

## U.S. Memo

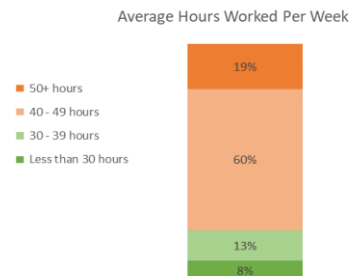
Date: August 21, 2018  
To: Express Employment Professionals  
From: The Harris Poll  
Subject: 2018 Survey of Blue Collar Americans

*The survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals between July 9 and 23, 2018 among 1,049 U.S. blue collar workers who are employed full-time, part-time, or self-employed; performs work that requires manual labor; and works in one of the following industries: construction, manufacturing, transportation & warehousing, automotive services, maintenance, agriculture/ forestry/ fishing/ hunting, or utilities.*

*Results were weighted as needed for age by gender, education, race/ethnicity, region and household income. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online. Totals may not equal the sum of their individual components due to rounding. No estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated; a full methodology is available upon request.*

### Profile of U.S. Blue Collar Workers

On average, U.S. blue collar workers have been working for 22 years, with the average worker saying they've been in their current job for approximately 10 years. Blue collar workers in the U.S. work about 41 hours per week, with 1 in 5 workers (19%) saying they work 50 or more hours each week.



Although the majority (73%) believe unions help the working man and woman, only 13% are members of a labor union. The majority (80%) report that they are paid hourly, while 15% characterize their pay as salaried, and 5% are not sure. When it comes to location, about 2 in 5 U.S. blue collar workers (42%) say they work mostly indoors, nearly a quarter (23%) say they work mostly outdoors, and another 30% say their time is split between the two locations. Few (5%) say they work inside a vehicle.

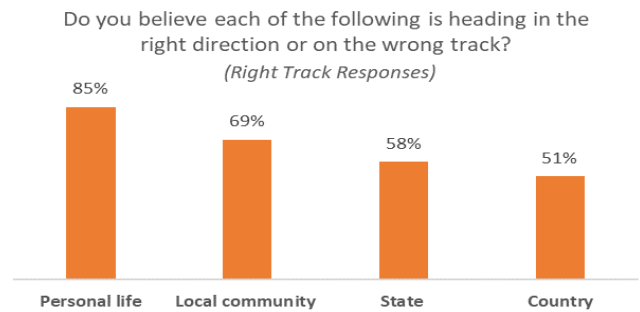
- Men are more than twice as likely as women to say they work mostly outdoors (27% vs. 12%).

Roughly half of U.S. blue collar workers (49%) identify their work as a skilled trade, while another 44% would describe their work as general labor. Technology also plays an important role for some, with nearly 1 in 5 U.S. blue collar workers (18%) say using technology is a significant part of their job and 7% of workers saying their job is in the technology sector.

- Men are more likely than women to say their work is a skilled trade (56% vs. 32%), while women are more likely than men to say their work is general labor (61% vs. 38%).

## General Attitudes

While more than 4 in 5 U.S. blue collar workers (85%) believe their own life is headed in the right direction, fewer express the same sentiment about their local community (69%), their state (58%), or their country (51%). Still, the majority of U.S. blue collar workers (82%) believe that America is the greatest country on Earth and more than half of workers (55%) say they are better off now than they were 5 years ago. Fewer say they are worse off (20%) or about the same (26%).



- Skilled trade workers (61%) are more likely than general labor workers (45%) to say they are better off now than they were five years ago.
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Four in 5 blue collar workers in the U.S. (80%) are optimistic about their future, with 1 in 3 (34%) saying they are very optimistic about their future. Most blue collar workers agree the harder you work, the more successful you'll be (80%) and that the American Dream is alive for people like themselves (70%).

## Financial Status

About half of blue collar workers in the U.S (51%) consider themselves to be in the middle income class. Another 38% view themselves as in the lower income or lower middle income class, and 1 in 10 (11%) say they are in the upper income or upper middle income class.

The majority of workers (78%) are confident they will be able to reach their lifestyle goals, but nearly 3 in 4 workers (74%) say life is a struggle, with general labor workers more likely than skilled trade workers to agree life is a struggle (80% vs. 70%).

- Blue collar workers ages 18-34 (86%) are more likely than those ages 35-54 (73%) and ages 55+ (74%) to say they are confident they will reach their lifestyle goals.
- Blue collar workers ages 18-34 (74%) and ages 35-54 (80%) are more likely than those ages 55+ (57%) to say life is a struggle.

While 84% of blue collar workers say they can make ends meet, nearly half of workers (48%) say it is difficult to make ends meet, with 1 in 10 (10%) saying it is very difficult. In fact, 1 in 7 workers (14%) say they currently have no money saved in case of an emergency, while another 1 in 4 (24%) say they have less than \$1000 saved in case of an emergency. On the other hand, more than 1 in 5 (21%) have saved \$10,000 or more. Only 42% of U.S. blue collar workers are currently putting aside money for their retirement and nearly 3 in 4 workers (73%) say they are worried about saving enough for their retirement. Further, more than half of workers (53%) say it's more likely that Martians will land on earth than them being able to collect Social Security.

