

Impact of Sharing A Room

February 1998

[Purpose](#) • [Highlights](#) • [Findings](#)



Purpose

The purpose for this survey was to gather feedback from students about their experiences sharing a residence hall room as a first year student.

Implications/Highlights

Most (82%) students had not shared a bedroom during the three years before coming to Penn State.

At the time they were deciding on their own initial room request, 22% said they would have preferred a single their first year on campus; 7% reported they would now suggest that incoming freshmen request a single room.

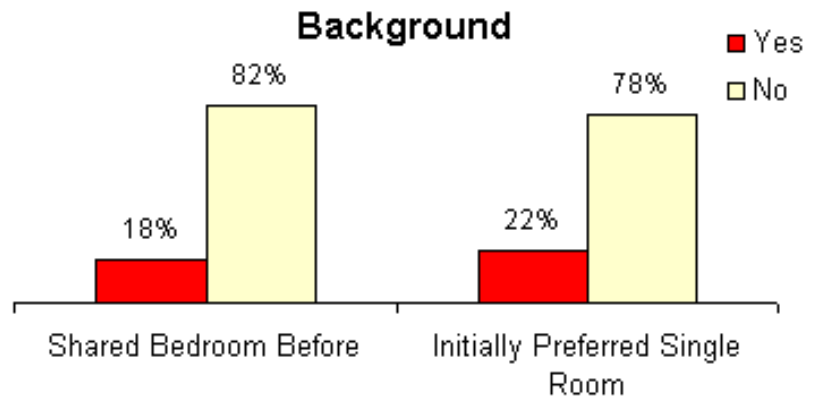
Participation Rate

■ N = 687(76%) agreed to participate
■ N = 220(24%) did not agree to participate

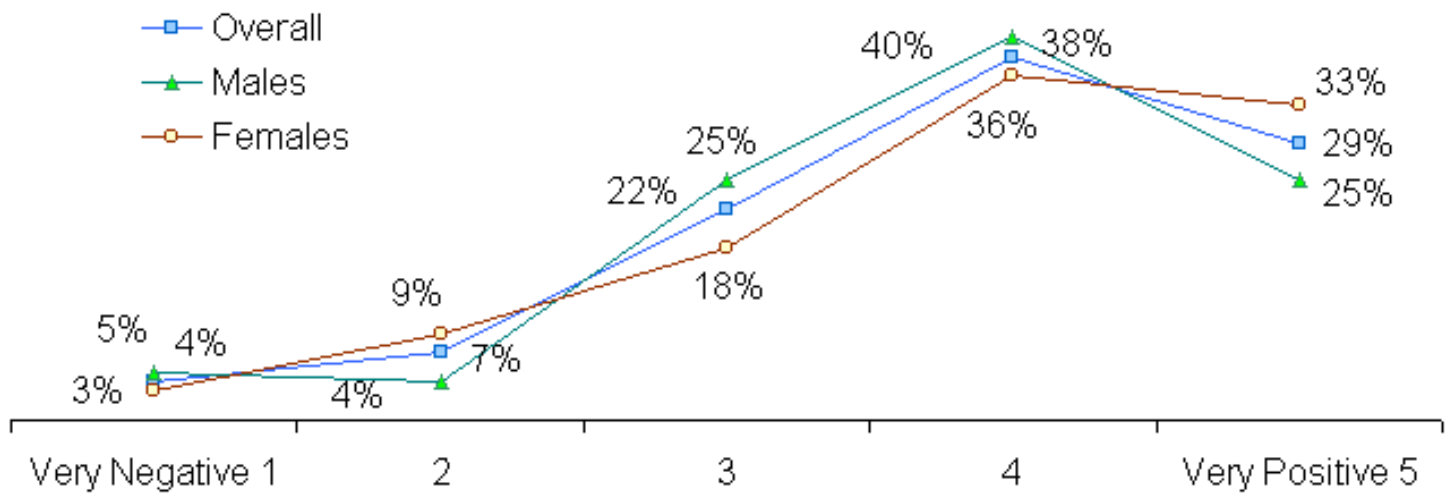


Findings

● Most students (82%) had their own bedroom during the three years before coming to Penn State. Many students (22%) would have preferred having a choice of having a single room at the time they were deciding on their room request as an incoming student.



