

# Briefing Paper:

## Career Dissatisfaction and Career Change in Britain

### Introduction

This paper summarises a survey of career satisfaction and expectations of career change in Britain's workers. It particularly explores expectations of career change in those who are dissatisfied with their careers, and how these expectations differ between age groups.

The survey suggests there is a sizable proportion of British workers who are dissatisfied with their career and yet have no expectations of changing to a significantly different job. Now Teach proposes this is evidence of the need for a shift in how career change is seen and how people plan their working lives, and for greater support for people to change careers once they are in work.

Now Teach is a charity that supports mid-to-late stage career changers to successfully retrain as teachers. This is in the context of increasing longevity and the fact that many more people are able to work into their late 60s and 70s. We have an opportunity to redefine the traditional one-profession career with a multi-stage career that continues past 65.

### Key Findings

- 32% of respondents reported that they found their careers dissatisfying.
- 27% of dissatisfied respondents reported that, despite their dissatisfaction, they expect to be in the same or a similar job in ten years' time.
- Dissatisfied workers attribute lower levels of in-work learning, pride and social purpose to their careers when compared to satisfied workers.
- The most frequently chosen blockers by both satisfied and dissatisfied respondents were concerns about money and concerns about handling a new workload.
- Low expectations of career-change in older respondents demonstrate the need to raise the profile of changing career as a realistic and beneficial decision.

## The benefits of increasing longevity and the impact of career change

Now Teach was founded on the principle that career change will become a major part of our working lives. We are living at the tail end of a culture in which people expect – or want to – completely retire in their sixties. We have seen that retraining as a teacher can give experienced people a new and inspiring challenge. To their students, Now Teach participants bring wisdom, experience of the world and careers advice. To the education system they bring knowledge of other sectors, fresh ideas and status. In time they may offer solutions to some of the more intractable problems our schools face.

The background to Now Teach's work is the fact that we are all living longer. In 1841 the life expectancy of the average newborn girl was 42 years; by 2011 this had almost doubled to 82. It is projected that by 2030 there will be nearly one billion people aged 65 and older. Many of them will still have decades of productive work ahead of them. Bringing different generations together for their mutual benefit will play a role in eradicating inequality in education.

Staying in a career that is no longer - or has never been - satisfying is undesirable. Studies show a clear link between satisfaction at work and productivity.<sup>1</sup> It has also been shown that a lack of meaningful work, defined by an individual's preferences, can have a negative impact on our physical<sup>2</sup> and mental health<sup>3</sup> as we age.

Career dissatisfaction is a personal, social and economic issue. Now Teach believes that attitudes to work and careers must change. Employers and employees must change their attitudes so that changing career later in life is both accepted and encouraged. This means including career-change in our long-term plans and employers exploring ways to bring experienced career-changers into their profession.

We acknowledge that career change brings with it challenges. It is accompanied by a sudden shift in the nature of one's work and, in all likelihood, an equally sudden drop in seniority and therefore salary. However, this can be mitigated by a number of measures, such as tailored career-change support, as Now Teach offers, and the likelihood of accelerated progression in the new career due to previous experience.

While organisations in the USA, such as the Encore Network, are bringing the idea of mid- and later-stage career change into the mainstream, the adoption of career-change as a norm is still in its infancy in the UK.

It is in this context that we set out to explore the current state of workplace satisfaction in England and link it to expectations of significant change in the workplace, arguing that the combination of career dissatisfaction and job continuity is an undesirable state of affairs.

### Katie Waldegrave

*Executive Director, Now Teach*

<sup>1</sup> The Happiness Advantage: The Seven Principles of Positive Psychology That Fuel Success and Performance at Work, Shawn Achor, 2010, Currency. See also: <https://hbr.org/2011/06/the-happiness-dividend>

<sup>2</sup> 'Leading a meaningful life at older ages and its relationship with social engagement, prosperity, health, biology, and time use', Andrew Steptoe and Daisy Fancourt, 2019, PNAS. <https://www.pnas.org/content/116/4/1207#abstract-2>

<sup>3</sup> 'Work Longer, Live Healthier', Gabriel H. Sahlgren, 2013, Institute of Economic Affairs. <https://iea.org.uk/in-the-media/press-release/retirement-causes-a-major-decline-in-physical-and-mental-health-new-resea>

## Endorsements

“One of National Careers Week’s key goals is to help young people make informed choices about jobs and careers – but we also know the need for this doesn’t stop once you’ve got your first job. Career advice is for everyone, and we should focus on lifelong learning and the portability of skills. Now Teach’s research demonstrates that we need to spread this message even further, so that people feel proud of their work and engaged in things that do matter to them.”

