

The State of Higher Education 2024

A valuable, but obstructed path
to great jobs and lives



COPYRIGHT STANDARDS

This document contains proprietary research, copyrighted and trademarked materials of Gallup, Inc. Accordingly, international and domestic laws and penalties guaranteeing patent, copyright, trademark and trade secret protection safeguard the ideas, concepts and recommendations related within this document.

The materials contained in this document and/or the document itself may be downloaded and/or copied provided that all copies retain the copyright, trademark and any other proprietary notices contained on the materials and/or document. No changes may be made to this document without the express written permission of Gallup, Inc.

Any reference whatsoever to this document, in whole or in part, on any webpage must provide a link back to the original document in its entirety. Except as expressly provided herein, the transmission of this material shall not be construed to grant a license of any type under any patents, copyright or trademarks owned or controlled by Gallup, Inc.

Gallup® is a trademark of Gallup, Inc. All rights reserved. All other trademarks and copyrights are property of their respective owners.

Table of Contents

- 1 Introduction and Key Findings
- 3 Value and Intention to Enroll
- 9 Enrollment and Persistence Considerations
- 19 The Enrolled Experience
- 25 Conclusion
- 26 Methodology
- 27 Appendix



Introduction and Key Findings

Since 2020, Lumina Foundation and Gallup have partnered to produce the State of Higher Education study, an annual survey of thousands of U.S. adults without a college degree. Each year, Lumina and Gallup measure their attitudes toward education beyond high school, interest in pursuing a degree or credential, the barriers they face to enrolling or completion, and the experiences currently enrolled students report having in their programs.

The 2024 State of Higher Education study includes responses from over 14,000 U.S. adults aged 18 to 59 who do not have a college degree and fall into one of the following groups:

Currently enrolled students: Includes 6,015 adults currently enrolled in a certificate, certification, associate degree or bachelor's degree program.

Stopped-out adults: Includes 5,012 adults previously enrolled in a certificate, certification, associate degree or bachelor's degree program but stopped out of their program before completing it.

Never-enrolled adults: Includes 3,005 adults who never enrolled in any type of education after high school.

As colleges and universities report the first increase in undergraduate enrollment since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic,¹ the *State of Higher Education 2024* results demonstrate that Americans still overwhelmingly agree that education beyond high school — particularly a four-year college degree — is valuable and important to having a good career.

Meanwhile, adults' interest in pursuing some form of higher education is at the highest level Lumina and Gallup have recorded.

This heightened interest is partially driven by an increasing openness to alternative pathways, such as industry certifications and certificates, and a continued belief that a degree or credential will increase an individual's salary, chances of promotion and competitiveness in the job market. Many prospective students are also searching for flexible programs in the form of remote instruction, schedules more conducive to working learners or expedited time to complete.

¹ *Current term enrollment estimates: Fall 2023.* (2024, January 24). National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. <https://nscresearchcenter.org/current-term-enrollment-estimates/>

But while interest is high, significant barriers to enrollment and completion remain, with cost leading the way as it has in previous years, and emotional stress and mental health issues posing a rising threat to completion.

Critical findings from the 2024 State of Higher Education study include:

- 1 **Nearly all adults without a college degree say at least one type of credential is “extremely” or “very” valuable**, and 59% of unenrolled adults have considered enrolling in additional education in the past two years, an increase of 15 percentage points from the 44% who said the same in 2021.
- 2 **Career outcomes — such as earning a raise, promotion or a more fulfilling role — are the primary motivators for pursuing higher education.** Eighty-four percent of current or prospective students cite at least one employment-related factor as why they are enrolled or considering pursuing a degree or credential.
- 3 **Meanwhile, the primary barriers to enrollment are cost and a lack of financial aid.** However, flexibility in course delivery is also an important factor, especially among non-traditional learners and those who were previously enrolled but stopped out of their program before completing it.
- 4 **More than one in three currently enrolled students have considered stopping out of their degree or credential program within the last six months.** Among those considering stopping out, 64% say emotional stress or mental health concerns are significant reasons — more than twice the percentage who say the cost of their program is what may cause them to stop out.
- 5 **About one in six currently enrolled students say they have at least occasionally felt disrespected, discriminated against or unsafe in their program.** Those who report these negative experiences are notably less likely to say the quality of education they receive in their program is “good” or “excellent.”

Building off the key findings from prior administrations of the State of Higher Education study, Lumina and Gallup also dedicated two separate reports to the following topics:

- **Policies and Laws: How They’re Impacting College Enrollment** summarizes the implications of recent public policy decisions — such as those regarding reproductive healthcare, gun legislation and affirmative action — and their effect on college enrollment decisions.
- **Cost of College: The Price Tag of Higher Education and Its Effect on Enrollment** addresses the cost of college education, exploring issues such as tuition transparency and how student loan debt forces many adults to delay major life events like getting married or purchasing a home.

Value and Intention to Enroll

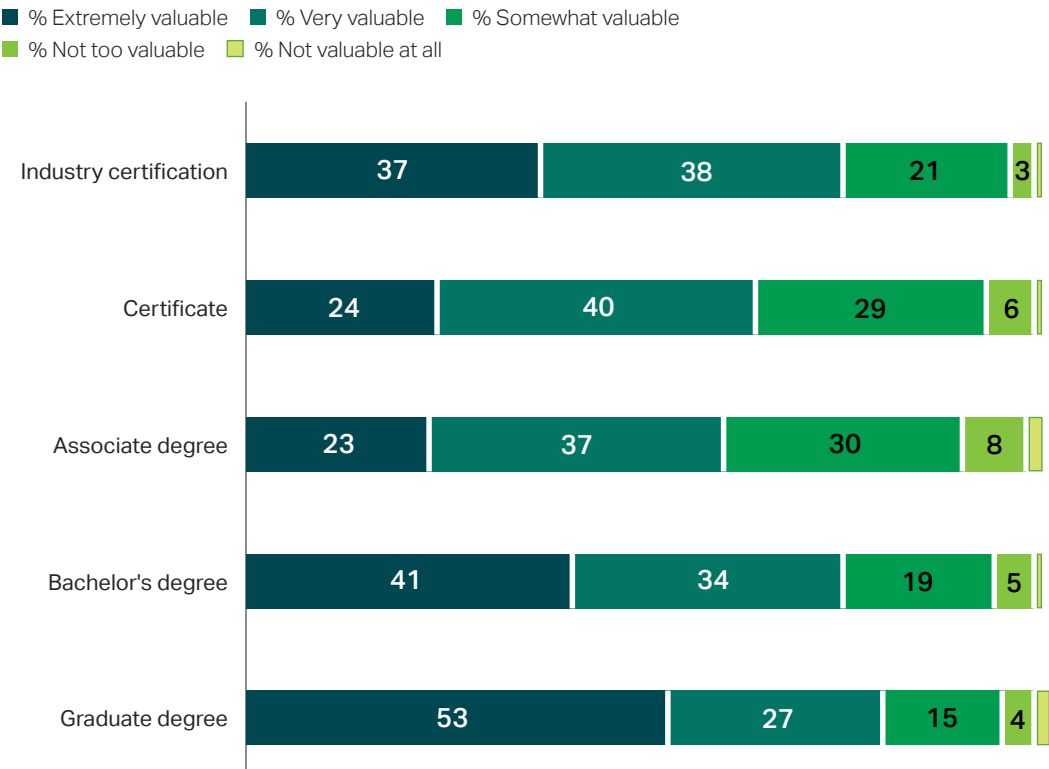
More than nine in 10 adults say at least one credential is valuable; half of unenrolled adults are likely to pursue one in the next five years.

Despite ongoing concerns related to college costs, loan debt, enrollment rates and other challenges facing students and institutions of higher education, nearly all adults without a college degree say at least one type of credential is “extremely” (74%) or “very” valuable (20%). As discussed more fully in the *Cost of College: The Price Tag of Higher Education and Its Effect on Enrollment* report, Americans are most likely to say graduate degrees and bachelor’s degrees are extremely or very valuable, though industry certifications are also highly regarded by 74% of adults without a degree.

CHART 1
Americans’ Views on the Value of Degrees and Credentials

Among adults without a college degree

In general, how valuable are each of the following types of degrees/credentials?



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100% or may sum to ±1%.

While those who have never enrolled in higher education place less value on degrees and credentials than currently or previously enrolled students, adults across all enrollment backgrounds see the greatest value in industry certifications, bachelor's degrees and graduate degrees. However, stopped-out adults are most likely to say industry certifications are valuable, while currently enrolled adults see the greatest value in bachelor's and graduate degrees.

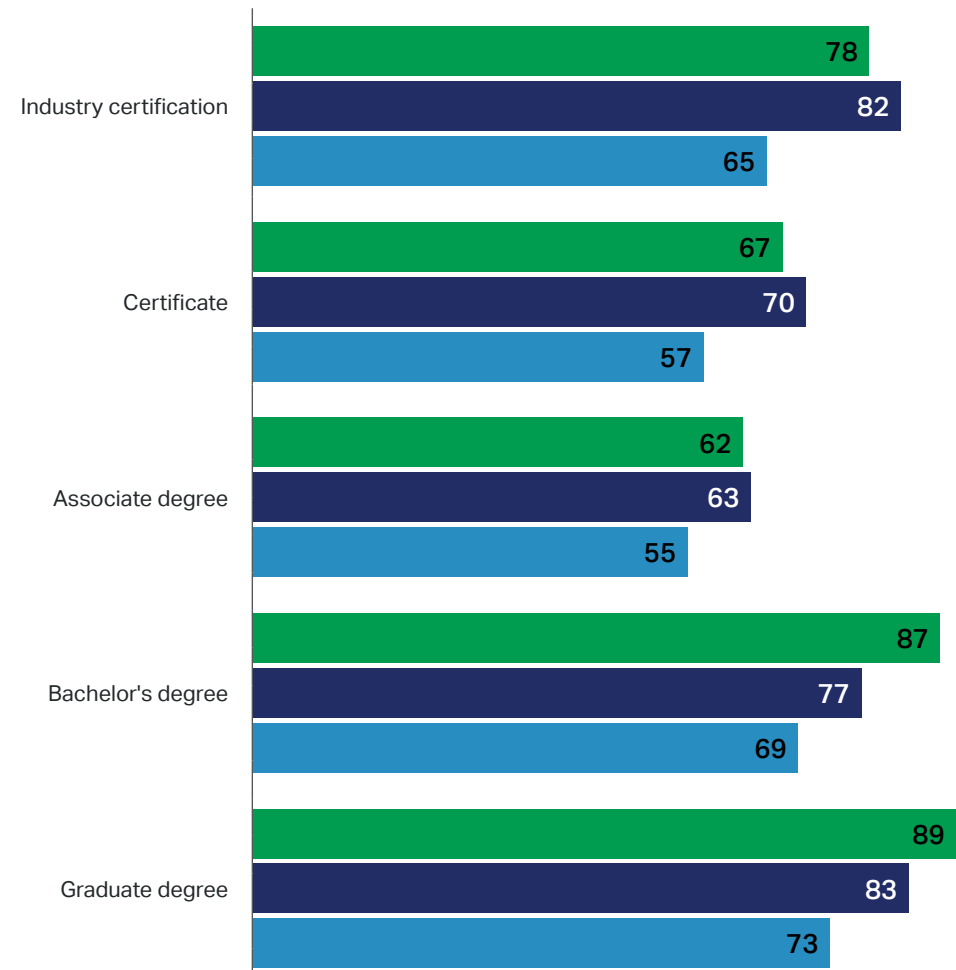
CHART 2
Americans' Views on the Value of Degrees and Credentials by Enrollment Status

Among adults without a college degree

In general, how valuable are each of the following types of degrees/credentials?

