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# Western Governors University 2022 Alumni Survey

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# Introduction

Despite the very public challenges that college students and higher education institutions have faced in recent years — including COVID-19-related disruptions, debates over the cost of college and student loan forgiveness and declining public confidence in higher education — a 2022 Gallup-Lumina study found that 80% of Americans believe a two- or four-year college degree is at least as important to finding a successful career as it was 20 years ago.

For many Americans, success and purpose in work is the foundation of a great life. Gallup research suggests that finding such a purposeful career has the greatest individual impact on a person's overall wellbeing.

Unfortunately, if a college education remains among the most direct paths to a successful career, many Americans are facing significant roadblocks to achieving that outcome. The same 2022 Gallup-Lumina study found that just 30% of Americans believe quality, affordable postsecondary education is widely available. Moreover, about one-third (32%) of currently enrolled bachelor's degree students have considered stopping out in the past six months, largely due to emotional stress or the cost of attendance.

While many Americans remain skeptical of the availability of quality postsecondary programs, Western Governors University (WGU) aims to reverse that trend. Founded in 1997, WGU strives to offer a college education that is not only accessible, accommodating, achievable and affordable, but also delivers tangible value to its students after graduation.

To measure the extent to which WGU is succeeding in this mission, Gallup surveyed more than 1,400 WGU alumni who completed their undergraduate degree between 2017 and 2021 and compared the results of WGU alumni to the responses of more than 600 national bachelor's degree holders who completed their degree during the same period. All responses from WGU alumni were collected Nov. 16-Dec. 13, 2022, while national alumni responses were aggregated across three surveys conducted between 2019 and 2022.<sup>1</sup>

**Compared to national college graduates, WGU alumni are consistently about twice as likely to recommend their alma mater to others, feel their degree was worth the cost and report that their university was supportive throughout their program.** Additionally, WGU alumni are notably more likely than graduates nationally to be thriving in their overall lives, as well as engaged in their workplaces.

According to analysis of alumni data, these outcomes are the result of an intentional approach to delivering an education that is student-centric and accessible at a time when public opinion suggests these qualities are in high demand from U.S. universities.

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<sup>1</sup> For full details of survey administrations, refer to the "Methodology" section on p.28 of this report.

**TABLE 1**

**Demographic Profile of Respondents**

	WGU GRADUATES	National graduates	Public university graduates	Private, not-for-profit university graduates	National graduates, age 25+ at graduation
Total respondents	1,448	629	362	198	210
Median current age	43	27	27	27	33
Median undergraduate loan amount (2022 USD)	\$3,990	\$12,100	\$5,080	\$21,463	\$19,350
Female graduates	61%	56%	56%	56%	57%
First-generation graduates	65%	34%	37%	24%	56%
Traditionally underrepresented races/ethnicities <sup>2</sup>	18%	21%	22%	16%	29%

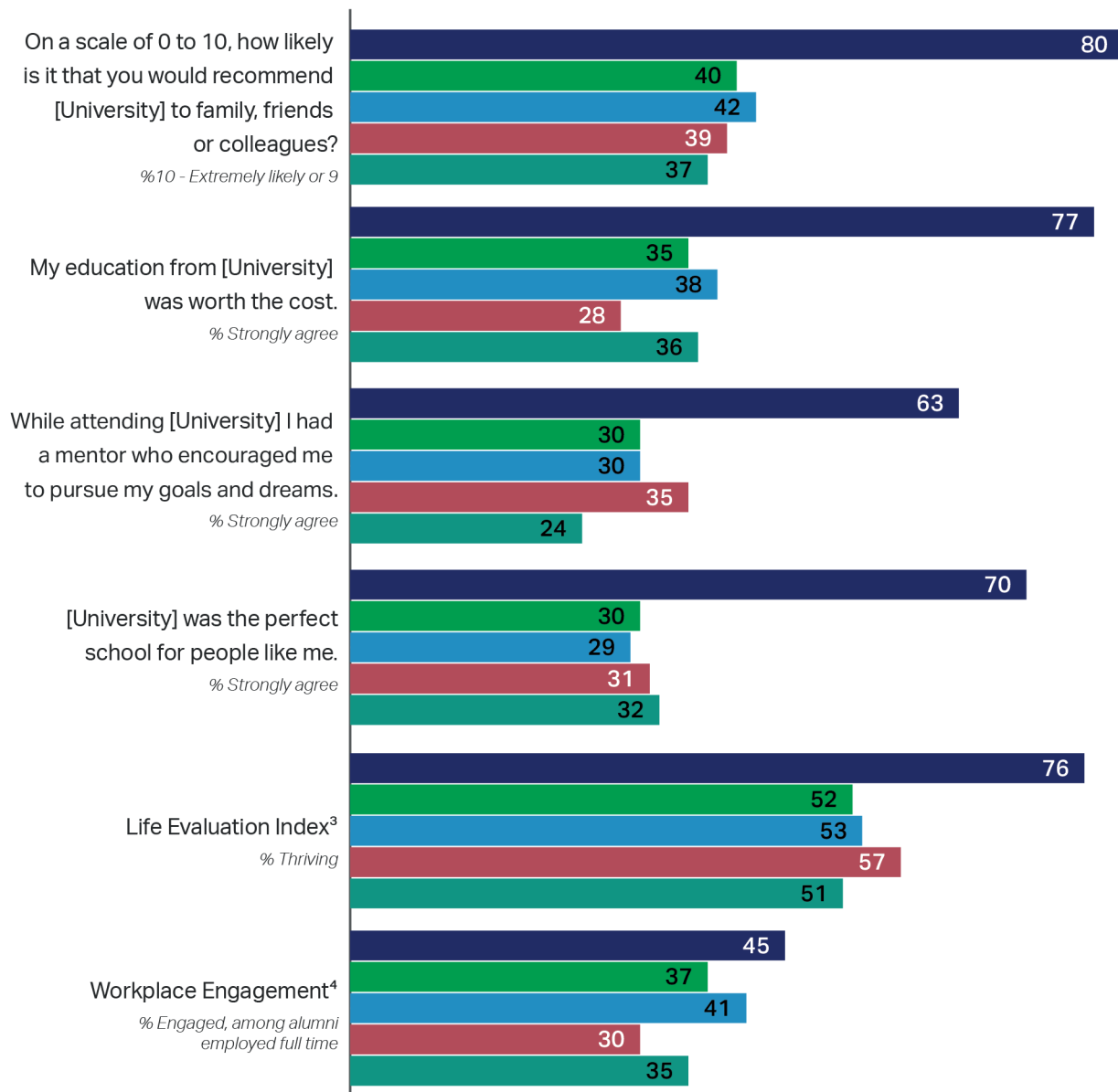


2 Includes respondents who identify as Black or African American, Hispanic, American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

# Key Findings

**CHART 1**

■ WGU graduates 
 ■ National graduates 
 ■ Public university graduates 
 ■ Private, not-for-profit university graduates  
■ National graduates, age 25+ at graduation



3 Gallup measures life evaluation using a two-item index based on the [Cantril Self-Anchoring Striving Scale](#). This index asks respondents to rate their current lives on a scale of 0 to 10, and to project how they will rate their lives in five years. Respondents who rate their current lives as a 7 or higher and their future lives as an 8 or higher are considered "thriving" in their life evaluation.

4 Gallup measures employee engagement using the [Q12<sup>®</sup> survey](#), a proprietary index that determines the degree to which individuals are highly committed to and psychologically engaged with their work. In both the WGU Alumni Survey and Gallup Alumni Survey, Gallup uses an abbreviated three-item version of the Q12 to determine engagement.



