



# 2022 Naviance Student Survey Report

Student Perspectives on College,  
Career, and Life Readiness

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# Introduction

## **During the pandemic, public conversation around postsecondary education saw dramatic shifts in policy considerations.**

From a focus on access and equity in college admissions and enrollment came a nuanced discussion on the costs and benefits of postsecondary education. There are many stories of graduates finding themselves financially struggling, having to repay grants and loans on salaries that barely cover living expenses. The gap between the student loan burden and expected income is of increasing interest to both policymakers and the families of new high school graduates.

## **The second change in public discourse shifted from a "college for all" focus to one that now includes career and life readiness and a broader view of postsecondary pathways.**

This reevaluation of postsecondary priorities surfaces partially as a result of the labor market and economic reality in which young adults now find themselves.

The pandemic also resulted in changes in college enrollment patterns. According to the National Student Clearinghouse, trend data indicate declines in both fall and

spring semesters starting in fall 2020.<sup>1,2</sup> The largest decline was seen for public two-year colleges, with a smaller impact for private, non-profit four-year colleges.

For the Class of 2019 through the Class of 2022, seniors submitting applications dropped by 23.8% as the number of total applications increased. These contrary metrics caused some concerns that year-to-year analysis may be akin to comparing apples and oranges. The smaller pool of students applying to four-year colleges during the pandemic encompasses a different cohort from previous graduating classes and likely consists of students from families least impacted by the economic repercussions of the pandemic.

In January 2022, U.S. Secretary of Education Dr. Miguel Cardona gave an address sharing his vision of postsecondary planning. Dr. Cardona highlighted the importance of inclusive and affordable options for higher education, as well as assurances that student-selected pathways lead to successful careers.<sup>3</sup>

Many advocates express a desire for increased focus on postsecondary socioeconomic outcomes, expanding postsecondary planning to be about more than just enrolling in college.<sup>4</sup> Postsecondary planning includes discussions about career options focused on employment, earnings, job satisfaction, and a clear career ladder.<sup>5</sup> Without these

additional areas of focus, postsecondary students may find themselves experiencing economic vulnerabilities in their desire to earn credentials and degrees that don't guarantee a career paying a livable wage.<sup>6</sup>

It's becoming increasingly important that conversations between students and their postsecondary counselors include raising awareness about the cost of education relative to potential future salaries and career growth. When creating long-term goals, students need to see the links between career interests, future earning potential, and the costs of required credentials. Without this alignment, efforts to prepare for college and career may fall short of student expectations, especially among those with the greatest need. First-generation college-goers, students paying their own way, and students from historically disinvested communities—communities that are allocated fewer resources and less political power, often formed along race and class lines—may have more difficulty achieving financial independence and overall satisfaction if postsecondary planning does not also consider outcomes.

Research has shown that postsecondary degrees increase an individual's lifetime earnings.<sup>7</sup> Earning potential for students increases by degree earned, with each degree providing a greater salary and lower levels of unemployment.<sup>8</sup> Adults without high school degrees earn the least and have the highest rates of unemployment. In contrast, adults

with graduate degrees (masters, professional degrees such as medical or law, and doctoral) earn the most and have the lowest rates of unemployment.<sup>9</sup>

The choice of major also matters. Recent graduates who majored in STEM, health, or business earned more in their careers than those who selected other majors.<sup>10</sup> As a result, this report includes an analysis to examine the final credentials desired by graduating seniors who may not have immediate plans to attend college but do plan to earn credentials during their careers. These later-credential interests are important to consider, as they highlight the often non-linear nature of career pathways. Regardless of postsecondary plans, it's important for students to be well-informed to navigate the postsecondary landscape.

To determine whether the plans of the Class of 2022 align with new policy shifts, this report provides insights into their industry interests, immediate postsecondary plans, and long-term goals. It covers:

- The overall college application status of the Class of 2022
- Discussion of survey responses on postsecondary plans
- Review of student reporting on Naviance as a tool

# Methodology

Two sources of data were used to create this report.

- **Naviance System Data:** User data from Naviance provides metrics for the number of student applications and type of applications, as well as admittances, enrollment, wait-listing, rejections, and additional admissions and matriculation statistics.
- **Naviance Survey:** Naviance administered a voluntary survey to all students. The survey enables the analysis of students' postsecondary interests and plans, the perceived importance of Naviance services, and a variety of other helpful metrics. 9,692 students responded. Thus, the survey data should be seen as providing glimpses into the current state of preparation for college, careers, and life, rather than conclusive evidence of any particular trend. More information can be found in Appendix A.

FourPoint Education Partners (FourPoint) conducted analyses of the data. The "data" consists of aggregated information on the number and type of applications submitted as well as survey responses captured within the Naviance platform. None of the data collected or processed included any personally identified information. The data is neither shared, sold, or disclosed to any third party aside from FourPoint and will be deleted upon the release of the updated report.



# Profile of Naviance Students Surveyed

For the past few years, [Naviance](#) has offered students an opportunity to participate in a survey to capture the use of various components of Naviance and information about the postsecondary planning process. The answers provided inform the product development team and professional development work to ensure students are equipped with the best services and support possible.

Each year, middle and high school students whose schools use Naviance participate in the survey. As can be seen in Figure 1, the number of respondents increases with each grade, with the most respondents in Grade 12.

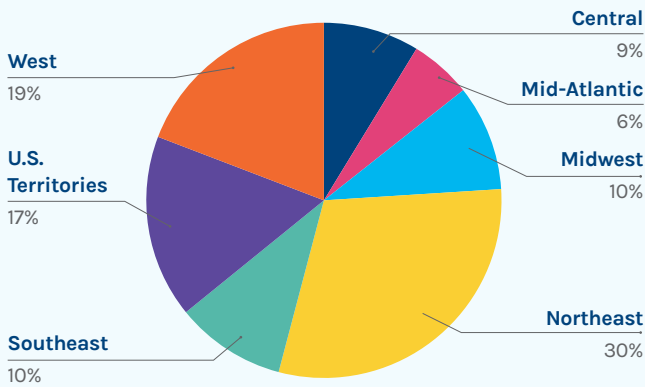
**FIGURE 1: Naviance Student Surveys Completed by Grade**

| Grade              | 2022         |
|--------------------|--------------|
| 6                  | 371          |
| 7                  | 359          |
| 8                  | 369          |
| 9                  | 489          |
| 10                 | 470          |
| 11                 | 816          |
| 12                 | 6,175        |
| No grade indicated | 643          |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>9,692</b> |

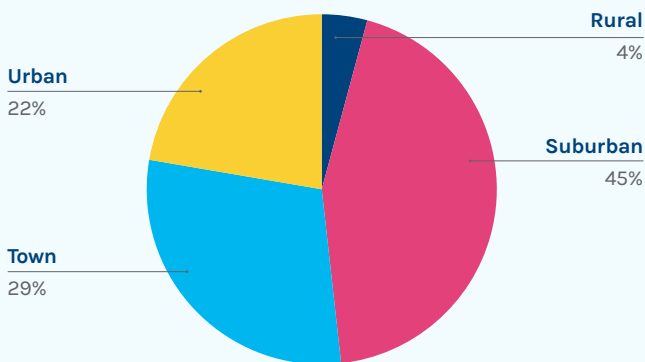


**FIGURE 2: Percent of Respondents by Region, Urbanicity, and School Type**

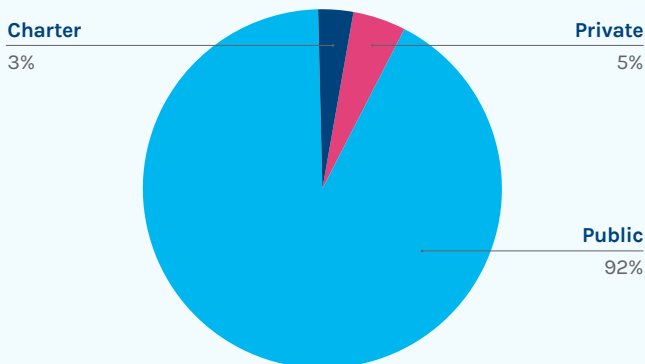
### Respondent Regions



### Urbanicity of Respondents



### School Type of Respondents



### By Region

A review of respondents by region shows that the Northeast represents 30% of all respondents, the West represents 19%, and the U.S. Territories represent 17%. The Southeast and Midwest represent 10% of respondents with Central representing 9% and the Mid-Atlantic 6%.

### By Urbanicity

Respondents were primarily living in suburban locales of the U.S. (45%), towns (29%), and urban locations (22%). A total of 4% of respondents live in rural parts of the country.

