



Werklabs

PROUnlimited

March 2022

# What Drives a Diverse Extended Workforce

Fostering feelings of inclusion  
for diverse contingent talent



# Welcome

Werklabs is happy to present: *What Drives a Diverse Extended Workforce*. Here we partner with PRO Unlimited, a leader in contingent workforce management servicing hundreds of the world's most recognizable brands, and RISE, a program operated by MomProject.org committed to upskilling and reskilling moms and women of color through certifications and unparalleled community support.

We have chosen to partner in developing and sharing this research because we share a common goal: fostering inclusive work experiences, where diversity is celebrated and professionals are elevated to realize greater economic opportunity for themselves and their families.

Our initial study looked at the employee experience for contingent workers and what it would take to help them feel more engaged and satisfied in their roles, whether as a short term or longer term career path. Contingent work is a clear pathway for reskilled and upskilled professionals looking for new relevant employment.

In this second study of the contingent workforce, we looked at important differences in happiness indicators between segments. In the report that follows, **we have two primary goals:**

First, our goal is to highlight unique differences among critical segments of the contingent workforce. The segments where the most notable significant differences occur are between contingent professionals by genders and races/ethnicities. In particular, we highlight key disparities that exist in attracting, engaging, and empowering contingent workers for these different segments, so that organizations and leaders can foster inclusive experiences.

Our second goal is to highlight key learnings about the experiences of RISE program participants who are moms and women of color that often see contingent work as a viable next-step in their careers as they look to pivot industries and refine newly learned skills.



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## Methodology & Overview

The following report was created using analyses from **two Werklabs' constructed questionnaires**. Primary results in this report came from a questionnaire built in partnership with PRO Unlimited. The questionnaire was fielded to 943 contingent workers within The Mom Project and PRO Unlimited talent networks.

Additionally, report highlights include key findings related to RISE that were created from a comprehensive Werklabs' constructed questionnaire on behalf of RISE, gathering 520 responses from program participants.

### RESEARCH PROCESS

Both questionnaires combined qualitative interviews followed by quantitative survey design and data collection. Research includes one-on-one interviews, employing a semi-structured approach and asking interviewees to respond to broad, open-ended questions regarding their work experiences, likes, and dislikes within the selected topic area without unnecessarily restricting the conversation.

An analysis using Grounded Theory method is then performed to determine key themes from which a survey instrument is crafted to empirically test qualitative findings. The survey instruments leverage 10-point scales to capture discrete differences in survey respondents' experiences and opinions. After, the data is combined together to create and explain the story.

In this report, we highlight key differences across segments where there is significant sample size to determine discrete differences.



# Survey Demographics

## CONTINGENT WORKFORCE SURVEY

For the contingent workforce survey, Werklabs surveyed participants drawn from The Mom Project and PRO Unlimited talent networks, whom over half are between the ages of 35-52. Moreover,



Identify as female.



Are people of color.



Identify as a parent or caregiver.

Of those identifying as moms, they generally care for 1-2 children.

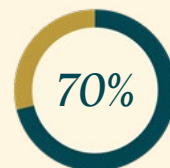
In terms of their career, almost all (98%) describe their contingent work roles as professional rather than industrial and/or manufacturing roles.

## RISE PARTICIPANT SURVEY

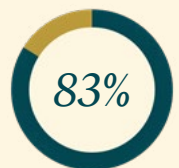
In a separate survey from the one above, Werklabs surveyed RISE participants who generally tend to be 25-54 years old. Moreover,



Identify as female.



Are people of color.\*



Identify as moms.

Of those identifying as moms, they generally care for 1-2 children.

\*Of those who are people of color, the largest group of participants report as Black/African American (43%), followed by Asian/Pacific Islander (31%), Hispanic/Latino (24%), or American Indian/Alaskan Native (2%), respectively.



# Workplace Drivers to Attract Diverse Contingent Talent



# Key Drivers to Attract Contingent Talent

## PROJECT-BASED WORK MOTIVATIONS

Many professionals are motivated to pursue project-based work due to important factors such as ability to work remote, schedule-related flexibility, and greater autonomy in work.

For many, contingent work may not be a first choice. The reality of forgoing benefits is difficult. However, sometimes the need to find *some* employment in the immediate short-term outweighs the desire to find *permanent* employment through a potentially longer search.

The **need to find permanent employment** is expressed as a significantly greater motivating factor for Black and Hispanic/Latino contingent workers in comparison to other segments.

Additionally, Werklabs' predictive modeling shows that the desire to find full-time permanent employment motivates people more strongly toward contract opportunities that are more likely to lead to permanent work than other types of contract work.

