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The State of Blue Collar America: *Satisfied with Work, Satisfied with Life*

New White Paper Explores Trends in the Blue Collar Workforce

High Paying Jobs with No College Degree—or Minimal Debt

Blue Collar Work is Red Hot

OKLAHOMA CITY, Feb. 13, 2019 – Previously a declining sector of the United States workforce, blue collar jobs are growing at the fastest rate in nearly three and a half decades, yet workers are scarcer than ever, according to studies from [The Washington Post](#) and [The Conference Board](#), respectively. This unique combination of circumstances creates significant new opportunities for Americans who may not have a college education. And, as they look to invest in a career, they face a question: is taking a blue collar job a smart decision?



According to America's blue collar workers, the answer appears to be a resounding yes. Today, Express Employment Professionals released a new white paper, "[The State of Blue Collar America](#)." Drawing on the expertise of Express franchise owners and on original polling commissioned by Express and conducted by Harris Poll, the white paper offers an in-depth look at blue collar workers, how they find meaning in their work and why filling open blue collar jobs is so important.

"For the first time in modern history, blue collar job openings outnumber white collar opportunities," said Express Employment Professionals CEO Bill Stoller. "These are some of the most in-demand jobs in our country. So as our paper argues, it's time to rethink negative stereotypes about blue collar work. Job seekers really are in the driver's seat, and that's part of the reason we're seeing rising wages in many of these fields."

The recent Conference Board study reveals blue collar labor shortages are the result of "converging demographic, educational and economic trends in the U.S. economy." Baby boomers who once held these jobs are retiring, while others have left the labor force because of disabilities. And more Americans are obtaining four-year degrees, while those without continues to decline.

Industries that are feeling the squeeze in particular include transportation, production/manufacturing and health care support.

Gad Levanon, lead report author and Chief Economist of North America at The Conference Board, says that while the picture may look bleak for businesses, it looks very different for the workers. Blue collar workers are now more likely to enjoy their jobs and be rewarded with rapid pay increases, which confirms the Express survey findings of this segment of the workforce.

The vast majority of blue collar workers (86 percent) say they are satisfied with their jobs, and 91 percent say their work makes them “proud.” And as the paper reports, blue collar workers are more likely to have a positive outlook about the direction of the country.

Accurate perceptions of blue collar life, then, are important for those considering career paths. But there are much larger implications: if jobs go unfilled, the strength of the American economy is at stake too. As Luke Sodergren, an Express franchise owner in Wisconsin and Minnesota puts it, “We have many skilled positions that go unfilled because there is a shortage of talented individuals wanting to enter the trades.”

The paper breaks down what more Americans need to understand about blue collar workers:

- Blue collar work brings satisfaction.
- Blue collar work offers viable career paths and advancement.
- Blue collar workers recommend their career paths.
- Well-paying jobs are possible without a college degree and the debt that comes with it.
- While they acknowledge challenges, blue collar workers have a positive outlook on the future.
- Blue collar workers have positive expectations for 2019, and very few are concerned about automation disrupting their careers.
- Blue collar workers may face unique retirement challenges.
- Blue collar workers lament that, despite their own satisfaction, society looks down on their work.

“There’s been a great deal of chatter about the future and frustrations of America’s blue collar workers,” Stoller added. “But our research shows that most blue collar workers feel good about themselves and their jobs. It is in all of our best interest, then, to check our preconceived notions—because our collective future will be determined in part by whether these jobs are filled. One thing that will never change is the importance and value of skilled workers in the modern and future economy.”

If you would like to arrange for an interview with Bill Stoller to discuss this topic, please contact Sheena Karami, Director of Corporate Communications and PR, at (405) 717-5966.

About Bill Stoller

William H. "Bill" Stoller is chairman and chief executive officer of Express Employment Professionals. Headquartered in Oklahoma City, the international staffing company has more than 800 franchises in the U.S., Canada and South Africa. Since its inception, Express has put more than 7.7 million people to work worldwide.

About Express Employment Professionals

Express Employment Professionals puts people to work. It generated \$3.5 billion in sales and employed a record 566,000 people in 2018. Its long-term goal is to put a million people to work annually. For more information, visit [ExpressPros.com](https://www.expresspros.com).