Post-Pandemic Work & Life
Expectations from the American workforce

Workforce on the Move amid Evolving Priorities

Half of workers say that the pandemic has made them reevaluate their career goals and given them more control in deciding the direction of their career.

Forty-eight percent are rethinking the type of job they want moving forward, and 53% would retrain for a career in a different field or industry if they had the opportunity.

What’s driving the talent migration?
A quarter of workers (24%) are planning to look for a new job post-pandemic. Workers planning to leave cite many reasons including compensation, work and life balance challenges and limited growth opportunities.

What workers value from a job
When considering a new job, workers say job stability, good work and life balance, salary/pay, comprehensive benefits and advancement opportunities are very important to them.

Percentage of those who said each item was “very important”
Jobs Key to Financial Security

Workers are recognizing the connection between work and financial security—8 in 10 American workers say their job is essential for their financial security.

Half of workers (49%) are in a financially precarious situation and might not be able to cover an unexpected expense such as a household repair or medical bill.

Additionally, 6 in 10 workers worry about their long-term financial security.

Changing nature of work drives workers to build skill sets

Workers see their job opportunities fading if they don’t reskill—and 43% say their long-term financial security will be in jeopardy if they do not retrain or learn new skills.

Four in 10 say the pandemic has forced them to learn new skills to remain in their current job. About half (46%) say it has changed what it takes to get their jobs done. Additionally, nearly half of workers (46%) will have to learn new skills to do their job in the next year, and more than half will need to learn new skills in the next 3-5 years.

Skilling at work

Three-quarters of managers (74%) believe their team would be more productive if they expanded their skill sets.

Fifty-four percent of workers have sought out training to help them develop in their career. However, 4 in 10 workers (38%) have spent little to no time training.
Workers Expect Employers to Help Them Build Skills

When asked who was most responsible for helping them develop the skills they need, aside from themselves, workers most often rank employers No. 1 and their managers No. 2.

Policy that would help support workers in building skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>82%</td>
<td>82% of workers support efforts by policymakers to encourage employers to offer job training to their employees—only 9% do not support these efforts.</td>
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<td>77%</td>
<td>77% of workers support allowing workers to use federal education grants for short-term job training programs—only 10% do not support these efforts.</td>
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<td>71%</td>
<td>71% of workers want Congress to pursue policies that provide career training and development—only 15% disagree with this statement.</td>
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What skills are workers focused on?

About half of workers (47%) believe there is more value in soft skills than subject matter expertise. Just over one-third of managers believe in the next three years applicants for jobs will need to demonstrate more knowledge of technology as well as an understanding of technology that enables remote work.

When it comes to technology, basic computer applications (37%), workplace messaging and collaboration platforms (28%) and network and information security (28%) are at the top of the list of skills workers think they will need in the future.
Work and Life Balance a Point of Stress for Workers

When asked to describe their experience with work, in one word, over the past year, workers overwhelmingly chose words like stressful, stressed and stress as well as difficult, hectic and frustrating. Some workers chose more positive descriptions, such as great, though to a lesser extent. These perspectives suggest a workforce that has been challenged as they manage both work and life priorities.

Work and life priorities in conflict for many workers

Nearly half of workers (48%) have to prioritize personal commitments at least weekly and (46%) say they have to “trade off” personal obligations with work demands. Millennials report more often making “trade offs” than other generations (55% compared to 47% of Gen-Z, 43% of Gen-Xers and 36% of Boomers).

Productivity increases, but managers have concerns

While the overwhelming majority of managers say their employees have been more productive, about half of say it is taking workers longer to complete their work—suggesting the workday may be lengthening for some workers, consistent with prior survey findings.²

- 65% of managers say their team has been more productive than they were before the pandemic.
- 48% of managers say it is taking longer for their teams to complete their work.
- 56% of managers want their direct reports to take more time off to avoid burnout.
Caregivers Face Greater Challenges Managing Work & Life

About **4 in 10** workers (**38%**) are providing care for someone else. Of those, **4 in 10** are providing in-home or remote schooling, **one-third** are providing early child care, and **nearly a quarter** (**23%**) are providing care for older adults.

These responsibilities increase challenges, with **54%** of working caregivers having to “trade off” personal obligations with work demands. Additionally, half (**49%**) have to prioritize personal commitments over work a few times a week or more.

**Caregivers struggle to manage work and personal demands**

- **45%** have considered leaving the workforce due to personal demands, compared to **19%** of non-caregivers.
- **41%** had more time to focus on career development before the pandemic, compared to **20%** of non-caregivers.
- **34%** have lost critical skills over the last year, compared to only **17%** of non-caregivers.

**Employers can support need for flexibility**

About **half of caregivers working remotely** (**47%**) would quit their jobs if their employer wanted them to return to the office full-time, compared to **34%** of all remote workers.

When asked what they would like to see from employers after the pandemic, caregivers say **increased workplace flexibility**, **increased paid time off** and **greater commitment to health and well-being**.

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1. Workers labeled as couldn’t cover an emergency indicated they would not or might not be able to handle an unexpected expense such as a household repair or medical bill. Workers labeled as could cover an emergency indicated they would easily be able to cover an unexpected expense.
2. Pulse of the American Worker Survey: Is This Working? A Year In, Workers Adapting to Tomorrow’s Workplace. March 2021

The Pulse of the American Worker Survey was conducted on behalf of Prudential by Morning Consult from May 25 to 27, 2021, among a national sample of 2,000 self-identified employed adults (age 18 and over). This sample included 764 employed adults that were providing care for someone in their household, 808 managers of people and 1,030 employed adults who worked remotely at some point during the pandemic. The interviews were conducted online, and the data was weighted to approximate a target sample of employed adults based on age, educational attainment, race/ethnicity, and gender. Results from the full survey population have a margin of error of ±2 percentage points. Percentages may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

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