



Impact of COVID-19 on Students' College Plans -Survey Report

Results of over 1,000 High School students surveyed for their college plans post COVID-19 Pandemic.



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Panic and unprecedented disruption by the COVID-19 pandemic has not only stressed the US healthcare system beyond any imaginable limits, it has also brought this nation to its economic knees. The bears are running wild on Wall Street, joblessness is incalculable, and the education system has ground to a halt as Americans wonder what the post-pandemic implications will be for them, both near term and for years to come. Additionally, some clear opportunities for change and growth have surfaced. The question is not just - Are we disaster ready? But also - Are we future ready? In 2020, in a totally technology run world, do our schools have technology they need to prepare students for 21st century jobs?

At Cirkled In, our focus is on students and in particular on their college and career readiness. We wondered about their thoughts as they sit at home pondering their educational future. High School is a rite of passage and a big life event for American High School seniors. COVID-19 has not only taken that away from them but is also significantly impacting their higher education plans and direction of their life.

Students are sad about missing out on memorable high school experiences and if COVID-19 prolongs, they are worried that it will impact their college experience as well.

"My plans for college have changed on a minimal level. My plan is still to go to a four-year university, with the top choice of Northern Arizona University. My plans haven't changed, I'm in contact with them about the situation. There is nothing that can stop me from striving my goal and ambition for a career!"

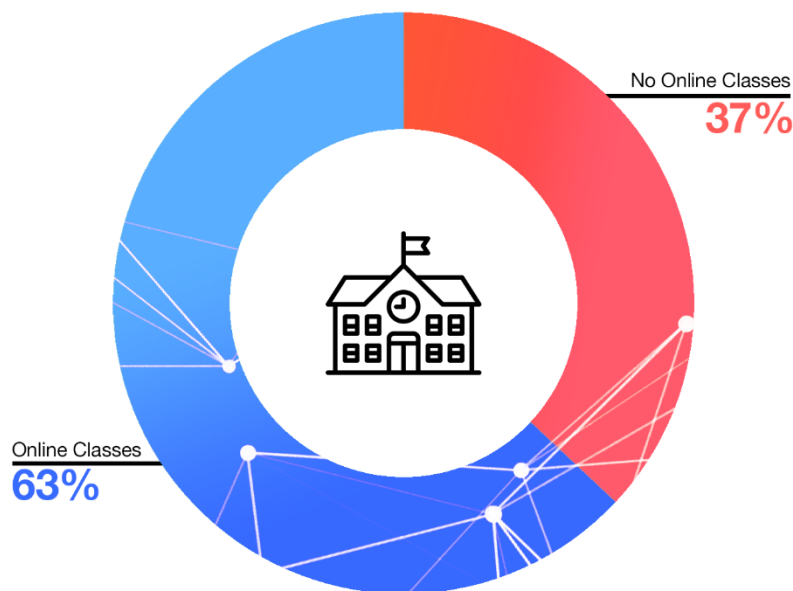
"I definitely need to be at a college where I'm out doing activities and exploring (of course when the virus is over). Since I'm a senior, some of my senior activities have already been cancelled due to "social distancing" which is sad because I've waited so long for this moment, finally being a senior who can end the year with a bang. Because of this, I will now need to make up all the fun activities that were lost, and invest it into college where I travel, participate in any campus activity with school spirit, and join clubs to keep myself social."

Q1. How many high schools are holding online classes?

COVID-19 tested to the limits the technical capabilities of our K-12 school systems. In 2020, how many schools can actually hold online classes if needed? Surprisingly more than one-third of schools in United States did not or could not hold online classes for weeks when whole country's school system was in lock down.

We, as a country, need to bring our schools and classrooms to 21st century.

