

IM:IR

Research Brief

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IUPUI's Entering Freshmen: Results from the Fall 1992 Freshman Survey

Table of Contents

Introduction	Highlights	How this Year's Freshman Survey was Conducted: A Methodological Note	Family Background
The College Decision	New Majority Students	Academic Preparation	Majors and Careers
Employment	Goals and Values	Attitudes, Opinions and Behaviors	Item-by-Item Analysis

Displays

- [Figure 1. First-Generation College Students among First-Time Full-Time Freshmen at IUPUI and Comparable Institutions](#)
 - [Figure 2. Reasons for Choosing to attend IUPUI](#)
 - [Figure 3. Referrals from H.S. Representatives, Relatives, and Friends](#)
- [Figure 4. Percentage of First-Time Students Not Directly out of High School at IUPUI and Comparable Institutions](#)
- [Figure 5. High School Courses in Math, Language and Physical Sciences: IUPUI vs. Peers](#)
 - [Figure 6. High School Grades and Ability Self-Ratings: IUPUI vs. Peers](#)
 - [Figure 7. IUPUI Freshmen Interested in Business and Professional Majors](#)
- [Figure 8. Expected Employment by First-Time Full-Time Freshmen at IUPUI and Comparable Institutions](#)
 - [Figure 9. Students' Long-Term Goals](#)
 - [Figure 10. Attitudes, Opinions, and Behaviors of IUPUI Freshmen](#)
- [Figure 11. Comparing IUPUI and Peer First-Time Full-Time Freshmen on Select Behaviors and Attitudes](#)
 - [Figure 12. Expected Years to Complete the Bachelor's Degree](#)

Introduction

For the last three years, a sample of IUPUI's entering freshmen have participated in the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey. The CIRP Freshman Survey is administered nationally by the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California Los Angeles. For each of the past twenty-six years, this survey has been completed by thousands of students entering hundreds of institutions across the nation. The survey is a valuable tool for comparing an institution's entering students to their freshman counterparts at other colleges and universities. The survey covers information on the background, attitudes, values, choices, and recent behaviors of America's freshmen.

Throughout this report, the freshman class of 1992 will be compared to previous cohorts of IUPUI freshmen who completed the Freshman Survey in 1990 and 1991. These comparisons involve all new freshman students. This includes beginners and freshman transfers, as well as, full- and part-time entering freshmen. Additional comparisons are made to two national peer groups. One comparison group is comprised of 8 "low-select" public universities (Defined as public universities with an average SAT score of below 1000 for the entering class.) that participated in the survey. The other group is comprised of the six universities that are members of the Urban 13 and participated in the 1992 survey (Includes: University of Pittsburgh, University of Louisville, Chicago State University, University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee, University of Missouri - Kansas City, and Wayne State University.). Because UCLA reports survey norms only for first-time full-time freshmen, peer comparisons with the national samples will involve a subset of the total IUPUI sample, that is, the first-time full-time freshmen only.

It is important to keep in mind that the percentages reported on various items for IUPUI freshmen will differ slightly depending on whether all new freshmen or just first-time full-time freshmen are included. It is also important to note that the Public Low-Select and Urban 13 institutions do not necessarily "match" IUPUI in terms of mission and student population. For example, few of the "comparable" institutions offer as many associate degree and remedial education programs as IUPUI.

(Back to [Table of Contents](#), [List of Displays](#))

Highlights

- IUPUI was the first choice of 69% of Fall 1992 entering first-year students, up slightly over previous years from 66%.
- A majority of the 1992 freshmen (56%) applied only to IUPUI. However, the number applying to more than one institution increased to 44%, compared to 37% in 1991 and 39% in 1990.
- As in previous years, the most important reasons for attending IUPUI are: to live near home (42%), low tuition (36%), good academic reputation (35%), and graduates get good jobs (30%). An increasingly important reason why freshmen choose IUPUI is the advice of high school professionals, relatives and friends: 24% cited these as important reasons in 1992 compared to 19% in 1990.
- According to their self-reported ability ratings, 1992 IUPUI entering freshmen were less well prepared academically than in previous years. Only 31% received a B average or higher in high school compared to 43% in 1991 and 41% in 1990. Some of this decrease is due to differences in the survey sample, but there have been small decreases in entering student test scores at IUPUI as well as nationally.
- Over one-half of the new freshmen (54%) were admitted in the same year that they graduated from high school. Over one-quarter (27%) were admitted after having been out of high school for three or more years.
- Freshman interest in the business major has declined from 25% in 1990 to 18% in 1992 but business remains the top choice of major for men (21%, down from 29% in 1990), followed by engineering (17%). Interest in pre-professional and professional majors, particularly the health professions, has increased from 24% in 1990 to 31% in 1992. Nursing remains the number one choice of major for freshman women (21%). Consistent with these results, the number one career choice for 1992 freshman women is nursing (19%), and the first choice for men is business (15%) followed closely by engineering (14%).
- Employment continues to be necessary for most of IUPUI's new freshmen. Just over one-half (51%) indicate that they will have to get a job to help pay for college expenses. Almost one-third (30%) either work full-time now or think it is likely that they will have to work full-time while attending college. These figures have decreased slightly from previous years.
- Compared to new freshmen at other public and urban universities, IUPUI's first-time full-time freshmen are less well-prepared academically, less likely to come directly from high school, and less likely to believe they will be satisfied with college. They are more concerned about paying for college, more likely to work while attending college, more likely to be first-generation college students, and more than three times as likely to consider transferring.

(Back to [Table of Contents](#), [List of Displays](#))

How this Year's Freshman Survey was Conducted: A Methodological Note

The 1992 Freshman Survey was administered during new student orientation. New student orientation was held in the summer, between June and August. All students who would matriculate in the fall as freshmen, regardless of their entry status (i.e. beginner or transfer) were asked to complete the survey. A total of 2,006 freshmen, out of a population of 2,964 completed the survey, for a participation rate of 68 percent.

While not a random sample, the sample appears to be representative of new freshmen based on comparisons between the sample and the population across key demographic characteristics, with

one exception: many more students in the sample intended to be full-time this year than in previous years. In order to determine if this represents a sampling bias, the records of those completing the survey were merged with data from the university records system. The analysis revealed that many students who intended to be full-time in summer, were in fact registered as part-time students in the Fall. When the actual enrollment behavior of the sample was compared to the population, the percentage difference on full-time status was within three points. In the prior two years, the survey was administered after classes had begun and so students knew their course load more precisely.

