



FINISH! Survey to  
Understand College  
Student Departure  
December 2009

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*Final Descriptive Results*

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Adams State College

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Second, I would like to thank Dr. Michael Mumper, Provost at Adams State College for requesting my assistance on this project. Third, the staff in the Office of Institutional Advancement at Adams State College and his staff—Lori Laske, Tammy Lopez, & Gaylene Horning—for their support in allowing my team to use their space and telephone bank for two weeks for data collection. Fourth, I would like to thank the four student employees—Christine Preiss, Anna Dean, Ashley Martinez, and Rochelle Sanchez, who worked diligently all summer to match identification numbers with names, addresses, and telephone numbers—a most cumbersome process.

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## Survey Overview

### *Description*

The Colorado Department of Higher Education (DHE) received funding from the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) to re-enroll students who had completed a specific number of credit hours, but had not finished their college degrees (Associates and Baccalaureate). Toward this end, DHE issued an RFP in February 2009 to contract with institutions of higher education across the state to undertake the re-entry of the adult ready population. Adams State College (ASC) applied for the grant funding. The proposal was two-pronged, a) to re-enroll students and b) to conduct this survey to understand *why* these students had not finished. Dr. Melissa L. Freeman, Assistant Professor, at Adams State College and Director of the School of Business Survey Research Center was appointed Project Director. She was responsible for conducting a survey of stop-outs from Colorado institutions of higher education.

Dr. Freeman worked with ASC Provost Michael Mumper and DHE Chief Academic Officer, Julie Carnahan to develop the survey instrument, which was designed to be completed by individuals who had stopped out of college. DHE provided a list of stop outs from 2003-2006. There were 25 items on the survey, which included an open-ended question for individuals to provide additional information or clarification of responses as well as to provide their contact information if they were interested in finishing their degree. A copy of the survey instrument is included as Appendix A.

### Methodology

The survey was conducted via telephone. According to Suskie (1996), there are several advantages to telephone-based data collection. First, telephone surveys often cost less than a

mailed survey. Second, telephone surveys often realize time efficiency. We were able to collect data from 375 stop outs in a two week time period, as opposed to a longer time frame had the survey been mailed. Third, telephone surveys are more conducive to brief and straightforward data collection. The brevity of this survey enabled for more effective communication with respondents sampled. Finally, telephone surveys yield a high response rate. In this case, there were 375 respondents, which made for a lower margin of error (+/-5%).

During the summer of 2009, four students were selected and trained under the Federal Right to Privacy Act (FERPA) guidelines. These students, referred to as the student detective team, undertook the task of taking identification numbers and finding names, addresses and telephone numbers of the random sample drawn (see *Sample* below). First, identification numbers were checked in ASC's databank. Any student who had either applied to or attended ASC could be found in this databank. Second, for those students who had never been affiliated with ASC, the student detective team used the Clearinghouse Database and Whitepages.com to find contact information. They accessed Clearinghouse to match social security numbers and last institution attended with most recent address and telephone number on file. Where telephone numbers did not exist in Clearinghouse, they accessed Whitepages.com to match names and addresses with current telephone numbers.

In September of 2009, a telephone survey was conducted by 17 students, all of whom were enrolled in BUS 454, Marketing Research. Students in the class completed worked in the telephone bank as part of a Service Learning assignment required for their course. All students were trained on human subjects protection, confidentiality, and compliance issues. Each was required to complete the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Human Subjects

training prior to working on the project. The BUS 454 class made telephone calls from September 1, 2009 until September 16, 2009, at which point the sample was exhausted.

### *Sample*

The sample was drawn from a list of students identified as “stop outs” by the Colorado Department of Higher Education. This list contained 19,907 individuals, of which a random sample of 2,000 was drawn using a random number generation method (Randomizer, 2008). In addition, a convenience sample of Adams State College stop outs was added to the random sample (n=538) for a total of 2,538.

Of the 2,538, there was insufficient contact information for 1,260 individuals; 17 cases were deleted due to duplication in the random sample and convenience sample; and 1 individual was identified as deceased, leaving a total of 1,242 in the final sample.

Of the total sample (n=1,242), there were 321 invalid numbers and 166 refusals. In addition 370 individuals never answered their telephones, despite multiple attempts during different times and days to reach them; leaving messages about the nature of the calls; and providing times in which they were likely to be called back. This suggests that these individuals were selectively screening calls in order to not speak with data collection staff, a form of refusal. Finally, two indicated that they had never attended college; three were currently in the military/deployed; and five were deceased. See Table 1.

Data were collected from 375 individuals. The number of individuals selected for sample size depends upon how much sampling error one is willing to accept. Sampling error is the possible difference between the study’s findings and the true results if valid responses were available from everyone in the population. Based on a mathematical formula (see Figure 1), a sample size of n=375 is a sufficient size to ensure +/- 5% margin of error. In other words, with a

sample size of n=375, the margin of error was 5% (Suskie, 1996). In much of social science research, as well as most political polls, 5% is an acceptable margin of error.

Table 1

*Respondent Metrics*

	Number
Population of interest	19,907
Random sample	2,000
ASC convenience sample	538
Insufficient contact information available	1,260
Duplicate cases	17
Deceased	1
Sample drawn	1,242
Invalid telephone numbers	321
Refusal	166
No answers	370
Never attended college	2
In military/deployed	3
Deceased	5

\*First survey response 9/1/ 2009. Last survey response 9/16/2009

Figure 1

$$\sqrt{\frac{1}{n}} \times 100\% \quad (\text{where } n = \text{sample size})$$

### *Limitations*

As with all research, this project had a few limitations. First, DHE only provided social security numbers and last institution attended of the population of interest. Finding current contact information for individuals with so little information was an arduous and difficult task. More often than not, contact information simply was not available on these individuals. Many addresses did not match, not surprising given the transient nature of today's population. At times, parental contact information was found. Often, however, parents were unwilling to provide current information on their children.

Second, the population of interest was to have completed nearly three-quarters of their degree (Associate or Baccalaureate). What we found, however, and report later in this document, was that large numbers of individuals had, in fact, completed their degrees. Thus, the population of interest from which the sample was drawn had significant limitations.

### *Results*

Descriptive results for each question follow, including both graphical presentations—pie charts and bar charts—and SPSS tables. Missing data are excluded from the graphs. However, the SPSS tables provide column data which includes missing cases. The valid percent column is the basis for the pie and bar charts. Additional comments, if any and as applicable, are included. All respondent comments are reported under question 22.

*Demographic Characteristics*

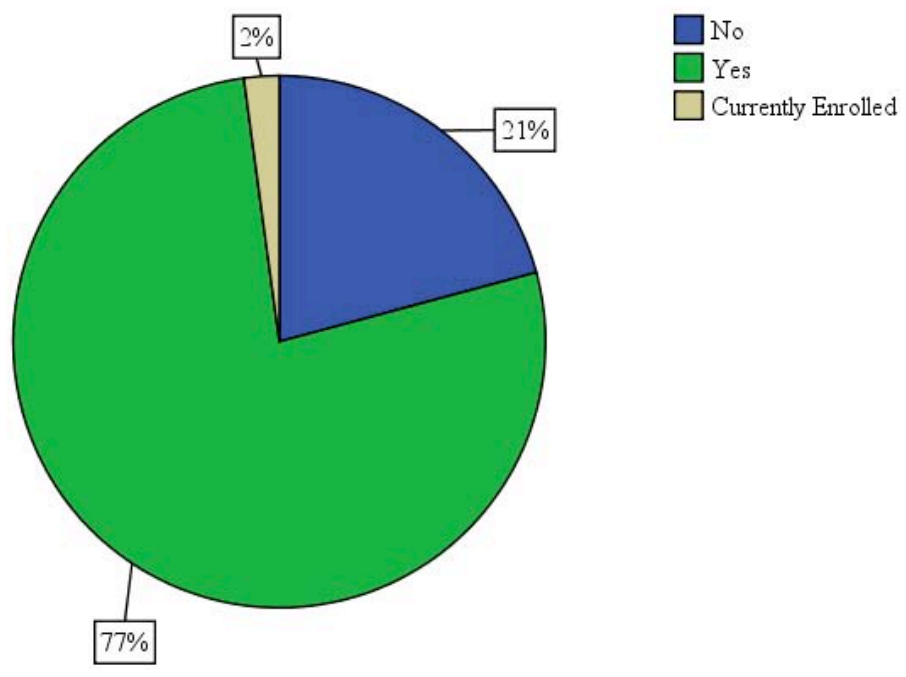
**1. Did you finish college?**

As data collection began, it became clear that a large number of respondents had finished college. Thus, the survey team began asking whether or not individuals had finished college first as a filter question. Originally this question was number 8 on the survey. This strategy helped to diffuse irritation at the question for those who had completed and cut down the length of time on the telephone. An overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that they had, indeed, finished college (77%). A little more than one-fifth (21%) indicated that they had not finished a college degree and 2% indicated that they were currently enrolled. These findings will be addressed later in the discussion section. All subsequent questions and their findings are based on those individuals who had not completed a college degree.

**Did you finish a college degree?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	78	20.8	20.8	20.8
	Yes	289	77.1	77.1	97.9
	Currently Enrolled	8	2.1	2.1	100.0
	Total	375	100.0	100.0	

**Did you finish a college degree?**



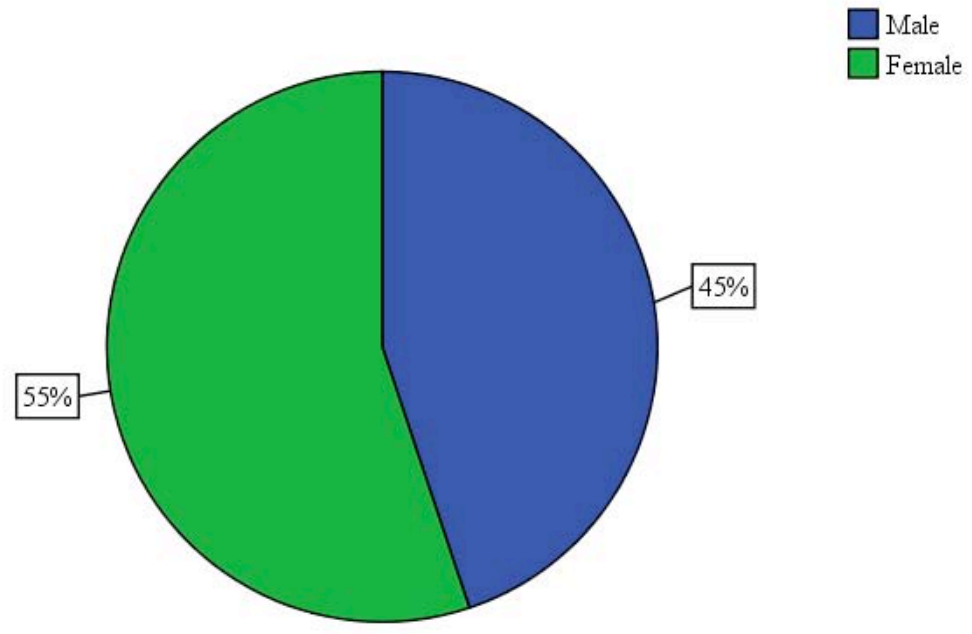
**2. What is your sex?**

For those who had not finished college (n=82), the majority were female (55%). While males accounted for 45% of respondents. This finding is somewhat surprising considering that women tend to enter and finish postsecondary education at higher rates than men (Freeman, 2004).

**What is your sex?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	35	44.9	44.9	44.9
	Female	43	55.1	55.1	100.0
	Total	78	100.0	100.0	

**What is your sex?**



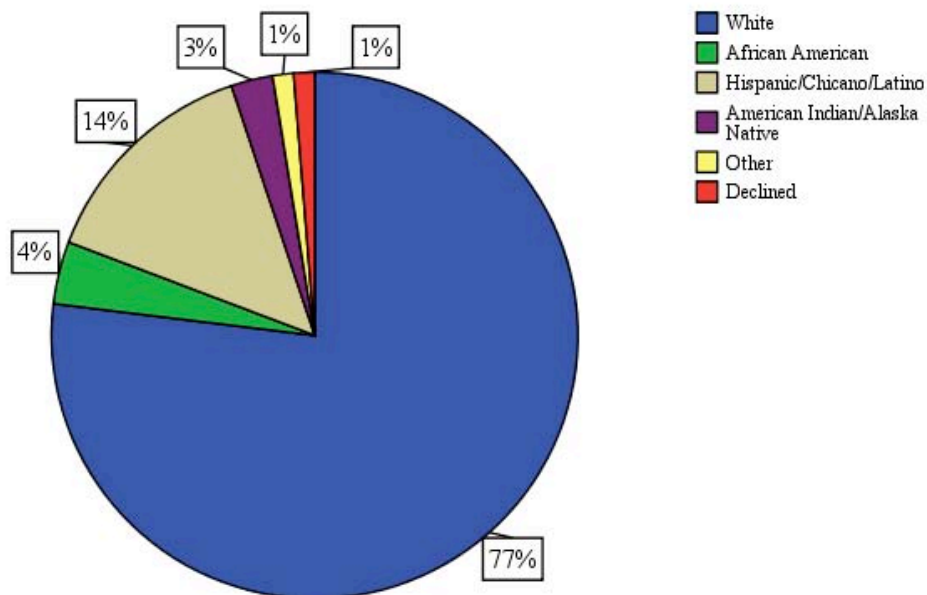
**3. With which group do you most identify?**

The majority of respondents indicated that they were white (77%), followed by Hispanic/Latino/Chicano (14%); African American (4%); American Indian/Alaska Native (3%); and Other/Declined (1%).

**With which group do you most identify?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid White	60	76.9	76.9	76.9
African American	3	3.8	3.8	80.8
Hispanic/Chicano/Latino	11	14.1	14.1	94.9
American Indian/Alaska Native	2	2.6	2.6	97.4
Other	1	1.3	1.3	98.7
Declined	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	78	100.0	100.0	

**With which group do you most identify?**



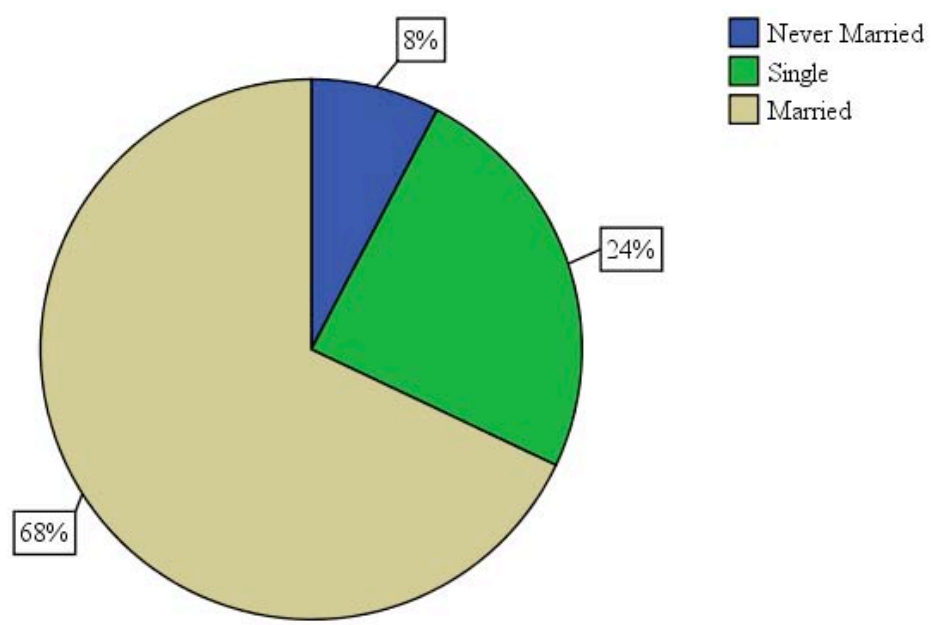
**4. What is your marital status?**

More than two-thirds (68%) of respondents indicated that they were currently married. One-quarter (24%) indicated that they were currently single—widowed, divorced or separated. And, 8% indicated that they had never been married.

