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# In their own words: What Workers Like and Dislike about their Jobs

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## Abstract

This paper provides novel evidence on the key drivers of job satisfaction. We ask individuals to describe, in their own words, what they like and dislike about their jobs. These open-ended questions allow us to capture what comes to mind most naturally. We analyze the resulting free-text responses using GPT-4 to identify and classify categories of job amenities. Our main study draws on a sample of 500 full-time U.S.-based employees aged 30 to 55. We find that flexible work arrangements, workplace relationships, and autonomy consistently rank among the most valued aspects of work, while poor workplace relationships, long work hours, and heavy workloads dominate the list of dislikes and rank above factors such as pay. Our approach offers a fresh lens on what job amenities workers are most satisfied and dissatisfied with.

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# 1 Introduction

Understanding what workers value in their jobs is a longstanding question in labor economics. While classic economic models emphasize wages and hours, there is growing recognition that non-monetary aspects of work play an important role in shaping job satisfaction and employee behavior (Mas and Pallais, 2017, 2020; Cassar and Meier, 2018). Much of the existing research, however, is guided by researchers' priors about which amenities are likely to matter. As a result, studies typically focus on a subset of potential factors and assess their relative importance.

In this paper, we present data collected using a more agnostic approach. We examine what comes to mind when workers are asked, in an open-ended way, what they like and dislike about their jobs. By giving respondents complete freedom in how they describe the features they value, we aim to reduce the role of researcher-induced priors. We analyze these free-text responses using a large language model (GPT-4) to identify frequently mentioned amenities. Naturally, what workers mention most readily does not necessarily coincide with what they value most. They could focus on what is salient to them for example. In a second step, we ask respondents to assess the importance of the features identified in the first stage. The goal of this approach is to uncover dimensions of job satisfaction that may have been overlooked in prior research.

Our study was conducted in two stages. First, we conducted a pilot survey, where we gather open-ended responses from which we identify specific features that employees tend to like or dislike. Second, we designed a formal survey that collected both open-ended questions and questions with a set of predefined features. For the latter, we elicited importance ratings and overall satisfaction.

Our approach is innovative in two key ways. First, we collect rich qualitative data through open-ended survey responses, departing from the usual approach in the literature. Second, we leverage recent advances in Natural Language Processing (NLP) and Large Language Models (LLMs), specifically GPT-4, to systematically analyze these textual responses at scale. Recent studies have begun to use textual data for measuring non-wage attributes and features that people value. Sockin (2022), for example, applies a topic

modeling method to workers' reviews on *Glassdoor* to extract "nuanced amenities" that they consider important. Furthermore, [Lagakos et al. \(2025\)](#) utilize LLMs to analyze unstructured historical text to extract sources of meaning and life satisfaction in the context of early 20th century U.S. To our knowledge, our study is one of the first to apply state-of-the-art LLM technology to analyze open-ended survey responses concerning features of work in labor economics.

Our analysis reveals several noteworthy insights into the drivers of job satisfaction. First, from the open-ended responses, we find employees overwhelmingly emphasize work arrangements and interpersonal aspects of work as the job aspects they value most. Flexible work arrangement and work-life balance are at the top of the list of what workers like best. Interestingly, the actual tasks of the job, although less studied, are frequently mentioned. Traditional contractual features, such as pay and benefit, work hours, and workload, are mentioned as well, but tend to be triggers of dissatisfaction. Relationships at work also often mentioned very frequently, and top both the 'like' and 'dislike' lists. Poor management also stands out as a frequent source of discontent, with nearly half of respondents identifying firm-related issues as their principal complaint. Finally, significant heterogeneity is observed across subgroups: for instance, women mention more often flexible work arrangements and work-life balance, while younger employees prioritize flexibility and older workers increasingly value relationships at work.

In a second step we asked workers what features were important to them. In this step we prompted them with specific features that had been identified as the most frequently mentioned in the pilot stage of the study. We find that conditional on mentioning a feature as a 'like' or 'dislike', the probability that this feature is judged important is very high. That is, it does not appear to be the case that workers merely mention what is salient to them. As a consequence, these answers reveal both the degree to which workers care about these features and their degree of (dis)satisfaction with them.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a review of relevant literature around non-wage amenities and job satisfaction. Section 3 describes the on-line survey and sample of participants. Section 4 describes the identification of the key features from open-ended responses and outlines the model performance. Section 5 provides

descriptive statistics of the open-ended responses, outlining important dimensions of heterogeneity. Section 6 reviews the relationship between the features identified in open text and those recovered through presenting job seekers with pre-defined categories. Finally, Section 7 concludes.

## 2 Literature review

Our study relates to the burgeoning literature on the role of non-wage amenities in determining the attractiveness of jobs. The seminal work by Rosen on compensating wage differentials (Rosen, 1974, 1986) modeled jobs as “bundles” of characteristics, particularly wage and amenities. In equilibrium, wages would adjust such that workers are indifferent between jobs. This framework predicts a negative relationship between offered wages and desirable job features: jobs with desirable amenities can pay less, whereas undesirable jobs must pay a premium to attract workers.

Early empirical studies focusing on tangible amenities, such as occupational safety, job risk, and fringe benefits, produced mixed evidence of compensating differentials, reflecting the challenges posed by measurement errors, omitted variables, and sorting (Brown, 1980; Hwang et al., 1992; Gruber, 2000). The presence of unobserved worker heterogeneity and omitted non-wage attributes often confounded the estimation of amenity values. Moreover, classical studies frequently lacked comprehensive data on job attributes valued by workers, motivating recent methodological advances.

One significant advancement involves the use of experiments to isolate workers’ valuations of specific amenities, thus circumventing biases inherent in observational data. Mas and Pallais (2017), for instance, randomly offered applicants alternative work arrangements—such as flexible schedules and remote work—alongside variations in wages. They found that workers were generally averse to unpredictable schedules set by employers, and that women placed high monetary value on the option to work from home. Subsequent studies, employing stated preference methods, document substantial heterogeneity in willingness-to-pay for various job attributes across demographic groups (Maestas et al., 2023).

Other approaches leverage matched employer-employee datasets combined with structural search models to infer workers' valuations of intangible firm-level amenities indirectly. [Sorkin \(2018\)](#) uses observed job transitions to infer workers' revealed preferences over employers. These results indicate that many workers accept lower wages to move to firms they prefer, implying that non-wage amenities are sufficiently valued to justify pay cuts. [Sorkin \(2018\)](#) estimates that over half of the firm-level earnings dispersion is explained by these amenity-driven preferences. Similarly, [Taber and Vejlin \(2020\)](#) illustrate that incorporating non-pecuniary factors significantly enhances the explanatory power of wage variance models, underscoring the critical role that non-wage amenities play.

Recent literature has started addressing intangible characteristics such as firm mission ([Besley and Ghatak, 2005](#)) and the meaningfulness of the job ([Cassar and Meier, 2018](#)). One common feature in these studies is that the set of amenities considered is defined by researchers. Researchers determine what could be a sensible amenity that workers may value and proceed to examine its role. In some cases, the choice is limited by data availability, while in other cases it may be limited by power constraints. For example, when carrying out experiments, there is only a limited set of features that can be varied.

Novel approaches employing broader survey instruments and textual analysis circumvent this issue. A recent study by [Sockin \(2022\)](#) exploits employees' open-ended job descriptions from the online platform *Glassdoor*, using topic modeling to categorize 50 distinct amenity dimensions. The findings reveal a positive correlation between wages and amenities, indicating that firms offering higher wages also typically provide superior non-wage attributes. Advancements in NLP have further increased the value of open-ended survey data; [Ferrario and Stantcheva \(2022\)](#) show that allowing respondents to describe their concerns freely and analyzing these texts with advanced algorithms can uncover priorities that multiple-choice surveys can overlook.

The present study contributes to this evolving literature by utilizing open-ended worker responses, analyzed through state-of-the-art language processing techniques. Workers are asked to freely describe what they like and dislike about their jobs. These open-ended responses can reveal a broad spectrum of amenities and disamenities workers appear to care about—from work-life balance and respectful management to career growth oppor-

tunities and workplace culture—and which traditional surveys largely overlook.

## 3 Sample and survey design

To explore the aspects of the job that matter most to employees, we designed and conducted two rounds of surveys, each serving a distinct purpose.<sup>1</sup>

### 3.1 Pilot survey

The initial pilot survey was conducted in March 2023, through *Prolific* (see Appendix D). The platform was selected due to its large and diverse participant pool, as well as its reputation for high-quality data collection. The pilot survey targeted full-time workers residing in the United States, aged 30 to 55, to ensure responses were drawn from individuals with stable employment and significant work experience. A total of 100 workers completed the pilot survey.

This pilot survey had three primary objectives, namely to (1) test the clarity and effectiveness of our open-ended questions in eliciting honest and meaningful responses, (2) perform an initial manual analysis of responses in order to identify recurring job features that workers mention, and (3) evaluate the feasibility of using text analysis and NLP tools (specifically GPT-4) to analyze the text data. This feasibility check was crucial to determine if AI tools could maintain accuracy and consistency in feature extraction.

The open-ended prompts were straightforward and asked “What do you like best about your job?”, “What do you like least about your job?”, and “What are the typical everyday tasks associated with your job?”. These questions allowed respondents to freely describe positive and negative facets of their work in their own words. From the pilot responses, we identified a preliminary set of common themes. For example, many respondents mentioned enjoying aspects like flexible schedule or good coworkers, and disliking aspects like poor management or low pay. This, in turn, informed the design of the main survey.

