

2016 Walden University Study Career and Well-Being Outcomes



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Introduction

Gallup and Purdue University created an index that examines the long-term success of graduates as they pursue a great job and a better life. This index — the Gallup-Purdue Index — provides insight into the relationship between the university experience and long-term outcomes. This report explores the relationship between university graduates' experiences and long-term outcomes based on their responses to the university's college outcomes survey.

For this study, Gallup compares Walden alumni to two other groups — all recent graduate degree holders nationally and recent graduate degree holders nationally who completed half or more of their coursework online. The latter two samples come from a re-contact study of respondents in the Gallup-Purdue Index, a nationally representative sample of U.S. college graduates with at least a bachelor's degree. Gallup administered a custom survey, developed in partnership with Walden University, to graduate degree holders from the national study to allow comparison of outcomes in the areas of professional success, return on investment and civic engagement.

Walden Study and Two Comparison Groups

1990-2015 Walden Alumni

Walden University alumni who earned their graduate degree from Walden University between 1990 and 2015

1990-2015 Half-Plus Online Graduate Alumni

A segment of graduate degree holders nationally who completed at least half of their graduate courses online

1990-2015 Graduate Degree Holders Nationally

Graduate degree holders nationally who earned their degree between 1990 and 2015

The primary comparison group for the Walden study are graduates from the national graduate database who completed at least half of their classes online and graduated between 1990 and 2015. The study uses the “half-plus online graduate alumni” comparison group because it is more similar in demographic composition to Walden's graduate alumni. With that, important demographic distinctions exist between the half-plus online group and graduate degree holders nationally. Seventy-six percent were working full-time while in graduate school compared with 43% of graduate degree holders nationally, and 51% had children in the household while in graduate school compared with 27% of graduate degree holders nationally. (Note that percentages may not add up to 100% as a result of rounding.)

Comparison Group Demographics

	Walden Graduates	Half-Plus Online Graduate Alumni	Graduate Degree Holders Nationally
Male	22%	38%	44%
Female	76%	60%	56%
Mean Age	46.6	43.3	43.2
White	64%	73%	77%
Black	26%	18%	11%
Hispanic	6%	6%	6%
Asian	3%	3%	5%
Other Race	1%	1%	1%
Working Full Time	86%	76%	43%
Children in the Household	51%	51%	27%
Top Three Majors	Education and Teaching: 43%	Education and Teaching: 31%	Education and Teaching: 19%
	Nursing: 24%	Business/ Management: 20%	Business/ Management: 14%
	Business/ Management: 12%	Nursing: 6%	Legal: 9%
Graduation Years	1990-2015	1990-2015	1990-2015
Margin of Error	N/A	5.2%	1.7%
Fielding Dates	1/21/16-3/1/16	1/25/16-2/23/16	1/25/16-2/23/16
Total N (Unweighted)	8,677	682	6,687

This report also compares Walden University graduates with graduate degree holders nationally who graduated between 1990 and 2015, regardless of how many graduate courses they took online. This group is referred to as “graduate degree holders nationally” throughout the report and is distinct from the Walden and half-plus online groups in that it contains fewer alumni who worked full or part time while in school and fewer who had children in their household while in school. The graduate degree holders nationally also had twice as many male respondents as the Walden group (44% vs. 22%, respectively) and fewer respondents from minority groups (23% vs. 36%, respectively).

Walden Alumni Reflect a More Diverse Population

Several important demographic distinctions are evident between the Walden sample and the primary comparison group (half-plus online graduate alumni), providing important context for the interpretation of these findings. Walden alumni reflect a more diverse population than graduate degree holders nationally, evidenced by the following characteristics:

- Walden graduates (61%) are more likely than half-plus online graduate alumni (48%) to be the first generation in their families to attend college, putting them at higher risk of negative career and well-being outcomes. Using parental education level as a reasonable proxy for family income, recent research from Brookings Institution indicates that low-income college graduates are relatively less advantaged by their degrees when it comes to income levels over the course of their lifetime.¹
- The Walden sample is more likely than the half-plus online graduate alumni sample to be female (76% vs. 60%, respectively) and from a racial or ethnic minority group (36% vs. 28%).
- Half-plus online graduate alumni are more likely than Walden alumni to have degrees in well-compensated professions, including those with degrees in business and management (20% half-plus vs. 12% Walden) and engineering (5% half-plus vs. 0% Walden). Conversely, Walden alumni are predominantly in professions that typically earn less: education (23% half-plus vs. 29% Walden), teaching (8% half-plus vs. 14% Walden) and nursing (6% half-plus vs. 24% Walden). All told, 43% of Walden alumni are in education or teaching, compared with 31% of half-plus online graduate alumni, and 67% of Walden graduates are in either healthcare or education. This finding aligns with Walden’s mission to afford opportunities to promote positive social change.

