



## 2023-2024 Graduate Student Life Survey Report

GPSG distributed a survey in late October to graduate and professional students. GPSG received over 300 student responses across the 14 graduate and professional schools. Not all questions required an answer. Students who responded were entered into a raffle and winners won free GPSG merchandise. This report will show the most common problems graduate and professional students face in their well-being during their time at the University of Pittsburgh. The goal of this survey was to understand the mental and financial wellness of these students. With that understanding, GPSG aims to work with university leadership in improving the quality of life of students.

### What do students want?

In this survey, students were asked to provide any additional comments or feedback as a way to help understand what students wanted from not only the university, but GPSG, too. Students asked for more financial help from the university due reasons such as inflation, high loan interest rates, their research for their school, and changes in the health insurance costs. As a result, many students have had to take out more loans, work another job, and/or rely on others to help get them through their education. Some students even avoid medical care to save money for other expenses. They stated that this has a direct impact on their mental health and they are often too exhausted to enjoy activities outside of their studies.

### What are we currently doing?

Currently, GPSG is planning on inviting Wellness Team members to our February Assembly Board Meeting to introduce their services and help graduate and professional students understand what resources are available for them. GPSG will maintain contact with leadership to discuss the specific needs of the graduate and professional student body in hopes to mitigate the issues students are facing with mental and financial wellness.

### What can we do?

GPSG is here to help students connect with resources and speak on their behalf to university leadership. As such, we plan on continuing conversations with university leadership and students to help understand the needs and resources for those needs. Further steps we can take include holding more workshops and events for students, sharing university resources to the students, and improving communication with the student body.

## Demographics

This is only a small portion of the graduate and professional student body, therefore GPSG wanted to see how much this survey reflects the needs of actual students based on the proportion of students that responded. Survey demographics appear consistent with university data on graduate and professional students, with survey respondents being within a 5% range of the university data provided.

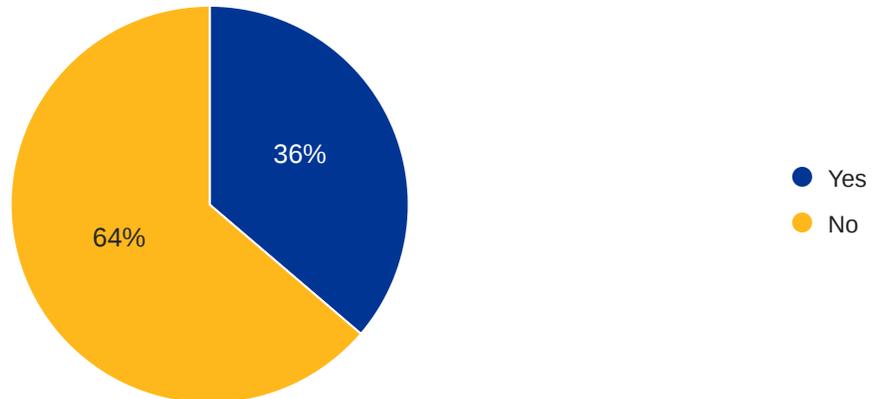
	Survey Respondents	University Data*
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.30%	0.80%
Asian	32.20%	25.90%
Black or African American	5.30%	8.80%
Hispanic or Latino	7.30%	6.80%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	**	0.40%
White	43.60%	59.60%
Multiracial - Two or more races	4.10%	***
Other	1.50%	***
Prefer not to say	1.50%	***
Female/Woman	59.40%	59.60%
Male/Man	34.80%	39.80%
Other	5.80%	0.60%

\*Fall 2023 University Data: [www.diversity.pitt.edu/social-justice/student-dashboard](http://www.diversity.pitt.edu/social-justice/student-dashboard)

\*\*GPSG Survey combined Native American/Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

