

FOUR COUNTY LABOUR MARKET PLANNING BOARD

# LOCAL LABOUR MARKET PLAN

2022



This Employment Ontario project is funded in part by the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

The Four County Labour Market Planning Board (Planning Board) is a community-directed, not-for-profit organization that specializes in providing labour market information for Bruce, Grey, Huron, and Perth counties. This Local Labour Market Plan provides an update on the local labour market, including information on demographics, migration, industry, Employment Ontario Services, and Business Counts in the Four County Region. Supported by data and input from local employers and residents, the plan shows the current challenges and opportunities that the Four County labour market is facing.

Funded by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, the Planning Board is very grateful for all the support we received during the past fiscal year. We would also like to express our appreciation to Employment Services, Ontario Works, and Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) service providers who provided their valuable insight on Employment Ontario program data consultation. We also want to express our special thanks to our Planning Board directors and staff who continually contribute to the long-term sustainable workforce development initiatives in Bruce, Grey, Huron and Perth counties.

## FOUR COUNTY LABOUR MARKET PLANNING BOARD DIRECTORS & STAFF

**BUSINESS:** Karen Galbraith, Shirley Keaveney, Larry Livingston

**LABOUR:** Karen Gventer, Dave Trumble (Co-Chair)

**EQUITY:** Waleed Aslam, Rozella Johnston, Emily Morrison, Alex Oestreicher

**EDUCATOR/TRAINER:** Vacant

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:** Gemma Mendez-Smith

**MINISTRY CONTACT:** Kimberley de Miranda

**STAFF:** Raisa Abraham, Marina Angeli, Madison Baumbach, Dayna Becker, Stacey Feldskov, Samantha Hooper, Kee May Ip, Jordan Meisel, Lee Rogister, Dana Soucie, Jason Wilson, Tingting Zhang

**CONSULTANTS:** Debbie Davidson, Paul Knafelc, Sarah Pelton, Jeff Staller



# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Purpose	6
Data	6
LLMP Strategic Direction	7
Overview of the Labour Market in Bruce, Grey, Huron and Perth counties	13
Population Dynamics	20
Employment Ontario Program Data Observations	24
Business Counts Analysis	45
Bruce County	45
Grey County	48
Huron County	51
Perth County	54
Action Plan Update 2021 - 2022	57
Action Plan 2022 - 2023	59
Long Range Action Items	61

## PURPOSE

---

The purpose of the Local Labour Market Plan (LLMP) is to identify significant labour market issues in the Four County Region and set a strategic direction that addresses these issues and puts forth actions that will help improve identified labour market challenges. The outcome of the LLMP and its resulting initiatives is intended to support local residents who are looking for work in the job market, to help employees remain employed, and to assist employers with better access to the labour pool to be competitive in the global market.

## DATA

---

The 2021-2022 LLMP uses both primary and secondary data to provide evidence and information for the community. The various sources that have been used in this document include:

- Labour Force Survey (LFS)
- Employment Ontario Program data
- Canadian Business Counts
- Taxfiler data

From the above data sources, this report uses the most current data available from 2021 while in some instances data from 2011 and 2016 is the most current available. The LLMP focuses on the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula Economic Region (ER) which comprises of Bruce, Grey, Huron and Perth counties.

## LLMP STRATEGIC DIRECTION

---

In the first six months of 2021, the Four County Region experienced two consecutive lockdowns. As a result, the impact of COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019) on the local labour market was ongoing and lingering. With the continuous restricted and confinement measures, many businesses still suffered with limited operation and some chose to close their businesses. In the second half of the year, things became better when Ontario entered the final phase of the reopening plan. Even though the fourth wave hit the economy in autumn, the impact of COVID-19 was mild. With the proof of vaccination, some businesses such as restaurants and retailers were able to operate at their full capacity in October.

From the demand side, most health measures were lifted and businesses started to hire more workers to recover and grow. Job demand reports of the connect2JOBS (C2J) site have shown that job vacancies in the Four County Region were increasing<sup>1</sup>. The demand for workers rose. From the supply side, reopening of childcare and schools have allowed some women to return to work, which means the supply of workers increased. As a result, full-time female employment has grown since May 2021.

However, in December 2021, the emergence of the Omicron variant created concerns in Canada. It caused non-essential businesses to operate at reduced capacity again and schools moved to online learning. The local labour market will continue to be impacted by the health measures. How long this pandemic will last and how businesses' operations will be affected is a question yet to be answered.

### CONTINUAL BUSINESS RECOVERY

Compared to February 2020 (pre-pandemic level), several sectors have fully recovered in December 2021 while others still lagged behind. Table 1 shows some of the industries that experienced gains in employment compared to the pre-pandemic level. Among them, employment in Health care and social assistance increased the most by 4,900, followed by Utilities (+1,900). Information, culture and recreation, on the other hand, experienced the largest employment percentage gain by 43 percent.

In contrast to February 2020, employment in Manufacturing increased slightly by 400. However, supply chain disruptions may continue bringing challenges to local manufacturers. According to the Canadian Survey on Business Conditions (the fourth quarter of 2021; CSBC), six in ten surveyed businesses indicated that difficulty acquiring inputs, products or supplies domestically would be an obstacle over the next three months. Half of businesses also expected difficulty acquiring inputs, products or supplies from abroad in the next three months. Besides these, labour shortage is also a concern. In the 2020-2021 fiscal year, the FCLMPB conducted a research on how the pandemic has impacted local businesses<sup>2</sup>. In the report, local employers have reported hiring difficulties again, especially in manufacturing and food service sectors. Further growth in output will be difficult without adequate labour supply.

---

<sup>1</sup> Check C2J job demand reports since May 2021 at <https://www.connect2jobs.ca/job-demand-report/>

<sup>2</sup> To read the full report "Business Counts in the Four County Region, October 2021", please go to <https://www.planningboard.ca/reports/business-counts-in-the-four-county-region/>.

TABLE 1: EMPLOYMENT IN SOME RECOVERED INDUSTRIES COMPARED TO FEBRUARY 2020, STRATFORD-BRUCE PENINSULA (X1,000)

	20-Feb	21-Dec	Change	Percentage change
Utilities	5.1	7	1.9	37%
Manufacturing	24.2	24.6	0.4	2%
Transportation and warehousing	6	7.5	1.5	25%
Educational services	7.1	8.1	1	14%
Health care and social assistance	22.1	27	4.9	22%
Information, culture and recreation	2.3	3.3	1	43%

Source: Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0388-01 Employment by industry, three-month moving average, unadjusted for seasonality (x 1,000)

Technical note: Prior analysis for LFS was based on the 2011 Census. The current LFS data was rebased to match 2016 Census geography and population. So current analysis may not match previous data because of this methodological change. Same as below.<sup>3</sup>

Table 2 demonstrates some of the lagged-behind industries compared to February 2020. Not surprisingly, Accommodation and food services still remained below its pre-COVID level (-5,100), followed by Wholesale and retail trade (-3,500) and Public Administration (-2,900). In December 2021, the sectors with the largest employment gap by percentage were Accommodation and food services (-54%) and Public Administration (-53%). With the Omicron variant starting to spread in December 2021, the government has already put stricter pandemic restrictions to combat with it. The re-introduction of capacity limit and closure of non-essential businesses will continue impacting the local labour market's full recovery. And the services-producing sector will continue to be the hardest hit throughout the pandemic.

The fourth quarter survey of CSBC was implemented during the fourth wave of COVID (October to early November 2021), however, about 80 percent of local businesses still felt optimistic when asked about the future outlook of their businesses or organizations over the next 12 months. Over the past two years, local businesses have built resilience with the changing circumstances. They continue to learn and innovate. The government has also provided various financial assistance to help local businesses survive or expand. Recently, Ontario introduced Small Business Relief Grant and additional electricity rate relief to help local businesses during the Omicron variant period. With the ongoing pandemic in the view, there is a need for the government to provide targeted financial support to businesses who are still struggling at this time.

<sup>3</sup> The 2021 Revisions of the Labour Force Survey (LFS). <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71f0031x/71f0031x2021001-eng.htm>

TABLE 2: EMPLOYMENT IN SOME LAGGED-BEHIND INDUSTRIES COMPARED TO FEBRUARY 2020, STRATFORD-BRUCE PENINSULA (X1,000)

	20-Feb	21-Dec	Change	Percentage change
Agriculture	10.1	8.6	-1.5	-15%
Construction	24.6	21.9	-2.7	-11%
Wholesale and retail trade	22	18.5	-3.5	-16%
Professional, scientific and technical services	8.1	6.2	-1.9	-23%
Accommodation and food services	9.4	4.3	-5.1	-54%
Public administration	5.5	2.6	-2.9	-53%

Source: Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0388-01 Employment by industry, three-month moving average, unadjusted for seasonality (x 1,000)

## PERSISTENT CHALLENGES

Prior to the pandemic, there are some structural issues in the Four County Region that hinder workforce development and thus community economic development. Challenges for workforce is closely connected to accessible transportation, attainable housing, and childcare services. The pandemic not only revealed the seriousness of these unsolved issues but also aggregated them.<sup>4</sup>

### LABOUR SHORTAGE

Before the pandemic, the unemployment rate in our region was already the lowest in Ontario. Though the first lockdown doubled the unemployment rate in May 2020, it decreased in the second half of 2020. It further decreased to a lower rate than the pre-pandemic level since May 2021, at 3.2 percent. Seven months later, the unemployment rate in the Four County Region in December 2021 was 3 percent, remaining the lowest in Ontario. For our region, low unemployment rate does not reflect growth in the number of jobs available but a shrinking labour force. It actually implies the low availability of workers in our region.

Since 2018, the local labour force has been relatively stable at around 167,500. But 2021 experienced a drop of 2,000 workers compared to 2020 (165,600 vs 167,600). Looking at the monthly data, the size of labour force has shrank by 9,700 in December 2021 compared to February 2020 (unadjusted for seasonality; 164,200 vs 173,900). The issue of labour shortage has been long-lasting in our region. Ageing population is one factor attributed to this issue. As elderly workers retire, the number of younger adults who enter the labour market is not sufficient to replace the leaving.<sup>5</sup> In 2021, the Four County Region had 10,300 people

4 The planning board has conducted a research on precarious employment in the Four County Region. In the report, it indicates that people who are more likely to face precarious employment and precarious living situations pre-COVID are “Indigenous individuals, individuals with criminal records, drug and addiction issues, low education, and physical or mental disabilities, single parents with young children, newcomer and immigrants.” They have faced barriers in various kinds. Unquestionably, their situations have been worsened due to the impact of COVID-19. The full report can be accessed here: <https://www.planningboard.ca/reports/precariouslivingstudy/>

5 Simpson, Carol. “Rural Ontario Foresight Papers.” 2019.

aged 65 years and its employment rate was 13.2 percent.

Due to COVID-19, new factors have worsened the labour shortage. The initial closures of school and childcare services have pushed some women to stay home to take care of their children, family, and sick relatives. With continual lockdown and health measures, some women did not return to their work at all. Ever since the pandemic's onset in March 2020, there were about 11,700 women added to the "not in the labour force" category from February to October 2020 in the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula ER. This is a 23 percent increase in the number of women who reported they left the labour force during the same time period when 6.8 percent of women reported losing employment <sup>6</sup>. As of December 2021, there were 14,400 more women who claimed to be not in the labour force compared to February 2020. At the same time, 500 more men joined the labour market. Clearly, the skills and talent of these "retreated" women are underutilized. Therefore, it is important to increase women's participation rate in the Four County Region. If the women's labour participation rate increases, some of the in-demand occupations in our region <sup>7</sup> might be filled up quickly.

Moreover, during the pandemic, some employees choose to take on non-traditional forms of employment, retire early, start their own businesses, or take a break from work.<sup>8</sup> All of these make it harder for businesses across sectors to find workers. According to the McKinsey's survey, forty percent of survey respondents/ employees said they are likely to quit their jobs in the next three to six months.<sup>9</sup> Such phenomenon is called "The Great Resignation" and repeated polls have validated that "15 percent of employees are planning on leaving their current jobs, even if they have nothing to go to. A further 25 percent are planning to leave as soon as they find another job."<sup>10</sup> While employers thought their employees quit for reasons of "compensation, work-life balance, and poor physical and emotional health", things that do matter, employees themselves indicated that they quit because they "didn't feel valued by their organizations (54 percent) or their managers (52 percent) or because they didn't feel a sense of belonging at work (51 percent)."<sup>11</sup> In certain industries, the workload is so unmanageable that people choose to leave. For example, healthcare workers have battled against COVID-19 for almost two years, their workload has increased dramatically and many become weary. As a result, some of them left their work and took a break. This has made both retention and recruitment in this sector more difficult.

---

6 "The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Women in the Four County Region." <https://www.planningboard.ca/reports/the-impact-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-women/>

7 For detailed information on in-demand occupations in our region, please check our "connect2JOBS" analysis report at <https://www.planning-board.ca/reports/>

8 Smet, Aaron De., Bonnie Dowling, Bryan Hancock, and Marino Mugayar-Baldocchi. "The Great Attrition: What to do about the labor shortage." McKinsey & Company. December 13, 2021. <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/the-organization-blog/the-great-attrition-what-to-do-about-the-labor-shortage>

9 Smet, Aaron De., Bonnie Dowling, Marino Mugayar-Baldocchi, and Bill Schaninger. "Great Attrition' or 'Great Attraction'? The choice is yours." McKinsey & Company. September 8, 2021. <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/great-attrition-or-great-attraction-the-choice-is-yours?hdpid=fa5f295d-22d1-4d18-a368-6ce9d5d48c7f&hctky=12382154&hl-kid=ba5acd07c9f74ce696040119bfe2ec97>

10 McCoy, Dawn. "Is 'The Great Resignation' real?" <https://www.municipalworld.com/feature-story/is-the-great-resignation-real/>

11 Smet, Aaron De., Bonnie Dowling, Marino Mugayar-Baldocchi, and Bill Schaninger. "Great Attrition' or 'Great Attraction'? The choice is yours." McKinsey & Company. September 8, 2021. <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/great-attrition-or-great-attraction-the-choice-is-yours?hdpid=fa5f295d-22d1-4d18-a368-6ce9d5d48c7f&hctky=12382154&hl-kid=ba5acd07c9f74ce696040119bfe2ec97>

## RETENTION AND ATTRACTION

While “the Great Resignation/ Attrition” may come, employers can actually seize this opportunity to listen and learn the needs of their employees. They may focus more on “the relational aspects of work”<sup>12</sup> and pay more attention on their employees’ work-life balance and mental health. Before COVID-19, the Planning Board reached out to local businesses with strong reputations for employee engagement and retention. The top 10 strategies and policies that are most effective when retaining employees are identified.<sup>13</sup>

With a low unemployment rate and job vacancies in the region remaining high, many businesses struggle to recruit qualified workers, which can be a hindrance for the local economy’s recovery from COVID-19. Worker attraction is the key for workforce development. One suggestion is to attract immigrants, which can help alleviate the issue of an ageing population. If a higher immigration target can be met, there will be a boost in the number of available workers.<sup>14</sup>

## ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION

Besides the shortage of labour, challenges such as affordable and accessible transportation are also ongoing issues in our region. Our local communities have a smaller population but close to large centres such as Toronto and London. In order to retain high skilled or in-demand workers, transportation is important. It is hard to retain workers in the entry level positions due to long commute times. International students who can be a potential labour force also could not integrate into communities due to the lack of transportation.

A few large manufacturers have offered transportation to employees for shift work or provided compensation for employees who can carpool other employees. Currently, Perth County introduced PC Connect to increase affordable transportation including Stratford, St. Marys, Kitchener/Waterloo, and London.<sup>15</sup> These are all flexible ways to deal with the labour shortage and transportation challenges. However, long-term solutions still need to be considered and implemented.

