



2021 YEAR UP ALUMNI SURVEY

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## Dear friends,

It is our pleasure to share with you this latest alumni survey report, our effort to learn how alumni have fared in their career, educational, and life pursuits after Year Up and ask for feedback that has helped us become [one of the most effective workforce programs in the country](#).

We conducted our first national alumni survey in 2011. As in 2016, this survey was a collaboration between the Research & Evaluation and Alumni Relations teams, and we hope it will be a resource for internal and external partners in the Opportunity Movement. While it was a monumental effort to reach as many alumni as possible, the lessons learned were so valuable that we committed to surveying alumni every five years. [In our next survey in 2016](#), we found that graduates' earnings grow steadily after the program and are competitive with college degree holders' wages. The majority of Year Up alumni (64%) considered themselves to be "thriving", exceeding quality of life measures for the U.S. general population. We also heard from alumni that they needed and wanted additional supports to pursue career-relevant certificates, credentials and degrees. In the years since, we responded by drastically expanding our [educational support offerings](#), for example, to pursue free Associate's and Bachelor's degrees with our partner educational institutions.

Preparing for this, our third all-alumni survey, presented some great new opportunities. We have a rich and active National Alumni Association, a broad alumni network of more than 23,000. Each year, thousands of alumni across the country participate in virtual events, attend our National Alumni Summits, and access resources to support their personal, career and educational development. Our vibrant alumni community is committed to advancing in their careers and education, contributing to Year Up's success, and taking action in the Opportunity Movement that is changing the narrative of young adults in our country.

Our alumni community works in close partnership with our dedicated National Alumni Relations Team. After more than six years as National Director of Alumni Relations, Ronda Harris Thompson recently stepped into a new role as Year Up's Chief Diversity Equity Inclusion & Belonging Officer. In February 2022, we were thrilled to welcome Janice Lindsey as our new National Director of Alumni Relations. Janice has more than 20 years of progressive leadership roles in leading non-profit organizations and in higher education. She joined Year Up in 2020 and previously served as Regional Director of Development for the Southeast Region, and we are fortunate to have her leadership on the Alumni team moving forward.

We also want to acknowledge that this survey went to our alumni at a time when so many of us have faced adversity and unexpected hardship during the COVID pandemic. During these trying times, it is especially important to reach out, connect, and learn where we can better offer our support. Many of our current students, staff, and graduates have been invited repeatedly to give their input, feedback, and perspectives over social media, email, and text messages from the many organizations, programs, and companies in our orbits. We are grateful to our alumni network for engaging with us, and providing the gift of feedback through the survey.

We are proud to share and celebrate the 2021 findings that show how our alumni are progressing in their careers, education, and in furthering the Opportunity Movement. We have also identified several important ways we know we can grow even stronger as an organization that aims to provide top-notch supports to our network.

We hope you find the report informative. Should you have any questions, please never hesitate to reach us at [alumnirelations@yearup.org](mailto:alumnirelations@yearup.org).



**Janice Lindsey**  
 National Director  
 of Alumni Relations



**Matt McCann**  
 Senior Director of  
 Alumni Advancement  
 and Operations

## INTRODUCTION

---

In fall 2021, Year Up's National Alumni Relations and Research & Evaluation teams surveyed Year Up alumni across the country. Building upon insights from our 2011 and 2016 alumni surveys, we were initially guided by four questions:

- **Since leaving Year Up, how have alumni fared in terms of employment and wages?**
- **Are alumni pursuing and completing post-secondary education and training opportunities after Year Up?**
- **Do alumni feel that they have achieved stability and self-sufficiency in their lives after Year Up? How do they compare to others?**
- **How are alumni continuing to engage with Year Up and what ongoing support do they need?**

However, there are key factors that make this 2021 report unique. First, Year Up's alumni population has more than doubled in size in the last five years with some alumni representing new cities, sites, and campuses that have launched since our last report. Second, Year Up established new graduate outcomes data collection and reporting practices. We now regularly capture alumni employment status and wages at one year after graduation and leverage the National Student Clearinghouse to measure long-term enrollment and completion of post-secondary education. We therefore complement and contextualize the 2021 Alumni Survey respondents' data with these other administrative and national data sources in the report. Finally, yet importantly, we administered the survey in fall 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic and the related economic downturn.

We provide this context for a few reasons. We must carefully qualify the comparisons of the 2021 survey results to our past surveys' results or any pre-pandemic national employment or quality-of-life benchmarks that do not reflect recent socioeconomic challenges. Additionally, while we aimed to hear from as many alumni as possible, our surveys are not immune to selection and non-response biases. The "Data and Methods" section later in the report carefully compares our survey respondents to the wider population of alumni we attempted to reach, and shows we heard from a largely representative group of alumni. Still, the perspectives and experiences of alumni who opted to respond to our survey could differ meaningfully from those who did not. Researchers may choose from a variety of technical weighting methods that attempt to reduce selection and non-response biases, but the choice of method can have very different results, or may only minimally reduce or even exaggerate biases in worst cases.<sup>1</sup> We are still exploring weighting options for subsequent analyses and opted to present, as we have in past reports, the unweighted and unadjusted survey results below.

Key findings follow in four sections:

- I. Career Development**
- II. Education**
- III. Quality of Life**
- IV. Engagement with and Support from Year Up**

At the back of the report, we provide additional details about our data, methodology, and analyses.

