How America Pays for Grad School

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Background and summary
About Ipsos Public Affairs

Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos is an independent company controlled and managed by research professionals. Ipsos Public Affairs is the social research branch of Ipsos.

We help our clients listen to what their audiences are saying, understand what they are thinking, and anticipate what they have in mind. We know how best to determine and measure their views and opinions.

But we go beyond delivering data. We analyze it, put it in context, and then let our clients know how they can best translate this understanding into efficient and effective policies, programs, communications strategies, and marketing initiatives.

Ipsos Public Affairs is the company that public and private sector leaders, the media and the public rely on for quality research and insight into rapidly evolving public opinion at home and around the world.
About the study

How America Pays for Graduate School is an online survey of 1,597 graduate students ages 20 and older.

Topics of the study include:

• about how much they spent on graduate school,
• the resources they used to fund their education,
• their reasons for earning a graduate degree, and
• the considerations they weighed when making decisions about attending.

Interviews were conducted in English between May 18 and July 19, 2017. This timing improved the likelihood that responses would reflect actual, not projected, payment amounts for the 2016 – 17 academic year.

The survey sample comprised a cross-section of key demographic groups, and was stratified to ensure representation of select fields of study.

Composite of how the ‘typical’ graduate student pays for school is a mathematical representation similar to that created for How America Pays for College. Total dollar amounts reported by students are gross costs, before any financial aid is applied, and include their estimates of direct and indirect costs of attending school, including tuition, room and board, any additional cost-of-living expenses, and other expenses.
Grad students enrolled in graduate school are focused on earning credentials that will help them achieve their career goals. They say they are investing in their future, that the degree will help them enter or advance in their field, and that they will earn more with the degree.

Half of those currently enrolled had considered not attending because of the cost, but believe the benefits outweigh the expense, certain the investment in a graduate degree will open, or widen, the door to career opportunity and increased earnings.

The majority take ownership of their decisions to
• Attend: basing their degree and university choices on performance outcomes
• Figure out how to pay for it: creating a plan to pay before enrolling
• Pay for it: being willing to borrow and feeling confident in their decisions.

Graduate students fund more than three-quarters of their expenses themselves, using money they’ve earned or borrowed. Access to aid is limited, and contributions from family/others is minimal.
Why students attend grad school
Attitudes toward grad school

- Investment in my future: 91%
- Earn more: 87%
- New minimum for professionals: 64%
- American Dream: 59%
- Would go for social/intellectual experience: 56%
Career goals influence grad school attendance

Primary reason for Attending Grad School

Total
- Degree is required for entry into field: 14%
- Degree is required for advancement: 17%
- Degree will accelerate my career: 35%
- Decided to change careers: 5%
- Formal education to support ambitions: 14%
- Knowledge to stay current or competitive: 11%
- Some other reason: 4%

Masters
- Degree is required for entry into field: 11%
- Degree is required for advancement: 17%
- Degree will accelerate my career: 37%
- Decided to change careers: 6%
- Formal education to support ambitions: 13%
- Knowledge to stay current or competitive: 12%
- Some other reason: 4%

Doctorate
- Degree is required for entry into field: 20%
- Degree is required for advancement: 17%
- Degree will accelerate my career: 29%
- Decided to change careers: 3%
- Formal education to support ambitions: 15%
- Knowledge to stay current or competitive: 10%
- Some other reason: 6%
Part-time students are more likely to change field

Graduate degree is in the same field as undergrad

- 74% All Grad Students
- 70% Part-time
- 77% Full-time
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Knew before enrolled in undergrad</th>
<th>Decided while attending undergrad</th>
<th>Decided after undergrad but before job market</th>
<th>Decided entering workforce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Masters</strong></td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Doctorate</strong></td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When they decided to attend grad school:

- **Doctoral students** decide earlier to attend grad school.
Majority enroll within a year of earning bachelors

