

50+ COLORADO WORKFORCE SURVEY—FINDINGS SNAPSHOT

Changing the Narrative (CTN) is a campaign to change the way people think, talk and act about aging and ageism. The initiative seeks to increase understanding of ageism, increase awareness of the value of an intergenerational workforce, and help shift the way people think and communicate about aging. Below is a brief snapshot of findings from a 2020 statewide survey of adults ages 50+ providing feedback about the challenges they face in the workforce, including those posed by COVID-19.

The Overall Picture

Survey respondents were asked if they were **currently looking for work**. **Nearly three out of four respondents (74%)** indicated they were actively looking for work or thought they might be in the next year.



Of current job seekers (50% of survey respondents) ...

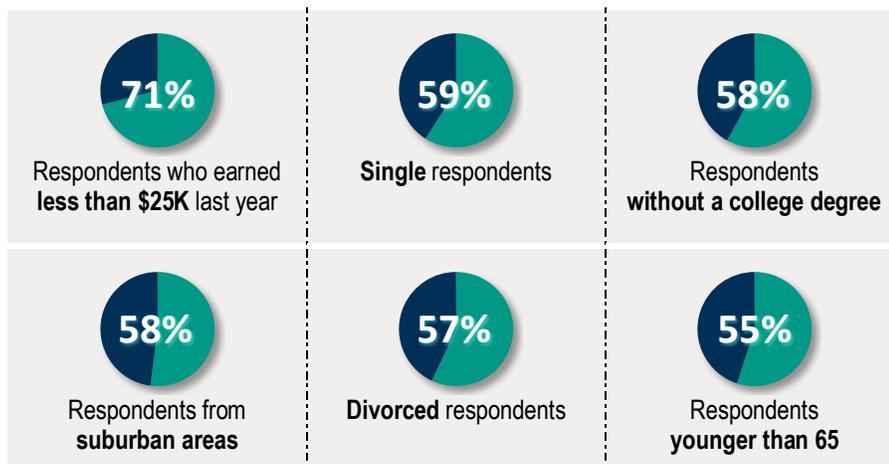
- 73% seek **full-time work** (more likely men than women)
- 42% seek **part-time work** (more likely women than men)
- 40% seek **contract work** (more likely people ages 70–79)

WHY ARE PEOPLE LOOKING FOR WORK?

When respondents looking for work were asked about the primary reason, the top four highest-rated items were the need to **sustain daily living** (78%), especially for people who are *single, divorced and/or earning less than \$50K annually*; the need to **increase retirement security** (76%); seeking **purpose through work** (74%); and seeking **security against uncertainty** (70%), which was particularly true for *people who are widowed and those who are younger than 65*.

WHO ARE THE JOB SEEKERS?

Respondents from the following six groups were more likely to report pursuing employment.



METHODS

The CTN workforce survey was offered in both English and Spanish and was open for responses in the late summer of 2020 (June 18 to September 1). Joining Vision and Action (JVA) designed and administered the survey, with recruitment and outreach support by CTN and its partners.

1,219 participants completed the survey. Participants came from 60 of Colorado's 64 counties.

Key demographic groups, based on gender, race and ethnicity, geographic location, age, long-term disability status, marital status, educational attainment, and annual income in the previous year, were represented in the sample to the extent that statistical analyses could be run on responses to determine patterns in the data at the 95% confidence level.