## I. CAREER DEVELOPMENT

---

In this section, we summarize data about alumni wages, employment rates, and career progress, and make special note of any differences between race and gender subgroups. Year Up historically graduates two classes each year (i.e., the "January" and "July" cohorts) and regularly uses post-program queries to confirm employment status and wages by four and 12 months after graduation for its most recent alumni. To avoid survey fatigue and any interference with our post-program queries, in fall 2021, we opted not to administer the full Alumni Survey to the recent graduates in the July 2020, January 2021, and July 2021 cohorts. Instead, we opted to combine employment data from recent cohorts' post-program queries with 2021 Alumni Survey responses collected from alumni from older cohorts who graduated between July 2002 and January 2020. **Uniquely, the wage and employment outcomes in this section include data from both 2,391 Alumni Survey respondents<sup>2</sup> and 4,480 alumni from recent cohorts with complete 4- and 12-month post-program employment data.** The career progress subsection on page 7 and all subsequent report sections on education, quality of life, and engagement with Year Up focus strictly on the Alumni Survey respondents from the July 2002 through the January 2020 cohorts.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Mercer, A., Lau, A., & Kennedy, C. (2018). For Weighting Online Opt-in Samples, What Matters Most? Pew Research Center, <https://www.pewresearch.org/methods/2018/01/26/how-different-weighting-methods-work/>

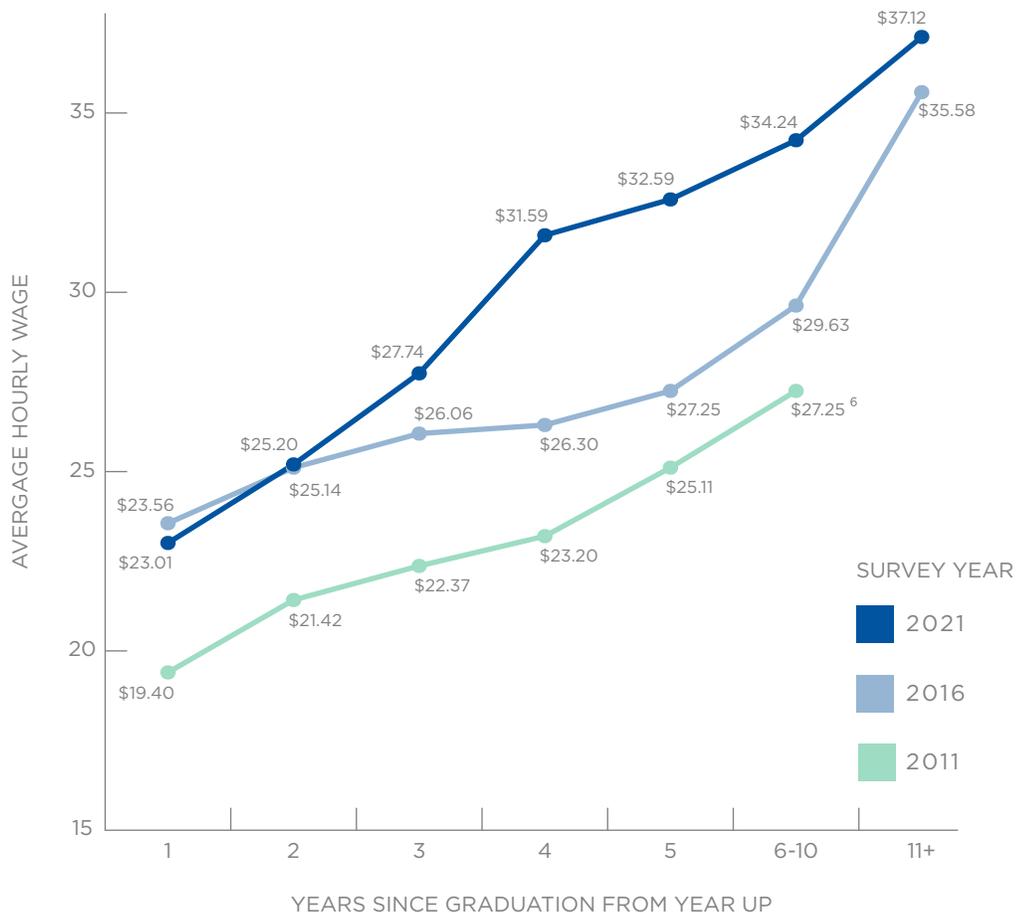
<sup>2</sup> Three outliers in the Alumni Survey wage data were removed before calculating averages. It was clear that the responses had typographical errors, and we elected not to assume the intended answers.

## Wages

From the second year after graduation and beyond, alumni earned their highest wages yet, with the biggest increases compared to results from the 2011 and 2016 alumni surveys<sup>3</sup> found among alumni who graduated from Year Up between 4 and 10 years ago.

- The average wage for all alumni was \$26. This compares favorably to the national average wages of those with Associate’s degrees (\$23) and Bachelor’s degrees (\$33).<sup>4</sup>
- As found in past Alumni Survey reports, wages improve over time for alumni as they progress through their careers after graduating from Year Up.
- Those who graduated one year ago include the July 2020, January 2021 and July 2021 cohorts. Notably, all of these cohorts graduated after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic during a pronounced economic downturn with national unemployment rates that remained inflated over pre-pandemic levels at least through July 2021.<sup>5</sup>

**For all but the most recent alumni, wages have increased in 2021 compared to 2016 (adjusted for inflation)**



<sup>3</sup> Hourly wages for the 2011 and 2016 Alumni Surveys have been adjusted for inflation and translated into 2021 dollars

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/emp/chart-unemployment-earnings-education.htm>

