

# AMERICA EMPLOYED

## INSIGHTS FROM EXPRESS EMPLOYMENT PROFESSIONALS

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## Survey: Declining Health, Aging Parents Keep Workers on the Sidelines

### *Unemployed Lament Sense of “Age Discrimination”*

### *Others Cite Skills Mismatch as Barrier*

**OKLAHOMA CITY, May 24, 2018** – Following [yesterday's release](#) of Express Employment Professional's fifth annual survey of the unemployed conducted online by The Harris Poll, Express is releasing a closer look at older Americans, in particular, those who are giving up searching for a job and why they make up a larger portion of the long-term jobless.

Among the U.S. unemployed, 42 percent report being out of work 24 months or more. But among 35- to 54-year-olds, the percentage rises to 46 percent, and among those 55 and older, it is 54 percent. The unemployed population surveyed does not include those who are retired, choose to stay at home or are unable to work due to long-term disability.

While 42 percent of all individuals surveyed agree with the statement, “I’ve completely given up looking for a job,” 50 percent are 55 and older.

#### **In the Words of the Unemployed**

Based on open-ended responses to questions in the survey, some of the themes that emerged among older workers who are on the sidelines include:

- Declining health
- Caring for elderly family members
- A lack of skills due to age or the perceived mismatch of skills

Respondents volunteered some of the following observations in response to questions about why they are unemployed and why they have given up looking for work:

- “[Taking] care of my mother”
- “Heart surgery”
- “Taking care of my dad”
- “[Taking] care of wife full-time”
- “I am 60.5 years old, and employers are not interested in us older people who are educated, have a strong work ethic, can perform well and be a team player.”
- “I feel age discrimination.”
- “I guess no one wants to hire someone over the age of 65.”
- “Health.”
- “I am 56 years old, I think employers do not want to hire me because of my age, and they will go with someone younger and less experienced to fit their pay scale.”
- “My high school diploma and out-of-date computer skills are no longer valid in the current workforce.”
- “After I became unemployed family members became ill and needed my help so I am unable to return to work.”
- “Because no one wants to hire me because of my age and my ability to work”
- “I’ve found that in today’s world I am not skilled enough. There is tremendous prejudice towards age. I am a dinosaur.”

Elder care was one of the key barriers to employment that Express covered in a January white paper, [“Battle of the Barriers.”](#)

### **Express Experts Weigh In**

“It’s common for older workers to have a gap in their resume due to elder care. I think this has become as accepted as a pregnancy leave,” said Anne Woods, an Express franchise owner in Santa Fe Springs and Covina, California.

Janis Petrini, an Express owner in Grand Rapids, Michigan, agrees.

“Taking care of aging parents in poor health is a financial burden on Baby Boomers,” she said. “We do see many people returning to our area to care for aging parents and leaving their jobs from another state to do this.”

The costs of elder care, though, can lead to some Boomers staying in the job market longer, even if that means taking lower-skilled jobs traditionally filled by younger workers, [even teenagers](#).

“They can’t sustain themselves without working and so this becomes a shared burden with other family members while everyone works and cares for their aging parents in poor health,” Petrini said.

Daniel Morgan, an Express owner in North Birmingham, has some advice for older workers.

“Workers must find a way to differentiate themselves as they get older,” he said. “Gain a set of skills that allows you to still be a value in other ways than just hard labor. Be a leader and do little things that are valued. Show up on time, stay late and offer to teach younger workers. This makes you valuable and will allow you to still be employable in blue collar jobs without being required to do the same manual labor that was done earlier in your career.

“If someone believes that companies want younger workers because they are good with technology, then make sure you have your experience with technology highlighted on your resume.”

The skills issue cuts both ways, though. In other cases, older workers may be excluded from lower-skilled jobs because they seem over-qualified.

“Older workers are finding it difficult to get past the automated applicant tracking systems and human resume readers, because on paper their experience or education is considered too much,” said Lee Wenninger, an Express franchise owner in Fisher, Indiana.

“Even as the American economy gains strength, our society and our workforce are undergoing some dramatic shifts, and those forces can leave people displaced and feeling like there are too many barriers standing between them and a job,” Express CEO Bill Stoller concluded. “Understandably, this can be particularly frustrating for older workers who never expected to have to care for an aging parent or to have years of work experience treated as a liability. To get more people off the sidelines and help our economy reach its full potential, we need to listen to the unemployed—and find ways to remove these barriers.”

### **About the Survey**

This study was conducted online by Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals and included 1,500 U.S. adults aged 18 or older who are unemployed but capable of working (whether or not they receive unemployment compensation benefits). Excluded are those who are currently retired, choose to stay at home or are unable to work due to long-term disability. The survey was conducted between March 28 and April 10, 2018.

Results were weighted as needed by gender for age, education, race/ethnicity, region and household income. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' penchant to be online. Totals may not equal the sum of their individual components due to rounding. No estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated; a full methodology is available.

### **Survey Methodology**

- [Memo from Harris Poll](#)
- [Study by Harris Poll](#)

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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 6 million people to work worldwide.

### **About Express Employment Professionals**

Express Employment Professionals puts people to work. It generated \$3.4 billion in sales and employed

a record 540,000 people in 2017. Its long-term goal is to put a million people to work annually. For more information, visit [ExpressPros.com](http://ExpressPros.com).

### **About The Harris Poll**

The Harris Poll is one of the longest running surveys in the U.S. tracking public opinion, motivations and social sentiment since 1963 that is now part of Harris Insights & Analytics, a global consulting and market research firm that delivers social intelligence for transformational times. We work with clients in three primary areas; building twenty-first-century corporate reputation, crafting brand strategy and performance tracking, and earning organic media through public relations research. Our mission is to provide insights and advisory to help leaders make the best decisions possible. Learn more at [TheHarrisPoll.com](http://TheHarrisPoll.com) and follow The Harris Poll on Twitter ([@HarrisPoll](https://twitter.com/HarrisPoll)).