

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Education Decision Making and Access



Abstract

The pandemic has certainly disrupted our economy and the demand for and perception of education. This paper reports the results of a joint UPCEA and Blackboard sponsored survey relating to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education decision making and education access. Participants were asked about their interest level in various delivery formats and how likely they were to consider education, training, and acquiring new skills due to the pandemic, as well as whether they felt they had more access to higher education as a result of the increasing number of online courses and programs during the pandemic.

Methodology

To better understand the impact of COVID-19 on higher education, UPCEA and Blackboard partnered to study the perceptions and value of a degree in a post-pandemic world. The results in this paper focusing purely on post-pandemic educational attitudes are part of a larger study that spanned many issues related to higher education. Using an internet panel, the survey targeted individuals that were between the ages of 23 and 40, were not full-time students, and had some interest in continuing their education, receiving additional training, or gaining additional skills. In total, 2,154 individuals participated in the research, of which 1,220 met all qualifications. The survey took place between April 30th and May 28th, 2021. (Besides the data contained in the following Study Findings, additional detailed information can be found in the appendices.)

Executive Summary


The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on education decision making, as well as perceptions on access to education. A recent study by Strada Education Network suggests that Americans have not only been disrupted, but they are questioning their future goals and plans toward education. Their most recent study showed that 32% (up 10% from an earlier study) of adults age 25 or older had their education plans disrupted and are no longer planning to enroll nor are they planning to enroll in the next six months. However, the UPCEA/Blackboard research shows that adult learners feel they have more access and interest in acquiring new skills and may be thinking more long-term.

Across all age groups, **a majority of respondents indicated they are more likely to consider education, training, and acquiring new skills** and that they feel they have more access to education since the pandemic. This is especially true for those interested in fully online and hybrid delivery formats. The increasing number of online courses and programs available since the pandemic has led all format groups to feel that they have more options and access to education. Even those most interested in face-to-face delivery felt this way. Those less interested in the various formats felt they had about the same or less access or options.

Additionally, **the pandemic proved to be a catalyst for many individuals** to consider personal advancement through education, training, or additional skills. Among respondents that were extremely interested in personal advancement, **44% said they were much more likely to consider continuing their education, additional training, or additional skills, as a result of the pandemic**. As interest in personal advancement decreased, so too did the impact of the pandemic.

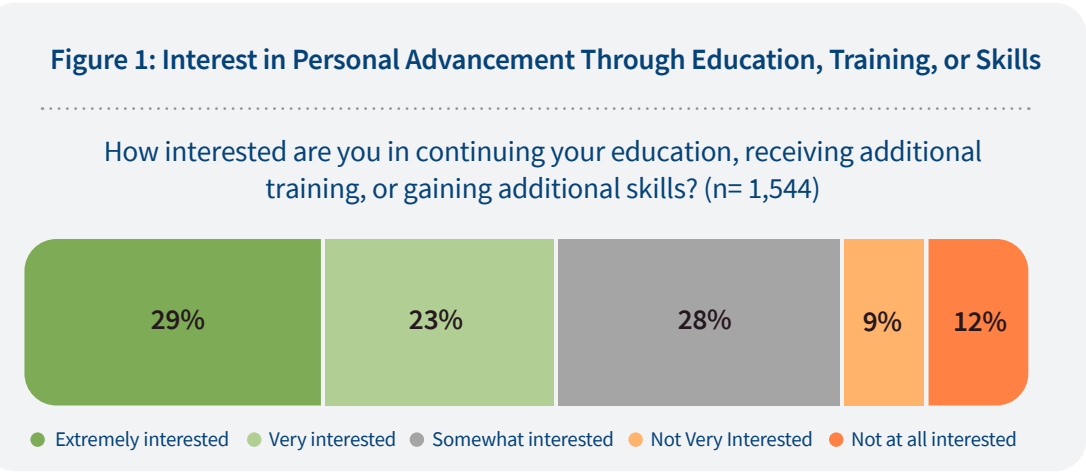
The most significant factor in this research was the **correlation between those with more positive outlooks to online or hybrid delivery coupled with their likelihood of seeking out future education training** as well as seeing the world as offering more choices. These individuals have slight leanings with a younger age group, but appear to cut across many age categories and thus have a **more positive or progressive attitude to technology-based learning**.

