

# Understanding Tennesseans' Attitudes about Education

## Part 1. Household Survey of Adult Tennesseans Part 2. Survey of High School Juniors and Seniors

A Report for the Tennessee Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury

Dr. William F. Fox  
Brad Kiser  
Stacia Couch

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Center for Business and Economic Research  
College of Business Administration  
The University of Tennessee  
Temple Court, Suite 100  
804 Volunteer Boulevard  
Knoxville, Tennessee 37996-4334  
Phone: (865) 974-5441  
Fax: (865) 974-3100  
<http://cber.bus.utk.edu>

THE UNIVERSITY of  
TENNESSEE  
Center for Business and  
Economic Research





# Introduction

## Purpose

Tennessee's economy continues in transition, as manufacturing employment declines and service occupations grow. Global competition in the years to come ensures further changes and pressures on the labor force and the economy as a whole. The ever changing economy mandates improvements in the skills and education levels of Tennesseans. Enhancing education and developing a 20th century workforce are arguably the most daunting economic development challenges confronting the state today.

In light of these challenges, Tennessee's stakeholders—including policymakers, educators, business and community leaders, and more—would benefit if more Tennesseans recognized that education is critical not only to their own personal well being (through higher earnings and reduced welfare dependencies) but also to employers who require higher skilled, better educated workers. Higher levels of educational attainment would also relieve some pressure on state and local government, by making business recruiting more fruitful, increasing tax dollars, and reducing crime costs.

Educational attainment levels as measured by high school diplomas and bachelor's degrees awarded have been on the rise in Tennessee. Still, Tennessee lags the nation and several neighboring states in attainment on all levels. And despite gains in recent years, attainment levels are on the rise in other states (and countries) as well, which means Tennessee is struggling to gain ground competitively.

As the state evaluates and develops policies and programs to improve the educational system, remove barriers to attainment, and incentivize both youth and adults to reach their maximum education potential, it is important to understand how highly Tennessee's youth and adults value education.

To assess attitudes, the Tennessee Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury contracted with the Center for Business and Economic Research to conduct two studies to measure Tennessean's attitudes about education. The first study of 3,012 Tennessee adults was designed to determine adults' attitudes about education in general, their own current education level and future education plans, the education of Tennessee's children, their plans for financing higher education for their children, and various demographic characteristics. The second study of 10,976 high school juniors and seniors in 39 public and three private high schools was designed to determine the students' attitudes about the value of education in general, their satisfaction with their own education, their future education plans, and demographic characteristics. The student study was also designed to identify certain school, home, and personality factors that might influence the students' attitudes.

Part 1 (page 3) of this report describes the methodology and results of the study of adult Tennesseans, and Part 2 (page 71) describes the same for the high school junior and senior study. A comprehensive Table of Contents appears at the start of each Part.

**Acknowledgments:** The Center for Business and Economic Research is extremely grateful to Keith Brewer, Deputy Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Education, and his staff for their role in identifying high schools in which to conduct the survey, interacting with school representatives, and assisting the schools with the administration of the surveys. Without them, Part 2 of this report would not be possible. We also thank the high school superintendents, principals, teachers, and other administrators who assisted with the collection of this information. We also thank Emily Fuller and Andi Holbrook at the Tennessee Association for Independent Schools for their guidance in identifying private high schools as well as the administrators and counselors at the private schools that ultimately participated in the survey.

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### Center for Business and Economic Research

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William F. Fox, Director  
Matthew N. Murray, Associate Director  
Donald J. Bruce, Associate Professor  
LeAnn Luna, Research Assistant Professor

Stacia Couch, Research Associate  
Vickie Cunningham, Research Associate  
Betty Drinnen, Program Resource Specialist  
Brad Kiser, Research Associate  
Derek A. Knapp, Staff Assistant  
Julie Marshall, Research Associate  
Joan Snoderly, Research Associate  
Angela Thacker, Research Associate

# Part 1.

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Table of Contents for</b> <b>Part 1. Household Survey of Adult Tennesseans</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>I. Part 1. Methodology</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>II. Characteristics of the Survey Sample</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Table 1: Characteristics of the Sample .....	8
<b>III. Importance of Education to Tennesseans</b> .....	<b>9</b>
Table 2: Importance of Education .....	9
Figure 1: Percent Who Believe Education Is Very Important to ... ..	9
Table 3: Factors Important to Achieving Goals .....	10
Figure 2: Percent Who Believe These Factors Are Very Important to Achieving Life's Goals	10
Table 4: Importance of Own Education to Achieving Life's Goals by Educational Attainment, Income, and Age .....	11
Figure 3: Percent Who Believe Having Educated Parents Is Very Important to Achieving Life's Goals, by Educational Attainment .....	12
Table 5: Importance of Educated Parents to Achieving Life's Goals by Educational Attainment, Income, and Age .....	12
Table 6: Importance of Family Wealth to Achieving Life's Goals by Educational Attainment and Income .....	13
<b>IV. Quality of Education in Tennessee</b> .....	<b>14</b>
Table 7: Quality of Tennessee Public Education .....	14
Figure 4: Quality of Tennessee Public Education .....	14
Table 8: Tennessee's Educational System Compared to Average State .....	15
Figure 5: Percent Who Believe Tennessee's Educational System Is Better Compared to the Average State, by Educational Attainment .....	16
Figure 6: Percent Who Believe Tennessee's Educational System Is Better Compared to the Average State, by Income .....	16

## Table of Contents, Part 1., cont.

Table 9:	Tennessee Educational System Compared to Neighboring States .....	17
Table 10:	Tennessee's Education System Today Compared to Ten Years Ago .....	18
Figure 7:	Percent Who Believe Tennessee's Education System Is Better Than It Was Ten Years Ago, by Income .....	19
Table 11:	Local Schools Compared to State Average .....	20
Table 12:	Importance of Local School Quality on Decision to Live There .....	21
Figure 8:	Percent Who Believe that Local School Quality Is Very Important to Their Decision on Where to Live .....	22
Table 13:	Most Important Area Needing Improvement in Tennessee Education .....	23
Table 14:	Issue Categories Prevalent in Responses to "What Could the State Do to Improve Its Education System?" .....	24
Table 15:	Increasing College Opportunities .....	26
<b>V.</b>	<b>Adult Tennesseans Currently Enrolled in School .....</b>	<b>27</b>
Table 16:	Adult Tennesseans Currently Enrolled in School .....	27
<b>VI.</b>	<b>Adult Tennesseans' Plans to Continue Their Education .....</b>	<b>29</b>
Table 17:	Plans to Continue Education .....	29
Figure 9:	Adult Tennesseans Who Plan to Continue Their Education, by Educational Attainment .....	30
Figure 10:	Adult Tennesseans Who Plan to Continue Their Education, by Grand Division .....	30
<b>VII.</b>	<b>Tennesseans Not Currently Pursuing Education .....</b>	<b>31</b>
Table 18:	Tennesseans with a High School Degree/GED or Less Who Are Not Currently Pursuing Education .....	31
Figure 11:	The Reason that Best Describes Why These Tennesseans Are Not Currently Pursuing Education .....	32
Table 19:	Tennesseans Who Took Courses after High School but Did Not Obtain a Degree and Are Not Currently Pursuing Education .....	33
<b>VIII.</b>	<b>Education and Jobs .....</b>	<b>34</b>
Table 20:	Job Satisfaction by Educational Attainment .....	34
Figure 12:	Percent of Employed Individuals Who Are Very Satisfied with Their Jobs, by Educational Attainment .....	34
Table 21:	Continuing Education and Employment .....	35
Figure 13:	Percent Who Agree with Certain Statements about Continuing Education and Employment .....	35

**Table of Contents, Part 1., cont.**

Table 22: Receiving Encouragement from Supervisor to Continue Education ..... 36

Table 23: Receive Pay Increases from Further Education ..... 36

Table 24: Education Pursuit Enabling Career Advancement ..... 37

Figure 14: Percent Who Believe More Education Will Help Them Get Ahead  
in Their Career, by Age Group ..... 37

Table 25: Participation in Job-Specific Education ..... 38

Figure 15: Percent Who Participate in Job-Specific Education, by Income ..... 38

**IX. Parents' Expectations for Their Children's Education ..... 40**

Table 26: Expectations for Children's Educational Attainment ..... 40

Figure 16: Percent of Parents Who Expect Their Child to Earn a Bachelor's Degree,  
by Parent's Educational Attainment Level ..... 41

Table 27: Factors Influencing In-State School Preference for Child ..... 42

Table 28: Factors Influencing Out-of-State School Preference for Child ..... 42

**X. Financing Children's Higher Education ..... 43**

Table 29: Feeling Informed Enough to Plan for Child's Future Education<sup>5</sup> ..... 43

Figure 17: Percent Who Feel Informed Enough to Plan for Child's Future Education ..... 44

Table 30: Plans for Financing Child's Education ..... 44

Table 31: Have Started Saving for Child's Education ..... 45

Figure 18: Percent Who Have Started Saving for Child's Education,  
by Educational Attainment ..... 45

Table 32: Incentive that Would Most Encourage Savings ..... 46

Table 33: Awareness of College Savings Incentives<sup>6</sup> ..... 46

Table 34: Awareness of College Savings Incentives by Group ..... 47

Table 35: How Respondents Heard about 529 Plans<sup>7</sup> ..... 48

Table 36: Utilization of College Savings Plans, Given Awareness ..... 48

Figure 19: Percent Who Are Participating in the Plans, Given Awareness ..... 49

Table 37: Factors in Choosing Current 529 Plan ..... 50

Figure 20: Percent Who Find these Factors Very Important  
in Choosing Current 529 Plan ..... 50

Table 38: How 529 Plan Was Purchased ..... 51

Table 39: Frequency of Contributions to 529 Plan ..... 51

**Appendix 1: Adult Telephone Survey Questionnaire ..... 52**

**Table of Contents  
for Part 2. Survey of High School Juniors and Seniors ..... 71**



## **I. Part 1. Methodology**

This report is based on a household telephone survey of 3,012 adult Tennesseans who were selected by random-digit dialing. The instrument was designed to determine their attitudes about education in general, their own current education level and future education plans, the education of Tennessee's children, their plans for financing higher education for their children, and various demographic characteristics. The survey was conducted by the Social Science Research Institute (SSRI) at the University of Tennessee from September 10 to October 20, 2005.

CBER made every effort to adequately represent the state of Tennessee in the sampling process. To ensure statistical significance of estimates for some demographic groups, it was necessary to oversample from certain areas of the state, while still sampling through random digit dialing. Doing this allowed CBER to achieve adequate representation based on various demographics, including income, ethnic background, and geography (representation of East Tennessee, Middle Tennessee, and West Tennessee) without sacrificing randomness. During the analysis, the resulting data were weighted so that the sample accurately reflected the Tennessee population. Unless otherwise specified, all data in this report have been subjected to this correction.

## II. Characteristics of the Survey Sample

There were 3,012 responses to the survey, with 1,097 from East Tennessee, 1,056 from Middle Tennessee, and 859 from West Tennessee. Respondents ranged in age from 19 to 99, with the median age being 49.<sup>1</sup> Ninety-three percent of respondents attended a public high school. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the sample by a number of demographics.

**Table 1: Characteristics of the Sample**

Age:	19-24	7.6%
	25-39	21.4%
	40-64	50.5%
	65+	20.4%
Sex:	Male	37.3%
	Female	62.7%
Race:	White	82.4%
	Black or African American	13.8%
	Asian	0.5%
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.1%
	American Indian or Alaska Native	0.6%
	Mexican	0.5%
	Puerto Rican	0.1%
	Other	2.1%
Of Hispanic Origin:		2.4%
Have Children Under 19 Years Old:		42.7%
Grand Division:	East Tennessee	36.4%
	Middle Tennessee	35.1%
	West Tennessee	28.5%
Employment:	Employed	56.7%
	Unemployed	43.3%
Income:	Less than \$15,000	10.5%
	\$15,000-24,999	11.9%
	\$25,000-49,999	29.9%
	\$50,000-74,999	20.9%
	\$75,000-99,999	12.9%
	\$100,000-199,999	11.4%
	More than \$200,000	2.4%
Educational Attainment:	Some High School	8.4%
	High School Diploma	38.8%
	GED	3.5%
	Vocational/Tech/Training Program Cert.	6.1%
	Associate's Degree	9.3%
	Bachelor's Degree	21.1%
	Master's Degree	9.1%
	Doctorate Degree	2.3%
	Professional Degree	0.9%
	Other	0.5%
High School Attended:	Public	92.8%
	Private	6.7%
	Homeschooled	0.6%
Currently Enrolled in School:		8.1%
Have a Computer at Home:		77.3%
Have Internet Access at Home:		70.6%

<sup>1</sup> A median is defined as the value that has an equal number of people above and below it.

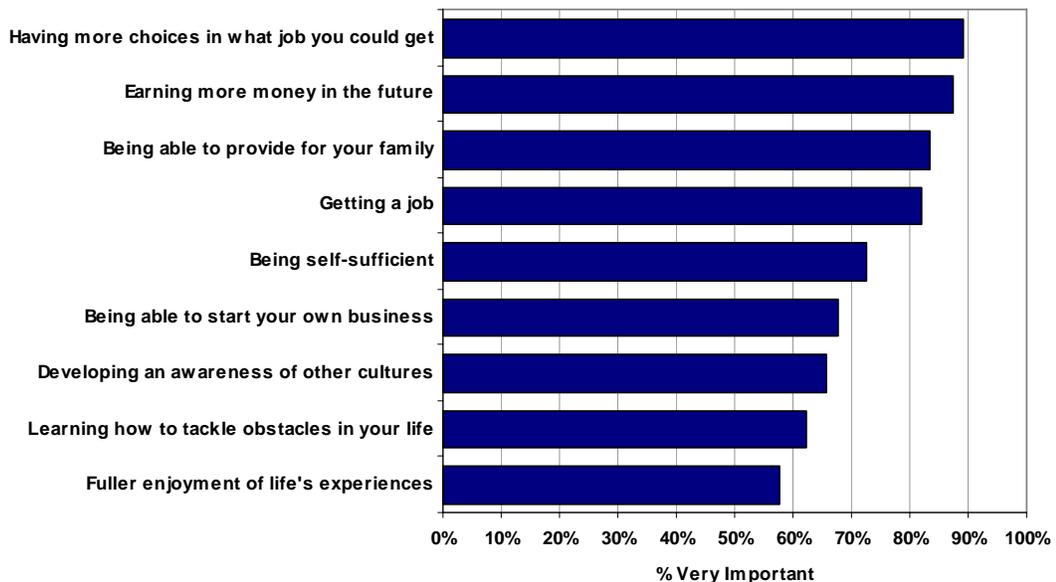
### III. Importance of Education to Tennesseans

Many Tennesseans acknowledge the importance of education, especially with respect to job opportunities and financial security, though a disturbingly large group place little value on education. More than 80 percent believe that education is “very important” to getting a job, having more career choices, earning more money, and providing for their families, and more than 70 percent believe education is very important to self-sufficiency (see Table 2 and Figure 1). Fewer respondents (though still more than half) say that education is very important to the more general concepts of developing cultural awareness, tackling life’s obstacles, and enjoying life’s experiences.

**Table 2: Importance of Education**

How important is education to . . .	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
having more choices in what job you could get?	89.0%	9.2%	1.8%
earning more money in the future?	87.5%	11.1%	1.4%
being able to provide for your family?	83.5%	15.1%	1.4%
getting a job?	81.9%	16.3%	1.9%
being self-sufficient?	72.6%	24.1%	3.3%
being able to start your own business?	67.8%	26.4%	5.8%
developing an awareness of other cultures?	65.6%	29.2%	5.3%
learning how to tackle obstacles in your life?	62.2%	31.9%	5.9%
fuller enjoyment of life’s experiences?	57.7%	34.8%	7.5%

**Figure 1: Percent Who Believe Education Is Very Important to ...**



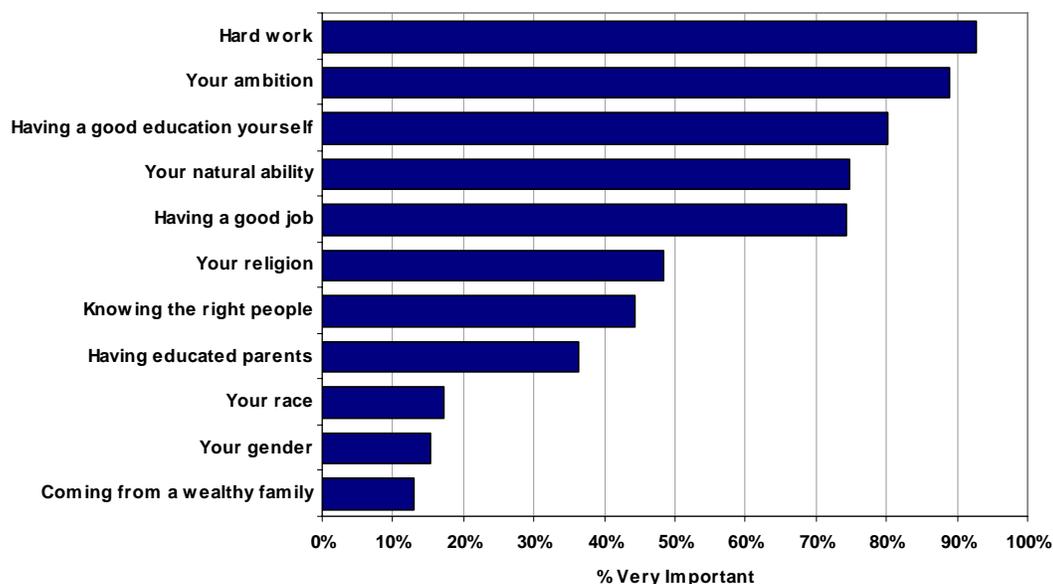
### III. Importance of Education to Tennesseans, cont.

Adult Tennesseans rank education *after* hard work and ambition among factors that respondents say help them reach their goals in life, with more than 80 percent considering it very important and 3 percent feel that education is not important at all (see Table 3 and Figure 2). About one-third of Tennesseans say that having educated parents is also a very important factor.

**Table 3: Factors Important to Achieving Goals**

How important are the following factors in helping you reach your goals in life?	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
hard work	92.8%	6.3%	1.0%
your ambition	89.0%	9.4%	1.6%
having a good education yourself	80.1%	17.4%	2.6%
your natural ability	74.8%	23.5%	1.7%
having a good job	74.4%	22.3%	3.3%
your religion	48.3%	22.0%	29.8%
knowing the right people	44.3%	42.6%	13.1%
having educated parents	36.4%	39.5%	24.0%
your race	17.3%	25.0%	57.7%
your gender	15.3%	29.9%	54.8%
coming from a wealthy family	13.0%	27.5%	59.5%

**Figure 2: Percent Who Believe These Factors Are Very Important to Achieving Life's Goals**



### III. Importance of Education to Tennesseans, cont.

The perceived importance of these factors is not uniform across Tennessee's population. There are large differences among some demographic groups. For one's own education, Tennesseans with a high school diploma or less are more than twice as likely as those with some post-secondary education to say their education is "not important" in reaching life's goals (though all percentages were quite low). A similar disparity can be found between lower income respondents and those with higher incomes, and between the older and younger respondents (see Table 4).

There are also large differences in the importance of having educated parents, with the opinions being somewhat reversed. Those that are older, have less education, and lower incomes tend to find more importance in having educated parents than their counterparts (see Table 5 and Figure 3).

**Table 4: Importance of Own Education to Achieving Life's Goals by Educational Attainment, Income, and Age**

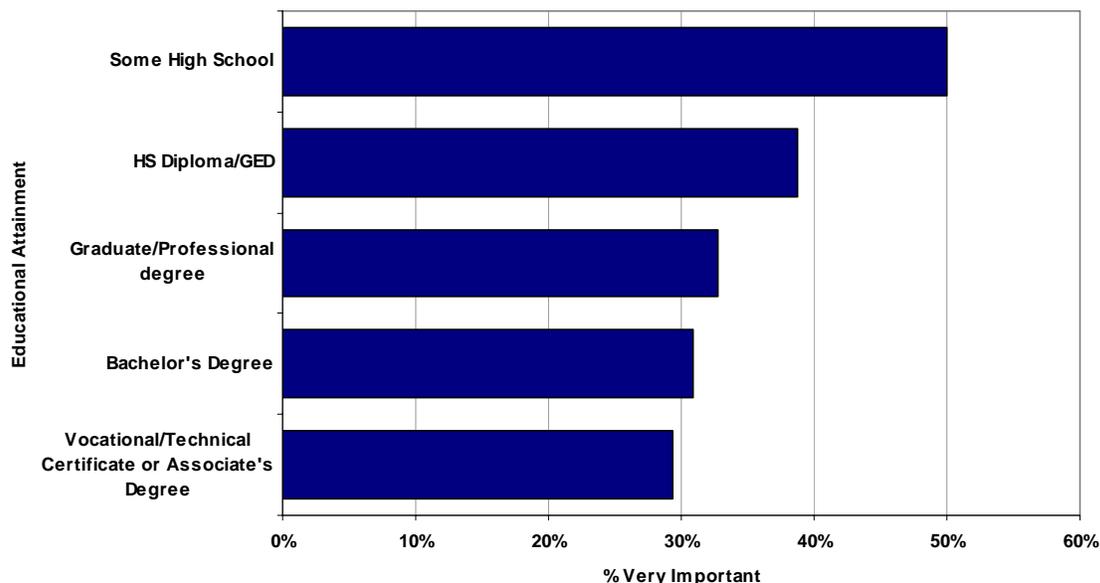
	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
<b>Educational Attainment of Respondent</b>			
Some High School	76.0%	18.8%	5.2%
HS Diploma/GED	77.9%	18.8%	3.3%
Vocational/Technical Certificate or Associate's Degree	82.4%	16.1%	1.5%
Bachelor's Degree	80.8%	18.0%	1.2%
Graduate/Professional degree	88.3%	11.1%	0.7%
<b>Income</b>			
Less than \$15,000	84.3%	13.0%	2.7%
\$15,000-24,999	80.6%	15.6%	3.9%
\$25,000-49,999	77.6%	19.5%	3.0%
\$50,000-74,999	76.7%	21.9%	1.4%
\$75,000-99,999	81.6%	17.2%	1.2%
\$100,000-199,999	83.4%	14.3%	2.2%
More than \$200,000	76.3%	22.5%	1.2%
<b>Age</b>			
19-24	84.6%	14.5%	0.9%
25-39	75.3%	21.9%	2.8%
40-64	80.1%	17.8%	2.1%
65+	82.2%	13.6%	4.2%

### III. Importance of Education to Tennesseans, cont.

**Table 5: Importance of Educated Parents to Achieving Life's Goals by Educational Attainment, Income, and Age**

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
<b>Educational Attainment</b>			
Some High School	50.0%	27.7%	22.4%
HS Diploma/GED	38.7%	37.2%	24.2%
Vocational/Technical Certificate or Associate's Degree	29.4%	45.4%	25.2%
Bachelor's Degree	30.9%	44.5%	24.5%
Graduate/Professional degree	32.8%	44.8%	22.4%
<b>Income</b>			
Less than \$15,000	41.8%	32.0%	26.2%
\$15,000-24,999	46.4%	32.8%	20.9%
\$25,000-49,999	34.1%	43.5%	22.3%
\$50,000-74,999	28.2%	46.0%	25.9%
\$75,000-99,999	29.4%	45.9%	24.7%
\$100,000-199,999	31.2%	42.6%	26.2%
More than \$200,000	35.0%	40.4%	24.6%
<b>Age</b>			
19-24	33.6%	40.3%	26.1%
25-39	30.3%	44.7%	25.0%
40-64	37.5%	37.7%	24.8%
65+	41.9%	38.8%	19.7%

**Figure 3: Percent Who Believe Having Educated Parents Is Very Important to Achieving Life's Goals, by Educational Attainment**



### III. Importance of Education to Tennesseans, cont.

Differences are also found in the importance that other factors play in achieving life's goals, with lower income Tennesseans finding family wealth, race, gender, and religion more important than those with higher incomes. The pattern that emerges from these responses is that those with lower incomes and less education tend to find factors that are out of their control, such as their parents' education and family wealth (see Table 6) to be more important in reaching their goals than those with higher incomes and educational attainment.

