Not Just a Job: New Evidence on the Quality of Work in the United States and California
The median household income has risen only slightly as income inequality has grown. The median income increased 0.6% per year from 1979 to 2016, while the top 1% of household incomes increased at an average rate of 3.2% per year during that time (using CBO data).

Median and top 1% household labor income growth, adjusted for inflation using PCE Index (1979-2016)
Percentage of workers and people aged 18-64 who had health insurance coverage and retirement plan benefits through their employer from 1978-2018

- Participation in employer-retirement plan (CPS)
- Coverage through own job (CPS)
- Coverage through own or partner’s job (National Health Interview Survey)
Why job quality needs to be measured
The dimensions of job quality consist of more than income and benefits.

**THEY INCLUDE:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01 LEVEL OF PAY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 STABLE AND PREDICTABLE PAY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03 STABLE AND PREDICTABLE HOURS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04 CONTROL OVER HOURS AND/OR LOCATION</td>
<td>(e.g., ability to work flexible hours, work remotely)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05 JOB SECURITY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06 EMPLOYEE BENEFITS</td>
<td>(e.g., healthcare, retirement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07 CAREER ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES</td>
<td>(e.g., promotion path, learning new skills)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08 ENJOYING YOUR DAY-TO-DAY WORK</td>
<td>(e.g., good coworkers/managers, pleasant work environment, manageable stress level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09 HAVING A SENSE OF PURPOSE AND DIGNITY IN YOUR WORK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 HAVING THE POWER TO CHANGE THINGS ABOUT YOUR JOB THAT YOU'RE NOT SATISFIED WITH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Job Quality = Satisfaction with Dimension 1 + Satisfaction with Dimension 2 + ...**
Great Jobs Demonstration Survey

DATES  February 8–April 1, 2019

METHOD  Address-based sampling with encouragement to respond online

SAMPLE POPULATION  Adults aged 18 and older from across all 50 states and the District of Columbia

RESPONSE  9,671 individuals, 6,633 workers

RESPONSE RATE  14.5%

CONTENT  81 items on a variety of topics connected to work

FUNDING  Lumina Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Omidyar Network
Defining a good job using the 10 dimensions of job quality
Highlights of the findings
Less than half of California workers are in good jobs. Job quality is closely related to income.

Percentage of California workers in good, mediocre and bad jobs by income level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Level</th>
<th>Good Job</th>
<th>Mediocre Job</th>
<th>Bad Job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All U.S. workers</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All CA workers</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top 20% income</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle 41%-79% income</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottom 40% income</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unless otherwise indicated, all data refer to CA workers.
Most California workers in good and even mediocre jobs are thriving in their life evaluation. Most in bad jobs are struggling or suffering.

Percent of workers with high life evaluation by whether they are in a good, mediocre or bad job situation

77% Good Job
64% Mediocre Job
26% Bad Job

Unless otherwise indicated, all data refer to CA workers
There is a noticeable gap between what California workers find important for a good job and how satisfied they are with those dimensions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All CA Workers</th>
<th>Bottom 40%</th>
<th>Middle 41%-79%</th>
<th>Top 20%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career advancement opportunities</td>
<td>45% (80%)</td>
<td>31% (83%)</td>
<td>52% (82%)</td>
<td>62% (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of pay</td>
<td>54% (89%)</td>
<td>29% (90%)</td>
<td>61% (86%)</td>
<td>84% (95%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having the power to change things</td>
<td>47% (81%)</td>
<td>42% (75%)</td>
<td>53% (83%)</td>
<td>46% (91%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee benefits</td>
<td>59% (88%)</td>
<td>44% (88%)</td>
<td>68% (89%)</td>
<td>77% (90%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoying your day-to-day work</td>
<td>66% (93%)</td>
<td>58% (95%)</td>
<td>75% (92%)</td>
<td>63% (92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job security</td>
<td>71% (93%)</td>
<td>58% (95%)</td>
<td>78% (95%)</td>
<td>84% (85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a sense of purpose</td>
<td>70% (92%)</td>
<td>61% (91%)</td>
<td>80% (94%)</td>
<td>74% (89%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable and predictable pay</td>
<td>73% (90%)</td>
<td>59% (91%)</td>
<td>83% (94%)</td>
<td>87% (90%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable and predictable hours</td>
<td>70% (84%)</td>
<td>61% (88%)</td>
<td>79% (86%)</td>
<td>73% (79%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control over hours and/or location</td>
<td>64% (73%)</td>
<td>56% (66%)</td>
<td>67% (76%)</td>
<td>72% (74%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Satisfaction**
- **Importance**
Employee benefits are closely tied to income level. Workers in the bottom 40% income bracket lag in all forms of benefits.

