

 **ELON** POLL

In Partnership with the Elon University Center for Engaged Learning

**High Impact Undergraduate Experiences and How They Matter Now**

Survey of College Graduates Age 18-34

November 10-12, 2021

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## Summary

In partnership with the Elon University Center for Engaged Learning, the Elon University Poll conducted an online survey of U.S. residents who were 18-34 years old and graduates of two- or four-year higher education institutions. This goal of this survey population is to represent experiences of younger, recent college graduates in the United States. The online survey was conducted November 10-12, 2021. Additional methodological information is in later pages of this report. For additional information about this research, please visit the Center for Engaged Learning's website: <https://www.centerforengagedlearning.org/> . A related 2019 survey is available from the Elon Poll Archive: <https://www.elon.edu/u/elon-poll/archive/> .

The sample of 1,832 has a credibility interval of +/- 2.4 %. Total survey error can exceed this credibility interval.

## Topline Results

*Note:* In this section of the report, table entries are row percentages, with the number of respondents in parentheses. Due to differential response rates to individual questions, the number of respondents listed in each row do not always sum equally. Due to rounding, the percentages in each row do not always sum perfectly to 100%.

### Common College Experiences

During your college/university experience, to what extent did you encounter the following?

	<i>Never</i>	<i>Once</i>	<i>Multiple Times</i>
<b>Faculty who asked you to draw on prior experiences when you learned new things</b>	14.8% (272)	23.7% (434)	61.4% (1125)
<b>Meaningful relationships with faculty or staff</b>	16.4% (301)	29.1% (535)	54.5% (1002)
<b>Meaningful relationships with other students</b>	9.8% (180)	21.1% (386)	69.1% (1264)
<b>Feedback from peers to guide your work before you submitted a final version</b>	12.5% (228)	22.2% (417)	64.7% (1183)
<b>Feedback from faculty/staff to guide your work before you submitted a final version</b>	11.2% (205)	23.7% (435)	65.1% (1193)
<b>Feedback from faculty/staff on a submitted, final project</b>	7.6% (140)	20.9% (383)	71.4% (1309)
<b>Practice with real-world applications of what you were learning</b>	11.6% (212)	24.8% (454)	63.6% (1164)
<b>Opportunities to reflect on how the different parts of your college experience fit together</b>	17.4% (319)	25% (458)	57.6% (1054)
<b>Opportunities to reflect on how what you were learning would apply to your future</b>	10.6% (195)	22.4% (411)	67% (1230)

## High Impact Experiences

Did you take part in any of the following during college? Select all that apply.

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<b>Internship or work placement</b>	50.3% (926)	49.7% (913)
<b>Service-learning / community-engaged learning course</b>	35.70% (657)	64.30% (1182)
<b>Independent undergraduate research project</b>	32.10% (590)	67.90% (1249)
<b>Capstone project or experience</b>	31.90% (587)	68.10% (1252)
<b>Study abroad experience</b>	20.10% (370)	79.90% (1469)
<b>ePortfolio</b>	18.40% (338)	81.60% (1501)

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## Undergraduate Research Experiences

*Note:* These questions were asked only of respondents who reported having undergraduate research experience above (n=590).

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<b>Was your undergraduate research a required project for one of your courses?</b>	79.90% (464)	17.00% (99)
<b>Was your undergraduate research conducted outside of a normal class, but under the supervision of faculty or staff?</b>	79.90% (464)	20.10% (117)
<b>Was your undergraduate research an original contribution to your field of study?</b>	82.70% (482)	17.30% (101)

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## Skills Used Now, and Were They Developed in College

Below you'll find a list of skills thought to be important for success after college.