### **Nick Newman**

*CEO of National Careers Week*

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“As we live and stay healthy for longer, so our careers will also extend. However, this will be bad news for a lot of people who don’t like what they are currently doing. As working careers lengthen a growing challenge is how to support people through career transitions. Firms and individuals spend a lot of time thinking about how people start their careers but much less attention on how they can shift into something different. We need to develop ways of supporting people into multi-stage careers as they look to find renewed purpose and enthusiasm in their job in later life. Providing pathways into socially orientated roles is a way of capitalising on this growing natural resource of older, healthier individuals.”

### **Andrew Scott**

*Professor of Economics at London Business School and co-founder of The Longevity Forum and Encore Fellows (UK).*

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“I changed career because I found I wasn’t learning anymore. Re-training as a teacher has been incredibly hard - but also rejuvenating. The teenagers I teach are so rewarding that I look back on my old life with no regret whatsoever. I am proud of what I’m trying to do in the classroom and proud of my fellow Now Teachers.”

### **Lucy Kellaway**

*Now Teach co-founder and teacher*

## Executive Summary

### Dissatisfaction levels in Britain.

32% of people working in Britain are dissatisfied with their career. This would translate to 8.3 million people who feel their career is dissatisfying.<sup>4</sup>

### Dissatisfaction and a lack of meaningful work.

Previous research shows people are happier, healthier and more productive when they are doing meaningful work, especially as they age. Dissatisfied workers attribute lower levels of learning, pride and social purpose to their careers when compared to satisfied workers.

### Dissatisfaction and career-change.

Dissatisfaction and a lack of meaningful work is a strong rationale for career change but many dissatisfied workers have no expectation of this happening. 27% report that, despite their dissatisfaction, they will be in the same or a similar job in ten years' time. This would extrapolate to 2.2 million people feeling they are stuck in dissatisfying careers.

### Dissatisfaction and blockers to career change.

The blocker to career-change most frequently cited by dissatisfied workers is financial. 49% said they would have concerns about earning less money. The next blocker was a 'lack of experience in a different role' at 39%. However, these blockers tend to decline in the older age groups: 24% of dissatisfied 55+s say 'No factors in particular would prevent me from changing career' compared with 12% of 35-44s.

### Raise the profile of career change.

The large group of dissatisfied workers who have no expectation of changing career demonstrates the need to improve the profile of career-change and expand career-change pathways into a variety of professions.

The survey also found that dissatisfied mid-to-late-stage career changers have the motivation and the fewest blockers to career-change but also the lowest expectation of changing career.

This is coherent with the approach of organisations like Now Teach and the Encore Network, a US organisation the works to engage over 50s to work together for social benefit. They are working to change attitudes to retirement and career change, and to support experienced professionals to change career and pursue roles that have greater social impact, such as teaching.

<sup>4</sup> Population figures calculated by Now Teach based on YouGov results and ONS Midyear 2017 GB 18+ population estimate (50,644,094). This is calculated on the 18+ British population (50,644,094) of those, who work – 54.92% (27,813,736) and of those, who feel dissatisfied in their career – 30.04% (8,355,246) and of those, who see minimal career change in ten years' time – 26.62% (2,224,167).

## Career satisfaction

This survey set out to explore trends in worker satisfaction in Britain, surveying 2308 people currently in work via YouGov's Omnibus Survey. After defining 'job' and 'career',<sup>5</sup> the survey asked:

**"How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following aspects of your work life?"**

### Your career

(i.e. the broader profession that you have experience in, the skills that you use, and the positions that are available as you progress)

|                     |            |
|---------------------|------------|
| <b>Satisfied</b>    | <b>64%</b> |
| <b>Dissatisfied</b> | <b>32%</b> |
| <b>Don't know</b>   | <b>5%</b>  |

If the survey was typical of the population of Britain, there could be around 8.3 million people who are dissatisfied with their careers.

