

2021

# JOB SEEKER NATION REPORT

## The Rise of the Optimized Workforce



**JOBVITE**

# INTRODUCTION

Year after year, Jobvite surveys hundreds of U.S. workers for its annual *Job Seeker Nation Report* to better understand the realities and preferences of today's job seekers. In 2020, Jobvite conducted two surveys. The first was pre-pandemic (February) and the second was in the beginning days of the health crisis (April), with the data revealing a dramatic shift in the job climate.

As a follow up in 2021, Jobvite surveyed roughly 1,500 adults in the U.S. to gain awareness of the current state of the U.S. workforce, roughly one year since the onset of the pandemic, to create the 2021 Job Seeker Nation Report. COVID's impact on the U.S. labor market caused profound changes in the concerns, challenges, and priorities for workers and job seekers nationwide.

As it stands in February 2021, the U.S. unemployment rate sits at 6.2 percent, and the number of unemployed persons at 10 million. The job market shift has led stress levels, job insecurity, and financial woes to skyrocket, in addition to a drastic increase in workers seeking a second source of income outside of their current job. In contrast, purposeful awareness of social and racial justice issues has drastically altered job seekers' expectations of employers, particularly when it comes to COVID-19 safety measures, diversity initiatives, company culture, and remote work.

The pandemic has greatly altered the dynamics of the U.S. labor market, bringing about "The Rise of the Optimized Workforce." COVID-19's significant impact on the workforce has made it evident that employers and recruiters must have a complete understanding of how to adjust efforts to meet the demands of varied realities—for individual work experiences of today and tomorrow. This additional strain on employers, recruiters, and talent acquisition professionals makes it even more essential to be equipped with the right systems, tools, skills, and channels to effectively navigate the current reality.

The 2021 Job Seeker Nation Report will help job seekers and recruiting decision makers understand:

-  How job market perceptions have shifted over the past year amidst COVID
-  U.S. workers' attitudes toward their jobs
-  The level of stress and job insecurity challenging workers and the impact on mental health
-  Expectations for employers for COVID-19 precautions and D&I initiatives
-  The importance of company culture, employer brand, and remote work opportunities
-  Preferred communication and interview tactics and platforms
-  The impact of the pandemic on working parents
-  How today's job seekers are finding jobs and applying for them
-  The impact of the current job market on salary and negotiations
-  Top influences in accepting or rejecting a job offer
-  Additional market findings

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past year, the pandemic has greatly altered the dynamics of today's job market. It is expected that many of the changes experienced will be here to stay. For talent leaders, there is a need to understand how adjusting efforts to meet the demands of the job market today will progress into the future.

If you have time to do some reading, then skip this section and jump right into it. But if you are a little more pressed for time, read on for key findings from the report as it relates to job seekers, employers, recruiters, and talent acquisition leaders.



## Job Seekers

One-quarter of workers have changed industries since the onset of the pandemic. [\(Page 4\)](#)

Over two-thirds of workers believe that getting a job in 2021 will be more challenging than before the pandemic. [\(Page 5\)](#)

58% of surveyed workers report an increased stress level since the onset of the pandemic. [\(Page 7\)](#)

Nearly 1 in every 3 workers report that they or someone in their immediate family have gone without food for 24 hours in the past month due to a lack of food or money. [\(Page 7\)](#)

A majority of workers continue to apply for jobs even if they do not have all the skills listed as required by the job description. [\(Page 10\)](#)

In 2021, one in two surveyed workers plan to take additional professional courses or continue their education to enhance their resumes. A similar number have, in the past year, learned new skills or re-skilled to adapt to a new industry. [\(Page 18\)](#)

53% of surveyed workers have or plan to have a second source of income outside of their current job, compared to 36% in February 2020. [\(Page 19\)](#)

## Employers

Employers need to embrace COVID-19 safety measures and diversity initiatives, as both significantly influence workers' decisions to accept or reject a job. [\(Page 9\)](#)

Despite the rise of remote work amidst the pandemic, company culture is still very important to employees. [\(Page 13\)](#)

While more employees are taking advantage of their employer's mental health offerings, there are still many workers who are unsure if those benefits are available to them. [\(Page 15\)](#)

The pandemic has led to longer workdays, with signs showing it's affecting employees' well being. [\(Page 15\)](#)

Nearly half of respondents believe employers should require employees to get COVID-19 vaccines. [\(Page 16\)](#)

Despite the pandemic, workers continue to be comfortable negotiating salaries and asking for a raise. [\(Page 17\)](#)

The ability to work remotely heavily influences a candidate's decision to accept or reject a job offer, especially for workers with children. [\(Page 20\)](#)