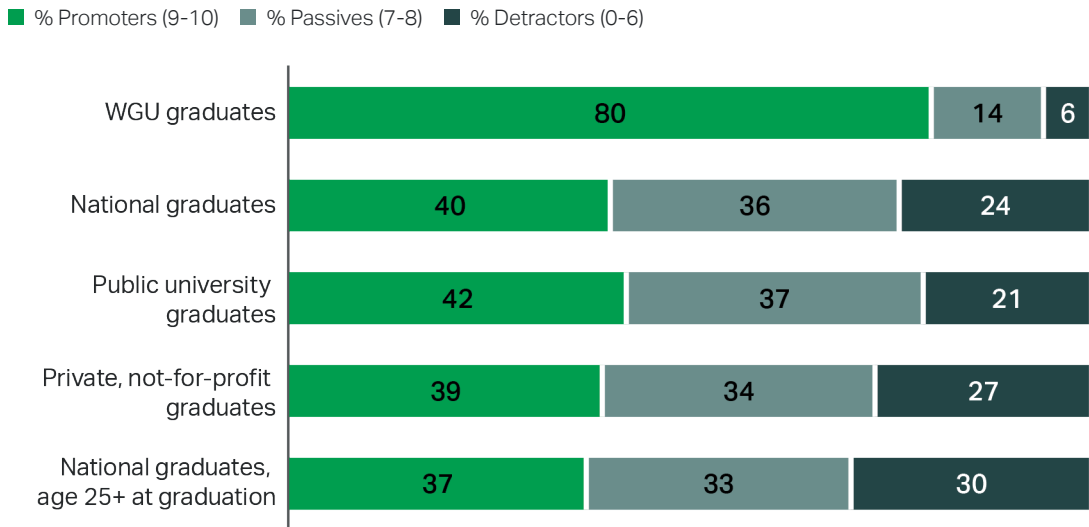
# Restoring Confidence in and Enthusiasm for a College Education

In addition to traditional outcomes such as job placement rates and average salaries, one indicator of whether a university is delivering a quality education to its students is how enthusiastically its alumni would recommend their experience to others. As college enrollment continues to decline alongside trust in institutions like higher education — despite widespread acknowledgement of the importance of a degree to career outcomes — the endorsement of alumni is arguably as important to restoring this trust as employment and salary metrics.

In the face of these challenges, WGU is delivering an education that its alumni overwhelmingly recommend. When asked how likely they would be to recommend WGU to others, 80% of WGU graduates are highly likely to recommend the university, compared with 40% of bachelor's degree holders nationally.

**CHART 2**

**On a scale of 0 to 10, how likely is it that you would recommend [University] to family, friends, and colleagues?**



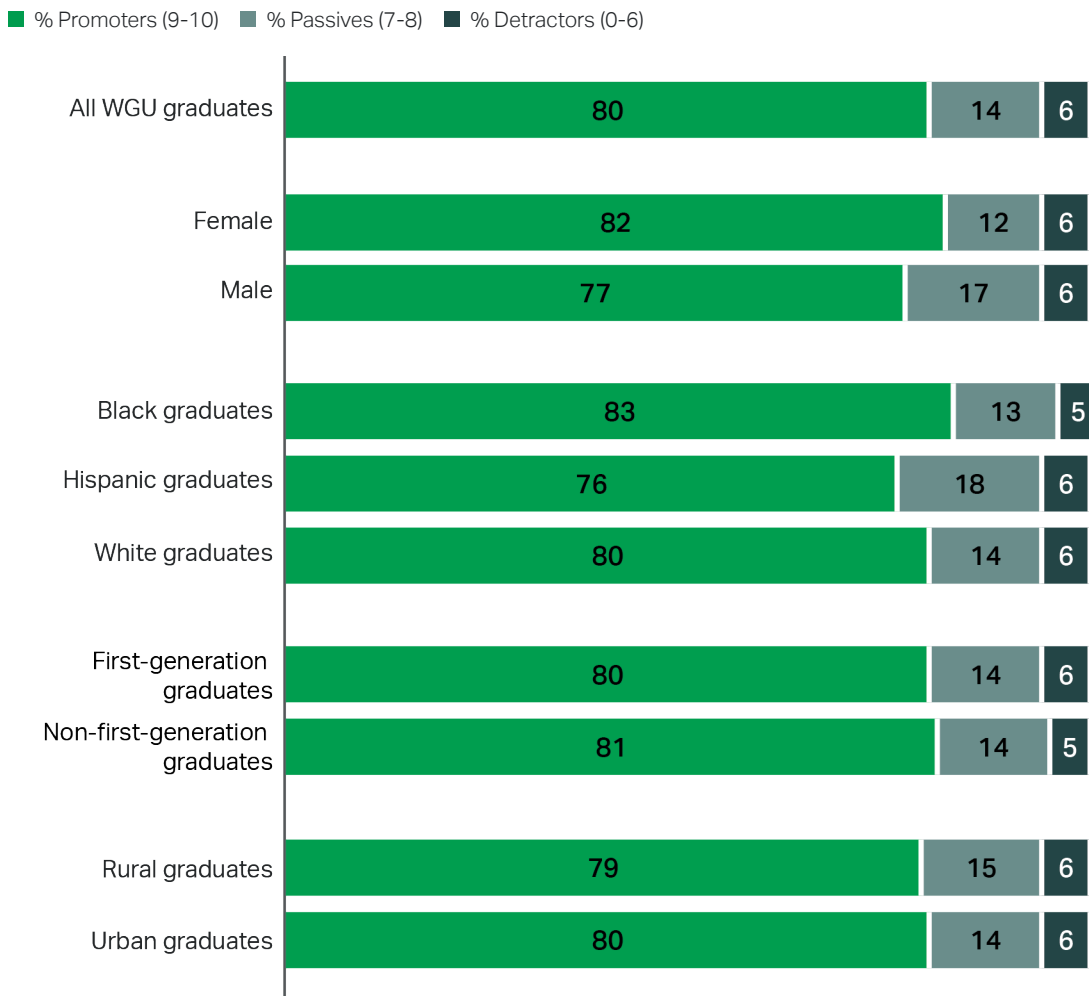


Perhaps just as notable as the overall enthusiasm of WGU graduates is the consistency of the experience across different and often traditionally underserved groups of alumni. Female, Black, Hispanic, first-generation and rural graduates are all about as likely to recommend WGU as their peers. Moreover, all of these groups are 34 to 48 percentage points more likely to recommend their alma mater than their national graduate counterparts.

**CHART 3**

**On a scale of 0 to 10, how likely is it that you would recommend [University] to family, friends, and colleagues?**

Among WGU graduates



Note: Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100% +/-1%.

Degree completion on its own does not imply endorsement of the college experience, as evidenced by the less than half of national bachelor's degree graduates reporting they would recommend their experience to others. Universities must earn that approval from their alumni.

Through advanced analysis of WGU alumni data, Gallup finds there are a number of crucial experiences, grouped into four major themes, that explain why WGU graduates are so likely to recommend their alma mater to others:

- 1 Belonging and Institutional Trust
- 2 Student Support Services
- 3 Career Development
- 4 Student Centricity

“ I needed a school that allowed me to move at my own pace. I was tired and bored with sitting through general education classes. With WGU I was able to progress quickly and use the knowledge I already possessed to earn a four-year degree in under 18 months. ”



# The Building Blocks of a High-Quality Education

## Belonging and Institutional Trust

Across all aspects of their program, no set of experiences was more influential to WGU students' likelihood to recommend the university than whether they felt like WGU was a place where they were respected, felt cared about and felt that they belonged.

At a minimum, students at a university should expect to be treated with respect by the staff and instructors. In this sense, WGU alumni are about 26 percentage points more likely to strongly agree they were treated with respect by both professors and staff than graduates nationally.

