

2022

Career Planning and Job Search Trends

Prepared by BestColleges

Working Americans share their job search experiences and employment priorities.





2022 Career Planning and Job Search Trends

Insights From Working Adults in the U.S.

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This report is the result of a collaborative effort of BestColleges.com contributors. The team included: Jennifer Cuellar, Reece Johnson, Emily Kelso, Rebecca Long, Andrew Rice, Claudia Sanchez, Jordan Stewart-Rozema, and Quinn Tomlin.

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Executive Summary

Most people experience multiple job changes over the course of their careers. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, workers born between 1957 and 1964 "held an average of 12.4 jobs from ages 18 to 54" (2021). Job change can happen for many reasons. What job search activities are most prevalent among today's job seekers? And where do they turn for guidance about the process? This report shares insights from a survey of 1,000 working Americans conducted in June 2022.



Key Findings

The Job Search

- *Identifying jobs to apply for* was the top job search challenge, as identified by 24% of respondents, followed by *participating in job interviews* (22%) and *writing or updating my resume* (20%).
- A vast majority (80%) of working Americans agreed that they were confident in their job search abilities.
- Only 17% of respondents said they had worked with a career counselor or coach in their most recent job search, although roughly half (51%) were interested in working with one in the future.

Impact of COVID-19

- Forty-one percent of working Americans said they started a job search during the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e., 2020-2022).
- Fifty-four percent said that they had experienced some kind of job change during the pandemic. The most common changes were related to being *unable to work due to COVID-19 restrictions* and *becoming unemployed as a result of a firing, layoff, or company closing*.
- While more than three-quarters (78%) of working Americans want to feel like their job is *making a positive difference in their community or the world at large*, the most important factors they consider about a new job or job offer are *health insurance, monetary compensation, and amount of paid time off*.

Career and Professional Development

- Forty-three percent of working Americans rely on their employer to provide input on career guidance, and 69% agreed that employer-offered training and education benefits were an important factor when considering a new job.
- College graduates were more likely than those without college experience to pursue professional development opportunities, including those subsidized by an employer (76% vs. 38%) and opportunities undertaken at their own expense (65% vs. 38%).
- The most popular resources for staying up to date with job opportunities and career trends are LinkedIn and similar networking sites (41%), company websites (39%), company review sites (28%), and industry sites and publications (26%).



Introduction

Project Goals

This new report is part of BestColleges' **ongoing research initiative** to identify and share trends related to higher education, the student experience, student support services, and career decision-making. This report provides a snapshot of how recent U.S. job seekers conducted their searches and what they found most important when considering new employment opportunities.

The findings provide insights for those providing career guidance and job search support, whether they are on college campuses, in private practices, or in corporate settings. These insights may also inform employment recruiters and other workforce professionals focused on employee recruiting, hiring, and retention.

Methodology

An online survey was conducted June 6-9, 2022. Respondents included 1,000 working adults (i.e., 18 years of age and older) in the U.S. These respondents were either employed full or part time or self-employed (90%), or were unemployed and looking for work (10%). The survey was fielded by Lucid LLC, in partnership with GLG Research. Quotas were implemented to ensure the sample included sex/gender and racial/ethnic diversity. All data were self-reported. Respondent demographics are available in the appendix of this report.



The Job Search

Job Search Challenges

Finding a job can be a daunting process. There are often many steps involved. Those interested in pursuing opportunities in specific industries, companies, and types of positions must also be aware of differences in the process. In this study, almost one in four (24%) working Americans indicated that *identifying jobs to apply for* was one of the most challenging parts of their most recent job search. Other top challenges included *participating in job interviews* (22%) and *writing or updating my resume* (20%).

Challenges of Most Recent or Current Job Search (n=1,000)

Identifying jobs to apply for	24%
Participating in job interviews	22%
Writing or updating my resume	20%
Knowing the salary associated with the jobs I applied for	18%
Networking	18%
Negotiating salary and/or other compensation	17%
Filling out and submitting job applications	13%
Writing cover letters	13%
Finding time to conduct the job search	13%
Tailoring my job search materials for each application (i.e., resume, cover letter)	12%
Navigating online application systems	12%
Asking for references and/or recommendation letters	10%
Developing portfolio/work samples/personal website	7%
Responding to a job offer	7%
Other	3%
None of the above	11%

The biggest challenge for older respondents — Gen X (25%) and baby boomers (27%) — was *identifying jobs to apply for*. Identifying jobs was a challenge for younger respondents as well — Gen Z (28%) and millennials (22%). However, *participating in job interviews* was their top response — Gen Z (29%) and millennials (24%).

When asked about activities respondents engaged in while looking for work, rather than seek support and advice through events such as career fairs and professional organizations, most job seekers conducted their own research online through less formal avenues. Beyond participation in on-site (31%) and virtual (22%) interviews, the top responses were related to setting up/updating LinkedIn profiles (26%), reading articles and websites (25%), and looking for advice posted on social media (18%).

In Which Activities Did You Participate During Your Most Recent Job Search? (n=1,000)

Participated in on-site, in-person interview(s)	31%
Set up or updated my LinkedIn profile	26%
Read articles and websites for advice on the job search process (e.g., resume writing, interview skills, networking)	25%
Participated in online video or phone interview(s)	22%
Looked for advice on social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)	18%
Sought out resume writing assistance	18%
Participated in a skills assessment exercise	16%
Upgraded my LinkedIn account to a paid/pro account	13%
Attended an in-person career fair	11%
Attended a virtual career fair	10%
Attended events specifically related to professional networking	9%
Joined one or more professional associations	9%
Used an interview practice app	8%
Other	5%
Not applicable/None of the above	16%