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<sup>1</sup> The study and data collection procedure were reviewed and approved by the IRB of Cornell University (protocol nr IRB0147146)

## 3.2 Main survey

Building on insights from the pilot, we launched a formal survey in July 2023, again targeting full-time U.S.-based employees between 30 and 55 years old through *Prolific*. This larger survey included 500 participants. It retained the three core open-ended questions from the pilot, and included additional questions. Specifically, the new questions included a preset list of job features and asked participants to indicate the extent to which these features are important in their valuation of their jobs.

The main survey was divided into several sections to collect detailed information on workers' experience, job satisfaction and valuation of job characteristics. The first section focused on respondents' current and previous job experiences, including the number of jobs held over the past decade, main occupation, job title, and weekly hours worked. Following this, respondents were asked the three open-ended questions, which prompted them to describe aspects of their current job they liked or disliked and to detail their main job responsibilities. In the second section, respondents were asked to rate the importance of each feature identified in several contexts: (a) how important was it in choosing their current job, (b) how important is it now in their current job, and (c) if they had a previous job, how important was it in choosing and (d) leaving their last job. These rating-scale questions allow us to compare two different ways of eliciting people's valuations of non-wage features of the jobs. Finally, the survey collected demographic information, including age, gender, state of residence, and union membership status, to allow for subgroup analyses based on individual characteristics.

## 4 Feature identification, categorization, and model performance

### 4.1 Manual categorization

To identify the specific features that workers value or find challenging in their jobs, we conducted a manual review of responses from the pilot survey. This analysis focused on

two sets of responses: one capturing answers to “What do you like best about your job?” and the other capturing answers to “What do you like least about your job?”. By examining these two sets of responses separately, we were able to identify recurring themes in workers’ likes and dislikes, allowing us to systematically categorize their responses. This manual categorization process served as a foundation for the subsequent automated analysis using GPT-4.

We found that workers often referenced the same job aspects in both their “like best” and “like least” responses, though with contrasting sentiments. For instance, flexibility, autonomy, and meaning were frequently mentioned as both appreciated and lacking features, depending on the worker’s experience. To accurately reflect this variation in sentiment, we assigned distinct labels to each feature in the “like best” and “like least” categories. For example, positive sentiments about flexibility were categorized under “flexibility in work arrangement” in the “like best” responses, whereas complaints about a lack of flexibility were categorized as “lack of flexibility in work arrangement” in the “like least” responses.

In total, we identified 20 features for each response set, as shown in Table 1. This manual categorization was essential for establishing a comprehensive set of features that accurately reflect positive and negative job-related sentiments. These categories were later used in the main survey analysis, where GPT-4 scaled the feature identification process to a larger dataset with consistent categorizations.

## 4.2 Use of GPT-4 for textual analysis

Our approach to feature identification in job satisfaction responses involved two stages: feasibility testing in the pilot study and scaling to a larger dataset with our main survey (see Appendix D). This two-step process ensured that GPT-4 could reliably capture nuanced job-related sentiments, allowing for consistent and efficient labeling across the larger sample.

In the pilot study, responses were manually labeled based on the 20 identified categories, tagging all relevant features mentioned by respondents. To use GPT-4 for la-

Table 1: Categories of Job Features Identified in Worker Responses

Likes	Dislikes
Actual tasks of the job	Actual tasks of the job
Administrative tasks	Administrative tasks
Meaning of the job	Lack of meaning of the job
Autonomy in work	Lack of autonomy in work
Creativity in work	Lack of creativity in work
Management	Bad management
Fit with skills	Poor fit with skills
Relationships at work	Relationships at work
Pay and benefits	Pay and benefits
Work hours and workload	Work hours and workload
Flexibility in work arrangement	Lack of flexibility in work arrangement
Career prospects	Bad career prospects
Non-monetary perks	Bad non-monetary perks
Firm location and firm infrastructure	Firm location and firm infrastructure
Firm culture and work environment	Firm culture and work environment
Internal organization	Internal organization
Firm mission	Firm mission
Reputation of the firm	Bad reputation of the firm
Work-life balance	Bad work-life balance
Distance to work	Long distance to work

beling, we developed specific instructions tailored to each category, ensuring clarity and consistency in classification. For example, for the aspect “meaning of the job” in the “like best” responses, the model was instructed as follows: “If the response includes a phrase like ‘making an impact’, ‘helping others’, ‘good to the society’, etc., it indicates the worker likes the meaning of the job.” In contrast, for “lack of meaning of the job” in the “like least” responses, the model was instructed: “Lack of meaning of the job means the worker may feel the job is not meaningful/useful, or they feel unfulfilled/unaccomplished/incomplete, or feel that they are not taken seriously, or feel that they are not helping others/the world.” The full set of instructions for each feature is provided in Tables A.1 and A.2 in Appendix A.

With these instructions in hand, we designed GPT-4 prompts for automated labeling. Each prompt included the worker’s job title, occupation, and response text, followed by

the specific feature’s definition and instructions. The prompt structure for identifying features workers like best asked GPT-4 to identify if each category is mentioned, separately for liked and for disliked.<sup>2</sup> For each response, GPT-4 provided a binary “Yes” or “No” answer for each feature, along with a brief explanation of its reasoning. This structure maintained the interpretability of the automated labeling, while ensuring that GPT-4’s decisions aligned with the guidelines established in the pilot study.

### 4.3 Model performance

We then evaluated GPT-4’s performance by comparing its labels to the manually tagged benchmark from the pilot study. The performance was assessed across all features, and is shown in Tables A.3 and A.4 in Appendix A. The metrics used to evaluate performance are (1) Precision (Of the items labeled as positive, how many were actually correct?), (2) Recall (Of all true positives, how many were successfully identified?) and (3) F1 score, which increases with each of the first two performance metrics (Precision or Recall), but less so when the other metric is low.<sup>3</sup>

Overall, GPT-4 identified the features well. For the “like best” responses, the precision rate is 0.71, the recall rate is 0.90, and the F1 score is 0.79. For the “like least” responses, the precision rate is 0.60, the recall rate is 0.83, and the F1 score is 0.70. The performance for the “like least” feature identification is not as good as that for the “like best” feature identification, mainly because the latter responses are more nuanced or context-specific. Some of the features we identified in the pilot have a low frequency of appearance in the main study, and GPT-4’s ability to identify them is poor. As a consequence, we exclude features that are mentioned less than three times in both “like” and “dislike” responses. This analysis demonstrates that GPT-4 could reliably identify relevant features in the re-

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<sup>2</sup> The specific prompt was as follows: A worker with the job title of {jobtitle} in {occupation} was asked what they like best about their job. The response is as follows: {text}. The worker may mention a list of things; please identify if {category} is specifically mentioned as something they like. Definition and additional instructions for {category}: {definition} {instruction}. Your answer should start with “Yes” or “No”, followed by a sentence explaining your reasoning. Use at most 20 words.

<sup>3</sup> The F1 score is calculated as

$$F_1 = 2 \cdot \frac{\text{Precision} \times \text{Recall}}{\text{Precision} + \text{Recall}} \quad (1)$$

sponses, with high alignment to manual labels.

To check the performance in the formal survey, we drew a random subset of 100 samples from the formal survey data and labeled the responses manually. The model performance is shown in Tables A.5 and A.6 in Appendix A. Overall, the model performance for identifying the “likes” features is slightly worse than in the training set. The overall precision rate is 0.57 while the recall rate is 0.86, meaning that more responses are labeled as true (i.e. present) by GPT-4, while being labeled as negative (i.e. absent) in our manual check. However the high recall rate means that many manually identified features are also identified by the model. The model performs as well in identifying the “dislikes” features.

## 5 Analysis

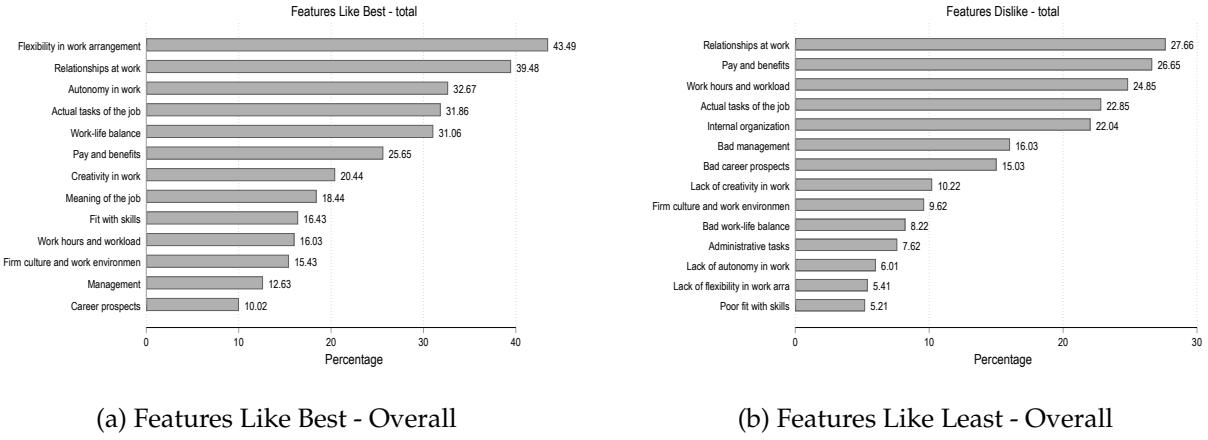
In this section, we examine the features that workers mention most in the open text, starting with the features that are associated with a positive sentiment. Figure 1(a) shows the distribution of responses. The most frequently mentioned feature is the flexibility in work arrangements, with relationships at work following closely behind. Other frequently mentioned features include autonomy at work, the actual tasks of the job and work-life balance.

