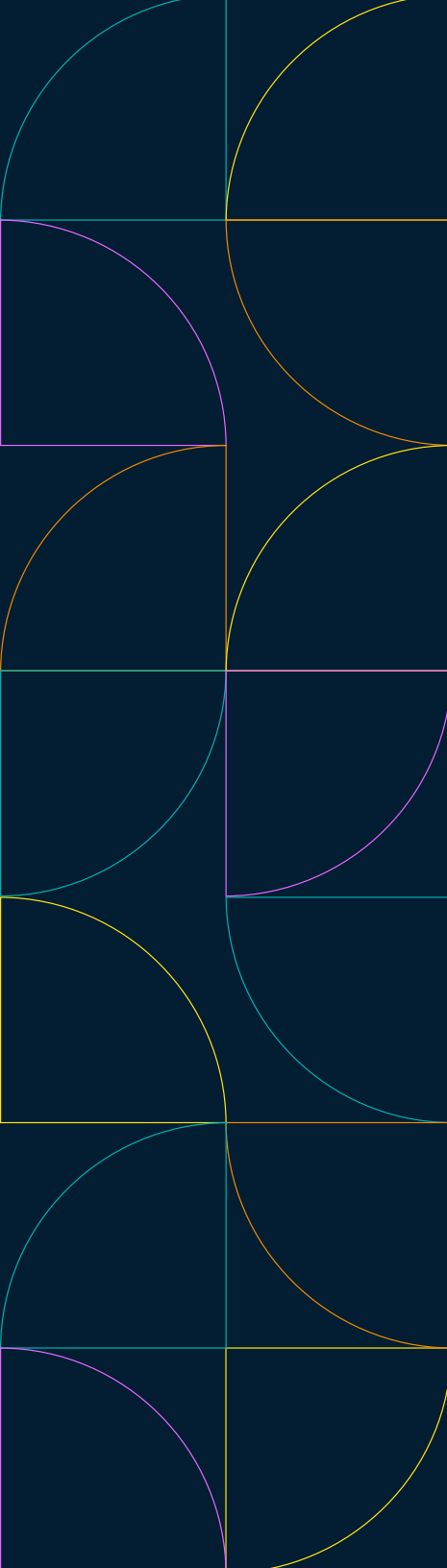


Mental Health Challenges and Their Impact on College Readiness



Parents and educators know that students are stressed out and increasingly struggling with mental health challenges. Appily set out to learn more about these challenges and how they impact students' decisions to go to college after high school.

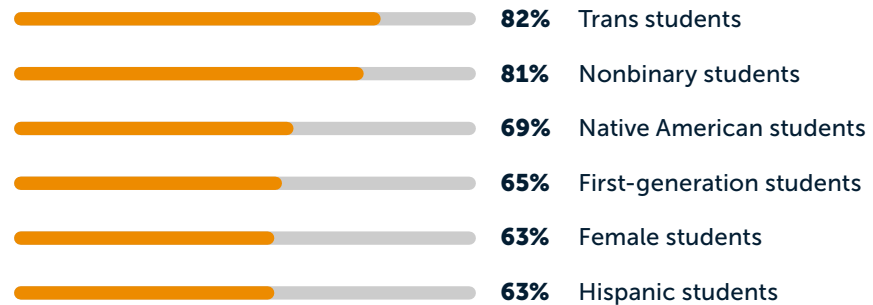
We surveyed 6,330 high school students in grades 9–12 on topics ranging from daily stress and anxiety levels, support mechanisms, how mental health is affecting the college search process, and specific drivers of stress and anxiety when considering college.

Our findings illustrate a generation of students who are anxious and worried about college to the point of choosing to delay enrollment or not attend because of mental health concerns.

More than half of students struggle with mental health challenges

Of the more than six thousand high school students surveyed, 58.8% report feeling anxious most days.

This anxiety is worse among vulnerable groups, including:

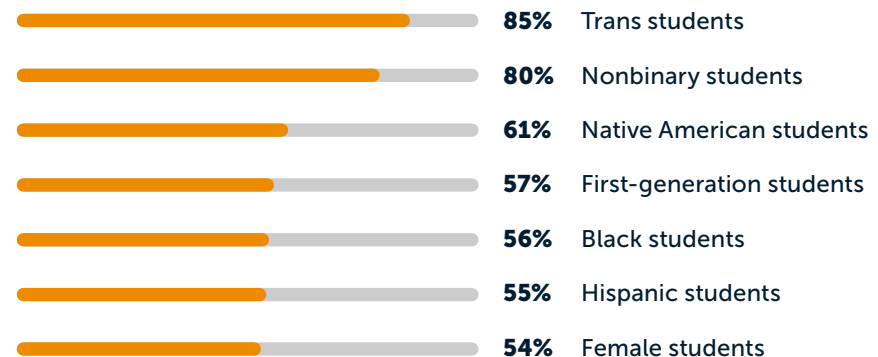


“

Anxiety and fear make it very difficult for me to plan for college because I overthink every outcome that my life could possibly take. I feel like college is the biggest decision of my life thus far, and that can be very heavy for a 17-year-old to handle.”