**Table 6: Importance of Family Wealth to Achieving Life's Goals  
by Educational Attainment and Income**

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
<b>Educational Attainment</b>			
Some High School	20.4%	21.5%	58.2%
HS Diploma/GED	15.4%	27.5%	57.1%
Vocational/Technical Certificate or Associate's Degree	10.2%	24.5%	65.4%
Bachelor's Degree	7.4%	32.0%	60.6%
Graduate/Professional degree	8.9%	30.5%	60.7%
<b>Income</b>			
Less than \$15,000	16.4%	26.0%	57.7%
\$15,000-24,999	16.0%	21.5%	62.5%
\$25,000-49,999	13.1%	28.5%	58.5%
\$50,000-74,999	11.2%	28.1%	60.7%
\$75,000-99,999	9.7%	29.7%	60.7%
\$100,000-199,999	10.2%	28.4%	61.4%
More than \$200,000	6.4%	33.6%	59.9%

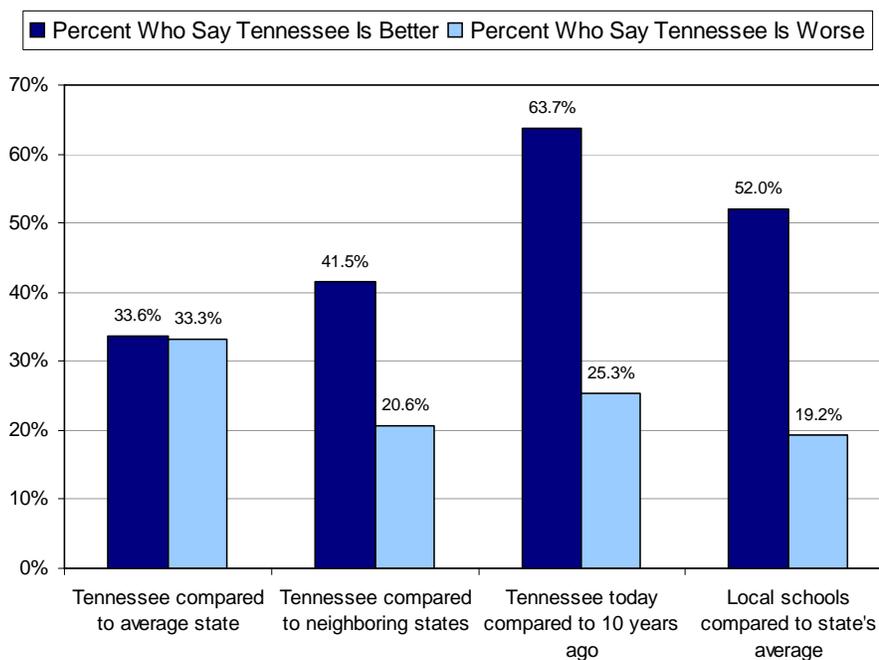
## IV. Quality of Education in Tennessee

Tennesseans are split almost evenly between believing that Tennessee’s public educational system provides better, worse, or the same quality of education as the average state (see Table 7 and Figure 4). There is a slightly stronger percentage that believes that Tennessee compares favorably with neighboring states (as opposed to the average state), with more than 40 percent responding that Tennessee is better and less than 21 percent saying that Tennessee is worse. Tennesseans are also generally positive about the direction that public education in the state is heading, with nearly two-thirds saying that the quality of education for Tennessee children is better than it was ten years ago. Interestingly, Tennesseans by and large feel that their local schools are better than the state average, with 52 percent responding “better” and only 19 percent indicating they feel that their local school is worse than the state average.

**Table 7: Quality of Tennessee Public Education**

	Better	The same	Worse
Tennessee compared to average state	33.6%	33.2%	33.3%
Tennessee compared to neighboring states	41.5%	38.0%	20.6%
Tennessee today compared to 10 years ago	63.7%	10.9%	25.3%
Local schools compared to state's average	52.0%	28.8%	19.2%

**Figure 4: Quality of Tennessee Public Education**



## IV. Quality of Education in Tennessee, cont.

Responses to all of these questions are sharply divided by several demographics. Table 8 shows that Tennesseans with more education, higher incomes, and that attended a private high school are far more likely to respond negatively about the quality of education in Tennessee compared to the average state (see also Figures 5 and 6). Thus, only about 20 percent of people with graduate or professional education believe Tennessee's schools are as good as the national average, but nearly one half of people who have some high school education (but no degree) believe the state's education is better. Additionally, young Tennesseans (between 19 and 25) are more positive about Tennessee's educational system than those 25 years and older, with only 20 percent responding that education in Tennessee is worse than in the average state.

Tennesseans believe that the state educational system compares more favorably to neighboring states than to the nation as a whole, but the breakdown across demographic groups is very similar to the comparison with the average state (see Table 9). People in the higher income and education categories tend to be considerably more negative about education in Tennessee compared to neighboring states. Additionally, East Tennessee residents find Tennessee considerably less

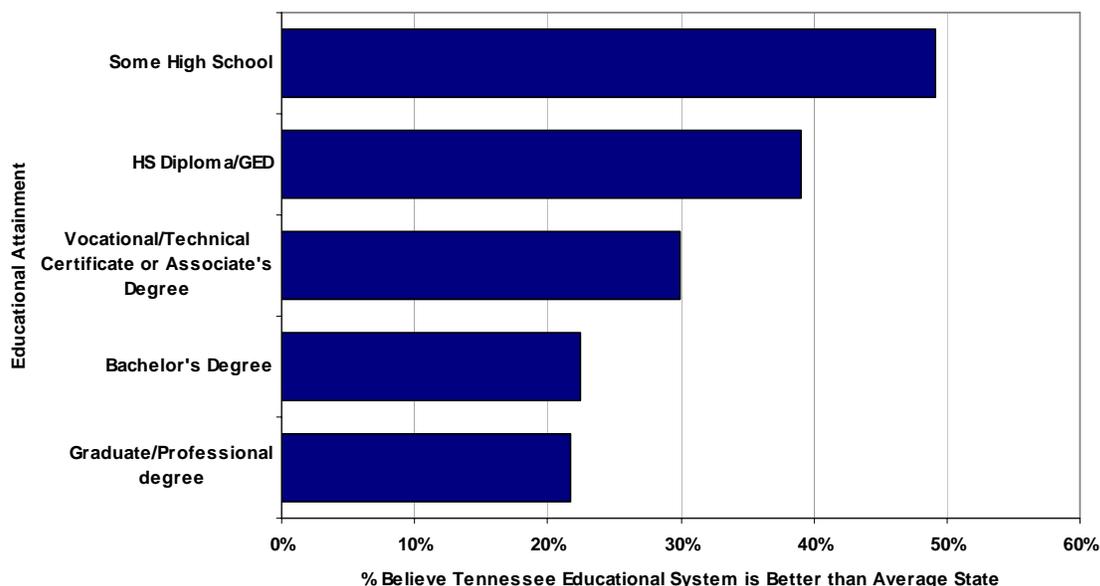
**Table 8: Tennessee's Educational System Compared to Average State**

	Better	The same	Worse
<b>Educational Attainment</b>			
Some High School	49.2%	27.3%	23.5%
HS Diploma/GED	39.1%	32.9%	28.0%
Vocational/Technical Certificate or Associate's Degree	29.9%	32.5%	37.7%
Bachelor's Degree	22.4%	36.3%	41.4%
Graduate/Professional degree	21.7%	35.0%	43.4%
<b>Income</b>			
Less than \$15,000	41.6%	28.8%	29.5%
\$15,000-24,999	40.0%	33.5%	26.5%
\$25,000-49,999	34.2%	36.8%	29.0%
\$50,000-74,999	29.4%	35.0%	35.6%
\$75,000-99,999	28.3%	35.9%	35.9%
\$100,000-199,999	16.9%	33.3%	49.8%
More than \$200,000	14.1%	31.6%	54.4%
<b>Age</b>			
19-24	39.9%	39.9%	20.2%
25-39	29.8%	36.7%	33.5%
40-64	33.4%	31.2%	35.3%
65+	35.0%	30.7%	34.3%
<b>High School Attended</b>			
Public	34.0%	33.3%	32.7%
Private	26.0%	30.5%	43.5%

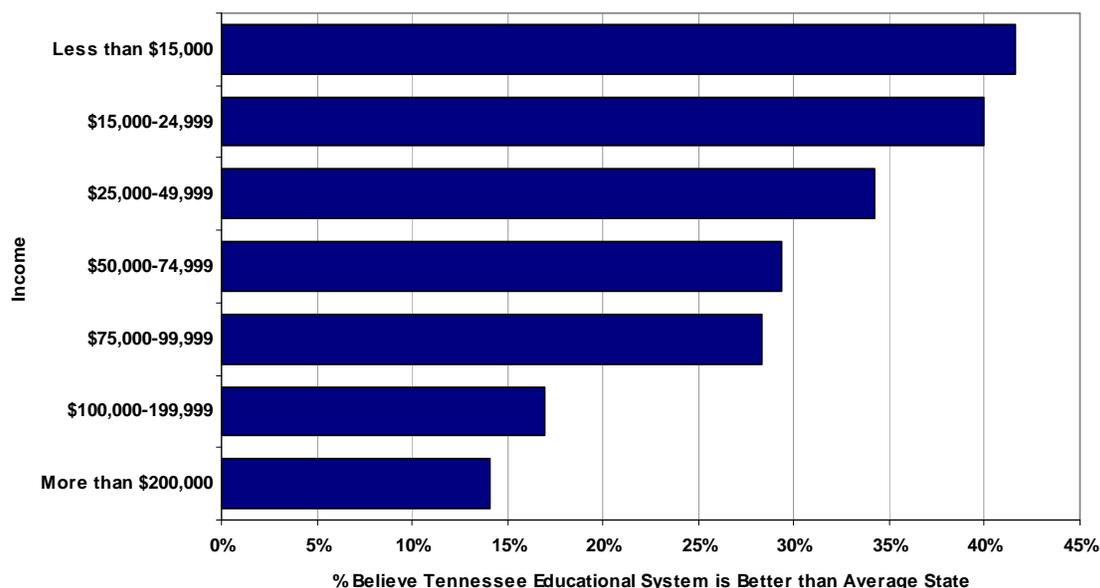
## IV. Quality of Education in Tennessee, cont.

favorable than those in Middle and West Tennessee, with 27 percent saying that Tennessee is worse than its neighbors (compared to just 17 percent for Middle Tennessee and 16 percent for West Tennessee). This could be because East Tennessee is adjacent to North Carolina and Georgia, which the public may perceive to have good educational systems, and Middle and West Tennessee have closer proximity to Mississippi and Arkansas, of which public perception is not as high.

**Figure 5: Percent Who Believe Tennessee's Educational System Is Better Compared to the Average State, by Educational Attainment**



**Figure 6: Percent Who Believe Tennessee's Educational System Is Better Compared to the Average State, by Income**



## IV. Quality of Education in Tennessee, cont.

**Table 9: Tennessee Educational System Compared to Neighboring States**

	Better	The same	Worse
<b>Educational Attainment</b>			
Some High School	47.7%	33.6%	18.7%
HS Diploma/GED	44.8%	34.5%	20.7%
Vocational/Technical Certificate or Associate's Degree	41.5%	35.1%	23.3%
Bachelor's Degree	32.6%	44.8%	22.6%
Graduate/Professional degree	39.3%	46.9%	13.8%
<b>Income</b>			
Less than \$15,000	47.0%	31.5%	21.5%
\$15,000-24,999	44.6%	38.0%	17.4%
\$25,000-49,999	41.7%	39.5%	18.9%
\$50,000-74,999	40.4%	38.2%	21.4%
\$75,000-99,999	40.4%	41.5%	18.2%
\$100,000-199,999	32.9%	45.3%	21.9%
More than \$200,000	33.1%	52.9%	14.0%
<b>Grand Division</b>			
East Tennessee	37.7%	35.0%	27.3%
Middle Tennessee	41.3%	41.5%	17.2%
West Tennessee	46.8%	37.6%	15.5%

## IV. Quality of Education in Tennessee, cont.

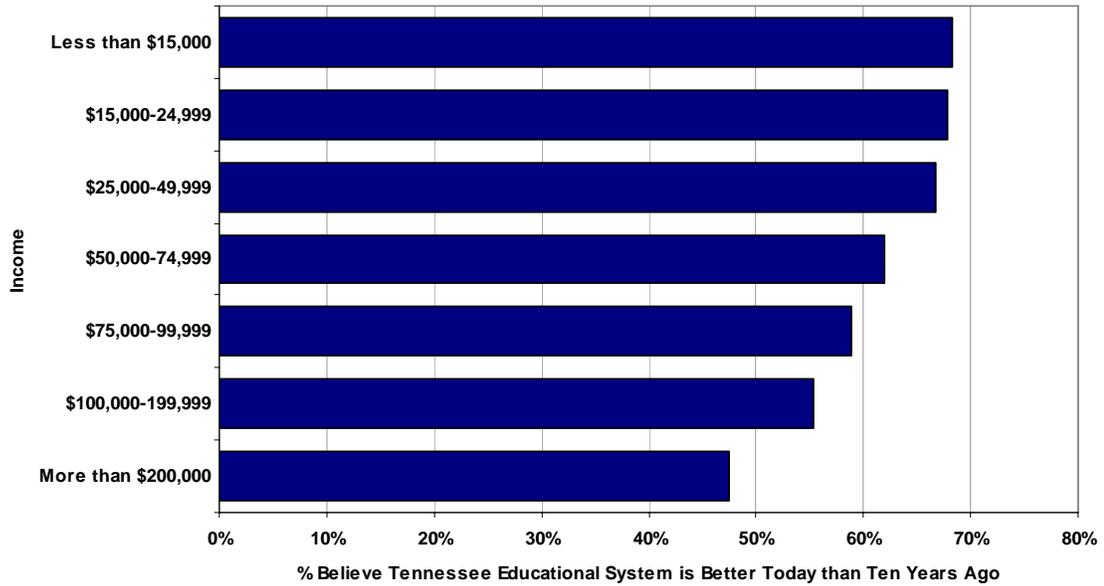
While Tennesseans are generally positive about the direction the Tennessee public education system is going, opinions are significantly different across various demographic groups (see Table 10 and Figure 7). Respondents with higher incomes and more education tend to be considerably less positive, though most still believe the system has improved in the last ten years. Younger people and those who attended public high schools tend to be more positive as well. West Tennesseans tend to be slightly less positive than those in East and Middle Tennessee with only 57 percent seeing improvement compared to nearly two thirds in East and Middle Tennessee.

**Table 10: Tennessee's Education System Today Compared to Ten Years Ago**

	Better	The same	Worse
<b>Educational Attainment</b>			
Some High School	67.0%	14.2%	18.8%
HS Diploma/GED	67.4%	9.6%	23.1%
Vocational/Technical Certificate or Associate's Degree	68.4%	8.7%	22.9%
Bachelor's Degree	51.7%	13.2%	35.2%
Graduate/Professional degree	58.9%	12.2%	28.9%
<b>Income</b>			
Less than \$15,000	68.3%	10.2%	21.5%
\$15,000-24,999	67.8%	8.4%	23.9%
\$25,000-49,999	66.7%	9.9%	23.4%
\$50,000-74,999	61.9%	12.5%	25.7%
\$75,000-99,999	58.9%	11.3%	29.8%
\$100,000-199,999	55.4%	13.7%	30.9%
More than \$200,000	47.4%	17.4%	35.1%
<b>Age</b>			
19-24	73.3%	8.7%	18.0%
25-39	66.6%	9.1%	24.4%
40-64	61.8%	12.1%	26.1%
65+	62.1%	10.3%	27.7%
<b>High School Attended</b>			
Public	64.5%	10.7%	24.8%
Private	54.4%	13.1%	32.6%
<b>Grand Division</b>			
East Tennessee	65.7%	12.0%	22.3%
Middle Tennessee	67.2%	10.6%	22.3%
West Tennessee	56.6%	10.0%	33.4%

#### IV. Quality of Education in Tennessee, cont.

**Figure 7: Percent Who Believe Tennessee's Education System Is Better Than It Was Ten Years Ago, by Income**



## IV. Quality of Education in Tennessee, cont.

The demographic patterns tend to go in the opposite direction when respondents' local schools are compared with others in the state. Higher income and better educated respondents are more likely to say their local schools are better than the state average, although less likely to say that Tennessee schools are better than neighboring states. On the other hand, West Tennesseans also tend to be less positive about their local schools, with nearly one-fourth saying their local schools are worse than the state average (see Table 11). Similarly, younger Tennesseans and those with less education and lower incomes are less likely to respond that their local schools are better than the state's average school.

**Table 11: Local Schools Compared to State Average**

	Better	The same	Worse
<b>Educational Attainment</b>			
Some High School	48.4%	35.9%	15.8%
HS Diploma/GED	50.0%	30.7%	19.3%
Vocational/Technical Certificate or Associate's Degree	51.9%	27.5%	20.6%
Bachelor's Degree	51.4%	26.4%	22.3%
Graduate/Professional degree	65.8%	20.8%	13.4%
<b>Income</b>			
Less than \$15,000	51.1%	33.4%	15.5%
\$15,000-24,999	45.5%	30.4%	24.1%
\$25,000-49,999	51.0%	31.8%	17.2%
\$50,000-74,999	49.6%	29.2%	21.2%
\$75,000-99,999	63.0%	19.9%	17.1%
\$100,000-199,999	58.5%	19.9%	21.7%
More than \$200,000	60.0%	16.8%	23.2%
<b>Age</b>			
19-24	46.2%	27.7%	26.1%
25-39	48.6%	27.7%	23.7%
40-64	52.4%	28.4%	19.2%
65+	57.1%	30.9%	12.0%
<b>High School Attended</b>			
Public	51.4%	29.4%	19.1%
Private	62.4%	19.2%	18.5%
<b>Grand Division</b>			
East Tennessee	52.2%	29.3%	18.5%
Middle Tennessee	53.9%	30.1%	16.0%
West Tennessee	49.2%	26.5%	24.3%

## IV. Quality of Education in Tennessee, cont.

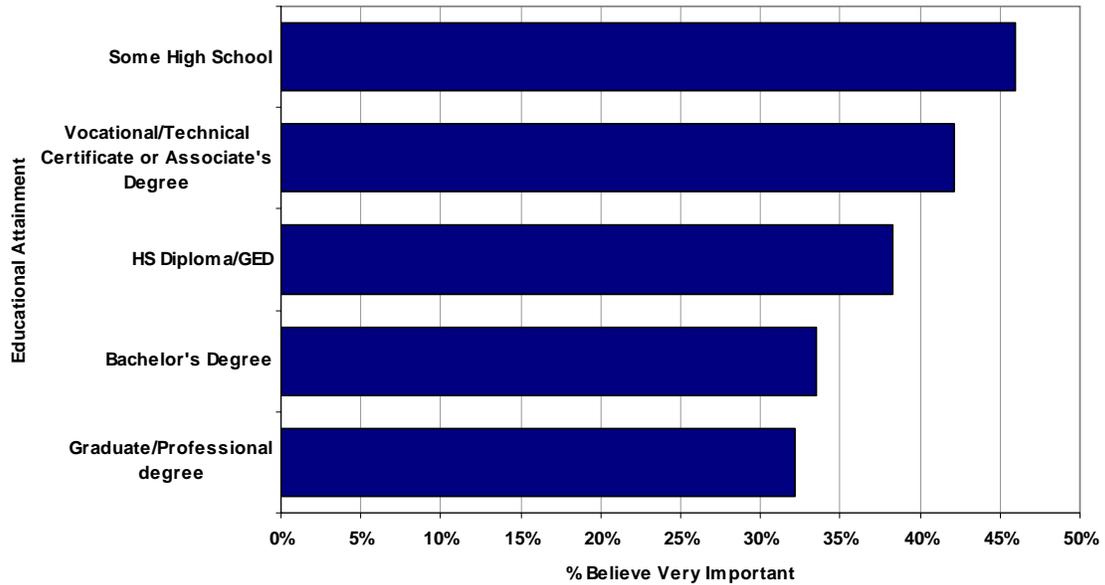
About 58 percent say that the quality of local schools was “somewhat important” or “very important” in their decision on where to live, while 42 percent say it was not a factor in their decision. Respondents with children under 19 were more likely to consider the local schools in their decision, with only 31 percent saying it was not a factor. The responses were not consistent across demographics, as those with higher incomes and more education were less likely to consider it important (see Table 12 and Figure 8). Perhaps lower income households show their preference for better schools by their housing choices and higher income households are more likely to have private school alternatives. Differences also exist between regions, age groups, and sexes, as well as between those who attended public and private high schools.

**Table 12: Importance of Local School Quality on Decision to Live There**

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
<b>Educational Attainment</b>			
Some High School	46.0%	19.6%	34.4%
HS Diploma/GED	38.3%	19.7%	42.1%
Vocational/Technical Certificate or Associate's Degree	42.1%	17.0%	40.9%
Bachelor's Degree	33.5%	22.7%	43.8%
Graduate/Professional degree	32.2%	20.3%	47.6%
<b>Income</b>			
Less than \$15,000	37.1%	20.5%	42.4%
\$15,000-24,999	39.2%	21.3%	39.5%
\$25,000-49,999	37.6%	20.8%	41.6%
\$50,000-74,999	34.4%	22.5%	43.1%
\$75,000-99,999	39.5%	18.5%	42.0%
\$100,000-199,999	44.8%	13.2%	42.0%
More than \$200,000	31.6%	17.3%	51.1%
<b>Sex</b>			
Male	31.8%	21.7%	46.6%
Female	43.8%	18.1%	38.2%
<b>Age</b>			
19-24	34.3%	33.0%	32.7%
25-39	39.3%	21.8%	38.9%
40-64	38.2%	18.4%	43.4%
65+	38.1%	16.0%	45.9%
<b>High School Attended</b>			
Public	38.6%	20.0%	41.4%
Private	33.1%	16.5%	50.5%
<b>Grand Division</b>			
East Tennessee	65.7%	12.0%	22.3%
Middle Tennessee	67.2%	10.6%	22.3%
West Tennessee	56.6%	10.0%	33.4%

## IV. Quality of Education in Tennessee, cont.

**Figure 8: Percent Who Believe that Local School Quality Is Very Important to Their Decision on Where to Live**



## IV. Quality of Education in Tennessee, cont.

Most Tennesseans, if given a choice to improve one area of the educational system, would choose elementary, middle, and high schools, with nearly 78 percent choosing one of the three (see Table 13). The next area of improvement Tennesseans look to is in Pre-K and kindergarten programs, with almost 15 percent saying they would emphasize those areas for improvement first; these responses were less common from younger Tennesseans and those with less education. Only 7 percent choose higher education (vocational and technical programs or college) as the primary area for improvement.

**Table 13: Most Important Area Needing Improvement in Tennessee Education**

	Pre-K	Kinder- garten	1st-5th	6th-8th	9th-12th	Technical/ Vocational	College
<b>Overall</b>	8.8%	5.8%	29.7%	20.3%	28.7%	3.3%	3.5%
<b>Educational Attainment</b>							
Some High School	6.3%	7.2%	27.4%	20.9%	27.0%	4.0%	7.2%
HS Diploma/GED	8.4%	7.3%	26.3%	21.7%	29.4%	3.6%	3.3%
Vocational/Technical Certificate or Associate's Degree	9.8%	3.4%	28.2%	19.8%	31.0%	3.9%	3.8%
Bachelor's Degree	7.4%	4.8%	34.6%	20.1%	28.8%	2.8%	1.5%
Graduate/Professional degree	13.6%	2.7%	39.7%	14.1%	24.9%	1.9%	3.1%
<b>Income</b>							
Less than \$15,000	7.4%	8.5%	25.9%	21.6%	29.5%	3.7%	3.2%
\$15,000-24,999	10.3%	6.3%	24.8%	23.0%	26.0%	3.4%	6.4%
\$25,000-49,999	9.7%	6.3%	29.1%	20.9%	27.7%	3.2%	3.1%
\$50,000-74,999	8.3%	4.4%	36.0%	20.5%	24.9%	3.2%	2.7%
\$75,000-99,999	10.8%	3.1%	33.0%	15.3%	31.5%	3.7%	2.6%
\$100,000-199,999	8.0%	3.4%	35.0%	18.9%	31.5%	1.8%	1.4%
More than \$200,000	1.3%	4.3%	32.1%	24.3%	28.8%	5.7%	3.5%
<b>Sex</b>							
Male	6.2%	4.6%	29.4%	20.7%	31.3%	3.9%	3.9%
Female	11.1%	6.8%	30.0%	19.8%	26.3%	2.8%	3.1%
<b>Age</b>							
19-24	3.6%	2.3%	17.1%	23.0%	48.2%	1.2%	4.7%
25-39	9.6%	4.8%	27.3%	18.5%	35.1%	2.2%	2.4%
40-64	9.3%	5.3%	31.8%	20.3%	29.0%	4.2%	3.2%
65+	9.2%	9.7%	33.5%	20.1%	19.8%	3.1%	4.5%
<b>High School Attended</b>							
Public	8.9%	5.9%	29.2%	20.6%	28.6%	3.3%	3.5%
Private	7.3%	4.2%	36.6%	13.3%	32.3%	4.0%	2.2%

## IV. Quality of Education in Tennessee, cont.

After respondents identified one area of Tennessee's education system on which to focus improvements, they were asked to talk about what the state could do to improve it. Of the 2,566 people who were willing (and had time) to talk about that issue, 167 of them stated that they did not know. The remaining responses were analyzed and categorized based on recurring issues. These categories, as well as the overall percentage of responses that fell into them, are outlined in Table 14.

**Table 14: Issue Categories Prevalent in Responses to  
"What Could the State Do to Improve Its Education System?"**

<b>Issue Category</b>	<b>Percent of All Responses</b>	<b>Description</b>
Policy/Administration Issues	33.2	Funding Increase funding; make funding equal in all schools across the state Increase funding on research, evaluation of programs and schools Increase funding on equipment, computers, textbooks, and facilities Class size Increase teacher-to-student ratio More one-on-one time between teachers and students Access to Pre-K programs Standardized testing for students and teachers No Child Left Behind Dress codes Zero tolerance policies Require attendance School voucher program Busing Increase use of volunteers Provide additional safety and protection for teachers and students
Teacher Issues	29.8	Increase pay for teachers Hire more caring teachers Hire better qualified teachers Increase training for teachers Add teachers aides and volunteers to assist teachers Do background checks on teachers before hiring
Student Issues	16.0	Disciplining students in schools Offer additional levels of courses for all students based on their ability Encourage students to become lifelong learners Instill the value of education in students Add tutors -- in school and after-school for students in all subjects Add counselors to help understand and meet needs of troubled students
Curricular Issues	15.3	Back to the basics Teach diversity in philosophy and languages Athletic programs
Parent and Family Issues	4.5	Investigate and consider family-life of individual students Educate the parents Increase parental involvement Parents and teachers work together
Society and Religion	1.2	Teach morality Hire Christian teachers Bring God/Christianity back into schools

#### IV. Quality of Education in Tennessee, cont.

While there appeared to be a general consensus about the issues in the state's education system that Tennesseans feel should be addressed, there was rarely agreement on how to address or fix them. In the rare cases where there was a consensus (for instance, respondents said to *increase*—not reduce—funding, to *increase*—not decrease—the teacher-to-student ratio, and to pay teachers more—not *less*), the direction of consensus is reported in the table. In most cases, however, competing views on the issue emerged. For instance, some respondents advocate additional standardized testing and the regulations associated with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) while others reported that both standardized testing and NCLB should be eliminated.

