

PEEL HALTON EMPLOYER SURVEY

2024

Meeting the Need for Skills & Recruitment

Acknowledgements

The first acknowledgment must go to the hundreds of employers who made the effort to complete our survey. Every year, we appreciate that employers take time from their busy schedules to provide their insights through our annual survey on the issues which are most pressing in our local labour market.

We would also like to express our sincere gratitude to the following individuals and organizations who contributed to the success of this survey.

Advisory Committee

These individuals provided suggestions regarding the focus and content of the survey.

Alia Abbas

Milton Economic Development

Martin Bohl

Brampton Economic Development

Tina Cassidy

Fedcap Canada

Tracy Cuning

Goodwill, The Amity Group

Clifford Hennig-Pereira

RBC

Katie Kelly

Sheridan College

Misty Knight

VPI

Moya MacKinnon

Achëv

Anita Shiwnath

Catholic Crosscultural Services

Karen Szonok

Halton Region

Yasmeen Tian

COSTI

Dissemination Partners

Abilities to Work

ACCES Employment

Achëv

Association of Administrative Professionals

Brampton Multicultural Community Centre

Bronte BIA

Burlington Economic Development

Caledon Community Services

Caledon Economic Development

COSTI

Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Centre

Downtown Acton BIA

Downtown Oakville BIA

Family Services of Peel

Goodwill, The Amity Group

Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce

Halton Region

HRPA- Peel

Indus Community Services

Job Skills

Malton Neighbourhood Services

Milton Downtown BIA

Mississauga Board of Trade

Newcomer Centre of Peel

Oakville Chamber of Commerce

Oakville Economic Development Office

Ontario Business Improvement Area

Association (OBIAA)

Ontario March of Dimes

Peel Career Assessment Services (PCAS)

Sheridan College

The Centre for Skills Development & Training

VPI

WCG Employment Ontario

YMCA-HBB

Yonge Lawrence Village BIA

Peel Halton Workforce Development Group

The Peel Halton Workforce Development Group (PHWDG) is a community-based, not-for-profit organization that serves the Peel and Halton regions. The PHWDG functions as a neutral broker of research, disseminator of information, and facilitator of collaborative partnership development. The PHWDG works with the community to identify trends and opportunities in the labour market environment which impact our workforce. We then nurture the ideas, which emerge from our consultations and seek to develop partnerships to address these issues, to further help our community to thrive in our local economy. Operating as part of the Local Boards Network of Ontario, PHWDG is one of 26 local planning board areas funded by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development to conduct and distribute local labour market research and engage community stakeholders in planning processes that support local solutions to local labour market challenges.

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For more information contact:

The Peel Halton Workforce Development Group:

email: info@peelhaltonworkforce.com, telephone: 905.306.9588

This report was prepared by:

Tom Zizys, Labour Market Analyst

Dallika Dehury, Research Analyst, Peel Halton Workforce Development Group

Shalini Da Cunha, Executive Director, Peel Halton Workforce Development Group

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An electronic version of this document as well as the survey questionnaire are available at: <https://www.peelhaltonworkforce.com/employer-surveys/>



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Executive Summary

This survey represents the 14th year that the Peel Halton Workforce Development Group (PHWDG) has administered an employer survey. This year's survey focused on recruitment challenges by different skill categories, hiring intentions, job recruitment targeting under-represented groups, use and assessment of government-funded employment and training programs, and trends relating to remote work.

The survey was administered between September 4 and October 6, 2024. This survey was distributed electronically through various channels such as social media (e.g., LinkedIn, Twitter), the PHWDG website, e-mail campaigns and PHWDG's community partners. The average number of respondents per question was 165.

The survey is not a random sample, but its respondents are generally representative of the characteristics of employers in Peel and Halton, except in the case of a few categories:

- 32% of the survey respondents have 100 or more employees, compared to 2% of all establishments in Peel and Halton; similarly, firms with 1-4 employees make up a much smaller proportion of the survey compared to their share of all establishments
- By industry, the survey share of Manufacturing firms is far higher, while the share of Transportation and Warehousing is far lower; the only other industries where there is a larger discrepancy are Educational Services, Health Care and Social Assistance, and Retail Trade
- There are slightly more firms completing the survey from Burlington, and fewer firms from Brampton, compared to their share of all firms across Peel and Halton

Overall, the number of employers participating in this annual survey has been declining over the last two years, even though there have been no changes in either the length of the survey or how it is distributed. This in itself can be considered a finding of the survey, that employers have become fatigued with surveys or that they may feel so taken up with their day-to-day demands that they feel they do not have the time to complete a survey. That being said, the proportion of respondents who requested a copy of the survey results was higher this year (almost half of those who started the survey), compared to previous years.

The vast majority of firms employ entry-level or low-skilled workers and for most of them the number they have hired has stayed about the same over the last year, while the number hiring more exceeds the number hiring less. Manufacturing firms are slightly more likely to report having hired more such workers in the last year. There is little change in the degree of difficulty when recruiting these workers compared to last year, although larger firms are slightly more likely to say it has become easier.

The biggest difference between the categories of employers was that those who felt it was easier to recruit currently felt strongly that there were more job candidates applying, while those who found it more difficult to recruit were somewhat more likely to feel there were less candidates applying, which suggests that some employers had more attractive occupations or conditions of work (wage, hours and/or schedule) that drew more candidates than other employers who had the opposite.

Hiring intentions for entry-level or low-skilled occupations over the next six months were slightly in favour of more hiring, particularly among smaller firms.

... Knowledge sector firms more likely to employ persons with a university degree or some combination certificates,

The vast majority of employers also employed workers in mid- to higher-wage, mid- to higher skilled occupations, although the proportion was slightly lower among employers with 1 to 4 employees. The post-secondary education for these occupations varied, with Knowledge sector firms more likely to employ persons with a university degree or some combination certificates, Manufacturing and Service sectors employed higher proportions of mid-to workers with trades certificates, but Services had more college diploma holders and Manufacturing has more workers with university degree or some combination of these certificates.

When it comes to training, workforce development or recruitment activities related to these mid- to higher-skilled occupations, the vast majority (87%) of employers conduct their own on-the-job training, a high proportion (almost two-thirds, at 63%) host interns or co-op students, and around half send job postings to actual or virtual job boards located at training bodies or educational institutions.

Service sector firms were far more likely to host interns or co-op students, as were very large firms (100 or more employees) and very small firms (1-4 employees). Very large firms were far more likely to attend job fairs, and firms in Peel were twice as likely to attend job fairs as firms in Halton. Service sector firms, very small and very large firms, and firms in Peel were more likely to make use of community-based employment services to meet their recruitment, retention or training needs.

Three reasons for not engaging in training or workforce development were more prominent; essentially, it cost too much or the pressures of time (lost productivity or managers were too busy).” Please replace with “The reasons for not engaging in training or workforce development were more prominent; essentially, it cost too much or the pressures of time (lost productivity or managers were too busy).”

As was the case for entry-level jobs, the hiring intentions for mid- to higher-skilled occupations over the next six months was also slightly leaning toward more hiring, with firms

with 1 to 4 employees and Knowledge sector firms having stronger hiring intentions for these occupations than other categories of firms.

Slightly more than a third (37%) track statistics regarding the demographic composition of their workforce. The significant variation arises by size of establishment: half of all firms with 100 or more employees track this data, while around a third of firms with 5 to 19 or 20 to 99 employees do so.

There is considerable variation by under-represented groups in the degree to which employers feel the proportion of these groups in their workforce matches that of the local or regional resident population.

Around half of respondents felt the proportion of newcomers and women generally matched that found in the resident population, while three groups were identified as either unrepresented or employers were not sure: Indigenous persons, persons with disabilities and refugees. When it came to identifying an under-represented group that would attract special recruitment efforts over the next six months, almost half of employers named women, youth and newcomers.

It is worth noting that a small minority of employers asserted that they did not have representativeness as a criterion for hiring, but rather that they hired based on skills, experience and/or credentials. (The survey had maintained that the purpose of these questions was to identify strategies for addressing staffing shortages.)

The challenge when recruiting from under-represented cited by the largest proportion (almost six out of ten) of respondents was recruitment challenges, how best to find and recruit these individuals. A more distant second challenge was education and accreditation, assessing their skills or their certification/education, cited by four out of ten.

In terms of recruitment strategies, it does not appear as if most employers make use of targeted approaches for different population groups, rather, they assume they will attract such candidates by the same means they use to attract all job candidates.

Around one-half of employers say they are aware of government-funded training and employment programs, a third say they are not, and one out of six say they are unsure.

When it comes to hiring youth, almost a quarter of the respondents said they did not hire youth. Half expected the number of youth hires to be about the same as the previous year, while the proportion of respondents who expected to hire more youth slightly exceeded the proportion who expected to hire fewer youth.

There appears to be a decline in the proportion of employers who say they have employees who can work remotely; however, among those who do have employees who could remotely, the incidence of working most of the time in the workplace has continued to decline (a trend apparent each year since 2021), while the proportion working hybrid has steadily increased.

Around one-half of employers say they are aware of government-funded training and employment programs, a third say they are not, and one out of six say they are unsure. There is a considerable range in the level of awareness of these programs, from six out of ten knowing about Employment Ontario employment services, apprenticeship programs and the Canada Ontario Job Grant, to only two or three out of ten knowing about the Ontario Bridge Training Program, the Ontario Job Creation Partnership or the Skills Development Fund training stream. When asked about either their use of or whether they would recommend any of these programs to other employers, large proportion (30% to 45%) said they were unsure, though they were somewhat likely to do so for two programs in particular, the Canada Ontario Job Grant and wage subsidies for new hires.

When employers were asked to provide additional comments as part of the survey or through interviews conducted as a follow-up to the survey, a number mentioned specific recruitment challenges, either in relation to entry-level service sector jobs, or more specialized skilled jobs, such as trades occupations or jobs requiring specific technical skills. The job readiness and/or the soft skills of job candidates were also cited. Several employers specifically raised concerns regarding increasing difficulty in making use of the temporary foreign worker program.

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Introduction

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The survey was administered between September 4 and October 6, 2024. This survey was distributed electronically through various channels such as social media (e.g., LinkedIn, Twitter), the PHWDG website, e-mail campaigns and PHWDG's community partners.