(% Extremely valuable + % Very valuable)

■ Currently enrolled students ■ Stopped out ■ Never enrolled





While about one million fewer students were enrolled in undergraduate degree and certificate programs in 2023 than in 2018 — an 8% decline over that five-year span — interest in pursuing additional education remains high: **Nearly six in 10 unenrolled adults say they have considered pursuing at least one credential within the past two years.**

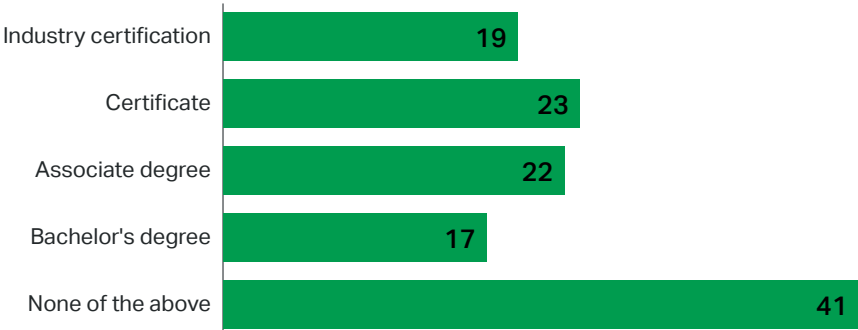
The most frequently considered programs — certificates and associate degrees — are typically offered by community colleges and, notably, are rated as less valuable than industry certifications and bachelor’s degrees. This finding may reflect prospective students prioritizing the lower cost associated with certificates and associate degrees.

CHART 3
Unenrolled Adults’ Interest in Pursuing Higher Education by Degree/Certification Type

Among adults not enrolled in a certificate, certification, associate or bachelor’s degree program

Which of the following, if any, have you considered pursuing in the past two years?

(% Selected)

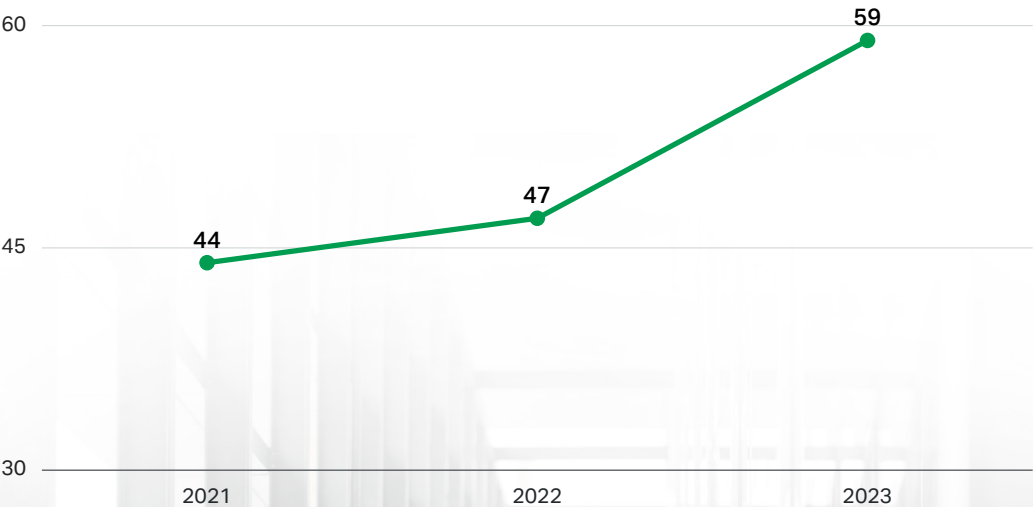


Interest levels in all four program types were the highest recorded throughout the Lumina-Gallup study; however, interest in industry certifications saw this biggest rise in interest — by nine points since 2021.

CHART 4
Interest in Higher Education, 2021-2023

Among adults not enrolled in a certificate, certification, associate or bachelor's degree program

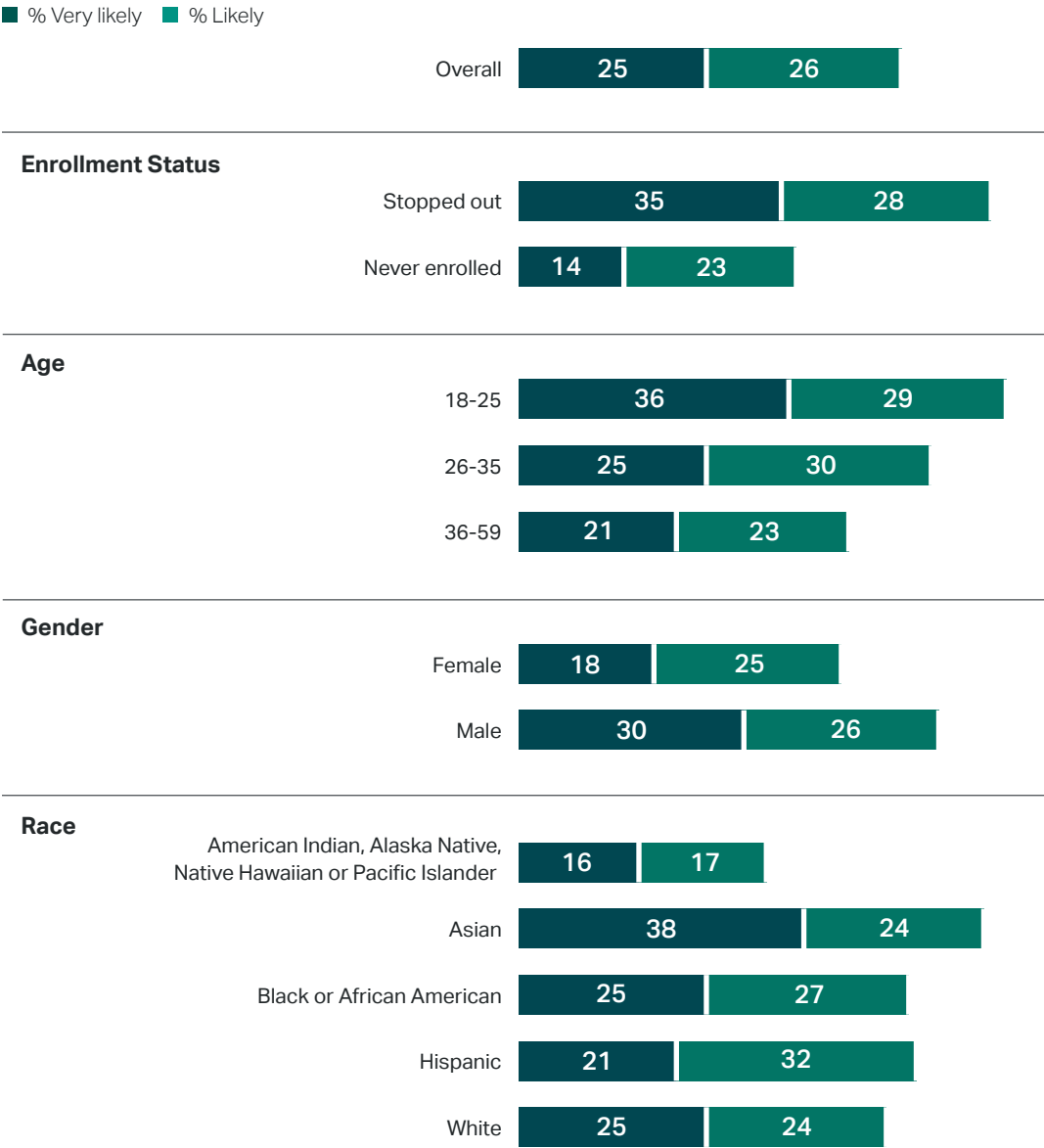
% Who considered pursuing at least one degree or credential in the past two years



Most of the 59% of adults who have considered pursuing further higher education intend to do so: 86% say they are likely to enroll in the next five years. This means just over half of all unenrolled adults are “likely” (26%) or “very likely” (25%) to enroll in higher education in the next five years. Adults who were previously enrolled are 26 percentage points more likely to enroll in the next five years than those who have never been enrolled. Prospective enrollment is especially high among adults 25 or younger, as well as Asian adults and men.

CHART 5
Likelihood of Pursuing at Least One Certificate, Certification or Degree in the Next Five Years Across Demographic Groups and Enrollment Status

Among adults not enrolled in a certificate, certification, associate or bachelor’s degree program



Career outcomes are the primary motivation for pursuing higher education.

Previous [Lumina-Gallup research](#) has demonstrated that additional education after high school positively affects physical and mental health, community relations and pro-social behaviors. Moreover, most Americans agree that a more educated populace leads to more prosperous, innovative and civically engaged societies. But while U.S. adults acknowledge higher education’s many benefits, one aspect stands out as the primary motivation for adults considering pursuing a degree or credential: improved career outcomes.

Since 2021, about three-quarters of adults without a college degree have said a two- or four-year college degree is at least as important — if not more so — to having a successful career as it was 20 years ago. Eighty-four percent of current or prospective students cite at least one employment-related factor — such as getting a job that pays more or is more fulfilling, improving their competitiveness in the job market, or getting a salary increase or promotion — as the reason they are pursuing or considering additional education.

“

Is [a college degree] worth what you get? Realistically, probably not. But do you have to have it? Yes ... Most jobs out there require a college degree. 50 years ago, a high school diploma was about the same as a college degree now.”

**- White Male, 19,
Currently Enrolled**

CHART 6
Reasons Current and Prospective Students Consider Pursuing Higher Education

Among currently enrolled students and those considering enrolling in a certificate, certification, associate or bachelor’s degree program

% Which of the following are important reasons why you are considering enrolling and obtaining a degree or credential?

(% Selected)



Note: Top responses only are shown; please [see the appendix](#) for a complete list of response options.

This employment-centric motive applies to more than three-quarters of adults, irrespective of their gender, age, race, whether they are currently enrolled or considering enrolling, or the type of credential they are pursuing.

Enrollment and Persistence Considerations

Values, finances and flexibility drive enrollment decisions, though priorities differ among enrolled and unenrolled adults.

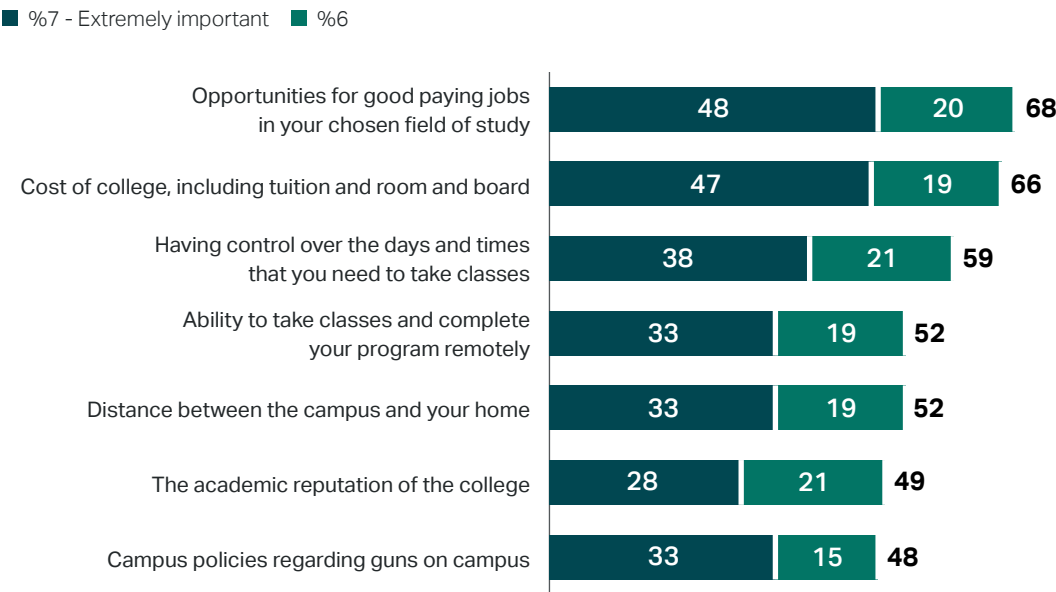


When making enrollment decisions, currently or previously enrolled students cite several factors that help them differentiate between individual programs and institutions. Thematically, the most prominent considerations remain in line with previous layers of the enrollment evaluation: **Career outcomes and cost lead the way, followed by flexibility in program delivery.**

CHART 7
Importance of Various Characteristics in Deciding Where to Enroll

Among adults without a college degree

How important [are/would] each of the following characteristics of [your/a] college [be] in your decision to [stay enrolled/enroll]?