Despite the fact that more Tennesseans would choose to improve elementary, middle, and high school before any other level, in these open-ended questions, kindergarten received the most attention, with over 800 specific suggestions. Concerns about parent and family involvement and/or support as well as society and religion arose more often in the respondents who focused on high schools than on any other grade level. In all grade-levels, responses relating to curricular issues most often included a cry for “back to the basics” of reading, math, and writing (in that order). Reading was identified 28.3 percent of the time as a subject matter on which to focus, math 24.0 percent, writing and grammar 14.9 percent. Those top three subjects were followed by science (6.4 percent) and a variety of others, including foreign language, diversity, art, communication skills, music, and physical education.

To better illustrate the issues, a sample of respondents' comments follows:

- Keep standard[s] high but keep classroom [with] small student to teacher ratio. Provide teachers as much support with materials. Parent and teacher communication is very important.
- I think they need more highly qualified, caring teachers who... can take the time to help their students if they are struggling in their subject matter.
- Focus more on reading/writing/math - back to the old school type of learning - back to basics.
- The public education is becoming a middle of the road education instead of supporting everyone to the best of their abilities.

In a different question, Tennesseans with a high school education or less who reported that they were either somewhat or very dissatisfied with their kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade education cited reasons similar to the predominate issues identified above: they needed more encouragement from their families and teachers, and they needed more one-on-one learning time with their teachers. Other Tennesseans reported that they were just not ready to progress to the next grade and expressed frustration with being advanced through grades in school when they did not understand the material (precisely stated by one respondent as “they should have held me back”).

## IV. Quality of Education in Tennessee, cont.

A clear majority of Tennesseans (about 80 percent) support increasing opportunities for young people to go to college, but there are some differences of opinion among demographic groups (though high percentages of all groups believe opportunities should be expanded). Those who have a college education tend to be more likely to say opportunities do not need to be increased (see Table 15). Differences also exist across age groups, with the youngest groups being more likely to want increased opportunity. Public high school attendees are also more likely to want opportunities increased than private school attendees.

**Table 15: Increasing College Opportunities**

	Increased	Kept the same	Decreased
<b>Educational Attainment</b>			
Some High School	78.7%	16.2%	5.1%
HS Diploma/GED	81.7%	15.8%	2.5%
Vocational/Technical Certificate or Associate's Degree	83.3%	14.9%	1.8%
Bachelor's Degree	74.4%	23.2%	2.5%
Graduate/Professional degree	75.8%	22.5%	1.7%
<b>Age</b>			
19-24	83.7%	13.8%	2.5%
25-39	81.2%	16.2%	2.6%
40-64	79.8%	18.1%	2.1%
65+	75.4%	21.1%	3.5%
<b>High School Attended</b>			
Public	80.1%	17.5%	2.4%
Private	70.9%	25.0%	4.1%

## V. Adult Tennesseans Currently Enrolled in School

About 8 percent of respondents are currently enrolled in school, with most pursuing an associate's, bachelor's, or master's degree in a public institution (see Table 16 below). Nearly all plan to finish the degree, and more than half plan to continue their education after they finish their current degree program. Their average age is 31 and over half (53.1 percent) of them are over the age of 26.<sup>2,3</sup>

**Table 16: Adult Tennesseans Currently Enrolled in School**

<b>Current degree pursuit</b>	
High School Diploma	6.8%
GED	2.3%
Vocational/Tech/Training Program Cert.	4.3%
Associate's Degree	15.7%
Bachelor's Degree	35.1%
Master's Degree	21.7%
Doctorate Degree	3.8%
Professional Degree	4.2%
Other	6.1%
<b>Grades</b>	
mostly As	47.4%
mostly Bs	46.9%
mostly Cs	4.7%
mostly Ds	0.5%
mostly below	0.5%
<b>Attending public or private institution</b>	
public	74.0%
private	26.0%
<b>Plan to finish degree</b>	
yes	97.3%
no	1.7%
haven't decided	1.1%
<b>Plan continue after degree</b>	
yes	58.8%
no	22.5%
haven't decided	16.3%
haven't thought about it	2.4%

<sup>2</sup> In comparison, the average age of students enrolled at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (which includes the Institute of Agriculture, Veterinary Medicine, Space Institute, and Health Science Center) in 2004 was 24 years. Broken down by degree pursuit, the undergraduate student's average age was 21.6 years while graduate and professional students' average age was 30 years.

<sup>3</sup> The wide difference between the median, about age 25, and the average, age 31, arises because the survey excluded individuals under age 19 and because a number of respondents are well over age 35.

## **V. Adult Tennesseans Currently Enrolled in School, cont.**

When asked to discuss what one thing the state could do to help with their current schooling, the primary response involved finances. Although a few respondents simply said “pay for it,” many students requested that financial aid, grants, and scholarships be offered to a broader range of students, that lottery scholarships not be limited to undergraduate programs, and that more financial assistance be made available for items such as books, other non-tuition expenses, and private school tuition. Other respondents discussed instructional issues, requesting more online courses, additional sections of courses (particularly in the summer), and enhanced library services.

In addition to monetary and instructional issues, respondents identified problems encountered by non-traditional students. For instance, respondents requested assistance with transportation, child care, and health insurance. Reflecting a need for help in transitioning to a new environment, students also asked for support groups, tutoring programs, additional counselors and advisors, and a more “welcoming environment” for non-traditional and transfer students.

Finally, some respondents asked the state to cut spending, cut taxes, keep costs and tuition down, and offer tax incentives for education programs.

## VI. Adult Tennesseans' Plans to Continue Their Education

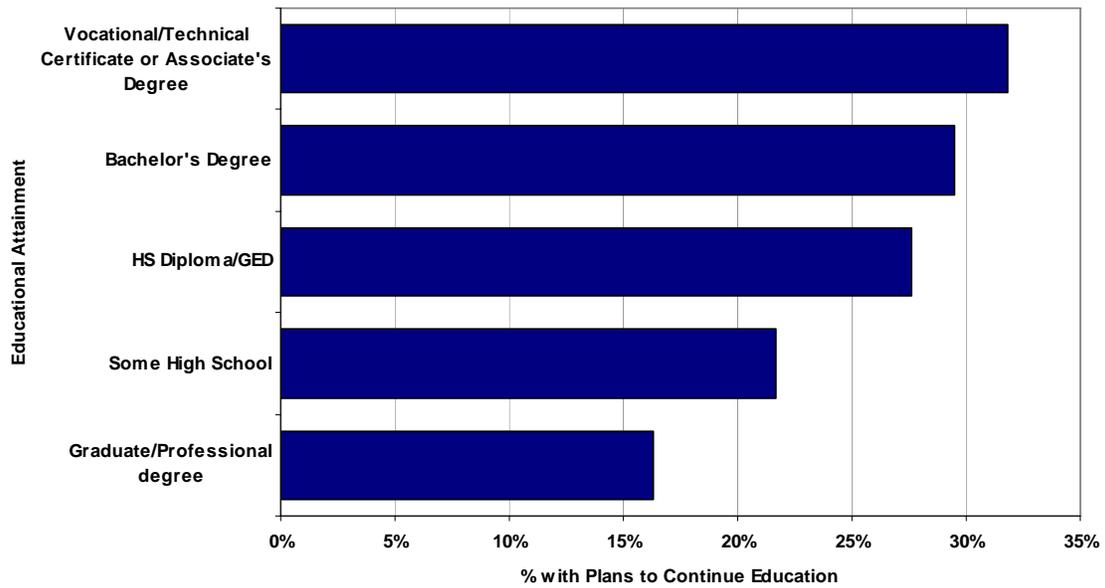
Only 26 percent of adult Tennesseans say they have plans to continue their education in the future. This varies by occupation, as well as income and education level, with both the low ends and high ends less likely to have such plans (see Table 17 and Figures 9 and 10). Those most likely to continue are those with postsecondary degrees but not graduate degrees, and those with incomes between \$15,000 and \$75,000. West Tennesseans are also more likely to plan to continue their education, with nearly one-third planning to do so. Wide differences exist across occupations; armed forces and office and administrative support workers are much more likely to have plans for more education and those in farming and the self-employed are less likely.

**Table 17: Plans to Continue Education**

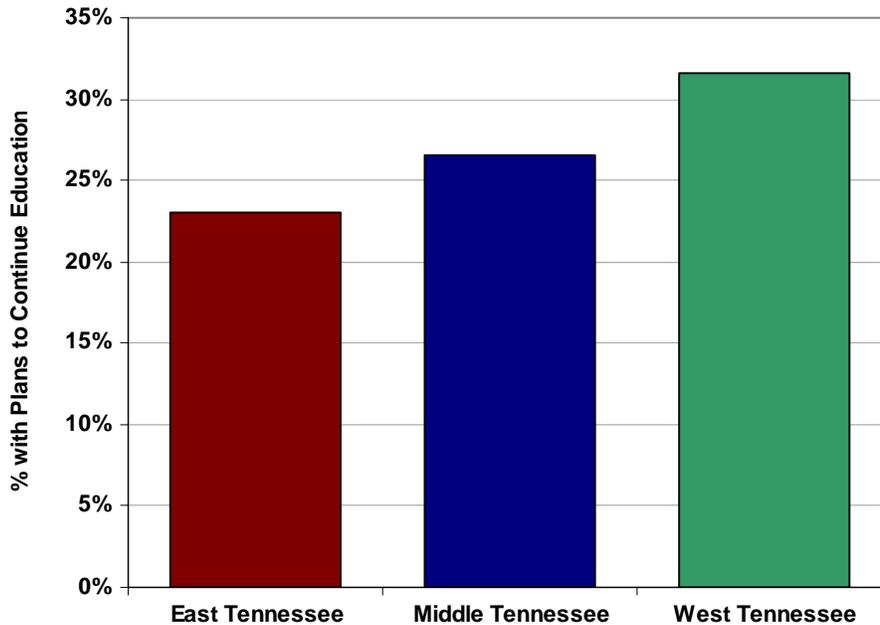
<b>Educational Attainment</b>	<b>Planning to Continue</b>
Some High School	21.7%
HS Diploma/GED	27.6%
Vocational/Technical Certificate or Associate's Degree	31.8%
Bachelor's Degree	29.5%
Graduate/Professional degree	16.3%
<b>Income</b>	
Less than \$15,000	25.1%
\$15,000-24,999	32.0%
\$25,000-49,999	30.9%
\$50,000-74,999	28.4%
\$75,000-99,999	24.7%
\$100,000-199,999	18.7%
More than \$200,000	17.0%
<b>Grand Division</b>	
East Tennessee	23.0%
Middle Tennessee	26.5%
West Tennessee	31.6%
<b>Occupation</b>	
Management or administrator	31.6%
Business, financial and professional services	36.2%
Sales	38.9%
Office and administrative support	43.4%
Farming, fishing and forestry	12.0%
Construction or production	31.9%
Installation, maintenance and repair	29.3%
Teacher	44.4%
Teacher – Post-Secondary	27.6%
Transportation	30.7%
Armed Forces	93.3%
Self-employed	14.5%
Service	50.3%
Other	33.2%

## VI. Adult Tennesseans' Plans to Continue Their Education, cont.

**Figure 9: Adult Tennesseans Who Plan to Continue Their Education, by Educational Attainment**



**Figure 10: Adult Tennesseans Who Plan to Continue Their Education, by Grand Division**



## VII. Tennesseans Not Currently Pursuing Education

More than one-third (34 percent) of Tennesseans have a high school degree, a GED, or less, have not taken any additional coursework, and are not currently pursuing an education. Most attended a public school, and most were at least somewhat satisfied with their education (see Table 18 below and Figure 11). Almost one-third say that their primary reason for not continuing their education was that they started a family. Another 19 percent obtained the job that they wanted without needing more education, and 14 percent said that postsecondary education costs too much.

Similarly, 17 percent of Tennesseans have a high school degree or a GED, took additional coursework but did not complete a degree program, and are not currently pursuing an education. Despite very high satisfaction ratings on the courses they completed, these Tennesseans decided not to pursue the program because they started a family, got the job they wanted without needing any more education, because it costs too much money, or myriad other reasons (see Table 19).

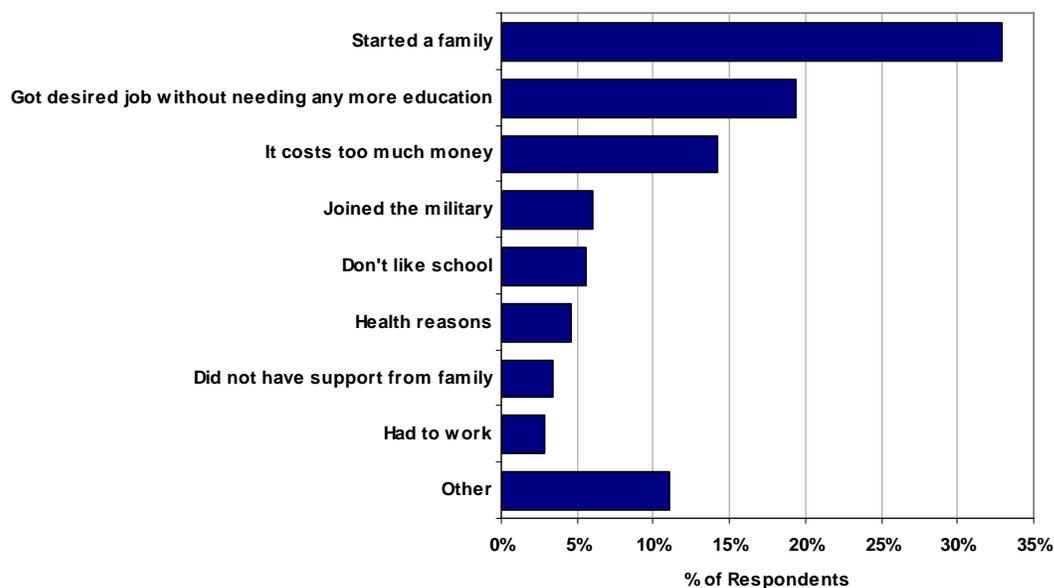
**Table 18: Tennesseans with a High School Degree/GED or Less Who Are Not Currently Pursuing Education**

<b>High School Attended</b>	
public	96.9%
private	3.1%
<b>Grades in K-12</b>	
mostly As	19.9%
mostly Bs	48.4%
mostly Cs	27.3%
mostly Ds	2.7%
mostly below	1.8%
<b>Satisfaction with K-12</b>	
very satisfied	39.2%
somewhat satisfied	43.6%
neither	5.6%
somewhat dissatisfied	7.2%
very dissatisfied	4.5%
<b>Reasons for not continuing education</b>	
started a family	32.9%
got the desired job without needing any more education	19.4%
it costs too much money	14.2%
joined the military	6.0%
don't like school	5.6%
health reasons	4.6%
did not have support from family	3.4%
had to work	2.8%
grades were too low	1.6%
did not have support from K-12 teachers or administrators	1.6%
it takes too much time	1.1%
started own business	0.6%
lack of self confidence	0.5%
no transportation	0.4%
other	5.3%

## VII. Tennesseans Not Currently Pursuing Education, cont.

When these two groups of Tennesseans who are not currently pursuing an education were asked what the state could do to improve their ability to do so, over 30 percent of them requested financial assistance through financial aid, scholarships, grants, loans, or full funding. One out of every nine of them said “nothing,” and one out of every twelve did not know how the state could help them. Almost 7 percent said they were too old or were retired and had no interest in continuing their education. Due in part to the average age of these respondents (age 52), the majority of their requests for help involved special needs of adults or seniors, like recruiting programs geared toward them specifically, child care assistance, online or correspondence courses, transportation assistance, and job-related training (such as technical or vocational programs that would apply directly to their jobs). One respondent specifically said the state should “start a program for people over 40 who didn’t get good schooling” and nine respondents asked the state to teach them to read.

**Figure 11: The Reason that Best Describes Why These Tennesseans Are Not Currently Pursuing Education**



## VII. Tennesseans Not Currently Pursuing Education, cont.

**Table 19: Tennesseans Who Took Courses after High School but Did Not Obtain a Degree and Are Not Currently Pursuing Education**

<b>Institution at which courses were taken</b>	
public	82.80%
private	17.20%
<b>High School Attended</b>	
public	96.5%
private	3.5%
<b>Grades in those courses</b>	
mostly As	26.6%
mostly Bs	52.0%
mostly Cs	18.6%
mostly Ds	2.5%
mostly below	0.3%
<b>Satisfaction with those courses</b>	
Very satisfied	58.6%
Somewhat satisfied	32.7%
Neither	3.0%
Somewhat dissatisfied	2.9%
Very dissatisfied	2.9%
<b>Reasons for not continuing education</b>	
started a family	34.1%
got the desired job without needing any more education	23.2%
it costs too much money	12.6%
health reasons	7.6%
joined the military	5.6%
don't like school	3.9%
it takes too much time	2.9%
did not have support from family	1.2%
had to work	0.8%
started own business	0.8%
grades were too low	0.3%
did not have support from K-12 teachers or administrators	0.3%
no transportation	0.1%
lack of self confidence	0.0%
other	6.9%

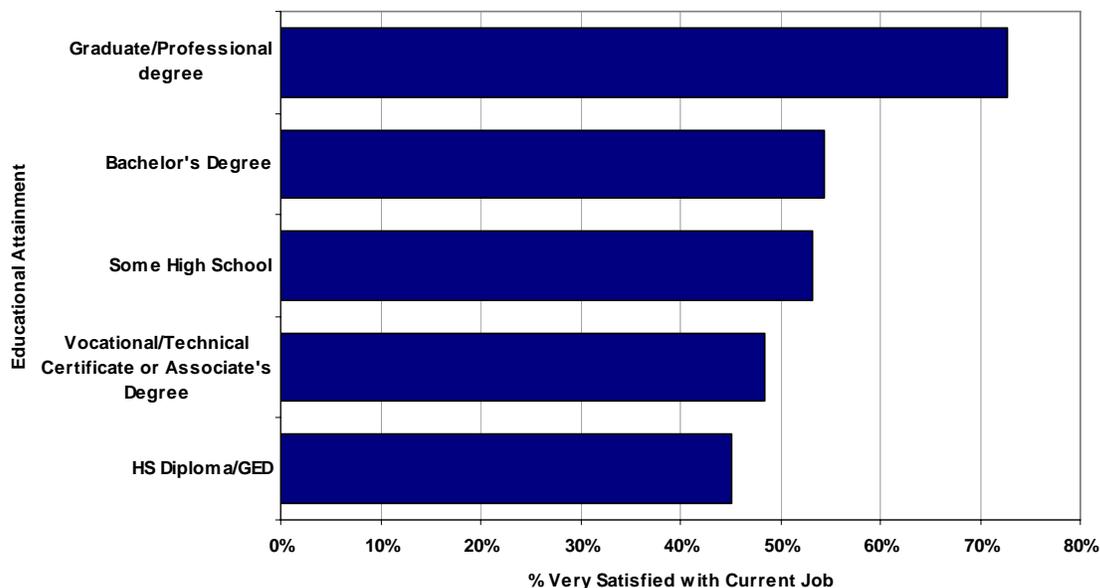
## VIII. Education and Jobs

Tennesseans with college degrees tend more toward being satisfied with their jobs than those with less education (see Table 20 and Figure 12). This is especially true of those with graduate or professional degrees, of whom almost 73 percent say they are “very satisfied” with their job, compared to less than 55 percent of those with a bachelor’s degree.

**Table 20: Job Satisfaction by Educational Attainment**

Educational Attainment	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neither	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Some High School	53.3%	33.1%	9.9%	3.6%	0.0%
HS Diploma/GED	45.1%	38.3%	6.8%	6.1%	3.8%
Vocational/Technical Certificate or Associate's Degree	48.5%	37.7%	4.2%	6.5%	3.2%
Bachelor's Degree	54.4%	32.9%	5.3%	5.9%	1.6%
Graduate/Professional degree	72.8%	17.9%	3.3%	4.5%	1.5%

**Figure 12: Percent of Employed Individuals Who Are Very Satisfied with Their Jobs, by Educational Attainment**



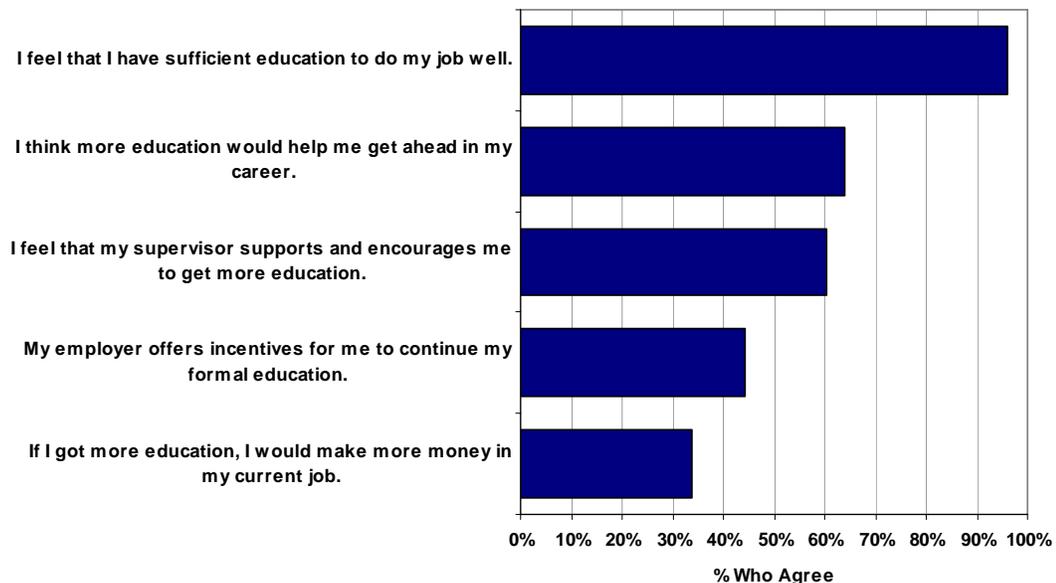
## VIII. Education and Jobs, cont.

Ninety-six percent of Tennesseans say that they have sufficient education to perform their jobs well. Most (60 percent) also feel that they are encouraged by their supervisor to get more education, though only 44 percent have employers that offer incentives to do so (see Table 21 and Figure 13). Note, however, 40 percent do not feel they are encouraged to get more education. Nearly two-thirds think that more education would help them get ahead in their career, though only one-third of Tennesseans say that more education would lead to more money in their current job. This is consistent across job types, with the exception of teachers, among whom a majority (73 percent) say that they would make more money if they got more education. Thus, many must believe that more education will help them get *different*, better jobs.

**Table 21: Continuing Education and Employment**

I feel that I have sufficient education to do my job well.	96.0%
If I got more education, I would make more money in my current job.	33.9%
I think more education would help me get ahead in my career.	63.9%
I feel that my supervisor supports and encourages me to get more education.	60.4%
My employer offers incentives for me to continue my formal education.	44.2%

**Figure 13: Percent Who Agree with Certain Statements about Continuing Education and Employment**



## VIII. Education and Jobs, cont.

Younger Tennesseans tend to feel that they receive more encouragement from a supervisor to pursue education (see Table 22) and are more likely to receive more money for getting additional education (see Table 23). Those with higher incomes and more education are also more likely to be encouraged by their employer to pursue further education, but these higher-income Tennesseans also believe they are less likely to benefit from an increase in pay.

**Table 22: Receiving Encouragement from Supervisor to Continue Education**

<b>Educational Attainment</b>	
Some High School	45.1%
HS Diploma/GED	53.4%
Vocational/Technical Certificate or Associate's Degree	60.7%
Bachelor's Degree	70.8%
Graduate/Professional degree	70.9%
<b>Income</b>	
Less than \$15,000	51.0%
\$15,000-24,999	56.9%
\$25,000-49,999	60.1%
\$50,000-74,999	60.3%
\$75,000-99,999	70.2%
\$100,000-199,999	62.8%
More than \$200,000	67.1%
<b>Age</b>	
19-24	75.9%
25-39	62.2%
40-64	56.1%
65+	51.2%

**Table 23: Receive Pay Increases from Further Education**

<b>Income</b>	
Less than \$15,000	38.7%
\$15,000-24,999	38.0%
\$25,000-49,999	39.1%
\$50,000-74,999	32.8%
\$75,000-99,999	32.1%
\$100,000-199,999	24.3%
More than \$200,000	20.9%
<b>Age</b>	
19-24	38.3%
25-39	40.5%
40-64	30.2%
65+	15.3%

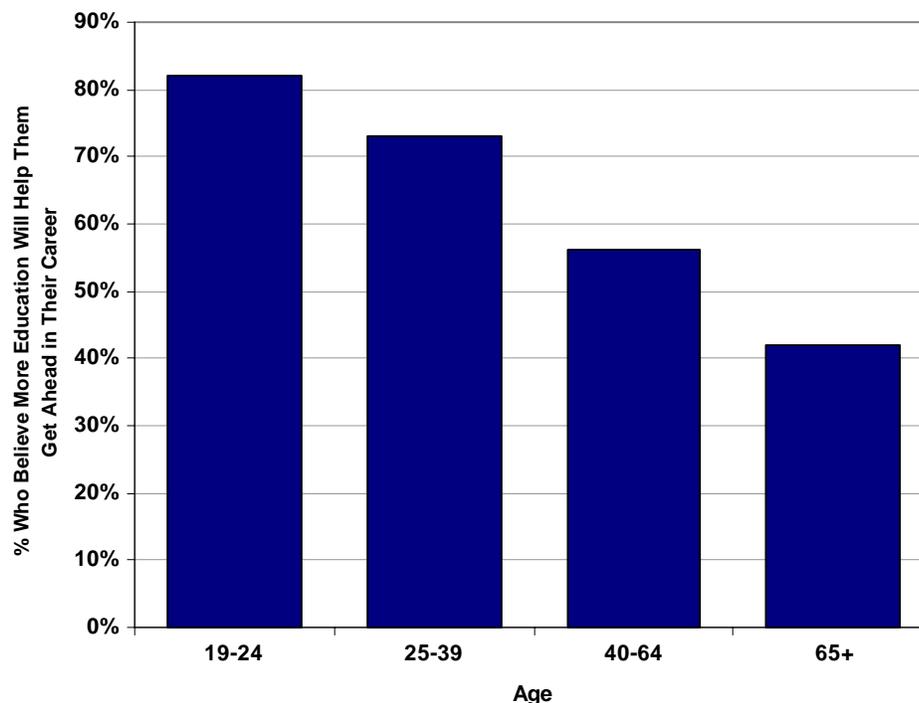
## VIII. Education and Jobs, cont.

