

67% of Blue Collar Workers Say COVID-19 Pandemic Changed How Society Views Their Jobs

***“It Became More Obvious How Much Society At Large Relies
on Them.”***

New White Paper Explores the State of Blue Collar America Latest Results from The Harris Poll

OKLAHOMA CITY, Feb. 23, 2022—Two years after many U.S. businesses temporarily shut down to try to contain the first cases of the COVID-19 pandemic, America’s blue collar workforce feels they are more respected and appreciated, and even more in demand than before the pandemic.



This is according to a new survey from The Harris Poll commissioned by Express Employment International. The results are explored in full detail through the companion white paper “[Industries of Opportunity in Blue Collar America: Rising Wages, Abundant Jobs, and Renewed Respect](#),” which builds on a [similar survey](#) of blue collar workers in 2018.

The COVID-19 pandemic put the spotlight on blue collar workers—the men and women who produced essential products, continued delivery and distribution of items, maintained vital infrastructure and more. Two thirds (67%) of these blue collar workers believe this historic time period changed how people view blue collar jobs, and 75% of white collar workers agree with this sentiment.

But what do blue collar workers themselves think about it all? Do they feel confident about their future, anxious about their safety, or uncertain about future technologies?

The findings are clear:

- Blue collar workers remain optimistic about the future.
- They feel more respected and appreciated than in the past.
- They are proud of the work they do, and the majority like the work they do.
- They encourage others to pursue similar careers.
- While they have concerns, the vast majority are not worried about losing their jobs or being replaced by automation.

Meaningful Work

The vast majority of blue collar workers (91%) say they feel proud of the work they do. When asked how they feel about their jobs, 84% used positive descriptors such as knowledgeable (53%), confident (46%) and valued (44%).

Overall, 62% like their jobs, citing a variety of reasons:

- **53%** say they like their jobs because they make a **good living wage**.
- **37%** say they like their jobs because they are **being challenged**.
- **33%** say they like their jobs because they are **able to help others/have a sense of purpose**.

Nearly three-fourths of blue collar workers in the U.S. (74%) say there is a good career path in their line of work.

Fresh Concerns

Even with this general positivity, blue collar workers have concerns:

- **28%** cite personal safety or **danger of the job**.
- **20%** mention **long hours**.
- **20%** lament **high performance demands**.
- Just **13%** say there are **no advancement opportunities**.

The pandemic may have made blue collar workers feel more appreciated, but it has also added new stresses and pressures to their jobs—especially as they feel the effects of a strained labor force.

Nearly three-quarters (73%) of blue collar workers say their work-life balance has been impacted by the current labor shortage. More blue collar workers than white collar workers (60%) say this. Nearly two in five (37%) blue collar workers have had a heavier workload due to staff shortages.

The Future of Blue Collar Work

Beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, blue collar industries are desperate for workers, and luckily, nearly three-quarters of blue collar workers (74%) believe there is a good career path in their line of work. However, 67% wish they had more exposure to the world of work when they were

in school.

More than 2 in 5 (42%) believe there will be more jobs available in their field in the next 10 years, up from 2018 (35%). Just 26% believe there will be fewer jobs available.

One of the most commonly heard views about blue collar careers is that automation will displace these workers. But among blue collar workers, it hardly seems to be a concern as just 8% are concerned about being replaced by automation. Only 7% worry about losing their jobs in the near future, down from 13% in 2018.

“Blue collar workers have always been the backbone of the American economy, and the COVID-19 pandemic provided a stark reminder for anyone who had forgotten that,” Express Employment International CEO Bill Stoller said. “These heroic individuals keep our country running with leadership that has earned them renewed respect in the eyes of Americans. And as the economy recovers, blue collar job prospects are more numerous and lucrative than at any time in recent history. Take blue collar workers’ word for it—now is the time to pursue one of these careers.”

Survey Methodology

The survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals between Sept. 28 and Oct. 13, 2021, among 2,002 U.S. adults ages 18+ who are employed full-time, part-time or self-employed. Data were weighted where necessary by age, gender, education, race/ethnicity, region, household income, household size and marital status to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. This sample of employees includes 209 blue collar workers (defined as employees who perform manual labor and work in agriculture, automotive services, construction, maintenance, manufacturing, transportation, or utilities).

- [Memo from The Harris Poll](#)
- [Study](#)

If you would like to arrange for an interview with Bill Stoller to discuss this topic, please contact Sheena Hollander, Director of Corporate Communications and PR, at (405) 717-5966.

About Bill Stoller

William H. "Bill" Stoller is chairman and chief executive officer of Express Employment International. Founded in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, the international staffing franchisor supports the Express Employment Professionals franchise and related brands. The Express franchise brand is an industry-leading, international staffing company with franchise locations in the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

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