	For each one, please indicate whether it is something important to <b>your day-to-day life</b> .			Which of these skills did you develop, at least somewhat, <b>while in college</b> ?	
	<i>Very important</i>	<i>Somewhat important</i>	<i>Not particularly important</i>	<i>Developed in college</i>	<i>Did not develop in college</i>
<b>Researching and understanding the answers to complex questions</b>	62.40% (1142)	31.70% (579)	5.90% (109)	81.60% (1491)	18.40% (337)
<b>Writing effectively</b>	64.50% (1185)	29.40% (540)	6.00% (111)	79.90% (1463)	20.10% (368)
<b>Speaking persuasively</b>	52.10% (954)	38.80% (711)	9.00% (165)	70.30% (1284)	29.70% (542)
<b>Using and/or interpreting data</b>	58.40% (1072)	35.80% (656)	5.80% (106)	77.90% (1424)	22.10% (404)
<b>Applying your existing skills to a new problem</b>	69.20% (1270)	27.10% (497)	3.70% (68)	74.30% (1359)	25.70% (470)
<b>Keeping up with the news</b>	38.80% (711)	45.90% (843)	15.30% (281)	46.20% (843)	53.80% (984)
<b>Engaging with your local government</b>	30.80% (565)	40.30% (740)	28.90% (530)	43.80% (801)	56.20% (1028)
<b>Volunteering in your local community</b>	35.7% (654)	45.3% (831)	19.0% (348)	49.70% (910)	50.30% (921)

For each one, please indicate whether it is something important to **your day-to-day life**.

Which of these skills did you develop, at least somewhat, **while in college**?

	<i>Very important</i>	<i>Somewhat important</i>	<i>Not particularly important</i>	<i>Developed in college</i>	<i>Did not develop in college</i>
<b>Connecting with people from different cultural backgrounds</b>	61.90% (1132)	31.00% (567)	7.10% (130)	70.80% (1295)	29.20% (535)
<b>Making ethical choices</b>	71.20% (1303)	24.30% (445)	4.50% (82)	63.80% (1166)	36.20% (661)
<b>Working with a team to accomplish goals</b>	64.50% (1181)	29.60% (543)	5.90% (108)	74.50% (1364)	25.50% (467)
<b>Giving feedback to others</b>	50.50% (927)	42.60% (783)	6.80% (125)	69.90% (1275)	30.10% (549)
<b>Making decisions on behalf of a team or organization</b>	50.00% (918)	40.80% (749)	9.10% (167)	66.90% (1223)	33.10% (605)
<b>Persisting in the face of setbacks</b>	66.0% (1206)	28.9% (529)	5.1% (93)	69.00% (1261)	31.00% (567)
<b>Managing time</b>	77.3% (1416)	19.4% (354)	3.3% (61)	75.30% (1381)	24.70% (454)
<b>Meeting deadlines</b>	71.7% (1316)	24.2% (444)	4.1% (76)	76.60% (1401)	23.40% (429)

## Mentorship Experiences

How important were the educational relationships you developed with peers, faculty, and staff to your overall success in college?

<i>Extremely important</i>	654.....	35.60%
<i>Very important</i>	652.....	35.60%
<i>Moderately important</i>	379.....	20.70%
<i>Slightly important</i>	97.....	5.30%
<i>Not at all important</i>	52.....	2.80%

Many students have a variety of relationships with different people in college. Thinking back on your time in college, which of these groups was most important for your overall success in college?

<i>Fellow students</i>	819.....	44.60%
<i>Faculty</i>	519.....	28.20%
<i>Staff</i>	180.....	9.80%
<i>Alumni</i>	74.....	4.00%
<i>Other community members</i>	44.....	2.40%
<i>Family</i>	200.....	10.90%

Did [selected mentor] contribute to your intellectual and academic engagement in college?

<i>Yes</i>	1661.....	90.60%
<i>No</i>	173.....	9.40%

Did [selected mentor] provide emotional support that helped you in college?

<i>Yes</i>	1544.....	84.30%
<i>No</i>	286.....	15.70%

Did [selected mentor] help you figure out how to get things done in college?

<i>Yes</i>	1558.....	85.20%
<i>No</i>	271.....	14.80%

Did [selected mentor] motivate you to study and work hard in college?

<i>Yes</i>	1588.....	86.60%
<i>No</i>	245.....	13.40%

### Satisfaction with College Experiences

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: My college experience prepared me well for the work I have done since graduating.