Schools Offering Online Classes



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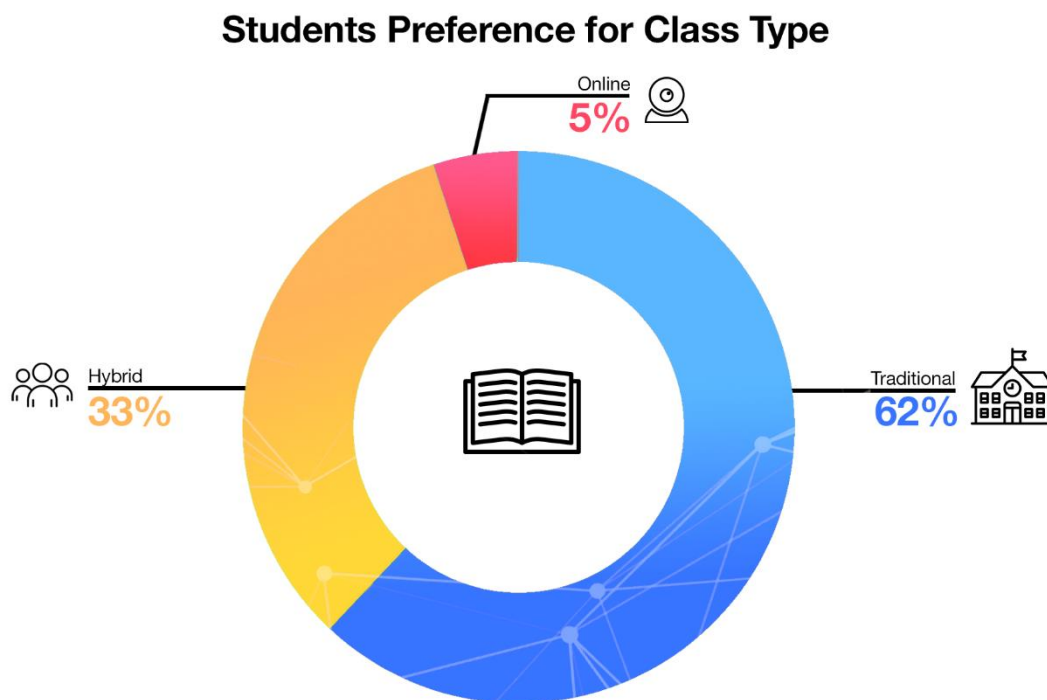
Key Takeaway

US school system is **not** as advanced in technology as it could be and should be. It's not only a reflection of current technology state but is also a **limitation** for the teachers to use latest educational apps in their classroom.



Q2. What do students prefer – online or traditional in-person classes?

This survey has some eye-opening data when it comes to high school students' preference for online vs. in-person classes. In this online world where students spend on average 3.5 hours per day online (as per another report), it was surprising to see that whopping 63% students preferred traditional classes and 33% preferred some sort of hybrid classes. Less than 5% students preferred only online classes.



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Here is what students had to say about online classes.

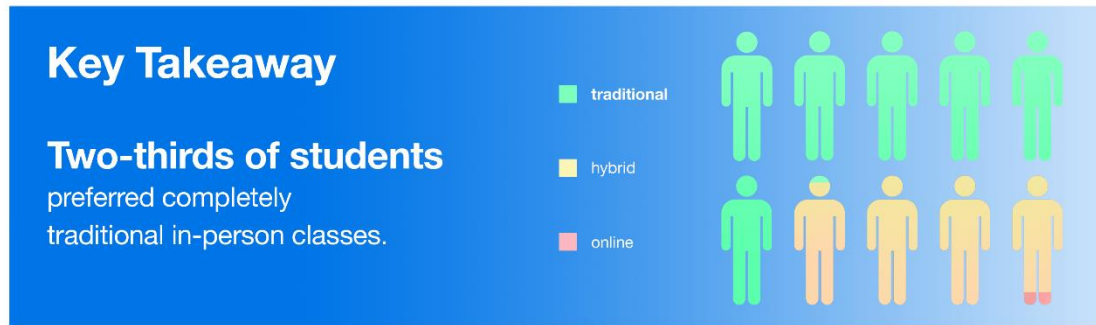
"I struggle to motivate myself to log onto online courses because they don't feel real"

"This changes our whole mindset for college how do we get the feel of the future school we might attend. Although they do online alternatives it's not the same as going in person."

