Future-Proofing: The Sector Analysis Scan

Reference Guide, Research Tips, and Sector Directory

Recommended Reading for Students

These five sources will give you the foundational knowledge to understand the forces shaping the economy. You do not need to read all of them. Start with the one closest to your question.

Source	What it teaches you	Best for
The Anxious Generation by Jonathan Haidt (2024)	How technology is reshaping adolescent development and why protecting your ability to think deeply matters. Connects the cognitive fitness argument to practical action.	Understanding why deep thinking is under threat and why the habits in this worksheet matter beyond career planning.
Co-Intelligence by Ethan Mollick (2024)	How to work alongside AI rather than be replaced by it. Practical, research-based, written by a Wharton professor who studies AI in real work environments.	Understanding the 80/20 Split (Pillar 2) and learning how to use AI as a sparring partner rather than a shortcut.
Deep Work by Cal Newport (2016)	Why sustained concentration is becoming the most valuable skill in the economy and how to build it. The book that coined the term and started the cognitive fitness conversation.	Building the mental discipline required to do the kind of analysis this worksheet asks you to do.
WEF Future of Jobs Report 2025 (free online at weforum.org)	The most comprehensive global survey of workforce trends, covering the five macro forces, projected job growth and decline, and the skills employers say they need. This is the primary data source behind the Sector Analysis Scan.	Understanding the five forces at a global level and seeing which roles are growing or shrinking across industries. Start with the Executive Summary (15 pages).
Occupational Outlook Handbook (free at bls.gov/ooh)	Detailed profiles of hundreds of occupations with growth projections, salary data, education requirements, and day-to-day work descriptions. Updated annually by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.	Step 4 of the Scan (mapping the skill premium). When you identify a growing role, look it up here to understand what the job actually involves, what it pays, and what education it requires.

A NOTE ON READING

Writing by hand on this worksheet is a form of cognitive exercise. Reading a book, a long report is another. Cal Newport argues that consuming a few dozen book pages a day should become the new 10,000 daily steps for cognitive fitness. If you read 20 pages a day from any of the sources above, you will finish each one in a few weeks, and your ability to think about career decisions will be measurably sharper by the time you are done.

How to Research the Five Forces on Your Own

You do not need expensive databases or a finance degree to fill in this worksheet. Here are the best free resources for each force, and what to look for when you use them.

Force	Where to find the data	What to look for
Technological Change	BLS Occupational Outlook Handbook (bls.gov/ooh): search by industry or occupation. McKinsey Global Institute (mckinsey.com/mgi): free reports on AI and automation. PwC AI Jobs Barometer (pwc.com): annual report on AI's impact on wages and hiring.	Which roles in your target sector are being augmented by AI vs. automated. Whether job postings for the role require AI skills. The 56% wage premium data for workers with AI skills.
The Green Transition	International Energy Agency (iea.org): free global energy outlook reports. EIA (eia.gov): U.S. energy production and price data. Department of Energy (energy.gov): Inflation Reduction Act project tracker showing where clean energy investment is flowing.	Whether renewable energy is growing in your region. Which trade skills (electrical, HVAC, solar) are in shortage. Federal and state incentive programs that create guaranteed demand.
Demographic Shifts	U.S. Census Bureau (census.gov): population projections by age group. HRSA Health Workforce Projections (data.hrsa.gov): nursing and physician shortage data by state. BLS Employment Projections (bls.gov/emp): 10-year industry and occupation projections.	The age distribution of the current workforce in your target sector (how many workers are near retirement). Whether the population that uses the sector's services is growing or shrinking. Projected shortage or surplus of workers in specific roles.
Geoeconomic Fragmentation	Peterson Institute for International Economics (piie.com): trade policy tracker. CHIPS Act project tracker (nist.gov): semiconductor and manufacturing investments by state. WEF Global Risks Report (free at weforum.org): annual assessment of geopolitical and economic risks.	Whether your target industry depends on global supply chains that are being restructured. Which manufacturing or production activities are being reshored to the U.S. Trade policy changes (tariffs, sanctions) affecting the sector.
Economic Uncertainty	BLS Monthly Jobs Report (bls.gov/news.release/empsit.nr0.htm): released first Friday of every month. Federal Reserve Economic Data / FRED (fred.stlouisfed.org): searchable database of GDP, inflation, unemployment, interest rates. Pathfinder Career Path Simulator (simulator.pathfinderfuture.io): 10-year lookback and forward projections across economic indicators.	Whether the sector is adding or losing jobs in the most recent month. How the sector performed during past recessions (recession-resistant or not). Current inflation and interest rate trends and how they affect hiring in the sector.

RESEARCH TIP

Start with the BLS Occupational Outlook Handbook. It is free, reliable, and written in plain language. Type in the name of any occupation and you will get projected growth, median salary, education requirements, and a description of what the job actually involves day to day. This single resource can fill in most of Step 4 of the Scan.

