



# WORKTRENDS

AMERICANS' ATTITUDES ABOUT **WORK, EMPLOYERS, AND GOVERNMENT**

## **Left Out. Forgotten? Recent High School Graduates and the Great Recession**

by

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## BACKGROUND

The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey was founded as a research and policy organization devoted to strengthening New Jersey's and the nation's workforce during a time of global economic change. The Heldrich Center researches and puts to work strategies that increase worker skills and employability, strengthen the ability of companies to compete, create jobs where they are needed, and improve the quality and performance of the workforce development system.

Since 1997, the Heldrich Center has experienced rapid growth, working with federal and state government partners, Fortune 100 companies, and major foundations. The Center embodies its slogan "Solutions at Work" by teaming with partners and clients to translate cutting-edge research and analysis into practices and programs that companies, unions, schools, community-based organizations, and government officials can leverage to strengthen the nation's workforce.

The Center's projects are grounded in a core set of research priorities:

- Disability Employment
- Evaluation, Management, and Employment
- Industry, Education, and Employment
- Reemployment
- Work Trends and Economic Analysis

Since its inception, the Heldrich Center has sought to inform employers, union leaders, policymakers, community members, the media, and academic communities about critical workforce and education issues that relate to the emerging global economy.

To better understand the public's attitudes about work, employers, and the government, and improve workplace practices and policy, the Heldrich Center produces the *Work Trends* surveys on a regular basis. (The complete set of reports is available at [www.heldrich.rutgers.edu](http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu).) The surveys poll the general public on critical workforce issues facing Americans and American businesses. The survey findings are promoted widely to the media and national constituencies.

The series is co-directed by Carl E. Van Horn, Ph.D., Director of the Heldrich Center, and Cliff Zukin, Ph.D., Senior Faculty Fellow at the Center and Professor of Public Policy and Political Science at Rutgers University. *Left Out. Forgotten? Recent High School Graduates and the Great Recession* continues to advance the goals of the *Work Trends* series to give American workers a voice in the national economic policy debates, and thereby provides policymakers and employers with reliable insights into how workers across the nation are judging and acting upon the realities of work and the workplace.

## INTRODUCTION

This report describes the findings of a nationally representative sample of 544 recent high school graduates from the classes of 2006 through 2011. The purpose of this study is to understand how recent high school graduates who are not attending college full time are faring in the workforce, specifically looking at those individuals who graduated before and during the difficult labor market caused by the Great Recession. The national recession officially began in late 2007 and ended in 2009. However, we classify students graduating from 2006, 2007, and 2008 as “pre-recession” graduates and students graduating in 2009, 2010, and 2011 as “recession” era graduates because the unemployment situation was dire during this entire period, even though economic growth was positive.

Little is known about the experience of high school graduates as they enter the workforce. The 2010 American Community Survey estimates that 7 in 10 high school graduates ages 18 to 24 do not have a college degree, more than 20 million people — five times more people than the four million in this age group who earned a college degree. The incidence of graduates with only a high school diploma amid the population provides evidence to the need for information regarding this group of young people.

The research in this report explores a number of topics related to the experiences of recent high school graduates in the workforce. The report first examines the experiences of high school graduates in the labor market, looking at both their first and current job as well as the experiences of the unemployed. This information was gathered through a series of questions asking about

their job search, the specifications of the job they chose, and their satisfaction with their job attributes. Next, the report looks at how well high school graduates feel they were prepared for the job market or attending college. Finally, the report examines how recent high school graduates feel about their financial futures.

The survey was fielded between March 21 and April 2, 2012 by GFK, of Palo Alto, California. GFK has the only nationally representative sample of high school graduates (between the ages of 18 and 29) that can be surveyed online. The overall survey has a sampling error of  $\pm 4.5$  percentage points. The survey and details of the sampling methodology can be found in Appendices A and B.

## EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF SAMPLE

The employment status of recent high school graduates, displayed in Table 1, is bleak. **Overall, only 3 in 10 high school graduates are employed full time, compared to college graduates who are employed at nearly twice that rate.** For those who graduated high school in 2006, 2007, and 2008 — before the recession — 37% are employed full time, compared to only 16% who graduated during the recession era. Nearly half are looking for full-time work, including 30% who are unemployed and 15% who are working part time. Another 8% are working part time and not looking for full-time work and about one in six have left the labor market altogether. In addition, 27% are taking college classes part time.

TABLE 1. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES YOUR CURRENT JOB SITUATION?

Employment Status of High School Graduates	Total	White	Black/Hispanic	Pre-Recession 2006-2008	Recession Era 2009-2011
Unemployed and looking for work now	30%	32%	35%	23%	37%
Unemployed but not looking for work now	14%	11%	11%	12%	17%
Working part time, not looking for full-time work	8%	7%	7%	7%	9%
Working part time, looking for full-time work	15%	14%	13%	16%	13%
Employed full time	27%	30%	25%	37%	16%
Military	2%	3%	-	1%	3%
Self-employed	3%	2%	6%	3%	3%
Volunteer	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%
Total	100%	100%	99%	100%	100%

## FIRST JOB

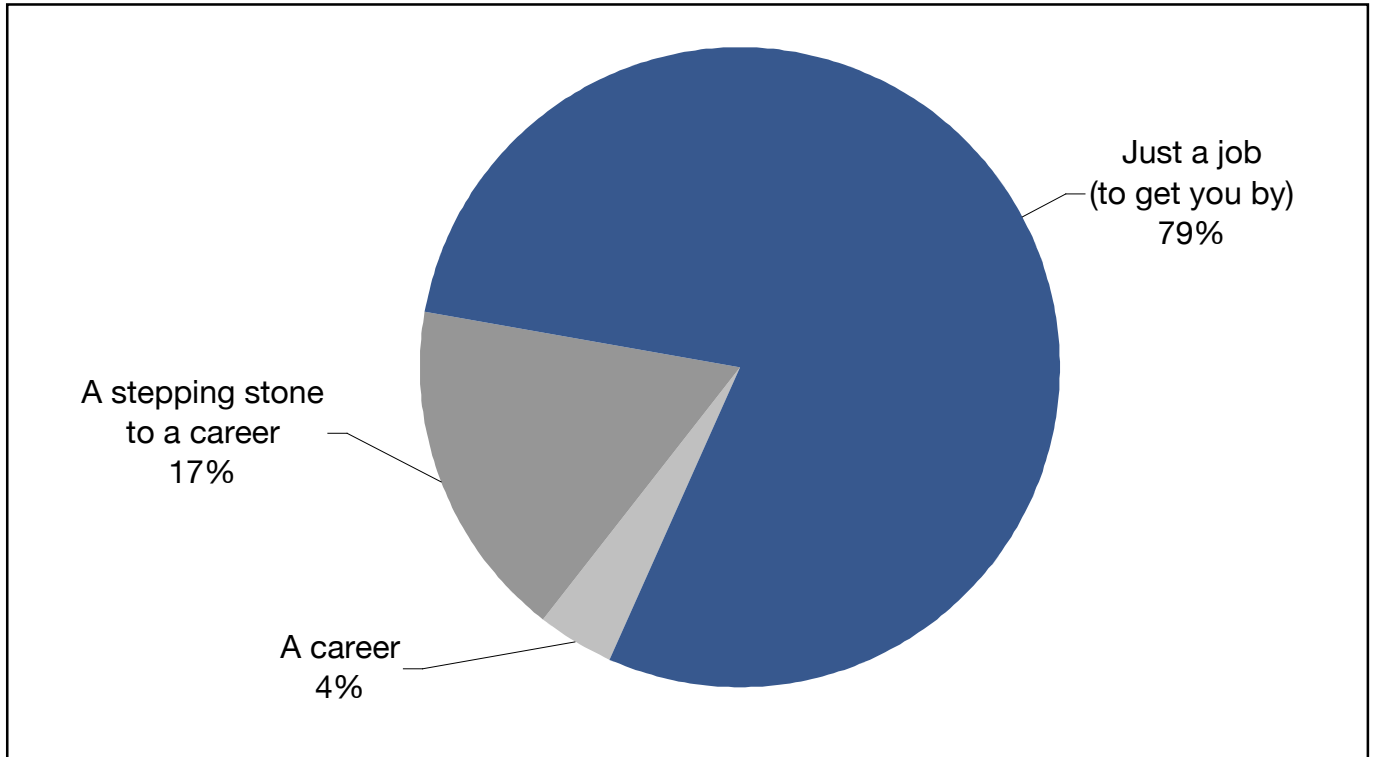
About half of the recent high school graduates were able to obtain at least one full-time job since they graduated from high school, but as of the survey, only 30% report being employed full time. Most (nearly 90%) report being paid by the hour. The median hourly wage earned in the first job was only \$7.50, a mere 25 cents above the federal minimum wage level. Recent research shows that wages have declined across all groups of young graduates in the aftermath of the Great Recession — wages of young high school graduates dropped by 10% between 2007 and 2011 and college graduates experienced wage decreases of approximately 5%.<sup>1</sup> Not only do high school graduates earn less than college graduates, they also occupy less stable employment. Most of these high school graduates' jobs — 75% — were reported as temporary positions. With this combination of temporary, low-wage work, it is likely that few

of the recent high school graduates would have been able to earn an annual income of \$10,890 to exceed the official federal poverty level for a single household. Clearly, those who were employed part time in their first job — about 58% — earned considerably less than a poverty-level income.

Nearly 8 in 10 regard their first job as just something to get them started rather than a first step on a pathway to a career (see Figure 1). A third remained in their first job after high school for less than six months. Half had moved on to another position within the first year. Only 16% are very satisfied with their first jobs, not surprising given the modest pay most obtained.

Overall, 4 out of 10 recent high school graduates found their first jobs while still in high school, but those who graduated into the recession-era labor market — 2009 to 2011 — are about 10% less likely to land a job while still in school. Following a pattern

FIGURE 1. DID YOU THINK OF YOUR FIRST JOB AS:



among job seekers, nearly two-thirds (63%) turned to their personal network of friends and family to search for work (see Figure 2). One in four used either online job boards or newspaper classified advertisements. Substantially less high school graduates used social media sites (8%) or government job placement centers (5%) when looking for work.

## CURRENT JOB

When compared to their first jobs, high school graduates have made modest progress in their current jobs. Starting wages increased slightly since their first job from \$7.50 to a starting wage of \$8.25 in their current jobs. At the time of the survey, high school graduates report earning a median hourly wage of \$9.25 in their current job. However, 7 in 10 of these current jobs are still temporary positions. Over half of high

school graduates still consider this current job as something to get them by and — evidencing the frequent job transitions experienced by high school graduates — only a few have been at this job for long.

High school graduates found their current jobs quickly. While 6 in 10 searched for and found their job in less than six months, and 8 in 10 within the year, nearly half were unemployed before finding their current job. Only a third went right to this job from another job and about a quarter report this job as being their first job after graduation. When asked why they took their current job, fully half of high school graduates say they just needed a job or it was the only job available (see Figure 3). Sixteen percent of the respondents report they took this job because it was what they really wanted to do. Hardly any took their current job because of the wages, benefits, or location.

