

2012 User Survey

In January 2012, the Student Doctor Network (<http://www.sdn.net>) conducted a survey of its membership, which consists primarily of current and future health care providers including physicians, dentists, pharmacists and psychologists. The survey consisted of approximately 25 questions (the number of questions varied based on the respondent educational level) and covered a variety of topics important to pre-health students (undergraduates), health professional students, and health professionals.

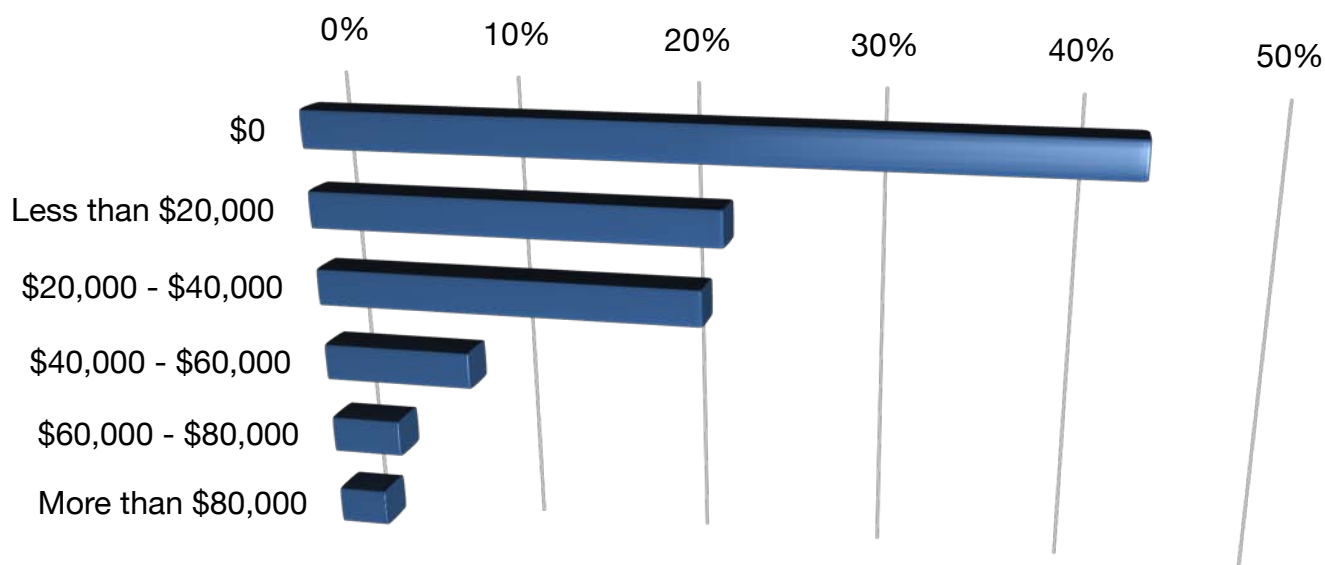
Below is a summary of the key findings of the survey.

Debt and Its Impacts

Educational Debt Incurred

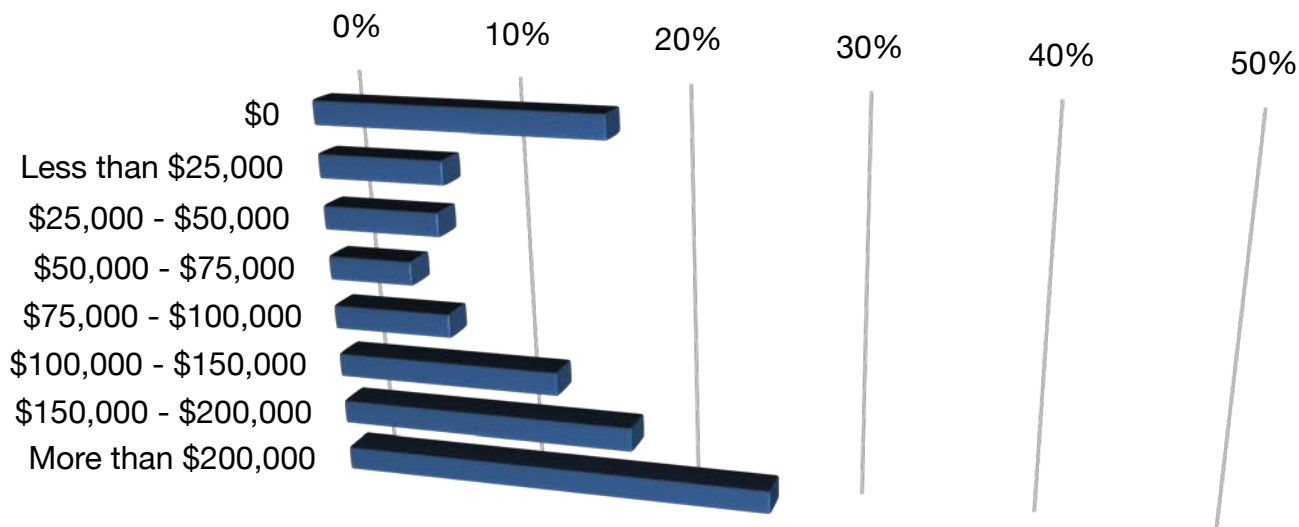
Among undergraduates and those with bachelors' degrees, 41.3% graduated with no debt. Of those with undergraduate debt, 38.4% had debt less than \$20,000, with 36.3% indicating debt of \$20,000 to \$40,000, and more than a quarter indicating that their debt was greater than \$40,000.

