

LOCAL LABOUR MARKET PLAN 2024

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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We also want to express our special thanks to our Planning Board directors and staff who continually contribute to workforce development initiatives in the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula Economic Region.

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SUMMARY

The purpose of the Local Labour Market Plan (LLMP) is to: monitor recent labour market developments; identify significant labour market issues within the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula Economic Region; and convey to the community the nature and complexity of these issues.

Stratford-Bruce Economic Region 2023 labour force indicators have shown signs of cooling compared to 2022, with employment declining 4.1 percent, and the number of unemployed people increasing 21.9 percent. The number of people not in the labour force also hit a historic high in 2023, reaching 109,400. Yet at the same time, there remained several thousand job vacancies/postings in the local area.

Several prevailing and related labour market issues remain a concern.

Over the past decade, Stratford-Bruce has experienced a persistently tight labour supply as evidenced by job vacancy rates that are consistently higher than Ontario and unemployment rates that are constantly lower than the province.

Not only is Stratford-Bruce's labour force participation declining among those age 45 and over, the Region also has one of the lowest labour force participation rates in Ontario. An aging and older population is also a concern: 47.9 percent of Stratford-Bruce's population (15+) is 55 years of age and over, compared to 37.3 percent in Ontario. These issues put the local supply of labour in jeopardy.

Efforts to raise Stratford-Bruce's participation rate should target people 45 years and above, with a particular emphasis on those 55 to 64 years of age. Understanding the circumstances and work arrangements that might lure some of this population back into the labour force is warranted.

Good news can be found among 25- to 44-year-olds. This cohort, which has the highest participation rate (89.7 percent), increased by 10,900 people between 2014 and 2023. Continued efforts to attract and retain this cohort is critical, as this group helps offset the negative labour force consequences of aging.

Employment Ontario (EO) programs that help people remain in or re-engage in the labour market by providing a range of training programs, assisted over 5,463 clients/learners in the 2022-23 year. The Employment Service program, the Apprenticeship program, and the Literacy and Basic Skills program (new learners) all served more clients than in the two previous years.

The dynamic nature of the Stratford-Bruce labour market impacts the supply of labour as new residents move to the Region and others leave. This churn within the labour market has consequences on resident skill levels. Between 2016 and 2021, thousands of new residents of varying skill sets moved to Stratford-Bruce, this influx will likely affect the demand for Employment Ontario programs.

LLMP PURPOSE

The purpose of the Local Labour Market Plan (LLMP) is to assess the labour market; identify significant labour market issues within the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula Economic Region; convey to the community the nature and complexity of these issues; and put forth specific actions that will help alleviate identified labour market challenges.

The outcome of the LLMP and its resulting initiatives are designed to support area residents join or remain in the job market and to help employers access the workers/skills they need to be competitive in the global economy. In support of this aim, evaluation of the new National Occupation Classification (NOC 2021) is examined as it provides insight into the Training, Education, Experience and Responsibility (TEER) required for each occupation.

DATA/EVIDENCE

The 2023-2024 LLMP is an evidence-based plan that draws upon both primary and secondary data. The following data sources have informed this plan:

- Canadian Business Counts
- Census 2016 and 2021 (including custom tabulated data)
- Connect2Jobs.ca platform
- Employment Ontario Program data
- Job Vacancy and Wage Survey
- Labour Force Survey (including custom tabulated data)
- Taxfiler data

It should be noted that the research uses the most current data available where viable. In some cases, the most recent data available is from 2023, while in other instances data from 2021 is the most current available.

GEOGRAPHY

The Four County Labour Marketing Planning Board is mandated by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) to serve the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula Economic Region which includes Bruce County, Grey County, Huron County and Perth County.

For readability within this LLMP, this area is sometimes referred to as: Stratford-Bruce Economic Region, Stratford-Bruce, and the Region.

In instances where data was not available or could not be aggregated for the Economic Region, County specific data is provided.

2023 LABOUR MARKET DEVELOPMENTS

Stratford-Bruce Economic Region 2023 labour force characteristics have shown signs of cooling compared to 2022. The number of people in the labour force declined 3.1 percent, and the total number of people employed declined 4.1 percent with full-time employment decreasing 5.5 percent. Additionally, the number of unemployed persons increased 21.9 percent, reaching an annual average of 7,800 people in 2023.

Also of note is the decline in the participation rate, from 62.6 to 59.8 between 2022 and 2023. This can be explained by the fact that as the labour force declined, the population 15+ continued to grow, reaching a historic high of 272,400 people in 2023. The number of people not in the labour force also reach a historic high of 109,400 people, a significant increase (8.7 percent) from 2022. Taken together, these metrics suggest that new area residents are not joining the labour force, and/or long-time residents are leaving the labour force.

Labour Force Characteristics

Stratford-Bruce Economic Region

	2022 Labour Force Characteristics #	2023 Labour Force Characteristics #	2022 - 2023 Percent Change %
Population 15+	268,800	272,400	1.3%
Labour force	168,200	163,000	-3.1%
Total employment	161,800	155,200	-4.1%
Full-time employment	132,600	125,300	-5.5%
Part-time employment	29,200	29,900	2.4%
Unemployed	6,400	7,800	21.9%
Not in the labour force	100,600	109,400	8.7%
	%	%	Percentage Point Change
Unemployment rate	3.8	4.8	1.0%
Participation rate	62.6	59.8	-2.8%
Employment rate	60.2	57.0	-3.2%

Source: Labour Force Survey, Table 14-10-0393-01

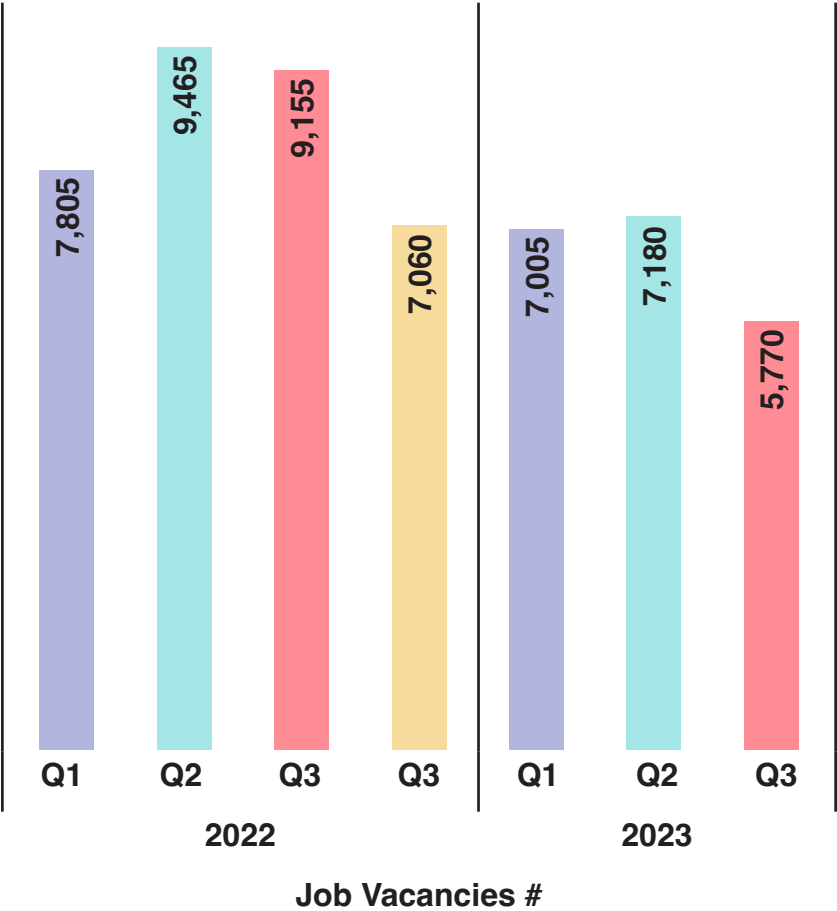
*Historic refers to the 2006 to 2023 period, as methodological changes to the Labour Force Survey don't allow for comparisons prior to 2006.

JOB VACANCIES

In 2022, the number of job vacancies was exceptionally high in the Stratford-Bruce Economic Region, with more than 9,000 in both Q2 and Q3. In 2023, the number of job vacancies declined, from a high of 7,180 in Q2 to 5,770 vacancies in Q3. This decline is not surprising given the labour force trends identified above. 2023 job vacancies are still well above pre-pandemic (2018 and 2019) numbers.

Job Vacancies

Stratford-Bruce Economic Region



Source: Job Vacancy and Wage Survey, Table 14-10-0325-01

PREVAILING LABOUR MARKET ISSUES

Prevailing labour market issues refer to widespread and longer-term conditions that affect the supply and/or demand for labour. A single year-over-year increase or decrease in the number of unemployed people does not negate a prevailing labour market issue. Prevailing labour market issues tend to be deeper and more structural in nature.

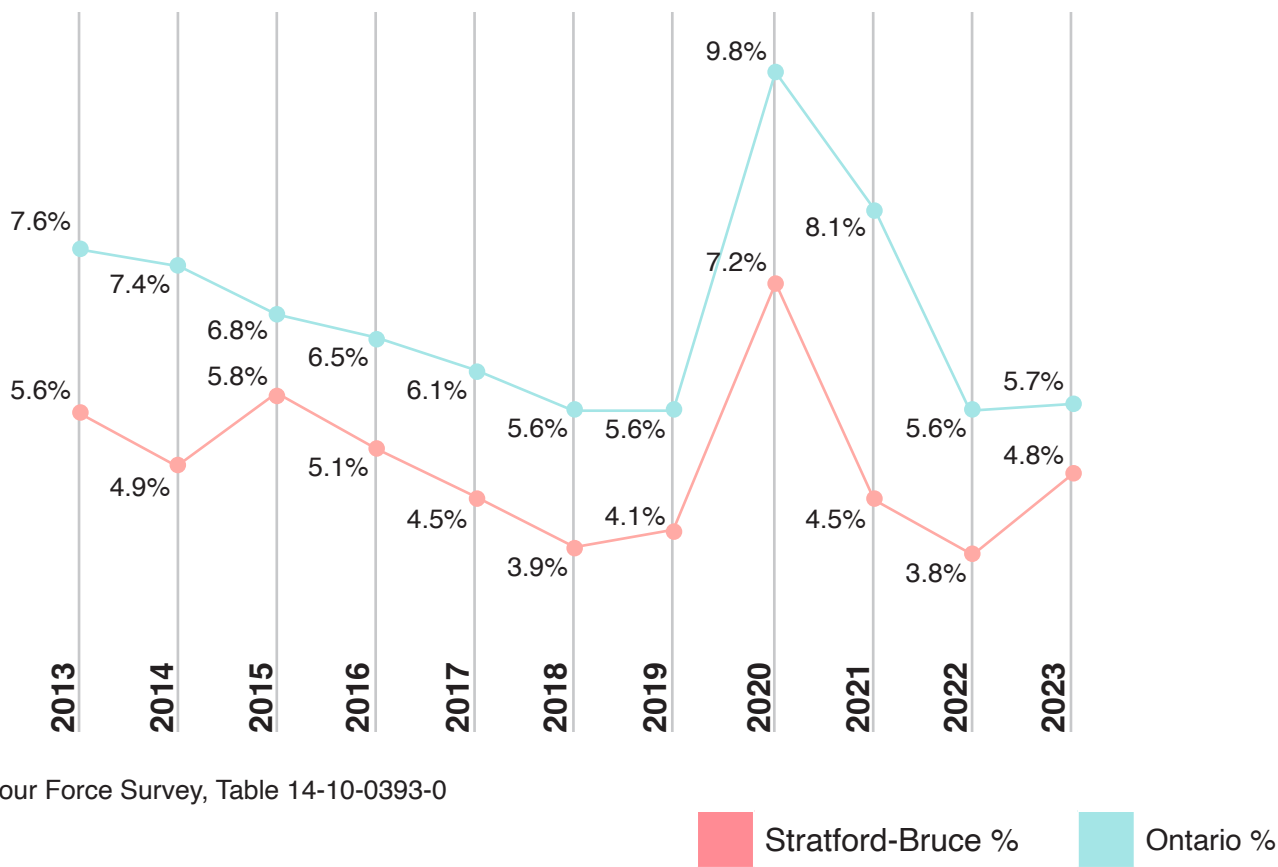
SHORTAGE OF WORKERS

While the unemployment rate edged up to 4.8 percent in 2023, it is important to note that the unemployment rate in the Stratford-Bruce Economic Region has been lower than the province of Ontario’s for the past decade. A consistent and comparatively low unemployment rate remains Stratford-Bruce’s defining labour market characteristic.

Similarly, Stratford-Bruce’s job vacancy rates remain consistently higher than rates in Ontario. The job vacancy rate is the number of job vacancies expressed as a percentage of labour demand; that is, all occupied and vacant jobs combined.

