

First-time job preferences: Which industries are hot?

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ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)

A recent LinkedIn survey explores how first-time jobs throughout the decades reflect personal preferences and a changing economy.

FULL TEXT

The days when many children followed their parent's career path for their first job appear to be over. LinkedIn took a multi-decade look at the most common first-job choices by industry as viewed across four generations, drawing upon a review of more than nine million profiles of LinkedIn users. The ebbs and flows in this analysis reveal U.S. labor market evolution.

Manufacturing, for example, attracted far more career starters a few generations ago than it does today. Nine percent of people in the baby boomer generation found their first job in manufacturing. That figure dropped to 7% for Gen X and 5% for millennials.

Today, first jobs in manufacturing attract a mere 4.4% of Gen Z . While non-farm, civilian U.S. employment has roughly doubled since 1970, relentless automation and offshoring have caused total manufacturing jobs to shrink more than 20% from their Nixon-era highs.

Meanwhile software and information technology service jobs have followed a more nuanced pattern. This sector's first-job percentage peaked at 8% for Gen X, which included many people starting their careers just as the dot-com craze got rolling from 1995 to 2000. That percentage has shrunk more recently, settling in at just 4% for Gen Z.

Areas with rising popularity over the decades include recreation and travel, retail, consumer goods, nonprofits and entertainment, along with wellness and fitness. Areas that have faded in relative popularity include corporate services, finance, public administration, construction, real estate and legal.

Health care and education, meanwhile, both show up as fields that never go out of style. Both have seen some fluctuations among generations. Yet each has always remained as a top-four choice for a first job regardless of era.. And the drivers for both fields' enduring popularity are intriguing.

In health care, nonstop technical advances –and greater availability of health insurance –keep expanding job options and the public's ability to pay for more care. Jobs that didn't exist a few generations ago, such as sonographers and cardiovascular technicians, are now mainstream. Opportunities for nurses, home health aides and other long-established jobs keep increasing.

America's appetite for education likewise keeps increasing. In 1964, only 12% of men and 7% of women held four-year college degrees. By 2019, the gender split had flipped and the totals had climbed to 38% for women and 37% for men. That translates into lots of job opportunities in higher education. In the K-12 sector, shrinking class sizes for much of the 20th century created new teacher demand that vastly exceeded population growth.

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