



Support for Federal Student Loan Forgiveness Split Along Generational Lines

Nationwide, 40% of Americans believe in canceling student loan debt

February 11, 2021 (Seattle, WA) - According to a new survey by BestColleges.com, 48% of millennials (aged 24-39) and 40% of Gen-Zers (aged 18-23) and Gen-Xers (aged 40-55) believe that federal student loan debt should be canceled compared to just 33% of baby boomers (aged 56-74) and 25% of respondents from the silent generation (aged 75+). Nationwide, 40% of Americans support forgiving the debt, while 29% disagree.

Click here for more information:

<https://www.bestcolleges.com/research/student-loan-debt-forgiveness-cancellation/>

“There is a stark generational divide when it comes to debt cancellation beliefs,” said Melissa Venable, Ph.D., Education Advisor for BestColleges.com. “One reason for this difference in opinion comes from the significant rising cost of college and the role debt has played in the lives of borrowers. A degree was more affordable when older generations attended.”

Only 33% of millennial respondents who took out student loans indicated that loan payments had not affected their lives. That percentage almost doubles with baby boomer borrowers, 61% of whom said their loan payments did not affect them. The different ways loans negatively affected these generations stood out for many major life events like buying a house/securing a mortgage (35% of millennials postponed or were unable to vs. 10% of baby boomers), getting married/engaged (12% vs. 1%), having/fully supporting children (15% vs. 5%), and going back to school (36% vs. 7%).

Overall, 60% of student loan borrowers reported their debt held them back from pursuing opportunities and accomplishing major milestones in their lives. Nearly one-third of respondents who took out student loans had to postpone or were not able to save for retirement (32%), pay off other debts (31%), buy a house/secure a mortgage (27%), or go on

vacation (27%). Other life interruptions included the inability to buy a car/get a car repaired (19%), go back to school (19%), and pay bills on time (16%).

A majority of respondents (63%) who borrowed to attend college still carry that debt today, with just 7% reporting they have completely paid off their student loans. Student loan forgiveness is supported by 72% of indebted students who actively hold loans. In contrast, only 43% of respondents who have already paid off their debts support student loan cancellation.

"Student debt relief could put students and graduates on more solid financial footing earlier than they anticipated, making a positive impact on their economic futures," added Dr. Venable.

Support for federal student loan cancellation is also divided along racial lines. Only 10% of Black respondents and 21% of Hispanic respondents indicated that they did not support forgiving student loans compared to 35% of white respondents.

Methodology

BestColleges.com commissioned YouGov PLC to conduct the survey. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov PLC. The total sample size was 2,433 adults. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all U.S. adults (aged 18+). Fieldwork was undertaken on December 9-11, 2020. The survey was carried out online and meets rigorous quality standards.

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