



## Needs of Off-Campus Students

January 2003

### Purpose

The goals of this survey were to learn more about the issues experienced by students who live off campus and to determine how this population can be better served.

### Implications/Highlights

Few off-campus students reported problems with their landlords, roommates, feeling isolated, or handling personal finances. More cited parking near their apartments and transportation to classes and activities as problems. Almost half the respondents wanted the University to provide services to help them understand their rights and responsibilities as renters.

### Participation Rate

N = 725 (67.1%) agreed to participate  
N = 356 (32.9%) did not agree to participate

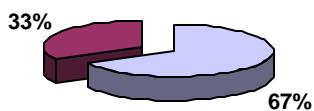


Figure 1. Participation rate

### Findings

Students were asked the importance of specific factors when they were deciding to live off campus. Factors cited as important by most students included: privacy, wanting to be with friends, and independence.

#### Reasons for Living Off Campus

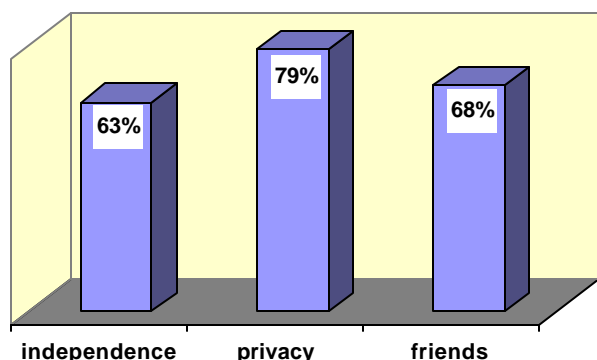


Figure 2. Students cited privacy, independence and wanting to be with friends as important when deciding to live off campus

\*Statistically significant at the .05 level

Students also referred to wanting a 'new experience' and the 'quality of off-campus vs. on-campus housing' as important reasons when deciding to live off campus. Less important issues were: unavailability of on-campus housing, financial considerations/costs, and extras such as cable, swimming pool, or in-apartment laundry facilities.

#### Other Reasons for Living Off Campus

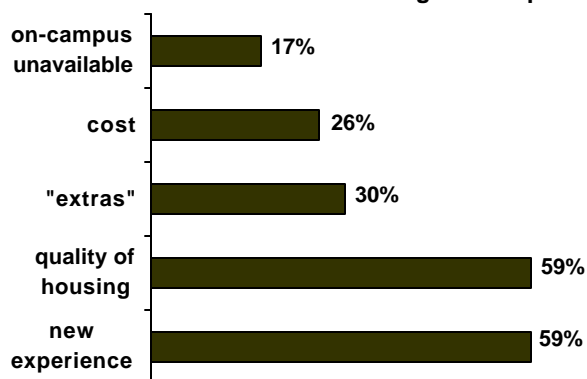


Figure 3. Other reasons cited by students for living off campus

Women were more likely than men to say that wanting: to be with friends,\* to have a new experience,\* to be independent,\* and to have 'extras' \* were important factors in their decision to live off campus.

Minority students were more likely than non-minority students to say that: unavailability of on-campus housing\* and financial considerations/cost \* were important to their decision making.

About one-fourth of the respondents said they had purchased an on-campus meal plan while living off campus.

#### Purchased On-Campus Meal Plan

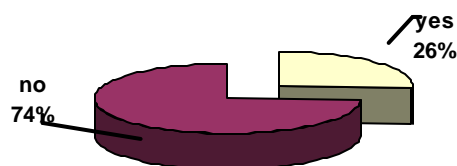


Figure 4. About one-fourth of students living off campus purchased an on-campus meal plan

More of the sophomores (41.3%) than of the juniors (29.5%) or seniors (20.3%) purchased campus meal plans.

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Students took an average of 1.7 months to find this year's apartment. More than half (56.0%) said they signed their leases during the months of November, December or January prior to moving off campus.

Of those respondents who said they had participated in the Housing Fair held at the end of January (n=65), nearly half (47.7%) found this experience to be helpful. A quarter of respondents (28%) said they had looked at the Penn State Off-Campus Living website and, of these, 58% found this helpful.

A majority of those who did not participate in the Housing Fair said they were unaware of the opportunity. Other reasons for not participating included 'already knew' about off-campus housing options, had arrangements to room with others, made their decision before the Housing Fair was scheduled, and distance/weather.



Figure 5. A majority of those who did not attend the 2002 Housing Fair were unaware of the opportunity

Some students indicated that living off campus resulted in a decrease in their use of on-campus fitness facilities (19.7%), in attending Late Night activities (16.7%), and participating in student organizations (11.0%).

