

BEAUTY AS A CAREER

2025 – INSIGHTS AND INTEREST FROM CAREER COUNSELORS



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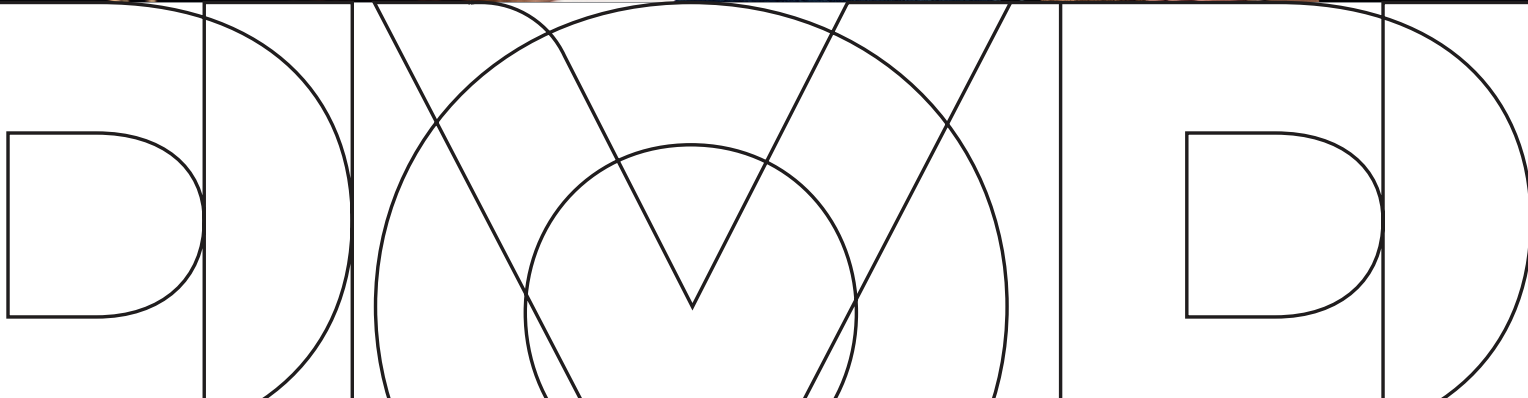




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Questions about student debt, the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on traditional white-collar jobs, the return on investment for a college degree and a focus on career satisfaction have fueled the “career vs. college” conversation.

To better understand what was taking place in our schools, we conducted research on school career counselors at the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Annual Conference in 2023, 2024 and again in 2025.

2023

Our initial study combined qualitative and quantitative methods to explore counselors’ perceptions of career pathways, with a focus on the beauty industry. Results revealed strong agreement that interest in vocational education was growing compared to traditional college routes. Counselors also mentioned a shift in parental attitudes, with more parents supporting skilled trade careers for their children. While many counselors expressed interest in beauty careers, most lacked detailed knowledge about the industry, including licensing requirements, program options, earning potential and financial aid—limiting their ability to fully support students. [2023 White Paper](#)

2024

In our follow-up study, the results showed that counselors increasingly viewed vocational pathways—including beauty—as strong, compelling alternatives to college. We also explored how counselors perceived key dimensions such as job security, earning potential and career satisfaction between college and career tracks. More than half of respondents rated career education as equal to or better than college in delivering long-term success and satisfaction. [2024 White Paper](#)

2025

Our recent research reaffirmed these trends. While overall perceptions and awareness generally remained consistent with 2024, the central message was unchanged: beauty careers and other skilled trades are now widely viewed as viable—and increasingly attractive—first-choice alternatives to traditional college pathways. The research also confirmed that the lack of familiarity with the beauty industry and limited awareness of related information resources to help guide their students remain key barriers.

National and Policy-Level Momentum Is Supporting the Trend

Recent government actions further support this shift toward career-focused education with changes to PELL, expanded support for Career and Technical Education (CTE) and bipartisan workforce readiness initiatives. At the state level, new policies are being introduced that offer career pathway planning and expand CTE offerings in middle and high schools—boosting early awareness and access to professions like beauty and wellness.

Implications for the Beauty Industry

The consistency of these findings highlights both an opportunity and a responsibility. As interest in vocational education—and careers in beauty—continues to grow, the industry must step up with information, programs, activities and partnerships that equip career counselors to effectively share these pathways.

