

WHO ARE TODAY'S ADULT LEARNERS?



Adult learners are having a big impact throughout higher education. On campus and online, they represent a growing and diverse student population with an urgent need for flexible and affordable degree options. With multiple demands on their time and money, adult learners benefit from degree pathways that alleviate pressure on their time and provide opportunities to lower their cost of college.

Working to support their education

According to the American Association of Community Colleges, **more than 40% of college students attend community colleges**, but only **62% can afford** to attend full-time.

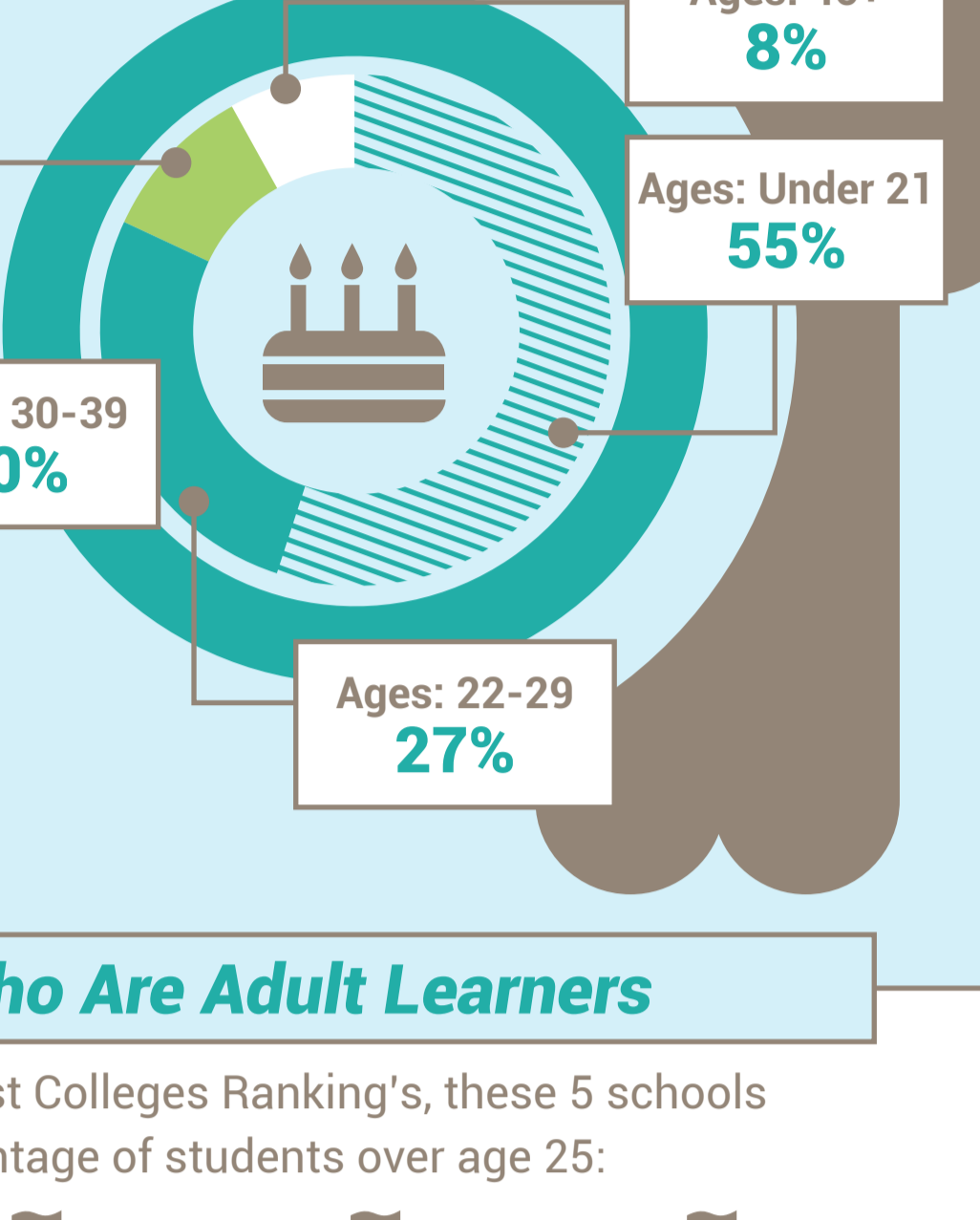
40% of college students work at least 30 hours per week.

About 25% of these students work and go to school full time.

In order to fully understand the needs of all college students, one must understand the unique perspective and needs of adult learners and how they are altering the makeup of the overall student population.

A Quick Look: Adult Learners Today

Older and wiser: a growing number of students aren't fresh out of high school. According to the US Dept. of Education, **nearly 40% of students are age 25 and older** and that percentage is expected to rise over the next decade.



