

California is Failing Adult Learners



Affordable and Flexible 100% Online College Programs are Key to Opening the Door to Higher Education

In the face of COVID-19, low-income and other underserved Californians are seeking greater flexibility in the pathways available to achieve a higher education. According to the Strada Education Network,

California ranks last in the country in adult education, with nearly 60% of all California adults aged 18-65 in need of additional education and training.

Who are California's Adult Learners?

- Underserved groups such as those impacted by COVID-19, Black and Latino Californians, rural Californians, military veterans, former foster youth, and single parents are among those seeking to pursue higher education as an adult, if only the barriers weren't so high.
- A similar group of vulnerable Californians who started college but had to stop represents another 64% of all adult learners in California, and 36% wanted to attend college, but couldn't. Now, with the COVID-19 pandemic, 45% of them are eager to earn an education within the next year or so.
- The pandemic has been a major force in driving potential California adult learners to consider more education:
 - More than half (57%) of potential California adult learners have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - The pandemic forced 57% of those negatively impacted to consider going back to college or some kind of adult career education, especially for veterans.



Higher education also brings individual benefits in terms of higher wages, lower unemployment, better health, and reduced incidence of poverty, as well as societal benefits such as greater participation in voting and other civic activities.

What Barriers to Higher Education do California's Adult Learners Face?

The gap between desire and ability to pursue adult education is significant.

- **Money, time and emotional stress** are preventing those who want a college education but cannot obtain one.
 - The need to be able to work and earn money is the most-cited reason standing in the way of them and a college education.
 - The two next most cited reasons include being unable to afford school and difficulty balancing an education with other responsibilities.

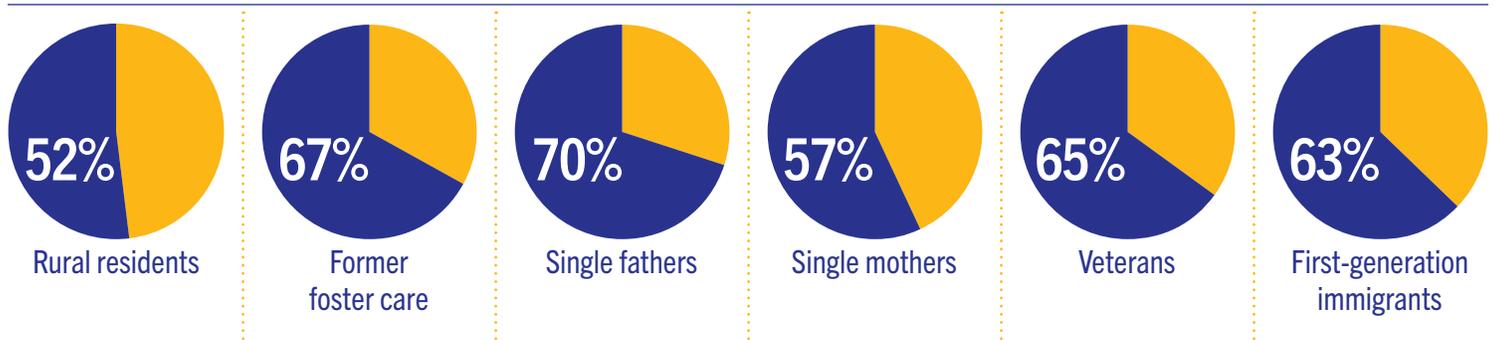
50%
of all adult learners would be interested in taking some kind of college or adult career education if their concerns and barriers were removed.

How Does Making Online Education Accessible Overcome Barriers?

“Where you can do your class work from home any day of the week or hour of the day and move at your own pace.”

- Financial support overcomes the barriers for the majority of California's adult learners (53% mention lack of affordable programs, financial aid, grants, scholarships as biggest barriers).
- Nearly two-thirds of these adult learners (62%) report they would be “definitely/very” likely to take a “100% online college [program].”

Percentages of California Adult Learners who would seek 100% online college program.



To address these barriers to access, two-thirds of adult learners (66%) support ways to increase the availability of state financial aid support programs for those who want to attend a regionally accredited nonprofit college or university that is 100% online, even if it does not have a campus or buildings in the state.