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JANUARY 7, 2020

About a Quarter of U.S. Adults Consider Higher Ed Affordable

BY **STEPHANIE MARKEN**



STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- More than half of U.S. adults believe higher education is available to anyone
- Only about a quarter say higher education is affordable
- Attitudes about availability and affordability unchanged in past five years

A majority of U.S. adults (60%) say education beyond high school is available to anyone in the country who needs it. The percentage reporting that additional postsecondary education is available to those who need it is consistent with the last time Gallup asked this question in 2015 but has declined since its high in 2011.

Americans' Views on the Availability of Higher Ed

Do you think education beyond high school is available to anyone in this country who needs it?

	Yes	No
	%	%
2019	60	40
2015	59	41
2014	61	39
2013	67	32
2012	68	32
2011	71	28

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These results are based on a recent Gallup poll of more than 1,000 U.S. adults.

A Quarter of U.S. Adults Say Higher Ed Is Affordable

About one in four U.S. adults (27%) report that education beyond high school is affordable, a rate that has remained fairly consistent since Gallup began asking this question in 2012.

Americans' Views on the Affordability of Higher Ed

Do you think education beyond high school is affordable for anyone in this country who needs it?

	Yes	No
	%	%
2019	27	73
2015	24	76
2014	21	78
2013	23	77
2012	26	74

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Youth Are Negative on Education Availability

Less than half of U.S. adults aged 18 to 29 (46%) say education beyond high school is available to those who need it -- significantly lower than the 60% or higher among those in older generations who say the same.

Americans' Views on the Availability of Higher Ed, by Age

Do you think education beyond high school is available to anyone in this country who needs it?

	Yes	No
	%	%
U.S. adults	60	40
18-29	46	54
30-49	60	40
50-64	68	32
65+	68	32

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A less clear relationship exists between age and the belief that education is affordable. Only 22% of those aged 18 to 29 say higher education is affordable, compared with 31% of those aged 30 to 49, 23% of those aged 50 to 64 and 31% of those aged 65 and older.

Implications

The percentages of U.S. adults saying higher education is affordable and is available to anyone who needs it have remained stable since Gallup last asked these questions in 2015. This may seem like good news given Americans' declining confidence in higher ed -- but perhaps not, given the proliferation of online degree-granting programs and the expansion of degree alternatives such as digital badging and micro-credentialing. These programs were designed to improve access to education beyond high school for millions of Americans interested in upskilling and reskilling -- unfortunately, public opinion about availability appears stagnant despite these changes.

Gallup doesn't stop at data. Our consultants help solve organizations' biggest problems.

- Explore our higher ed solutions.
- Demonstrate the enduring power of the undergraduate experience.
- Become a research partner to develop engaged, thriving organizations in the education industry.

Stephanie Marken is Executive Director of Education Research at Gallup.

SURVEY METHODS



Results for this Gallup poll are based on telephone interviews conducted June 3-16, 2019, with a random sample of 1,015 adults, aged 18 and older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. For results based on the total sample of national adults, the margin of sampling error is ±4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. All reported margins of sampling error include computed design effects for weighting.

Each sample of national adults includes a minimum quota of 70% cellphone respondents and 30% landline respondents, with additional minimum quotas by time zone within region. Landline and cellular telephone numbers are selected using random-digit-dial methods.

RELEASE DATE: January 7, 2020

SOURCE: Gallup <https://www.gallup.com/education/272366/quarter-adults-consider-higher-affordable.aspx>

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