Similarly, Tennesseans with higher incomes are less likely to expect career advancement as a result of further education (see Table 24 and Figure 14). Those with incomes under \$50,000 and those under 40 years old are far more likely to expect education to help them get ahead of where they are today. This makes sense, as those with high incomes or those late in their careers may not see a need for further advancement whether they pursue more education or not.

**Table 24: Education Pursuit Enabling Career Advancement**

<b>Income</b>	
Less than \$15,000	71.0%
\$15,000-24,999	70.4%
\$25,000-49,999	72.5%
\$50,000-74,999	61.0%
\$75,000-99,999	58.4%
\$100,000-199,999	48.5%
More than \$200,000	42.2%
<b>Age</b>	
19-24	82.1%
25-39	73.1%
40-64	56.3%
65+	41.9%

**Figure 14: Percent Who Believe More Education Will Help Them Get Ahead in Their Career, by Age Group**



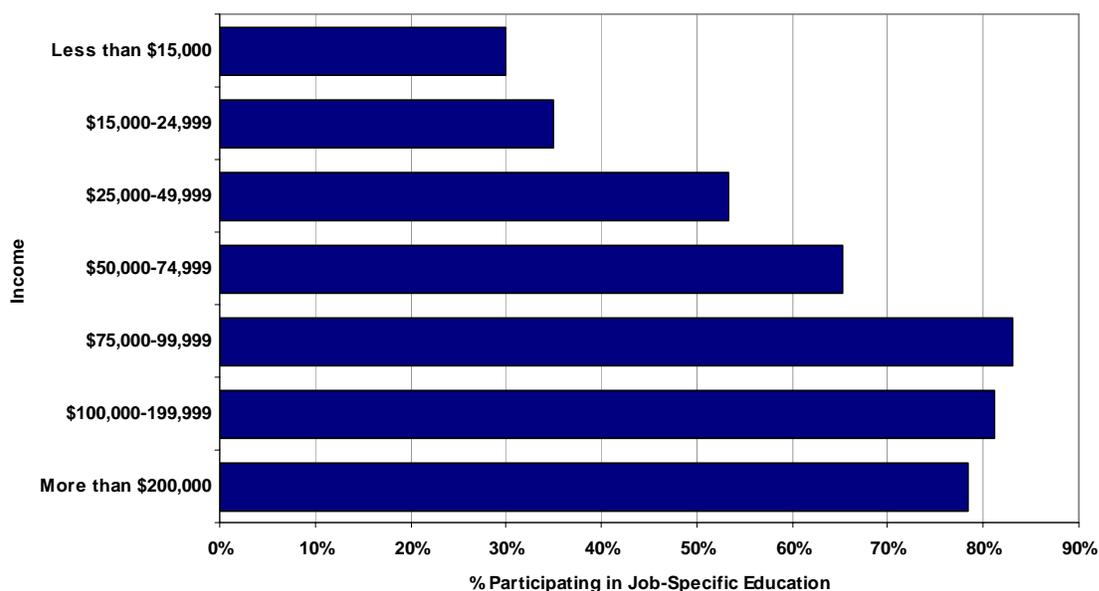
## VIII. Education and Jobs, cont.

Among employed Tennesseans, about 57 percent participate in informal, continuing education that is specific to their job, including in-house training, professional seminars, and certification courses. This participation varies considerably by education and income; those with more education and higher income are far more likely to participate (see Table 25 and Figure 15). The youngest and oldest age groups are also less likely to participate than those between 25 and 64 years old.

**Table 25: Participation in Job-Specific Education**

<b>Educational Attainment</b>	
Some High School	19.8%
HS Diploma/GED	42.2%
Vocational/Technical Certificate or Associate's Degree	61.1%
Bachelor's Degree	74.7%
Graduate/Professional degree	83.4%
<b>Income</b>	
Less than \$15,000	29.9%
\$15,000-24,999	34.9%
\$25,000-49,999	53.3%
\$50,000-74,999	65.3%
\$75,000-99,999	83.0%
\$100,000-199,999	81.2%
More than \$200,000	78.4%
<b>Age</b>	
19-24	39.3%
25-39	59.4%
40-64	59.6%
65+	47.4%

**Figure 15: Percent Who Participate in Job-Specific Education, by Income**



## VIII. Education and Jobs, cont.

When asked to describe what incentive their employer could offer that would improve their ability or desire to continue their education, just over 1,000 respondents provided a variety of suggestions. Of note is that 110 discrete responses were simply “nothing” and another 70 were “I don’t know.” Other respondents praised the incentives already offered by their employers, and 41 respondents requested job-related training incentives such as opportunities, money, and time off for training courses, seminars and conferences to acquire job skills specific to their positions, rather than for degree-seeking programs.

Among the remaining discrete responses, three main themes emerged. First, 407 people indicated that they would need more *money* to continue their education, through tuition reimbursement plans; cash for supplies, books, and computers; education savings plans; and low-interest loans from their employer. Some respondents indicated a willingness to absorb some of the cost, to maintain certain grades in exchange for their tuition being paid, or to guarantee that they would work for that employer for a certain period of time after completion of their degree. Others simply stated that their employer should “pay for it.”

The second recurring theme was *time*. The issue of time took on many forms in the responses, including paid time off to attend classes and more flexible work hours so that they could attend classes during the day or the evenings. Many respondents discussed the challenge of juggling the demands of work and family and seemed to express that work hours would have to be cut before they could continue their education. One respondent stated that she needed “more hours in the day to where I could keep up with my kids and do other things.”

The third theme is categorized as *job and career incentives* but can also be viewed as a request that employers reward employees for continuing their education. Over one hundred respondents suggested that continuing education incentives should involve tying their efforts and accomplishments to particular career events, like promotions, raises, or bonuses. Responses along these lines included:

- Offer me a better job if I continue my education
- Link the pay scale to education
- If I knew I could make more money, then I might go back, but my job won’t change
- Promotions relevant to education

A few other concepts appeared in these open-ended responses. For instance, some employed respondents requested better benefits across the board or indicated that having health insurance or a childcare program would help them continue their education. Others indicated that their location made it particularly difficult to go to school and suggested that either their employers or educational institutions offer classes on-site or online. Finally, some respondents simply stated that they needed “encouragement” from their employer and assurances that their job would be appropriately covered if they did take some time off to attend classes.

## IX. Parents' Expectations for Their Children's Education

Parents in Tennessee generally have high expectations for their children, with almost all expecting their child to complete as much education as they did; in most cases they expect more. More than 80 percent of parents expect their children to get college degrees. Among parents who are college graduates, that number exceeds 90 percent, and among parents with graduate or professional degrees, more than half expect their children to get advanced degrees as well (see Table 26 and Figure 16). Expectations also increase for children with higher income parents. Some differences also exist between the three grand divisions, with expectations in West and Middle Tennessee generally being higher than in East Tennessee.

These high expectations for children are inconsistent with the reality that only 24 percent<sup>4</sup> of Tennessee adults currently have a college degree. Keeping in mind this large discrepancy, it may make more sense to interpret a number of these responses as “hopes” rather than “expectations.”

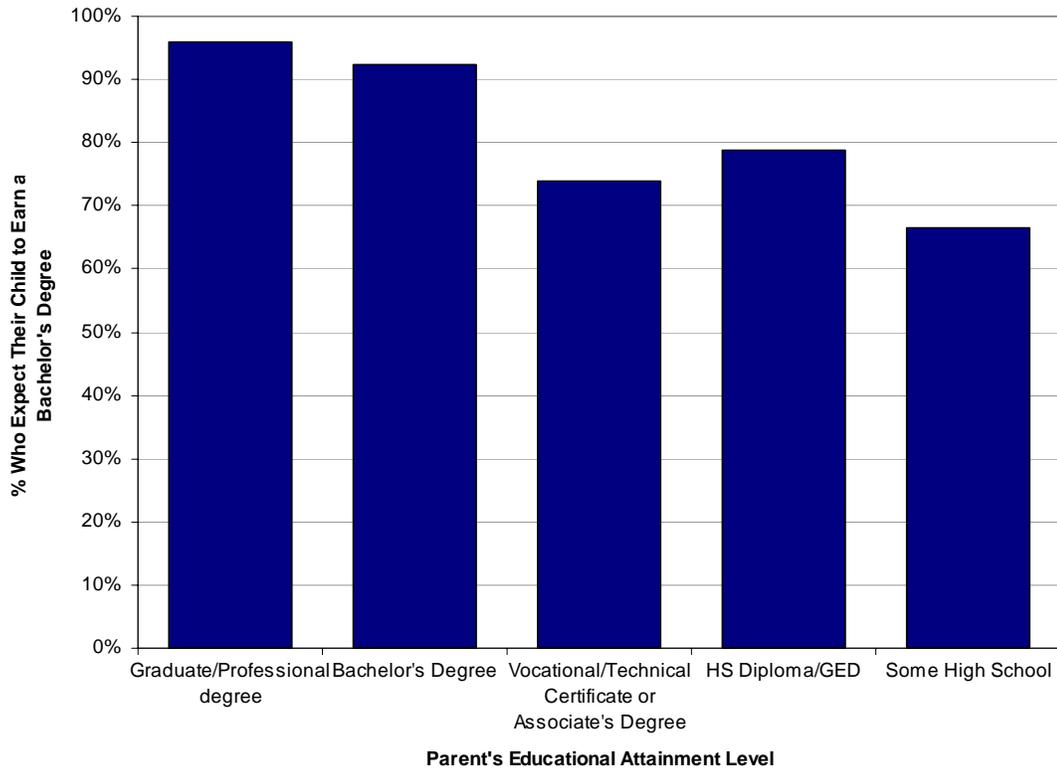
**Table 26: Expectations for Children's Educational Attainment**

Parents' Educational Attainment	Expectation for Child	
	Bachelor's Degree or more	Graduate/Professional Degree or more
Some High School	66.6%	26.1%
HS Diploma/GED	78.8%	31.9%
Vocational/Technical Certificate or Associate's Degree	73.9%	30.0%
Bachelor's Degree	92.4%	33.5%
Graduate/Professional degree	95.9%	57.5%
<b>Parents' Income</b>		
Less than \$15,000	75.8%	35.6%
\$15,000-24,999	77.4%	31.2%
\$25,000-49,999	74.4%	31.5%
\$50,000-74,999	83.6%	31.3%
\$75,000-99,999	92.8%	34.4%
\$100,000-199,999	90.5%	36.5%
More than \$200,000	93.1%	46.7%
<b>Grand Division</b>		
East Tennessee	73.9%	30.0%
Middle Tennessee	83.6%	33.3%
West Tennessee	86.9%	39.3%

<sup>4</sup> United States Census Bureau, 2004 Current Population Survey.

## IX. Parents' Expectations for Their Children's Education, cont.

**Figure 16: Percent of Parents Who Expect Their Child to Earn a Bachelor's Degree, by Parent's Educational Attainment Level**



## IX. Parents' Expectations for Their Children's Education, cont.

More than one-third of parents expecting their children to attend college would prefer to see them remain in-state, while about half have no preference. Less than 10 percent indicate that they would prefer to see their child attend college out-of-state, and 54 percent of those indicate a particular institution outside of Tennessee that they would prefer their child attend.

For both parents who prefer their child stay in-state and those who prefer their child go out-of-state, the most important factors considered are reputation and quality of institution and program availability (see Tables 27 and 28 below). The major difference between the two groups of parents is that parents preferring out-of-state schools are more likely to make this decision without regard to their child's scholastic ability, the availability of scholarships, or cost. Location is also less of a concern.

**Table 27: Factors Influencing In-State School Preference for Child**

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Quality of the institution	88.1%	9.7%	2.3%
Reputation of the institution	74.6%	21.0%	4.3%
Program availability	72.5%	19.2%	8.3%
Scholarship availability	71.9%	20.7%	7.4%
Your child's scholastic ability	64.5%	19.0%	16.5%
Cost	60.5%	24.1%	15.5%
Your child's preference	60.3%	34.0%	5.7%
Location	59.5%	28.5%	11.9%

**Table 28: Factors Influencing Out-of-State School Preference for Child**

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Quality of the institution	94.7%	4.1%	1.2%
Reputation of the institution	70.6%	18.9%	10.5%
Program availability	67.6%	17.2%	15.3%
Your child's preference	63.1%	26.5%	10.5%
Scholarship availability	53.5%	14.6%	31.9%
Your child's scholastic ability	49.8%	23.0%	27.2%
Location	47.7%	26.8%	25.6%
Cost	30.3%	27.7%	42.1%

## X. Financing Children's Higher Education

Considering the very high proportion of Tennesseans who expect their children to go to college, the financing of higher education is a major concern for the state. Unfortunately a large number of Tennesseans are uninformed, with about one-third saying they do not have enough information about cost to start planning the financing. That number is significantly higher for younger Tennesseans and those with less education or lower income (see Table 29 and Figure 17). Additionally, Middle Tennesseans are a little more likely to say they are well-informed than their East and West counterparts.

Most Tennesseans say they will be financing their child's education, at least in part, with their own savings or investments, and many expect to receive help in the form of academic scholarships or student loans (see Table 30). Only about one-third expect their child to receive a scholarship financed by the Tennessee Lottery.

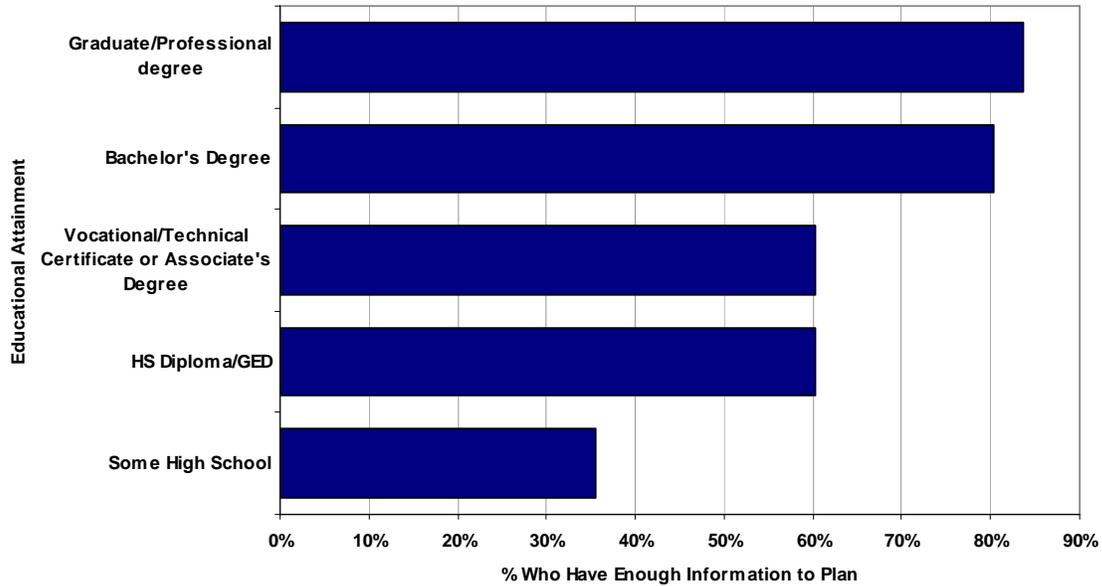
**Table 29: Feeling Informed Enough to Plan for Child's Future Education<sup>5</sup>**

	Yes	No
<b>Educational Attainment</b>		
Some High School	35.6%	64.4%
HS Diploma/GED	60.2%	39.9%
Vocational/Technical Certificate or Associate's Degree	60.2%	39.8%
Bachelor's Degree	80.3%	19.7%
Graduate/Professional degree	83.7%	16.3%
<b>Income</b>		
Less than \$15,000	39.4%	60.6%
\$15,000-24,999	65.1%	35.0%
\$25,000-49,999	62.0%	38.1%
\$50,000-74,999	69.7%	30.4%
\$75,000-99,999	74.6%	25.4%
\$100,000-199,999	76.9%	23.1%
More than \$200,000	93.9%	6.1%
<b>Age</b>		
19-24	55.2%	44.8%
25-39	62.8%	37.2%
40-64	69.6%	30.4%
65+	100.0%	0.0%
<b>Grand Division</b>		
East Tennessee	63.8%	36.2%
Middle Tennessee	68.1%	31.9%
West Tennessee	63.4%	36.6%

<sup>5</sup> Tables 29-33 reflect percentages based on the responses of Tennesseans who currently have children under the age of 19. The total number of unweighted responses for these tables is 1,036.

## X. Financing Children's Higher Education, cont.

**Figure 17: Percent Who Feel Informed Enough to Plan for Child's Future Education**



**Table 30: Plans for Financing Child's Education**

your own savings or investments	57.9%
academic scholarships	42.6%
lottery scholarships	32.9%
student loans	23.9%
athletic scholarships	15.5%
your child's savings	12.0%
other	2.7%
gifts or inheritances	6.4%
your employer pays	4.4%

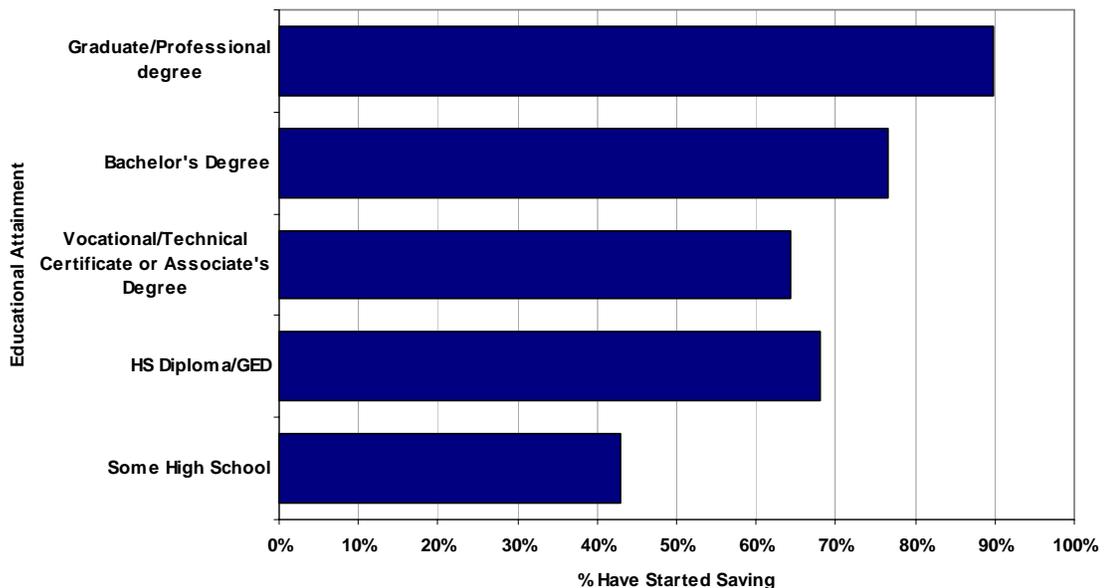
## X. Financing Children's Higher Education, cont.

Nearly 70 percent of Tennesseans have started saving for their child's education, but the disparities between high and low incomes and high and low educational attainment are significant (see Table 31 and Figure 18). East Tennesseans also lag behind Middle and West Tennessee in this area, with more than one-third saying that they have not yet started saving.

**Table 31: Have Started Saving for Child's Education**

	Yes	No
<b>Educational Attainment</b>		
Some High School	42.9%	57.1%
HS Diploma/GED	68.0%	32.0%
Vocational/Technical Certificate or Associate's Degree	64.3%	35.7%
Bachelor's Degree	76.6%	23.4%
Graduate/Professional degree	89.9%	10.1%
<b>Income</b>		
Less than \$15,000	40.5%	59.5%
\$15,000-24,999	57.3%	42.7%
\$25,000-49,999	70.6%	29.4%
\$50,000-74,999	75.3%	24.7%
\$75,000-99,999	85.2%	14.8%
\$100,000-199,999	88.7%	11.3%
More than \$200,000	93.4%	6.6%
<b>Grand Division</b>		
East Tennessee	65.3%	34.7%
Middle Tennessee	71.3%	28.7%
West Tennessee	72.0%	28.0%

**Figure 18: Percent Who Have Started Saving for Child's Education, by Educational Attainment**



## X. Financing Children's Higher Education, cont.

Tennesseans say that tax-free savings and tax deductibility for tuition are the two primary incentives that would encourage them to save more money for their child's education (see Table 32 below).

Less than 7 percent say that a state 529 plan would most encourage them to save, and in part this could be due to the fact that less than one-third of Tennesseans have even heard of a 529 college savings plan (see Table 33 below). Even fewer are aware of Tennessee's plans (BEST 529 Prepaid and BEST 529 Savings)

**Table 32: Incentive that Would Most Encourage Savings**

Tax-free savings for education expenses	33.5%
Tax deductibility for tuition	28.9%
Automatic withdrawal from paycheck	16.6%
Tax deductibility for related expenses	14.6%
State-administered 529 plan	6.4%

**Table 33: Awareness of College Savings Incentives<sup>6</sup>**

	Yes	No	Total Number Aware
Lifetime Learning tax credit	19.2%	80.8%	202
HOPE tax credit	29.4%	70.6%	289
529 college savings plans	30.5%	69.5%	314
Coverdale education savings accounts	9.0%	91.0%	93
Tennessee's BEST 529 Prepaid	17.1%	82.9%	187
Tennessee's BEST 529 Savings	9.8%	90.2%	110

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<sup>6</sup> The total number aware are unweighted responses.

## X. Financing Children's Higher Education, cont.

Those with the least education and lower income are far less likely to be aware of any of these savings opportunities (see Table 34). In most cases, East Tennesseans are less informed about savings plans than those in Middle and West Tennessee.

**Table 34: Awareness of College Savings Incentives by Group**

	Lifetime Learning tax credit	HOPE tax credit	529 college savings plans	Coverdale education savings accounts	Tennessee's BEST 529 Prepaid	Tennessee's BEST 529 Savings
<b>Educational Attainment</b>						
Some High School	0.0%	2.3%	6.1%	2.7%	3.8%	3.7%
HS Diploma/GED	11.2%	22.2%	16.0%	4.5%	7.1%	2.4%
Vocational/Technical Certificate or Associate's Degree	15.2%	28.9%	29.8%	6.3%	17.3%	9.3%
Bachelor's Degree	34.2%	45.9%	56.6%	15.3%	34.1%	18.7%
Graduate/Professional degree	42.5%	45.5%	55.7%	23.9%	32.7%	27.5%
<b>Income</b>						
Less than \$15,000	7.3%	13.4%	10.6%	6.0%	4.4%	4.4%
\$15,000-24,999	7.8%	22.4%	10.5%	4.2%	5.9%	3.7%
\$25,000-49,999	15.3%	25.4%	25.2%	4.7%	13.3%	6.3%
\$50,000-74,999	25.6%	35.1%	26.6%	9.9%	21.5%	11.2%
\$75,000-99,999	32.7%	42.8%	58.2%	16.5%	32.9%	17.1%
\$100,000-199,999	24.8%	46.7%	63.1%	17.0%	36.5%	24.6%
More than \$200,000	22.9%	56.4%	80.8%	23.2%	25.5%	34.0%
<b>Age</b>						
19-24	3.2%	20.2%	8.6%	4.3%	1.1%	1.1%
25-39	19.3%	27.1%	29.0%	8.7%	15.1%	8.5%
40-64	22.1%	33.9%	36.9%	9.6%	23.0%	12.7%
65+	0.0%	17.7%	0.0%	0.0%	17.7%	17.7%
<b>Grand Division</b>						
East Tennessee	17.2%	29.6%	28.9%	5.5%	15.6%	7.3%
Middle Tennessee	21.5%	27.5%	32.9%	10.7%	17.9%	11.1%
West Tennessee	18.5%	31.7%	30.4%	10.8%	18.0%	11.0%

## X. Financing Children's Higher Education, cont.

Tennesseans hear about 529 plans, and in particular Tennessee's 529 plans, from a variety of sources. The most common sources are friends and family and advertising from financial institutions, with people being likely to hear about Tennessee's plans through their own research and less likely to find out via a broker (see Table 35 below).

*Among those aware* of the existence of these savings incentives and plans, participation and utilization are low (see Table 36 and Figure 19). Tennessee's BEST plans get especially low participation, with less than 12 percent participating in the Savings plan and only 7 percent participating in the Prepaid plan.