Conducting the survey during orientation also increased slightly participation among students directly out of high school to 54% of the total sample compared to 50% in the prior two years.

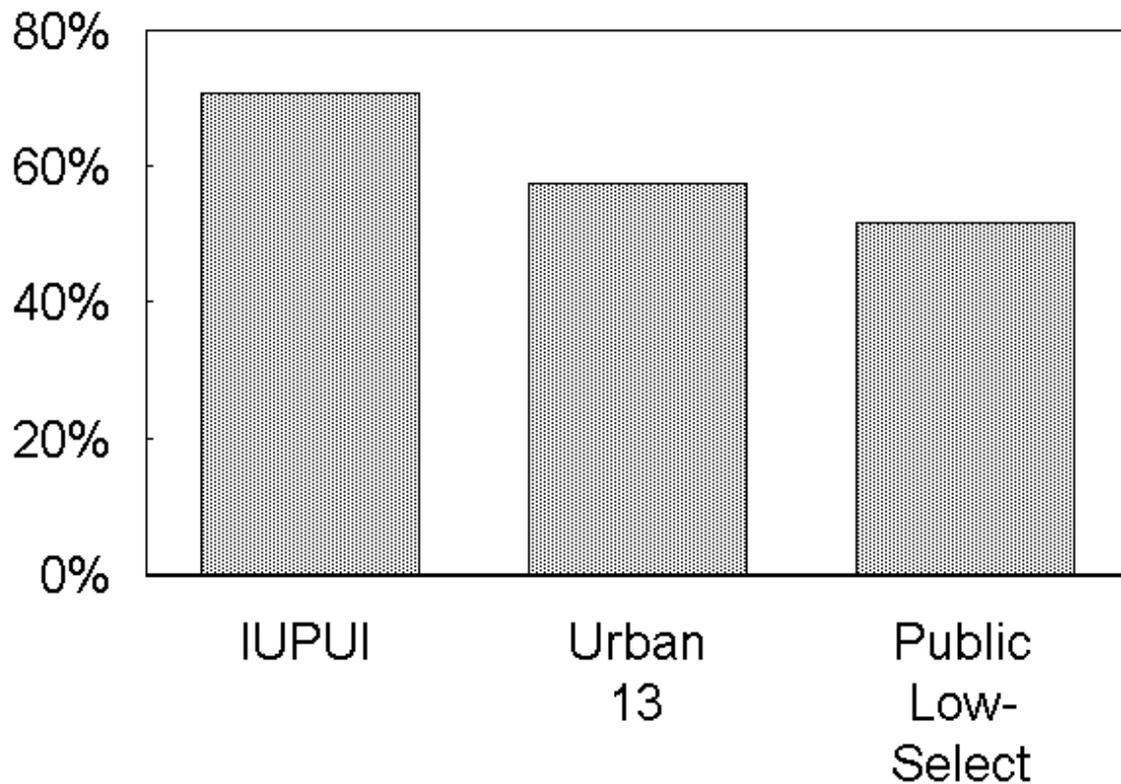
Overall, the 1992 sample should be considered an adequate, though not perfect, representation of IUPUI's new freshmen for 1992.

(Back to [Table of Contents](#), [List of Displays](#))

Survey Results: Family Background

First-generation college students prevail at IUPUI. This year, three-quarters (74.6%) of the class came from homes where father's education was less than a college degree (For comparability purposes only father's education is considered. When mother's education is included, the number of IUPUI entering freshman who are first-generation college students decreases to 68.2%). This characteristic clearly distinguishes IUPUI from comparable institutions. First-generation college students make up 70.9% of IUPUI's first-time full-time freshmen, compared to 51.8% of the first-time full-time freshmen at low-select public universities and 57.6% at the participating Urban 13 universities. These differences are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. First-Generation College Students among First-Time Full-Time Freshman at IUPUI and Comparable Institutions



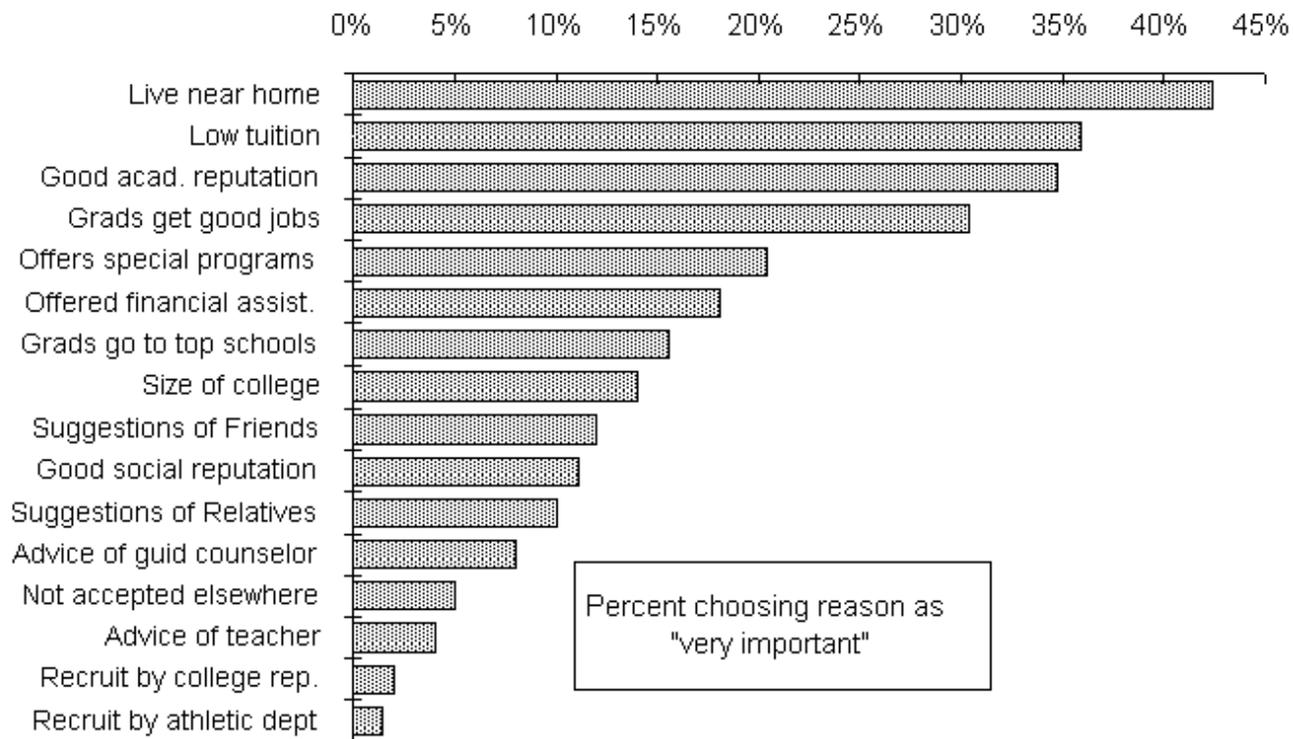
(Back to [Table of Contents](#), [List of Displays](#))

