

DATA POINT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NCES 2017-005 MAY 2017

The Education and Work Plans of Public High School Students

This report uses data from the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSL:09). HSL:09 is a nationally representative, longitudinal study of more than 23,000 students who were first surveyed in fall 2009, when they were in the ninth grade, and then again in spring 2012, when most were in the eleventh grade. Students who had been held back and high school dropouts were also included in the 2012 follow-up. This report includes data for the 2009 *public school* students who participated in the 2012 follow-up.

This Data Point examines the activity that these students expected would be their primary focus in the fall of 2013. These activities were divided into three groups: postsecondary education, work (including military service), or some other activity (including starting a family, caring for one's own children, or attending high school or a high school completion program). Students' plans were examined for

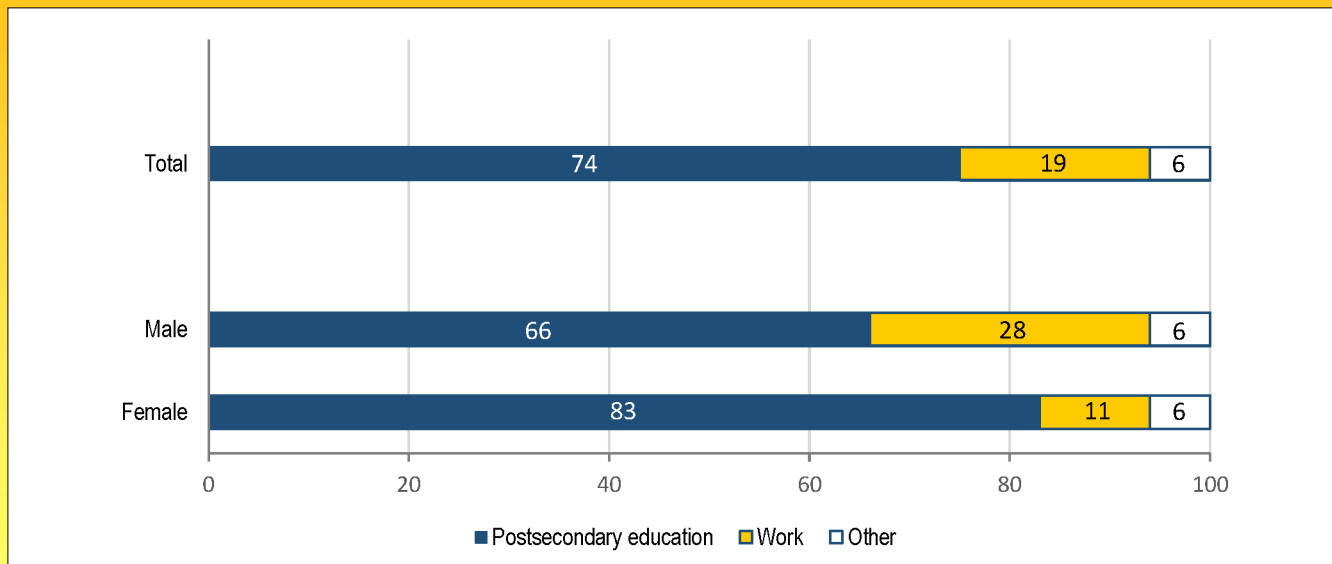
students overall and by sex and family socioeconomic status (SES).¹ Students were divided into three groups based on their SES quintile ranking: the top quintile (high SES), middle three quintiles (middle SES), and bottom quintile (low SES).

Most students expected their primary activity for the

year after high school to be postsecondary education.

Overall, 94 percent of public high school students from the 2009 ninth-grade cohort expected their main activity in 2013 would be either postsecondary education or work, with about three-quarters (74 percent) expecting their main activity to be postsecondary education, and 19 percent expecting their main activity to be work (figure 1).²

FIGURE 1. Percentage distribution of fall 2009 public school ninth-graders as of 2012 according to their primary plan for fall 2013, by sex: 2012



NOTE: Standard errors for estimates can be found at <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ctes/tables/h159.asp>. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSL:09), First Follow-up Restricted-Use Data File.

To learn more about the data collection used in this report, visit <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/hsls09>. For questions about content or to view this report online, go to <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2017005>.

Although 94 percent of both male and female students expected to either continue their education or work in 2013, their primary activity differed by sex. A higher proportion of female than male students expected their main activity to be postsecondary education (83 percent of females versus 66 percent of males), whereas a higher proportion of males than females expected their main activity to be work (28 percent of males versus 11 percent of females).

