

# Encore Careers: The Persistence of Purpose

More than 25 million Americans 50 to 70 years old are eager to share their skills, passions and expertise in encore careers that address social needs, typically in education, health care, human services and the environment, according to a 2014 study by Encore.org and Penn Schoen Berland. Of this larger group, more than 4.5 million, or 6 percent, are already working for social impact. Another 21 million are ready to join them, nearly six in ten within the next five years.

Encore careers are options whose appeal cuts across education level and economic status for everyone who has skills and experience to share, a sense of purpose, and the passion to make their world, or their corner of the larger world, a better place.

**1 Interest in social-impact encores is robust and unflagging. More than 4.5 million people aged 50 to 70 identify themselves as working in encore careers today – and another 21 million are preparing to move into their own encores.**

Our 2011 study asked a broad question of a broader audience: We asked Americans 44 to 70 years of age about their interest in encore careers – working after midlife in roles that address important social needs. Of the 9 percent already engaged in encore work, two-thirds said they were strongly motivated by the desire for a positive social impact and by issues of personal significance. (The rest were mainly motivated by the desire for a paycheck, regardless of how their work made a difference.)

As the economy began to rebound, we wanted to learn more about the subset of people who put purpose at the center of their encore careers. We drilled down on the 2011 findings by refining our questions and survey analysis to better understand the people who desire work with personal significance and social impact, as well as – often – financial compensation. We also narrowed our subjects to people aged 50 to 70 (those closest to transitioning into, and out of, encores) and explored their interest in social-impact work.

The 2014 study results reinforce the broad strokes of our 2011 research: The desire for encore careers is robust. More than half of all Americans (55 percent) agree that putting skills and expertise to use in some fashion to help others is an important part of how they view the stage of their lives that would follow a primary career. Over a quarter (28 percent) put post-midlife work with real social impact at the center of their planning.

The encore transition happens as often before as after the age of 55. Among those in encores today, 44 percent transitioned into new roles between 45 and 54, and 44 percent in the next decade, from 55 to 64.

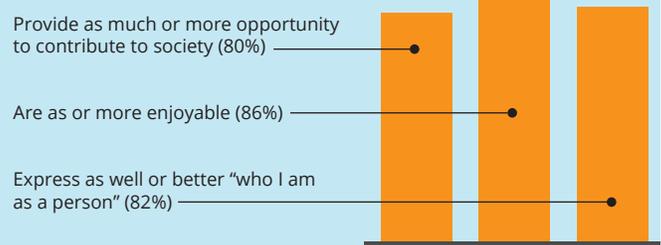
About one in four people (23 percent) in encore careers are employees who are paid for their work. Nearly a third (30 percent) are self-employed, evidence of a rising entrepreneurial thread that persisted across the study findings. Fewer than three in ten (28 percent) carry out their encores through significant pro bono roles.

**2 Interest in encore careers is growing, while concerns are diminishing.**

Interest in encore careers rose by 17 percent from 2011 to 2014, when 28 percent of respondents in the 50-70 age group said they were highly interested in encore careers, up from 24 percent in 2011.

Financial barriers to encore careers are less onerous in 2014 than in 2011. Among those with high interest in encore work, only one in eight (12 percent) respondents said they were worried about earning enough income in a social-impact encore; in 2011, nearly one in three respondents shared that worry (30 percent).

Satisfaction levels in encore careers vs. in earlier careers

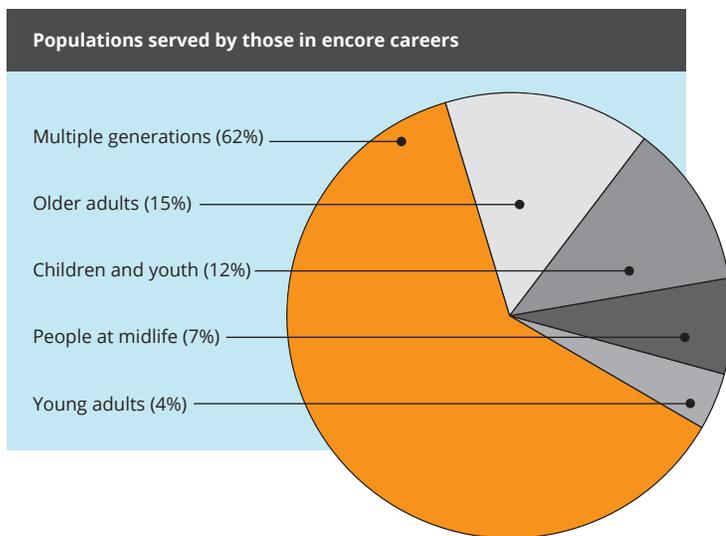


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**3** Encore careers are potentially powerful sources of human talent, passion and expertise. Those in encore careers start and stick with new career paths, ones that often draw on their existing skills in a new context.

