

Attitudes toward online learning improve post-pandemic, according to survey

September 8 2022



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Positive attitudes toward online learning have increased to their highest

levels yet among learners who use it, according to Wiley's annual Voice of the Online Learner report, issued today.

The vast majority—94%—of online learners in the survey said they have a positive or very positive view of [online learning](#), up from 86% before the pandemic. And 83% said they would learn online again.

Among graduated online learners, 87% reported achieving an outcome they can attribute to their degree, such as obtaining a salary increase or more marketable skills.

"Our findings suggest those individuals who engage in online learning overwhelmingly have a positive experience," said Todd Zipper, Wiley's executive vice president and general manager of University Services and Talent Development. "They also see real value in the results they achieve through [online education](#), which allow them to advance in their [career](#)."

The report is based on a [national survey](#) of 2,500 adult respondents enrolled or planning to enroll in an online degree or certificate program. It's the 11th such annual survey conducted by Wiley's University Services division, a global provider of technology-enabled education solutions to meet the evolving needs of universities, corporations and learners.

Pandemic-driven online learners persist, but lack commitment

Last year's report identified a new group of pandemic-driven online learners, who hadn't considered a fully online program before the pandemic forced many institutions to shift to remote instruction in early 2020. This segment of online learners persisted this year, representing a third of the respondents.

There are doubts, however, about whether this group will stick with online learning moving forward. Pandemic-driven learners in the survey, who skew younger than traditional online learners, were more likely to prefer in-person than online instruction, and around a third expressed a likelihood to return to campus-based learning in the future.

Nevertheless, commitment to online learning remains strong among respondents overall. More respondents reported a fundamental preference for online learning this year than previously, and 77% said the fact that it was online was the most important factor in their decision to learn remotely this year. In fact, 60% said they'd choose an equivalent remote program at a different school if their preferred college or university didn't offer the program online.

Online learners motivated by career outcomes

Online learners are largely motivated by career outcomes. The top-mentioned factors that influenced respondents' decision to pursue a degree are improving their job prospects (40%), advancing their careers (38%), and starting their careers (35%).

Changing careers is the next largest motivation, such as switching to a career that aligns with their interests (32%) and switching to earn more money (31%).

Many don't use available employer-sponsored tuition benefits

Nearly half of online learners with access to employer-paid tuition assistance benefits reported they won't or aren't planning to use them. This is despite the fact that affordability remains a top factor for choosing one program over another: Nearly one-third of online learners

say an annual scholarship of as little as \$500 would make a difference in their choice and nearly half of learners said the same for a \$1,000 scholarship amid mounting inflationary pressures.

Why don't they use these benefits? Respondents cite two main concerns: They feel their employer benefits don't cover enough tuition, and they worry about having to pay back their employer if they leave the company before finishing their program.

"Employers should review their education benefits with an eye to reducing hurdles that prevent employees from using them," said Zipper. "Benefits that are too restrictive for many workers to use will not help an organization's recruitment, hiring or retention efforts, especially in a tight labor market."

The survey provided additional insights into the behavior, motivation and preferences of online learners, including the following findings:

- A new openness to synchronous learning is emerging: Online learners are now more open to occasional, synchronous sessions either online or on-site; 79% of respondents said they'd be willing to log in at a specific time at least once per course for a required discussion or virtual lecture, and 55% reported a willingness to visit campus at least once per term for an in-person session.
- Timing is important: Nearly 70% of online learners want a program with a fast completion time, with the same percentage looking for the flexibility to work through courses at their own pace.
- Online learners highly value a college education: 83% agreed that their degree will be very important in helping them achieve their career goals, and 79% agreed that a college degree can lead to better jobs.

- Local is preferred: Online learning remains localized with the majority of students still preferring a university less than 50 miles from where they live. Indeed, more than one-third said being close to their physical campus was important or very important to them for two main reasons: to attend their graduation ceremony and to connect with their professors.

The data in this report are based on the results of surveys conducted by Wiley in the spring of 2022 among 2,500 prospective, current, and recently graduated online [learners](#). Respondents were at least 18 years of age and had a minimum educational credential of a high school degree or equivalent. They were also recently enrolled, currently enrolled, or planned to enroll in a fully online undergraduate or [graduate degree](#) or certificate program in the next twelve months. The sample for this survey was weighted to constitute approximately 59% graduate students. Additional details regarding the methodology may be found in the report.

More information: Survey: universityservices.wiley.com/v...online-learner-2022/

Provided by Wiley

Citation: Attitudes toward online learning improve post-pandemic, according to survey (2022, September 8) retrieved 26 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2022-09-attitudes-online-post-pandemic-survey.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.