



**NSHSS**

Be Honored. Be More.

# 2022 CAREER INTEREST SURVEY

## Career Motivations of Generation Z

Discover the most current research on the preferences, attitudes, and goals of high-achieving high school and college-aged individuals toward college, employment, and career aspirations.

This focused look at Generation Z offers a useful resource for employers working to engage and retain the diverse talent of the future.





## About NSHSS

The National Society of High School Scholars (NSHSS) is a distinguished academic honor society, recognizing and serving the highest-achieving student scholars in more than 26,000 high schools across 170 countries. With more than 2 million members spanning high school to college to career, NSHSS members are academically outstanding emerging leaders in their schools, workplaces, and communities.

**NSHSS  
scholars  
represent the  
most promising  
diverse talent  
for the emerging  
workforce.**



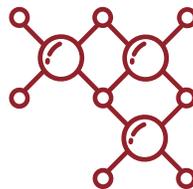
## 2022 Career Interest Survey

The **2022 Career Interest Survey** offers a glimpse into what Generation Z, the most diverse American generation, values and expects from their employers. Born after 1997, Gen Z is significantly larger than the generations that precede it, with more than 90 million members, according to Pew Research. With its oldest members just 25 years old, many in this generation are making life-changing transitions: graduating high school, attending college, and starting their careers.

The Career Interest Survey highlights five themes that characterize Gen Z in the United States:



**Equity for All**



**STEM and Healthcare**



**Love of Learning**



**Seeing the World, After COVID**



**Setbacks of College Debt**

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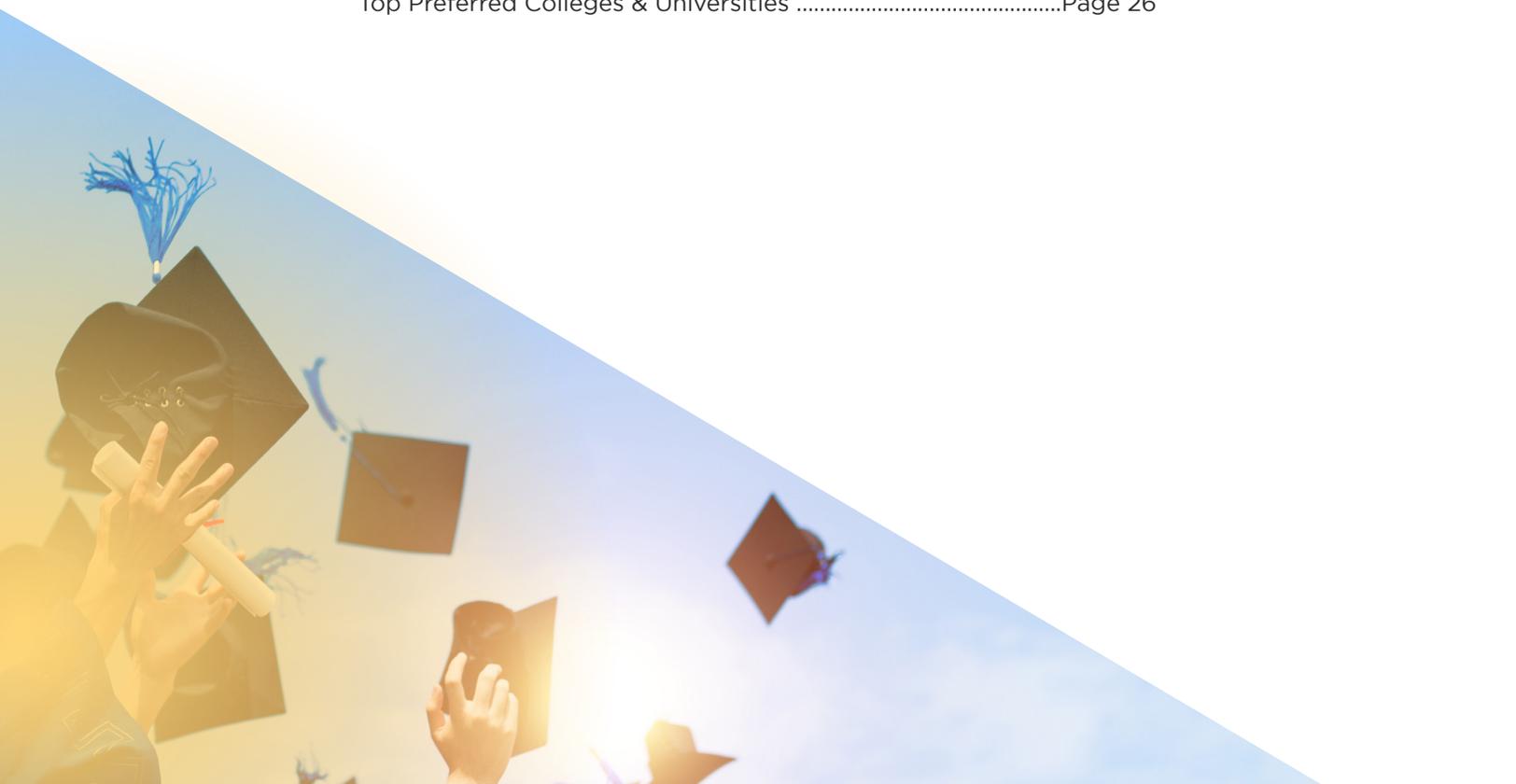
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## Survey Methodology

2022 marks the 13th edition of the NSHSS Career Interest Survey. NSHSS partnered with Researchscape International to produce this study. The report reveals the preferences and attitudes of the highest achieving high-school students, college students, and recent college graduates. Together, these scholars have an average GPA of 3.72. The findings contained in this report reveal their opinions on education, career and employment aspirations, and civic involvement.

The 2022 study was conducted from February 13 to March 7, 2022, and captures the voices of 11,495 high school or college-aged individuals, representing the diverse ethnicities of Gen Z. As in years past, the study yielded great geographic representation, with participants representing all 50 states, the District of Columbia, U.S. military bases overseas, and U.S. territories of American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

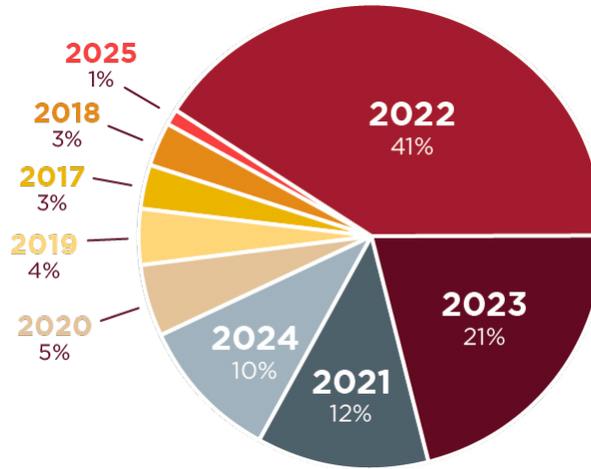
Similar to previous years, a majority of respondents were female. The results were weighted to be representative by proportions of male and female, leaving those who identified as nonbinary (4%) or who didn't answer unweighted.

Results were not weighted by age, as career interest correlates to age. Overall, as in past years, high-school students represent the vast majority of the sample: 73% this year.

