

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) collects information from first-year and senior students about the characteristics and quality of their undergraduate experience. Since the inception of the survey, more than 1,600 bachelor's-granting colleges and universities in the United States and Canada have used it to measure the extent to which students engage in effective educational practices that are empirically linked with learning, personal development, and other desired outcomes such as persistence, satisfaction, and graduation.

NSSE data are used by faculty, administrators, researchers, and others for institutional improvement, public reporting, and related purposes. Launched in 2000 with the support of a generous grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts, NSSE has been fully sustained through institutional participation fees since 2002. The NSSE questionnaire was substantially updated in 2013, including new customization options. This document provides an overview of NSSE 2018, including administration details, response rates, participating institutions, and respondent characteristics.

Survey Data and Methodology

Approximately 1.2 million first-year and senior students from 511 institutions (489 in the US, 16 in Canada, and 6 in other countries) were invited to participate in NSSE 2018. Of this population, 289,867 students responded to the survey. Less than half (46%) of these were first-year students and 54% were seniors.

NSSE's sampling methodology calls for either a census of all first-year and senior students or a random selection of an equal number of students from each group, with sample size based on total undergraduate enrollment. Census administration is available only via email recruitment, in which students get a survey invitation and up to four reminders by email. In 2018, all participating institutions opted for this method rather than the regular mail option, in which sampled students get up to three messages by post and up to two reminders by email.

Unless noted otherwise, the results presented below are from 491 institutions—476 in the US and 15 in Canada—that participated in NSSE 2018. Due to nonstandard details of their participation, 20 institutions are not represented. In these summary tables, as in each *Institutional Report 2018*, only data for census-administered and randomly sampled students are included.

U.S. Participating Institutions

NSSE 2018 U.S. respondents profiled here include 275,219 first-year (46%) and senior (54%) respondents from 476 institutions. NSSE 2018 participating institutions and students reflect the diversity of bachelor's-granting colleges and universities in the US with respect to institution type, public or private control, size, region, and locale (Table 1). A searchable list of participating institutions is on the NSSE website: nsse.indiana.edu/html/participants.cfm



Mississippi State University

Institutional Response Rates

The average response rate for U.S. NSSE 2018 institutions was 30%. The highest response rate among U.S. institutions was 88%, and three out of five achieved a response rate of 25% or higher. Higher average response rates were observed for smaller institutions and for institutions offering incentives (Table 2).

Institutions had the option to use their learning management system or student portal to recruit students. In 2018, 91 U.S. institutions chose this option, and the average share of respondents who accessed the survey this way was 24%.

Table 1**Profile of NSSE 2018 U.S. Institutions and Respondents and Bachelor's-Granting U.S. Institutions and Their Students**

Institution Characteristics	Institutions (%)		Students (%)	
	NSSE	U.S. ^a	NSSE	U.S. ^a
Carnegie Basic Classification^b				
Doc/Highest: Doctoral Universities (Highest Research Activity)	5	7	15	27
Doc/Higher: Doctoral Universities (Higher Research Activity)	8	6	16	14
Doc/Moderate: Doctoral Universities (Moderate Research Activity)	8	7	14	10
Master's L: Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs)	27	24	29	28
Master's M: Master's Colleges and Universities (medium programs)	17	13	10	7
Master's S: Master's Colleges and Universities (smaller programs)	8	8	4	3
Bac/A&S: Baccalaureate Colleges—Arts & Sciences Focus	16	15	8	4
Bac/Diverse: Baccalaureate Colleges—Diverse Fields	11	19	4	5
Control				
Public	39	35	57	67
Private	61	65	43	33
Undergraduate Enrollment				
Fewer than 1,000	12	22	3	2
1,000–2,499	33	32	14	10
2,500–4,999	23	18	18	11
5,000–9,999	16	14	20	18
10,000–19,999	9	9	20	24
20,000 or more	6	6	25	35
Region				
New England	7	8	7	6
Mid East	18	18	16	16
Great Lakes	14	15	13	14
Plains	8	10	7	8
Southeast	29	25	25	24
Southwest	11	8	16	12
Rocky Mountains	4	3	6	5
Far West	8	10	10	13
Outlying Areas	<1	2	<1	2
Locale				
City	48	47	58	62
Suburban	22	26	23	22
Town	26	21	17	14
Rural	3	6	1	2

Notes: Percentages are unweighted and based on U.S. postsecondary institutions that award baccalaureate degrees and belong to one of the eight Carnegie classifications in the table. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

a. U.S. percentages are based on the 2016 IPEDS Institutional Characteristics data.

b. For information on the Carnegie Foundation's 2015 Basic Classification, see carnegieclassifications.iu.edu

Table 2**NSSE 2018 U.S. Participation and Response Rates by Undergraduate Enrollment and Use of Incentives**

Institution Characteristics	Number of Institutions	Average Institutional Response Rate (%)
Undergraduate Enrollment		
2,500 or fewer	219	35
2,501 to 4,999	109	28
5,000 to 9,999	74	25
10,000 or more	71	21
Use of Incentives^a		
Offered incentives	303	33
No incentives	173	25
All Institutions	476	30

a. Some institutions used recruitment incentives, such as small gifts or raffles, to encourage students to complete the survey.

