

School students, currently numbering 1 million, constitute a wide base of the Lebanese society. This figure includes 384,000 students registered between the intermediate and secondary levels (aged between 12 and 18 years old).

Considering this high number, it is compulsory to form an understanding regarding their thoughts, their lives, their expectations and ambitions.

For this reason, *Information International* conducted an opinion poll amongst a sample of 675 school students. The results of this poll are published in two parts.

## Part 1: School Students and Religion, Outings, Love, Family, Drugs, Smoking, Alcohol, Self-Perceptions

### School Students and Religious Commitment

The majority of the respondents (96.8%) stated that they believe in God, while 0.8% said that they do not believe in God and 1% replied that they did not know if they believed in God or not, while 1.4% refused to give an answer.

Furthermore, according to the results, the practice of religious rituals is not directly related to the concept of believing in God. In fact, although the majority of the respondents claimed that they believe in God, only 43.4% of them practice all of their religious rituals thoroughly, while 49.9% practice some of their religious rituals from time to time, 6.3% said they do not practice any of their religious rituals, and 0.4% refused to give an answer.

Of those practicing their religious rituals, 52.9% said that they started practicing their rituals 5 years ago, 35.4% started practicing their religious rituals 2 to 5 years ago, 7.9% started less than one year ago, and 3.8% could not determine the period when they started practicing their religious rituals.

If answers given about the practice of religious rituals were broken down by confession, a high commitment can be observed amongst the members of the Greek Catholic community (66.7%), the Sunni community (47.6%), and the Shia'a community (43.5%), while members of the Maronite and the Greek Orthodox communities seem to be less committed to practicing their religious rituals.

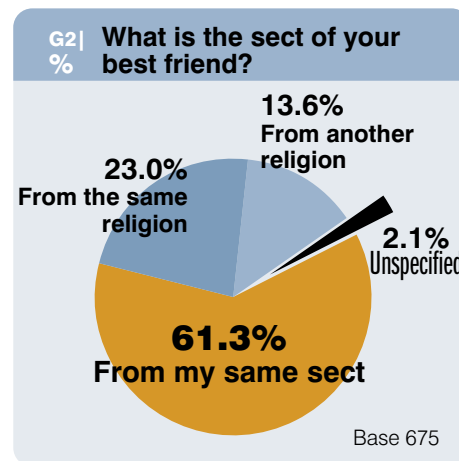
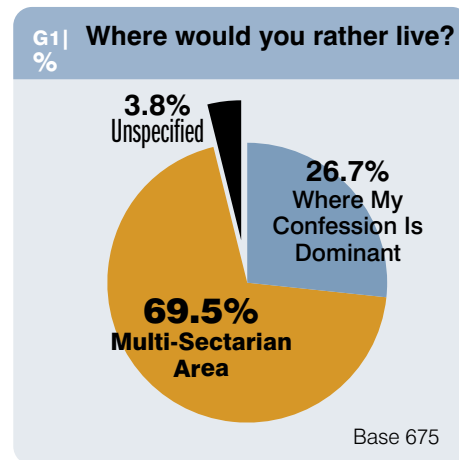
### Religion and Residence

The majority of the respondents (69.5%) stated that if they were to have a choice regarding their area of residence, they would choose to live in a multi-sectarian area, while only 26.7% would rather live in an area where their confession is dominant, and 3.8% did not specify their position concerning this subject (Graph 1).

The following is the breakdown by confession of those who would rather live in an area where their confession is dominant (26.7%): 23.8% Shia'a, 30.2% Sunni, 13.5% Orthodox and 34.6% Maronite.

### Religion and Friends

The majority of the respondents (61.3%) said that their best friend belongs to their same sect, while 23% stated that their best friend is from the same religion, but not from the same sect; 13.6% answered that their best friend belongs to another religion, and 2.1% did not specify an answer. (Graph 2)



When the students were asked about how important the religious factor was in choosing their friends, 19.9% confirmed that the religious factor is of high importance, while the majority of the respondents (78.4%) said that the religious factor has no importance, and 1.7% refused to give an answer. Thus, students are oriented towards choosing friends from their same sectarian belonging.

In addition, 83.9% of the respondents consider it inappropriate to ask someone about their religious belonging, while 15.3% think the opposite, and 0.8% refused to give an answer. When the students were asked if they considered the members of their sectarian community superior to members of other sectarian communities, 70.8% said "No", 27.1% said "Yes" and 2.1% refused to give an answer.

The following is the breakdown by confession of those who think that members of their confession are superior

to others from another confession (27.1%): 33.3% Shia'a, 27.6% Sunni, 8.1% Orthodox and 23.1% Maronite.

