A First Glimpse into the Career Aspirations of Generation Z

This report is designed to help employers develop informed strategies for engaging, managing, and retaining a diverse and talented young workforce.
2017 CAREER STUDY PROFILE
This robust study includes every ethnicity from across all 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia and U.S. territories of American Samoa, Guam, Micronesia, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. It includes responses from 9,214 participants during the spring of 2017.

THE 2017 CAREER INTEREST SURVEY

METHODOLOGY & SURVEY POOL

2017 marks the 10th anniversary of The National Society of High School Scholars Career Survey. Since 2015, NSHSS has partnered with Hanover Research to produce this survey. The report reveals key findings of the preferences and attitudes of high-achieving high school students, college students, and college graduates specific to education, career and employment aspirations, and civic involvement. Within the 2017 survey, high school students (Gen Z) represent 76% of the participants – 41% of whom are current seniors – and 45% of respondents are 18 years or older.
The 2017 Career Survey is distinctive because Gen Z, born starting in the mid-1990s, is now squarely situated in high school and early college. This large, tech-native demographic matured in a post-9/11 economic recession-era America. They are notably distinct from their millennial predecessors in several mindset, preference, and behavior categories. For employers, these differences represent an imperative to consider new ways to appeal to an incredibly diverse emerging talent base.

**The similarities and differences between millennial and Gen Z scholars offer important insights useful for engaging and retaining this diverse, talented young workforce.**

Companies striving to attract and harness the talents of both of these uniquely burgeoning generations can benefit by understanding the factors influencing their educational plans, perceived employment needs, and career aspirations.
MILLENNIALS AND GEN Z’ERS

2017 is a turning point year in the NSHSS annual Career Survey. The Gen Z generation, which is larger than its millennial predecessors by a million people, has reached a landmark point in its educational maturity and is now thinking about college, career, lifestyle, civic aspirations, and financial plans.

WORLD EVENTS AND INFLUENCERS

9/11 & THE GREAT RECESSION

Millennials, who spent their childhood in the relative peace and prosperity of the 1990s, abruptly lost innocence and ease with 9/11 and the Great Recession. Gen Z has a pragmatic worldview shaped by the results of these events and informed by parents who learned cautiousness through financial challenge.

TECHNOLOGY

While both are tech-native generations, Gen Z knows only a world with smartphones and social media. They engage with information in an unmatched speed and capacity. No information is outside their reach. Again, they are comparatively pragmatic, taking care to protect their identities and privacy online.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Multiculturalism and ethnic diversity are expectations (and demands) of both generations. We see this in the continually growing pursuit of international travel as part of the educational and work experience, as well as the high priority placed on fair treatment of all people in a company.

POLITICAL CHANGE

At this influential period in their young lives, Gen Z’ers are enmeshed in a rapidly changing geo political world order. Decisions made on national and global stages are influencing their studies, altruistic considerations, personal relationships, and more. They are eagerly pursuing efficient, creative avenues to make an impact.
THE EDUCATIONAL IMPERATIVE

The number of college-educated young adults in the U.S. workforce is at its highest level in history. In 2016, 40% of the workforce between ages 25 and 29 held at least a bachelor’s degree. While more women (46%) than men (36%) earned at least a bachelor’s degree, an educational priority cuts across genders, ethnicities, and regions in the general population.²

The pursuit of education is directed by career goals. When asked what qualifies them to work for their top choice employer(s), 60% of scholars highlighted skills/expertise, followed by personality (46%) and education level (38%). This belief informs undergraduate majors, graduate school plans, and the decision to incorporate travel into the educational pathway.


What is your intended or current undergraduate major(s)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medicine/ Health Services</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sciences</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art/ Drama/ Music</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology/ Computers</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English/ Journalism/ Communications</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages/ Linguistics</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTERNATIONAL EXPOSURE

Almost two-thirds (64%) indicate an interest in a study abroad/exchange program (61%) or international volunteer program (55%). It’s not hard to posit that students see travel as part of their skills/experience package. Since 2013, more than 60% of the Top Ten Preferred Employers are global entities. For NSHSS scholars, the desire to study far outside the walls of the classroom reflects an awareness of their role in the global marketplace.

Are you interested in gaining international experiences (e.g., studying abroad, being an exchange student)?

- Yes: 64%
- No: 19%
- Not Sure: 17%
HEADED TO GRADUATE SCHOOL

Particularly among high-achieving students with access to the ability and resources to pursue college, the bachelor’s degree is not the finish line. Since 2015, between 76% (2017) and 78% of survey participants have indicated an intent to attend graduate school – specifically to work toward a career in medicine (33%), other science (15%), or business (11%).

