

The Gap Year: Survey Data & Results

Survey Conducted by Hostelworld

September 2016

General Findings

- **25.93 percent** of survey respondents have taken a gap year, while **74.07 percent** have not.
- Of those who have taken a gap year, **35.91 percent** took their gap year when they were 30 or older. Only **5.02 percent** report taking a gap year during high school. Over half (**59.85 percent**) of all respondents who took a gap year did so after college.
- The majority (**39.77 percent**) of those who have taken a gap year did so for personal reasons. An additional **33.20 percent** sighted “other” reasons, including illness, family care and unemployment. Only **10.42 percent** of those who have taken a gap year took time off to travel.
- The majority (**39 percent**) of those who have taken a gap year spent that time at home. **26.64 percent** spent that time working and 14.29 percent spent time traveling — either long term or short term.
- Those who spent time traveling during their gap year cited the following as top benefits: I learned about other places / people / cultures (**83.33 percent**), I had new experiences (**80.56 percent**), I learned about myself (**66.67 percent**), I met new people / made new friends (**61.11 percent**), I was creatively inspired (**50 percent**), I came back better prepared for school / work (**44.44 percent**).
- Of those who have not taken a gap year, only **26.48 percent** have taken a one-to-six-month break away from school or work. Of those that did take extended time off, **55.12 percent** cited “other” reasons for doing so, including maternity leave, raising a family and illness.
- Of those who have not taken a gap year, **62.27 percent** said they would not consider taking a gap year at some point before or after college. The reason? The majority (**37.03 percent**) said they can’t financially afford to take a gap year.
- Of the **37.73 percent** of people who said they would consider taking a gap year, the majority (**66.89 percent**) said they would most like to spend the time traveling - **45.86 percent** to other countries and **21.03 percent** around the United States. Those interested in traveling are most (**92.19 percent**) interested in learning about other places / people / cultures. Only **1.04 percent** said they didn’t believe there were any benefits of traveling.

Variations by Age

- **50.60 percent** of those under the age of 30 that have not taken a gap year would consider doing so at some point before or after college. The majority (**69.05 percent**) said they would most like to spend time traveling - **51.19 percent** to other countries and **17.86 percent** around the United States.

Variations by Gender

- Women are more likely than men to have taken a gap year — **29.98 percent** of women have taken a gap year compared to **21.05 percent** of men.
- Women are also more likely to take extended time away from work or school — **33.16 percent** of women have taken extended time off compared to **20.51 percent** of men.

Variations by Income

- Regardless of income, the number one reason respondents said they would not take a gap year is because they can’t financially afford to do so.

Variations by Employment Status

- **61.82 percent** of full-time students who have not yet taken a gap year would consider doing so. Of those full-time students who would consider taking a gap year, **70.59 percent** said they would like to spend that time traveling — **55.88 percent** would prefer to travel to other countries and **14.71 percent** would prefer to travel around the United States. Of full-time students who would not consider taking a gap year, the majority (**52.38 percent**) said it is because their education or job comes first.
- Comparatively, just **38.89 percent** of employed respondents (full-time and part-time) who have not yet taken a gap year said they would consider doing so. Those who said they would not take a gap year cited finances as the number one deterrent.
- Unemployed respondents were least likely to cite interest in taking a gap year if they had not already done so — **29.09 percent** said they would consider taking a gap year. Unsurprisingly, the primary concern for those who would not consider taking a gap year is that they believe they can't financially afford to take one.

Variations by Extend Time Off

- Those who have taken extend time off from school or work are more likely to consider taking a gap year in the future — **52.68 percent** said they would consider taking a gap year at some point. Meanwhile, only **32.34 percent** of those who have not taken extend time off from school or work said they would consider taking a gap year in the future.
- Those who took extended time off to travel were overwhelmingly more likely to consider taking a gap year in the future — **85.71 percent** said they would consider taking a gap year in the future.

Methodology

Hostelworld set out to uncover United States citizens' opinions about taking gap years, defined as a one year break away from school and/or work. The company conducted an online survey via SurveyMonkey of over 1,000 US citizens in September 2016. Respondents were between the ages of 18 and 100 and lived in the United States.