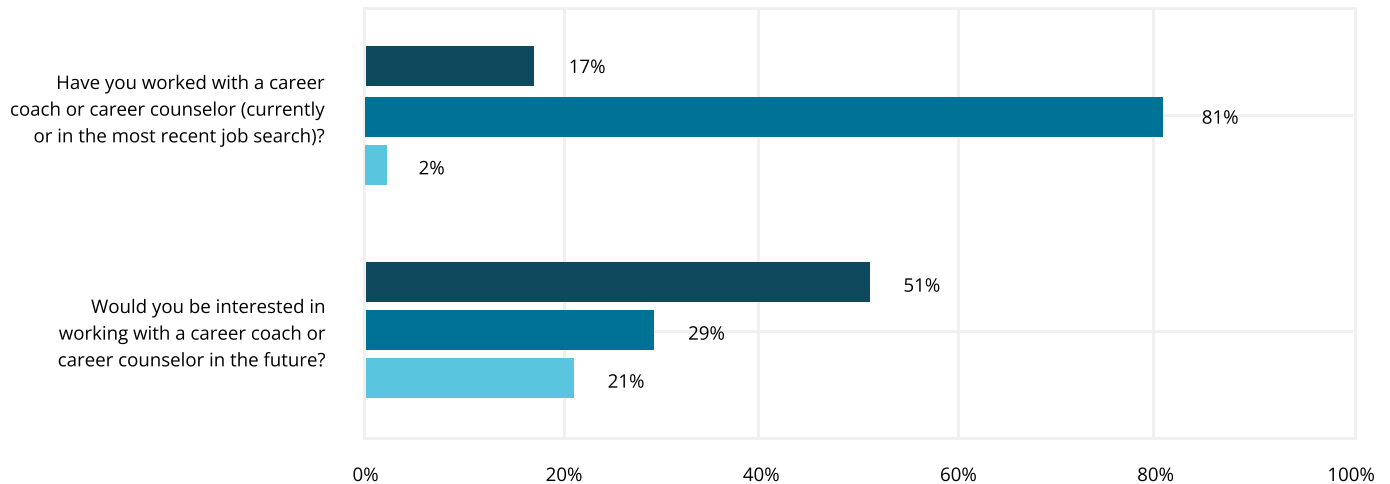
Advice and Assistance

A recent survey from the National Career Development Association found that 85% of working adults in the U.S. agreed that "career service professionals provide valuable assistance" (Niles, 2021). The study also found that 58% of working Americans wish they had worked with a career coach or counselor.

In our survey, only 17% of working Americans said they had worked with a career coach or counselor in their most recent job search, although 51% said they would be interested in doing so in the future. Eighty percent agreed that they were confident in their ability to conduct a successful job search. And more than two-thirds (69%) said they had access to helpful resources they could go to for career guidance.

Working With Career Coaches and Counselors (n=1,000)

■ Yes ■ No ■ Not Sure



Working Americans with more education were more likely to say that they had worked with a career development professional — ranging from only 7% of those with no college experience to 47% of those with a master's degree or higher. Those without college experience were also the most unsure about working with a career coach or counselor in the future and the least likely to say they would be interested in doing so.



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Connecting Job Seekers With Career Assistance Is Essential

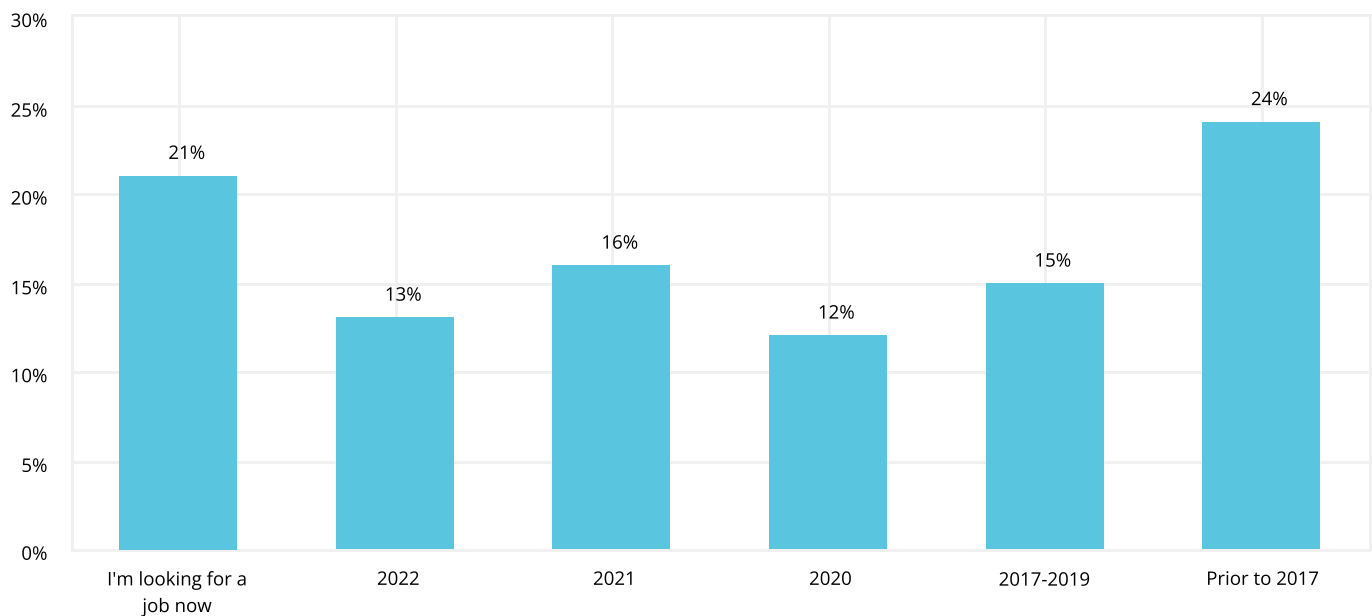
A majority of respondents are confident in their job search skills and report having access to helpful resources. However, one in five have trouble finding jobs to apply for. Working Americans are interested in working with career development professionals, though they may not currently be doing so. Connecting job seekers with expert support could result in the development of job search and career management skills that lead to a reduction in common challenges such as identifying jobs to apply for and participating in job interviews. Making these connections is particularly important for job seekers who don't have access to college- or alumni-related career services. Access and affordability are important components to consider.

Impact of COVID-19

Job and Career Transition

In our June 2022 study, more than one in five (21%) respondents said they were looking for a job at the time of the survey. Those with some college, a two-year degree, or technical training (27%) and those with no college experience (31%) were more likely than bachelor's degree-holders (17%) and graduate degree-holders (5%) to be engaged in a current job search.

When Did You Begin Your Most Recent Job Search? (n=1,000)



Forty-one percent of working Americans said they started a job search during the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e., 2020-2022). The trend of quitting and/or changing jobs during this time has been referred to as the Great Resignation, the Great Reshuffle, and more recently the Great Attrition (De Smet et al., 2022; Meister, 2022; Nugent, 2022). Some people changed jobs by choice, while others lost their positions due to layoffs and company closures.

In our survey, a majority of working Americans (54%) said that they had experienced some kind of job change during the pandemic. The largest percentage indicated that this was caused by being *unable to work due to COVID-19 restrictions* (16%) followed by *becoming unemployed as a result of a firing, layoff, or company closing* (11%).

Job Change(s) Experienced by Working Americans During the Pandemic (n=1,000)

I was unable to work due to COVID-19 restrictions	16%
I became unemployed as a result of a firing, layoff, or company closing	11%
I've had more than one job change since March 2020	10%
I changed jobs — moving to a different role in a different field or industry	9%
I changed jobs — moving to a similar role in the field or industry in which I was already working or a similar field/industry	8%
I changed jobs — within the company or organization where I was already working	7%
I changed jobs — moving to a similar role in a different field or industry	6%
I changed jobs — moving to a different role in the same field/industry or a field/industry similar to my previous one	6%
I have not experienced any of these employment changes since March 2020	46%

Respondents indicating a job change during the pandemic represented a range of industries. However, workers in *computer and information technology* and *education, training, and library* occupations were more likely to have chosen a job change during this period rather than have experienced a layoff or been unable to work due to restrictions related to the pandemic. And those with some college or no college experience were more likely than those with a degree to have become unemployed due to firings, layoffs, or company closures.



