

## **Nine in 10 U.S. Adults Say Math Is Essential — But Many Grapple With Their Own Math Skills**

*New Gallup study shows over eight in 10 managers wish their direct reports had stronger math skills.*

**WASHINGTON, D.C. — May 28, 2025** — Ninety-five percent of Americans say math skills are very or somewhat important in their work life, and 4 in 10 (43%) say they wish they had learned more math skills in middle or high school, according to [Gallup's latest study](#). *The Math Matters Study: The Value of Math in Work and Life*, conducted with support from the Gates Foundation, surveyed over 5,000 U.S. adults, including nearly 3,000 workplace managers, to understand perceptions of math in Americans' work and personal lives.

### **Americans See Value of Math in Life, but Have Complex Emotions on the Subject**

While an overwhelming majority of adults (96%) recognize math skills as important in their personal lives, Americans have varying emotions when it comes to their feelings toward math. “Challenged” (60%) is the most common word Americans use to describe their personal experience with math, followed by “interested” (48%). Nearly half of Americans (47%) have exclusively positive feelings (interested, excited or happy) about math, while about four in 10 (37%) have exclusively negative feelings (such as confused or bored).

These emotions toward math are linked to Americans' views on its importance: Those with exclusively positive feelings toward math are much more likely to say math should be prioritized in school (73%) than those with only negative feelings (46%). They're also more confident in their ability to help their children with math homework — 73% of parents with positive feelings express confidence, compared with just 38% of parents with negative feelings.

However, views and emotions differ by age: 75% of adults aged 65 and older say math is “very important” in their personal life, compared with just 37% of 18- to 24-year-olds. Older adults are also more likely to have positive feelings toward math — 61% of those 65 and older have exclusively positive feelings toward math compared with 32% of 18- to 24-year-olds.

### **Support for Increased Attention on Math in School, Work**

Six in 10 Americans (62%) believe math should be prioritized more highly than other subjects in K-12 schools, including 14% who say it should receive the very highest priority. Forty three percent of U.S. adults wish they had learned more math skills in middle or high school, especially financial math — by far the most-desired skill, cited by 29% of adults.

In the context of workforce skills, 61% of Americans say math is “very important,” ranking below reading (90%), language (68%) and technology skills (68%), but about on par with writing and collaboration skills. From a managerial perspective, many managers (85%) wish their direct reports had stronger math skills. Financial (41%) and foundational (41%) math top their list of most-desired capabilities among employees, followed by data science skills (37%).

“Americans overwhelmingly believe math is essential in life and work, but many wish they had gained more real-world skills like data science and financial literacy,” said Justin Lall, principal at Gallup. “Aligning math education with these practical applications could not only boost engagement, but better prepare future generations for success.”

### **Methodology**

The Gallup Math Matters Study, supported by the Gates Foundation, surveyed 5,136 U.S. adults aged 18 and older from Dec. 2-6, 2024. Among the total sample, Gallup surveyed 808 parents of children currently enrolled in K-12<sup>th</sup> grade. To gather the workplace perspective from managers, Gallup surveyed 2,831 managers from Dec. 2-9, 2024, using a web-based survey. The data are weighted to match national demographics of gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education and region for the population of U.S. adults.

### **About Gallup**

Gallup delivers analytics and advice to help leaders and organizations solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 85 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.