

GALLUP®

Math Matters Study

The Value of Math in Work and Life



COPYRIGHT STANDARDS

This document contains proprietary research, copyrighted and trademarked materials of Gallup, Inc. Accordingly, international and domestic laws and penalties guaranteeing patent, copyright, trademark and trade secret protection safeguard the ideas, concepts and recommendations related within this document.

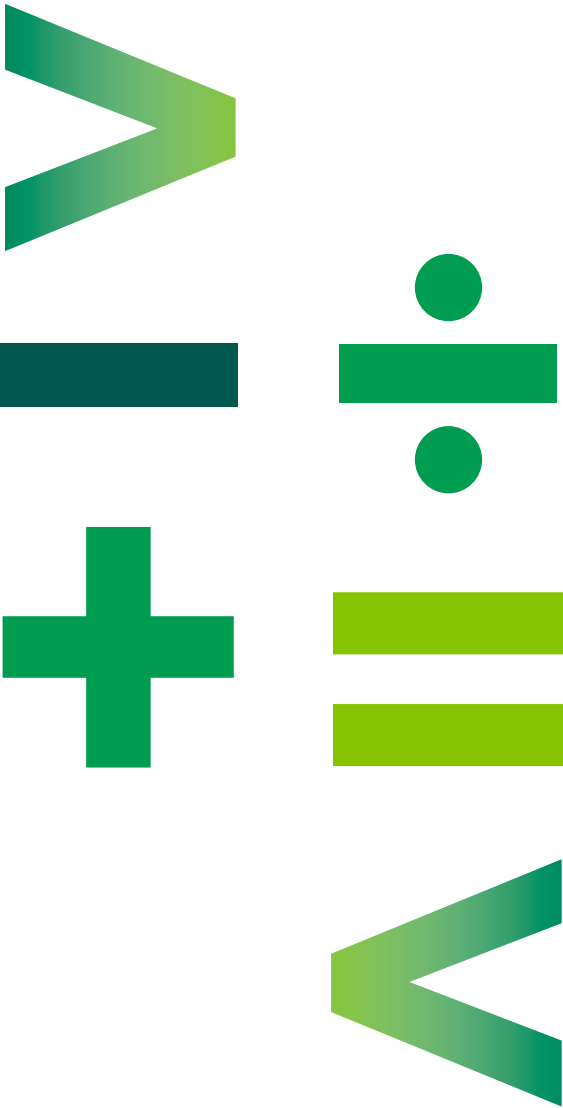
The materials contained in this document and/or the document itself may be downloaded and/or copied provided that all copies retain the copyright, trademark and any other proprietary notices contained on the materials and/or document. No changes may be made to this document without the express written permission of Gallup, Inc.

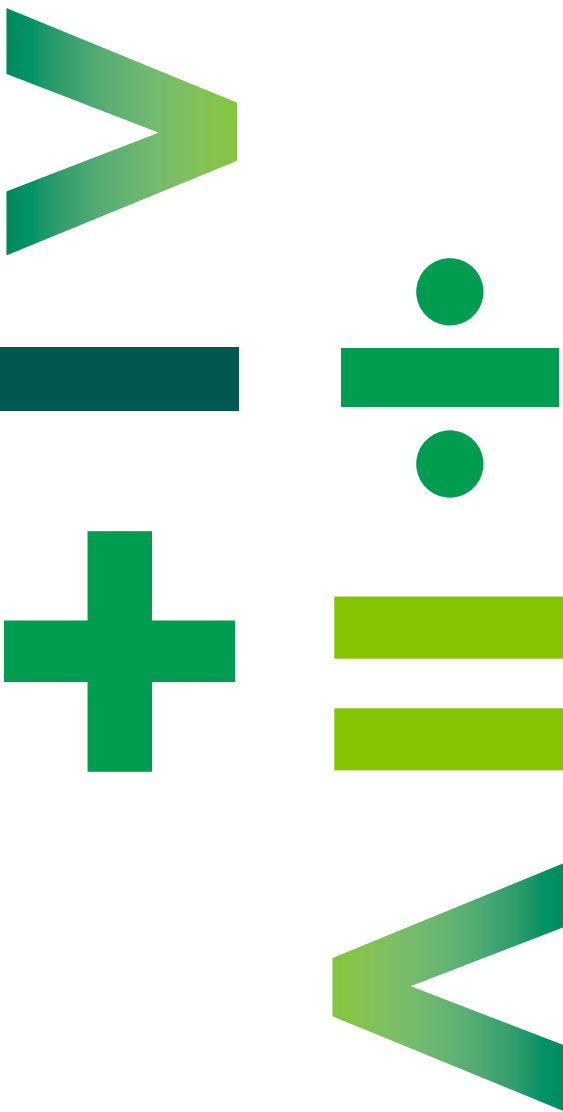
Any reference whatsoever to this document, in whole or in part, on any webpage must provide a link back to the original document in its entirety. Except as expressly provided herein, the transmission of this material shall not be construed to grant a license of any type under any patents, copyright or trademarks owned or controlled by Gallup, Inc.

Gallup® is a trademark of Gallup, Inc. All rights reserved. All other trademarks and copyrights are property of their respective owners.

Table of Contents

1	Acknowledgements
2	Introduction
3	Key Findings
5	Detailed Findings
22	Methodology





Acknowledgements

Gallup acknowledges the Gates Foundation for its sponsorship of this study. Their support enabled the research and analysis presented in this report.

We also recognize the contributions of the research team and survey participants who played a vital role in this study. Their insights and efforts have been essential in shaping the findings and conclusions shared in this report.

This report represents an effort to provide data-driven insights on math attitudes, made possible through this collaboration.

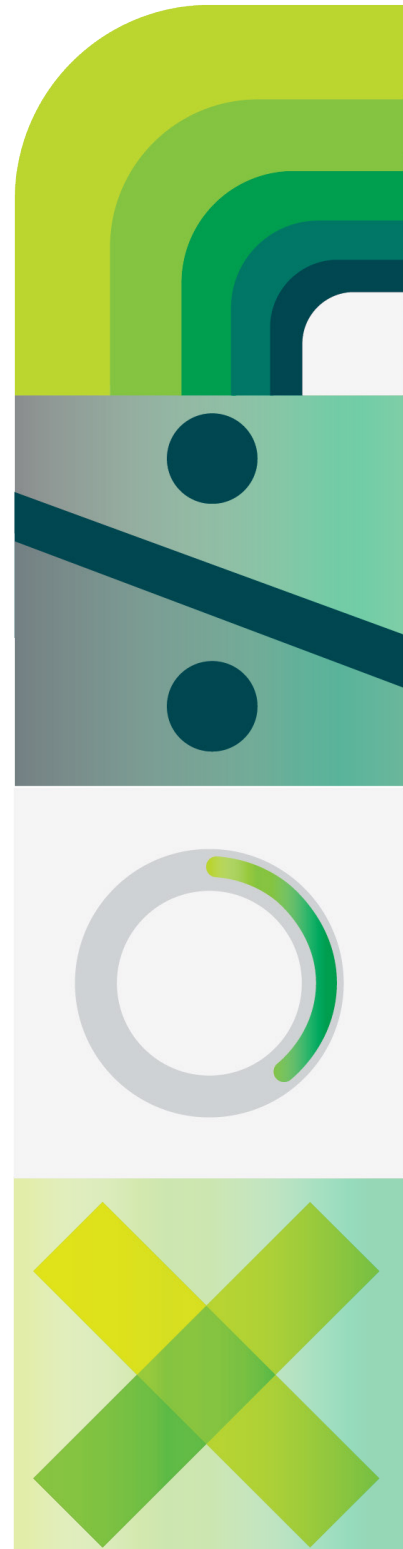
Introduction

Math skills are essential for navigating daily life and achieving success in the workforce, but K-12 student math scores in the U.S. are continuing to decline or, at best, plateau.^{1,2,3} Prior research released in April 2025 from the [Gallup Math Matters Study: Education Leaders' and Parents' Views on K-12 Math Education](#) reveals the ongoing challenges in math education faced by K-12 education leaders, including a shortage of well-qualified math teachers, lack of awareness about and alignment to high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) in their schools and districts, and lack of professional learning opportunities. These challenges, combined with evolving workforce demands,⁴ highlight the need for a deeper understanding of how Americans perceive math and math education, including its personal and professional value.

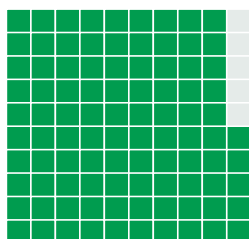
Gallup, with support from the Gates Foundation, conducted a web survey of 5,136 U.S. adults, including 808 parents. In addition, Gallup interviewed 2,831 workplace managers to provide further insight into the role of math skills in the workplace. Both groups were sampled using the probability-based Gallup Panel. The data are weighted to ensure results are generalizable and fully represent each of these respective populations.

