



Workforce Planning Board
of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin



EmployerOne Survey Report: Guelph

**Economic Development and Tourism
Office of the CAO
City of Guelph**

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Introduction

The bi-annual EmployerOne survey, conducted by the Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin (WPBWWD), gathers information from employers in the Waterloo Region, Dufferin, and Wellington counties.

This report is a subset of the regional survey and represents participating employers located in the city of Guelph. It provides a summary of employer responses delving into their workforce needs in terms of skills, practices around recruitment, hiring trends, and separation activities over the preceding year. Additionally, it sheds light on their anticipated hiring trends for the upcoming 12 months and industry perceptions.

Methodology

The EmployerOne survey is used across the Western Ontario region to collect employer data around hiring and skills needs. The nine planning boards across the region meet and develop the questions each year. Each individual board adds 1-2 questions that are relevant to their individual communities. In Waterloo Wellington Dufferin, the survey was shared at a meeting with representatives from some of the 40 partners who support the survey. During this meeting, the questions were shared, and the partners identified two additional topics to gather information on: the equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) efforts of employers, engagement on artificial intelligence/work environment trends and how industry feels it is perceived by the public.

The electronic survey opened on December 1st, 2023, for all employers who had taken the survey in prior years followed by a launch on January 1st, 2024, and a closing date of January 31st, 2024. After January 31st, WPBWWD did follow-up with employers who were almost done to complete their surveys until February 9th, 2024.

Data analysis and dissemination

The raw data collected by the survey through WPBWWD is then shared with partnering municipalities. This report captures insights related to the employer responses exclusively for the city of Guelph. Out of the 245 responses, 56 responses are collected by employers within the city of Guelph, followed by 29 responses each in the Kitchener and Waterloo region. Despite somewhat reduced engagement compared to previous years, the survey yields valuable insights into open-ended questions, industry perceptions, and employer challenges.

Key highlights

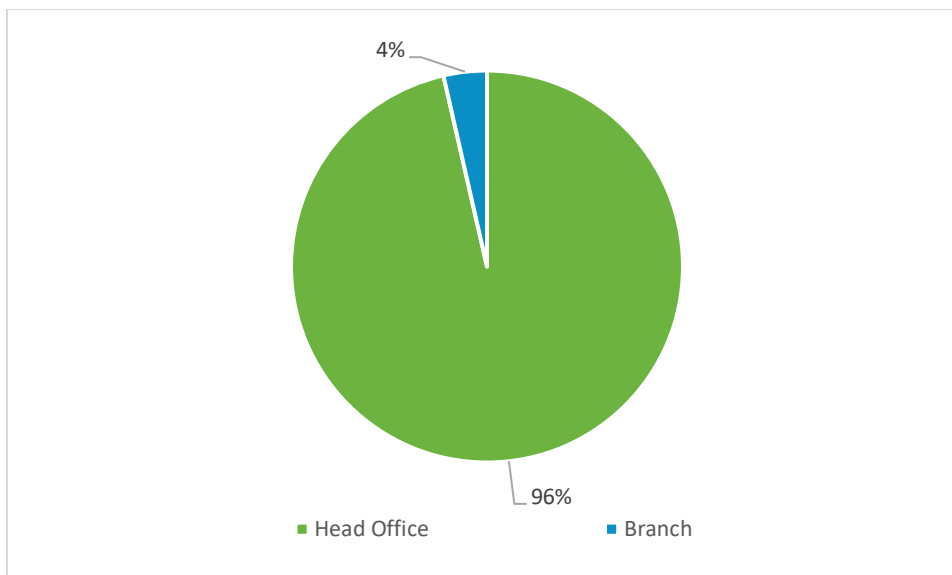
- 78 per cent of respondent employers have less than 50 employees.
- 50 per cent of respondent employers categorized open positions as hard to fill and 77 per cent of respondent employers had a least one separation in 2023 including retirement, quits, layoffs and dismissals.
- 73.2 per cent of the employers confirmed their willingness to train a fit candidate that might lack technical skills.
- 60.7 per cent of the employers would do in-house training. For those who would outsource training, employers would use: an industry association, online courses (e.g. LinkedIn Learning), private trainer or consultant, and postsecondary partnership or corporate training.
- Talent retention strategies that respondent employers are using include offering job flexibility, training, and scheduled salary increases.
- Over 40 per cent of respondent employers indicated that diversifying workforce is an important part of their company's business strategy.
- 54 per cent of respondent employers feel they offer competitive compensation packages compared to their industry counterparts.

Reading the report

Each survey question and respondent answer is presented in a graph or table for easy visualization of the response values. A short explanation is additionally provided for clarity in some responses.

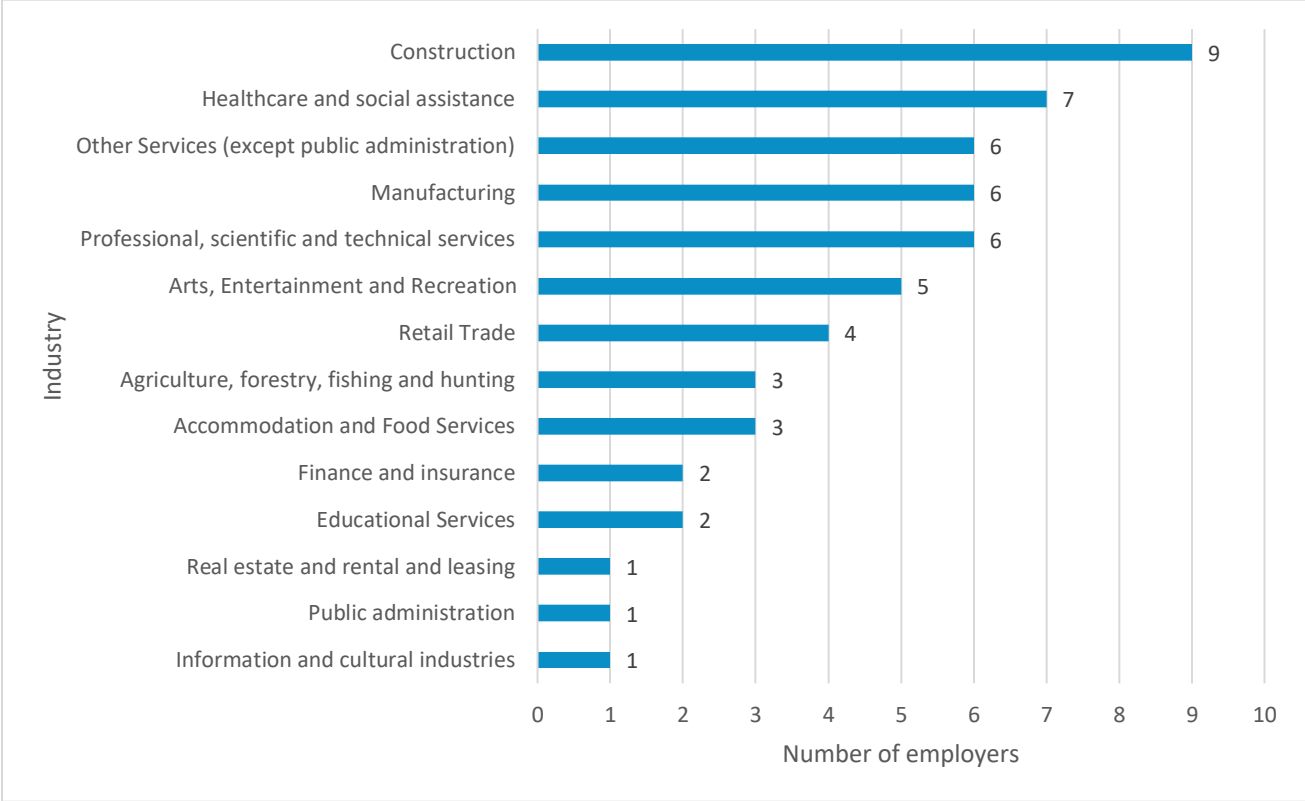
Organization and workforce characteristics

Figure 1. Head office or branch locations of the employer's organization.



The overwhelmingly respondent employers were from a head office of the business entity, which also aligns with the data outcomes of employer size as majority of the businesses have less than 50 employees as shown in Table 1.

Figure 2. Employers by Industry



Employer respondents categorized by North American Industry Classification System designation. The highest number of employers were from the construction industry.

