

# TOP TRENDS



2021 NOW & NEXT

# TOP TRENDS 2021 – NOW & NEXT OVERVIEW

As the second pandemic year, 2021 was characterized by resilience, reprioritization, and reactions. Americans made shifts in their lives to prioritize better work/life balance, time with loved ones, and overall wellbeing. Beyond mere acknowledgments in 2020, values were supported with more tangible actions. Environmentally sustainable behaviors have become more mainstream and brands are making moves for greater diversity, equity, and inclusion in response to consumer demand. While the real world began to reopen more than the previous year, the virtual world also expanded with the broader adoption of NFTs, attention for cryptocurrency, and the introduction of the metaverse. The trends of 2021 have varying projected staying power, but all are likely to continue into the start of 2022 and many will shape the long-term future.





# GENERAL TRENDS

1. Brands as Citizens
2. Great Reprioritization
3. Inclusion in Action
4. Sustainability is in Style
5. Digital World and Social Currency



# BRANDS AS CITIZENS (NOW – NEAR TERM)

As a convergence between the existing trends of demand for business good and a rise in localism, we are now seeing brands engage as community members. In addition to the pandemic, 2021 brought local community-specific natural disasters and violent tragedies, giving businesses both big and small the opportunity and imperative to act. Consumers are looking to businesses to have a positive impact on society, starting in their own backyards, and are rewarding those who align with their values.

## 73%

**73%** of global respondents believe brands must act now for the good of society and the planet.

- HAVAS MEDIA GROUP

## 69%<sub>LEFT</sub> 70%<sub>RIGHT</sub>

**69%** of left-leaning and **70%** of right-leaning consumers are willing to forgo the convenience of online ordering to shop at local small businesses.

- AFLAC

## 2/5

More than **2 in 5** women under 40 want to buy from companies that use a percentage of their profits to help local communities.

- THE HARRIS POLL

## 77

The Waukesha County Community Foundation shows **77** organizations and businesses have had or will have their own fundraisers to benefit The United for Waukesha Community Fund, a fund organized to benefit the victims of the Waukesha Christmas Parade tragedy.

- MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL





# GREAT REPRIORITIZATION (NOW – MEDIUM TERM)

After a continued rollercoaster of unemployment and health concerns, Americans are doing more than just quitting their jobs, but are reprioritizing their lives and acting on their own major shifts. During this shuffle, job vacancies delay society from a rapid return to pre-pandemic growth. However, whether starting businesses, adjusting to a more flexible work arrangement, or simply focusing more on bettering themselves and others, the great reprioritization is a sign that positive change often happens amidst major disruption.

## 4.3MM

**4.3** million people (or nearly **3%** of the workforce) quit their jobs in the U.S. in August - the most on record.

- AP NEWS

CLOSE TO A QUARTER  
(23%) OF EMPLOYED  
AMERICANS PLAN TO  
QUIT THEIR JOBS IN  
THE NEXT 12 MONTHS.

- THE HARRIS POLL

## 89%

A large majority (**89%**) of startup entrepreneurs say that the pandemic has presented new innovative opportunities for their businesses.

- THE HARRIS POLL

## 49%

Around half of Americans report that they are prioritizing a better work life balance (**49%**).

- IPSOS

## 76%

Americans report lifestyle changes to serve their own betterment and that of society;

**(76%)** will continue to support charities they donated to this year due to the pandemic in the future

## 43%

**(43%)** plan to stay more connected to friends and family after the pandemic

## 42%

**(42%)** plan to stay more physically active.

- THE HARRIS POLL

## 81% 86%

**81%** of Gen Z and **86%** of Millennials say the pandemic has made them re-evaluate what is important in their life.

- KANTAR U.S. MONITOR





# SUSTAINABILITY IS IN STYLE (NOW – LONG TERM)

As climate change continues to be a looming concern over society, consumers are increasingly welcoming sustainable practices into their lifestyles. Once niche behaviors, buying electric vehicles and participating in sustainable fashion practices are just a few of the eco-friendly choices that are in style and broadly accepted. Vegetarianism is also gaining traction as an environmentally conscious lifestyle in the high-end foodie space showing that it is here to stay.