The National Center for Education Statistics projects the population of students age 25 and older to grow at a rate that is 5% faster than students under age 25.

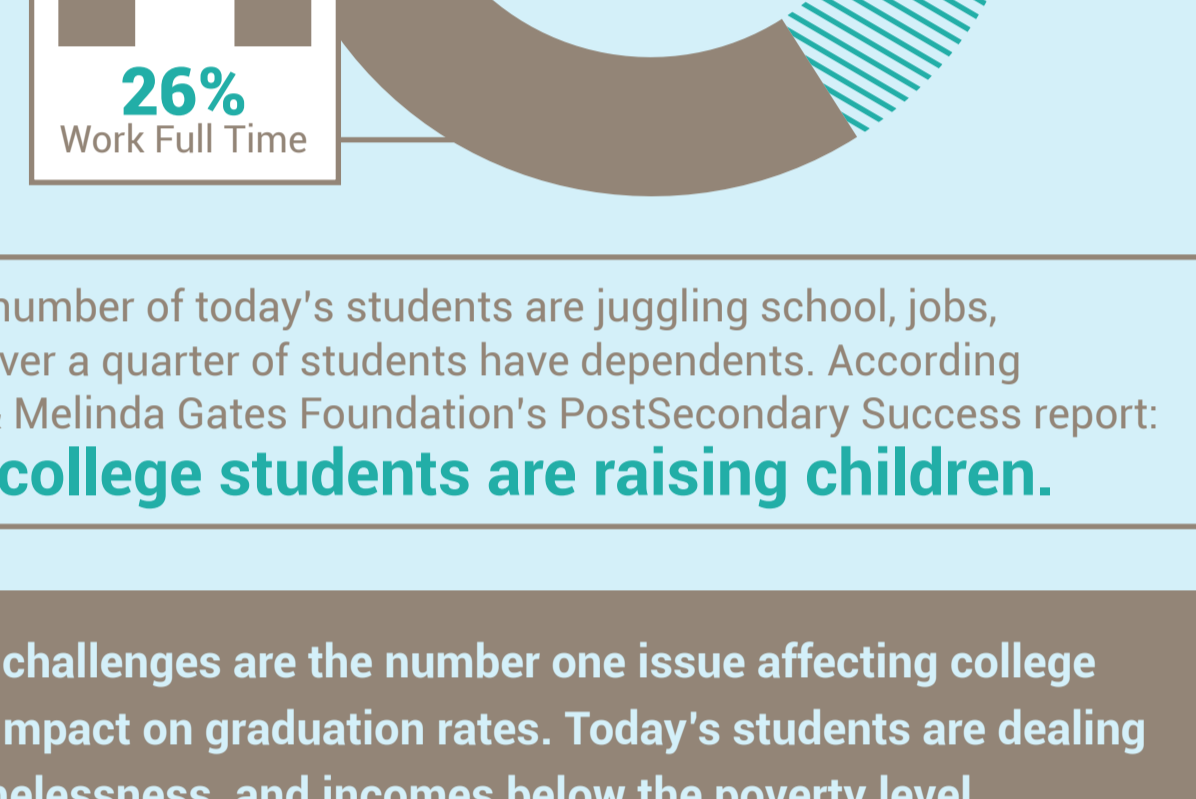


Most Students Who Are Adult Learners

According to the U.S. News Best Colleges Ranking's, these 5 schools have the highest percentage of students over age 25:



The majority of today's students work (62%) and many have children (28%). Students with multiple demands on their limited resources often struggle to succeed in a one-size-fits all system of higher ed; 38% of students with additional financial, work and family obligations leave school in their first year.



A growing number of today's students are juggling school, jobs, and bills. Over a quarter of students have dependents. According to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's PostSecondary Success report: **28% of college students are raising children.**

According to a study, financial challenges are the number one issue affecting college students and are having a major impact on graduation rates. Today's students are dealing with food-insecurity, homelessness, and incomes below the poverty level.