Methodology

In total, 241 employers started the survey, but that number was reduced to 228 after the survey was "cleaned up" – surveys with no substantive answers were eliminated. Also, where respondents provided contact information, their responses relating to their industry classification were checked and, where necessary, corrected. For the remaining substantive questions, the average number of respondents per question was 165.

When it comes to the analysis of the survey results, cross-tabulation tables were created for each question, based on select groupings, such as employee size or industries, to compare responses. With fewer responses resulting in smaller sample sizes in many subcategories of groupings, fewer cross-tabulations were carried out.

The survey is not a random sample survey. It is based on which employers are contacted, and which employers choose to respond to the survey. The survey sample is compared in its various characteristics (in particular, industry and size) to the distribution of all employers in the survey target area as one gauge of the degree to which the survey represents the universe of employers in Peel and Halton Regions. We also believe that the cross-tabulated comparisons provide insights into how different labour market issues were experienced by employers depending on their industry and the number of their employees.

The lower number of responses does raise the question whether the effort in carrying out a survey is worth the results, or whether there are other ways to explore the views of the demand side of the labour market equation.

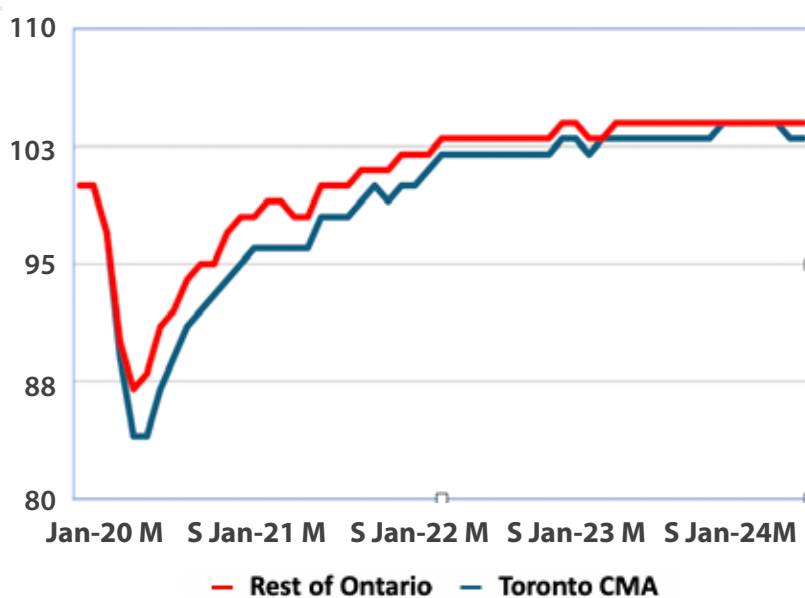
Number of responses compared to previous years

The number of responses this year are considerably below those for 2023, and the 2023 numbers were much lower than the previous years. Chart 1 shows these trends.

Prior to 2020, the number of respondents had been steadily increasing (the chart shows the figures going back five years). Between 2020 and 2022, the numbers pretty much held steady, although they did drop for the average

number of responses per question. In 2023, the figures fell in all categories by 30-45%, and in 2024, they fell again by 30-45%. It was not the case that more respondents started dropping out halfway through the survey – rather, fewer were even starting the survey, compared to previous years. The lower number of responses does raise the question whether the effort in carrying out a survey is worth the results, or whether there are other ways to explore the views of the demand side of the labour market equation.

Chart 1: Ratio of active businesses, Toronto CMA and Rest of Ontario, January 2020 to July 2024 (January 2020 = 100) (seasonally adjusted)



Statistics Canada, Table 33-10-0270-01

Profile of employers

The PHWDG survey, while focusing on Peel and Halton, also attracts employers across the Greater Toronto Area, as local partners who disseminate the survey through their e-mailing lists often engage with employers beyond the boundaries of these two regions. As a result, while a clear majority (72%) of the respondents are employers in Peel and Halton, many come from other parts of the GTA (Table 1).

To gauge how representative, the survey sample is, Table 1 focuses on the responses from Peel and Halton and compares how the survey distribution matches that actual distribution of establishments with employees in Peel and Halton. According to these results, employers from Burlington are over-represented in the survey sample, while employers from Brampton are under-represented.

Table 1: Distribution of survey respondents by municipality

Municipality	Survey		Actual in Peel/Halton
	Number	Percent	
Brampton	18	12%	34%
Mississauga	57	39%	35%
Caledon	6	4%	5%
Oakville	20	14%	11%
Milton	10	7%	5%
Halton Hills	6	4%	3%
Burlington	31	21%	8%
TOTAL PEEL + HALTON	148	101%	101%
Peel Region	11		
Halton Region	4		
City of Toronto	48		
Durham Region	3		
York Region	6		
Outside GTA	7		

Actual distribution of Peel and Halton employers from Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Counts, June 2024

For many industry sectors, the proportionate share of survey respondents rather closely matches the actual share present in Peel and Halton.

Table 2 profiles the distribution of survey responses by industry. Two calculations have been provided. Firstly, the actual number of all survey responses by industry, together with their percentage distribution (the first and second column of figures in Table 2). The third column shows the actual percentage distribution of employers in Peel and Halton (with the Management of Companies excluded to match the survey industry options).

For many industry sectors, the proportionate share of survey respondents rather closely matches the actual share present in Peel and Halton. There are, however, two sectors where there is a considerable difference:

- Manufacturing (21.1% of the survey responses compared to 4.5% of all Peel and Halton employers)
- Transportation and Warehousing (1.3% of the survey responses compared to 20.9% of Peel and Halton all employers)

Otherwise, the only industries where the spread between the survey and the actual distribution by industry is greater than 4% are Educational Services, Health Care and Social Assistance, and Retail Trade.

Table 2: Distribution of survey respondents by industry

Industry	TOTAL SURVEY		Actual Percent of employers in Peel and Halton
	Number	Percent	
Accommodation and Food Services	8	3.5%	5.3%
Administrative & Support, Waste Management	8	3.5%	3.9%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	2	0.9%	0.3%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	8	3.5%	0.8%
Construction	20	8.8%	8.6%
Educational Services	15	6.6%	1.2%
Finance and Insurance	3	1.3%	2.9%
Health Care and Social Assistance	32	14.1%	8.8%
Information and Cultural Industries	1	0.4%	1.0%
Manufacturing	48	21.1%	4.5%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0	0.0%	0.0%
Other Services (except Public Administration) †	22	9.7%	6.7%
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	30	13.2%	16.9%
Public Administration	6	2.6%	0.1%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	7	3.1%	4.2%
Retail Trade	7	3.1%	8.4%
Transportation and Warehousing	3	1.3%	20.9%
Utilities	0	0.0%	0.0%
Wholesale Trade	7	3.1%	5.4%
TOTAL	354	99.8%	99.9%

Actual distribution of Peel and Halton employers from Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Counts, June 2024

† Such as automotive repair, hairdressing or dry-cleaning services

Sub-categories were selected based on enough responses in that category to ensure that the sample was robust.

Table 3 profiles the survey respondents by number of employees. Once again, the distribution of all survey respondents is compared to the actual distribution present in Peel and Halton by size of establishments.

Very small enterprises (1-4 employees) account for two-thirds (67%) of all establishments with employees in Peel and Halton, but a much smaller proportion of survey respondents, at 13%. Instead, survey respondents tend to represent larger firms, and the largest size category, 100 or more employees, accounts for a third (32%) of survey respondents, whereas this category only accounts for 2% of all employers in Peel and Halton. However, for the sake of this survey, we feel there is a healthy distribution of responses by different size categories, allowing us to analyze the differences in responses between employers.

When we compare the number of survey respondents to the actual number of employers by size of establishment, we can see different response rates by size category: 4% of firms with 100 or more employees in Peel and Halton responded to the survey (one in 25), while 0.9% of firms with 1 to 4 employees took the survey (one in 111).

In analyzing the survey results, we will refer to differences in responses by various sub-categories (industry, number of employees, or geography) where there exist significant outliers. Sub-categories were selected based on enough responses in that category to ensure that the sample was robust. We defined outliers as scoring lower or higher (by 25% or more) than the average score for any response. The sub-categories used for cross-tabulation were as follows:

Table 3: Distribution of survey respondents by number of employees (Peel and Halton)

	Number of employees			
	1-4	5-19	20-99	100+
ACTUAL DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYERS BY SIZE IN PEEL AND HALTON				
Actual number	60385	19837	7727	1787
Actual percent	67%	22%	9%	2%
DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYERS BY SIZE IN THE SURVEY				
Survey number	28	57	67	71
Survey percent	13%	26%	30%	32%
RATIO OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS TO ACTUAL				
Survey as percent of actual in Peel and Halton	0.1%	0.3%	0.9%	4.0%

Actual distribution of Peel and Halton employers from Statistics Canada, Canadian Business Counts, June 2024

Employers were first asked whether they employed entry-level workers . . . the vast majority do.

Number of employees:

- 1-4 employees
- 5-19 employees
- 20-99 employees
- 100+ employees

Industry sector:

- Manufacturing
- Knowledge sectors (Educational Services, Finance & Insurance, Information & Cultural Industries, Professional, Scientific & Technical Services, Public Administration)
- Services sectors (Accommodation & Food Services; Administrative Support; Arts, Entertainment & Recreation; Retail Trade)

Geography:

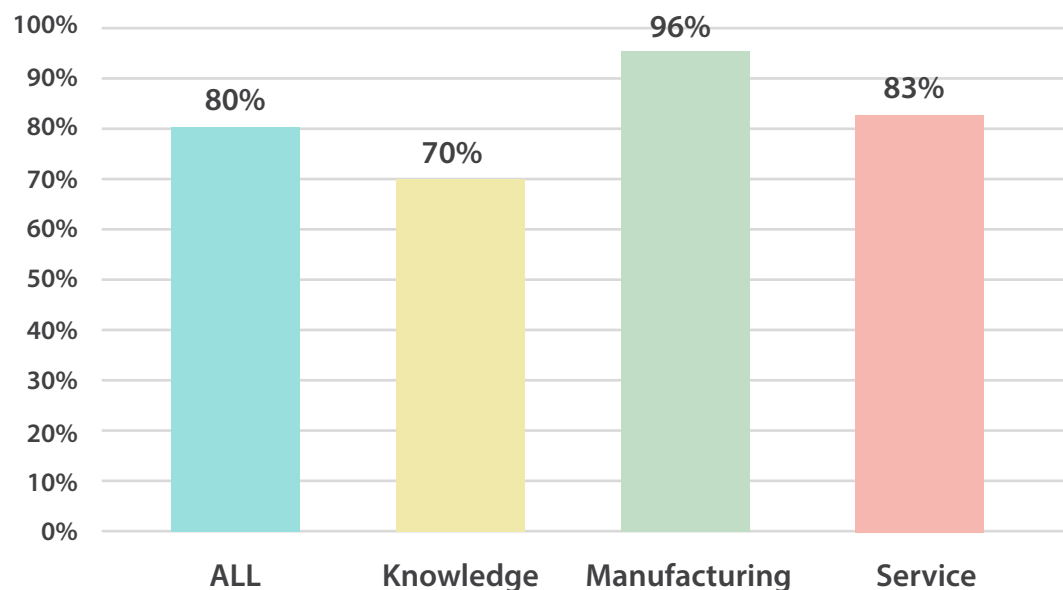
- Peel
- Halton

Recruitment for entry-level occupations

The survey defined entry-level occupations as those which typically require no more than a high school diploma, even though in many cases, these jobs are filled with people who have a post-secondary education. Examples of these jobs include: office clerks; retail salespersons; cashiers; shelf stockers; food and beverage servers; cleaners; and labourers in construction, logistics, manufacturing and natural resources.