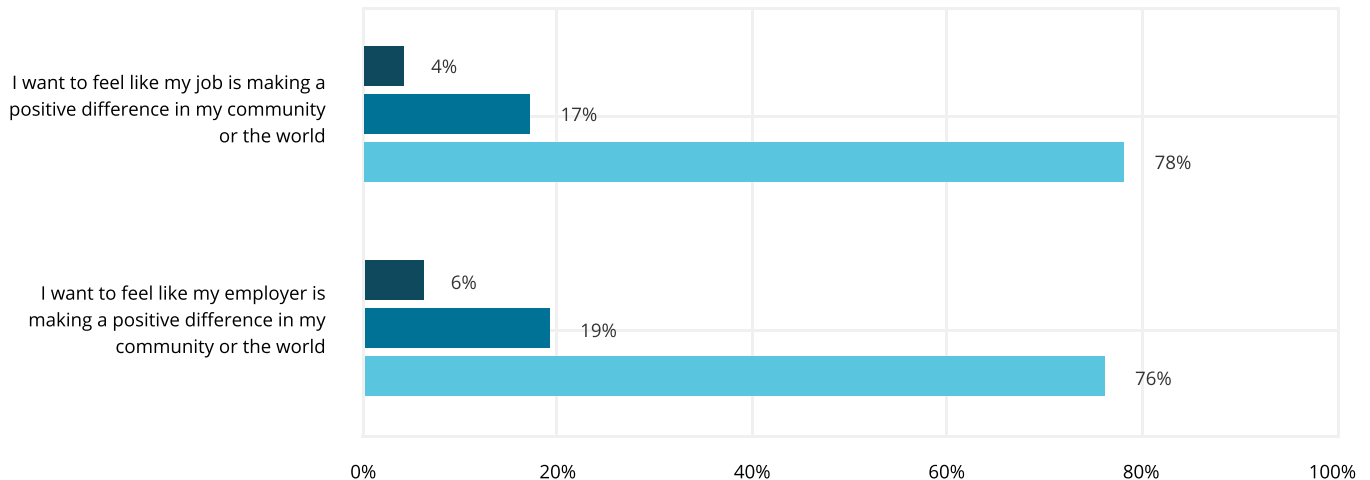
Employment Priorities

The shifts in employment and other areas of life people experienced during the pandemic may have also affected what workers value in their jobs and careers. Many people are now more focused on values related to work/life balance and have purpose-driven motivations when making career and employment decisions (Wiles, 2022).

More than three-quarters (78%) of respondents agreed that they *want[ed] to feel like their job is making a positive difference in their community or the world at large*. A similar number (76%) also agreed that they *want to feel like their employer is making a positive difference*. All age groups showed similar levels of agreement on these preferences.

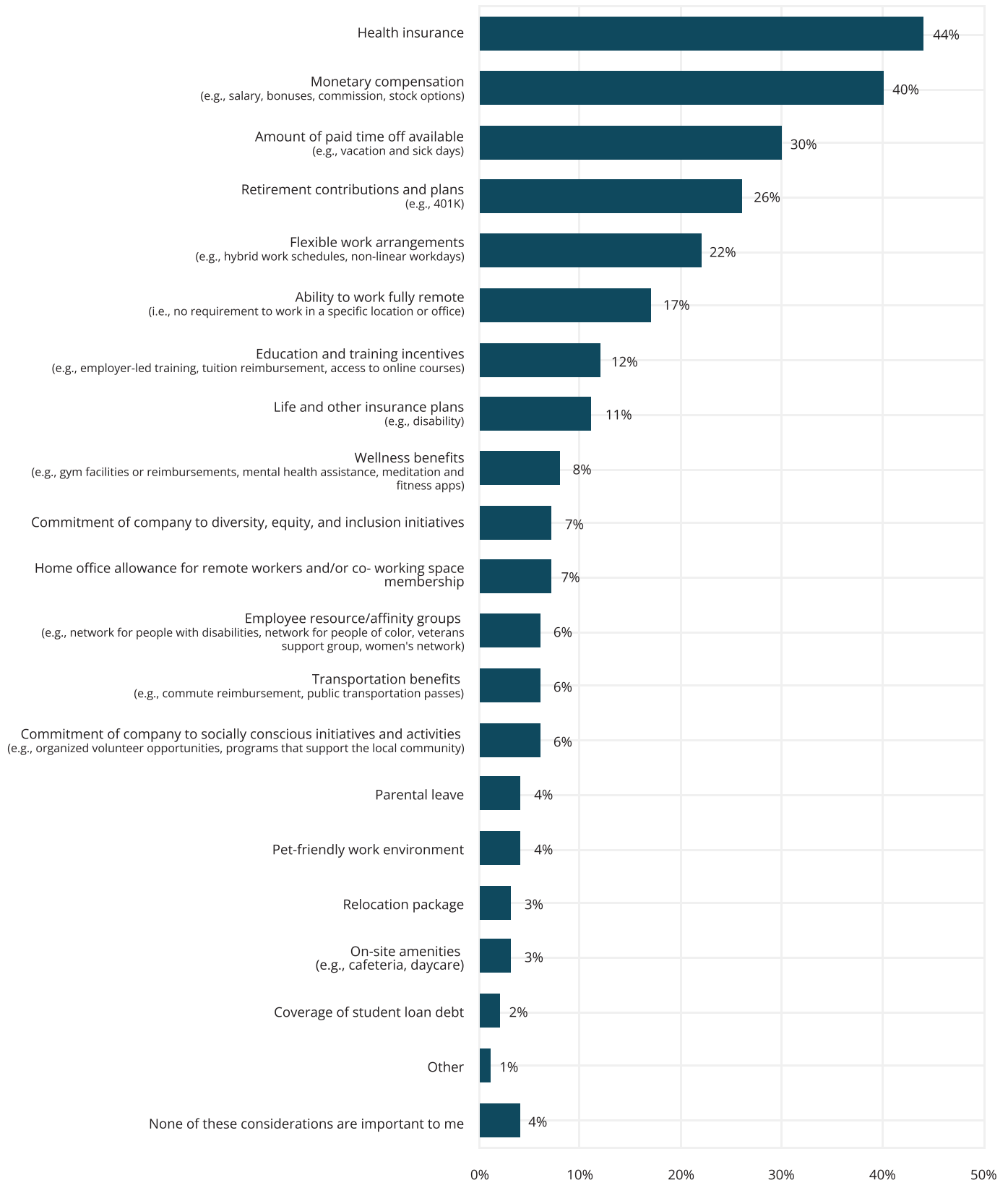
Desired Social Impact of Jobs and Employers (n=1,000)

■ Disagree
 ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree
 ■ Agree



However, when provided a list of job search or job offer considerations, including *commitment of company to socially conscious initiatives and activities*, the top responses were more traditional. Overall, the most important considerations when pursuing or accepting a new job were: *health insurance* (44%), *monetary compensation* (40%), *amount of paid time off* (30%), *retirement contributions and plans* (26%), and *flexible work arrangements* (22%).