Table 1. Responses by the size of the employer’s organization

Number of Employees	Respondents
1-4	12
5-9	14
10-19	9
20-49	11
50-99	3
100-199	5
500+	2

Seventy-eight per cent of respondent employers have less than 50 employees.

Hiring in 2023

Figure 2, 4, 5 show that 88 per cent of respondent employers filled at least one job vacancy in 2023. These employers are looking to fill both full-time and part-time roles and had 114 contract, seasonal and casual job opportunities in 2023.

Figure 3. Employers that hired in the last 12 months i.e. 2023

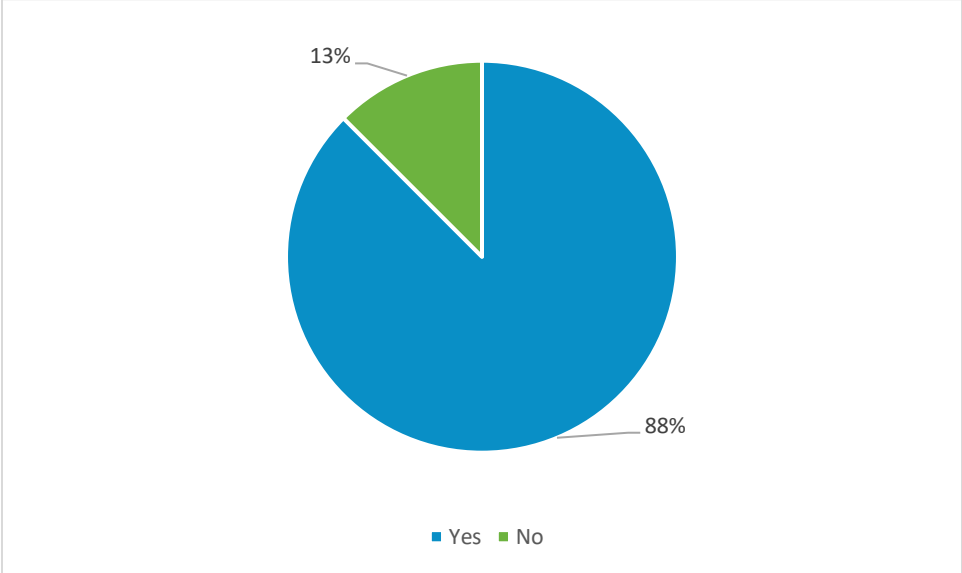


Figure 4. Hired by industry in the last 12 months i.e. 2023

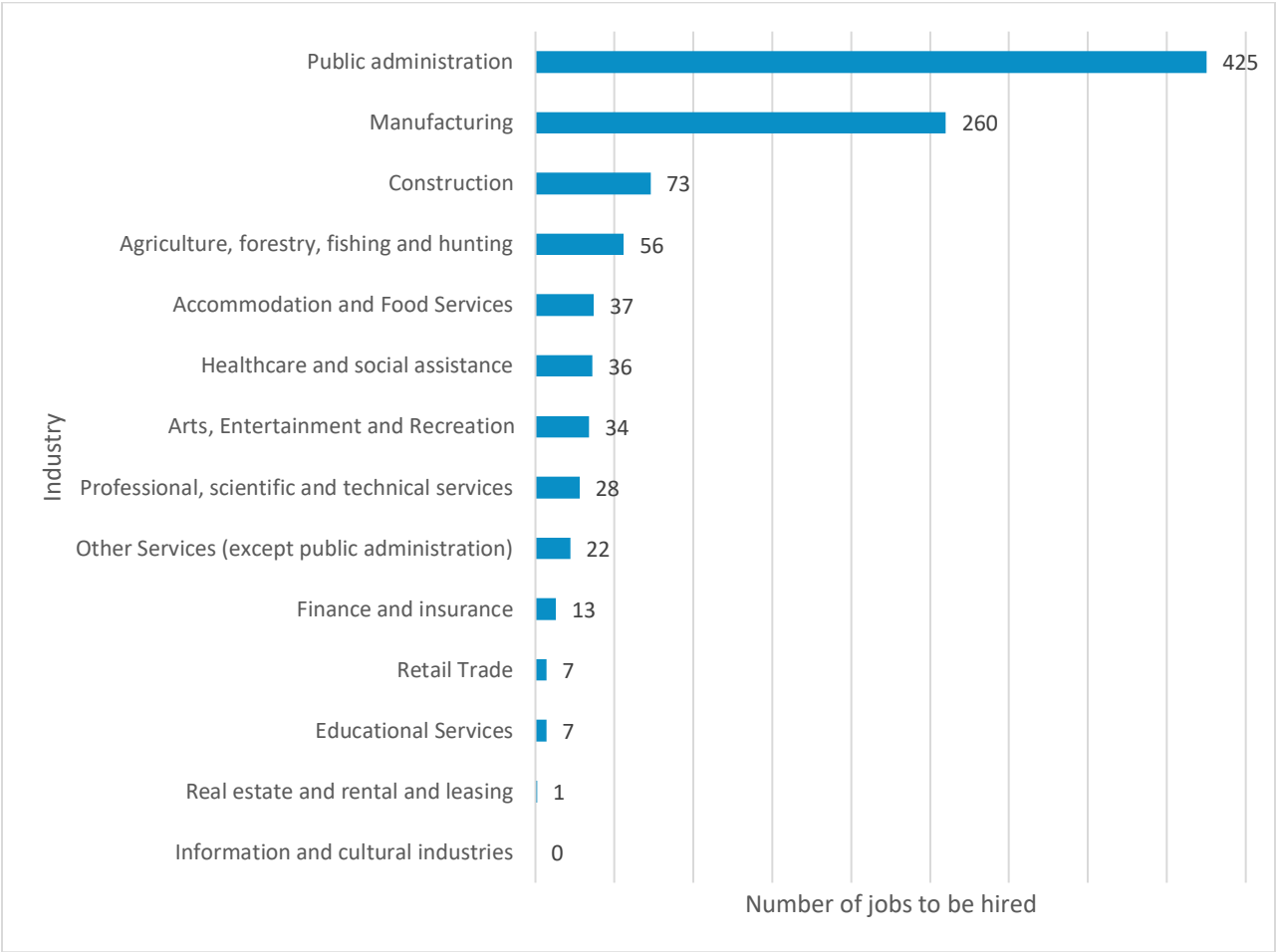
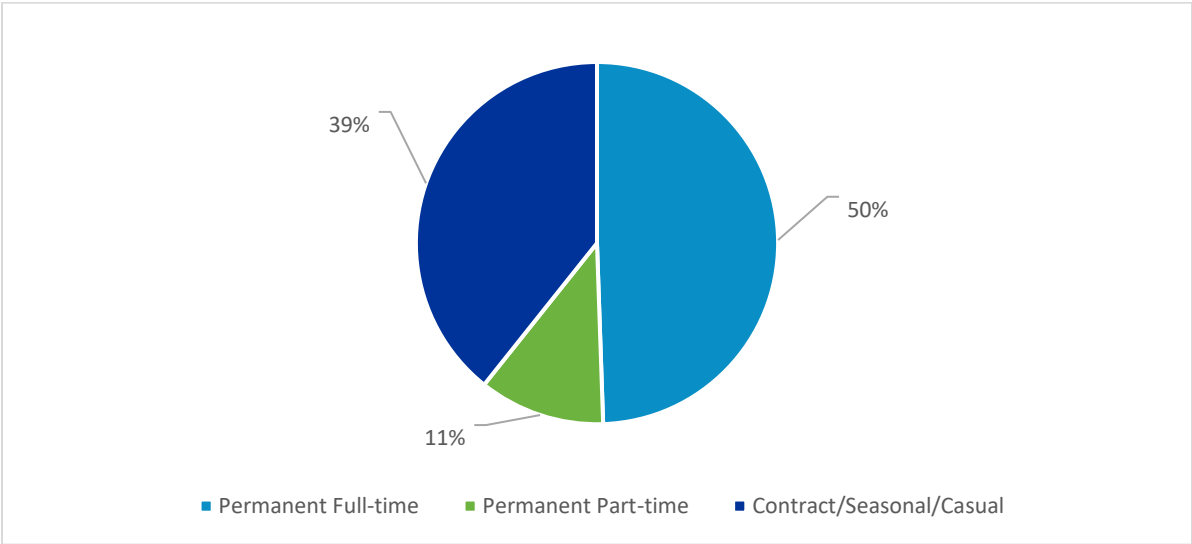


Figure 5. Types of hires in the last 12 months i.e. 2023



Separations in 2023

Figure 6 and Table 2 show that 77 per cent of respondent employers had a least one separation in 2023 which included retirements, layoffs, dismissals, quits, and other.

