

**John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development**

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Americans' Attitudes About Work, Employers, and Government

# **Work Trends**

*At a Crossroads:*

*American Workers Assess Jobs and Economic  
Security Amid the Race for President*

By K.A. Dixon, Neil Ridley, and Carl E. Van Horn, Ph.D.

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## Background

The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning & Public Policy at Rutgers University was founded as a research and policy organization devoted to strengthening New Jersey's and the nation's workforce during a time of global economic change. The Heldrich Center researches and puts to work strategies that strengthen worker skills and their employability, strengthen the ability of companies to compete, create jobs where they are needed, and improve the quality and performance of the workforce development system.

Since 1998, the John J. Heldrich Center has experienced rapid growth, working with federal and state government partners, Fortune 100 companies, and major foundations. The Center embodies its slogan "solutions at work" by teaming with partners and clients to translate cutting-edge research and analysis into practices and programs that companies, unions, schools, CBOs, and government officials use to strengthen their workforces, create jobs, and remain competitive. The Center's projects are grounded in a core set of organizational priorities: to confront the challenges of America's skills and education gap, to reemploy laid off workers, to ensure economic opportunity for all, to ensure high quality education and training for all students and job seekers, and to strengthen the management and effectiveness of government programs.

Since its inception, the Heldrich Center has sought to inform employers, union leaders, policymakers, community members, as well as media and academic communities, about the critical workforce and education issues that relate to today's global, knowledge-based economy.

The Center for Survey Research and Analysis (CSRA) is an outgrowth of the tremendous success of original survey research conducted under the aegis of the Roper Center/Institute for Social Inquiry (ISI). For twenty years, Roper Center/ISI has conducted high quality, high profile original research; this tradition is being continued and expanded. CSRA, a non-profit, nonpartisan research and educational facility, is a leader in conducting important public opinion research.

CSRA staff has completed more than 350 survey projects for a wide variety of clients, providing the Center with extensive experience in surveying special populations, including studies of members of Congress, journalists, business owners and managers, parents, teenagers, college students, and university faculty. In addition to quantitative research, CSRA conducts in-depth qualitative research, including nationwide focus groups, one-on-one interviewing, and case studies.

The staff has worked with clients to develop strong secondary research programs in support of ongoing research in a variety of fields. Expert statisticians are available for additional analysis of original and secondary data. CSRA strictly adheres to the code of ethics published by the American Association of Public Opinion Research, which, among other things, requires them to fully divulge their research methods, treat all respondents with respect and honesty, and ensure that results are not presented in a distorted or misleading manner. During the past three years, staff now affiliated with CSRA has conducted more than 70 national, regional, and local survey projects.

To better understand the public's attitudes about work, employers, and the government, and improve workplace practices and policy, the Heldrich Center and CSRA produce the *Work Trends* survey on a regular basis. The survey polls workers and job seekers on critical workforce issues facing Americans and American businesses, and promotes the survey's findings widely to the media and national constituencies.

Carl E. Van Horn, Ph.D., Director of the Heldrich Center, and Kenneth Dautrich, Director of the Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Connecticut, co-direct the series.

*At a Crossroads: American Workers Assess Jobs and Economic Security Amid the Race for President* continues to advance the goals of the *Work Trends* series, giving American workers a voice in current national economic policy debates and the race for president, and providing policymak-

ers and employers with reliable insights into how families across the nation are judging and acting upon the realities of work and the workplace.

This survey adds depth to the Heldrich Center's research agenda that is based on the Center's commitment to improve academic and public understanding of the costs and benefits generated by worker dislocation as employers restructure their workforces, suggesting a stronger role for public policy at the federal, state, and local levels of government.

The results of *At a Crossroads* provide an in-depth look at the 2004 presidential election and strive to determine what American workers want from their next president and their next Congress. The survey's intent is to provide valuable information about the issues that workers and job seekers want the next president to address.

# Executive Summary

*Work Trends Vol. 7 No. 3, At a Crossroads: American Workers Assess Jobs and Economic Security Amid the Race for President*, is the fifteenth in the national survey series that polls American workers and employers about issues affecting their lives in the economy, the workforce, and the workplace, and how workers view the policy choices made by lawmakers and employers to address these concerns. With the publication of this report, the project's partners—the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development and the Center for Survey Research and Analysis at the University of Connecticut—have completed more than 15,000 worker and employer interviews since 1998 on a variety of critical economic topics, as well as long term trends in job satisfaction, economic confidence, and workplace issues.

This new *Work Trends* was conducted with 1,011 members of the U.S. workforce between September 16 and October 15, 2004.<sup>1</sup> During this period, the news was dominated by the presidential campaign, the situation in Iraq, and the American economy, particularly job creation. As Election Day approaches, workers are preparing to cast their votes for the next President of the United States at a time of uncertain economic growth, volatile politics, and war.

Concern for economic issues continues to grow among workers, and the majority (63%) think now is a bad time to find a good job. In addition, workers express a high degree of concern regarding unemployment and job security.

- Among workers, 40% say that they are very concerned about the current unemployment rate, one of the highest levels of concern since the *Work Trends* series began in 1998. At the same time, nearly one in two workers (44%) are very concerned about job security for those currently working.
- Opinions about the health of the economy vary dramatically among workers of different political affiliation, work history, race, gender, income and marital status. For example, among Democrats, 56% say they are very concerned about the current unemployment rate, compared to only 23% of Republicans and 42% of Independents.
- This survey finds that women are more likely than men to express concern about the current unemployment rate and job security, as are African-American workers, low-income workers, and workers who are not married. In addition, workers who have been laid off in the past are more concerned about economic issues than workers who have not been laid off.

In the past three years, workers and employers have faced a volatile labor market characterized by corporate restructuring and job losses. These job losses have occurred across multiple industries and have affected workers of all education, income, and skill levels.

- This report finds that in the past three years (Fall 2001 to Fall 2004), 35% of

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<sup>1</sup> Unlike other national polls, *Work Trends* targets people in the labor force. The population surveyed for *Work Trends* includes workers and unemployed workers at least 18 years of age who are looking for work. It does not include people outside the labor market who are not actively looking for work, such as retired workers, homemakers or students, or workers under the age of 18.

workers say that they or a family member have been laid off from a full or part time job (30% and 5%, respectively).

More than half (57%) say that they or a family member have been laid off from a full or a part time job at some point in their lives (50% and 7%, respectively).

- Among laid off workers, one in two (54%) earn \$40,000 a year or more, while 41% earn less than \$40,000 a year. Clearly, higher-income workers are not insulated from the vagaries of the job market.

Three years after the events of September 11th, the threat of terrorism continues to overshadow economic issues for many workers, as one in two (50%) say that protecting the country against terrorism is more important than improving the health of the economy. However, in thinking about the economy, most workers believe that the policies of the President of the United States are responsible for the health of the American economy, with 48% saying that such policies bear a lot of responsibility. In addition to economic issues, workers express concern regarding a wide range of other domestic issues, and consider initiatives such as improving education in America and providing health and medical insurance to workers extremely important. In contrast, issues such as reducing taxes and lowering interest rates garner a smaller share of support.

- Jobs are a critical issue that will affect how workers and job seekers vote. The majority (68%) of workers say that, in thinking about how they will vote in the upcoming presidential election, candidates' positions on the job situation in America are extremely or very important (25% and 43%, respectively).
- Among Democrats, Republicans and Independents, improving education gar-

ners the most support, although only 76% of Republicans say it is extremely or very important, compared to 81% of Independent workers and 91% of Democratic workers. In contrast, 70% of Republicans cite reducing the amount of money they pay in taxes as extremely or very important, while only 58% of Democrats and 56% of Independents say the same.

