

U. Miami Undergraduate Survey: Family Influence

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In this report, we examined undergraduate results to questions QU26, QU27, and QU27A, which asked respondents whether their families were supportive of and/or tried to influence their choice of college major, and the ways in which they did so.

I. Visualizations and Statistics

QU26: Is your family supportive of your choice of major?

Total Respondents: 260 out of 312

Yes, Very Supportive: 65%

Yes, Somewhat Supportive: 17%

No, Not Supportive: 1%

No Answer: 17%

QU27: Does your family try to influence your choice of major?

Total Respondents: 252 out of 312

Yes: 27%

No: 54%

No Answer: 19%

QU27A: If so, what reasons do they give?

Total Respondents: 71 out of 85¹

84 % Answer

16 % No answer

¹ This question was open only to those who answered “Yes” to QU27.



Fig. 1: Word cloud of QU27A

II: Observations

Considering QU 26 and QU27, 82% of respondents reported family being supportive (with 65% “very supportive” and 17% “somewhat supportive”) of their choices of major. Only 1% listed “no, not supportive” and 17% did not answer. 27% of participants reported family tried to influence their choices of major.

Family influence is focused on getting a job, and a stable, promising salary. STEM, business, and law are particularly associated with perceived stability and financial success, while music and other humanities disciplines are perceived as paths with limited job opportunities. Family influence in favor of STEM, business, and law degrees, over pursuing degrees in the humanities has little to do with the value of the disciplines themselves but rather a perceived pessimism of the humanities job market.

Family background in certain fields is the second most important factor after financial stability. Additionally, ethnic background and legal status also play a factor in family persuasion, as seen in responses such as “Biology cuz my mom wants me to be a doctor and because I am Asian,” and “My family, immigrants, wanted me to find a safe major for me to stay in the US after graduation, gaining a work visa primarily.”