Survey Results: The College Decision

IUPUI was the first choice of 69% of this year's new freshman class. This is up slightly over previous years from 66%. While a majority of the 1992 freshmen (55.7%) applied only to this institution, the percent who applied to at least one other institution has increased. For 1992, 44.3% applied to at least one other institution, compared to 37.3% in 1991, and 39.4% in 1990.

For each of the past three years, freshmen have been asked their reasons for deciding to go to college. The number one reason our freshmen have been giving is 'to get a better job' (83.6%), followed by 'in order to make more money' (80.1%). IUPUI freshmen are similar to their peers nationally, who also endorsed these items as their top two reasons for going to college. Having made the decision to go to college, students must decide, more specifically, which college they will attend. Figure 2 shows, in order of importance, all of the reasons why 1992 freshmen chose IUPUI for their college education.

Figure 2. Reasons for Choosing to attend IUPUI

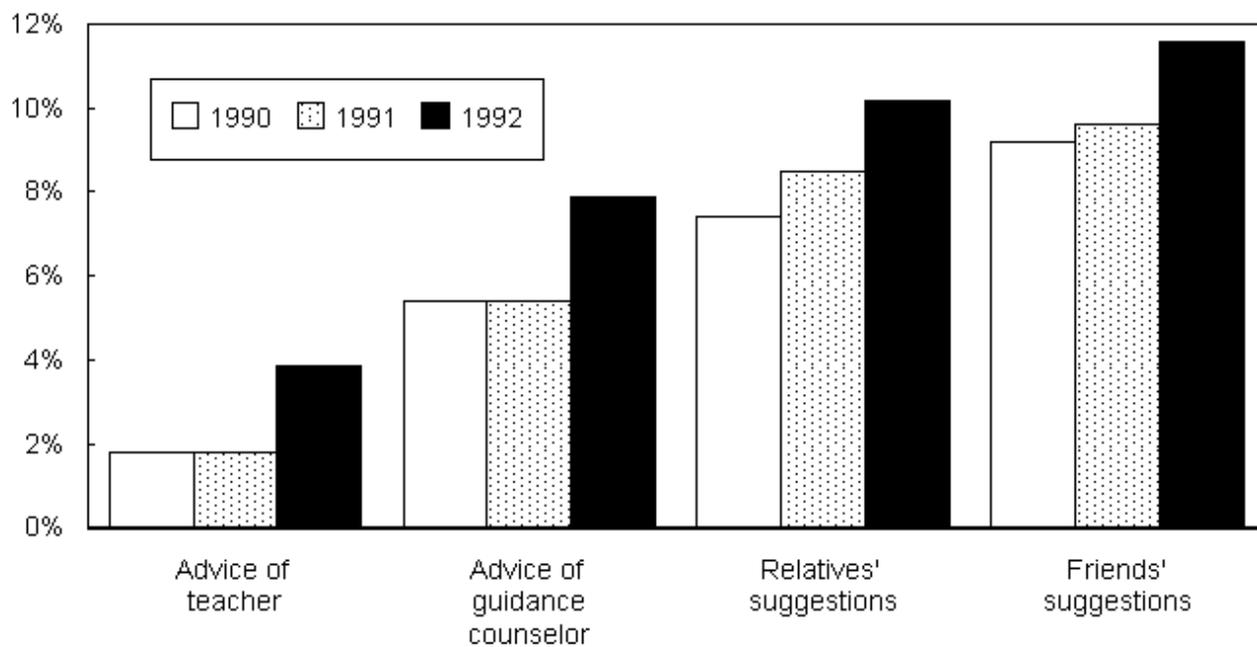


(Back to [Table of Contents](#), [List of Displays](#))

As in previous years, the 1992 freshmen chose IUPUI because they wanted to live near home (42.4%), the low tuition (35.9%), because of its good academic reputation (34.7%), and because graduates get good jobs (30.4%).

An interesting change is the increasing influence of the advice of high school professionals, relatives and friends. Figure 3 shows how the strength of these factors have increased. Nineteen percent of the 1990 sample said that at least one of these factors was very important in selecting IUPUI. In 1992, 24% of the sample said that at least one of these reasons was very important. This change may be due in part to the higher proportion of students directly out of high school in the 1992 sample. Results of other recent surveys have shown, however, that there is an increasing awareness of IUPUI among high school professionals and in the Central Indiana community at large.