As the race for president comes down to the wire, workers remain evenly split regarding whom they would vote for. At the same time, workers describe a host of issues, including job issues, that they say are important for candidates—and, ultimately, the next president—to address:

- If the election were held today, nearly equal numbers of workers say they would vote for Republican George W. Bush and Democrat John Kerry (43% and 41%, respectively).
- While the majority of Democrats and politically liberal workers say they will vote for Kerry and the majority of Republicans and politically conservative workers say they intend to vote for Bush, among those workers who identify themselves as Independents, 47% say they would vote for Kerry and 35% say they will vote for Bush.
- In general, Democrats, women, African-Americans and Hispanics, lower income workers, workers who have experienced layoffs, and unmarried workers favor Democrat John Kerry, while Republicans, workers who have never been laid off, and white, higher income married workers are more likely to support Republican George W. Bush.
- Only 16% of workers say that overall, President Bush is doing an excellent job. Conversely, 28% of workers say that

President Bush is doing a poor job overall. An even smaller share of workers (7%) says that President Bush is doing an excellent job in handling the job situation in America.

- This survey finds that workers are not certain about how well Senator Kerry would address the job situation in America if elected, with only 6% saying he would do an excellent job. However, when asked to compare the two candidates, 45% of workers say that John Kerry would best handle the job situation in America, compared to 40% who say the same about George W. Bush.

Whoever wins on Election Day, the critical issue of worker dislocation will demand the attention of the next president. The Heldrich Center has conducted extensive research on this issue and will offer recommendations for workers, employers, and policymakers in a forthcoming report. A central finding is that public and private sector policies are out of sync with the realities of a changing labor market in which millions of Americans face layoffs every year and millions more are at risk of layoffs. The study puts forward a set of recommendations intended to stimulate a national dialogue about the policies and practices necessary to assist workers in a changing economy. The next president and Congress will have the opportunity to lead that dialogue.



# Section 1. Workers and Economic Issues: Judging the Health of the American Economy

Since the March 2004 *Work Trends* survey, American businesses have continued to add jobs, though at an uneven rate. About 885,000 non-farm jobs were added in March, April, and May, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Since May, however, monthly job gains have not exceeded 150,000—the threshold that many economists believe is necessary to keep pace with the flow of new workers into the labor force.

Despite recent job growth, many workers continue to face extended periods of joblessness. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that in September 2004 unemployed individuals were out of work for an average of 19.6 weeks, down only slightly from the level in May 2004. Nearly 22% of unemployed individuals were jobless for six months or longer.

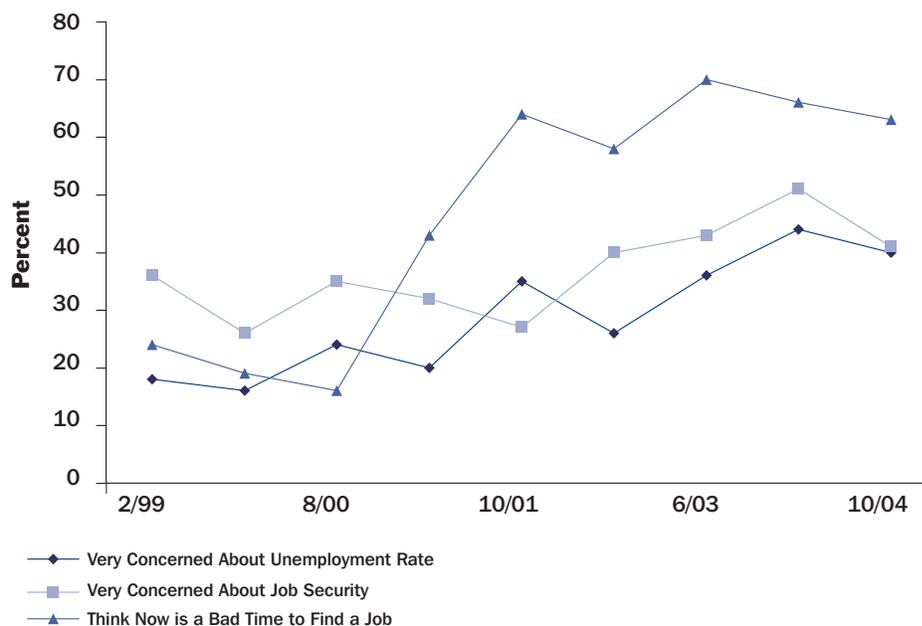
The reality of these statistics is reflected in workers' concern regarding the economy

Notably, the vast majority of workers say that now is a bad time to find a quality job in America.

and the security of their jobs. Among workers, 40% say they are very concerned about the current unemployment rate, while 33% say they are somewhat concerned. Similarly, 44% say they are very concerned with job security for those currently working, and 38% say they are somewhat concerned.

Notably, the vast majority of workers (63%) say that now is a bad time to find a quality job in America (see Figure 1.1). These figures are in stark contrast to past *Work Trends* data. For example, in January 2000, only 16% of workers were very concerned about the current unemployment rate, and 26% were very concerned about job security for those currently working. Remarkably, in January 2000, three-fourths (76%) of workers thought that it was a good time to find a quality job in America. The workplace—and

Fig. 1.1: Worker Concern About Economic Issues, Over Time



**As the presidential race enters its final days, this survey makes clear that American workers are worried about the state of the economy and their place within it.**

workers' perception of it—has clearly changed.

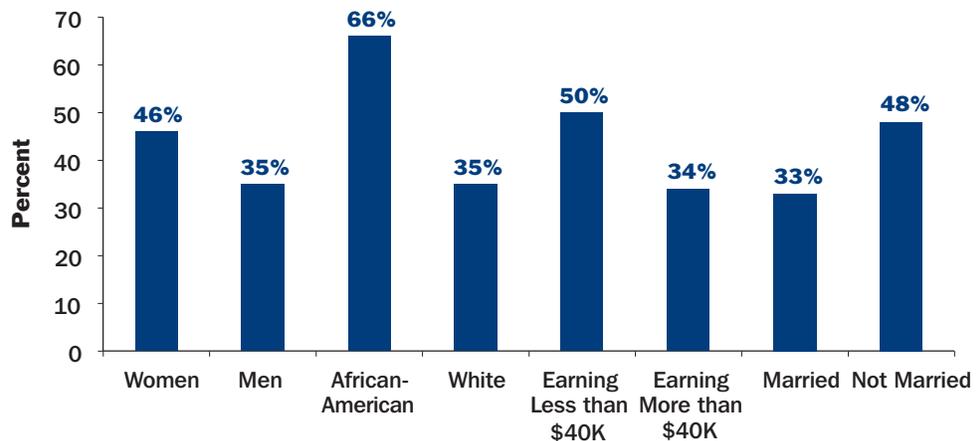
However, opinions about the health of the economy vary dramatically among workers of different political affiliation, work history, race, gender, income, and marital status. For example, among Democrats, 56% say they are very concerned about the current unemployment rate, compared to only 23% of Republicans and 42% of Independents. Similarly, more than half (51%) of Democrats are very concerned about job security for those currently working. In contrast, only 27% of Republicans are equally concerned, while 46% of Independents say the same. Finally, less than one-fifth (19%) of Democrats think now is a good time to find a quality job in America, while nearly half (54%) of Republicans think now is a good time to find a job.

