

# Job satisfaction falls to record low in US, survey shows

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WASHINGTON — We can't get no job satisfaction.

Even Americans who are lucky enough to have work in this economy are becoming more unhappy with their jobs, according to a new survey that found only 45 percent of Americans are satisfied with their work.

That was the lowest level ever recorded by the Conference Board research group in more than 22 years of studying the issue. In 2008, 49 percent of those surveyed reported satisfaction with their jobs.

The drop in workers' happiness can be partly blamed on the worst recession since the 1930s, which made it difficult for some people to find challenging and suitable jobs. But worker dissatisfaction has been on the rise for more than two decades.

"It says something troubling about work in America. It is not about the business cycle or one grumpy generation," said Linda Barrington, managing director of human capital at the Conference Board, who helped write the report, which was released today.

Workers have grown steadily more unhappy for a variety of reasons:

- Fewer workers consider their jobs to be interesting.

- Incomes have not kept up with inflation.

- The soaring cost of health insurance has eaten into workers' take-home pay.

If the job satisfaction trend is

not reversed, economists say, it could stifle innovation and hurt America's competitiveness and productivity. And it could make unhappy older workers less inclined to share their knowledge and skills with younger workers.

Nate Carrasco, 26, of Odessa, Texas, says he's been pretty unhappy in most of his jobs, including his current one at an auto parts store. "There is no sense of teamwork in most places anymore," Carrasco said.

When the Conference Board's first survey was conducted in 1987, most workers — 61 percent — said they were happy in their jobs. The survey of 5,000 households was conducted for the Conference Board by TNS, a global market research company.

One clue that may explain workers' growing dissatisfaction: Only 51 percent now find their jobs interesting, another low in the survey's 22 years. In 1987, nearly 70 percent said they were interested in their work.

Workers who find their jobs interesting are more likely to be innovative and to take the calculated risks and the initiative that drive productivity and contribute to economic growth, Barrington says.

"What's really disturbing about growing job dissatisfaction is the way it can play into the competitive nature of the US workforce down the road and on the growth of the US economy — all in a negative way," said Lynn Franco, another author of the report.