

## NSSE 2025 Overview

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, nearly 1,700 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 2025, including administration details, response rates, participating institutions, and respondent characteristics.

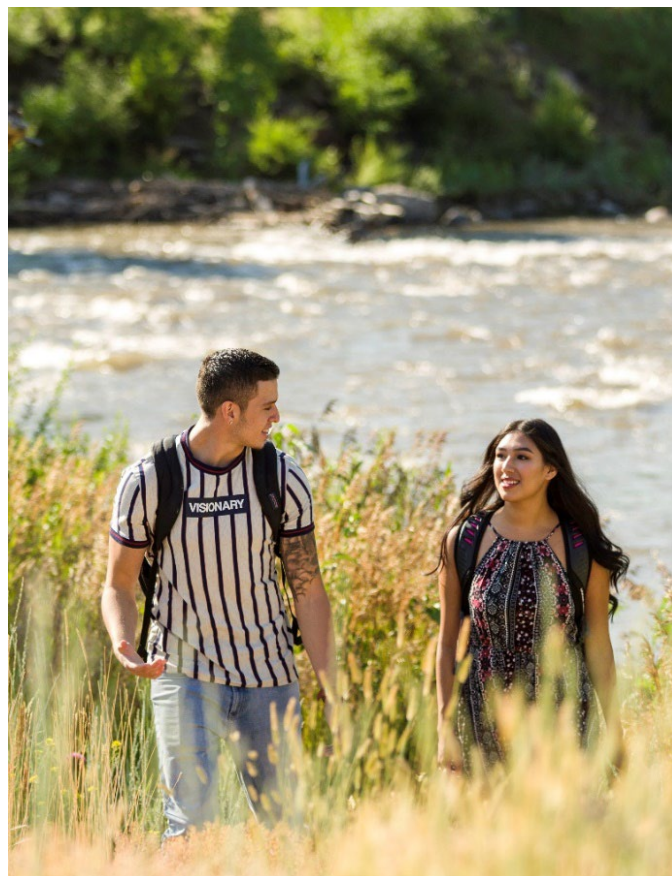
NSSE changes in 2025 included updates to several Topical modules. Academic Advising, Experiences with Writing, First-Year Experiences & Senior Transitions, and Global Learning Experiences all received major modifications. Additionally, the Civic Engagement, Experiences with Online Learning, Inclusiveness & Engagement with Cultural Diversity modules had minor edits. No changes were made to the NSSE core items.

For more information and a complete list of changes by survey year, [visit our website](#).

### Survey Data and Methodology

Approximately 930,000 first-year and senior students from 395 institutions (382 in the US, 6 in Canada, and 7 in other countries) were invited to participate in NSSE 2025. Of this population, 179,484 students responded to the survey. First-year and senior students were about equally represented among the respondent population.

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 sizes based on total undergraduate enrollment. Census recruitment is available via email, in which students get a survey invitation and up to four reminders.



Fort Lewis College

Unless noted otherwise, the results presented below are from 369 institutions—364 in the US and 5 in Canada—that participated in NSSE 2025. Due to nonstandard details of their participation, 26 institutions are not represented. In these summary tables, and in the *Institutional Report 2025*, only data for census-administered and randomly sampled students are included. NSSE 2025 U.S. respondents profiled here include 89,393 first-year (51%) and 84,934 senior (49%) respondents.

### U.S. Participating Institutions

NSSE 2025 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](#).