Likewise, more than half of teens surveyed (52%) report feeling moderately, very, or extremely concerned about their mental health.

These concerns are, again, far more significant among certain student groups, including:

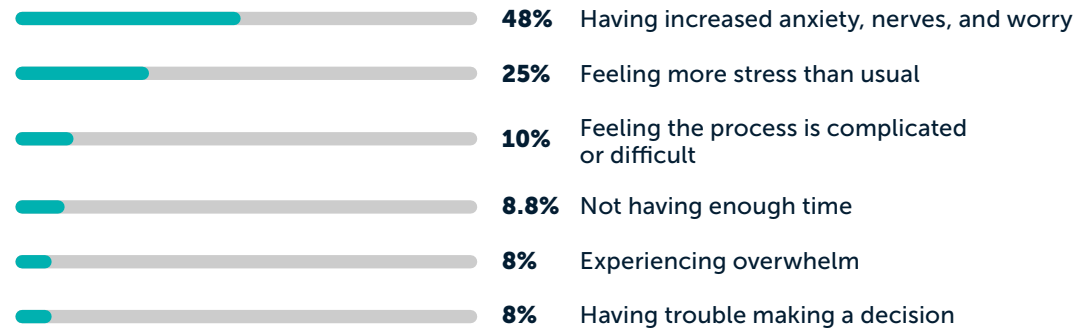


The college search and decision process exacerbates existing stress and anxiety issues

Almost half of all students surveyed (48%) told us that stress and anxiety overshadow their college search and planning. Students reported feelings of increased anxiety, nerves, and worry.

A quarter of these students reported feeling more stressed in general thinking about the college planning process.

Specific responses when asked about feelings and thoughts related to college planning include:



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College is such a huge stressor. Trying to not only find the money, but feeling like you may not be doing the right thing. Being anxious can often lead to me not doing things I probably should do and procrastinating.”

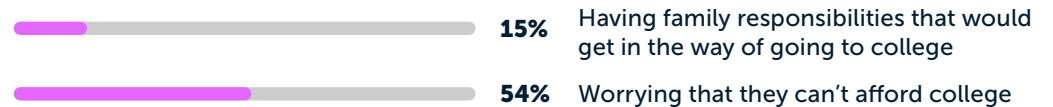
Mental health concerns cause students to delay or not attend college

Of the students who are currently applying or considering applying to college, nearly a third (28%) reported that mental health concerns are a reason they may choose not to attend college.

Top reported concerns in the area of mental health while in college include:



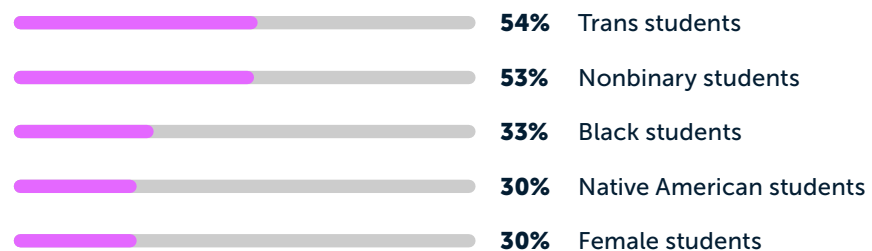
Students reported additional stress-causing factors like:



Anxiety and worry make me believe my future in college is going to be for nothing. Even if I get in and do what I'm supposed to, these feelings just press the brakes on my motivation and trigger my flight response. It's like it doesn't matter how much potential I have or how hard I work. If I can't shake off this anxiety that's holding me back mentally, then what is the point?"

Although nearly a third of all high school students surveyed said mental health concerns might cause them to delay or not enroll at all, vulnerable student groups reported a higher likelihood of this happening.

Survey results show the most vulnerable groups include:



Prospective students evaluate universities on their ability to help support student mental health

Since mental health challenges cause students to forgo college, it makes sense that access to support would be a primary factor used to evaluate schools.