**What is your marital status?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never Married	6	7.7	7.7	7.7
	Single	19	24.4	24.4	32.1
	Married	53	67.9	67.9	100.0
	Total	78	100.0	100.0	

**What is your marital status?**



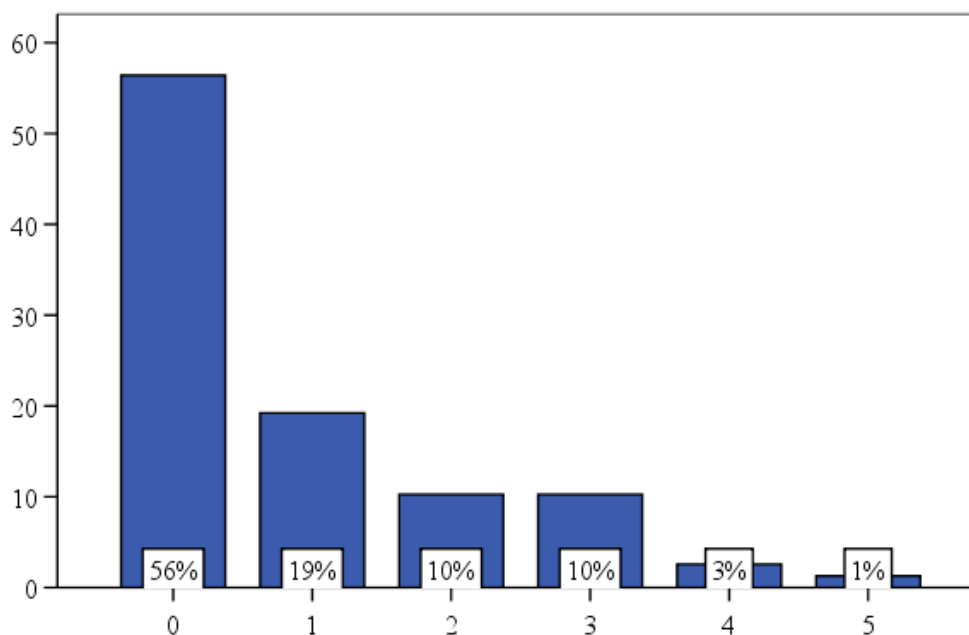
**5. How many children under the age of 18 currently live with you?**

When respondents were asked how many children under the age of 18 currently lived, with them, the majority indicated that they had none (56%). Still, one-fifth (19%) reported having one child. Ten percent reported 2 and 3 children. While only 3% and 1% of respondents indicated having 4 children and 5 children, respectively.

**How many children under the age of 18 currently live with you?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0	44	56.4	56.4	56.4
1	15	19.2	19.2	75.6
2	8	10.3	10.3	85.9
3	8	10.3	10.3	96.2
4	2	2.6	2.6	98.7
5	1	1.3	1.3	100.0
Total	78	100.0	100.0	

### How many children under the age of 18 currently live with you?



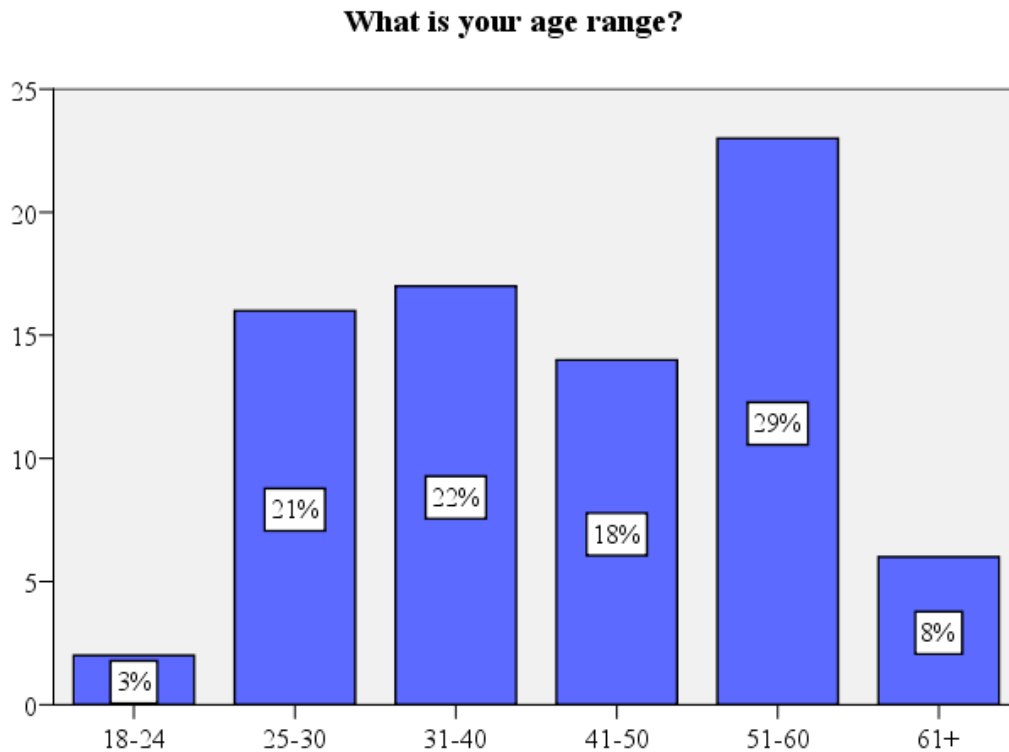
### 6. What is your age range?

When asked about their age range, only 3% indicated that they were 18-24 years old—traditional-age according to the literature. However, one-fifth indicated that they were either 25-30 years of age (21%) and 31-40 years of age (22%). Another 18% indicated that they were between the ages of 41-50. But the largest percentage of respondents fell in the 51-60 years of age category (29%). And, nearly one-tenth (8%) of respondents indicated that they were 61 years of age or older. These are interesting findings, considering these individuals were to have been enrolled in college between 2003 and 2006. This suggests that a large number of individuals (78%) were nontraditional age at the point of stop out. This is not surprising, then considering the difficulty that nontraditional age students have in completing a degree in the “typical” four years. As Choy & Premo (1995) point out, nontraditional age students have work

and familial responsibilities that often prevent them from enrolling full-time or on a consistent basis. This combined with the gender variable above possibly explains volumes about the population under study. College completion is even more confounding for nontraditional age women than any other group (Jacobs & King, 2002).

**What is your age range?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-24	2	2.6	2.6	2.6
	25-30	16	20.5	20.5	23.1
	31-40	17	21.8	21.8	44.9
	41-50	14	17.9	17.9	62.8
	51-60	23	29.5	29.5	92.3
	61+	6	7.7	7.7	100.0
	Total	78	100.0	100.0	



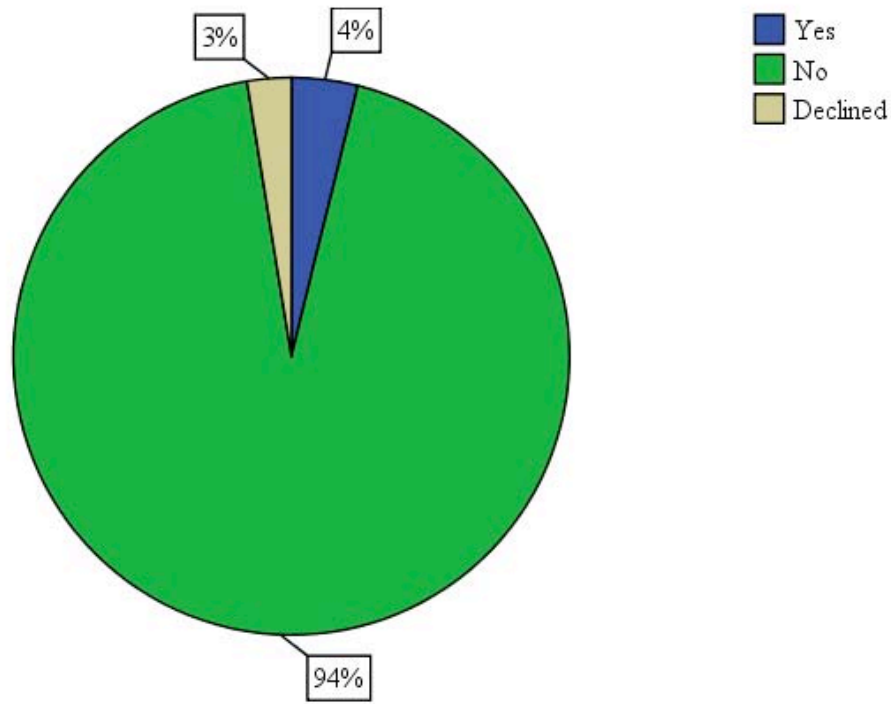
**7. Are you claimed as a dependent on your parents' income tax?**

An overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that they were not claimed as a dependent on their parents' income tax (94%). Not a surprising statistic considering the age ranges of respondents identified above. Only 4% of respondents indicated that they were currently claimed on their parents' income tax, while 3% of respondents declined to answer the question.

**Are you claimed as a dependent on your parents' income tax?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	3	3.8	3.8	3.8
No	73	93.6	93.6	97.4
Declined	2	2.6	2.6	100.0
Total	78	100.0	100.0	

**Are you claimed as a dependent on your parents' income tax?**



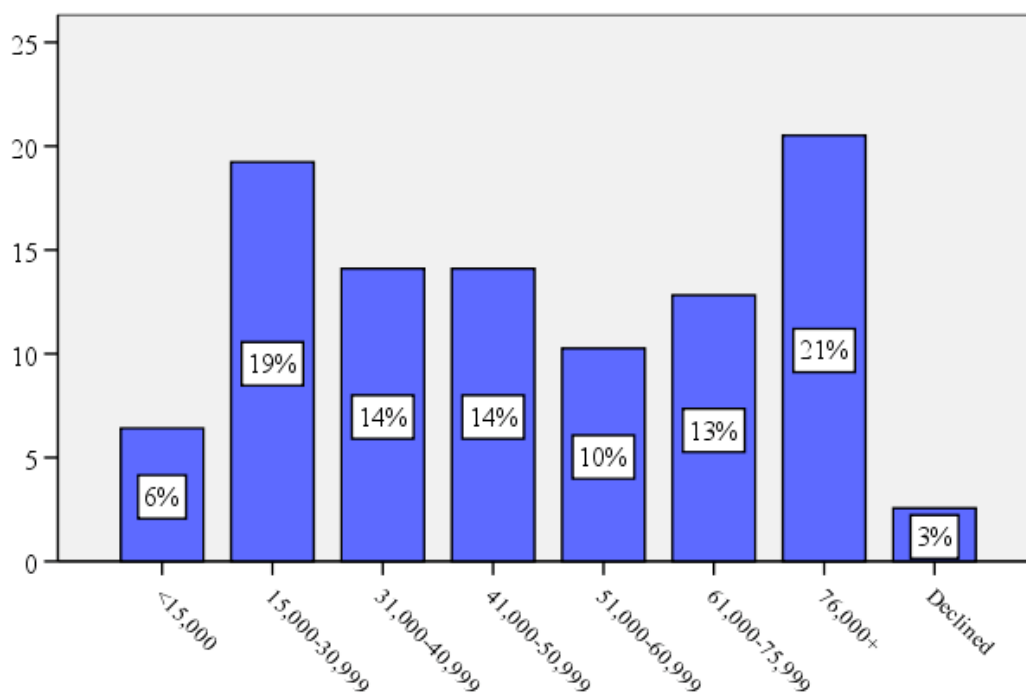
**8. What is your estimated household income range per year?**

While only 6% of respondents indicated earning less than \$15,000 per year; 19% indicated earning \$15,000-\$30,999 per year; and 21% of respondents indicated earning more than \$76,000 per year, the remaining income ranges were fairly evenly distributed. However, more than one-half (54%) of the respondents earned *less* than the national and Colorado median incomes of \$50,233 and \$70,164, respectively (U.S. Census, 2008).

**What is your estimated household income range per year?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	<15,000	5	6.4	6.4	6.4
	15,000-30,999	15	19.2	19.2	25.6
	31,000-40,999	11	14.1	14.1	39.7
	41,000-50,999	11	14.1	14.1	53.8
	51,000-60,999	8	10.3	10.3	64.1
	61,000-75,999	10	12.8	12.8	76.9
	76,000+	16	20.5	20.5	97.4
	Declined	2	2.6	2.6	100.0
	Total	78	100.0	100.0	

### What is your income range?



### *Risk Factors*

The U.S. Department of Education has identified seven risk factors or barriers to postsecondary attainment for undergraduate students. These include a) not having a high school diploma, b) delayed enrollment, c) enrolling part-time, d) working full-time, e) being financially independent, f) having dependents other than a spouse, and g) being a single parent (Horn & Premo, 1995). The following section was designed to understand the respondents' relative risk and whether or not any of those factors may have played a roll in stop out.