Figure 3. Referrals from H.S. Representatives, Relatives, and Friends



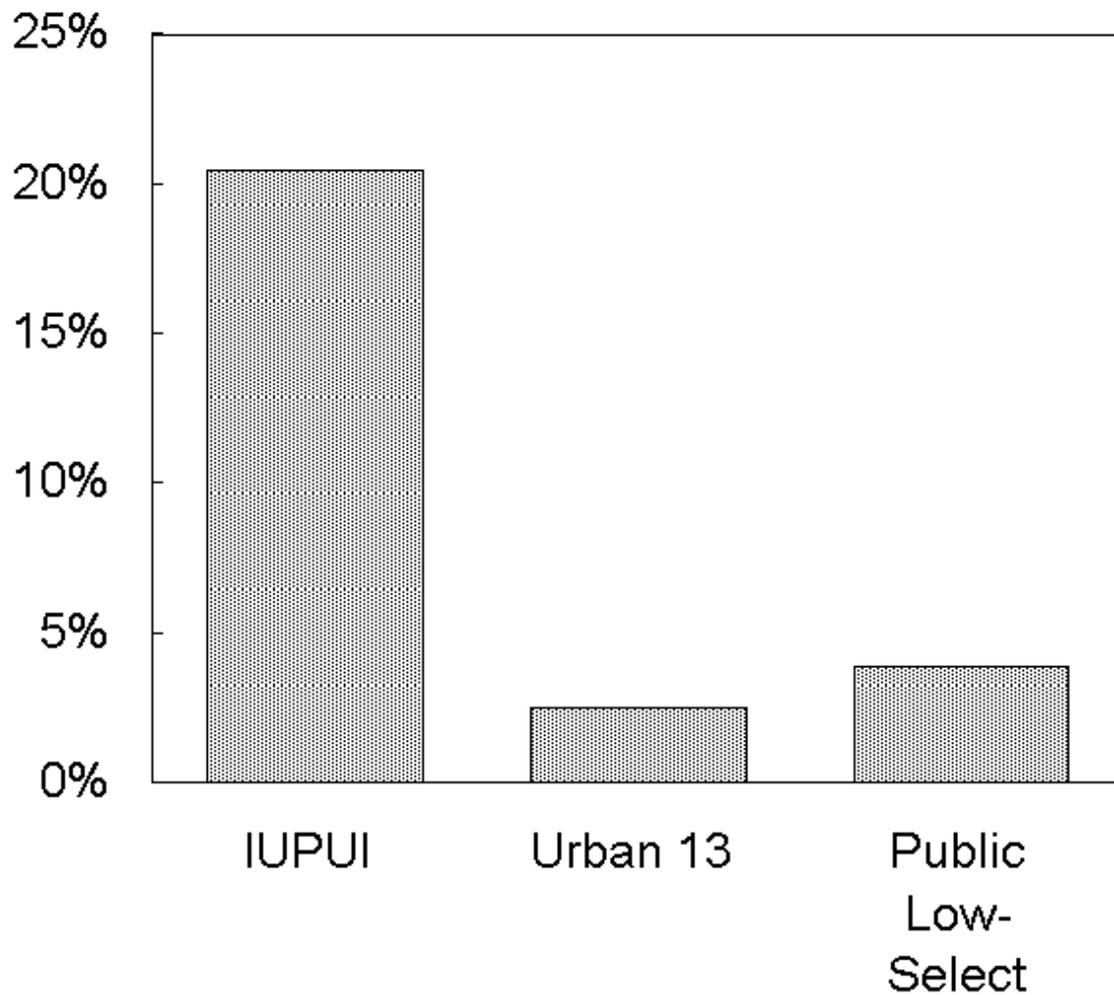
(Back to [Table of Contents](#), [List of Displays](#))

Survey Results: New Majority Students

IUPUI faculty and staff take pride in creating an educational environment that meets the needs of traditional as well as non-traditional or new majority students. The 1992 freshmen support the continued viability of a strategy that acknowledges differences in students' time-tables for attending college. Even with the slight bias toward including more students directly out of high school in the 1992 sample, a large percentage of students (46%) interrupted their academic careers between high school and college.

The diversity of the 1992 freshman class in this regard is most dramatically illustrated when viewed in relation to peer institutions. Figure 4 compares IUPUI to its peer institutions with respect to the enrollment of non-traditional students. Over one-fifth of IUPUI's first-time full-time freshman had taken time off between high school and college compared to less than one-twentieth of the students at peer institutions. These striking differences may be due in part to the way in which the freshman survey is administered at other institutions. It is possible that non-traditional students are excluded from the samples of these comparable institutions.

Figure 4. Percentage of First-Time Full-time Students Not Directly out of High School at IUPUI and Comparable Institutions

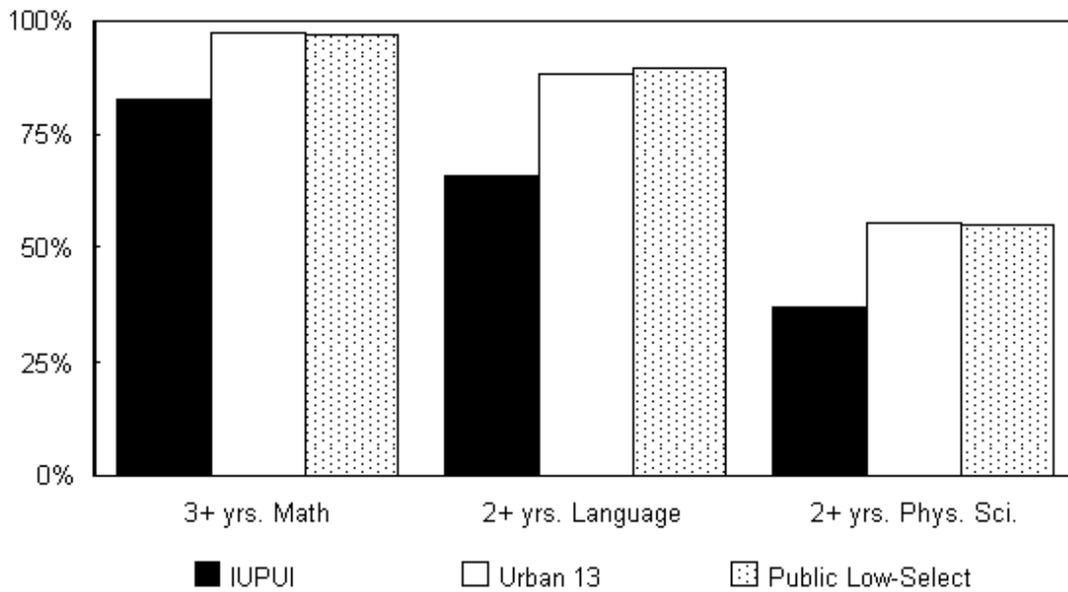


(Back to [Table of Contents](#), [List of Displays](#))

Survey Results: Academic Preparation

The 1992 IUPUI freshman class is less well prepared than in the previous two years, as well as in comparison to their peers at comparable public and urban institutions. Figure 5 shows that in the areas of math, foreign languages, and the physical sciences, IUPUI's first-time full-time freshmen lag behind their peers at comparable institutions in the number of high school courses completed in these important subjects.

