

5. EMPLOYER SURVEY

5.1. SURVEY DESIGN

Based on the literature review, environmental scan and meetings with steering committee members and employers' representatives, a 30-question employer questionnaire was drafted by the CFDC-SN research team. The draft questionnaire was reviewed by VCLMP Steering Committee members who provided input into content and structure as well as suggestions for additional survey questions. The questionnaire was pre-tested by delivering it to neighbouring community employers who volunteered to complete the questionnaire and make suggestions on structure and content. The final draft incorporated changes suggested by steering committee members and by pre-test volunteers.

The final questionnaire asked respondents to answer questions pertaining to:

Their organization's characteristics (such as organization type, sector, number of full-time, part-time, and casual/contract/seasonal employees, whether they were a home-based business, peak season for employing casual/contract/seasonal employees, and number of employees in various age groups);

Perceived employment issues (such as problems recruiting and retaining employees, adequacy of current training programs, perceptions about why employees leave their jobs and which sector attracts them, and perceptions of who should be responsible for ensuring workers obtain basic job skills);

Their response to perceived labour shortages (such as strategies used for recruitment and retention, for selling the business and replacing exiting employees and geographic areas employers use to recruit employees).

5.2. POPULATION, SAMPLE, AND RESPONSE RATE

Population

The CFDC-SN staff compiled key contacts and addresses of all organizations representing private business, non-profit organizations, government (including First Nations), and government-funded agencies within the Vanderhoof area. These contacts were identified from the District of Vanderhoof business licence list, Chamber of Commerce listings, telephone directory blue pages (government), white pages, yellow pages and a list of contacts previously compiled by CFDC-SN. Staff attended two local Cattlemen's Association meetings to help identify employers in the agricultural sector.

A research team member first contacted each potential respondent (employer) by telephone. Employers were asked if they currently employed workers, employed workers in the past year, or had plans to employ workers within in the next year. Those who answered affirmatively were invited to receive a hand-delivered questionnaire. For most respondents it was the business owner or organizational leader who completed the questionnaire, while in some larger organizations staff members assisted by compiling numbers and identifying types of employees.

The research team attempted to contact employers several times. Six employers did not return messages, or did not answer. Employers whose telephone numbers were no longer in service were removed from the list.

The target population included 288 employers in the Vanderhoof, B.C. area that had at least one paid employee (part-time or full-time) over the last year or that expected to hire an employee part-time or full-time in the next year. The survey area was the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Electoral Area F, which includes Vanderhoof rural and the District of Vanderhoof.

Sample

The research team chose to use a census sampling approach (all individuals in the population were included in the sample frame). Given the desire to compile data such as total number of employees, the research team wanted to obtain as many responses as possible rather than use a random sample approach where only a percentage of the employers would receive a questionnaire. Given the small size of the population, the pre-work done to advertise the survey and to prepare employers for the survey, and the resources available for multiple follow-up contacts with non-respondents, it was deemed reasonable to conduct a census rather than a random sample of the population. A non-respondent survey was conducted to determine the level of non-response error (see Section 6.3).

Survey Implementation

A 30-question questionnaire was distributed to employers and included a one-page cover letter from Keith Federink, General Manager of CFDC-SN, inviting employers to respond and ensuring confidentiality in accordance with Canada's *Privacy Act* and *Access to Information Act*. As an incentive to participate, employers who participated in the survey were told their name would be entered in a draw for a piece of local art.

The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) was used as a guide to develop the survey's employer sectors and the Canadian National Occupation Code (CNO) was used to develop the occupation categories.

For each employer, the research team made multiple telephone calls to set up a time to deliver a written survey or to record a non-response survey. Employers were given several days to complete the survey before receiving a call from the

research team to arrange for pick-up. In some cases, employers were visited in person to promote completing the survey and to establish a pick-up time.

Thirteen employers requested to have surveys faxed or emailed to them. They were primarily out-of-town employers who answered the survey on behalf of local offices. Of the 13 surveys faxed or emailed, 11 were completed and returned. Four emailed or faxed surveys came from within the Vanderhoof area and the nine surveys came from head offices in Terrace, Smithers, and Prince George. Some employers preferred to drop off or mail their survey to the CFDC office but everyone who received a hand-delivered survey was given the opportunity to have the survey picked up.

Response Rate

Out of 288 employers, 220 completed and returned the questionnaires—a 76% response rate, which is considered excellent for surveys. Eight of 68 employers did not respond to the survey or provide numbers of employees. Based on general knowledge about the non-respondent employers, it is believed that the survey captured the employers who hire the vast majority of employees in Vanderhoof. Of the total number of employees represented by the survey and the count from non-respondents, the survey represents responses from employers who employ approximately 93% of all employees in Vanderhoof and area.

Analysis Process

After surveys were collected, the data was entered into Zoomerang, a commercially available Web-based survey compilation tool. Zoomerang allows researchers to enter results from written surveys and automatically compile the data. The data was subsequently transferred into SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) for the analysis. SPSS is a standard commercial data analysis tool.

5.3. NON-RESPONDENTS

Because there is a greater risk of bias when using a census sampling approach rather than a random sampling approach, the research team conducted a “non-respondent survey” to identify if there were considerable differences in those who completed a survey compared with those who did not. The research team tested non-response error by conducting a brief demographic telephone survey of 60 employers (called “non-respondents”) who agreed to provide minimal information but declined to complete the full questionnaire and compared the data with those who did complete a full questionnaire. The research team asked the 60 non-respondent employers six questions (Appendix C).

Non-respondent employers represented 15 sectors, with accommodation and food service; business, building and other support services; and retail trade sectors having the highest number of non-respondent employers. Twelve percent of the non-respondents were from the accommodation and food service sector, 12% were from the business, building, and other support services sector, and 12% were from the retail trade sector. There was slight over-representation in non-respondents from the business, building and other support services sector, as well as the transportation and warehousing, and agriculture sectors, while there was slight under-representation from the retail trade sector, and the finance, insurance, real estate and leasing sector compared with the population. No one from the education, high tech, public administration, and utilities sectors were included in the non-respondents, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Non-respondents compared with respondents

	# employers who completed demographic survey ("non-respondents")	% employers who completed demographic survey ("non-respondents")	# employers surveyed ("respondents")	% employers surveyed ("respondents")
Accomm. & Food Service	7	11.7	22	10.0
Business, Building and Other Support Services	7	11.7	12	5.5
Retail-Trade	7	11.7	39	17.7
Agriculture	6	10.0	11	5.0
Construction	6	10.0	22	10.0
Transportation and Warehousing	5	8.3	5	2.3
Health Care & Social Assistance	4	6.7	14	6.4
Manufacturing	4	6.7	16	7.3
Other	4	6.7	8	3.6
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	3	5.0	10	4.5
Information, Culture and Recreation	2	3.3	6	2.7
Logging	2	3.3	17	7.7
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Leasing	1	1.7	9	4.1
Forestry	1	1.7	8	3.6
Wholesale Trade	1	1.7	1	0.5
Education Services	0	0	9	4.1
High Tech	0	0	2	.9
Public Administration	0	0	7	3.2
Utilities	0	0	2	.9
TOTAL	60	100.0	220	100.0

The key difference between respondents and non-respondents is that respondents included several larger companies that have many more employees than do the non-respondents. Table 2 shows a comparison between those who completed the comprehensive survey and those who responded only to the demographic survey in terms of average number of full-time, part-time, and casual/contract/seasonal employees. Most non-respondent employers have a small number of employees: the average number of full-time employees was two, part-time was one, and casual/contract/seasonal was two, with relatively little variation among employers (known as standard deviation¹⁹). By contrast, the average number of employees for respondents was 11 full-time, three part-time, and three casual/contract/seasonal employees.

Table 2: Employee type – respondents and non-respondents

	Avg. # FT employees	SD	Avg. # PT employees	SD	Avg. # casual/contract/seasonal employees	SD
Respondents	11	3.2	3	6.9	3	7.40
Non-respondents	2	2.3	1	1.7	2	2.58

Table 3 shows a comparison of employers by organization size and the number of employees for respondents and non-respondents. One percent of the respondent employers (the two largest employers) had 21% of the employees and 47% of employers had only 8% of employees. For non-respondents, two-thirds of the employers employed 45% of employees.

Table 3: Organization size – respondents and non-respondents

Size	Respondents				Non-respondents			
	No. of employers	% of employers	No. of employees	% of employees	No. of employers	% of employers	No. of employees	% of employees
Small (1–5)	82	37.3%	253	6.7%	46	77%	112	45%
Medium (6–25)	102	46.4%	1156	30.5%	14	23%	136	55%
Large (26–193)	31	14.1%	1739	45.8%	0	0	0	0
Very large (300–330)	2	.91%	645	17%	0	0	0	0
Total	220	100%	3,793	100%	60	100%	248	100%

¹⁹Standard deviation is a measure of variability among responses. A high standard deviation means that there is a great deal of variation among responses around an average (some employers gave very low values, some gave very high values). A low standard deviation means that respondents gave more similar answers without a great deal of variability among them. The statistic is used in conjunction with average, since average could be misleading without knowing the dispersion around the average.

5.4. LIMITATIONS OF THE EMPLOYER SURVEY

The employer survey weighed responses of all employers equally regardless of how many employees they each employed. The non-respondent survey shows that the results of the study could be biased towards perceptions of those representing smaller organizations. The 187 small organizations (those under 25 employees) that represent 85% of the employers employ only 37% of the employees, while the 33 largest organizations (those with 25 or more employees) that represent 15% of the employers employ 63% of employees. To compensate for this potential bias, the report presents some results from employers in larger organizations separately from those in smaller organizations.

In compiling total number of employees, eight employers did not respond to the survey or provide numbers of employees. It is not known how many employees were represented by these eight organizations.

Vanderhoof-area employers varied widely in numbers of employees, ranging from one to 330. Results from the survey are provided either in the aggregate (based on percent of all employers), broken out by employment sector, or by occupation group. When broken out by sector, the numbers of employers for some sectors is quite small (in some cases, only two employers), so percentages used to describe results (such as 50% of employers in that sector) could be misleading.