**RISE** participants find job search and career navigation to be two common challenges they experience. **Over 50% of participants join RISE unemployed\***. Regularly, they find themselves submitting applications with limited time and energy. When they do find the time, it's often challenging to navigate reentering the workforce or to break into a new industry.

Moreover, over 90% of the participants join RISE with **a need or desire to find employment and increasing their earning potential**, according to Werklabs' survey results.

\*Data from application forms as of February of 2022



**Flexibility** can be broken down into three different categories: (1) ability to work remotely or from a location of a professional's choosing, (2) flexibility in times of day worked, and (3) autonomy in how work gets done.

Working remotely or from a place of their choosing is a strong motivating factor to pursue contingent work across ethnic groups. However, parents and caregivers value this factor to a far greater degree than non-parents and non-caregivers.

Moreover, flexibility is valued by female professionals significantly more than their male counterparts. In comparison to their male counterparts, female professionals participating in the extended workforce more greatly value:

- Ability to work remotely or from a location of their choosing
- Schedule-related flexibility
- Autonomy in how work gets done

**RISE** participants, as moms (83% of survey respondents) and parents/caregivers (88%), are affected by flexibility in the workplace. An interviewed RISE participant said, "I had an offer that I had to turn down because it was fully on site and an hour away from home. I'm a single mom [and] my son's school does not offer after school care...It's been a challenge."

When surveyed, 94% felt optimistic about the possibility for working at an organization that offers flexibility.



**RISE** participants' decision to pursue a certification is closely aligned with contingent workers choosing specific contract opportunities.



92% desire an increased earning potential.



93% look for work-life balance.



50% desire advancing in their current role.



96% need new employment opportunities.



## Workplace Drivers to Attract Contingent Talent

### CONTRACT OPPORTUNITY MOTIVATIONS

Along with more broad motivating factors to pursue contingent work, project-specific factors make some contracts more appealing than others. As detailed in Werklabs' previous report, there are two categories of project-appeal factors: Threshold and Consideration.

Threshold factors, comprised of competitive pay and employer supportiveness, are minimum requirements to consider a contract.

**Competitive pay** is valued by both male and female respondents as the most important factor. However, **employer supportiveness** is valued to a much greater degree by female respondents than male respondents.

Consideration factors, comprised of career growth opportunities and potential for full-time employment, are more "nice to haves" that serve to distinguish contracts from one another when evaluating different options.

**Career growth opportunities** are valued by Asian professionals more than their White counterparts and by female respondents more than male respondents. For **potential full-time employment opportunities**, Black respondents value these more than their White peers.



Along with threshold and consideration factors, workplace diversity is also a consideration factor for some contingent workers more than others when considering pursuing a specific project opportunity. More specifically, the relative importance of diversity is greatest among Asian and Black contingent workers.



Over 90% of **RISE** participants feel optimistic about and desire the opportunity to work for an organization that values diversity.



# Workplace Drivers to Equip and Empower Contingent Talent

Survey results show six drivers that impact contingent workers' career optimism and work experiences. These drivers are the extent to which organizations facilitate feelings of (1) equity, (2) success, (3) trust, (4) respect, (5) support, and (6) belonging among its contingent talent.

These drivers have been identified as being important to the experiences of contingent workers regardless of race/ethnicity and gender. However, there are some difference in the level of impact each of the identified drivers has for people within certain segments of the population. Here, Werklabs explores how these drivers differ across gender as well as race/ethnicity.

*(Ranked order of importance toward impacting career optimism as a contingent worker)*

## UNDERSTANDING THE SCORES:

Werklabs asked contingent workers to rate how important various individual items in identified engagement drivers were to them. Each identified driver is made up of multiple single item indicators. When data collection is complete, a series of tests are run to empirically test the constructs. Individual indicators are grouped together in ways that optimally define a driver. Next, an Overall Score for each driver is calculated, using a weighted average of the scores for the combined indicators in each driver that is then scaled up to 100 for readability. Higher scores indicate greater importance.