"I will not go to a college that does the majority of their work online."

"I believe that the transition I have had from traditional classes to online is very hard. I think being home doing work online makes me more lazy and I don't want to get work done"

"I am not changing my college choice. However, I do not want to start my first year of college sitting in my home taking classes over the computer. If this whole must stay at home thing is still happening in September, I really want to delay going to college."

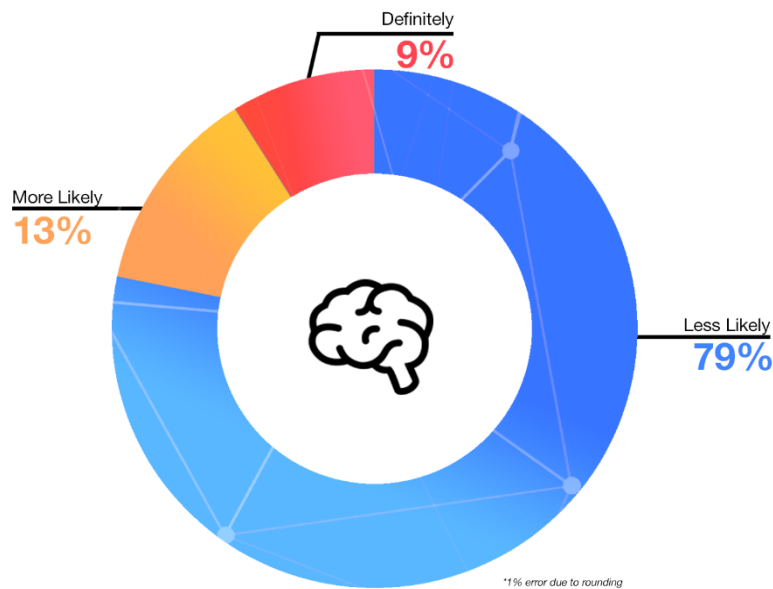


Q3. How many students are rethinking about their overall plans for Higher Education?

Obviously, COVID-19 is a disruption for millions of families in the United States who are adapting to a “New Normal”. This pandemic is something completely unexpected and unprecedented. Considering that, it’s not surprising that 22% students surveyed are rethinking their plans for higher education. The good news is that 79% of students are not looking to change their plans at this point. Since majority of our respondents were high schools’ seniors, these results apply to fall 2020 college admissions cycle. But changes for the remaining 22% are going to be dramatic, to the extent that some students are dropping the idea of college altogether.

The uncertainty of COVID-19 is still causing lot of confusion and indecisiveness among high school students.

Students rethinking their College Plans



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A common theme among these students was that the impact to plans is mainly due to change in financial situation. Here is what some students said:

"My path will go a different direction"

"My criteria won't change, but this pandemic has made it just that more impossible for me to attend college."

"I'm still planning to go to the same college I've chosen but I don't know if I'll still plan to go right after I graduate or just take a gap year before going."

"I cannot tour my dream school because of the virus. Without touring it in person, I'm unable to make an educated decision about going there or not."

"I have no idea if I will even go to college this fall at this point. I no longer have a job so I am unable to save for my deposit fee and the rest of the cost of attendance that my financial aid does not cover. As sad as it is college just doesn't look likely to me anymore. Online classes wont really work for what I want to study which is art so it would be pointless to go if my classes are just going to be online. It sucks and I am extremely sad but I am just going to have to figure out another plan for my life."

"There is a much larger chance that I will not be attending college altogether. My financial situation doesn't allow it, unless I receive 28,000\$ more in scholarships."