6. EMPLOYER SURVEY RESULTS

6.1. PROFILE OF EMPLOYERS

Organization Size

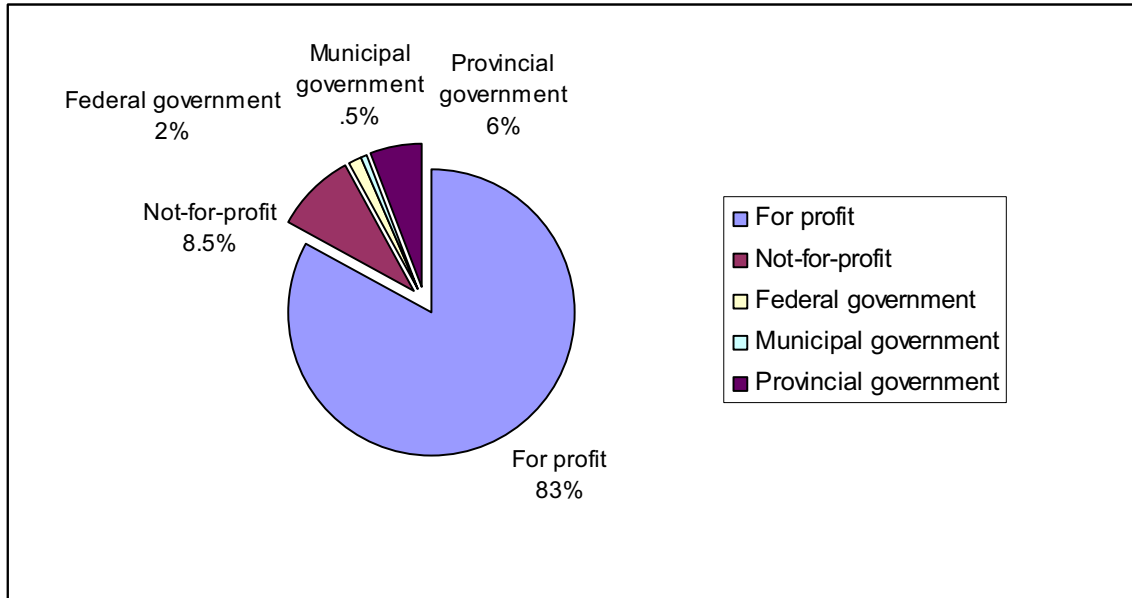
The data shows that the Vanderhoof labour market is dominated by a few large organizations and yet many employers are small organizations with only a few employees. Small organizations (under six employees) comprise almost half (47%) of the employers, but hire only 8% of the employees. A third of all employees are employed by the five largest organizations that hire more than 100 employees each and that employ 1,062 employees in total. These numbers illustrate a significant difference between those who work for large organizations that are more likely to have resources for more employee services, training, recruitment and retention programs and those who work for smaller employers that likely do not have human resource departments or resources to aid in recruitment and retention.

Employers in 18 sectors (plus an “other” category) reported having 2,459 full-time, 651 part-time, and 536 casual/contract/seasonal employees. Almost all (90%) employers reported employing full-time workers, 60% employ part-time workers, and 54% had casual/contract/seasonal employees.

Organization Type

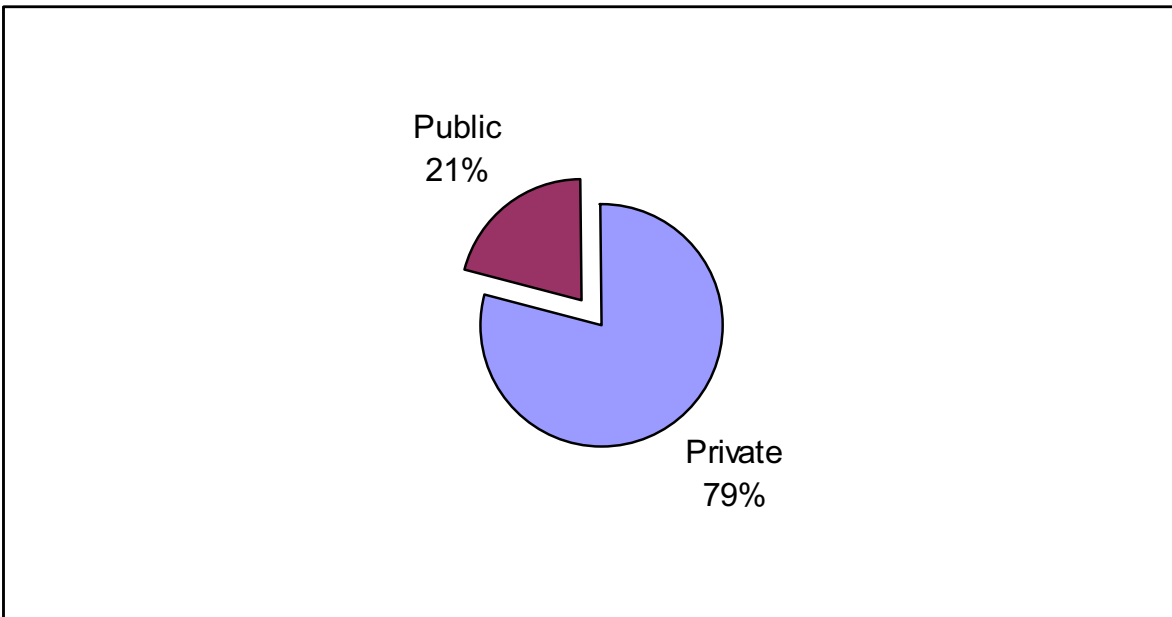
Two hundred and twenty (220) employers representing over 20 sectors completed the survey. By far, the greatest number of employers represent for-profit businesses (183 or 83%), followed by 19 not-for-profit organizations (8.5%). Thirteen provincial government employers represent 6% of the total, while 2% are federal government. There is one municipal government employer at .5%. The non-profit organizations include one First-Nation organization. These percentages are shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Employers by organization type.



Seventy-nine percent of all employees work for private (profit or not-for-profit) organizations, while 21% of employees work for public organizations (federal, provincial, municipal, or First Nations' government), as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Percentage of employees working for public and private organizations.



Sectors

Table 4 shows the number and percentage of employers who represent various employment sectors, using categories of the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). See Appendix F for more information on NAICS. The highest number of employers (39) work in the retail trade sector, followed by accommodation and food service, and construction sectors (22 employers each). In total, 3,793 employees were employed in the past 12 months. Twelve percent of employees worked in either the logging or forestry sector. Employers that considered themselves in the “other” category included auto body and repair, local church, and First Nations administration.

Table 4: Number of employers and employees by sector*

	No. of employers	% of total employers surveyed	Total individual employees	% of employees
Accommodation and Food Service	22	10.0	333	8.8
Agriculture	11	5.0	77	2.0
Business, Building and Other Support Services	12	5.5	166	4.4
Construction	22	10.0	281	7.4
Education Services	9	4.1	667	17.6
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Leasing	9	4.1	58	1.5
Forestry	8	3.6	208	5.5
Health care and Social Assistance	14	6.4	249	6.6
High Tech	2	.9	6	0.2
Information, Culture and recreation	6	2.7	47	1.2
Logging	17	7.7	238	6.3
Manufacturing	16	7.3	645	17.0
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	10	4.5	61	1.6
Public Administration	7	3.2	87	2.3
Retail Trade	39	17.7	465	12.3
Transportation and Warehousing	5	2.3	82	2.2
Utilities	2	.9	11	0.3
Wholesale Trade	1	.5	13	0.3
Other (e.g. auto body and repairs, local church, and First Nations Administration)	8	3.6	99	2.6
Total	220	100.0	3,793	100.0

* Note: In the last 12 months

Table 5, on the following page, breaks down the number of employees by sector in terms of full-time, part-time and casual/contract/seasonal.

Table 5: Number of full-time, part-time, and casual/contract/seasonal employees by sector*

	No. of full-time employees	No. of part-time employees	No. of casual/contract/seasonal employees
Accommodation and Food Service	146	151	30
Agriculture	26	39	14
Business, Building and Other Support Services	113	18	27
Construction	173	44	94
Education Services	508	29	125
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Leasing	33	13	13
Forestry	182	6	18
Health Care and Social Assistance	92	79	71
High Tech	4	0	2
Information, Culture and Recreation	10	5	32
Logging	189	10	28
Manufacturing	580	33	11
Other (e.g. auto body and repairs, local church, and First Nations Administration)	50	17	0
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	30	11	20
Public Administration	46	10	15
Retail Trade	245	181	27
Transportation and Warehousing	58	5	9
Utilities	11	0	0
Wholesale Trade	13	0	0
Total	2,459	651	536

* Note: In the last 12 months

6.1.1. Full-time, Part-time and Seasonal Employees

Half of the employers who responded currently have three or fewer full-time employees and three-quarters of employers have fewer than 10 full-time employees. Two percent of organizations have 100 or more full-time employees, and two employers have more than 300 people each.

Except in agriculture and accommodation and food service, employers reported hiring more full-time employees than part-time or casual/contract/seasonal workers. The average number of employees per organization is 11 full-time, three part-time, and three casual/contract/seasonal workers, with significant variation among employers (a high standard deviation). The average was skewed by the existence of two large organizations that employ 315 and 330 people. Even without those two organizations, however, the average is nine full-time employees, three part-time, and three casual/contract/seasonal employees.

Just over half of all employers hire only one or no part-time employees and close to three-quarters of employers have two or fewer employees. No employer hires more than 60 part-time employees. Eight employers hire between 20 and 60 part-time employees. In total, this represents more than 250 part-time jobs.

Seventy-nine percent of employers who have casual/contract/seasonal employees have fewer than three casual/contract/seasonal employees. One organization hires 89 casual/contract/seasonal positions.

Home based

Twenty-four percent (52 employers) said that their organizations are home-based. Thirty percent of all home-based businesses are in construction, 18% are in logging, and 11% are in agriculture. All other sectors represent less than 8% of the total percent of home based businesses.

The highest percentage of home-based businesses within a sector is in construction (16 or 72% of construction businesses, followed by logging (10 or 59% of logging businesses), agriculture (6 or 54%), and high tech (1 or 50% of high tech businesses). There were no home-based businesses in the following sectors: finance, insurance, real estate and leasing; forestry; health care and social assistance; professional, scientific and technical services; public administration; utilities; and wholesale trade. Refer to Table A in Appendix G for details.

6.2. CURRENT LABOUR SITUATION IN VANDERHOOF AREA

6.2.1. Job vacancies filled in the past 12 months

Across all employment sectors, the total number of *new* job vacancies reported in the past 12 months was 265. There were 569 vacancies for *replacement* positions, for a total of 834 job vacancies in the past 12 months. One employer reported 89 new job vacancies, slightly positively skewing the average of 1.2 vacancies for new positions per employer, and 2.5 vacancies for replacement positions per employer. The one employer that hired 89 contract workers last year is from the education sector and reported hiring many workers for small pieces of work throughout the year. The number of job vacancies reported in the past 12 months does not necessarily correspond with the number of positions filled in the past 12 months, discussed in Section 7.2.2.

6.2.2. Number of positions filled and expected to be filled, by occupation

Table 6 shows the number and percentage of positions expected to be filled in the next five years and in 6–10 years, broken out by occupation group. By far, the highest numbers of positions filled are among labourers (380 or 43% of all job types filled in past 12 months). The greatest number of positions in the next five years is also expected in labour occupations (851 or 46.9% in the next five years, an average of 170 per year).