Employers were first asked whether they employed entry-level workers. As Chart 2 shows, the vast majority do, with some variation by industry sector.

Chart 2: Percentage of respondents who employ workers in entry-level occupations by industry sector



80% of all respondents said they employed workers in entry-level occupations, almost all (96%) Manufacturing firms did so, while Knowledge sector firms were somewhat below the average (70%).

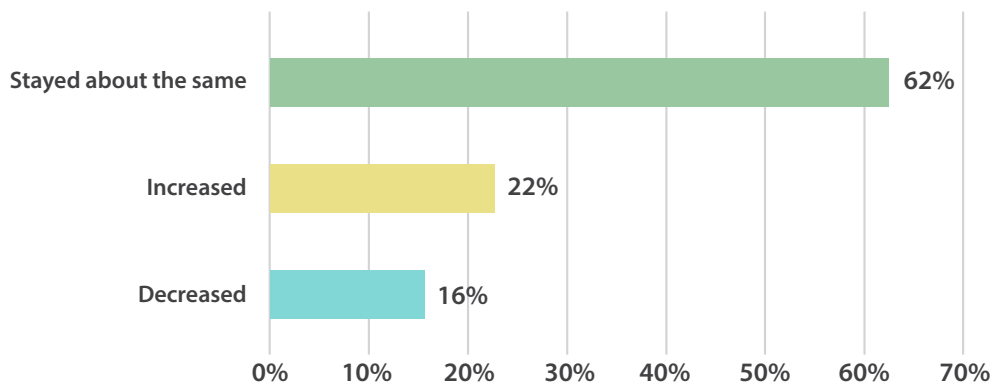
There was some variation by size of firm (Table 4). Firms with 5 to 19 employees reported the smallest proportion, but still even in this category, two-thirds (67%) employed workers in entry-level occupations.

For most firms, the number of workers employed in entry-level occupations has not changed since last year (Chart 3). Almost two-thirds of employers (62%) said that the number had stayed about the same; a little over one out of five (22%) said the number had increased, while one out of six said it had decreased.

Table 4: Percentage of respondents who employ workers in entry-level occupations by size of firm

ALL FIRMS	Number of employees			
	1-4	5-19	20-99	100+
80%	89%	67%	85%	91%

Chart 3: Comparing number of workers employed in entry-level occupations to last year



Employers were further asked to compare the current ease or difficulty of recruiting workers in entry-level occupations to the previous year.

There was little variation in these responses by the size of firm, but by industry sector there were noticeable differences (Table 5). Manufacturing firms experienced more changes (only half said there had been no change), and more firms reported increases in the number of entry-level occupation workers. Knowledge sector firms reported less change, but also more firms indicated that the number of entry-level workers increased, whereas among Service sector firms, there were an equal number reporting either an increase or a decrease in their numbers.

Employers were further asked to compare the current ease or difficulty of recruiting workers in entry-level occupations to the previous year. Respondents were given a range of responses; in order to make comparisons across different categories, a composite score has been developed by assigning the following values for each response:

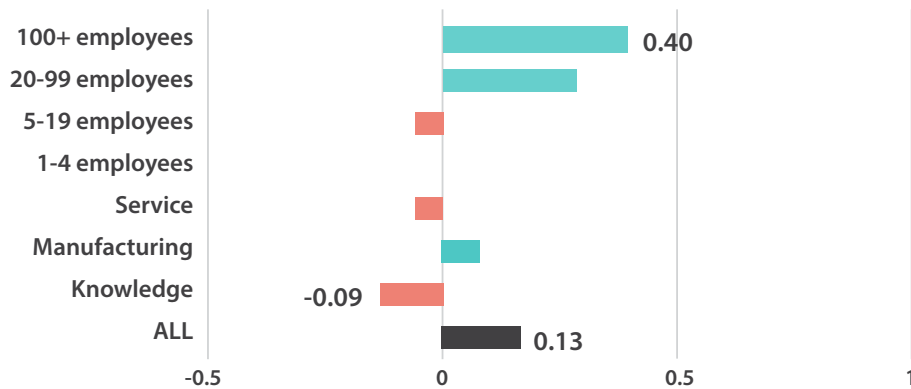
- +2 Much easier now compared to a year ago
- +1 Slightly easier now compared to a year ago
- 0 About the same level of difficulty
- 1 Slightly more difficult now compared to a year ago
- 2 Much more difficult now compared to a year ago

Each response was multiplied by its corresponding answer value, then all these values were added up and divided by the total number of responses, minus those who answered “unsure.” The resulting composite score represents the average answer for all respondents. Chart 4 displays the results by category of employers.

Table 5: Comparing number of workers employed in entry-level occupations to last year by industry sector

	ALL	Knowledge	Manufacturing	Service
Stayed about the same	62%	67%	51%	62%
Increased	22%	19%	27%	19%
Decreased	16%	14%	22%	19%

Chart 4: Composite score results comparing degree of current difficulty when recruiting workers for entry-level occupations compared to last year



There is not a huge variation between the responses by different categories of employers. A value of +1 equals a response of “slightly easier now compared to a year ago,” but the average response of each category hovered more closely above or below “0,” “about the same level of difficulty.” There were some variations within these categories: larger firms (20-99 and 100+ employees) found it slightly easier to recruit now, whereas smaller firms were either at “0” or slightly below zero. Knowledge sector firms had the lowest score, but this was still only a shade below zero.

Respondents were then further probed about the reasons for the ease or difficulty they expressed regarding the recruitment of workers for entry-level occupations. The respondents were grouped into three categories based on their earlier response about the recruitment ease or difficulty, and asked to rate various reasons for their views, where the wording was different to reflect their earlier response (for example, why has it been easier or more difficult to recruit).

Table 6: Reasons for why employers felt recruitment was easier, more difficult or no different

	Employers who feel it is easier to recruit	Employers who feel it is more difficult to recruit	Employers who feel the difficulty is the same
Number of job candidates applying	Strongly believe more candidates are applying	Somewhat believe that fewer candidates are applying	More think there are too many candidates rather than too few
Skill level of job candidates	Job candidate skills are roughly the same	Job candidate skills have declined somewhat	Job candidate skills have contributed somewhat to the difficulty
Qualifications needed for the job	Do not feel qualifications for job have decreased	Do not feel qualifications for job have increased	Somewhat believe qualifications for job have increased
Competition from other employers for workers	Somewhat believe there is more competition from other employers	Somewhat believe there is more competition from other employers	Somewhat believe there is more competition from other employers
Wage levels	Slight support for view that wages have become more attractive	Somewhat support view that wages have become more attractive	Wage expectations contribute somewhat to the difficulty

Those who felt there was no difference in the difficulty in recruiting were more likely to think there were too many candidates applying rather than too few.

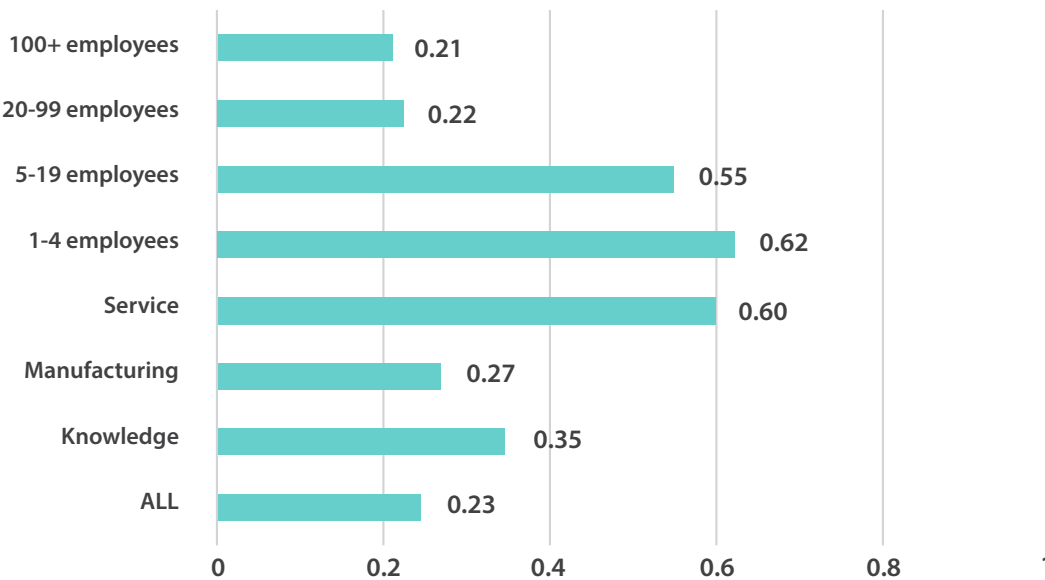
The biggest difference between the categories of employers was that those who felt it was easier to recruit currently felt strongly that there were more job candidates applying, while those who found it more difficult to recruit were somewhat more likely to feel there were less candidates applying. Those who felt there was no difference in the difficulty in recruiting were more likely to think there were too many candidates applying rather than too few. All this suggests that some employers had more attractive occupations or conditions of work (wage, hours and/or schedule) that drew more candidates than other employers who had the opposite.