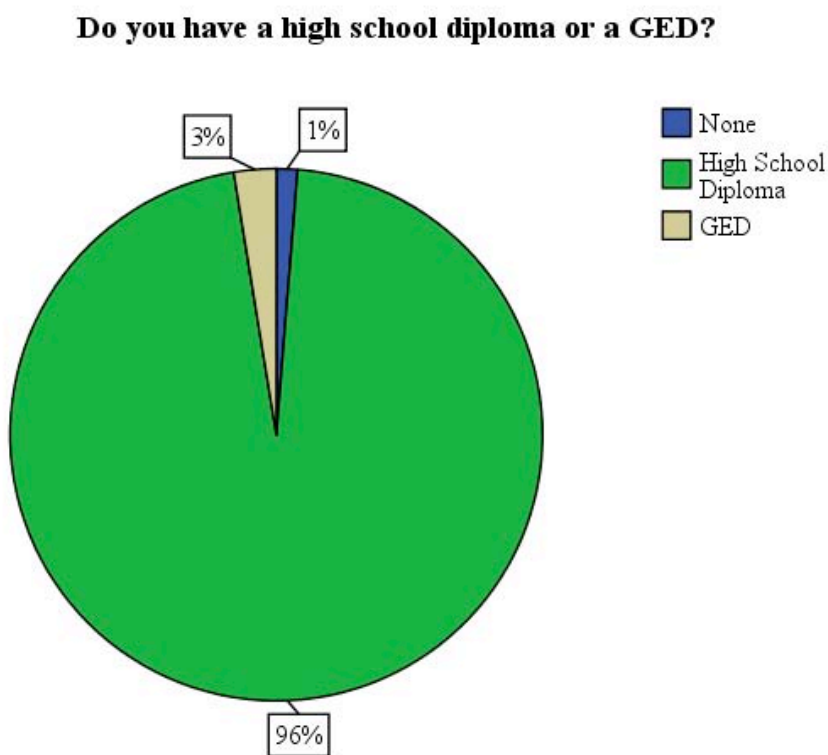
### **9. Do you hold a high school diploma or GED?**

Whether or not an individual graduated from high school as opposed to having earned a GED is a strong predictor of postsecondary attainment. Having a GED is a significant barrier to

postsecondary success. (Horn & Premo, 1995). The vast majority of respondents indicated that they held a high school diploma (96%) as opposed to a GED (3%) or neither (1%). Clearly, this was one barrier that the population did not have.

**Do you hold a high school diploma or GED?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid None	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
High School Diploma	75	96.2	96.2	97.4
GED	2	2.6	2.6	100.0
Total	78	100.0	100.0	



**10. Did you enroll in college immediately following high school graduation?**

The second risk factor associated with not finishing a college degree is whether or not the student enrolled in postsecondary education immediately following high school graduation.

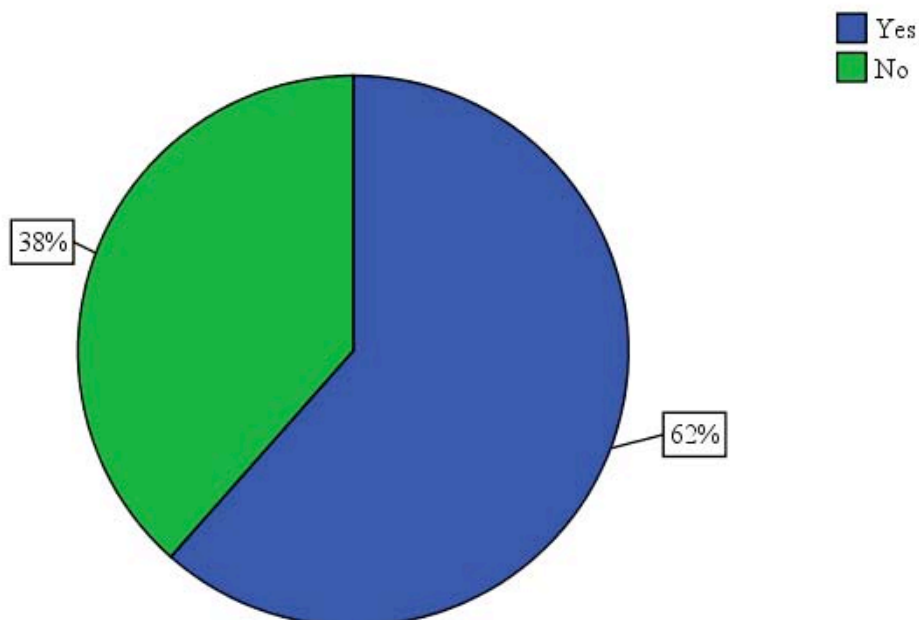
Those who delay enrollment tend to finish at rates lower than those who do not (Horn & Premo,

1995). Again, as with high school diploma, this was not a barrier for respondents. A majority indicated that they *had* enrolled in college immediately following their high school graduation (62%). A little more than one third (38%) indicated that they had delayed enrollment. These data are a bit confounding when compared to the nontraditional nature of this population. One explanation could be that students enrolled immediately following high school, stopped out, and re-enrolled at a later date, as a nontraditional student.

**Did you enroll in college immediately following high school graduation?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	48	61.5	61.5	61.5
	No	30	38.5	38.5	100.0
	Total	78	100.0	100.0	

**Did you begin college immediately following high school?**



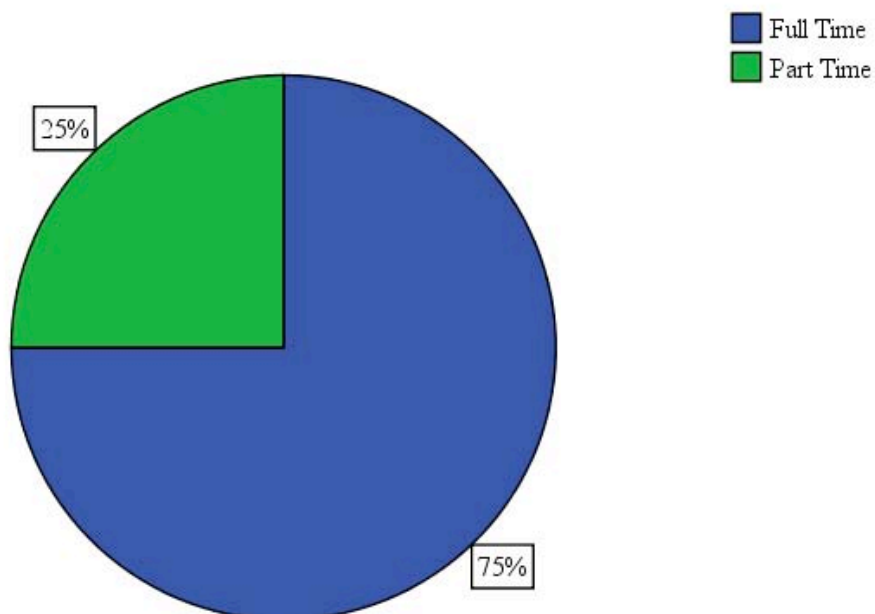
### 11. Did you attend college primarily full-time or part-time?

Whether or not students attend college full-time or part-time can determine whether or not they will finish a college degree. Those who attend primarily part-time tend to have more difficulty in achieving that postsecondary credential (Horn & Premo, 1995). The majority of respondents, however, reported having attending college primarily full-time (75%) versus part-time (25%). Still, 25% is a fairly high percentage for part-time attendance. In all likelihood, this was a contributing factor to student stop out.

**Did you attend college primarily full-time or part-time?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Full Time	57	73.1	75.0	75.0
	Part Time	19	24.4	25.0	100.0
	Total	76	97.4	100.0	
Missing	System	2	2.6		
Total		78	100.0		

**Did you attend college primarily full-time or part-time?**



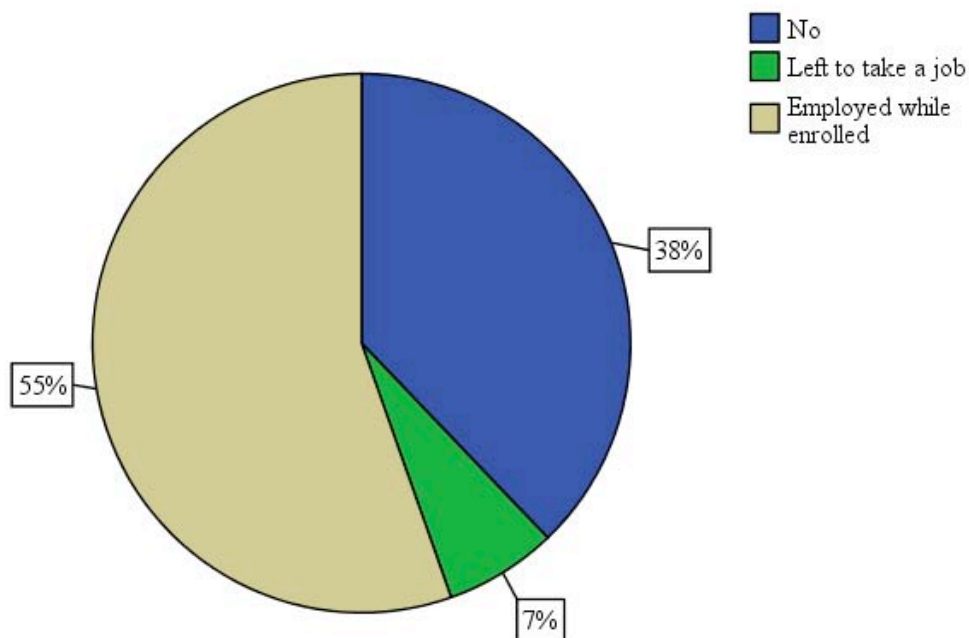
**12. At the time you decided to leave college, were you employed (not including college work study)?**

Whether or not a student is employed while enrolled—particularly full-time—is a risk factor to finishing a college degree (Horn & Premo, 1995). A majority of respondents definitely worked while in college (excluding college work study) and/or left to take a job. More than one-half (55%) indicated that they worked while enrolled. An additional 7% indicated that they left college to take a job. A little more than one-third (38%) indicated no employment while enrolled. This suggests that work responsibilities play a significant role in college stop out.

**At the time you decided to leave college, were you employed (not including college work study)?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	28	35.9	37.8	37.8
	Left to take a job	5	6.4	6.8	44.6
	Employed while enrolled	41	52.6	55.4	100.0
	Total	74	94.9	100.0	
Missing	System	4	5.1		
Total		78	100.0		

**At the time you decided to leave college, were you employed (not including College Work Study)?**

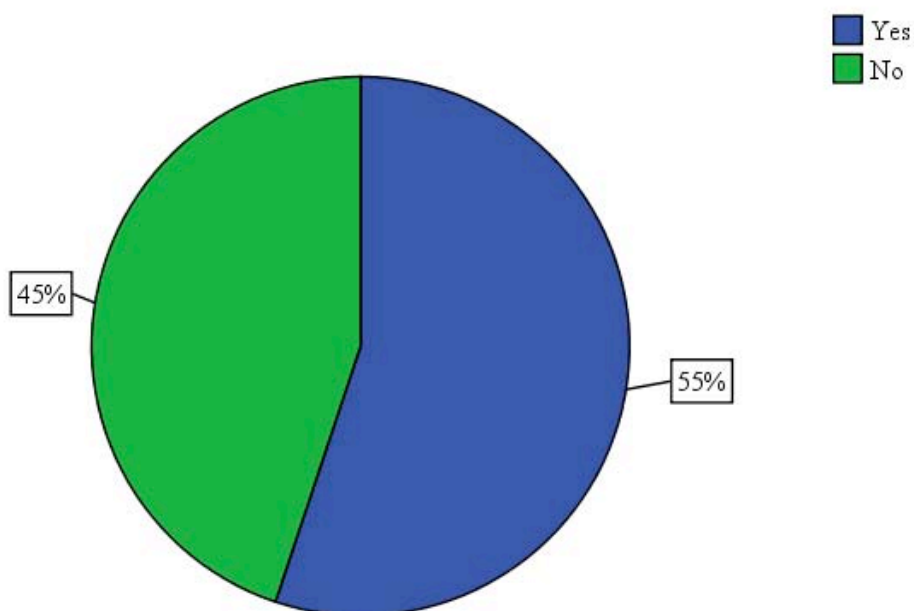


**13. At the time you enrolled in college, were you financially independent?**

According to Horn & Premo (1995), financial independence is a strong indicator as to whether or not a student will complete a postsecondary education. Here, respondents were asked two questions with regard to financial independence a) were you financially independent when you enrolled and b) were you financially independent when you left. These two slightly different questions about financial independence could tease out changes in life situations that occur over time. The first question, “At the time you enrolled in college, were you financially independent?” found that a majority (55%) were financially independent when they enrolled in college.

**At the time you enrolled in college, were you financially independent?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	43	55.1	55.1	55.1
	No	35	44.9	44.9	100.0
Total		78	100.0	100.0	

**At the time you enrolled in college, were you financially independent?****14. At the time you decided to leave college, were you financially independent?**

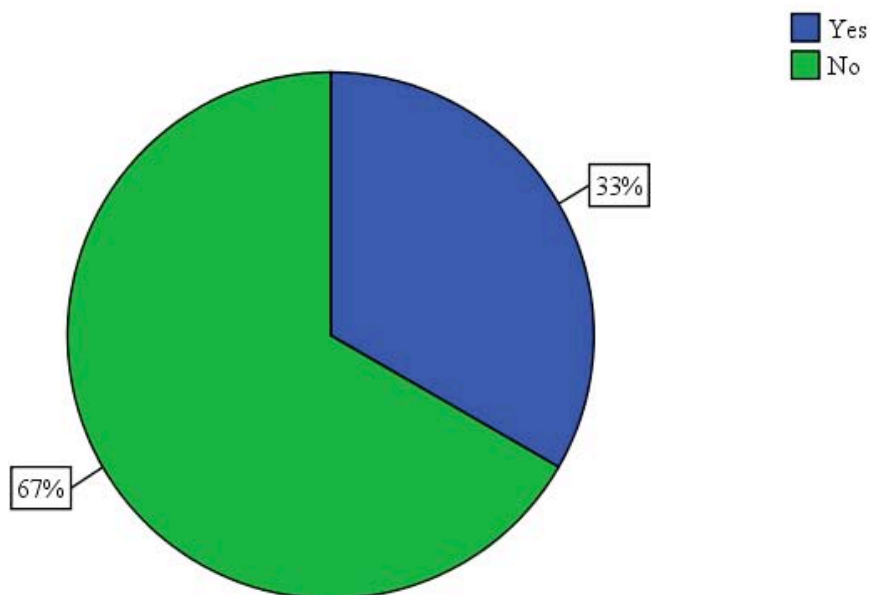
Respondents indicating financial independence when they enrolled were skipped out of this question. Thus, while the percentage of financially independent respondents may appear smaller than before, financial independence, in fact, increased among the sample. Of those who indicated that they were not financially independent when they enrolled, one-third (33%) of them had become financially independent when they decided to leave. This accounted for an additional 14% of the total respondents being financially independent, particularly at the point

they decided to leave college. Or put another way, at the point respondents had left college approximately 70% were financially independent.

