



Research Brief

A MAJOR STEP

What Adults Without Degrees Say About Going (Back) to College

A research brief from
Public Agenda by
Rebecca Silliman and
David Schleifer
Sponsored by The
Kresge Foundation

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This research brief explores the perspectives of adults who are considering going (back) to college to get a degree or certificate. Important findings include the following:

Finding 1: Most adult prospective students say their primary motivation for pursuing a degree or certificate is to improve their career prospects. About half of them think pursuing a degree or certificate is a wise investment despite the cost, but the rest are not convinced.

Finding 2: Taking on debt and balancing their studies with work and family are adult prospective students' top concerns about pursuing a degree. Relatively few worry about dropping out of their program.

Finding 3: Adult prospective students expect daily expenses to become more difficult to afford when they start college. Few expect to receive help paying for college from family, friends or employers.



PUBLIC AGENDA

Support for this research was provided by The Kresge Foundation. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views of The Kresge Foundation.

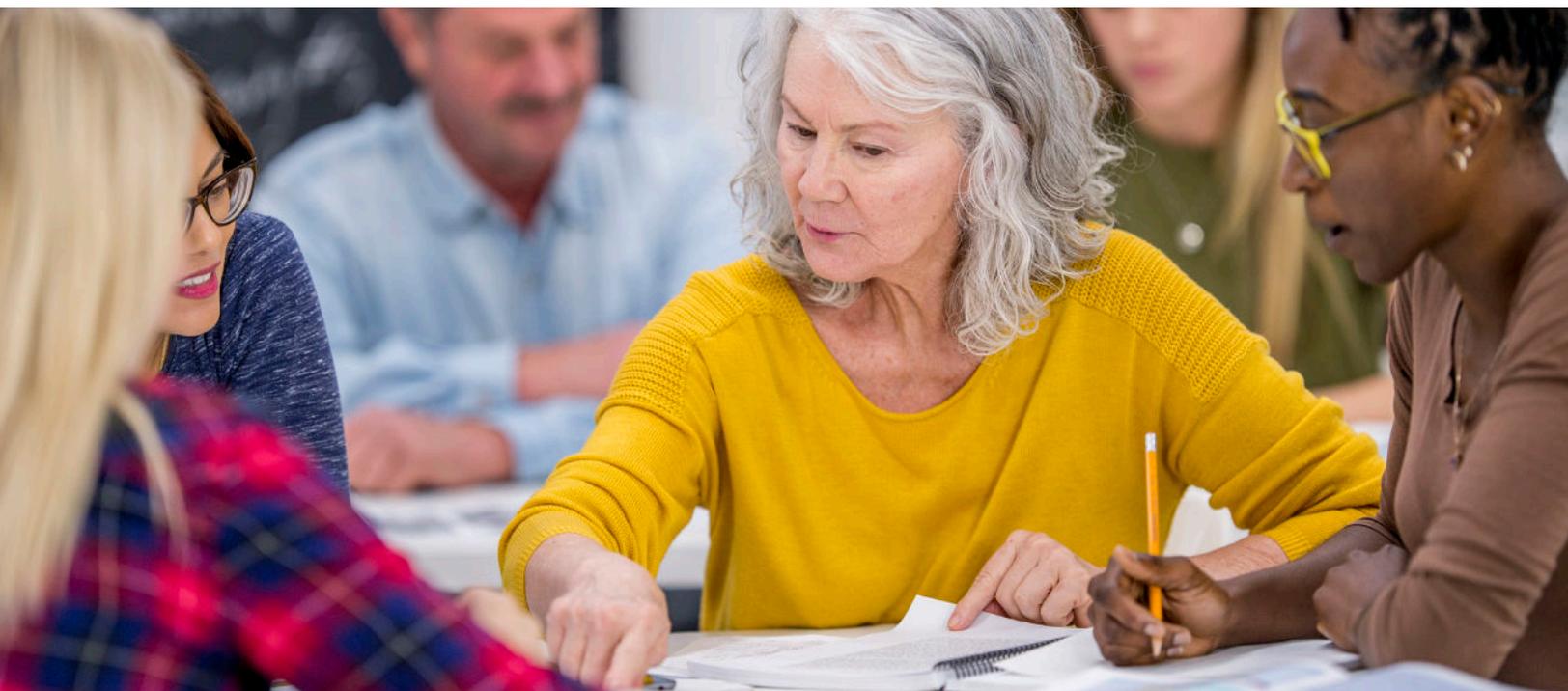
Finding 4: Most adult prospective students plan to attend college in ways that can make completion more difficult, including transferring between institutions and going to school part-time. Moreover, about a third will start college unsure of what they want to study, an increase since 2013.

Finding 5: High-quality teachers, affordability and gaining workplace skills are adult prospective students' top priorities when choosing a college. Most would be attracted to colleges that help students stay on track in their studies and find a job after graduation.

Finding 6: Although most adult prospective students are confident they will choose the right school, many are overlooking important information that experts think could help them do so.

Finding 7: Most adult prospective students think colleges and faculty can help inform their decisions about schools.

Finding 8: Adult prospective students believe that business, community organizations and government can work together alongside colleges to help students succeed.



Millions of American adults either have no education beyond high school or have some college but no degree. Helping more adults attain a degree or certificate is crucial for our nation's competitiveness and for individuals' economic prospects as well. Although traditional-age students outnumber adult learners in college, the percent of adults enrolling in college continues to grow.¹ Yet adult students have lower graduation rates than their younger peers. And, in general, lower-income students of all ages are less likely to graduate than their more economically advantaged peers and are more likely to face various challenges.