## 66%↑72%

**66%** of all respondents express some anxiety about how climate change will affect them personally, rising to **72%** of Gen Z.

- WUNDERMAN THOMPSON

The secondhand market is projected to reach **\$77 billion by 2025** — up from \$36 billion in 2021 — and is growing at 11x the rate of the broader retail clothing sector.

- YAHOO! NEWS

Madewell has opened its first secondhand store

- TRENDWATCHING

## 59%

**59%** of women agree that “shopping online is often wasteful with its packaging,” and **56%** agree “I’m staying away from fast fashion because it’s unsustainable.”

- THE HARRIS POLL

Foodie culture sacrifices meat-based menus in favor of sustainable consumption.

“Michelin star restaurant in New York ditches meat and goes plant-based”

- FOOD & LIVING VEGAN

## 1/2

Already half (**51%**) of US adults would consider buying an EV.

- THE HARRIS POLL





# INCLUSION IN ACTION (NOW – LONG TERM)

As an ongoing effort to improve society, diversity, equity and inclusion will remain imperative themes in our culture for years to come. Far beyond the early days of DEI work being seen as bonus initiatives, equitable and inclusive solutions that represent all people are now seen as foundational in brands' offerings. As a result, brands have shifted from a phase of avowals to actions and are redefining cultural norms.



## 12B

In the U.S., Biden is funneling over **\$12 billion** into disability services.

- TRENDWATCHING

## 52%

**52%** of corporate directors support tying executive compensation to DEI goals.

- PWC SURVEY VIA FORTUNE

“Target’s Teaming up with Diverse and Women-owned Businesses to Reimagine Beauty and Personal Care Products”

- TARGET CORPORATE

Luxury brands are re-inventing themselves to appeal to younger and more diverse audiences:

Tiffany’s new campaign with Beyonce and Jay Z is geared towards younger and more diverse consumers with familiarity highest among African Americans **(66%)**, Asian Americans **(67%)**, and Millennials **(72%)**.

- THE HARRIS POLL

Citizen Watches currently uses tennis star Naomi Osaka as a brand ambassador and among Gen Z and Millennials, Citizen has steadily improved in its perception as a fun, hip, and bold brand.

- THE HARRIS POLL



# DIGITAL WORLD AND SOCIAL CURRENCY

## (NOW – LONG TERM)

After experiencing a home-bound world in 2020, our culture is adopting a more limitless world through digital technology. Digital assets such as NFTs and cryptocurrencies continue to gain popularity while gaming platforms and social media companies build out the possibilities of virtual worlds and the metaverse. Brands can look for ways to get in on the action and reach consumers in a meaningful way digitally and in real life.

### 75%

A vast majority (**75%**) of parents with kids aged 3-9 say they have more screen time now than they did last year.