These results are similar to the results found by the Project on Student Debt, who estimated that two thirds of college seniors who graduated in 2010 had student debt, with an average of \$25,250 ("Student Debt and the Class of 2010", page 1, The Project on Student Debt, <http://projectonstudentdebt.org/files/pub/classof2010.pdf>).



Question: How much UNDERGRADUATE educational debt will you or did you have when you finish(ed) your degree?

Graduate students and those with graduate degrees indicated that they had more debt than those with a bachelors' degree or less. Only 16.9% of graduate students had or anticipated no graduate educational debt upon degree completion. Among those with graduate debt, more than two thirds will have or had debt of over \$100,000, over half will have debt of over \$150,000, and over 30% will have debt over \$200,000.



Question: How much GRADUATE educational debt will you or did you have when you finish(ed) your degree?

Community College Attendance

Over 22% of respondents reported that they planned to or had attended a community college before transferring to a college or university, and of that group, almost 75% cited financial reasons as a driver.

As the age of respondents increased, so did the likelihood that financial reasons were cited as a reason for community college attendance:

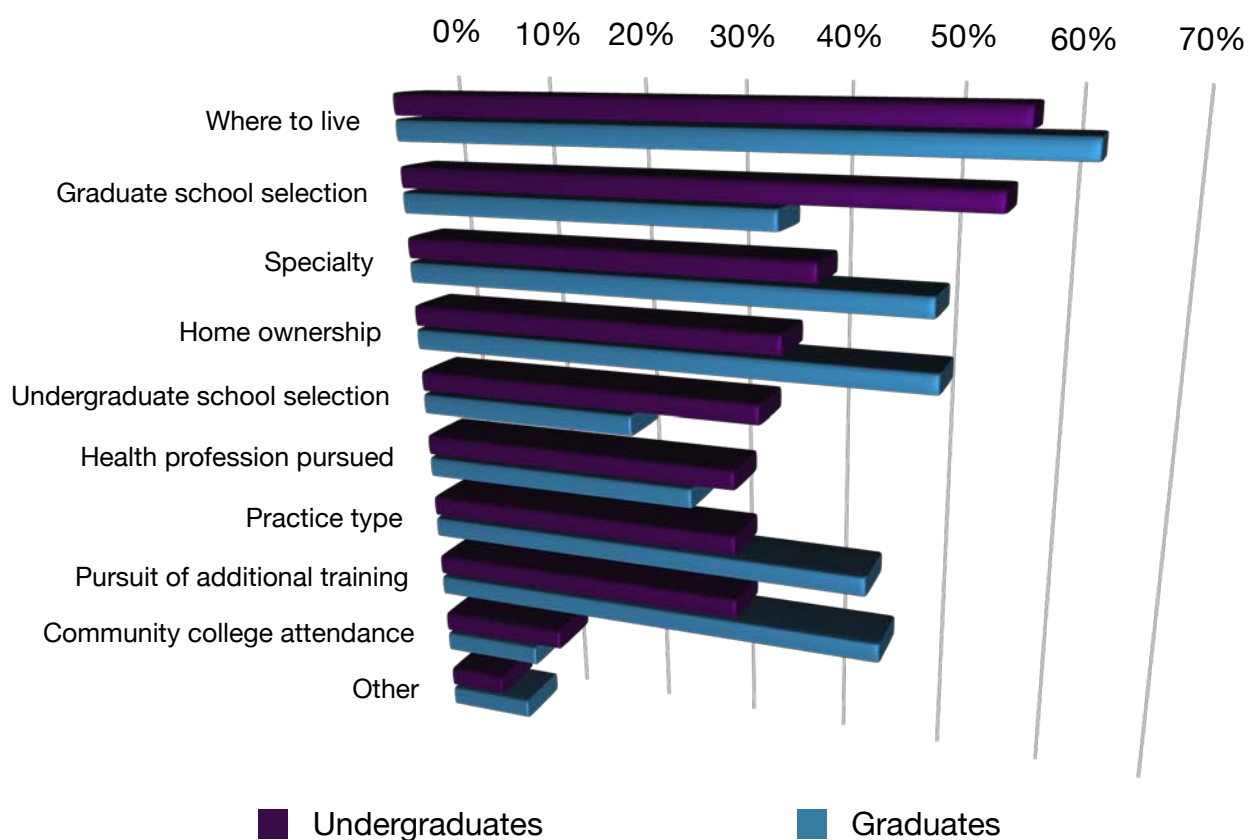
- 18-24: 65.6%
- 25-34: 79.3%
- 35-44: 80.8%