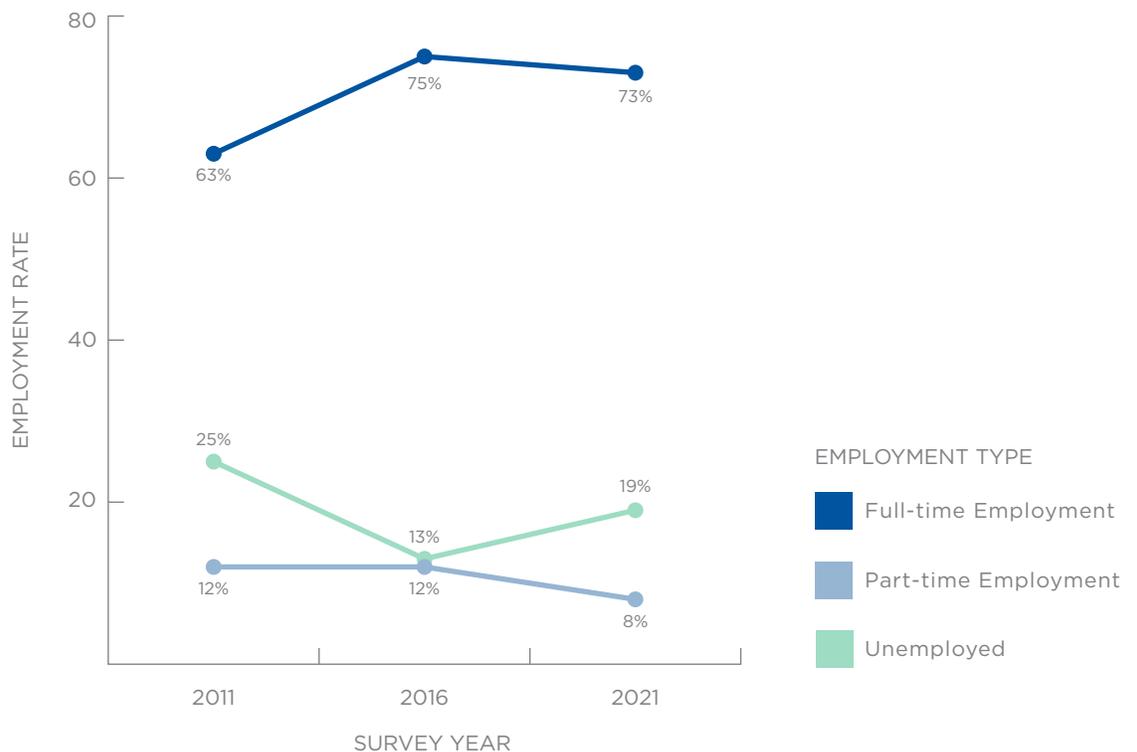
<sup>5</sup> [https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/empsit\\_01072022.pdf](https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/empsit_01072022.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Since Year Up’s first cohort graduated in July 2002, at the time of the 2011 Alumni Survey there were not any alumni who were more than 10 years beyond graduation.

## Employment Rates

- Full-time employment for alumni has decreased slightly from 75% in 2016 to 73% in 2021, and unemployment increased from 13% to 19%. There were, however, some noteworthy differences depending upon how long ago alumni graduated from Year Up:
  - Unemployment rates were elevated (23%) among alumni from the three most recent cohorts (July 2020, January 2021, and July 2021) who graduated after the pandemic's onset compared to cohorts that graduated in January 2020 or earlier (12%).
  - Full-time employment rates for alumni cohorts who graduated before the pandemic (classes of January 2020 and earlier; 81%) were comparable to the general U.S. population (80%).<sup>7</sup>
- Many alumni reported that the COVID-19 pandemic affected their employment. Of the alumni who had been unemployed for a period of at least 4 months, 88% lost their jobs due to the pandemic and/or had to stop working due to health or care concerns related to COVID-19.

**Full-time employment decreased slightly and unemployment increased from 2016 to 2021**



## Wage and Employment Differences

- In past Alumni Survey reports, we noted some important wage and employment differences comparing across alumni race/ethnicity and gender subgroups and to national averages. We revisit those comparisons here, especially in light of research that has shown the COVID-19 economic downturn has disproportionately affected young adults and workers of color.<sup>8</sup>

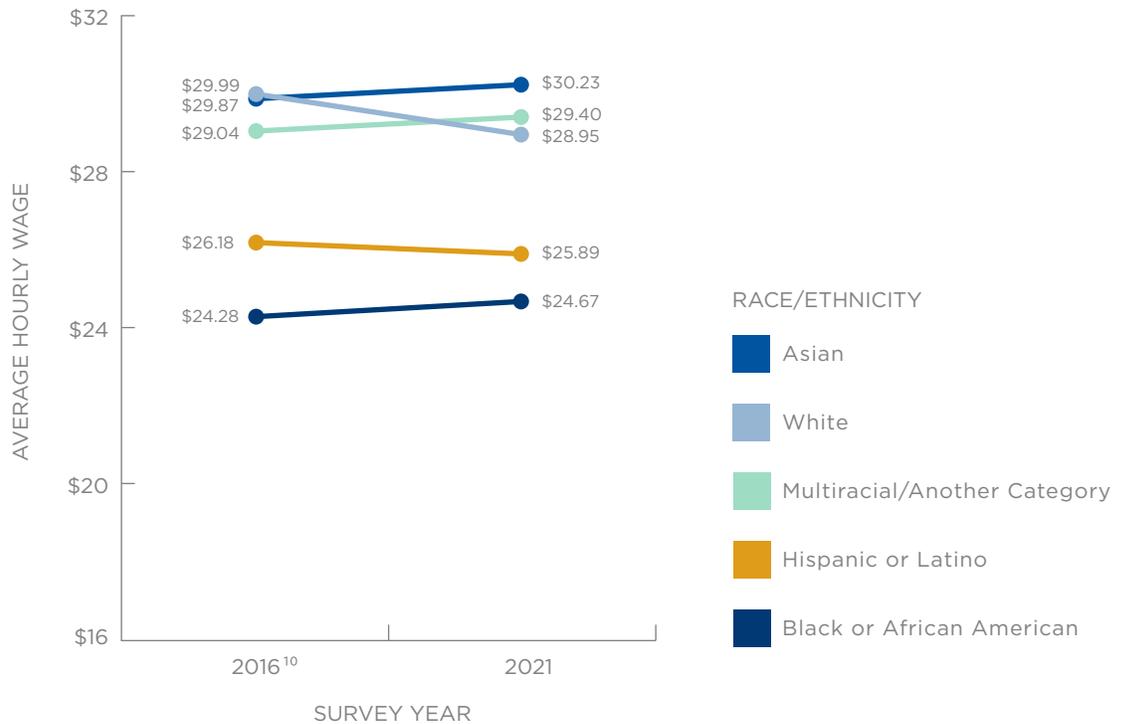
<sup>7</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/web/empsit/cpseea06.htm> The full-time employment rate was derived by dividing the total number of full-time workers (129,388,000) by the overall number of workers (162,155,000) in November 2021

