

PO Box 36030
Grosse Pointe, Michigan 48236
Phone: 313 570 6084
Web: roiinsight.net

Pathways To Well-Paying Jobs

Final Research Report

Prepared for: Lou Glazer, President, Michigan Future
Lavea Brachman, Vice President of Programs, Ralph C Wilson Junior
Foundation

Prepared by: Paul King, President, ROI Insight
Mitch Crank, Qualitative Research Specialist, ROI Insight

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I. Introduction

A. Background

This research will help the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation (RCWJF) and Michigan Future continue to develop programs that positively impact the quality of life for residents living in the Southeast Michigan and Western New York regions. A primary focus of RCWJF is helping people without four-year college degrees find well-paying careers. To better measure that market and help identify the best strategy for achieving this goal, RCWJF, in partnership with Michigan Future, hired ROI Insight to design and execute a multi-modal study exploring current factors impacting workers' earning power and career success within these two service areas. The focus of this research is to study individuals who have built successful careers without a four-year college degree. The findings will reveal practices, challenges and opportunities experienced in their journey and will help direct RCWJF's future program investment strategy.

The primary goal is to learn what experiences and best practices led to and bolstered career success for these individuals. In addition, comparisons with previous research will allow us to quantify how market characteristics, perceptions, pathways, practices or experiences may have evolved over time and add richer insight into how future decisions may impact those trends.

B. Objectives

Qualitative and quantitative research components were designed to explore the various career pathways taken by individuals without a four-year college degree.

Some of the research objectives include:

- Identifying which well-paying jobs and careers are available to those without a four-year degree
- Learning when respondents became interested in their current occupations
- Learning more about respondents' skill sets and training that make them marketable to employers
- Exploring ways respondents obtained these marketable skills
- Identifying the pathways respondents took to get to their current positions

For this research we targeted individuals who:

- Are at least 18 years of age, understanding that most will likely be older than 25
- Have a personal income of at least \$40,000
- Have less than a four-year college degree

We ensured that all occupational subgroups within our target audience were represented in the focus groups and surveys, including union members, independent contractors and business owners. Additional secondary research of the regions' demographics guided the survey sampling and focus group recruiting strategies, while earlier studies served as a benchmark. Final research strategy and design for this project was approved through collaboration with Michigan Future and RCWJF.

II. Methodology

A. Qualitative Research Design & Fieldwork

To help understand the pathways followed by these adults who achieved career success, a series of eight focus groups was conducted in the last weeks of February and the first week of March 2017. One of the primary goals of these open-end sessions was to foster meaningful discussions and learn about the participants' career and life stories, gaining an understanding of the various steps followed that led them to where they are today.

A series of 8 open-end, roughly 90-minute focus groups was conducted in professional, one-way mirrored focus group facilities in Tonawanda, New York (Buffalo-Niagara Falls Metropolitan Area) and Southfield, Michigan (Detroit Metropolitan Area). All groups were audiotaped, videotaped and fully transcribed. The written transcripts are provided in the qualitative report provided separately.

Participant Profiles

All participants were adults who had graduated from high school or completed a G.E.D., but had not earned a bachelor's degree or higher.

In each of the market areas, the four groups consisted of 8 to 10 participants with the following profile:

1. All men in blue collar jobs, ages 25-60 who earn \$40,000+ annually
2. Men & women ages 25-40 in 'pink collar' jobs who earn \$40,000+ annually
3. Men & women ages 41-65 in 'pink collar' jobs who earn \$50,000+ annually
4. All women (any occupation), ages 25-65 who earn \$40,000+ annually

Key findings and conclusions from the focus groups are included in this final report to support and provide background for the quantitative findings.

B. Quantitative Research Design & Fieldwork

Previous research (1999 Detroit Pathways Study) was used to draft the initial template of our survey instrument. That draft was then amended and optimized for this study through collaboration with Michigan Future and RCWJF. In addition, the findings and analysis of the qualitative research identified areas requiring further exploration in the quantitative phase. Thus, further amendments were made to the survey instrument.

Surveys were conducted through a combination of phone (land line and cell) and online interviews. Given the challenges inherent in survey research today, we believe multi-modal collection techniques are more likely to yield a representative sample of the target audience. Quite simply, individuals prefer to communicate in various ways, depending on demographics, education, experiences and peer groups. Using multiple channels to communicate improves the probability that everyone in the target audience has a chance to be included in the sample — the very nature of random sampling.

Using census tract data, the survey sample was demographically balanced to be representative of the target audience within each region. A regional goal of 400 completed interviews was set ($n=800$ in total) to limit the margin of error to ± 4.9 within each region and ± 3.5 for the total sample. To achieve this, we used a combination of targeted phone sampling and online survey panels. Our goal was to complete 50% of the interviews by phone and 50% online. While we exceeded our online sampling goals, we expended additional time, effort and money to complete the telephone interviewing.

Polling in the most recent presidential election demonstrated the difficulty pollsters face when sampling individuals without four-year college degrees. Research suggests that their significant distrust of pollsters and marketers causes a risk of higher non-response bias in this demographic sector, creating a unique barrier to communication with them. In addition, there are challenges in selecting the best channel through which to engage them. The very nature of this study required us to have an in-depth discussion with them, necessitating the multi-modal approach. Overcoming these challenges required doubled efforts by our data collection team.

We spent roughly one full month in the field (3/20/17 through 4/19/17), approximately two weeks longer than the proposed fieldwork timeline estimate. Several sampling adjustments were made while in the field to improve our response rates, including purchasing additional phone sample from various research sampling sources and making additional appeals to online panelists who fit our candidate profile. Over that month, more than 400,000 attempts were made to engage respondents in both regions through phone calls and email messages. Those attempts garnered more than 13,000 individual conversations. Of those, roughly 1,000 potential respondents qualified for the

survey. Seven hundred and sixty-three (763) respondents completed interviews. Two-hundred and forty-six (246) were completed by phone and 517 were completed online.

Demographic quotas were lifted toward the end of the fieldwork to improve response rates. We weighted the final data to reflect our original demographic/geographic stratification, which is representative of the target audience within each region. This type of weighting can sometimes cause minor data anomalies in the final reporting. Please contact us if any questions arise.

Given the total sample size of 763, the margin of error for the quantitative component can be reliably set at ± 3.5 percent or less using a 95 percent confidence interval. That margin of error increases for smaller subsamples. For example, the margin of error for the Western New York subsample ($n=373$) is ± 5.06 percent or less, while the Southeast Michigan subsample ($n=390$) has a margin of error of ± 4.95 percent or less.

It is understood that there are inherent limits to the findings and interpretations of all research of this nature, given the error involved and the challenges faced in engaging respondents. That said, the stories collected herein and the quantitative findings that buttress them provide a powerful and accurate account of the challenges faced and goals achieved by those who succeed in their career without a four-year college degree. Furthermore, this report provides a roadmap for Michigan Future and RCWJF to help other like individuals achieve their goals.

A full description of the sampling frame, a copy of the survey instrument, aggregated survey results and the cross-tabulated data tables used in this report are included in the appendices.

III. Detailed Analysis of Findings

A. Overview

The job market for individuals without a four-year college degree has certainly changed since 1999, the last time this type of research was conducted (in Detroit only). Today's still-recovering economy thrives on adaptability and innovation and that is reflected in this most recent data. Based on the survey data, managerial, business and financial jobs lead the way in Southeast Michigan, but blue-collar jobs also make up approximately 27% of the market there. Jobs are more evenly spread across various sectors in the Western New York region, with blue-collar jobs making up a bigger portion of the market (35%). Meanwhile the job market continues to evolve with ongoing growth in various sectors including IT and health care. Given that continued evolution, our research shows that today's successful career builders are prevailing by learning and adapting to change, mirroring some conclusions from the 1999 study.

Overall, most of the individuals participating in this study share similar traits that drive their success. As stated above, two of the most significant traits are adaptability to change and hunger for knowledge. In addition, the qualitative and quantitative research revealed that they also possess qualities like patience, persistence and kindness to others.

These qualities help them overcome challenges and meet goals throughout their careers. Many said situations throughout their lives forced them to seek another job within the same organization or elsewhere. However, confidence in their ability to take on a new role is also pervasive among these individuals and they fight on. They intrinsically understand that it takes time, effort, strategy, networking and continued learning to advance their careers. Those who don't naturally possess these traits risk an inability to recover from a career setback or to seize a new opportunity.

From this research, we see at least four distinct groups with clearly different personalities and varied behaviors for navigating their career pathways. Many are less proactive but still calculating, finding a good job early on and taking on new roles only as they are given to them. There are also those who are aggressive in nature and proactive in seizing opportunities as they come into view or making new ones if none exist. Those two groups makeup the ends of the bell curve, with majority of the audience falling somewhere in the middle. Furthermore, the need for more access to professional growth and career advancement opportunities is borne out by the research data. Those needs evolve depending on career variables like their occupation, level of education required for their jobs and income earned, but there is clearly a demand for additional training and education on various levels.

The following detailed analysis of findings provides comprehensive insight into the evolution of those needs and offers data driven solutions to meet them.

B. Findings

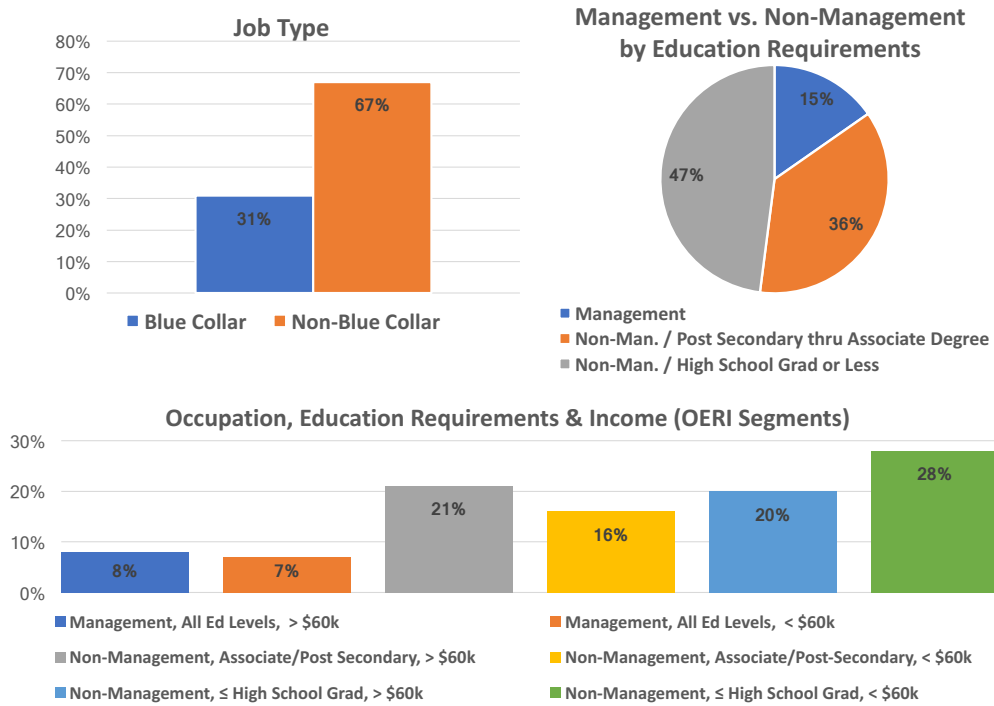
Segmenting the Audience (OERI Categories)

For this analysis, we created audience segments that reflect the findings of the focus groups and stay consistent with the quantitative and secondary data analyses. This segmentation strategy categorizes occupations by the following criteria:

- 1) Managers and first line supervisor occupations (in all fields) that pay more than the 75th percentile, roughly \$60,000 annually. (n=59)
- 2) Managers and first line supervisor occupations (in all fields) that pay less than the 75th percentile (\$60,000) but more than \$40,000 annually. (n=53)
- 3) Non-managerial occupations that require an Associate degree or some post-secondary education or certification, paying more than \$60,000 annually. (n=157)
- 4) Non-managerial occupations that require an Associate degree or some post-secondary education or certification, paying less than \$60,000, but more than \$40,000 annually. (n=121)
- 5) Non-managerial occupations that have no education requirements (high school grad or less), paying more than \$60,000 annually. (n=150)
- 6) Non-managerial occupations that have no education requirements (high school grad or less), paying less than \$60,000, but more than \$40,000 annually. (n=211)

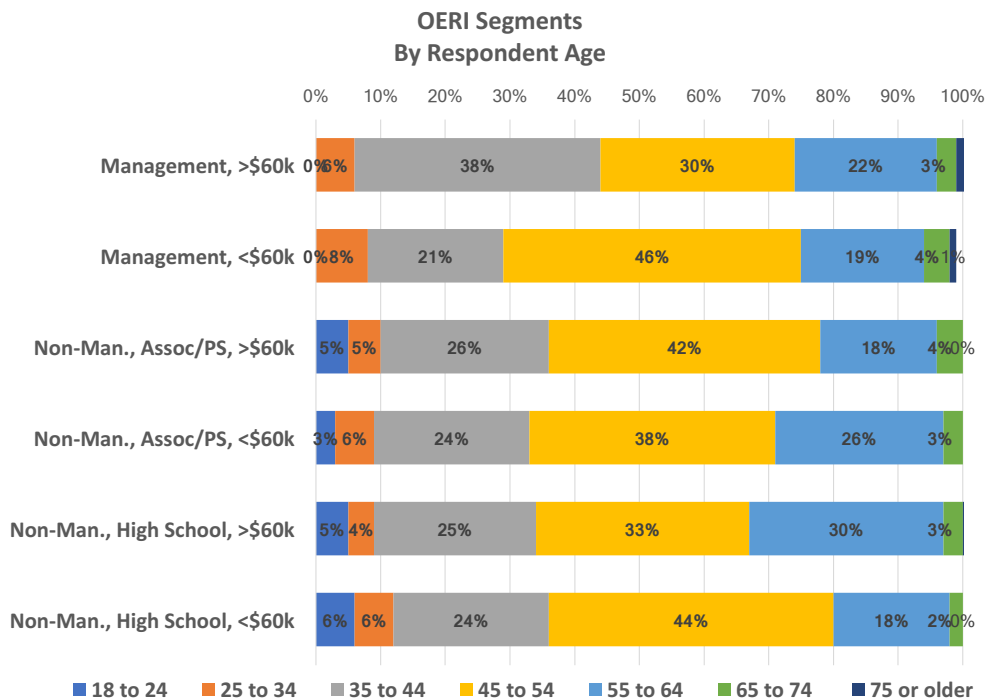
We gave this group of segments the acronym "OERI," which stands for Occupation, Education Requirements, and Income. We used the United States Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS) occupation groupings (<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>), BLS occupation education requirements and the survey data to categorize respondents. In addition, we created separate segments for blue-collar workers and non-blue-collar workers. We analyzed variances in responses, perceptions and reported behaviors across each of these segments to better understand their individual motivators, challenges, best practices and pain points. The following graphs show some of the demographic information of the OERI segments and begin to provide a better understanding the characteristics of each.

Fig. 1



In the graph below you will notice that those in the two “management” segments tend to be slightly older than the “non-management” segments.

Fig. 2



The following graphs clearly indicate gender and race gaps in wages across all segments. More than two-thirds of those making \$60,000 annually are men, while women make up roughly half to a majority of those making less than \$60,000/yr. Whites also make up a majority of all segments, while African Americans are more likely to be found in the jobs paying less than \$60,000/annually.