Most Important Considerations of a New Job or Job Offer (n=1,000)



There were no differences across gender/sex on the top five most important considerations. *Health insurance* was also the most important consideration across all education levels except for bachelor's degree-holders who placed it second after *monetary compensation*. *Health insurance* was also the most important consideration among both white respondents and BIPOC respondents. And while *health insurance* was the most important consideration for all age groups, older generations were even more likely to say it was most important.

Health insurance was also the top concern of working Americans with an annual household income of \$99,999 or less. Of all income brackets, those who earned \$50,000-\$74,999 were most likely to say *health insurance* was their top concern. The highest percentage was among those reporting incomes of \$50,000-\$74,999. Those with incomes of \$100,000-\$150,000 placed it second after *monetary compensation*. Among those with incomes over \$150,000, it was third after *monetary compensation* and *retirement contributions and plans*.





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Health Insurance Is a Primary Consideration of Employment for Most Working Americans

With few exceptions, working adults in the U.S. are most concerned about health insurance when considering a new job or job offer. This was the case for respondents of all sexes/genders and races/ethnicities, with few differences across education level, income level, and age groups. Whether the urgency around health-related benefits is driven by the pandemic or other factors, employment and healthcare seem, for better or worse, to be inextricably linked. It's interesting to imagine how different individual career and employment decisions might be if health insurance were not a primary factor in those decisions. Employers, healthcare systems, and policy makers should prioritize employee concerns about healthcare and collaborate to address them. Career development professionals should also be aware of job seekers' healthcare-related concerns and be able to respond with resources and referrals.

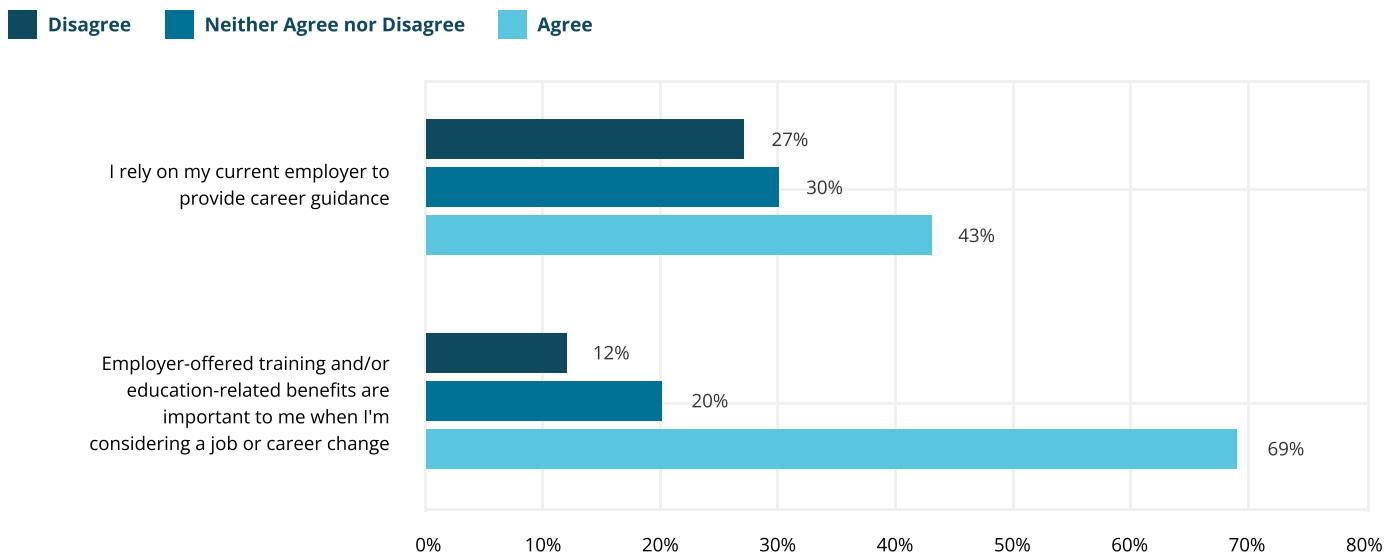
Career and Professional Development



Role of the Employer

How do working Americans make decisions about their careers and maintain employable skills? We found that many (43%) *rely on their employer to provide input on career guidance*. More than two-thirds (69%) also agreed that *employer-offered training and/or education benefits were an important factor* when considering a new job. A previous BestColleges study found that 24% of working Americans relied on their employer for training, including 45% of those with no college experience (Venable, 2021).

Perceptions on the Role of the Employer — Training and Career Guidance (n=1,000)



When asked about how they prepare for future jobs and maintain the skills they use in their current or most recent jobs, respondents' top responses included *pursuing professional development or continuing education that their employers paid for* (28%) and *pursuing work-related professional development or continuing education at their own expense* (26%). Additionally, almost one in five (19%) shared that they had *earned industry certification in their current or previous field* as a way to prepare for future work or maintain their job skills.

Activities to Prepare for or Maintain Skills Needed in Current or Most Recent Job (n=1,000)

Pursuing work-related professional development or continuing education (e.g., webinars, seminars, workshops, association membership) paid for by my current or a previous employer	28%
Pursuing work-related professional development or continuing education (e.g., webinars, seminars, workshops, association membership) at my own expense	26%
Earning an industry-related certification related to my current or previous field	19%
Earning continuing education credits/units required to maintain my professional license or certification	18%
Earning an industry-related certification in a field I want to pursue	14%
Participating in an internship	11%
Enrolling in an academic program offered by a school that my current or a previous employer is/was partnered with	9%
Receiving discounted tuition or tuition reimbursement offered through my current or a previous employer	9%
Participating in an apprenticeship	7%
Other	3%
I have not participated in any of these education or training activities	34%