### CHART 4

**I was treated with respect by [faculty/staff] while obtaining my undergraduate degree from [University].**

% Strongly agree

■ WGU graduates ■ National graduates

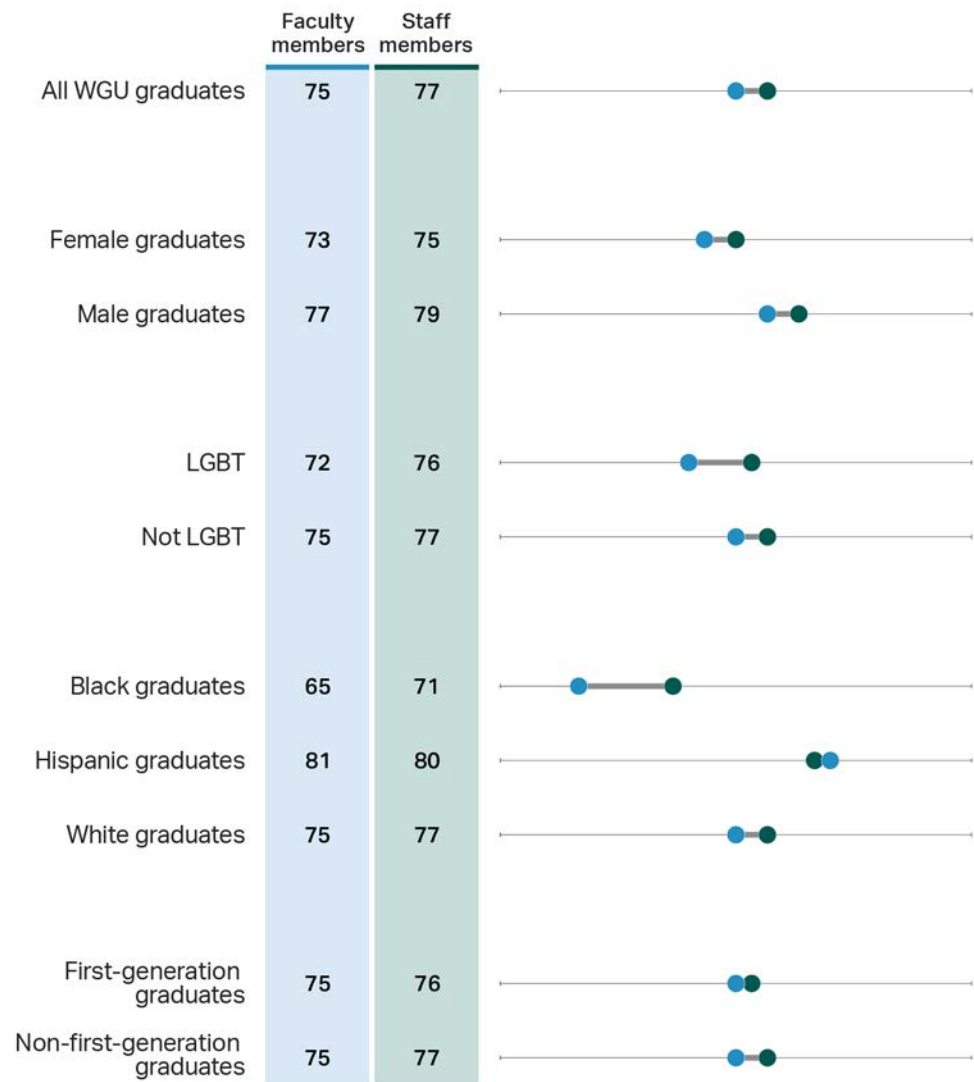


This is largely true across WGU graduates of all races, ethnicities, gender identities and sexual orientations. Black alumni are marginally less likely than their WGU peers to agree, though this is also true nationally. Black WGU graduates are still significantly more likely than Black graduates nationally to feel respected by faculty (65% to 34%) and staff (71% to 38%).

**CHART 5**

**I was treated with respect by [faculty/staff] while obtaining my undergraduate degree from WGU.**

% Strongly agree, among WGU graduates

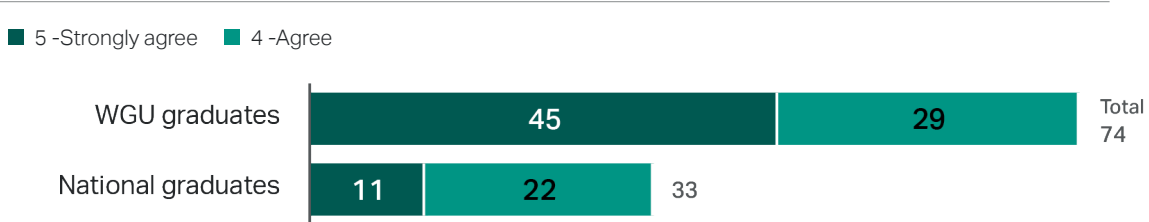


In addition to this baseline expectation of respect, graduates' assessment of their educational experience is influenced nearly as heavily by whether they feel their institution is passionate about their wellbeing. This may reflect the high incidence of emotional and financial stress among college students, and the need for support from their institution. In 2021, nearly one in four (24%) bachelor's degree students said they had considered stopping out of their program in the past six months due to emotional stress, and 12% considered stopping out due to the cost of attendance.<sup>5</sup>

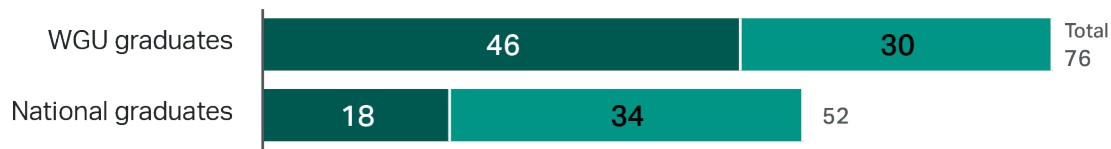
WGU delivers that support to students at far higher levels than the national average. Nearly half of WGU alumni strongly agree their alma mater was passionate about both their financial and mental wellbeing. WGU alumni are more than four times as likely as their national peers to strongly agree their institution is passionate about students' financial wellbeing (45% to 11%), and more than twice as likely to strongly agree their institution is passionate about students' mental health (46% to 18%).