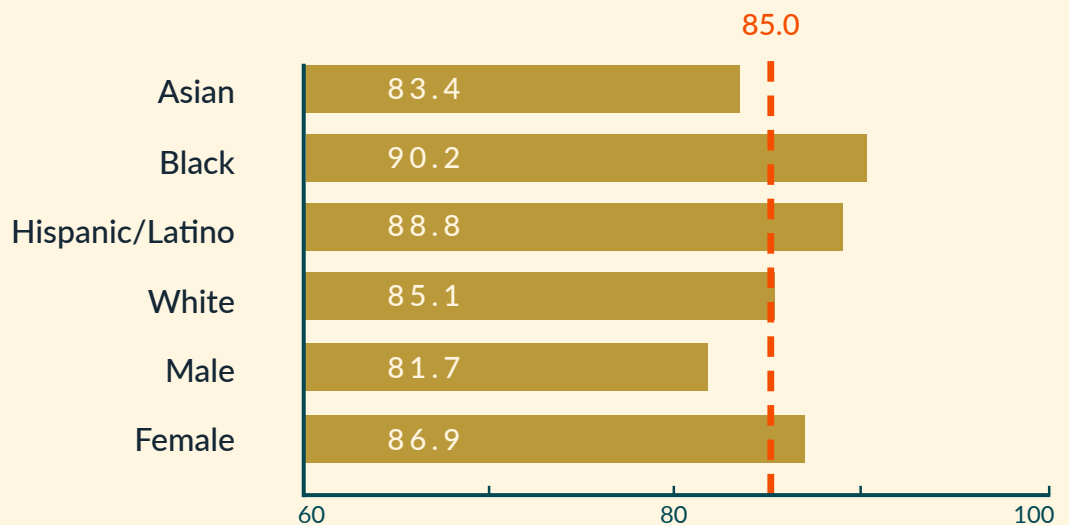
In the pages that follow, Werklabs highlights how these scores differ across demographic groups.

# Equity

OVERALL SCORE = 85.0\*

For contingent workers, equity is determined in three primary ways: having the opportunity in work, being communicated with by organizations and colleagues with transparency, and receiving fair and sincere treatment. The areas where organizations and colleagues can optimally influence feelings of equity is as follows:

1. Sharing work information freely
2. Communicating in a transparent manner
3. Giving me the opportunity to share my opinions
4. Providing me with the resources needed to get the job done
5. Caring about my personal wellbeing
6. Treating me similarly to other full-time colleagues



While all tend to view equity as important, looking at the chart above, Black contingent workers place a particularly significant emphasis on equity (90.2) followed closely by Hispanic/Latino contingent workers.

Female contingent workers rate equity (86.9) as being critical and significantly higher than their male counterparts (81.7).

\*Each identified driver is made up of multiple single item indicators that have been rated by respondents and combined through statistical analysis. The overall score reflects the weighted average of the listed items that are then converted to a 100-point scale. Two-point differences in scores across demographic groups are considered significant.

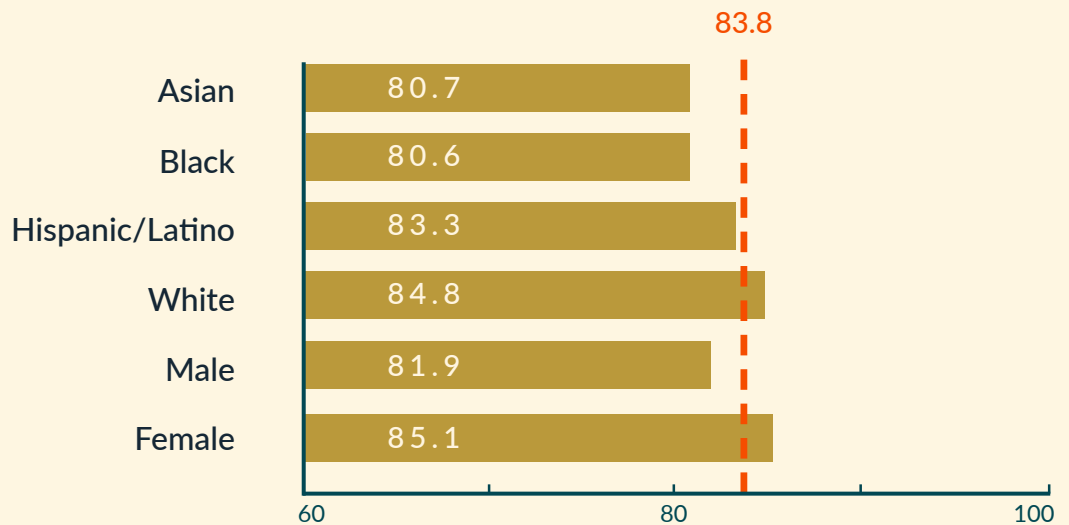


# Success

OVERALL SCORE = 83.8\*

Contingent employees feel successful and measure metrics of success primarily through getting a contract renewed (when the option for renewal is on the table). When this option does not exist, receiving more responsibility in their work is a metric used to feel intrinsic success. The areas where organizations and colleagues can optimally influence feelings of success is as follows:

1. Renewing my contract
2. Giving me more responsibility in work



While gaining more responsibility in work contributes to feelings of success, a continued increase in responsibility beyond the initial scope of the project can lead to feelings of discouragement or being taken advantage of. One surveyed contingent worker notes, “The same pay but more and more responsibility after years is discouraging.”

