

CAREY LOHRENZ

— BE FEARLESS —

THE 2025 NATIONAL STUDY OF

# NAVIGATING UNCERTAINTY, CHALLENGE, AND THRIVING THROUGH CHANGE



“

*You will face turbulence. You **will** feel vulnerable. The question is—how can you succeed anyway?”*

— Carey Lohrenz

# INTRODUCTION

The 2025 National Study of Navigating Uncertainty, Challenge, and Thriving Through Change is a comprehensive study that started as a passion of mine to uncover new, missing data on leading with confidence in an era of remarkable uncertainty.

These insights have never been more valuable for organizations navigating today's turbulent waters.

Leaders everywhere recognize the future is increasingly uncertain and unpredictable. Since COVID-19, uncertainty now governs decisions, behaviors, and performance across the U.S. and worldwide.

Organizations face new problems without clear solutions. In this climate, leaders seek guidance on how to learn, adapt, and thrive in our evolving reality.

In short, leaders of all ages, titles, occupations, and experiences seek ways to learn, navigate, and lead in this new post-pandemic reality.

But what specific knowledge, practices, and actions do leaders need to achieve their potential and drive results?

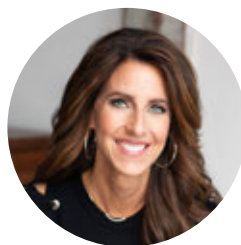
This national study aimed to uncover practical, empowering insights so leaders at every level can lead with greater confidence and impact.

This is the kind of helpful data leaders have wanted but not found—until now.

We are committed to providing the latest insights on leadership excellence and high performance, enabling you to build effective, influential organizations.

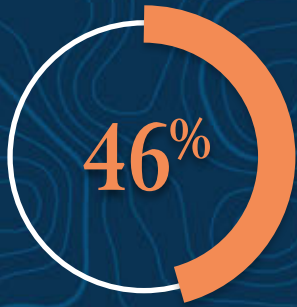
Welcome to the 2025 National Study of Navigating Uncertainty, Challenge, and Thriving Through Change. We're excited for you to explore our findings.

Your partner in leadership,



**Carey Lohrenz**, Founder and CEO  
Carey Lohrenz Enterprises  
Author of 2 WSJ Bestsellers:  
*Fearless Leadership*, and *Span of Control*

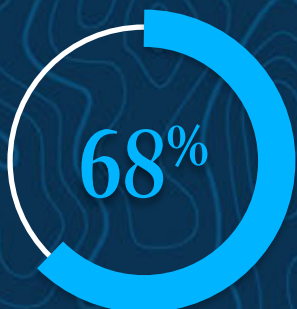




Of those currently *employed* are actively looking for work.



The majority of those employed feel less confident in their future than before the pandemic.



The majority of Gen Z feels less confident about their future now than before the pandemic.



- In finances (34%)
- Meeting new people (21%)
- With their physical health (21%)

Uncertainty is not a risk but an opportunity to learn, adapt, be resilient, and deliver sustainable growth—yet Americans today grapple with workforce challenges, inflation, geopolitics, government polarization, and much more, amplifying its impact.

Lost in this uncertainty is how these experiences directly impact the mindset, motivation, emotion, and confidence needed to pursue dreams, take risks, and persevere.

Our study found that over half of Working Americans (54%) feel less confident in their future than before the pandemic. That's a majority!

The impact on younger generations is even more pronounced, a staggering 68% of Gen Z feels less confident about their future now than before the pandemic.

As any leader can tell you, confidence is critically important. Losing it threatens creativity, innovation, and more. Shockingly, we discovered that 46% of those currently *employed* are actively looking for work.

Discovering this loss of confidence in their future should be a wake-up call that leaders and all Americans are having lasting impacts from the last few years of uncertainty, and these are now impacting their attitude about the future.

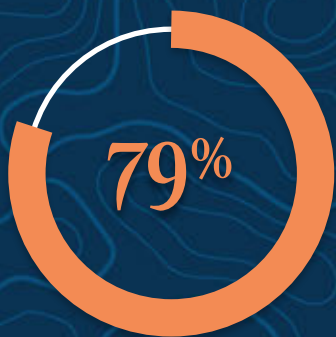
As we go further into the data, there are even more nuanced insights about the divergent impact of the pandemic and this time of uncertainty that leaders need to know:

## WOMEN ARE MOST IMPACTED

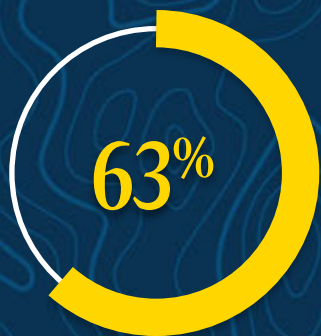
Coming out of the pandemic, the data revealed that women are impacted significantly more than men when it comes to family challenges, mental health challenges, and physical health challenges. It is essential to raise awareness of this greater impact on women as leaders consider resources, solutions, and approaches to helping all those they lead.

