



**NSLI
FOR YOUTH**
Scholarships to Study
Language Abroad



**AMERICAN
COUNCILS**
FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

2023 NSLI-Y ALUMNI SURVEY REPORT

Your Story, Your Impact

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Executive Summary

This report summarizes results from a survey of National Security Language for Youth (NSLI-Y) alumni on the impact NSLI-Y has had on their academic trajectory, professional development, and leadership.

NSLI-Y is a program of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and promotes critical language learning among American high school students through summer and academic year scholarship programs. This survey intended to measure the degree to which NSLI-Y goals have been achieved and how NSLI-Y alumni are impacting their U.S. communities.

In all, 1,047 alumni responded to the 2023 NSLI-Y alumni survey, a 14% response rate. The online questionnaire was distributed via email and social media posts to NSLI-Y alumni communities. The survey was open for four weeks. The key findings listed below demonstrate the myriad ways in which the program has influenced participants.

Half of the respondents were 16-22 years old and had participated in a NSLI-Y program since 2020. The oldest respondent indicated their age as 33 years old. Currently, 64% of NSLI-Y alumni respondents are studying at a school or university, 26% are employed full-time and 19% are employed part-time.

Impactful learning experience: 82% of respondents report that NSLI-Y had a significant impact on their educational and/or professional goals. 812 alumni provided examples of decisions they made that were linked to their NSLI-Y experience.

Commitment to continued language learning: 85% of respondents continued to study their NSLI-Y target language. Of those continuing study, the most common methods include self-study (63%), conversing with native speakers (63%), and university-level courses (61%).

Sustained use of target language: 80% of respondents have used their NSLI-Y target language skills in personal or professional contexts, primarily to converse with native speakers in their community or abroad.

Expanded worldview: More than 80% of respondents indicated that NSLI-Y influenced their appreciation of other cultures, encouraged travelling abroad, and their ability to recognize similarities and identify differences between cultures.

“I discovered a passion for language and cross-cultural connection and the direction of my life has completely been shifted.”

Chandler, Arabic, 2021

Developing personal and professional skills: 99% of NSLI-Y alumni report that they increased their personal and professional skills due to their program participation. Respondents reported an increase in communication skills (87%), self-awareness (78%), and self-confidence (74%).

Dedication to community service: 54% report using their NSLI-Y language or cultural skills in community service activities. The most common community service activities included language teaching (43%) and supporting refugee or immigrant communities (33%).

Program Impact

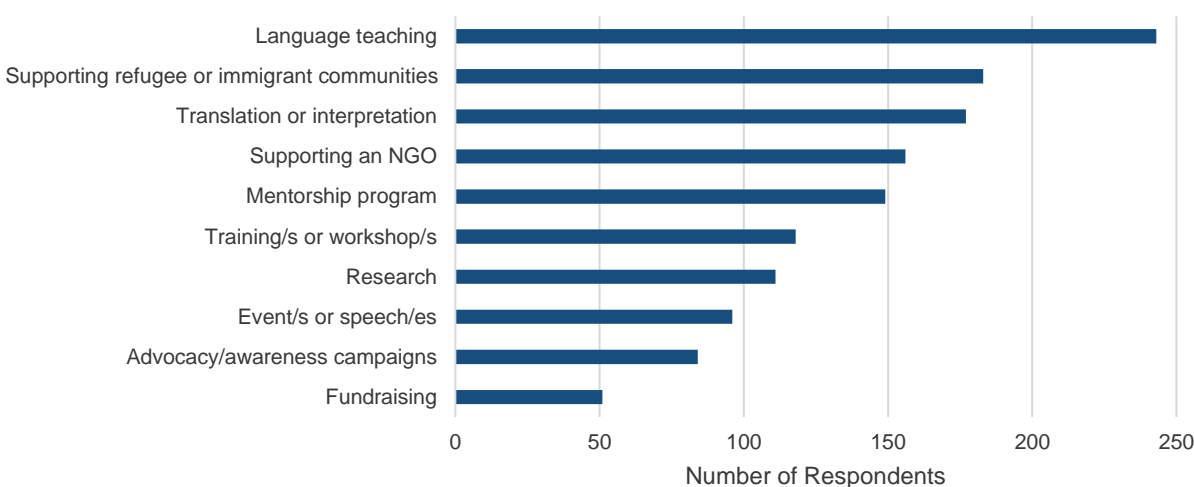
82% of alumni respondents reported that their NSLI-Y program had a significant or very significant impact on their personal and professional goals. 812 alumni shared additional examples of decisions they made or accomplishments they achieved that they linked to their NSLI-Y experience. Since the completion of their program, 55% of alumni have been officially recognized or received an award for an achievement, and 47% have studied abroad.

“NSLI-Y isn't just a language workbook, but repeated, lived lessons in what it means to connect to people and yourself.”