All categories believed there was more competition from other employers for job recruits. Those who expressed it was easier to recruit felt that job candidate skills had

remained steady, while for the other two categories, they felt the skill level of job candidates pose a challenge. On the other hand, there seemed to be greater support for the view that wages for these jobs had become more attractive.

Respondents were next asked regarding their hiring expectations for entry-level occupations in the coming six months. Overall, the average composite score reflected slightly positive hiring intentions; these hiring intentions were more pronounced among firms with 1 to 4 and 5 to 19 employees and among firms in the Service sector. Chart 5 shows these results; a composite score of "1" indicates that hiring over the next six months will increase somewhat, and a composite score of "0" indicates that hiring will stay the same.

Chart 5: Hiring intentions regarding entry-level occupations over the coming six months



Recruitment for mid- to higher-wage, mid- to higher-skilled occupations

The survey defined mid- to higher- wage, mid- to higher-skilled occupations as those where the skill level is often related to a postsecondary education, either a trades certificate, a college diploma or a university degree.

Examples of these occupations include:

- Trades certificate: Electricians, plumbers, industrial millwrights, carpenters, cooks, hairdressers
- College diploma: Supervisors, executive assistants, licensed practical nurses, technicians and technologists, paralegals, early childhood educators, insurance agents, real estate agents

- University degree: Managers, professionals such as doctors, nurses, lawyers, accountants, engineers, HR professionals, computer system developers and programmers, teachers

86% of respondents indicated that they employ workers in mid- to higher- wage, mid- to higher-skilled occupations. Firms in the Knowledge sector (89%) and the Manufacturing sector (88%) were more likely to employ workers in these occupations, whereas firms in the Service sector (63%) were somewhat less likely (Chart 6).

There was also a clear trend by size of establishment, where firms with 1 to 4 employees were less likely to employ these workers compared to other size categories (Table 7).

Chart 6: Percentage of respondents who employ workers in mid- to higher-wage, mid- to higher-skilled occupations by industry sector

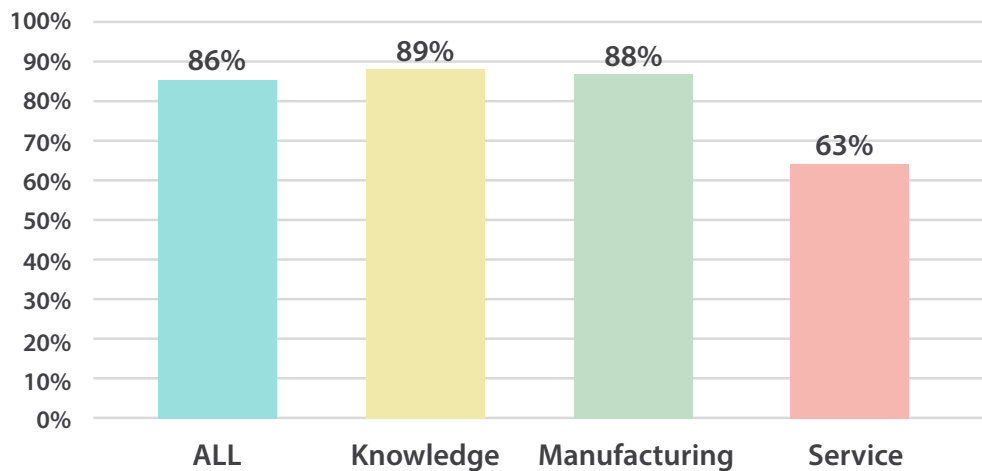


Table 7: Percentage of respondents who employ workers in mid- to higher-wage, mid- to higher-skilled occupations by size of firm

ALL FIRMS	Number of employees			
	1-4	5-19	20-99	100+
80%	63%	81%	88%	98%

Manufacturing has more workers with university degree or some combination of these certificates

Employers were asked which category of skill-level they employed in their organization, with the following options provided:

- Jobs usually associated with a trades certificate
- Jobs usually associated with a college diploma
- Jobs usually associated with a university degree
- Jobs that include a combination of these categories

Table 8 shows the responses by category of employer.

Among the industry categories, the Knowledge sector had a very high proportion of workers who had a university degree or some combination of these post-secondary certificates. The Manufacturing and Service sectors employed higher proportions of mid- to workers with trades certificates, but Services had more college diploma holders and Manufacturing has more workers with university degree or some combination of these certificates. Firms with 1-4 employees had higher proportions of workers with a university degree, while larger firms (who presumably have a higher range of occupations) had larger proportions of workers with some combination of these certificates. Halton employers had a higher proportion of workers with some combination as well.

Table 8: Distribution of workers in mid- to higher-wage, mid- to higher-skilled occupations by post-secondary certificate, by employer categories

	ALL	Knowledge	Manufacturing	Service	1-4 employees	5-19 employees	20-99 employees	100+ employees	PEEL	HALTON
Trades	15%	3%	21%	21%	20%	22%	10%	9%	18%	20%
College	16%	10%	15%	29%	13%	16%	15%	15%	23%	14%
University	29%	35%	29%	21%	47%	16%	25%	33%	24%	20%
Combination	40%	53%	35%	29%	20%	46%	50%	43%	35%	47%

The next question focused on training or workforce development activities (including recruitment) related to their mid- to higher-wage, mid- to higher-skilled occupation workforce. Employers were asked which activities they engaged in and could select as many as applied. The options as expressed in the survey are listed below, together with the abbreviated version of that option used to fit Chart 7 which provides the responses.

OPTION IN SURVEY	ABBREVIATED VERSION IN CHART
We deliver our own on-the-job training	Do our own training
We host interns or co-op students	Host interns/co-ops
We send job postings to actual or virtual job boards located at training bodies or educational institutions	Place job postings at job boards
We contract external suppliers to provide training to our employees, either on-site, off-site or on-line	Contract external trainers
We participate in job fairs	Attend job fairs
We work with community-based employment services to help us with our recruitment, retention or training needs	Use employment agencies
We visit training bodies or educational institutions to give presentations, career talks or to provide advice regarding curriculum	Give talks to trainers/schools
We hire apprentices	Hire apprentices
We host school projects or site visits	Host school projects/visits

A high proportion (almost two-thirds, at 63%) host interns or co-op students.

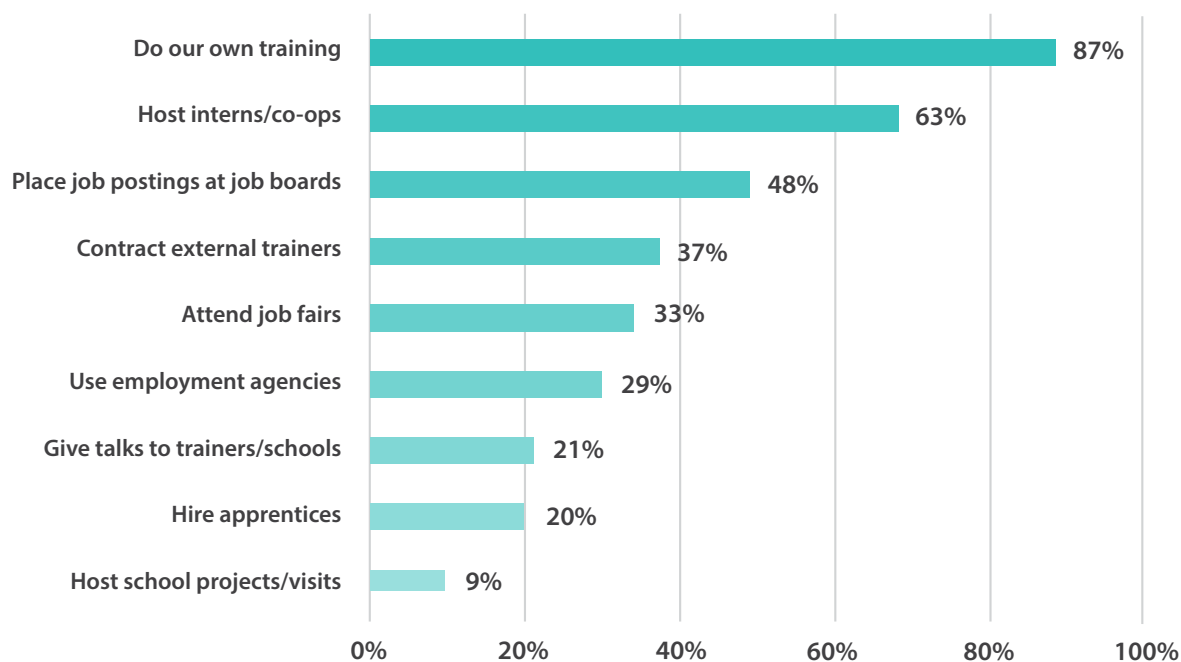
Chart 7 shows that, by far, the vast majority (87%) of employers conduct their own on-the-job training. A high proportion (almost two-thirds, at 63%) host interns or co-op students. Then between one-third and one-half do the following:

- Send job postings to actual or virtual job boards located at training bodies or educational institutions (48%)
- Contract external suppliers to provide training to our employees, either on-site, off-site or on-line (37%)
- Participate in job fairs (33%)
- Work with community-based employment services to help us with our recruitment, retention or training needs (29%)

Lower on the list of training or workforce activities are:

- Visit training bodies or educational institutions to give presentations, career talks or to provide advice regarding curriculum (21%)
- Hire apprentices (20%)
- Host school projects or site visits (9%)

Chart 7: Engagement in training or workforce development activities by employers



There are three activities where there are notable differences among employer categories, as displayed in Table 9.

Table 9: Engagement in select training or workforce development activities by employer categories

	ALL	Knowledge	Manufacturing	Service	1-4 employees	5-19 employees	20-99 employees	100+ employees	PEEL	HALTON
Host interns/co-ops	63%	67%	45%	86%	67%	49%	59%	77%	62%	63%
Attend job fairs	33%	31%	21%	29%	20%	8%	20%	67%	38%	18%
Use employment agencies	29%	28%	27%	36%	40%	22%	17%	42%	32%	22%

Service sector firms were far more likely to host interns or co-op students, as were very large firms (100 or more employees) and very small firms (1-4 employees). Very large firms were far more likely to attend job fairs, and firms in Peel were twice as likely to attend job fairs as firms in Halton. Service sector firms, very small and very large firms, and firms in Peel were more likely to make use of community-based employment services to meet their recruitment, retention or training needs.