# Participant Profile

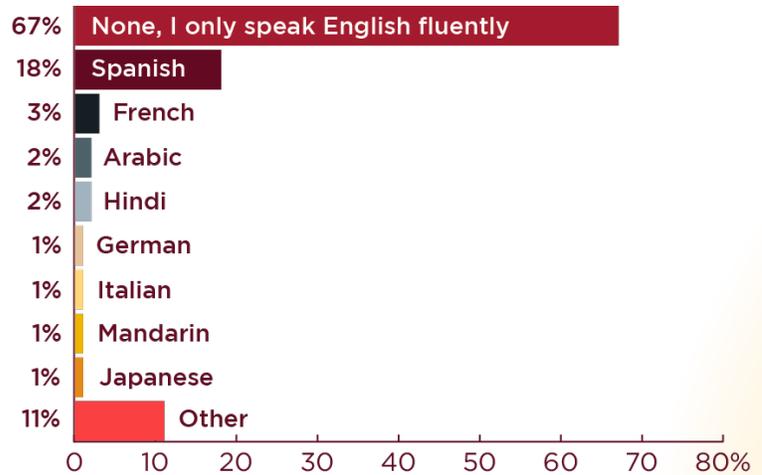
## HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION YEAR

What is or was your high school graduation year?



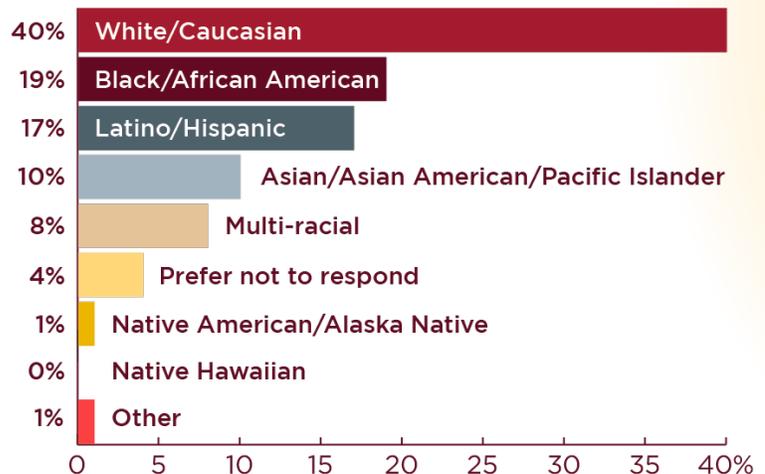
## LANGUAGES

Which of the following languages, if any, do you speak fluently or as a native language in addition to English?



## ETHNICITY

What is your ethnicity?



## Themes Shaping Gen Z

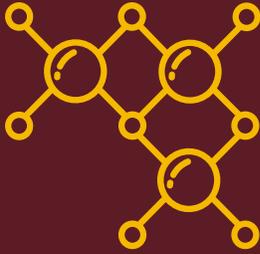
The five driving themes that impact Gen Z are a desire for equity for all, interest in STEM and healthcare fields, their love of learning, a desire to see the world after COVID-19, and facing the setbacks of college debt



### Equity for All

As the most diverse American generation yet, Gen Z is looking for potential employers that reflect and respect that diversity. In fact, a third of our participants fluently speak a language besides English. Over a fifth (22%) report that their own experiences with racial inequality have influenced their career choices. Not surprisingly, most important to Gen Z in a potential employer is the fair treatment of all employees (across genders and races), followed by quality of life, employer flexibility, and corporate social responsibility. As to their own social responsibility, they are most interested in impacting the world in the areas of human rights (35%) and social justice (34%), but also science/technology innovation (34%), and healthcare and health-related issues (34%).





## STEM and Healthcare

Gen Z wants to make an impact in STEM and healthcare, and 24% report their own experiences with health-related issues and healthcare have influenced their career choices. As in past studies, interest is greatest in the health industry, dominating the fields that Gen Z expects to work in: Medicine/Health-related (27%) and Healthcare (20%), edging the third most popular option, Business/Corporate (19%). In addition to health and medicine majors, STEM majors predominate: Engineering (18%), Sciences (18%), Business (16%), Health (16%), Medicine/Health Services (16%), Technology (12%), and Math (7%). For those who had considered other fields of study, the fields they've shifted away from are Education (17%), Arts (14%), and Legal (14%). 30% of scholars are interested in medical facilities, ranking third in the types of organizations they want to work for, behind large corporations (40%) and small businesses (31%). When it comes to working for the government, Gen Z is most interested in the CIA (31%), FBI (29%), and – in another sign of the passion for healthcare – the CDC (27%).



## Love of Learning

Gen Z has a love of learning, especially the experiential learning that comes from hands-on training. Before even getting their first job after college, the vast majority (82%) expect to participate in an internship, looking to develop their skills and explore their interest in the career. As a result, 64% are very or extremely interested in taking a certification course to prepare for an internship.

As Gen Z students look to their first full-time job, they most want jobs that will enable them to learn skills that will advance their career (67%), and – while pathways to promotion are second in importance – third in importance to them are professional development opportunities (29%). In fact, 63% expect their employer to provide in-person training to them. They want a boss who is someone they can learn from (26%, second-most important after a manager with good communication skills), and 65% acknowledge they will have a lot to learn, and they're eager to do so.



## Seeing the World, After COVID

After being trapped at home during COVID-19 lockdowns, Gen Z wants to see the world – even from space! In fact, 29% are interested in living and working in outer space, on the Moon or Mars, should they be presented the opportunity. Before that, though, they want to see the world close up: 70% want to gain international experiences while attending college, and the majority of those students are interested in Europe as a destination.

Remote schooling during the pandemic seems to have soured most on remote working. Only 23% say remote working is very or extremely important to them. And they're tired of online training, too: in-person training is almost five times more interesting to them than online training (63% vs. 13%).



## Setbacks of College Debt

Nearly four out of five (78%) NSHSS scholars expect to take on some student debt, with the median amount of debt expected to be \$28,000. This is despite the hope that scholarships, grants, and a job while in college will be the primary way to pay for their education.

This debt will burden many. 34% expect that student loan debt will prevent them from pursuing their passions. And 60% expect to live at home after getting their first job for at least a year or two.

To lighten this burden, Gen Z is looking for help from their potential employers: 44% expect an employer to help them pay off student loans, a significant disconnect from the benefits packages that employers offer.

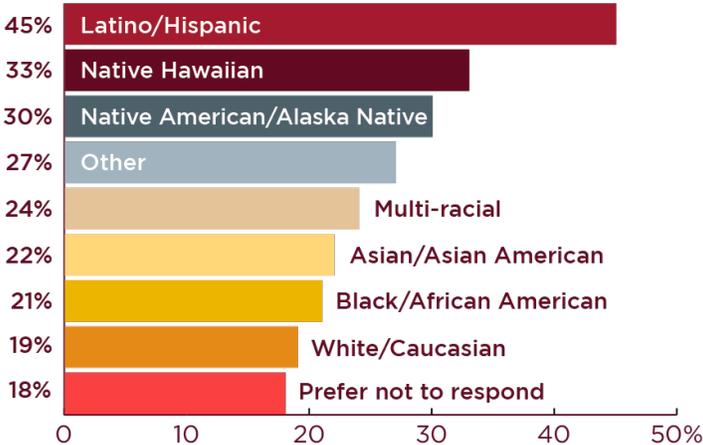
In terms of compensation, scholars expect to make a median of \$50,000 and \$69,999 in their first job, and 47% say health benefits are most important to them, beating out a flexible work schedule (40%) and time-off benefits (32%).

