



**NSHSS**

Be Honored. Be More.



2026

# CAREER INTEREST SURVEY



# CAREER MOTIVATIONS OF GEN Z

This study highlights the most current research on the preferences, attitudes, and goals of high school and college-aged students as they move into their next chapters and the workforce. These students will evaluate employers, plan for higher education, think about debt and internships, consider alternative pathways, and respond to the growing role of artificial intelligence. This focused look at Generation Z offers a valuable resource for employers, educators, and institutions seeking to better understand, engage, and support the diverse talent of the future.

# NSHSS scholars represent the most promising diverse talent shaping the future workforce.



## About NSHSS

The National Society of High School Scholars (NSHSS) is a distinguished academic honor society that recognizes and supports high-achieving student scholars at more than 26,000 high schools across 170 countries.

With more than 2 million members spanning high school, college, and career, NSHSS members represent a diverse community of academically accomplished, emerging leaders shaping the future of their schools, workplaces, and communities.

# 2026 Career Interest Survey

Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, is significantly larger than the generations that precede it, with more than 90 million members, according to Pew Research. Ranging from 14 to 29 years old in 2026, many in this generation are now navigating life-changing transitions: finishing high school, attending college, and entering the workforce. As they make these decisions, Gen Z offers important insight for employers, educators, and institutions focused on the talent of the future.

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The 2026 Career Interest Survey highlights four themes shaping Gen Z perspectives in the United States:



**Career Aspirations & Employer Expectations**



**Civic Purpose & Social Impact**



**Education Pathways & Financial Reality**



**Perspectives on AI**

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## Survey Methodology

This marks the 16th edition of the NSHSS Career Interest Survey and the first update since 2024. The report reveals the preferences and attitudes of high-achieving high school students, college students, and recent college graduates. Together, these scholars have an average GPA of 3.79.

The findings contained in this report reflect their perspectives on education, career and employment aspirations, social impact, and artificial intelligence.

This report highlights findings from the 2022, 2024, and 2026 editions of the online survey, which collected a total of 34,100 responses between February 6, 2022, and March 5, 2026. The 2026 edition alone included **11,443 respondents**. As in past years, the study yielded broad geographic representation.

Respondents reported living in all **50 states**, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and U.S. military bases overseas. Results were weighted by Census Region and gender, when specified, to produce estimates more representative of the overall population.

Current results were not weighted by age, as career interest correlates to age. Overall, high-school students, as in past years, represent the vast majority of the sample at 72%.

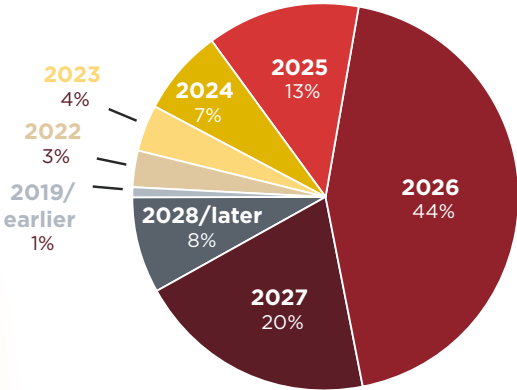
Reflecting the diversity of Gen Z, the majority of participants were from minority groups: 43% White/Caucasian, 17% Black/African American, 15% Latino/Hispanic, 10% Multi-racial, and 8% Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander.

# Participant Profile

Respondents in 2026 reported a high school graduation year of 2025 or later. The sample reflects the diversity of Gen Z across gender, race and ethnicity, geography, and language. Among respondents 47% identified as female and 46% as male. Respondents came from across the country, led by California, Texas, New York, and Florida, and 30% reported speaking a language other than English fluently or as a native language

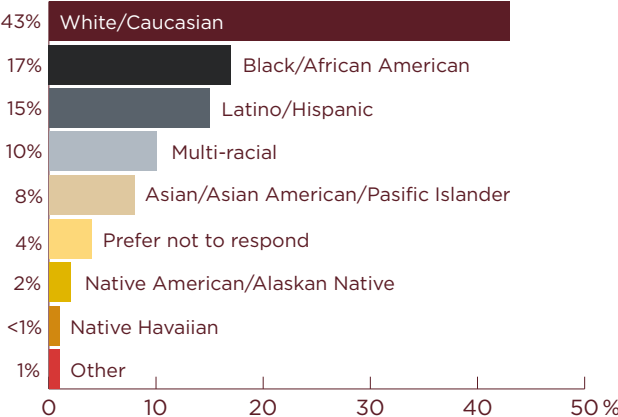
## GRADUATION YEAR

What is or was your high school graduation year?



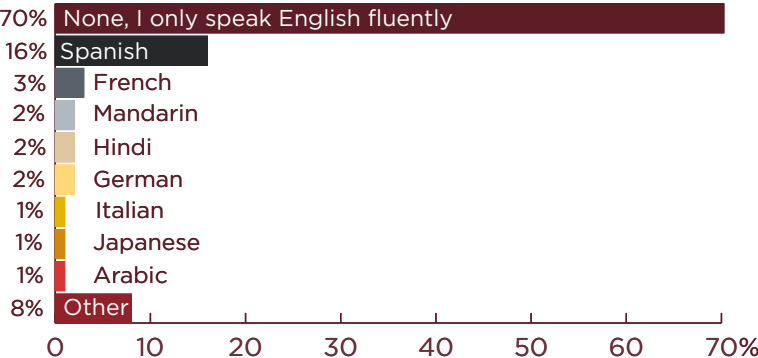
## ETHNICITY

What is your ethnicity?



## LANGUAGES

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



# Themes Shaping Gen Z

The four key themes covered in this year's survey show a generation thinking carefully about workplace values, educational decisions, the issues they want to influence, and the growing role of AI (artificial intelligence) in everyday life.



## Career Aspirations and Employer Expectations

Students place the greatest importance on how people are treated at work and the quality of the work experience itself. When ranking employer attributes, **fair treatment of all employees** was the top-ranked factor, followed by work life balance. In benefits and compensation, health benefits (72%), time-off benefits (62%), and a flexible work schedule (62%) lead the list, while **66%** say **gaining skills** and **professional development** is the most important part of the work experience. Expectations after college are equally pragmatic: **79%** expect to secure a full-time job before graduating or within six months of graduation, and **56%** expect to stay in their first job for two years or less. The 2026 trend summary also shows that job location has become less important than in prior waves. The percentage of those ranking job location as least important has surged from **6%** to **21%**.



## Education Pathways & Financial Reality

Students continue to think ambitiously about higher education, but with clear attention to cost and practical pathways. **Scholarships** rank as the biggest expected contributor to paying for higher education. **81%** say they plan to attend graduate school or obtain a professional degree, and **83%** expect to get at least one internship with a company where they really want to work. At the same time, the survey captures broader pathways as well: **52%** say they know what a certificate program is, **22%** are interested in attending trade school, and **35%** say there is a stigma around trade school.



## Civic Purpose & Social Impact

Social impact remains central to how respondents see their future. The top issues students want to impact the most are **human rights** (48%), equitable access to healthcare (34%), poverty/hunger (33%), and the environment (30%). In addition to this, **84%** believe they can personally make a difference in the world. The 2026 trend summary also highlights that interest in human rights, poverty/hunger, and immigration increased notably from **29%** to **48%** in comparison to 2024.



