

2023

EmployerOne Survey Observations



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

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all employers, community stakeholders, and advisory committee representatives who have completed and promoted this survey.

The success of this project is a direct result of collaborative efforts and would not be possible without your ongoing participation. We are grateful for your dedication and look forward to increasing the awareness and understanding of the local labour market needs through this and future projects.

The ongoing importance of EmployerOne is the survey's ability to collect and summarize local workforce data. This information is crucial to understanding the challenges and opportunities our employers are facing and to better understand how we compare to Ontario and Canada.

About the Survey:

The Four County Labour Market Planning Board is one of twenty-six planning boards in Ontario. Funded by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD). This survey is designed to collect necessary workforce data and feedback from local employers. This data is used to support and guide both employers and community stakeholders in their efforts to address workforce needs and challenges.

The EmployerOne Survey was conducted for the seventh time in 2022-23. The survey was open from November 2022 to January 2023 for employers in Bruce, Grey, Huron, and Perth counties. In an attempt to reach seasonal employers who may not be as accessible in the winter months; we opted to open the survey earlier and keep it open longer.

Advisory Committee Representatives:

- Corporation of the County of Bruce
- Corporation of the County of Grey
- Corporation of the County of Perth
- Corporation of the County of Huron
- Huron Manufacturing Association
- Stratford Economic Enterprise Development Corporation
- Town of St. Marys
- Town of Hanover

Staff Contributions:

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BACKGROUND

The EmployerOne Survey was conducted for the seventh time. The survey was open from November 2022 to January 2023 for employers in the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula Region, which is comprised of the counties of Bruce, Grey, Huron, and Perth. In previous years, the survey has only been open for the month of January. Based on feedback received from our project advisory committee members, we opted to open the survey earlier in an attempt to reach a higher number of employers, in particular those seasonal employers who may not be as accessible in the winter months.

The ongoing importance of EmployerOne is the survey's ability to collect and summarize local workforce data directly from employers. This information is crucial to local organizations engaged in workforce attraction and retention strategies, strategic planning, and other community projects requiring local labour market data. In a small labour market, this type of data can be challenging to acquire, and EmployerOne has continued to fill this need.

Due to survey fatigue and the labour market constraints on many employers from the pandemic; the Planning Board had paused the annual EmployerOne Survey project for a couple of years. Working closely with our advisory committee and partners we revised the survey for a more efficient collection of employer data and feedback. We will not be undertaking the survey in the 2023-24 project year and plan to take this time for further review of the survey design and to invest in an awareness and engagement strategy that will maximize the effectiveness of this survey moving forward.

METHODOLOGY

Based on business counts for 2022¹ (including only businesses with one or more employees), 392 survey responses represent 3.4% of all businesses in the four county area.

Both industry sector and business size are variables that impact responses to many survey questions and will be highlighted several times in this report. Several datasets will include a summary of all survey responses, followed by:

- A comparison of results in each of the top five sectors for the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula Economic Region (agriculture, construction, healthcare and social assistance, manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade);
- A comparison of results by business size (based on number of employees).

As in previous reports, significant changes compared to surveys from past years will be noted where deemed to be significant. For many of the data points presented in this report, the response rate will be given for the current survey, followed by a change notation in brackets. This indicates change compared to 2020 survey results. Terminology indicating this change from the previous survey results are used throughout this report as follows:

- Increase/decrease represents a change of at least 5%;
- Slight increase/slight decrease represents a change of less than 5%.

Percentages have been rounded in some cases to the nearest whole number.

¹ Canadian Business Counts – Custom Purchase, June 2022

GENERAL LABOUR MARKET CONDITIONS

In 2022, the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula Economic Region (SBPER), encompassing Bruce, Grey, Huron and Perth counties, experienced historically high and historically low labour market metrics. In 2022, the annual unemployment rate in the region reached a new low of 3.7%. The Stratford-Bruce Peninsula Economic Region maintained the lowest annual unemployment rate of any economic region in Ontario in 2022.

The total number of people employed in our region in 2022 reached a historic high of 161,600 people. Full-time employment reached 131,400 people, significantly surpassing the number of full-time workers pre-pandemic which sat at 125,000 people in 2019. This suggests that employers are opting to fill proportionately more full-time positions to meet labour demands. The table below shows the population in the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula Economic Region by age cohort in 2012 and 2022, representing a 10-year period.

Age Cohort	Population 2012	Population 2022	Absolute Change
15-24 years	35,800	33,500	(-2,300)
25-44 years	67,800	84,700	(+16,900)
45-54 years	44,100	31,300	(-12,800)
55-64 years	44,200	44,500	(+300)
65+ years	55,500	74,800	(+19,300)
Total 15 years and over	247,300	268,800	(+21,500)

Source: 2022 Labour Force Survey – Custom Tabulation

The region saw a total increase of 21,500 persons over the age of 15 between 2012 and 2022. Much of this population increase was seen in the 65+ age bracket. The low participation rate of this age cohort has contributed to the labour shortage experienced in our region. Significant population decline in the 45-54 year age bracket has also had negative consequences on labour supply in our region, especially given that this age bracket has the highest participation rates (89.5% in 2022).

It is encouraging that the region has seen significant population growth in the 25-44 year age bracket as this group generally experiences high participation rates (89.1% in 2022). The population 15 years of age and older that are participating in the labour market, was 62.4% in 2022. The participation rate continues to decline in our region year over year, yet, it is important to note that this is due largely in part to an aging population.

When we examine the participation rate by age cohort, you can see that our region's participation rate exceeds that of Ontario in 4 of the 5 age brackets. There is a significantly high participation rate of the age cohort 15-24 years in our region when compared to Ontario.

Age Cohort	Stratford-Bruce Peninsula Participation	Ontario	Comparison of SBPER and Ontario
15-24 years	70.7%	61.7%	+ 9%
25-44 years	89.1%	88%	+1.1%
45-54 years	89.5%	86.8%	+2.7%
55-64 years	62.9%	67.2%	-4.3%
65+	16.8%	15%	+1.8%

Source: 2022 Labour Force Survey – Custom Tabulation

SURVEY RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

In total, 392 businesses responded to the survey; 279 businesses completed all questions and 113 businesses completed some of the questions in the survey. These business respondents continue to provide valuable insights into changes in the local labour market.

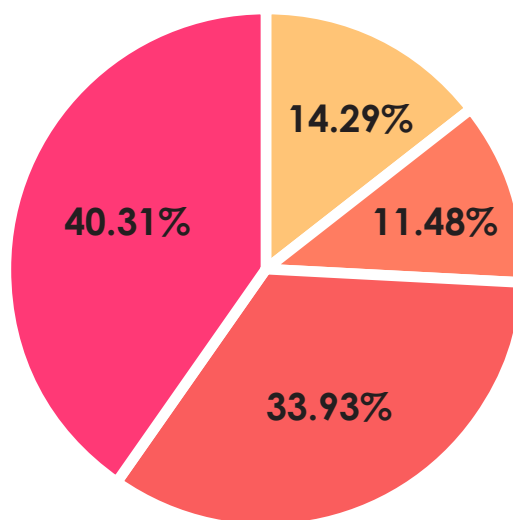
Survey Respondents by County

BRUCE COUNTY

158 respondents

GREY COUNTY

133 respondents



HURON COUNTY

45 respondents

PERTH COUNTY

56 respondents

The top 5 sectors of respondents were Construction with 12.4%, Healthcare and social assistance with 11.2%, Food Services with 10.36%, Manufacturing with 8.12%, and Retail Trade with 7.56%. This is consistent with the sectors currently experiencing high volumes of job vacancies.