Fig. 3

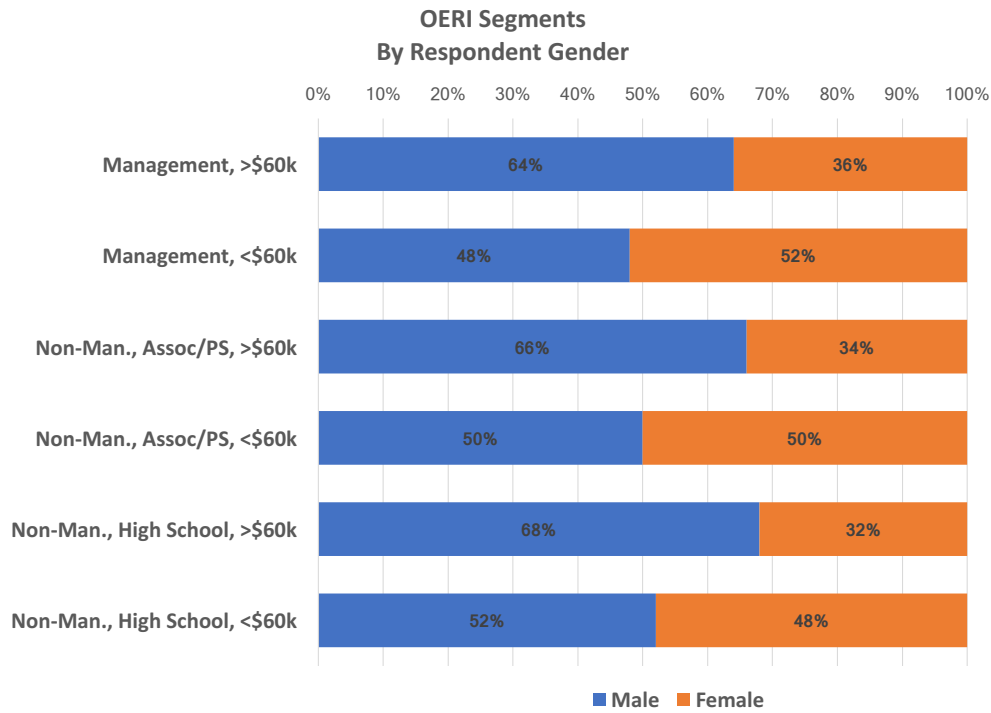
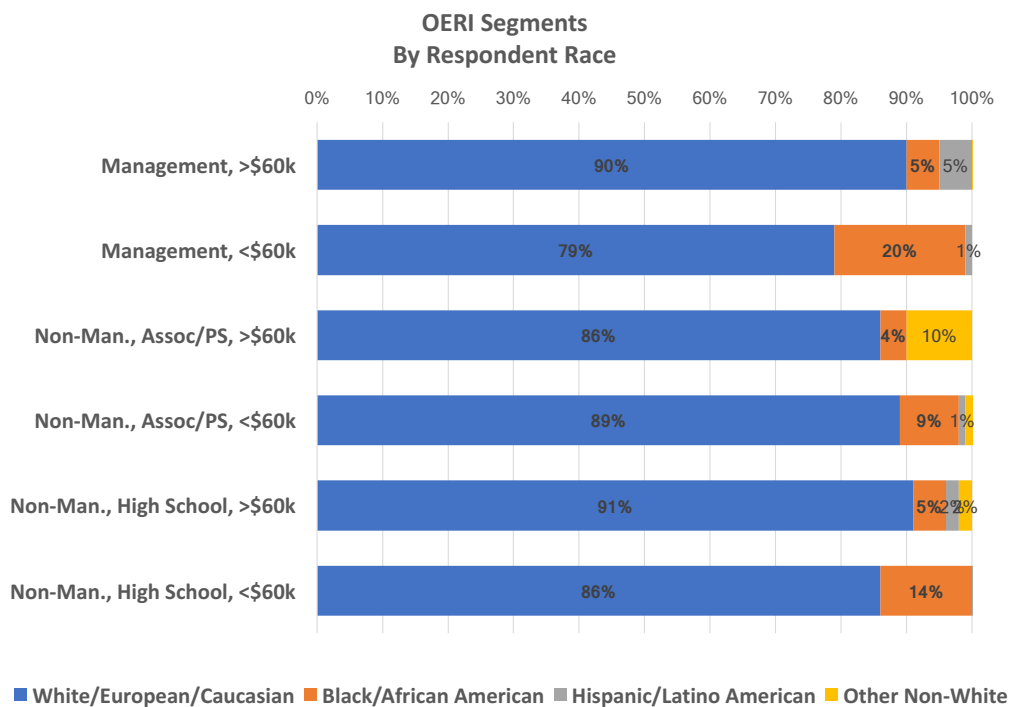


Fig. 4



Where are the well-paying jobs for those without a four-year degree?

We asked our audience to describe their current jobs.

FROM THE FOCUS GROUPS:

- *Roughly 80 participants held a wide range of jobs in several different career fields. For example, in the two blue-collar all-men groups (#1 and 5), careers include mechanics, machinists, truck drivers, electrical contractors, auto manufacturer line workers, landscapers and construction professionals. In the six remaining groups (which included four pink collar and two all women) both skilled and non-skilled workers from several market sectors participated, including healthcare fields, city and state government, public schools and insurance, and banking, investment and insurance.*

FROM THE SURVEY:

Using the BLS occupation groupings, a plurality of respondents (15%) work in management or supervisory positions across all fields, followed by those in sales (10%); business and finance (10%); office and administrative support (10%); production or manufacturing (9%); transportation and material moving (8%); construction and extraction (6%); healthcare (5%); and installation, maintenance and repair (4%).

Sales, maintenance/repair and construction jobs are more heavily concentrated in Western New York, management, business/finance, office support, healthcare and education are more heavily concentrated in Southeast Michigan.

These findings are demonstrated in the following graph and table.

Fig. 5

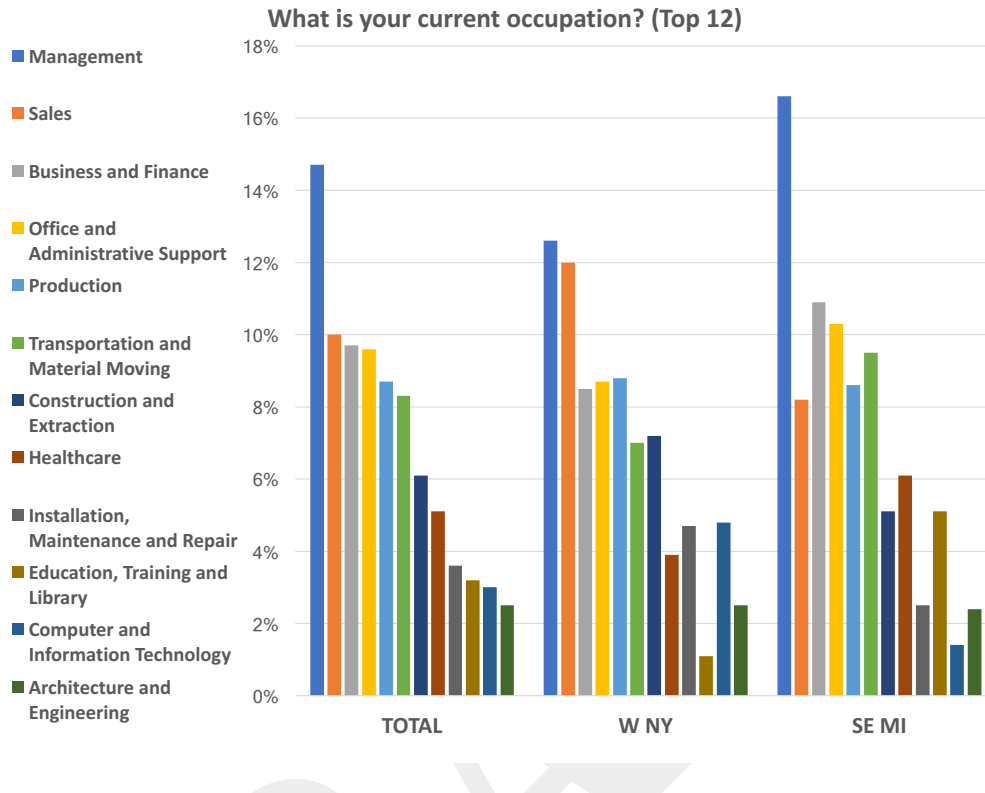


Fig. 6

What is your current occupation?

	TOTAL	W NY	SE MI
Management	14.70%	12.60%	16.60%
Sales	10.00%	12.00%	8.20%
Business and Finance	9.70%	8.50%	10.90%
Office and Administrative Support	9.60%	8.70%	10.30%
Production	8.70%	8.80%	8.60%
Transportation and Material Moving	8.30%	7.00%	9.50%
Construction and Extraction	6.10%	7.20%	5.10%
Healthcare	5.10%	3.90%	6.10%
Installation, Maintenance and Repair	3.60%	4.70%	2.50%
Education, Training and Library	3.20%	1.10%	5.10%
Computer and Information Technology	3.00%	4.80%	1.40%
Architecture and Engineering	2.50%	2.50%	2.40%
Building and Grounds Cleaning	2.20%	3.20%	1.20%
Farming, Fishing and Forestry	2.10%	2.10%	2.20%
Protective Services	2.10%	4.00%	0.30%
Food Preparation and Serving	2.10%	2.20%	1.90%
Personal Care and Service	1.80%	1.60%	2.00%
Arts and Design	1.30%	1.60%	1.00%
Life, Physical and Social Science	1.00%	0.00%	2.00%
Legal	0.60%	0.70%	0.40%
Media and Communication	0.40%	0.30%	0.50%
Entertainment and Sports	0.20%	0.00%	0.50%
Military	0.10%	0.20%	0.00%

Women are more likely to dominate the office support (17%), business/finance (16%), management (16%), sales (11%), health care (9%) and education (4%) fields. Men are most likely to be in management (14%), transportation/material moving (11%), production/manufacturing (11%) and construction (9%), sales (9%), maintenance/repair (6%), computers/IT (4%), office support (4%) and architecture/engineering (4%).

Those below the age of 35 are more likely to be in sales (22%), management (10%) or education (10%).

Those with a high school education or less are more likely to be in production/manufacturing (14%), management (13%), transportation/materials moving (12%) or sales (12%), while those with an Associate degree are more likely to be in management (16%), business/finance (16%) or health care (13%).

COMPARISONS WITH 1999:

- *The Detroit survey in 1999 found that the top three jobs in Metro Detroit were "technicians" (24%), "precision production, crafts and repair" (20%) and "managers and owners" (18%). Within the City of Detroit, the top jobs were "business and office" (21%), "machine operators, assemblers and inspectors" (21%) and "managers and owners" (10%).*

Length of Time in Their Current Job

A plurality (25%) of respondents to the survey say they've worked in their current job for between 10 and 20 years, while slightly fewer (24%) say they've been in that job for more than 20 years. That is nearly half of the respondents working at their current job for more than 10 years. Another 17% said 5 to 10 years, 14% said 2 to 5 years, 9% said 1 to 2 years and 10% said less than one year. Clearly respondents are more likely to stay in the same job for 5 years or more, but blue-collar workers (32%) and those making more than \$60,000 in non-management positions with no education requirements (36%) are significantly more likely to have worked in their current field for more than 20 years. Those making less than \$60,000 in non-management positions with no education requirements are more likely to be in their field for less than 10 years.

Data variances by geographic region and OERI segments are demonstrated in the following graphs.

Fig. 7

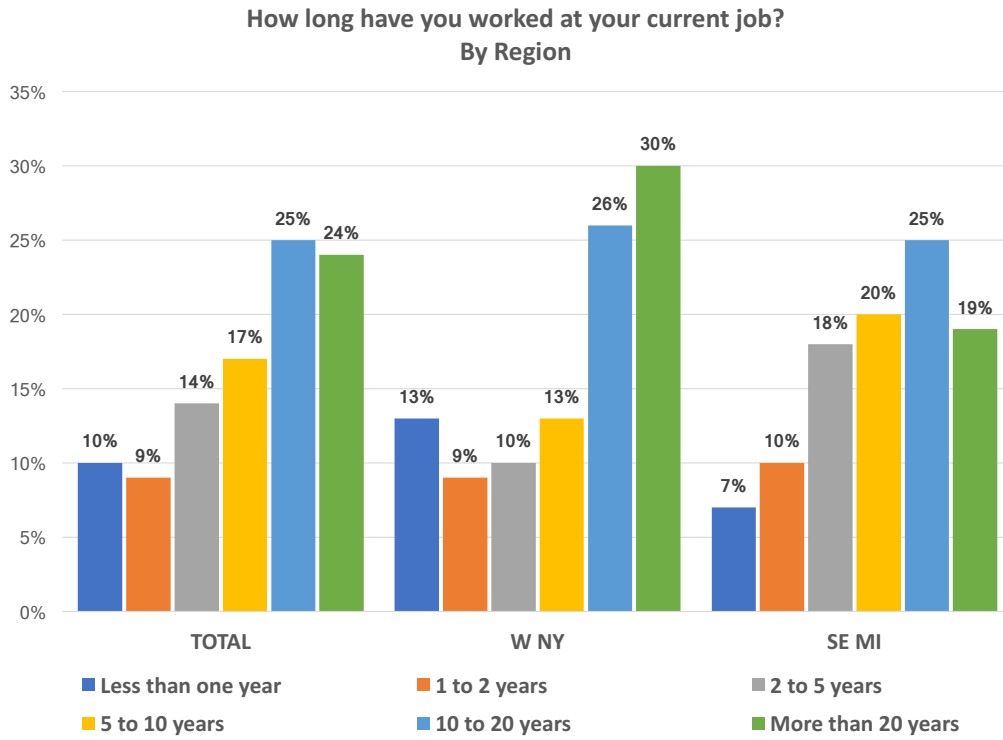
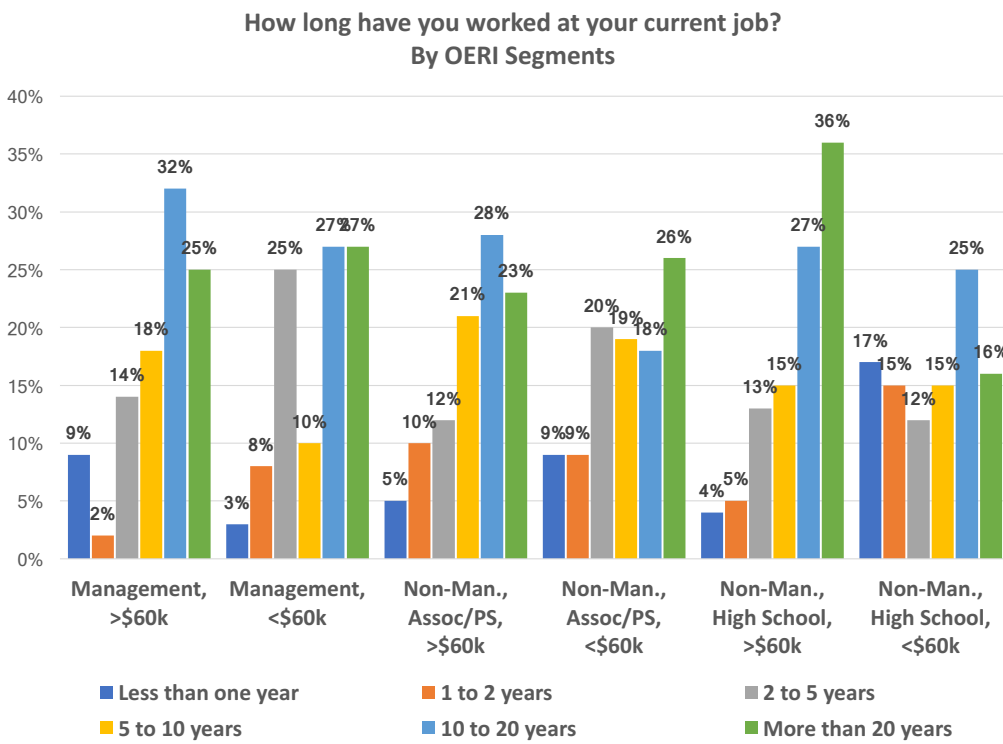


Fig. 8



A plurality (34%) said they started to pursue their current occupation between the ages of 19 and 24, followed by twenty-three percent saying they were between ages 25 and 29. While 54% of men say they decided to pursue their career before age 25, women said they made that decision later in life (68% after the age of 25). Also, those making more than \$60,000 in management positions and those in making less than \$60,000 in non-management positions requiring some college are more likely to pursue their careers earlier. These variances are demonstrated in the following graphs.

