

# First-Year Student Self-Perceptions

2013 Your First College Year Survey

In spring 2013, we asked first-year students at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) to participate in the *Your First College Year* survey. The survey was administered by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA in conjunction with the Office of Planning and Institutional Research. Due to low response rates, the results should be interpreted with caution.<sup>1</sup> This report examines how students view their academic, social, and global knowledge and abilities.

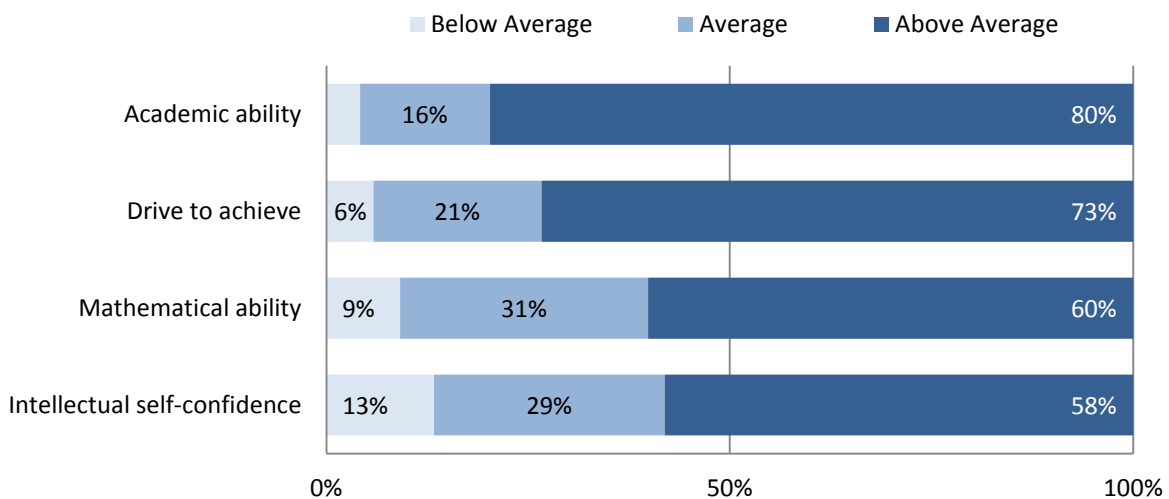


The survey instrument includes 16 constructs based on rigorous statistical methods. The constructs are designed to capture the experiences and outcomes that institutions are often interested in but find challenging to measure because of their complex and multifaceted nature. Constructs are particularly helpful in examining trends over time and making comparisons to other institutions. Construct scores should not be converted into percentages or compared to other constructs.

## Academic Self-Concept

The academic self-concept construct measures students' beliefs about their abilities and confidence in academic environments. CWRU's score on the academic self-concept construct decreased significantly from 2011 to 2013 (52 vs. 50). However, it was significantly higher than the score for the private university comparison group (50 vs. 48).<sup>2</sup> Results for items in the construct are provided in figure 1.

Figure 1. Compared to the average person your age, how would you rate your:



<sup>1</sup> Of the 1,336 students who received the survey, 27% (n=361) answered at least 50% of the questions. Compared to their peers, women, Asian/White, U.S. citizens, and students in non-management majors responded to the survey at significantly higher rates.

<sup>2</sup> The private university comparison group included Azusa Pacific University, Fordham University, Pepperdine University, University of the Pacific, Wake Forest University, and Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