**CHART 6**

**[University] is passionate about the financial wellbeing of its students.**



**[University] is passionate about the mental health of its students.**



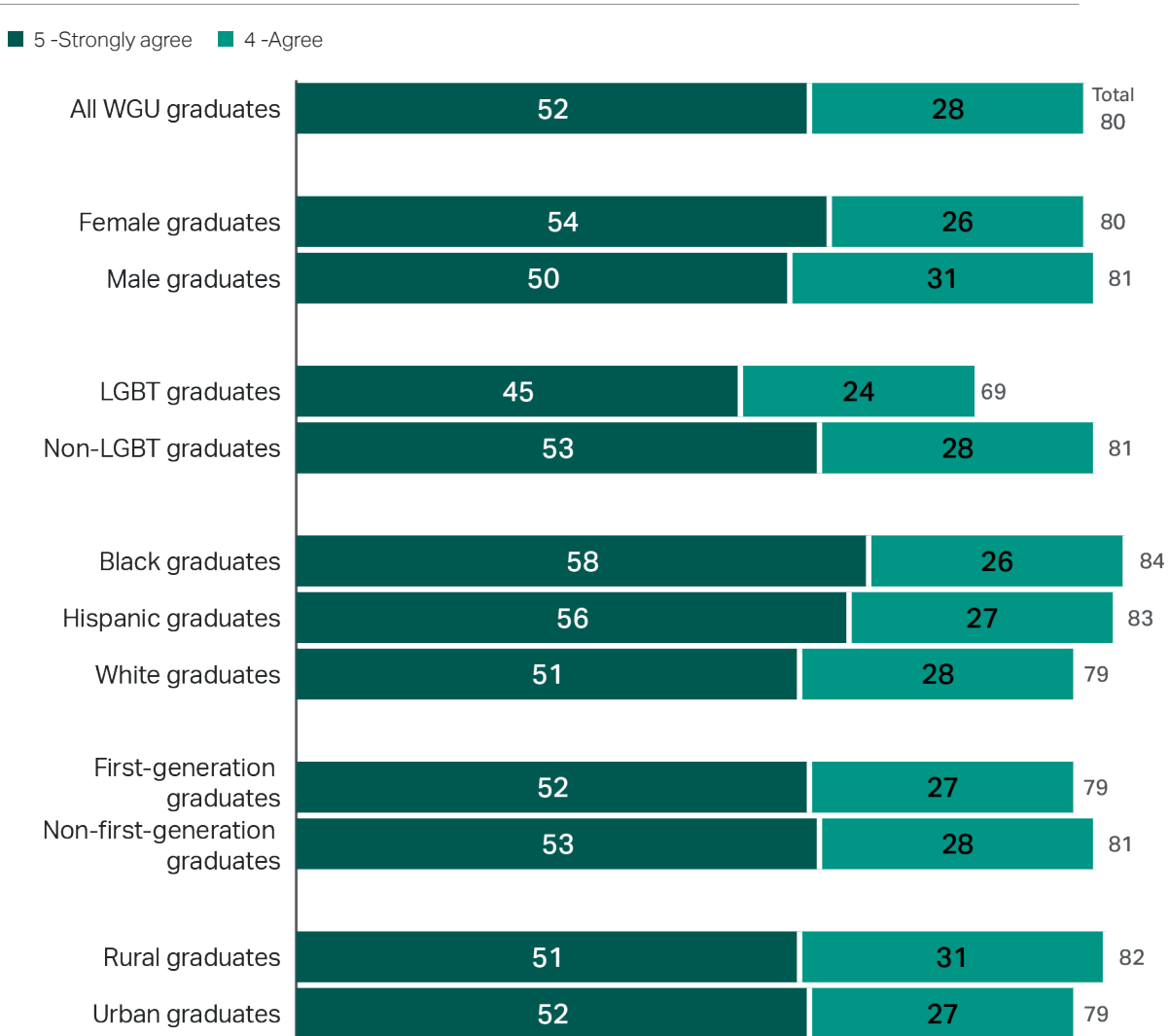
<sup>5</sup> Gallup & Lumina Foundation, "The State of Higher Education 2022 Report" <https://www.gallup.com/analytics/391829/state-of-higher-education-2022.aspx>

By ensuring its learners feel cared for and respected, WGU creates an environment where students are not only present for their education, but deeply connected to the university community. Though they earned their degrees exclusively in a distance-learning format, slightly more than half (52%) of WGU alumni strongly agree they felt like they belonged at WGU, 14 points higher than the 38% of national alumni who say the same. Large majorities of students from all races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations and geographies agree they felt a sense of belonging while enrolled at WGU.

**CHART 7**

**I felt as if I belonged at [University].**

% Among WGU graduates

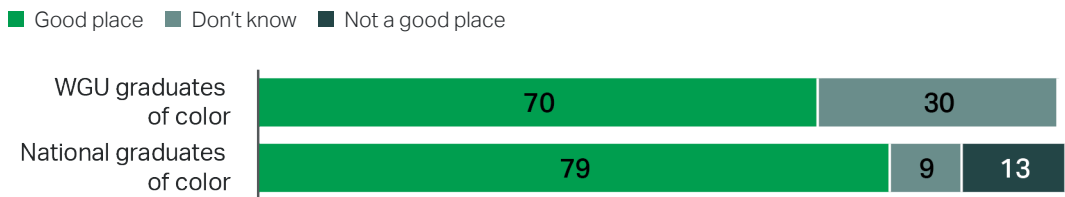


This sense of respect and belonging likely contributes to another aspect of WGU that compares favorably with universities nationally. Graduates agree that WGU is a good place for students of all races, ethnicities, gender identities and sexual orientations.

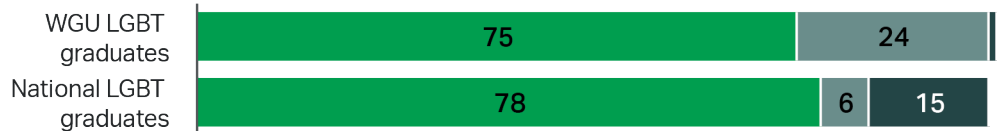
WGU graduates of color are less likely to say their college is a good place for racial and ethnic minorities (70%) than graduates nationally (79%). However, the balance of WGU graduates say they don't know whether it is a good place for students of color (30%), rather than say it is not a good place. WGU graduates who identify as LGBT are about as likely as graduates nationally to say their college is a good place for students like them (75% to 78%).

**CHART 8**

**Is [University] a good place or not a good place for students who are members of racial or ethnic minorities?**



**Is [University] a good place or not a good place for lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender students?**



Note: Numerical values <5 not shown. Due to rounding, percentages may sum to 100% +/-1%.



I required an affordable accredited degree that would work with my busy schedule and would incorporate my life experiences and previous college credits. Compounding that with WGU's tenacious support for success, I doubt there would have been another option available.



## Student Support Services

While they rarely come face-to-face with their students before commencement, WGU faculty and staff are still able to deliver support to students more effectively than universities whose students are physically on campus. About two-thirds of WGU alumni strongly agree they had access to the resources they needed to be successful (65%) and that the availability of student support services was excellent (62%). Each is notably higher than the percentages of national degree holders who give their universities the highest marks in access (39%) and availability (31%) of resources and support services.

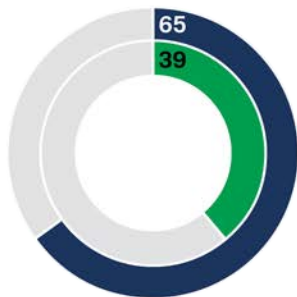
### CHART 9

#### Student Support Services and Resources

■ WGU graduates ■ National graduates

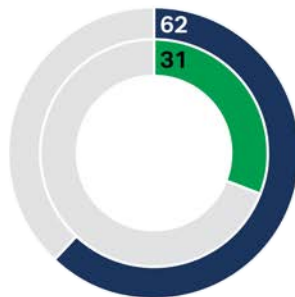
I had access to the resources I needed to be successful academically while completing my degree at [University].

(% Strongly agree)



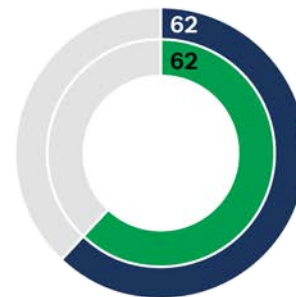
How would you rate the availability of student support services?

(% Excellent)



My professors at [University] cared about me as a person.

(% Strongly agree + % Agree)