Today's students are drawn to careers that offer creativity, flexibility and a sense of purpose—with an interest in beauty that's amplified by social media. These, and a strong alignment to national workforce goals, make the beauty industry well positioned to help the next generation pursue fulfilling, secure and financially viable careers.

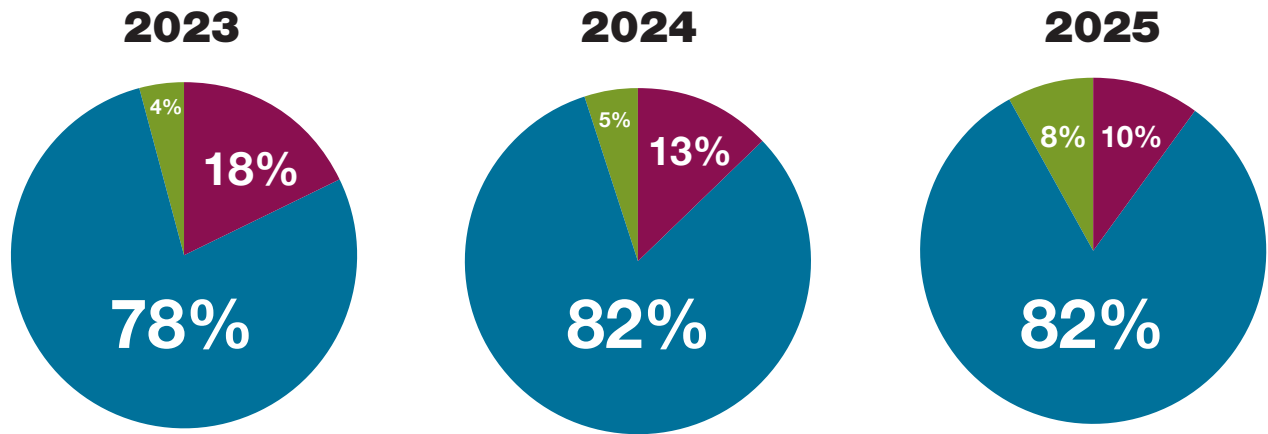


Pivot Point and **Beauty Cast Network** conducted research at the 2025 American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Annual Conference, focusing exclusively on insights from career counselors. We gathered 193 survey responses, supplemented by open-ended comments and in-depth conversations on the show floor.

This report presents both quantitative data and qualitative insights, offering a comprehensive look at counselor attitudes toward career education—with a particular focus on the beauty industry, defined as hairdressing, barbering, nails, skin care and massage.



Question: In your opinion, what are the future trends of students pursuing vocational education compared to traditional college education?



Percentage

- Upward trend for traditional college education over vocational education
- Upward trend for vocational education over traditional college education
- No change in trend for either type of education

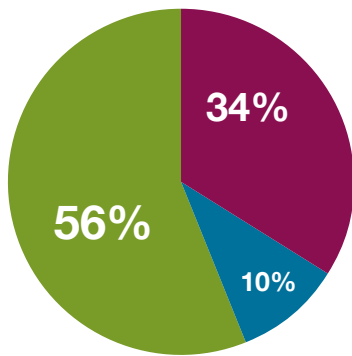
By a significant margin, career counselors see post-secondary education trending toward vocations, with the percentage indicating a trend toward traditional college education continuing to diminish.



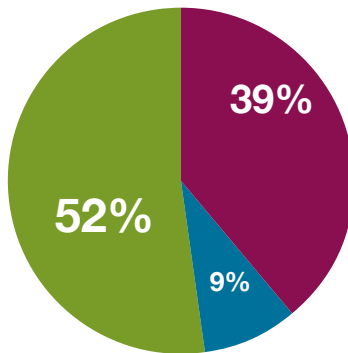


Question: Please consider each statement below and select the type of education you believe best reflects the statement.

