• On behalf of the University of Phoenix, Edelman Data x Intelligence, an independent market research firm, conducted 20-minute, online survey among:
  • N=5000 nationally representative US adults, age 18+, who either currently work or wish to be working
    • National fieldwork was conducted December 12 – January 6, 2021

• Oversamples of n=300 adults in each of the top 20 US designated market areas (DMAs): New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, Dallas, San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose, Washington D.C., Houston, Boston, Atlanta, Phoenix, Tampa, Seattle, Detroit, Minneapolis, Miami, Denver, Orlando, Cleveland, Sacramento
  • DMA fieldwork was conducted between December 12 – January 15, 2012

• Throughout the report, there are multiple demographic data points, including generational data. The following age groups correspond to each:
  • Gen Z, ages 18-21
  • Millennial, ages 22-37
  • Gen X, ages 38-53
  • Boomer, ages 54-72

• Margin of error for main sample and over-samples:
  • U.S. General Population, Employed +/- 1.39% (n=5000)
  • New York City +/- 5.66 (n=300)
  • Los Angeles +/- 5.66 (n=301)
  • Chicago +/- 5.66 (n=300)
  • Philadelphia +/- 5.66 (n=303)
  • Dallas +/- 5.66 (n=302)
  • SF-Oak-San Jose +/- 5.66 (n=302)
  • Washington D.C. +/- 5.66 (n=304)
  • Houston +/- 5.66 (n=301)
  • Boston +/- 5.66 (n=302)
  • Atlanta +/- 5.65 (n=304)
  • Phoenix +/- 5.66 (n=301)
  • Tampa +/- 5.65 (n=304)
  • Seattle +/- 5.66 (n=300)
  • Detroit +/- 5.65 (n=300)
  • Minneapolis +/- 5.66 (n=301)
  • Miami +/- 5.66 (n=305)
  • Denver +/- 5.66 (n=301)
  • Orlando +/- 5.65 (n=300)
  • Cleveland +/- 5.65 (n=300)
  • Sacramento +/- 5.65 (n=301)
This report is part of The Career Optimism Index Study developed and conducted by the University of Phoenix Career Institute, a newly established department within the University’s College of Doctoral Studies is focused on studying American workforce dynamics to inform societal solutions that spur career growth.

This specific report covers key findings across a nationally representative sample of US adults who either currently work or wish to be working and includes multiple demographic and designated metro area (DMA) data points.
• Almost one year into the pandemic, Americans' careers have been taken off course and many are living paycheck to paycheck

• Despite challenges, hope exists, and Americans are optimistic for the future

• Americans believe they are resilient, prepared, and highly employable if they had to search for a job in the short-term

• Americans define themselves by their careers. Yet, many don’t see a clear path forward to develop skills and advance in their careers for the long-term

• There are acute and on-going challenges facing working adults as they navigate their careers, including but not limited to:
  • COVID-19 pandemic
  • Financial concerns
  • The future of jobs/automation
  • Emotional and structural barriers

• American workers need additional support and resources to translate their optimism into future career outcomes. They are looking for support in finding upskilling opportunities, mentorship, and access to mental health resources
Almost one year into the pandemic, Americans' careers have been taken off course and many are living paycheck to paycheck.

### COVID-19 Impact

*(Shown % Top 2 Agree)*

1 in 3 Americans say their career has been **taken off course/ derailed** due to COVID-19 (34%)

**Q27:** How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the pandemic and how it may have impacted you? Base: Gen Pop n=5000, Latinx n=4125, White n=8274, Gen Z n=1595, Millennials n=6320, Gen X n=4834, Boomers n=2276, income under $50k n=5150, $50,000-$99,999 n=4763, $100,000-$149,000 n=2404, $150,000+ n=2258.

