

## **Career Gaps Pose Concern for 36% of US Employers, Yet 95% Acknowledge Valid Explanations**

*Health Issues, Caregiving and Schooling Acceptable*

*Latest Results from The Harris Poll*

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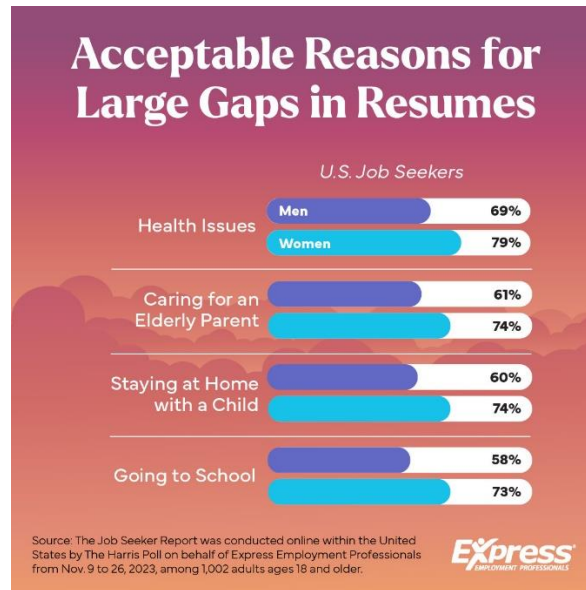
**OKLAHOMA CITY, May 15, 2024** — Although sizable unexplained work gaps (36%) may deter some U.S. hiring managers from interviewing applicants, an overwhelming majority (95%) of decision-makers recognize valid reasons for such interruptions.

This is according to a recent Express Employment Professionals-Harris Poll survey.

On the other side of the situation, surveyed job seekers say they are worried about long-term unemployment but also believe there are acceptable reasons for candidates to have large gaps on resumes, including:

- Health Issues — 73% hiring managers; 74% job seekers
- Staying Home with a Child — 68% hiring managers; 66% job seekers
- Going to School — 68% hiring managers; 65% job seekers
- Caring for an Elderly Parent — 67% hiring managers; 67% job seekers
- Trying to Switch Careers — 45% hiring managers; 41% job seekers
- Not Liking Working in Their Past Industry — 23% hiring managers; 18% job seekers

These reasons are more likely to be found to be acceptable by female job seekers compared to men, while sentiments are equal for female/male hiring managers.



### Re-Entering the Workforce After Caregiving

“Hiring managers should be receptive to many of these real-life situations because they don’t indicate complacency,” said Neil McMillan, an Express franchise owner in California. “The candidate was doing something of value for themselves or others.”

One of the most common reasons for taking time away from careers is caregiving as 100 million U.S. adults [“function as caregivers, providing care for a child, parent or other relative.”](#)

How this gap is perceived by employers depends, according to Kim Sullivan, an Express franchise owner in Wisconsin.

“Someone who did graphic design 15 years ago might be very out of touch with the technological advances in that field,” she said. “On the other hand, I don’t know that packaging, production or forklift driving has changed that much in the past decade. If it has been a long break, I think the candidate should expect a lower pay rate until they prove themselves a bit.”

McMillan seconds this.

“Taking a step back from the workforce to be a caregiver is acceptable, as long as it doesn’t result in eroded skills,” he said.

Sullivan adds that historically, caregiving duties that lead to time away from the workplace disproportionately affected mothers, but that seems to be evolving.

“Many years ago, the ‘norm’ was for mothers to stay home, and the fathers worked,” she said. “I think that is changing. Now, both caregivers are looking for more flexibility to share the responsibilities of earning money and raising children.”

Due to low unemployment levels and a big shortage of talent, having both parents work is critical to the success of the economy, McMillan added.

“Where possible, employers should consider the challenges faced with regards to childcare and commutes,” he said. “Managers could try to offer flexible schedules and hybrid or remote work opportunities where possible and as long as it makes business sense.”

It can be easy to overlook candidates without a linear work history, but that could be a mistake, according to Express Employment International CEO Bill Stoller.

“For even the most dedicated employee, life interruptions happen,” he said. “Hiring managers might miss out on the ideal candidate by simply evaluating them on paper. If the applicant has the proper skills and appears to be a cultural fit, it’s worth bringing them in for further evaluation and a possible employment offer.”

### **Survey Methodology**

The Job Insights survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals between Oct. 31 and Nov. 10, 2023, among 1,007 U.S. hiring decision-makers.

The Job Seeker Report was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from Nov. 9 to 26, 2023, among 1,002 adults ages 18 and older.

For full survey methodologies, please contact [Sheena.Hollander@ExpressPros.com](mailto:Sheena.Hollander@ExpressPros.com), Director of Corporate Communications & PR.

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### **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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