**At the time you decided to leave college, were you financially independent?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	11	14.1	33.3	33.3
	No	22	28.2	66.7	100.0
	Total	33	42.3	100.0	
Missing	System	45	57.7		
Total		78	100.0		

**At the time you decided to leave college, were you financially independent?**



**15. At the time you enrolled in college, did you have dependents for which you were responsible, other than a spouse?**

Whether or not a student has a dependent other than a spouse (e.g., children, parents, etc) can determine their postsecondary success. Having dependents—familial responsibilities—can hinder degree attainment (Horn & Premo, 1995). As with financial independence, having

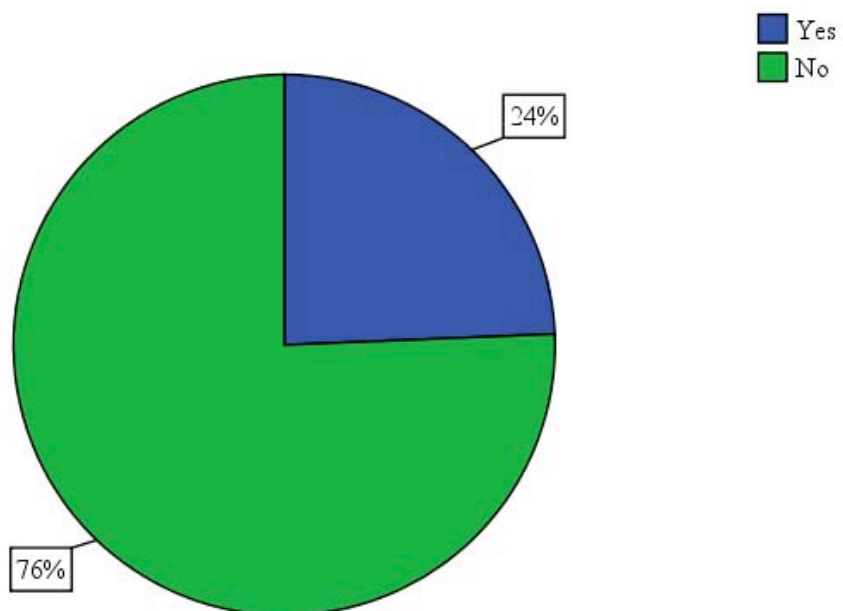
dependents can change over time. Thus, respondents were again asked about dependents at the point of enrollment and the point of stop out.

Respondents who indicated having dependents, for which they were responsible, other than a spouse at the point of enrollment, accounted for only one-quarter (24%) of the sample.

**At the time you enrolled in college, did you have any dependents for which you were responsible, other than a spouse?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	19	24.4	24.4	24.4
	No	59	75.6	75.6	100.0
	Total	78	100.0	100.0	

**At the time you enrolled in college, did you have any dependents for which you were responsible, other than a spouse?**



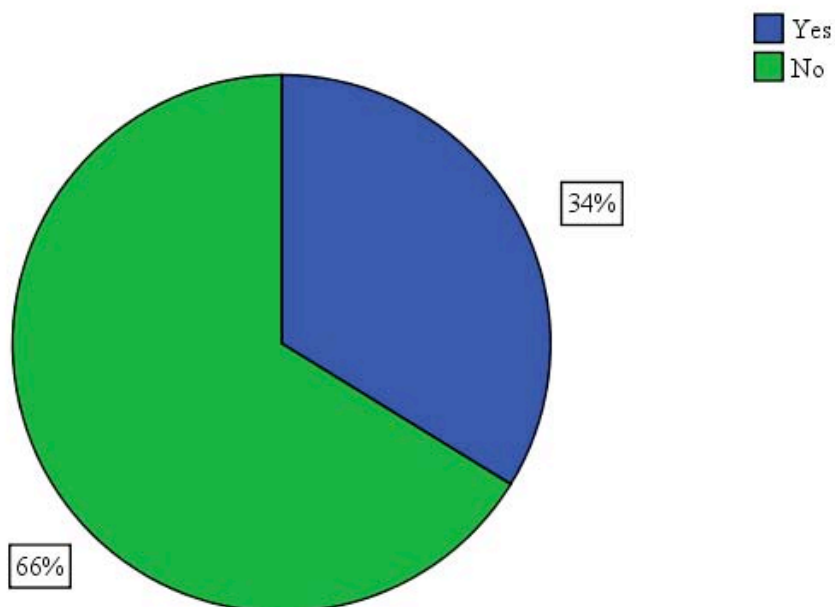
**16. At the time you decided to leave college, did you have dependents for which you were responsible, other than a spouse?**

When asked about dependents at the point they decided to leave college, the percentage of respondents answering “Yes” had increased, although modestly. A little less than one-third (34%) indicated having familial responsibilities in terms of dependents. Still the vast majority (66%) had no dependents at the point they decided to leave college.

**At the time you decided to leave college, did you have dependents for which you were responsible, other than a spouse?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	25	32.1	33.8	33.8
	No	49	62.8	66.2	100.0
	Total	74	94.9	100.0	
Missing	System	4	5.1		
Total		78	100.0		

**At the time you decided to leave college, did you have any dependents for which you were responsible, other than a spouse?**



**17. At the time you enrolled in college, were you a single parent?**

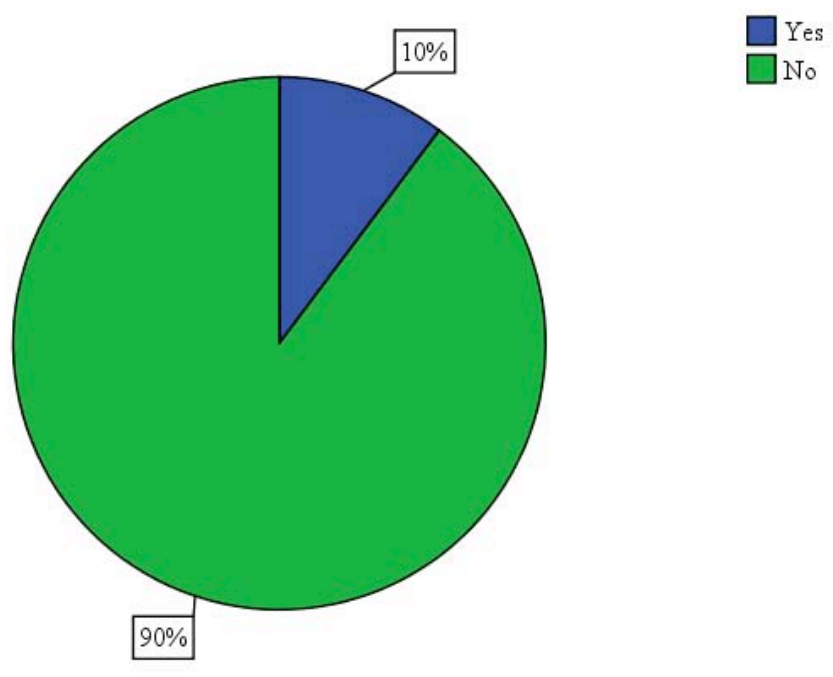
Finally, being a single parent is one of the strongest indicators of whether or not a student will finish his or her postsecondary education. Those who are single parents are far less likely to finish than those who are not (Horn & Premo, 1995). As with financial independence and being responsible for dependents, being a single parent can change over time. This question was also asked based on the point of enrollment and the point of departure.

Those who indicated being a single parent at the point of enrollment accounted for only 10%. Those who indicated that they were not a single parent at the point of enrollment accounted for 90%.

**At the time you enrolled in college, were you a single parent?**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	8	10.3	10.3	10.3
No	70	89.7	89.7	100.0
Total	78	100.0	100.0	

**At the time you enrolled in college, were you a single parent?**



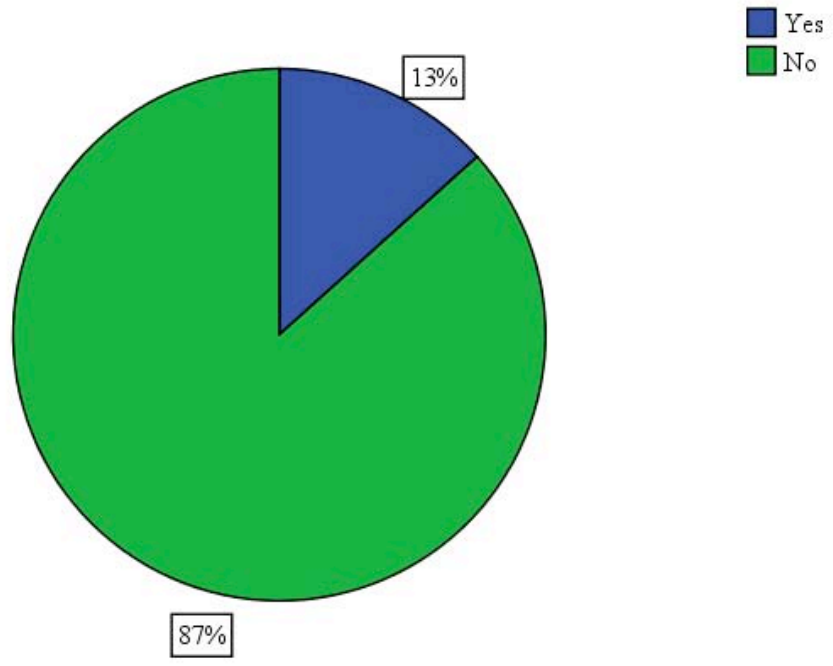
**18. At the time you decided to leave college, were you a single parent?**

At the point of departure respondents indicating being a single parent had not increased drastically. Here 13% indicated that they were a single parent, an increase of only 3%. This suggests that single parenting was not a relevant variable for this population.

**At the time you decided to leave college, were you a single parent?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	10	12.8	13.3	13.3
	No	65	83.3	86.7	100.0
	Total	75	96.2	100.0	
Missing	System	3	3.8		
Total		78	100.0		

**At the time you decided to leave college, were you a single parent?**



*Reasons for Leaving College*

The follow questions asked respondents what their reasons were for leaving college. First, they were asked to rank order of importance the top three reasons from a list provided based on the literature. Then they were asked to rate their level of agreement with possible reasons for leaving college. Their responses are below.

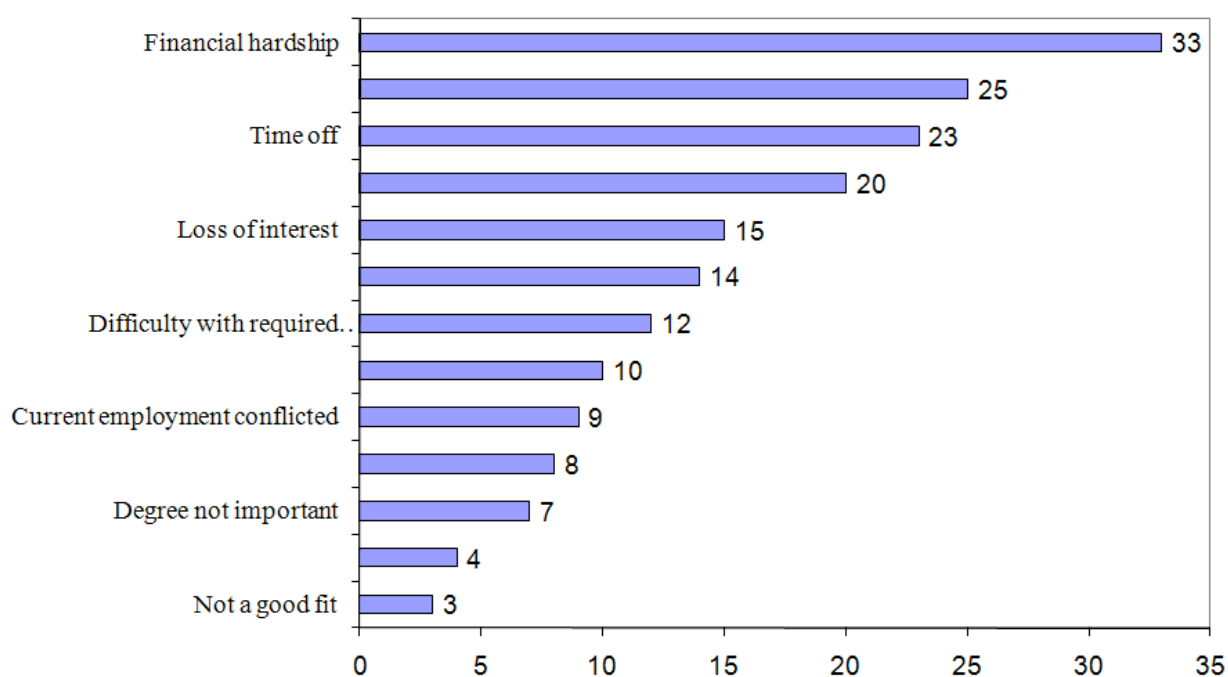
**19. Rank order of importance reasons for leaving college.**

Respondents were asked to rank order in order of importance their top three reasons for leaving college. The top reason for leaving college was due to financial hardship (n=33), followed by family responsibilities (n=25) and taking time off/will return (n=23). The third response indicates that student will return to finish their degree at some point in the future. The fourth top response was *Other*. Interestingly, many of these “Other” reasons had to do with work and familial responsibilities (indicated with an asterisk \*). Respondents just did not categorize them as such. The *Other* open ended responses included the following:

\*I got my travel certificate and I got pregnant  
 I am thinking of going back  
 The teachers sucked  
 I was taking courses didn't want to. I didn't understand why had to take them. I got bored  
 I am still enrolled  
 \*I am a stay at home mom  
 The professor revoked my Pell grant. Speech class was irrelevant as I was doing vocational (mechanic) training  
 Personal  
 \*Parents needed me  
 \*I needed to work at the point left  
 Money  
 Medical issue  
 Math  
 \*Married, spouse had a good career  
 \*Job situation  
 Health  
 \*My husband got a different job and we moved

\*My husband entered military, we moved  
 I had a job, lost interest  
 \*I got married  
 \*I got married  
 \*I got married  
 \*I had elderly parents  
 Courses needed not offered at night  
 Algebra & medical

### Rank order the top three reasons you did not finish college



#### 20. Please rate your level of agreement with the following:

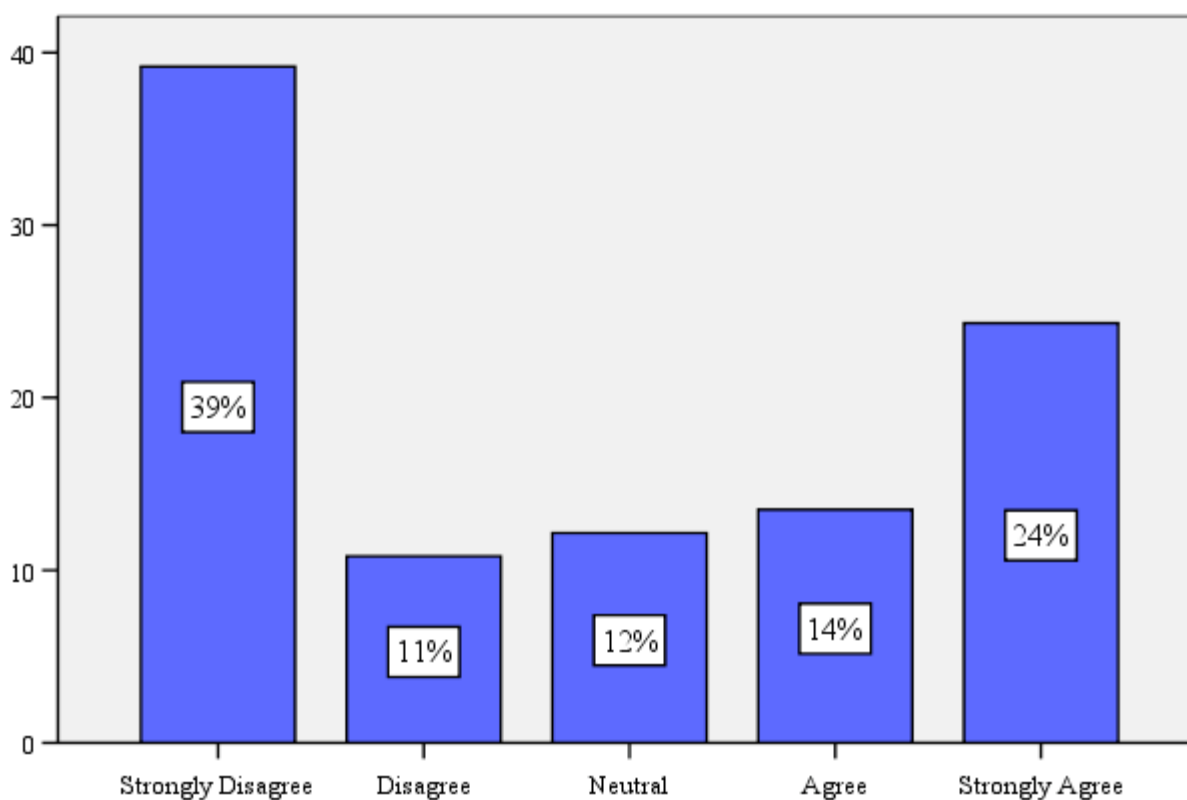
Respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 1-5 with (1 Strongly Disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 Neutral, 4 Agree, and 5 Strongly Agree), their level of agreement with a number of statements about *why* they left college. Results are presented below.

