

College Board

Career and Skill-Building Survey

SEPTEMBER 2024



Objectives

The research conducted by Morning Consult on behalf of College Board seeks to understand what students are thinking about their future careers and their plans to get there, particularly for students interested in pursuing paths besides four-year college. Results of the study will direct internal product planning and messaging strategies.

Methodology

This poll was conducted between September 25-30, 2024 among a sample of 1,252 high school students ages 14-18. The interviews were conducted online and the data were weighted to approximate a target sample of high school students based on gender, age, race/ethnicity, region, and grade level.

Results from the full survey have a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points.

STUDENT SURVEY DEMOGRAPHIC DEFINITIONS

DEMOGRAPHIC	WEIGHTED (N)	%	DEFINITION
Students	1,252	100%	High school students ages 14-18 in grades 9-12
College-bound	484	39%	Students who are very likely they will attend four-year college immediately after high school
Non-college-bound	669	53%	Students who are <i>somewhat likely</i> or <i>very/somewhat unlikely</i> to attend four-year-college immediately after high school
9 th /10 th Graders	648	52%	Students in 9 th or 10 th grade (Freshman and Sophomore)
11 th /12 th Graders	604	48%	Students in 11th or 12th grade (Junior or Senior)
College 9th/10th Graders	242	19%	College-bound students in 9 th /10 th grade (Freshman and Sophomore)
Non-college 9th/10th Graders	351	28%	Non-college-bound students in 9th/10th grade (Freshman and Sophomore)
College 11 th /12 th Graders	242	19%	College-bound students in 11th/12th grade (Junior or Senior)
Non-college 11 th /12 th Graders	318	25%	Non-college-bound students in 11th/12th grade (Junior or Senior)
Gender: Male	633	51%	Male students
Gender: Female	599	48%	Female students
Ethnicity: White	668	53%	White students (includes Hispanic and non-Hispanic)
Ethnicity: Black	163	13%	Black students (includes Hispanic and non-Hispanic)
Ethnicity: Other	421	34%	Students of another race or ethnicity (includes Hispanic and non-Hispanic)
Ethnicity: Hispanic	320	26%	Hispanic students (of any race)

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Key Takeaways

- High school students are more aware of non-college post-high school options than they were last year, especially non-college bound students.
 - Nearly two-thirds of high school students (63%) have heard "a lot" or "some" about post-high school options other than attending a four-year college, which is 4-points higher than last year. Similarly, 62% of non-college bound students report they are aware of these post-high school options, an increase of 12-points since last year.
- Both college-bound and non-college-bound high school students want more career exploration opportunities, but these groups differ in how they feel about their post-high school plans.
 - A large amount of both college-bound (85%) and non-college bound (81%) high schoolers want more career exploration opportunities in high school, but college-bound students are nearly 20-points more likely than non-college-bound students to say they have enough information to decide their best post-high school plans. College-bound students are also 15-points more likely than non-college students to say their post-high school plans are a top priority to them and that they know what it takes to achieve their post-high school goals.
- High school students want more skill-building opportunities from school. They see *communication* as the skill they most need to develop and as the most important one to employers.
 - Three-in-four high school students (79%) say they want more skill-building opportunities in high school, including 87% of college-bound students and 77% of non-college-bound students. College-Bound students are 15-points more likely than non-college bound students to say they have learned the skills they need to be future-ready at school.
 - Nearly half of high school students (47%) say *communication* is the skill they most want to improve, and over 90% think it is at least somewhat important to employers.
 - Work-based learning is seen as more helpful than high school coursework when it comes to preparing students for the future
 - Nearly half of high school students (47%) say work-based learning like internships and pre-apprenticeships prepare them "a lot" for the future, compared to less than a third (31%) who say the same about their general high school coursework. Those who do not feel that their coursework prepares them sufficiently say it does not teach them life skills or is not relevant to the careers they plan on pursuing in the future.
 - Half of high school students say they go to high school to prepare them for college, prepare them for the future, or simply because they have to. Related to this, students are most likely to say that their teachers prepare them the most for their futures compared to other figures at their school.