While all view success as important in contingent work, feeling successful is of greatest importance to females, scoring 85.1.

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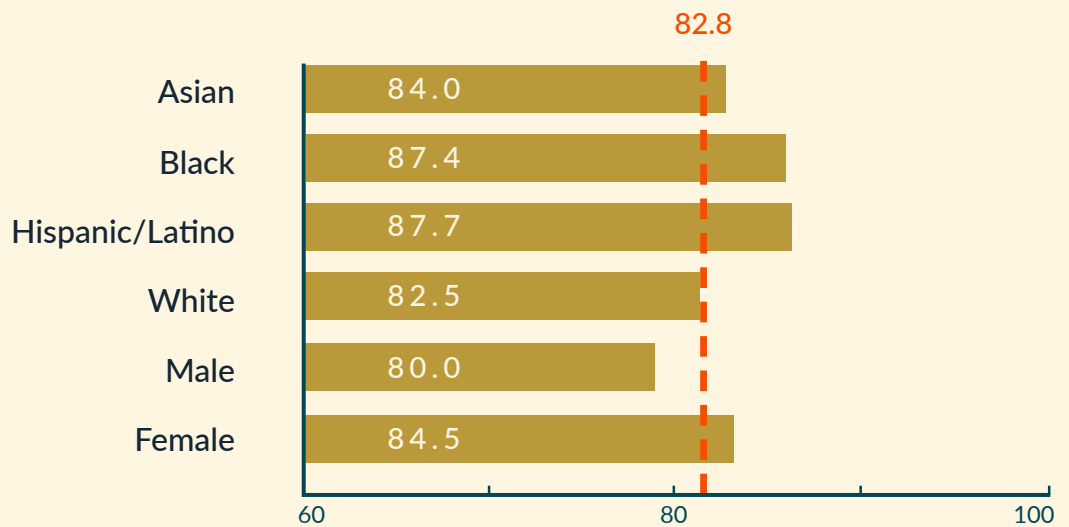
# Trust

**OVERALL SCORE = 82.8\***

Not feeling trusted to do the job they are hired to do is a common barrier faced by contingent workers.

To overcome these barriers, contingent workers most notably report that being given critical work responsibilities and being expected to meet project expectations instill a sense of trust from co-workers. The areas where organizations and colleagues can optimally influence feelings of trust is as follows:

1. Co-worker(s) being team player(s)
2. Believing I will meet project/work standards
3. Giving me critical work responsibilities



These aspects of work are of particularly high importance to Hispanic/Latino (87.7) and Black contingent workers (87.4). Feeling trusted in work is also of high importance to female contingent workers who rate trust (84.5) significantly higher than their male counterpart (80).

\*Each identified driver is made up of multiple single item indicators that have been rated by respondents and combined through statistical analysis. The overall score reflects the weighted average of the listed items that are then converted to a 100-point scale. Two-point differences in scores across demographic groups are considered significant.