Table 6: Positions filled in the last 12 months, and positions expected to be filled in 1–5 years and in 6–10 years

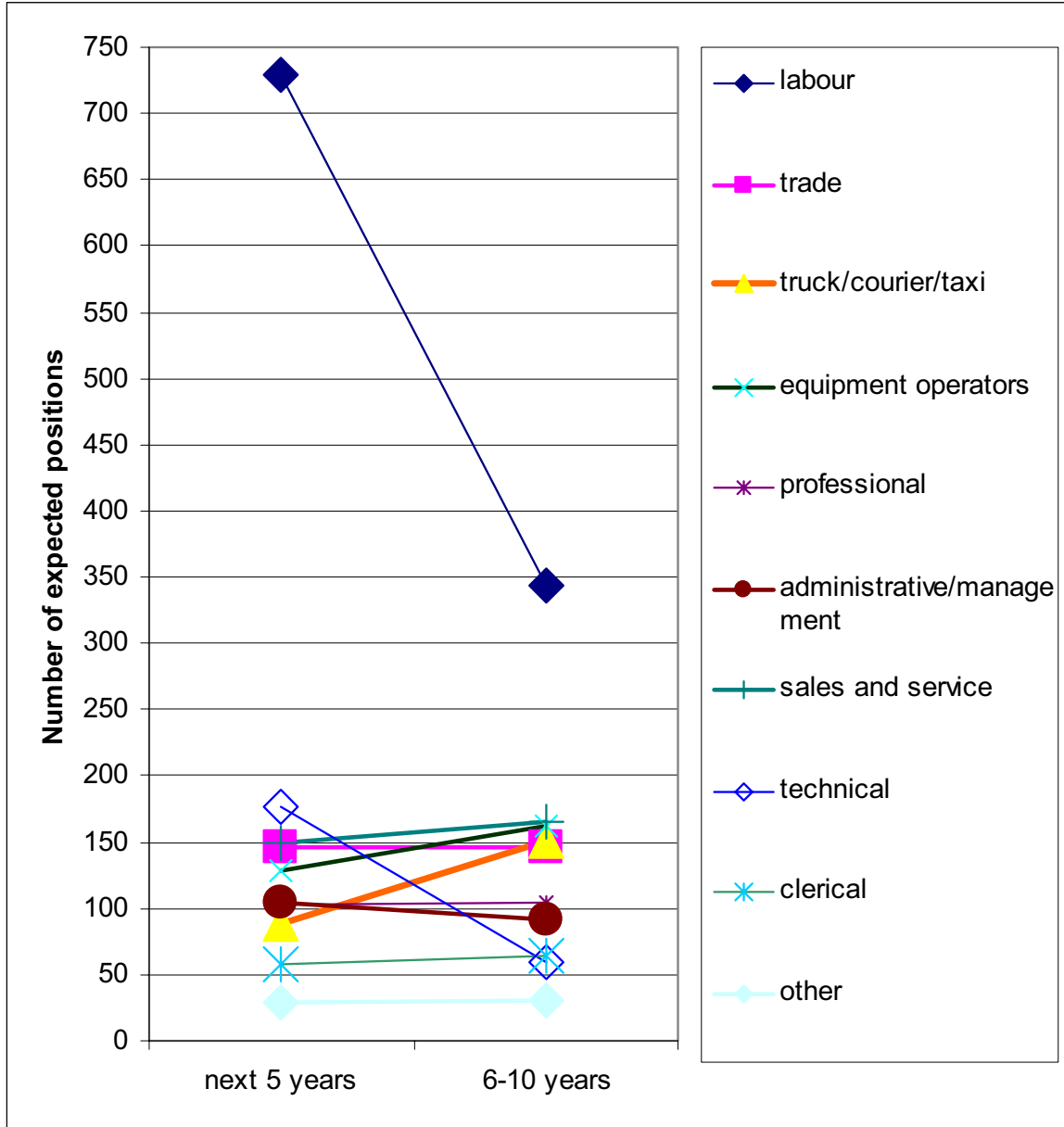
	No. of positions filled in the past 12 mo.	% of positions filled in the past 12 months	No. positions expected to be filled in the next 5 years	% of positions expected to be filled in the next 5 years	No. positions expected to be filled in 6–10 years	% of positions expected to be filled in 6–10 years
OCCUPATIONS/JOBS						
LABOURERS						
Labourers–Primary Industry	98	11.0	81	4.5	85	5.0
Labourers–Processing, Manufacturing & Utilities	51	5.7	201	11.1	327	19.4
Labourers–Government	6	0.7	6	0.3	6	0.4
Labourers–Construction	26	2.9	25	1.4	43	2.5
Labourers–Agriculture	5	0.6	8	0.4	7	0.4
Labourers–Retail/Wholesale	108	12.2	423	23.3	62	3.7
General Labourers	39	4.4	107	5.9	59	3.5
Labourers Total	380	42.8	851	46.9	589	34.9
TRADES PERSONS						
Trade–Electrical	7	0.8	11	0.6	8	0.5
Trade–Plumbing/Heating	6	0.7	11	0.6	16	0.9
Trade–Millwright	7	0.8	24	1.3	15	0.9
Trade–Welding/Fabricating	10	1.1	15	0.8	14	0.8
Trade–Automotive/Heavy Duty Mechanic	15	1.7	34	1.9	37	2.2
Trade- Carpentry/Cabinet Making/Painting	15	1.7	25	1.4	31	1.8
Trade–Other	23	2.6	56	3.1	53	3.1
Trades Persons Total	83	9.4	235	12.9	177	10.5
Truck/Bus/Courier/Taxi Drivers	62	7.0	89	4.9	151	8.9
EQUIPMENT OPERATORS						
Equipment Operators–Forest Industry	30	3.4	67	3.7	46	2.7
Equipment Operators–Agriculture	22	2.5	54	3.0	103	6.1
Other Equipment Operators	6	0.7	6	0.3	14	0.8
Equipment Operators Total	58	6.5	127	7.0	163	9.7
PROFESSIONAL						
Professional Business	15	1.7	14	0.8	19	1.1
Professional Health	27	3.0	54	3.0	64	3.8
Professional Education	10	1.1	26	1.4	22	1.3
Other Professional	7	0.8	17	0.9	6	0.4
Professional Total	51	5.7	111	6.1	111	6.6

SALES AND SERVICE						
Retail Sales/Service Clerks	70	7.9	156	8.6	188	11.1
Skilled Retail/Service	9	1.0	15	0.8	17	1.0
Retail Management	6	0.7	19	1.0	27	1.6
Sales and Service Total	85	9.6	190	10.5	275	16.3
ADMINISTRATIVE/MANAGEMENT						
Skilled Administrative	10	1.1	32	1.8	36	2.1
Supervisory	25	2.8	52	2.9	47	2.8
Managers	20	2.3	34	1.9	24	1.4
Skilled in Arts, Culture, Recreation and Sport	1	0.1	6	0.3	4	0.2
Administrative/Management Total	56	6.3	124	6.8	111	6.6
TECHNICAL						
Technical—Health	15	1.7	16	0.9	16	0.9
Technical—Forestry	14	1.6	19	1.0	26	1.5
Technical—Agriculture	2	0.2	2	0.1	2	0.1
Technical—Business	1	0.1	1	0.1	0	0.0
Other—Technical	12	1.4	14	0.8	17	1.0
Technical Total	44	5.0	52	2.9	61	3.6
CLERICAL						
Clerical—Business/Finance	36	4.1	50	2.8	58	3.4
Clerical—Health	3	0.3	5	0.3	3	0.2
Clerical—Education	2	0.2	2	0.1	1	0.1
Clerical—Government	9	1.0	5	0.3	2	0.1
Clerical—Other	8	0.9	4	0.2	2	0.1
Clerical Total	58	6.5	66	3.6	66	3.9
Other	10	1.1	29	1.6	30	1.8
Total	887	100%	1,815	100%	1,688	100%

The greatest number expected in 6–10 years is also in the labour occupations (589 or 35% in the next 6–10 years, an average of 117 per year). These positions are due to employees resigning or retiring or anticipated increases or decreases in the number of jobs each employer is expected to have available. Economic and environmental conditions could influence position availability as well.

Figure 9 shows the sharp decline in the number of new labourers required in 6–10 years compared with the next five years, while almost all other general job categories predict a slight increase in the longer term, except for positions in the technical job category. These are expected to decrease from 176, five years from now, to 60 in 6–10 years. The number of equipment operator positions is expected to slightly increase in 6–10 years.

Figure 9: Positions expected to be filled in the next 5 years and in 6–10 years, by occupation.



See Appendix H for details of each sector broken out further.

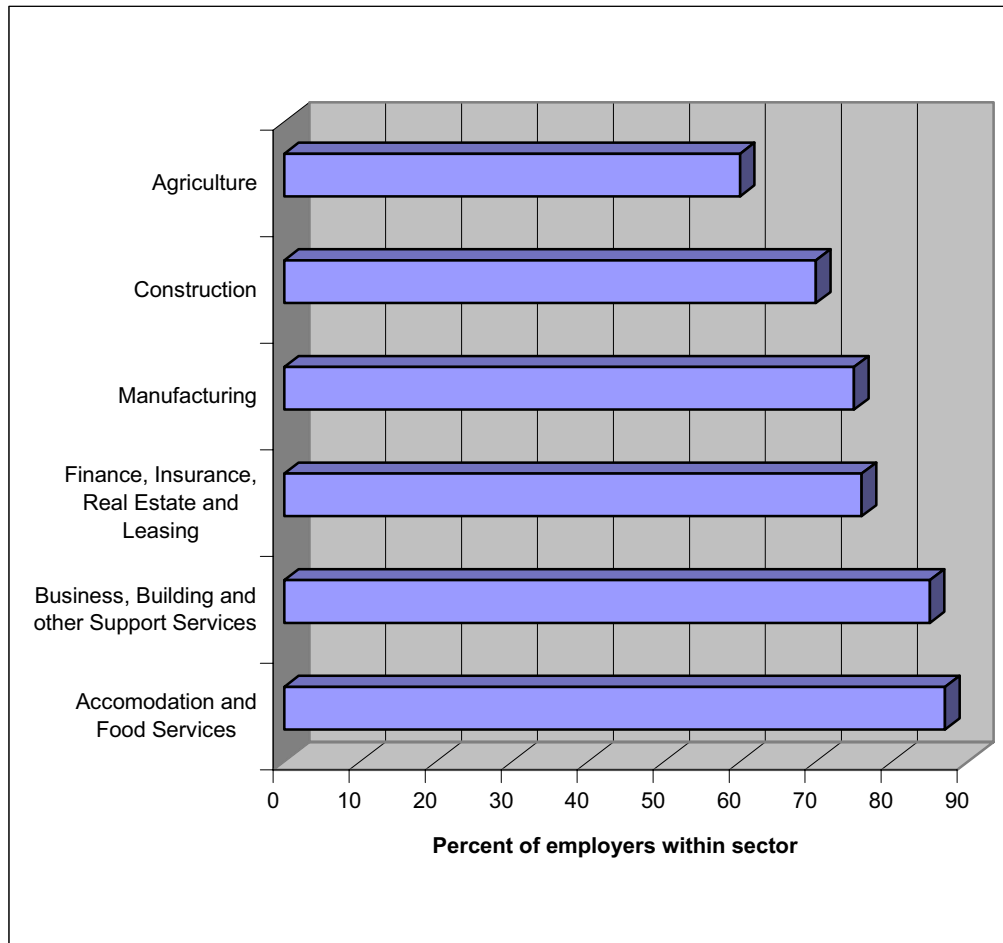
6.2.3. Peak Seasons for Hiring Casual/Contract/Seasonal Employees

