

4/1/2009



RED  
DOORS

## HOW PEOPLE MAKE CAREER CHOICES



Survey Results | [www.red-doors.com](http://www.red-doors.com)

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## Introduction

Red Doors undertook a survey to gain a better understanding of the processes people have used to find their career. Our belief was that only a minority of adults actually planned their careers, while luck or “being in the right place” is often the norm. We also wanted to capture lessons learned and career advice for the younger generation.

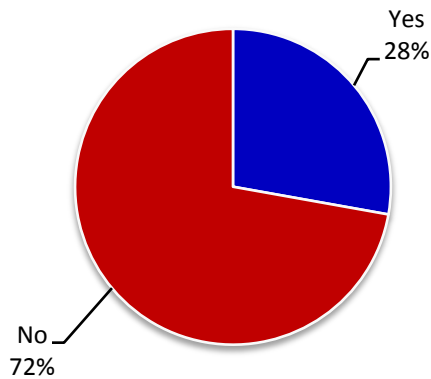
The survey was sent out on February 1, 2009 and a total of 387 responses were received as of March 31, 2009. The following provides a summary of the survey results.

## What did you want to be when you grew up?

The majority of respondents did not know what they wanted to be when they grew up. This was followed closely by people interested in becoming teachers, writers, singers, doctors, nurses, scientists, engineers, astronauts, pilots and lawyer and veterinarians. The following table provides the listing of occupations by cluster as well as the most popular jobs mentioned in the survey.

Occupational Cluster	Most Popular Occupations	Percent of Total
Don't Know	Don't Know	17.3%
Education and Training	Teacher, Librarian	12.9%
Arts, A/V Technology and Communication	Writer, Singer, Journalist, Musician, Dancer	11.9%
Health Science	Doctor, Nurse	10.6%
Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics	Scientist, Engineer, Astronaut	7.8%
Transportation, Distribution & Logistics	Pilot, Air Host	7.2%
Law, Public Safety and Security	Lawyer, Police, Military	7.0%
Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources	Vet, Horse Trainer, Farmer	6.2%
Business Management and Administration	Executive, Office Worker, Administration	4.1%
Human Services	Hair Dressor, Priest, Social Services	4.1%
Finance	Accountant, Banker	2.6%
Professional Athlete	Hockey, Golf, Cricket, Basketball, Baseball	2.6%
Marketing, Sales and Service	Entrepreneur	1.8%
Architecture and Construction	Architect, Builder, Land Surveyor	1.6%
Hospitality and Tourism	Tour Guide, Hotelier, Sales, PR	1.6%
Governmental & Public Administration	Diplomat, Prime Minister	0.8%
		100.0%

**Are you doing this now?**



If yes, what steps did you take to make this a reality?

- Further education and training
- Apprenticeship
- Broad experience and left options open
- Flexibility and openness
- Followed my dream and persevered
- Life Long Learning
- Made it a priority
- Maintained flexibility
- Obtained the necessary training
- Set a plan and worked towards it

**If no, why not?**

The most frequent reason cited for individuals not pursuing their career dream was people finding other interests along the way, circumstances did not allow (usually monetary), job experience showed this was not the right job and being discouraged by family or others.

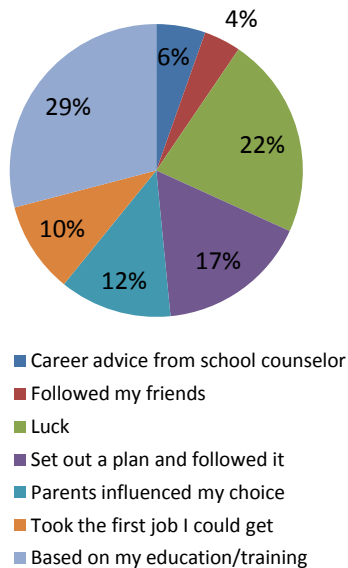
Found other interests along the way	33.3%
Circumstances did not allow	21.0%
Job experience showed this was not the job for me	9.6%
Discouraged by family or others	9.6%
Did not have the natural talent	8.7%
Physical limitations	5.5%
Limited job opportunities at the time	5.0%
Did not persevere	4.6%
Lacked the grades	2.7%
	100.0%

Some comments received from survey participants included:

- Changed my mind
- Cost of education too high
- Did not have the guidance to support me
- Lacked the grades to pursue further education
- Parents were not supportive
- Realized I had no passion for it
- Shifting priorities as I got older
- Did not have the right information and thought I couldn't do it

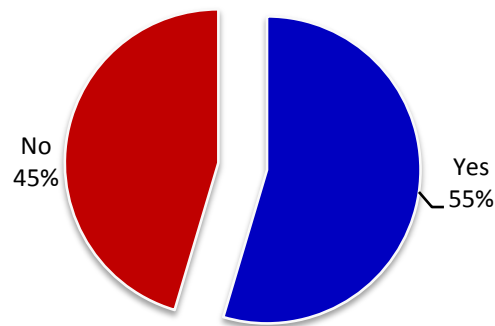
## How did you select your eventual career?

A total 516 responses were received in answer to this question. This supports the notion that there are multiple influences in people's ultimate career choice. The top cited response to how individuals selected their eventual career was based on their education and training (29%), followed by luck (22%) and setting a plan and following it (17%).



## Knowing what you know now, if you could "do it all again" in terms of selecting a career path would you do anything differently?

*"I wish that I had more information about careers and that someone had spoken to me about jobs and careers in coordination with my education"*



## If yes, what would you do differently?

The most frequent responses to this question were to explore options, opportunities and get more information (38.6%), follow my dream (18.7%) and get more education/training and build my skills (18.1%).