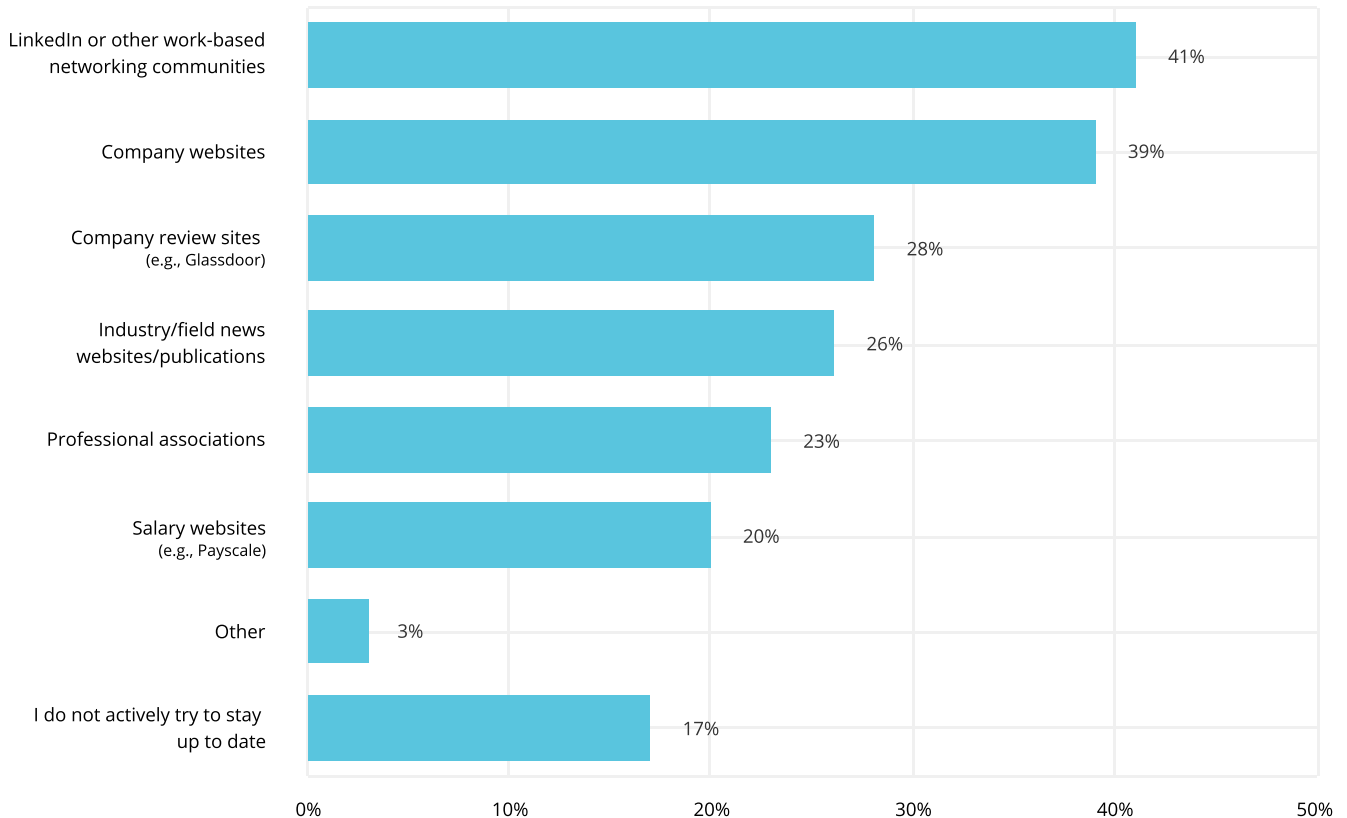
College graduates were more likely than those without any college experience to pursue professional development opportunities, including those subsidized by an employer (76% vs. 38%) and at their own expense (65% vs. 38%). Those without college experience were the least likely to have participated in professional development or continuing education related to their most recent job.



Following Career and Job Trends

We asked respondents to share how they find information about professional development opportunities and career and job-related trends. Many respondents rely on multiple sources of information, but the most popular were *LinkedIn or other work-based networking communities* (41%) and *company websites* (39%).

How Do You Stay Up to Date With Career or Job-Related Trends? (n=1,000)



Respondents with no college experience were more likely than those with college experience to say that they do not actively try to stay up to date with career and job-related trends. And the higher the respondent's annual household income, the more likely they were to engage in activities that would keep them current with trends in their field or a field they would like to pursue. About one in five (21%) of those earning \$50,000 or less said they did not try to stay up to date compared to only 4% of those earning \$150,000 or more.



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Employees Count on Employers for Career Guidance and Job Training

Employers are an important source of information and support for working people in the U.S. As the world of work continues to evolve quickly and become more technical, greater integration of work and learning may serve both employer and employee. Embedding career counseling and coaching expertise at the workplace could also positively impact all stakeholders. Employers should maintain an active presence on platforms like LinkedIn by creating and sharing content about current employment trends, hiring needs, and employment benefits to reach current and prospective employees with the information they need to make the best job and career decisions.

Conclusion

Understanding the needs and concerns of today's job seekers is important for those providing career-related services and for employers focused on both hiring and employee retention. The changes to work and learning experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic sparked new conversations about not only the workplace and work schedules, but also career identity, values, and priorities. The reality is that employment, education, and healthcare continue to be linked. And the employees that are most susceptible to an unplanned job change (i.e., those with no college experience, lower income) are also the least likely to seek job search assistance. Preparing for a successful future of work involves employers, employees, and career development professionals alike.

Connecting Job Seekers With Career Assistance Is Essential

A majority of respondents are confident in their job search skills and report having access to helpful resources. However, one in five have trouble finding jobs to apply for. Working Americans are interested in working with career development professionals, though they may not currently be doing so. Connecting job seekers with expert support could result in the development of job search and career management skills that lead to a reduction in common challenges such as identifying jobs to apply for and participating in job interviews. Making these connections is particularly important for job seekers who don't have access to college- or alumni-related career services. Access and affordability are important components to consider.

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With few exceptions, working adults in the U.S. are most concerned about health insurance when considering a new job or job offer. This was the case for respondents of all sexes/genders and races/ethnicities, with few differences across education level, income level, and age groups. Whether the urgency around health-related benefits is driven by the pandemic or other factors, employment and healthcare seem, for better or worse, to be inextricably linked. It's interesting to imagine how different individual career and employment decisions might be if health insurance were not a primary factor in those decisions. Employers, healthcare systems, and policy makers should prioritize employee concerns about healthcare and collaborate to address them. Career development professionals should also be aware of job seekers' healthcare-related concerns and be able to respond with resources and referrals.

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Contributors



About Melissa Venable

Melissa A. Venable, Ph.D. is a principal writer for BestColleges where she leads a research initiative reporting trends in online education, student demographics, student support services, and career planning. She is also the editor for the National Career Development Association's Career Developments magazine and is a certified career coach who has experience in college career services. Melissa earned her doctorate in instructional technology at the University of South Florida with research interests in distance education and career services for online students.

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BestColleges empowers students to make smarter educational decisions and find schools that best fit their needs through proprietary research, user-friendly guides, and hundreds of unique college rankings. As a trusted education advisor, BestColleges also provides a wide array of college planning, financial aid, and career resources to help students realize life goals and overcome educational challenges as they prepare for careers after college.

Data Notes

1. Percentages reported in this document have been rounded, resulting in some totals adding up to just under or over 100%.
2. Several charts and descriptions present results for questions in which survey respondents could select more than one response.
3. Data are self-reported.