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to ±1%. Top responses only are shown; please [see the appendix](#) for a complete list of response options.

Nearly three-quarters of stopped-out college students say cost is highly important to their decision, compared with about two-thirds of currently enrolled college students. Overall, location and flexibility are less important than cost in adults’ college selection decisions. However, stopped-out students are notably more likely than enrolled students to say online or remote courses are highly important to their decision, and they are also more sensitive to the distance between the campus and their home.

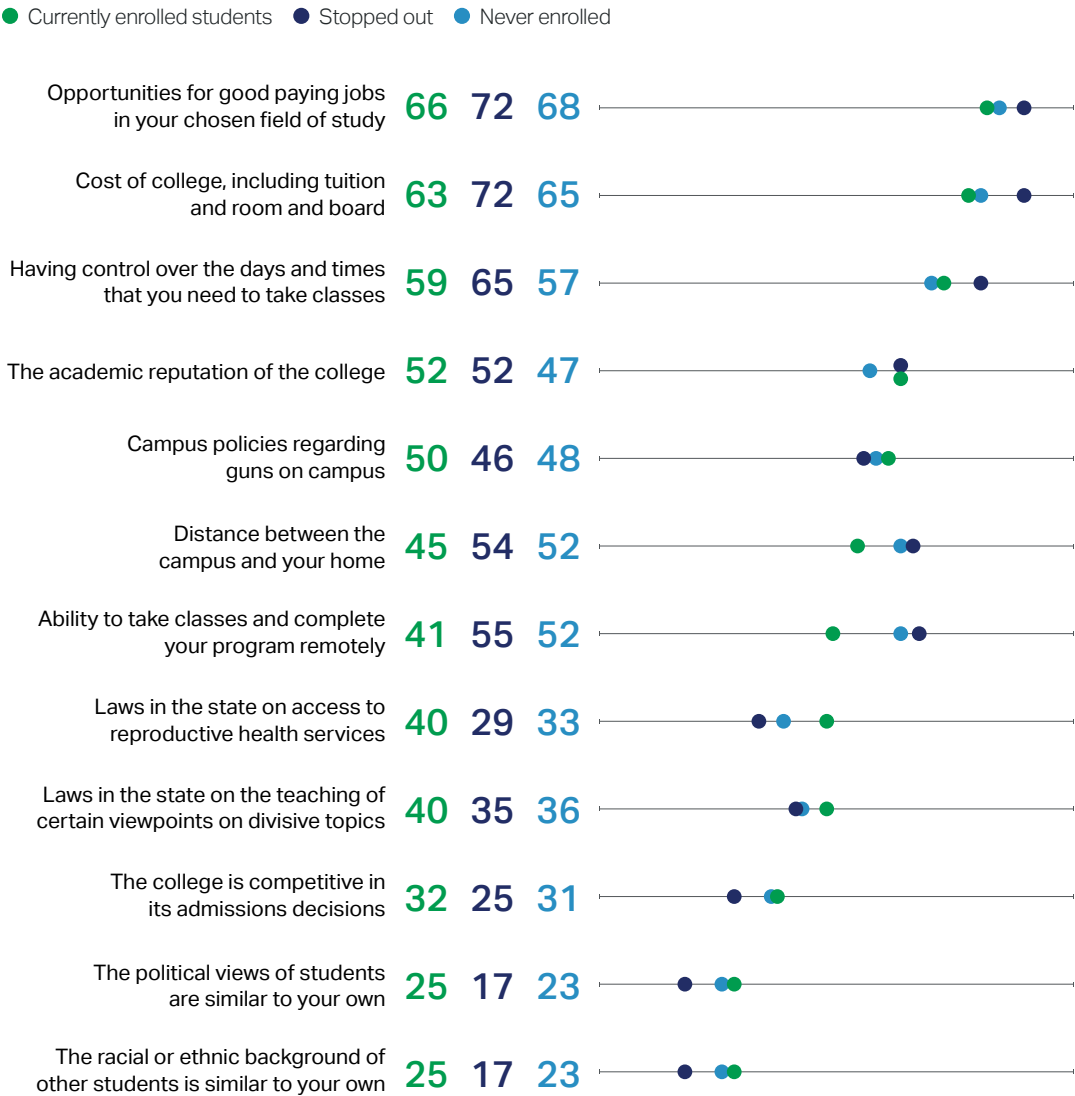
CHART 8

Importance of Various Characteristics in Deciding Where to Enroll by Enrollment Status

Among adults without a college degree

How important [are/would] each of the following characteristics of [your/a] college [be] in your decision to [stay enrolled/enroll]?

(%7 - Extremely important + %6)



Though public policy factors — including those related to firearms, reproductive healthcare and topics that can be discussed on campuses — are generally less important to students’ enrollment decisions than the foundational characteristics of a school, at least one in three adults say these policies are highly important to their decision. This is especially true of firearm policies: About half of adults say these policies would be highly influential in selecting or remaining enrolled in a college. The [*Policies and Laws: How they’re impacting college enrollment*](#) report provides a fuller analysis of the implications of these policies.

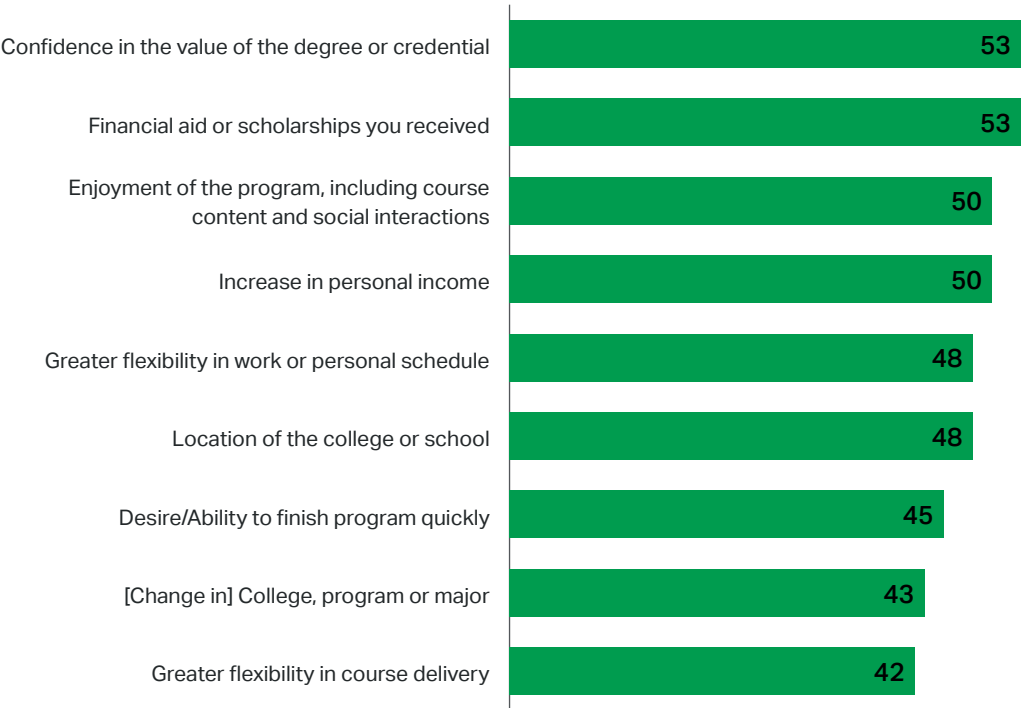
Just as cost and flexibility are important factors in how students differentiate between programs or institutions, they are also highly influential in students’ decisions to pursue higher education at all. Cost and finances are among the most important factors in whether adults decide to enroll. While the value of a degree is the most important factor to enrolling or remaining enrolled, at least half of adults without a degree say financial aid or their personal income are “very” important factors in their potential or continued enrollment. Black and Hispanic adults are especially likely to say these are very important factors.

CHART 9
Factors That Influence Enrollment Decisions

Among current, former and prospective students

How important [are/were/would] each of the following [be] in [being able to remain enrolled/your decision to enroll/getting you to enroll]?

(% Very important)

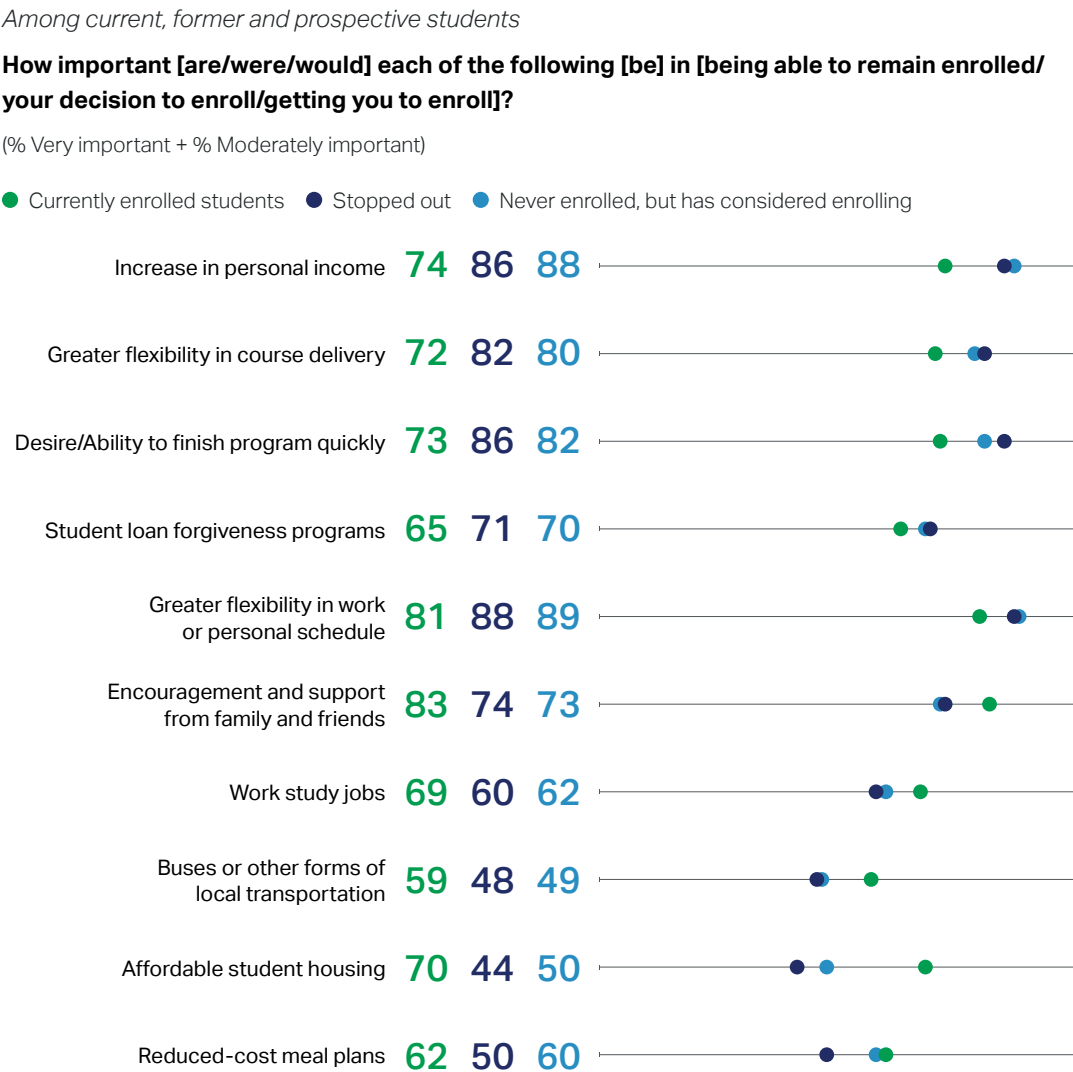


Note: Top responses only are shown; please [see the appendix](#) for a complete list of response options.

