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# Walton Family Foundation-Gallup Voices of Gen Z Study

Year 3 Annual Report

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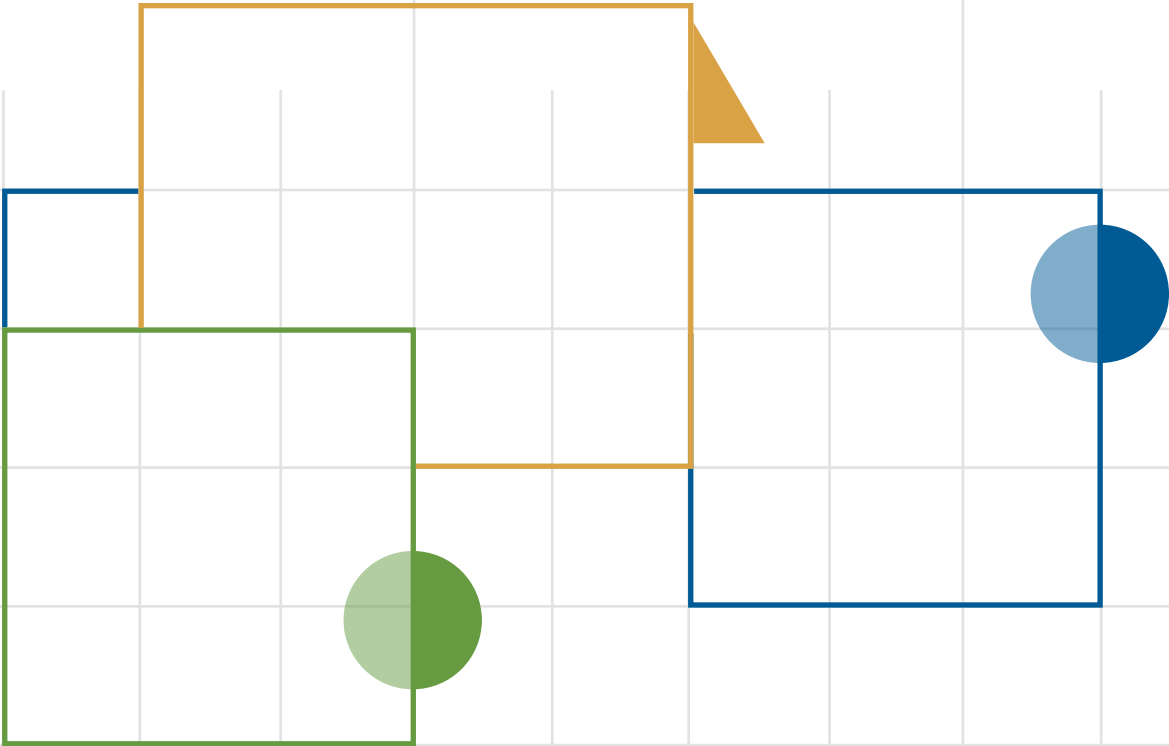
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## Executive Summary and Key Findings

Since 2023, the Walton Family Foundation and Gallup have surveyed tens of thousands of members of Generation Z — children and young adults born between 1997 and 2012 — about critical aspects of their lives, education and aspirations, as part of the Voices of Gen Z study. The series of surveys has provided diverse insights into the experiences of Gen Z, including the extent to which they feel [happiness, purpose and meaning](#) in their lives; how they assess their [relationships with their parents](#); their attitudes toward [artificial intelligence](#); and their [awareness of and preparedness](#) for post-high school employment and education pathways.

While the study has covered many aspects of Gen Zers' lives, one important finding consistently surfaces across all topics explored:

### **The benefits of a great education extend far beyond the walls of the classroom and a student's time in school, affecting all aspects of their lives.**

Students who report having a **highly engaging experience at school** — such as feeling like their schoolwork challenges them, is interesting and gives them opportunities to do what they do best — are **significantly more likely** to feel **optimistic** about and **prepared** for their future, understand their **purpose** and be **thriving** in their lives overall.

Students who do not plan to pursue a college degree after they graduate high school report having fewer of these experiences than their college-bound peers. Moreover, just half of students say that most of their teachers seem excited about what they are teaching; even fewer say most of their teachers make the material in their classes interesting or connect that content to the real world.

Ensuring more students have these engaging experiences — and understanding the conditions that create a truly engaging classroom experience — will not only prepare students for their first job or college course after graduation, but also give them the greatest opportunity to pursue purposeful and thriving lives.



While school engagement improved slightly in 2025, about **one in three students** report having no more than four of eight engaging classroom experiences.

The most recent administration of the Voices of Gen Z survey — conducted May 16-27, 2025, with nearly 3,800 13- to 28-year-old Gen Zers — builds upon past research on this theme, updating trends while exploring several new factors that influence the school experience of middle and high school students.

**Key findings from the 2025 survey include:**

- 1 Life evaluation among all Gen Zers **declined to its lowest level** in the past three years, with 45% of 13- to 28-year-olds considered “thriving” in their lives. However, this decline is **driven exclusively by Gen Z adults**, whose thriving percentage **declined to 39%** — a five-point drop from 2024. Meanwhile, more than half of Gen Z middle and high school students (56%) are thriving.
- 2 Gen Z has **never felt more prepared for their futures**: 56% of Gen Z agree they feel prepared for their futures, a 12-point increase since 2023. Moreover, while unchanged from prior years, about three-quarters of Gen Z (77%) **agree they have a great future ahead of them**.
- 3 Gen Z students report notable **improvements in every aspect of their school engagement** compared with 2024; however, about half of students do not agree that their coursework gives them the opportunity to do what they do best or challenges them in a good way, and just over one in three students **do not feel they have recently learned anything interesting**.
- 4 As in prior years, students who are **more engaged in the classroom** are significantly **more likely to feel prepared for and optimistic about their futures**, as well as more likely to be thriving in their lives. Additionally, students who are more engaged are also **less likely to be chronically absent from school**.
- 5 Students who report **greater enjoyment of reading** — as well as those who read more frequently for enjoyment — are also **more likely to report strong overall academic performance**. However, 35% of Gen Z students say they dislike reading, and 43% say they rarely or never read for fun.



# Detailed Findings

## The difference in life evaluation between Gen Z K-12 students and adults is larger than ever.

For the third straight year, just under half of Generation Z — children and young adults born between 1997 and 2012 — report living great lives. According to Gallup’s Life Evaluation Index, 45% of Gen Zers are considered “thriving” in their lives, indicating they rate their current lives positively and anticipate they will continue to rate their lives positively in five years. However, this is the lowest percentage measured during the Voices of Gen Z study, down slightly from the 49% of Gen Zers who were thriving in 2024 and about in line with the 47% who were thriving in 2023.

While the overall number of Gen Zers who are thriving in their lives is at the lowest point in the trend since 2023, the life evaluation of the youngest members of the cohort, who are still enrolled in middle school or high school, has never been higher. Since 2023, the life evaluation of Gen Z middle and high school students has inched upward, with 56% of these students thriving in 2025.

Meanwhile, though the life evaluation of Gen Z adults has consistently trailed their younger peers by a considerable margin, the gap has widened to 17 points in 2025, with 39% of these adults thriving. That contrasts with 11- and 12-point gaps, previously.

### CHART 1

#### Life Evaluation Trend Across Gen Z

Life Evaluation Index

■ % Suffering ■ % Struggling ■ % Thriving

##### Gen Z K-12 students



##### Gen Z adults



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

The percentage of thriving Gen Z adults is five points lower than it was in 2024 (44%), but in line with the 2023 percentage (41%). Moreover, a national Gallup survey conducted in February 2025 showed [49% of U.S. adults were thriving](#), the lowest level in five years.<sup>1</sup> Thus, while Gen Z adults are about 10 percentage points less likely to be thriving than older generations — a pattern that has been consistent in all three years of the Voices of Gen Z study — the recent decline may reflect broader changes happening among all U.S. adults.