### By School Type

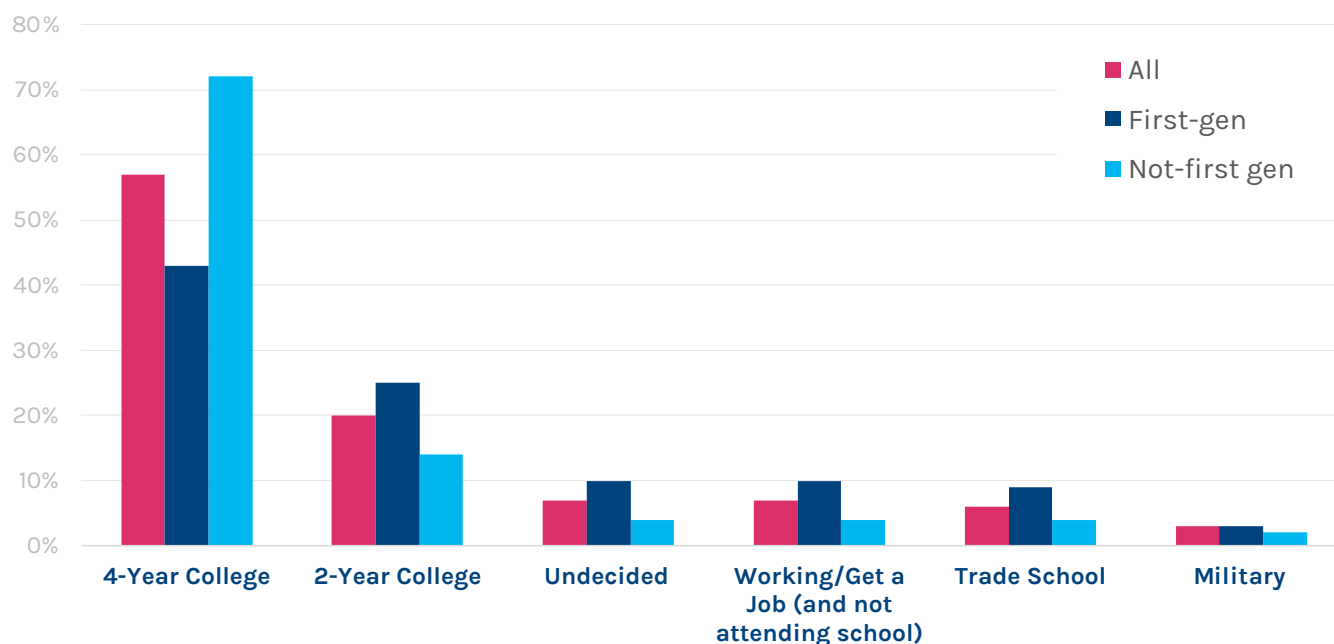
Respondents were primarily from public schools (92%). Smaller proportions were enrolled in private (5%) or charter schools (3%).

# Naviance Class of 2022

## Postsecondary Plans

Most respondents (77%) plan to attend either a four-year or two-year college following high school (Figure 3). **This represents a 10-point dip from the previous year (87%) of respondents planning to enroll in college in the fall.** The remaining students were undecided (7%), planning on working (7%), enrolling in a trade school (6%), or joining the military (3%). Only one student reported wanting to take a Gap Year.

**FIGURE 3: Class of 2022 Postsecondary Plans**





# Comparing First-Generation to Not-First-Generation Plans

When comparing first-generation respondents (those who reported that their parents had not completed college) with respondents who are not the first in their family to attend college, some interesting differences in postsecondary plans arose.

- First-generation students were less likely to enroll in a four-year college (43% compared to not-first-generation at 72%) and more likely to enroll in a two-year college (25% compared to 14%).
- First-generation students were also more likely to report enrolling in a trade school (9% compared to 4%).
- First-generation students were more likely to be undecided or planned to start work after high school (10% compared to 4% for both). As these are seniors who took this survey in the spring of 2022, **10% of undecided first-generation students is a large proportion.** Further, because community colleges have low completion rates,<sup>11</sup> and potentially lower earning potential, these differences may be important for counselors to consider in their advising conversations.



**Do you know which of your students are first-generation?**

Do you have a structure or process for identifying partners to support your first-generation families and students and issues such as financial aid, scholarships, or building their resumes?

# Naviance Class of 2022 College Applications

Examining college application and acceptance data provides insight into the types of institutions to which Naviance students are applying and which receive higher acceptance rates.

## Applications by Higher Education Institution Type

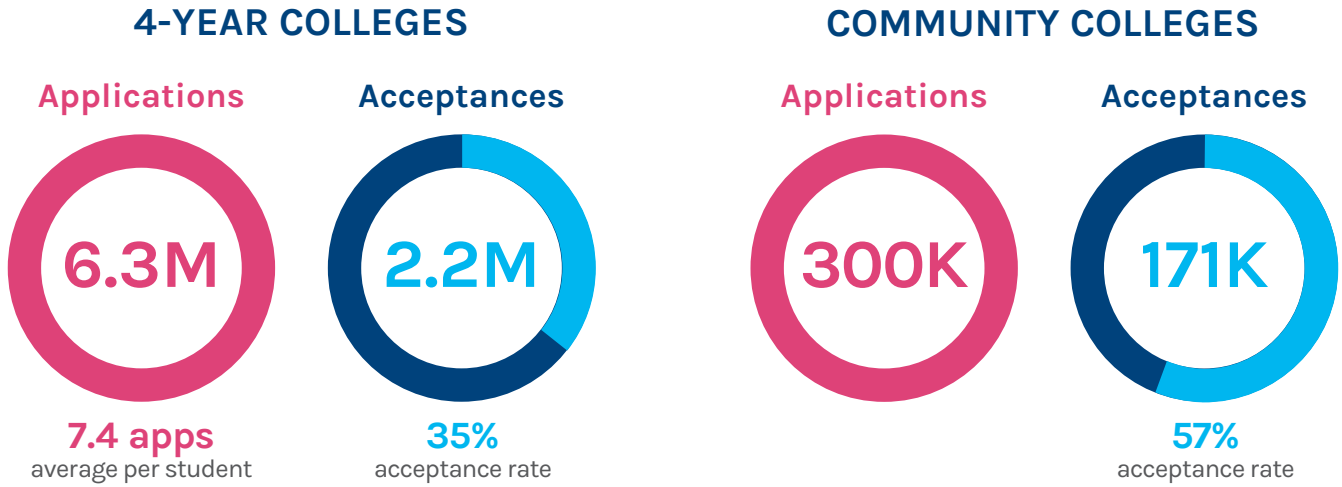
The overwhelming majority of responding students with plans to attend college applied to either four-year school or a two-year community college (over 99% together—Figure 4). Over the four graduation years between 2019 and 2022, applications to four-year colleges have remained fairly steady. For two-year colleges, applications have declined.

For both college types, acceptance rates declined between 2019-2022. For four-year colleges, acceptances decreased from 43% to 35%, but the decline could reflect the slight increase in number of applications, leading to a lower acceptance rate. For two-year colleges, applications were fewer, and the acceptance rate declined from 68% to 57% over the four years.

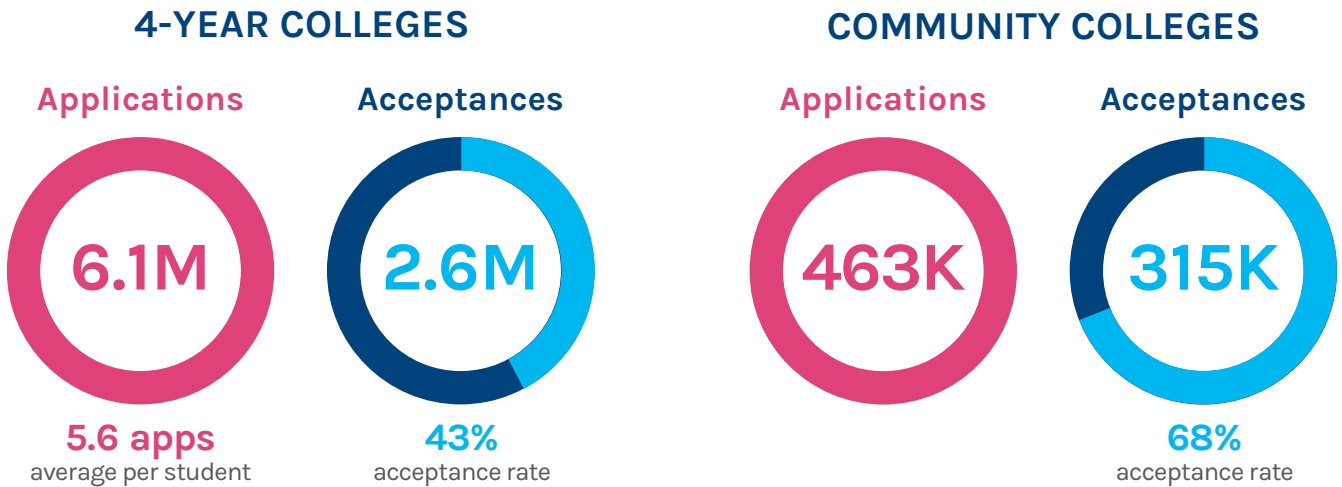


FIGURE 4

## Class of 2022 by the Numbers



## Class of 2019 by the Numbers



# Applications to Four-Year Colleges

## Applications by Admissions Type

Acceptance rates differ by the type of admission requested (Figure 5). More than half of the applications (55%) were submitted as Regular Decision and had an acceptance rate of 26% for the Class of 2022. Early Action applications had the highest rates of acceptance, averaging 51% for the Class of 2022.

