

METHODOLOGY

America's Top Online Schools 2026

in cooperation with

Newsweek

statista 

September 25



Summary

Methodology

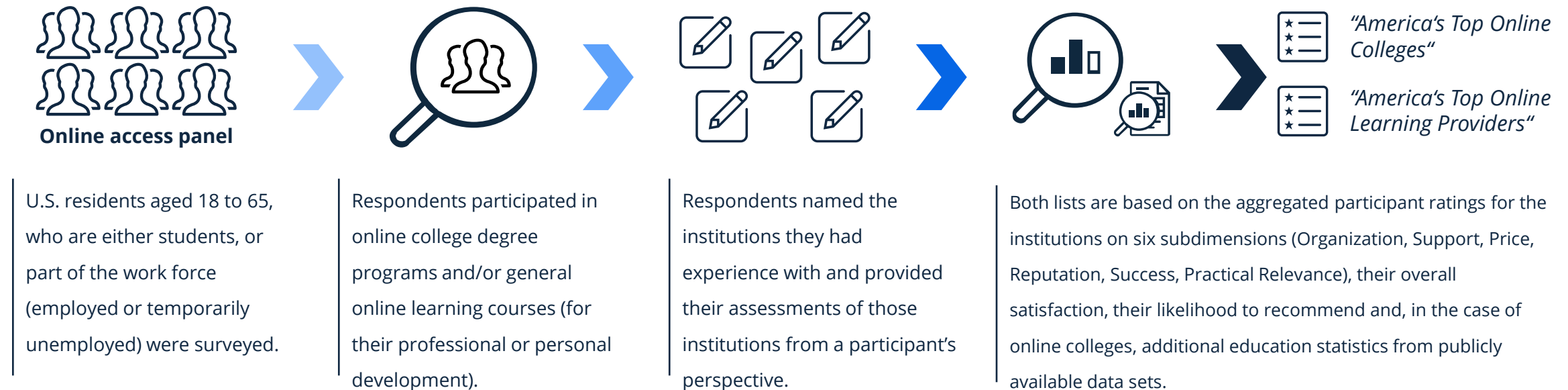
- For the fifth time, Newsweek and Statista are awarding institutions that offer online learning courses or online college/university degrees to adult learners in two top lists:
 - **“America’s Top Online Colleges”** (colleges and universities that offer online degree programs, to learners who want to obtain an academic degree, including hybrid programs with online and offline courses or exams)
 - **“America’s Top Online Learning Providers”** (institutions other than a university or college and platforms, which provide access to their own or third-party online courses)
- The rankings are based on an **online survey** among U.S. residents who have used online learning service offers to obtain an academic degree or acquire knowledge and skills for their job (professional development) or hobbies (personal development) via online courses.
- Between 06/06/2025 and 06/30/2025, Statista surveyed **more than 10,000 individuals** in the United States. Survey respondents indicated which institutions they used to obtain an online degree or where they attended an online course. In a next step, respondents shared their experiences by rating the institutions regarding several criteria. Finally, respondents could indicate how satisfied they were with the organization and to what extent they would recommend it to others.
- User reviews and additional institutional indicators* were transformed into score values and aggregated towards a **final score**. To receive an award, institutions needed an above average total score value. The awarded institutions received either five stars, if their final score value is above the median score of all awarded institutions, or four stars, if their score is below this threshold.
- The top lists were created through an elaborate process: Participants’ responses as well as the final selection of institutions in each list were **carefully reviewed**. Statista makes no statement about the quality of education institutions or learning providers that are not included in the lists, and their reputation is not disputed.

2 | **Note:** *Additional institutional indicators were included from public datasets, including sources like the National Center for Education Statistics’ (NCES) and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

The two top lists are based on an online survey with more than 10,000 respondents and additional desk research