This report explores public attitudes toward math education and its role in everyday life, revealing a widespread appreciation for the importance of math in personal and work life.

- 1 National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.). Nation's Report Card. National Assessment of Educational Progress. <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>
- 2 IEA TIMSS & PIRLS. (2023). TIMSS 2023 International Results in Mathematics and Science. Boston College Lynch School of Education and Human Development. <https://timss2023.org/results/>
- 3 National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). PISA 2022 Mathematics Literacy Results. Program for International Student Assessment. <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pisa/pisa2022/#/mathematics/trends>
- 4 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (29, August 2024). Math Occupations. Occupational Outlook Handbook. <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/math/>



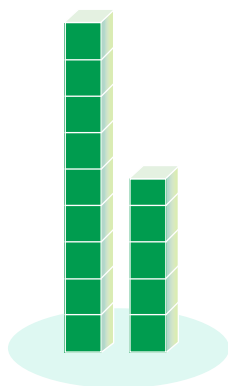
Key Findings



1

Virtually all U.S. adults see math as important in their lives:

95% say math skills are very (55%) or somewhat (40%) important in their work life, and 96% say math skills are very (63%) or somewhat (33%) important to have for most U.S. adults in their personal life.



2

Older Americans are more likely than younger Americans to value math for both personal and work life.

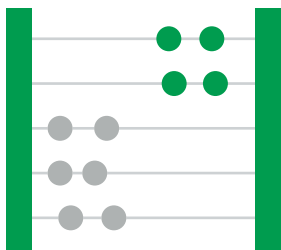
Seventy-five percent of adults aged 65 and older say math is very important for most adults in their personal life, compared with 37% of adults aged 18 to 24. The same pattern is true for perceptions of math in work life.



3

6 in 10 U.S. adults say math should be prioritized in K-12 schools:

When compared with other subjects in K-12 schools, six in 10 U.S. adults (62%) say math should either have a higher priority (48%) or have the very highest priority (14%).



4

4 in 10 U.S. adults (43%) wish they had learned more math skills in middle or high school.

Financial math (29%), data science (21%), software (20%) and programming (20%) are the most frequently desired math skills out of a list of 30.



5

Most managers (85%) wish their direct reports had more math skills in at least one area.

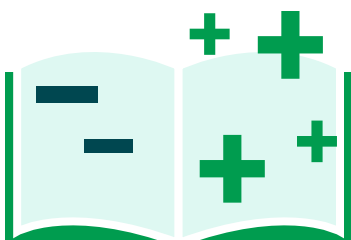
Some of the most desired math skills are financial math (41%), foundational math (41%), data science (37%), software (31%) and programming (16%).



6

Americans have complex emotions toward math:

60% say math makes them feel challenged, while 48% report feeling interest, 24% confused and 21% excited by math.

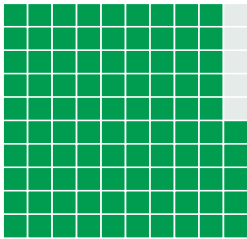


7

2x greater confidence in parents:

Parents with positive feelings toward math are nearly twice as likely as those with negative feelings to express confidence in their ability to help their children with math homework (73% vs. 38%).

Detailed Findings

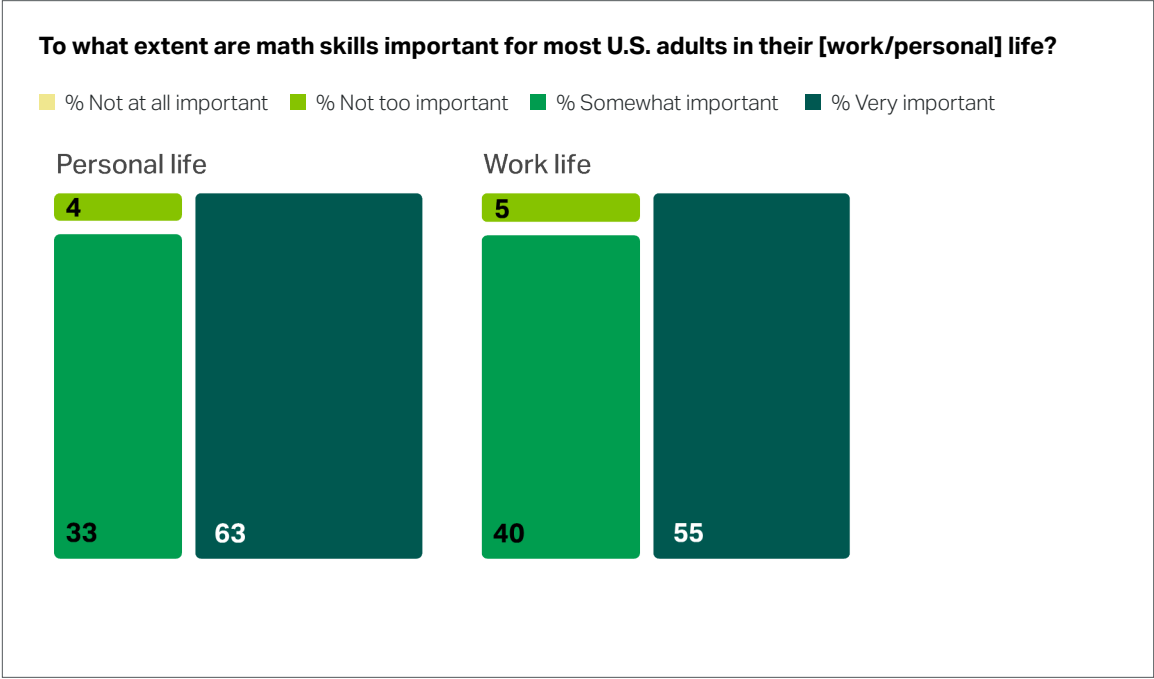


Nearly all U.S. adults see math as important for their work or personal lives

Ninety-five percent of Americans say math skills are very (55%) or somewhat (40%) important for most U.S. adults in their work life. A similar percentage (96%) say the same with respect to their personal life. But a higher percentage (63%) say math skills are very important to have in their personal life.

95% of Americans say math skills are very or somewhat important for their work life.