Survey Respondents by Sector

Sector Description	% of Respondents
Construction	12.04%
Healthcare and social assistance	11.20%
Food services	10.36%
Manufacturing	8.12%
Retail trade	7.56%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	7.28%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	7.0%
Accommodation services	6.44%
Other services (except public administration)	6.16%
Professional, scientific and technical services	5.04%
Responses not Categorized	4.76%
Educational services	3.92%
Real estate and rental and leasing	1.68%
Public administration	1.68%
Finance and insurance	1.4%
Information and cultural industries	1.4%
Transportation and warehousing	1.4%
Management of companies and enterprises	1.12%
Utilities	0.56%
Administration and support, waste management and remediation services	0.28%
Mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction	0.28%
Wholesale trade	0.28%

WHAT IS IN-DEMAND IN FOUR COUNTY AREA

To reduce the survey length, the questions for this section were removed. With the implementation of the Labour Market Information (LMI) tools located on the connect2JOBS platform we are able to provide more current and accurate data. Note the information displayed are not results compiled through this survey and may differ from past reports when making comparisons. This data represents a larger number of local employers than that of the survey and a wider range of industries. The connect2JOBS Monthly Job Demand Report provides data on top in-demand jobs based on local job postings. (Note: data from 52 job boards was collected as of February 2023 – this number may fluctuate over time).



The connect2JOBS Monthly Job Demand Report provides data on top in-demand jobs based on local job postings aggregated from 52 different job boards. As of January 2023, these occupations (based on 4 digit NOC code) were most in demand in our region.

In-demand Jobs by NOC Code – Top 10

4 Digit NOC	4 Digit NOC Name	Skill Level	Posting Count	Average Posting Length in Days	Median Posting Length in Days
6421	Retail salespersons	NOC Skill Level C	256	23.5	24
3012	Registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses	NOC Skill Level A	220	23.7	24
4412	Home support workers, housekeepers and related occupations	NOC Skill Level C	197	25.3	24
6711	Food counter attendants, kitchen helpers and related support occupations	NOC Skill Level D	178	23.7	24
6322	Cooks	NOC Skill Level B	176	27.5	24
3233	Licensed practical nurses	NOC Skill Level B	169	25.7	24
4212	Social and community service workers	NOC Skill Level B	119	22.4	24
6731	Light duty cleaners	NOC Skill Level D	99	27.0	24
1241	Administrative assistants	NOC Skill Level B	98	25.9	24
6622	Store shelf stockers, clerks and order fillers	NOC Skill Level D	95	24.7	24

Top 5 In-demand Skills

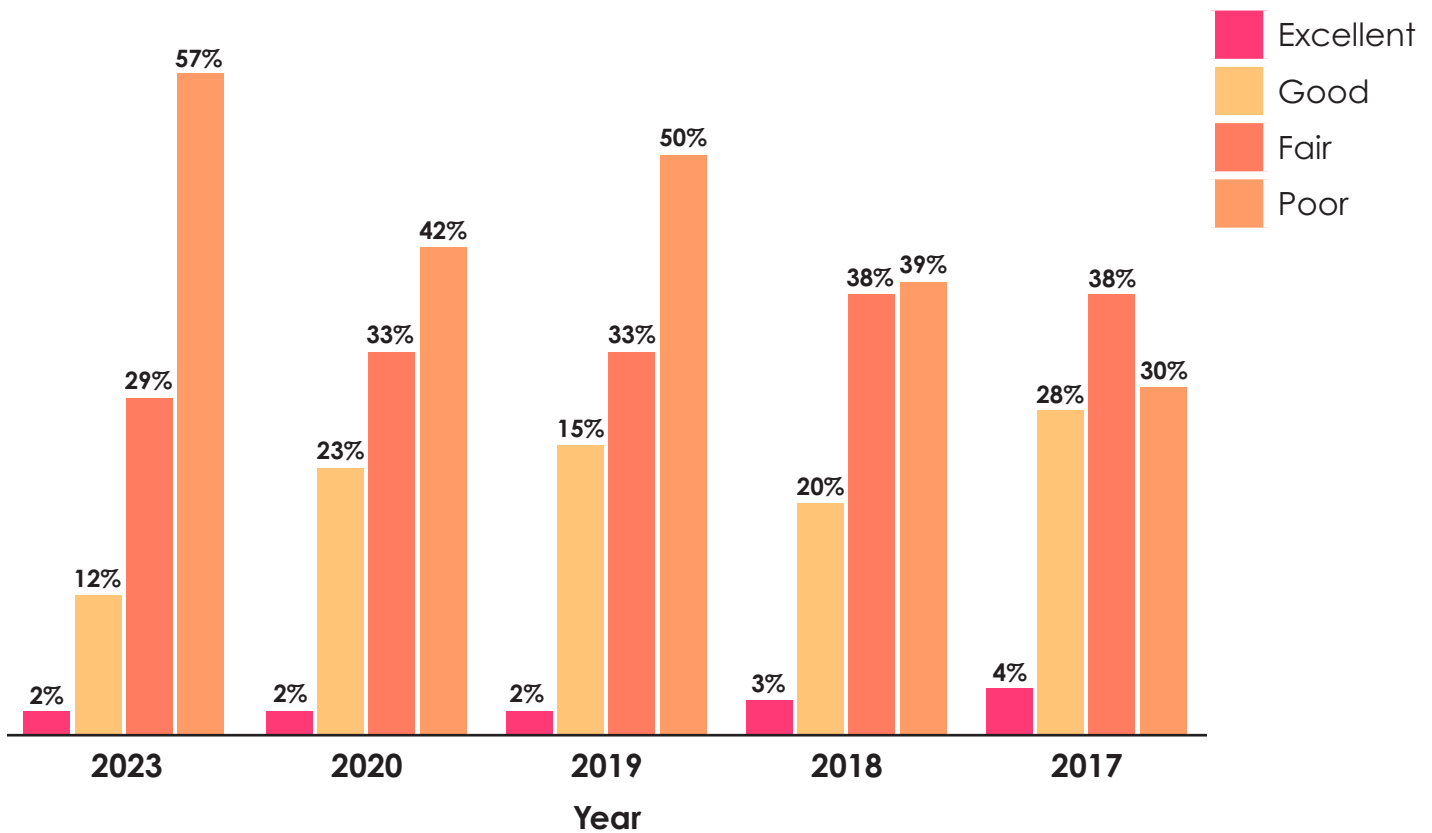
1. Customer Service Skills
2. Organization Skills
3. Communication Skills
4. Attention to Detail
5. Leadership Skills