SECTION 1

Post-High School Planning

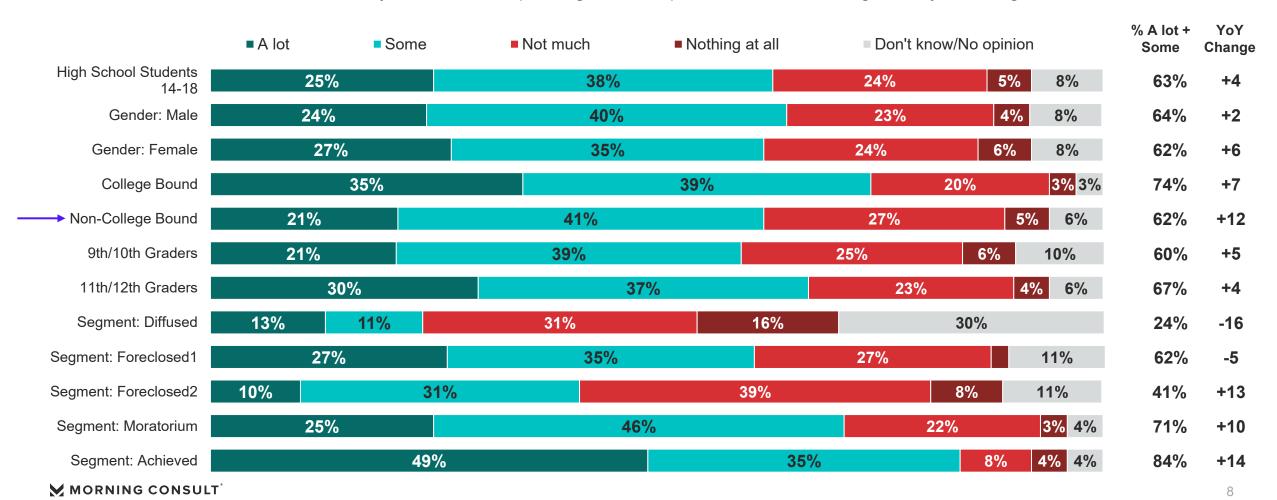
SEGMENTATION

Adapted from the **Marcia model**.

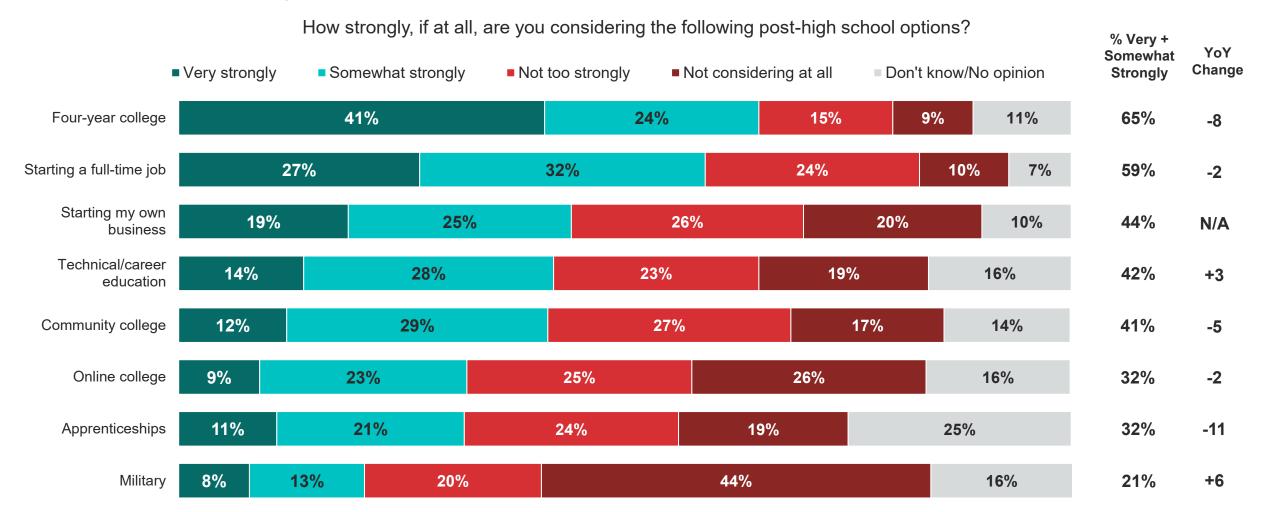
Student Segment	Share of students	How much, if at all, have you begun exploring future career paths you could take post-high school?	Which best describes where you are in terms of your future career goals?
Diffused	9% (N=113)	•Not much •Not at all	•I have no idea what career I would like
Foreclosed1	10% (N=122)	•Some	•I know exactly what career I want to pursue
Foreclosed2	15% (N=194)	•Not much •Not at all	 I know exactly what career I want to pursue I have some idea of which career I would like I know the career area I want to work in but not the specific career or job
Moratorium	51% (N=638)	•A lot •Some	 I have no idea what career I would like I have some idea of which career I would like I know the career area I want to work in but not the specific career or job
Achieved	15% (N=185)	•A lot	•I know exactly what career I want to pursue

Non-college bound students have increasingly (+12) heard more about post-high school options other than a four-year college.

