

## Americans are hit hard by the recession

The rise in unemployment is just one of the employment fallouts of the economic downturn. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the current unemployment rate stands at 9.4% (December 2010), but our survey found that the negative employment impacts of the recent recession extended beyond unemployment for Americans. Twenty percent (20%) of those surveyed indicated that they had experienced a negative change to their employment status.

Given the extent of the employment impact on the American information consumer, we wanted to better understand the differences in attitudes, behaviors and perceptions, if any, that may exist between Americans whose employment was negatively impacted by the recent recession and those who had not experienced a job impact. We explored how a change in employment influences or impacts information use. We also studied how economically impacted Americans have changed their use, perceptions and attitudes about the library.

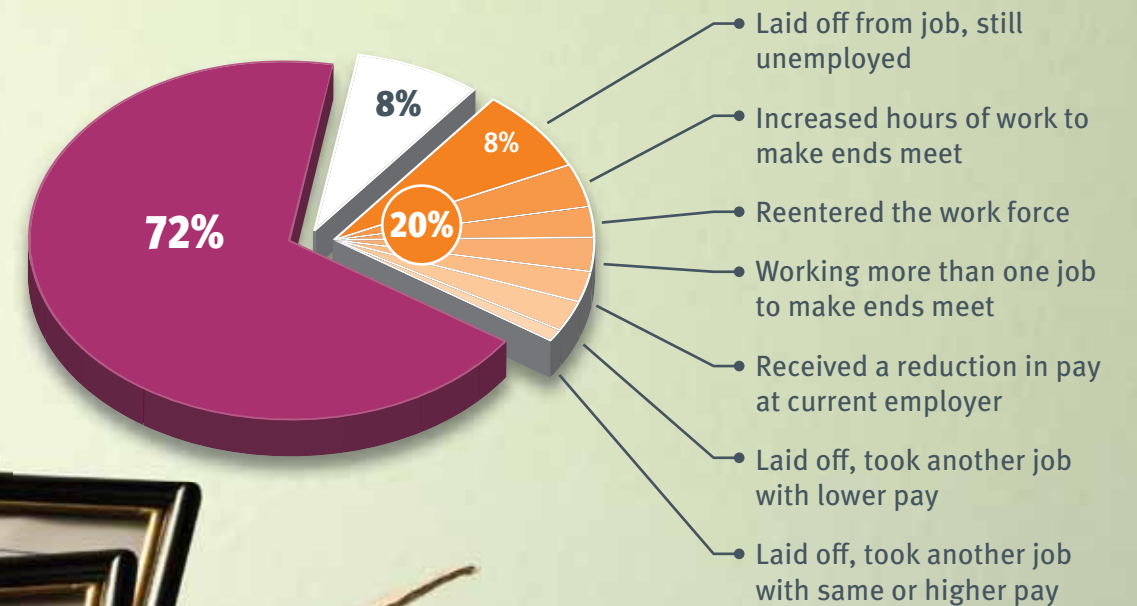
## The economically impacted American

Survey data find 20% of Americans have had a negative employment impact—more than double the current unemployment rate. In this report, we define “economically impacted” as those Americans whose personal employment status has been adversely affected by the current economic environment, either from a job loss, a reduction in the hours employed, employment or reemployment at a lower wage, or taking on more than one job or additional hours to make ends meet. (The graphic on page 21 details the changes in job status that define “economically impacted.”)

Unemployment represents less than half of the job impact of the recent recession.

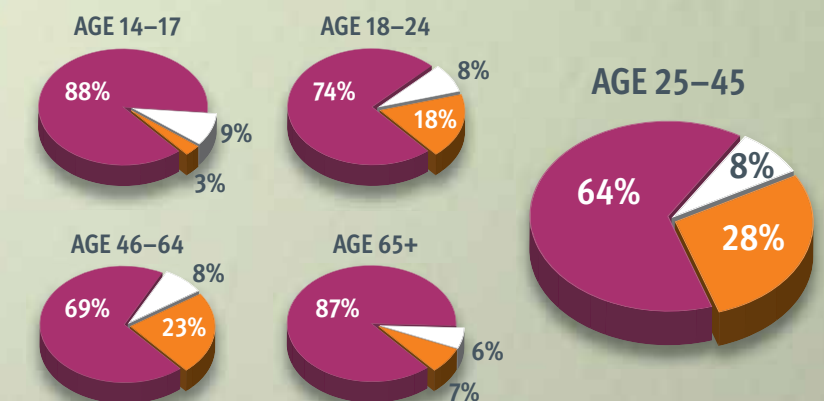
## 20% of Americans—twice the unemployment rate—have been economically impacted

■ ECONOMICALLY IMPACTED ■ NOT IMPACTED ■ OTHER



## 25–45-year-olds are most impacted

**28%** of adults ages 25–45 have had a negative job impact.



### A third of American families are impacted

Our survey also found that a significant number of the respondents, while not personally experiencing a change in job status, had immediate family members who had been impacted. If we combine the numbers of directly impacted respondents with those who were not economically impacted but had an immediate family member who was impacted, we find that over a third of all American families have likely experienced some negative job impact during the recent recession.

