



Virtual  
**NSLI-Y**

2023 VIRTUAL NSLI-Y ALUMNI SURVEY REPORT

Your Story, Your Impact

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# Executive Summary

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

Virtual NSLI-Y is a program of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and promotes introductory critical language learning among American high school students through virtual exchange programs. This survey was

intended to measure the degree to which Virtual NSLI-Y goals have been achieved and how Virtual NSLI-Y alumni have impacted their U.S. communities and the greater global community. This survey was distributed to alumni from across six terms, from the first term in Fall 2019 through Fall 2023 term.

The online questionnaire was distributed to 717 alumni via email and promoted via social media. The response rate for this survey was 38% (270 respondents), with a 55% response rate (157 respondents) from those who completed the program in the 2022-2023 academic year. Given the distribution of target languages among respondents, the data can be considered representative of the Virtual NSLI-Y alumni population. The program's longer-term impact is becoming apparent even as 90% of respondents remain between the ages of 16-19, and 63% have yet to complete high school.

“The course was incredibly challenging, and yet incredibly engaging and fulfilling. Every single class, day after day, I left wanting to learn more.”

Aidan  
Virtual NSLI-Y Korean, Fall 2021

“I never thought I would be capable of self-studying languages that were so linguistically different from English, like Mandarin Chinese. Virtual NSLI-Y gave me the confidence that I could and provided me with a foundation for doing so.”

Linda  
Virtual NSLI-Y Chinese, Fall 2022

# Key Statistics

**IMPACTFUL LEARNING EXPERIENCE:** 96% of respondents reported that Virtual NSLI-Y was somewhat to extremely significant for their educational goals. 45% reported that the program's impact was extremely significant.

**COMMITMENT TO CONTINUED LANGUAGE LEARNING:** 75% of respondents continued to study their Virtual NSLI-Y language after the program.

**SUSTAINED USE OF TARGET LANGUAGE:** 57% of respondents are using their Virtual NSLI-Y target language skills beyond their studies, in personal or professional contexts.

**EXPANDED WORLDVIEW:** 79% of respondents indicated that Virtual NSLI-Y helped them recognize similarities and differences between cultures and encouraged them to seek opportunities to learn about different cultures.

**IMPROVED COMMUNICATION SKILLS:** 73% of Virtual NSLI-Y alumni report that they improved their communication skills because of their program participation. Respondents also reported an increase in listening skills (69%), self-confidence (52%), and self-awareness (46%).

**DEDICATION TO COMMUNITY SERVICE:** 17% report using their Virtual NSLI-Y language or cultural skills in community service activities such as events or speeches, advocacy or awareness campaigns, and mentorship programs.

“I don't think I would have studied the Russian language in college if it wasn't for my Virtual NSLI-Y experience. Now, the language has become such an integral part of my experience at college, I don't know what I would be doing without it.”

Genevieve  
Virtual NSLI-Y Russian, Fall 2021

# Program Impact

96% of respondents reported that Virtual NSLI-Y had been somewhat to very significant for their educational goals since completing the program. 45% reported that the program was extremely significant. 240 alumni shared additional details on the significance of Virtual NSLI-Y as it related to their educational experience. Common throughlines in the comments include the program’s reaffirmation of respondents’ passion for studying languages and global affairs, insights into new academic and career paths, and increases in cross-cultural understanding and empathy.