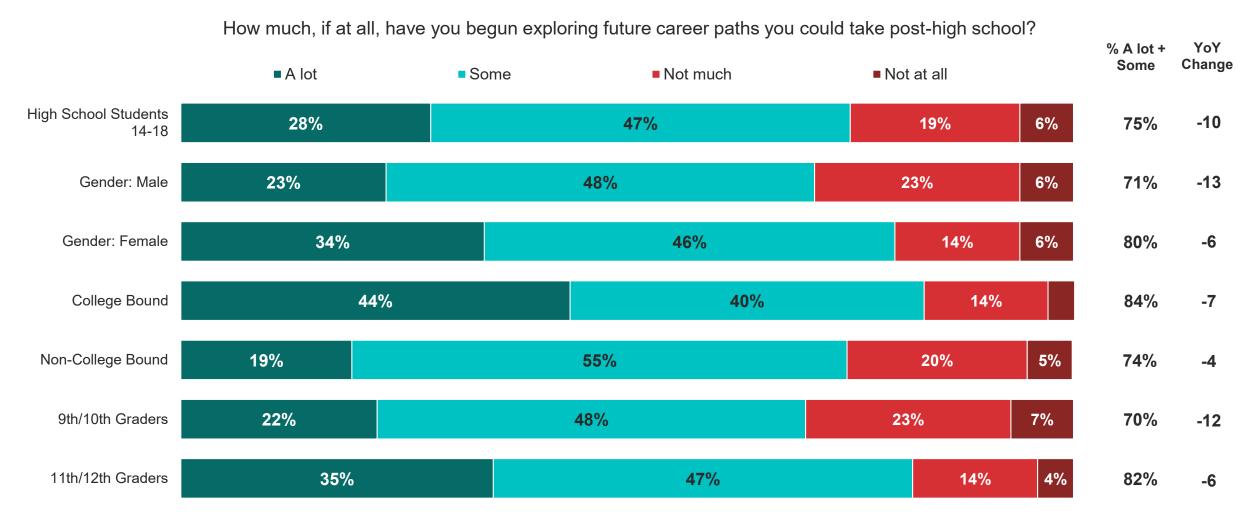
How much have you heard about post-high school options besides attending a four-year college?



The proportion of those considering four-year college has fallen since this time last year, though it remains the top post-high school option for students. The proportion of those considering apprenticeships has also decreased since last year.



Female high-school students are more likely (34%) to say they are exploring their future career paths "a lot" compared to male high school students (23%).



Non-college-bound students are less likely than college-bound students to say they are *hopeful*, *excited*, and *motivated* about exploring their future careers.

Which of the following words or phrases most closely describe how you feel about exploring your future career? Please select all that apply. **Total % Selected**

		Students	College	Non-College
g	Hopeful	48%	54%	46%
feelin	Excited	45%	52%	42%
itive f	Motivated	35%	41%	33%
Posi	Confident	33%	37%	33%

Non-college-bound students feel more excited (+5) and confident (+5), but less motivated (-3) than last year.



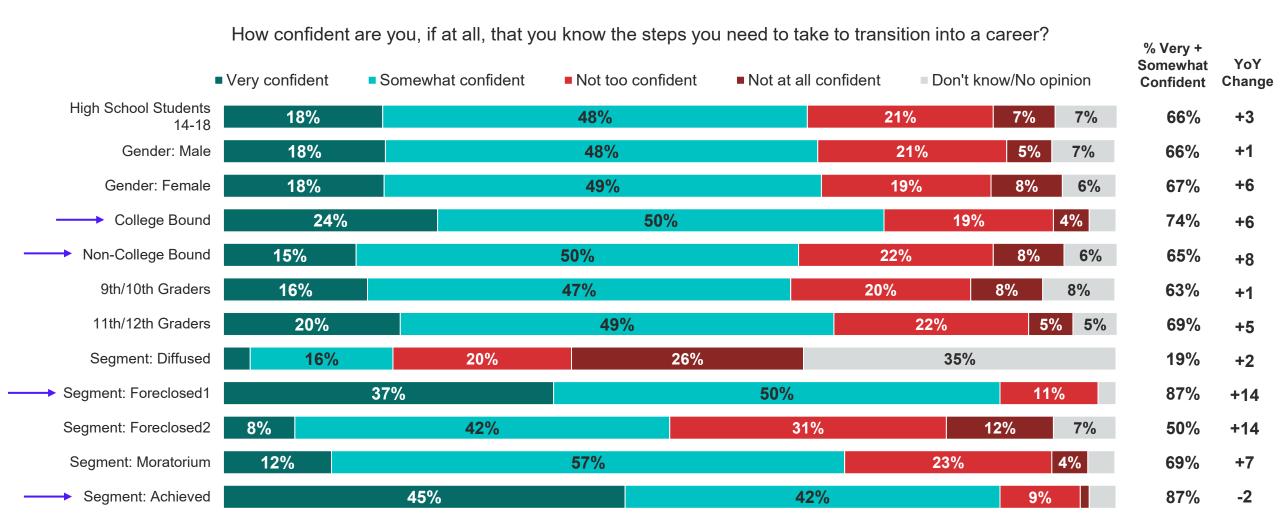
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Anxious	46%	43%	48%
Overwhelmed	35%	35%	37%
Depressed	8%	6%	11%
Pessimistic	7%	6%	8%