## Recruiters and Talent Acquisition Leaders

An overwhelming majority of surveyed workers consider their most recent candidate experience to be mostly positive. [\(Page 11\)](#)

Lack of response from a recruiter is the top reason for a negative candidate experience. [\(Page 11\)](#)

Great communication from recruiters, ease of scheduling, and easy job application process were the top reasons for positive candidate experiences. [\(Page 11\)](#)

Recruiters should consider how lack of access to adequate technology or Wi-Fi negatively impacts a worker's participation in a video interview. [\(Page 12\)](#)

Social media proves to be vital in highlighting and educating potential candidates on a company's culture and brand. [\(Page 13\)](#)

# THE JOB HUNT AMIDST COVID-19

*25% of respondents have changed industries since the onset of the pandemic*

## Of those respondents who are currently unemployed:

36% have been out of work for 6-12 months



35% have been out of work for over a year



28% have been looking for a job for 6-12 months



23% have been looking for a job for over a year



## In the past year, those who are currently unemployed have applied for:



1-10 jobs: **40%**



Over 30 jobs: **23%**



11-20 jobs: **28%**



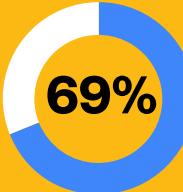
21-20 jobs: **10%**

## How do job seekers search for or find out about job openings?

	2021	2020
Online job boards:	<b>60%</b>	72%
Social media such as LinkedIn or Facebook:	<b>44%</b>	42%
Through friends:	<b>35%</b>	45%
Directly from an employer's career site:	<b>26%</b>	N/A
Through professional connections:	<b>24%</b>	31%

# STATE OF JOB SEEKERS TODAY

*Finding new opportunities remains challenging*



**69%** of surveyed workers believe that getting a job in 2021 will be 'much harder' or 'somewhat harder' than it was before the pandemic.



Just **14%** think it could become easier.



Despite the pandemic, U.S. workers' attitudes toward their jobs are similar to those of previous years. While **67%** of respondents are satisfied with their jobs, **50%** are still open to other job opportunities.

## Who is more likely to be satisfied with their current job yet open to other possibilities?



Males: **57%**  
(vs. 41% females)



Married workers: **57%**  
(vs. 41% single)



City workers: **52%**  
(vs. 35% rural)



College educated employees: **61%**  
(vs. 40% non-college educated)

Workers with a child in their household are much more likely to be satisfied with their job yet still open to other job opportunities than are workers without children in their household:



Male workers:



With Children



Without Children

**71%**

**41%**

Female workers:

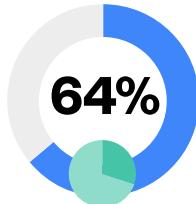
**44%**

**39%**

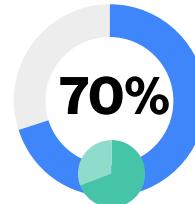
# STATE OF JOB SEEKERS TODAY

*Finding new job opportunities in 2021 is more challenging*

## Stress in the job seeking process:



**64%** report that the job seeking process is at least somewhat more stressful than it was before the pandemic, with **30%** saying it's a lot more stressful



**70%** of workers with children living in their household and **69%** of married workers report that the job seeking process is now at least somewhat more stressful than it was before the pandemic

**40%** said catching COVID-19 is the biggest stressor contributing to the job seeking process. Other stressors include:



Mental health  
struggles: **38%**



Juggling multiple  
jobs: **21%**



Children at home: **34%**



Caring for a sick  
family member: **17%**



Long work hours: **34%**



Shared Wi-Fi: **16%**



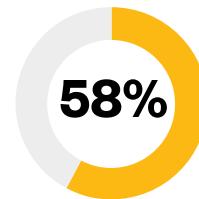
Personal health  
challenges, including  
COVID-19: **30%**



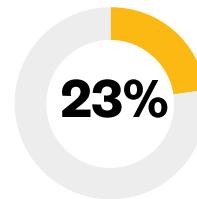
Unsurprisingly, for workers with kids, having children at home is by far the biggest stressor (**55%**) contributing to the job seeking process.

# STRESS & JOB SECURITY

**Stress levels have only risen since pandemic onset**



**58%**  
58% of surveyed workers report increased stress since pandemic onset



**23%**  
23% report that their stress levels have *drastically* increased since the pandemic hit

**Perceived job security has declined since the onset of the pandemic**



**39%** of workers report a decline in feeling secure in their current position, compared to 24% who report feeling more secure



The number of workers who report that they, or someone in their immediate families, is afraid of losing a job has jumped to **41%** – a **13 percentage point increase** compared to last year



Workers with children (**49%**) are most concerned with losing a job

## Food insecurity



Alarmingly, **30%** of surveyed workers report that they or someone in their immediate family have gone without food for 24 hours in the past month due to a lack of food or money.



