

State of the Black Workforce

A summary of research insights on Black talent produced
by OneTen in partnership with Bully Pulpit Interactive



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Overview

To advance OneTen’s mission of creating one million family-sustaining careers for Black talent in America over 10 years, we surveyed our target workforce across America of Black adults without four-year degrees and earning less than \$50,000 in household income. The survey measured beliefs, attitudes and self-reported status regarding economic satisfaction, employment status, career aspirations and opportunities, workplace culture and more. Our findings help paint a picture of what’s on the minds of the 76% of Black workers across the country without four-year college degrees. What they’ve reported can help companies catalyze career opportunities for Black talent at scale and create places of belonging within their organizations.

Current Employment Situation

Black talent without a four-year college degree are seeking greater stability in their current jobs and want the skills to get a more stable job. In qualitative research conducted in December 2020, respondents said they felt stymied by the opportunities available to them and frustrated that they aren’t able to get the kinds of opportunities they envision for themselves. Moreover, as we heard in the focus groups, frustration with current opportunities can lead to skepticism that there are better opportunities out there and a reticence to take the time needed—particularly when time is a precious commodity—to develop new skill sets.

- **76% of Black adults without a four-year college degree and with a household income of less than \$50K report that they earn an hourly wage.**

- **Additionally, just 40% report that they are employed full-time.**
 - 26% are employed part-time or are a gig worker
 - 21% are unemployed
 - 18% are out of the workforce (retired, student, homemaker, etc.)
- **The median number of years that employed Black adults over the age of 25 without a college degree have been at their current job is 3.0 years.** According to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), the median number of years for all Americans is 4.1 years.
- **Yet, nearly two-thirds (64%) are interested in enrolling in more schooling or obtaining a technical certification.**

Job Dissatisfaction Drivers

A lack of satisfaction with their current job—specifically with their current salary, benefits and opportunity for career advancement—is what is driving people to search for a better job.

- The plurality (45%) of Black individuals without a four-year college degree are just somewhat satisfied with their current job.

- Security, stability and safety (financially, emotionally, and physically) are the primary drivers of finding a new job. In the focus groups, looking for both physical and emotional safety was cited as a major factor in choosing the next job.

% who reported not being satisfied with a specific aspect of their job

Wage / salary		42%
Paid time-off		39%
Career advancement		38%
Benefits		37%
Job security		34%
Professional development		33%
Emotional safety / mental health		33%
Flexible hours		32%
Diverse, inclusive workplace		29%
Consistent hours		28%
Community		28%
Location / commute		27%
Physical safety / physical health		25%
Interesting / challenging work		25%

Current Economic Situation

Black adults without a four-year college degree reported struggling financially and are especially concerned with earning a living wage.

- 70% of Blacks without a college degree describe their personal economic situation as “just fair” or “poor”, while 30% describe it as “excellent” or “good”. For comparison, in a [recent Gallup poll](#),

54% of all Americans described their personal economic situation as “only fair” or “poor,” while 46% described it as “excellent” or “good.”

- In addition to earning a living wage, the cost of essentials like health care, childcare and groceries are concerns.

% of individuals surveyed who rate each aspect of the US economy as “poor”

Wages / ability to make a living wage	<div style="width: 39%;"></div>	39%
Affordability of health care	<div style="width: 39%;"></div>	39%
Affordability of childcare	<div style="width: 35%;"></div>	35%
Affordability of food and groceries	<div style="width: 32%;"></div>	32%
Retirement security	<div style="width: 30%;"></div>	30%
Affordability of education and career training	<div style="width: 29%;"></div>	29%
Job market / ability to find a job	<div style="width: 24%;"></div>	24%





Job Retention Drivers

A strong workplace culture is the top-cited reason to stay in a job—even ahead of satisfaction with salary and benefits. For the majority of those surveyed, it is particularly important to have a supportive manager and to make employees feel emotionally safe at work.

- Showing an investment in employees is also important: having good benefits is seen as even more important than satisfaction with salary, because

it speaks to the commitment the company is making and addresses concerns around the cost of health care.

- Lastly, having opportunities for growth and promotion are important reasons to stay in a job. This is another way companies are able to show investment in employees through training opportunities and a general focus on employee career advancement.

[Among those not likely to look for a job] Reasons why they would not look

I like my current manager / workplace culture	<div style="width: 78%;"></div>	78%
I am satisfied with my current benefits	<div style="width: 75%;"></div>	75%
I am satisfied with my current salary	<div style="width: 67%;"></div>	67%
I am looking to get promoted in my current job	<div style="width: 60%;"></div>	60%
I don't think I would find a better job	<div style="width: 48%;"></div>	48%
I do not have time to look for another job	<div style="width: 35%;"></div>	35%
I don't think I have the skill set for a different job	<div style="width: 30%;"></div>	30%










What Jobseekers are Looking For

Evaluating Future Opportunities

While a higher salary is important when considering a new job, benefits, a flexible schedule and work-life balance are also key considerations.

- In the focus groups we conducted, respondents also expressed a desire for emotional support, not just professional development.





% saying top 3 most important when considering new job

Wage / salary		57%
Benefits		30%
Flexible schedule		26%
Work-life balance		23%
Location		21%
Job security		19%
Ability to work from home		18%
Safe for my mental health		17%
Physically safe		15%

For younger Black individuals without a four-year college degree, having a combination of strong mentorship, career

development and promotion opportunity is almost as important as getting a higher wage.

Responses to: When thinking about your next job, which is more important?

Overall	62%		38%
35+	69%		31%
25-34	59%		40%
18-24	53%		47%

Getting a higher starting wage / salary

Having strong mentorship, career development and promotion opportunities

Where Companies Should Focus to Attract and Retain Black Talent



To attract Black talent, companies should:

- **Emphasize the stability of a family-sustaining salary and benefits.** 57% of Black adults without a four-year college degree and with a household income of less than \$50K say salary/wages are a top consideration when evaluating a new job, followed by 30% who say benefits are a top consideration.
- **Provide flexibility to work around personal commitments.** Flexible schedules were seen as a top consideration when looking for a new job by a quarter of those surveyed, and 23% said work-life balance was among the most important factors.



To retain Black talent, companies should:

- **Invest in career advancement opportunities.** 64% of Black adults without a four-year college degree are interested in enrolling in more schooling or obtaining a technical certification. And among those not looking for a job, 6 in 10 say it is because they are looking to get promoted.
- **Surround employees in a supportive workplace.** The number one reason (78%) why people are not likely to look for a job is because they like their current manager and current workplace culture.
 - For younger talent especially, having a supportive mentor at a company is almost as important as getting a higher salary. Among younger Black talent (ages 18-24), when asked what is more important in their next job, 53% say a higher salary but 47% say having strong mentorship.
 - We heard in focus groups that many in this group are concerned around fitting in to a corporate workplace culture that can feel confusing and unwelcoming to them. Mentorship allows space to talk about these issues and feel supported in overcoming them.

Methodology

To assess the opinions and beliefs of Black individuals without a college degree, our partner, Bullpy Pulpit Interactive (BPI), conducted both qualitative focus groups and a quantitative survey of Black adults without a four-year college degree.

- Four focus groups were conducted online December 15 to 16, 2021, with 20 Black adults without a college degree, with a household income of less than \$60k annually and with an interest in career development opportunities.
- Following the groups, BPI conducted a national survey February 22 to March 2, 2022, of 800 Black individuals without a four-year college degree and with a household income of under \$50K, age 18-50. The survey was conducted online and via phone to ensure a representative sample. The margin of error on truly random sample is +/- 3 points on total sample; higher among subgroups.

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