Income is an especially relevant factor among the unenrolled: More than half of unenrolled adults (52%) say an increase in personal income would be very important to enrolling, compared with 40% of current students who say the same of their ability to remain enrolled. As with enrolled students' preferences for differentiating between institutions and programs, stopped-out and prospective students prioritize factors that allow higher education to fit into their overall lives, including greater flexibility in course delivery, accommodating work and personal schedules, and completing the program as quickly as possible.

Conversely, currently enrolled students are more likely to focus on the support infrastructure they need to succeed in their program, such as support from family and friends, cost mitigation opportunities like work-study jobs, reduced-cost meal plans and affordable housing, and community resources like public transportation.

CHART 10
Factors That Influence Enrollment Decisions by Enrollment Status



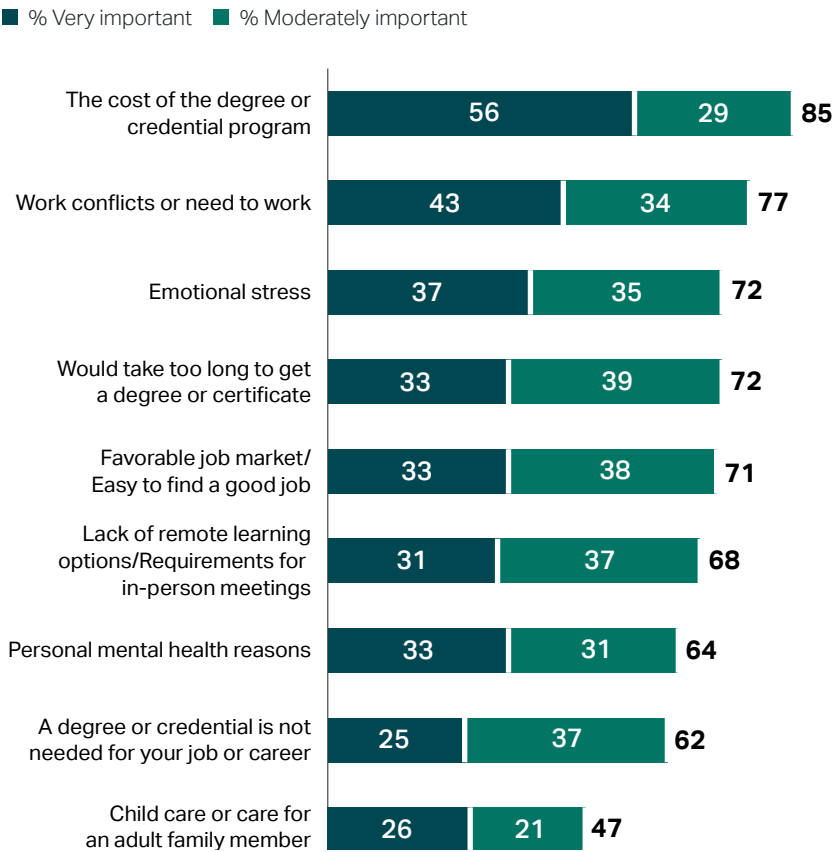
Cost is the greatest barrier to enrollment, with work conflicts close behind.

U.S. adults’ clear focus on affordable schools that allow them to fit education into their lives extends beyond mere preference, especially for those not currently enrolled. These factors are not just nice-to-haves; **for more than three-quarters of unenrolled adults, cost and the need to work prevent them from pursuing further education.**

CHART 11
Barriers to Enrolling in Higher Education

Among adults unenrolled in a certificate, certification, associate or bachelor’s degree program

How important are each of the following reasons why you are not currently enrolled?



“

I knew it was going to be expensive. I didn't realize that the study material was as expensive as it is ... they update the books, they get new books, and not only do you have to buy the books, whether it's digital or physical, you have to pay for the labs, as well, and I didn't realize it was going to be that expensive, on top of the class.”

- White Male, 45,
Currently Enrolled

Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to ±1%. Top responses only are shown; please [see the appendix](#) for a complete list of response options.

While cost is the predominant barrier for unenrolled adults of all ages, genders and races, certain subpopulations of unenrolled adults face unique barriers.

The most notable examples include:

1 COST

Nearly two-thirds of women say cost is a very important barrier to enrollment, compared with less than half of men.

2 LACK OF VALUE OR INTEREST

Nearly half of men (48%) say additional education not being needed for their job, not being valuable or not being of interest are important reasons for not enrolling, compared to 39% of women.

3 MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL STRESS

Fifty-five percent of 18- to 25-year-olds and half of 26- to 35-year-old unenrolled adults say mental health or emotional stress are very important reasons they are not enrolled, compared with 46% of 36- to 59-year-olds.

4 CARETAKING

Four in 10 unenrolled adults who care for a child or an adult family member say their caretaking responsibilities are a very important reason they remain unenrolled.

5 TIME COMMITMENT

About one-third of 26- to 59-year-olds say earning a degree or credential would take too much time, compared with about one-quarter of 18- to 25-year-olds.

“

It's just drilled into their head: 'Go to college. Go to college. Go to college.' But that's as far as anybody goes. It's never just, 'Go to college, and this is why you should go to college. This is what happens in college. These are the different kinds of degrees that you get in college. This is the job market. These are the degrees that can get you these jobs.' Because everything that I just said – I didn't get any of that.”

**- White Male, 32,
Stopped Out**

“

I probably became resentful of my education. It took away from time with my new baby. It was just a lot. At one point, I did take my one-month-old to my nursing class with me and my teacher held him the entire time while she was teaching, she had him on her shoulder. She loved it, but I'm sure it was a distraction to everybody, and I don't remember what I learned that day. It was just a whole new world when he came into the picture.”

**- Black or African
American Female, 39,
Stopped Out**



Several barriers have increased in importance over just the past year. Most notably, flexibility in course delivery — including remote learning options, avoiding work conflicts and increasing the pace of attainment — has become a more prominent barrier. So, too, have the mounting belief that credentials are not needed to achieve positive career outcomes, either because the jobs these adults are pursuing do not require a degree or because a favorable economy has made it less important to finding a job.

CHART 12
Changes in Barriers to Enrolling in Higher Education, 2022-2023

Among adults unenrolled in a certificate, certification, associate or bachelor’s degree program

How important are each of the following reasons why you are not currently enrolled?

(% Very important + % Moderately important)



Note: Barriers shown are those that changed significantly from 2022-2023.

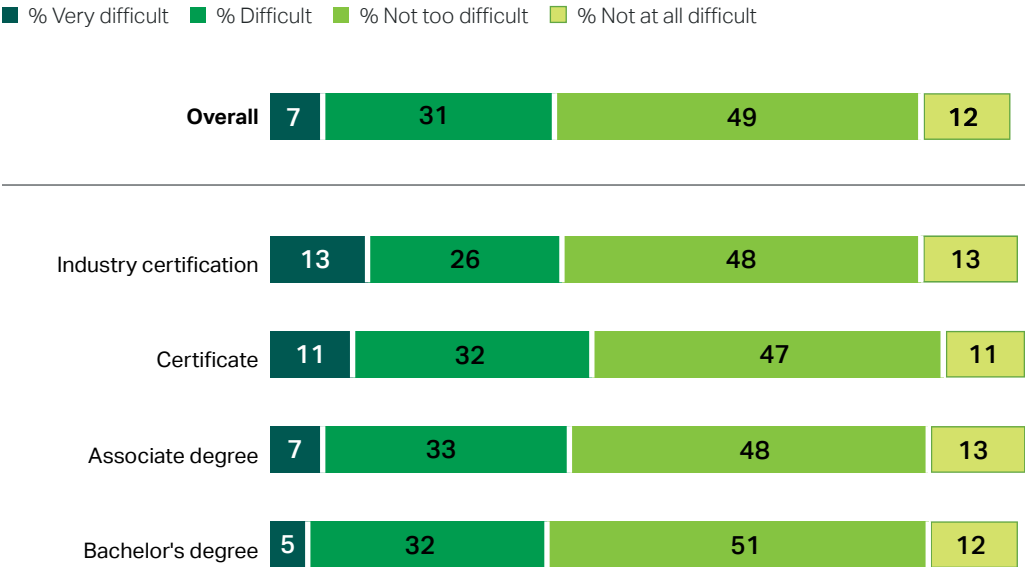
About one in three enrolled adults find it difficult to remain enrolled or have considered stopping out, largely due to mental health and cost concerns.

For many students who overcome the preceding barriers to pursuing higher education, remaining enrolled can be just as daunting. Across all degree and credential programs, at least 37% of students find it difficult to remain enrolled.

CHART 13
Difficulty in Remaining Enrolled Across Degree or Credential Programs

Among currently enrolled adults pursuing a certificate, certification, associate or bachelor's degree

Taking all factors into account, how difficult is it for you to remain enrolled in your program?



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100%.

A similar percentage (35%) of enrolled students say they have considered stopping out of their program in the past six months. This figure is slightly elevated among students not in a bachelor’s degree program, though 32% of bachelor’s students have considered stopping out. Caretakers, those struggling to pay their monthly bills, and Black and Hispanic students are particularly likely to be at risk of stopping out.