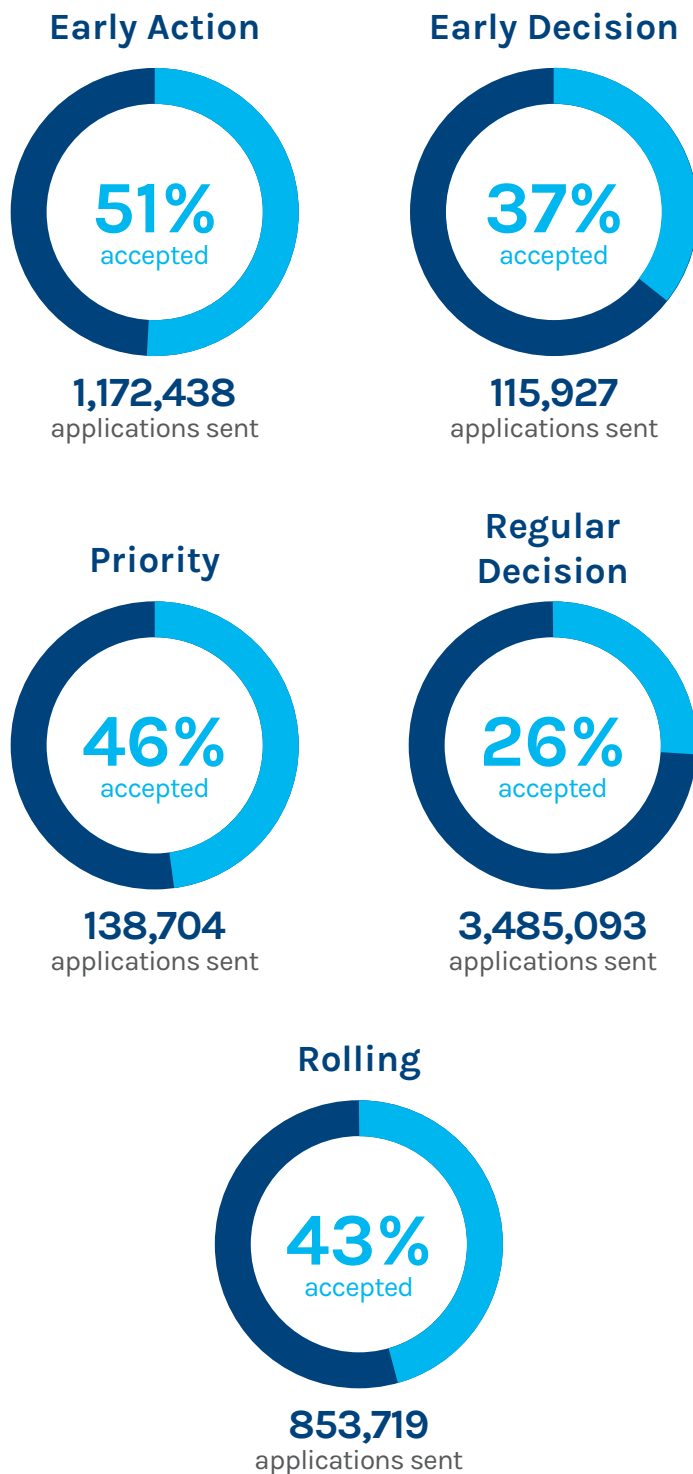
Rolling Applications had grown between 2019-2021 but dropped by nearly 25% in 2022. Early Decision applications, which commit a student to the school if they are accepted, have had small declines across the past four years. Across all admission types, acceptances have remained steady or shown a slight decline over the past four years.



**Do your school counselors discuss application decision options with students?**

Have you seen a change in decision options in recent years? How do you address those shifts with students?

**FIGURE 5: Applications by Admission Type**



The percentages labeled above indicate the number of total applications accepted divided by the number of total applications sent.



## Admissions Types

**Early decision** applications are binding. An accepted student commits to attend.

**Early action** applications do not require a student to commit until about May.

**Priority decision** are offered by some colleges who set an early deadline, which if met means the application will be reviewed as a priority over later submissions. Thereby increasing probability of acceptance.

**Regular decision** follows traditional college due dates and announcement dates.

**Rolling decisions** allow students to submit applications at any time and expect a response after several weeks.

## Key Takeaways

- A total of 77% of senior survey respondents reported college attendance as their primary plan. This is above the national average and possibly suggests that Naviance's student users are more likely to be planning to attend college after graduation.
- The vast majority of college applications are to four-year colleges.
- The volume of applications to four-year colleges held steady between 2019-2022, while applications to two-year colleges declined slightly, with most being for a regular admission decision.
- The average number of applications to four-year colleges increased for each graduating class, growing from 5.6 to 7.4, an increase of 1.8 for all students on average; this occurred as the number of seniors applying to four-year colleges decreased by 23.8%.

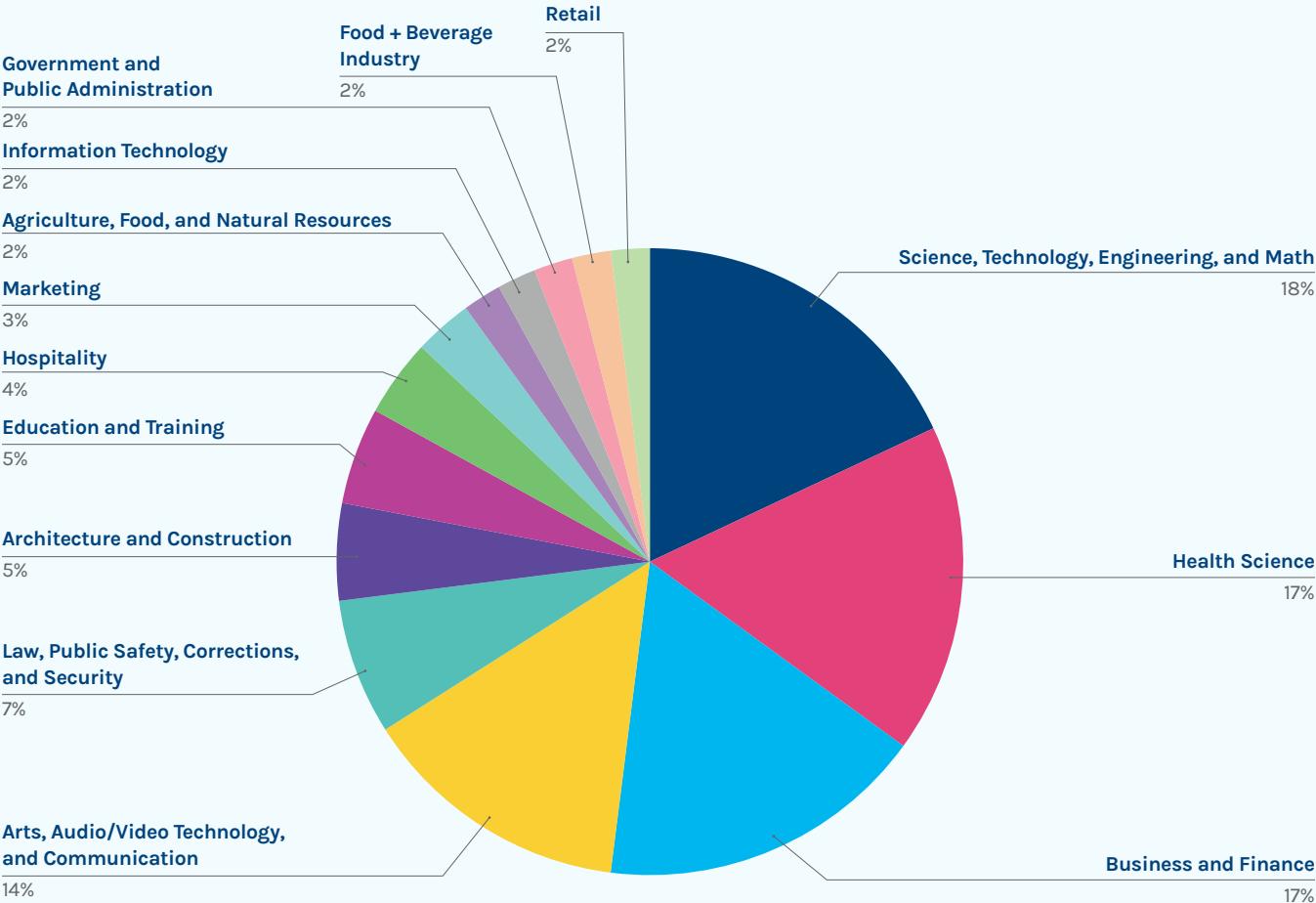


# Career Interests and Postsecondary Plans

Studies examining lifelong earning potential have shown that earning degrees and credentials matters for long-term economic earnings. Adults without high school degrees earn the least and have the highest rates of unemployment. In contrast, adults with graduate degrees (master’s, professional such as medical or law, and doctoral) earn the most and have the lowest rates of unemployment.<sup>12</sup> But even beyond degrees, choice of major matters. Students who major in STEM, health, and business were the highest paid over their career.<sup>13</sup>

**FIGURE 6: Class of 2022 Industries of Interest**

N=5,834



When asked "What career industry are you interested in?", Grade 12 respondents selected Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) the most often, with Health Science and Business and Finance a close second, followed by Arts, Audio/Video Technology, and Communication (Figure 6). The remaining comprised fewer than 10% of responses. The lowest percentage of selections were for Government and Public Administration, Retail, Food and Beverage Industry, and Information Technology, each receiving 2%.