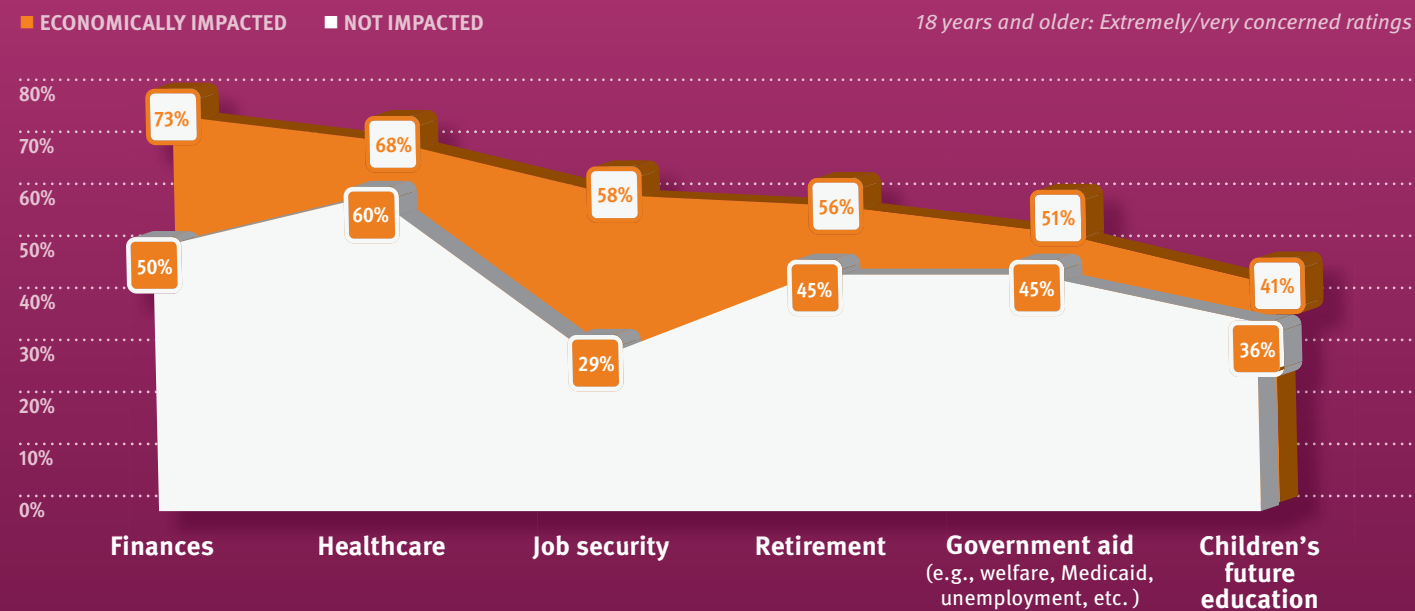
While we define “economically impacted” respondents in the balance of this report as respondents who were personally impacted, it is worth noting that the outcomes and attitudes that we report for the economically impacted segment of Americans may logically apply to an even broader household view.

### Americans are concerned

Respondents, both directly impacted and those who have not experienced a job impact, shared similar concerns about their current livelihoods and future prosperity. Adults over age 18 were asked about their current attitudes toward finances, healthcare,

**Over a third of American families have experienced negative employment effects.**

### Americans are concerned about the future

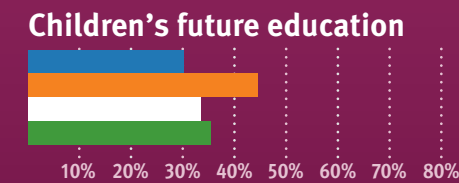
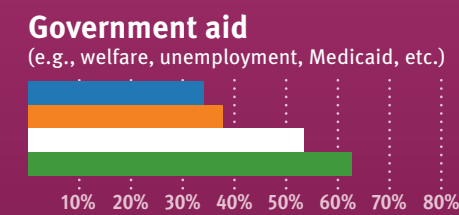
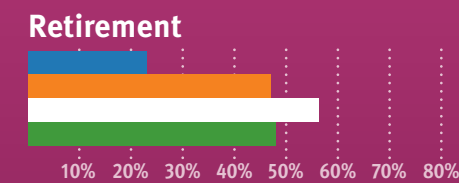
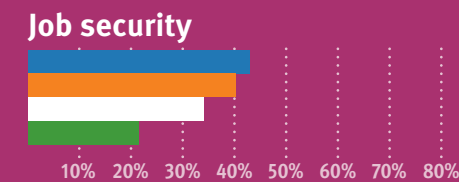
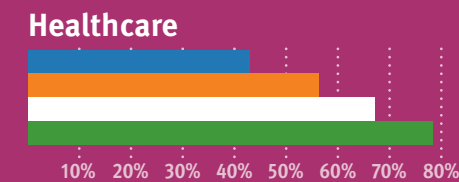
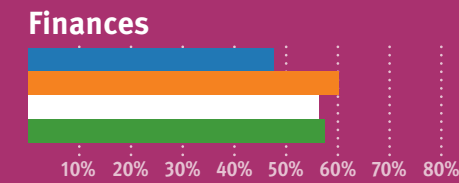