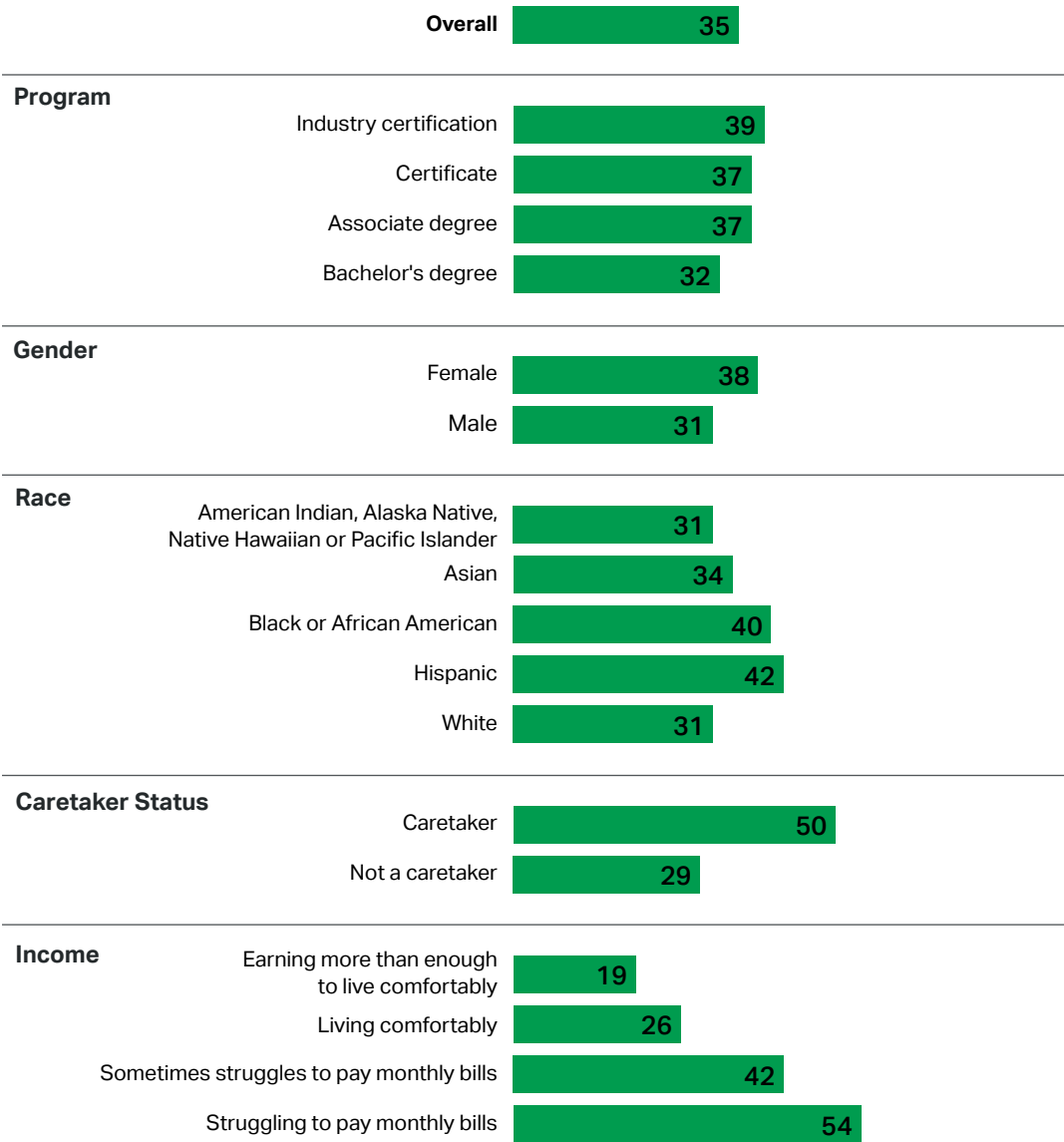
CHART 14

Percentage Who Have Considered Stopping Out in the Past Six Months Across Demographic and Income Groups

Among currently enrolled adults pursuing a certificate, certification, associate or bachelor’s degree

In the past six months, have you considered stopping your coursework?

(% Yes)



As with the decision whether to enroll, many students considering stopping out say cost is a significant factor.

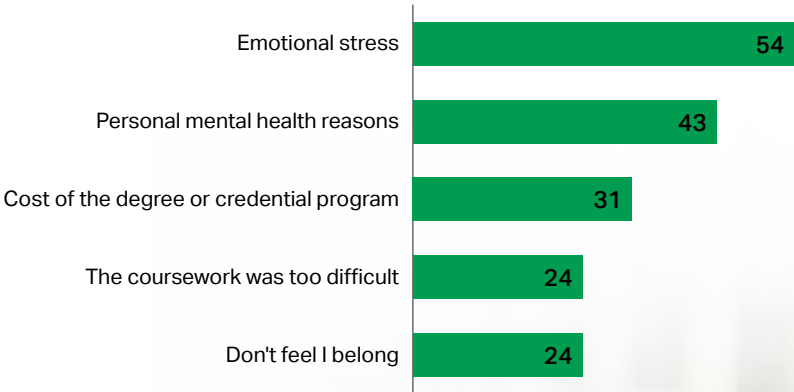
However, nearly two-thirds of those considering stopping out cite mental health or emotional stress as the reason — twice the percentage as those who cite cost.

CHART 15
Reasons Students Consider Stopping Out

Among currently enrolled adults pursuing a certificate, certification, associate or bachelor's degree who have considered stopping out of their program in the past six months

Which of the following describes why you considered stopping your coursework?
Select all that apply.

(% Selected)



Note: Top responses only are shown; please [see the appendix](#) for a complete list of response options.

Scaling this number across the entire student population suggests that more than one in five students (22%) have considered stopping out due to mental health challenges or emotional stress. Moreover, 28% of all female students have considered stopping out due to mental health or emotional stress — nearly twice the percentage of male students (15%).



The Enrolled Experience

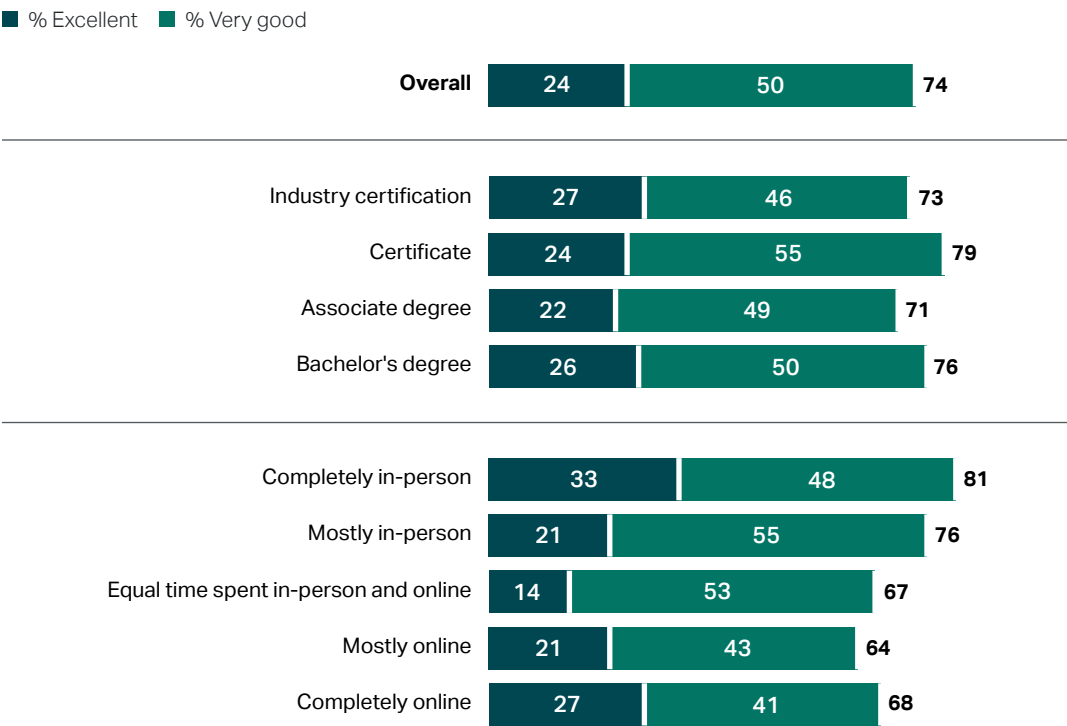
About three-quarters of enrolled students report that the quality of their education is excellent or very good.

Despite disparities in the perceived value of different types of credentials, there is noticeably less variance in the actual quality of education students report in their programs. Across currently enrolled students, nearly three-quarters say the quality of the education they receive is “excellent” or “very” good. However, modality is an important factor: More than eight in 10 students completing their programs entirely in-person say the quality of their program is excellent or very good, while students in hybrid and fully online programs are slightly less positive about the quality of their program. Still, nearly two-thirds of students in the programs with the lowest reported quality — mostly, but not exclusively online — rate their program quality as excellent or very good.

CHART 16
Quality of Education by Degree or Credential Program and Modality

Among currently enrolled adults pursuing a certificate, certification, associate or bachelor's degree

Which of the following best describes the quality of the education you are currently receiving in your program?



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to $\pm 1\%$.

The comparable quality of hybrid programs versus fully in-person programs may be encouraging for adults who indicate flexibility and opportunities for remote learning would be important to their ability to enroll in higher education, as they are able to more easily fit education into their lives while making only minimal sacrifices in the quality of their program.

In addition to the quality of the education they are receiving, more than six in 10 students report that the faculty and instructors in their program care about them as a person and that they have at least one mentor who encourages them to pursue their goals. However, there are some differential experiences across races and genders: Women and students of color are less likely than their White and male peers to feel cared for, mentored, respected and like they belong.

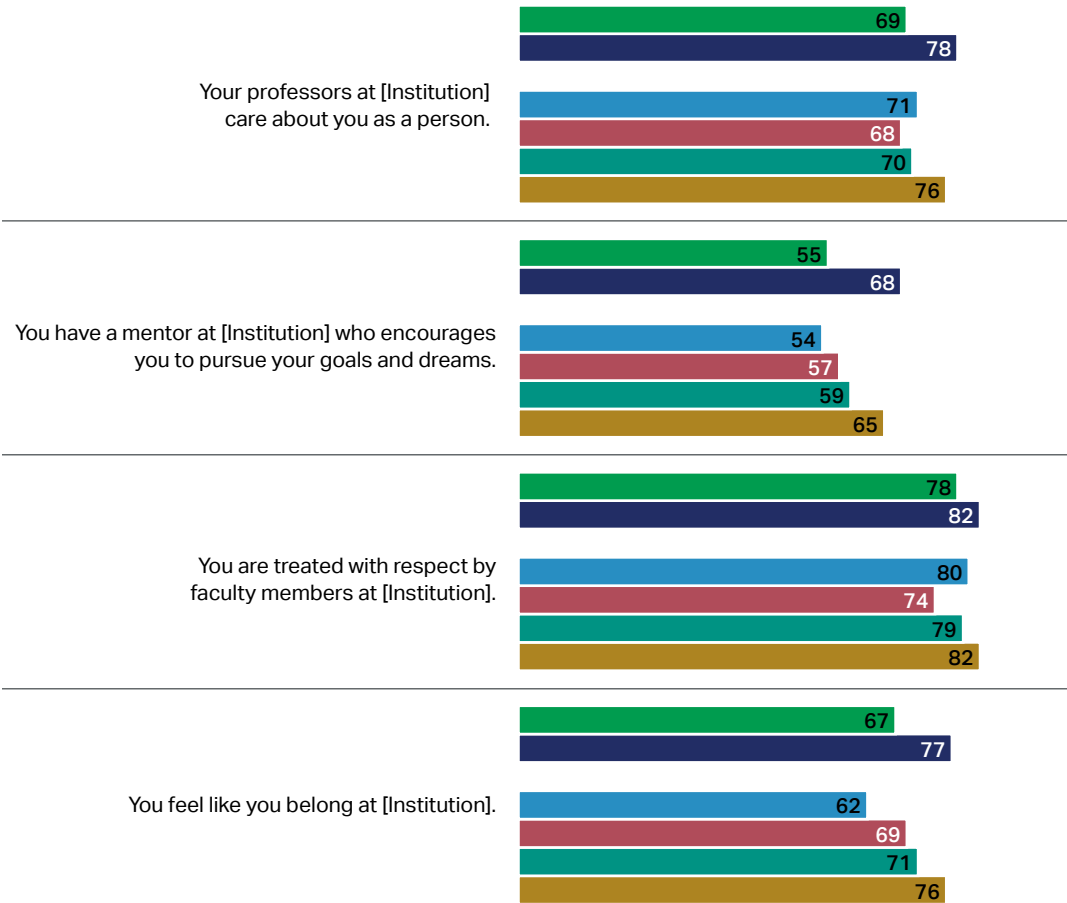
CHART 17

Perceptions of Support, Respect and Belonging by Gender and Race

Among currently enrolled adults pursuing a certificate, certification, associate or bachelor's degree