Notably, Education and Training received only 5% interest, which supports the data suggesting that there are 20-30% fewer people going into teaching each year now than a decade ago.<sup>14</sup>

There were patterns among students' postsecondary plans and their career field interests, a critical alignment for postsecondary persistence and completion. For example, students who planned to attend a four-year college were most interested in STEM while students who planned to attend a two-year college selected Health Science most often.

The respondents that did not have plans for college immediately after graduation (undecided) selected Arts, Audio/Video Technology, and Communication as their first choice.

Students planning to enter the workforce selected Architecture and Construction as their top choice. Respondents planning on enrolling in trade school had a first selection of Architecture and

Construction, and for those planning to enter the military, Law, Public Safety, Corrections, and Security was the industry most often selected.

To ensure that students understand the implications of their decisions, the choice of major should be discussed during career counseling sessions.



## How do you help students and families become aware of higher education costs, scholarships, and loans?

Are counselors talking about future income potential in discussing majors and career ladders? Are counselors and teachers collaborating to raise awareness about the different options available?



## Key Takeaways

- Almost a quarter of seniors reported that college was not their initial plan after high school. Within this group, most were still undecided about their plans in the spring of their senior year and were considering entering the workforce, enrolling in trade school, or joining the military.
- First-generation students were more likely to plan to attend a two-year college than four-year.
- Most students identified an interest in studying fields associated with higher-earning careers.



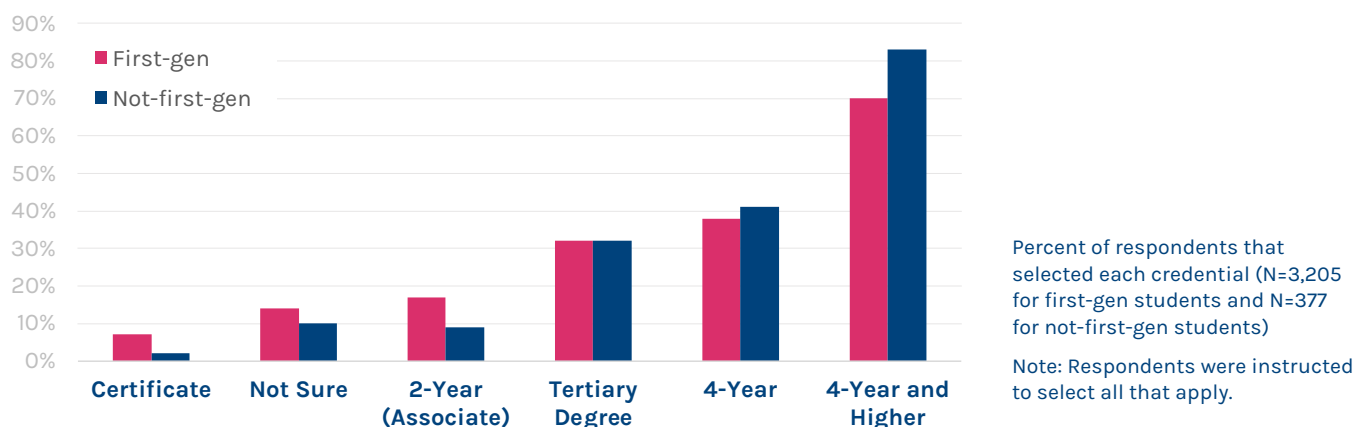
# Plans of First-Generation College Goers

An important consideration for school counselors is the varying need for assistance for their advisees. One group, in particular, is first-generation college goers. With no one with a college degree in their household, getting advice and support about applying to college mostly comes from school or other resources. First-generation seniors are less likely to apply to four-year colleges—in fact, they’re more likely not to enroll in college at all.

This is seen in seniors’ reported postsecondary plans. In addition to the lower rates of planned enrollment in four-year colleges, first-generation seniors reported lower expectations for earning degrees later in life. As seen in Figure 7, when asked to select all credentials they expected to earn, 70% of first-generation students expected to earn a four-year degree or higher compared to 83% of not-first-generation respondents. First-generation students were more likely to enroll in a two-year college to start their postsecondary plan.

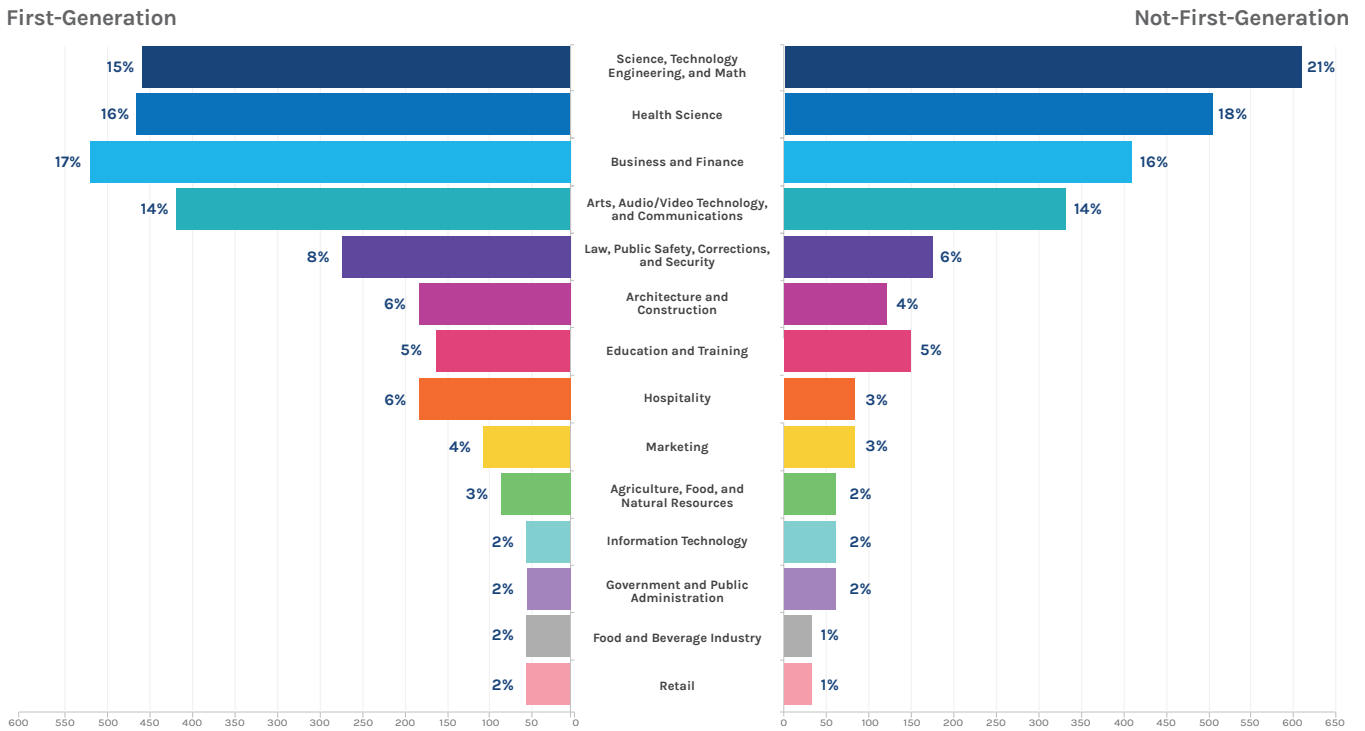
Fewer first-generation students reported plans to attend a four-year college (43% compared to 72% not-first-generation). Instead, they more often reported plans to enroll in a two-year college (25% compared to 14%), and if their plan did not include transferring to a four-year college to earn a bachelor’s degree, it would likely lead to lower economic success. Historically, adults with associate degrees earn less than adults with bachelor’s or graduate degrees.

**FIGURE 7: Seniors’ Credentials Expected to Earn**



These results may suggest students are aware of the economic impact on graduates who majored in STEM, Health, or Business and earned more in their careers than other majors<sup>15</sup>.

## FIGURE 8: Seniors' First-Gen and Not-First-Gen Industry Interests



The number of students who selected each industry by count (x-axis) and percent (labeled on each bar) comparing first-generation to not-first-generation. The industries are ordered by most total responses (top) to fewest (bottom). Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.