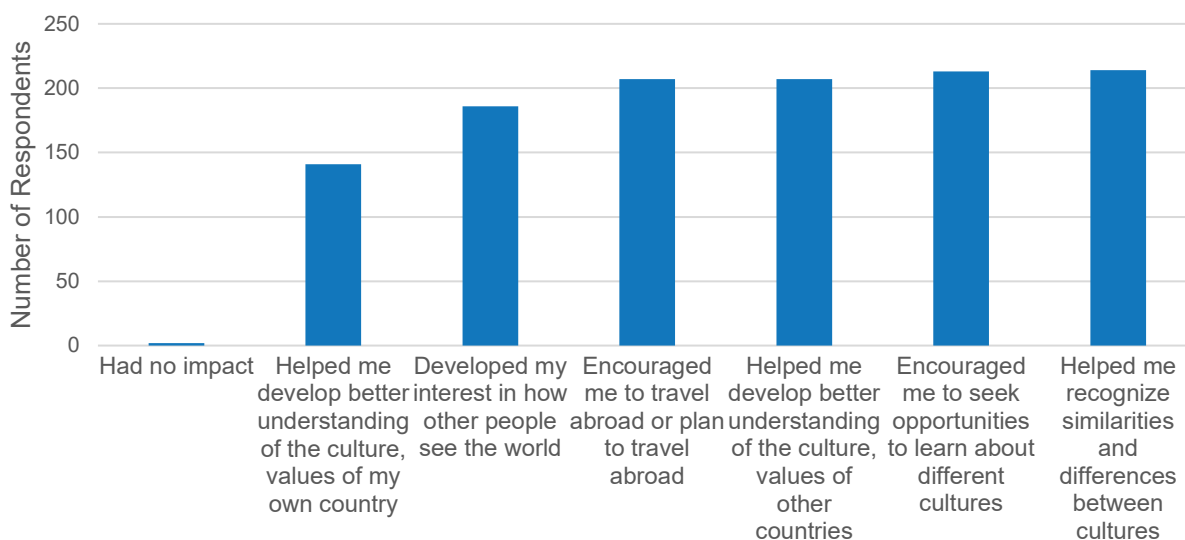
Virtual NSLI-Y alumni reported that program participation helped them recognize similarities and differences between cultures (79%). Respondents also reported that their participation influenced their worldview by encouraging them to seek opportunities to learn about different cultures (78%) and to travel or plan to travel abroad (76%).

Virtual NSLI-Y alumni report an increase in personal and professional skills because of their program participation, with the most common skills being communication skills (73%), listening skills (69%), and self-confidence (52%). One alumna shared that they have increased their “consideration of ethics” and another, their “incentive to learning – I have become much more dedicated to my studies”.

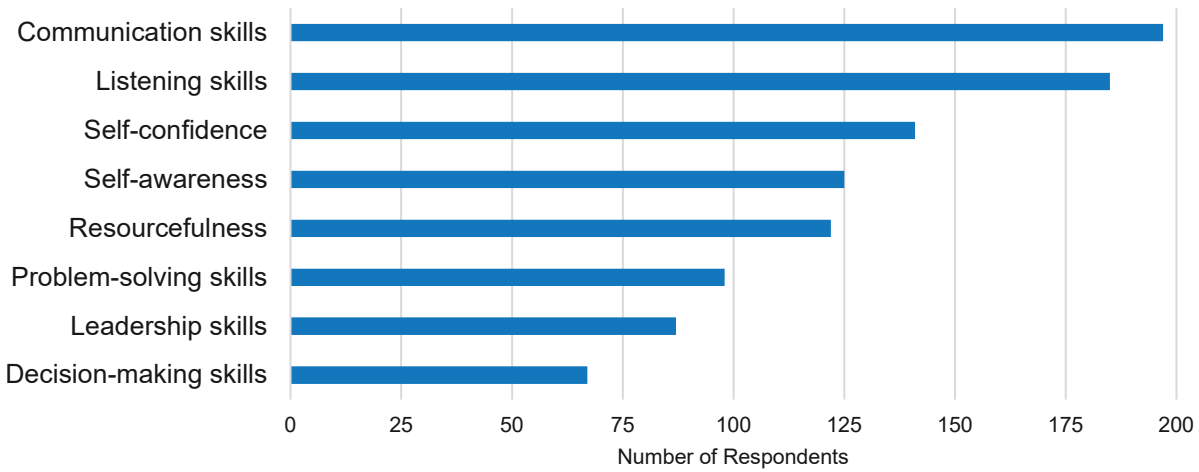
“[Virtual NSLI-Y] taught me greater empathy, cultural awareness, and a greater interest in learning new languages.”

