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Gallup-Lumina Foundation Poll Finds Overwhelming Majority of Americans Support Increasing Attainment

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by [Lucia Anderson Weathers](#)

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Hispanics & African Americans Believe Most Strongly in the Power of Postsecondary Education for Jobs & Quality of Life

WASHINGTON, D.C. – An overwhelming majority of Americans continue to believe that having a certificate or degree beyond high school is important to our success as a nation and as individuals. But, according to new results released today from the annual Gallup-Lumina Foundation Poll on Higher Education, Hispanics and African Americans believe most strongly in the power of postsecondary education to help deliver good jobs and a better quality of life.

Read the full report here:

[Postsecondary Education Aspirations and Barriers](#)

A summary of key findings from the Gallup-Lumina Foundation Poll follow:

Key Finding #1 – Americans Value Postsecondary Education

- 96% of Americans say it is somewhat or very important to have a degree or professional certificate beyond a high school diploma
- Furthermore, 73 percent of African Americans and 72 percent of Hispanics say it is very important to increase the proportion of Americans with a degree or professional certificate, compared with 56 percent of Whites.
- Looking ahead, 78 percent of Hispanics, 74 percent of African Americans, and 67 percent of Whites say a postsecondary degree will be more important in the future to get a good job.

Key Finding #2—Hispanics & African Americans Equate More Attainment with Jobs and Quality of Life

- Eighty-four percent of Hispanics and 76 percent of African Americans agree or strongly agree that having a professional certificate or degree beyond high school is essential for getting a good job. By comparison, 64 percent of Whites agree with this same statement.
- Eighty-six percent of Hispanics and 84 percent of African Americans agree or strongly agree that a good job is essential to having a higher quality of life. Seventy-six percent of Whites agree.
- Eighty-three percent of Hispanics and 80 percent of African Americans agree or strongly agree that having a college degree or professional certificate leads to a better quality of life. By comparison, 71 percent of Whites agree.

“Our *Stronger Nation* report—released earlier this month—showed that the degree attainment rate among U.S. residents is currently at 40 percent, but postsecondary attainment rates among African Americans and Hispanics is significantly lower, at 28 percent and 20 percent respectively,” said Jamie Merisotis, president and CEO of Lumina Foundation. “That’s what makes these new polling data so insightful. Even though these groups have lower rates of attainment, they have much stronger views regarding the importance and value of education beyond high school. We must seize the opportunity and use this information to help address the unacceptably large gaps in attainment.”

Key Finding #3—Americans See Affordability and Student Debt as Barriers to Degree Attainment

- Seventy-nine percent of Americans do not think that education beyond high school is affordable for everyone in this country who needs it.
- Sixty-eight percent of Americans say the price of postsecondary education is very important when selecting a college or university. And 79 percent say that financial assistance is a very important factor in that process.
- Sixty-two percent of Americans say that \$20,000 or more in student debt is reasonable. Forty percent say that \$30,000 or more in debt is reasonable.

Key Finding #4—Americans Don’t Feel College Degrees are Preparing Them for Workplace Success

- Eighty percent of Americans agree or strongly agree that colleges and universities need to change to better meet the needs of today’s students.
- Thirty-six percent of Americans overall agree or strongly agree that college graduates in this country are well prepared for success in the workplace. Hispanics and African Americans are more optimistic,

55 percent and 53 percent respectively, agreeing or strongly agreeing that graduates are well prepared, compared to 30 percent of Whites.

- Eighteen percent of Americans without degrees strongly agree that college graduates are well prepared for success in the workforce. By comparison, only six percent of American with degrees strongly agree with the same statement.

“For many decades, education has proven to be this nation’s single most powerful engine of individual progress and upward mobility,” said Merisotis. “And in today’s rapidly changing workplace, that’s truer than ever. Some form of college-level learning is a necessity for anyone who seeks a spot in the middle class, and we must do more to create a system that is equitable and able to close the troubling attainment gaps linked to race, ethnicity, income and age.”

Key Finding #5—Americans are Increasingly Accepting Professional Certificates and Online Learning

- Forty-one percent of Americans agree or strongly agree that only a professional certificate beyond high school can lead to a good job.
- Forty-one percent of Americans agree or strongly agree that online colleges and universities offer high-quality education. Seventeen percent strongly agreed with statement, an increase over the 10% who strongly agreed in 2011.

Methodology

This paper includes results from a survey conducted by Gallup on behalf of Lumina Foundation. The study reported includes findings from a quantitative survey conducted to understand the perceptions of adults currently living in the U.S. about several important issues pertaining to higher education, including degree attainment, quality and value, costs, information access and workforce preparedness. Gallup conducted 1,533 interviews from a random sample of individuals using a dual-frame design, which includes both landline and cellphone numbers. Gallup samples these phone numbers using random-digit-dial methods.

Gallup conducted surveys in English and Spanish from November 3 to December 18, 2014. Multiple calls were made to each household to reach the eligible respondent.