Key Takeaway

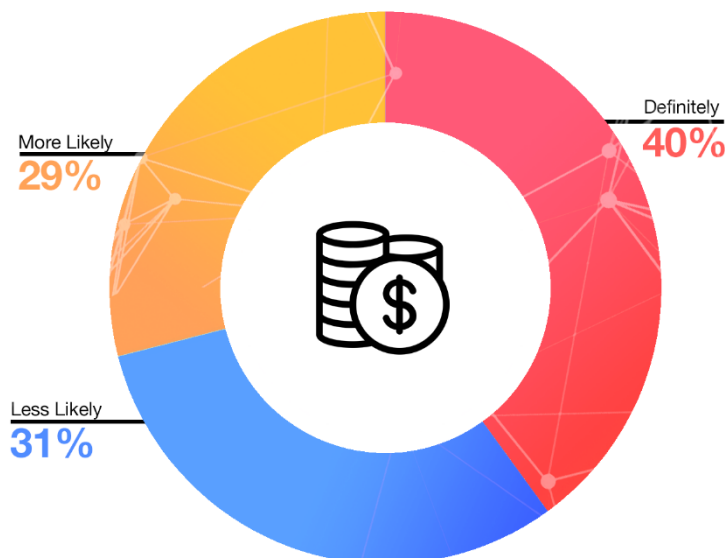
Colleges may have to drum up some more cash for financial aid and scholarships. Even though **79%** students said their plans are not changing but their financial needs have changed **significantly**.



Q4. How many students are expecting a change in their financial situation for Higher Education?

COVID-19 is causing economic disruption and hardships for millions of families in the United States, changing the financial outlook for students and their college plans. Even though about 78% students are not expecting changes to their college plans, still 69% students are expecting a change in their financial situation for their higher education.

Students Expecting Change in their Financial Situation



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Most students are very worried about their financial capabilities for higher education. Not only their 529 plans are tanking, parents are losing jobs and they themselves may not be able to find a part time job to pay off some of the college expenses. So, students will get hit from multiple angle. And it was clear from some of their sentiments.

“As COVID-19 has taken people out of work, including parents, my financial situation gets much harder.”

“I believe that the main thing that will impact my ability to gain higher education is finding a job to help pay for college amidst COVID 19.”

“the financial aspect of a college education is becoming more and more overwhelming. With everything closed, I am no longer able to work to make money, and am concerned about the availability of scholarships during this time of hardship.”

“The cost will most definitely be the biggest factor in where I go to school. I am responsible for all of my loans and ways of paying for school and due to the pandemic, I am not able to work at either of my two jobs.”

“My parents told me that my 529 Plan has lost about \$5000. If it continues to lose money i may have to choose my 2nd choice school or go to a community college.”

“The pandemic has affected my family's financial situation greatly. I fear that I will need to change my college choice because we do not have the financial resources we once had.”

“Having the coronavirus has really hurt my family. My family owns a small business and has been hit hard with the virus. I was going to attend Belmont in Nashville; however, I now will probably have to attend a state school instead. This is frustrating especially since I recently put my deposit down and found a roommate at Belmont.”

Key Takeaway

We are looking at an increase in, already mounting students debt, for next few years. Hence answer has to be in **scholarships and grants**. There is a saying going around – It's not the virus that will kill us but financial meltdown and economic shock to the system.