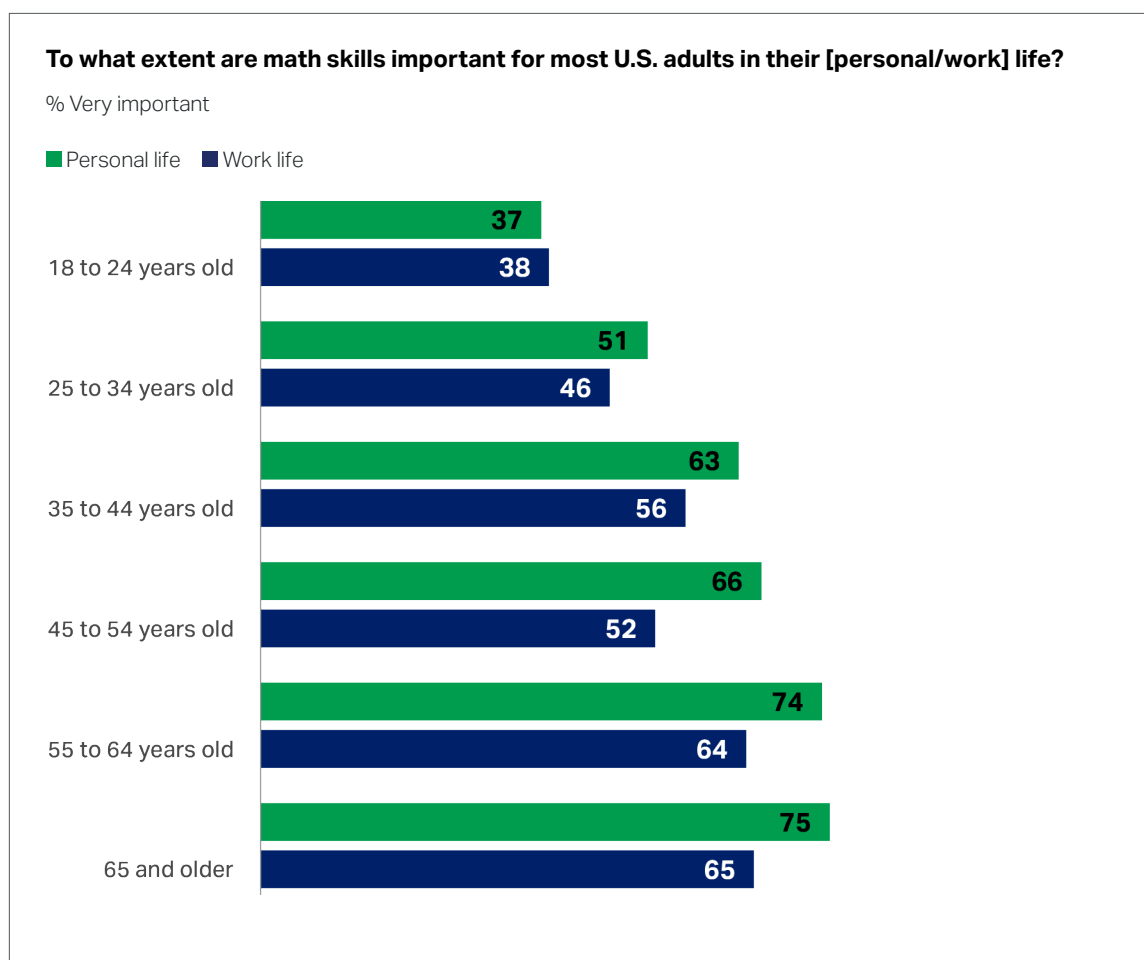
CHART 1



The importance Americans place on math skills varies by age, with older adults more likely to consider them essential for both work and daily life. Sixty-five percent of adults aged 65 and older say math skills are very important for work life, compared with 56% of 35- to 44-year-olds, 46% of 25- to 34-year-olds and 38% of 18- to 24-year-olds. This single point in time survey cannot determine whether the oldest generations have valued math throughout their lives or whether the appreciation has grown as they have gotten older. Across educational attainment, race and ethnicity, and household income, Americans' views of the importance of math skills are largely similar.

65% of Americans aged 65 and older say math skills are very important for U.S. adults' work life, compared with 38% of 18- to 24-year-olds. Older adults are also more likely than younger adults to say math skills are important in their personal life.

CHART 2





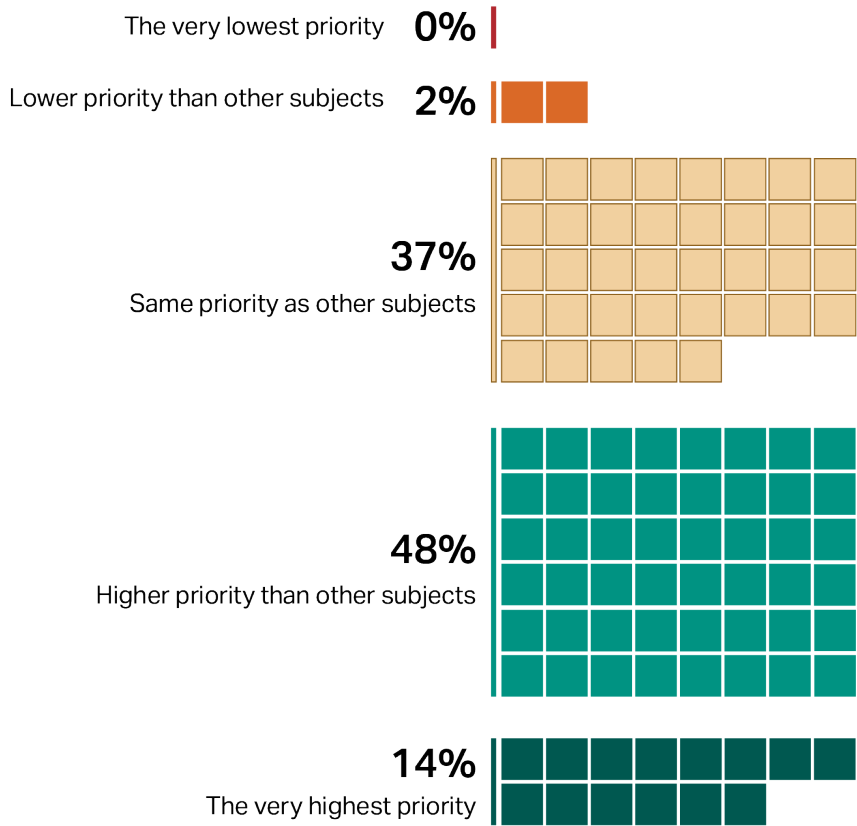
Six in 10 U.S. adults say math should be prioritized more highly than other subjects in school

Six in 10 Americans (62%) say K-12 schools should give math a higher priority than other subjects. This includes 14% who say math should be given the very highest priority among school subjects and 48% who say it should be given a higher priority than other subjects. Roughly one-third feel it should be treated similarly to other subjects (37%), and only 2% say it should receive lower priority than other subjects.

CHART 3

In your opinion, how should K-12 schools prioritize math, in comparison to other subjects?

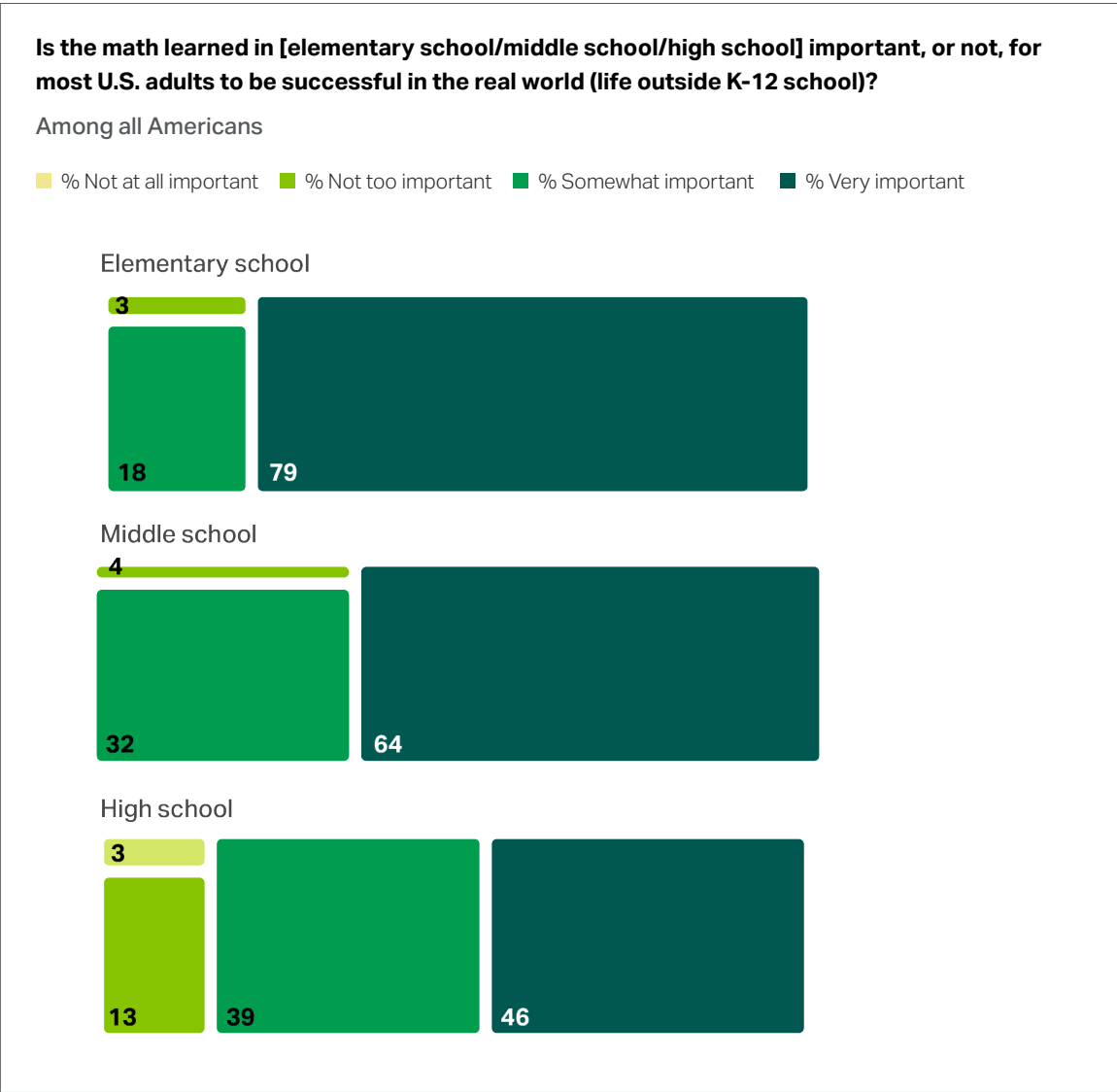
Among all Americans



Early and intermediate math skills are among the most valued for success in the real world. Almost all Americans (97%) say the math learned in elementary school is very (79%) or somewhat (18%) important for success, compared with 96% who say the math learned in middle school is very (64%) or somewhat (32%) important and 85% who say the math learned in high school is very (46%) or somewhat (39%) important.