Students in our survey rated the quality and availability of college mental health programs as moderately important (**3.2 out of 5**). This consideration was revealed to be more critical than even distance from home, political climate, or alumni support.

Once again, vulnerable groups rated the availability of mental health support programs as even more essential to their college decision.

We collaborated with Joon to curate these survey questions.



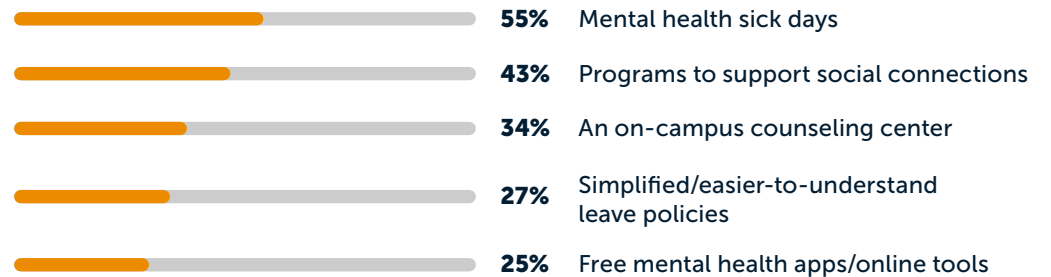
Joon is a mental health therapy provider, specializing in the unique needs of adolescents and young adults, aged 13 to 24 years old.

Learn more at joon.com.

Prospective students want universities to support their mental health and wellness

Students considering college said that universities can provide mental health support to make attending college easier.

The top five ways identified were:

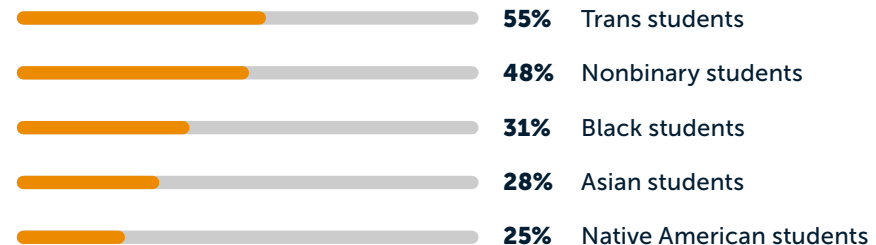


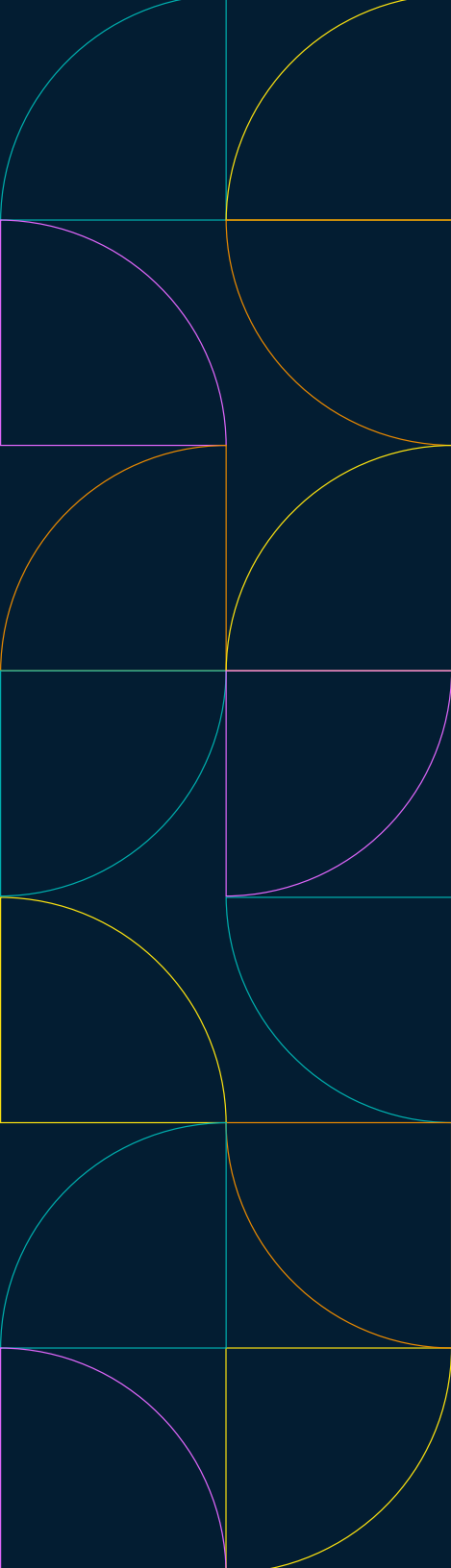
“

Given the enrollment challenges facing higher education institutions today, colleges must do a better job of acknowledging adolescent mental health struggles and reduce friction in the application process.”