**Percentage Headed To Graduate School**

What type of graduate school do you plan to or did attend?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Graduate School</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical School</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science Advanced Degrees</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business School (MBA)</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering Advanced Degrees</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Advanced Degrees</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law School</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English/ Foreign Languages Advanced Degrees</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The reasons millennial and Gen Z students give when asked about employment needs vary significantly. In many ways, the explanations reflect important differences between these two age brackets.

The general millennial mindset around higher education was to attend the best college they could get into. Many paid with loans. This young demographic is now consequently burdened by school debt. Gen Z’ers are just going into their higher education phase and, of those in college, more than a third (38%) of them are paying their own way. They have seen financial challenges all around them and say they’re putting more consideration into choosing colleges they can afford.  

Most current NSHSS high school and college students need a job during college for personal income (53%) or to contribute to household income (30%).

Not surprisingly, more of these respondents expect to need a job after college for personal (68%) or household (67%) income. The demand is gender-inconsistent — in college and high school, females are almost 10% more likely than males of the same age to say they need a job to help with income. Almost half (41%) of current college students say they foresee they will have a job upon graduation, but only 29% actually accomplish that goal. More reasonably, 67% of respondents expect to get a full-time job in their field within six months of graduating.

3 The State of Gen Z 2017, Center for Generational Kinetics

When jobs are needed to contribute to household income

By Ethnicity
While the need for a salary looms large in the pursuit of employment, personal interests and outside influences shape what careers people pursue. Notably, parental involvement continues to play a strong role when it comes to pursuing a career. Since 2015, 78% of survey participants have reported that their parents and guardians influence their employment decisions.

Internships also play a significant role in the employment puzzle – 77% of NSHSS scholars say they have or plan to participate in an internship.

Why We Pursue Internships

- 96% to develop skills
- 83% to explore career interests
- 69% to receive an employer reference
- 57% for full-time employment
As has been the case since 2008, STEM-related fields are the most popular employment fields of interest among survey participants. Women (46%) are significantly more likely than men (25%) to expect to work in Medicine/Health, whereas men are more inclined toward work in the other STEM areas of engineering (35% versus 10%) and technology (27% versus 9%), or to work in a business/corporate field (25% versus 20%).

In general, most respondents rank their preferred employer type by large corporations (42%), research organizations (29%), and then small or family businesses (27%).

Among governmental executive/cabinet departments, 40% of respondents are interested in learning more about Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), with the Department

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMPLOYER RANK</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Google</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Hospital</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walt Disney Company</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBI</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apple, Incorporated</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3M</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BuzzFeed</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amazon</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care Service Corp.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayo Clinic</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nike</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. State Department</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal Studios</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netflix</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DreamWorks Animation SKG</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHG Healthcare Services</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tesla Motors</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New York Times</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boeing</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic Health Systems</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SONY</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Security Agency (NSA)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Air Force</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Cross Blue Shield</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapchat</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starbucks</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston Scientific</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abercrombie &amp; Fitch</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach For America</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samsung</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spotify</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta Air Lines</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Navy</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank of America</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UnitedHealth Group</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaiser Permanente</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hershey’s</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Police Department</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coca-Cola Company</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.L.F. (Eyes Lips Face)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adobe Systems</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Army</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huffington Post</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meridian Health</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of Education being the next most frequently mentioned (24%). And among government agencies and offices, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (35%), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (32%), and FBI (31%) garner the most interest.

NSHSS survey respondents indicate that they are most likely to search for and pursue jobs using the website of the organization itself (76%). With that in mind, it’s not all that surprising to see companies like Google, Instagram, and Amazon on the Top Employer lists. Those are brands that are not only ubiquitous to these tech native generations; they are on the Top 100 lists of global web domains as well.4

4 The Moz Top 500, June 14, 2017

With the continued trend toward the sciences, it’s not surprising that within the top 25 preferred employers, health-related and technology/science companies make up more than half of the list.

Please reference Page 15 for Top Employer List Methodology.
CIVIC & POLITICAL INVESTMENT

Among the 59% of respondents who spend at least three hours each week volunteering, the focus is on issues close to home and personal relevance. Presumably, that’s because most young people learn about opportunities for community involvement from their school (81%), friends (65%), family (55%) or their church/religious organizations (42%).

NSHSS scholars who donate their time to volunteer and civic efforts actively care about education issues close to home.