Of the 54% of employers who hire casual/contract/seasonal employees, by far the highest percentage consider the summer months their peak time (July–September) (52% or 65 employers). Eighteen percent (22) employ them in October to December and the same number considers April to June as their peak time. The season where the fewest employers hire casual/contract/seasonal

employees is January to March (12% or 15 employers).²⁰ The logging sector, where 17 employers reporting employing 446 workers but only constitutes 8% of employers in the survey, employ workers heavily in the winter months (70% of logging employers said that January to March was their peak season)

Across most sectors, more than half of employers who hire casual/contract/seasonal employees employ them during the summer months, as shown in Figure 10. However, seventy percent of logging casual/contract/seasonal employees work in January–March; two-thirds of health care and social assistance in April–June; 40% of information, two-thirds of transportation and warehousing in April–June, culture and recreation employees work in the summer and the remainder are evenly spread across all other seasons.

Figure 10: Employers, by sector, who hire casual/contract/seasonal employees – summer months.



See Table B in Appendix G for data broken out by sectors.

²⁰ Note that 15% of the employers (the largest employers) hire 63% of all employees reported in the survey.

6.2.4. Number of months worked by casual/contract/seasonal employees

Casual/contract/seasonal employees work an average of five months per year across all sectors, but the number of months varies widely within sectors, ranging from 0 to 12 months with a standard deviation of 3.8 months, shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Number of months worked – casual/contract/seasonal employees

	Minimum	Maximum	Average	SD
Number months that casual/contract/seasonals work	0	12	5.34	3.8

Health care and social assistance employers reported hiring casual/contract/seasonal employees for the highest number of average months, at 7.6 months, with a standard deviation of 5.6 months (one of the most diverse sectors in terms of number of months). Business, building and other support services hire casual/contract/seasonal employees for an average of seven months, with less variation in months in that sector as compared to the health care and social assistance sector (SD = 2.9). Public administration and manufacturing employers reported hiring casual/contract/seasonal employees for an average of seven months, but there was also considerable variation within the sector. The shortest average number of months was reported by the finance, insurance, real estate and leasing sector, at one month, but there was significant variation among employers within that sector.

6.2.5. Number of employees by age group

The average number of employees per employer is 2.8 in the 15 to 24-year-old group, while in the 25 to 34-year-old group the average is 3.4. In the 35 to 44-year-old group the average is 4, and in the 45 to 54-year-olds the average is 4.2. The smallest group is 55 and over with an average of just under two employees per employer. There is enormous variation; among employers of 35 to 44-year-olds, the standard deviation is 11.2. See Table 8.

Table 8: Numbers of employees by age group

	Minimum	Maximum	Average # Employees	SD
15- to 24-yr-olds	0	67	2.8	6.5
25- to 34-yr-olds	0	69	3.4	8.1
35- to 44-yr-olds	0	99	4.0	11.2
45- to 54-yr-olds	0	105	4.2	10.9
55 and over	0	47	1.7	5.2

Table 9 shows that the accommodations/food service, agriculture, and to some degree retail/trade sectors are largely dominated by the youngest workers among

employees in this survey. Sectors such as health care and social assistance, forestry, and public administration lean slightly more towards older workers, and sectors such as business, building and other support services, education services, and transportation/warehousing tend to have more workers in the middle age groups.

Table 9: Employees by age group and sector

SECTOR	# Employed by Age Group				
	15-24	25-34	34-44	45-54	Over 55
Accommodation and Food Service	110	58	53	43	13
Agriculture	28	4	8	11	8
Business, Building & Other Support Serv.	23	18	22	14	5
Construction	34	70	56	52	26
Education Services	20	114	237	93	85
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing	10	18	4	16	5
Forestry	27	39	54	76	16
Health Care and Social Assistance	5	48	66	64	35
High Tech	0	0	2	2	3
Information, Culture and Recreation	13	6	4	9	5
Logging	27	52	44	63	23
Manufacturing	108	135	107	92	58
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	5	12	11	13	7
Public Administration	7	6	8	18	17
Retail Trade	131	92	87	71	26
Transportation and Warehousing	9	21	24	10	6
Utilities	0	0	1	3	4
Wholesale Trade	1	2	3	6	1
Other	11	11	10	9	6
TOTAL	569	706	801	665	349

6.3. PERCEIVED LABOUR ISSUES

6.3.1. Employees expected to retire

Employers were asked to indicate the number of employees they expect will retire in the next year, in the next 1–5 years, and 6–10 years. Employers indicated they are aware of a relatively small number of expected retirements compared with the total number of employees per sector; even in the public administration sector that has a high percentage of older employees on average, employers reported only six employees expected to retire in 1–5 years. In the next year for all employers, 36 employees are expected to retire. In one to five years, 170 are expected to retire, and in 6–10 years, 305 are expected to retire. This means that there may be a glut of retirements over the 10-year mark, or that employers have underestimated the number of retirements in the next 10 years.

In the next year, the largest number of retirees is expected in the education services sector. Education services, manufacturing, and health care and social assistance sectors lead the number of expected retirees for 1–5 years, and 6–10 years with 54, 42, and 40 respectively, as shown below in Table 10. Across all sectors, employers expect only a bit more than half the number of retirees in the next 1–5 years than they do in the next 6–10 years. Given the number of employees in the older age classes (45 and older) as shown in Table 10, employers in almost all sectors may have underestimated their number of retirees. The data shows that more retirees are expected in 6–10 years than in the next five years.

Table 10: Number of retirees expected, compared with number of employees in older age classes

Sector	Retirements in 12 mos	Retirements in 1–5 yrs	Retirements in 6–10 yrs	Employees age 45–54	Employees age 55+
Accomm/Food Service	0	8	18	43	13
Agriculture	1	2	4	11	8
Business, Building and Other Support Services	2	5	10	14	5
Construction	1	9	21	52	26
Education Services	8	36	54	93	85
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Leasing	0	7	6	16	5
Forestry	1	13	27	76	16
Health & Social Assistance	4	22	40	64	35
High Tech	0	0	3	2	3
Information, Culture & Rec.	0	1	7	9	5
Logging	3	13	23	63	23
Manufacturing	5	23	42	92	58
Prof., Scientific, Technical	1	2	1	13	7
Public Administration	4	6	8	18	17
Retail Trade	5	16	25	71	26
Transportation/Warehousing	0	1	12	10	6
Utilities	1	4	3	3	4
Wholesale Trade	0	1		6	1
Other	0	1	1	9	6
Total	36	170	305	665	349

6.3.2. Need to adjust job requirements in the past year

Eighty employers (36%) said that their organization needed to adjust job requirements in the past year because of lack of adequately qualified applicants. The health care and social assistance sector had the highest percentage of employers who said they had to adjust job requirements (66% of employers), as shown in Table 11 below. More than half of all employers within the sectors of

forestry, construction, accommodation and food service, and transportation and warehousing said that they needed to adjust job requirements.

Table 11: Lack of adequately skilled applicants, by sector

Sector (number of employers in sector)	# employers needing to adjust job requirements	% in sector needing to adjust job requirements	% employers needing to adjust job requirements
Health Care and Social Assistance (14)	8	66%	10.0%
Forestry (8)	5	63%	6%
Construction (22)	12	54%	15%
Accommodation and Food Service (22)	11	50%	14%
Transportation and Warehousing (5)	2	50%	2.5%
High Tech (2)	1	50%	1%
Agriculture (11)	5	45%	6%
Logging (17)	7	41%	9%
Retail Trade (39)	14	37%	18%
Business, Building & other Support Serv. (12)	4	33%	5%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing (9)	3	33%	5%
Prof., Scientific & Technical Services (10)	3	30%	4%
Education Services (9)	2	22%	2%
Public Administration (7)	1	14%	1%
Manufacturing (16)	1	6%	1%
Utilities (2)	0	0	0
Wholesale Trade (1)	0	0	0
Information, Culture & Recreation (6)	0	0	0
Total	80	n/a	100%

A third of organizations with fewer than 10 employees said that they had to adjust job requirements, while 44% of larger organizations reported the same. The highest percentage of employers who said they had to adjust job requirements was within the retail trade sector (18% of all employers), followed by the construction, and accommodation and food service sectors at 15% and 14% respectively. Employers from the sectors of information, culture, and recreation; utilities; and wholesale trade did not indicate any need to adjust job requirements in the past year. Within sectors, sixty percent of health care and social assistance employers needed to adjust job requirements, and 63% of forestry employers needed to adjust job requirements.

Employer Quote:

“We are taking less skilled & qualified people and crossing our fingers”

6.3.3. How adequately job applicants meet skill requirements

Employers were asked to indicate how adequately job applicants meet each of the 12 skills, shown in Figure 11. Across all employment sectors, project management and supervisory skills were most frequently cited as “not

adequately” meeting requirements (29% and 26% of employers respectively). In addition, more than half of employers said that technical and computer skills are “somewhat adequately” or “not adequately” met by job applicants. A third of employers rated life skills as being “somewhat adequately” or “not adequately” met.

Figure 11: Skill adequacy of job applicants.