With the differences considered, it is clear that Walden graduates reflect a more diverse population compared with both national comparison groups. The distinctions are consistent with Walden’s social change mission to provide access to higher education to people who would otherwise be unable to advance their education and careers, and they help provide context for interpreting the following results.

¹ Hershbein, B. (2016, February 19). A college degree is worth less if you are raised poor. Retrieved from <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/social-mobility-memos/posts/2016/02/19-college-degree-worth-less-raised-poor-hershbein>

Executive Summary

The Walden University study included 8,877 adults who received graduate degrees from the university between 1990 and 2015. The results illustrate how many Walden University graduates went on to advance their careers, have thriving lives and engage their community. The Walden sample and the comparison groups featured in this report are uniquely different from one another, particularly around demographics, career choice and level of parental education providing important context for interpreting these findings.

The study yields important insights for educators, employers, alumni and prospective students about the factors that contribute to great careers, lives and experiences for Walden University graduates. It also identifies the areas in which Walden graduates are doing as well as or better than graduates of other universities and areas of opportunity for Walden University to consider for its current and future students, notwithstanding demographic differences.

Among key findings in this report, Walden graduates were more likely than comparison groups to cite their degree as being important or very important toward getting promoted, achieving a salary raise and changing careers. Additionally, the majority of Walden graduates agree or strongly agree that they gained skills and training to advance their career (70%), have applied the knowledge and skills they learned to their job (73%) and feel their professional work has increased because of their degree (66%). Career advancement following a Walden University graduate degree may be contributing to the vast majority of Walden graduates (88%) saying they are satisfied with their personal life today, on par with half-plus online graduate alumni (86%) and graduate degree holders nationally (89%).

But a “good job” is not enough. Engaged workers are more loyal, productive and profitable than those who are not engaged or are actively disengaged. The findings for Walden University are positive in this regard as well. More than four in 10 Walden graduates (42%) who are employed full time for an employer are engaged at work, which is on par with graduate degree holders nationally (42%) and half-plus online graduate alumni (40%). Additionally, about three in four Walden graduates (73%) agree or strongly agree that they are applying the knowledge and skills they learned at Walden in their job.

These high marks in career advancement could be credited to educational fulfillment among Walden graduates. Eighty-three percent of Walden graduates agree or strongly agree that they were challenged academically by Walden University. Additionally, 60% of Walden University graduates agree or strongly agree that Walden prepared them well for life outside of graduate school, more than the 54% of half-plus online graduate alumni and on par with the 64% of graduate degree holders nationally. Ultimately, the vast majority of Walden graduates (76%) agree or strongly agree that Walden University was the perfect university for people like them.

Essential Findings

Great Jobs: Career Advancement

Walden University succeeds in assisting with the advancement of its students' careers by fulfilling its promise that students will gain valuable tools and strategies that they can immediately apply in the workplace.

- A sizable majority of Walden graduates (81%) say their degree was important or very important in getting promoted at work (rating its importance a "4" or "5" on a five-point scale). This is higher than the 76% of half-plus online graduate alumni and the 70% of graduate degree holders nationally.
- The majority of Walden graduates (74%) say their degree was important or very important in getting a salary increase. This finding is similar to the 71% of half-plus online graduate alumni but slightly higher than the 69% of graduate degree holders nationally.
- Among Walden graduates who changed their careers after obtaining their graduate degree, 82% say their degree was important or very important in granting them the ability to change their career or field of work. This is higher than the 76% of half-plus online graduate alumni and the 76% of graduate degree holders nationally who say the same.

Community Engagement and Well-Being

Gallup categorizes graduate degree holders as "thriving," "struggling" or "suffering" in five elements of well-being: purpose, social, financial, community and physical. Walden alumni show similar levels of thriving as comparison groups.

- Walden graduates who had supportive experiences while attending Walden (strongly agreeing with having at least one professor who made them excited about learning, having a professor who cared about them as a person and having a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams) are three times more likely than those who did not have support to be thriving in all five well-being elements (30% vs. 10%). Similarly, graduates who had experiential learning are about 2.5 times more likely than those who did not to be thriving in all five elements (21% vs. 9%).
- Walden graduates are more likely than half-plus online graduate alumni to agree or strongly agree that they interacted online with people from different backgrounds on a regular basis (77% vs. 68%).
- Among all well-being elements, Walden alumni are most likely to be thriving in purpose well-being (61%). A majority, 53%, are also thriving in social well-being.