HOW THIS RESEARCH DEFINES ADULT PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

- They are 18- to 55-year-old Americans who do not hold an associate or bachelor's degree (although they may have earned a postsecondary diploma or certificate).
- They have finished high school but are not entering college straight out of high school.
- They are not currently enrolled in any kind of higher education institution.
- They are considering enrolling in a degree or certificate program and say it is likely that they will do so within two years.

The path to educational attainment starts before someone is accepted into college. Higher education leaders, administrators, educators and policymakers need to understand adults' aspirations, worries and needs as they consider whether college is worth it for them and, if it is, what college they will choose. Understanding the perspectives of adults who are considering going (back) to college or a university can position higher education institutions and other stakeholders to help adult learners make good choices and get the support they need to complete their degrees or certificates.

Findings and recommendations are based on survey data from a nationally representative sample of 1,328 adult prospective students that were collected via phone, including cell phones, and online interviews from August 17 through November 12, 2017. In addition, we conducted three focus groups with adult prospective students, including both adults with some college experience but no degree and adults with no college experience at all. Focus groups were held in New York City, New York; Fort Lauderdale, Florida; and Los Angeles, California.

For more details about the methodology, see page 22 of this research brief. For a full report on these findings, including sample characteristics, and a complete methodology and the survey's topline with full question wording, please go to www.publicagenda.org/pages/a-major-step-what-adults-without-degrees-say-about-going-back-to-college.



MAIN FINDINGS

Finding 1: Most adult prospective students say their primary motivation for pursuing a degree or certificate is to improve their career prospects. About half of them think pursuing a degree or certificate is a wise investment despite the cost, but the rest are not convinced.

- **The most often cited reason to pursue a postsecondary credential is to get a different kind of job or career.** Forty-four percent of adult prospective students are planning to pursue a degree or certificate in order to get a different kind of job or career altogether, and 27 percent are looking to get ahead in their current job or career. Only 25 percent say they want a degree or certificate in order to get a good education and learn about the world.
- **In our focus groups, some adult prospective students expressed frustration that they had to get a degree or certificate in order to advance their careers.** A woman in Fort Lauderdale explained, "I lost out on a really good job about a year and a half ago. The upper management told me, 'You gotta get that piece of paper.' He told me, 'I went through college. I didn't really care about it, but I knew that if I didn't get that degree, I wasn't going to get here where I am.'"²

- Fewer adults looking to complete an associate degree or certificate think doing so is a wise investment compared with those considering a bachelor's degree; see figure 1 and figure 1b.

Fewer adults looking to complete an associate degree or certificate think doing so is a wise investment.

Figure 1a. Percent of adult prospective students who indicate one of the following statements comes closest to describing how they feel about getting a bachelor's degree/associate degree/certificate:[×]

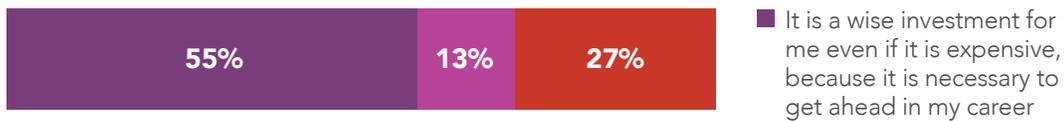
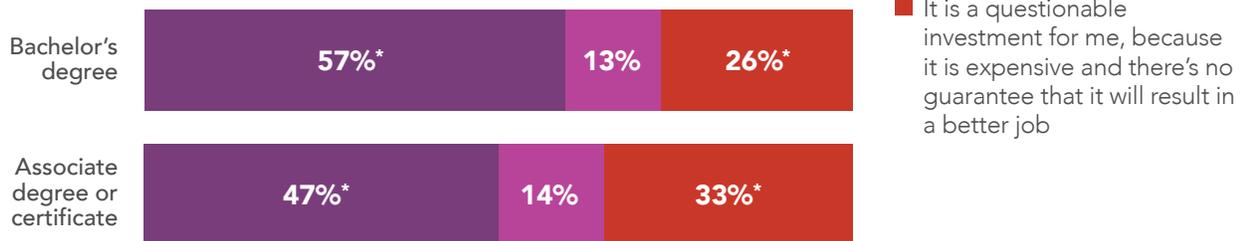


Figure 1b. Percent of adult prospective students who indicate one of the following statements comes closest to describing how they feel about getting a bachelor's degree/associate degree/certificate, by type of degree they wish to attain:



Base: All respondents, N = 1,328; bachelor's degree, n = 1,027; associate or certificate, n = 301.

*Indicates group estimates are statistically different from one another at the p < .05 level.

Numbers may not add up to 100 percent owing to rounding and the less than 5 percent of respondents who answered "Neither" or "Don't know" or who refused the question and are not represented in the figure.

[×] Respondents were asked at the beginning of the survey if they were planning on pursuing a bachelor's degree, an associate degree or certificate. Some subsequent questions were programmed so that respondents were asked about their intended postsecondary outcome. These questions are identified by *bachelor's degree/associate degree/certificate* in chart titles.

Finding 2: Taking on debt and balancing their studies with work and family are adult prospective students' top concerns about pursuing a degree. Relatively few worry about dropping out of their program.

- **Adult prospective students' top worries about pursuing a degree or certificate are taking on too much debt and balancing work and family responsibilities with the demands of school;** see figure 2.
- **Dropping out is not a top concern for adults considering getting a degree or certificate.** Although more than half of adult prospective students are worried about factors that have been linked to dropping out, only 30 percent of them are concerned about dropping out; see figure 2.

Most adult prospective students worry about debt and about how to balance school with their work and family.

