

Data-Driven Workforce Trends to Elevate Your Hiring Strategy

Fall 2026 *EDITION*

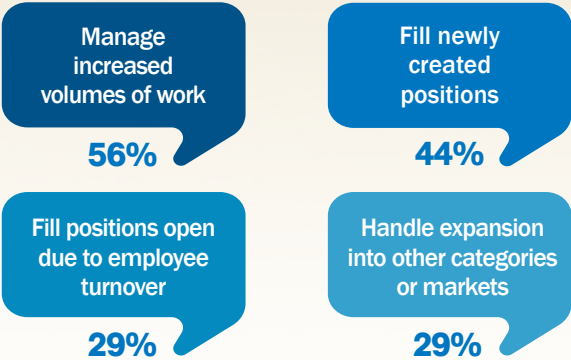


Hiring Optimism Is Strong for the Remainder of 2026

Hiring decision-makers feel positive (74%) about their company's hiring outlook for the second half of the year, yet anticipate facing challenges (86%), principally, finding qualified candidates (45%). Optimism (39%), hopefulness (35%), and confidence (30%) are feelings reported by hiring decision-makers about the hiring outlook.

Forty-three per cent of companies plan to increase headcount in the second half of the year and 47% plan to stay at about the same number of employees or make no change to headcount.

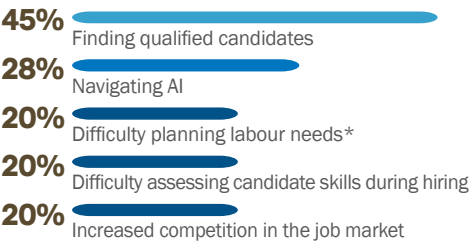
Reasons Companies Plan to Increase Headcount



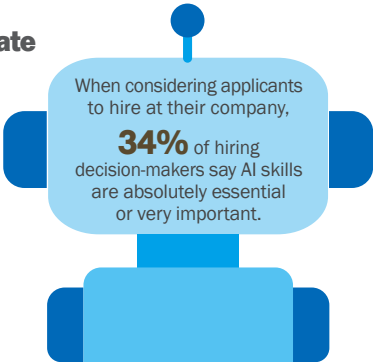
Rising AI Challenges

Eighty-six per cent of hiring decision-makers expect to face challenges over the remainder of the year. Navigating AI use is one of the top challenges hiring decision-makers (28%) anticipate. This includes identifying ways AI can help reach more candidates and/or implementing AI to help assess job candidates, aid in the hiring process, and/or help process job applications.

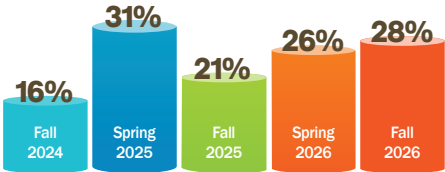
Top Challenges Hiring Decision-Makers Anticipate



*Due to concerns of a recession or economic downturn, and/or changes in government policies.



Hiring decision-makers expecting to face AI challenges:



“Today’s workforce requires employers to think beyond traditional hiring models,” said Bob Funk Jr., CEO, president, and chairman of Express Employment International. “Organizations are using a combination of technology, contract talent, and seasonal hiring to remain agile while preparing for future growth. These approaches not only help businesses respond to changing demands but also create opportunities for workers to gain experience, build skills, and move into long-term careers.”

— **Bob Funk Jr.**
CEO, President, and Chairman of Express Employment International

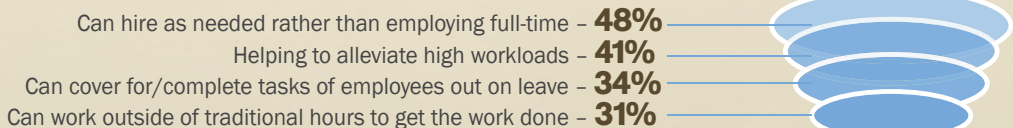
Contract Work Keeps Growing

Contract workers play an important part in the workforce. These workers are hired to complete a specific job, project, or task for a set period of time, as opposed to being a permanent employee at the company. Hiring contract workers signals agility and smart leadership, according to 73% of hiring decision-makers.

Sixty-nine per cent of hiring decision-makers have employed contract workers, and 38% currently do. Hiring decision-makers whose companies have employed contract workers (48%) say their company is just as reliant on them now as they were three years ago, and 23% say they’re more reliant on contract workers.