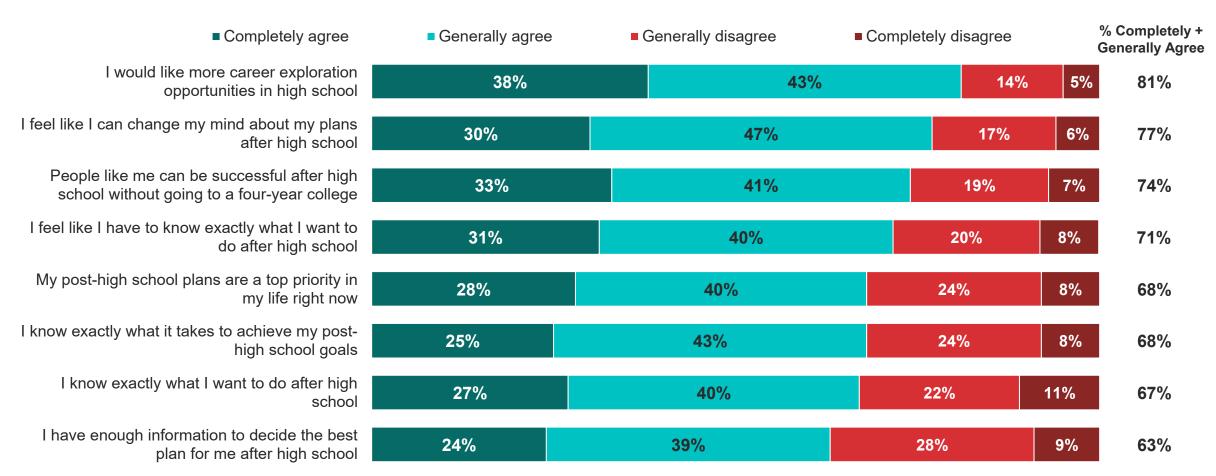
College- and non-collegebound students feel similarly *anxious* and *overwhelmed* about exploring their future careers.

Foreclosed1 and Achieved students exhibit higher confidence in knowing how to transition into a career than other segments. College-bound students are more confident than non-college bound in this aspect as well.



More than three-in-four high school students agree that they want more career exploration opportunities after high school. A similar number of students feel that they can change their minds about their post-high school plans.

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your plans after high school?



Non-College bound students are less likely than college-bound students to feel that they know what they want to do after high school or have enough information to make the best plan for themselves. There is a stronger gap here in these metrics between *Achieved* students and *Diffused* students.

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your plans after high school?

%Completely + Generally Agree	High School Students	College- Bound	Non-College Bound	Achieved	Diffused	Foreclosed1	Foreclosed2	Moratorium
I would like more career exploration opportunities in high school.	81%	85%	81%	82%	60%	82%	76%	85%
I feel like I can change my mind about my plans after high school	77%	76%	79%	76%	62%	72%	74%	81%
People like me can be successful after high school without going to a four-year college.	74%	71%	76%	81%	61%	81%	66%	75%
I feel like I have to know exactly what I want to do after high school	71%	80%	68%	90%	36%	81%	71%	71%
My post-high school plans are a top priority in my life right now	68%	78%	63%	89%	41%	78%	52%	70%
I know exactly what it takes to achieve my post-high school goals	68%	80%	64%	95%	35%	85%	50%	70%
I know exactly what I want to do after high school	67%	78%	62%	97%	20%	88%	58%	66%
I have enough information to decide the best plan for me after high school.	63%	76%	57%	85%	26%	75%	52%	65%

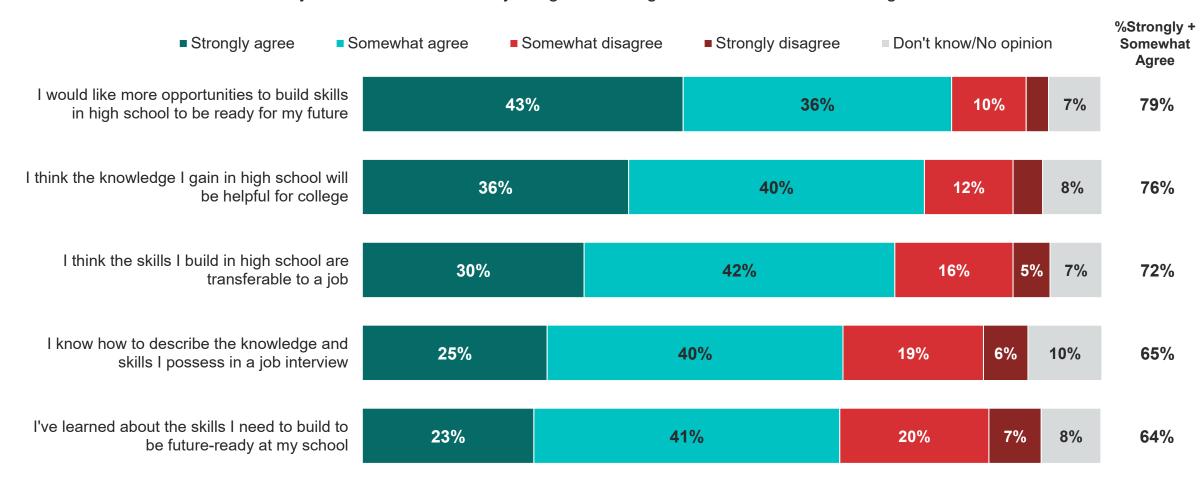
SECTION 2

Skill-Building



High school students are more likely to say that they would like more opportunities to build skills in high school (43% strongly agree) than they are that they learned the skills to be future ready at their school (23%).

Based on what you know, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?