Workers with children are most likely to report being in this situation.

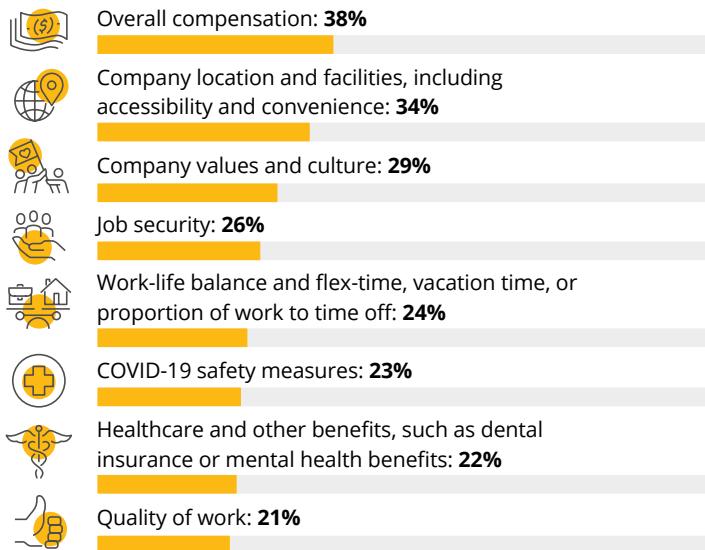
[Donate now to Feeding America to combat food insecurity](#)



# ACCEPTANCE & REJECTION

*What job seekers have on their radar*

## Top influences in accepting a job offer or not:



## The least important factors influencing a decision to accept a job or not:

**2%** Strong parental leave policies

**4%** Opportunities to perform community service

**2%** Continued education opportunities/subsidies

**4%** Belief in the company's mission

## Remote work as a factor to accept or reject a job offer:

**74%** say remote work is “**very important**” or “**somewhat important**”.

Responses were evenly split between the two choices.



Remote work is an especially important factor for workers with children in their household – **47%** consider it very important,

compared to **27%** of workers without children at home.

**47%**

**27%**

# ACCEPTANCE & REJECTION

*What job seekers have on their radar*

## Diversity in the workforce



A significant number of workers (**42%**) would turn down a job offer if the company lacked diversity in its workforce or had no clear goals for improving diversity in hiring.

### Most likely to do so are:



Male workers with children: **66%**



Male workers: **50%**



All workers with children: **56%**



Married workers: **49%**



College educated workers: **50%**



Workers in the West: **48%**



## COVID-19 safety measures:



**58%** would decline a job offer if the employer did not have clear COVID-19 protocols in place



**55%** said they have or would decline a job offer if the employer did not require employees to wear masks in the office or at the workplace



# THE APPLICATION PROCESS

*Multi-channel, personalized candidate experiences are best*

**Workers most frequently applied to their current/most recent job through:**



**Job boards: 27%**



Used by city workers more than rural workers (29% vs. 19%)



**Employer's career site: 24%**



Used by married workers more than single workers (27% vs. 19%)



and college educated workers more than non-college educated workers (28% vs. 20%)



**Friends or former colleagues: 18%**

(a five percentage point drop from last year)



Used by rural workers more than city workers (28% vs. 16%)



**Social sites like LinkedIn, Facebook, or Craigslist: 14%**

## Job skills

The majority of workers (**53%**) apply for jobs even if they don't have all the skills listed as required by the job description.



## This is especially common for:



Males: **59%** (vs. **48%** female workers)



College educated workers: **59%** (vs. **48%** non-college educated)