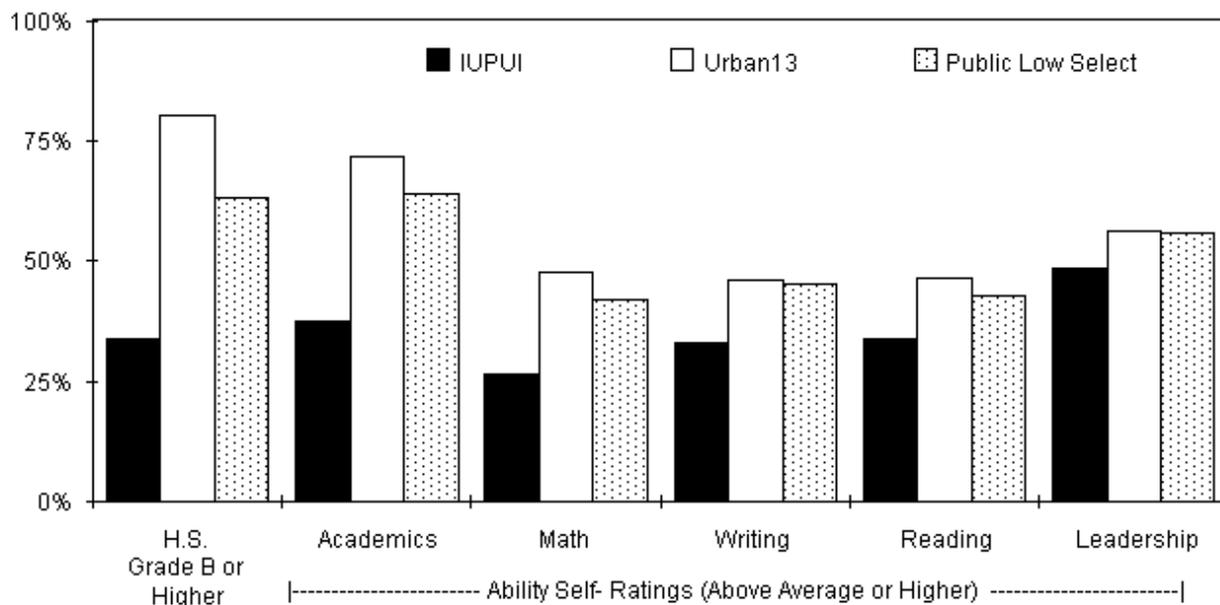
Figure 5. High School Courses in Math, Language and Physical Sciences: IUPUI vs. Peers



(Back to [Table of Contents](#), [List of Displays](#))

The freshman class of 1992 also performed less well in high school relative to previous freshman classes at IUPUI and relative to peer institution cohorts. Only 31.3% of this year's freshmen received a B average or higher in high school, compared to 42.5% in 1991, and 40.9% in 1990. Comparisons with first-time full-time freshmen at peer institutions are shown in Figure 6. One-third (33.7%) of IUPUI's first-time full-time freshmen reported a B average or higher in high school, compared to nearly two-thirds (62.9%) of public low-select university freshmen and four-fifths (80.3%) of the Urban 13 freshmen.

Figure 6. High School Grades and Ability Self-Ratings: IUPUI vs. Peers



(Back to [Table of Contents](#), [List of Displays](#))

Figure 6 reveals other indicators of the disparity in the abilities of IUPUI's first-time full-time freshmen when compared to their peers. IUPUI's first-time full-time freshmen rate themselves considerably below their peers in terms of general academic, mathematical, writing, reading and leadership abilities.

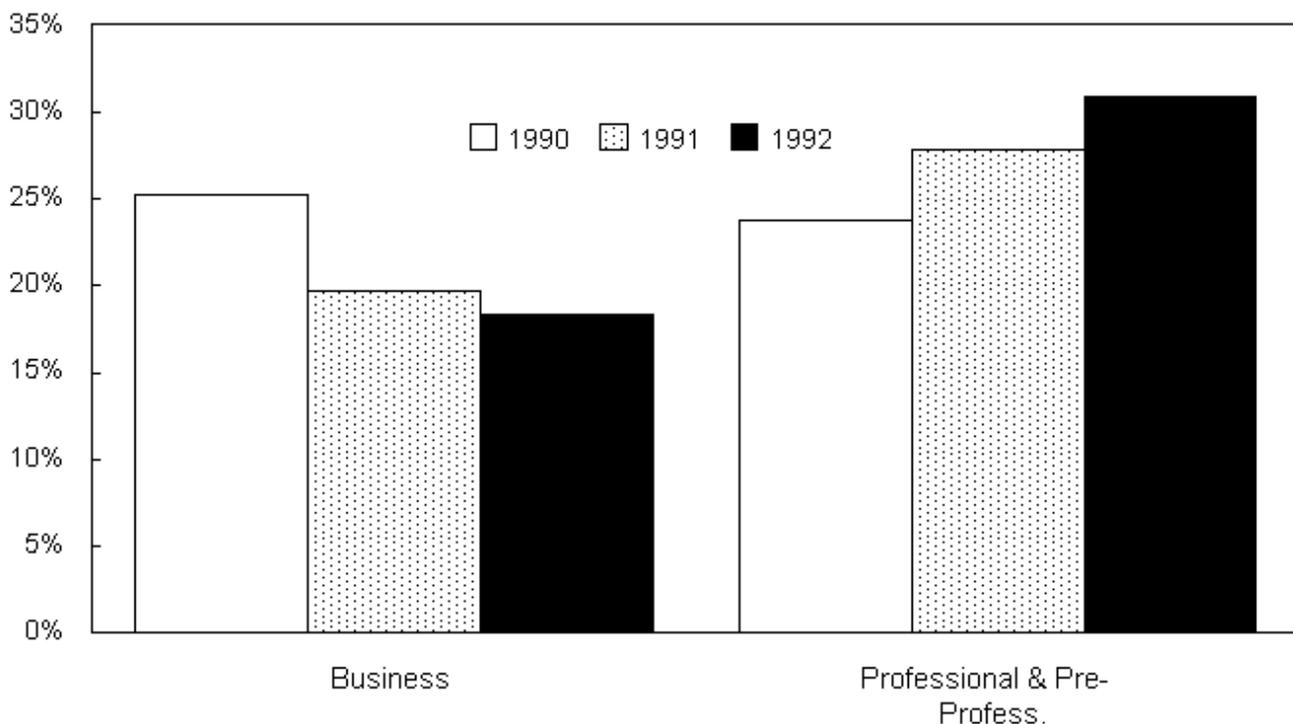
(Back to [Table of Contents](#), [List of Displays](#))

Survey Results: Majors and Careers

Several Trends in choice of college major have been occurring over the last five years on a national level. Interest in the business major began to decline in 1988 after a twenty year climb that peaked in 1987. Interest in health professions began to increase in 1987 and has doubled since that time.