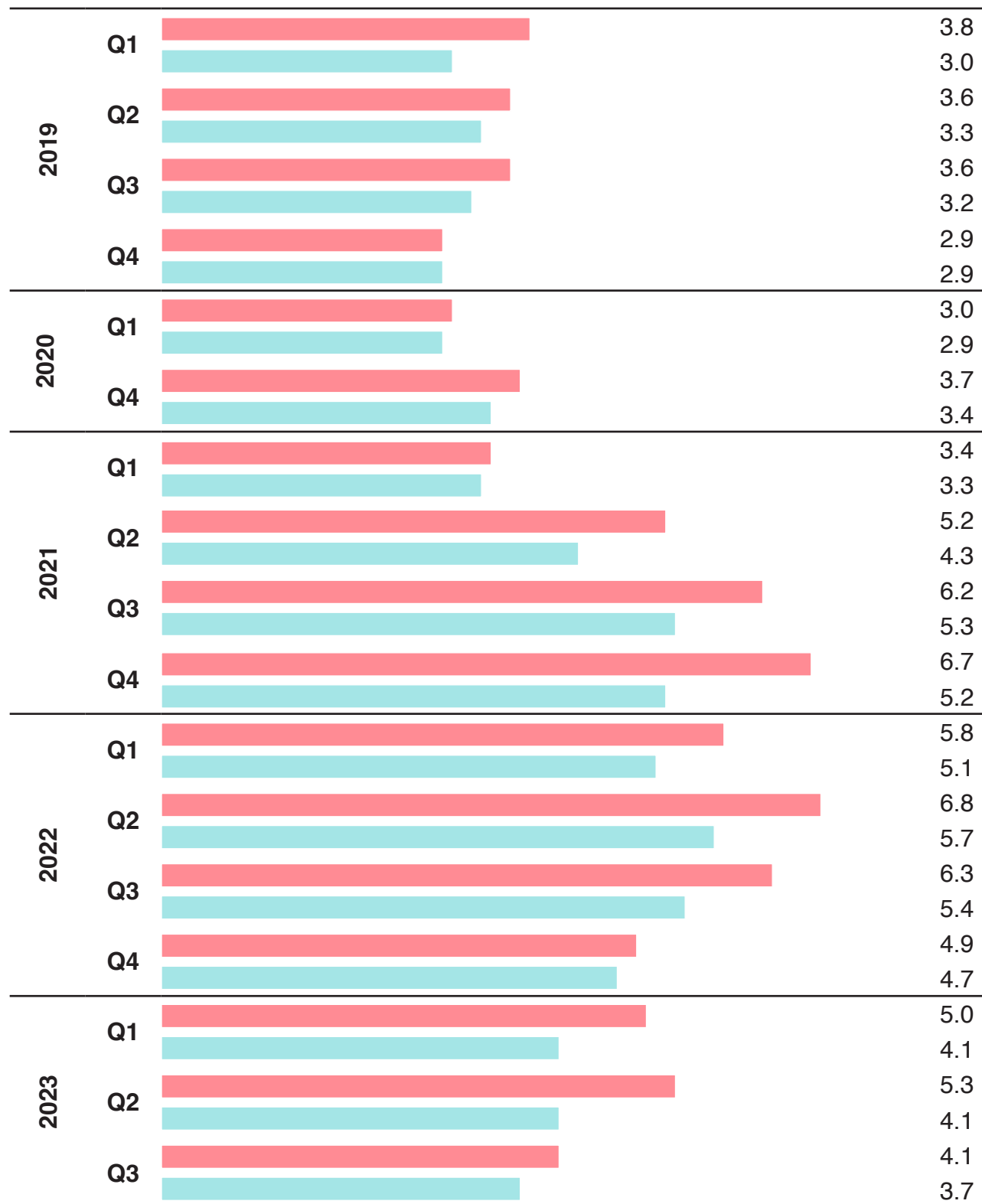
Job vacancy rates that are consistently higher than the province in combination with unemployment rates that are constantly lower than the province, point to a persistent shortage of workers in Stratford-Bruce Economic Region (a shortage that was less dire in 2023).

Unemployment Rate Comparison



Source: Labour Force Survey, Table 14-10-0393-0

Job Vacancy Rate Comparison



Source: Job Vacancy and Wage Survey, Table 14-10-0325-01
 Survey not conducted in Q2 and Q3 of 2020

Stratford-Bruce %
 Ontario %

DECLINING LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION (45+)

Stratford-Bruce's declining labour force participation rates are a serious labour market issue affecting local employers, given the persistent shortage of workers. The total labour force participation rate which includes people 15 years and over fell from 64.4 percent in 2014 to 59.8 percent in 2023.

When participation rates are examined by age cohort, we see that the 15 to 24 age cohort held steady and the proportion of 25- to 44-year-olds in the labour force increased from 87.6 percent in 2014 to 89.7 percent in 2023, a significant increase.

The story changes considerably when we look at the population 45 and over. Between 2014 and 2023, the participation rate of 45–54-year-olds declined from 87.0 percent to 85.2 percent, and the participation rate of 55- to 64-year-olds dropped a substantial amount (4.6 percent points) to 61.5 percent. As for those 65 years and older, the participation rate remained the same.

Change in Participation Rates by Age Cohort

Stratford-Bruce Economic Region

	2014 Participation Rate %	2023 Participation Rate %	Percentage Point Change %
15-24 years	74.3	74.7	0.4
25-44 years	87.6	89.7	2.1
45-54 years	87.0	85.2	-1.8
55-64 years	66.1	61.5	-4.6
65 years and over	14.8	14.7	-0.1
Total 15 years and over	64.4	59.8	-4.6

Source: Labour Force Survey, custom tabulation

LOW LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES (45+)

To gauge how high or low Stratford-Bruce's participation rates are, a comparison to Ontario is provided.

Of the five age cohorts examined, Stratford-Bruce has higher participation rates than Ontario in two of the categories. The participation rate of the 15 to 24 group is substantially higher than the Ontario rate and the participation rate of the 25 to 44 cohort is modestly higher than the province. There are practical limits to how high participation rates can go, and both are quite high already.

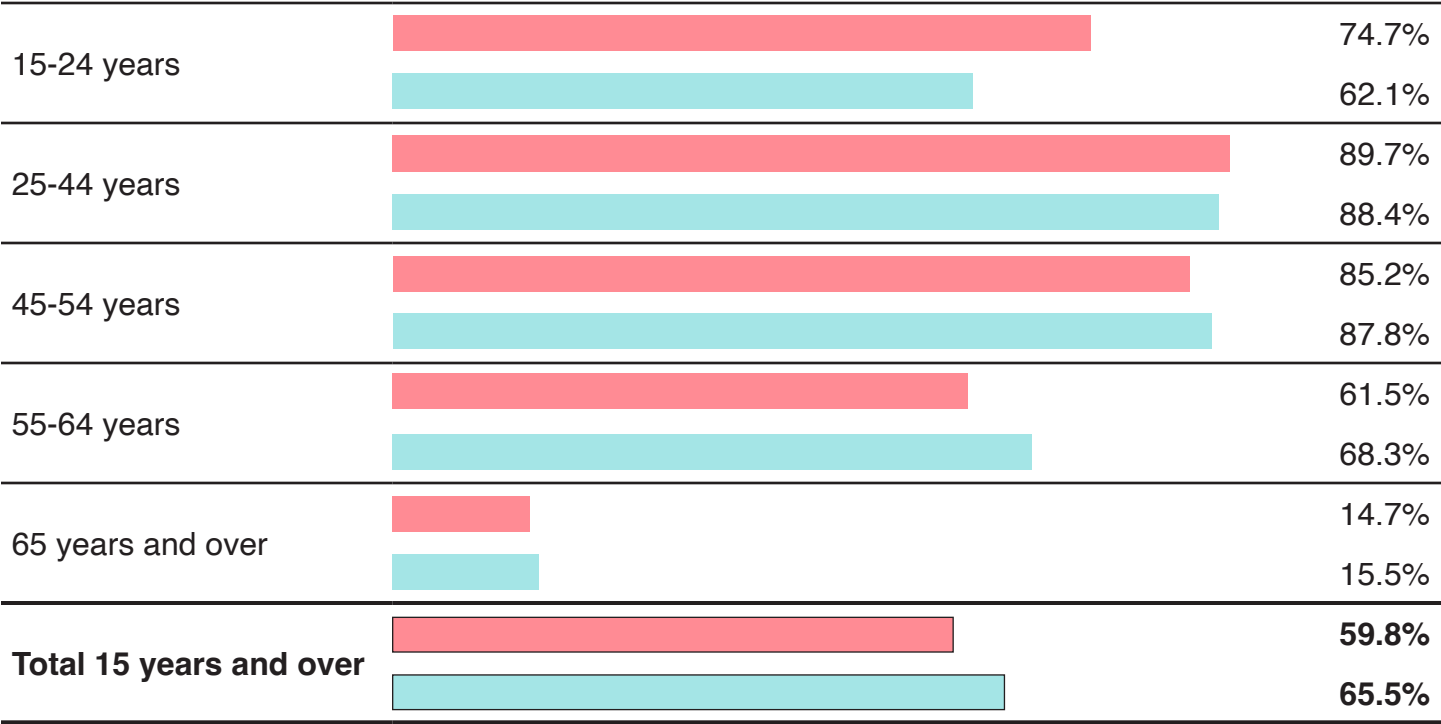
Once again, the story changes for the population 45 and older. The participation rate of Stratford-Bruce's 45 to 54 age cohort is significantly lower than the rate in Ontario (85.2% versus 87.8%). An examination of the 55 to 64 cohort reveals a large gap between participation rates, 61.5 percent in Stratford-Bruce compared to 68.3 percent in Ontario. As for the 65 and over cohort, the Region's

participation rate is slightly lower than the province, 14.7 percent versus 15.5 percent.

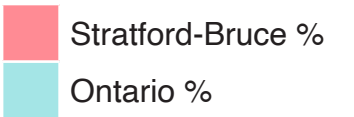
Overall, Stratford-Bruce’s total (15+) participation rate (59.8 percent) is one of the lowest in the province of Ontario, only the Kingston-Pembroke Economic Region (ER), the Muskoka-Kawarths ER and the Northeast Ontario ER is lower.

Efforts to raise Stratford-Bruce’s participation rate must target people 45 years and over, with a particular emphasis on those 55 to 64 years of age. Understanding the circumstances and work arrangements that might lure some of this population back into the labour force is warranted.

Participation Rate Comparison by Age Cohort
2023



Source: Labour Force Survey, custom tabulation



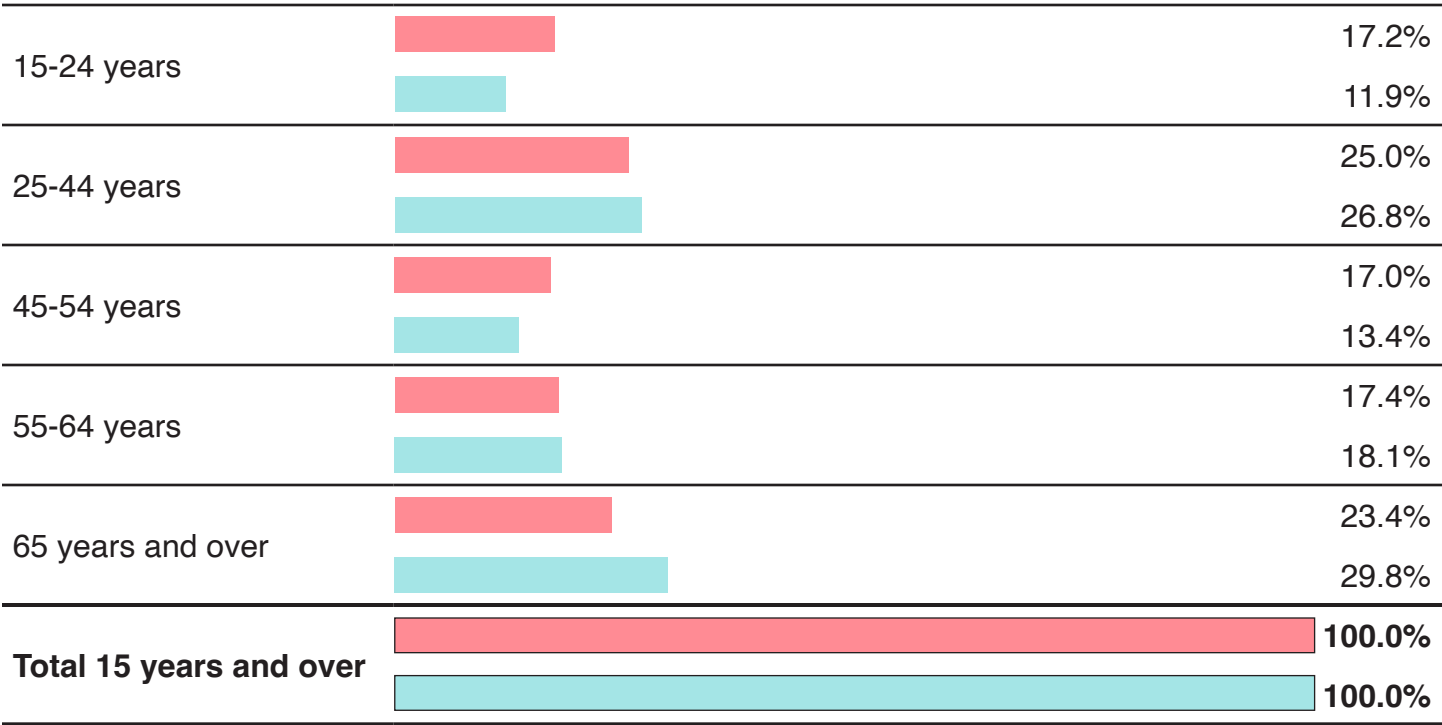
AN AGING POPULATION

Since the participation rate measures the proportion of the population engaged in the labour force (those who are employed or unemployed), it is important to examine how the population has changed in Stratford-Bruce.

