



AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
Center for Organizational Excellence

JUNE 2018

2018 Work and Well-Being Survey

Chronic job stress, being overworked and feeling a lack of support to take time off—these are issues facing many U.S. workers. Too often, the burden falls on individual employees to make the best use of vacation time, recharge and return to the fray, only to face the same larger systemic issues that wore them down in the first place. As this year’s Work and Well-Being Survey findings show, employees need the support of an organizational culture with workplace practices that allow them to recover from stress and function at their best on and off the job. The Work and Well-Being Survey provides a snapshot of the U.S. workforce, including employee well-being and attitudes and opinions related to workplace policies and practices. Among other things, this year’s survey explores the effect of time off—paid and unpaid—on employee well-being and job performance.

OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH WORKPLACE PRACTICES

Although almost three-quarters of workers reported being satisfied with the health and safety practices at work, fewer than 6 in 10 said they are satisfied with their employer’s recognition practices and opportunities for development.

% OF WORKERS REPORTING SATISFACTION WITH

Health and safety practices of my employer

73%

Amount of control and involvement I have at work

68%

Work-life balance practices offered by my employer

67%

Employer’s communication practices

60%

Employee recognition practices of my employer

57%

Growth and development opportunities offered by my employer

55%



VACATION USE

Taking time off helps many U.S. workers recover from stress and experience positive effects that improve their well-being and job performance, but for nearly two-thirds of working adults, the benefits of time away dissipate within a few days.

Almost a quarter of U.S. workers (23 percent) said their employer does not provide them with paid vacation days or paid time off. Of those who do not receive paid time off, nearly 3 in 5 are part-time workers.

Although 9 in 10 working adults have used paid or unpaid vacation time in the past year, 27 percent haven't taken a vacation in the past six months, and 36 percent left paid vacation time unused last year.

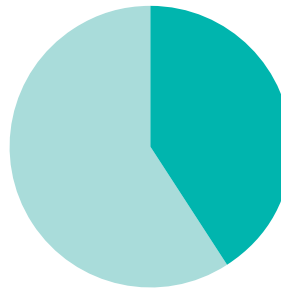
About three-quarters of working Americans (76 percent) said taking vacation time is important to them, but less than half reported that their organization's culture encourages employees to take time off and just 38 percent said their supervisor encourages it.

Almost a third of U.S. workers said their workload makes it difficult to take time off, about a quarter reported that they worry they'll miss important information or opportunities when they take vacation time, and about 1 in 5 said they avoid taking time off because they feel guilty when they do and might be seen as less committed to their job.

A majority of working adults said that when they do take time off, they enjoy it (83 percent) and reported that they have the necessary stress recovery experiences: relaxing (80 percent), sleeping well (73 percent), engaging in interesting or challenging non-work activities (71 percent), avoiding thinking about work (65 percent) and not engaging in work activities (63 percent).

Despite this, 21 percent said they feel tense or stressed out while on vacation, 28 percent said they work more than they planned to and 42 percent reported that they dread returning to work.

The majority of working Americans reported positive effects of taking vacation time and said when they return to work, their mood is better (68 percent) and they have more energy (66 percent) and motivation (57 percent) and feel less stressed (57 percent). Additionally, working adults reported that following time off, they were more productive (58 percent) and their work quality was better (55 percent).



41%

Of working Americans reported that their organization's culture encourages employees to take time off

% STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE

My workload makes it difficult for me to take time off

32%

When I take vacation time, I worry that I will miss important information or opportunities at work

26%

I avoid taking vacation time because I feel guilty when I do

23%

I avoid taking vacation time because I might be seen as less committed to my job

19%

The benefits of vacation time are fleeting. Nearly 2 in 3 working adults said that when they return to work, the benefits either disappear immediately (24 percent) or last only a few days (40 percent). And nearly half said when they return to work following a vacation, they have to address problems that occurred while they were out (49 percent) and come back to a heavier-than-normal workload, due to work that piled up.

An organization's culture makes a difference. When an organization's culture encourages time off, employees are more likely to have the necessary stress recovery experiences when they use vacation time. They are also more likely to benefit from vacation time and those benefits last longer.