Fig. 9 How old were you when you decided to pursue your current line of work as a profession?

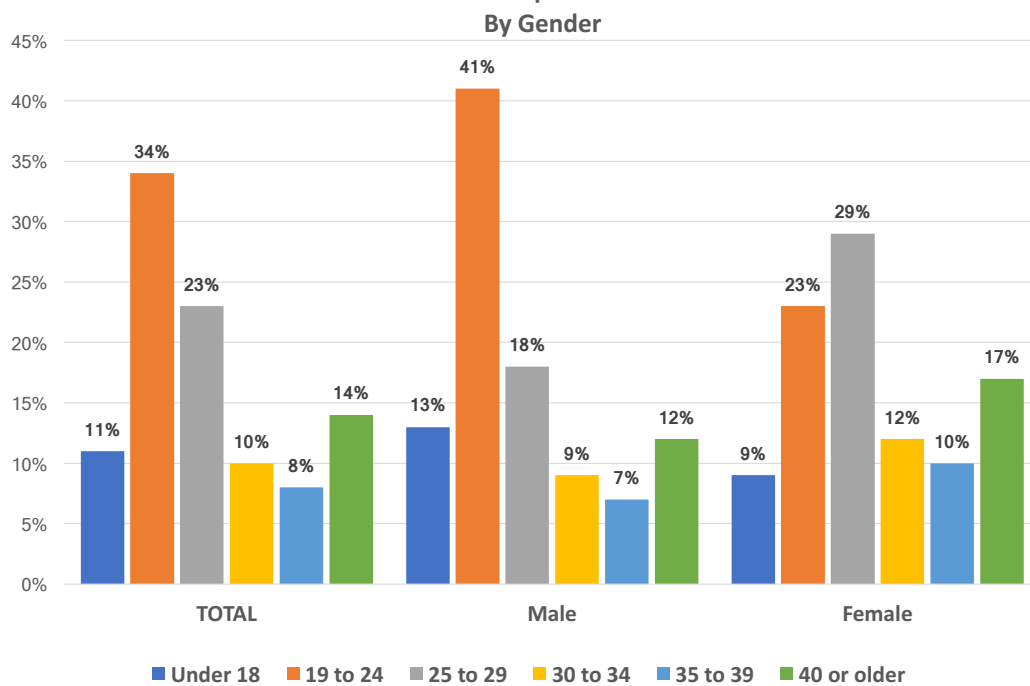
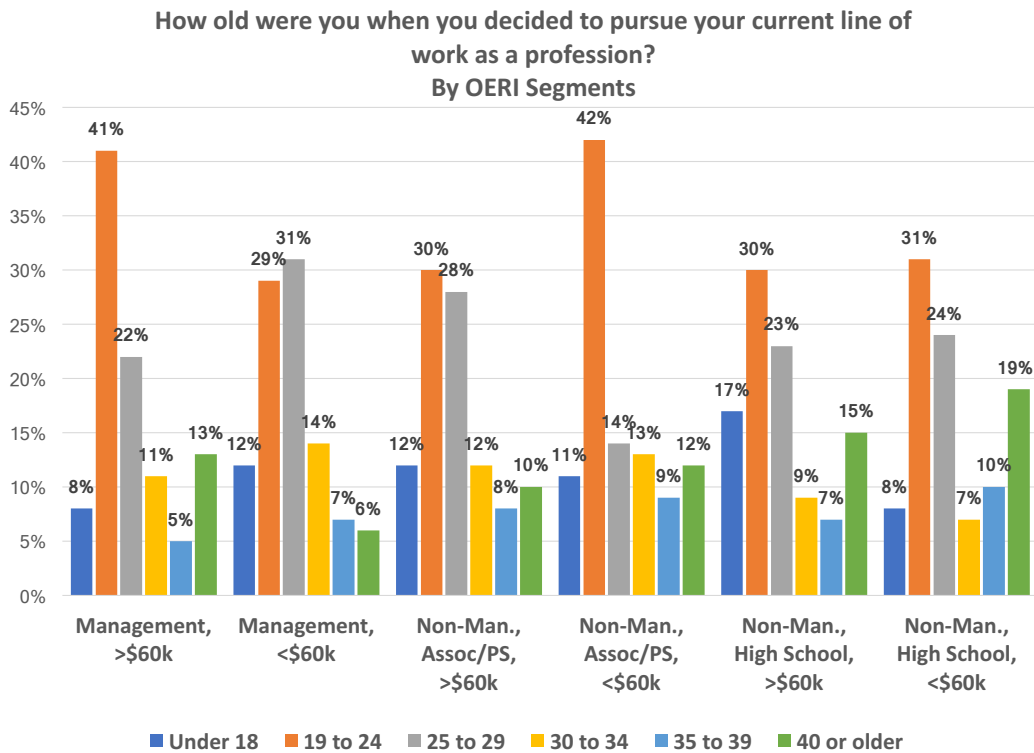


Fig. 10



COMPARISONS WITH 1999:

- *In 1999, 55% of Metro Detroiters and 44% of Detroit high school graduates said they decided by age 22 to pursue the work they are in now. Nearly three times as many Detroit high school graduates as Metro Detroiters reported deciding on a career path by age 30 (13% vs. 5%). Fifty-two percent (52%) of Metro Detroiters took the first job in their current line of work by age 22, and 78% took their first job in their field by age 26. Among Detroit graduates, 44% took their first job in their current line of work by age 22.*

The Pathways to Success

The research shows that most respondents have held a variety of jobs throughout their careers, but many settle into roles that provide them with additional opportunities for professional growth or increased wages and benefits until retirement.

FROM THE FOCUS GROUPS:

- *Our participants' fields of employment were wide ranging with varied career paths. Some worked for only one employer or in a single field their entire working lives. Many had held a variety of jobs and several years of experience with their current employer or field.*

- *At least a few in each group had served in the military. These experiences were universally respected for instilling sense of discipline, teamwork and focus.*
- *Among those who had worked for one employer or stayed in a single, narrow career field for their entire career to date, some truly loved their job, employer and career field and considered themselves lucky to have those jobs. Others didn't necessarily love their jobs, but valued the length of their employment and that they were near retirement. This was also a significant disincentive to change employers.*
- *Many had (by choice or circumstance) experienced a significant number of job and career field changes. For some – particularly those over forty – their career paths involved several jobs with various employers.*

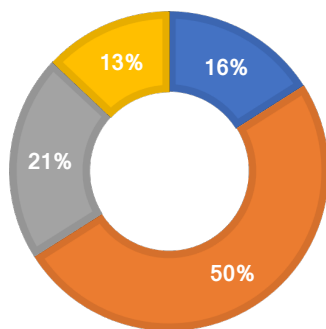
FROM THE SURVEY:

When describing their own career path, most believe it has been neither particularly difficult nor easy (23% easy, 17% hard and 59% somewhere in the middle). However, a strong majority says they've had at least three different jobs at three different companies throughout their adult career. Eighty-four percent (84%) say they've had at least three jobs throughout their career (50% have had between 3 and 5, while 34% have had 6 or more). Similar percentages (81%) say they've worked for at least three different companies. These findings are demonstrated on the following graphs.

Fig. 11

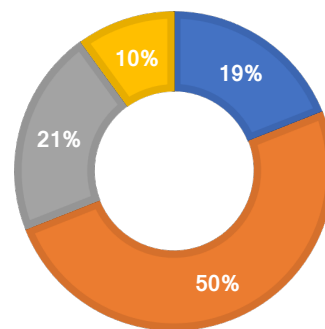
Number Of Jobs/Positions Throughout Career

■ 1 to 2 ■ 3 to 5 ■ 6 to 9 ■ 10 or more



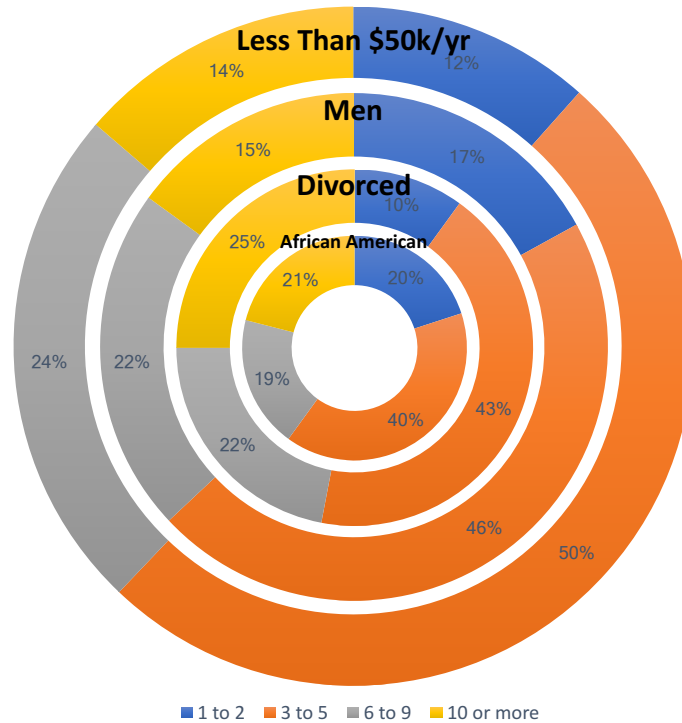
Number Of Employers Throughout Career

■ 1 to 2 ■ 3 to 5 ■ 6 to 9 ■ 10 or more



The significant variances in the data are found among African Americans, men, those who are divorced, and those making less than \$50k per year. Respondents with those demographic characteristics are more likely than other groups to say they've worked at 10 or more jobs over their adult careers.

Fig. 12



When looking at variances across OERI segments, it's clear that those in non-management jobs making less than \$60,000 per year are more likely than others to be working in more than five jobs or companies throughout their careers. Those making more than \$60,000 in non-management jobs are more likely than others to be working in fewer than three jobs or companies throughout their careers. These findings are demonstrated on the following graphs.

Fig. 13

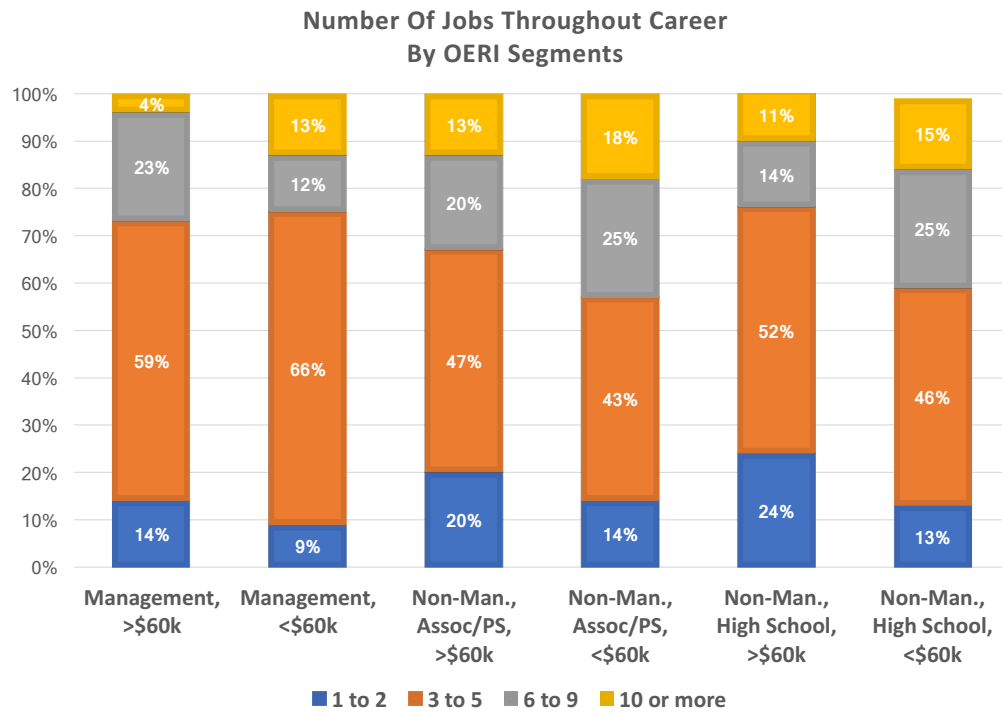
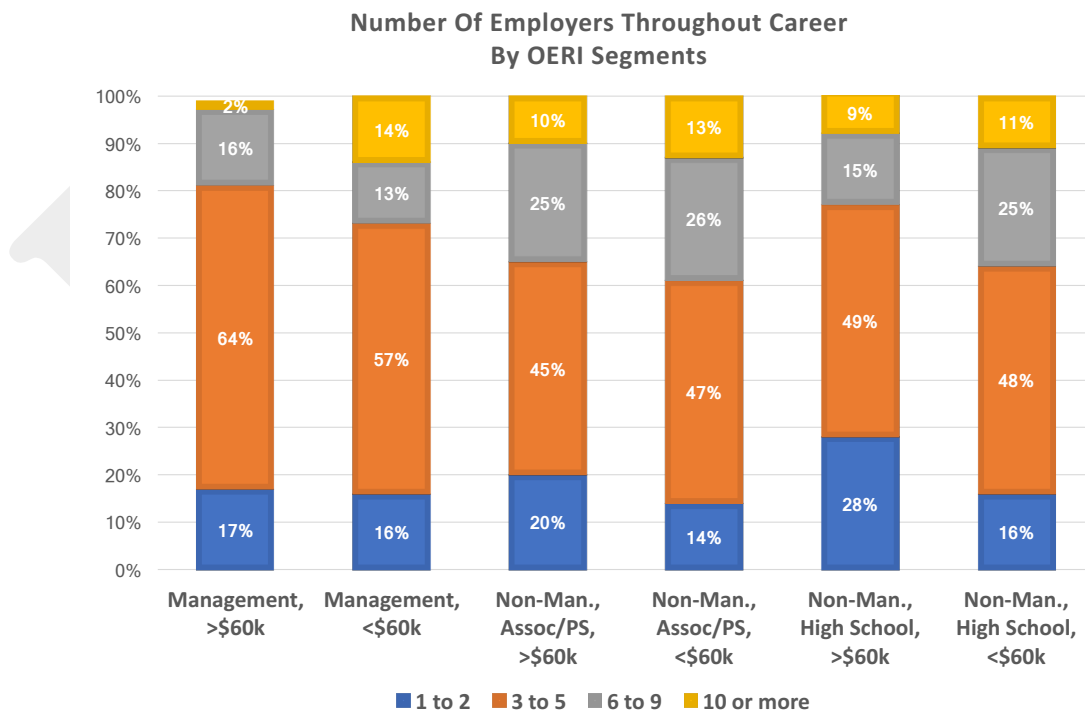


Fig. 14



To further segment the audience, based on their personalities, experiences and behaviors throughout their career, we created the following four descriptions of varied career paths and asked respondents to choose which one best describes their own:

A: A slow straight line; meaning you found your current job and have taken on few additional roles throughout your career.