**Table 35: How Respondents Heard about 529 Plans<sup>7</sup>**

	529 plans	Tennessee's BEST 529 Prepaid	Tennessee's BEST 529 Savings
Friend/family	17.9%	19.9%	15.5%
Advertising from a financial institution	12.6%	11.4%	15.4%
Own research	9.7%	14.3%	14.0%
Newspaper	9.6%	9.4%	7.2%
Broker	9.3%	4.9%	4.5%
Radio	7.5%	8.9%	4.3%
TV	7.1%	8.1%	5.6%
Employer	6.7%	5.3%	5.4%
Internet	5.6%	6.1%	8.2%
Financial advisor/Insurance agent	2.4%	0.8%	2.3%
Billboard	2.3%	0.6%	0.0%
Other	5.8%	8.4%	9.7%
Don't know	11.2%	11.9%	9.4%

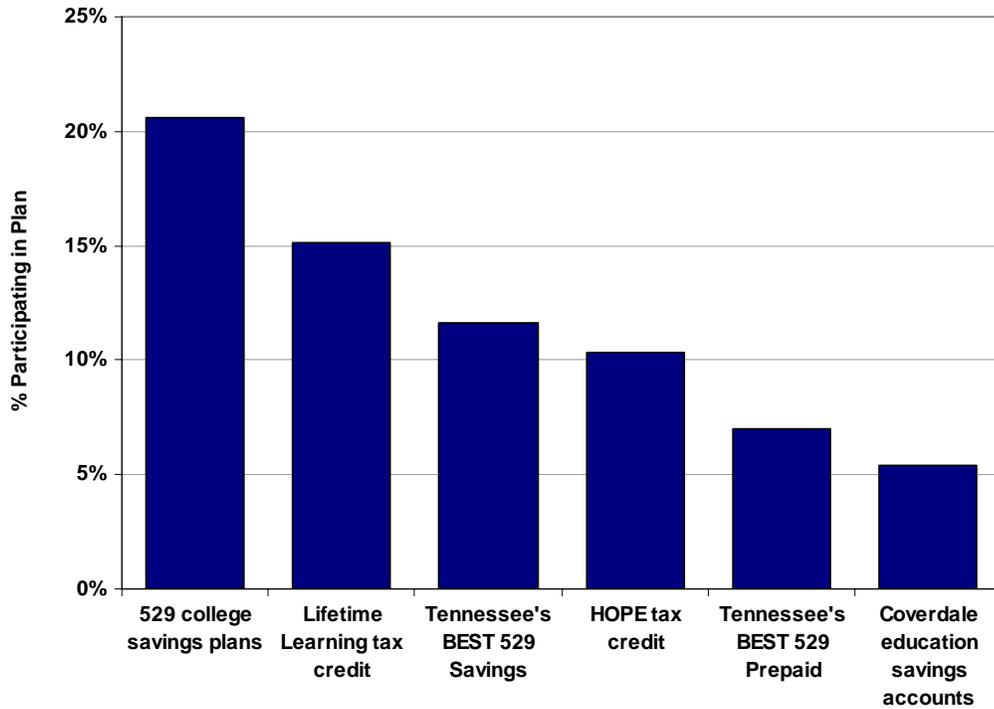
**Table 36: Utilization of College Savings Plans, Given Awareness**

	Participating	Not Participating
Lifetime Learning tax credit	15.1%	84.9%
HOPE tax credit	10.3%	89.7%
529 college savings plans	20.6%	79.4%
Coverdale education savings accounts	5.4%	94.6%
Tennessee's BEST 529 Prepaid	7.0%	93.0%
Tennessee's BEST 529 Savings	11.6%	88.4%

<sup>7</sup> The percentages in Tables 34 and 35 are based on the population of respondents that are aware of the plans' existence. See Table 32 for the number of unweighted responses used in each category.

## X. Financing Children's Higher Education, cont.

**Figure 19: Percent Who Are Participating in the Plans, Given Awareness**



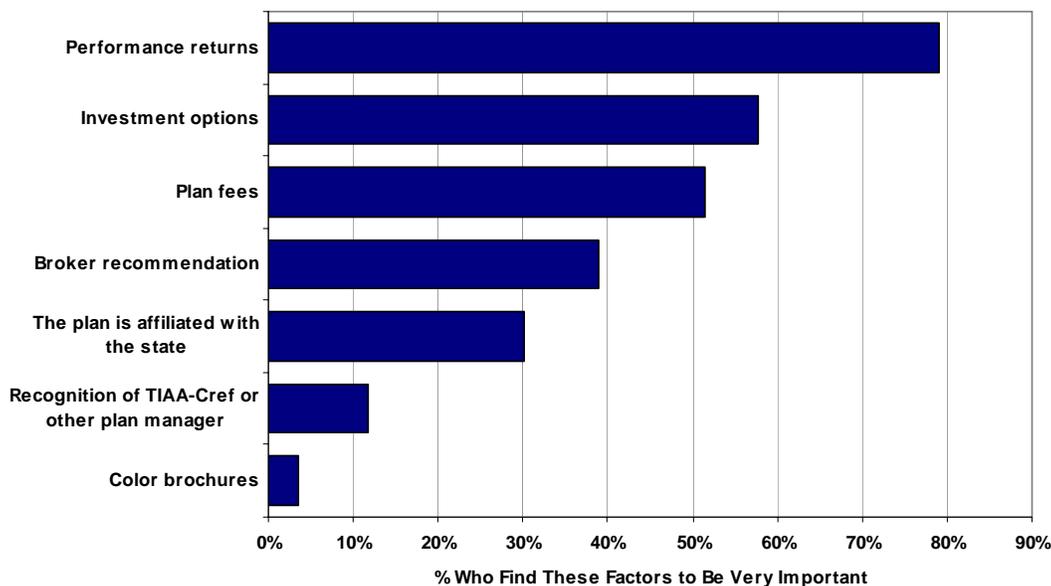
## X. Financing Children's Higher Education, cont.

Among those who have chosen to use a 529 savings plan (a total of 75 respondents in this survey), performance returns and available investment options were considered the most important factors in their decision (see Table 37 and Figure 20). Less than 10 percent of those choosing a 529 plan considered these two factors unimportant. The state's color brochures and recognizable plan managers were largely considered unimportant.

**Table 37: Factors in Choosing Current 529 Plan**

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
performance returns	79.0%	15.1%	6.0%
investment options	57.8%	33.4%	8.9%
plan fees	51.4%	25.4%	23.3%
broker recommendation	39.0%	26.6%	34.4%
the plan is affiliated with the state	30.1%	21.7%	48.2%
recognition of TIAA-Cref or other plan manager	11.8%	23.4%	64.7%
color brochures	3.5%	11.0%	85.5%

**Figure 20: Percent Who Find these Factors Very Important in Choosing Current 529 Plan**



## X. Financing Children's Higher Education, cont.

Most Tennesseans purchase their 529 plans through a broker rather than directly from the state or a state representative, despite the fact that most state that they would not be willing to pay an upfront sales charge for investment advice (see Table 38). This indicates that perhaps many Tennesseans are unaware that they can purchase a 529 directly from the state and avoid such charges.

Almost 45 percent of those with a 529 plan intend to contribute monthly, another 26 percent quarterly, and less than 13 percent plan to fund it with a one-time contribution (see Table 39). Sixteen percent are not sure how they will contribute to their 529 plan. Among those making monthly contributions, the average contribution is just under \$200 per month. The average for those making quarterly contributions is almost \$700 per quarter. One-time contributions average \$42,000.

**Table 38: How 529 Plan Was Purchased**

	<b>Purchased via broker</b>	<b>Purchased directly from the state or a state representative</b>
willing to pay sales charge	65.8%	34.2%
unwilling to pay sales charge	60.4%	39.6%

**Table 39: Frequency of Contributions to 529 Plan**

monthly	44.7%
quarterly	26.2%
one-time	12.8%
not sure	16.4%

## Appendix 1: Adult Telephone Survey Questionnaire

Hello. I am calling from the Social Science Research Institute, conducting a survey about Tennesseans' attitudes about education — your own education (whether you are currently in school or not) and the education of Tennessee's children (whether you have children or not).

May I please speak to someone in the household who is over the age of 18?

[Do not survey any individuals aged 18 or younger.]

*To begin, I have a few questions about your education:*

Q1. What is the highest grade of school or degree you have *completed*?

A	Kindergarten through 11 <sup>th</sup> grade: <b>ENTER GRADE</b> _____
B	12 <sup>th</sup> grade (High school diploma)
C	GED
D	Vocational/tech/training program, diploma or certificate
E	Associates' degree (AA/AS)
F	Bachelor's degree (BA/BS)
G	Master's degree (MA/MS)
I	Doctorate degree (PHD, EDD)
J	Professional degree beyond bachelor's degree (Medicine MD; Dentistry DDS; Law JD/LLB)
K	Other: _____

Q2. Are you *currently enrolled* in school?

yes [go to Q4]

no [A-C on Q1 = go to Q3][D-K on Q1 = go to Q36]

Q3. Have you ever taken coursework towards any post-high school degree or certificate program?

yes [go to Q24]

no [go to Q14]

---

---

## Appendix 1: Adult Telephone Survey Questionnaire, cont.

Q4. What degree or certification are you pursuing?

High school diploma
GED
Vocational/tech/training program, diploma or certificate
Associates' degree (AA/AS)
Bachelor's degree (BA/BS)
Master's degree (MA/MS)
Doctorate degree (PHD, EDD)
Professional degree beyond bachelor's degree (Medicine MD; Dentistry DDS; Law JD/LLB)
Other: _____

Q5. What grades do you normally earn in your coursework?

- mostly As
- mostly Bs
- mostly Cs
- mostly Ds
- mostly below Ds
- coursework is not graded

Q6. Are you attending a public or private institution?

- public
- private

Q7. Was the **last year** of your kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade education in a public or private institution or were you home schooled?

- public
- private
- home-schooled

Q8. How are you financing your education? <can choose any or all>

- student loans
- lottery scholarships
- academic scholarships
- athletic scholarships
- your own savings
- your parent or parents' savings
- gifts or inheritances
- your employer pays
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 1: Adult Telephone Survey Questionnaire, cont.

Q9. Do you plan to finish this degree?

- yes
- no [GO TO Q13]
- haven't decided yet [GO TO Q13]

Q10. Do you plan to continue your education after this degree?

- yes [GO TO Q11 AND Q 12]
- no [GO TO Q13]
- haven't decided [GO TO Q13]
- haven't thought about it yet [GO TO Q13]

Q11. In what state do you plan to continue your education?

- [use standard state abbreviations]
- Outside of the US. Where: \_\_\_\_\_
- haven't decided
- haven't thought about it yet

Q12. What degree or degrees do you plan to pursue? <can select multiple degrees>

GED
Vocational/tech/training program diploma or certificate
Associates' degree (AA/AS)
Bachelor's degree (BA/BS)
Master's degree (MA/MS)
Doctorate degree (PHD, EDD)
Professional degree beyond bachelor's degree (Medicine MD; Dentistry DDS; Law JD/LLB)

Q13. If the state of Tennessee could do one thing to help you with your current schooling, what would that one thing be?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
<leave option for but do not prompt: the state should not do anything>

### [AFTER Q13, GO TO Q45]

Q14. In what state did you attend the **last year** of your kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade education?

- [use standard state abbreviations]
- Outside of the US. Where: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 1: Adult Telephone Survey Questionnaire, cont.

Q15. Was the **last year** of your kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade education in a public or private institution or were you home schooled?

public  
private  
home-schooled

Q16. When you were in your kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade school years, what grades did you normally earn? Mostly As, mostly Bs, mostly Cs, mostly Ds, mostly below Ds?

mostly As  
mostly Bs  
mostly Cs  
mostly Ds  
mostly below Ds

Q17. How satisfied are you with the quality of your kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade education? Would you say you are:

very satisfied  
somewhat satisfied  
neither satisfied nor dissatisfied  
somewhat dissatisfied  
very dissatisfied

Q18. <If somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied> What is *one thing* that could have been done to improve your satisfaction with your K-12 educational experience?

---

---

## Appendix 1: Adult Telephone Survey Questionnaire, cont.

- Q19. So far in your life, you have chosen not to continue your education beyond high school. Please choose from the following list the reason that **best describes** why you have not continued your education?

<input type="checkbox"/> You joined the military
<input type="checkbox"/> You got the job you wanted without needing any more education
<input type="checkbox"/> You started a family
<input type="checkbox"/> You just don't like school
<input type="checkbox"/> Your grades were too low
<input type="checkbox"/> Health reasons
<input type="checkbox"/> It costs too much money
<input type="checkbox"/> It takes too much time
<input type="checkbox"/> You did not have support from your kindergarten through 12 <sup>th</sup> grade teachers or administrators
<input type="checkbox"/> You did not have support from your parents or other family members
<input type="checkbox"/> Other reasons _____

- Q20. Do you plan to continue your formal education in the future?

yes [GO TO Q21 AND Q22]  
no [GO TO Q23]  
haven't decided yet [GO TO Q23]

- Q21. In what state do you plan to continue your education?

[use standard state abbreviations]  
outside of the US. Where: \_\_\_\_\_  
haven't decided  
haven't thought about it yet

## Appendix 1: Adult Telephone Survey Questionnaire, cont.

Q22. What degree or degrees do you plan to pursue? <can select multiple degrees>

GED
Vocational/tech/training program after high school but not voc/tech/training diploma or certificate
Some college but no degree
Associates' degree (AA/AS)
Bachelor's degree (BA/BS)
Attended but did not complete graduate or professional school
Master's degree (MA/MS)
Doctorate degree (PHD, EDD)
Professional degree beyond bachelor's degree (Medicine MD; Dentistry DDS; Law JD/LLB)

Q23. If the state of Tennessee could do one thing to improve your ability to continue your education, what would that one thing be?

---

---

**[AFTER Q23, GO TO Q45]**

Q24. How many **years** of post-high school coursework have you completed?

- less than 1
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- more than 5

Q25. In what state did you attend the **last course** of either vocational tech or college education?

[use standard state abbreviations]  
Outside of the US. Where: \_\_\_\_\_

Q26. Was the **last course** you attended in a public or private institution?

- public
- private

Q27. Did you graduate from a public or private high school or were you home schooled?

- public
- private
- home-schooled

## Appendix 1: Adult Telephone Survey Questionnaire, cont.

Q28. Were you the first member of your immediate family to attend vocational or technical school or college?

- yes
- no
- don't know

Q29. When you were in those courses, what grades did you normally earn?

- mostly As
- mostly Bs
- mostly Cs
- mostly Ds
- mostly below Ds

Q30. How satisfied are you with the quality of the vocational tech or college courses you have taken so far? Would you say you are:

- very satisfied
- somewhat satisfied
- neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- somewhat dissatisfied
- very dissatisfied

Q31. So far in your life, you have chosen not to continue your education beyond those courses. Please choose from the following list the reason that **best describes** why you have not continued your education?

<input type="checkbox"/> You joined the military
<input type="checkbox"/> You got the job you wanted without needing any more education
<input type="checkbox"/> You started a family
<input type="checkbox"/> You just don't like school
<input type="checkbox"/> Your grades were too low
<input type="checkbox"/> Health reasons
<input type="checkbox"/> It costs too much money
<input type="checkbox"/> It takes too much time
<input type="checkbox"/> You did not have support from your kindergarten through 12 <sup>th</sup> grade teachers or administrators
<input type="checkbox"/> You did not have support from your parents or other family members
<input type="checkbox"/> Other reasons _____

---

---

## Appendix 1: Adult Telephone Survey Questionnaire, cont.

Q32. Do you plan to continue your formal education in the future?

- yes [GO TO Q33 AND Q34]
- no [GO TO Q35]
- haven't decided yet [GO TO Q35]

Q33. In what state do you plan to continue your education?

- [use standard state abbreviations]
- outside of the US. Where: \_\_\_\_\_
- haven't decided
- haven't thought about it yet

Q34. What degree or degrees do you plan to pursue? <can select multiple degrees>

GED
Vocational/tech/training program after high school but not voc/tech/training diploma or certificate
Some college but no degree
Associates' degree (AA/AS)
Bachelor's degree (BA/BS)
Attended but did not complete graduate or professional school
Master's degree (MA/MS)
Doctorate degree (PHD, EDD)
Professional degree beyond bachelor's degree (Medicine MD; Dentistry DDS; Law JD/LLB)

Q35. If the state of Tennessee could do one thing to improve your ability to continue your education, what would that one thing be?

---

---

**[AFTER Q35, GO TO Q45]**

Q36. Were you the first member of your immediate family to attend college?

- yes
- no
- don't know

Q37. Did you graduate from a public or private high school or were you home schooled?

- public
- private
- home-schooled

## Appendix 1: Adult Telephone Survey Questionnaire, cont.

**READ: For the next couple of questions, consider only the highest degree you obtained.**

Q38. What was your major?

\_\_\_\_\_

Q39. What state was the school located in?

[use standard state abbreviations]

outside of the US. Where: \_\_\_\_\_

Q40. Was the school a public or private institution?

public

private

Q41. When you were in your degree program, what kind of student—in terms of grades—did you consider yourself?

exceptional (mostly As)

above average (mostly Bs)

average (mostly Cs)

below average (mostly Ds)

poor (mostly below Ds)

Q42. How satisfied are you with the quality of that degree? Would you say you are:

very satisfied

somewhat satisfied

neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

somewhat dissatisfied

very dissatisfied

Q43. Do you plan to continue your formal education in the future?

yes

no

haven't decided yet

Q44. If the state of Tennessee could do one thing to improve your ability to continue your education, what would that one thing be?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

<NOTE: ask everyone – whether they plan to continue their education or not >

## Appendix 1: Adult Telephone Survey Questionnaire, cont.

- Q45. Now, I would like to explore how important you feel **education** is to the following opportunities. For each one I read, please tell me if education is very important, somewhat important, or not important at all to: <randomize order of choices>

First, how important is **education** to...

- fuller enjoyment of life's experiences?
- getting a job?
- having more choices in what job you could get?
- earning more money in the future?
- being able to start your own business?
- being self-sufficient?
- learning how to tackle obstacles in your life?
- developing an awareness of other cultures?
- being able to provide for your family?

- Q46. Think of two people working in the exact same job with the same pay. You are their supervisor and can only give one of them a raise this year. In deciding which one of them to give the raise, will you take the following factors into consideration (answer yes or no)?

	Yes	No
Will you consider...		
how long each employee has been at the firm in determining who gets the raise?...		
how well each employee does the job		
each employee's education level		
age of employees		
gender of employees		
each employee's professional certification		
each employee's loyalty to the company		
each employee's family responsibilities		

- Q47. Now please tell me, what do you think should be the *most* important factor in deciding which employee should be paid more? <Read again if necessary.>

how long the employee has been at the firm
how well the employee does the job
the employee's education level
the age of employee
the gender of employee
the employee's professional certification
the employee's loyalty to the company
the employee's family responsibilities

## Appendix 1: Adult Telephone Survey Questionnaire, cont.

Q48. Next, we have a question about *things that might help you reach your life goals*, whatever those goals might be. Are the following factors very important, somewhat important, or not important at all in helping you reach your goals in life?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important at all
your natural ability			
hard work			
your ambition			
coming from a wealthy family			
having educated parents			
having a good education yourself			
having a good job			
knowing the right people			
your race			
your gender			
your religion			

Q49. Currently, are you employed?

yes [go to Q50]

no [go to Q58]

Q50. What is your current occupation:

Management or administrator Business, financial and professional services	[in any field] [accountants, analysts, architects, engineers, scientists, media, health services]
Sales Office and administrative support	[in any field] [data entry, customer service reps, office clerks, secretaries and admin assistants]
Farming, fishing and forestry	[agricultural, fishers, forest conservations, logging]
Construction or production	[carpenters, roofers, electricians, metal and plastic workers, food processing]
Installation, maintenance and repair	[electrical repair, vehicle and mobile equipment mechanics, installers, and repairers]
Teacher	[pre-school, kindergarten, elementary, middle, secondary, special education, teacher's assistant]
Teacher – Post-Secondary	[college/university, technical school]
Transportation	[air, vehicle, rail transportation operators and workers]
Armed Forces Other	Please specify:  _____

## Appendix 1: Adult Telephone Survey Questionnaire, cont.

Q51. Please know that all of the information you provide is confidential and will not be shared with anyone, including your employer. Please tell me what you think about the following statements.

Do you feel that you have sufficient education to do your job well? [Yes, no, unsure/don't know]

Do you feel that your supervisor supports and encourages you to get more education? [Yes, no, unsure/don't know]

If you got more education, would you make more money in your current job? [Yes, no, unsure/don't know]

Do you think more education would help you get ahead in your career? [Yes, no, unsure/don't know]

Q52. Do you currently participate in any informal, continuing education that is specific to your job, such as in-house training, professional seminars, or other certification courses?

yes

no

Q53. How satisfied are you with your current job? Would you say you are:

very satisfied

somewhat satisfied

neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

somewhat dissatisfied

very dissatisfied

Q54. Does your employer offer incentives for you to either obtain or continue your formal education—with tuition assistance, comp time, or something else?

yes [GO TO Q55]

no [GO TO Q56]

don't know [GO TO Q56]

Q55. Do you or your family members participate in these education incentives?

I do

one or more members of my family do

I do AND one or more members of my family do

no one does

don't know

## Appendix 1: Adult Telephone Survey Questionnaire, cont.

Q56. What incentive could your employer offer that would improve your ability or desire to continue your education?

\_\_\_\_\_

<leave option for but do not prompt: my employer should not do anything>

Q57. Are you continuing your education in some other way I have not addressed?

yes, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

no

Q58. Do you think Tennessee's public education system is <...> than the average state's education system?

much better  
a little better  
the same  
a little worse  
much worse  
don't know/ no answer

Q59. Do you think Tennessee's public education system is <...> than the education system in neighboring states?

much better  
a little better  
the same  
a little worse  
much worse  
don't know/ no answer

Q60. Do you think the schools in your neighborhood are <...> than the state's average school?

much better  
a little better  
the same  
a little worse  
much worse  
don't know/ no answer

Q61. How important was the quality of the schools in your neighborhood in your decision to live there?

very important  
somewhat important  
not important at all

## Appendix 1: Adult Telephone Survey Questionnaire, cont.

Q62. Would you say that the quality of education for Tennessee children today is much better, a little better, the same, a little worse, or much worse than it was 10 years ago?

- much better
- a little better
- the same
- a little worse
- much worse

Q63. If you could choose only one area of Tennessee's education system to improve, which level would you focus on?

- Pre-kindergarten
- Kindergarten
- Elementary school (first grade through fifth grade)
- Middle school (sixth grade through eighth grade)
- High school (ninth grade through twelfth grade)
- Post-high school technical or vocational training
- College (higher education)

Q64. What do you think the state could do to improve that area of Tennessee's education system?

---

---

---

Q65. How do you feel about opportunities for young people to go to college – should opportunities be:

- increased [GO TO Q66]
- increased a little [GO TO Q66]
- kept the same as now [GO TO Q67]
- reduced a little [GO TO Q67]
- reduced a lot [GO TO Q67]

Q66. Can you tell me, briefly, what would be the best way for the state of Tennessee to increase opportunities for young people to go to college?

---

---

---

Q67. How many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

Q67B. For the next questions, we want to focus on your children who are aged 18 or younger and who live in Tennessee. How many children aged 18 and younger do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 1: Adult Telephone Survey Questionnaire, cont.

[IF CHILDREN IN FAMILY *under age 19*, CONTINUE WITH Q68, IF NOT, SKIP TO Q86; IT IS OKAY IF THE CHILD/CHILDREN DO NOT LIVE WITH THE PERSON BEING SURVEYED, AS LONG AS THEY LIVE IN THE STATE OF TENNESSEE]

Q68. What grade of school is <CHILD1; ask for every child under age 19> in?

A	Not currently in school (then find out highest grade <i>completed</i> )
B	Kindergarten through 11 <sup>th</sup> grade: ENTER GRADE: _____
C	12 <sup>th</sup> grade but no diploma
D	High school diploma
E	GED
F	Vocational/tech/training program after high school but not voc/tech/training diploma or certificate
G	Some college but no degree

Q69. Is the school your child is currently in a public or private institution or is this child home schooled? <CHILD1; ask for every child under age 19>

public  
private  
home-schooled

Q70. How far do you expect <CHILD1; ask for every child under age 19> to go in (his/her) education?

A	High school diploma
B	GED
C	Vocational/tech/training diploma or certificate
D	Associates' degree (AA/AS)
E	Bachelor's degree (BA/BS)
F	Master's degree (MA/MS)
G	Doctorate degree (PHD, EDD)
H	Professional degree beyond bachelor's degree (Medicine MD; Dentistry DDS; Law JD/LLB)
I	Other: _____

[IF A-B ON Q70, GO TO Q86]

[IF C-I ON Q70, GO TO Q71]

Q71. Would you prefer that your <child/children> continue their education beyond high school in the state of Tennessee or outside the state of Tennessee, or do you not have a preference?

in-state [GO TO Q73]  
out-of-state [GO TO Q72]  
do not have a preference [GO TO Q74]

## Appendix 1: Adult Telephone Survey Questionnaire, cont.

Q72. Is there a particular out-of-state institution?

yes, which \_\_\_\_\_ [CONTINUE TO Q73]  
no [CONTINUE TO Q73]

Q73. You have indicated that you want your <child/children> to continue their education <in-state/out-of-state>. Please indicate how the following factors influenced that response. Was it a very important factor, a somewhat important factor, or not a factor at all?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not a factor at all
Your child's scholastic ability			
Cost			
Scholarship availability			
Program availability			
Location			
Reputation of the institution			
Quality of the institution			
Your child's preference			

Q74. Do you feel that you have enough information about the cost of college or vocational school to start planning how to pay for your <child's/children's> future education?

yes  
no  
haven't thought about it yet

Q75. How do you plan to finance your <child/children's> education? <can choose any or all>

student loans  
lottery scholarships  
academic scholarships  
athletic scholarships  
your own savings  
your child/children's savings  
gifts or inheritances  
your employer pays  
other: \_\_\_\_\_

Q76. Have you started saving for your <child/children's> education?

yes  
no  
do not intend to  
don't know

## Appendix 1: Adult Telephone Survey Questionnaire, cont.

Q77. Which one of the following incentives would most encourage you to save more money for your <child/children's> education?