Top 5 Job Requirements

1. Driver's License
2. Criminal Record Check
3. CPR/First Aid
4. Microsoft Office
5. Regular Access to a Vehicle

AVAILABILITY OF QUALIFIED WORKERS

When employers were asked how they would rate the availability of qualified workers in the Four County area, they answered as follows:

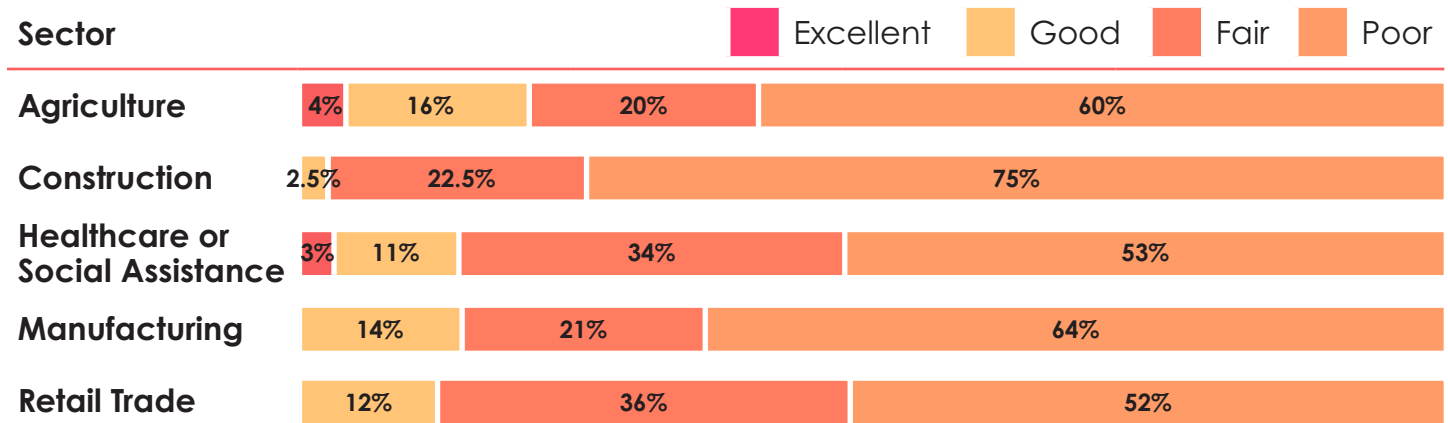


*percentages may not always total 100% due to rounding

In the past decade in which the EmployerOne survey has been conducted, this is the most dire response yet with a 57% Poor rating. This reinforces the magnitude of the local labour shortage. More than half of employers would rate the availability of qualified workers in our region as poor and has been increasing steadily over the past 5 years.

Availability of Qualified Workers by Sector

When looking at how employers rated the availability of qualified workers by top sectors, Agriculture had the highest percentage of employers who responded with “Excellent or Good”. Construction had the lowest percentage, with only 2.5% of employers responding with an “Excellent or Good” rating.



*percentages may not always total 100% due to rounding

Availability of Qualified Workers by Business Size

The highest percentage of employers who rate the availability of qualified workers as excellent or good are businesses with between 10 and 19 employees. However, there does not appear to be a linear correlation between business size and how employers responded to this question.

Compared to EmployerOne survey results from 2020, we see a significantly lower percentage of employers in nearly all employee size ranges rating the availability of qualified workers as excellent or good with the largest decrease seen in employers with 50 to 99 employees. When comparing business sizes 100+ there was a difference of -5% (2022 is 6% + 17% = 23%).

Business Size	Excellent or Good (2023)	Excellent or Good (2019)	Difference
1-4	16%	32%	-16%
5-9	15%	28%	-13%
10-19	18%	23%	-5%
20-49	14%	18%	-4%
50-99	6%	28%	-22%
100-199	6%	18% (100+)*	N/A
200-499	17%	N/A	N/A
500+	0%	N/A	N/A

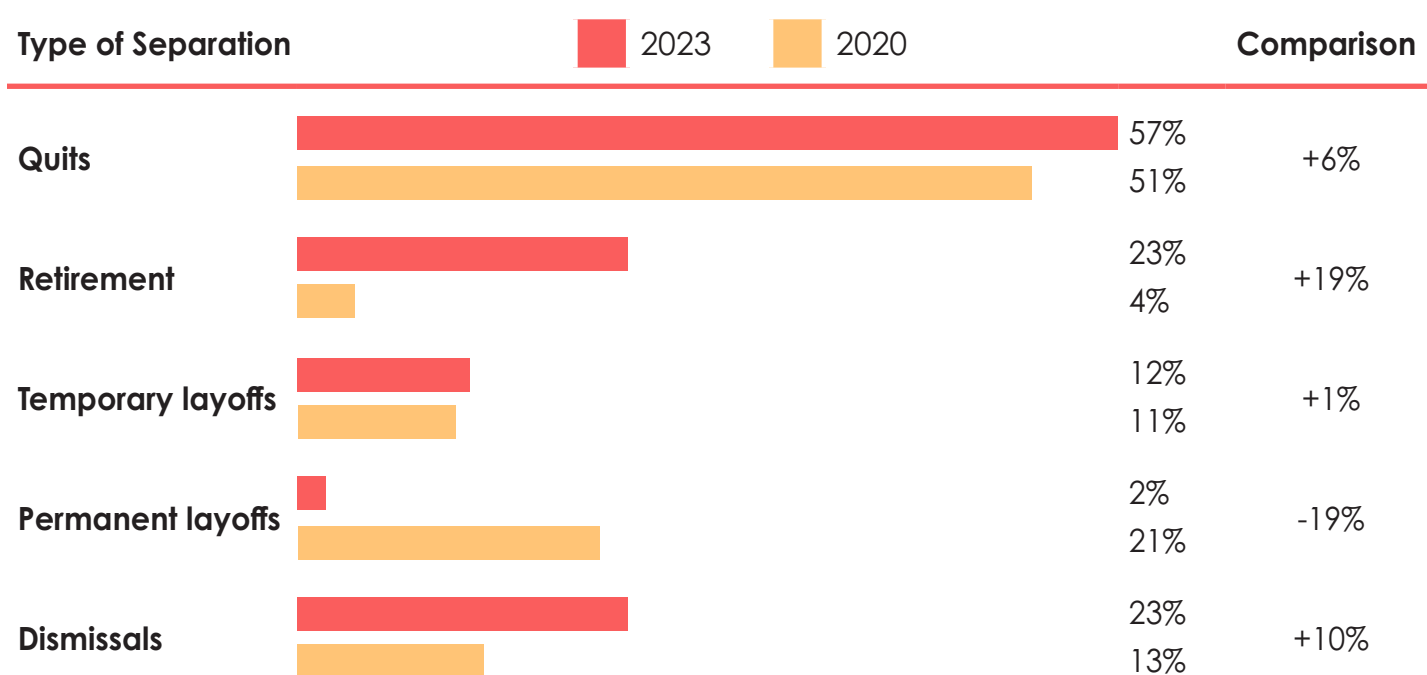
*EmployerOne 2020 reported on business size of 100+ (includes sizes of 200-499 and 500+)

EMPLOYMENT DYNAMICS

Employer Separations by Type

Compared to 2020 EmployerOne survey results, there was an increase in all types of separations reported apart from permanent layoffs which saw a significant decline in 2022 reported by employers. The percentage of quits has climbed steadily over the past years – from 47% being reported in 2017 to 57% in 2022. Between 2019 and 2021, more than 6,000 people in our region had left the labour force.

