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Interviews: 1,001 adults
Margin of error: ± 3.1

**THE ASSOCIATED PRESS POLL
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Back to Work: Americans Satisfied With Working Life

The Associated Press Poll is conducted by Ipsos-Public Affairs. Between August 16-18, 2004, the AP-Ipsos poll interviewed a representative sample of 1,001 adults nationwide. The margin of error is ± 3.1 for all adults. Margin of error for subgroups may be higher.

Washington, D.C., September 7, 2004 — As the Labor Day weekend unofficially marks the end of Summer 2004, at least half of working Americans say they are ready to get back to work. Americans see work not only as an important part of their lives and their own identity, but they also generally say they enjoy their coworkers, find their work interesting and feel they are paid fairly.

Back to Work or More Time Off? Americans are Divided

Americans are of two minds when it comes to going back to work after some time off. Half of us (51%) feel ready to get back to work, while as many (49%) wish they had a few more days off. These divided feelings generally span age, education, region, and occupation.

Q After a long weekend, vacation, or a few days off from work, what best describes how you usually feel about going back to work? Do you ...

Feel ready to go back to work	51
Wish you could have a longer break	49
Not sure.....	-

Six in Ten Say Work is About More than Earning Money

Even though half of us would like a few more days off, a majority of Americans who work either full or part-time see real value in the work they do. Nine in ten (93%) agree that the work they do is important.

Q. I'm going to read you some statements related to your job. For each of these statements, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each statement.

THIS TABLE IS RANKED BY THE PERCENTAGE WHO SAY STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT AGREE

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Some-what Agree</u>	<u>Some-what Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>	<u>Total Agree</u>	<u>Total Disagree</u>
I feel the work I do is important ...	70	23	3	4	-	93	7

Six in ten (61%) say their job is an important part of who they are, as compared to 39% who say their job is only something they do to earn money. Work is a more important component of identity for college graduates (75%), people holding down two or more jobs (72%), high-income earners (71% of those with household incomes over \$75,000), and married women (70%). Conversely, jobs are most often considered just a money-earner by majorities of people in low-income households (59%), those with up to a high school education (58%), members of ethnic minorities (55%), and workers under 30 years of age (52%).

Q. What best describes how you feel about your job?

Something you only do to earn money	39
An important part of who you are as a person.....	61
Not sure	-

Job Satisfaction Linked to Satisfaction with Life

Nine in ten working Americans say their job is at least somewhat important for their overall satisfaction with life. This feeling is particularly stronger among workers age 50-64 (53% "very important") than younger workers, especially those under 30 (38% "very important"). The feeling that work is "very important" to overall satisfaction with life is also more common among:

- Men with no college education (58%)
- Democratic women (56%)
- Single women (58%; vs. 43% of single men)
- Catholics (58%)

Conversely, men who are unmarried and who have some college experience (15% each), as well as people who work less than 35 hours per week (14%), are slightly more prone to say their job bears little on their overall life satisfaction.

Q. How important is your job to your overall satisfaction with life? Would you say...

Very important	47
Somewhat important.....	44
Not too important	6
Not at all important.....	3
Not sure	-
Total Important.....	91
Total Not Important.....	9

Most Americans Satisfied with Life Overall; Richer and Educated People More So

Maybe money can't buy happiness, but it can get you some greater satisfaction with life. While overall satisfaction with life among the total U.S. adult population is high, college graduates (90%), people in higher income brackets (90% of those in households earning over \$75,000 per annum), investors (87%) and homeowners (84%) are especially satisfied. Also married men (84%) are more satisfied than unmarried men (72%).

(QUESTION ASKED OF OVERALL PUBLIC)

Q. In general, how satisfied are you with the way things are going in your life at this time? Would you say...

Very satisfied	38
Somewhat satisfied.....	42
Somewhat dissatisfied	11
Very dissatisfied.....	8
Not sure	1
Total Satisfied	81
Total Dissatisfied	18

In the overall U.S. public, people who be characterized as economically vulnerable express more dissatisfaction with their life at present. This includes people in low-income households (29% of those earning below \$25,000 annually) and those with up to a high school education (28%).

Non-whites (28%) are more often dissatisfied than whites (16%), although there is no measurable difference between people living in different regions of the U.S. or in urban, suburban and rural areas. People in their pre-retirement (24% age 50-64) and retirement years (22% age 65+) are also somewhat more likely to be dissatisfied than younger Americans.

Most Employees Satisfied with their Jobs

Nine in ten working Americans say they are somewhat or very satisfied with their job. Work satisfaction is found pretty much across the board, spanning age, gender, race, education, region and income. Expressions of satisfaction are so widespread that even those who say they are not paid fairly for their work are still generally satisfied, although "somewhat" (54%) more than "very" (25%) much so (21% dissatisfied).

Job satisfaction contributes greatly to overall life satisfaction, but it isn't necessary. Although their numbers are relatively small, working Americans who are dissatisfied with their job and don't feel they are paid enough for their work tend to be satisfied with their life nonetheless.

Q. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your job? Would you say you are...