Mai, Korean, 2014

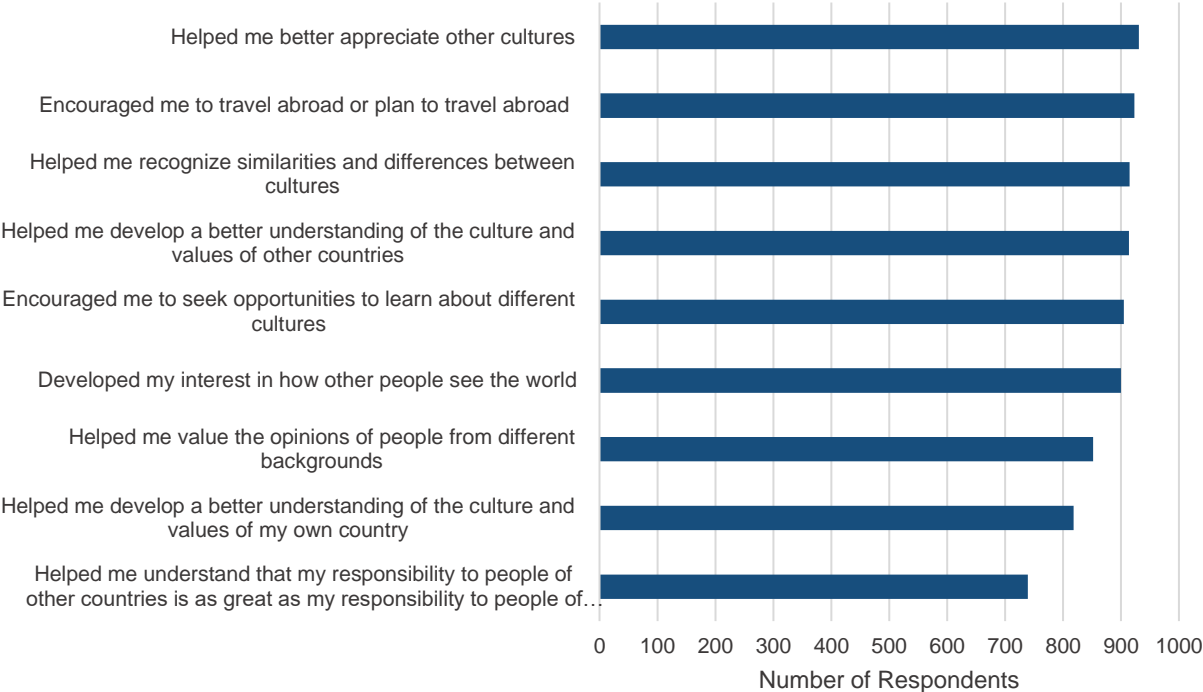
54% of respondents (563 alumni) reported participating in community service activities where they applied target language or cultural skills learned from NSLI-Y. Types of community service included language teaching (43%) and support of refugee or immigrant communities (33%).

NSLI-Y ALUMNI COMMUNITY SERVICE ACTIVITIES



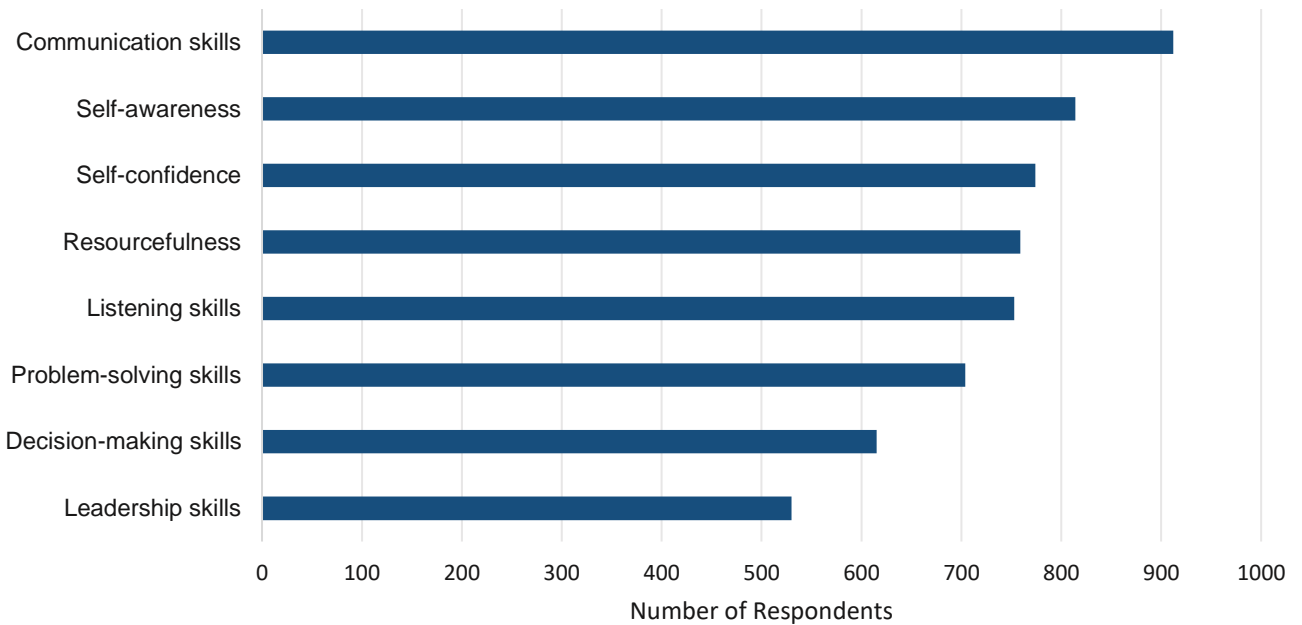
NSLI-Y alumni also demonstrate a continued appreciation for learning about other cultures. Respondents reported that their participation in the program influenced their perspectives on other cultures or their worldview by encouraging the following: better appreciate other cultures (89%), travel abroad or plan to travel abroad (88%), and recognize similarities and differences between cultures (87%).

