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American Workers are Stuck in a Rut

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New Study: American Workers are Stuck in a Rut

Almost a fifth of Americans are unhappy at work, with 22 percent of adults reportedly unable to see a clear career path in their current job. More than half of the working population in the U.S. is not in the job they had planned for themselves and two-thirds have considered quitting.

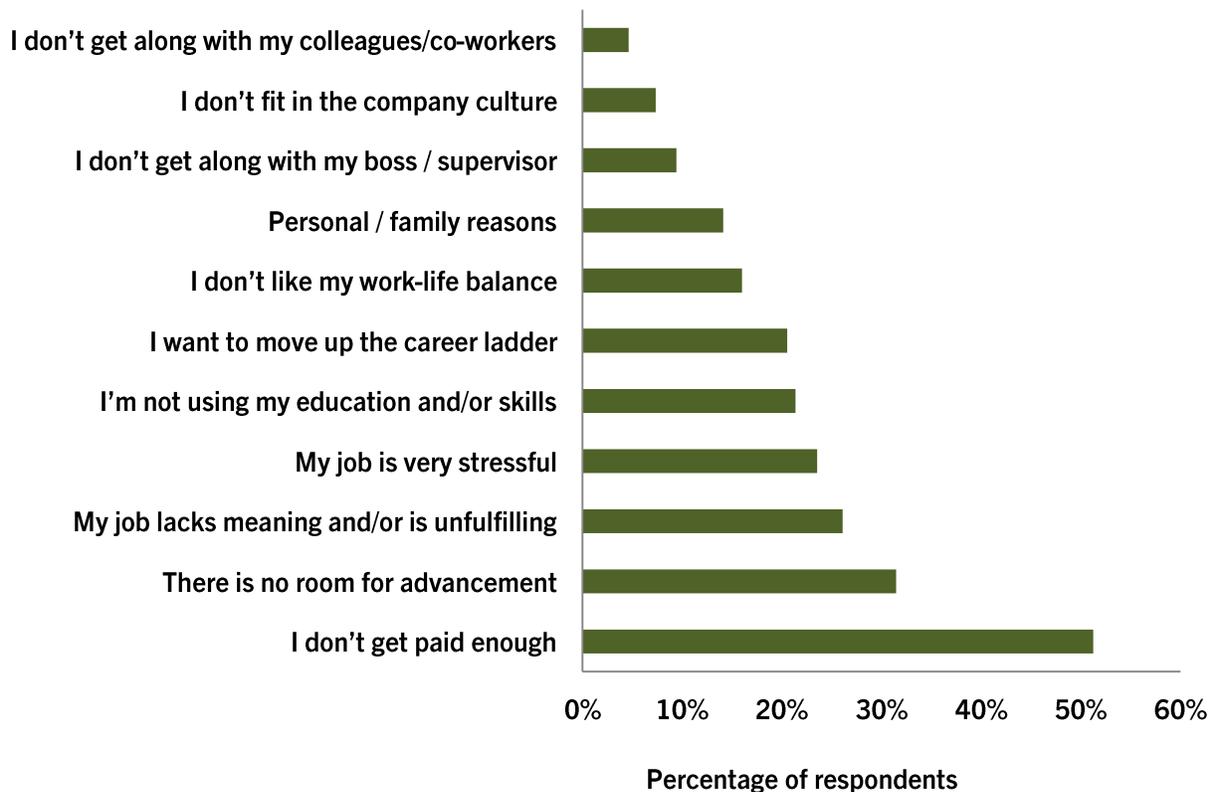
These are some of the key findings of the American Workers study released in April. The study was commissioned by Rasmussen College to accompany its [Career Roadmap](#), which was designed to help people find careers that align with their goals, education, skills and interests.

The online survey, taken by more than 2,000 adults currently employed in the U.S., delves into job satisfaction, career progression and work-life balance.

The survey revealed some surprising facts about the U.S. workforce, especially concerning worker motivation and, specifically, why employees change jobs.

When asked why they would consider changing jobs, 51 percent of respondents cited salary as the top reason they thought about leaving.

Why would you consider changing jobs?



In addition to salary, emotional factors appeared to play a considerable role in workers' desire to move on from their current roles. Twenty-six percent reportedly feel "unfulfilled" in the workplace, while 21 percent said they feel like their skills or education is underutilized. In addition, 31 percent of respondents cited a "lack of advancement opportunities" as a major factor in their unhappiness at work. Another 24 percent pointed to stress as the main reason for their dissatisfaction.

