



# A STEP AHEAD: KEY MOTIVATORS FOR RECAREERING

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As people are living longer, the opportunity to have more than one career in their lifetime may increase over time. Reasons vary as to why people change careers or pursue new ones. Some may desire a new career that brings in more pay, higher status, or increased responsibility while others are required to pursue additional training or education, learn new skills, or hone existing ones.

Among those who participated in the study (n=2,632, ages 35+), 78% reported that they recareered at least once in their life. One in five (22%) have never had more than one career.

A factor analysis revealed two primary reasons for recareering: to retrain or to maximize.<sup>1</sup> If any relationships existed between response options selected then they were grouped together. The reasons people recareered (changing their careers one or more times) could be viewed in two ways: to *retrain* or to *maximize*. Reasons related to *retraining* involved career requirements that necessitated learning new skills, going back to school or receiving some other formal training, and/or required moving from one work sector or industry into a new sector/industry. Reasons related to *maximizing* were defined as moving into a career to seek a significant increase in factors such as pay, employment status, and flexibility.

<sup>1</sup>Based on the following survey question: Thinking about the [time/first time/second time/third time/fourth time/fifth time] that you changed careers, how was your new career different from your previous career?

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Two comparable scales (one related to retraining and one related to maximizing) were devised to create a two-component recareering index. This index provides insight on the reasons people make career moves and at what ages or points of the working life they do so. In addition, the index was developed to better understand the reasons why people change careers. For each career change, respondents were asked to indicate the relevant reasons for recareering. Two separate 4-point scales (4 being high and 1 being low) were used to indicate the number of items selected related to retraining, and the number of items selected related to maximizing, for changing careers. The scores of these two scales show whether retraining or maximizing is of relative importance during each career change.

Results showed that the mean age gradually increased with each career change (see Table 1). For those who experienced at least one career change, the mean age was 31. The mean age jumped by five years for the second career change and then gradually increased with each subsequent career change. Unsurprisingly, by the fourth career change, the average age was 41.

Table 1. Career Change: Age, Reasons for Recareering – *Retraining* and *Maximizing*\*

Career change	Percent	Mean Age	Retraining reasons**	Maximizing reasons***
1st (n=2,041)	78%	31	3.1	2.6
2nd (n=644)	25%	36	2.7	2.4
3rd (n=396)	15%	40	2.5	2.4
4th (n=148)	6%	41	2.1	1.6

\*Reasons for career changes were only asked up to the fifth career change, however due to a low base, results for a fifth career change are not reported.

\*\* Retraining scale based on the following items: New career meant a change in the type of work I performed, new career required me to learn new skills, new career required me to go back to school or have some other formal training, new career required me to work in a different sector or industry.

\*\*\* Maximizing scale based on the following items: New career meant more pay, new career gave me a higher employment status, new career meant more responsibility, new career meant more flexibility.

First and second career changes, given the low average ages and high retraining scale scores, suggests that the earliest recareerings involve the need to learn new skills, go back to school, or to shift work sectors/industries. Retraining rationales gradually decreased for third and fourth career changes.

Somewhat similarly, rationales for recareering *related to maximizing* — i.e., pay, status, flexibility — were higher in the first career changes — relative to *maximizing* scores in the subsequent career changes. The drive for higher pay and status declined during the second career change, leveled off, and then dropped during the fourth career change.

Although retraining as the reason for a career change may decrease with age and be less frequent, people are continuing to learn new skills or hone existing ones for the purposes of career advancement or change — which shows the importance of providing opportunities for those ages 40 and older to stay current with the changing needs of today's workforce.

Workers are faced with different life experiences that take them on one, a few, or numerous career journeys. And through those experiences, they make choices in whether they want to be *one step ahead* — taking advantage of educational opportunities or trainings or climbing the career ladder.



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