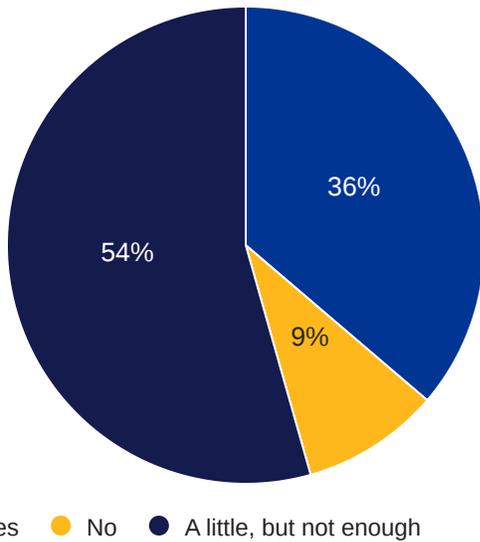
\*\*\*Indicates information only gathered in the survey with no university data counterpart

### Are you an International Student?



## Mental Wellness

Do you find time for activities outside your studies and research?  
(For example: exercise, hanging out with friends, personal development, etc)



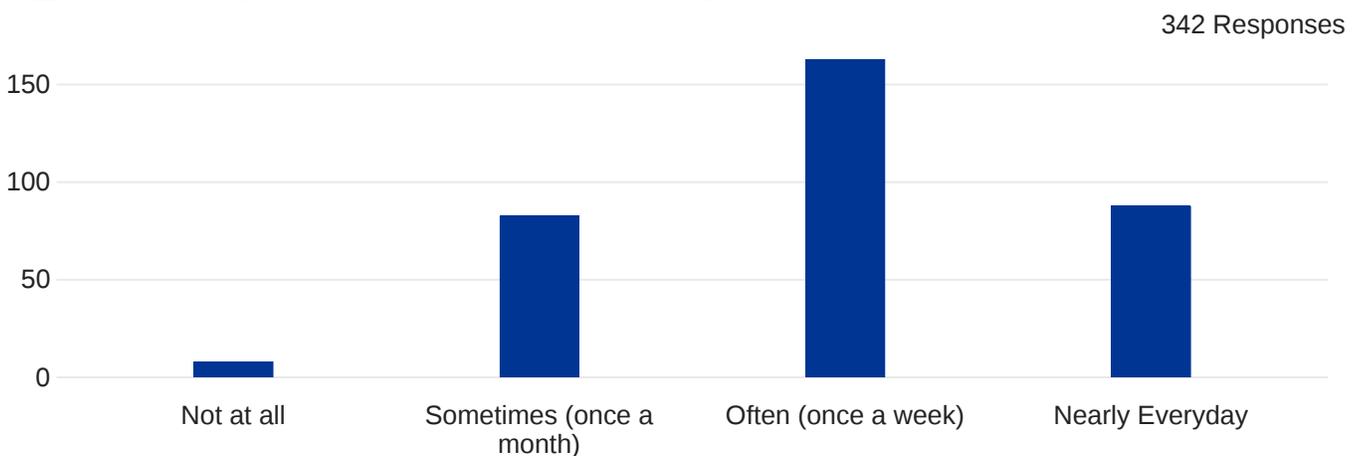
The majority of students who responded indicated that they are able to find some time for activities outside of their studies and research, but that the time they had was not enough. This could possibly mean that many students focus more on their studies rather than activities they enjoy, which could affect their mental health. Later in the survey, some students also say that they had to take on another job, which might play a role in their response here.