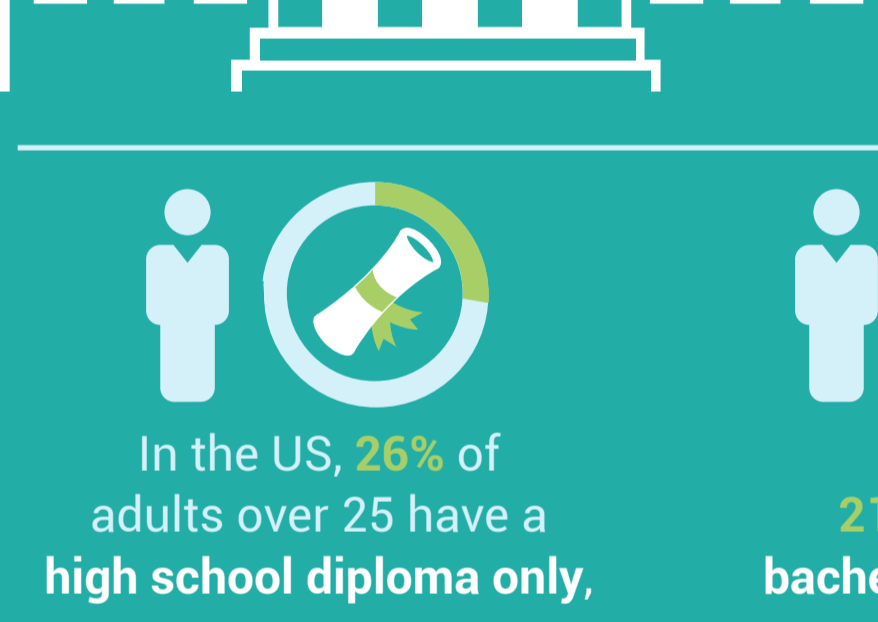
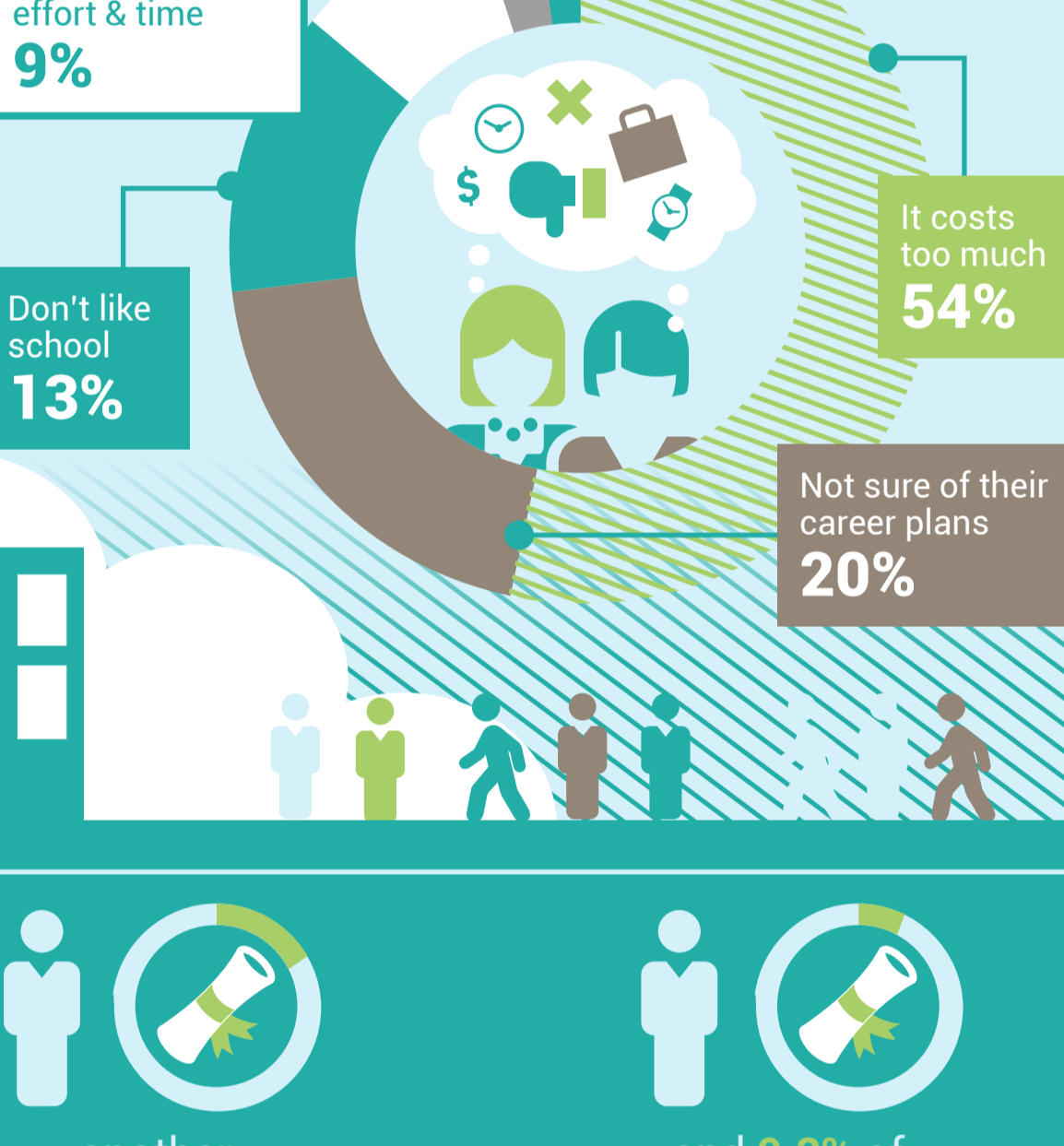
From 2011 to 2015, **20% of students who attended a two-year college lived in food-insecure households.**