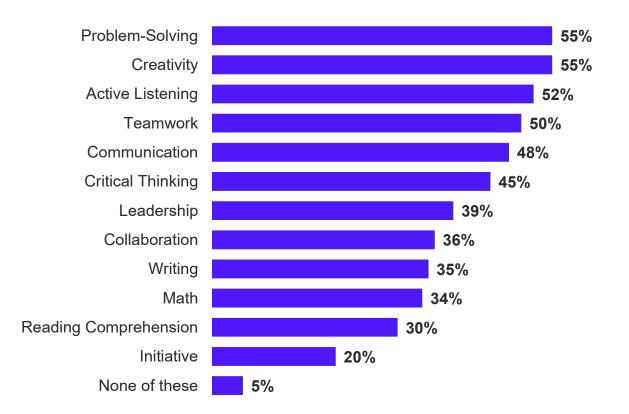
College-Bound students are more likely than non-college bound students to say they have learned the skills they need to be future-ready at school. Both groups believe their skills are transferable to a job at similar rates.

Based on what you know, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

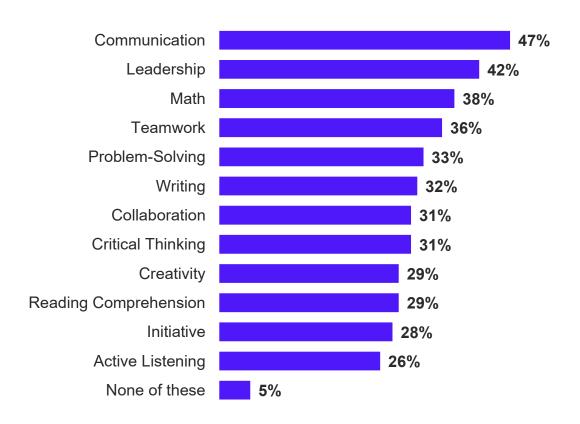
%Strongly + Somewhat Agree	High School Students	College- Bound	Non-College Bound	Achieved	Diffused	Foreclosed1	Foreclosed2	Moratorium
I would like more opportunities to build skills in high school to be ready for my future.	79%	87%	77%	87%	53%	81%	77%	83%
I think the knowledge I gain in high school will be helpful for college	76%	86%	73%	77%	54%	79%	70%	81%
I think the skills I build in high school are transferable to a job.	72%	77%	72%	79%	48%	77%	62%	76%
I know how to describe the knowledge and skills I possess in a job interview.	65%	72%	62%	81%	38%	73%	50%	68%
I've learned about the skills I need to build to be future-ready at my school.	t 64%	76%	60%	79%	32%	75%	49%	70%

Students see "problem-solving" and "creativity" as their top skill strengths, while nearly half see "communication" as the skill they want to strengthen the most.

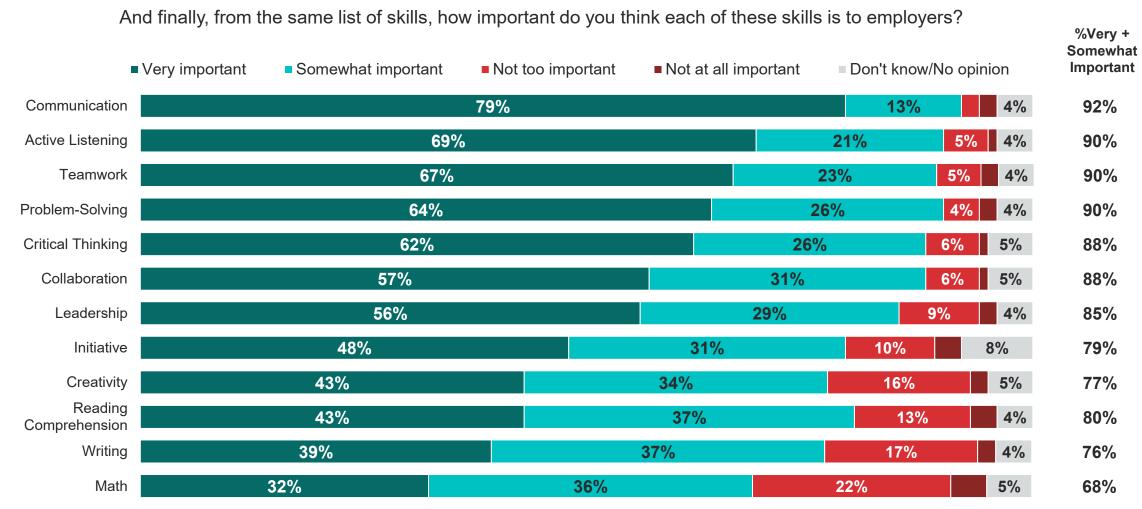
From the following list of skills, which would you say are your strengths? Select all that apply.