It is worth noticing that these top-ranked features focus on the quality and nature of the work rather than external and contract features, such as pay and benefits. Also worth noting is that some of these features have received very little attention in the labor economics literature, such as the actual tasks of the job, which emerge here as a key aspect of a job workers care about. Existing research often emphasizes the role of contractual arrangements or experiential attributes of work, like creativity or meaning, whereas our results highlight the importance of the substantive nature of what people do on the job.

Similarly, Figure 1(b) displays the distribution of dislikes, with relationships at work being at the top, followed by pay and benefits as well as work hours. Actual tasks of the job and internal organization are also high on the list.

To explore how preferences vary across subgroups, we examine the distribution of fea-

Figure 1: Overall features workers like most and least about their job



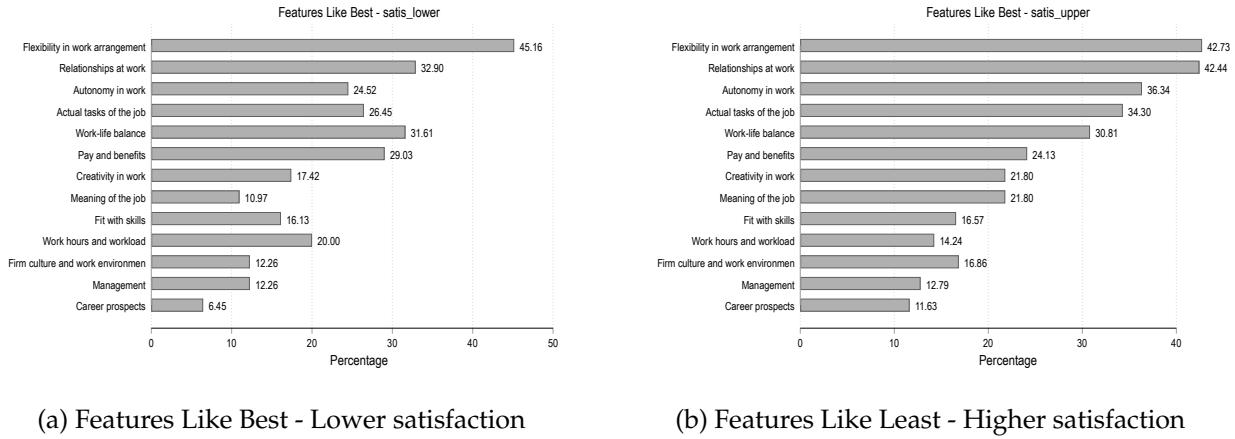
*Note:* The figure displays the overall distribution of features workers like best about their job. We exclude features with less than 5% mentions, which includes administrative tasks (1.8%) and internal organization (0.6%), which appear at the bottom of the list in the "like best" feature analysis. The two features are also excluded in all subsequent 'like best' subgroup analyses.

tures by respondents' sex, age, and skills. The results are presented in Appendix B, Figures B.1 and B.2 of the Appendix. The order of the features in these figures follows the overall ranking, making it easier to compare subgroup rankings relative to the overall sample and identify which features are more or less emphasized in each subgroup. As shown in Figures B.1(a)-(b), work-life balance is more frequently mentioned by female respondents (38.17%), ranking second overall. This is significantly more often mentioned than pay and benefits (22.04%). Additionally, meaning of the job is more commonly cited by women, and it ranks ahead of creativity in work. In contrast, for male respondents, work-life balance (26.64%) is mentioned slightly less frequently than pay and benefits (26.99%), and meaning of the job is ranked lower than both creativity and fit with skills.

Turning to differences by age, we divide the sample into two groups: workers younger than 40 years old and workers aged 40 and above. The results are presented in Figure B.1(c)-(d). Overall, the ranking of features is remarkably similar between the two age groups, with only minor differences in the order of preferences. Both groups prioritize flexibility in work arrangement and relationships at work as the most liked features, followed closely by autonomy in work and actual tasks of the job. Relationships at work is more frequently mentioned by workers aged 40 and above. Younger workers (under

40) place more emphasis on work-life balance (32.60% vs. 29.20% for older workers) and career prospects (11.72% vs. 7.96%), suggesting a stronger focus on work-life integration and career growth opportunities at the beginning of their careers.

Figure 2: Features workers like most and least by satisfaction level



(a) Features Like Best - Lower satisfaction

(b) Features Like Least - Higher satisfaction

*Note:* The figure displays the overall distribution of features workers like best about their job. We exclude features with less than 5% mentions, which includes administrative tasks (1.8%) and internal organization (0.6%), which appear at the bottom of the list in the "like best" feature analysis. The two features are also excluded in all subsequent 'like best' subgroup analyses.

From Figure B.1(e)-(f), less skilled workers mention flexibility in work arrangement most often, while skilled workers place relationships at work at the top of their preferences. Skilled workers also emphasize the meaning of the job more frequently, but they mention autonomy in work slightly less often.

## 6 Do workers care about these features?

The open questions focused on what people report liking or disliking about their jobs. Presumably these answers reflect amenities workers care about to some extent, as well as a subjective evaluation of how well these amenities are provided. For example, they may care about pay and benefits, but not feel very satisfied with them. It is also possible that workers mention aspects that are salient in their mind but are not that important in their overall valuation of the job.

To get a sense of the degree to which respondents care about the amenities they men-

tion, we included a set of more structured questions using the list of likes and dislikes we had identified in the Pilot survey. That is, after answering the open-ended questions, respondents were asked to indicate how important different aspects were, based on a curated list. Table 2 reports the probability that a job attribute is subsequently rated as highly or weakly important, conditional on having been mentioned in the open-ended questions as either a 'like' or a 'dislike'. Across most attributes, the probability of being rated as highly important exceeds 50%, particularly when the attribute is mentioned as a Like. This means that respondents predominantly mention aspects of their jobs that they later classify as important. Conditional importance is systematically lower for dislikes than for likes, suggesting that negative mentions may capture a mix of core concerns and more transitory or context-specific issues. Internal organization stands out as the only attribute for which conditional importance is low when it is mentioned positively.

Table 2: Conditional probabilities of being important (High/Low) given mention

Item	P(High   Like)	P(High)	P(Low   Like)	P(Low)	P(High   Dislike)	P(High)	P(Low   Dislike)	P(Low)
Work hours and workload	93.8%	83.2%	1.3%	5.0%	81.1%	83.2%	5.7%	5.0%
Flexibility in work arrangement	89.4%	77.8%	3.7%	9.4%	68.8%	77.8%	13.8%	9.4%
Work-life balance	89.0%	84.8%	1.9%	4.8%	82.8%	84.8%	6.1%	4.8%
Firm mission	88.2%	35.3%	11.8%	42.3%	33.4%	35.3%	43.4%	42.3%
Pay and benefits	87.5%	77.6%	3.1%	6.6%	74.1%	77.6%	7.8%	6.6%
Reputation of the firm	83.3%	42.1%	0.0%	33.5%	41.1%	42.1%	34.3%	33.5%
Fit with skills	82.9%	72.1%	6.1%	10.4%	70.0%	72.1%	11.3%	10.4%
Distance to work	81.5%	65.9%	11.1%	15.2%	65.0%	65.9%	15.5%	15.2%
Meaning of the job	80.4%	45.1%	7.6%	30.3%	37.1%	45.1%	35.4%	30.3%
Autonomy in work	80.4%	68.1%	7.4%	13.2%	62.2%	68.1%	16.1%	13.2%
Non-monetary perks	80.0%	32.9%	20.0%	40.9%	32.4%	32.9%	41.1%	40.9%
Location and infrastructure	80.0%	45.7%	0.0%	29.5%	45.3%	45.7%	29.8%	29.5%
Actual tasks of the job	74.8%	68.3%	5.7%	9.2%	65.3%	68.3%	10.9%	9.2%
Career prospects	72.0%	46.9%	4.0%	27.3%	44.1%	46.9%	29.8%	27.3%
Management	69.8%	56.7%	14.3%	21.6%	54.8%	56.7%	22.7%	21.6%
Administrative tasks	66.7%	32.3%	11.1%	38.7%	31.6%	32.3%	39.2%	38.7%
Relationships at work	60.4%	48.7%	13.7%	26.1%	41.1%	48.7%	34.1%	26.1%
Culture and work environment	57.1%	48.9%	13.0%	25.1%	47.4%	48.9%	27.3%	25.1%
Creativity in work	53.9%	38.5%	19.6%	37.5%	34.5%	38.5%	42.1%	37.5%
Internal organization	33.3%	40.3%	33.3%	30.5%	40.3%	40.3%	30.4%	30.5%

Table 3 classifies job attributes along two dimensions: how frequently they are men-

tioned in open-ended responses and how likely they are to be rated as highly important conditional on being mentioned. Attributes such as pay, work hours, workload, and work-life balance appear frequently in both likes and dislikes and are consistently rated as important, highlighting their central role in job evaluation. In contrast, attributes such as autonomy, skills fit, and flexibility are mentioned less frequently but are highly important when they are mentioned, suggesting that these dimensions matter greatly for a subset of workers. Finally, attributes such as creativity and workplace relationships are frequently mentioned both as likes and as dislikes, but are less consistently rated as important.

Summarizing, the most important aspects of a job that workers mention among their 'Likes' are work hours and workload, flexibility in work arrangement and work-life balance. The most important aspects they mention among their 'Dislikes' are also work hours and workload and work-life balance, but also pay and benefits. From this analysis, we conclude that work hours and work arrangements are important features of the job, and that workers differ in the degree to which they are satisfied with their current arrangements. Pay and benefits are also key features of the job, but are more likely to be perceived as a source of discontent.