Joy Ding Yuan  
Virtual NSLI-Y Hindi, Fall 2022

## VIRTUAL NSLI-Y’S IMPACT ON WORLDVIEW



## INCREASED SKILLS FROM PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

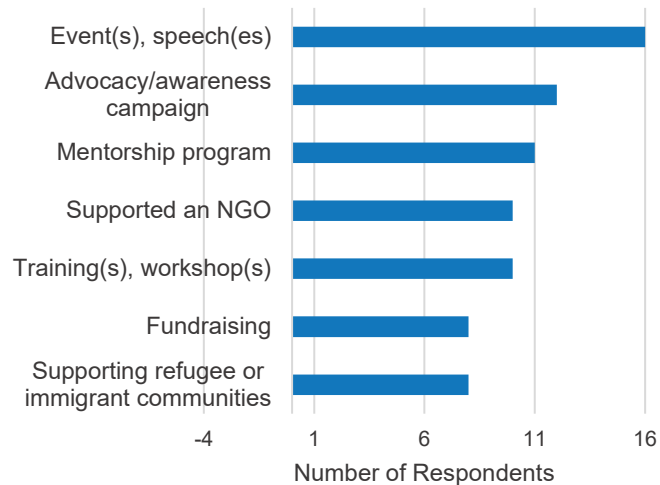


Alumni reported that they share information about their program experience with others, primarily through informal discussions with family, friends, or community members (73%). Alumni also shared their experiences through informal discussions with colleagues and other professionals (35%) and posting online (22%). 17% of respondents reported participating in community service activities where they applied target language or cultural skills learned from Virtual NSLI-Y.

“It was super impactful for me in showing me different possibilities for future careers. It also exposed me to different cultures and Arabic which has impacted my future decisions.”

Jackson  
Virtual NSLI-Y Arabic, Fall 2021

## TOP COMMUNITY SERVICE ACTIVITIES



# Continued Target Language Study

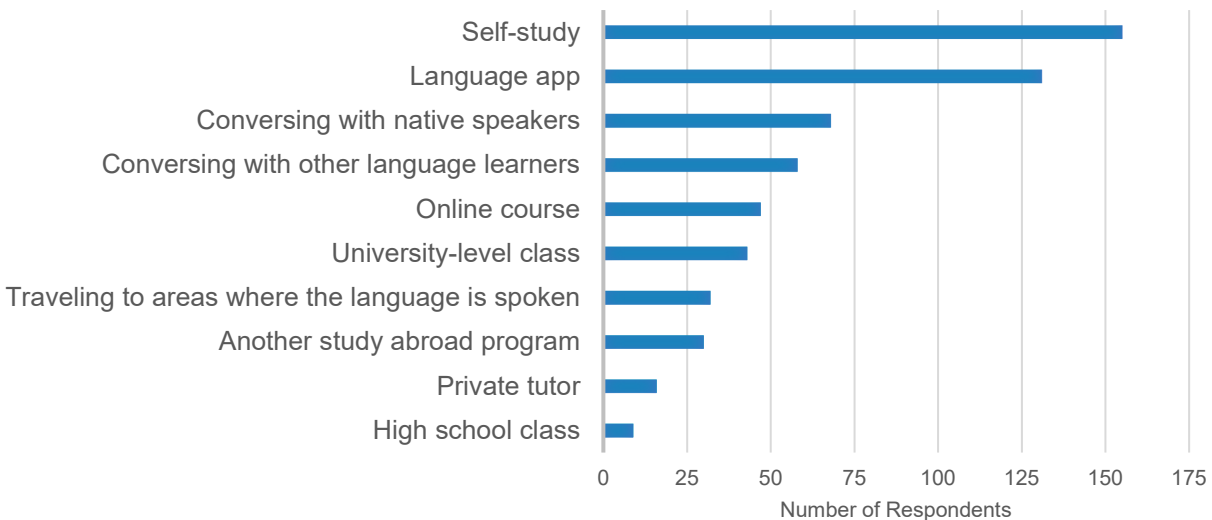
Survey respondents reported a strong interest in learning foreign languages after completing the Virtual NSLI-Y program. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not at all interested and 10 is very interested, the mean response was 9.18.

Notably, 75% of respondents continued to study their target language post-program. Among those respondents, the top three methods for continued language study were self-study (76%), using a language app (64%), and conversing with native speakers (33%).

“The Turkish teacher I had was amazing. He made the classroom an incredibly exciting experience, and he encouraged us to ask questions and make mistakes [...]”