(% Strongly agree + % Agree)

Gender: Females Males Race: Asian adults Black adults Hispanic adults White adults

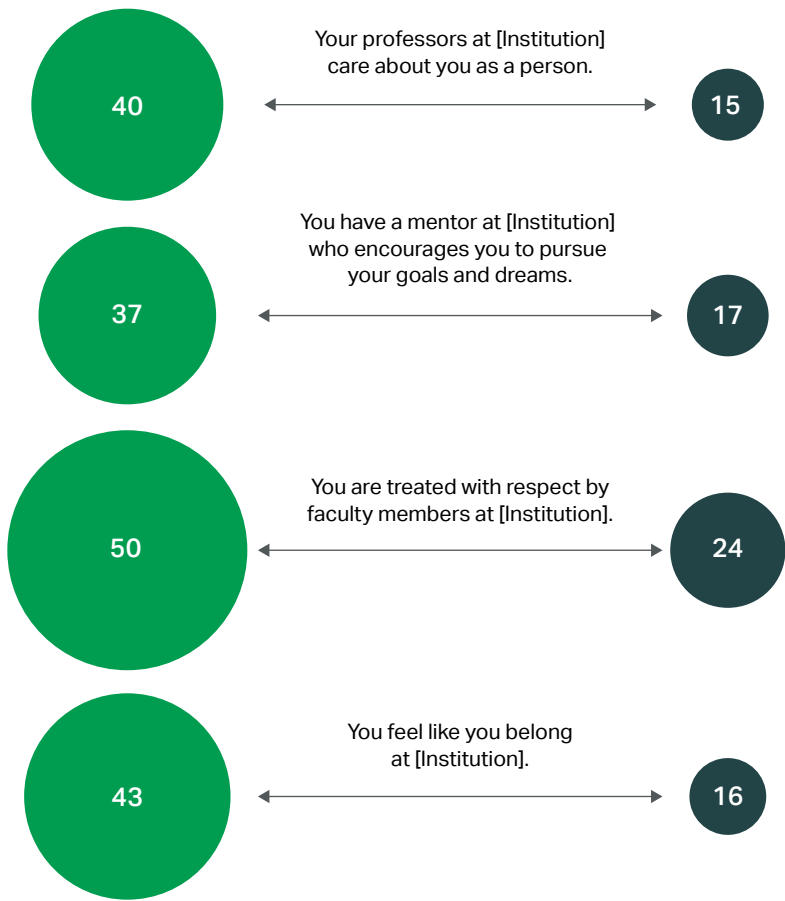


Importantly, feelings of support, respect and belonging are closely tied to students' assessment of the quality of their program. **Students who say their program quality is excellent or very good are about twice as likely to agree that they feel like they belong and are supported and respected by faculty.**

CHART 18
Perceptions of Support, Respect and Belonging by Program Quality

Among currently enrolled adults pursuing a certificate, certification, associate or bachelor's degree
(% Strongly agree)

● Excellent or very good quality education ● Less than very good quality education



“

I feel like especially like my first year, with COVID, and not knowing anyone and moving to a new place, and just all those feelings on top of like, academic stress ... I felt really guilty that I wasn't having fun. Because I knew how much money it was and that I was privileged to have this opportunity to go to school, and neither of my parents did. So I felt really bad whenever I had like a complaint, or they would call me and be like, 'Are you having like the best time of your life?' And I just wasn't. And I felt really guilty for feeling that way because I knew that I was the one that wanted to go there, and how expensive and how much of a sacrifice it was for my family to do it. So, like any negative feelings, I just felt like embarrassed or like upset at myself for feeling them.”

- Hispanic Female, 21, Currently Enrolled

About one in six students at least occasionally feel disrespected, discriminated against or unsafe in their program.

Unfortunately for some students, the absence of respect and belonging in their program can lead to outright disrespect, discrimination and, in some cases, feeling unsafe.

Eighteen percent of currently enrolled students report being disrespected at least occasionally during their program, and 16% report being discriminated against. Younger students and men are most likely to report these experiences, with fewer differences observed based on race and ethnicity.

Additionally, 17% of students report frequently or occasionally feeling physically unsafe at their institution, and 18% at least occasionally feel psychologically unsafe. These percentages are noticeably higher among 18- to 25-year-old students.

“

I go to a public university, so that means anyone can go on campus ... There was a time where a student was assaulted ... and she ended up in the hospital, and everyone was pushing her story because a random man had gone onto campus and had attacked her while she was walking to her dorm ... That was kind of a big worry for a lot of the students where it's like, when a class ends ... and the sun has set, you're walking by yourself back to your dorm. Nobody wants to deal with the uneasiness of that.”

**- Hispanic Female, 21,
Currently Enrolled**

CHART 19

Experiences of Disrespect, Discrimination and Feeling Unsafe During Their Program Across Demographic Groups

Among currently enrolled adults pursuing a certificate, certification, associate or bachelor's degree

How often, if ever, do you ever feel any of the following at [Institution]?

(% Frequently + % Occasionally)

		Disrespected	Discriminated against	Physically unsafe	Psychologically unsafe
Age	18-25	20	16	19	19
	26-35	13	15	12	13
	36-59	11	11	9	12
Gender	Female	15	12	15	14
	Male	23	21	20	21
Race	Asian	14	13	19	14
	Black	19	21	18	19
	Hispanic	16	14	15	16
	White	20	15	17	19

Some of these negative experiences may stem from student interactions during discussions or debates about race, politics or religion.

More than three-quarters of currently enrolled students agree they can express their opinions freely on campus, suggesting that about one in four students do not feel comfortable speaking freely.

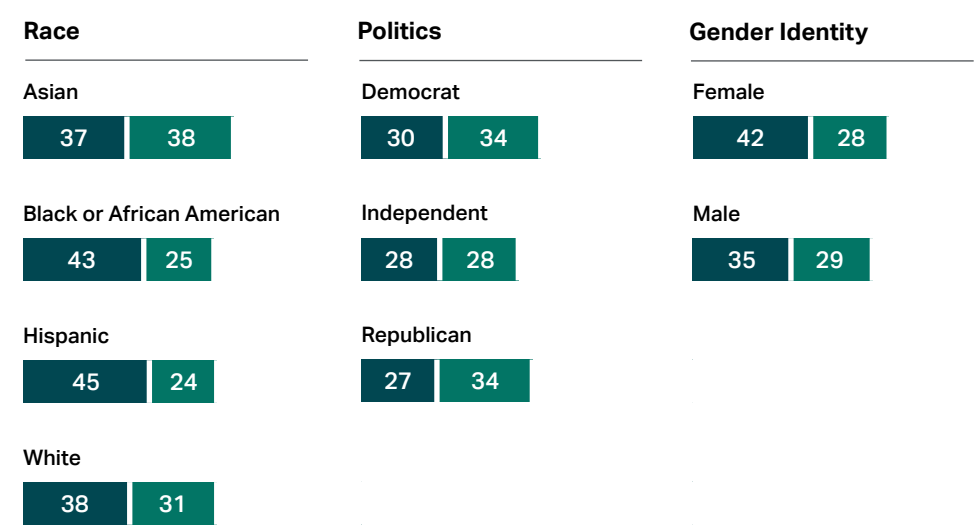
Notably, this concern is not centered within students of any particular gender, race, ethnicity or political party. When asked whether their institution is a place where students can share opinions on specific topics, such as race, religion, politics and sexual orientation, between 60% and 69% of students agree that these topics can be freely discussed on their campuses and in their classrooms. Moreover, students’ belief that a topic can be discussed does not vary significantly based on subgroups related to it; for example, students of all races are generally aligned on whether their campus is a place where race can be freely discussed.

CHART 20
Perceptions That Students Can Speak Freely on Campus

Among currently enrolled adults pursuing a certificate, certification, associate or bachelor’s degree

[Institution] is a place where students can freely express all opinions on issues like ...

■ % Strongly agree ■ % Agree



Conclusion

Since the launch of the Lumina-Gallup State of Higher Education study, U.S. adults have never been more likely to consider enrolling in a degree or credential program.

This surge has been primarily driven by rising interest in industry certification programs, but at least 17% of unenrolled adults without a degree also say they are considering a bachelor's degree, associate degree or certification program.

The driving force behind this interest is clear: Americans still see higher education — and particularly a four-year degree — as the most reliable path to a good career. More than 80% of those considering a degree or credential program say a better or higher-paying job drives their decision. But without intentional efforts to remove historical and emerging barriers, many who want to reap the benefits of higher education will not be able to do so.

While cost remains a persistent hurdle for 85% of unenrolled adults, more than 90% say additional flexibility in program delivery would be moderately important to their decision to enroll. This may take the form of remote learning opportunities, more scheduling options that allow working learners to integrate school into their work schedule, and finding ways to accelerate the pace at which learners can earn their degree or credential.

For those aspiring learners who manage to overcome these barriers and enroll in a higher education program, the work is not done: About one in three currently enrolled students say they are considering stopping out of their program before completing it. While many of these students cite cost or difficulty with the program material, nearly two-thirds say it is due to emotional stress or struggles with their mental health, with women being nearly twice as likely as men to consider stopping out due to mental health challenges.

Ensuring these educational pathways are accessible to as many Americans as possible is not just a boon to those individuals' careers and finances; the future of the U.S. economy depends on it. The Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce projects that by 2031, 72% of jobs will require some kind of education beyond high school. Meanwhile, Lumina estimates that 54% of U.S. adults aged 25 to 64 have met that education threshold. Closing that gap will rely on helping those who are considering higher education overcome the barriers currently preventing them from enrolling, persisting and completing a degree or credential.