FIGURE 2. PLEASE CHECK WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING YOU USED WHEN LOOKING FOR YOUR FIRST JOB:

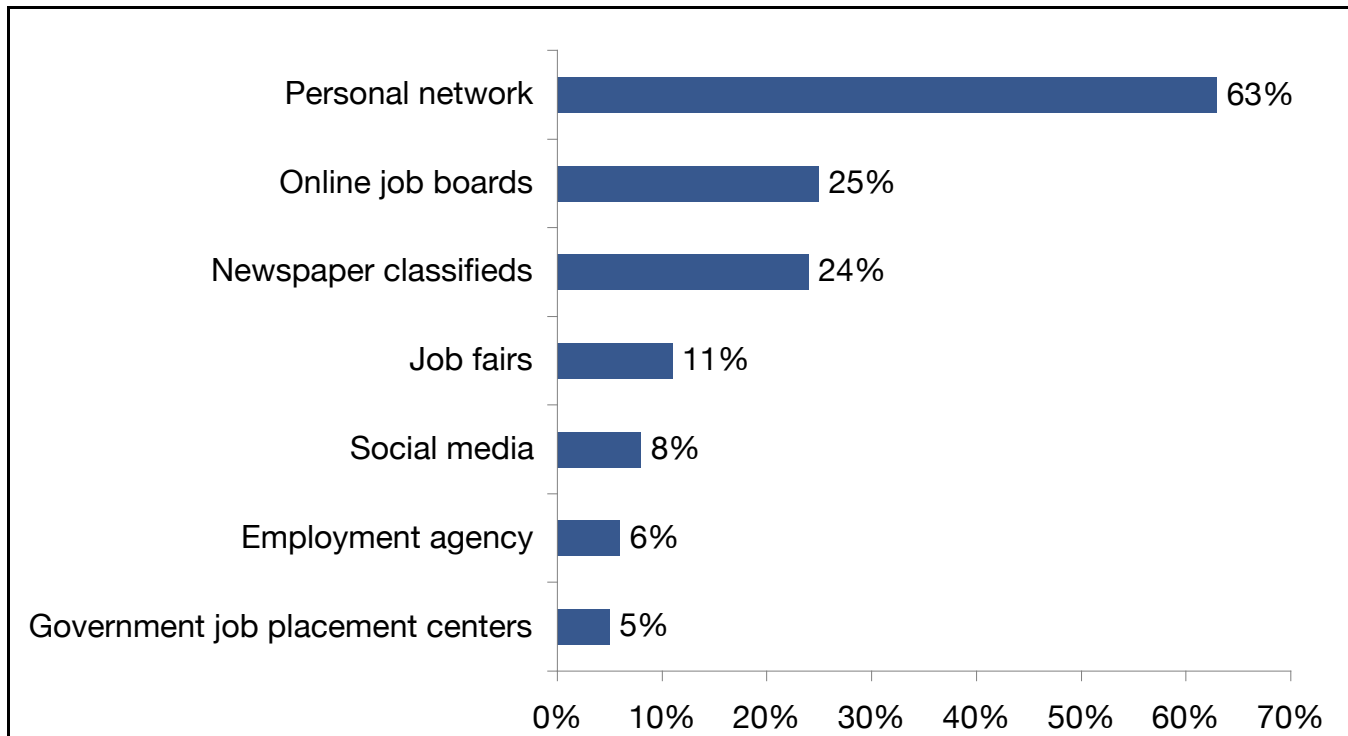
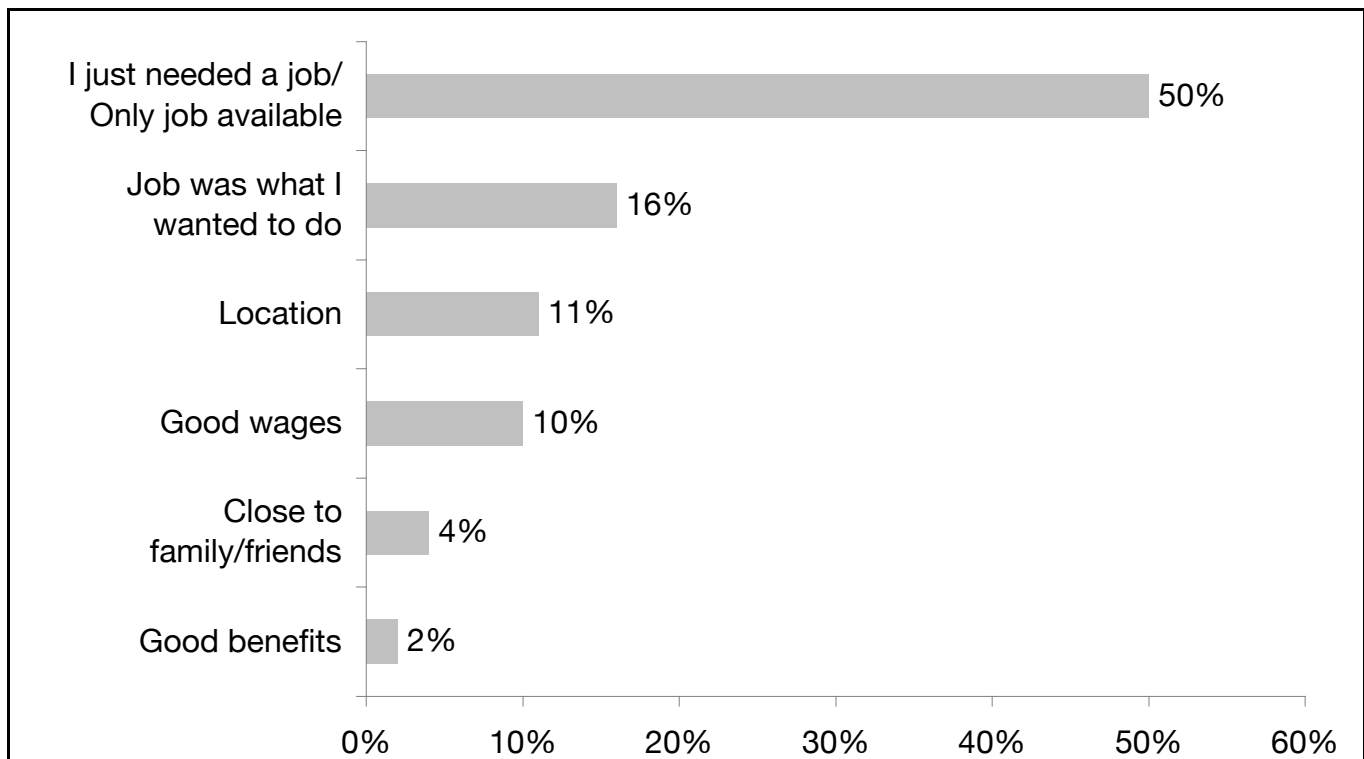


FIGURE 3. WHAT WAS THE MAIN REASON YOU TOOK THIS JOB?



When asked how they view their current job, over half say this is just a job to get them by (see Figure 4). Only 8% say they have found a job on their career path and the remaining 36% see their job as a stepping stone to a career. However, high school graduates report being fairly satisfied with their current jobs. Roughly 6 in 10 report being very or somewhat satisfied with their job overall. But when asked about specific attributes related to their jobs, they are slightly less satisfied. About half are very or somewhat satisfied with their job responsibilities and tasks. A quarter or more are very or somewhat satisfied with their total annual income, health and medical coverage, opportunities for advancement, opportunities to get more education, and progress toward their career goals (see Figure 5).

A closer look at the characteristics of these jobs reveals why many view their current position as just a job to get them by. Nearly 9 in 10 are still paid by the hour at their current job. The median starting wage is \$8.25, a meager increase over starting salary in their first job. In addition, 70% of their current jobs are temporary. Only 3 in 10 have been fortunate enough to find a permanent position and only 1 in 10 landed a job that provided them an annual salary.

High school graduates also experience frequent job transitions. When asked how long they had been at their current job, 4 in 10 report they had been there less than a year, and 7 in 10 for less than two years. Only half of the high school graduates report being employed at a job for more than 12 months since graduation. Graduates that held jobs longer than 12 months spent a median time of two years in that position. The other half of graduates who have not held jobs for more than 12 months experi-

enced considerably more turnover — the median time spent in their job was just two months. This kind of job movement leaves little time for the kind of upward mobility that might improve the financial situation of these graduates.

## UNEMPLOYED

Overall, one in three high school graduates included in the survey report being unemployed and looking for work. The findings — spanning a six-year sample of graduates from 2006 to 2011 — reflect recent data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Current Population Survey that show an average jobless rate of 31% from April 2011 to March 2012.<sup>2</sup> The most recent data from the fall of 2012 estimate a jobless rate of 33% among the class of 2011 high school graduates not enrolled in college. Those who graduated in the recession era are unemployed at a higher rate (37%) than those who graduated before the recession (23%). Nearly one in five high school graduates are working part time while looking for a full-time job. When combined, the total number of all high school graduates who are looking for a full-time job is 45% and fully half of those graduated during the recession era.

Looking for a job has proven to be difficult for those who are unemployed. Nearly half say they have been actively seeking employment for more than six months, and 3 in 10 have been searching for more than a year. When asked how long they think it will be until they start a new job, fully half were unable to make a guess. The other half was hopeful they would start a new job within the year. The uncertainty expressed by respondents about when they would start a new job may be explained by the fact that

FIGURE 4. DID YOU THINK OF YOUR CURRENT JOB AS:

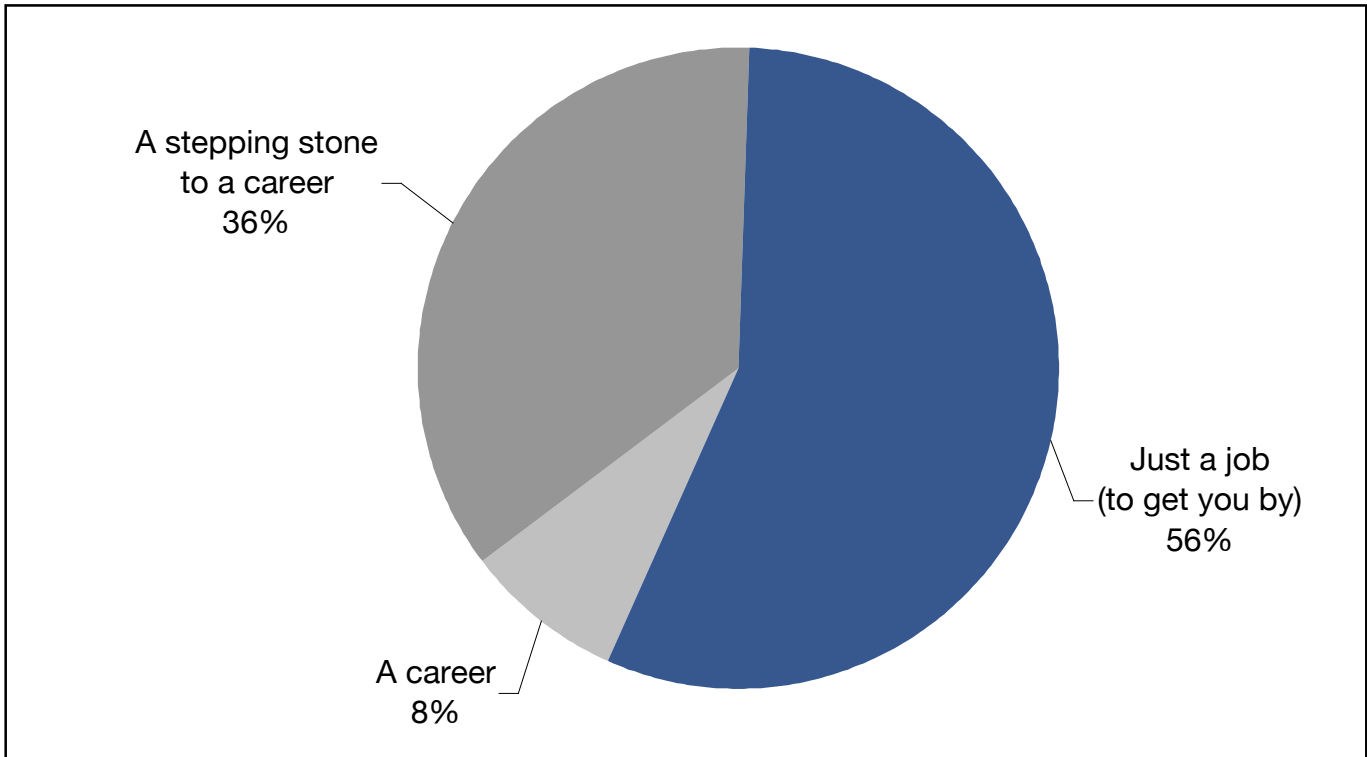
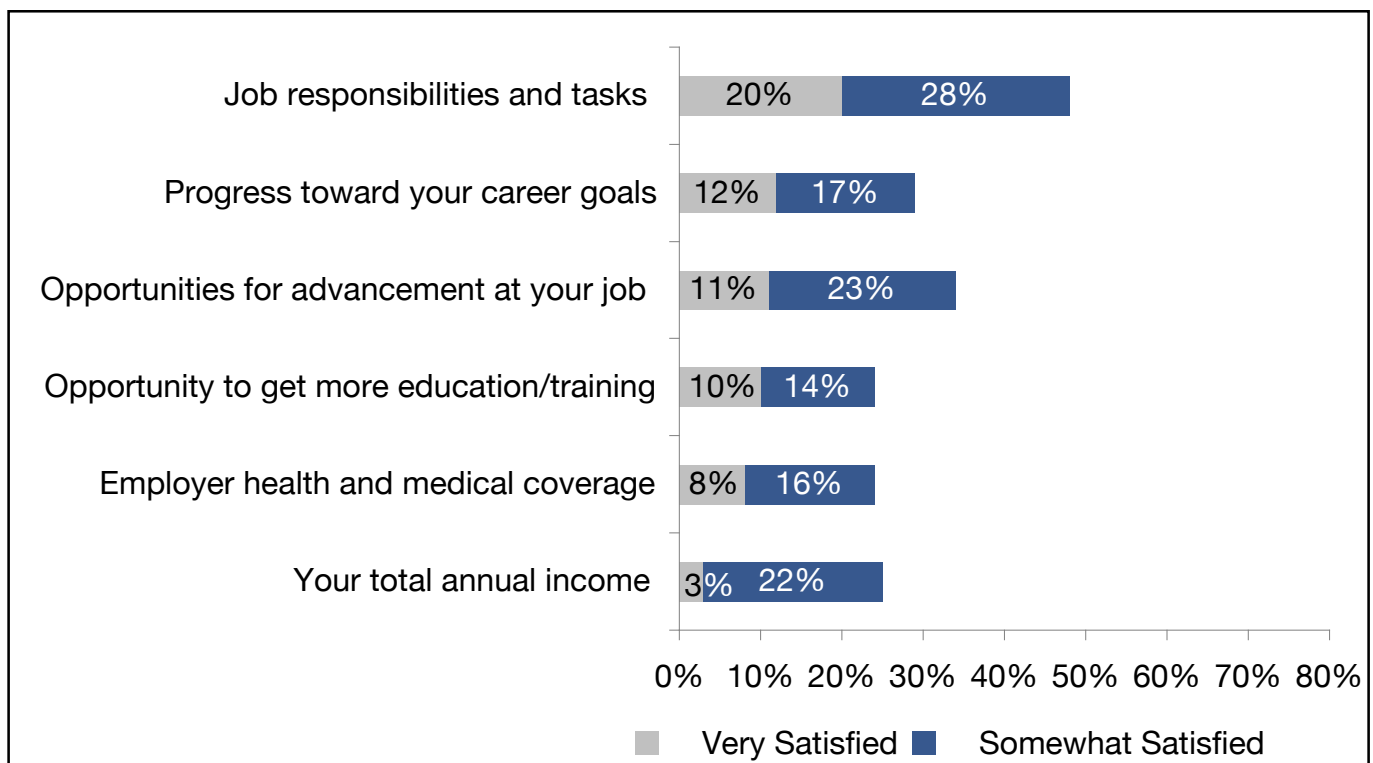


FIGURE 5. PLEASE INDICATE HOW SATISFIED YOU ARE WITH EACH OF THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS OF YOUR JOB:





more than 8 in 10 have not received a job offer since they started looking. Of the few who had received a job offer, the median number of offers was two. Respondents who had received a job offer were divided on why they chose not to take the job. About a third say they did not like what they would be doing; another fifth say the job was too far from where they lived. Low pay and no benefits were also cited (13%).