## Students and Love

73.3% of the respondents revealed that they are in a relationship, or have been in one in the past (56.7% are currently in one, 16.6% have been in one previously), while 25.3% said that they do not and have not had a boyfriend or a girlfriend, and 1.4% refused to give an answer. Table No.1 illustrates the results by age.

Do you have a relationship with a boy/girl friend? By age	Table 1	
	12-14 years	15-18 years
Yes	58.6	56.4
No	30.3	24.5
I had One in the Past	9.1	17.9
Unspecified	2	1.2

The students were also asked to assess current relationships between young men and women. The answers came as follows: 50.8% of the respondents described their relationship as temporary and for fun, 23.3% described their relationship as honest, 10.1% described their relationship as a means towards materialistic ends, 15.1% said that they did not know how to describe their relationship, and 0.7% described their relationship as sexual.

## Students and Night Outings

32.9% of the respondents said that they do not go out at night at all, while 32.2% said that they go out at night once or twice a week at the most, 14.1% said that they go out at night once a week, 20.6% said they do not go out regularly, and 0.2% did not specify an answer. (Graph 3)

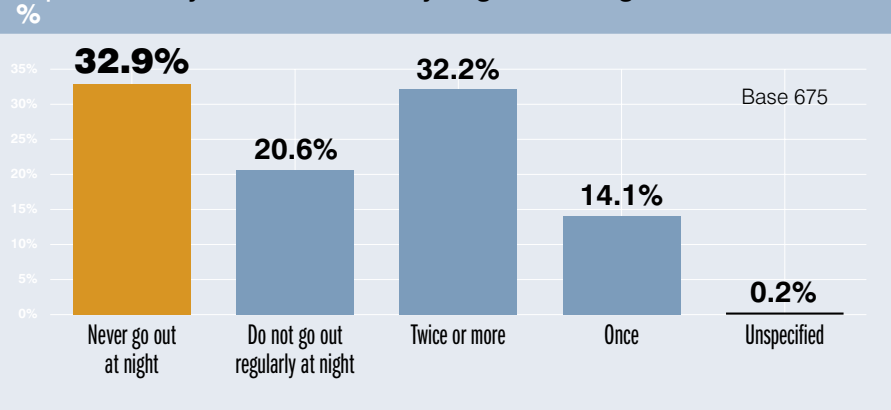
The following is the breakdown by confession of those who said they do not go out at night (32.9%): 32.1% Shia'a, 36.7% Sunni, 18.9% Orthodox and 11.5% Maronite.

As for the distribution of response by age, 50.5% of respondents aged 12 – 14 years said they do not go out at night, compared to 29.9% aged 15 – 18 years.

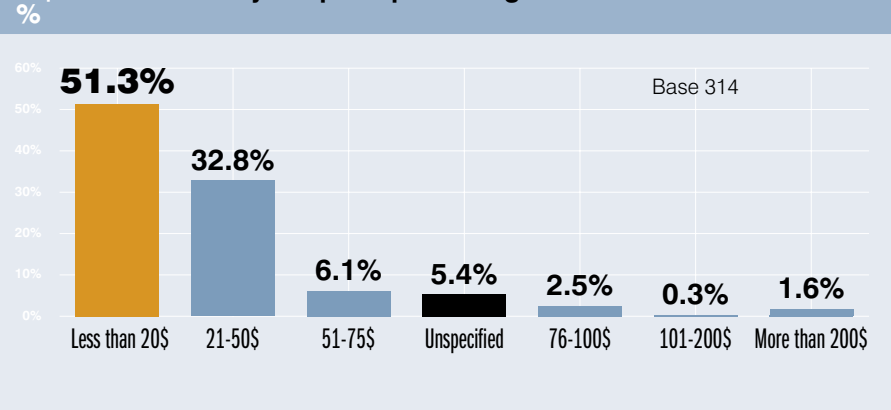
Amongst the respondents who confirmed going out from time to time, 41.3% said they go out at night 3 times a month, 23.8% go out at night twice a month, 12.7% go out at night once a month, while 22.2% did not specify the frequency of their night outings.

In terms of places the students choose for their outings,

G3 | How many times a week do you go out at night?



G4 | How much do you spend per outing?



29% of the respondents said that they go to coffee shops, 23.9% go to restaurants, 16.6% visit their relatives, 16.2% attend movie theaters, 15% go to a friend's house, 13.7% visit beaches, and 8.9% go to nightclubs. Only 2.5% indicated that they go to internet cafes, 4.8% specified other places, and 7.3% refused to specify an answer.

On the other hand, the cost of each outing varies from one student to another. In fact, 51.3% of the respondents stated that on average they spend less than 20 USD per outing, 32.8% spend between 21 and 50 USD, 6.1% spend between 51 and 75 USD and 4.4% spend between 76 and 200 USD or more. 5.4% did not specify an answer. (Graph 4)

As the respondents are school students, their source of money comes mainly from the father (75.1%), from the mother (28.9%), from a part time job (11.9%), or from a brother or a sister (7.9%). Multiple-response question.