Figure 2. Percent of adult prospective students who say they worry about the following as they are thinking about going back to school, by year:



Base: The number of respondents for each item varies between n = 1,017 and n = 982 by design, as each respondent was asked six random items.

[†]**Base:** Only those who think they will pay for school by applying for student loans or applying for grants and scholarships, n = 855.

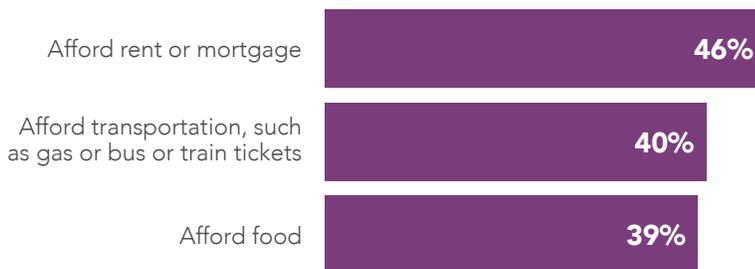
Group estimates are not statistically different from one another.

Finding 3: Adult prospective students expect daily expenses to become more difficult to afford when they start college. Few expect to receive help paying for college from family, friends or employers.

- **Forty-six percent of adult prospective students think that attending college will make it harder for them to afford rent or mortgage payments;** see figure 3.

Nearly half of adult prospective students think that attending college will make it harder for them to afford rent or mortgage payments.

Figure 3. Percent of adult prospective students who say that, looking ahead, they think attending college will make it *harder* for them to do each of the following:

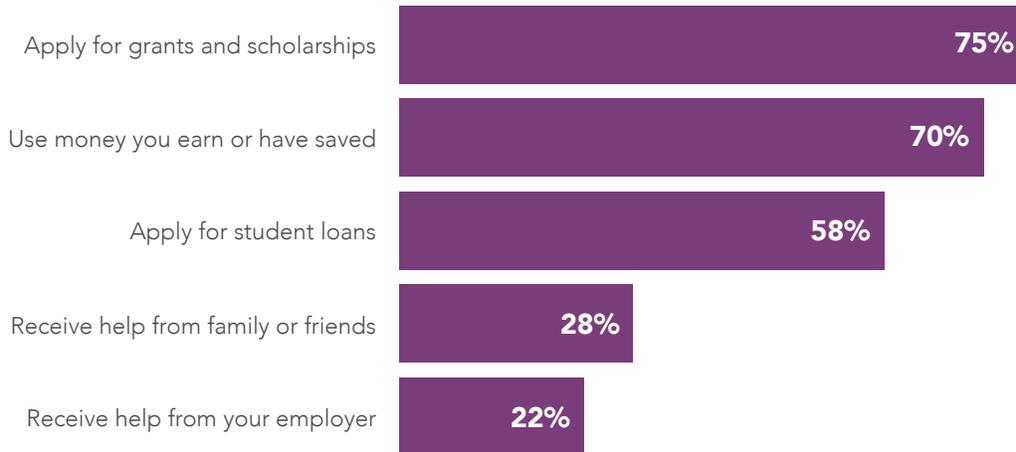


Base: All respondents, N=1,328.

- **Attending college will make it harder for adults with low incomes to afford food and transportation.** Forty-five percent of adult prospective students who have an annual household income of \$40,000 or under believe that it will be harder for them to afford transportation, while only 33 percent of adult prospective students whose household income is over \$40,000 believe this. Forty-one percent of adult prospective students with lower household incomes say that it will be harder for them to afford food, while 36 percent of their higher-income counterparts say this.
- **Most adult prospective students plan to pay for college with grants or scholarships and savings. Few will receive help from their family, friends or employers.** Eighty-two percent of adult prospective students say they will use two or more of the five sources we asked about to pay for college. While 70 percent say they will use money they earn or have saved, only 6 percent say this is the only way they think they will pay for college; see figure 4. Because so many adults planning to get a degree or certificate are concerned about taking on too much debt, it is not surprising that more are planning to apply for grants and scholarships than to take out loans.

More adult prospective students think they will apply for grants and scholarships, and fewer say they will apply for student loans.

Figure 4. Percent who think they will pay for college by doing any of the following:



Base: All respondents, N=1,328.

- **Sixty-nine percent of adult prospective students believe it is a very good idea to require schools to offer comprehensive financial aid counseling.** After all, while 75 percent say they will apply for grants or scholarships and 58 percent will apply for loans, 57 percent of adult prospective students are worried about understanding the financial aid application process.

Finding 4: Most adult prospective students plan to attend college in ways that can make completion more difficult, including transferring between institutions and going to school part-time. Moreover, about a third will start college unsure of what they want to study, an increase since 2013.

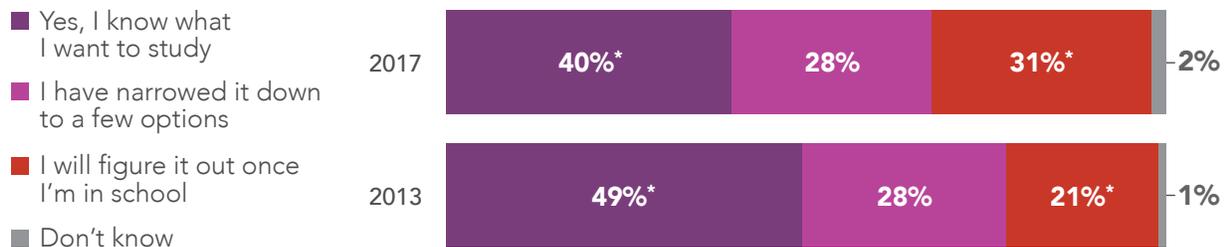
- **Most adult prospective students will be looking to transfer at some point.** While 80 percent of adult prospective students say they are looking to complete a bachelor’s degree, only 9 percent will enroll directly into a bachelor’s program. Fifty-six percent will transfer into a bachelor’s program at some point; see figure 5.
- **Thirty percent of adult prospective students plan to transfer into a bachelor’s program after completing an associate degree. Yet 26 percent of adults considering a degree are looking only to complete some courses or receive a certificate prior to transferring into a bachelor’s program.** There are benefits to completing an associate degree first—rather than taking only a few courses and then trying to transfer into a bachelor’s program. It can be a less expensive pathway to a degree and confers greater labor market benefits.³



