DATA-DRIVEN WORKFORCE TRENDS TO ELEVATE YOUR HIRING STRATEGY

Fall 2026 EDITION



JobInsights
CANADA REPORT

SPECIALIZED® RECRUITING GROUP

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

- Manage increased volumes of work – 56%
- Fill newly created positions – 44%
- Fill positions open due to employee turnover – 29%
- Handle expansion into other categories or markets – 29%

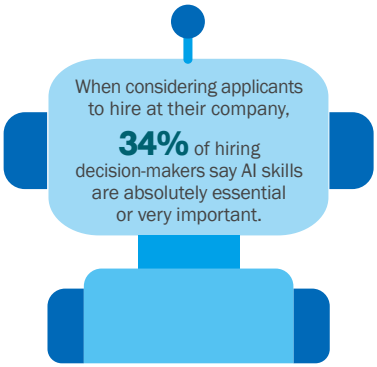
RISING AI CHALLENGES

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.

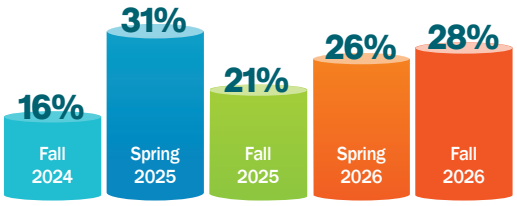
Top Challenges Hiring Decision-Makers Anticipate

- 45% Finding qualified candidates
- 28% Navigating AI
- 20% Difficulty planning labour needs*
- 20% Difficulty assessing candidate skills during hiring
- 20% Increased competition in the job market

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



Hiring decision-makers expecting to face AI challenges:



AGILE WORKFORCE GROWING

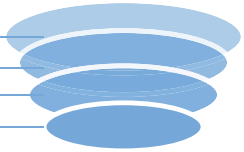
Contract workers are essential in achieving today's business goals. Contractors are hired to add expertise to a team or project for a set period of time, as opposed to being a permanent employee at the company. Hiring contract workers signals agility and smart leadership, according to 73% of hiring decision-makers.

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.

ADVANTAGES OF HIRING CONTRACT WORKERS

- Can hire as needed rather than employing full-time – 48%
- Helping to alleviate high workloads – 41%
- Can cover for/complete tasks of employees out on leave – 34%
- Can work outside of traditional hours to get the work done – 31%



89% of companies see the advantages of hiring contract workers.

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%.

72% Hiring decision-makers likely to hire contract workers in the future

22% Hiring decision-makers very likely to do so

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

COMPANIES NAVIGATE RISING COSTS AND POLITICAL PRESSURES

Politics and rising costs are impacting companies, affecting logistics, raw materials, and wages. Sixty percent of hiring decision-makers say politics and the current political climate have had an impact on their company. A fifth (20%) report a positive impact, while 40% report a negative impact. Rising costs have an impact on 61% of companies' ability to operate and/or grow, with 13% reporting a positive impact and 48% saying it has had a negative impact.

LEVEL OF IMPACT POLITICS AND RISING COSTS HAVE ON COMPANIES

Rising Costs

- Positive Impact – **13%**
- Negative Impact – **48%**

Political/Current Political Climate

- Positive Impact – **20%**
- Negative Impact – **40%**

AREAS OF BUSINESS MOST IMPACTED BY RISING COSTS

- Wages and compensation **38%**
- Hiring budgets **33%**
- Benefits and insurance **32%**



Nearly 3 in 10 (29%) report hiring budgets have been most affected by recent cost increases. Twenty per cent note that difficulty planning labor needs due to concerns of a recession or economic downturn and changes in government policies are among the biggest hiring challenges their company will face for the rest of this year.

Twenty-nine per cent of hiring decision-makers say their company won't be able to survive much longer if wages or costs continue to increase so quickly. However, these sentiments have significantly decreased from 40% when this question was last asked in spring 2022.

The Harris Poll

Harris Insights & Analytics LLC, A Stagwell Company

The Job Insights survey was conducted online within Canada by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment International, parent company of Specialized Recruiting Group, May 13–June 1, 2026, among 508 Canadian hiring decision-makers (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 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 complete survey methodology, please contact Communications@ExpressPros.com.

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