These unemployed high school graduates have utilized a number of resources in their job hunt. Seven in ten say they used their personal networks to look for a job. These networks include their friends and family, high school alumni networks in which they are a part, and contacting former employers for leads. Nearly 7 in 10 also used online job boards or company job boards to help locate potential job opportunities. Just over

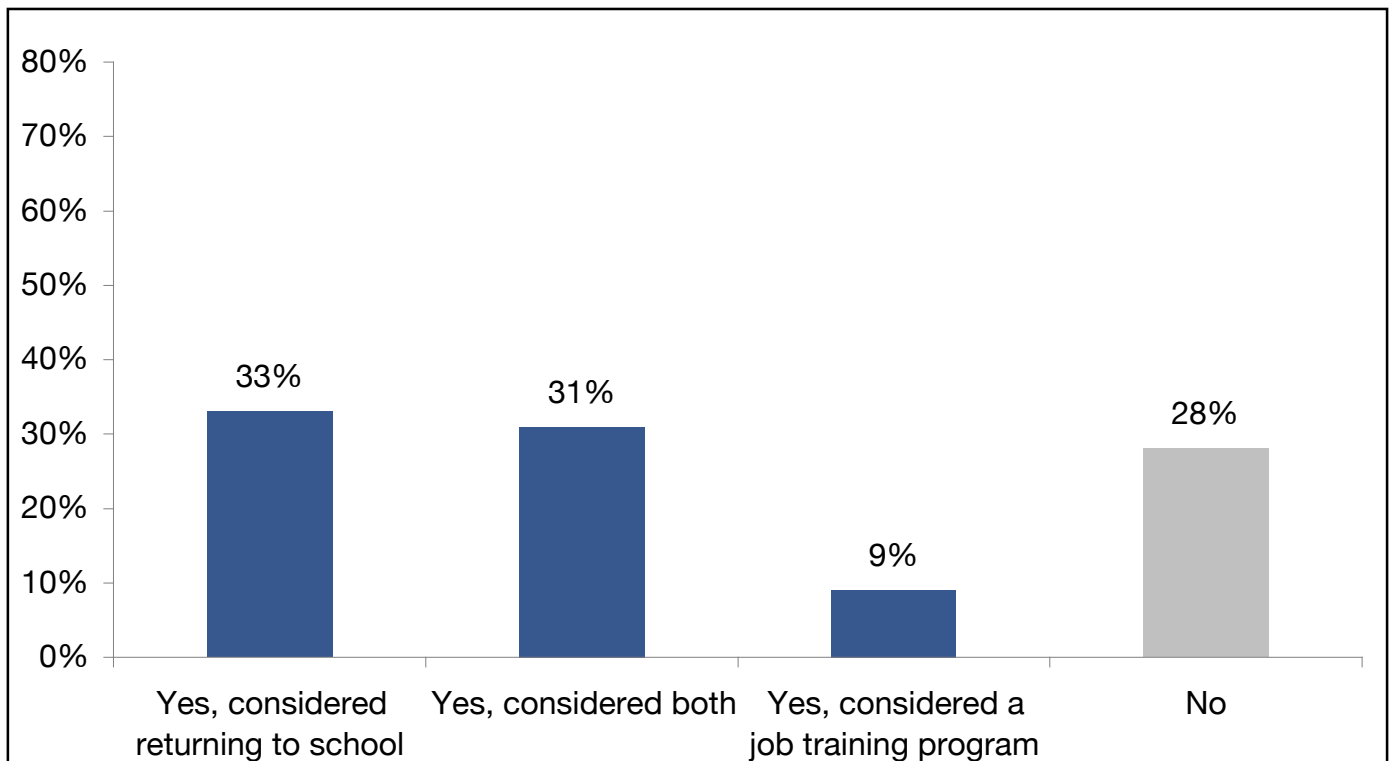
60% looked in the newspaper job classifieds and, somewhat surprisingly, only a quarter utilized social media.

Unemployment, as well as the hardships faced in their job search, has left many (73%) wondering if they need more training. About a third report that they had seriously considered returning to school, nearly 10% had considered a job training program, and another third had considered both (see Figure 6).

## PREPARATION FOR THE WORKFORCE

Most enjoyed their high school years. Overall, 70% say they liked high school, including 34% saying they liked it “a lot.” Just one-quarter disliked high school, with the

**FIGURE 6. HAVE YOU SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED RETURNING TO SCHOOL OR ENTERING A JOB TRAINING PROGRAM?**



remaining 6% offering no opinion. And by their own report, they were pretty good students, although not at the top of the class. Just 16% say they got mainly A grades, 40% B, 27% C, and 11% lower than that, with 5% not venturing an answer.

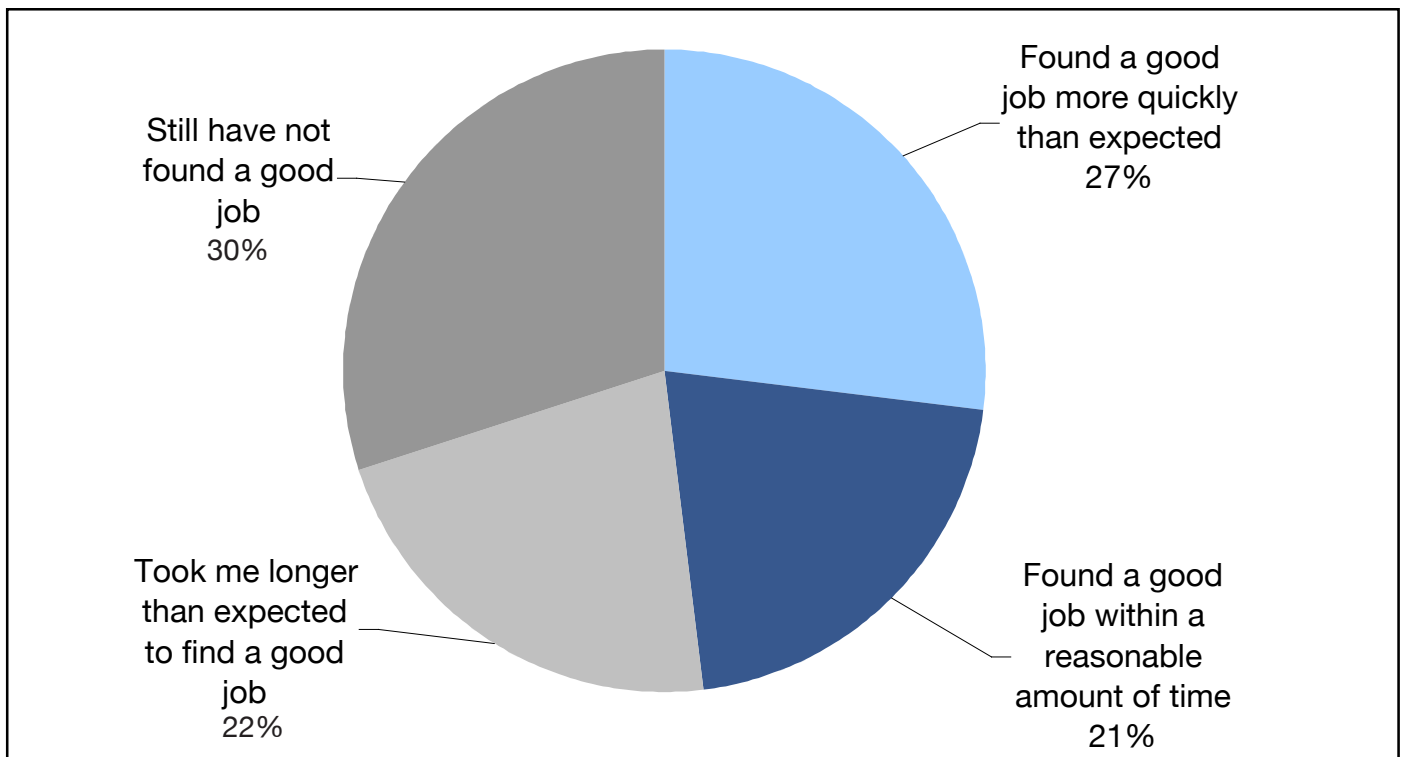
TABLE 2. AFTER GRADUATION, DID YOU...

Find or look for a job	45%
Go to a community college full time	16%
Go to a four-year college/ university full time	13%
Take college courses part time	8%
Take some time off for family or health reasons	7%
Other	6%
Join the military	4%
Enter a job training program	1%
Total	100%

After high school, a plurality, 45%, went directly to the job market. Another 37% went to college in some fashion, including 29% on a full-time basis (see Table 2). The survey finds 13% went on to a four-year institution of higher education, with another 16% starting at a community college full time, and 8% going to school part time somewhere. Good jobs, though, were hard to find. Half say they found what they consider to be a good job in a reasonable period of time or more quickly than expected, while the other half say it either took longer than expected (22%), or **still** haven't found a good job (30%) (see Figure 7).

High school graduates are divided on the questions of how well their high school education prepared them to get a job and to be successful in that job. Half say their high school equipped them either "not very well" (30%) or "not well at all" (21%) to get their first jobs. On the other side, 40% say they

FIGURE 7. WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU ONCE YOU BEGAN LOOKING FOR A JOB?



were “pretty well” prepared, but only 8% say they were “extremely well” prepared to get their first jobs. The numbers for how well high school prepared them to be **successful** in their first jobs are quite similar. Just 1 in 10 say they were extremely well prepared by their high school to succeed in their first job after graduation. Another 40% say they were pretty well prepared, leaving fully half disapproving of how well high school readied them to be successful in their first job.

About two-thirds say they would do something different in the course of their high school education if they had it to do over, some self-critical, some faulting the system of advising, and some both (see Table 3). Overall, 28% say they should have been more careful about the courses they took as electives, and roughly the same number say they should have taken more classes directly related to preparing for a career. In each of these cases, the number for blacks and Hispanics is much higher than for whites. For example, twice as many

blacks/Hispanics (43%) than whites (21%) say they should have been more careful in selecting their electives. Overall, 29% say they should have been better prepared for college, a number that encompasses 2 in 10 whites and 4 in 10 non-whites. Another fifth regret not having done an internship or not working part time while in school.