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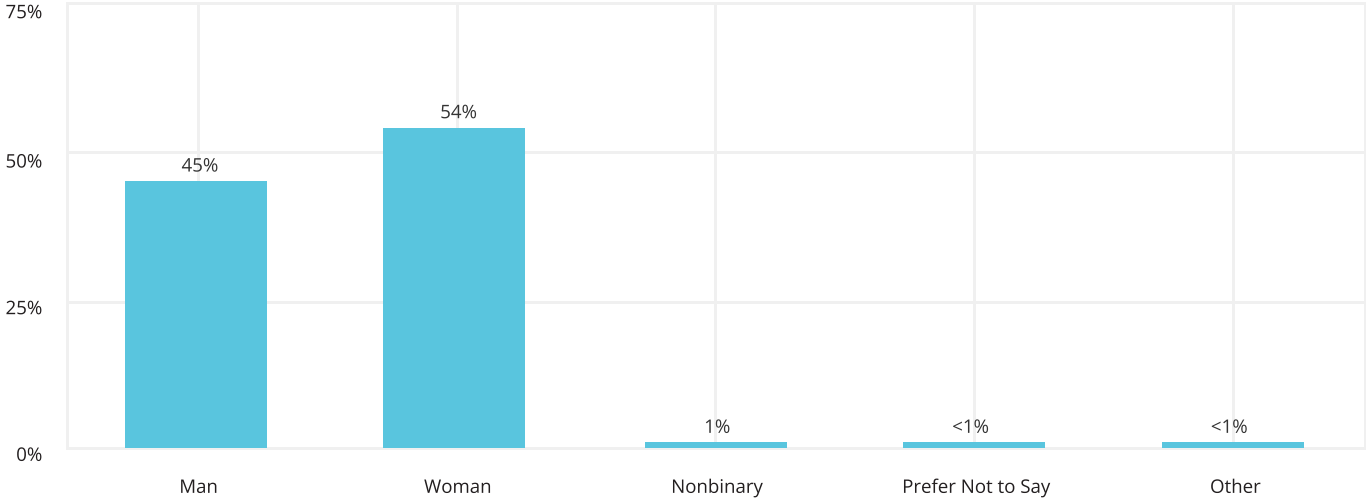
Appendix



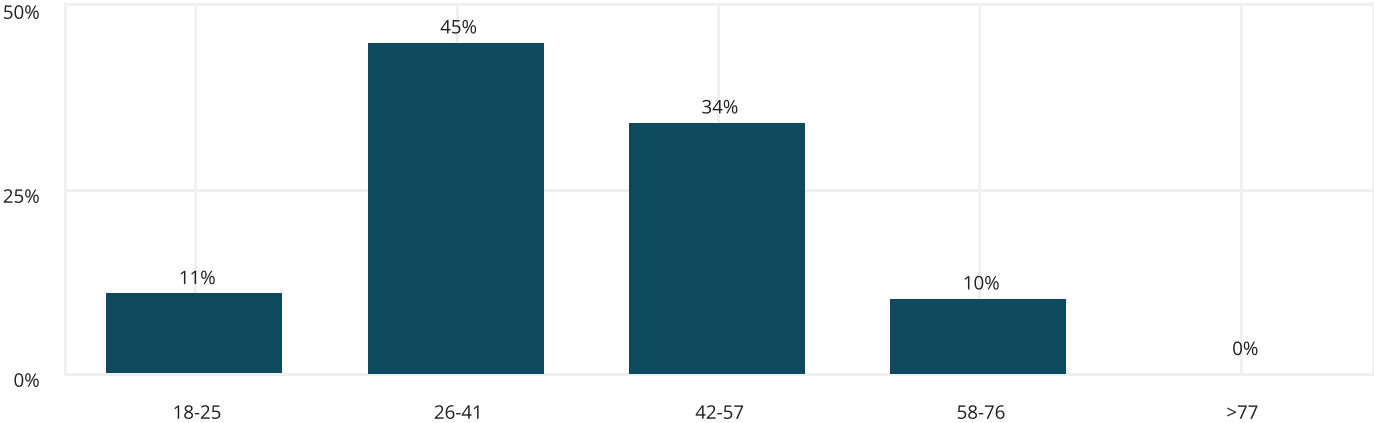
Respondent Demographics

Data Collection — GLG/Lucid LLC, June 6-9, 2022

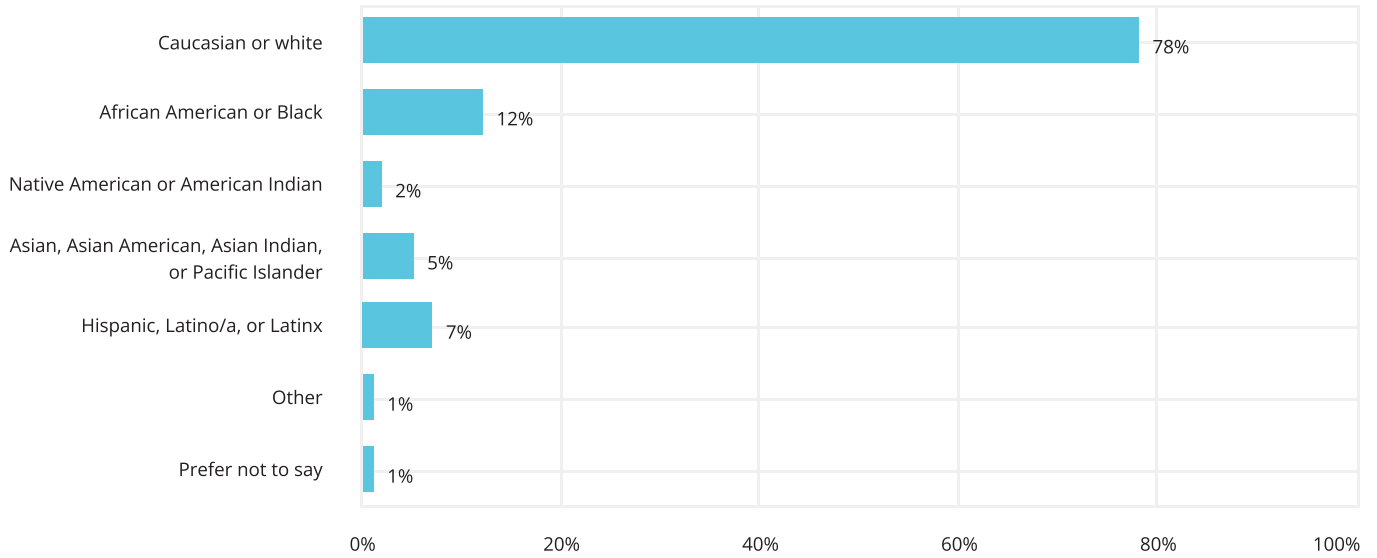
Gender/Sex (n=1,000)



Age (n=1,000)

