



Ipsos Public Affairs

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Education Fully Prepared Them for Their Current Job***



Ipsos Public Affairs

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Younger U.S. Workers More Likely to Feel Overqualified, Yet More Eager to Acquire New Skills

Across All Ages, Only One in Five Full-Time Employees Feel Their Education Fully Prepared Them for Their Current Job

New York, NY – One third of full-time employees (33%) consider themselves to be overqualified for their job, while only 3% feel they are under qualified, according to a new Ipsos Public Affairs-Randstad survey of over 1,000 employed U.S. adults. The vast majority (65%) view themselves as neither over- nor under qualified.

- Younger American workers are more likely than their elders to think of themselves as overqualified for their job: 44% of employees under the age of 35 say so vs. 27% of those who are older. College graduates (38%) are also more likely than those without a college degree (30%) to feel this way.

When it comes to how well workers' education prepared them for their current position, the most prevalent opinion, shared by 50% of those surveyed, is that while their education helped, they learned most of their skills on the job. Only one in five (21%) report that their education completely prepared them for their current job. Additionally, 15% feel that their education did not prepare them at all, and 14% report that they are not working in the industry that they went to school for.

- Employees living in the Northeast (30%), college graduates (29%), and workers under 35 (28%) are most likely to say that their education prepared them “nearly 100%” for their current job.

Over six in ten workers (62%) wish that they had more skills -- “hard skills” such as a degree or knowledge of a trade or industry and/or “soft” skills such as emotional, social, leadership and organizational intelligence. More precisely, 41% wish they are more hard skills and 30% wish they had more soft skills, including 8% who wish they had both more hard skills and soft skills. The other 38% report that they are not in need of more hard or soft skills as they already have the right combination of both.

- Workers 35 and older are more likely to be content with their skill set than are younger workers (44% vs. 26%). In fact, half of younger employees (50%) wish they had more hard skills and 40% wish they had more soft skills.
- College-educated workers are more likely to desire soft skills (39%), while those without a college degree are more likely to be in need of hard skills (44%).

Nearly two thirds of employed adults (64%) would be willing to take at least one step to get the skills needed for a better job. Half of all employees surveyed (51%) say they would attend company sponsored training courses. In addition, one in five (20%) say they would pay out of pocket or take out loans to go back to school, and 12% say that they would take an unpaid, volunteer position to gain experience. However, over a third (36%) report that they would not take any of these steps, preferring to stay in their current job rather than take on additional burdens or expenses.

- Younger workers – also those who are more likely to wish they had both more hard and soft skills – are much more likely to say they would take action to obtain these skills. Eight in ten



workers under 35 (81%) would take some steps to get the skills they need for a better job, including 60% who say they would attend company training courses, 34% who would pay out of pocket to go back to school, and 20% who would take an unpaid position to gain experience.

- In contrast, older workers, who are presumably more settled in their careers, are far less likely to take such initiative to get the skills they need for a better job. While nearly half (47%) would attend company sponsored trainings, just 13% would pay tuition to go back to school and only 8% would take an unpaid position.

When asked how much would they be willing to pay out of pocket for continued education or training, nearly half of all employed adults surveyed (48%) say that they wouldn't be willing to spend any of their own money. However, a majority say they would be willing to pay for continued education or training, including 28% who would spend a few hundred dollars, 14% who would spend a few thousand dollars, and 9% who would spend as much as it takes.

Again, notable differences emerge across age groups, with younger workers being more willing to pay for continued education and training than older workers.

	Total	18-34	35-54	55+
A few hundred dollars	28%	33%	28%	20%
A few thousand dollars	14%	24%	10%	10%
As much as it takes	9%	15%	7%	4%
I wouldn't be willing to spend any of my own money for continued education/training	48%	29%	55%	65%

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted May 2-5, 2011. For the survey, a national sample of 1,006 adults aged 18 and older who are currently employed full-time from Ipsos' U.S. online panel were interviewed online. Weighting was employed to balance demographics and ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the universe. A survey with an unweighted probability sample of this size and a 100% response rate would have an estimated margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points 19 times out of 20 of what the results would have been if the entire population of employed adults aged 18 and older in the United States had been polled. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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