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Study: The Most Common Grade Given By Colleges Is An 'A'

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A comprehensive look at historical data on letter grades given by more than 200 four-year colleges and universities found that A's have become "ordinary."

In a study published Wednesday in *Teachers College Record*, Stuart Rojstaczer and Christopher Healy found that A's represent 43 percent of all letter grades, making it the most common mark.

The New York Times reports:

Most recently, about 43 percent of all letter grades given were A's, an increase of 28 percentage points since 1960 and 12 percentage points since 1988. The distribution of B's has stayed relatively constant; the growing share of A's instead comes at the expense of a shrinking share of C's, D's and F's. In fact, only about 10 percent of grades awarded are D's and F's.

As we have written before, private colleges and universities are by far the biggest offenders on grade inflation, even when you compare private schools to equally selective public schools. Here's another chart showing the grading curves for public versus private schools in the years 1960, 1980 and 2007...

USA Today quotes the study's authors as saying that over the past 50 years, universities created a narrative that excellence was everywhere but failure was "virtually non-existent."

"The evolution of grading has made it difficult to distinguish between excellent and good performance," USAT quotes the authors as writing. "At the other end of the spectrum, some students who were once removed from school for substandard

performance have, since the Vietnam era, been carried along. America's colleges and universities have likely been practicing some degree of social promotion for over 40 years."

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