For the big picture, read the Executive Summary of the WEF Future of Jobs Report (15 pages, free PDF). It covers all five forces globally and identifies which roles are growing and shrinking fastest. That gives you the framework. The BLS gives you the U.S. numbers.

> The Pathfinder Career Path Simulator combines many of these sources into one tool. Use it to see how economic indicators (GDP, inflation, oil prices, unemployment) have affected specific sectors over the past decade and how they are projected to perform over the next decade.

The 10 Career Worlds

These are the sectors covered by the Pathfinder platform. Each one can be scanned using this worksheet. BLS projected growth rates (2024-2034) are listed for reference.

#	Career World	BLS projected growth	Primary forces driving it
1	Healthcare & Social Assistance	+8.4% (+2.0M jobs)	Demographics, Technology, Recession resistance
2	Professional & Business Services	+7.5% (+813K jobs)	Technology, Geoeconomic Fragmentation
3	Technology & AI (Information)	+6.5% (+192K jobs)	Technology (but entry-level contracting sharply)
4	Clean Energy & Environment (Utilities)	+4.9% (+29K sector / fastest-growing detailed industries)	Green Transition, Geoeconomic Fragmentation, Technology
5	Construction & Infrastructure	+4.4% (+361K jobs)	Green Transition, Geoeconomic Fragmentation, Demographics
6	Finance & Insurance	+3.4% (+226K jobs)	Technology, Economic Uncertainty
7	Transportation & Logistics	+3.0% (+199K jobs)	Geoeconomic Fragmentation, Technology
8	Manufacturing & Advanced Production	~0% (flat overall, but advanced mfg growing)	Geoeconomic Fragmentation, Technology
9	Education & Training	+0.1% (+12K jobs, but workforce retraining growing fast)	Technology, Demographics
10	Defense & National Security	-0.1% (gov. sector, but cybersecurity surging)	Geoeconomic Fragmentation, Technology

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Employment Projections 2024-2034 (August 2025). Growth rates refer to BLS sector classifications, which may not map perfectly to Career World groupings. Use the Pathfinder Career Path Simulator for sector-specific data.

Sample Scan: Healthcare & Social Assistance

A completed example showing how to fill in the Sector Analysis Scan

QUICK DEFINITIONS

Tailwind: A force pushing an industry forward. **Headwind:** A force pushing against an industry.

Structural: Persists 10+ years regardless of economic cycle. **Cyclical:** Moves with the economy; reverses in 2-5 years.

Force alignment: Number of forces pushing the same direction. 1 = interesting. 2 = signal. 3+ = strong.

STEP 1 Name the forces in play

☑	**Technological Change** AI, automation, digitization	**TAILWIND: AI automates documentation and diagnostics but increases need for clinical judgment**	**STRUCTURAL: AI adoption in healthcare accelerates every year**
☑	**The Green Transition** Renewable energy, electrification	**(not a major force for this sector)**	
☑	**Demographic Shifts** Aging population, workforce composition	**TAILWIND: Baby boomers aging into the highest healthcare need period. 73% of 65+ will need increased services by 2029**	**STRUCTURAL: Demographics do not reverse. This force persists for 20+ years.**
☑	**Geoeconomic Fragmentation** Trade policy, reshoring	**(minor: some pharmaceutical reshoring, but not the primary driver)**	
☑	**Economic Uncertainty** Inflation, interest rates, recession risk	**TAILWIND: Healthcare is recession-resistant. Added 82,000 jobs in Jan 2026, 63% of all new U.S. jobs that month.**	**STRUCTURAL: People need healthcare regardless of economic conditions.**

DOMINANT FORCE

Demographic Shifts are the dominant force. The aging of 76 million baby boomers into their highest-need healthcare years is creating demand that will persist for at least two more decades. This is reinforced by technological change (AI expanding the scope of what healthcare workers can do) and recession resistance (healthcare hiring continues even during downturns).

STEP 2 Assess direction and durability

Overall direction: STRONGLY UP | BLS projects +8.4% growth (2024-2034), adding ~2 million jobs. Nearly 3x the economy average of 3.1%.

Durability: STRUCTURAL (20+ years) | The aging population is not a trend that reverses. Nursing shortage projected through at least 2037. Healthcare added jobs during every recession since 2001.

Evidence: Healthcare contributed 63% of all new U.S. jobs in January 2026. HRSA projects a shortage of nearly 700,000 physicians, RNs, and LPNs by 2037. Five of the 20 fastest-growing occupations are in nursing.

STEP 3 Count the force alignment

Forces aligned: 3 (Demographics + Technology + Recession Resistance) | All pointing up. All structural.

Opposing forces: Minor headwind from workforce burnout and nursing education bottleneck (not enough faculty to train enough nurses). But this headwind actually reinforces the opportunity: the shortage makes the demand for qualified workers even more acute and drives wages higher.

STEP 4 Map the skill premium

Skills becoming MORE valuable: Clinical care (nursing, gerontology, chronic disease management), mental health counseling, health informatics, telehealth coordination, clinical data interpretation.