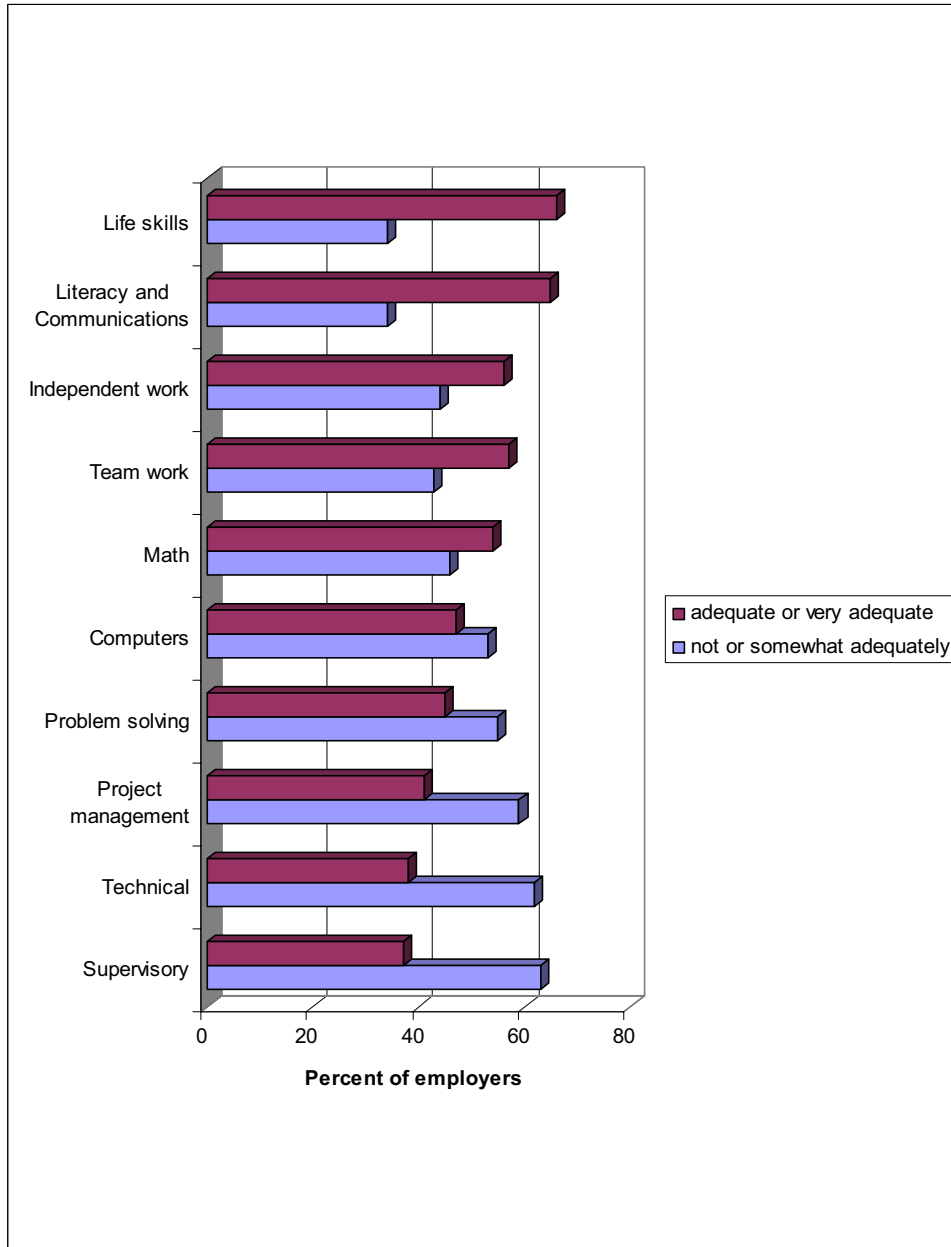


Table 12: Percent of employers who rate the skill level of job applicants as adequate or very adequate, by sector

	Technology	Computers	Math	Literacy	Writing	Oral Comm.	Supervisory	Project Management	Team Work	Independent Work	Problem Solving	Life Skills
Accommodation and Food Service	25	33	40	62	67	58	8	50	68	50	28	57
Agriculture	40	67	57	57	67	66	50	50	44	30	25	70
Business	14	50	67	70	44	82	75	40	75	60	60	73
Construction	10	50	47	57	33	58	45	25	79	58	39	72
Education	50	63	100	100	89	88	43	80	76	76	78	76
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Leasing	67	88	63	86	57	86	50	50	71	63	25	4.3
Forestry	63	51	43	57	38	50	28	43	37	63	13	76
Health Care and Social Assistance	51	50	86	100	92	92	33	33	76	71	77	92
High Tech	50	50	100	0	0	50	0	0	100	100	100	100
Information, Culture and Recreation	0	0	25	84	60	100	75	50	84	83	50	67
Logging	33	66	71	82	73	92	62	63	78	64	54	73
Manufacturing	45	40	43	58	73	56	29	29	47	57	36	62

Table 12, cont.: Percent of employers who rate the skill level of job applicants as adequate or very adequate, by sector

	Technology	Computers	Math	Literacy	Writing	Oral Comm.	Supervisory	Project Management	Team Work	Independent Work	Problem Solving	Life Skills
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	62	63	57	63	50	100	100	57	78	78	78	67
Public Administration	60	100	100	100	100	47	22	100	86	100	84	100
Retail Trade	25	25	41	63	45	47	0	8	63	37	34	58
Transportation and Warehousing	0	100	67	100	75	25	0		25	50	25	25
Utilities	430	0	0	0	0	50	0	0	0	50	0	50
Wholesale Trade	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	50	58	0	0	0
Other	25	33	60	50	40	58	40	50	65	58	58	34

Oral communications skills:

Employers in most sectors said that oral communications skills are somewhat adequately or adequately met by job applicants; however, some employers in the accommodation and food service; business, building, and other support services; forestry; high tech; logging; manufacturing; professional, scientific and technical services; and retail trade sectors said oral communications skills are not adequately met.

Independent work skills:

Between 6 and 30% of employers in the accommodations and food service sector (15%); agriculture (30%); construction (21%); forestry (13%); information, culture, and recreation (17%); logging (7%); manufacturing (6%); professional, scientific and technical services (11%); and retail trade (8%) said that independent work skills are inadequately met by job applicants. All employers in public administration and high tech said that independent work skills are adequately met. Retail trade and manufacturing were mixed, with some employers saying independent work skills are adequately met and others saying they are not.

Writing skills:

Employers in five of 18 employment sectors cited writing skills as a problem for job applicants: finance, insurance, real estate and leasing (14%); high tech (100%); manufacturing (15%); professional, scientific and technical services (25%); and retail trade (16%). Most other employers said that writing skills are somewhat adequately or adequately met. More than 40% of employers in the public administration and the information, culture and recreation sectors said that writing skills are very adequately met.

Team work skills:

For more than half of employers across all sectors, except forestry, manufacturing, and transportation and warehousing, team work skills are adequately or very adequately being met by job applicants. Only in the education; manufacturing; and professional, scientific and technical services sectors did 10–13% of employers say that job applications do not adequately meet team work skills requirements.

Mathematics skills:

Employers in the accommodations and food service sector (20%); manufacturing (21%); professional, scientific and technical (14%); retail trade (16%); transportation and warehousing (33%); and wholesale trade (100%) said that job applicants did not adequately meet mathematics skills requirements. More than 40% of all other sector employers said that math skills are adequately met by job applicants.

Computer skills:

All employers in the public administration sector said that computer skills are adequately or very adequately met. Eighty-six percent of employers in the finance, insurance, real estate and leasing sector said that these skills are adequately met. However, more than 50% of employers in accommodation and food service; construction; high tech; information, culture, and recreation; manufacturing; and retail trade sectors said that job applicants somewhat adequately or did not adequately meet computer skills.

Problem solving skills:

Only in the business, building and other support services sector; construction; logging; professional, scientific and technical services; public administration; and retail trade sectors did any employers say that problem solving skills are very adequately met by job applicants. In 10 of 18 sectors, at least 10% of employers said problem solving skills are not adequately met by job applicants.

Project management skills:

More than half of employers in accommodation and food service; agriculture; construction; finance, insurance, real estate and leasing; and utilities sectors said that project management skills are not adequately being met by job applicants. Only in the public administration (100%), education services (80%), professional, scientific and technical services (57%) sectors did more than half of employers say that project management skills are adequately or very adequately met.

Technical skills:

Fifty percent or more of employers in the education services sector, finance, insurance, real estate and leasing sector, forestry sector, high tech sector, and the public administration sector said that job applicants met technical skill requirements adequately or very adequately.

Supervisory skills:

More than half of employers in the forestry, utilities, and agriculture sectors said that job applicants didn't meet requirements for supervisory skills. Thirty-eight percent of logging employers indicated that job applicants did not adequately meet supervisory skills. Fifty-seven percent of education services sector employers said that applicants didn't meet supervisory skill requirements. By contrast, seventy-five percent of information, culture, and recreation sector employers said that job applicants did adequately meet supervisory requirements. All other results by sector are mixed. Other skills that were mentioned were:

Inadequate

- basic shop skills
- mechanical skills
- common sense

Somewhat adequate

- physical fitness
- multi-tasking

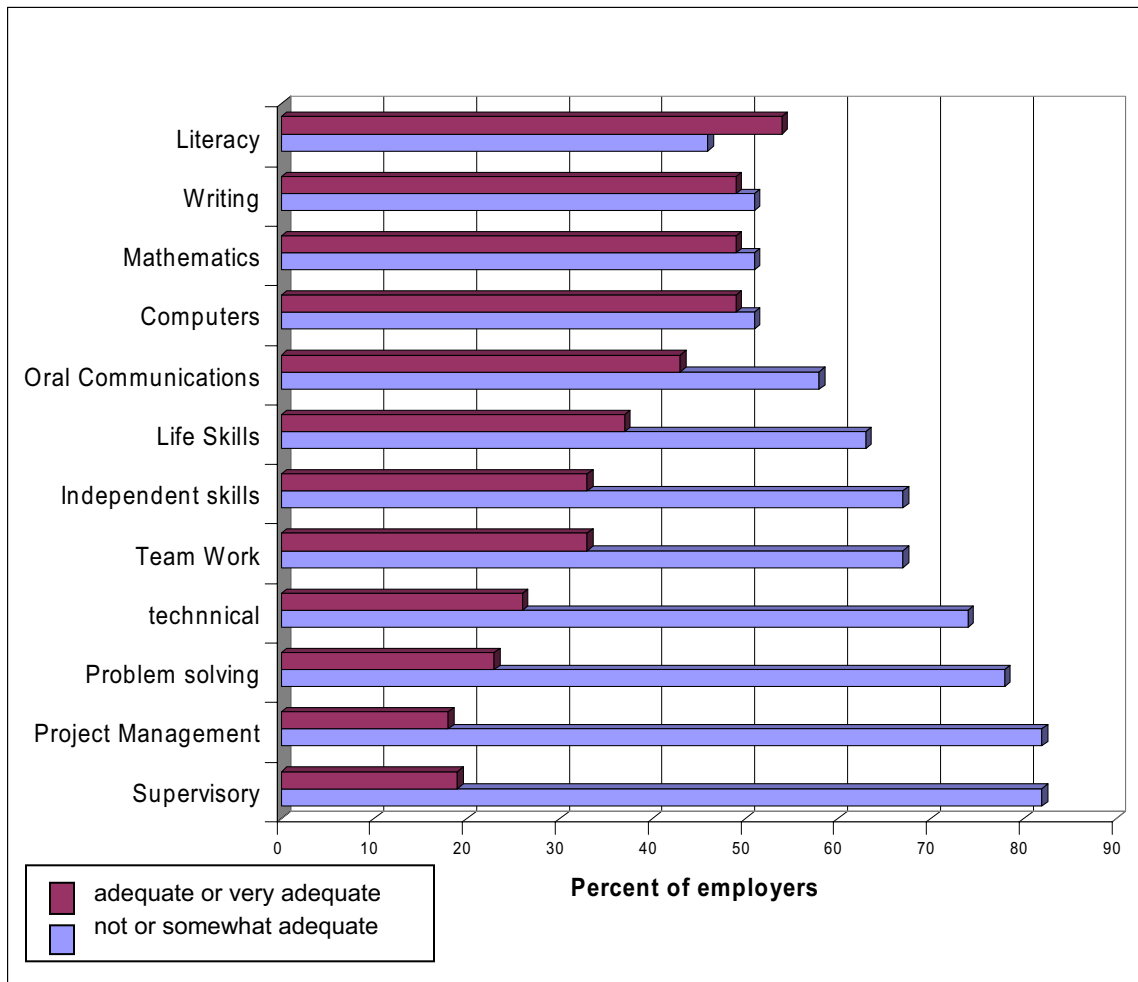
Adequate or very adequate

- customer service

6.3.4. Adequacy of current training programs

When asked to rate the adequacy of current local employee training programs related to the 12 listed job skills, the highest percentage of employers who said that training programs are not adequate was in the project management and supervisory skill areas (58% and 51% of employers said not adequate, respectively), as shown in Figure 12. Forty-five percent said that training for technical skills is inadequate for meeting their needs as an employer.

Figure 12: Adequacy of current training programs.



More than 60% of employers in the utility; retail trade; high tech; construction; and business, building and other support services sectors said that current technical training programs do not adequately or only somewhat adequately meet employee job skill requirements. A high percentage of business, building and other support services sector employers said that technical, supervisory, project management, team work, independent work, writing, oral communications, and problem-solving training is not adequately meeting the need. Half of employers in education said that current technical training is adequate.

Most employers said that current computer training either adequately meets their needs, with the exception of almost half of health care and social assistance and a quarter of retail trade employers saying that it is not adequate. All high tech employers indicated that current computer training is not adequate.

Most employers said that mathematics training programs adequately meet the need, except for a higher percentage of accommodation and food service and retail trade employers (31% and 25% respectively) who said that they do not meet the need. In addition, all high-tech employers felt that math training programs do not adequately meet the need.

Eighty percent in the professional, scientific and technical services sector said that math training is adequate and 75% of forestry and 100% of business, building and other support services sector employers felt that math training does meet the need.

Employer Quote:

“The biggest problem facing our company is finding young people with appropriate life skills and work ethic. Short-term projects cannot teach this. It is quite easy to tell whether a young adult has been taught basic skills and work ethic. Part of the EI or other social service programs for those lacking in life skills/work ethic/sense of self worth should be a long-term (8 months) program directed towards helping individuals to be prepared for the challenges of being an adult. So, if a young adult wishes to be paid by EI or by welfare, the requirement will be completion of such a course.”

Employers across most sectors said that current literacy and writing training somewhat adequately or adequately meets the need, except for 20 to 25% of retail trade feel literacy and writing training are inadequate. Two-thirds of business, building and other support services employers said that writing and oral communications training are not adequate. Seventy percent of retail trade employers said that oral communications training only somewhat adequately or not adequately meets the need.

Supervisory training is considered inadequate by more than 50% of employers in all sectors except construction; logging; retail trade; and professional, scientific and technical services. More than 50% of employers in these sectors felt that current supervisory training is adequately met. As much as 80% and 100% of forestry and

manufacturing employers (respectively) felt that supervisory training is inadequate.

A high percentage of employers in the manufacturing; business, building and other support services; high tech; forestry; and retail trade sectors considered project management training inadequate. Construction and logging responses were mixed. A majority of finance, insurance, real estate and leasing employers reported that project management training is adequate.

A larger percentage of public administration and retail trade employers said that team work training is not adequate when compared with employers of other sectors, but generally responses regarding team work training were mixed. More than two-thirds of accommodation and food service sector and retail trade sector employers said that team work training is only somewhat or not at all adequate.

Forestry; business, building and other support services; and public administration sector employers said that training relating to independent work skills is only somewhat adequately met or not at all adequate. In no sector except accommodation and food service; professional, scientific and technical services; construction; and logging did more than 20% of employers say that training related to independent work skills is adequate.

Training related to problem-solving skills was rated as somewhat adequately or not adequately met by a high percentage of employers in most sectors, particularly retail trade (80%), accommodation and food service (91%), construction (80%), forestry (100%), public administration (100%), and business, building and other support services (100%). Opinions about life skills training were mixed among most sectors; no sector except high tech conclusively said current life skills training is adequate.

Other training needs mentioned:

- Entry-level training for electrical apprentice in Prince George
- Driver training
- Safety courses, H2S etc.
- Shop skills
- Experience
- Merchandising

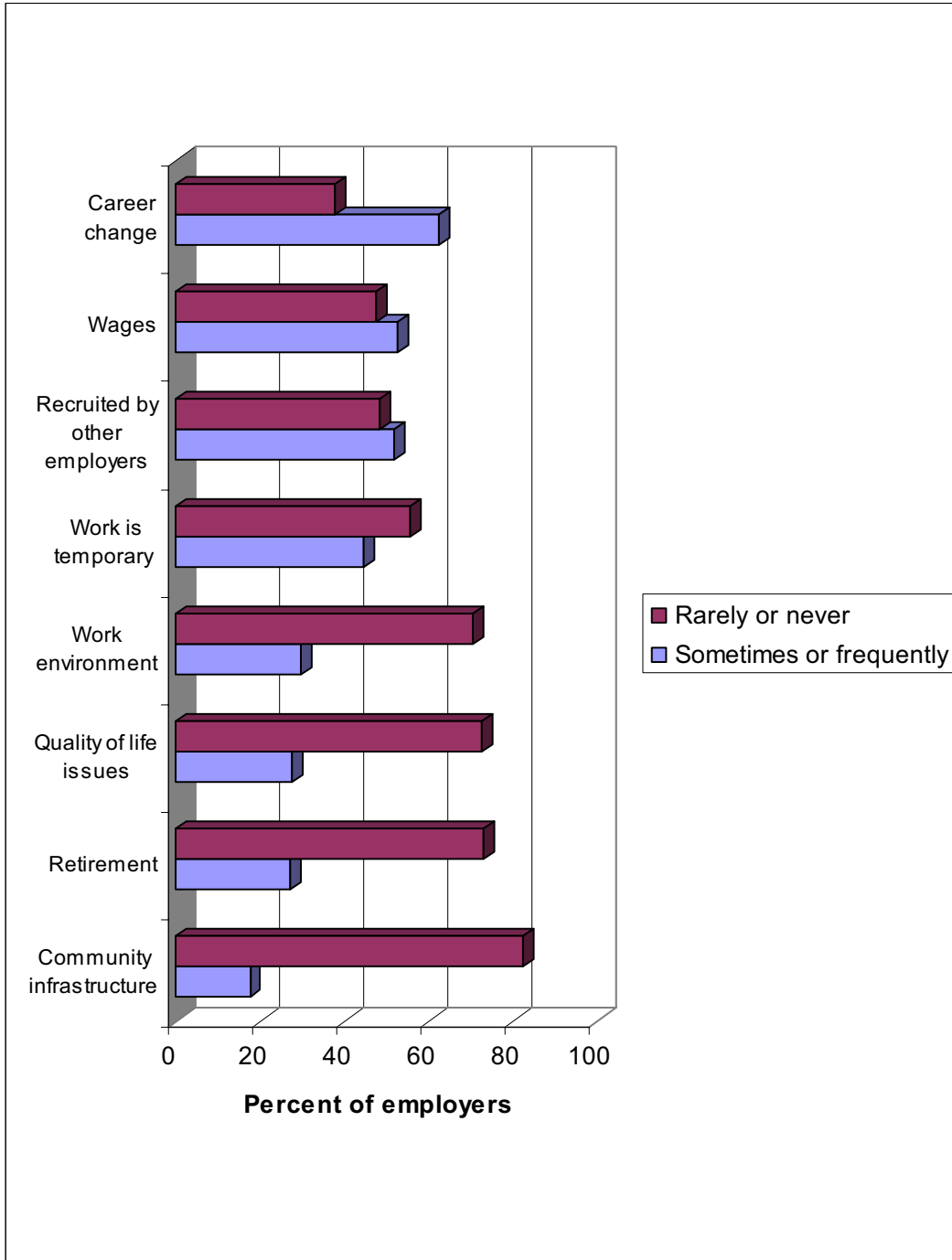
One employer said that their company provided their own training and one employer said, "(It's not) not the training that is lacking. (It's the) motivation!!"

6.3.5. Reasons employees leave their jobs

Employers were given eight possible reasons why their employees might leave, and were asked to indicate if they thought the reason applied "frequently," "sometimes," "rarely," or "never" to their situations. Overall, fewer employers thought that community infrastructure, work environment, retirement, and quality-

of-life issues are frequently the reasons why employees leave the jobs compared with other reasons such as workers recruited by other employers, the temporary nature of work, wages, and career changes, as shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Perceptions of reasons why employees leave their jobs.



The work environment was mentioned by more than 40% of employers as sometimes or frequently the reason why employees leave the job in the following sectors: accommodation and food service (63%), agriculture (84%), construction (41%), and public administration (40%) sectors. Quality of life was mentioned as frequently or sometimes a reason for 63% of forestry sector employers, 50% of accommodation and food service employees, and 40% of transportation and warehousing sector employers.

Community infrastructure is more of a reason cited by forestry sector employers than in other sectors (63% said frequently or sometimes). Less than 40% of employers selected “frequently” or “sometimes,” for retirement as a reason, except in the agriculture; business, building and other support services; education services; health care and social assistance; and information, culture and recreation sectors. In the utilities sector, one employer said “frequently” and one said “sometimes” retirement is a reason.

Employer Quote:

“We find that a lot of our crew do not like the camp life & leave employment so they can be home every night”

Fewer employers from smaller organizations (under 26 employees) thought that quality of life and community infrastructure were factors in why employees leave their jobs than employers from larger organizations (those with 26 or more employees), but the 187 smaller organizations represent only a total of 1,409 (37% of all employees). Employers from the smallest organizations (those with 10 or fewer employees) were the largest employer group that reported that quality of life and community infrastructure were never factors in why people leave their jobs. The 33 organizations with 26 or more employees with a total of 2,384 employees (63% of all employees) were the largest group of employers who said that quality of life and community infrastructure were major reasons why employers left their jobs.