### Concerns related to the recession:

- Job security for young adults
- Healthcare, government aid and retirement for the mature
- Finances for all

Extremely/very concerned ratings

AGE 18-24 AGE 25-45 AGE 46-64 AGE 65+



jobs, retirement, government aid and their children’s education. Those impacted and those with no job impact are almost equally concerned about healthcare, the state of government aid (e.g., welfare, unemployment, Medicaid, etc.), and about funding their children’s education. Healthcare is the highest concern (60%) for Americans not economically impacted. As expected, the largest differences are in the areas of job security and finances. While more than half (58%) of economically impacted Americans are concerned about job security, just 29% of those who had not experienced a change in job status are extremely or very concerned about job security. Seventy-three percent (73%) of the economically impacted are concerned about finances compared to 50% of those not impacted by the economy. This was the highest concern for the economically impacted.

Differences by age groups were also identified. Young adults, under age 25, are less concerned about finances than older Americans, but showed greater concern over job security, with more than 40% of younger Americans extremely or very concerned about jobs. Healthcare concerns increased with age as expected, but younger Americans are also concerned. Forty-two percent (42%) of younger adults have concerns about healthcare.

Concern about finances is more strongly expressed by Americans age 25 and older. Overall, 50 to 60% of Americans over age 24 are concerned about their finances. Similar patterns hold for this age group related to retirement concerns. About half of adults age 25 or older are concerned about retirement, with the 46–64-year-olds most concerned. Government aid concerns are expressed by all age groups, but concerns grow significantly for Americans over age 45.

### More economically impacted Americans are online

Our survey data show that compared to those not impacted by the economy, impacted Americans are more likely to use a broader set of online resources. Social networking, online research, banking and bill paying are online activities the economically impacted are engaging in more extensively. Eighty percent (80%) of respondents who have had a job impact are engaged in social networking, compared to 64% of those not impacted. Seventy percent (70%)



# Economically impacted Americans use library services more frequently

Monthly activities among library users



## What are economically impacted Americans doing online?

They are more likely to engage in...

- ✓ Social networking 80%
- ✓ Research 74%
- ✓ Banking 73%
- ✓ Bill paying 70%
- ✓ Seeking career information 51%
- ✓ Completing job applications 41%
- ✓ Visiting library Web site 38%
- ✓ Applying for unemployment 28%
- ✓ Seeking public assistance information 21%

...compared to those not impacted.

- ✓ Social networking 64%
- ✓ Research 61%
- ✓ Banking 60%
- ✓ Bill paying 56%
- ✓ Visiting library Web site 32%
- ✓ Seeking career information 17%

or more of economically impacted Americans are doing research, banking and bill paying online compared to roughly 60% of those with no job impact.

As expected, the most significant differences in online activities between the economically impacted and nonimpacted are related to seeking career information (51% vs. 17%), completing job applications (41% vs. 12%), applying for unemployment (28% vs. 3%) and seeking public assistance information (21% vs. 7%).

Economically impacted Americans are also using the library more, both online and in person.

## Economically impacted Americans are using the library more—and at greater rates

The differences in information consumption habits of Americans impacted by the economy extend to the use of information at the library. Those who have experienced a job impact are more likely to have a library card. Eighty-one percent (81%) of economically impacted Americans have a library card compared to 68% for Americans who have not been impacted.

Economically impacted Americans are 50% more likely to visit their library at least weekly (18% vs. 12%) and are nearly a third more likely to visit at least once a month (36% vs. 27%).

While at the library, those who have been economically impacted are more likely to use a broader range of services and are more likely to use those resources more frequently. Borrowing books and leisure reading are the top activities for all library users; but the economically impacted report a greater level of use, with a third borrowing books monthly. Borrowing DVDs and videos is an activity that 20% of economically impacted library users do monthly; twice the rate of those not impacted (11%).

Economically impacted Americans are making adjustments to their lifestyles and to their consumer-spending habits. The adjustments and how the library is filling the gap for these Americans is the focus of the next chapter.