Survey Customization

Participating institutions may append up to two additional question sets in the form of NSSE Topical Modules or consortium questions (for institutions sharing a common interest and participating as a NSSE consortium) (Table 3). Of the nine modules available in 2018, the most widely adopted was Academic Advising, closely followed by First-Year Experiences and Senior Transitions (Table 4).

Table 3**Summary of NSSE 2018 Participation in Additional Questions Sets**

Selection of Additional Question Sets	Number of Institutions	Percentage of Institutions
None	58	11
One module only	174	34
Two modules	205	40
Consortium items only	16	3
Consortium items plus one module	58	11

Notes: Includes U.S., Canadian, other international institutions, and institutions with nonstandard population files or administrations. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Table 4**NSSE 2018 Participation in Topical Modules**

Topical Module	Number of Institutions	Percentage of Institutions
Academic Advising	164	32
First-Year Experiences and Senior Transitions	158	31
Inclusiveness and Engagement with Cultural Diversity	103	20
Development of Transferable Skills	46	9
Experiences with Writing	45	9
Civic Engagement	43	8
Global Learning	30	6
Experiences with Information Literacy	29	6
Learning with Technology	24	5

Notes: Includes U.S., Canadian, other international institutions, and institutions with nonstandard population files or administrations. Percentages sum to more than 100 because many institutions selected two modules.

U.S. Respondent Profile

Table 5 displays selected demographic and enrollment characteristics of NSSE 2018 U.S. respondents alongside all U.S. bachelor's degree-seeking students for comparison. NSSE reports use weights as appropriate to correct for disproportionate survey response related to institution-reported sex and enrollment status at each institution. Table 6 provides additional details about U.S. respondents.

Canadian Respondent Profile

Canadian respondents profiled here include 7,998 students (57% first-year, 43% senior) from 15 institutions in 4 provinces, including 6 institutions in Ontario; 4 in Alberta; 4 in British Columbia; and 1 from New Brunswick. Female students and full-time students accounted for about 71% and 85% of Canadian respondents, respectively. The average response rate for Canadian NSSE 2018 institutions was 37%, with the highest response rate being 72%. Nearly nine in ten achieved a response rate of 25% or higher.

About 24% of Canadian respondents were at least 24 years old. The majority of students providing ethnocultural information identified as Caucasian or White (69%), while 9% were multiracial, 5% Chinese, 3% South Asian, 3% Black, and less than 3% from each of nine other categories.

Table 5**Characteristics of NSSE 2018 U.S. Respondents and Undergraduate Population at All U.S. Bachelor's Degree-Granting Institutions**

Student Characteristics ^a	NSSE Respondents ^b (%)	U.S. Bachelor's-Granting Population ^c (%)
Sex		
Male	32	45
Female	68	55
Race/Ethnicity		
African American/Black	10	12
American Indian/Alaska Native	1	1
Asian	6	7
Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Isl.	<1	<1
Caucasian/White	62	56
Hispanic/Latino	14	16
Multiracial/multiethnic	4	4
Foreign/nonresident alien	4	5
Enrollment Status		
Full-time	90	84
Not full-time	10	16

Note: Percentages are unweighted and may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

- Institution-reported, using categories provided in IPEDS. Race/ethnicity excludes students whose classification was unknown or not provided.
- The NSSE 2018 sampling frame consists of first-year and senior undergraduates. Data were provided by participating institutions.
- U.S. percentages are based on data from the 2016 IPEDS Institutional Characteristics and Enrollment data. Includes all class years.

Table 6**Additional Characteristics of NSSE 2018 U.S. Respondents**

Student Characteristics	%
At least 24 years old	23
First-generation ^a	45
Transfer	29
Expects to complete a master's degree or higher	61
Living on campus ^b	40
Taking all classes online	9

Note: Percentages are unweighted.

- No parent (or guardian) holds a bachelor's degree.
- Campus housing, fraternity, or sorority.

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