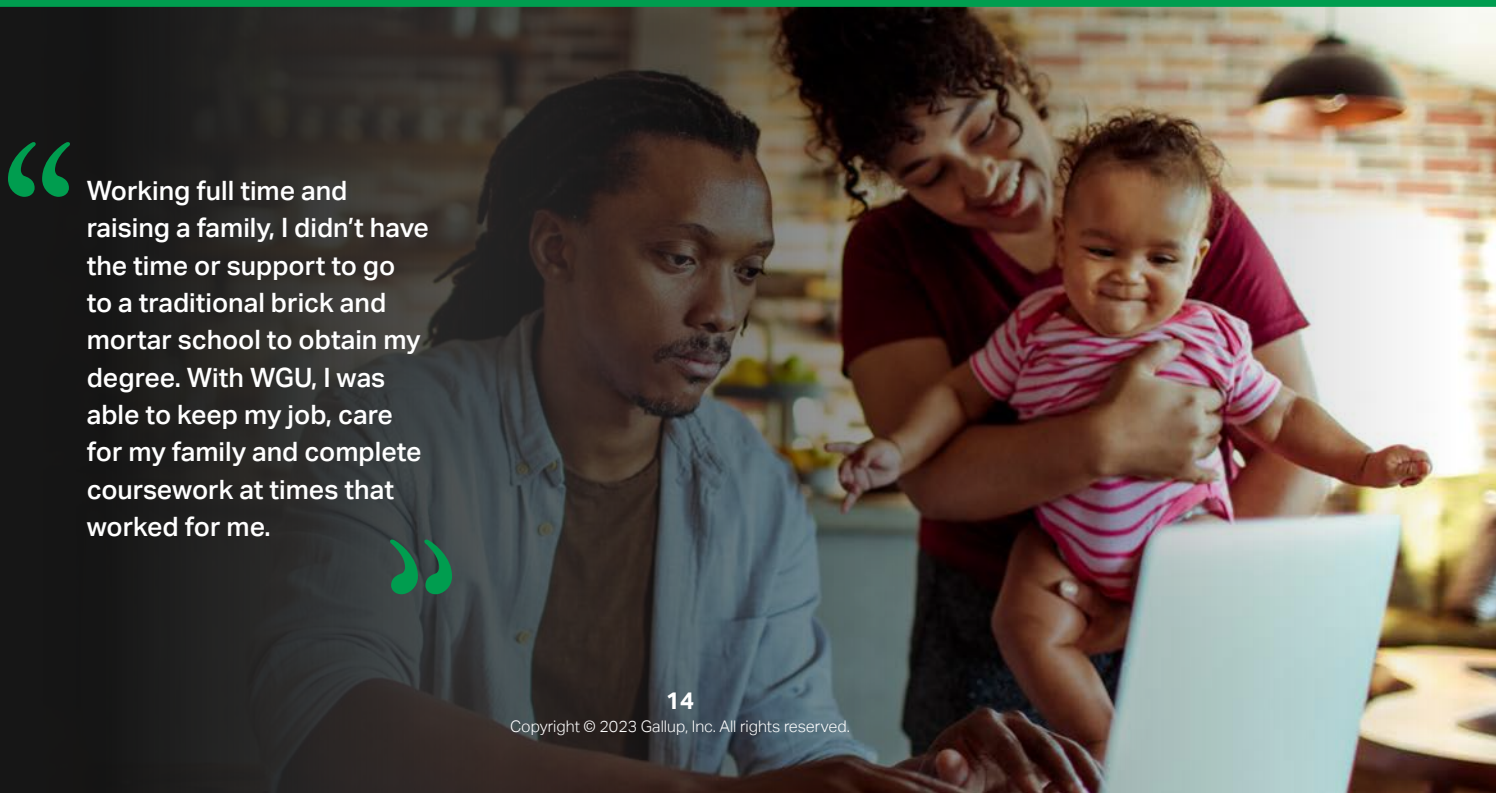
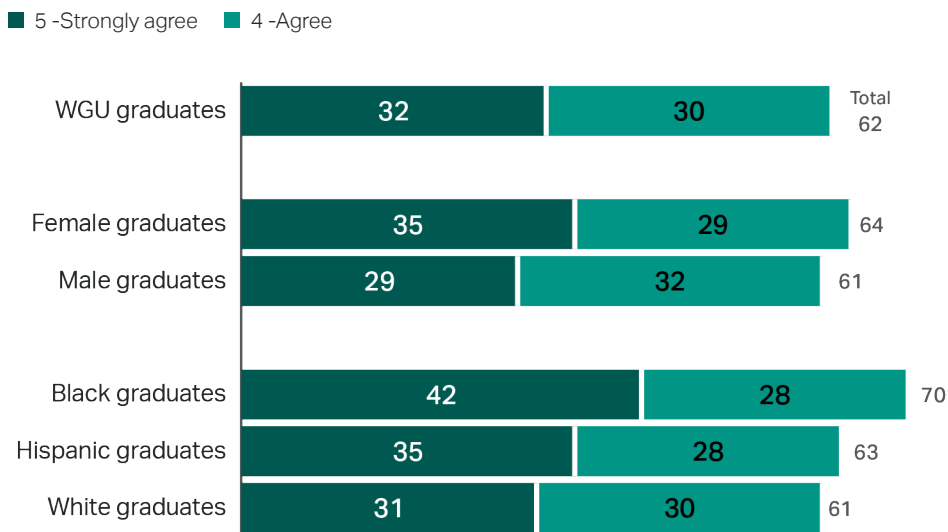




This support extends beyond the offices expressly charged with helping students navigate their college experience. Sixty-two percent of WGU alumni agree their faculty treated them not just as another student in their class, but cared about them as a person, the same percentage of national graduates who also agree with that statement.

**CHART 10**

**My professors at WGU cared about me as a person.**



“ Working full time and raising a family, I didn’t have the time or support to go to a traditional brick and mortar school to obtain my degree. With WGU, I was able to keep my job, care for my family and complete coursework at times that worked for me. ”

WGU also ensures this support is available to the students who may rely on it most. First-generation students — who may not have a close family member with college experience to help them navigate the various administrative offices — rate WGU student support services and resources just as highly as non-first-generation students. They are also just as likely to feel cared for by their faculty.

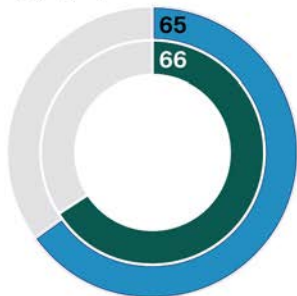
**CHART 11**

**Student Support Services and Resources**

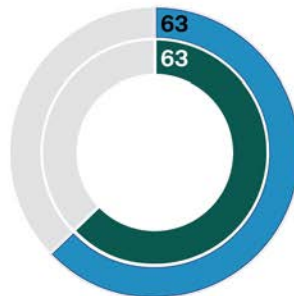
Among WGU graduates

■ First-generation graduates ■ Non-first-generation graduates

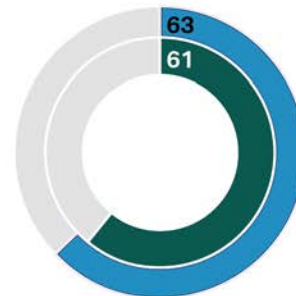
I had access to the resources I needed to be successful academically while completing my degree at [University].  
*(% Strongly agree)*



How would you rate the availability of student support services?  
*(% Excellent)*



My professors at [University] cared about me as a person.  
*(% Strongly agree + % Agree)*



First-generation WGU alumni are about twice as likely as first-generation graduates nationally to strongly agree they had access to the resources they needed (65% to 33%) and to rate the availability of student support services as excellent (63% to 33%).

In addition to the intrinsic influence these support services have on graduates' likelihood to recommend WGU, this commitment to ensuring students receive the care and resources they need to succeed also likely contributes to students' feelings of belonging and overall trust in WGU.

## Career Development

Though belonging, trust and support are the strongest drivers of WGU graduates' likelihood to recommend the university, career development also plays a significant role. This reflects not only the previously cited belief that a college degree remains an important catalyst for a successful career, but also students' explicit motivation. In 2021, 61% of currently enrolled U.S. students said pursuit of a more fulfilling career was an important reason why they decided to continue their education.

At WGU, student motivations for pursuing a degree are likely different from those of the average U.S. college student. The median age at graduation of WGU students surveyed was 41, and 83% were employed full-time while they were enrolled. Because many WGU alumni had likely already established a career path before completing their degree, more than twice as many alumni say they were pursuing a degree to advance in their current career (69%) than say they were seeking to start a career (12%) or change career paths (19%). Still, no matter which career outcome prompted them to pursue a degree, 74% of WGU alumni say they have already achieved that goal.

That success reflects graduates' assessment of how well WGU prepared them for their postgraduation jobs. Among alumni who were 25 or older at the time of graduation — who are more likely to have been employed prior to and during their enrollment — 45% of WGU alumni strongly agree they gained important job-related skills through their degree program, and half strongly agree their coursework was directly relevant to their current job. Both figures are at least 10 points higher than those of their similarly aged national peers.