## DEEPER IMPACT OF UNCERTAINTY

The study found that Working Americans are not very, or not at all, confident in their finances (34%), meeting new people (21%), or with their physical health (21%). This shows the more profound impact of uncertainty—affecting a broad spectrum of perceptions, experiences, and behaviors that will have significant long-term effects, from personal finances to networking, and wellness. While the study reveals the challenges posed by uncertainty, it also highlights the resilience and determination present when people feel supported.



Surprisingly: **79% of Working Americans** say the more change they go through in life, the more confident they feel they can adapt to it



63% of Gen Z say they try to avoid change whenever possible, the highest of any generation

## CHALLENGES CAN BUILD STRENGTH

In a nod to the resilience and determination of Americans, the national study found that 79% say the more change they experience in life, the more confident they feel adapting to it.

So, while the study clearly shows the downsides of recent uncertainty, it also reveals most people are not giving up. Instead, they see challenges as a pathway to building strength. **The study also uncovered surprising insights about generational differences in dealing with change.**

**Change avoidance is real:** Which generation most avoids change?

Many would guess older generations with more experience, set in tradition, with ingrained behaviors. But that would be incorrect.

In a surprise discovery, Gen Z most says they try to avoid change whenever possible. That's right, a vast majority (**63%**) of the youngest generation avoid change whenever possible.

This contrasts with prior generations who were experiencing a lot of change in earlier adult life stages—such as buying a house, starting a family, etc.

## BEYOND GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES, THE STUDY EXPLORED WHAT MOTIVATES PEOPLE TO DO THEIR BEST WORK.

### MOTIVATION MATTERS

The study explored what holds people back and what motivates their best work.

**Of all the motivations tested**, overwhelmingly, Working Americans are most motivated to do their best when they feel good about themselves.

This is important for leaders to recognize because Working Americans who feel good about themselves do their best work, a clear message for leaders to hear.

### NAVIGATING CHANGE VARIES

When it comes to change, Americans believe that the difficulty of navigating it depends on the type of change confronting them.



Americans *actively* looking for work experienced more difficulty navigating change in 8 out of 9 areas of life tested.



The number one benefit of navigating change:

*better mental health*

## WHAT TYPE OF CHANGE IS MOST DIFFICULT FOR WORKING AMERICANS?

The study found that Working Americans have the **most difficulty** navigating change regarding their personal finances. *Significantly* more than any other area of their lives tested in the study.

Going deeper into the data from that question was another staggering finding: Americans *actively looking* for work experienced more difficulty navigating change than full-time, part-time, or self-employed Americans in **8 out of the 9** areas of life tested.

## UNLOCKING SUCCESS

### THE BENEFIT THAT WINS

Leaders often wonder what the top benefit or outcome is for Working Americans when they successfully navigate change.

In a surprise and telling discovery, the number one benefit of all those tested? Better mental health.

More than better physical health, confidence, and feeling more in control, Working Americans said the top *benefit of navigating change* is better mental health. This is an excellent outcome for Working Americans and the organization(s) counting on them to perform at a high level.

### AN EXCRUCIATING COST

In further exploring Working Americans navigating change, what was the biggest consequence of being unable to navigate change successfully?

By an even *larger margin* than the benefit of successfully navigating change, the **most painful** personal consequence of not navigating change well: **worse mental health.**

The polarity of mental health being both the best outcome of successfully navigating change **and**, by an even larger margin, the worst outcome of not successfully navigating change speaks to the urgency, influence, and emotional impact that navigating change creates.

It's up to leaders to help Americans better navigate change to boost skills, mental health, and confidence for the future.

The gap in confidence and outlook, especially among the younger generation, is concerning, and will significantly affect individuals and organizations.





# What should you consider to better prepare to navigate change, avoid the damaging pitfalls of change, and create more positive outcomes amid uncertainty?

In my work with leaders and organizations globally—from Fortune 500s to startups and governmental agencies—I’ve seen an approach that generates results. This method sparks conversations and reconnects priorities for learning, resources, and planning:



## ACTIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS

### 1. INVEST IN YOUR GROWTH

During uncertain times, people may hesitate to take risks or try new things, even when it’s the right move. It’s essential to keep growing and developing your skills, especially after facing challenges. By expanding your knowledge and abilities, you gain confidence and a positive attitude toward learning. This helps you seize new opportunities and invest in yourself. Don’t let change and uncertainty hold back your career growth and potential.