INFLUENCE OF NSLI-Y ON ALUMNI WORLDVIEW



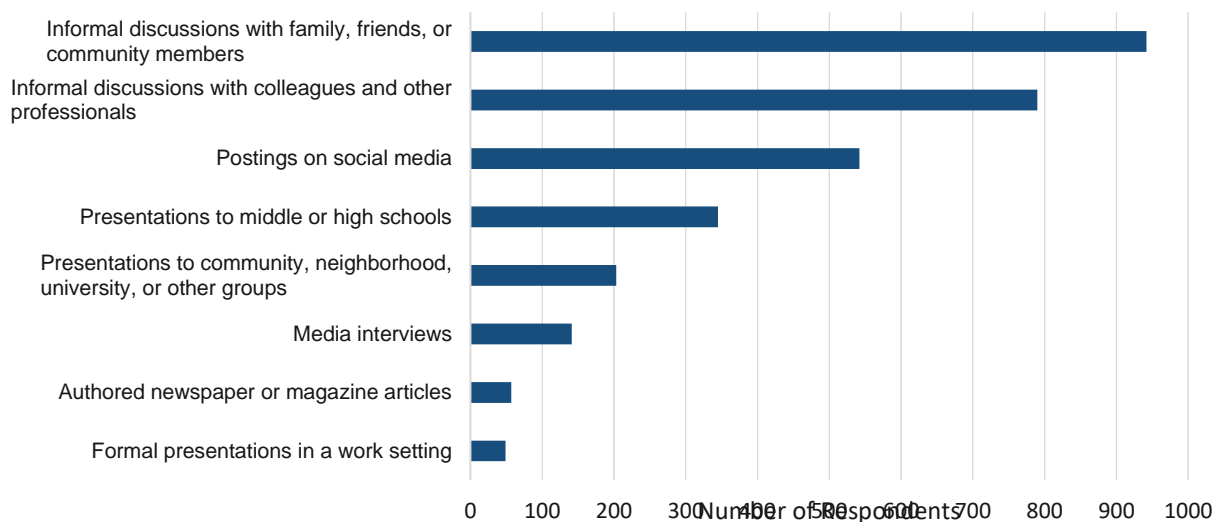
NSLI-Y alumni report improvements in personal and professional skills because of their program participation, including: communication skills (87%), self-awareness (78%), and self-confidence (74%).

INCREASE IN PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS



NSLI-Y alumni have also shared their study abroad experience after their completion of the program. The most common ways include informal discussions with family, friends, or community members (90%), informal discussions with colleagues and other professionals (75%), and postings on social media (52%).

METHODS OF SHARING NSLI-Y EXPERIENCE WITH OTHERS



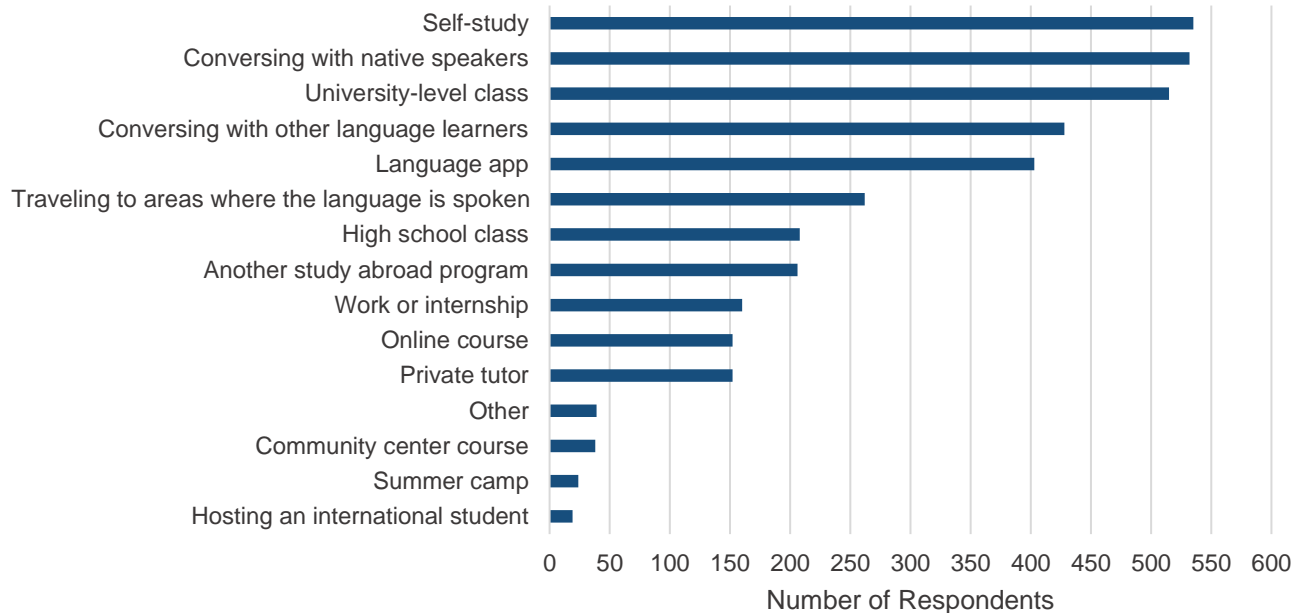
Continued Target Language Study

Since completing the NSLI-Y program, 85% of alumni reported that they continued to study their NSLI-Y target language. For these students, the most common methods include self-study (63%), conversing with native speakers (63%), and university-level courses (61%). Of the alumni who have not continued their target language studies, the main reason is lack of time for language study (27%).

