



Findings from the 2026 Cross-Society Survey

Professional Identities, Demographics, and Issues

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INTRODUCTION

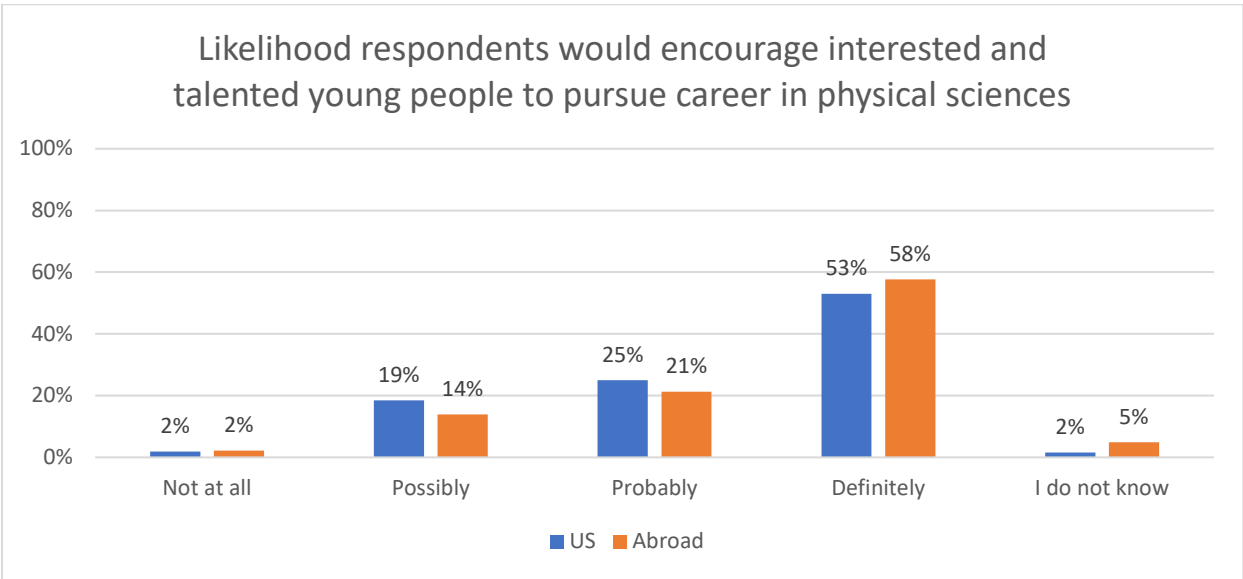
What This Report Tells Us About AIP Member Organization Members

Selected AIP Member Organizations participated in AIP's 2026 Survey of Professional Identities, Workforce Demographics, and Current Issues. This report presents findings for all respondents who indicated membership in an AIP Member Organization. Given the survey logistics, these results may not be representative of the entire AIP community. For more information about the survey, please see the Methodology section.

LOOKING AHEAD

Encouraging Interested and Talented Young People

We asked respondents whether they would encourage interested and talented young people to pursue a career in the physical sciences.



Differences between the responses from US residents and non-residents are statistically significant, $\alpha = 0.05$.

Most Important Issues

We asked respondents to indicate the three most important issues impacting the science and engineering enterprise to them. Respondents were presented with the following list:

- Artificial Intelligence
- Public trust in science
- Climate Change
- Educational pathway for scientists
- Eliminating barriers to access and opportunities
- Federal Funding for Science
- Indirect costs for government grants
- Other Funding for Science
- Research integrity
- Visas for international scholars
- Visas for international students
- Other – *please specify*: _____

We then asked those who selected artificial intelligence to tell us a bit more about that.

Federal funding for science, public trust in science, and AI are the three issues that were selected most frequently. Among those selecting AI, most thought AI could be both beneficial and detrimental to our future.