Table 3: Job Attribute Classification by Importance and Frequency

	Less important	Important
Low freq dislikes – high freq likes	Meaning of the job	Autonomy in work; Fit with skills; Flexibility in work arrangement
Low freq dislikes – low freq likes	Administrative tasks; Non-monetary perks; Location and infrastructure; Firm mission; Reputation of the firm	Distance to work
High freq dislikes – low freq likes	Career prospects; Internal organization	Management; Culture and work environment
High freq likes – high freq dislikes	Creativity in work; Relationships at work	Pay and benefits; Work hours and workload; Work-life balance

## 7 Discussion

This study sets out to investigate a fundamental question with a novel approach: What do workers - in their own words - claim they like and dislike about their jobs? By collecting open-ended responses from employees and analyzing them with modern NLP tech-

niques, we uncovered a rich array of factors that matter to workers. Several key findings emerge. First, employees overwhelmingly emphasize intrinsic and interpersonal aspects of work as the things they value most. Good relationships at work, competent and supportive management, a positive company culture, and doing work that is interesting and meaningful were top of the list of what makes a job satisfying for many people. Factors like pay and benefits appear more frequently as potential sources of dissatisfaction. Second, the biggest sources of discontent reported was poor management, bad relationships at work, and toxic workplace culture. Nearly half of our respondents pointed to a firm-related issue as what they dislike most about their job. This highlights that workplace environment issues are pervasive and can severely undermine employee morale. Doing what is misaligned with one's interest is the second most often mentioned 'dislike', indicating that the match between one's interest and the job tasks is important to both satisfaction and dissatisfaction. These findings suggest that improving the quality of management and firm culture is an important component of worker well-being.

We also found meaningful variations across different groups of workers. Women in our sample mention more frequently flexible work arrangements and work-life balance than men. Newer employees (<5 years tenure) were more likely to mention flexibility, whereas seasoned employees (5+ years) emphasized job fit and meaning. These differences could be due to differences in valuation of these features or a higher likelihood of having access to them.

Overall, our study highlights a number of aspects that appears to matter to employees, some of which have received that appear to have received little attention in the literature. In Appendix C, Table C.1, we report key studies focusing on the different aspects of the job we identified, and in Table C.2, we summarize what information one could find in three of the largest and most widely used surveys, namely the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), the American Community Survey (ACS), as well as the UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS), formerly known as the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS). We search for references on objective measures associated with these aspects, such as for example the annual salary, as well as for measures relating to satisfaction with those aspects, such as satisfaction with annual salary.

As can be seen, the objective coverage is best for UKHLS, followed by SOEP, and with ACS only identifying 5 of these attributes. However, there is only sparse coverage when it comes to the satisfaction measures. UKHLS does the best job of covering satisfaction, including questions on satisfaction with the actual job, promotion prospects, total pay, job security, relationships with management, use of initiative at work, as well as hours worked. SOEP also includes three relevant questions asking on satisfaction with income and leisure time. The ACS does not include relevant questions on satisfaction.

In our view, our study findings suggest that there may be understudied aspects of work that could receive more attention. Collecting objective information on these aspects of work could help understanding better their role in determining job satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

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# Online Appendix

## Appendix A - GPT-4 analysis

Table A.1: Categories of Job Features and Definitions

Likes	Dislikes	Definition
actual tasks of the job	actual tasks of the job	Actual tasks of the job refer to the specific duties, responsibilities, and assignments that a worker is expected to perform as part of their job role.
administrative tasks	administrative tasks	Administrative tasks include various non-core tasks related to managing and organizing work, such as documentation, record-keeping, scheduling, and other administrative responsibilities.
meaning of the job	lack of meaning of the job	Job meaning relates to how employees perceive the significance and purpose of their work, whether it brings impact and value to individuals and society. The meaning can apply to society, the company, or coworkers generally.
autonomy in work	lack of autonomy in work	Autonomy refers to the level of independence and self-direction employees have in making decisions, setting goals, and organizing their work processes without excessive micromanagement. It differs from flexible work arrangements or creativity in work.
creativity in work	lack of creativity in work	Creativity indicates the opportunity for employees to express their creative thinking, problem-solving skills, and innovative ideas in their job tasks, allowing them to explore new approaches and contribute to organizational success.
management	bad management	Management encompasses the quality of leadership and supervision within the organization, including the competence, supportiveness, communication style, and effectiveness of managers in guiding and motivating employees.
fit with skills	poor fit with skills	Fit with skills refers to the degree to which an individual's skills, knowledge, educational background, and competencies align with the requirements of a particular job or role within an organization.
relationships at work	relationships at work	Relationships at work encompass the quality of interactions and relationships employees have with clients, coworkers, managers, and other individuals they engage with in the workplace.
pay and benefits	pay and benefits	Pay and benefits refer to the financial compensation employees receive, including base salary, bonuses, incentives, and benefits such as healthcare coverage, retirement plans, vacation time, and other perks provided by the organization.
work hours and workload	work hours and workload	Work hours and workload relate to the number of hours employees are expected to work and the volume and intensity of tasks they are assigned, impacting their work-life balance and stress levels.
flexibility in work arrangement	lack of flexibility in work arrangement	Flexibility in work arrangement refers to employees' ability to control when, where, and how they work, including options for flexible schedules, remote work, or other arrangements accommodating individual needs.
career prospects	bad career prospects	Career prospects encompass factors such as job security, opportunities for advancement, professional growth, and the existence of a clear career path within the organization.
non-monetary perks	bad non-monetary perks	Non-monetary perks refer to additional benefits or incentives beyond financial compensation, such as company-provided meals, transportation, wellness programs, or employee discounts, enhancing the overall work experience.
firm location and firm infrastructure	firm location and firm infrastructure	Firm location and infrastructure refer to the physical location and facilities of the organization, including transportation options and the quality of office spaces, internet connection, and equipment.
firm culture and firm work environment	firm culture and firm work environment	Firm culture and work environment encompass the values, norms, attitudes, and overall atmosphere within the organization, including collaboration, inclusivity, and work-life balance.
internal organization	internal organization	Internal organization refers to the structure, processes, and effectiveness of internal operations within the organization, including communication channels and decision-making processes. It is more about firm-level organization.
firm mission	firm mission	Firm mission relates to the overarching purpose, vision, and goals of the organization, and how well employees connect with and find meaning in the organization's mission.
reputation of the firm	bad reputation of the firm	Reputation of the firm refers to the organization's standing and perception in the industry or market, including factors such as brand image, track record, customer satisfaction, and overall reputation.
work-life balance	bad work-life balance	Work-life balance represents the ability to maintain a healthy equilibrium between work responsibilities and personal life, allowing employees time and energy for family, hobbies, self-care, and other pursuits.
distance to work	long distance to work	Distance to work refers to the physical distance or length of the commute between an individual's place of residence and their workplace.

**Table A.2: Categories of Job Features and Instructions for Classification**

Likes	Dislikes	Likes Instruction	Dislikes Instruction
actual tasks of the job	actual tasks of the job	Not about autonomy or meaning of the job. Phrases like "I love/like/enjoy the tasks" indicate liking.	Not about autonomy, hours, or admin tasks. Detailed mentions of job tasks as mentally/physically demanding indicate dislike.
administrative tasks	administrative tasks	Mentions of paperwork, scheduling, meetings, etc.	Mentions of paperwork, scheduling, meetings, etc.
meaning of the job	Lack of meaning of the job	Phrases like "making an impact," "helping others," or "good to society" indicate liking the job's meaning.	Phrases like "not meaningful/useful" or "unfulfilled/incomplete" indicate lack of meaning.
autonomy in work	Lack of autonomy in work	Mentions of freedom from micromanagement or strict adherence to regulations indicate lack of autonomy.	Mentions of micromanagement or strict adherence to regulations indicate lack of autonomy.
creativity in work	Lack of creativity in work	Phrases like "finding new ways," "challenges," or "variety" indicate creativity.	Phrases like "boring," "monotonous," or "tedious" indicate lack of creativity.
management	bad management	Mentions of good leadership or positive remarks about managers.	Mentions of poor communication, micromanagement, or disorganized administration indicate bad management.
fit with skills	poor fit with skills	Phrases indicating skill match, prior experience, or ease with tasks.	Mentions of misaligned, mismatched, or utilized skills indicate poor fit.
relationships at work	relationships at work	Positive mentions of coworkers, clients, or interpersonal interactions.	Mentions of rude customers, uncooperative coworkers, or strained relationships.
pay and benefits	pay and benefits	Includes pay structure (e.g., hourly vs. salary) and benefits like paid time off.	Rarely needed for dislikes as it focuses on pay dissatisfaction.
work hours and workload	work hours and workload	Includes shifts or workload unrelated to pay structure.	Mentions of stress, overwork, or unrealistic goals.
flexibility in work	lack of flexibility in work arrangement	Not applicable here.	Explicit mentions of desire for flexible arrangements or dissatisfaction with rigid schedules.
career prospects	bad career prospects	Phrases like "stable job," "growth opportunities," or "training" indicate positive career prospects.	Mentions of "poor job security," "slow promotion," or "limited opportunities."
non-monetary perks	bad non-monetary perks	Mentions of perks like gym, cafeteria, or discounts.	Complaints about lack of perks like gym, cafeteria, or tools.
firm location and infrastructure	firm location and infrastructure	Positive mentions of convenient location or high-quality facilities.	Complaints about inconvenient location or outdated infrastructure.
firm culture and work environment	firm culture and work environment	Phrases like "friendly," "supportive," "family-like culture," or "diversity" indicate positive culture.	Mentions of "toxic culture," "office politics," or lack of inclusivity.
internal organization	internal organization	Not applicable here.	Mentions of "bureaucracy," "inefficiency," or unexpected policy changes.
firm mission	firm mission	Positive mentions of alignment with firm mission or values.	Mentions of disagreement with mission or values indicate dissatisfaction.
reputation of the firm	bad reputation of the firm	Mentions of working at prestigious or well-respected firms.	Not applicable here.
work-life balance	bad work-life balance	Mentions of maintaining equilibrium between work and life.	Explicit mentions of negative impact on personal life due to work demands.
distance to work	long distance to work	Positive mentions of short commutes.	Mentions of dissatisfaction with long commutes.