Manufacturing had the greatest number of separations, mostly due to quitting the job followed by construction which experienced a lot of layoffs. Public administration showed a high number of retirements as compared to other industries. Dismissals are high in manufacturing, construction, public administration, and accommodation and food services industries. This could mean these industries hired contractors and those contracts were not renewed. Personal leave or leave of absence was also mentioned by a few employers as a reason for separation.

Figure 6. Separations in the last 12 months

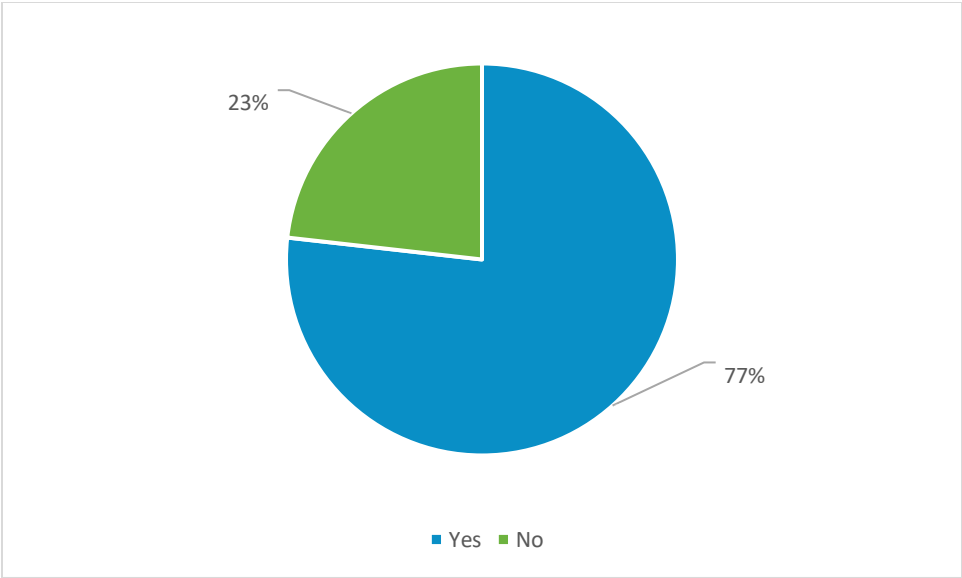


Table 2. Types of separations by industry

Separation by Industry	Total	Quits	Retirements	Layoffs	Dismissals	Other
Professional, scientific and technical services	23	18	1	0	4	0
Accommodation and Food Services	24	12	0	0	12	0
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	4	2	0	0	1	0
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	6	5	0	0	1	0
Construction	90	27	6	32	25	0
Educational Services	5	5	0	0	0	0
Finance and insurance	11	6	0	1	3	1
Healthcare and social assistance	22	14	1	1	3	3
Information and cultural industries	2	0	0	2	0	0
Manufacturing	214	142	7	13	37	15
Other Services (except public administration)	12	5	0	3	3	1
Public administration	88	59	17	0	12	0
Retail Trade	4	1	0	1	0	2
Real estate and rental and leasing	0	0	0	0	0	0

Hard-to-fill positions in 2023

Figure 7, 8, 9 show that 50 per cent of respondent employers categorized open positions as hard to fill. Not having enough applicants (34 per cent) was the top reason positions were reported as being hard to fill as well as applicants lacking work experience (29 per cent) and qualifications (25 per cent). Table 3 provides which positions were the hardest to fill by industry.

Almost 60 per cent of respondent employers are planning to hire in 2024.

Figure 7. Hard-to-fill positions

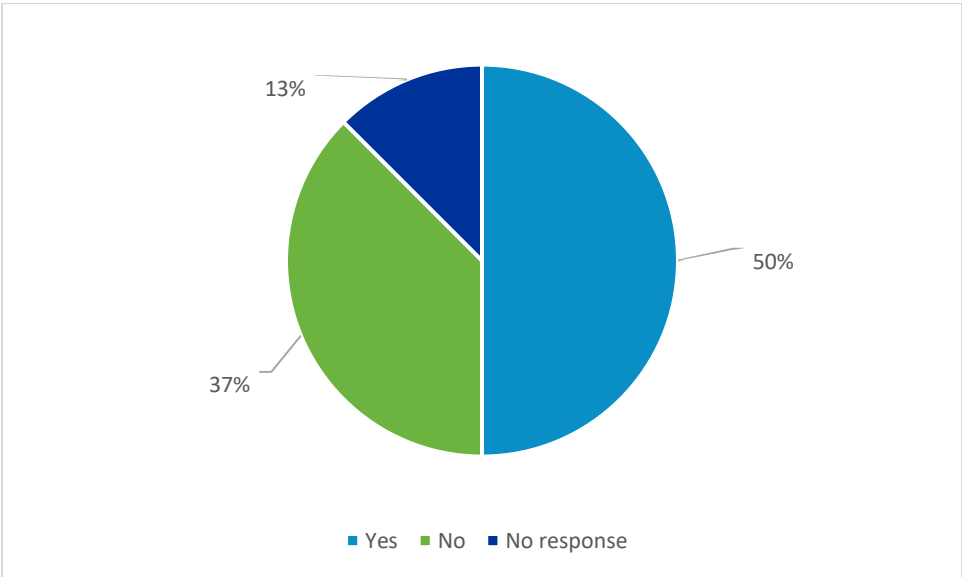


Figure 8. Reasons employers said positions were hard-to-fill.

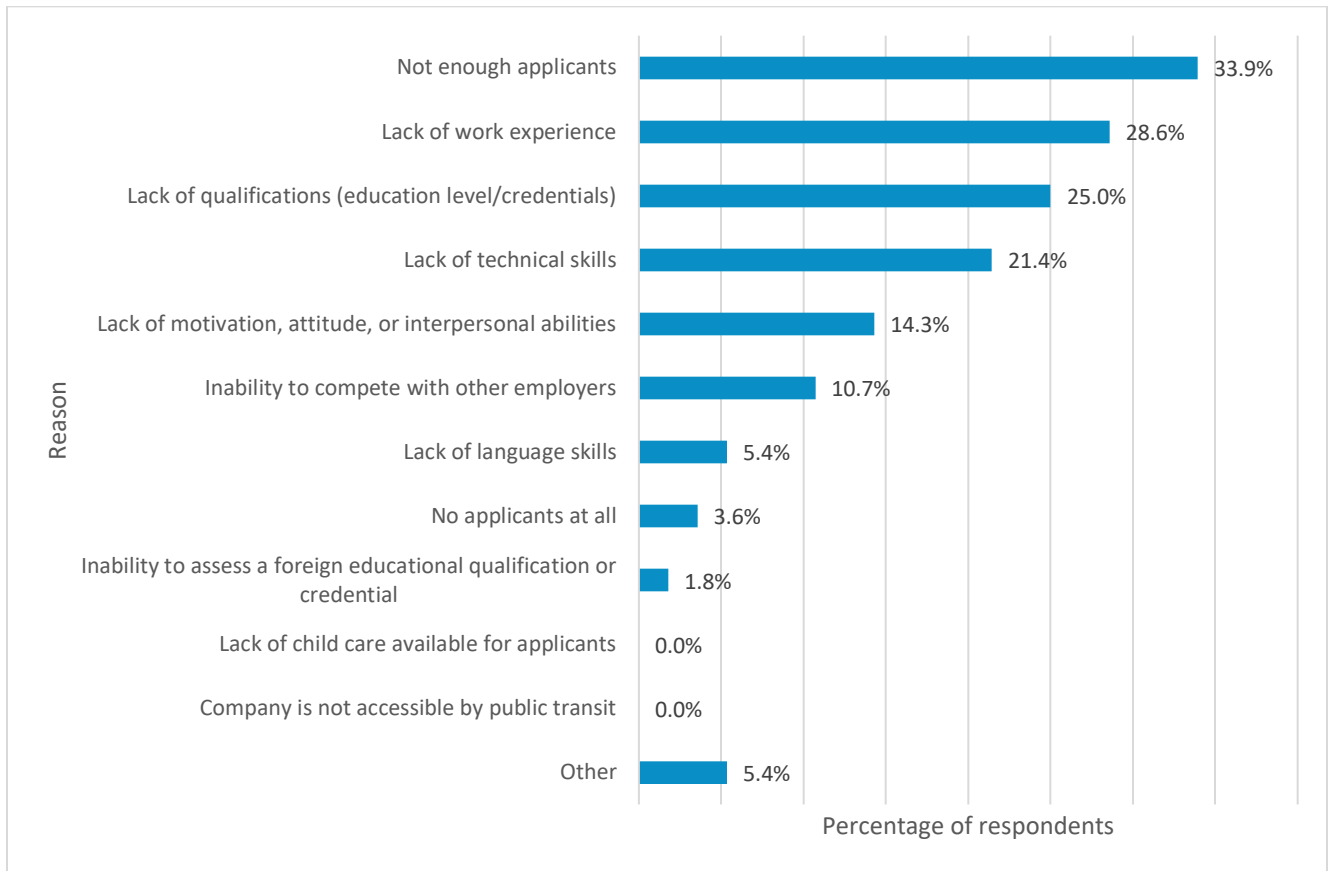


Figure 9. Employers planning to hire in 2024.

