MEASURING OUR IMPACT
2020 ROADTRIP NATION IMPACT REPORT

CONFIDENCE, CAREER ENGAGEMENT & MOTIVATION TO PERSIST
19 YEARS
OF ROADTRIPS
Roadtrip Nation is a nonprofit organization that humanizes career exploration through story and empowers individuals to connect their interests to fulfilling lives and careers.

We believe there’s power in doing work that’s true to who you are. That’s why we’ve dedicated ourselves to helping people explore career possibilities that connect to their interests. We seek out inspiring individuals who’ve built lives around what they love, then share their stories in award-winning documentaries on public television and through an online archive featuring thousands of conversations about struggle and success. We also provide a framework for how to navigate the career journey, with programs and courses, career discovery resources, live events, and our New York Times bestselling career guide, “Roadmap.” Along the way, we have benefited from world-class partnerships with great nonprofits, mission-driven corporations, foundations, and people who believe in empowering career seekers to define their own roads in life.

We took our first road trip in 2001, guided by the question of how to build a life doing what you love. The answers we found showed us that this was bigger than our journey alone. Since then, we’ve been driven by one mission: to create a movement of people empowered to define their own roads in life.
Dear Friends of Roadtrip Nation,

For many years, you’ve asked, “Where are the roadtrippers now?” In many ways, this is the question for Roadtrip Nation. Did this experience make a real difference in the life trajectory of the people who hit the road with us? Was it a fleeting moment of inspiration, or was it something deeper?

We've heard anecdotally over the years that the road trip was a breakthrough and a life-changing experience—particularly for those from underrepresented groups. However, we needed more data to back that claim up and, equally important, to more deeply understand the specific ways that the experience impacted them so we can continue to improve our work.

In partnership with Strada Education Network, the nonprofit network that Roadtrip Nation joined in 2016, we spent much of 2019 and 2020 going back and asking some of these big questions of the roadtripper alumni. Alongside that work, we developed a comprehensive Theory of Change for Roadtrip Nation, in partnership with Cicero Group, to pinpoint the most important questions to ask, and to ensure that those impact points were tracking toward longer-term goals and impact (see page 112 for our full Theory of Change).

By way of this report, we’re incredibly excited to share the outcomes of this project. We now more deeply understand the specific impact points for those whom we serve and how they differ for people from underrepresented backgrounds; and we’ve identified improvements we can make to both deepen the experience and scale it to larger numbers of career seekers.

This report is part of an ongoing commitment to annually measure different areas of our work. For our first area of focus, it made sense to start with the longest running component of Roadtrip Nation: our road trips.

In 2021, our focus will turn to the Roadtrip Nation Experience, the project-based learning program we’ve been implementing with underrepresented groups for the past 10 years. There has been some great research already conducted on this program, funded by the Hewlett Foundation, which you can access on roadtripnation.org, but in 2021, we’ll be turning our attention to our new virtual, open-access release of the program that is set for greater scale.

Just as our roadtrippers have each been on quite the journey since their trip, so has Roadtrip Nation. As we’ve grown and expanded our work, we’ve constantly tried to balance preserving the heart and core of Roadtrip Nation, while also trying to improve and be better for those whom we serve.

For those of you who’ve been on this journey with us, we thank you sincerely.

We hope that you see your thumbprint in this impact, and know that it has truly taken a village to make all of this a reality.

Here’s to the road ahead,

Mike, Brian, Nathan and the Roadtrip Nation Team
We send people out on the road to venture beyond what they know. They are not hosts reading a script. They are not a cast to be directed. These roadtrippers are real people, poised at a turning point, looking for guidance, and they find it in the life stories of the people they meet on the road. Roadtrippers come on the road with us to get inspiration, and to find possibilities for their future—but they're also sharing their own stories to empower those who are coming up behind them, who also need exposure to what's possible.

We tell the story of the roadtrippers’ journeys, but the experience is so much more than what ends up onscreen. Throughout this report, we focus on individual roadtrippers, but the team element is fundamental to a successful road trip—through interviews and conversations with applicants, we choose a team of roadtrippers that will work together to grow as a team, and individually. That team also extends to include the members of our staff who not only film the trip, but guide and mentor the roadtrippers.

That relationship starts from the moment the roadtrippers are selected—when they begin to take part in weekly team calls to plan their road trip and get to know each other. Learning how to plan, reach out, and readjust to changes is core to the trip's impact—it’s an incredibly important part of taking ownership of the experience, and for roadtrippers to build confidence that they have the skills and the power to reach out and develop their own social capital after the trip as well.

Before they hit the road, the roadtrippers travel to Roadtrip Nation HQ to learn how to drive a 36-foot RV and get a deep dive into what makes a meaningful interview. They go from never having interviewed someone before to interviewing someone on camera, where they create engaging and natural conversations that are driven by their real questions. That’s because we spend time on what makes for a good conversation, which starts with being vulnerable and sharing their own challenges and stories, and developing what they really want to know and ask—not just giving them a sheet of scripted questions.

To us, these less-seen parts of the road trip are essential—and we’ve kept them as a core part of the experience for this reason. We’ve seen this engagement and ownership come through in this report and beyond, in our project-based learning program that’s based on the road trip experience, where over 300,000 students since 2008 have completed our course and reached out to have conversations with people in careers that align with their interests.

When the last mile is driven, the road trip may be over, but our relationships and connections to the roadtrippers remain. They often continue to share their experiences and stories—on stage, on camera, or at student-engagement events and conferences. Their willingness to pass on what they’ve learned and be role models for others ensures that their experiences reverberate and impact so many others who, as a result, are empowered to define their own roads.
“THE ROAD TRIP BUILT BRIDGES BETWEEN MY COMFORT ZONE AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD in the form of life-changing conversations—stepping foot into the world and work of some impressive leaders, and literally driving the miles from location to location.”
Our roadtrippers come from a broad range of backgrounds, life experiences, and educational paths. Respondents were 59% female and 28 years old on average. 76% had an associate degree or higher, 71% are currently employed, and 24% are currently students. 36% identified as first generation college students and 43% received a lunch subsidy during their K-12 education.

Over the last five years, the proportional mix of roadtrippers who are ethnically diverse, first-generation college students, received a lunch subsidy during school, or who identify as part of a historically disadvantaged group has been increasing. Between 2003 and 2011, 66% of roadtrippers identified as at least one of these four groups. From 2012 to 2018, that number was 91%.

RACED/ETHNICITY

- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: 4%
- Hispanic or Latino: 19%
- White: 45%
- Black, African American or African: 21%
- Asian: 22%
- Middle Eastern or North African: 1%
- Decline to State: 2%
- Other: 6%
- Native American/Alaska Native: 2%
- Other: 6%
- Decline to State: 2%
- White: 45%
- Other: 6%
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: 4%
- Hispanic or Latino: 19%
- White: 45%
- Black, African American or African: 21%
- Asian: 22%
- Middle Eastern or North African: 1%

AGE

- 18-24: 39%
- 25-34: 39%
- 45-54: 2%

First generation college students: 36%
Highly disadvantaged: 45%
Low-income: 44%
EDUCATION

- HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS: 5%
- SOME COLLEGE: 19%
- COLLEGE CERT./ASSOC. DEGREE: 6%
- BACHELOR'S DEGREE: 48%
- GRADUATE DEGREE OR HIGHER: 22%

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

- EMPLOYED FULL-TIME: 48%
- EMPLOYED PART-TIME: 11%
- SELF-EMPLOYED: 12%
- STUDENT: 24%
- SEARCHING FOR EMPLOYMENT: 3%
- TAKING CARE OF CHILDREN: 2%
- RETIRED: 1%

Approximately 2 out of 3 roadtrippers are currently employed, while 1 in 4 is currently a student. When we adjust for currently enrolled students and people who are retired, 94% of roadtrippers are employed.

REPRESENTED FIELDS & INDUSTRIES

Roadtrippers work in a diverse range of industries and fields that connect to a wide range of interests.

- EDUCATION, TRAINING & LIBRARY: 17%
- ARTS, DESIGN, ENTERTAINMENT & MEDIA: 16%
- COMPUTER & MATHEMATICAL: 12%
- BUSINESS, FINANCIAL, INSURANCE, REAL ESTATE OR CONSULTING: 10%
- MANAGER, EXECUTIVE OR OFFICIAL: 9%
- OFFICE & ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT WORKER: 5%
- INSTALLATION, MAINTENANCE OR REPAIR WORKER: 4%
- SMALL BUSINESS OWNER: 4%
- COMMUNITY & SOCIAL SERVICES: 3%
- HEALTHCARE: 3%
- LEGAL: 3%
- ALL OTHER (SUM OF ALL SECTORS BELOW 3% RESPONSE): 16%
KEY FINDINGS
MORE ENGAGED IN WORK
The roadtrippers are thriving on their career path and it’s clear that their road trip had a significant role to play in their success. The fact that the roadtrippers are finding success at work is really exciting—the world will be a better place for their engagement and contributions.