**Table 1****Profile of NSSE 2025 U.S. Institutions and Respondents and Bachelor's-Granting U.S. Institutions and Their Students**

| Institution Characteristics                           | Institutions (%) |      | Students (%) |      |
|---|------------------|------|--------------|------|
|   | NSSE             | U.S. | NSSE         | U.S. |
| <b>Carnegie Basic Classification</b>                  |                  |      |              |      |
| Doctoral Universities (Very high research activity)   | 5                | 9    | 17           | 35   |
| Doctoral Universities (High research activity)        | 10               | 8    | 18           | 17   |
| Doctoral/Professional Universities                    | 16               | 11   | 15           | 11   |
| Master's Colleges and Universities (Larger programs)  | 25               | 20   | 29           | 23   |
| Master's Colleges and Universities (Medium programs)  | 13               | 11   | 6            | 5    |
| Master's Colleges and Universities (Smaller programs) | 8                | 9    | 4            | 3    |
| Baccalaureate Colleges—Arts & Sciences Focus          | 12               | 14   | 5            | 3    |
| Baccalaureate Colleges—Diverse Fields                 | 12               | 18   | 4            | 4    |
| <b>Control</b>  |                  |      |              |      |
| Public  | 42               | 34   | 58           | 66   |
| Private   | 58               | 66   | 42           | 35   |
| <b>Undergraduate Enrollment</b>                       |                  |      |              |      |
| Fewer than 1,000                                      | 13               | 25   | 3            | 3    |
| 1,000–2,499   | 32               | 31   | 13           | 9    |
| 2,500–4,999   | 23               | 16   | 16           | 10   |
| 5,000–9,999   | 18               | 14   | 22           | 18   |
| 10,000–19,999   | 7                | 7    | 16           | 19   |
| 20,000 or more  | 7                | 7    | 29           | 41   |
| <b>Region</b>   |                  |      |              |      |
| New England   | 7                | 8    | 5            | 7    |
| Mid East  | 16               | 17   | 11           | 15   |
| Great Lakes   | 15               | 15   | 16           | 13   |
| Plains  | 10               | 10   | 8            | 7    |
| Southeast   | 27               | 26   | 26           | 25   |
| Southwest   | 9                | 8    | 8            | 13   |
| Rocky Mountains                                       | 3                | 3    | 12           | 7    |
| Far West  | 11               | 11   | 13           | 13   |
| Outlying Areas  | 1                | 2    | 1            | 1    |
| <b>Locale</b>   |                  |      |              |      |
| City  | 44               | 49   | 55           | 63   |
| Suburban  | 26               | 24   | 24           | 22   |
| Town  | 25               | 20   | 20           | 13   |
| Rural   | 4                | 8    | 1            | 2    |

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. U.S. percentages are based on the 2023 IPEDS Institutional Characteristics data. For information on the Basic Carnegie Classification, see [carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu](https://carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu).

## Institutional Response Rates

The average response rate for U.S. NSSE 2025 institutions was 25%, a two-point increase from last year. The highest response rate among U.S. institutions was 93%, and about 45% of institutions achieved a response rate of 25% or higher. Higher average response rates were observed for small-size institutions and at institutions that offered incentives for survey participation (Table 2).

Sixty-eight-percent of institutions chose to offer a survey incentive. On average, these institutions had a 27% institutional response rate, six percentage points higher than those who did not offer an incentive. Institutions also had the option to use their learning management system or student portal to recruit students. In 2025, 93 U.S. institutions chose this option, and the average share of respondents who accessed the survey this way was 32%.

**Table 2****NSSE 2025 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   | 165                    | 30                                      |
| 2,501 to 4,999   | 83                     | 23                                      |
| 5,000 to 9,999   | 64                     | 19                                      |
| 10,000 or more   | 52                     | 18                                      |
| <b>Use of Incentives</b>   |                        |   |
| Some institutions used recruitment incentives, such as small gifts or raffles, to encourage students to complete the survey. |                        |   |
| Offered incentives   | 247                    | 27                                      |
| No incentives  | 117                    | 21                                      |
| <b>All Institutions</b>  | <b>364</b>             | <b>25</b>                               |

## 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 twelve modules available in 2025, the most widely adopted was Academic Advising (Table 4).