## ATTAINABLE HOUSING

Attainable housing is another serious barrier for the local communities to attract new workers. During the pandemic, we experienced “urban to rural” moving due to our proximity to large urban centers. As a result, the price of housing skyrocketed in the Four County Region. As mentioned in our Precarious Living report, affordable housing is a pillar factor that affects precarious employment pre-COVID and is a challenge all sectors are facing with finding and retaining employees.<sup>16</sup> The pandemic has worsened the situation as the demand for housing increases, so does the housing price. The available employment opportunities in our region are mainly at unskilled or low- skilled levels which often have lower wage rates. High housing prices and low wage rates will not attract people to work in the Four County Region. Therefore, it is critical to provide affordable housing for local workers, especially for entry-level workers.

---

12 Smet, Aaron De., Bonnie Dowling, Marino Mugayar-Baldocchi, and Bill Schaninger. “‘Great Attrition’ or ‘Great Attraction’? The choice is yours.” McKinsey & Company. September 8, 2021. <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/great-attrition-or-great-attraction-the-choice-is-yours?hdpid=fa5f295d-22d1-4d18-a368-6ce9d5d48c7f&hctky=12382154&hl-kid=ba5acd07c9f74ce696040119bfe2ec97>

13 <https://www.planningboard.ca/2020-vision/employer-toolkit-retention-strategies/>

14 Leach, Cynthia. “The Great Canadian Restart: How 2022 can spark an era of greener, more robust growth.” December 8, 2021. <https://thought-leadership.rbc.com/the-great-canadian-restart-how-2022-can-spark-an-era-of-greener-more-robust-growth/>

15 <https://www.perthcounty.ca/en/living-here/community-transportation---perth-county-and-stratford.aspx>

16 “Precarious Living Study 2021.” <https://www.planningboard.ca/reports/precariousofstudy/>

## ACCESSIBLE CHILDCARE SERVICES

If one thing that the pandemic has taught us, it would be the importance of childcare services. In the beginning of the pandemic, 11,700 women in the Four County Region left the labour market possibly due to school and childcare closure. Almost two years later, still 14,400 more women left the labour market in December 2021. In our “The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Women in the Four County Region” report, childcare services managers in each county all mentioned the shortages of qualified early childhood educators (ECEs) as the top challenge. With the vaccination requirement being implemented in October 2021, some local childcare centers experienced more loss of ECEs and childcare staff. Moreover, the need for childcare spaces and options remains high in some areas of our region. In order to help retreated women to return to the labour market and support working caregivers, this barrier of accessible and affordable childcare services need to be solved. Further discussion and recommendations can be found in the full report on the planning board website.

## REMOTE WORK

The pandemic has also pushed many businesses to realize the possibility of working from home. However, the rural internet infrastructure may not enable every business to do so. As a result, most businesses still prefer in-site working. In our region, “Only 2.3% of Four County employers reported being likely to offer the possibility of teleworking to more employees.”<sup>17</sup> Also, most jobs cannot be worked entirely remotely due to the physical nature of many jobs. “Of the 32,665” job vacancies recorded between Q1 2019 and Q1 2021, 5.27% are in occupations that can be worked entirely remotely.”<sup>18</sup> Although remote work may not be preferable, it does offer employers an additional way to fill some employment vacancies.

---

<sup>17</sup> “Does Remote Work Have a Future in the Four County Region?” <https://www.planningboard.ca/reports/does-remote-work-have-a-future-in-the-four-county-region/>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

# OVERVIEW OF THE LABOUR MARKET IN BRUCE, GREY, HURON AND PERTH COUNTIES

## LABOUR FORCE CHARACTERISTICS

In 2021, the number of total employment in Stratford-Bruce Peninsula ER reached 158,600 (Table 3). It was higher than 2020 but still lower than the pre-pandemic level of 2019. Interestingly, full-time employment recovered beyond the 2019 level, at 129,000. However, part-time employment still lagged behind, at a loss of 5,900 (comparing 35,500 with 29,600).

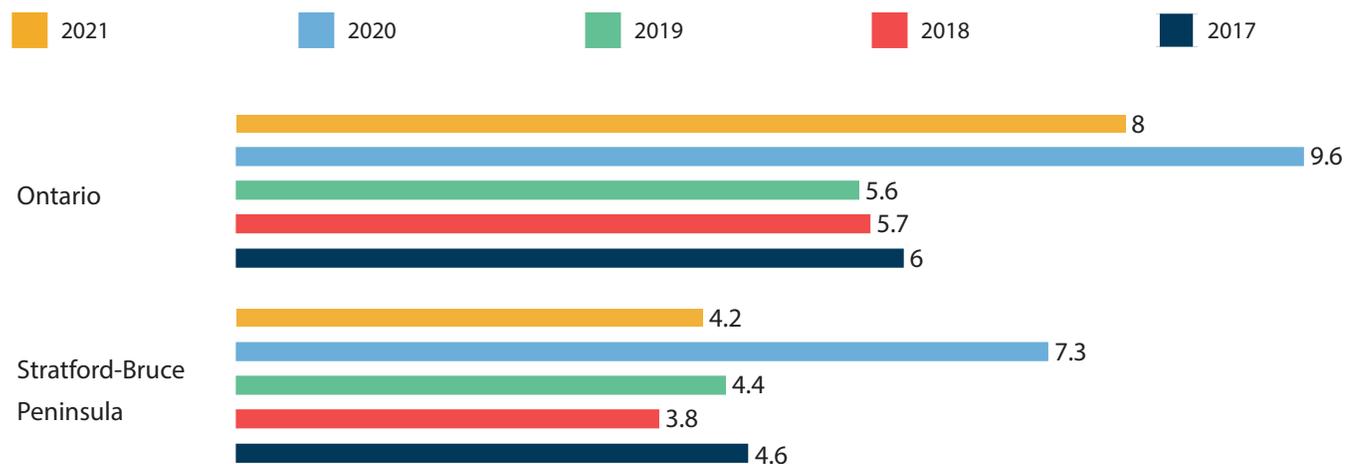
TABLE 3: FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT, STRATFORD-BRUCE PENINSULA (X 1,000)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Employment	152.7	161.1	160.5	155.2	158.6
Full-time employment	122	130	125	126.5	129
Part-time employment	30.8	31	35.5	28.7	29.6

Source: Statistics Canada. LFS survey.

The unemployment rate in the region was 4.2 percent in 2021, the second lowest over the last five years (Chart 1). It remained the lowest in the province. As mentioned before, this low unemployment rate actually represents a shrinking labour force and a low availability of workers. In other words, it implies the significance of labour shortage in the Four County Region.

CHART 1: UNEMPLOYMENT RATE, STRATFORD-BRUCE PENINSULA



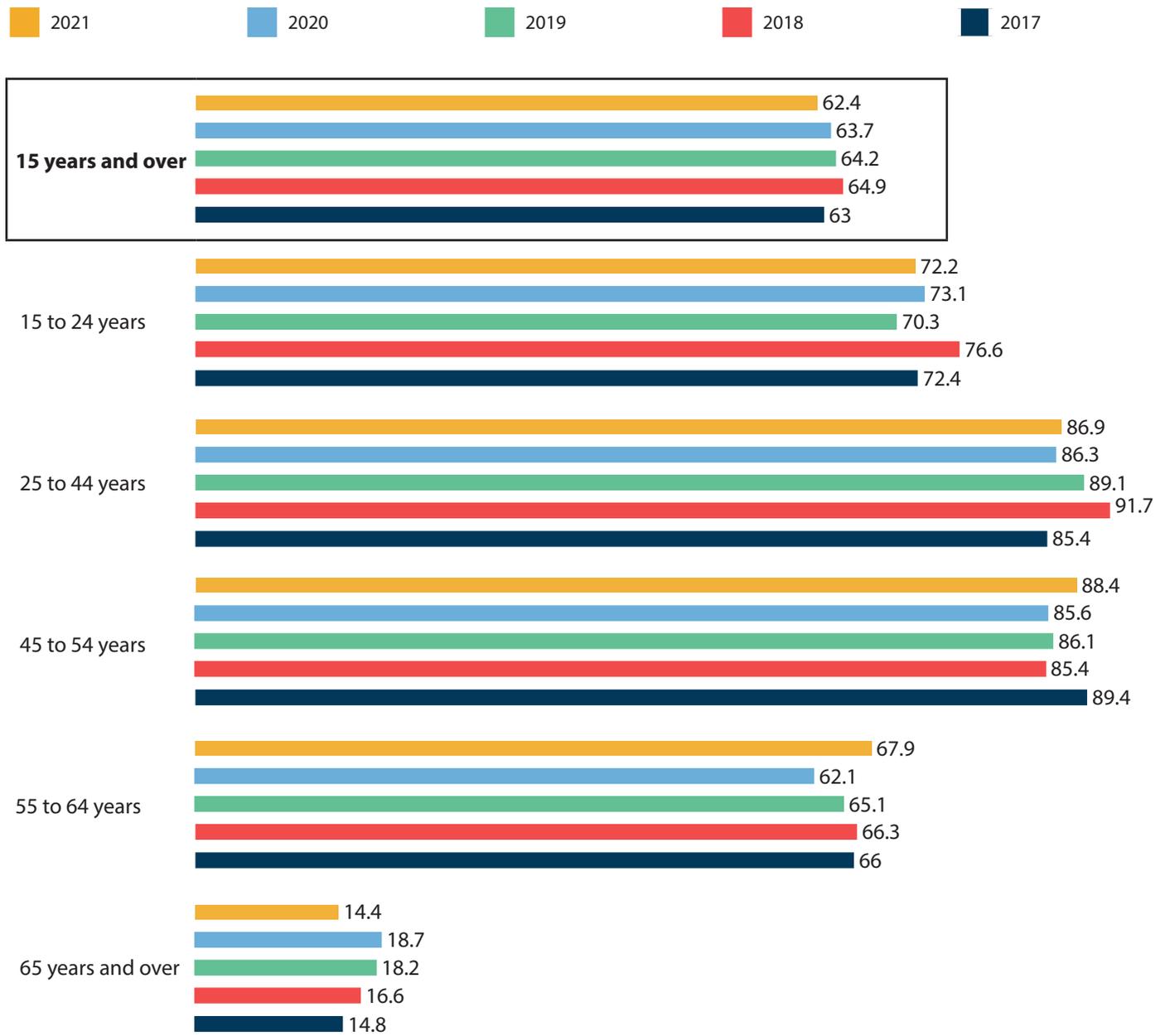
Source: Statistics Canada. LFS survey.

Since 2017, the participation rate for people aged 15 years and over in the region has been steady above 63 percent except in 2021 (Chart 2). The participation rate dropped to the lowest in 2021, at 62.4 percent. Relative to the provincial level, the value was 2.5 percent lower (Chart 3). This implies that the number of people who were actively working or seeking employment decreased in 2021. Therefore, it is difficult for employers to recruit workers for in-demand occupations, particularly in manufacturing, healthcare, and skilled trades.

In terms of age, the participation rate of youth aged 15-24 increased to 72.2 percent in 2021 compared to 2019. This was also higher than the provincial level of 60.3 percent, indicating a higher proportion of youth joining the labour market in our region. However, the participation rate of people aged 65 years old and over decreased by 4.3 percent in the last year. In 2021, such participation rate was 14.4 percent, not much different from the provincial level. This decreasing participation rate of the older cohort implies that more people get retired and leave the labour market. It also puts downward pressure on the overall labour force participation rate.

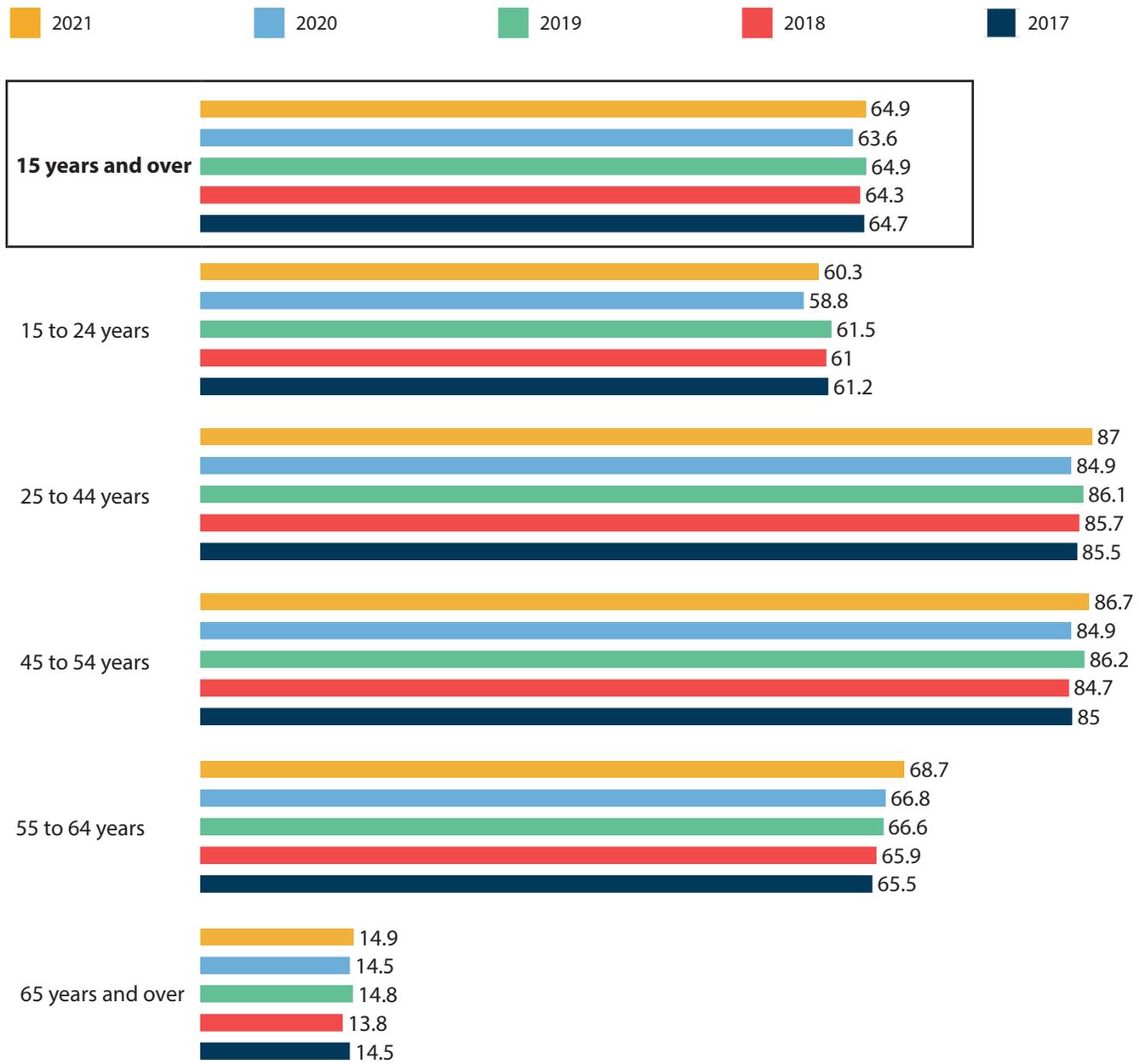
Among all age cohorts, peoples aged 45-54 years old had the highest participation rate as 88.4 percent in the Four County Region. Differently, Ontario has the highest participation rate among people aged 25-44 years old, the core-aged working group (87%). This difference indicates that our region has a higher proportion of midcareer workers (45-54 years old). Many of them might experience career transition and are highly likely to face negative experience with education and training. One common perception is that midcareer workers are not young enough to learn new skills or technology, which makes it hard for hiring managers to see their value. As a result, they need career related support from local employment service providers. With aging populations, it is important to encourage midcareer workers and older workers to stay in the labour market through self-employment or part-time work.

CHART 2: PARTICIPATION RATE, 2017-2021, STRATFORD-BRUCE PENINSULA (%)



Source: Statistics Canada. LFS survey.

CHART 3: PARTICIPATION RATE, 2017-2021, ONTARIO (%)



Source: Statistics Canada. LFS survey.

The pandemic has uniquely impacted the labour force by driving some women out of the labour force. As a result, one needs to look at the “Not in labour force” index in order to see the whole picture of the local labour market. Over the last 5 years, the number of people who reported as being out of the labour force has increased, especially with COVID-19 (Table 4). In 2021, there were 99,600 people who claimed as “not in the labour force”, 6,200 higher than 2019.