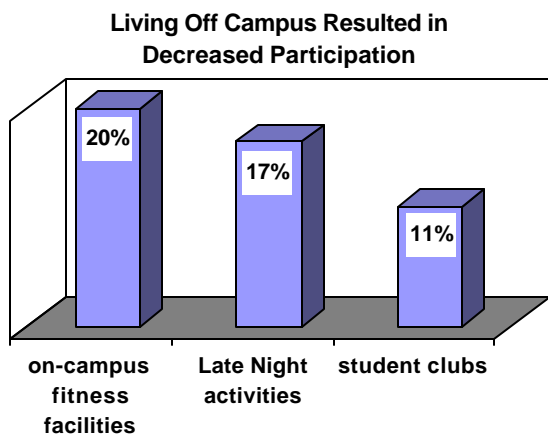


Figure 6. Living off campus resulted in some students using on-campus facilities less often

More of the minority students said that living off campus resulted in their participating less often with clubs and student organizations.\*

Few students reported they knew about special on-campus services.

**Aware of Special Services**

- 8.4% on-campus attorney for students
- 4.6% Judicial Affairs Peer Mediators
- 3.8% USG Department of Town Affairs

Less than a tenth (6.4%) were aware of the proposed Off-Campus Student Union while a quarter (24.9%) said they would be willing to pay to support this new effort.

Students were asked what services they thought the University should provide to those living off campus.

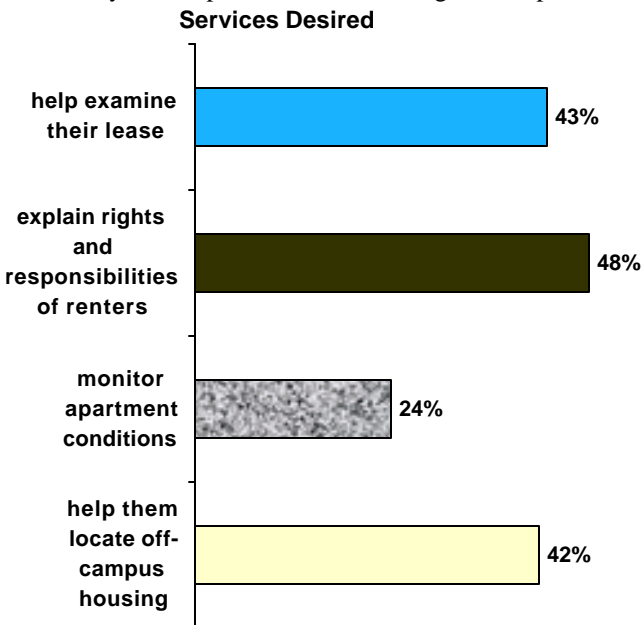


Figure 7. Students wanted specialized services

Students were asked how much they each spent per month on average for various expenses.

monthly average

- \$ 364.22 rent/utilities
- \$ 108.17 food
- \$ 76.65 entertainment

On average, males spent more per month than females did on food\* and entertainment.\*

Sixty percent of respondents overall and 70% of seniors reported having a car here during the semester.

monthly average

- \$ 65.90 parking space (note that 49% of those with cars did not pay extra for parking)
- \$ 33.57 parking fines (note that 83% of those with cars did not have parking fines)

Students with cars spent more per month on entertainment than those without cars.\*

\*Statistically significant at the .05 level.

Students were asked a series of questions about **problems related to living off campus**. The problems most often cited were parking near their apartments and transportation to and from classes and meetings on campus. Fewer students noted problems with the relationship with their landlord, feeling isolated, studying in their apartment or having roommate difficulties.