# Education without Limits

After declining to 21% in 2020, the proportion of participants who are the first in their family to attend college has rebounded to 2018 levels, with 24% saying they are or will be the first in their family to attend college. The percentage of first-time college attendees remains steady because of the increasing proportion of ethnicities for whom college is more often a first-time experience.

## NSHSS SCHOLARS WHO ARE FIRST-GENERATION ATTENDING COLLEGE

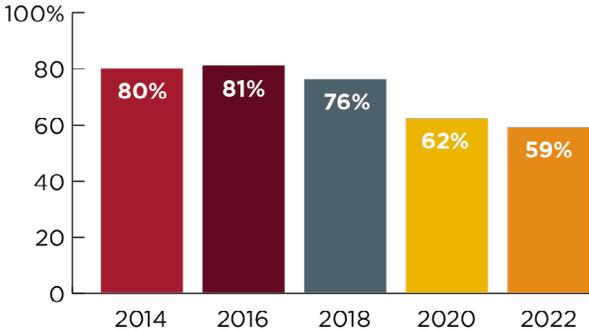
Are you (or will you be) the first in your family to attend college? - by Race/Ethnicity



Plans to attend graduate school, on the other hand, have continued to decline, dropping from 81% in 2016 to 62% in 2020, down to 59% in 2022. For those who are planning or considering attending graduate school, no one reason for doing so predominated. Common reasons cited included gaining new knowledge, advancing their career, having more career options, increasing their income potential, and gaining a specialized skill set.

## NSHSS SCHOLARS PLANNING TO ATTEND GRADUATE SCHOOL

Do you plan to attend graduate school or obtain a professional degree (e.g., M.D., J.D.)?



# International Experiences

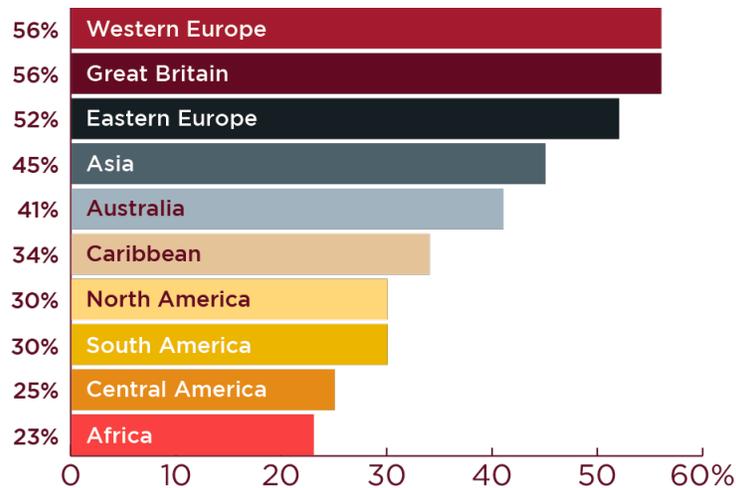
The lure of international education is strong: 70% are interested in gaining international experiences (e.g., studying abroad, being an exchange student).

Europe was the most popular destination. The latest Russian invasion of Ukraine, on February 24, 2022, commenced while the survey was fielding; in fact, 87% of responses came in after the start of the invasion. However, the full impact of the invasion on Gen Z attitudes is yet to be determined.

While 70% of scholars are interested in studying abroad, only 3% have or want to have International Studies/Relations as a major. When it comes to international experiences after school, just 20% considered international opportunities one of their top two criteria for comparing potential employers.

## INTERNATIONAL DESTINATIONS

Where would you like to study abroad? - Top 10





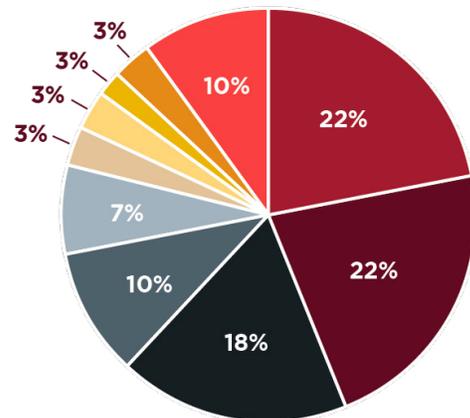
## The Economics of Education

Participants were asked to rank how they plan to pay for higher education, and 50% expect scholarships to be the #1 contributor, with 10% expecting grants to be their #1 contributor. Overall, when analyzing their rankings for each option, the second-leading contributor was a job while in college, third was grants, fourth was family assistance, fifth was personal savings, and sixth was student loans.

Despite the low contribution expected from student loans, the average amount of student debt held or expected by students is \$28,000, and 34% believe that student loan debt has or will prevent them from pursuing their passions.

### EXPECTED STUDENT LOAN DEBT

How much college debt did you or do you expect to have?



When asked how they planned to pay off their student debt, participants talked about savings, budgeting, and working.

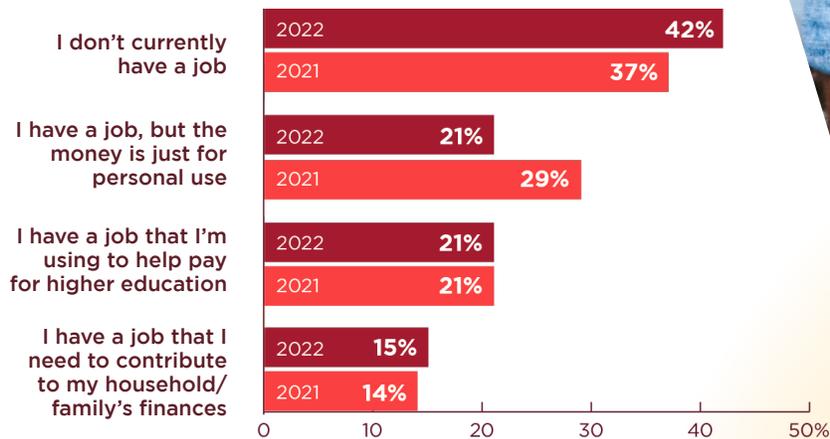
“Get on a budget, find out my payment date, make sure I have good credit and a steady job, enroll in autopay, make biweekly payments and pay off capitalized interest. I will also have some support from my family.”

“Working hard in my career field to earn better wages and being wise about my spending and saving habits.”

Despite jobs being an important part of the equation for managing student debt, the proportion of college students without a job has edged up, from 37% in 2020 (pre-pandemic) to 42% in 2022. Perhaps this is because many colleges and universities now offer hybrid classes, resulting in fewer on-campus part-time jobs than before COVID-19 lockdowns.