This survey finds that women are more likely than men to express concern about the current unemployment rate and job

security, as are African-American workers, workers earning less than \$40,000 per year, and workers who are not married (see Figure 1.2). In addition, workers who have been laid off in the past are more concerned about economic issues than workers who have not been laid off. Among workers who have experienced a layoff in the past three years, more than half (54%) are very concerned about the current unemployment rate, 51% are very concerned about job security, and 72% think now is a bad time to find a job in America. In contrast, less than one-third (32%) of workers who have not been laid off in the past three years are very concerned about the current unemployment rate, 35% are very concerned about job security, and 59% think now is a bad time to find a job.

As the presidential race enters its final days, this survey makes clear that American workers are worried about the state of the economy and their place within it. This and past *Work Trends* reports reveal high levels of concern among workers regarding unemployment, job security, and their ability to find and keep a good job. Combined with the prevalence of layoffs among workers, it is clear that today's fast-paced, sometimes unforgiving labor market is one in which many workers feel insecure.

**Fig. 1.2: Workers Who Are Very Concerned About the Current Unemployment Rate**



## Section 2. American Workers and the Race for President

As the 2004 presidential election enters its final week, neither candidate can claim a decisive lead. In fact, the race for president remains too close to call, according to a number of national polls that target registered voters and those likely to vote.

*At a Crossroads*, which focuses on people in the labor force, finds nearly equal numbers saying they would vote for Republican George W. Bush and Democrat John Kerry (43% and 41%, respectively). Only 6% of workers say they do not know for whom they will vote, while 4% indicate that they do not or will not vote. Among undecided workers, a nearly equal share says they would vote for Bush as for Kerry (23% and 20%, respectively). Regardless of how they intend to vote, the majority (85%) of workers surveyed say they are registered to vote, and 79% of those registered voters say they will definitely vote on Election Day. Workers are slightly more likely to identify themselves as Democrats than Republicans (31% and 29%), with 27% saying they are Independents and 7% belonging to other parties. Workers are least likely to identify themselves as politically liberal (19%) and most likely to say they are moderate (37%). One in three (33%) say they are politically conservative.

While the two candidates are in a statistical dead heat among all workers, certain groups of workers are more likely to favor Kerry. Not surprisingly, Democrats and workers who identify themselves as politically liberal overwhelmingly support Democrat John Kerry (81% and 77%, respectively), while the majority of Republicans and those who identify themselves as conservative say they will vote for George W. Bush (88% and 63%, respectively). Among those workers who identify themselves as Independents, 47% say they

would vote for Kerry and 35% say they will vote for Bush. Among politically moderate workers, the vote is nearly evenly split between John Kerry and George W. Bush (42% and 44%, respectively).

This survey finds that other factors influence which candidate a worker is more likely to support. For example, women are more likely than men to say they would vote for John Kerry if the election were held today (46% and 35%, respectively), as are workers earning less than \$40,000 per year compared to workers earning more (47% and 38%, respectively). African-American workers are overwhelmingly in favor of John Kerry compared to white workers (80% and 35%, respectively). A smaller share (54%) of Hispanic workers say they would vote for Kerry, while one in three (33%) support Bush. Interestingly, the more formal education workers have, the more likely they are to say they would vote for Kerry. Among workers with a high school education or less, 39% say they would vote for Kerry, while 41% of those with some college education or a college degree say the same. In contrast, 54% of those with an advanced or professional degree support Kerry. Finally, workers who are not married (single, divorced, widowed, etc.) are more likely than workers who are married to say they would vote for Kerry (50% and 34%, respectively).

Only 16% of workers say that overall, President Bush is doing an excellent job, while 30% say he is doing a good job (see Figure 2.1). Conversely, 28% of workers say that President Bush is doing a poor job overall. Approval of the president's job performance rating varies dramatically among workers of different political affiliation, race and marital status. For example, 40% of

Republican workers say that Bush is doing an excellent job, while more than one-third (35%) of workers who identify themselves as conservative say the same. In contrast, only 4% of Democrats rate his performance as excellent. Only 3% of African-American and 11% of Hispanic workers say that Bush is doing an excellent job, compared to 18% of whites and 11% of workers of other races. Similarly, married workers are more likely than unmarried workers to rate the president's job performance as excellent (21% and 10%).

An even smaller share of workers (7%) says that President Bush is doing an excellent job in handling the job situation in America (see Figure 2.2). In contrast, 36% say he is doing a poor job. More than half (53%) believe that the president is doing either a good or fair job in handling issues related to jobs (27% and 26%, respectively). Again, members of the Republican Party are far more favorable toward the president than Democrats, with 19% of Republican workers saying the president is doing an excellent job and less than 1% of Democrats saying the same. In stark contrast, 63% of workers who identify themselves as Democrats and 42% of Independents say

that Bush is doing a poor job handling the job situation in America. Among white workers, only 32% think that the president is doing a poor job, compared to 61% of African-American workers and 54% of Hispanic workers. Similarly, lower income workers earning \$40,000 a year or less are more likely than higher income workers to rate Bush's performance handling the job situation in America as poor (42% and 33%, respectively).

While only a small proportion of workers (3%) do not know how to evaluate President Bush's performance during the past four years, a much larger fraction (14%) do not know how well John Kerry would handle the job situation in America if elected. Only 6% say the Democratic candidate would do an excellent job; however, only 16% say he would do a poor job (see Figure 2.2). Most workers rate his potential performance in this area as either good or fair (34% and 30%, respectively).

When asked to compare the two candidates, however, 45% of workers say that John Kerry would best handle the job situation in America, compared to 40% who say the same about George W. Bush. Again, Democrats, women, African-Americans,

Fig. 2.1: "Overall, how good a job do you think President Bush is doing?"

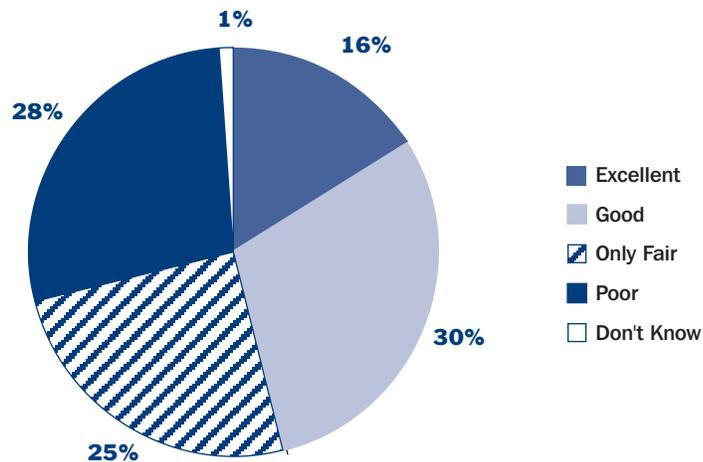
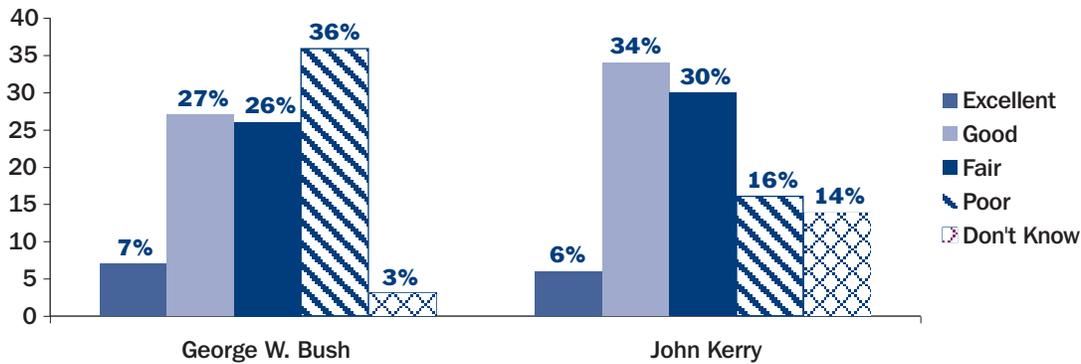