Table A.3: Performance Metrics of GPT-4 in Identifying 'Like Best' Features

Feature	Instances	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1 Score
Actual tasks of the job	31	0.86	0.74	0.91	0.82
Administrative tasks	0	1			
Meaning of the job	18	0.95	0.86	0.90	0.88
Autonomy in work	25	0.94	0.83	0.96	0.89
Creativity in work	23	0.87	0.68	0.92	0.78
Management	15	0.94	0.75	0.94	0.83
Fit with skills	12	0.89	0.63	0.75	0.69
Relationships at work	33	0.82	0.65	1.00	0.79
Pay and benefits	25	0.95	1.00	0.83	0.91
Work hours and workload	3	0.94	0.33	1.00	0.50
Flexibility in work arrangement	28	0.84	0.65	0.97	0.78
Career prospects	14	0.95	1.00	0.74	0.85
Non-monetary perks	0	0.97	0	0	
Firm location and infrastructure	2	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Firm culture and work environment	13	0.96	0.93	0.81	0.87
Internal organization	0	1.00			
Firm mission	1	0.99	0.50	1.00	0.67
Reputation of the firm	3	0.99	0.75	1.00	0.86
Work-life balance	7	0.85	0.32	1.00	0.48
Distance to work	2	0.97	0.40	1.00	0.57
<b>Total</b>		<b>0.93</b>	<b>0.71</b>	<b>0.90</b>	<b>0.79</b>

*Note:* Excluding the less mentioned features (less than 3 incidences) in both 'likes' and 'dislikes' responses, the overall accuracy is 0.92, precision rate is 0.72, recall rate is 0.90, and the F1-score is 0.80. Excluding features are 'non-monetary perks', 'firm location and firm infrastructure', 'firm mission', 'reputation of the firm', and 'distance to work'.

Table A.4: Performance Metrics of GPT-4 in Identifying 'Like Least' Features

Feature	Instances	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1 Score
Actual tasks of the job	11	0.74	0.31	0.85	0.46
Administrative tasks	11	0.98	0.92	0.92	0.92
Lack of meaning of the job	5	0.97	0.83	0.71	0.77
Lack of autonomy in work	4	0.94	0.40	1.00	0.57
Lack of creativity in work	13	0.98	0.87	1.00	0.93
Bad management	9	0.88	0.47	0.82	0.60
Poor fit with skills	0	1			
Relationships at work	13	0.86	0.54	0.81	0.65
Pay and benefits	12	0.97	0.92	0.86	0.89
Work hours and workload	20	0.86	0.69	0.80	0.74
Lack of flexibility in work arrangement	3	0.97	0.50	1.00	0.67
Bad career prospects	5	0.97	0.71	0.83	0.77
Bad non-monetary perks	2	0.99	1.00	0.67	0.80
Firm location and firm infrastructure	3	0.99	0.75	1.00	0.86
Firm culture and work environment	6	0.89	0.55	0.50	0.52
Internal organization	16	0.88	0.67	0.80	0.73
Firm mission	1	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Bad reputation of the firm	0	1.00			
Bad work-life balance	3	0.97	0.50	1.00	0.67
Long distance to work	1	0.99	0.50	1.00	0.67
<b>Total</b>		<b>0.94</b>	<b>0.60</b>	<b>0.83</b>	<b>0.70</b>

*Note:* Excluding the less mentioned features (less than 3 incidences) in both 'likes' and 'dislikes' responses, the overall accuracy is 0.92, precision rate is 0.59, recall rate is 0.82, and the F1-score is 0.69. Excluding features are 'bad non-monetary perks', 'firm location and firm infrastructure', 'firm mission', 'bad reputation of the firm', and 'long distance to work'.

Table A.5: Validating Model Performance in Identifying 'Like Best' Features

Feature	Instances	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1 Score
Actual tasks of the job	35	0.85	0.79	0.77	0.78
Administrative tasks	1	0.96	0.20	1.00	0.33
Meaning of the job	17	0.92	0.74	0.82	0.78
Autonomy in work	26	0.91	0.76	0.96	0.85
Creativity in work	4	0.85	0.21	1.00	0.35
Management	9	0.94	0.64	0.78	0.70
Fit with skills	5	0.86	0.20	0.60	0.30
Relationships at work	24	0.80	0.55	1.00	0.71
Pay and benefits	28	0.94	0.89	0.89	0.89
Work hours and workload	2	0.84	0.11	1.00	0.20
Flexibility in work arrangement	27	0.85	0.65	0.96	0.78
Career prospects	2	0.93	0.14	0.50	0.22
Firm culture and work environment	15	0.90	0.73	0.53	0.62
Internal organization	0	1.00			
Work-life balance	13	0.80	0.39	0.92	0.55
<b>Total</b>		<b>0.89</b>	<b>0.57</b>	<b>0.86</b>	<b>0.68</b>

*Note:* Less mentioned features are excluded, they are 'non-monetary perks', 'firm location and firm infrastructure', 'firm mission', 'reputation of the firm', and 'distance to work'.

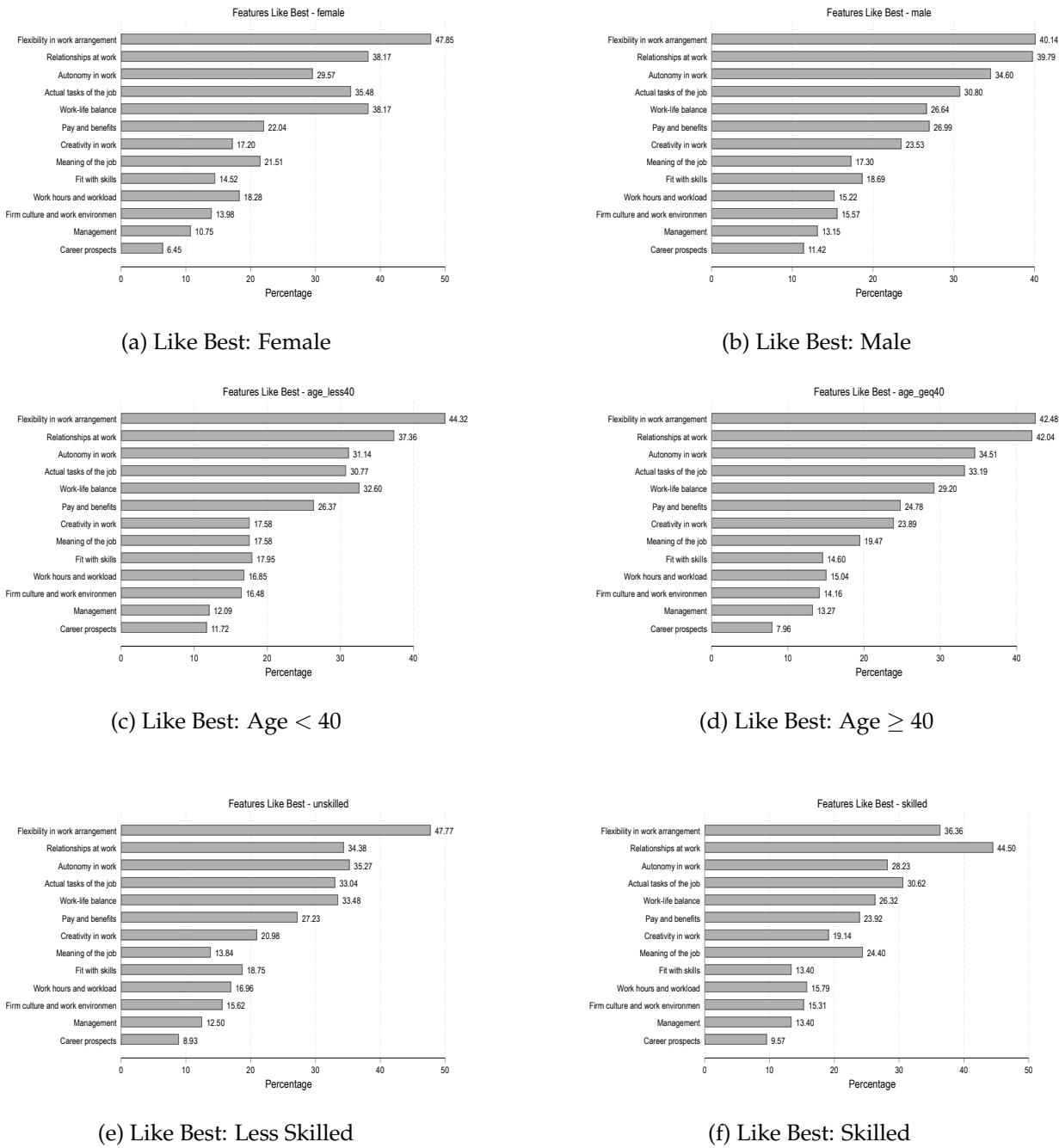
Table A.6: Validating Model Performance in Identifying 'Like Least' Features

Feature	Instances	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1 Score
Actual tasks of the job	31	0.81	0.70	0.68	0.69
Administrative tasks	3	0.95	0.38	1.00	0.55
Lack of meaning of the job	0	1.00			
Lack of autonomy in work	1	0.96	0.00	0.00	
Lack of creativity in work	9	0.97	0.88	0.78	0.82
Bad management	19	0.89	0.83	0.53	0.65
Poor fit with skills	5	0.94	0.40	0.40	0.40
Relationships at work	13	0.78	0.36	0.92	0.52
Pay and benefits	30	0.94	0.93	0.87	0.90
Work hours and workload	27	0.89	0.77	0.85	0.81
Lack of flexibility in work arrangement	4	0.95	0.40	0.50	0.44
Bad career prospects	7	0.93	0.50	1.00	0.67
Firm culture and work environment	10	0.89	0.43	0.30	0.35
Internal organization	17	0.88	0.65	0.65	0.65
Bad work-life balance	10	0.98	0.90	0.90	0.90
<b>Total</b>		<b>0.92</b>	<b>0.65</b>	<b>0.73</b>	<b>0.69</b>

*Note:* Less mentioned features are excluded, they are 'bad non-monetary perks', 'firm location and firm infrastructure', 'firm mission', 'bad reputation of the firm', and 'long distance to work'.