## Perspectives on AI

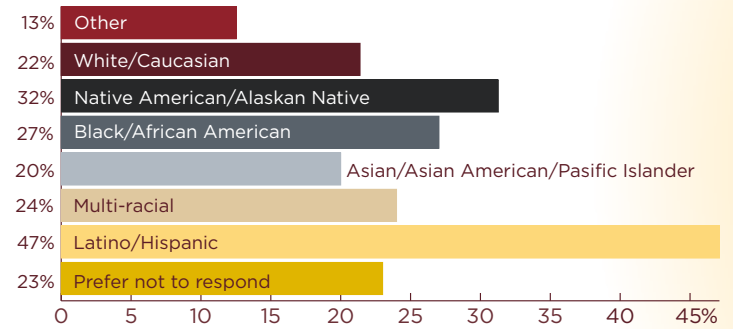
Artificial intelligence is now a routine part of student life, even as concern about its broader effects continues to rise. In 2026, those reporting they are “not using AI at all” collapsed from 36% in 2024 to just **6%**, while the most common uses are searching for information on the Internet (55%) and brainstorming (51%). At the same time, **69%** compared to 59% in 2024 believe AI will have a more negative than positive impact on society in the next ten years, and **53%** say AI will have an “extremely” or “very much” negative effect on their privacy and security overall.

# Education without Limits

Students continue to approach higher education with strong ambition. More than a quarter of respondents, **27%**, say they are or will be the first in their family to attend college. This reflects a trend seen in our 2022 and 2024 surveys, where **24%** reported being first-generation students. The increase is particularly notable among ethnicities for whom attending college is often a first-time experience within their families.

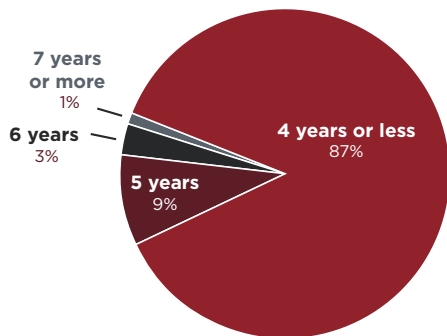
## FIRST-GENERATION NSHSS SCHOLARS ATTENDING COLLEGE

Are you (or will you) be the first in your family to attend college?



## UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE

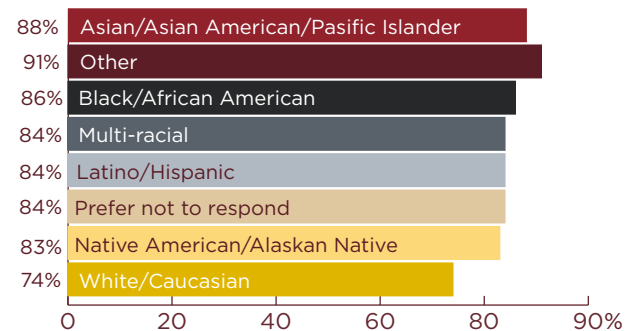
How many years do you expect it to take for you to earn your undergraduate degree??



Most respondents expect a relatively traditional path to an undergraduate degree, with **87%** expecting to earn their undergraduate degree in four years or less.

## BEYOND COLLEGE DEGREE

Do you plan to attend graduate school or obtain a professional degree?



Breakdown of the 81% who replied "Yes"

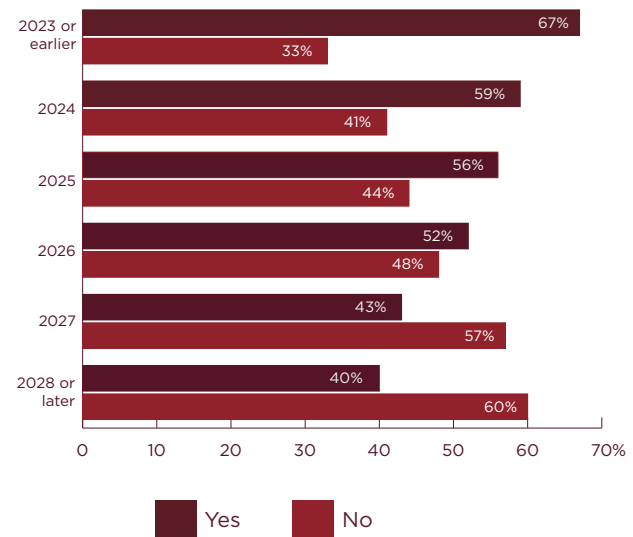
Looking beyond college, **81%** plan to attend graduate school or obtain a professional degree. Interest in graduate or professional study has remained remarkably stable since 2022, holding at about four in five respondents.

# Education Pathways & Alternatives

The 2026 survey shows that postsecondary planning extends beyond the traditional college track, though familiarity and interest vary across alternative pathways. When asked about certificate programs, **52%** of respondents say they know what a certificate program is. Awareness of certificate programs declines steadily among younger graduation cohorts, falling below a majority among the classes of 2027, 2028, and later.

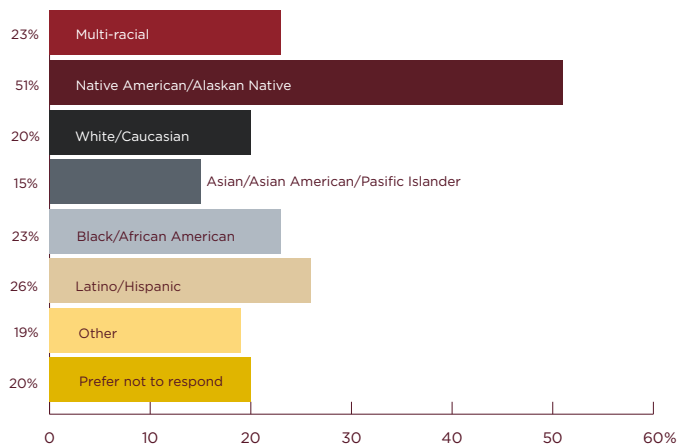
## CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

Do you know what a certificate program is?



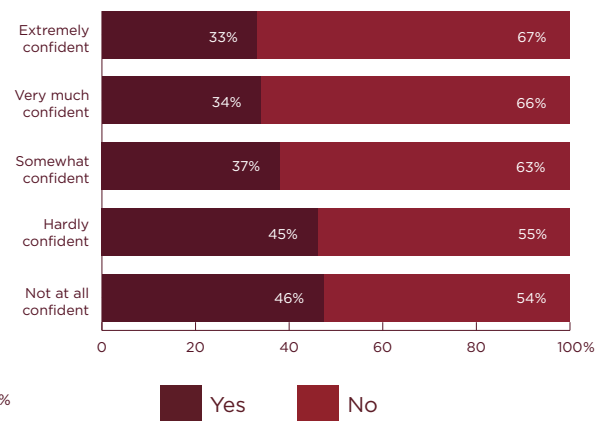
## TRADE SCHOOL

Are you interested in attending trade school?



Breakdown of the 22% who replied "Yes"

Do you think there is stigma around attending trade school?



How confident are you about your future after you graduate from college?

Trade school remains part of the conversation, but not the dominant path for most respondents. Among those asked, only **22%** say they are interested in attending trade school. Interest in trade school was modestly higher among Latino, Black, and Multi-racial respondents than among White and Asian respondents. Even so, **35%** believe there is a stigma around trade school, suggesting that alternative pathways remain visible, but not fully normalized, in how students talk about education after high

