

Employers' Preferred Hiring Demographics May Face Pressure Against DEI Compliance

Latest Results from The Harris Poll

OKLAHOMA CITY, Nov. 8, 2023—While U.S. companies welcome a variety of applicants, priority is placed on some groups, with some hiring managers feeling pressure to meet diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) requirements.

This is according to a recent survey from The Harris Poll commissioned by Express Employment Professionals.

Hiring managers say they place a great deal/some priority on those under 30 (70%) and those who identify as female (66%), followed by military veterans (59%) and people with disabilities (53%); though few place “a great deal” of priority on hiring these groups.

Around half place priority on hiring those 50 years old or older (51%)—however, more than 3 in 5 hiring managers (68%) and job seekers (63%) feel workers over the age of 65 will always have a place in the workforce.



Less than half of U.S. hiring managers place priority on hiring those who identify as LGBTQ+ (48%) and Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) (44%). Notably, more than half of hiring managers (56%) feel pressured to put meeting DEI hiring requirements above hiring the best candidate for the job.

Looking at parents, around 9 in 10 job seekers (91%) and hiring decision-makers (89%) say working mothers bring valuable skills and perspective to the workplace. While the majority understand that working parents face challenges in the workplace, they are more likely to acknowledge this for mothers (83% job seekers and 78% of hiring managers) than fathers (65% and 66%, respectively).

Implementing DEI Initiatives

“Organizations that have a strong workplace culture in diversity and inclusion have been linked to an increase in productivity, belonging, engagement and innovation,” said Angela Russell, Express Employment International Organizational Development and DEI manager.

According to a 2021 survey conducted by Harvard Business Review and the Society of Human Resource Management, respondents say that the following is needed to support and improve DEI efforts within their respective organizations:

- 59% say visible executive support, such as regular communications and leading by example
- 58% say DEI training for managers
- 55% say training for employees
- 49% say a culture that is consistently supportive of DEI across all divisions or geographies; tied with mechanisms for employees to report DEI-related incidents without fear of reprisal

Hiring Managers’ Responsibilities

For hiring managers who feel pressure to put DEI hiring requirements before choosing the best candidate, Russell says that as an equal opportunity employer, they should always hire the best candidate for the job based on their knowledge, skills and abilities.

The best workforce is one where every employee feels seen, heard and secure in the knowledge of what they bring to the table, according to Express Employment International CEO Bill Stoller.

"Diversity isn't just about checking boxes; it's about embracing a kaleidoscope of perspectives,

experiences and talents," he added. "In a diverse workplace, ideas flourish and companies thrive."

Survey Methodology

The Job Insights survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals between June 13 and June 26, 2023, among 1,010 U.S. hiring decision-makers (defined as adults ages 18+ in the U.S. who are employed full-time or self-employed, work at companies with more than one employee, and have full/significant involvement in hiring decisions at their company). Data were weighted where necessary by company size to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within ± 3.2 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest.

The Job Seeker Report was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals between June 13 and June 26, 2023, among 1,006 adults ages 18 and older. Data are weighted where necessary by age, gender, race/ethnicity, region, education, marital status, household size, household income and propensity to be online, to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population. Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within ± 2.8 percentage points using a 95% confidence level.

If you would like to arrange for an interview with Bill Stoller to discuss this topic, please contact Sheena Hollander, 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 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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