For more information, please email info@changingthenarrative.org



A partnership of NextFifty Initiative and Rose Community Foundation

<https://changingthenarrative.org/>

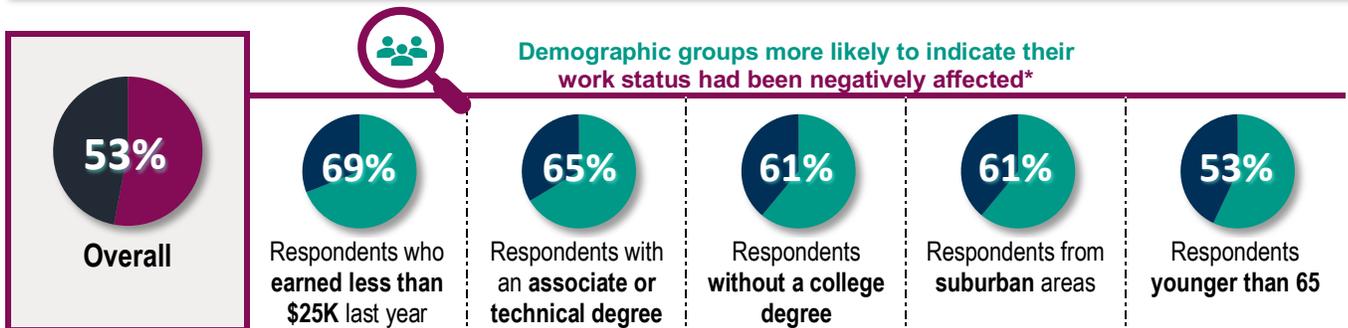
The Current Challenges

The survey assessed challenges experienced by older adults in the workforce. Three areas explored were the impact of COVID-19, the related and amplified *digital divide*, and *age discrimination* experienced during or after hiring.



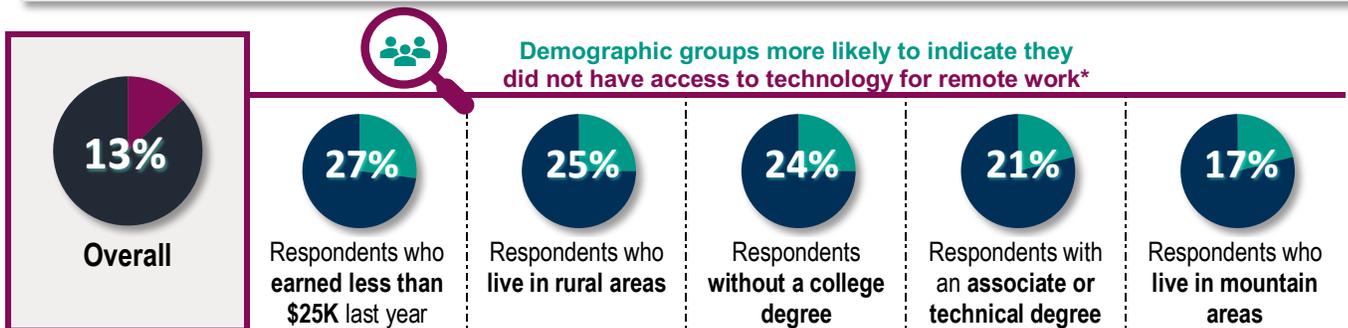
COVID-19

Over half of all survey participants (53%) indicated their work status had been negatively affected by the pandemic. The most commonly identified negative impacts were being laid off from their work (24%), followed by a decrease in work hours (11%) or being furloughed from work (11%).



DIGITAL DIVIDE

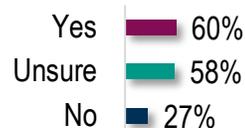
Among those not currently looking for work, 57% report not being allowed to work remotely. Among all survey respondents (currently working and not currently working), 13% of respondents indicated they did not have access to the technology required to work from home.



AGE DISCRIMINATION

All survey respondents were asked if they have experienced age discrimination in the workforce—nearly one third (32%) said “yes” and an additional 40% were unsure. Age discrimination was as prevalent for all demographic groups, especially for those who earned less than \$25K annually (46% said “yes”).

Respondents who have or are unsure if they have experienced age discrimination are more likely to be currently looking for work



Respondents who have or are unsure if they have experienced age discrimination are more likely to have been negatively affected by COVID-19 pandemic



* All findings reported here and in this report are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

The Opportunities

Of respondents who reported that they were looking for work, **50% indicated they were interested in changing careers or industries**, and an additional **39% indicated they were not necessarily looking to do so but were open to the idea**. When asked to rate the usefulness of career services and supports, the following had the highest reported interest overall.

Top career services and supports	61%	56%	55%
 Job postings, hiring events		Networking opportunities	Paid certifications
Other services rated by respondents as “very” or “extremely” useful			
46%	45%	45%	44%
Resume assistance	Career assessment	Career counseling	Access to job coaching

In addition to the supports with the most interest across all groups, several **services and supports were rated significantly higher by specific demographic groups**, with the following trends emerging per category.