- **A third of adult prospective students do not know what they want to study, an increase since 2013;** see figure 6.⁴ Additionally, more low-income adult prospective students plan to enroll without knowing what they want to study. Only 23 percent of those with annual household incomes of more than \$40,000 plan to enroll without knowing what they want to study, but 35 percent of those with incomes under \$40,000 say this.

Compared with our research from 2013, this survey found that more adult prospective students are looking to pursue a degree or certificate without knowing what they want to study.

Figure 6. Percent who indicate, when thinking about getting a certificate/associate degree/degree, that they know what they want to study, they have narrowed it down to a few options or they will figure it out once they are in school, by year:



Base: All respondents, N=1,328.

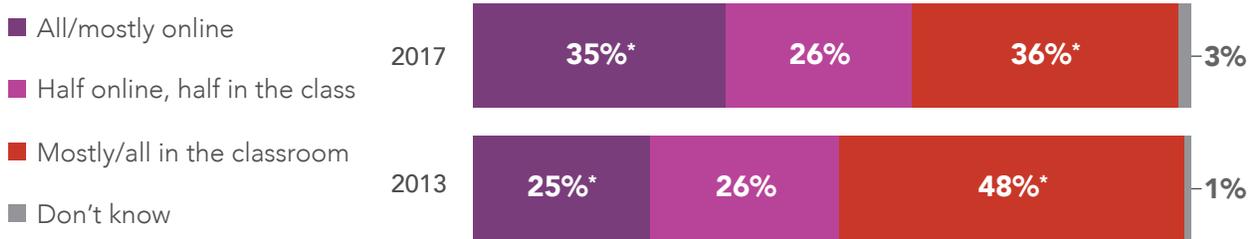
*Indicates group estimates are statistically different from one another at the $p < .05$ level.

Numbers may not add up to 100 percent owing to rounding and the less than 1 percent of respondents who refused the question and are not represented in the figure.

- **Almost half of adult prospective students plan to attend school part-time.** Forty-six percent of adult prospective students plan to go to school part-time. Only 24 percent plan to go full-time, and 29 percent are not yet sure.
- **A growing number of adult prospective students are looking to take courses online, yet most think in-person courses are better.** Most adult prospective students are planning on taking an online class, including 61 percent who are looking to take at least half of their classes online, an increase from 2013; see figure 7. While overall 68 percent of adults agree that although online courses are more flexible, students get more out of in-person courses, among those who are looking to take all or most of their classes online, 63 percent agree that students get more out of in-person courses.

Compared with our 2013 study, this survey revealed that more adult prospective students are looking to take most of their classes online.

Figure 7. Percent who are looking to take their classes all or mostly online, half online and half in the classroom or mostly or all in the classroom, by year:



Base: All respondents, N=1,328.

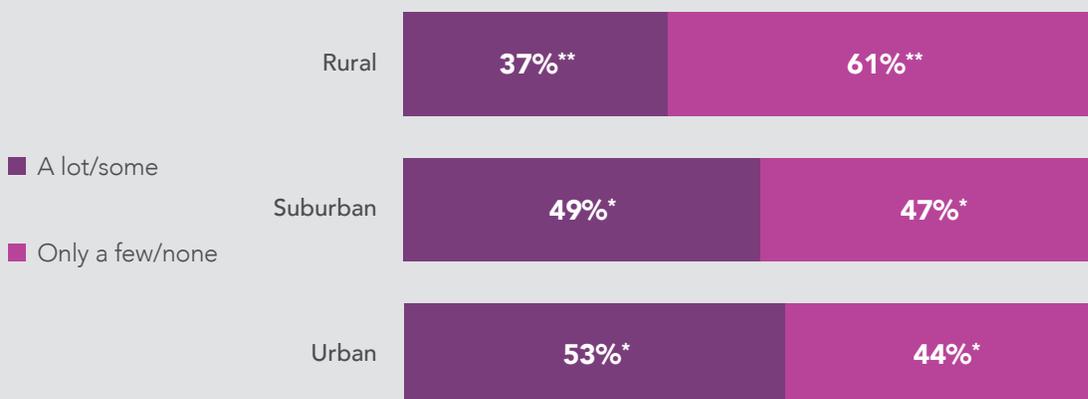
*Indicates group estimates are statistically different from one another at the $p < .05$ level.

Numbers may not add up to 100 percent owing to rounding and the less than 1 percent of respondents who refused the question and are not represented in the figure.

RURAL ADULT PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS DIFFER FROM THEIR URBAN COUNTERPARTS.

Rural adult prospective students feel they have fewer schools in the area in which they live that are right for them.

Figure 8. Percent of adult prospective students who say, considering the area in which they live, there are a lot, some, only a few or no schools there that are right for them, or they don't know, by location.