Other reasons given by employers in the survey included:

Frequently

- Lazy
- Return to school
- Camp
- “Grass is greener”
- Spouse leaving
- Inability to work with other staff
- Moving
- Lack of work ethic
- Dissatisfaction
- Moving to Alberta
- Maternity
- Vanderhoof lacks local infrastructure

Sometimes

- Physical endurance
- Personal conflicts with other employees
- Cannot perform basic job requirements
- Maternity
- Moving
- Work environment, i.e., stairs

Rarely

- Medical reasons
- Personal dispute

6.3.6. Sector that most often attracts/recruits employees who leave the job

Employer Quote:

“The construction business is competing with the wages paid in the logging industry.”

Employers were asked to select from a list of employment sectors that most often recruits/attracts employees who leave the job to work for other employers. See Table 13. Of the 107 employers who said their employees leave their jobs to work for other employers, logging was by far the most frequently mentioned sector that attracts workers (27% of employers selected this sector, while no more than 9% of any other sector was selected).

Of employers who indicated that other employers attracted their workers, the highest percentage of employers said that their employees were attracted by employers in the same sector. In contrast, retail trade sector employers indicated 10 different sectors that attract their workers—the most significant being logging and manufacturing (25% and 20% of employers respectively).

Twenty-five percent of retail trade sector employers, 60% of construction employers, and 71% of agriculture employers said that the logging sector attracts their employees while 20% of retail trade employers said that the manufacturing sector attracts their employees. Five of 107 employers cited the mining and oil and gas extraction sector (from construction; health and social assistance; high tech; professional, scientific and technical services; and retail trade) as sectors that most often recruits/attracts employees who leave the job.

Employer Quote:

“The town needs more to offer someone looking to relocate here.”

Table 13: Sectors that most often recruit/attract employees when employees leave to work for other employers

	Number of employers	Percent of total employers
Logging	29	27.2
Manufacturing	10	9.3
Forestry	9	8.5
Health care and Social Assistance	8	7.6
Education Services	6	5.6
Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction	5	4.8
Construction	4	3.7
Finance, Insurance, Real estate and Leasing	4	3.7
Retail Trade	4	3.7
Accommodation and Food Service	3	2.8
Agriculture	3	2.8
Transportation and warehousing	3	2.8
Business, Building and other Support Services	2	1.9
Public Administration	2	1.9
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	1	.9
Utilities	1	.9
Wholesale Trade	1	.9
Other	12	11
Total	107	100.0

Since employers were asked to select only one sector, some wrote additional sectors in the “other” section of the survey. They included:

- Government institutions/agencies
- BC Ministry of Forests and Range
- Hair salons
- Logging and forestry
- Home-based business or anything for higher wages
- Professional
- Community services or working in lodge
- Finance

6.3.7. Difficulty recruiting and retaining various job classifications

As shown in Table 14, 33% of employers who hire trades/technical employees (72) said that they have difficulty recruiting trades/ technical employees, 20% of employers who hire labourers said they have difficulty recruiting minimal skilled labour, 18% who hire professional/management employees have difficulty recruiting professional/management, and 13% who hire clerical employees have difficulty recruiting clerical employees. Seventeen percent of employers selected “other job classifications,” as listed below. Seventeen percent (38) have difficulty retaining minimal skilled labour, and 16% have difficulty retaining trades/technical employees. Four percent of employers have difficulty retaining clerical workers.

Table 14: Number and percentage of employers who said they have difficulty recruiting and retaining employees, by job classification

Job Classification	Difficulty Recruiting		Difficulty Retaining	
	Number of employers	Percent of employers within job classification	Number of employers	Percent of employers within job classification
Trades/technical	72	33	35	16
Minimal skilled labour	44	20	38	17
Professional/management	39	18	20	9
Clerical	28	13	8	4
Other	38	17	0	0

Some employers chose to specify the positions they have difficulty recruiting.

These include:

- Certified fitness instructor
- Drivers
- Truck drivers (mentioned by 9 employers)
- Equipment operators
- Processor operators
- Bank tellers, personal bankers
- Quilters
- Cleaning staff
- Server/kitchen (mentioned by 2 employers)
- Crisis workers
- Machine operators
- Tax associate
- Paramedic (trained)
- Drycleaner
- Retail clerks/customer service (mentioned by 3 employers)
- Professional
- Sales

- Cooks
- Maintenance, housekeeping
- Teachers/special education assistants
- Medical
- Guards
- Frontline residential care workers

Others listed as being difficult to retain, once hired:

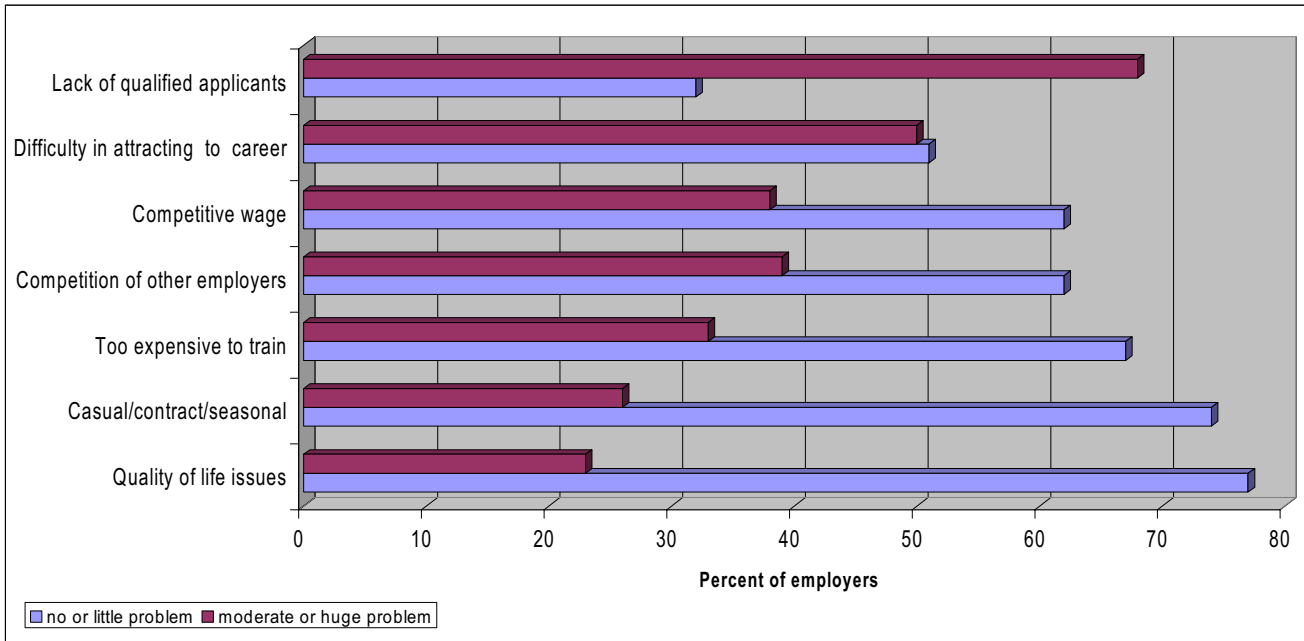
- Machine operators (mentioned by 3 employers)
- Truck drivers (mentioned by 6 employers)
- Equipment operators, including processor (mentioned by 2 employers)
- Pilots/engineers
- Servers waitresses
- Kitchen/cooks
- Tax Associate
- Personal bankers and small business lenders
- Paramedics
- Retail clerks/customer service
- Frontline care workers
- Housekeeping (mentioned by 2 employers)

6.3.8. Problems associated with filling job vacancies

As shown in Figure 14, the most frequently cited problem associated with filling job vacancies is the lack of qualified applicants (39% across all sectors said it is a huge problem). Other problems associated with filling job vacancies across employment sectors are “attracting workers to this career” (21% said it is a huge problem), “competition from other employers” (17% said it was “a huge problem”), “competitive wages” (13% said it was a huge problem), “training costs” (12% said it was a huge problem), “casual/contract/seasonal work” (9% said it was a huge problem), and “quality-of-life issues” (6.5% said it was a huge problem).

There was little difference in employer perceptions between smaller (less than 25 employees) and larger organizations (25 or more employees) regarding the severity of the problem of lack of qualified applicants in filling vacancies. Organization size appeared to be a factor in perceptions regarding competition from other employers, however; a higher percentage of employers in smaller organizations said that competition from other employers was not at all a problem in filling vacancies compared with larger organizations (41% compared with 18%). Thirty-nine percent of employers in larger organizations thought competition from other employers was a huge problem, compared with 12% of employers of smaller organizations.

Figure 14: Problems filling job vacancies, all employers.



Fewer employers in smaller companies also reported difficulties with attracting workers to the career, competitive wages, the expense of training, and quality of life issues than those in larger organizations. A higher percentage of employers in smaller organizations cited casual/contract/seasonal work as a moderate problem in filling positions compared with larger organizations, however.

Several individual employers listed “other” problems, including:

Huge Problem

- “The construction business is competing with the wages paid in the logging industry”
- Too far to travel
- Remote location
- Too many students; restricted work times
- Workers do not want to work away from home (camp life)

Moderate Problem

- Hiring students limits hours they are available

The following sections provide further detail about problems by sector.

Lack of Qualified Job Applicants by Sector

As stated earlier, the most frequently cited problem associated with filling job vacancies is the lack of qualified applicants. Sixty-eight percent of employers said that lack of qualified applicants is a “moderate” or “huge problem.” Just under a third (32%) said that it was a “little” or “no problem.”

More than 47% of employers in agriculture, forestry, high tech, retail trade, transportation and warehousing, and utilities said it is a huge problem. The only sector where half of employers said it is only a little problem or no problem was in public administration. Half of health care and social assistance sector employers said it is a moderate problem and 14% reported it is a little problem. In the professional, scientific and technical services sector, employers were mixed between those who said lack of qualified applicants is a problem and those who did not consider it a problem. Only in the public administration and professional, scientific and technical services sectors did 50% or more say that a lack of qualified applicants is a little problem or not at all a problem.

Fifty percent or more of employers in these sectors said that a lack of qualified job applicants is a moderate or huge problem:

- Accommodation and Food Service
- Agriculture
- Business
- Construction
- Education services
- Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Leasing
- Forestry
- Health care and Social assistance
- High Tech
- Information, Culture and Recreation
- Logging
- Manufacturing
- Retail Trade
- Transportation and Warehousing
- Utilities
- Wholesale Trade

Forty percent or more of employers in these sectors said that a lack of qualified job applicants is a little problem or no problem:

- Public Administration
- Retail
- Manufacturing

Difficulty Attracting Workers to this Type of Career

Overall, half of employers said that attracting workers to the career offered job applicants is a moderate or huge problem: 60% of agriculture; 67% of finance, insurance, real estate and leasing; and 80% of logging sector employers. Between 45 and 66% of employers in the public administration; business, building and other support services; and high tech sectors said that attracting workers to this type of career is not a problem. Forty-four percent of retail and trade sector employers also said it is not a problem. In the high tech sector, one employer said it was a huge problem while the other said it is not at all a problem.

