

Changing Jobs in the Current Market – Survey Data on Employee Job Searching

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Between December 23, 2025, and January 12, 2026, the Consumer Finance Institute (CFI) at the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia collected survey data to investigate job searching activity among U.S. adults who are currently *employed* (N=2,632). The data were collected via the quarterly Labor, Income, Finances, and Expectations (LIFE) Survey.

Within the *employed* population, we further identified the population of *established employees* (N=2,186), defined as people who have been at their current job for at least one year. This group was asked whether they have considered leaving their current job at any time in the past 12 months; those who had considered leaving received additional questions about their job searching behavior.

Owing to small volumes across demographic subsets within these data, we see somewhat limited statistical power across groups. Below, we provide tables and charts with data for the subpopulations that were above (blue) or below (orange) their population averages with statistical significance of at least $p < 0.10$ (e.g., any groups not shown were not statistically significant).

The key findings include:

- Just over 40 percent of the *established employees* reported that they had considered leaving their current job in the prior 12 months (43.8 percent) (**Figure 1**). There are four subsets of that population:
 - *Never searchers* who never started looking for a new job (18.2 percent).
 - *Active searchers* who are currently looking for a new job (12.3 percent).
 - *Previous searchers* who abandoned a job search (10.5 percent).

- *Workforce leavers* who are not taking another job (2.8 percent).¹
- The demographic groups most likely to have considered leaving their current primary employment include those who are younger, have a lower household income, or have a college degree (**Figure 1**).
- Based on respondents' self-reported employment information, those most likely to have considered leaving currently have jobs in retail and sales or at nonprofit, charitable, or religious organizations; are individual contributors; or have job tenures of one to five years (**Figure 2**).
- *Never searchers* most often said they have not started looking for a new job because of a belief that it is not a good time to change jobs, that they will not meet their income needs, or that the search process will be too difficult (**Figures 3 and 4**).
- *Previous searchers* most often abandoned their job searches owing to lack of progress, failure to meet their income needs, failure to find matches for their skill set or experience, or because they decided it was not a good time to change jobs (**Figures 5 and 6**).
- Just under half of *active searchers* are confident that they will find a new job in the next three months; the highest levels of confidence were among high earners, executive-level searchers, or those who have been searching for less than four months (**Figures 7 and 8**).

NOT A GOOD TIME TO CHANGE JOBS

Any *previous searchers* and *never searchers* who selected “I decided this was not a good time to change jobs” received a follow-up question asking them to explain in their own words what they meant. The text responses were reviewed (N=290; N=82 *previous searchers*, N=208 *never searchers*) to identify how frequently respondents cited concerns about the economy and/or the job market versus personal (e.g., family needs) reasons.

Overall, 53.8 percent of those who abandoned or did not start a job search cited the economy or the job market as at least part of the reason (47.6 percent of *previous searchers* and 56.1 percent of *never searchers*).¹ Samples of responses to this question can be found in **Appendix A**.

¹ *Workforce leavers* will not be covered in this brief because of small volumes; the primary reason provided was planning to retire.

Tables and Charts

Figure 1 – Job Search Status for Established Employees by Demographic Group

		Active Searchers	Previous Searchers	Never Searchers	Workforce Leavers	Stay in Job	Unweighted N
	All	12.3%	10.5%	18.2%	2.8%	56.2%	2,186
Age Range	18–25 years old	17.8%		27.7%		42.9%	207
	26–35 years old						554
	36–55 years old						940
	56–65 years old			14.3%		63.5%	320
	66 years or older	3.6%	4.1%	8.5%	7.1%	76.6%	165
Gender	Male						1,080
	Female						1,106
Personal Income	<\$40,000	18.1%	13.2%			49.9%	634
	\$40,000–\$69,999			20.5%			608
	\$70,000–\$99,999	8.4%					363
	\$100,000–\$149,999						287
	\$150,000+			12.1%		66.2%	142
Race/ Ethnicity	White Non-Hispanic	10.7%					1,356
	Black/African American	15.8%		14.0%			242
	Hispanic/Latino		6.9%				371
	Other						217
Education Level	High School or Less	10.2%	8.5%			61.4%	570
	Some College		13.7%				585
	College Grad			21.3%		52.8%	629
	Postgrad						402

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia Consumer Finance Institute LIFE Survey Data. Shaded cells indicate values that are above (blue) or below (orange) their population averages with statistical significance of at least $p < 0.10$.