Fulfilling Educational Mission

The study assesses whether alumni perceive that their university was a great fit for them, whether they had professors who cared about them and made learning exciting and, most importantly, whether they feel their school prepared them well for life after graduate school.

- The vast majority of Walden graduates (88%) say they are satisfied with their personal life today, on par with half-plus online graduate alumni (86%) and graduate degree holders nationally (89%).
- More than eight in 10 Walden graduates (83%) agree or strongly agree that they were challenged academically, higher than the 75% of half-plus online graduate alumni but similar to graduate degree holders nationally (83%).
- Six in 10 Walden University graduates (60%) agree or strongly agree that Walden prepared them well for life outside of graduate school, more than the 54% of half-plus online graduate alumni and comparable with the 64% of graduate degree holders nationally.

Methodology

Results for the Walden University graduate study are based on web surveys conducted Jan. 21-Mar. 1, 2016, with a sample of 8,677 Walden University graduate school alumni. The sample of alumni email addresses was provided by Walden University. Alumni were included in the study if the institution had an email address on file.

Results for the national graduate study, the national study used for comparison purposes, are based on web surveys conducted Jan. 25-Feb 23, 2016, with a random sample of 6,687 respondents with a master's degree or higher who obtained their degree between 1990 and 2015, aged 18 and older, with internet access, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. The national graduate sample was compiled from respondents who had been interviewed via the Gallup-Purdue Index, a national survey of college graduates. The Gallup-Purdue Index national study was conducted using web surveys from Feb. 4-Mar. 7, 2014, with a random sample of 29,560 respondents and from Dec. 16, 2014-June 29, 2015, with a random sample of 30,151 respondents with a bachelor's degree or higher, aged 18 and older, with internet access, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

The Gallup-Purdue Index sample was compiled from two sources: the Gallup Panel and the Gallup Daily Tracking survey. The Gallup Panel is a proprietary, probability-based longitudinal panel of U.S. adults who are selected using random-digit-dial (RDD) and address-based sampling (ABS) methods. The Gallup Panel is not an opt-in panel. The Gallup Panel includes 60,000 individuals, and Panel members can be surveyed by phone, mail or the web. Gallup Panel members with a college degree and access to the internet were invited to take the Gallup-Purdue Index survey online. The Gallup Daily tracking survey sample includes national adults with a minimum quota of 50% cellphone respondents and 50% landline respondents, with additional minimum quotas by time zone within region. Landline and cellular telephone numbers are selected using RDD methods. Landline respondents are chosen at random within each household on the basis of which member had the most recent birthday. Gallup Daily tracking respondents with a college degree who agreed to future contact were invited to take the Gallup-Purdue Index survey online.

The national graduate study interviews are conducted via the web, in English only. Samples are weighted to correct for unequal selection probability and nonresponse. The data are weighted to match national demographics of gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education and region. Demographic weighting targets are based on the most recent Current Population Survey figures for the aged 18 and older U.S. master's degree or higher population.

All reported margins of sampling error for the national graduate study include the computed design effects for weighting. For this report, the national comparison groups include only those who graduated in 1990 or later.

For results based on the total sample of 6,687 graduates with a postgraduate degree, the margin of sampling error is ± 1.7 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. For results based on employee engagement, the margin of sampling error is ± 2.3 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

For results based on the total sample of 682 graduates with a postgraduate degree who took half or more of their graduate courses online, the margin of sampling error is ± 5.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. For results based on employee engagement, the margin of sampling error is ± 5.8 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

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.

About

About Walden University

For more than 45 years, Walden University has supported working professionals in achieving their academic goals and making a greater impact in their professions and their communities. Today, more than 52,600 students from all 50 states in the U.S. and more than 155 countries are pursuing their bachelor's, master's or doctoral degrees online at Walden. The university offers more than 80 degree programs with more than 400 specializations and concentrations including: health sciences, counseling, criminal justice, human services, management, psychology, education, public health, nursing, social work, public administration and information technology. Walden University is accredited by The Higher Learning Commission.

About Gallup

Gallup delivers analytics and advice to help leaders and organizations solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 80 years of experience with its global reach, Gallup knows more about the attitudes and behaviors of employees, customers, students and citizens than any other organization in the world.

About Healthways

Healthways is an independent, global well-being company that provides comprehensive improvement solutions to increase performance and lower healthcare costs in its client populations. Dedicated to creating a healthier world one person at a time, Healthways uses the science of well-being and behavior change to produce and measure well-being improvement for its customers. Healthways provides personalized support to individuals to optimize each participant's health and productivity and to reduce health-related costs, and also advises leaders on how to maximize well-being across an organization.

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