### Student Feedback:

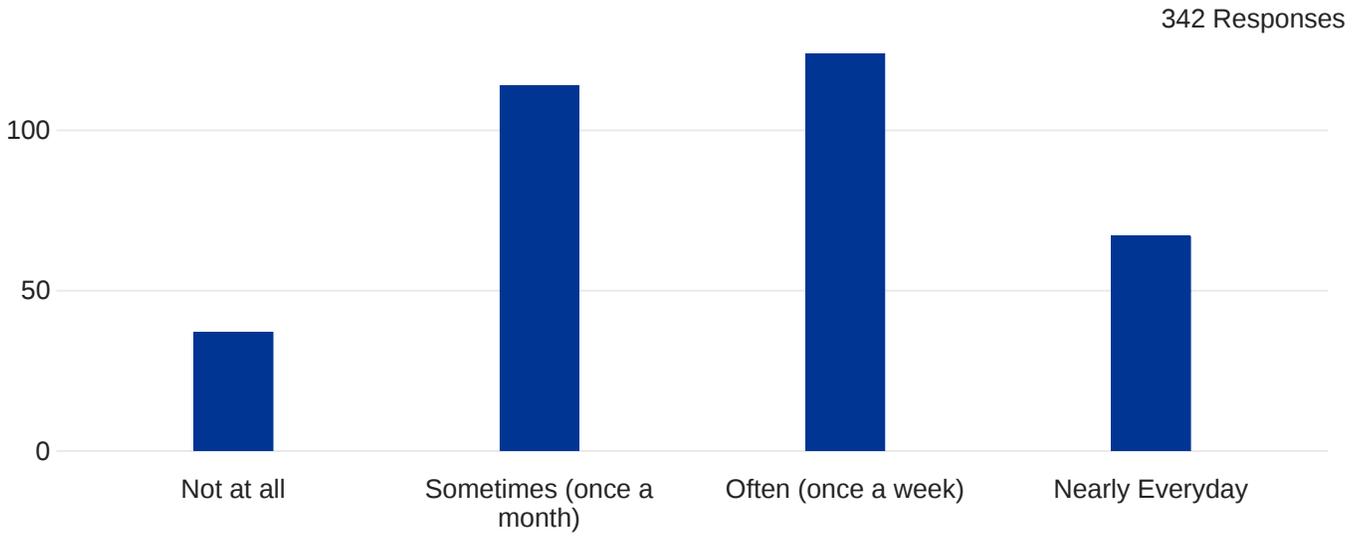
"You're doing great, wish I could attend more events but most times just feel tired or sick these days."

The following three questions were more directly aimed at understanding students' current mental health. They show that the majority of students surveyed are struggling with their mental well-being. Students were asked how often they are affected by common mental health issues.

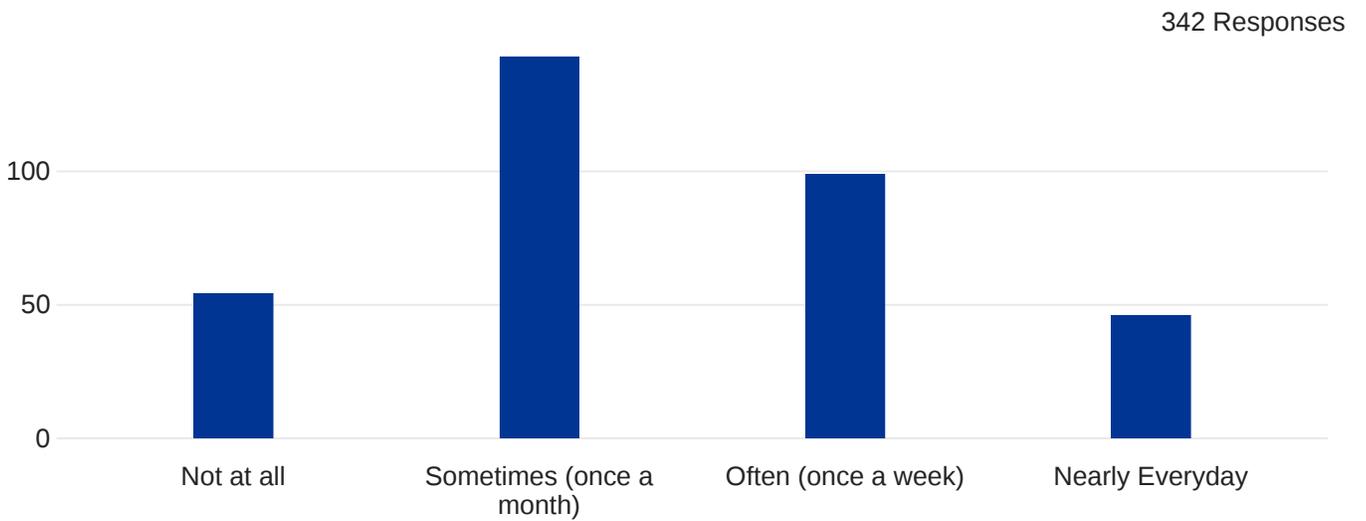
## Q6\_1 - Feeling nervous/anxious/on edge



