

# Data-Driven Workforce Trends to Elevate Your Hiring Strategy

**JobInsights**  
US REPORT

**Express**  
EMPLOYMENT PROFESSIONALS

Spring 2025 EDITION

## High Hiring Optimism for the Year Ahead

Most U.S. hiring decision-makers (84%) feel positively about their company's hiring outlook for the next year. Feelings of optimism (52%), hopefulness (46%), and confidence (45%) continue to rise to the top of hiring decision-makers' minds. Sixty-three percent of hiring decision-makers say their company plans to increase its headcount in the first half of the year (Jan. 1–June 30), and 19% plan to make significant increases.

This anticipated hiring boom may be partly attributed to new business or opportunities, as many hiring decision-makers who expect to increase their headcount point to the need to manage increased volumes of work (52%), fill newly created positions (46%), and expand into other categories or markets (33%).

**While hiring looks promising, 92% of hiring decision-makers anticipate facing challenges ahead. These challenges include:**



**45%**

Difficulty finding qualified candidates



**37%**

Navigating artificial intelligence (AI), including identifying ways AI can help reach more candidates, implementing AI to help assess candidates, and/or implementing AI to help process job applications



**27%**

Increased competition in the job market



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*While the future of hiring looks promising, it's essential for companies to stay flexible and adaptable in a changing job market. Emphasizing soft skills and being open to diverse candidates can help businesses thrive. Addressing workplace challenges and adopting new technologies like AI, while maintaining a human touch, will be key to success. By embracing these changes, companies can look forward to growth and innovation.*

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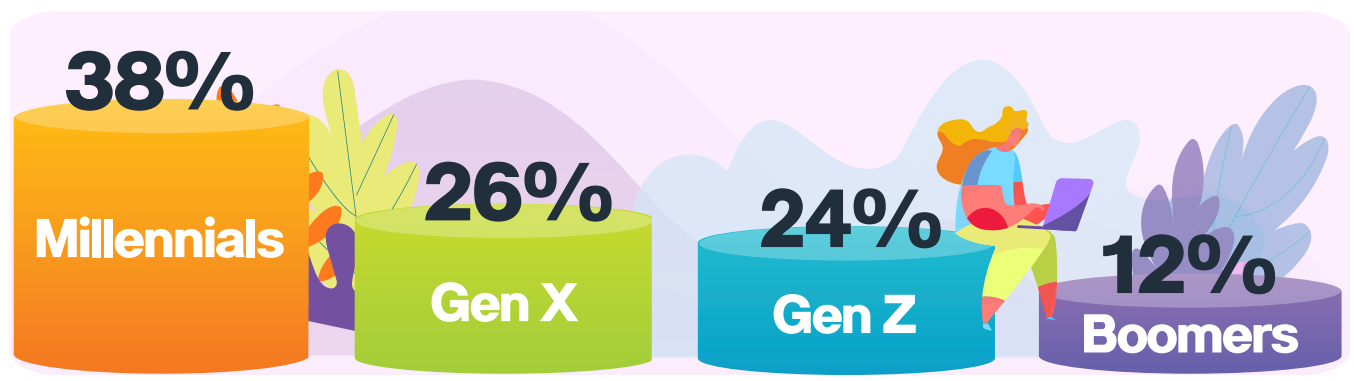
— **Bill Stoller**

Express Employment International  
Founder, CEO, and Chairman of the Board

## Seasoned Workers Are Increasingly Holding Entry-Level Jobs

Half of companies (50%) have about the same number of entry-level positions as they did three years ago, however, another 40% have more than they did three years ago. While these roles are commonly perceived to be filled by younger generations, there is a growing trend of older workers holding these roles. Seventy-four percent of hiring decision-makers say more older workers are applying for entry-level jobs now than three years ago, and 61% say they would rather hire a more seasoned candidate than a younger one to perform an entry-level role.