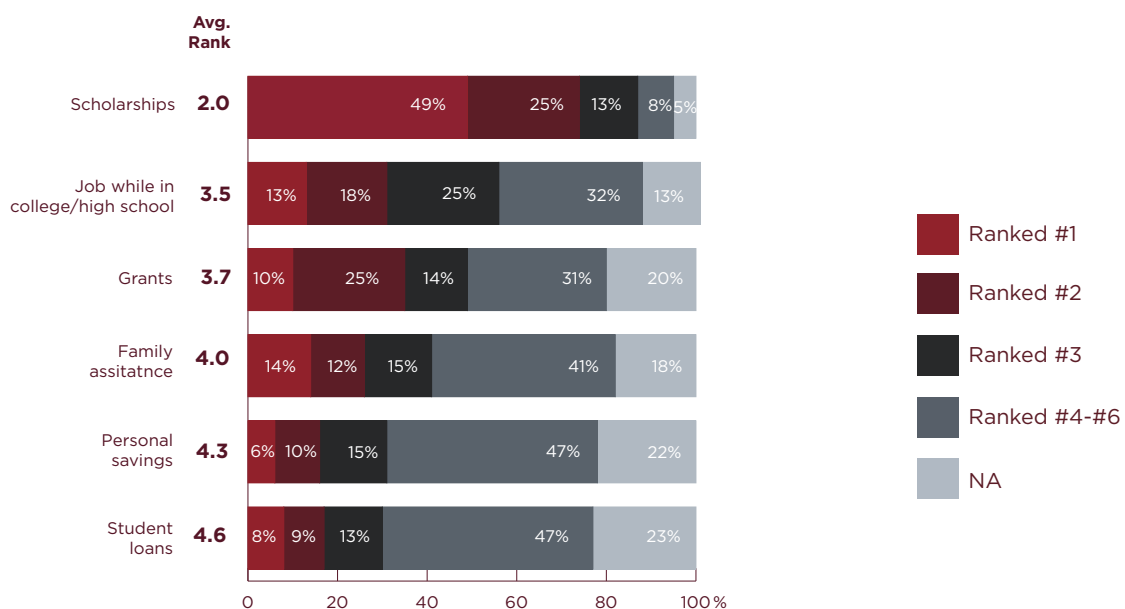


## The Economics of Education

Paying for higher education remains a multi-part equation, but scholarships stand out as the clearest anchor, though both scholarships and family assistance declined from 2024. When respondents were asked to rank how they plan to pay for higher education, **49%** said **scholarships** would be the biggest contributor. Far fewer named family assistance (14%), a job while in college or high school (13%), and grants (10%).

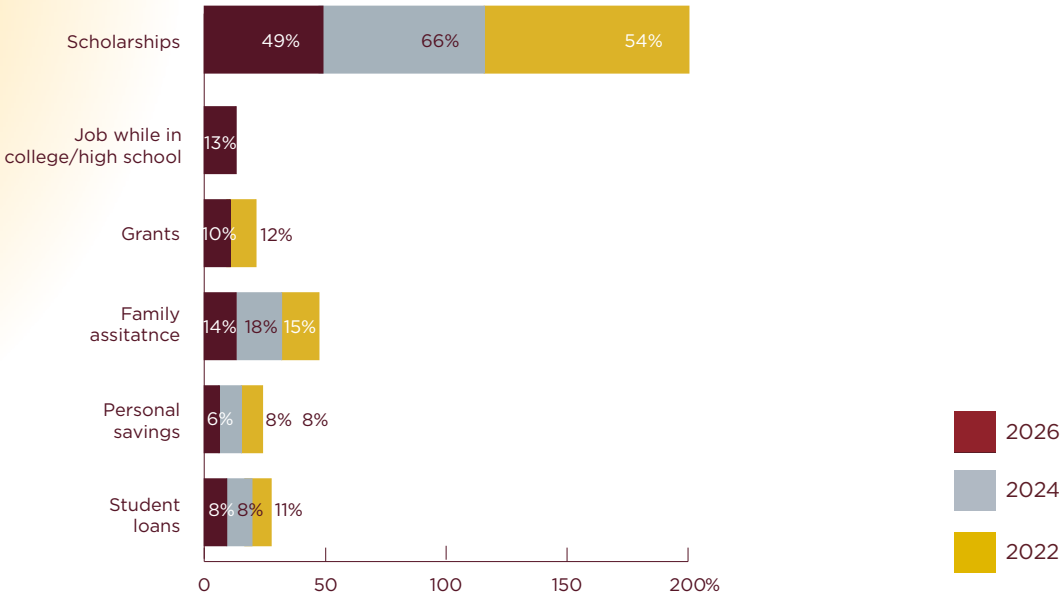
### PAYING FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

How did you plan to pay for higher education?



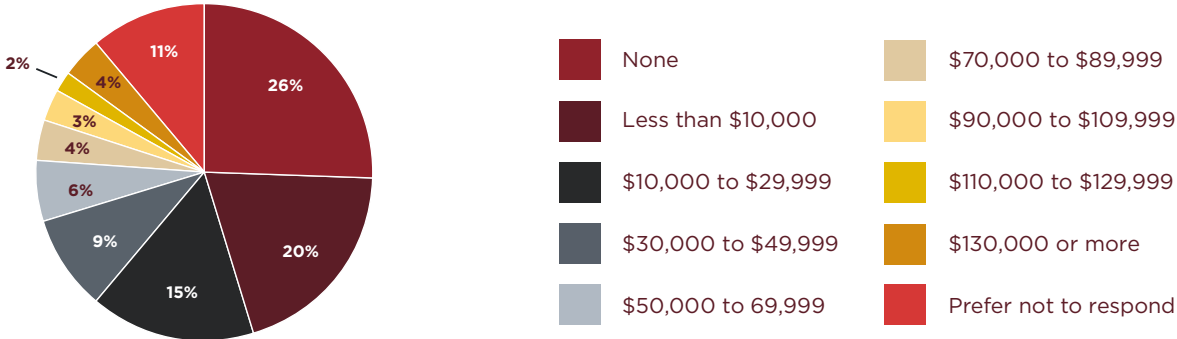
# PAYING FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Year over year comparison.



# EXPECTED DEBT

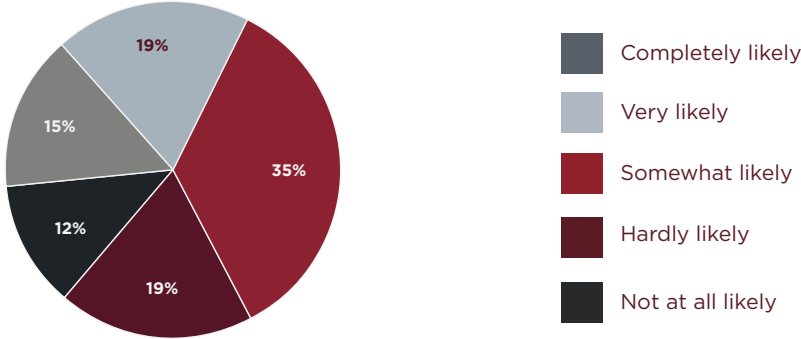
How much college debt did you or do you expect to have?



Expected debt levels suggest that many respondents are trying to keep borrowing manageable, though not everyone expects to avoid it. Nearly half of respondents (**46%**) expect either no college debt or less than \$10,000, but concern about debt is still widespread.

## CONCERNS

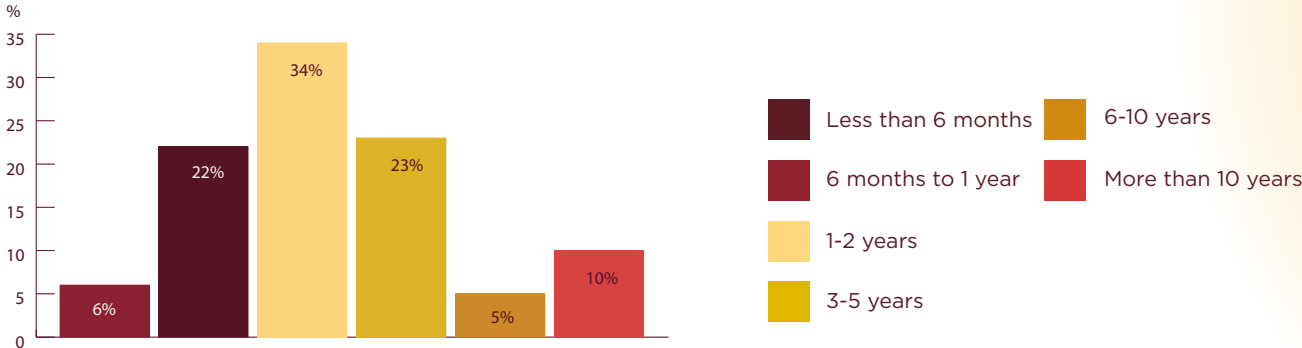
How likely it is that concerns about college debt could prevent you from pursuing a field you're interested in?