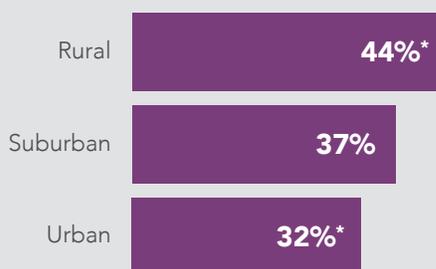
Base: All respondents, N=1,328.

Estimates for groups indicated by * are not statistically different from one another; groups indicated by ** are statistically different from groups indicated by ** at the $p < .05$ level. Variations between rural and urban adult prospective students remain significant when taking into consideration a range of demographics such as income, gender, age and race and ethnicity.

Numbers may not add up to 100 percent owing to rounding and the less than 5 percent of respondents who answered "Don't know" or who refused the question and are not represented in the figure.

Adults considering a degree in rural areas are looking to take more classes online compared with adults in suburban or rural areas.

Figure 9. Percent who are looking to take their classes all or mostly online, by location:



Base: All respondents, N=1,328.

*Indicates group estimates are statistically different from one another at the $p < .05$ level. Variations between rural and urban adult prospective students remain significant when taking into consideration a range of demographics such as income, gender, age and race and ethnicity.

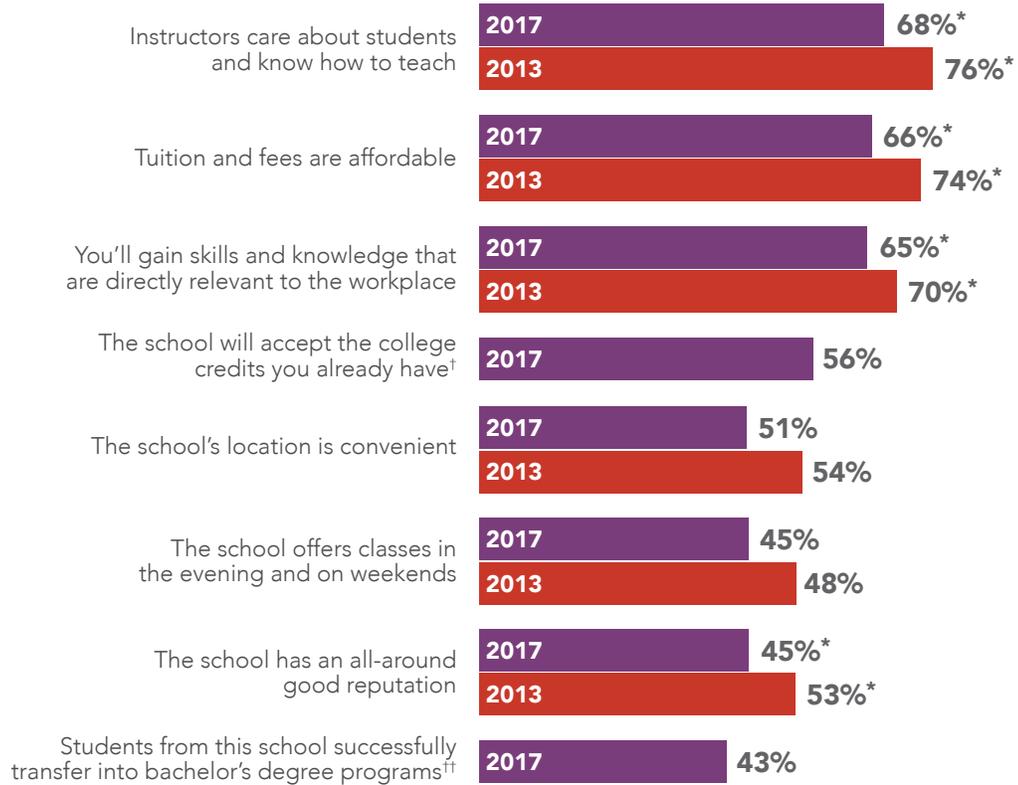
In both urban and rural areas most think that in-person classes are better. Sixty-five percent of adult prospective students in rural areas and 70 percent of those in urban areas agree that although online courses are more flexible, overall, students get more out of in-person courses than they do out of online courses.

Finding 5: High-quality teachers, affordability and gaining workplace skills are adult prospective students' top priorities when choosing a college. Most would be attracted to colleges that help students stay on track in their studies and find a job after graduation.

- **Similar to our 2013 findings, caring, skillful teachers are absolutely essential to adult prospective students;** see figure 10.⁵ Yet colleges are increasingly relying on adjunct faculty. While adjuncts and other non-tenure-track faculty are often skilled and caring teachers and scholars, they may lack the support and job security they need to live up to their full potential in helping students succeed.⁶
- **When choosing a school, most adult prospective students feel that affordable tuition and fees and workplace-relevant skills are absolutely essential;** see figure 10. Most adult prospective students also think it is absolutely essential to gain skills that are relevant to the workplace—which is not surprising, since 71 percent of them want to get a degree or certificate to broaden their career options.
- **Among those who are looking to transfer between institutions, few think it is absolutely essential to know whether students from a school have successfully transferred.** While 56 percent of adult prospective students would like to transfer into a bachelor's program after receiving some college credit, a certificate or an associate degree, only 43 percent of those who indicate that they plan on transferring say that it is absolutely essential to know that students from a particular school have successfully transferred; see figure 10.

Adult prospective students' priorities are finding high-quality teachers, securing affordable tuition and gaining workplace-relevant skills and knowledge.

Figure 10. Percent who say the following are absolutely essential when they are choosing a school, by year:



Base: The number of respondents for each item varies between n = 849 and n = 801 by design, as each respondent was asked a random five items.

[†]Base: Only those who have some college experience, n = 620.