Michael Koppenheffer | EAB Vice President, Enroll360 Marketing and Analytics

The diversity of a college’s counseling center staff is also a significant point of consideration for potential students, with the issue being most prominent among the following student groups:



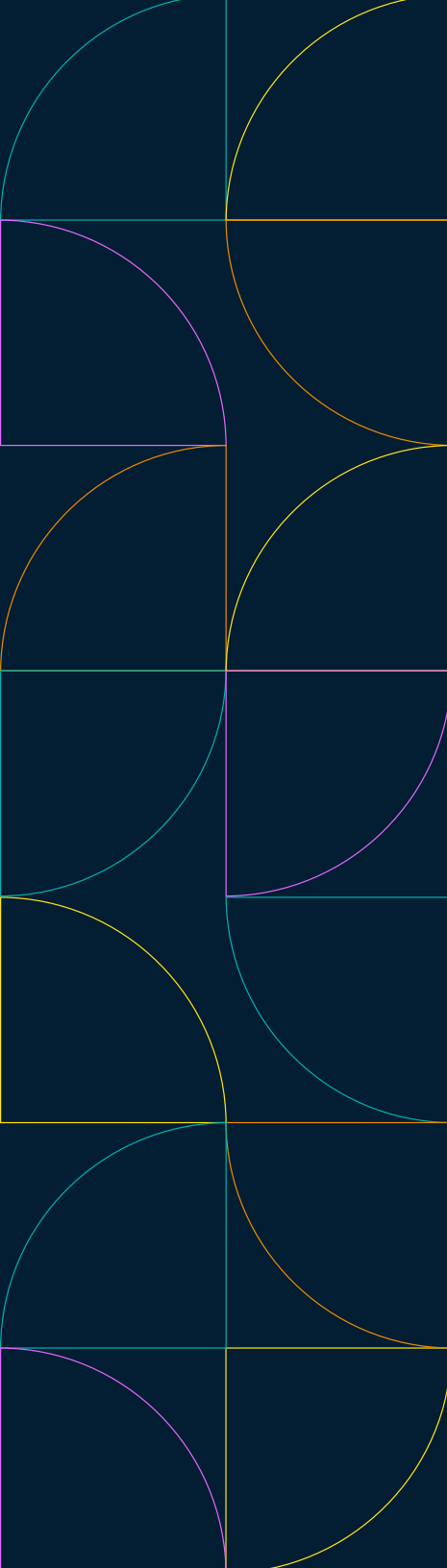


High school students are overwhelmed and stressed, and the college planning process multiplies any existing mental health challenges they may have. Students find the college application process time-consuming and difficult. They also fear making the wrong decisions about college.

As a result, students attribute mental health challenges as a reason for not enrolling in college. Their struggles related to academics, applications, decisions, and finances are significant challenges on the road to college. Students also worry about fitting in and managing stress while in college.

All of these reported challenges are magnified for nonmajority and underserved student groups. These students carry the most significant burden of stress, anxiety, and other mental health concerns. Accordingly, compared to their peers, they are more likely to say they will not enroll in college.

The college-bound students we surveyed crave community and mental health support on campus. They look for these attributes when making college decisions. To meet this need, **colleges should provide robust support programs for students, with a dedicated focus on the needs of the especially vulnerable student groups.**



At **Appily**, we understand the mental health challenges high school students face, so we provide resources and guidance to lighten their stress burden and support them as they look toward college.

Students can use our college search filters to find and connect with schools offering on-campus support programs, like resource centers, identity-based student groups, and disability housing. With **Appily virtual tours** and information available on our college profiles, it's easier for students to get a sense of whether a school will have a welcoming community with the safety and security that allows them to be themselves.

Appily Match is our reverse admissions program that lets colleges apply directly to students; by completing one simple profile, students can start receiving real offers of admission from over 75 college partners. Students only receive acceptance offers—no rejections—plus, 75% of offers come with scholarships, on average.

Finally, we give parents professional advice and resources on the topic of mental health so they can support their students during this stressful time.

We are passionate about student success. We help students and families bring a little order to the chaos, demystify the process, and empower them to make better decisions—all of which make the college search process less stressful and more accessible for students of all kinds.



Learn more at:
appily.com