

Political Experiences and Perspectives

2014 College Senior Survey

In spring 2014, we asked graduating seniors at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) to participate in the *College Senior Survey*. The survey was administered by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) in conjunction with the Office of Planning and Institutional Research. It is a follow-up to *The Freshman Survey* (TFS) which was administered to this cohort in fall of 2010. Of 983¹ potential participants, 33% (n=326)² submitted responses. Their results are compared to students from a comparison group of universities³. Additionally, 154 students completed both the TFS and CSS, allowing us to make comparisons over time⁴. This report provides information about students' political experiences and perspectives on campus.



The full distribution for items is available on the IR website at: <https://www.case.edu/ir/srvyresults/>. All significant differences also include a measure of effect size, Cohen's d. Effect size allows us to estimate the size of the differences between two means⁵. For ease of reference, bulleted items which demonstrate significant differences are italicized.

Political Affiliation

CWRU students were asked about their political affiliations. As a whole, CWRU seniors were slightly more left-leaning in their political viewpoints than those at the comparison institutions; ($M=3.29$, $SD=0.81$) vs. ($M=3.11$, $SD=0.86$); $d=0.21$, $p<.01$.

Table 1. Political Affiliation

	CWRU	Comparison Group
Far left	4.0%	3.4%
Liberal	38.9%	32.0%
Middle-of-the-road	39.6%	37.6%
Conservative	17.1%	26.2%
Far right	0.4%	0.8%

¹ Population n=983: Women=399 (41%), Men=584 (59%); Caucasian=515 (52%), Asian=189 (19%), Black=41 (4%), Hispanic=33 (3%), Other=29 (3%), Unknown=106 (11%), International=70 (7%)

² Sample n=326: Women=166 (51%), Men=160 (49%); Caucasian=184 (56%), Asian=53 (16%), Black=10 (3%), Hispanic=8 (3%), Other=11 (3%), Unknown=42 (13%); International=17 (5%)

³ Pepperdine University, Northeastern University, Fordham University, Texas Christian University and Biola University

⁴ Longitudinal comparisons examine change in students who completed both TFS and CSS (includes data from 33 non-graduating seniors).

⁵ The effect size is the size of the difference between two means. Cohen's d values were interpreted according to the criteria used by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research: small ~ .1, medium ~ .3, large ~ .5, very large ~ .7. These benchmark criteria were applied unilaterally to both constructs and individual items for simplicity.