## School Students and Parents

According to the results, 47.1% of the respondents described their relationship with their parents as excellent, 41.3% as good, and 8% as tense, while 3.6% did not know how to describe their relationship.

## School Students and Smoking

Amongst the respondents, 6.5% admitted to be smokers, while 92.6% said that they were not smokers and 0.9% refused to give an answer. In terms of consumption, 43.2% of the smokers said that they consume less than 5 cigarettes a day, 20.5% consume between 5 to 10 cigarettes a day, 6.8% consume between 10 to 20 cigarettes a day, 15.9%

more than one packet (20 cigarettes) a day, while 13.6% did not specify how many cigarettes they consume a day. (Graph 5)

### School Students and Alcohol

According to the results, 89% of the respondents do not drink alcohol, while only 9.8% do, and 1.2% refused to give an answer.

In terms of frequency, 63.6% of the respondents who drink alcohol said that they do so occasionally, 24.2% said that they drink alcohol once a week, 6.1% drink alcohol once a month, 4.5% drink alcohol daily, and 1.6% did not specify their frequency in drinking alcohol. (Graph 6)

It is noteworthy that 40.9% of the respondents who smoke also drink alcohol.

### School Students and Drugs

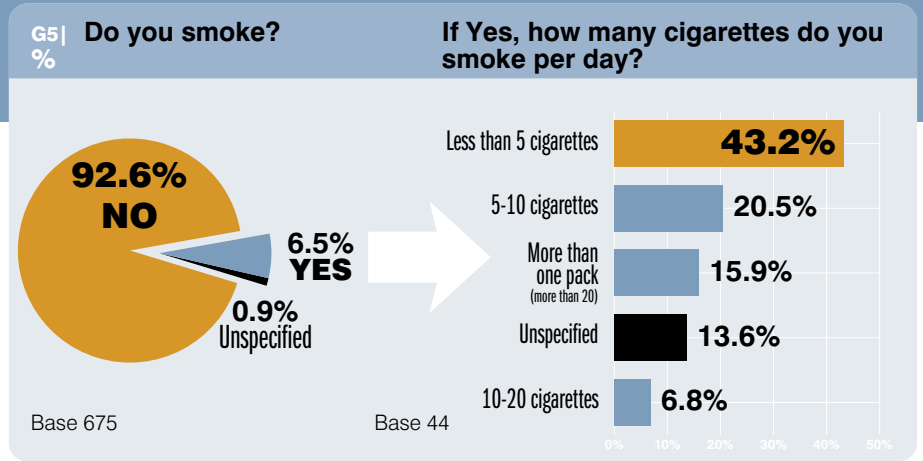
20.6% of the respondents confirmed that the percentage of school students who take drugs is high, 30.8% said that the percentage of school students who take drugs is average, 14.1% said that the percentage of school students who take drugs is low, and 5.3% said that they did not think that school students take drugs at all. 29.2% did not know whether school students take drugs or not.

The students were also asked if they have personally tried drugs. 94.7% of the respondents claimed to not have tried drugs, 3.6% admitted that they have, and 1.7% refused to give an answer. However, 58.3% of those who claimed to have tried drugs said that they have quit, 29.2% said that they still take drugs, while 12.5% refused to give an answer. In addition, 66.7% of the respondents, who indicated that they have tried drugs, are aged between 15 and 18 years old, 25% aged between 12 and 14 years old, and 8.3% did not specify their age.

Furthermore, amongst those who admitted having tried drugs, 37.5% said they have tried hashish, 20.8% said they have tried marijuana, 20.8% said they have tried cocaine, and 54.1% said they have tried other types of drugs. 29.2% did not specify any kind, so they may in fact have tried other types of drugs.

### School Students and Self-Perception

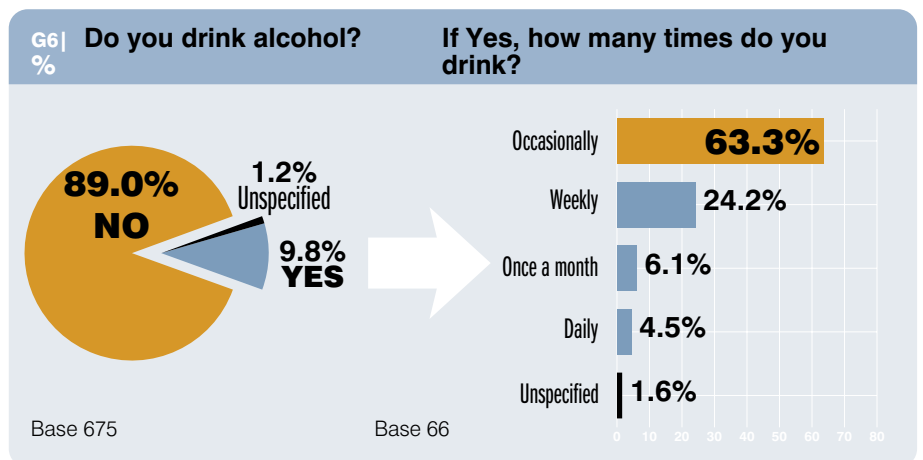
How do school students perceive themselves and



what do they think most represents them? The results are illustrated in Table No.2 as follows:

Attribute	Represent (%)	Doesn't Represent (%)	Not Specified (%)
Ambitious	69.6	23.4	7
Liberal	68.3	18.7	13
Dependent	67	21.2	11.8
Patriotic	62.2	31	6.8
Loose	59.3	27.7	13
Cultured	59.4	30.7	9.9
Lazy and neglectful	59.2	28.7	12.1
Sectarian	58.8	31.1	10.1
Pretentious	58.2	25.6	16.2
Selfish	52.3	34.2	13.5
Opportunist	50.7	33.3	16
Manipulated	46	39	15
Perseverant and studious	36.6	55.8	7.6
Self Taught	32.4	53.4	14.2
Puritan	30.7	48.6	20.7
Religious	25.2	59.3	15.5
Ignorant	24.4	61.5	14.1
Content	24.1	61.6	14.3

Table 2



## Conclusion

By way of conclusion, the following findings in table 3 can be highlighted in comparison with the results of an opinion poll conducted with university students\*:

Comparison between School Students and University Students on Specific Issues Table 3		
Issue	School Students	University Students
<b>1- Belief in God</b>	96.8% of the respondents believe in God	83.2% of the respondents believe in God
<b>2- Religious rituals</b>	43.3% are committed to their religious rituals.	17.8% are committed to their religious rituals.
	6.3% are not committed to their religious rituals.	29.3% do not practice any of their religious rituals
<b>3- Choice of friends in terms of religion</b>	19.9% believe that religion is an important factor that determines their choice of friends	10.5% believe that religion is an important factor that determines their choice of friends
	78.4% think that religion does not affect their choice of friends	45.6% think that religion does not affect their choice of friends
		40% believe that religion affects their choice of friends.
<b>4- Perception of religious affinities</b>	70.8% believe that the members of their sect are not superior to members of other religious belonging	73% of the university students agree upon that
	27.1% believe that the members of their religious community are somehow better than members of other religious affinities	26% of the university students believe the same
<b>5- Night Outings</b>	67.1% go out at night	74.8% go out at night
	8.9% go to night clubs	42.1% go to night clubs
	32.8% spend on average between 21-50 USD per outing.	44.4% spend on average between 20 and 51 USD per outing
<b>6- Smoking</b>	6.5% admitted to smoke	40.3% admitted to smoke
<b>7- Alcohol</b>	9.8% drink alcohol	43.2% drink alcohol
<b>8- Drugs</b>	20.6% believe that the percentage of youth taking drugs is high	27% believe the same
	3.6% admitted to have tried drugs	6.8% admitted to have tried drugs

Some of the differences existing between the answers of the university students and the answers of the school students, concerning drugs and alcohol practices, may be explained by the age difference between the two categories.

However, if the figures that have been obtained through this poll are exhaustive, it indicates an alarming rate of drug and alcohol consumption amongst school and university students.

Even though the rate of those who have actually admitted their consumption is not high, the estimations given by the students, concerning their opinion about the number of youth students who consume drugs and alcohol, remain high. These estimates represent reality, as it is far easier for a student to admit the action of others, than to confess their own.

The majority of the school students perceive themselves as: ambitious (69.6%), liberal (68.3%), patriotic (62.2%), cultured (59.4%), lazy and neglectful (59.2%), sectarian (58.8%), pretentious (58.2%), selfish (52.3%), opportunist (50.7%).

When comparing the results with university students, it is evident that the older the students are, the higher is the percentage of those who smoke and drink alcohol, and the more affected they are by sectarian considerations.

\* For further information about a similar opinion poll conducted amongst university students, refer to *Ii Monthly issues 44, 45, 47 and 48.*

## Sample and Methodology

This opinion poll was conducted between April and May 2006. The sample included 675 students of 12 private and public schools in the different Lebanese governorates. The sample represents the real distribution of students between the private (52%) and public schools (48%). Breakdown of the sample by age: 14.7% between 12-14 years old and 85.3% between 15 and 18 years old. The random sample selected from the schools did not include any druze students. The margin of error amounts to  $\pm 1.9\%$ .