

# Role of Formal Education in Work Experience Programs

This Data Point uses data from the Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES), administered as part of the 2016 National Household Education Surveys Program (NHES:2016). ATES collected information from a nationally representative sample of over 47,000 adults ages 16 to 65 who were not enrolled in high school. ATES focuses on nondegree credentials and training, including certifications, licenses, postsecondary certificates, and work experience programs. As defined in ATES, a work experience program includes an internship, co-op, practicum, clerkship, externship, residency, clinical experience, apprenticeship, or similar program. Respondents described the last work experience program they had completed.

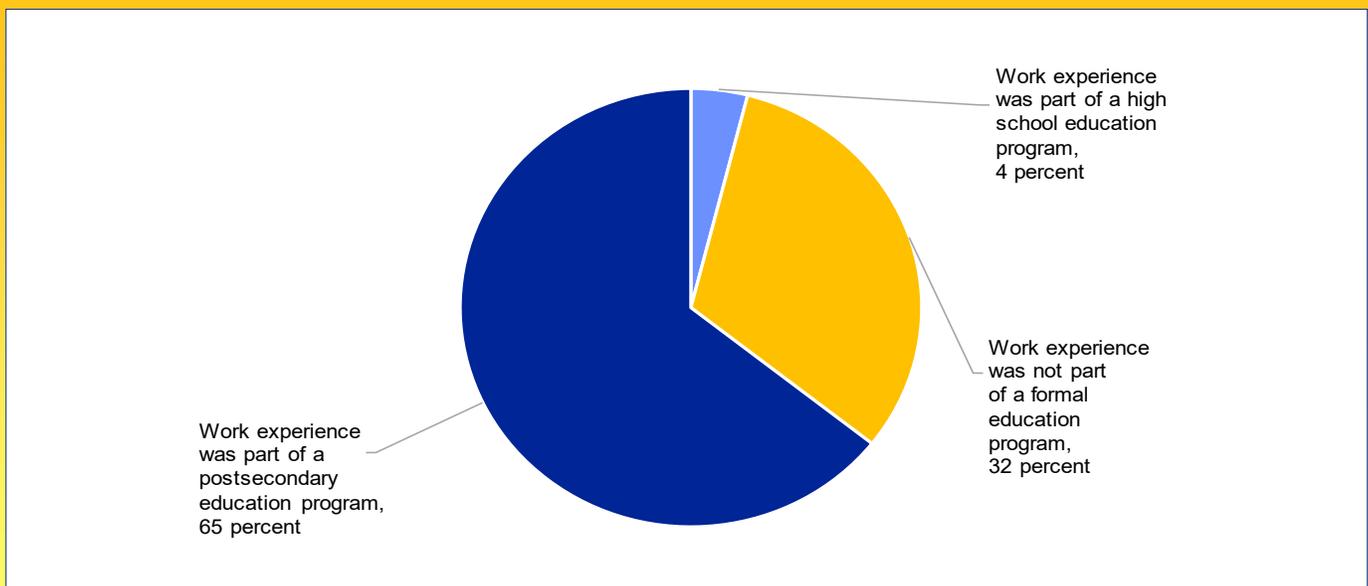
In 2016, a total of 21 percent of adults had completed a work experience program at some point (not shown in figures).<sup>1</sup> This Data Point examines the extent to which these work experience programs were taken as part of a formal education program and compares selected characteristics of the programs taken as

part of formal education versus programs taken outside of formal education.

**More than two-thirds (68 percent) of adults who completed a work experience program did so as part of a formal education program, usually as part of a postsecondary education program.**

Among adults who had completed a work experience program, 65 percent completed their last work experience program as part of a postsecondary education program, while only 4 percent completed their last work experience program as part of a high school program (**figure 1**).

**FIGURE 1. Among adults who completed a work experience program, percentage whose last completed work experience program was part of a formal education program: 2016**



NOTE: As defined in the survey, *adults* are ages 16 to 65 and not enrolled in high school, and a *work experience program* is an internship, co-op, practicum, clerkship, externship, residency, clinical experience, apprenticeship, or similar program. Standard errors for estimates can be found at <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ctes/tables/A10.asp>. Detail may not sum to total because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES) of the National Household Education Surveys Program, 2016.

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Too few adults completed their last work experience program as part of a high school program to permit a reliable analysis of these programs. Therefore, the remainder of the Data Point compares the characteristics of work experience programs taken as part of a postsecondary education program to those taken outside of an education program.

Most adults who completed a work experience program (93 percent) received on-the-job training or on-the-job evaluation, regardless of whether the program was part of a postsecondary education program or was not part of a formal education program (**figure 2**).