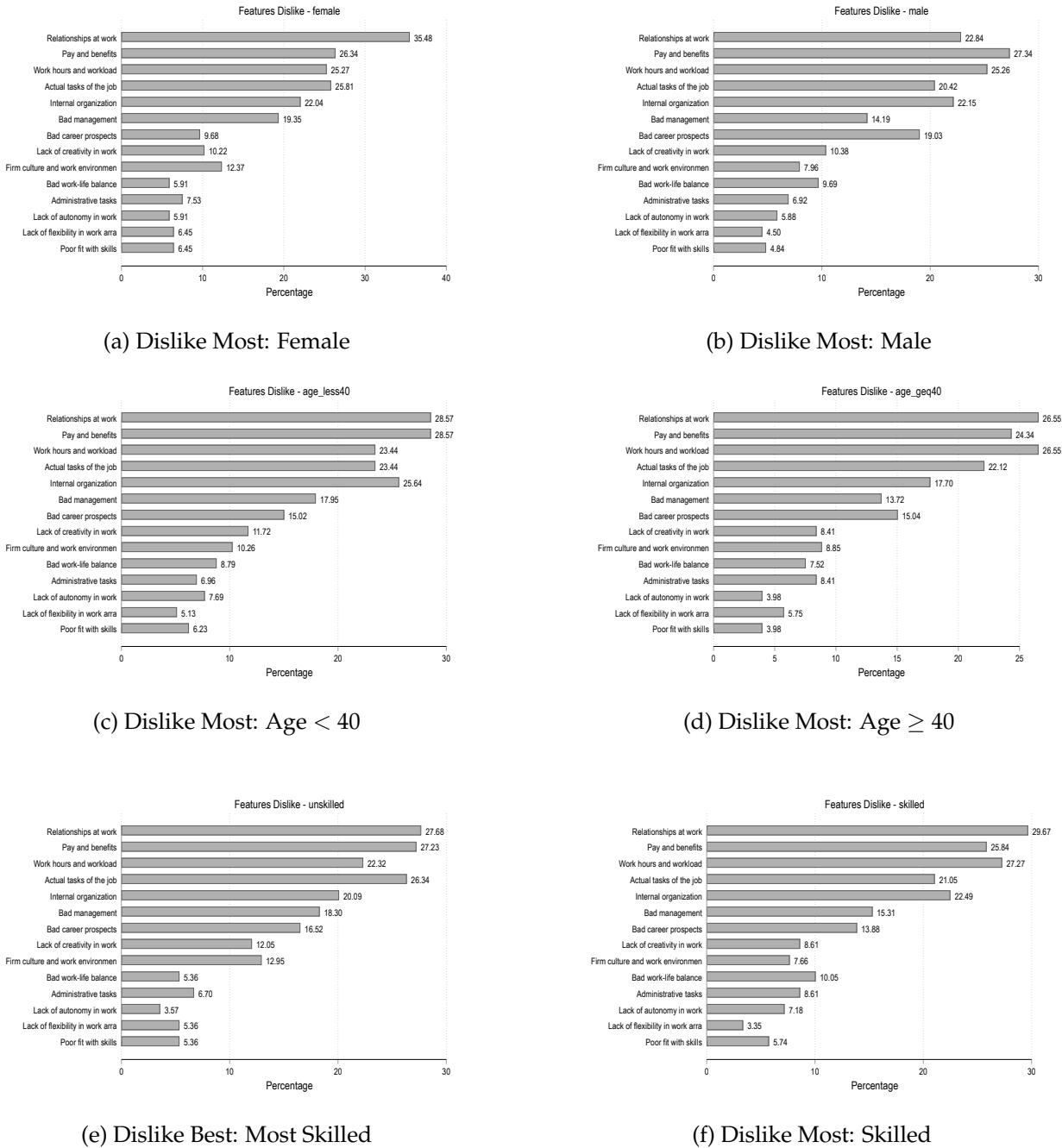
## Appendix B -Likes and dislikes

Figure B.1: Features workers like most about their jobs by subgroup



Notes: Panels (a)–(b) compare female and male respondents. Panels (c)–(d) compare respondents below age 40 with those 40 and above. Panels (e)–(f) compare less skilled versus skilled workers, defined by occupational categories. In all subgroup comparisons, features are ranked according to the overall ranking. Features with less than 5% mentions (administrative tasks, 1.8%; internal organization, 0.6%) are excluded throughout.

Figure B.2: Features workers dislike most about their jobs by subgroup



Notes: Panels (a)–(b) compare female and male respondents. Panels (c)–(d) compare respondents below age 40 with those 40 and above. Panels (e)–(f) compare less skilled versus skilled workers, defined by occupational categories. In all subgroup comparisons, features are ranked according to the overall ranking. Features with less than 5% mentions (administrative tasks, 1.8%; internal organization, 0.6%) are excluded throughout.

## Appendix C -Job features considered in the literature

Table C.1: Job features considered in the literature

Aspect	Objective	Satisfaction
Actual tasks of the job	Freeman (1978, AER); Jovanovic (1979, JPE); Bartel (1981, JHR); Delfgaauw (2007, Labour Econ.)	Lévy-Garboua et al. (2007, Labour Econ.); Oswald et al. (2015, JoLE)
Administrative tasks		
Meaning of the job		Besley & Ghatak (2005, AER); Lévy-Garboua et al. (2007, Labour Econ.); Oswald et al. (2015, JoLE); Cassar & Meier (2018, JEP); Lagakos et al. (2025, NBER); Ferrario & Stantcheva (2022, AEA P&P)
Autonomy in work	Bloom et al. (2015, QJE); Mas & Pallais (2017, AER); Mas & Pallais (2020, Ann. Rev. Econ.)	Lévy-Garboua et al. (2007, Labour Econ.); Cassar & Meier (2018, JEP)
Creativity in work		
Management/supervisory responsibility	Freeman (1978, AER); Bender & Sloane (1998, ILRR); Delfgaauw (2007, Labour Econ.); Sorkin (2018, QJE)	Lévy-Garboua et al. (2007, Labour Econ.)
Fit with skills / job match	Jovanovic (1979, JPE); Hamermesh (2001, JHR); Taber & Vejlin (2020, Econometrica); Rosen (1974, JPE); Rosen (1986, Handbook of Lab. Econ.)	
Relationships at work		Delfgaauw (2007, Labour Econ.); Lévy-Garboua et al. (2007, Labour Econ.); Cassar & Meier (2018, JEP); Sockin (2022, working paper)
Pay and benefits	Freeman (1978, AER); Brown (1980, QJE); Hamermesh (2001, JHR); Bender & Sloane (1998, ILRR); Heywood et al. (2002, ILRR); Hwang et al. (1992, JPE); Gruber (2000, Handbook of Health Econ.); Maestas et al. (2023, AER); Mas & Pallais (2017, AER); Mas & Pallais (2020, Ann. Rev. Econ.); Sockin (2022, working paper); Sorkin (2018, QJE); Taber & Vejlin (2020, Econometrica)	Clark (1997, Labour Econ.); Lévy-Garboua et al. (2007, Labour Econ.); Cassar & Meier (2018, JEP); Maestas et al. (2023, AER); Mas & Pallais (2017, AER); Sockin (2022, working paper)
Work hours / workload	Mas & Pallais (2017, AER); Heywood et al. (2002, ILRR); Delfgaauw (2007, Labour Econ.)	Clark (1997, Labour Econ.); Lévy-Garboua et al. (2007, Labour Econ.); Mas & Pallais (2017, AER)
Flexibility in work	Bloom et al. (2015, QJE); Mas & Pallais (2017, AER); Mas & Pallais (2020, Ann. Rev. Econ.); Maestas et al. (2023, AER)	Clark (1997, Labour Econ.); Lévy-Garboua et al. (2007, Labour Econ.); Cassar & Meier (2018, JEP)
Career prospects / promotion	Clark (1997, Labour Econ.); Delfgaauw (2007, Labour Econ.); Taber & Vejlin (2020, Econometrica)	Lévy-Garboua et al. (2007, Labour Econ.)
Non-monetary perks / amenities	Cassar & Meier (2018, JEP); Sockin (2022, working paper); Sorkin (2018, QJE)	Cassar & Meier (2018, JEP); Lévy-Garboua et al. (2007, Labour Econ.); Oswald et al. (2015, JoLE); Sockin (2022, working paper)
Location and infrastructure	Clark (1997, Labour Econ.); Bloom et al. (2015, QJE); Mas & Pallais (2017, AER)	
Culture and environment	Freeman (1978, AER); Heywood et al. (2002, ILRR); Sorkin (2018, QJE); Sockin (2022, working paper)	Lévy-Garboua et al. (2007, Labour Econ.); Oswald et al. (2015, JoLE); Cassar & Meier (2018, JEP); Sockin (2022, working paper)
Internal organisation / firm size	Freeman (1978, AER); Sorkin (2018, QJE); Taber & Vejlin (2020, Econometrica)	Lévy-Garboua et al. (2007, Labour Econ.)
Firm mission / purpose	Besley & Ghatak (2005, AER); Cassar & Meier (2018, JEP); Lagakos et al. (2025, NBER)	Cassar & Meier (2018, JEP); Oswald et al. (2015, JoLE)
Firm reputation	Sorkin (2018, QJE); Sockin (2022, working paper)	Lévy-Garboua et al. (2007, Labour Econ.); Sockin (2022, working paper)
Work-life balance	Bloom et al. (2015, QJE); Mas & Pallais (2017, AER); Maestas et al. (2023, AER)	Cassar & Meier (2018, JEP); Oswald et al. (2015, JoLE); Mas & Pallais (2017, AER)
Distance to work (commute)	Bloom et al. (2015, QJE); Mas & Pallais (2017, AER); Maestas et al. (2023, AER)	

