

A Survey of Information Technology Workers

In December 2003, the Washington Alliance of Technology Workers (WashTech) commissioned a national survey of technology workers. The purpose of the survey was to quantitatively measure the opinions of U.S. technology workers on a variety of issues, including free trade, future information technology (IT) job demand, legislative action, party affiliation and voting behavior.

The results challenge conventional wisdom about “independent” IT workers who cannot be galvanized around any one set of issues to seek political change. In fact, IT workers appear to be an emerging political constituency that is increasingly looking for political action to address its economic concerns.

This report outlines the key findings from the survey.

Who Are IT Workers?

Just who are these IT workers? IT workers are an experienced and highly educated group. Based on the results of the survey, 70% of respondents said they had five or more years of experience working in an IT-related job and 68% had a college degree or higher. They include software developers, data processors, technical writers and more.

Most are direct, full time employees, though nearly one in five is an independent contractor, speaking to the ingenuity and energy that characterizes this group of workers.

What Are the Issues?

IT workers face a host of challenges, among them an increase in the practice of off shoring and gaps in training.

There is overwhelming concern about high-tech job flight

- Nearly all respondents (93%) were aware of off shoring and expressed concern about its impact on the industry
- Close to one in four IT workers said his or her company had off shored jobs
- Even more incredibly, almost one in five had lost a job or knew someone who had lost a job after training a foreign worker

IT workers believe globalization will lower wages and benefits

- The majority of respondents indicated that off shoring has impacted wages and benefits
- 56% of these respondents said the trend has put downward pressure on wages and benefits
- One third of survey respondents cited a decrease in job stability as a result of off shoring
- 53% of these respondents felt that off shoring created a less stable U.S. job market or resulted in cuts and lay offs
- The jobs most often off shored included programming/data processing, tech support, customer service, software/systems developer and database design/development

Companies are not investing in employees

- 64% of IT workers said their employers do not offer adequate training on the latest technologies and programming languages
- What's more, 87% questioned whether they had the time, money and resources to independently obtain needed training
- A strong majority of IT workers believed that demand for highly educated workers will increase in the future and that specialized training will be critical to success in the industry
- Perhaps incongruently, however, 42% said demand at their company would stay the same, and 16% said demand at their company would decrease

High-Tech Workers Demand a Political Response to Off Shoring

- More than two thirds (69%) of respondents supported legislation that would require customer service representatives to identify the city and country in which they are located
- An overwhelming majority (84%) also supported legislation to enhance unemployment benefits to workers whose jobs had been off shored
- Nearly three quarters (73%) did not think there is a need for the H1-B program, which enables companies to bring in foreign professionals to fill jobs in the event that American labor cannot be found, and 81% supported legislation to place restrictions on the program
- In a similar vein, 86% of respondents supported legislation requiring government IT-contract work to be performed by U.S. workers and 71% supported legislation requiring companies to inform local officials if they plan to use U.S. workers to train foreign replacements

An Emerging Constituency

IT workers are just beginning to self-identify as a group with common interests. While IT workers are far from homogeneous, their influence as a constituency can only grow stronger.

IT workers are well educated and have financial means

- 68% have a college degree or higher
- 54% are between the ages of 18 and 44
- 49% have yearly salaries between \$75,000 and \$125,000

IT workers are found all across the ideological spectrum

- 26% identified themselves as Democrats
- 32% identified themselves as Independent
- 41% identified themselves as Republican

IT workers vote

- The vast majority (91%) of IT workers are registered to vote
- 87% said they vote in most or every election

About This Survey

In December 2003, the Washington Alliance of Technology Workers (WashTech) commissioned a 410-respondent national Web survey of technology workers. The survey was conducted by The Evans/McDonough Company. The survey was checked to ensure proportional representation of technology workers geographically and demographically in the United States, using U.S. Bureau and Labor Statistics reports, U.S. Census information, and prior research on technology workers available to the public.