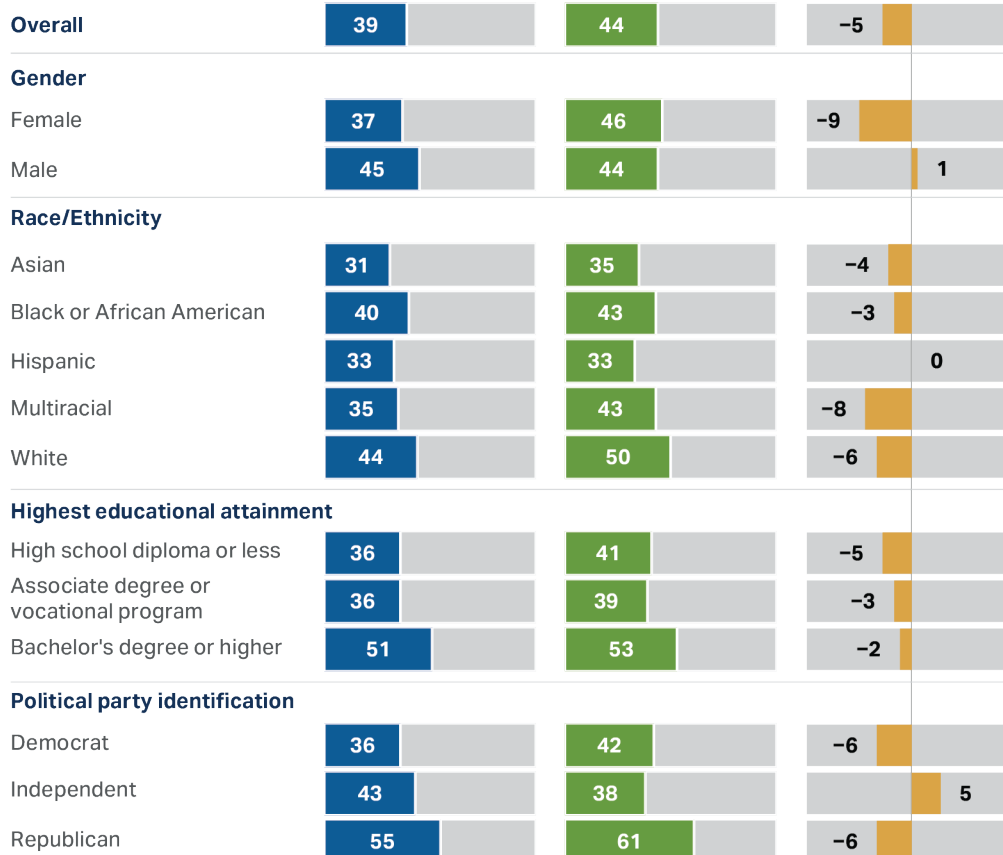
The primary driver of the decline in life evaluation from 2024 to 2025 is the life evaluation of adult Gen Z women: 46% of women were thriving in 2024, compared with 37% in 2025. At the same time, thriving among Gen Z men remained steady from 2024 to 2025 (44% vs. 45%). Additionally, life evaluation declined by six points among both Democrats and Republicans. Democrat thriving declined from 42% to 36% from 2024 to 2025, while Republican thriving declined from 61% to 55% over the same period. By comparison, political independents are five points more likely to be thriving in 2025 (43%) compared with 2024 (38%).

## CHART 2

### Life Evaluation of Gen Z Adults

Life Evaluation Index | % Thriving

■ 2025 ■ 2024 ■ Change



Among Gen Z adults

1 Witters, D. (2025, April 10). Americans' Life Ratings Slump to Five-Year Low. Gallup News. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/658778/americans-life-ratings-slump-five-year-low.aspx>



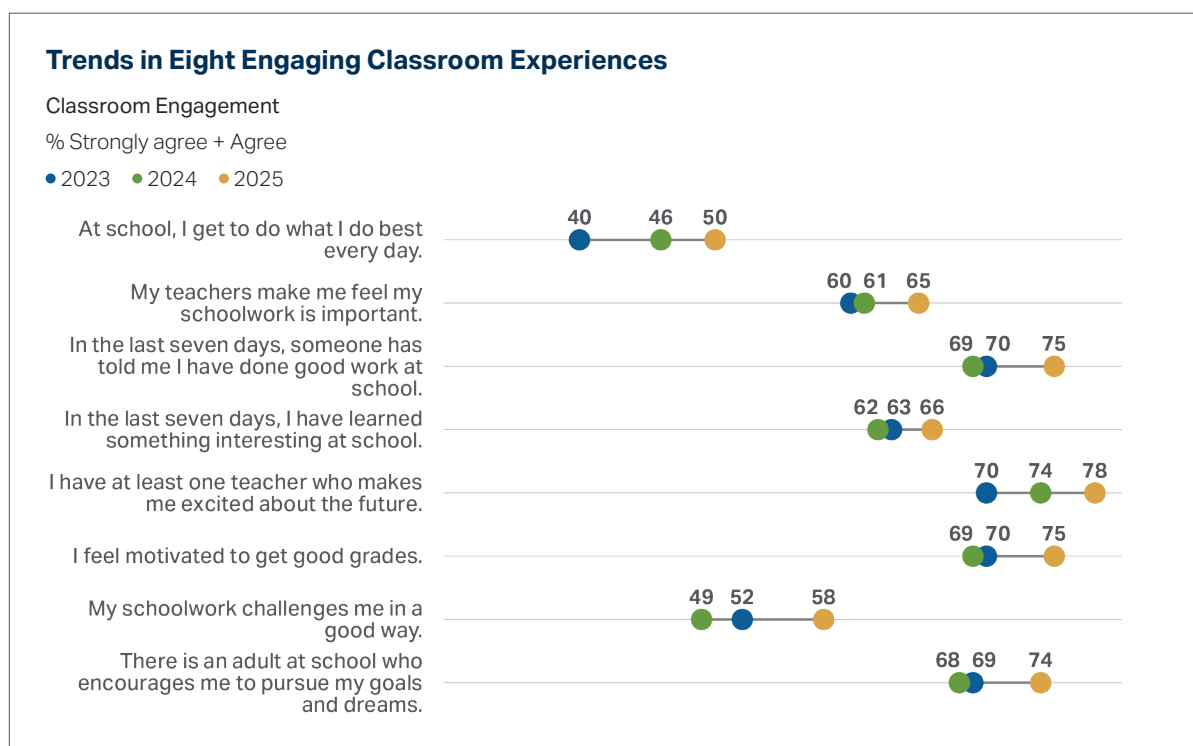
While life evaluation declined across most subgroups of Gen Z adults from 2024 to 2025, after controlling for the overlap and interconnected nature of demographic characteristics — for example, higher levels of education typically correlate with higher income levels — **several factors continue to predict distinctly higher or lower rates of thriving**:

- **Higher levels of income and education** after high school each independently **increase** Gen Z adults' likelihood of **thriving**.
- Adults who are **religiously affiliated** — particularly those who attend services on a weekly or monthly basis — are **more likely to be thriving** than their less devout or agnostic peers.
- **Republican adults** are **significantly more likely** to be **thriving** than Democrats and independents.
- **Black adults** are **significantly more likely** to be **thriving** than Gen Z adults of other races and ethnicities.
- Gen Z adults who identify as **LGBTQ+** are **significantly less likely** to be **thriving** than their peers.

### Student engagement peaks, but significant gaps remain.

Prior research from the Voices of Gen Z study has consistently found that the extent to which middle and high school students find their teachers and coursework to be engaging significantly influences their wellbeing and outlook on the future. In 2025, all eight measures of school engagement reached the highest levels on record, with the largest increases occurring in the percentage of students who agree that school gives them the opportunity to do what they do best (50% vs. 40% in 2023) and that they have a teacher who makes them excited about the future (78% vs. 70%).

#### CHART 3





**Historically, engagement has decreased as students approach graduation, with engagement among high school students lagging that of middle school students.**

It is notable, then, that increased engagement in 2025 is primarily due to high school students reporting significant improvements in their experience. Compared with 2023, every measure of engagement increased by six to 14 percentage points among high school students. Over the same period, middle school students have reported changes in engagement ranging from a two-point decrease to a six-point increase. Following these shifts, high schoolers are now at least as likely as middle schoolers, if not more so, to agree they are having each of the eight engaging experiences measured.