Interestingly, the number of men who reported as not in labour force decreased to 38,600 in 2021, a loss of 2,200 compared to 2019. This means that instead of retreat, more men actually joined the labour force in the last two years. In contrast, there were 60,900 women who claimed as “not in the labour force”. This figure was 8,300 higher than 2019, implying that more women withdrew from the labour market in the last 2 years. As a result, women actually accounted for 134 percent of the increases in the number of people who are not in the labour force.

TABLE 4: NOT IN LABOUR FORCE, 2017-2021, STRATFORD-BRUCE PENINSULA (X 1,000)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Both sexes	94.2	90.5	93.4	95.4	99.6
Male	36.4	36.8	40.8	37.5	38.6
Female	57.7	53.7	52.6	57.9	60.9

Source: Statistics Canada. LFS survey.

## INDUSTRY CONDITION

In the past five years, the total employment of all industries in the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula ER was the lowest in 2017 at 152,700 and highest in 2018 at 161,100 (Table 5). Though the pandemic happened in 2020 and the total employment experienced a decrease of 5,300, 2021 saw some recovery among industries. In general, the Goods-producing sector has fully recovered in 2021, resulting in a gain of 100 workers compared to 2019. The biggest loss came from Agriculture (-2,800), however, the gains from Utilities (+2,100) and Manufacturing (+800) have offset such loss. As a result, employment in Goods-producing industries rebounded beyond the pre-pandemic level.

On the other hand, the Service-producing sector still lagged behind by 2,000. These losses were mainly driven by Wholesale and retail trade (-3,200), Accommodation and food services (-2,500) and Public Administration (-1,600). Even though Health care and social assistance and Information, culture and recreation experienced employment gains of 2,800 and 1,800, respectively, they could not offset the overall losses. Also, Service-producing industries tended to be sensitive to the lockdown and restricted measures imposed in 2021. For these reasons, it still takes time for Service-producing industries to recover.

In the past five years, the total employment of all industries increased by 5,900, with 4,800 from the Goods-producing sector and 1,100 from the Service-producing sector. During this period, people who were employed in Health care and social assistance increased the most by 6,200, followed by Utilities (+3,800) and Manufacturing (+2,700). Agriculture, however, experienced the most employment losses by 2,500 over the same time period. The second largest loss came from Accommodation and food services by 2,300. Over the 2017-2021 period, Health care and social assistance was the only sector that experienced employment gains every year. In contrast, Wholesale and retail trade experienced employment losses for three consecutive years and 2021 saw the lowest employment at 20,900.

TABLE 5: EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY (ANNUAL)

	Ontario					Stratford-Bruce Peninsula, Ontario				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<b>Total employed, all industries</b>	<b>7052.5</b>	<b>7173.3</b>	<b>7376.9</b>	<b>7021.6</b>	<b>7,366.4</b>	<b>152.7</b>	<b>161.1</b>	<b>160.5</b>	<b>155.2</b>	<b>158.6</b>
<b>Goods-producing sector</b>	<b>1439.4</b>	<b>1463.9</b>	<b>1467.3</b>	<b>1410.7</b>	<b>1,466.6</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>60.7</b>	<b>61.7</b>	<b>59.1</b>	<b>61.8</b>
Agriculture	72.6	71.9	75.0	71.8	67.4	12.6	13	12.9	9.9	10.1
Forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas	35.8	35.2	35.1	36.1	35.8	1.8	x	1.5	1.8	x
Utilities	47.6	57.7	55.6	50.5	53.2	5.1	6.9	6.8	3.9	8.9
Construction	513.0	529.6	540.0	514.8	534.0	16.2	19.1	17.4	19.2	17.8
Manufacturing	770.4	769.4	761.5	737.5	776.2	21.3	21.3	23.2	24.4	24
<b>Services-producing sector</b>	<b>5613.1</b>	<b>5709.5</b>	<b>5909.7</b>	<b>5610.9</b>	<b>5,899.9</b>	<b>95.7</b>	<b>100.4</b>	<b>98.8</b>	<b>96.1</b>	<b>96.8</b>
Wholesale and retail trade	1056.6	1059.2	1084.1	1023.7	1,069.1	22.7	26	24.1	22.4	20.9
Transportation and warehousing	340.8	374.2	395.7	357.5	372.9	5	7.4	6.2	5.2	6.9
Finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing	557.5	567.8	590.4	607.2	625.3	7.5	6.6	5	6.6	6
Professional, scientific and technical services	620.7	624.7	668.0	664.8	738.5	7	5.4	6.5	7.3	7.1
Business, building and other support services	308.3	313.3	312.6	294.9	287.3	5	3.8	4.6	3.7	4.3
Educational services	488.7	516.6	540.8	515.8	546.3	7.5	7.3	8.4	6.2	7.4
Health care and social assistance	859.1	844.4	900.5	870.0	918.7	17	19.2	20.4	22.8	23.2
Information, culture and recreation	302.9	306.3	296.8	271.9	303.8	5.3	4.8	2.9	3.5	4.7
Accommodation and food services	443.5	460.4	448.9	338.2	356.3	9.4	10.8	9.6	6.8	7.1
Other services (except public administration)	267.4	285.7	298.8	285.2	276.1	5.9	6	6.1	6.1	5.8
Public administration	367.8	356.9	373.0	381.8	405.6	3.4	3.1	4.9	5.4	3.3

Source: Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0392-01. Employment by industry, annual (x 1,000)

# POPULATION DYNAMICS

## POPULATION OVER THE LAST 5 YEARS

According to the population estimates from Statistics Canada, each of the four counties in our region experienced steady growth in their population. The total population of the region increased by 16,440 from 305,953 in 2016 to 322,393 in 2020 (Table 6).

Over the past five years, Bruce County had its population grow from 69,953 to 74,143, an increase of 4,190. The population of Grey County had the largest increase from 96,298 in 2016 to 102,007 in 2020, an increase of 5,709. Huron County experienced the smallest growth of population over the last five years with an additional 2,251 people. Lastly, Perth County saw the second highest population growth among all four counties from 78,970 in 2016 to 83,260 in 2020, a change of 4,290.

Overall, this population growth shows mixed impacts on our region. As the population grew, the assumption is that the labour force also increased. However, without knowing the age cohort, place of work and skills sets, this assumption is limited. The impacts of this population growth on the access to labour cannot be immediately determined.

TABLE 6: POPULATION ESTIMATES (BOTH SEXES, ALL AGES)

Geography	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Absolute change 2016 & 2020
Bruce, Ontario	69,953	70,987	72,069	73,170	74,143	4,190
Grey, Ontario	96,298	97,751	99,096	100,454	102,007	5,709
Huron, Ontario	60,732	61,088	62,066	62,568	62,983	2,251
Perth, Ontario	78,970	79,896	81,062	82,051	83,260	4,290
<b>Total</b>	<b>305,953</b>	<b>309,722</b>	<b>314,293</b>	<b>318,243</b>	<b>322,393</b>	<b>16,440</b>

Source: Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0139-01 Population estimates, July 1, by census division, 2016 boundaries

## MIGRATION CHARACTERISTICS

Between 2014 and 2019, Bruce County attracted 15,200 people from other areas while losing 11,930 people with a net gain of 3,270 new residents (Table 7). Among all age groups, people aged 45-64 migrated the most to Bruce County with a net gain of 1,833, followed by 0-17 and 25-44 age cohorts. Interestingly, Bruce County was the only county that lost people aged 65+ by 224. Youth aged 18-24 saw the largest net loss (237) as they migrated out of the county. While not all youth migrate for post-secondary education, this certainly plays a role as access to post-secondary education institutions are predominantly in larger centres. The consideration would be how to motivate and attract them back to Bruce County to work upon their graduation. One possibility is to build their family ties and experiences before they leave the communities.<sup>19</sup>

TABLE 7: MIGRATION CHARACTERISTICS BETWEEN 2014 AND 2019, BRUCE COUNTY

Age Group	In-migrants	Out-migrants	Net-migrants
0-17	3,076	1,929	1,147
18-24	1,467	1,704	-237
25-44	4,420	3,669	751
45-64	4,230	2,397	1,833
65+	2,007	2,231	-224
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,200</b>	<b>11,930</b>	<b>3,270</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, Taxfiler

Between 2014 and 2019, Grey County attracted 24,044 people from other areas, the most among all four counties. However, it lost 18,160 people to other areas, the most loss in the four counties as well. Eventually, Grey County gained 5,884 new residents (Table 8). These net-migrants, driven by people aged 45-64 might bring extra pressure on the housing market in Grey County. In terms of age dynamics, people aged 45-64 migrated the most to Grey County with a net gain of 2,832, followed by 0-17 and 25-44 age cohorts. Youth aged 18-24 was the only group with negative migrations as 172. A net loss of this age group is common in the area partly due to the lack of post-secondary institutions. Youth may choose to go to other cities for postsecondary studies. The consideration remains to be how to attract them back to Grey County to work and live.

<sup>19</sup> Carol Simpson. "Rural Ontario Foresight Papers". Rural Ontario Institute. 2019.

TABLE 8: MIGRATION CHARACTERISTICS BETWEEN 2014 AND 2019, GREY COUNTY

Age Group	In-migrants	Out-migrants	Net-migrants
0-17	4,934	3,409	1,525
18-24	2,554	2,726	-172
25-44	6,894	5,522	1,372
45-64	6,550	3,718	2,832
65+	3,112	2,785	327
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,044</b>	<b>18,160</b>	<b>5,884</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, Taxfiler

Between 2014 and 2019, Huron County attracted 11,407 people from other areas while losing 9,935 people, resulting in a net gain of 1,472 new residents (Table 9). In terms of age dynamics, people aged 45-64 migrated the most to Huron County with a net gain of 1,185, followed by 0-17 and 65+ age cohorts. Among all ages, youth aged 18-24 migrated the most out of the county with a net loss of 303. Huron County also lost 75 people aged 25-44 to other areas, the only county that experienced a loss in this age cohort.

TABLE 9: MIGRATION CHARACTERISTICS BETWEEN 2014 AND 2019, HURON COUNTY

Age Group	In-migrants	Out-migrants	Net-migrants
0-17	2,366	1,864	502
18-24	1,233	1,536	-303
25-44	3,137	3,212	-75
45-64	2,981	1,796	1,185
65+	1,690	1,527	163
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,407</b>	<b>9,935</b>	<b>1,472</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, Taxfiler

Between 2014 and 2019, Perth County attracted 16,025 people from other areas while losing 13,276 people, with a net gain of 2,749 new residents (Table 10). In terms of age dynamics, people aged 45-64 migrated the most to Perth County with a net gain of 898, followed by 25-44 and 0-17 age cohorts. However, youth aged 18-24 migrated out of the county with a net loss of 307, the most loss among four counties. While the youth might choose to leave Perth County for post-secondary education, they could be a potential workforce for the county after their graduation. Perth County has already launched Prosper in Perth initiative to increase youth engagement and empower them in the local communities.<sup>20</sup> This kind of initiative might attract more youth to stay in Perth County and develop their careers.

TABLE 10: MIGRATION CHARACTERISTICS BETWEEN 2014 AND 2019, PERTH COUNTY

Age Group	In-migrants	Out-migrants	Net-migrants
0-17	3,494	2,795	699
18-24	2,015	2,322	-307
25-44	5,615	4,764	851
45-64	3,072	2,174	898
65+	1,829	1,221	608
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,025</b>	<b>13,276</b>	<b>2,749</b>

Source: Statistics Canada, Taxfiler

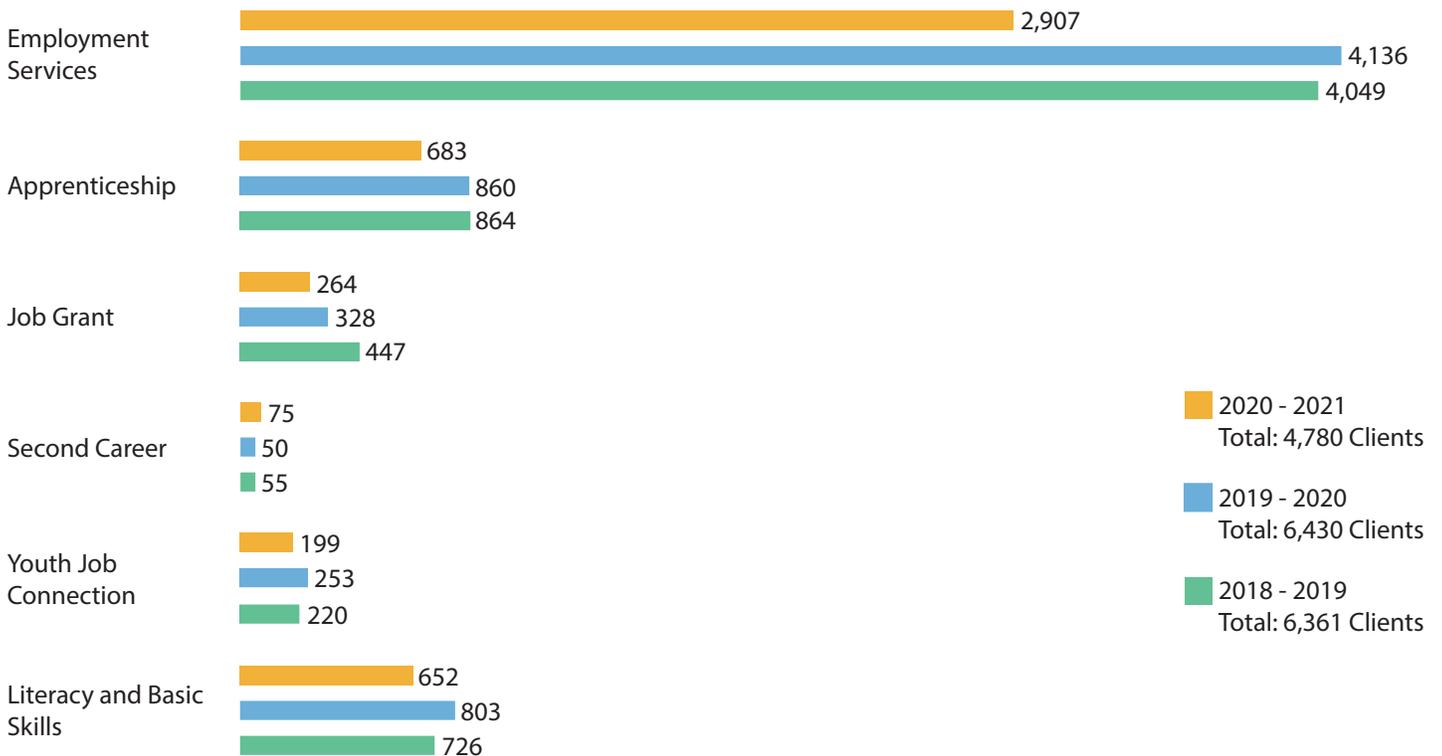
<sup>20</sup> <https://www.perthcounty.ca/en/doing-business/prosper-in-perth-county.aspx#>

# EMPLOYMENT ONTARIO PROGRAM DATA OBSERVATIONS

In August 2021, the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development provided the Four County Labour Market Planning Board the aggregate Employment Ontario (EO) program data to inform the local service activities. The scope of EO services includes Employment Services, Apprenticeship, Canada-Ontario Job Grant, Second Career, Literacy and Basic Skills, and Youth Job Connection. All programs are maintained under the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development and have been developed to help EO clients get the training, skills, and experience they need to succeed in the changing labour market. The following data analysis delivers both year-to-year trends and program outcomes of EO service clients. The data reported and presented reflects closed cases for the given fiscal year, which runs from April 1st 2020 to March 31st 2021. A closed case refers to closure of a client’s service plan.

Chart 4 demonstrates the number of clients for each EO program over the last four years. In the 2020-2021 period, all EO programs have served a total of 4,780 clients, a decrease of 1,650 clients compared to 2019-2020. Among all programs, only the Second Career program experienced an increase of 25 clients. The Employment Services program experienced the greatest decline of 1,229 clients, followed by the Apprenticeship program (-177) and the Literacy and Basics Skills program (-151).