### Civic Awareness

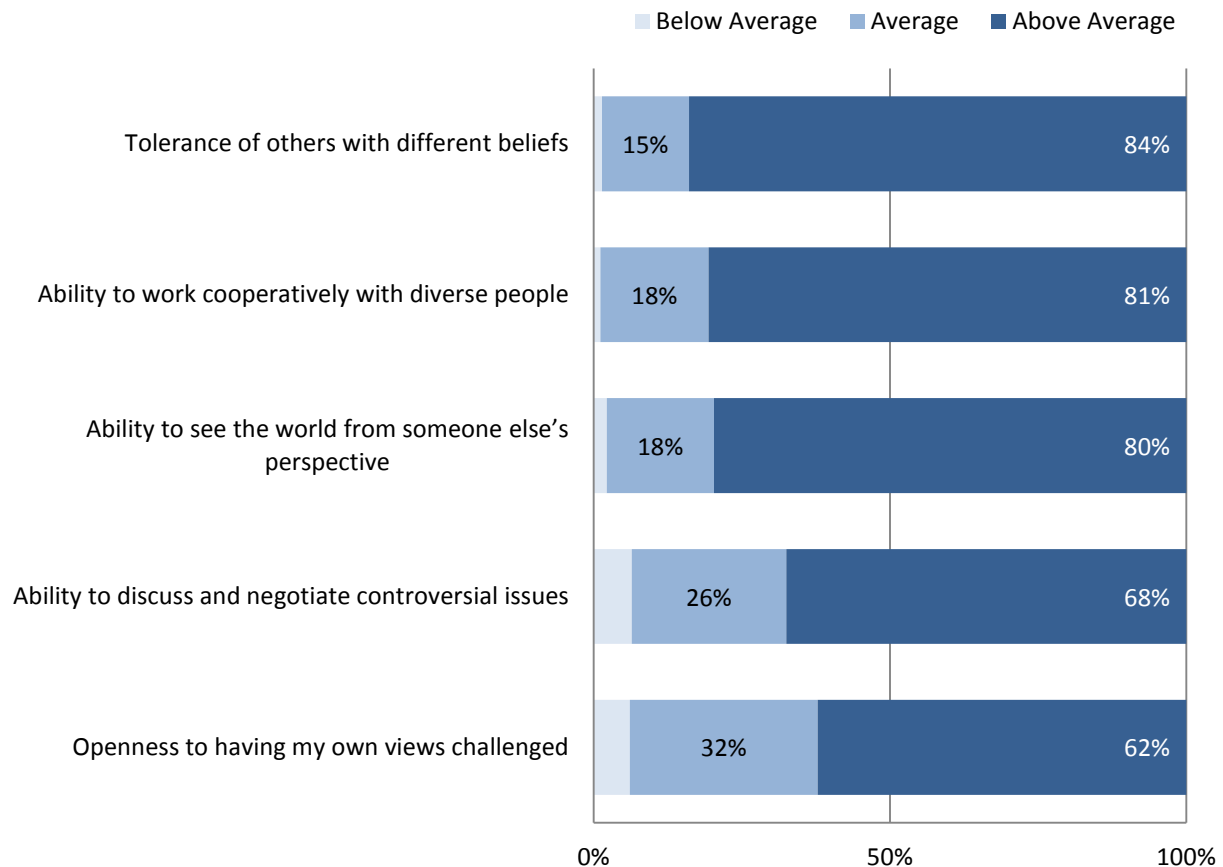
The civic awareness construct measures changes in students’ understanding of the issues facing their community, the nation, and the world. Compared to 2011, CWRU’s score on the civic awareness construct increased significantly (45 in 2011 vs. 50 in 2013) but remained significantly lower than the comparison group score (CWRU: 50 vs. private universities: 51). The results for the items which make up the construct are:

- ❖ 43% rated their understanding of the problems facing their community as somewhat strong or a major strength
- ❖ 42% rated their understanding of national issues as somewhat strong or a major strength
- ❖ 29% rated their understanding of global issues as somewhat strong or a major strength

### Pluralistic Orientation

The pluralistic orientation construct measures students’ skills and dispositions for living and working in a diverse society. CWRU’s score on the pluralistic orientation construct did not change significantly from 2011 to 2013 (53 vs. 53). However, in 2013 it was significantly higher than the score for the private university comparison group (53 vs. 51). The results for the construct items are provided in figure 2.