Workers in the West: **60%**

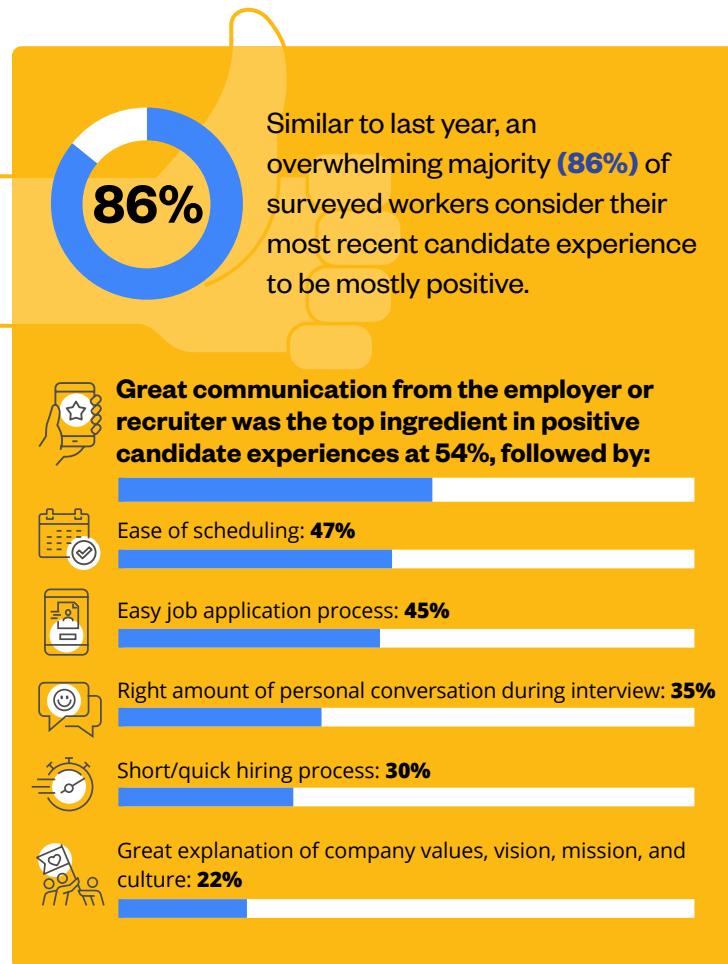
(eight percentage points higher than in the other three regions)



**Both male and female workers with children in their households** are more likely to apply for jobs even if they don't have the skills required than are their counterparts without children in households.

# CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

*Converting top talent starts here*



## Negative candidate experience increases from 2020:

	2021	2020
Lack of response from employer/recruiter:	48%	42%
Complicated job application process:	25%	24%
Too much back and forth when scheduling an interview:	22%	19%
Little or no explanation of company values, vision, or mission:	22%	20%
Limited availability of recruiter/company for interview:	21%	14%

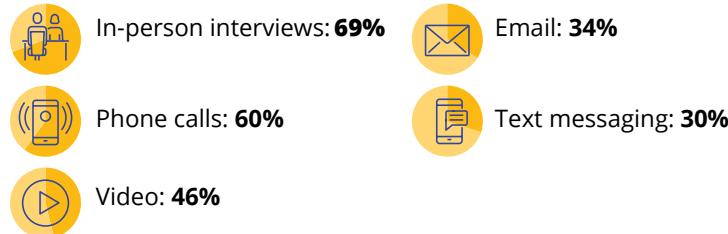
## Other negative candidate experiences that stayed the same or decreased:

Too long of a hiring process/ too many interviews:	25% (vs. 26% in 2020)	No personal conversation during interview:	19% (vs. 19% in 2020)
Not enough communication from employer/recruiter:	20% (vs. 23% in 2020)	Unprepared interviewer:	12% (vs. 16% in 2020)
Unpleasant interview:	20% (vs. 25% in 2020)		

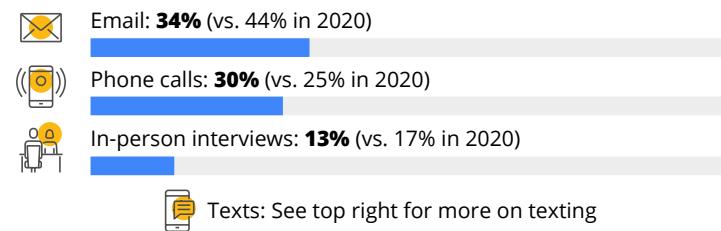
# PREFERRED COMMUNICATION

*Here's how candidates want to get in touch*

**Even in a pandemic, job seekers are still at ease with in-person interviews. A majority of surveyed workers are comfortable with:**



**While still the most preferred channel of communication with a recruiter, email has declined in popularity compared to last year**



## Texting

A majority prefer texting for scheduling interviews vs. email or phone calls

**51%** of respondents have been texted by recruiters to schedule a job interview

**69%** of them preferred this process more than scheduling via email or phone calls

Workers with children (**63%**) are more likely to prefer to have a job interview scheduled through text messaging

## Video interviews

**36%** of surveyed workers have, at some point, not been able to participate in a video interview due to a lack of adequate access to technology or Wi-Fi.

