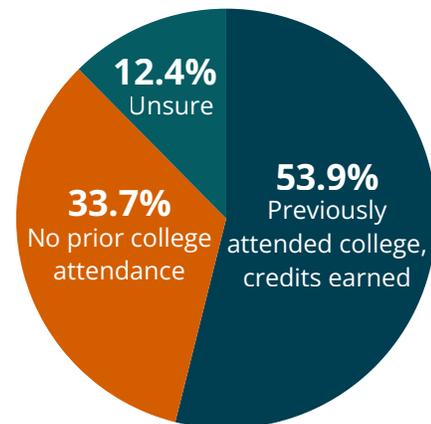# MICHIGAN RECONNECT APPLICANT SURVEY

The Michigan Reconnect scholarship program provides free or reduced community college tuition for eligible adults without a college degree. To better understand the needs of Reconnect applicants, the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Attainment and Potential administered a statewide survey to all individuals who sign up for the Michigan Reconnect program.

Between August 2024 and April 2025, a total of 9,433 applicants offered insights into their life experiences, plans for college, prior learning, and needed supports. MiLEAP continues to provide the survey to new applicants in order to learn how it can better serve Michigan's adult learners.
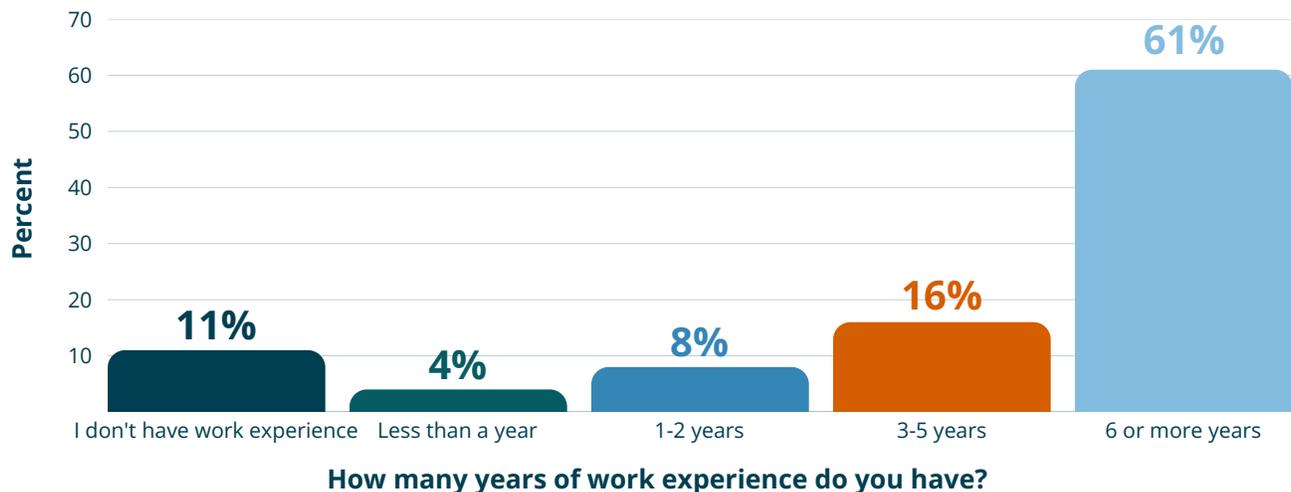
LIFE EXPERIENCES

College Experience

Over 50% of Reconnect applicants are returning adult learners with some college experience but no credential.

12.4% Unsure

33.7% No prior college attendance

53.9% Previously attended college, credits earned
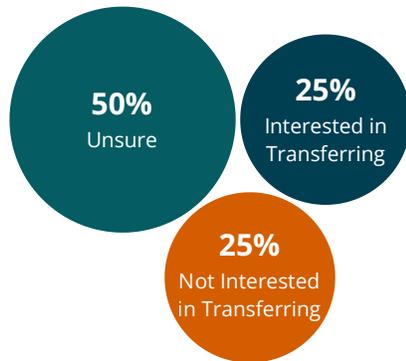
Work Experience

Work experience was common among respondents, with the majority of students having six or more years of experience in the workforce. This suggests that many Reconnect applicants are looking for education that will enhance their career opportunities.