Encores entail serious, standing commitments, well beyond bursts of volunteer work or pitching in after a natural disaster. More than one-third (34 percent) of those in encores have worked a decade or longer in their encore role – although half (50 percent) have less than five years' experience. On average, people in their encores work about 21 hours a week. Of those planning encores, most anticipate devoting 5 to 14 years to their encore roles.

Seven in ten of those in encores are doing work that's something new, compared to their primary work at age 45. That impulse is reflected among those considering encores as well, of whom nearly two-thirds (62 percent) want to move into a new type of work, generally around age 61.



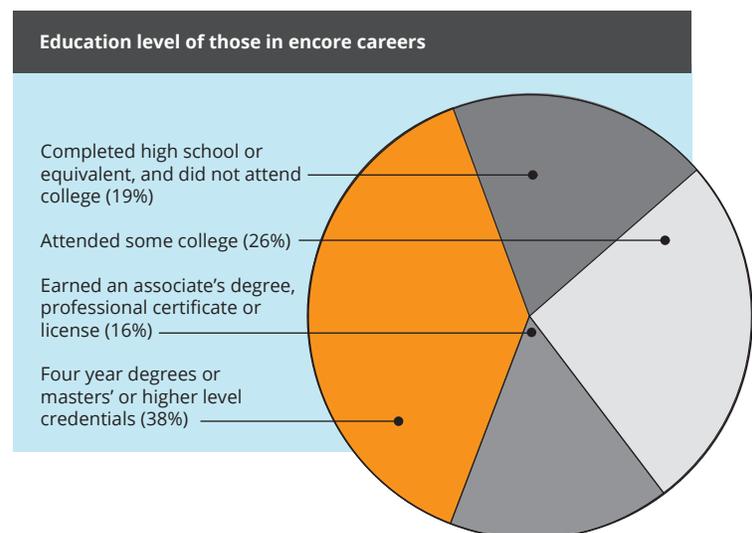
**4** Social impact, and particularly work that affects broad swaths of communities, is an important goal of those in and those considering encore careers. That same impact is integral to the pleasure, satisfaction and sense of personal expression reported by the majority of people in active encores.

The findings suggest that people in encore careers derive great satisfaction and meaning in contributing to the social good. In fact, four in five people (80 percent) in encores say just that – their encore careers give them as much or even greater opportunity to contribute to society as their prior career offered.

Six in ten (62 percent) of those in encore careers say that their work affects multiple generations; others impact older adults (15 percent), children/youth (12 percent), people at midlife (7 percent) and young adults (4 percent).

Nearly everyone in an encore career (86 percent) says that their encore role is as or more enjoyable than their prior career.

Four in five (82 percent) say that their encore career expresses “who I am as a person” as much or more than their prior work. One in three (31 percent) report greater satisfaction in their encore work; fewer than one in 10 (9 percent) are less-satisfied.



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**5** Encores are for everyone. People in encore careers – and those who are considering encores – span the full educational and economic spectrum, underscoring Encore.org’s belief that encore choices are not restricted to a particular class or group. Anyone who wants to apply his or her energy to make the world a better place can find satisfaction, self-expression and social impact in a meaningful encore.

Conventional thinking might suggest that encores are options for society’s best-educated, who often have the greatest financial clout. Strikingly, our findings prove the opposite is true: Encores are for everyone, independent of education and economics.

One in five people (19 percent) in encores completed high school or the equivalent, and did not attend college. More than one in four (26 percent) have attended some college; one in six have earned an associate’s degree, professional certificate or license (16 percent). Only two in five (38 percent) have four-year degrees or masters’ or higher-level credentials.

Nearly three in five (57 percent) of those in encore careers report household incomes of less than \$45,000. Only about one in seven (14 percent) have total household incomes above \$90,000.

Household assets show a similar range. Three in five (57 percent) of those in encore careers – a significant majority – have total household assets below \$50,000. Assets exceed \$200,000 for only one in four (25 percent).

Among those considering encores, just under half (47 percent) have total household incomes below \$45,000 (15 percent, under \$20,000) and one in five (20 percent) earn more than \$90,000. The distribution of household assets is comparable: About half (48 percent) have assets below \$50,000 – but nearly a third (30 percent) report assets above \$200,000.

Encore.org’s 2014 study broke new ground and reinforced prior observations. We confirmed strong interest in the encore movement and gained new understandings about people in or considering social-impact encore careers: More likely to involve new kinds of work, including entrepreneurship, as extensions of familiar roles, social-impact encore careers offer millions of midlife Americans the means to apply their life skills and knowledge to contribute to the greater good, no matter their academic credentials or economic status. This underscores the work we completed in 2011, and points us in new directions for future research.

## Methodology

*Encore.org, in collaboration with Penn Schoen Berland, conducted an on-line survey of a representative sample of 1,694 adults ages 50 to 70 in the United States. The survey was conducted between February 5 and 19, 2014 and March 19 and 25, 2014. The margin of error for the general population is  $\pm 3.1$  percent at the 95 percent confidence level, and large for subgroups.*