## Most likely to report a negative video interview experience:

<b>50%</b>	Workers with children at home	<b>44%</b>	College educated workers
<b>58%</b>	Male workers with children at home		
<b>39%</b>	Female workers with children at home	<b>42%</b>	Married workers

# COMPANY CULTURE

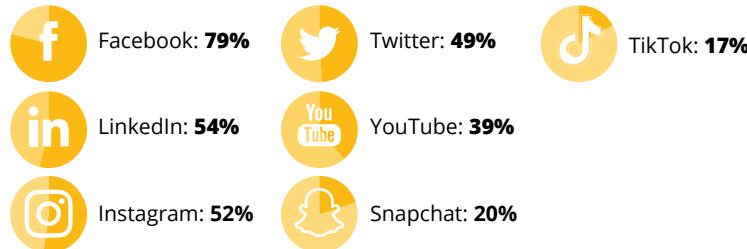
*Company culture still matters—a lot*

Despite an increasing number of employees working remotely due to COVID-19, the importance of company culture in the decision to apply for a job has continued to rebound. **86% say it is somewhat or very important.** (48% rate it as very important, up from 37% in 2019)

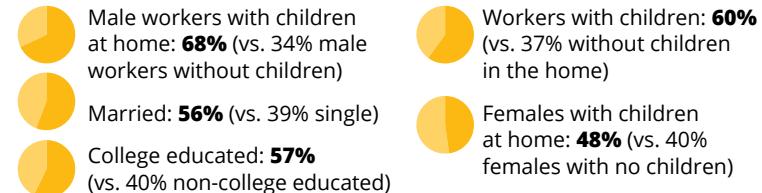


Male, city, married, and college educated workers are approximately **10-15 percentage points** more likely to rely on an employer's social media and information/videos on the employer's website to get a sense of the company's culture or brand than are female, rural, single, and non-college educated workers.

## Which social sites are most popular for learning about company culture and employer brand?



## Who cares most about company culture and values?



## Where do job seekers go to get a sense of an employer's company culture or brand?



## Twitter is the platform with the largest discrepancies among demographic groups who use it to learn about an employer's company culture or brand:

<b>62%</b> College educated workers (vs. 29% non-college educated)	<b>57%</b> Older (age 40+) (vs. 40% younger)
<b>59%</b> Married (vs. 33% single)	<b>51%</b> City (vs. 30% rural)
<b>58%</b> Male (vs. 33% female)	<b>51%</b> Currently employed adults (vs. 29% of those who are unemployed but looking for work)

# DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

*Job seekers weigh in on the importance of diversity focus*



**49%**

of those surveyed inquired about employer's goals and efforts around improving diversity in the workplace during their interviews.



**53%**

believe that employers should be sharing their intentions to meet diversity hiring goals on their social media, blogs, career sites, etc. However, a substantial minority (29%) disagree.



**39%**

of workers report that their employers are putting more emphasis on diversity, which they like.



**26%**

However, 26% report that their employers have not changed their emphasis on diversity and they are OK with that.



**12%**

Another 12% report that they do not like their employers' increased emphasis on diversity.



**7%**

Only 7% of respondents said that their employer wasn't putting an emphasis on diversity when they think their employer should.

# WORKFORCE MENTAL HEALTH & THE PANDEMIC

*Mental health benefits are being accessed more*

	2020	2021
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Employers who offer mental health benefits and/or resources to employees:

**46%**      **53%**

Workers who have taken advantage of mental health benefits:

**54%**      **64%**

**16%**

There's an opportunity for employers to better promote mental health offerings as **16%** of employees are unsure if their employer offers such benefits.

## Who is most likely to have access to mental health benefits?



Males: **61%**



College educated workers: **66%**



City workers: **56%**



Workers with children: **67%**  
(76% among male workers with kids)



Married employees: **64%**



West region workers: **60%**  
(lowest in the Central Great Lakes region at 48%)



**One in four** workers say they have taken advantage of their employer's mental health benefits **MORE** since the onset of the pandemic.

## The pandemic has led to longer workdays:



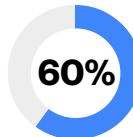
**42%** of employees are working more since the onset of the pandemic



**30%** of workers with children in their household say they are working more

# COVID-19 SAFETY MEASURES IN THE WORKPLACE

## *Employee expectations around COVID-19 safety measures*



In the past year, **60%** of surveyed workers have inquired about their current or prospective employer's COVID-19 safety measures.



### Workers with children



**71%** have inquired about the employer's safety measures



**64%** would decline a job offer if there were no clear COVID-19 safety protocols in place



**61%** would decline a job offer if the employer did not require masks at the workplace



**49%** believe that employers should require employees to get COVID-19 vaccines, while **36%** disagree.

Half of those who disagree would not get a vaccine even if it was incentivized by their employer, while one-third would do so.