94% OF ROADTRIPPERS ARE EMPLOYED, AND 92% REPORT THAT THEIR WORK IS ENGAGING

Impact on the roadtrippers’ career trajectory was top of mind when we set out to conduct this study. With career exploration as a fundamental intent of the road trip, it was important for us to know if the experience was producing the desired effects. We’re proud to say that the roadtrippers highly rated the impact of the road trip on their career paths, rating its effect as 8 out of 10, on average.

“After my road trip, I doubled down on the business I was working on thanks to my newfound sense of purpose. I eliminated impostor syndrome from my vocabulary, stopped comparing myself to others, landed features in publications, and it’s only up from here. I WOULDN’T BE WHERE I AM TODAY WITHOUT ROADTRIP NATION.”

BENCHMARK STUDY:
Gallup found that in 2019, the percentage of “engaged” workers in the U.S.—those who are highly involved in, enthusiastic about and committed to their work and workplace—reached an all-time high of 35% since Gallup began tracking the metric in 2000.*

MY JOB GIVES ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO WORK THAT ENGAGES ME

- 92% Agree Strongly
- 60% Agree Somewhat
- 32% Neutral
- 1% Disagree Somewhat
- 4% Disagree Strongly

PERCENTAGE OF ROADTRIPPERS WHO AGREE THAT THEIR JOB GIVES THEM THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO WORK THEY FIND ENGAGING

92%

When we focused on the specific areas of the road trip experience that relate to career path and workplace skills, roadtrippers reported that there were two parts of the road trip that were most valuable: “meeting people like me who have succeeded in life by pursuing areas of interest” and “conducting interviews with influential people.” The impact of these two points was even greater for roadtrippers who were first-generation college students or identified as low-income. (See Greater Impact for Subgroups, on page 84)

**WORKPLACE SATISFACTION**

**I HAVE THE IDEAL JOB FOR ME**

- **Agree Strongly**: 26%
- **Agree Somewhat**: 40%
- **Neutral**: 19%
- **Disagree Somewhat**: 10%
- **Disagree Strongly**: 5%

**66%**

**MY JOB IS CLOSELY ALIGNED TO MY INTERESTS**

- **Agree Strongly**: 47%
- **Agree Somewhat**: 38%
- **Neutral**: 9%
- **Disagree Somewhat**: 5%
- **Disagree Strongly**: 1%

**84%**

**CAREER SATISFACTION**

**MY WORK IS REWARDING**

- **Extremely**: 29%
- **Very**: 42%
- **Somewhat**: 23%
- **Not Very**: 5%
- **Not at All**: 1%

**71%**

**BENCHMARK STUDY:**
The Addison Group, a provider of professional staffing services, and Kelton Global, a global insights firm, surveyed 1,006 adults in the workforce about their work preferences and attitudes. The survey found that fewer than one in four workers (24%) said their present role is their ideal job.*

*https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/millennials-raises-promotions-generations.aspx
After the road trip, 92% felt more confident in exploring new career opportunities

**BENCHMARK STUDY:**
In a survey of U.S. students, Ellucian, a market leader in charting the digital future of higher education, found that just under half of all students are confident in their career path when they enroll in college. Millennials were the least confident (46%), followed by Gen Z (52%), and Gen X (56%).

There was one interview in particular with an advertising CEO on Madison Avenue and—while I wasn’t planning a career in creative marketing—I was utterly hypnotized by the interview. The environment, creativity, and passion ignited my curiosity in the career path. I then worked my way into this industry and never looked back.

“The road trip showed me careers I didn’t know existed.”
WHERE ARE THEY NOW

The interviews were a lightbulb moment where I went, **OH! AUTHENTICITY AND HAVING A JOB ARE NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE.** I learned to say here’s who I am, here’s what I love, and I’m going to pursue that in a way that is unabashed. It is about being true, confident, and clear-headed about what makes me happy—and I will figure out a pathway to build the rest of my life around that.”

—Ryan Duffy, “Roadtrip Nation: Destination Unknown,” 2004

WHERE ARE THEY NOW:

When Ryan Duffy hit the road with us in 2004, he knew what he cared about most, but he didn’t think the world would take it seriously. From his limited experience and exposure up to that point, documentary storytelling was something to put away during the week and take out on weekends. The transformation of the road trip for him was realizing that jobs existed where he could be fully himself. On his trip, he saw those careers for the first time, and he’s gone on to build his own career as a journalist, producer and host for Vice’s Emmy Award-winning HBO series and National Geographic Explorer. His exploring days with us gave him the foundation for his globetrotting adventures as a journalist, going into uncertain and uncharted reporting situations in North Korea, Colombia, and more.
"My road trip pushed me to see endless possibilities of how I could use my talents, education, and passion to live a meaningful life beyond a restricted career path. I was able to see more possibilities and opportunities within my field. Now, I work hard at my job and also work hard beyond my job to create those opportunities."

"The road trip was instrumental in letting me see the possibilities out there for people with doctoral degrees. The diversity of career paths we encountered and the travel itself gave me the courage to move across the country to pursue the next step in my career."

"I entered my road trip thinking I was interested in business, specifically finance. After spending time with the crew and talking to people in this industry about what they wished they had done differently, I realized that though I still wish to be in the general field of business, I want to pursue work in creative industries. THE TRIP PUSHED ME TO WORK TOWARD A CAREER I HAVE A PASSION FOR RATHER THAN SETTLING."

"I was unsure whether what I was doing was right for me or not. THE ROAD TRIP EXPOSED ME TO SO MANY DIFFERENT VIEWS AND OPPORTUNITIES, I FEEL I WILL BE SUCCESSFUL WITH ANYTHING I DO. That just so happens to be staying on the path I was already on."

"I stayed in the same field, but the opportunities that I learned about through my road trip changed the direction of my career completely. They helped me discover an intense passion for my career and showed me amazing opportunities in my field."

"It made me realize I did not have to pursue a career based on salary and that my career path did not have to be traditional and linear. I could explore and experiment, and for the first time I realized that the path I take is not set in stone."

"The biggest impact Roadtrip Nation had on me was an expansion of the career horizon. It made it immediately clear to me that a career wasn't some traditional title you picked out of a pre-stamped bucket of jobs they hand out after graduation, but rather a living, breathing, and endlessly evolving path that I could play an active role in shaping. It pulled it down from the clouds and put it in my hands in a way that stripped it of a lot of the intimidating uncertainty that had always surrounded professional life for me."

"I have been working through materials provided on that road trip and re-watching the documentary and getting the courage to apply to medical school to follow my ultimate dream. Without Roadtrip Nation, I would not have even thought that switching careers was possible because the people around me have not done that and were initially really unsupportive."
The road trip didn’t show me anything I wasn’t already aware of, but it uncovered a burning passion of mine and gave me the punch in the face I needed to invest all my time into the business I was already working on building.”

“The road trip shaped who I am and was a huge contributor to my finding the career path of my dreams. I love my business and would not have had the confidence to make it happen without Roadtrip Nation.”

“I was able to meet people doing various things in my field. I realized by the end that I can find a way to combine my other interests with computer science.”

“Roadtrip Nation exposed me to career opportunities outside of what I thought I could do.”

“Before the road trip, I was already doing a skilled trade. The road trip really solidified my belief that my current line of work was fine with me. I don’t believe that I need a four-year degree to succeed and do what I want to do in life.”

“Before the road trip, I had an idea about work that was much more formal—barring major changes—I aimed to have a career that was completely cohesive and straightforward. After the road trip, I definitely looked at work in a new light! Changing careers was totally acceptable and followed by enormous rewards!”

“I’ve shifted my fears to be more afraid of not trying something than of failing at attempting something that means a lot to me. I still have room to grow, but I find a lot of power in that approach. I’ve developed a stronger trust in myself and my value, which has allowed me to thrive in many other aspects of my personal and professional life.”

“After my road trip, I doubled down on the business I was working on thanks to my newfound sense of purpose. I eliminated impostor syndrome from my vocabulary, stopped comparing myself to others, and it’s only up from here. I wouldn’t be where I am today without Roadtrip Nation.”