Unless otherwise indicated, all data refer to CA workers.
Workers in counties with smaller metropolitan areas are in bad jobs at greater rates than those in Southern California and the Bay Area.

Percent of California workers in good, mediocre and bad jobs by region

- **Southern California**
  - Bad Job: 19%
  - Mediocre Job: 45%
  - Good Job: 36%

- **San Francisco Bay Area**
  - Bad Job: 9%
  - Mediocre Job: 45%
  - Good Job: 46%

- **Other Californian counties**
  - Bad Job: 26%
  - Mediocre Job: 29%
  - Good Job: 45%

Regions were defined using the California Employment Development Department's Economic Markets and Sub-Markets for Regional Economic Analysis Profiles. Unless otherwise indicated, all data refer to CA workers.
Female workers in California are in good jobs at greater rates than male workers.

Female workers:
- 47% in Mediocre jobs
- 37% in Good jobs
- 16% in Bad jobs

Male workers:
- 42% in Mediocre jobs
- 35% in Good jobs
- 22% in Bad jobs

Unless otherwise indicated, all data refer to CA workers.
Job quality in California tends to rise with age, then decline for older workers.

Percent of California workers in good jobs and bad jobs by age

Unless otherwise indicated, all data refer to CA workers.
Those with a bachelor’s degree have bad jobs at much lower rates than those whose education is less than a bachelor’s degree.

Bachelor's degree or higher

- Bad Job: 9%
- Mediocre Job: 45%
- Good Job: 46%

Less than bachelors degree

- Bad Job: 25%
- Mediocre Job: 37%
- Good Job: 38%

Unless otherwise indicated, all data refer to CA workers.
California workers who were immigrants to the U.S. are in good jobs at higher rates and bad jobs at lower rates than workers who were not foreign-born.

Unless otherwise indicated, all data refer to CA workers
The difference in rates of good and bad jobs between California workers who were immigrants and those who were not foreign born is particularly notable when considering education level.

**Bachelor’s degree or higher**

- **Not foreign-born**
  - Bad Job: 11%
  - Mediocre Job: 48%
  - Good Job: 41%

- **Foreign-born**
  - Bad Job: 38%
  - Mediocre Job: 59%
  - Good Job: 59%

**Less than a Bachelor’s degree**

- **Not foreign-born**
  - Bad Job: 26%
  - Mediocre Job: 37%
  - Good Job: 38%

- **Foreign-born**
  - Bad Job: 13%
  - Mediocre Job: 49%
  - Good Job: 38%

Percentages below 5% are not shown.

Unless otherwise indicated, all data refer to CA workers.
California workers are more likely to be in a good job when they strongly agree that they have the opportunity to do what they do best every day.

Percentage of California workers in each type of job who strongly agree that they have the opportunity to do what they do best every day:

- **GOOD JOB**: 67%
- **MEDIOCRE JOB**: 21%
- **BAD JOB**: 12%
Unsurprising Confirmations

1. Benefits and income predict higher job quality.
2. Younger workers and African American workers exhibit significantly lower job quality.
3. Workers rate their job lower when they work too many or too few hours.
4. Full-time jobs are rated better than part-time jobs.
5. Permanent jobs are rated much higher than temporary jobs.
6. Workers in production jobs tend to have lower job quality ratings, but those in the manufacturing sector more broadly do not have lower job quality.
7. Working multiple jobs out of need predicts lower job quality.

National Analysis: Factors that do and do not predict job quality

Control variables: age, race, ethnicity, immigration status, family characteristics, education
National Analysis: Factors that do and do not predict job quality

Control variables: age, race, ethnicity, immigration status, family characteristics, education

Surprising Non-results

1. Geography, gender and union status do not matter.
2. Republicans have higher job quality than Democrats and those with no party affiliation.
3. At least some measures of vulnerability to automation or trade don’t matter:
   - no effect from “face-to-face interactions with clients, customers, partners or students”
   - no effect from “a machine, computer or robot could do my job”
4. Education attainment has only a weak effect.
The Most Important Predictors of Job Quality Nationally:
Engagement + Income + Benefits + Tasks + Right amount of hours

Engagement and Tasks

- My opinions count at work.
- I have the opportunity to do my best work.
- Someone encourages my development.
- I have the opportunity to learn new skills that will be valuable to my career.
- I am expected to be creative or innovative at my job.
- I take risks at my job that could lead to new products, services or solutions.

- I manage others.
- I solve problems with math.
- My job does not involve repetitive tasks.
- I have remote interactions with clients, customers, partners or students via email, phone or another device.
- I don’t perform physical tasks.

MORE PREDICTIVE THAN INCOME OR BENEFITS
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