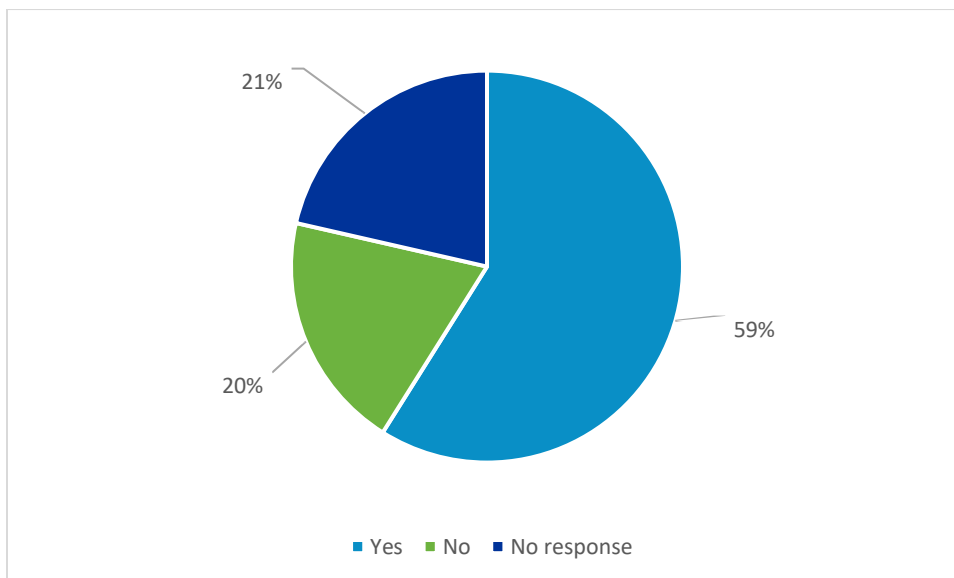


Table 3. Top 3 hard-to-fill positions by industry.

Industry	First	Second	Third
Accommodation and Food Services	Chef/cook	Manager/supervisor	Servers
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	HR manager		
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	Chef	Line cook	Advisory Administration
Construction	Senior building inspector - level III	Welder	Landscape Foreman
Educational Services	Math teacher	French teacher	
Finance and insurance	Bookkeeper		
Healthcare and social assistance	Counsellor	Digital Marketing/Social media Specialist	Contract supervisor
Information and cultural industries	No response		
Manufacturing	Millwright	Plastic injection moulding manager	Set Up Techs
Other Services (except public administration)	Director of sales/operations	Development Coordinator	Admin-technical
Professional, scientific and technical services	Corporate Law Clerk	Family Law Clerk	Estates Law Clerk
Public administration	Urban Planners	Licensed Mechanics	
Real estate and rental and leasing	No response		
Retail Trade	Tractor Truck Mechanic		

Recruitment and retention

Recruitment and training

Sixty per cent of respondents are looking to recruit in 2024, Figure 10 shows that respondents are utilizing several tactics and channels to communicate open positions. Informal networks and word of mouth is one of the most common recruitment methods stated by the employers. Companies rely on those within the organization to help bring in quality people that not only aid the business but also the workplace culture as a whole.

In terms of the competencies being sought after, Figure 11 shows that respondent employers are looking for self-motivation, communication, and teamwork as top needed skills.

Employers that responded also indicated a willingness to train employees that may be lacking in experience, education, technical skills:

1. 73.2 per cent of the employers confirmed their willingness to train a fit candidate that might lack technical skills.
2. 60.7 per cent of the employers would do in-house training.
3. For those who would outsource training, employers would use: an industry association (62.5 per cent), online courses (e.g. LinkedIn Learning) (62.5 per cent), private trainer or consultant (62.5 per cent), and postsecondary partnership or corporate training (37.5 per cent).