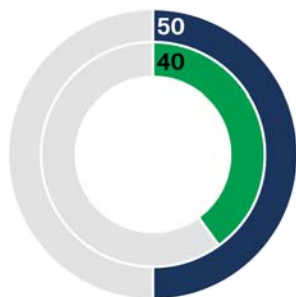
### CHART 12

#### Degree's Relevance and Utility to Career

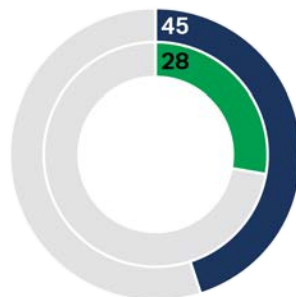
% Strongly agree

■ WGU graduates, 25+ at graduation ■ National graduates, 25+ at graduation

The knowledge and skills I learned at [University] are directly relevant to my current job or career  
*(% Strongly agree)*



I gained important job-related skills while completing my undergraduate degree at [University]  
*(% Excellent)*



WGU programs are not just preparing graduates for any jobs; they are helping them secure great jobs. Gallup research shows that workers who are not only employed, but highly engaged in their work — enthusiastic about and psychologically committed to their job — **also see benefits to their overall wellbeing**. As a result, a university that helps guide students into engaging postgraduation jobs will drive positive outcomes in nearly all other aspects of their graduates' wellbeing.

Forty-five percent of employed WGU graduates who were 25 or older at graduation are currently engaged in their work. This is 10 points higher than similarly aged bachelor's degree holders nationally, and 13 points higher than **the 2022 national average among all workers** (including those without a bachelor's degree).

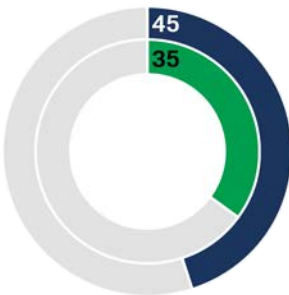
**CHART 13**

**Employee Engagement**

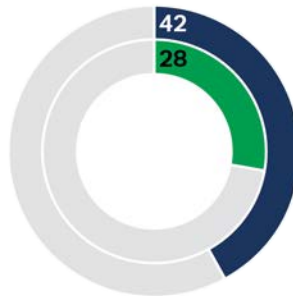
■ WGU graduates, employed full-time and 25+ at graduation

■ National graduates, employed full-time and 25+ at graduation

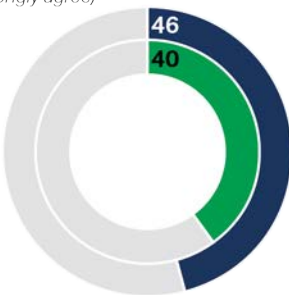
Employee Engagement  
(% Engaged)



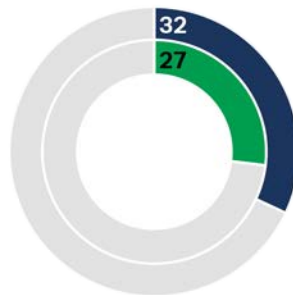
At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day  
(% Strongly agree)



I am deeply interested in the work that I do.  
(% Strongly agree)



I have the ideal job for me.  
(% Strongly agree)



## Student Centricity

Beyond delivering on standard features of a university education, there is another aspect of WGU that makes some of its graduates particularly likely to recommend the university to others: A belief that WGU was the only university from which they could have received a degree.

The WGU model is built on a number of pillars that are uniquely designed to serve its students. WGU degrees are competency-based, which allows students to complete their degrees at their own pace, potentially resulting in fewer semesters of tuition bills and faster realization of postgraduation benefits.

WGU tuition is also administered at a flat rate per six-month term — students pay the same amount regardless of how many courses they enroll in — which helps students save even more. And if students do have to take out loans to cover the cost of their degree, WGU's Responsible Borrowing Initiative helps students borrow only what they need. The result is that WGU graduates take an average of \$3,990 in loans to complete their degree, which is about one-third the median loan burden of graduates nationally (\$12,100).

Once enrolled, every WGU student is also assigned a program mentor, ensuring they have a resource available to help them navigate class scheduling, financial aid and their coursework. This has resulted in WGU graduates being more than twice as likely as graduates nationally to report having a mentor while enrolled — a key predictor of a student's likelihood to be thriving in their life and work after graduation.

### CHART 14

#### While attending [University] I had a mentor who encouraged me to pursue my goals and dreams.

% Strongly agree



These pillars are not unique for the sake of novelty; to WGU students, they can be truly differentiating. When asked whether they believe they could have earned a degree at another university, just over half (54%) of WGU alumni are certain they could have. Twenty-three percent of graduates say they could not have obtained a degree elsewhere, and a further 24% are unsure.<sup>6</sup>

**Scaled across the more than 186,000 students who completed their undergraduate degree at WGU between 2017 and 2021, WGU has awarded approximately 43,000 bachelor's degrees to students who, without the support system WGU provides, would not have been able to earn that degree, and a further 45,000 degrees to students who may not have been able to.**

The fact that nearly half of its recent graduates are not confident another university could have provided the experience they needed to graduate reflects the importance of WGU's student-centric model to the population it serves. When alumni were asked why WGU was the only school from which they could have received their degree, a number of key themes emerged, particularly surrounding affordability, flexibility and accommodation for students with jobs and caretaking responsibilities.

“ I was a full-time nurse, wife and mother. In order to complete my degree, I would have had to quit working and it would have taken time from my family. I was able to complete my degree without it interfering with any of my other responsibilities. ”

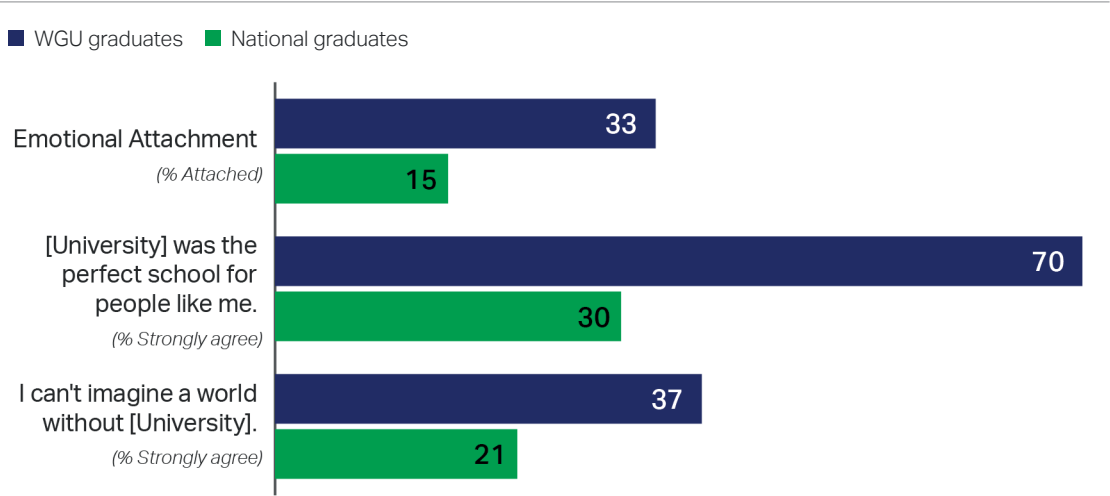
6 Due to rounding, percentages do not total 100%.



In addition to facilitating the prior themes of trust, belonging, support and development, this unique model also creates an attachment to WGU that other universities do not enjoy from their alumni at nearly the same rate. Seventy percent of WGU alumni strongly agree WGU was the perfect school for people like them, more than twice the percentage of graduates nationally who say the same (30%). WGU graduates are also significantly more likely to agree they can't imagine a world without their alma mater than their national counterparts.