## JOB STATUS AMONG CURRENT NSHSS COLLEGE SCHOLARS

Which of the following best applies to you?  
% of college scholars



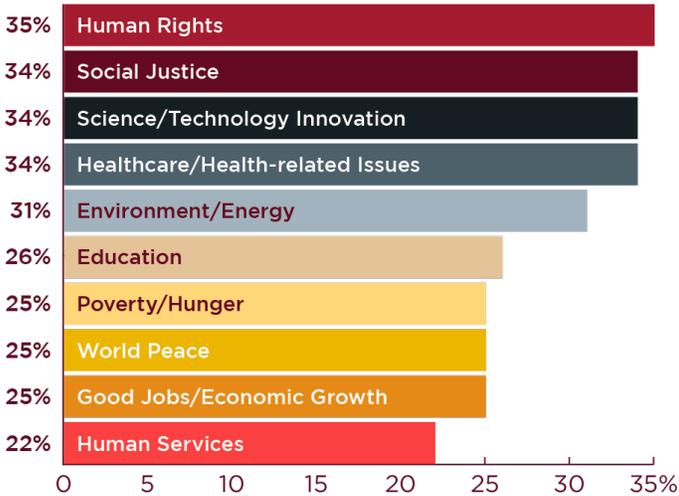


# Purpose

The cause of human rights remains the most important issue to NSHSS scholars, while interest in science/tech innovation has jumped from 24% to 34%, and world peace is now debuting in the top 10, no doubt due to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, which happened while the survey was fielding. Dropping out of the top 10 was bullying/violence prevention, the incidence of which declined while schools and colleges were virtual or hybrid.

## ISSUES TO IMPACT

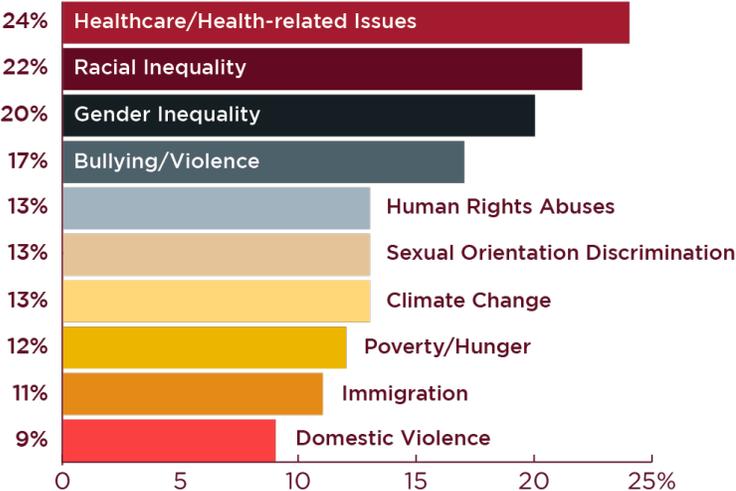
What issues are you most interested in impacting in your world? - Top 10



Personal experiences with these issues influenced the career choices of 60% of NSHSS scholars. At least one out of five reported their career was influenced by their personal experience with health-related issues (24%), racial inequality (22%), or gender inequality (20%).

## INFLUENCING PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

Does your personal experience with any of the following issues influence your choice of career? - Top 10



## Career Expectations

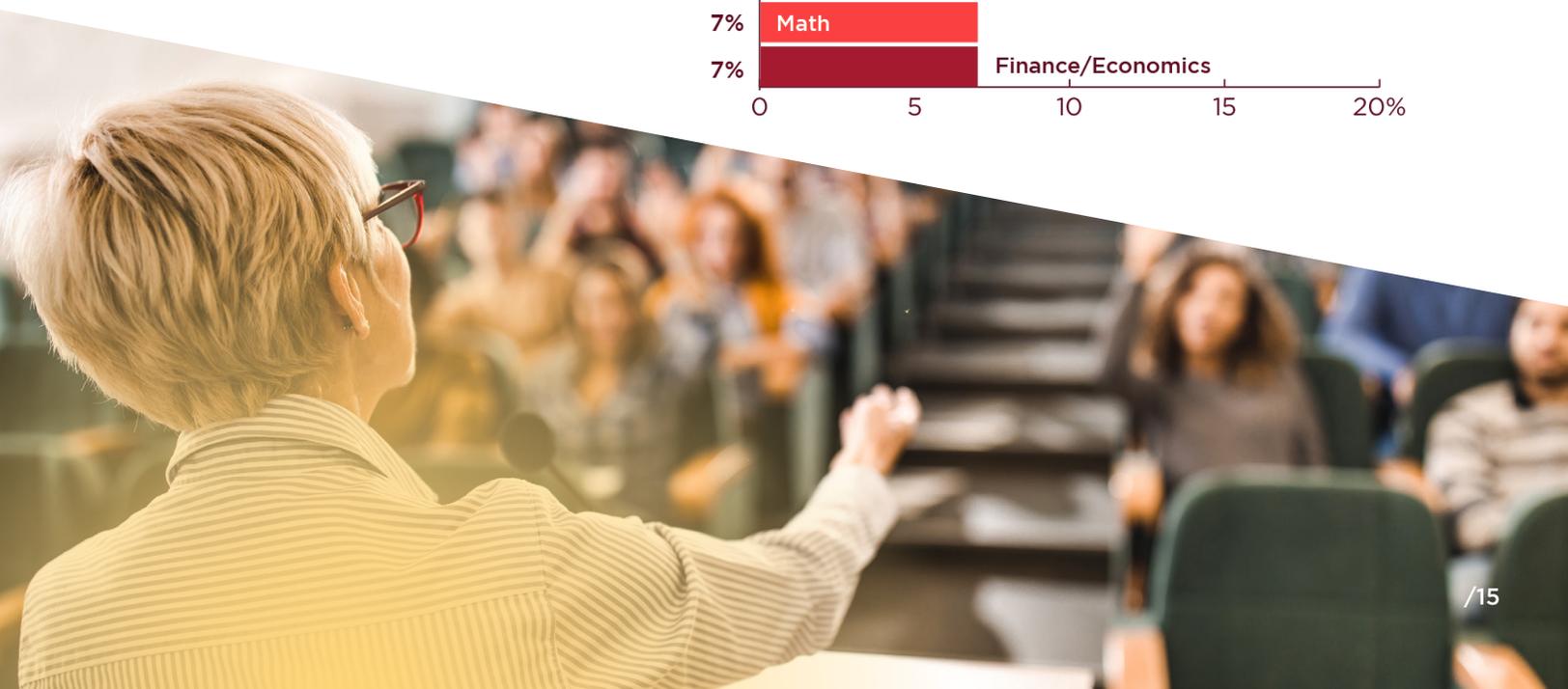
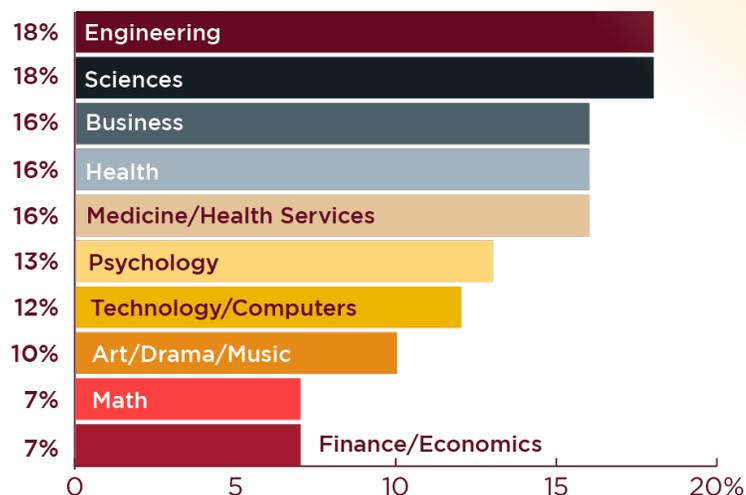
NSHSS scholars are primarily interested in pursuing degrees that will prepare them for STEM and healthcare careers. With more than three-quarters believing it is very likely or extremely likely that their career will align with their passions and aspirations.