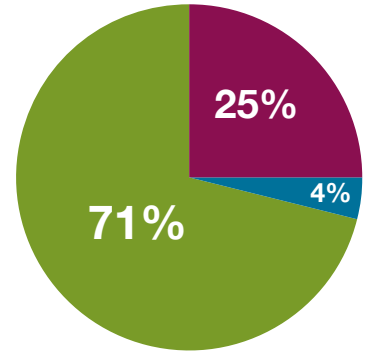
2024



Offers More Job Security

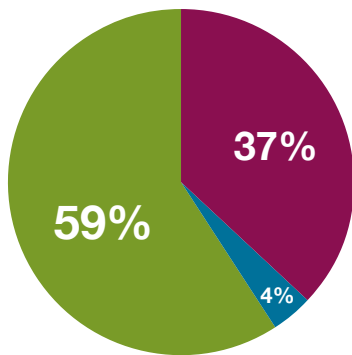


Has Higher Earning Potential

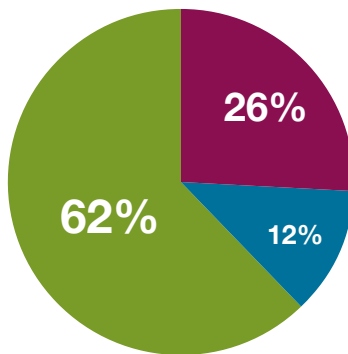


Leads to Greater Career Satisfaction

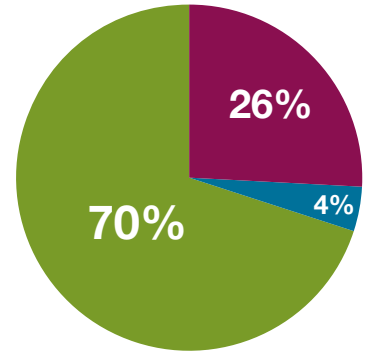
2025



Offers More Job Security



Has Higher Earning Potential



Leads to Greater Career Satisfaction

Percentage

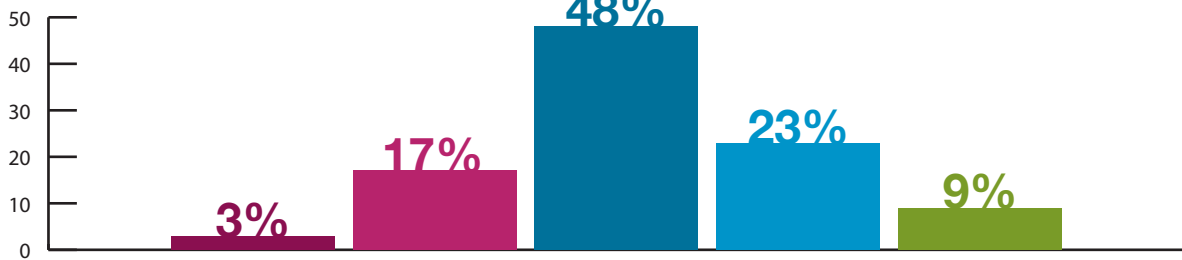
■ Vocational education ■ Traditional college education ■ Both equally

More than half of the career counselors regarded careers as equally able to offer security, earning potential and career happiness as college. Those who felt there was a difference saw careers as significantly better in offering these than college.

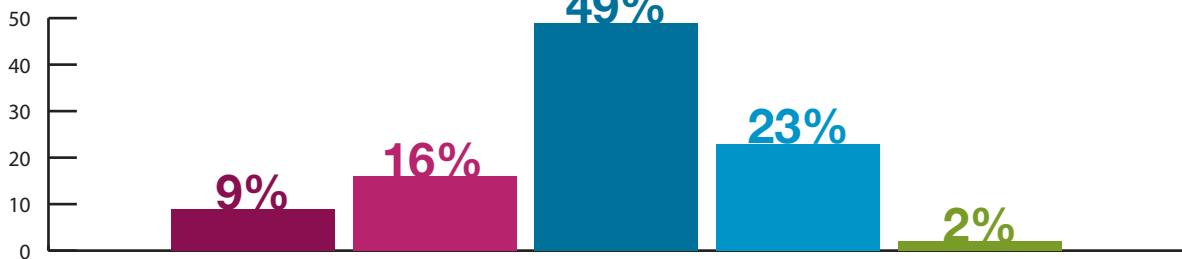


Question: The beauty industry includes hairdressing, barbering, nails, skin care and massage. What is your level of familiarity with career paths in the beauty industry?