Detailed Findings



Key Insight: *Approximately half of all respondents were extremely or very interested in continuing their education. Younger individuals were more likely to be extremely or very interested than older individuals.*

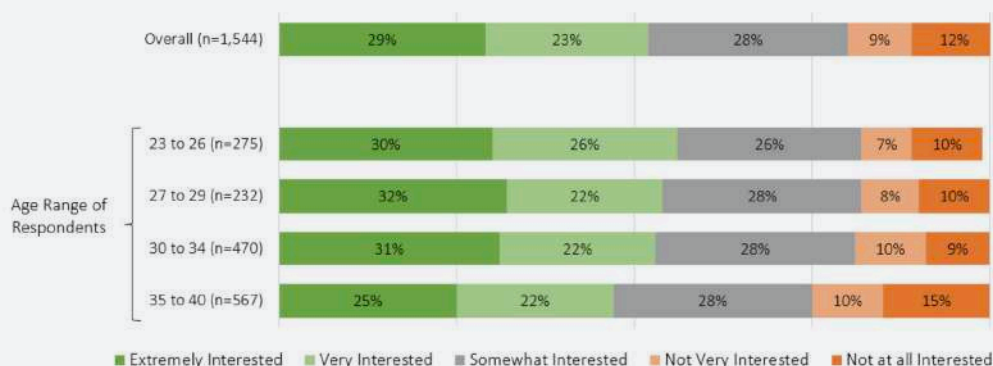
Over 50% of respondents were extremely (29%) or very interested (23%) in continuing their education, receiving additional training, or gaining additional skills. Those that were not very or not at all interested were terminated from the study.



As age increased, the percentage of respondents that were extremely or very interested in personal advancement decreased.

Figure 2: Interest in Personal Advancement by Age

How interested are you in continuing your education, receiving additional training, or gaining additional skills?



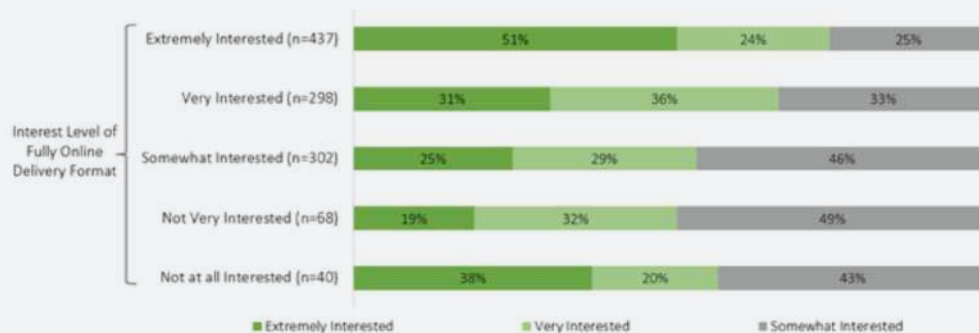
Key Insight: As interest in various delivery formats decreased, so too did interest in personal advancement through education, training, or skills.

As interest in personal advancement through education, additional training, or additional skills decreases, so too does the interest in a fully online delivery. There is a noticeable deviation from the trend as 58% of individuals that are not at all interested in an online delivery are still extremely or very interested in personal advancement.



Figure 3: Interest in Personal Advancement by Interest in a Fully Online Delivery

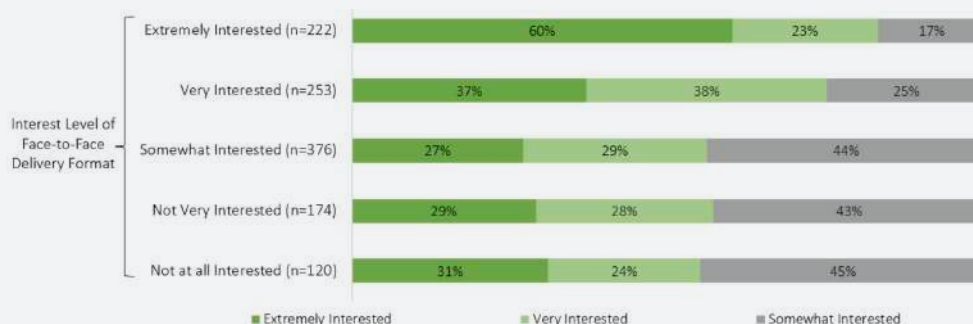
How interested are you in continuing your education, receiving additional training, or gaining additional skills?



As interest in a face-to-face delivery decreased, so too did the percentage of individuals that were extremely or very interested in personal advancement.

