

NBC NEWS. GEN Z CHOOSING TRADE SCHOOLS OVER COLLEGE. TRANSCRIPT

Antonio: I'm Antonio. I'm 19 years old. I do asphalt.

Girl: Hey guys, I'm at work. It's 4:41, and I leave at 5:00, so I got to hurry up and get this wheel liner in.

NBC: A career in skilled trade jobs is becoming a hit amongst the unlikeliest demo, Gen Z.

Andrew Salgado: A day in the life of a 20 year old HVAC technician. Let's go. I feel like trades are such a, you know, even playing field. As long as you know what you're doing, you have the experience, and you have the ambition, you could really go anywhere in the street.

NBC: 18 to 28 year old electricians, plumbers, HVAC techs, and more are increasingly choosing careers where they have to learn a hard skill and use their hands, because they say it provides stability without going into major debt.

Mary Millican: You can never lose a trade education, something you can always fall back onto. Best thing that ever happened to me, so my experience is going good. Let's do a quick welding job for some cash.

NBC: And many of them are turning to social media to share the ins and outs of their day jobs, garnering millions of views.

Adrian China: To be able to inspire people, make them do better for themselves.

Mary Millican: I found passion helping others through Tik Tok find their way in the trade.

NBC: Amid skyrocketing tuition cost for more traditional colleges and fears of job security in white collar roles alongside the threat of AI, trade school enrolment is on the rise, with Gen Z leading the charge.

Andrew Salgado: You don't have to go to college to be successful.

The number of people ages 17 to 21 with two year vocational degrees last year hit its highest level in more than three decades, doubling the rate in the year 2000.

Mary Millican: I started out at a university. They shut down. Cost was too much. Wasn't worth it. I wanted an essential job, like most Gen Z's I'm assuming. Um, transitioned into trade school.

NBC: And the reason why there's a high demand for skilled workers, but not enough people to fill the roles, there are millions of unfilled trade jobs. And according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are roughly 500,000 open manufacturing jobs alone. And some estimates expect that number to balloon to more than 2 million by 2033. So Gen Z, in many ways, is filling the gap.

Chad Phillip: The average age of the class is becoming younger.

NBC: Chad Phillip teaches a three week course at Fred's Appliance Academy in Ohio, where students travel from all over the country to learn to fix kitchen appliances.

Chad Phillip: One of the biggest things I would get from the students is that they desire to be hands on. They don't want to sit in an office or a cubicle, uh, and do that type of work.

NBC: While many people think AI is going to hurt the future of work across industries, some experts believe it could be a good thing for the trades.

Marco Zappacosta: AI is going to help, not hurt, these categories. It's going to do a lot of the work that, again, people don't love doing.

NBC: Marco Zappacosta in 2018 founded Thumbtack, a platform that connects hundreds of thousands of pros to homeowners in need of home maintenance. And he's been writing about Gen Z and trade jobs for the last year and says the role of social media cannot be understated.

Marco Zappacosta: Two out of three G-Zers are saying that social media's increased their interest in the trades. Um, and that's kind of like influencing them more than like teachers, siblings, extended family.

NBC: What made you want to share a bit of your journey on social media and Tik Tok?

Jordan Morris: Um, just want to get my face out there and just show the younger generation that you don't, it don't, it don't always have to be college. Um, you can go to trade and you can make a good living.

Andrew Salgado: Just to show like the next generation, like I'm 18, 19, 20 years old in these videos, and I could do it. You guys could do it. There's nothing that I did was special. All right. Fourth of July on call service call. Let's see what we got.

NBC: How does it feel knowing you have a job that is always going to be in demand in some capacity, and AI can't replace it?

Andrew Salgado: I sleep well at night.

Jordan Morris: Um, I feel important in this world. People need me. People AC go out, they call me. So it just feel important, and it feel good to have a trade under your belt, just a skill.

VOCABULARY

asphalt (noun) - a black, sticky material used to make roads and driveways.

demo (noun) - a group of people being studied, like a certain age or type of person.

even playing field (noun) - a situation where everyone has the same chance to succeed.

garnering (verb) - getting or collecting something, like attention or support.

HVAC (noun) - heating, ventilation, and air conditioning, the system that warms or cools buildings.

stability (noun) - the state of being steady and not changing suddenly.

unlikeliest (adjective) - most surprising or not expected.