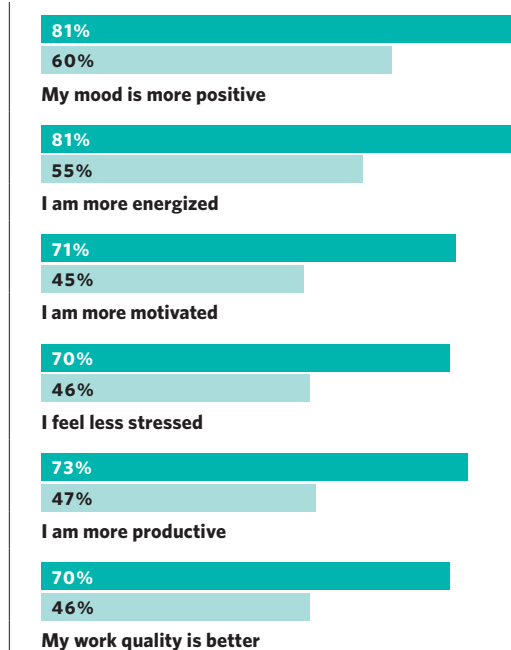
When organizations encourage time off, 93 percent of employees said they are able to enjoy their time off (vs. 74 percent in organizations that don't encourage time off); 90 percent said they're able to relax (vs. 71 percent), 84 percent said they sleep well (vs. 64 percent), 81 percent engage in interesting or challenging non-work activities (vs. 71 percent), 78 percent are able to stop thinking about work (vs. 52 percent), 74 percent are able to avoid engaging in work activities (vs. 56 percent) and 40 percent said they dread returning to work after a vacation (vs. 53 percent).

When an organization's culture encourages time off, employees are less likely to report that the benefits of vacation time dissipate immediately after they return from vacation, compared to when an organization's culture does not support employees taking time off (14 percent vs. 38 percent).

In general, when I return to work following vacation time...

% STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE

- ORGANIZATION'S CULTURE ENCOURAGES TIME OFF
- ORGANIZATION'S CULTURE DOES NOT ENCOURAGE TIME OFF



RECOMMENDATIONS

The benefits of time off can be fleeting. When stress levels spike shortly after employees return to work, that's bad for workers and for business. Here are four suggestions to help everyone get the most benefit out of time away and the return to work.

Plan ahead

Develop a concrete plan for how tasks will be handled while an employee is out. Share clear expectations on availability and responsiveness when someone is away. Encourage teams to schedule vacations in advance and coordinate timing to avoid especially busy times. This helps minimize a pre-vacation scramble, work spilling over into time off and overburdening other team members who are covering for someone on vacation.

Develop supervisors

Ensure that managers keep track of employees' vacation time and encourage appropriate use of time off. Train supervisors so they understand work stress and reinforce actions that promote stress recovery. Make cross-training routine, so other team members can cover for co-workers who are away.

Ease back in

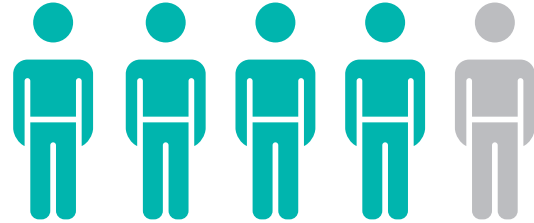
Make it common practice for employees to build in time to catch up on email and other backlogged tasks before their typical routine resumes full speed. Prevent immediate overload by planning a work-at-home day to catch up on the first day back or block out time on the calendar to dig out. This can help employees maximize the benefits of their time off and prevent those gains from rapidly dissipating.

Examine your culture

While anti-vacation sentiments may not be communicated explicitly, the expectations that exist may be unspoken rules. Some things to consider: Are employees celebrated for rarely taking time off? Is being available and responsive 24/7 glorified and recognized? Are organizational leaders, who may be more likely to stay connected to the office outside of normal business hours, inadvertently communicating through their actions that they expect their employees to do the same? Examine the assumptions that may be operating below the surface and take steps to address any dysfunctional elements. Managers and work teams should explicitly discuss their expectations when it comes to use of vacation time and availability during time off.