- MORNING CONSULT DATA IN AXIOS

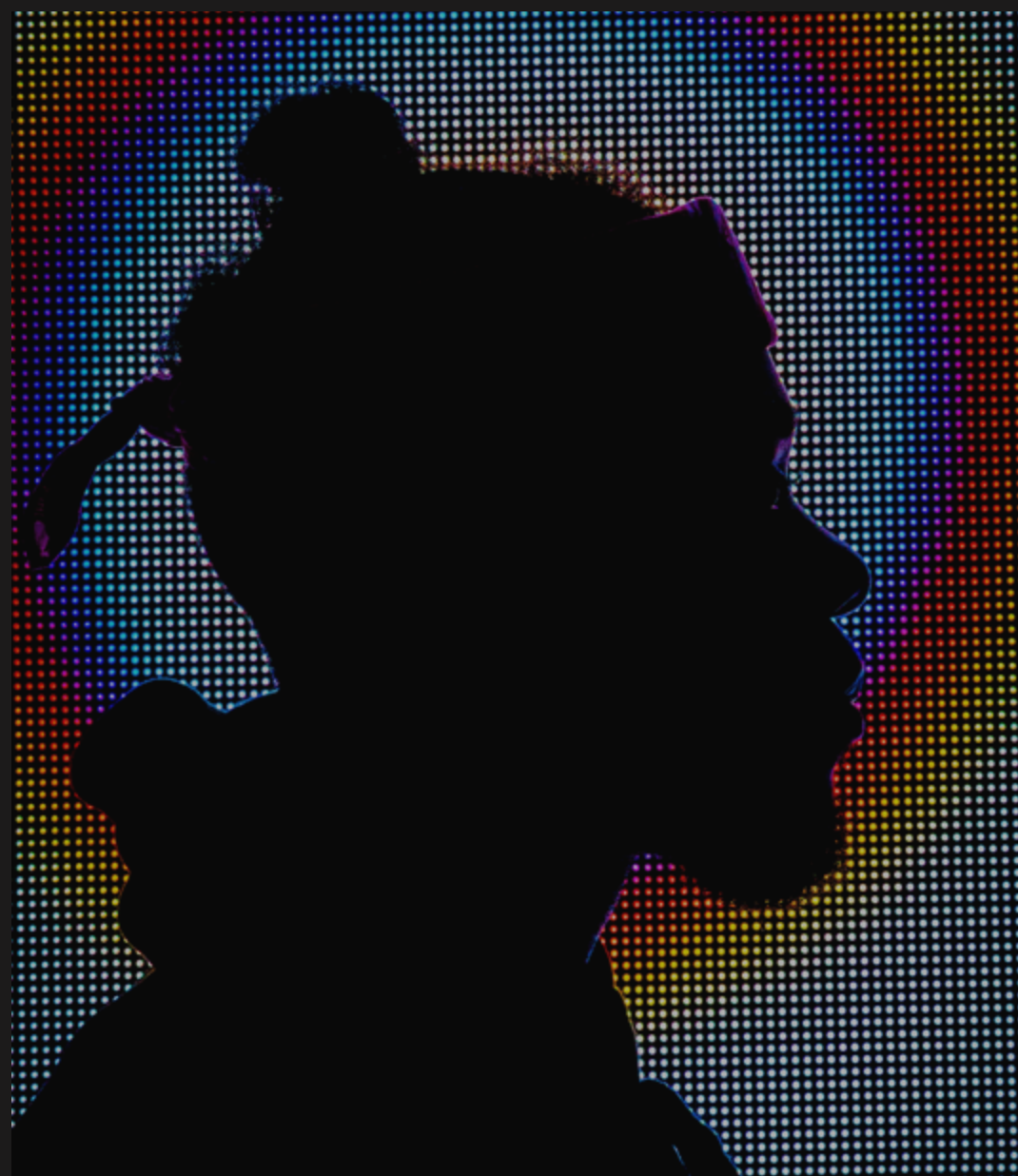
Gaming platform Roblox has become one of the most popular platforms for young kids. TikTok has become one of the hottest social apps, especially among older kids.

- MORNING CONSULT DATA IN AXIOS

### 48%

Nearly half (**48%**) of U.S. consumers reported investing money in cryptocurrency during the first half of the year.

- BUSINESS WIRE



### 22.5M

Robinhood had **22.5 million** active users in 2021 as trading cryptocurrency for hobby continued its popularity.

- BUSINESS OF APPS

### 7/10

**7 in 10 (70%)** Gen Z and Millennials are interested in interacting within the metaverse (vs **32%** of those over 40.)

- THE HARRIS POLL

Marriott International has released three art inspired NFTs at the Art Basel Miami as part of the Marriott Bonvoy rewards program.

- MARKETING DIVE



# HIGHER EDUCATION

1. Economics of Education
2. Wellness Imperative
3. Plentiful Career Pathways
4. Breaking Down Barriers
5. Racial Justice Rising



# HIGHER EDUCATION NOW & NEXT OVERVIEW

As the higher education space continues to adapt and evolve due to the pandemic and shifts in societal needs, college and graduate degrees remain of high value and importance. While there are now multitudes of career pathways, further expanded with virtual offerings, college education and liberal arts offer valuable soft skills expressed as most important in the job market by over a third of Americans (Best Colleges). Higher education institutes are also acting on their imperative values of both wellness and racial justice, all while continuing to prove their worth as a valuable life investment.





