

# **“FRESHMAN ATTITUDES ABOUT GREEK LIFE” SURVEY**

## ***Survey Results***

by  
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### **Introduction**

From November 6 through November 9, 1996, the Oregon Survey Research Laboratory (OSRL) conducted a random sample survey of incoming Freshman students for the University of Oregon Greek Living Organization Renewal Fund Advisory Board. Two-hundred and five newly-enrolled, first-term UO Freshmen were asked about their attitudes regarding fraternity and sorority life, including:

- factors influencing housing choices, including cost, physical environment, proximity to campus, access to facilities, personal safety, social and academic atmosphere, friends, coeducational environment, and ability to select roommates;
- parents' influences on housing choices and importance of parents' input;
- association with a fraternity or sorority, including considering joining, going through rush, and pledging;
- information students received about fraternities and sororities;
- belief in stereotypes about fraternities and sororities, such as prevalence of alcohol and drugs, ability to make friends, developing leadership skills and job networks, sexual activity, conservatism, and lack of personal safety;
- friends or relatives' involvement with a fraternity or sorority and quality of experience;
- and basic background and demographic characteristics.

This summary of survey results focuses on four main components of the survey: sample demographics, housing choices, stereotypes of fraternities and sororities, and general impressions of fraternities and sororities. Discussion of survey procedures has been omitted due to space constraints, although details on these may be found in the survey proposal.

### **Sample and Refusal Rates**

OSRL obtained 400 randomly-selected sample records of newly-enrolled, full-time, first-term UO Freshmen from the UO Office of the Registrar. Twelve-hundred sixty-four dial attempts yielded 205 completed interviews. The refusal rate was 2.3%.

### **Survey Results**

Members of the University of Oregon Greek Living Organization Renewal Fund Advisory Board were interested in statistical differences among three groups of Freshmen: those who had never rushed or pledged a fraternity or sorority (hereafter NROPs), those who had rushed but not pledged (RBNPs), and those who had pledged. Seventy-five percent of respondents had neither rushed nor pledged a fraternity or sorority. Six percent had rushed but not pledged, and 20% had pledged. One-quarter of those who had rushed elected not to pledge a fraternity or sorority. Demographics, housing choices, stereotypes of fraternities and sororities and general attitudes about fraternities and sororities are all hypothesized to contribute to a respondent's likelihood of joining a fraternity or sorority. Differences along these variables among the three groups as well as univariate distributions are thus examined below in detail.

#### ***Sample Demographics***

The sample was 42% male and 58% female. All respondents were between the ages of 17 and 20, although most (79%) were 18 years old. Similar to the student body as a whole, there were few people of color in the sample. Eighty-one percent identified themselves as white non-Hispanic, 7% Asian-American, 5% Hispanic, 2% African American, and 1% Native American. Two percent claimed another racial or ethnic identity, and 3% refused or did not know. Three percent were international students and one-third paid out-of-state tuition. Forty-four percent of respondents received financial aid to attend the UO. Twenty-one percent worked while attending school; just over three-quarters (76%) of these working students worked fewer than 16 hours per week.

In general, males were much more positive about fraternities and sororities than females. Despite approximately equivalent propensities for joining the Greek system, 30% of males had a generally positive impression of fraternities, compared with 19% of females. Thirty-four percent of male respondents held a positive impression of sororities, compared with 28% of females. Males were also much more likely to consider joining the Greek system than females (28% versus 17%).

In-state students are as likely as out-of-state students to pledge, but are somewhat less likely to rush but not pledge. Twenty percent of in-state students and 19% of out-of-state students pledged, while 7% of in-state and 4% of out-of-state students rushed but did not pledge. Seventy-three percent of in-state and 77% of out-of-state students never rushed or pledged. In-state students are far more likely to consider joining the Greek system: 26% of in-state students reported considering joining, compared with 13% of out-of-state students. In-state students also hold less negative views of fraternities and sororities: 25% of in-state students and 31% of out-of-state students reported negative impressions of fraternities, and 12% of in-state students and 26% of out-of-state students reported negative views of sororities.