Debt concerns also appear to shape how students think about their future careers. In fact, **69%** say worries about college debt are at least somewhat likely to keep them from pursuing a field they are interested in.

## POST COLLEGE LIVING

After getting your first job, how long did you, or do you expect to, live at home?



Post-college living expectations also continue to reflect financial caution. In 2026, **68%** of respondents said they expect to live at home when they start their first job, up from **66%** in 2024 and **60%** in 2022. Among those who expect to live at home with their parents/family, the majority of those plan to stay at home for more than a year.

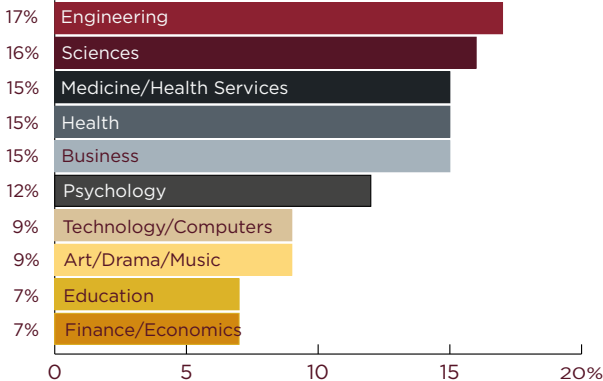


# Career Expectations

NSHSS scholars continue to orient their future plans toward a mix of STEM, health, and professionally focused fields. The most common intended or current majors are Engineering, Sciences, Medicine/ Health Services, Health, and Business. Confidence about the future is strong, with **94%** of NSHSS students saying they feel at least somewhat confident about life after college.

## CURRENT/INTENDED MAJOR

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



The 2026 results also suggest that career ambition is balanced by pragmatism. A slim majority of **51%** would take a job that does not align with their political beliefs and **52%** would choose an unappealing industry if it guaranteed financial success. Among those considering non-corporate careers, the biggest concern is still making enough money (44%), followed by job stability and security (30%).

These tradeoff questions sit within a wider set of attitudes about confidence, debt, and future planning. NSHSS students are not simply idealistic or purely transactional; many appear to be weighing passion, values, and long-term stability at the same time. This makes it reasonable to frame this section around the tension between personal fit and financial security.



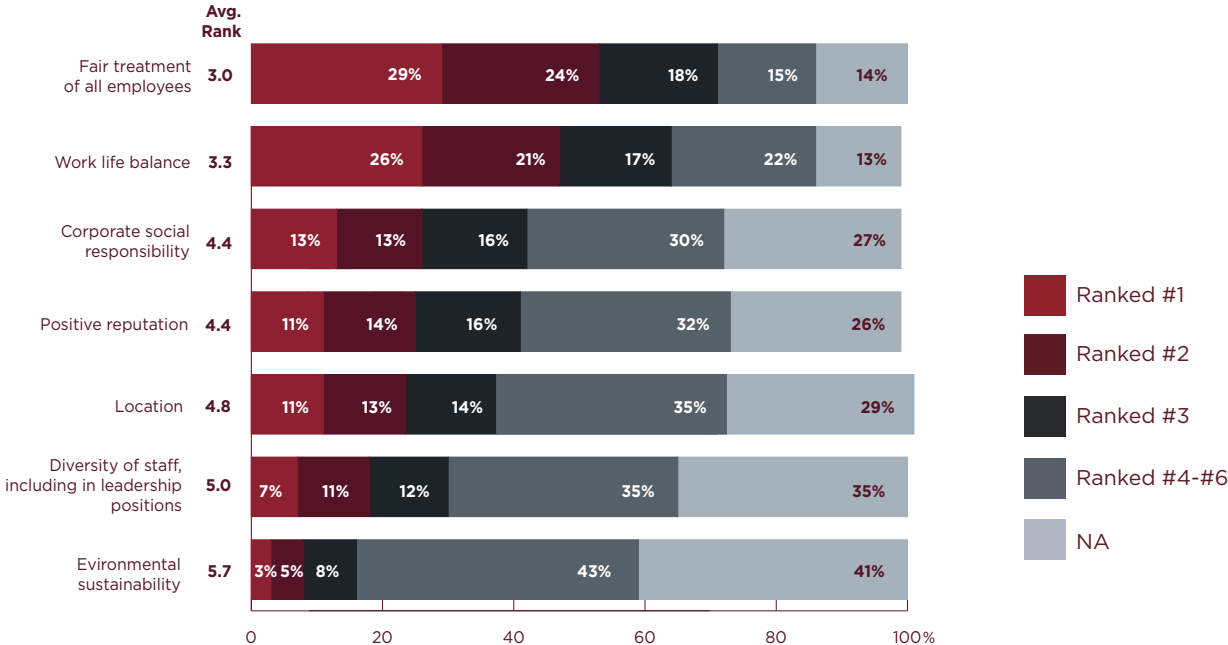
# Employer Preferences & Expectations

## WORK EXPERIENCE

When Gen Z thinks about employers, they prioritize how people are treated and what day-to-day work will feel like. **Fair treatment of all employees** and work-life balance lead employer priorities, while **health benefits**, time-off benefits, and a flexible work schedule top the list of desired benefits.

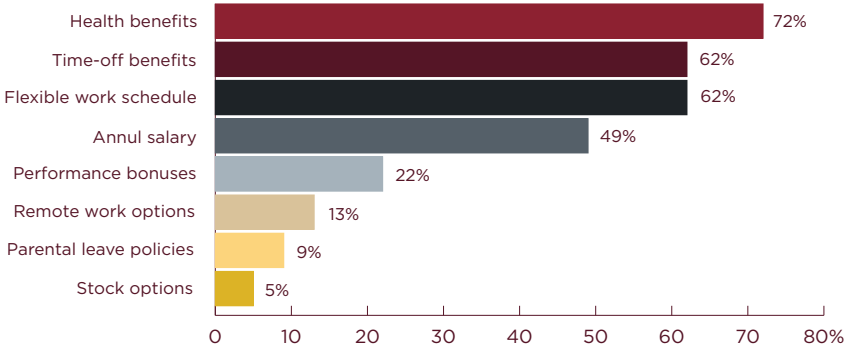
## ORGANIZATION EXPECTATIONS

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



# BENEFITS AND COMPENSATION

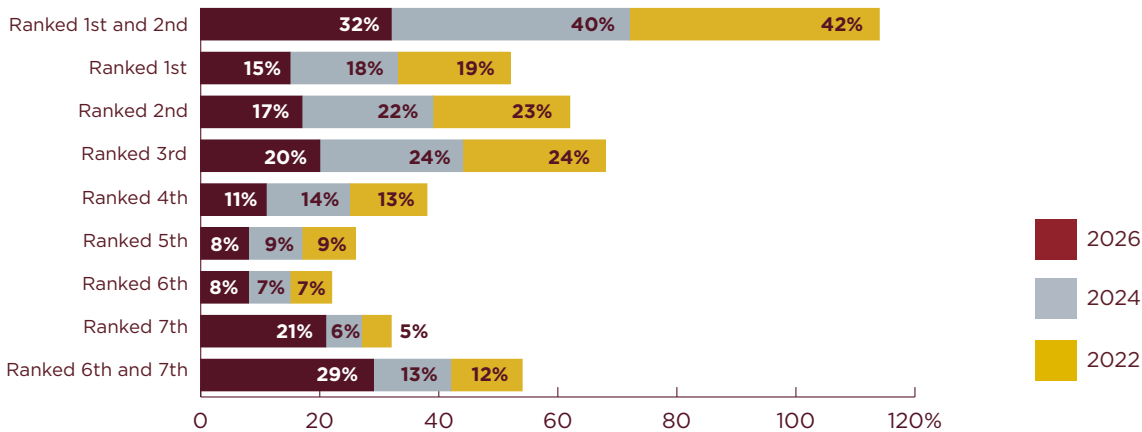
When considering potential employers, what is most important to you about benefits and compensation?