- State-administered 529 plan
- Automatic withdrawal from paycheck (yours or a family member's)
- Tax-free savings for education expenses
- Tax deductibility for tuition
- Tax deductibility for related-expenses like books, housing, food costs

Q78. Have you ever heard of...

- The Lifetime Learning tax credit? [yes, no, not sure]
- The HOPE tax credit? [yes, no, not sure]
- 529 college savings plans? [yes, no, not sure]
- Coverdale education savings account? [yes, no, not sure]
- Tennessee's BEST 529 Prepaid Plan? [yes, no, not sure]
- Tennessee's BEST 529 Savings Plan? [yes, no, not sure]

[IF NO TO ALL ON Q78, GO TO Q86]

[IF YES OR NOT SURE TO ANY ON Q78, GO TO Q79]

Q79. How did you hear about <from above; ask for each plan respondent has heard of>. Choose as many of the following options as apply:

- TV
- Radio
- Broker
- Your own research
- Newspaper
- Billboard
- Internet
- Friend/family
- Employer
- Advertising from a financial institution
- Don't know or don't remember
- Other (Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

Q80. Are you currently participating in any of the above?

- A. The Lifetime Learning tax credit? [yes, no, not sure]
- B. The HOPE tax credit? [yes, no, not sure]
- C. 529 college savings plans? [yes, no, not sure]
- D. Coverdale education savings account? [yes, no, not sure]
- E. Tennessee's BEST 529 Prepaid Plan? [yes, no, not sure]
- F. Tennessee's BEST 529 Savings Plan? [yes, no, not sure]

## Appendix 1: Adult Telephone Survey Questionnaire, cont.

[IF YES TO C, D, E, OR F ON Q80, GO TO Q81; ALL OTHER (nos and not sures), GO TO Q86]

Q81. How important were the following factors to you in choosing your current 529 plan? Would you say they were very important, somewhat important, or not important at all?

- the plan is affiliated with the state
- broker recommendation
- investment options
- plan fees
- recognition of TIAA-Cref or other plan manager
- performance returns
- color brochures
- don't know

Q82. How did you purchase your 529 investment?

- broker
- directly from the state or the state's representative like TIAA
- don't know

Q83. Will you be making monthly, quarterly, or a one-time contribution?

- monthly
- quarterly
- one-time

Q84. What amount?

\_\_\_\_\_

Q85. Would you be willing to pay an upfront sales charge to someone to give you investment advice based on a percentage of the amount invested?

- yes
- no
- don't know

Now I have a few questions about your household.

Q86. Do you have a computer or laptop at home?

- yes
- no

## Appendix 1: Adult Telephone Survey Questionnaire, cont.

Q87. Do you have access to the Internet at home?

yes  
no

Q88. So that we can group households geographically, may I have your ZIP Code?

\_\_\_\_\_  
[ZIP Code]

\_\_\_\_\_  
County (to be imported from sample)

Q89. Are you male or female?

male  
female

Q90. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

Q91. Are you of Hispanic or Latino national origin?

yes  
no  
don't know

Q92. What race do you consider yourself?

White  
Black or African American  
Asian  
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander  
American Indian or Alaska Native  
Mexican  
Puerto Rican  
Cuban  
Other

Q93. In studies like this, households are sometimes grouped according to income. What was the total income of all persons in your household over the past year, including salaries or other earnings, interest, retirement, and so on for all household members?

Less than \$15,000  
Between \$15,000 and 24,999  
Between \$25,000 and 49,999  
Between \$50,000 and 74,999  
Between \$75,000 and 99,999  
Between \$100,000 and 199,999  
Over \$200,000?

Those are all of the questions I have for you. Thank you very much for your participation.

# Part 2.

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Table of Contents for Part 1. Household Survey of Adult Tennesseans .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Table of Contents for Part 2. Survey of High School Juniors and Seniors .....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>I. Part 2. Methodology .....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>II. Categories for Analysis .....</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>III. Characteristics of Respondents .....</b>	<b>78</b>
Table 1: Characteristics of Respondents .....	79
Figure 1: Students' Perceptions of their Family's Income Compared to Other American Families .....	80
Figure 2: Students' Overall Grades Last Year .....	80
Table 2: Internal and External Factor Groupings .....	80
<b>IV. Opinions on the Importance of Education .....</b>	<b>81</b>
Table 3: Importance of Education .....	81
Figure 3: Percent Who Believe Education is Very Important to... ..	81
Table 4: Responses that Education Is "Not Important" to Career and Financial Security .....	82
Table 5: Responses that Education Is "Not Important" to Personal Life .....	83
Table 6: Factors Important to Achieving Life's Goals .....	84
Figure 4: Percent Who Believe These Factors Are Very Important to Achieving Life's Goals .....	84
Table 7: Factors Important to Achieving Life's Goals by Gender .....	85

## Table of Contents, Part 2., cont.

Table 8:	Importance of Own Education to Achieving Life's Goals, by Internal and External Factors .....	86
Table 9:	Importance of Educated Parents to Achieving Life's Goals, by Internal and External Factors .....	86
Table 10:	Importance of Family Wealth to Achieving Life's Goals, by Internal and External Factors .....	87
<b>V.</b>	<b>Satisfaction with Education and Importance of Current Subjects .....</b>	<b>88</b>
Table 11:	Satisfaction with Tennessee Education, by Gender, Grades, Income, and School Type .....	88
Table 12:	Satisfaction with Tennessee Education, by Internal and External Factors .....	89
Table 13:	Importance of Current Subjects, by Gender, Grades, Income, School Type, Advanced Placement and College Prep Courses, and Plans to Continue Education .....	90
Table 14:	Importance of Current Subjects, by Internal and External Factors .....	91
<b>VI.</b>	<b>Educational Expectations and Plans for the First Year after Graduation ....</b>	<b>92</b>
Table 15:	Highest Level of Education Expected, by Gender, Grades, Income, and School Type .....	92
Figure 5:	Highest Level of Education Students Expect to Achieve in Their Lifetime .....	93
Table 16:	Highest Level of Education Expected, by Internal and External Factors .....	94
Figure 6:	Highest Level of Education Expected, by Home Support Ratings .....	94
Table 17:	Plans for First Year after High School .....	95
Figure 7:	Plans for First Year after High School .....	95
Table 18:	Plans for Continuing Education in First Year after High School, by Gender, Grades, Income, and School Type .....	96
Figure 8:	Plans for Continuing Education in First Year after High School, by Family Income .	96
Table 19:	Plans for Continuing Education in First Year after High School, by Internal and External Factors .....	97

## Table of Contents, Part 2., cont.

<b>VII.</b>	<b>Students Planning to Attend College .....</b>	<b>98</b>
Table 20:	State or Region Where Student Plans to Go to College .....	98
Table 21:	Reasons for Attending College Outside of Tennessee .....	98
Table 22:	Reasons for Attending College in Tennessee .....	99
Figure 9:	Reasons for Attending College Inside or Outside of Tennessee .....	99
Table 23:	Number of Times Taken ACT .....	100
Table 24:	Composite ACT Score on Most Recent Attempt .....	100
Table 25:	Intended Program of Study .....	101
Table 26:	First in Family to Attend College .....	101
Table 27:	Plans to Pay for Future Education9 .....	102
Table 28:	Already Saving for College .....	102
<b>VIII.</b>	<b>Students Not Planning to Attend College .....</b>	<b>103</b>
Table 29:	Biggest Reason for Choosing Not to Continue Education after High School .....	103
Table 30:	State or Region Where Respondent Plans to Live after High School .....	103
<b>IX.</b>	<b>Comparisons to National Data .....</b>	<b>104</b>
Table 31:	Comparisons between Tennessee Students and National Survey Respondents ....	104
	<b>References and Resources for Questionnaire .....</b>	<b>105</b>
	<b>Appendix A: High School Survey Questionnaire .....</b>	<b>106</b>



## **I. Part 2. Methodology**

This report is based on a survey of 10,976 juniors and seniors in 39 public high schools and three private schools across the state of Tennessee. Participating public schools were identified by the Tennessee Department of Education as representative of various state geographic and demographic characteristics. Three private high schools volunteered to distribute the survey to their students. While neither the students nor schools were randomly selected and therefore the results can not be simply extrapolated to all junior and senior high schools students in the state of Tennessee, the results do reflect the opinions of 10,976 students in 42 different high schools.

The instrument was designed to determine the students' attitudes about the value of education in general, their satisfaction with their own education, their future education plans, and other demographic characteristics. A copy of the instrument is attached as Appendix A to this report. The paper-and-pencil survey was administered to students in junior and senior classes who were present on the day of administration. All high schools completed the survey during a one- or two-day period starting on October 25, 2005 and ending by November 24, 2005. Student participation was voluntary, and no identifying information was collected.

## II. Categories for Analysis

Throughout this report, reference to and comparisons of students will be made across demographic groups as well as across groups of students who responded similarly to certain questions. To assess students' perceptions of key external and internal factors that might affect their attitudes about education, the survey included 26 questions about the 1) strengths and weaknesses of their school ("school assets"), 2) support they receive from the teachers or other adults at their school ("school support"), 3) support they receive from their parent or other adults in their home ("home support"), 4) their own interpersonal skills, and 5) their own problem-solving skills.<sup>1</sup>

Those 26 questions asked students to rate statements on a 4-point scale from 1 (definitely not true for me) to 4 (definitely true for me). Students could also indicate that they did not know or that they did not want to answer the question. Those two selections were not considered in this analysis. Responses were then categorized as "high" or "low," where "high" represents students whose average rating for the questions in that category was above 2.5, or in other words, they were more likely to respond that the statements were mostly true or definitely true for them. "Low" of course represents the opposite—that the students were more likely to indicate that these statements were mostly *not* true or definitely *not* true for them (2.5 or less).

A summary of the survey questions contained in each of the external and internal groupings appears on the following page.

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<sup>1</sup> The methodology and survey questions relating to the internal and external factor groupings were adapted from WestEd's Resilience & Youth Development Module, a component of the California Department of Education Healthy Kids Program Office's youth development initiative and the California Healthy Kids Survey.

## II. Categories for Analysis, cont.

<b>External Factors</b>	
<b>School assets</b>	How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the school you are in right now?
	I feel close to people at this school.
	I am happy to be at this school.
	This school challenges me.
	The teachers at this school treat students fairly.
	I feel safe in my school
	I like coming to school most days.
<b>School support</b>	I have a close relationship with at least one of my teachers or school administrators.
	At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult who...
	really cares about me.
	tells me when I do a good job.
	notices when I'm not there.
	always wants me to do my best.
	listens to me when I have something to say.
	believes I will be a success.
<b>Home support</b>	In my home, there is a parent or some other adult who...
	expects me to follow the rules.
	is interested in my school work.
	believes that I will be a success.
	always wants me to do my best.
	wants me to go to college or some other school after high school.
<b>Internal Factors</b>	
<b>Interpersonal skills</b>	During the school year, I...
	do things that make a positive difference to other students.
	do things that make a positive difference in my community.
	I can work with someone who has opinions that are different than mine.
	I enjoy working with other students my age.
	I try to understand how other people feel and think.
<b>Problem-solving skills</b>	I know where to go for help with a problem.
	I can work out my own problems.
	I can do most things if I try.

### III. Characteristics of Respondents

There were 10,976 usable responses<sup>2</sup> to the survey, with 6,041 high school juniors and 4,916 high school seniors. The median age<sup>3</sup> of respondents was 17 years and more than 98 percent were between 16 and 18 years old. Less than 2 percent of respondents were from private schools, with the remainder attending a Tennessee public high school. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the sample by a number of demographics. Figures 1 and 2 show students' perceptions of their family income and what they report their overall grades were like last year.

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<sup>2</sup> 11,790 students in junior and senior level classes responded to the survey. 486 of these were removed manually and another 180 were removed algorithmically because they contained a number of invalid responses and/or a clear pattern of improper responses to the survey. An additional 148 surveys were removed because the respondent reported being a freshman or sophomore.

<sup>3</sup> A median is defined as the value that has an equal number of people above and below it.

### III. Characteristics of Respondents, cont.

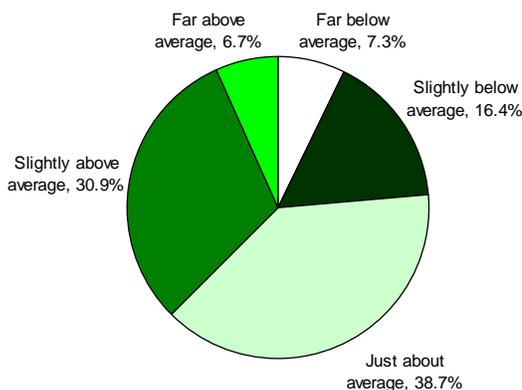
**Table 1: Characteristics of Respondents**

Age:	15 or younger	0.5%
	16	38.2%
	17	47.9%
	18	12.6%
	19 or older	0.8%
Sex:	Male	47.5%
	Female	52.5%
Race:	White	73.6%
	Black or African American	18.7%
	Asian	1.9%
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.4%
	American Indian or Alaska Native	0.7%
	Mexican	1.4%
	Puerto Rican	0.4%
	Cuban	0.2%
	Other	2.8%
Of Hispanic Origin:		4.1%
Family Income:	Far below average	7.3%
	Slightly below average	16.4%
	Just about average	38.7%
	Slightly above average	30.9%
	Far above average	6.7%
High School:	Public	98.1%
	Private	1.9%
	East Tennessee	34.0%
	Middle Tennessee	42.2%
	West Tennessee	23.9%
	Urban	12.9%
	Suburban	42.2%
Rural	44.9%	
Last year's grades:	Mostly As	29.4%
	Mostly Bs	40.2%
	Mostly Cs	25.4%
	Mostly Ds	3.9%
	Mostly below Ds	1.1%
Number of times taken ACT:	None	67.3%
	1	18.2%
	2	10.2%
	3	3.1%
	4 or more	1.3%
Language spoken at home:	English	94.1%
	Spanish	1.7%
	Chinese	1.1%
	French	0.3%
	German	0.6%
	Other	2.2%
Have a Computer at Home:		87.0%
Have Internet Access at Home:		79.4%

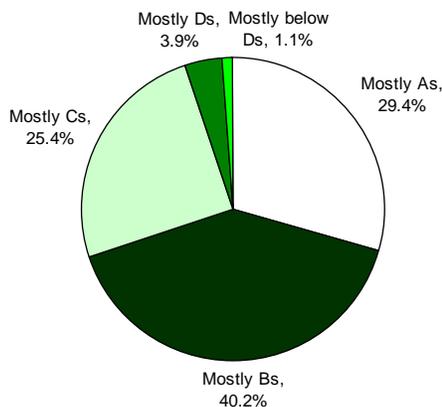
### III. Characteristics of Respondents, cont.

Table 2 provides a breakdown of students by their responses in the aforementioned external and internal factor groupings, which will provide an important basis for comparison in this report. Table 2 can be read as follows: approximately 94 percent of respondents indicate that they have a high level of support at home from a parent or other adult while only 6 percent (634 respondents) describe low levels of support at home.

**Figure 1: Students' Perceptions of their Family's Income Compared to Other American Families**



**Figure 2: Students' Overall Grades Last Year**



**Table 2: Internal and External Factor Groupings**

		High	Low
External Factors			
	School Assets	59.3%	40.7%
	School Support	70.8%	19.2%
	Home Support	94.2%	5.8%
Internal Factors			
	Interpersonal Skills	80.0%	20.0%
	Problem-Solving Skills	92.6%	7.4%

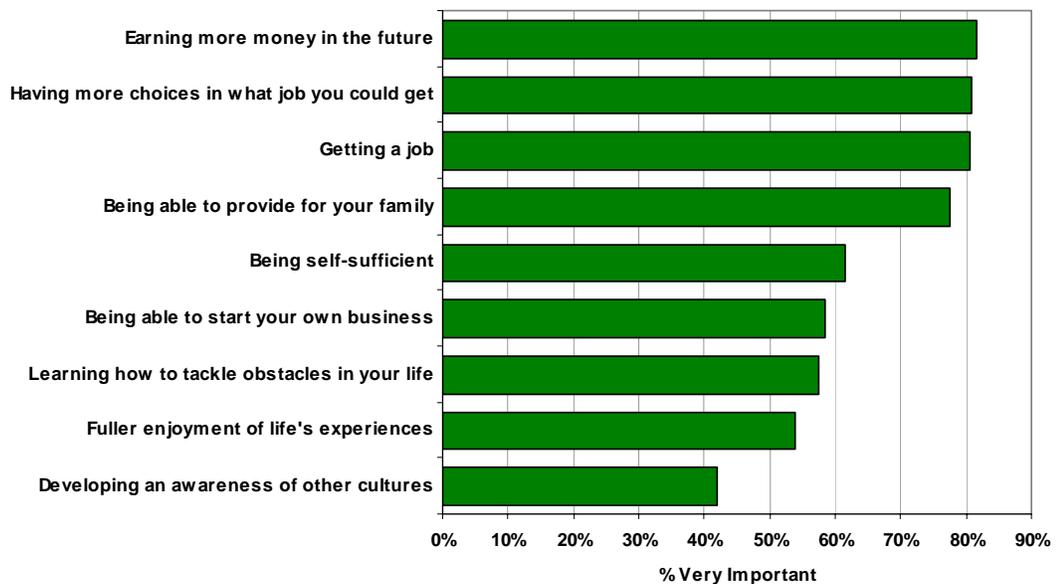
## IV. Opinions on the Importance of Education

Most respondents consider education very important, particularly with respect to employment and financial issues, but a disturbingly large group place little value on education. More than 75 percent consider education “very important” to getting a job, having career options, earning more money, and providing for a family (see Table 3 and Figure 3). More than 50 percent consider it very important to self-sufficiency, starting a business, tackling obstacles in life, and fully enjoying life’s experiences. Only “developing an awareness of other cultures” receives “very important” responses of less than 50 percent, yet few (less than 15 percent) considered it “not important.”

**Table 3: Importance of Education**

How important is education to . . .	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
earning more money in the future?	81.7%	15.3%	3.0%
having more choices in what job you could get?	80.7%	16.4%	2.8%
getting a job?	80.5%	16.6%	2.9%
being able to provide for your family?	77.6%	17.6%	4.7%
being self-sufficient?	61.4%	31.9%	6.7%
being able to start your own business?	58.4%	31.1%	10.5%
learning how to tackle obstacles in your life?	57.4%	33.0%	9.7%
fuller enjoyment of life’s experiences?	53.9%	38.9%	7.1%
developing an awareness of other cultures?	41.8%	43.8%	14.3%

**Figure 3: Percent Who Believe Education is Very Important to...**



## IV. Opinions on the Importance of Education, cont.

Students respond quite differently to these questions across several different groupings. Throughout, all groups consistently note the importance of education to career opportunities and financial security (responses of “very important” were the most common in all cases). However, those with low response ratings on the internal and external factors are far more likely to consider education “not important” than those with high ratings (see Table 4). This is especially true for students who lack strong support at home; they were more than six times as likely to say that education is not important to getting a job, having more job choices, and earning more money than those with parental support.

**Table 4: Responses that Education Is “Not Important” to Career and Financial Security**

Education is "not important" to . . .	Earning More Money	Job Choices	Getting a Job	Providing for Family	Being Self-Sufficient	Starting Own Business
<b>School Assets</b>						
High	1.9%	1.8%	2.0%	3.2%	4.2%	9.0%
Low	4.7%	4.3%	4.4%	7.0%	10.6%	12.7%
<b>School Support</b>						
High	2.2%	2.1%	2.2%	3.5%	5.2%	9.1%
Low	6.8%	5.9%	6.3%	10.3%	13.8%	16.6%
<b>Home Support</b>						
High	2.2%	2.1%	2.3%	3.9%	5.9%	9.6%
Low	17.4%	16.3%	14.6%	19.7%	21.6%	25.2%
<b>Interpersonal Skills</b>						
High	2.2%	2.0%	2.1%	3.7%	5.2%	9.1%
Low	6.8%	6.2%	6.5%	9.4%	13.3%	16.1%
<b>Problem-Solving Skills</b>						
High	2.3%	2.0%	2.2%	4.0%	5.9%	9.6%
Low	12.6%	13.0%	12.6%	15.4%	17.1%	21.7%

## IV. Opinions on the Importance of Education, cont.

A similar separation exists when respondents report how important education is for more personal opportunities (see Table 5). All groups of respondents find education less important to these areas than to career and finances, but again those with low responses in each group are far more likely to find education “not important” at all.

**Table 5: Responses that Education Is “Not Important” to Personal Life**

Education is "not important" to . . .	Cultural Awareness	Tackling Life's Obstacles	Fuller Enjoyment of Experiences
<b>School Assets</b>			
High	10.6%	6.7%	4.4%
Low	20.1%	14.1%	11.3%
<b>School Support</b>			
High	11.8%	7.8%	5.5%
Low	25.8%	18.4%	14.8%
<b>Home Support</b>			
High	13.4%	8.8%	6.0%
Low	30.5%	25.0%	26.5%
<b>Interpersonal Skills</b>			
High	11.1%	7.7%	5.2%
Low	28.6%	18.1%	15.5%
<b>Problem-Solving Skills</b>			
High	13.3%	8.7%	6.1%
Low	27.8%	23.3%	21.4%

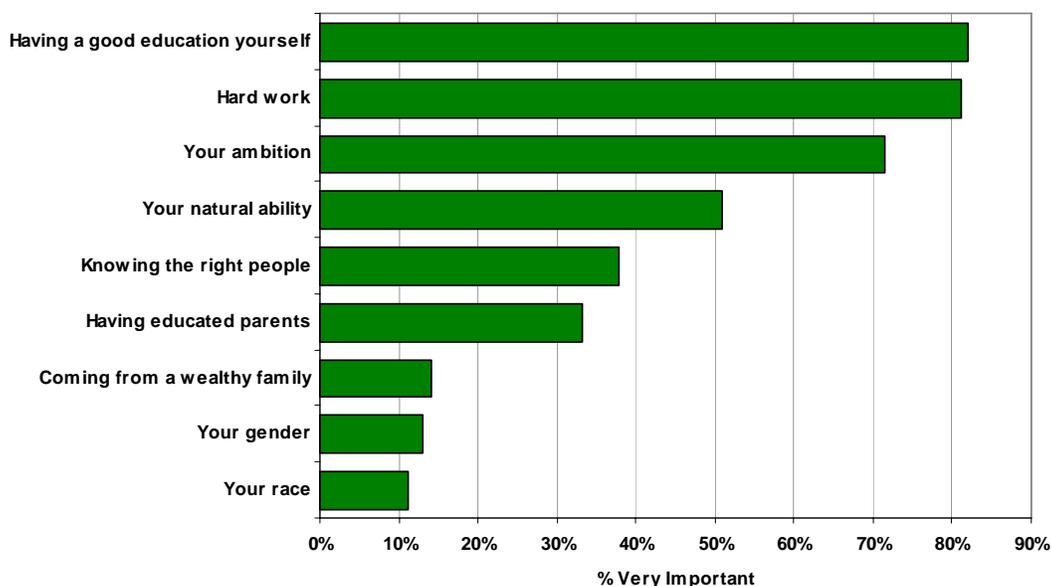
## IV. Opinions on the Importance of Education, cont.

Most students consider their education important to achieving their goals in life, with more than 80 percent responding that it is “very important,” comparable to their perceived importance of hard work (see Table 6 and Figure 4). About one-third of respondents also say that having educated parents is very important. Most also consider ambition and natural ability very important, while race, gender, and family wealth are considered “not important” by most.

**Table 6: Factors Important to Achieving Life’s Goals**

How important are the following factors in helping you reach your goals in life?	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
having a good education yourself	82.0%	15.8%	2.9%
hard work	81.2%	16.4%	3.3%
your ambition	71.5%	22.4%	3.8%
your natural ability	50.8%	43.6%	6.7%
knowing the right people	37.9%	43.3%	18.0%
having educated parents	33.1%	48.3%	20.0%
coming from a wealthy family	14.1%	29.7%	54.5%
your gender	13.0%	19.5%	67.8%
your race	11.1%	17.3%	69.2%

**Figure 4: Percent Who Believe These Factors Are Very Important to Achieving Life’s Goals**



#### IV. Opinions on the Importance of Education, cont.

Males and females, however, feel differently about what factors are important to achieving their life goals (see Table 7). The rank of each factor doesn't change much between the sexes, but the percentage of responses in some categories is very different. While both find their own education, hard work, and ambition important, female students respond considerably more often that it is "very important" and far less often that it is "not important" at all. Males, on the other hand, tend to respond more often that natural ability, connections, educated parents, family wealth, gender, and race are important while girls are more likely to reject this notion.

**Table 7: Factors Important to Achieving Life's Goals by Gender**

How important are the following factors in helping you reach your goals in life?	Very Important		Somewhat Important		Not Important	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
having a good education yourself	86.8%	75.5%	11.8%	20.0%	1.4%	4.5%
hard work	82.8%	77.9%	14.7%	18.1%	2.5%	4.1%
your ambition	78.1%	67.5%	19.4%	26.9%	2.5%	5.6%
your natural ability	48.7%	52.1%	45.0%	40.9%	6.3%	7.0%
knowing the right people	31.8%	45.4%	45.8%	41.4%	22.4%	13.2%
having educated parents	30.0%	35.7%	49.1%	46.0%	20.9%	18.4%
coming from a wealthy family	11.7%	17.4%	28.8%	31.9%	59.5%	50.8%
your gender	8.6%	17.8%	15.7%	23.8%	75.7%	58.4%
your race	6.9%	16.4%	13.5%	22.7%	79.7%	60.9%

## IV. Opinions on the Importance of Education, cont.

Large differences in education's importance on helping achieve life's goals also exist based on internal and external factors. Those with low responses in these groups tend to be far more likely to say that their own education is not important at all to achieving their goals in life (see Table 8). This is especially prevalent among students with low responses in Home Support; more than 18 percent say that their education is not important while only slightly more than half say it is very important. This is dramatically different than any other group.