Employers were further asked what the reasons might be for not engaging in training or workforce development activities for mid- to higher-wage, mid- to higher-skilled occupations. They were provided with the following set of options (with abbreviated version listed):

OPTION IN SURVEY	ABBREVIATED VERSION IN CHART
The financial cost of training	Financial cost
The work time lost due to training	Time lost
Our managers and supervisors are too busy to take on this work	Managers too busy
The inability to find a qualified trainer or a relevant training program	No qualified trainer
Our employees do not currently need additional training	Do not need training
It is not clear what training would best help our employees	Not clear what training

Very large firms were far more likely to attend job fairs

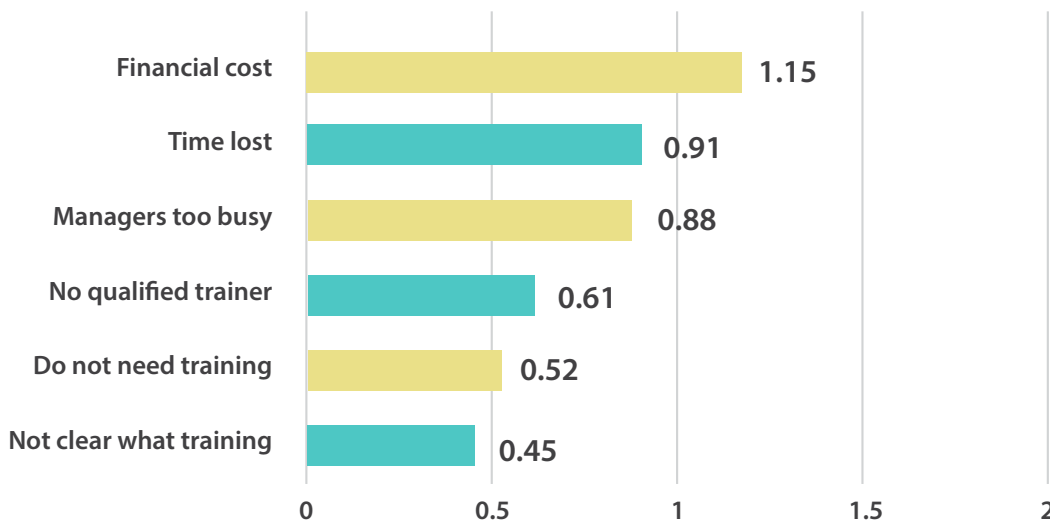
Respondents were asked to rate each of these reasons and values were assigned for each response:

- +2 A major reason
- +1 A minor reason
- 1. Not a consideration

The reasons for not engaging in training or workforce development were more prominent; essentially, it cost too much or the pressures of time (lost productivity or managers were too busy).

Chart 8 shows the results of all responses.

Chart 8: Rating reasons for not engaging in training or workforce development activities



OPTION IN SURVEY	ABBREVIATED VERSION IN CHART
The financial cost of training	Financial cost
The work time lost due to training	Time lost
Our managers and supervisors are too busy to take on this work	Managers too busy
The inability to find a qualified trainer or a relevant training program	No qualified trainer
Our employees do not currently need additional training	Do not need training
It is not clear what training would best help our employees	Not clear what training

Very small firms (1 to 4 employees) gave higher ratings than other firms for such concerns as financial cost, time lost, managers being too busy and inability to find a qualified trainer. Knowledge sector firms also provided a much higher rating to the financial cost issue and were much less likely to say that their employees did not need additional training. On the other hand, Manufacturing firms were more likely to say their employees did not need training, while they were least likely to say that there was no qualified trainer available. Service sector firms were least likely to say it was not clear what training their employees needed.

The next question focused on employer hiring intentions over the next six months for mid- to higher-wage, mid- to higher-skilled occupations.

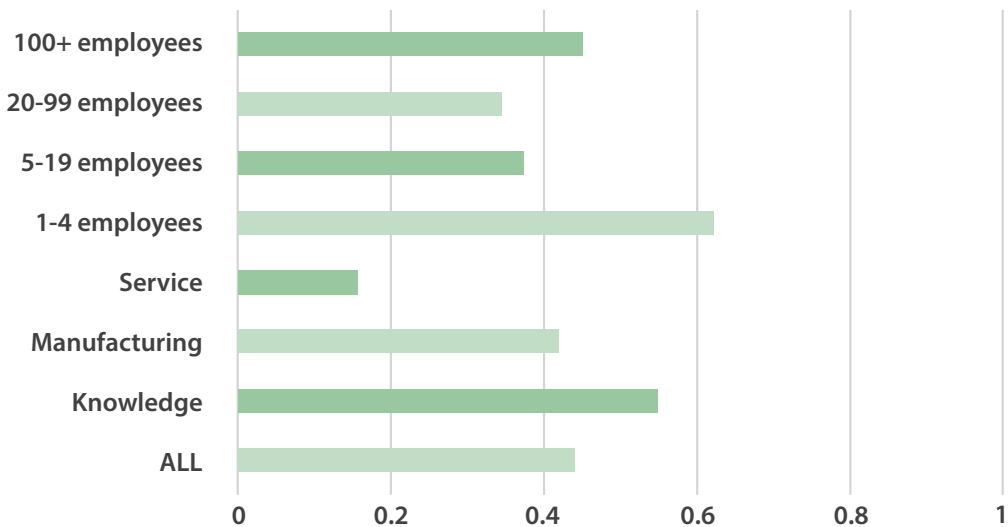
The answer options were assigned values as follows:

- +2 Will increase significantly
- +1 Will increase somewhat
- 1 Will decrease somewhat
- 2 Will decrease significantly

Chart 9 shows the composite score for different employer categories.

The average score for all employers is just below halfway between “will stay the same” and “will increase somewhat.” Firms with 1 to 4 employees and Knowledge sector firms had stronger hiring intentions for these occupations than other categories of firms.

Chart 9: Hiring intentions for mid- to higher-wage, mid- to higher-skilled occupations over next six months



When the labour market is tight, employers sometimes target under-represented groups to widen their recruitment base.

Under-represented groups in one's workforce

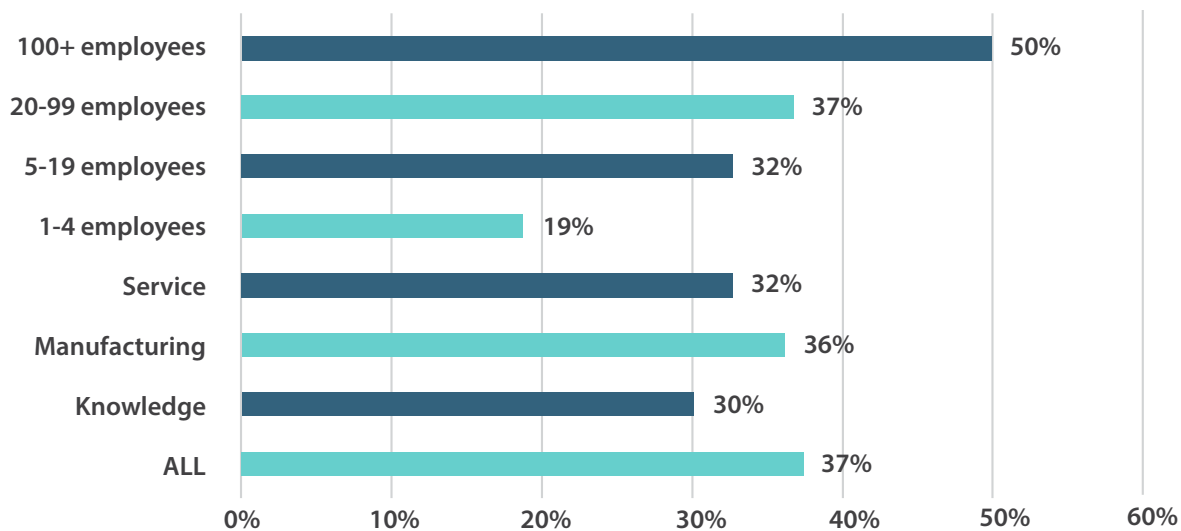
In the survey, under-represented groups were described as follows:

An under-represented group is a population category that is employed in a lower proportion than might be expected given their share of the general population. What constitutes an under-represented group can vary from one employer to another. There may also be good reasons for under-representation; for example, youth aged 15 to 24 years of age are likely to be under-represented in a law firm, compared to their share of the general population, because of the age at which one is likely to graduate from law school.

When the labour market is tight, employers sometimes target under-represented groups to widen their recruitment base.

The first question in this section asked respondents whether their organization tracked or kept statistics on the demographic composition of their workforce. The results by employer categories are presented in Chart 10. Among all respondents, 13% did not know if their organization kept such statistics. For the purposes of comparison, only those who knew whether their organization kept such statistics are used for the calculations in Chart 10, which shows the percentage of those who said they did.

Chart 10: Percentage of organizations maintaining statistics on demographic composition of workforce



Slightly more than a third (37%) track statistics regarding the demographic composition of their workforce. The significant variation arises by size of establishment: half of all firms with 100 or more employees track this data, while around a third of firms with 5 to 19 or 20 to 99 employees do so. Only one in five (19%) of small firms (1 to 4 employees) collect this information – although this may be somewhat misleading, because while they may not track such data, having only 1 to 4 employees means that they

are likely aware of the demographic composition of their workforce.

Respondents were further asked the extent to which the demographic profile of their employees compared to that of the resident population in the local area or region. The survey offered demographic categories, using the descriptions below, with the abbreviated version applied in the following chart.

