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Shifting Attitudes – New Research Reveals Teens’ Views on AI, Career Preparedness and the Future of Work

JA/Citizens 2025 Survey of High School Students Shows Current Opinion About AI, Evolving Career Paths and How Students are Building Skills for Emerging Roles

PROVIDENCE, R.I. & COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. – American teens are preparing for a workforce shaped by AI, new approaches to education, and economic uncertainty, and while challenges are real, optimism remains high. New research from [Junior Achievement](#) and [Citizens](#) reveals how teens are preparing for the future and the skills they see as essential for success.

The survey found that **94% of teens say they are optimistic about their future careers**, reflecting a strong sense of hope and ambition. However, **57% believe AI has negatively impacted their career outlook**, raising concerns about job replacement and the need for new skills. This tension highlights a generation that is both forward-looking and deeply aware of the challenges ahead. Additionally, **88% report feeling pressure to follow a specific educational or career path**, underscoring the weight of expectations as they navigate their futures.

2025 Data At-a-Glance:

- 94% are optimistic about their future career prospects, even as they recognize the challenges ahead.
- 57% say the rise of AI has negatively impacted how they view their future careers.
- 36% worry they will not earn enough money in their future careers.
- 40% believe a four-year degree is always a good investment, while 56% value real-world experience more.
- 87% expect to earn extra income through side hustles, gig work, or social media content creation.

“The data illustrates how the stressors on young people are compounding year after year. It also shows how resilient and savvy students are these days in terms of understanding the world around them and deciphering the best path to the future that’s best for them,” said Tim Greinert, President of Junior Achievement USA. “JA and partners like Citizens are helping educate

students and fueling them with experiences and knowledge to encourage them achieve or exceed their expectations when it comes to career and financial independence.”

Teens’ perspectives on education also reflect their uneasiness. Only 40% believe a four-year degree is always a good investment, and many are weighing passion against pay. At the same time, about six in ten believe a bachelor’s or graduate degree is still necessary for their chosen profession, which shows how complicated these decisions feel.

The pressure to make the right choice is significant. 88% of teens report feeling pressure to follow a specific educational or career path. While most (63%) say they would prefer a good-paying job even if it comes with stress, many are also exploring less traditional routes to build security and opportunity, including side hustles (62%) and gig pursuits (38%).

Even with these pressures, confidence is high. Nearly all teens (94%) remain optimistic in their career outlook. Top industries in which teens plan to pursue a job include healthcare and life sciences (30%), arts and music (27%), content creation and digital media (25%), business and finance (23%), law, government and public policy (21%), and STEM (18%). They also recognize that success will depend on more than credentials alone, pointing to qualities such as discipline, hard work (67%), networking (50%), and internships (41%), as keys to their future success.

“Today’s teens face a rapidly changing world, from the rise of AI to shifts in education and careers,” said Susan LaMonica, Chief Human Resources Officer, Citizens. “The survey shows they know the importance of adaptability and continuous learning. Citizens partners with Junior Achievement to help students build these skills, and we are doing the same internally by reimagining our culture, investing in new technologies and learning programs, and equipping our colleagues with the skills needed for the future.”

Citizens and Junior Achievement USA have partnered for more than 18 years to advance financial empowerment nationwide. Building on this long-standing collaboration, Citizens allocated more than \$630,000 in 2025 to support Junior Achievement USA to support financial empowerment programs that give people the confidence and tools they need to budget, save, invest, and pursue their goals. As part of the bank’s Citizens Helping Citizens Manage Money program, Citizens provides funding and volunteer support to help deliver financial education. Last year, volunteers donated more than 4,000 hours to help deliver Junior Achievement programming in 25 cities.

More information and an executive summary of the survey are available at JA.org/FutureOfWork

Survey Methodology:

The JA Teens & Future of Work Survey was conducted by [Wakefield Research](https://www.wakefieldresearch.com/) among 1,000 nationally representative US Teens ages 13-18, between July 30-August 10, 2025, using an email invitation and an online survey. Data was weighted to ensure a reliable and accurate representation of U.S. teens ages 13-18.

Results of any sample are subject to sampling variation. The magnitude of the variation is measurable and is affected by the number of interviews and the level of the percentages expressing the results. For the interviews conducted in this particular study, the chances are 95 in 100 that a survey result does not vary, plus or minus, by more than 3.1 percentage points from the result that would be obtained if interviews had been conducted with all persons in the universe represented by the sample.

About Junior Achievement USA® (JA)

Junior Achievement is the world's largest organization dedicated to giving young people the knowledge and skills they need to own their economic success, plan for their future, and make smart academic and economic choices. JA learning experiences are delivered by corporate and community volunteers and provide relevant, hands-on experiences that give students from kindergarten through high school knowledge and skills in financial literacy, work readiness, and entrepreneurship. Additionally, Junior Achievement is expanding its reach to 18-to-25-year-olds to provide young adults with critical life skills, as well as to pre-K youth to ensure children get a solid head start. Today, JA reaches more than 4.6 million students per year in nearly 100 markets across the United States as part of 19.9 million students served by operations in more than 100 other countries worldwide. Junior Achievement USA is a member of JA Worldwide. For more information, visit www.ja.org.

About Citizens Financial Group, Inc.

Citizens Financial Group, Inc. is one of the nation's oldest and largest financial institutions, with \$218.3 billion in assets as of June 30, 2025. Headquartered in Providence, Rhode Island, Citizens offers a broad range of retail and commercial banking products and services to individuals, small businesses, middle-market companies, large corporations and institutions. Citizens helps its customers reach their potential by listening to them and by understanding their needs in order to offer tailored advice, ideas and solutions. In Consumer Banking, Citizens provides an integrated experience that includes mobile and online banking, a full-service customer contact center and the convenience of approximately 3,000 ATMs and approximately 1,000 branches in 14 states and the District of Columbia. Consumer Banking products and services include a full range of banking, lending, savings, wealth management and small business offerings. In Commercial Banking, Citizens offers a broad complement of financial products and solutions, including lending and leasing, deposit and treasury management services, foreign exchange, interest rate and commodity risk management solutions, as well as loan syndication, corporate finance, merger and acquisition, and debt and equity capital markets capabilities. More information is available at www.citizensbank.com or visit us on [X](#), [LinkedIn](#) or [Facebook](#).