“I'm now a China policy researcher at a major American think tank, focused on the US-China relationship. NSLI-Y set me on this path.”

Frances, Chinese, 2015

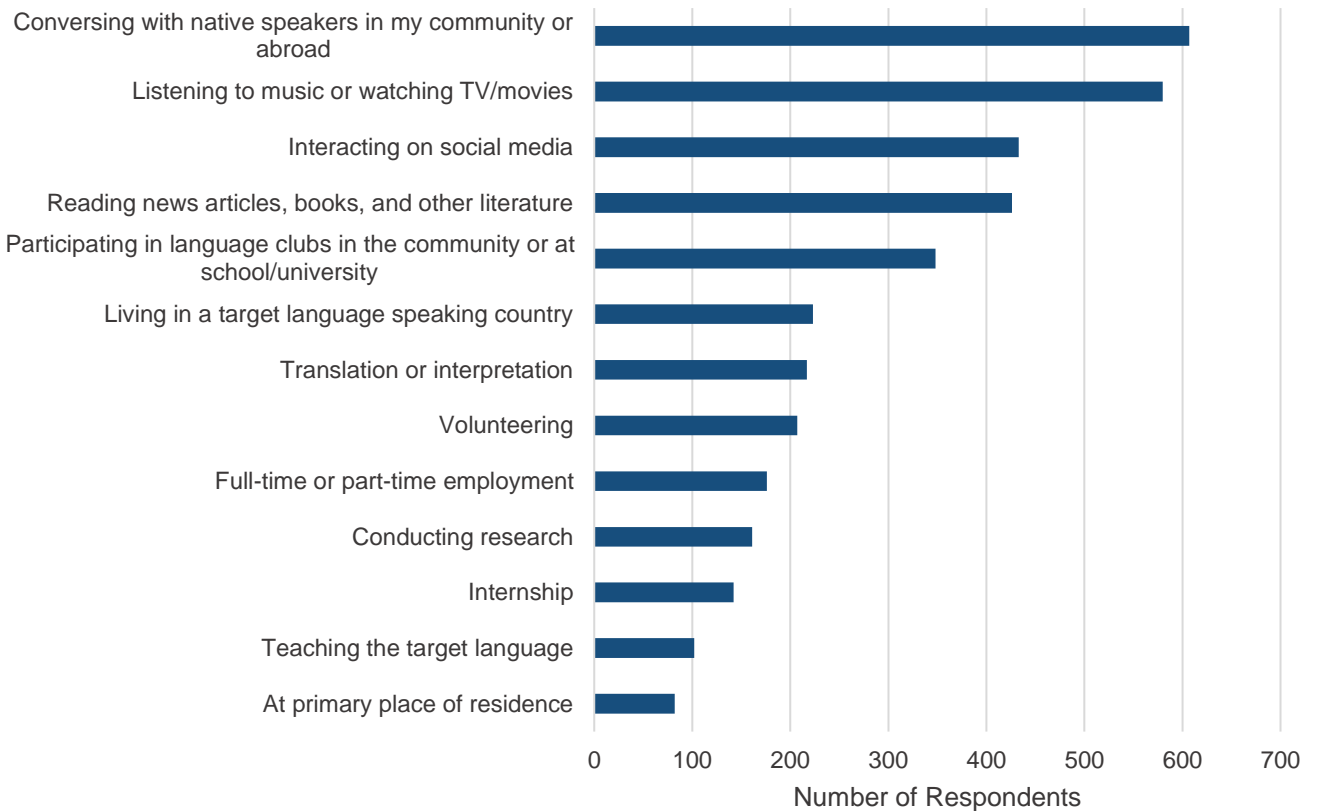
METHODS FOR CONTINUED TARGET LANGUAGE STUDY



Continued Target Language Usage

80% of NSLI-Y alumni have used their target language skills in their personal or professional life, apart from studying. Of these, over 76% are using their target language skills to converse with native speakers in their community or abroad. Other uses are shown in the graphic below.

CONTINUED USE OF TARGET LANGUAGE



Alumni who did not continue to use their NSLI-Y language skills after the program reported that the primary reason was lack of opportunity or situations to use target language skills (85%). Other reasons include lack of confidence in language skills and studying or using a different foreign language.

Education and Employment

“My college career has been so very influenced by the push in self-confidence, language ability, and interpersonal relationships NSLI-Y gave me.”