<i>Strongly disagree</i>	150.....	8.20%
<i>Somewhat disagree</i>	241.....	13.10%
<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	267.....	14.50%
<i>Somewhat agree</i>	705.....	38.40%
<i>Strongly agree</i>	473.....	25.80%

Overall, how would you rate your college experience?

<i>Very rewarding</i>	884.....	48.10%
<i>Somewhat rewarding</i>	634.....	34.50%
<i>Slightly rewarding</i>	276.....	15.00%
<i>Not at all rewarding</i>	43.....	2.30%

Considering both the costs and benefits of your college experience, would you say attending college was “worth it” for you personally?

<i>Definitely yes</i>	883.....	48.10%
<i>Probably yes</i>	675.....	36.80%
<i>Probably not</i>	196.....	10.70%
<i>Definitely not</i>	80.....	4.40%

### Respondent Demographics and Other Characteristics

#### Gender

<i>Male</i>	809.....	44.00%
<i>Female</i>	1030.....	56.00%

#### Age

<i>18-24</i>	368.....	20.00%
<i>25-34</i>	1471.....	80.00%

#### Race

<i>White</i>	1232.....	67.00%
<i>Black</i>	202.....	11.00%
<i>Other</i>	184.....	10.00%
<i>Hispanic</i>	221.....	12.00%



Household income

<i>Less than \$20,000</i>	123.....	6.7%
<i>\$20,000 - \$49,999</i>	421.....	22.9%
<i>\$50,000 - \$99,999</i>	764.....	41.5%
<i>\$100,000 - \$149,999</i>	365.....	19.9%
<i>More than \$150,000</i>	165.....	9.0%

Employment

<i>Employed Full Time</i>	1331.....	72.50%
<i>Employed Part Time</i>	200.....	10.90%
<i>Unemployed looking for work</i>	116.....	6.30%
<i>Unemployed not looking for work</i>	74.....	4.00%
<i>Retired</i>	3.....	0.20%
<i>Student</i>	98.....	5.30%
<i>Disabled</i>	15.....	0.80%

Region

<i>Northeast</i>	386.....	21.00%
<i>Midwest</i>	386.....	21.00%
<i>South</i>	625.....	34.00%
<i>West</i>	441.....	24.00%

Highest education attainment

<i>Two-Year</i>	423.....	23.00%
<i>Four-Year</i>	1048.....	57.00%
<i>Graduate</i>	368.....	20.00%

Did at least one of your parents or legal guardians complete college before you?

<i>Yes</i>	1212.....	66.00%
<i>No</i>	625.....	34.00%

Did you participate in intercollegiate athletics as a student-athlete?

*[note: this was likely interpreted to mean more than NCAA athletics by respondents]*

<i>Yes</i>	543.....	29.6%
<i>No</i>	1293.....	70.4%

Did you participate in an academic cohort program (e.g., Honors program, fellows program) for at least one academic year during college?

<i>Yes</i>	846.....	46.30%
<i>No</i>	982.....	53.70%

Did you participate in a social cohort program (e.g., Greek Life) for at least one academic year during college?

Yes	553.....	30.30%
No	1272.....	69.70%

Did you work while you were pursuing your degree?

Yes- Only on campus	435.....	23.70%
Yes- Only off campus	722.....	39.30%
Yes - Both on and off campus	388.....	21.10%
No	291.....	15.80%

About how much did you take out in student loans to finance your undergraduate education?

None	540.....	29.40%
Less than \$10,000	218.....	11.90%
\$10,000 to \$19,999	333.....	18.20%
\$20,000 to \$40,000	478.....	26.00%
More than \$40,000	265.....	14.50%

Did you receive a scholarship or non-debt financial aid as an undergraduate?

Yes	1255.....	68.50%
No	577.....	31.50%

Did you live on campus for at least a year while in college?

Yes	1082.....	59.20%
No	747.....	40.80%

### College Characteristics

What types of degrees were offered at your undergraduate institution when you attended (check all that apply)?

Associates	256.....	14.00%
Bachelors	709.....	38.80%
Masters	416.....	22.80%
Doctoral	447.....	24.40%

In terms of numbers of undergraduates, was your college small, medium or large?