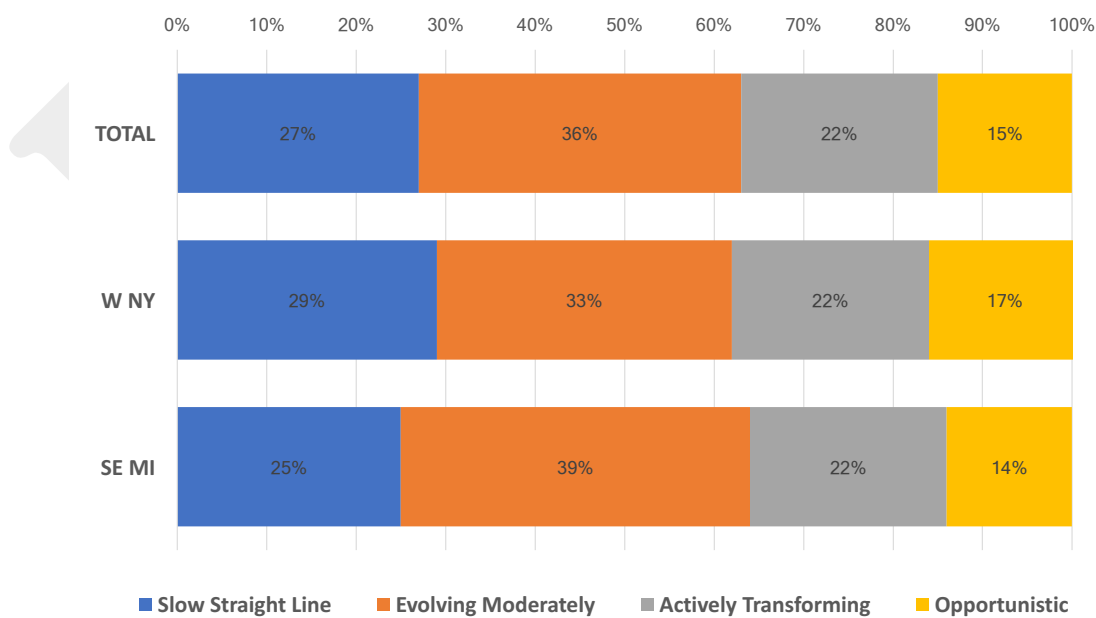
B: Evolving moderately; meaning you take on new roles and responsibilities only as they are given to you by my superiors.

C: Actively transforming; meaning you choose or are sometimes forced to actively seek out other positions within the same field and use your portable skills to obtain them.

D: Opportunistic; meaning you strategically change jobs and fields of work often, taking advantage of your portable skills to find and get higher paying jobs.

More than one-third (36%) describe their career path as “evolving moderately,” or essentially making the most of the jobs/roles that are given to them by their superiors. More than one-quarter (27%) describe their career path is a “slow straight line,” meaning they took few, if any, additional roles since beginning their career. Just over one-fifth (22%) say they are “actively transforming,” or proactively taking on new roles within the same field. While only 15% say they are “opportunistic,” or aggressive when going after new and better roles inside or outside of their field. These findings are demonstrated on the following graph.

Fig. 15 Which best describes your career path?



Those with only a high school diploma or less are most likely to describe their career paths as a “slow straight line” (31%) and least likely to be “opportunistic” (12%). Those with an Associate degree are most likely to be “opportunistic” (20%) and least likely to have a “slow straight line” (22%) career path. While a plurality (40%) of those in blue collar jobs fall within the “evolving moderately” segment, non-blue-collar workers are slightly more evenly spread out.

In addition, those under the age of 35 are more likely than others to describe their career path as a “slow straight line” (35%) and least likely to describe it as “opportunistic” (7%), which may reflect some of the generational disconnect that the qualitative research revealed.

When looking at OERI segments, those making more than \$60,000 in management positions and those with some college experience making \$60,000+ in non-management roles are most likely to be “actively transforming,” meaning somewhat more aggressive.

These variances in the data demonstrated in the following graphs.

Fig. 16

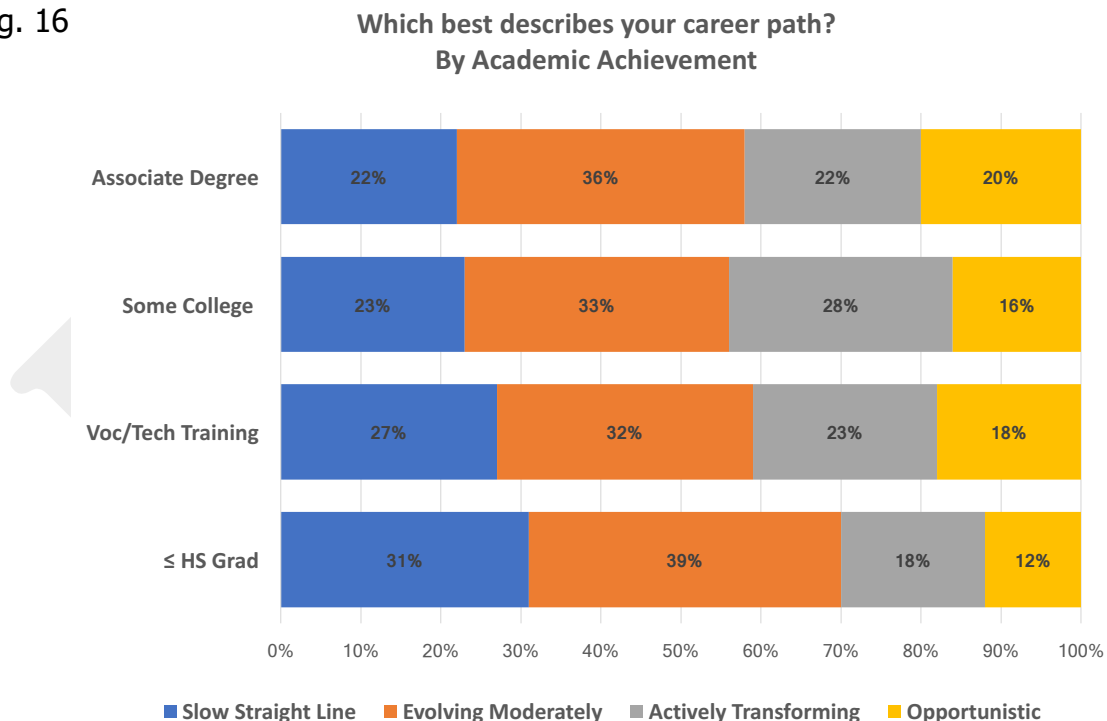


Fig. 17

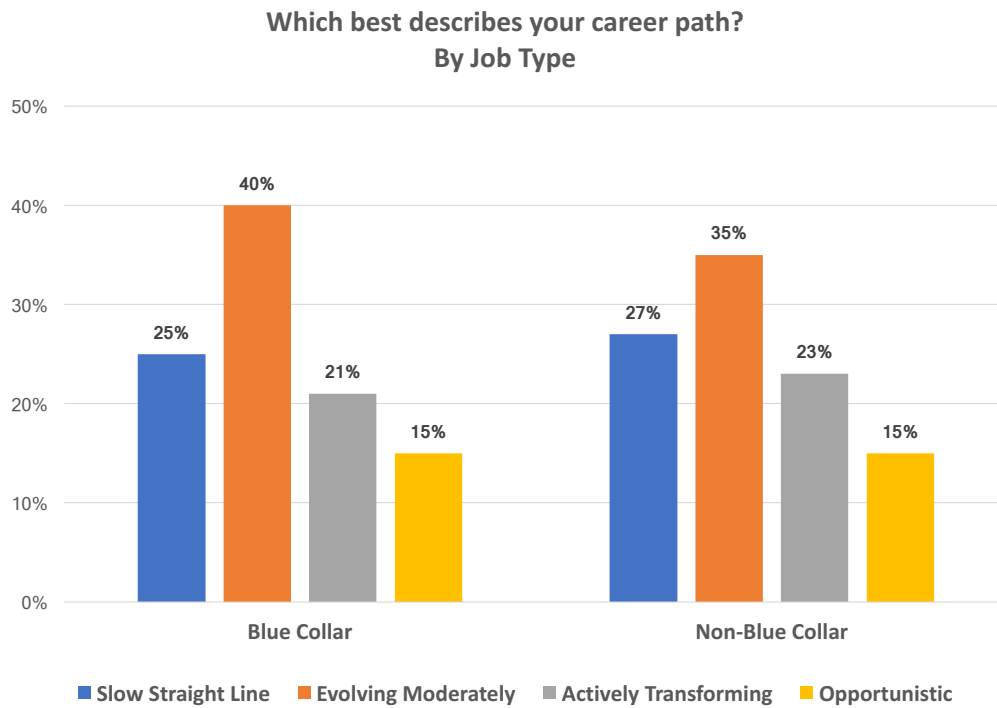


Fig. 18

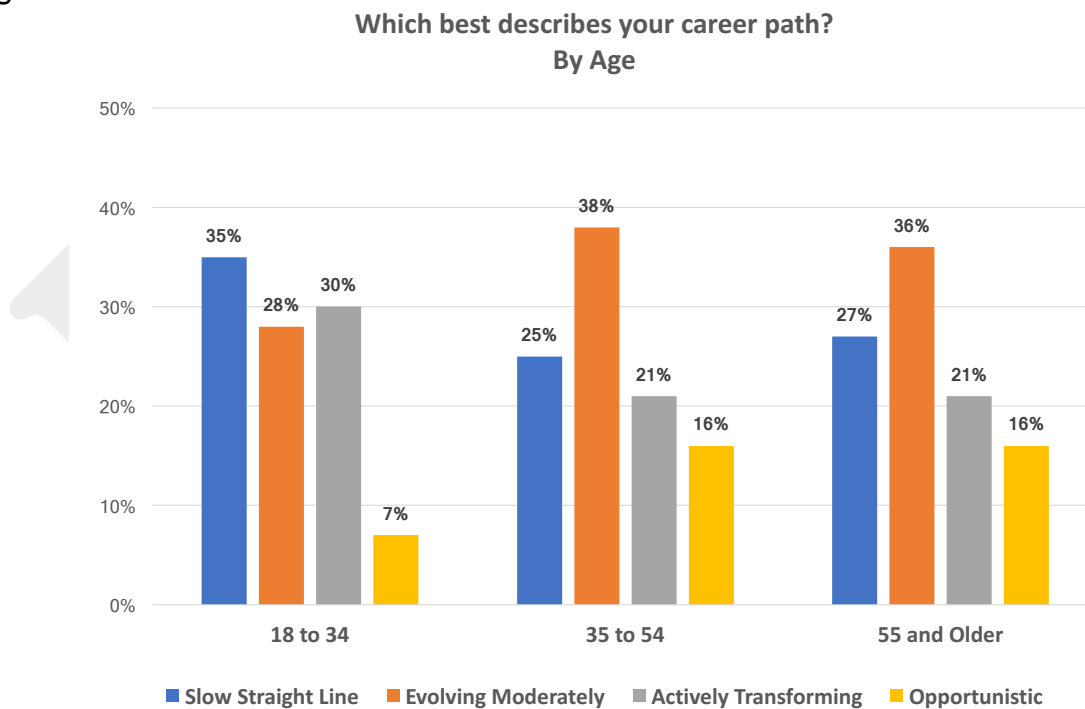
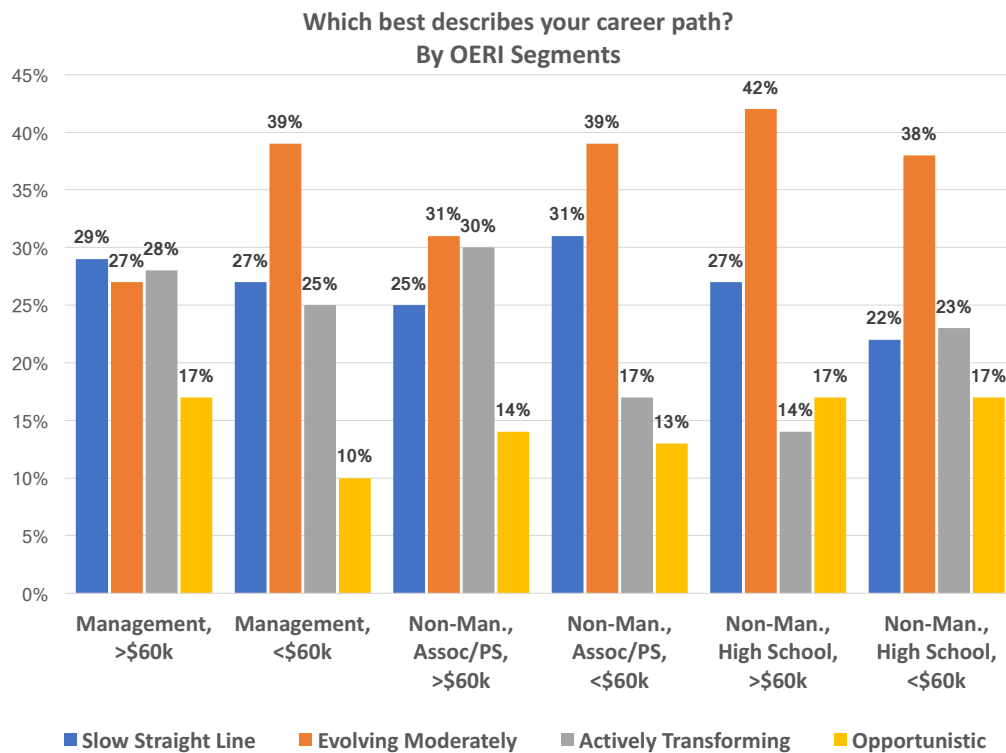


Fig. 19



COMPARISONS WITH 1999:

- *The 1999 Detroit research found that the path Metro Detroiters and Detroit high school graduates took to their good-paying jobs resembled the path one would take up a climbing wall rather than one would take up a ladder. Advancement was more of an ad-hoc path upward, moving laterally if necessary, to get a better foothold before moving up. The two most important skills that could be attributed to those individuals' success were perseverance and resourcefulness.*

Our findings suggest that the “rock climber” analogy from 1999 holds true today, with some added nuance. The data analysis reveals a range of climber types based on climbing ability, access to tools, motivation to climb and preferred degree of difficulty. While some indicate a preference for a more measured approach with adequate safety equipment in place, others are willing to take bigger risks and are likely to be more aggressive in their climbing style. Analogy aside, this indicates a need for a diverse array of programs to address the needs of each segment of this audience.

Additional research is likely required to further define these segments, their members and their specific needs, but it is clear these segments exist.

Defining Their Job Satisfaction, Career Success and Job Security

Respondents are generally satisfied with their current job and career success to date and most are clearly confident in their job security.