Ava, Korean, 2019

Currently, 64% of NSLI-Y alumni respondents are studying at a school or university, 26% are employed full-time and 19% are employed part-time. The highest degrees attained by alumni are high school diploma (45%), Bachelor’s degree (36%), and Master of Arts or Science (11%). Half of survey respondents participated in a program since 2020; thus, the majority of respondents were 18-22 years old. 88 alumni reported that their job requires use of their NSLI-Y target language, with one alumnus sharing that “I use my NSLI-Y target

language to communicate with officials from the Chinese Embassy in Washington, Chinese government officials in Beijing and at the provincial/ municipal levels, and for communicating with colleagues at our Beijing and Shanghai offices”. 130 alumni reported that they have either worked overseas or are currently working overseas in countries including China, South Korea, and Turkey.

Of NSLI-Y alumni who are employed, 57% are employed full time. Employed respondents contribute to a variety of sectors including education (24%), international affairs/development (16%), and science/research (13%). Other alumni reported working in public service, health, and the military. Fifty alumni said they are working for the U.S. federal government, with agencies of service including but not limited to the Department of Defense (34%) and the Department of State (28%). 85% of these alumni said their NSLI-Y participation impacted their decision to pursue U.S. Government employment.

PLACE OF WORK OF NSLI-Y ALUMNI



NSLI-Y alumni report that their program participation greatly influenced their interest in studying a foreign language (76%) and their interest in seeking employment overseas (59%). 285 alumni shared more details on how their NSLI-Y experience influenced their professional life. One alumnus shared that, “The language and cultural immersion improved my ability to communicate effectively with individuals from different backgrounds and cultures. This has allowed me to build strong relationships with clients and colleagues alike at Morgan Stanley as part of the Global Investment Office. Additionally, the critical thinking and problem-solving

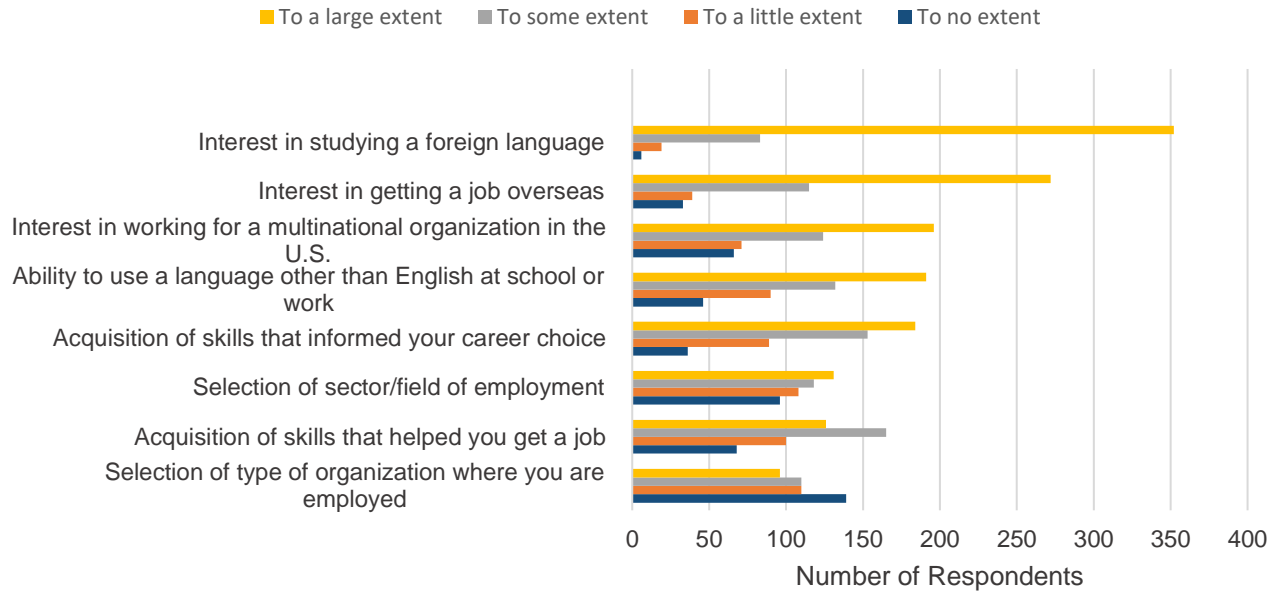
“I would not have my current career without NSLI-Y. I was hired because my skills in a Central Asian language filled a gap in the staff who cover the entire region of Russia, East Europe, and Eurasia.

Katherine, Tajiki, 2012

One alumnus shared that, “The language and cultural immersion improved my ability to communicate effectively with individuals from different backgrounds and cultures. This has allowed me to build strong relationships with clients and colleagues alike at Morgan Stanley as part of the Global Investment Office. Additionally, the critical thinking and problem-solving

skills that I developed during my time in Jordan have been instrumental in my work as an analyst”.