Life Impacts of Debt

Undergraduate and graduate school debt has strong impacts on the lives of those seeking to become health professionals.

Among undergraduates and those with bachelors' degrees, more than half cited that where they will live and what graduate school they will attend were impacted by debt concerns. Over 30% indicated that their undergraduate school selection, health profession pursued, practice type, specialty, pursuit of additional training, and home ownership would be impacted by debt (multiple answers accepted).

The impact of debt was stronger among graduate students and those with graduate degrees, with over half indicating that the specialty they selected, where to live, and home ownership were affected by their debt. Over a third indicated that their graduate school selection, practice type, and pursuit of additional training were impacted by their debt.



Question: What major life decisions have been or will be impacted by debt concerns? Select all that apply.

Though not an option available for selection, multiple respondents at both the undergraduate and graduate levels indicated that planning for marriage and a family were impacted by debt concerns.

Most respondents indicated that it was or would be a moderate to large burden to pay off their educational debts.

Value of Education

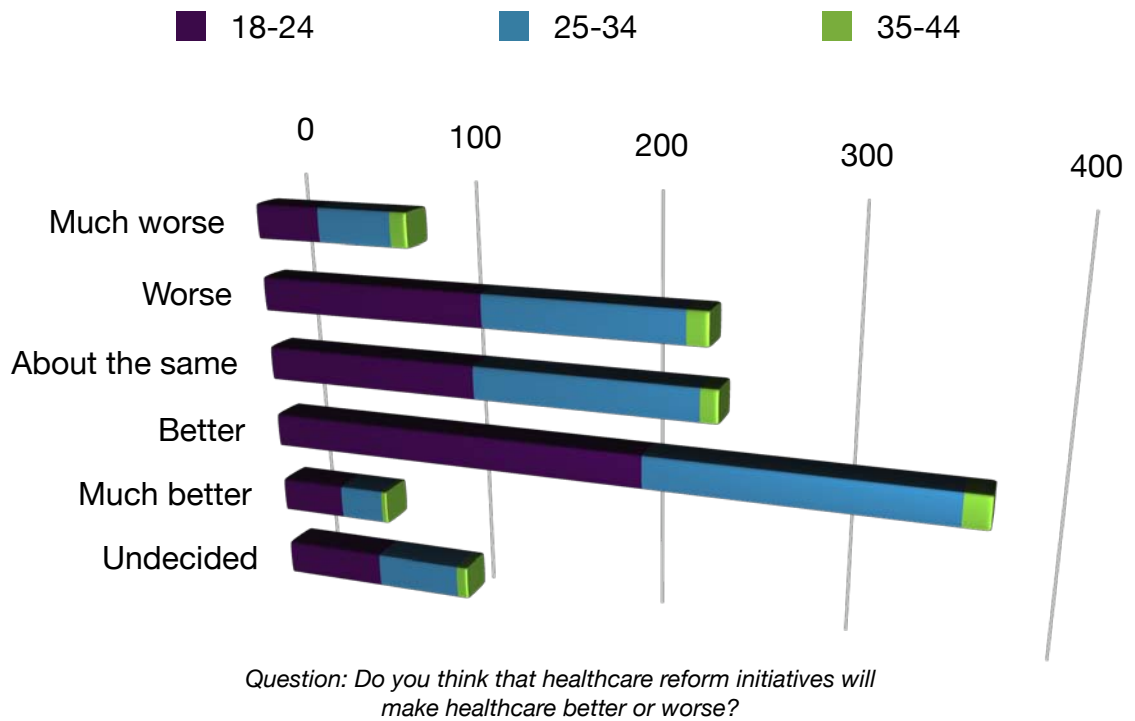
Despite the rising costs of undergraduate and graduate education, most respondents indicated that they were happy with their education and the value they were receiving for the money.