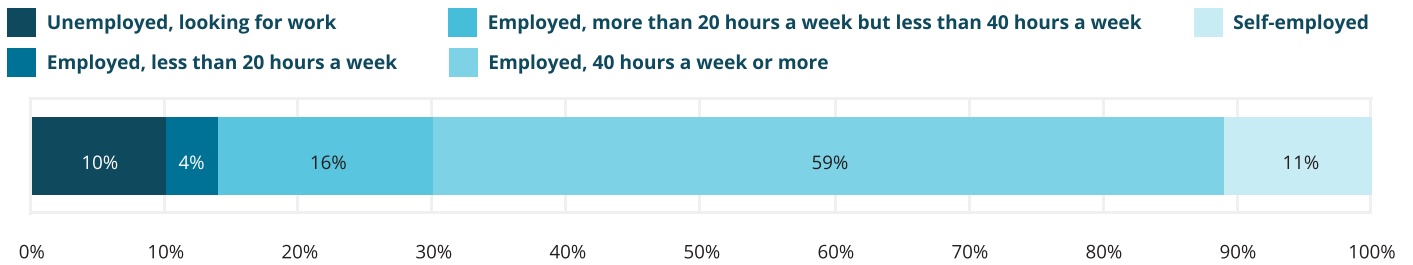


Racial/Ethnic Background or Heritage (n=1,000)

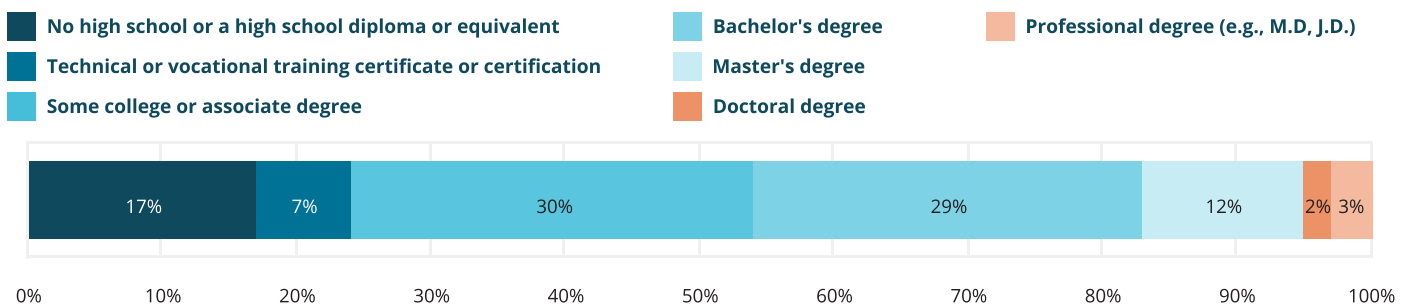


Note: Respondents could select all that applied.

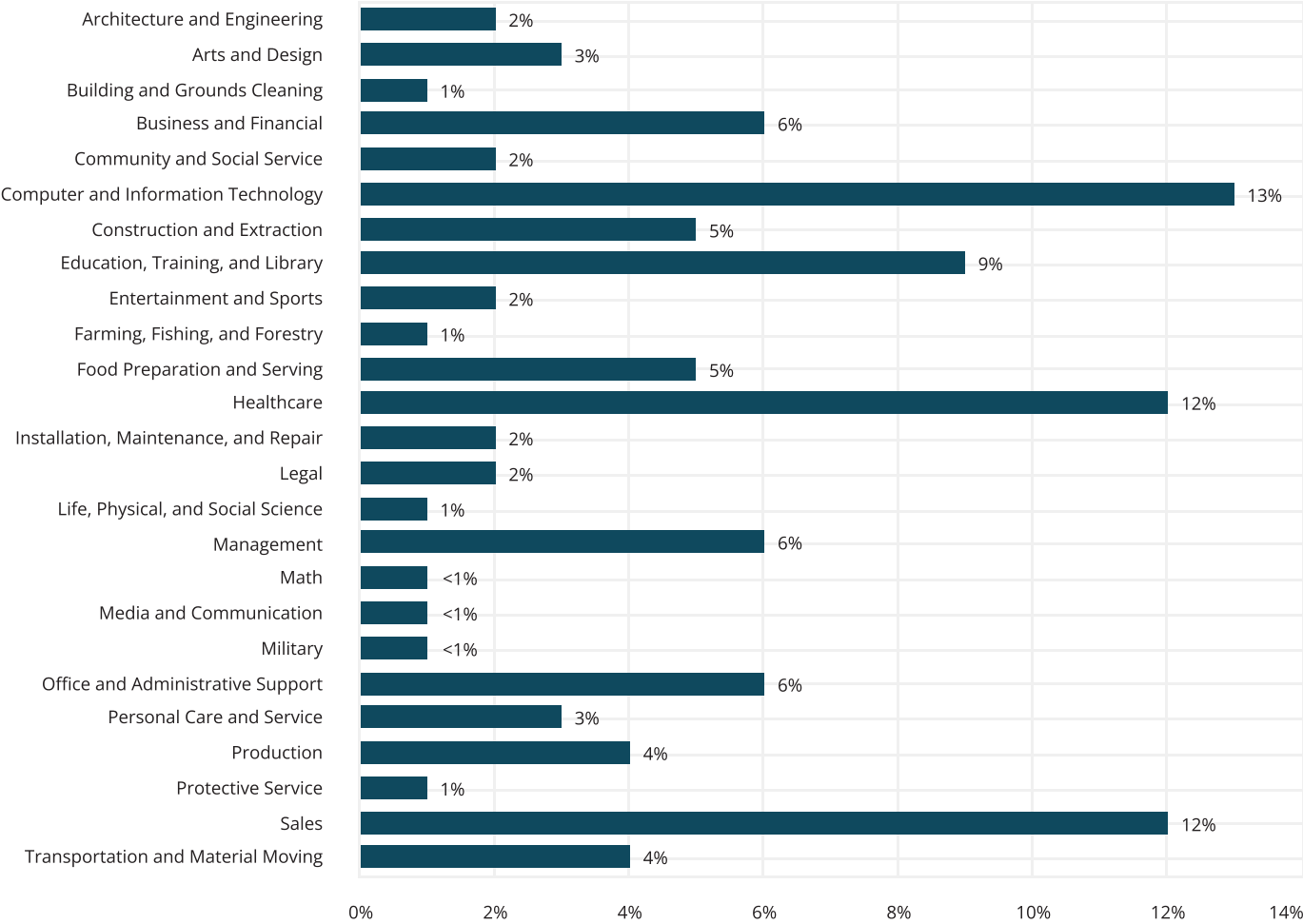
Employment Status (n=1,000)



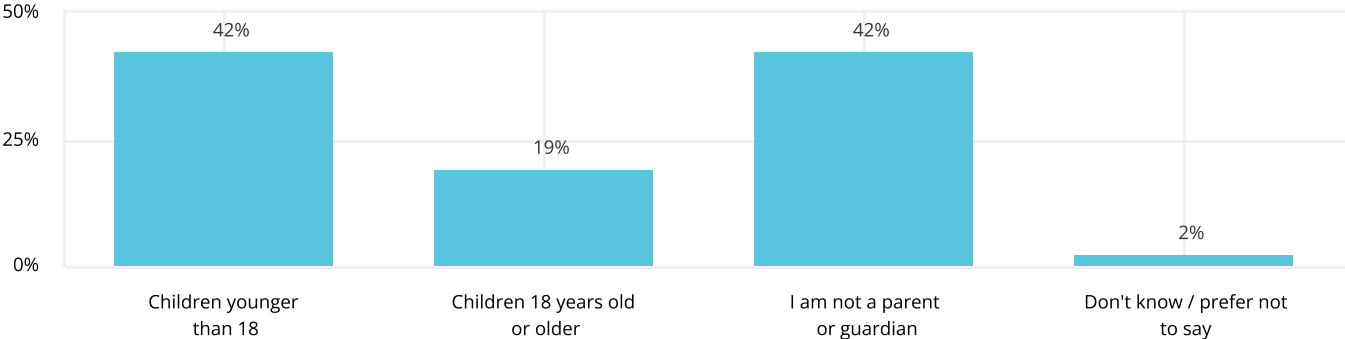
Education Level (Highest Completed) (n=1,000)