INFLUENCE OF NSLI-Y ON PROFESSIONAL LIFE

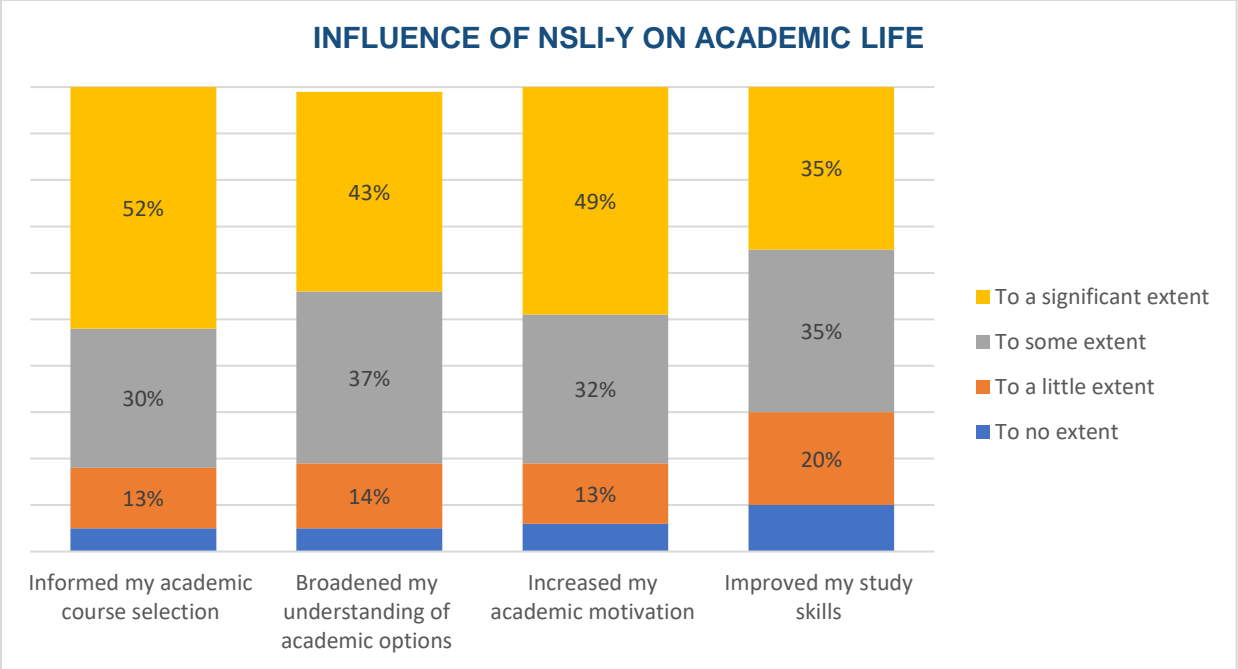


For alumni currently in school, 28% are in high school, 1% are working toward their associate degree, and 53% are pursuing a bachelor’s degree. 14% are seeking advanced degrees. The most common major fields of study for respondents are international affairs (19%), foreign languages (18%), and engineering (8%). Of all respondents, 14% consider themselves as first-generation college students.

“My passion for language learning and intercultural learning, fueled by my NSLI-Y experience, ultimately led me to pursue an international studies degree.”

Megan, Indonesian, 2018

52% of alumni report that their program experience informed their academic course selection to a significant degree. 796 alumni shared additional details of how their NSLI-Y experience influenced their academic life, with one sharing “I want a career incorporating my interests in Eastern European Studies, the Russian language, and agricultural issues. My primary goal is to ‘serve as a public servant,’ which I hope to do in a government career advocating for United States agriculture, food security, and environmental issues.”



U.S. Government Scholarships and Other Study Abroad Experiences

Over 500 respondents sought out additional opportunities to participate in other U.S. Government language learning or cultural exchange initiatives since receiving their NSLI-Y scholarship. Some alumni have been awarded the same scholarship multiple times.

Scholarship	Number of Respondents that Applied	Number Awarded
American Youth Leadership Program	5	4
Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship	15	14
Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX)	24	17
Critical Language Scholarship (CLS)	171	85
David L. Boren Scholarship or Fellowship	44	32
Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS)	59	57
Fulbright Scholarship	61	46
Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX Abroad)	7	5

STARTALK	40	35
The Language Flagship	29	29
Youth Exchange and Study Abroad (YES Abroad)	36	6
Other Programs	N/A	61

Top destinations for the U.S. government-funded programs include:

1. South Korea
2. China
3. Kazakhstan
4. Taiwan
5. Russia

NSLI-Y Alumni Association Participation

69% of respondents report that they remain in touch with the NSLI-Y program. The top ways alumni continue to stay connected are the NSLI-Y Instagram (57%), the NSLI-Y Alumni Association (38%), and the NSLI-Y Alumni Facebook group (36%). For those who are not in contact, reasons include lack of time, distance from in-person events, and updates to contact information.

Additionally, 24% of respondents have attended NSLI-Y alumni events. The events most attended include those organized by regional Alumni Representatives (46%) or NSLI-Y staff in Washington, DC (38%), and virtual events organized by NSLI-Y Alumni Representatives or NSLI-Y staff (38%). For those who have not attended events, reasons include lack of time and distance from events.

