

Pennsylvania Course Materials Survey 2023



Affordable Learning PA (ALPA) and the Partnership for Academic Library Collaboration and Innovation (PALCI) aim to understand the impact of course material choices on students' academic and general life. Together with Bay View Analytics, they conducted a survey of Pennsylvania students in Spring and Fall 2023. There were 4,306 student responses from 14 participating institutions.



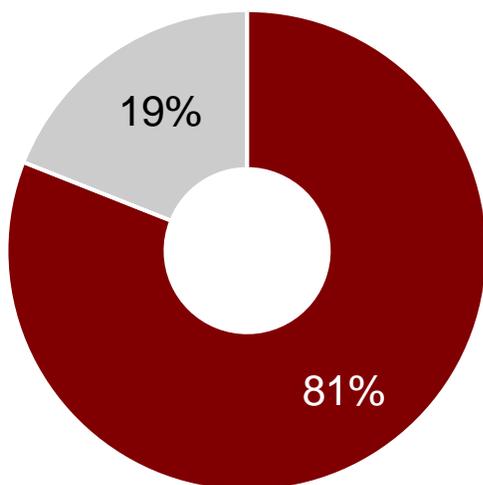
This project builds on the work done by the [Virginia Course Materials Survey](#) and the [Florida Student Textbook and Course Materials Survey](#). The survey used in Pennsylvania expands and updates those surveys for the state's students.



This project was made possible by Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Office of Commonwealth Libraries.

Widespread Student Worry about Meeting Their Course Material Costs

Almost half of all students say their worry is “moderate” or “extreme.”



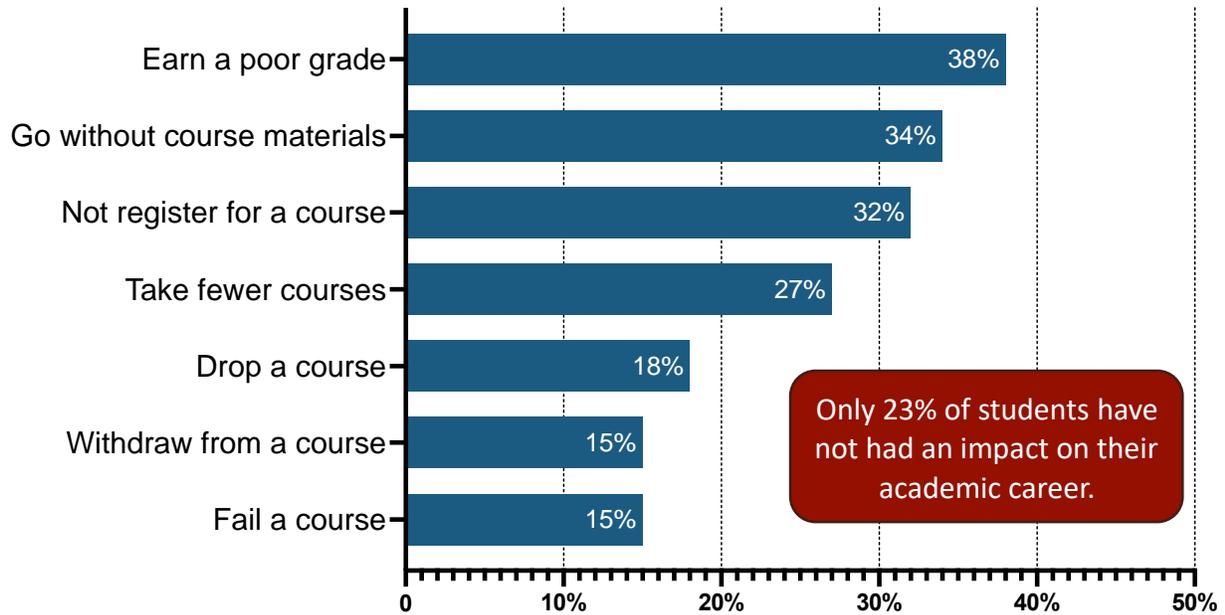
■ Not Worried ■ Worried

Not all students have the same level of worry. Students that reported even higher levels of worry were: Black, Hispanic, women, had a full-time job off campus, or were a Pell Grant recipient.