Work experience programs completed through postsecondary education differed from those that were not part of an education program in two key ways: whether participants were paid as part of the work experience, and whether the work experience helped prepare them for certification or licensure.

Specifically, adults who completed a work experience program outside of education, rather than as part of postsecondary education, were more often paid during the program. About three-quarters of adults who completed a work experience program outside of education were paid a wage (74 percent), compared to less than half

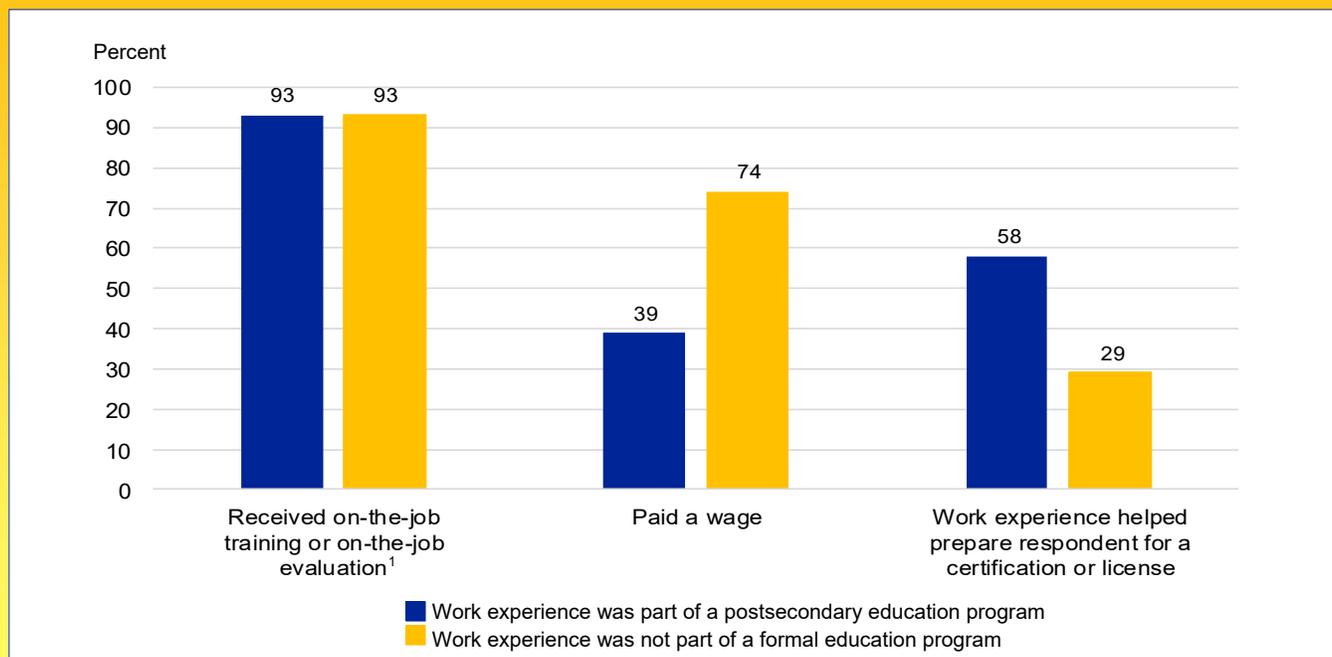
(39 percent) of those whose program was part of postsecondary education (**figure 2**).

But postsecondary-based work experience programs more often provided another benefit. Adults who completed a work experience program as part of postsecondary education, rather than outside of education, more often reported that the program helped prepare them for a certification or license (58 compared to 29 percent, respectively; **figure 2**).

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Available at <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ctes/tables/A1.asp>.

**FIGURE 2. Among adults whose last completed work experience program was part of a postsecondary education program or was not part of a formal education program, percentage of adults whose work experience program had selected characteristics: 2016**



<sup>1</sup>Combines responses to two survey questions asking if the adult had been (1) instructed or trained by a co-worker or supervisor, or (2) evaluated by a co-worker or supervisor. NOTE: As defined in the survey, *adults* are ages 16 to 65 and not enrolled in high school, and a *work experience program* is an internship, co-op, practicum, clerkship, externship, residency, clinical experience, apprenticeship, or similar program. Standard errors for estimates can be found at <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ctes/tables/A10.asp>. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES) of the National Household Education Surveys Program, 2016.

This National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Data Point presents information on education topics of current interest. It was authored by Kirsten Manville and Emily Isenberg of the American Institutes for Research (AIR). Estimates based on samples are subject to sampling variability, and apparent differences may not be statistically significant. All stated differences are

statistically significant at the .05 level. In the design, conduct, and data processing of NCES surveys, efforts are made to minimize effects of nonsampling errors, such as item nonresponse, measurement error, data processing error, or other systematic error.