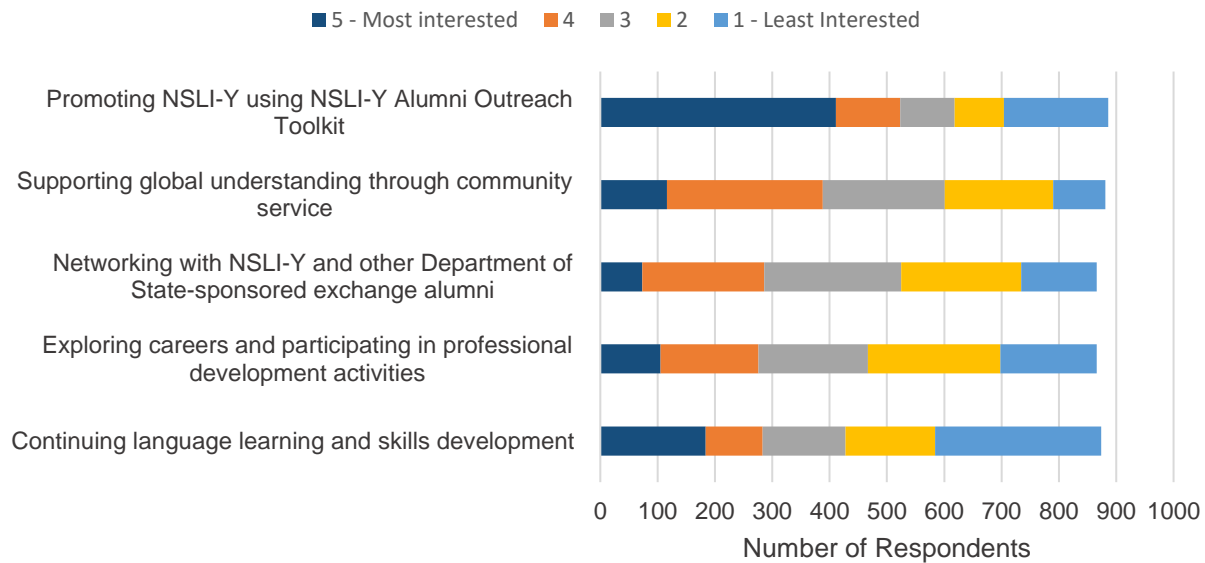
Alumni reported that the NSLI-Y Alumni Association program components they are most interested in include promoting NSLI-Y using the NSLI-Y Alumni Outreach Toolkit and supporting global understanding through community service. 55% of alumni

“Being a part of a like-minded and academically inclined cohort while abroad really motivates you to learn more about the language, culture, and even yourself. I never expected to be able to bond so quickly with a group of strangers when I was thousands of miles away from home.”

Sarah, Korean, 2022

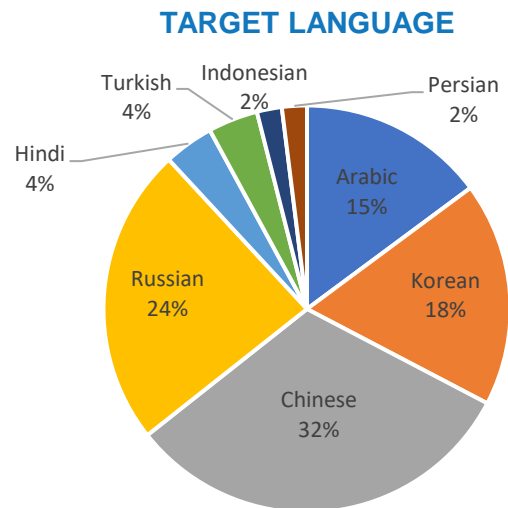
respondents reported that they have registered for the International Exchange Alumni and 74% are registered in the NSLI-Y Alumni Association. 87% of respondents considered themselves alumni of a U.S. Department of State program.

INTEREST IN ALUMNI ASSOCIATION PROGRAM COMPONENTS



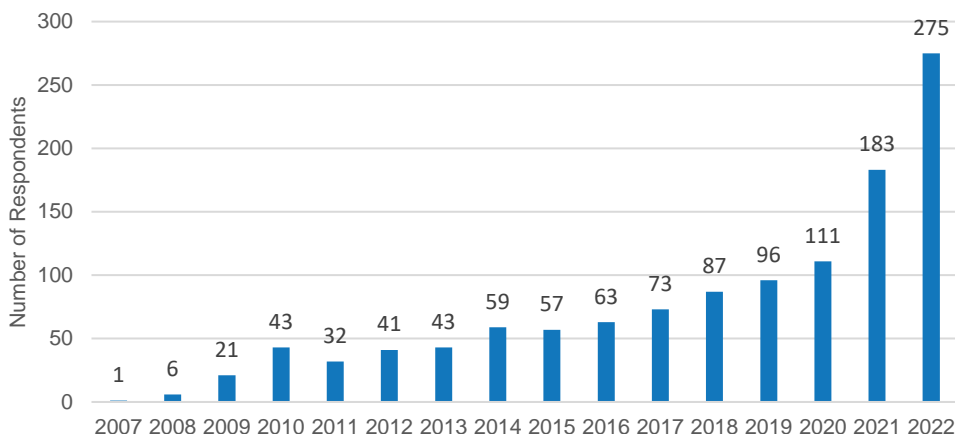
Demographic Information

The top languages studied by respondents were Chinese (32%), Russian (24%), Korean (18%), and Arabic (15%). Some students participated in more than one NSLI-Y language program. Of the respondents, 78% participated in overseas NSLI-Y programs. The remaining participate in NSLI-Y VSI, Virtual Academic Year and/or a hybrid AY program. 929 respondents participated in a summer program, 163 in Academic Year, and 13 in a semester program. Students were able to note if they had participated in more than one type of program.