Figure 10. Recruitment methods

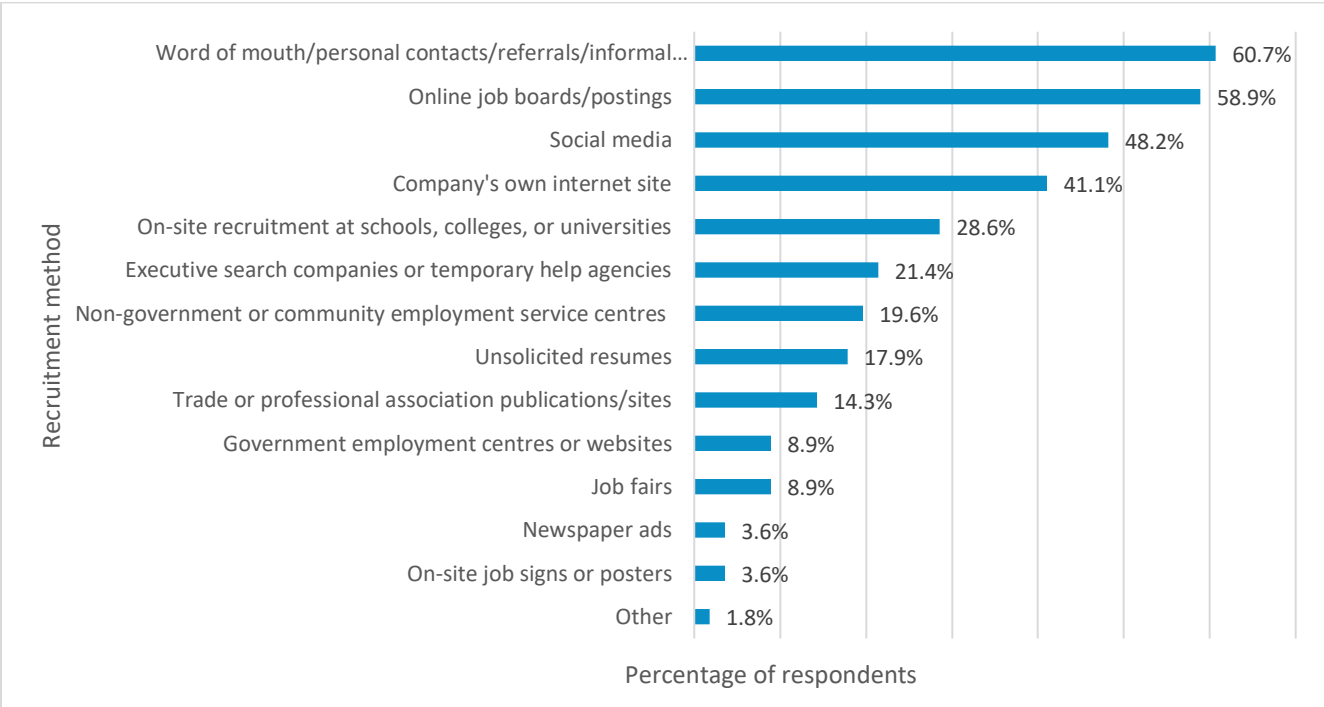
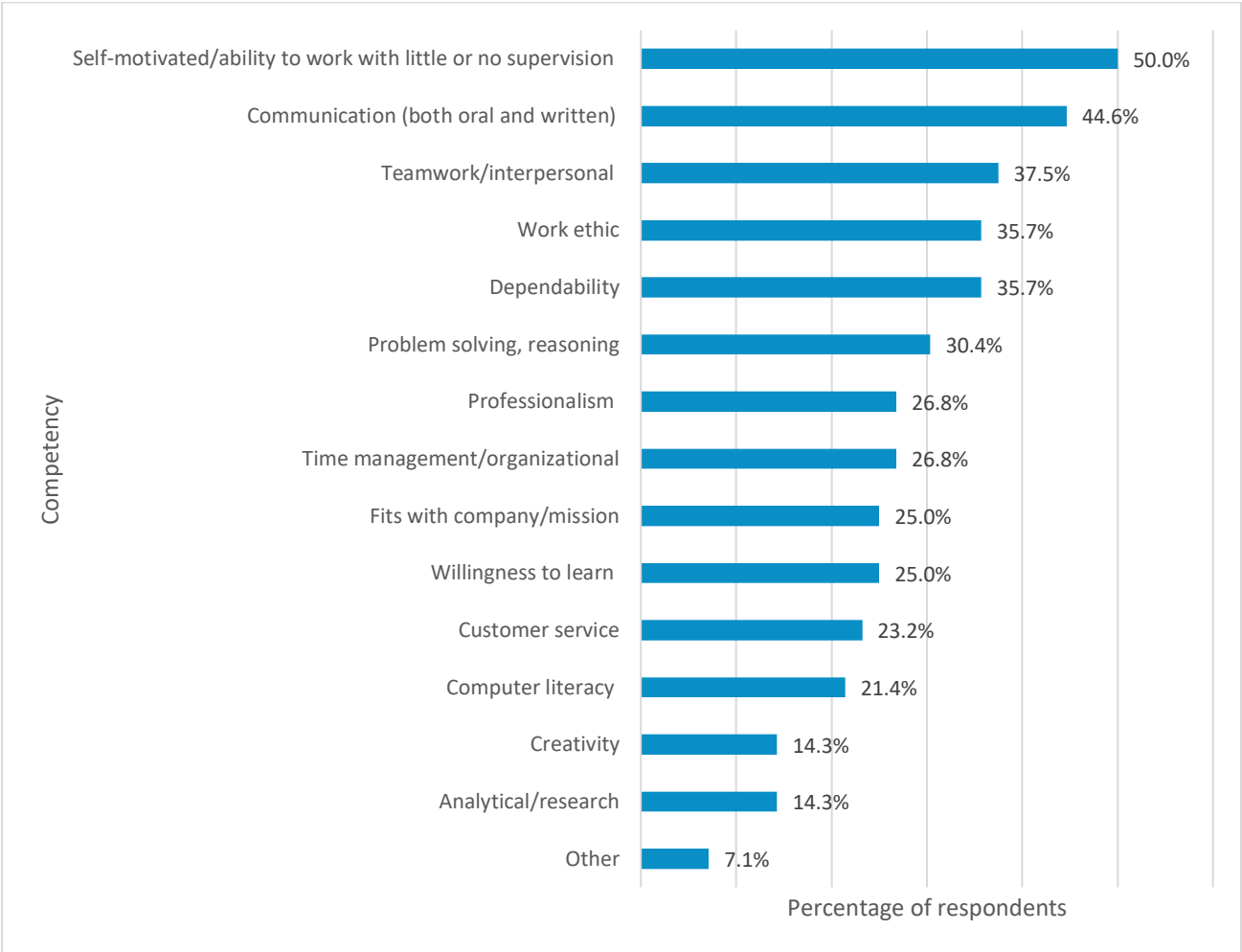


Figure 11. Top competencies employers seek.



Retention

Over half of the respondents feel that employee retention is a concern.

Respondent employers recognize that career progression is important to their employees. Mental health is also recognized by the employers as a concern for retention. Talent retention strategies respondent employers are using include offering job flexibility, training, and scheduled salary increases.

Figure 12. Reasons for retention being a concern

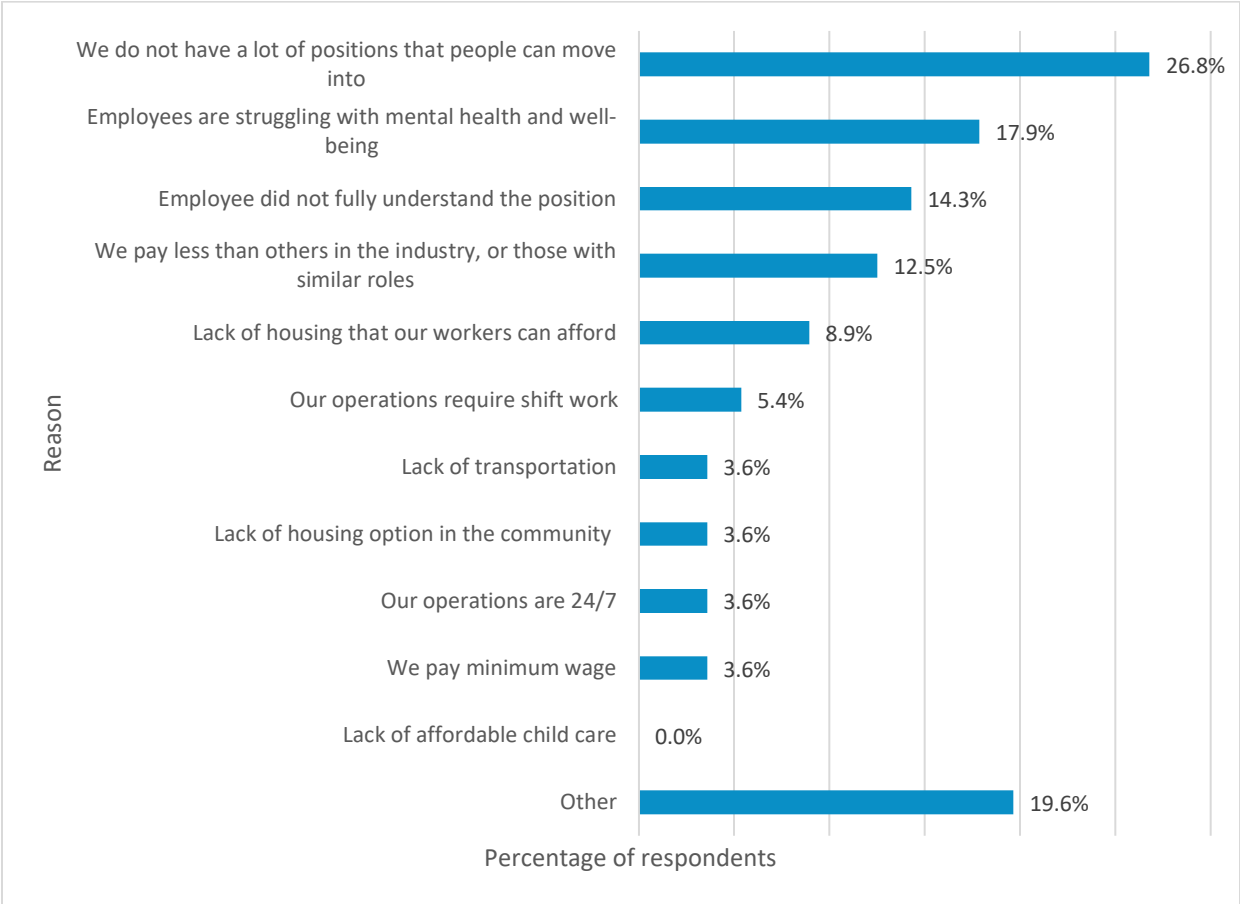
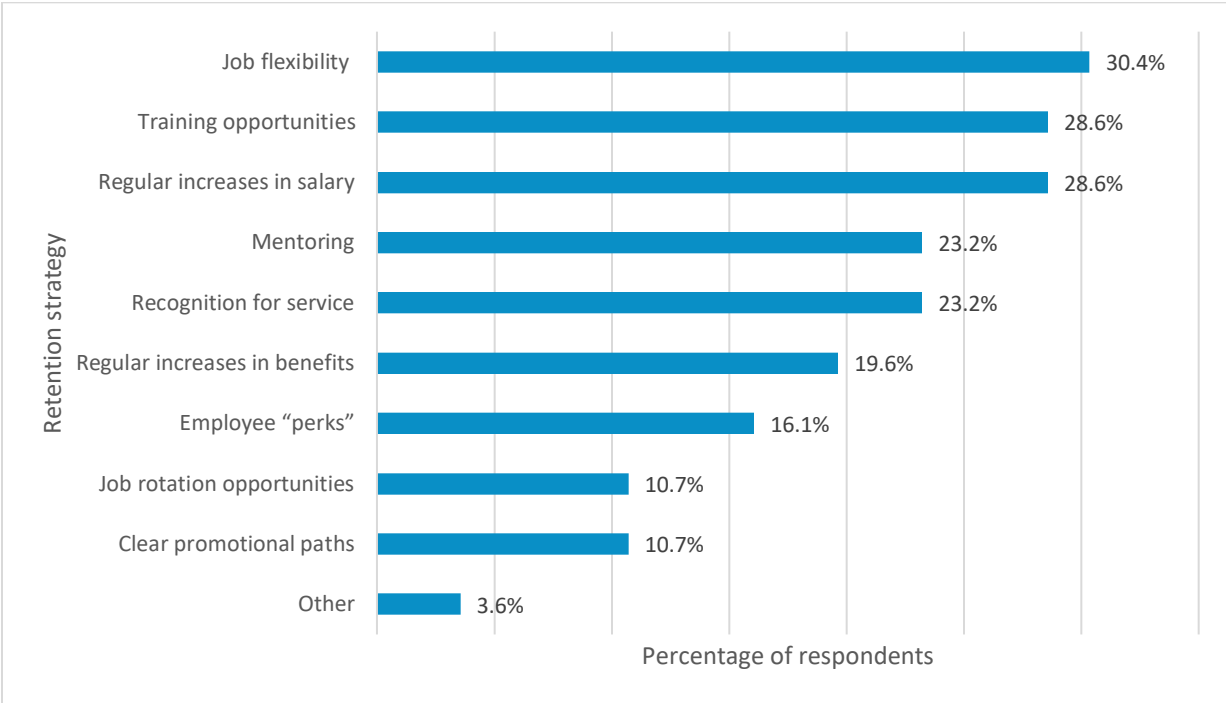