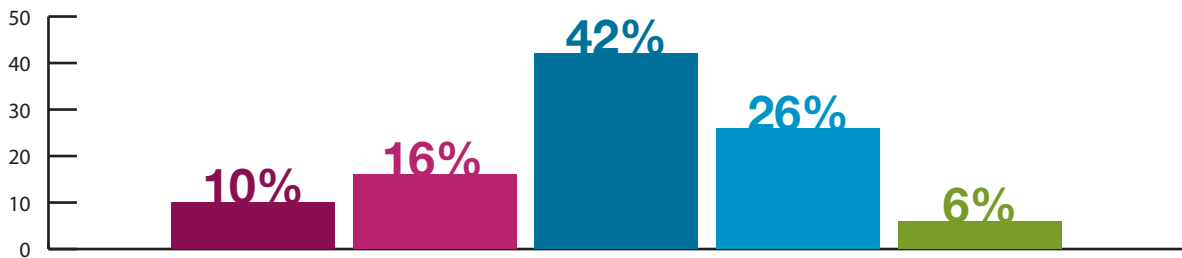
2023



2024



2025

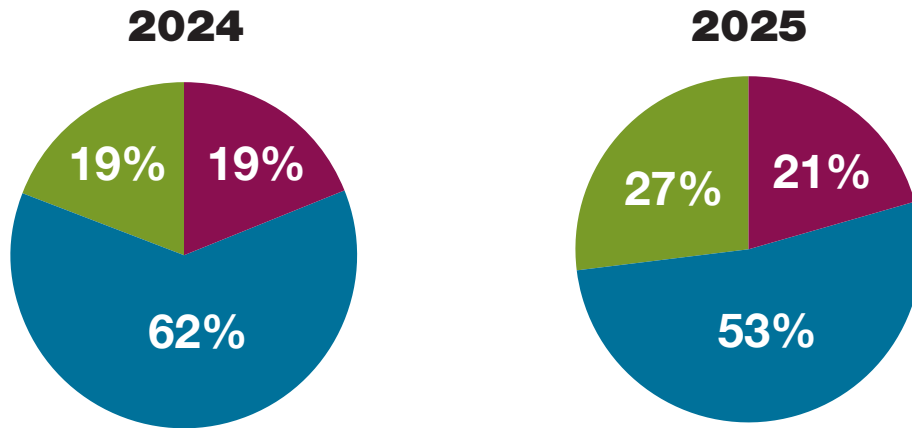


Percentage

- Extremely familiar
- Very familiar
- Moderately familiar
- Slightly familiar
- Not at all familiar

While interest in beauty careers has grown, most counselors still don't have a strong understanding of beauty industry career paths.

Question: In your opinion, what are the future trends of students pursuing beauty education compared to traditional college education?



Percentage

- Upward trend for traditional college education over beauty education
- Upward trend for beauty school education over traditional college education
- No change in trend for either type of education

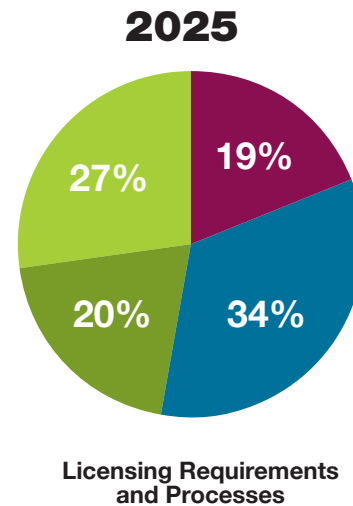
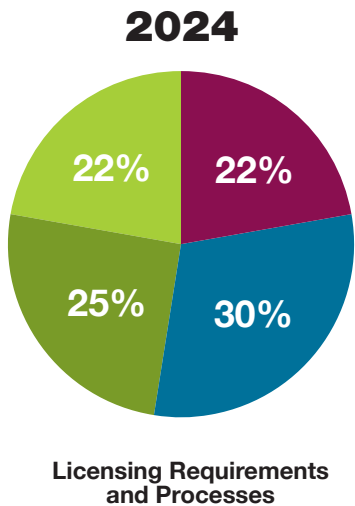
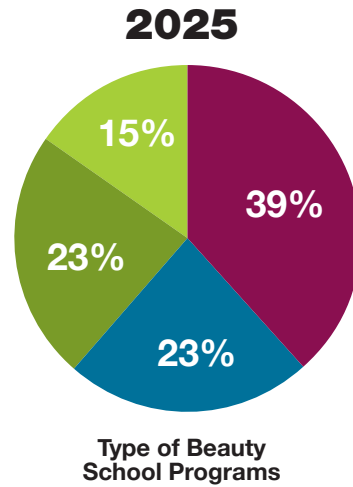
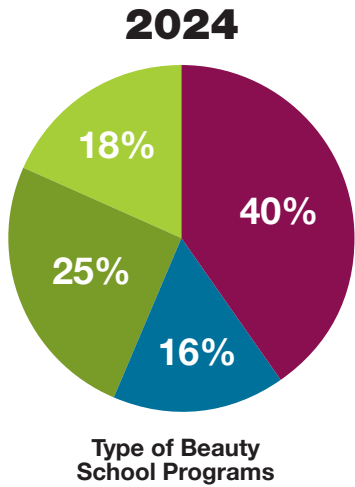
Disclaimer: Due to rounding, the values presented in the above charts may not add up to 100%.