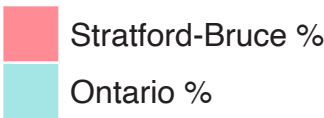
The distribution of the population by age cohort has changed between 2014 and 2023, a 10-year period. The proportion of the population 15 to 24 years of age declined significantly from 17.2 percent in 2014 to 11.9 percent in 2023, and the proportion of the population 25 to 44 years of age increased slightly. In 2014, 45- to 54-year-olds accounted for 17.0 percent of the population but dropped to 13.4 percent in 2023. There was also a modest increase in the distribution of people 55 to 64 years of age. The 65 years and over cohort saw the greatest shift, representing 23.4 percent of the population in 2014, increasing to 29.8 percent in 2023 (compared to 21.6 percent in Ontario).

In Stratford-Bruce, 47.9 percent of the population (15+) is 55 years of age and older, in Ontario the proportion is 37.3 percent. This is a big difference, meaning Stratford-Bruce is significantly older than Ontario. This greatly affects the supply of labour locally as older people are less likely to participate in the labour market.

Distribution of Population by Age Cohort Stratford-Bruce Economic Region



Source: Labour Force Survey, custom tabulation



The table below also shows how the population of Stratford-Bruce has changed between 2014 and 2023 but with absolute values. For example, in 2023, there were 32,400 15 to 24 years olds in Stratford-Bruce, 10,400 fewer than in 2014. The number of people 65 years and over, reached 81,100 in 2023, an increase of 22,900 people from 2014.

Population by Age Cohort

Stratford-Bruce Economic Region

	2014 #	2023 #	Absolute Change #
15-24 years	42,800	32,400	-10,400
25-44 years	62,100	73,000	10,900
45-54 years	42,200	36,500	-5,700
55-64 years	43,300	49,300	6,000
65 years and over	58,200	81,100	22,900
Total 15 years and over	248,700	272,400	23,700

Source: Labour Force Survey, custom tabulation

SUPPLY OF LABOUR IN JEOPARDY

The combination of Stratford-Bruce's declining labour participation rates among the 45 and over population, relatively low labour participation rates among the 45 and over population, and an aging population greatly constrains the supply of labour.

For example, the population of 15- to 24-year-olds decreased from 42,800 in 2014 to 32,400 in 2023; while the participation rate essentially remained the same, the absolute number of people in the labour force in this cohort decreased from 31,800 to 24,202 over the period examined.

With regards to the population 45 to 54, a decline in the population and a decline in the participation rate means that the number of 45- to 55-year-olds in the labour force dropped from 36,714 in 2014 to 31,098 in 2023.

While the number of 55- to 64-year-olds increased by 6,000 people between 2014 and 2023, the decrease in the participation rate (from 66.1 percent to 61.5 percent) resulted in only a modest labour force increase, from 28,621 to 30,319 persons.

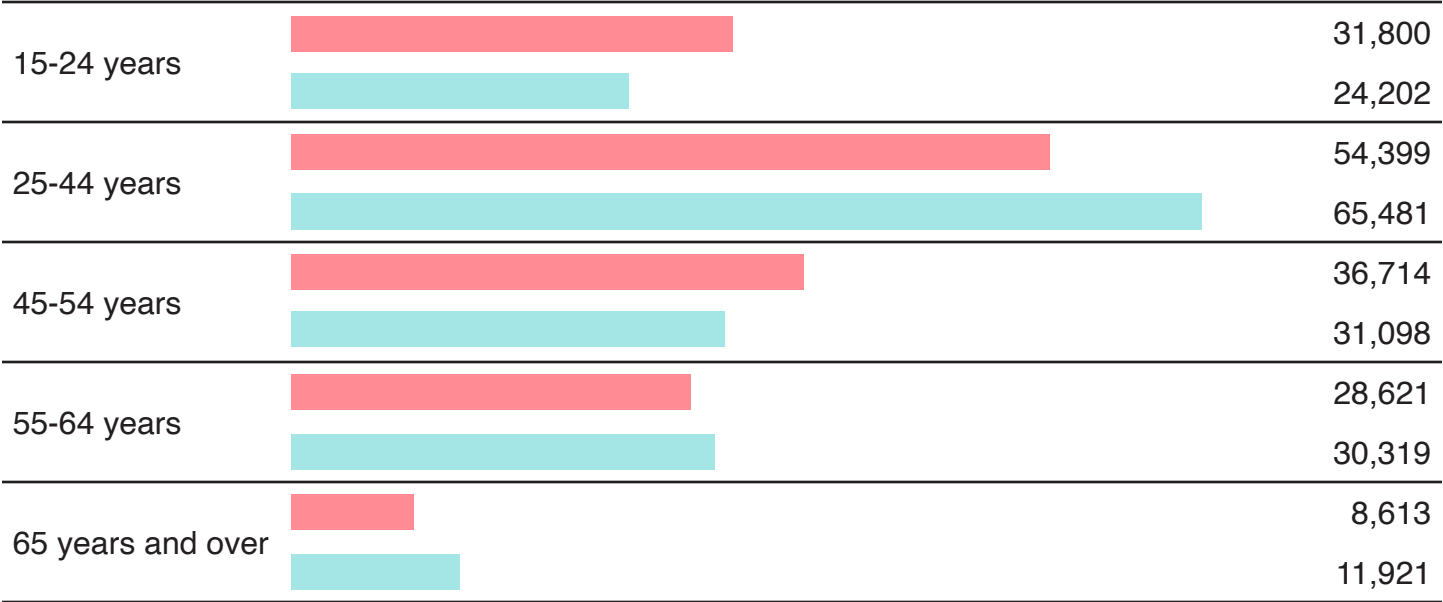
Even though the 65 and over age cohort experienced the greatest population growth, adding 22,900 people between 2014 and 2023, the participation rate remained the same at 14.7 percent. As a result, the labour force only increased from 8,613 to 11,921.

Population growth in older age cohorts (55+) with lower participation rates is causing Stratford-Bruce's overall participation rate to decline. This trend explains why the participation rate for the population 15 years and older for Stratford-Bruce is significantly lower than the province's (59.8% versus 65.5%).

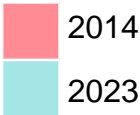
Finally, there is some goods new regarding Stratford-Bruce’s labour supply, and it is found within the 25 to 44 age cohort. Significant population growth (10,900 people) within this group combined with an increase in the participation rate, resulted in the labour force increasing from 54,399 in 2014 to 65,481 in 2023. Given 25- to 44-year-olds are in their core working years this is extremely positive, with a participation rate of 89.7 percent, this group helps offset the negative labour force consequences of aging. Serious efforts to attract and retain this age group are critical to the Region’s labour supply.

Population by Age Cohort
Labour Force #

Stratford-Bruce Economic Region



Source: Labour Force Survey, custom tabulation
Population * the participation rate equals labour force



NOT IN THE LABOUR FORCE CONTINUES TO GROW

As previously mentioned, the number of people not in the labour force reached a historic high in 2023. Over 109,000 people 15 years of age and over are neither employed nor looking for work. Given the declining participation rate and labour shortages within the Stratford-Bruce Economic Region, the potential to lure some of these people into the labour force requires further investigation.

The table below shows the number and distribution of people not in the labour force by age cohort. The obvious finding is that in 2023, 63.3 percent of the people not in the labour force are 65 years of age and over, an increase from 56.0 percent in 2014. Another 17.4 percent (19,000) of people not in the labour force are 55 to 64 years of age. This is not surprising, given the participation rate and aging evidence above.

Given the population and extremely low participation rate of the 55 to 64 age cohort, understanding what can be done to encourage some of this age cohort to return to the workforce is necessary. Research shows that flexible work arrangements may be the best way to encourage more people to return to the workforce. The sheer number (69,200) of those 65 years and over also deserves attention, as it may also be possible to draw some of these people back to the workforce with suitable work arrangements.

Not in the Labour Force by Age Cohort

Stratford-Bruce Economic Region

	2014 %	2023 #	2023 %
15-24 years	12.4	8,300	7.6
25-44 years	8.7	7,500	6.9
45-54 years	6.2	5,400	4.9
55-64 years	16.7	19,000	17.4
65 years and over	56.0	69,200	63.3
Total 15 years and over	100.0	109,400	100.0

Source: Labour Force Survey, custom tabulation

EMPLOYMENT ONTARIO PROGRAMS

The Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) maintains several programs that have been developed to help Employment Ontario's (EO) clients access the training, skills and experience they need to succeed in the changing labour market.

Drawing upon the 2022-23 EO program data, observations regarding service gaps, overlaps, and under-served populations have been brought forth below. EO program data and observations are used to inform service network discussions.

OBSERVATIONS BY NUMBER OF CLIENTS

This year's LLMP report provides data for six EO programs. The first observation regarding 2022/2023 Employment Ontario program data is the Employment Service program and the Apprenticeship program are serving significantly more clients than they did in the two previous pandemic years. The Literacy and Basis Skills program also experienced an increase in new learners (as compared to carry over learners). These three programs account for the majority of all EO clients in the Stratford-Bruce Economic Region. When looking over the last five years, it is noteworthy that the number of Apprenticeship clients in 2022/2023 far surpassed other years.

The fact the number of clients is increasing in the 3 major programs is a positive sign, as people seem to be trying to reengage in the labour market as the pandemic ends.

The Canada Ontario Job Grant program, the Youth Job Connection program and the Better Jobs Ontario program are three of the smallest EO programs, and each saw the number of clients decline to the lowest level in the five-year period.

Stratford-Bruce Economic Region

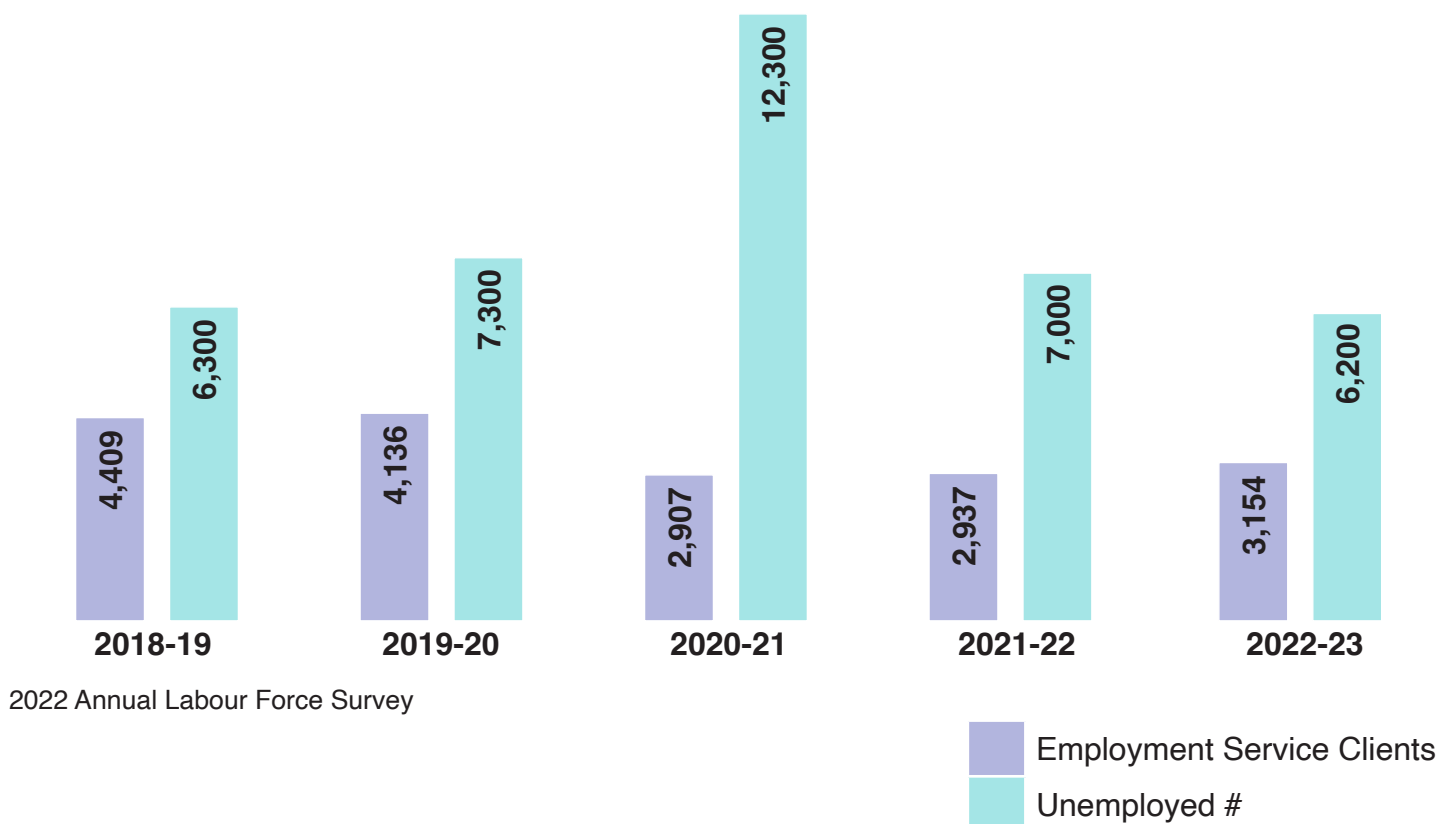
EO Service Program Name	Clients 2018-19	Clients 2019-20	Clients 2020-21	Clients 2021-22	Clients 2022-23
Employment Services	4,049	4,136	2,907	2,937	3,154
Apprenticeship (new registrations)	864	860	683	864	947
Literacy and Basic Skills	1,099	1,187	995	1,087	1,008
New Learners	726	803	652	688	719
Carry Over Learners	373	384	343	399	289
Canada Ontario Job Grant	447	328	264	552	186
Youth Job Connection	220	253	199	214	125
Better Jobs Ontario*	55	50	75	59	43
Total	6,734	6,814	5,123	5,713	5,463

*Note: the Second Career program was renamed the Better Jobs Ontario program in 2022-23.