Table C.2: Coverage of job-related aspects in household surveys

#	Aspect	SOEP (Germany)		ACS (USA)		UKHLS/BHPS (UK)	
		Obj.	Sat.	Obj.	Sat.	Obj.	Sat.
1	Actual tasks of the job	✓		✓		✓	✓
2	Administrative tasks	✓					
3	Meaning of the job					✓	
4	Autonomy in work	✓				✓	✓
5	Creativity in work	✓					
6	Management	✓				✓	
7	Fit with skills					✓	
8	Relationships at work						✓
9	Pay and benefits	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
10	Work hours & workload	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
11	Flexibility in work	✓				✓	
12	Career prospects						✓
13	Non-monetary perks						
14	Location & infrastructure				✓	✓	
15	Culture & environment						
16	Internal organisation					✓	
17	Firm mission						
18	Reputation of the firm						
19	Work-life balance		✓				
20	Distance to work (commute)	✓		✓		✓	

## **Appendix D - Surveys (Pilot and Main)**

# Employee Survey - Pilot

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## Start of Block: Consent

**Intro** We are asking you to participate in a research study titled “*EMPLOYEE SURVEY: JOB SATISFACTION AND JOB ENGAGEMENT*”. This study is being led by Michele Belot, School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University. Please read this form carefully before agreeing to take part in the study.

### **What the study is about**

The purpose of this research is to measure job satisfaction and to study what workers like and dislike about their jobs.

### **What we will ask you to do**

We will ask you to fill out a **10-minute survey** and answer open-ended questions about your task at work, what you like best and least about your job.

### **Risks and benefits**

We anticipate that your participation in this survey presents no greater risk than everyday use of the Internet. **There are no specific benefits associated with this study.**

### **Incentives for participation**

**To appreciate your time and effort, you will receive \$5 for completing the survey. It is estimated to take approximately 10 minutes to complete the survey. Please note that if you decide to exit the survey at any point in time, you will not be eligible for the compensation**

### **Privacy/Confidentiality/Data Security**

We are not planning to collect any identifying information at all.

### **Taking part is voluntary**

Your involvement is voluntary. You may refuse to participate before the study begins, discontinue at any time.

### **If you have questions**

The researchers conducting this study are Michele Belot, Xiaoying Liu, and Vaios Triantafyllou at Cornell University. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Participants at 607-255-5138 or access their website at <https://researchservices.cornell.edu/offices/IRB>. You may also report your concerns or complaints anonymously through Ethicspoint online at [www.hotline.cornell.edu](http://www.hotline.cornell.edu) or by calling toll free at 1-866-293-3077. Ethicspoint is an independent

organization that serves as a liaison between the University and the person bringing the complaint so that anonymity can be ensured.

I consent to take part in this study.

I agree (1)

I disagree (2)

End of Block: Consent

---

Start of Block: Section 1 Passion at Work

Number of jobs How many jobs do you currently have?

1 (1)

2 (2)

3 (3)

4 or more (4)

---

Description The following questions ask about your current job. If you have more than one job, please answer the questions based on your primary job (the one with highest monthly income).

---

---

Satisfaction How much do you like your current job?

Dislike a great deal	Dislike somewhat	Neither like nor dislike	Like somewhat	Like a great deal
----------------------	------------------	--------------------------	---------------	-------------------

1

2

3

4

5

How much do you like your current job? ()



JS

\*

Like best What do you **like best** about your job? What attracted you to this job? Feel free to write about any aspects that come to mind (minimum 50 words required)

---

---

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---

JS

\*

Like least What do you **like least** about your job? Feel free to write about any aspects that come to mind (minimum 50 words required)

---

---

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---

---

JS

\*

Task What are the **typical everyday tasks** associated with your job? (minimum 50 words)

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---

Occupation In what category of occupations does your job fit?

- Architecture and Engineering Occupations (4)
- Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations (9)
- Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations (14)
- Business and Financial Operations Occupations (2)
- Community and Social Service Occupations (6)
- Computer and Mathematical Occupations (3)
- Construction and Extraction Occupations (19)
- Educational Instruction, and Library Occupations (8)
- Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations (18)
- Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations (13)
- Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations (10)
- Healthcare Support Occupations (11)
- Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations (20)
- Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations (5)
- Legal Occupations (7)
- Management, Business, and Financial Occupations (1)
- Material Moving Occupations (23)
- Office and Administrative Support Occupations (17)
- Personal Care and Service Occupations (15)
- Production Occupations (21)
- Protective Service Occupations (12)

- Sales and Related Occupations (16)
- Transportation Occupations (22)
- Other (please specify) (24)

---

Job title What is your job title?

---

JS

Work hours How many hours per week do you usually work at your primary job?

---

JS

YOB What is your year of birth?

---

State of residency In which state do you currently reside?

Alabama (1) ... I do not reside in the United States (53)

State of workplace In which state do you currently work?

Alabama (1) ... I do not reside in the United States (53)

End of Block: Section 2 Job Description

---

# Employee Survey (Main)

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## Start of Block: Consent

**Intro** We are asking you to participate in a research study titled “*EMPLOYEE SURVEY: JOB SATISFACTION AND JOB ENGAGEMENT*”. This study is being led by Michele Belot, School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University. Please read this form carefully before agreeing to take part in the study.

### **What the study is about**

The purpose of this research is to measure job satisfaction and to study what workers like and dislike about their jobs.

### **What we will ask you to do**

We will ask you to fill out a **15-minute survey** and answer questions about your task at work, and your preferences over work attributes, and rate job satisfaction.

### **Risks and benefits**

We anticipate that your participation in this survey presents no greater risk than everyday use of the Internet. **There are no specific benefits associated with this study.**

### **Incentives for participation**

**To appreciate your time and effort, you will receive \$5 for completing the survey. It is estimated to take approximately 15 minutes to complete the survey. Please note that if you decide to exit the survey at any point in time, you will not be eligible for the compensation**

### **Privacy/Confidentiality/Data Security**

We are not planning to collect any identifying information at all.

### **Taking part is voluntary**

Your involvement is voluntary. You may refuse to participate before the study begins, discontinue at any time.

### **If you have questions**

The researchers conducting this study are Michele Belot, Xiaoying Liu, and Vaios Triantafyllou at Cornell University. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Participants at 607-255-5138 or access their website at <https://researchservices.cornell.edu/offices/IRB>. You may also report your concerns or complaints anonymously through Ethicspoint online at [www.hotline.cornell.edu](http://www.hotline.cornell.edu) or by calling toll free at 1-866-293-3077. Ethicspoint is an independent

organization that serves as a liaison between the University and the person bringing the complaint so that anonymity can be ensured.

I consent to take part in this study.

I agree (1)

I disagree (2)

End of Block: Consent

---

Start of Block: Section 1 Current Job Description

Number of jobs How many jobs do you currently have?

1 (1)

2 (2)

3 (3)

4 or more (4)

---

Description The following questions ask about your current job. If you have more than one job, please answer the questions based on your primary job (the one with highest monthly income).

---

---

Satisfaction How much do you like your current job?

Dislike a great deal	Dislike somewhat	Neither like nor dislike	Like somewhat	Like a great deal
----------------------	------------------	--------------------------	---------------	-------------------

1

2

3

4

5

How much do you like your current job? ()



JS

\*

Like best What do you **like best** about your job? What attracted you to this job? Feel free to write about any aspects that come to mind (minimum 50 words required)

---

---

---

---

---

JS

\*

Like least What do you **like least** about your job? Feel free to write about any aspects that come to mind (minimum 50 words required)

---

---

---

---

---

JS

\*

Task What are the typical everyday tasks associated with your job? (minimum 50 words)

---

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---

Occupation In what category of occupations does your job fit?

- Architecture and Engineering Occupations (4)
- Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations (9)
- Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations (14)
- Business and Financial Operations Occupations (2)
- Community and Social Service Occupations (6)
- Computer and Mathematical Occupations (3)
- Construction and Extraction Occupations (19)
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- Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations (10)
- Healthcare Support Occupations (11)
- Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations (20)
- Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations (5)
- Legal Occupations (7)
- Management, Business, and Financial Occupations (1)
- Material Moving Occupations (23)
- Office and Administrative Support Occupations (17)
- Personal Care and Service Occupations (15)
- Production Occupations (21)
- Protective Service Occupations (12)

- Sales and Related Occupations (16)
- Transportation Occupations (22)
- Other (Please specify) (24)

---

Job title What is your job title?

---

JS

Work hours How many hours per week do you usually in your primary job?

---

End of Block: Section 1 Current Job Description

---

Start of Block: Section 3 Job Satisfaction

JS

Number of past jobs In the past 10 years, how many full-time jobs have you had (including your current job)?