Freya  
Virtual NSLI-Y Turkish, Fall 2021

## CONTINUED TARGET LANGUAGE STUDY METHODS

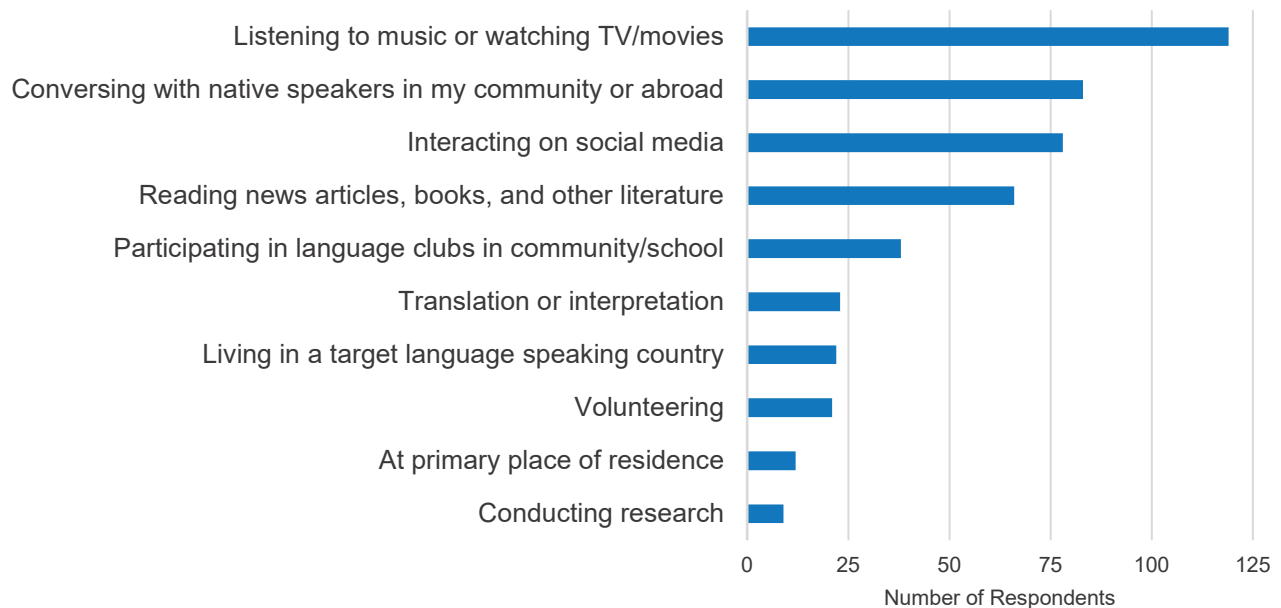


Respondents who did not continue their language study indicated that the primary reason was classes in their target language were not available at their school, university, or community (33%). Other reasons include a lack of time (22%) or that they started studying another language (20%).

# Continued Target Language Usage

56% of Virtual NSLI-Y alumni have used their target language skills in their personal or professional lives, apart from studying. Among those respondents, 77% have used their language skills to listen to music or watch TV shows and movies, and 54% have used their skills to converse with native speakers in their community or abroad. Additional uses are shown in the graphic below.

## CONTINUED TARGET LANGUAGE USAGE METHODS



Of respondents who do not continue to use their target language skills, 98% report that they have not yet found opportunities or encountered situations in which to use such skills. Other reasons include a lack of confidence (36%) and a lack of time (16%).

“Virtual NSLI-Y was great! [...] I was able to be immersed in an environment where other people my age had the same interest and motivation of learning the language. It pushed me to work harder toward my goals and become a better student! I met amazing people and was able to utilize what I learned!”