The road trip reconfirmed that my skills and interests would find a home in a career that I love.”
INCREASED SOCIAL CAPITAL
KEY FINDING: INCREASED SOCIAL CAPITAL

For roadtrippers, the opportunity to interview and connect with people like them who faced similar hurdles along their journey was the most important part of their experience. This was a key finding from the survey, and will be foundational as we look toward expanding Roadtrip Nation’s mission impact. Social capital is a driving force behind life and career advancement, and the roadtrippers identified extraordinary gains in social capital as a result of their experience.

Social capital, defined: The resources that arise from a web of relationships which people can access and mobilize to help them improve their lives and achieve their goals. (Search Institute, “Defining and Measuring Social Capital for Young People,” April 2020*)

THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET “SOMEONE LIKE ME” WHO MADE A SUCCESSFUL CAREER PURSUING THEIR INTERESTS WAS THE NUMBER ONE MOST VALUABLE PART OF THE EXPERIENCE.

GREATER IMPACT FOR LOW-INCOME AND FIRST-GEN STUDENTS

For these subgroups, the experience of meeting people like them who succeeded in life by pursuing areas of interest was extremely valuable.

79% vs 57%
First-gen students compared to those who were not first-gen.

72% vs 58%
Low-income roadtrippers compared to those who were not low-income.


The road trip was a singular life experience for me. It built my confidence, helped me build concrete interviewing skills, and gave me a renewed sense of excitement and momentum for my future. FROM START TO FINISH, IT WAS AN ADVENTURE AND SET OF CHALLENGES AND EXPERIENCES THAT I CONTINUE TO REFLECT ON AND DRAW FROM OVER 10 YEARS LATER.”
INCREASED SOCIAL CAPITAL

When asked what made the interviews meaningful, the top response was “The leaders showed some of the same insecurities and vulnerabilities that I have.”

Other top responses were:

- The conversations opened my eyes to new ideas and new possibilities
- The leader gave me great life advice
- The leaders lessened the anxiety I felt about my future

Far more than a collection of informational interviews, roadtrippers fostered deep personal connections with the people they met on the road—connections that shape their lives years later. It was not uncommon that the “interviewees” became lifelong mentors to the roadtrippers and opened doors to jobs and other opportunities down the road.

93% vs 31%

After the road trip, 93% of roadtrippers felt that they better understood the importance of talking with professionals in a career they are interested in.

BENCHMARK STUDY:
In a research report by the Society for Human Resource Management, 31% of employees felt that networking opportunities were very important to their job satisfaction, and 59% percent were satisfied with their opportunities to network.*

79% vs 37%

When the roadtrippers reflected on how they felt after the road trip, 79% felt that they now know role models and mentors whom they can look to for guidance and support.

BENCHMARK STUDY:
In a survey of 3,000 individuals, Olivet Nazarene University found that while 76% of people think mentors are important, only 37% of people currently have one.**

“I often felt like I couldn’t relate to anyone around me in my field because I came from a low-income, first-generation background. Meeting someone who has been in my shoes and understands me was unbelievably amazing.”

**https://online.olivet.edu/research-statistics-on-professional-mentors
INCREASED SOCIAL CAPITAL

How valuable are the following aspects of a road trip experience in helping you to pursue a career in an area that interests you?

- **Extremely Valuable**
- **Very Valuable**
- **Somewhat Valuable**
- **Slightly Valuable**
- **Not at all Valuable**

Roadtrippers who identified as low-income or were first in their family to go to college rated the value of “meeting people like me who have succeeded in life by pursuing areas of interest” significantly higher than those who did not fall into either of these two groups.

See Greater Impact for Subgroups, on page 84, for details.
Roadtrippers often say that they gained just as much from building the trip as they did from the insights they heard in the interviews. And of all the applied skills that roadtrippers take away from the experience, cold-calling to book the trip interviews is the clear standout.

Cold-calling people and organizations to book interviews tends to be the aspect of trip planning that just about every roadtripper has dreaded—because it’s a little intimidating, especially as the world goes more digital—so we wanted to know if going through the experience of making cold calls contributed to the overall impact of the road trip. We found, in fact, that it did, in a very substantial way.

Of those roadtrippers who did some level of cold-calling, 77% found the experience very or extremely valuable.

Half of the roadtripper respondents remembered cold-calling and setting up interviews, while one-quarter claimed to have helped in the process, but did not book interviews. The other one-quarter of roadtrippers indicated they did not participate in this process.

"I learned skills in cold-calling, which I have used since to gain work experience, internships, and interview possible mentors. It was also important to help shape the road trip and added a personal investment when booking our own interviews. It helped to build the relationship and rapport with our potential mentors."

"Gaining a comfort level with cold-calling and emailing might be the single most valuable thing I took from my road trip experience. Cold outreach is something I’ve come back to again and again."

77% of those who participated in cold-calling found the experience very or extremely valuable.

Rising Social Capital

INCREASED SOCIAL CAPITAL

Roadtrippers who participated in cold-calling

Roadtrippers who helped with interview booking but did not conduct cold calls
WHERE ARE THEY NOW:

With all of the roles she fills—mother, grandmother, and social justice advocate—Bernita Bradley was on the road to burnout before she hit the road with us in 2019. Not only did her road trip give her that space to reassess where she was spending her energy; the conversations she had on the road helped her bring that perspective back to her life after the road trip, too. When she landed back home in Detroit, she quit her job and started her own business—the Village PCL—which works to strengthen connections between schools, nonprofits, and the community to make sure they're successful. Now she's even more of a leader than she was before because she knows how to be most effective and where to support others. That point of view helps her thrive, and brings so much to the community where she lives.

“I HAD EVERYTHING I NEEDED RIGHT THERE INSIDE OF ME—I JUST NEEDED PEOPLE TO TELL ME. I came back as Superman with a new cape on. I step back often now. I trust my gut more. I needed that journey to happen to open my eyes to myself, and that’s the biggest reward.”

—Bernita Bradley, “Roadtrip Nation: Rerouting,” 2019
“[Cold-calling] definitely forced me out of my comfort zone, but after doing it, I realized that leaders and professionals are often happy, willing, and flattered to pass on their experiences. It helped me to see my seniors as more similar to myself than I originally thought.”

“I think it’s important to make those connections yourself and be the first to go out of your comfort zone. It’s amazing to me to think that people actually want to give you answers to questions about their lives. And if they don’t, then it’s at no loss to you.”

“I learned how to sell myself and my projects as a valuable investment of someone’s time. I also improved my ability to leverage and understand the power of personal networks. In some ways, the process of booking interviews was the first step in a process of letting go of self-imposed limitations; it encouraged us to think big and take chances.”

“It helped me face a fear of rejection and putting myself out there. It also instilled in me that people want to help you, especially if they see a little of themselves in you and the opportunity you’ve been given.”

“When I had the experience of cold-calling people, I had the realization that there were very few people on the planet that I couldn’t get ahold of. The only things that prevented me from doing so were opportunity and confidence. The road trip supplied me with both.”

“[Cold-calling] definitely forced me out of my comfort zone, but after doing it, I realized that leaders and professionals are often happy, willing, and flattered to pass on their experiences. It helped me to see my seniors as more similar to myself than I originally thought.”

“I was extremely nervous cold-calling in the beginning of my trip, but it was an extremely valuable skill that everyone should learn. Cold-calling taught me how easy it was to connect to people and how rare it was that we choose to take this approach.”

“Roadtrip Nation made me realize that the questions I asked of complete strangers I had not asked of my parents, grandfather, family, and friends. After I came back from the road trip, I ‘interviewed’ so many people in my life, asking them questions I had never thought to ask. I didn’t really ever come back from the road. That mindset or ability to ask questions of people allowed me to get to know my family as real people, filling them with history and context, strength, and vulnerability. It brought me so close to so many people in my life.”

“I’ve gotten opportunities in work and other domains just by reaching out to the right person with an interesting question.”

“I was extremely nervous cold-calling in the beginning of my trip, but it was an extremely valuable skill that everyone should learn. Cold-calling taught me how easy it was to connect to people and how rare it was that we choose to take this approach.”
“I created lifelong friendships and mentorship that was part of leaving my comfort zone, and it was a big deal for me. Most importantly, knowing and being reassured by leaders that it doesn’t matter how long you take to get to where you want—anything you work for, you will accomplish. It was one of the best experiences I’ve had, and changed my mentality forever.”

“The people I went on the road trip with were definitely the most impactful aspect. I got to hang out with two really cool people, whom I probably never would have hung out with outside of the road trip. I went into the trip thinking we were all so different, but left realizing that despite the differences, we still had so much in common.”