FROM THE FOCUS GROUPS:

- *There were only a few participants who were pessimistic about their career job security, even though some see how technology and other market forces are rapidly impacting their industry. Others shared mergers and acquisitions were realistic possibilities that may force them to relocate or lose their jobs. Even those who were worried tended to believe they had the job skills, experience and connections necessary to land a new position.*
- *Participants were mostly optimistic about their future job prospects. For some nearing the end of full-time employment, they believe they need to just "hang on" or "put in the time" to qualify for full retirement. Many did not intend to entirely discontinue working. Some of the younger skilled workers were especially optimistic. Many were confident their career field would grow – particularly those in information technology and healthcare. Others in the skilled trades see many coworkers nearing retirement and remain confident their skills and talents will continue to fulfill a need.*

FROM THE SURVEY:

Nearly 6 in 10 respondents (59%) give their current job a satisfaction rating of 8, 9 or 10, the most positive scores on a one-to-ten rating scale. The overall mean rating is 7.5. A slightly higher percentage (63%) say they are very satisfied (score of 8, 9 or 10) with their career success (Mean=7.74). An even higher percentage (64%) say they are very confident (score of 8, 9 or 10) in their career job security (Mean=7.8). These findings are demonstrated in the following graphs.

Fig. 20

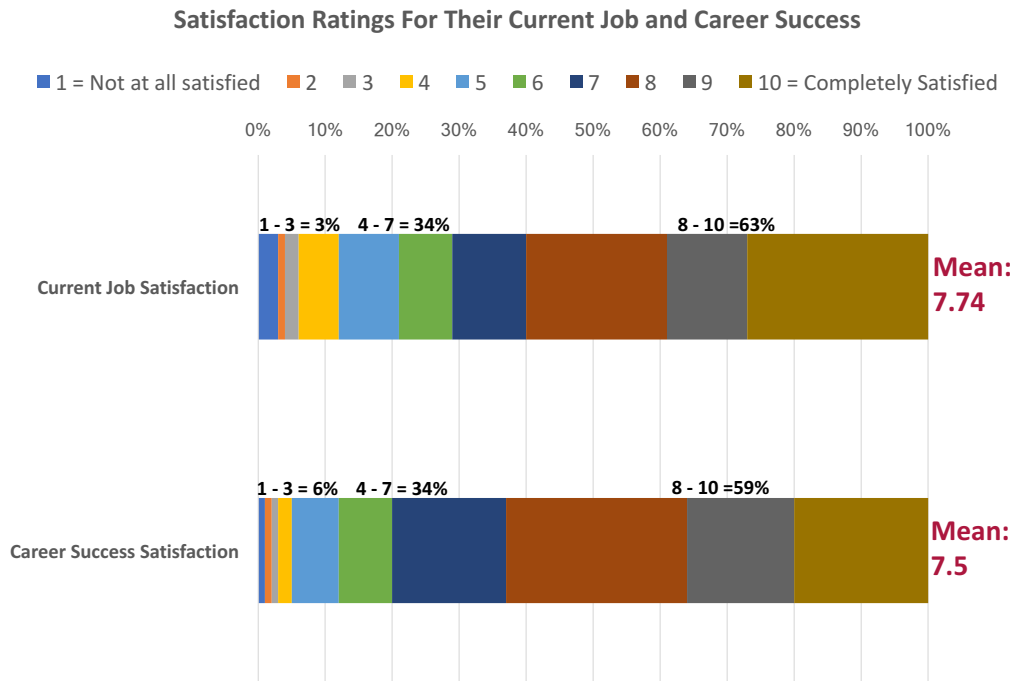
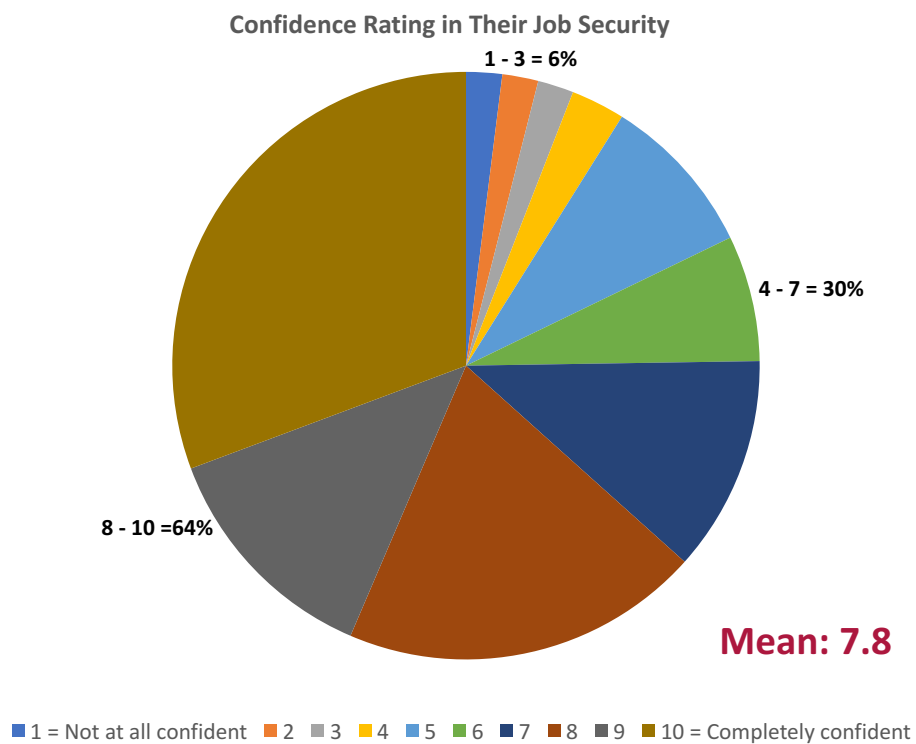


Fig. 21



Those most significantly satisfied and optimistic about their current job, career success and job security are those who define their career paths as “opportunistic” job and those making \$60k or more. Those least satisfied with their current jobs are those with only a high school diploma in non-managerial jobs making less than \$60,000. However, they are nearly as optimistic about their career success and job security as the other segments. These findings are demonstrated in the following graphs.

Fig. 22

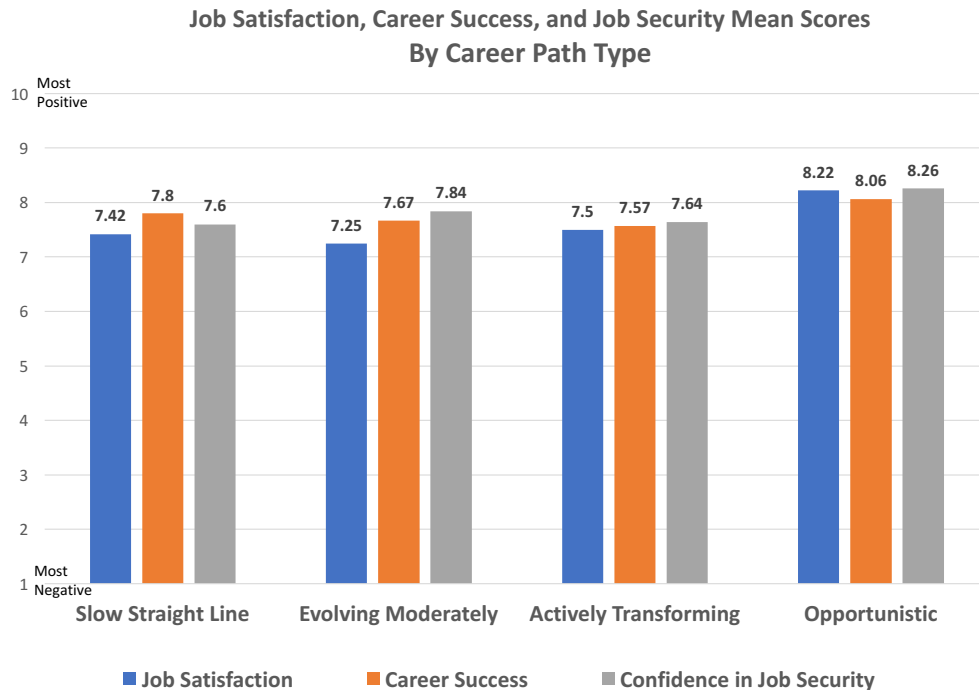
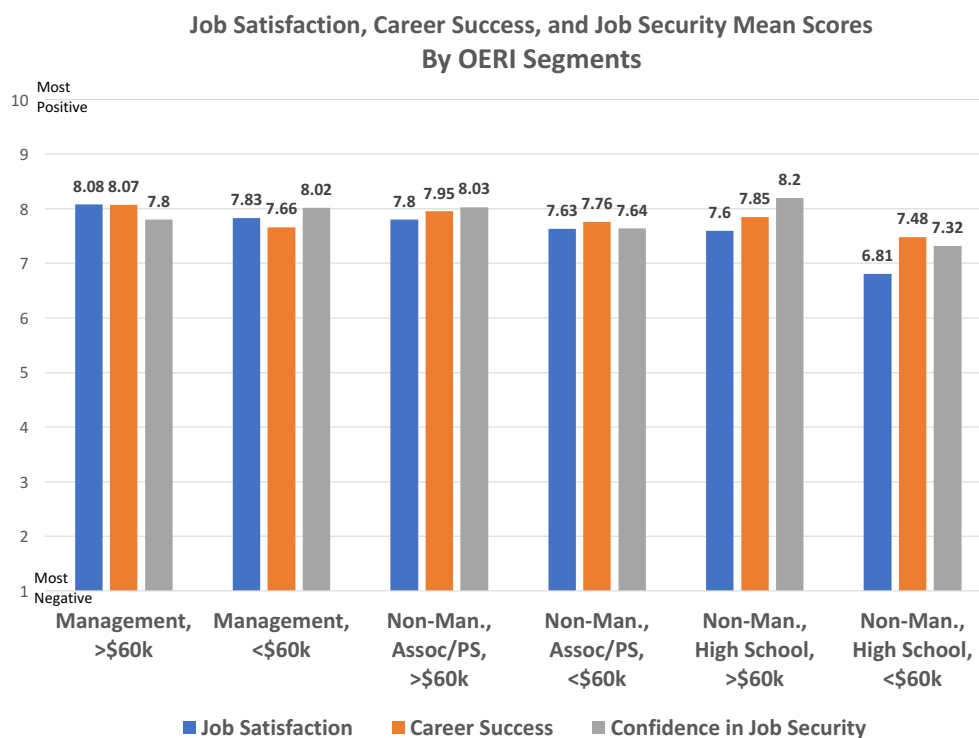


Fig. 23



COMPARISONS WITH 1999:

- *Sixty percent (60%) of Metro Detroiters said they were very satisfied with their current job, while 34% said they were somewhat satisfied. Detroit high school graduates were equally divided (45% very satisfied/43% somewhat satisfied).*
- *Nine of ten (89%) Metro Detroiters said they were either very satisfied (59%) or somewhat satisfied (30%) with their job security. Similarly, 85% of Detroit high school graduates said they were satisfied with their job security (48% very/37% somewhat).*

Academic Achievement and Job Qualification Requirements

To better understand the level of education achieved by these individuals and how those academic assets influence their career success, we asked respondents and participants to describe their educational backgrounds and skills acquired.

FROM THE FOCUS GROUPS:

- *Perhaps fifty-percent of our participants had earned an associate’s degree or completed a certification or other degree program. Quite a few had earned some credits at a two or four-year college or university; a few nearly completed an associate’s or bachelor’s program. Many attend employer or government*

mandated training seminars provided either at the workplace or off site. Although some thought much of their formal education had little impact on their current success (typically if they were not in that line of work), others credited formal training and degrees earned with empowering their on-the-job effectiveness.

- *Nearly all participants had completed either classes or training programs to be qualified for his or her job. Whether it was formal education, on the job training or informal learning on their own or at work, education and training is a key factor of career success for most.*
- *Many employers offer and / or demand on-the-job training. In some cases, the mandated training was considered a waste of time. Typically these instances involved state, federal or industry required re-certifications or simple continuing education. Other mandated training is required to teach employees new techniques, technologies or orient them to different machines or ways of doing business. For some, their talents were noticed and their career mobility was rapid. As they were promoted, they learned how to meet and often exceed the new demands of their positions.*
- *Most of our participants educated themselves well beyond what was mandated by their employers or professions. Many attended conferences, googled information of professional interest or otherwise committed to improving their job related knowledge and skills. Quite a bit of training / education occurs informally in the work place. Ambitious, curious employees learn from watching their peers and supervisors competently complete their own work responsibilities. In many instances, supervisors and managers see and appreciate this interest and reach out to share what they know with their subordinates. Good mentors also were credited with giving praise and prompting diligent subordinates to seek out higher level, more challenging positions.*

FROM THE SURVEY:

A plurality of respondents (45%) has a high school diploma, equivalency or less. Seven percent (7%) have either a certification from a vocational or technical school or an employee required training program. Twenty-six percent (26%) have completed some college courses, but have not obtained a degree. Twenty-two percent (22%) have obtained an Associate degree.

The most significant differences in the level of education attained occur across geographic regions, job type and OERI segments. Across regions, respondents in Southeast Michigan are more likely to have attended some college, but less likely to hold an Associate degree. In Western New York respondents are more likely to have only a high school diploma or less, but the percentage of those with Associate degrees

is also highest in this region. Six in ten blue-collar respondents have a high school diploma or less, while nearly the same amount of non-blue-collar respondents have some level of college education up to an Associate degree. `

Those making more than \$60,000 per year in managerial roles and non-managerial roles requiring college are most likely to have college experience, most likely Associate degrees. However, it is also clear from the OERI segment analysis that there are a significant number of non-college educated workers in roles that typically require college education. Forty-six percent (46%) of workers making more than \$60,000 in non-managerial fields requiring college and 50% of workers making less than \$60,000 in those same fields say they have only a high school degree or less (or vocational/employee training only).

These findings are demonstrated in the following graphs.