Anna  
Virtual NSLI-Y Korean, Fall 2022



# Education and Employment

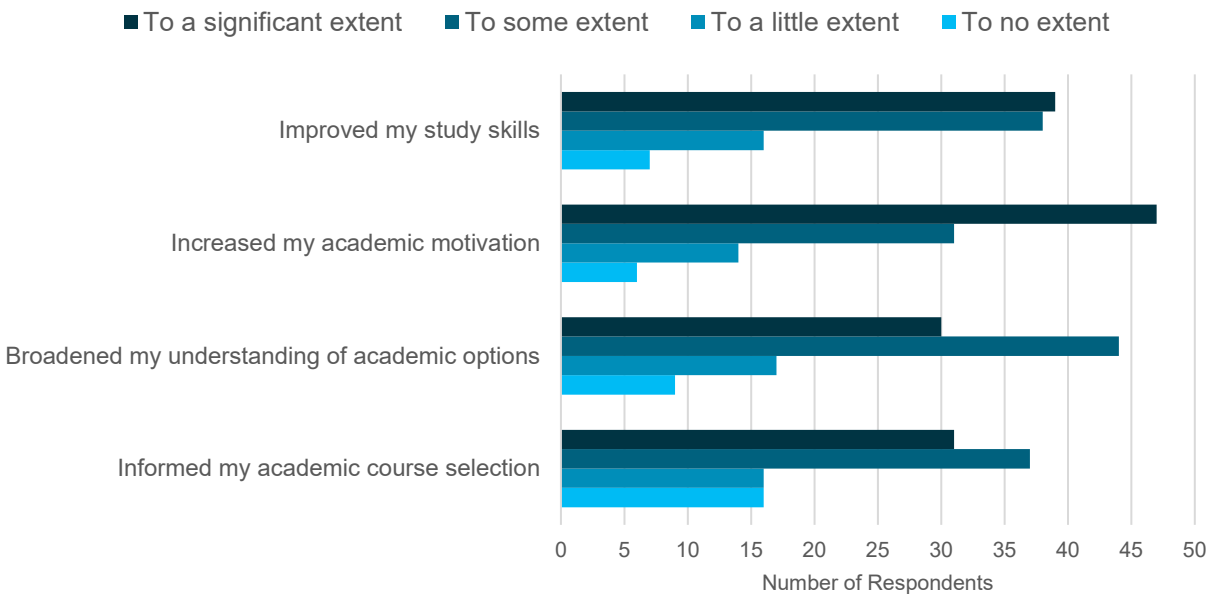
68% of Virtual NSLI-Y alumni report that their program experience increased their academic motivation to a significant degree. One alumnus reported that “although I am not majoring in Korean, Virtual NSLI-Y has motivated me to take Korean classes at my college”; another noted that the program “opened many doors” to potential careers and language interests. Another notes “I believe it sets me apart in jobs and résumés.”

24% of respondents consider themselves to be first-generation college students.

“Virtual NSLI-Y has been very significant to my educational goals. [...] This program has been a very enriching and fortunate opportunity that has helped reassure my passion for learning about the world.”

Angely  
Virtual NSLI-Y Korean, Fall 2022

## VIRTUAL NSLI-Y IMPACT ON ACADEMICS



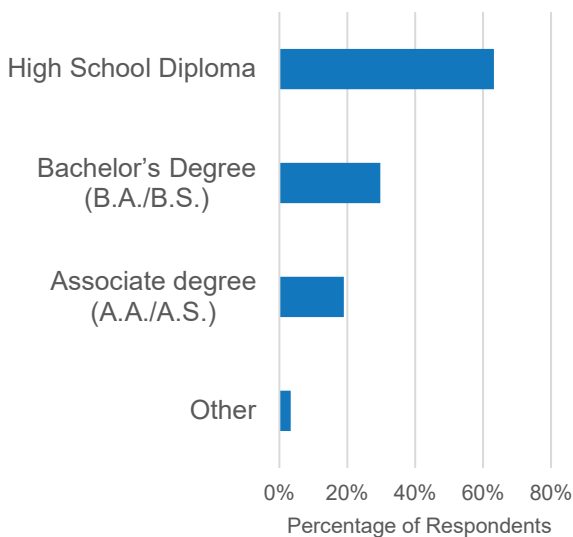
80% of Virtual NSLI-Y alumni respondents reported they are currently studying at a school or university. (The average age of our respondents was 17.2.) 24% reported they were volunteering, 22% reported having part-time or full-time employment, and 7% reported they were participating in an internship. Survey respondents were able to select more than one status (i.e.: employed part-time and studying).

For respondents currently seeking a degree, 63% are currently working towards their high school diploma and 30% are working towards their bachelor's degree. 3% of alumni reported that they are pursuing more than one degree at a time, such as a high school diploma and an associate degree. Of the 33% of respondents currently pursuing post-secondary education, common fields of study include foreign languages (19%), international affairs (16%), and political science (9%); 38% of these same respondents indicated that they are pursuing more than one field of study.

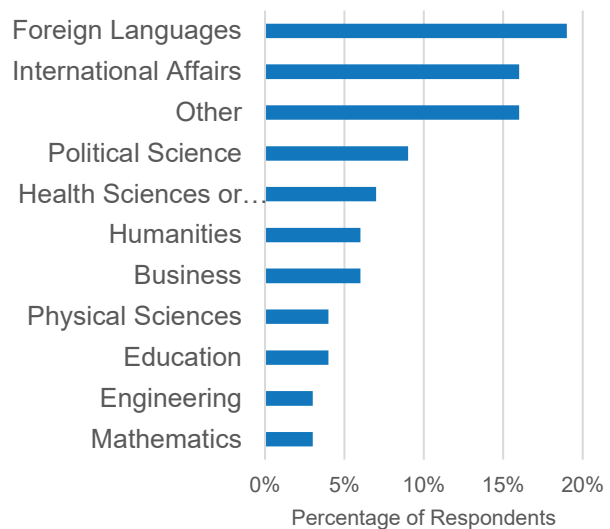
“Virtual NSLI-Y was an empowering experience that furthered my interest in language learning. It was an important factor in my decision to study international relations.”