Hiring decision-makers whose companies have employed contract workers (80%) say at times, contract workers have actually outperformed full-time employees, with 28% strongly agreeing. Most companies (89%) see the advantages of hiring contract workers.

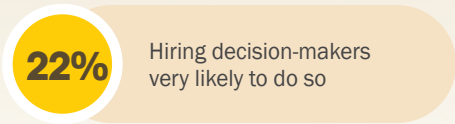
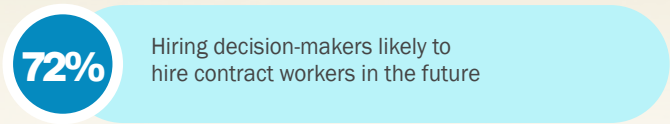
Advantages of Hiring Contract Workers



71% of companies are willing to hire contingent workers to meet business needs.

Is Contract Work Here to Stay?

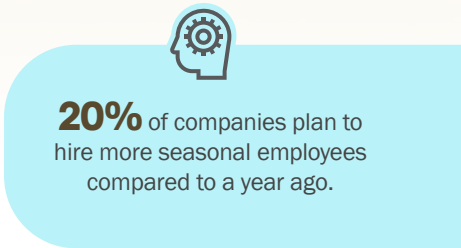
Forty-four per cent of hiring decision-makers feel contract work is a permanent shift in the workforce, yet 56% believe it's a temporary response to the economy. Intent to hire temporary or contract workers in the remainder of the year remains in line with six months ago at 22%.



Seasonal Today, Full-Time Tomorrow

Seasonal work allows employees to build their skills and network and hiring decision-makers view it as an opportunity to identify future full-time hires (81%). According to hiring decision-makers, seasonal jobs are a pathway into long-term careers (83%) and career accelerators, not just holiday help (87%).

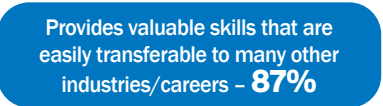
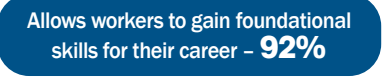
Hiring decision-makers say seasonal jobs provide job seekers with the opportunity to get their “foot in the door” (91%) and are particularly valuable for younger workers (92%).



Why Companies Have Hired Seasonal Workers:

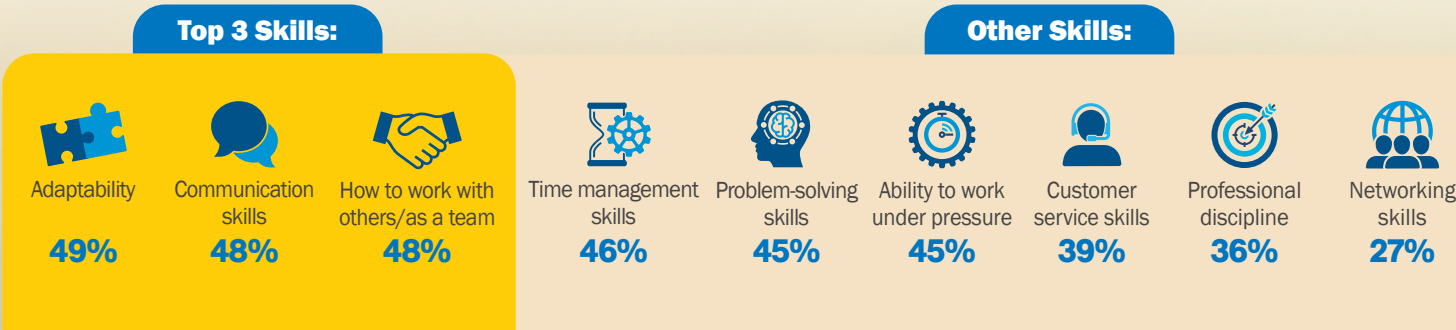


Hiring decision-makers see the value seasonal work offers to employees.



Transferable Skills Seasonal Employees Commonly Develop

According to Hiring Decision-Makers Who Have Hired Seasonal Employees





The Harris Poll

Harris Insights & Analytics LLC, A Stagwell Company

The survey was conducted online within Canada by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals among 508 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). The survey was conducted May 13–June 1, 2026. Data are weighted where necessary by company size to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population. Percentages may not add up to 100% due to the acceptance of multiple responses.

For full survey methodology, contact Communications@ExpressPros.com.



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