How many years of work experience do you have?

- I don't have work experience: 11%
- Less than a year: 4%
- 1-2 years: 8%
- 3-5 years: 16%
- 6 or more years: 61%
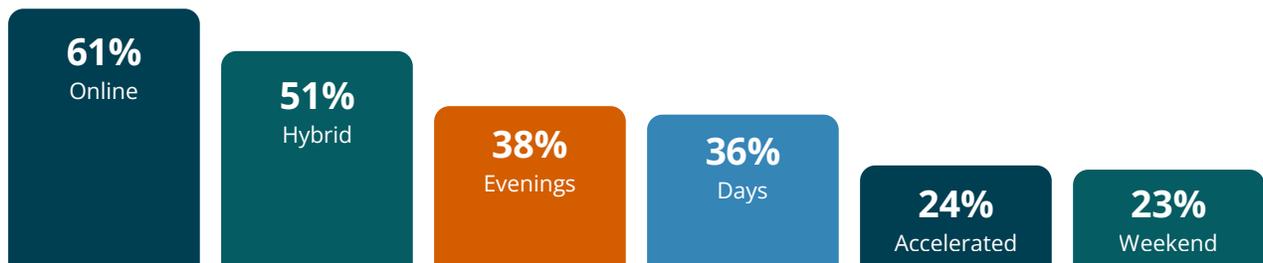
PLANS FOR COLLEGE

Transfer Possibilities

25% are interested in transferring, while another 50% are unsure, demonstrating a large pool of potential transfer students.
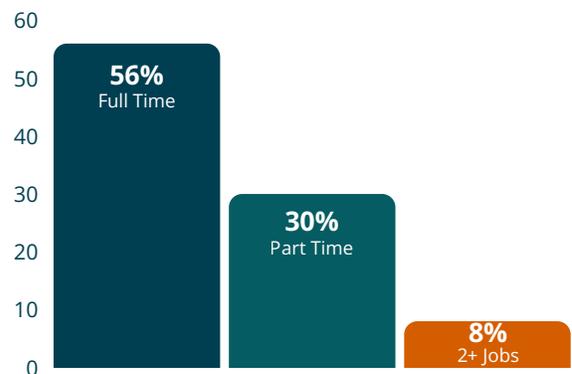
50% Unsure

25% Interested in Transferring

25% Not Interested in Transferring
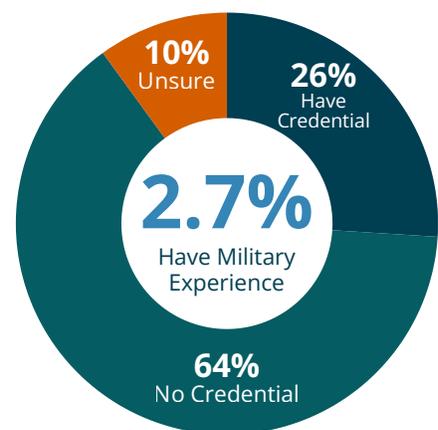
Balancing Work Responsibilities

At the time of the survey, a majority of respondents indicated that they would need to balance work with school, including 56% who anticipated having full-time work responsibilities, 30% who anticipated having part-time work responsibilities, and 8% who anticipated having multiple jobs while enrolled.

56% Full Time
30% Part Time
8% 2+ Jobs

Learning Formats

Similar to national trends, respondents had no singular, clear preference for one format over another.

