

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE, pronounced “nessie”) 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. This document provides an overview of NSSE 2019, including administration details, response rates, participating institutions, and respondent characteristics.

## Survey Data and Methodology

Approximately 1.5 million first-year and senior students from 531 institutions (504 in the US, 19 in Canada, and 8 in other countries) were invited to participate in NSSE 2019. Of this population, 294,507 students responded to the survey. Less than half (47%) of these were first-year students and 53% 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 2019, all but three 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 email reminders.

Unless noted otherwise, the results presented below are from 510 institutions—491 in the US and 19 in Canada—that participated in NSSE 2019. Due to nonstandard details of their participation, 21 institutions are not represented. In these summary tables, as in each *Institutional Report 2019*, only data for census-administered and randomly sampled students are included. NSSE 2019 U.S. respondents profiled here include 281,136 first-year (46%) and senior (54%) respondents.

## U.S. Participating Institutions

NSSE 2019 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/links/participants](https://nsse.indiana.edu/links/participants)



Mississippi State University

## Institutional Response Rates

The average response rate for U.S. NSSE 2019 institutions was 28%. The highest response rate among U.S. institutions was 67%, and about 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 2019, 85 U.S. institutions chose this option, and the average share of respondents who accessed the survey this way was 28%.

**Table 1****Profile of NSSE 2019 U.S. Institutions and Respondents and Bachelor's-Granting U.S. Institutions and Their Students**

Institution Characteristics	Institutions (%)		Students (%)	
	NSSE	U.S. <sup>a</sup>	NSSE	U.S. <sup>a</sup>
<b>Carnegie Basic Classification<sup>b</sup></b>				
Doctoral Universities (Very high research activity)	6	8	20	30
Doctoral Universities (High research activity)	10	8	18	16
Doctoral/Professional Universities	13	9	17	10
Master's Colleges and Universities (Larger programs)	26	21	25	26
Master's Colleges and Universities (Medium programs)	15	12	8	6
Master's Colleges and Universities (Smaller programs)	6	8	3	3
Baccalaureate Colleges—Arts & Sciences Focus	12	14	5	4
Baccalaureate Colleges—Diverse Fields	12	19	4	5
<b>Control</b>				
Public	42	36	62	67
Private	58	64	38	33
<b>Undergraduate Enrollment</b>				
Fewer than 1,000	12	22	3	2
1,000–2,499	33	31	14	9
2,500–4,999	21	17	14	11
5,000–9,999	17	15	20	19
10,000–19,999	10	8	21	22
20,000 or more	7	7	29	37
<b>Region</b>				
New England	8	8	7	6
Mid East	19	18	13	16
Great Lakes	12	15	12	14
Plains	12	10	13	7
Southeast	26	25	25	24
Southwest	11	8	13	12
Rocky Mountains	4	3	8	6
Far West	9	10	8	13
Outlying Areas	1	2	1	1
<b>Locale</b>				
City	45	46	56	61
Suburban	24	26	22	24
Town	26	22	20	14
Rural	5	6	2	1

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 2018 IPEDS Institutional Characteristics data.

b. For information on the Carnegie Foundation's 2018 Basic Classification, see [carnegieclassifications.iu.edu](http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu)

**Table 2****NSSE 2019 U.S. Participation and Response Rates by Undergraduate Enrollment and Use of Incentives**

Institution Characteristics	Number of Institutions	Average Institutional Response Rate (%)
<b>Undergraduate Enrollment</b>		
2,500 or fewer	230	33
2,501 to 4,999	101	25
5,000 to 9,999	80	24
10,000 or more	80	21
<b>Use of Incentives<sup>a</sup></b>		
Offered incentives	315	30
No incentives	176	25
<b>All Institutions</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>28</b>

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 2019, the most widely adopted was First-Year Experiences and Senior Transitions, followed by Academic Advising (Table 4).

**Table 3****Summary of NSSE 2019 Participation in Additional Questions Sets**

Selection of Additional Question Sets	Number of Institutions	Percentage of Institutions
None	57	11
One module only	122	23
Two modules	242	46
Consortium items only	16	3
Consortium items plus one module	94	18

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 2019 Participation in Topical Modules**

Topical Module	Number of Institutions	Percentage of Institutions
First-Year Experiences and Senior Transitions	188	35
Academic Advising <sup>a</sup>	178	34
Inclusiveness and Engagement with Cultural Diversity	108	20
Civic Engagement	63	12
Experiences with Writing	48	9
Development of Transferable Skills	45	8
Global Learning	28	5
Learning with Technology	24	5
Experiences with Information Literacy	18	3

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.

a. Includes institutions that administered an experimental set.

## U.S. Respondent Profile

Table 5 displays selected demographic and enrollment characteristics of NSSE 2019 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 9,091 students (58% first-year, 42% senior) from 19 institutions in four provinces, including nine institutions in Ontario; two in Alberta; five in British Columbia; and one from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Saskatchewan. Female students and full-time students accounted for about 69% and 90% of Canadian respondents, respectively. The average response rate for Canadian NSSE 2019 institutions was 42%, with the highest response rate being 81%. About three out of four achieved a response rate of 25% or higher.

About 16% of Canadian respondents were at least 24 years old. The majority of students providing ethnocultural information identified as Caucasian or White (67%), while 10% were multiracial, 6% Chinese, 6% South Asian, 3% Black, and less than 3% from each of nine other categories.

**Table 5****Characteristics of NSSE 2019 U.S. Respondents and Undergraduate Population at All U.S. Bachelor's Degree-Granting Institutions**

Student Characteristics <sup>a</sup>	NSSE Respondents <sup>b</sup> (%)	U.S. Bachelor's-Granting Population <sup>c</sup> (%)
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	34	44
Female	66	56
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
African American/Black	9	12
American Indian/Alaska Native	1	1
Asian	5	7
Native Hawaiian/other Pac. Isl.	<1	<1
Caucasian/White	64	55
Hispanic/Latino	13	17
Multiracial/multiethnic	4	4
Foreign/nonresident	3	5
<b>Enrollment Status</b>		
Full-time	89	84
Not full-time	11	16

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

a. Institution-reported, using categories provided in IPEDS. NSSE percentages do not include students with "another" or "unknown" sex (0.2% of all respondents) or unknown race/ethnicity (14% of all respondents).

b. The NSSE 2019 sampling frame consists of first-year and senior undergraduates. Data were provided by participating institutions.

c. U.S. percentages are based on data from the 2018 IPEDS Institutional Characteristics and Enrollment data. Includes all class years.

**Table 6****Additional Characteristics of NSSE 2019 U.S. Respondents**

Student Characteristics	%
At least 24 years old	23
First-generation <sup>a</sup>	44
Transfer	30
Expects to complete a master's degree or higher	59
Living on campus <sup>b</sup>	39
Taking all classes online	12

Note: Percentages are unweighted.

a. No parent (or guardian) holds a bachelor's degree.

b. Campus housing, fraternity, or sorority.

## Meet the NSSE Team

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