Fig. 24

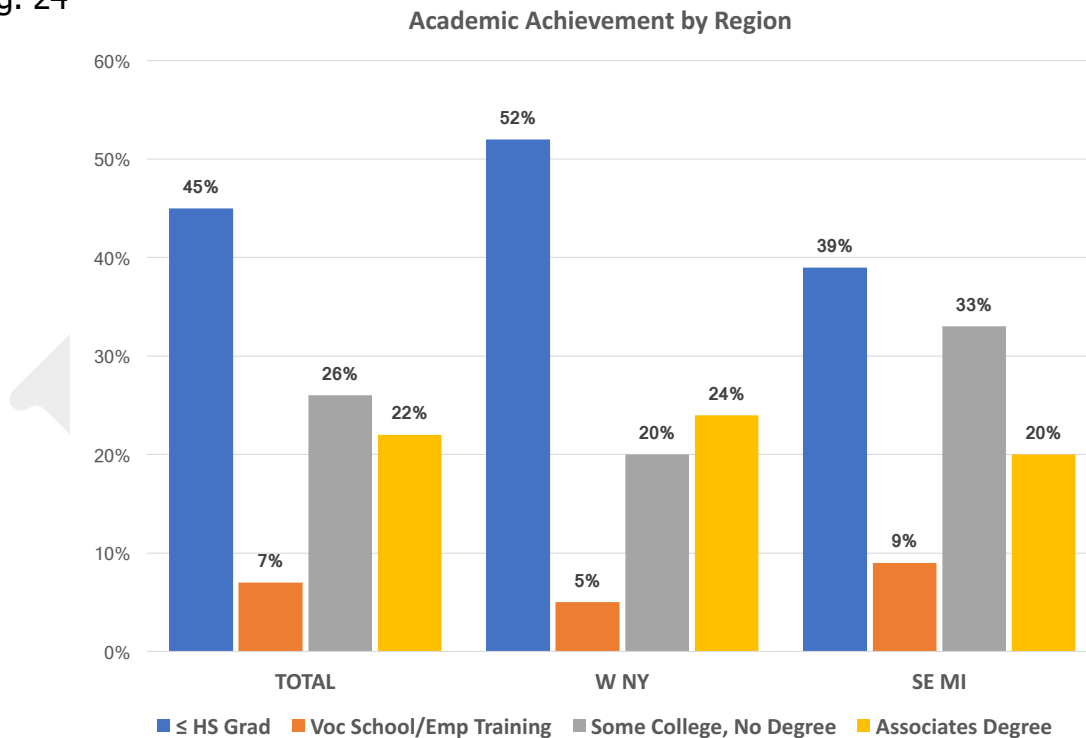


Fig. 25

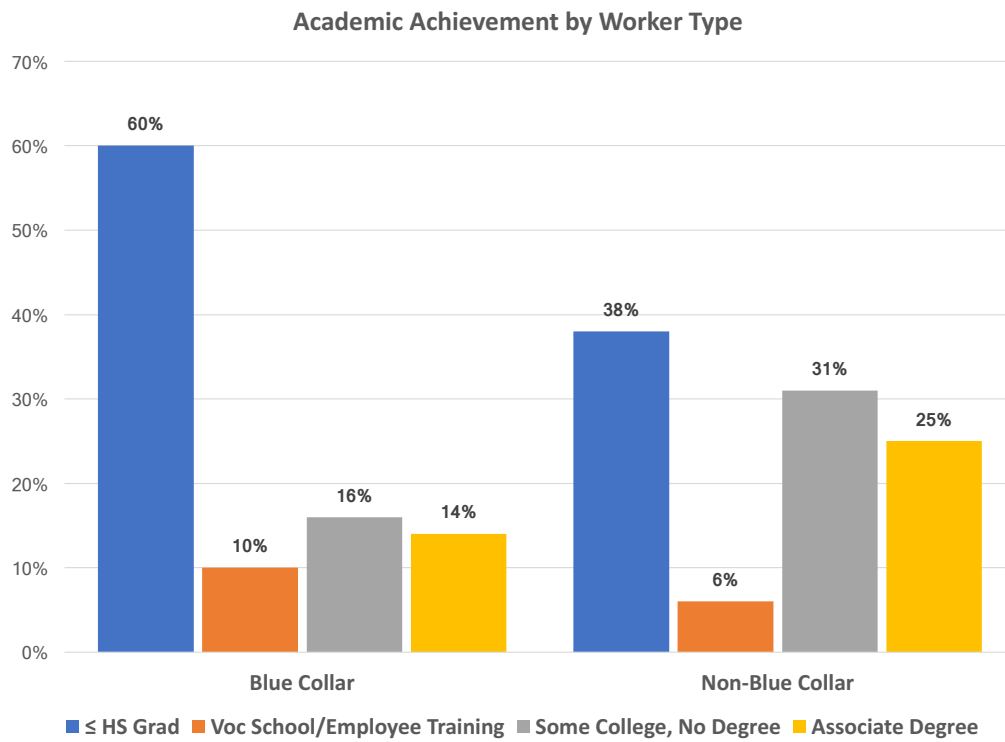
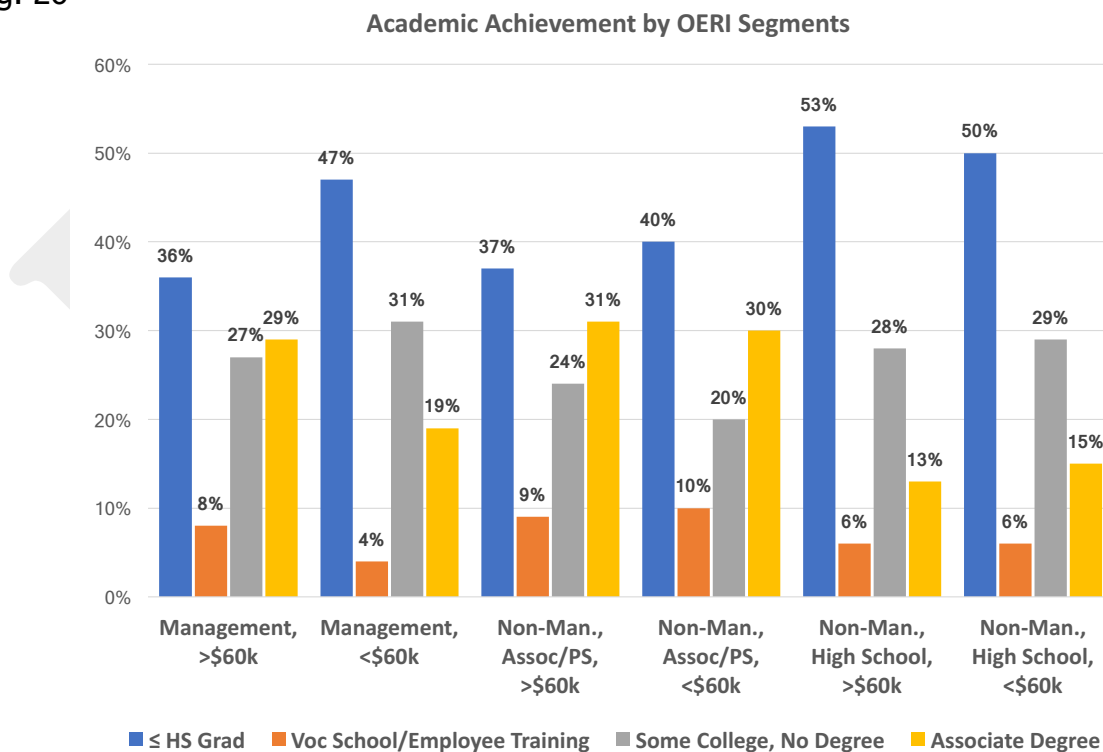
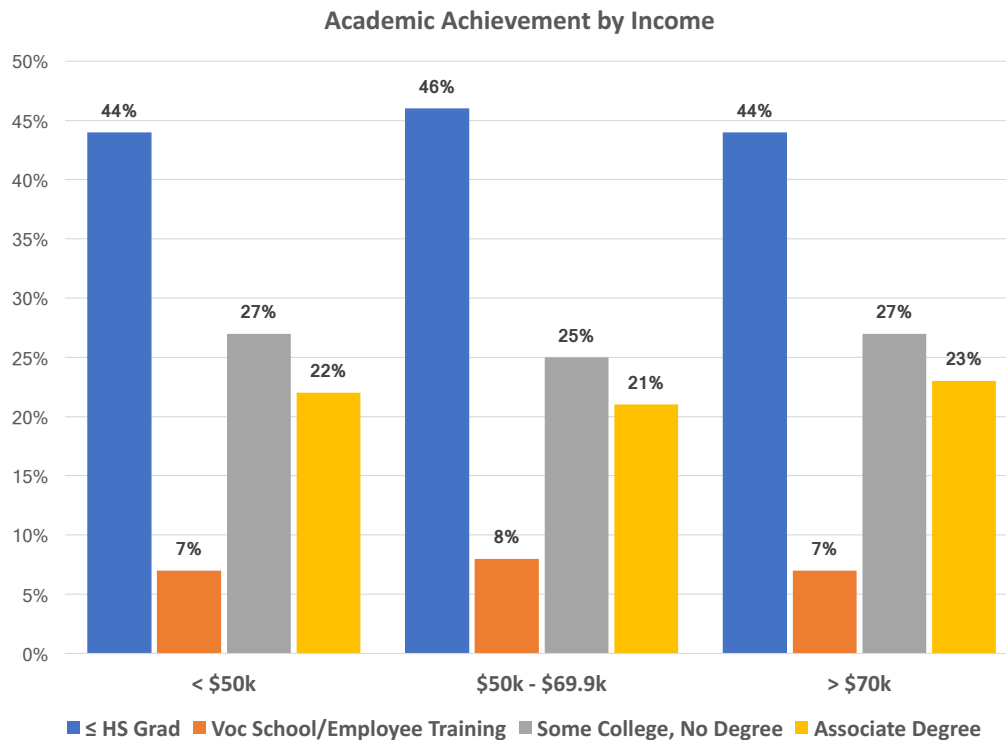


Fig. 26



Perhaps one of the most interesting findings is revealed when ignoring occupation and looking at income and education alone. There is little or no correlation with the amount of education attained and the annual personal income earned, as demonstrated in the chart below.

Fig. 27



COMPARISONS WITH 1999:

- Among Metro Detroit respondents, 41% had only a high school diploma, 10% attended a vocational or technical school or program, 31% attended college but didn't receive a degree and 17% received an Associate degree.
- Among Detroit high school graduates, 36% had only a high school diploma, 3% attended a vocational or technical school or program, 36% attended college but didn't receive a degree and 25% received an Associate degree.

Beyond their level of education attained, we also wanted to learn what specific technical skills are required of and possessed by our respondents for their jobs. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (65%) say their current job requires them to have specific technical skills. That number is significantly higher among those in blue-collar jobs (72%), among those who describe their career path as "opportunistic" (77%) and among those making \$60,000 in non-managerial roles requiring some college (83%). The top ten training requirements are listed in the following table.

Fig. 28

Training Required	
Computer skills/Programming	25%
Machine operations/Mechanical	16%
Certification/Recertification	9%
Medical training	8%
Associate degree/College	6%
Licensing	5%
Technical skills/Trade school	5%
Interpersonal skills/Communication	4%
Truck driving certification/Heavy equip.	4%
Microsoft Office/Word/Excel	3%

Training in computers is mostly required in non-blue-collar jobs (32%). Only 9% of blue collar workers are required to have computer training. Additional skills required by Non-blue-collar jobs include: some medical training (10%), certification training (8%), some college education (7%) accounting or bookkeeping (6%), licensing (5%), machine operations (5%) and management/business (5%). Nearly all of those required to have training or knowledge of Microsoft Office are in non-blue-collar jobs.

Blue-collar jobs primarily require machine operation (36%), certification training (12%), truck/heavy machinery operation (9%), computer skills (9%), technical/trade skills (6%), ongoing training (5%) and electrical (5%).

Fewer require a special license, certificate or degree. Only 40% say their jobs require such qualifications. Again, that number is highest among blue-collar workers (50%), among those making \$60,000 in non-managerial roles requiring some college (52%), men (46%) and those younger than 55 (41%). The top ten licensing/certification requirements are listed below.

Fig. 29

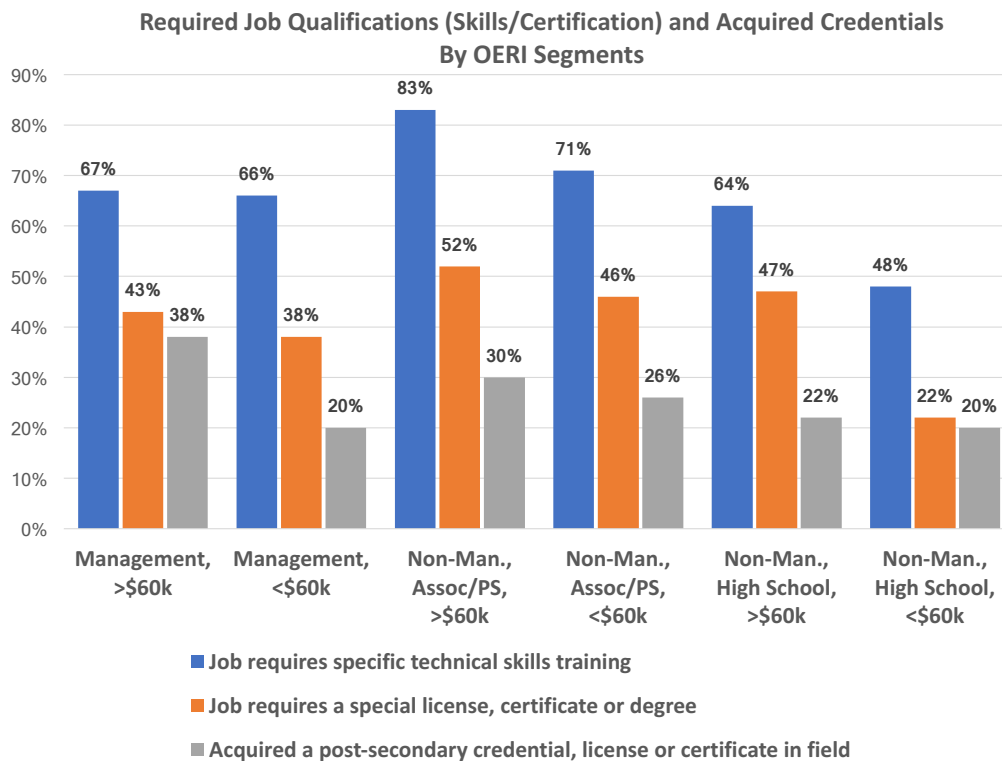
License/Certification Required	
Truck/Heavy equipment operation/CDL/CDO/DOT	13%
Associate degree/College	11%
Certification (general)	7%
Licensing (general)	7%
Machine operations/Mechanical certification	6%
Insurance	5%
Culinary/Food safety	4%
Computer certification	4%
Law enforcement/Corrections certification or degree	3%
Medical/Dental certification or degree	3%

Those requiring certification for truck operations, heavy machinery, law enforcement are primarily in blue-collar fields. Those requiring college, certification, insurance, medical or culinary certification are primarily in the non-blue-collar fields.

However, three-quarters (75%) of respondents say they have never acquired a post-secondary credential, license or certificate in the field that they've worked. African Americans are most likely to acquire these credentials (31%), in addition to those with an Associate degree (31%), those who have had vocational or technical training (31%) and those who define their career path as "opportunistic" (38%).

The following graph shows variances in skills training and certification requirements across OERI segments.

Fig. 30



COMPARISONS WITH 1999:

- *Possibly the most significant difference between 1999 and today is that a majority of respondents (66% of Detroit high school graduates and 62% of Metro Detroiters) said they did not need any technical skills to qualify for their job in 1999. Just over one-third (38%) of Metro Detroiters and one-third (33%) of Detroit high school graduates said they were required. The skill requirements most frequently mentioned were computer skills (19%), math skills (12%), and mechanical skills (9%) and obtaining a license (6%).*

- *Only slightly more than one-third (34%) of Metro Detroiters said their job required a special license, credential or degree, while 65% said it didn't. Among Detroit high school graduates, 30% said they required a special license, credential or degree, while 69% said they didn't. Twenty-six percent (26%) of Metro Detroiters and 23% of Detroit high school graduates with special credentials said they obtained them from a college or specific post-secondary institution. Fourteen percent (14%) in Detroit also said they attended a trade or career school.*

Again, our new data shows a significantly increased need for skilled workers, which echoes findings that we have seen in various other business surveys we've conducted. Which skills are most needed and by whom may require further research with job providers, but in the short term, this data indicates an increasing demand for workers with skills specific to getting their job done. It also points to a need for targeted programs to train those workers' specific needs.

Challenges Faced

The research reveals that various life situations are also significant influencers of career pathways. Many indicate that job or career changes are often forced by circumstances outside of the worker's control.