While these improvements represent a step in the right direction, significant percentages of students still report lacking critical aspects of their school experience. About half of students do not agree that their coursework gives them the opportunity to do what they do best, about four in 10 say it does not challenge them in a good way, and just over one in three students do not feel they have learned anything interesting in the last seven days.

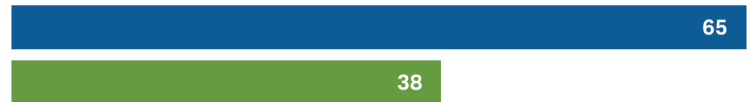
As in prior years, students who have more of these engaging experiences at school are also more likely to report positive outcomes in their wellbeing, with those having at least five of the eight engaging experiences significantly more likely to be thriving in their lives, optimistic about their future and prepared for that future. However, one in three students (34%) report having fewer than five of those experiences.

**CHART 4**

**Impact of Classroom Engagement on Life Evaluation and Future Outlook**

■ Five or more classroom engagement experiences   ■ Four or fewer classroom engagement experiences

Life Evaluation Index (% Thriving)



I have a great future ahead of me. (% Strongly agree + Agree)



I feel prepared for the future. (% Strongly agree + Agree)



I feel that I lead a purposeful and meaningful life. (% Strongly agree + Agree)



Among Gen Z K-12 students

Students who do not plan to pursue higher education are markedly less likely to be engaged in their K-12 education than those who hope to enroll in an associate or bachelor’s degree program after graduation. However, the gap remained consistent from 2024 to 2025, as students who do not intend to pursue college reported similar increases in engagement to their peers. One major exception is in the percentage of non-college-bound students who agree they learned something interesting at school in the past week: 52% of these students report learning something interesting in the prior week, a nine-point decrease from 2024 (61%).

Unsurprisingly, student engagement starts with teachers. For the second consecutive year, a majority of students report that when they are most engaged in school, it is because their teachers made the coursework exciting and interesting. Similarly, when asked to think about their best teacher, most say that teacher was energetic and excited about what they were teaching and made it easy to understand the content.

Unfortunately, most students do not consistently have these kinds of teachers. Only half of middle and high school students report that all or most of their teachers seem excited about what they are teaching, and fewer say most of their teachers make the content interesting (42%) or connect that content to the real world (37%).

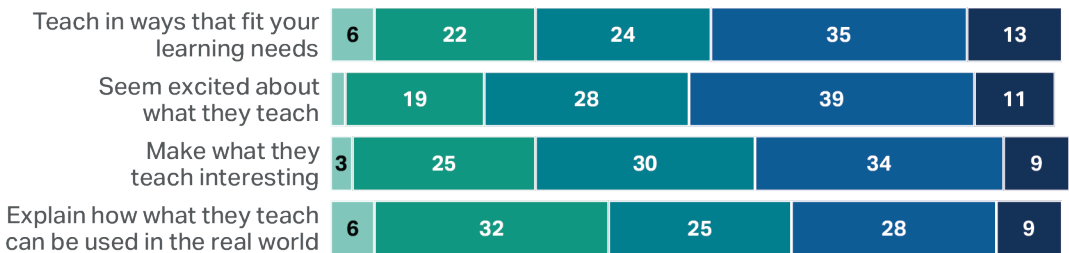
About one in four students say only a few — or even none — of their teachers teach in ways that fit their individual learning needs (28%), make what they teach interesting (28%) or seem excited about what they teach (22%).

**CHART 5**

**Students’ Assessment of Teacher Engagement and Performance**

Think about the teachers who you have classes with this year. How many of your teachers ...

■ % None ■ % A few ■ % About half ■ % Most ■ % All



Note: Data labels less than 3% are not displayed. Due to rounding, percentages in chart may sum to ±1 percentage point of sums reported in text; where these percentages do not match, refer to those reported in the text.

The impacts of this are clear: Students who report that all or most of their teachers seem excited, make what they teach interesting, connect material to the real world and teach in ways that fit their learning needs are significantly more likely than their peers to be thriving in their lives, optimistic about the future and feel prepared for their postgraduation lives.

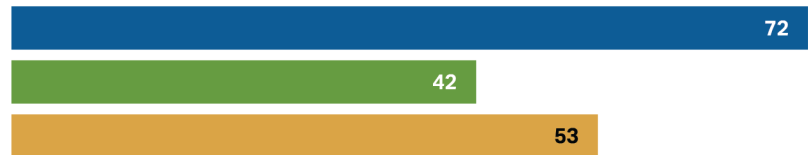
However, just **21%** of students say **“all” or “most”** of their teachers **do all four of those things**, while **11%** of students say **“few” or “none”** of their teachers **do all four**.

CHART 6

Impact of Teacher Engagement on Student Outcomes

■ All or most teachers are engaging ■ A few or no teachers are engaging ■ Other

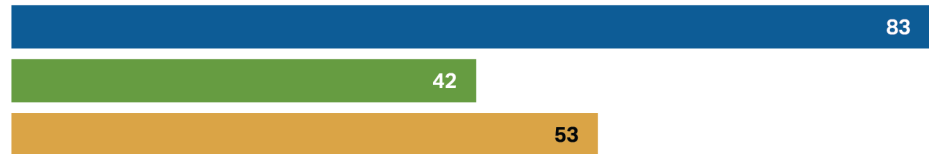
Life Evaluation Index (% Thriving)



I have a great future ahead of me. (% Strongly agree + Agree)



I feel prepared for the future. (% Strongly agree + Agree)



Categories are based on how many of a student’s teachers 1) seem excited about what they are teaching, 2) make what they teach interesting, 3) explain how what they teach can be used in the real world and 4) teach in ways that fit the student’s learning needs.

Students who say “all” or “most” of their teachers do all four of these things are in the “all or most teachers are engaging” category; students who say “a few” or “none” of their teachers do all four things are in the “a few or no teachers are engaging” category; all other students are placed in the “other” category.



## Most students missed at least one day of school in the past month; engagement is a key factor.

A 2023 examination of school attendance data found that chronic absenteeism — defined as missing at least 10% of days in a school year, or an average of two days a month — nearly doubled between the 2018-2019 and 2021-2022 school years, with nearly one in three students qualifying as chronically absent in the 2021-2022 school year.<sup>2</sup>

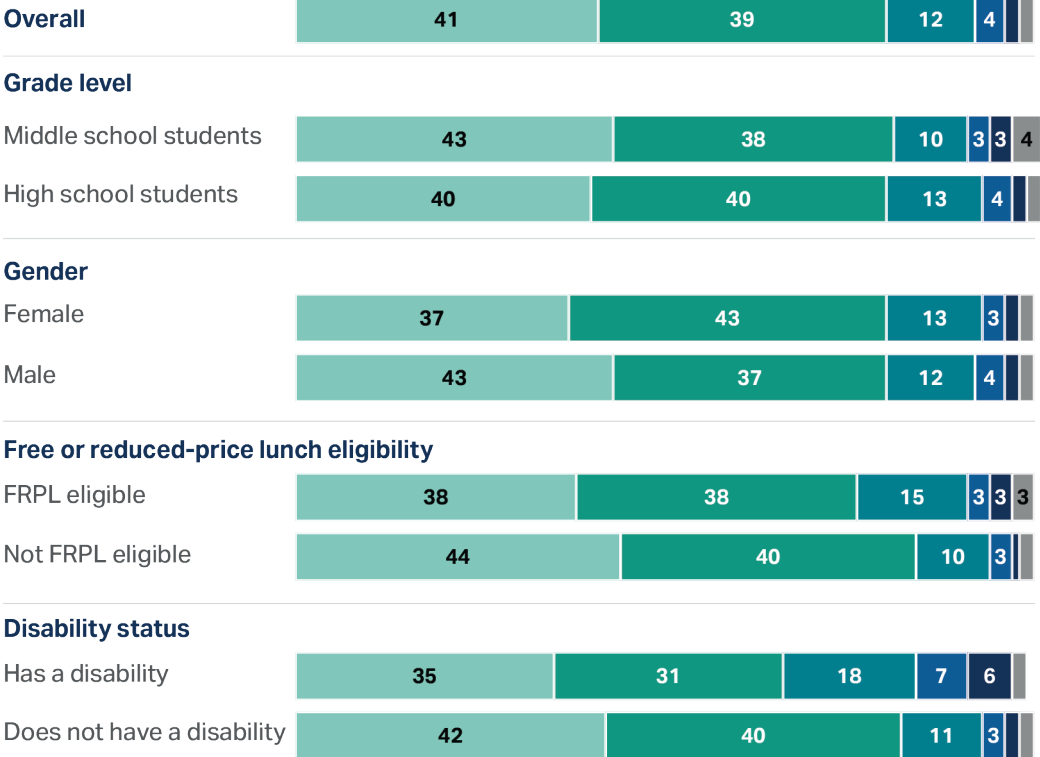
Just under six in 10 (57%) Gen Z students report that they missed at least one day of school in the prior month, with 18% saying they missed three days or more. Absenteeism is especially high among students who have a disability or are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

### CHART 7

#### Self-Reported Absenteeism Among Gen Z Students

How much school have you missed in the last 30 days?