This ensures change and uncertainty don’t limit an individual’s career growth and potential.

### 2. USE MENTAL HEALTH TOOLS AND RESOURCES

As the research clearly shows, mental health risks come with change. The top benefit of successfully navigating change is better mental health. But worse mental health is an **even greater risk**.

Providing tools, resources, training, professionals, and support enable people to better navigate stress and anxiety. This enables them to be their best selves at work and in life.

### 3. BUILD RESILIENCE AND ADAPTABILITY

Confidence often goes hand in hand with resilience and the ability and willingness to adapt to change.

Those needing confidence may require help preparing for and navigating uncertainty.

Leaders can help support resilience by highlighting the strength and stability of their team members, their organization, and the personal journeys of the talent across their organization.

People often forget their resilience, especially when confidence is low.

Reminding people, resurfacing those stories, strategies, and memories—shows people they’ve done it before, and can do it again.



## ACTIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

### 1. INNOVATING TALENT ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

The research shows Gen Z workers are the *least confident* in their future after going through such a deep time of uncertainty.

Addressing this head-on is key to attracting and retaining this emerging generation of talent.

Gen Z needs to see a clear, attainable future with the company, so their confidence is strong.

This connection *should be a priority* for all leaders who want to attract and keep this emerging generation long-term.

If Gen Z doesn't see a clear future with the company, they're more likely to seek opportunities elsewhere. Don't let this happen. Show them they have a future at your organization.

### 2. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND SMART RISK TAKING

When people lack confidence, they may avoid innovation and change, because of the potential for failure, loss, or disappointment. They defend or support the status quo rather than being open to change and champions for innovation.

This hinders performance, creativity, and adaptation.

Leaders often find it difficult to build and sustain a high-performing team in these circumstances.

Fostering a culture of innovation, smart risk-taking, and elevating learning over failure is key to making it safe to fail, learn, and grow.

### 3. LEAD BY EXAMPLE FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE

Confidence is closely tied to peak performance. If a significant percentage of the workforce needs more confidence in their future, the organization's overall performance, productivity, and results can suffer.

Now more than ever, leading by example through actions, words, and vision is crucial. Inspire your team to follow you to higher levels of excellence.

Leading by example has never been more important, especially in times of uncertainty and lower confidence.



Transparent and consistent communication can restore employee confidence at this critical time. (For more strategies, visit page 215 in Span of Control to learn how to communicate an organization's plans, invest in employee development, and support mental health.)

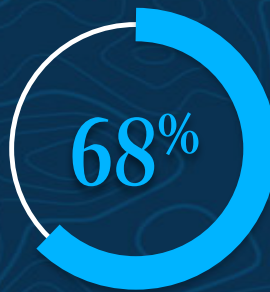
As the first section of the research study revealed, now is a crucial time for organizations to engage with their employees and teammates (such as **briefing and debriefing**), particularly the younger generation, to understand their concerns and provide the necessary support and solutions.

This builds a confident, resilient, and adaptable workforce better equipped to navigate change and uncertainty.

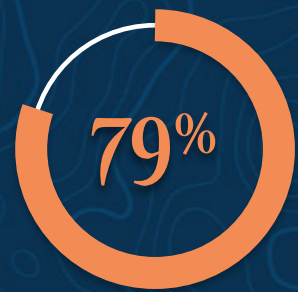
## KEY FINDINGS AND ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS: WHAT EMPLOYERS CAN DO



54% of Working Americans feel less confident about their future than before the pandemic.



68% of Gen Z feels less confident about their future now than before the pandemic.



79% say the more change they experience, the more confident they feel adapting to it.



1. Invest in employee development to build skills and confidence.



2. Provide mental health resources and support.



3. Foster a culture of resilience and adaptability.





## RESEARCH STUDY SERIES CONCLUSIONS: THE TIME IS NOW

“

*Panic-stricken people do not make good decisions, nor do they inspire confidence in their team. In times of crisis, change, and uncertainty, focus on your Span of Control.”*

— Carey Lohrenz

The world has transformed dramatically in recent years. Most leaders were not ready. Most employees were not ready. Most organizations were not ready. Now is the time to dive deep and find research-driven truth in the current experience, unmet needs, and leadership priorities. Results matter now more than ever.

This national study series revealed numerous shocking discoveries, important insights, actionable data points, and key trends that leaders must act on immediately.

The findings touch on every aspect of culture, performance, leadership, wellness, innovation, goal setting, planning, and outcomes.