One-half (50%) of respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, *I left college due family responsibilities*. A little more than one-third (38%) indicated that they either strongly agreed or agreed, while 12% remained neutral.

**I left college due to family responsibilities**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	29	37.2	39.2	39.2
	Disagree	8	10.3	10.8	50.0
	Neutral	9	11.5	12.2	62.2
	Agree	10	12.8	13.5	75.7
	Strongly Agree	18	23.1	24.3	100.0
	Total	74	94.9	100.0	
Missing	System	4	5.1		
Total		78	100.0		

**I left college due to family responsibilities**

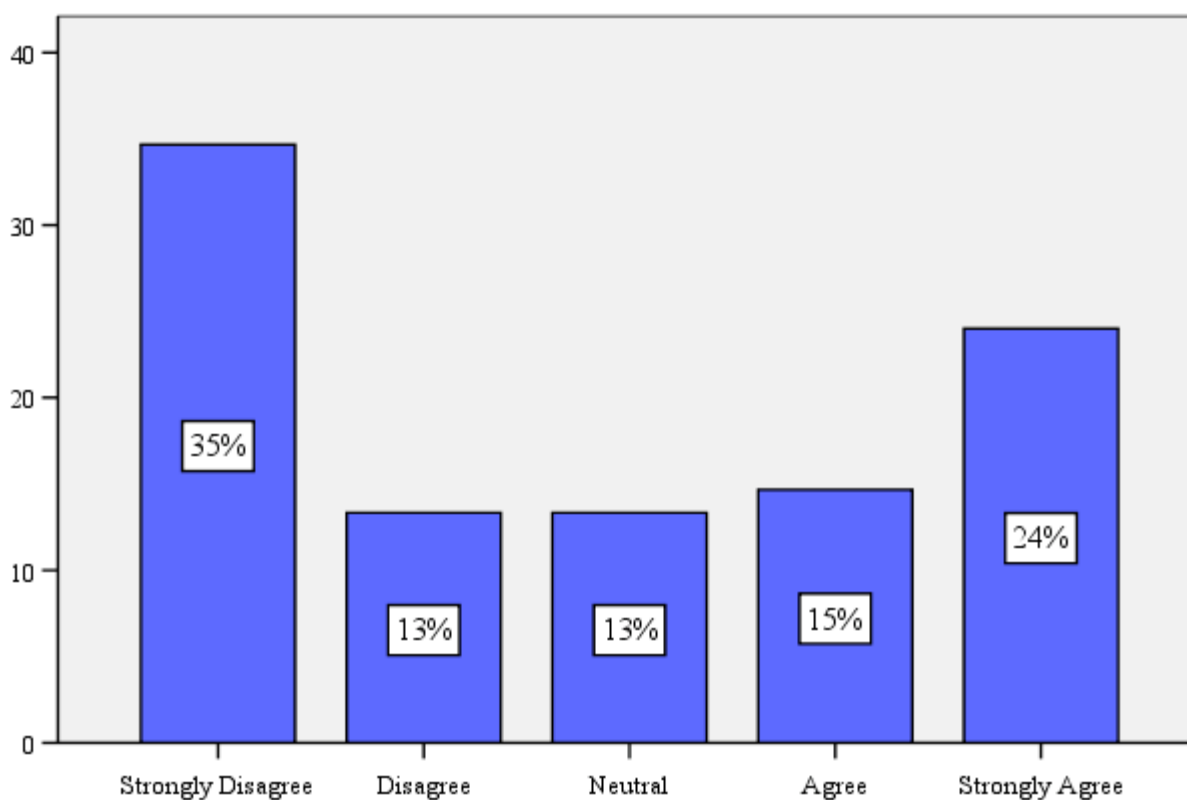


Fewer students left college due to *financial hardship* than not. Here, 39% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that they left college due to financial hardship, while 48% either strongly disagreed or disagreed. Approximately 13% rated their level of agreement as neutral.

**I left college due to financial hardship**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	26	33.3	34.7	34.7
	Disagree	10	12.8	13.3	48.0
	Neutral	10	12.8	13.3	61.3
	Agree	11	14.1	14.7	76.0
	Strongly Agree	18	23.1	24.0	100.0
Total		75	96.2	100.0	
Missing	System	3	3.8		
Total		78	100.0		

**I left college due to financial hardship**

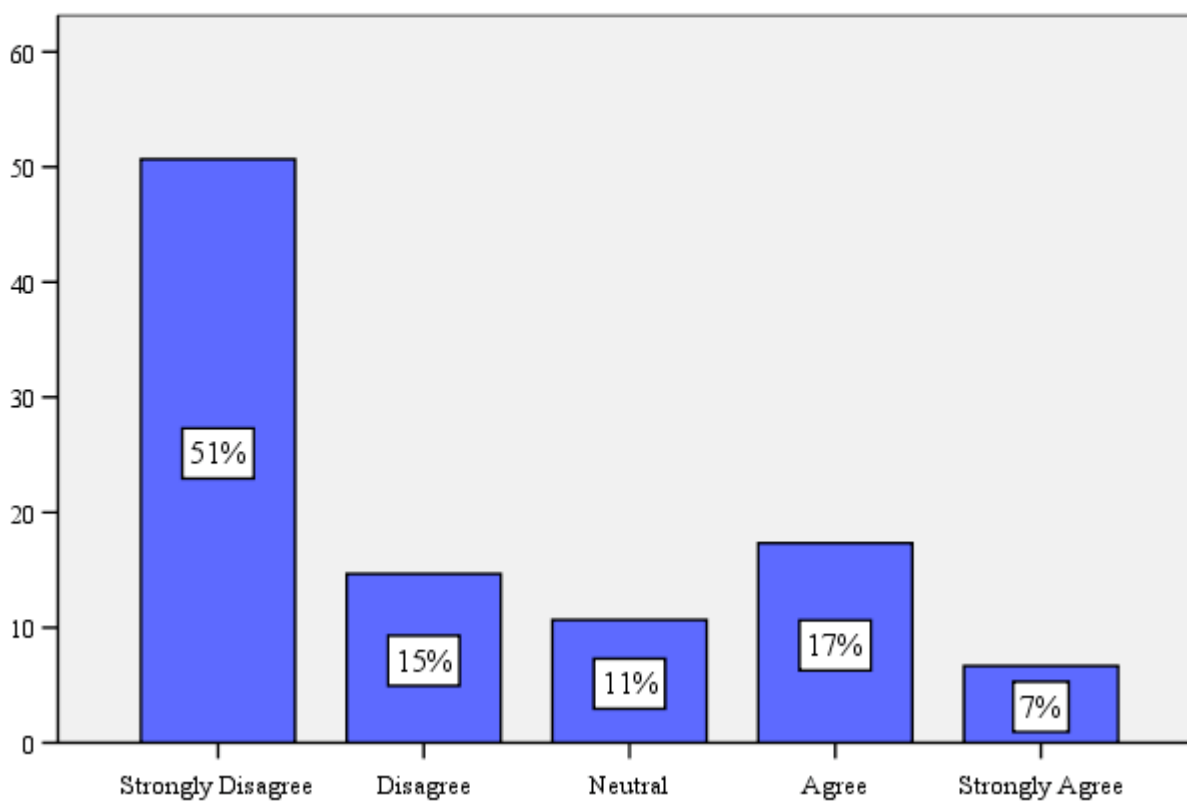


More than one-half (66%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement *I left college due to a loss of interest*. Only 24% of respondents indicated a loss of interest was their reason for leaving college.

**I left college due to a loss of interest**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	38	48.7	50.7	50.7
	Disagree	11	14.1	14.7	65.3
	Neutral	8	10.3	10.7	76.0
	Agree	13	16.7	17.3	93.3
	Strongly Agree	5	6.4	6.7	100.0
	Total	75	96.2	100.0	
Missing	System	3	3.8		
Total		78	100.0		

**I left college due to a loss of interest**

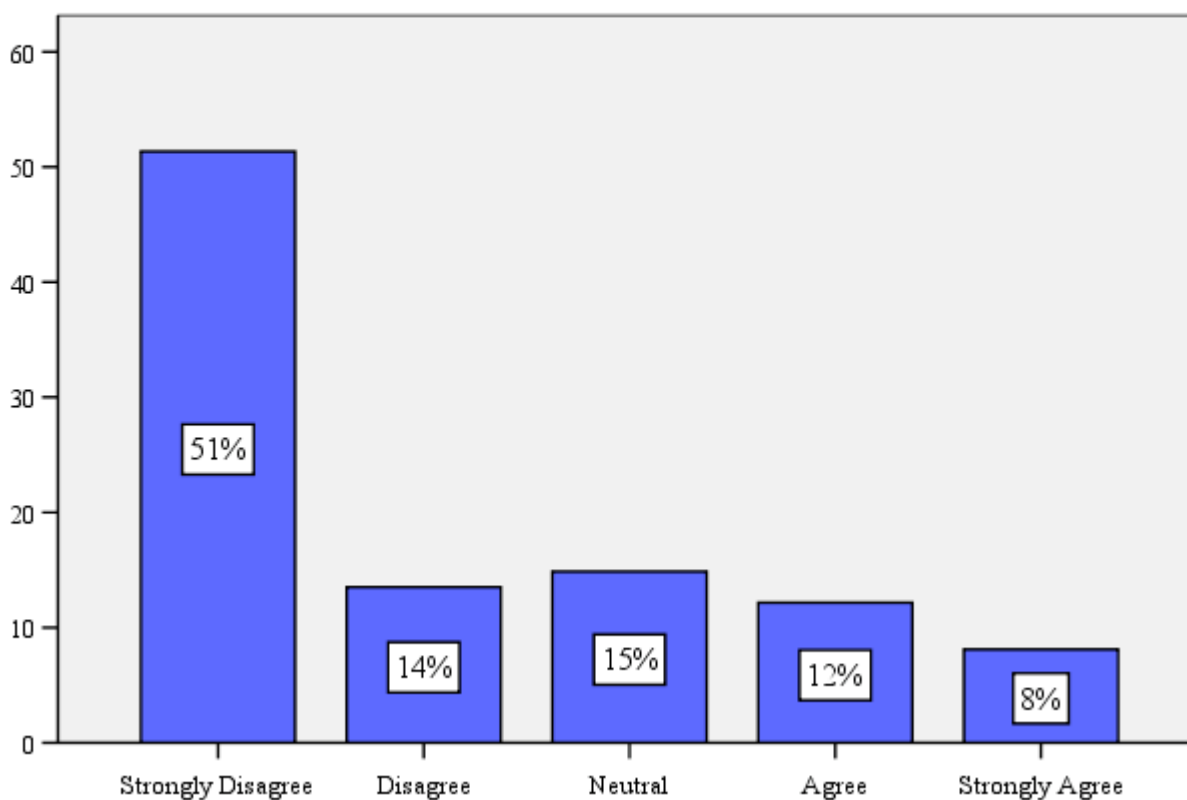


Two-thirds (65%) of respondents indicated that they either disagreed (14%) or strongly disagreed (51%) that *a degree was not important*. Whereas, only 20% of respondents indicated the lack of importance of a degree for them.

**I left college because a degree was not important**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	38	48.7	51.4	51.4
	Disagree	10	12.8	13.5	64.9
	Neutral	11	14.1	14.9	79.7
	Agree	9	11.5	12.2	91.9
	Strongly Agree	6	7.7	8.1	100.0
	Total	74	94.9	100.0	
Missing	System	4	5.1		
Total		78	100.0		

**I left college because a degree was not important**

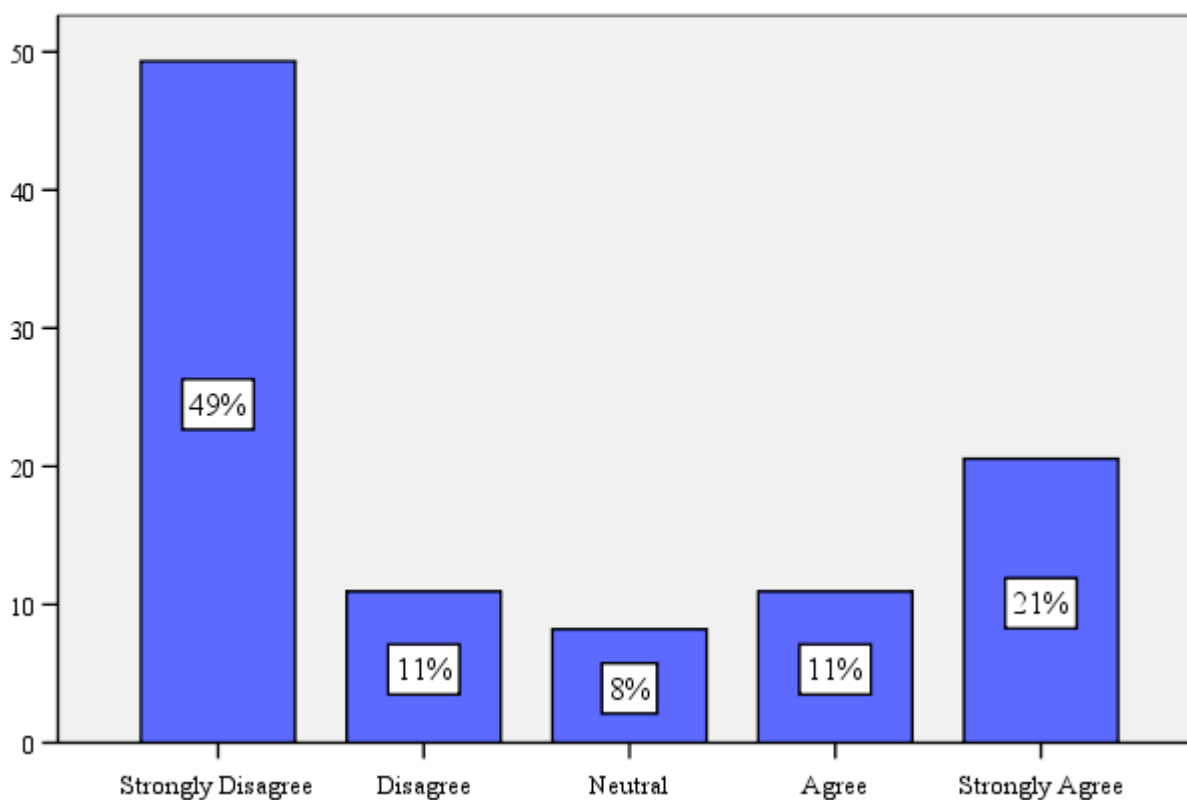


A majority 60% of respondents indicated that they disagreed (11%) or strongly disagreed (49%) that their reason for leaving college was due to *being offered employment*. Nearly one-third 32% agreed or strongly agreed that this was the case.