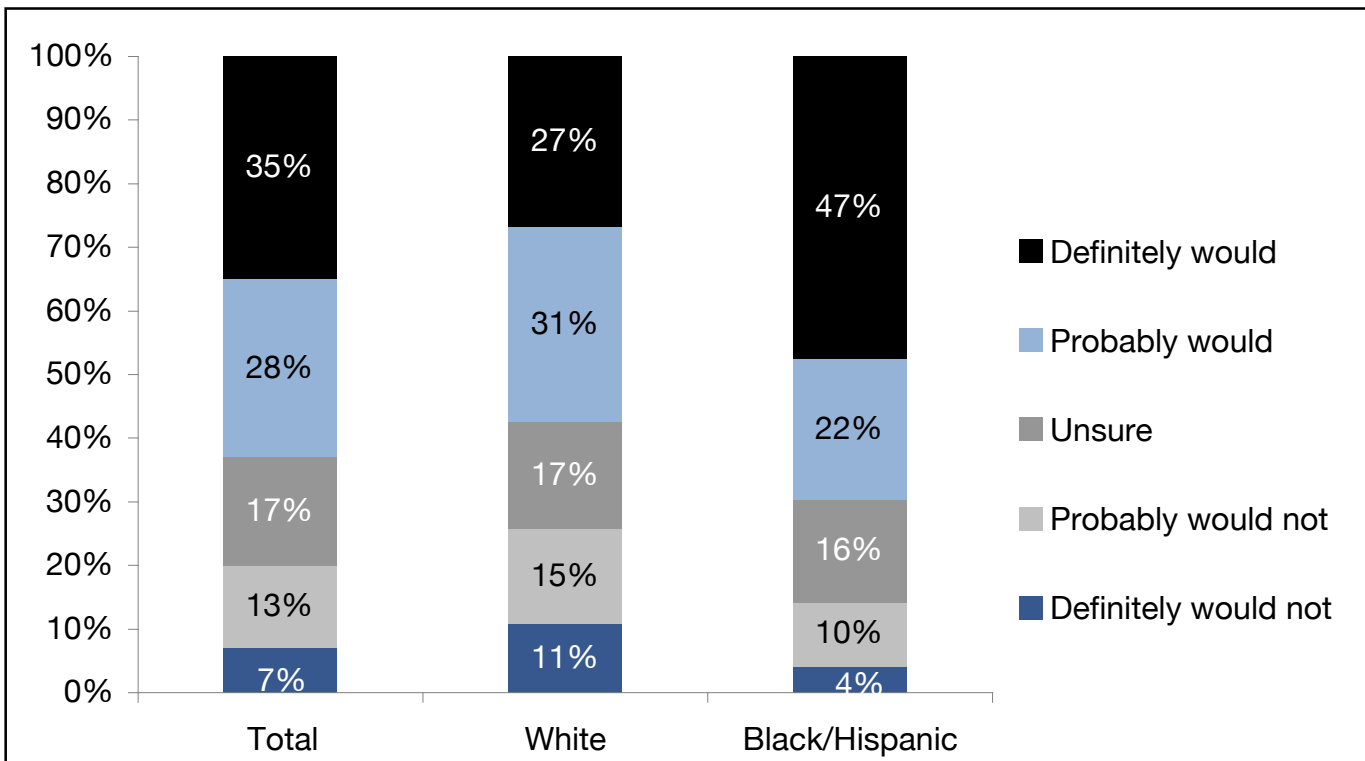
## COLLEGE PLANS

The survey uncovers a significant amount of dashed dreams — college aspirations that foundered on the rocks of economic realities or family responsibilities. More than one-third say that at the time they entered high school they definitely thought they would go on to college; another 28% thought they probably would, bringing this to an overall total of 63%. Another 17% say they were unsure about going to college, leaving only 20% who say they would end their educational career with high school. A much larger proportion of blacks and Hispanics say they “definitely” planned to go

**TABLE 3. THINKING BACK TO WHEN YOU WERE IN HIGH SCHOOL, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY TO HELP YOU BE SUCCESSFUL IN TODAY’S LABOR MARKET/WORKPLACE?**

	Total	White	Black/Hispanic <sup>3</sup>
Would have better prepared for college	29%	21%	38%
Been more careful about selecting the courses I took as electives	28%	21%	43%
Would have taken more classes to prepare for a career	23%	16%	38%
Done an internship or worked part time	21%	18%	28%
Something else	7%	12%	1%
No/Nothing	38%	45%	24%

FIGURE 8. WHEN YOU STARTED HIGH SCHOOL, DID YOU THINK YOU WOULD GO TO COLLEGE?



to college when they entered high school (47%) than whites (27%) (see Figure 8).

**Economics** was the dominant reason given by those not going to college, or those who attended college without finishing. Four in ten say they could not afford the cost of full-time college; another 30% say that they needed to work, and 10% cite children or family members they have to take care of as reasons they were unable to get as much college education as they wanted (see Table 4). Just 15% say they were not interested in college, and only 5% say they do not need a college education for what they want to do. Research from the Economic Policy Institute suggests there is no evidence that young high school graduates have been able to “shelter in school” from the effects of the Great Recession. College enrollment rates have not meaningfully de-

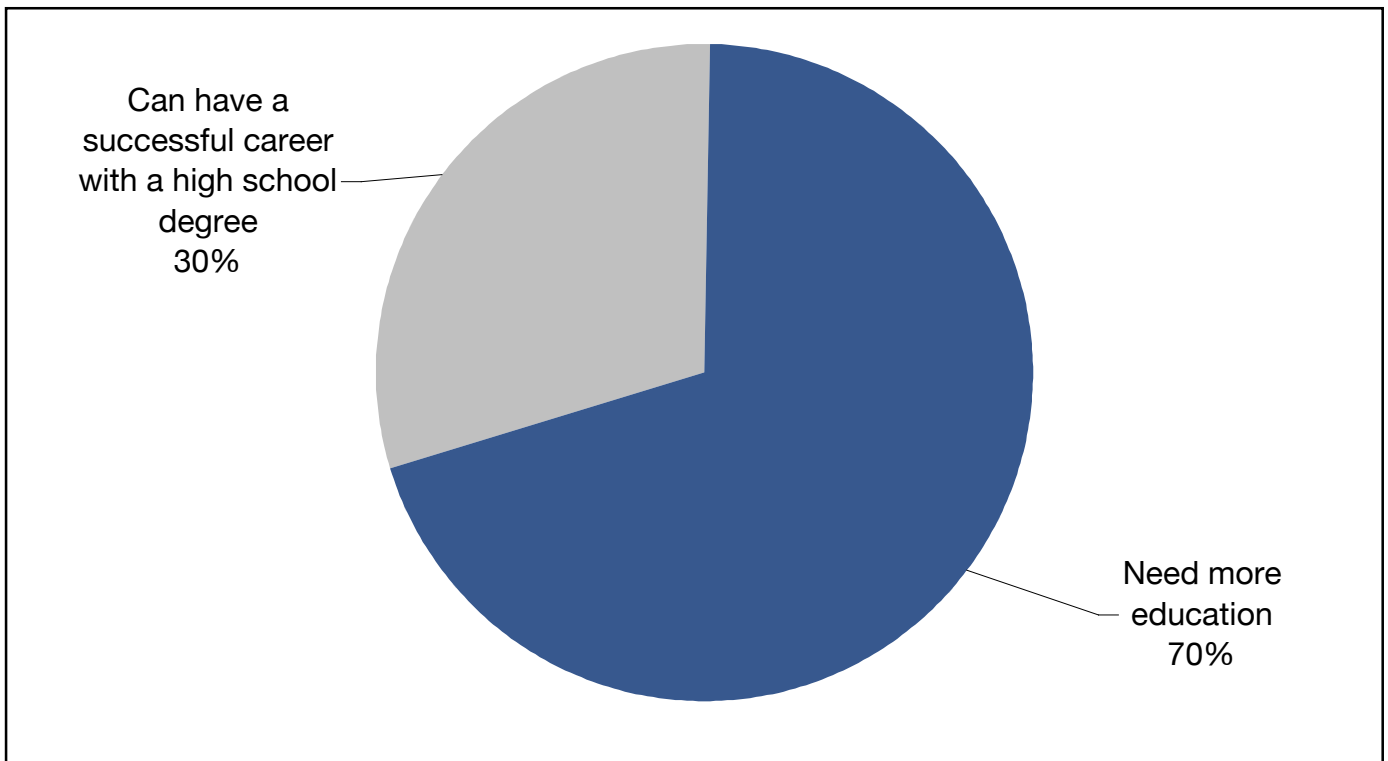
parted from their long trend. Some students have had the financial resources to take shelter in school but this group has been offset by students who have been forced to drop out of school because a lack of work meant they could not afford to attend.<sup>4</sup>

**There is a clear recognition among the sample of recent high school graduates that they will need additional education to be successful in life.** Just 30% believe they can have the successful career they want with only a high school degree (see Figure 9). Seven out of ten high school graduates believe they will need more education in order to have the successful career they want. Evidence from previous studies suggests that millions of high school graduates who wanted to complete their education were unable to do so, also wanted to enhance their education. A previous survey of 2002, 2003, and 2004 high

TABLE 4. WHY ARE YOU LONGER TAKING CLASSES FULL TIME? OR WHY ARE YOU NOT PLANNING TO ATTEND COLLEGE?

	No longer taking college classes full time	Not planning to attend college
I cannot afford the cost of college	39%	34%
I needed to work	30%	37%
I'm not interested in college	15%	26%
I have children or family members at home that I take care of	10%	8%
I don't need a college education to do what I want to do right now	5%	22%
I finished the classes I needed	4%	9%
I am enrolled in a job training program	1%	7%
Other	21%	17%

FIGURE 9. CAN YOU HAVE THE SUCCESSFUL CAREER YOU WANT WITH A HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE, OR WILL YOU NEED MORE EDUCATION?



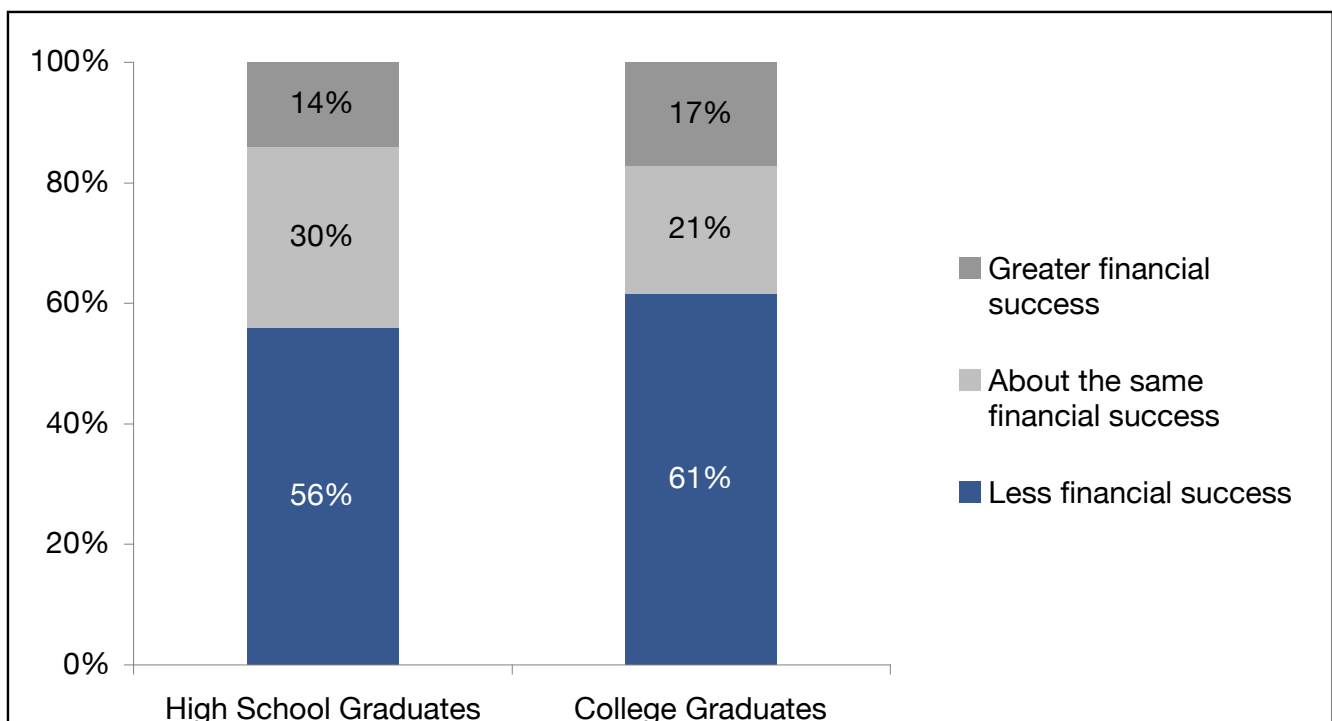
school graduates reveals that 8 out of 10 graduates not currently in college believed they would need more formal education or training to achieve what they hoped for in life.<sup>5</sup> One-fifth of the Heldrich Center's survey respondents report needing an Associate's degree, 35% a Bachelor's degree, and 10% a graduate or professional degree. The remainder either need a certificate (16%) or are unsure of what they need in the way of higher education (20%).

Despite this widespread recognition that they need additional education, only 38% say they "definitely" plan to attend college to get more education in the next five years, with another 25% saying they "probably will." Among the 17% saying they definitely or probably will not go (back) to college, just 22% say they either have enough college or do not need any more college for what they want to do. The primary barriers are again economic, with 34% saying they cannot afford college and 37% saying they need to work to make ends meet.

## EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Recent high school graduates are worried that they feel less prepared to enter the workforce than previous generations. They also perceive that their generation will be less successful financially than the one that came before them. While they have little way of actually knowing, the percentage of high school graduates saying they are less prepared for work than a generation ago outnumbers those who say they are better prepared by a lopsided margin of 61% to 17%, with the remaining 23% saying there is no difference. Moreover, there is tremendous pessimism about what the future holds for them personally. **The number expecting their generation to do less well financially than the one before them exceeds those who expect to do better by a margin of four to one — with college graduates sharing similar feelings** (see Figure 10).