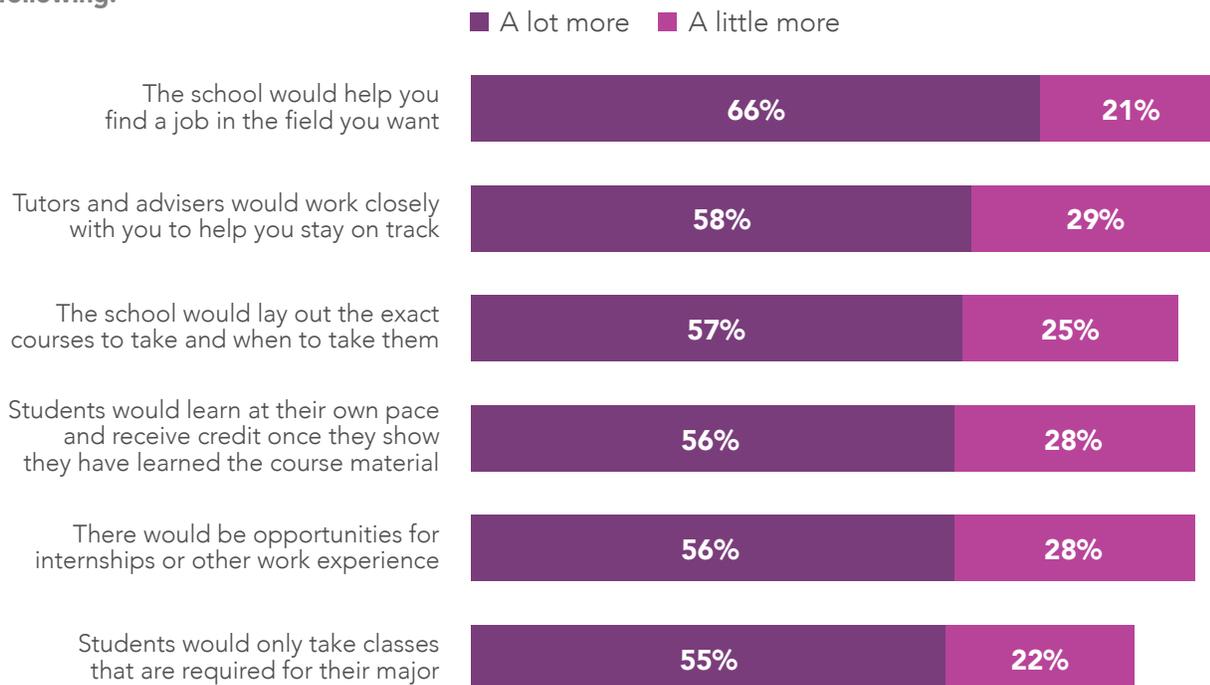
^{††}Base: Only those who indicate that they plan on enrolling in a bachelor's program once they complete an associate degree, a certificate or some college credit, n = 761.

*Indicates group estimates are statistically different from one another at the p < .05 level.

- **Most adult prospective students would be more interested in a school if they knew it would help them stay on track and get a job after graduating;** see figure 11.
- **Although most want workplace-relevant skills, adult prospective students are not necessarily looking for schools that offer internships or work experience.** Sixty-five percent of adult prospective students think it is absolutely essential to gain skills and knowledge that are directly relevant to the workplace, but only 56 percent would be a lot more interested in a school if they knew there would be opportunities for internships or other work experience.

Adult prospective students would be more attracted to schools that would help them find jobs and provide support to help them stay on track.

Figure 11. Percent who say they would be a lot or a little more interested in a school if they knew the following:



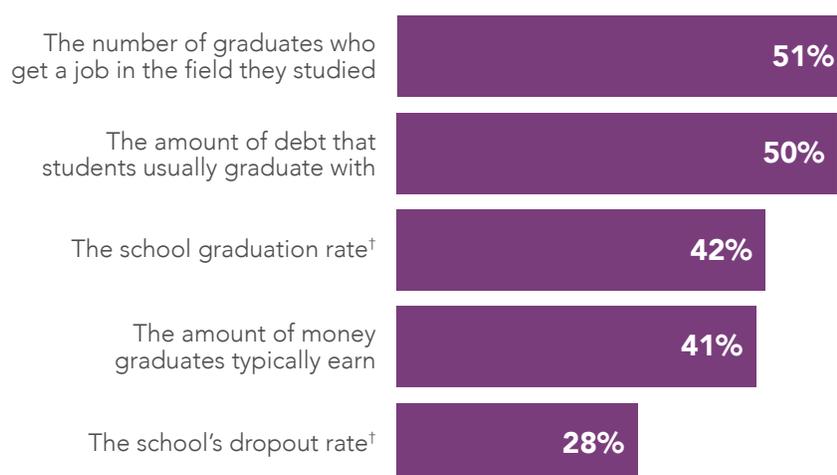
Base: The number of respondents for each item varies between n = 1,128 and n = 1,072 by design, as each respondent was asked a random five items.

Finding 6: Although most adult prospective students are confident they will choose the right school, many are overlooking important information that experts think could help them do so.

- **Eighty-nine percent of adult prospective students are confident they will choose the right school, but 48 percent say there are only a few or no schools that are right for them in the area where they live.** More adults with annual household incomes under \$40,000 say there are few or no schools that are right for them. Fifty-one percent of adult prospective students with household incomes under \$40,000 and 42 percent of those with household incomes above \$40,000 say this.
- **Most adult prospective students do not think it is absolutely essential to have the information that experts prioritize, such as dropout rates;** see figure 12. Focus groups indicate that one possible reason why adult prospective students may not believe that these metrics are absolutely essential is that they may think students themselves are solely responsible for graduating or finding a job—rather than linking these outcomes to the policies and practices of higher education institutions. A man in our New York City focus group said, “There could be schools where you don’t get the type of advisement or advising that you really need. But you have to be a person who’s going to continuously go back to that counselor over and over again until they know who you are and they realize that if they do not help you, you will help yourself.”