### International comparisons

While international and cross-survey comparisons are not straightforward, the above results compare negatively to related reports from other countries that show significantly higher levels of job satisfaction. New Zealand<sup>6</sup> reported 84% satisfaction; a survey from the USA<sup>7</sup> found a massive 89% satisfaction; Canada<sup>8</sup> and Australia<sup>9</sup> were also higher at 83.9% and 82-83% respectively. It is however consistent with other surveys of British workers which reported between 50-60%.<sup>10</sup>

### Demographic breakdown

|                          | <b>Satisfied</b> | <b>Dissatisfied</b> | <b>Don't know</b> |
|--------------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Male</b>              | <b>65%</b>       | <b>31%</b>          | <b>4%</b>         |
| <b>Female</b>            | <b>62%</b>       | <b>32%</b>          | <b>6%</b>         |
| <b>Working full time</b> | <b>65%</b>       | <b>31%</b>          | <b>3%</b>         |
| <b>Working part time</b> | <b>59%</b>       | <b>32%</b>          | <b>9%</b>         |

<sup>5</sup> We preface the question with: "For the following question, by "job", we mean specifically the role or position you currently hold. By "career", we mean the broader profession that you have experience in, the skills that you use, and the positions that are available as you progress.

<sup>6</sup> 'The Social Report 2016', Ministry of Social Development (New Zealand), 2016. <http://socialreport.msd.govt.nz/paid-work/job-satisfaction.html>

<sup>7</sup> '2017 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: The Doors of Opportunity Are Open', Society for Human Resource Management, 2017. <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/research-and-surveys/pages/2017-job-satisfaction-and-engagement-doors-of-opportunity-are-open.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> 'Table 22-10-0111-01, Job satisfaction by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and regions (x 1,000)', Statistics Canada, 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=2210011101>

<sup>9</sup> 'Happy Workers: How satisfied are Australians at work?', Rebecca Cassells, Curtin University, 2017. <https://bcec.edu.au/assets/curtin-mwah-happy-workers-report-1.pdf> No overall figure is given, so this is male/female data (p10).

<sup>10</sup> 'Measures of National Well-being Dashboard', Office for National Statistics. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/measuresofnationalwellbeingdashboard/2018-04-25>  
A similar survey here: <https://www.amanet.org/training/articles/survey-shows-uk-job-satisfaction-and-commitment-on-the-decline.aspx>

|              | Satisfied  | Dissatisfied | Don't know |
|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| <b>ABC1</b>  | <b>67%</b> | <b>30%</b>   | <b>4%</b>  |
| <b>C2DE</b>  | <b>58%</b> | <b>35%</b>   | <b>6%</b>  |
|              |            |              |            |
| <b>18-24</b> | <b>64%</b> | <b>28%</b>   | <b>8%</b>  |
| <b>25-34</b> | <b>61%</b> | <b>37%</b>   | <b>2%</b>  |
| <b>35-44</b> | <b>63%</b> | <b>32%</b>   | <b>5%</b>  |
| <b>45-54</b> | <b>63%</b> | <b>32%</b>   | <b>5%</b>  |
| <b>55+</b>   | <b>68%</b> | <b>26%</b>   | <b>6%</b>  |

Career satisfaction and dissatisfaction is distributed comparably between genders. Dissatisfaction is distributed comparably between full-time and part-time workers, but part-time workers are notably less satisfied by 6 percentage points

Social grade exhibits disparities with ABC1s more satisfied and less dissatisfied than C2DEs. ABC1s report satisfaction levels at nine percentage points above C2DEs, suggesting that career satisfaction may have some relationship with income and profession.

The youngest (18-24) and oldest workers (55+) tend to be most satisfied, with 25-35 year olds the least satisfied and most dissatisfied.

## Meaningful careers: learning, pride and social purpose

Research has linked positive health benefits for those who are over 50 and engage in ‘meaningful work’,<sup>11</sup> so the survey explored the relationship between career satisfaction and three ‘meaningful’ aspects of a career. These were: learning in new things in the respondents’ career; a sense of pride in their career; and a career’s social purpose.