**I left college because I was offered employment**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	36	46.2	49.3	49.3
	Disagree	8	10.3	11.0	60.3
	Neutral	6	7.7	8.2	68.5
	Agree	8	10.3	11.0	79.5
	Strongly Agree	15	19.2	20.5	100.0
Total		73	93.6	100.0	
Missing	System	5	6.4		
Total		78	100.0		

**I left college because I was offered employment**

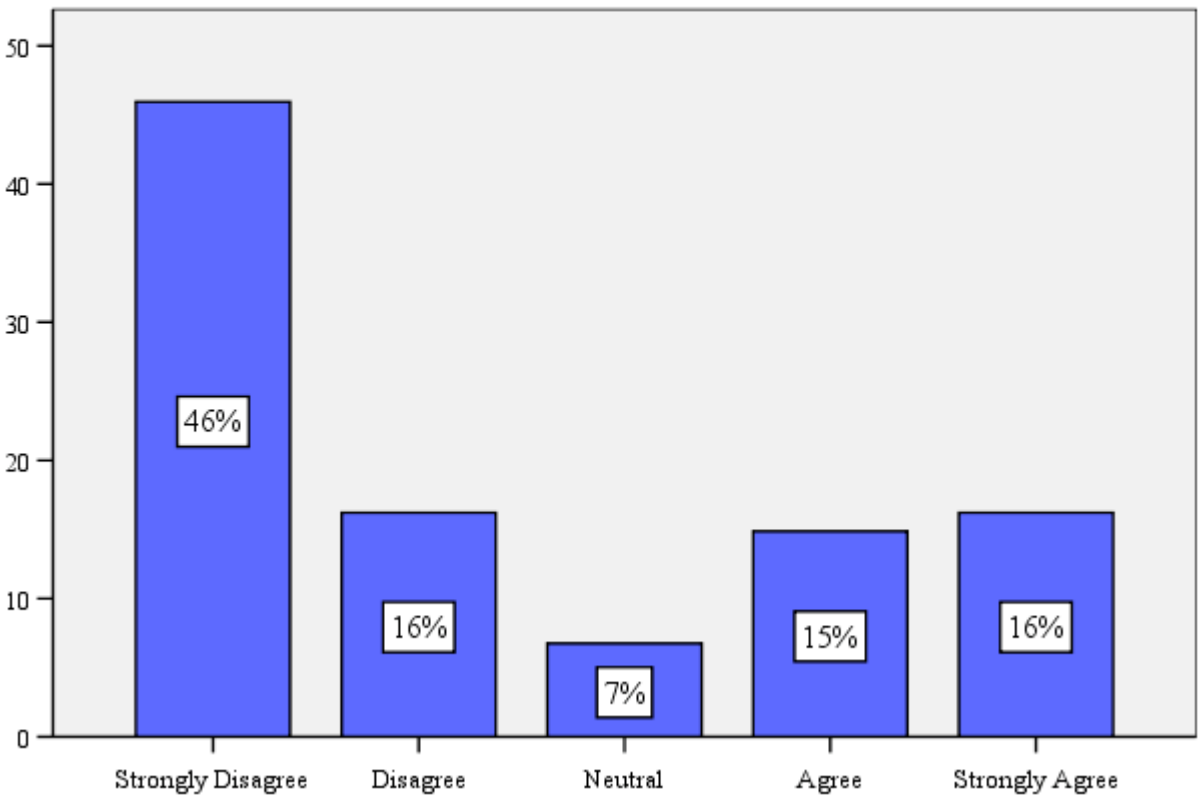


Approximately one-third (31%) of respondents indicated that the reason they left college was due to a *conflict with their current employment*. Again, however, the vast majority disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement (62%).

**I left college because my current employment conflicted with school**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	34	43.6	45.9	45.9
	Disagree	12	15.4	16.2	62.2
	Neutral	5	6.4	6.8	68.9
	Agree	11	14.1	14.9	83.8
	Strongly Agree	12	15.4	16.2	100.0
	Total		74	94.9	100.0
Missing	System	4	5.1		
Total		78	100.0		

**I left college because my current employment conflicted with school**

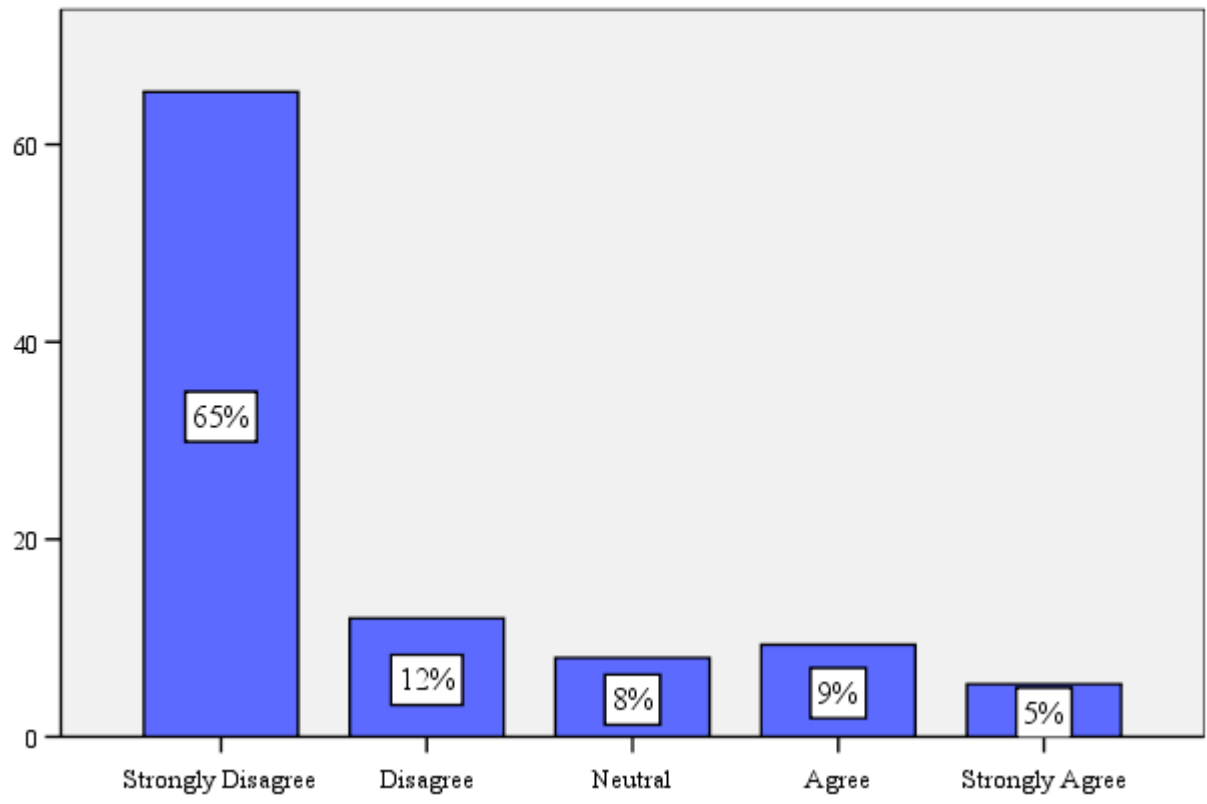


Very few students indicated that the reason for leaving college was due to *the distance from their home* (15%). In fact, 65% strongly disagreed with this statement and 12% disagreed. Thus, 77% of students did not find distance from home to be a factor in college stop out.

**I left college due to the distance from my home**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	49	62.8	65.3	65.3
	Disagree	9	11.5	12.0	77.3
	Neutral	6	7.7	8.0	85.3
	Agree	7	9.0	9.3	94.7
	Strongly Agree	4	5.1	5.3	100.0
	Total		75	96.2	100.0
Missing	System	3	3.8		
Total		78	100.0		

**I left college due to the distance from my home**

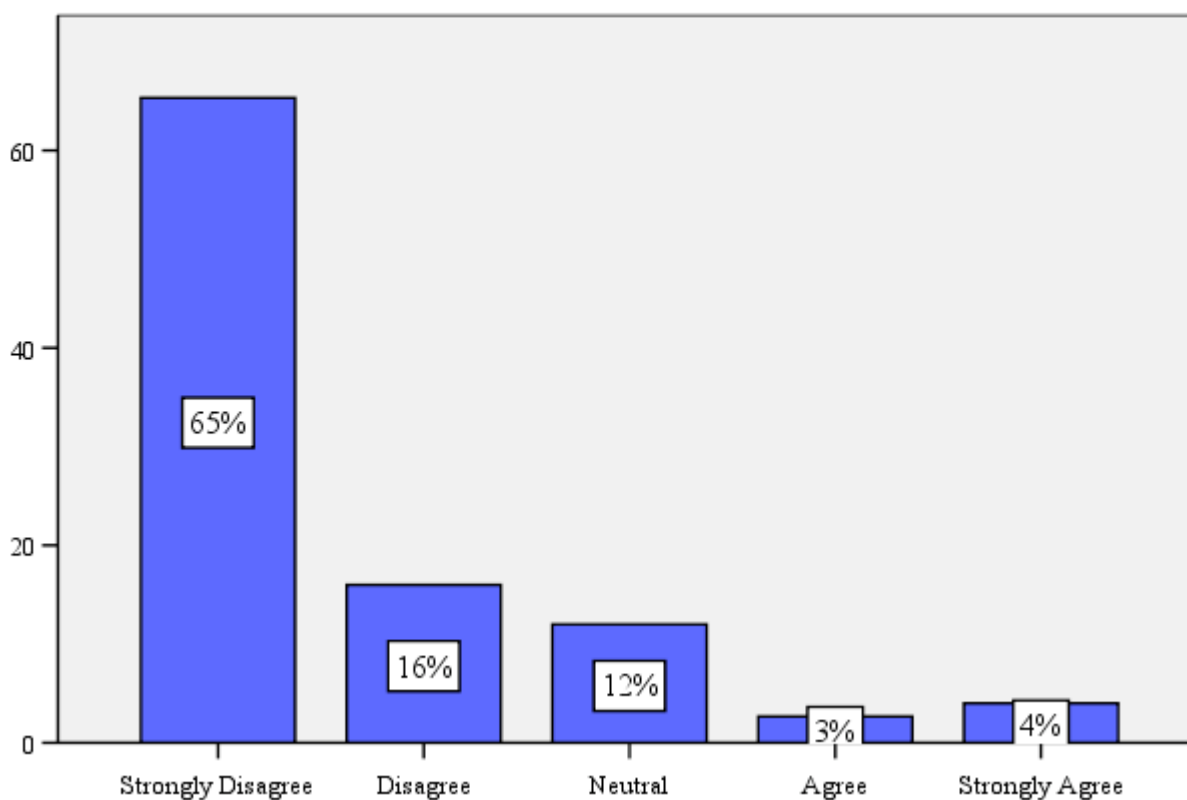


Only 7% of students reported that they left college due to *no program of interest*. Likewise, 81% reported that they disagreed/strongly disagreed that their reason for leaving college was due to no program of interest being offered.

**I left college because there was no program of interest**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	49	62.8	65.3	65.3
	Disagree	12	15.4	16.0	81.3
	Neutral	9	11.5	12.0	93.3
	Agree	2	2.6	2.7	96.0
	Strongly Agree	3	3.8	4.0	100.0
	Total	75	96.2	100.0	
Missing	System	3	3.8		
Total		78	100.0		

**I left college because it did not offer a program in my area of interest**

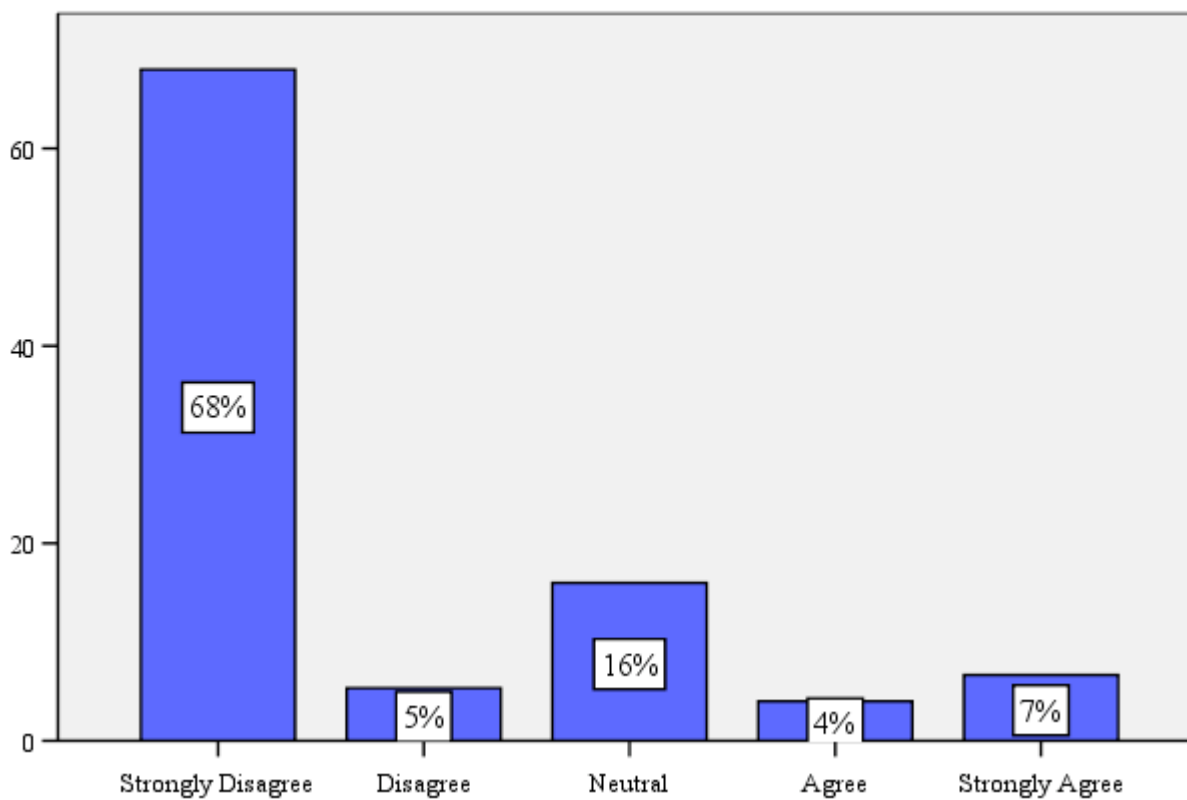


A majority of students indicated that *academic difficulty* had nothing to do with their reason for leaving college (68% strongly disagreed, 5% disagreed). Only 11% of respondents felt that academic difficulty was the reason that they left college.

