

# CANADIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ON STUDY HABITS AND EXAM-RELATED STRESS

***Half Of Students Say They Have Good Study Habits, But Many Say They Don't Leave Enough Time For Studying And/Or Cram For Exams***



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## **CANADIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ON STUDY HABITS AND EXAM-RELATED STRESS**

### ***Half Of Students Say They Have Good Study Habits, But Many Say They Don't Leave Enough Time For Studying And/Or Cram For Exams***

**Toronto, ON** – Half (50%) of Canadian university students say they have good study habits, according to a new Ipsos-Reid survey conducted on behalf of Kumon Math and Reading Centres.

However, two-thirds (68%) of students only start studying or preparing for exams at most a week in advance. Moreover, asked whether or not they agree with the statement, “I give myself enough time to prepare for exams” less than half (43%) agrees and the same proportion (43%) agrees with the statement “I never start studying early enough for exams.” Another 27% admit to staying up all night studying for exams.

Students were asked how they define “cramming,” most (62%) refer to the timing of studying (e.g. last minute) while a smaller proportion (19%) think of “cramming” as the quantity of information (e.g. studying a large amount of information). Thinking of their own definition of “cramming,” the students were then asked whether or not they consider themselves to be “crammers,” one-third (33%) said “yes.”

Most (71%) students study for exams mostly in their room. This compares to 17% who study mainly in a library (on or off campus), 8% who study elsewhere on campus, and 4% who study in a coffee shop most often.



When it comes to exams, students are experiencing a lot of stress—40% say they experience high stress, with 8% that say they “experience extreme stress.” Conversely, 0% say they experience “no stress” at all. Students experience the most stress “in the final hours just before an exam” (48%) and “while studying/preparing for an exam” (32%). And, the top three factors which cause students the most exam-related stress are, having too many exams to study for (20%), the pressure to do well in school (19%), and balancing study with other responsibilities (18%).

Students are affected by exam-related stress in many ways ranging from feelings of nervousness and anxiety (29%) to difficulty sleeping (27%) to fatigue/exhaustion (15%). Some even say they develop stomach aches (13%), bad moods (11%) and get sweaty (5%). Other responses are outlined on the pages that follow.

Asked what they have done, or do, to help them cope with, relieve, or prevent exam-related stress, the top answers are study more (31%) and exercise or go to the gym (27%). And, if they could bring any one item into an exam to help relieve stress, 20% say they’d bring music.

*These are some of the findings of an Ipsos-Reid/Kumon poll conducted from February 9<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2005. For the survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 597 part-time and full-time university students 30 years of age or younger was interviewed online. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within  $\pm 4.0$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were weighted to ensure the sample's regional and sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian university population according to the 2001 Census data.*



## ***Half Of Students Say They Have Good Study Habits***

Asked whether or not they agree with the statement, “I consider myself to have good study habits,” half (50%) of Canadian university students agree (10% “strongly agree” and 40% “agree”). Two in ten (22%) disagree (3% “strongly disagree” and 19% “disagree”) while another 27% are “neutral.”

- Students in Quebec are more likely than others to think they have good study habits (63% vs. 33% of the rest of Canada).
- Women are more likely than men to think they have good study habits (55% vs. 43%).

## ***Yet, Many Do Not Leave Enough Time To Study For Exams***

Two-thirds (68%) of students only start studying or preparing for exams at most a week in advance: 37% begin one week prior, 26% three days prior, 5% one day prior, and 1% the day of the exam. Conversely, 26% begin studying/preparing for exams two weeks prior, 4% begin a month prior, and 1% continually study/prepare from the beginning of the course.

Asked whether or not they agree with the statement, “I give myself enough time to prepare for exams” 43% agrees (9% “strongly agree” and 34% “agree”). Three in ten (28%) disagree (3% “strongly disagree” and 25% “disagree”) while another 29% are “neutral.”

However, the same proportion (43%) agrees (12% “strongly agree” and 31% “agree”) with the statement “I never start studying early enough for exams.” Nearly four in ten (37%) disagrees (6% “strongly disagree” and 30% “disagree”) and another 21% are “neutral.”



