



# **branch** REPORT 2021

A look at the financial, work, and lifestyle  
interests of today's hourly workers.



# **branch** REPORT 2021

03	Introduction
04	Return to Work
07	Finances
09	Lifestyle
10	About Branch
11	Appendix

## Methodology

The survey was conducted through the Branch app in July 2021 featuring more than 3,000 responses from hourly employees across industries ranging from retail, food service, to healthcare. Participation in this survey was completely voluntary and all responses were anonymized.

Survey questions were authored by Branch. For more information or questions, please contact [research@branchapp.com](mailto:research@branchapp.com)



## Intro

We first started this report in 2019 during a tight labor market, with the demand for hourly employees reaching all-time highs. And even though a lot has changed since then, the demand and importance of hourly workers has only continued to grow. Amidst an evolving pandemic, hourly workers have navigated and responded to challenges in real-time, becoming essential to every business. As the economy recovers and businesses renew hiring efforts, employers have started to respond to these needs and concerns — from raising wages to creating new perks. But what will truly resonate with workers? That's why we continue to take a holistic look at the lives of hourly workers and understand how their needs and preferences evolve.

The Branch Report takes a look at the financial, work, and lifestyle interests of today's hourly workers. Surveying over 3,000 hourly employees across a variety of sectors including retail, restaurants, and healthcare, the report evaluates what this demographic values in their financial, professional, and personal lives. We hope these findings shed light on the deskless workforce and expand your understanding of today's hourly worker.

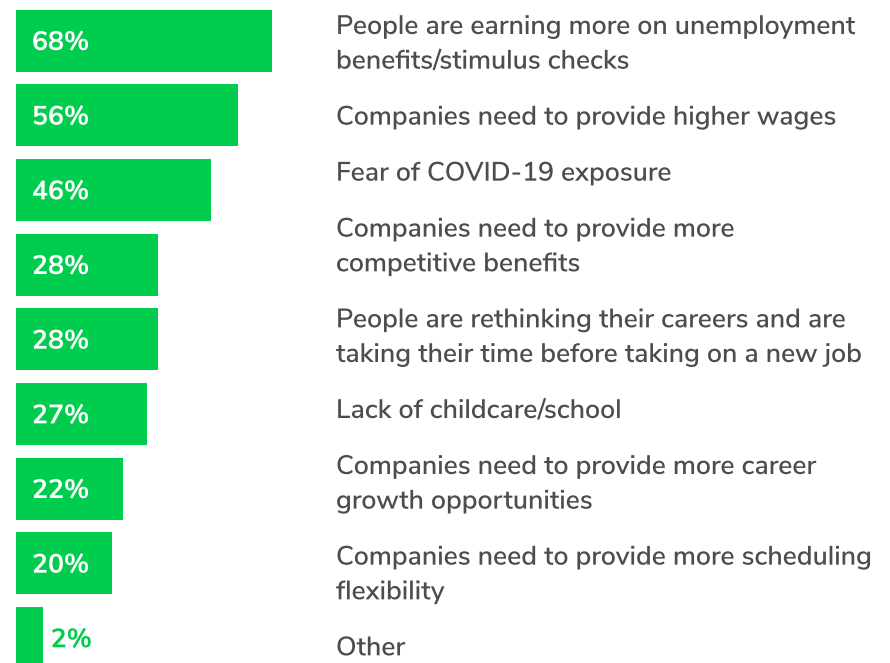
# Return to Work

## Workers Seek Higher Wages, Career Mobility and Stability

As employers struggle to fill jobs, about 60 percent of respondents believe that companies are having a hard time hiring workers, while 15 percent believe the difficulty is only in certain regions and industries.

**The cause?** The need for higher wages: More than two-thirds (68%) believe that people are earning more on unemployment benefits and stimulus checks and that companies need to provide higher wages (59%). They also believe that fear of COVID-19 exposure is also a major factor for this difficulty in hiring (46%):

### What do you think are the primary causes of this difficulty in hiring?

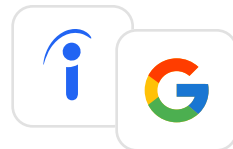
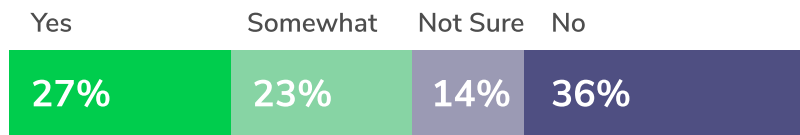




## Working More

But unemployment benefits and stimulus checks have not greatly impacted how much today's hourly workers are working—71 percent are working about the same and another 11 percent are even working more. Only 7 percent are working less or using the checks to take time off to look for a new job.

