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Most Americans See College as Essential to Getting a Good Job

College educated least likely to be unemployed or underemployed

by Cynthia English

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Most Americans see a college degree as a necessary step toward attaining quality employment. Nearly 7 in 10 U.S. adults (69%) strongly agree or agree that having a college degree is essential for getting a good job in this country, according to a recent study by Gallup and Lumina Foundation for Education.

On a 5-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. You may use any number between 1 and 5.

Having a college degree is essential for getting a good job in this country.

Strongly agree/agree	69%
Neither agree nor disagree	19%
Strongly disagree/disagree	11%

May 17-29, 2011
Gallup/Lumina

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Consistent with these perceptions, Gallup Daily tracking of unemployment and underemployment in the U.S. finds that college-educated Americans fare better in the workforce than U.S. adults without a college degree. Their unemployment and underemployment rates so far in 2011 are lower than those rates for Americans with less education and are also well below the national averages.

Unemployment and Underemployment, by Education Level

Jan. 2-July 31, 2011

	Unemployed	Underemployed*
All U.S. adults	6%	19%
High school or less	8%	26%
Technical/Vocational/Some college	7%	21%

College graduate	5%	12%
Post-graduate work or degree	3%	9%

Gallup Daily tracking

*Unemployed or employed part time but wanting full-time work

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Given a choice, Americans are most likely to believe that students seek higher education primarily for practical reasons, rather than for personal development. According to the Gallup/Lumina study conducted in May, about half of Americans (53%) say the main reason students get more education is to earn more money and a third say it is to get a good job (33%).

In your opinion, which one of the following is the main reason why students get education beyond high school?

	U.S. adults
To earn more money	53%
To get a good job	33%
To become a well-rounded person	5%
To learn more about the world	3%
To learn to think critically	1%
All of the above	3%
None of the above/other	1%

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At a time when most [Americans are negative about the job market in general](#), more than half (57%) strongly agree or agree that people who have a college degree have a good chance of finding a quality job and 15% disagree.

On a 5-point scale, where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. You may use any number between 1 and 5.

	People who have a college degree have a good chance of finding a quality job.
Strongly agree/agree	57%
Neither agree nor disagree	27%
Strongly disagree/disagree	15%

May 17-29, 2011

Gallup/Lumina

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Implications

While Americans remain negative about the economy and the job market, they still see the value of a college education, both in terms of its ability to help them earn more money and to help them get a good job.

Some college graduates and post-graduates remain out of work, which may partly reflect today's challenging economy and jobs climate. However, it also suggests that leaders can do more to ensure that college graduates have the quality of education and skills that employers are looking for.

Recent research by [Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce](#) proposes that the U.S. needs more college graduates with a quality education and skills suited for today's job market. Gallup/Lumina data suggest that the majority of Americans would agree with this assessment. Forthcoming articles will explore how Americans perceive the quality of higher education in the U.S.

Survey Methods

Gallup conducted 1,001 interviews in English only from May 17-29, 2011, with a random sample of adults, aged 18 and older, residing in landline-telephone households, cell phone-only households, and cell phone-user households. Up to three calls were made to each household to reach an eligible respondent.

The data set was statistically adjusted (weighted) using the following variables: race/ethnicity, gender, education, and age as defined by the most recent data from the Current Population Survey, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. The final overall results are representative of the U.S. adult population.

The questionnaire was developed in consultation with representatives from Lumina Foundation and Gallup. All interviewing was supervised and conducted by Gallup's full-time interviewing staff. For results based on the total sample size of 1,001 adults, one can say with 95% confidence that the margin of error attributable to sampling and other random effects is ± 4 percentage points. For subgroups within this population, e.g., education level, gender, and income, the margin of error would be greater. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Results for the employment data are based on more than 208,000 telephone interviews conducted as part of Gallup Daily tracking, with a random sample of adults, aged 18 and older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia, collected from Jan. 2-July 31, 2001, selected using random-digit-dial sampling.

Interviews are conducted with respondents on landline telephones and cellular phones, with interviews conducted in Spanish for respondents who are primarily Spanish-speaking. Each daily sample includes a minimum quota of 400 cell phone respondents and 600 landline respondents per 1,000 national

adults, with additional minimum quotas among landline respondents for gender within region. Landline telephone numbers are chosen at random among listed telephone numbers. Cell phone numbers are selected using random-digit-dial methods. Landline respondents are chosen at random within each household on the basis of which member had the most recent birthday.

Samples are weighted by gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education, region, adults in the household, and phone status (cell phone only/landline only/both, cell phone mostly, and having an unlisted landline number). Demographic weighting targets are based on the March 2010 Current Population Survey figures for the aged 18 and older non-institutionalized population living in U.S. telephone households. All reported margins of sampling error include the computed design effects for weighting and sample design.

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

For more details on Gallup's polling methodology, visit <http://www.gallup.com/>.

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