Most Americans who think high school math is not at all or not too important say it is because high school math is more advanced than necessary for the real world.

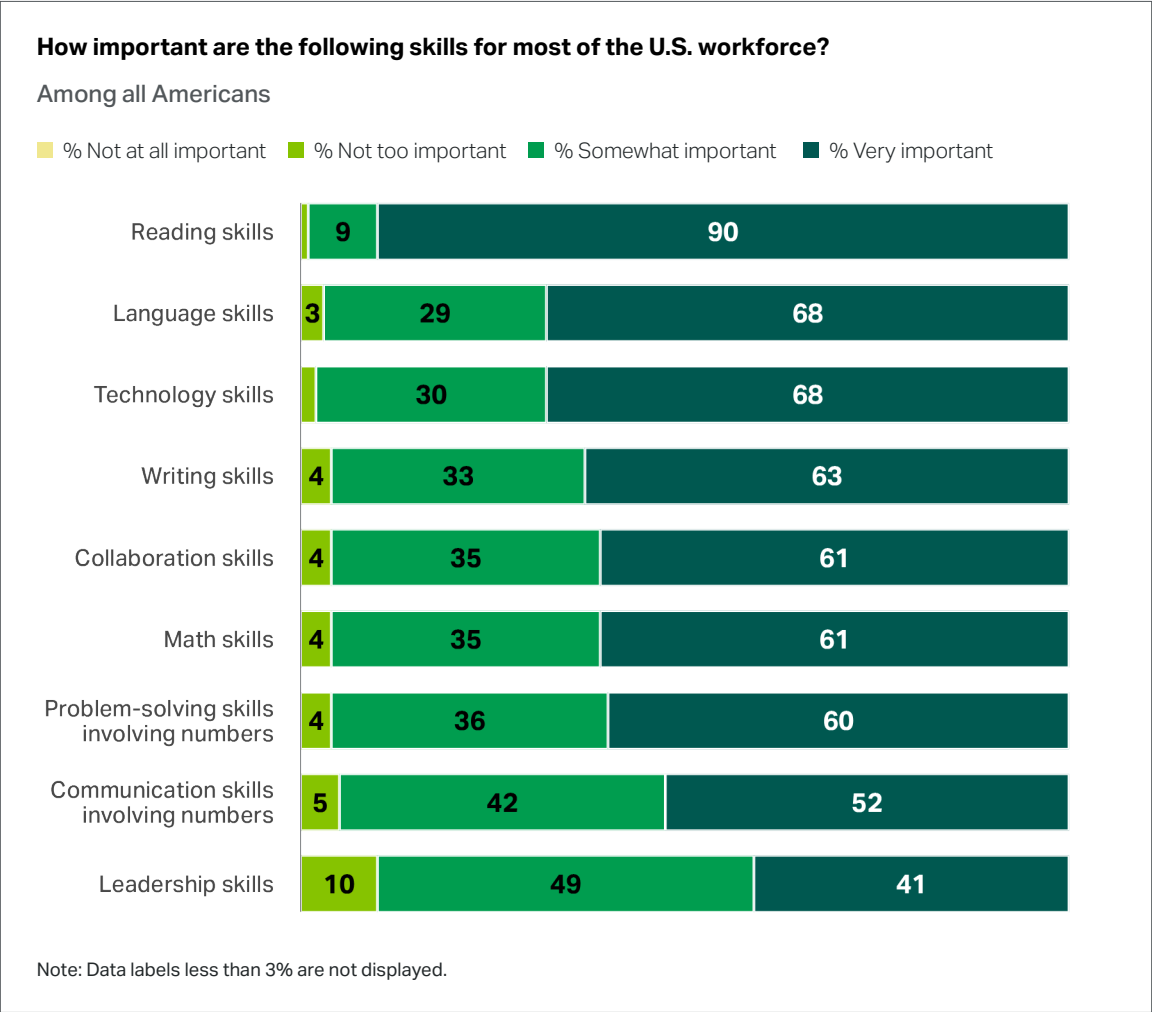
CHART 4

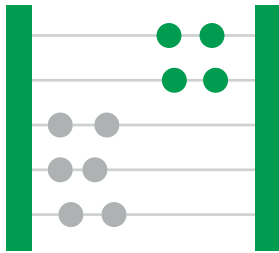


Among the 16% of Americans who describe the math learned in high school as not at all or not too important, most (81%) say they hold this view because of a belief that high school math is more advanced than what is needed for the real world, among other reasons.

In addition to sharing their thoughts on the importance of math in K-12 education, Americans also expressed their opinions on the importance of math skills for the U.S. workforce. When asked about the importance of math skills for the U.S. workforce, 61% of Americans believe math skills are “very important.” This view is similar across subgroups. While math ranks below reading (90%) in perceived importance, it is on par with writing (63%), collaboration skills (61%) and problem-solving skills involving numbers (60%).

CHART 5





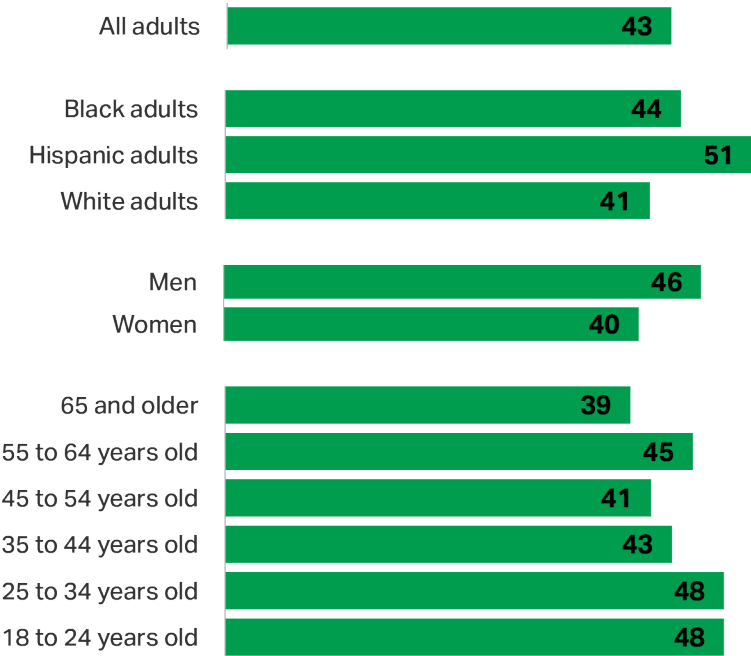
Four in 10 U.S. adults wish they had learned more math skills in middle or high school

Forty-three percent of U.S. adults wish they had learned more math skills in middle or high school, a sentiment that is similar among Americans with a range of educational backgrounds. Modest differences are seen across other subgroups: Desire to have learned more math in middle or high school is higher among Hispanic adults (51%) relative to Black (44%) and White adults (41%), and higher among men compared with women (46% vs. 40%).

CHART 6

Are there any math skills that you wish you had learned more of in middle or high school?

% Yes, among all Americans



Financial math, such as personal finance, budgeting and accounting, is the skill Americans *most* wish they had learned more in school. Sixty-eight percent of U.S. adults wanting to learn more math — equal to 29% of all U.S. adults — wish they had learned more financial math skills in school. Financial math is the most-desired skill among Americans regardless of gender, race and ethnicity, or educational background.

About one in five Americans wish they had learned more about data science (21%), software (20%), programming (20%) or statistics (18%) in school. Other topics, including algebraic thinking and problem-solving, were also chosen by more than one in 10 respondents from a list of 30 possible math skills.