### Those who would not get a vaccine even if it was incentivized by their employer:

Currently unemployed and looking for work: **63%**



Rural workers: **62%**



Female workers: **61%**



### Those who agree with mandatory vaccines:

Male workers with children: **72%**



College educated workers: **61%**



Workers with children: **61%**



Married workers: **58%**



# SALARY & NEGOTIATIONS

*Despite the job market, comfortability with negotiating salaries and raises increased*

65% of workers are “very comfortable” and “somewhat comfortable” *combined* negotiating salaries, compared to 60% in February 2020 and 51% in 2018



60% are “very comfortable” and “somewhat comfortable” combined asking for a raise



40% would be willing to accept a salary that is less than their current or most recent salary



50% of workers in the West are willing to accept a salary that is lower than their most recent or current salary – 10+ percentage points higher than in the other regions.



## Who is most comfortable negotiating salaries?

Male workers with children: **54%**



College educated employees: **42%**  
(vs. 21% among workers with no college degree)



Workers with children: **42%**  
(vs. 20% among workers with no children)



Male workers: **39%**  
(vs. 21% among females)



Married workers: **39%**  
(vs. 21% among single workers)



## Who is most comfortable asking for a raise?



Male workers with children in their household: **47%**  
(vs. **22%** females with children)



Male workers: **35%** (vs. **17%** female)



Married workers: **35%** (vs. **17%** single)



College educated: **36%** (vs. **18%** no college degree)



Workers with children: **37%** (vs. **17%** those with no children)

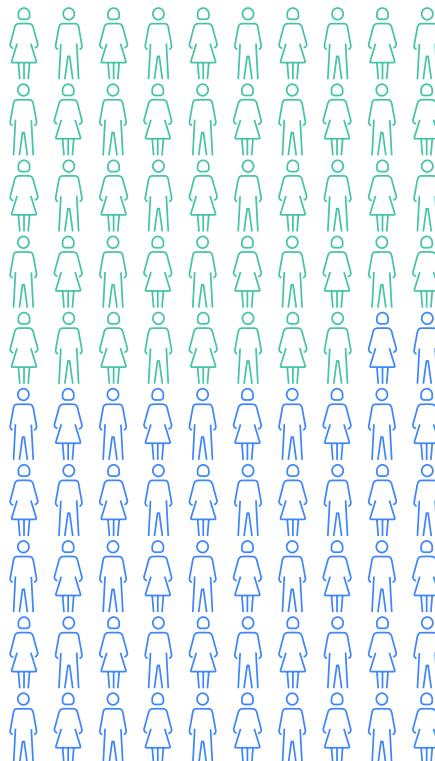
# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## *Adaptable candidates and new skills*

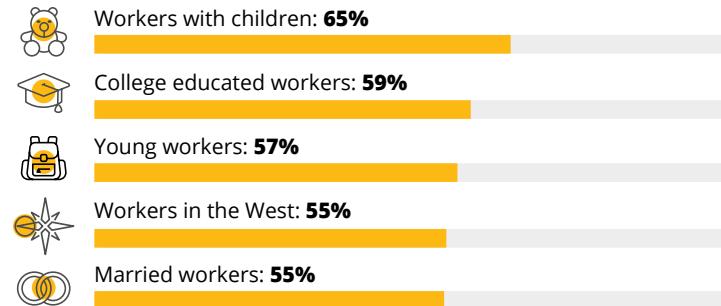
**48%** of workers today plan to take additional professional courses or continue their education in 2021 to enhance their resume.

This is down from 57% in February 2020 who reported having taken those courses since entering the workforce.

**52%** of workers have, in the past year, learned new skills or re-skilled to adapt to a new industry.



## **Who is most likely to take additional professional courses?**



**Female workers with children at home** are much more likely to plan to take additional professional courses compared to their female colleagues without children in the household (**57%** vs. 32%).



**Female workers with children at home** are much more likely to plan to continue their education or to have learned new skills in the past year compared to their female colleagues without children in the household (**56%** vs. 36%).



**Already employed workers (male and female)** are more likely to plan to take additional professional courses compared to those looking for jobs (**52%** vs. 31%).



**Already employed workers (male and female)** are more likely to plan to continue their education or to have learned new skills in the past year than those who are looking for jobs (**55%** vs. 30%).

# SIDE HUSTLES

*The gig economy is still trending*

Compared to pre-pandemic, **U.S. workers' interest in having a second source of income outside of their regular jobs has increased**, but the reasons for it have remained the same.