Gallup weighted the sample to correct for unequal selection probability, nonresponse, and double coverage of landline and cellphone users in the two sampling frames. Gallup also weights the final samples to match the U.S. population according to gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education, region, population density and phone status (cellphone only, landline only, both and cellphone mostly). Demographic weighting targets are based on the most recent Current Population Survey figures for the aged 18 and older U.S. population. Phone status targets are based on the most recent National Health Interview Survey. Population density targets are based on the most recent U.S. Census.

The questionnaire was developed in consultation with representatives from Lumina Foundation and Gallup. All interviewing was supervised and conducted by Gallup’s interviewing staff. For results based on the total sample size of 1,533 adults, one can say with 95% confidence that the margin of error attributable to sampling and other random effects is ± 3.3 percentage points. For subgroups within this population (e.g., education level, gender and income), the margin of error would be greater.

About Lumina Foundation

Lumina Foundation is an independent, private foundation committed to increasing the proportion of Americans with degrees, certificates and other high-quality credentials to 60 percent by 2025. Lumina's outcomes-based approach focuses on helping to design and build an equitable, accessible, responsive and accountable higher education system while fostering a national sense of urgency for action to achieve Goal 2025.

About Gallup: Gallup delivers forward-thinking research, analytics, and advice to help leaders solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 75 years of experience with its global reach, Gallup knows more about the attitudes and behaviors of the world's constituents, employees, and customers than any other organization. For more information, log on to <http://www.gallup.com>.

Media contacts:

Lucia Anderson Weathers
Lumina Foundation
317.951.5316
landerson@luminafoundation.org

Johnathan Tozer
Gallup
202.715.3030
communications@gallup.com

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FOR MEDIA INQUIRIES CONTACT:

Lucia Anderson Weathers
317-951-5316
[Email](#)

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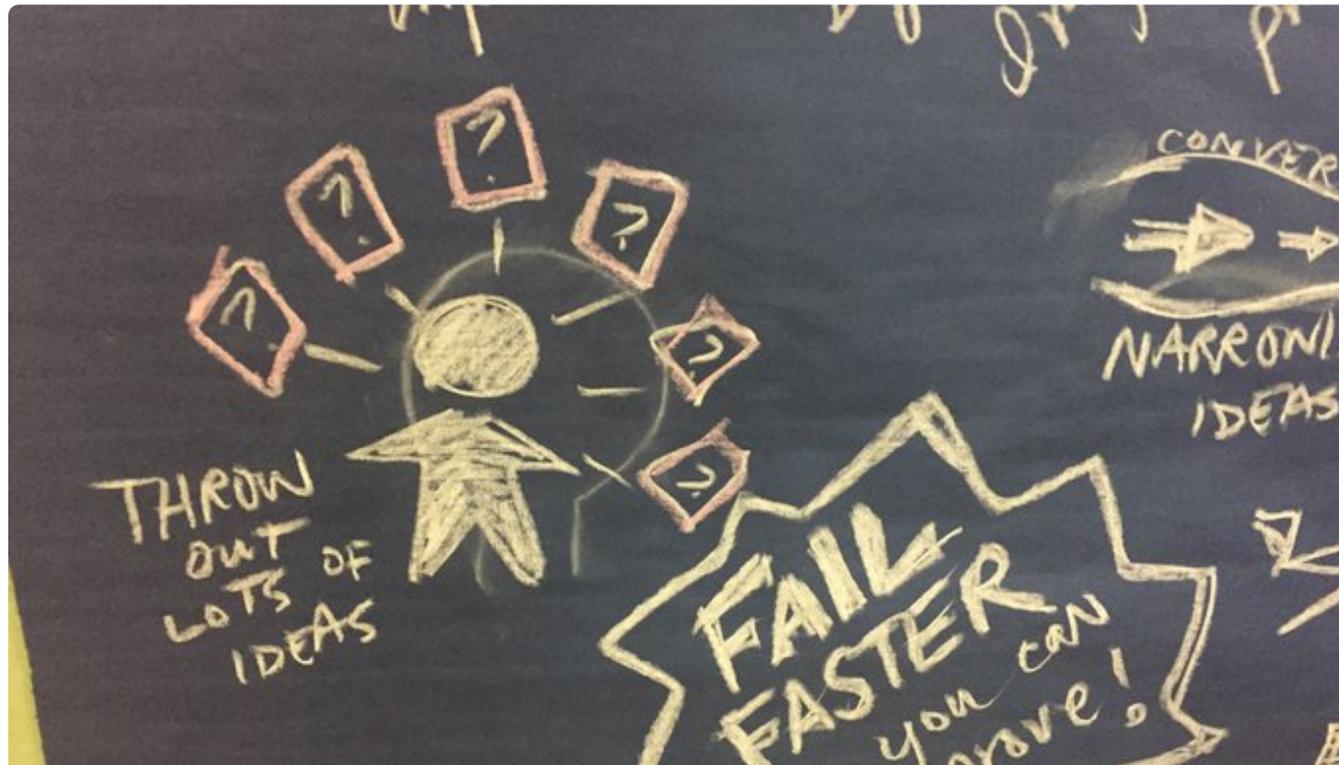


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