Small (<4,000 students)	390.....	21.3
Medium (4,000-15,000 students)	848.....	46.3
Large (>15,000 students)	594.....	32.4

Did you take most of your undergraduate classes online or in-person?

<i>Online</i>	338.....	18.40%
<i>In-person</i>	1494.....	81.60%

Did most students at your college live on campus (or in student housing near campus) or did most commute to campus?

<i>Most lived on or near campus</i>	1195.....	65.40%
<i>Most commuted to campus</i>	633	

## Methodological Information

Mode:	Online
Population:	U.S. college graduates, ages 18-34
Dates in the field:	November 10-12 <sup>th</sup> , 2021
Sample size:	1,832
Weighting variables:	Age, Gender, Race, Census region, Highest degree earned
Credibility interval:	+/- 2.4 points

### *Procedure*

For this survey, the Elon University Poll used an online opt-in sample provided by Lucid, LLC. Respondents were recruited for this sample from many sample providers in the Lucid marketplace. Respondents received small amounts of compensation in exchange for their opinions. More information about the Lucid marketplace and quality tests are available [here](#).

Our sample was designed to represent 18 to 34-year-olds in the United States with at least a two-year degree. This population consists of approximately 24 million individuals. We defined our eligible population as those classified by the U.S. Census as having an Associate's, Bachelor's, or Graduate or Professional graduate degree. The survey software, Qualtrics, screened respondents out of the sample if they self-reported having less than this level of education.

This survey used both quotas prior to data collection and weights after data collection to match sample demographics to population demographics of age, race, sex, highest degree and Census region. A raking algorithm in Stata generated weights.

### *Credibility Interval*

Unlike a traditional random digit-dial telephone survey, online opt-in surveys do not have traditional margin of errors because they do not adhere to assumptions of random selection. To account for uncertainty inherent in any sample-based research design, we provide credibility intervals. More information about this technique can be found [here](#). The credibility interval was calculated by inflating traditional confidence intervals by design effects means. In this survey, the interval was calculated as follows:  $(1.015 * 2.29) = 2.32$  (rounded up to 2.4)

### *Support for Transparency*

The Elon University Poll supports transparency in survey research and is a charter member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research Transparency Initiative, which is a program promoting openness and transparency about survey research methods and operations among survey research professionals and the industry. All information about the Elon University Poll that we release to the public conforms to reporting conventions recommended by the American Association for Public Opinion Research and the National Council on Public Polls.

## Weighting Information

The table below presents population parameters, unweighted sample parameters and weighted sample parameters (rounded):

		Population	Unweighted Value	Weighted Value
Age	18-24	20%	18%	20%
	25-34	80%	82%	80%
Sex	Male	44%	40%	44%
	Female	56%	60%	56%
Race	White (non-hispanic)	67%	70%	67%
	Black (non-hispanic)	11%	11%	11%
	Other (non-hispanic)	10%	7%	10%
	Hispanic	12%	12%	12%
Census Region	Northeast	21%	22%	21%
	Midwest	21%	21%	21%
	South	34%	34%	34%
	West	24%	23%	24%
Highest Degree Earned	2-year	23%	22%	23%
	4-year	57%	58%	57%
	Graduate	20%	20%	20%

We were unable to locate exact parameters for our population of interest, recent college graduates, age 18-34. To create the above parameters, we made assumptions based on several sources of federal data. Data on race and highest degree earned are limited to those between 20 and 34 in the labor force, not all residents 18 to 34. Furthermore, our sample does not reflect those 18-34-year-old degree holders who lack internet access. Despite these limitations, we believe our sample is as reflective of the population as possible.

For age, sex, and highest degree earned, and region, we relied on American Community Survey (U.S. Census) 2017 Table B15001 “Sex by Age by Educational Attainment for The Population 18 Years and Over.” For race, we used Table EEO-ALL07R-N1 “Educational Attainment (6) by Younger Age Groups, Sex, and Race/Ethnicity (Part I) for Residence Geography, Total Population, Number Universe: Civilian labor force 20 years and over “(2010) from U.S. Census Bureau Fact Finder. We obtained percentages for each demographic group by dividing subcategory population counts by category overall population counts

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Who pays for the Elon University Poll?