### Q6\_2 - Not being able to stop/control worrying

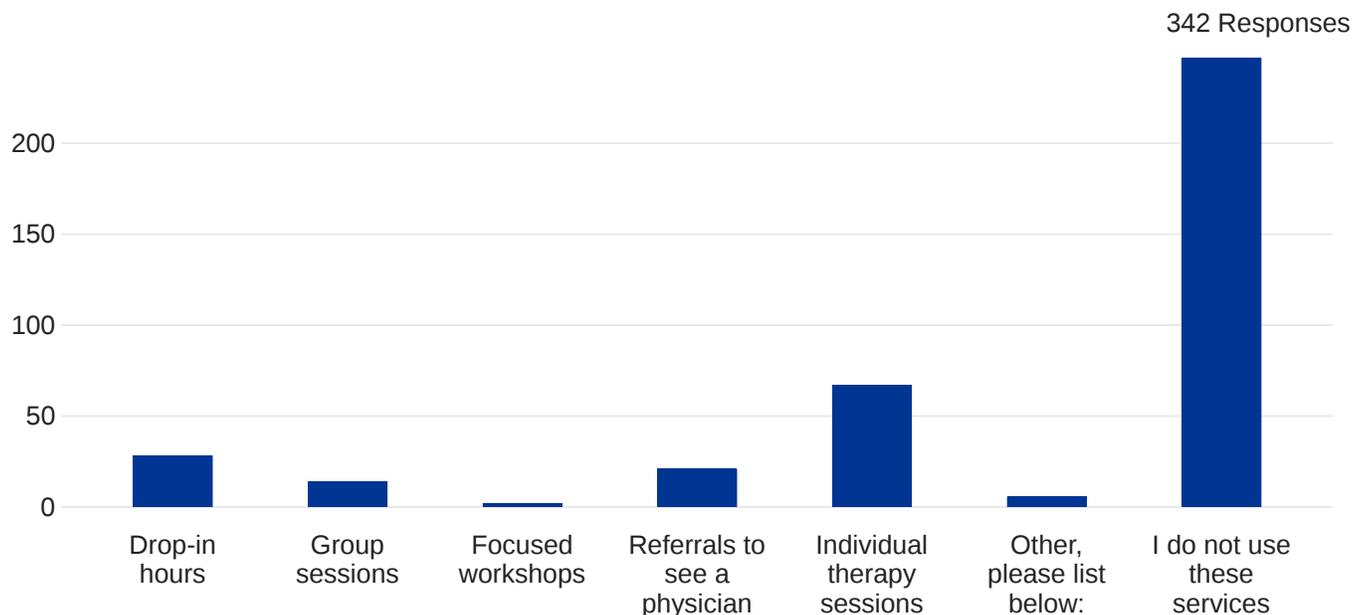


### Feeling down/depressed/hopeless



The University Counseling Center is a resource available to all students and the following question sought to find out if graduate and professional students utilize this resource and which of their services is most used. Most students state that they do not use the resource and a student commented that the wait time for drop-in hours has impacted their willingness to use that service.

## Have you ever used any of the services offered by the University Counseling Center? Check all that apply. - Selected Choice



### Student Responses:

I don't use the University Counselling Center, but I do have a (private practice)therapist

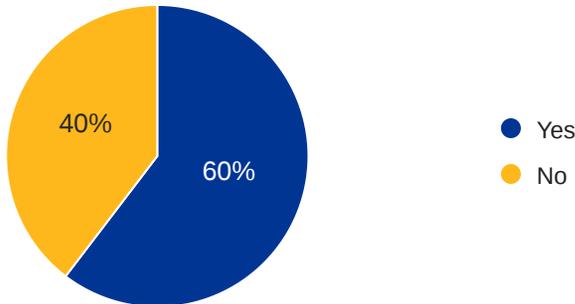
I would like to use the UCC, but the current system requires you to first use drop in hours, often with a long wait.