Figure 4: Interest in Personal Advancement by Interest in a Face-to-Face Format

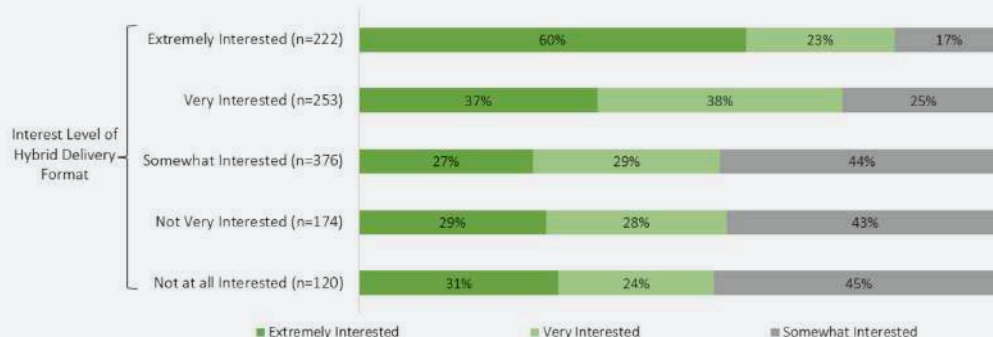
How interested are you in continuing your education, receiving additional training, or gaining additional skills?



As interest in a hybrid delivery decreased, so too did the percentage of individuals that were extremely or very interested in personal advancement.

Figure 5: Interest in Personal Advancement by Interest in a Hybrid Format

How interested are you in continuing your education, receiving additional training, or gaining additional skills?



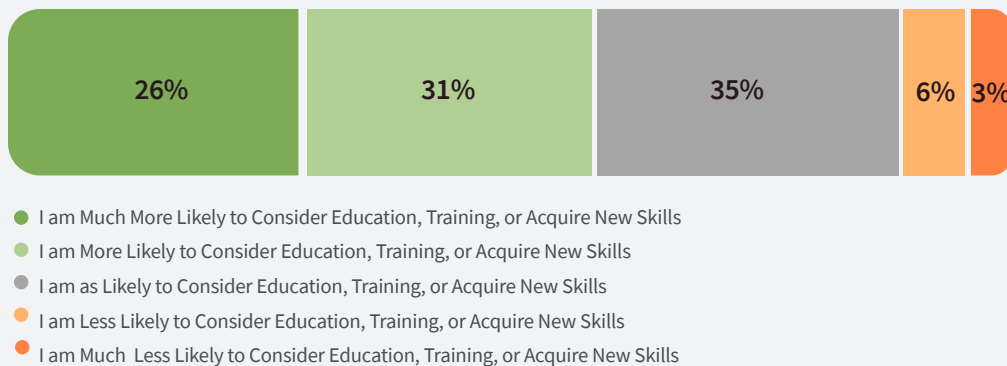


Key Insight: The pandemic proved to be a catalyst for many individuals to consider personal advancement through education, training, or additional skills. Those that were much more likely to consider personal advancement as a result of the pandemic were more likely to be extremely interested in continuing their education, training, or additional skills.

Respondents were asked a series of questions regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their education decision making. When asked how likely they were to consider education, training, and acquiring new skills due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 57% of respondents were more (31%) or much more (26%) likely while 35% were just as likely as before. A similar pattern was seen across all age groups as 54% to 62% were more or much more likely and 35% just as likely to do so.

Figure 6: Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Education Decision Making

How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your decision making toward education, training, or acquiring new skills?(n= 1,108)

