

People protection: Insights on empowering an agile workforce

Executive summary





Introduction

Zurich Insurance Group and the Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment at the University of Oxford are **responding to the increasing need for agile protection of a fast-changing workforce.**

This is flexible insurance and associated worker protection which is provided by multiple stakeholders and tailored to individual career trajectories, addressing various transition points in working lives.

To help provide vital insights, we designed a large online survey of the working-age population in 16 countries across Europe, Asia Pacific, North America, and Latin America, with responses from nearly 18,000 individuals. The results provided us with **fascinating insights at both the country and global level.** Preliminary observations were first presented in June 2019 ([Perceptions on Protection: Surveying Workers to Build New Agile Solutions.](#))

In today's report, we take a more comprehensive look at the results of the survey and analyzed **what they mean for stakeholders – including individuals, employers, policymakers and insurers.**



Recapping the findings

We begin the analysis of the study by looking at which workers are embracing change and taking action to shape their career paths. Strikingly, **nearly a fifth of respondents had plans to leave their current job in the next 12 months to become a freelancer**. Their motivations included a desire for flexibility and autonomy. On attitudes to retraining and reskilling - **people who felt they had control in their daily work routine were 25% more willing undertake skills training during their leisure time**. In other words, if people feel empowered to be flexible in their jobs, they are more likely to remain so throughout their careers. With retraining and reskilling likely to be an important issue for an evolving workforce, this is a significant finding.

We then consider some noteworthy and often surprising results on workers' anxieties and responses to the Fourth Industrial Revolution. **Nearly a third were revealed to be at least relatively worried that automation will lead to them losing their job within five years**. However, those who were concerned weren't necessarily those most at risk. Meanwhile, concerned workers were more willing to move abroad for a job and more likely to become freelancers, but **no more likely than others to undertake skills training to address their anxieties**.

Turning to financial concerns, we then discover that **funding for retirement has replaced monthly bills as the number one issue**. Whilst older workers unsurprisingly showed the highest focus retirement, nearly a third of 20-somethings cited it as their greatest financial worry.

Finally, despite the concerns and uncertainties respondents raised above, **36% of respondents had no personal insurance such as pension, life or income protection insurance**. **More vulnerable workers also appear to have less protection**. Those in routine jobs, for example, are at much greater risk of restructuring or elimination due to advances in automation, but workers in these occupations did not appear to be aware of this, were doing less to adapt their careers; and were less likely to take measures to protect themselves against financial risks.

Next steps

This report, and the survey on which it was based, has given us a **wealth of insight** into individual workers' attitudes towards a changing world of work and their place in it. The next step in this project will be to conduct research into **employers' perspectives** on these and related issues. In the final phase of the project, we will put forward **recommendations to governments, employers, insurers, and other financial institutions and intermediaries**, as well as **individuals and households**.

[To read the full report please click here >](#)

What does this mean for stakeholders?

As self-employment increases, we need to find solutions for these workers that do not place an excessive bulk of the protection risks **on the individual**. There are opportunities for **insurers** and **Governments** to play a prominent role.

Businesses must note and take action on the finding that, granting employees **greater autonomy** over their shorter-term workloads appears to translate to greater productivity, agility and loyalty, as well as better health outcomes.

This study supports the evidence of a **growing skills shortage**, which requires adult education and training systems that cater to all levels of the workforce throughout increasingly non-traditional career paths. Given the lack of appetite from those more at risk from job loss, incentives by **both employers and governments** should be considered.

While issues such as funding for retirement are becoming an increasing concern, it is less clear that individuals – particularly those most at risk - have the **knowledge and resource** to address them adequately. This requires focus from **policy makers, businesses and insurers**.

The study reinforces that **experience is the greatest driver towards positive behavioral change**. **Governments, employers, and insurers** need to find ways to replicate the wisdom of experience when educating people about the risks they face, and the measures they can take to mitigate them.

Employers and policymakers may wish to consider how to **assuage potentially inflated fears** about the threat of technology to jobs.

That **older workers are substantially less willing to undertake skills training** than those in their 20s and 30s may pose a challenge as the nature of work continues to evolve and pension ages rise. **Businesses and policymakers** may wish to address this issue either individually or in collaboration.

Zurich Insurance Company Ltd
Austrasse 46, 8045 Zürich, Switzerland

173006247 (10/19) TCL