	Percent All respondents indicating issue as most important		
Important Issues Impacting the Science and Engineering Enterprise	Respondents residing in US	Respondents residing abroad	Overall
Federal funding for science	76% [‡]	57% [‡]	74%
Public trust in science	63% [‡]	48% [‡]	61%
Artificial intelligence	48%	55%	49%
Educational pipeline for scientists	24% [‡]	16% [‡]	23%
Climate change	17% [‡]	23% [‡]	18%
Research integrity	15% [‡]	24% [‡]	16%
Eliminating barriers to access and opportunities	15%	16%	15%
Visas for international scholars	9% [‡]	20% [‡]	10%
Visas for international students	10%	12%	10%
Other funding for science	6% [‡]	12% [‡]	7%
Indirect costs for government grants	6% [‡]	2% [‡]	6%
Other not listed	5%	7%	5%
Total respondents	1844	262	2106

[‡] Indicates differences are statistically significant at $\alpha=0.05$

	Percent of All respondents who indicated AI is an important issue	
	Respondents residing in US	Respondents residing abroad
AI can be beneficial to our future	5%	13%
AI can be both beneficial and detrimental	83%	77%
AI can be detrimental to our future	12%	10%
Total respondents	881	142

Differences are statistically significant at $\alpha=0.05$.

EXPERIENCES SINCE JANUARY 2025

Work Opportunities

We asked respondents to tell us whether changes in federal policy or funding affected their employment or work activities. Respondents could select all situations that applied from the following:

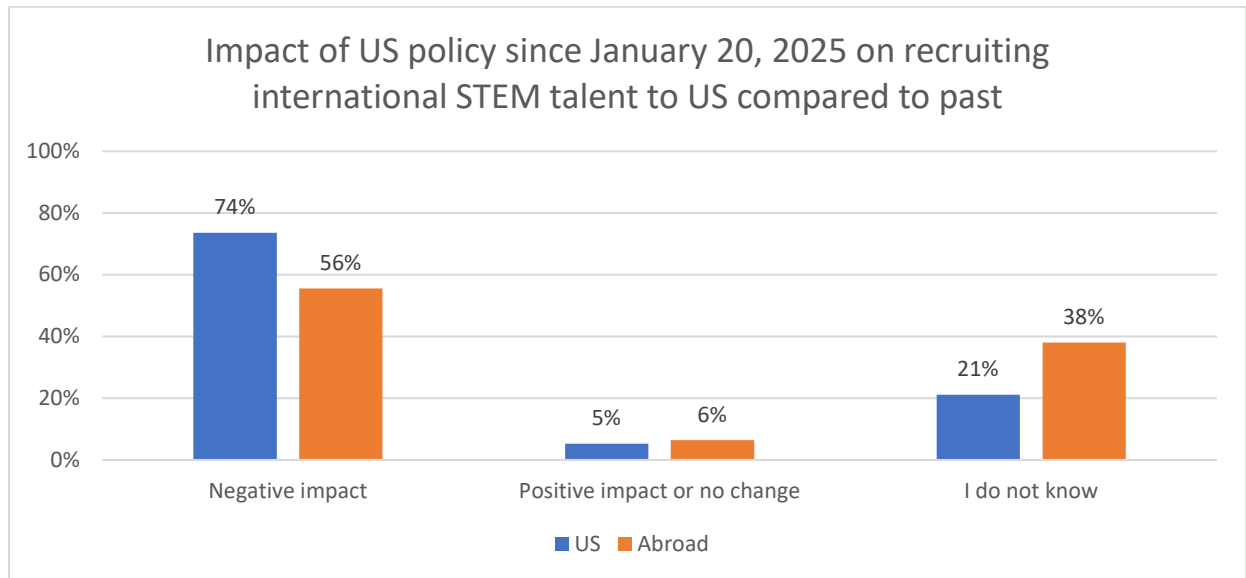
- Lost a job or position – *for example* *layoff, position eliminated*
- Took retirement or buyout to leave a position earlier than originally intended
- Lost funding for a planned activity – *for example* *grant, contract*
- Experienced reduced work hours or responsibilities

- No impact
- I don't know
- Prefer not to respond

How changes in federal policy or funding affected employment of All respondents	Percent All respondents
No impact	61%
Lost funding for a planned activity - for example grant, contract	19%
Experienced reduced work hours or responsibilities	4%
Lost a job or position - for example layoff, position eliminated	2%
Took retirement or buyout to leave a position earlier than originally intended	2%
I do not know	12%
Prefer not to respond	4%
Total respondents	2185

Recruiting International Science & Engineering Talent

We asked respondents what impact, if any, US policies since January 20, 2025 impacted recruiting international science and engineering talent to the US. Response options included negative, no change, positive, and “I do not know.”