Very satisfied	48
Somewhat satisfied.....	43
Somewhat dissatisfied	6
Very dissatisfied.....	3
Not sure	-
Total Satisfied	91
Total Dissatisfied	9

Workers Say Job is Interesting, Like Their Co-Workers; Least Satisfied by Stress Levels

Nine in ten employed Americans say their job is interesting most (48%) or nearly all (42%) the time. One in ten describe their work as dull.

Q. Which of the following comes closest to describing how you feel about your present job?

My job is interesting nearly all the time.....	42
While my job is interesting most of the time, there are dull stretches now and then.....	48
There are a few times when my job is interesting, but mostly it is pretty dull and monotonous.....	8
My job is completely dull and monotonous, there is nothing interesting about it.....	2
Not sure	-

Working Americans also tend to express a high level of satisfaction with various elements of their working life, with the highest satisfaction given to the relationships they have with their co-workers, as well as their boss or supervisor. While working Americans have no legal entitlement to a paid vacation, eight in ten are at least somewhat satisfied with the vacation time they receive.

Q. I'm going to read you a list of characteristics of your job. For each one, please tell me if you very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with that aspect of your job.

THIS TABLE IS RANKED BY THE PERCENTAGE WHO SAY VERY OR SOMEWHAT SATISFIED

	<u>Very Satisfied</u>	<u>Some- what Satisfied</u>	<u>Somewhat Dis- satisfied</u>	<u>Very Dis- satisfied</u>	<u>Self Employed</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>	<u>Total Satisfied</u>	<u>Total Dis- satisfied</u>
Your relationships with your co-workers.....	69	25	3	1	1	1	94	3
Your boss or immediate supervisor.....	54	31	7	3	5	-	84	10
The vacation time you receive.....	58	24	9	8	-	1	83	16
Your opportunities for advancement.....	36	39	13	11	-	1	75	24
The amount of on-the-job stress.....	22	43	24	10	-	1	65	34
The health insurance benefits offered by your employer.....	34	30	11	17	5	3	64	28
The retirement benefits offered by your employer....	34	29	12	18	4	3	62	30

Working Americans are least satisfied with the amount of on-the-job stress, although more are “somewhat” (43%) than “very satisfied” (22%). A third (34%) in total are dissatisfied.

Executives (41%) and professionals (37%) are only slightly more dissatisfied with the level of stress than clerical (32%) and service sector (30%) workers. Baby boomers (40%) are more dissatisfied than members of Generation X (33%) or Generation Next (24%). City-dwellers (40%) and suburban women (38%) also tend to be more dissatisfied than the norm.

Most Say Work Lets Them Achieve Their Potential

Respondents express a range of views in respect to their opportunity for advancement. People in higher income brackets (81%), those who consider themselves to be paid fairly (84%) and those who are satisfied with their job (80%) and overall direction of their life (79%) tend to be more satisfied with their opportunity to advance at work. People with no more than a high school diploma are most dissatisfied (33%) with their advancement opportunities, but even in this group 66% are at least somewhat satisfied.

In the same vein, another question finds that a majority of working Americans agree at least somewhat that their job allows them to achieve their full potential (75% agree, 24% disagree). There is a significant amount of overlap between the two questions.

Q. I'm going to read you some statements related to your job. For each of these statements, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each statement.

THIS TABLE IS RANKED BY THE PERCENTAGE WHO SAY STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT AGREE

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Some- what Agree</u>	<u>Some- what Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>	<u>Total Agree</u>	<u>Total Disagree</u>
My job allows me to achieve to my full potential	36	39	17	8	-	75	25

Most Are Happy with Pay and Benefits

Seven in ten (71%) working Americans feel they are paid fairly, although three in ten (29%) say they are not. Disgruntlement about paychecks is somewhat more apparent among women than men, and married women (37%) in particular.

Q. Do you feel you are paid fairly for the work you do, or not?

Yes	71
No	29
Not sure	-

For many, employment provides important access to health care and retirement benefits. While just over six in ten are least somewhat satisfied with their provision of each, about three in ten are not. Dissatisfaction with health care benefits is more pronounced among younger women (36% of those under 45) and older men (31% age 45 and up), and those working less than 35 hours per week (42%). Dissatisfaction with retirement benefits is higher among employed residents of the western U.S. (40%).

Wide Majority Feels They Get Work-Family Balance Right

One factor that may boost Americans' positive feelings toward their jobs is the sense among many that they are able to get the balance between work and home life right. Nine in ten working Americans agree – six in ten agree strongly – that they do a good job of balancing their job and their family.

Q. I'm going to read you some statements related to your job. For each of these statements, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree with each statement.

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	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Some- what Agree</u>	<u>Some- what Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>	<u>Total Agree</u>	<u>Total Disagree</u>
I do a good job of balancing my job and my family	61	33	4	1	1	94	5

People with a high school education (72%) are more likely than those with college degrees (56%) to agree strongly that they get the balance right. Hours worked also has an impact: those working 35-40 hours per week (65%) or less (71%) are more likely than those working over 40 hours per week (50%) to agree strongly that they do a good job in this regard.

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