
Canadian Job Seekers Worried About Labour Market as Tables Turn in Favour of Employers

High Number of Long-Term Unemployed Canadians

TORONTO, Aug. 14, 2024 — Canadian job seekers are more pessimistic about their opportunities, signaling they have lost the upper hand in the job market they had in the previous few years to employers, according to a new Express Employment Professionals-Harris Poll survey.

More than half of job seekers (57%) say it will be difficult to find a job in the next six months. There has also been a significant decline in the number of job seekers who believe there are more job opportunities in their field compared to a year ago (only 20% currently, compared to 27% in Fall 2023 and 33% in Spring 2023). Indeed, more job seekers now believe there are fewer job opportunities overall (38% currently, up from 31% in both Fall and Spring 2023).

In addition, many unemployed Canadians face longer periods of unemployment, with nearly 2 in 5 unemployed job seekers (38%) reporting being unemployed for more than two years.

The main causes reported for becoming unemployed include individuals quitting their job voluntarily (18%), being laid off (15%) and being terminated or fired (10%). For those who quit, the reasons were moving away from their former work location (49%), burn out (21%), wanting to find a job with better pay (16%), looking for a job with better benefits (16%) and not liking the company culture (15%).

Another sign that the job market has shifted is that, while most job seekers want to accept full-time positions (80%), job seekers are now more willing to accept part-time positions (47% compared to 38% in Spring 2023), temporary or seasonal positions (28% compared to 16% in Spring 2023) or even positions below their most recent pay level (15% compared to 7% in Spring 2023).

Even those currently employed and looking for new job opportunities are worried about the state of the labour market.

Among their top fears regarding their current job, employed job seekers list not getting the

raise they deserve (47%), a slow down in work opportunities due to the economy (32%), their company reducing the workforce due to the economic climate (27%) and AI/technology replacing their position (23%, which is a significant increase from 12% in Spring 2023). In addition, more than half of employed job seekers (53%) reported working longer hours and more shifts than usual in the past year, a large increase from 37% in Fall 2023.

It is unsurprising then that the most common reasons employed Canadians are looking for new jobs is to find better compensation (46%), better work life/balance (44% compared to 35% in Spring 2023) and better growth opportunities in their current field (43% compared to 30% in Spring 2023).



Defining a Job vs. Career

Employed job seekers have worked at their company for an average of 7.5 years (down from the average tenure of 8.9 years in Spring 2023) and a quarter have been with their company for more than 10 years (24%).

However, even with many recording long tenures at their company, employed job seekers are split on whether they describe their current employment as having a job (i.e., the work I do to earn money to support my needs and wants) (51%) versus having a career (i.e., a long-term occupation or profession I not only earn money to support my basic needs and wants but also enjoy and take pride in) (49%).

Employed job seekers share several reasons for saying their employment is just a job, including:

- “No option for advancement or increase in pay...just a cog in the machine.” – 47-year-old female job seeker

- “It is something I do to make money. Even though I have been there for a long time and expect to be there until I retire, it doesn’t define who I am.” – 51-year-old male job seeker

Other job seekers see careers as employment in which they are personally invested, have a sense of expertise, match what they went to school for or feel like they are making a meaningful difference. Specifically, they say:

- “I had a plan early on to follow this particular career path. I geared my education and early work experiences towards this path. I love this job because it’s what I want to do.” – 56-year-old male job seeker
- “It is work that I believe in, and feel is integral. Long-term goals and benefits.” – 48-year-old male job seeker
- “My work has meaningful impact to myself and other peoples’ lives.” – 36-year-old male job seeker

“Every job serves a purpose and could be the first stepping stone on the path to a meaningful career,” said Bill Stoller, Express Employment International CEO. “For those feeling unfulfilled in everyday duties, making positive changes starts today. With the widespread availability of online certifications and training, make the investment to reskill and turn your job into a career of fulfillment.”

Survey Methodology

The Job Seeker Report was conducted online within Canada by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals between May 28 – June 10, 2024, among 505 adults ages 18 and older.

For full survey methodologies, please contact Ana Curic at 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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