Time between Undergraduate and Graduate Enrollment

- within 12 months: 63%
- 1-2 years: 8%
- 2-5 years: 14%
- 5-10 years: 9%
- 10+ years: 6%
More than half anticipate a substantial salary increase

Expect their salary will change after graduation

87%
Employed Grad Students

Estimated Salary increase after Graduation

- 15% $50,000 or more
- 7% $40,000 to $49,999
- 15% $30,000 to $39,999
- 21% $20,000 to $29,999
- 21% $10,000 to $19,999
- 17% $5000 to $9,999
- 4% Less than $5,000

Total (n=1002)
Enrollment decisions and Planning
Decision point: Selecting a degree

Doctoral Degree Type

- Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.): 39%
- Doctor of Medicine (M.D.): 21%
- Doctor of Education (Ed.D.): 18%
- Juris Doctor (J.D.) or Doctor of Juridical Science: 18%
- Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS) or Dental Medicine (DMD): 4%

Doctoral degree: 28%

Masters degree: 72%

Master's Degree Type

- Master of Science (M.S.): 49%
- Master of Arts (M.A.): 24%
- Master of Business Administration (MBA): 22%
- Master of Laws (LL.M.): 4%
- Master of Fine Arts (MFA): 4%

Enrollment
**Decision point: Full- vs part-time enrollment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment Status</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Masters</th>
<th>Doctorate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part-time students are more likely to be:**
- Currently employed
- Have delayed starting grad school
- Be married
- Have children

**Full-time students are more likely to be:**
- Younger
- Female
- From the south
- Black or Asian
- Doctorate level
School choice: quality, convenience, and cost

School Type
Private university 53%
Public university 47%

Enrollment
Part time
11% Financial, 11% Prestige, 19% Strength of desired major, 7% Job placement rate, 25% Flexible coursework options, 16% Location, 10% Personal choice, 2% Some other reason

Full time
12% Financial, 11% Prestige, 28% Strength of desired major, 8% Job placement rate, 12% Flexible coursework options, 13% Location, 13% Personal choice, 4% Some other reason

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Paying-for-grad school considerations

- More responsible for paying than undergrad: 79%
- Willing to borrow rather than not attend: 77%
- Made a plan for how to pay: 70%
- Considered not attending due to cost: 48%
Planners are more confident

Confident in Paying-for-Grad School Decisions

85% All Grad Students
90% Planners
76% Non-Planners
How grad students pay for school
Loans pay more than half of grad school costs

Average amount spent in academic year 2016-17: $24,812
Federal student loans are top borrowing source

Proportion of costs paid from:
- Federal loans: 27%
- Private or university loans: 13%
- Non-student loan borrowing: 13%
Savings is top personal spending source for grad school

Proportion of costs paid from:
- Savings/investments: 14%
- Current income: 7%
- Benefits: 4%
School top contributor of ‘free money’

Proportion of costs paid from:
- University aid: 10%
- Private / community scholarships: 3%
- Government grants: 2%
Part-time attendance comes with a lower price-tag

Full-time students spend nearly 50 percent more on grad school, on an annual basis, than part-time students.

Average annual amount spent in 2016-17

$19,469
part-time program

$28,790
full-time program
Part-time students cover the cost of college themselves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment Status</th>
<th>Grants &amp; scholarships</th>
<th>Non-student income &amp; savings</th>
<th>Student income &amp; savings</th>
<th>Non-student borrowing</th>
<th>Student borrowing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Ipsos ranks third in the global research industry. With a strong presence in 87 countries, Ipsos employs more than 16,000 people and has the ability to conduct research programs in more than 100 countries. Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos is controlled and managed by research professionals. They have built a solid Group around a multi-specialist positioning – Media and advertising research; Marketing research; Client and employee relationship management; Opinion & social research; Mobile, Online, Offline data collection and delivery.

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By nurturing a culture of collaboration and curiosity, we attract the highest calibre of people who have the ability and desire to influence and shape the future.

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