Fig. 2.2: Workers Rate the Candidates' Ability to Handle the Job Situation in America



Hispanics, lower income workers, workers who have experienced layoffs, and unmarried workers favor Democrat John Kerry, while Republicans, workers who have never been laid off, and white, higher income married workers are more likely to support Republican George W. Bush. In addition, workers believe that the Democratic Party in Congress does a better job than the GOP handling issues related to jobs (45% and 30%, respectively).

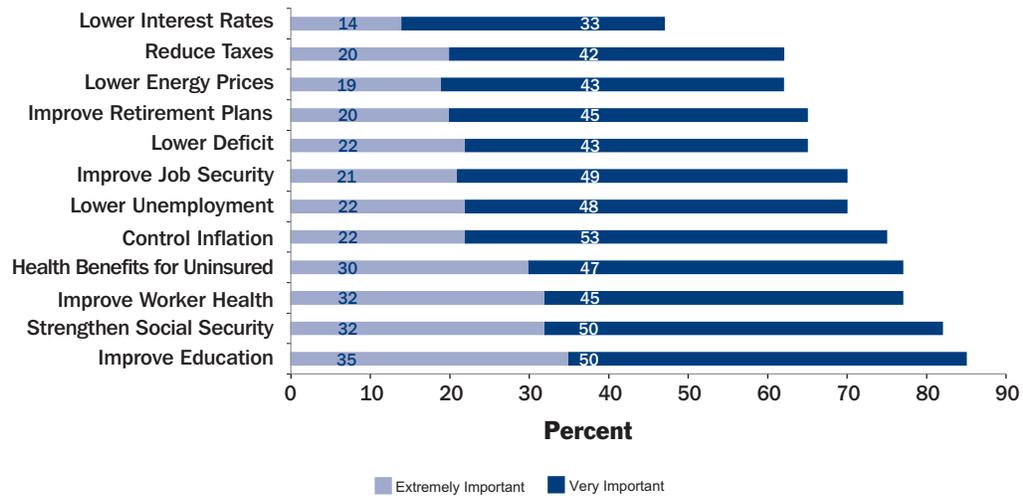
When asked to compare economic and security issues, workers express more concern about the threat of terrorism. One in two (50%) workers say that protecting the country against terrorism is more important than improving the health of the American economy. In contrast, 39% believe that improving the economy is more important. However, Republicans are far more likely than Democrats to believe that protecting the country against terrorism is more important than improving the economy (75% and 35%, respectively), as are conservative workers compared to liberals (57% and 35%, respectively). Among workers who identify themselves as Independents, 42% agree that fighting terrorism is more important than improving the economy, as do 49% of moderate workers.

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**One in two workers say that protecting the country against terrorism is more important than improving the health of the American economy.**

When workers consider various domestic issues, they rate improving the quality of education and maintaining the long-term health of Social Security as more important than reducing taxes and interest rates. For example, 85% of workers say that it is extremely or very important that candidates address improving the quality of education (35% and 50%, respectively). In contrast, only 14% of workers say it is extremely important and 33% say it is very important to reduce interest rates on the money they borrow (see Figure 2.3). Among Democrats, Republicans and Independents, improving education garners the most support, although only 76% of Republicans say it is extremely or very important, compared to 81% of Independent workers and 91% of Democratic workers. In contrast, 70% of Republicans cite reducing the amount of money they pay in taxes as extremely or very important, while only 58% of Democrats and 56% of Independents say the same.

Fig. 2.3: Workers Rate the Importance of Campaign Issues



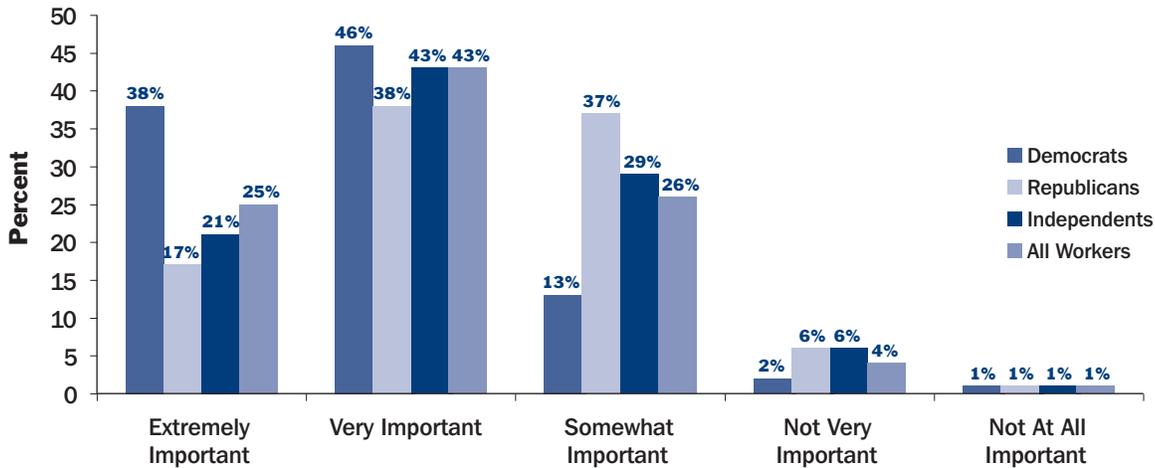
**The majority of workers think that the policies of the President of the United States are responsible for the health of the American economy.**

Jobs loom large as a critical issue in this election. The majority (68%) of workers say that, in thinking about how they will vote in the upcoming presidential election, candidates' positions on the job situation in America are extremely or very important (25% and 43%, respectively). Democrats and workers who identify themselves as politically liberal are particularly concerned about job issues. Among Democrats, 38% say that the candidates' positions on job issues are extremely important, compared to 17% of Republican and 21% of Independent workers (see Figure 2.4). More than one-third (37%) of liberal workers also consider

job issues extremely important; in contrast, only 22%, respectively, of moderate and conservative workers say the same.

Not only do workers consider the candidates' position on job issues important, they also believe that they know a lot about the candidates' positions on jobs. Among workers, 26% say that they know a lot about candidates' positions on issues related to jobs, while half (50%) say they know some. A minority of workers says that they know only a little or nothing at all about this topic (19% and 5%, respectively). Some workers rate their level of knowledge higher than others. For example, 31% of men say that they know a lot about the candidates' positions on jobs compared to 19% of women. The more formal education workers have, the higher they rate their knowledge level. Among workers with a high school education or less, 19% say that they know a lot about the candidates' positions on jobs; in

Fig. 2.4: Importance of the Candidates' Position on the Job Situation, by Political Party



contrast, 28% of college attendees and graduates and 45% of workers with a post-college degree say the same.