# JOB LOCATION

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

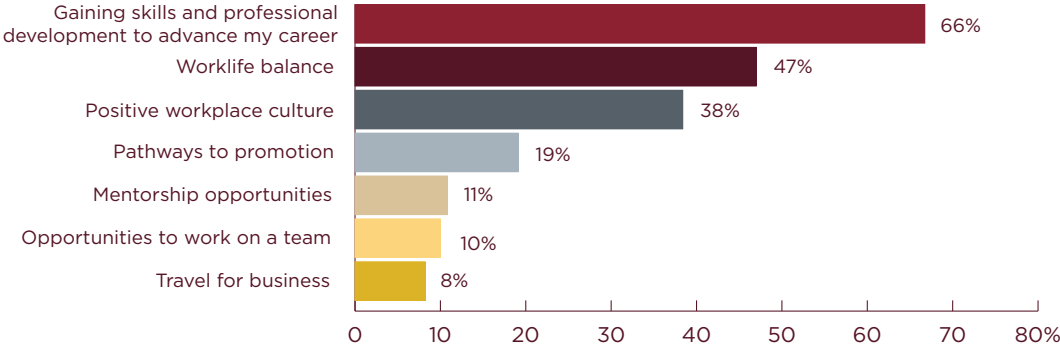
Job location also stands out for a different reason: respondents ranking it as the **least important** employer factor rose sharply compared with the previous wave, suggesting that where a job is located matters less than how the organization operates.



## WORKING CONDITIONS

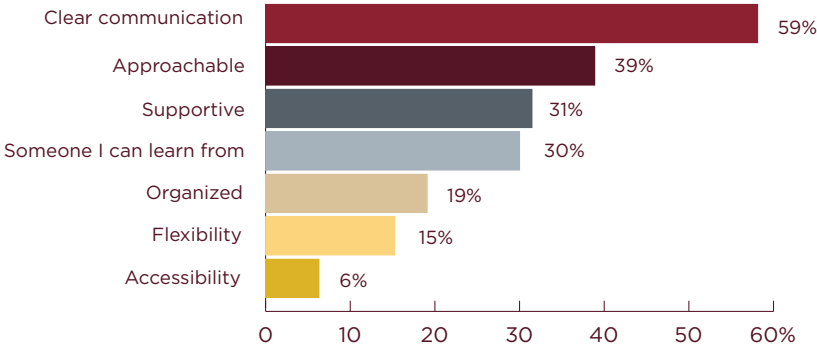
When considering potential employers, what is most important to you about the work experience?

What students want most from the work experience is the chance to gain skills and professional development to advance their careers (66%), followed by work-life balance (47%) and a positive workplace culture (38%). The manager qualities they value most are clear communication (59%), being approachable (39%), and being supportive (31%).



## MANAGEMENT QUALITIES

At the same time, expectations after college remain practical:



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## EXPECTATIONS AFTER COLLEGE

At the same time, expectations after college remain practical:

**79%** of respondents expect to secure a full-time job before graduating or within six months of graduation, **56%** expect to stay in their first job for two years or less, and **68%** expect to live at home when they begin working. Salary expectations are spread across the middle ranges, led by \$50,000 to \$69,999 (17%) and \$70,000 to \$89,999 (16%).

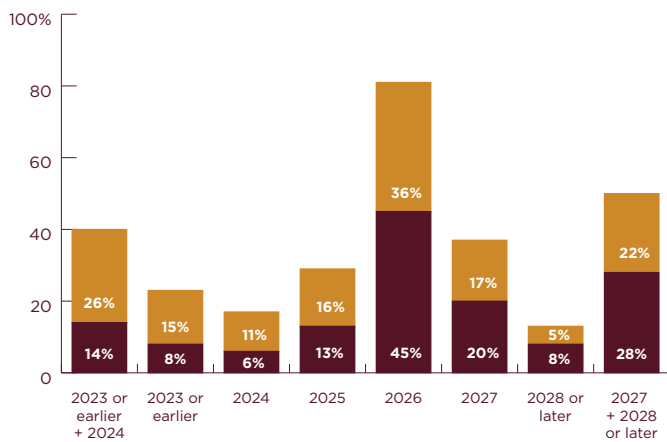


## Internships

Internships continue to play a major role in how NSHSS scholars think about career preparation. In 2026, **83%** say they believe they will get at least one internship with a company where they really want to work, which reflects strong confidence in securing meaningful early career experience.

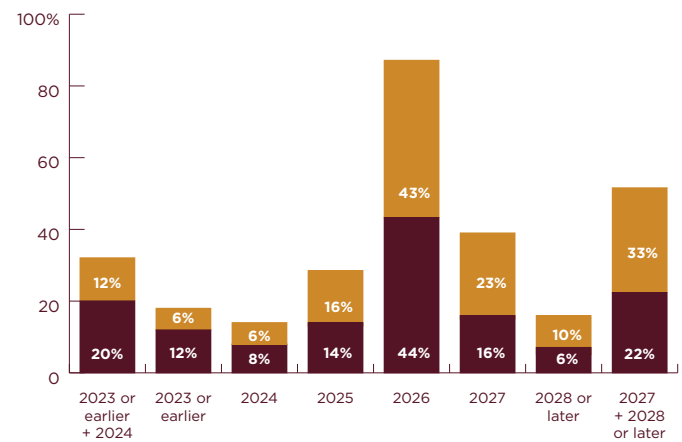
### ASPIRATIONS

Do you think you will get at least one internship with a company where you really want to work?



### CERTIFICATION

Do you know what a certificate program is?



What is or was your graduation year?

Yes No

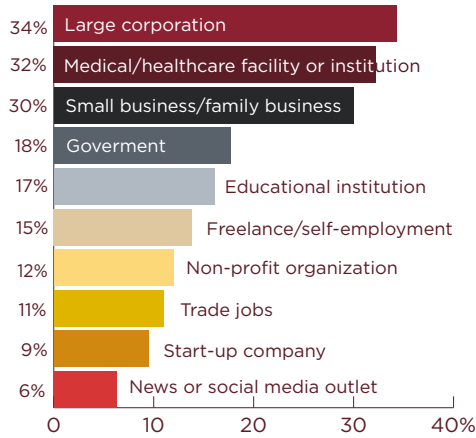


## Top Employers of Choice

Gen Z prefers working for large corporations over small/family businesses. Unsurprisingly, given the interest in medical professions, working at a medical facility or institution is in the top three. This explains why hospitals, healthcare institutions, and nationally recognized organizations continue to dominate the list of preferred employers.

### EMPLOYER TYPE

When seeking employment, what types of organizations do you most prefer?



Hospitals earn many of the top spots for desired employers:

- #1** for St. Jude Children's Hospital
- #2** for Mayo Clinic
- #5** for a local hospital

The 2026 results point to strong interest in employers associated with healthcare, research, and public service. St. Jude Children's Research Hospital leads the list at **18%**, followed by Mayo Clinic (10%), with NASA and the FBI tied at **8%**, and local hospitals close behind at **7%**. Major technology and consumer brands, including Apple, Google, Amazon, and Microsoft each draw **6%**.

