A woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a white lab coat over a dark blue polka-dot top, is leaning over a desk. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a bright, modern office space with large windows. An orange diagonal overlay covers the bottom half of the image, containing the main text.

# High Education and Income Do Not Guarantee a Resilient Employee

# INTRODUCTION

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Change is inevitable. Any successful business manager knows their organization must continually evolve to stay relevant and competitive. Whether it's the packaged goods company that has reached the limits of its market, or the financial giant integrating a new software platform, or the global corporation building teams, adaptability is imperative. Having resilient employees that are open to change and better equipped to cope with stress is key.

**But it may surprise you to learn who among your employees will weather the storm and who won't. The Chief Technology Officer? Or the lead on the innovation project? Your top analyst? While some managers understandably assume that their highest earning, most highly educated employees are all highly resilient, they may need to think again.**

A study from meQuilibrium, the only clinically validated resilience building program on the market today, conducted by behavioral scientist Wendy Lynch, Ph.D., and psychologist Andrew Shatté, Ph.D., shows that a large salary and a college degree do not guarantee high resilience.\*

In fact, resilience, defined as the ability to bounce back from adversity, is independent of income and education, as well as other personal attributes, including age and gender. And nearly half of the people surveyed in the study who had high levels of education and income scored low in resilience.

**These findings mean that your highest paid, highest educated employees are at risk for feeling burned out, having sleep issues, experiencing more absences, and slowing down their productivity. What's more, study participants with low resilience scores had three times the depression risk and twice the rate of absence and intent to quit than those who scored high in resilience. You have just a 50/50 chance of guessing who those people are, according to the study.**

"If an employer is interested in resilience, they can't ignore their highly paid and highly educated workers," said Lynch, the study's primary author.

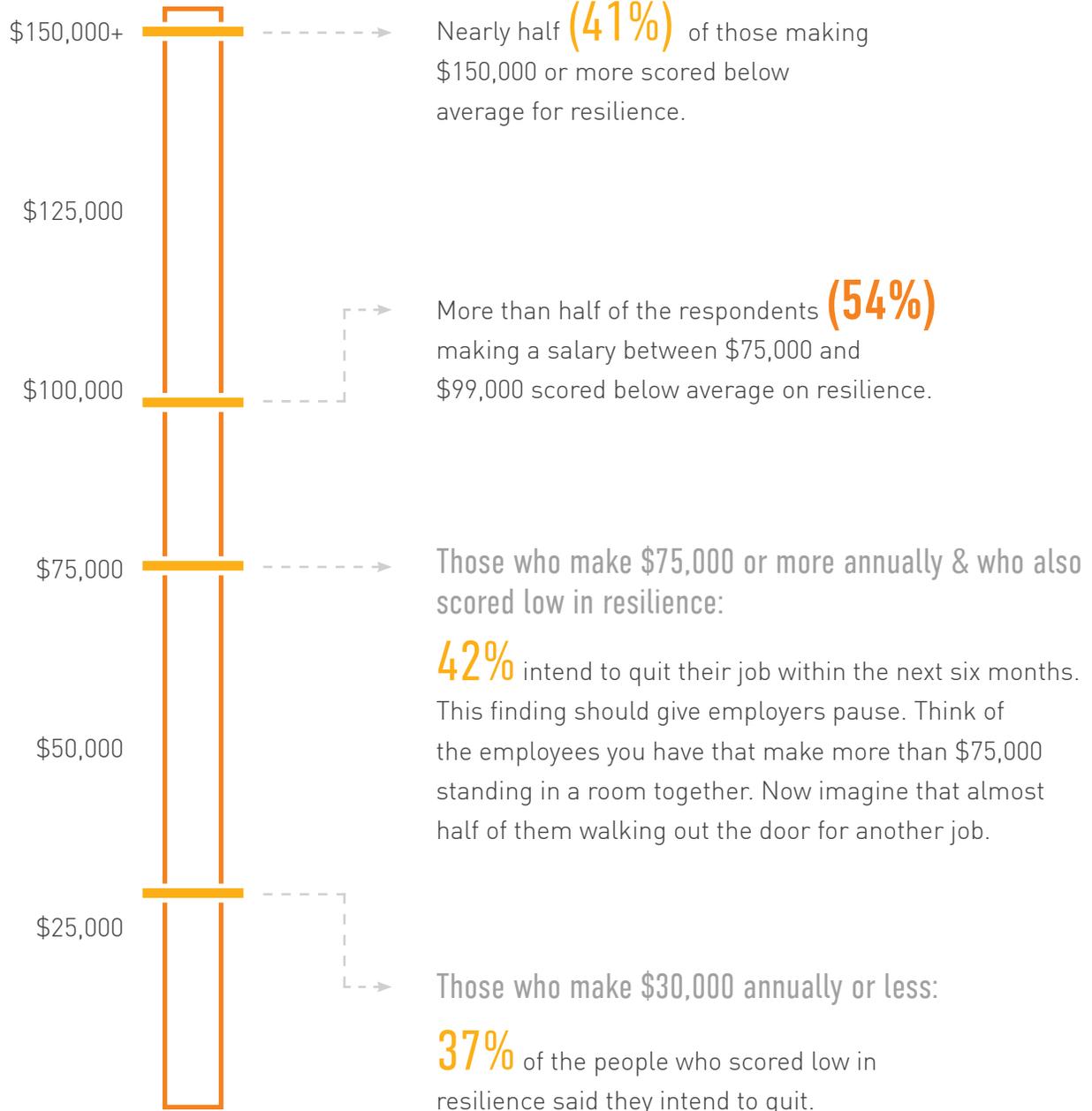
\* Is Resilience the Result of Higher Education and Income? Investigating the Independent Effect of Resilience on Stress and Work  
Andrew Shatté, PhD, Adam Perlman, MD, MPH, Brad Smith, PhD, and Wendy D. Lynch, PhD. Available upon request