Students' expectations for postsecondary education increased as family SES increased, and their expectations for working and for pursuing other activities decreased as SES increased.

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Although the majority of students from each SES group expected their main 2013 activity to be postsecondary education, the proportions of low- and high-SES students with this expectation differed by over 20 percentage points—64 percent of low-SES students expected to primarily be pursuing postsecondary education, compared to 88 percent of high-SES students (figure 2). Conversely, although a minority of students from each SES group expected that their main 2013 activity would be work, 27 percent of low-

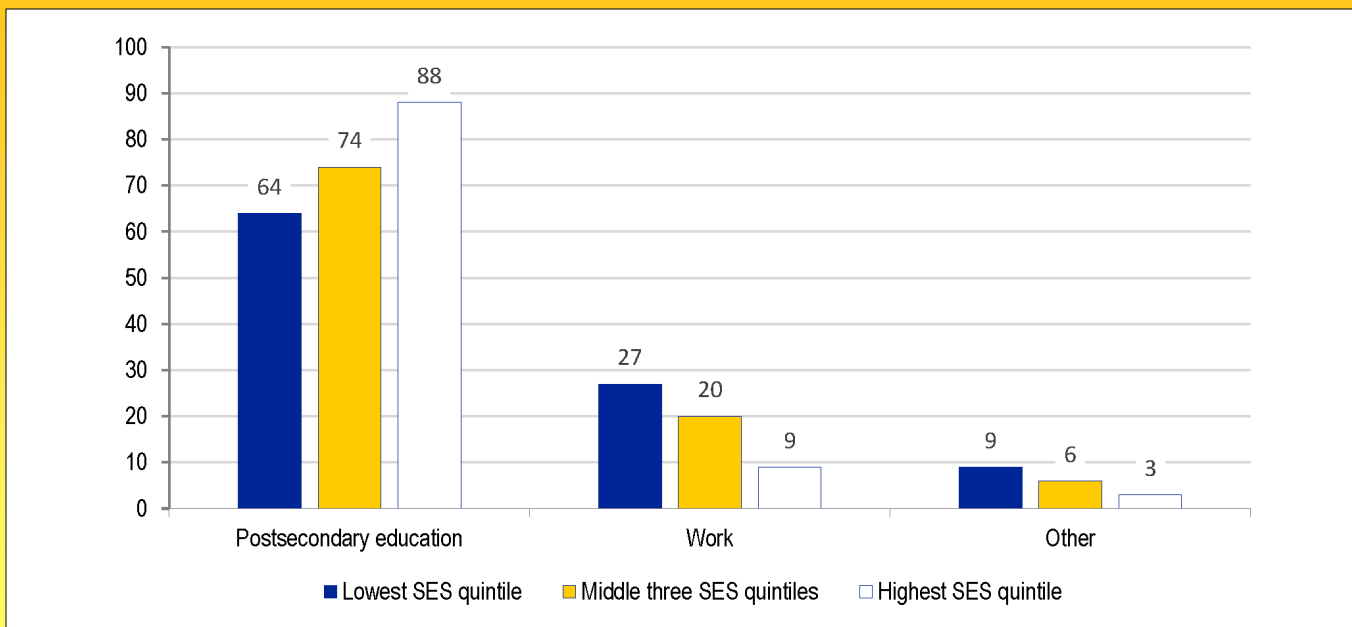
SES students had this expectation, compared to 9 percent of high-SES students.

Endnotes

¹ Family SES is a composite measure constructed as an average of the values from five variables: the highest education of each parent, the occupation prestige score of each parent, and family income.

² The 94 percent estimate in the text differs from the sum in figure 1 (93 percent) because the text estimate is based on unrounded values while the figure shows rounded values.

FIGURE 2. Percentage distribution of fall 2009 public school ninth-graders as of spring 2012 according to their primary plan for fall 2013, by socioeconomic status (SES): 2012



NOTE: Standard errors for estimates can be found at <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ctes/tables/h159.asp>. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSL:09), First Follow-up Restricted-Use Data File.

This National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Data Point presents information on education topics of current interest. It was authored by Ceylan Oymak of NuCoreVision, Inc. Estimates based on samples are subject to sampling variability, and apparent differences may not be statistically significant. All stated

differences are statistically significant at the .05 level. In the design, conduct, and data processing of NCES surveys, efforts are made to minimize effects of nonsampling errors, such as item nonresponse, measurement error, data processing error, or other systematic error.