Leading a study of this depth and complexity was a major undertaking. But the discoveries are incredibly valuable for strategic decisions to drive the organization forward through uncertainty.

One thing is clear: **leadership grounded in data and insights is critical.**

This is why I lead this global work, write books, speak, and advise leaders worldwide.

Together we can use this data and these discoveries to create the plans, strategies, and approaches enabling fearless leadership and optimizing your Span of Control.

I'm committed to these goals and am excited to provide this study at no cost, so you can implement these findings for real results.

Reach out to see how we can work together to drive the results you and your organization need right now. Together we have the experience, expertise, and now the data to lead in uncertain times for outcomes you can rely on.

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## THREE ACTIONS TO LEAD FEARLESSLY AND TAP INTO YOUR SPAN OF CONTROL



Download your free chapters from Fearless Leadership and Span of Control here: [careylohrenz.com/free-chapters/](https://careylohrenz.com/free-chapters/)



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Contact my team for an in-person keynote or leadership program at [CareyLohrenz.com](https://CareyLohrenz.com) or [BookCarey@CareyLohrenz.com](mailto:BookCarey@CareyLohrenz.com)



## OUR TAKEAWAY: FEARLESS LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

To thrive in uncertainty, organizations must prioritize fearless leadership at all levels. This research report series reveals a roadmap for building confidence, fostering psychological safety, and optimizing Span of Control™.

By investing in employee development, embracing smart risks, and leading with transparency, organizations can navigate disruption and achieve high performance.

The time for fearless leadership is now.

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### NATIONAL STUDY METHODOLOGY

The 2025 National Study of Navigating Uncertainty, Challenge, and Thriving Through Change was conducted in partnership with, and fielded by an independent research firm. The custom research study included a total of 1,003 U.S. participants ages 18-65, who are currently employed full-time, part-time, or actively looking for work.

The study is weighted to the 2020 U.S. Census for age, region, gender, and ethnicity. The research study was conducted online from October 18, 2023, to November 7, 2023. The total sample of 1,003 has a margin of error of +/-3.1 percentage points.



# CAREY LOHRENZ

— BE FEARLESS —



## ABOUT CAREY LOHRENZ

### FIGHTER PILOT, BESTSELLING AUTHOR, KEYNOTE SPEAKER

As one of the first female F-14 Tomcat fighter pilots in the U.S. Navy, Carey Lohrenz knows firsthand how inconsistent execution can generate catastrophic results in high-stakes, fast-moving environments.

Lohrenz has translated her pressure-tested leadership and strategy experience to help business leaders thrive in today's competitive business environments. Lohrenz has appeared on CNN, MSNBC, NBC, CBS, ABC, and NPR, and in Vanity Fair, Inc., Time, Huffington Post, and more, and has delivered her high-impact keynotes and programs to thousands of Forbes Global 2000, Fortune 500, and other companies worldwide.

A CEO, board member, business owner, and mom to four kids, Lohrenz inspires individuals and teams how to summon the courage, tenacity, and agility required to execute with excellence amidst adversity. By following her approach, they learn to navigate complexity, lead change, and deliver results when it matters most.

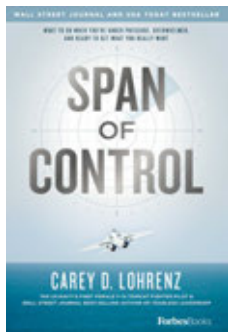
## CAREY'S BESTSELLING BOOKS

### FEARLESS LEADERSHIP



In “Fearless Leadership: High Performance Lessons from the Flight Deck,” she walks readers through the three fundamentals a leader must possess to exhibit real fearlessness: courage, tenacity, and integrity. Lohrenz then reveals what fearless leadership looks like in action, offering advice on how to set a bold vision, bring the team together (as wingmen, not Top Gun Mavericks), execute effectively, and stay resilient through hard times. Whether they're stepping into their first leadership role or looking to get out of a longstanding rut, readers will find this resource to act like an afterburner, rocketing them to ever-higher levels of performance.

### SPAN OF CONTROL



In Span of Control, Lohrenz picks up right where Fearless Leadership left off—encouraging readers to develop resilience for facing hard times. Span of Control offers a collection of moving stories, actionable tools, and opportunities for reader reflection, all of which can be applied immediately in businesses, on teams, and in readers' personal lives. The central tenet of this book—that we focus our attention and effort explicitly and relentlessly on a limited number of priorities that we can, and should, control—offers a clear path out of the chaos and overwhelm that can accompany our biggest challenges and our moments of greatest distress.

## FOR MORE TOOLS, RESOURCES, AND MEDIA INQUIRIES CONTACT US



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