



6 East 39th Street, New York, NY 10016-0112
Tel: 212.686.6610 • Fax: 212.889.3461
info@publicagenda.org • publicagenda.org

Public Agenda

"New Survey Suggests Public Confidence in Higher Ed Waning"

**July 20 through July 24, 2016, General Public Survey on Higher Education
Data Collected by Social Science Research Solutions, Inc.**

TOPLINE

Released September 13, 2016

www.publicagenda.org/pages/public-opinion-higher-education-2016

The survey results below appear in the Public Agenda press release, "New Survey Suggests Public Confidence in Higher Ed Waning" and Public Agenda research brief, "What's the Payoff: Americans Consider Problems and Promises of Higher Education." The data are based on a nationally representative survey of 1,006 Americans 18 and older conducted between July 20 and July 24, 2016, via telephone (landline and cell phone).

The project was funded by a grant to Public Agenda from The Kresge Foundation. The survey was fielded by Social Science Research Solutions, Inc. (SSRS). SSRS was responsible for data collection only. Public Agenda designed the survey instruments and analyzed the data. When using these data, please cite Public Agenda.

Respondents could refuse to answer any question. The response rate for the survey was 5.4 percent overall using the American Association for Public Opinion Research's Response Rate Three formula, with a response rate of 7.6 percent for the landline sample and 4.2 percent for the cell phone sample.

The final data were weighted to correct for variance in the likelihood of selection for a given case and to balance the sample for known population parameters to correct for systematic under- or over-representation of key demographics. The margin of error for the original weighted data is +/-3.8 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

A survey result of less than 0.5 percent is signified by an asterisk, and a result of zero is signified by a dash. Unless otherwise stated, "Don't know" and "Refused" are responses volunteered by participants that were not explicitly offered to them. Responses may not always total 100 percent due to rounding.

The press release describing these results is available at <http://www.publicagenda.org/press-releases/new-survey-suggests-public-confidence-in-higher-ed-waning>. For more information, email research@publicagenda.org

FULL SURVEY RESULTS - WAVE 1

	Total N=1,006
Q1. How important is each of the following in terms of what students should gain from attending college, either a two year or four-year institution? How about (INSERT ITEM)? Is that absolutely essential, important but not essential or not too important?	
Q1a. An improved ability to solve problems and to think analytically	
Absolutely essential	61%
Important but not essential	32%
Not too important	6%
Don't know	1%
Refused (vol.)	*
Q1b. The skills they need to get a job when they graduate (n=490)	
Absolutely essential	67%
Important but not essential	29%
Not too important	4%
Don't know	*
Refused (vol.)	*
Q1c. Skills that would prepare them for a specific job (n=516)	
Absolutely essential	59%
Important but not essential	33%
Not too important	6%
Don't know	2%
Refused (vol.)	*
Q1d. To make professional connections and to network	
Absolutely essential	35%
Important but not essential	48%
Not too important	14%
Don't know	2%
Refused (vol.)	1%
Q1e. Sense of maturity and how to manage on their own	
Absolutely essential	61%
Important but not essential	30%
Not too important	7%
Don't know	1%
Refused (vol.)	1%
Q2. No question	

Q3. Do you think that currently, the vast majority of people who are qualified to go to college have the opportunity to do so, or do you think that there are many people who are qualified to go but don't have the opportunity to do so?

Have opportunity	29%
Don't have opportunity	69%
Don't know (vol.)	2%
Refused (vol.)	*

Q4. Do you think that college education is necessary for a person to be successful in today's work world or do you think that there are many ways to succeed in today's work world without a college education?

College education is necessary	42%
There are many ways to succeed in today's world without a college degree	57%
Don't know (vol.)	1%
Refused (vol.)	*

Q5. Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?

A college education is still the best investment for people who want to get ahead and succeed	52%
A college education is a questionable investment because of high student loans and limited job opportunities	46%
Don't know (vol.)	2%
Refused (vol.)	*

Q6. Who has a harder time paying for college today?

Middle income students because they get less financial aid	43%
Lower income students because they struggle to afford tuition	51%
Don't know	5%
Refused (vol.)	*

Q7. Which comes closer to your own view?

Colleges today mainly care about education and making sure students have a good educational experience	34%
Colleges today are more like businesses and care mainly about the bottom line	59%
Don't know (vol.)	6%
Refused (vol.)	*

Sample Characteristics

	Total N=1,006
Race/ethnicity	
White non-Hispanic	67%
Black non-Hispanic	11%
Hispanic	11%
Asian	3%
Native American/ American Indian/ Alaska Native	2%
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	*
Mixed	4%
Refused	2%
Gender	
Male	50%
Female	50%
Age	
18-29	16%
30-49	21%
50-64	28%
65+	34%
Refused	*
Educational attainment	
Less than high school or GED	7%
High school or GED	25%
Some college but no degree	16%
Associate's degree	10%
Bachelor's degree	22%
Graduate school or more	19%
Don't know	*
Refused	*
Household income	
Less than \$50,000	45%
\$50,000 to \$100,000	24%
\$100,000 or more	19%
Don't know	2%
Refused	10%

Employment status	
Full-time	38%
Part-time	14%
Retired	30%
Homemaker	5%
Student	2%
Temporarily unemployed	5%
Disabled/Handicapped	4%
Other not employed	1%
Refused	1%
Political party affiliation	
Republican	25%
Democrat	34%
Independent	35%
Other	1%
Don't know	2%
Refused	3%
Marital Status	
Married	48%
Living with a partner	7%
Divorced	12%
Separated	2%
Widowed	10%
Never married	20%
Refused	1%
Parental status	
Parent or guardian of child under 18	14%
Not a parent or guardian of child under 18	86%
Refused	-

Public Agenda

"What's the Payoff?"