Most respondents focus on helping their family, friends, and neighbors (69%), or participating in organized community groups or events (65%) or local volunteering (45%). While the level of active participation is slightly higher for females than males, and the priority varies slightly across ethnic groups, education (46%) and human rights (43%) are the two areas where most NSHSS scholars are interested in making an impact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What issues are you most interested in impacting your world?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents were allowed to choose more than one issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare/ Health-Related Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying/ Violence Prevention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment/ Energy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OUR NEXT LEADERS

Despite the current turbulent national and world political environment, the interest and motivation to get involved remain relatively stable. Just over a third of respondents (39%) indicate an interest in running for political office at any level, just slightly more than the 37% who showed interest in 2016. Men are more likely than women to pursue political office. Among ethnic groups, Latino/Hispanic respondents are most likely to express an interest in running for political office.

Across ethnicities and genders, political science consistently ranks low as an area of study – since 2015, only around 5% of current college students say they are majoring in the subject.

Are you a registered voter?
Of those eligible to vote

| Yes     | 61% |
| No      | 34% |
| Not Sure| 5%  |

Would you be interested in running for political office in the future?

By Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal Office</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Office</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ATTRACTIONG & RETAINING A STRONG, DIVERSE WORKFORCE REQUIRES PERSONAL ATTENTION

For organizations competing to attract and keep high-achieving young employees like those who comprise the more than one million NSHSS members, the focus should be on four factors: fair treatment for all employees (81%), skills for career advancement (71%), benefits (70%), and work/life balance (69%).

Factors in Choosing an Employer

By Gender

- **Fair Treatment of all Employees**
  - Male: 70%
  - Female: 84%

- **Gaining Skills to Advance my Career**
  - Male: 71%
  - Female: 72%

- **Basic Benefits**
  - Male: 62%
  - Female: 72%

- **Work/Life Balance**
  - Male: 67%
  - Female: 70%
Particularly for employers seeking to compete for the attention and loyalty of this high-achieving young workforce, one point may be more prescient than any other. Across every NSHSS Career Survey since 2012, the perception that an employer “treats employees fairly” is the most stable priority ranked by participants asked about the importance of various workplace factors.

Fairness for all employees regardless of ethnicity or gender is increasing in importance, over salary, bonuses, or other financial measures. For employers, that means a culture of inclusion and ability to spot and satisfy the priorities and needs of these highly educated, motivated individuals.
ABOUT THE NSHSS ANNUAL TOP EMPLOYERS LIST

Respondents were asked to rank their preferred companies to work for from a list created by combining the Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For, DiversityInc Top 50 Companies for Diversity, selected companies from Fortune’s Global 500, and popular write-in choices from prior surveys. Companies were also included this year from lists of top innovative companies from Fast Company, Fortune and Forbes. Respondents were given the opportunity to select up to three companies and were also allowed to write in choices. Segmented rankings are available for further review by gender, age group and ethnicity.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL SOCIETY OF HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARS

The National Society of High School Scholars (NSHSS) is a distinguished honor society that recognizes the outstanding academic achievements of more than a million high school and college scholars globally. We provide access to exclusive scholarships, college and career resources, and peer networking to support our scholars’ success. Qualified high school students are invited to join based on their high academic performance.

NSHSS scholars represent the most promising talent for colleges and the emerging workforce. In 2016, 64% of NSHSS members had a cumulative GPA of 3.7 or higher.
This report reflects work done in partnership with Hanover Research, a global research and analytics firm founded in 2003 and headquartered in Arlington, Virginia. Since 2015, NSHSS and Hanover have performed this annual in-depth survey of high-achieving high school and college-aged individuals to uncover useful insights into their academic, employment, career, and lifestyle goals.

Hanover Research is the second fastest growing market research firm in the world, recognized as a 2015 American Marketing Association Gold Top 50 Firm and Gold Global Top 50 Firm and a 2015 Washington Business Journal 50 Fastest Growing Company.

RESOURCES
- http://genhq.com/findings/
- https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_15_5YR_DP02&src=pt
- http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/05/16/todays-young-workers-are-more-likely-than-ever-to-have-a-bachelors-degree/

END NOTES
The higher rate of female respondents generally correlates with the gender balance in high schools and colleges currently. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, of the 20.5 million students who attended a college or university in the United States in 2016, 11.7 million (57%) were female and 8.8 million (43%) were male.
To access high-achieving millennials and Gen Z’ers, or explore partnership opportunities with NSHSS, please contact partnerships@nshss.org.

For media inquiries please contact Lauren Shankman lshankman@trevelinokeller.com.

www.nshss.org