Procedure

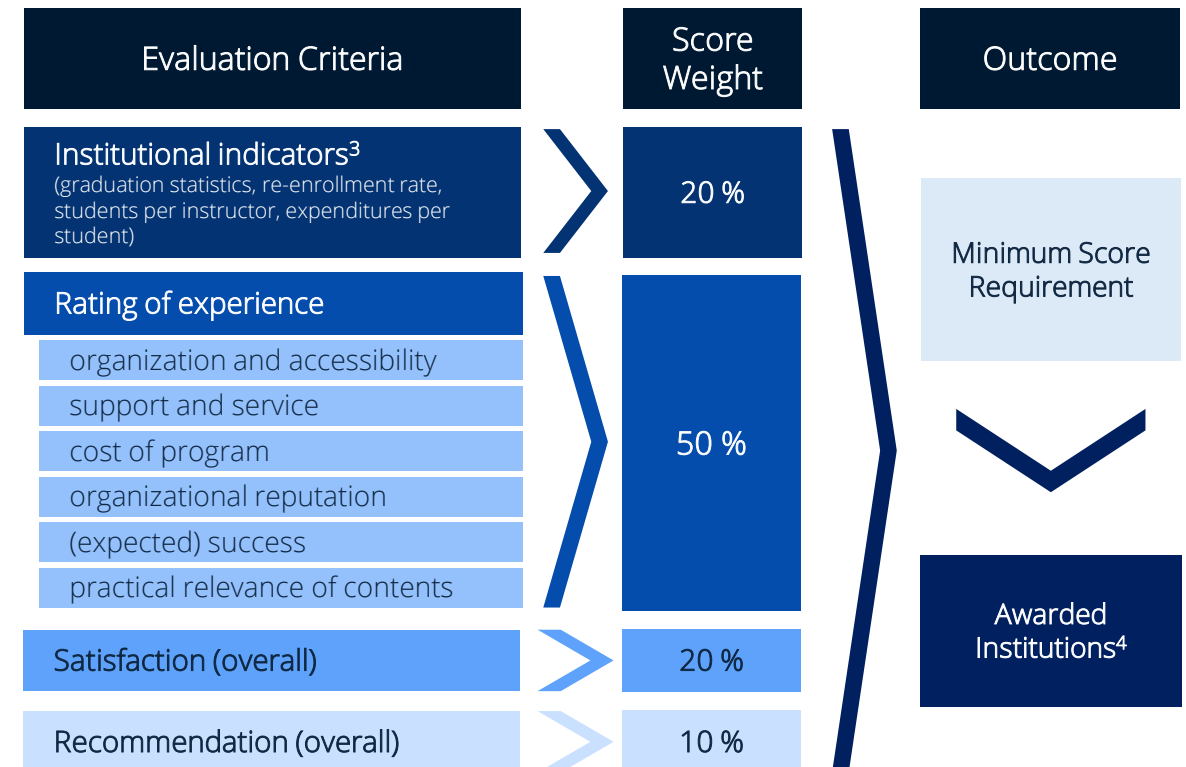
Statista conducted an online survey among American learners using an online access panel. Each survey respondent was able to share their experiences with institutions where they used to obtain an online college degree or to attend online trainings (for their job or private interests) based on six subdimensions. The recommendations and ratings were transformed into score values and aggregated towards a final score.



The final top list of colleges and universities is based on user reviews and institutional data

Analysis and score dimensions: America's Top Online Colleges 2026

- Participants evaluated their college/university they visited to obtain an online college degree on six different subdimensions: **Organization, Support, Price, Reputation, Success and Practical Relevance**
- The importance of the six subdimensions was determined by the participants and used to weight the respective subdimension accordingly¹
- Furthermore, participants had to rate their college towards **satisfaction** and **overall recommendation**. In addition, education statistics were researched from publicly available data sets
- All user reviews were transformed into score values and aggregated towards a **final score**
- To receive an award, institutions needed a minimum number of ratings²