The majority of workers think that the policies of the President of the United States are responsible for the health of the American economy. For example, 48% say that such policies bear a lot of the responsibility, while 37% say that they bear some responsibility. Only 10% of workers say that the policies of the president matter a little and only 4% say they do not matter at all. Interestingly, Democrats are far more likely

than Republicans to think that the policies of the president bear a lot of responsibility for the health of the economy (63% and 35%, respectively), as do liberals compared to conservatives (59% and 44%, respectively). At the same time, more than half (55%) of women say the same, compared to 42% of men. So, too, do African-American and Hispanic workers, among whom 62% and 60%, respectively, say that the president's policies bear a lot of responsibility for the nation's economic health, compared to 45% of white workers and 52% of workers of other races.



## Section 3. Layoffs, the Economy and the Role of Government

Since 2001, workers have encountered a turbulent labor market characterized by corporate restructuring and job losses. This report finds that in the past three years (Fall 2001 to Fall 2004), 35% of workers say that they or a family member have been laid off from a full or part time job (30% and 5%, respectively). More than half (57%) say that they or a family member have been laid off from a full or a part time job at some point in their lives (50% and 7%, respectively) (see Figure 3.1). This is an increase over the results of a March 2004 *Work Trends* survey, which found that 44% of workers said that they or a family member had been laid off from a full or part time job at some point in their lives (40% and 4%, respectively).

Layoffs are an increasingly common feature of the American labor market. In the past, the typical displaced worker was a blue-collar employee in the manufacturing industry. Today, layoffs occur across all industries and few workers, regardless of income or education, are exempt from the

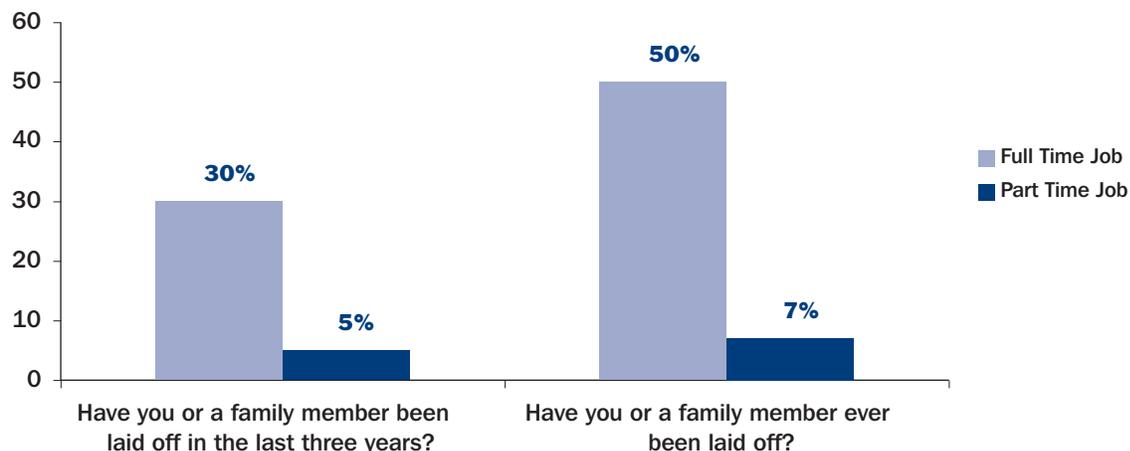
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Today, layoffs occur across all industries and few workers, regardless of income or education, are exempt from the risk of dislocation.

risk of dislocation. For example, among those surveyed who say they or a family member have been laid off in the past three years, 46% of workers have a high school diploma or less and 45% have a college degree or some education. Men are more likely than women to have experienced recent layoffs (54% and 46%, respectively). Interestingly, among laid off workers, 54% earn \$40,000 a year or more, while 41% earn less than \$40,000 a year. Clearly, higher income workers are not insulated from the vagaries of the job market.

When layoffs occur, the price can be high for individual workers. Previous *Work Trends* reports as well as other research undertaken by the Heldrich Center demonstrate that:

Fig. 3.1: Incidence of Layoffs Among Workers and Their Family Members



- Many laid-off workers, including white-collar employees and college graduates, have trouble finding new jobs and endure significant drops in earnings when they do.
- A large proportion of workers receive little or no advance notice prior to losing their jobs and companies can easily circumvent limited federal requirements for advance notification.
- Benefits and services offered by employers are not widely available or well coordinated to provide assistance needed at a vulnerable time.
- Government support for laid-off workers, including unemployment insurance benefits and access to training, is uneven.

In considering actions that government might take to help workers and job seekers, American workers hold divergent opinions regarding the importance of many strategies. For example, workers are most likely to rate as extremely or very important actions to improve the quality of education in our K-12 schools and colleges and universities (37% and 49%, respectively). Other actions that garner a large share of support include requiring employers to provide health and medical benefits and providing financial assistance for people who want to go to college. In contrast, a much smaller share of workers rate providing more information about available jobs as extremely or very important (15% and 38%, respectively). Workers offer similar levels of support for actions such as providing tax incentives for employers to train workers and raising the federal hourly minimum wage from \$5.15 to

\$6.15 (see Figure 3.2). Republicans offer lower levels of support for all actions that government could take to help workers. For example, 79% of Republicans say it is extremely or very important to improve the quality of education in our K-12 schools and colleges. In contrast, nine in ten (91%) Democrats and 88% of Independents say the same. Similarly, less than half (41%) of all Republicans support an increase in the minimum wage, compared to 72% of Democrats and 55% of Independents.

Workers favor a number of policies regarding workers who have been laid off from work. For example, 73% of workers say that they favor the government using a portion of Unemployment Insurance funds to pay for job training and education for workers. Nearly two-thirds (63%), respectively, are in favor of the government allowing laid-off workers to use a portion of their Unemployment Insurance benefits to start their own business and of providing unemployed individuals with a personal reemployment account, as well as a cash reemployment bonus, for early return to work.

Democratic and politically liberal workers are more likely than Republican and conservative workers to support each of these measures. For example, 77% of Democratic workers say they favor the government using a portion of Unemployment Insurance to pay for worker job training and education, while 68% of Republican workers say the same. Similarly, 83% of workers who identify themselves as liberal are in favor of this initiative, compared to 68% of politically conservative workers (see Figure 3.3).