**Problems Parking and Getting to Campus**

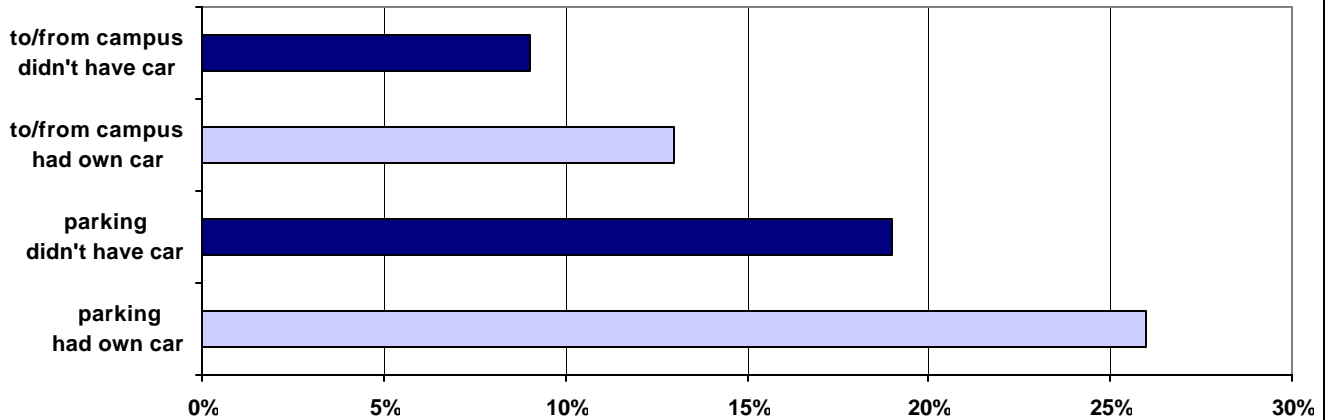


Figure 8. Students had problems parking close to their apartments and with transportation to classes and meetings on campus

**Other Problems Experienced by Off-Campus Students**

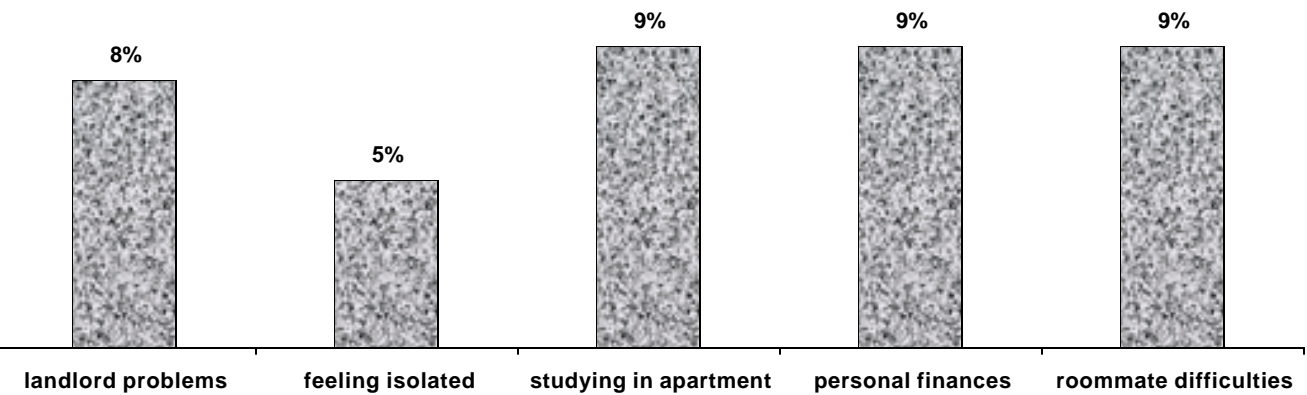


Figure 9. Other than parking near their apartment and transportation to campus, some students reported problems with their landlord, studying at home, handling personal finances, roommate difficulties and feeling isolated

Female students were more likely to report problems with their roommates;\* minority students were more likely to have problems with personal finances.\*

Slightly less than half the students (47%) reported being currently employed. Those who were employed said they worked on average 14.7 hours per week.

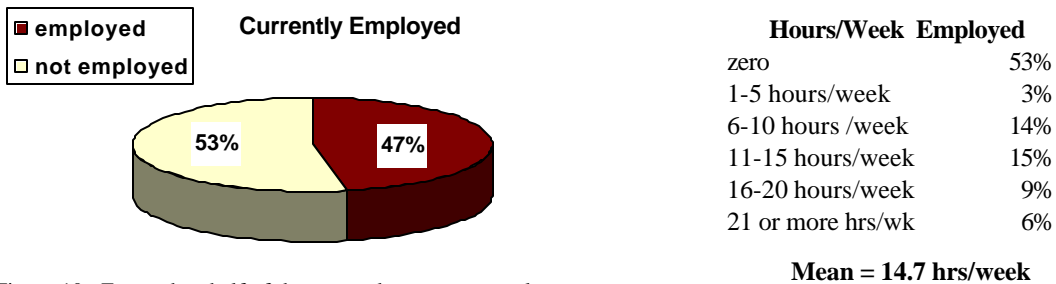


Figure 10. Fewer than half of the respondents are currently employed

\*Statistically significant at the .05 level.