In fact, all four of the STEM majors were listed in the top 10 of the 30 prompted majors. Not surprising, given the selected majors, STEM and health fields are where scholars most expect to work. Math majors primarily expect to apply mathematics to fields like Engineering, Sciences, Medicine, and Computer Science.

**“I hope to study biomedical engineering and later medicine, with the hopes of starting a practice and helping work toward lessening the global health disparity in any ways I can.”**

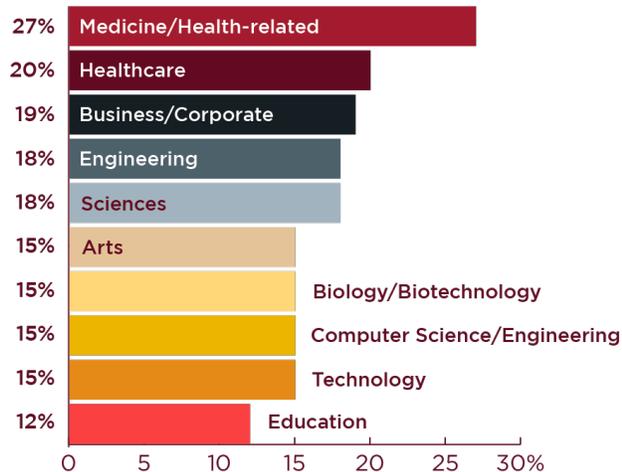
### INTENDED OR CURRENT UNDERGRADUATE MAJORS

What is your intended or current undergraduate major(s)? - Top 10



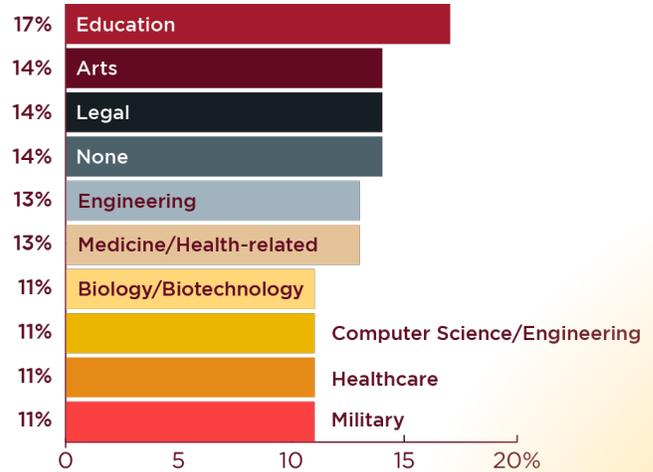
## EXPECTED CAREER PATHS

In what type(s) of field do you expect to work in the future? - Top 10



## PREVIOUS CAREER PATH INTERESTS

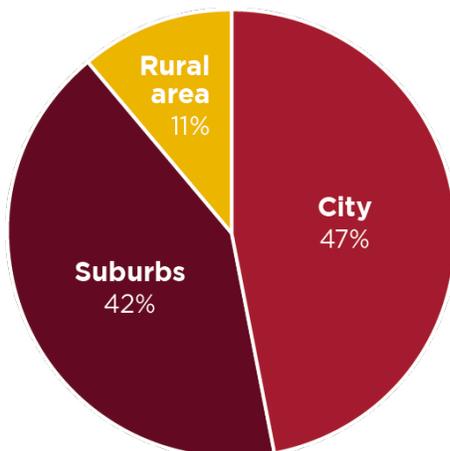
What fields interested you in the past but no longer interest you? - Top 10



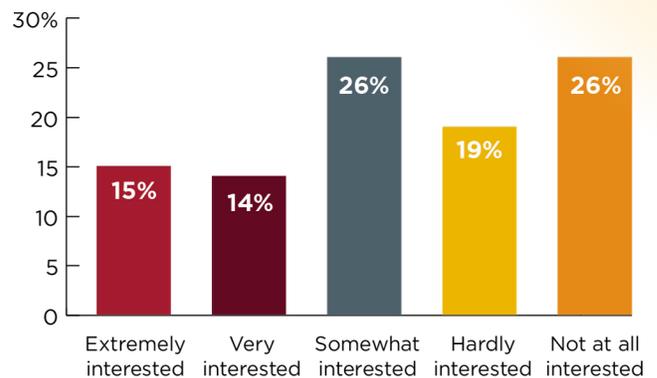
Most scholars would prefer the city (47%) to suburbs (42%), with rural areas (11%) far behind. For out-of-this-world destinations, three out of ten scholars (29%) are interested in living and working in outer space, on the Moon or on Mars.

## PREFERRED LIVING

For the career you wish to pursue, would living in the city, suburbs, or more rural area be more preferable?



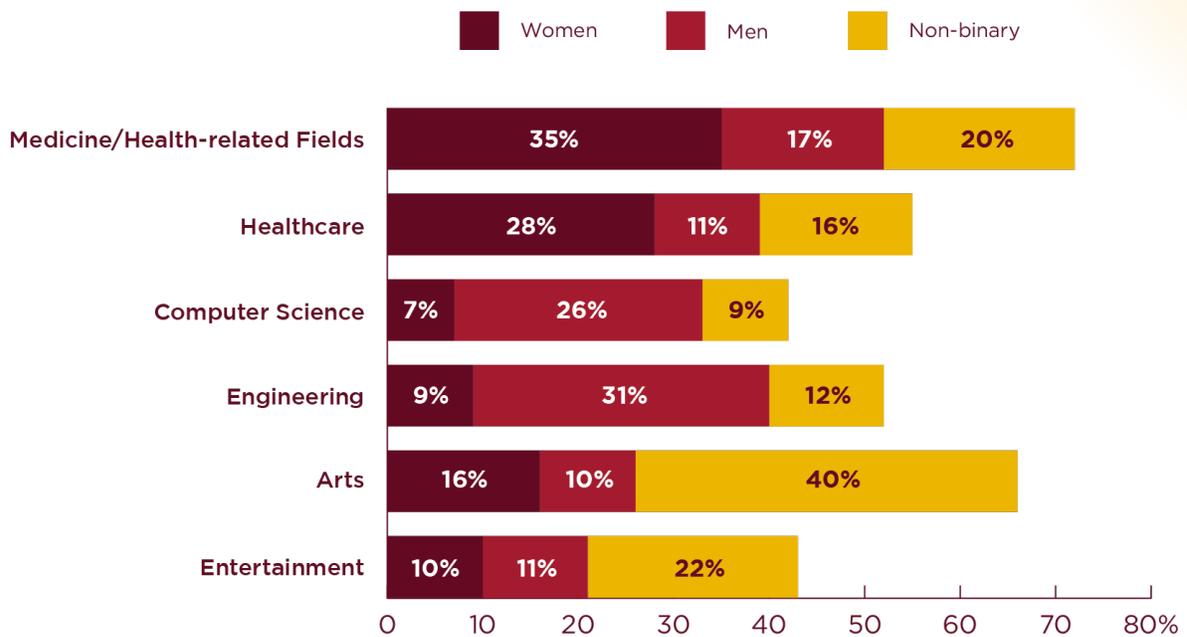
If you were presented the opportunity, and the costs were reasonable, how interested would you be in living and working in outer space or on the Moon or Mars?