CHART 4



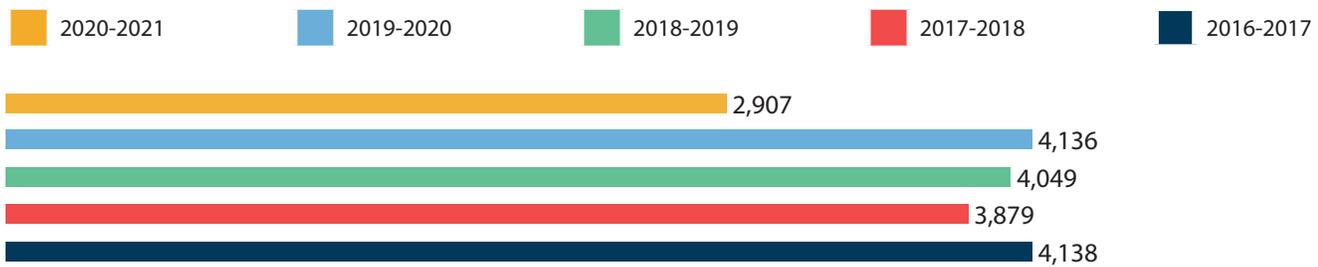
Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

# EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

## NUMBER OF ASSISTED SERVICE CLIENTS

The Employment Services program offers various resources and supports to individuals who need help with their employment and skills-upgrading. Over the 2020-2021 period, it served 2,907 clients, the lowest in the past five years (Chart 5). Such decrease was highly likely caused by the consecutive lockdowns and health measures, which make it challenging to deliver Employment Services programs. According to local service providers, they have no problems to get clients employed as many local employers are hiring. However, childcare is an issue because many parents need to stay at home for their children. As a result, some of them might choose to drop out of the labour market.

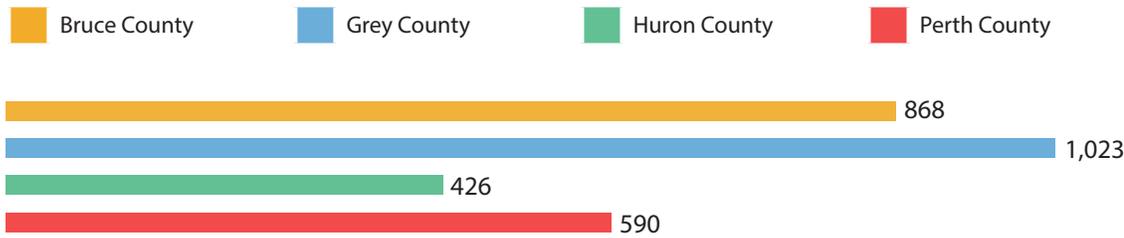
CHART 5



Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

In the 2020-2021 period, the Employment Services program in Grey County served the most clients with 1,023, followed by Bruce County with 868 and Perth County with 590 (Chart 6).

CHART 6



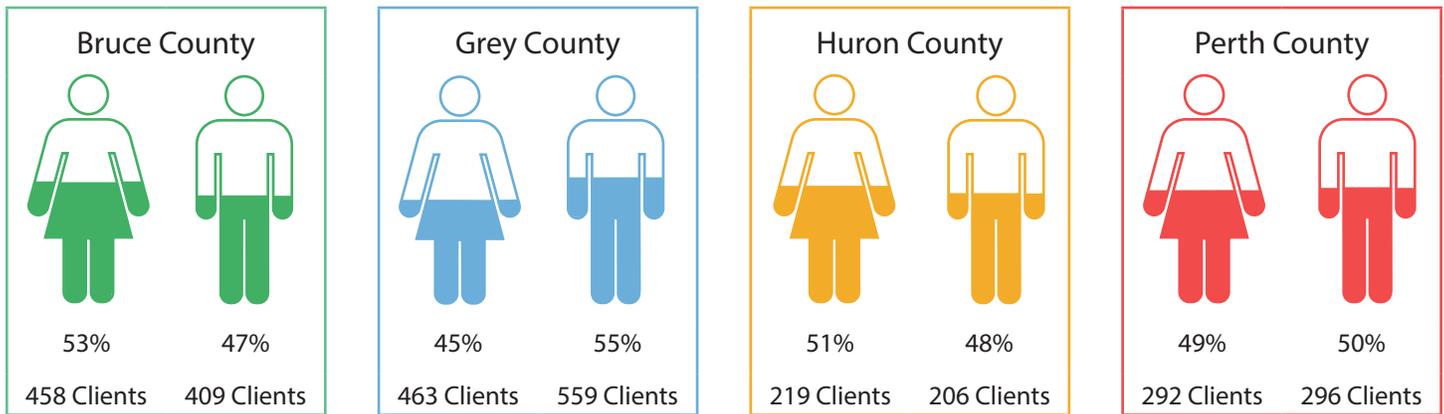
Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

## CLIENTS BY GENDER

In the four county area, 49.3 percent of its clients were female while 50.6 percent were male, which was relatively equal. In Ontario, 50.9 percent of Employment Services clients were female, which was slightly higher than male clients at 48.7 percent.

At the county level, the Employment Services program in Bruce County served a greater portion of female clients (53%) while Employment Services program in Grey County served more male clients (55%) (Chart 7). The clients in Huron County and Perth County were quite equal by Gender.

CHART 7

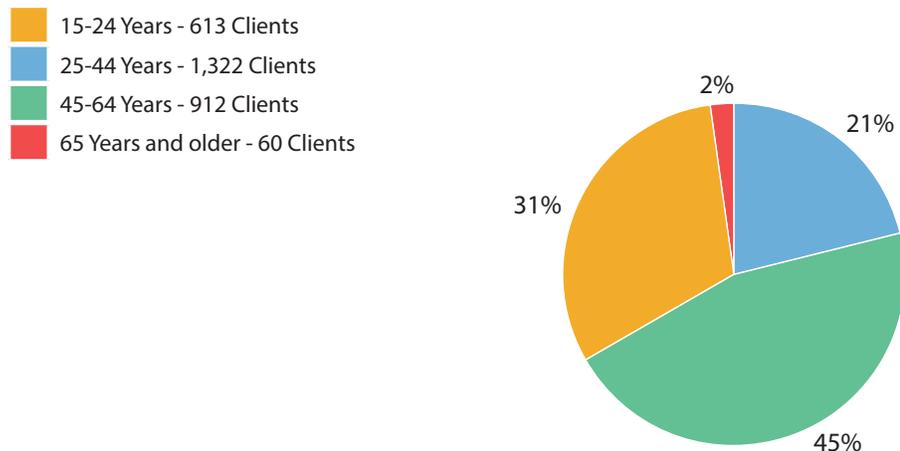


Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

## CLIENTS BY AGE COHORT

Chart 8 shows the distribution of the Employment Services program clients by age cohort, providing more insight about how the program served the local community. Same as last year, clients aged 25-44 years old represent the main client group (comprising 45 percent of total clients), followed by the 45-64 age cohort (31%).

CHART 8

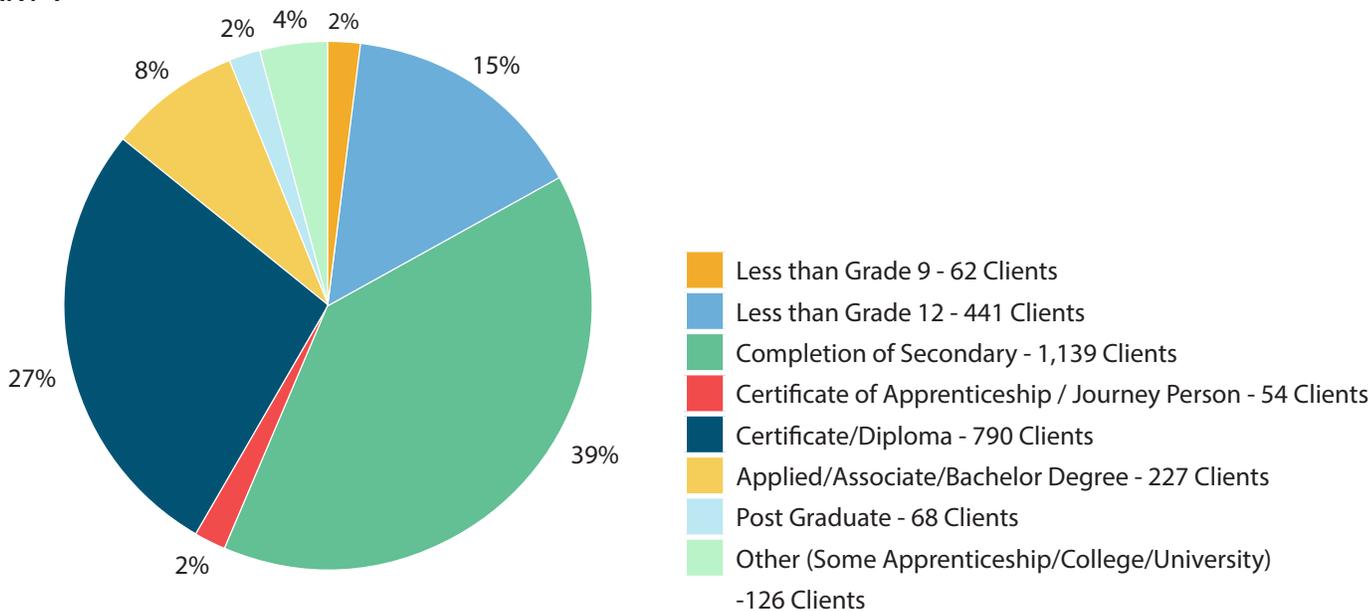


Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

## CLIENTS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Among all clients served by the Employment Services program, people with Completion of Secondary education was served the most as 1,139 (39%), followed by Certificate/ Diploma as 790 (27%) (Chart 9).

CHART 9



Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

## EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

### TOP 5 LAYOFF SECTORS

Table 11 provides information about clients' employment history. During the 2020-2021 period, the top layoff sectors among the Employment Services program clients were Accommodation and Food Services, Construction, Retail Trade, Manufacturing, and Health Care and Social Assistance. Three of them are the top employment sectors in the four county area and most of them were negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

TABLE 11

Accommodation and Food Services	290
Construction	202
Retail Trade	199
Manufacturing	178
Health Care and Social Assistance	136

Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

## TOP 10 LAYOFF OCCUPATIONS

Specifically, clients who accessed the Employment Services program were more likely laid-off in occupations such as Trades helpers, construction labourers and related occupations (163), Service support and other service occupations (161), n.e.c., Labourers in Processing, Manufacturing and Utilities (146), Service representatives and other customer and personal services occupations (115), and Service supervisors and technical service occupations (108) (Table 12). Every occupation requires some degrees of close contact with customers, which was greatly disturbed by health measures. As a result, people who held these occupations were struggling the most in the pandemic.

TABLE 12

Trades helpers, construction labourers and related occupations	163
Service support and other service occupations, n.e.c.	161
Labourers in Processing, Manufacturing and Utilities	146
Service representatives and other customer and personal services occupations	115
Service supervisors and technical service occupations	108
Sales support occupations	106
Transport and heavy equipment operation and related maintenance occupations	96
Industrial, electrical and construction trades	95
Administrative and financial supervisors and administrative occupations	77
Sales representatives and salespersons - wholesale and retail trade	76

Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

## OUTCOME AT EXIT SUMMARY

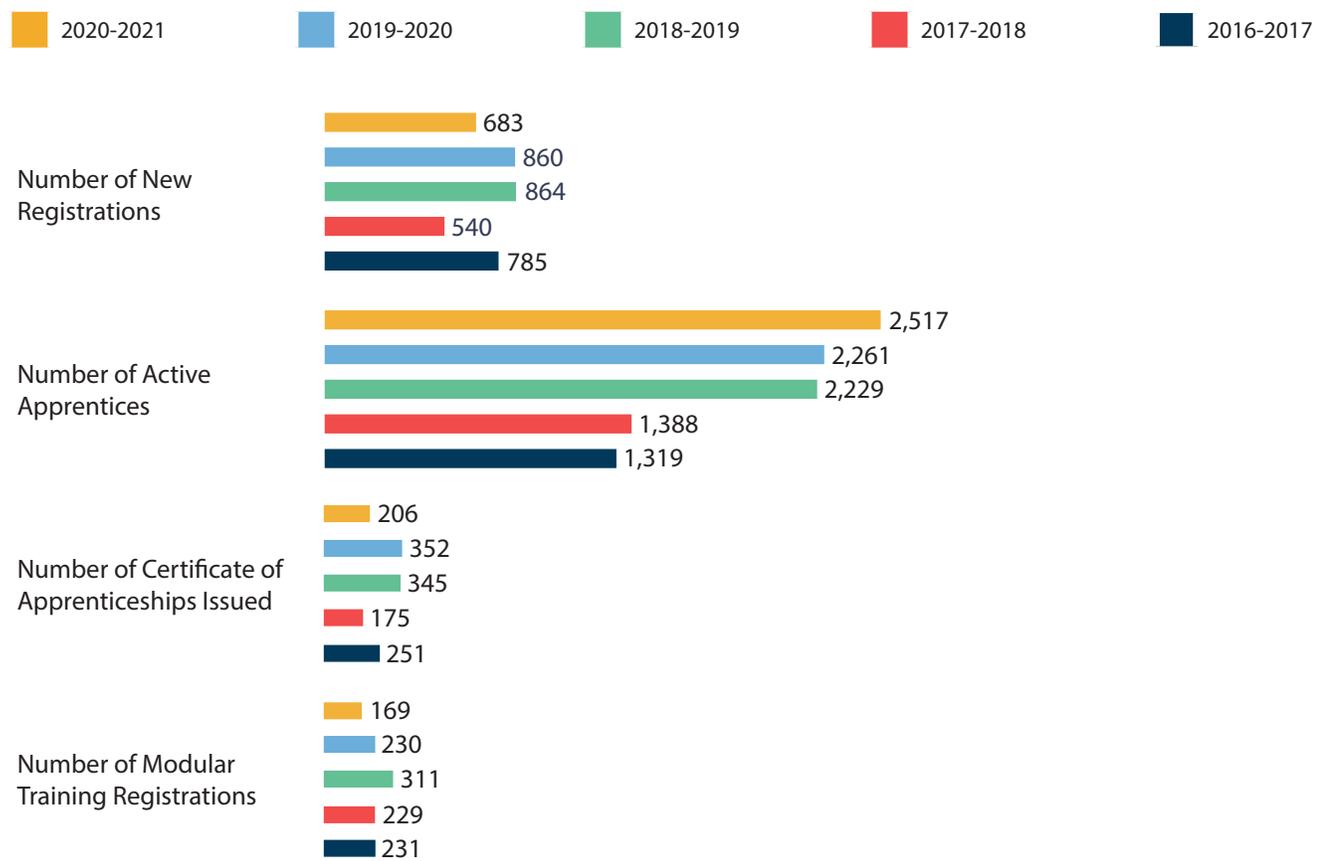
In the 2020-2021 period, 67 percent of its clients gained employment and 14 percent of clients were in education or training. With 9 percent of clients remaining unemployed, one can still be confident to say that the Employment Services program has successfully served clients to meet their needs in the last difficult year.

# APPRENTICESHIP

## NUMBER OF CLIENTS

The Apprenticeship program provides people with both on-the-job and in-school training in skilled trades so that they can be certified and work in the trade of their interest. According to Chart 10, the Apprenticeship program received 683 new clients, a decrease of 177 clients compared to the previous year. In total, there were 2,517 active apprentices in the four county area in 2020-2021, the highest since 2016. This implies the success of the local Apprenticeship programs attracting more people to skilled trades. Nevertheless, both the number of Certificates of Apprenticeship issued and the number of modular training registrations decreased in 2020-2021.