SOM's provided psychiatrists

Therapist

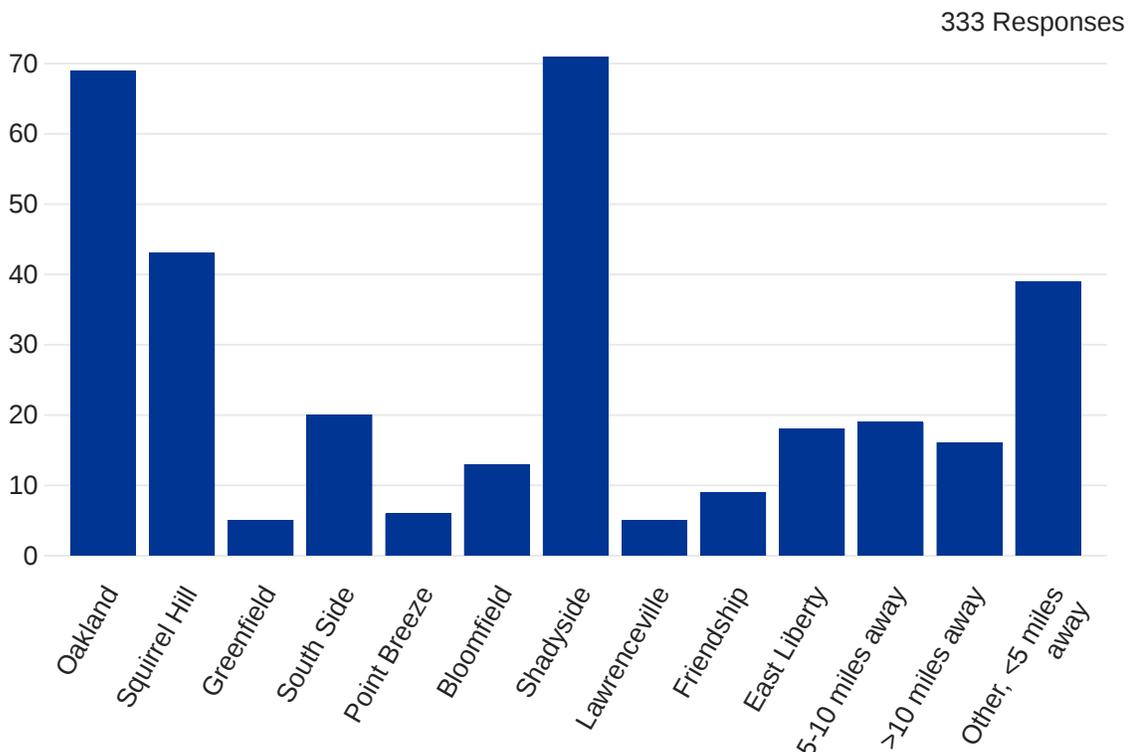
## Financial Wellness

Are you a Pennsylvania resident?



The majority of respondents are Pennsylvania residents. This is important to understand financial wellness as the University of Pittsburgh provides a discounted tuition rate to residents of Pennsylvania. While the majority of students who responded were Pennsylvania residents, there was still a high percentage of students who have to pay the normal tuition rate.

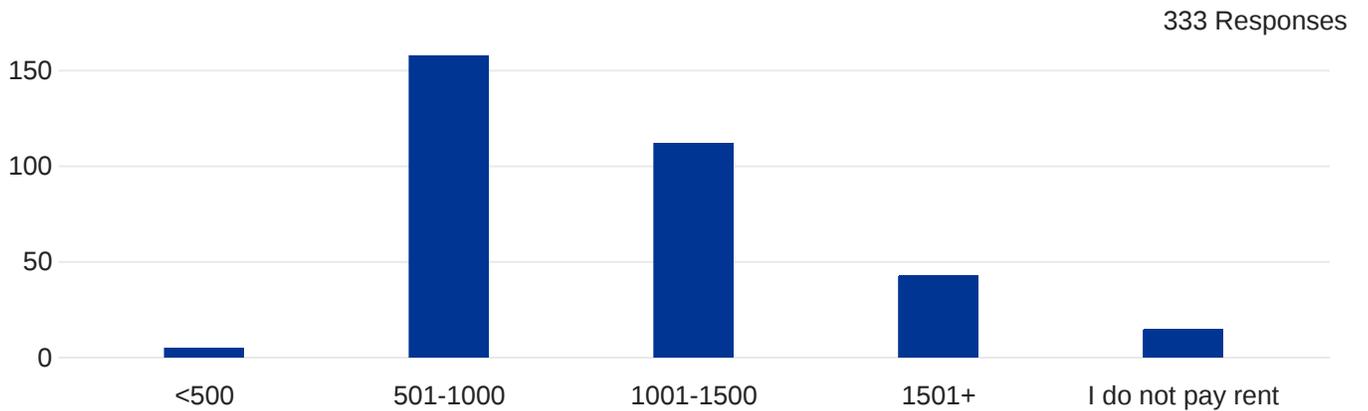
Please indicate where you live while attending Pitt (2023-2024)? - Selected Choice