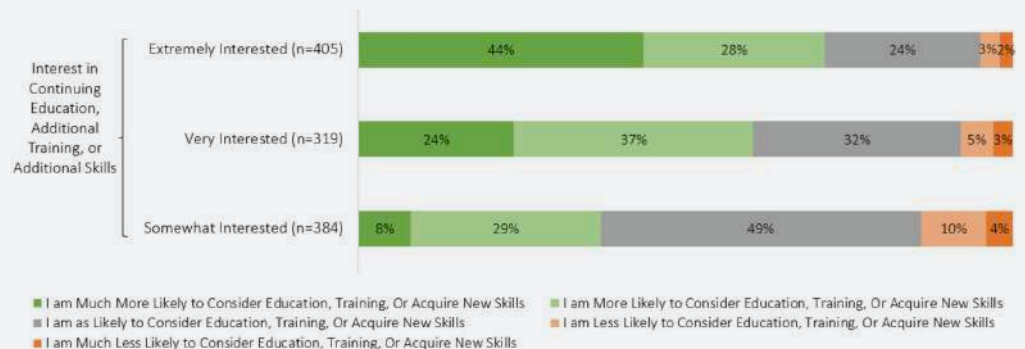


The pandemic proved to be a catalyst for many individuals to consider personal advancement through education, training, or additional skills. Among respondents that were extremely interested in personal advancement, 44% said they were much more likely to consider continuing their education, additional training, or additional skills, as a result of the pandemic. As interest in personal advancement decreased, so too did the impact of the pandemic.



Figure 7: Impact of the COVID 19 Pandemic on Education Decision Making by Interest in Personal Advancement

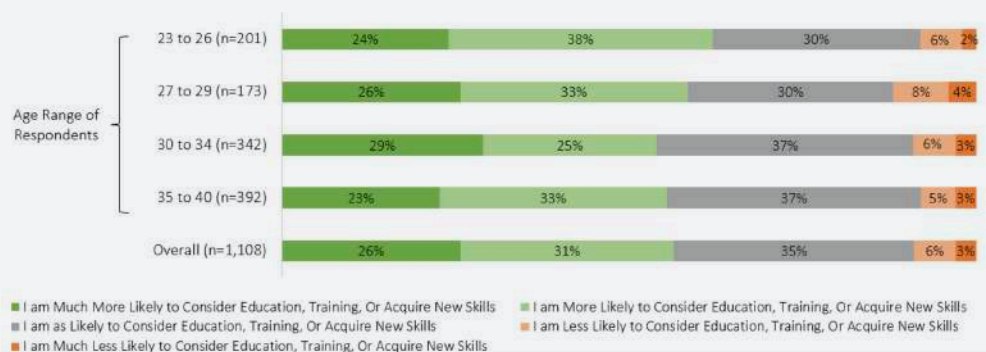
How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your decision making towards education, training, or acquiring new skills?



The impact of the pandemic on participants' decision making toward education was also examined by age group. Overall, 57% of respondents were much more or more likely to consider education, training, or acquiring new skills, and by age group this ranged from 54-62%. Younger individuals were somewhat more likely than those older.

Figure 8: Impact of the COVID 19 Pandemic on Education Decision Making by Age

How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your decision making towards education, training, or acquiring new skills?



Key Insight: Those interested in fully online delivery are also more likely to consider more education and training.

When participants were sorted by their interest level in various delivery formats (fully online, hybrid, and face-to-face), type of delivery had an impact on respondents' education decisions. Those interested in fully online delivery were more likely to consider further education than those not interested. Those extremely interested were much more (36%) or more (28%) likely, while approximately 60% of those not very or not at all interested in online delivery were less or much less likely. Note that there were more individuals extremely (n=419) or very interested (n=291) than not at all or very interested (total n= 105).

Figure 9: Impact of Pandemic on Education Decision Making by Interest in a Fully Online Delivery

How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your decision making towards education, training, or acquiring new skills?

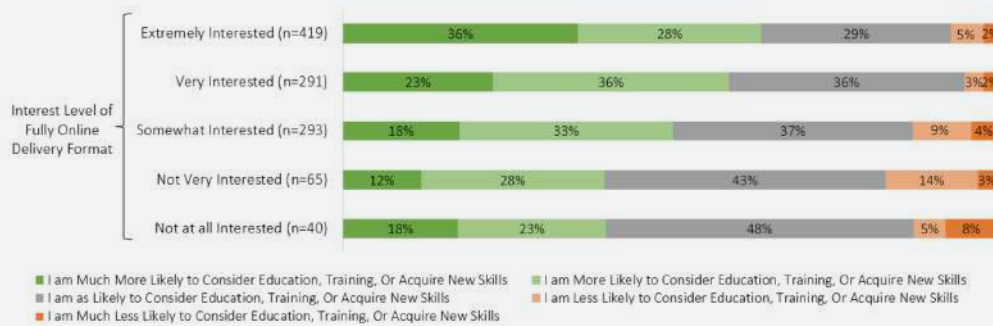
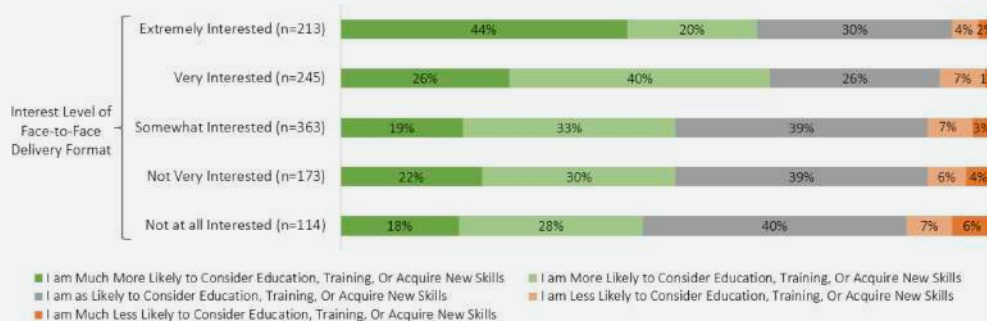