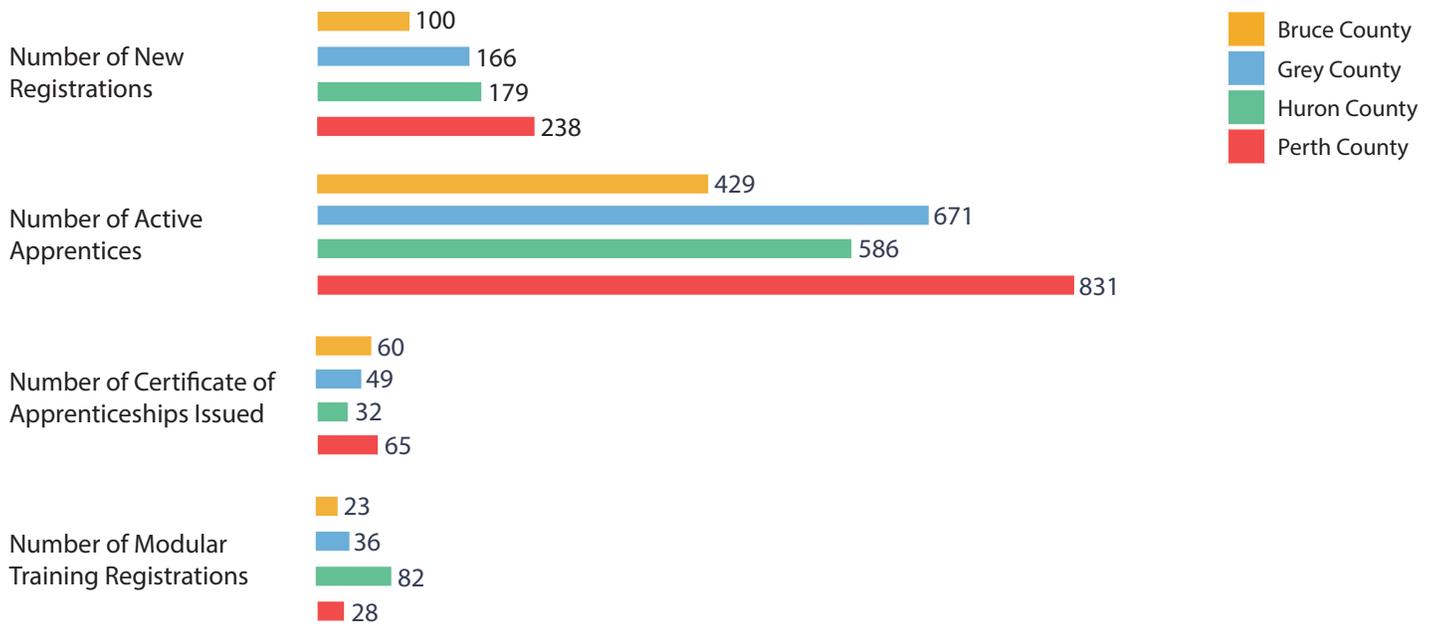
CHART 10



Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

At the county level, the Apprenticeship program in Perth County served the most new clients with 238 for 2020-2021, followed by Huron County with 179 (Chart 11). As a result, Perth County had the most active apprentices (831) among the four counties. However, Huron County received the most modular training registrations.

CHART 11

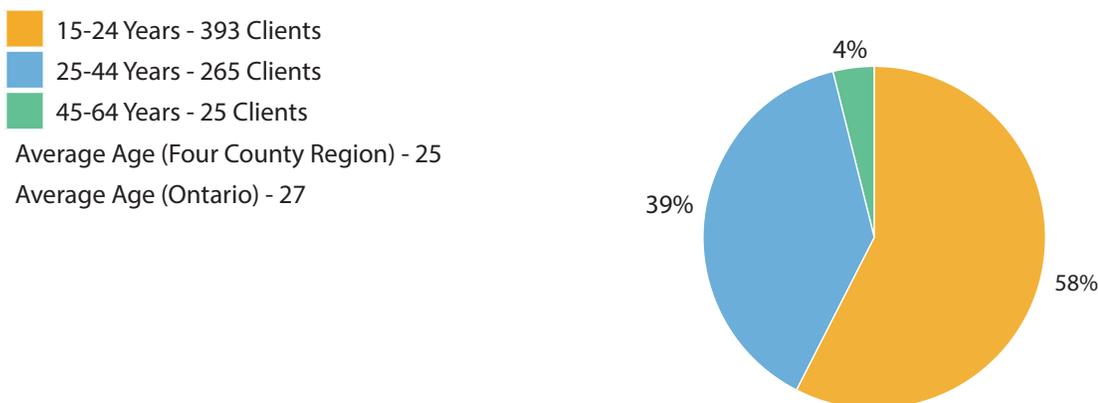


Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

### CLIENTS BY AGE GROUP

The average age of new registered apprentices in the four county is 25 years old, 2 years younger than the provincial average (Chart 12). This shows that the Apprenticeship programs in the four county area has successfully attracted a younger demographic to join the skilled trades. Among all clients, 58 percent were aged 15-24 years old. This represents a higher proportion of young people than last year, which means more young people get trained to fill the growing aging gap in skilled trades over the 2020-2021 period.

CHART 12



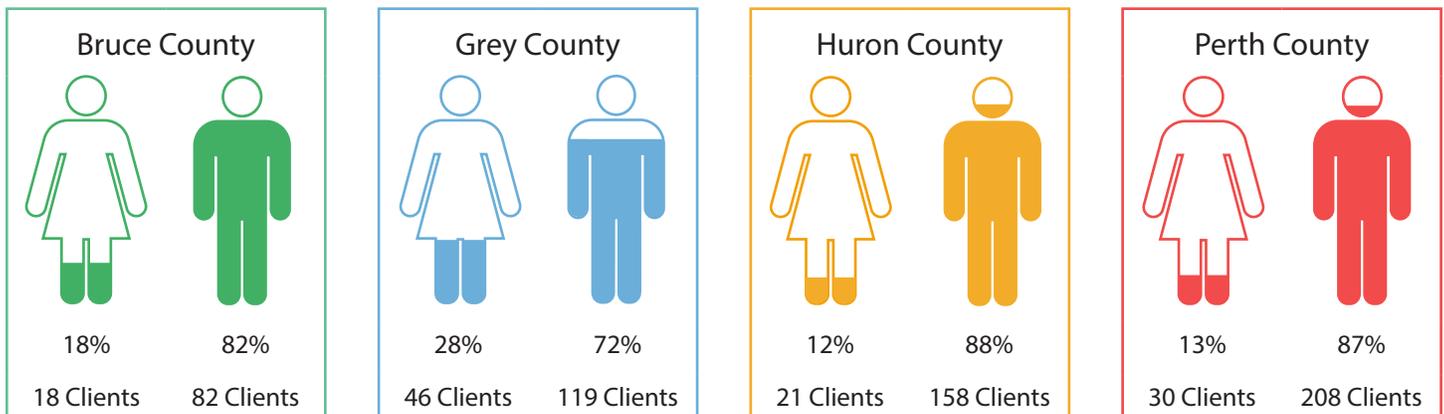
Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

## CLIENTS BY GENDER

Similar to last year, 83 percent of Apprenticeship program clients were male and 17 percent were female. In Ontario, only 12.5 percent of its Apprenticeship program clients were female, indicating that the four county area served a higher percentage of female clients (+4.5%). Whereas, 86.9 percent of clients in Ontario were male. The gender imbalance in skilled trades, shown by these data, suggests that continued efforts should be made to promote skilled trades to women as a career choice.

At the county level, the Apprenticeship program in Grey County served a higher proportion of female clients at 28 percent, followed by Bruce County at 18 percent (Chart 13). Among the four counties, Huron County served the most males in percentage.

CHART 13



Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

## TOP 10 REGISTERED TRADES

The top 10 trades with the highest number of new registrations for 2020-2021 is listed below (Table 13). They remained the same as the previous year with different rankings. However, all experienced a lower registration except Sheet Metal Worker. Electrician - Construction and Maintenance had the highest number of new registrants with 117 apprentices, while Welder only received 21 new registrants. The top 10 trades registered by Ontario clients were similar to the four county area, but the former included Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Systems Mechanic and Child Development Practitioner as its top 10 registered trades instead of Cook and Welder.

TABLE 13

Four County Region		Ontario	
Electrician - Construction and Maintenance	117	Electrician - Construction and Maintenance	3,308
General Carpenter	83	Automotive Service Technician	1,850
Industrial Mechanic Millwright	72	Plumber	1,305
Automotive Service Technician	57	General Carpenter	1,237
Plumber	53	Truck and Coach Technician	973
Cook	45	Hairstylist	863
Truck and Coach Technician	38	Industrial Mechanic Millwright	812
Sheet Metal Worker	27	Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Systems Mechanic	477
Hairstylist	21	Child Development Practitioner	408
Welder	21	Sheet Metal Worker	392

Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

## TOP 5 REGISTERED TRADES

Each county also experienced different compositions of top 5 registered trades with its Apprenticeship program. Bruce County had the highest number of new registrants in General Carpenter with 26 apprentices while Grey County had the most apprentices registered in Automotive Service Technician (19). Both Huron County and Perth County had the most new registrants in Electrician - Construction and Maintenance, with 37 and 45, respectively.

TABLE 14

Bruce County		Grey County	
General Carpenter	26	Automotive Service Technician	19
Industrial Mechanic Millwright	20	Educational Assistant	18
Electrician - Construction and Maintenance	18	Electrician - Construction and Maintenance	17
X <sup>1</sup>		Cook	17
		General Carpenter	16
Huron County		Perth County	
Electrician - Construction and Maintenance	37	Electrician - Construction and Maintenance	45
Plumber	28	Cook	27
General Carpenter	23	Industrial Mechanic Millwright	27
Truck and Coach Technician	16	Automotive Service Technician	22
Sheet Metal Worker	15	General Carpenter	18

Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

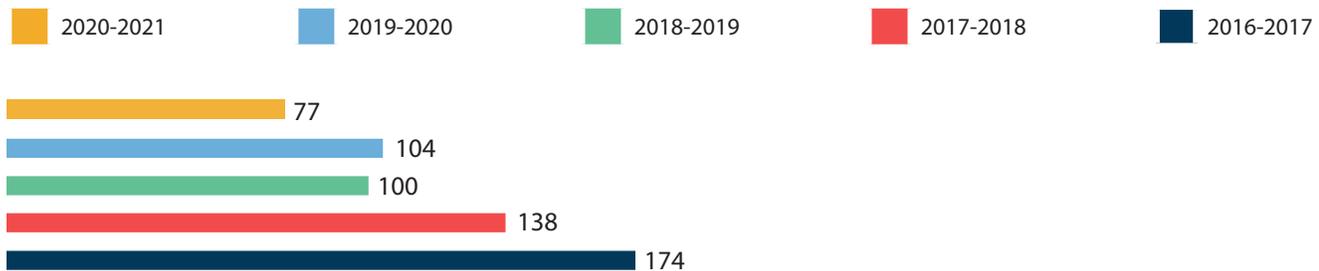
Note: 1. Other registered trades for Bruce County were below 10 participants. As a result, the data counts were suppressed for confidentiality concerns.

# CANADA-ONTARIO JOB GRANT

## NUMBER OF EMPLOYERS

The Canada-Ontario Job Grant (COJG) program offers non-repayable grants to help employers, individually or in groups, train their employees and invest in their workforce. The COJG program is available to all kinds of businesses with short-term training needs. According to the 2020-2021 EO data, the participating employers of COJG program decreased to 77, the lowest over the past 5 years (Chart 14).

CHART 14



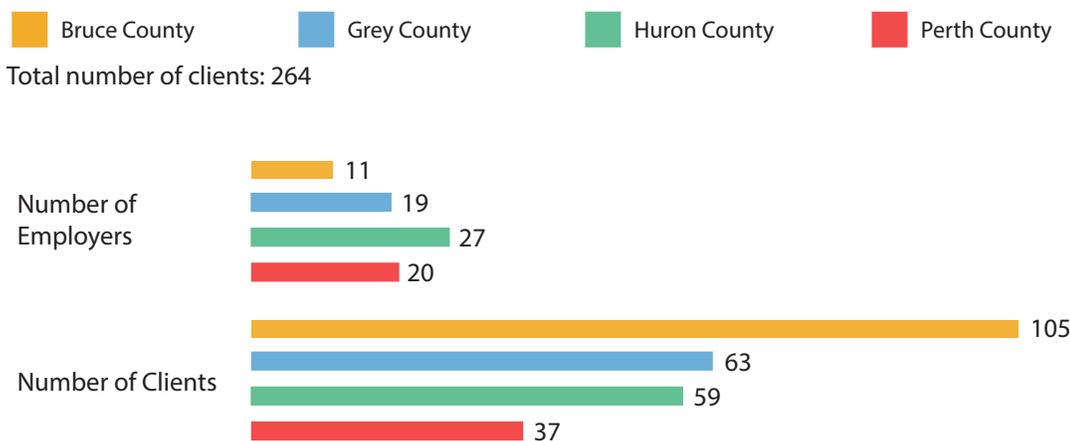
Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

## EMPLOYEE SIZE RANGE

Among 77 employers who applied for the COJG program, 66 were small businesses with less than 50 employees. As COJG funds are granted to businesses under 100 employees, these data indicates that the local community's needs have been met.

Among four counties, Huron County had the most employers (27) who applied for the COJG program, followed by Perth County (20). However, Bruce County served the most clients for the COJG program in the 2020-2021 period with 105 clients.

CHART 15

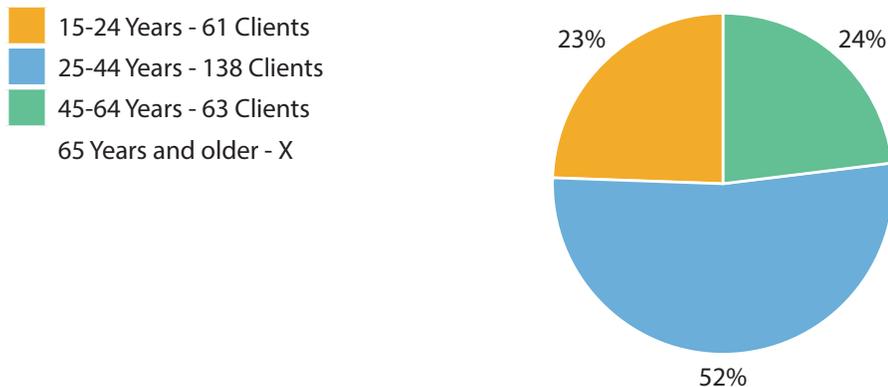


Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

## CLIENTS BY AGE COHORT

The age composition of the COJG program clients is demonstrated below (Chart 16). Employees aged 25-44 years old accounted for the most of the COJG program clients in the 2020-2021 period at 52 percent. Employees in the younger cohort (aged 15-24 years old) represented 23 percent of the COJG program clients, a higher percentage than the previous year (+7%). One possibility for this increase might be the increasing need of technical or other essential skills during the pandemic. As a result, employers invested in the younger cohort to meet the changing labour force.

CHART 16



Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

Note:

1. For confidentiality concerns, any data counts lower than 10 participants have been suppressed and is marked with an 'X'. As a result, they are not included in the following gender/age breakdown and the total does not equal to 100%. The same method pertains to the entire report.
2. '-' indicates unavailable data or not reportable data i.e. data not collected or true zero.

## OUTCOME AT EXIT SUMMARY

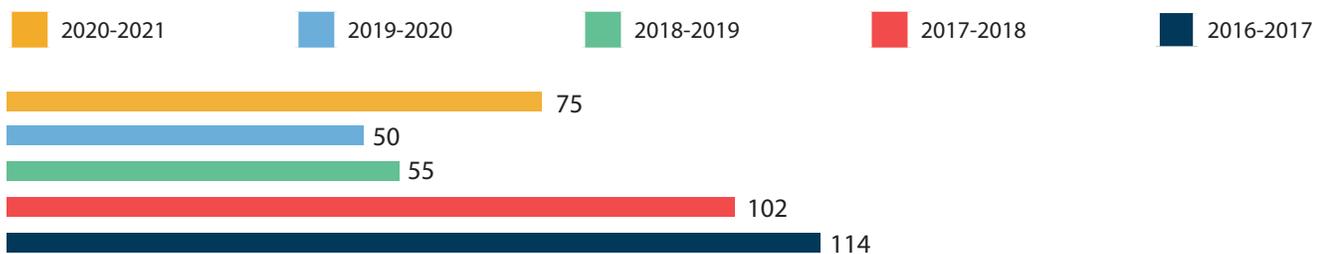
Interestingly, no matter in which county, employers who registered for the COJG program reported a 100 percent satisfaction rate with increase in trainee productivity and training met workforce needs. Both are higher than the provincial level (94% and 98%, respectively). These outcomes indicate the effectiveness and efficiency of the local COJG program to both employers and employees.