**CHART 15**

**Emotional Attachment**





# Delivering Economic Value for Graduates and Their Communities

## Income Gains

Beyond creating an experience that allows tens of thousands of learners to earn degrees that seemed out of reach, WGU is conferring degrees that translate to immediate, significant economic gains for graduates, their families and their communities.

WGU graduates between 2017 and 2021 who were working learners<sup>7</sup> reported a median income of just over \$75,000<sup>8</sup> while they were enrolled at WGU. While this is notably higher than median personal income in the U.S. over the last decade — particularly for workers without a bachelor's degree — this is likely due to the average age of WGU students, as well as the industries that many working learners are employed in while attending WGU, namely healthcare, information technology and finance.

Upon graduation, these working learners report immediate boosts to their salary: The median present-day salary among working learners in the WGU Class of 2021 is \$85,000, an increase of more than \$13,000 over what they were earning while enrolled.

<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of this report, “working learners” refers to WGU graduates who were employed full-time while they were enrolled at WGU and were employed full-time at the time of the 2022 WGU Alumni Survey.

<sup>8</sup> All income and loan figures are adjusted for inflation and reported in 2022 USD.



**CHART 16**

**Change in Postgraduation Income by Year of Graduation, in 2022 USD**



While this first-year salary increase is the largest one-year change reported, WGU working learners do tend to earn continuous salary increases each year following graduation. After adjusting for the number of years they have been employed since graduation, WGU working learners report a median salary increase of \$5,333 per year.

When these income premiums are scaled across all working learners who graduated between 2017 and 2021, Gallup estimates that WGU working learners collectively earned over \$1 billion more in 2022 than they were earning at the time of their enrollment at WGU. Since 2017, those premiums total nearly \$2.6 billion.

**TABLE 2**

**Income Premiums Earned by WGU Working Learners in 2022**

Among alumni currently employed full-time for an employer, as well as during their enrollment at WGU

Year of Graduation	2022 Premium Over Income While Enrolled	Total Number of Graduates	Percentage Working Learners	Total 2022 Premium – All Working Learner Graduates
2021	\$13,605	25,729	70%	\$246,080,261
2020	\$9,190	24,676	72%	\$163,956,474
2019	\$14,600	20,211	72%	\$211,867,871
2018	\$20,300	16,089	73%	\$238,096,284
2017	\$27,400	13,087	65%	\$233,079,470
<b>Total</b>				<b>\$1,093,080,360</b>

These income gains are particularly impactful for the 23% of students who believe WGU is the only university that could have provided them the support they needed to earn their degree, as well as the 24% who are unsure whether they could have earned a degree at another school. In 2022 alone, WGU degrees have generated more than \$500 million in additional income for these graduates, their families and their communities that — were it not for an institution like WGU — they otherwise may not have been able to earn. Since 2017, these gains total more than \$1 billion.

## Tuition Savings

As discussed in the preceding section, WGU also provides value to its graduates through an affordable, flat-rate tuition model. Using administrative data from WGU, as well as data from the Department of Education's [College Scorecard](#), Gallup sought to quantify the benefits this model provides to WGU graduates not only in the tuition dollars saved, but also in the time required for completion.<sup>9</sup>

First, Gallup calculated the average net tuition cost<sup>10</sup> per student. After adjusting for inflation, Gallup determined the average annual net tuition cost for WGU students to be \$7,125, compared with \$14,909 among bachelor's-degree-granting institutions nationally.<sup>11</sup> This means that on average, a full-time WGU student pays about half as much per term as the average full-time bachelor's degree student.

Next, Gallup estimated the number of additional credits that each WGU graduate would have needed to complete their degree at a national university. This was done by subtracting the number of credits a graduate transferred to WGU from 120 credit hours, the minimum required to complete a bachelor's degree.<sup>12</sup> Because 98% of WGU students were enrolled at another university prior to WGU,<sup>13</sup> this step allowed Gallup to calculate savings only for the portion of a degree that graduates completed at WGU.

On average, WGU students transferred 55.5 credits to WGU, meaning that at an average university, they would have been required to complete an additional 64.5 credits to earn their degree. The average WGU graduate completed their degree in 4.8 terms. Therefore, they completed the equivalent of just under 27 credits per year. While WGU's flat-rate tuition is not calculated on a per-credit basis, by dividing WGU graduates' annual tuition costs by their annual credit accumulation, Gallup estimates WGU graduates pay \$265 per credit.

Because the national annual net tuition comparison is based on costs for full-time students, Gallup's national per-credit cost calculations assume an annual credit accumulation of 24 hours. While this is the minimum number of credits a student could enroll in to be included in College Scorecard tuition data, a [2022 National Student Clearinghouse report](#) found the average first-time, first-year student in 2019 attempted approximately 21 credits, and also found that "adult learners (over age 24) realized consistently lower [credit accumulation rates] ... compared to their younger counterparts." Therefore, while the national per-credit cost used in this analysis is \$621, this may be a conservative estimate, based on the national credit accumulation trends of students who are in the same age group as the typical WGU graduate.

9 WGU administrative data included graduates between 2007 and 2022 for whom WGU had valid data regarding tuition costs and transfer credits. IPEDS data were then used to calculate average net tuition cost for all bachelor's degree-granting institutions within the same period. All tuition data were adjusted for inflation to 2022 USD.

10 Net tuition is defined as the cost of tuition at an institution, less any awards, grants or scholarships awarded to students by the institution or federal government. This does not include any external grants or scholarships earned by students.

11 Annual tuition calculations for WGU assume enrollment in two, six-month terms. National tuition is calculated based on average annual costs for a full-time student (defined as enrollment in a minimum of 12 credit hours).<https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/data/glossary/>

12 DOE guidance (as of 2008) states the typical bachelor's degree program requires 120 credit hours; this is also true of five of the six regional accrediting bodies: HLC, NECHE, NWCCU, SACSCOC and WASC.

13 <https://www.wgu.edu/about/story/measuring-impact/retention-graduation-rates.html>

Still, even when assuming the average national university offers a program format that allows full-time working adults to complete 24 credits per year, Gallup finds WGU graduates enjoy significant tuition savings. By offering its students a model that charges less for tuition and allows them to accumulate credits at a higher rate than the national average, the average WGU graduate completes their degree at a cost of \$17,108. This is nearly \$23,000 less than the \$40,081 it would have cost them to earn that degree at another university, a savings of 57%.

Across the nearly 140,000 students who completed their bachelor’s degree at WGU in 2021 or earlier, these savings total to more than \$3.2 billion.

### Reduced Loan Burdens

These tuition savings not only allow WGU students to pay less in nominal price for their degree, but also help many students to avoid taking out loans to cover tuition costs, potentially saving them additional interest costs associated with loan repayment. Since 2017, WGU working learners borrowed a median of \$5,450, and 42% of these graduates did not have to take out any loans to complete their degree. When calculated as a percentage of their income while enrolled at WGU, the median debt-to-income ratio among working learners is 7%.

