

Gallup-Amazon Study Shows Impact of Childhood Role Models on Career Success and Income, Reveals Gaps in Access

Three in five adults say they received little to no career education in school

Among all adults, those who had successful career role models are more likely to earn \$60,000 or more

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Oct. 5, 2023—Amazon and Gallup released a new report today, [Role Models Matter](#), examining working adults' childhood experiences with career education and role models. The research highlights the profound influence that role models can have in building a successful career. The study reveals that working adults who had a successful role model during their youth are more likely to say their current career is fulfilling compared to those who were neutral or disagreed that they had a role model (68% vs. 51%). They are also more likely to feel established in their career (64% vs. 45%) and to be in a career that pays enough to live comfortably (60% vs. 39%).

The report also sheds light on the need for improved access to these resources. The majority (60%) of young adults received little or no career education when they were in middle and high school, and of those who did receive it, most rate it as having been only “fair” (41%) or “poor” (25%) as opposed to “excellent” (7%) or “good” (27%). There are also economic disparities in access: Young adults who say they grew up in a family that often struggled financially are less likely than those from high-income families to have had career education (30% vs. 40%) and less likely to have had someone with a successful career to look up to in their youth (28% vs. 84%). Role models may also impact objective earnings in adulthood. Among all adults, those who had someone with a successful career to look up to are more likely than those who did not to be earning \$60,000 or more (52% vs. 39%).

Amazon's global philanthropic computer science education program, Amazon Future Engineer, commissioned the study to identify new ways to inspire young students and help them pursue more successful careers.

“It is our mission to improve young people's access to comprehensive education and pathways for careers of the future, particularly for students from underserved and underrepresented communities,” said Victor Reinoso, global director of philanthropic education initiatives at Amazon. “This study emphasizes the importance of increasing youth access to role models as a key part of this strategy. Amazon Future Engineer programs such as Class Chats, Career Tours and our Scholarship/Internship program are initial steps in this direction, but the research points to opportunities to do so much more. Experiences like these will help pave the way for students to maximize their potential and find fulfilling careers.”

The research shows role models have benefits for people of all ages, including early career professionals, and sharing similar life experiences with a role model can strengthen their impact. Among those who agree that their role model had similar life experiences to them, 81% say their role model motivated them to achieve great things, compared to only 59% of those whose role model did not share similar life experiences. When reflecting on the role models they had early in their careers, 77% of working adults say they trusted their role model's knowledge and expertise, 68% say they felt like their role model's level of career success seemed realistic for them to achieve in their own career, and 66% say their role model helped motivate them to achieve great things.

Taken together, these findings illustrate the dynamic relationship between the presence of a role model and career outcomes and perceptions later in life. This study adds to the growing body of research from Gallup and

Amazon on [how students and adults perceive careers](#) and the [factors that shape their career interests, access and outcomes](#).

“Role models and career education can have a profound impact on a person’s career outcomes, but the research indicates that access to these resources is not equally distributed throughout society,” said Lydia Saad, Gallup’s director of U.S. social research. “Students who lack good role models have fewer pathways to success, so it is imperative that we continue working to correct this, ensuring that every young person has both the information and the inspiration needed to reach their full potential.”

Read the full [report](#) for more about the power of role models and visit [Amazon Future Engineer](#) to learn how the program is helping more young people explore their full potential.

About Amazon Future Engineer

Amazon Future Engineer is a childhood-to-career computer science education program intended to inspire and educate millions of students from historically underrepresented communities globally, including millions of students in the U.S. each year. Students explore computer science through school curriculum and project-based learning, using code to make music, program robots, and solve problems. Additionally, each year Amazon Future Engineer awards hundreds of students with four-year, \$40,000 scholarships and paid industry internships to promote diversity and inclusion in the field. The program is currently available in Canada, France, Germany, India, the UK and U.S. For more information, visit amazonfutureengineer.com.

About Gallup

Gallup delivers analytics and advice to help leaders and organizations solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 80 years of experience with its global reach, Gallup knows more about the attitudes and behaviors of employees, customers, students and citizens than any other organization in the world.

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