- More than 45% of undergraduates and those with bachelors' degrees said that they received an Excellent education, with less than 14% indicating that their education was Average or less.
- More than three quarters of undergraduates and those with bachelors' degrees felt that they received a Good or Excellent value for their money.
- Graduate students and those with graduate degrees are positive about their graduate education, but are slightly less satisfied with the value received. More than 80% feel that the education they are receiving is Good or Excellent, but almost a third feel that the value for the money they are receiving is Average or less.

The Future of Healthcare

Respondents are not blind to the potential issues associated with the career in healthcare they are pursuing.

- On average, respondents felt that healthcare in the United States is getting worse.
- Younger respondents tended to view healthcare reform initiatives more positively than older respondents. Of respondents ages 18-24, more than 40% felt that healthcare reform initiatives would make healthcare better, versus 36% of respondents aged 25-34 and 31% of respondents aged 35-44.



- Approximately half of all respondents felt that universal coverage would make healthcare better.
- When asked to indicate the biggest problem in healthcare today, access to care, costs, and insurance were cited as major issues.

Despite the issues they see with healthcare in the United States, most are positive about their future career as a healthcare provider.

- Three quarters said that they were positive or very positive about their career prospects.
- Most respondents anticipate an average annual income of between \$100,000 and \$250,000.

About the Survey Respondents

The survey was open to U.S. residents ages 18 and over.

Age Range

18-24	51.0%
25-34	43.2%
35-44	4.6%
45-54	0.6%
55+	0.5%

Gender

Female	44.8%
Male	55.2%

Education Level

High school (enrolled or completed)	0.4%
College/university (currently enrolled)	25.5%
Bachelors	25.7%
Graduate/professional school (currently enrolled)	26.2%
Masters	6.3%
Doctorate (MD, DO, PhD, DDS, DVM, PharmD, etc.)	15.8%

Health Profession

Note: Depending on the education level of the respondent, this question asked the health profession they were planning to pursue or that they were currently pursuing.

Medicine – Allopathic (MD)	54.0%
Medicine – Osteopathic (DO)	13.2%
Medicine – Physician Scientist (MD/PhD, DO/PhD)	4.3%
Audiology (AuD)	0.2%
Dentistry (DDS, DMD)	8.5%
Optometry (OD)	1.0%
Pharmacy (PharmD)	6.4%
Physical Therapy (DPT)	1.2%
Podiatry (DPM)	0.5%
Psychology (PhD, PsyD)	2.4%
Veterinary (DVM)	4.7%

Other	3.7%
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Community College Attendance

Note: Depending on education level of the respondent, this question asked if they were planning to or had attended community college before transferring to a college or university.

Yes	22.8%
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No	77.2%
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Methodology

- The Student Doctor Network designed and administered this survey with support from Niche PR, which was conducted via the Internet using Survey Monkey from January 6 through January 27, 2012. Respondents were recruited for the survey via a notice on the Student Doctor Network forums (<http://forums.studentdoctor.net>), Facebook postings on the Student Doctor Network page and group page, Linked In page and Twitter message.
- A total of 1,191 respondents completed the survey, of which 1,123 met the survey criteria (U.S. resident age 18 or over).

About the Student Doctor Network

The Student Doctor Network (SDN) is an organized community of health professionals and students from across the United States and around the world. Founded in 1999, SDN operates a website www.sdn.net moderated by volunteer health professionals and students who are dedicated to providing students, residents, and practitioners with free and unbiased information. SDN is published by the Coastal Research Group, a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt educational organization founded in 1983.

The mission of SDN is to assist and encourage all students through the challenging and complicated healthcare education process. The membership includes most doctoral-level health fields, including the following:

- Audiology (AuD)
- Dental (DDS and DMD)
- Medical (MD-Allopathic and DO-Osteopathic)
- Optometry (OD)
- Pharmacy (PharmD)
- Podiatry (DPM)
- Psychology (PsyD and PhD)
- Rehabilitation Sciences (DPT, ODT)
- Veterinary (DVM)

More than 300,000 members make up the SDN community. The SDN Forums compose the heart of the site, consisting of over 11 million posts covering all areas of health care education and practice. A diverse membership base extends from high school students to practicing doctors.