Students on financial aid are less likely to pledge a fraternity or sorority than non-recipients. Fifteen percent of financial aid recipients have pledged, compared with 23% of non-recipients. Financial aid recipients are less likely to have friends or relatives who belonged to the Greek system: 66% of respondents receiving financial aid and 75% of non-recipients reported having close friends or relatives who belonged to the Greek system.

Similarly, students who work for pay are also less likely to pledge: only 12% of working students pledged a fraternity or sorority, compared with 22% of non-working students. Working students also held more negative impressions of fraternities and sororities: 38% of working students and 25% of non-working students reported negative views of fraternities, while 21% of working students and 16% of non-working students reported negative views of sororities. Sixty-four percent of working students and 72% of non-working students had close friends or relatives who belonged to the Greek system.

### ***Housing Choices***

Two percent of the students interviewed reported living in a fraternity or sorority at the time of the survey, while the vast majority (86%) lived in University housing, 6% resided off-campus, 4% with parents or other relatives, and 2% resided someplace else.

Personal safety and security was very important to 61% of respondents when selecting a place to live. Twenty-three percent considered it somewhat important, 13% not very important, and 3% not at all important. Combining the categories 'very important' and 'somewhat important' yields a summary indicator for the general importance of a characteristic, and these broader categories are thus used throughout this section. Wide discrepancies exist among the groups. Ninety-five percent of pledges, 75% of RBNPs, and 82% of NROPs considered safety and security to be important in a place to live.

Cleanliness of the living area was very important to 57% of respondents, somewhat important to 34%, not very important to 7% and not at all important to 2% of respondents. There was little variation among the three groups in the importance of cleanliness, with 90% of NROPs, 100% of RBNPs, and 95% of pledges reporting its importance to them in a place to live.

Being within walking distance to campus was very important to 60% of respondents. Twenty-six percent considered it somewhat important, 10% not very

important, and 3% not at all important. Ninety-eight percent of pledges cited the importance of living in close proximity to campus, compared with 83% of RBNPs and 84% of NROPs.

Fifty-five percent of respondents rated the availability of a meal plan as very important, 22% somewhat important, 17% not very important, and 6% not at all important. NROPs were least likely to desire a meal plan. Seventy-one percent of pledges, 92% of RBNPs, and 95% of pledges considered a meal plan to be important.

A quiet study atmosphere was considered very important to 34% of respondents, somewhat important to 46% of respondents, not very important to 17%, and not at all important to 3%. Ninety percent of pledges, 78% of NROPs, and 75% of RBNPs reported a quiet study atmosphere to have been important to their housing decision.

Twenty-two percent of respondents considered housing costs to be very important, 51% somewhat important, 21% not very important, and 6% not at all important. Those who had pledged a fraternity or sorority were less concerned about cost than other groups: 60% of pledges, 75% of RBNPs, and 76% of NROPs cited the importance of cost when considering a place to live.

Living where friends live was relatively unimportant to the Freshmen interviewed, possibly because Freshmen frequently do not know people when they arrive at college. Twenty-one percent claimed it was very important to live where their friends live, while 37% reported it was somewhat important, 30% not very important, and 12% not at all important. However, RBNPs were least likely to consider this attribute important: 70% of pledges, 33% of RBNPs, and 57% of NROPs considered living near friends to be an important factor in their housing decision.

Living where one could make new friends, on the other hand, was almost universally important to survey respondents. Sixty-two percent considered it very important to live where they could make new friends, 34% somewhat important, 3% not very important, and 1% not at all important. One-hundred percent of pledges, 92% of RBNPs, and 95% of NROPs asserted this characteristic to be important.

Respondents considered residing where they could select their roommates to be relatively unimportant. Twenty-five percent of respondents considered the ability to select their roommates to be very important, 28% somewhat important, 29% not very important, and 17% not at all important. Among the three groups, 58% of RBNPs, 53% of NROPs, and 55% of pledges considered this to be important.

Living with people of similar political and social values was considered very important to 20% of respondents. Another 43% thought this was somewhat important, 27% not very important, and 9% not at all important. Sixty percent of NROPs, and 75% of both pledges and RBNPs reported the importance of this attribute.