Skills becoming LESS valuable: Administrative tasks (scheduling, documentation, billing), basic data entry, standardized test-prep tutoring for healthcare exams (AI-handled).

Roles to investigate: Nurse Practitioner (+40% growth, $129K median), Home Health Aide (largest absolute job growth), Health Informatics Specialist, Mental Health Counselor, Telehealth Coordinator.

Pillar 1 check: A student who values direct human connection and is energized by helping people would align with nursing or counseling. A student who prefers technical problem-solving and autonomy might align with health informatics or clinical data analysis. Same sector, different fits.

Pillar 2 check: The 20% capabilities most critical in healthcare are judgment under ambiguity (treatment decisions with incomplete data), ethical discernment (end-of-life care, resource allocation), and relational intelligence (patient trust, family communication).

STEP 5 Run the bias check

Narrative fallacy: "Healthcare = being a doctor or nurse." Reality: the sector includes data analysts, informatics specialists, policy researchers, counselors, telehealth coordinators, and dozens of non-bedside roles.

Herd thinking: "Everyone is going into tech." Entry-level tech postings have dropped 67%. Healthcare added 82,000 jobs in a single month. The herd is going one direction; the macro forces are pointing another.

Most active bias: For me, narrative fallacy. I assumed healthcare was only for people who wanted to work in a hospital. The Macro Scan revealed a much broader set of roles I hadn't considered.

STEP 6 Your verdict and next move

Assessment: Healthcare has the strongest Macro Scan result of any sector I've evaluated. Three structural tailwinds. Recession-resistant. Fastest growth rate of any major sector. Opportunities across every education level. The talent shortage is severe and projected to worsen, which means wages will continue rising and employers will be competing for workers.

One action this week: Look up Health Informatics on the BLS Occupational Outlook Handbook. Check the Pathfinder Opportunity Index for internships in healthcare data or telehealth. Talk to the career counselor about certification programs that start this summer.

Revisit date: October 2026. Check the BLS monthly jobs report, simulator data, and whether any healthcare workforce legislation has passed.

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Six steps to read any industry. A pen and this page.

Write your answers by hand. The act of writing forces slower, more deliberate thinking than typing. There are no right answers, only clearer ones.

THE SECTOR I AM SCANNING:

Date: _____ My revisit date (6 months): _____

QUICK DEFINITIONS

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STEP 1

Name the forces in play

Check each force acting on this sector. Note whether it is a tailwind or headwind, and structural or cyclical.

☐	**Technological Change** AI, automation, digitization	*Tailwind or headwind?*	*Structural or cyclical?*
☐	**The Green Transition** Renewable energy, electrification, climate policy	*Tailwind or headwind?*	*Structural or cyclical?*
☐	**Demographic Shifts** Aging population, workforce composition, migration	*Tailwind or headwind?*	*Structural or cyclical?*
☐	**Geoeconomic Fragmentation** Trade policy, reshoring, supply chain redesign	*Tailwind or headwind?*	*Structural or cyclical?*
☐	**Economic Uncertainty** Inflation, interest rates, recession risk, job market volatility	*Tailwind or headwind?*	*Structural or cyclical?*

Which force is the **dominant** one for this sector and why?

STEP 2

Assess direction and durability

Overall direction (circle one): **STRONGLY UP** **UP** **FLAT** **DOWN** **STRONGLY DOWN**

Durability (circle one): **STRUCTURAL (10+ years)** **CYCLICAL (2-5 years)** **UNSURE**

What evidence supports your assessment?

STEP 3

Count the force alignment

How many forces are pushing in the same direction? Any pushing the opposite way?

Forces aligned: _____ Direction: _____

Are any forces pointing the opposite direction? Which one, and how strong?

STEP 4

Map the skill premium

What specific skills do the forces make more or less valuable?

Skills becoming MORE valuable:

Skills becoming LESS valuable:

Roles to investigate (2-3 specific roles):

Pillar 1 check: Do these connect to your strengths, values, and energy?

Pillar 2 check: Which 20% capabilities (judgment, contextual reasoning, ethical discernment, relational intelligence, strategic framing) matter most here?

STEP 5

Run the bias check

Name the bias that might be operating. Naming it creates distance between the feeling and the decision.

Loss aversion *Am I avoiding a change because I fear losing what I have?*	
Recency bias *Am I projecting recent headlines onto the long term?*	
Herd thinking *Am I following this path because everyone else is?*	
Present bias *Am I choosing the faster option over the more durable one?*	
Narrative fallacy *Am I carrying a story that doesn't match the data?*	

Which bias is most active right now? If you removed it, would your decision change?

STEP 6

Your verdict and next move

My assessment of this sector after running the Scan:

One action I will take this week:

(Research a role on BLS.gov. Check the Opportunity Index. Talk to someone in this sector. Visit the simulator.)

My revisit date: _____

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