- Blue collar workers ages 18-34 (56%) and ages 35-54 (60%) are more likely than 55+ (28%) to agree it is more likely that Martians will land on earth than them being able to collect Social Security.

Despite some difficulties making ends meet and concerns about retirement, 2 in 3 blue collar workers (67%) say they are satisfied with the lifestyle that they have. Four in 5 blue collar workers in the U.S. (80%) say their job provides a good living to financially support their family, with skilled trade workers more likely than general labor workers to agree with this (85% vs. 72%). About half of blue collar workers (51%) say they are financially on par with their neighbors and 28% say they are financially better off. Only 21% say they are financially worse off than their neighbors. In addition, many blue collar workers (40%) say they are financially better off than their parents were at their age. Similar proportions say they are about the same (30%) or worse off (30%) than their parents were at the same age.

Looking ahead to the next generation, the vast majority of parents are optimistic about their child's future financial situation and say their children will have a better future than they will (88%). Nearly 2 in 3 blue collar workers who are parents (65%) state their child will be financially better off than they themselves are now, with only 10% saying their child will be worse off and 25% reporting their child will be about the same.

## Job Satisfaction

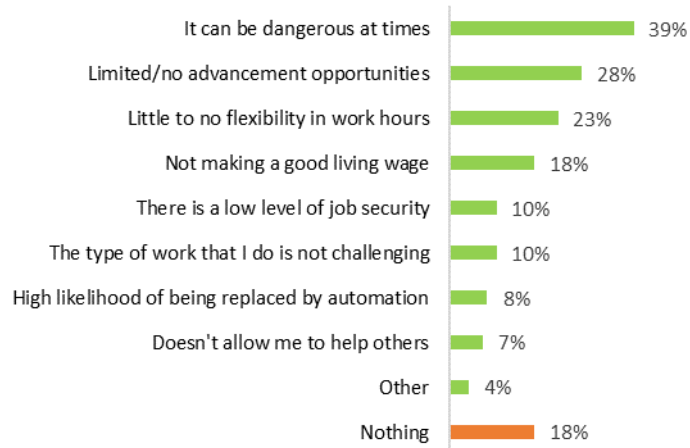
The vast majority of U.S. blue collar workers (86%) say they are satisfied with their job, with 1 in 3 (33%) saying they are *very satisfied*. In addition, the majority of workers say they are proud of the work that they do (91%) and the people they know respect the type of work they do (79%). For those that are self-employed, nearly all (99%) say they love being their own boss. Nearly 3 in 5 blue collar workers (59%) say they like their job (skilled trade workers more so than general labor workers: 66% vs. 52%) and the overwhelming majority of workers (94%) reported positive things they like about their job, including making a good living wage (53%), being challenged by their work (40%), and having flexible work hours (35%).

- Skilled trade workers are more likely than general labor workers to report a number of characteristics they like about their job field/occupation, including:
  - Making a good living wage (60% vs. 48%)
  - Being challenged by the type of work they do (48% vs. 31%)
  - Being able to help others/having a sense of purpose (36% vs. 25%)
  - There is a high level of job security in my field/occupation (36% vs. 16%)

On the other hand, blue collar workers also report features of their job that they dislike, mainly reporting that it can be dangerous (39%), there is limited/no advancement opportunities (28%), little to no flexibility in work hours (23%), and not making a good living wage (18%).

- General labor workers are more likely than skilled trade workers to say they dislike not making a good living wage (25% vs. 13%) and that their job field doesn't allow them to help others (11% vs. 4%).

### Negatives About Job



Regarding blue collar workers' feelings about their company, 2 in 3 blue collar workers (66%) say employers care about employees in general, and 71% say their employer cares about their employees. In addition, about half of full-time and part-time workers (47%) say their company treats them fairly and nearly 1 in 3 full-time and part-time workers (32%) say they have a great boss. Still, many workers report concerns when thinking about their own workplace, including the long hours (31%), personal safety/danger of the job (28%), being paid well (26%), no advancement opportunities (24%), or high-performance demands (22%). Nearly 1 in 5 workers also report poor work conditions (18%), supervisors not understanding how difficult the job is (17%), having a bad boss (17%), or missing work for a family emergency (16%) as concerns.

## Career Path

Sixteen percent of workers (16%) say their parent(s) had an influence on the type of work they currently do and more than 1 in 4 workers (28%) say they are working in the job field they expected to have.

- Skilled trade workers are more likely than general labor workers to say their parents had an influence on their current work (23% vs. 10%) and that they are working in the field they expected to have (37% vs. 20%).