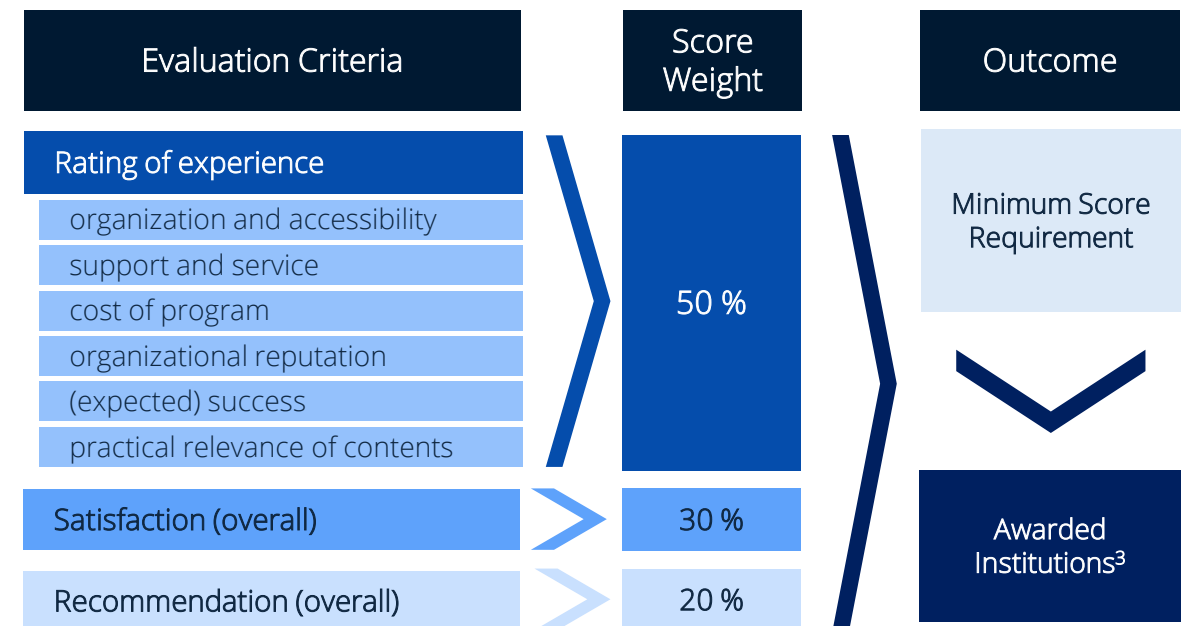


4 | Notes: ¹Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements about choosing a college or university. You can indicate how important each statement is to you on a scale of 1-5, where 5 indicates that the statement applies to you completely, and 1 indicates that it does not apply to you at all
²A given online college needs at least five nominations and more than five complete user ratings to enter the long list of eligible institutions.
³Based on public data from the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).
⁴The awarded institutions received either five stars, if their final score value is above the median score of all awarded institutions, or four stars, if their score is below this threshold.

The final top list of online learning providers is based on user reviews

Analysis and score dimensions: America's Top Online Learning Providers 2026

- Participants who have used online learning platforms to obtain relevant skills evaluated their institution based on six different subdimensions: **Organization, Support, Price, Reputation, Success and Practical Relevance**
- The importance of the six subdimensions was determined by the participants and used to weight the respective subdimension accordingly¹
- Furthermore, participants had to rate their college towards **satisfaction** and **overall recommendation**
- All user reviews were transformed into score values and aggregated towards a **final score**
- To receive an award, institutions needed a minimum number of ratings²



5 **Notes:** ¹Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements about choosing an online learning provider. You can indicate how important each statement is to you on a scale of 1-5, where 5 indicates that the statement applies to you completely, and 1 indicates that the statement does not apply to you at all

²A given online learning provider needs at least six nominations and six complete user ratings to enter the long list of eligible institutions

³The awarded institutions received either five stars, if their final score value is above the median score of all awarded institutions, or four stars, if their score is below this threshold.

Disclaimer

The selection of the institutions and the definition of the evaluation criteria were based on independent journalistic criteria of Newsweek and Statista. The evaluation was carried out by the statistics and market research company Statista. Newsweek and Statista make no claim to the completeness of the institutions examined.

The ranking only includes institutions that qualify according to the criteria described in this document. A position in the ranking is a positive recognition based on an extensive survey. Furthermore, events following September 25, 2025, were not a subject of this list. As such, the results of this ranking should not be used as the sole source of information for future deliberations. The information provided in this ranking should be considered in conjunction with other available information.

The quality of institutions that are not included in the ranking is not disputed.

About Statista R

Statista R is a world leader in the creation of company, brand, and product rankings and top lists, based on comprehensive market research and data analysis: Statista R recognizes the best. With a team of over 100 expert analysts and in cooperation with more than 40 high profile media brands across all continents, Statista R creates transparency for consumers and business decision makers and helps companies build trust and recognition across a plethora of industries and product categories. Visit r.statista.com for further information about Statista R and our rankings.

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