### Dissatisfieds

|  | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Don't know |
|--|-------|----------------------------|----------|------------|
| In my career I learn new things          | 44%   | 22%                        | 33%      | 1%         |
| I'm proud to tell people about my career | 28%   | 38%                        | 33%      | 1%         |
| My career has social purpose             | 40%   | 22%                        | 35%      | 3%         |

### Satisfieds

|  | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Don't know |
|--|-------|----------------------------|----------|------------|
| In my career I learn new things          | 85%   | 9%                         | 5%       | 0%         |
| I'm proud to tell people about my career | 78%   | 18%                        | 4%       | 0%         |
| My career has social purpose             | 65%   | 20%                        | 13%      | 2%         |

The survey shows dissatisfaction is associated with much lower rates of learning, pride and social purpose. Of these three factors, ‘pride’ is the least frequently agreed with (28%), suggesting that a lack of pride plays a key part in many people’s career dissatisfaction and may be more important than learning or social purpose. This would challenge the utility of training courses and increasing social impact as a simple solution to career dissatisfaction.

Social purpose is also notably lower in the Satisfieds (64%) compared to the other two factors. This could mean that social purpose plays a less significant part in career satisfaction or that fewer people in general feel their career has social purpose.

Overall, the survey demonstrates that job dissatisfaction is associated with a lack of ‘meaningful work’, defined by learning, pride and social purpose. In the context of the health benefits ascribed to meaningful work in older age, this invites the hypothesised that long-term career dissatisfaction could carry health risks for those 55 and over.

<sup>11</sup> 'Leading a meaningful life at older ages and its relationship with social engagement, prosperity, health, biology, and time use'. See above.

## Career change expectations over ten years

Now Teach’s mission is to empower experienced professionals who have become dissatisfied with their careers to successfully retrain as teachers. However, changing career in mid-to-later life is still not common. Only 180 over 55s began Initial Teacher Training in 2016, compared with 14,055 under 25s.<sup>12</sup>

The next part of the survey explored whether respondents believed they were likely to continue in the same career (by being in the same or a similar job to the one they have now) or if they would have changed career in ten years’ time (by working in a new job that is very different to their current role). The survey also gave options for retiring, other reasons and not knowing.

|   | Agree      | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree   |
|---|------------|----------------------------|------------|
| <b>Working in a new job that is very different to my current role</b>   | <b>19%</b> | <b>33%</b>                 | <b>13%</b> |
| <b>Don’t know</b>   | <b>15%</b> | <b>19%</b>                 | <b>11%</b> |
| <b>Not applicable - I think I will be retired in ten years’ time</b>  | <b>20%</b> | <b>17%</b>                 | <b>21%</b> |
| <b>Working in a new job that is similar to my current role</b>  | <b>23%</b> | <b>17%</b>                 | <b>28%</b> |
| <b>Working in the same job that I currently have</b>  | <b>19%</b> | <b>10%</b>                 | <b>25%</b> |
| <b>Not applicable - I think I won’t be working in ten years’ time (e.g. taking a career break for children, for health, unemployment, etc.)</b> | <b>4%</b>  | <b>4%</b>                  | <b>3%</b>  |

Despite their career dissatisfaction, only 33% of the Dissatisfied expect to change career by working in a new and very different job.<sup>13</sup> 27% of Dissatisfied think they’ll be doing the same or similar job in ten years; 19% don’t know where they’ll be in 10 years.<sup>14</sup> Now Teach is working to increase the proportion of people planning for and choosing to change career; success in this work would see these three groups decline from their combined total of 46%.

Of the Satisfied, 13% expect to change career, and the proportion with ‘same or similar’ job expectations is 53%. At 11%, ‘Don’t Know’ is notably lower here than with the Dissatisfied. As above, while the Satisfied have less motivation to change career, successfully raising its profile and creating career-change pathways would see these three groups growing smaller from their total of 64%.

While there is a much higher expectation of career change in the Dissatisfied compared with the Satisfied (33% vs 13%), the survey showed over a quarter of Dissatisfied people had no expectations of changing career (27%). This demonstrates the low profile that career change has in the working population, even for those who likely benefit from it most. In the context of the negative outcomes associated with a lack of meaningful work and low job satisfaction, the low likelihood of career change in the Dissatisfied likely presents a challenge to both workers and employers alike.