“[Cold-calling] taught me that a lot of people are willing to share their knowledge and help the next people coming up, if we just ask. It teaches you to be active in seeking what you want.”

“[The most impactful part of the road trip was] the interviews—learning how to prep, conduct, and facilitate meaningful interviews with impressive, successful people.”

“The most impactful aspect was the human connection—feeling like we are not alone, that there are people who come from similar places and are doing great, and are there for you.”

“The experience allowed me to interact with someone I thought was a valuable asset and taught me that sometimes it’s as simple as making a phone call to meet with someone you look up to.”

“It was terrifying to cold-call these people, and going through that process helped build my confidence that people are usually willing and excited to share their stories. In my current career, I am probably more comfortable reaching out and asking for help from strangers because of this experience.”

“[The most valuable aspect of the road trip was] meeting leaders that became future mentors.”

“As simple as it sounds: confidence in professional settings. Personally, I have found cold-calling—as unpleasant as it can be—to be a relevant skill in almost every job I’ve had since. Roadtrip Nation was the beginning of me developing both the confidence and skill set it requires.”

The friends I made through Roadtrip Nation have become part of my family. Both literally and figuratively. My friendships with staff members have grown into lifelong ones, growing connections that make up the daily fabric of my life.”

“Increased Social Capital: Voices from the Survey
IMPROVED WELL-BEING
KEY FINDING: IMPROVED WELL-BEING

The road trip experience was a pivotal moment in the lives of many roadtrippers—one whose impact they continue to think about often. In fact, nearly 2 out of 3 roadtrippers reminisce about their experience once a month or more and 70% strongly agree that their life is in a better place than it would have been if they never went on the road trip.

Roadtrippers shared that being on the road provided ample time for self-reflection, self-awareness and self-discovery, all of which impacted their overall well-being: 96% of roadtrippers report a favorable impact on their sense of purpose and 86% on their mental health. Additionally, 80% felt it improved their sense of being part of a community (a key factor in Gallup’s essential elements of well-being) and over 70% felt it improved their social life and education.

ROADTRIPPERS AGREED THAT THEIR SENSE OF PURPOSE WAS CLEARER AND THEIR LIFE WAS IN A BETTER PLACE AFTER THE ROAD TRIP

My road trip pushed me to see endless possibilities of how I could use my talents, education, and passion to live a meaningful life.

“agree that their life is in a better place after the road trip 93% 96% 86% Report a positive impact on their sense of purpose Say the road trip benefited their mental health

My road trip changed my dreams, how I think about my career, and how I think about my place in the world. It changed my life, in ways I would have never received from any other opportunity in the world.”

Roadtrip Nation plucked me out of my ‘everyday’ and exposed me to so many different versions of what makes a good career—but maybe more importantly, what makes a fulfilling life. Without that experience, I would not have taken risks or had the courage to pursue the things I have.”
WHERE ARE THEY NOW:

Jeremy Burton hit the road with us to learn from the experiences of people who had transitioned to a new career in mid-life, which is what he was struggling with when we met him in 2019. Jeremy had served in the Navy for almost 17 years before being medically retired for depression—and he wasn’t sure of his way forward. He was on the road to recovery from his depression and enrolled in school, but tired of what he was doing. On his road trip, though, it was his interview with a fellow veteran who founded Vets Who Code that jolted him with new certainty about what he wanted to do. That conversation set Jeremy on a path to learning programming and opened his mind to alternative educational pathways, like the community college program he started once home to build his technical skills. These days, he’s the founder and CEO of Halo, an app that changes how people meet and make friends.

"I joined the Navy at 18 because I didn’t know what I wanted to do in life. And I re-enlisted after 4 years because I didn’t know what I wanted to do with my life. And then I re-enlisted again for 6 years. And then on this road trip, I figured out what I want to do with my life. THINGS ARE FINALLY WHERE I WANT THEM TO BE."

- Jeremy Burton, “Roadtrip Nation: Rerouting,” 2019
The road trip was a singular life experience for me. IT GAVE ME A RENEWED SENSE OF EXCITEMENT AND MOMENTUM FOR MY FUTURE. From start to finish, it was an adventure and set of challenges and experiences that I continue to reflect on 10 years later.”

“If I had to distill all of the benefits of my road trip into one concept, it would be a greater appreciation of the value of my individuality and identity.”

“Going on a road trip is like being thrown in a pressure cooker. It’s one of the most intense experiences ever, but you come out transformed.”

“I received real insight into my own preferences and passions. Roadtrip Nation gave me the ability, in a very real way, to peer deep into my own soul.”

“I was never sure about what I wanted to do or where I wanted to go in life, but THE ROAD TRIP WAS A COMPASS THAT SHOWED ME HOW TO FIND MY PEACE and gave me the opportunity to change direction.”

“The most special thing my road trip gave me was the belief that I had something interesting to say, that my journey to my career was valuable and part of a shared experience, and that I could have something interesting to say. They valued me for my journey, for my thoughts and ideas, for my questions, and for who I am as a person—and that experience has fundamentally changed who I am and the way I see myself in the world.”

“I’ve changed careers a number of times since the road trip, including going back to school for a whole new four-year degree. Roadtrip Nation gave me the perspective and confidence to take risks and continually evaluate what is right for me in the moment rather than feeling locked into decisions that were made at a different time, under different circumstances. Roadtrip Nation greatly contributed to that confidence by dispelling a lot of the fears attached to such change.”

“If I had to distill all of the benefits of my road trip into one concept, it would be a greater appreciation of the value of my individuality and identity.”

“For me, the most impactful aspect of the road trip was my personal development. I became a lot more confident and happy with who I am and where I’m going in life. I didn’t know what I would do in the future (I still don’t know now), but I did know that whatever I ended up doing, it would be my own choice.”

“Roadtrip Nation provided a supportive and kind space to learn confidence, while also providing me with the necessary structure to see the value in myself. The road trip changed my life in ways that I have not even articulated to myself yet. When I doubt my confidence, I think, Remember Roadtrip Nation, because of the confidence and support I gained from that trip.”

“I received real insight into my own preferences and passions. Roadtrip Nation gave me the ability, in a very real way, to peer deep into my own soul.”
“My road trip helped me see the value of other careers and the importance of giving adequate value to all of my interests in finding a path that was the best fit for me. My road trip also gave me the confidence to take risks and try things that weren’t always guaranteed to work.”

“[The road trip] was one of the greatest gifts of my life. Fresh out of college, I discovered enormous freedom on the road. To see San Francisco, cross the golden fields of Nebraska, pull into New York City at sunset. I felt connected to a lineage of young Americans who were dissatisfied with what they were offered and instead went to find a life for themselves. There was a constant energy in our RV; everything felt electric—crossing deserts and seeing coyotes, seeing the highest peaks, cresting a hill and suddenly seeing the ocean, waking up in one state and falling asleep in another, saying hello, saying goodbye.”

“The most impactful part of the trip was meeting professionals and learning that struggle is a part of success. I was always insecure and let down when things didn’t fall into the plan I had. I learned that a plan is good to have, but you have to be flexible.”

“The road trip made me realize the importance of life and work balance. To value friendships and family is as important as my career. It is a path I have continually walked and it has profoundly shaped who I am.”

“The advice that I received from the people we interviewed has helped me maneuver through many different situations on my career path.”

“[The road trip] was one of the greatest gifts of my life. Fresh out of college, I discovered enormous freedom on the road. To see San Francisco, cross the golden fields of Nebraska, pull into New York City at sunset. I felt connected to a lineage of young Americans who were dissatisfied with what they were offered and instead went to find a life for themselves. There was a constant energy in our RV; everything felt electric—crossing deserts and seeing coyotes, seeing the highest peaks, cresting a hill and suddenly seeing the ocean, waking up in one state and falling asleep in another, saying hello, saying goodbye.

And to share it with other people who were also wondering, Who am I and how do I live a good life, was a fire that continues to burn in my heart.”

“During the trip, I benefited significantly from the positive spirit from the leaders I met on the road. I had been a very impatient person, eagerly wanting to jump to the next stage of my life and didn’t want to face the daily struggles. But the viewpoint of life as a long journey allowed me to see challenges differently which then opened up more opportunities for myself.”

“The most impactful part of the trip was the time, space, and people that encourage synthesis of all the new perspectives, experiences, and advice.”
GROWTH IN SELF-PERCEPTION
KEY FINDING:
GROWTH IN SELF-PERCEPTION

The road trip experience helped roadtrippers build courage and develop the confidence to persist through challenges. Beyond that, the stories they heard on the road humanized career journeys that before felt out of reach and made their path ahead feel more approachable and energizing. They came away from the trip feeling that they weren’t alone.