<sup>8</sup> See Hershbein, B.J., & Holzer, H.J. (2021), The COVID-19 Pandemic's Evolving Impacts on the Labor Market: Who's Been Hurt and What We Should Do, [https://research.upjohn.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1360&context=up\\_workingpapers](https://research.upjohn.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1360&context=up_workingpapers), and Milovanska-Farrington, S. (2021), The Effect of a Health and Economic Shock on the Gender, Ethnic and Racial Gap in Labor Market Outcomes: Evidence from COVID-19, <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/236303/1/dp14272.pdf>

### Race/Ethnicity

- Wages increased for all but white and Hispanic alumni. Hispanic alumni's wages held essentially constant, with a modest decrease for White alumni.
- Comparing alumni of color to their white counterparts, the racial wage gap has narrowed from \$5.70 in 2016 to \$4.30 in 2021 for Black alumni. For Hispanic alumni, this gap has modestly narrowed from \$3.80 to \$3.10. While these wage gaps are both smaller than those observed in the general U.S. population (\$5.25 for Black workers and \$6.15 for Hispanic workers)<sup>9</sup>, they confirm that Year Up graduates continue to face the inequities of the Opportunity Divide after a Year Up experience.
- The overall racial employment gap for Black alumni decreased to 3% (from 7% in 2016). The overall employment gap for Hispanic alumni has disappeared entirely (from 3% in 2016), and in 2021, they are slightly more likely to be employed than white alumni (84% compared to 82%).

**Black alumni, Asian alumni, and alumni from the Multiracial/ Another Race group saw the highest wage growth.**



### Gender

- The gender wage gap between male and female alumni shrank to \$1.65 in 2021 compared to \$2.60 in 2016. This is less than half the size of the national gender wage gap of \$4.35 in 2021,<sup>11</sup> and demonstrates that Year Up's women-identifying alumni continue to face inequities in their careers after Year Up.
- As found in 2016, there is not a meaningful gap in overall employment by gender, as was also the case nationally for labor-force-participating adults in late 2021.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat37.pdf> This source reports weekly earnings. To convert to hourly earnings, we divided the weekly figures by 40, representing a typical 40-hour work week.

<sup>10</sup> Hourly wages for the 2016 Alumni have been adjusted for inflation and translated into 2021 dollars.

<sup>11</sup> See footnote 9

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/web/emp/sit/cpseea06.htm>

Gap	Comparison	Year Up Alumni 2021	U.S. General Population 2021	Year Up Alumni 2016	U.S. General Population 2016
Wage Gap	White - Black	\$4.30	\$5.60	\$5.70	\$5.70
	White - Hispanic	\$3.10	\$5.80	\$3.80	\$7.40
	Male - Female	\$1.65	\$4.35	\$2.60	\$5.10
Employment Gap	White - Black	3%	4%	7%	4%
	White - Hispanic	0%	3%	3%	1.5%
	Male - Female	0%	0%	0%	11%

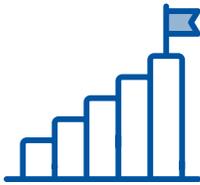
Year Up program operations in major cities are broadly grouped into three geographic regions, the Northeast, Southeast, and West.<sup>13</sup> The table below summarizes the number of alumni and average wages in each region, and shows that the gaps in average wages by race/ethnicity do vary by geography. There are gaps in all regions with the smallest differences in the Southeast where there are the lowest regional average wages.

Race	Number of Alumni in Region	Percent of Alumni in Region	Average Hourly Wage
<b>Northeast</b>			
Asian	129	7%	\$26.00 Northeast Average
Black or African American	732	39%	
Hispanic or Latino	705	38%	
Multiracial/Another Category	160	9%	
White	133	7%	
<b>Southeast</b>			
Asian	76	6%	\$24.10 Southeast Average
Black or African American	875	67%	
Hispanic or Latino	205	16%	
Multiracial/Another Category	95	7%	
White	58	4%	
<b>West</b>			
Asian	311	20%	\$28.70 West Average
Black or African American	249	16%	
Hispanic or Latino	739	47%	
Multiracial/Another Category	173	11%	
White	85	5%	

<sup>13</sup> We group Year Up program locations in the following states into three broader geographic regions for comparison: Northeast = CT, DE, IL, MA, NJ, NY, PA, RI; Southeast = DC, FL, GA, MA, NC, VA, MD; West = AZ, CA, TX, WA.

## Career Progress

This section on career progress summarizes data from 2021 Alumni Survey respondents and excludes the more recent cohorts (July 2020, January 2021, July 2021) whose employment and wage data were analyzed above. Most alumni respondents have a positive view of the trajectory of their careers since graduating, even if they have reached a steady state in terms of promotions, raises, and increases in responsibility.