Figure 13. Retention strategies used by employers.



Equity, diversity and inclusion

With a consistent shift and increased awareness about systemic barriers to full participation in society and the workplace, employers were asked some questions around equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives. These questions help to determine if employers are ready to welcome all talented people into their organization or if there is still some work to be done.

Figure 14 show that over 40 per cent of respondent employers indicated that diversifying workforce is an important part of their company's business strategy.

Figure 15 shows women and youth are being actively targeted by the job postings, covering more than 40 per cent of job postings. 12.5 per cent of employers felt that they are not sure how to connect with equity seeking groups.

Figure 14. Hiring with a lens to be diversifying workforce is an important part of company's business strategy (0 = Strongly Disagree, 100 = Strongly Agree)

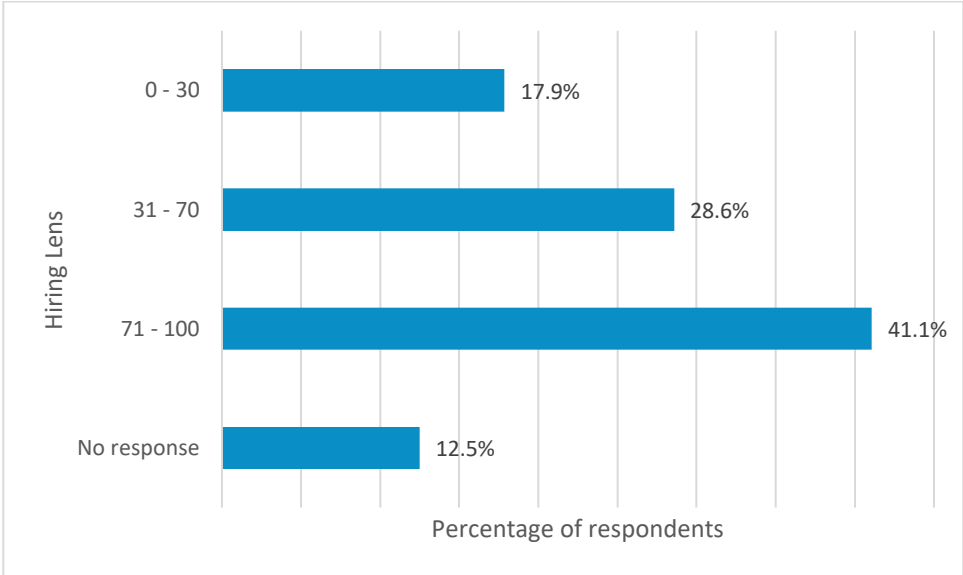
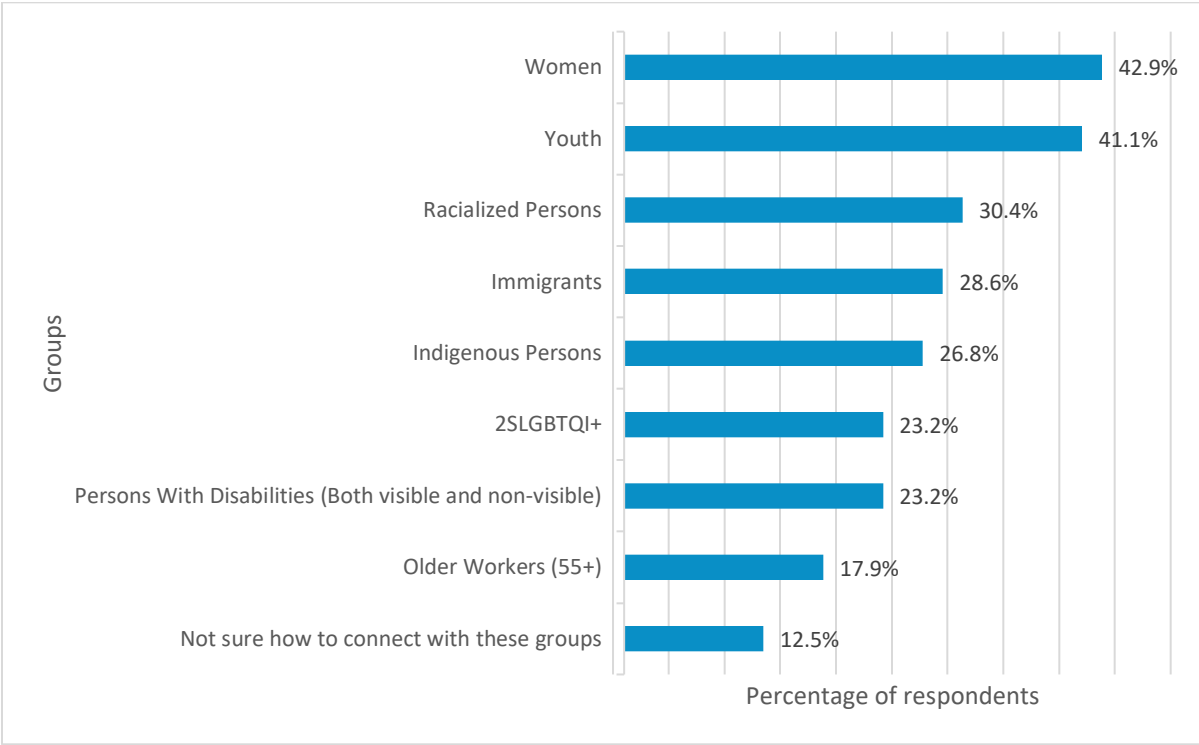


Figure 15. Groups being actively targeted in job postings.