Fig. 3.2: Government Policies to Aid Workers and Job Seekers

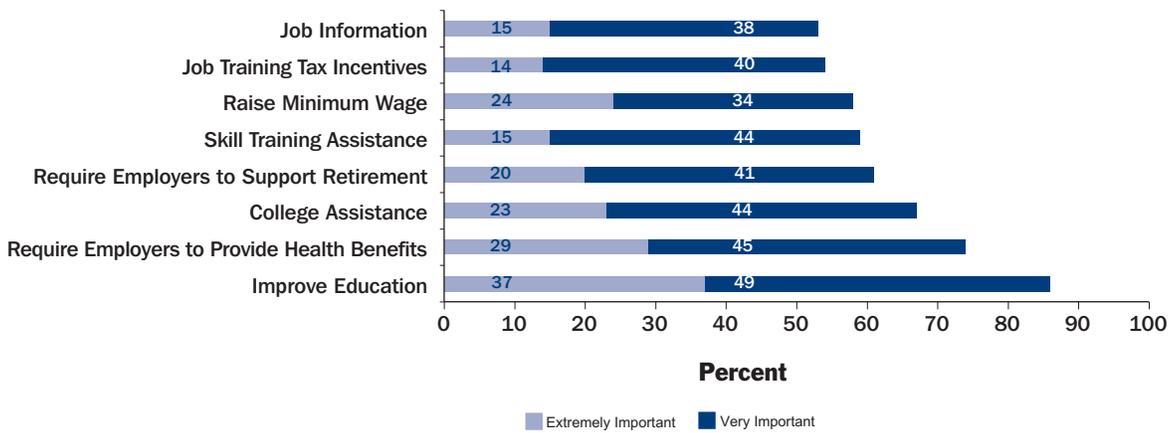
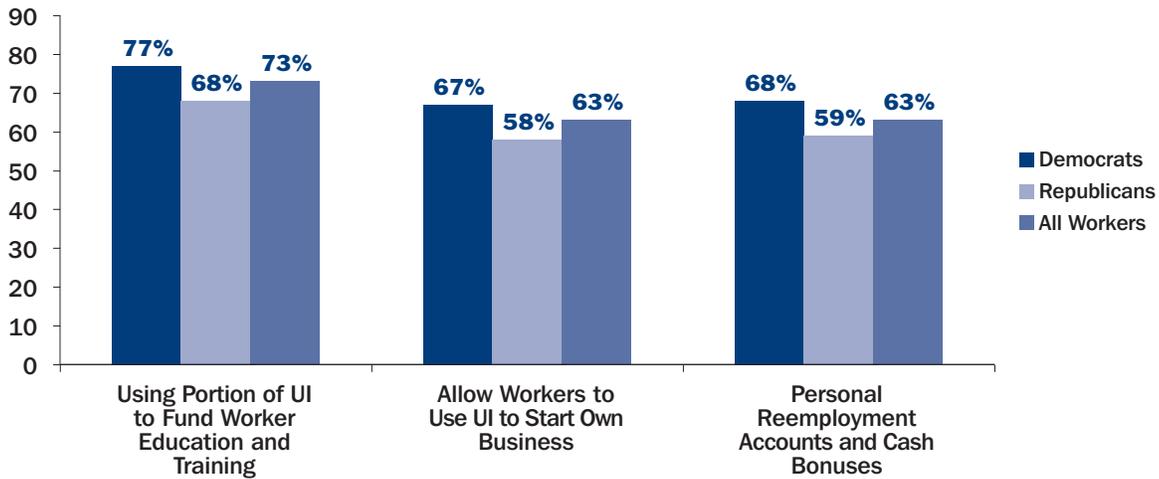


Fig. 3.3: Workers in Favor of Policies to Assist Laid-Off Workers





# Conclusion

*At a Crossroads* finds American workers faced with a critical decision on Election Day, a decision that must be made during a time of political and economic uncertainty. As Americans go to the polls this November 2nd, they are very concerned about a host of domestic issues, including jobs; however, the importance of the health of the economy is overshadowed by the need to fight terrorism.

American workers consider themselves to be a well-informed electorate, and the majority are committed to voting in the presidential election. The outcome of that election remains to be seen, however, as a nearly equal share of workers say they would vote for Bush and Kerry. As Election Day nears, and workers head to the polls, their concerns about unemployment and job security, experiences in the workplace, domestic issues, and national security will translate into votes for the next President of the United States.

As this report shows, workers will cast their votes during a time of economic volatility. The prevalence of job losses demands that workers, employers, and policymakers understand how layoffs affect both those laid off and those who remain employed. During the past year, the Heldrich Center has conducted an extensive study on the impact of worker displacement. In addition to three national surveys, the Center conducted focus groups with displaced workers across the country and interviews with human resource executives, outplacement firm executives, and policymakers.

A central finding is that public and private sector policies are out of sync with the realities of a changing labor market in which millions of Americans face layoffs every year and millions more are at risk of layoffs. The

study puts forward a set of recommendations intended to stimulate a national dialogue about the policies and practices necessary to assist workers in a changing economy. Key recommendations for policymakers include:

- Provide workers with adequate notice in advance of layoff by clarifying federal requirements for advance notification and by providing a combination of guidance, technical assistance, and incentives to employers.
- Ensure that Unemployment Insurance benefits are widely available and deploy program resources, not only as a source of temporary income support, but also as a lever to reconnect unemployed individuals with the workforce.
- Help get the unemployed back to work by integrating government support and employer-funded benefits and services.
- Ensure that government-funded training is closely attuned to business needs and upgrade workers' skills prior to the crisis of a layoff.

The study, with a complete set of findings and recommendations for workers, employers, and policymakers, will be released later this year.

Workers cite several initiatives that would help laid-off workers reenter the labor market, including using a portion of Unemployment Insurance for job training or to start their own business. Strengthening existing programs and implementing new strategies that provide support to dislocated workers should be a priority for policymakers, including the next President of the United States.



## Appendix A: Methodology

The worker survey was conducted from September 16 through October 15, 2004 by the Center for Survey Research and Analysis (CSRA) at the University of Connecticut. This report is based on a total of 1,011 telephone interviews completed with adult members of the workforce in the contiguous United States.

Interviews were conducted at the CSRA's interviewing facility in Storrs, Connecticut, using a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system. Professional survey interviewers who are trained in standard protocols for administering survey instruments conduct all CSRA surveys. All interviewers assigned to this survey participated in special training conducted by senior project staff. The draft survey questionnaire and field protocols received extensive testing prior to the start of the formal interviewing period. Interviews were extensively monitored by center staff to ensure CSRA standards for quality were continually met.

The sample for this survey was stratified to ensure that regions, as defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, were represented in proportion to their share of the total U.S. population. Within each of these regions, telephone numbers were generated through a random-digit-dial telephone methodology to ensure that each possible residential telephone number had an equal probability of selection. Telephone banks that contain no known residential telephone numbers were removed from the sample selection process. The sample was generated using the GENESYS sampling database under the direction of a CSRA survey

methodologist. Once selected, each telephone number was contacted a minimum of four times to attempt to reach an eligible respondent. Households where a viable contact was made were called up to 25 additional times. All households that initially refused to be interviewed were contacted at least one additional time by a senior interviewer who attempted to elicit cooperation. Within each household one adult was randomly selected to complete the interview.

A total of 1,540 adults were interviewed for this survey. Respondents who worked full or part time, or who were unemployed and looking for work, received a full interview. A total of 529 respondents who did not meet these criteria received a short interview that included demographic questions. The results of this report are based on a total of 1,011 complete interviews with members of the workforce. The final results were weighted to adjust for disproportionate probabilities of selection based on household size and telephone lines; additional weights were applied to match U.S. Bureau of the Census estimates for age, educational attainment, gender, and race.

The sample error associated with a survey of this size is +/- 3%, meaning that there is less than one chance in 20 that the results of a survey of this size would differ by more than 3% in either direction from the results that would be obtained if all members of the workforce in the contiguous U.S. had been selected. The sample error is larger for subgroups. CSRA also attempted to minimize other possible sources of error in this survey.

# Appendix B: Survey Results

INT1. Hello, my name is [redacted] and I'm calling from the Center for Survey Research and Analysis at the University of Connecticut. We're conducting a brief national survey of the American workforce.