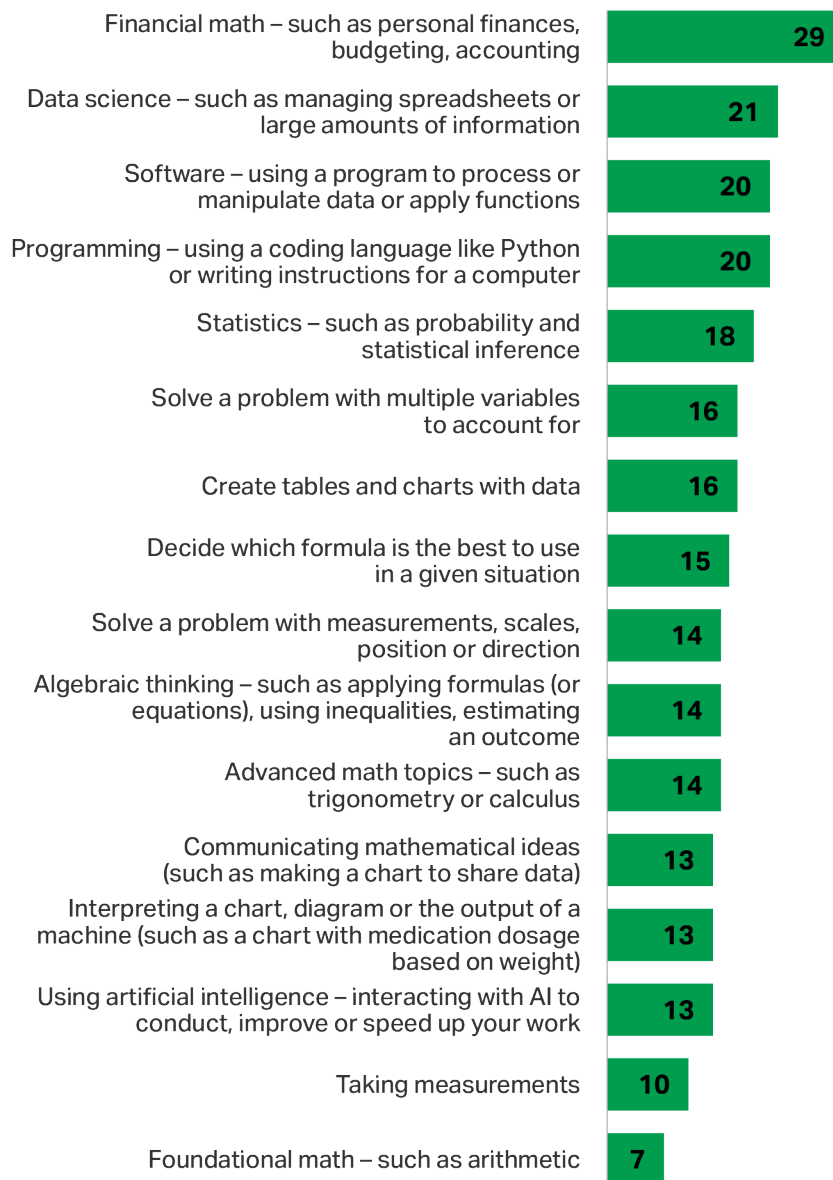


About one in five Americans (21%) wish they had learned data science in middle or high school.

CHART 7

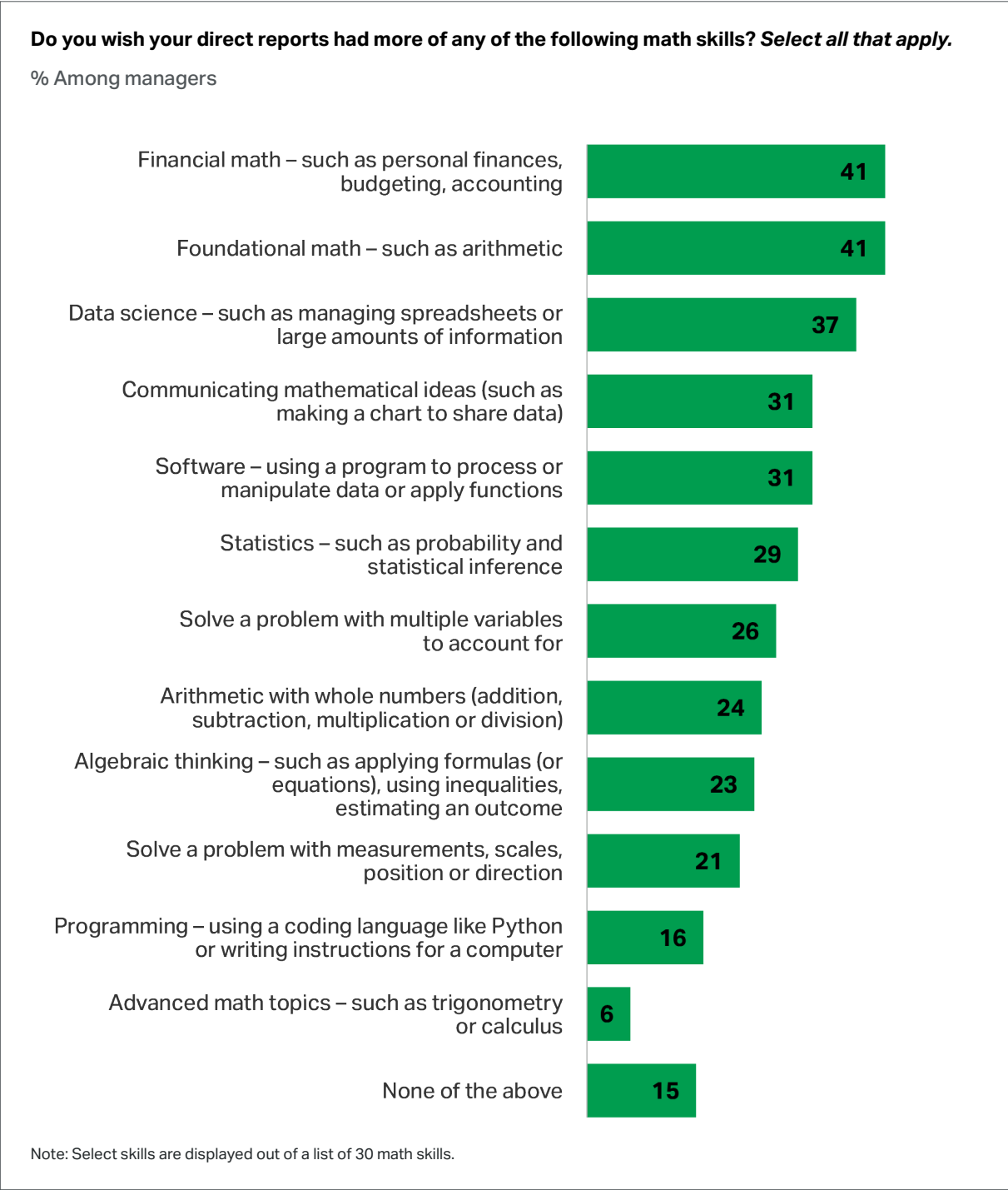
Which of the following math skills, if any, do you wish you had learned more of in middle or high school? *Select all that apply.*

% Among all Americans



Note: Select skills are displayed out of a list of 30 math skills. Rebased to all Americans.

CHART 8





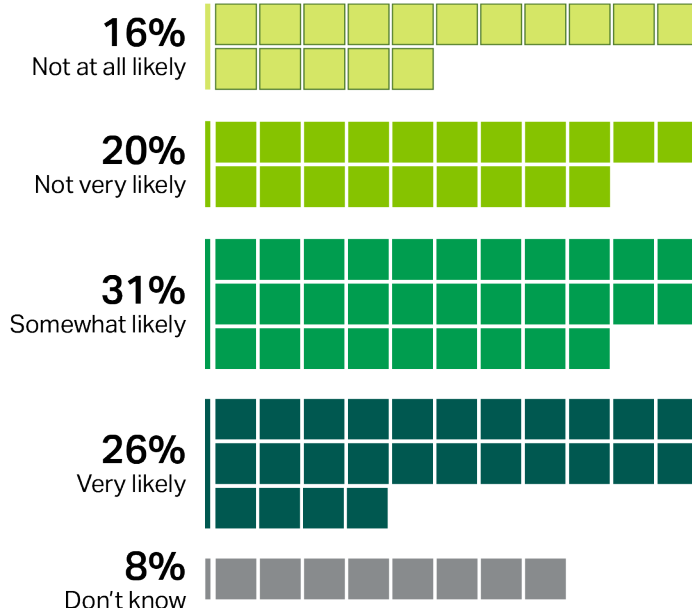
More than half of managers say they will likely need to hire more individuals with data science skills

When asked about data science in terms of “managing, cleaning, interpreting or reporting on data,” nearly six in 10 managers say that in the next five years it’s very (26%) or somewhat (31%) likely that they will need to hire more individuals with data science skills than they currently have. Americans may sense this demand, as one in five American adults overall (21%) wish they had learned more data science in high school.