What information or resources can you provide to support first-generation students and their families?

## Key Takeaways

Successfully leveling the playing field for first-generation students takes a coordinated effort. School leaders can help empower school counselors to find and implement ways to share that load by identifying internal (staff) and external (community) partners who can support students and families in navigating the intricacies of applying for financial aid, finding scholarships, etc.

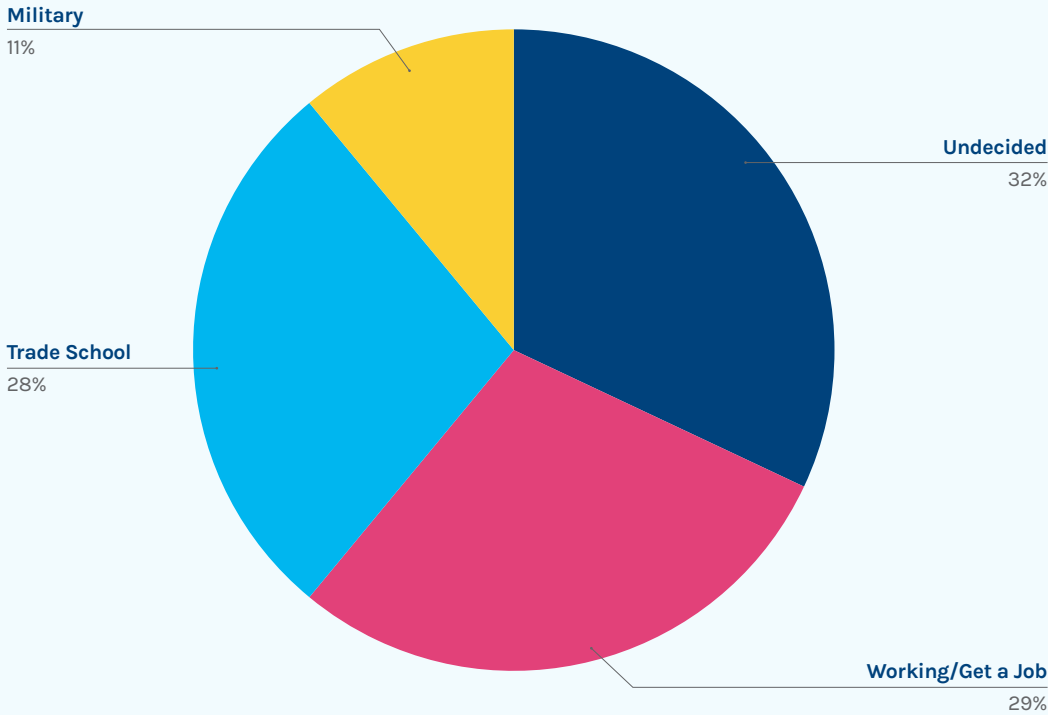
- Schools could host events designed specifically to support first-generation college goers. These events can review the college application process, the components of the Common App, the FAFSA® application, finding affinity spaces on college campuses, and using on-campus services such as advising and academic support. Schools and districts may find it helpful to provide written materials in languages other than English to be inclusive to families. They might encourage school families who have already completed the college application process to act as peer resources and volunteer their time to answer questions, help families fill out forms, etc.
- While first-generation students report being more likely than their not-first-generation peers to enroll in a two-year college, 32% indicated an intention to ultimately earn a four-year degree or higher. 45% of not-first-generation students reported interest in earning additional degrees. School counselors can act upon this data by advocating for first-generation students' applications to four-year colleges to work towards diminishing the equity gap. Such efforts may have a positive long-term impact on future earnings and support movement toward redistributing wealth to reduce inequality.
- Industry interest shows that both first-generation and not-first-generation college goers are most interested in STEM, Health Sciences, and Business. This gives an indication of which majors will be most popular in postsecondary education.

# Plans of Students Not Planning to Attend College

Nationally reported statistics indicate roughly two-thirds of graduating seniors enroll in a two-year or four-year college the following fall,<sup>16</sup> leaving the remaining 33% to make other choices. In the survey, these students indicated plans to attend a trade school, join the military, go directly to work, or remain undecided.

Of the 1,360 survey respondents not reporting college as the first step after graduation, those indicating "undecided" represents the largest group. This is followed by plans to go directly into the workforce or enroll in trade school. The military rounds out the remainder (Figure 9).

**FIGURE 9: Plans of Students Not Immediately Planning to Attend College after Graduation**



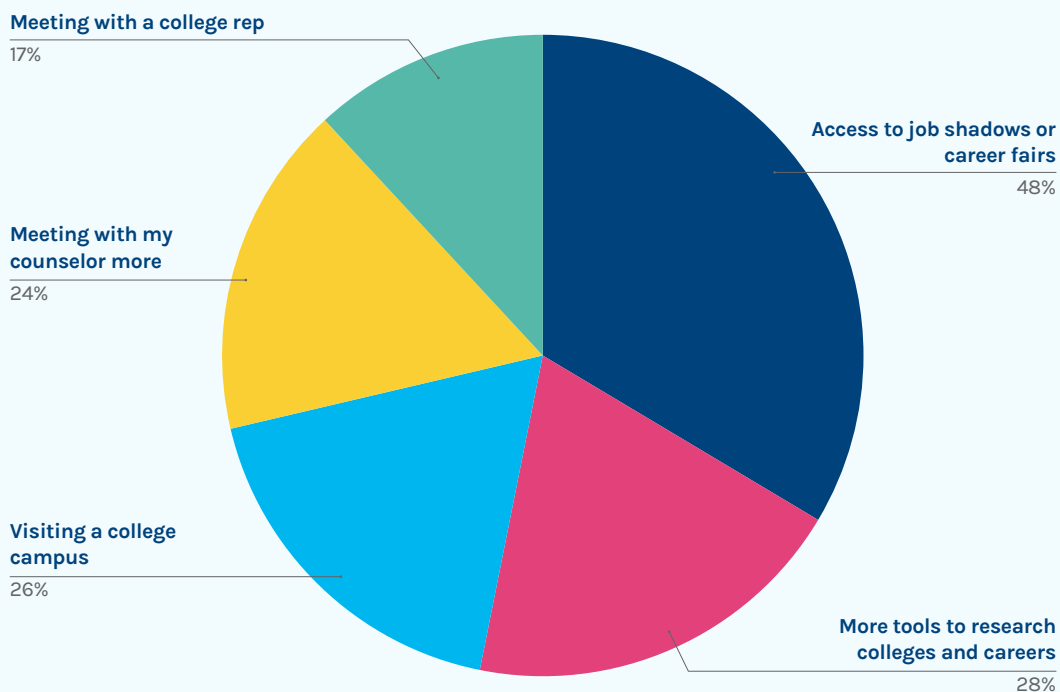
**Do your counselors know which seniors are not planning to attend college after graduation?**  
What supports are available to those students?

# Undecided

32% of responding seniors reported being undecided about their postsecondary plans. When asked what resources or tools would help them with their planning (Figure 10), almost half reported "Access to job shadows or career fairs" and an additional quarter requested "More tools to research colleges and careers", "Visiting a college campus," and "Meeting with my counselor more." The least selected resource was "Meeting with a college rep," chosen by approximately one in five of the undecided seniors.

To provide more context, of these undecided students, 72% were first-generation and 28% were not-first-generation. Some of these activities are offered in high schools and it might be helpful for counselors or administrators to learn more about why students are not engaged with them.

**FIGURE 10: Resources Requested by Undecided Seniors**



Note: Respondents were prompted to select all that apply

This population of students may have fewer resources at home and are more dependent on other adults to provide support for college, career, and life readiness. As a result, this could be an area where additional resources could support these students in better understanding their strengths and interests.



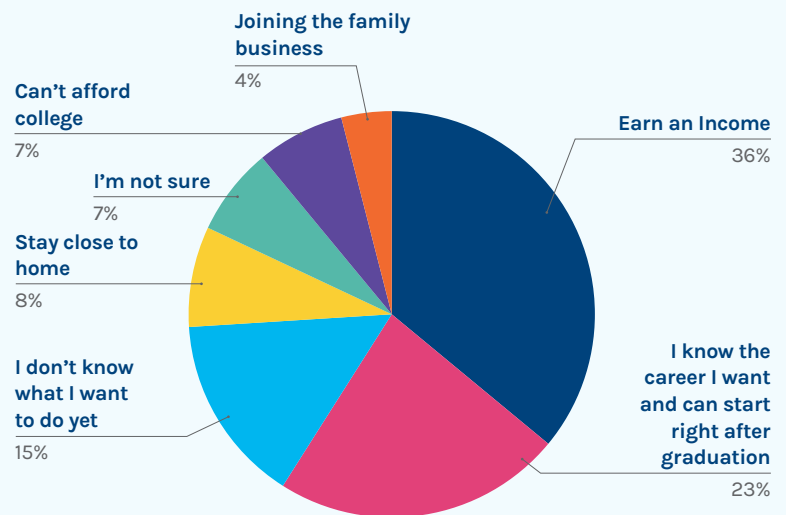
## Can counselors work with community partners to create job shadow and career fair opportunities?