**Who is more likely to have a second source of income?**



Males: **58%** (vs. 46% among females)



College educated workers: **60%** (vs. 46% among workers with no college degree)



Workers with children: **62%** (vs. 44% among workers with no children in household)



**Top reasons for a second source of income saw little change:**

54%

Need for money

22%

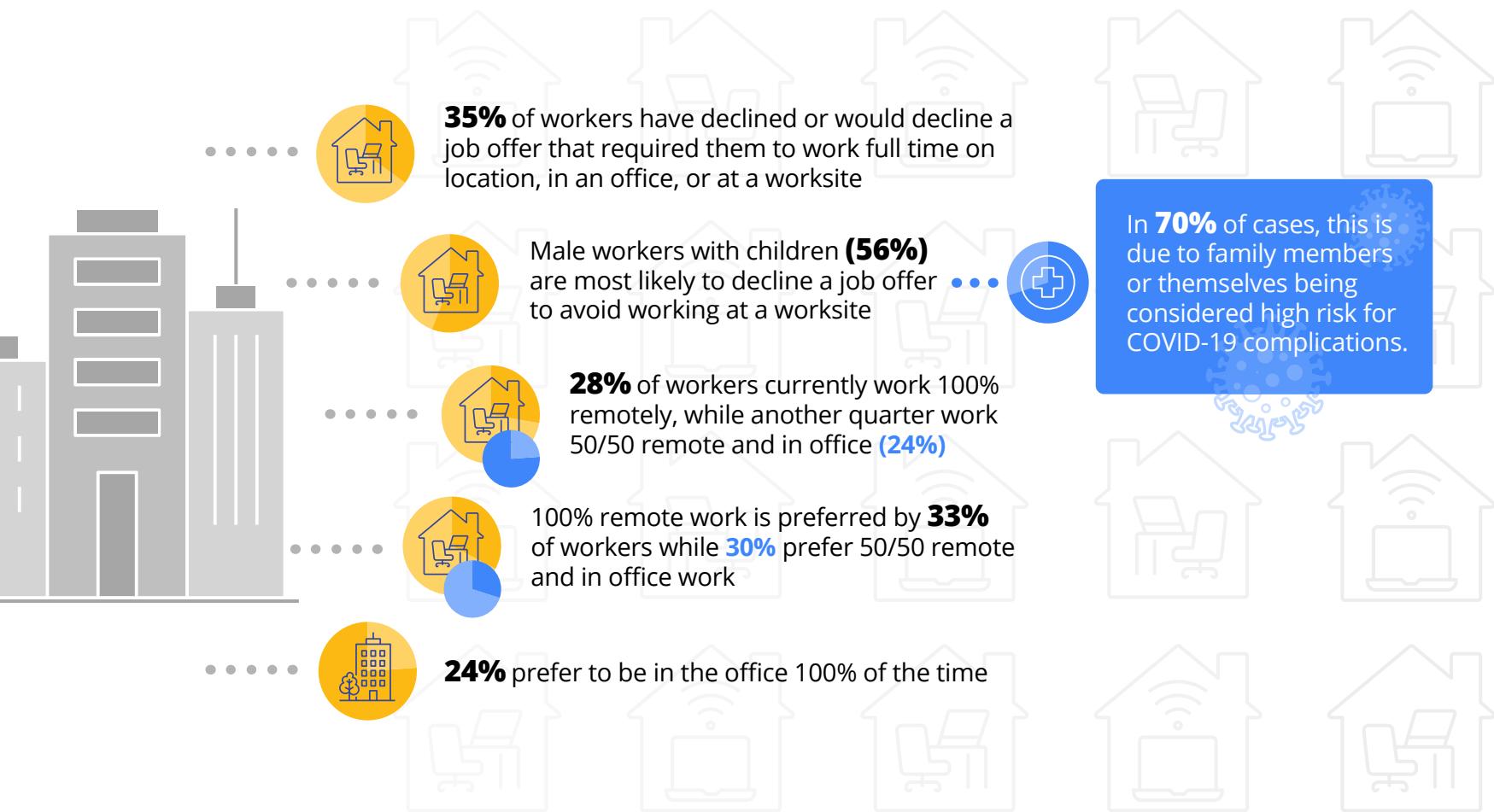
Pursuing a passion project

13%

Helping out family members or friends

# REMOTE WORK

*Many candidates prefer hybrid work options*



# OPENINGS & REFERRALS

*Sharing is caring and it shows*

U.S. workers are increasingly likely to share job openings and participate in referral programs:

71% of workers are likely to **share** job openings at their companies via social media, compared to 63% of those asked in February 2020 before the pandemic hit.