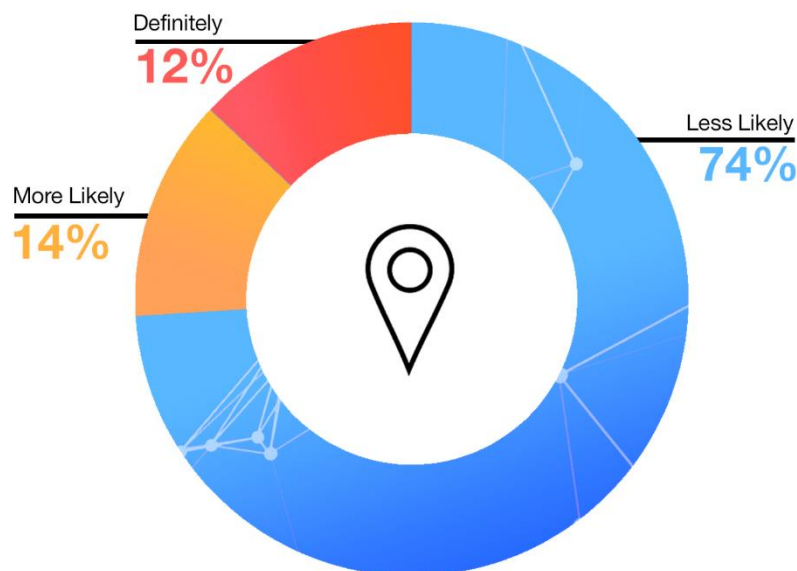


Q5. How many students are rethinking their College Location Preference?

Even though 74% students are sticking to their original college location plans, 26% are rethinking where they want to go to college. This could be partially due to change in financial situation and making students think to save money by staying at home or partially, to stay closer to the safety and support of their family.

If anything, this social distancing has brought families closer. Lot of students are thinking about staying close to home, going to in-state college or even community college. So, they can be closer to the family if something like COVID were to happen again. It's clear from messages below.

Students rethinking their College Location Preference



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"I wanna be closer to family and have a priority for more job placement/internship opportunities brought forward by the school due to incoming recession"

"I think I'd be less inclined to spend a lot on tuition as a lot of college students I know spent lots on tuition and are now having to do basically the same online classes as every other college. I think also it would be more imperative to find a college in a location where housing off campus is more accessible/less expensive in case i would need it."

"I hoped to be close to home and have financial aid for tuition, but now the reasons are for the sake of my family's health."

"I feel as though it won't change much but I will mostly likely change the location of where I was planning to attend"

"I definitely think that the Coronavirus Pandemic has made me want a college close to home even more, as I would like to be close to my family in the event of a similar occurrence."

"My dad lost his job, therefore, going out of state for college is out of the question now."

Key Takeaway

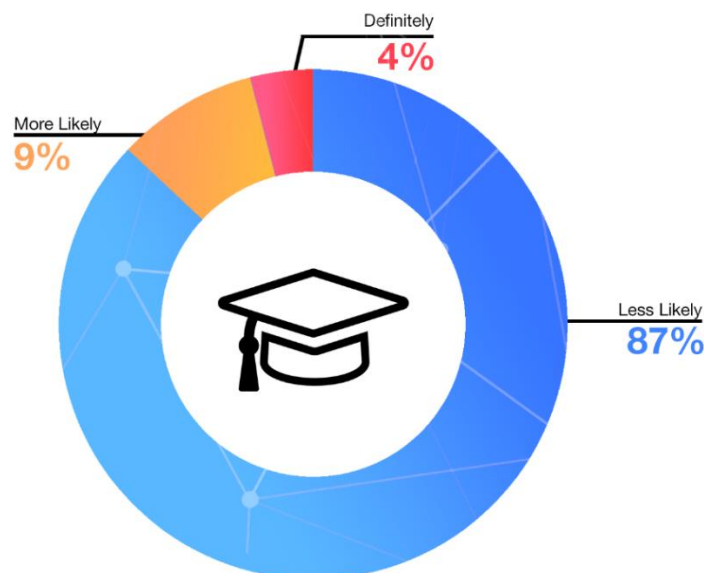
We will see a **drop in out-of-state applicants** in coming years. Impact of COVID (financial and others) will take **years to fade away** from the system.



Q6. How many students are rethinking their Intended Major Preference?

The majority of surveyed students have no plans to change their college major. That said, 13% of those surveyed shared that they are seriously reconsidering their major as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Events such as 9/11 and the COVID-19 pandemic can sometimes trigger an affinity to certain careers like medicine, first responder, and educator.