Naviance’s work-based learning feature can help to ensure students have an opportunity to participate.

## Going Directly to Work

Of the 29% of seniors reporting their postsecondary plan as going directly to work, the reason most cited was to "Earn an income" followed by "I know the career I want and can start right after graduation" (Figure 11).

**FIGURE 11: Seniors’ Reasons for Going Directly to Work**

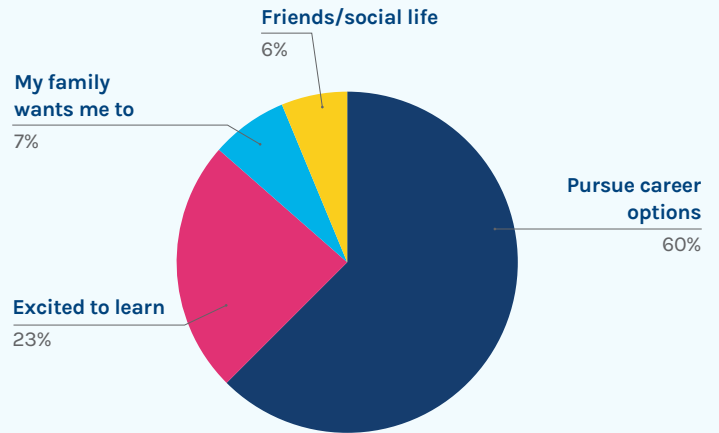


Note: Respondents were prompted to select all that apply.

## Enrolling in Trade School

28% of respondents reported an interest in attending trade school. The most cited reasons were to "Pursue career options," and about a quarter responded that they were "Excited to learn" (Figure 12).

**FIGURE 12: Seniors' Reasons for Enrolling in Trade School**

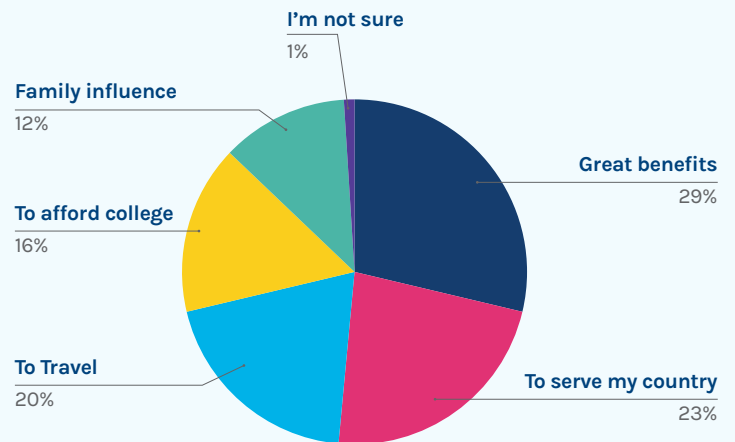


Note: Respondents were prompted to select all that apply.

## Joining the Military

Of the 11% of respondents who identified joining the military as their postsecondary plan, more than a quarter selected "Great benefits" as the reason for their choice. (Figure 13).

**FIGURE 13: Seniors' Reasons for Joining the Military**



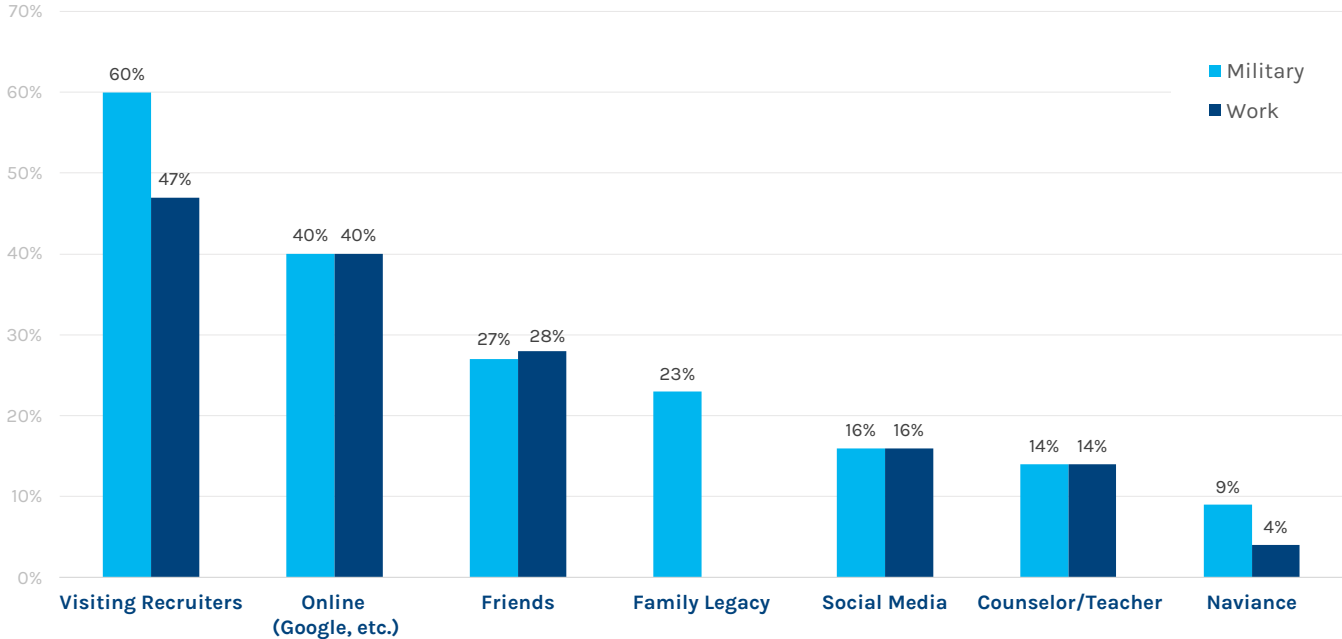
Note: Respondents were prompted to select all that apply.



# How Seniors Researched Military and Work Options

Respondents who reported a preference to join the military or enter the workforce after graduation reported several sources of information for their choice (Figure 14). Those planning on joining the military reported "Visiting recruiters" as their primary source. Seniors who were planning on working reported "Family" as their top resource. "Online sources", like Google, were reported by 40% for both groups. A quarter of each group reported "Friends" as a resource.

**FIGURE 14: Primary Tools Used to Research Military and Work Options**



Are there activities or supports that could be provided to students expressing interest in joining the military or going directly to work?

## Future Credentials

For those seniors who were not planning on college as a first step, some reported interest in earning degrees later in life. Those opting to start work after graduation represented the lowest proportion of students planning to earn a later degree, with 83% either not being sure or responding "no" (Figure 15). Most undecided seniors (72%) were either not sure or did not think they would earn a later degree.

On the other hand, most trade school enrollees did report an expectation for earning credentials, with 69% planning on a credential of some sort, from a certificate through a graduate degree. For seniors joining the military, 76% reported an expectation of more education in their future.

**FIGURE 15: Non-College-Bound Seniors' Expectations for Later Credentialing**

|                 | Undecided<br>(n=435) | Work<br>(n=396) | Trade School<br>(n=378) | Military<br>(n=151) |
|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Certificate     | -                    | 17%             | 31%                     | -                   |
| Associate's     | 22%                  |                 | 14%                     | 24%                 |
| Bachelor's      |                      |                 | 9%                      | 51%                 |
| Master's        | 7%                   |                 | 6%                      | -                   |
| Doctorate       |                      |                 | 2%                      | -                   |
| Graduate Degree |                      |                 | 8%                      | -                   |
| I'm not sure/no | 72%                  | 83%             | 31%                     | 24%                 |

### Key Takeaways

- Counselors might aim to identify students not planning to enroll directly in college early in their junior year and provide opportunities to job shadow, attend career fairs, and meet with college representatives or visit campuses if students are interested. Those students can be encouraged to use self-exploration and self-assessment tools and take advantage of work-based learning opportunities.
- Counselors might work as a team to offer support to students who may be underrepresented at their school but a large-enough group warranting extra attention. Special events could be hosted at the school with individualized invitations provided to these students to ensure they are making a deliberate choice about their future and not merely slipping through the cracks.

# Impact of Naviance Features

All 2021 and 2022 survey respondents were asked to indicate the impact of Naviance features in supporting their postsecondary planning (Figure 16). Figure 17 shows the top five respondents' answers to what they wish their school offered more of. The two figures are constructed to show the overlap between what students valued and used a lot in Naviance to what their peers were requesting more of from their school.

## Services Most Valued from Naviance

Four of the top five valued features provided by Naviance were the same rank for the respondents in spring 2021 and 2022. In rank order for 2022, they were:

- *Researching college options* - 77% in 2022 (up from 71% in 2021),
- *Exploring career options* - 74% in 2022 (up from 67% in 2021),
- *Applying to colleges* - 73% in 2022 (up from 66% in 2021), and
- *Discovering my interests and strengths* - 70% in 2022 (up from 69% in 2021).