Observations for each program follow. All subsequent tables represent the Stratford-Bruce Economic Region.

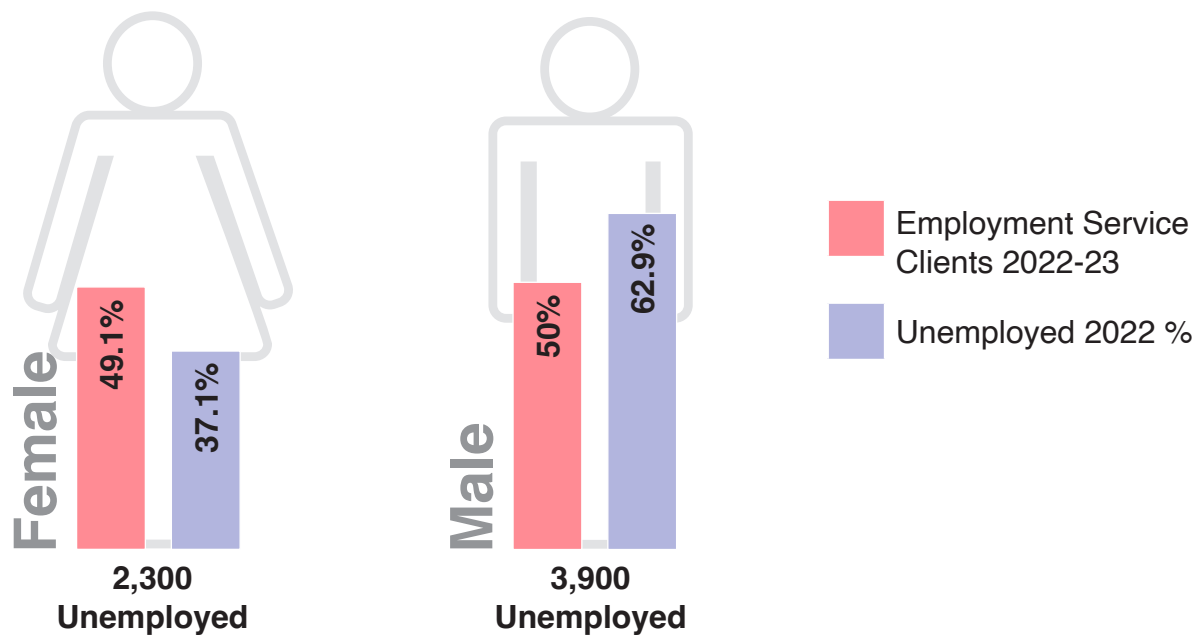
EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The Employment Services program offers various resources and supports to individuals who require assistance with their employment and skills-upgrading. 2022/2023 saw an increase in the number of clients compared to the two previous years. Since the Employment Service program primarily serves the unemployed (86.9% of clients), one would expect there to be a correlation between client numbers and the number of unemployed. This does not seem to be the case, clearly, additional factors influence client participation.



Gender

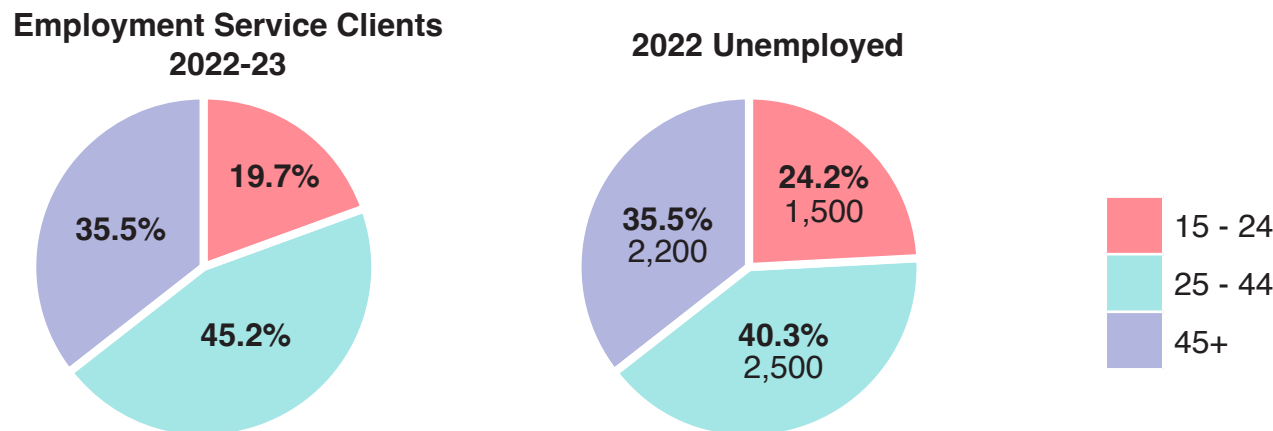
The gender of Employment Service clients are 49.1 percent female and 50.0 percent male, which does not align with the gender distribution of the unemployed, where 37.1 percent of the unemployed were female and 62.9 percent were male.



2022 Annual Labour Force Survey

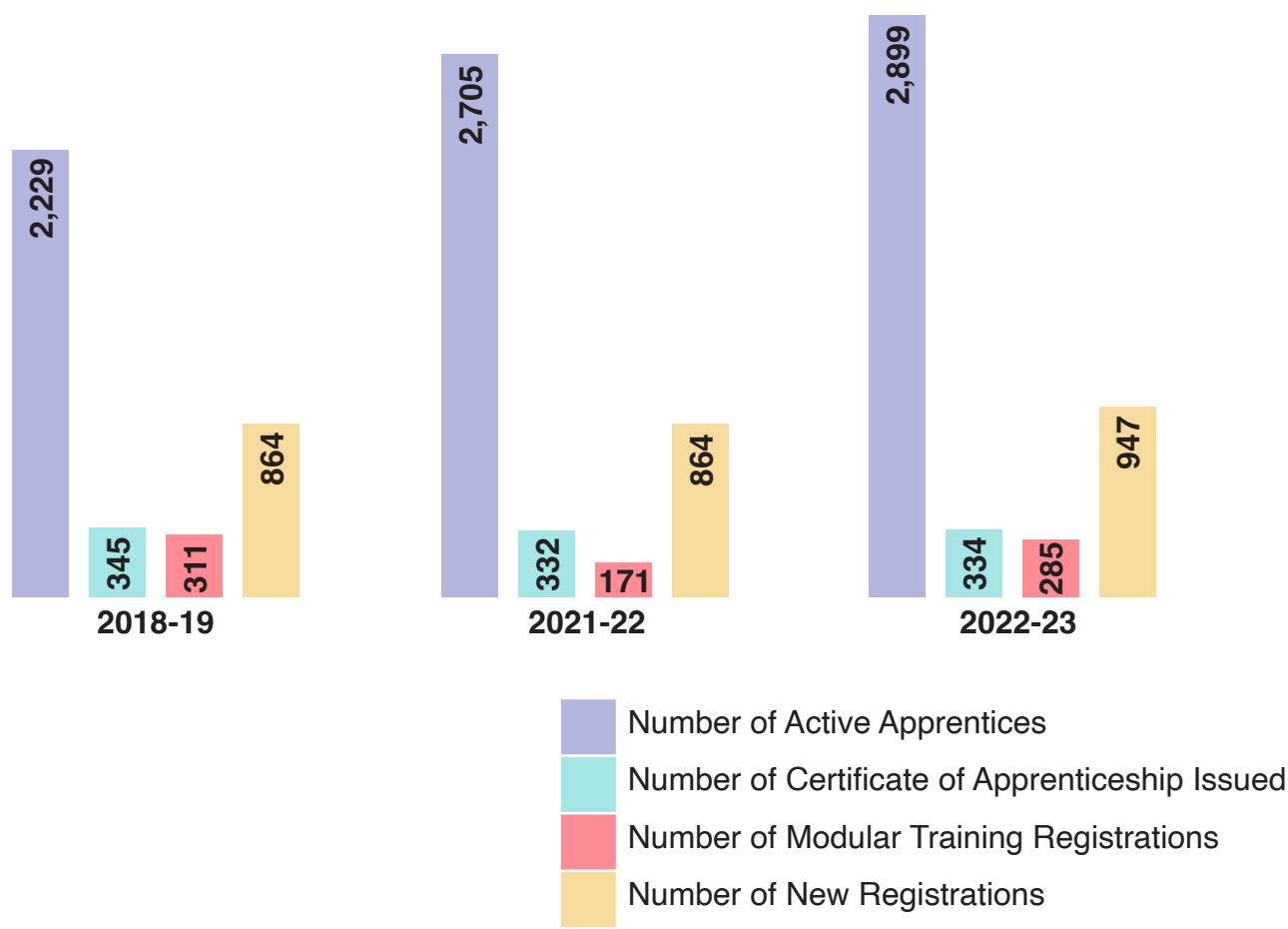
Age Cohort

To provide insight into how the Employment Services program serves clients by age cohort, the distribution of clients and the unemployed is compared. The data shows that the proportion of Employment Service clients 15 to 24 years of age is 19.7 percent, compared to 24.2 percent of the total unemployed. Employment Service clients in the 25 to 44 age cohort exceed the proportion of people unemployed: 45.2 percent compared to 40.3 percent.



APPRENTICESHIP

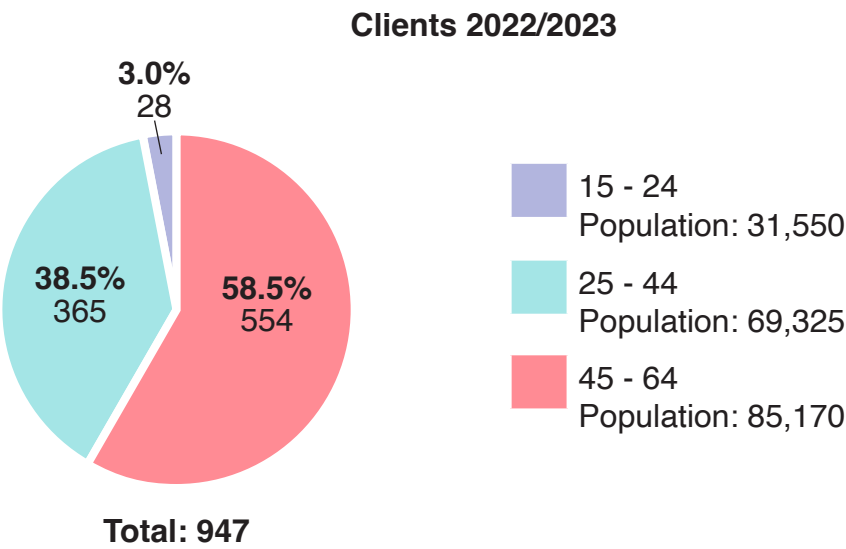
The Apprenticeship program provides people with both on-the-job and in-school training in skilled trades; the goal is a worker certified in their respective trade. The program data for 2022/2023 shows a 30 percent increase over the five-year period in the number of active apprentices and a 9.6 percent increase in the number of new registrations. Given the shortage and demand for workers with trade certificates in the Stratford-Bruce Region, the client growth observed is encouraging.



Age Cohort

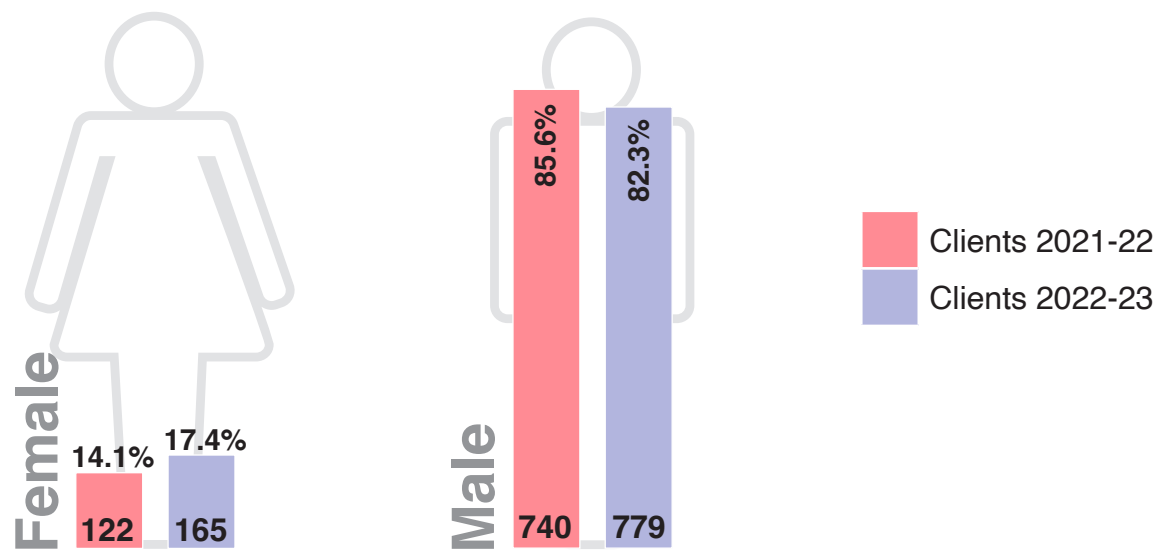
While the majority (58.5 %) of new registrations include clients who are 15 to 24 years of age, another 38.5 percent of new registrations are 25 to 44 years of age. While younger people are more likely to seek apprenticeships, it is important to remember that the 15 to 24 age cohort has 31,550 people and the 25 to 44 age cohort has 69,325 people. This large pool of people may deserve more focus as they are still young enough to embark on a new career.