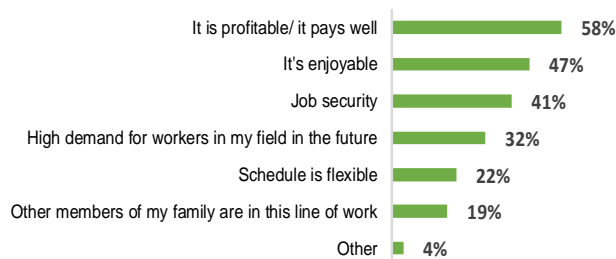
Looking at how blue collar workers first got started in their line of work, the top response was that it pays well (20%), followed by other family members were in that line of work (15%), and it was the only job they could get (13%).

- Skilled trade workers are more likely than general labor workers to say they first became interested in their line of work because other family members were in that field of work (20% vs. 10%).

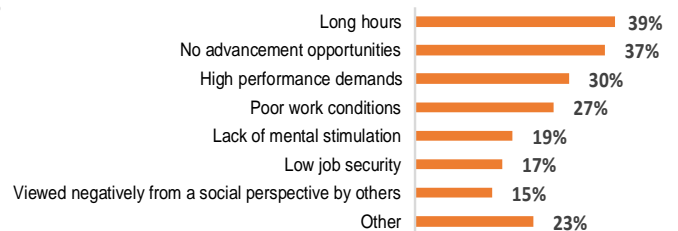
Nearly 3 in 4 blue collar workers in the U.S. (74%) say there is a good career path in their line of work. In fact, nearly 2 in 3 workers (65%) say more young men should pursue careers in their field and over half of workers (52%) say more young women should pursue careers in their field. Over half of blue collar workers (51%) say they would be likely to encourage a child to pursue a career in their field of work, and even more workers (64%) say they would be likely to encourage a family member or friend to pursue a career in their field of work. Of those who would encourage their/a child, the top reasons why are because it pays well (58%), it's enjoyable (47%), and job security (41%). But on the other hand, of those who would not encourage their/a child to pursue a career in their field of work, the top reasons are long hours (39%), no advancement opportunities (37%), and high performance demands (30%) – which appears to mimic what they themselves dislike about their own job.

- Skilled trade workers are more likely than general labor workers to say there is a good career path in their line of work (79% vs. 69%) and that more young men should pursue careers in their field (75% vs. 56%).

### 51% would their job recommend to their/a child...



### 49% would not....



Many also acknowledge that being a blue collar worker may come with some negative perceptions. Although nearly 3 in 5 workers (58%) agree having a blue collar job is respected more now than it was 10 years ago, a similar proportion (58%) say society generally looks down on blue collar workers and 48% of workers say at times, they feel like a second class citizen because of the type of work that they do.

Nearly 3 in 4 blue collar workers who have a high school diploma or less (72%) say they would've had more opportunities available to them if they had gone to college. In fact, more than half of those with a HS diploma or less (55%) wish they attended vocational school/career tech (28%), a 4-year college/university (26%), and/or community college (20%). On the other hand, nearly half of blue collar workers who graduated college (46%) wish they did something else instead of attending college such as vocational school (23%), gone straight into the workforce (22%), and/or community college (10%).

### **Job Outlook**

Many blue collar workers in the U.S. have received pay increases (68%), increased job responsibilities (45%), and/or promotions (35%) as recent as in the past year. And, of those who received a pay increase, more than 1 in 4 (26%) say it was an increase of 10% or more. Many also have an optimistic outlook for a pay increase in the next year, with more than half of workers (55%) saying the next time they will get a pay increase will be this year (22%) or next year (33%).

Still, there appears to be some trepidation about the future of their jobs. Although more than 1 in 3 workers (35%) say there will be more jobs in their field over the next ten years, 43% believe the amount of jobs will stay the same and 22% say there will be fewer jobs. Nearly half of blue collar workers (48%) say it is easy for their employer to find cheaper labor to do their job. And, more than 1 in 3 say illegal immigrants allow their employer to pay them less money to do their job field (37%) and illegal immigrants make it harder for them to get a job in their field (37%). Still, only 1 in 3 workers (34%) say it is difficult to find a job in their field and few workers (13%) say they worry that they may lose their job in the near future.

### **Political Outlook**

Only 3 in 10 U.S. blue collar workers (30%) say they trust elected government officials and about half of blue collar workers (51%) believe that the federal government is pro-business (men more so than women, 58% vs. 32%). Blue collar workers are split on their approval of how President Trump is doing, with 44% saying they approve and 40% saying they disapprove. More than 1 in 3 workers (36%) believe President Trump has helped their industry, while 28% believe he's hurt it and 37% say he hasn't helped or hurt it. Workers also are split on which political party in general does a better job of helping blue collar Americans, with similar proportions saying the Republican party (39%) and Democratic party (36%). Nearly 1 in 4 (24%) believe neither party does a better job helping blue collar Americans.