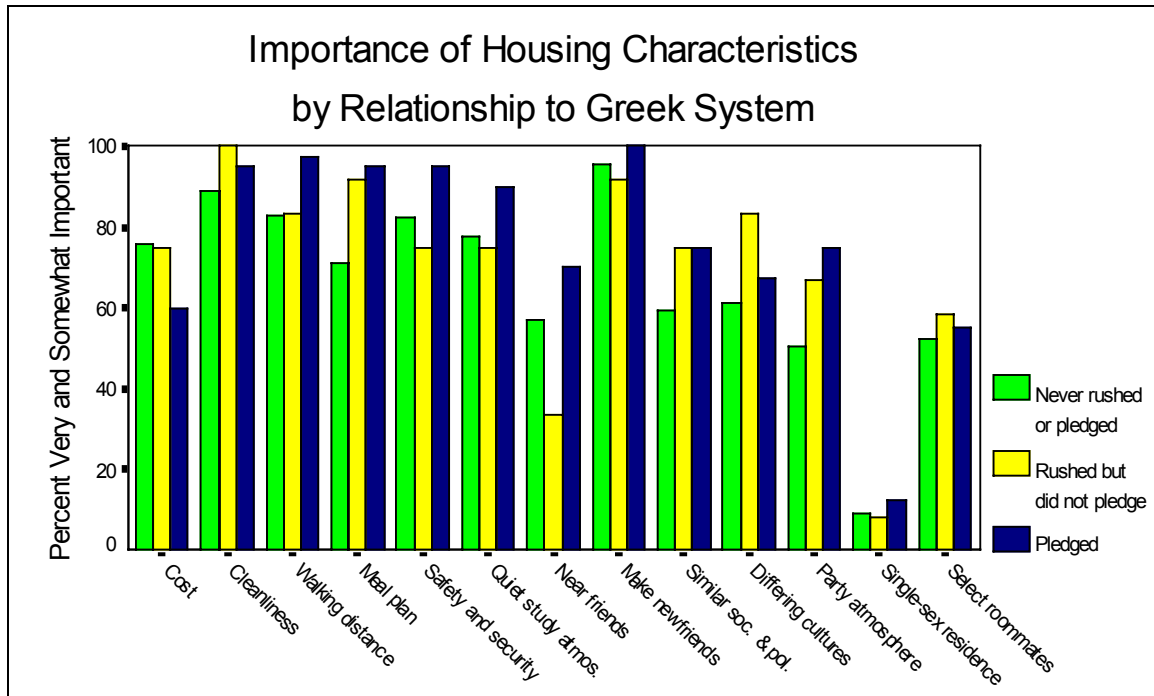
Sixteen percent reported that it was very important to live with people of different cultural values; 48% thought it was somewhat important, 29% not very important, and 7% not at all important. Residing with people of differing cultural values was important to 83% of RBNPs, 68% of pledges, and 61% of NROPs.

An active party atmosphere was very important to 14% of those interviewed, somewhat important to 42%, not very important to 37% and not at all important to 7%. Pledges were the most likely group to report the importance of a party atmosphere: 75%

of pledges, 67% of RBNPs, and 50% of NROPs claimed this quality was very or somewhat important in a place to live.

Residing in a single-sex residence was of little importance to all respondents. It was very important to only 1% of respondents, somewhat important to 9%, not very important to 46%, and not at all important to 44%. Thirteen percent of pledges, 9% of NROPs, and 8% of RBNPs reported the importance of single-sex housing to their housing decisions.

**GRAPH 1**



### *Stereotypes of Greek Life*

The most pervasive stereotype of fraternities and sororities concerned women’s greater risk of sexual assault at fraternity parties. Respondents also perceived members of the Greek system to be wealthier, consume more alcohol (although notably not drug use), and have greater opportunities to form lasting friendships, network for jobs, and meet people of the opposite sex.

Sixty-two percent of respondents considered women to be at greater risk of sexual assault at fraternity parties than at other campus parties, and 34 % disagreed. Twenty-five percent of pledges, compared with 75% of RBNPs and 71% of NROPs held this view. Males were surprisingly more likely than females to believe that women are at greater risk of sexual assault at fraternity parties, although the difference was not large: 65% of males and 61% of females considered women’s risk of assault to be greater at fraternity parties than at other campus parties.