Methodology

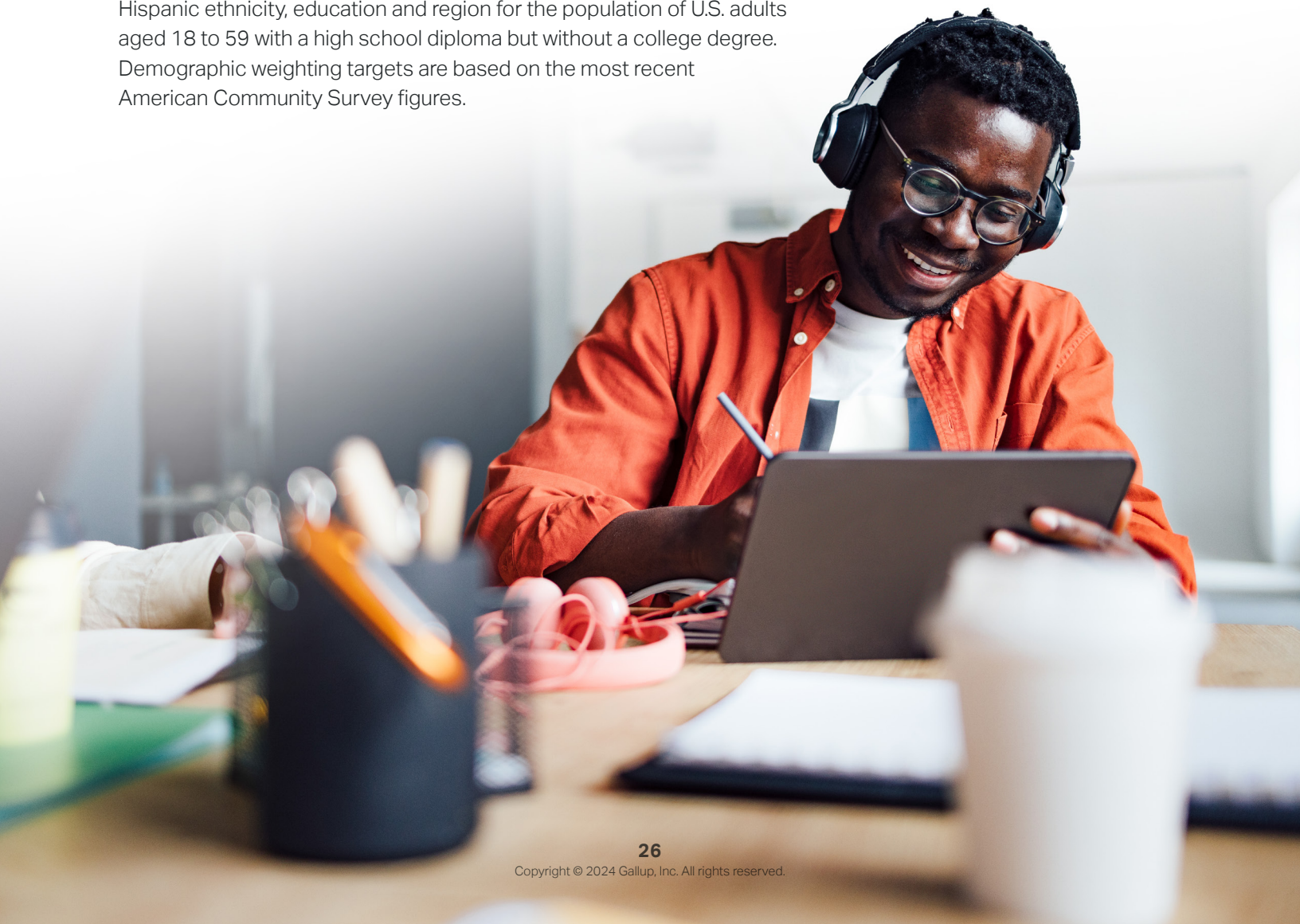
Results for the Lumina-Gallup Study are based on web surveys conducted from Oct. 9-Nov.16, 2023, with samples of 6,015 students who are currently enrolled in a post-secondary education program (certificate, associate, or bachelor's degree), 5,012 adults who were previously enrolled in a post-secondary education program but had not completed an associate or bachelor's degree, and 3,005 adults who had never enrolled in a post-secondary education program.

All respondents were between the ages of 18 and 59 and had a high school diploma or equivalent but not an associate or bachelor's degree.

Of the currently enrolled students, 2,532 say they are pursuing a bachelor's degree, 1,468 are pursuing an associate degree, 1,373 are pursuing a certificate and 642 are pursuing an industry certification.

Respondents were interviewed via Dynata's non-probability web-based panel.

The data are weighted to match national demographics of gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education and region for the population of U.S. adults aged 18 to 59 with a high school diploma but without a college degree. Demographic weighting targets are based on the most recent American Community Survey figures.



Appendix

CHART 21
Reasons Current and Prospective Students Consider Pursuing Higher Education

Among currently enrolled students and those considering enrolling in a certificate, certification, associate or bachelor's degree program

Which of the following are important reasons why you are considering enrolling and obtaining a degree or credential?

(% Selected)

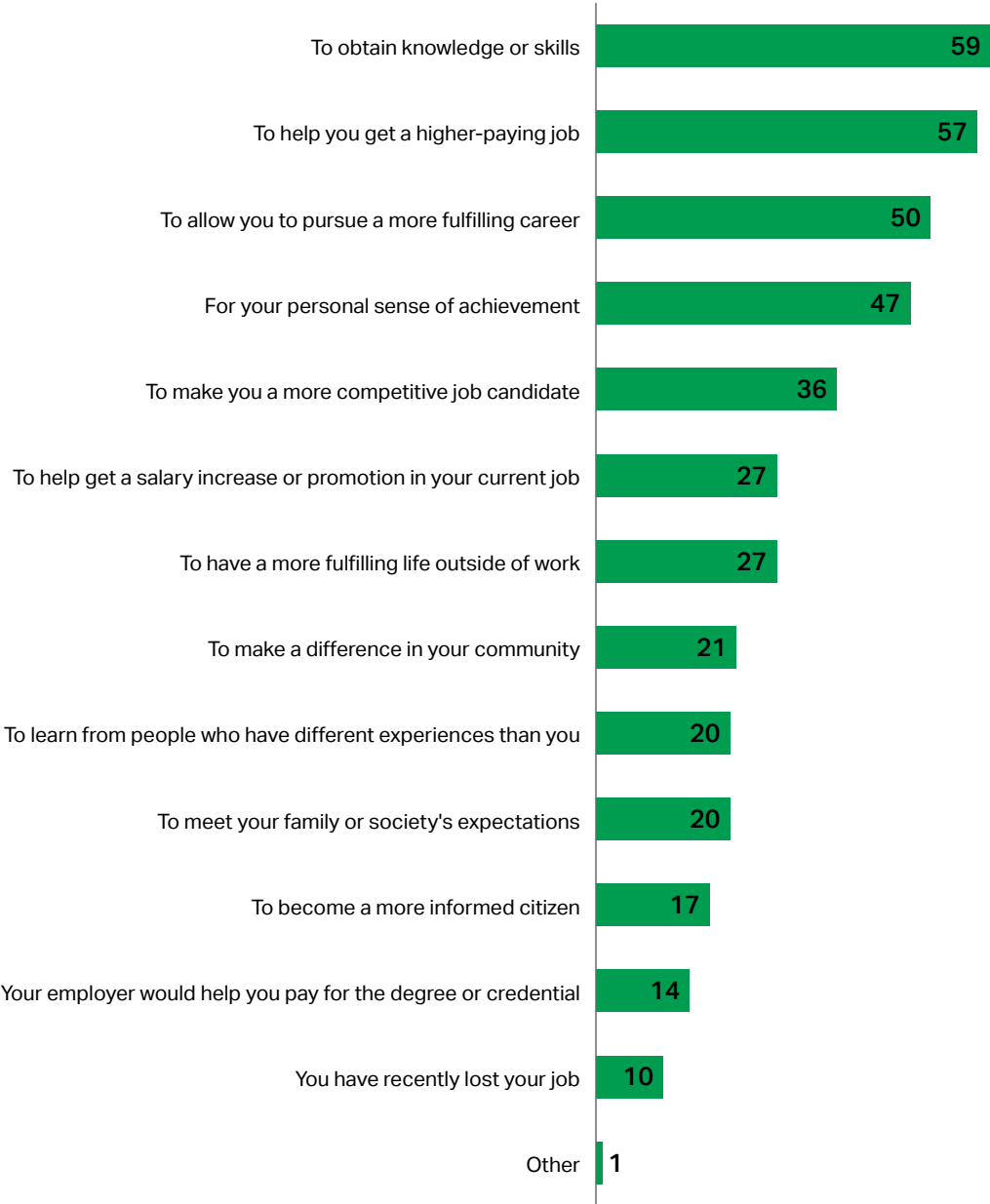


CHART 22

Importance of Various Characteristics in Deciding Where to Enroll

Among adults without a college degree

How important [are/would] each of the following characteristics of [your/a] college [be] in your decision to [stay enrolled/enroll]?

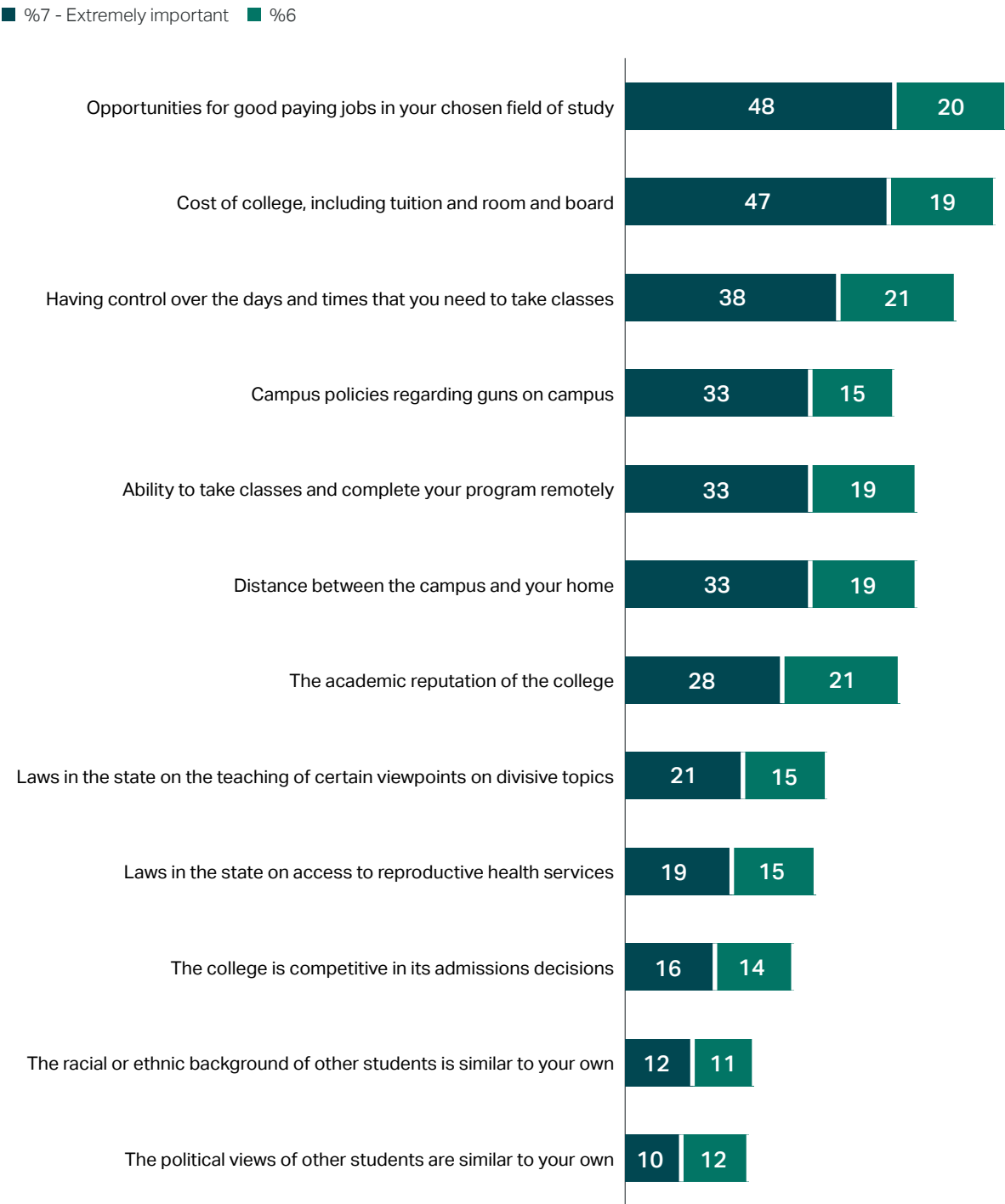


CHART 23

Factors That Influence Enrollment Decisions

Among current, former and prospective students

How important [are/were/would] each of the following [be] in [being able to remain enrolled/your decision to enroll/getting you to enroll]?

