
Career Gaps Not a Problem According to Canadian Hiring Managers

Schooling, Caregiving and Health Issues Acceptable Reasons for Gaps

TORONTO, May 15, 2024 — Many Canadian job seekers (34%) worry that having a career gap in their resume would prevent them from being hired, but most hiring managers say they are not a problem, according to a newly released Express Employment Professionals-Harris Poll survey.

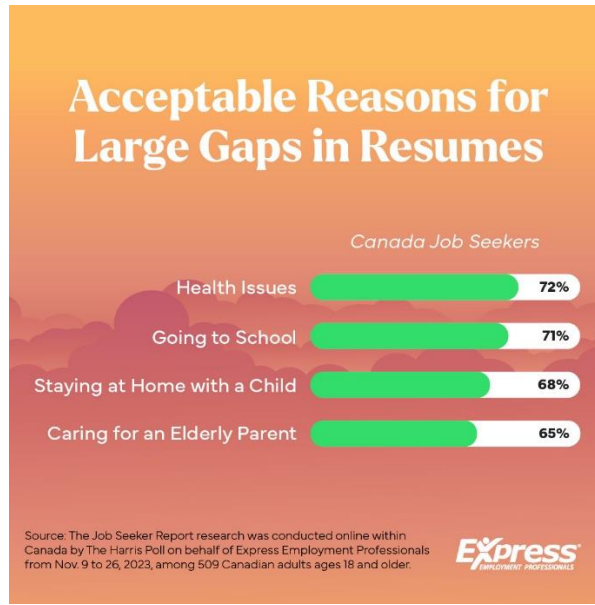
Indeed, the vast majority (92%) of hiring managers say there are acceptable reasons for large gaps in an applicant's resume (the same proportion of job seekers agree) — with only one-third (36%) responding that a large and unexplainable gap between work experiences would cause them not to hire a candidate.

The acceptable reasons for large gaps on job applicants' resumes include:

- Going to School — 68% hiring managers; 71% job seekers
- Staying Home with a Child — 66% hiring managers; 68% job seekers
- Health Issues — 64% hiring managers; 72% job seekers
- Caring for an Elderly Parent — 63% hiring managers; 65% job seekers
- Trying to Switch Careers — 46% hiring managers; 47% job seekers
- Not Liking Working in Their Past Industry — 25% hiring managers; 24% job seekers

Interestingly, female hiring managers tend to be more accepting of career gaps in numerous categories compared to males. For example, 71% of female hiring managers say career gaps are acceptable if staying home with a child, compared to 62% of male hiring managers. When it comes to health issues, 73% of female hiring managers view it acceptable compared to 58% of male hiring managers.

This difference is also found among job seekers. For example, 78% of female job seekers believe staying at home with a child is an acceptable reason for a career gap, compared to 62% of male job seekers.



Re-Entering the Workforce After a Career Gap

According to Hanif Hemani, Express franchise owner in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, most career gaps have a legitimate explanation, and candidates should be transparent about it during the hiring process.

“Generally, acceptable gaps are health-related matters, educational upgrading and family support needs to name a few,” said Hemani. “But excessive gaps can raise flags with employers and limit a candidate’s ability to secure the next step in the process, so I suggest providing a short explanation from the beginning, if the candidate is comfortable doing so, as to the nature of the gap.”

Hemani says there are other issues employers pay more attention to than career gaps.

“One area of concern among employers is a candidate with no gaps, but many shorter employment roles,” he said. “This raises red flags about the employee’s commitment or ability to work with others.”

Hemani says that both job seekers and employers must be realistic about a candidate returning to the workforce after a long gap.

“The reality is that candidates who have been out of the workforce for a while can have a difficult time because market conditions have changed, the role responsibilities have changed and technology has changed — often their confidence level has changed too,” said Hemani. “Many returnees recognize that they will need to start in a lower position than they left, and often will need to reskill or acclimatize to these new realities.”

But there are things job seekers who are re-entering the workforce after a gap can do to increase their chances of getting hired.

“Like any skill, lack of practice will diminish capabilities and performance,” said Hemani. “Job seekers can recognize this and proactively upgrade technical skills, job shadow and get micro credentialed. This will show the employer that they are trying and is usually indicative of their work ethic and work nature, which employers will perceive positively.”

It can be easy to overlook candidates without a linear work history, but that could be a mistake, according to Express Employment International CEO Bill Stoller.

“For even the most dedicated employee, life interruptions happen,” he said. “Hiring managers might miss out on the ideal candidate by simply evaluating them on paper. If the applicant has the proper skills and appears to be a cultural fit, it’s worth bringing them in for further evaluation and a possible employment offer.”

Survey Methodology

The Job Insights survey was conducted online within Canada by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals between Oct. 31 and Nov. 10, 2023, among 504 Canadian hiring decision-makers.

The Job Seeker survey was conducted online within Canada by the Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from November 9-26, 2023, among 509 Canadian adults ages 18 and older.

For full survey methodology, please contact Ana@MapleLeafStrategies.com.

If you would like to arrange for an interview to discuss this topic, please contact Ana Curic at (613) 858-2622 or email Ana@MapleLeafStrategies.com.

About Bill Stoller

William H. "Bill" Stoller is chairman and chief executive officer of Express Employment International. Founded in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, the international staffing franchisor supports the Express Employment Professionals franchise and related brands. The Express franchise brand is an industry-leading, international staffing company with franchise locations in the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

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