Most adult prospective students do not believe that it is absolutely essential to know the statistics about schools that experts prioritize.

Figure 12. Percent who say it is absolutely essential to know the following before enrolling at a school:



Base: All respondents, N=1,328.

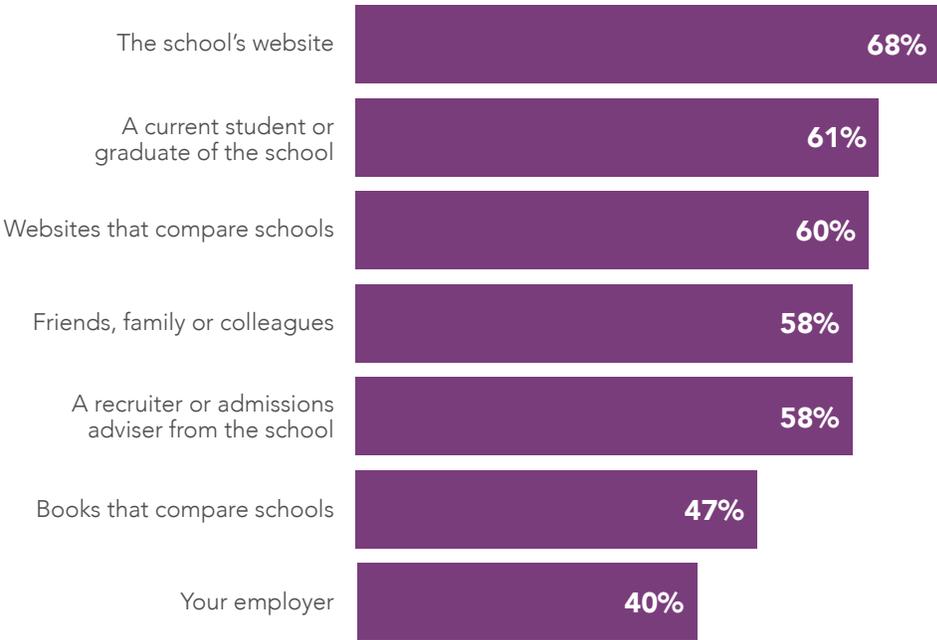
[†]Base: Random half, respondents were asked only one of the two items.

Finding 7: Most adult prospective students think colleges and faculty can help inform their decisions about schools.

- Schools themselves are especially important sources of information for adult prospective students; see figure 13.

When choosing schools, adult prospective students would rely on schools themselves for information.

Figure 13. Percent who say that, when considering a school, they would rely on the following a great deal or somewhat to help them make a decision:



Base: All respondents, N=1,328.

- **When choosing a school, 76 percent of adult prospective students think talking to faculty or sitting in on classes would help them a great deal or somewhat in choosing a school;** see figure 14.
- **More urban than rural adult prospective students think that nonprofits would be helpful to them in choosing a school.** Overall, 72 percent of adult prospective students think that nonprofit organizations that work with adults going back to school can help them a great deal or somewhat when it comes to choosing a school; see figure 14. But in urban areas, 77 percent of adult prospective students think that nonprofit organizations would be helpful, compared with only 64 percent who think this in rural areas.

Most adult prospective students think faculty can help them choose a school.

Figure 14. Percent who say that when it comes to choosing a school, they think the following would help them a great deal or somewhat:



Base: The number of respondents for each item varies between n = 690 and n = 644 by design, as each respondent was asked a random two items.

Finding 8. Adult prospective students believe that business, community organizations and government can work together alongside colleges to help students succeed.

- **Most adult prospective students think it is a very good idea to require schools to work together to make transferring between institutions easier.** Furthermore, most adult prospective students favor a variety of roles for employers, businesses and community organizations in helping students succeed in college; see figure 15.

Adult prospective students support multiple ideas for how the community can help them complete a degree or certificate.

Figure 15. Percent of adult prospective students who indicate each of the following is a very good idea or a somewhat good idea:



Base: The number of respondents for each item varies between n = 694 and n = 629 by design, as each respondent was asked a random three items.

- **Fewer Republican adult prospective students than Democrats or Independents think using taxpayer money to make public colleges free for low- or middle-income students is a good idea.** Only 33 percent of Republican adult prospective students think using taxpayer money to make public colleges free for low- or middle-income students is a good idea. Fifty-five percent of Democrat and 45 percent of Independent adult prospective students think this.



IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS IN BRIEF

Based on our findings, this brief concludes with implications and recommendations for helping more adult prospective students attain postsecondary success.

- **Broaden the conversation about college costs to include not only tuition, but housing, transportation and food.** Emergency financial aid, transportation stipends and food assistance can all be scaled up to alleviate some of the most pressing affordability burdens of attending college, helping more students complete their degrees. This is especially important for low-income students.
- **Help adult prospective students gain a more realistic understanding of how to pay for college, and provide comprehensive counseling on loans and the financial aid process.** For many students, loans may be unavoidable. While many schools offer financial aid counseling to enrolled students, such counseling is clearly a priority for adult prospective students. Relevant, easily accessible financial aid counseling should be available when choosing a college, during enrollment and even after college completion.
- **Provide guidance about when to transfer, and help adults understand potential challenges.** Adult prospective students need to be engaged on when and how to transfer to maximize their likelihood of graduating and minimize their costs and time spent in school. They need to understand that some schools have higher transfer rates than others—before they start investing time and money in an institution.