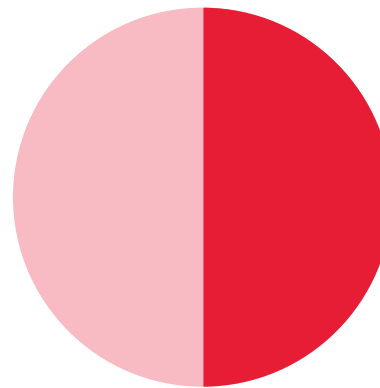
EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING

Approximately **4 out of 5 employees reported that they are in good physical and mental health.** Yet, around one-fifth of employed adults reported that in the past month, physical health problems kept them from achieving their goals at work. Similarly, 16 percent of U.S. workers said mental health problems such as depression or anxiety kept them from achieving their goals at work.



% STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE

- 80%** Overall, I am in good physical health
- 18%** In the past month, physical problems such as a chronic illness, allergies, headaches, back pain or other physical health conditions kept me from achieving my goals at work
- 82%** Overall, I am in good psychological health
- 16%** In the past month, mental health problems such as depression, anxiety or other mental health issues kept me from achieving my goals at work
- 50%** My employer provides the resources necessary for employees to meet their mental health needs



50%
Of working Americans said their employer provides the resources necessary to meet employees' mental health needs

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

The survey also looked at employees' access to adequate mental health resources. Overall, just half of workers said their employer provides the resources necessary to help them meet their mental health needs. When adequate resources are provided, only a third of workers said they typically feel tense or stressed out during the workday, compared to over half of those who said their employer doesn't provide sufficient mental health resources. When it comes to overall well-being, nearly three-fourths of employees supported with mental health resources (73 percent) said their employer helps them develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle, compared to 14 percent who said they don't have the resources.

% OF AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSES BY U.S. WORKERS

- EMPLOYER PROVIDES SUFFICIENT MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES
- EMPLOYER DOES NOT PROVIDE SUFFICIENT MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES



I have a positive relationship with my boss or supervisor



All in all, I am satisfied with my job



I am motivated to do my very best for my employer



My company or organization makes me feel valued



The organization I work for treats me fairly



I would recommend my workplace to others as a good place to work



I intend to seek employment outside of my company or organization in the next year



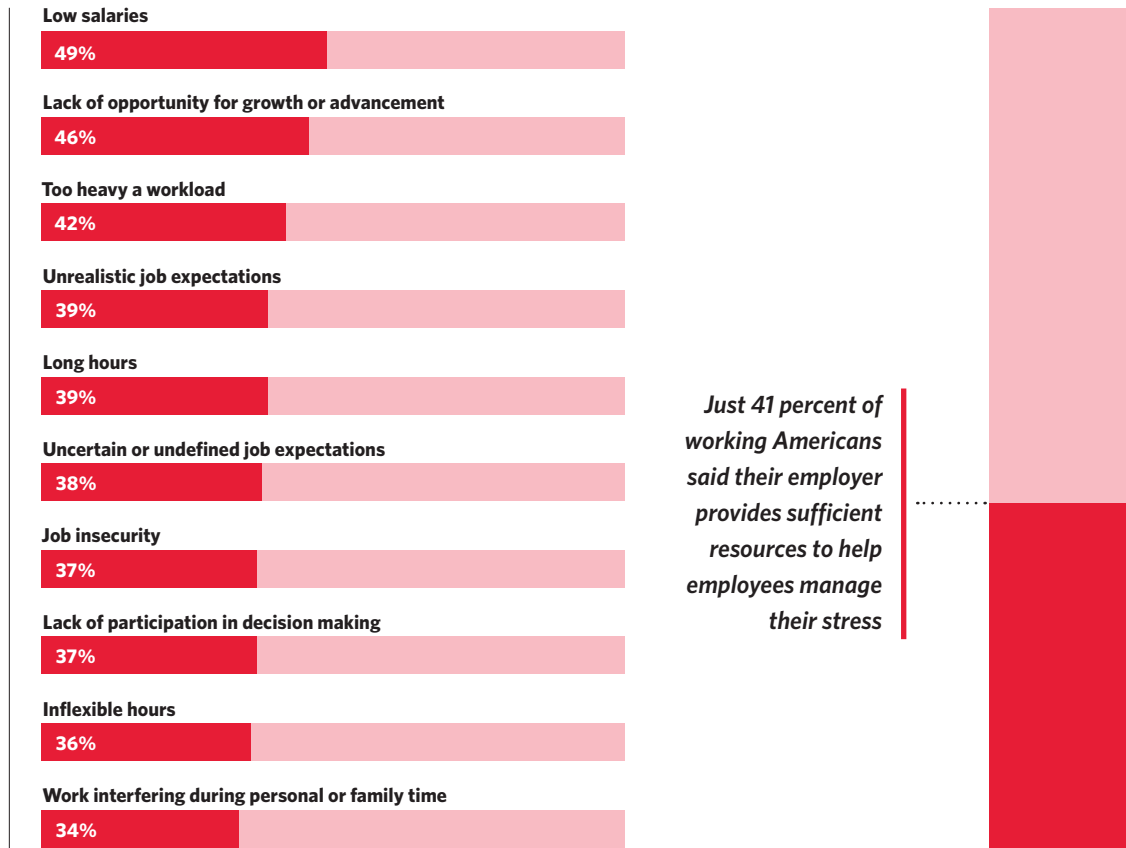
During my workday, I typically feel tense or stressed out