**55%**

of alumni defined their career so far as a consistent upward climb, and 26% defined it as an ascent that has levelled off.



**70%**

of alumni were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their career progress so far.



**53%**

of alumni moved to a higher paying job, received a promotion, or received a raise beyond a cost-of-living increase in the last year.

## II. EDUCATION

In our 2016 Alumni Survey, we asked alumni about their educational attainment since graduating from Year Up and their prospective plans to pursue additional education and training. In our latest 2021 Alumni Survey report, we instead leveraged the National Student Clearinghouse’s repository of post-secondary education enrollment and degree completion records. Compared to 2016, the change in data sources regarding alumni education helpfully shortened a portion of the survey we administered in 2021 because we did not have to ask questions about ongoing education. As a tradeoff, this change also means we cannot make direct comparisons to the last report about current or future aspirations for post-secondary education. Still, we drew a few high-level parallels between the 2016 and 2021 findings in the following.

**Of the respondents,<sup>14</sup> 52% had pursued some further education or completed a certification or a degree after graduating from Year Up.**

- Among the 15% of all respondents who earned AA, BA, or MA degrees after Year Up, it took them, on average, three, four, and six years, respectively, to complete after graduating from Year Up. BA earners completed their degrees one year faster than what we observed in the 2016 report (5 years), but timelines for AA and MA degree completion are on par with the last report.
- 7% of respondents have attained a BA degree or above after Year Up, compared to 3% reported in 2016.
- The average wages of alumni who are employed full-time compared favorably to those of college-educated adults nationwide (\$23 for AA holders and \$33 for BA holders).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Though we collect National Student Clearinghouse data for all cohorts, the July 2020, January 2021, and July 2021 cohorts are excluded here. Alumni from these cohorts graduated so recently as to have little time to pursue higher education.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/emp/chart-unemployment-earnings-education.htm> This source reports weekly earnings. To convert to hourly earnings, we divided the weekly figures by 40, representing a typical 40-hour work week.

Employment Status	Post Year Up Educational Attainment	% of All Alumni	Average Hourly Earnings		
<b>Full-time (81%)</b>	BA completion or above	6%	\$35.30	\$31.90 FT Jobs Average	\$31.00 All Jobs Average
	AA completion	5%	\$32.50		
	Some education/training less than AA	30%	\$31.00		
	No further education	40%	\$32.00		
<b>Part-time (7%)</b>	BA completion or above	<1%	\$24.30	\$19.90 PT Jobs Average	
	AA completion	1%	\$15.00		
	Some education/training less than AA	3%	\$17.90		
	No further education	3%	\$22.90		
<b>Unemployed (12%)</b>	BA completion or above	1%	N/A		
	AA completion	1%			
	Some education/training less than AA	5%			
	No further education	5%			

### III. QUALITY OF LIFE

When asked to assess their quality of life, alumni responses in 2021 were very similar to what we found in 2016, including in comparison to the general U.S. population.<sup>16</sup>

- Alumni respondents were more likely than the U.S. general population to consider themselves “thriving,” (60% compared to 50%) and also more likely to consider themselves “suffering” (11% compared to 4%).<sup>17</sup> This was very consistent with findings from 2016.
- Recent Year Up graduates from the last two years (graduating between July 2019 and July 2021) had lower average perceptions of their lives than alumni further removed from Year Up. The majority of recent graduates entered into the workforce at or after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the related economic downturn. This timing could have affected life ratings compared to alumni who were further removed from the program and further along and more established in their post-Year Up career paths. However, our Alumni Survey data do not allow us to test that theory directly.

Alumni’s assessment of their financial well-being in 2021 was also similar to what we observed in 2016. These responses can be benchmarked against the general population, but the latest data from the Federal Reserve are from 2020, limiting comparison only to the first but not the second year following the onset of the pandemic. Below, we made comparisons between 2021 Alumni Survey results and the 2020 national benchmarks. The 2020 benchmarks must be qualified because they do not reflect any changes in well-being related to the continued worldwide economic and social shifts in 2021.

- In 2021, 74% of alumni respondents said they were “living comfortably” or “doing okay,” which was slightly lower than the 2020 statistic, 75%, for the U.S. general population, though still much higher than 52% for low-income families earning less than \$25,000/year and 65% for families earning \$25,000-49,999/year.<sup>18</sup>
- The average wages of alumni who said they were “living comfortably” differ meaningfully by the three geographic regions by which Year Up groups its program locations.<sup>19</sup> For example, alumni respondents who are living comfortably in the West (including CA, AZ, WA and TX) earn the equivalent of \$16,000/year more than those in the Southeast (including the Capital Region, FL, GA, and NC) on average.