The road trip built bridges between my comfort zone and the outside world. It shattered my self-imposed limitations and boundaries and shoved me out of my comfort zone. I still pinch myself every single day and ask how the heck did I get to live this life? The simple answer: ROADTRIP GAVE ME THIS OPPORTUNITY. FOR THAT I’M FOREVER GRATEFUL.”

THE ROAD TRIP HAD SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS ON ROADTRIPPERS’ CONFIDENCE, SELF-ESTEEM, AND WORLDVIEW

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The growth in roadtrippers’ self-perception was a strongly felt benefit of the road trip. After the road trip, 88% feel like they are able to see more options available to them, including an increase in authentic career choices for their future.

Nearly 70% of roadtrippers feel that they are more comfortable with where they come from after the road trip, and that number goes up to 81% for those who identified as low-income and received a lunch subsidy in school.

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They are motivated to make things happen for themselves.

The future appears brighter than the past.

They’re confident exploring new opportunities on their career path.

GREATER IMPACT FOR LOW-INCOME AND FIRST-GEN STUDENTS

Both first-generation college students and low-income roadtrippers left the road trip with more confidence in their ability to make things happen for themselves and a greater degree of comfort with where they come from compared to roadtrippers who did not identify with either group.

Roadtrippers who identified as low-income or first-generation college students also noted a greater impact on several of their skills and abilities, are more confident pursuing new career opportunities, more likely to agree that they have “authentic career choices,” and more likely to see the importance of discussing their potential career with mentors.

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It’s often difficult for students to identify the connection between education and career. However, 70% of roadtrippers feel that their education is relevant to their life. Seeing the strong correlation between career and education among the roadtrippers is incredibly promising for long-term impact.

**GROWTH IN SELF-PERCEPTION**

**MY EXPERIENCE WITH ROADTRIP NATION WAS THE SINGLE MOST PROFOUND SOURCE OF PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH I’VE HAD THUS FAR.** Reflecting on my trip, I am now far more confident about myself as a person and in my career opportunities.”

**BENCHMARK STUDY:**
YouthTruth analyzed responses from 230,000 students between 2012 and 2017 and found that across all secondary students, only 48% feel that what they are learning in class helps them outside of school.*

**70%**
Feel their education is relevant to their life

* https://youthtruthsurvey.org/student-engagement/#section1
### Measuring Self-Perception Before and After the Road Trip

We asked Roadtrippers to think about how much more or less the following statements described them after their road trip.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Much More</th>
<th>Somewhat More</th>
<th>No Change</th>
<th>Somewhat Less</th>
<th>Much Less</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I understand the importance of talking with professionals in a career in which I am interested</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident in exploring new opportunities on my career path</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I have the ability to seek out new role models and build social capital</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know that I can pursue what interests me and turn it into a livelihood</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am motivated to make things happen for myself</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are many options available to me in life, including authentic career choices</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The future appears brighter than the past</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know role models and mentors that I can look to for guidance and support</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My education is relevant to my life</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am comfortable with where I come from</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHERE ARE THEY NOW:
Jackie Gamboa didn’t realize she was a role model until her little cousins saw the path she was taking and were amazed. Jackie was first in her family to go to college—after growing up in Mexico, she went to college in Texas to study chemistry—and that’s where we met her in 2013. Going to college away from home, in a different culture, felt overwhelming—but the road trip changed her whole mentality. That one summer journey helped her get comfortable with being uncomfortable, and with seeing where new situations could lead. It opened her up to questions and curiosity that have taken her to Missouri to earn her Ph.D., given her the drive to start an award-winning radio show and do advocacy work, finish her postdoc at Harvard and MIT, and finally make the leap into patent science. None of it would be possible if she hadn’t learned how to ask one question that she learned out on the road—what else can I be?

“" It was a big shock being fully immersed in another culture and missing home and trying to adapt and learn English. It was terrifying because I didn’t know that language and I didn’t know that culture—and the road trip changed that mentality. IT WAS LIFE-CHANGING IN THAT IT GOT ME COMFORTABLE BEING UNCOMFORTABLE.””
GROWTH IN SELF-PERCEPTION: VOICES FROM THE SURVEY

“The biggest impact had to be the effect it had on my self-esteem. Not having a four-year degree used to really bother me and had a negative impact on my self-worth. After speaking with people who are doing what they love without a four-year degree, I learned that there’s nothing to be embarrassed about. It’s entirely possible to live a life full of purpose while doing a skilled trade.”

“I learned to just say yes to every opportunity and not be scared of failure. I am very confident when I try something now, and I know it is okay to fail. Most of all, I learned that you just have to try. You can’t get anywhere if you don’t.”

“I feel like I have choices. My life doesn’t feel as dictated by financial security. I learned that I can literally do anything I want. The world somehow gives back to people who are passionate, who don’t give up.”

“Before coming to Roadtrip Nation, I had never been west of [where I live]. It was the first time in my life that I had actually gone on a road trip and explored on my own accord. During the road trip, it was clear to me that I had the ability to make decisions on my own and that there were more individuals, such as myself, that were going through the same scenario of heading into a career that they had doubts about and the uncertainty of their next steps. The mere act of making the final round [of the Roadtrip Nation application], accepting the offer, and driving the RV was a defining moment for me in my life.”

“Roadtrip Nation did more than help me define my own road in life; they equipped me with tools to clear my own path free of distractions, fear, and comparison. Since the road trip, I have been paving my own road into the wild and unpredictable unknown.”

“Talking to individuals who were genuinely inspiring to me illuminated philosophies and nuances of inner strength that I needed to cultivate to expand my sense of the possible. Sacrifice, commitment, and passion are key.”

“Roadtrip Nation taught me my purpose, what I want in a job, my skills, my personality, it gave an in-depth evaluation of who I am as a person and my purpose in life.”

“‘Roadtrip Nation did not just show me all the career opportunities available to me; it boosted my confidence in going for those opportunities. The leader interviews were inspiring, encouraging, and pragmatic. I took leaps in my career after the trip that I would never have had the courage to take before the trip.’”

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“Roadtrip Nation taught me my purpose, what I want in a job, my skills, my personality, it gave an in-depth evaluation of who I am as a person and my purpose in life.”
“Being a part of Roadtrip Nation not only connected me to leaders in my community and successful industry leaders in my career field, but made me believe in myself.”

“A conversation where everyone is being vulnerable and sharing their successes and failures empowers every single person in the conversation. This is the magic of Roadtrip Nation.”

This is less career-based, but **driving the RV was very impactful for me.** I was very scared of driving before the trip, and I gained a lot of confidence while logging miles in the RV. I had never considered accepting a job that I couldn’t take a bus to before the trip, and having confidence in driving to work opened up many new opportunities for me when I returned home.”

“Roadtrip Nation changed my life in every aspect. I am confident in who I am and what I can accomplish in life regardless of what life throws my way.”

“The introspective portion of the road trip was what I personally found most impactful. I was able to identify various aspects of my personality and skills which made [career] choices easier.”

“The road trip completely shifted my headspace and how I viewed my future, and empowered me to take chances and seek out opportunities.”

“Roadtrip Nation changed my outlook on life and gave me the confidence to choose my own path in life.”

“The road trip definitely solidified [my] sense of identity. I didn’t need to be anything that society thought or wanted me to be. I should just be who I should be and whoever I wanted to be. That was a really big issue for me, and getting over that hurdle and over that feeling has allowed me to go much further in my life.”

“All of the interviews gave me so much more insight than I expected—the combined experience and background that everyone had taught me about pursuing my passion and being able to succeed in life.”

“The road trip created a space and set of experiences that gave me the confidence that the most successful people didn’t go from A to B to C in their careers.”

“The road trip was such a bolster and fond journey of development for me, the ability to watch the content and reflect back is priceless.”
LASTING IMPACT
One thing we explored in the study was how much the road trip experience sticks with our roadtrippers. When asked how often they reminisce about their road trip, 65% said they think about the road trip at least once a month, and 13% of roadtrippers think about the road trip almost every day.

Another way we measured the lasting impact on the roadtripper was to understand how strongly they would recommend the experience to others. To measure this, we used the Net Promoter Score as a framework. We found that the roadtripper alumni gave the experience an average NPS score of 73.

As a reference point, 0 to 30 on this scale would be considered good, 30 to 70 is great, and 70 to 100 is considered excellent.