Although by a smaller margin than overall vocational education—likely due to less familiarity with the beauty industry—career counselors see beauty education as comparable to college education.





Question: Please rank the following forms of information from most valuable to least valuable for supporting students who want to pursue beauty careers:



Percentage

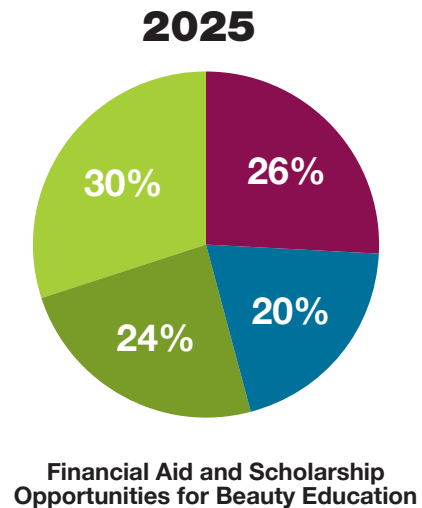
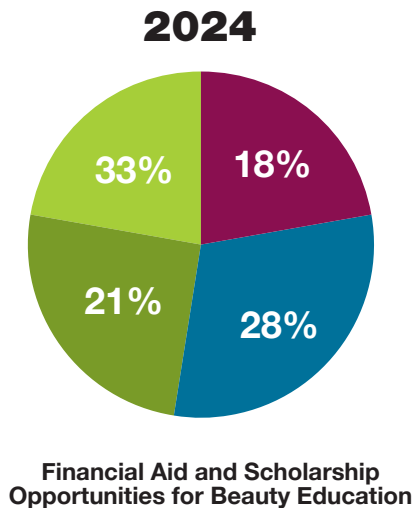
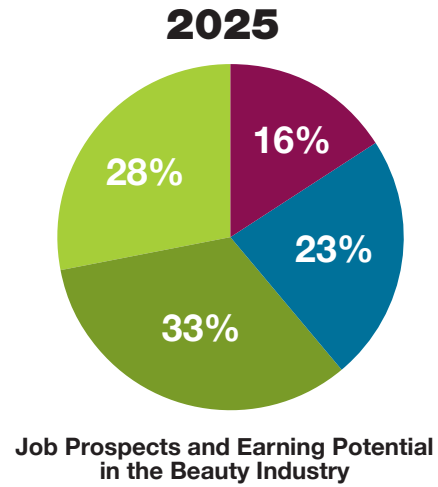
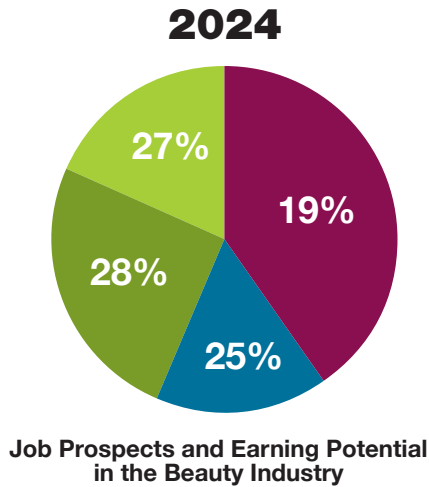
- Most valuable
- Very valuable
- Moderately valuable
- Least valuable

Disclaimer: Due to rounding, the values presented in the above charts may not add up to 100%.

Career counselors consider information about different types of beauty school programs to be their greatest need. However, information on licensing requirements, employment and financial aid is also seen as important.



Question: Please rank the following forms of information from most valuable to least valuable for supporting students who want to pursue beauty careers:



Percentage

- Most valuable
- Very valuable
- Moderately valuable
- Least valuable

Disclaimer: Due to rounding, the values presented in the above charts may not add up to 100%.

Career counselors cite information about different types of beauty school programs as their top need. However, interest in financial aid information is growing—perhaps reflecting recent government policy changes.

The following comments highlight key themes that emerged both in the study and from our in-person event conversations.