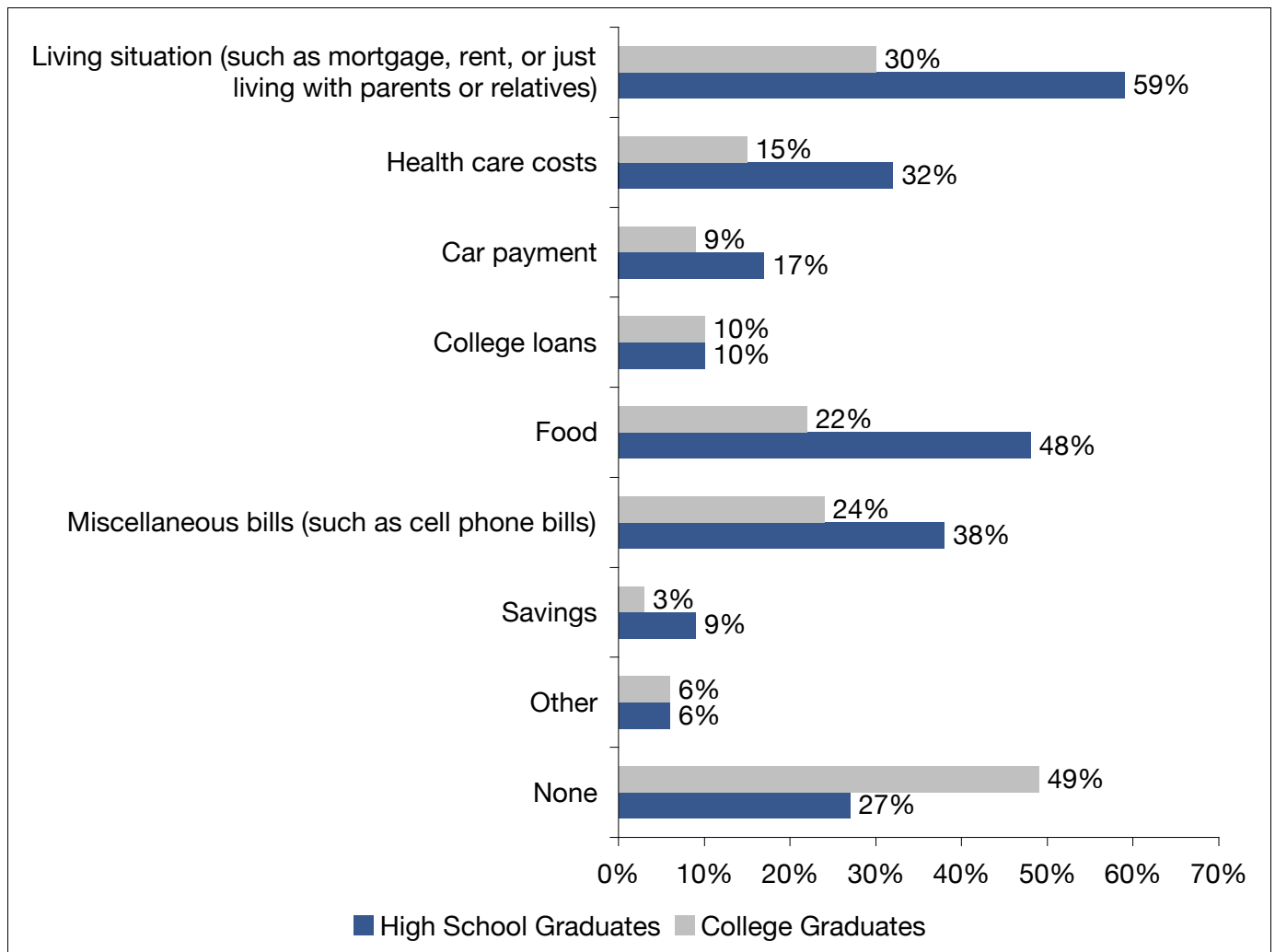
FIGURE 10. PEOPLE IN YOUR GENERATION WILL HAVE... (COMPARED TO THE GENERATION BEFORE YOU) (HIGH SCHOOL VS. COLLEGE GRADUATES)



This pessimism extends from generational outlook to a personal concern over downward mobility. Not even half (44%) expect to have more success than their parents, even though only 11% of their fathers and 15% of their mothers went so far as to get a four-year college degree. The balance of recent high school graduates consists of 29% who expect to have less success than their parents and 27% who think they will have the same level of success. Additionally, these respondents exhibit a fair amount of powerlessness. Thirty-eight percent agree with the statement that “hard work and determination are no guarantee of success,” and just 70% believe that “everyone has it in their power to succeed.”<sup>6</sup>

An enormous number of those having graduated high school between 2006 and 2011 are heavily dependent on their parents (see Figure 11). Three-fifths still live with their parents or relatives, twice as many as recent college graduates of the same age. Another quarter lives with a significant other or spouse, leaving only 15% living either on their own or with roommates. Fully half report getting family help with food, and 38% with miscellaneous bills such as cell phone costs. One-third are dependent on their parents for health care and a slightly greater number — 36% — reports having no health care benefits at all. Finally, one-third report having financial debt independent of mortgage/rent or student loans.

**FIGURE 11. FINANCIAL HELP FROM PARENTS/FAMILY MEMBERS (HIGH SCHOOL VS. COLLEGE GRADUATES)**



The survey examined six occupational or lifestyle goals, asking how far along respondents are on each — whether they had already achieved it, would do so in the next few years, if the goal was a number of years off, or if it was more than 10 years in the future (see Figure 12). While one-fifth have already started a family, just 14% say they are now in jobs that provide them good job security and a similar number say they have a job that will lead to a career. Even fewer have a job with reasonable health care or a job that enables them to be financially secure.

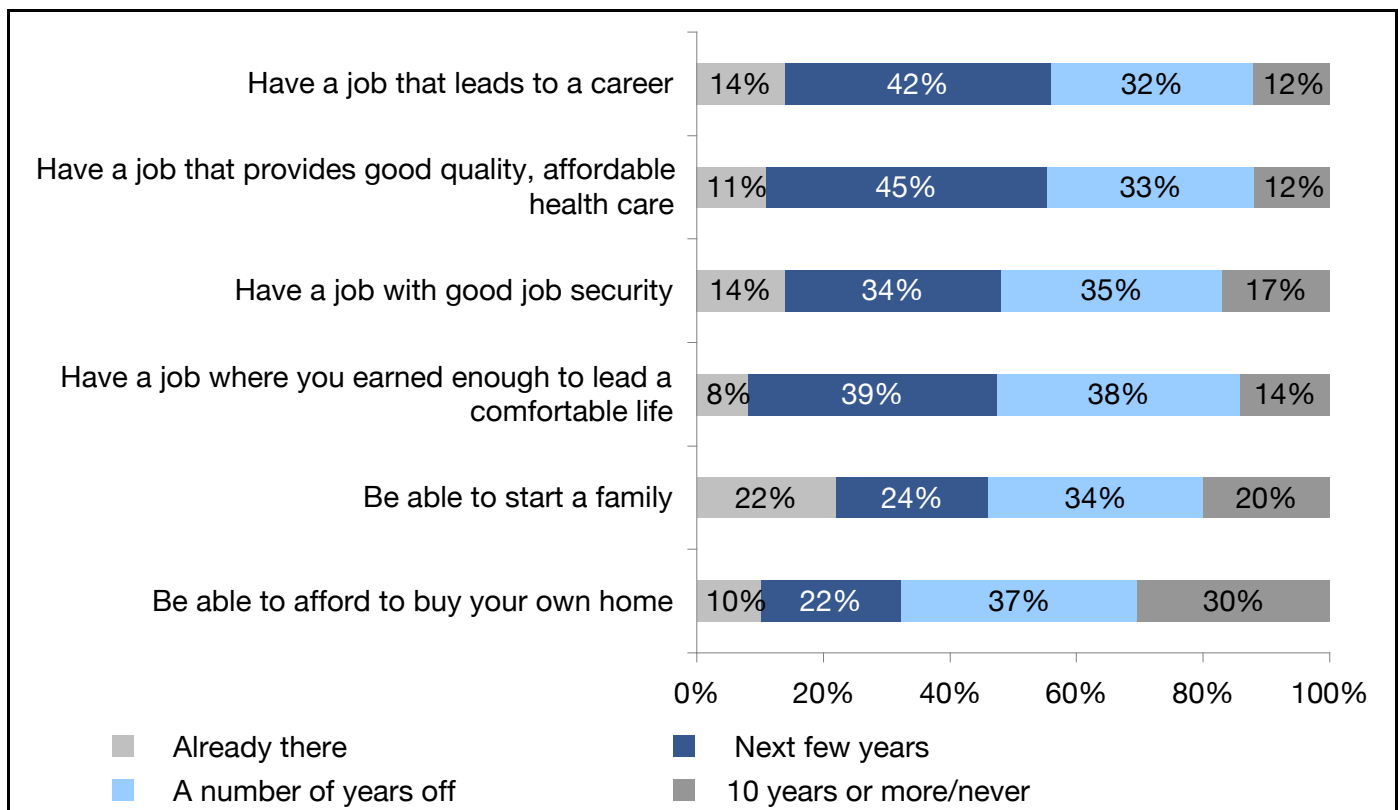
Good, stable jobs with benefits seem far away and elusive to most. Just 56% feel they will have a job leading to a career within even the next few **years** or they have one already; only 55% believe they will have a

job that provides them with good quality, affordable health care in the next few years. Fewer than half already have a secure job or believe they will have achieved a secure job within the next few years (47%) and the same number believes that having a job where they earn enough to lead to a comfortable life is something they can envision within the next few years. Starting a family and home ownership are even further away than these expected job accomplishments.

### A NOTE ON RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIFFERENCES

Given the small number of those in the sample, it is not feasible to break out black and Hispanic respondents separately.<sup>7</sup> However, there are a number of interest-

FIGURE 12. HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU THAT IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS YOU WILL:





ing differences between whites on the one hand, and blacks and Hispanics on the other. In sum, a larger number of blacks and Hispanics than whites:

- Started high school believing they would go on to college, believe they will go to college in the future, and believe college is necessary for a successful career.
- Have regrets about what they took in high school and feel they should have taken different electives, been career-oriented, and should have prepared better for college.
- Feel they were well prepared to get their first job and to be successful in it.

There is a tremendous difference in the education levels of the parents of white students and those of minority students (see Table 4). Thirty-four percent of the mothers of white high school graduates have either a high school degree or less education,

compared to 56% of the mothers of minority students. Whereas just 9% of the fathers of the whites in the survey did not graduate from high school, this was true of 23% of black fathers. The percentage of each group with at least some college experience was as follows: mothers of whites, 62%; mothers of blacks and Hispanics, 33%; fathers of whites, 52%; and fathers of blacks and Hispanics, 25%.

## CONCLUSION

High school graduates' first jobs after graduation can be characterized as low-paying, temporary jobs. Most (88%) were paid by the hour with the median wage being \$7.50 — just 25 cents over the federal minimum wage. Seventy-five percent of these first jobs were temporary positions and over half were only part time. It is clear why nearly 8 in 10 regarded their first job as just a job to get them by rather than a step toward a career.

**TABLE 5. WHAT WAS THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION COMPLETED BY YOUR MOTHER/FATHER/GUARDIAN?**

	Mother's Education		Father's Education	
	White High School	Black Hispanic High School	White High School	Black Hispanic High School
Less than high school	8%	32%	9%	23%
High school graduate	26%	24%	35%	38%
Some college (did not graduate)	31%	14%	24%	12%
Associate's degree (two-year degree)	14%	6%	12%	4%
Bachelor's degree (four-year degree)	13%	6%	8%	6%
Graduated from graduate school	4%	7%	8%	3%
Not sure/Not applicable	4%	10%	8%	14%
Total	100%	99%	100%	100%

Currently, only 3 in 10 high school graduates are employed full time. For those who graduated before the recession, 37% have found full-time employment, compared to only 16% of those who graduated during the recession era. Nearly half are looking for full-time work and 27% are taking college classes part time.

Only modest progress has been made in their current jobs. Although the salary rose slightly — up to \$8.90 from the starting wage of \$7.50 — the same number find themselves in temporary positions. Many are satisfied with their job overall, but over half still see their job as something to get them by. In addition, high school graduates experience frequent job transitions, hampering their ability to rise up the ranks and improve their financial situation.

Unemployment is another major issue facing high school graduates. One in three high school graduates are unemployed and looking for a job. Those who graduated during the recession era are unemployed at a higher rate (37%) than those who graduated before the recession (23%). When combined with those who are working part time and looking for full-time work, **nearly half of all high school graduates are looking for full-time employment.**

While most expected to go on to college, many high school graduates went directly into the workforce upon graduation. However, good jobs were difficult to find after high school graduates entered the job market. Half found a job within a reasonable amount of time, but the other half took longer than expected. In fact, 30% still haven't found a good job.