**OTHER FINDINGS:**
- Education level had a big impact on NPS. Roadtrippers who have a bachelor’s degree or higher gave an average NPS score of 64, while roadtrippers who have an associate degree or less gave an average NPS of 97.
- The time period when the road trip occurred also significantly changed the NPS score. We found that road trips that occurred earlier (from 2003 to 2009) had an NPS score of 61, while the most recent road trips we measured (from 2017 to 2018) had an NPS score of 86.

Over time, Roadtrip Nation has increasingly focused on amplifying the stories of people from historically marginalized groups (impact was greater for roadtrippers who identified themselves as belonging to a disadvantaged group, see page 84) so it was good to see the NPS score increase as the experience has expanded to empower more of the roadtrippers who can benefit most.

“I didn’t really ever come back from the road. It was an incredible experience.”
The most impactful aspect of the road trip for me was branching out my views and ways of thinking. Going into this trip, I was a much more set in my own ways type of person, however, after, I can now take a step back and try to see from other angles. **THIS CONTINUES TO HELP ME GROW AS A PERSON, AND I HAVE A MUCH MORE POSITIVE WORLDVIEW.**

"I always refer back to how much these leaders had no clue where they would be today when they were in our shoes, which has carried me into appreciating the moments around me for what they are and not always needing to be at a destination to enjoy this wonderful life or challenge myself."

The [road trip] led me to look at life as full of endless opportunities and inspired me to pursue something out of the ordinary instead of settling for the comfortable and secure.

"Thank you so much for this incredible experience it shaped who I am and ultimately was a huge contributor to my finding the career path of my dreams."

"The words and interviews are stuck with you and are guideposts for years and years."

"It was my first experience with people with jobs I'm interested in. Realizing they are just normal human beings soothed my anxiety for the future."

"I knew I wanted to be a teacher, but before my road trip I thought teachers took jobs at one school for twenty years and taught the same classes all that time. I was struggling with loving education but not being able to see myself in the teachers I knew. **THEN I WENT ON MY ROAD TRIP AND IT LITERALLY CHANGED MY LIFE. I talk about it all the time. It made me feel worthy and so incredibly passionate about something I already loved.**"
GREATER IMPACT FOR SUBGROUPS
Since 2010, the number of roadtrippers identifying as low-income or first-generation college students has doubled from approximately 1 in 5 participants to 2 in 5, and, by many measures, their road trip has been more impactful on their well-being, self-perceptions and career path than on their peers.

These roadtrippers continue to think about their experience more often than their counterparts—once a month or more for 3 in 4 first-gen and 4 in 5 low-income participants—and 3 in 4 strongly agree that their life is in a better place because of the road trip experience, compared with 2 in 3 of their peers.

This impact extends to how they think about certain aspects of their lives, such as their career, education, and sense of purpose. For low-income participants, the road trip’s effect on these measures has been incredibly significant: nearly 4 in 5 say it’s had a very favorable impact on their sense of purpose, nearly 3 in 4 on their career, and 3 in 5 on their education. Likewise, with regard to how they view their education, nearly two-thirds of first-gen students report the road trip very favorably impacted their perceptions.

In addition to improving one’s sense of their own well-being, road trips are designed to positively influence how participants view themselves, their skills, and abilities. Looking across all 10 measures of self-perception tested, first-gen and low-income participants rated the measures (on average, in aggregate) higher than their counterparts.

In particular, for both first-gen and low-income participants, they left the road trip with more confidence in their ability to make things happen for themselves and a greater degree of comfort with where they come from. A primary driving force behind both perceptions may well be interviewing leaders they could relate to: These roadtrippers were more likely to tell us that what was extremely valuable was “meeting people like me who have succeeded in life by pursuing areas of interest” and what stood out for them were leaders who “came from a background or circumstance like me.” Furthermore, these measures homed in on career perceptions and here, as well, first-gen and low-income roadtrippers indicated a greater degree of impact than their peers. They are more confident pursuing new career opportunities, agree that they have “authentic career choices,” and can also see the importance of discussing their potential career with mentors.

I often felt like I couldn’t relate to anyone around me in my field because I came from a low-income, first-generation background. Getting to meet someone who came from my background and made it to where they are meant the world to me.”
GREATER IMPACT FOR SUBGROUPS

A statement within a circle indicates that this group provided a significantly higher rating than the complementary group. Mean ratings were compared between the two complementary groups, at the 90% confidence level (two-tailed).

FIRST-GEN COLLEGE STUDENTS
ROADTRIPPERS WHO WERE FIRST IN THEIR FAMILY TO GO TO COLLEGE

First-gen college students had an NPS of 87 compared to non-first-gen students, who had an NPS of 67.

I feel I have the ability to seek out new role models and build social capital

I know role models and mentors that I can look to for guidance and support

I have a greater sense that my education is relevant to my life

I have a greater understanding of the importance of talking with professionals in a career in which I am interested

I would recommend this road trip experience to others

LOW-INCOME PARTICIPANTS
ROADTRIPPERS WHO RECEIVED A LUNCH SUBSIDY IN K-12 SCHOOL

Roadtrippers in this group gave an NPS score of 89 compared to those who didn’t receive a lunch subsidy and gave an NPS of 61.

I know that I can pursue what interests me and turn it into a livelihood

I am comfortable with where I come from

DISADVANTAGED GROUPS
ROADTRIPPERS WHO IDENTIFIED AS BELONGING TO A DISADVANTAGED GROUP

Roadtrippers in this group gave an NPS of 83 as compared to roadtrippers who didn’t identify as part of a disadvantaged group, who had an NPS of 66.

I am more confident in exploring new opportunities on my career path
I’M NOT SURROUNDED BY PEOPLE WHO LOOK LIKE ME, AND SO I’VE OFTEN FELT LIKE AN OUTCAST. I told [the person we interviewed] all of my insecurities. I was bawling my eyes out to the point where I couldn’t speak. MY QUESTION WAS, “HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH THESE PRESSURES AS A FIRST-GENERATION STUDENT, AS A CHILD OF AN IMMIGRANT, AND AS A MINORITY?” She gave the ultimate advice. I saw a lot of her in me and we shared a lot of similarities. SHE GAVE ME HOPE THAT I WILL PERSEVERE.”
“Providing [this] opportunity is a powerful way to overcome the trauma, oppression, and colonialism that our community has faced. Through this simple interaction, we can create our own story and arm ourselves with the tools to blend our identity and culture into our aspired careers.”

“Seeing that the people we interviewed had succeeded, despite having similar insecurities and issues, was an enormous help. That bit of knowledge came from speaking to people who had been brave enough to choose a career which I would never have considered viable or possible.”

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, MY LEARNING DIFFERENCE WAS POSITIVE. My LD was the reason I received this opportunity as opposed to being the reason I cannot participate in things. I thought I was useless and I would have to spend my life working against my LD. I was so ashamed of the fact that I was less than everyone else. I COULD HAVE NEVER DREAMED OF SEEING PEOPLE, WHOM I COULD ONLY DREAM OF MEETING, LOOKING AT ME SAYING, ‘YOU ARE MORE THAN ENOUGH.’ I am literally tearing up writing this because I did not realize how little self-worth I had until I saw what the possibilities were for my life if I embraced my difference.”

“It showed that I could bring more of my own culture to the table. I learned that I can dare to try many of the crazy ideas I have without feeling tied to the conventional path.”

“Your roots are also your identity, and if you can’t come to terms with that, then you will never fully be yourself. A lot of the people we met gave extremely helpful insight on why your place of origin is never a hindrance.”

“Seeing other female engineers was empowering, and I felt encouraged to pursue a field that initially felt daunting because of the gender gap.”

“The most impactful part of the experience was being able to not only come together with strangers to learn about career paths, but to also hear first-hand how individuals in my community were making a difference.”

“Not only did I take so much from the conversations with the amazing people I got the chance to interview—wisdom I’ve returned to again and again over the last 15 years—but I also built an appetite for risk-taking and for sharing vulnerabilities that have been core to my personal and professional growth.”

“I finally got to see firsthand that I’m not alone.”
“Coming from a small town the opioid epidemic has caused me to lose a couple of my friends and the trip couldn’t have come at a better time.”

“I could talk for hours about the career and adventure aspect of the trip, but it was so much more than that.”

“The biggest impact the trip had on my life was it really helped me with my self-confidence.”

“Without a doubt the most impactful aspect of my road trip was being with people my age who had different upbringings but similar end goals. We all wanted to pursue higher education to not only succeed as first-generation college students, but to provide futures that promised hope and healing from our broken paths.”

“Learning a trade, I see all these people with these fancy degrees doing all kinds of stuff and it made me question myself, feeling like I should be further along in my life, that I’d just be a failure because I don’t have a degree. But AFTER TALKING WITH ALL THOSE PEOPLE DOING WHAT THEY LOVE WITHOUT A FOUR-YEAR DEGREE, IT REALLY HELPED MY SELF-CONFIDENCE.”