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- **Create structures to help undecided adult prospective students pick a program of study prior to enrollment or soon thereafter.** Enrolling undeclared means students may use up valuable time and money deciding on a field of study. Approaches such as intensive advising or guided pathway programs can help students narrow down their options so that they enter a program of study earlier and start earning credits toward their major. These approaches may be especially helpful for low-income students, who are even more likely to enter college unsure of what to study.
 - **Provide additional support for adult prospective students to stay on track and ensure they graduate.** Consider ways different departments such as academic affairs and career services can work together and provide easily accessible and relevant tutoring or other services that can address students' academic needs.
 - **Colleges and universities should prioritize faculty.** Adult prospective students are looking for high-quality teachers once they enroll, but they recognize that faculty can also play an important role *prior* to enrollment, by helping them decide which colleges are right for them. Therefore, it is essential for colleges and universities to attract and retain high-quality faculty and give them the time they need to connect with adult prospective students and serve as advisers.
 - **Find innovative ways to provide workplace-relevant instruction in classrooms.** Internships are not appealing to most adult prospective students. Colleges and faculty need to find other ways to integrate workplace-relevant skills and foster experiential learning into their curricula and instruction.
 - **The metrics that matter to experts—such as graduation rates—need to be made relevant to adult prospective students.** Many experts believe that making information about the cost and quality of schools more transparent will help adult prospective students identify and choose higher-performing institutions. While transparency is important for leaders and policymakers to hold institutions accountable, more needs to be done to help individual adult prospective students understand how those metrics matter to them.
 - **Ensure that colleges and universities are equipped to help adult prospective students make informed choices.** Faculty, current students and staff should be provided with the time, training and information needed to enable them to engage adult prospective students and help them make informed choices. School websites should be easy to navigate, have information specific to adult learners and provide ways for adult prospective students to connect directly with faculty, students, alumni and advisers.
 - **Encourage businesses and community organizations to work together to support adult prospective students.** Consider ways to create partnerships between businesses, community organizations and colleges themselves to create support systems for adult learners. Such support will help adult students gain workplace-relevant skills, transfer without encountering barriers and find support for critical needs such as food and transportation.

METHODOLOGY IN BRIEF

The findings in “A Major Step: What Adults Without Degrees Say About Going (Back) to College” are based on a nationally representative survey of adults who are considering enrolling in college to earn an undergraduate degree or certificate, a group we refer to as “adult prospective students.” A total of 1,336 interviews were completed from August 17 through November 12, 2017; 1,328 interviews were included in the analysis. The survey was conducted by telephone, including cell phones, and online. Respondents completed the surveys in English.

This research follows up on a nationally representative survey of adult prospective students by Public Agenda—fielded and published in 2013—that was also funded by The Kresge Foundation. The methodology of this survey is similar to that of the previous survey to ensure comparability of results over time and to minimize the possibility that any stability or change in findings could be attributed to methodological differences. The methodology differs in that, in this survey, 36 percent of interviews were completed through probability-based phone sampling and the remainder through both a probability-based web panel and a nonprobability-based, opt-in web panel. In the 2013 survey, 70 percent of the interviews were completed through probability-based phone sampling and the remainder through a nonprobability-based web panel.

The telephone response rate for the phone portion of the survey was calculated to be 7.4 percent using the American Association for Public Opinion Research Response Rate Three (RR3) formula. The web portion of the study was calculated to be 14 percent using the same formula.

The final data were weighted to correct for variance in the likelihood of selection for a given case and to balance the sample to known population parameters in order to correct for systematic under- or overrepresentation of different demographic groups.

The design effect for the survey was 1.5, and the survey has an overall margin of error of +/- 3.3 at the 95 percent confidence level. The surveys were designed by Public Agenda and fielded by Social Science Research Solutions Inc.

This research was funded through a grant to Public Agenda from The Kresge Foundation. For briefs on this research and the full methodology, including topline findings, full question wordings and sample characteristics, please go to www.publicagenda.org/pages/a-major-step-what-adults-without-degrees-say-about-going-back-to-college-research-brief.

ENDNOTES

- 1 National Center for Education Statistics, NCES Fast Facts, <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=98>.
- 2 Focus group quotations have been minimally edited for clarity.
- 3 Clive Belfield, "The Economic Benefits of Attaining an Associate Degree Before Transfer: Evidence from North Carolina," Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University, July 2013, <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/economic-benefits-associate-degree-before-transfer.html>.
- 4 Carolin Hagelskamp, David Schleifer and Christopher DiStasi, "Is College Worth It for Me?" (New York: Public Agenda, November 2013), <https://www.publicagenda.org/pages/is-college-worth-it-for-me>.
- 5 Hagelskamp, Schleifer and DiStasi, "Is College Worth It for Me?"
- 6 "Background Facts on Contingent Faculty," American Association of University Professors, n.d., <https://www.aaup.org/issues/contingency/background-facts>.



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The Kresge Foundation was founded in 1924 to promote human progress. Today, Kresge fulfills that mission by building and strengthening pathways to opportunity for low-income people in America's cities, seeking to dismantle structural and systemic barriers to equality and justice. Using a full array of grant, loan, and other investment tools, Kresge invests more than \$160 million annually to foster economic and social change. For more information visit Kresge.org.

For more information about this study, visit: www.publicagenda.org/pages/a-major-step-what-adults-without-degrees-say-about-going-back-to-college