Elon University fully funds the Elon University Poll. The poll operates under the auspices of the College of Arts and Sciences at Elon University, led by Dean Gabie Smith. The Elon University administration, led by Dr. Connie Ledoux Book, president of the university, fully supports the Elon University Poll as part of its service to the community. Because of this generous support, the Elon University Poll does not engage in any contract work. This permits the Elon University Poll to operate as a neutral, non-biased, non-partisan resource.

### 2. What did respondents know about the survey before agreeing to take the survey?

During survey recruitment, respondents saw a title that the survey was about higher education. In the introductory screen, respondents read, “We are hoping to understand what aspects of the college experience matter most for life outcomes.”

### 3. Did you randomize response options?

Yes. The order of college experiences and writing habits were randomized.

### 4. Did you weight the data?

Yes. We applied weights to the data according to U.S. Census information about this demographic group. For more details, see the Weighting Information above.

### 5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of online opt-in surveys over traditional random digit dial surveys?

Traditional telephone surveys have a clear advantage over online surveys such as this in that assumptions of equal probability of selection are more appropriate. Furthermore, online surveys do not capture opinions of respondents who lack internet access.

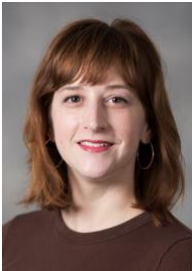
However, our opinion is that [declining telephone response rates](#) and the growth in online sample pool sizes have narrowed quality differences between the two modes. Additional information about opt-in surveys in general is available from AAPOR and the [Pew Research Center](#).

## About the Elon University Poll

The Elon University Poll conducts statewide, regional, and national surveys on issues of importance to North Carolinians as well as other southern states. Information from these polls is shared with media, citizens and public officials to facilitate informed public policy making through the better understanding of citizens' opinions and attitudes. By conducting several public opinion surveys annually, the Elon University Poll is easily recognized as the "poll of record in North Carolina."



[Jason Husser](#) is Director of the Elon University Poll and Associate Professor of Political Science & Policy Studies at Elon University. Dr. Husser holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Vanderbilt University. He researches American political behavior and survey methodology.



[Kaye Usry](#) is Assistant Director of the Elon University Poll and Assistant Professor of Political Science & Policy Studies at Elon University. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her research interests are in American politics and political psychology.



[Owen Covington](#) is Director of the Elon University News Bureau. A native North Carolinian, Owen Covington joined the staff of Elon University in 2016 after spending 17 years in the field of journalism as a reporter and editor for daily and weekly news outlets in North Carolina and Kentucky. As director of the Elon University News Bureau, Covington oversees the promotion of Elon and its students, faculty and staff both through stories told across Elon's media channels as well as through interactions with state, national and international media. He is involved in media relations, including responding to requests from print, digital and broadcast media outlets, and works to promote content generated by a variety of Elon news sources.

For more information on the Elon University Poll, visit [elon.edu/elonpoll](http://elon.edu/elonpoll)

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## About the Center for Engaged Learning

The Center for Engaged Learning brings together international leaders in higher education to develop and to synthesize rigorous research on central questions about student learning. The center offers multi-institutional research and practice-based initiatives, conferences, and seminars; and shares related resources for faculty and faculty developers on high-impact practices for engaged learning.



[Peter Felten](#) is Executive Director of the Center for Engaged Learning, Assistant Provost for Teaching and Learning, and Professor of History at Elon University. He received his Ph.D from the University of Texas at Austin. His research interests are in student experiences and agency in higher education.



[Jessie L. Moore](#) is Director of the Center for Engaged Learning and Professor of English, Professional Writing & Rhetoric at Elon University. She received her Ph.D. from Purdue University. Her research interests are in engaged learning and high-impact pedagogies.

For more information about the Center, visit [centerforengagedlearning.org](http://centerforengagedlearning.org)