



2025 College Savings & Student Debt Study



Fidelity Investments'® 2025 College Savings & Student Debt study explores the evolving attitudes and behaviors of high school students and their parents, and finds economic uncertainty may be driving a surge in interest in non-traditional higher education paths and a sharper focus on return on investment when it comes to going to college.

Public, in-state colleges and universities continue to be the type of higher education students are most likely to consider

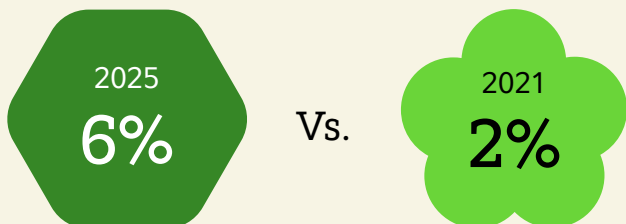
High school students

Type of college	2025	2021 ¹
Public in-state college or university	35%	34%
Public out-of-state college or university	9%	14%
Private college or university	14%	9%

High school parents

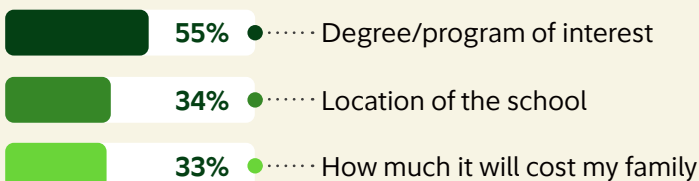
Type of college	2025	2021
Public in-state college or university	39%	38%
Public out-of-state college or university	7%	9%
Private college or university	12%	13%

Vocational/technical school as the most likely choice has increased 3X for students

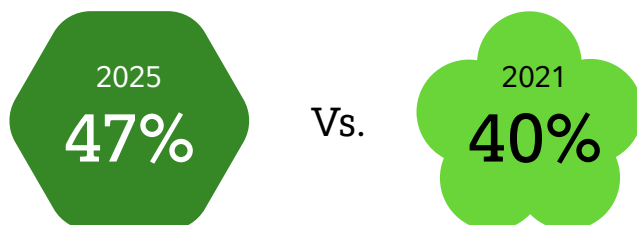


When choosing where to go to college, college-bound students are prioritizing practical factors

What factors do you expect to prioritize when choosing where to go for college/higher education?

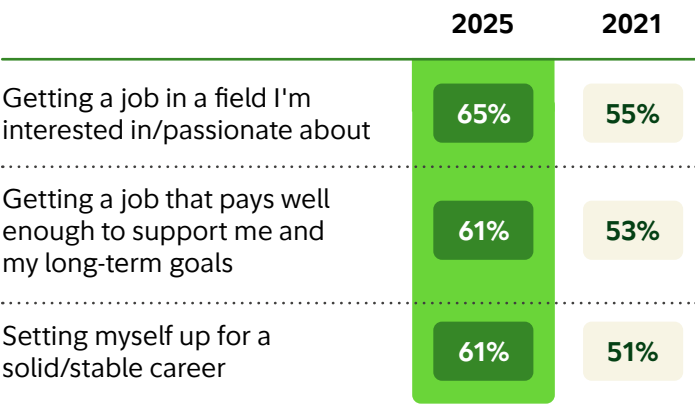


The percentage of college-bound students who say cost is most important when choosing where or how to pursue higher education is on the rise



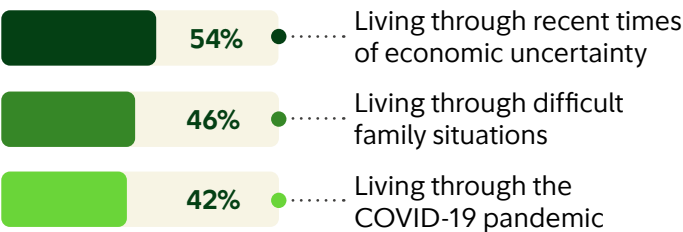
Top three goals for pursuing college

High school students are prioritizing career prospects and long-term financial goals



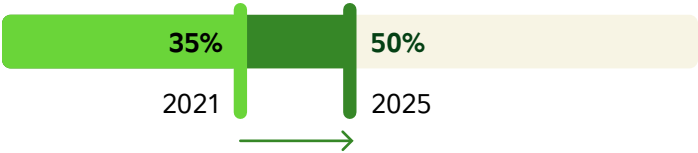
Economic uncertainty is the leading life experience shaping students' views on the role of higher education

What life experiences shaped how you view the role of higher education?

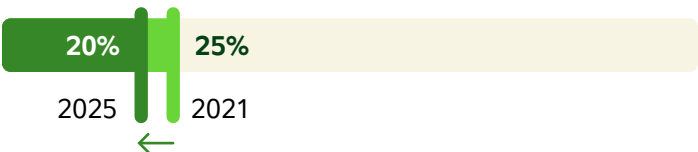


The top financial priorities for high school students are achieving financial security and being able to enjoy life

