

**Table 276. College Freshmen—Summary Characteristics: 1980 to 2008**

[In percent, except as indicated (24.5 represents \$24,500). As of fall for first-time full-time freshmen in 4-year colleges and universities. Based on sample survey and subject to sampling error; see source]

Characteristic	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008
Sex: Male . . . . .	48.8	48.9	46.9	45.6	45.2	45.0	45.1	45.2	45.4
Female . . . . .	51.2	51.1	53.1	54.4	54.8	55.0	54.9	54.8	54.6
Applied to more than three colleges . . . . .	31.5	35.4	42.9	44.4	50.5	55.4	56.5	56.5	60.1
Average grade in high school:									
A- to A+ . . . . .	26.6	28.7	29.4	36.1	42.9	46.6	46.0	45.9	47.2
B- to B+ . . . . .	58.2	57.1	57.0	54.2	50.5	48.0	49.4	49.0	48.0
C to C+ . . . . .	14.9	14.0	13.4	9.6	6.5	5.4	4.6	5.0	4.7
D . . . . .	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Political orientation:									
Liberal . . . . .	21.0	22.4	24.6	22.9	24.8	27.1	28.4	29.3	31.0
Middle of the road . . . . .	57.0	53.1	51.7	51.3	51.9	45.0	43.3	43.4	43.3
Conservative . . . . .	19.0	21.3	20.6	21.8	18.9	22.6	23.9	23.1	20.7
Probable field of study:									
Arts and humanities . . . . .	10.5	10.1	10.5	11.2	12.1	12.8	13.1	12.8	13.5
Biological sciences . . . . .	4.5	4.5	4.9	8.3	6.6	7.6	8.3	8.6	9.3
Business . . . . .	21.2	24.6	21.1	15.4	16.7	17.4	17.9	17.7	16.8
Education . . . . .	8.4	6.9	10.3	10.1	11.0	9.9	9.5	9.2	8.2
Engineering . . . . .	11.2	11.0	9.7	8.1	8.7	8.3	8.0	7.5	9.4
Physical science . . . . .	3.2	3.2	2.8	3.1	2.6	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.2
Social science . . . . .	8.2	9.4	11.0	9.9	10.0	10.7	11.2	11.1	11.5
Professional . . . . .	15.5	13.1	13.0	16.5	11.6	14.6	13.0	14.5	13.8
Technical . . . . .	3.1	2.4	1.1	1.2	2.1	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.0
Data processing/computer programming . . . . .	1.7	1.7	0.7	0.8	1.5	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.5
Other <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	14.0	15.1	15.8	16.0	17.9	14.1	14.2	14.2	13.2
Communications . . . . .	2.4	2.8	2.9	1.8	2.7	2.0	2.2	1.8	1.8
Computer science . . . . .	2.6	2.4	1.7	2.2	3.7	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.0
Personal objectives—very important or essential:									
Being very well off financially . . . . .	62.5	69.2	72.3	72.8	73.4	74.5	73.4	74.4	76.8
Developing a meaningful philosophy of life . . . . .	62.5	46.9	45.9	45.4	42.4	45.0	46.3	49.2	51.4
Keeping up to date with political affairs . . . . .	45.2	(NA)	46.6	32.3	28.1	36.4	37.2	37.2	39.5
Median family income (\$1,000) . . . . .	24.5	37.3	46.6	54.8	64.4	73.2	76.2	77.9	77.5

NA Not available. <sup>1</sup> Includes other fields not shown separately.

Source: The Higher Education Research Institute, University of California, Los Angeles, CA, *The American Freshman: National Norms*, annual.