Differences between the responses from US residents and non-residents are statistically significant, $\alpha = 0.05$.

Changes in Plans to Attend a Conference

	Percent All respondents conference plans outside US due to US policy changes since January 20, 2025		
Conference plans outside US	Respondents residing in US	Respondents residing abroad	Overall
Changed plans	19%	20%	19%
Did not change plans	32% [‡]	60% [‡]	35%
Had no plans to attend	49% [‡]	20% [‡]	46%
Total respondents	1845	251	2096

[‡] Indicates differences are statistically significant at $\alpha=0.05$.

	Percent All respondents conference plans in the US due to US policy changes since January 20, 2025		
Conference plans in US	Respondents residing in US	Respondents residing abroad	Overall
Changed plans	21% [‡]	44% [‡]	24%
Did not change plans	57% [‡]	31% [‡]	53%
Had no plans to attend	23%	25%	23%
Total respondents	1829	256	2085

[‡] Indicates differences are statistically significant at $\alpha=0.05$.

Impacts from Changes in Visa or Immigration Policy

We asked whether changes in the visa or immigrations policies had negatively impacted their career.

	Percent All respondents
Experienced negative impacts on their careers as a result of changes in visa or immigration policy since January 20, 2025	Overall: 9% Academic sector: 10% All other sectors combined: 8%

Differences are not statistically significant at $\alpha=0.05$.

PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES

Primary Professional Identity

We presented respondents with a list of professional identities and asked them to indicate their primary professional identity. These proportions describe the 2,245 respondents from societies across AIP's Member Organizations. They are not representative of all members of AIP's Member Organizations.

Primary professional identity	Percent All respondents
Astronomer / astrophysicist	27%
Physicist	25%
Medical physicist	16%
Educator	12%
Material scientist	2%
Planetary scientist	2%
Crystallographer	2%
Chemist	2%
Chemical engineer	2%
Other physicist	2%
Other scientist	2%
Other engineer	4%
Other professional identity	2%
Total respondents	2245

Additional Professional Identities

We presented the same list of professional identities and asked respondents to indicate which, if any, were additional professional identities. Respondents could select more than one.

Number of secondary professional identities	Percent All respondents
None	24%
One	70%
Two or more	6%
Total respondents	2004

Secondary professional identity	Percent All respondents
Educator	21%
Physicist	20%
Astronomer or astrophysicist	8%
Materials scientist	4%
Data scientist	3%
Chemist	3%
Planetary scientist	2%
Informal science educator	2%
Computer science	2%
Rheologist	2%
Other physicist	5%
Other scientist	3%
Other engineer	6%
Other professional identity	5%
Total respondents	2004 ¹

¹ This sum is the total number of identities selected, not the total number of respondents. Recall that respondents could select multiple secondary identities.

The

Most common professional identification combinations	Percent All respondents
Physicist-educator	13%
Medical physicist only	10%
Astronomer only	9%
Physicist only	7%
Astronomer-physicist	7%
Astronomer-educator	7%
Educator only	3%
Medical physicist - physicist	2%
Astronomer - planetary scientist	2%
Physicist-material scientist	2%
Medical physicist - educator	2%
Crystallographer - chemist	2%
Total respondents	2245

remaining

combinations accounted for 1% or less of the 140 different combinations each.