## DISPARITIES IN STEM CAREERS

Unfortunately, almost every profession showed statistically significant differences by gender. STEM careers remain divided by gender with women being more likely than men to enter the fields of Medicine, Science, and Biology but far less likely to consider Engineering or Computer Science.



For the most part, STEM careers are seen as an area of opportunity for scholars of color who are often more likely to enter the STEM and health fields than whites are.



## Top Employers of Choice

Hospitals earn the top two spots for desired employers. Interestingly, local hospitals maintain the number one spot they took over from the well-known St. Jude Children's Hospital in 2020. Driven by the pandemic, three of the 18 newcomers to the top 100 employers are in healthcare: CDC (#18), Pfizer (#48), and Moderna (#97).

The top five risers within the list are Target Corp. (to #45 from #89), Spotify (to #3 from #42), Airbnb (to #27 from #66), E.L.F. (Eyes Lips Face, to #31 from #69), and Starbucks (to #16 from #44). Gen Z would prefer to work at a large corporation somewhat more than a small business/family business (40% vs. 31%). Unsurprisingly, given the interest in medical professions, working at a medical facility or institution is in the top three (30%). Interest in entrepreneurship is high, with one out of five (21%) interested in being freelancers or self-employed. Rounding out the top five types of organizations is interest in government. Employers with the identical rank are in a statistical tie.

Employer Rank	2022	2020
Local hospital	1	1
St. Jude Children's Research Hospital	2	2
Spotify	3	42
Google	4	5
Amazon	5	7
FBI	6	6
Mayo Clinic	7	3
Apple, Incorporated	8	8
SpaceX	9	20
Walt Disney Company	10	4
Netflix	11	13
National Aeronautics and Space Administration	12	9
Microsoft	13	12
Health Care Service Corp.	14	17
Tesla Motors	15	29
Starbucks	16	44
DreamWorks Animation SKG	17	24
Center for Disease Control and Prevention	18	--
Central Intelligence Agency	19	11
Nike	20	15
SONY	21	36
Lockheed Martin	22	30
Children's Healthcare of Atlanta	23	10
The New York Times	24	26

Employer Rank	2022	2020
Local police department	25	16
Universal Studios	26	19
Airbnb	27	66
U.S. State Department	28	14
U.S. Air Force	29	25
Atlantic Health Systems	30	34
E.L.F. (Eyes Lips Face)	31	69
Chick-fil-A	32	28
Meridian Health	33	40
Delta Air Lines	34	52
Adobe Systems	35	48
U.S. Army	36	32
American Airlines	37	46
National Football League	38	22
Boeing	39	31
Major League Baseball	40	33
National Basketball Association	41	21
3M	42	49
Instagram	43	37
Lululemon	43	41
Target Corp.	45	89
National Security Agency	46	23
Teach For America	47	27
Pfizer	48	--
Abercrombie & Fitch / Hollister	49	58
BuzzFeed	50	18





Employer Rank	2022	2020
Blue Cross and Blue Shield	51	38
CNN	52	39
Kaiser Permanente	53	35
Duke Energy	54	--
CHG Healthcare Services	55	50
Bank of America	56	54
Johnson & Johnson	57	72
Build-A-Bear Workshop	58	67
U.S. Navy	59	47
Samsung	60	63
Mercedes Benz USA	61	62
Forbes	62	68
Major League Soccer	63	51
WellStar Health System	63	59
Valve	65	--
Dow Chemical	66	--
Intel	67	71
CVS Caremark	68	91
Aeropostale	69	94
Boston Scientific	70	53
Wal-Mart Stores Inc.	71	98
eBay	72	--
Local fire department	72	45
Lyft	74	--
L'Oreal	75	57

Employer Rank	2022	2020
Southern Ohio Medical Center	75	60
The Everett Clinic	77	--
UnitedHealth Group	78	43
Facebook	79	90
Ford Motor Co.	79	100
Hilton Hotels & Resorts	81	80
Toyota	81	--
Ohio Health	83	75
Southwest Airlines	84	--
T-Mobile	85	--
Scripps Health	86	73
JPMorgan Chase	87	70
Dell	88	87
GPS Hospitality	88	--
U.S. Marine Corps	90	77
Wells Fargo & Co.	91	--
A.J. O'Connor Associates	92	--
IBM Corp.	93	82
Costco Wholesale	94	--
Honda	95	--
American Express	96	--
Bethesda Softworks	97	64
Moderna	97	--
Coca-Cola Company	99	74
Porsche	100	95

## Employment Preferences

NSHSS scholars paint a clear picture of the type of employer and environment they would like to work for, and their preferences reflect their values and fears. Gen Z finds it most important to work for organizations that provide fair treatment of all employees across gender and race. The next most important item is the quality of life and employer flexibility. Gen Z again places their values foremost, with employers who are working to make a positive impact on the world ranking third. Less important, surprisingly, is environmental impact and the presence of women or different races in leadership roles.

When considering potential employers, what is most important to you about the organization?

Overall Rank	
1	Fair treatment of all employees
2	Quality of life and employer flexibility
3	Corporate social responsibility
4	Location
5	Reputation
6	Diversity of staff
7	Diversity of managers and senior leaders
8	Presence of women in leadership roles
9	Environmental impact
10	Presence of people from different races in leadership roles



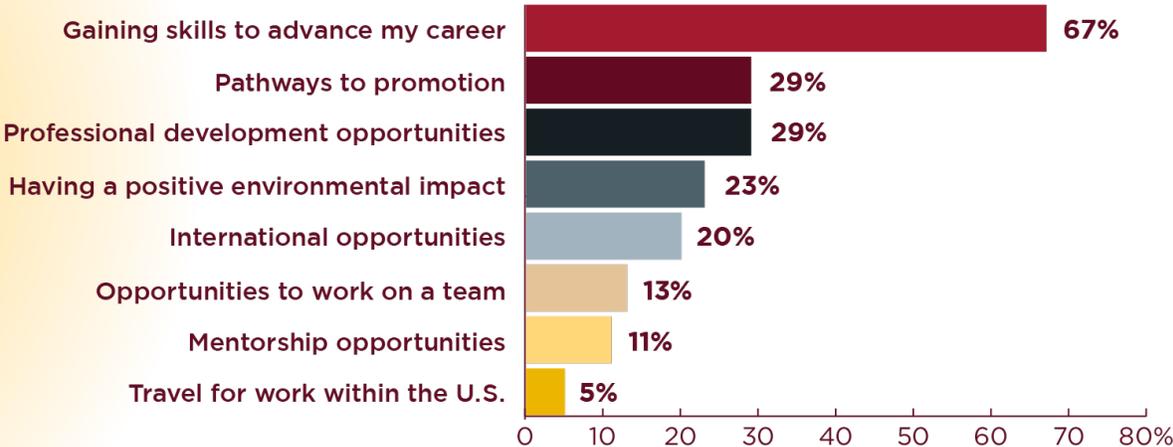
## Factors in Choosing an Employer

Although fewer Gen Z scholars plan to attend graduate school than before, they still prioritize learning skills to advance their careers and pathways to promotions. Given the importance of development, we asked about training and continuing education. Most desired was in-person training (63%), favored almost five-to-one over online training (13%).