■ % 0 days ■ % 1 to 2 days ■ % 3 to 4 days ■ % 5 to 9 days ■ % 10 or more days ■ % Don't know

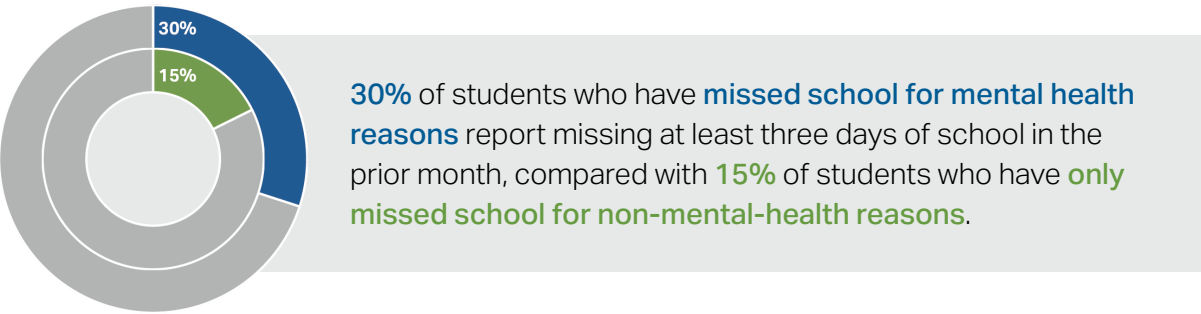


Note: Data labels less than 3% are not displayed.

2 Dee, T.S. (2024, January 9). Higher chronic absenteeism threatens academic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 121(3). <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2312249121>

Students are most likely to say that they have missed school during the prior year due to physical health issues (51%); however, nearly three in 10 students (29%) say that they have missed at least one day of school because they felt tired or needed a break; felt anxious, stressed or overwhelmed; or because they were experiencing some other kind of mental health issue. This percentage is notably higher among middle and high school girls than boys (34% vs. 25%).

Moreover, while fewer students are absent due to mental health concerns than physical health issues or illnesses, mental health issues cause students to miss more time:



When students report having at least five engaging experiences at school, they are significantly more likely to say they missed fewer than three days of school in the past month than students who report having four or fewer engaging classroom experiences.

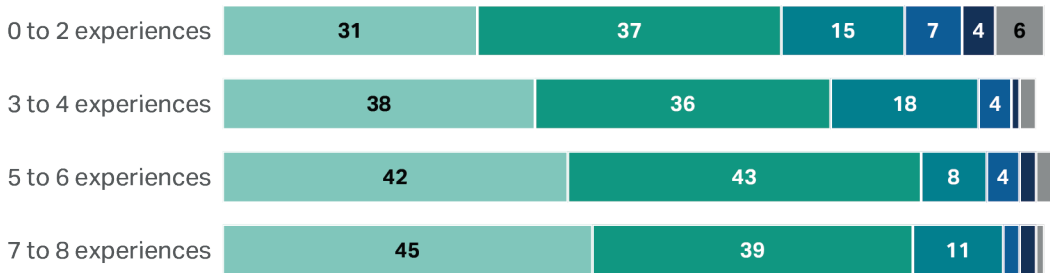
CHART 8

Absenteeism Based on Classroom Engagement

How much school have you missed in the last 30 days?

Based on the number of engagement experiences student agrees they had

% 0 days % 1 to 2 days % 3 to 4 days % 5 to 9 days % 10 or more days % Don't know



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

# One in three Gen Z students dislike reading; one in four are not assigned weekly reading at school.

In 2024, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results revealed that the median reading score among U.S. eighth-grade students had not only declined for the third consecutive administration but had also reached the lowest level in over 30 years.<sup>3</sup> While researchers continue to attempt to quantify the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on student achievement,<sup>4</sup> progress in reading proficiency had stagnated between 2013 and 2017, and even showed signs of decline in 2019, prior to the onset of the pandemic.

One factor that research suggests is highly influential in students' reading proficiency is the extent to which a student enjoys reading. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has consistently found that "students who read for enjoyment have typically been stronger performers in reading."<sup>5</sup> Moreover, this improved proficiency is not solely because students who enjoy reading spend more time doing so: The study concluded that "how much a student enjoys reading matters more than how many hours students spend reading for enjoyment."

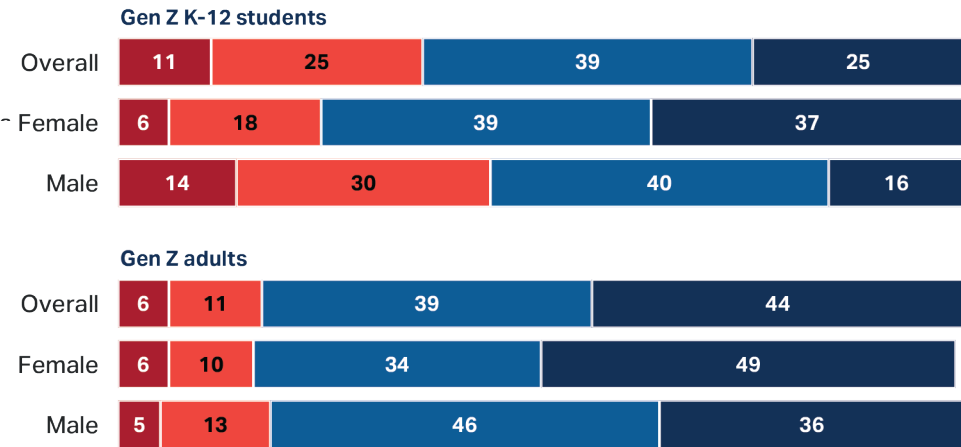
This finding is reflected in the Voices of Gen Z data: Students who report that they enjoy reading — as well as those who read more frequently for enjoyment — are also more likely to report strong overall academic performance. However, while most Gen Zers say they at least "somewhat like" reading, about one in four say they "somewhat dislike" (16%) or "really dislike" reading (8%). Importantly, the percentage of Gen Zers who dislike reading is far higher among students: 35% of middle and high school students say they dislike reading, compared with 17% of Gen Z adults.

## CHART 9

### Gen Z Students' Enjoyment of Reading

How much do you like or dislike reading?

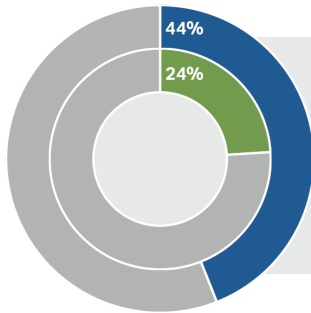
■ % Really dislike reading ■ % Somewhat dislike reading ■ % Somewhat like reading ■ % Really like reading



Note: Due to rounding, percentages in chart may sum to ±1 percentage point of sums reported in text; where these percentages do not match, refer to those reported in the text.

3 The Nation's Report Card. (n.d.). NAEP Report Card: Reading. Grade 8. [https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reports/reading/2024/g4\\_8/?grade=8](https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reports/reading/2024/g4_8/?grade=8)  
4 Dewey, D.C., Fahle, E., Kane, T.J., Reardon, S.F., & Staiger, D.O. (2025, February). Pivoting From Pandemic Recovery to Long-Term Reform: A District-Level Analysis. Education Recovery Scorecard. <https://cepr.harvard.edu/education-recovery-scorecard>  
5 OECD. (2021). 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Readers: Developing Literacy Skills in a Digital World. PISA. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/a83d84cb-en>





Within the Gen Z student population, boys have an especially high dislike of reading: **44%** of **male** middle and high school students say they **dislike reading**, compared with **24%** of **female students**.