# ECONOMICS OF EDUCATION (NOW – NEAR TERM)

Despite the cost of higher education, many still view the value to be worth the investment. However, greater conversations around financial implications of a higher education degree are needed as students and parents navigate these large life decisions, many of whom turn to heavy student loan burden or drop out altogether. Institutions have an opportunity to communicate long term ROI and cost-conscious options for potential students to be able to achieve their goals in line with their financial state.

## 71% → 77%

**71%** of US respondents agree that getting a college degree is worth the investment, up to **77%** for Gen Z.

- KANTAR U.S. MONITOR Q4 2021 DATA

However, **64%** of Gen Z and **67%** of Millennials agree that student loan debt has made them question whether it's a good idea for students to go to college.

- KANTAR U.S. MONITOR Q4 2021 DATA

Current students and graduates in repayment held an estimated **\$136.3** billion in private student loans as of March.

- INSIDE HIGHER ED

## 24%

Of students who drop out of college, nearly a quarter (**24%**) cited financial reasons.

- ED SURGE

## 31%

**31%** of Gen Zers cited “personal education” as the major purchase they put off in the past few months because of personal finance worries.

- KANTAR U.S. MONITOR Q4 2021 DATA

Top sources of college funding:

Parent income and savings **45%**

Scholarships **16%**

Student borrowing  
(average of \$8,775) **11%**

- SALLIE MAE SURVEY IN UNIVERSITY BUSINESS

## 38%

Only **38%** of families and students have talked about post-college options and savings, including how lucrative their career paths will be when they graduate and the potential for post-graduate studies.

- SALLIE MAE SURVEY IN UNIVERSITY BUSINESS





# WELLNESS IMPERATIVE (NOW – MEDIUM TERM)

After nearly two years of hyperfocus on health and wellbeing within higher education, the bar has been raised for students and faculty health to be a top priority. Some wellbeing improvements have been made among students as a result of the increased acknowledgement of mental health challenges. However, more work is needed for both students and faculty to feel that their wellbeing is fully supported by the institution they are a part of.

## 73% 48%

A recent survey highlighted that the most pressing issue facing university presidents is the mental health of students (**73%**) followed closely by the mental health of faculty and staff (**48%**).

– AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION SURVEY

## 47%

**47%** of students say they could have used some or a lot more support from their college during this time.

– INSIDE HIGHER ED STUDENT VOICE SURVEY

## 67%

**67%** said the COVID-19 pandemic had caused them to give more thought to their mental health as part of their overall wellness.

– HEALIO

## 20

About **20** California community colleges have partnered with TimelyMD to provide around-the-clock virtual health and wellness services.

– CAMPUS TECHNOLOGY

## 25%

However, there has been a **25%** decline in the number of students who said they felt somewhat or considerably more stressed this year than in previous years.

– HEALIO





# PLENTIFUL CAREER PATHWAYS (NOW – LONG TERM)

As educational institutions ramped up their digital offerings out of necessity, many will keep these flexible and hybrid learning options as permanent shifts in academic availability and as their key to much needed enrollment growth. Virtual learning added to the various pathways, from community colleges to traditional four-year universities, creates an array of options for adults to choose from in establishing their careers. Despite ongoing barriers that will need to be addressed, the variety of options open pathways for more non-traditional students to enroll, and encourage pursuit of graduate degrees as solutions to society's needs and students' aspirations.

## 59% VS. 41%

When asked what they believe is the better way for a young person to get ahead in life, **59%** of US respondents say getting a college education vs. only **41%** who say starting to work as soon as possible. These values go up to **64%**, and **36%**, respectively, for Gen Z.

- KANTAR U.S. MONITOR Q4 2021 DATA

## 47% 43%

**47%** of Gen Z would rather spend the entire time in college at a four-year university/college vs. **43%** who would rather start at a two-year school and finish at a four-year institution.