Financial security for myself and/or my family

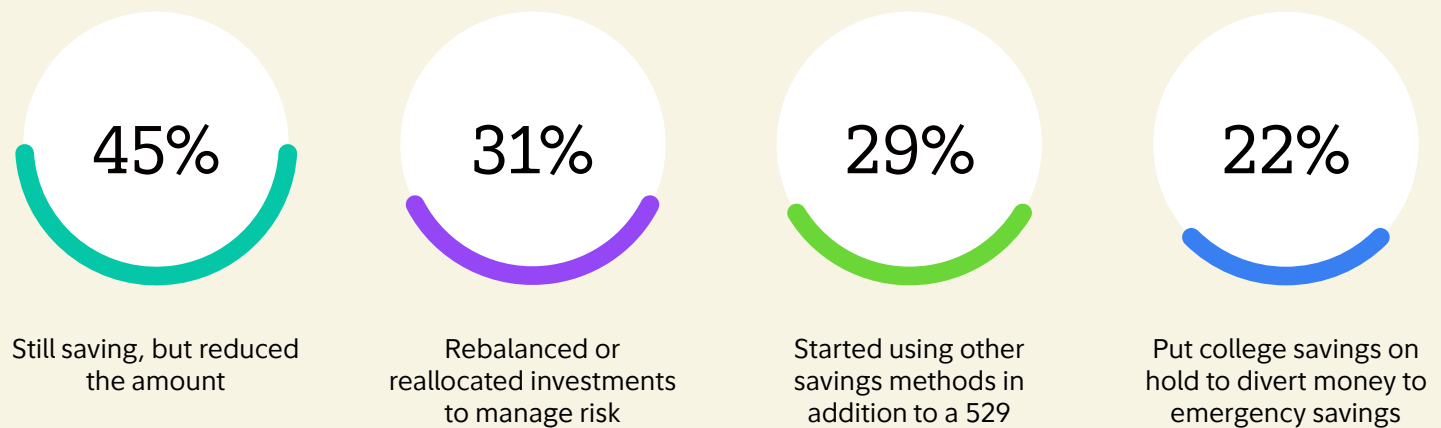


Enjoying life with what money can buy (vacations, outings with friends/family, etc.)



58% of parents are closely monitoring the market

While nearly 3-in-4 parents say recent market volatility hasn't changed how they're saving for college, those who have made changes to their approach are reducing savings, rebalancing investments, and saving outside of 529 plans:



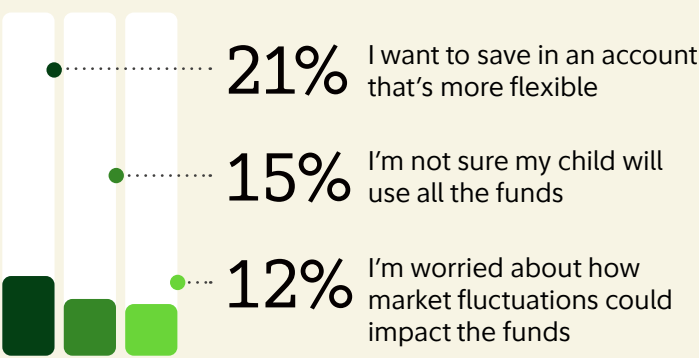
The majority of students and parents have discussed how they'll finance higher education

The percentage is even higher for high school seniors

	Yes	No
High school students	67%	26%
High school seniors	75%	24%
Parents	70%	27%

55% of parents currently use a 529 to save for their child's higher education or plan to in the future

Among the 45% who don't save in a 529 and have no plans to, the top reasons include:



60% of parents are concerned about market uncertainty affecting their ability to pay for their child's college education



How does having money saved in a dedicated college savings account make you feel as college gets closer?

	Students	Parents
Grateful, to have saved some money towards college	67%	69%
Optimistic, that I / my child will be able to pursue higher education thanks to the savings	54%	56%
Accomplished, to have set a savings goal and partially or fully met it	33%	54%

College-bound students and parents have similar estimates for how much their family will owe after graduation

	Students	Parents
Average Total Student Debt	\$16,570	\$17,883
Average Total Parent Debt	\$13,507	\$15,910

58% of students and 54% of parents say they used their own best guess to come up with this estimate

When you (or your child) finish college, how much do you expect to pay per month towards student loans?

High school students and their parents estimate they'll be paying more than \$500 a month on student and parent loans

High school students
Average expected monthly payment: \$541

High school parents
Average expected monthly payment: \$596

After you (or your child) graduate from college, how long do you expect it to take to pay off student loans?

On average, high school students and their parents expect it will take more than six years to fully repay student and parent loans

Student loans

Students



8.9 years

Parents



9.7 years

Parent loans

Students

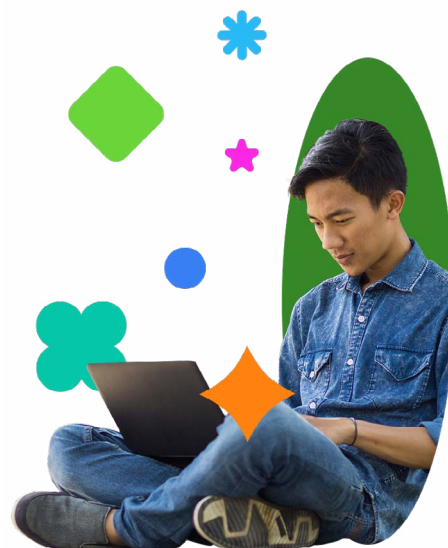


6.8 years

Parents



7.6 years



¹ Fidelity Investments 2021 College Savings & Student Debt Study

About Fidelity's 2025 College Savings & Student Debt Study

This study presents findings of an online survey among a sample of 2,008 respondents who are 15 years of age or older and either a current high school student in grades 10-12 (N=1,003) or a parent of a current high school student in grades 10-12 (N=1,005). Fielding for this survey was completed between May 22-June 4, 2025, by Big Village, which is not affiliated with Fidelity Investments.

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900 Salem Street, Smithfield, RI 02917

Fidelity Distributors Company LLC
900 Salem Street, Smithfield, RI 02917

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245 Summer Street, Boston, MA 02110

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