Ilinca  
Virtual NSLI-Y Russian, Fall 2020

### LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINED



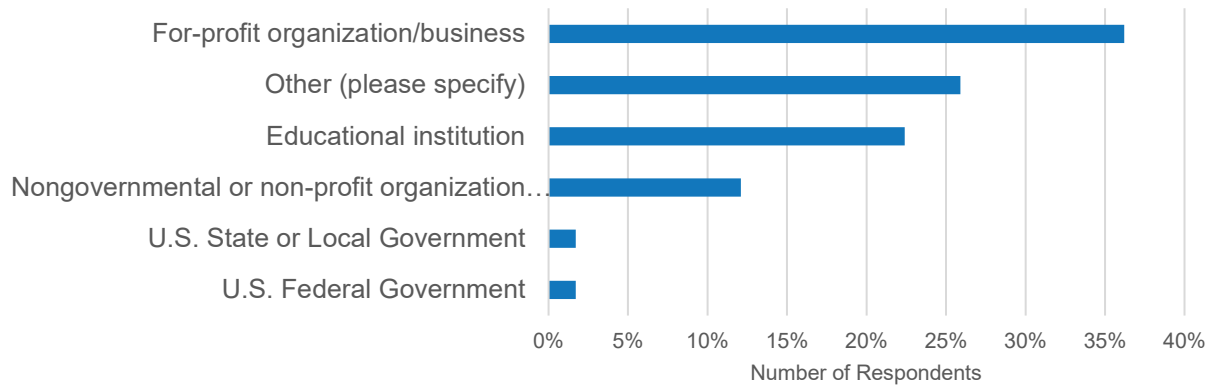
### TOP 10 CURRENT OR INTENDED FIELDS OF STUDY



Of Virtual NSLI-Y alumni respondents who are employed, 98% are employed part-time. 88% of those employed part-time are also studying at a school or university. These alumni contribute to a variety of sectors, including for-profit organizations and businesses (36%), educational institutions (22%), and nongovernmental or non-profit organizations (12%). Examples of places of part-time work include the Air National Guard and the Smithsonian Institution.

A few alumni shared how they use their target language skills in their place of work. One alumnus shared, “I work at an Asian restaurant. I can speak conversational Chinese there.” Another reported, “I live in a town with a prominent Russian community, deepening my understanding of the language has helped me better convey my ideas to the people around me. Not to mention, as a customer service employee, I can provide a better experience to those who speak my target language.”

### SECTORS OF ALUMNI EMPLOYMENT



“I found that the historical lessons and guest speakers were incredibly significant to the educational path that I later chose in university. The lessons affirmed my passion for global history and international politics.”

Trevor  
Virtual NSLI-Y Korean. Fall 2020

# U.S. Government Scholarships and Other Study Abroad Experiences

51% of survey respondents reported that they applied to participate in other U.S. Government initiatives to study language and/or participate in cultural exchange initiatives after receiving their Virtual NSLI-Y scholarship. The below chart reflects scholarships and initiatives with more than one applicant as reported by respondents.

Scholarship/Program	Number of Respondents who Applied	Number Awarded
Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship	2	1
Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX)	7	1
Critical Language Scholarship (CLS)	6	1
David L. Boren Scholarship or Fellowship	5	5
Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX Abroad)	7	1
NSLI-Y	91	39
STARTALK	10	6
The Language Flagship	2	1
Youth Exchange and Study Abroad (YES Abroad)	11	3