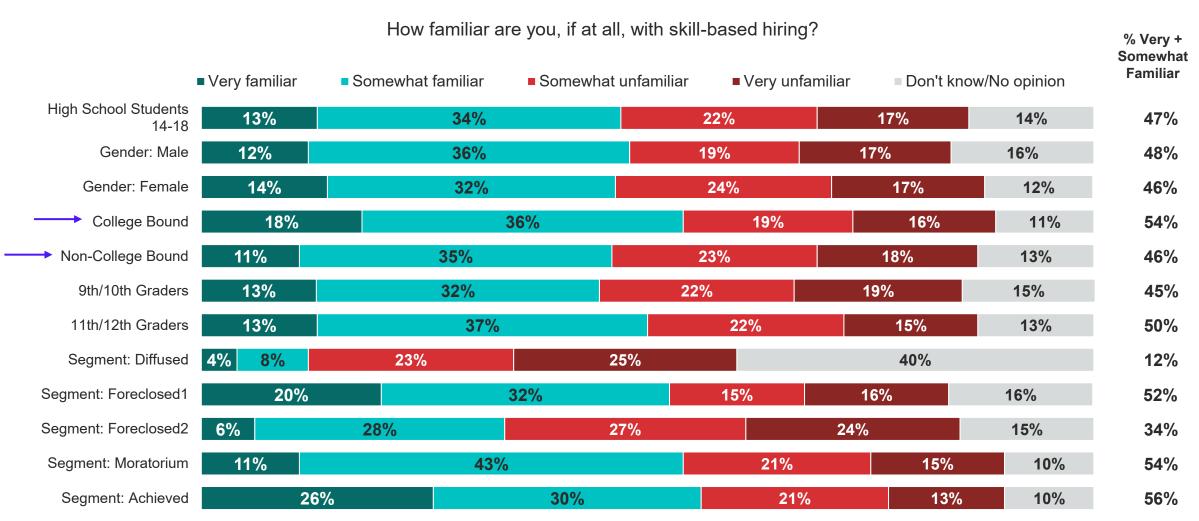
And again, from the same list of skills you just read, which skills would you want to strengthen/improve? Select all that apply.



As students want to strengthen their communication skills most, they also see this skill as the one that is most important to employers. They see skills like "writing" and "math" as the least important to employers.

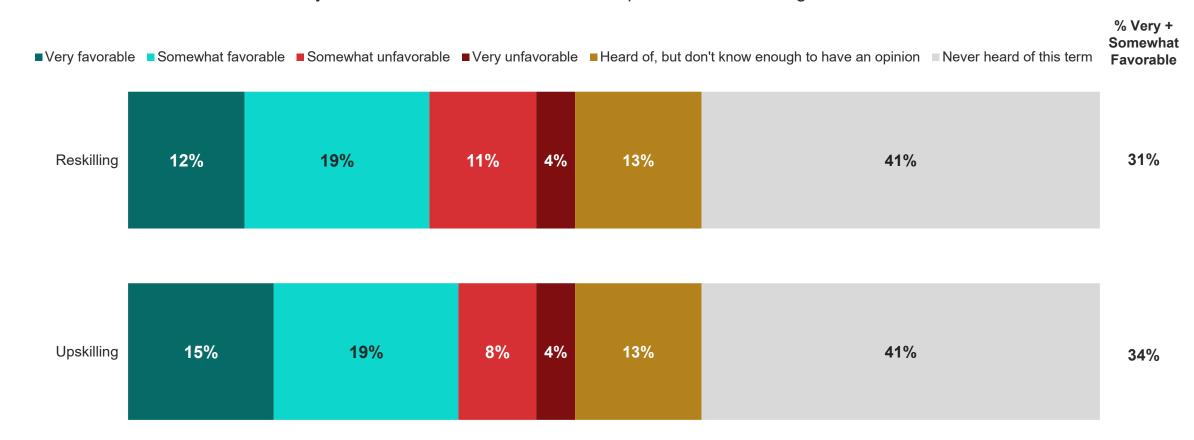


Almost half of high-school students are at least "somewhat familiar" with skill-based hiring. College-bound students show higher familiarity than non-college bound students.



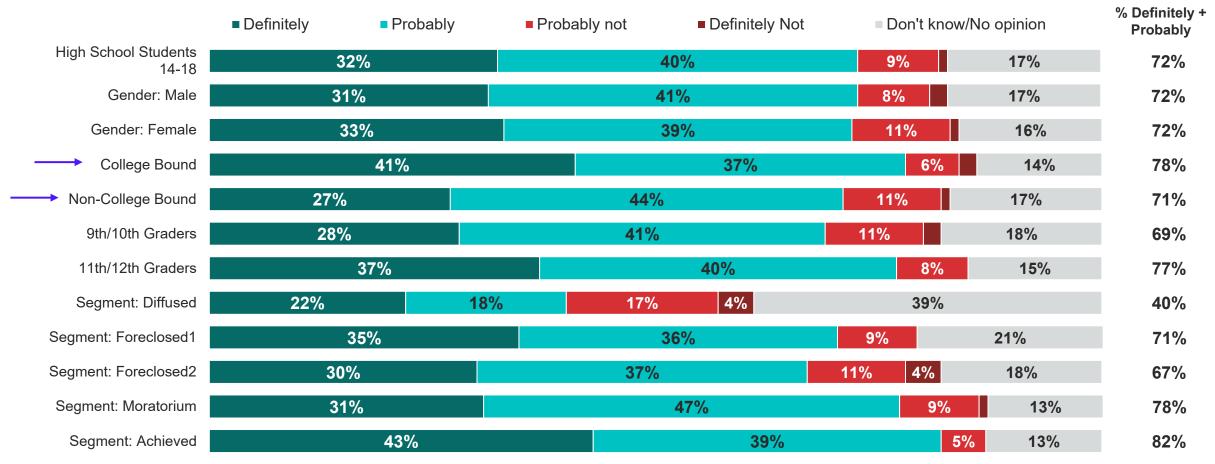
While roughly one-third of high school students have a favorable opinion of reskilling (31%) and upskilling (34%), more than half have either never heard of the terms or do not know enough to have an opinion.