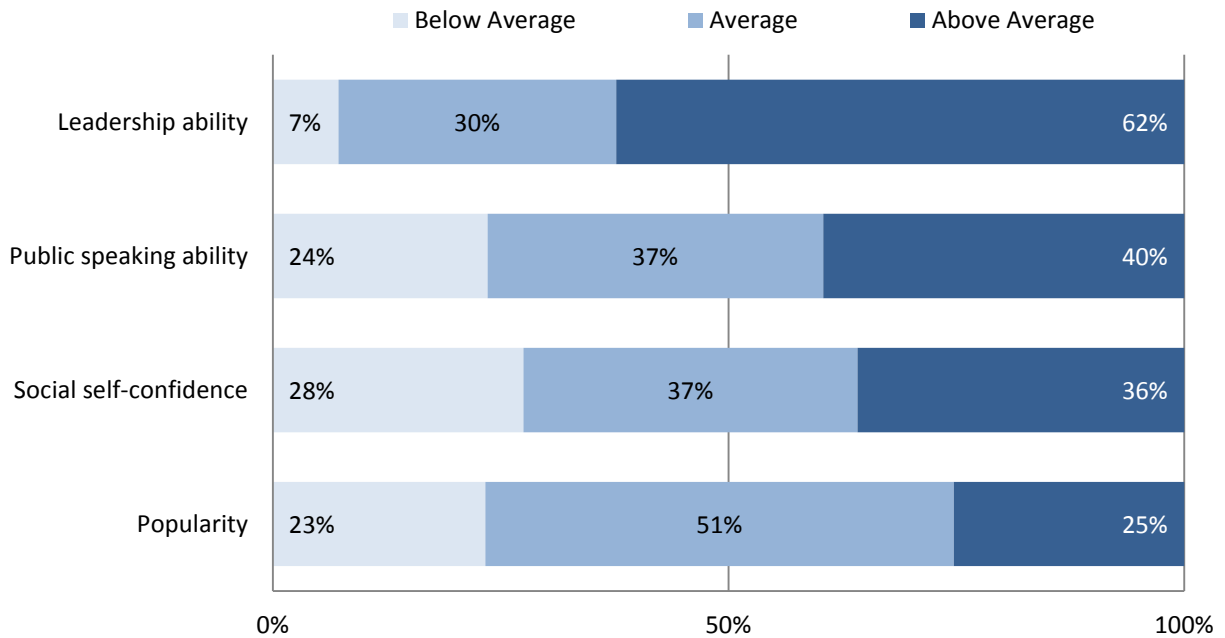
**Figure 2. Compared to the average person your age, how would you rate your:**



### Social Self-Concept

The social self-concept construct measures students' beliefs about their abilities and confidence in social situations. CWRU's social self-concept score did not change significantly from 2011 to 2013 (51 in 2011 vs. 49 in 2013). Compared to private universities that also participated in the survey, CWRU's score was significantly lower (49 vs. 51). The results of the items in the construct are provided in figure 3.

**Figure 3. Compared to the average person your age, how would you rate your:**



### What Else Do We Know About Students' Self-Perceptions?

Several additional questions addressed self-perceptions that were not included in the constructs. For example, the majority of students rated themselves above average in:

- ❖ Cooperativeness (74%)
- ❖ Creativity (58%)
- ❖ Competiveness (52%)
- ❖ Understanding of others (66%)
- ❖ Self-understanding (61%)
- ❖ Writing ability (54%)