Number of New Registrations



Gender

When the number of new registrations is examined by gender, the data shows that the number of both female and male clients has increased, but growth in female clientele increased much faster than male. Female clients represented 17.4 percent of new registrations in 2022-23, compared to 14.1 percent in 2021-22.



*Does not sum to 100 because some clients preferred not to disclose their gender

Top 10 New Apprenticeship Registrations in 2022-23

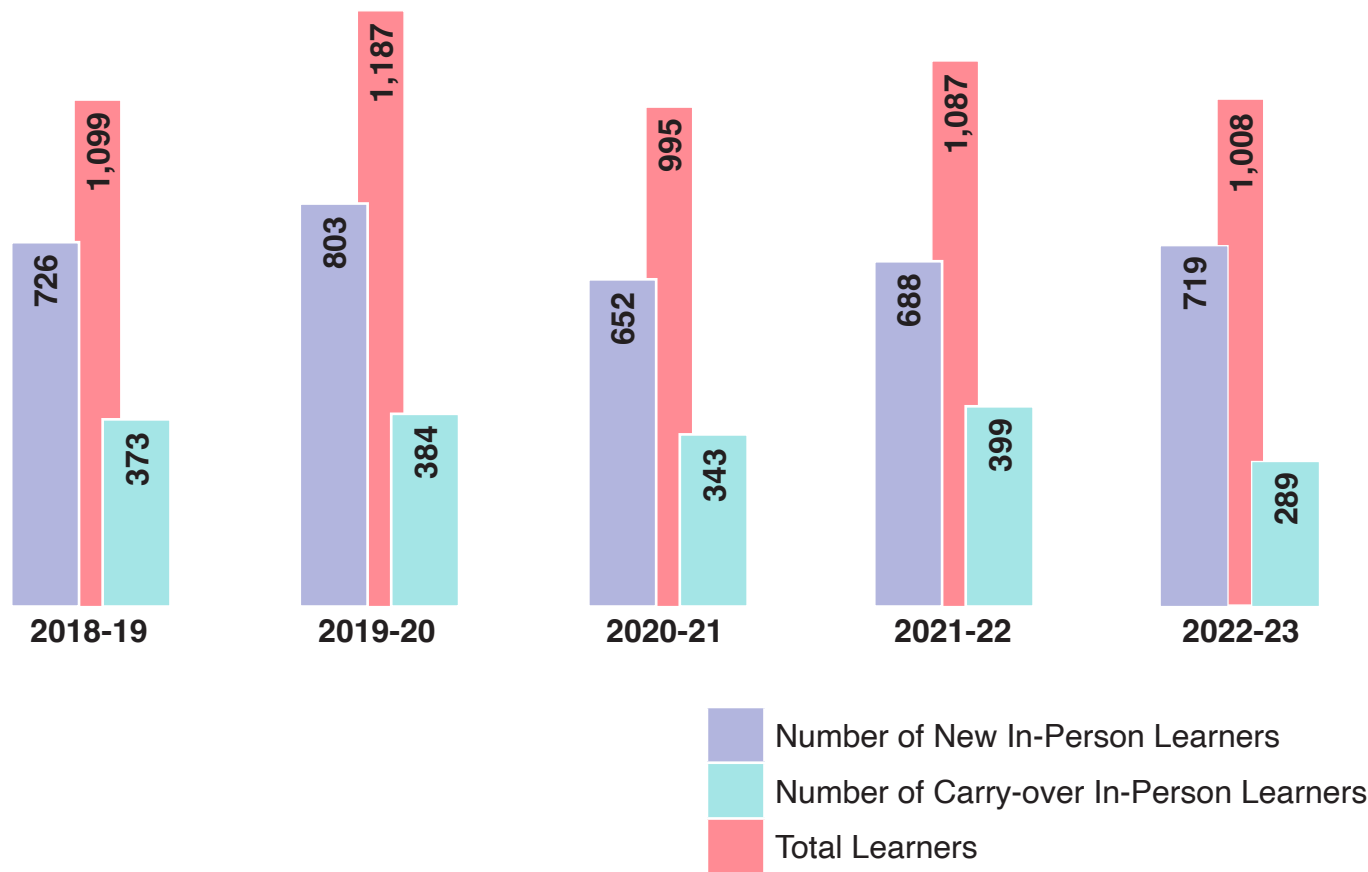
These are similar to the top 10 in previous years and include:

Electrician-Construction and Maintenance	162
General Carpenter	136
Automotive Service Technician	87
Industrial Mechanic Millwright	86
Plumber	65
Cook	48
Welder	40
Child Development	36
Truck and Coach Technician	36
Agriculture Equipment Technician	33

LITERACY AND BASIC SKILLS (LBS)

The Ontario Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) program helps adults in Ontario who require upskilling and/or face barriers learning, to develop and apply essential skills such as communication, numeracy, interpersonal and digital skills to help them achieve their labour market goals.

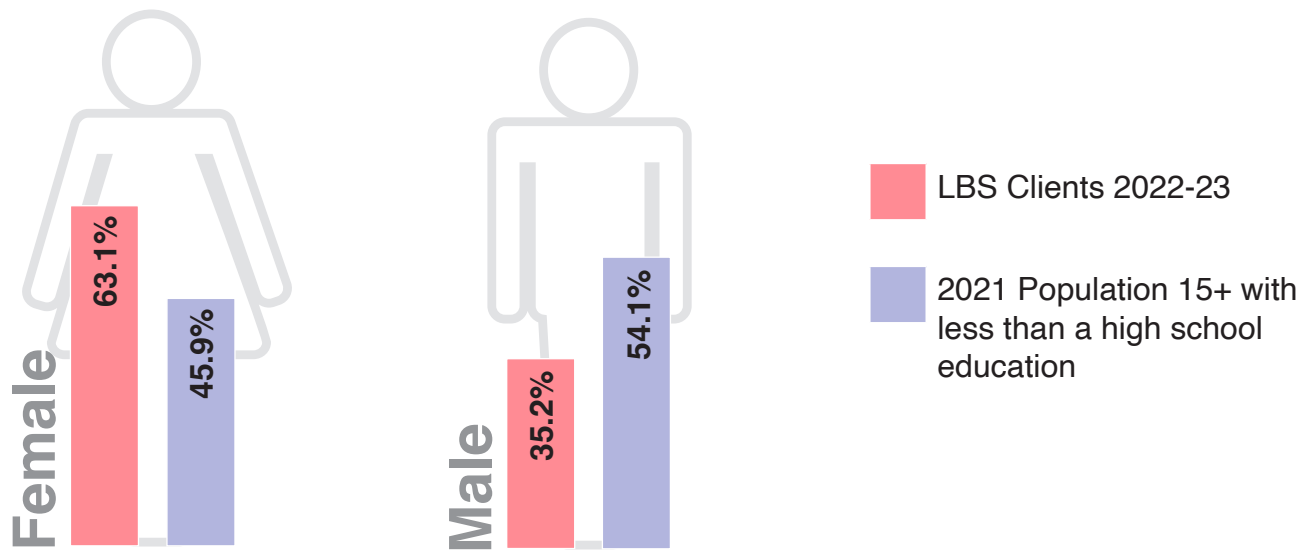
The number of LBS new, in-person learners increased from 688 in 2021/2022 to 719 in 2022/2023. In addition to new learners, the LBS program served 289 carryover learners, bring the total number of learners served in 2022/2023 to 1,008.



Gender

Of the 1,008 learners, 63.1 percent were female, and 35.2 percent were male. The LBS program continues to be the only EO program that has a higher female participation rate.

While lower literacy skills are not synonymous with lower educational attainment, there is a correlation between the two. Therefore, LBS clients are compared to the population (15+) with less than a high school certificate. Female LBS clients are significantly over-represented and male clients considerably under-represented when compared to the distribution of the population with less than a high school certificate.

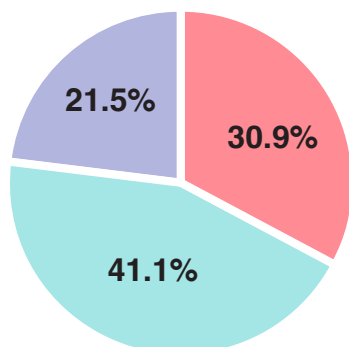


Source: 2021 Census

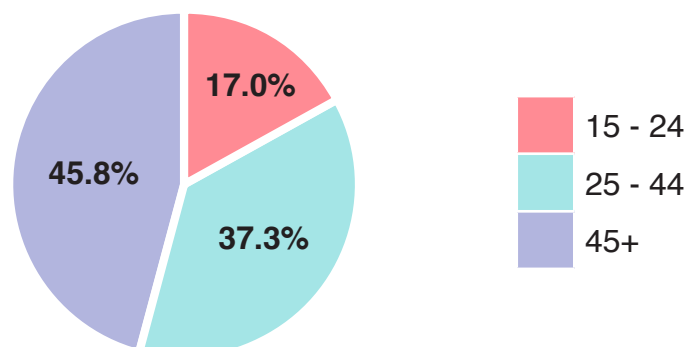
Age Cohort

An examination of LBS clients by age cohort shows that most clients (41.1%) are 25 to 44 years old, yet only 37.3 percent of the population is in this category. The majority (45.8%) of the population base is 45 to 64 years of age and only 21.5 percent of LBS clients are in this age cohort.

LBS Clients 2022/2023



2021 Population 15 to 64



CANADA ONTARIO JOB GRANT (COJG)

The Canada Ontario Job Grant (COJG) program offers non-repayable grants to help employers train their employees and invest in their workforce. The COJG is available to all kinds of businesses with short-term training needs.

The 2022/2023 EO data shows the number of participating employers declined from 100 in 2018/2019 to 67 in 2022/2023. A funding decrease over this time period may account for the decline in participating employers. Changes to the program guidelines also likely affected the number and size of employers applying. For example, one year 60 employers may receive smaller grants, but the next year fewer employers may receive larger grants because of more trainees. Therefore, it is not appropriate to draw conclusions solely based on the change in the number of participating employers.

COJG employer participants with less than 50 employees account for just 0.5 percent of all employers in this employee size range, which is miniscule given that employers with less than 50 employees as a group represent 99% of all area businesses. COJG employer participants with 50 or more employees account for 3.7 percent of all employers in this employee size range.

Given the high proportion of employers who report being unsatisfied with the quality of their current workforce and the difficulty finding new qualified workers, one would expect more employers to participate in this program.

Employer Participants

Employee Size Range	Number of COJG Employers 2018-19	Number of COJG Employers 2021-22	Number of COJG Employers 2022-23	COJG Employers as a % of Total* Employers 2022-23
Less than 50	68	87	51	0.5%
50 or more employees	32	22	16	3.7%
Total Number of Employers	100	109	67	

*Does not include sole proprietors or owner operators

Outcome at Exit

The effectiveness of the local COJG program is clear: 88 percent of employer participants reported an increase in trainee productivity, and 97 percent of employer participants reported that training met workforce needs.

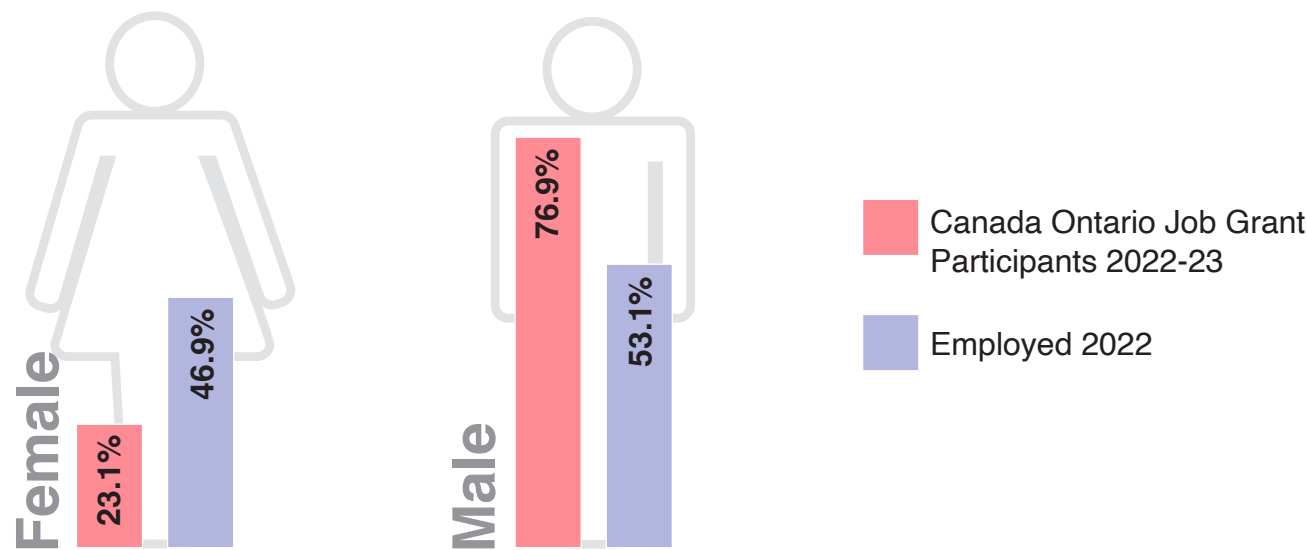
COJG Employee Participants

Given the decline in the number of COJG participating employers, it is not surprising that the number of participants also declined between 2021-22 and 2022-23 (552 compared to 186).

