

PRESS RELEASE

The Most Anxious Generation Yet? Sodexo Decodes Gen Z with Global Survey of University Students

The International Student Lifestyle Survey finds increasingly stressed students value universities for being welcoming and rank a friendly atmosphere as most important to university selection process

Paris, France/Gaithersburg, Maryland, Sept. 7, 2017—Sodexo, world leader in quality of life services, today released its first-ever International Student Lifestyle Survey, which surveyed 4,000 students in three continents for insights about ways to improve quality of life along students' academic journeys.

The report is intended to drive an understanding of university students around the world and to help universities provide new offerings, living arrangements and studying spaces that alleviate students' stress about studies, finances and/or careers after graduation.

The survey of undergraduates in the U.S., U.K., China, India, Italy and Spain, which can be downloaded [here](#), took students' pulse on everything from what most influences their decision about where to attend university, to who is paying for their accommodations, to how much they're exercising and sleeping, to their career plans (or lack thereof). The responses about the four stages of a student's lifecycle—pre-arrival, arrival, living and departure—provide insight into universal student experiences and into those experiences where national culture and expectations make an enormous difference.

Patrick Connolly, CEO of Schools and Universities Worldwide, said: *"The college and university industry is changing rapidly, in part because the expectations of Generation Z are much more fluid, varying quite a bit among student populations and from country to country. Our survey affirmed Sodexo's understanding of this generation as more worldly and interested in campus services and opportunities that help them live a fast-paced, stress-free lifestyle. Universities that reconfigure their operational model to suit these expectations will be much more effective at alleviating some of the mental, sociological and economic pressures that students around the world say they are under."*

Additional key global findings include:

- **Overall quality of life? Just OK.** Across the six countries surveyed, most students report medium stress levels, medium levels of wellbeing and medium to high-quality living arrangements (supporting numerous third-party assessments of Gen Z as the most anxious generation to date). And overall, students report being especially stressed out in their first month by the newness of university and adjusting to the differences between high school and university studies.
- **The worries and concerns of the average student vary significantly based on the country they study in.** When it comes to which services are most attractive, U.S students are concerned about finances and how to minimize debt, while students in the U.K. prioritize facilities that support an active social life. India is more focused on studying, while China is concerned with both social life and ease of daily life.
- **Students consider both immediate priorities and long-term implications when selecting a university:** When deciding which college to attend, a friendly atmosphere is the most important factor, mentioned by 78 percent of students. Reputation and ranking is almost as important, cited by three-quarters of respondents. Further, students value internet research about colleges (72 percent) more than advice from parents (62 percent), teachers (57 percent) and friends (49 percent).
- **There's a global appetite to learn stress management and money management skills:** Dealing with stress is the skill students most want to learn (50 percent), with money management a close second (48 percent). Globally, 30 percent of students have considered dropping out of university, with half blaming

study-related problems, approximately one third citing their health or mental health, and one third saying the reasons are financial.

- **Gen Z students are less “traditionally” social and more serious (and money is a contributing factor):** Students are socializing less than might be expected. They look for cheap social activities and generally prioritize accommodations with facilities that focus on day-to-day living rather than recreational or social facilities. Their social life is one of the first things to be sacrificed to save money; 56 percent have saved money by not going out with friends.
- **Students value inclusive environments where they feel heard: Eighty three** percent of students say it's important that their university fosters an environment where they are free to voice their concerns or opinions. For example, just over half of students think their university is welcoming to new students, with students in Italy ranking their university the lowest on the welcoming scale (39 percent) and students in China largely rating their university as welcoming (84 percent). Different nationalities and ethnicities are more accepted by universities (65 percent) than different sexualities (58 percent) or gender identities (59 percent).
- **Students are more motivated by passion than money in their careers:** Just over half of the students surveyed know what they want to do after graduation, and most students are more concerned about finding a job quickly (37 percent) or in a field they're interested in (36 percent) than with earning a high salary (24 percent).

Connolly added: *“Universities have an opportunity and a responsibility to cultivate a profound understanding of what contributes to their students’ quality of life. They will find enormous value in expressing this understanding in the way they approach everything from the design of student accommodations and traditional gathering spaces—libraries, study halls and courtyards—to the way they welcome international students who have very specific needs. It’s very important to today’s university students to be able to voice their concerns or opinions to their academic institutions—this is one of the findings from our survey, and it affirms that co-creation should be key to problem-solving in academia. This is the best way for universities to bring different voices, teams, specialties and opinions together to solve an existing problem or to develop something completely new.”*

Sodexo International University Lifestyle Survey Methodology

The survey builds on the success of Sodexo’s industry-leading, biennial University Lifestyle Survey of students in the U.K., which it has released since 2004. This is the first year Sodexo, which serves 8 million students a day at 1,000 universities in 32 countries, has conducted the survey globally.

The research was carried out in spring 2017 by [YouthSight](#), which surveyed 4,027 students from six countries who completed questionnaires online. The sample included 1,008 U.S. students, 1,005 from the U.K., 507 from Italy, 500 from Spain, 505 from India and 502 from China, in all years of study. There was a 50/50 gender split in all countries except India where it was 70/30 male to female.

About Sodexo

Founded in 1966 by Pierre Bellon, Sodexo is the global leader in services that improve Quality of Life, an essential factor in individual and organizational performance. Operating in 80 countries, Sodexo serves 75 million consumers each day through its unique combination of On-site Services, Benefits and Rewards Services and Personal and Home Services. Through its more than 100 services, Sodexo provides clients an integrated offering developed over 50 years of experience: from food services, reception, safety, maintenance and cleaning, to facilities and equipment management; from Meal Pass, Gift Pass and Mobility Pass benefits for employees to in-home assistance, child care centers and concierge services. Sodexo’s success and performance are founded on its independence, its sustainable business and financial model and its ability to continuously develop and to engage the commitment of its 425,000 employees throughout the world.

Sodexo is a member of the CAC 40 and DJSI Indices.

Key figures (as of August 31, 2016)

20.2 billion euro in consolidated revenues

425,000 employees

19th largest employer worldwide

80 countries

75 million consumers served daily

17.1 billion euro in market capitalization (as of July 5, 2017)

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