FROM THE FOCUS GROUPS:

- *Many had (by choice or circumstance) experienced a significant number of job and career field changes.*
- *Several stayed in jobs they don't really love because of a practical need to earn a living or to secure health insurance and other benefits for themselves and their families. Unexpected life events forced many to pursue different jobs or change career fields. Sometimes these events were stressful (e.g. divorce, death, health issues) and other times unforeseen opportunities and positive events (e.g. marriage or the birth of a child) induced employment changes.*
- *A limited number had lost jobs or been forced to relocate due to plant closings, mergers, acquisitions, off-shore job movements, emerging technologies, corporate decisions and other disruptions.*

FROM THE SURVEY:

More than 4 in 10 (42%) respondents have experienced at least one situation in their career that forced them to find another job. In the survey, most of the career volatility came among those who had been working at their jobs for between 2 and 10 years (59%). This makes sense, given the volatility of the job market over the past decade.

The percentage of those who faced layoffs, mergers, closings or relocations is highest among those who have a vocational or technical education background (56%), those older than 55 (48%), African Americans (53%), men (45%) and those who define their career path as “opportunistic” (54%). However, it’s quite possible that the volatility among “opportunistic” individuals may be self-motivated, given their propensity to pursue new, more lucrative opportunities.

When looking at the OERI segments, those making more than \$60,000 in non-managerial positions requiring some college are least likely (36%) to have been forced to change jobs or careers. Their counter parts (non-management, college educated, making less than \$60,000) are most likely (52%) to have been forced to change jobs or careers. In fact, those making less than \$60,000 across all segments are more likely than those making more than \$60,000 to have experienced a layoff, closing, merger in their career. This indicates that those who experience such challenges in their career are more likely to earn less over the course of their lifetime. Having the required skills to do their jobs better will help them remain competitive with the rest of the labor market.

Access to Professional Growth and Advancement Opportunities

FROM THE FOCUS GROUPS:

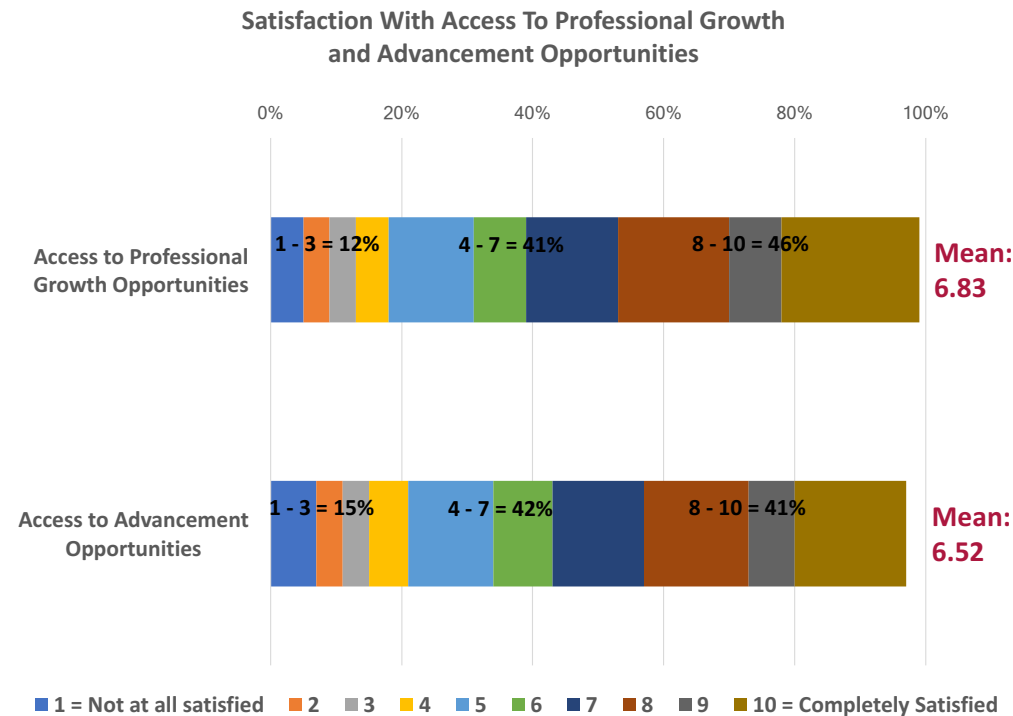
- *Several employees had progressed from very low, entry level positions to positions of high authority with the help of a supervisor or mentor. Employers and co-workers influenced participants in several ways. Some supervisors saw potential in their subordinate and encouraged that person to understand and pursue their strengths. They also shared their knowledge of career paths and potential positions worth targeting. This helped to boost self-esteem and empower the employee’s belief that he or she could succeed in a higher-level position. Some mentioned coworker animosity. A few younger participants noted it can be difficult to supervise older, often more experienced employees. Younger managers – often with a college degree but little on-the-job experience – can be frustrating as they don’t fully respect the capabilities and institutional knowledge of more experienced workers.*
- *In some instances, their employers were instrumental in identifying educational and career opportunities. For others, coworkers or more simply, work-place experience generated an awareness of ways to move forward with their current employer or career field.*

FROM THE SURVEY:

A plurality (46%) of respondents rate their personal access to opportunities for professional growth as very satisfactory (score of 8 to 10 on a scale of 1 to 10). The

mean rating was 6.83. Slightly fewer (41%) say their access to career advancement is as satisfactory, with a mean rating of 6.52.

Fig. 31



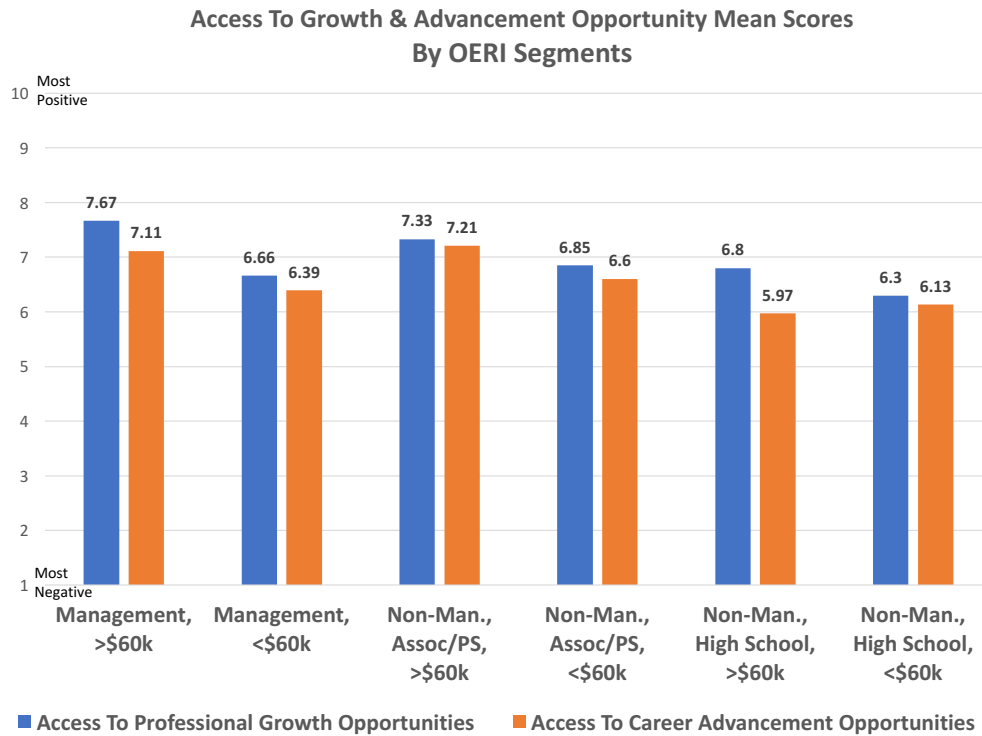
Those with an Associate degree (53%) are most likely to be very satisfied with their opportunities for professional growth. However, there is no significant difference in perceived access to career advancement across educational achievement segments.

Those making \$70k or more are both significantly more likely to be very satisfied with their opportunities for professional growth (53%) and career advancement (47%).

Similarly, those with a more aggressive or opportunistic career path are more likely to see more access to professional growth (54%) and career advancement (55%) opportunities. Likely because they are also most likely to be proactive in pursuing new opportunities.

When assessing the OERI Segments, there is a correlation with income earned and access to growth and advancement opportunities. Those making more than \$60,000 annually in both management and non-management fields are much more likely to be satisfied with their access to these opportunities, especially among those with some college education. Those making less than \$60,000 are less satisfied.

Fig. 32



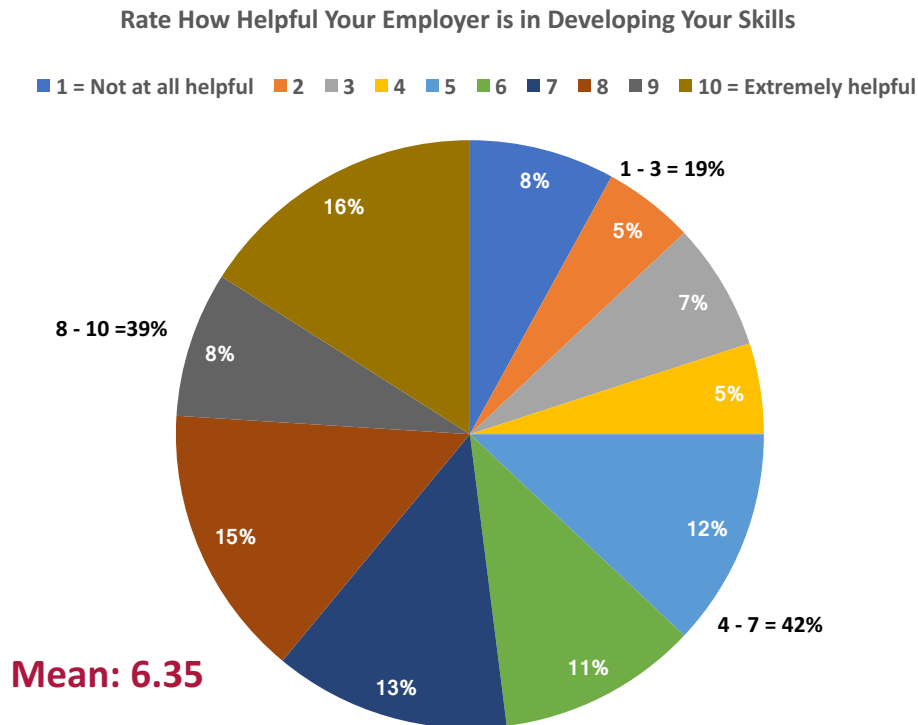
This indicates that access to growth and advancement opportunities fuels higher income careers. Those with only a high school education are most likely to benefit the most from training programs that help them access those opportunities.

Are Employers Helping Advance Careers?

FROM THE SURVEY:

In general, respondents believe there is room for improvement when it comes to employers helping them develop job skills for career advancement. Forty-percent (40%) say employers are very helpful (high score of 8, 9 or 10 on a scale of 1 to 10). Nearly 1 in 5 (19%) say they are not helpful (low score of 1, 2 or 3). The mean rating for the entire sample is 6.35.

Fig. 33



The most significant variances in the data are found across gender and income. Scores are most positive among those making more than \$70k annually (45% helpful, 6.81 mean), men (44% helpful, 6.57 mean) and "opportunistic" job hunters (49% helpful, 6.98 mean).

While scores are similar across geographic regions, the data show the most significant need for more employer help among those making less than \$50k (38% helpful, 24% not helpful, mean of 6.03), women (33% helpful, 21% not helpful, mean of 6.02), and those in non-management positions making less than \$60,000 (34% helpful).

What is the DNA of a Successful Individual?

FROM THE FOCUS GROUPS:

- *Several common personal attributes were shared by our 'successful' participants. Many of our participants were naturally intelligent and possessed a wide array of talents which empowered their ability to excel at work. They used their innate intelligence to master requirements of their jobs and in many cases, went above and beyond the minimum required to be a top performer.*

- *Good People Skills - Many had strong 'people skills' and good communication abilities. Others were compassionate with a strong customer service orientation.*
- *Strong Technical Abilities - Many of our participants had strong 'hard skills'. Whether a great spot welder, accurate contractor estimator, adept at shaving, a fast typist or gifted with a natural grasp of technology, they had attributes valued by their employers and important to their personal career success.*
- *Creative Problem-Solving / Multi-tasking - Another skill set common to many, was the able to multi-task and look for creative solutions to sometimes perplexing job challenges.*
- *Many exhibited impressive values and personality characteristics that directly correlated to career success.*
 - *Work Ethic - A critically important and very common characteristic of our participants was the possession of a strong work ethic. They're likely to show up early, stay late, and take ownership of their job responsibilities. They also understand and respect the importance of teams, of doing what was needed to exceed job requirements.*
 - *Ambition & Self-Initiative - Many participants exhibited signs of confidence and strong character. They impressed us with their positive attitudes to succeed no matter the barriers placed in front of them.*
 - *Perseverance - Several individuals shared their jobs are often less than exhilarating, are repetitious or otherwise minimally rewarding. That said, they show up for work every day, don't complain and made sure the job is completed to a high standard.*
 - *Adaptability & Preparation - A common characteristic of many was the importance placed on adapting to meet the changing needs of their current position and to become qualified for future advancement opportunities. To improve their skills, they learned from others through both formal and informal training and often took it upon themselves to figure out how to master new challenges on their own.*
 - *Curiosity & Job Satisfaction— Notable among some of the youngest participants but common among many, was a high-level of curiosity. They enjoy learning more about their own job, field of work, what can be done to help themselves and their employers succeed.*

- *Confidence and Humility- With few exceptions, our interviewers were confident they were highly qualified employees. Many were humble and unassuming; they quietly worked hard to meet job requirements.*

FROM THE SURVEY:

As the focus groups uncovered a clear set of behaviors and characteristics shared by those who've achieved success without a four-year degree, we tested these characteristics in the survey to quantify the target audience's disposition to possess them. The results across the entire sample showed similar results to the focus groups. Nearly two-thirds describe themselves as goal oriented and proactive. More than 7 in 10 describe themselves as adaptive to change and helpful to fellow workers. More than 8 in 10 describe themselves as persistent or patient.

Not all respondents were necessarily aggressive or proactive. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents stated they felt lucky to find their job without much planning and they planned on staying in it as long as they could. In addition, a majority of respondents said that getting "excited about going to work and giving my best effort each day" did not describe them well. This is somewhat surprising, given the positive experiences we heard about in the focus groups, but it does reinforce the findings that a strong work ethic and persistence is key, whether you like your job or not.

Fig. 34

Behaviors & Characteristics of Successful Workers	
I keep going when my job gets tough	81%
I take the initiative to help fellow workers when they need it	76%
I adapt quickly to difficult or changing situations	72%
I proactively identify future challenges and opportunities at work	63%
I set and meet personal goals at work	63%
I'm lucky because I found my job without much planning or action and I don't plan on leaving	63%
I strive to help our business succeed, often tackling jobs that are not my responsibility	61%
I actively seek out new opportunities to learn and take on new roles at work	60%
My employer shows appreciation for the work that I do	51%
I get excited about going to work and giving my best effort each day	47%

The most significant variances in the data are found among the segment of respondents that describes their career path as "opportunistic" (aggressive). Respondents in that group, are significantly more likely than the other segments to say nearly all of the characteristics tested described them very well. Also, those in managerial positions (all income levels) are significantly more likely be proactive in

identifying challenges and opportunities, to set personal goals, to actively seek out new opportunities to learn and to get excited about going to work each day.

Which Skills or Attributes are Valued Most?