Course Material Costs Negatively Impact Students Academically and Influences their Choices

Students reported earning poor grades and reducing the number of courses they took because of the cost of course materials.

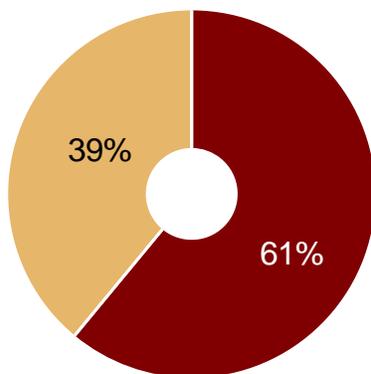
In your academic career, has the cost of required course materials caused you to:



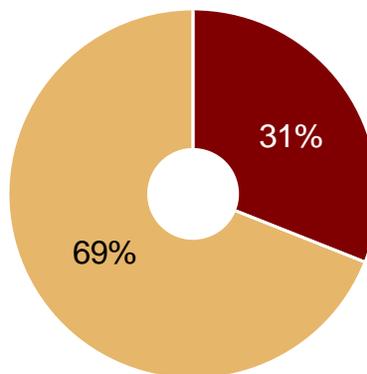
Major academic life decisions are affected by the cost of course materials.

In your academic career, has the cost of required course materials affected:

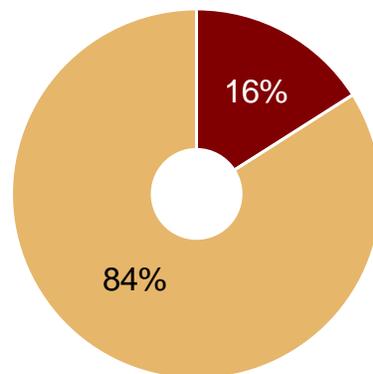
Selecting your Institution



Selecting your Major



Selecting your Minor

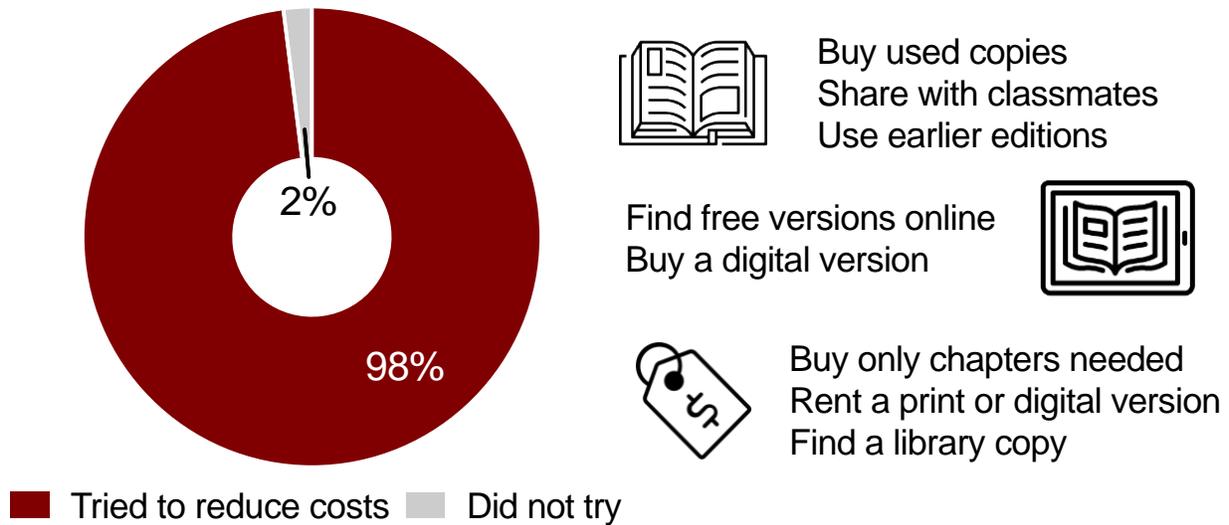


Yes, affected

No, not affected

Almost all Students Try to Reduce Costs

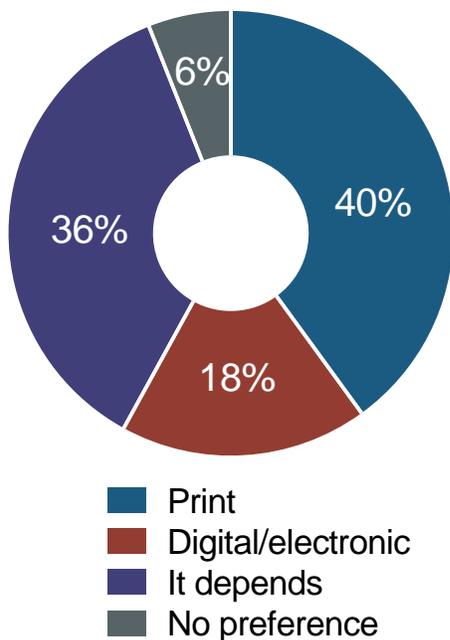
50% of students report trying 5 or more different ways to lower their costs.



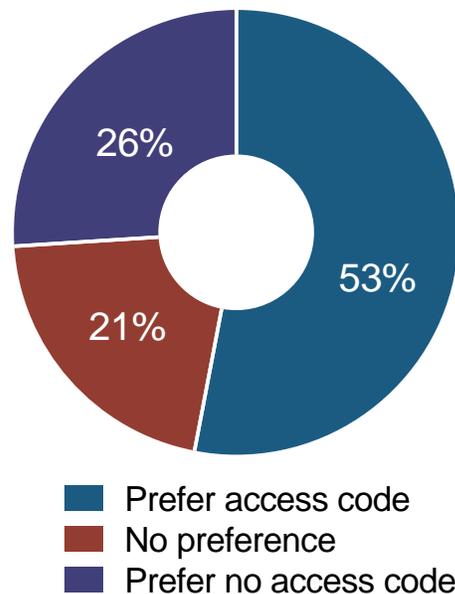
Preferences are mixed on digital versus print.

While many students report preferring print, they are not a majority, and preferences can depend on the course. However, just over half of students prefer access codes (also called day one programs) to obtain course materials.

Student Format Preference



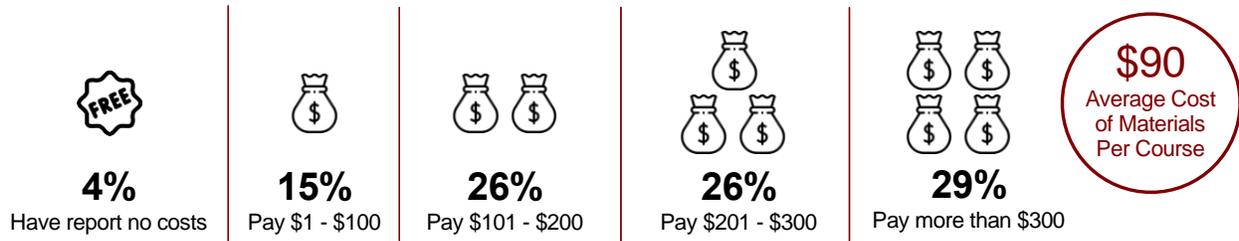
Student Preference for Obtaining Course Materials



Students are Responsible for Course Material Costs

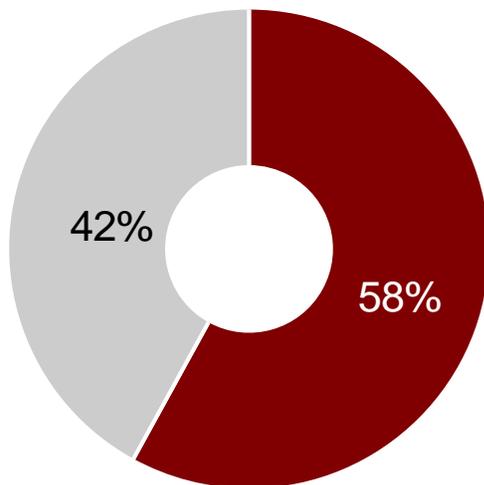
Full time students will take 4 or more courses in a term and purchase materials for each course. While some courses may offer materials at no cost, they are not common and generally just for one course, not all.