## SECOND CAREER

### NUMBER OF CLIENTS

The Second Career program provides services to help laid-off unemployed workers acquire new skills in order to transition into high-skilled, in demand occupations in the local labour market. In 2020-2021, the number of Second Career clients was 75 (Chart 17). This represents an increase of 25 compared to 2019-2020, the first increase over the past five years. One probable explanation could be the shrinking training time of the Second Career program from two year to one year and the increasing supply of micro-credentials. This eligibility criteria change and easier access of online learnings might attract more people registered in the Second Career program.

CHART 17



Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

At the county level, the Second Career program in Grey County served the most clients with 32 clients and Bruce County served the fewest with below 10 clients (Chart 18).

CHART 18

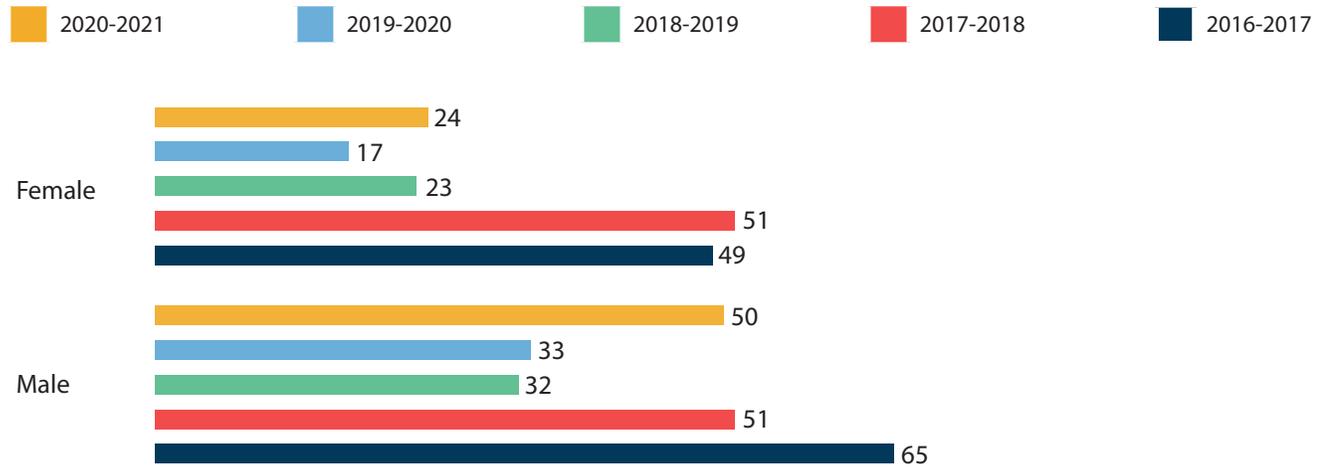


Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

## CLIENTS BY GENDER

Female clients served by the Second Career program represented 32 percent of total clients in the four county area. Compared to the provincial level of 45 percent, this was lower. In other words, Ontario served a greater proportion of female clients than the four county area. The Second Career program served 67 percent male clients in the four county region versus 55 percent in Ontario. Both the number of female and male clients increased for 2020-2021, with 24 female clients and 50 male clients, respectively (Chart 19).

CHART 19



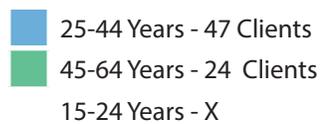
Other 2020/2021 - X

Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

## CLIENTS BY AGE COHORT

The chart below shows the age composition of the Second Career program clients. As usual, clients aged 25-44 years old accounted for the most clients with 63 percent. This finding implies that the main working force (aged 25-44 years old) needed extra help with upskilling in the 2020-2021 period.

CHART 20



Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

## OUTCOME AT EXIT SUMMARY

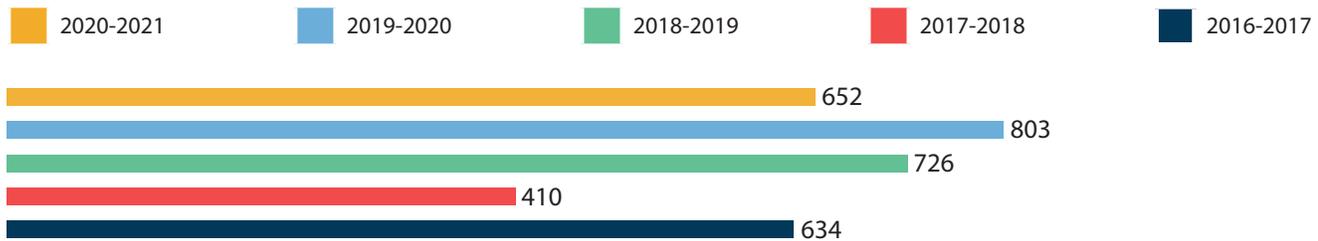
According to the program outcome data, only 17 percent of clients gained employment for 2020-2021. About one third of clients remained unemployed and the rest of clients were in education/training or other categories such as independent work, unable to work and volunteer work. These suggest the difficulties to find a job with consecutive lockdowns and health measures in the previous year.

# LITERACY AND BASIC SKILLS

## NUMBER OF IN-PERSON NEW LEARNERS

The Ontario Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) program helps adults in Ontario who require upskilling and/or face various barriers to learning develop and apply essential skills such as communication, numeracy, interpersonal skills, and digital skills to achieve their goals. The LBS program serves learners transitioning to employment, postsecondary education, apprenticeship, secondary school, or increased personal independence and is free and available to all local residents. According to Chart 21, the number of LBS in-person new learners in 2020-2021 decreased to 652 from 803 in 2019-2020, a drop of 151 learners. The local literacy network (QUILL Learning Network) cited the COVID-19 pandemic as the main reason for the 19 percent decrease in new learners. In addition to new learners, LBS program served 343 carryover learners, bringing the total number of learners serviced in 2020-2021 to 995.

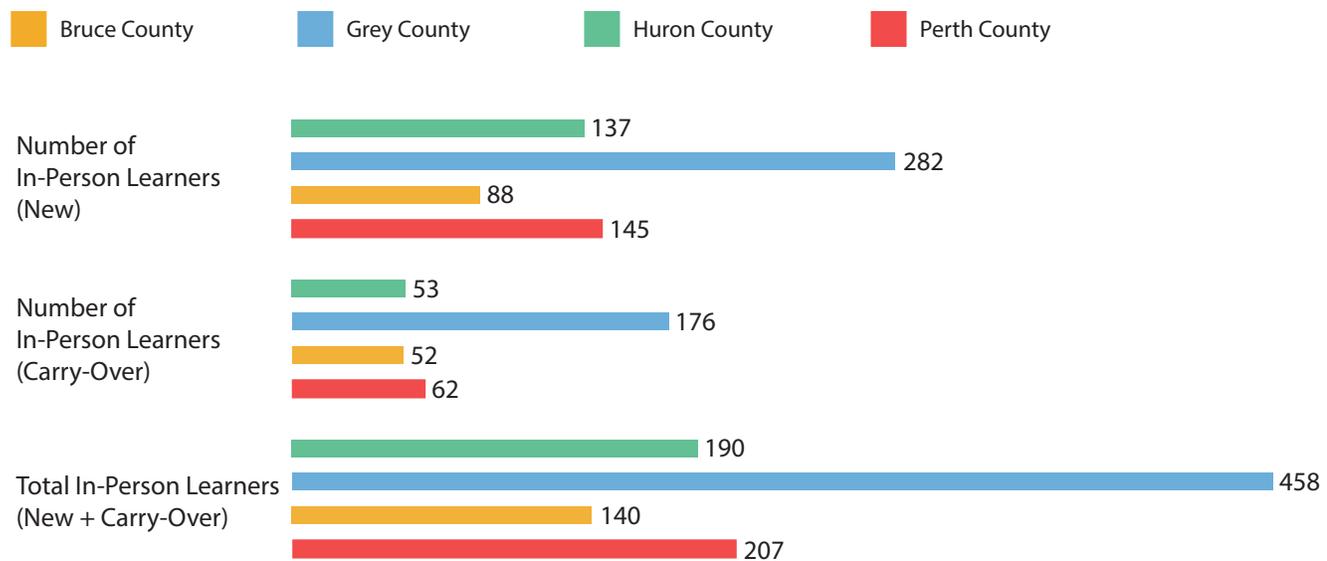
CHART 21



Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

At the county level, Grey County, which offers the most LBS programs, also served the most LBS in-person new learners with 282, followed by Perth County with 145. Grey County also served the most carryover learners.

CHART 22



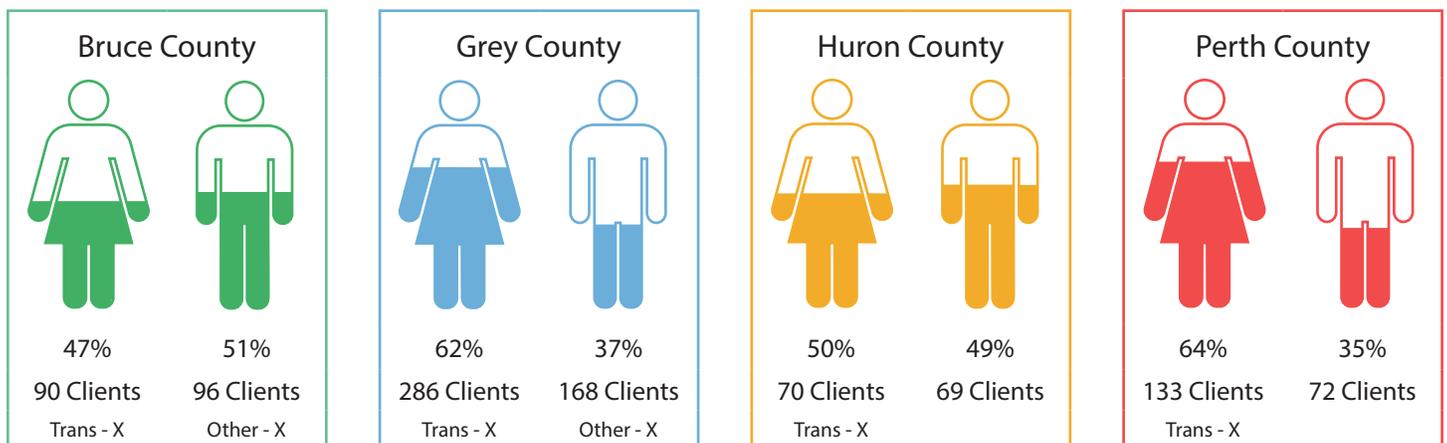
Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

## CLIENTS BY GENDER

Of the 995 Total In-Person Learners served (new plus carryover), 58 percent were female and 41 percent were male. Interestingly, this gender composition was the same as the previous year. The LBS program is the only EO program that has a higher female participation rate. At the provincial LBS level, females accounted for 64 percent of total learners for 2020-2021, higher than the four county area.

Looking at the LBS program in each county, Perth County served the largest percentage of female learners with 64 percent, the same as the provincial level (Chart 23). Bruce County, however, served the largest percentage of male learners. In terms of numbers, Grey County served the most female learners in 2020-2021 and Huron County served the fewest.

CHART 23

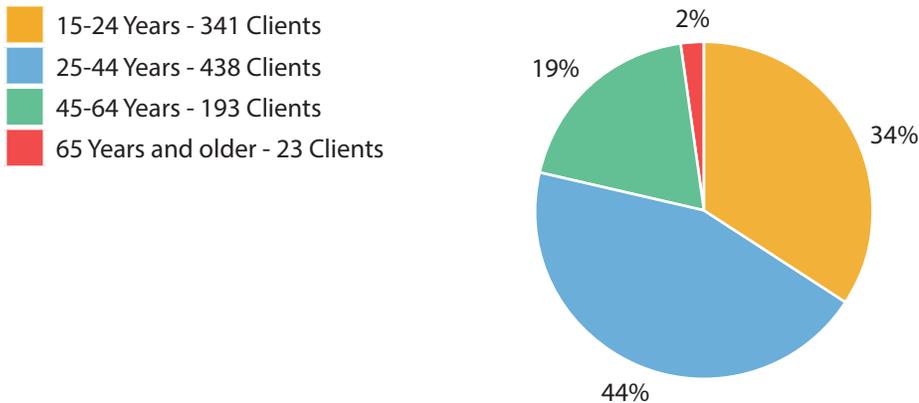


Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

## CLIENTS BY AGE

Chart 24 demonstrates the age composition of the LBS program. The highest proportion of learners fell into the 25-44 age range, representing 44 percent of the total LBS learners. As the main workforce, adults aged 25-44 years old will undoubtedly have a higher need for essential skills development to match the changing job market demand.

CHART 24

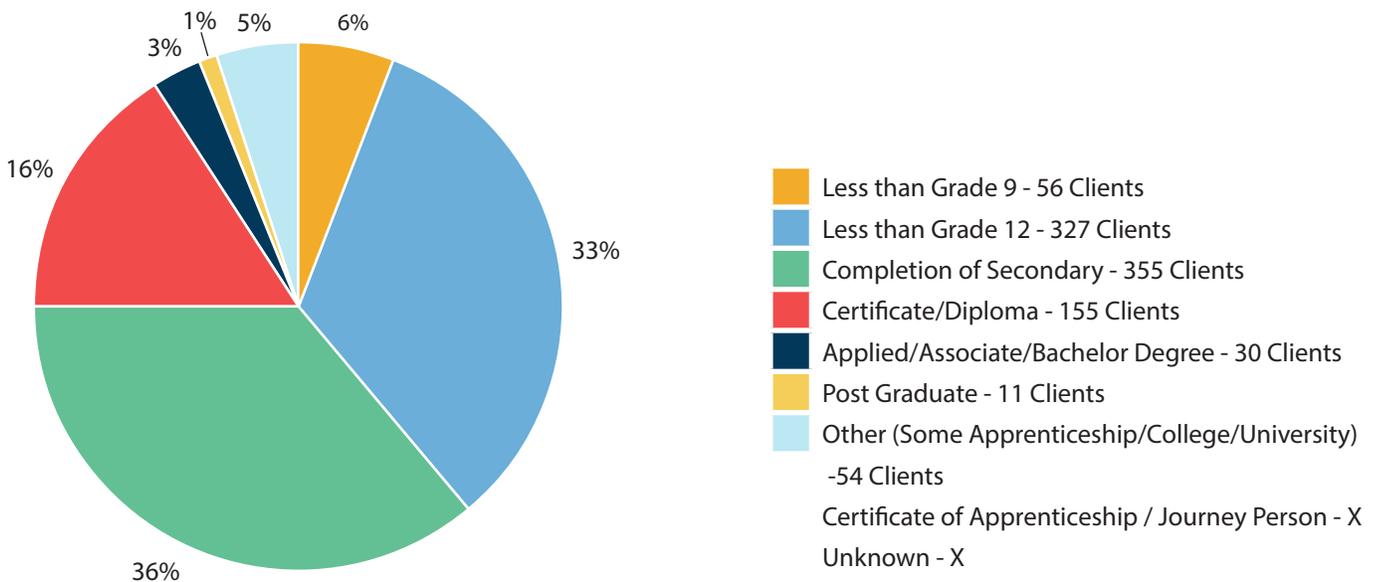


Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

## CLIENTS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The educational attainment indicated at intake by LBS learners in the 2020-2021 period is shown below (Chart 25). Of the learners served in 2020-2021, 37% reported an education level of less than Grade 12. This is the most common learner group served by LBS, and as the least educated, is the one that would benefit most from increased literacy, numeracy and digital skills instruction.