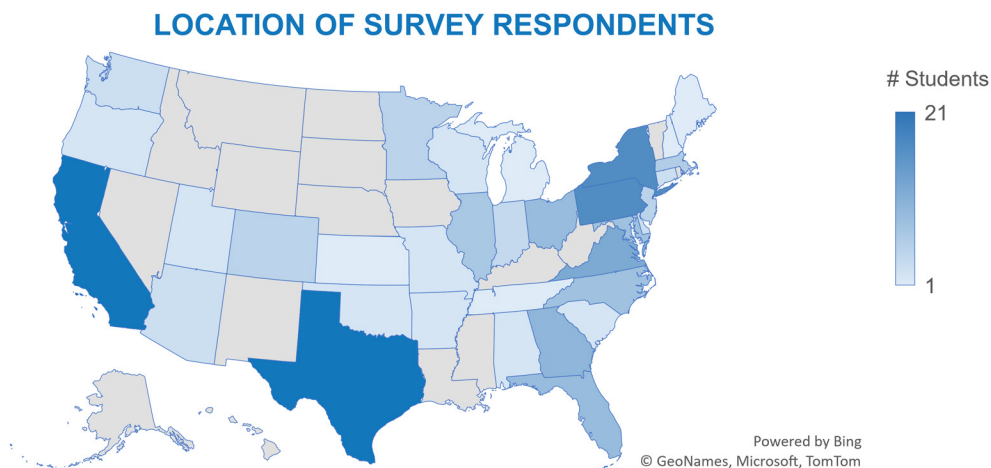
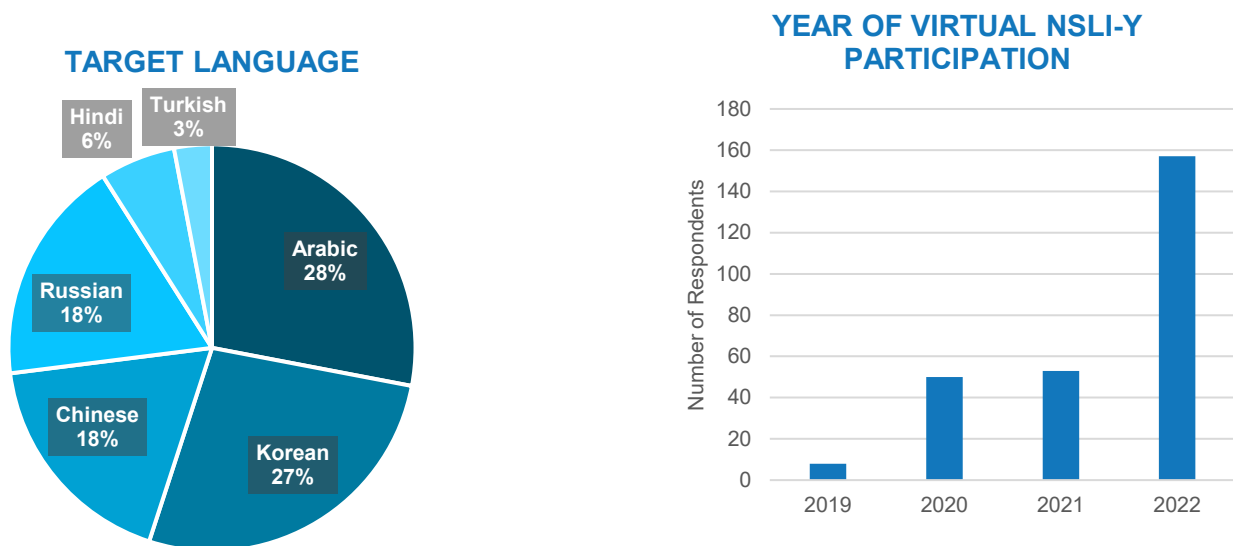
Top destinations or languages of study applied for through the above U.S. government-funded programs include:

1. **South Korea (Korean)**
2. **China (Chinese [Mandarin])**
3. **Morocco (Arabic)**
4. **Taiwan (Chinese [Mandarin])**
5. **Russia (Russian)**

# Demographic Information

270 alumni responded to the 2023 Virtual NSLI-Y alumni survey for a 38% response rate. Alumni who completed the program since Fall 2021 responded at a 55% rate. The average respondent age was 17.2, and 63% of respondents are currently still in high school. The top languages studied by respondents were Arabic (28%), Korean (27%), Chinese (18%), and Russian (18%). 87% of respondents considered themselves participants of a U.S. Department of State program.

14% of respondents said they have participated in International Exchange Alumni events. The most common event types these alumni attended were virtual events and webinars organized by International Exchange Alumni Association.



48% of respondents identified themselves as white, 23% identified themselves as Asian, 15% identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino, 7% identified themselves as Black or African American, 2% identified themselves as American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 2% identified themselves as Some Other Race.

70% of respondents identified as Female, forming the largest gender group among the respondents followed by Male (26%) and Non-binary (2%) respondents.