Preferred Employer	2026	2024	2022
St. Jude Children's Research Hospital	1	1	2
Mayo Clinic	2	2 <sup>↓</sup>	7
FBI	3 <sup>↓</sup>	5	6
National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)	4	6 <sup>↓</sup>	12
Local hospital	5	4 <sup>↓</sup>	1
Microsoft	6 <sup>↓</sup>	16	13
Amazon	7	8	5
Google	8	7	4
Apple	9	9	8
Health Care Service Corp.	10 <sup>↓</sup>	3	14
Starbucks	11	32	16
Walt Disney Company	12	10	10
Netflix	13	15	11
Nintendo	14	20	—
Mercedes Benz USA	15	39	61
Chick-fil-A	16	25	32
DreamWorks Animation SKG	17	21	17
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)	18	14	18
Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)	19	11	19
Red Cross	20	13	—
Spotify	21	26	3
Children's Healthcare of Atlanta	22	12	23
SONY	23	30	21
The New York Times	24	18	24
SpaceX	25	22	9
Meridian Health	26	19	33
Abercrombie & Fitch / Hollister	27	45	49
U.S. Air Force	28	23	29
Universal Studios	29	24	26

Preferred Employer	2026	2024	2022
Delta Air Lines	30	17	34
Lockheed Martin	31	43	22
Education Unlimited	32	—	—
Boeing	33	38	39
Ford Motor Co.	34	62	79
Build-A-Bear Workshop	35	34	58
National Football League	36	44	38
Bank of America	37	41	56
NVIDIA	38	—	—
Nike	39	31	20
Teach For America	40	27	47
U.S. State Department	41	29	28
Target Corp.	42	28	45
National Security Agency (NSA)	43	40	—
Local police department	44	53	25
JPMorgan Chase	45	65	87
Valve (Steam)	46	70	65
Airbnb	47	49	27
National Basketball Association	48	52	41
American Airlines	49	64	37
U.S. Army	50	35	36
ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union)	51	51	—
Toyota	52	79	81
Adobe Systems	53	47	35
3M	54	87	42
Duke Energy	55	83	54
Blue Cross and Blue Shield	56	36	51
TikTok	57	—	—
Costco Wholesale	58	88	94
Tesla Motors	59	33	15
Twitch	60	—	—
Atlantic Health Systems	61	37	30
U.S. Navy	62	59	59

\* Hand arrows signify increase or decrease compared to previous survey results

Preferred Employer	2026	2024	2022
Wal-Mart Stores Inc.	63	75	71
Boston Scientific	64	57	70
Local fire department	65	76	72
CHG Healthcare Services	66	42	55
Dow Chemical	67	80	66
Discord	68	—	—
T-Mobile	69	72	85
Hilton Hotels & Resorts	70	63	81
IBM Corp.	71	88	93
Johnson & Johnson	72	73	57
eBay	73	95	72
Lululemon	74	56	43
Samsung	75	82	60
Whole Foods Market	76	77	—
L'Oreal	77	67	75
Kaiser Permanente	78	58	53
CNN	79	66	52
U.S. Marine Corps	80	74	89
Intel	81	81	67
Major League Baseball	82	54	40

Preferred Employer	2026	2024	2022
CollegeAdvisor.com	83	—	—
Instagram	84	48	43
UnitedHealth Group	85	55	77
Method Learning	86	—	—
OpenAI (ChatGPT)	87	71	—
Southwest Airlines	88	96	84
WellStar Health System	89	69	63
Wells Fargo & Co.	90	86	90
Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide	91	92	—
Dell	92	68	88
CVS Caremark	93	60	68
Major League Soccer	94	46	63
NCSA College Recruiting	95	—	—
Ohio Health	96	91	83
Forbes	97	85	62
GPS Hospitality	98	61	88
Facebook	99	94	79
Pfizer	100	50	48



## Top Preferred Colleges & Universities

NSHSS high-school scholars are college-bound. Only **1%** do not wish to attend college. Both those in high school and those in college expect their undergraduate major to support their career.

High-school students were asked to provide up to five of their preferred colleges. Harvard kept its spot at #1. Stanford is the biggest climber inside the top tier, moving from #7 to #2 in 2026. New to the Top 10 was MIT, rising to #6 after being #15 in 2022 and #14 in 2024. UC Berkeley returns to the Top 10, and the two schools that drop out of the Top 10 in 2026 are Columbia and Duke.



Preferred College or University	2026	2024	2022
Harvard University	1	1	1
Stanford University	2↕	7	7
Yale University	3	4	4
Texas A&M University	4	2	3
University of California, Los Angeles	5	3	4
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	6↕	14	15
New York University	7	5	2
University of Florida	8	6	6
University of Texas at Austin	9	9	8
University of California, Berkeley	10↕	11	10
Florida State University	11	13	9
Duke University	12↕	10	11
Howard University	13	25	16
Johns Hopkins University	14	22	29
University of Central Florida	15	24	17
Princeton University	16	15	23
University of Michigan - Ann Arbor	17	18	21
University of Georgia	18	20	13
Georgia Institute of Technology	19	19	22
Columbia University	20↕	8	11
University of Pennsylvania	21	23	38
Pennsylvania State University	22	12	18
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	23	28	43
Ohio State University	24	40	44
University of Miami	25	43	39
Cornell University	26	29	27
Brown University	27	31	24
Vanderbilt University	28	44	41
University of Chicago	29	38	31
University of Washington	30	39	50
Boston University	31	34	27

Preferred College or University	2026	2024	2022
Arizona State University	32	30	14
University of Southern California	33	26	35
University of South Florida	35	36	31
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University	33	76	42
University of Tennessee - Knoxville	38	61	52
Baylor University	33	17	20
University of Alabama - Tuscaloosa	38	16	30
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University	39	86	31
Auburn University	41	47	70
Michigan State University	39	33	57
University of California, San Diego	41	35	26
Purdue University	39	21	19
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech)	46	42	84
Emory University	45	53	66
Florida International University	46	51	51
Liberty University	45	83	84
Savannah College of Art and Design	46	49	71
Texas Tech University	49	46	37
Kennesaw State University	50	55	62
University of South Carolina	51	57	44
Rice University	52	32	46
Georgia State University	54	56	24
North Carolina State University	52	37	39
University of Maryland at College Park	55	65	56
Clemson University	56	45	46
Clark Atlanta University	57	98	—

\* Hand arrows signify increase or decrease in Top Ten schools compared to previous survey results

Preferred College or University	2026	2024	2022
Spelman College	58	67	59
University of Alabama at Birmingham	59	—	—
Alabama State University	60	—	—
Grand Canyon University	61	98	—
Mississippi State University	63	60	77
Oklahoma State University	64	92	97
University of California, Davis	65	54	65
Northwestern University	66	91	77
Oregon State University	67	82	100
George Mason University	68	63	79
Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College	69	27	35
Florida Atlantic University	70	73	75
University of Arizona	71	52	54
Brigham Young University	72	50	80
Northern Arizona University	73	62	58
University of California, Irvine	74	41	48
San Diego State University	75	74	91
University of Houston	76	68	31
University of North Carolina at Charlotte	77	—	—
University of Wisconsin - Madison	78	79	54
Georgetown University	79	77	69
University of Virginia	80	75	66
Northeastern University	81	80	82