CHART 25



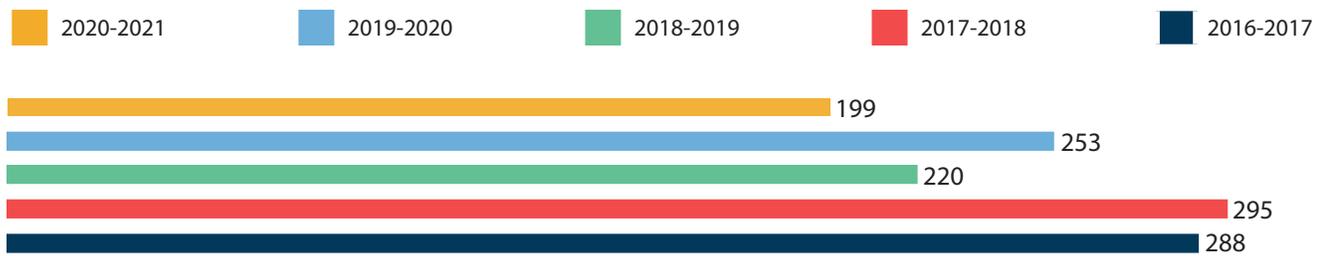
Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

# YOUTH JOB CONNECTION

## NUMBER OF CLIENTS

The Youth Job Connection (YJC) program provides more intensive supports to youth aged 15 to 29 years old in order to help them overcome different barriers to employment. The program is designed to help these youth find employment and participate in education or training. For 2020-2021, the YJC program served a total of 199 clients (Chart 26). This represents a decrease of 54 clients compared to 2019-2020.

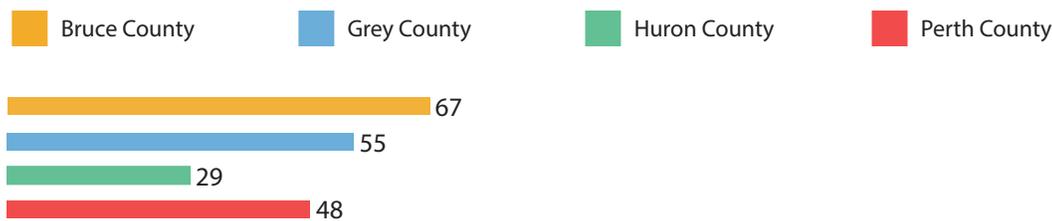
CHART 26



Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

At the county level, Bruce County served the most YJC program clients with 67 for 2020-2021 while Huron County served the fewest with 29.

CHART 27



Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

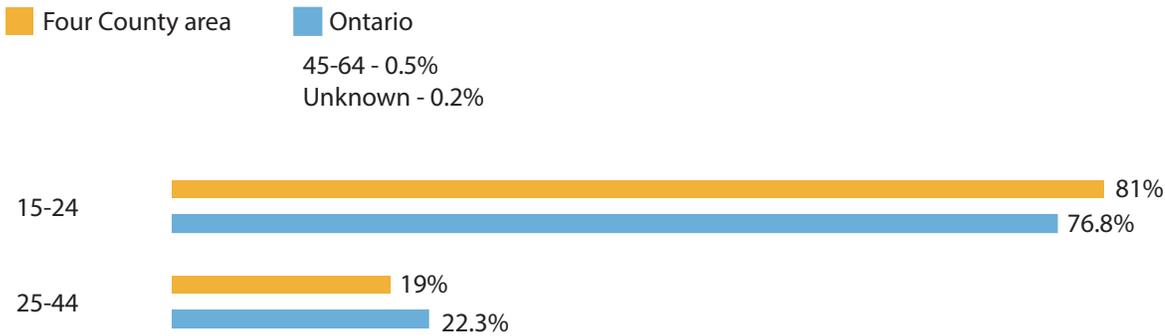
## CLIENTS BY GENDER

Among all YJC clients, male youth accounted for 55 percent while female youth accounted for 43 percent. However, Ontario shows a different pattern. In the 2020-2021 period, Ontario served 50 percent of female clients and 48 percent male clients, which was relatively equal. Also, Ontario served a higher proportion of female youth than the four county area.

## CLIENTS BY AGE

With respect to age, the majority of the YJC clients were less than 25 years old (81 percent). This remains the same as 2019-2020. Compared to the provincial level, four county area served a higher percentage of youth aged 15-24 years old (81% vs 76.9%). This suggests that the YJC program in our area has successfully reached the target group and helped local youth with their employment.

CHART 28

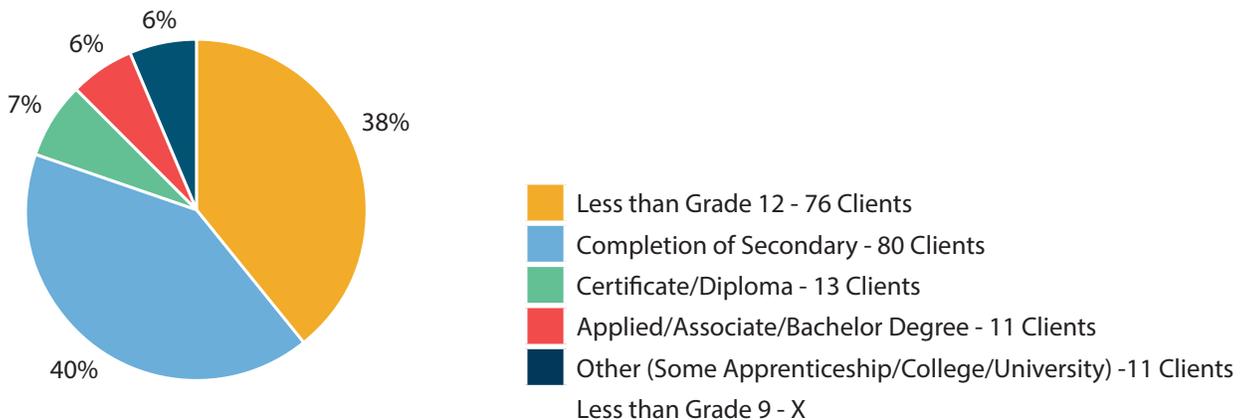


Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

## CLIENTS BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Among all YJC clients, youth who completed secondary education represented the most clients with 80, followed by youth who had a less than Grade 12 education with 76. Both experienced a decrease in percentage compare to 2019-2020. In the previous year, youth has been particularly challenged with the COVID-19 pandemic as both education and training institutions were greatly disrupted. Apprenticeships, skilled trades placements and other programs that require experiential learning or work-based places have been postponed or cancelled. Therefore, youth might lack the experience needed for jobs. Moreover, sectors with close customer contact had to close temporarily due to lockdown and health measures, resulting in a decrease of entry level jobs. As a result, youth needs extra help to find jobs under this pandemic-led recession and the YJC program service providers should play such a role.

CHART 29



Source: 2021 Employment Ontario data

## EMPLOYMENT ONTARIO PROGRAM DATA CONSULTATION

The Planning Board hosted an online meeting with local employment service providers on September 20th, 2021 and shared the above findings of EO programs. Nine participants heard the presentation and shared insights into service challenges and potential solutions.

Observation one: All EO programs were somewhat disturbed by the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated health measures. In the 2020-2021 period, EO programs had to close for consecutive months due to the first lockdown in March 2020 and the second lockdown in January 2021. Though some services have transitioned to online services with limited resources, service providers reported that many clients still prefer the in-person services. As a result, the number of clients for most EO programs decreased. Even so, considering the disruption of services due to the COVID-19 situation and the availability of CERB, the total number of clients served could be considered successful.

Observation two: Clients are still facing many individual barriers that might hinder their pursuit of employment. For example, some clients struggle with childcare issues, lack of accessible and affordable transportation, anxiety and other mental health issues associated with the pandemic. Under the virus-combating environment, those who are medically compromised also withdraw from job search activities for safety concerns. With these pressures in place, individuals need extra support to help overcome these barriers and to participate in the labour market successfully.

Observation three: The demand for training was higher as people wanted to increase their skills, over the pandemic, to be better equipped to fill vacancies. Employers are looking for candidates to fill vacancies but there are not enough candidates for them. How to attract people and match them to the right employers continues to be a focus for local service providers.

# BUSINESS COUNTS ANALYSIS

---

## BRUCE COUNTY

Since the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, local businesses have suffered with consecutive lockdowns and virus-confinement measures. Many businesses had to reduce hours of operation, lay off employees or rely on government financial assistance to stay open. Some of them, unfortunately, chose to close. The consecutive lockdowns in early 2021 further pushed local businesses to make tough decisions and while essential businesses could keep running, non-essential businesses were adversely affected by the pandemic the most.<sup>21</sup>

The June business counts data collected information on local businesses between January and June. While these June business counts can provide some information about the local businesses, they cannot be used to measure the impact of the pandemic. There could be a delay in time and administrative paperwork for a business to close, so the June counts would not be a timely representation of the degree of possible business closures. Statistics Canada indicates that “Permanently closed businesses will eventually be excluded once the businesses wind down and closeout procedures are completed and confirmed, a process that can take many months. (The Daily, 2021a)” Notably, Statistics Canada also discourages comparison of business counts data over time due to potential methodological changes. For the following report, there is no recorded change in methodology between June 2020 and 2021.

The total number of classified businesses in Bruce County increased from 6,595 in June 2020 to 6,670 in June 2021 (Table 15). This increase was largely driven by increases of owner-operated businesses and small businesses with 1-4 employees. Among all businesses, the ones with 20-49 employees experienced the most decrease. The majority of businesses in Bruce County were owner-operated, representing 71 percent of all classified businesses. There were 22 businesses with 100 or more employees in June 2021, a decrease of 5 compared to the previous year. Many employees might lose jobs because of this.

---

<sup>21</sup> For more information about how the pandemic has impacted the local businesses, please check [www.planningboard.ca/reports/](http://www.planningboard.ca/reports/) for Business Counts in the Four County Region, October 2021 report.

TABLE 15: NUMBER OF BUSINESSES, BRUCE COUNTY

Employee Size Range	Jun-20	Jun-21	Changes	Percent of Total (June 2021)
0 <sup>22</sup>	4,698	4,722	24	71%
1-4	1,056	1,126	70	17%
5-9	392	380	-12	6%
10-19	234	250	16	4%
20 - 49	160	135	-25	2%
50 - 99	28	35	7	1%
100+	27	22	-5	<1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,595</b>	<b>6,670</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Canadian Business Counts, June 2020 and June 2021

<sup>22</sup> Businesses with 0 employees include the self-employed, i.e. those who do not maintain an employee payroll, but may have a workforce which consists of contracted workers, family members or business owners. These also include employers who did not have employees in the last 12 months.

Table 16 demonstrates the top ten industry sub-sectors (by 3-digit NAICS codes) in Bruce County. In June 2021, Professional, scientific and technical services have the most employers as 234, followed by Speciality trade contractors (190) and Food services and drinking places (119).

**TABLE 16: TOP TEN INDUSTRY SUB-SECTORS BY NUMBER OF FIRMS WITH EMPLOYEES, BRUCE COUNTY**

3-digit NAICS industry sub-sector	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES				Total
	1-4	5-19	20-99	100+	
Professional, scientific and technical services	194	30	9	1	234
Specialty trade contractors	117	63	10	0	190
Food services and drinking places	25	70	23	1	119
Animal production and aquaculture	79	34	2	1	116
Ambulatory health care services	62	26	3	0	91
Construction of buildings	46	40	2	0	88
Real estate	74	6	4	0	84
Crop production	57	12	3	1	73
Religious, grant-making, civic, and professional and similar organizations	60	11	0	0	71
Food and beverage stores	22	28	10	1	61

Source: Canadian Business Counts, June 2021

## GREY COUNTY

Since the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, local businesses have suffered with consecutive lockdowns and virus-confinement measures. Many businesses had to reduce hours of operation, lay off employees or rely on government financial assistance to stay open. Some of them, unfortunately, chose to close. The consecutive lockdowns in early 2021 further pushed local businesses to make tough decisions and while essential businesses could keep running, non-essential businesses were adversely affected by the pandemic the most.<sup>23</sup>

The June business counts data collected information on local businesses between January and June. While these June business counts can provide some information about the local businesses, they cannot be used to measure the impact of the pandemic. There could be a delay in time and administrative paperwork for a business to close, so the June counts would not be a timely representation of the degree of possible business closures. Statistics Canada indicates that “Permanently closed businesses will eventually be excluded once the businesses wind down and closeout procedures are completed and confirmed, a process that can take many months. (The Daily, 2021a)” Notably, Statistics Canada also discourages comparison of business counts data over time due to potential methodological changes. For the following report, there is no recorded change in methodology between June 2020 and 2021.

The total number of classified businesses in Grey County decreased from 11,742 in June 2020 to 11,659 in June 2021 (Table 17). This decrease of 83 businesses was largely driven by decreases in small businesses with 5-9 and 20-49 employees. Among all businesses, owner-operated businesses experienced the most increase. The majority of businesses in Grey County were owner-operated, representing 70 percent of all classified businesses. There were 56 businesses with 100 or more employees in June 2021, a decrease of 15 compared to the previous year. This undoubtedly would lead to employment decreases.

---

<sup>23</sup> For more information about how the pandemic has impacted the local businesses, please check [www.planningboard.ca/reports/](http://www.planningboard.ca/reports/) for Business Counts in the Four County Region, October 2021 report.

TABLE 17: NUMBER OF BUSINESSES, GREY COUNTY

Employee Size Range	Jun-20	Jun-21	Changes	Percent of Total (June 2020)
0	8,084	8,136	52	70%
1-4	2,039	2034	-5	17%
5-9	798	719	-79	6%
10-19	430	422	-8	4%
20 - 49	257	220	-37	2%
50 - 99	63	72	9	1%
100+	71	56	-15	<1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,742</b>	<b>11,659</b>	<b>-83</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Canadian Business Counts, June 2020 and June 2021

Table 18 demonstrates the top ten industry sub-sectors (by 3-digit NAICS codes) in Grey County. In June 2021, Speciality trade contractors have the most employers as 398, followed by Professional, scientific and technical services (266) and Ambulatory health care services (238). It is noteworthy that Bruce and Grey County share nine of the top ten sub-sectors, with different orders. In Bruce County, Crop Production is counted as one of the top ten sub-sectors while Grey County has Administrative and support services instead.

**TABLE 18: TOP TEN INDUSTRY SUB-SECTORS BY NUMBER OF FIRMS WITH EMPLOYEES, GREY COUNTY**

3-digit NAICS industry sub-sector	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES				Total
	1-4	5-19	20-99	100+	
Specialty trade contractors	251	135	12	0	398
Professional, scientific and technical services	194	66	6	0	266
Ambulatory health care services	190	36	11	1	238
Food services and drinking places	34	93	47	0	174
Construction of buildings	114	51	7	0	172
Administrative and support services	92	56	14	1	163
Real estate	117	17	1	0	135
Repair and maintenance	80	42	2	0	124
Religious, grant-making, civic, and professional and similar organizations	85	31	5	2	123
Animal production and aquaculture	87	29	3	0	119

Source: Canadian Business Counts, June 2021

## HURON COUNTY

Since the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, local businesses have suffered with consecutive lockdowns and virus-confinement measures. Many businesses had to reduce hours of operation, lay off employees or rely on government financial assistance to stay open. Some of them, unfortunately, chose to close. The consecutive lockdowns in early 2021 further pushed local businesses to make tough decisions and while essential businesses could keep running, non-essential businesses were adversely affected by the pandemic the most.<sup>24</sup>

The June business counts data collected information on local businesses between January and June. While these June business counts can provide some information about the local businesses, they cannot be used to measure the impact of the pandemic. There could be a delay in time and administrative paperwork for a business to close, so the June counts would not be a timely representation of the degree of possible business closures. Statistics Canada indicates that “Permanently closed businesses will eventually be excluded once the businesses wind down and closeout procedures are completed and confirmed, a process that can take many months. (The Daily, 2021a)” Notably, Statistics Canada also discourages comparison of business counts data over time due to potential methodological changes. For the following report, there is no recorded change in methodology between June 2020 and 2021.