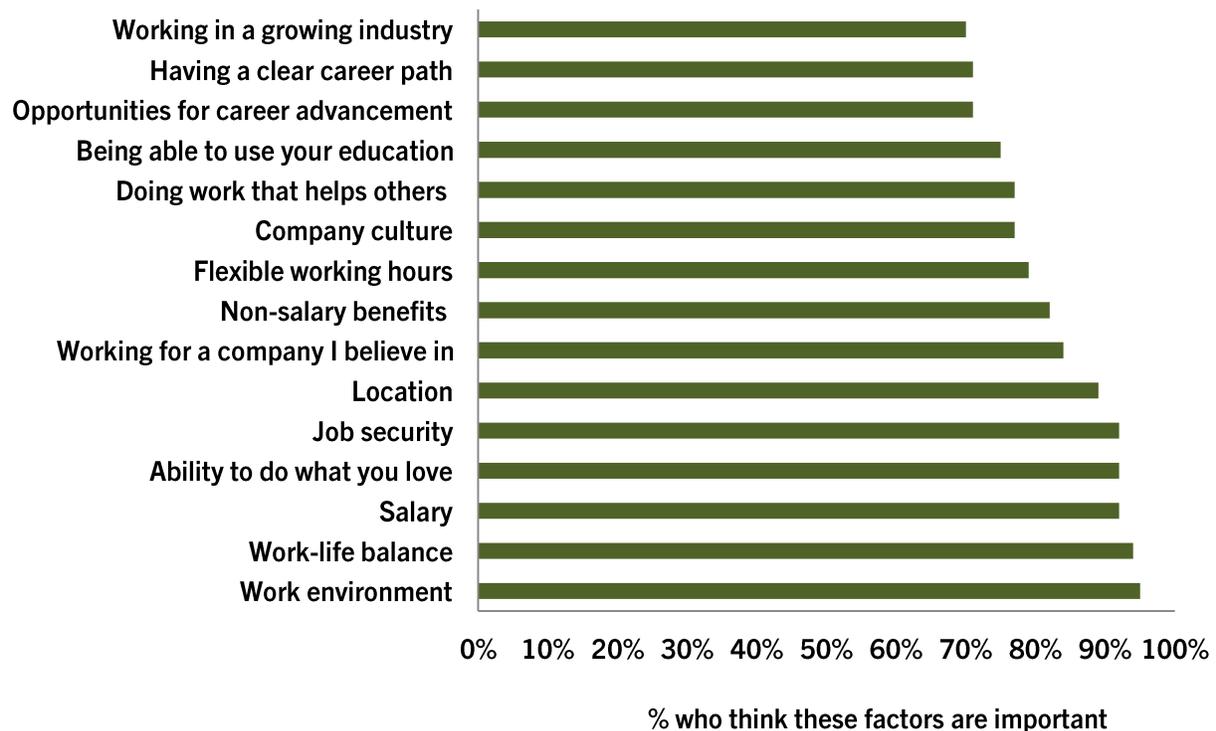
But despite the statistics that show many workers are dissatisfied in their current roles, the majority of respondents reportedly feel unable to leave their jobs.

Not surprisingly, a perceived unstable economy and financial security are the top reasons respondents gave for staying in unsatisfying jobs—35 percent cited financial security as their main cause for concern. A quarter of workers said they are afraid of regretting the decision to leave, and 16 percent said they feel they don't have the right skills or education to progress in their careers.

So what *does* make U.S. workers happy in their jobs?

Ninety-five percent of adults consider "work environment" to be the most important factor in job satisfaction, according to the survey. That percentage outpaced even "salary," which suggests that day-to-day workplace conditions should not be overlooked by employers hoping to increase employee satisfaction. All told, just 33 percent of respondents claimed to be happy with their current work environment.

How important are the following factors at work?

