

Do you need a better job? Answer these five questions to find out.

Accounting for such metrics as schedule stability and advancement opportunities, few people have jobs that meet all their needs, a Gallup survey of 18,400 workers finds.

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By [Taylor Telford](#)

Most Americans lack “quality jobs,” according to a [study published](#) Thursday by Gallup that makes a broadscale effort to define what makes up such a role — something that has long eluded researchers and led to limited understanding of the factors that shape workers’ experiences and how they contribute to their quality of life.

The study draws on 2025 survey data from more than 18,400 workers across industries and employment models, ranging from workers in health care, manufacturing, technology and beyond. Jobs for the Future, the Families & Workers Fund and the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research collaborated with Gallup on the survey.

“Clear, agreed-upon metrics of job quality have been scarce until now, and a ‘quality job’ means different things to different workers,” the study states. To account for these differences, researchers established “minimum thresholds for each of the five dimensions of job quality without dictating what an ideal job looks like for every worker or workplace.”

By Gallup’s count, just 2 in 5 U.S. workers have jobs that “provide financial well-being, safe and respectful workplaces, some control over their work, a voice in decisions that affect their job, and opportunities to build skills and advance.

A job is a “quality” one if it meets the minimum threshold across at least three categories, according to Gallup’s framework.

Find out whether yours fits the bill.

How well can you live off your pay?

Even defining what constitutes a livable wage has long been a challenge for economists, researchers note.

For the study, researchers created thresholds that “represent a minimum level that could support basic needs while providing a consistent, nationally comparable standard for tracking progress over time.” However, they noted, “many workers require higher earnings to feel financially secure depending on factors such as regional cost of living and household composition.”

For full-time workers, a quality job meant they earned more than 300 percent of the federal poverty level for a family of two (roughly \$5,287 a month) and had access to paid time off (PTO).

One in 10 workers said they had no access to PTO, Gallup found.

For part-time employees, a quality job meant they earned at least \$5,287 a month or do not report “financial distress,” do not want more hours to make ends meet, or are not reliant on a second job. And they had to have access to some form of PTO.

Nearly a third of workers say they are struggling to get by financially, Gallup’s survey found, while 43 percent say they are “doing okay.” Just 27 percent say they are “living comfortably.”

Do you have some control over your hours?

Unstable work schedules are a chronic issue for employees of all stripes, from low-wage workers in restaurants and retail to white-collar employees in finance, health and technology, despite the fact that “better scheduling practices lower turnover in both service-sector and white-collar jobs,” according to Gallup.

“Providing autonomy and reasonable workloads further reduces stress and burnout, increases job satisfaction and improves retention — benefiting both employees and employers,” the report noted. In retail, they have been shown to “boost sales while reducing labor costs.”

Yet barely a quarter of workers surveyed say they “strongly agree” they have the freedom to decide how they do their work, while 45 percent agreed “somewhat.”

Carol Kulik, a professor at the University of South Australia and a scholar with the Academy of Management, said decades of research literature show that “autonomy is one of the biggest contributors to employee well-being on and off the job.”

“Autonomy gives an employee the opportunity to anticipate stressors rather than react to them, and modify behavior accordingly,” Kulik said.

In terms of hours worked vs. hours desired, few workers have high-quality schedules. Nearly two-thirds of all workers “lack schedules that are predictable, stable and over which they have some control,” the report found.

About a quarter of U.S. workers “experience schedule unpredictability,” meaning their hours — and earnings — wax and wane. More than 40 percent of workers reported having little or no control over their hours.

Part-time employees and those with less than an associate's degree are especially likely to have low-quality schedules. However, they are also slightly more likely than full-timers to have high-quality schedules, 39 and 35 percent, respectively, a mix that “reflects the varied nature of part-time work, which can provide valuable flexibility for some but can also mean unpredictable or unstable hours for others,” the report noted.

Do you have a voice at work?

Gallup asked workers whether they had enough influence over their pay, their safety and working conditions, and adoption of new technology. 

The vast majority of workers (69 percent) say they have “less influence than they should” over pay and benefits. Nearly half (48 percent) say they lack the influence they should have over safety, breaks and other working conditions.

“Working conditions is the area where employees most want input, and the area in which they are most likely to report having it,” the report notes.

More than half of workers said they lack the desired influence over “decisions about new software, artificial intelligence tools or robotics,” Gallup’s survey found.

Desire for more input in these categories stood out to Molly Blankenship, director of Jobs for the Future, a workforce nonprofit that teamed up with Gallup on the study, because “they have the potential to have a major impact on a worker’s experience without being super costly to the employer.”

Do you feel respected?

Workers with a bachelor’s degree (51 percent) or graduate degree (53 percent) are most likely to strongly agree that they feel respected on the job.

Most (83 percent) employees strongly (46 percent) or somewhat agree (37 percent) that they are treated with respect in their primary job, while 7 percent somewhat or strongly disagree. But “gaps remain” for employees of certain identity groups, according to Gallup.

Experiences varied across genders, the study notes: 52 percent of Asian men reported feeling respected, compared with 40 percent of Asian women. Among multiracial employees, 37 percent of women strongly agree that they are treated with respect, vs. 52 percent of men.

Just 35 percent of self-identified neurodivergent employees strongly agree they are treated with respect in their main job, compared with 50 percent of employees with no reported diagnoses.

Overall, about a quarter of workers reported being treated unfairly or discriminated against over their identity, the survey found.  Discrimination and unfair treatment was most common for workers

who are nonbinary (52 percent), neurodivergent (47 percent), of Middle Eastern/North African heritage (41 percent), and LGBTQ+ (36 percent).

Do you have opportunities for training and promotion?

A quarter of workers report having no opportunities for promotion or advancement in their roles, but “access to these opportunities differs by employee subgroups,” the report stated.

Workers of Middle Eastern and North African descent reported the lowest rate of access to advancement opportunities of all racial groups, at 57 percent.

Employees with a bachelor’s degree or higher and younger workers are more likely to say they have opportunities for advancement, “though access declines noticeably after age 55.” Workers at large companies — particularly those with at least 1,000 employees — are more likely to have these opportunities, with 74 percent reporting access.

Access to advancement varies minimally by industry, but utilities employees are the most likely to say they have advancement opportunities, at 76 percent.

The desire for more growth opportunities is more urgent in the current labor market, where there is a “greater emphasis on skill-based hiring,” Kulik said.

“Historically, employers have hired for potential and shouldered the responsibility for employee development,” she said. Now, job postings are focusing less on college degrees and more on years of experience, “and employees are responsible for their own development.”

Who is most likely to have a quality job?

Men were substantially more likely than women to have “quality” jobs according to Gallup’s analysis, with 45 percent of men having these roles compared with 34 percent of women.

Asian workers (46 percent) and White workers (42 percent) were more likely than, Black, Hispanic or Indigenous workers to hold quality jobs, Gallup’s survey found.

Geographically speaking, workers in the West had the highest share of quality jobs at 44 percent, compared with 39 percent of workers in the Northeast, 38 percent of workers in the South, and 36 percent in the Midwest.

By industry, workers in professional services, finance and wholesale trade led in overall job quality — with 53 percent, 48 percent and 49 percent in quality jobs, respectively. By contrast, just 29 percent of workers in leisure and hospitality and 26 percent of those in retail and warehouses were in quality jobs, Gallup found.