Figure 10 on the following page shows that just under one-half of respondents are very or extremely interested in learning in a face-to-face mode and of this group, about two-thirds are more likely or much more likely to continue education or training.

Figure 10: Impact of the Pandemic on Education Decision Making by Interest in a Face-to-Face Delivery

How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your decision making towards education, training, or acquiring new skills?





Key Insight: Those extremely or very interested in a form of hybrid delivery are more likely to consider education and training as a result of the pandemic.

Those extremely interested in a hybrid delivery format were more likely to consider further education as a result of the pandemic, 45% much more and 28% more likely. Of those very interested, 62% were much more or more likely. Again, those not very or not at all interested in a hybrid format were significantly less likely to pursue further education.

Figure 11: Impact of Pandemic on Education Decision Making by Interest in a Hybrid Delivery

How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your decision making towards education, training, or acquiring new skills?

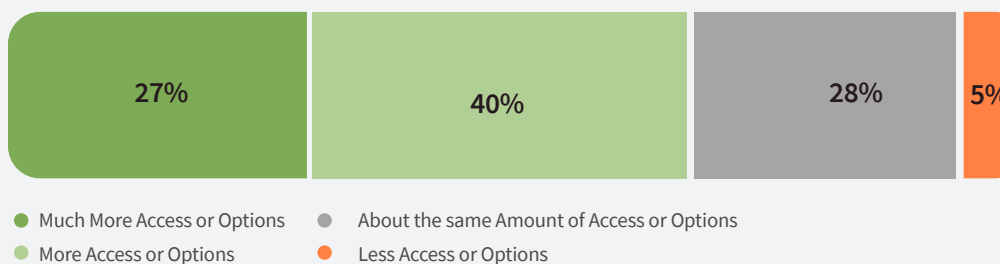


Key Insight: Potential students believe that with the rush of higher education institutions to move content online, there is a perception or belief that individuals have more options or access.

Participants were also asked a series of questions regarding access to higher education post-pandemic. Of those surveyed, 67% indicated they felt they had more (40%) or much more (27%) access to higher education than before the COVID-19 pandemic as a result of the increasing number of online courses and programs, while 28% said they had about the same and 5% had less.

Figure 12: Access to Higher Education Post-Pandemic

As a result of the increasing number of online courses and programs, do you feel you have more options or access to higher education than before the COVID-19 pandemic? (n= 1,108)

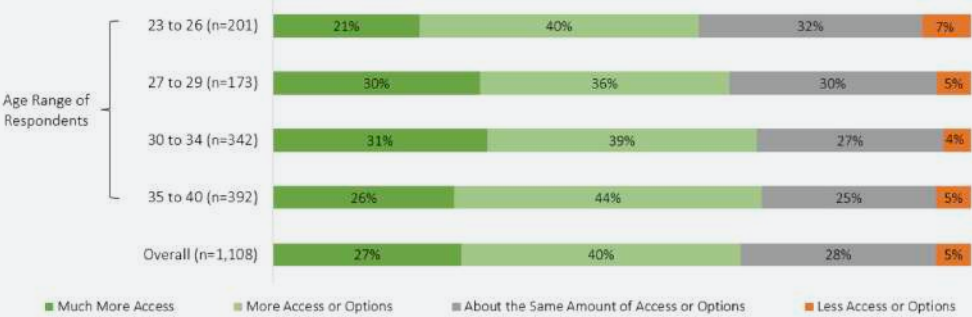




Results were also tabulated by age group and 70% of individuals 30 to 40 felt they have more or much more options.

