

AMERICA EMPLOYED

INSIGHTS FROM EXPRESS EMPLOYMENT PROFESSIONALS

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Giving Up and Holding Out

The Plight of the Unemployed in America Today

42% Say They've Given Up Looking for Work—Significantly Higher than 2017

New Survey Shows They're Holding Out for \$60,428 Average Income

OKLAHOMA CITY, May 23, 2018 – If you're unemployed in America today, chances are you have either given up looking for work, or you're holding out, waiting for the perfect job to come along.

Those are the findings of the fifth annual survey of the unemployed, commissioned by Express Employment Professionals.

Despite the Bureau of Labor Statistics' reported 3.9 percent unemployment rate, the unemployed express greater levels of resignation compared to last year's survey. The average duration of unemployment hit 28 months, the highest level recorded by the survey.

The national survey of 1,500 jobless Americans age 18 and older was conducted online by The Harris Poll between March 28 and April 10, 2018, on behalf of Express and offers a detailed, in-depth look at the background and attitudes of the unemployed.

"With low unemployment, people tend to forget that America still has more than 6 million unemployed people," said Express CEO Bill Stoller. "Many of them have simply quit looking for work, which is a human tragedy. Others are waiting for the perfect job to come along. Meanwhile, businesses can't find people to take jobs. As a society, we just can't give up on the unemployed."

More Unemployed Americans are Giving Up...

Forty-two (42) percent of the unemployed agree with the statement, "I've completely given up on looking for a job," compared to 33 percent in 2017, 43 percent in 2016, 40 percent in 2015 and 47 percent in 2014.

Of those who have been unemployed for more than two years, 57 percent agree that they have “given up.”

The unemployed reported they put in an average of just 10.9 hours looking for work last week (at the time of interviewing). That is down from 13.3 hours in 2017, 11.7 hours in 2016, 12.9 hours in 2015 and 13.8 hours in 2014.

The majority had no interviews in the previous month, and at the time of surveying in the prior month:

- 57 percent had been on zero interviews
- 27 percent had been on one or two interviews
- 17 percent had been on three or more

Twenty-three (23) percent of unemployed Americans have been out of work for three months or less, 14 percent for four to six months, 8 percent for 7 – 12 months, 12 percent for 13 – 24 months and 42 percent for more than two years – with the average duration being 28 months, versus 23.5 months in 2017, 26.3 in 2016, 26.8 in 2015 and 23.2 in 2014.

“The duration of unemployment may be going up because those who have been out of work longest are ‘stuck’ but those who have only been out a few months are finding jobs at a faster pace. It could be that the recently unemployed make more attractive job candidates,” said Stoller said.

...and More are Holding Out for the Right Salary.

Forty-three (43) percent of respondents say they would “only accept a job that I really want to do,” verses “willing to accept almost any job that will help me pay the bills” up from 2017 (35 percent), 2016 (38 percent), 2015 (36 percent) and 2014 (34 percent).

Compared to the previous four years, this is a marked increase in the level of selectivity, and in another sign of that selectivity, nearly two-thirds (65 percent) say they will only accept a job that would allow them to use their education and skills.

Eighty-five (85) percent say they need to earn a specific amount of money to help pay their bills, and among those respondents, the average amount needed is \$60,428 per year—more than the median U.S. household income, according to the [United States Census Bureau](#).

The selectivity may be a reflection of the income levels to which the unemployed had become accustomed. Respondents were asked, “How much total combined income did all members of your household earn before taxes last year?” The average earnings were \$63,000.

Sixty-eight (68) percent say they do not apply to minimum wage jobs because they would not cover the bills.

“In this tight labor market, the unemployed can probably afford to be more selective than they have been in the past, given the high demand for workers. But passing up too many opportunities can be counterproductive,” said Stoller.

A Record High Number Are Quitting Jobs While Fewer Are Being Laid Off.

When asked why they are unemployed, 24 percent say they quit, and 19 percent say they were laid off. This is the highest percentage of respondents saying they quit in the five-year history of the survey—indicating that more people are jobless because of their own choices.

The percentage of people walking away from their job was 15 percent in 2014, 19 percent in 2015, 22 percent in 2016 and 22 percent in 2017.

This is a new low of people reporting they were laid off, compared to 2017 (22 percent), 2016 (23 percent), 2015 (28 percent) and 2014 (36 percent).

They Don't Blame the Economy, But Do See Issues Like Illegal Immigration as Contributing to Unemployment.

The economy is not to blame for most workers' unemployment, according to the survey. A new low of 18 percent blame the economy, down from 45 percent in 2014.

Regarding immigration, fifty-six (56) percent agree with the statement "It would be easier to get a job if there was less illegal immigration in the United States."

So, Who Are The Unemployed?

According to the survey, 58 percent of the unemployed are men; 42 percent are women.

The largest age group is the 18-29 age group:

- 29 percent are ages 18-29
- 24 percent are ages 30-39
- 17 percent are ages 40-49
- 18 percent are ages 50-59
- 12 percent are 60 or older

The majority lacks a college degree:

- 16 percent did not complete high school
- 24 percent received only a high school diploma
- 4 percent completed job-specific training after high school
- 24 percent attended college but did not receive a degree
- 12 percent hold an associate degree
- 15 percent hold a bachelor's degree
- 1 percent attended graduate school but did not receive an advanced degree
- 6 percent have a graduate degree

Those with a college degree reported receiving their diplomas in the following areas:

- 30 percent in liberal arts
- 23 percent in business
- 19 percent in science
- 5 percent in education
- 4 percent in fine arts
- 19 percent in another area

“There is no question that the economy and the job market have improved over the five years of this survey, but it’s clear the personal situation of so many Americans hasn’t—especially when you consider the average duration of unemployment exceeds two years,” Stoller concluded. “It’s a reminder that there’s another side of the story: that millions of jobless Americans who have given up or are holding out.”

About the Survey

This study was conducted online by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals and included 1,500 U.S. adults aged 18 or older who are unemployed but capable of working (whether or not they receive unemployment compensation benefits). Excluded are those who are currently retired, choose to stay at home, or are unable to work due to long-term disability. The survey was conducted between March 28 and April 10, 2018.

Results were weighted as needed by gender for age, education, race/ethnicity, region and household income. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' penchant to be online. Totals may not equal the sum of their individual components due to rounding. No estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated; a full methodology is available.

Download an [infographic](#) for the release.

Survey Methodology

- [Memo from Harris Poll](#)
- [Study by Harris Poll](#)

If you would like to arrange for an interview with Bill Stoller to discuss this topic, please contact Sheena Karami, 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 Professionals. Headquartered in Oklahoma City, the international staffing company has more than 800 franchises in the U.S., Canada and South Africa. Since its inception, Express has put more than 6 million people to work worldwide.

About Express Employment Professionals

Express Employment Professionals puts people to work. It generated \$3.4 billion in sales and employed a record 540,000 people in 2017. Its long-term goal is to put a million people to work annually. For more information, visit ExpressPros.com.

About The Harris Poll

The Harris Poll is one of the longest running surveys in the U.S. tracking public opinion, motivations and social sentiment since 1963 that is now part of Harris Insights & Analytics, a global consulting and market research firm that delivers social intelligence for transformational times. We work with clients in

three primary areas; building twenty-first-century corporate reputation, crafting brand strategy and performance tracking, and earning organic media through public relations research. Our mission is to provide insights and advisory to help leaders make the best decisions possible. Learn more at TheHarrisPoll.com and follow The Harris Poll on Twitter ([@HarrisPoll](https://twitter.com/HarrisPoll)).