Explore options, opportunities and get more information	38.6%
Follow my dream	18.7%
Get more education/training, build my skills	18.1%
Understand my strengths and interests	12.9%
Stay focused	7.6%
Focus on my studies	3.5%
Look after my health	0.6%
	100.0%

Some insightful comments provided by respondents are listed below.

- I just wished I figured out what I wanted to do in my life at a much earlier age
- Be brave
- Explore more options
- Find ways to relax and enjoy non-work or career related activities
- Focus on what I have passion for
- Furthered my education
- Get international exposure early in my career
- More planning and thinking
- Not take the first job that came along
- Obtain more education
- Research more career options
- Researched the viability of the industry
- Seek advice earlier
- Understand myself much better first and get help to select suitable career path

**If no, what did you do that supported your success and satisfaction?**

The following comments were provided by respondents in answer to what they did that led to their success and personal satisfaction.

- Commitment to continuous learning
- Decided to do what I was good at
- Did something I loved
- Followed my passion
- Had a very supportive spouse
- Hard work
- Kept an open mind and was optimistic, positive and enthusiastic
- Moved overseas which added an international dimension and broadened career

- Reflected on and evaluated my progress
- Set clear goals and followed plan
- Took risks
- Was very flexible and took opportunities as they came along
- Wide variety of job experiences
- Maintained a good work life balance

**Advice for Youth**

**If you could provide any advice to youth relating to jobs and career what would it be?**

The top category of advice provided by the respondents was for individuals to get a better understanding of their interests, skills, strengths and life style expectations (51.3%), followed by the importance of networking and work experience (14.0%) and further education (13.6%).

Understand your interests, skills, strengths and life style expectations	51.3%
Network and get real work experience	14.0%
Get more education/training and build your skills	13.6%
Be open to opportunities	9.6%
Study hard and work hard	5.7%
Be positive and optimistic	4.8%
Be balanced in your approach to work	0.9%
	100.0%

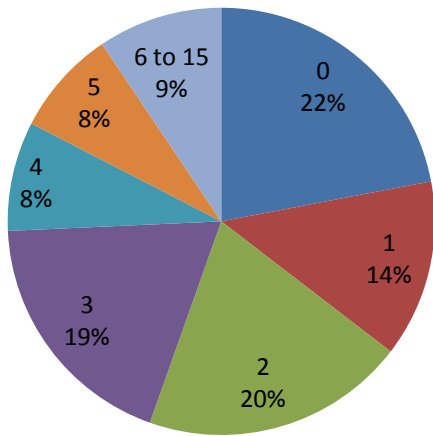
The following provides a sample of advice from the survey respondents.

- Trust your instincts
- Do all you can to become self-aware...learn a psychometric system to understand your personal preferences, be able to pinpoint "what you love" and why you love it....do this early!
- Do not be afraid to strive for a job in an unconventional field if that is the goal that you wish to pursue.
- Focus on a job that seems TRULY interesting to you. You're possibly going to be doing it for a relatively long time.
- Take your time because if you make the wrong career decision, you'll be unhappy for a long time.
- Get as much education as you possibly can and then follow your dream.
- Ask questions, find out about as many possibilities as possible for potential career paths.
- Don't be afraid to study what interests you, even if it's not a solid career field like business, etc.
- Find out what the options are, but find out specifics about the fields. The idea of something is often very different from what you would actually be doing.
- Take the time to figure out what you enjoy most, what you excel at, and how you would envision your life in the future.
- Find your passion and think about the kind of life you want to lead. Money is nice, but it isn't everything. Use your talents to make the world better.
- Talk to people in the fields you are interested in. Find out the downside of each career.
- Connect with what you are passionate about. Know yourself. Get your values straight.
- Understand what makes you unique and what gifts you have. Young people can get a sense of what their purpose is in life. Build ideas from there.
- Spend some time and get to know yourself first. Select your education and your job based on what you enjoy and what you are good at.
- Understand that you have a better and longer-term chance of success if you follow what you want to do, rather than getting a job just for the money or security
- Find out what you are good at and discover arenas in which you can be optimally successful. Have as broad an education as possible to keep open as many career choices as possible.
- Most of all, make sure you do what you enjoy doing. The money will follow.

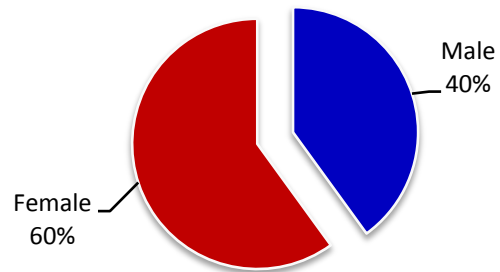
## Demographics of the Survey Respondents

### In your working life, how many career changes have you had so far?

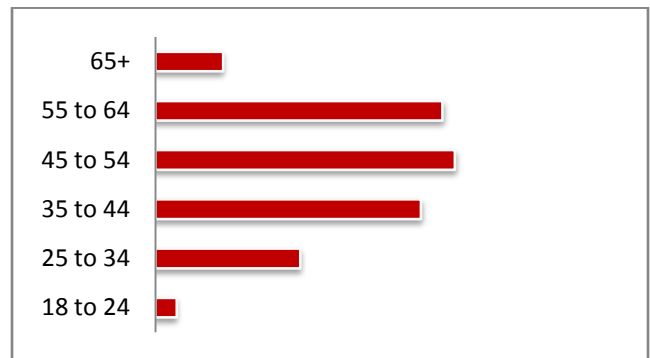
The majority of participants had remained with their original career choice (22%), followed by two major career changes (20%) and three changes (19%). The number of career changes ranged from a low of 0 to a high of 15.



### Gender



### Age Range



### Job Satisfaction

The majority of the respondents to the survey were happy with their overall career choice with 65 percent of the respondents ranking their satisfaction level at 8 or higher.