A less-pronounced gender gap exists among Gen Z adults, as about half of women say they “really like reading” (49%), while 36% of men say the same (though 84% and 82%, respectively, at least somewhat like reading).

Following the pattern of general reading enjoyment, 43% of Gen Z students — including just over half of male students (51%) — say they “rarely” or “never” read for fun. And while Gen Z adults are notably more likely to enjoy reading than their K-12 peers, they are only slightly less likely to say that they never or rarely read for fun (35%), which may suggest that adults’ low incidence of reading is due more to time constraints than a lack of desire.

Despite the demonstrated importance of students’ reading enjoyment and frequency to their overall academic performance, many Gen Z students are not encouraged to read frequently in their coursework. About half of students (52%) say they are assigned reading activities in class or for homework once a week or less. About one in three students (35%) say they are assigned reading a few times a week, and just 13% say they are assigned reading daily.



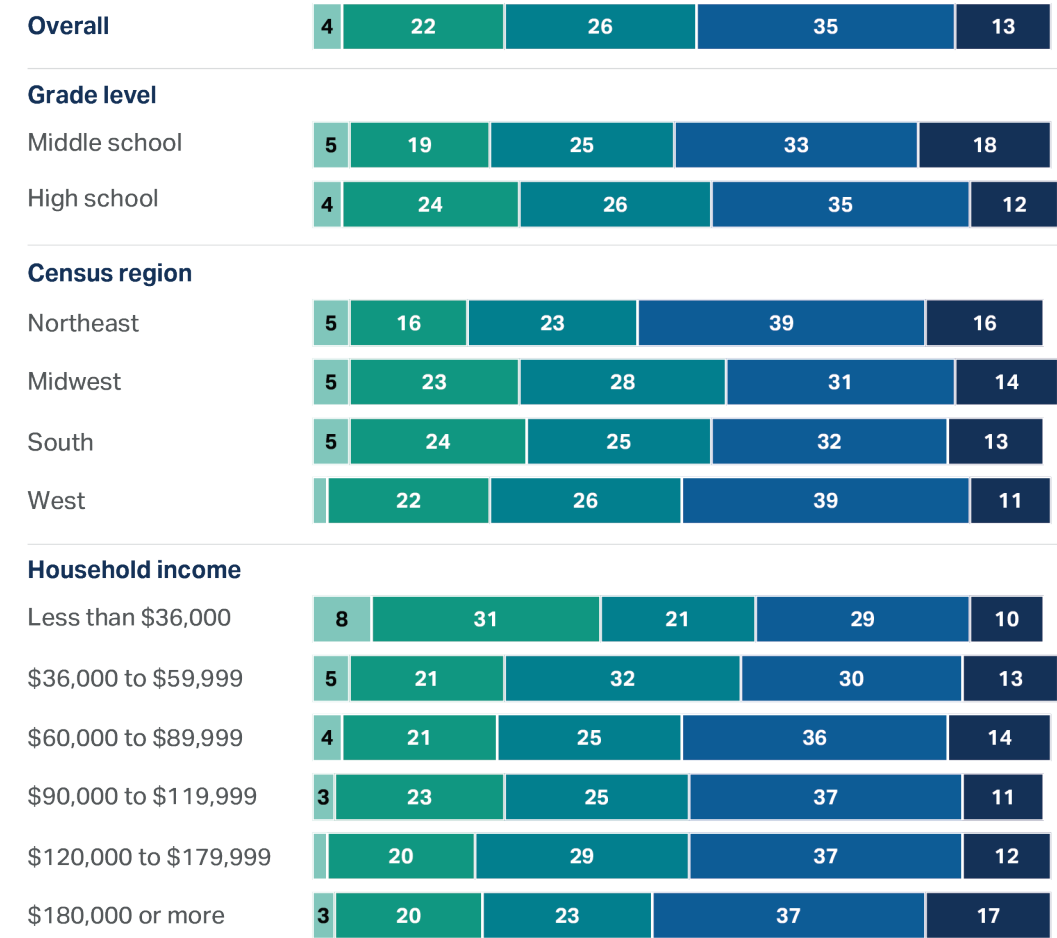


CHART 10

Frequency of School Reading Assignments

Thinking of this past year, how frequently were you assigned reading activities, such as reading books or textbook passages in class or for homework?

% Never   % Less than once a week   % Once a week   % A few times a week   % Every day



Note: Data labels less than 3% are not displayed. Due to rounding, percentages in chart may sum to ±1 percentage point of sums reported in text; where these percentages do not match, refer to those reported in the text.



Just under four in 10 students living in households that earn less than \$36,000 annually say their school assigns them reading on a less than weekly basis, compared with 24% of their peers from higher-earning households.

Moreover, 30% of students living in the South and 27% of those living in the Midwest are assigned reading less than weekly, compared with 24% of those living in the West and 21% of those living in the Northeast.

## Most students are allowed to use phones at school; the relationship with school performance is mixed.

As of January 2025, nine U.S. states have implemented statewide bans or restrictions on student cellphone use in public schools, and an additional 28 states have proposed doing so.<sup>6</sup> Policymakers are not the only group who are actively in favor of restricting phone use, as teachers also express strong support for these policies. A 2024 National Education Association poll found that 90% of teachers are in favor of prohibiting phone use during class time, and 75% would be in favor of banning cellphones entirely during the school day.<sup>7</sup>

Whether due to statewide mandates, district-level policies or building-level policies, strong majorities of middle school (84%) and high school (80%) students say their school has established rules about cellphone use. However, for most students, this policy allows them to access and use their phones in at least some instances. While the most common exception is for emergency purposes (81%), more than half of students say they are also allowed to use their phones between classes (64%) or during free time in their classes (55%). In each scenario, middle school students are much more likely than high schoolers to say their school restricts phone use.

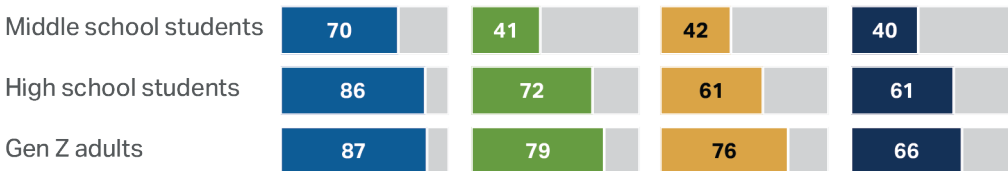
### CHART 11

#### School Cellphone Policies

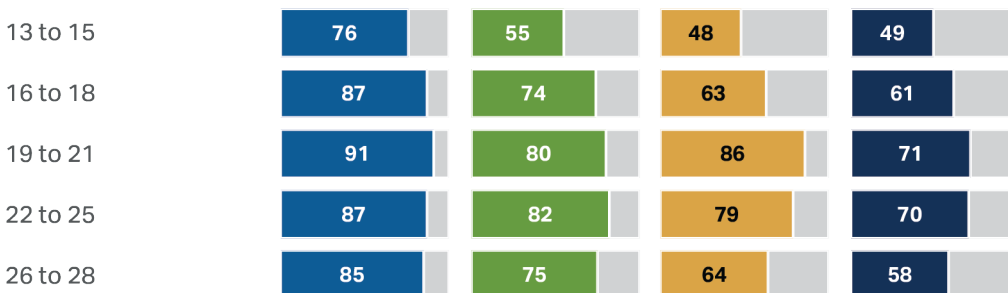
[Do/When you were in high school, did] any of the following situations describe when you [are/were] allowed to use your cellphone during the school day?

■ % For emergencies ■ % Between classes ■ % For learning activities ■ % During free time in classes

##### Grade level



##### Age group



6 Demillo, A. (2025, January 16). Banning cellphones in schools gains popularity in red and blue states. AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/school-cell-phone-bans-states-e6d1fe8ddfd33f086d5cd2a19f4c148>

7 Walker, T. (2024, October 2024). Take Cellphones Out of the Classroom, Educators Say. neaToday. <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/take-cellphones-out-classroom-educators-say>

While the percentage of students allowed to use their cellphones remains high, schools appear to be implementing policies at growing rates: Gen Z high school graduates are more likely to say that they were permitted to use their phones in all four situations when they were in high school than currently enrolled high school students.