The top-choice majors of IUPUI freshmen follow this national trend as shown in Figure 7. Freshman interest in a business major at IUPUI declined from 25.2% in 1990, to 18.3% in 1992. At the same time, interest in the pre-professional and professional majors, particularly the health professions, has increased from 23.7% in 1990 to 30.8% in 1992.

Figure 7. IUPUI Freshmen Interested in Business and Professional Majors



(Back to [Table of Contents](#), [List of Displays](#))

Nursing remains the number one choice of major for freshman women (20.5%). Despite its decline in popularity, the number one choice of major for men this year remains business (21.1% down from

29.4% in 1990), followed by engineering (17.0%). Career choices follow major choices closely: the number one career choice for 1992 freshman women is nursing (19.2%), and the first choice for men is business (15.3%), followed closely by engineering (14.0%).

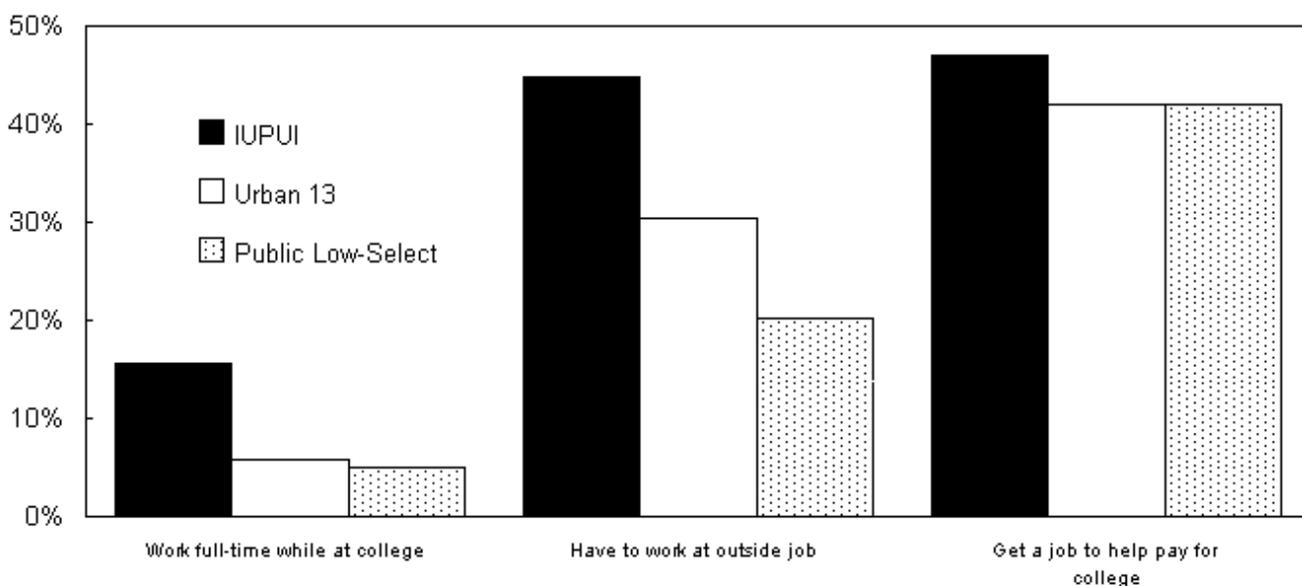
(Back to [Table of Contents](#), [List of Displays](#))

Survey Results: Employment

Working continues to be a necessary part of the lives of most of IUPUI's new freshman class. Just over fifty percent (50.8%) indicate that they will have to get a job to help pay for college expenses. Additionally, almost thirty percent (29.7%) either work full-time now, or estimate the chances are very good that they will have to work full-time while attending college. These figures are lower this year than in previous years, perhaps due to the increase in students directly from high school who participated in the survey. The percent of freshmen who reported they would have to get a job to help pay for college expenses was 57% in both 1990 and 1991. The percent of freshmen who thought they would have to work full-time while attending college was 32% in 1990 and 1991.

Compared to students nationally, more IUPUI first-time full-time freshmen expect to "work full-time while attending college," "have to work at an outside job during college," and "get a job to help pay for college expenses." Figure 8 illustrates these comparisons.

Figure 8. Expected Employment by First-Time Full-Time Freshmen at IUPUI and Comparable Institutions



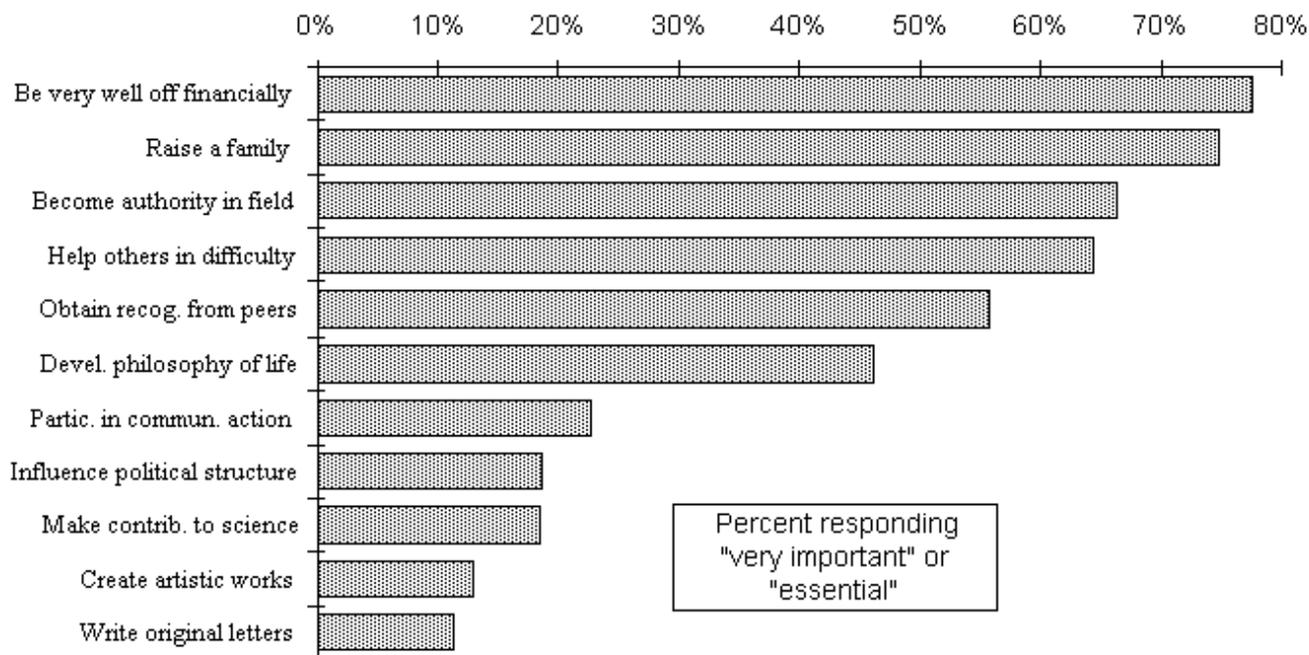
(Back to [Table of Contents](#), [List of Displays](#))