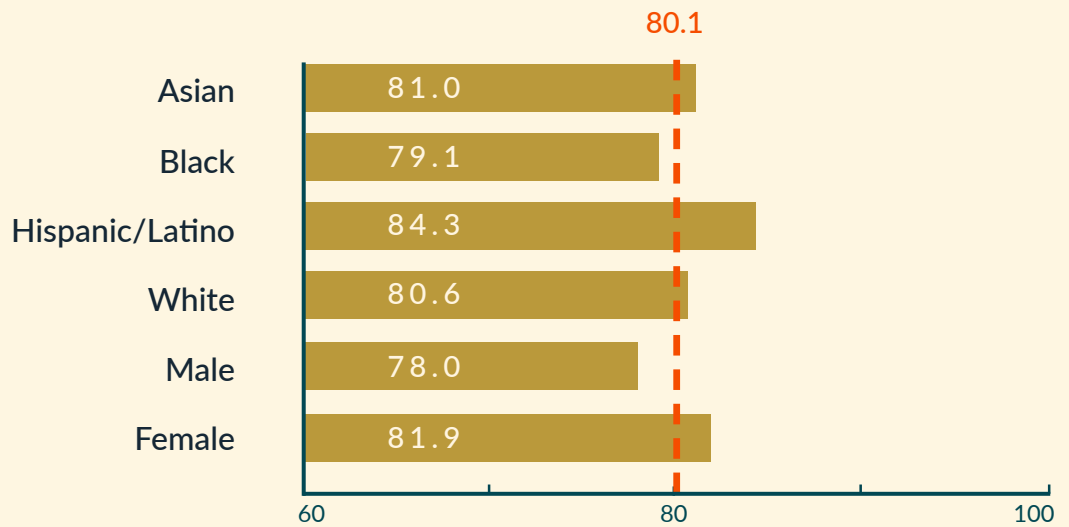


# Respect

OVERALL SCORE = 80.1 \*

Universally, respect is an important factor driving contingent work experiences. Respect for the contingent workforce can be thought of in terms of a cycle, where colleagues and project leaders first encourage opportunities, listen to the opinions of contingent workers, and recognize work contributions. The areas where organizations and colleagues can optimally influence feelings of respect is as follows:

1. Giving me the opportunity to showcase my skills
2. Recognizing my work contribution
3. Listening to my voice and opinions
4. Complimenting my work



While all the above items contribute to feelings of respect, the first three (above) most strongly contribute to contingent workers feeling respected followed by the indicator “complimenting my work.” Further, Hispanic/Latino (84.3) and female (81.9) contingent workers report the greatest importance on feeling respected in their work.

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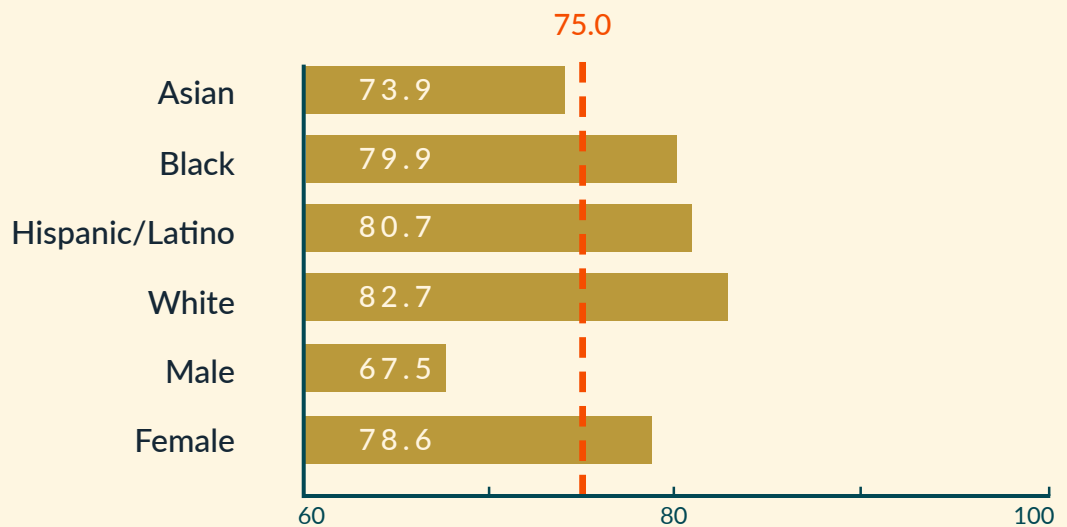


# Support

OVERALL SCORE = 75.0\*

Support is felt by the contingent workforce through tangible and intangible efforts on the part of organizations and project leaders. Namely, contingent workers seek and desire valuable feedback to be able to grow in their careers through contingent work. The areas where organizations and colleagues can optimally influence feelings of support is as follows:

1. Giving me feedback on ways to improve
2. Giving me feedback on my strengths
3. Inviting me to team building events
4. Providing opportunities to network
5. Offering employee perks
6. Having conversations about career goals with me
7. Informing me of internal jobs



While support is undoubtedly a driver of contingent work experiences, clear differences emerge in terms of its relative importance across different demographic groups. White contingent workers place a particularly high emphasis on support (82.7) followed by Hispanic/Latino contingent workers (80.7).

Of all identified drivers, support is also where the greatest difference emerges across male and female contingent workers, with women rating support over 11-points more in importance than men.

\*Each identified driver is made up of multiple single item indicators that have been rated by respondents and combined through statistical analysis. The overall score reflects the weighted average of the listed items that are then converted to a 100-point scale. Two-point differences in scores across demographic groups are considered significant.