CHART 9

Thinking about the next five years, how likely is it that your team or department will need to hire more individuals than you currently have with math skills in the following areas? *Data science (e.g., managing, cleaning, interpreting, reporting on data)*

Among managers





Americans have complex emotions toward math: 60% say they feel challenged; about half say it interests them

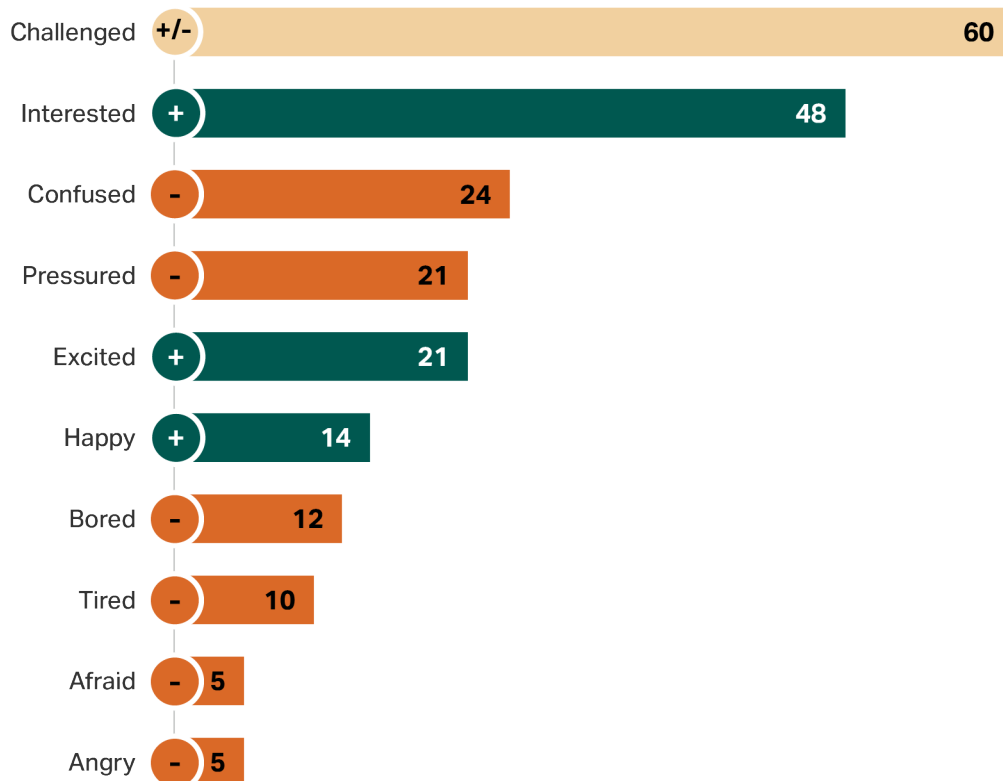
Americans hold a range of emotions when it comes to their personal attitudes toward math. Asked to select three words among a list of 10, Americans most frequently describe math as making them feel “challenged” (60%). Nearly half (48%) say math makes them feel “interested,” while less than one in four choose each of eight other positive or negative emotions.

CHART 10

How does doing math make you feel? Please select three words.

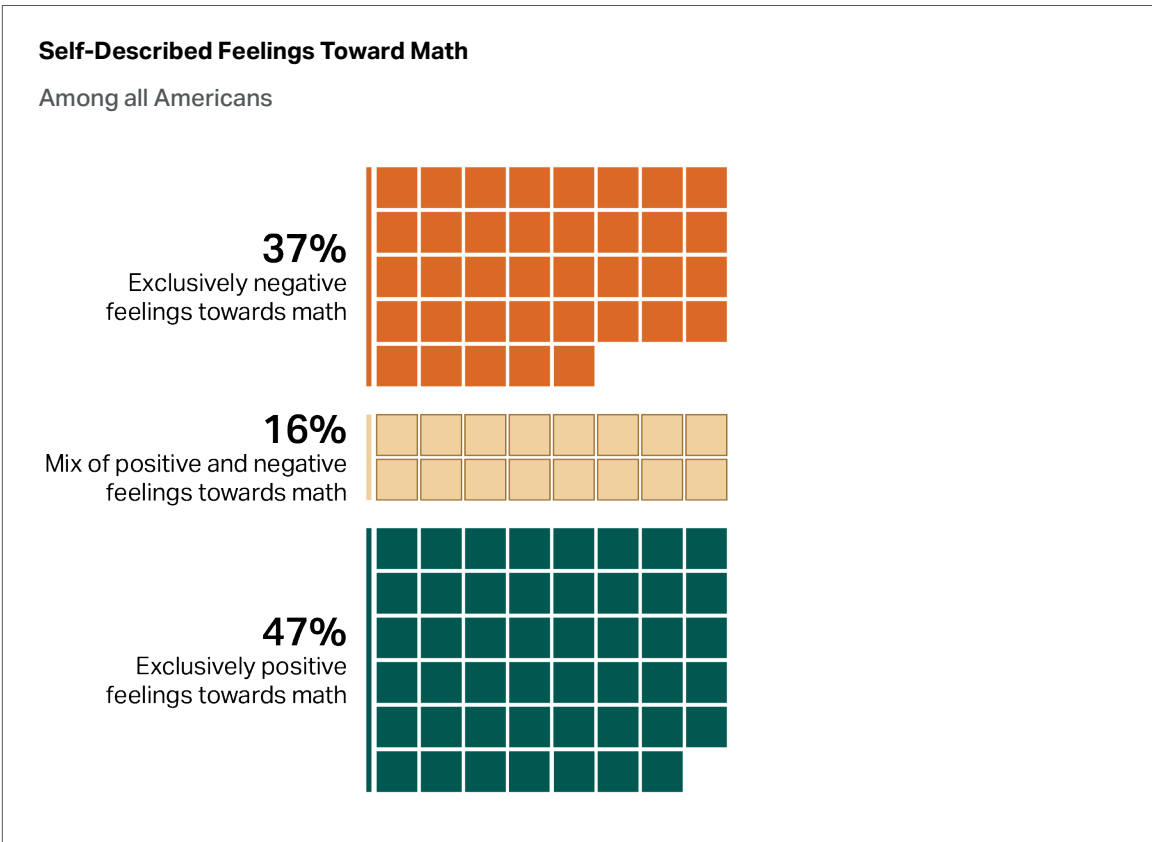
% Among all Americans

■ Negative feelings ■ Mixture of feelings ■ Positive feelings



Summarizing across the various math-related emotions people have, almost half of Americans (47%) have exclusively positive feelings (interested, excited or happy) about math, 37% have exclusively negative feelings (such as confused or bored) and 16% have a mix of both positive and negative feelings.⁵

CHART 11



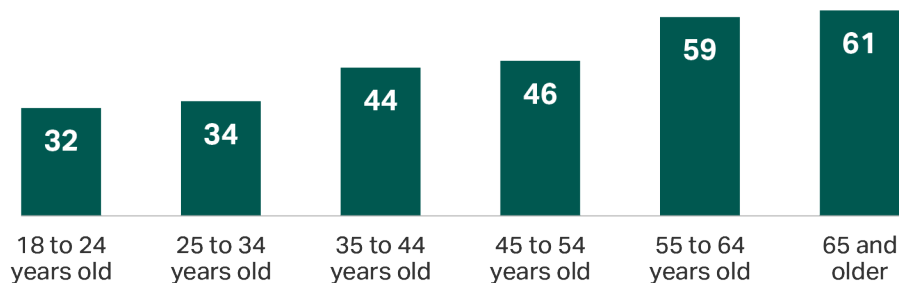
Age is an important predictor of Americans' feelings toward math. About half as many younger U.S. adults (32% of those aged 18 to 24) as older adults (61% of those aged 65 and older) have exclusively positive feelings toward math.

⁵ The feeling of "challenged" was not used to categorize respondents.

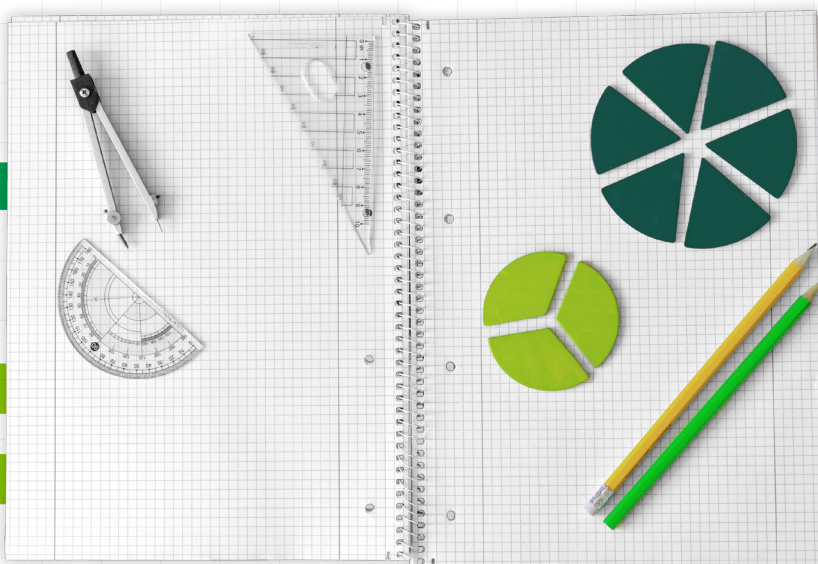
CHART 12

Self-Described Feelings Toward Math

% Exclusively positive feelings toward math, among all Americans



More men (54%) than women (42%) have exclusively positive feelings toward math, and Black (46%) and White (50%) adults are more likely to have only positive feelings toward math than are Hispanic adults (37%). Americans with higher educational attainment are also more likely to have positive feelings toward math (53% of those with a bachelor's degree vs. 44% of those without a bachelor's degree).