Roommate Contribution to Overall Experiences

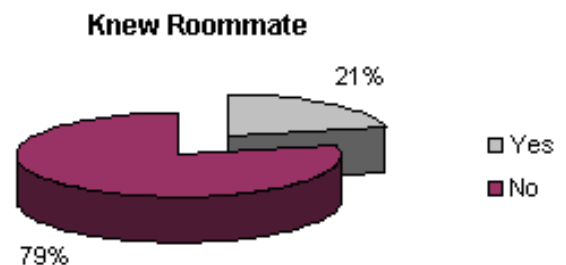


● A majority of students indicated having a roommate contributed positively to their overall experiences as a first year student. Male and female students differed when reporting the impact of having a roommate.*

● Significantly more of those who felt having a roommate contributed positively to their first year experience planned to live with the same roommate next year.*

(*Statistically significant at the .05 level)

● A fifth (21%) of the sample said they had known their roommates before arriving on campus as a new student.



● A higher proportion of those who knew their first year roommate before arrival (31%) are planning on

living with the same roommate next year than of those who had not known their first year roommate (16%).*

● Forty percent of the respondents reported their roommates were in the same major or academic College. More of the male students (48%) than of the female students (36%) had roommates who were in the same area of study.*

(*Statistically significant at the .05 level)

● Students were asked about advice they would give to incoming freshmen. Most (93%) would suggest they request a double rather than a single room. A third (32%) would recommend requesting having someone they already know as a roommate their first year on campus.

● Male students (45%) were significantly more likely than were female students (27%) to report they would suggest incoming new students room with someone they know.*

Students were asked whether living in a single room or with a roommate was better in helping first year students develop the following personal competencies.

Academic Skills	Single	Roommate	No Difference
learning about classes and majors	8%	67%	25%
learning effective study skills	25%	50%	25%

Interpersonal Competencies	Single	Roommate	No Difference
learning how to negotiate	2%	91%	7%
learning how to explain ideas	4%	87%	9%
learning to listen to others	3%	86%	11%
recognizing needs of others	2%	92%	6%

Community	Single	Roommate	No Difference
learning about different cultures	4%	80%	16%
responding to other lifestyles	2%	90%	8%
developing own lifestyle norms	21%	57%	23%

feeling connected to Penn State	7%	54%	38%
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Involvement	Single	Roommate	No Difference
getting involved	4%	83%	13%
meeting students	4%	88%	8%
making friends	7%	75%	18%
developing new interests	7%	76%	17%

Personal Skills	Single	Roommate	No Difference
handling homesickness	6%	84%	11%
learning to assert oneself	7%	78%	15%
respecting privacy	6%	88%	6%
seeing others handle pressure	2%	89%	8%
valuing respect and consideration	1%	95%	4%

- **There were significant differences between students from University Park and the three other Penn State campuses (Behrend/Erie, Berks and Altoona) included in this survey. University Park students were more likely than students from the three other campuses to feel having a roommate:**

- helped develop listening skills * 89% vs. 80%
- helped them learn to assert themselves * 81% vs. 71%
- helped them feel connected to Penn State * 59% vs. 43%
- helped them learn how to handle pressures * 89% vs. 79%
- helped them learn about classes and majors * 70% vs. 59%

- **Students were asked to describe the single best and single worst aspect of their living arrangement this year.**

Best

having someone to talk to
being exposed to different backgrounds
having someone watch out for me
learning to work out problems
learning to put up with someone else

only having to bring 'half the stuff'
gaining a new friend
helping adapt to school
having a bigger room than a single

Worst

not enough space
study/sleep conflicts
constantly had others sleep over
having to compromise
foot odor
living with a control freak
roommate had no respect
lack of privacy
sharing the bathroom

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