OPTION IN SURVEY	ABBREVIATED VERSION IN CHART
Indigenous persons	Indigenous persons
Neurodivergent individuals	Neurodivergent
Refugees	Refugees
Persons with disabilities	Persons w/disabilities
LGBTQ+ population	LGBTQ+ population
Racialized persons	Racialized persons
Youth (15 to 24 years old)	Youth
Older adults (55 years and older)	Older adults
Women	Women
Newcomers to Canada (arrived in last five years)	Newcomers

Almost half of respondents say that the proportion of newcomers and of women generally matches that the resident population

There is considerable variation in responses for each demographic graphic category, however, these can be grouped into the following clusters:

Generally matches

Almost half of respondents say that the proportion of newcomers and of women generally matches that the resident population, with the remainder roughly equally distributed across the rest of the answers (over-represented, under-represented, unsure)

Generally matches, but also under-represented

For the two age-related categories, that of youth and of older adults, around 40% of respondents said they generally matched, but around a third also said that they were under-represented; essentially, there are jobs that either have a higher proportion of youth, as well as a range of occupations which have fewer youth, and the same applies to older adults

Generally matches, but also unsure

Almost 40% of respondents felt that the proportion of racialized persons generally matched the resident population, but an even larger proportion (45%) were unsure

Under-represented or unsure

Three groups were identified as under-represented: Indigenous persons (53%), persons with disabilities (44%) and refugees (38%), with over a third to close to one half saying they were not sure

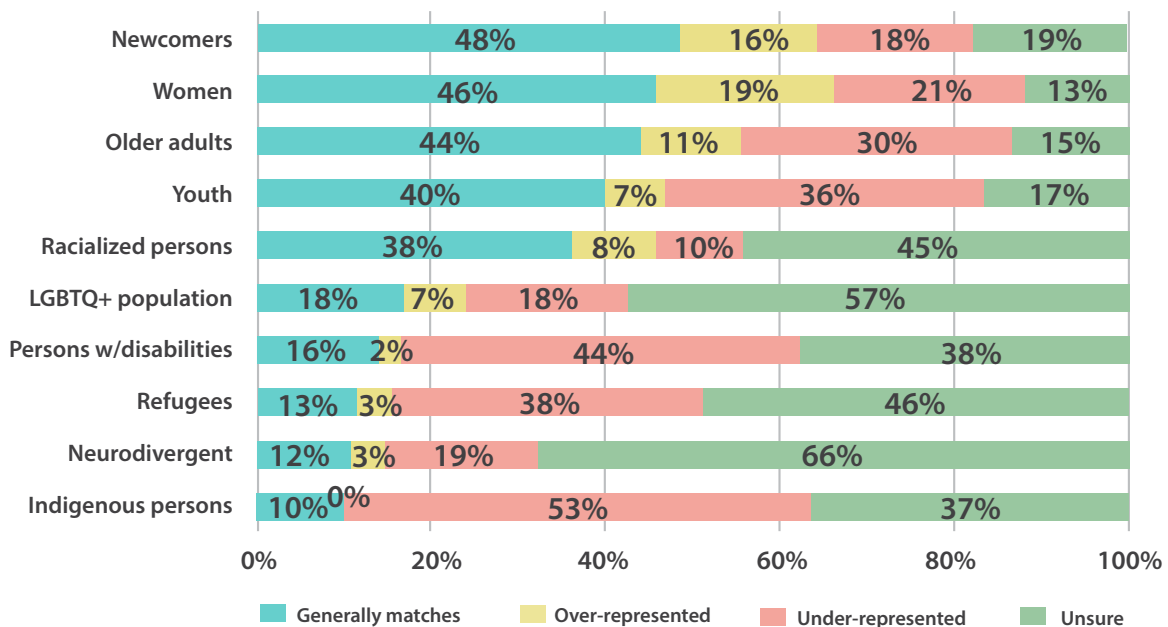
Unsure

For two population categories, close to 60% of respondents were unsure of the match: LGBTQ+ population and neurodivergent individuals.

There are further variations by employer categories:

- A large proportion of Service sector firms report that the Indigenous population is under-represented (76%) in their workforce, as are persons with disabilities (57%)
- Firms with 1 to 4 employees indicate that older adults are under-represented (48%) among their employees
- Firms with 5 to 19 employees indicate that Indigenous persons are under-represented (71%) in their workforce
- Even though half of firms with 100 or more employees indicated their organization kept statistics on the demographics of their workforce, they were still often likely to answer that they were unsure regarding the demographic match to the local resident population

Chart 11: Degree of demographic match between workforce and local/regional resident population



Respondents were next probed regarding which under-represented groups might attract additional recruitment efforts over the next six months. Chart 12 shows that there are two clusters of under-represented groups: a higher priority group for which around half (44% to 48%) of the respondents say they expect to place extra recruitment efforts (women, youth and newcomers), with the rest falling into a lower priority group (19% to 25% saying they would attract extra recruitment efforts).

By employer category, Service sector firms, firms with 1 to 4 employees, and Manufacturing firms tended to have higher proportions of employers placing a priority on pretty much every under-represented group, which perhaps is an indication of their recruitment needs as opposed to an effort to diversify their workforce.

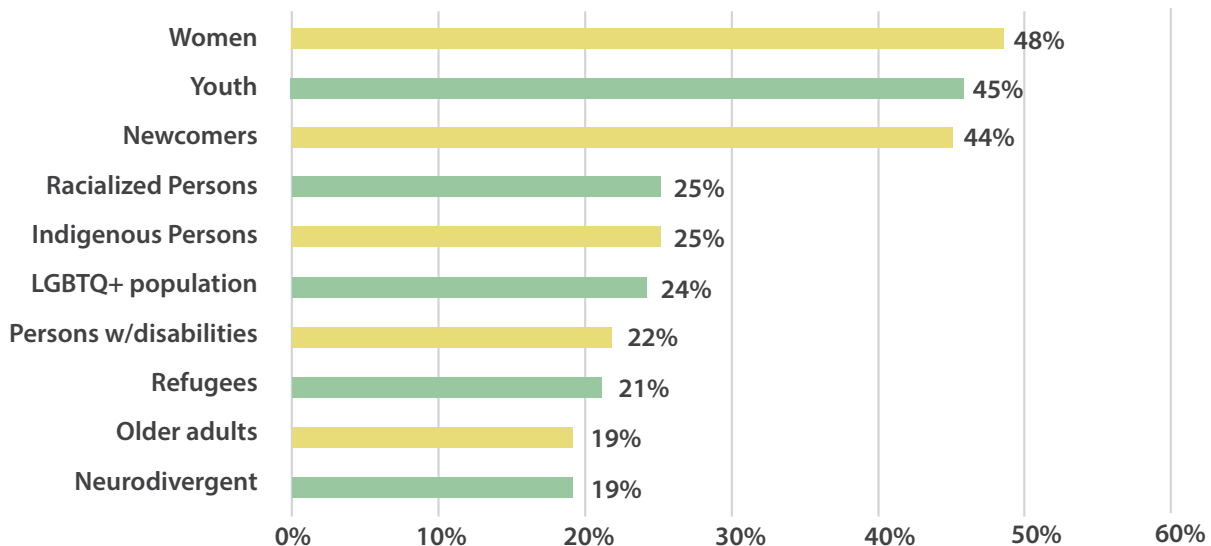
This question provided an option to mention a group that had not been included in the under-represented group list, and several respondents used this opportunity to

comment on the focus of this question. One in seven (14%) respondents who answered this question made a point of communicating that they hired based on skill, experience and/or qualifications, not based on representation, emphasizing the point with such comments as “just want the best person, not a checkbox,” or “I don’t like this question; we hire the best recruit for the position regardless of group.”

This section of the survey had been characterized as a way to broaden one’s recruitment efforts at a time when labour markets might be tight, not as a diversity and inclusion strategy. Next time such survey questions are developed, it may be helpful to explain that broadening one’s recruitment efforts may require different recruitment approaches, as some population categories may be under-represented not because of discrimination but because of reliance on limited outreach.



Chart 12: Under-represented groups identified for special recruitment efforts in next six months

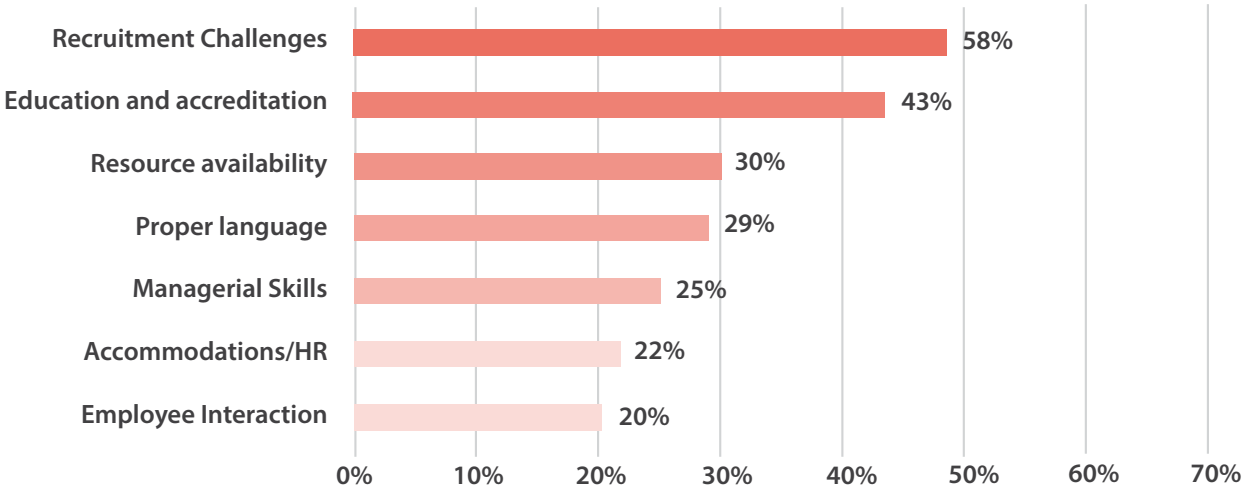


Service sector firms, firms with 1 to 4 employees, and Manufacturing firms tended to have higher proportions of employers placing a priority on pretty much every under-represented group

In that context, the next question of the survey asked regarding the challenges organizations faced when recruiting from under-represented populations. The following possible challenges were identified in the survey for respondents to select, and the table shows the abbreviated version used in the chart.

OPTION IN SURVEY	ABBREVIATED VERSION IN CHART
Recruitment challenges: How best to find and recruit these individuals	Recruitment challenges
Proper language: The right language to describe the under-represented group	Proper language
Accommodations and human resources adjustments: How best to provide accommodations or meet their needs	Accommodations/HR
Managerial skills: Uncertain about the skills of our managers and supervisors, including cultural understanding, to engage with these new workers	Managerial skills
Employee interaction: Uncertain how our current employees will interact with these new workers	Employee interaction
Education and accreditation: Assessing their skills or their certification/education	Education and accreditation
Resource availability: Not knowing what resources we can access to better on-board these employees	Resource availability

Chart 13: Challenges when recruiting from under-represented groups



By far, the challenge cited by the largest proportion (almost six out of ten) of respondents was recruitment challenges, how best to find and recruit these individuals. A more distant second challenge was education and accreditation, assessing their skills or their certification/education, cited by four out of ten. All the other challenges were named by between 20% and 30% of the respondents.

