

New Poll: Blue Collar Workers More Respected and In-Demand Due to COVID-19 Pandemic

New White Paper Explores the State of Blue Collar Canada: Rising Wages, Abundant Jobs, and Renewed Respect

TORONTO, Feb. 23, 2022—Two years after the COVID-19 pandemic began, Canadians have more respect and appreciation for blue collar workers—the men and women who produced essential products, continued delivery and distribution of items, maintained vital infrastructure and more—according to a new survey from The Harris Poll, commissioned by Express Employment International.



The survey results are explored in full detail through a [new white paper “Industries of Opportunity in Blue Collar Canada: Rising Wages, Abundant Jobs, and Renewed Respect,”](#) which builds on a similar [2018 survey of blue collar workers](#).

The COVID-19 pandemic put the spotlight on blue collar workers and changed the way many Canadians feel about them. Two thirds of blue collar workers (65%) believe this historic time period changed how people view blue collar jobs, and an even higher proportion of white collar workers agree with this sentiment (75%).

The findings of the survey include:

- Blue collar workers remain optimistic about the future.
- They feel more respected and appreciated than in the past.
- They are proud of the work they do, and the majority like the work they do.
- They encourage others to pursue similar careers.
- Most are not worried about losing their jobs or being replaced by automation.

Meaningful Work

The vast majority of blue collar workers (83%) say they are proud of the work they do. When it

comes to getting a job, most (69%) say it's easy to find a job in their field currently.

Overall, three-quarters are satisfied with their jobs (75%), citing a variety of reasons, including:

- 50% say they like their jobs because they make a good living wage.
- 36% say they like their jobs because they have flexible hours.
- 33% say they like their jobs because they are able to help others/have a sense of purpose.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in some dampening of their outlook, two thirds of blue collar workers (64%) express optimism about the future.

Blue Seeing Green: A Hot Job Market

Employers are desperate for blue collar talent and, as a result, many blue collar workers are cashing in as companies compete for employees who are in short supply.

According to the [latest data from Statistics Canada](#), blue collar industries have some of the highest number of job vacancies in the country. Labour shortages have resulted in increased wages in blue collar industries.

A majority of blue collar workers surveyed (61%) received a pay increase in the past year, up from 55% in 2018. More than half (56%) say they will receive a pay increase this year, up from 51% in 2018.

It's not just wages that are increasing in blue collar industries, so are training opportunities. As job vacancies increase, more employers are willing to provide training to prospective employees who may not yet have quite the right skills. This makes these jobs even more attractive, particularly for those who don't currently possess a specialized degree or certification, because they can land no-cost training and a quality job with good pay at the same time.

Blue Collar Concerns

Although blue collar workers are generally optimistic, they do have concerns. Their biggest concern is saving enough for their retirement (71%). Fortunately, the proportion of blue collar workers who say they are putting money aside for retirement has increased (45% in 2021 vs. 31% in 2018).

The pandemic may have made blue collar workers feel more appreciated, but it has also added new stresses and pressures to their jobs—especially as they feel the effects of a strained labour force.

Nearly two-thirds of blue collar workers (62%) say their work-life balance has been impacted by the current labour shortage. Close to one-third of blue collar workers (29%) say they have a heavier workload due to staff shortages.

The Future of Blue Collar Work

Beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, blue collar industries are desperate for workers and luckily, more than two-thirds of blue collar workers in Canada (68%) say there is a good career path in their line of work.

More than 1 in 3 (33%) believe there will be more jobs available in their field in the next 10 years, up from 2018 (31%). Just 23% believe there will be fewer jobs available. Almost three-quarters (72%) believe more young adults should pursue careers in their field.

One commonly heard view about blue collar careers is that they will be displaced by increased automation, but that is hardly a concern among blue collar workers. Only 12% worry about losing their jobs in the near future, and just 7% are concerned about being replaced by automation.

Automation will certainly create change, but it won't erase the need for blue collar talent. In fact, it presents an opportunity that could result in the creation of more jobs in some blue collar industries.

"Blue collar workers have always been the backbone of the Canadian economy, and the COVID-19 pandemic provided a stark reminder for anyone who had forgotten that," Express CEO Bill Stoller said. "These heroic individuals keep the country running with leadership that has earned them renewed respect in the eyes of Canadians. And as the economy recovers, blue collar job prospects are more numerous and lucrative than at any time in recent history. Take blue collar workers' word for it—now is the time to pursue one of these careers."

Survey Methodology

The survey was conducted online by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals between Sept. 28 and Oct. 13, 2021, among 2,065 Canadian adults ages 18+ who are employed full-time, part-time, or self-employed. Data were weighted where necessary by age by gender, education, region, household income, household size and marital status to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. This sample of employees includes 191 blue collar workers (defined as employees who perform manual labour and work in agriculture, automotive services, construction, maintenance, manufacturing, transportation or utilities) that were weighted individually.

- [Blue Collar White Paper](#)
- [Memo from Harris Poll](#)
- [Survey by Harris Poll](#)

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.

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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