When we looked at combinations of primary and secondary professional identities among All respondents, we found that physicist was in many of the most common pairs. The pairs shown in the table are independent of primary and secondary identity, so physicists-educators in the table could have either as their primary professional identity.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Membership in other AIP Member Organizations

Here is the breakdown of membership in AIP Member Organizations for all respondents.

Member Organization membership	Percent All respondents
APS (American Physical Society)	36%
AAS (American Astronomical Society)	34%
AAPT (American Association of Physics Teachers)	22%
AAPM (American Association of Physicists in Medicine)	18%
AGU (American Geophysical Union)	6%
ACA (American Crystallographic Association)	4%
SoR (Society of Rheology)	4%
ASP (Astronomical Society of the Pacific)	4%
SPIE	4%
Optica	2%
AIAA (American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics)	2%
ASGSR (American Society for Gravitational and Space Research)	2%
Total respondents	2249

Less than 1% of all respondents indicated being a member of any of the other AIP Member Organizations.

Respondents by Highest Degree

More than three-quarters of all respondents held a doctorate and two-thirds indicate being employed in a full-time position.

Highest Degree	Percent All respondents
Doctorate	78%
Master's	16%
Bachelor's	4%
Other	2%
Total respondents	2243

Respondents by Employment Status

Almost one-fourth of all respondents are retired.

Employment Status	Percent All respondents
Full-time employed	67%
Part-time employed and not seeking full-time employment	5%
Seeking full-time employment	1%
Not employed and not seeking employment	1%
Retired	21%
Student	5%
Total respondents	2227

Respondents by Employment Sector

The employment sector of respondents is as follows:

Employer type	Percent All respondents
University or four-year college	46%
Hospital and medical services	14%
Industry or Private sector (for-profit)	10%
Federally funded research and development center (FFRDC)	6%
Elementary, Middle, or Secondary school	5%
University-affiliated research institute or observatory (UARI)	5%
Government (including state and local)	4%
Non-profit or Non-governmental organization (NGO)	4%
Two-year or Community college	3%
Medical school	2%
Other	1%
Total respondents	1649

Respondents by Primary Work Activity

Primary Work Activity	Percent All respondents
Basic research	30%
Teaching	28%
Clinical or patient care	16%
Applied research, long-term horizon	6%
Administration	6%
Engineering, design, and development	5%
Consulting	2%
Applied research, short-term horizon	2%
Creating content	1%
Other	4%
Total respondents	1640

Methodology

In summer 2026, the American Institute of Physics (AIP) invited its Member Organizations to participate in a survey examining members' professional identities, current work, and issues affecting the physical sciences community. Each participating Member Organization distributed the survey to its members using a survey link provided by AIP.

The following Member Organizations participated in this survey by notifying and encouraging their members to complete the questionnaire:

ACA: The Structural Science Society
American Association of Physicists in Medicine (AAPM)
American Association of Physics Teachers (AAPT)
American Astronomical Society (AAS)
American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA)
American Physical Society (APS)
American Society for Gravitational and Space Research (ASGSR)
Microscopy Society of America (MSA)
Society of Vacuum Coaters (SVC)
The Society of Rheology (SoR)
SPIE

Because many individuals belong to more than one AIP Member Organization, respondents were asked to indicate all Member Organizations of which they were members. Overall, 2,384 individuals responded to at least part of the survey, 2,172 completed the questionnaire, and 2,249 identified themselves as members of at least one participating Member Organization. Nearly one-quarter of respondents (23%) reported membership in more than one Member Organization.

This report is based on all respondents. Because members could receive invitations from multiple organizations and participation was voluntary, there is no way to identify how respondents received the link. The findings presented here should therefore be interpreted as describing the responses of the 2,249 members who participated in the survey.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