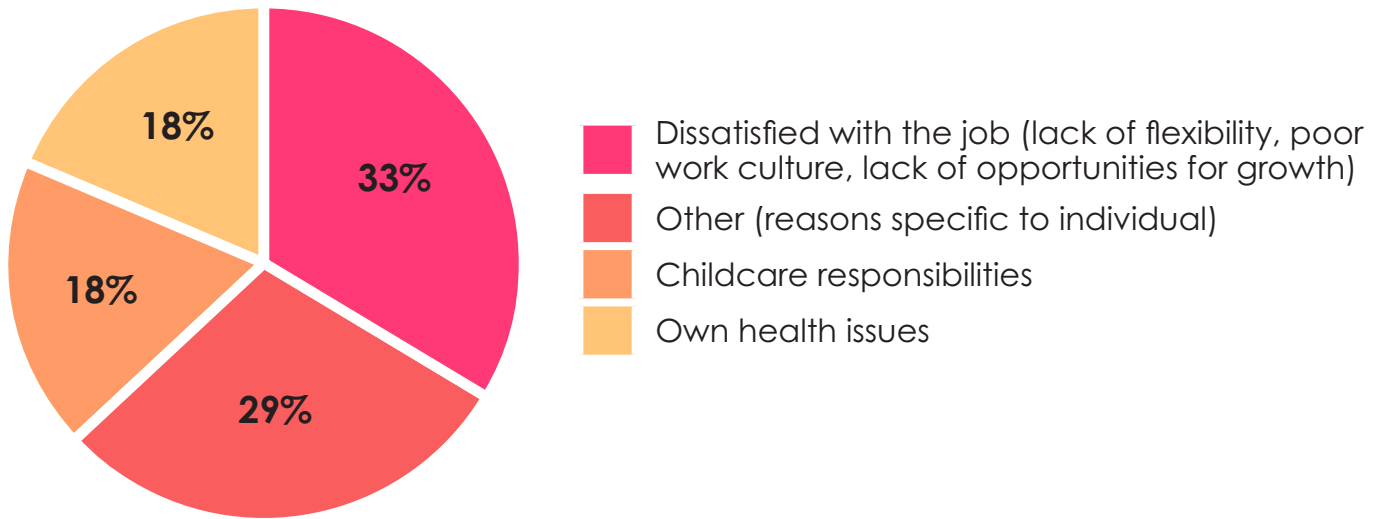
With ongoing labour shortages and the number of job vacancies in the region hitting an all-time high in Quarter 2 of 2022, we continue to see employees voluntarily separate from their employers. Note that the number of retirements and dismissals reported have increased significantly when compared to the previous survey results.



*percentages may not always total 100% due to rounding

In order to better understand why workers retreated from the labour force and how to support the re-engagement of this valuable group, the Planning Board launched a survey in July 2022 aimed at this target audience. The survey received 112 responses. You can read the full report of Re-engaging Retreated Workers Survey by visiting our website www.planningboard.ca/reports

In the Retreated Workers Survey, we asked “What was the reason you left your last position?” These were the top responses:



Youth and Older Worker Dynamics

When survey respondents were asked to estimate what percentage of their workforce aged 15-24 and 55+, employers reported the following:

Youth Workers (aged 15-24) as a % of Their Workforce

% of Workforce	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
0-25%	264	73.95%
26-50%	56	15.69%
51-75%	16	4.48%
76-100%	21	5.88%
Total Responses	357	100%

Older Workers (aged 55+) as a % of Their Workforce

% of Workforce	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
0-25%	214	59.94%
26-50%	81	22.69%
51-75%	28	7.84%
76-100%	34	9.52%
Total Responses	357	100%

Of the responses received, 73.9% of employers indicated their workforce aged 15 to 24 was less than 25% and 59% of employers responded that their workforce aged 55+ was less than 25%.

RETENTION STRATEGIES AND HIRING CHALLENGES

41% of employers reported using job flexibility (i.e. work from home, hybrid work, flex time) as a strategy to encourage hiring and retention compared to only 32% of employers reportedly using this method in the 2020 EmployerOne Survey.

The increased use of this strategy is beneficial in the hiring and retention of all age cohorts, but in particular workers who may require more flexibility to either stay in their current positions or re-enter the labour market.

Retention Strategies

In the EmployerOne 2023 survey, we asked employers what they are presently doing to encourage retention efforts. The top five responses were as follows:

The top five reasons remain unchanged from when the EmployerOne survey was previously conducted in 2020 although the percentage of employers who reported using these strategies increased in each category.

Retention Strategy	2023	2020
Regular increases in salary or benefits	76%	62%
Recognition for service and/or outstanding work	64%	49%
Employee perks (discounts on merchandise, company-branded clothing, staff celebrations)	59%	43%
Training opportunities	57%	36%
Job flexibility (i.e. work from home, hybrid work, flex time, job sharing)	41%	32%

When asked if they have implemented strategies to address workplace mental health and/or burnout there was a relatively even response between employers who responded with yes or no.

- 55% of employers responded with “no” whereas
- 42% responded with “yes”.

Of those employers who said “yes”, many responded that supports are offered through their workplace benefits package or Employee Assistance Programs.

In the Re-engaging Retreated Workers Survey², we asked, “What might encourage you to return to the workforce?” The top responses were as follows:

Response	Percentage (%)
Flexible working hours	54%
Remote work/working from home	39%
Reduced working hours or part-time work	35%
Positive company culture and growth opportunities	34%
Financial needs	33%
Health and dental benefits	32%

By making a comparison of the responses received through the Retreated Worker Survey and the responses received through the EmployerOne Survey, it suggests there may be a mismatch between the strategies employers are currently using to promote retention strategies and what employees deem most valuable. As an example; flexible working hours ranked number one in the Re-engaging Retreated Workers Survey while employers ranked job flexibility as number 5 in the EmployerOne survey results. With this being said, we must recognize that while flexible work opportunities such as remote work and hybrid work are considered important to some workers, many organizations and occupations do not have the capability to fully support these work models.

Hiring Challenges

The top 3 barriers to hiring employees that employers reported:

Housing is not affordable



53%

Unavailable housing



44%

Lack of transportation



41%

In 2019, the Ontario Living Wage Network calculated the living wage for the Grey-Bruce area at \$18.39 per hour. A 3 bedroom rental was assigned at \$14,400³. In the Huron-Perth area, the Network assigned a living wage of \$17.55 per hour with a 3 bedroom rental assigned a cost of \$13,164⁴. In 2022, the living wage for Bruce-Grey-Perth-Huron-Simcoe was deemed \$20.70 per hour with the annual cost of a 3 bedroom apartment rental climbing to \$18,813⁵. This represents between a 31-43% increase in just 3 years.

