

YOUNG PEOPLE VALUE HIGHER EDUCATION, BUT MANY SAY A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA ALONE PREPARES FOR SUCCESS

While 60% say a four-year college degree does a good job preparing someone for success in today's economy, nearly half say the same about a high school diploma.

CHICAGO, Nov. 11, 2019 — A new survey by [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#) reveals that most young Americans age 13-29 believe in the value and impact of higher education, though many also express concern about its affordability and must take on debt to finance it.

The national survey finds that while a majority of young Americans feel that a postgraduate degree (66%), a four-year college (60%), or a vocational school (60%) are good ways to be prepared in today's economy, nearly half say the same of an associate's degree (47%) or a high school diploma (45%).

The survey also reveals that 61% of teens age 13-17 plan to attend a four-year college and 42% of young adults age 18-29 have attended or are attending one. To do so, 77% of teens and 55% of young adults plan to or have already taken out loans. Many young people are concerned about student loan debt (47%).

Yet when it comes to evaluating the trade-offs, only 22% think there are more disadvantages than advantages in attending a four-year college. Most say college offers more advantages (32%) or as many advantages as disadvantages (45%).

"A majority of young people see the benefits of a college degree for today's economy, but there are significant concerns over affordability," said Trevor Thompson, senior vice president of Public Affairs and Media Research at NORC and director of The AP-NORC Center. "At a time when a majority of young people report taking on debt to finance their educations, the survey reveals support for government action to address the problem."

Young Americans support a number of measures to make higher education more affordable, including allowing student loans to be refinanced (70%), loan forgiveness for those in households making less than \$100,000 (67%), loan forgiveness for those in public service (65%), making community college tuition free (65%), and making all public college tuition free (60%). While support is highest among young Democrats, a majority of young Republicans also support policies to refinance or forgive student loan debt.

Among the key findings from the report:

- Forty-eight percent of young Americans plan to attend, are currently attending, or have attended a four-year college, including 61% of teens who plan to attend and 42% of young adults who have

attended or are attending one. In comparison, 27% say the same about community college, vocational school, or trade school.

- More affluent young Americans also are more likely to attend or plan to attend a four-year college. Fifty-three percent of young Americans in households making between \$50,000 and \$100,000 a year attended or plan to attend a four-year college compared to 38% of young Americans in households making less than \$50,000 and 73% of those in households making more than \$100,000.
- Those in households making more than \$100,000 are more likely than those in households earning less to say they will get or have had help from their parents in paying for college tuition, filling out financial aid forms, and researching college options.
- Among young Americans who attended or plan to attend a four-year college, 67% have taken out or plan to take out a loan.
- Roughly a third say colleges and high schools do a good job addressing mental health needs of their students (33% and 30%), and about 4 in 10 say they do a good job dealing with sexual assault (37% and 36%).

About the Survey

This nationwide poll was conducted by The AP-NORC Center from August 7 to September 9, 2019, using TrueNorth®, which combines a sample from AmeriSpeak, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago, with a non-probability panel sample. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cell phones were conducted with 2,573 young Americans, including 769 teens age 13-17 and 1,804 young adults age 18-29. The margin of sampling error is +/- 3.7 percentage points.

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