- More Latinx (38%) than White (31%) Americans
- More Gen Z & Millennials (46%, 41%) than Gen X & Boomers (32%, 22%)
- More people with lower incomes, under $50k (42%) than incomes of $50k-$99k (35%), $100k-$149k (29%) or $150k+ (25%)

### Personal Finances

*(Shown % Top 2 Agree)*

43% Of Americans **live paycheck to paycheck**

**Q13:** How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about finances? Base: Gen Pop n=5000, Women n=3177, Male n=3207, Black n=491, Latinx n=1651, White n=3714, Millennials n=2487, Gen Z n=531, Gen X n=2089, Boomers n=1257.

- More Women than Men (51%, 36%)
- More Black, Latinx and White Americans (61%, 49%, 40%) than Asian Americans (31%)
- More Millennials, Gen Z, and Gen X (59%, 55%, 40%) than Boomers (23%)
HOPE EXISTS, AND AMERICANS ARE OPTIMISTIC FOR THE FUTURE
**DESPITE CHALLENGES, AMERICANS ARE OPTIMISTIC**

**IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC**
*(Shown % Top 2 Agree)*

- **70%**
  - Of Americans say that **hope** has helped them get through this past year
  - **32% strongly** agree that hope helped them through

**CAREER TRAJECTORY**
*(Shown % Top 2 Agree)*

- **78%**
  - Of Americans are **hopeful** about the future of their careers
  - **26% strongly** agree that they are hopeful about the future of their careers

Q27: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the pandemic and how it may have impacted you? Base: Gen Pop n=5000
Q16: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your career trajectory? Base: Gen Pop n=5000.
THEY PERSONALLY BELIEVE THEY HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO BE SUCCESSFUL

JOB SEARCH READINESS (Shown % Top 2 Prepared)

Feel prepared to search for a job if they had to (70%)

7 IN 10

PERSONAL BELIEFS (Shown % Top 2 Agree)

83% Believe they are highly employable
  Even more in Atlanta (89%), Orlando, and Houston (both 88%)

83% Believe they adapt easily to new work situations
  Even more in Detroit and Tampa (91%)

82% Believe they are resilient when facing challenges in their career
  Even more in New York City and Boston (91%)

Q2: Please indicate which of the following responses best describes how prepared you currently are or would be if you needed to search for a job. Base: Gen Pop n=5000, Frontline workers n=1667, Atlanta n=304, Washington D.C. n=302, Orlando n=300, Denver n=301, Miami n=301.

Q12: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about job security? Base: Gen Pop n=5000, Atlanta n=304, Orlando n=300, Houston n=301.

Q15: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your mental health/well-being? Base: Gen Pop n=5000, Detroit n=300, Tampa n=304, NYC n=300, Boston n=302
ABOUT HALF OF THOSE CURRENTLY EMPLOYED LOVE THEIR JOBS, EVEN MORE IN ATLANTA AND WASHINGTON, D.C. DO

CAREER STATEMENTS
(Shown % Selected Response, Among those Employed)

- Boomers (63%) are more likely than Millennials & Gen X (52%, 57%) to love their job
- More people with higher incomes, $150k+ (67%) are more likely than people with incomes of Under $50k (50%), $50k-$99k (55%), and $100k-$150k (59%) to love their jobs

“Love my job”
(Shown % Selected Response, DMA breakdown)

- Atlanta: 70%
- Washington, D.C.: 70%
- Cleveland: 68%
- Los Angeles: 66%
- Houston: 65%
- Minneapolis: 65%
- Miami: 65%
- Denver: 64%
- Seattle: 64%
- Orlando: 64%
- Chicago: 64%
- Dallas: 64%
- Sacramento: 63%
- Boston: 63%
- Phoenix: 63%
- New York City: 63%
- Philadelphia: 62%
- Tampa: 60%
- Detroit: 59%
- SF-Oak-San Jose: 53%

THEY ALSO BELIEVE THEIR JOB IS NOT JUST THEIR JOB, IT IS THEIR CAREER

CAREER STATEMENTS
(Shown % Selected Response, Among those Employed)

- Millennials, Gen X, and Boomers (36%, 57%, 67%) are more likely than Gen Z (23%) to say their current job is their career