FROM THE FOCUS GROUPS:

- *Advice given from many was for younger adults to be broaden their skill set and be prepared for change. They also believed a great source of inspiration and insight was to listen and learn from others, particularly those with more age, experience and wisdom.*
- *To help bolster job security and promotional opportunities with their current employer or prepare for a potential opportunity with a different employer, many possess a strong desire to continually learn and build their arsenal of skills. In some instances, this involves formal on-the-job or professional training. In other cases, simply observing others and building skills on personal time (reading self-help books, manuals, etc.), helps fulfill an innate desire to know more and be better prepared for whatever the future brings.*
- *Most participants showed resilience, ambition and perseverance. When faced with challenges, they addressed them. When offered opportunities, they took them. When employers were demanding, they accepted the situation and met or exceeded expectations. When jobs were lost or disliked, they took the steps to find new jobs, to reposition themselves.*
- *Most employees truly love what they do. And for those who don't love their jobs, they were at least highly committed to performing for their employer at a high level. Some regretted not pursuing other career paths, but virtually no one expressed regret at working too hard or caring too much about meeting or exceeding job expectations.*
- *A small group regretted not completing a bachelor's degree and would advise others to do whatever was needed to complete at least four years of college. Some planned to do so in the future. The perceived value of a bachelor's degree stems from the knowledge that many positions simply require the degree to simply apply.*

FROM THE SURVEY:

In the survey, we offered a battery of educational qualifications, behaviors or skills to respondents that may be perceived as important to an individual's success. We then asked respondents to rate these factors in their importance for building a successful career. Confirming what we learned in the focus group research, survey respondents believe the most important skills and characteristics are:

- Flexibility/Adaptability (82% very important)
- Continual learning (80% very important)
- Patience/Persistence (80% very important)
- Being kind and good with people (77% very important)
- Effective communication (76% very important)
- Principles learned from family/friends like a strong work ethic (75% very important)
- Technical skills learned on the job (74% very important)
- Hunger for success (72%)
- Taking on new opportunities (72%)
- Having a supportive boss (71%)
- Mentors (61%)
- Being focused at a young age (58%)
- Networking/Relationships (58%)
- Skills learned in technical training/vocational certification (56%)

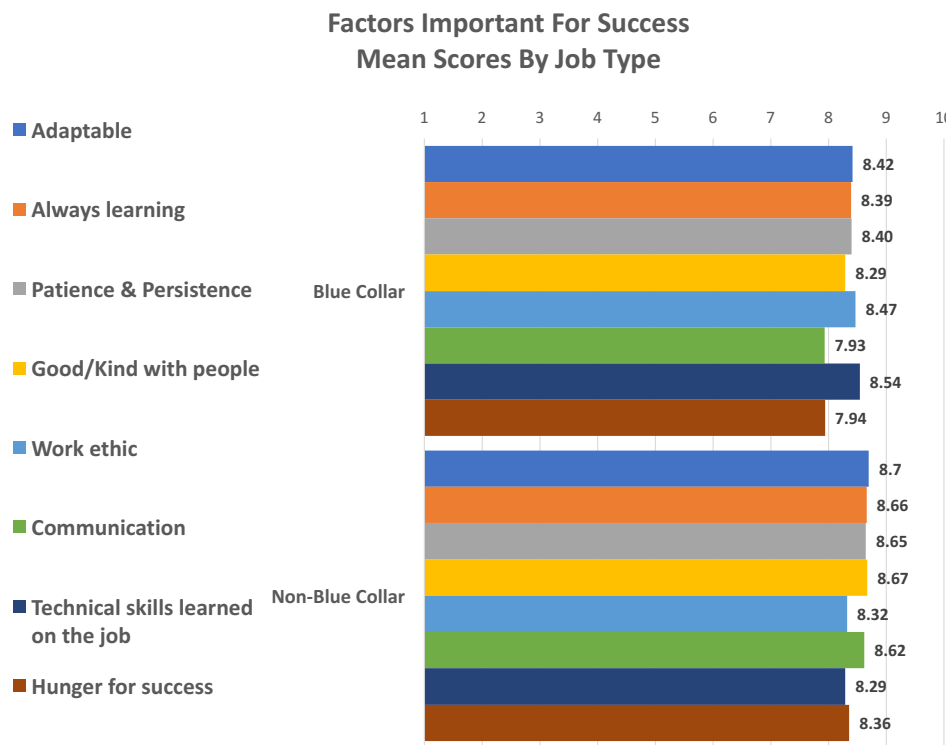
Skills learned in high school, the military or a university are at the bottom of the list.

- Skills learned in high school (40%)
- Skills learned in the military (33%)
- A four-year college degree (31%)

Significant differences are most evident across worker types. Non-blue-collar workers are much more likely to believe that flexibility (83%), always learning (82%), patience and persistence (82%), communication skills (80%), people skills (81%), proactively taking on new opportunities (74%), and networking (63%) are very important. Blue collar workers more likely to place more importance on work ethic (77%), on the job training (77%), skills learned in vocational training (60%) and skills learned in the military (42%).

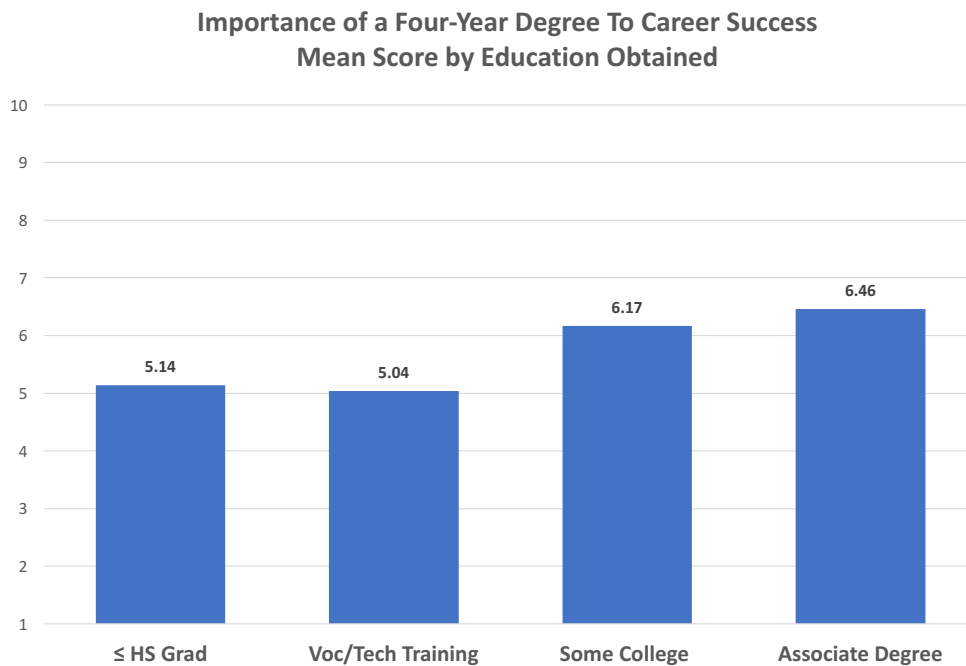
When looking at OERI segments, those in managerial positions are more likely than others to say patience and persistence (95%), communication skills (89%), having a boss who believes in you (90%), being proactive to take on new responsibilities (88%) and technical skills learned on the job (87%) are important to them. Interestingly, respondents in non-managerial jobs are more likely than those in managerial jobs to believe a four-year college degree is important to their careers, which again shows a desire for knowledge and skills training.

Fig. 35



Like we learned in the focus groups, few found that attaining a four-year college degree is important to their career, except for one group: those who went to college. Those who have some college experience along with those with an Associates degree are significantly more likely to believe obtaining a four-year college degree is important to their career success (41% very important). In fact, there is a positive correlation between the amount of education obtained and the perceived importance of higher education in a career. This is demonstrated in the following graph.

Fig. 36



Mirroring the college-educated segment of this sample is the OERI segment of those making less than \$60,000 in non-managerial jobs with no educational requirements. Thirty-two percent (32%) of that group views a four-year college degree favorably, which is higher than their counterparts in jobs with no educational requirements making more than \$60,000 and those in managerial positions. This indicates a demand for knowledge and education among this group with whom more education is not required for their job.

Following this ratings section, we asked respondents to tell us which of those tested skills, behaviors or educational factors was most beneficial to their own personal careers. The top responses were “work ethic” at 17%, on the job training (15%) and continual learning (7%). Patience (6%) was tied with mentors (6%) and adaptability (6%).

Mentors were significantly more important (11%) to blue-collar workers, than non-blue-collar workers. Vocational certification was significantly more important (18%) to those who received their education through a vocational, technical or employee training program.

COMPARISONS WITH 1999:

- *Workers said the skills they learned on the job or taught themselves had been most important to their career. Of all the skills resources tested, Metro Detroit workers (45%) and Detroit high school graduates (36%) said the skills they learned working at their current or previous employer were most important to their being hired into their current line of work. And more than nine of ten rated them as very important.*
- *Those who received training at a community college and through technical training programs found them valuable. Fewer found skills learned in high school valuable.*

People Skills vs. Technical Skills

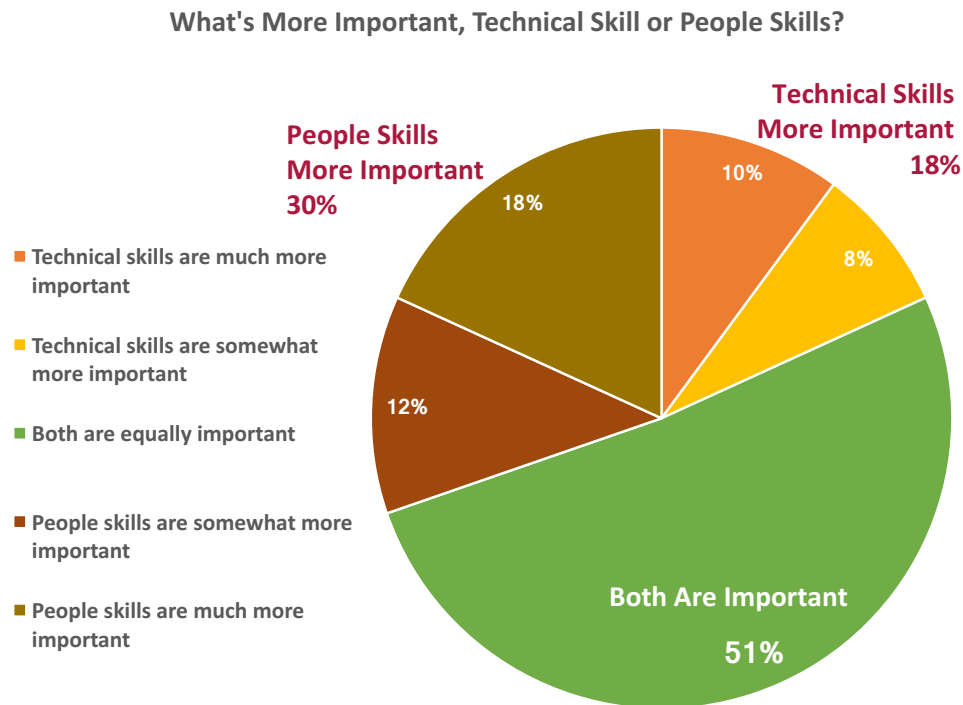
FROM THE FOCUS GROUPS:

- *The importance of networking was also brought up by several participants. They know that in this ever- changing world, they need to be prepared for unforeseen curves. Many formally developed and nursed networks of friends, others in their field of work or frankly anyone who might be valuable to know should a job be needed.*
- *They also believed a great source of inspiration and insight was to listen and learn from others, particularly those with more age, experience and wisdom.*
- *A minority of participants had completed a degree, certification program or apprenticeship program in high school or shortly after and continued in the field of their training. Many more had 'found' their career success somewhat accidentally: they became aware of training and advancement opportunities once on the job.*

FROM THE SURVEY:

To quantify their overall perception of the importance of people skills as compared to technical skills to their career success, we asked respondents to tell us which was most important to them on a five-point scale. The results are shown below.

Fig. 27



While a majority of respondents believe both are equally important, significantly more (30%) believe people skills are more important than technical skills (18%).

Men (24%) are significantly more likely to place importance on technical skills than women (10%). Also, blue-collar workers (29%) and those who describe their career paths as a "slow straight line" (27%) are significantly more likely to view technical skills as more important. Pink-collar (38%) and white-collar (37%) are significantly more likely to view people skills as more important.

Those in managerial positions making more than \$60,000 are most likely to place a high importance on people skills (42%). Their counterparts (managers making less than \$60,000) also rank people skills much higher than technical skills (37% saying important) when compared to the rest of the sample. This data confirms that the people who likely know most about what their business demands are most likely to value people skills more than specific technical skills. This supports the theory that on the job training or post-hire certification is vital to businesses who are hiring individuals with the right people skills (communication, empathy, conflict resolution, patience, tolerance, problem solving) and training them to fit their roles. This also points to a need for a two-tiered training system. One tier that focuses on preparing people for the work environment by honing those patterns of behavior that will help them succeed. The second tier would focus on specific technical skill training.

Profile of Survey Respondents

	Western New York	South Eastern Michigan
Gender		
Male	65%	53%
Female	35%	47%
Age		
Under 25	5%	5%
25 to 34	4%	7%
35 to 44	23%	29%
45 to 54	38%	40%
55 and Older	30%	20%
Race		
White/Caucasian/European	91%	82%
Black/African American	5%	12%
Hispanic	3%	2%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1%	2%
Multiple Ethnicity/other	1%	1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0%	1%
Education		
High School Graduate or Less	52%	39%
Vocational/Technical	5%	9%
Some College – No Degree	20%	33%
Associate Degree	24%	20%
Income		
< \$50k	30%	29%
\$50k – \$69.9k	37%	33%
\$70k +	33%	38%
Marital Status		
Never Married	12%	19%
Married	69%	61%
Separated/Divorced/Widowed	19%	21%
Children Under 18 at Home		
Yes	41%	43%
No	59%	57%

IV. Conclusions

- The pathway to success continues to be analogous to rock climbing – an ad-hoc, non-linear track that includes lateral moves – but this survey reveals a variety of rock (career) climber types, based on their experiences, education and motivation. Therefore, a variety of programs are required to address all needs.
 - The research suggests that a two-tiered training approach may be in demand, with a first tier focusing on highly valued people skills and a second tier focusing on industry specific technical skills.
- Being adaptable, resourceful, curious, patient, persistent and kind are qualities found in most individuals interviewed. They see these traits as necessary for advancing in their careers and believe there is a need to teach younger individuals coming into the workforce these traits.
- A four-year degree remains to be valued least and most workers without one remain optimistic and confident in their own careers. However, many of our participants and respondents also possess qualities of successful students. Many would likely succeed in anything they do, including school, because possess a hunger to learn.
- People skills are valued more than technical skills. However, when it comes to training, they place a higher value on self-taught skills or those learned on the job, above than those learned in a formal school or program setting. This is reinforced by those within our sample who are in managerial roles, possibly having first-hand knowledge of the needs of the business.
- While occupation and position influences income, there is little correlation with and individual's education alone and income earned. Our research subjects who have only a high school diploma are generally as successful (in earnings) as those with an Associate degree. We are not suggesting this corresponds to all workers in these regions, but is a significant finding within our target audience.
- Non-blue-collar workers are more likely to value people skills and see a need for more computer training, while blue-collar workers are more likely to value continual learning, work ethic and on-the-job training.
- Most say that specific skills are required for acquiring and keeping their jobs, but most of them learn those skills on-the-job. Other B2B research we've done confirms that businesses are hiring motivated but less skilled individuals and training them to fill roles. This research reflects that and places a high value on skills that enable workers to do their jobs at various stages in their careers.