## Wish School Provided More

In the "Wish your school provided more support" section, the top five features selected were the same for 2021 and 2022, with slight shifts in ranking and percentages. In rank order for 2022, they were:

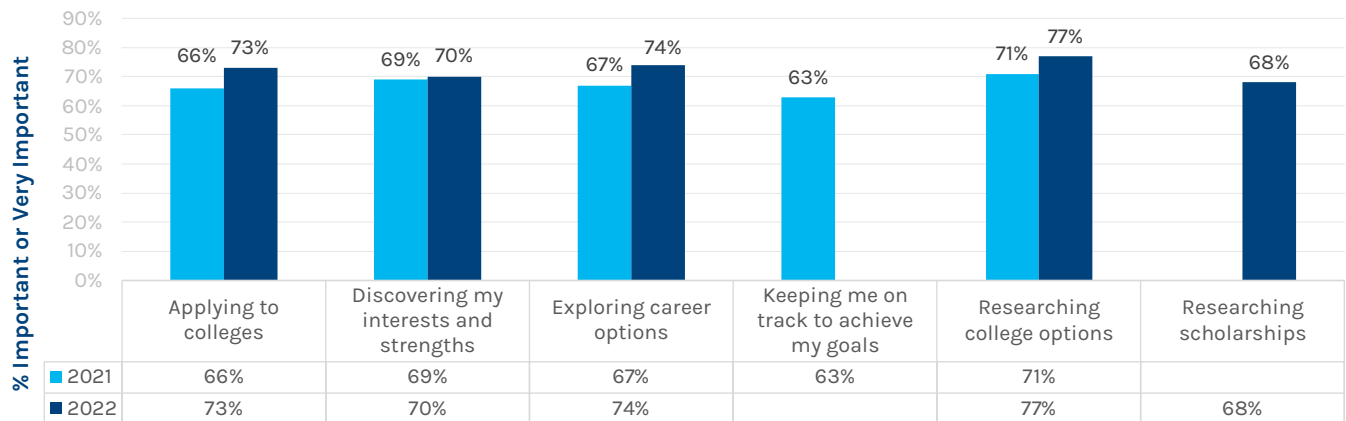
- *Discovering my interests and strengths* - 47% in 2022 (down from 58% in 2021)
- *Exploring career options* - 40% in 2022 (down from 48% in 2021)
- *Researching scholarships* - 38% in 2022 (down from 39% in 2021)
- *Finding Internships and work opportunities* - 34% in 2022 (down from 44% in 2021)
- *Keeping me on track to achieve my goals* - 34% in 2022 (down from 39% in 2021).

# Recommendations to Counselors

"Discovering my interests and strengths" and "Exploring career options" were reported both as a valued service from Naviance and a "Wish my school had more" response. A possible interpretation of this could be that counselors need additional support to help communicate and share all the features of Naviance with students.

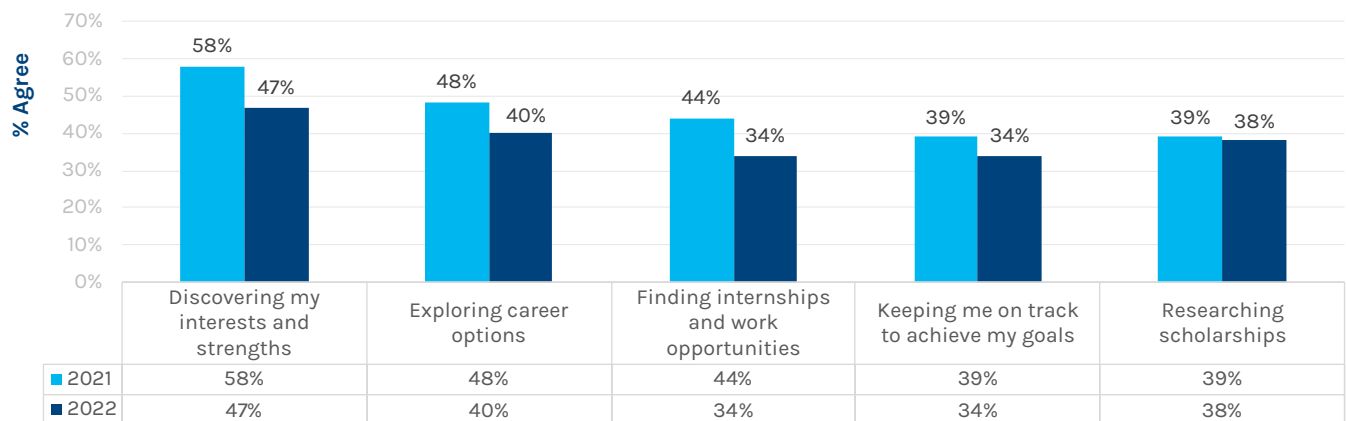
**FIGURE 16: Survey Respondents Rating of Naviance as "Very important," "Important," or "Used a Lot"**

N=11,115 in 2021, and N=9,567 in 2022



**FIGURE 17: Survey Respondents Rating of "Wish school provided more support of"**

N=11,115 in 2021, and N=9,237 in 2022



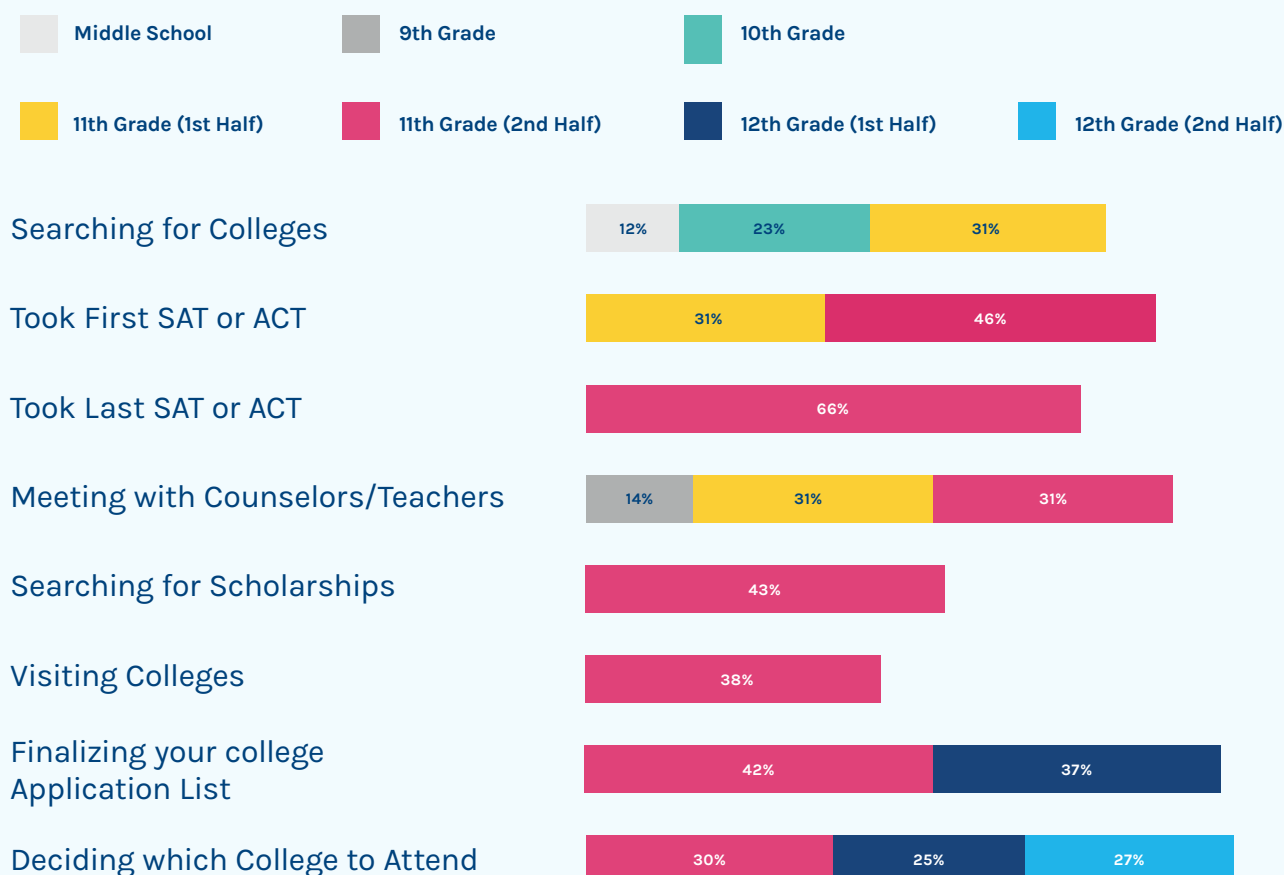
# Postsecondary Planning Timeline

As seen in Figure 18, students reported starting postsecondary planning in middle school, but with minimal activity. A total of 12% of respondents reported using Naviance in middle school to search for colleges.