Survey Results: Goals and Values

The top three goals of IUPUI freshmen are to (1) be very well off financially, (2) raise a family and (3) become an authority in their own field. Figure 9 displays, in order of importance, the goals and values of the 1992 freshmen. The top three goals have remained the same over the last three years.

However, some changes have occurred among other goals and values. The 1992 freshmen appear to be more interested in promoting social change than did freshmen in the previous two years. In particular, more of this year's freshmen want to influence social values, be involved in environmental cleanup, participate in community action, and promote racial understanding.

Figure 9. Students' Long-Term Goals

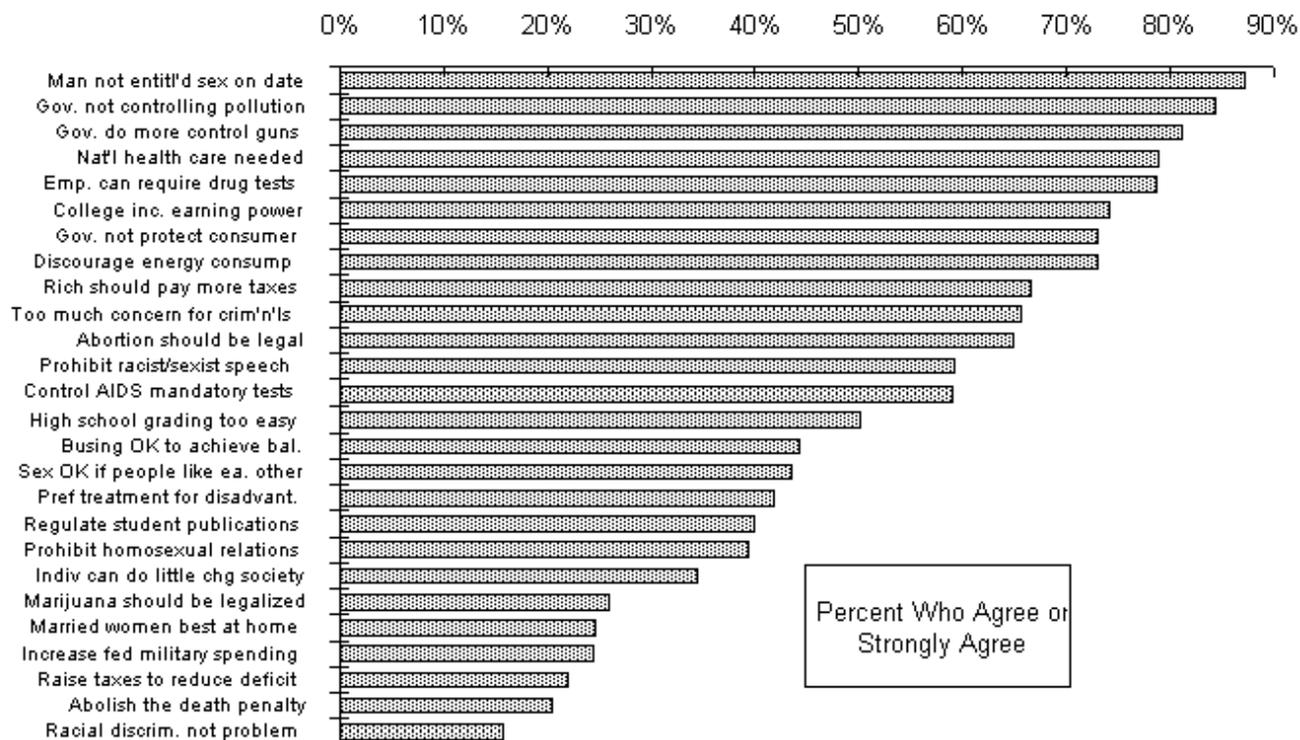


(Back to [Table of Contents](#), [List of Displays](#))

Survey Results: Attitudes, Opinions and Behaviors

Figure 10 displays a set of items from the Freshman Survey that attempt to measure attitudes and opinions on current issues ranging from government policies to sexual practices. Seventy percent or more of this year's freshmen believe that a man is not entitled to sex on a date, the government should do more to control pollution and handguns, a national health care plan is needed, employers can require drug tests, college increases earning power, and that the government is not protecting consumers and needs to discourage energy consumption. Additionally, over fifty percent of the sample believe that the wealthy should pay more taxes, there is too much concern for criminals, abortion should be legal, racist and sexist speech should be prohibited, and we should control AIDS by using mandatory tests.