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the following terms?



Nearly three-in-four students say they will "probably" or "definitely" use reskilling or upskilling in their career journey. College-bound students are 14-points more likely than non-college bound students to say they will "definitely" use these in their journey.

Based on what you know, do you expect to use reskilling or upskilling as part of your career journey?



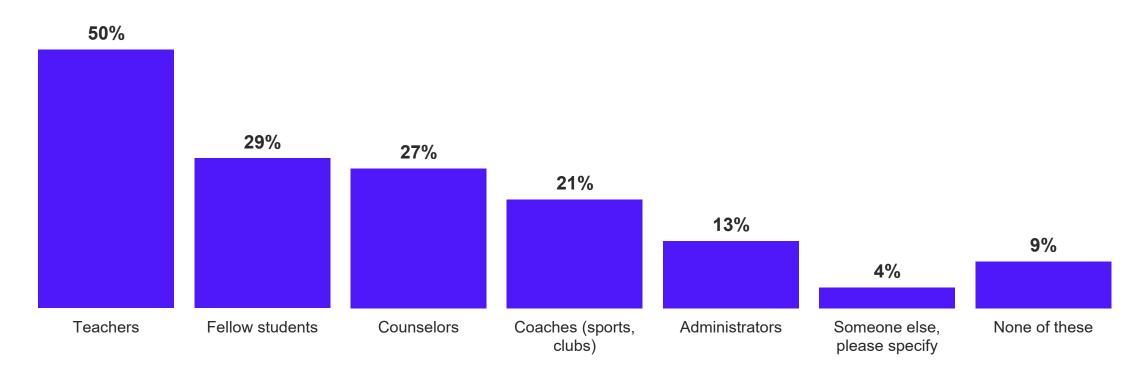
SECTION 3

Preparation for Future



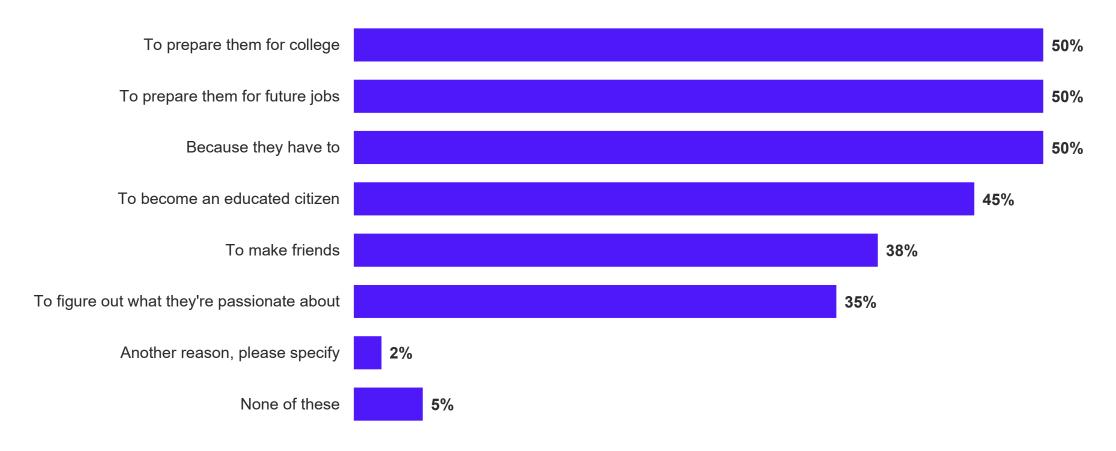
High students are most likely to say teachers prepare them the most for the future, much more than fellow students, counselors and coaches.

Thinking about who you interact with at your school, which of the following groups or individuals do you feel prepares you MOST for the future? You may select up to two.