Occupational Field (n=1,000)

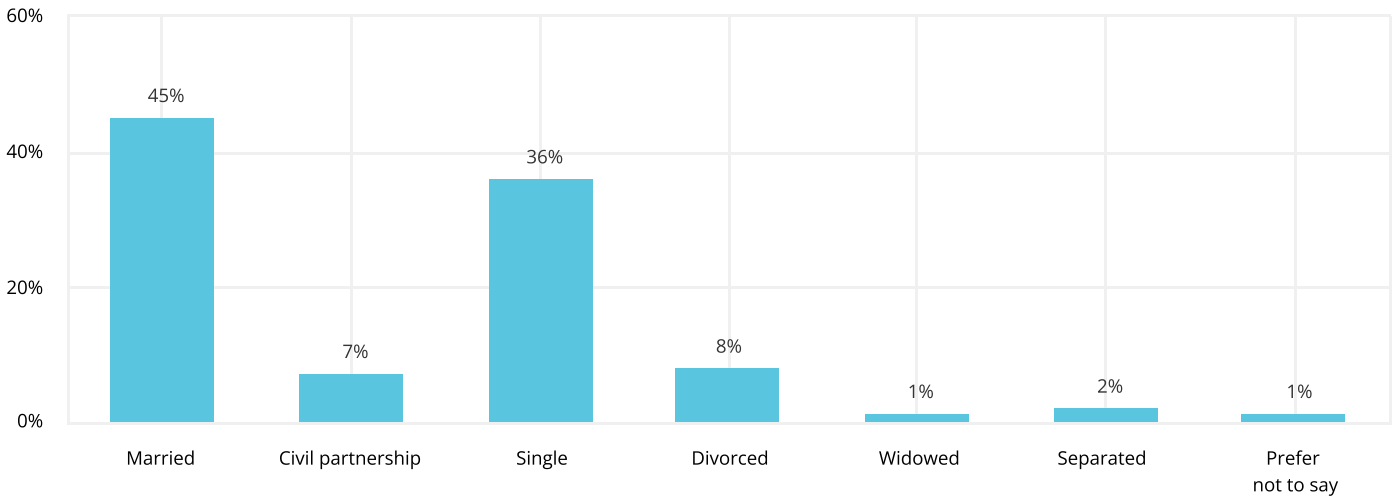


Children (n=1,000)

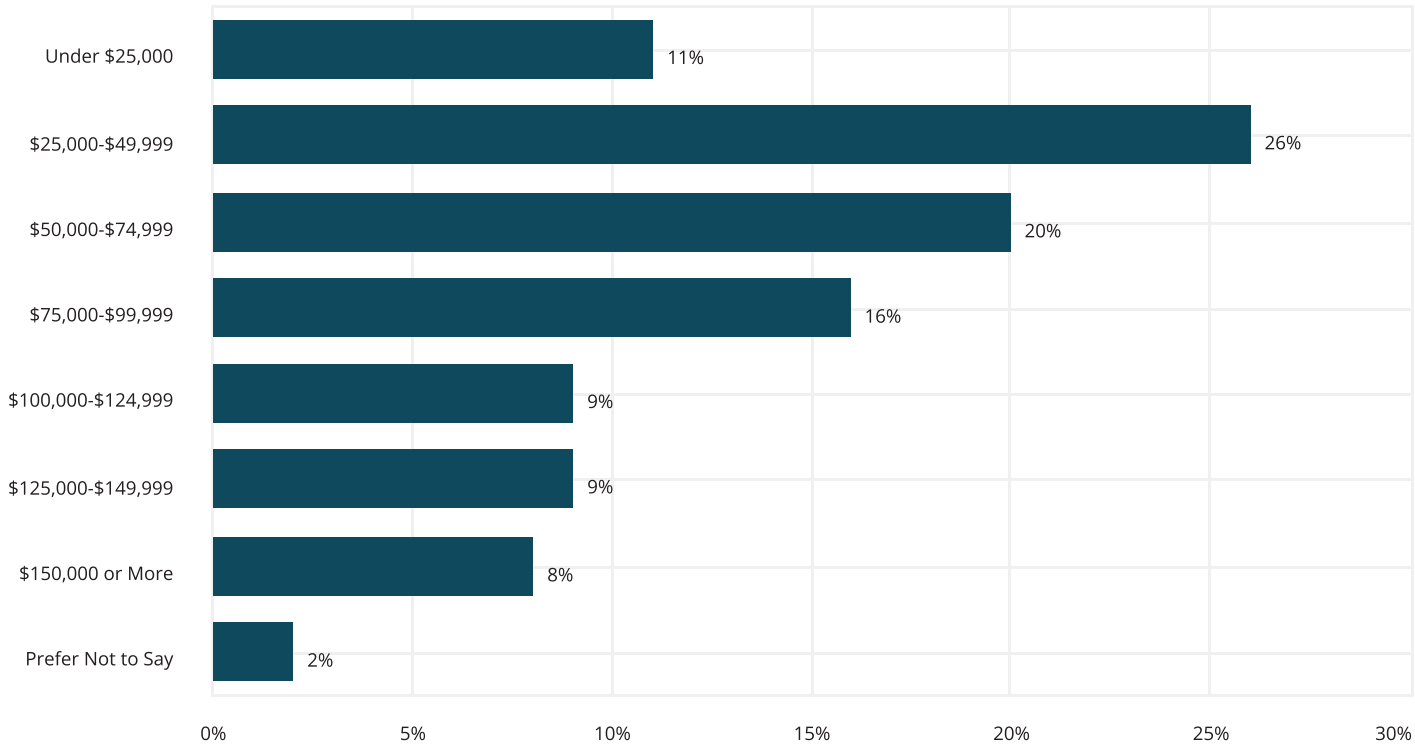


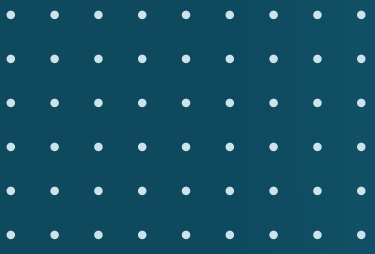
Note: Respondents could select all that applied.

Marital Status (n=1,000)







Income Level (n=1,000)





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