“My current job is more than just a job, it’s my career”
(Shown % Selected Response, DMA breakdown)

HALF HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT CHANGING CAREERS – ESPECIALLY YOUNGER GENERATIONS, LOWER INCOME, AND BLACK AMERICANS

Q20: Have you ever thought about changing your career? By changing your career, we mean moving from one industry or field to a totally different industry or field. Base: Gen Pop n=5000, Women n=2340, Men n=2637, Gen Z n=401, Millennial n=1666, Boomer n=1197, White n=3029, Black n=325, Latinx n=1193, Asian n=259, Income under $50k n=1589, $50,000-$99,999 n=1537, $100,000-$149,999 n=864, $150,000+ n=912.

CONSIDERATION OF CHANGING CAREERS
(Shown % Selected Response)

AUDIENCE BREAKDOWN
(Shown % Selected ‘Yes’ Response)
AND THEY ARE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO THEM

63% OF AMERICANS

Feel positive about the job opportunities available to them

Q1: Regardless of your current employment status, how do you feel about the job opportunities available to you? Base: Gen Pop n=5000, Women n=2340, Men n=2636, Gen Z n=401, Millennial n=1684, Gen X n=1666, Boomer n=1197, White n=3029, Black n=325, Latinx n=1193, Asian n=259, Income under $50k n=1489, $50,000-$99,999 n=1537, $100,000-$149,999 n=864, $150,000+ n=912
ATLANTA FEELS MOST POSITIVE ABOUT THE JOB OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE, FOLLOWED CLOSELY BY MINNEAPOLIS AND MIAMI

Q1: Regardless of your current employment status, how do you feel about the job opportunities available to you? Base: Gen Pop n=5000, NYC n=300, Los Angeles n=301, Chicago n=300, Philadelphia n=303, Dallas n=302, SF-Oak-San Jose n=302, Washington, D.C. n=304, Houston n=301, Boston n=302, Atlanta n=304, Phoenix n=301, Tampa n=304, Seattle n=300, Detroit n=300, Minneapolis n=301, Miami n=305, Denver n=301, Orlando n=300, Cleveland n=300, Sacramento n=301
CONCEPTUALLY, THEY BELIEVE THE RIGHT SKILLSET, ADAPTABILITY, FLEXIBILITY, AND OPTIMISM ARE WHAT IS NEEDED TO PIVOT IN YOUR CAREER

Q23: Which of the following, if any, do you think are necessary for someone to successfully change their career? Base: Gen Pop n=5000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Selected Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The right skillset</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional training</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resiliency</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional education</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A strong professional network</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A strong social support system</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support with childcare</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SKILL BUILDING AND NETWORKING GO HAND IN HAND AS THE CORE ACTIONS THEY BELIEVE NEED TO BE TAKEN TO CHANGE CAREERS

Q24: Which actions do you think people would have to take to successfully change careers? Base: Gen Pop n=5000

**ACTIONS TAKEN TO SUCCESSFULLY CHANGE CAREERS**

(Shown % Selected Response)

- Seek out opportunities to build skills: 49%
- Talk/connect with people in the field they want to be in: 46%
- Learn new skills and expertise to be competitive in the digital age: 45%
- Enroll in a training program: 38%
- Talk/connect with people they personally know: 37%
- Go back to school/enroll in an education program: 35%
- Attend networking events: 30%
- Use job apps and tools like LinkedIn and Indeed: 28%
- Attend job fairs: 27%
- Seek out assistance from a reputable career resource: 26%
- Spend time job-shadowing: 25%
- Reach out for informational interviews: 25%
- Volunteer in a new field: 24%
- Meet with human resources: 22%
CAREER PERCEPTIONS
AMERICANS DEFINE THEMSELVES BY THEIR CAREERS – YET MANY DON’T SEE A CLEAR PATH FORWARD IN THEIR CAREERS

Employed Americans say that their job/career is part of their **identity**

2 IN 3

Of Americans don’t see a **clear path forward** for advancing their careers

42%

Of Americans want to expand their skillset but don’t know where to begin

43%

Of Americans say they do not have access to opportunities to develop the skills they need to advance in their careers

