



## Unemployment's Hidden Toll: Skills, Confidence and Mental Health

### 41% of Job Seekers Report Skill Deterioration

**OKLAHOMA CITY, April 9, 2025** — In a rapidly changing job market, the consequences of prolonged unemployment are taking a significant toll on job seekers, affecting not only their skills and confidence but also their mental health and networking opportunities.

According to a recent Express Employment Professionals-Harris Poll survey, there is a glimmer of hope: only 22% of unemployed job seekers have been without work for more than two years, a significant drop from the alarming 40% in Spring 2023. However, the road to recovery is still long, with only slight improvements from Fall 2023 (36%) and Spring 2024 (32%). The primary reasons for unemployment remain consistent, with voluntary quits (26%) and terminations (19%) leading the pack.



### Impacts of Extended Unemployment

Extended periods of unemployment have both practical and mental impacts on job seekers. The most common effects include:

- **Deterioration of Skills:** 41% of job seekers report a decline in hard or soft skills.
- **Gaps in Work Experience:** 37% cite gaps on their resumes as a significant issue.
- **Decreased Confidence:** 34% experience a loss of confidence.
- **Reduced Networking Opportunities:** 29% find it harder to network.
- **Decreased Awareness of Industry Trends:** 23% feel out of touch with current practices.

Generational differences also play a role, with Gen Z and millennial job seekers more likely to report a deterioration of hard skills compared to boomer/senior job seekers (34% and 31% vs. 17%, respectively).

### Expert Tips for Job Seekers

As experts in the staffing industry, Express franchise owners John Roller in New Hampshire and Lisa Daijo in Hawaii frequently witness both the joy of employment and the heartbreak of unavoidable job loss.

“Job seekers can experience a mix of emotions, ranging from anxiety and frustration to feeling relaxed or burdened,” Daijo said. “They can start to feel disconnected from society and not feel valuable because of the difficulty in finding their next opportunity.”

Roller notes that the long-term impacts of unemployment can also extend into other areas of life, such as relationships and physical health. However, for all the potential adverse outcomes of resume interruptions, both experts agree that there are strategies to make the most of the situation.

“Losing a job may provide a new level of motivation, and time to sharpen skills, pursue additional education or obtain a certification,” Roller added. “Although networking opportunities may not be readily available, most people would be happy to help if approached in the right way. Job seekers should be honest about their intentions and ask for help with introductions.”

Daijo adds that it’s also an excellent time to earn microcredentials and volunteer to maintain the same level of expertise to be ready when the next opportunity presents itself.

“Ideally, we want to always leave our current job with another position secured before leaving to prevent unemployment,” she said. “But if the circumstances arise, maximize your time by learning new skills and developing yourself.”

### **Turning Unemployment into Opportunity**

While job seekers rarely describe extended unemployment as a blessing, Daijo said, “This is the greatest opportunity to ask yourself those hard-hitting questions about your whys and your purpose, ensuring your next career fills your cup.”

“If you are not fully qualified for this next jump, it’s an excellent time to gain the skills and knowledge to thrive in your next role,” she added.

Speaking from personal experience, Roller suggests that many have survived and even thrived after experiencing unemployment.

“It inspired me to finally pursue my own business,” he said. “I don’t think I would have made the leap if I still retained the salary and job I had with two kids in high school, about to enter college.”

Staying positive in the face of adversity can be a powerful catalyst for change, according to Express Employment International CEO Bill Stoller.

“By focusing on skill development and networking, job seekers can turn this period of unemployment into a stepping stone for future success,” he said.

### **Survey Methodology**

The Job Seeker Report was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals from Nov. 21 to Dec. 10, 2024, among 1,039 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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If you would like to arrange for an interview to discuss this topic, please contact [Sheena.Hollander@ExpressPros.com](mailto:Sheena.Hollander@ExpressPros.com), Director of Corporate Communications & PR.

### **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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