

# Monitoring the Future

## You cannot be replaced!

You were scientifically selected to be included in the follow-up sample so that your responses represent the views of thousands of people your age. If we lose contact with you, no substitution can be made, and the views of adults similar to you will not be as well represented by the study. The success of the study depends upon your willingness to continue to complete and return the questionnaire to Monitoring the Future. For this reason, we work hard to keep track of you and other participants around the country and the world. We are indeed grateful for your cooperation.



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## A Special Thanks to Our Respondents

As a Monitoring the Future study participant, you have completed many questionnaires for us since you graduated from high school. Your participation has contributed to the success of this research project, and it is very much appreciated.

Your continued response to the questionnaires has been crucial to the success of the project. The transitions you have experienced from high school until now provide a unique perspective for us to see how behaviors and attitudes change as people progress through their adult years.

This newsletter represents our commitment to distributing some of the results of the study to our participants. We are also committed to distributing the findings from this study to policymakers and the public. This important study is designed to look at changing behaviors and preferences of younger Americans as they grow into their middle years. We believe that studying the way young adults are today will tell us a lot about the way the whole nation will be tomorrow.

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## Job and Financial Outlook

In periods of economic uncertainty, people may find themselves squeezed from two sides—facing rising prices and increased debt as well as concerns about potential loss of income or assets. We wondered how our participants in the 35-55 age range were feeling about their own economic situation. We looked at participants' 2016 responses to three statements. The first, "I feel sure that I can keep working steadily with my present employer as long as I want to," was asked only of people who were employed. Everyone was asked the other two: "I feel sure I could go out and get a new job (with decent pay) whenever I want one" and "I feel that I have enough money to get along pretty well."

Our participants expressed considerable confidence about their employment continuity. The large majority of the employed people who responded in the spring/summer of 2016 felt that they could stay with their current employer as long as they wished. As Figure 1 shows, 74% "often" or "always" felt that way and only 9% "seldom" or "never" felt they had a long-term position with their employer.

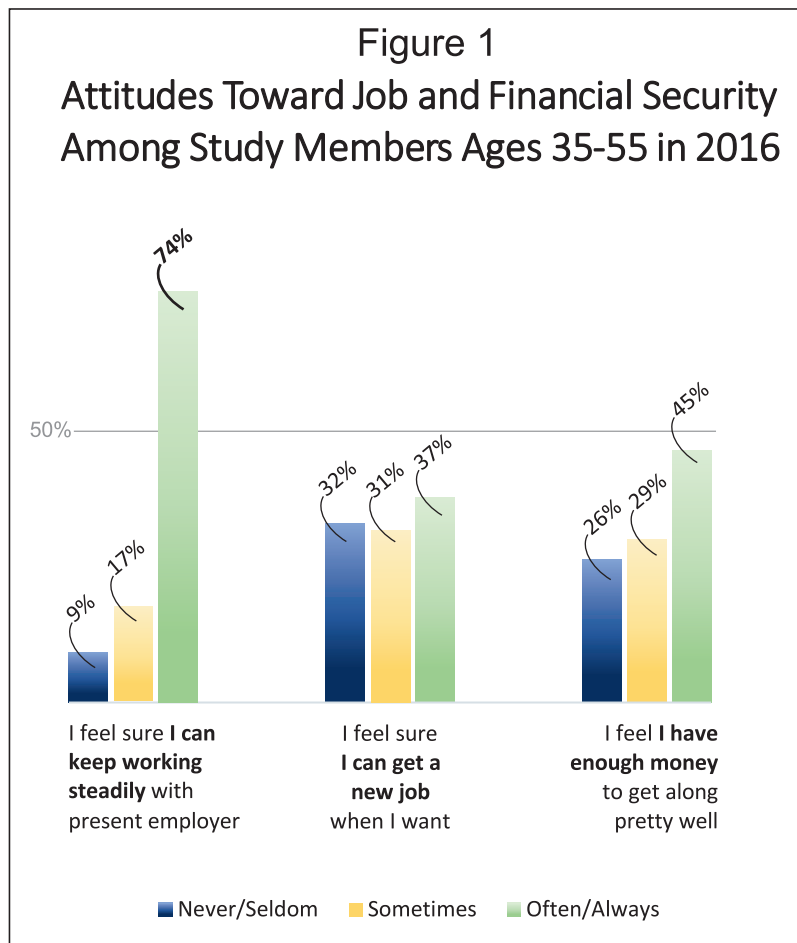
Participant's confidence levels were lower when asked if they felt that good jobs were available to them if they wanted a new job (see Figure 1). Only slightly more than a third of all participants (37%) "often" or "always" felt sure that they could go out and get a new job with decent pay whenever

they wanted. In contrast, about a third (31%) report "sometimes" feeling this way, and about another third (32%) report "seldom" or "never" feeling this way.