Positive feelings toward math are associated with support for math education

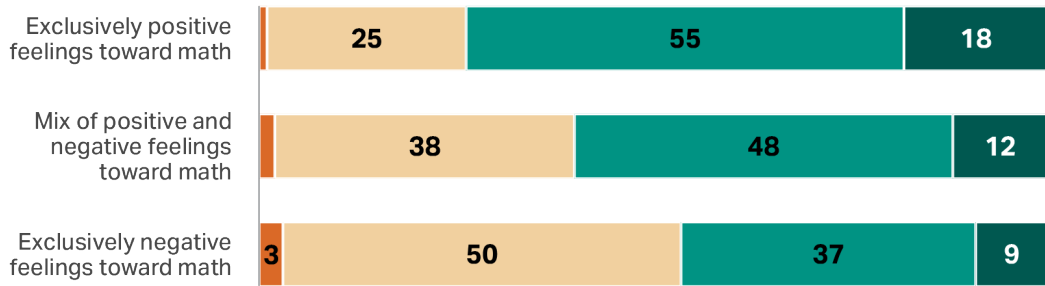
As would be expected, Americans’ feelings toward math are linked to their views on the importance of math in school and the workplace. Seventy-three percent of Americans with only positive feelings toward math say K-12 schools should prioritize math more highly than other subjects, compared with 46% of Americans with only negative feelings toward math. Similar patterns are also seen in the value Americans place on math learned in high school and whether they believe math skills are important for work life in the U.S.

CHART 13

In your opinion, how should K-12 schools prioritize math, in comparison to other subjects?

Among all Americans

■ % The very lowest priority ■ % Lower priority than other subjects ■ % Same priority as other subjects
■ % Higher priority than other subjects ■ % The very highest priority



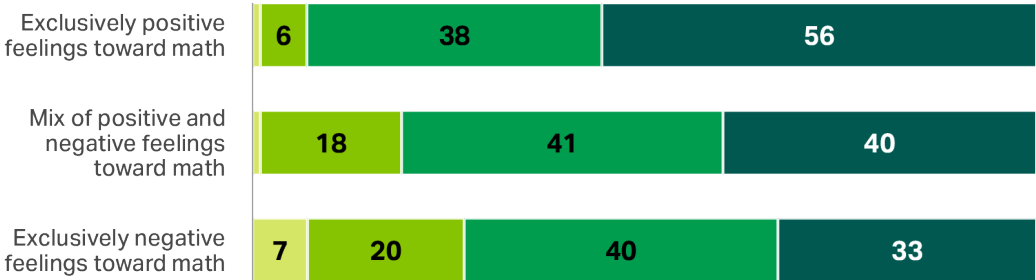
Note: Data labels less than 3% are not displayed.

CHART 14

Is the math learned in high school important, or not, for most U.S. adults to be successful in the real world (life outside K-12 school)?

Among all Americans

■ % Not at all important ■ % Not too important ■ % Somewhat important ■ % Very important



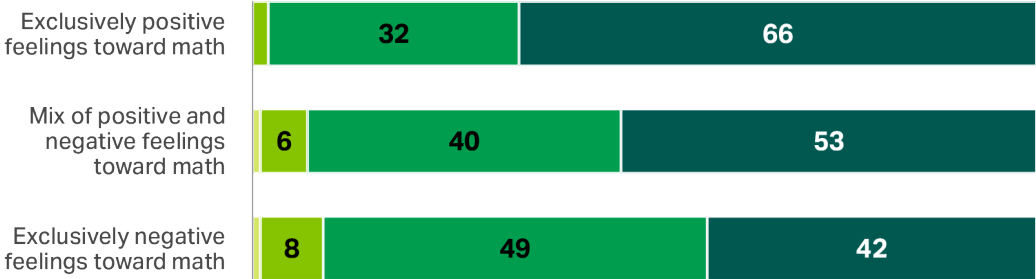
Note: Data labels less than 3% are not displayed.

CHART 15

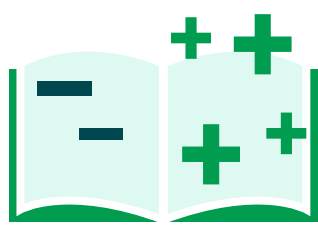
To what extent are math skills important for most U.S. adults in their work life?

Among all Americans

■ % Not at all important ■ % Not too important ■ % Somewhat important ■ % Very important



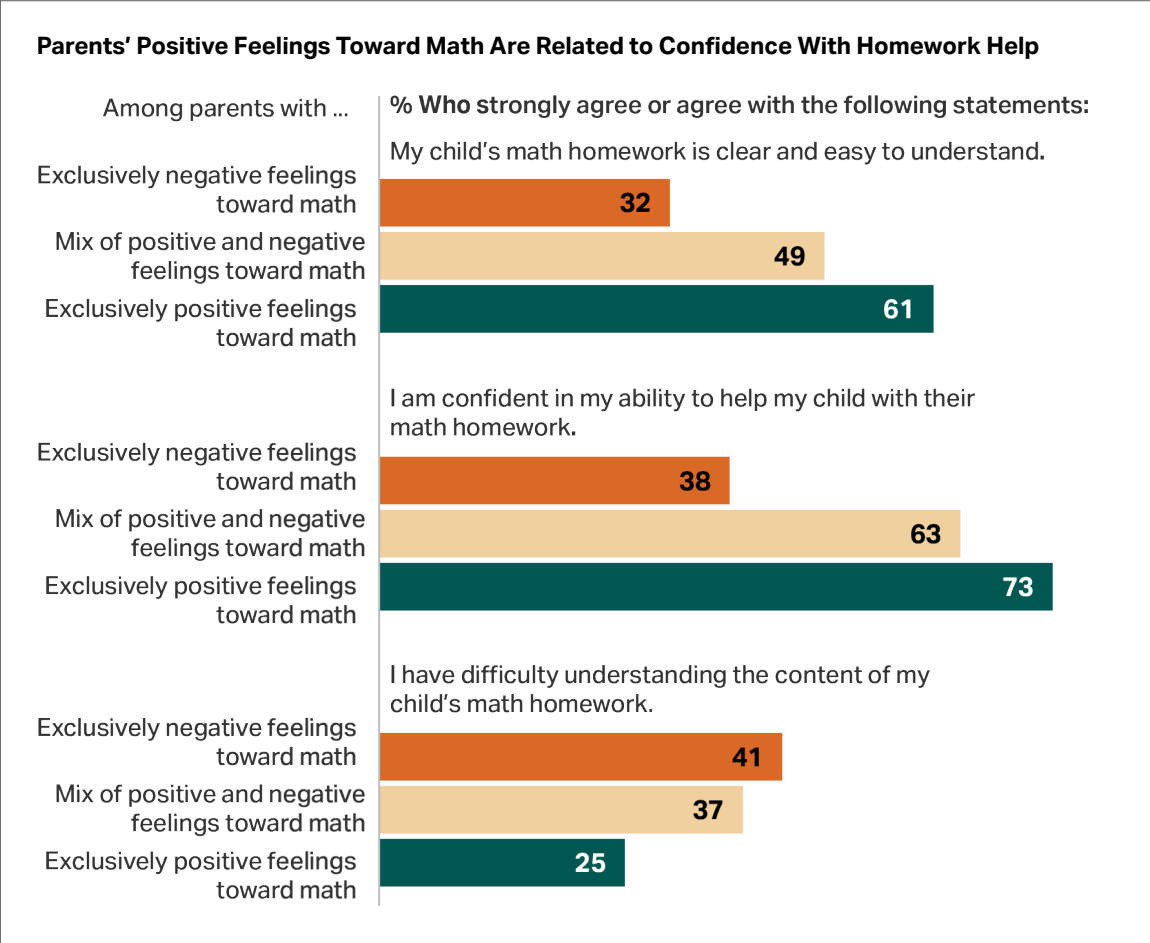
Note: Data labels less than 3% are not displayed.



Parents with positive feelings toward math are more confident supporting their child’s math learning

Prior research from the Math Narrative Project⁶ has found that parents’ beliefs about math, such as whether they consider themselves to be a “math person,” can impact how they support their child’s math education. The Gallup Math Matters study demonstrates a similar finding: Parents’ feelings toward math are related to their confidence in and ability to support their child with math homework. Seventy-three percent of parents who have only positive feelings toward math feel confident in their ability to help their child with math homework, compared with just 38% of parents who have only negative feelings toward math.