How much did you spend on course materials during this term?



3 in 5 students report all their courses required purchasing materials

Financial aid can help with student educational costs; however, most students report it does not directly help with their course materials costs.



Only a third of students with financial aid report that it helps with their course material costs. Just 1 in 5 students with financial aid say it covers more than 50% of their costs.

- No help or no financial aid
- Financial aid helped covered costs

PA Students Face Unique Challenges

A national sample of 500 students responded to the same questions that were in the PA survey in Spring 2023. Compared to national responses, Pennsylvania's students differ on key metrics around issues with course material costs.

PA students are like students everywhere...



PA students spend similar to national levels per term for materials.



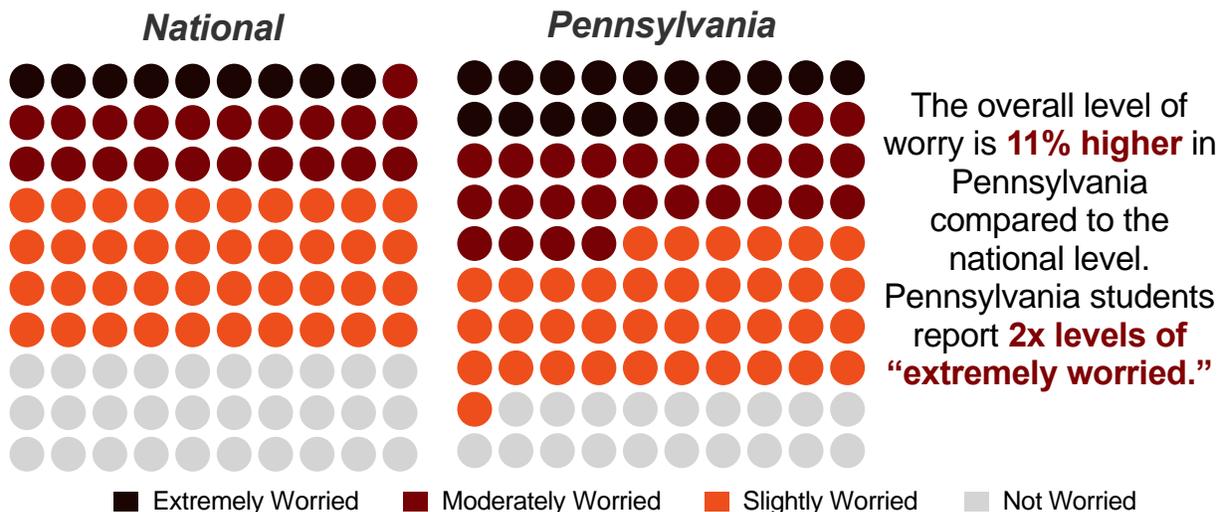
Course material costs affects large academic decisions at similar rates both in PA and nationally.



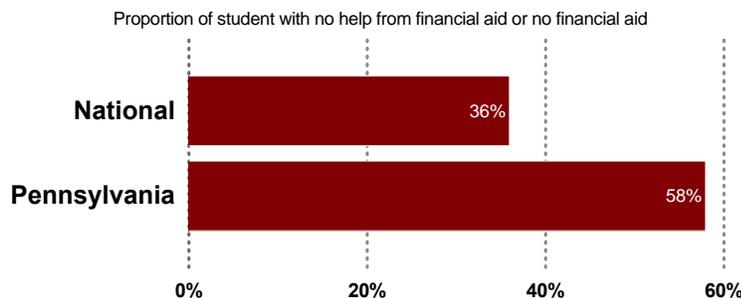
Digital vs. print preferences are similar between PA and national students.

...But do differ on some key metrics.

How worried were you about meeting your course material costs this term?



More students in PA have no help from financial aid for course material costs.



More Costs for PA students

- +6%** PA students report more courses require purchasing materials.
- 16%** PA students report they take courses with no costs.