**I left college due to academic difficulty**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	51	65.4	68.0	68.0
	Disagree	4	5.1	5.3	73.3
	Neutral	12	15.4	16.0	89.3
	Agree	3	3.8	4.0	93.3
	Strongly Agree	5	6.4	6.7	100.0
	Total	75	96.2	100.0	
Missing	System	3	3.8		
Total		78	100.0		

**I left college due to academic difficulty**

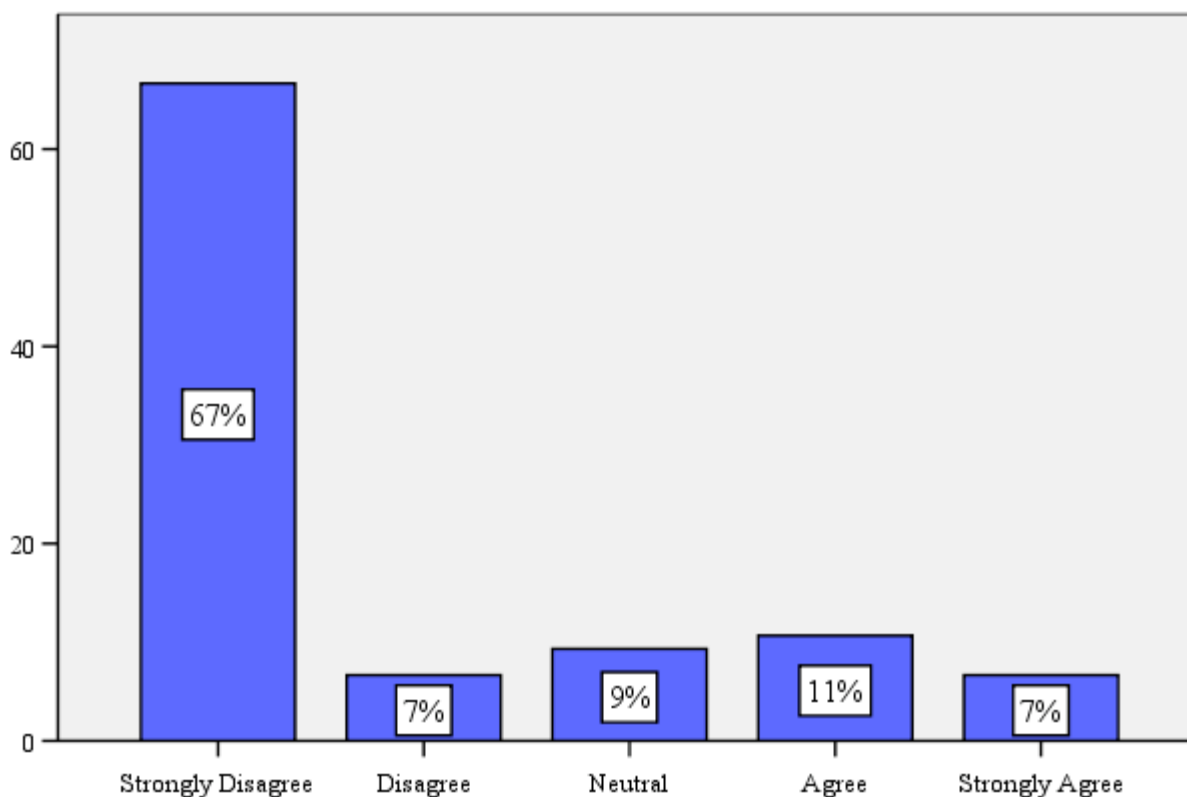


Nearly three-quarters (74%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that *difficulty with required courses* kept them from completing their college degrees.

**I left college due to difficulty with required courses**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	50	64.1	66.7	66.7
	Disagree	5	6.4	6.7	73.3
	Neutral	7	9.0	9.3	82.7
	Agree	8	10.3	10.7	93.3
	Strongly Agree	5	6.4	6.7	100.0
	Total	75	96.2	100.0	
Missing	System	3	3.8		
Total		78	100.0		

**I left college due to difficulty with required courses**

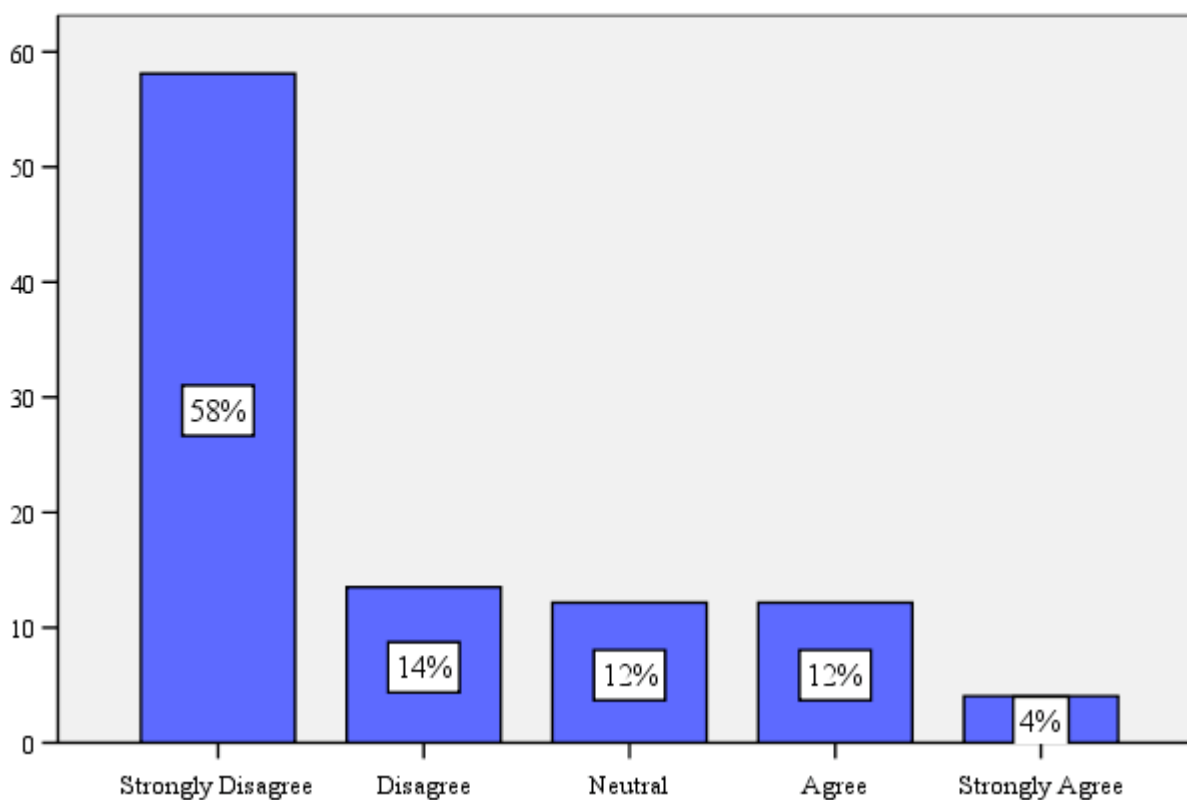


When asked their level of agreement with the statement *I left college because it was not a good fit*, the majority of students either disagreed (14%) or strongly disagreed (58%). Only 16% of respondents left college because it was not a good fit.

**I left college because it was not a good fit**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	43	55.1	58.1	58.1
	Disagree	10	12.8	13.5	71.6
	Neutral	9	11.5	12.2	83.8
	Agree	9	11.5	12.2	95.9
	Strongly Agree	3	3.8	4.1	100.0
	Total	74	94.9	100.0	
Missing	System	4	5.1		
Total		78	100.0		

**I left college because it was not a good fit for me**

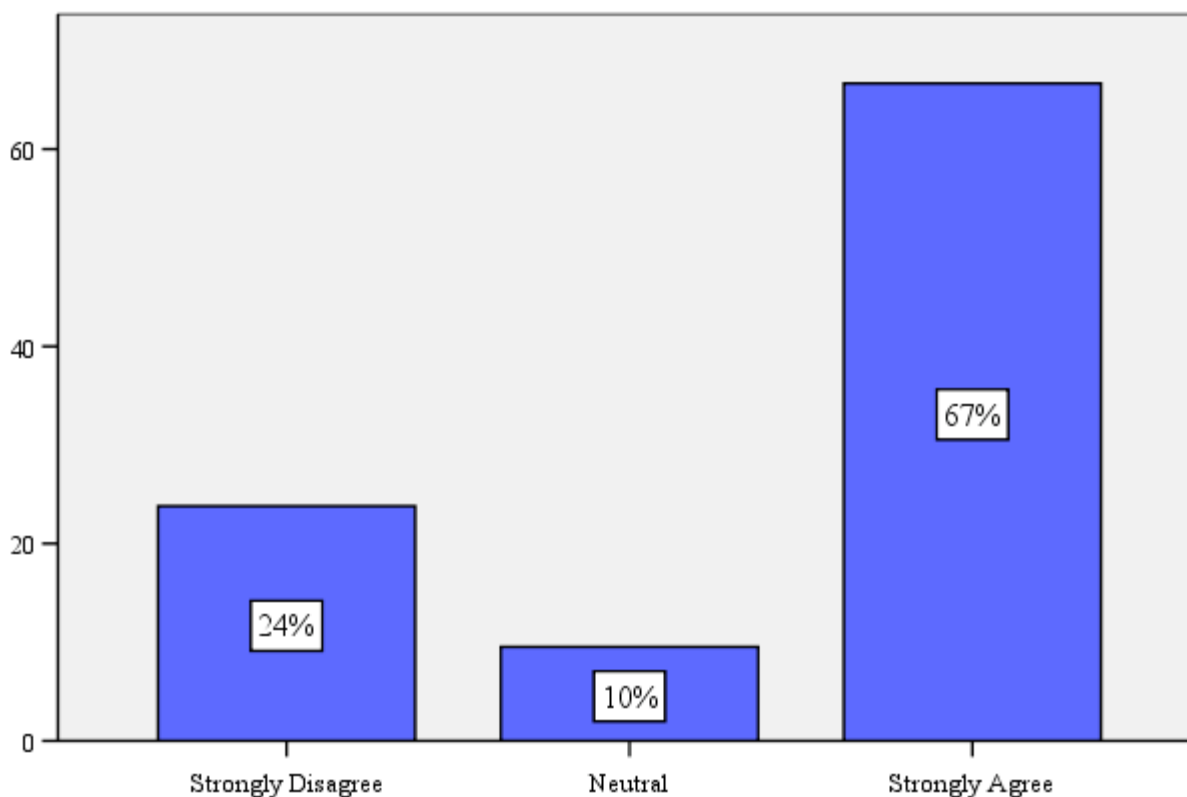


When given the opportunity to identify some *Other* reason for leaving college, 24% indicated that there was no other reason. However, of those who did identify some other reason, two-thirds (67%) strongly agreed that this other reason was why they left college.

**I left college due to some other reason**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	5	6.4	23.8	23.8
	Neutral	2	2.6	9.5	33.3
	Strongly Agree	14	17.9	66.7	100.0
	Total	21	26.9	100.0	
Missing	System	57	73.1		
Total		78	100.0		

**I left college due to some other reason**



Again, many reasons students gave as “Other” were in fact work and familial responsibilities, although respondents did not categorize them as such (indicated with an asterisk\*). Those reasons included:

\*I was offered job in field of study. Job experience was more important.

\*Financial desires

I didn't like the wrestling coach

They did not offer automotive class

\*My husband was in the military

I was going part-time, courses would change, I had to take new ones/start over

I've been enrolled for two years now

\*I got divorced and went back to school at 59

\*I got married and moved away

I am still enrolled

\*Just fitting it in with the family is hard

The distance is too great because can't drive

I have a medical issue

I didn't know what wanted to do and college discouraged me from my major

I have difficulty with math

I don't see the need to take English and algebra. I got married.

Medical problems kept me out

\*I had to make some money, will return to school

I had a lack of interest because of the cost

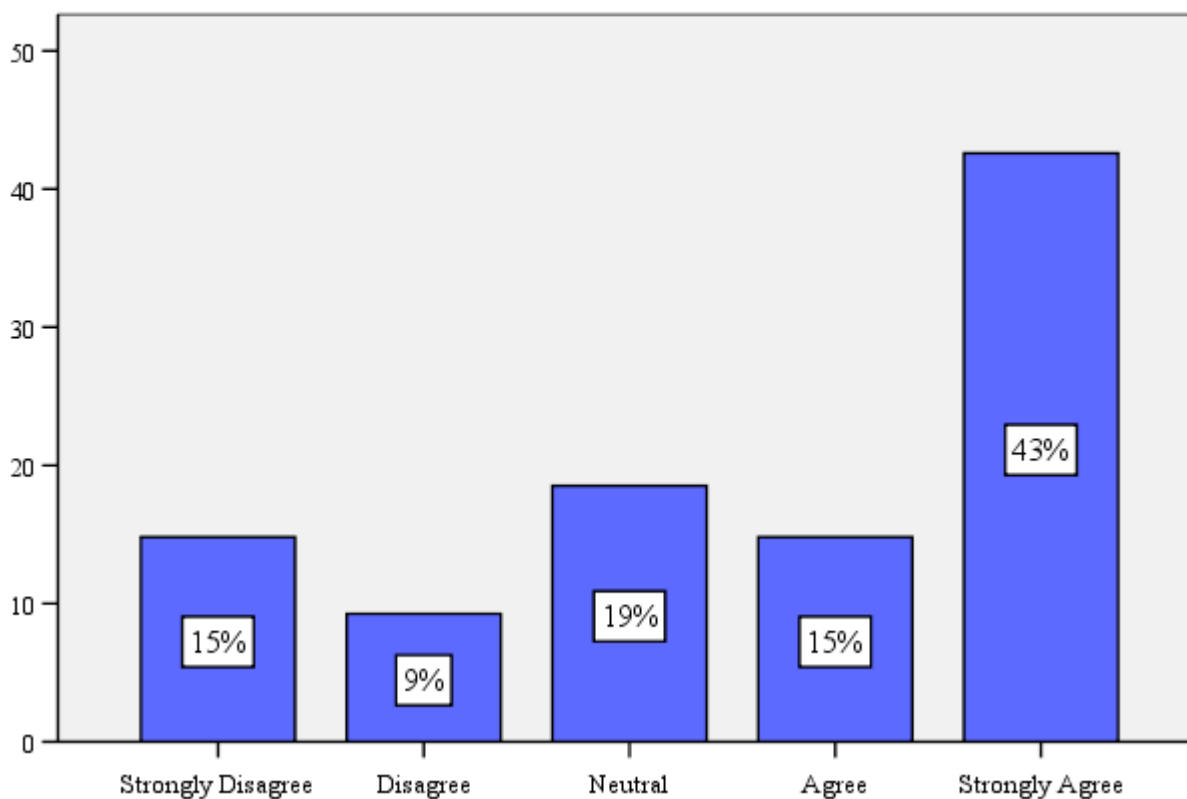
\*I had to take care of 2 children

Interestingly, a large number (58%) of respondents (43% strongly agreed and 15% agreed) that they had *not left college permanently*. In their view they would return to finish their degree at some point in time. Nearly 20% were neutral on this point, suggesting that perhaps they could decide to return as well.