35%

Q7: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base: Employed n=4124. Q16: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your career trajectory? Base: Gen Pop n=5000. Q14: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your career development? Base: Gen Pop n=5000
MORE THAN ONE-QUARTER SAY THEY DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO THE RIGHT TOOLS TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS — EVEN MORE NEED AN ADVOCATE IN THEIR PROFESSIONAL LIFE

More than 1 in 4 Americans do not have access to the right tools and resources to achieve their career goals (27%)

Of Americans do not have someone in their professional life who advocates for them

Q16: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your career trajectory? Base: Gen Pop n=5000
AT LEAST ONE-FIFTH OF AMERICANS EXPERIENCE EMOTIONAL AND STRUCTURAL BARRIERS IN MOVING FORWARD IN THEIR CAREERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMOTIONAL BARRIERS</th>
<th>STRUCTURAL BARRIERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low self-confidence</td>
<td>Not having enough education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of change</td>
<td>Lack of opportunities for upskilling/development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not knowing what to do in their career</td>
<td>Lack of required skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low focus/motivation</td>
<td>Lack of time/schedule flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of hopelessness</td>
<td>Financial problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mental health</td>
<td>Lack of mentorship/advocacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q17: Which of the following, if any, are reasons why you might feel like you are held back in your career? Base: Gen Pop n=5000

- Low self-confidence: 25%
- Fear of change: 25%
- Not knowing what to do in their career: 24%
- Low focus/motivation: 23%
- Feelings of hopelessness: 20%
- My mental health: 19%
- Not having enough education: 24%
- Lack of opportunities for upskilling/development: 24%
- Lack of required skills: 22%
- Lack of time/schedule flexibility: 21%
- Financial problems: 21%
- Lack of mentorship/advocacy: 20%
NEARLY HALF ARE WORRIED ABOUT BEING ABLE TO KEEP UP – AND ONE-FIFTH WATCHED THEIR JOB BECOME AUTOMATED THIS PAST YEAR

**TECHNOLOGY**
*(Shown % Top 2 Agree)*

- **45%**
  - I am worried about being able to keep up in a job market that is becoming increasingly dependent on technology

- **42%**
  - I am worried that my job skills will become outdated because of advancements in technology

**IMPACT OF COVID-19**
*(Shown % Selected “Yes”)*

- **55%** are worried about the impact of technology on their careers in at least one way

**1 IN 5**

Say “my job has become automated due to the pandemic” (22%)

Even more in Washington, D.C., Miami (both 30%), Orlando (28%), Houston (26%), Atlanta, Los Angeles, and New York City (all 24%) say this.

Q7: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base: Gen Pop n=5000. Q27: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the pandemic and how it may have impacted you? Base: Gen Pop n=5000, Washington, D.C. n=304, Miami n=305, Orlando n=300, Houston n=301, Atlanta n=304, Los Angeles n=301, NYC n=300
They worry that a bad economy will cause them to lose their jobs.

Of employed Americans are worried about losing their job due to a bad economy:

44%
THESE CHALLENGES HAVE LEFT MANY AMERICANS FEELING STRESSED ABOUT THEIR CAREERS – ESPECIALLY WOMEN, YOUNGER GENERATIONS AND THOSE WITH LOWER INCOMES

1 IN 4 Americans feel stressed about their own careers

FEELINGS ASSOCIATED WITH CAREER
(Shown % Selected Response)
MOST METRO AREAS FEEL MORE STRESSED THAN THE NATIONAL AVERAGE WHEN IT COMES TO THEIR CAREERS

FEELINGS ASSOCIATED WITH CAREER
(Shown % Selected “Stress”)