As shown in the right side of Figure 1, less than half of the respondents (45%) "often" or "always" felt they had enough money to get along pretty well. This means that just over half do not feel very financially secure. About one in four participants (26%) said they "never" or "seldom" felt that they had sufficient money to cover their needs well and about one in three (29%) only sometimes felt that they had enough money.

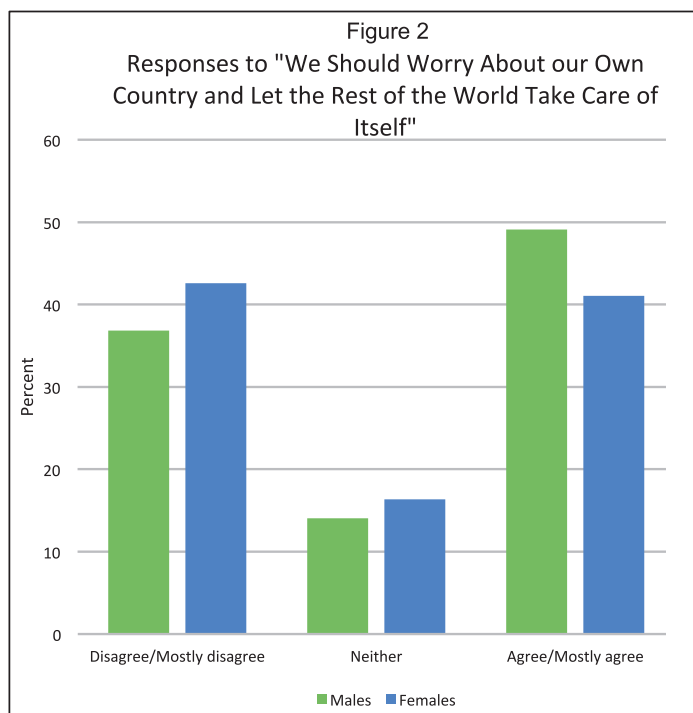
Overall, it seems that our participants aged 35-55 typically had a positive attitude toward their own financial and job security, with almost three-quarters of employed respondents reporting that they often or always felt that they would be able to keep working with their current employer if they wanted to do so. In contrast, respondents were less confident about new job prospects, with a little over a third reporting that they often or always felt sure they could get a good new job whenever they wanted one.

In addition, about one-quarter (26%) report never or seldom feeling that they have enough money to get along pretty well. Even so, it is encouraging to know that during the spring/summer of 2016, most of the Monitoring the Future participants were hopeful about their job security and on reasonably good economic footing. 

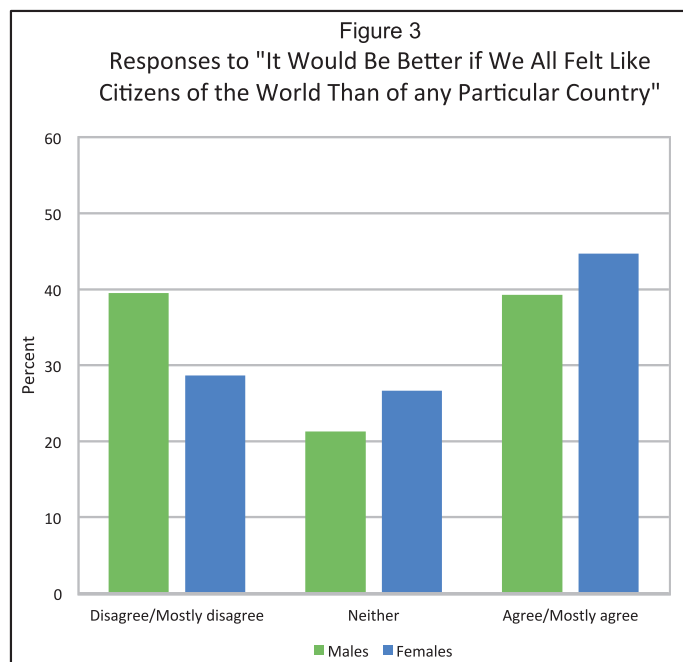


## Global Concerns: Our Role in a Changing World

Events in our country and around the world sometimes make us all think about where we should be focusing our attention. With difficult times in our own country and elsewhere, it is worth wondering how many of our participants think we should concern ourselves mostly with our own country and how many think it would be good to see ourselves as a citizens of the world. In addition, on these topics, do men and women differ in their world views and do people living in large cities have different opinions from those living in rural areas or suburbs?