By employer categories, Knowledge sector employers were more likely to identify these various issues as challenges, especially with regards to assessing education and

accreditation, as well the proper language for describing under-represented groups and what resources they could access to better on-board these candidates. Very small employers also more likely to identify these same challenges. Service sector employers were more likely to choose how best to find and recruit these individuals as their challenge, while Manufacturing employers were more concerned regarding the skills of their managers in engaging with these workers as well as how their current employees would interact with them.

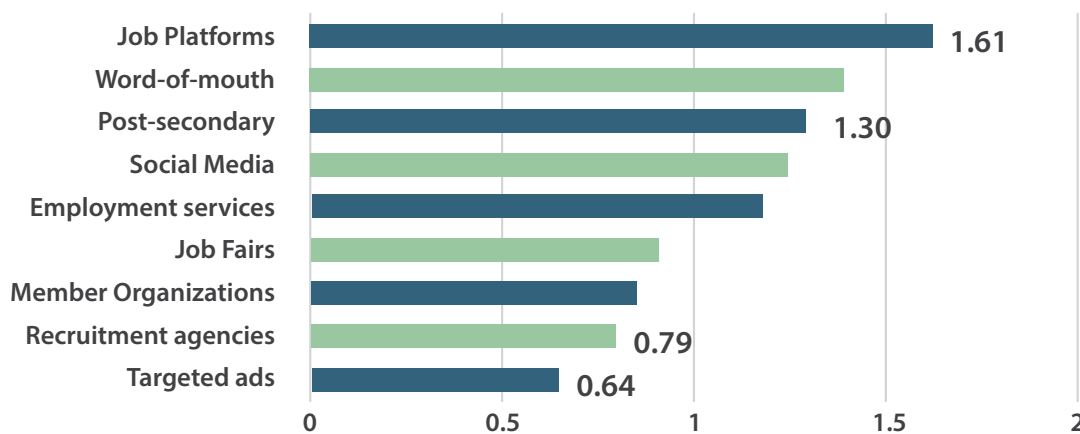
For years, our surveys have shown that job platforms and word-of-mouth are the primary methods employers rely on

Respondents were next asked what resources they used when recruiting job candidates from under-represented groups. The options offered them are listed below, together with the abbreviated version used in the accompanying Chart 14.

These strategies essentially reflect the strategies which employers typically identify when asked about recruitment

in general. For years, our surveys have shown that job platforms and word-of-mouth are the primary methods employers rely on. It is noteworthy that strategies which one might consider most appropriate for reaching unique population groups, such as making use of membership or advocacy organizations or placing targeted ads for under-represented groups, score low on this list. The conclusion one can draw is that employers do not make

Chart 14: Recruitment strategies for under-represented groups



OPTION IN SURVEY	ABBREVIATED VERSION IN CHART
Job platforms (such as Indeed or Job Bank)	Job platforms
Word-of-mouth	Word-of-mouth
Post-secondary institutions, like community colleges or universities	Post-secondary
Social media (such as LinkedIn)	Social media
Community-based employment services	Employment services
Job fairs	Job fairs
Membership or advocacy organizations working on behalf of the under-represented group	Member organizations
Recruitment agencies	Recruitment agencies
Advertisement strategy targeting the under-represented group	Targeted ads

targeted approaches for these population categories, rather, they assume they will attract such candidates by the same means they use to attract all job candidates.

There are some interesting variations by employer categories. Manufacturing firms are less likely to use social media, job fairs, membership organizations or targeted ad strategies, but they are much more likely to use recruitment agencies, whereas Service sector firms do say they sometimes use targeted ads. Firms with over 100 employees are much more likely to use job fairs as well as approach membership or advocacy organizations. Firms with 5 to 19 employees were much less likely to use job fairs, social media or community-based employment agencies.

Employers were specifically asked regarding their hiring intentions relating to youth by having them select one of the following statements:

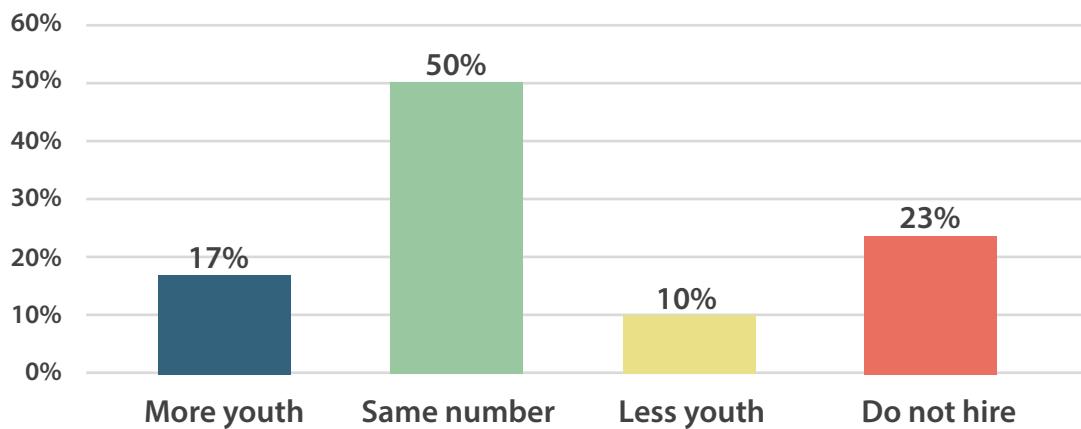
- We expect to be hiring more youth over the next 12 months, compared to the last 12 months
- We expect to hire about the same number of youths over the next 12 months, compared to the last 12 months
- We expect to hire fewer youth over the next 12 months, compared to the last 12 months
- Generally, we do not hire any youth

Chart 15 displays the results for all respondents.

Almost a quarter (23%) of the respondents said they did not hire youth. Half (50%) expected the number of youth hires to be about the same as the previous year, while the proportion of respondents who expected to hire more youth slightly exceeded the proportion who expected to hire fewer youth.

More than a third (36%) of Knowledge sector firms said they did not hire youth, compared to only 10% of Service sector firms; less than a sixth (17%) of firms with 100 or more employees said they did not hire youth. Manufacturing firms were the only category where the proportion of respondents who said they expected to hire fewer youth was greater than the proportion who said they expected to hire more youth.

Chart 15: Hiring intentions regarding youth over next 12 months



... there is a decline in the proportion of workers who are not working at all remotely (0%), and notable increases among those working hybrid

Remote work

The next two questions probed the current extent of remote work. The first question was a screening question, asking employers in principle, regardless of their remote work policies, whether their organization has employees who could do their work remotely. Table 10 shows the responses, including for the various categories of employers, and compares the results to the 2023 responses.

There appears to be a decline in the proportion of employers who say they have employees who can work remotely. By and large, this view applies across almost all employer categories.

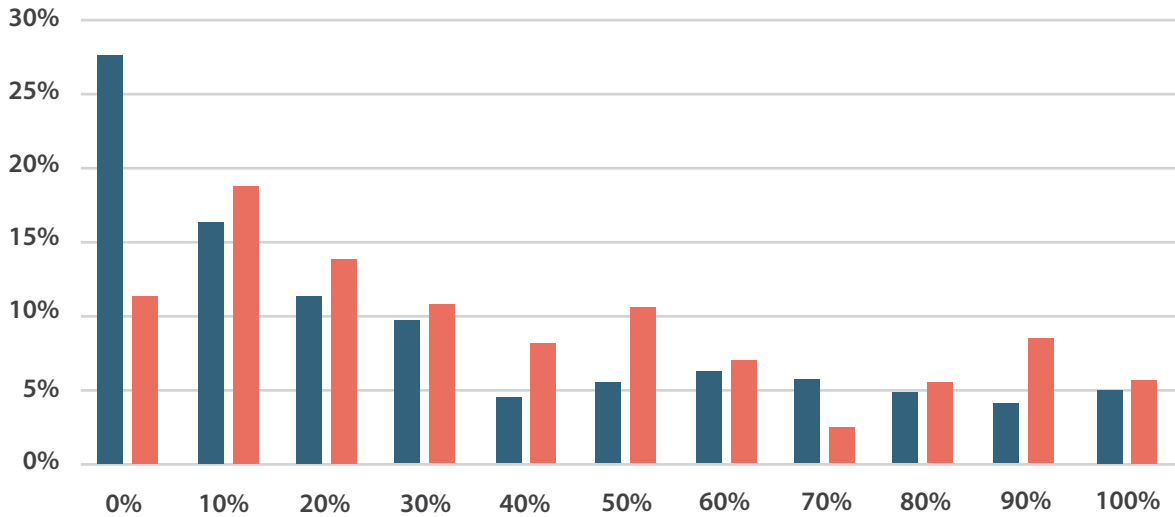
The next question asked what percentage of a typical employee's time is carried out remotely. Chart 16 displays the responses expressed as a percentage of their time, where 0% means there is no remote work and 100% means that all a typical employee's time is spent working remotely. Once again, the responses are compared to the answers provided in 2023.

Overall, there is a decline in the proportion of workers who are not working at all remotely (0%), and notable increases among those working hybrid (especially half their time remotely) and those working 90% of their time remotely.