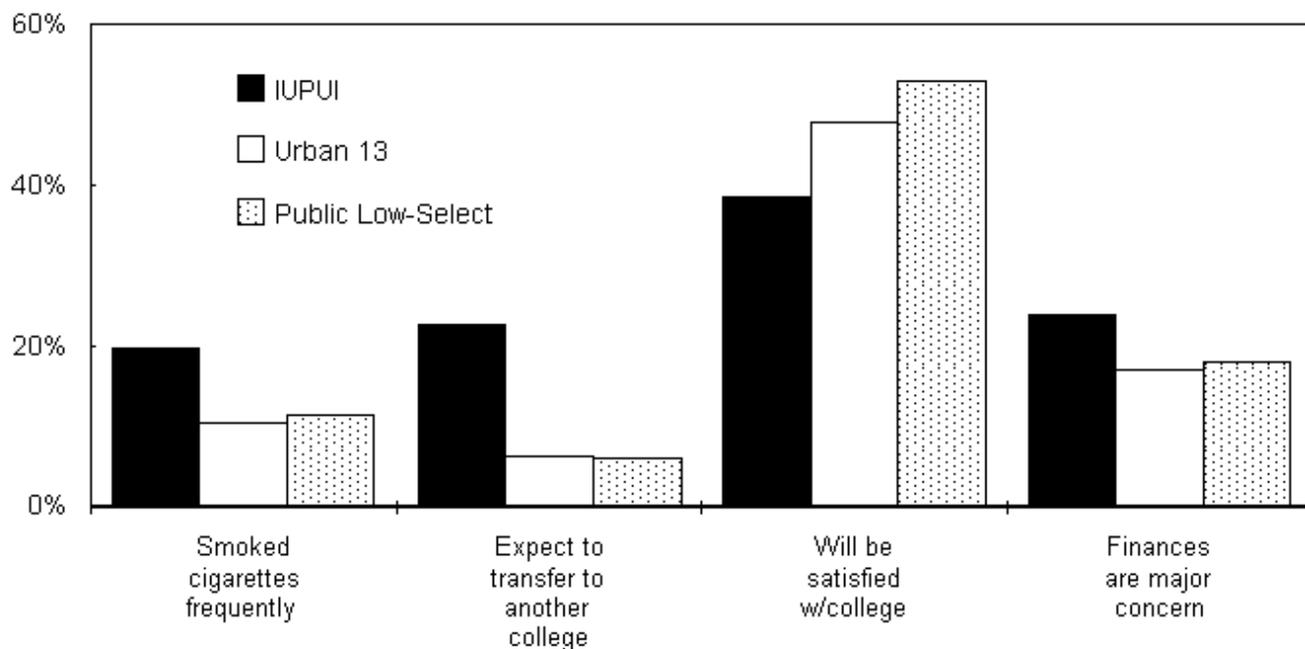
Figure 10. Attitudes, Opinions, and Behaviors of IUPUI Freshmen



(Back to [Table of Contents](#), [List of Displays](#))

The percentage of new freshmen who reported that they smoked cigarettes in the past year dropped markedly in 1992 compared to previous years. This year, 22.1% of freshmen reported that they smoked cigarettes frequently in the past year, compared to approximately 35% in 1991 and 34% in 1990. Figure 11 provides a comparison between IUPUI first-time full-time freshmen and their peers at comparable public and urban universities with regard to smoking and several other attitudes and behaviors. While there has been a decline in cigarette smoking among IUPUI freshmen, they still smoke more than their public university (11.4%) and urban university (10.3%) peers.

Figure 11. Comparing IUPUI and Peer First-Time Full-Time Freshmen

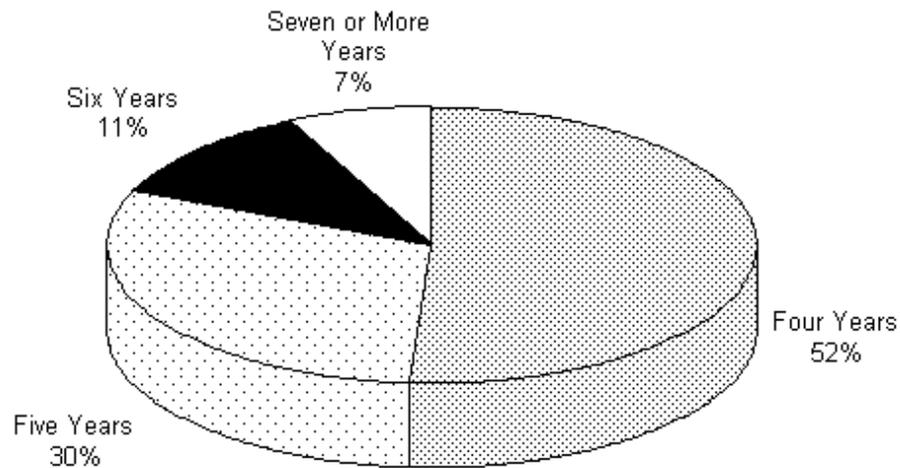


(Back to [Table of Contents](#), [List of Displays](#))

Three other items on the survey are interesting as they may relate to the future retention and degree completion rates of this class. In comparison to their peers at other institutions, IUPUI first-time full-time freshmen express a greater concern about financing their education. Nearly 24% of our freshmen say that financing their college education is a major concern to them, whereas only 17% of urban and 18% of public university students express this same concern. IUPUI freshmen are less likely than their peers to believe they will be satisfied with college. Thirty-eight percent of IUPUI freshmen believe that chances are very good they will be satisfied with college versus 48% of urban freshmen and 53% of public university freshmen. Furthermore, IUPUI freshmen report being more than three times as likely to transfer to another college than either their public or urban peers (22.7% vs. 6.3% vs. 6.0% respectively).

Finally, as Figure 12 shows, just over one-half (52%) of the new freshmen at IUPUI expect to take four years to complete their bachelor's degree. Thirty percent believe it will take five years, and 18% believe it will take six or more years. These are estimates based on personal considerations rather than on institutional considerations since these students had not registered for classes at the time the survey was administered. There is no comparative data available on how long public or urban university freshmen expect it will take them to complete their bachelor's degree.

Figure 12. Expected Years to Complete the Bachelor's Degree



(Back to [Table of Contents](#), [List of Displays](#))

Item-by-Item Analysis

The CIRP Freshman Survey contains over 150 items. This analysis reviewed significant trends and comparisons from among these items. More detailed results are available in a set of item-by-item analyses. The item analyses were produced for all IUPUI students combined as well as for significant identifiable subgroups of students. Subgroups include UEC-preparatory students, Columbus Center students, and students grouped according to intended major. Intended majors were clustered into disciplinary groups so as to generally correspond with IUPUI's academic schools. These detail reports present a three year trend for each individual item of the survey. They are available upon request from the Office of Information Management and Institutional Research.

(Back to [Table of Contents](#), [List of Displays](#))

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Go to [Office of Information Management and Institutional Research](#) Home Page