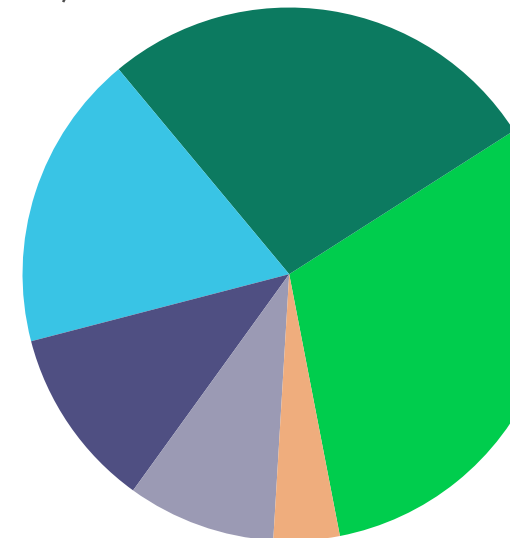
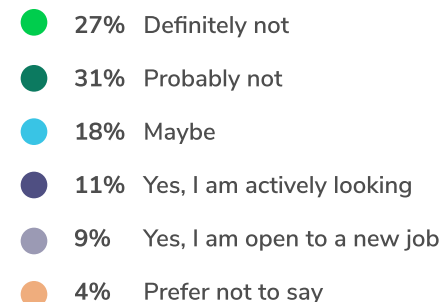
Do you feel like you have more job opportunities now than before the pandemic?



## ... And More Likely to Stay Put

The majority of respondents (58%) don't plan on switching jobs in the next six months. About a quarter are open to switching but not actively looking (27%), and only 11 percent are actively looking. If they were to switch, the biggest motivator would be higher wages (64%), with the option to work from home a distant second (15%).

Do you plan on switching jobs in the next 6 months?



When workers are ready to switch jobs, their top resources for finding new positions remain Indeed (50%) and Google (23%). Friends/word of mouth rounded out the top three (8%).

## In Search of a ~~New Job~~ Raise

But while they may be staying put, they're still seeking higher wages in their current positions. When asked about what they want out of their current workplace, 69 percent cited higher wages followed by greater support and predictability at work. Scheduling predictability (51%) and flexibility (41%) along with a positive work culture (45%) and supportive managers (31%) were among their top workplace priorities.



When it comes to longer term career goals, beyond higher pay, one in five hourly workers (21%) wanted to earn a promotion, followed by work/life balance and flexibility (16%).

---

### TOP 5 CAREER GOALS

- 34% Higher Pay
  - 21% Promotion at This Employer
  - 16% Work/Life Balance + Flexibility
  - 10% Work Stability
  - 8% Gain Experience
- 

Hourly workers' overall economic optimism increased slightly compared to last year, with 43 percent optimistic about the economy (vs. 42% in 2020) while those who responded negatively decreased slightly (22% vs. 27%). And despite the demand for labor, optimism for their job prospects decreased slightly from last year (62% vs. 66%) while those who felt neutral about their job prospects increased (26% vs. 21%). Those who were not optimistic about their job prospects remained the same (13%).

# Finances

## Finances Recovering to Pre-pandemic Levels

Hourly workers' financial situations saw improvement in the last year likely due to rising wages and stimulus checks. Emergency savings and financial concerns have begun to return to pre-pandemic levels, with the percentage of hourly workers with \$0 savings dropping down from 52 percent down to 41 percent. The portion of workers with more than \$1000 saved in emergency savings doubled from 7 percent to 15 percent. However, the vast majority (77%) still have less than \$500 saved.

The increase in savings may be why the portion of hourly workers who found accessing their pay before payday dropped slightly. But the vast majority of hourly workers still found this benefit helpful (84% vs. 94%).