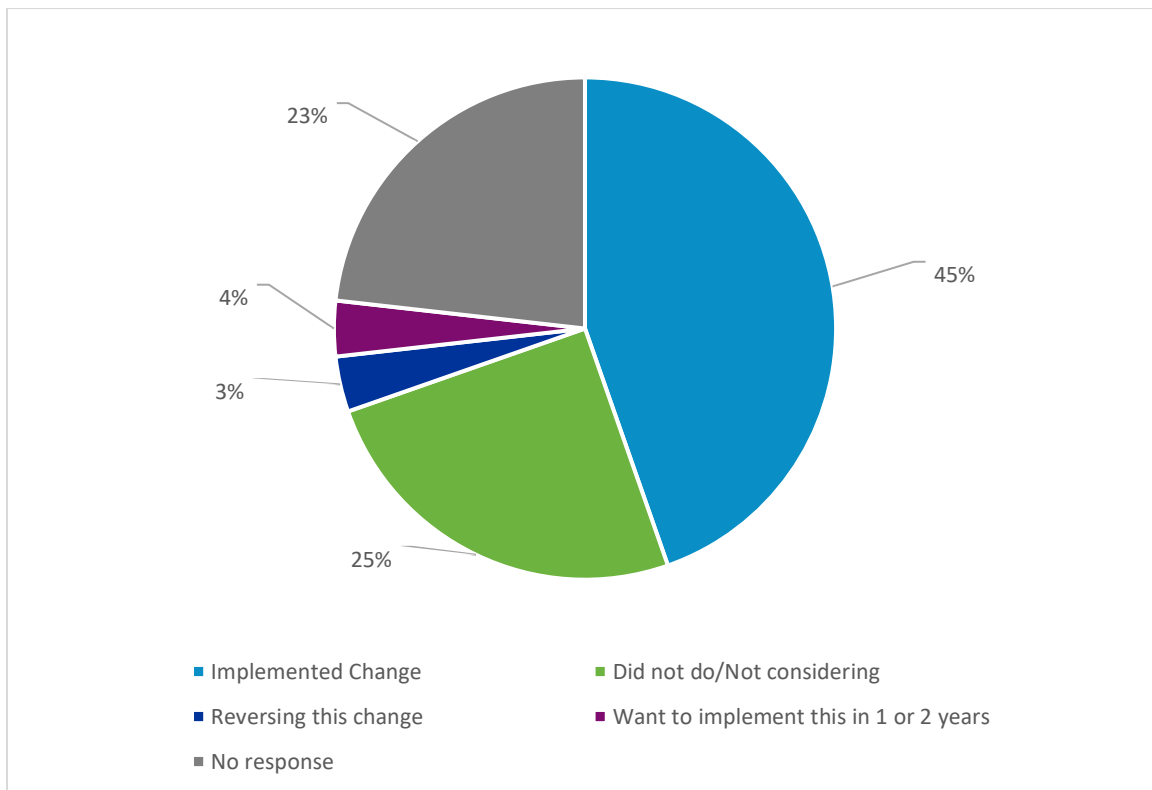
Work trends

More than ever, workplaces are becoming attractive to job seekers when their workplace attempts to understand and accommodate their needs. This section helps to determine if local employers are making any changes or plan to and which changes are more important to them.

Flexible hours

Figure 16 shows that 45 per cent of the employers have implemented flexible working hours to promote a work-life balance and only 3 per cent are reversing this change after the pandemic. One fourth of the employers are not considering flexible working hours as a perk.

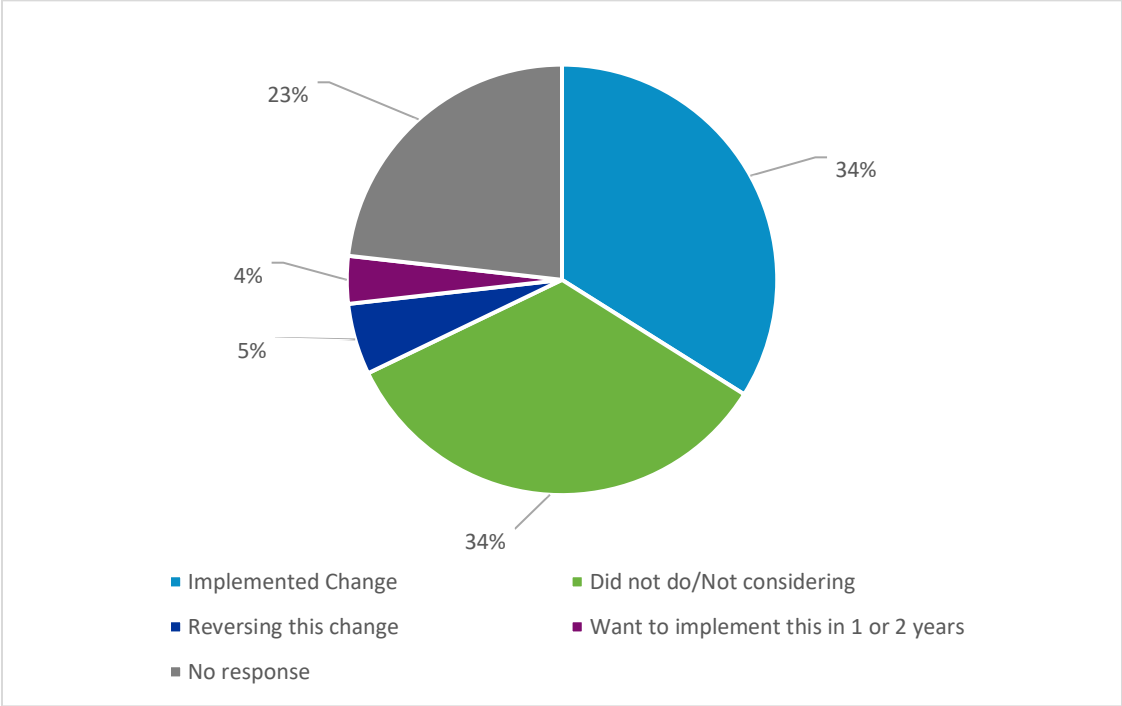
Figure 16. Offer more flexible hours to promote work-life balance.



Work from home/Hybrid work environment

Figure 17 shows the number of employers is equally divided: 34 per cent implemented a work from home policy for at least some of the workforce, while another 34 per cent are not even considering it at this time.

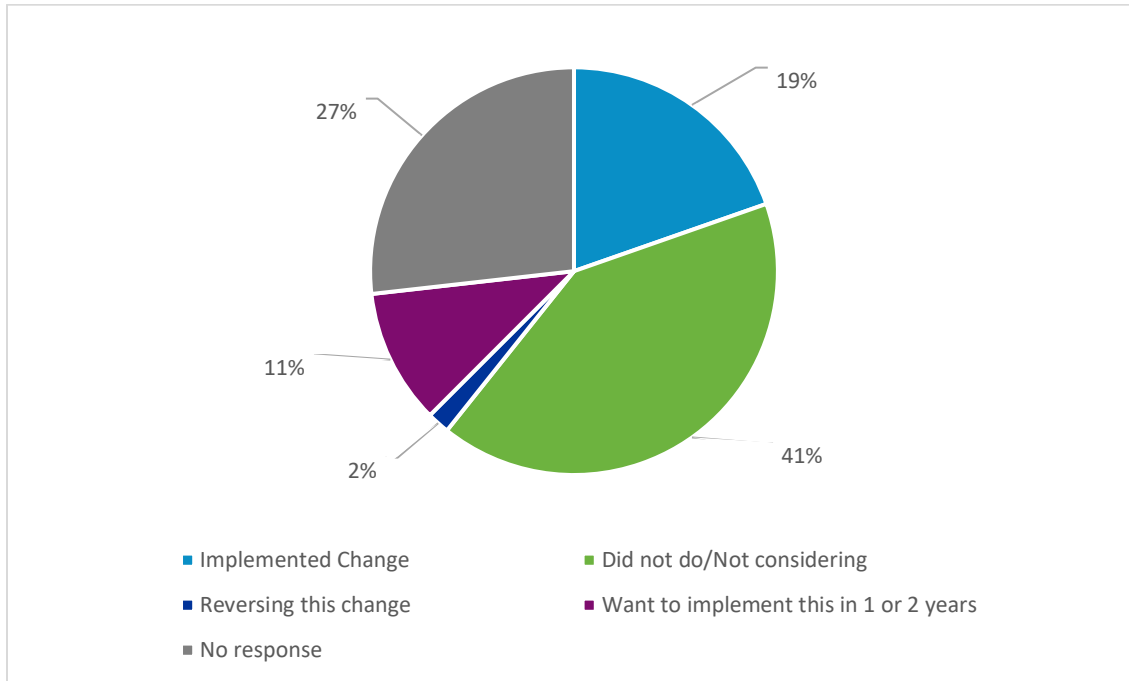
Figure 17. Shift to work from home (part-time or full-time) for at least some of workforce.



Automation/AI driven work environment

Figure 18 shows 19 per cent of the employers have introduced automation or artificial intelligence to some of the roles and 11 per cent want to implement this change in the next one or two years. A majority of 41 per cent are still not considering it in their company while 2 per cent are reversing this change.