QS1. Are you currently employed, are you unemployed and looking for work, or are you not employed and not looking for work?

|  |           |      |      |
|--|-----------|------|------|
| N =  |           | 1540 | 100% |
| Employed   | 01 => QS2 | 897  | 58%  |
| Unemployed looking for work                      | 02 => +4  | 118  | 8%   |
| Unemployed and not looking for work (or retired) | 03        | 522  | 34%  |
| Don't know                                       | 98        | 3    | 0%   |
| Refused  | 99        | 0    | 0%   |

QS2. Which statement best describes your current employment situation (READ CHOICES 1-5)

|     |  |     |      |
|-----|--|-----|------|
| N = |  | 897 | 100% |
|-----|--|-----|------|

I work full-time for only one employer

|  |            |     |     |
|--|------------|-----|-----|
| 01   |            | 622 | 69% |
| I work full-time for one employer and part-time for another employer | 02         | 58  | 6%  |
| I work one part-time job   | 03         | 89  | 10% |
| I work two or more part-time jobs                                    | 04         | 26  | 3%  |
| I am self-employed   | 05         | 99  | 11% |
| Don't know   | 98 => OPP1 | 4   | 1%  |
| Refused  | 99 => OPP1 | 0   | 0%  |

QS3. How many hours do you work in a typical week? (ENTER 2 DIGIT NUMBER 0-79)

|                           |    |     |      |
|---------------------------|----|-----|------|
| N =                       |    | 893 | 100% |
| 80 or more hours per week | 80 | 23  | 3%   |
| Don't know                | 98 | 16  | 2%   |
| Refused                   | 99 | 0   | 0%   |

I'm going to read you a list of some economic issues. For each issue that I read, please tell me whether you are very concerned, somewhat concerned, not too concerned, or not at all concerned about this.

|  | Very Concerned | Somewhat Concerned | Not Too Concerned | Not At All Concerned | Don't Know | Refused |
|--|----------------|--------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------|---------|
| The current unemployment rate            | 403 (40%)      | 330 (33%)          | 191 (19%)         | 78 (8%)              | 9 (1%)     | 0 (0%)  |
| Job security for those currently working | 411 (41%)      | 380 (38%)          | 145 (14%)         | 64 (6%)              | 11 (1%)    | 0 (0%)  |

Q3. Thinking about the job situation in America today, would you say that now is a good time or a bad time to find a quality job?

|            |    |      |      |
|------------|----|------|------|
| N =        |    | 1011 | 100% |
| Good       | 01 | 324  | 32%  |
| Bad        | 02 | 639  | 63%  |
| Don't know | 98 | 47   | 5%   |
| Refused    | 99 | 0    | 0%   |

Republican

|                          |          |           |       |
|--------------------------|----------|-----------|-------|
| George W. Bush           | 02 => Q5 | 437       | 43%   |
| Other (SPECIFY)          | (Vol.)   | 03 O=> Q5 | 3 0%  |
| Don't Vote/Wouldn't Vote | (Vol.)   | 04 => Q5  | 38 4% |
| Neither (vol.)           | 05       | 36        | 4%    |
| Don't Know               | 98       | 61        | 6%    |
| Refused                  | 99 => Q5 | 21        | 2%    |

Now I am going to ask you some questions about the upcoming presidential election.

|          |      |      |      |
|----------|------|------|------|
| N =      |      | 1011 | 100% |
| continue | 01 D | 1011 | 100% |

If the election for president were held today and you had to choose between candidates (READ CHOICES 1-2), for whom would you vote? permutation -> 2

|            |          |      |      |
|------------|----------|------|------|
| N =        |          | 1011 | 100% |
| Democrat   |          |      |      |
| John Kerry | 01 => Q5 | 416  | 41%  |

Which candidate are you leaning more towards (READ CHOICES 1-2)?

|                 |      |    |      |
|-----------------|------|----|------|
| N =             |      | 96 | 100% |
| Democrat        |      |    |      |
| John Kerry      | 01   | 19 | 20%  |
| Republican      |      |    |      |
| George W. Bush  | 02   | 22 | 23%  |
| Other (SPECIFY) | 03 O | 8  | 8%   |
| Don't Know      | 98   | 42 | 44%  |
| Refused         | 99   | 6  | 6%   |

Overall, how good a job do you think President Bush is doing? Excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

|            |    |      |      |
|------------|----|------|------|
| N =        |    | 1011 | 100% |
| Excellent  | 01 | 162  | 16%  |
| Good       | 02 | 300  | 30%  |
| Only Fair  | 03 | 251  | 25%  |
| Poor       | 04 | 282  | 28%  |
| Don't Know | 98 | 12   | 1%   |
| Refused    | 99 | 4    | 0%   |

How good a job do you think President Bush is doing in handling the job situation in America? Excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

|            |    |      |      |
|------------|----|------|------|
| N =        |    | 1011 | 100% |
| Excellent  | 01 | 66   | 7%   |
| Good       | 02 | 274  | 27%  |
| Only Fair  | 03 | 266  | 26%  |
| Poor       | 04 | 368  | 36%  |
| Don't Know | 98 | 31   | 3%   |
| Refused    | 99 | 5    | 1%   |

How good a job do you think Kerry would do handling the job situation in America if elected? Excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

|            |    |      |      |
|------------|----|------|------|
| N =        |    | 1011 | 100% |
| Excellent  | 01 | 58   | 6%   |
| Good       | 02 | 340  | 34%  |
| Only Fair  | 03 | 305  | 30%  |
| Poor       | 04 | 163  | 16%  |
| Don't Know | 98 | 142  | 14%  |
| Refused    | 99 | 4    | 0%   |

Which of the following presidential candidates would best handle the job situation in America? (READ CHOICES 1-2)

|                      |    |      |      |
|----------------------|----|------|------|
| permutation -> 2     |    |      |      |
| N =                  |    | 1011 | 100% |
| Republican candidate |    |      |      |
| George W. Bush       | 01 | 404  | 40%  |
| Democratic candidate |    |      |      |
| John Kerry           | 02 | 459  | 45%  |

|            |    |     |     |
|------------|----|-----|-----|
| Don't Know | 98 | 132 | 13% |
| Refused    | 99 | 16  | 2%  |

How much do you think the policies of the president of the United States are responsible for the health of the American economy? A lot, some, a little, or not at all?

|            |    |      |      |
|------------|----|------|------|
| N =        |    | 1011 | 100% |
| A lot      | 01 | 483  | 48%  |
| Some       | 02 | 369  | 37%  |
| A little   | 03 | 105  | 10%  |
| Not at all | 04 | 38   | 4%   |
| Don't Know | 98 | 13   | 1%   |
| Refused    | 99 | 3    | 0%   |

In thinking about how you will vote in the next Presidential election, how important are the candidates' positions on the job situation in America? Extremely important, very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not important at all?

|                      |    |      |      |
|----------------------|----|------|------|
| N =                  |    | 1011 | 100% |
| Extremely important  | 01 | 252  | 25%  |
| Very important       | 02 | 429  | 43%  |
| Somewhat important   | 03 | 263  | 26%  |
| Not very important   | 04 | 42   | 4%   |
| Not at all important | 05 | 12   | 1%   |
| Don't Know           | 98 | 9    | 1%   |
| Refused              | 99 | 4    | 0%   |

Which party in Congress does a better job handling issues related to jobs in America? (READ CHOICES 1-2)

|                  |    |      |      |
|------------------|----|------|------|
| permutation -> 2 |    |      |      |
| N =              |    | 1011 | 100% |
| Democratic Party | 01 | 457  | 45%  |
| Republican Party | 02 | 305  | 30%  |
| Neither (vol.)   | 03 | 61   | 6%   |
| Both (vol.)      | 04 | 24   | 2%   |
| Don't Know       | 98 | 157  | 16%  |
| Refused          | 99 | 6    | 1%   |