### AVAILABLE EMERGENCY SAVINGS

	2021	2020	2019
\$0	41%	52%	40%
\$1-149	21%	20%	19%
\$150-499	15%	14%	17%
\$500-999	9%	7%	9%
\$1000+	15%	7%	15%

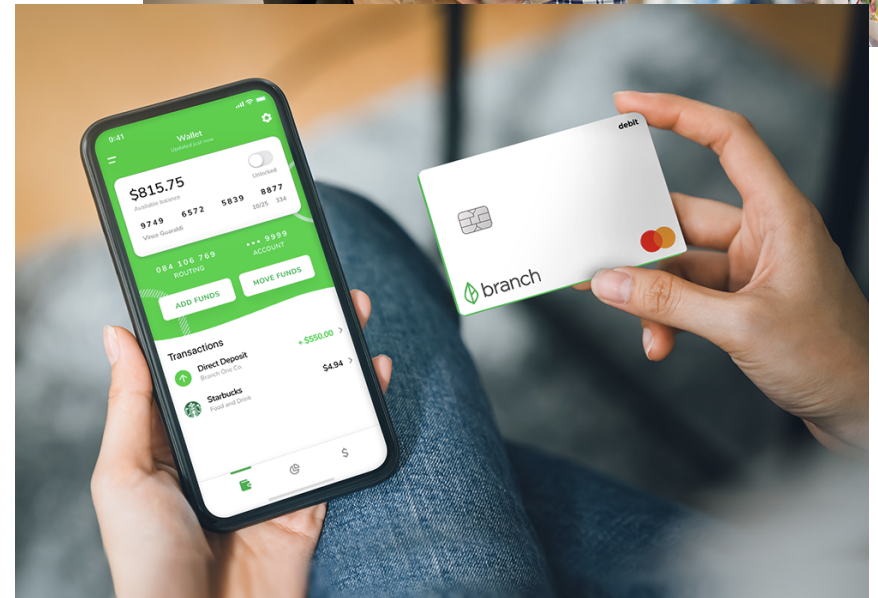
Among financial concerns, Home/Rent Affordability returned as an even greater concern (62%) compared to previous years, followed by utility bills (53%), and groceries (38%), which had been top financial issues in 2020.

Medical/Healthcare costs saw an uptick (32%), surpassing Autocare/Transportation (28%) this year.

## Digital, Fast, and Free

While debit cards still reigned as the top payment method for hourly workers this year (74%), the move to cashless led credit cards (10%) to overtake cash (6%) as the second most popular payment method. And workers are increasing their use of digital wallets compared to last year (4% vs. 2% in 2020), using them as often as they use online/mobile payments apps (4%).





When it comes to selecting a banking/financial services application, the majority of hourly workers cited no overdraft or maintenance fees (56%) as their top desired feature, closely followed by building credit (51%). Hourly workers also wanted their applications to be free and fast—free ATM usage (43%) and faster paychecks (39%) were also cited as top features. Rounding out the top five was responsive customer support (34%).



# Lifestyle

## TikTok Usage Doubles

There's a reason why employers are increasingly turning to TikTok to find new workers—TikTok usage has rapidly grown, especially among hourly workers. **Instagram (65%) overtook Facebook (63%) this year among workers' top social media platforms**, but both fell significantly compared to usage last year, while TikTok usage nearly doubled. Snapchat continued to hold steady at third, with similar usage rates as last year.

	2020	2021
 Facebook	83%	63%
 Instagram	73%	65%
 Snapchat	53%	52%
 Tik Tok	24%	44%

Among entertainment platforms, Netflix continued to lead for the third straight year with 76 percent of respondents citing it as one of their most used platforms, followed by YouTube (55%). However, both platforms' usage decreased slightly as Hulu (49% vs. 48%), Disney+ (34% vs. 30%), Amazon Prime Video (31% vs. 29%), and HBO Max (26% vs. 7%) all gained ground compared to last year.

	2020	2021
Netflix	85%	76%
Youtube	61%	55%
Hulu	48%	49%
Disney+	30%	34%
Amazon Prime Video	29%	31%
HBO Max	7%	26%

