

# College students report more stress, less time to socialize

February 5 2015, by Lisa Leff

---



In this Nov. 24, 2014 file photo, students march under Sather Gate during a tuition hike protest at the University of California Berkeley in Berkeley, Calif., Monday, Nov. 24, 2014. High school seniors across the United States are spending much less time partying and socializing with friends than their parents' generation and report having a much lower sense of emotional well-being when they get to college, according to a new survey of college freshmen released Wednesday, Feb. 4, 2015. The annual survey conducted by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute found that incoming students at four-year colleges and universities last fall devoted half as many hours to hanging out with friends during their final year of high school as students who entered college in 1987, when the institute first asked respondents about hobnobbing habits. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu, File)

Today's high school seniors aren't partying and socializing as much as their parents' generation—they're too busy trying to get into college, and when they get there, some don't feel good about themselves, a new survey reports.

The annual survey of college freshmen by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute found that incoming [students](#) at four-year colleges and universities last fall devoted half as many hours to hanging out with friends during their final year of high school as students who entered college in 1987, when the institute first asked respondents about hobnobbing habits.

The findings rang true to Isabella Galeazi, 18, who is juggling a job at McDonald's and a musical production internship along with a full-time course load at California State University, Fullerton. Balancing her professional and academic responsibilities with her desire for a thriving social life has proven a challenge that sometimes leaves her feeling snowed under, Galeazi said.

"My parents are always saying, 'When they were in school, when they were in school,' but I can show them my math homework and they have no clue how to do it," she said. "The work load is a lot heavier and the work is a lot harder. There is so much pressure to do well in high school or otherwise you won't get into college and if you don't do well in college you won't get a job."

The survey found that first-year-college students' sense of [emotional well-being](#) is at its lowest since the institute first asked the question in 1985.

The results released Wednesday are consistent with other trends that indicate millennials face greater pressure to succeed academically and

has less time to have fun, said Kevin Eagan, the institute's managing director and an assistant professor at UCLA

"The declines we have seen in time spent partying and the frequency of alcohol use in high school and the increases we have seen in the number of college applications students are submitting and their reporting feeling overwhelmed are all signs students are internalizing this message that they need to take the last year of high school seriously," Eagan said.

In the survey, nearly 39 percent said they spent five hours or less each week socializing, compared to the 18 percent who mingled with others that much in 1987. During the same 27-year period, the percentage of students who said they passed six or more hours each week "partying" shrank from 35 percent in 1987 to 9 percent in 2014.

When asked to rank their emotional health in comparison with their peers, half put themselves in the above-average category. Nearly 12 percent rated their emotional well-being as below average, a figure that stood at 3.5 percent in 1985.

Jack Foley, 18, a freshman at the University of California, Davis and considers himself neither happier nor less happy than other people his age, advised parents not to read too much into the survey. Sure, today's older teenagers may be spending less time chilling out with friends than their folks did in the 1980s, but they connect with others through social media and the clubs and extra-curricular activities they have been primed to participate in since toddlerhood, Foley said.

"It's kind of a competition: 'Oh, you are stressed? I'm stressed!' Which isn't to say people aren't stressed, but I think there is an element of talking about how stressed you are because there is this twisted self-fulfillment level to measure up with your peers," he said. "In some ways, talking about how stressed you feel is a way to quantify how well you are

doing and how hard you are working."

Dr. Gina Fleming, medical director of the University of California's student [health insurance program](#), has been lobbying the 10-campus system's board to provide more money for counselors, psychologists and psychiatrists at student health centers. Over the last three years, there has been a 20 percent increase in students seeking help for anxiety or depression, Fleming said, with many also complaining of stomach aches, headaches and insomnia that are likely stress-induced.

"There is a greater expectation that they need to succeed and do extremely well from the get-go at the same time they are dealing with the regular transitional issues of leaving home and adapting to the student environment," she said. "The pressure that starts in [high school](#) about 'What is your SAT score? What is your GPA? What are you going to study?' is so different from 1985."

The survey was based on the responses of 153,015 first-time, full-time students at 227 colleges and universities. The responses were statistically weighted to reflect the broader population of such students—approximately 1.6 million at 1,583 four-year schools.

© 2015 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: College students report more stress, less time to socialize (2015, February 5) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-02-college-students-stress-socialize.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--