Awareness, Exposure & Access

- “We need to provide more exposure and access to beauty career information starting in elementary school and continuing through middle and high school.”
- “We need help connecting to more beauty schools or education programs; current options have too few seats for the demand.”

Perception, Popularity & Career Exploration

- “I need to work more to destigmatize it at my school.”
- “This seems to be a growing field. I think it’s a fantastic job prospect, especially now that social media shares so much beauty content.”
- “Social media, especially TikTok, influences young people to consider careers in cosmetology and related fields.”
- “Careers in the beauty industry are very popular with students, but many are unsure what these careers look like.”

Financial Support & Collaboration

- “I wish there were more options to help fund their opportunities, and more collaboration with local community colleges.”
- “Students and school staff need more information about available financial aid for beauty careers—many interested students lack the funds for training.”



Penny Burns is the founder of Beauty Cast Network (BCN), a digital career services platform founded in 2013 to connect schools and students with leading regional and national employers across the categories of beauty, barbering, nails, skin care and wellness. BCN's mission is to help graduates find their way to the right first job, a critical step in developing a successful career.

A long-time industry veteran, Penny has gone from successfully managing and owning nine schools to re-focusing her energies on helping graduates and employers connect through the Beauty Cast Network. Penny believes that when we help a graduate choose a career path that allows them to continue to learn and grow, it will eventually lead them to a profitable and sustainable dream career.

INQUIRY FORM

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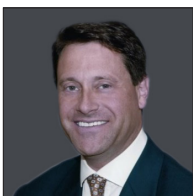
Pivot Point International is a third-generation, family-owned company dedicated exclusively to the professional beauty, barbering and wellness industry. Our team of licensed professionals brings extensive hands-on experience across beauty schools, salons, spas, barbershops, chains, brands and distributors.

As a founding member of Beauty Changes Lives and producer of the Industry Leader Roundtable, Pivot Point is committed to shaping the future of the beauty industry through charitable initiatives, recognition programs and cause-driven efforts focused on ethics, empowerment, inclusion and sustainability. Our original research explores critical topics affecting schools and professionals, including wellness, generational dynamics, post-pandemic education and the role of perception in industry recruitment and retention.

Pivot Point's education offering includes original and third-party curriculum for cosmetology, barbering, nails and esthetics—delivered through a learning platform built specifically for beauty professionals.

Pivot Point also manufactures the industry's most diverse range of top-quality mannequins, all produced in our company-owned, SA8000-certified factory to ensure the highest standards of ethics and craftsmanship. We offer a complete range of textured hair mannequins, and our eco-friendly Cap Series mannequins are designed for portability, space efficiency and reduced landfill waste.

www.pivot-point.com



Let's Connect

To explore how we can collaborate,
please contact: Steve Reiss
sreiss@pivot-point.com

We understand industry relationships and trends, ensuring your research objectives are met with actionable, real-world insights.

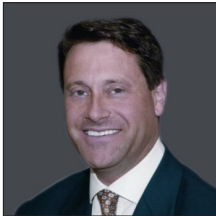
Whether your research is for internal intelligence or to support sales and marketing, we can help you explore all your research options. Knowing that quick turnaround is often a consideration, our industry relationships and experience help us provide you with the most time-effective solution.

We look forward to working with you!

INQUIRY FORM

pivot-point.com/research/

THE PIVOT POINT RESEARCH LEADERSHIP TEAM



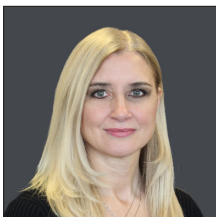
Steve Reiss
*Strategic Marketing &
Business Insights*

15+ years providing custom research solutions to leading beauty industry groups, with a focus on leveraging research insights to create effective strategies supporting business goals.



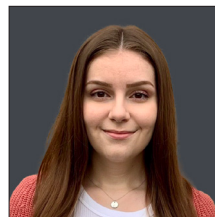
Sabrina Cason
Primary Research

Specializes in consumer-focused market research, leading and designing research methodology, execution and analysis that provides insight to drive business growth.



Vasiliki A. Stavrakis
Secondary Research

Specializes in analyzing and aggregating third-party and government data and regulatory, licensing and accrediting agency requirements to inform business decisions.



Christina Mooshil
Data Visualization

Specializes in combining analysis, design and storytelling to create visual data representations that help people understand and evaluate information more easily.