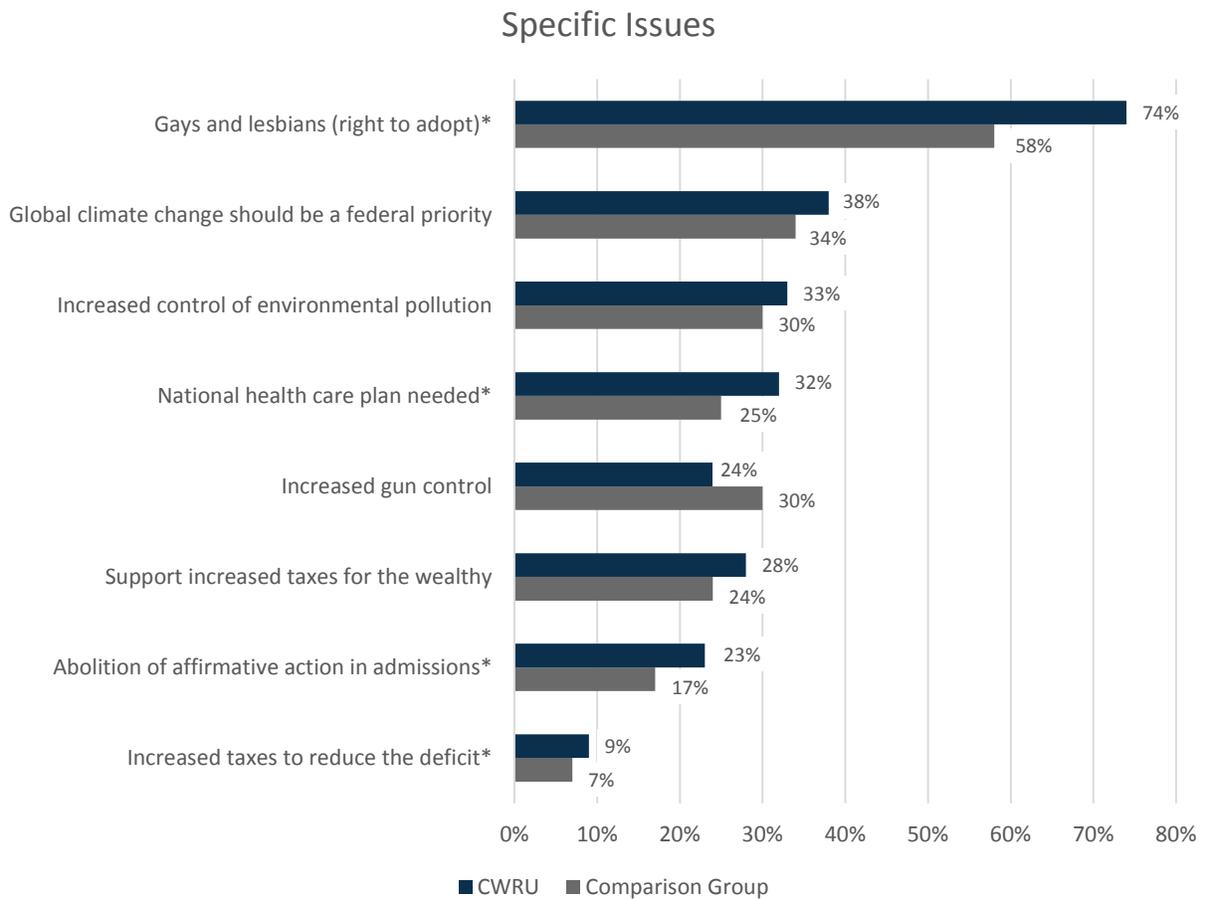
Among those students who responded to this item in both the TFS and CSS, there was a slight shift towards a left-leaning political orientation over time, as illustrated in the Table 2 below ($M=3.35$, $SD=0.77$) vs. ($M=3.51$ vs. $SD=0.75$); $d=0.26$, $p<.01$.

Table 2. Change in Political Affiliation

	TFS	CSS
Far left	4.4%	4.4%
Liberal	38.2%	52.9%
Middle-of-the-road	47.1%	31.6%
Conservative	8.8%	11.0%
Far right	1.5%	0.0%

Specific Issues

Following is information pertaining to student opinion about specific political issues. CWRU students tended to more frequently hold viewpoints in support of these issues as described below.



*Slight to moderate differences: gays and lesbians right to adopt ($d=0.35$), affirmative action admissions process ($d=0.15$), national health care plan ($d=0.18$), increased taxes against deficit ($d=0.17$)

Involvement and General Attitudes

The following items assessed student involvement in politics and their general attitudes toward political participation. While the majority of differences between CWRU students and the comparison group were not meaningful, CWRU students were slightly less likely to see influencing the political structure as essential.

- Currently registered to vote: 87% vs. 83%
- Frequently voted in a student election: 25% vs. 20%
- Ever participated in student government: 10% vs. 10%
- Discussed politics: 17% vs. 18% frequently; ($M=1.87, SD=0.67$) vs. ($M=1.91, SD=0.67$); No meaningful difference
- Understanding of national issues: 11% vs. 13% self-rated as a major strength; ($M=3.30, SD=0.97$) vs. ($M=3.34, SD=0.97$); No meaningful difference
- Keeping up to date with political affairs: 14% vs. 14% rated as essential; ($M=2.39, SD=0.89$) vs. ($M=2.43, SD=0.92$); No meaningful difference.
- Influencing the political structure: 6% vs. 7% rated as essential; ($M=1.94, SD=0.71$) vs. ($M=2.08, SD=0.68$); $d=-0.21, p<.01$

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