2026 Career, Work, and Current Issues Survey

1. Which of the following best describes your primary professional identity?

- ☐ Acoustician
- ☐ Aerospace engineer
- ☐ Astronomer/Astrophysicist
- ☐ Atmospheric scientist
- ☐ Biomedical engineer
- ☐ Chemist
- ☐ Chemical engineer
- ☐ Computer Scientist
- ☐ Crystallographer
- ☐ Data Scientist
- ☐ Educator
- ☐ Geologist
- ☐ Geophysicist
- ☐ Hydrologist
- ☐ Informal science educator
- ☐ Material Scientist
- ☐ Medical Physicist
- ☐ Meteorologist
- ☐ Physicist
- ☐ Planetary Scientist
- ☐ Rheologist
- ☐ Other scientist: _____
- ☐ Other engineer: _____
- ☐ Other – *Please specify*: _____

2. Which of the following best describes your secondary professional identity, if any? *Please select a different option than your primary professional identification. Please check all that apply.*

- ☐ No secondary professional identity
- ☐ Acoustician
- ☐ Aerospace engineer
- ☐ Astronomer/Astrophysicist
- ☐ Atmospheric scientist
- ☐ Biomedical engineer
- ☐ Chemist
- ☐ Chemical engineer
- ☐ Computer Scientist
- ☐ Crystallographer
- ☐ Data Scientist
- ☐ Educator
- ☐ Geologist
- ☐ Geophysicist
- ☐ Hydrologist
- ☐ Informal science educator
- ☐ Material Scientist
- ☐ Medical Physicist
- ☐ Meteorologist
- ☐ Physicist
- ☐ Planetary Scientist
- ☐ Rheologist
- ☐ Other scientist: _____
- ☐ Other engineer: _____
- ☐ Other – *Please specify:* _____

3. What is the highest degree you have earned?

- ☐ Some high school, no diploma
- ☐ High school graduate or GED
- ☐ Some college, no degree
- ☐ Associate degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Professional degree (for example, JD, MD)
- ☐ Doctorate
- ☐ Other degree – *Please specify:* _____

3a In what year did you earn your highest degree? ____

4. What was your primary employment status as of December 31, 2025? Employed includes active military.

- ☐ Student
- ☐ Employed full-time
- ☐ Employed part-time
- ☐ Employed part-time, seeking full-time employment
- ☐ Not employed, seeking employment
- ☐ Not employed, not seeking employment
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Other: _____

4a Which of the following best describes your employment sector? (Ask only employed)

- ☐ University or Four-year college
- ☐ Two-year or Community college
- ☐ Elementary, Middle, or Secondary school
- ☐ Planetarium or museum
- ☐ Medical school
- ☐ University-affiliated research institute or observatory (UARI)
- ☐ Federally funded research and development center (FFRDC)
- ☐ Non-profit or Non-governmental organization (NGO)

- ☐ Broadcast or Print media
- ☐ Industry or Private sector (for-profit)
- ☐ Government (including state and local)
- ☐ Hospital or other medical services
- ☐ Self-employed
- ☐ Other – *please specify:* _____

4b. What is your primary work activity? (Ask only employed)

- ☐ Basic research
- ☐ Applied research, long-term horizon
- ☐ Applied research, short-term horizon
- ☐ Engineering, design, or development
- ☐ Teaching
- ☐ Clinical or patient care
- ☐ Administration
- ☐ Consulting
- ☐ Creating content
- ☐ Other: _____

5. Which of the following societies are you currently a member of? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ AAPM (American Association of Physicists in Medicine)
- ☐ AAPT (American Association of Physics Teachers)
- ☐ AAS (American Astronomical Society)
- ☐ ACA: The Structural Science Society
- ☐ AMS (American Meteorological Society)
- ☐ APS (American Physical Society)
- ☐ ASA (Acoustical Society of America)
- ☐ AVS: Science & Technology of Materials, Interfaces, and Processing
- ☐ Optica
- ☐ SoR (The Society of Rheology)