Fifty-nine percent of respondents reported that Greeks were more wealthy than non-Greeks, 37% about the same, and 1% less. Pledges were the least likely to hold this belief: 40% thought Greek members were more wealthy, compared with 67% of RBNPs and 63% of NROPs. Those who responded that Greeks were more or less wealthy than non-Greeks were asked their attitude about this stereotype. Forty-six percent thought it was negative, 26% positive, and 25% neutral.

Virtually no respondents believed that Greeks drink alcohol less than non-Greeks. Less than 1% thought Greeks drink less than non-Greeks, while 59% thought they drink more, and 37% about the same amount. Again, large discrepancies exist among the groups. Forty percent of pledges reported that Greeks drink more than non-Greeks, while 67% of RBNPs and 63% of NROPs held this stereotype. It is worth noting that this Bacchanalian stereotype does not extend to drug use. Twenty-seven percent of respondents thought that Greeks used drugs less than non-Greeks, 8% more, 57% about the same, and 7% did not know. No pledges reported the belief that Greeks use drugs more than non-members, while 17% of RBNPs and 10% of NROPs agreed with this stereotype. Forty-five percent of pledges, 25% of RBNPs, and 23% of NROPs asserted that fraternity and sorority members use drugs more than non-members.

A majority of respondents also held positive stereotypes about fraternities and sororities. Fifty-five percent claimed that Greek members had more opportunities to form lasting friendships, while 4% reported less and 40% about the same. Pledges were far more likely to hold this view than others, however, with 95% of pledges, 42% of RBNPs, and 45% of NROPs agreeing with this stereotype.

Respondents considered job networking opportunities to be more available to Greeks than non-Greeks. Fifty-three percent of respondents thought Greeks had more of these opportunities, 1% less, and 42% about the same as non-Greeks. Again, pledges were the most likely to think Greeks had more opportunities: 85% of pledges, 50% of RBNPs, and 44% of NROPs thought Greeks had more job networking opportunities than non-Greeks.

Slightly fewer than half (48%) of respondents agreed that Greeks had more opportunity to develop leadership skills, 46% the same opportunity, and 4% less opportunity than non-Greeks. Thirty-eight percent of NROPs, 58% of RBNPs, and 83% of pledges thought Greeks had more opportunities to develop leadership skills.

Fifty-two percent of survey respondents reported that Greeks had more opportunities to meet people of the opposite sex, 2% less, and 44% about the same. Seventy-five percent of pledges, 50% of RBNPs, and 46% of NROPs believed Greeks to have more opportunities in this domain.

Other stereotypes were less pervasive. Twenty-four percent of respondents reported that Greeks are less serious about their studies, 7% more, and 63% about the same as non-Greeks. Group differences are along this variable are large. Thirty-one percent of NROPs, 5% of pledges, and none of the NROPs thought Greeks were less serious about their studies than non-Greeks.

About one-third (32%) of respondents thought Greeks engaged in sexual activity more frequently than non-Greeks, 64% about the same amount, and 1% less. Only 18%