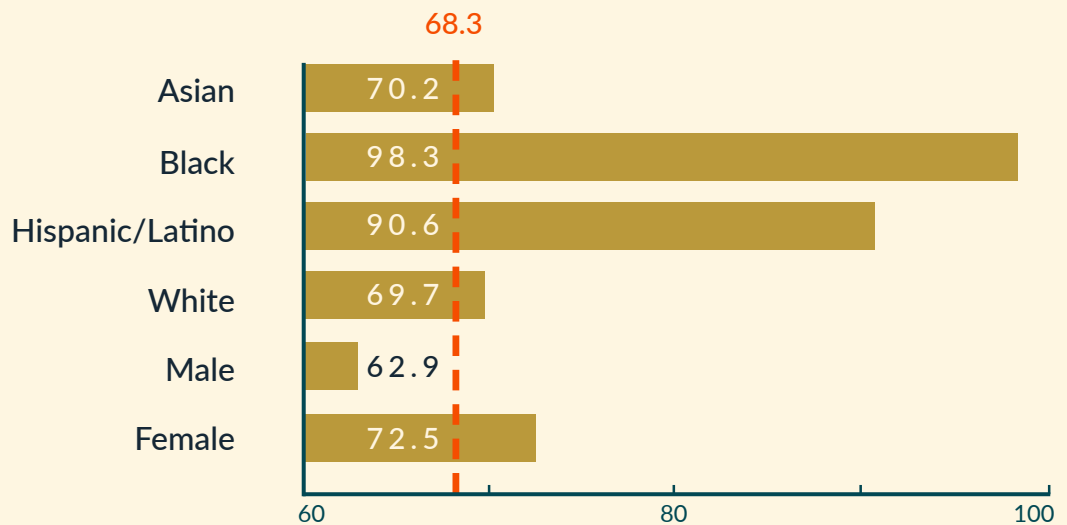


# Belonging

OVERALL SCORE = 68.3\*

Overall, belonging is felt by the contingent workforce through factors that primarily result from people-centric cultures. What might be thought as being only important to permanent workers (such as finding projects where the organization aligns with their values) is also essential to the contingent workforce. The areas where organizations and colleagues can optimally influence feelings of belonging is as follows:

1. Being aligned with my personal values
2. Empowering me to be myself during work
3. Interacting with me outside of work



Despite belonging being the driver with the lowest rating among all contingent workers (68.3), separately, both Black and Hispanic/Latino contingent professionals place the greatest importance on belonging compared to other drivers, scoring 98.3 and 90.6, respectively.

\*Each identified driver is made up of multiple single item indicators that have been rated by respondents and combined through statistical analysis. The overall score reflects the weighted average of the listed items that are then converted to a 100-point scale. Two-point differences in scores across demographic groups are considered significant.





# The Future of Work

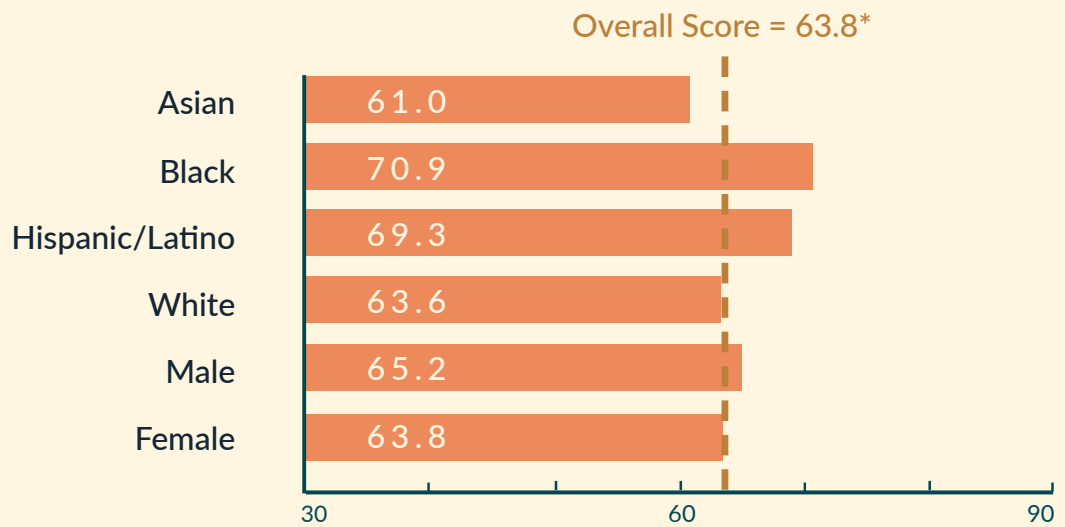
Werklabs looks into the level of optimism among contingent workers and RISE program participants when thinking about their career.