**TABLE 3**

#### Debt-to-Income Ratio of Working Learners

Among all working learners at WGU

Year of Graduation	Median Income While Enrolled	Approximate Amount of Loans	Debt-to-Income Ratio
<b>Overall</b>	\$75,240	\$5,450	7%
<b>2021</b>	\$71,395	\$4,360	6%
<b>2020</b>	\$75,810	\$5,700	8%
<b>2019</b>	\$75,400	\$4,060	5%
<b>2018</b>	\$76,700	\$1,475	2%
<b>2017</b>	\$72,600	\$8,470	12%



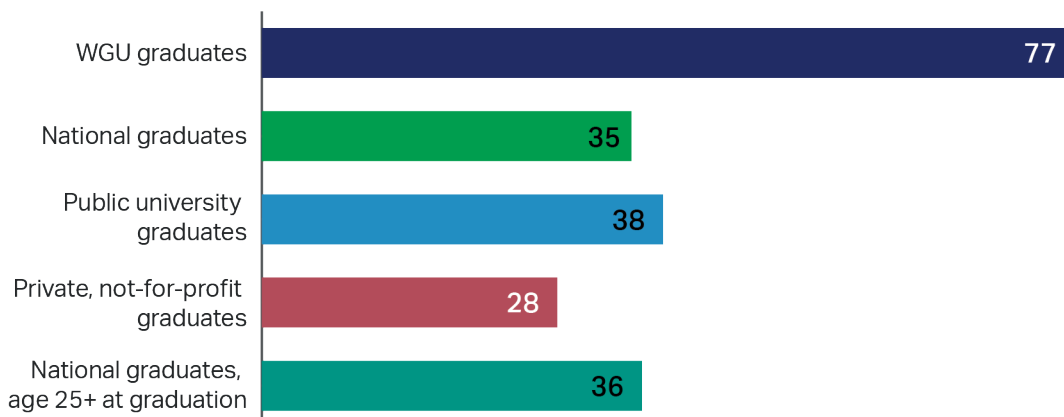
# Guiding Alumni to Great Postgraduation Lives

All of these components — additional income, lower tuition, reduced debt and a differentiating student experience — make WGU graduates far more likely than the national average to believe their degree was valuable. Over three-quarters (77%) of WGU alumni strongly agree their education was worth the cost, more than double the percentage of bachelor's degree holders nationally who say the same (35%).

## CHART 17

### My education from [University] was worth the cost.

% Strongly agree

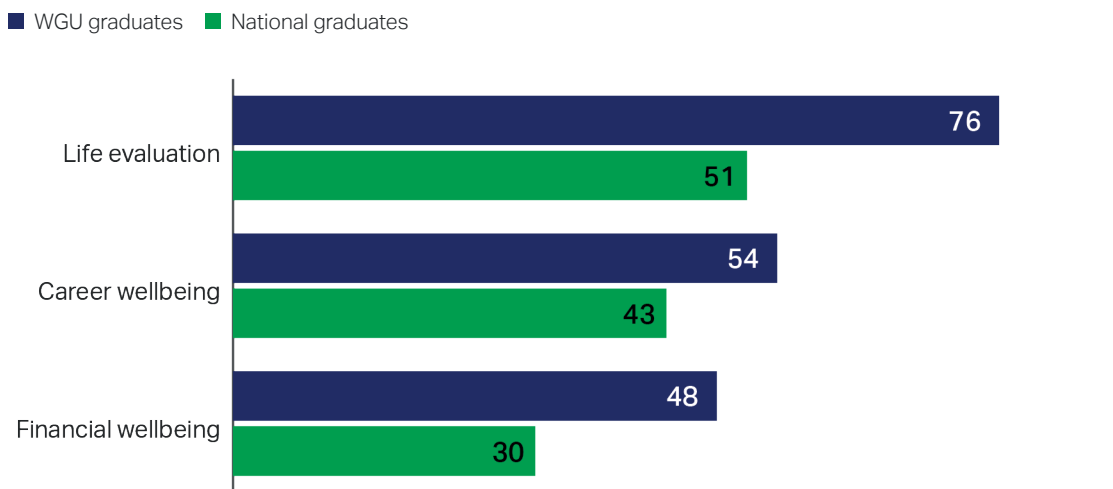


For WGU graduates, their degree also remains a reliable pathway to a good life. By designing a program that is relevant to students' current or future jobs, ensuring its students achieve whatever career goal drove them to pursue a degree and providing that education at a reasonable cost, WGU enables its graduates to thrive in their careers, finances and overall lives at notably higher rates than bachelor's degree holders nationally.

**CHART 18**

**Wellbeing**

% Thriving, among those 25+ at graduation



Though Gallup data suggest higher education has lost the trust of many U.S. adults in recent years, WGU may offer a model for institutions across the U.S. to begin restoring that trust. The responses of its alumni suggest that by delivering education that is affordable, accessible and student-centric, WGU has not only broadened the population of students who can pursue a college degree — and attain the benefits that come with it — but also created hundreds of thousands of advocates for the value of postsecondary education. If higher education institutions nationally were able to similarly increase the percentage of their alumni who would strongly recommend their experience to others, this may be an important step to restoring trust in higher education. This would increase trust among those who obtain a degree, as well as the friends, family and colleagues to whom they would recommend their experiences.

# Methodology

Results from this study are based on 1,448 web survey responses from WGU alumni who received their undergraduate degree between 2017 and 2021. Gallup conducted the survey from Nov. 16 to Dec. 13, 2022. WGU provided the sample of alumni email addresses. Alumni were included in the study if the institution had an email address on file.

Results from the national study used for comparison purposes — the Gallup Alumni Survey — are based on 629 web surveys from respondents who received a bachelor's degree between 2017 and 2021, are aged 18 or older, have internet access, and live in one of the 50 U.S. states or the District of Columbia. Of these, 362 graduated from public universities and 198 graduated from private, not-for-profit universities. There were 210 graduates from the national sample who were age 25 or older at graduation. Results were collected over multiple fielding periods, including Oct. 21 to Nov. 4, 2019; Nov. 18 to Dec. 1, 2021 and Nov. 21 to Nov. 30, 2022.

All reported margins of sampling error for the Gallup Alumni Survey include the computed design effects for weighting.

For results based on the total sample of 1,448 respondents with a bachelor's degree from WGU, the margin of sampling error is  $\pm 2.6$  percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

For results based on the 629 respondents from the Gallup Alumni Survey with a bachelor's degree conferred between 2017 and 2021, the margin of sampling error is  $\pm 4.4$  percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

For results based on the 362 respondents from the Gallup Alumni Survey with a bachelor's degree from a public university conferred between 2017 and 2021, the margin of sampling error is  $\pm 5.7$  percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

For results based on the 198 respondents from the Gallup Alumni Survey with a bachelor's degree from a private, not-for-profit university conferred between 2017 and 2021, the margin of sampling error is  $\pm 7.9$  percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

For results based on the 210 respondents from the Gallup Alumni Survey with a bachelor's degree conferred between 2017 and 2021 when age 25 or older, the margin of sampling error is  $\pm 7.6$  percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

# About Western Governors University

Western Governors University (WGU) is a competency-based, online, nonprofit university founded in 1997 by 19 U.S. governors who saw advancement in technology as an opportunity to expand access to higher education by making it possible to study and learn independent of time and place. These governors saw the transformative power of competency-based education (CBE) — an academic model that focuses on measuring learning rather than time.

CBE is ideal for adult learners, who come to college with different learning styles and levels of knowledge. Rather than enrolling in semester-long courses with fixed schedules, students move through courses as quickly as they can demonstrate that they know the material. They study and learn on a schedule that fits their lives with regular, one-on-one instruction and support from faculty. Programs and courses are designed with input from academic and industry leaders to ensure their relevance to employers and the workplace.

WGU's defining principle is focus on the student — every WGU initiative is evaluated and prioritized based on its impact on student success. The efficacy of WGU's learning model and student focus is demonstrated in results — a graduation rate significantly higher than other institutions serving adult learners; student, graduate, and employer satisfaction levels that outpace the national average; dramatically lower student debt levels, decreasing annually; and better employment outcomes for its graduates.

The university offers more than 60 bachelor's, master's and post-baccalaureate degree programs in the key workforce areas of business, information technology, K-12 teacher education and health professions, including nursing. WGU's nearly 140,000 enrolled students and more than 305,000 graduates reside in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and at military installations worldwide.

## 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.

Gallup partners with higher education institutions to improve the employee experience and student experience through advice and analytics about the university culture, employee engagement among faculty and staff, and the curricular and programmatic experiences in which students engage.



**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](http://www.gallup.com)**