

Career Stability and Control are Driving Education Decisions, New Research Shows

U.S. Career Institute survey finds more Americans are pursuing or recommending nontraditional education pathways for long-term career stability.

FORT COLLINS, CO, UNITED STATES, July 22, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Earning a four-year degree has been widely accepted as the clearest path to [career stability](#) — until recently. New research commissioned by U.S. Career Institute shows a shift in priority and perception regarding educational pathways to a stable career. Data shows that many Americans are increasingly embracing a broader view, one that includes [skills-based learning](#) and alternative educational pathways alongside traditional higher education.

Among U.S. adults ages 18 to 54, 53% say job stability is the most important factor influencing career decisions. At the same time, 54% say they have either completed a certificate or skills-based program or seriously considered pursuing one, signaling growing openness to educational pathways beyond the traditional four-year degree.

The findings suggest individuals are becoming more focused on career outcomes and long-term stability than any single educational route. While a four-year degree remains an important pathway for many professions, Americans appear increasingly willing to consider alternative options that align with their goals, circumstances, and desired career advancement.

"The time commitment and cost of a 4-year degree was previously justified by the promise of stable employment. Predictions about AI can make it seem like no job is safe, but this isn't the case. The roles threatened are primarily those requiring these degrees. Now, many people are finding that skills-based programs are a faster and cheaper route to stable careers that are safe from disruption." - Thomas Weston, Chief Strategy Officer for U.S. Career Institute.

The findings arrive as workers navigate evolving workforce demands, rising education costs, and changing career expectations. Rather than moving away from education, many appear to be broadening their view of what education can look like and which credentials can help them achieve long-term career stability.

This research supports U.S. Career Institute's ongoing effort to better understand how workforce trends, economic pressures, and evolving career expectations are shaping educational decision-making among working adults.

The full report, "Why [Career Control](#) Is the New Credential," is available in U.S. Career Institute's Career Intelligence Center. For media inquiries or to discuss with a U.S. Career Institute's spokesperson about the findings, workforce trends, and evolving attitudes toward education and career planning, please contact our PR Specialist Alex Brown at alexandriab@uscareerinstitute.edu.

About U.S. Career Institute

U.S. Career Institute is a trusted distance education provider, helping students achieve their educational and career goals for more than 45 years. U.S. Career Institute is accredited by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC) and provides in-demand career training certificates, high school, and associate degree programs. Its high school program is also dually accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Elementary and Secondary Schools (MSA-CESS). U.S. Career Institute is approved by the Colorado Department of Higher Education, Private Occupational School Board. To maintain these credentials and ensure high standards and outcomes for students, U.S. Career Institute's curriculum, faculty, administrative procedures, and policies are frequently reviewed and updated. For more information on U.S. Career Institute, please visit www.uscareerinstitute.edu.

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