A similar pattern emerges when the importance of having educated parents is assessed, though it is far less dramatic (see Table 9). Those with low ratings on internal and external factors are

**Table 8: Importance of Own Education to Achieving Life's Goals, by Internal and External Factors**

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
<b>School Assets</b>			
High	85.9%	12.6%	1.6%
Low	74.9%	20.3%	4.9%
<b>School Support</b>			
High	84.9%	13.4%	1.7%
Low	66.3%	25.7%	8.1%
<b>Home Support</b>			
High	83.3%	14.8%	2.0%
Low	50.7%	31.1%	18.2%
<b>Interpersonal Skills</b>			
High	84.9%	13.4%	1.7%
Low	67.1%	25.2%	7.6%
<b>Problem-Solving Skills</b>			
High	83.1%	15.0%	2.0%
Low	61.0%	24.9%	14.1%

**Table 9: Importance of Educated Parents to Achieving Life's Goals, by Internal and External Factors**

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
<b>School Assets</b>			
High	32.2%	50.2%	17.6%
Low	33.4%	43.7%	23.0%
<b>School Support</b>			
High	33.1%	48.6%	18.3%
Low	30.7%	43.3%	25.9%
<b>Home Support</b>			
High	32.8%	48.2%	19.0%
Low	29.5%	36.9%	33.6%
<b>Interpersonal Skills</b>			
High	32.7%	48.9%	18.5%
Low	32.6%	42.3%	25.1%
<b>Problem-Solving Skills</b>			
High	32.5%	48.2%	19.3%
Low	34.7%	40.3%	25.0%

## IV. Opinions on the Importance of Education, cont.

more likely to find their parents' education to be not important to achieving their own goals in life.

Students with low ratings on the internal and external factors were also more likely to see issues beyond their control, such as race, gender, and family wealth (see Table 10) as being very important to achieving their goals. There are also large differences in the way students responded based on their family's income. Those with the lowest and highest incomes found wealth to be more important than those whose incomes are closer to average.

**Table 10: Importance of Family Wealth to Achieving Life's Goals, by Internal and External Factors**

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
<b>School Assets</b>			
High	10.7%	32.3%	57.0%
Low	19.6%	27.2%	53.1%
<b>School Support</b>			
High	12.7%	30.8%	56.5%
Low	21.7%	27.7%	50.7%
<b>Home Support</b>			
High	13.4%	30.5%	56.0%
Low	29.6%	25.4%	45.0%
<b>Interpersonal Skills</b>			
High	12.1%	31.1%	56.8%
Low	23.5%	26.7%	49.8%
<b>Problem-Solving Skills</b>			
High	13.3%	30.4%	56.3%
Low	27.9%	27.8%	44.3%
<b>Family Income</b>			
Far below average	24.8%	23.8%	51.5%
Slightly below average	13.8%	25.0%	61.3%
Average	11.4%	28.4%	60.1%
Slightly above average	11.0%	36.3%	52.7%
Far above average	25.6%	39.5%	35.0%

## V. Satisfaction with Education and Importance of Current Subjects

Most respondents in the high school survey are satisfied with the education they have received so far in Tennessee, with 68 percent responding that they are “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” (see Table 11). There are some significant differences, however, among different groups of respondents. Male respondents are slightly less likely to say they are satisfied and more likely to express that they are “very dissatisfied.” Satisfaction also closely correlates to the student’s performance in school. Students earning higher grades tend to be satisfied with their education, while those with lower grades are far more likely to express dissatisfaction. Students from lower-income families are also likely to express that they are dissatisfied with their education; among students that say their family’s income is “far below average,” nearly one-fourth say they are “somewhat” or “very” dissatisfied with their education. Also, while satisfaction in public schools is still high, responses are not nearly as positive as those from private schools. Almost 85 percent of students from private schools express satisfaction compared to just 68 percent of students from Tennessee’s public schools.

**Table 11: Satisfaction with Tennessee Education, by Gender, Grades, Income, and School Type<sup>5</sup>**

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neither	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
<b>Overall</b>	23.4%	44.9%	18.6%	7.7%	5.4%
<b>Gender</b>					
Female	24.3%	47.6%	16.3%	7.9%	3.9%
Male	22.5%	41.9%	21.2%	7.5%	7.0%
<b>Grades</b>					
Mostly As	26.9%	46.7%	13.7%	8.1%	4.6%
Mostly Bs	24.8%	46.1%	17.6%	6.7%	4.8%
Mostly Cs	19.0%	44.2%	23.5%	8.4%	4.9%
Mostly Ds	14.7%	30.0%	31.7%	9.1%	14.5%
Mostly below Ds	16.8%	19.5%	25.7%	6.2%	31.9%
<b>Family Income</b>					
Far below average	23.5%	33.4%	18.4%	10.3%	14.4%
Slightly below average	20.3%	44.3%	20.8%	9.3%	5.3%
Average	22.9%	46.8%	19.8%	6.8%	3.8%
Slightly above average	23.6%	48.3%	16.0%	7.4%	4.6%
Far above average	29.5%	39.8%	13.3%	8.4%	9.0%
<b>School Type</b>					
Public	23.1%	44.9%	18.8%	7.8%	5.5%
Private	38.9%	45.7%	9.6%	4.3%	1.4%

<sup>5</sup> This report highlights breakdowns of respondent characteristics to demonstrate how responses change based on different respondent groups. Some of these breakdowns may involve characteristics that could be considered closely related to the outcome being analyzed. For example, the grades a student earns might determine the student’s satisfaction with his or her education but also might be partially determined by the student’s satisfaction. While this should be noted, the comparisons and breakdowns remain valuable for assessing relationships between these characteristics and related opinions or outcomes.

## V. Satisfaction and Importance of Current Subjects, cont.

Students' ratings on internal and external factors reveal considerable differences in satisfaction with education (see Table 12). More than 80 percent of those with a high response to their school's assets expressed satisfaction with their education; however, for those with a low response, the level of satisfaction is about 50 percent and the dissatisfaction was more than 23 percent. Students lacking support from a teacher or administrator expressed dissatisfaction with the highest frequency, with almost 12 percent being somewhat dissatisfied and more than 15 percent being very dissatisfied. Support from a parent or guardian at home remains a significant issue; more than 25 percent of respondents without home support express dissatisfaction with their education.

**Table 12: Satisfaction with Tennessee Education, by Internal and External Factors**

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neither	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
<b>School Assets</b>					
High	30.9%	49.9%	13.2%	4.6%	1.3%
Low	12.5%	37.6%	26.4%	12.1%	11.4%
<b>School Support</b>					
High	26.0%	47.8%	16.4%	6.7%	3.1%
Low	12.8%	32.6%	27.6%	11.8%	15.2%
<b>Home Support</b>					
High	23.8%	46.0%	18.1%	7.5%	4.6%
Low	18.2%	30.1%	26.2%	10.1%	15.5%
<b>Interpersonal Skills</b>					
High	25.4%	47.6%	16.4%	7.3%	3.5%
Low	15.5%	34.3%	27.7%	9.3%	13.2%
<b>Problem-Solving Skills</b>					
High	24.0%	46.2%	17.9%	7.4%	4.5%
Low	16.8%	29.7%	27.1%	11.2%	15.2%

## V. Satisfaction and Importance of Current Subjects, cont.

The students respond in similar fashion when asked how important their current courses will be for later in their life (see Table 13). Less than 8 percent of respondents say that their current subjects are not important at all, while 39 percent find them very important. Once again, male students respond more negatively than females, with 11 percent finding no importance in their current classes. The respondents' grades make a very large difference in their response to this question; 45 percent of A-students find their courses very important, while less than 16 percent of students with grades below Ds feel this way. More than 40 percent of the students earning low grades find their current subjects to be not important at all. Students coming from very high-income or very low-income families are more likely to find their classes unimportant (17 percent and 11 percent, respectively) than their middle-income peers.

Students who are taking advanced or college preparatory classes are more likely to find their courses important than students taking only standard-level classes. Private school students provide interesting responses to this question; they are less likely to believe their classes are not important,

**Table 13: Importance of Current Subjects, by Gender, Grades, Income, School Type, Advanced Placement and College Prep Courses, and Plans to Continue Education**

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important at All
<b>Overall</b>	39.0%	53.4%	7.6%
<b>Gender</b>			
Female	42.2%	53.3%	4.5%
Male	35.5%	53.6%	11.0%
<b>Grades</b>			
Mostly As	45.0%	50.5%	4.4%
Mostly Bs	39.5%	54.4%	6.1%
Mostly Cs	34.7%	55.3%	10.0%
Mostly Ds	21.8%	55.0%	23.2%
Mostly below Ds	15.7%	43.5%	40.9%
<b>Family Income</b>			
Far below average	34.7%	48.6%	16.7%
Slightly below average	37.9%	53.4%	8.7%
Average	39.4%	54.5%	6.1%
Slightly above average	38.8%	55.9%	5.3%
Far above average	39.8%	49.3%	11.0%
<b>School Type</b>			
Public	39.2%	53.1%	7.7%
Private	28.9%	66.4%	4.8%
<b>AP, CP Courses</b>			
Taking neither	35.5%	55.3%	9.2%
Taking AP,CP or both	44.6%	50.5%	5.0%
<b>Plans to Continue Education</b>			
Yes or maybe	41.2%	53.4%	5.4%
No	32.1%	53.4%	14.5%

## V. Satisfaction and Importance of Current Subjects, cont.

but also less likely to believe their classes are very important. About two-thirds say instead that their subjects are “somewhat” important. Not surprisingly, respondents who plan to continue their education within a year of graduating high school tend to see more importance in their current coursework. Those with no plans to continue are three times as likely to find their subjects unimportant.

Once again, internal and external factors reveal some large differences among students concerning the importance of their current subjects (see Table 14). Students rating any factors as low have more of a tendency to view their courses as unimportant. This is especially true of students who lack support from a parent or guardian at home; nearly one-third of these respondents say that their current subjects are not important at all to their future. Also, more than 26 percent of respondents with a low rating on problem-solving skills and more than 20 percent of respondents with a low rating on interpersonal skills say that their current school subjects are not important at all, indicating that both internal and external factors play a key role in the students' attitudes toward their current classes.

**Table 14: Importance of Current Subjects, by Internal and External Factors**

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important at All
<b>School Assets</b>			
High	45.3%	51.7%	3.1%
Low	29.9%	55.8%	14.3%
<b>School Support</b>			
High	42.4%	53.2%	4.4%
Low	25.0%	53.9%	21.0%
<b>Home Support</b>			
High	40.1%	53.9%	6.0%
Low	22.4%	45.0%	32.6%
<b>Interpersonal Skills</b>			
High	42.6%	53.0%	4.4%
Low	24.8%	54.8%	20.5%
<b>Problem-Solving Skills</b>			
High	40.1%	53.8%	6.1%
Low	26.5%	47.1%	26.5%

## VI. Educational Expectations and Plans for the First Year after Graduation

Most students have very high expectations for their educational attainment, with 64 percent expecting to obtain a bachelor's degree or higher degree (see Table 15 and Figure 5). Only 5 percent expect their education to stop with a high school diploma, though 17 percent have not decided. Expectations are a bit higher for female students (of whom 71 percent expect a bachelor's degree or more) than for male students (57 percent). Students attending private schools and students with exceptional grades also have higher expectations. Those with lower grades tend to

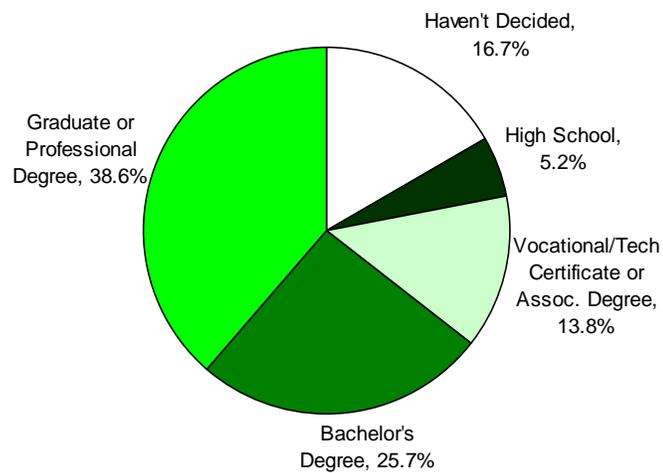
**Table 15: Highest Level of Education Expected, by Gender, Grades, Income, and School Type**

	Haven't Decided	High School	Vocational/Tech Certificate or Assoc. Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree
<b>Overall</b>	16.7%	5.2%	13.8%	25.7%	38.6%
<b>Gender</b>					
Female	15.6%	3.2%	10.2%	24.5%	46.5%
Male	17.9%	7.4%	17.9%	27.1%	29.8%
<b>Grades</b>					
Mostly As	11.6%	1.4%	9.2%	24.8%	57.8%
Mostly Bs	15.6%	4.1%	12.9%	29.3%	38.0%
Mostly Cs	21.3%	8.5%	23.5%	24.0%	22.7%
Mostly Ds	27.8%	17.6%	29.2%	13.0%	12.3%
Mostly below Ds	31.0%	22.1%	21.2%	10.6%	15.0%
<b>Family Income</b>					
Far below average	15.8%	12.9%	20.4%	20.2%	30.7%
Slightly below average	16.6%	6.6%	17.8%	22.5%	36.5%
Average	15.9%	4.5%	15.7%	28.5%	35.5%
Slightly above average	12.3%	2.8%	9.7%	29.0%	46.2%
Far above average	11.2%	2.6%	9.1%	24.2%	52.9%
<b>School Type</b>					
Public	16.7%	5.3%	14.1%	25.8%	38.2%
Private	17.8%	0.5%	1.0%	21.6%	59.1%

## VI. Educational Expectations, cont.

expect their education to stop after high school or at most with a two-year or technical degree. Students from lower-income families are also less likely to pursue a college education, with 13 percent expecting to stop after high school. Many students (17 percent) say they haven't decided how much education they plan to obtain; this response is more common among juniors (19 percent) than seniors (13 percent).

**Figure 5: Highest Level of Education Students Expect to Achieve in Their Lifetime**



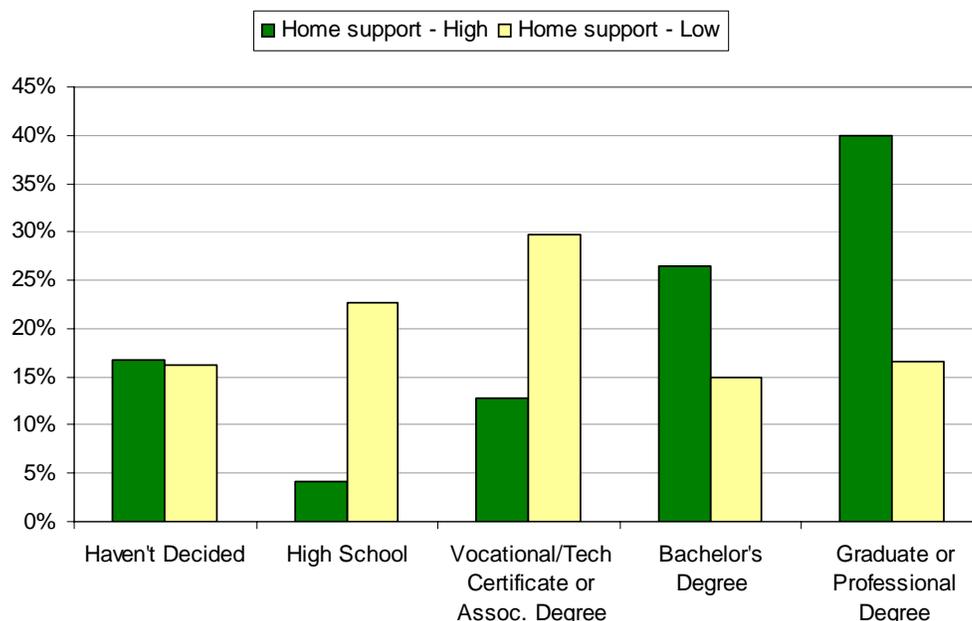
## VI. Educational Expectations, cont.

Students with low ratings on internal and external factors also tend to have lower expectations for their educational attainment (see Table 16). Once again the most dramatic difference is between students who have support at home and those who don't. Among the former, only 4 percent expect to stop their education after high school; among the latter, 23 percent have that expectation (see Figure 6).

**Table 16: Highest Level of Education Expected, by Internal and External Factors**

	Haven't Decided	High School	Vocational/Tech Certificate or Assoc. Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree
<b>School Assets</b>					
High	15.3%	3.3%	10.9%	27.6%	42.8%
Low	18.7%	7.9%	18.1%	23.0%	32.4%
<b>School Support</b>					
High	15.5%	3.8%	12.0%	26.9%	41.8%
Low	21.5%	10.8%	21.4%	20.8%	25.4%
<b>Home Support</b>					
High	16.7%	4.1%	12.8%	26.4%	40.0%
Low	16.2%	22.6%	29.7%	15.0%	16.5%
<b>Interpersonal Skills</b>					
High	15.4%	3.2%	11.5%	27.2%	42.9%
Low	21.9%	13.2%	23.2%	20.1%	21.6%
<b>Problem-Solving Skills</b>					
High	16.3%	4.3%	12.9%	26.5%	40.1%
Low	21.7%	15.7%	23.8%	17.4%	21.4%

**Figure 6: Highest Level of Education Expected, by Home Support Ratings**



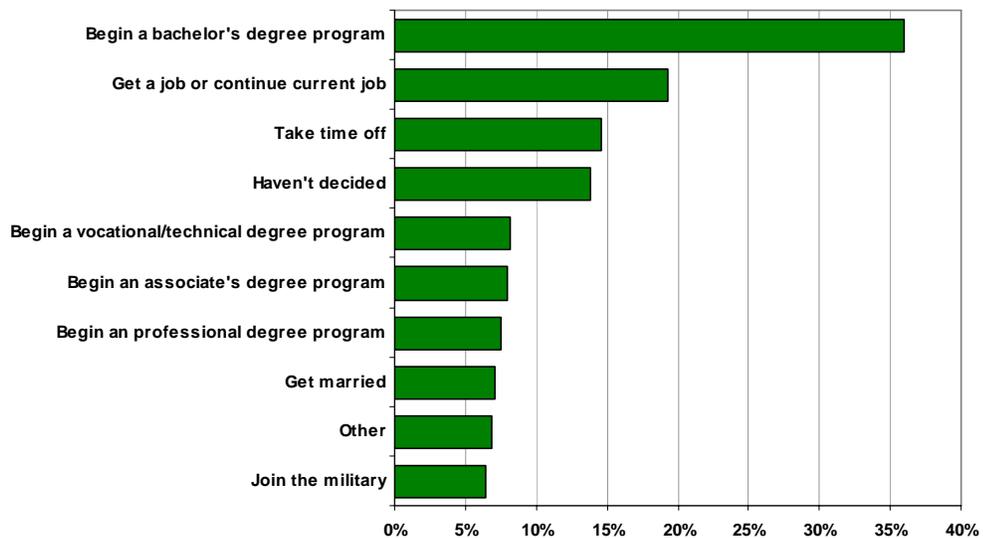
## VI. Educational Expectations, cont.

With expectations among respondents being so high, it is not surprising that 58 percent plan to begin a degree program (vocational/technical, associate, bachelor, professional program) in their first year after high school (see Table 17 and Figure 7). Some students plan to work (19 percent) or take time off (15 percent), while a small number plan to get married (7 percent) or join the military (7 percent). Again, many students report being undecided about their plans upon graduation (14 percent).

**Table 17: Plans for First Year after High School<sup>6</sup>**

Begin a bachelor's degree program	35.9%
Get a job or continue current job	19.3%
Take time off	14.6%
Begin a vocational/technical degree program	8.2%
Begin an associate's degree program	7.9%
Begin an professional degree program	7.5%
Get married	7.0%
Join the military	6.5%
Other	6.9%
Haven't decided	13.8%

**Figure 7: Plans for First Year after High School**



<sup>6</sup> These responses are not mutually exclusive.

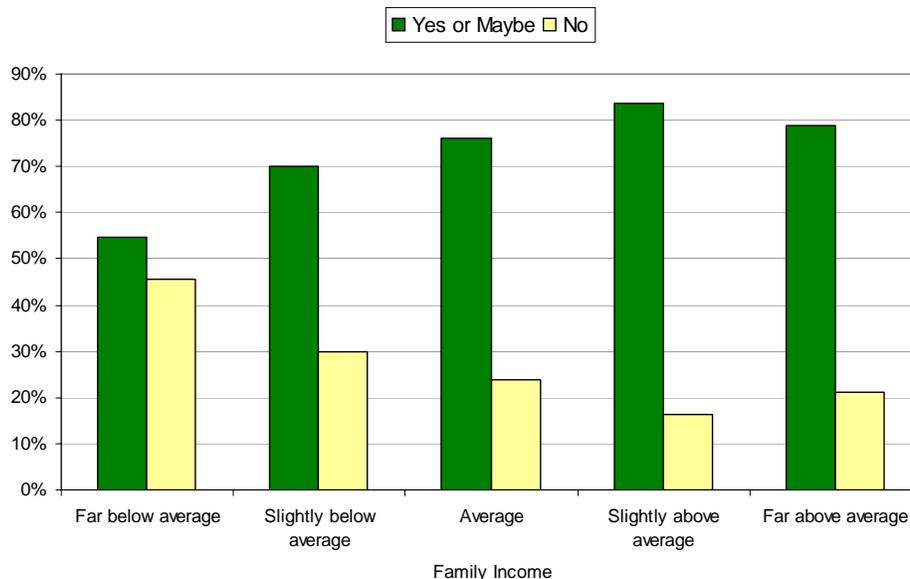
## VI. Educational Expectations, cont.

Based on these responses, almost one-fourth of respondents have no plans to continue their education in their first year after graduating high school, while the other three-fourths have explicit plans to continue their education or have not yet decided (see Table 18 and Figure 8). This means that many students will need to continue their education at a later date if 64 percent plan to obtain a bachelor's degree. Students with no immediate plans to continue their education are most commonly male, have low grades, come from low income families, and attend public schools.

**Table 18: Plans for Continuing Education in First Year after High School, by Gender, Grades, Income, and School Type**

	Yes or Maybe	No
<b>Overall</b>	75.4%	24.6%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	82.2%	17.8%
Male	68.0%	32.0%
<b>Grades</b>		
Mostly As	89.6%	10.4%
Mostly Bs	77.7%	22.3%
Mostly Cs	61.2%	38.8%
Mostly Ds	46.2%	53.8%
Mostly below Ds	40.9%	59.1%
<b>Family Income</b>		
Far below average	54.5%	45.5%
Slightly below average	70.1%	29.9%
Average	76.1%	24.0%
Slightly above average	83.6%	16.4%
Far above average	78.9%	21.1%
<b>School Type</b>		
Public	75.1%	24.9%
Private	88.6%	11.4%

**Figure 8: Plans for Continuing Education in First Year after High School, by Family Income**



## VI. Educational Expectations, cont.

Students with low ratings on the internal and external factors are less likely to say they have plans for education in the first year after high school (see Table 19). Nearly 60 percent of students who say they do not receive support at home have no education plans in the first year after high school. Similarly, students with low ratings on school support and assets as well as on internal factors are considerably more likely to say they don't plan to continue their education after graduation.

**Table 19: Plans for Continuing Education in First Year after High School, by Internal and External Factors**

	Yes or Maybe	No
<b>School Assets</b>		
High	81.0%	19.0%
Low	67.2%	32.8%
<b>School Support</b>		
High	79.2%	20.8%
Low	59.6%	40.4%
<b>Home Support</b>		
High	77.6%	22.4%
Low	40.5%	59.5%
<b>Interpersonal Skills</b>		
High	79.9%	20.1%
Low	57.7%	42.3%
<b>Problem-Solving Skills</b>		
High	77.4%	22.7%
Low	52.0%	48.0%

## VII. Students Planning to Attend College

Most respondents who plan to attend college intend to enroll in a college in Tennessee (see Table 20). About 28 percent plan to attend a college in another state, while a small number would like to study abroad. Interestingly, students in East Tennessee are more likely to stay in-state than students in Middle and West Tennessee.

Students give assorted reasons for wanting to leave Tennessee to attend college, with the most common being location, quality of the institution, and program availability (see Table 21 and Figure 9).

**Table 20: State or Region Where Student Plans to Go to College**

	Tennessee	Other U.S. State	Outside the U.S.
<b>Overall</b>	70.1%	28.4%	1.4%
<b>Grand Division</b>			
East Tennessee	74.4%	24.1%	1.5%
Middle Tennessee	67.9%	30.6%	1.5%
West Tennessee	68.2%	30.6%	1.2%

**Table 21: Reasons for Attending College Outside of Tennessee<sup>7</sup>**

Location	22.6%
Quality of institution	19.3%
Program availability	15.9%
Reputation of institution	10.6%
Scholarship availability	9.9%
Athletic ability	9.5%
Scholastic ability	8.6%
Cost	3.6%
Other	22.3%

<sup>7</sup> These responses are not mutually exclusive.