Recent high school graduates are divided on how well their high school education prepared them to be successful in their jobs, but only 1 in 10 thinks high school prepared them “extremely well” to get a job or be successful in it. About two-thirds say they would do something different if they had their high school education to do over. When it comes to making choices about elective courses and classes that would prepare them for a career, black and Hispanic graduates are far more likely than white graduates to say they would have been more careful.

The cost of a higher education remains an obstacle for many young high school graduates. Despite a widespread recognition held by 7 in 10 that they will need further education, only 38% say they definitely plan to attend college in the next few years. Most feel it is too expensive or need to work to make ends meet.

There is tremendous pessimism among high school graduates about what the future holds for them. The number expecting their generation to do less well financially than the one before them outnumbers those who expect to do better by a margin of four to one. Most believe they are less prepared than the previous generation to enter the workforce.

Many of those recently graduating from high school are financially dependent on their parents or relatives for some basic needs. More than half receive financial help with food and their living situation. When asked to gauge how far off certain life goals are, high school graduates believe good jobs with security, reasonable pay,

and health care are not in their immediate future. Starting a family and owning a home are farthest away — two-thirds believe such accomplishments are a number of years off.

## ENDNOTES

1. H. Sheirholz, N. Sabadish, and H. Wething. (2012). *The class of 2012: Labor market for young graduates remains grim*. Washington D.C.: Economic Policy Institute.

2. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2012). "College enrollment and work activity of 2011 high school graduates." *Economic News Release*.

3. While the experiences of blacks and Hispanics are different, there is an insufficient number in the sample to break out separate responses. This question was answered by 77 blacks and 102 Hispanics.

4. H. Sheirholz, N. Sabadish, and H. Wething. (2012). *The class of 2012: Labor market for young graduates remains grim*. Washington D.C.: Economic Policy Institute.

5. Peter D. Hart Research Associates/Public Opinion Strategies. (2005). *Rising to the challenge: Are high school graduates prepared for college and work?* Washington, D.C.: Author.

6. Interestingly, these numbers are not too dissimilar from the responses given by recent graduates of four-year colleges. This is a widespread belief of this cohort, regardless of education. See Appendix B for details.

7. The sample is comprised of 323 whites, 77 blacks, 102 Hispanics, 16 other/non-Hispanic, and 26 two or more racial/ethnic identities. While the sample has been weighted to the current U.S. population parameters, the sampling error for blacks and Hispanics separately would be over +/- 10 percentage points. Figures for white vs. black/Hispanic comparisons can be found in Appendix B.

## APPENDIX A. METHODOLOGY

The latest Heldrich Center *Work Trends* survey, *Left Out. Forgotten? Recent High School Graduates and the Great Recession*, was conducted with a national probability sample of 544 U.S. residents between the ages of 18 and 29 who graduated with a high school degree between 2006 and 2010. The survey was fielded between March 21 and April 2, 2012.

The sampling and data collection were conducted for the Heldrich Center by GfK, located in Palo Alto, California. GfK's proprietary web-enabled KnowledgePanel® is a probability-based panel and designed to be representative of the U.S. population. Initially, participants are chosen scientifically by a random selection of telephone numbers and residential addresses. Persons in selected households are then invited by telephone or by mail to participate in the panel. For those who agree to participate, but do not already have Internet access, GfK provides at no cost a laptop and ISP connection. People who already have computers and Internet service are permitted to participate using their own equipment. Panelists receive unique login information for accessing surveys online, and then are sent emails throughout each month inviting them to participate in research.

All surveys are subject to sampling error, which is the expected probable difference between interviewing everyone in a population versus a scientific sampling drawn from that population. With a sample size of 544 respondents, the sampling error is approximately +/- 4.5%, at a 95% confidence interval. Thus, if 50% of respondents say they have financial debt other than mortgage, rent, or student loans, one would

be 95% sure that the true figure would be between 45.5% and 54.5% had all U.S. residents age 18 to 29 who graduated with a high school degree between 2006 and 2010 been interviewed, rather than just a sample.

Sampling error increases as the sample size decreases, so statements based on various population subgroups, such as separate figures reported for women or men, are subject to more error than are statements based on the total sample. Sampling error does not take into account other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording, or contextual effects.

The survey was weighted according to 2012 Current Population Survey benchmarks for demographic information. Weighting was also applied so that each year was treated as equal to all the others. For example, each of the years 2006 to 2011 was weighted to be one-sixth of the sample, to adjust for variation in the sample in year-to-year yields of respondents when there should be no expected year-to-year differences in the underlying population. The demographic variables used for weighting included: gender, age categories within the overall parameters of 18 to 29, race and ethnicity, geographic region (northeast, midwest, south, and west), and metropolitan area. In practice, these adjustments and weights also bring with them a design effect that increases the estimated sampling error. The estimate of the design effect in this case is 2.8.

## APPENDIX B. TOPLINE SURVEY RESULTS

Knowledge Networks/online

Field dates: March 21 to April 2, 2012

N = 544 - High School Graduates

*Percentage totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.*

\* Less than 1% reporting

### High School Sequence

**[ASK OF ALL HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES]**

**N=544**

**[SP]**

**HEMPSTAT. Which of the following best describes your current job situation?**

	Total
Unemployed and looking for work now	30%
Unemployed but not looking for work now	14%
Working part time, not looking for full-time work	8%
Working part time, looking for full-time work	15%
Employed full time	27%
Military	2%
Self-employed	3%
Volunteer	1%
Total	100%

[TEXT BOX, ASK IF HEMPSTAT=2 AND 3]

**HEMP1. Why are you currently not looking for a full-time job?**

[SP, IF HEMPSTAT=3 AND 4]

**HEMP2. How many part-time jobs are you currently working?**

	Total
One	92%
Two	6%
Three	1%
Four or more	*
Total	99%

[SP, ASK ALL]

**HEMP3. Are you currently attending a job training program?**

	Total
Yes	5%
No	95%
Total	100%

[TEXT BOX, ASK IF HEMP3=1]

**HEMP4. Why did you decide to attend a job training program?**

[SP, ASK ALL]

**HEMP5. Are you currently participating in an apprenticeship program?**

	Total
Yes	2%
No	98%
Total	100%

**[IF HEMPSTAT=1 SKIP TO UL ULSCREEN]**

**V. HIGH SCHOOL GRADS CURRENT JOB (HCJ)**

**[ASK ALL IF GROUP=3 & HEMPSTAT= 3, 4, 5, OR 7]**

**N=294**

**[DISPLAY, ON THE SAME SCREEN WITH HCJ1]**

**Please think about your CURRENT JOB when answering the following questions.**

**[SP]**

**HCJ1. How long have you been at your current job?**

	<b>Total</b>
Less than 6 months	17%
6 months to under 1 year	24%
1 to 2 years	32%
3 to 4 years	16%
5 or more years	11%
Total	100%

**[SP]**

**HCJ2. Thinking overall about your current job are you:**

	<b>Total</b>
Very satisfied	14%
Somewhat satisfied	43%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	23%
Somewhat dissatisfied	12%
Very dissatisfied	8%
Total	100%

[SP]

**HCJ3. Are you paid:**

	Total	White	Black/ Hispanic
A salary	5%	3%	9%
By the hour	86%	90%	79%
Self-employed/commission/stipend	8%	6%	11%
Total	99%	99%	100%

[NUMBER BOX, RANGE: 0-999, IF HCJ3=1]

**HCJ4. How much was your starting annual salary, in thousands?**

For example: If your starting salary was \$35,000, please enter 35 in the box.

Total

**MEDIAN: \$24,500**

**MEAN: \$21,100**

[NUMBER BOX, RANGE: .000-999.00, IF HCJ3=2]

[ALLOWS DECIMALS TO THE TENTH]

**HCJ4A. How much was your starting hourly rate?**

Total

**MEDIAN: \$8.25**

**MEAN: \$8.90**

[NUMBER BOX, RANGE: 0-999, IF HCJ3=1]

**HCJ4B. How much is your current annual salary, in thousands?**

For example: If your salary is \$40,000, please enter 40 in the box.

Total

**MEDIAN: \$28,000**

**MEAN: \$24,400**

[NUMBER BOX, RANGE: 0.00-999.00, IF HCJ3=2]

[ALLOWS DECIMALS TO THE TENTH]

**HCJ4C. What is your current hourly rate?**

Total

**MEDIAN: \$9.25**

**MEAN: \$9.70**



[SP]

**HCJ5. What was the main reason you took this job?**

	Total
Good wages	10%
Good benefits	2%
Location	11%
Close to family/friends	4%
The job was what I wanted to do	16%
I just needed a job/only job available	50%
Other	7%
Total	100%

[SP]

**HCJ6. Is this job meant to be:**

	Total	White	Black/Hispanic
Temporary	71%	65%	75%
Permanent	29%	35%	25%
Total	100%	100%	100%

[SP]

**HCJ7. Do you think of your current job as:**

	Total
A career	8%
A stepping stone to a career	36%
Just a job (to get you by)	56%
Total	100%

[GRID, SP]

**HCJ8. Please indicate how satisfied you are with each of the following aspects of your job:**

	Total	White	Black/Hispanic
<i>Your total annual income</i>			
Very satisfied	3%	2%	6%
Somewhat satisfied	23%	24%	23%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	21%	24%	20%
Somewhat dissatisfied	22%	27%	13%
Very dissatisfied	30%	22%	37%
Not applicable	1%	2%	1%
Total	100%	101%	99%
<i>Health and medical coverage provided by your employer</i>			
Very satisfied	8%	6%	15%
Somewhat satisfied	16%	19%	14%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	17%	24%	11%
Somewhat dissatisfied	5%	3%	4%
Very dissatisfied	28%	24%	34%
Not applicable	25%	25%	22%
Total	99%	101%	100%
<i>Job responsibilities and tasks</i>			
Very satisfied	20%	20%	22%
Somewhat satisfied	28%	30%	27%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	30%	36%	17%
Somewhat dissatisfied	11%	9%	16%
Very dissatisfied	10%	4%	16%
Not applicable	1%	1%	1%
Total	100%	100%	99%
<i>Opportunities for advancement at your job</i>			
Very satisfied	11%	12%	13%
Somewhat satisfied	23%	22%	25%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	27%	32%	20%
Somewhat dissatisfied	12%	11%	14%
Very dissatisfied	23%	17%	24%
Not applicable	5%	6%	4%
Total	101%	100%	100%

**[GRID, SP]**

**HCJ8. Please indicate how satisfied you are with each of the following aspects of your job: (continued)**

	Total	White	Black/Hispanic
<i>Opportunity to get more education/training from your employer</i>			
Very satisfied	10%	11%	12%
Somewhat satisfied	14%	15%	11%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	25%	28%	23%
Somewhat dissatisfied	12%	15%	9%
Very dissatisfied	26%	18%	32%
Not applicable	12%	13%	14%
Total	99%	100%	101%
<i>Progress toward your career goals</i>			
Very satisfied	12%	14%	12%
Somewhat satisfied	17%	13%	24%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	22%	26%	18%
Somewhat dissatisfied	18%	22%	11%
Very dissatisfied	17%	13%	18%
Not applicable	13%	13%	17%
Total	99%	101%	100%

**[MP]**

**HCJ9. Please mark which statements best describe your situation.**

	Total
I was unemployed before getting my current job	49%
I went right to my current job from another job	31%
This is my first job after graduation	24%
The job I have now is the same job I had in high school	7%

[SP, IF HCJ9=1]

**HCJ10. How long were you actively seeking employment before you found your current job?**

	Total	White	Black/ Hispanic
2 months or less	37%	48%	29%
3 to 4 months	11%	11%	12%
5 to 6 months	14%	16%	12%
7 months to 1 year	19%	10%	19%
1 to 2 years	4%	4%	7%
More than 2 years	3%	3%	5%
Not sure	11%	9%	17%
Total	99%	101%	101%

[NUMBER BOX, RANGE:0-99]

**HCJ11. Since high school, how many full-time jobs have you had that lasted more than ONE month? Just your best guess is fine.**

**TOTAL**

**MEDIAN: 1**

**MEAN: 1.8**

[SP]

**HCJ11A. Have you had a full-time job that lasted for more than 12 months since you graduated?**

	Total
Yes	48%
No	51%
Total	99%

[NUMBER BOX, RANGE: 1-99, IF HCJ11A=1]

HCJ11B. How long were you at that full-time job?

TOTAL

MEDIAN: 2 years

MEAN: 2.6 years

[NUMBER BOX, RANGE: 0-99, IF HCJ11A =2]

HCJ11C. What is the longest you've been at any full-time job since you graduated?

TOTAL

MEDIAN: 2 months

MEAN: 4.4 months

[NUMBER BOX, RANGE: 0-99]

HCJ12. Since high school, how many part-time jobs have you had that lasted more than ONE month? Just your best guess is fine.