One-quarter (27%) of students agrees (9% “strongly agree” and 18% “agree”) that they “stay up all night studying for exams.” Conversely, 56% disagree (28% “strongly disagree” and 28% “disagree”) and 17% are “neutral.”

- Men are more likely than women to agree that they stay up all night studying for exams (36% vs. 21%).

### ***And, Many Are Cramming***

Students were asked how they define “cramming,” most (62%) refer to the timing of studying (e.g. last minute) while a smaller proportion (19%) think of “cramming” as the quantity of information (e.g. studying a large amount of information). Another 14% define it some other way and 16% are unsure. A full breakdown of responses is available in the corresponding data tables.

Thinking of their own definition of “cramming,” the students were then asked whether or not they consider themselves to be “crammers,” one-third (33%) said “yes.” Conversely, two-thirds (67%) said they are not “crammers.”



## ***Where Are Students Studying Most Often?***

Most (71%) students do most of their studying in their room. This compares to 17% who mostly study in a library (on or off campus), 8% who primarily study elsewhere on campus (common room, park, etc.), and 4% who study in a coffee shop most often.

- Students in Quebec are more likely than others to study in their room (80% vs. 49% of the rest of Canada).
- Men are more likely than women to study in a library (22% vs. 13%).

## ***Many Experience A Lot Of Exam-Related Stress***

Four in ten (40%) students say they experience high stress, with 8% that say they “experience extreme stress.” Conversely, 4% report low stress (0% say they experience “no stress” at all). The remaining 57% experience moderate levels of exam-related stress.

- Women are more likely than men to experience high exam-related stress (44% vs. 34%).
- Students in Quebec are *less* likely than others to experience high exam-related stress (27% vs. 55% of the rest of Canada).



Students experience the most stress “in the final hours just before an exam” (48%) and “while studying/preparing for an exam” (32%). This compares to 12% who experience the most stress during the exam and 8% who experience the most stress after the exam is over, but before the results are available.

- Students in Quebec are *less* likely than others to experience the most stress “while studying/preparing for an exam” (59% vs. 75% of the rest of Canada).

The top three factors which cause students the most exam-related stress are having too many exams to study for (20%), the pressure to do well in school (19%), and balancing study with other responsibilities (18%). Following this are: Not having enough time to study (13%), fear of failure (12%), exam worth 50% or more of final grade (8%), poor study habits (6%), and not understanding the course material (3%).

### ***How Are They Affected By The Stress?***

Students are physically and emotionally affected by exam-related stress in many ways ranging from feelings of nervousness and anxiety (29%) to difficulty sleeping (27%) to fatigue/exhaustion (15%). Some even say they develop headaches (13%), stomach aches (13%), difficulty focussing or concentrating (12%), irritability (12%), bad moods (11%), nausea or vomiting (10%), loss of appetite (9%), fear (8%), accelerated heart rate (7%), frustration (7%), negative effects on personal life (6%), poor eating habits (6%), insecurity (5%), agitation (5%), impatience (5%), and sweating (5%). All other responses were cited by fewer than 5% of respondents (please refer to data tables).



## ***And, How Do They Cope With It?***

Asked what techniques, methods, or behaviours they have used, or do use, to help them cope with, relieve, or prevent exam-related stress, the top answers are study more (31%) and exercise or go to the gym (27%). Others relax, meditate, or do yoga (16%), sleep/rest well (15%), take a break (14%), socialize (14%), and breathe deeply (11%). All other responses were cited by fewer than 10% of respondents (please refer to data tables).

And, if they could bring any one thing (other than cheating notes or permitted materials) into an exam to help relieve stress, 20% say they'd bring music. The same proportion (21%) also said they'd bring in food or drink: 8% mention foods such as candy, chocolate, chips, or fruit; 7% mention drinks such as coffee, tea, hot chocolate, and juice; and 5% mention water. All other responses were cited by fewer than 5% of respondents (please refer to data tables).

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