<sup>12</sup> Initial teacher training: trainee number census - 2017 to 2018, Department for Education, 2017. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/initial-teacher-training-trainee-number-census-2017-to-2018>

<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that Now Teach defines career change through the lens of positive and deliberate choice. However, the expectation of changing to a very different new job could also be based on an expectation of economic insecurity. Taking this into account, the possible negative impact of long-term dissatisfaction, the report assumes that moving to a very different job for the Dissatisfied is likely to be benign, at least in the medium- to short-term.

<sup>14</sup> For a similar reason as above, ‘Don’t Know’ will be treated as on-balance negative. It suggests career uncertainty and lack of knowledge about one’s career that is on-balance likely to result in the continuation of the status quo. For the Dissatisfied, this would be the continuation of a potentially negative career.

## Career change expectations over ten years - Dissatisfied by age group

### In ten years' time

|       | Working in a new job that is very different to my current role | Working in a new job that is similar to my current role | Working in the same job that I currently have |
|-------|--|---|---|
| 18-24 | 59%  | 16%   | 2%  |
| 25-34 | 46%  | 20%   | 9%  |
| 35-44 | 36%  | 26%   | 10%   |
| 45-54 | 26%  | 16%   | 14%   |
| 55+   | 5%   | 1%  | 7%  |

|       | Don't know | Not applicable - I think I will be retired in ten years' time | Not applicable - I think I won't be working in ten years' time <sup>15</sup> |
|-------|------------|---|--|
| 18-24 | 11%        | 4%  | 8%   |
| 25-34 | 20%        | 1%  | 3%   |
| 35-44 | 25%        | 3%  | 1%   |
| 45-54 | 23%        | 16%   | 4%   |
| 55+   | 9%         | 71%   | 7%   |

The survey data shows that expectations of career-change (working in a very different job) are highest with the Dissatisfied 18-24s and decline steeply as people grow older. This matches the current narrative that career-change is yet to be normalised with those in the latter stages of their career even when they are dissatisfied.

<sup>15</sup> (E.g. taking a career break for children, for health, unemployment, etc.)

Working in the same job peaks at 45-54; presumably because this group believes that they are in their final role before retirement. Retirement rates begin climbing in this group and reach 71% in the 55+ group. While the lack of grouping beyond 55+ prevents us from drawing finer conclusions in relation to retirement age, these responses are coherent with the widely shared norm that retirement will occur around 65 years old.

The survey data shows that expectations of career-change (working in a very different job) are highest with the Dissatisfied 18-24s and decline steeply as people grow older. This matches the current narrative that career-change is yet to be normalised with those in the latter stages of their career even when they are dissatisfied.

Career continuity (staying in the same or similar job) is highest in the 25-34, 35-44 and 45-54 groups at 29%, 36% and 31% respectively. However, 'Don't Know' is also higher in these groups too, showing there is still significant uncertainty at these ages about the future.

## Career change blockers

The survey then asked about the specific issues that people would consider blockers to career change. We asked:

**“Which, if any, of the following factors would potentially prevent you from changing your career?”**

|   | All Dissatisfied | All Satisfied |
|---|------------------|---------------|
| I would have concerns about earning less money                                  | 49%              | 42%           |
| The lack of experience in a different role                                      | 39%              | 29%           |
| Having to learn new professional skills   | 19%              | 17%           |
| Dealing with an unfamiliar workload   | 18%              | 16%           |
| Not applicable - no factors in particular would prevent me from changing career | 18%              | 24%           |
| The drop in seniority (e.g. a lower tier position)                              | 9%               | 14%           |
| Other   | 9%               | 7%            |
| The drop in status (e.g. reputation within the organisation)                    | 7%               | 11%           |
| Don't know  | 6%               | 6%            |
| The opinions of my friends and/or family  | 4%               | 5%            |

The blockers to career change were selected in similar proportions and priority between the Satisfied and Dissatisfied. The most frequently cited blocker to career-change is financial and followed by the pragmatic concern of lacking experience and the need to learn new skills.

The Satisfieds chose the blockers concerned with seniority and status – 14% and 11% respectively - in higher proportions to the Dissatisfieds (9% and 7%). Having already hypothesised that the Dissatisfieds are less likely to feel proud of their careers, this observation is consistent with the idea that fewer people in this group gain status from their career and fewer people have status to lose by changing career.