WORK STRESS

More than a third of working Americans (35 percent) reported experiencing chronic work stress, and less than half said their employer provides sufficient resources to help employees manage their stress.

TOP SOURCES OF WORK STRESS

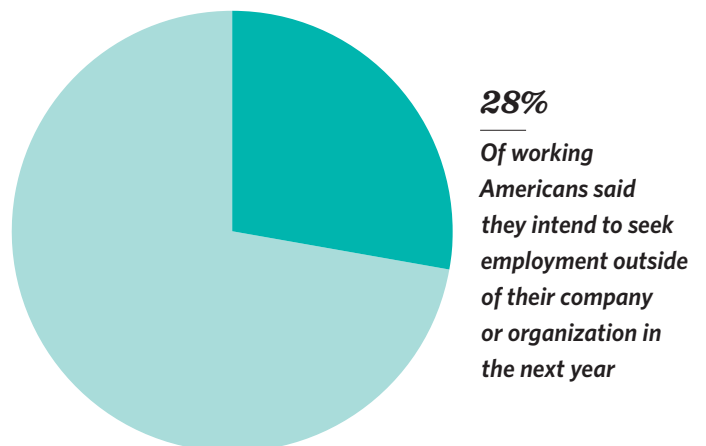
% reporting as somewhat or very significant source of work stress



EMPLOYEES' EXPERIENCE AT WORK

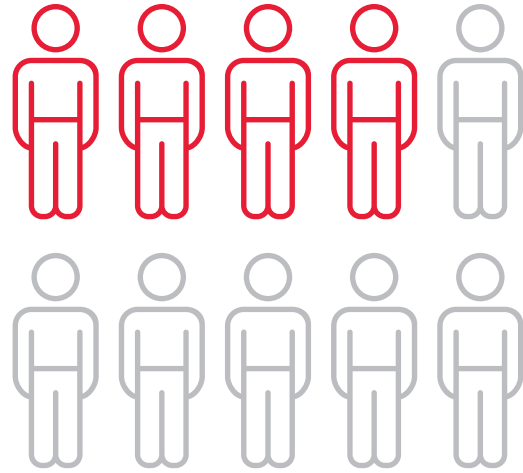
Although around three-quarters of working Americans said they are satisfied with their job and motivated to do their best at work, just over half said their employer makes them feel valued, 1 in 5 said they don't trust their employer and **almost 3 in 10 reported that they intend to seek employment outside of the company within the next year.**

- 73%** All in all, I am satisfied with my job
- 75%** I am motivated to do my very best for my employer
- 69%** The organization I work for treats me fairly
- 58%** My company or organization makes me feel valued
- 20%** I don't trust my employer
- 28%** I intend to seek employment outside of my company or organization in the next year



PARTICIPATION IN WORKPLACE PROGRAMS

Just over half of U.S. workers said they regularly participate in training and development activities and even fewer reported participating in efforts designed to involve employees in decision making, problem solving and goal setting or using flexible work arrangements. Despite the prevalence of workplace health promotion efforts, **just 4 in 10 working Americans said they regularly participate in these employer-provided wellness programs.**



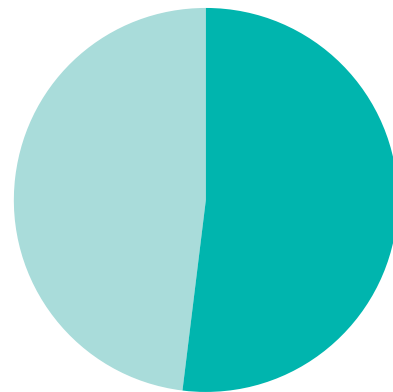
I regularly participate in...

% STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE

- 56%** Employee training and development activities
- 52%** Activities designed to involve employees in decision making, problem solving and goal setting
- 49%** Programs or utilize policies that allow me to be flexible in where, how much or when I work
- 40%** Health and wellness programs provided by my employer

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

When employers make people feel valued and appreciated, it creates a better work environment. But in many organizations, meaningful and consistent recognition is often overlooked. Only half of working Americans said they receive non-monetary forms of recognition at work, such as praise from supervisors, thank you cards or awards for their achievements and contributions.



52%

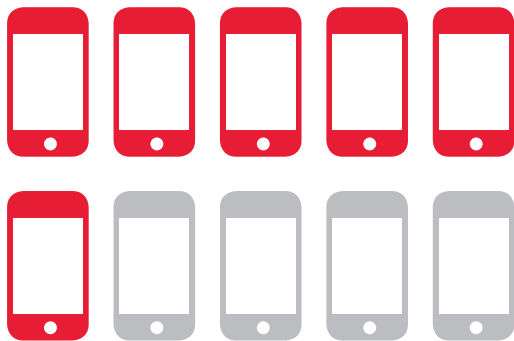
Of working Americans said employee recognition is based on a fair and useful performance evaluation system

% STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE

- 57%** I receive adequate monetary compensation for my contributions at work
- 50%** I receive non-monetary rewards for my achievements and contributions at work
- 52%** Employee recognition is based on a fair and useful performance evaluation system

COMMUNICATION

Open communication plays a key role in the success of organizations. More than **6 in 10 working adults reported that their organization regularly communicates with employees**, but only 56 percent reported that their employer collects feedback from workers and even fewer said their employer actually makes changes based on feedback.



% STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE

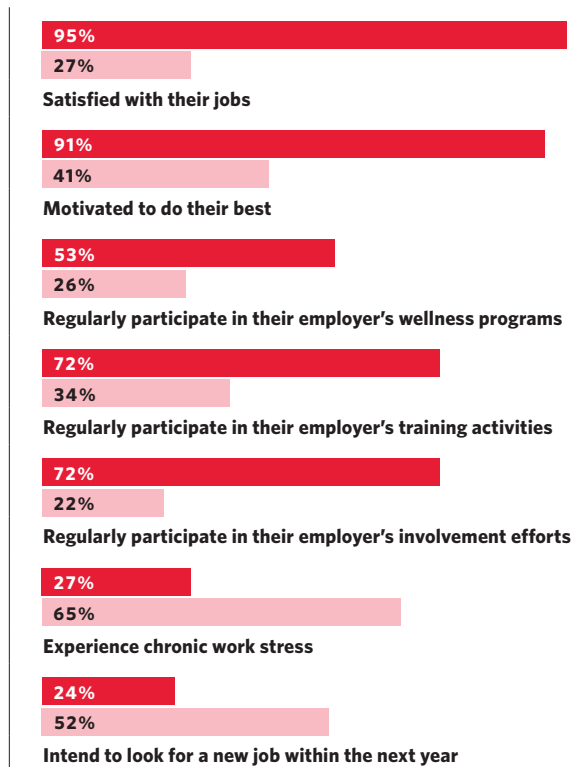
- 68%** My company or organization regularly communicates with employees
- 56%** My company or organization regularly collects feedback from employees
- 43%** My employer regularly makes changes in response to employee feedback

FEELING VALUED

Workers who said their employer makes them feel valued were more likely to be satisfied with their jobs and motivated to do their best. Those who feel valued were also more likely to have said they regularly participate in their employer's wellness programs, training activities and involvement efforts and less likely to have reported chronic work stress or intent to leave the organization in the next year.