TOTAL

MEDIAN: 1

MEAN: 1.5

## VI. LOOKING FOR WORK (UL)

[ASK IF GROUP=3 & HEMPSTAT=1]

N=152

[SP]

ULSCREEN. Are you looking for full-time or part-time work?

	Total	White	Black/ Hispanic
Full time	70%	66%	77%
Part time	30%	34%	23%
Total	100%	100%	100%

[IF ULSCREEN=3 Skip to FJ Sequence]

[SP]

**UL1. How long have you been actively seeking employment?**

	Total
2 months or less	26%
3 to 4 months	13%
5 to 6 months	9%
7 months to 1 year	20%
1 to 2 years	17%
More than 2 years	12%
Not sure	4%
Total	101%

[SP]

**UL2. How long do you think it will be until you start a new job?**

	Total
2 months or less	21%
3 to 4 months	16%
5 to 6 months	6%
7 months to 1 year	3%
1 to 2 years	5%
More than 2 years	*
Never	*
Not sure	49%
Total	100%

[TEXT BOX]

**UL3. What is the main reason you think you have not found a job?**

[SP, WITH NUMBER BOX, RANGE: 1-99]

**UL5. Have you received any job offers since you started looking for work?**

	Total
Yes	20%
No	80%
Total	16%

**Number of offers:**

**TOTAL**

**MEDIAN: 2**

**MEAN: 2.3**

[MP, IF UL5 = 1]

**UL5A. Thinking about the most recent time this happened, why did you not accept the job offer:**

	Total
Pay too low	13%
No benefits	13%
Work below my education level	*
Temporary or part-time job	7%
Too far from where I live	20%
Didn't like what I would be doing	30%
Other	32%
None of the above	16%

[MP]

**UL6. Please check off which of the following you have used in job hunting:**

	Total
Newspaper classifieds	62%
Online job boards (Monster, Hot Jobs, Career Builder), online bulletin boards (Craigslist) or company job boards	67%
Social media (Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn)	24%
Government job placement centers	17%
Job fairs	19%
Personal network (word of mouth, friends and family, alumni network, contacting former employers)	70%
Employment agency	20%
Other	4%

[SP]

**UL7. Have you seriously considered returning to school full time or entering a job training program?**

	Total
Yes, considered returning to school	33%
Yes, considered a job training program	9%
Yes, considered both	31%
No	28%
Total	101%



**VII. HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES' FIRST JOB (HFJ)**

**[ASK IF GROUP=3]**

**[SP, PROMPT]**

**HFJ SCREEN. [IF HEMPSTAT NE 1, 2: Other than your current job, have you had at least one other FULL-TIME or PART-TIME JOB since you graduated high school?] [IF HEMPSTAT=1, 2: Have you had at least one FULL-TIME or PART-TIME JOB since you graduated high school?]**

**[IF HFJSCREEN=2 OR REFUSED SKIP TO HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCE]**

**N=394**

**[DISPLAY, ON THE SAME SCREEN WITH FJ1]**

**To answer the next set of questions, please think back to the first FULL-TIME or PART-TIME job you held after graduating from High School.**

**[SP]**

**HFJ1. From the time of graduation, how long were you actively seeking employment before you found your first job?**

	<b>Total</b>
Got the job while still in high school	40%
2 months or less	25%
3 to 6 months	15%
7 months to 1 year	6%
1 year to 2 years	4%
More than 2 years	3%
Not sure	7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

**[MP]**

**HFJ2. Please check off which of the following you used when looking for your first job:**

	<b>Total</b>
Newspaper classifieds	24%
Online job boards (Monster, Hot Jobs, Career Builder), online bulletin boards (Craigslist) or company job boards	25%
Social media (Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn)	8%
Government job placement centers	5%
Job fairs	11%
Personal network (word of mouth, friends and family, alumni network, contacting former employers)	63%
Employment agency	6%
Other	22%

**[SP]**

**HFJ3. Was this job:**

	<b>Total</b>
Full time	42%
Part time	58%
Total	100%

**[SP]**

**HFJ4. Was this job meant to be:**

	<b>Total</b>
Temporary	75%
Permanent	25%
Total	100%

[SP]

**HFJ5. How long did you work for that first employer?**

	Total
Less than 6 months	30%
6 months to under 1 year	24%
1 year to under 2 years	21%
2 years or more	26%
Total	101%

[SP]

**HFJ6. Thinking overall about your first job, were you:**

	Total
Very satisfied	16%
Somewhat satisfied	39%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	20%
Somewhat dissatisfied	14%
Very dissatisfied	10%
Total	99%

[SP]

**HFJ7. Were you paid:**

	Total
A salary	8%
By the hour	90%
Self-employed/commission/stipend	2%
Total	100%

**[NUMBER BOX, RANGE: 0-999, IF HFJ7=1]**

**HFJ8. How much was your annual starting salary, in thousands?**

**For example: If your starting salary was \$35,000, please enter 35 in the box.**

**TOTAL**

**MEDIAN: \$13,900**

**MEAN: \$13,900**

**[NUMBER BOX, RANGE: 0.00-999.00, IF HFJ7=2]**

**[ALLOWS DECIMALS TO THE TENTH]**

**HFJ9. How much was your starting hourly rate?**

**TOTAL**

**MEDIAN: \$7.50**

**MEAN: \$8.00**

**[SP]**

**HFJ10. Did you think of your first job as:**

	<b>Total</b>
A career	4%
A stepping stone to a career	17%
Just a job to get you by	79%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

[SP]

**HFJ11. What was the main reason you left this job?**

	<b>Total</b>
Didn't like the work	5%
Pay and benefits were too low	4%
Didn't like my boss/people who worked there	8%
Found a better job	19%
Company closed or went out of business	6%
Was laid off	15%
Was fired	4%
Went back to school	7%
Moved to another location	12%
Other	21%
Total	101%

**VIII. HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCE (HE)**  
**[ASK ALL GROUP=3]**

N=544

**[DISPLAY, ON THE SAME SCREEN WITH HE1]**

The next set of questions asks about your experiences while you were in high school.

**[SP]**

**HE1. How much did you enjoy high school?**

	Total	White	Black/ Hispanic
Liked it a lot	34%	26%	47%
Liked it a little	36%	36%	31%
Disliked it a little	10%	12%	9%
Disliked it a lot	14%	20%	8%
Don't know/mixed	6%	6%	5%
Total	100%	100%	100%

**[SP]**

**HE3. Thinking about your grades, would you say you got:**

	Total	White	Black/ Hispanic
Mostly As	16%	15%	17%
Half As and half Bs	19%	19%	17%
Mostly Bs	21%	17%	28%
Half Bs and half Cs	17%	17%	21%
Mostly Cs	10%	13%	7%
Half Cs and half Ds	7%	9%	3%
Mostly Ds	4%	5%	4%
Don't know	5%	5%	3%
Total	100%	100%	100%

[SP]

**HE6. When you started high school, did you think you would go to college?**

	Total	White	Black/ Hispanic
Definitely would	35%	27%	47%
Probably would	28%	31%	22%
Probably would not	13%	15%	10%
Definitely would not	7%	11%	4%
Unsure	17%	17%	16%
Total	100%	101%	99%

[SP]

**HE7. After graduation, did you...**

	Total	White	Black/ Hispanic
Find or look for a job	45%	47%	48%
Go to a four-year college or university full time	13%	10%	12%
Go to a community college full time	16%	13%	17%
Take college courses part time	8%	9%	8%
Take a sometime off for family or health reasons	7%	8%	5%
join the military	4%	3%	3%
Enter a job training program	1%	*	3%
Other	6%	9%	3%
Total	100%	99%	99%

[MP, IF HE7=2,3,4]

**HE8. Which is the main reason you decided to go to college?**

	Total	White	Black/ Hispanic
To get a Bachelor's degree	47%	37%	61%
To get an Associate's degree	23%	26%	19%
To get a certification	12%	14%	10%
To take the few courses I needed to get a job	5%	8%	1%
I didn't have anything else to do	8%	7%	5%
Other	5%	7%	4%
Total	100%	99%	100%

[MP, IF HE7=2-4]

[IF HE7=2 OR 3 USE FOLLOWING QUESTION TEXT]

**HE9A. Why are you no longer taking classes full time? Check all that apply.**

[IF HE7=4; USE FOLLOWING QUESTION TEXT]

**HE9B. Why did you choose to take classes only part time, instead of going to school full-time? Check all that apply.**

	Total
I cannot afford the cost of full-time college	39%
I needed to work	30%
I don't need a college education to do what I want to do right now	5%
I have children or family members at home that I take care of	10%
I am enrolled in an apprenticeship program	4%
I finished the classes I needed	15%
I'm enrolled in a job training program	1%
Other	21%



[SP]

**HE10. Are you planning to attend college to get more education in the next 5 years?**

	Total	White	Black/ Hispanic
Definitely will	38%	28%	49%
Probably will	25%	25%	27%
Probably will not	8%	10%	6%
Definitely will not	9%	12%	4%
Unsure	20%	25%	14%
Total	100%	100%	100%

[MP, IF HE10=3 OR 4]

**HE11. Why are you not planning to attend college? Check all that apply.**

	Total
I cannot afford the cost of full-time college	34%
I needed to work	37%
I don't need a college education to do what I want to do/I don't need more college	22%
I have children or family members at home that I take care of	8%
I do not feel like I can do college level work	9%
I'm not interested in college	26%
I'm enrolled in a job training program or apprenticeship	1%
Other	17%

[GRID, SP]

HE12. For each question, please mark your answer below.

	Total	White	Black/ Hispanic
<i>How well did your high school education prepare you to get your first full-time job?</i>			
Extremely well	7%	6%	11%
Pretty well	34%	27%	39%
Not very well	25%	28%	25%
Not very well at all	18%	24%	8%
Not appropriate	16%	16%	16%
Total	100%	101%	99%

<i>How well did your high school education prepare you to <b>be successful</b> in your first full-time job?</i>			
Extremely well	9%	8%	12%
Pretty well	33%	25%	42%
Not very well	25%	31%	18%
Not very well at all	17%	19%	12%
Not appropriate	17%	17%	16%
Total	101%	100%	100%

[TEXT BOX, HE 12\_2=1]

**HE12A. You mentioned that your high school education prepared you well to be successful in your first full-time job. Please briefly explain how you were well prepared.**

[SP]

**HE13. Which of the following best describes what happened to you once you began looking for a job?**

	Total	White	Black/ Hispanic
I found a good job more quickly than I had expected to	27%	30%	22%
I found a good job within a reasonable amount of time	21%	24%	22%
It took me longer to find a good job than I had expected it to	22%	19%	26%
I still have not found a good job	30%	27%	29%
Total	100%	100%	99%

[MP]

**HSE14. In the last two years, have you: Check all that apply.**

	Total	White	Black/ Hispanic
Quit a job	18%	21%	16%
Got laid off	14%	16%	11%
Worked for a temporary hiring agency	6%	8%	6%
Worked a temporary seasonal job	16%	10%	26%
None of the above	55%	54%	51%

[SP]

**HE15. Do you think you can have the successful career you want with a high school degree, or will you need more education for that?**

	Total	White	Black/ Hispanic
Can have a successful career with a high school degree	30%	35%	23%
Need more education	70%	65%	76%
Total	100%	100%	99%

[SP, IF HE15=2]

**HE16. What type of further education would you need to pursue to have a successful career?**

	Total	White	Black/ Hispanic
Associate's/two-year degree	19%	16%	28%
Bachelor's degree	35%	31%	37%
Certificate program/Apprenticeship/ Job Training Program	16%	17%	12%
Graduate school	6%	3%	12%
Professional school	4%	6%	1%
Don't know	20%	27%	9%
Total	100%	100%	99%

[MP]

**HE17. Thinking back to when you were in high school, is there anything you would have done differently to help you be successful in today's labor market/workplace?**

	Total	White	Black/ Hispanic
Been more careful about selecting the courses I took as electives	28%	21%	43%
Would have taken more classes to prepare for a career	23%	16%	38%
Done an internship or worked part time	21%	18%	28%
Would have better prepared for college	29%	21%	38%
Something else	7%	12%	1%
No	38%	45%	24%

**IX. PUBLIC AFFAIRS (PA)**  
**[ASK GROUP=1-3]**

N=544

**[DISPLAY, ON THE SAME SCREEN WITH PA1]**  
**Next are just a few final questions on current events.**

**[SP]**

**PA1. All in all, do you think things in the nation are generally headed in the right direction, or do you feel things are off on the wrong track?**

	Total
Right direction	37%
Wrong track	62%
Total	99%

**[SP]**

**PA2. A year from now, do you expect economic conditions in the country as a whole will be:**

	Total
Better	25%
Worse	35%
Same as now	39%
Total	99%

**[SP]**

**PA3. Who do you think is most to blame for the current state of the nation's economy?**

	Total
The Bush Administration	27%
The Obama Administration	17%
Wall Street and the financial institutions	14%
Congress	9%
Something else	6%
Don't know	26%
Total	99%