Clients 2018-19	447
Clients 2021-22	552
Clients 2022-23	186

Gender

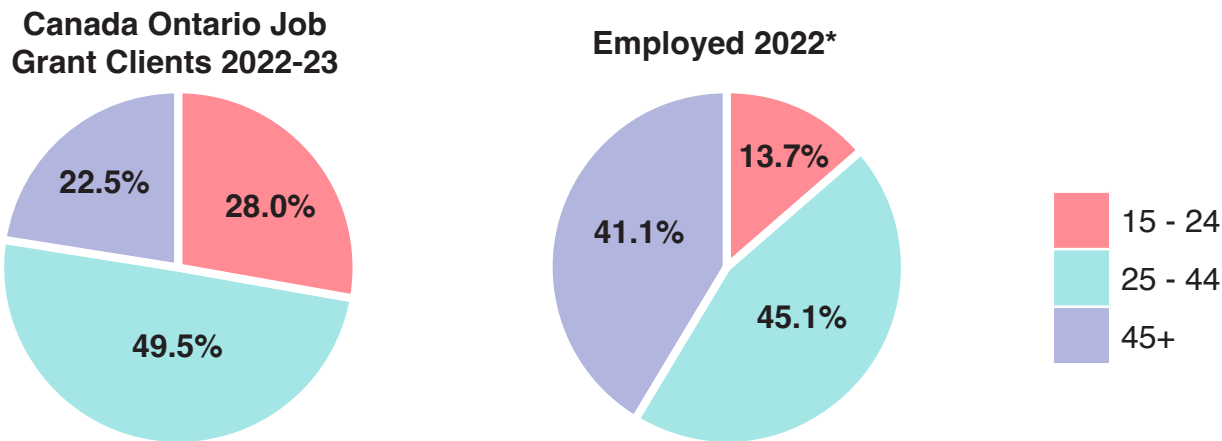
Males form a far greater proportion of COJG participants than females: 76.9 percent compared to 23.1 percent. Interestingly, females represent 46.9 percent of employed people in the Stratford-Bruce Region, suggesting females are under-represented in the client base. This may suggest that the employers who are participating are from more male dominated fields.



2022 Labour Force Survey, custom tabulation

Age Cohort

With 41.1 percent of the employed labour force being 45 years of age and over, the proportion of COJG client in this cohort are under-represented, accounting for just 22.5 percent of all clients. That said, employers decide which employees participate in training.



2022 Labour Force Survey, custom tabulation

YOUTH JOB CONNECTION (YJC)

The Youth Job Connection (YJC) program provides more intensive support to youth aged 15 to 29 years old to help them overcome barriers to employment. The program is designed to assist youth participate in education or training and/or find employment. The number of Youth Job Connection clients decreased considerably from 214 in 2021/2022 to 125 in 2022/2023.

Record job vacancies in 2022, particularly those in sales and service occupations, may explain why youth are not seeking out this program.

As the numbers of youth engaging in the program have declined significantly, this program will not be delivered moving forward in the Stratford-Bruce Economic Region.

Youth Job Connection Clients

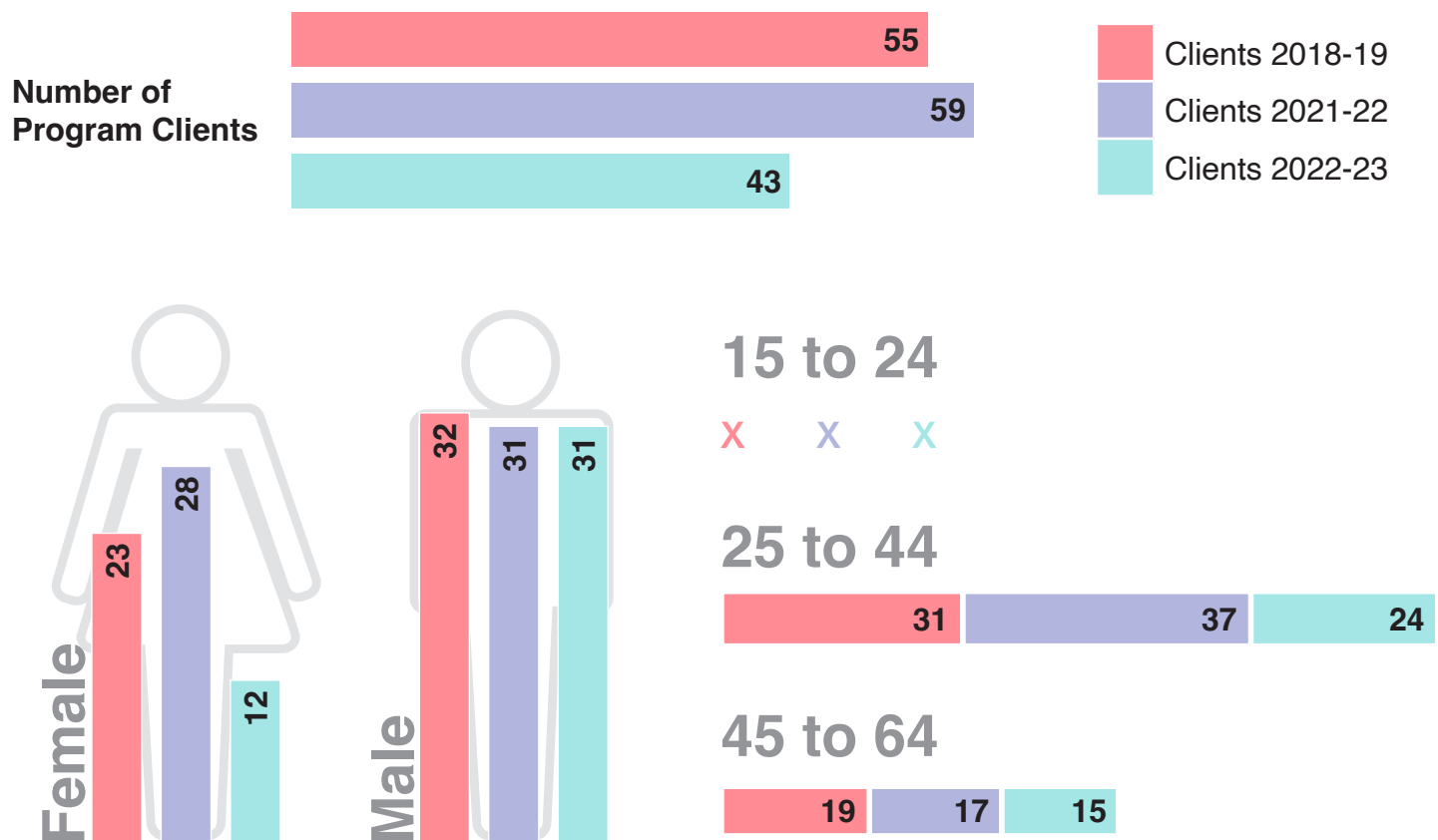
2018-19	220
2021-22	214
2022-23	125

BETTER JOBS ONTARIO (BJO)

The Better Jobs Ontario program (formally known as the Second Career program) provides services to help the unemployed to acquire new skills to transition into occupations that are in demand. The number of Better Jobs Ontario clients has declined over the past five years, from 55 clients in 2018/2019 to 43 clients in 2022/2023. The number of female clients declined significantly over the time-period.

The number of job vacancies in the region were at an all-time high in 2022; this may have contributed to the decline. With more job opportunities available, those with less experience may not require the services offered in the Better Jobs Ontario program.

Program administrators believe the application process is daunting and overwhelming for many potential applicants who have been out of school for a long time. There are pilot programs being led by LBS to review the application process, hopefully the results make it easier for more people to apply.



X Data Suppressed

TRAINING, EDUCATION, EXPERIENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY (TEER) ASSESSMENT

Understanding the occupation make-up of the Stratford-Bruce Economic Region is important because it helps clarify what skill sets are in demand and what type of training is required to enter an occupation. As is the norm, the occupational classification is updated over time to better capture new jobs and required skill sets. As such, a new National Occupation Classification (NOC 2021) was incorporated into the 2021 Census. NOC 2021 is quite different than the previous version (NOC 2016) and makes comparisons over the time-period mostly unworkable.

The defining feature of the new NOC (2021) is that it incorporates a Training, Education, Experience and Responsibility (TEER) component into the classification which reflects the extent to which each of these components is required for a given occupation. In total, there are six TEER categories, from 0 to 5. Each TEER category shows that there are different ways to gain the skills necessary to work in a specific occupation (educational attainment is not the only factor). For example, TEER 4 occupations require completion of secondary school or several weeks of on- the-job training with some secondary school education, or experience in a related occupation from TEER 5.

The most detailed occupation is at the 5-digit level, where the second digit refers to the TEER level of an occupation.

The definition of TEER categories is presented below:

Definition of TEER Categories:

The NOC 2021 V1.0 Training, Education, Experience and Responsibility (TEER)	when the second digit is...
Management - TEER	0
Completion of a university degree (bachelor's, master's or doctorate); or Previous experience and expertise in subject matter knowledge from a related occupation found in TEER 2 (when applicable).	1
Completion of a post-secondary education program of two to three years at community college, institute of technology or CÉGEP; or Completion of an apprenticeship training program of two to five years; or Occupations with supervisory or significant safety (e.g. police officers and firefighters) responsibilities; or Several years of experience in a related occupation from TEER 3 (when applicable).	2

Completion of a post-secondary education program of less than two years at community college, institute of technology or CÉGEP; or Completion of an apprenticeship training program of less than two years; or More than six months of on-the-job training, training courses or specific work experience with some secondary school education; or Several years of experience in a related occupation from TEER 4 (when applicable).	3
Completion of secondary school; or Several weeks of on-the-job training with some secondary school education; or Experience in a related occupation from TEER 5 (when applicable).	4
Short work demonstration and no formal educational requirements.	5

There is a wide range of the number of occupations which fall within a given tier. In the Stratford-Bruce Economic Region, there are 160 different 5-digit occupations within TEER 2 and just 44 5-digit occupations in TEER 5. Understanding the detailed occupations within each TEER may help employees, job seekers and training organizations determine an appropriate training path for individuals.

5-Digit Occupations by TEER Categories

Stratford-Bruce Economic Region

NOC 2021	Number of 5-digit occupations
TEER 0	43
TEER 1	95
TEER 2	160
TEER 3	68
TEER 4	94
TEER 5	44

Source: 2021 Census, custom tabulation

Contact Four County Labour Market Planning Board for a list of the 5-digit occupations within each TEER category.

LABOUR FORCE BY TEER CATEGORIES AND GENDER

In the Stratford-Bruce Economic Region, the greatest number of individuals in the labour force (35,525) fall within TEER 2, which includes 160 different 5-digit occupations. TEER 5 occupations account for 27,615 members of the labour force but only include 44 different occupations. Third is TEER 3, with a labour force of 25,595, consisting of 68 different 5-digit occupations.

Further investigation shows that there is quite a discrepancy between men and women in the labour force by TEER. The greatest number of women in the labour force are in TEER 3 (14,010), followed by TEER 4 (13,780) and TEER 5 (13,080), and these TEERs have a similar number of constituents.

Men, on the other hand, dominate TEER 2 with 23,835 persons in the labour force, followed by TEER 5 with 14,500 and TEER 0 with 13,440. Understanding these gender differences may help better target training initiatives.

Stratford-Bruce Economic Region

NOC 2021	Number of 5-digit occupations	Both Genders In the Labour Force	Men In the Labour Force #	Women In the Labour Force #
TEER 0	43	21,235	13,440	7,785
TEER 1	95	19,020	7,200	11,820
TEER 2	160	35,525	23,835	11,705
TEER 3	68	25,595	11,575	14,010
TEER 4	94	25,265	11,495	13,780
TEER 5	44	27,615	14,500	13,080

Source: 2021 Census, custom tabulation

LABOUR FORCE BY TEER CATEGORIES AND AGE COHORT

Of course, the age of an individual also influences what form of skills development is most feasible: for example, a 15- to 24-year-old may find it easier to pursue formal schooling, whereas someone over 45 may benefit the most from on-the-job training. Similarly, someone who is over 55 will likely have more experience than someone who is under 45. The table below shows the labour force by age cohorts and TEER level.

Stratford-Bruce Economic Region

NOC 2021	15 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65+
TEER 0	600	7,345	4,650	5,855	2,965
TEER 1	785	9,030	4,130	3,535	1,535
TEER 2	3,600	16,620	7,040	6,405	1,830
TEER 3	2,785	9,125	5,065	6,145	2,410
TEER 4	4,300	8,745	4,530	5,690	1,940
TEER 5	9,845	8,055	3,535	4,715	1,870

Source: 2021 Census, custom tabulation

MOVERS BY COUNTY AND TEER CATEGORIES

It is important to recognise the dynamic nature of the Stratford-Bruce labour market. Over time, the labour pool/supply changes as new residents move to the Stratford-Bruce Region and others leave the Region. This churn within the labour market has consequences on resident skill levels **and** the demand for labour force assistance. The table below captures the number of people who moved to each of Bruce, Grey, Huron and Perth between 2016 and 2021. Data regarding people who moved away is not available at this time.