“I could talk for hours about the career and adventure aspect of the trip, but it was so much more than that.”

“The biggest impact the trip had on my life was it really helped me with my self-confidence.”

“Without a doubt the most impactful aspect of my road trip was being with people my age who had different upbringings but similar end goals. We all wanted to pursue higher education to not only succeed as first-generation college students, but to provide futures that promised hope and healing from our broken paths.”

“[The most valuable aspect of the road trip was] being proud of where you come from! A lot of my road trip revolved around possible careers that are held right here [where I live]. People here tend to feel like they need to go away in order to have a successful lifestyle, and for some people, it might be true, but there is definitely a bright future for the people here and you should never feel ashamed of where you come from and what you want to do in life. Anything can be possible, as long as you’re dedicated. Your roots are also your identity, and if you can’t come to terms with that then you will never fully be yourself.”

“The connections I made [in the interview] opened many doors and allowed me to make more connections with those at the very top of the political profession.”

“The most impactful aspect of the road trip was the interviews and the team navigation/team-building. Hearing how people make their way through life is always good. The road trip came at a pivotal moment in my life where I was looking for answers and direction and talking to leaders (especially fellow women!) about how they made it through when the going got tough was endlessly comforting!”
WHERE ARE THEY NOW
WHERE ARE THEY NOW: VIDEO UPDATES

“Looking back at that crossroads, I don’t know that I would have had the confidence to choose the road less traveled if not for the experience here.” —Ryan Duffy “Roadtrip Nation: Destination Unknown,” 2004

After the road trip, Ryan committed to his love of documentary filmmaking and worked his way up at Vice to become the host of their Emmy Award-winning series on HBO. Read more about Ryan’s story on pg. 30.

“After the road trip, Bernita quit her job and started her own business, the Village PCL, where she’s proud to support and employ members of her community in Detroit. Read more about Bernita’s story on pg. 46.”

I had never taken time like that for myself. Taking that road trip helped me to be clear and really see paths forward.” —Bernita Bradley “Roadtrip Nation: Rerouting,” 2019

When we met Matt in 2005, he had experience working as a child actor, an interest in film and photography, and a lot of curiosity about the world beyond his hometown of Leeds, England. The road trip gave him the chance to travel across a new country and interview people from all walks of life. After the road trip, he leaned in fully to filmmaking, starting his own production company making advertisements, promos, music videos, and narrative shorts. He even joined us at Roadtrip Nation as a cinematographer and field producer for four seasons of our public television series. In 2018, his first feature-length documentary, “General Magic,” about a secretive Silicon Valley startup spun out of Apple in 1990 to create the “next big thing,” premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival, where Matt was nominated for Best New Director. “General Magic” has since gone on to become the number-one bestselling documentary on iTunes, won several best documentary awards, and was acquired by Showtime and National Geographic.

“General Magic” | Directed by Sarah Burns and Matt Maude

WATCH MATT’S VIDEO

WATCH BERNITA’S VIDEO

When we met Matt in 2005, he had experience working as a child actor, an interest in film and photography, and a lot of curiosity about the world beyond his hometown of Leeds, England. The road trip gave him the chance to travel across a new country and interview people from all walks of life. After the road trip, he leaned in fully to filmmaking, starting his own production company making advertisements, promos, music videos, and narrative shorts. He even joined us at Roadtrip Nation as a cinematographer and field producer for four seasons of our public television series. In 2018, his first feature-length documentary, “General Magic,” about a secretive Silicon Valley startup spun out of Apple in 1990 to create the “next big thing,” premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival, where Matt was nominated for Best New Director. “General Magic” has since gone on to become the number-one bestselling documentary on iTunes, won several best documentary awards, and was acquired by Showtime and National Geographic.

“GENERAL MAGIC” | DIRECTED BY SARAH BURNS & MATT MAUDE

WATCH MATT’S VIDEO

“Looking back at that crossroads, I didn’t really ever come back from the road. I found my tribe and I was completely cemented that filmmaking was the thing I wanted to do.” —Matt Maude, “Roadtrip Nation: Infinite Drive,” 2005

I didn’t really ever come back from the road. I found my tribe and I was completely cemented that filmmaking was the thing I wanted to do.” —Matt Maude, “Roadtrip Nation: Infinite Drive,” 2005

WATCH MATT’S VIDEO

WATCH BERNITA’S VIDEO

"I had never taken time like that for myself. Taking that road trip helped me to be clear and really see paths forward.” —Bernita Bradley “Roadtrip Nation: Rerouting,” 2019

After the road trip, Bernita quit her job and started her own business, the Village PCL, where she’s proud to support and employ members of her community in Detroit. Read more about Bernita’s story on pg. 46.

“Looking back at that crossroads, I don’t know that I would have had the confidence to choose the road less traveled if not for the experience here.” —Ryan Duffy “Roadtrip Nation: Destination Unknown,” 2004

After the road trip, Ryan committed to his love of documentary filmmaking and worked his way up at Vice to become the host of their Emmy Award-winning series on HBO. Read more about Ryan’s story on pg. 30.
When we met Dana, she was a globe-trotting horse groomer looking for a more concrete career. After a divorce, she was left with no retirement and didn't want to be a burden on her kids. She was considering going back to college, but wanted to explore less conventional pathways, so hitting the road with us was perfectly timed; she needed to see and meet other people who had made these life transitions. For Dana, it was never that she didn't know what she wanted to do, but that she wanted to do so much. With the inspiration from her road trip, she’s wrapped all of her skills and interests into her own business, where she uses reclaimed materials to build all kinds of projects for people’s yards and homes. It’s the perfect combination of hands-on, DIY, people-focused work, where she gets to see cast-aside objects and materials turned into something beautiful. Given new life and new purpose, she says, “they have another story to tell.”

**I HAD A VISION, AND I'M ACTUALLY STARTING TO DO IT.** I think we need to quit questioning ourselves or asking other people where they think we should be. Find what you want to do and do it well and do it with all your heart. All of that has come from the road trip.” — Dana Erickson, “Roadtrip Nation: Rerouting,” 2019

After the road trip, Dana finished her Ph.D., started her own radio show, and then became a patent scientist. Read more about Jackie’s story on pg. 70.

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**[The road trip] really opened my mind to alternative educational options.”** — Jeremy Burton “Roadtrip Nation: Rerouting,” 2019

After the road trip, Jeremy took classes in programming at community college and is getting ready to launch his own app. Read more about Jeremy’s story on pg. 56.

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**I was able to connect to other people who I wouldn’t have otherwise met. I was able to connect with myself, with my curiosity, and with following my gut.”** — Jackie Gamboa “Roadtrip Nation: Potential Possible,” 2013

After the road trip, Jackie finished her Ph.D., started her own radio show, and then became a patent scientist. Read more about Jackie’s story on pg. 70.
WHERE ARE THEY NOW: VOICES FROM THE SURVEY

I am an educator and a nonprofit co-founder. I work with students through restorative justice and our nonprofit builds human connection and community.

I'm the director of a design and makerspace program for teens.

I do small group interventions in ELA and math with students at a low-income school.

I develop and propose legislation that helps individuals who have experienced a period of incarceration have a successful transition back to the community with increased opportunity to succeed.

I run an urban farm focused on the cross-section of food, community, and education.

I am a neurosurgeon. At the time of my road trips I wanted to abandon medicine and pursue music. I played and produced music for friends and promoted bands, but when I realized that I still enjoyed science and was fascinated by the brain, and that this promised a long-term fulfilling life, I turned back to medicine. In the end, I followed both of my passions and am happy for the experiences.

I'm a marketing and brand strategy consultant for consumer lifestyle brands.

I work in a nursing program. I teach classes, mentor students, and lead a team.

I'm currently working as a tour guide.

I founded a company and wrote a book.

I founded my own production company and am a film director, writer and producer.

I work in special education.

I'm working as a teaching assistant for an undergraduate class and conducting neuro-behavioral research.

I work as a commercial changeout technician. We go to different businesses and replace their air conditioners and heat.

I run a small production and creative services group.

I am currently a technical project manager for a digital publishing company.

I do small group interventions in ELA and math with students at a low-income school.

I work at a software company, building new and managing existing accounts, and teach coding to high school students who are part of a coding club.

I work as a freelance editor. I edit video that appears online or through streaming platforms as well as advertising, promos, corporate, and live events.

I oversee and manage the implementation of digital media companies from the current platform to our online SaaS platform.