82% of workers are likely to **click** on a job opportunity they see someone in their network post on social media, compared to 74% in February 2020.

38% of workers have **participated** in a company's referral program, compared to 27% in February 2020.

**Most likely to share job openings via social media:**



Workers with children:  
**29%**



College educated  
employees: **27%**



Married workers:  
**26%**

**Most likely to participate in a company's referral program:**



Workers with children:  
**54%**



Male workers:  
**48%**



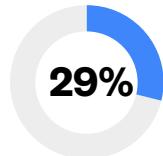
College educated  
workers: **49%**



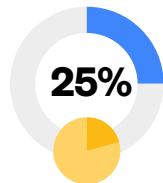
Married workers:  
**47%**

# INTERNAL MOBILITY

*Employers can benefit from empowering team members to grow at their organization*

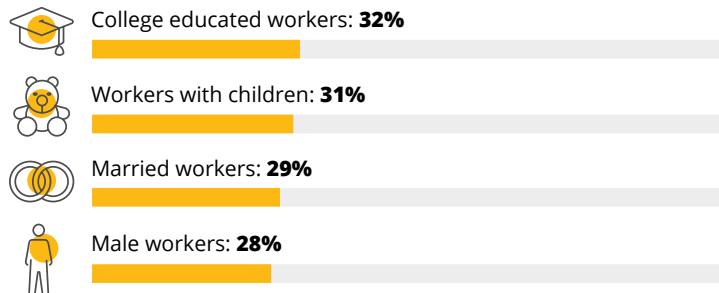


**29%** of workers say their employer doesn't offer a platform/software to make it easy for employees to apply for open internal roles.



**25%** of workers are not at all likely to apply to internal roles, however, the rest are at least somewhat likely, including **21%** who are very likely to do so.

## Most likely to apply for an internal role:



## INDUSTRY CONTRIBUTORS

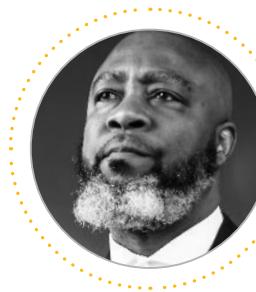
Jobvite is pleased to share the results of the *2021 Job Seeker Nation Report*, and thank these industry thought leaders who helped to contribute to the great questions that are driving insights to help us all better understand this nation of job seekers.



**Hung Lee**  
Curator of  
Recruiting Brainfood



**Madeline Laurano**  
Founder,  
Aptitude Research



**Torin Ellis**  
Principal,  
The Torin Ellis Brand



**Ben Eubanks**  
Chief Research Officer,  
Lighthouse Research  
& Advisory

## ABOUT THE STUDY

Zogby Analytics was commissioned by Jobvite to conduct an online survey of 1,511 adults in the U.S. who are working full time, part time, or looking for work.

Using internal and trusted interactive partner resources, thousands of adults were randomly invited to participate in this interactive survey. Each invitation was password coded and secure so that one respondent could only access the survey one time.

Using information based on census data, voter registration figures, CIA fact books, and exit polls, Zogby uses complex weighting techniques to best represent the demographics of the population being surveyed. Weighted variables may include age, race, gender, region, party, education, and religion.

The final sample consisted of 58% full-time workers and 48% with college degrees, covering a variety of industries and job titles. Fifty-three percent of respondents are married, and 49% have children under 18 living in their households. In addition, 53% of respondents identify as male, while 47% are female.

Based on a confidence interval of 95%, the margin of error for 1,511 is +/- 2.5 percentage points. This means that all other things being equal, if the identical survey were repeated, its confidence intervals would contain the true value of parameters 95 times out of 100.

Subsets of the data have a larger margin of error than the whole data set. As a rule Zogby does not rely on the validity of very small subsets of the data, especially sets smaller than 50-75 respondents. At that subset, Zogby can make estimations based on the data, but in these cases the data is more qualitative than quantitative.

Additional factors can create error, such as question wording and question order.

## ABOUT ZOGBY ANALYTICS

Zogby Analytics is respected nationally and internationally for its opinion research capabilities. Since 1984, Zogby has empowered clients with powerful information and knowledge critical for making informed strategic decisions.

The firm conducts multi-phased opinion research engagements for banking and financial services institutions, insurance companies, hospitals and medical centers, retailers and developers, religious institutions, cultural organizations, colleges and universities, IT companies, and Federal agencies. Zogby's dedication and commitment to excellence and accuracy are reflected in its state-of-the-art opinion research capabilities and objective analysis and consultation.

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