(% Very important)

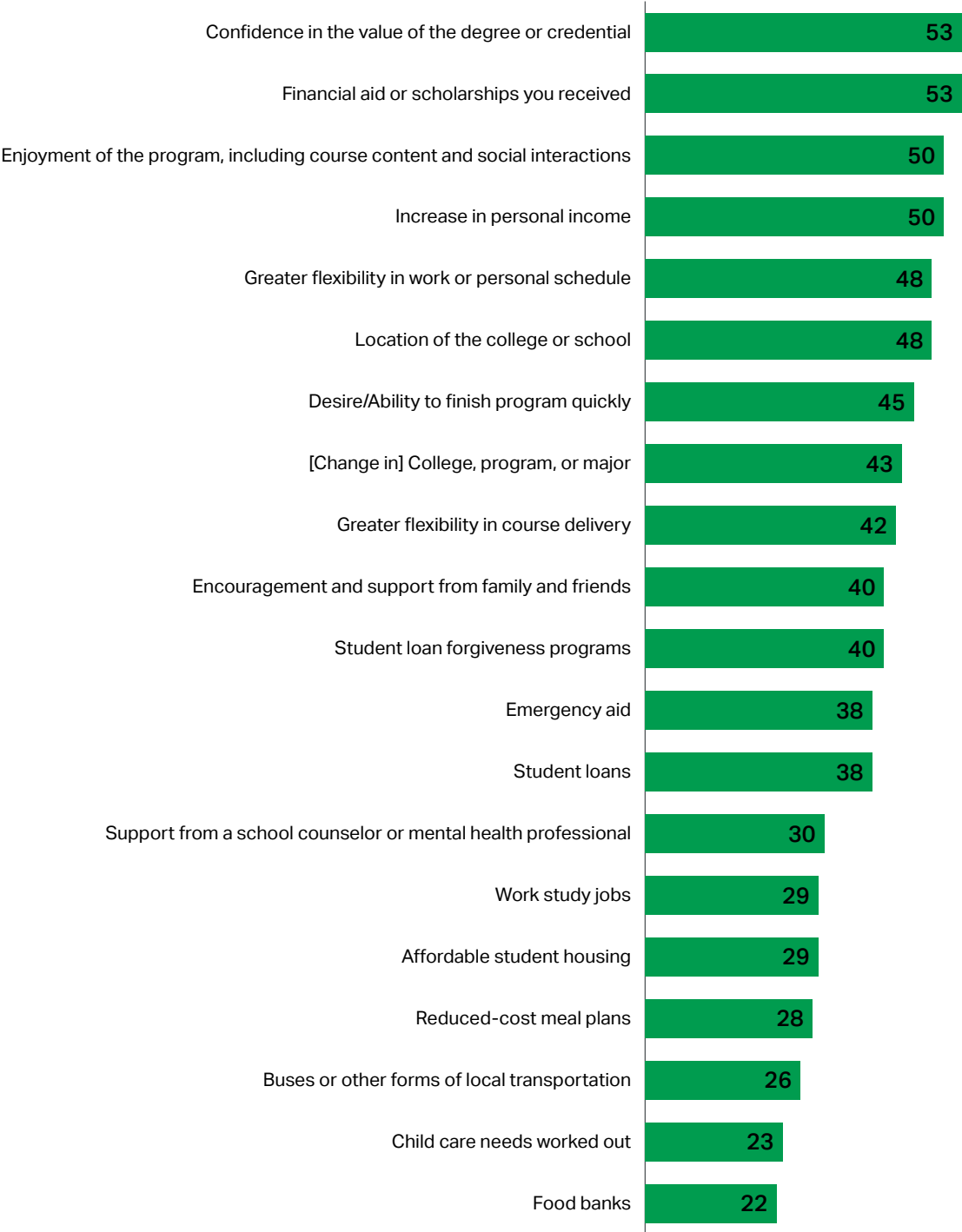


CHART 24

Barriers to Enrolling in Higher Education

Among adults unenrolled in a certificate, certification, associate or bachelor's degree program

How important are each of the following reasons why you are not currently enrolled?

■ % Very important ■ % Moderately important

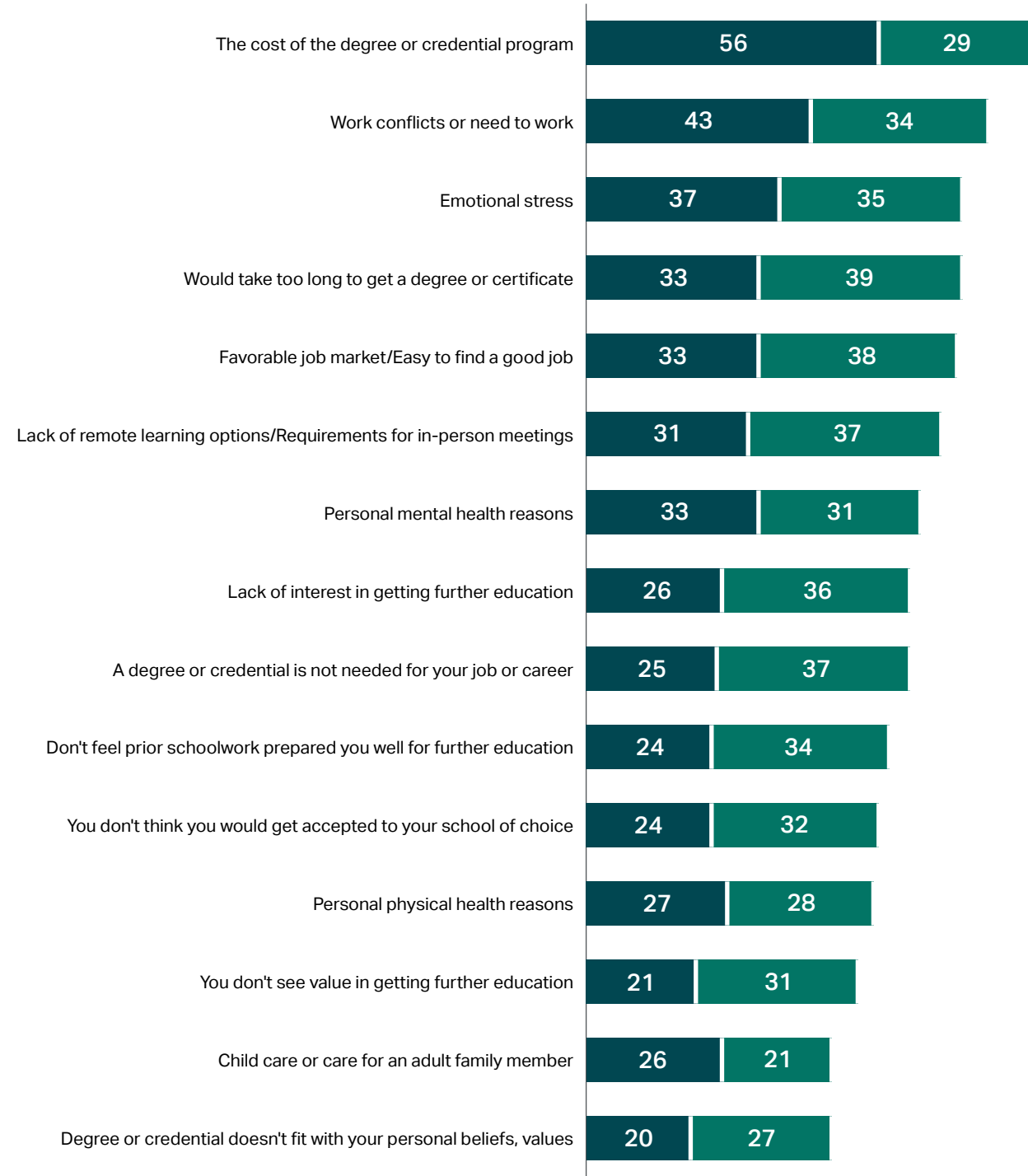


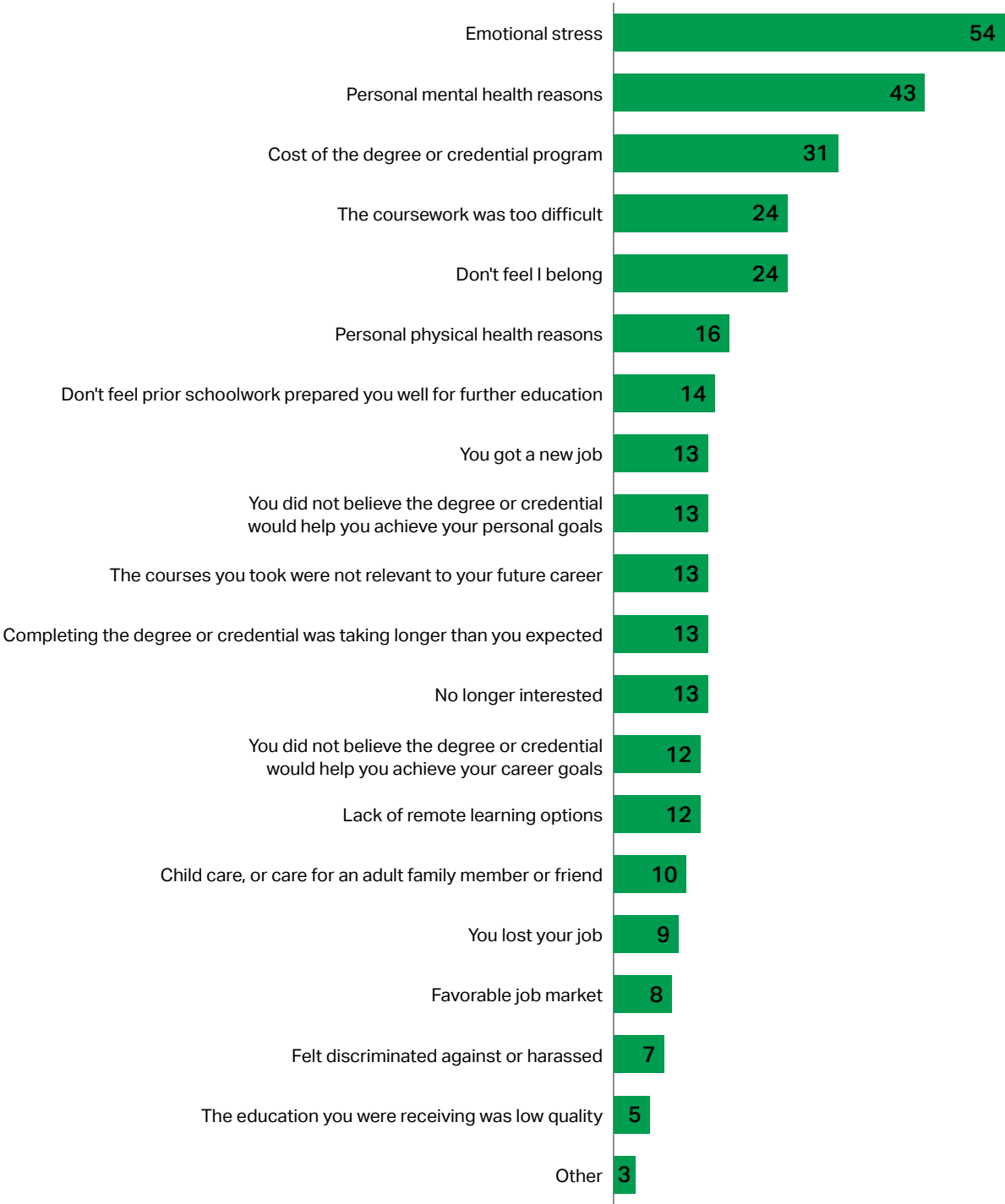
CHART 25

Reasons Students Consider Stopping Out

Among currently enrolled adults pursuing a certificate, certification, associate or bachelor's degree who have considered stopping out of their program in the past six months

Which of the following describes why you considered stopping your coursework?

(% Selected)



GALLUP®

World Headquarters

The Gallup Building
901 F Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

t +1.877.242.5587

f +1.888.500.8282

www.gallup.com