Q9: Which of the following feelings do you associate most with your own career? Base: Gen Pop n=5000, NYC n=300, Los Angeles n=301, Chicago n=300, Philadelphia n=303, Dallas n=302, SF-Oak-San Jose n=302, Washington, D.C. n=304, Houston n=302, Boston n=304, Atlanta n=301, Phoenix n=301, Tampa n=304, Seattle n=300, Detroit n=300, Minneapolis n=301, Miami n=301, Denver n=300, Orlando n=300, Cleveland n=300, Sacramento n=301
SUPPORT NEEDED TO BUILD CAREER
OPTIMISM
AMERICANS WANT MORE SUPPORT IN MANY DIFFERENT AREAS – PARTICULARLY NETWORKING, FINDING A MENTOR, AND IN TRAINING PROGRAMS

Q25: For the below activities, please indicate the level of support you feel you need with each. Base: Gen Pop n=5000
MENTAL HEALTH HAS NEGATIVELY IMPACTED WORK PERFORMANCE DURING THE PANDEMIC – NOTABLY, FOR THOSE IN WASHINGTON D.C. AND YOUNGER GENERATIONS

34% of Americans say their mental health has negatively impacted their work performance during the pandemic.

Q27: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the pandemic and how it may have impacted you? Base: Gen Pop n=5000, NYC n=300, Los Angeles n=301, Chicago n=300, Philadelphia n=303, Dallas n=302, SF-Oak-San Jose n=302, Washington D.C. n=304, Houston n=302, Boston n=302, Atlanta n=304, Phoenix n=301, Tampa n=304, Seattle n=300, Detroit n=300, Minneapolis n=301, Miami n=305, Denver n=301, Orlando n=300, Cleveland n=301, Sacramento n=301, Women n=2340, Men n=2636, White n=3027, Black n=325, Latinx n=1193, Asian n=259, Gen Z n=401, Millennial n=1684, Gen X n=1665, Boomer n=1197, Income Under $50k n=1489, Income $50,000-$99,999 n=1537, Income $100,000-$149,999 n=863, Income $150,000+ n=912
PEOPLE ARE LOOKING FOR RESOURCES TO HELP THEM MANAGE STRESS, ESPECIALLY YOUNGER GENERATIONS AND PEOPLE WITH LOWER HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

MENTAL HEALTH
(Shown % Top 2 Agree)

33%
Of Americans have looked for mental health resources to help them manage work-related stress

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA
(Shown % Top 2 Agree)

Q15: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your mental health/well-being? Base: Gen Pop n=5000, NYC n=300, Los Angeles n=301, Chicago n=300, Philadelphia n=303, Dallas n=302, SF-Oak-San Jose n=302, Washington, D.C. n=304, Houston n=301, Boston n=302, Atlanta n=304, Phoenix n=301, Tampa n=304, Seattle n=300, Detroit n=300, Minneapolis n=301, Miami n=305, Denver n=301, Orlando n=300, Cleveland n=300, Sacramento n=301, Women n=2340, Men n=2636, White n=3027, Black n=325, Latinx n=1193, Asian n=259, Gen Z n=401, Millennial n=1684, Gen X n=1665, Boomer n=1197, Income Under $50k n=1489, Income $50,000-$99,999 n=1537, Income $100,000-$149,999 n=863, Income +$150,000 n=912
PEOPLE ARE PRIORITIZING WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN ORDER TO ADVANCE – MENTAL HEALTH IS AS CRITICAL TO ADDRESS AS NETWORKING AND SKILLS

Q19: How often are you taking the following actions, if at all, to advance in your career? Base: Gen Pop n=5000

- Prioritizing my work-life balance: 44%
- Managing my mental health/wellness: 37%
- Becoming a specialist in an area of my industry: 33%
- Connecting with others in my field/desired field: 30%
- Seeking skill development opportunities/certifications: 29%
- Researching resources to improve my employability: 27%
- Talking with my manager/boss about what I need to do to succeed: 24%
- Taking courses/classes to improve my employability: 23%
- Advocating for financial rewards for myself: 23%
- Seeking/engaging mentors/advocates: 21%

Managing mental health/wellness is as important as being a specialist, networking, and skills development.
THANK YOU