% OF AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSES BY U.S. WORKERS

- EMPLOYEES WHO FEEL VALUED BY THEIR EMPLOYER
- EMPLOYEES WHO DO NOT FEEL VALUED BY THEIR EMPLOYER

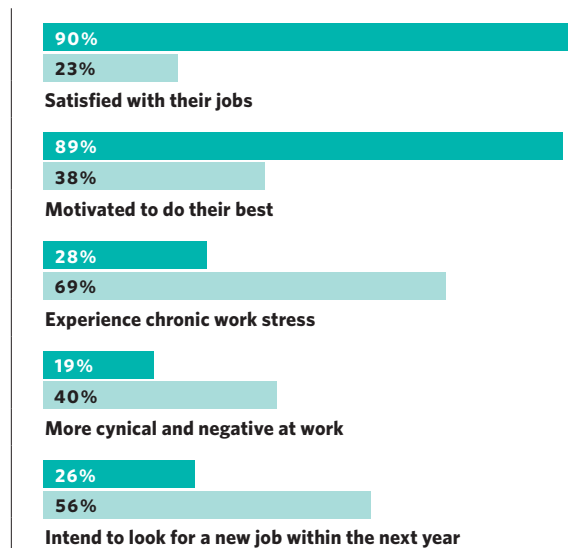


FAIRNESS

Nine out of 10 working Americans who feel they are treated fairly said they are satisfied with their job, compared to less than a quarter of employees who feel treated unfairly. Employees who feel treated fairly were also more likely to have said they are motivated to do their best at work. Employees who said they were treated unfairly were more likely to have reported feeling stressed out on a typical work day, more cynical and negative at work and that they intend to look for a new job within the next year.

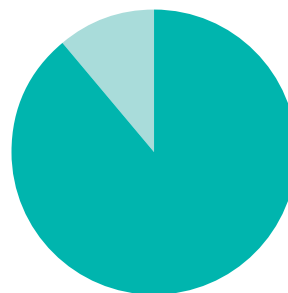
% OF AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSES BY U.S. WORKERS

- EMPLOYEES WHO FEEL THEY ARE TREATED FAIRLY
- EMPLOYEES WHO FEEL THEY ARE TREATED UNFAIRLY

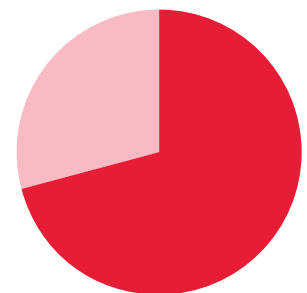


TRUST

Approximately **9 out of 10 working Americans who said they trust their employer report being satisfied with their job**, compared to less than half of employees who don't trust their employer (46 percent). Those who trust their employer were also more likely to have said they are motivated to do their best at work (89 percent vs. 53 percent), have a positive relationship with their supervisor (90 percent vs. 56 percent) and would recommend the organization as a good place to work (80 percent vs. 41 percent). Employees who said they don't trust their employer are more than three times as likely to have said they're typically tense and stressed out at work (71 percent vs. 20 percent) and to have indicated that they plan to look for a new job within the next year (58 percent vs. 18 percent), compared to those who trust their employer.



89 percent of working Americans who trust their employer said they are motivated to do their best at work



71 percent of working Americans who don't trust their employer said they're typically tense and stressed out at work



ABOUT THE CENTER FOR ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

APA's Center for Organizational Excellence works to enhance the functioning of individuals, groups, organizations and communities through the application of psychology to a broad range of workplace issues. The center houses the Psychologically Healthy Workplace Program, a public education initiative designed to engage the employer community, raise public awareness about the value psychology brings to the workplace and promote programs and policies that enhance employee well-being and organizational performance.

MORE 2018 ANALYSIS

Visit apaexcellence.org/assets/general/2018-sexual-harassment-survey-results.pdf to see our 2018 Work and Well-Being Survey findings on Workplace Sexual Harassment.

METHODOLOGY

The Work and Well-Being Survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of the American Psychological Association between February 15 and March 1, 2018, among a nationally representative sample of 1,512 adults age 18 and older who reside in the U.S. and were either employed full time, part time or self-employed. Data are weighted where necessary to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population.