One of the more interesting aspects was that 24% of the Satisfieds saw ‘No Reason’ why they couldn’t change career, in contrast to 18% of the Dissatisfieds. Thus while dissatisfied people are more likely to want to change career, they are also more likely to report there are blockers.

The open text question ‘Other’ was also chosen at similar rates in both the Satisfied and Dissatisfied. While the survey does not link these responses to demographic factors, 50 responses included the terms ‘age’, ‘old’ or ‘retire’. Counter to the argument that we should be embracing work in later life, this demonstrates that age is also considered a blocker to career change.

### Blockers to career change - Dissatisfied by age

Breaking down the Dissatisfieds’ blockers to career change by age reveals patterns that complement those of the career-change expectations section above, notably in the decline of blocking factors as the respondents grow older. This presents the situation where the 55+ group report the lowest blockers to career-change but, as discussed above, have the lowest expectation of career change. This confirms the need to raise the profile and benefits of career-change with this group.

|  | All Dissatisfied | 18-24 | 25-34 | 35-44 | 45-54 | 55+ |
|--|------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| I would have concerns about earning less money     | 49%              | 42%   | 49%   | 49%   | 49%   | 49% |
| The lack of experience in a different role         | 39%              | 29%   | 49%   | 49%   | 49%   | 49% |
| Having to learn new professional skills            | 19%              | 17%   | 49%   | 49%   | 49%   | 49% |
| Dealing with an unfamiliar workload                | 18%              | 16%   | 49%   | 49%   | 49%   | 49% |
| The drop in seniority (e.g. a lower tier position) | 18%              | 24%   | 49%   | 49%   | 49%   | 49% |

|   | All Dissatisfied | 18-24      | 25-34      | 35-44      | 45-54      | 55+        |
|---|------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Other</b>  | <b>9%</b>        | <b>3%</b>  | <b>7%</b>  | <b>10%</b> | <b>10%</b> | <b>17%</b> |
| <b>The drop in status (e.g. reputation within the organisation)</b>                   | <b>7%</b>        | <b>4%</b>  | <b>7%</b>  | <b>10%</b> | <b>6%</b>  | <b>6%</b>  |
| <b>Don't know</b>   | <b>6%</b>        | <b>9%</b>  | <b>7%</b>  | <b>6%</b>  | <b>5%</b>  | <b>4%</b>  |
| <b>The opinions of my friends and/or family</b>                                       | <b>4%</b>        | <b>6%</b>  | <b>4%</b>  | <b>4%</b>  | <b>4%</b>  | <b>3%</b>  |
| <b>Not applicable. No factors in particular would prevent me from changing career</b> | <b>18%</b>       | <b>32%</b> | <b>12%</b> | <b>12%</b> | <b>21%</b> | <b>24%</b> |

As was observed in relation to the Satisfied and Dissatisfied above, relationships, status and seniority are less prevalent than the others. Financial concerns dominate, with practical concerns about unfamiliar work, the need to learn new skills and lack of experience coming next.

The proportion of people choosing each blocker generally declines as we move through the age groups (though the 18-24 group provides some outliers), making the 55+ the least concerned in many cases.

The biggest contrasts between the 55+ group and other groups can be seen in: concerns about money (16 percentage points lower than the 25-34 group); concerns about lack of experience (20 percentage points lower than the 25-34 group); and other concerns<sup>16</sup> (7 percentage points above 35-44 and 45-54).

Most important for the project of later-stage career change is that, for those with significant work experience, 'no blockers' peaks in the 55+ group. This is the group who are likely to be the most receptive to career change, if they can have their significant expectations of retirement changed.

<sup>16</sup> See above for the comment on 30% of 'Other' answers referring to age.

## Closing observations

### The need to make the case for later-stage career-change

The survey demonstrates a significant number of people working in Britain are simultaneously dissatisfied with their career and expect to continue in the same or similar job over the next ten years.

This is evidence of the need to raise the profile of career change and to provide people with the advice and pathways that would give them a clear alternative to staying in their current career. The long-term objective is that career-change becomes a normal part of people's working lives, enabling them to pursue new challenges as their priorities change.