Students rethinking their Intended Major



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Here is what one student said specifically on this.

“I applied for an international BFA program and have already filed for consideration to change my major.”

Key Takeaway

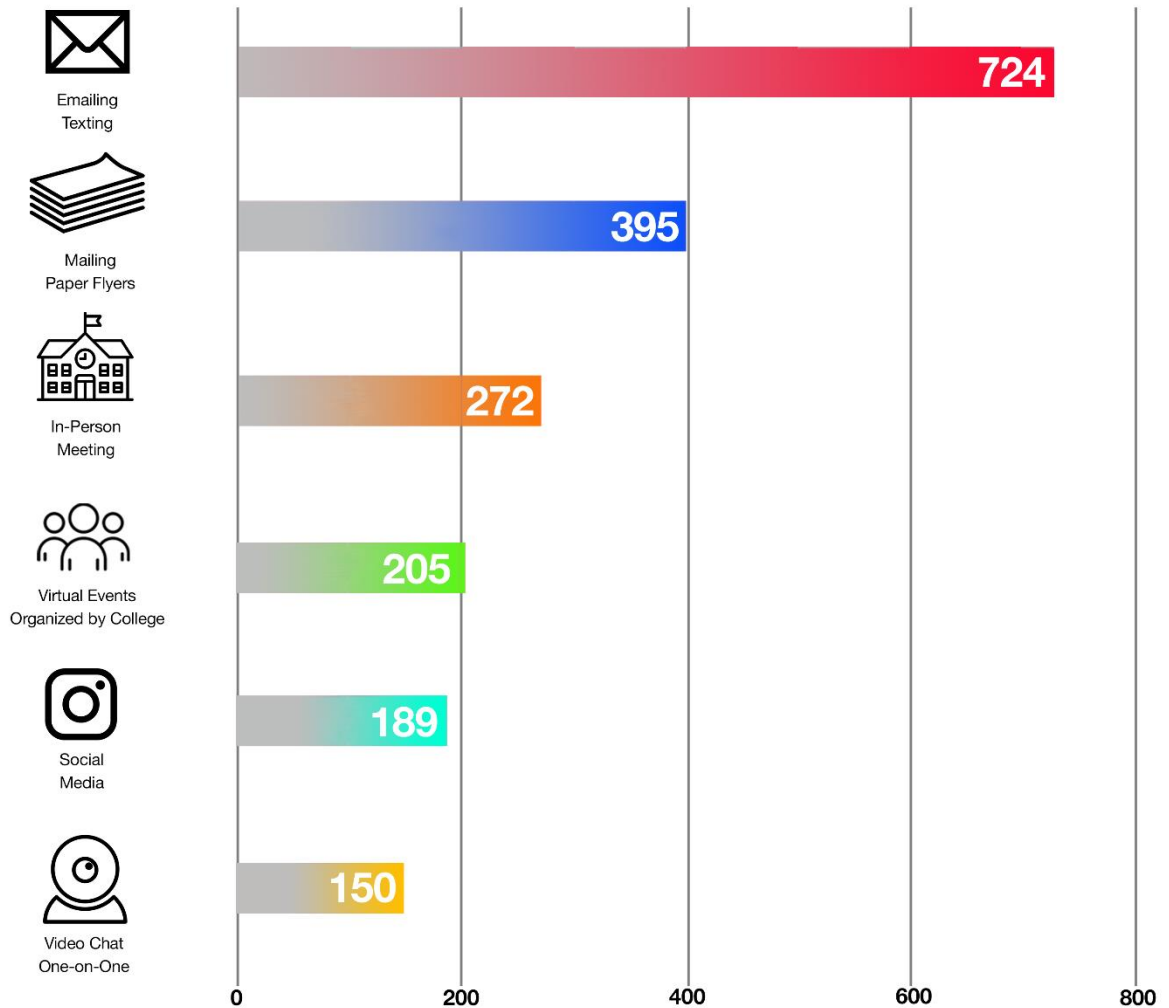
COVID-19 **did not** deter majority of students from their intended career and **hence intended-major**. So higher education doesn't have to shuffle their programs to meet new needs.