- KANTAR U.S. MONITOR Q4 2021 DATA

## 66%→69%

**66%** of US respondents agree that getting a graduate degree is worth the investment, up to **69%** for Gen Z.

- KANTAR U.S. MONITOR Q4 2021 DATA

## 19.9%

Societal challenges have shaped preferences in advanced education. Graduate degrees in computer and information sciences and support services have increased **19.9%** YOY and biological and biomedical sciences degrees have increased **9.5%** YOY.

- NATIONAL STUDENT CLEARINGHOUSE RESEARCH CENTER DATA IN THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Online Education is predicted to increase at a compound annual growth rate of **9.23%**, reaching **\$319.167** billion by 2025.

- RESEARCH AND MARKETS DATA IN FINANCES ONLINE

"A hybrid approach will allow institutions to become more resilient during future disruptions, whether pandemics or natural disasters; help institutional leaders better manage costs and pedagogical demands; and, ultimately, become more student-centered."

- DELOITTE

However, nearly 80% of students said trouble concentrating has been the biggest barrier to successful online learning.

- HEALIO

There has been an increase in cybersecurity threats targeting universities attempting to steal university login credentials, with thousands of messages targeted to dozens of universities in North America leveraging concern over the Omicron variant.

- PROOFPOINT

# BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS (NOW – LONG TERM)

The pandemic and recent racial justice movements have resurfaced the concern of higher education barriers in the application process. Standardized tests are becoming less standard as many question whether their bias excludes capable candidates of less privileged groups, or if these admittedly imperfect measures of merit are still the most effective way for institutions to gauge college readiness. Furthermore, there have been shifts in demographics from those applying, with students who have the highest financial need reluctant to apply.

The percentage of FAFSA applications dropped in 2020-21 to **68%**, a nearly **10%** decrease from 2018-19 and an **18%** decline since 2016-17. The No. 1 reason they don't apply is that they feel they won't qualify.

-SALLIE MAE SURVEY IN UNIVERSITY BUSINESS

## 30%

**30%** of students are too overwhelmed to finish the application process.

- COVID-19 IMPACT ON FALL 2021 STUDY CARNEGIE DARTLET

## 51%

**51%** of Americans agree standardized tests are inherently biased in favor of affluent students.

- THE HARRIS POLL

Top Proposed Alternative Measures for College Preparedness

High school grades **58%**

Interviews **49%**

Teacher recommendations **47%**

Academic/extracurricular awards **41%**

- THE HARRIS POLL

The University of California system—which called for eliminating the ACT/SAT as an admissions requirement as far back as 2001—officially removed testing as of November 2021.

- JEFF SELINGO LINKEDIN





# RACIAL JUSTICE RISING (NOW – LONG TERM)

Faced with historic inequities across the higher education system, racial groups and allies are calling on higher education to make meaningful and lasting changes. The recent racial injustice conversations in culture have accelerated the pressure for universities to take action – and many have responded.

## 62%

**62%** of students surveyed strongly or somewhat agree that higher education has a role to play in racial justice and racial equality in the United States.

- COLLEGE PULSE

## 73%

**73%** of students believe the recruitment and retention of diverse staff will influence change.

- BEST COLLEGES

Black parents are most likely to be fearful of their children dropping out of college (**26% vs. 23% White, 18% Hispanic, and 21% Asian**)

- KANTAR U.S. MONITOR Q4 2021 DATA

Universities reconsider what historical figures are honored

Clemson University removed the name of John C. Calhoun, who held that slavery was a “positive good,” from its honors college.

-THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Western Carolina University dropped the name of the segregationist former governor Clyde R. Hoey from an auditorium.

-THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Universities offer trainings & courses to combat racism

University of Louisville instituted the Cardinal Anti-Racism Agenda which includes a wide range of programs such as the Black Male Initiative, which seeks to increase the retention, graduation and engagement of Black males, a consortium for social justice-related research, and enhanced programming related to structural racism.

- THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

This fall, Duke University held its first antiracism training program for freshmen.

- THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION







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