YEAR OF NSLI-Y PARTICIPATION

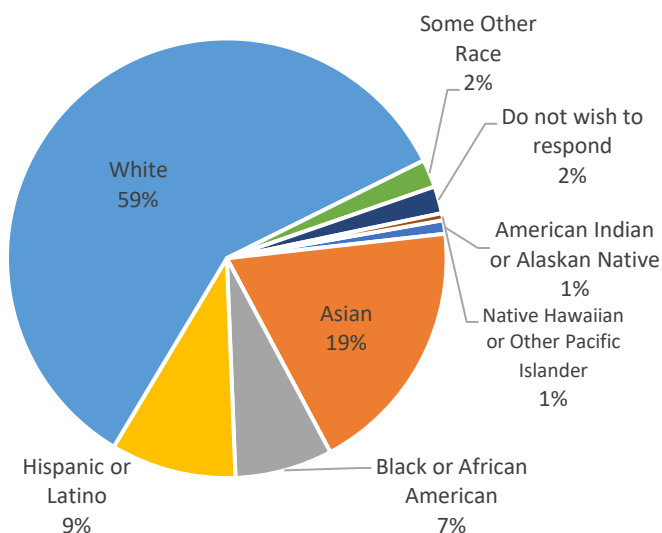
Note: Students were able to select more than one program cycle.



Half of the respondents had participated in a program since 2020.

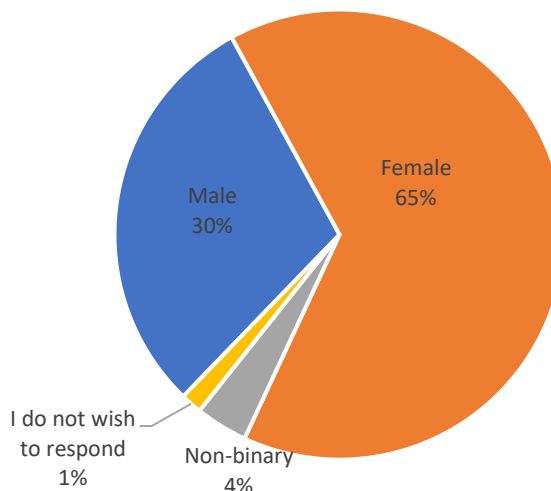
Approximately 93% of respondents answered the question regarding race and ethnicity and were able to select more than one option. More than half of the students identified as white. The other common responses include 19% identifying as Asian, 9% as Hispanic or Latino and 7% as Black or African American.

RACE/ETHNICITY



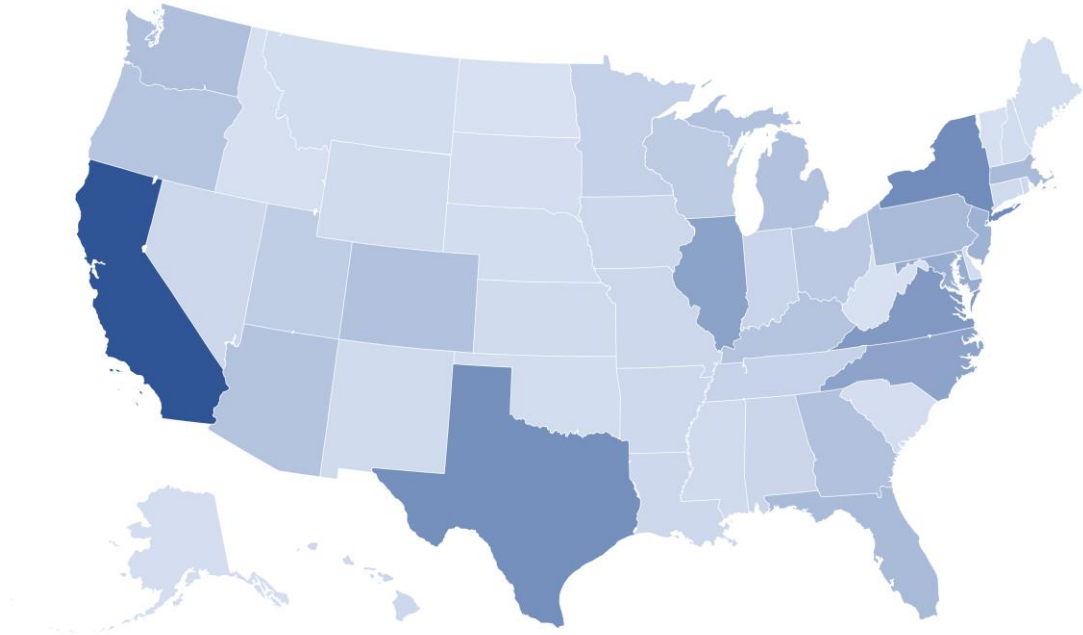
GENDER

Approximately 81% of the respondents answered the question regarding gender. 65% of respondents identified as Female, forming the largest gender group among the respondents followed by Male (30%) and Non-binary (4%) respondents.



Nearly 80% of respondents provided their home state. The top three home states were California (11%), Texas (6%) and New York (7%).

LOCATION OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS



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