Figure 2 – Job Search Status for Established Employees by Current Job Type

		Active Searchers	Previous Searchers	Never Searchers	Workforce Leavers	Stay in Job	Unweighted N
	All	12.3%	10.5%	18.2%	2.8%	56.2%	2,186
Industry	Construction			11.3%		70.2%	119
	Manufacturing						177
	Trade, transportation, utilities		6.2%	24.6%			127
	Information, professional, or business services		13.3%				354
	Finance, insurance, or real estate						159
	Education and health services			21.0%			468
	Retail and sales		15.2%			51.6%	290
	Leisure, hospitality, arts, and entertainment						215
	Government, public administration, military						170
	Nonprofit, charitable, or religious organization					46.8%	107
Current Job Role	Individual contributor	13.8%		19.9%		51.9%	1,199
	Team or line manager						379
	Middle manager	7.8%		24.3%			213
	Executive, C-level					67.0%	83
	Self-employed or small business owner			7.5%		67.6%	312
Current Job Tenure	1 to 5 years	15.9%	11.9%	20.2%		49.7%	1,087
	More than 5 years	8.5%	9.1%	16.3%		62.9%	1,099

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia Consumer Finance Institute LIFE Survey Data. Shaded cells indicate values that are above (blue) or below (orange) their population averages with statistical significance of at least $p < 0.10$.

Figure 3 – Never Searchers: Reasons Given for Never Beginning a Job Search by Demographic Group

		I don't think this is a good time to change jobs	I don't think I will find a job that meets my income needs	I think the job search process will be too complicated or frustrating	I don't think I will find a job that is a good fit for my skillset or experience	I don't think I will find a job with acceptable benefits	Conditions at my current job are improving	I think I will have to move to get a new job	Unweighted N
	All	52.7%	41.4%	35.2%	23.7%	22.0%	18.5%	12.4%	394
Age Range	18–25 years old		26.7%		12.9%	10.6%	28.1%		58
	26–35 years old							19.0%	105
	36–55 years old		49.8%		29.6%	26.3%			170
	56–65 years old	36.0%		20.8%				4.3%	47
	66 years or older			7.4%					14
Gender	Male			30.2%				17.9%	209
	Female			41.4%				5.5%	185
Personal Income	<\$40,000		30.0%			14.0%			105
	\$40,000–\$69,999								123
	\$70,000–\$99,999							20.4%	74
	\$100,000–\$149,999								51
	\$150,000+								18
Race/Ethnicity	White Non-Hispanic								255
	Black/African American	37.3%							32
	Hispanic/Latino								68
	Other								39
Education Level	High School or Less				18.0%				98
	Some College	44.8%					12.3%		98
	College Grad	60.4%							133
	Postgrad								65

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia Consumer Finance Institute LIFE Survey Data. Shaded cells indicate values that are above (blue) or below (orange) their population averages with statistical significance of at least p<0.10.

