Public Viewpoint: COVID-19 Work and Education Survey

Enrolling in Education: Motivations, Barriers, and Expectations

July 15, 2020
Public Viewpoint

A regular survey of 1,000 American adults that is representative of the population on the basis of:

- Age
- Gender
- Educational attainment
- Race/ethnicity
- Nine geographic census regions
- 13,000+ responses from March 25-July 9

Other survey research incorporated in findings:

- Strada-Gallup Education Consumer Survey
  - 10,000+ responses from March 30-May 28
- Aspiring Adult Learner Survey
  - 1,007 responses from August-September 2019
Key topics from prior weeks

- Work Impact of COVID-19
- Education Disruption
- Disproportionate Impact on Communities of Color
- Differential Impact by Generation
- Future Education Plans
- New Jobs
25% of adults say they plan to enroll in an education or training program within the next six months.

Likelihood of enrolling in an education/training program by time horizon:

- 25% at 1 month
- 30% at 3 months
- 35% at 6 months
- 40% at 1 year
- 45% at 2 years
- 50% at 5 years

Adults considering enrolling prefer nondegree programs

If you were to enroll in education or training in the next six months, what would be your goal?

- A graduate degree: 10%
- A bachelor's degree: 15%
- An associate degree: 12%
- A certificate, certification, or license: 26%
- One or more courses to get some skills I need for work: 20%
- One or more courses for personal interest: 17%

63%

Key questions

1. What are Americans’ motivations for pursuing education and training?

2. What are their perceived barriers to enrollment?

3. What are their expectations about the costs and benefits of education?
Motivations
Career motivations are most important when making education decisions

How important were each of the following reasons for you personally in deciding whether to pursue your highest level of education?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Gain skills to be successful at work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Qualify for good jobs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Advance my career</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Support myself and my family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Make more money</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfillment</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Become the best person I can be</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Learn new things</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Be a good role model</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lack of perceived career benefit is the main reason people won’t enroll

You indicated you are not likely to enroll in courses or training over the next five years. Which statement best describes the MAIN reason you don't expect to enroll?

- No real benefit at work: 42%
- Health or disability: 19%
- Time commitment: 13%
- Don't like being in a class or training: 13%
- Financial cost: 11%
- Not confident I would do well: 3%

Strada-Gallup 2020 Education Consumer Survey. Base: Americans ages 18-64 who will not enroll in courses or training, n=1,831.
Barriers
Top three challenges to education and training: time/logistics, self-doubt, and cost

How challenging would each of the following be for you personally in pursuing education and training?

- Time/logistics: 55%
- Self-doubt: 49%
- Cost: 48%
- Health: 32%
- Technology: 32%

Extremely/very challenging
55% of adults see time and logistical barriers to education and training

How challenging would each of the following be for you personally in pursuing education and training?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Difficulty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time away from work</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing school and work</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedules and times when courses are available</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing school and childcare</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least one of these</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extremely/very challenging

Many people face multiple time and logistical challenges

- 55% at least 1
- 39% at least 2
- 26% at least 3
- 15% at least 4
- 8% Five

Self-doubt is a major barrier for half of Americans when it comes to pursuing education and training

How challenging would each of the following be for you personally in pursuing education and training?

- Fear that I won't be able to succeed: 35%
- Fear that I've been out of school too long: 39%
- At least one of these fears: 49%

Extremely/very challenging

Americans of color and urban residents are more likely to report that reliable internet and computer access is challenging

How challenging would [reliable access to internet or a computer] be for you personally in pursuing education and training?

(%% who indicated extremely/very challenging)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Suburban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/ethnicity</th>
<th>Latino</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expectations
4 in 10 Americans without degrees or credentials were very or extremely interested in more education when they left high school.

Immediately after high school, how interested were you in pursuing additional education?