ACCESS TO PAID CERTIFICATIONS (55%)
 People who indicated the highest interest:

- Black or African American (72%)
- Younger than 65 (59%)



TECHNOLOGY TRAINING (44%)
 People who indicated the highest interest:

- >\$25K and <\$50K annual income (57%)
- <\$25K annual income (54%)



CONSULTING TRAINING (38%)
 People who indicated the highest interest:

- Hispanic or Latino/Latina (55%)
- Black or African American (49%)



INTERNSHIP OR APPRENTICESHIP (37%)¹
 People who indicated the highest interest:

- Black or African American (52%)
- <\$25K annual income (44%)



ENTREPRENEUR TRAINING (35%)
 People who indicated the highest interest:

- Black or African American (50%)
- Hispanic or Latino/Latina (50%)



DATA LITERACY TRAINING (28%)
 People who indicated the highest interest:

- <\$25K annual income (38%)
- >\$25K and <\$50K annual income (37%)
- Rural (33%)



ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY (33%)
 People who indicated the highest interest:

- Black or African American (54%)
- <\$25K annual income (45%)



TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE (9%)
 People who indicated the highest interest:

- Black or African American (26%)
- <\$25K annual income (23%)
- Long-term disabilities (18%)



¹ Additionally, returnship opportunities—internship-like programs for experienced workers seeking to reenter the workforce after an extended period, particularly in a new line of work—were rated as useful by 37% of respondents overall and higher among those who were Black or African American (56%) and those who made less than \$25k in annual income (49%).

The Implications of Findings

From the findings, a number of implications for Colorado decision-makers emerge:



While the negative effects of the **COVID-19** pandemic have been felt by all demographic groups ages 50+ across Colorado, results indicate **respondents approaching retirement are more likely to have experienced these negative effects** on their working status. Because half of adults ages 55+ have little to no retirement savings, this is **likely to have long-term implications**. Coloradans in this age group may have to either delay retirement to make up for lost wages and reduced retirement savings or retire to a life of poverty.



Despite **respondents from rural and mountain areas** being less likely to have had their **work status negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic**, there appears to be a **digital divide**, as up to one-fourth of respondents in these areas do not have the access to work remotely, nor do they likely have access to the technology to connect with friends and family remotely during the pandemic.



In addition to **access to technology being so important moving forward, so are technology and data literacy skills**. Respondents who made less than \$25,000 in the previous year were more likely to be looking for work and negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. There may be an opportunity to help upskill this population with tech or data literacy skills as those become increasingly important, while helping to raise the income bracket of those currently making the least.



Although there were no consistent differences based on racial and ethnic identity, there was **more interest among black or African American and Hispanic or Latino/Latina respondents in entrepreneurial trainings**. Perhaps a program focused on these skills targeting this population could help these respondents take their ideas and make them actionable.



There is **great interest in full-time work among adults ages 50+**, with the exception of those ages 70–79, who are instead looking for either part-time or contract work.



As **respondents from suburban areas** are more likely than those from other areas to be **currently looking for work and to have had their work status negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic**, there may be a need to ensure awareness, availability and accessibility of services and supports in those areas.



The **services seen as most useful revolve around connecting those looking for work to those looking for workers**; whether this occurs through job postings or networking opportunities, those looking for work are trying to identify opportunities at companies open to hiring older adults.



The relationship between workplace discrimination and critical outcomes, such as being in or out of work, highlights the need to **raise awareness** about the issue and find ways to address it.

There is a clear need to support older adults with workforce supports—especially because this might help address challenges related to COVID-19, the digital divide and age discrimination—and survey results reveal a clear menu of options for providing services and solutions, as identified and described by those directly impacted.

Learn more at <https://changingthenarrativeco.org/50-colorado-workforce-survey/>

² Key Issues: Financial Security for Older Americans. (n.d.) Retrieved December 10, 2020 from https://goa.gov/key_issues/financial_security_for_older_americans/issue_summary