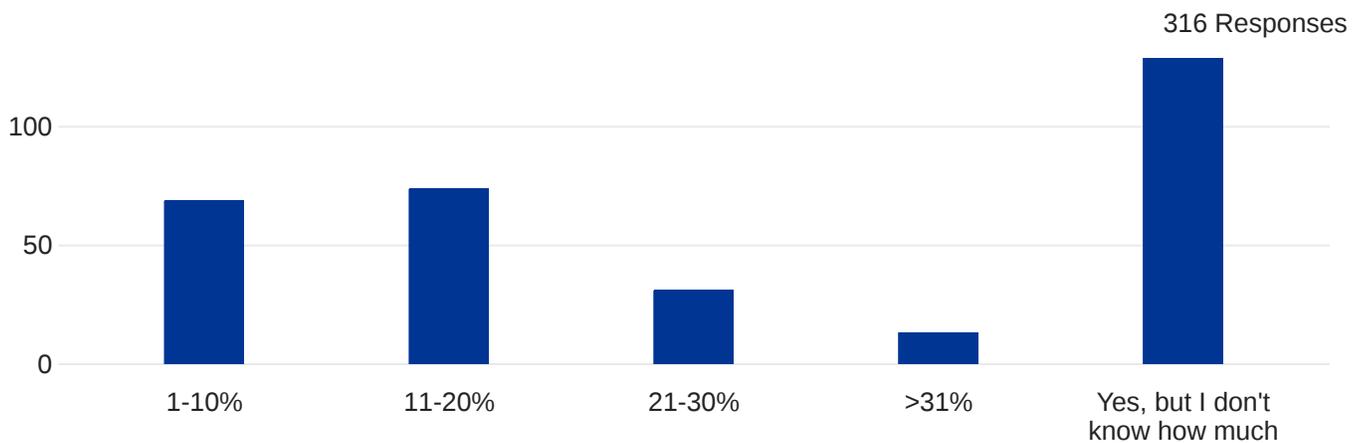
The majority of the students surveyed live in close proximity to campus, but there is still a fair amount of students who commute from either the suburbs surrounding Pittsburgh or further. GPSG wanted to see if many students had to spend a lot of time traveling, as well as which specific areas students resided. This could also help understand the rental climate of the students.

The following questions ask for more monetary figures to understand the specific financial wellness of students and what might affect their financial hardships.

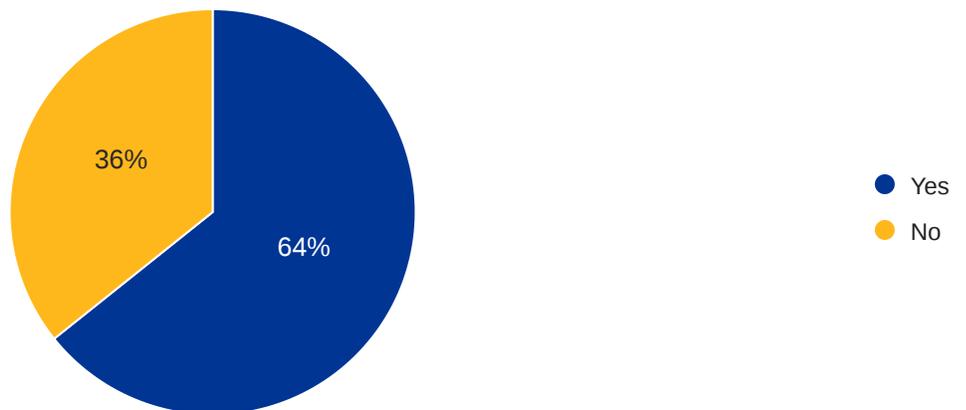
### How much do you pay for rent and utilities? (per month)



