



Paychecks and the Pandemic

Perceptions by Income level

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The Coronavirus pandemic impacted individuals across all demographics. This report summarizes the perceptions of Americans about job security, career trajectory, and career optimism, distinguishable by income level.

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Executive Summary

The Coronavirus pandemic impacted individuals across all demographics. This paper summarizes perceptions American individuals have towards their job and/or career due to the impact of the recent coronavirus pandemic and the Great Lockdown of 2020. This paper offers a summary of perceptions from American households distinguishable by income level.

With a barrage of recent studies measuring the impact of the pandemic on the American workforce, evidence supports the concerns that American workers and their families are reeling from changes in their professional and personal lives and will continue to do so for some time. More American workers are living paycheck to paycheck than pre-pandemic times across all income levels. More Americans are feeling overwhelmed by debt than pre-pandemic times across all income levels. While across all income levels concerns are echoed about job security, it is loudest from those reporting household incomes less than \$50,000/year. This includes apprehension about being replaced at one's job, fear and doubt that one will move forward in a career, and absence of opportunity to resources are all felt higher as income levels drop.

This data also indicates that those same individuals believe that with access to convenient, career-related educational opportunities, such as networking, training, and enhancing job skills, an increase in career optimism, career trajectory, and ultimately income can occur for American workers post-pandemic.

Essential and Frontline Workers

During the coronavirus pandemic, *essential* and *frontline* became popularized terms referring to individuals that continued to serve during the Great Lockdown of 2020. A large and varied group of the American workforce, *essential* workers are vital for societal and economic core functions (Blau, Koebel, & Meyerhofer, 2020). Approximately 60% of these workers make up a subcategory called *frontline* workers, with less than 30% of this group working remotely, but most physically at the *frontline*. Healthcare workers, protective service workers (police and EMTs, for example), production and food processing workers, janitors and maintenance workers, agricultural workers, cashiers in grocery and general merchandise stores, and truck drivers comprise many frontline workers (Blau, Koebel, & Meyerhofer, 2020). Essential and frontline workers are more likely to be less educated, receive lower wages, and represent a higher percentage of minorities (Blau, Koebel, & Meyerhofer, 2020).

In a study by the Edelman Data Intelligence Research Group (2021), for the Career Institute for the University of Phoenix, data confirmed that the lower the income of an individual, the more likely that person was a *frontline* worker. This data also supported the

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