Table 10: Employers who have employees who could work remotely

CATEGORY	2023	2024
ALL RESPONDENTS	80%	71%
1-4 employees	72%	55%
5-19 employees	68%	50%
20-99 employees	82%	83%
100 or more employees	92%	82%
Knowledge sector	89%	80%
Manufacturing	76%	64%
Services sector	72%	48%
Peel	85%	63%
Halton	77%	73%

Chart 16: Percent of time working remotely, 2023 and 2024



This question has been asked several times now since COVID first struck in 2020. During the pandemic, we asked not only about the current incidence of remote work, but also about what had been the practice before COVID, and what employers were predicting once COVID ended. In 2022, the survey also asked about the current incidence of remote work. As a result, we have six distinct time frames for responses, as follows:

BEFORE	Incidence of remote work before COVID
DURING	Incidence of remote work during COVID
AFTER	Predicted incidence of remote work after COVID
2022	Incidence of remote work in 2022
2023	Incidence of remote work in 2023
2024	Incidence of remote work in 2024

After COVID, we did not return completely to the pre-COVID practices; moreover, over these last several years, there has been a trend toward less time spent mainly in the workplace

In order to make comparisons easier, the percentage distribution of remote work has been clustered into three groups:

- 0% to 20% of time spent working remotely
- 30% to 70% of time spent working remotely
- 80% to 100% of time spent working remotely

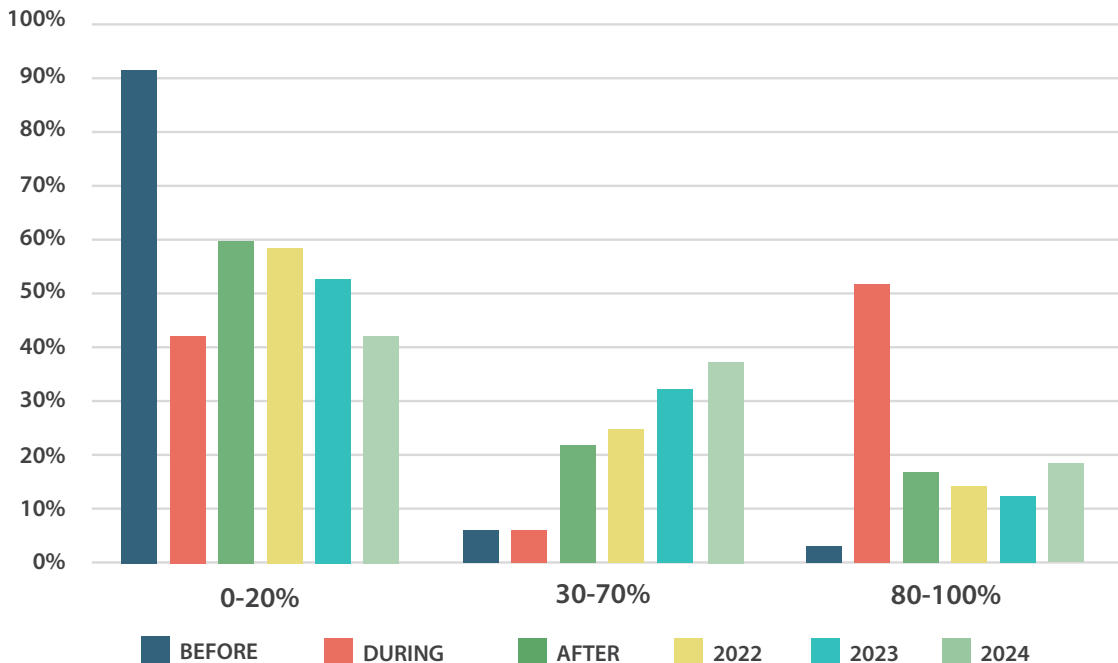
Chart 17 probably tells the most complete story, because it has the benefit of trends over time. Before COVID, around 90% of employees worked most of their time in the workplace. During COVID, with lockdowns and the desire for social distancing, this changed considerably, and around half of employees were working most of their time remotely. After COVID, we did not return completely to the pre-COVID practices; moreover, over these last several years, there has been a trend toward less time spent mainly in the workplace (0% to 20% of the time), and an increasing proportion of employees have been working hybrid (30% to 70% of their time remotely). It is striking how each year, the hybrid proportion has been increasing. While the

proportion of employees working most of their time (80% to 100%) remotely was declining, in 2024 that proportion increased slightly. Whether that is a trend or whether that is just a blip from this current survey (with its smaller sample size), we will only know after a further year or two of such surveys.

There are significant variations by employer categories:

- Knowledge sector firms report almost an even distribution between 0%-20%, 30%-70% and 80%-100% working from home, while Manufacturing and the Service sector indicate that around 60% of their employees work 0%-20% from home (essentially, in the workplace)
- Small firms (1 to 4 and 5 to 19 employees) have higher rates (35% to 40%) of employees largely working from home; large firms say that around half of their employees work hybrid (30% to 70%), while most of the rest of their employees are largely in the workplace

Chart 17: Percentage of time working remotely, before COVID, during COVID, predicted after COVID, 2022, 2023 and 2024



Government-funded training and employment services

Several questions in the survey probed the awareness and assessment of government-funded training and employment programs. The first such question asked in a generic way whether the respondent was aware of government-funded training and employment services that are available to employers. Table 11 shows the results.

Around one-half of respondents (51%) say they are aware of such programs, a third (32%) say they are not, while one out of six (17%) are unsure. For all further comparisons, we will only calculate the percentages based on those who either are or are not aware (61% were aware, 39% were not aware).

There was little variation in awareness by industry sector, but smaller firms were less aware (40% to 60%) of these programs than larger firms (75%).

Table 11: Awareness of government-funded training and employment programs

	ALL	EXCLUDING UNSURE
Yes	51%	61%
No	32%	39%
Unsure	17%	

Respondents were next asked their awareness of specific programs and a subsequent question asked how likely there were to use or recommend each of these programs to another employer.

Respondents were next asked their awareness of specific programs and a subsequent question asked how likely there were to use or recommend each of these programs to another employer. Table 12 displays the responses to both questions. The likelihood of using or recommending a program is expressed as a composite score, based on the following values:

- +2 Very likely
- +1 Somewhat likely
- 1 Somewhat unlikely
- 2 Very unlikely

There is a considerable range in the level of awareness of these programs, from six out of ten knowing about Employment Ontario employment services, apprenticeship

programs and the Canada Ontario Job Grant, to only two or three out of ten knowing about the Ontario Bridge Training Program, the Ontario Job Creation Partnership or the Skills Development Fund training stream.

When it came to either use of or recommending these programs, there was a high proportion of “unsure” responses, ranging from 30% to 45%, depending on the program. The composite score for two programs almost reached the level of “somewhat likely” to use or recommend, those being Canada Ontario Job Grant (composite score 0.99) and wage subsidies for new hires (0.94). The lowest scores (which were still positive scores) were for the Ontario Bridge Training Program (0.60) and apprenticeship programs (0.66).

Table 12: Awareness of and likelihood to use or recommend government-funded training and employment programs to other employers

	Aware	Use/Recommend
Employment Ontario employment services	66%	0.82
Apprenticeship programs	63%	0.66
Canada Ontario Job Grant	56%	0.99
Wage subsidies for new hires	51%	0.94
Newcomer settlement services	42%	0.72
Skills Development Fund Training Stream	36%	0.76
Ontario Job Creation Partnership	26%	0.58
Ontario Bridge Training Program	24%	0.60

Other comments from employers

Employers were invited at the end of the survey to provide additional comments relating to the topics covered by the survey or priorities related to their organization. Around 50 comments were received, have of which were respondents either writing to say that they did not have any additional comments or thanking us for the survey. Otherwise, the comments covered a very wide range of topics:

- Six mentioned recruitment/retention challenges, such as the difficulty of finding workers for food service occupations, the turnover one experiences with students, the lack of new apprentices in their specific trade, the difficulty workers have living on a minimum wage and the challenge employers face paying a higher wage, and the difficulty attracting individuals to work in retail occupations which have been labelled dead end jobs but which this employer felt could be a fulfilling career
- Another five commented on government-funded programs, some noting that they may not qualify or do not need these programs, another grateful that these programs were drawn to their attention, two saying that these programs were helpful and another suggesting that employment counsellors need more training to be able to support employers
- Three respondents noted that the temporary foreign worker program had become more difficult to access and were concerned about their future supply of workers
- Another three repeated their concerns about the questions relating to under-represented populations in the labour market, asserting that they did not hire based on membership in a category, but rather based on skills, experience and qualifications
- Two expressed concerns regarding immigrant job seekers, mentioning either concerns with credential recognition or concerns with English language skills
- Finally, two commented on difficulties with the survey itself, one claiming it was too long and another finding the industry classifications not fitting the function of their organization

Follow-up interviews

As part of the survey process, respondents were also asked if they would be willing to participate in a short follow-up phone interview, so that the analysis of the data could benefit from additional qualitative insights. Over ten employers were interviewed.

As has often been the case when reporting on the follow-up interviews to the survey, the issues raised by these employers are often unique, largely because they have trouble recruiting for one occupation, sometimes a particular trade or a particular profession. Sometimes, the enterprise is constrained in how much they can raise wages and so they have the additional challenge of not being able to attract or retain workers because of higher wages elsewhere.

While some were also limited because of the technical skills they were seeking, several also emphasized that soft skills, such as interaction with customers and managing in a fast-paced environment, were just as important.

Partly because of the focus of this year's survey, several employers sought assistance in recruiting job candidates from under-represented populations. More than in past years, several employers were referred to Employment Ontario service providers.

Employers engage in a range of workforce development activities, the two most prominent being conducting their own on-the-job training and hosting interns or co-op students.

Conclusion

In many respects, respondents to the survey have indicated that the labour market has not changed much from last year, if anything it has cooled somewhat, with hiring steady or slightly increasing, and many employers feel there are more job candidates available for entry-level occupations.

Employers engage in a range of workforce development activities, the two most prominent being conducting their own on-the-job training and hosting interns or co-op students. The financial cost or the pressures of time limit how much they do in this regard.

Slightly more than a third of employers track the demographic composition of their workforce. The biggest challenge for most is knowing how to reach and recruit under-represented populations; in most instances, employers use the same recruitment strategies they use to attract job candidates generally. Some employers feel that suggesting under-represented populations as a way of addressing labour shortages means hiring based on identity as opposed to qualifications or experience.

While half of employers say they are aware of government-funded training and employment programs, a third say they are not, and one out of six say they are unsure, which indicates a lower awareness of these services which also target employers.

There is work to be done to make more employers aware of training and employment programs that can help with their recruitment and training needs, as well as to make the business case for the value of diversifying one's job recruitment efforts.

2024

PEEL HALTON EMPLOYER SURVEY
Meeting the Need
for Skills & Recruitment

Peel Halton Workforce Development Group

5636 Glen Erin Dr
P.O. Box 60039
Mississauga, ON
L5M 6B0

(905) 306-9588
info@peelhaltonworkforce.com