### Q11 - Have you experienced an increase in expenses due to inflation? If yes, how much?

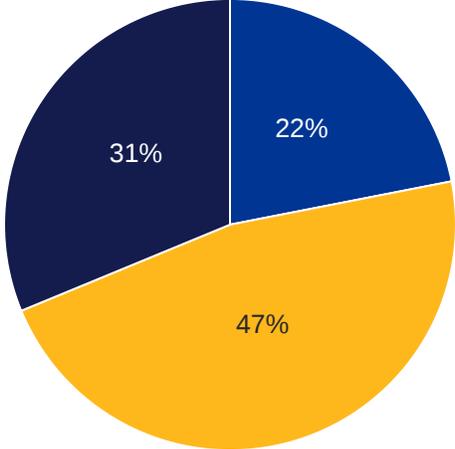


### Do you receive financial aid from the University? (For example: academic/athletic scholarships, research grants, federal grants through Pitt, etc.)



### Has the stipend increase in 2023-2024 school year covered your increase in cost of living?

● Yes ● No ● N/A or Do not receive stipends



### If you answered no to the previous question, how are you managing the difference in cost? Student Responses:

parents sponsor

It is extremely difficult, and financially I am stretched thin

Living off of extra student loans

I am mainly restricting my leisure expenses.

Making ends meet is very challenging with the current stipend!! I'm just praying for the worst things that will make me choose between basic needs not to happen!

Relying on partner income.

taking out additional loans

Side job

loans

I have additional work

I have yo use my savings and help from my parents

More loans:(

Education loan

I'm not: I'm running a budgetary deficit of at least \$200 a month.

Credit card debt

I take on extra loans and also participate in Pitt+Me studies to try and supplement my life.

cutting expenses wherever possible. Avoiding using medical services

My stipend hasn't increased

Loans, participating in research studies

Loans

Full-time employment

Trying to pick up extra cash on the side, spending less/tighter budget, using more credit cards when necessary, food stamps

I'm lucky enough to live with my partner who has a "regular job," and we've adopted an equitable split to accommodate my low income. I also try my best to save money where I can and create a budget for regular expenses (e.g., groceries).

Parental help

It covers but now I can't go out to eat with friends. I need to be extra careful about groceries.

Sometimes I make use of the school Pantry to augment.

I'm working as a co-op

Student Loans

By taking money out of my pocket which was given by my parents and student loan.

Personal funds

I am barely surviving

Partner is paying additional expenses

Working side jobs, cutting down my budget significantly

Budgeting for every month

Shrinking costs aka worse life quality.

I had savings, but I am not sure whether they will be enough

Will start as an Uber Eats driver next week. There was no increase in stipend for dental residents.

I'm not. Cutting back on groceries, gas, and other expenditures

I have started to cut down on costs. Have began volunteering for research studies that provide money incentives.

Currently working part time with Americorps in order to afford rent. Any assistance would be fantastic tho to mitigate stress

Taking out more loans.

Paying out of pocket

Tighter budget

Working part time

Working during the semester which is not doing much

I just save little-to-no money now. My first year at Pitt, I was putting \$200-\$300 into savings each month after rent, utilities, bills, food costs, parking fees, gas, and even non-essential purchases.

Now, I have pretty much cut out all non-essential purchases and I just about break-even each month. My bank account is effectively static now when looked at on a month-to-month scale.

Budgeting more carefully

- Used entirety of emergency savings
- Switched to using credit cards once savings exhausted
- Reduced frequency and amount of grocery purchases
- Seek part-time employment
- Considered taking a leave of absence to rebuild financial security

Relying on family to help cover

Parents; tutoring on the side

more debt

Personal savings

Loans, help from family

My stipend and some of other students stipend did not increased as our PI refuse to increase the stipend. It's very difficult to manage the increased cost and have to cut down expenses especially on food.

So far it has been manageable, but I am concerned about long-term affordability to finish my program.

Freelance gigging

I'm using my credit card for paying for non bills and saving all refund money for bills