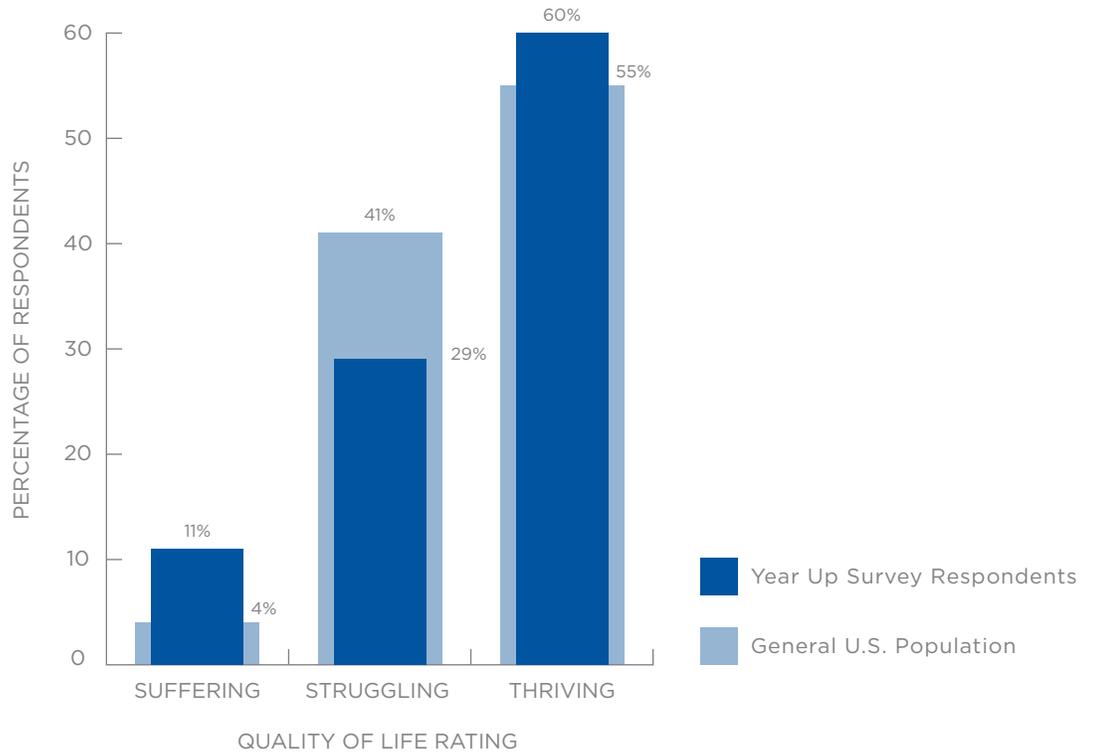
<sup>16</sup> Gallup (2016). *Understanding How Gallup Uses the Cantril Scale*. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/122453/understanding-gallup-uses-cantril-scale.aspx>

<sup>17</sup> <https://news.gallup.com/poll/388682/life-ratings-retreat-close-2021.aspx>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/2021-economic-well-being-of-us-households-in-2020-overall-financial-well-being-in-2020.htm>

<sup>19</sup> We group Year Up program locations in the following states into three broader geographic regions for comparison: Northeast = CT, DE, IL, MA, NJ, NY, PA, RI; Southeast = DC, FL, GA, MA, NC, VA, MD; West = AZ, CA, TX, WA.

**Alumni are more likely than the U.S. population to have a very good or very poor life assessment**



Financial Wellbeing <sup>20</sup>	Year Up Region	Average Hourly Earnings	
Finding it Difficult to Get By (3%)	Northeast	\$20.30	\$20.40 "Difficult" Average
	Southeast	\$18.40	
	West	\$21.70	
Just Getting By (18%)	Northeast	\$22.90	\$22.00 "Getting By" Average
	Southeast	\$19.90	
	West	\$22.80	
Doing Okay (46%)	Northeast	\$28.40	\$29.00 "Doing Okay" Average
	Southeast	\$26.60	
	West	\$31.90	
Living Comfortably (33%)	Northeast	\$37.70	\$39.80 "Comfortable" Average
	Southeast	\$36.60	
	West	\$44.70	

<sup>20</sup> This table includes only employed alumni with positive earnings. Because of this, the percentages of those who selected the different categories of financial wellbeing will be different.

## IV. ENGAGEMENT WITH AND SUPPORT FROM YEAR UP

---

At Year Up, our Alumni Relations Team affectionately refers to the period after graduation as the “longest phase of the program.” Every graduate of Year Up is a lifelong member of the National Alumni Association (NAA)<sup>21</sup> and has access to a wide array of post-program career, family, and educational supports, and programming, as well as networking and engagement opportunities. Many graduates participate in national retreats and conferences and local events offered each year. Year Up’s National Alumni Association is guided by three long-term strategic commitments (developed by alumni leaders in 2014), known as ACT for short:

- **A**dvance in career and higher education
- **C**ontribute to Year Up’s success
- **T**ake action in the Opportunity Movement

In the 2021 survey, we asked exploratory questions about how alumni continued to support Year Up’s mission in their professional, educational and community activities. The exploratory questions offered extensive but not exhaustive response options about engaging with Year Up, so the total number of alumni respondents to each question varied.

- Of the 2,060 alumni who responded about going to Year Up events, 50% have attended at least one event since graduating, and 21% have attended at least one event a year.
- Of the 1,578 alumni who told us how they engaged with Year Up, 62% have referred at least one student to Year Up, 25% have volunteered or spoken at a Year Up event, and 13% have made financial donations to the organization.
- Of the 1,196 alumni who told us about their leadership experiences, 47% have directly supervised others at work, 50% have overseen or directed a project at work, and 17% have served as leaders in workplace groups (such as task forces or working groups).
- Of the 592 alumni who told us about their contributions to the Opportunity Movement, 50% have worked to alleviate poverty or provide services for the economically disadvantaged, and 48% have worked to address disparities in areas related to the Opportunity Divide or advocated for change in those areas.
- Of the 1,975 alumni who responded about their likelihood to recommend Year Up to others, 92% indicated they are satisfied with Year Up, compared to 93% in 2016.

When reflecting on alumni support services, respondents:

- Reported that financial education, job search support, and professional development were the three most important of many support services offered to them by Year Up.
- Cited job search support as their most commonly used service. Of the 1,984 alumni who had used a listed service, 72% of respondents utilized job search support, 28% utilized professional development, and 23% utilized college advising.

