

METHODOLOGY

America's Dream Employers Ranking **2026**



America's Dream Employers honors organizations that have a great reputation amongst the workforce of the future

Ranking's cornerstones



Methodology

America's Dream Employers are identified in independent surveys of a vast sample of **U.S. college students** who nominated their "Dream Employers", **as well as employees** working for the nominated organizations.

The surveys are conducted using several online access panels, providing a representative sample of the American workforce, as well as current American college students. Students were asked **which firm or institution offers their "dream job"** in an open-ended question with an autofill option. Employees were asked to name their employer (also with an autofill option) and gauge their willingness to recommend said employer to family and friends. Each survey is conducted based around companies **from all industry sectors** with more than 1,000 employees in the U.S. In total, the surveys take an average of 5-8 minutes to complete. Over 266,000 datapoints were gathered and are considered for the ranking.

The final score is based on two types of evaluations:

1. **Dream Employer Nominations:** How frequently the organization is named as a "dream employer" relative to the size of the sample.
2. **Personal Evaluations** (those given by employees of the "dream employers" themselves): responses about the named "dream employers" that have been captured in the course of our other America's Best Employers projects are incorporated to balance "dreamer" opinions. Overall willingness to recommend their employer on an 11-point Likert scale serves as the key metric to differentiate employers that live up to their dream status from those that may not.

The final result is a list of the top 500 "dream" employers in the U.S.A. Less than the top 1/3 of evaluable companies are ranked.



Executive Summary

- **Title of ranking:** America's Dream Employers 2026
- **Media partner:** Forbes
- **Edition:** 2nd
- **Number of awardees:** 500
- **Methodology:** Survey
- **Criteria used for determining rank:** Online survey of students assessing various evaluations of company performance as a dream future employer. Companies were scored across multiple dimensions, with the highest scores determining the final ranking.

America's Dream Employers follows the same approach as other employers projects

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Process

Data-based results



Two surveys capture data from two respondent groups: students and employees

Data collection through online access panels



Online Access Panel

An online access panel is a sample group set up by a survey company and available for custom-built surveys. People register and agree to take part in online surveys.

Employee Sample



>140,000 Participants

- ✓ **Full-Time** (> 35 hours per week)
- ✓ **Part-Time** (< 35 hours per week)
- ✗ **Unemployed**
- ✗ **Self-employed**
- ✗ **Company size** < 1,000 employees

Student Sample



>10,000 Participants

- ✓ **Student Status**
- ✓ **Enrolled in U.S. College/Uni**



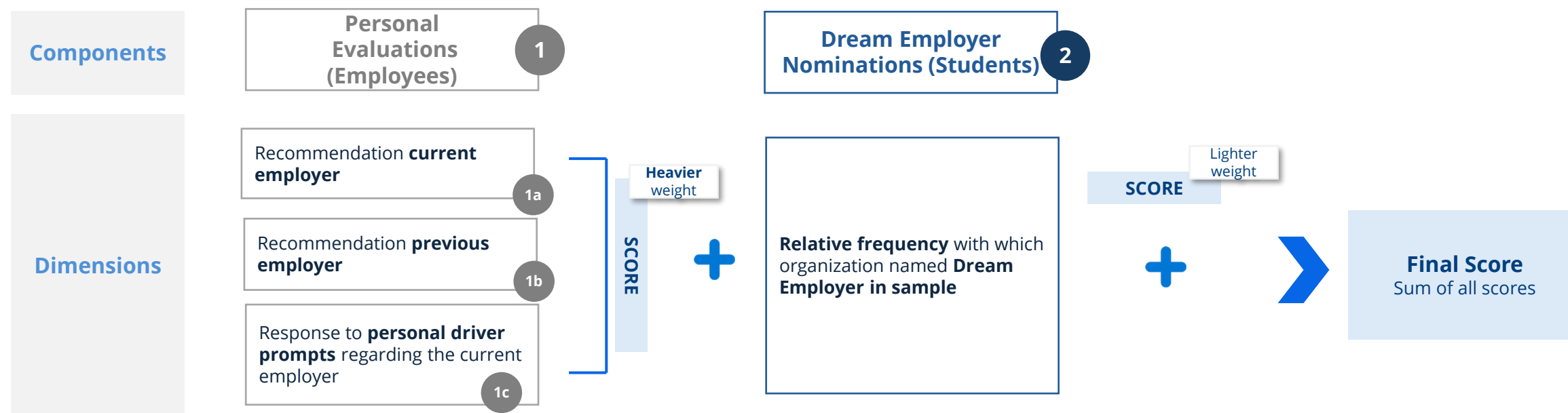
Survey Periods

February – June*, September – November*
Over a 3 year period

The survey has been conducted using an **online access panel**, providing a representative sample of **>10,000 students, as well as >140,000 employees** over the last three years working part- or full-time for companies and institutions employing **at least 1,000 employees in the U.S.**

The scoring model is founded on two key components: Personal Evaluations and Dream Employer Nominations from students

Scoring Model



Data from the **previous three years is considered**, with a **heavier weight put on more recent data**. The results are combined to calculate a final score.

Overview of "Personal Driver" Prompts give an indication of employee preferences

Prompts categorized into six dimensions, shown below

Atmosphere & Development

- Good performance at work is recognized and praised
- The management is loyal to the employees
- There is a climate of fairness and trust
- I am given the necessary information I need to do my work
- My employer encourages me to take initiative and develop new ideas
- There are career advancement opportunities
- Colleagues work well together
- My direct supervisor makes his/her decisions clear

Salary / Wage

- My company pays fair wages/salaries
- Wages/salaries paid are in line with responsibilities
- The medical insurance, paid holidays/vacation/sick days, and retirement plan offered by my employer are competitive with comparable jobs in my industry

Image

- The company enjoys a good image
- I am proud of the product/service that my company produces/offers

Company Culture

- My employer respects individuals and values their differences
- My employer provides an environment for the free and open expression of ideas, opinions and beliefs
- My employer takes appropriate action in response to incidents of discrimination

Working Conditions

- I can organize my own work
- I am satisfied with my working hours

Workplace

- Working equipment is state of the art
- Work stations are safe and ergonomic

Industries

Each employer is grouped by industry



Manufacturing and Heavy Industry

- Aerospace & Defense
- Automotive (Automotive and Suppliers)
- Construction, Chemicals, Raw Materials
- Engineering, Manufacturing



Consumer Goods and Retail

- Clothing, Shoes, Sports Equipment
- Food, Soft Beverages, Alcohol & Tobacco
- Packaged Goods
- Retail & Wholesale



Healthcare and Biotechnology

- Drugs & Biotechnology
- Health Care Equipment & Services
- Healthcare & Social Services



Technology and Telecommunication

- Telecommunications Services, Cable Supplier
- IT Software & Services
- Semiconductors, Electronics, Electrical Engineering



Finance and Professional Services

- Banking & Financial Services
- Business Services & Supplies
- Professional Services
- Insurance



Media, Advertising, and Leisure

- Media & Advertising
- Restaurants
- Travel & Leisure



Others

- Utilities
- Transportation and Logistics
- Education
- Government Services