² Four County Labour Market Planning Board, Re-engaging Retreated Workers Survey 2023, ([Re-engaging Retreated Workers Survey - Four County Labour Market Planning Board](#))

³ [2019 Living Wage - United Way of Bruce Grey](#)

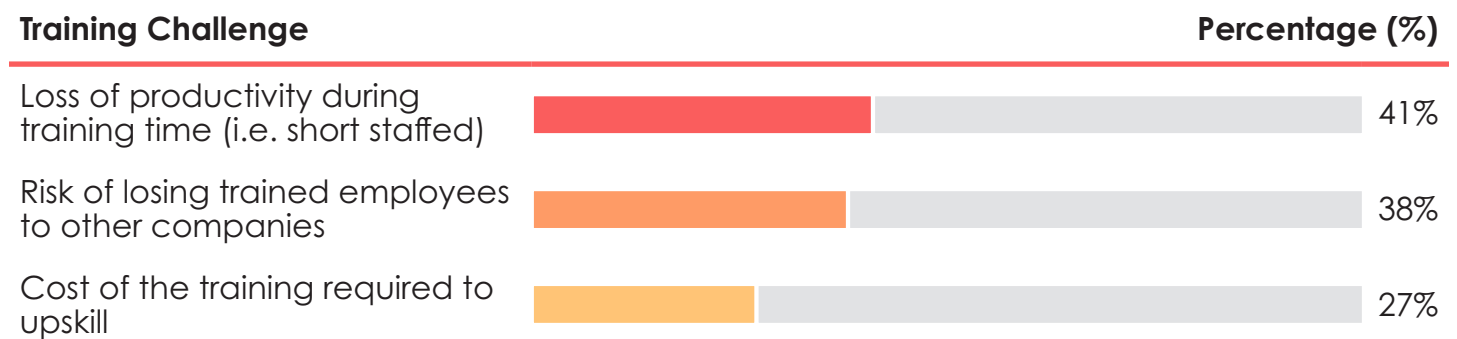
⁴ [Living Wage 2019 - United Way Perth Huron](#)

⁵ [Calculating Ontario's Living Wages - 2022.pdf \(nationbuilder.com\)](#)

Training Challenges

We wanted to better understand the challenges or barriers employers are facing when it comes to offering training opportunities to their employees. When asked to select the challenges of training their workforce, respondents reported a loss of productivity during training time, risk of losing trained employees to other companies and the cost of training required to upskill as the top three challenges.

The top three training challenges:



As our region faces an acute labour shortage, it is understandable that many employers have concerns regarding loss of productivity or the risk of losing trained employees to other organizations. With this being said, employers continue to recognize the strong link between employee training opportunities and job satisfaction.

According to a bi-annual survey conducted by research firm Kantar on behalf of HSBC, the survey found that “47 per cent of Canadian respondents said their companies planned to spend more on training employees, and 42 per cent said they’d spend more on employee satisfaction and well-being⁶”.

Referring again to the Retreated Workers Survey, 33% of respondents reported that they left their last position because they were dissatisfied with the job. We identified dissatisfaction as a lack of flexibility, lack of growth/advancement opportunities, poor company culture and insufficient training.

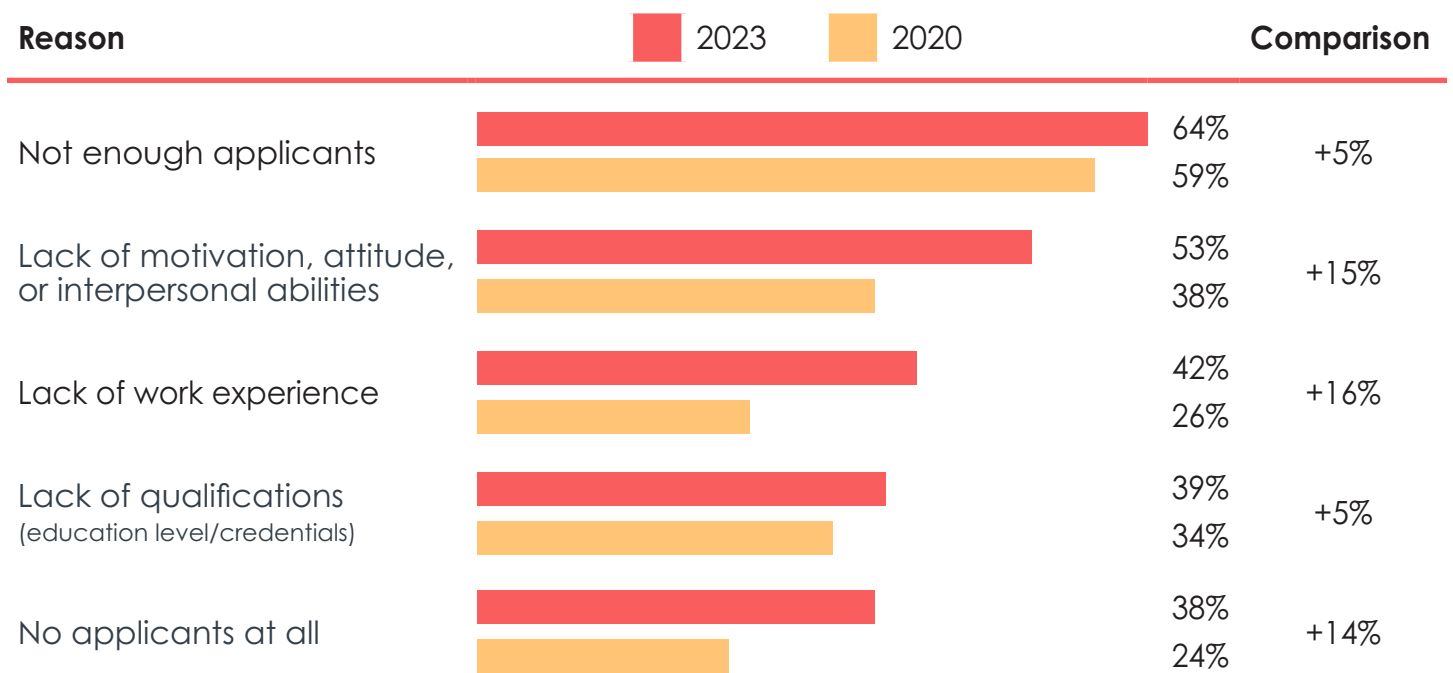
⁶ [‘The priorities have shifted’: Nearly half of Canadian firms plan to spend on employee training, satisfaction | CBC News](#)

Hard to Fill Positions

Compared to the 2020 EmployerOne survey results, all but one of the reasons, “Lack of Qualifications” saw significant increases. “No applicants at all” did not reach one of the top five reasons in 2020, suggesting that employers are now experiencing the impact of an even tighter labour force. The most significant increases were seen in Lack of motivation, attitude or interpersonal abilities (soft skills), and Lack of work experience. Providing opportunities for local youth may be an opportunity to ensure the future workforce is equipped with the experience necessary for sustainability and increasing the quality of the local workforce.

These responses indicate that soft skills and industry specific training is still a priority to improve the quality of our local workforce. These survey results support initiatives to explore and implement programs that address both soft skills and specific industry needs.