**August 10 through August 14, 2016, General Public Survey on Higher Education
Data Collected by Social Science Research Solutions, Inc.**

TOPLINE

Released October 6, 2016

www.publicagenda.org/pages/public-opinion-higher-education-2016

The survey results below appear in the Public Agenda research brief, "What's the Payoff: Americans Consider Problems and Promises of Higher Education." The data are based on a nationally representative survey of 1,002 Americans 18 and older conducted between August 10 and August 14, 2016, via telephone (landline and cell phone).

The project was funded by a grant to Public Agenda from The Kresge Foundation. The survey was fielded by Social Science Research Solutions, Inc. (SSRS). SSRS was responsible for data collection only. Public Agenda designed the survey instruments and analyzed the data. When using these data, please cite Public Agenda.

Respondents could refuse to answer any question. The response rate for the survey was 4.9 percent overall using the American Association for Public Opinion Research's Response Rate Three formula, with a response rate of 7 percent for the landline sample and 3.5 percent for the cell phone sample.

The final data were weighted to correct for variance in the likelihood of selection for a given case and to balance the sample for known population parameters to correct for systematic under- or over-representation of key demographics. The margin of error for the original weighted data is +/-3.8 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

A survey result of less than 0.5 percent is signified by an asterisk, and a result of zero is signified by a dash. Unless otherwise stated, "Don't know" and "Refused" are responses volunteered by participants that were not explicitly offered to them. Responses may not always total 100 percent due to rounding.

The research brief describing these results is available at <http://www.publicagenda.org/media/whats-the-payoff>.

For more information, email research@publicagenda.org

FULL SURVEY RESULTS - WAVE 2
**Total
N=1,006**

Q1. How much attention do you think higher education, meaning education beyond high school, is receiving in the current U.S. presidential election? Would you say it is receiving the right amount of attention, it should receive more attention, it should receive less attention, or are you unsure?

Receiving the right amount of attention	14%
Should receive more attention	52%
Should receive less attention	9%
Not sure	25%
Refused (vol.)	*

Q2. For each of the following, please tell me whether you view it as a serious problem, somewhat of a problem, not much of a problem, not a problem or whether you are not sure.

Q1a. High schools that fail to prepare students for college-level work.

Serious	56%
Somewhat	21%
Not much	7%
Not	4%
Not sure	11%
Refused (vol.)	*

Q1b. Too many college students lack the discipline and persistence to finish their degree.

Serious	29%
Somewhat	33%
Not much	11%
Not	7%
Not sure	18%
Refused (vol.)	1%

Q1c. Colleges that are wasteful and inefficient in how they spend their money.

Serious	44%
Somewhat	27%
Not much	5%
Not	5%

Not sure	19%
Refused (vol.)	*
Q1d. Employers who demand college degrees for jobs that don't really require them.	
Serious	29%
Somewhat	31%
Not much	14%
Not	9%
Not sure	18%
Refused (vol.)	*
Q1e. Cuts in state government funding of public colleges.	
Serious	43%
Somewhat	25%
Not much	8%
Not	6%
Not sure	18%
Refused (vol.)	*
Q3. For each of the following, please tell me whether you think it is a very good idea, a somewhat good idea, a somewhat bad idea, a very bad idea or whether you are not sure.	
Q3a. Punishing colleges with consistently low graduation rates and job placement rates.	
Very good	19%
Somewhat good	28%
Somewhat bad	18%
Very bad	11%
Not sure	23%
Refused (vol.)	1%
Q3b. Requiring colleges to provide career counseling and networking opportunities for students	
Very good	65%
Somewhat good	21%
Somewhat bad	2%
Very bad	2%
Not sure	10%

Refused (vol.)	*
Q3c. Requiring colleges to publicly report their graduation rates.	
Very good	54%
Somewhat good	22%
Somewhat bad	5%
Very bad	2%
Not sure	17%
Refused (vol.)	*
Q3d. Using taxpayer money to make public colleges free for students from low and middle income families.	
Very good	39%
Somewhat good	28%
Somewhat bad	11%
Very bad	14%
Not sure	9%
Refused (vol.)	*

Sample Characteristics

	Total N=1,006
Race/ethnicity	
White non-Hispanic	70%
Black non-Hispanic	9%
Hispanic	12%
Asian	3%
Native American/ American Indian/ Alaska Native	1%
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	*
Mixed	3%
Refused	2%
Gender	
Male	50%
Female	50%
Age	
18-29	16%
30-49	24%
50-64	29%
65+	31%
Refused	*
Educational attainment	
Less than high school or GED	7%
High school or GED	24%
Some college but no degree	15%
Associate's degree	13%
Bachelor's degree	23%
Graduate school or more	18%
Don't know	*
Refused	*
Household income	
Less than \$50,000	42%
\$50,000 to \$100,000	26%
\$100,000 or more	20%
Don't know	3%
Refused	8%

Employment status	
Full-time	43%
Part-time	12%
Retired	28%
Homemaker	4%
Student	2%
Temporarily unemployed	5%
Disabled/Handicapped	4%
Other not employed	*
Refused	*
Political party affiliation	
Republican	23%
Democrat	33%
Independent	38%
Other	1%
Don't know	2%
Refused	3%
Marital Status	
Married	48%
Living with a partner	7%
Divorced	12%
Separated	2%
Widowed	11%
Never married	21%
Refused	1%
Parental status	
Parent or guardian of child under 18	20%
Not a parent or guardian of child under 18	80%
Refused	*