As states and districts continue to debate and implement policies on cellphone use in schools, students' parents have not coalesced around a single approach, though most parents favor at least some restrictions on phone use. Only 13% of parents would support a policy that allowed unrestricted cellphone use during the day.

The most-favored cellphone use approach would likely be one that allows students to retain their devices but not use them. About three-quarters of parents (76%) would support a policy that bans cellphone use during the school day but allows students to keep their phones in their possession. When asked about policies that would prevent students from having their cellphones on their person, parents are split. About six in 10 parents (62%) would support at least one policy that would require students to leave their phones in a private place (such as their vehicle or locker) or turn them in to a teacher or administrator, while 38% of parents oppose all policies that would prevent their child from keeping their phone throughout the school day.

## CHART 12

### Parent Support for School Cellphone Policies

How strongly do you support or oppose the following school policies regarding student cellphone usage?

■ % Strongly oppose ■ % Oppose ■ % Support ■ % Strongly support

Banning cellphone use during the school day but allowing students to keep their phone



Restricting cellphone use to hallways, cafeterias and/or parking lots



Requiring students to leave phones in a private location (e.g., locker or vehicle)



Requiring students to turn in phones to a teacher/administrator at start of day



Allowing unrestricted use of phones during the school day



Among parents of Gen Z K-12 students

Note: Due to rounding, percentages in chart may sum to  $\pm 1$  percentage point of sums reported in text; where these percentages do not match, refer to those reported in the text.

## Gen Z students feel more prepared for the future but are split on their outlook of it.

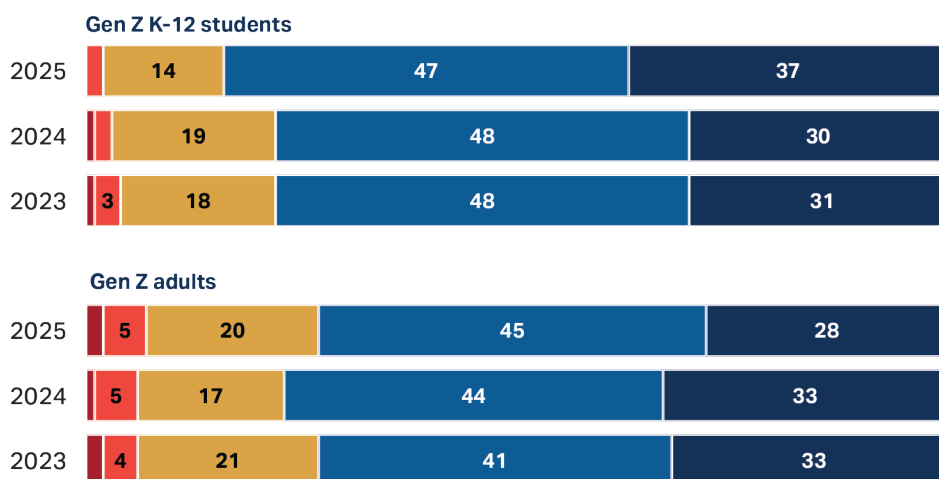
Overall, just over three-quarters of all Gen Zers (77%) agree or strongly agree they have a great future ahead of them, a percentage that is unchanged from 2024 and 2023. This is higher among Gen Z students (84%), who express greater optimism than they did in 2023 (79%) and 2024 (78%). Meanwhile, Gen Z adults are not only 11 points less likely than students to agree they have a great future ahead of them (73%), but have also not seen that percentage change meaningfully from 2024 (76%) or 2023 (74%).

### CHART 13

#### Gen Zers' Optimism for the Future

I have a great future ahead of me.

■ % Strongly disagree ■ % Disagree ■ % Neither agree nor disagree ■ % Agree ■ % Strongly agree



Note: Data labels less than 3% are not displayed. Due to rounding, percentages in chart may sum to  $\pm 1$  percentage point of sums reported in text; where these percentages do not match, refer to those reported in the text.

As in prior years, Black Gen Zers remain especially optimistic about their futures: Nearly half of Black Gen Zers (45%) strongly agree they have a great future ahead of them, at least 14 percentage points higher than their Hispanic (31%), White (30%) and Asian peers (20%).

Among Gen Z adults in particular, optimism also splits sharply along partisan and educational lines. Nine in 10 Republicans agree they have a great future ahead of them, compared with 70% of independents and 74% of Democrats. Separately, nearly eight in 10 Gen Zers who have enrolled in or completed a bachelor's degree program believe they have a great future ahead of them, compared with 62% of those who have enrolled in or completed an associate degree or vocational program. Gen Z adults who have never enrolled in postsecondary education fall in the middle, at 67%.

While overall optimism has stagnated, Gen Zers' self-reported preparedness for the future increased for the second consecutive year: 56% of Gen Z agree they feel prepared for the future, compared with 49% in 2024 and 44% in 2023. Unlike optimism, Gen Zers' confidence in their readiness for the future increased across both students and adults and remains similar across these cohorts.

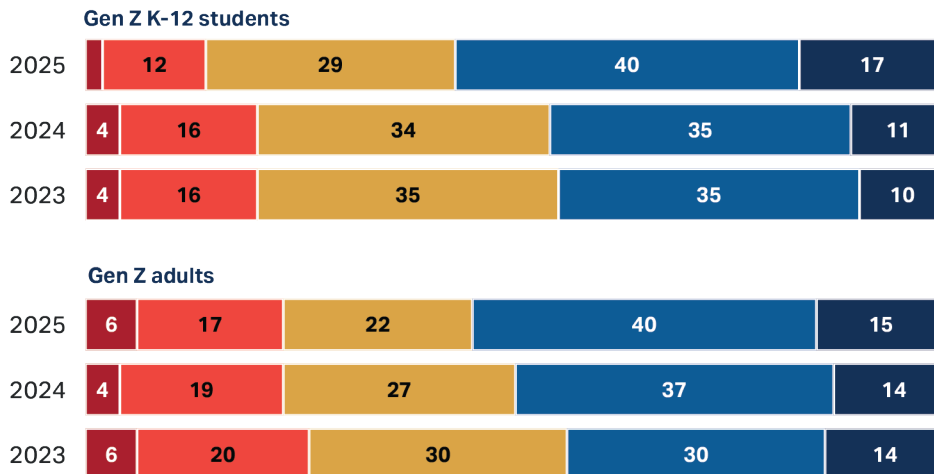


CHART 14

### Gen Zers' Preparedness for the Future

I feel prepared for the future.

■ % Strongly disagree ■ % Disagree ■ % Neither agree nor disagree ■ % Agree ■ % Strongly agree



Note: Data labels less than 3% are not displayed. Due to rounding, percentages in chart may sum to  $\pm 1$  percentage point of sums reported in text; where these percentages do not match, refer to those reported in the text.

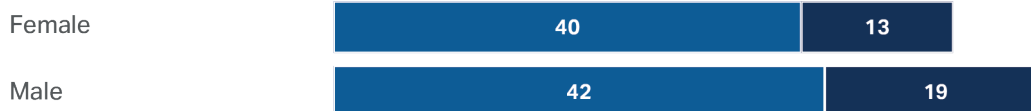
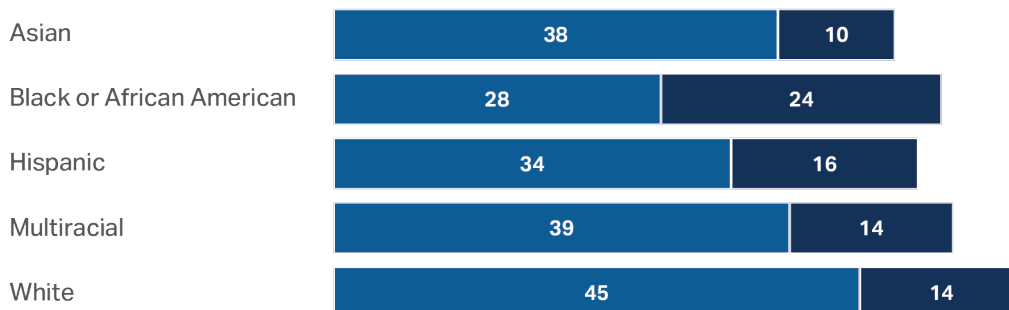
While the youngest members of Gen Z get closer to graduation every year, this does not explain the 12-point increase in middle and high school students' feelings of preparedness (from 46% in 2024 to 58% in 2025). To the contrary, in prior years Gen Z students' confidence in their future typically declined among high schoolers when compared with middle schoolers. The increase likely corresponds at least in part to students' higher levels of classroom engagement in 2025, which remained stagnant or declined from 2023 to 2024.

