
Surge in U.S. Seniors Applying for Entry-Level Positions

Most Companies Would Rather Hire Older Workers Than Younger Generation

Latest Results from The Harris Poll

Note: If you would like to arrange for an interview with a local Express franchise owner on this topic, please go to ExpressPros.com/Locations to find the nearest location.

OKLAHOMA CITY, Sept. 27, 2023—U.S. hiring managers are on the hunt for full-time talent, and many (79%) report a rising tide of older workers vying for entry-level roles compared to three years ago.

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

Furthermore, 60% of these hiring managers express a preference for hiring older candidates over younger ones for entry-level positions, highlighting a shift in perceptions about experience and maturity.

For the overall U.S. labor market, hiring managers say their sights are set on full-time talent acquisition, encompassing both hourly (55%) and salaried (51%) employees. Most commonly, companies are looking to hire for entry-level (53%, down from 63% in late 2022) and mid-level (52%, down from 58% in late 2022).



Job seekers signal a strong inclination towards full-time employment, with more than 4 in 5 (82%) indicating their willingness to accept such positions. The enthusiasm for part-time (33%) and contract/freelance (23%) roles is notably lower.

Applicants are casting a wide net in their job searches, with a significant portion (46%) pursuing mid-level positions. A substantial number are also applying for individual contributor (32%), senior-level (30%) and entry-level (27%) roles, showcasing a diverse array of career aspirations.

When it comes to applying for positions, a resounding 83% of job seekers believe it's perfectly acceptable to apply for roles they may be overqualified for, as long as they want it.

Desired Skill Levels

In both North Carolina and New Jersey, Express franchise owners Bill Sofio and Mike Nolfo, respectively, agree full-time positions are more plentiful and clients are desperate for mid-level candidates.

“Absolutely mid-level,” Nolfo said when asked which skill level is most requested. “With the minimum wage going up, there is wage compression between entry-level and mid-level. They are seeing more value with mid-level talent that have both hard and soft skills.”

Most companies are short-staffed and do not have the time to train new hires, Sofio added.

“Some even lack trainers, so they need workers who already have the skills and experience to do the job from day one,” he said.

Older Workers and Overqualifications

One generation with ample experience is baby boomers, and Nolfo says he would gladly take their professional diligence for all levels of work right now.

“We need responsible workers who have the work ethic,” he said. “Skillsets are easier to train but work ethic and the importance of work is the priority right now.”

Some applicants have shared they are re-entering the workforce to pay for their children’s schooling or compensate for the higher cost of living.

“We are seeing some older candidates, but they are looking for skilled work; not wanting to start over and want to be paid for their experience,” Sofio said. “They have offered to start at a lower level as long as they have the opportunity to advance quickly.”

With the benefit of decades of experience, it can seem pointless for baby boomers to apply for entry-level jobs, but Nolfo says it’s not a waste.

“As long as you understand the salary for the position, you have nothing to lose,” he said. “Companies are looking for reliable talent, and they will pay more for that right now. Oftentimes, companies are creating positions based on the applicant, not the current job opening.”

In today’s competitive job market, developing a diverse set of skills is key for job seekers to be noticed by hiring managers, according to Express Employment International CEO Bill Stoller.

“Beyond the qualifications listed on resumes, cultivating soft skills such as effective communication, adaptability and teamwork, as well as technical proficiencies, demonstrates the ability to thrive in dynamic work environments,” he added.

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 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 1,006 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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