- 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 or more (3)

---

Job spell - current For how many years have you been in **your current job**?

- Current job (1) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Display This Question:

If In the past 10 years, how many full-time jobs have you had (including your current job)? != 1

Job spell - last For how many years did you stay in **your last job**?

Last job (2) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Satisfaction0\_curr Did you feel satisfied with your **current** job during your **first year of joining the firm**?

Extremely  
dissatisfied  
Somewhat  
dissatisfied  
Neither  
satisfied  
Somewhat  
satisfied  
Extremely  
satisfied  
nor  
dissatisfied

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Current Job ()



Display This Question:

If In the past 10 years, how many full-time jobs have you had (including your current job)? != 1

Satisfaction0\_last Did you feel satisfied with your **last** jobs during your **first year of joining the firm**?

Extremely  
dissatisfied  
Somewhat  
dissatisfied  
Neither  
satisfied  
Somewhat  
satisfied  
Extremely  
satisfied  
nor  
dissatisfied

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Last job ()



Satisfaction1\_curr Do you feel satisfied with **your current job now?**

Extremely Somewhat Neither SomewhatExtremely  
dissatisfied dissatisfied satisfied satisfied  
nor  
dissatisfied

1 2 3 4 5

Current job ()



*Display This Question:*

*If In the past 10 years, how many full-time jobs have you had (including your current job)? != 1*

Satisfaction1\_last Did you feel satisfied with your **last job** during your **last year at the firm?**

Extremely Somewhat Neither SomewhatExtremely  
dissatisfied dissatisfied satisfied satisfied satisfied  
nor  
dissatisfied

1 2 3 4 5

Last job ()



Factors0\_curr How important were these factors in **choosing your current job** on a scale from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important)

	Not at all important (1)	Slightly important (2)	Moderately important (3)	Very important (4)	Extremely important (5)
career prospects (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
good match to my skills (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
hours (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
benefits (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
salary (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
security (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
commuting distance, location (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
reputation of employer (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
other (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
TO BE FILLED 1 (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
TO BE FILLED 2 (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
TO BE FILLED 3 (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Display This Question:

If In the past 10 years, how many full-time jobs have you had (including your current job)? != 1

Factors0\_last How important were these factors in **choosing your last job** on a scale from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important)

	Not at all important (1)	Slightly important (2)	Moderately important (3)	Very important (4)	Extremely important (5)
career prospects (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
good match to my skills (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
hours (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
benefits (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
salary (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
security (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
commuting distance, location (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
reputation of employer (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
other (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
TO BE FILLED 1 (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
TO BE FILLED 2 (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
TO BE FILLED 3 (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

*Display This Question:*

*If In the past 10 years, how many full-time jobs have you had (including your current job)? != 1*

Factors1\_last How important were these factors in **leaving your last job** on a scale from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important)

	Previous job (1)
was promoted (1)	<input type="radio"/>
left for a better job (2)	<input type="radio"/>
made redundant (3)	<input type="radio"/>
dismissed/sacked (4)	<input type="radio"/>
temporary job (5)	<input type="radio"/>
contract ended (6)	<input type="radio"/>
retired (7)	<input type="radio"/>
health reasons (8)	<input type="radio"/>
left to have baby or look after family (9)	<input type="radio"/>
moved area (10)	<input type="radio"/>
other (11)	<input type="radio"/>
TO BE FILLED 1 (12)	<input type="radio"/>
TO BE FILLED 2 (14)	<input type="radio"/>
TO BE FILLED 3 (15)	<input type="radio"/>
TO BE FILLED 4 (16)	<input type="radio"/>

---

Salary0\_curr What was your salary **the year you entered your current job?**

	Current job (1)
< \$10,000 (1)	<input type="radio"/>
\$10,000 - \$19,999 (2)	<input type="radio"/>
\$20,000 - \$29,999 (3)	<input type="radio"/>
\$30,000 - \$39,999 (4)	<input type="radio"/>
\$40,000 - \$49,999 (5)	<input type="radio"/>
\$50,000 - \$59,999 (6)	<input type="radio"/>
\$60,000 - \$69,999 (7)	<input type="radio"/>
\$70,000 - \$79,999 (9)	<input type="radio"/>
\$80,000 - \$89,999 (10)	<input type="radio"/>
\$90,000 - \$99,999 (11)	<input type="radio"/>
\$100,000 or more (12)	<input type="radio"/>

---

Salary1\_curr What is your salary **for your current job this year?**

	Current job (1)
< \$10,000 (1)	<input type="radio"/>
\$10,000 - \$19,999 (2)	<input type="radio"/>
\$20,000 - \$29,999 (3)	<input type="radio"/>
\$30,000 - \$39,999 (4)	<input type="radio"/>
\$40,000 - \$49,999 (5)	<input type="radio"/>
\$50,000 - \$59,999 (6)	<input type="radio"/>
\$60,000 - \$69,999 (7)	<input type="radio"/>
\$70,000 - \$79,999 (9)	<input type="radio"/>
\$80,000 - \$89,999 (10)	<input type="radio"/>
\$90,000 - \$99,999 (11)	<input type="radio"/>
\$100,000 or more (12)	<input type="radio"/>

*Display This Question:*

*If In the past 10 years, how many full-time jobs have you had (including your current job)? != 1*

Salary0\_last What was your salary **the year you entered your last job?**

	Last job (1)
< \$10,000 (1)	<input type="radio"/>
\$10,000 - \$19,999 (2)	<input type="radio"/>
\$20,000 - \$29,999 (3)	<input type="radio"/>
\$30,000 - \$39,999 (4)	<input type="radio"/>
\$40,000 - \$49,999 (5)	<input type="radio"/>
\$50,000 - \$59,999 (6)	<input type="radio"/>
\$60,000 - \$69,999 (7)	<input type="radio"/>
\$70,000 - \$79,999 (9)	<input type="radio"/>
\$80,000 - \$89,999 (10)	<input type="radio"/>
\$90,000 - \$99,999 (11)	<input type="radio"/>
\$100,000 or more (12)	<input type="radio"/>

Display This Question:

*If In the past 10 years, how many full-time jobs have you had (including your current job)? != 1*

Salary1\_last What was your salary **the year you left your last job?**

	Previous job (1)
< \$10,000 (1)	<input type="radio"/>
\$10,000 - \$19,999 (2)	<input type="radio"/>
\$20,000 - \$29,999 (3)	<input type="radio"/>
\$30,000 - \$39,999 (4)	<input type="radio"/>
\$40,000 - \$49,999 (5)	<input type="radio"/>
\$50,000 - \$59,999 (6)	<input type="radio"/>
\$60,000 - \$69,999 (7)	<input type="radio"/>
\$70,000 - \$79,999 (9)	<input type="radio"/>
\$80,000 - \$89,999 (10)	<input type="radio"/>
\$90,000 - \$99,999 (11)	<input type="radio"/>
\$100,000 or more (12)	<input type="radio"/>

Display This Question:

*If In the past 10 years, how many full-time jobs have you had (including your current job)? = 2*

Q22-1 Did you receive evaluations from your employer during the last year in the job?

Very Poor Okay Good Excellent  
poor

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100



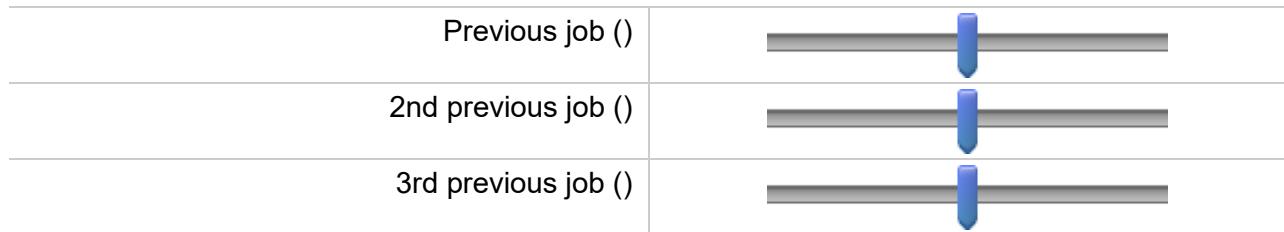
*Display This Question:*

*If In the past 10 years, how many full-time jobs have you had (including your current job)? = 3 or more*

Q22-2 Did you receive evaluations from your employer during the last year in the job? Please answer for each of your current and three previous jobs, if applicable.

Very Poor Okay Good Excellent  
poor

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100



Q5 What is the approximate total number of employees in your company?

- 1 - 4 (1)
- 5 - 9 (2)
- 10 - 19 (3)
- 20 - 49 (4)
- 50 - 99 (5)
- 100 - 249 (6)
- 250 - 499 (7)
- 500 - 999 (8)
- 1,000 or more (9)
- Don't know (10)
- Other (11) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Display This Question:

If In the past 10 years, how many full-time jobs have you had (including your current job)? = 1

Q17-1 TO BE FILLED IN -

Terrible    Poor    Average    Good    Excellent

0    10    20    30    40    50    60    70    80    90    100



End of Block: Section 3 Job Satisfaction

---

Start of Block: Section 4 Demographics

Q6 Is the workplace unionized?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Don't know (3)
- Other (please specify) (4)

---

*Display This Question:*

*If Is the workplace unionized? = Yes*

Q6-1 Are you a member of the union?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

---

Q17 What is your year of birth?

---

State of residency In which state do you currently reside?

▼ Alabama (1) ... I do not reside in the United States (53)

State of workplace In which state do you currently work?

▼ Alabama (1) ... I do not reside in the United States (53)

End of Block: Section 4 Demographics

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