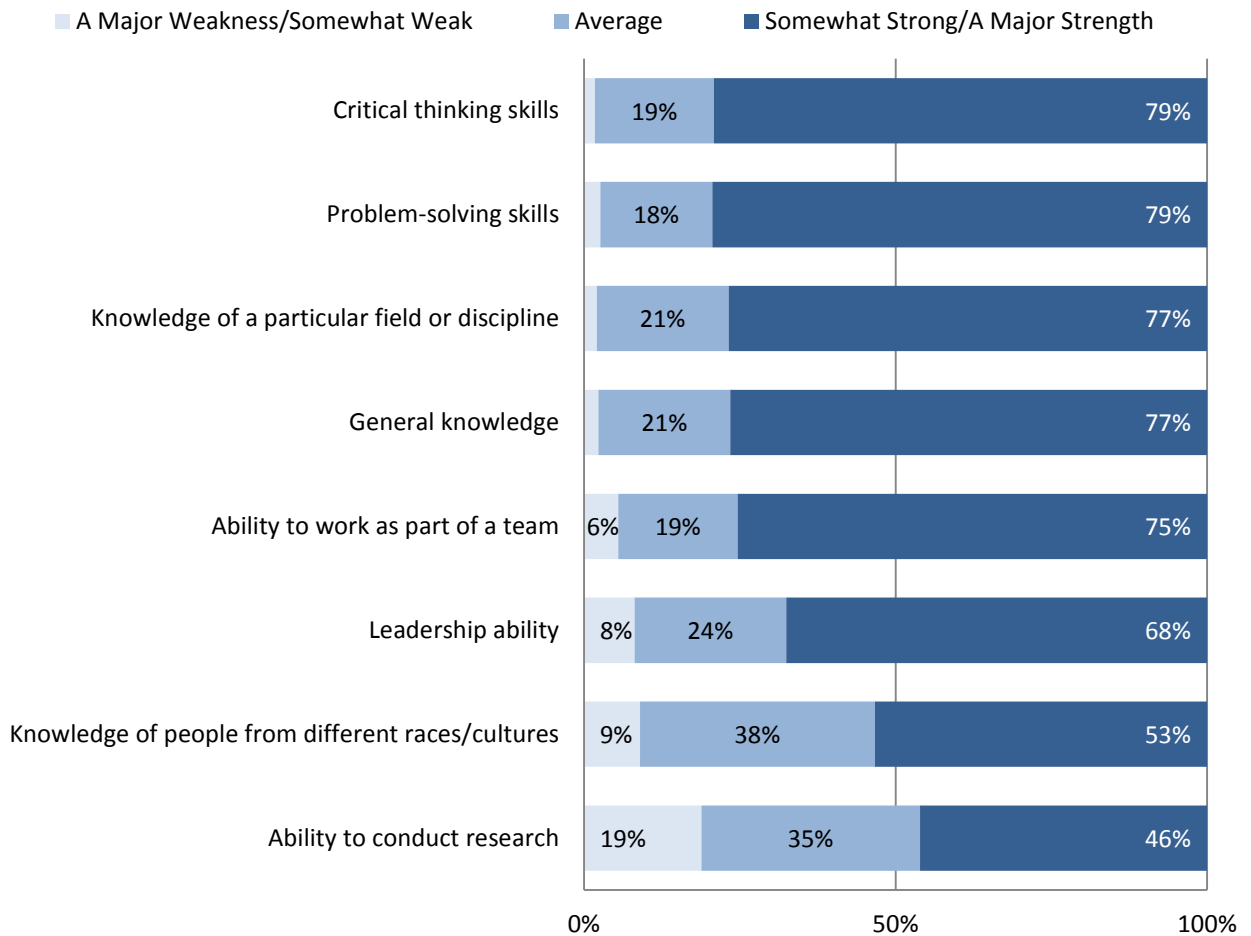
In terms of physical health, exactly 50% of students rated themselves above average and an additional 34% rated themselves as average. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of students rated themselves as average or higher in emotional health. Fewer students rated themselves above average in computer skills (40%), spirituality (37%), artistic ability (33%), and risk-taking (32%).

When asked about their abilities, the majority of students rated the following as somewhat strong or a major strength:

- ❖ Critical thinking skills
- ❖ Problem-solving skills
- ❖ Knowledge of a particular field or discipline
- ❖ General knowledge
- ❖ Ability to work as part of a team

Fewer rated their leadership abilities, knowledge of people from different races/cultures, and ability to conduct research as somewhat strong or a major strength (figure 4).

**Figure 4. How would you rate your current abilities?**



**Additional Information**

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