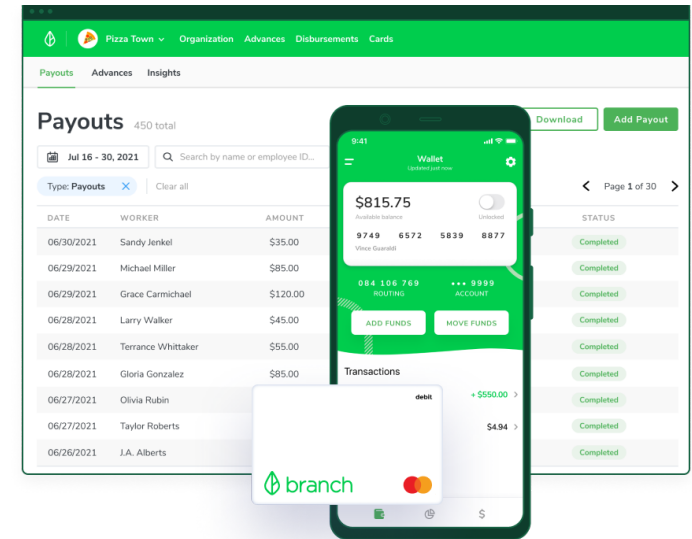




## Branch helps businesses accelerate payments to empower working Americans.

Businesses turn to Branch for a more cost-effective, faster way to pay employees and independent contractors and reduce the costs of paper checks and paycards. Workers that sign up with Branch can receive a zero-fee bank account, free instant access to earned wages, and personal finance tools to help them manage their cash flow between paychecks. Branch partners with some of the nation's leading payroll and workforce technologies to support companies in retail, restaurant, logistics, manufacturing, and healthcare.

To learn more about Branch, visit [www.branchapp.com](https://www.branchapp.com) and follow us on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.



# Appendix

## General

**What is your job category at your primary job?**

Employee (88%)  
Manager (11%)  
Contractor (1%)

**What is your age range?**

14-19 (11%)  
20-29 (48%)  
30-39 (26%)  
40-49 (11%)  
50+ (4%)

**What gender do you identify as?**

Female (60%)  
Male (39%)  
Non-binary (1%)

**What industry do you work in?**

Restaurant/Food Service (including food delivery) (29%)  
Healthcare (22%)  
Retail (7%)  
Telecommunications (6%)  
Manufacturing/Construction (5%)  
Public/Government Services (3%)  
Freight/Logistics (3%)  
Banking/Financial Services (3%)  
IT (3%)  
Beauty & Wellness (salon services, gym/fitness) (2%)  
Repair & Maintenance (2%)  
Hospitality (hotel, travel, airline) (2%)  
Education (2%)  
Staffing/Freelance/Gig Economy (1%)  
Other (10%)

## Work

**What is the average amount of hours you work per week?**

40+ (56%)  
21-39 (33%)  
11-20 (6%)  
6-10 (3%)  
1-5 (1%)  
Not currently working (1%)

**How many jobs do you currently hold?**

1 (80%)  
2 (18%)  
3+ (2%)

**What do you want most out of a workplace? (select top 3)**

Higher wages (69%)  
A stable, predictable work schedule (51%)  
Positive work culture (45%)  
Scheduling flexibility/more control over when you work (41%)  
Supportive managers (31%)  
Supportive team members (26%)  
Safe work environment (20%)  
Additional hours of work (17%)

**Do you plan on switching jobs in the next 6 months?**

Probably not (31%)  
Definitely not (27%)  
Maybe (18%)  
Yes, I am actively looking (11%)  
Yes, I am open to a new job (9%)  
Prefer not to say (4%)

**Have unemployment benefits/stimulus checks impacted how much you work?**

No, I'm working about the same (71%)  
Not sure (11%)  
Yes, I'm working more (11%)  
Yes, I'm working less (4%)  
Yes, it's given me the option to take time off while I look for a new job (3%)

**What is your main career goal with your current employment situation?**

Higher Pay (34%)  
Promotion at This Employer (21%)  
Work/Life Balance + Flexibility (16%)  
Work Stability (10%)  
Gain Experience to Switch Industries/Occupations (8%)  
Professional Development and Training (8%)  
Employment Perks + Discounts (2%)  
Qualifying for Health Benefits (2%)

**Do you supplement your income with gig or contractor work?**

No, I do not supplement my income with gig/contractor work and do not plan to (53%)  
No, I do not supplement my income with gig/contractor work but am considering it (28%)  
Yes, I complete gig/contractor work to supplement my income but work another job for my primary source of income (14%)  
Yes, I complete gig/contractor work for the majority source of income (5%)

**Do you feel like you have more job opportunities now than before the pandemic?**

No (36%)  
Yes (28%)  
Somewhat (23%)  
Not sure (14%)

# Appendix

## Work

### Do you feel like companies are having a hard time hiring workers right now?

Yes, a very hard time (38%)  
Yes, somewhat of a hard time (22%)  
Yes, but only in some regions and industries (15%)  
No (15%)  
Not sure (10%)

### What do you think are the primary causes of this difficulty in hiring?

People are earning more on unemployment benefits/stimulus checks (68%)  
Companies need to provide higher wages (59%)  
Fear of COVID-19 exposure (46%)  
Companies need to provide more competitive benefits (28%)  
People are rethinking their careers and are taking their time before taking on a new job (28%)  
Lack of childcare/school (27%)  
Companies need to provide more career growth opportunities (22%)  
Companies need to provide more scheduling flexibility (20%)  
Other (2%)