**Table 3****NSSE 2025 Participation in Additional Question Sets**

| Selection of Additional Question Sets | Number of Institutions | Percentage of Institutions |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| None                                  | 34                     | 9                          |
| One module only                       | 92                     | 23                         |
| Two modules                           | 229                    | 58                         |
| Consortium items only                 | 2                      | 1                          |
| Consortium items plus one module      | 38                     | 10                         |

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 2025 Participation in Topical Modules**

| Topical Module                                       | Number of Institutions | Percentage of Institutions |
|--|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Academic Advising                                    | 124                    | 31                         |
| Career & Workforce Preparation                       | 109                    | 28                         |
| First-Year Experiences & Senior Transitions          | 105                    | 27                         |
| Inclusiveness and Engagement with Cultural Diversity | 62                     | 16                         |
| Mental Health & Well-Being                           | 56                     | 14                         |
| HIP Quality  | 32                     | 8                          |
| Experiences with Online Learning                     | 23                     | 6                          |
| Civic Engagement                                     | 20                     | 5                          |
| Development of Transferable Skills                   | 20                     | 5                          |
| Experiences with Writing                             | 15                     | 4                          |
| Experiences with Information Literacy                | 14                     | 4                          |
| Global Learning Experiences                          | 8                      | 2                          |

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.

## U.S. Respondent Profile

Table 5 displays selected demographic and enrollment characteristics of NSSE 2025 U.S. respondents alongside all U.S. bachelor's degree-seeking students for comparison using IPEDS-defined institutional and student characteristics. NSSE reports use weights as appropriate to correct for disproportionate survey response related to institution-reported sex and enrollment status at each institution. Note that in 2023, NSSE included new and updated questions pertaining to student identities. These expanded items are presented and available in institution data files and reports.

**Table 5****Characteristics of NSSE 2025 U.S. Respondents and Undergraduate Population at All U.S. Bachelor's Degree-Granting Institutions**

| Student Characteristics         | NSSE Respondents (%) | U.S. Bachelor's-Granting Population (%) |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| <b>Sex</b>                      |                      |   |
| Male                            | 33                   | 44                                      |
| Female                          | 66                   | 56                                      |
| <b>Race/Ethnicity</b>           |                      |   |
| African American/Black          | 10                   | 12                                      |
| American Indian/Alaska Native   | <1                   | <1                                      |
| Asian                           | 5                    | 8                                       |
| Native Hawaiian/other Pac. Isl. | <1                   | <1                                      |
| Caucasian/White                 | 60                   | 51                                      |
| Hispanic/Latino/Latine          | 16                   | 19                                      |
| Multiracial/multiethnic         | 5                    | 5                                       |
| Foreign/nonresident             | 3                    | 4                                       |
| <b>Enrollment Status</b>        |                      |   |
| Full-time                       | 90                   | 84                                      |
| Not full-time                   | 10                   | 16                                      |

Note: Percentages are unweighted and may not sum to 100 due to rounding. Institution-reported, using categories provided in IPEDS. NSSE percentages do not include students with "another" or "unknown" sex (1.1% of all respondents) or unknown race/ethnicity (4.1% of all respondents). The NSSE 2025 sampling frame consists of first-year and senior undergraduates. Data were provided by participating institutions. U.S. percentages are based on data from the 2023 IPEDS Institutional Characteristics and Enrollment data. Includes all class years.

## Canadian Respondent Profile

Canadian respondents profiled here include 1,846 students (62% first-year, 38% senior) from 5 institutions in 3 provinces, including 2 institutions in Ontario, 2 in Alberta, and 1 in British Columbia. Female students and full-time students accounted for about 64% and 90% of Canadian respondents, respectively. The average response rate for Canadian NSSE 2025 institutions was 29%, with the highest response rate being 37%. 3 institutions achieved a response rate of 26% or higher. About 31% of Canadian respondents were at least 24 years old. A plurality of students providing ethnocultural information identified as Caucasian or White (53%), 13% multiracial, 11% South Asian, 5% Black, 4% Indigenous, and less than 2% from each of nine other categories.

## Meet the NSSE Team

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