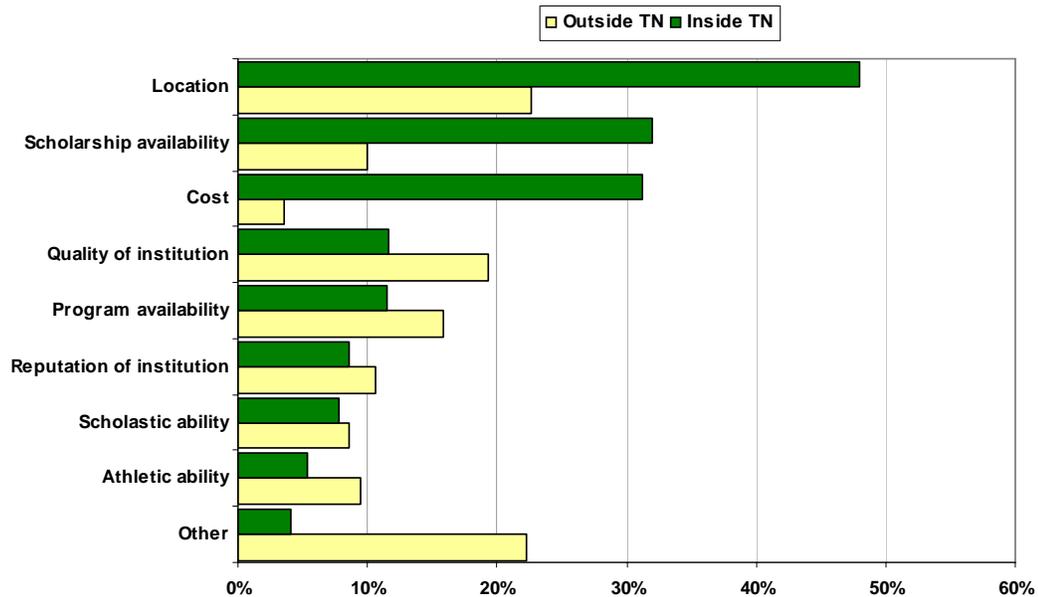
## VII. Students Planning to Attend College, cont.

Location is also the top reason students give for wanting to stay in Tennessee to go to school (see Table 22 and Figure 9). Other major factors are scholarship availability and cost.

**Table 22: Reasons for Attending College in Tennessee<sup>8</sup>**

Location	48.0%
Scholarship availability	32.0%
Cost	31.2%
Quality of institution	11.7%
Program availability	11.5%
Reputation of institution	8.5%
Scholastic ability	7.8%
Athletic ability	5.4%
Other	4.1%

**Figure 9: Reasons for Attending College Inside or Outside of Tennessee**



<sup>8</sup> These responses are not mutually exclusive.

## VII. Students Planning to Attend College, cont.

Despite intending to attend college after graduation, almost two-thirds of these students have not yet taken the ACT (see Table 23). Just over 20 percent have taken it once, while about 17 percent have taken it multiple times.

Most students planning to attend college respond that they scored between 16 and 27 composite on their most recent attempt at the ACT (see Table 24). About 10 percent said they scored higher than 28, while 6 percent said they scored below a 16.

**Table 23: Number of Times Taken ACT**

None	62.3%
1	20.4%
2	12.3%
3	3.6%
4 or more	1.4%

**Table 24: Composite ACT Score on Most Recent Attempt**

1-12	0.9%
13-15	5.3%
16-19	28.3%
20-23	33.6%
24-27	21.5%
28-32	8.8%
33-36	1.6%

## VII. Students Planning to Attend College, cont.

Pre-medicine is the most common choice for program of study in college (see Table 25), with nursing and business also getting a significant percentage of responses. Many students (15 percent) have a program besides those listed in mind or have not yet decided (15 percent).

Almost one-fourth of all students planning to attend college say they would be the first in their family to do so (see Table 26). Some students (5 percent) are not sure if they would be the first or not, while most (71 percent) say they would not be the first in their family to get a college education.

**Table 25: Intended Program of Study**

Pre-med	11.4%
Nursing	9.6%
Business	8.3%
Philosophy, political science, psychology, religious studies, sociology, or social work	6.0%
Education	5.7%
Engineering	5.5%
Arts	4.2%
Pre-law	4.1%
Astronomy, biology, botany, chemistry, physics	3.5%
Music	2.8%
Computer science	2.7%
Architecture	2.6%
Automotive repair	2.0%
Communications or information	1.8%
Other	15.4%
Haven't decided	14.5%

**Table 26: First in Family to Attend College**

Yes	24.2%
No	71.0%
Not sure	4.8%

## VII. Students Planning to Attend College, cont.

Many students are counting on receiving scholarships to help them pay for their education (see Table 27). Thirty-seven percent plan to receive academic scholarships, and 36 percent expect to receive lottery scholarships from the state of Tennessee. Many students also believe they will need their parents' savings (33 percent), student loans (29 percent), and their own savings (18 percent). Nearly 14 percent of students planning to attend college have not yet thought about how to pay for it. More than half of students or their parents have already started saving for college (see Table 28).

**Table 27: Plans to Pay for Future Education<sup>9</sup>**

Academic scholarships	37.0%
Lottery scholarships	35.8%
Parents' savings	33.4%
Student loans	28.8%
Own savings	18.5%
Athletic scholarships	11.6%
Gifts or inheritances	11.0%
Haven't thought about it	13.8%

**Table 28: Already Saving for College**

Yes	53.7%
No	23.8%
Not sure	22.6%

---

<sup>9</sup> These responses are not mutually exclusive.

## VIII. Students Not Planning to Attend College

Among students who do not plan to attend college, the biggest reason is simply that the student does not like school (see Table 29). Financial issues are a major concern, with a combined 23 percent of respondents indicating that they won't go because they want to earn money first, that it would cost them too much, or that it would cost their parents too much. However, many of these students simply haven't thought about continuing their education (19 percent), don't see the point (10 percent), or just have no reason to go to college (1 percent).

More than half of students that do not intend to go to college plan to remain in Tennessee after high school (see Table 30), with about 40 percent planning to move to another state and 4 percent planning to live abroad.

**Table 29: Biggest Reason for Choosing Not to Continue Education after High School**

Don't like school	13.9%
Want to earn money first	12.0%
Don't see the point	10.1%
Want to join the military	9.4%
It would cost me too much	6.4%
Grades are too low	6.1%
Want to start a family	5.9%
It will cost my family too much	4.9%
Health won't allow it	3.4%
Job doesn't require it	3.4%
Want to travel	3.3%
No reason to go	1.3%
No teacher support	0.3%
No family support	0.1%
Never thought about it	19.4%

**Table 30: State or Region Where Respondent Plans to Live after High School**

Tennessee	56.7%
Other U.S. State	39.7%
Outside the U.S.	3.5%

## IX. Comparisons to National Data

Annually, the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans produces a report detailing their results from a national survey of high school students (9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders) about their feelings and opinions on various issues. (The State of Our Nation's Youth, 2005-2006). There are some useful comparisons between the findings in their survey and those from this present survey of Tennessee's juniors and seniors. As shown in Table 31, respondents in Tennessee generally take fewer advanced placement and college preparatory classes, and fewer have intentions to begin a two-year or four-year degree program. They are more likely to have said that they consider a friend, family member, or religious leader a role model and less likely to say that they would consider a teacher or business leader. Consistent with actual distributions of income, more students in Tennessee report that their family's income is far below the average American family's.

**Table 31: Comparisons between Tennessee Students and National Survey Respondents<sup>10</sup>**

	Tennessee School Survey	State of Our Nation's Youth
<b>Advanced placement / college preparatory courses</b>		
Neither	61%	51%
AP	15%	17%
CP	15%	21%
Both	9%	11%
<b>Role Models</b>		
Family member	50%	47%
Friend or family friend	17%	15%
Entertainment/artist or writer	11%	11%
Teacher/educator	5%	9%
Coach	2%	*
Sports figure	5%	5%
Religious leader, including pastor or youth leader	6%	5%
Business leader	2%	3%
Local political or community leader	0%	1%
National political leader	1%	1%
International political leader	1%	1%
<b>Plans to attend college</b>		
No	5%	3%
Yes, four-year college or university	64%	76%
Yes, two-year or community college	6%	13%
Yes, training or vocational school	8%	5%
Not sure	17%	3%
<b>Family income</b>		
Far below average	6%	2%
Slightly below average	14%	20%
Just about average	34%	40%
Slightly above average	27%	32%
Far above average	6%	4%
Not sure	13%	2%

<sup>10</sup> In terms of students' plans to attend college, Tennessee students were asked if they intend to begin a program in the next year; respondents to the State of Our Nation's Youth survey were asked if they intended to begin a program at any point after high school.

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## Appendix A: High School Survey Questionnaire

**Dear Student:**

**This survey is about your education—how you feel about it so far and your plans for the future. This is not a test so there are no right or wrong answers. Your answers to these questions will be CONFIDENTIAL. This means that your answers will stay secret, and your name will never be asked.**

**Please do not write your name on this question booklet or on the Scantron form.**

**Before you begin, please go to the top left of your Scantron form to the I.D. NUMBER area. Enter your home ZIP Code in the first five boxes of the I.D. NUMBER section and fill in the corresponding bubbles.**

**This survey is completely voluntary. You may skip any question you don't want to answer. If you do skip a question, please fill in the bubble ① on your Scantron form so that you do not lose your place in the survey.**

**Please read the instructions before you mark any answers.**

**Thank you for participating in this survey.**

---

**Mark all answers with heavy pencil marks inside the circles on the Scantron form; please do not mark on this booklet.**

---

**1. How old are you?**

- Ⓐ 15 or younger
- Ⓑ 16
- Ⓒ 17
- Ⓓ 18
- Ⓔ 19 or older

**2. What grade are you in?**

- Ⓐ 9<sup>th</sup>
- Ⓑ 10<sup>th</sup>
- Ⓒ 11<sup>th</sup>
- Ⓓ 12<sup>th</sup>

**3. Are you**

- Ⓐ Female
- Ⓑ Male

## Appendix A: High School Survey Questionnaire, cont.

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**Please make heavy pencil marks inside the circles on the Scantron form, not on this booklet.**

---

- 4. Are you of Hispanic or Latino national origin?**
- Ⓐ Yes
  - Ⓑ No
  - Ⓒ I'm not sure
- 5. What do you consider yourself to be?**
- Ⓐ White
  - Ⓑ Black or African American
  - Ⓒ Asian
  - Ⓓ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - Ⓔ American Indian or Alaska Native
  - Ⓕ Mexican
  - Ⓖ Puerto Rican
  - Ⓗ Cuban
  - Ⓘ Other
- 6. Putting them all together, what were your grades like last year?**
- Ⓐ Mostly As
  - Ⓑ Mostly Bs
  - Ⓒ Mostly Cs
  - Ⓓ Mostly Ds
  - Ⓔ Mostly below Ds
- 7. How many times have you taken the ACT?**
- Ⓐ None
  - Ⓑ 1
  - Ⓒ 2
  - Ⓓ 3
  - Ⓔ 4 or more
- 8. What was your composite score on the ACT the last time you took it? (Choose the range in which your score fell.)**
- Ⓐ I have not taken it
  - Ⓑ 01-12
  - Ⓒ 13-15
  - Ⓓ 16-19
  - Ⓔ 20-23
  - Ⓕ 24-27
  - Ⓖ 28-32
  - Ⓗ 33-36
- 9. In which subject area of the ACT did you score the highest the last time you took it? (If you scored equally high in two subjects, mark both subjects.)**
- Ⓐ I have not taken it
  - Ⓑ English
  - Ⓒ Math
  - Ⓓ Reading
  - Ⓔ Science

## Appendix A: High School Survey Questionnaire, cont.

**10. Are you currently taking any college prep classes or advanced placement classes or both?**

- (A) I am not taking any
- (B) I am taking college prep classes
- (C) I am taking advanced placement classes
- (D) I am taking both college prep classes and advanced placement classes

**Questions 11-21 are about the people with whom you live most of the time and their education. Please read the instructions carefully.**

**FIRST:**

Mark whether **each person** lives with you.

(A) = NO, he or she does not live with you or you do not have one

(B) = YES, he or she lives with you

**NOW:** if this person lives with you, on the same line of your Scantron form, please fill in the bubble describing his or her highest level of education

	NO	YES	Some high school	High school graduate	College graduate (Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctorate Degree)	Professional degree (MD, DDS, JD)	Other	Don't know
<i>Example: You live with your mother alone. She has a Bachelor's degree.</i>								
11. Mother	(A)	(B) ●	(C)	(D)	(E) ●	(F)	(G)	(H)
12. Father	(A) ●	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)	(H)

	NO	YES						
11. Mother	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)	(H)
12. Father	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)	(H)
13. Stepmother	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)	(H)
14. Stepfather	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)	(H)
15. Foster mother	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)	(H)
16. Foster father	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)	(H)
17. Grandmother	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)	(H)
18. Grandfather	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)	(H)
19. Aunt	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)	(H)
20. Uncle	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)	(H)
21. Other adults	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)	(H)

**22. How many brothers, sisters, stepbrothers, stepsisters, or other children live with you most of the time?**

- (A) None
- (B) 1
- (C) 2
- (D) 3
- (E) 4
- (F) 5
- (G) 6 or more

**23. What is the language you use most often at home?**

- (A) English
- (B) Spanish
- (C) Chinese
- (D) French
- (E) German
- (F) Other

## Appendix A: High School Survey Questionnaire, cont.

### YOU ARE NOW ON QUESTION 24!

Please check your Scantron form.

24. How important do you think the subjects you are learning in school right now will be for later in your life?

- Ⓐ Very important
- Ⓑ Somewhat important
- Ⓒ Not important at all

25. Please think about one particular person whom you would consider a role model. Which of the following categories would your role model be in? (Please choose only one.)

- Ⓐ Family member
- Ⓑ Friend/family friend
- Ⓒ Entertainment/artist or writer
- Ⓓ Teacher/educator
- Ⓔ Coach
- Ⓕ Sports figure
- Ⓖ Religious leader, including pastor or youth leader
- Ⓗ Business leader
- Ⓙ Local political or community leader
- Ⓚ National political leader
- Ⓛ International political leader

**How to answer these questions:**

Mark Ⓐ for **NO!** if you think the statement is *definitely not true* for you  
 Mark Ⓑ for **No** if you think the statement is *mostly not true* for you  
 Mark Ⓒ for **Yes** if you think the statement is *mostly true* for you  
 Mark Ⓓ for **YES!** if you think the statement is *definitely true* for you

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the school you are in right now?

	Definitely NO!	No	Yes	Definitely YES!	Don't know
26. I feel close to people at this school.	Ⓐ	Ⓑ	Ⓒ	Ⓓ	Ⓔ
27. I am happy to be at this school.	Ⓐ	Ⓑ	Ⓒ	Ⓓ	Ⓔ
28. This school challenges me.	Ⓐ	Ⓑ	Ⓒ	Ⓓ	Ⓔ
29. The teachers at this school treat students fairly.	Ⓐ	Ⓑ	Ⓒ	Ⓓ	Ⓔ
30. I feel safe in my school.	Ⓐ	Ⓑ	Ⓒ	Ⓓ	Ⓔ

At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult...

	Definitely NO!	No	Yes	Definitely YES!	Don't know
31. who really cares about me.	Ⓐ	Ⓑ	Ⓒ	Ⓓ	Ⓔ
32. who tells me when I do a good job.	Ⓐ	Ⓑ	Ⓒ	Ⓓ	Ⓔ
33. who notices when I'm not there.	Ⓐ	Ⓑ	Ⓒ	Ⓓ	Ⓔ
34. who always wants me to do my best.	Ⓐ	Ⓑ	Ⓒ	Ⓓ	Ⓔ
35. who listens to me when I have something to say.	Ⓐ	Ⓑ	Ⓒ	Ⓓ	Ⓔ
36. who believes I will be a success.	Ⓐ	Ⓑ	Ⓒ	Ⓓ	Ⓔ

## Appendix A: High School Survey Questionnaire, cont.

During the school year, I...

	Definitely NO!	No	Yes	Definitely YES!	Don't know
37. participate in after-school activities.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
38. am involved in student government.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
39. do things that make a positive difference to other students.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
40. do things that make a positive difference in my community.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
41. have a job (for pay) before or after school or on weekends.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)

How true do you feel these statements are about you personally...

	Definitely NO!	No	Yes	Definitely YES!	Don't know
42. I have goals and plans for the future.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
43. I plan to graduate from high school.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
44. I plan to go to college or some other school after high school.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
45. I know where to go for help with a problem.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
46. I can work out my own problems.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
47. I can do most things if I try.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
48. I can work with someone who has opinions that are different than mine.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
49. I enjoy working with other students my age.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
50. I try to understand how other people feel and think.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)

**PLEASE TURN TO THE BACK OF YOUR SCANTRON FORM.**

51. There is a purpose to my life.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
52. I like coming to school most days.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
53. I can speak a language other than English.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)
54. I have a close relationship with at least one of my teachers or school administrators.	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)

## Appendix A: High School Survey Questionnaire, cont.

**How to answer these questions:**

Mark Ⓐ for **NO!** if you think the statement is *definitely not true* for you

Mark Ⓑ for **No** if you think the statement is *mostly not true* for you

Mark Ⓒ for **Yes** if you think the statement is *mostly true* for you

Mark Ⓓ for **YES!** if you think the statement is *definitely true* for you

**In my home, there is a parent or some other adult who...**

	Definitely <b>NO!</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	Definitely <b>YES!</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
<b>55. expects me to follow the rules.</b>	Ⓐ	Ⓑ	Ⓒ	Ⓓ	Ⓔ
<b>56. is interested in my school work.</b>	Ⓐ	Ⓑ	Ⓒ	Ⓓ	Ⓔ
<b>57. believes that I will be a success.</b>	Ⓐ	Ⓑ	Ⓒ	Ⓓ	Ⓔ
<b>58. always wants me to do my best.</b>	Ⓐ	Ⓑ	Ⓒ	Ⓓ	Ⓔ
<b>59. wants me to go to college or some other school after high school.</b>	Ⓐ	Ⓑ	Ⓒ	Ⓓ	Ⓔ

**Mark all answers with heavy pencil marks inside the circles on the Scantron form.**

**60. How satisfied are you with *the quality* of the education you have received so far in Tennessee?**

- Ⓐ Very satisfied
- Ⓑ Somewhat satisfied
- Ⓒ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Ⓓ Somewhat dissatisfied
- Ⓔ Very dissatisfied

**61. What is the highest level of education you plan to obtain in your life?**

- Ⓐ A high school degree
- Ⓑ A vocational or technical certificate
- Ⓒ A 2-year degree (associate's)
- Ⓓ A 4-year degree (bachelor's)
- Ⓔ An advanced degree after my 4-year degree (master's and/or doctoral)
- Ⓕ A law degree
- Ⓖ A medical degree
- Ⓗ I haven't decided yet

**62. What do you plan to do during the first year *after* you graduate from high school? (Select all that apply.)**

- Ⓐ Take some time off
- Ⓑ Get married
- Ⓒ Join the military
- Ⓓ Get a job or continue the job I have now
- Ⓔ Begin vocational or technical school program
- Ⓕ Begin an associate's degree program
- Ⓖ Begin a bachelor's degree program
- Ⓗ Begin another professional degree program like veterinary school, dentistry
- Ⓗ Other
- Ⓗ I haven't decided yet

## Appendix A: High School Survey Questionnaire, cont.

How important do you feel *education* is to the following opportunities? Please rate education as very important, somewhat important, or not important at all to...

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important at all	Don't know
63. fuller enjoyment of life's experiences	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
64. getting a job	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
65. having more choices in what job you could get	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
66. earning more money in the future	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
67. being able to start your own business	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
68. being self-sufficient	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
69. learning how to tackle obstacles in your life	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
70. developing an awareness of other cultures	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
71. being able to provide for your family	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)

**YOU ARE NOW ON QUESTION 72!**  
 Please check your Scantron form.

Next, please rate the following characteristics as very important, somewhat important, or not important at all to *getting what you want out of life...*

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important at all	Don't know
72. coming from a wealthy family	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
73. having educated parents	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
74. having a good education yourself	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
75. ambition	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
76. natural ability	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
77. hard work	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
78. knowing the right people	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
79. a person's race	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)
80. a person's gender	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)

## Appendix A: High School Survey Questionnaire, cont.

**81. Do you have a computer or laptop at home?**

- Ⓐ Yes
- Ⓑ No

**82. Do you have access to the Internet at home?**

- Ⓐ Yes
- Ⓑ No

**83. Compared with other American families, would you say that your family's income is far below average, slightly below average, just about average, slightly above average, or far above average?**

- Ⓐ Far below average
- Ⓑ Slightly below average
- Ⓒ Just about average
- Ⓓ Slightly above average
- Ⓔ Far above average
- Ⓕ I'm not sure



**STOP**

**PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU CONTINUE.**

**If you do *not* plan to continue your formal education within the first year after you graduate from high school, answer Questions 84-86 on the following page.**

**If you do plan to continue your formal education within the first year after you graduate from high school, fill in Ⓓ to indicate "This question does not apply to me" for Questions 84-86 and then proceed with Question 87 to complete the survey.**

## Appendix A: High School Survey Questionnaire, cont.

**84. In what state do you plan to live after high school?**

- (A) Tennessee
- (B) Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, OR Vermont
- (C) New Jersey, New York, OR Pennsylvania
- (D) Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, OR Wisconsin
- (E) Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, OR South Dakota
- (F) Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, OR West Virginia
- (G) Alabama, Kentucky, OR Mississippi
- (H) Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, OR Texas
- (I) Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico, Montana, Utah, Nevada, OR Wyoming
- (J) Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, OR Washington
- (K) Outside of the US
- (T) This question does not apply to me

**85. Please choose any reasons from the following list that describe why you do not plan to continue your education as soon as you graduate from high school? (Select all that apply.)**

- (A) I never thought about it
- (B) I don't see the point
- (C) I don't like school
- (D) My health won't allow it
- (E) My grades are too low
- (F) It will cost me too much money
- (G) It will cost my family too much money
- (H) The job I want does not require me to have any more education
- (I) I want to work and earn some money first
- (J) I want to travel
- (K) I want to start a family
- (L) I want to join the military
- (M) I do not have support from my teachers or administrators
- (N) I do not have support from my parents or other family members
- (O) There's just no reason for me to go to college
- (T) This question does not apply to me

**86. What would you say is the *first and biggest* reason why you do not plan to continue your education after high school? (Select only one.)**

- (A) I never thought about it
- (B) I don't see the point
- (C) I don't like school
- (D) My health won't allow it
- (E) My grades are too low
- (F) It will cost me too much money
- (G) It will cost my family too much money
- (H) The job I want does not require me to have any more education
- (I) I want to work and earn some money first
- (J) I want to travel
- (K) I want to start a family
- (L) I want to join the military
- (M) I do not have support from my teachers or administrators
- (N) I do not have support from my parents or other family members
- (O) There's just no reason for me to go to college
- (T) This question does not apply to me

## Appendix A: High School Survey Questionnaire, cont.

**If you do *not* plan to continue your formal education within the first year after you graduate from high school, you have completed the survey. Thank you for your participation.**

**If you do plan to continue your formal education within the first year after you graduate from high school, please continue with Question 87 to complete the survey.**

**87. In what state or region do you plan to go to college?  
(If you are applying to colleges in multiple states, please choose the state in which the college you *most want to go to* is located.)**

- (A) Tennessee
- (B) Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, OR Vermont
- (C) New Jersey, New York, OR Pennsylvania
- (D) Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, OR Wisconsin
- (E) Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, OR South Dakota
- (F) Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, OR West Virginia
- (G) Alabama, Kentucky, OR Mississippi
- (H) Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, OR Texas
- (I) Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico, Montana, Utah, Nevada, OR Wyoming
- (J) Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, OR Washington
- (K) Outside of the US

**88. If you want to go to college *outside* of Tennessee, why?  
(Select all that apply.)**

- (A) I plan to stay *in* Tennessee
- (B) Your scholastic ability
- (C) Cost
- (D) Scholarship availability
- (E) Program availability
- (F) Your athletic ability
- (G) Location
- (H) Reputation of the out-of-state institution
- (I) Quality of the institution
- (J) Other

**89. If you want to go to college *in* Tennessee, why?  
(Select all that apply.)**

- (A) I plan to go to college *outside* of Tennessee
- (B) Your scholastic ability
- (C) Cost
- (D) Scholarship availability
- (E) Program availability
- (F) Your athletic ability
- (G) Location
- (H) Reputation of the in-state institution
- (I) Quality of the institution
- (J) Other

## Appendix A: High School Survey Questionnaire, cont.

**90. What program do you want to study?**

- Ⓐ I haven't decided
- Ⓑ Architecture
- Ⓒ Arts
- Ⓓ Astronomy, biology, botany, chemistry, physics
- Ⓔ Automotive repair
- Ⓕ Business
- Ⓖ Communications or information
- Ⓗ Computer science
- Ⓘ Education
- Ⓝ Engineering
- Ⓚ Music
- Ⓛ Nursing
- Ⓜ Pre-law
- Ⓝ Pre-med
- Ⓞ Philosophy, political science, psychology, religious studies, sociology, or social work
- Ⓟ Other

**91. Will you be the first member of your immediate family to attend college?**

- Ⓐ Yes
- Ⓑ No
- Ⓒ Not sure

**92. How do you plan to pay for your future education?  
(Select all that apply.)**

- Ⓐ Student loans
- Ⓑ Lottery scholarships
- Ⓒ Academic scholarships
- Ⓓ Athletic scholarships
- Ⓔ Your own savings
- Ⓕ Your parent's or parents' savings
- Ⓖ Gifts or inheritances
- Ⓗ Haven't thought about it yet

**93. Have you or your parents already started saving for your future education?**

- Ⓐ Yes
- Ⓑ No
- Ⓒ Don't know

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**Those are all of the questions we have for you.  
Thank you very much for your participation.**

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## **Appendix A: High School Survey Questionnaire, cont.**

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