[SP]

**PA4. Some say government can lead the way out of the recession with strong policies. Others say that the economy will not improve until businesses start hiring and people start spending, regardless of what the government does. How much do you think the government can do to improve the economy?**

	<b>Total</b>
A great deal	26%
A fair amount	32%
Not much	23%
Nothing at all	3%
Don't know	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>99%</b>

[GRID, SP, RANDOMIZE ITEMS]

**PA6. People often disagree about what it takes to be a good citizen. For each item please check whether or not you think someone must do it to be considered a good citizen.**

	<b>Total</b>
<i>Vote in elections if they are eligible</i>	
Yes	65%
No	13%
No opinion	23%
<b>Total</b>	<b>101%</b>
<i>Obey the laws</i>	
Yes	84%
No	3%
No opinion	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>101%</b>

**[GRID, SP, RANDOMIZE ITEMS]**

**PA6. People often disagree about what it takes to be a good citizen. For each item please check whether or not you think someone must do it to be considered a good citizen. (Continued)**

	<b>Total</b>
<i>Volunteer their time to help others</i>	
Yes	54%
No	16%
No opinion	31%
Total	101%
<i>Pay attention to government decisions and political happenings</i>	
Yes	56%
No	17%
No opinion	27%
Total	100%

**[SP]**

**PA7. Many are not registered to vote because they are too busy or move around often. Would official state records show that you:**

	<b>Total</b>
Are registered to vote	63%
Not eligible to register	6%
Eligible, but not registered to vote	22%
Don't know what records would show	10%
Total	101%



[SP]

**PA8. If the election was today, who would you vote for?**

	Total
Barack Obama	57%
Mitt Romney	44%
Total	101%

[SP]

**PA9. Do you know which party has a majority in the house and senate of the U.S. Congress?**

	Total
Republicans	20%
Democrats	15%
One party controls the house and another the senate	20%
Don't know	44%
Total	99%

**X. PERSONAL VIEWS (PV)****[ASK GROUP=1-3]****[SP]****PV1. Do you think, in general, people in your generation will have:**

	Total High School	Total College Graduates	White High School	Black/ Hispanic High School
Greater financial success than the generation that came before you	14%	17%	10%	21%
Less financial success than the generation that came before you	56%	61%	59%	53%
About the same financial success than the generation that came before you	30%	21%	32%	25%
Total	100%	99%	101%	99%

**[SP]****PV2. When it comes to your financial success in the future, do you think you will have:**

	Total High School	Total College Graduates	White High School	Black/ Hispanic High School
More success than your parents	44%	48%	42%	47%
Less success than your parents	29%	22%	32%	22%
About the same success as your parents	27%	30%	26%	30%
Total	100%	100%	100%	99%

**[SP, GROUP=3]****PV3A. Do you think high school students today are:**

	Total High School	Total College Graduates	White High School	Black/ Hispanic High School
Better prepared than a generation ago to enter the labor market	23%	28%	20%	29%
Less prepared than a generation ago to enter the labor market	61%	52%	64%	58%
No difference	17%	20%	16%	12%
Total	101%	100%	100%	99%

[MP]

**PV4. Please check off any of the following things that your parents or other family members help you with financially:**

	Total High School	Total College Graduates	White High School	Black/ Hispanic High School
Living situation (such as mortgage, rent, or just living with parents or relatives)	59%	30%	59%	52%
Healthcare costs	32%	15%	32%	24%
Car payment	17%	9%	13%	16%
College loans	10%	10%	9%	8%
Food	48%	22%	46%	47%
Miscellaneous bills (such as cell phone bills)	38%	24%	38%	33%
Savings	9%	3%	4%	15%
Other	6%	6%	5%	7%
None	27%	49%	27%	30%

[SP]

**PV5a. Please mark which of the following pairs of statements is closest to what you think, even if neither is exactly right:**

	Total High School	Total College Graduates	White High School	Black/ Hispanic High School
Most people who want to get ahead can make it if they're willing to work hard	63%	68%	53%	74%
Hard work and determination are no guarantee of success for most people	38%	32%	47%	26%
Total	101%	100%	100%	100%

[SP]

**PV5b. Please mark which of the following pairs of statements is closest to what you think, even if neither is exactly right:**

	Total High School	Total College Graduates	White High School	Black/ Hispanic High School
Everyone has it in their power to succeed	70%	76%	71%	72%
Success in life is pretty much determined by outside forces	29%	24%	29%	27%
Total	99%	100%	100%	99%

[GRID, SP]

**PV6. How confident are you that in the next 10 years you will:**

	Total High School	Total College Graduates	White High School	Black/ Hispanic High School
<i>Have a job where you earned enough to lead a comfortable life</i>				
Already there	8%	21%	11%	4%
Next few years	39%	45%	37%	50%
A number of years off	38%	28%	39%	35%
10 years or more/never	14%	7%	13%	10%
Total	99%	101%	100%	99%
<i>Have a job that prioritizes good quality, affordable health care</i>				
Already there	11%	43%	14%	8%
Next few years	45%	35%	42%	53%
A number of years off	33%	18%	34%	30%
10 years or more/never	12%	5%	11%	8%
Total	101%	101%	101%	99%
<i>Be able to afford to buy your own home</i>				
Already there	10%	26%	11%	11%
Next few years	22%	28%	18%	30%
A number of years off	37%	30%	43%	33%
10 years or more/never	30%	16%	28%	26%
Total	99%	100%	100%	100%

[GRID, SP]

**PV6. How confident are you that in the next 10 years you will: (continued)**

	Total High School	Total College Graduates	White High School	Black/ Hispanic High School
<i>Have a job with good security</i>				
Already there	14%	36%	20%	9%
Next few years	34%	35%	28%	46%
A number of years off	35%	20%	39%	26%
10 years or more/never	17%	9%	13%	20%
Total	100%	100%	100%	101%
<i>Be able to start a family</i>				
Already there	22%	26%	20%	31%
Next few years	24%	35%	26%	23%
A number of years off	34%	29%	36%	30%
10 years or more/never	20%	11%	18%	16%
Total	100%	101%	100%	100%
<i>Have a job that leads to a career</i>				
Already there	14%	38%	20%	8%
Next few years	42%	42%	37%	51%
A number of years off	32%	16%	32%	33%
10 years or more/never	12%	4%	11%	8%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

**XI. DEMOGRAPHICS (D)**

[ASK GROUP=1-3]

[SP]

**D1. Do you currently have health care benefits?**

	Total High School	Total College Graduates	White High School	Black/ Hispanic High School
No	36%	13%	33%	44%
Yes, from current employer	15%	49%	16%	14%
Yes, from previous employer (COBRA, other)	1%	1%	2%	*
Yes, from other family member	32%	29%	31%	26%
Yes, Medicare or Medicaid	11%	3%	9%	13%
Yes, other	6%	6%	8%	3%
Total	101%	101%	99%	100%

[SP]

**D2. What was the highest level of education completed by your father/guardian?**

	Total High School	Total College Graduates	White High School	Black/ Hispanic High School
Less than high school	14%	5%	9%	23%
High school graduate	34%	20%	35%	38%
Some college (did not graduate)	20%	14%	24%	12%
Associate's degree (two year degree)	9%	6%	12%	4%
Bachelor's degree (four year degree)	8%	28%	8%	6%
Attended graduate school (did not graduate)	*	2%	*	*
Graduated from graduate school (master's, professional, doctorate degree, etc.)	3%	24%	8%	3%
Not sure	11%	1%	7%	11%
Not applicable	2%	1%	1%	3%
Total	101%	101%	100%	100%

[SP]

**D3. What was the highest level of education completed by your mother/guardian?**

	Total High School	Total College Graduates	White High School	Black/ Hispanic High School
Less than high school	18%	4%	8%	32%
High school graduate	25%	20%	26%	24%
Some college (did not graduate)	24%	17%	31%	14%
Associate's degree (two year degree)	10%	14%	14%	6%
Bachelor's degree (four year degree)	8%	24%	12%	4%
Attended graduate school (did not graduate)	1%	3%	1%	2%
Graduated from graduate school (master's, professional, doctorate degree, etc.)	6%	16%	4%	7%
Not sure	7%	2%	4%	8%
Not applicable	1%	1%	*	2%
Total	100%	101%	100%	99%

[SP]

**D4. What is your parents or guardians' total annual household income? Just your best guess.**

	Total High School	Total College Graduates	White High School	Black/ Hispanic High School
0 - \$30K	29%	12%	24%	42%
\$31K - \$60K	30%	21%	31%	25%
\$61K - \$100K	14%	27%	18%	10%
More than \$100K	8%	27%	11%	3%
Don't know	19%	12%	16%	20%
Total	100%	99%	100%	100%

[SP]

**D5. Do you currently have children under the age of 18 living in your home?**

	Total High School	Total College Graduates	White High School	Black/ Hispanic High School
Yes	40%	24%	35%	41%
No	60%	76%	65%	59%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

[SP]

**D6. Which of the following best describes your current living situation?**

	Total High School	Total College Graduates	White High School	Black/ Hispanic High School
Living with parents or relatives	60%	25%	59%	61%
Living with a significant other or spouse	24%	47%	27%	24%
Living with a roommate or roommates that you are not romantically involved with	8%	11%	6%	8%
Living alone	7%	15%	7%	6%
Other	1%	2%	2%	1%
Total	100%	100%	101%	100%

[SP, GROUP=2 OR 3]

**D7. [IF GROUP= 2: Other than mortgage, rent, or student loans, do you currently have any financial debt such as credit cards?] [GROUP= 3: Other than mortgage or rent, do you currently have any financial debt such as credit cards? ]**

	Total High School	Total College Graduates*	White High School	Black/ Hispanic High School
Yes	32%	43%	33%	33%
No	68%	57%	67%	67%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

\*Asked only of 2011 college graduates

[KN CLOSE]



## APPENDIX C. VOICES OF COLLEGE GRADUATES

Individuals who participated in the spring 2012 survey were asked how their college education prepared them to be successful in their careers. The following were some of the answers that were received.

### WHAT IS THE MAIN REASON YOU THINK YOU HAVE NOT FOUND A JOB?

Background

Bad economy

Because a lot of people are not hiring at the moment

Companies always want people to have years of experience

Current economy with many people out of work and few positions to apply for.

Economy

Eligibility requirements not met.

Everyone in this town needs a job

Failed to push myself

Felony

I am having trouble finding a job because I am limited about the things I can do

I dont know...

I dont no

I have back issues

I have no idea

I live in a small town so there is not very many jobs as it is, but also because of the economy.

I wasn't looking hard enough

Job market in my state is very poor

Jobs are pretty difficult to find here.

Lack of a drivers liscence, which I will get soon.

Lack of experience

Lack of experience, education. There are to many other people looking for and applying to the same job as me. Too much competition.

Lack of experience.

Less pay and not enough experience

Life

No experience

No job skills, No history of employment. certian people frown apon G.E.D's

No jobs available

No jobs available right now a nd I dont have a lot of expierience

No one is hiring I put applications but they they are not hiring but I check up on it again and they hire someone from mexico cause they don't have to pay much money to them

No one is hiring i put in applications but no one is hiring the say they will keep them on file etc. they say there are jobs out there but where are they i can not find anyone hiring, no one seems to be hiring

No one seems to be hiring where ever I look

No previous job experience

No where is hiring

No work available

Nobody wants to hire mw

None of the places I've applied has called me

Noone is hiring.

Not enough jobs available

Not enough work experience and no one is hiring

Not much available that I'm qualified for

Not sure not looking hard enough but that is what my uncle tells me everyday.

Poor economy

Schedule conflicts- child care.

The economy

The economy isn't so great at the moment and many companies aren't willing to spend the money on hiring new employees.

The reason may be because im not putting my effort on looking for a real job. and insisting on asking if there is still a position. Im not putting enough effort.

There are more applicants, with more experience, than there are jobs.

There are not enough jobs currently, too many employers cannot afford to hire until the economy improves.

There are not very many options.

There aren't many jobs around where I live. there isn't any jobs out there! My dad has been laid off for a year.

US economy

**YOU MENTIONED THAT YOUR HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION PREPARED YOU WELL TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN YOUR FIRST FULL-TIME JOB. PLEASE BRIEFLY EXPLAIN HOW YOU WERE WELL PREPARED.**

Cause i can read @write

Everything I learned about math helped me the most since the job I had involved math. i had all the good basic courses with great teachers plus i had computer courses and learned technical things in high school

I had the pleasure of knowing some motivational people in school, primarily teachers and coaches, who taught me responsibility.

I learned english and i became a bilingual person and i leard how to use computers

I was home schooled then my senior year went to a public school that I could take pre. nursesing training.

Learning new things

Over all education in all areas .

teaching me how to be prepared

Team worker, math skills, positive attitude,  
and taught me about everyday life

They always gave us advice and take us to  
job fairs

They taught me how to get up on time and  
that people in the real world will not cater to  
you and to turn my work in on time

Took job training class



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