61% Online
51% Hybrid
38% Evenings
36% Days
24% Accelerated
23% Weekend

MAXIMIZING PRIOR LEARNING

Credentials in Hand

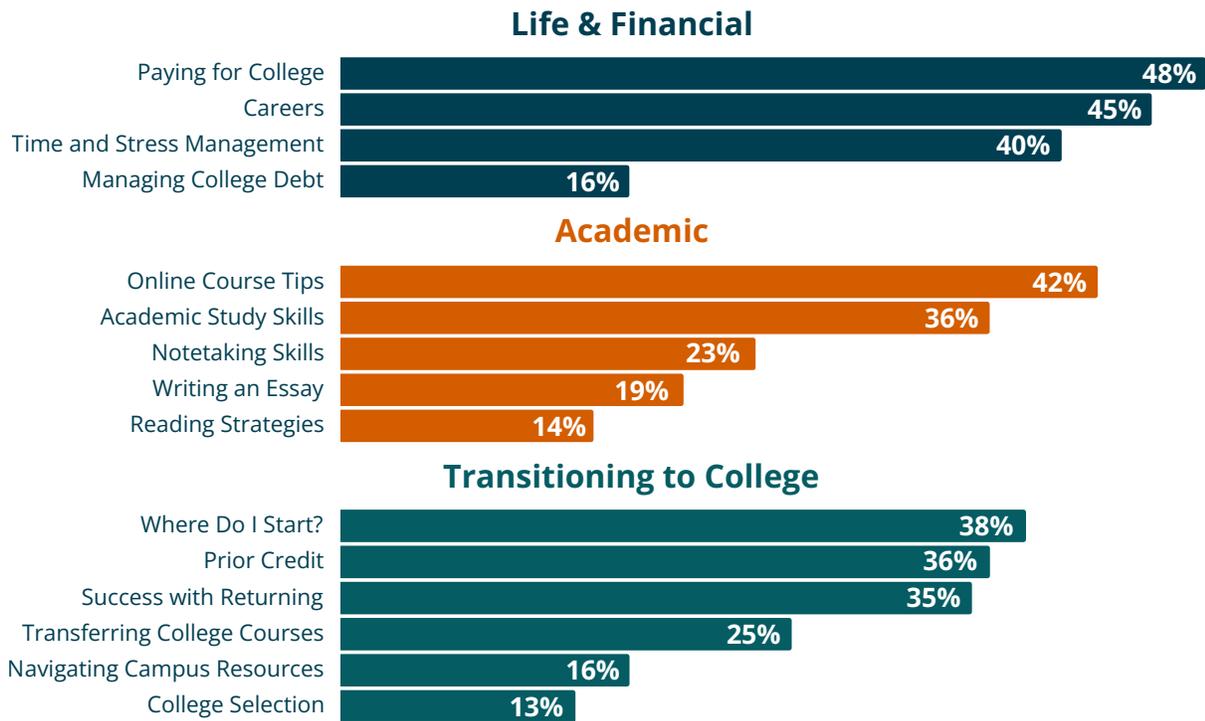About 26% of applicants entered college with a credential, and separately, 2.7% reported prior military experience. The sizeable group with prior workforce training, work experience, and/or military experience presents a strong case for the use of Prior Learning Assessment and Credit for Prior Learning.

10% Unsure
26% Have Credential
2.7% Have Military Experience
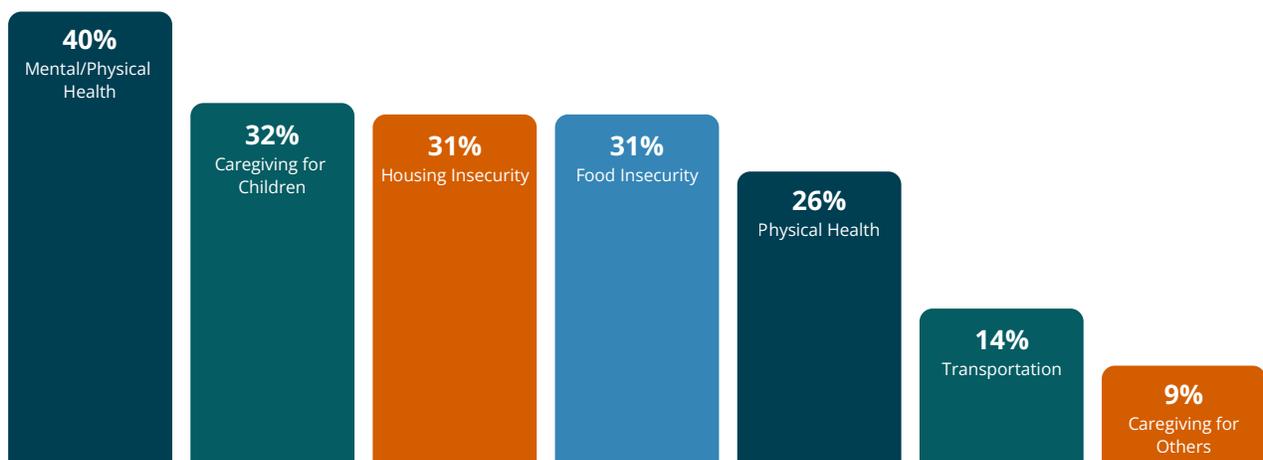**64%** No Credential