**I did not leave college permanently; I am taking time off and will return**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	8	10.3	14.8	14.8
	Disagree	5	6.4	9.3	24.1
	Neutral	10	12.8	18.5	42.6
	Agree	8	10.3	14.8	57.4
	Strongly Agree	23	29.5	42.6	100.0
	Total	54	69.2	100.0	
Missing	System	24	30.8		
Total		78	100.0		

**I did not leave college permanently, I am taking time off and will return**

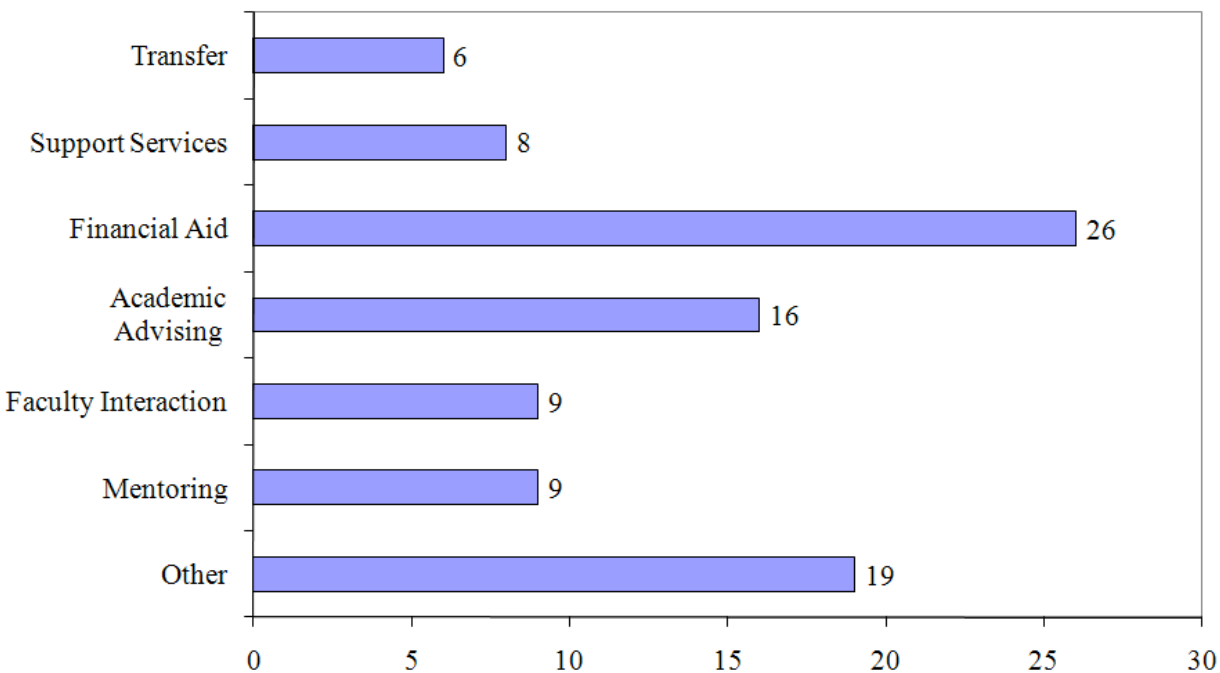


*Additional Information*

**21. Is there anything that would help you to return to college to finish your degree?**

Respondents were asked to identify those things that would help them to return to college. Twenty-six indicated that financial aid would help them to return to college. Nineteen indicated “Other”. These items are listed below. Sixteen felt that a focus on academic advising would help. Faculty interaction and mentoring were each identified by nine respondents as potentially helpful. Eight individuals felt additional support services. And six people wanted more information about transfer.

**Is there anything that would help you to return to college to finish your degree? Check all that apply.**



For those who identified “Other” their responses included the following:

A college in Lake City

After retirement I will return

Availability of courses for working people

Better health

College teacher position in which it was required, I would go back.

Courses at night. Older I get hard it gets

Guaranteed a job when finished

How old is too old for credits to still be accepted

Location-hour away from school

Need 4 year colleges to offer BA programs at local community colleges

I need to take my last required course (math) correspondence

No English or math

One day will go back, I enjoy it

Online classes and interesting classes

Online program

Reasonable time for commitment

Teachers scraping bottom of the barrel, inadequate, had their own agendas

Time

Time

Time

Time constraints with kids

Tutoring

Tutoring

What credits transfer now

**22. Is there anything you would like to add for our information?**

Finally, one open-ended question was asked of respondents, “Is there anything you would like to add for our information or anything you would like to clarify?” Following are respondents’ comments.

Institutions that concentrated on adults would help return

Competition to get into certain programs is too difficult

I would go full-time, then my wife would get pregnant I had to go back to work.

I got divorced and returned to college at 59. Then I was in a bad auto accident had to quit

I just don't test well...have difficulty taking tests

At my age the thought of going back sounds exhausting and money is also an issue

I am still enrolled

I left college to enter the military. I need financial assistance and online classes

I've always been enrolled, taking classes for fun.

I would finish my degree if I didn't have to take English and Algebra. I have life experiences and I can do that--realtor license, accounting, etc

ASC dropped the EC bachelors program.

I don't like online classes, would prefer 4 year schools offer classes at local community colleges, rather than online

I enrolled multiple times over multiple years in different degree programs. I have an LPN, EMT, etc. Left college when husband changed jobs and we moved.

Ease of enrollment

I am not interested in attending school

My first year was at ASC, I've been off and on since then, plan to return

Went back 10 years later but still didn't earn a degree

I would go back in a heartbeat with financial aid

College need to eliminate the red tape

The cost is too high

I am an LPN

I took some courses post CDA

I am an LPN

I am thinking about law school

I was enrolled in ACC, lab tech program. The administrator misinformed about time to do clinics (I had a medical issue). Once I figured it out, my clock had run out, although originally I had 2 years left. I withdrew and started over at TCU

I am post BA 70 hrs working toward masters

I took English courses in a community college

I took additional courses in Denver for CPA

After 22 years, I was laid off, went back to finish masters

I am working on doctorate

I am always take classes for things I'm interested in and for computers. I'm trying to learn about computers.

I have certificate in paralegal

I am currently enrolled in Associate's program

The program manager didn't help me get classes required to complete the program. Now the program is shut down and can't finish

### *Discussion*

There were two significant findings from this study. First, a large percentage (77%) of the sample population had, in fact, finished a college degree. Thus, there do not appear to be nearly as many adult ready students in Colorado as originally thought. Conversations with those individuals who completed a college degree suggest that they enrolled in classes either to pursue professional development opportunities or simply for “fun”. One individual finished a baccalaureate degree in Spain, came to the United States, and enrolled in college to learn English. This suggests that perhaps a more thorough examination of college stop outs in the state of Colorado is warranted, especially prior to any new policy development. The time period from which these individuals were selected was 2003-2006—not a sufficient length time to understand college persistence and completion, especially in light of the age demographic discovered in the survey, addressed below. Short of a transcript analysis and going further back in time in the National Clearinghouse to collect data, there is no way to tease out those who have completed and are taking classes for either professional develop reasons or for fun from those who have not completed their college degree. Additional research should focus on a thorough transcript analysis of these individual students. A transcript analysis, while time consuming, would inform as to whether or not students are degree-seeking, the types of classes in which they are enrolling, and how often they are stopping out of college. In some cases it could also indicate whether or not students had actually completed a college degree.

The second major finding was that those who have not completed a college degree, the reasons seem to be consistent with the college persistence and completion literature. The majority (78%) of stop outs was nontraditional age with work and familial responsibilities. Individuals with these characteristics take longer to finish a college degree than their

counterparts. Again, the timeline from which the population was selected does not provide sufficient time for these individuals to finish college. The data show that these individuals were financially independent with work and familial responsibilities, especially at the point of stop out. It simply takes longer for them to complete. Related, when asked about taking time off and whether or not they planned to re-enroll, a large number of respondents confirmed that this was their situation. For them, they still planned to earn their degrees.

These findings point to the need for policy decisions that a) are based on research using more relevant transcript analysis; b) focus attention on re-entry of adult ready students; and c) take into consideration the timeframe it takes for adults, with competing demands on their time, to complete a college degree. As Freeman (2007) points out, while nontraditional students may not finish a college degree within a specified time frame, they do persist.

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## Appendix A

### Language Sheets and Survey Instrument

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ may I speak with \_\_\_\_\_?

\*if not living there,

I am calling on behalf of Adams State College and the Department of Higher Education. We are conducting a survey to understand college completion and dropout. \_\_\_\_\_'s name was drawn to participate in this study. Do you have a current number?

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, I am calling on behalf of Adams State College and the Department of Higher Education. We are conducting a survey to understand college completion and stop out. You have been identified as an individual who attended college in Colorado but may not have completed your degree. We are contacting individuals to learn if they completed college. If they did not, we want to understand why they chose to leave college and to see if they might be interested in returning. The outcomes of this research will better inform college officials and policymakers about why students leave college and how we might be able to encourage them to complete their degrees.

Would you mind spending about 10 minutes to answer our survey? Your participation is voluntary. There is no risk to you for your participation and all responses are strictly confidential. Your name will become a random number in our database. Nobody will be able to identify you. If you agree to participate, you have given your consent.

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For additional information, contact:

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# FINISH! Survey to Understand Colorado College Student Departure

## Section 1: Demographic Information

1. What is your sex?

- Male
- Female
- Declined

2. With which group do you most identify?

- White
- African American
- Hispanic/Chicano (a)/ Latino (a)
- American Indian/ Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian/ other Pacific Islander
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Declined

3. What is your marital status? Are you:

- Never Married
- Single (includes Widowed, Separated and Divorced)
- Married
- Declined

4. How many children under the age of 18 currently live with you?

- None
- Number \_\_\_\_\_
- Declined

5. What is your current age range?

- 18-24 yrs
- 25-30 yrs
- 31-40 yrs
- 41-50 yrs
- 51-60 yrs
- 61+ yrs
- Declined

6. Are you claimed as a dependent on your parents' income tax?

- Yes
- No
- Decline

7. What is your estimated household income range per year?

- < 15,000
- 15,000-30,999
- 31,000-40,999
- 41,000-50,999
- 51,000-60,999
- 61,000-75,999
- 76,000+
- Declined

8. Have you finished a college degree?

- No **SKIP TO SECTION 2**  
 Associate's  
 Bachelor's  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

9. From where did you earn your most recent college degree? \_\_\_\_\_

10. What year did you earn your most recent college degree? \_\_\_\_\_ **(SKIP TO QUESTION # 25—GRADUATE EDUCATION FOCUS).**

## SECTION 2: Risk Factors

11. Which of the following do you hold?

- High School Diploma  
 GED

12. Did you enroll in college immediately following high school graduation?

- Yes  
 No, what was your age when you first enrolled in college? \_\_\_\_\_

13. Did you attend college primarily

- Full-time  
 Part-time

14. At the time you decided to leave college, were you employed (not including college work study)?

- Unemployed when left college  
 Left college to take a job  
 Employed when I enrolled in college, approximate number of hours per week \_\_\_\_\_

15. At the time you enrolled in college, were you financially independent?

- Yes **(SKIP TO QUESTION 17)**  
 No

16. At the time you decided to leave college were you financially independent?

- Yes  
 No

17. At the time you enrolled in college, did you have dependents for which you were responsible, other than a spouse?

- Yes \_\_\_\_\_ Explain (children, parents, etc.)  
 No

18. At the time you decided to leave college, did you have dependents for which you were responsible, other than a spouse?

- Yes \_\_\_\_\_ Explain (children, parents, etc.)  
 No

19. At the time you enrolled in college, were you a single parent?

- Yes \_\_\_\_\_ number of children  
 No

20. At the time you decided to leave college, were you a single parent?  
 Yes \_\_\_\_\_ number of children \_\_\_\_\_  
 No \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION 3: Reasons for Leaving College**

21. Please rank order the top three reasons you left college (1 Most Important, 2 Second Most Important, and 3 Third Most Important)

- \_\_\_\_\_ I left college due to family responsibilities
- \_\_\_\_\_ I left college due to financial hardship
- \_\_\_\_\_ I left college due to a loss of interest
- \_\_\_\_\_ I left college because a degree was not important
- \_\_\_\_\_ I left college because I was offered employment
- \_\_\_\_\_ I left college because my current employment conflicted with school
- \_\_\_\_\_ I left college due to the distance from my home
- \_\_\_\_\_ I left college because it did not offer a program in my area of interest
- \_\_\_\_\_ I left college due to academic difficulty
- \_\_\_\_\_ I left college due to difficulty with required courses. Explain \_\_\_\_\_
- I left college because it was not a good fit for me. Explain \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other. Explain/identify \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ I did not leave college permanently; I am taking time off and will return. Explain \_\_\_\_\_

22. Please rate on a scale of 1-5 with (1 Strongly Disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 Neutral, 4 Agree, and 5 Strongly Agree), your level of agreement with the following statements.

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
I left college due to family responsibilities (explain below)	1	2	3	4	5
I left college due to financial hardship	1	2	3	4	5
I left college due to a loss of interest	1	2	3	4	5
I left college because a degree was not important	1	2	3	4	5
I left college because I was offered employment	1	2	3	4	5
I left college because my current employment conflicted with school	1	2	3	4	5
I left college due to the distance from my home	1	2	3	4	5
I left college because it did not offer a program in my area of interest	1	2	3	4	5
I left college due to academic difficulty	1	2	3	4	5
I left college due to difficulty with required courses (explain below)	1	2	3	4	5
I left college because it was not a good fit for me (explain below)	1	2	3	4	5
Other (explain below)	1	2	3	4	5
I did not leave college permanently, I am taking time off and will return (explain below)	1	2	3	4	5

Explanation about any comments above: \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION 4: Additional Information**

23. Is there anything that would help you to return to college to finish your degree? Check all that apply.

- Information on transfer
  - Support services, explain \_\_\_\_\_
  - Financial aid
  - Academic advising
  - Faculty interaction
  - Mentoring
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
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24. Is there anything you would like to add for our information?

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25. If you would like information about finishing your undergraduate degree or pursuing graduate education, please provide the following information. Again the answers you provided above are strictly confidential!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for your time!**