

Global COVID-19 pandemic causes mass rethink of career goals amongst young people

- **66% of those surveyed across the UK and US admit pandemic has changed what they want from their jobs**
- **Work-life balance now considered more important than financial security**
- **Only half of respondents feel they are on the career path they wanted**

LONDON, February 23rd 2021 - An international survey of 18–25-year-olds has shone a light on COVID-19's impact on the lives of young people in the US and UK, especially those taking their first steps into the job market. The research conducted in January 2021 found that 67% of respondents in the US and 64% of those in the UK have changed their work expectations and career aspirations. Factors such as salary and remuneration which previously dominated peoples' priorities have become less important with life outside of work now ranking as their number one priority.

The survey of 500 respondents in each country, conducted by [Liberty Communications](#) and strategic insight agency [Opinium](#), found that of those admitting COVID-19 had changed what they were looking for, one third in both countries (33%) now want their career to enable them to have a healthy work life balance, while a quarter (28%) want something more financially secure. In addition, only about half (52%) young people who are employed say they're on the career path they would like and for those who aren't, 39% think it's unlikely they will end up in the career they want; possibly explained by fears of a global economic recession fuelling a desire to accept any employment opportunity offered to them.

The survey also revealed the difficulties in getting roles during the pandemic. On average, 96% of those who actively applied for a job during this time across both countries said they had faced challenges of some kind, including the number of other people applying for the job at the same time (42% UK, 37% US) as well as difficulties making a connection through virtual interviews (31% across both countries).

The responses also flagged some differences between the two countries. 53% of UK respondents felt that COVID had negatively affected their mental health, while only 35% of those in the US agreed. In addition, regarding the skills needed for career progression, leadership was ranked much higher in the UK than the US, (32% vs. 23%), with communication seen as more important in the American workplace.

Elena Davidson, CEO of Liberty Communications, says: *"It's clear that more and more young people in both countries are entering the workplace not only with altered priorities, but also with an increased uncertainty that they are in the right role. With many concerned about their future, we firmly believe we have a responsibility to help support young people in making their first steps into the world of work. Our Liberty Academy programme helps do that by providing students and recent graduates with the knowledge and experience they need to make informed decisions about their future."*

James Endersbury at Opinium, added: *"The research shows that COVID-19 has drastically changed the landscape for young people and that money is no longer the main factor for incoming professionals across the UK and US. As such, we would advise employers that they need to adapt their recruitment strategies to ensure they remain attractive to this next generation of talent."*

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About Opinium

Opinium helps its clients harness the power of insight to build, grow, promote and make strategic business decisions. It is an award-winning strategic insight agency built on the belief that in a world of uncertainty and complexity, success depends on the ability to stay on the pulse of what people think, feel and do. Creative and inquisitive, Opinium is passionate about empowering our clients to make the decisions that matter.

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