- 42% very or extremely interested
- 17% very interested
- 15% somewhat interested
- 29% not very interested
- 25% not at all interested

Strada-Gallup 2020 Education Consumer Survey. Base: Americans ages 18-64 with no postsecondary degree or credential, n=6,152.
Only 36% of Americans without degrees or credentials felt they had a good understanding of their options for paying for education when they left high school.

[After high school] I had a good understanding of my options for paying for my education

36% had good understanding

- Strongly agree 13%
- Agree 24%
- Neither agree nor disagree 28%
- Disagree 8%
- Strongly disagree 26%

Strada-Gallup 2020 Education Consumer Survey. Americans ages 18-64 with no postsecondary degree or credential, n=6,067.
Adults without degrees who are now considering education underestimate time and costs to complete

**ASSOCIATE DEGREE**

- **Estimated**(*) time to complete: 2.5 years
- **Average time to complete:** 3.3 years
- **Estimated**(*) cost to complete: $18,132
- **Average cost to complete**(**): $21,196

**BACHELOR’S DEGREE**

- **Estimated**(*) time to complete: 3.5 years
- **Average time to complete:** 5.1 years
- **Estimated**(*) cost to complete: $33,286
- **Average cost to complete**(**): $106,372

(*) As estimated by American adults without degrees or credentials.
(**) Estimated total cost assuming national average enrollment time.

2016 National Student Clearinghouse Research Center and online survey with Heart+Mind Strategies August-September 2019. Base: Americans ages 25-44 with no postsecondary degree or credential, n=1,007.
Adults without degrees or credentials are divided when it comes to the value of education

If I were to go on for additional education…

- **It would advance my career**: 62%
- **It would be worth the cost**: 52%
- **It would help me get a stable job in times of economic uncertainty**: 50%

*Strongly agree/agree*
Key insights: motivations, barriers, expectations

1. Americans who are not likely to enroll most often fail to see a clear career benefit. Lack of career benefit is the No. 1 reason Americans do not enroll. Even among those considering enrolling, many are uncertain whether education will be worth the cost and would help them get a stable job in times of economic uncertainty.

2. Americans identify three primary challenges to pursuing education and training:
   - Competing obligations and logistics. Fifty-five percent identify commitments to work and family or the logistics of course schedules and transportation as major concerns. Many Americans face more than one of these barriers.
   - Self-doubt. Forty-nine percent fear they will not be successful as students or have been out of school for too long.
   - Cost. Forty-eight percent report that cost is an extremely or very challenging barrier.

3. Many Americans considering enrolling do not have a good understanding of the time and costs involved. Adults consistently underestimate the time and costs to complete a degree. The majority of adults who have not completed postsecondary degrees or credentials were interested in education and training after high school, but 64 percent reported that they didn’t have a good understanding of how to pay for college.
Learn more at StradaEducation.org/PublicViewpoint or email consumervoice@stradaeducation.org
Methodology

- Public Viewpoint is a regular tracking survey of education consumers’ perceptions of COVID-19’s impact on postsecondary education and work in the United States, completed by Heart+Mind Strategies on behalf of Strada Center for Consumer Insights.
  - Online survey of Americans ages 18 and above.
  - Representative of the general population in age, gender, geographic region, educational attainment, and race/ethnicity.
  - A theoretical margin of error based on a probability sample of size 1,000 would be +/- 3.1% at 95% confidence. This is not a probability-based sample, and a margin of error cannot be estimated. Based on experience, we believe the sampling error would be at least this number.
- The 2020 wave of the Strada-Gallup Education Consumer Survey is a nationally representative survey using both mail and web data collection modes. They survey was conducted from March 30-May 28: n=10,361.
- The survey of Aspiring Adult Learners is a nationally representative online survey of adults ages 25-44. They survey was conducted by Heart + Mind Strategies on behalf of Strada Center for Consumer Insights from August-September 2019, n=1,007.
- Please contact Strada Center for Consumer Insights with questions or information requests at consumervoice@stradaeducation.org or learn more at StradaEducation.org/PublicViewpoint.