- ☐ None of the above

6. Which of the following societies are you currently a member of? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ AGU (American Geophysical Union)
- ☐ AIAA (American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics)
- ☐ AIMBE (American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering)
- ☐ ANS (American Nuclear Society)
- ☐ ASGSR (American Society for Gravitational and Space Research)
- ☐ ASP (Astronomical Society of the Pacific)
- ☐ BPS (Biophysical Society)
- ☐ CUR (Council for Undergraduate Research)
- ☐ Cryogenic Society of America
- ☐ ECS (The Electrochemical Society)
- ☐ ESA (Ecological Society of America)
- ☐ GSA (The Geological Society of America)
- ☐ MSA (Microscopy Society of America)
- ☐ NSBP (The National Society of Black Physicists)
- ☐ NSHP (The National Society of Hispanic Physicists)
- ☐ SAS (Society for Applied Spectroscopy)
- ☐ SVC (Society of Vacuum Coaters)
- ☐ SPIE

- ☐ None of the above

7. Since January 1, 2025, to your knowledge, have changes in federal policy or funding affected your employment or work opportunities in any of the following ways? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Lost a job or position – *for example layoff, position eliminated*
- ☐ Took retirement or buyout to leave a position earlier than originally intended
- ☐ Lost funding for a planned activity – *for example grant, contract*
- ☐ Experienced reduced work hours or responsibilities

- ☐ No impact
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to respond

8. **Would you encourage interested and talented young people to pursue a career in the physical sciences?**
- ☐ No, not at all
 - ☐ Possibly
 - ☐ Probably
 - ☐ Definitely

 - ☐ I do not know
Please expand on your answer, if you wish _____
9. **How have US policies since January 20, 2025 impacted recruiting international science and engineering talent to the US?**
- ☐ Very negative impact
 - ☐ Somewhat negative impact
 - ☐ No change
 - ☐ Somewhat positive impact
 - ☐ Very positive impact

 - ☐ I do not know
Please expand on your answer, if you wish _____
10. **Have US policy changes since January 20, 2025, caused you to change or cancel plans to attend a conference outside the US?**
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No

 - ☐ I had no plans to attend a conference outside the US
 - ☐ Please expand on your answer, if you wish _____
11. **Have US policy changes since January 20, 2025, caused you to change or cancel plans to attend a conference within the US?**
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No

 - ☐ I had no plans to attend a conference within the US
 - ☐ Please expand on your answer, if you wish _____
12. **Have you experienced any impacts on your career as a result of changes in visa or immigration policy since January 20, 2025?**
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
- 12a (if yes) **Which of the following best describes the impacts you have experienced as a result of changes in visa or immigration policy since January 20, 2025?**
- ☐ Very negative impact
 - ☐ Somewhat negative impact
 - ☐ Somewhat positive impact
 - ☐ Very positive impact
 - ☐

13. In your opinion, what are the three most important issues impacting the science and engineering enterprise to you today? (Please check up to three issues)

- ☐ Artificial Intelligence
- ☐ Public trust in science
- ☐ Climate Change
- ☐ Educational pathway for scientists
- ☐ Eliminating barriers to access and opportunities
- ☐ Federal Funding for Science
- ☐ Indirect costs for government grants
- ☐ Other Funding for Science
- ☐ Research integrity
- ☐ Visas for international scholars
- ☐ Visas for international students
- ☐ Other – *please specify*: _____

13a (if selected Artificial Intelligence) You indicated that you believe that Artificial Intelligence is an important issue impacting the science and engineering enterprise today. Which of the following best describes the reasoning behind this concern?

- ☐ Because it can be beneficial to our future
- ☐ Because it can be both beneficial and detrimental to our future
- ☐ Because it can be detrimental to our future
- ☐ Other – Please expand on your answer if you wish _____

14. Do you currently reside in the US (or a US territory)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

14.a What is your citizenship? (Ask only US residents.)

- ☐ US citizen
- ☐ Non-US citizen, permanent resident status (green card holder)
- ☐ Non-US citizen, other
- ☐ I prefer not to respond

15. Which of the following best describes your gender identity? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Woman
- ☐ Man
- ☐ An identity not listed - *Please specify if you wish* _____
- ☐ I prefer not to respond

16. Thank you, your survey is now complete. Please tell us anything else you would like to say about your professional identity, changes in US policy, or important issues in science and engineering.