For jobs after college, the economic impact of education is important. When asked how they expect their employer to invest in them, 44% expect help with paying off student loans and 38% expect tuition reimbursement for a master’s degree or other postgraduate degree.

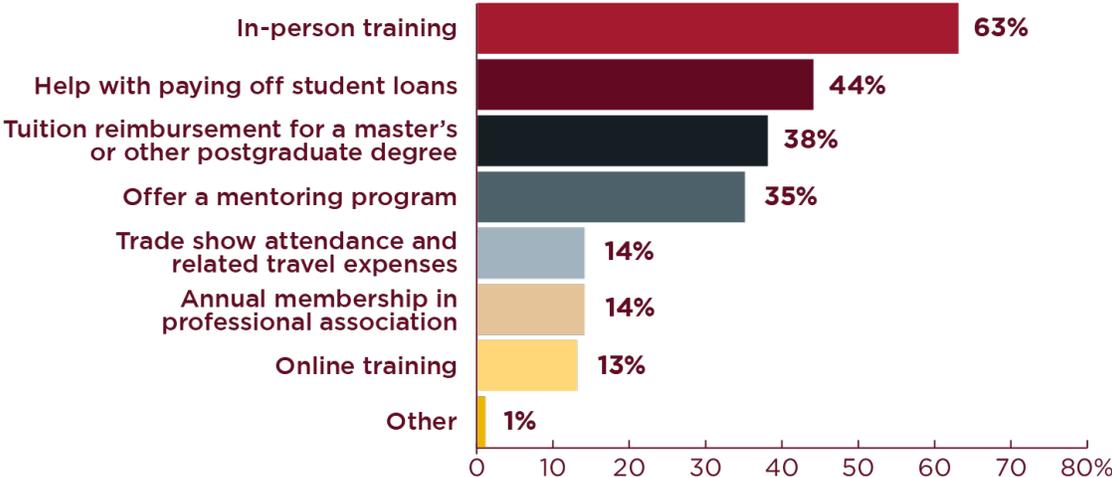
## JOB-SPECIFIC OPPORTUNITIES

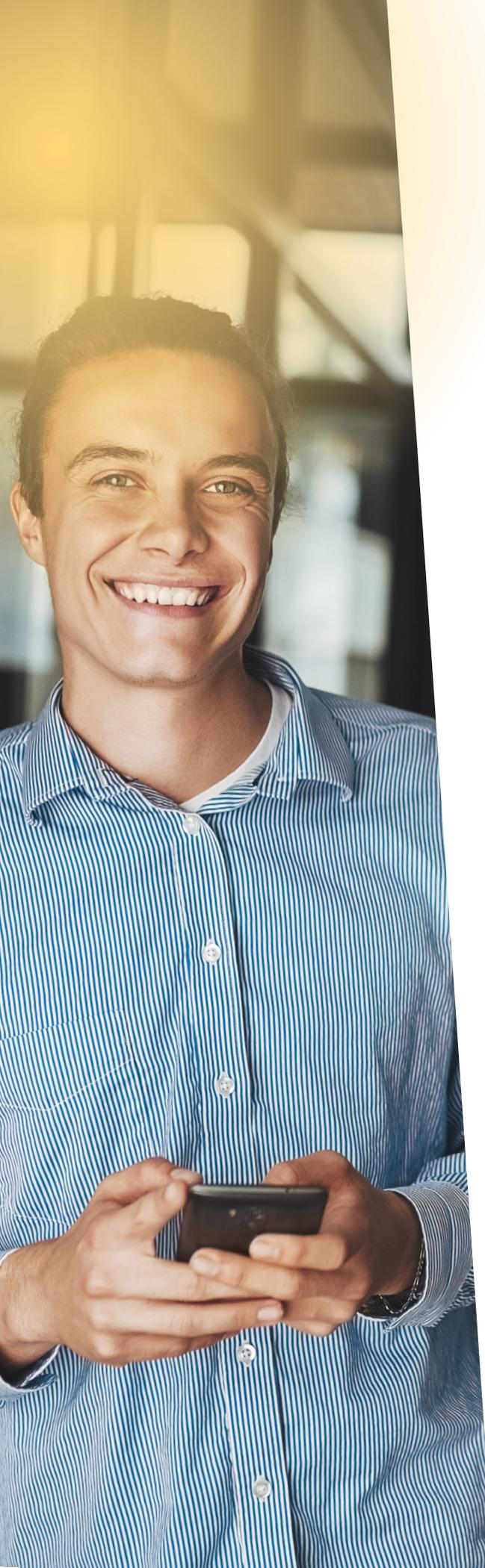
When considering potential employers, what is most important to you about the work experience?



## EXPECTED EMPLOYER INVESTMENT

How do you expect your employer to invest in you?

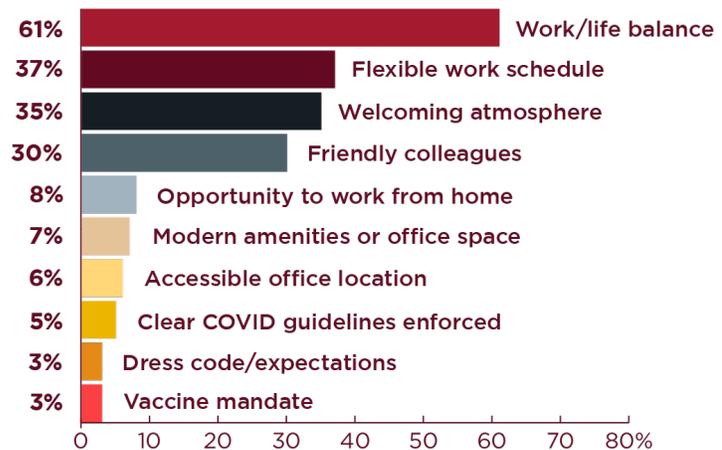




## Work Atmosphere & Environment

Gen Z ranks work conditions that promote a work/life balance and flexible work schedule the highest. COVID-19 concerns have largely waned, as few said the opportunity to work from home was most important, nor was the enforcement of clear COVID guidelines or vaccine mandates. In a follow-up question, only 23% rated the option to work remotely as very or extremely important.

