

## Survey: Working Parents Exiting Workforce During COVID-19 Pandemic

### *1 in 4 Companies Lost Employees Due to Caregiving Obligations Last Year*

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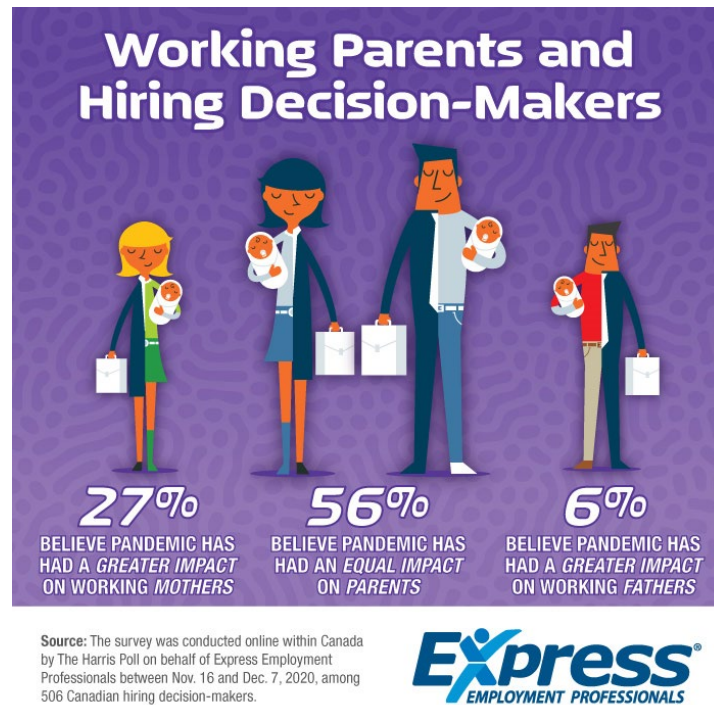
**TORONTO, April 28, 2021** – Many working parents are finding it impossible to juggle work and caring for their children and family during the COVID-19 pandemic and, as a result, have chosen to leave the workforce according to a new survey by Harris Poll, commissioned by Express Employment Professionals.

The survey found more than 1 in 4 companies (28%) report employees left due to care obligations last year, either for children (20%) or other family members (14%).

When it comes to employees with children, 1 in 4 Canadian companies (23%) say the COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on their ability to retain working parents.

Moreover, one-third of companies surveyed also say that their employees who remained have changed their work schedule (36%) and/or reduced the number of hours they work (33%) due to family obligations.

Those surveyed say the pandemic has had a greater negative impact on working moms (27%), which is four times the number who believe the pandemic has had a greater negative impact on working dads (6%). More than half (56%) agree the pandemic has had a negative impact on both working mothers and fathers equally.



While nearly 3 in 4 of those surveyed (73%) agree it is important that their company nurture and grow working parents as leaders within their organizations, only 22% say retaining working parents is one of their company's most important priorities right now.

The exit of working parents is something Jessica Culo, an Express franchise owner in Edmonton, Alberta, sees firsthand. She says working mothers are the most severely impacted.

"Many of the women we talked to agree that, even in situations where both parents are working remotely, the mother most often still is the one who manages children, the business of the home, online schooling if necessary, and their full-time job," said Culo. "In cases where the workload becomes unmanageable for a working mom, this then affects her colleagues who may have to pick up extra work on their behalf."

Michael Elliott, an Express franchise owner in London and Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, agrees that working moms have been more severely impacted. He notes the pandemic has exacerbated the gender imbalance in the labour market and that it will take time before female employment rebounds.

"The specific industries that have been hardest hit—hospitality, travel, retail, and service industries—employ a larger percentage of women and, even with lockdowns easing, these industries are expected to rebound at a much slower pace," said Elliott. "In addition, many employers have modified their business model to no longer require the same number of workers they had pre-pandemic."

Culo cautions that it may not be easy for working parents, particularly working mothers, who left their jobs to re-enter the job market, especially at their previous salary.

“With all the other uncertainty that employers have been faced with in the last 12 months, a new hire or re-hire that left due to unreliable childcare may be seen as outside of their risk tolerance level because of concerns about reliability and fear that they will leave again,” said Culo.

While Elliott has seen this problem as well, he says companies can help become part of the solution for working parents.

“It will be interesting to see whether there will be trailblazing companies that step up and are leaders in this next wave of getting women back to work,” added Elliott. “I think it will take several big names to lead this movement before we see a real impact on the gender imbalance.”

Culo and Elliott agree that many employers have tried to accommodate working parents by providing much greater flexibility.

“It was encouraging to see how quickly companies and organizations adapted to the ongoing lockdowns by offering flexible work arrangements,” said Elliott. “Now that employers can see that productivity can be maintained for those working from home offices, they need to take the next step to address the expectations of the traditional 40-hour work week. Technology has easily bridged the traditional concept of working closely as a team, and in many situations has eliminated a lot of the inefficiencies and distractions of the assembled work location.”

Accommodations to retain working parents don’t always have to be drastic, Express CEO Bill Stoller says.

“Working parents are an important part of the workforce, and with the instability surrounding the pandemic, business owners should allow some flexibility for childcare when possible,” he said. “A diverse labor market benefits everyone, and parents in the workforce are then able to pass on a quality work ethic to the next generation.”

### **Survey Methodology**

The survey was conducted online within Canada by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals between Nov. 16 and Dec. 7, 2020, among 506 Canadian hiring decision-makers (defined as adults ages 18+ in Canada 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 was weighted where necessary by company size to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population.

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If you would like to arrange for an interview to discuss this topic, please contact Ana Curic at (613) 858-2622 or email [ana@mapleleafstrategies.com](mailto:ana@mapleleafstrategies.com).

**About Bill Stoller**

William H. "Bill" Stoller is chairman and chief executive officer of Express Employment Professionals. Headquartered in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, the international staffing company has more than 830 franchises in the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Since inception, Express has put more than 9 million people to work worldwide.

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