# Optimism

Optimism that contingent workers possess for the future of their career is important to understand as more professionals and organizations are turning toward temporary, project-based work for the inherent flexibility. More specifically, the complete list of items making up career optimism follows:

1. Overall optimism for the future of my career
2. Optimism that I will achieve my career goals
3. Optimism that I will achieve my ideal work situation



\*Optimism is made up of multiple single item indicators that have been rated by respondents and combined through statistical analysis. The overall score is the weighted average of the listed items that are then converted to a 100-point scale. Two-point differences in scores across demographic groups are considered significant.

Overall levels of optimism contingent workers possess for the future of their work and careers varies, with Black contingent workers scoring the highest (70.9) followed closely by Hispanic/Latino professionals (69.3).

**RISE** participants, in spite of the challenges they face, are extremely hopeful about their future work experience.

The majority (93%) feel optimistic about working at an organization that:

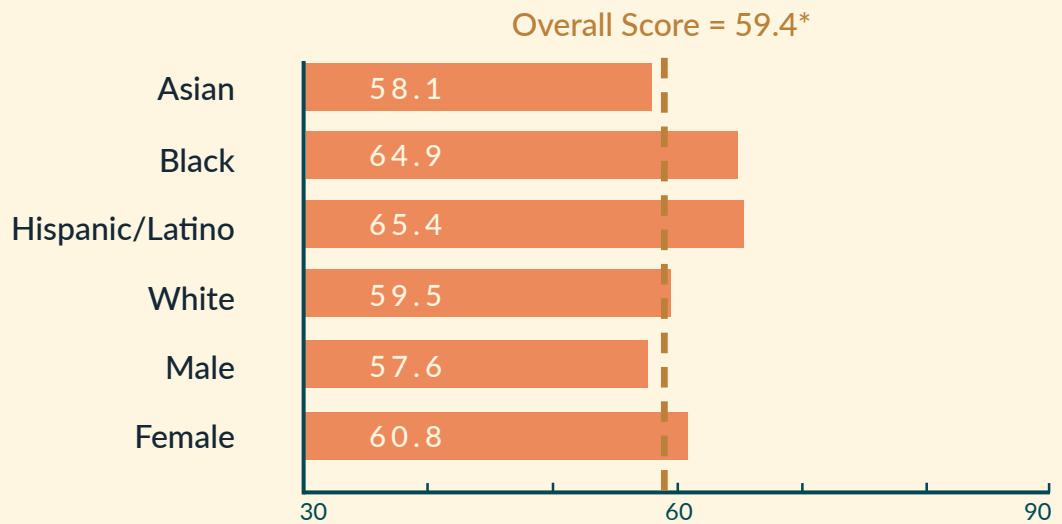
- Values diversity
- Offers flexibility
- Respects work-life balance
- Appreciates their unique work background

Project-based work can serve RISE participants by providing them with practical experience as they pivot or reenter the workforce, unlocking possibilities for future full-time positions.



# Recommending Contingent Work

In addition to career optimism, Werklabs also assessed the likelihood with which professionals would recommend contingent work as a good career option to others. This measure is an outcome impacted by the extent to which contingent workers experience the key drivers of inclusion, as previously discussed.



Of surveyed demographic segments, Hispanic/Latino (65.4), Black (64.9), and female (60.8) professionals would recommend contingent work to others the most.\*

\*Two-point differences in scores across demographic groups are considered significant.