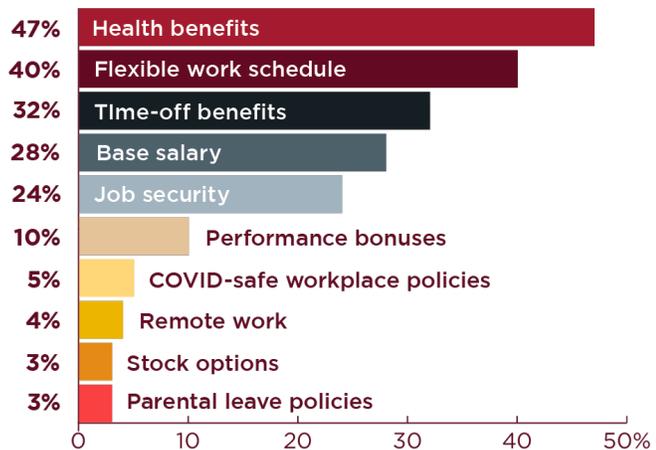
When considering potential employers, what is most important to you about the working conditions? - Top 10



## Benefits & Compensation

In terms of compensation, the median salary expectation that NSHSS scholars have for their first full-time job is \$50,000 to \$69,999. Looking beyond compensation, the benefits of most interest are health benefits, a flexible work schedule, and time-off benefits.

When considering potential employers, what is most important to you about benefits and compensation? - Top 10



# Internships

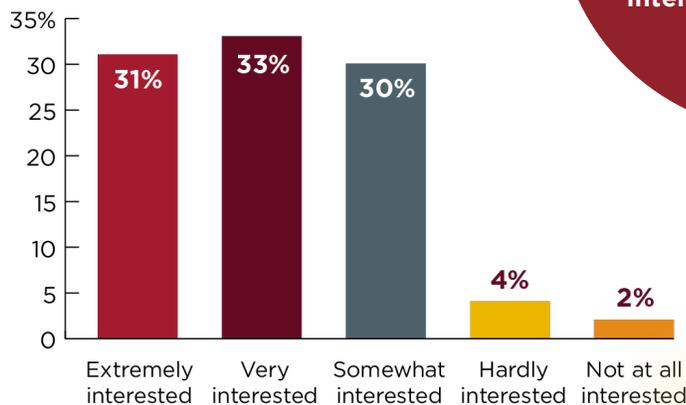
More than four out of five (82%) NSHSS scholars expect to participate in an internship. When asked what they would most like to gain from an internship, the #1 priority, for nearly half, was skill development and training (49%), followed by the chance to explore career interest (#2).

What would you most like to gain from an internship?

	Overall Rank	#1
Skill development and training	1	49%
Explore career interest	2	24%
Future full-time employment	3	13%
Employer reference	4	5%
Earn college credit	5	8%

## NSHSS SCHOLARS INTERESTED IN CERTIFICATION COURSE

How interested would you be in a certification course to prepare you for an internship?



### Did You Know?

NSHSS launched an Intern Readiness Certification Program to provide essential internship and job skills!

[Learn More.](#)



## First Jobs after College

Another expression of NSHSS scholars' love for learning, and a sign they are more humble than sometimes assumed, is their attitude toward their first job after college:

**65%** claim:  
"There's a lot to learn, so I'll roll up my sleeves and do anything."

**35%** claim:  
"I know my skills and plan to make an impact in my field right away."

**53%** said:  
"I know my skills and can hit the ground running but know I have to work my way up the ladder."

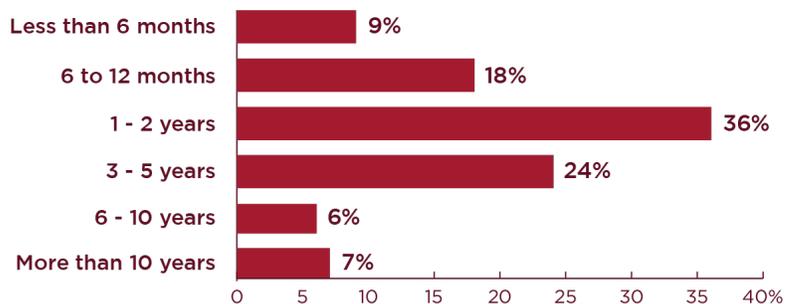
**39%** said:  
"I just graduated and I know I'm entry level with a lot to learn."

**8%** said:  
"I learned the job in school and am ready to lead as an expert."

However, first jobs are clearly seen as a stepping stone: 27% expect to stay in their first job for less than a year, and 36% more for less than two years.

### FIRST JOB TENURE

How long do you expect to stay, or did you stay, in your first full-time job?





## Top Preferred Colleges & Universities

NSHSS scholars were asked to share up to five of their preferred colleges. Universities with the identical rank are in a statistical tie.

College / University	2022	2020
Harvard University	1	4
New York University	2	3
Texas A&M University	3	15
University of California, Los Angeles	4	1
Yale University	4	11
University of Florida	6	2
Stanford University	7	5
University of Texas, Austin	8	10
Florida State University	9	6
University of California, Berkeley	10	12
Columbia University	11	21
Duke University	11	8
University of Georgia	13	7
Arizona State University	14	20
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	15	17
Howard University	16	19
University of Central Florida	17	9
Pennsylvania State University	18	18
Purdue University	19	44
Baylor university	20	13
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor	21	65
Georgia Institute of Technology	22	22
Princeton University	23	41
Georgia State University	24	26
Brown University	24	59

College / University	2022	2020
University of California, San Diego	26	32
Boston University	27	31
Cornell University	27	55
Johns Hopkins University	29	16
University of Alabama	30	24
University of Chicago	31	33
University of Houston	31	38
University of South Florida	31	37
North Carolina A&T State University	31	45
University of Southern California	35	23
Louisiana State University	35	25
Texas Tech University	37	36
University of Pennsylvania	38	39
North Carolina State University	39	67
University of Miami	39	28
Vanderbilt University	41	30
Florida A&M University	42	62
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill	43	14
University of South Carolina	44	48
Ohio State University, Columbus	44	40
Clemson University	46	47
Rice University	46	35
University of California, Irvine	48	51
Rutgers University	48	79
University of Washington, Seattle	50	29

College / University	2022	2020
Florida International University	51	54
Texas State University	52	--
University of Tennessee	52	72
University of Arizona	54	49
University of Wisconsin	54	--
University of Maryland, College Park	56	68
Michigan State University	57	57
Northern Arizona University	58	90
Spelman College	59	53
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University	60	78
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign	61	84
Kennesaw State University	62	52
California State University, Long Beach	63	80
Indiana University, Bloomington	63	83
University of California, Davis	65	34
University of Virginia	66	43
Emory University	66	50
University of Colorado, Boulder	68	76
Georgetown University	69	70
Auburn University	70	42
Colorado State University	71	97
Savannah College of Art and Design	71	56
University of Minnesota	73	--
University of Texas, Dallas	73	92
Florida Atlantic University	75	77

College / University	2022	2020
Loyola University	75	--
Mississippi State University	77	61
Northwestern University	77	64
George Mason University	79	60
Brigham Young University	80	94
University of North Texas	80	91
Northeastern University	82	96
Temple University	82	--
Liberty University	84	--
Virginia Tech	84	46
Tulane University	84	86
Iowa State University	84	--
University of Oregon	88	71
University of Texas, San Antonio	88	89
California State University, Fullerton	90	--
San Diego State University	91	82
University of Notre Dame	91	85
University of Oklahoma	93	66
Mercer University	93	--
Xavier University	93	--
University of Pittsburgh	93	81
Oklahoma State University	97	75
University of Kentucky	97	63
University of Connecticut	97	--
Oregon State University	100	74
Washington State University	100	73





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