NEEDED SUPPORTS

What Adult Learners Need to Stay on Track

Respondents identified multiple supports that they require from the colleges to be successful, chief among which are assistance paying for college and navigating careers.

Life & Financial

Support	Percentage
Paying for College	48%
Careers	45%
Time and Stress Management	40%
Managing College Debt	16%

Academic

Support	Percentage
Online Course Tips	42%
Academic Study Skills	36%
Notetaking Skills	23%
Writing an Essay	19%
Reading Strategies	14%

Transitioning to College

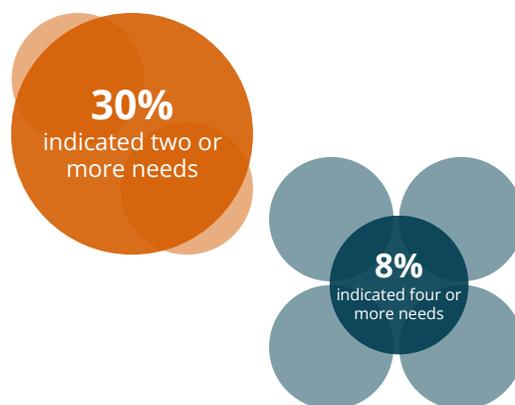| Support	Percentage
Where Do I Start?	38%
Prior Credit	36%
Success with Returning	35%
Transferring College Courses	25%
Navigating Campus Resources	16%
College Selection	13%

Adult Learners Face Many Competing Priorities

Adult learners bring resilience, work experience, and strong motivation to advance their education. However, many juggle demanding responsibilities outside the classroom, and institutions can better support them by addressing key challenges they face. Among adult learners, the most common challenges include:

Challenge	Percentage
Mental/Physical Health	40%
Caregiving for Children	32%
Housing Insecurity	31%
Food Insecurity	31%
Physical Health	26%
Transportation	14%
Caregiving for Others	9%

Intersectionality of Needs

Nearly 30% of respondents indicated that they experienced at least two or more basic needs challenges, such as housing or food insecurity, and approximately 8% reported four or more competing basic needs priorities. This concentration of overlapping challenges reinforces the importance of integrated student support models that can address multiple barriers simultaneously, rather than treating them in isolation.

30%
indicated two or more needs

8%
indicated four or more needs

KEY FINDINGS

Vast Prior Experience Brought to the Table
- Reconnect applicants bring substantial prior work and educational experience.
- Most have been in the workforce for several years, and more than half have some college credit.
- This underscores the importance of credit recognition and support strategies tailored to returning adult learners.

Goal Oriented, Yet Uncertain About Timelines and Transfer Pathways
- Reconnect applicants are motivated and goal-oriented—most plan to graduate within two years.
- Nearly three-quarters express openness to eventually earning a bachelor's degree, indicating students should receive information about transferring to a bachelor's degree granting institution.
- Many applicants also report uncertainty about graduation timelines and transfer pathways.
- Early advising, flexible course formats, and clear, supportive planning tools are needed to help students reach their long-term goals.

Supports Needed to Satisfy Competing Demands
- Reconnect applicants are balancing a wide range of competing demands on their time, attention, and resources.
- From basic needs to academic confidence, the survey highlights clear and diverse areas where support is needed.
- Addressing these challenges requires holistic, wraparound services that integrate academic, financial, and personal support to ensure adult learners can persist and succeed.

MiLEAP
Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential

MICHIGAN RECONNECT

The Michigan Center for Adult College Success