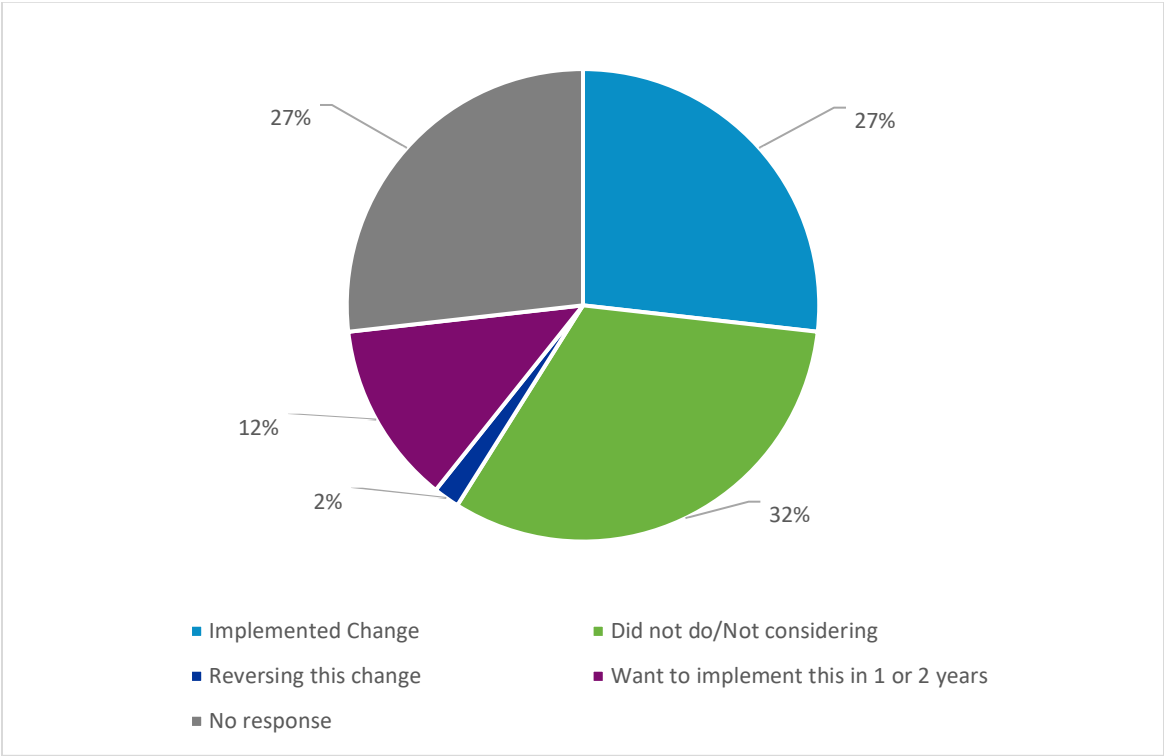
Figure 18. Introduce automation or artificial intelligence to some roles.



Collaborative office environment

Figure 19 shows 27 per cent of the employers have already set up a change in the workplace to accommodate collaboration amongst employees after moving to work at the office set up even if it is in a hybrid scenario. 12 per cent want to accommodate this change while a majority of 32 per cent did not consider this.

Figure 19. Change workplace set-up to accommodate collaboration, working at office on occasion.



Industry perceptions

As workers change from generation to generation, what they are looking for in an employer changes as well, and there may be instances where companies are holding on to outdated mindsets. In this year’s EmployerOne, the Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin asked employers some questions about their industry and what they assume the public thinks of it.

Figure 20 shows that out of the respondent employers, 54 per cent feel they offer competitive compensation packages compared to their industry counterparts. This could align with the retention strategy of employers as shown in Figure 13, to provide increased salaries (28.6 per cent) and employee perks (16.1 per cent).

Table 4 shows employer perceptions of draws and deterrents to their companies broken down by industry.

Figure 20. Organization is competitive with its compensation package.

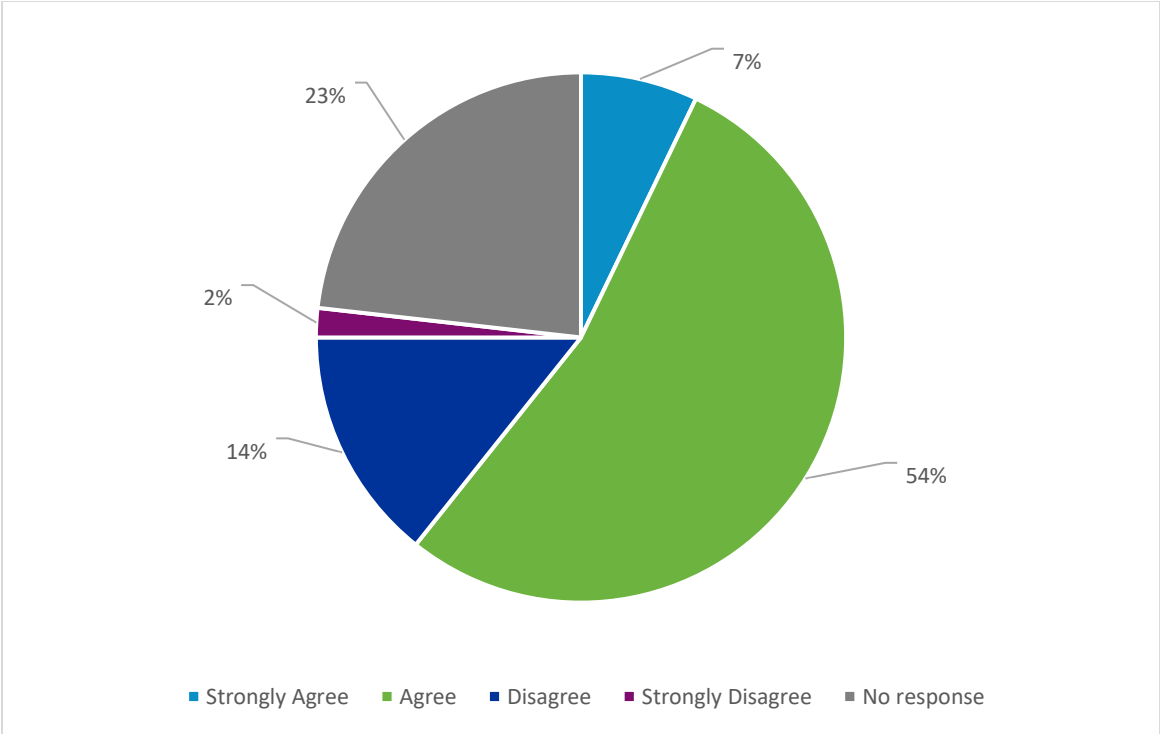


Table 4. What do you think draws people to your industry and what keeps people away?

Industry	Draws	Deterrents
Accommodation and Food Services	Fun, engaging and flexible work	Hours of work, weekends and evenings
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	Curiosity, address climate change, and food insecurity	Lack of knowledge and skills and poor job security.
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	Fun work	Long hours, short contract, and not much pay
Construction	Quality of work, working hours, and competitive wages	Hard work in all weather conditions and seasonality of the industry
Educational Services	Learning, reading and being part of a vibrant community.	Low wage as several staff members have more than one job, and / or a spouse who also works.
Finance and insurance	Fast-paced, customer-focused, and collaborative.	The general stigma of insurance companies.
Healthcare and social assistance	Independent working, nice work environment, technology and a passion for the work	No benefits, self-driven environment, hard work and upward mobility
Information and cultural industries	Meaning	Lay offs
Manufacturing	Technical skills required, work with hands and lifestyle	Loud, dirty environment and work with hands
Other Services (except public administration)	White-collar high-level positions with Retirement planning and benefits, lifestyle, work culture, government compliance,	Too much information to retain and being in the social services field
Professional, scientific and technical services	Interest in the law	Tough industry to work in, stressful
Public administration	Public- service	
Retail Trade	High Salary	Very hard work, hard on the body.

Conclusion

The data collected by the EmployerOne survey by Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington and Dufferin region has helped shed light on a variety of critical issues, challenges and employers' perceptions of industry skills, education and training requirements.

The next survey will be conducted in 2026 and this information will be used alongside other datasets collected or accessed by the City of Guelph to measure trends in the economic health of our community.

For more detailed insights, the full 2024 EmployerOne report is available on the [Workforce Planning Board's website](#).