Bruce County attracted a total of 14,675 new residents between 2016 and 2021; over the same time period, Grey welcomed 21,745 new residents; Huron received 10,790 new people; and Perth attracted 18,220. This is a substantial number of new residents.

Since the majority of EO clients are in TEER level 4 and 5 occupations, new residents at these TEER levels deserves an examination. Between 2016 and 2021, the number of TEER 4 and 5 people combined welcomed to Bruce County was 4,200; the number to Grey was 7,360; to Huron 4,070; and Perth received 6,645 TEER 4 and 5 people. The continual influx of new residents to Stratford-Bruce offers an ongoing supply of new labour. This influx could also mean that many of these movers may require training and EO support to find and remain in gainful employment.

NOC 2021	Moved to Bruce 2016 to 2021	Moved to Grey 2016 to 2021	Moved to Huron 2016 to 2021	Moved to Perth 2016 to 2021
TEER 0	1,720	2,640	1,295	1,800
TEER 1	2,315	3,310	1,225	2,345
TEER 2	4,050	4,810	2,390	3,995
TEER 3	2,390	3,625	1,810	2,435
TEER 4	1,960	3,385	1,850	3,555
TEER 5	2,240	3,975	2,220	3,090
Total	14,675	21,745	10,790	18,220

Source: 2021 Census, Table 98-10-0590-01

Includes persons aged 15 years and over who have worked at some point in the time between January 2020 and May 2021

MINISTRY BASE INDICATORS

Complementing the 2023 Labour Market Developments and the Stratford-Bruce Economic Region's prevailing labour market issues are seven base indicators. These indicators represent the minimum quantitative analysis and are comparable between the 25 Ontario Workforce Planning Boards. While the base indicators do not offer current (2023) insight into the Stratford-Bruce labour market, they do provide high level insight into several metrics that are associated with labour market characteristics and trends.

INDICATOR 1: NUMBER OF EMPLOYERS BY EMPLOYEE SIZE RANGE

Stratford-Bruce's business composition is typical of most regions in the province. The majority of businesses/employers are owner operated, followed by businesses employing 1 to 4 employees. There are only 194 business establishments (including public and private entities) with 100 or more employees.

Note: A comparison of the number of businesses over time is particularly tempting to assess to understand the impact of the pandemic. Unfortunately, increases or decreases (depending on the County) in the number of business (2020 to 2022) have been affected by a change in the Postal Code Conversion File (PCCF). In short, some businesses have been assigned to a different adjoining County (Census Division) because the PCCF version changed, not because of a physical change in the business location. For this reason, trend analysis would be misleading and, therefore, not valuable to conduct.

Number of Employers/Businesses

Stratford-Bruce Economic Region

2022

Employee Size Range	Number #	Distribution %
0 (without employees)	30,320	72.0
1-4	6,508	15.5
5-9	2,376	5.6
10-19	1,535	3.6
20-49	897	2.1
50-99	255	0.6
100+	194	0.5
Total	42,085	100.0

Source: Canadian Business Counts, December 2022

Number of Payroll Employers by NAICS Sector

Stratford-Bruce businesses that have payroll employees can also be examined by their North American Industrial Classification (NAICS) sector. The construction sector has the most businesses accounting for 15.8 percent of all businesses, second is the Retail trade sector representing 12.9 percent of the total number of businesses.

Number of Businesses with Payroll Employees by Sector

Stratford-Bruce Economic Region 2022

NAICS Sector	Number #	Distribution %
11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	1,315	11.8
21 Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	43	0.4
22 Utilities	19	0.2
23 Construction	1,772	15.8
31-33 Manufacturing	709	6.3
41 Wholesale trade	407	3.6
44-45 Retail trade	1,443	12.9
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	381	3.4
51 Information and cultural industries	131	1.2
52 Finance and insurance	360	3.2
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	471	4.2
54 Professional, scientific and technical services	825	7.4
55 Management of companies and enterprises	36	0.3
56 Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	425	3.8
61 Educational services	104	0.9
62 Health care and social assistance	881	7.9
71 Arts, entertainment, and recreation	150	1.3
72 Accommodation and food services	678	6.1
81 Other services (except public administration)	984	8.8
91 Public administration	46	0.4
Total with employees	11,180	100.0

Canadian Business Counts, December 2022

INDICATOR 2: EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY AND OCCUPATION

A total of 144,080 people were employed in the Stratford-Bruce Region in 2021. However, between 2016 and 2021, total employment declined by 2,505 people or 1.7 percent. Contravening this trend were the Construction and Professional, scientific, technical services Sectors, as each experienced significant absolute and percentage growth in employment. The Accommodation and food services Sector, the Arts, entertainment and recreation Sector, and the Manufacturing Sector each experienced significant absolute and percentage decline in employment.

Undoubtedly, the pandemic affected the 2021 employment numbers as they were collected in May of 2021, a period in which some Sectors struggled to operate due to lock downs.

Employment by Industry (NAICS-2)

Stratford-Bruce Economic Region

	2016	2021	Absolute Change #	Percent Change %
11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting	13,950	13,225	-725	-5.2
21 Mining, Quarrying, oil & gas extraction	1,095	1,055	-40	-3.7
22 Utilities	5,800	6,380	580	10.0
23 Construction	13,245	15,510	2,265	17.1
31-33 Manufacturing	18,615	17,310	-1,305	-7.0
41 Wholesale trade	4,870	4,465	-405	-8.3
44-45 Retail trade	16,100	15,975	-125	-0.8
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	5,405	4,935	-470	-8.7
51 Information and cultural industries	1,725	1,735	10	0.6
52 Finance and insurance	4,280	4,200	-80	-1.9
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	1,925	2,015	90	4.7
54 Professional, scientific, technical services	5,730	7,675	1,945	33.9
55 Management of companies, enterprises	75	145	70	93.3
56 Admin., waste mngmt., remediation	4,835	4,655	-180	-3.7
61 Educational services	8,050	7,625	-425	-5.3
62 Health care and social assistance	17,135	18,425	1,290	7.5
71 Arts, entertainment and recreation	3,175	2,110	-1,065	-33.5
72 Accommodation and food services	8,800	5,855	-2,945	-33.5
81 Other services (except public admin.)	6,775	6,090	-685	-10.1
91 Public administration	5,000	4,695	-305	-6.1
Total	146,585	144,080	-2,505	-1.7

Source: 2021 Census, custom tabulation

An examination of employment by occupation reveals that Legislative and senior management occupations added the most jobs (1,625) while Sales and service occupations saw the greatest absolute decline in jobs (4,415). From a percent change perspective, the number of jobs in the Natural and applied sciences occupation increased 20.7 percent and the Natural resources and agriculture occupations declined 17.2 percent.

Employment by Occupation* (NOC-1)

Stratford-Bruce Economic Region

	2016	2021	Absolute Change #	Percent Change %
0 Legislative and senior management	19,250	20,875	1,625	8.4
1 Business, finance and administration	17,710	18,530	820	4.6
2 Natural and applied sciences	5,905	7,125	1,220	20.7
3 Health occupations	9,960	10,980	1,020	10.2
4 Education, law, social, community, government	13,655	12,935	-720	-5.3
5 Art, culture, recreation and sport occupations	3,405	3,045	-360	-10.6
6 Sales and service occupations	30,420	26,005	-4,415	-14.5
7 Trades, transport and equipment operators	26,885	27,390	505	1.9
8 Natural resources and agriculture occupations	7,260	6,010	-1,250	-17.2
9 Manufacturing and utilities occupations	12,150	11,190	-960	-7.9
Total	146,590	144,080	-2,510	-1.7

Source: 2021 Census, custom tabulation

*2021 data has been recoded to NOC 2016 version 1.3

INDICATOR 3: POPULATION OF MARGINALIZED GROUPS

Assisting marginalized groups access the job market has always been a priority of the Workforce Planning Boards. Marginalized groups - including recent immigrants, indigenous people and racialized people - are the focus of Indicator 3.

The tables below show the population 15+ and change in the population of these groups.

Indigenous and Racialized populations 15+ by Gender

Stratford-Bruce Economic Region


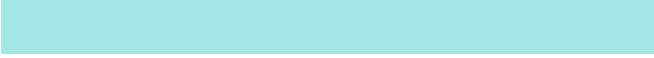


Population Groups	2016			2021			Change		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Indigenous	5,495	2,520	2,975	6,240	2,945	3,295	745	425	320
Racialized	5,495	2,635	2,860	9,580	4,690	4,890	4,085	2,055	2,030

Source: 2021 Census, custom tabulation

Recent Immigrants by Age Cohort

Stratford-Bruce Economic Region

Number of Immigrants between 2016 and 2021

Age 15 to 24		225
Age 25 to 54		1,295
Age 55 and older		200
Total 15+		1,720

Source: 2021 Census, custom tabulation

Total does not sum due to rounding.

Total Population by Age Cohort and Gender

Stratford-Bruce Economic Region

Age Groups	2016			2021			Change		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
15-24	33,165	17,000	16,165	31,385	16,350	15,040	-1,780	-650	1,125
25-54	100,390	49,560	50,840	102,790	51,095	51,700	2,400	1,535	860
55+	109,605	53,040	56,555	125,145	60,330	64,805	15,540	7,290	8,250
Total 15+	243,165	119,605	123,555	259,320	127,775	131,545	16,155	8,170	7,990

Source: 2021 Census, custom tabulation

Employment Rate

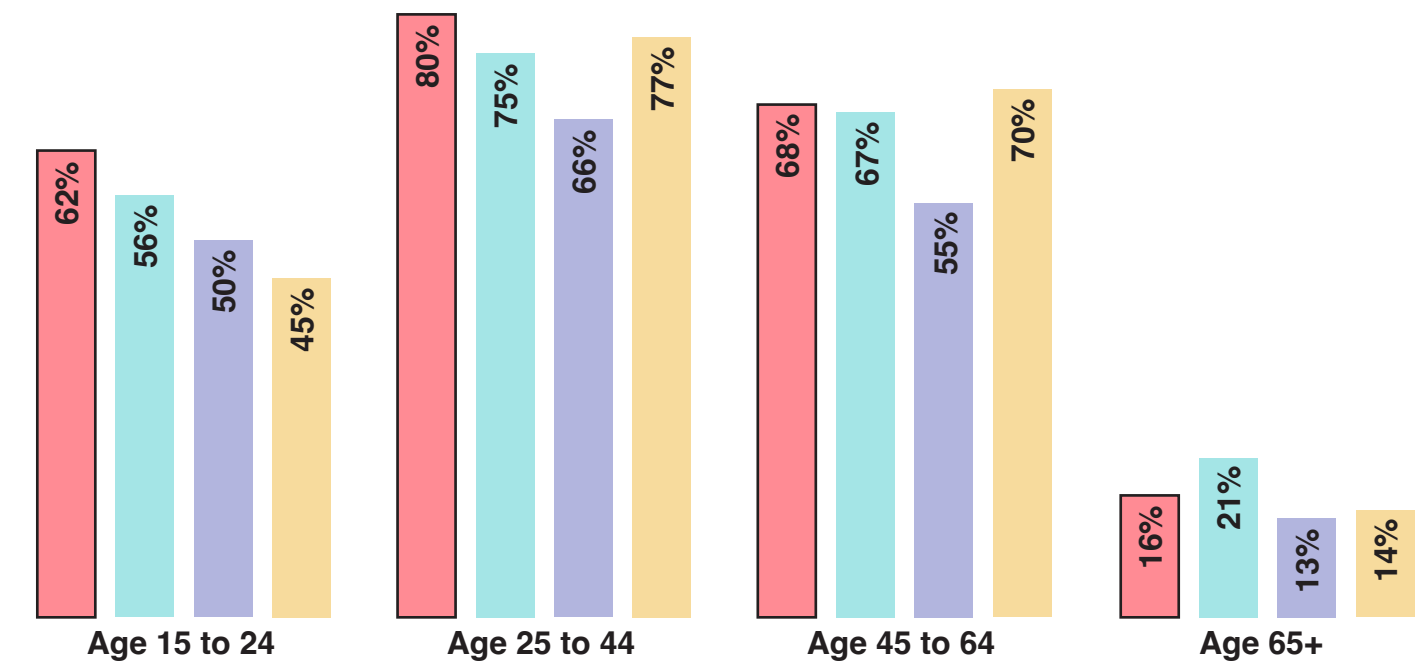
Since the population of these marginalized groups doesn't tell us about their wellbeing in the labour market, the employment rate of each group is examined. The employment rate measures the percentage of a given population who are employed. Comparing the employment rate of the total population to recent immigrants, indigenous and racialized groups show how engaged these groups are in the job market.

An examination of 15- to 24-year-olds reveals that the total population has a much higher employment rate than recent immigrants, indigenous and racialized people. The same trend holds for persons 25 to 44 years of age, which is concerning as this is an age where most people need to be working.

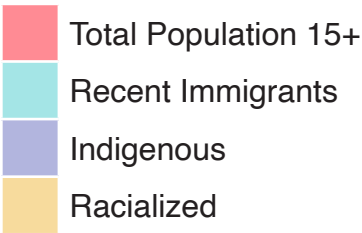
In the 45 to 64 age cohort the racialized population has the highest employment rate, where in the 65+ age group recent immigrants have the highest employment rate. This may be out of necessity, as these groups may not be able to retire due to their financial circumstances.

Overall, based on the employment rate, the Indigenous population is the most marginalized group in the Stratford-Bruce Economic Region.