Q7. This is how students want colleges to communicate with them.

The survey findings indicate that COVID-19 has *NOT* drastically changed students' preferences for communication from the colleges. This generation is “*digitally native*” and spends more time online than previous generations. Not surprising that “email or text” is their first preference for communication from colleges. Surprisingly, “Video Chat – One-on-One” was least favorite method, followed by “In-person” meetings as next least favorite.

Students' Preferred Communication Methods



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Key Takeaway

Not surprising, this generation **lives online** and that's where you can meet them.



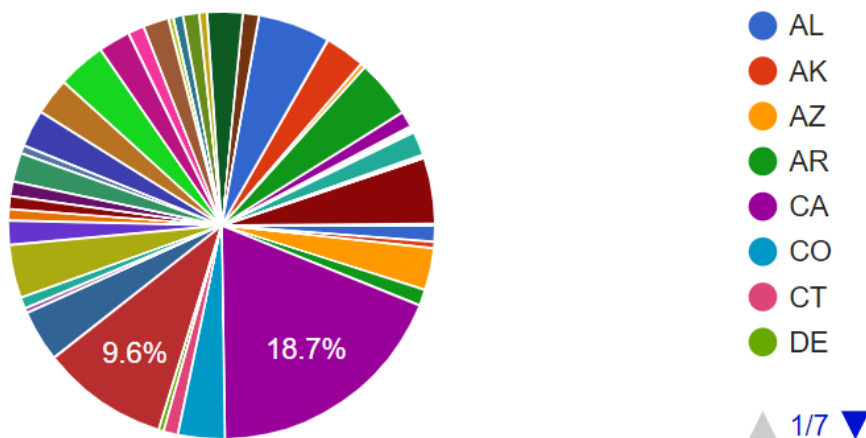
Another interesting finding emerged – students think that colleges are operating on a business as usual basis and they will still require/ demand everything they have done in the past. Whereas we have found in a separate survey conducted with colleges that they are as concerned about their freshman class as students themselves (Read about that survey report on our [website](#)). We believe colleges can do a better job of communicating with their prospects and putting them at ease. “We are all in this together and we’ll figure it out” should be the message.

There is a lot of uncertainty even now as things change by the hour. We think that as things evolve related to COVID, students’ responses will also change. Cirkled In wishes the Class of 2020 a wonderful and hopefully normal college experience as they have dreamed and looked forward too.

Survey Information:

Survey was sent to high school students. Eighty-six percent of these were high school seniors and 13% are high school juniors. The remainders are sophomore and freshman.

Students surveyed were from all states in the United States. California students were the highest responders with 19% followed by Florida at almost 10%.



About Cirkled In

[Cirkled In](#) is an award-winning 21st-century college recruitment platform, matching colleges and universities with the best-fit students, based on students' rich, holistic portfolios. Students compile all their activities and showcase themselves in the best possible way to get discovered and recruited by colleges and universities. Cirkled In creates a win-win by making the best-fit match resulting in improved enrollment, retention and graduation rates. Cirkled In won 2 [People's Choice Awards](#) for Favorite New Product, and a [Top 10 Companies in US](#) by American Business Awards.

Learn more and request a demo

Our College Recruitment Platform gives you the ability to search a massive data base of students who maintain rich holistic portfolios on Cirkled In. You can find, engaged and recruit the best-fit candidates and improve ROI on your enrollment spend. With best-fit students, you not only meet your enrollment goals but also improve your retention, graduation and employability.

Contact us for a demo and learn how Cirkled In can help you meet your strategic goals.

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