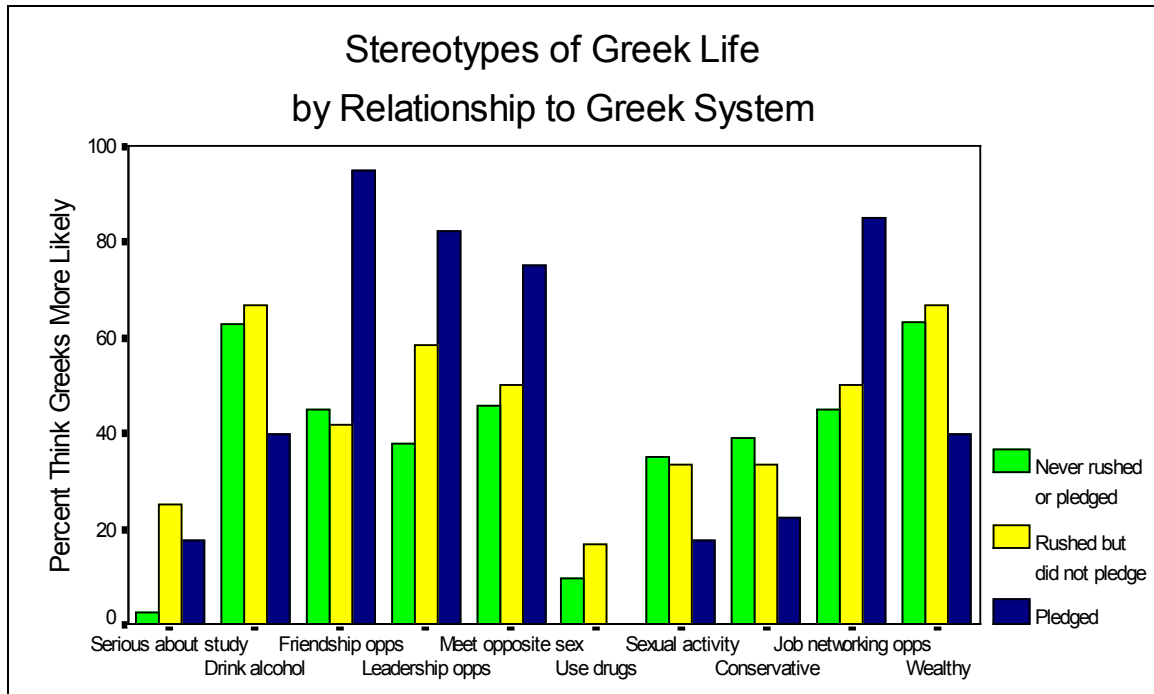
of pledges believed that Greeks were more likely to engage in sexual activity, compared with 35% of NROPs and 33% of RBNPs.

Fraternity and sorority members were considered more conservative than non-members by 36% of respondents, less conservative by 15%, and about as conservative by 45% of respondents. NROPs were the most likely to believe that Greeks are more conservative, with 39% of NROPs, 33% of RBNPs, and 23% of pledges holding this view. Thirty-nine percent of respondents considered the level of conservatism they postulated to exist in fraternities and sororities to be positive, 47% considered it negative, and 13% neutral.

Students were split on the existence of hazing in fraternities and sororities. Forty-five percent of respondents do not think that fraternities and sororities haze new pledges, while 44% think they do and 11% did not know.

Most respondents considered fraternities and sororities to be safe places to live. Eighty-two percent of respondents reported that fraternities are safe places to live, while 91% reported that sororities are safe residences. NROPs are less likely than the other groups to think fraternities are safe residences: 78% consider them safe, compared with 100% of RBNPs and 93% of pledges. A similar pattern is observed for sororities: 88% of NROPs, 100% of RBNPs, and 98% of pledges considered sorority houses safe places to live.

**GRAPH 2**



### ***General Attitudes About Fraternities and Sororities***

Overall, respondents perceived fraternities and sororities as neutral, but had less negative attitudes toward sororities. Forty-nine percent of respondents reported neutral impressions of fraternities, 27% negative, and 24% positive. NROPs were much more likely to express a negative impression of fraternities than the other groups: 34% of NROPs, 8% of RBNPs, and 8% of pledges reported a negative impression of fraternities. Eleven percent of NROPs, 33% of RBNPs, and 73% of pledges reported a generally positive attitude.

Fifty-three percent of respondents had neutral impressions of sororities, 17% negative, and 30% positive. No pledges reported a negative impression of sororities, compared with 22% of NROPs and 17% of RBNPs. Sixteen percent of NROPs, 33% of RBNPs, and 85% of pledges reported generally positive impression of sororities.

### **Conclusion**

This brief report has left much of the data collected in November unanalyzed, yet it elucidates many significant differences among those who have never rushed or pledged, those who rushed but did not pledge, and those who pledged. Distinctions among these groups arise in the values they place on certain housing characteristics, the stereotypes they hold regarding fraternities and sororities, and their demographic attributes. In turn, these characteristics shape respondents' general attitudes toward Greek life.