The top five reasons for which positions were hard-to-fill:



*percentages may not always total 100% due to rounding

Vacancy Rates

According to Statistics Canada, “long-term job vacancies” are defined as vacancies for which recruitment efforts have been ongoing for 90 days (3 months) or more. Long-term vacancies represented 38.4% of all Canadian job vacancies as of the third quarter of 2022 – up from 28.5% in the first quarter of 2020⁷.

By this definition, long-term vacancies represented 79% of hard-to-fill positions locally, as per EmployerOne survey results are exceeding the national average for the length of time vacancies remain open. Using data from the Job Vacancy and Wage Survey, we can see that the job vacancy rate, that is the number of vacant job positions expressed as a percentage of total labour demand (both occupied and vacant positions), is higher in the SBPER (Four County area) when compared to Ontario.

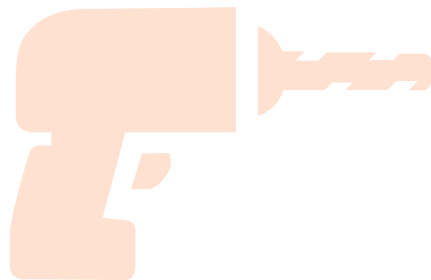
Comparison by Quarter & Year	Stratford-Bruce Peninsula Economic Region	Ontario	Comparison
Q3 2022	6.3%	5.4%	(+0.9%)
Q2 2022	6.8%	5.7%	(+1.1%)
Q1 2022	5.8%	5.1%	(+0.7%)
Q4 2021	6.7%	5.2%	(+1.5%)
Q3 2021	6.2%	5.3%	(+0.9%)
Q2 2021	5.2%	4.3%	(+0.9%)
Q1 2021	3.4%	3.3%	(+0.1%)

Source: Statistics Canada. [Table 14-10-0325-01 Job vacancies, payroll employees, job vacancy rate, and average offered hourly wage by provinces and territories, quarterly, unadjusted for seasonality](#)

It's clear that many employers are increasingly facing difficulty in hiring various positions. When asked how long their hard-to-fill positions have gone unfilled or vacant, 30% of employers responded with over one year. This represents a slight increase from survey results in 2020.

Length of Time Positions are Vacant by Sector

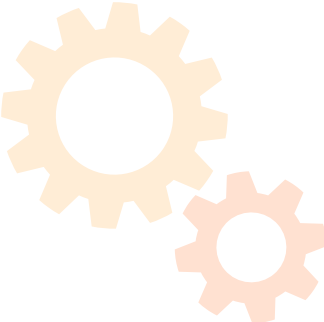
Construction	2023	2020	Change
Less than 3 months	6%	5%	+1%
3-6 months	22%	30%	-8%
6-9 months	17%	5%	+12%
9-12 months	14%	15%	-1%
Over 1 year	42%	45%	-3%



⁷ [The Daily — Job vacancies, third quarter 2022 \(statcan.gc.ca\)](#)

Healthcare and social assistance**2023 2020 Change**

Less than 3 months	15%	33%	-18%
3-6 months	30%	27%	+3%
6-9 months	21%	0%	+21%
9-12 months	6%	7%	-1%
Over 1 year	27%	33%	-6%

Manufacturing**2023 2020 Change**

Less than 3 months	11%	17%	-6%
3-6 months	30%	20%	+10%
6-9 months	11%	27%	-16%
9-12 months	22%	17%	+5%
Over 1 year	26%	20%	+6%

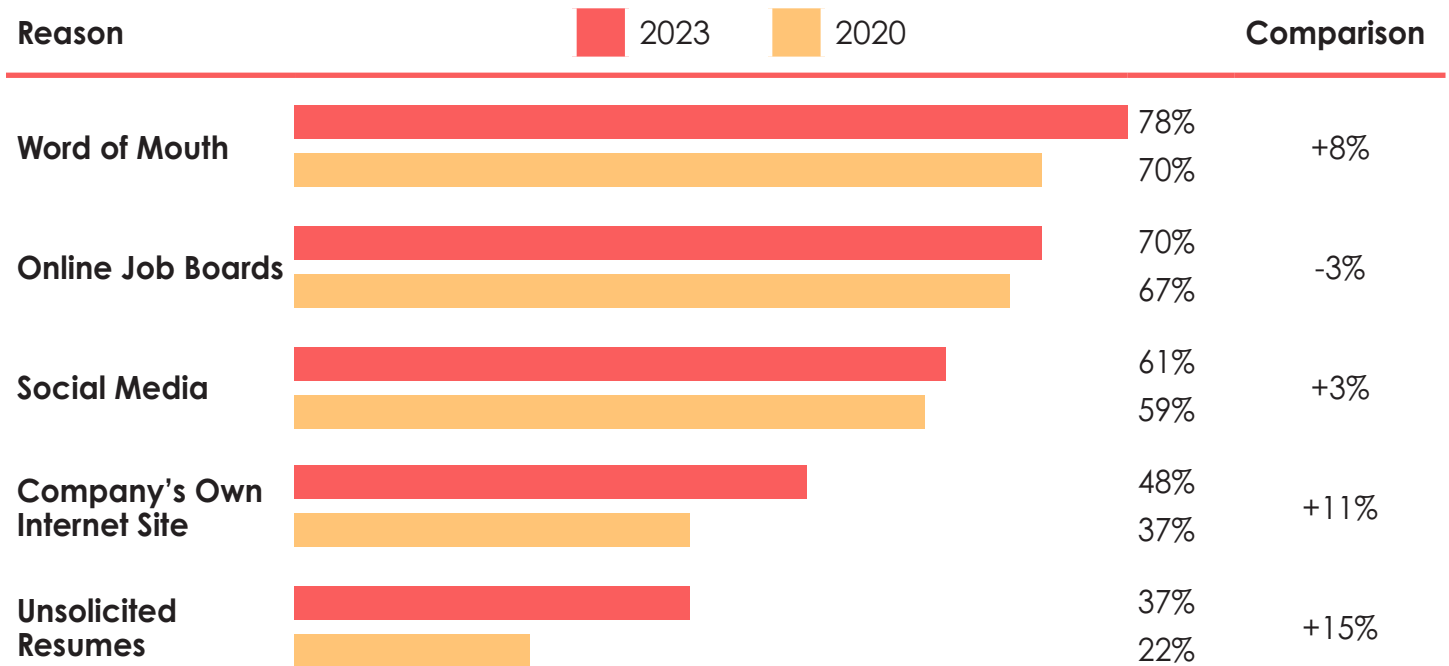
Retail Trade**2023 2020 Change**

Less than 3 months	27%	19%	+8%
3-6 months	14%	56%	-42%
6-9 months	18%	7%	+11%
9-12 months	14%	11%	+3%
Over 1 year	27%	7%	+20%

RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

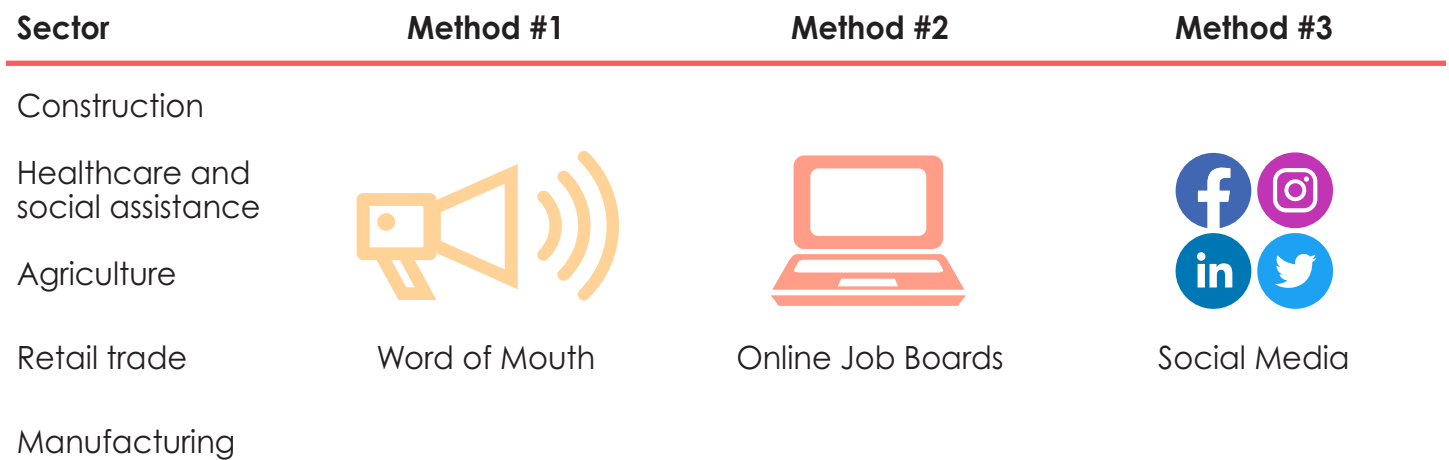
Four of the top five recruitment methods remained unchanged from the previous EmployerOne survey completed in 2020. Unsolicited resumes took the fifth spot, previously filled by Newspaper ads in the 2020 results. Significant increases were seen in Word of Mouth, Company's Own Internet Site, and Unsolicited Resumes.

Recruitment Methods by Overall Survey Respondents



*percentages may not always total 100% due to rounding

Recruitment Methods by Top Sectors



Recruitment Methods by Business Size

Business Size	Method #1	Method #2	Method #3
1-4	Word of Mouth	Online Job Boards	Social Media
5-9	Word of Mouth	Online Job Boards	Social Media
10-19	Word of Mouth	Online Job Boards	Social Media
20-49	Online Job Boards	Word of Mouth	Social Media
50-99	Word of Mouth	Online Job Boards	Social Media
100-199	Company's Own Internet Site	Online Job Boards	Word of Mouth
200-499	Online Job Boards	Company's Own Internet Site	Word of Mouth
500+	Online Job Boards	Word of Mouth	Company's Own Internet Site

Geographic areas targeted for recruitment by overall survey respondents



Geographic Area	Percentage (%)
Local	90%
Provincial	25%
National	9%
International	7%

Geographic Area of Recruitment based on Business Size

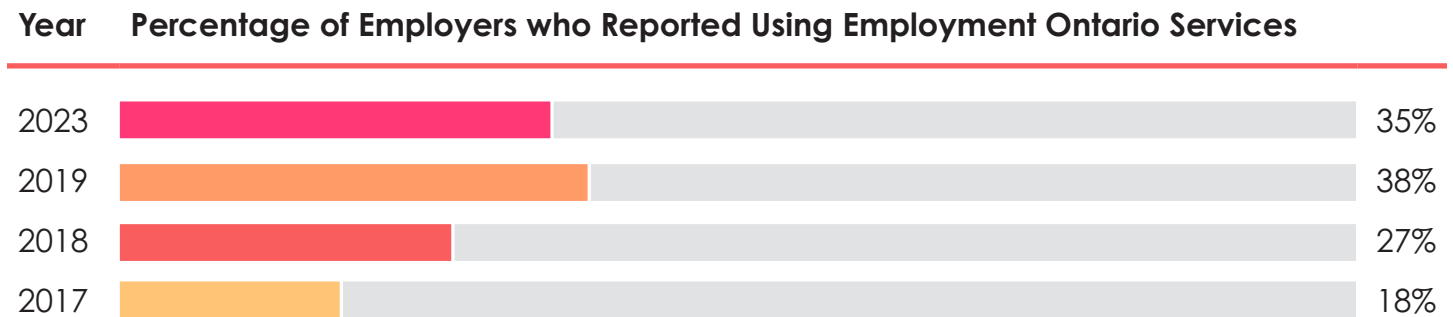
Business Size	Local	Provincial	National	International
1-4	90%	16%	4%	3%
5-9	93%	18%	5%	3%
10-19	90%	23%	6%	5%
20-49	92%	29%	10%	12%
50-99	88%	39%	21%	21%
100-199	100%	53%	18%	12%
200-499	67%	33%	17%	17%
500+	67%	67%	50%	17%

*percentages may not always total 100% due to rounding

As business size increases, employers reported they were more likely to utilize provincial, national and international recruitment compared to businesses with fewer employees. Businesses with 500+ employees were just as likely to target the local geographic area for recruitment as they were provincially.

Recruitment via Employment Ontario Services

In this year's survey, 35% of survey respondents reported utilizing free Employment Ontario services. While this represents a slight decrease compared to 2019 survey results, the five-year trend suggests that employers are increasingly seeking out these services to assist in their job search strategies

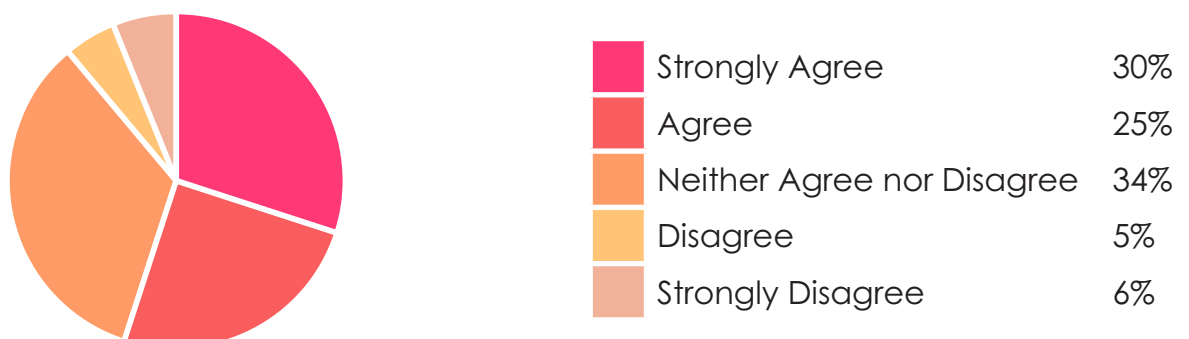


With an increased number of job vacancies and low numbers of available job seekers this may suggest why more employers are seeking outside assistance to support them in their search to fill their vacancies. Employers in the Construction sector reported using Employment Ontario services the most (36%) followed closely by employers in Food service (35%) and Retail (33%).