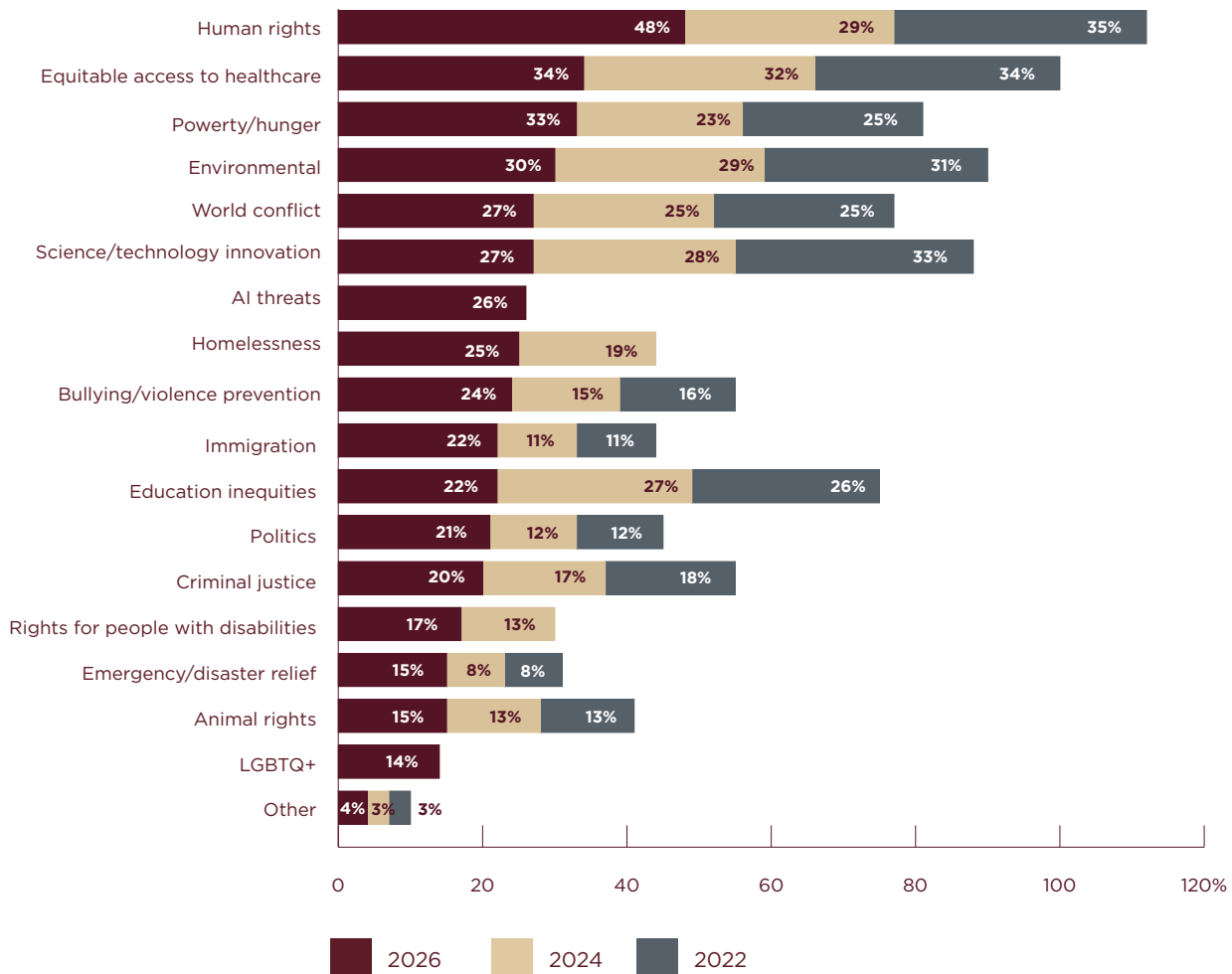
Preferred College or University	2026	2024	2022
Colorado State University	82	59	71
Indiana University at Bloomington	83	71	63
University of Cincinnati	84	—	—
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	85	—	—
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey	86	48	48
Temple University	87	—	—
University of Minnesota - Twin Cities Campus	88	78	73
University of Kentucky	89	84	97
University of Oklahoma	90	—	—
California Institute of Technology	91	87	—
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University	92	69	60
University of Utah	93	85	—
University of Oregon	94	96	88
Virginia Commonwealth University	95	90	—
Washington State University	96	81	100
Towson University	97	—	—
University of Arkansas at Fayetteville	98	—	—
Carnegie Mellon University	99	—	—
Rochester Institute of Technology	100	—	—

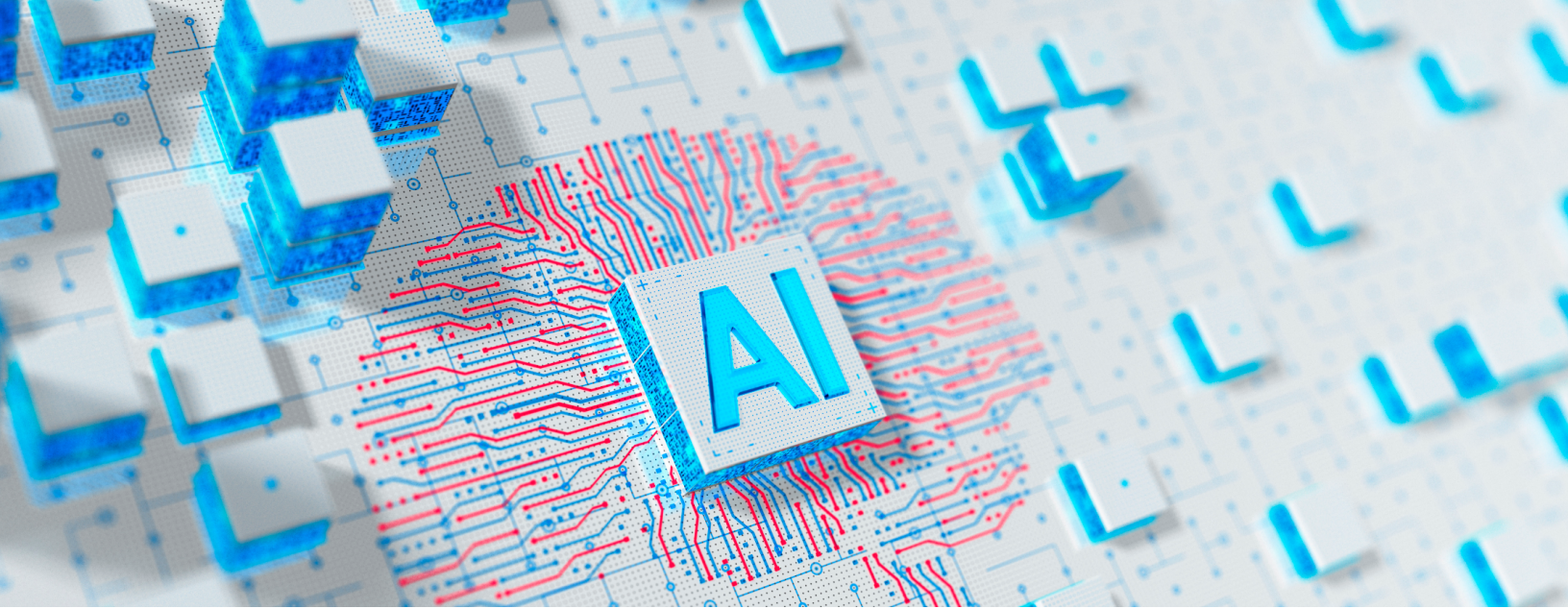
# Civic Purpose & Social Impact

Gen Z continues to place strong emphasis on making a meaningful impact. Compared with 2024, the 2026 results show stronger interest in rights- and access -related issues, led by human rights, poverty/hunger, immigration, and the environment over healthcare and innovation. Specifically, interest in impacting human rights rose from **29%** in 2024 to **48%** in 2026, interest in poverty/hunger increased from **23%** to **33%** and interest in immigration doubled from **11%** to **22%**. These findings all point to a stronger focus on lived conditions, vulnerability, and protection. Just as important, **84%** believe they can personally make a difference in the world.

## ATTITUDES AND ISSUES

What issues are you most interested in impacting in your world?