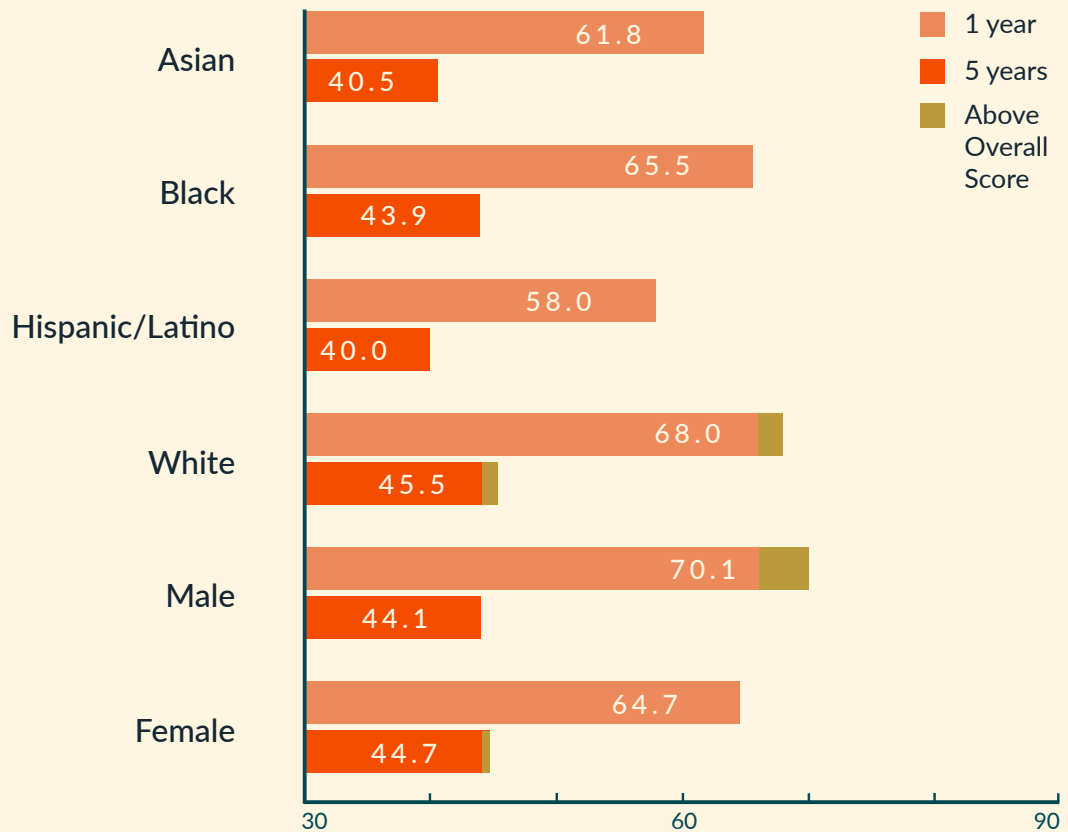
3 out of 4 **RISE** participants struggle to manage their daily job search. Knowing female contingent workers exhibit less confidence when thinking about future job security, it is crucial to understand how to support and empower diverse talent.

Interestingly, close to 90% of RISE participants find the program appealing as it offers a supportive community. Along with in-demand upskilling program certifications, RISE recognizes the importance of uplifting its participants.



# Remaining Part of the Contingent Workforce

Knowing that contingent work for many is viewed as a temporary means of unemployment until more permanent opportunities arise, Werklabs also assessed the likelihood that contingent workers could see themselves continuing to work on a contingent basis in one year and in five years into the future.



Time horizons strongly matter to contingent workers and the likelihood that they can see themselves continuing to work on a contingent basis. Overall, respondents report higher levels of likelihood of continuing to work in a contingent role in one year (Overall Score = 66.0) than in five (Overall Score = 44.4). In one year, male (70.1) and White respondents (68) report the highest levels of likelihood to remain working in a contingent capacity. In five years, White professionals remain the most likely to see themselves working in contingent roles (45.5).\*

\*Two-point differences in scores across demographic groups are considered significant.



# Our Conclusions

From our research with RISE, we know that moms and women of color are turning to upskilling and reskilling certification programs to elevate themselves and their families by realizing new economic opportunity. In the process, they are juggling the day-to-day realities of household responsibilities, work, and career search, and often with minimal support. And yet they still pursue new opportunities with the aspiration of finding the right fit between their home and work lives.

*“I’m transitioning into a new skill set that will make me much more hireable in the future. I’ll be able to qualify for more competitive positions.”*

## Contingent work is that opportunity.

Contingent work is a clear pathway for non-traditional candidates to break into new industries that at one point had felt out of reach, a common sentiment among RISE participants.

This research highlights the unique motivations and needs of diverse contingent talent with the hope of encouraging organizations to equip and empower these critical professionals in ways that allow everyone to be successful.





### About Werklabs

Werklabs, the research division of The Mom Project, develops custom research maps directly to key business outcomes like performance, productivity, customer experience, reduced risk, and revenue growth. The areas of the business and work experience that we often measure and address are:

- Optimizing employee experience
- DE&I elevation
- Organizational and team effectiveness
- Creating best-in-class parental and family policies
- Flexible work structures
- Organizational culture and values

## PRO Unlimited

### About Pro Unlimited

PRO Unlimited is a leader in contingent workforce management. Servicing hundreds of the world's most recognizable brands, PRO offers the industry's most comprehensive modern workforce management and partner ecosystem supported by data, software, intelligence and services. PRO's award-winning platform can adapt quickly to regional or industry economic shifts, and provides the speed, scale, flexibility, transparency, and expertise to serve as the holistic platform for the modern workforce.

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## RISE

### About RISE

RISE is a scholarship program committed to accelerating equity for moms and women of color by providing access to reskill and upskill tech certifications, while harnessing the power of community, support, and job placement.