The total number of classified businesses in Huron County increased the most from 9,665 in June 2020 to 10,233 in June 2021 (Table 19). This increase was mainly driven by increases of owner-operated businesses. Among all businesses, the ones with 10-19 employees experienced the most decrease. The majority of businesses in Huron County were owner-operated, representing 75 percent of all classified businesses. In June 2020, owner-operated businesses represented 74 percent of all employers. As a result, this segment of employers did not only report the largest absolute growth (adding 600 employers) but also the most proportional growth (1 percent increase). There were 41 businesses with 100 or more employees in June 2021, a decrease of 5 compared to the previous year. Employees who lost their jobs in these large companies might start their own businesses over the pandemic, which could partially explain why owner-operated businesses boomed during the last year.

---

<sup>24</sup> For more information about how the pandemic has impacted the local businesses, please check [www.planningboard.ca/reports/](http://www.planningboard.ca/reports/) for Business Counts in the Four County Region, October 2021 report.

TABLE 19: NUMBER OF BUSINESSES, HURON COUNTY

Employee Size Range	Jun-20	Jun-21	Changes	Percent of Total (June 2020)
0	7,123	7,723	600	75%
1-4	1,344	1,380	36	13%
5-9	517	491	-26	5%
10-19	369	341	-28	3%
20 - 49	211	204	-7	2%
50 - 99	55	53	-2	1%
100+	46	41	-5	<1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,665</b>	<b>10,233</b>	<b>568</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Canadian Business Counts, June 2020 and June 2021

Table 20 demonstrates the top ten industry sub-sectors (by 3-digit NAICS codes) in Huron County. In June 2021, Animal production and aquaculture is the leading sub-sector with 291 employers, followed by Speciality trade contactors (213) and Crop production (145).

**TABLE 20: TOP TEN INDUSTRY SUB-SECTORS BY NUMBER OF FIRMS WITH EMPLOYEES, HURON COUNTY**

3-digit NAICS industry sub-sector	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES				Total
	1-4	5-19	20-99	100+	
Animal production and aquaculture	197	85	9	0	291
Specialty trade contractors	129	72	9	3	213
Crop production	108	28	7	2	145
Professional, scientific and technical services	86	31	8	2	127
Food services and drinking places	27	67	24	0	118
Construction of buildings	75	30	3	0	108
Religious, grant-making, civic, and professional and similar organizations	76	15	2	0	93
Repair and maintenance	63	26	3	0	92
Ambulatory health care services	54	27	7	1	89
Real estate	70	9	3	0	82

Source: Canadian Business Counts, June 2021

## PERTH COUNTY

Since the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, local businesses have suffered with consecutive lockdowns and virus-confinement measures. Many businesses had to reduce hours of operation, lay off employees or rely on government financial assistance to stay open. Some of them, unfortunately, chose to close. The consecutive lockdowns in early 2021 further pushed local businesses to make tough decisions and while essential businesses could keep running, non-essential businesses were adversely affected by the pandemic the most.<sup>25</sup>

The June business counts data collected information on local businesses between January and June. While these June business counts can provide some information about the local businesses, they cannot be used to measure the impact of the pandemic. There could be a delay in time and administrative paperwork for a business to close, so the June counts would not be a timely representation of the degree of possible business closures. Statistics Canada indicates that “Permanently closed businesses will eventually be excluded once the businesses wind down and closeout procedures are completed and confirmed, a process that can take many months. (The Daily, 2021a)” Notably, Statistics Canada also discourages comparison of business counts data over time due to potential methodological changes. For the following report, there is no recorded change in methodology between June 2020 and 2021.

The total number of classified businesses in Perth County decreased from 9,251 in June 2020 to 9,217 in June 2021 (Table 21). This decrease was driven by decreases of small businesses with 5-9 and 20-49 employees. Among all businesses, the ones with 1-4 employees experienced the most increase. The majority of businesses in Perth County were owner-operated, representing 70 percent of all classified businesses. There were 61 businesses with 100 or more employees, a decrease of 1 compared to the previous year. This was the least decrease of large businesses among all four counties.

---

<sup>25</sup> For more information about how the pandemic has impacted the local businesses, please check [www.planningboard.ca/reports/](http://www.planningboard.ca/reports/) for Business Counts in the Four County Region, October 2021 report.

TABLE 21: NUMBER OF BUSINESSES, PERTH COUNTY

Employee Size Range	Jun-20	Jun-21	Changes	Percent of Total (June 2020)
0	6,495	6,490	-5	70%
1-4	1,349	1,404	55	15%
5-9	586	559	-27	6%
10-19	395	379	-16	4%
20 - 49	273	248	-25	3%
50 - 99	91	76	-15	1%
100+	62	61	-1	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,251</b>	<b>9,217</b>	<b>-34</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Canadian Business Counts, June 2020 and June 2021

Table 22 demonstrates the top ten industry sub-sectors (by 3-digit NAICS codes) in Perth County. In June 2021, Specialty trade contractors is the leading sub-sector with 273 employers, followed by Animal production and aquaculture (247) and Ambulatory health care services (175). It is noteworthy that Huron and Perth County share all of the top ten sub-sectors, with different orders. The main difference is that Huron County has Crop Production as its third sub-sector while Perth County has Ambulatory health care services instead.

**TABLE 22: TOP TEN INDUSTRY SUB-SECTORS BY NUMBER OF FIRMS WITH EMPLOYEES, PERTH COUNTY**

3-digit NAICS industry sub-sector	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES				Total
	1-4	5-19	20-99	100+	
Specialty trade contractors	143	111	19	0	273
Animal production and aquaculture	159	82	6	0	247
Ambulatory health care services	117	44	13	1	175
Professional, scientific and technical services	127	34	12	1	174
Food services and drinking places	30	64	28	1	123
Construction of buildings	57	37	6	0	100
Religious, grant-making, civic, and professional and similar organizations	74	19	7	0	100
Repair and maintenance	53	29	3	0	85
Crop production	65	18	1	0	84
Real estate	70	8	1	0	79

Source: Canadian Business Counts, June 2021

# ACTION PLAN UPDATE 2021-2022

Annually the Planning Board engages in community collaborative initiatives. Below is an update on what we have accomplished over the 2020-21 period.

## PRECARIOUS LIVING SERIES

Goals	Proposed Activities
<p>A report highlighting how our past research on precarious employment aligns and complements the work of other employment and social service agencies in the region will be prepared following stakeholder meetings/focus groups/surveys to look at key areas of overlap and future opportunities for collaboration. This project is intended to be the second phase of project in which the employment characteristics of precarious employment have been defined and analyzed. This follow-up report will explore the relationship between these characteristics and other critical factors related to precarious employment in our communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of case scenarios to highlight the connections between precarious employment and key socioeconomic components</li> <li>• Focus Groups sessions</li> <li>• Production of Precarious Living Series</li> <li>• Launch series and final report</li> </ul>

Staff Lead: Kee May Ip

Status: Completed by January 20, 2022 and available on the Planning Board website

## LABOUR MARKET DIFFERENCES BY GENDER - IMPACT OF COVID-19

Goals	Proposed Activities
<p>The project will identify key variables indicating a difference between men’s and women’s labour force participation, as a result of COVID-19. Identifying the extent to which women’s workforce participation has been impacted by the pandemic may help us further understand the overall economic recovery of the S-BP region. A further exploration of sectors in which women’s participation in the labour force has been significantly impacted may yield information regarding which sectors could be targeted when identifying opportunities for recovery (i.e., participation rate # increases, part-time to full-time, etc.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze labour market composition and engagement by gender</li> <li>• Focus Groups sessions</li> <li>• Final report</li> </ul>

Staff Lead: Tingting Zhang

Status: Completed by January 20, 2022 and available on the Planning Board website

## connect2JOBS LABOUR MARKET ANALYSIS

Goals	Proposed Activities
<p>This project will analyze job posting fluctuations by examining our connect2Jobs website postings in 2020/21 (timeframe unclear, given that we didn't have postings pre-COVID). Changes will be explored based on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-demand occupations</li> <li>• In-demand skills</li> <li>• Full-time vs. part-time postings</li> <li>• Geographical changes (more or fewer postings in certain regions, perhaps?)</li> <li>• Skill Gap/Occupation Gap: Job search and job demand reports - comparison</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather and analyze data from connect2JOBS</li> <li>• Vet findings with community stakeholders</li> <li>• Finalize report</li> </ul>

Staff Lead: Kee May Ip

Status: In progress

## BUSINESS COUNTS - COVID-19 IMPACTS

Goals	Proposed Activities
<p>Report analyzing business count changes in 2020, identifying factors correlating with business closures in our region (such as business size, industry, location). The report would also look at the percentage of business closures by industry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of business counts changes, by county and industry, with attention to closures resulting from COVID-19.</li> <li>• Total business counts 2020-21</li> <li>• Changes in business composition: business size, number of owner-operator businesses, etc.</li> <li>• Final Report</li> </ul>

Staff Lead: Tingting Zhang

Status: Completed by December 16, 2021 and available on the Planning Board website

# ACTION PLAN 2022-2023

Below is a list of initiatives that have been proposed to the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development to address the priorities identified through activities and research across the region.

## POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF LOW UNEMPLOYMENT

Goals	Proposed Activities
<p>During the pandemic, Stratford-Bruce Peninsula has the lowest unemployment rate in the province, which also represented the lowest unemployment rate anywhere in Ontario in the last 10 years. This lack of available workers has created a crisis in the region. This project will explore ways in which a chronically low unemployment rate is impacting our community, particularly local employers and job seekers. Identify ways in which the extremely low unemployment rate is impacting our communities, and share this information in a way that is easily relatable. Creation of four infographics focusing on how a chronically low unemployment rate has impacted key members of our community, such as: employers, job seekers, government representatives/economic development groups, industry groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LFS data analysis</li> <li>• Focus Groups sessions</li> <li>• Final report</li> </ul>

Staff Lead: TBD

Status: Pending

## HOW TO RE-ENGAGE RETREATED WORKERS - SURVEY

Goals	Proposed Activities
<p>Compared to 2019, there were 6,000 more people leaving the labour force in 2021. Many people chose to leave the labour market for various reasons and were not actively looking for work. We have also heard from employers and service providers about difficulties in hiring. Identifying the factors/barriers that prevent retreated workers from joining the labour market may help alleviate labour shortage in our region. It is important for the community and employer to understand how to support the re-engagement of these valuable workers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey Completed by minimum of 100 retreated workers across Bruce, Grey, Huron and Perth counties;</li> <li>• Comprehensive Report and Infographics that shares the findings.</li> </ul>

Staff Lead: TBD

Status: Pending

## SERVICE PROVIDER JOB SEARCH RESOURCE

Goals	Proposed Activities
<p>The connect2JOBS aggregator was launched in June, 2020 with three basic tools - Job Board, Job Map and Career Explorer – that have assisted job seekers in the region in finding work and learning about their potential career paths. More tools have been added in the past year, including Resume Builder, Occupation Library, Industry Library. Job seekers can also create their own portfolios on the website to target job postings that match their skills. connect2JOBS has become a very comprehensive, one-stop-shopping platform for job seekers to find work, explore career paths and identify upskilling needs. In this project FCLMPB will work with: EO and LBS providers to make the connect2JOBS tools more accessible to job seekers in the region, connect2JOBS developers to improve the website’s capability to connect job seekers with local employment and pre-employment resources/programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute the activity manual to EO &amp; LBS Service Providers</li> <li>• Distribute Instructional video series on www.connect2JOBS.ca website and social media channels;</li> <li>• Mechanism linking users to LBS programming launched</li> </ul>

Staff Lead: TBD

Status: Pending

## EMPLOYERONE

Goals	Proposed Activities
<p>In the last two years, employers have suffered from COVID-19 and its associated health measures. This project will identify any changes from employers’ perspectives on labour force and skills needs. Employer perspectives are important to ensure we are providing the right information and the appropriate training to meet the skill demands needed by employers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum of 500 employers complete survey;</li> <li>• Infographics developed for each county;</li> <li>• Infographics developed for top 5 sectors</li> </ul>

Staff Lead: TBD

Status: Pending

# LONG RANGE ACTION ITEMS

---

Under the global pandemic environment, our region faces similar challenges as urban economies. However, these challenges impact local communities differently due to its context. As a result, solutions to the previous mentioned challenges should be local specific.

Through surveys, consultations and data analysis, our research has identified challenges and opportunities in the regional labour market. The list below outlines recommendations for both employers and local governments. These initiatives will serve as a basis of the Planning Board's ongoing work and development of strategic activities in the coming months.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### STAKEHOLDER: EMPLOYER

- Attracting and retaining workers to the local workforce, especially women who left the labour market during the pandemic;
- Providing improved compensation, wages and benefits in order to increase the attractiveness of entry-level occupations;
- Providing flexible working hours and good workplace environments to attract and retain workers. With more respectful and inclusive workplaces, employees tend to remain.
- Recruiting seniors to act as mentor or trainers to younger generations with more awareness of generational differences and focus on succession planning;
- Improving training and safety for employees; more human resources management and mental health support;<sup>26</sup>
- Providing job trials or experiential learning opportunities to students to get them into the workplace; more support on Apprenticeships and Work-Integrated Learning;
- Improving collaboration between all levels of government, the private sector, and the non-profit sector to support recovery efforts;
- Encouraging local consumers to shop and increasing their confidence level by implementing safe reopening plans;

### STAKEHOLDER: LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- Continually supporting local businesses with grants, loans or other means of financial relief, especially for businesses who are still struggling;
- Enhancing access to capital for small businesses and entrepreneurs, especially for indigenous people and other racial minorities <sup>27</sup>;

---

<sup>26</sup> Future Skills Center and the Chamber of Commerce provided a platform for Small and Medium-sized Businesses to access a wide variety of free resources including ones on leadership, diversity and inclusion, mental health and wellness, digital skills and regulatory compliance. Find out more here: <https://occ.ca/mediareleases/small-businesses-get-injection-of-support-to-tackle-skills-gaps-and-labour-shortages/>.

<sup>27</sup> 2021 Ontario Economic Report. OCC. 2021. <https://occ.ca/interactive-oer2021/>

- Providing targeted support for rural non-profit organizations who work on crisis response and recovery planning;
- Developing and funding regional partnership programs to support on-demand skilled workers;
- Addressing misconceptions of career path in manufacturing, tourism, and skilled trades; More engagement of high school students, women, and other underrepresented groups and educating them about the career opportunities locally;
- Identifying the barriers that may prevent people from participating in training opportunities; Exposing students and firms to the training options offered by Fanshawe, Georgian College or other local agencies;
- Providing policies and programs to support regionally appropriate training and new trends in skill requirements to enable and sustain local productivity; local service providers can offer training to increase digital skills and improve employability, followed by job-search assistance, and potentially employment subsidies to those who are in need;
- Investing more in affordable, high-quality child care and address the shortage of early childhood educators;<sup>28</sup>
- Extending regional immigration pilots to bring more economic immigrants to rural and remote communities;
- Improving access to labour markets and community services for newcomers by engaging employers, service providers and community members in educational and training opportunities to attract, retain, and integrate all newcomers;
- Fostering an inclusive environment for Indigenous and racialized people through the promotion of cross-cultural competencies and skill-bridging initiatives;
- Welcoming international students as a source of workers and helping them to integrate into the workforce; more partnership with community service providers such as YMCA;
- Conducting strategic workforce planning and creating a strong learning environment; more collaboration between public and private stakeholders;

---

<sup>28</sup> Dessanti, Claudia. “The She-covery Project: Confronting the Gendered Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Ontario”. Ontario Chamber of Commerce. September 2020. <https://occ.ca/wp-content/uploads/OCC-shecovery-final.pdf>



**FOUR COUNTY LABOUR MARKET PLANNING BOARD**

111 Jackson Street South, Suite 1  
Walkerton, ON N0G 1L0  
[www.planningboard.ca](http://www.planningboard.ca) • 519-881-2725