# ALMOST 50% OF HIGH VALUE EMPLOYEES HAVE LOW RESILIENCE

The research team at meQuilibrium analyzed **2,063 responses** to a web survey. Respondents, who were between the **ages of 18 and 64 years**, were asked a wide range of questions to determine several different characteristics.

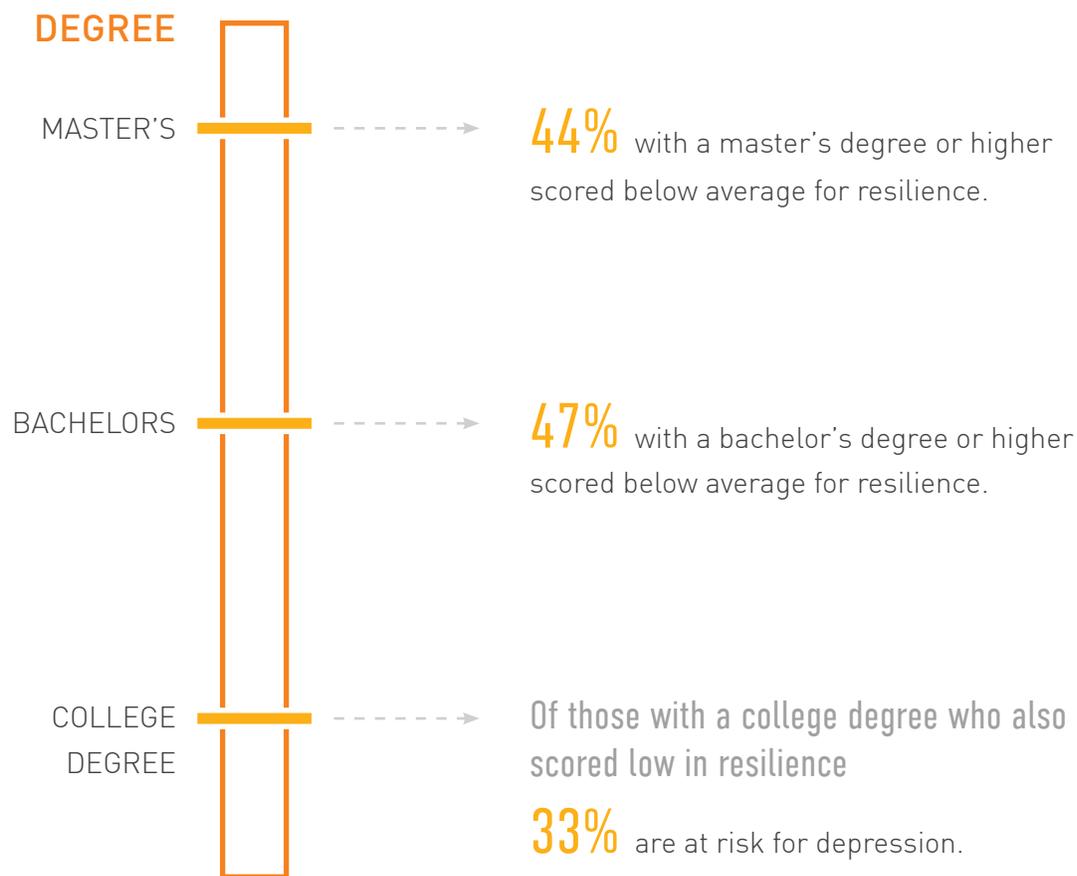
Making a high wage does not make necessarily make a person more resilient than her coworker earning less money. **People making more than \$75,000 a year scored low in resilience and are at a high risk for quitting.** Here's how it breaks down.