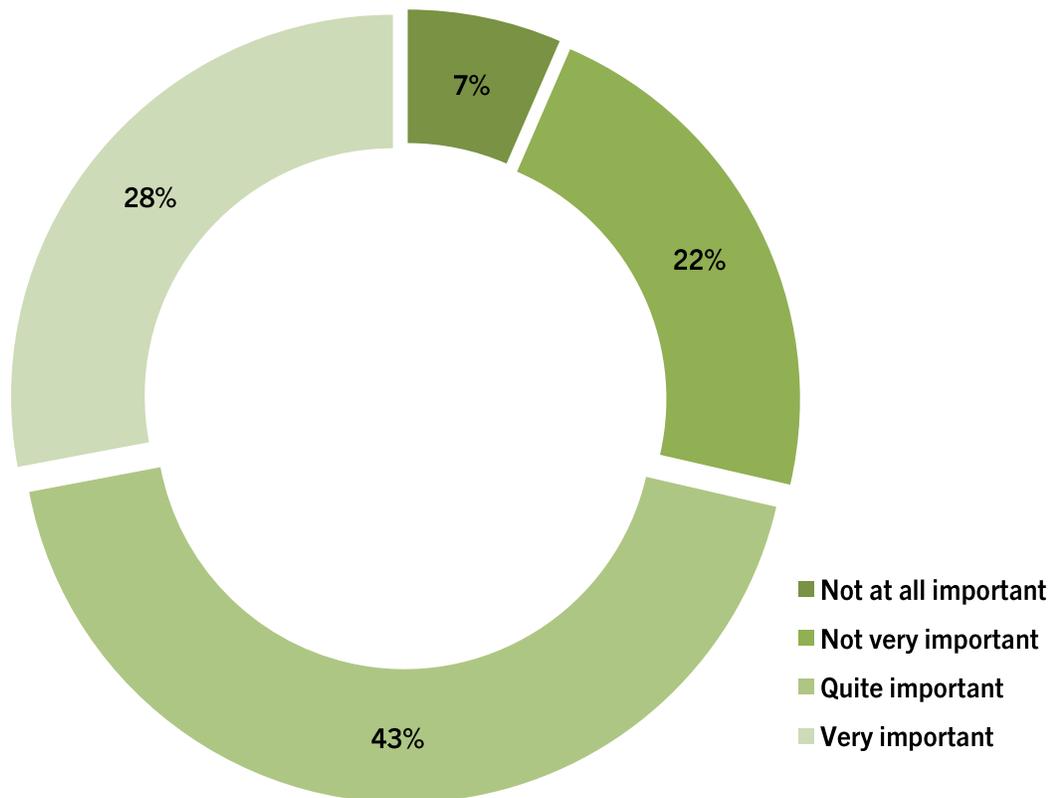


A positive “work-life balance” ranked as the second most important factor in employee satisfaction, yet only 37 percent believe they have achieved it. The study found that 61 percent of women consider a positive work-life balance ‘very important,’ as compared to 52 percent of men who ranked it similarly.

Eighty-nine percent of adults also considered “location” an important factor in workplace satisfaction—not surprising, considering location has been linked to health, life expectancy and salary (see [Rasmussen College’s Career Roadmap](#) for further information). This was closely followed by “non-salary benefits,” which 82 percent of respondents considered significant.

The study also showed that 71 percent of respondents considered “a clear career path” an important factor. But, just 24 percent reported that they are doing a job they originally intended to do. That number rose to 39 percent when isolating employees with a graduate or professional degree.

How important is having a clear career path?



When it comes to job satisfaction, it’s no shock to learn that “doing what you love” ranks at or near the top of factors contributing to workplace satisfaction. Ninety-two percent of job seekers considered it to be one of the most important factors to satisfaction. In addition, 84 percent of job seekers say working for a company they believe in is important to them.

Finally, the survey revealed that 73 percent of workers use on-the-job skills they learned in school, a tentative sign that the U.S. education system is getting something right.

So how do you avoid becoming a statistic? And if you're already one of them, how do you go about finding a job where you're likely to be happy?

"Having a clear career path from the very beginning is critical so you don't end up stuck in a job outside of your skill set or with a lack of advancement opportunities," said Tamryn Hennessy, vice president of career services at Rasmussen College.

"We know starting a career or leaving a job and starting a new one can be a nerve-wracking experience," Hennessy said. "At the same time, we see in our graduates every day how rewarding it is to pursue a career you're passionate about. More than half of our survey respondents also told us doing something they love is just as important as their salary."

Rasmussen College's American Worker study was conducted to develop a suitable tool to aid people in finding the right career for them. From understanding motivation to assessing skills, [Rasmussen College's Career Roadmap](#) can help people discover the things they need to know to go out and start searching for true job satisfaction.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

From February 25 to March 2, 2014, Vision Critical conducted an online survey of 2,003 U.S. adults who are currently employed and members of their American Community panel. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 2.2%. Quotas were put in place to ensure a sample representative of the entire working U.S. adult population in terms of age, gender and region. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

ABOUT RASMUSSEN COLLEGE

Rasmussen College is a regionally accredited private college and Public Benefit Corporation that is dedicated to changing lives through career-focused education and public service. Rasmussen College offers certificates, diplomas, Associate's and Bachelor's degrees online and across its 24 Midwest and Florida campuses in a supportive, student-centered environment. Since 1900, Rasmussen College has been dedicated to being a primary contributor to the growth and development of the communities it serves. As a Public Benefit Corporation, Rasmussen College is committed to helping change lives through education and making a positive impact on society through public service and a variety of community-based initiatives. For more information about Rasmussen College, please visit www.rasmussen.edu.