic | 49 | 29 |
| Asian | 54 | 30 |
| Men | 60 | 23 |
| Women | 39 | 38 |
| Major - Mathematics/Engineering | 55 | 28 |
| Major - Social/Behavioral Sciences | 46 | 37 |
| Major - Humanities | 50 | 35 |
| Major - Business | 60 | 23 |
| Major - Natural Sciences | 41 | 41 |
| Major - Arts | 42 | 31 |
| Major - Healthcare | 50 | 34 |

Three in ten (31\%) have attended a rally or protest in the last two years that advocated for a particular political cause. This is down slightly from $37 \%$ last year.


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