Figure 4 – Never Searchers: Reasons Given for Never Beginning a Job Search by Current Job Type

		I don't think this is a good time to change jobs	I don't think I will find a job that meets my income needs	I think the job search process will be too complicated or frustrating	I don't think I will find a job that is a good fit for my skillset or experience	I don't think I will find a job with acceptable benefits	Conditions at my current job are improving	I think I will have to move to get a new job	Unweighted N
	All	52.7%	41.4%	35.2%	23.7%	22.0%	18.5%	12.4%	394
Industry	Construction		70.3%		0.0%				13
	Manufacturing								38
	Trade, transportation, utilities								31
	Information, professional, or business services	70.2%		48.1%					60
	Finance, insurance, or real estate			51.0%					27
	Education and health services					28.5%			97
	Retail and sales					10.5%	6.5%		46
	Leisure, hospitality, arts, and entertainment					6.0%			34
	Government, public administration, military		60.9%						26
	Nonprofit, charitable, or religious organization		23.7%						22
Current Job Role	Individual contributor				27.4%				236
	Team or line manager		50.1%			35.4%		25.2%	72
	Middle manager			23.4%			27.2%		51
	Executive, C-level						47.8%		12
	Self-employed or small business owner							0.0%	23
Current Job Tenure	1 to 5 years		34.5%			16.9%			216
	More than 5 years		50.2%			28.6%			178

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia Consumer Finance Institute LIFE Survey Data. Shaded cells indicate values that are above (blue) or below (orange) their population averages with statistical significance of at least p<0.10.

Figure 5 – Previous Searchers: Reasons Given for Abandoning a Job Search by Demographic Group

		I gave up the job search because I wasn't making any progress	I was unable to find a job that met my income needs	I was unable to find a job that was a good fit for my skillset or experience	I decided this was not a good time to change jobs	I was unable to find a job with acceptable benefits	Conditions at my current job improved, so I no longer wanted to leave	I was not willing to relocate to take a new job	I received an offer, but my existing job provided a counteroffer, and I chose to stay	Unweighted N
	All	38.6%	37.5%	35.1%	34.7%	22.1%	17.7%	14.5%	4.9%	235
Age Range	18–25 years old									22
	26–35 years old	48.6%	48.4%							65
	36–55 years old									114
	56–65 years old		19.0%							27
	66 years or older									7
Gender	Male									106
	Female									129
Personal Income	<\$40,000	50.3%	25.5%	42.1%	20.4%			8.9%		85
	\$40,000–\$69,999			21.0%	45.8%					66
	\$70,000–\$99,999		52.6%					29.7%		32
	\$100,000–\$149,999	16.7%								24
	\$150,000+						36.4%	30.2%		14
Race/ Ethnicity	White Non-Hispanic								3.1%	157
	Black/African American						3.4%			27
	Hispanic/Latino									26
	Other				52.2%					25
Education Level	High School or Less				23.0%					48
	Some College									82
	College Grad		49.3%							65
	Postgrad				53.2%			24.4%		40

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia Consumer Finance Institute LIFE Survey Data. Shaded cells indicate values that are above (blue) or below (orange) the population average in each column.

Figure 6 – Previous Searchers: Reasons Given for Abandoning a Job Search by Current Job Type

		I don't think this is a good time to change jobs	I don't think I will find a job that meets my income needs	I think the job search process will be too complicated or frustrating	I don't think I will find a job that is a good fit for my skillset or experience	I don't think I will find a job with acceptable benefits	Conditions at my current job are improving	I think I will have to move to get a new job	I received an offer, but my existing job provided a counteroffer, and I chose to stay	Unweighted N
	All	38.6%	37.5%	35.1%	34.7%	22.1%	17.7%	14.5%	4.9%	235
Industry	Construction									10
	Manufacturing									13
	Trade, transportation, utilities						51.7%			8
	Information, professional, or business services									49
	Finance, insurance, or real estate		67.6%					29.7%		15
	Education and health services							25.5%		41
	Retail and sales		22.5%						12.2%	45
	Leisure, hospitality, arts, and entertainment			61.1%						24
	Government, public administration, military									16
	Nonprofit, charitable, or religious organization									14
Current Job Role	Individual contributor								1.6%	139
	Team or line manager		53.1%						10.5%	43
	Middle manager								20.4%	19
	Executive, C-level	81.7%					58.5%			5
	Self-employed or small business owner				17.0%					29
Current Job Tenure	1 to 5 years									132
	More than 5 years									103

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia Consumer Finance Institute LIFE Survey Data. Shaded cells indicate values that are above (blue) or below (orange) their population averages with statistical significance of at least $p < 0.10$.