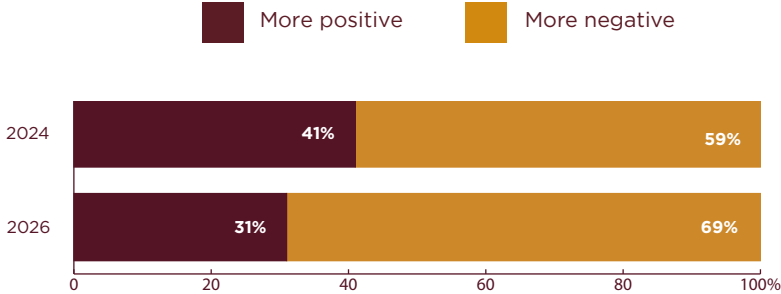


# Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence is now a routine part of how respondents work, study, and search for information, even as concern about its broader impact continues to rise. In the 2026 survey, **69%** say AI will have a more negative than positive impact on society in the next ten years, even as adoption has become nearly universal. The NSHSS students' choice expressing they are "not using AI at all" fell from **36%** in 2024 to just **6%** in 2026.

## IMPACT OF AI

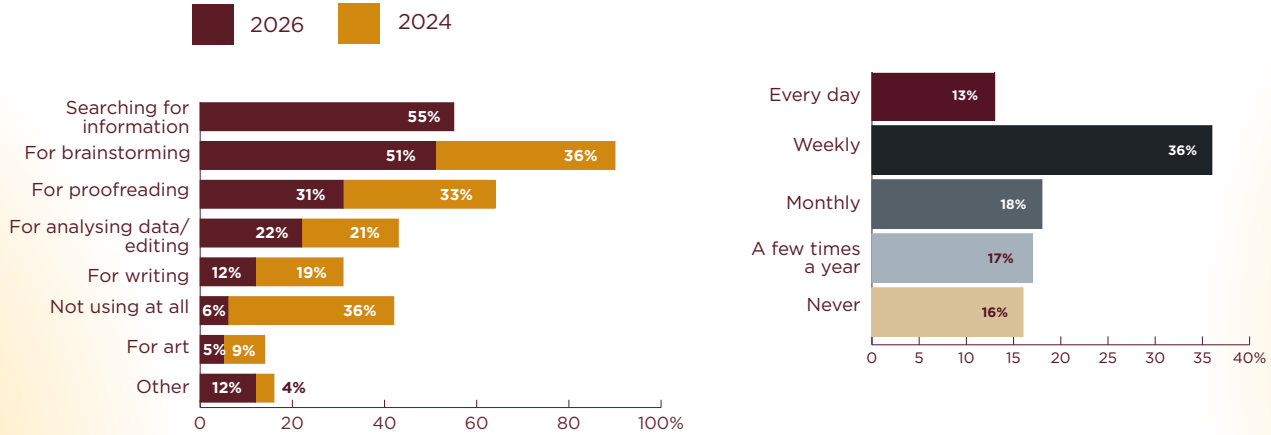
Do you think Artificial Intelligence will have a more positive or negative impact on society in the next ten years?



## AI ADOPTION

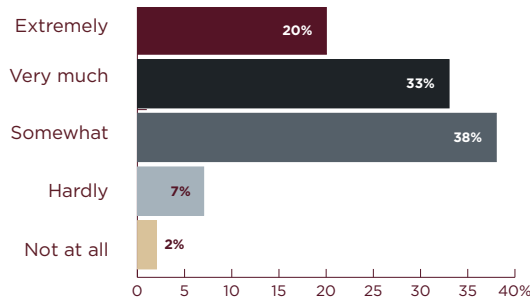
What are the primary ways that you use AI?

How often do you use AI?



## PERSONAL PRIVACY

To what degree do you think AI will negatively impact your personal privacy in the 10 years?



NSHSS scholars most often use AI to search for information (55%), brainstorm (51%), and proofread (31%), and nearly half use generative AI at least weekly. At the same time, concern remains high: **53%** believe AI will have an “extremely” or “very much” negative effect on their privacy and security over the next decade, with **91%** expecting at least some negative effect on privacy and security.

# Conclusion

The 2026 Career Interest Survey points to a generation that is ambitious, practical, and deeply aware of the forces shaping its future. Across education, work, social impact, and technology, Gen Z continues to think in terms of both opportunity and uncertainty. They remain highly oriented toward higher education, professional growth, and meaningful careers, while also showing a clear awareness of financial pressure, changing workplace priorities, and the growing influence of AI (Artificial Intelligence).



## Perspectives on AI

Several findings stand out most clearly in this year's results. AI adoption has become nearly universal, with the share of NSHSS students saying they are not using AI at all falling from **36%** in 2024 to just **6%** in 2026. At the same time, greater familiarity with AI has coincided with greater skepticism: the share who believe AI will have a more negative than positive impact on society rose from **59%** to **69%**.



## Career Aspirations & Employer Expectations

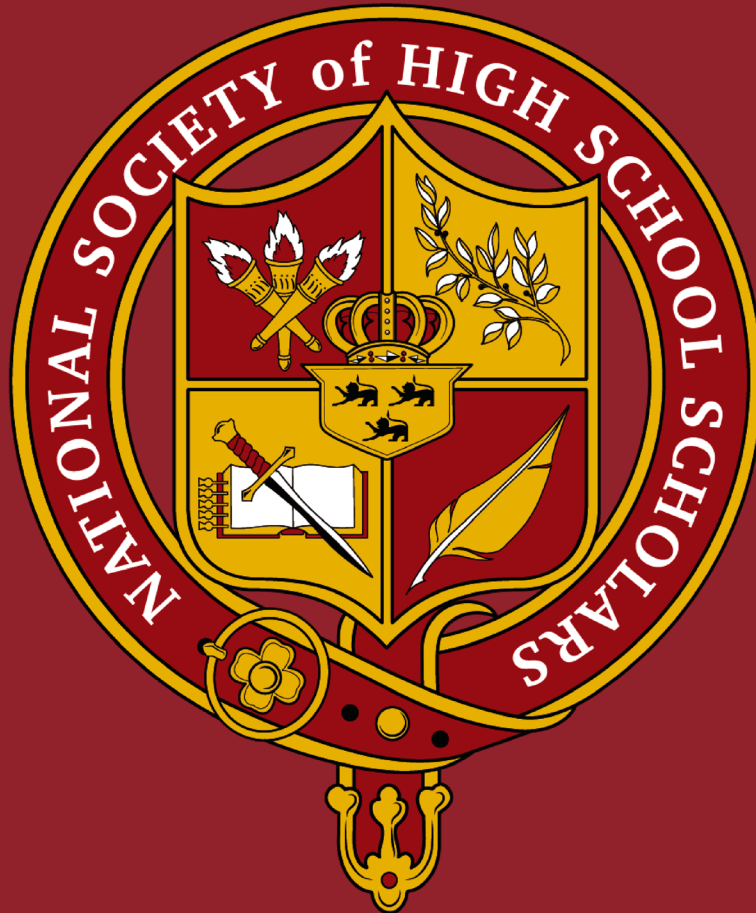
The 2026 results also reflect changing expectations around work. Job location appears to matter less than it did in the past, with the share of students ranking location as the least important employer consideration rising from **6%** to **21%**. Instead, Gen Z continues to place greater weight on factors such as fair treatment, work life balance, benefits, and professional development.



## Civic Purpose & Social Impact

At the same time, social purpose remains central to how this generation sees its role in the world. Interest in impacting human rights rose sharply from **29%** in 2024 to **48%** in 2026, making it the top societal issue in this wave. Concern about poverty/hunger also increased to **33%**, while interest in immigration rose to 22%. Together, these shifts point to a generation increasingly focused on dignity, protection, and access.

Taken together, these findings suggest that Gen Z is entering its next chapter with a mindset defined by both optimism and realism. Respondents are embracing new tools, rethinking what matters in the workplace, and showing stronger commitment to human-centered social issues. For employers, educators, and institutions, the message is clear: engaging this generation will require not only opportunity, but also trust, flexibility, and a meaningful sense of purpose.



For more information about partnership opportunities with NSHSS, contact [partnerships@nshss.org](mailto:partnerships@nshss.org), or visit [www.nshss.org](http://www.nshss.org).