Figure 13: Access to Higher Education Post-Pandemic by Age

As a result of the increasing number of online courses and programs, do you feel you have more options or access to higher education than before the COVID-19 pandemic?

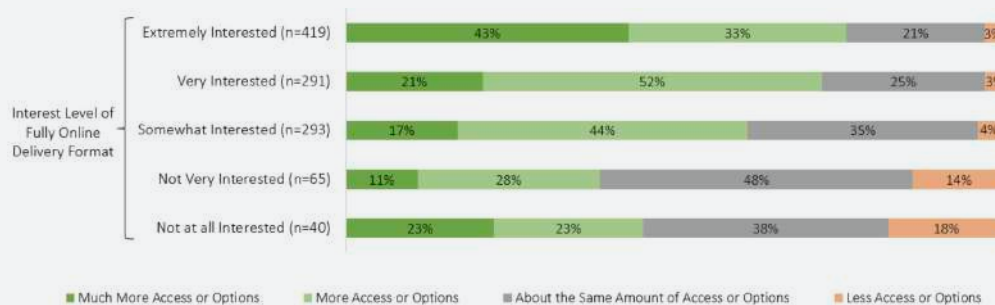


Key Insight: Those extremely interested in fully online delivery are also more likely to believe that they have more choices or access to higher education.

Respondents who said they were extremely or very interested in fully online delivery were the most likely to feel they have much more access or options to higher education than before the COVID-19 pandemic. They were more or much more likely (73-76%) to feel they have greater access.

Figure 14: Access to Higher Education Post-Pandemic by Interest in a Fully Online Delivery

As a result of the increasing number of online courses and programs, do you feel you have more options or access to higher education than before the COVID-19 pandemic?



Similarly, respondents who said they were extremely or very interested in hybrid delivery were more likely to feel they have more or much more (71-78%) access or options to higher education than before the COVID-19 pandemic as a result of an increasing number of online courses and programs. Results for those preferring face-to-face delivery, either extremely or very interested, showed little difference with 70-72% feeling they had more or much more access.

Figure 15: Access to Higher Education Post-Pandemic by Interest in a Face-to-Face Delivery

As a result of the increasing number of online courses and programs, do you feel you have more options or access to higher education than before the COVID-19 pandemic?

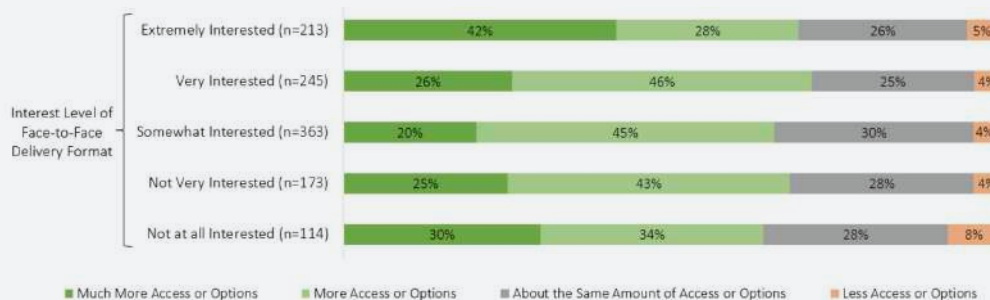
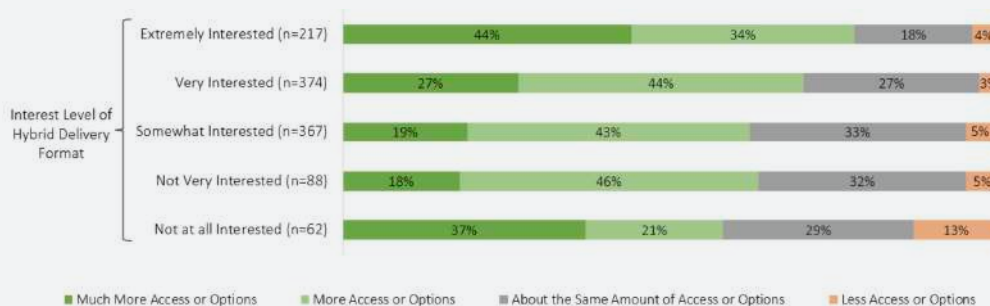


Figure 16: Access to Higher Education Post-Pandemic by Interest in a Hybrid Delivery

As a result of the increasing number of online courses and programs, do you feel you have more options or access to higher education than before the COVID-19 pandemic?





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