Counselors might think about visiting the resources available in [PowerSchool Community](#), such as training videos and tutorials for how to maximize Naviance features for students and families.

**FIGURE 18: Postsecondary Planning Activities Completed by Grade**

(as reported by survey respondents)



In high school, respondents reported limited activities in Grade 9, with very few using Naviance solely to "Meet with counselors and discuss plans." In Grade 10, close to a quarter of respondents (23%) used Naviance to "Conduct college searches."

Most postsecondary planning appears to take place in Grade 11, as students began planning in a variety of ways at higher rates. In the first half of Grade 11, almost a third of respondents (31% each) reported they "Took the SAT or ACT for the first time," "Searched for colleges," and "Met with counselors to discuss plans." In the second half of Grade 11, students continued to take standardized tests, "Search for scholarships" (43%), "Finalize their college application list" (42%), "Visit colleges" (38%), continued to "Meet with counselors" (31%), and "Start making decisions about where they wanted to enroll" (30%).

Activity in Grade 12 slowed. In the first half of their senior year, respondents were "Finalizing college application lists" (37%) and "Deciding which college to attend" (25%). In the final semester in high school, students were primarily "Deciding where to enroll."



## What activities would you want students to have completed, or to have become familiar with as they start high school?

Reviewing reports in Naviance, you can determine which features are being used most. Using that data as an indicator of where students are focusing, you could augment those areas with additional material or draw awareness of less-used features and ways they can benefit from postsecondary planning.



## Key Takeaways

- Students report postsecondary planning is not consistently occurring in middle school. A comprehensive approach to future planning ideally begins for students in elementary school and builds in breadth and depth as students progress through their academic journey. Building a career exploration framework that encompasses age-appropriate experiences for students from elementary through high school will help schools and districts create a future-looking culture and make postsecondary planning a consistent element of every grade level.
- Middle school curriculum could be an opportunity to begin introducing projects based on real-world scenarios. For example, students could work on math problems on the economic impact of degrees and the cost of education. Social studies could feature a unit in which students study possible salaries and career growth opportunities. Making explicit connections between what students are learning in the classroom and how those skills can be applied to their postsecondary lives will strengthen students' ability to think about their futures.



# Discussion and Recommendations

After completing the analysis and reviewing the findings, below is a discussion of the findings and possible next steps for school counselors, families, and all adults supporting students in postsecondary planning.

## Recommendation 1:



**Develop a strategic plan to increase postsecondary awareness and planning during students' earlier years.**

A growing body of research demonstrates the importance of providing career-connected learning experiences for younger learners to develop a positive self-concept of their occupational prospects.<sup>17</sup> Encouraging elementary students to explore career paths helps them broaden their understanding of the opportunities that exist for them as they progress through their academic journey. Introducing career-oriented learning such as themed curricular units and field trips helps students begin to understand the

relationship between school and career. In middle school, students can begin speaking with their families and teachers about careers and future economic opportunities. This earlier initiative will also assist in helping students identify their areas of interest. **Knowing their strengths and curiosities will help students create a long-term course plan for their high school path**, allowing them to take advantage of class offerings, work-based learning opportunities, and other career and technology education activities.



## Recommendation 2:



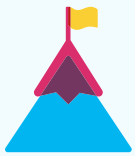
**Establish additional school programming and delegate resources to identify, advocate for, and support first-generation students and their families.**

Another area worthy of consideration is the difference between first-generation students' plans to enroll in a two-year college over a four-year. This finding is replicated in the college-going literature and has been persistent over time<sup>18,19</sup>. **If counselors and administrators knew students were first-generation, they could provide additional support such as personal invitations to events designed specifically for first-generation students and their families. Creating opportunities to learn about college and the application process, especially starting in middle school, could change students' postsecondary plans.**

This could also address the finding that first-generation students have lower expectations for long-term credential earning. First-generation survey respondents were less likely to plan to earn a BA or graduate degree (71% compared to 85% of not-first-generation students). The long-term economic impact of a degree is consequential. Helping first-generation students and their families understand the benefits of investing in a four-year degree and providing them with resources for financial aid, scholarships, and affinity support may make a bachelor's degree feel more achievable.



## Recommendation 3:



Reinforce messaging that postsecondary planning is still important for students not planning on attending college. Schools and counselors can support these students in their long-term planning, including earning degrees and credentials later in their journey.

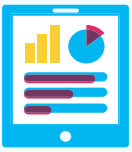


As the definition of postsecondary planning expands, there is a greater opportunity for students not planning on attending college to receive postsecondary attention. If financial concerns are the reason for not planning for college, make sure families are aware of the options of scholarships and financial aid, and provide that information within the context of future earnings. Investments in the moment can reap benefits years later.

Survey findings suggest that a quarter to a third of those planning on enrolling in a trade school or the military report plans to earn a credential later in their professional lives. **The economic advantage of credentials should be part of counseling even for students not directly enrolling in college.**

Many technical jobs, such as electricians, mechanics, and medical imaging technicians, do not require a bachelor's degree—yet pay well, and are in high demand. These skilled-trade jobs are relatively recession-resistant and can be a way of securing economic stability without a college degree.

## Recommendation 4:



Maintain deep and current knowledge of Naviance’s full abilities, including the newest upgrades and features, so counselors know how to best support students and families in exploring students’ interests, postsecondary opportunities, financial aid and scholarship resources, and more.

Students who responded to the survey reported finding many Naviance features very important and useful. At the same time, peers reported that they wished their school would provide these features for them. Naviance usage could be improved by **ensuring all counselors know the features available and how they benefit students, teachers, families, and counselors.** Ideally, counselors will rely on Naviance to help manage their workloads because the platform streamlines and simplifies the parts of their job that are essential to their work but take time away from interacting directly with students. Students and families can use Naviance to help with college and financial aid research and facilitate the intricacies of college applications.

All Naviance users are encouraged to visit [PowerSchool Community](#) where they can connect with other administrators, educators, parents, and students, view video tutorials, and share tips and ideas.



## Recommendation 5:



Increase data reporting capabilities for school counselors and administrators.

School counselors and schools have been overwhelmed by the challenges brought on by the pandemic. One option to ease the burden on school administrators and school counselors would be to **provide summary reports that help provide greater insights**, like flagging students who are behind on meeting graduation milestones, identifying first-generation students who would benefit from more individualized postsecondary planning attention, and listing students who have not yet met with a postsecondary counselor.



# Conclusion

**The results of this year's survey point to the growing importance of providing opportunities for students to consider a broader range of postsecondary pathways to lifelong success.**

Students' survey responses point to a clear shift in postsecondary priorities, from a "college for all" mindset to a wider consideration of alternative opportunities. This shift is reflected in the declining college enrollment patterns seen in the last several years. Students are increasingly considering college alternatives such as attending a trade school, enlisting in the military, or entering the workforce directly after graduating high school.

This year's survey also gives insight into college-goers' preferences about majors and career fields of interest. The data aligns with the current economic and employment climate, with most graduating seniors indicating the greatest interest in studying fields associated with higher-earning careers such as STEM, Health, and Business. As the national conversation around teacher attrition continues to draw attention to the state of K-12 education, it's significant that only 5% of students surveyed expressed interest in the Education and Training industries.

The data highlights several areas that warrant more attention to better support students' postsecondary planning. The most vital of these are:

- Providing more career-connected learning experiences to students at younger ages. Increasing student exposure to potential career paths broadens students' understanding of what's possible in their futures
- Early identification of first-generation college students and the development of programs designed specifically to offer them greater counseling support
- Taking a holistic approach to conversations about long-term goals, including weighing postsecondary education costs against future earning potential to help reduce the number of students who find themselves in debt or unable to earn a living wage

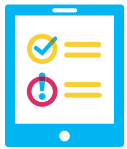
Schools and districts play a fundamental role in shaping students' futures. Encouraging earlier and greater exploration into postsecondary pathways, supporting a "best-fit path" rather than a "one size fits all" model, and emphasizing the importance of planning are all integral parts of the essential work of educators: preparing students for lifelong success.

# Appendix A: Methods

There were two data sets used to create this report.



**Application data** as collected within Naviance describing the type of application and whether the student was admitted, wait-listed, or denied admission.



**Survey responses** from a survey Naviance makes available to all student users in spring. We analyzed senior reporting for postsecondary planning questions and all responses about the use of Naviance and what users liked about the product.

This report is organized to respond to the following questions:

- 1 What were the Class of 2022 applications and acceptance patterns by application type and school type?
- 2 What postsecondary plans did seniors report?
- 3 Did first-generation college-goers' plans for careers and credentials differ from first-generation seniors whose parents had postsecondary degrees?
- 4 What were the plans for seniors not planning to attend college after graduation?
- 5 What did Naviance survey respondents report as helpful and where did they see a need for additional supports?
- 6 What is the timeline of postsecondary planning for students starting in the middle grades through graduation?

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