The need to raise the profile of career-change is also demonstrated by the number of respondents answering 'Don't Know' to their likely work situation in ten years. While a degree of uncertainty is to be expected, there are particularly high levels in the Dissatisfieds (19%) compared to the Satisfieds (11%). Supporting the Dissatisfied 'Don't Know's to explore other options could result in more of them changing career.

The key blocker is financial: career-change is likely to result in a lower salary. While the other blockers about lack of experience and learning new skills can be mitigated through effective support and training, it is not realistic to expect career-changers to be awarded additional pay that is not available to others. Organisations looking to recruit career-changers, like Now Teach, must therefore make the pragmatic choice to target people who are likely to have the fewest blockers.

Focusing on the Dissatisfied as the group who are most likely to be responsive to career-change messages, it is clear that the older groups with the fewest blockers are likely to career-change. However, focusing on the 55+ group, we can see that the biggest blocker is in fact their low expectations of change and their high expectations of retirement. This therefore presents a challenge: in order to successfully recruit later-stage career changers, they must first be convinced that it is preferable to enter a new profession rather than to retire.

The task is therefore to raise the profile of the many positives that are associated with working beyond a set retirement age, and to change cultural expectations of retirement, so that the latter decades of life are not seen as a time to stop but a chance to move into a new stage.

### Changing expectations of retirement

The cultural work to change expectations around careers and retirement will likely take time. However, the survey suggest that expectations of retirement may already be changing. Our survey age breakdown stops at 55+, so we can make no granular observations beyond this point (see below for more on this). However, in answering the question related to career change in ten years' time, the entire 55+ group was making a prediction about what they would be doing when they were 65+.

The data shows that 72% of the total 55+ group expect to be retired in ten years; 16% thought they would still be working when the group would be 65+. In contrast, recent data that reports the

proportion of workers in Britain who are 65+ and currently working is 10.9%.<sup>17</sup>

While these are only predictions about the actual working status of this group in 2029, it is positive to see a five percentage point difference between current data and future projections. It suggests that an increasing number of people are expecting to work beyond 65, enabling them to continue to contribute to society and share their experience with others.

### **A note on survey age groups**

As the section above noted, YouGov's Omnibus survey breaks down age groups in ten year increments with the exception of young people (18-24) and older people (55+). While this is commonplace and YouGov do provide a 50+ Omnibus survey with five-year breaks, this survey highlights how such a practice is unhelpful for organisations looking to better understand our ageing population. It is also a symptom of a cultural attitude that treats people above a certain age as a uniform group. While there may be a statistical rationale, in the context of an increasingly long-lived society the practice is a blocker to understanding.

As has been referred to throughout this paper, increased longevity means older people are remaining economically active and physically healthy for longer. From this perspective, the idea that a 55 year-old can be included in the same group as an 85 year-old is problematic in terms of both methodology and in the attitudes to older age that implies.

For the purposes of this survey and no doubt other research into our ageing population, significant insight could have been gained by further breakdowns that could have explored responses from a 65+ group. Adding demographic age breaks beyond 55+ should be one aspect of the cultural change that will occur as our ageing population is normalised and their productive activity continues beyond current expectations of retirement.

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<sup>17</sup> ONS; Employment, unemployment and economic inactivity by age group (not seasonally adjusted); <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/employmentunemploymentandeconomicinactivitybyagegroupnotseasonallyadjusted05nsa>

## Methodology

Questions were prepared with the objective of exploring respondents' degree of satisfaction with both their job and their career, their attitudes to their career and their career expectations over the next ten years.

**We used both 'job' and 'career' to create a clear distinction, using this definition below:**

For the following question, by "job", we mean specifically the role or position you currently hold. By "career", we mean the broader profession that you have experience in, the skills that you use, and the positions that are available as you progress.

### Questions addressed the following topics:

- respondents' job and career satisfaction
- whether they agreed with statements that: they learned new things in their career, were proud to tell others about their careers and if their career had a social purpose
- what they thought they would be doing in their career in ten years' time: the same job; a new but similar job; a job that was very different to their current role; don't know; not working; or retired
- what would prevent them from changing career
- if they had or were considering changing career to teaching.

*All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 4205 adults, of which 2,291 were workers. Fieldwork was undertaken between 14th - 18th February 2019. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).*