In 2017, **14% of community college students experienced homelessness at one point.**

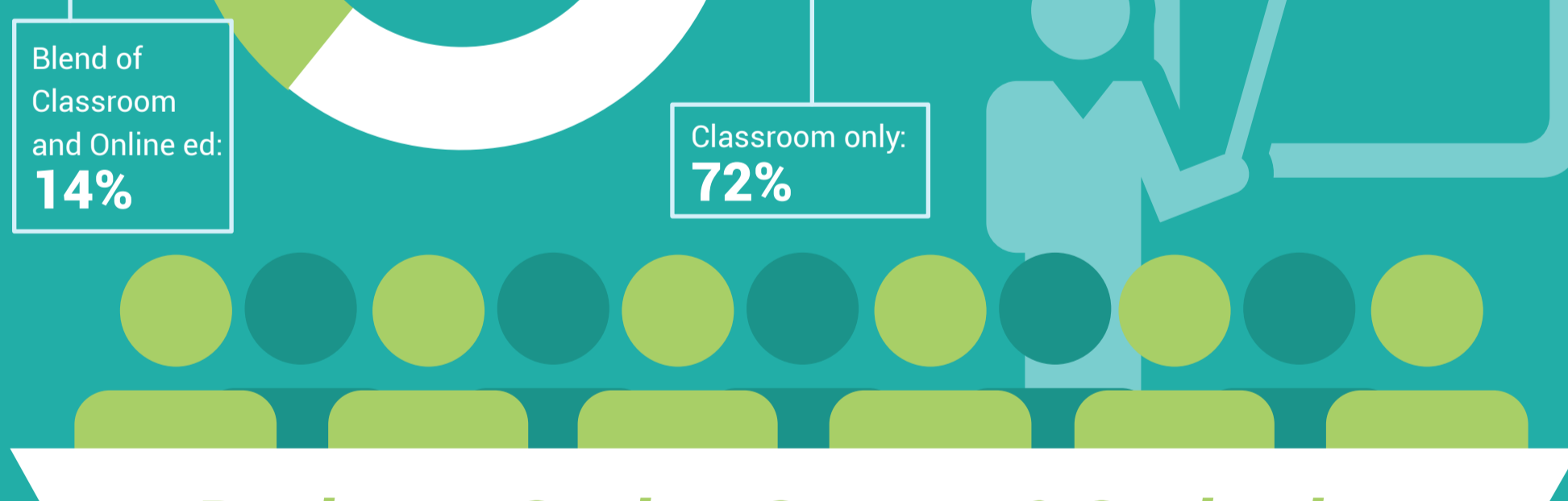
22% of adults have enrolled in some college but dropped out before earning a degree.

What are Reasons Adults Don't Enroll in College?

Though many adults without a college degree aspire to earn a higher credential, many never take the first step towards enrollment. According to a recent survey by the American Enterprise Institute, the top reasons that potential adult learners don't go back to school to complete secondary training include issues around finances and debt, uncertainty around their career path, and a lack of time.



In the US, **26%** of adults over 25 have a high school diploma only, another **21%** have a bachelor's degree, and **9.3%** of adults have a master's degree.



Barriers to Student Success & Graduation

According to data in a 2017 survey, Online Learning & the Back-to-School Decision, financial challenges relate to college affordability (70%) and taking on student debt (75%) are the most significant barriers adults face when considering a return to school.

The number one reason adults, cited by 73% of those surveyed, gave for wanting to return to college is to grow their income.

47% of today's students are financially independent, and 42% are living in poverty as they struggle to balance living expenses with the rising cost of college.

To tackle the real issues that adult learners face, education policies need to adapt:

- According to federal statistics, **75% of today's college students didn't start right out of high school.**
- 2/3rds of adults who return to college after a year away don't graduate.**
- 1/3 of adults say they can't afford to return to school because they are supporting their children's education.**

A Better Way Forward

Despite all these challenges, advances in online education have begun to transform the way adults think about college and earning their degree.

Average Age of Online Students

Undergraduate students average age: **29 years old**

Graduate students average age: **33 years old**

Online learning helps adults enhance their tech skills

52% of students believe that their tech-savviness improves their employability.

Online learning helps adult learners meet their academic potential

60% of students agree that learning technology helped improve their grades.

Adult learners can demonstrate mastery with competency-based education

CBE currently used in over **600 degree programs online** and on-campus.