I am going to read you a list of policies a candidate might address in a campaign. Please tell me how important each is in your decision to vote for a candidate, if it's extremely important, very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important.

|  | <b>Extremely important</b> | <b>Very important</b> | <b>Somewhat important</b> | <b>Not very important</b> | <b>Not at all important</b> | <b>Don't Know</b> | <b>Refused</b> |
|--|----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Reducing the unemployment rate   | 220 (22%)                  | 487 (48%)             | 240 (24%)                 | 41 (4%)                   | 12 (1%)                     | 9 (1%)            | 2 (0%)         |
| Improving job security for those who are working                                       | 216 (21%)                  | 481 (48%)             | 249 (25%)                 | 40 (4%)                   | 14 (1%)                     | 9 (1%)            | 2 (0%)         |
| Reducing the federal budget deficit  | 224 (22%)                  | 435 (43%)             | 271 (27%)                 | 48 (5%)                   | 19 (2%)                     | 10 (1%)           | 4 (0%)         |
| Reducing energy prices   | 191 (19%)                  | 430 (43%)             | 324 (32%)                 | 45 (4%)                   | 13 (1%)                     | 4 (0%)            | 4 (0%)         |
| Keeping inflation under control  | 226 (22%)                  | 535 (53%)             | 207 (21%)                 | 25 (3%)                   | 7(1%)                       | 9 (1%)            | 2 (0%)         |
| Reducing the amount of money you pay in taxes  | 201 (20%)                  | 426 (42%)             | 288 (29%)                 | 66 (7%)                   | 21 (2%)                     | 7 (1%)            | 2 (0%)         |
| Lowering interest rates on money you borrow  | 144 (14%)                  | 332 (33%)             | 394 (39%)                 | 101 (10%)                 | 28 (3%)                     | 8 (1%)            | 3 (0%)         |
| Improving the quality of education   | 351 (35%)                  | 506 (50%)             | 120 (12%)                 | 14 (1%)                   | 10 (1%)                     | 8 (1%)            | 3 (0%)         |
| Ensuring the long term financial health of Social Security                             | 319 (32%)                  | 506 (50%)             | 145 (14%)                 | 21 (2%)                   | 9 (1%)                      | 4 (0%)            | 6 (1%)         |
| Improving retirement and pension plans other than Social Security for people with jobs | 197 (20%)                  | 450 (45%)             | 284 (28%)                 | 51 (5%)                   | 19 (2%)                     | 6 (1%)            | 4 (0%)         |
| Improving health and medical benefits for workers                                      | 322 (32%)                  | 457 (45%)             | 191 (19%)                 | 24 (2%)                   | 8 (1%)                      | 6 (1%)            | 2 (0%)         |
| Providing health and medical benefits for workers who do not currently have benefits   | 304 (30%)                  | 472 (47%)             | 184 (18%)                 | 30 (3%)                   | 11 (1%)                     | 7 (1%)            | 2 (0%)         |

How much would you say that you know about the presidential candidates' positions on issues related to jobs? A lot, some, a little, or nothing at all?

|                |    |      |      |
|----------------|----|------|------|
| N =            |    | 1011 | 100% |
| A lot          | 01 | 258  | 26%  |
| Some           | 02 | 500  | 50%  |
| A little       | 03 | 191  | 19%  |
| Nothing at all | 04 | 55   | 5%   |
| Don't Know     | 98 | 5    | 1%   |
| Refused        | 99 | 1    | 0%   |

What is more important today? (READ CHOICES 1-2)

|  |    |      |      |
|--|----|------|------|
| N =  |    | 1011 | 100% |
| Improving the health of the American economy | 01 | 393  | 39%  |
| Protecting the country against terrorism     | 02 | 504  | 50%  |
| Don't Know                                   | 98 | 99   | 10%  |
| Refused                                      | 99 | 15   | 2%   |

I am going to read you a list of actions that the government might take to help workers or those looking for better jobs. For each, please tell me whether you think these actions are extremely important, very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important.

|   | Extremely important | Very important | Somewhat important | Not very important | Not at all important | Don't Know | Refused |
|---|---------------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------|---------|
| Provide more information about available jobs                           | 153 (15%)           | 384 (38%)      | 341 (34%)          | 97 (10%)           | 30 (3%)              | 5 (1%)     | 0 (0%)  |
| Provide financial assistance for skills training for people who need it | 151 (15%)           | 449 (44%)      | 326 (32%)          | 54 (5%)            | 20 (2%)              | 7 (1%)     | 3 (0%)  |
| Provide financial assistance for people who want to go to college       | 232 (23%)           | 446 (44%)      | 270 (27%)          | 38 (4%)            | 20 (2%)              | 4 (0%)     | 0 (0%)  |
| Improve the quality of education in our K-12 schools and colleges       | 375 (37%)           | 498 (49%)      | 111 (11%)          | 19 (2%)            | 7 (1%)               | 1 (0%)     | 0 (0%)  |
| Provide tax incentives for employers to train workers                   | 145 (14%)           | 402 (40%)      | 374 (37%)          | 62 (6%)            | 18 (2%)              | 9 (1%)     | 1 (0%)  |
| Require employers to provide health and medical benefits                | 294 (29%)           | 450 (45%)      | 186 (18%)          | 54 (5%)            | 23 (2%)              | 3 (0%)     | 0 (0%)  |
| Require employers to provide retirement and pension benefits            | 201 (20%)           | 417 (41%)      | 273 (27%)          | 73 (7%)            | 35 (3%)              | 8 (1%)     | 3 (0%)  |
| Raise the federal hourly minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$6.15             | 245 (24%)           | 340 (34%)      | 244 (24%)          | 94 (9%)            | 79 (8%)              | 7 (1%)     | 3 (0%)  |

Now I am going to ask you some questions about your experiences in the workplace and policies to assist workers who have been laid off from their jobs.

N = 1011 100%  
Continue 01 D 1011 100%

In the last three years-Fall 2001 to Fall 2004-have you or a family member been laid off from a full or part time job?

N = 1011 100%  
Yes, full-time job 01 305 30%  
Yes, part-time job 02 50 5%  
No 03 653 65%  
Don't Know 98 3 0%  
Refused 99 0 0%

Have you or a family member EVER been laid off from a full- or part-time job?

N = 1011 100%  
Yes, full-time job 01 504 50%  
Yes, part-time job 02 57 6%  
No 03 443 44%  
Don't Know 98 5 1%  
Refused 99 1 0%

For the following questions, please tell me whether you favor or oppose each policy.

|   | Favor     | Oppose    | Don't Know | Refused |
|---|-----------|-----------|------------|---------|
| The federal government is considering providing unemployed individuals with a personal reemployment account, as well as a cash reemployment bonus for early return to work. | 640 (63%) | 283 (28%) | 86 (9%)    | 2 (0%)  |
| The government should reserve a portion of Unemployment Insurance to pay for job training and education for workers.  | 733 (73%) | 249 (25%) | 29 (3%)    | 1 (0%)  |
| The government should allow laid off workers to use a portion of their Unemployment Insurance benefits to start their own business.   | 624 (62%) | 333 (33%) | 51 (5%)    | 3 (0%)  |





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