## SALARY



## DOES EDUCATION EQUAL RESILIENCE?

As with high-income earners, college-educated workers seem to be more at risk than their high-school-educated colleagues. Many people with a bachelor's degree or higher scored low in resilience and are at risk for depression. Let's look at the numbers:



“If an employer is interested in resilience, they can’t ignore their highly paid and highly educated workers,” said Lynch, the study’s primary author.

## SOME GOOD NEWS FROM THE STUDY

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In the past 30 years, about 600 peer-reviewed studies have looked at the psychological effects of resilience and have found that it has a measurable, positive influence on worker health and performance. In addition to looking at income and education, the meQuilibrium researchers also wanted to see whether resilience was independent of four variables—age, gender, income levels, and education levels.

They put all of their data into a computer model and looked specifically at how low resilience and high resilience affected different stress- and job-related outcomes. If resilience were simply an artifact of making good money or having a high education, the scientists reasoned, there wouldn't be any differences when the two variables were compared.

But there were significant differences. For all stress-related and job-related outcomes, having high resilience improved a person's ability to fend off perceived stress, burnout, depression risk, and sleep issues. Having a high level of resilience also kept people from feeling a desire to quit, it improved their job satisfaction and productivity and reduced their absences.

**Two outcomes stood out the most. High resilience offered twice the protection against perceived stress than low resilience and offered three times the protection against depression risk than low resilience. This finding means that people with a high level of resilience experience fewer negative mental health symptoms.**

**Lastly, of those with a college degree or higher who scored high in resilience, only 8% of them were at risk for depression. Compare that to the 33% of college-educated workers with low resilience who were at risk.**

Resilience is a unique attribute with a benefit that's independent of person's income or education. Because you can't know which of your employees are at the highest risk, be they high-paid executives or high-school graduates on the front lines of your organization, training all of them can give an organization the edge it needs to adjust to change.

**Resilience is a unique attribute with a benefit that's independent of person's income or education.**

## THE BENEFITS OF RESILIENCE TRAINING

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Resilience is the ability to bounce back from an unexpected challenge (Windle, 2011), to remain psychologically robust when faced with adversity. Everyone can improve the way they respond to stressful situations, to reframe the way they think about stressful events to minimize the impact. Resilience can be learned (A.J. Shatte, 2012).

The training uses cognitive behavior therapy tools to identify thought patterns that increase stress. For some people, these thoughts come on without full awareness and can quickly inundate the mind with thoughts that exacerbate a stressful situation. But with personalized coaching, the thought patterns can be pinpointed, and a person can gain control over those negative thoughts, feelings, reactions, and behaviors.

**meQuilibrium's platform and proprietary algorithm's make it possible for each individual's self-guided journey based on a personal assessment. By practicing simple skills on a regular basis and then reinforcing these skills, a person can develop new strategies to deal with, not just the ups and downs of work, but of life.**

Everyone can improve the way they respond to stressful situations, to reframe the way they think about stressful events to minimize the impact.

## HOW MEQUILIBRIUM ARRIVED AT THESE NUMBERS

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To tease out these numbers, the research team at meQuilibrium analyzed 2,063 responses to a web survey. Respondents, who were between the ages of 18 and 64 years, were asked a wide range of questions to determine several different characteristics. First among them were questions designed to determine their resilience score. These questions are based on the sixteen-item meQuilibrium Resilience Scale, which accounts for a person's problem-solving skills, their ability to control their emotions, their optimism, and their self-efficacy. The answers people gave put them in one of four rankings (by quartile): lowest, low, high and highest.

The survey also asked questions to determine the person's level of education and income. To root out how each person described his or her stress level, the survey asked questions related to self-reported stress, burnout, depression risk, and sleep issues.

For example, In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly? ( 0 = Never 1 = Almost Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Fairly Often 4 = Very Often). And How often do you think: "I can't take it anymore"?

And finally, the survey asked questions to and their attitudes about their jobs. For example, Other than vacation days or holidays, how many days of work did you miss last month?

In all, the respondents answered a total of over 100 questions. Lynch ran the responses to these questions through a couple of different statistical models to find the enlightening results.

In all, the respondents answered a total of over 100 questions. Lynch ran the responses to these questions through a couple of different statistical models to find the enlightening results.

## About meQuilibrium

meQuilibrium builds, delivers, and supports the only clinically validated resilience program on the market today. Its mission is to help both individuals and organizations unleash and realize their potential, achieving measurable improvements in well-being, adaptive capacity, purpose, and performance. To achieve this, meQuilibrium combines behavioral psychology, neuroscience, and data with its proprietary algorithms. On a cloud-based platform, meQuilibrium delivers the insights that lead to resilient transformation.

For more information on how you can improve resilience in your organization, contact meQuilibrium at 617.274.8830, email [sales@meQuilibrium.com](mailto:sales@meQuilibrium.com), or visit us at [meQuilibrium.com](http://meQuilibrium.com)

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