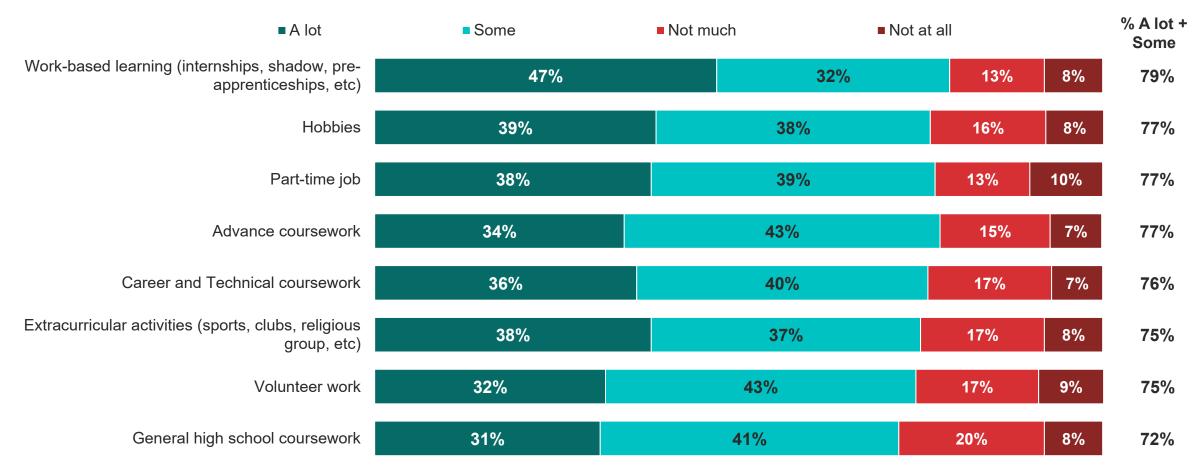
Half of students believe that they and their peers go to high school to prepare them for college and future jobs or because they have to. They are least likely to say they attend in order to figure out what they are passionate about.

In your opinion, why do students go to high school? Select all that apply.



Despite identifying that college preparation and future jobs are why students go to high school, only 31% say that high school coursework prepares them "a lot" for their future.

How much do you feel the following is preparing you with the knowledge and skills that are helpful for your future?



Why do you feel that your high school coursework has not prepared you well for the future?

AMONG STUDENTS WHO SAY GENERAL HIGH SCHOOL COURSEWORK PREPARES THEM "NOT MUCH" OR "NOT AT ALL" [N=351]

NOT APPLICABLE TO REAL WORLD

"Because most of it **isn't** applicable to real life."

"Half the stuff you learn isn't relevant to the world"

"Does not teach you about the real world."

DOES NOT TEACH LIFE SKILLS

"Because they have not taught any of us **how to pay bills, do taxes and basic necessities** for living."

"I don't think it's prepared me very well because I know nothing about finance or how to do my taxes or manage money."

"I feel like it only focuses on academics rather than real life skills that are applicable and important in everyday life." NOT RELEVANT TO MY CAREER/FUTURE GOALS

"Because, the potential paths that I could take, don't seem to relate to the main high school coursework that I do."

"There wasn't enough focus on helping me figure out what career paths I might be interested in and how to pursue them"

"I feel it sometimes has nothing to do with the future after high school."

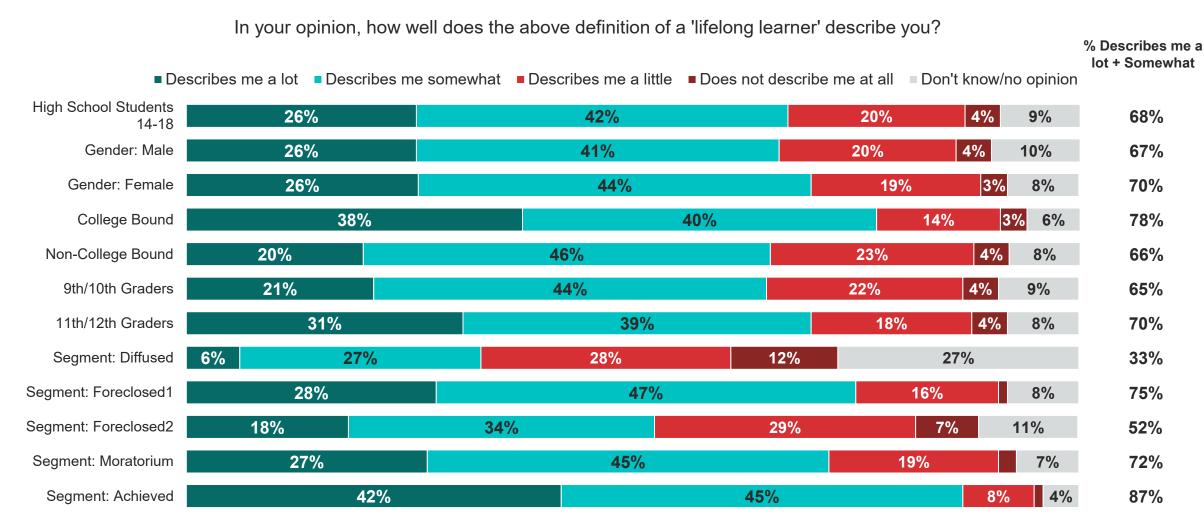
ONLY MEMORIZATION/BUSY WORK

"It's mostly busy work that isn't real life material."

To me, schoolwork is mainly about memorizing and not necessarily learning."

"Lots of the high school coursework feels like it is centered around memorization rather than actual learning."

More than two-thirds of high school students say that the definition of a 'lifelong leaner' describes them at least "somewhat." College-bound students and *Achieved* align with this description more than their respective counterparts.



At least three-in-four high school students agree that lifelong learners have more diverse skills, greater access to job opportunities, are harder workers, and are more successful than others.