While Gen Zers are feeling more prepared than ever, there are still significant discrepancies among Gen Z adults based on their educational attainment — particularly whether they are pursuing or have obtained a bachelor’s degree. More than six in 10 students and graduates of bachelor’s degree (62%) and graduate degree (63%) programs feel prepared for the future. This is more than 20 percentage points higher than the 40% of Gen Z adults who have not completed or enrolled in any education after high school who feel prepared for their future, and significantly higher than the 46% of those who enrolled in postsecondary education but stopped out of their program before completing it. Meanwhile, 45% of Gen Zers who are enrolled in or have completed associate degree or technical and vocational programs feel prepared for their future — about the same percentage as Gen Zers who have not enrolled in or completed any postsecondary education.

**CHART 15****Gen Z Adults’ Preparedness for the Future**

I feel prepared for the future.

■ % Agree ■ % Strongly agree

**Gender****Race/Ethnicity****Highest educational attainment or enrollment**

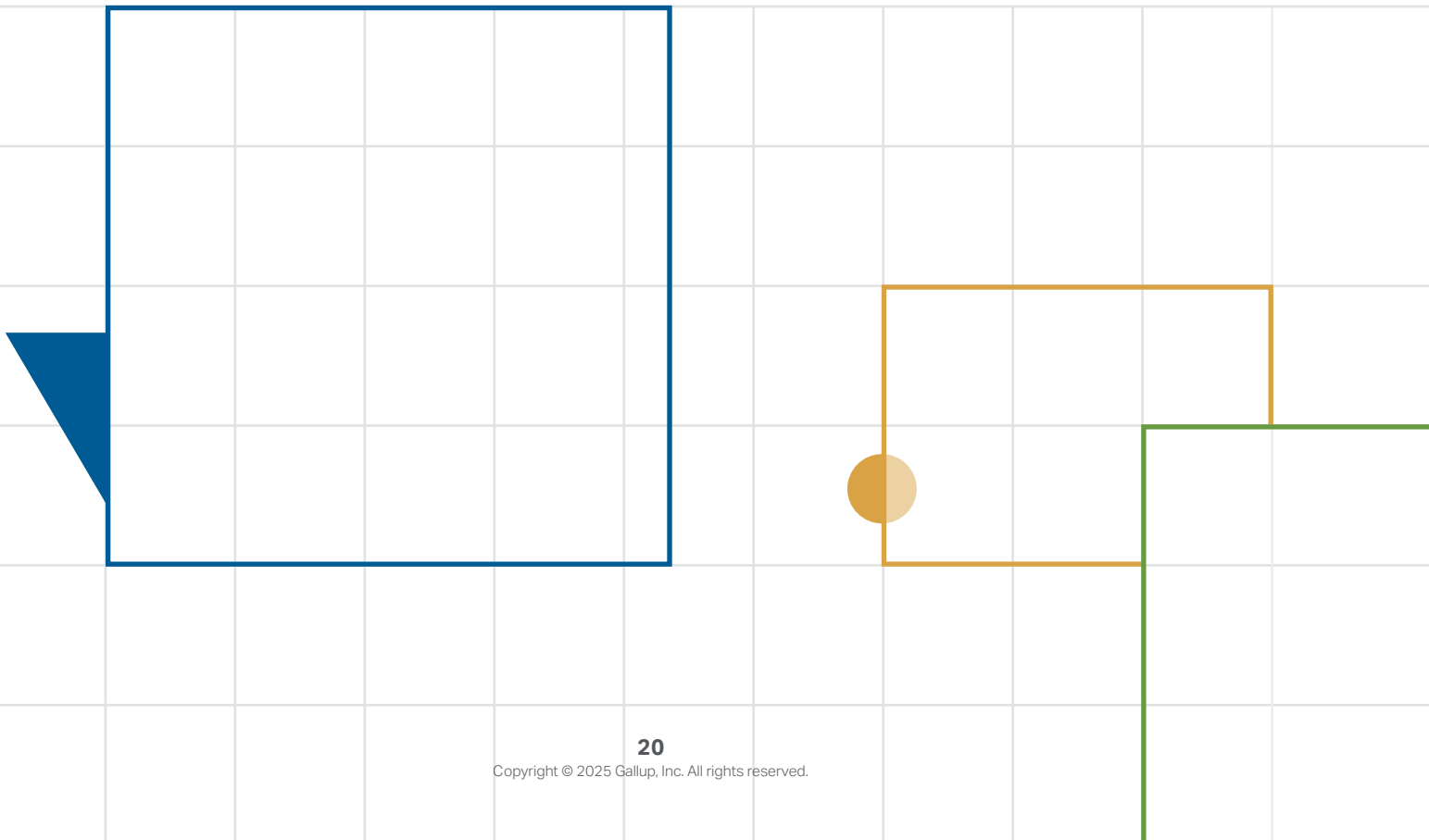
Note: Due to rounding, percentages in chart may sum to  $\pm 1$  percentage point of sums reported in text; where these percentages do not match, refer to those reported in the text.

## Implications

The third administration of the annual Voices of Gen Z survey reveals several developments worthy of cautious optimism. Gen Z middle and high school students report important, if incremental, improvements in their life evaluation and engagement at school, while also feeling significantly more prepared for their postgraduation lives. However, the data also suggest there is still work to be done to ensure that the one in three students who are having a less-than-engaging classroom experience can reap the benefits of a meaningful education.

Unsurprisingly, much of that starts with their teachers. Gen Z students report that when they feel excited and interested in what they are learning in the classroom, it is most often because their teachers make the content engaging. However, just half of students say most of their teachers seem excited about what they are teaching, and even fewer make that content interesting or relevant to the real world. Ensuring teachers have what they need to create an engaging environment for their students — a topic that the Walton Family Foundation and Gallup are quantifying through the [Teaching for Tomorrow study](#) — will be paramount to building upon the improvements made from 2024 to 2025.

This will also involve implementing policies at the building and district level that facilitate learning and optimize students' academic performance. This includes not only policies that limit distractions and disruptions caused by cellphones, but also those that prioritize key aspects of the curriculum — such as regular reading assignments, [career and postsecondary education exploration](#) and even an [introduction to leveraging artificial intelligence](#) — which data suggest are crucial to students' academic success and feelings of postgraduation readiness.