To find the answers, we examined the data for participants at ages 35-55 who completed the questionnaire forms in the Spring/Summer of 2016. We considered their responses to the statements: "We ought to worry about our own country and let the rest of the world take care of itself," and "It would be better if we all felt more like citizens of the world than of any particular country." For reporting purposes, we combined all of the age groups because there was little or no difference among them.



Overall, 45% of our participants "agree" or "mostly agree" that we should be more concerned about our own country and let other countries take care of themselves. Figure 2 shows that this belief holds especially true for men, with 49 percent agreeing compared to 41 percent of women. Likewise, more women (43%) than men (37%) disagree or mostly disagree with this statement. Similar percentages of men (14%) and women (16%) expressed no opinion or mixed opinions regarding this statement.

As one might expect, based on the findings just reported, more women (45%) than men (39%) agreed or mostly agreed that it would be better if we thought of ourselves as citizens of the world rather than of any particular country (see Figure 3). Likewise, more men than women disagreed with this statement, with about 4-in-10 men and 3-in-10 women reporting that they disagreed or mostly disagreed that we would be better off if we thought more globally. A relatively large proportion of women (27%) and men (21%) indicated no or mixed opinions on this statement.

How people feel on this subject also seems to be related to the type of community in which they live. As shown in Figure 4, the response to the statement "We should worry about our own country and let the rest of the world take care of itself" has a 7 percentage point

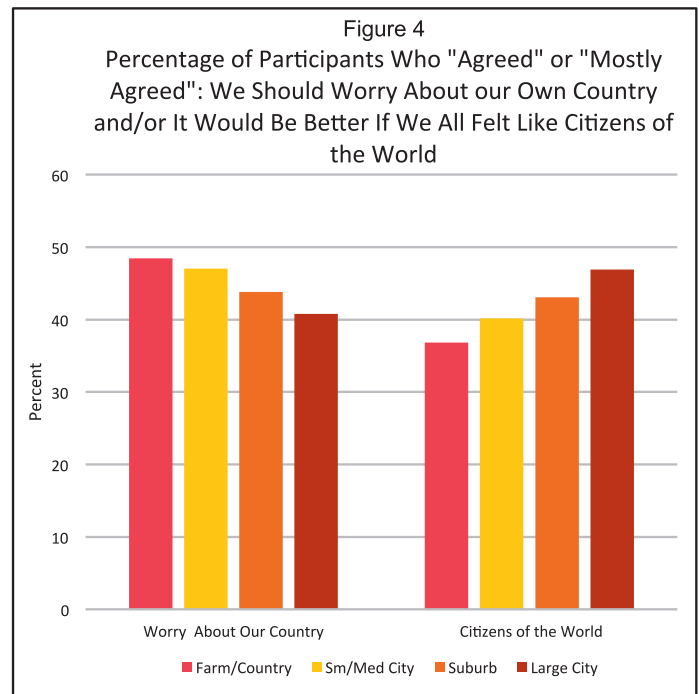
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difference in agreement between city residents and those who live in rural areas. Almost half (48%) of the participants who live on farms or in the country “agree” with this statement compared to 41% who live in large cities. The responses of people in small and medium sized cities were similar to that for rural residents—47% agreed. Suburban dwellers’ level of agreement was slightly higher (at 44%) than big city residents.

Type of community is also associated with differences in response to the statement. “It would be better if we all felt like citizens of the world,” with the differences being even more pronounced. Forty-seven percent of large city dwellers supported this opinion, compared with only 37% of rural residents. Residents of small and medium sized cities were similar to suburbanites and between the two extremes (40% and 43%, respectively).

It is interesting to note that, regardless of gender or type of community where one lives, over 20 percent of all participants choose the “neither (agree nor disagree)” category when responding to “It would be better if we all felt like citizens of the world.” Whether this number likely represents people who have mixed



opinions on the subject or no opinion at all, we do not know.

Will the way participants feel about our role in the world change with future events? That of course remains to be seen. We plan to share these results and changes, if any, with you in the years ahead. ☞

## What you've asked us...

### What are the results used for?

The results will allow an understanding of adults' values, perceptions, behavior, and their hopes for the future. Most important, we can understand how these things change or remain the same as people transition through various family- and work-related roles, and as they deal with health-related changes. The findings will reach a wide audience and have an impact in many ways. Results appear in the popular media as well as in scientific journals and are often used by policy makers at the national level.

### Can I get a summary of my individual answers throughout the years I have been a part of this survey?

A summary of results from a variety of topics are mailed out to all respondents in the form of this newsletter in December of every year. However, due to confidentiality and our policy of never connecting names and responses together, we are unable to accommodate requests to mail out individual answers.

From our house to yours, we wish you a very happy holiday season!