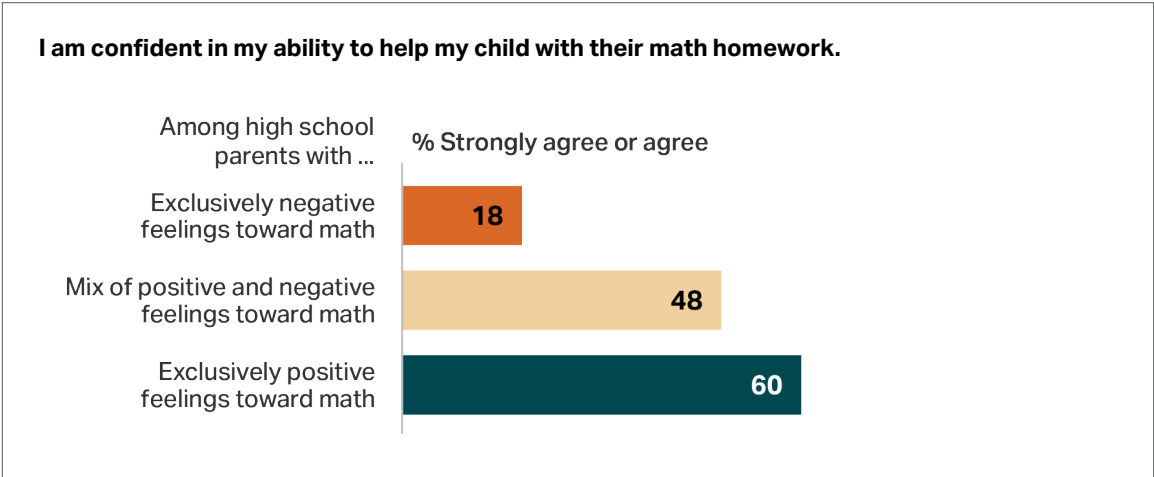
CHART 16



6 The Math Narrative Project. (n.d.). Project Overview. <https://www.mathnarrative.org/insights/>

While confidence in homework help is much greater among parents with children in lower grade levels, the link between parents’ positive feelings toward math and overall confidence exists at all grade levels. Among parents of high schoolers alone, 60% of parents with exclusively positive feelings toward math feel confident helping their child with math homework, compared to 18% of parents with exclusively negative feelings toward math.

CHART 17

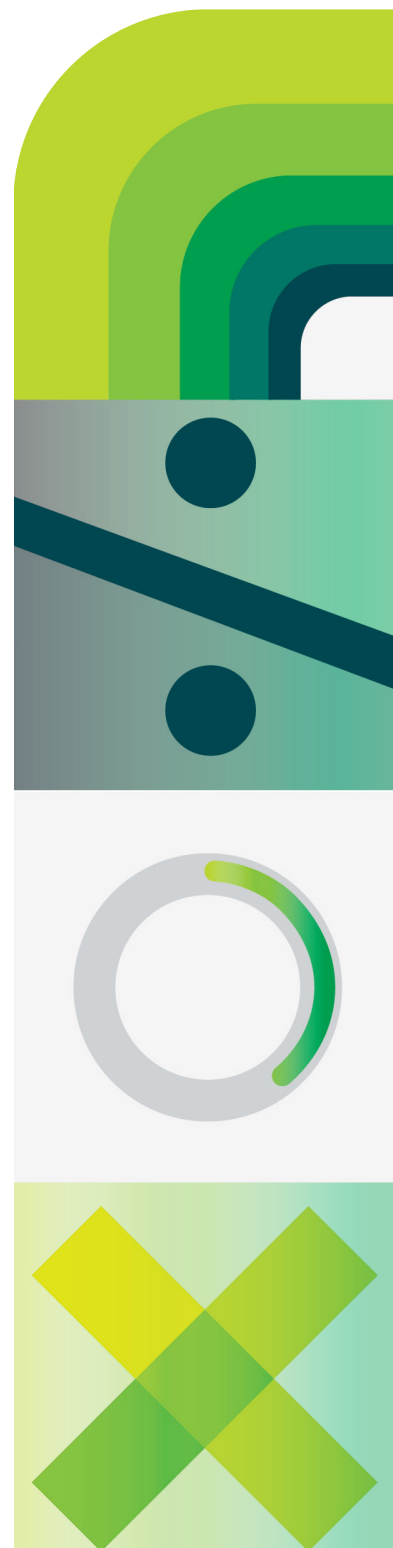


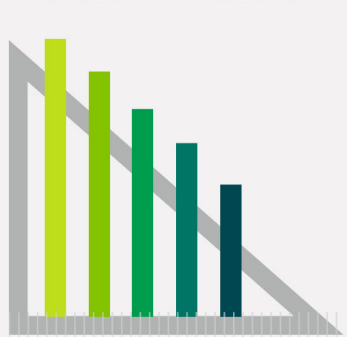
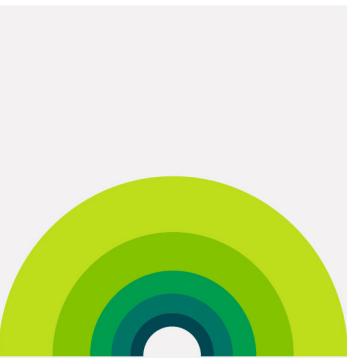
Methodology

Results for the Gallup Math Matters Study are based on multiple surveys conducted with the general U.S. public, with results disaggregated among parents and managers nationally.

To gather the general U.S. adult and parent perspective, Gallup surveyed 5,136 U.S. adults aged 18 and older from Dec. 2-6, 2024. Among the total sample, Gallup surveyed 808 parents of children currently enrolled in K-12th grade. If a parent had more than one child, they were asked to think of their oldest child in K-12 school when responding to the survey. Gallup used the Gallup Panel to randomly select and survey respondents to participate in the study. The Gallup Panel is a probability-based panel of U.S. adults who are randomly selected to join the panel primarily through address-based sampling (ABS), as well as random-digit-dialing (RDD) telephone surveys. The data are weighted to match national demographics of gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education and region for the population of U.S. adults aged 18 and older. Demographic weighting targets are based on the most recent American Community Survey figures. For results based on the sample of U.S. adults, the margin of sampling error is ± 1.9 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. For parents, the margin of error is ± 4.3 percentage points. All reported margins of sampling error include computed design effects for weighting.

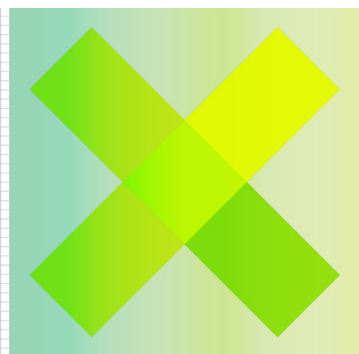
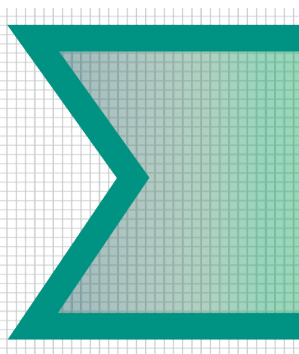
To gather the workplace perspective from managers, Gallup surveyed 2,831 managers from Dec. 2-9, 2024, using a web-based survey. Managers were individuals who self-reported their workplace role as senior leaders, managers, supervisors or project managers who are responsible for the work output of others. Gallup used the Gallup Panel to randomly select and invite eligible respondents to participate in the study. The Gallup Panel is a probability-based panel of U.S. adults who are randomly selected to join the panel primarily through ABS, as well as RDD. The data are weighted to match national demographics of gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity and educational attainment for the population of U.S. managers aged 18 and older. The targets are based on the most recent weighted Gallup workforce study data set, wherein managers were defined as senior leaders, managers/supervisors or project managers. For results based on the total sample of managers, the margin of sampling error is ± 2.8 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. All reported margins of sampling error include computed design effects for weighting.





About Gallup

Gallup delivers analytics and advice to help leaders and organizations solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 85 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. Gallup has served more than 1,000 education organizations with advice and analytics based on over 85 years of research, including nearly half a million interviews with education leaders and their teams about their workplace experiences and the perspectives of more than 6 million students and alumni. Gallup assists districts, schools, universities and institutions nationwide with research-based strategies to provide a culture shift in education to help students on their path toward great careers and great lives.



GALLUP®

World Headquarters

The Gallup Building
901 F Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

t +1.877.242.5587

f +1.888.500.8282

www.gallup.com