Employment Rate
Stratford-Bruce Economic Region
2021



Source: 2021 Census, custom tabulation



INDICATOR 4: MIGRATION (COUNTY DATA ONLY)

An examination of migration movements in and out of each County reveals the ability of each County to attract and retain its population/labour force. Several observations are noteworthy. First, the majority of in and out migrants in each County are in the 25 to 44 age cohort. The fact that each County experienced a net gain in this age group is positive from a labour supply perspective, as this age cohort has the highest labour force participation rate. Perth was the only County to have the greatest net gain in the 25 to 44 age cohort.

Second, the greatest net gain of migrants in Bruce, Grey and Huron are in the 45 to 64 age cohort, an age bracket also with a high labour force participation rate. Lastly, all four counties experienced a net gain of people 65 years of age and over, but these gains were modest compared to other age cohorts.

Migration Characteristics

Bruce County

2016 to 2021

Age Groups	In-migrants	Out-migrants	Net-migrants
0-17	3,442	1,966	1,476
18-24	1,518	1,569	-51
25-44	5,254	3,566	1,688
45-64	4,496	2,262	2,234
65+	2,194	2,129	65
Total	16,904	11,492	5,412

Source: Statistics Canada, Taxfiler

Migration Characteristics

Grey County

2016 to 2021

Age Groups	In-migrants	Out-migrants	Net-migrants
0-17	5,272	3,293	1,979
18-24	2,604	2,498	106
25-44	7,634	5,634	2,000
45-64	6,956	3,634	3,322
65+	3,329	2,576	753
Total	25,795	17,635	8,160

Source: Statistics Canada, Taxfiler

Migration Characteristics

Huron County

2016 to 2021

Age Groups	In-migrants	Out-migrants	Net-migrants
0-17	2,602	1,869	733
18-24	1,320	1,404	-84
25-44	3,533	3,146	387
45-64	3,298	1,721	1,577
65+	1,889	1,476	413
Total	12,642	9,616	3,026

Source: Statistics Canada, Taxfiler

Migration Characteristics

Perth County

2016 to 2021

Age Groups	In-migrants	Out-migrants	Net-migrants
0-17	3,733	2,768	965
18-24	2,152	2,151	1
25-44	6,498	4,923	1,575
45-64	3,393	2,209	1,184
65+	2,065	1,172	893
Total	17,841	13,223	4,618

Source: Statistics Canada, Taxfiler

INDICATOR 5: LABOUR FORCE BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Indicator 5 shows the Stratford-Bruce labour force by their highest level of educational attainment. In 2021, members of the labour force with a Secondary school diploma or equivalent accounted for the greatest share (30.0%) of the labour force. Second were members of the labour force who held a College/CEGEP or other non-university degree or diploma.

A comparison of the 2016 to 2021 time period shows a considerable decline in the number of people in the labour force with no certificate, diploma or degree, as well as a substantial increase in the number of people with a university certificate, degree or diploma.

It is a concern to see that the number of people in the labour force that hold an apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma has declined 9.8 percent over the period, as the shortage for skilled trade workers is well documented in the Stratford-Bruce Region.

Labour Force by Educational Attainment

Stratford-Bruce Economic Region

	2016 #	2021 #	2016-2021 Absolute Change #	2016-2021 Percent Change %
No certificate, diploma, degree	25,780	22,890	-2,890	-11.2%
Secondary school diploma or equivalent	46,420	47,005	585	1.3%
Apprenticeship or Trades certificate or diploma	14,180	12,790	-1,390	-9.8%
College/CEGEP or other non-university degree or diploma	42,555	42,955	400	0.9%
University certificate, degree or diploma	25,910	31,050	5,140	19.8%
Total	154,840	156,690	1,850	1.2%

Source: 2021 Census, custom tabulation

Total does not sum due to rounding.

INDICATOR 6: 2023 TOP 25 JOB POSTINGS BY 5-DIGIT OCCUPATION

In 2023, using the Connect2Jobs.ca platform a total of 7,466 distinct jobs were posted online by businesses within the Stratford-Bruce Area. The top five 5-digit occupations accounted for 26.1 percent of all job postings. The top 25, 5-digit occupations accounted for 39.8 percent of all job postings in 2023. Insight regarding the number of positions filled is not available.

Within the top 25 job postings, the majority (eight) were TEER 5 occupations, followed by six occupations in TEER 2, and five in TEER 4.

The average hourly wage for TEER 4 and 5 occupations ranged from \$17 to \$27 an hour, wages vary by occupation. TEER 2 job posting ranged from \$18 to \$35 an hour.

Job Postings

Stratford-Bruce Economic Region
2023

TEER	NOC 2021	Job Posting #	Average Wage hr \$
4	64100 Retail salespersons and visual merchandisers	678	17.9
5	65201 Food counter attendants, kitchen helpers and related support occupations	365	19.1
5	65102 Store shelf stockers, clerks, and order fillers	344	18.3
1	31301 Registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses	291	51.0
2	42201 Social and community service workers	274	25.3
4	64409 Other customer and information services representatives	241	19.3
3	63200 Cooks	229	19.5
2	32101 Licensed practical nurses	213	35.3
0	60020 Retail and wholesale trade managers	179	21.1
5	75101 Material handlers	161	21.2
5	65310 Light duty cleaners	152	19.9
3	13110 Administrative assistants	133	24.3
5	65200 Food and beverage servers	130	17.3
3	73300 Transport truck drivers	120	26.2
5	65100 Cashiers	120	18.6
3	33102 Nurse aides, orderlies, and patient service associates	112	23.6
2	62020 Food service supervisors	92	18.2

5	75110 Construction trades helpers and labourers	89	26.9
4	14101 Receptionists	89	21.6
2	62010 Retail sales supervisors	85	20.4
2	62101 Retail and wholesale buyers	84	19.5
4	14100 General office support workers	81	24.0
5	65211 Operators and attendants in amusement, recreation and sport	78	19.6
2	42202 Early childhood educators and assistants	76	22.3
4	54100 Program leaders and instructors in recreation, sport, and fitness	71	24.7
	Top 25	2,975	
Total		7,466	

Source: Connect2Jobs.ca platform

INDICATOR 7: MEDIAN INCOME

The median income refers to the midpoint, where half the population has income below the median and half above the median. In Stratford-Bruce, the median total income, which includes income from all sources was \$41,200 in 2020. The median total income in 2015 was \$33,337, although numbers have not been adjusted for inflation.

An examination of median employment income provides insight into what people earned while working (full-time or part-time). In 2020, the median employment income in Stratford-Bruce was \$34,000 up from \$29,566 in 2015 (again not adjusted for inflation). The proportion of people who earned over \$100,000 saw the greatest shift, increasing from 6.9 percent of the total in 2015 to 9.9 percent in 2015.

Income Characteristics

Stratford-Bruce Economic Region

	2015	2020
Median Total Income (from all sources)	\$33,337	\$41,200
Median Employment Income	\$29,566	\$34,000
Employment Income Cohorts	# of people	# of people
Under \$10,000	44,265	44,410
\$10,000 to \$19,999	23,720	21,965
\$20,000 to \$29,999	19,565	16,760
\$30,000 to \$39,999	19,200	17,085
\$40,000 to \$49,999	17,140	17,045
\$50,000 to \$59,999	12,965	14,335
\$60,000 to \$69,999	8,885	11,045
\$70,000 to \$79,999	6,195	7,930
\$80,000 to \$89,999	4,825	5,950
\$90,000 to \$99,999	4,720	5,280
\$100,000 and over	11,995	17,715
Total	173,470	179,515

Source: 2016 and 2021 Census, Community Profiles

Note: Income numbers have not been adjusted for inflation

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFICIARIES

While Employment Insurance beneficiaries is not a Ministry-required indicator, the number of people and change in the number of people collecting employment insurance benefits in the Stratford-Bruce Region provides insight into the health of the job market. “Regular Benefits” include people who were laid off from their job; “Other Benefits” include people who collect employment insurance for reasons such as sickness, maternity, paternity, adoption, compassionate care, work sharing, retraining and benefits.

In October 2023, 1,780 Stratford-Bruce residents received regular employment insurance benefits, constituting a 29.9 percent increase over the number of residents receiving benefits in October 2022. This increase is unsurprising given the fact that the number of unemployed has risen and job vacancies have declined. The number of people collecting “other benefits” declined 2.1 percent over the same time period.

Employment Insurance Beneficiaries

Regular Benefits and Other Benefits
Stratford-Bruce Economic Region

Month	Regular EI Benefits #	Other EI Benefits #
October 2022	1,370	2,830
November 2022	1,810	2,700
December 2022	2,690	2,710
January 2023	4,250	2,690
February 2023	4,170	2,680
March 2023	4,260	2,680
April 2023	2,760	2,680
May 2023	1,730	1,290
June 2023	1,490	2,780
July 2023	2,970	2,880
August 2023	3,210	2,900
September 2023	1,640	2,790
October 2023	1,780	2,770

Source: Statistics Canada, Table 14-10-0343-01

ACTION PLAN 2023 - 2024 - CURRENT PROJECTS

Throughout the year the Planning Board engages with a variety of local stakeholders and partners to discuss local workforce trends and challenges. Data is collected and analyzed that supports evidence based decisions regarding workforce development through our Local Labour Market Plan (LLMP). Our Local Board Projects are proposed for funding to the MLITSD in January and released the following year typically between January and March. They are released through a variety of channels such as email, social media, and newsletters. They can be accessed on our website www.planningboard.ca. Be sure to watch for our spring consultation sessions where we will discuss the results of this year's projects and announce our proposed projects for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

Understanding Workforce Attraction and Retention

The Stratford-Bruce Peninsula Economic Region is facing a historically low unemployment rate; leaving a small pool of residents to fill an unprecedented number of vacant positions. Encouraging more residents to participate in the workforce has limited potential as participation rates in younger age groups such as those between the ages of 24 and 54 are already quite high and often exceed provincial rates. Furthermore, population aging reduces the number of people available for work. Unsurprisingly, older people are less likely to participate in the job market. As such, it is critical that Bruce, Grey, Huron and Perth counties are equipped to attract and retain residents, particularly people from younger age groups. While workforce attraction and retention is vital to the local supply of labour, it is not currently well measured or understood. The development of effective workforce attraction and retention strategies (to address labour shortages), hinges on a more thorough understanding of this topic.

Skilled Trades Handbook Update

Skilled trades are in high demand and make up a large portion of vacant jobs within the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula Economic Region. These positions on average offer higher wages and growth opportunities compared to other industries. In 2021, the National Occupation Classification (NOC) underwent a series of changes which better describe and explain the experience, education, responsibilities, and training associated with each occupation. An updated career handbook that includes these attributes will help students and job seekers explore careers/opportunities in the trades and help map out requirements and pathways associated with each occupation.

2023 Employee Survey

Chronic labour shortages are the result of a historically low unemployment rate and record high job vacancies. Four County employers point to a complete lack of applicants as a major challenge affecting their organization. Yet each year thousands of employees leave or lose their job in the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula Economic Region (the Region). Recent EmployerOne data revealed that employers identified “quits” as the main type of job separation they face. Of course, the pandemic forced some workers to retreat or re-evaluate their employment options. Further compounding the matter is the fact that the number of people not in the labour force hit a historic high in the Region in 2022. Therefore, an Employee Survey that gathers information as to why people are choosing to leave their jobs and to what can be done to retain and encourage more people to return to the workforce is necessary. Research shows that when employees are satisfied in their jobs, they are more likely to stay, and one thing that leads to higher employee satisfaction is having flexibility in their work. The survey will explore various flexible work arrangements among other things.

LONG RANGE FOCUS

Our region has a significant aging population, low participation, and high volumes of job vacancies when compared to Ontario. This leaves our employers with a small pool of available workers. We will focus our projects and partnerships in these areas for the long term success and growth of the region's workforce:

- Exploring the possibilities of utilizing flexible work arrangements to engage with older workers aged 45+ who are currently not participating in the workforce to return, and mitigate the loss of experienced workers to retirement;
- Encouraging the creation of clear career paths and opportunities to learn new skills for employees retention & personal growth for workers aged 25 to 44;
- Addressing shortages of child care facilities and where possible implementing flexible work arrangements to encourage women 25 to 44 years of age to re-enter or remain in the workforce;
- Provide opportunities for those 18 to 30 years of age to participate in leadership programs to create a sense of belonging to encourage them to return should they leave the area for education or other purposes;
- Creation of resources, educational and experiential opportunities to those 15 to 24 years of age on the in demand occupations available in the region in effort to encourage our younger workforce to remain in the region;
- Participate in initiatives that support our local labour market in addressing diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Supporting and encouraging employers to utilize marginalized groups currently participating at lower rates to fill vacancies;
- Identify opportunities to improve worker job satisfaction regarding safety in occupations dealing directly with the public. These could include service training, revised policies, mental health benefits, and supervisor training.

Supporting Articles

<https://www.publichealth.columbia.edu/research/others/age-smart-employer/resources/guides/advantages-older-workers>

<https://www.talentguard.com/blog/how-to-improve-employee-retention-and-company-performance-with-career-pathing>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/ontario-new-ece-plan-1.7030462#:~:text=Ministry%20officials%20have%20warned%20the,the%20national%20child%2Dcare%20system.>

<https://www.ruralontarioinstitute.ca/changemakers>

<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1002797/ontario-helping-more-students-enter-the-skilled-trades-faster>

<https://cupe.ca/diverse-workplaces-bring-many-benefits>

<https://www.hrcloud.com/blog/who-is-considered-to-be-a-frontline-worker>

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