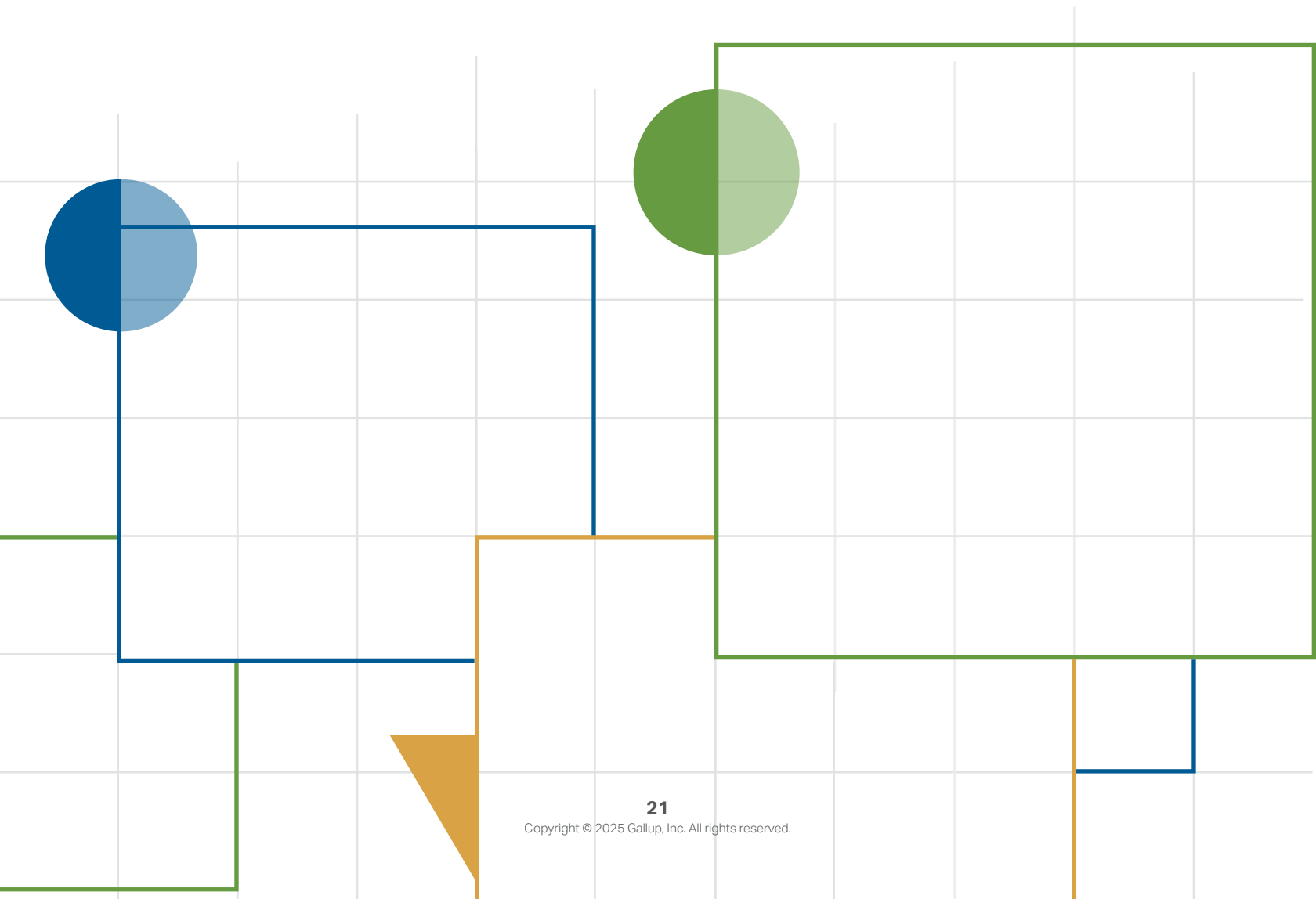
## Methodology

Results are based on a Gallup Panel™ web survey conducted May 16-27, 2025, with a sample of 3,793 13- to 28-year-olds living in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The Gallup Panel is a probability-based panel of U.S. adults who are randomly selected using address-based sampling methodology. Gallup also recruits using random-digit-dial phone interviews that cover landline and cellphones.

Within the overall sample, 1,746 13- to 18-year-old children were reached through adult members of the Gallup Panel who indicated they had at least one child 18 or younger living in their household. The remaining 2,047 18- to 28-year-old respondents are members of the Gallup Panel.

For the total sample of 3,793 Gen Z respondents, the margin of sampling error is  $\pm 2.3$  percentage points at the 95% confidence level. For the sample of 1,687 children still enrolled in K-12 school, the margin of sampling error is  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points at the 95% confidence level. For the sample of 2,106 Gen Z adults who are no longer enrolled in K-12 school, the margin of sampling error is  $\pm 3.2$  percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Margins of error for subgroups are higher.

All reported margins of sampling error include computed design effects for weighting. 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.



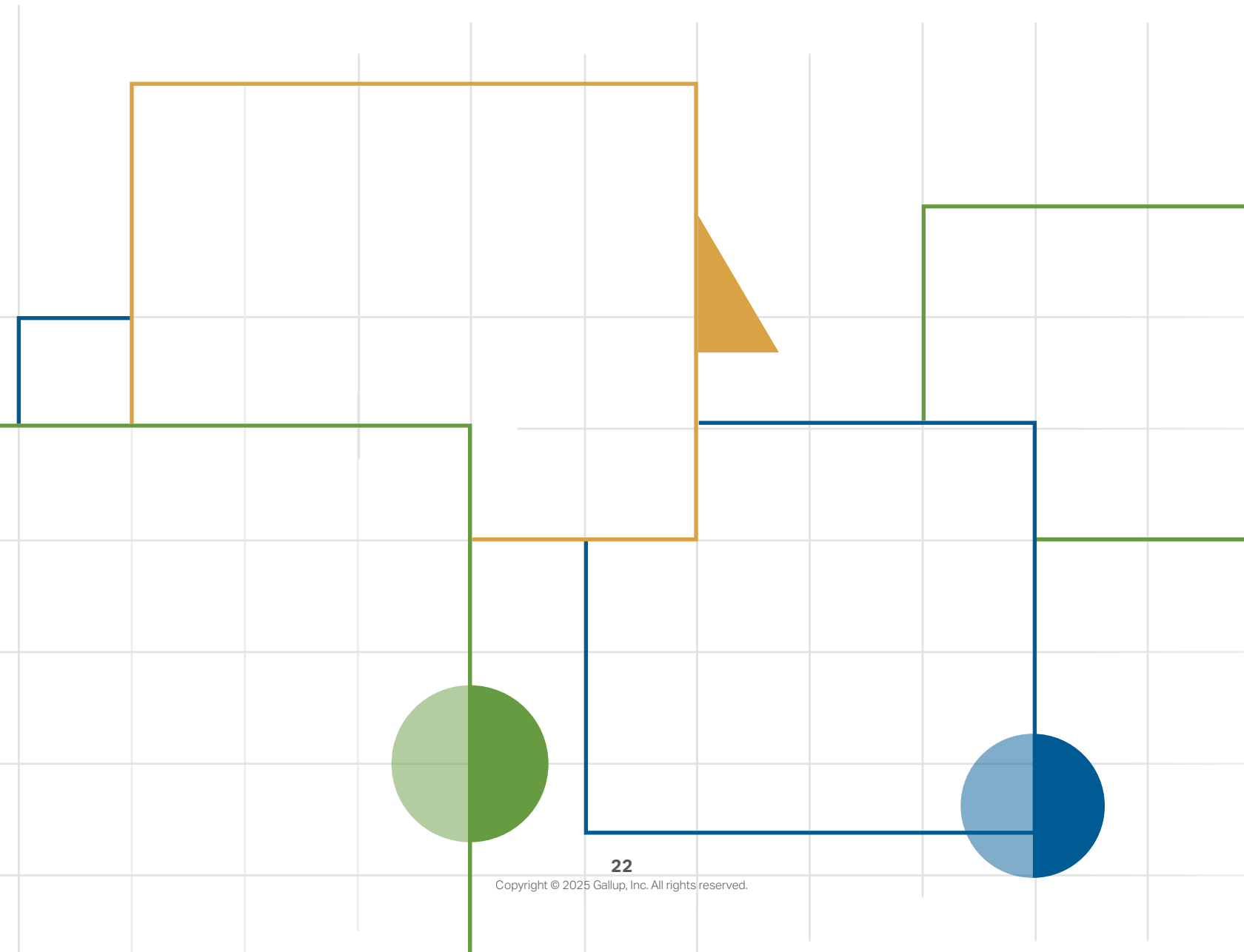
# About

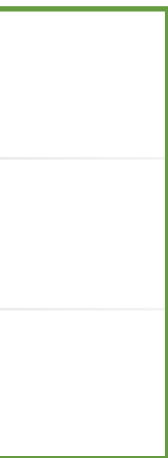
## Walton Family Foundation

The Walton Family Foundation is, at its core, a family-led foundation. Three generations of the descendants of our founders, Sam and Helen Walton, and their spouses work together to lead the foundation and create access to opportunity for people and communities. We work in three areas: improving education, protecting rivers and oceans and the communities they support, and investing in our home region of Northwest Arkansas and the Arkansas-Mississippi Delta.

## 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.





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