## DATA AND METHODS

---

We used five sources of data and information throughout the 2021 Alumni Survey report:

- Year Up administrative data on all alumni including demographics and information on program enrollment, participation, and graduation
- 2021 Alumni Survey responses from alumni who graduated from July 2002 through January 2020 with questions about career progression, perceptions of financial well-being and quality of life, and ongoing engagement with Year Up
- Verified employment status and wage records collected at four and 12 months after graduation from Year Up, specifically for the most recently graduated classes of July 2020, January, 2021, and July 2021
- Individually matched alumni higher education enrollment and certificate/credential completion records from the National Student Clearinghouse
- Contextual and national benchmark data cited from sources including Gallup and Federal Reserve System surveys of U.S. households, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and other scholarly articles related to economic trends and the COVID-19 pandemic.

---

<sup>21</sup> For more information about Year Up’s National Alumni Association, please visit: [www.yearupalumni.org](http://www.yearupalumni.org)

This section provides additional details regarding the alumni population targeted for the survey, our administration of the survey, and comparisons to the sample of alumni who opted to respond to our survey.

Historically, Year Up has two graduating classes a year, one in winter (the “January” cohort) and one in summer (the “July” cohort). We designed the 2021 Alumni Survey for all 18,591 alumni from the very first class of graduates in July 2002 through the class that graduated in January 2020. We administered the survey electronically and distributed it via email and text between October and December 2021. Additionally, we posted generic web links to the survey on Year Up social media pages, the alumni website, and the alumni newsletter, all of which have a sizable alumni following online. We also offered three chances to win American Express gift cards as incentives for participation.<sup>22</sup>

We secured valid, unique contact information for 17,184 alumni (91% of all alumni on record through the class of January 2020), which became our target population of alumni who were eligible for our outreach. We received 2,391 unique responses, 82.4% of which were complete. This represents a response rate of 14% (or 11.5% of all 18,591 alumni on record).<sup>23</sup> Most respondents (75%) replied by clicking the personalized survey links sent to their email and/or phone numbers, while all others responded to the generic web links shared online and over social media.

Comparing the 2,391 respondents in the sample to the 18,591 alumni from July 2020 through January 2020:

- Most survey respondents were from the 2017-2020 cohorts (56%), which represented 49% of the 18,000+ alumni pool.
- Geographic representation in the survey sample was proportionate to a Year Up location’s share of the alumni population. The most variation was found in the Bay Area in California (17% of respondents versus 14% of the alumni pool; inclusive of San Francisco, San Jose and surrounding areas) and Greater Boston (17% of respondents versus 20% of the alumni pool), Year Up’s first and longest-operating program location.
- Responses were proportionate by Year Up’s operating models: 75% from our standalone Core programs, 24% from our college-based models, and 1% from employer-based programs co-located with employer partners.
- Male alumni were underrepresented in the survey sample, making up 48% of survey respondents versus 58% of total alumni.
- Responses were proportionate by race, with the most variation among Black or African American respondents (44% of respondents versus 47% of the alumni pool)
- Respondents were more likely to have had an internship conversion<sup>24</sup> than the general pool of alumni (46% of respondents versus 41% of alumni)

Alumni from the July 2020, January 2021, and July 2021 cohorts were not targeted for survey outreach, though their wage and employment outcomes are represented in the Career Development section:

- The 2021 Alumni Survey administration timeline fell quite close to Year Up’s routine 4- and 12-month post-program employment outcomes collection periods, during which alumni who recently graduated receive outreach emails and texts to complete queries about their employment and wages.
- To avoid survey fatigue among our recent alumni and any potential interference with the response rate of those important post-program queries, we elected to forego administering the 2021 Alumni Survey to them. Instead, we used 4- and 12-month post-program wage and employment outcomes data for these three cohorts.
- We incorporated employment and wage data for 4,480 recent alumni from the July 2020, January 2021, and July 2021 cohorts as a result.

<sup>22</sup> The first gift card offer was a raffle; 25 randomly drawn alumni who had completed the survey by a certain date received a \$25 gift card. The following offers gave \$25 gift cards to the first 25 alumni to complete the survey within the next 48 hours.

<sup>23</sup> In addition, we received 45 responses (33 complete, 12 incomplete) from alumni in the July 2020, January 2021, and July 2021 graduating classes, whom we did not target directly for the 2021 Alumni Survey. These 45 responses were used only for employment and wage information where possible (where not possible, we leveraged post-program query data on recent employment and wage outcomes). Otherwise, they were not included in the results.

<sup>24</sup> An internship conversion means that a Year Up student’s internship with an employer during the program transitions to a post-program employment opportunity with that employer.

**In total, the wage and employment outcomes of 6,871 (2,391 Alumni Survey respondents plus 4,480 recent graduates) alumni were included in the analysis. This represents 29.6% of all 23,250 alumni from July 2002 through July 2021, which is on par with our 29% response rate in the 2016 survey report.** Overall, the sample used for analysis is largely representative of the broader Year Up alumni population by race and geography. Men were underrepresented in the sample and data were biased toward recent cohorts with more than half the sample representing alumni who graduated from 2017 onward. As discussed in the report's introduction, surveys are prone to imbalances between the sample of respondents and the wider target population, which can introduce some sample and non-response bias. As we have in past survey reports, we opted to present unweighted and unadjusted survey results in this 2021 report, though we are still considering alternative weighting methods<sup>25</sup> for subsequent analysis.

The 2021 Survey was an altered version of the 2016 survey, co-edited by members of Year Up's Research & Evaluation and Alumni Relations teams with generous and helpful feedback from Year Up alumni, as well as local and national staff. The education section of the 2016 survey was omitted in favor of using education records sourced from the National Student Clearinghouse. Any questions about the full list of 2021 Alumni Survey questions may be directed to [alumnirelations@yearup.org](mailto:alumnirelations@yearup.org).