Figure 7 – Active Searchers: Confidence in Finding a New Job in the Next Three Months by Demographic Group

		Confident	Not Confident	Unweighted N
	All	48.0%	52.0%	264
Age Range	18–25 years old	61.0%	39.0%	37
	26–35 years old			76
	36–55 years old			114
	56–65 years old			31
	66 years or older			6
Gender	Male			136
	Female			128
Personal Income	<\$40,000			111
	\$40,000–\$69,999			66
	\$70,000–\$99,999			31
	\$100,000–\$149,999			29
	\$150,000+	79.7%	20.3%	11
Race/ Ethnicity	White Non-Hispanic	40.0%	60.0%	143
	Black/African American	68.3%	31.7%	38
	Hispanic/Latino	57.3%	42.7%	53
	Other			30
Education Level	High School or Less			57
	Some College			75
	College Grad	36.5%	63.5%	78
	Postgrad			54

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia Consumer Finance Institute LIFE Survey Data. Shaded cells indicate values that are above (blue) or below (orange) their population averages with statistical significance of at least $p < 0.10$.

Figure 8 – Active Searchers: Confidence in Finding a New Job in the Next Three Months by Current Job Type

		Confident	Not Confident	Unweighted N
	All	48.0%	52.0%	264
Industry	Construction			9
	Manufacturing			19
	Trade, transportation, utilities			11
	Information, professional, or business services			42
	Finance, insurance, or real estate			22
	Education and health services			47
	Retail and sales			43
	Leisure, hospitality, arts, and entertainment			33
	Government, public administration, military			22
	Nonprofit, charitable, or religious organization			16
Current Job Role	Individual contributor	42.7%	57.3%	163
	Team or line manager			37
	Middle manager			17
	Executive, C-level	87.1%	12.9%	8
	Self-employed or small business owner			39
Current Job Tenure	1 to 5 years			172
	More than 5 years			92
Duration of Job Search	Less than 4 Months	59.9%	40.1%	118
	4+ Months	38.2%	61.8%	146

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia Consumer Finance Institute LIFE Survey Data. Shaded cells indicate values that are above (blue) or below (orange) their population averages with statistical significance of at least $p < 0.10$.

Appendix A: Samples of text responses to “I don’t think this a good time to change jobs” follow up question. The following are verbatim responses from survey respondents, presented as they were received in the survey.

References to the economic environment:

- “Each time we move, it sets is back financially. Cannot afford to do that right now. The economy is too uncertain.” (*Previous searcher*)
- “I value stability right now and prefer to wait for better market conditions before changing jobs.” (*Previous searcher*)
- “Economy is too terrifying to make big changes.” (*Never searcher*)
- “The economy is so precarious that it seems that holding on to what you have is the best strategy.” (*Never searcher*)

References to the job market:

- “I work as a professor and there is significant uncertainty in higher education.” (*Previous searcher*)
- “AI just eliminated a ton of jobs and considering even with my experience I can’t get out of entree level jobs going to a new job would be hard.” (*Never searcher*)
- “The current economy and employment market are too volatile.” (*Never searcher*)
- “The job market is not good. People aren't hiring. And when they are they aren't offering a livable wage.” (*Previous searcher*)

References to non-economic or job market reasons:

- “I am a teacher and I would feel bad if I quit mid year.” (*Previous searcher*)
- “My current work situation allows for my childcare needs. Once my child is older and in school might be better.” (*Previous searcher*)
- “I was caretaking for a friend for two years and have a loan out of my 401k and I need to first afford to pay the penalty before I get a new job.” (*Never searcher*)
- “Not in a good financial situation. To chance anything new could be risky when I’m already in debt. Fear of change too, I suppose.” (*Never searcher*)