I work as a garden educator at a pre-school.

I'm a diesel mechanic for semi trucks and I'm taking welding classes.

I'm a nurse's aide.

I'm working as a teaching assistant for an undergraduate class and conducting neuro-behavioral research.

I work as a commercial changeout technician. We go to different businesses and replace their air conditioners and heat.

I run a small production and creative services group.

I am currently a technical project manager for a digital publishing company.

I do small group interventions in ELA and math with students at a low-income school.

I work in social impact for an action sports brand.

I'm a director of strategy. We specialize in consulting nonprofits related to their communications. All of our clients are mission-driven—lots of social justice, education, and arts and culture organizations.

I work in lots of roles in arts and culture, as a product designer, costume maker, buyer, project manager, and more.

I am an international development consultant. I help governments and international organizations to improve the capacity of governments to deliver economic growth.

I'm a teacher and run my own home organizing business.

I'm the CEO of my own marketing agency. We focus specifically on mobile applications. I also volunteer a lot of my time to working with women and kids in STEM as well as tech ethics.
Our 2020 impact report has been essential in validating the work we’re doing, and guiding ways in which experiences and resulting content can bring the highest value to those who need it most. Going into 2021, these are the areas we’ll continue to focus on:

Amplifying the Stories of Historically Marginalized Groups

Studying and measuring our work from the last 19 years has given our team a renewed commitment to serving roadtrippers who need this experience the most. The findings were clear: the roadtrippers most impacted by the experience were those who had the least access to opportunities to explore possible paths for their future and connect with potential role models.

Continuing to Improve on the Experience and Impact for Roadtrippers

We were encouraged to see that, based on our NPS scores, our road trips are getting better with time. With our ongoing commitment to strengthening areas of impact and finding ways to further support roadtripper growth—such as ensuring that roadtrippers are engaged in the planning and interview-booking process—we’ll take actions that continue that trajectory. As a direct result of this study, we’ve developed pre-trip and post-trip surveys so that we can continue tracking the measures from this impact study over time.

Focusing on Important Themes and Issues

For the first half of Roadtrip Nation’s history, our road trips were more general in theme; roadtrippers interviewed anyone they wanted without a particular focus. In 2014, we completed our first road trip that explored a specific theme, with roadtrippers who were united by the pursuit of related interests or shared experiences. In this study, we validated our hypothesis that our impact is greater for roadtrippers when we focus on a theme. Thematic road trips garnered an NPS score of 84, compared with general road trips, which scored 54. Going forward, we’ll continue to focus our efforts on launching road trips centered on important themes and issues, and selecting roadtrippers who are engaged and interested in those themes.

Serving Low-Income Individuals and First-Generation College Students

Since 2012, 71% of all our roadtrippers were either low-income, first in their family to go to college, or identified as part of a disadvantaged group. Both the measure of impact the roadtripper experienced and the likelihood that they would recommend that others go on a road trip were higher within these subgroups. To us, this is a clear sign that serving these communities is an area where we should be focusing our impact.

Continuing to Measure and Report on Our Impact

In 2021, we’re turning our focus to our new open-access online course, the Roadtrip Nation Experience. The five-lesson project-based learning program scales the roadtripper interview experience so that learners in diverse learning environments can interview people in their communities working in a career that they’re curious about.
At the end of 2019, we launched a study to measure, in a quantifiable way, the impact of our road trips for the roadtripper participants.

The research was funded by Strada Education Network, a national social impact organization dedicated to improving lives by forging clearer and more purposeful pathways between education and employment, whose network we are part of.

We sent a survey to 160 of our past roadtrippers from 2003 to 2018. For the findings to be statistically meaningful, we set a goal of achieving a minimum response rate of 25%, and we were very pleased when 109 roadtrippers—nearly 70%—completed the survey.

The survey was voluntary and anonymous. It was conducted and analyzed by Clear Path Market Research. Any attribution to a specific roadtripper in this report has been done so with their express permission.

We see this report as a case study of past roadtripper participants that allows us to continue to ensure that this experience is impactful in the short-term and the long-term.

Our objectives were to:

- Determine how the road trip impacted participants on their career trajectory
- Gather qualitative testimonials from roadtrippers from a variety of backgrounds to capture the individual growth and how the experience continues to impact their lives
- Understand what sticks with roadtrippers once they are years removed from the experience
- Understand the aspects of the road trip that are most valuable to participants
ROADTRIP NATION’S THEORY OF CHANGE

Our Theory of Change is a conceptual map for how we aim to achieve impact. It outlines the cause-and-effect logic by which we aim to convert our organizational and financial resources to effect change.

We developed our Theory of Change this year in partnership with Cicero Social Impact.

KEY AUDIENCE

PRIORITY AUDIENCE

Profile 1: In-system
US-based secondary (grades 8-12) & community college students who are students of color and/or low income, inclusive of the BPOC community

Profile 2: Out of System
US-based young people (ages 16-25) who withdrew from high school, student of color and/or low income, inclusive of the BPOC community

ACTIVITIES

Provide facilitated learning experiences that provide life and career lessons:

- Project-based activities
- Facilitator capacity building
- Experiential activities - Events
- Experiential activities - Road Traps
- Licensed Digital Media

Providing self-guided learning experiences using materials that provide life and career lessons:

- Broadcast television
- Public Digital Media
- Print Literature

OUTCOMES NEAR-TERM

- Self-efficacy
- Understanding of own interests, skills, & talents
- Knowledge of diverse career paths

- Knowledge of career exploration & social capital building pathways
- Identification of a designated career path and plan

INTERMEDIATE

Pursuit of post-secondary credentials, certificates, or experience career

Completion of credentials, certificates, or experience for chosen career

LONG-TERM

Increased # of formerly at-risk young people who are gainfully employed in an interest-aligned career

INTENDED IMPACT

A world in which the pursuit of an interest-aligned first career is celebrated and possible for youth from all walks of life

Outgrowth of RTN Activities

Increased acceptance among the general public that the pursuit of an interest-aligned career is a worthy pursuit and accessible to all
MAPPING IMPACT REPORT  
FINDINGS TO OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Once we developed our Theory of Change, we mapped its intended outcomes to the questions in the Roadtripper Impact Survey. The chart below lists the survey questions, the outcome they are aligned to in the Theory of Change, and the roadtrippers’ responses, shown as a percentage of confidence in the statement or question. Taken as a whole, roadtrippers responded with a high degree of confidence for each of these questions or statements, validating that, among the outcomes we're tracking in our Theory of Change, we have made a high degree of impact on their lives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION/STATEMENT</th>
<th>THEORY OF CHANGE ALIGNMENT</th>
<th>ROADTRIPPER RESPONSE</th>
<th>QUESTION/STATEMENT</th>
<th>THEORY OF CHANGE ALIGNMENT</th>
<th>ROADTRIPPER RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am comfortable with where I come from</td>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>I feel I have the ability to seek out new role models and build social capital</td>
<td>Knowledge of career exploration &amp; social capital-building pathways</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident in exploring new opportunities on my career path</td>
<td>Knowledge of career exploration &amp; social capital-building pathways</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>I understand the importance of talking with professionals in a career in which I am interested</td>
<td>Knowledge of career exploration &amp; social capital-building pathways</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know that I can pursue what interests me and turn it into a livelihood</td>
<td>Understanding of own interests, skills, &amp; talents</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>My education is relevant to my life</td>
<td>Pursuit/Completion of credentials, certificates, or experience for chosen career</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know role models and mentors that I can look to for guidance and support</td>
<td>Knowledge of career exploration &amp; social capital-building pathways</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>My road trip allowed me to see more opportunities/possibilities in the career path I was already on</td>
<td>Knowledge of diverse career paths</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am motivated to make things happen for myself</td>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>My job gives me the opportunity to do work that engages me</td>
<td>Increased # of formerly at-risk young people who are gainfully employed in an interest-aligned first career</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are many options available to me in life, including authentic career choices</td>
<td>Knowledge of diverse career paths</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>I have the ideal job for me</td>
<td>Increased # of formerly at-risk young people who are gainfully employed in an interest-aligned first career</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The future appears brighter than the past</td>
<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>My job is closely aligned to my interests</td>
<td>Increased # of formerly at-risk young people who are gainfully employed in an interest-aligned first career</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABOUT ROADTRIP NATION

Roadtrip Nation is a nonprofit organization that humanizes career exploration through story and empowers individuals to connect their interests to fulfilling lives and careers. We drive impact in partnership with mission-aligned organizations who support our self-discovery experiences, content creation, and distribution of tools and career resources. To learn more, visit roadtripnation.com.