### What would be the biggest motivator for you to switch or start a new job right now?

Higher pay (64%)  
A job that allows me to work from home (15%)  
Career development (5%)  
More stability and guaranteed hours (4%)  
More scheduling flexibility (4%)  
Work culture (3%)  
Sick leave and paid time off (2%)  
Health insurance/benefits (1%)  
Family care support (1%)  
Other (1%)

## Finances

### What are your top financial concerns? (select top 3)

Home/rent affordability (62%)  
Utility Bills (electricity, gas) (53%)  
Groceries (38%)  
Medical/Healthcare costs (32%)  
Autocare/Transportation (28%)  
Short-term savings (25%)  
School/College Tuition Debt (21%)  
Retirement (16%)  
Cell Phone Bill (14%)  
Childcare (12%)  
Eldercare (1%)

### How much does your pay vary from week to week?

Some (36%)  
A little (28%)  
Hardly at all (24%)  
A lot (12%)

### How helpful would it be if you could access your pay before the official pay day?

Very helpful (63%)  
Somewhat helpful (21%)  
Not too helpful (8%)  
I wouldn't do this (7%)

### What amount do you have saved in case of an emergency?

\$0 (41%)  
\$1-149 (21%)  
\$150-499 (15%)  
\$500-999 (9%)  
\$1000+ (15%)

### What's your preferred method of payment?

Debit card (74%)  
Credit card (10%)  
Cash (6%)  
Online/Mobile app payments (Venmo, Cash app, PayPal, etc.) (4.2%)  
Digital wallet (Apple Pay, Google Pay, Samsung Pay) (4%)  
Check (2%)

### What features are most important for you when choosing a banking/financial services app?

No overdraft/maintenance fees (56%)  
Building credit (51%)  
Free ATM (43%)  
Faster/early paycheck (39%)  
Responsive customer support (34%)  
Rewards (21%)  
Transfer money to friends/family (19%)  
Budgeting/personal finance help (14%)  
Savings tools (14%)  
Ability to trade stocks/crypto (5%)  
Option to open family accounts (4%)  
Transfer money to international accounts (4%)

### How frequently would you like to get your paycheck/earnings?

Weekly (49%)  
Bi-weekly (23%)  
Daily (15%)  
Doesn't matter as long as I have the option to access a portion of my money before payday (12%)  
Bi-monthly (1%)



# Appendix

## Lifestyle

**Among these entertainment platforms, which do you use the most? (select up to 3)**

Netflix (76%)  
YouTube (55%)  
Hulu (49%)  
Disney+ (34%)  
Amazon Prime Video (31%)  
HBO Max (26%)  
PlayStation (16%)  
Xbox (13%)  
PC Gaming (7%)  
Nintendo (6%)  
Twitch (4%)  
I don't use any of these (3%)

**Which platforms do you have paid subscriptions for? (Select all that apply)**

Netflix (70%)  
Hulu (54%)  
Amazon Prime (52%)  
Disney+ (45%)  
Apple Music (33%)  
HBOMax (28%)  
Spotify Premium (20%)  
YouTubePremium (8%)  
YouTube TV (7%)  
I don't use any of these (6%)  
Tidal (1%)  
Other (1%)

**Among these social media platforms, which do you use most? (select up to 3)**

Instagram (65%)  
Facebook (63%)  
Snapchat (52%)  
TikTok (44%)  
Twitter (18%)  
Pinterest (9%)  
WhatsApp (8%)  
Discord (6%)  
Reddit (6%)  
I don't use any of these (5%)  
Twitch (4%)  
Clubhouse (1%)

**How optimistic do you feel about the economy?**

Neither Optimistic nor Negative (35%)  
Somewhat Optimistic (25%)  
Very Optimistic (18%)  
Somewhat Negative (15%)  
Very Negative (7%)

**Do you feel optimistic about your job prospects (the ability to switch jobs easily or grow in your current position)?**

Somewhat Optimistic (33%)  
Very Optimistic (29%)  
Neither Optimistic nor Negative (26%)  
Somewhat Negative (9%)  
Very Negative (4%)

**What is your top resource for finding a job?**

Indeed (50%)  
Google (23%)  
Friends/Word of Mouth (8%)  
Glassdoor (3%)  
Snagajob (3%)  
Family (3%)  
Craigslist (3%)  
Monster (2%)  
Staffing Agency (2%)  
School/University Job Board (1%)  
Other (2%)