

Approximately 22 percent of undergraduate students are raising children while in school, and over half of these students are single parents. At the same time, 52 percent of these students end up leaving school before finishing a degree compared to 32 percent of non-parenting students. <sup>i</sup> Parenting students are also more likely than non-parenting students to report having fewer financial resources to fund their education, and over half report paying for childcare with an average cost of \$490 per month. <sup>ii</sup> At the same time, parenting students are more likely to struggle with basic needs including food and housing insecurity and homelessness. <sup>iii</sup> Limited resources coupled with high financial and familial obligations puts these students at greater risk of leaving school without completing a degree.

This brief examines data from 58,900 students at 104 higher

## Public Assistance Use

Parenting students are more likely to use various forms of public assistance. For example, nearly three-quarters reported receiving federal stimulus funds compared to just under half of non-parenting students. Additionally, parenting students are far more likely to report they utilize other forms of assistance including for food, medical needs, utilities, childcare, housing, and unemployment. As such, parenting students indicate higher need and higher usage of public assistance, which suggests that while these services are being utilized, they may not meet full need.

## Financial Insecurities

Despite leveraging public assistance, parenting students are more likely to report facing various financial insecurities. Overall, 78 percent indicated they experienced financial difficulties or challenges while in college. Sixty-four percent indicated they would have trouble getting \$500 in case of an emergency compared to 54 percent of non-parenting students. Additionally, 56 percent of parenting students worry about being able to pay their current monthly expenses compared to 48 percent of non-parenting students. Similarly, parenting students reported running out of money more frequently than non-parenting students since the beginning of the year.

While parenting students face greater financial insecurity, many of them rely on credit to make ends meet. For example, 65 percent of parenting students used a credit card since January 1, 2021. Among those that use credit cards, only 22 percent reported they fully paid off their balance each month. As a result, many of these students may be carrying around balances that accrue high interest.





## Recent Trellis Research publications

### No food for thought: Insights on basic needs insecurities and mental health challenges from Trellis' Fall 2020 Student Financial Wellness Survey.

Cornett, A., & Fletcher, C. (2022). No food for thought: Insights on basic needs insecurities and mental health challenges from Trellis' Fall 2020 Student Financial Wellness Survey. Trellis Company. Retrieved from: <https://www.trelliscompany.org/portfolio-items/no-food-for-thought-insights-on-basic-needs-insecurities-and-mental-health-challenges/>

### Student Financial Wellness Survey Report: Fall 2020

Webster, J., Fletcher, C., Cornett, A., & Kna, C. (2021). Student financial wellness survey report: Fall 2020. Trellis Company. Retrieved from: <https://www.trelliscompany.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/SFWS-Report-Fall-2020.pdf>

### State of student aid and higher education in Texas.

Fletcher, C., Cornett, A., & Webster, J. (2021). State of student aid and higher education in Texas. Trellis Company. Retrieved from: <https://www.trelliscompany.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/SOSA-2021.pdf>

### Studying on empty: A qualitative study of low food security among college students

Fernandez, C., Webster, J., & Cornett, A. (2019). Studying on empty: A qualitative study of low food security among college students. Trellis Company. Retrieved from: <https://www.trelliscompany.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Studying-on-Empty.pdf>

### Longitudinal fluidity in collegiate food security: Disruptions, restorations, and its drivers

Cornett, A., & Webster, J. (2020). Longitudinal fluidity in collegiate food security: Disruptions, restorations, and its drivers. Trellis Company. Retrieved from: <https://www.trelliscompany.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Research-Brief-FSS-Longitudinal-Fluidity.pdf>

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