Entry-level positions are most filled by:



**33%**

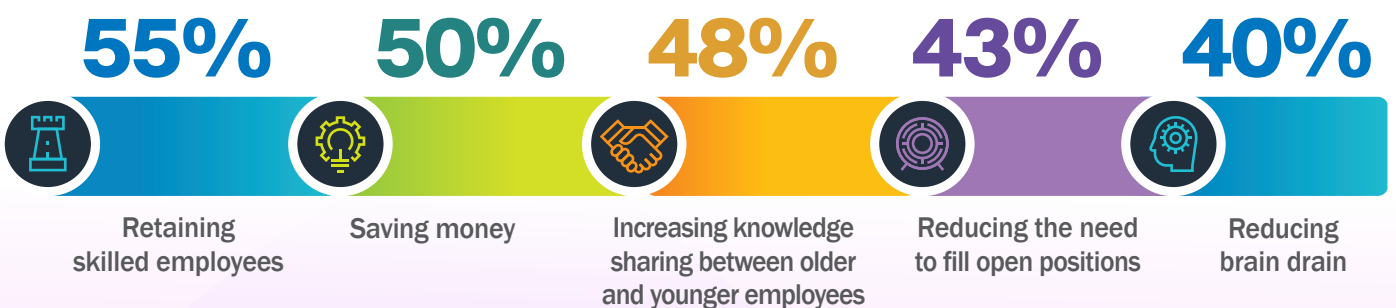
of companies would prefer to retain retirees than train younger workers.

### Retirees vs. New Hires

Employees' ability and age at which they retire may be impacted by rising inflation of the last few years, leading to potential shifts in the generational makeup of companies' workforces. At least a quarter of hiring decision-makers report an increase in the number of employees delaying retirement (33%) and retired employees coming back to work at the company (25%) over the past three years. Most companies (69%) agree workers over age 65 will always have a place in the workforce.

Semi-retirement may be an attractive opportunity, with 94% of companies seeing its benefits. Nearly 3 in 10 hiring decision-makers (27%) say the number of employees choosing to semi-retire at their company has increased over the past three years. Some companies have apprehensions, with 50% of hiring decision-makers expressing concern that allowing semi-retirement may hinder junior employees' ability to advance in their career at their company.

Semi-retirement benefits for companies:



## Widening Skills Gap Worsens Hiring Challenges

Among companies that have had positions open over the past year, hiring decision-makers (40%) reported difficulty finding the right candidates to fill these positions. For those that have had open positions over the past five years, more than 2 in 5 (44%) said it is now harder than five years ago and nearly 7 in 10 hiring decision-makers (69%) report the skills gap they see from new hires in the past year is wider than ever before.

Companies that have open positions attribute hiring difficulty to a lack of qualified applicants with:



The lack of applicants with the skills companies are searching for may be due in part to extended unemployment. More than 3 in 5 hiring decision-makers (64%) report deterioration of hard and soft skills as an impact of extended unemployment, particularly for young adults ages 18–26. While more than 4 in 5 hiring decision-makers (84%) feel their company has the tools it needs to fill any skills gaps new hires have, most (55%) would prefer to take more time to fill the position with a candidate who meets all of the requirements and does not need time to train or address any skills gaps.

Companies' Preferences to Fill Open Positions

**55%**

I would prefer to take more time to fill the position with a candidate who meets all of the requirements and does not need time to train or address any skills gaps.

**45%**

I would prefer to fill the position with a candidate who meets most of the requirements and train them/ address any skills gaps on the job.



**86%** agree the money and time invested to find quality candidates is worth it for the long-term success of the company.

The Job Insights survey was conducted online throughout the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from Nov. 11–26, 2024, among 1,001 U.S. hiring decision-makers (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 are weighted where necessary by company size to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population. For complete survey methodology, please contact [Communications@ExpressPros.com](mailto:Communications@ExpressPros.com).

**The Harris Poll**  
Harris Insights & Analytics LLC, A Stagwell Company

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