Recruitment of Immigrant Workers

88% of survey respondents reported that they did not utilize immigration services to attract new workers. Of those employers that did report utilizing these services, some noted the high costs and lengthiness associated with the process. Businesses with 200+ employees were more likely to use immigration services when compared to responses from businesses with fewer employees. This suggests that larger businesses may have more organizational capacity to take on Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW) and staff (such as a dedicated HR department) to manage the administrative processes associated with temporary foreign worker programs.

When asked, "Justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI) training is a priority for our organization" this was the breakdown of responses:

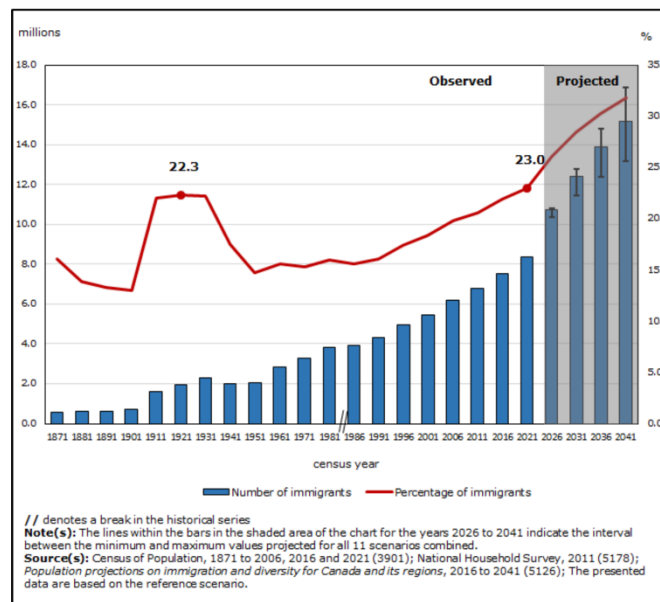


In the Four County area, Perth County has the highest percentage of immigrants as a proportion of the total population – currently sitting at 9.1% (Census 2021)

County	% of Immigrants as a Proportion of Total Population
Perth	9.1%
Grey	8.5%
Bruce	7.6%
Huron	7.0%

While locally, our proportion of immigrants is much smaller than provincially or federally, our labour force continues to become more diverse. With this, many organizations are beginning to recognize the importance and implement strategies related to justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI).

In 2021, almost one-quarter (23.0%) of the population of Canada were, or had ever been a landed immigrant or permanent resident. If these trends continue, based on Statistics Canada's recent [population projections](#), immigrants could represent from 29.1% to 34.0% of the population of Canada by 2041⁸



Source: Census of Population, 1871 to 2006, 2016 and 2021 (3901); National Household Survey, 2011 (5178); Population projections on immigration and diversity for Canada and its regions, 2016 to 2041 (5126);

⁸ [The Daily — Immigrants make up the largest share of the population in over 150 years and continue to shape who we are as Canadians \(statcan.gc.ca\)](#)

SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, TECHNICAL TRAINING, AND SERVING LABOUR MARKET NEEDS

The Four County Labour Market Planning Board delivered SkillsAdvance Ontario projects from 2017 to 2022 providing both soft skills and industry training to highly barriered job seekers. As a 5-year pilot program under the brand connect2SKILLS, the project met with successful outcomes having matched hundreds of job seekers to opportunities with local employers in the Manufacturing, Hospitality & Tourism and Construction sectors within Bruce, Grey, Huron and Perth counties.



Training and the development of our local talent continues to be identified by local employers as a need. This is indicated in the responses received regarding the quality of the workforce available as well as employers reporting an increased number of applicants lacking motivation, attitude, or interpersonal abilities (see "Availability of Qualified Workers" and "Hard to Fill" sections of report).

The EmployerOne Survey and other Labour Market Information (LMI) sources such as the connect2JOBS platform continue to support funding proposals for needed projects like connect2SKILLS and other workforce development initiatives that will serve the local labour market training needs.

EMPLOYER FEEDBACK

Employers who completed the survey were offered the opportunity to provide any additional commentary related to their personal workforce issues and/or challenges they are experiencing. We felt that the comments included below represent some of the common themes or challenges being experienced by local employers:

"The past few years have been extremely challenging with the changing landscape during and after the pandemic as well as younger people not needing to or wanting to work. Housing is an issue. At this point we can only hire people that own a house, cottage or can commute (of which are forced to buy a parking pass from the town). I am at a loss. Anything short of erecting staff housing I can't see much reprieve from it. We do what we can to get by, fortunately we are a seasonal business."

"The struggle to compete against a major corporation in our area is the most difficult part of being a small business owner here. We can only afford to pay our employees so much because of being a small business."

"Thank you for providing this survey. Construction and the trades are well behind in keeping up with retirements and have long suffered in priority behind higher education. I hope you use the results of this survey to change the attitudes of the teachers, trainers and the young members of the upcoming workforce. We need to keep the local kids in the community to serve the community. Thank you."

CONCLUSION

The EmployerOne survey was conducted for the seventh time in the four county area. The survey was open from November 2022 – January 2023 for employers in the region with at least one employee. In previous years, the survey has only been open for the month of January. Based on feedback received from our project advisory committee members, we opted to open the survey earlier in an attempt to reach a higher number of employers, in particular those seasonal employers who may not be as accessible in the winter months.

The previous EmployerOne Survey was conducted in 2020. We felt that in light of the current labour market challenges this was the right time to seek updated data on how employers are navigating the current labour market post-pandemic.

An acute labour shortage, high participation rates and an aging population are all associated with the challenges employers in many industries are facing. This data has given us the ability to measure trends over time as well as anticipate future labour needs and challenges in our region. Key takeaways from respondent results:

- Employers are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the availability of qualified workers
- Employers are reporting hard-to-fill job vacancies going unfilled for longer periods of time
- Unavailable and unaffordable housing presents a key barrier to hiring employees
- Word of Mouth continues to be the top recruitment method used by local employers
- Regular increases in salary or benefits continues to be the top retention strategy used by employers
- While many employers recognize the benefit of training opportunities for staff, responses suggest that employers are fearful of losing trained employees to other companies and the loss of productivity during training time
- Employers recognize the importance of Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) strategies in their workforce

The Four County Labour Market Planning Board will focus on these projects and deliverables in the 2023/24 year:

- Local Labour Market Plan 2023-2024 (LLMP)
- 2023 Employee Survey
- Understanding Workforce Retention and Attraction
- Skilled Trades Handbook Update

Thank you to all employers and community partners who have promoted and completed this survey. The success of this project would not have been possible without your ongoing support. Collecting local data is important to understand how we compare to Ontario and Canada while also identifying the challenges and opportunities to sustain our local workforce.

We continue to meet with and discuss these issues with a variety of stakeholders in the Bruce, Grey, Huron and Perth counties included in the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula Economic Region.

You can access this report and other relevant projects on our planning board website by visiting www.planningboard.ca. Should you wish to speak with us regarding these reports or to discuss your workforce needs contact our office by emailing admin@planningboard.ca or call 519-881-2725.