---

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/methods/2018/01/26/how-different-weighting-methods-work/>

## APPENDIX

### Survey Administration and Respondent Analysis Details

Year Up's 2021 National Alumni survey targeted alumni from the classes of July 2002 through January 2020. Year Up used a variety of collector approaches and incentives to connect alumni with the survey opportunity. Those with contact information on file were sent personalized survey links via email. Alumni could also take the survey via a general web link that was shared through text messages, social media pages, and the alumni newsletter. Because we did not ask alumni whether they were connected to the general link by text as opposed to some other channel, we cannot summarize the response rates of our text outreach.

#### Data Collection by Modality

Mode	Email 1	Text 1	Email 2	Text 2	Email 3	Email 4	General Web Link	Total
Alumni contacted	16080	1104	14798	13987	14063	13368	N/A	17184
Raw responses received	936	N/A	284	N/A	623	27	570	2440
Partial responses	166	N/A	56	N/A	76	5	136	439
Duplicate responses removed	22	N/A	4	N/A	6	2	15	49
Complete, unique responses	757	N/A	226	N/A	543	22	427	1975

#### Demographics

Baseline Variable	Respondents (n = 2391)		All Alumni Jul 2002-Jan 2020 (n = 18591)	
	Respondent Percent	Respondent Number	All Alumni Percent	All Alumni Number
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>				
Asian	10.9	261	9.5	1773
Black or African American	44.1	1057	46.9	8713
Hispanic or Latino	29.9	716	28.7	5340
Native American	0.4	9	0.4	76
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	24	0.8	145
Unknown or Another Racial Category	4.4	106	4.8	897
Two or More Races	4	95	3.6	660
White	5.3	127	5.3	987
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	49.5	1186	38.7	7204
Male	48.1	1151	58	10792
Other/Unknown	2.4	58	3.2	595

Baseline Variable	Respondents (n = 2391)		All Alumni Jul 2002-Jan 2020 (n = 18591)	
	Respondent Percent	Respondent Number	All Alumni Percent	All Alumni Number
<b>Graduation Year</b>				
2002	0.1	3	0.1	20
2003	0.2	5	0.1	25
2004	0.3	8	0.4	77
2005	0.5	12	0.5	90
2006	0.4	9	0.8	147
2007	0.8	20	1.2	228
2008	1	24	1.6	304
2009	1.4	34	2.3	423
2010	1.6	39	2.8	528
2011	2.7	65	3.7	694
2012	3.2	77	5	927
2013	4.8	114	6	1111
2014	7.4	177	7.8	1455
2015	9.1	217	8.6	1601
2016	10.1	243	9.9	1849
2017	12.1	290	11.6	2149
2018	14.7	352	13.8	2559
2019	18.6	446	15.6	2899
2020	10.9	260	8.1	1505
<b>Internship Converted to Job</b>				
No	54.3	1300	58.9	10949
Yes	45.7	1095	41.1	7642
<b>Year Up Site</b>				
Arizona (PHX)	3.3	78	2.7	499
Baltimore	2.9	69	3.2	591
Bay Area (Diablo Valley)	0.6	15	0.6	103
Bay Area (Menlo Park)	0.5	11	0.4	71
Bay Area (San Francisco)	11.1	266	8.7	1617

Baseline Variable	Respondents (n = 2391)		All Alumni Jul 2002-Jan 2020 (n = 18591)	
	Respondent Percent	Respondent Number	All Alumni Percent	All Alumni Number
Bay Area (Silicon Valley)	4.8	115	3.7	681
Chicago	5.4	129	5.1	943
Chicago (HWCCH)	0.8	18	0.4	80
Chicago (NLUCH)	0.3	6	0.3	48
Dallas/Fort Worth	1.6	39	1.2	218
Greater Atlanta	6.6	157	7.5	1403
Greater Atlanta (ATC)	1.6	39	1.6	304
Greater Boston	16	383	18.5	3432
Greater Boston (Roxbury)	0.6	15	0.6	105
Greater Boston (Quincy)	0.5	11	0.5	100
Greater Philadelphia	1.5	37	1.5	286
Jacksonville	1.8	43	1.8	336
Los Angeles	1.8	44	1.2	229
NCR	8	192	9.6	1779
NCR (Alexandria)	0	1	0.1	21
NCR (Woodbridge)	1.7	40	1.5	280
New York	11.5	276	11.1	2064
New York (BMCC)	1.3	32	1.4	251
New York (CUNY)	0.2	4	0.1	20
Puget Sound	4.1	98	5	935
Puget Sound (BELLV)	1.3	31	1.7	311
Rhode Island	7.3	174	7	1302
Rhode Island (HSBRO)	0.1	2	0.1	12
South Florida	0.1	3	0.1	23
South Florida (Miami)	2	48	2.2	411
Tampa Bay	0.1	2	0.1	18
Wilmington	0.3	6	0.2	41
Wilmington (WILMU)	0.5	11	0.4	77

Baseline Variable	Respondents (n = 2391)		All Alumni Jul 2002-Jan 2020 (n = 18591)	
	Respondent Percent	Respondent Number	All Alumni Percent	All Alumni Number
<b>Channel</b>				
Core	74.9	1794	76.3	14176
Employer-Based	1	24	1	183
College-based, Professional Training Corps (PTC)	24.1	577	22.8	4232
<b>Age Group</b>				
20 to 24	22.9	548	20.3	3777
25 to 29	51	1222	48.2	8970
30 to 34	21.3	511	24.7	4595
35+	2.2	52	3.4	636
Missing	2.6	62	3.3	613
<b>Track of Study at Year Up</b>				
Business Operations	18	430	9	1669
Financial Operations	12.4	298	12.2	2265
Information Technology	51.9	1244	44.6	8297
Sales & Customer Support	5.3	126	4.4	826
Software Development & Support	12.3	294	8.3	1535