Two-thirds of employers who filled vacancies or plan to fill vacancies in the labour-primary industry occupation said that it is difficult to attract workers to the occupation. More than half of employers who filled vacancies or planned to fill vacancies said that it is difficult to attract labourers: manufacturing and utilities (55%), construction (69%), agricultural labourers (67%), other general labourers (53%), truck/bus/courier/taxi (55%), clerical business/finance (53%), clerical education (2 of 2 employers), trade electrical (74%), trade-plumbing and heating (63%), millwright (57%), welding-fabrication (67%), carpenter/cabinet maker/painting (63%), other trades (66%), technical agriculture (1 of 1 employers), technical business (2 of 2 employers), other technical (60%), and other (70%).

Competitive Wage

Thirteen percent of employers indicated that being able to provide a competitive wage is a huge problem. More than 40% in the business, building and support services; construction; health care and social assistance; high tech; logging; public administration; manufacturing; transportation and warehousing; and utilities sectors said it is not at all a problem. However, 75% of employers from the professional, scientific and technical services sector reported being able to offer competitive wages is a moderate or huge problem.

More than half of employers who filled vacancies or plan to fill vacancies in the future said that competitive wage is a problem in these occupation categories: government labourers (1 of 1 employer), other general labourers (53%), education clerical (1 of 1 employer), retail sales/service clerks (53%), technical agriculture (1 of 1 employer), technical business (2 of 2 employers), other technical (80%), other supervisory (53%). Thirty-five percent (13) of retail trade sector employers said that competitive wage is not at all a problem and another 27% (10) thought it is a little problem. Fourteen percent thought it is a huge problem. Thirty-six percent of accommodation and food service employers indicated that competitive wages are not at all a problem while 18 percent indicated it is “a huge problem.”

Compared with other problems identified by occupation group, competitive wage affected fewer occupation groups than did other problems.

Competition from Other Employers

Opinions on the extent of competition from other employers varied widely within each sector. Employers who said it is a huge problem, a moderate problem, a little problem, and not at all a problem were generally evenly distributed, reflecting the diversity within the sectors.

Overall, 61.5% of employers reported that it is a little or no problem. The highest percentage of employers who indicated it is not at all a problem was from the public administration (67%) retail trade (62%), and manufacturing (60%) sectors. Two of four employers in the transportation and warehousing sector said it is a huge problem, while one of two high-tech companies said that competition from other employers is a huge problem while the others felt that it was a little problem.

More than half of employers who said that they had either filled vacancies or plan to fill vacancies in the future currently consider competition from other employers a moderate or huge problem in the following occupation categories: government labour (1 of 1 employer said it is a huge problem), construction labour (56% of employers), equipment operators in the forest industry (51%), other equipment operators, truck/bus/courier/taxi, clerical health (50%), education clerical, (2 of 2 employers), electrical trade (57%), trade plumbing and heating (50%), millwright (57%), carpenter/cabinet making/painting (55%), retail management (50%), other manager (59%).

Workers Expensive to Train

In many sectors, the expense of training workers is not considered a huge problem, but many did consider it a moderate problem. In the accommodation and food service sector; business, building and support services; construction; education services; finance, insurance, real estate and leasing; manufacturing; public administration; retail trade; and utilities sectors, more than 40% of employers said that the expense of training workers is not at all a problem, but between 25 and 50% of accommodation and food service; agriculture; construction; business, building and support services; forestry; logging; retail trade; transportation and warehousing sector employers said it is a moderate problem. The sector where a higher percentage of employers said it is a huge problem was in the professional, scientific and technical services sector, at 38%. In all other sectors except high tech, less than 29% of employers thought it is a huge problem. In construction, only 5% said it is a huge problem.

The job category where most of the employers said the expense of training employees is a problem is among equipment operators. Two-thirds of those employers said it is a problem for general equipment operators and 58% said it is a problem with forest industry equipment employees. Fifty-three percent of employers who hired or plan to hire automotive/heavy duty mechanics said that training expenses are a problem. Fewer than 50% of employers who hired or plan to hire in all other job categories said that the expense of training employees is a problem.

Work is Casual/Contract/Seasonal

The casual/contract/seasonal nature of jobs within many sectors does not appear to be a problem for many employers. Only 9% across all sectors said this is a huge problem. More than 40% of employers in the accommodation and food service; education services; finance, insurance, real estate and leasing; forestry; health care; professional, scientific and technical services; and manufacturing sectors did not consider the casual/contract/seasonal nature of the work a problem. The high-tech employers were split: one indicated that it is a huge problem, while the other reported it is not at all a problem. Six percent of logging sector employers said it is a huge problem, and between 10 and 20% of all other employers said it is a huge problem.

Less than 50% of employers who said that they filled or plan to fill vacancies across most occupations said that the casual/contract/seasonal nature of work is a problem in terms of their ability to fill job vacancies. The exceptions were among the employers who are in the following categories: equipment operators (100% of employers cited casual/contract/seasonal nature of work as a problem when filling vacancies), technical forestry (57%), and technical agriculture (1 of 1 employer).

Quality-of-Life Issues

Compared with other problems, quality of life for employees is not considered a huge problem for most employers. In 11 of 18 sectors, more than half of all employers said that quality of life issues are not a problem. None of the sectors had more than 25% of employers who said it is a huge problem, and most were below 14%. However, in the forestry sector, 63% said quality of life is a moderate or huge problem and in the professional, scientific and technical services sector, 38% said it is a moderate problem.

Quality-of-life issues were viewed as a problem for employees by 50% or more of employers who hire in the following job categories: technical forestry, technical business, and other technical. In all other job categories, quality of life is a problem for fewer than 50% of employers. Compared with other problems, quality of life is not as big a problem for employees in most job categories.

6.3.9. Job vacancies gone unfilled for past three months

For the vacancies discussed in Section 7.2.1, just under a third of employers said that they have had job vacancies remain unfilled for more than three months (32% of employers, or 69). The highest percentage of those were in the forestry sector, where 87% (7) said that they had unfilled job vacancies after three months, followed by the finance, insurance, real estate and leasing sector (44% or 4). Both utilities and high tech sectors were split, with one utilities employer saying that they had unfilled vacancies after three months and three saying that they did not.

There does not seem to be a sector that stands out as having a larger percentage of their positions remaining unfilled when compared to other sectors. Table 15 shows the number and percentage of employers that had positions for more than three months by sector. For comparison, the table also shows the total number of jobs in each sector and the percentage of total jobs in the sector gone unfilled for more than three months.

Table 15: Number and percent of employers who had unfilled positions for more than three months

	No. of employers	% employers (within sector)
Accommodation and Food Service	8	38.1%
Agriculture	3	27.3%
Business, Building and other Support Services	3	25.0%
Construction	7	31.8%
Education Services	3	33.3%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Leasing	4	44.4%
Forestry	7	87.5%
Health Care and Social Assistance	5	35.7%
High Tech	1	50.0%
Information, Culture and Recreation	2	33.3%
Logging	4	23.5%
Manufacturing	4	25.0%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	2	20.0%
Public Administration	1	14.3%
Retail Trade	10	26.3%
Transportation and Warehousing	1	20.0%
Utilities	1	50.0%
Wholesale Trade	0	0
TOTAL	66	

6.3.10. Responsibility for job preparedness

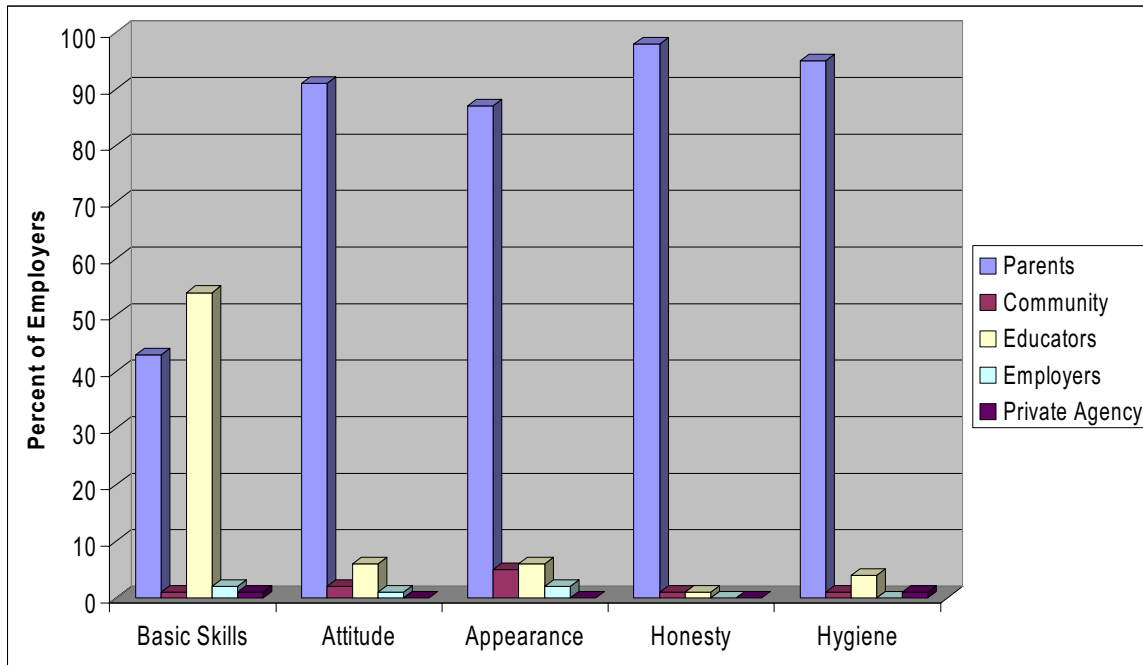
Employers were asked who they felt is responsible for ensuring employees have basic skills, attitude, appearance, honesty, and hygiene. By far, the highest percentage of employers called on parents across all five attributes, except when it came to basic skills. Ninety-seven percent of employers said parents should be responsible for honesty, 95% said parents should be responsible for hygiene, and 91% said parents should be responsible for attitude. Less than 10% of employers

Employer Quote:

“I believe that the development of these attributes is the responsibility of the parents, but realistically, if the basics aren't taught at home, then they most certainly should be learning these skills in school.”

thought either community, educators, employers, or private agencies should be responsible for attitude, appearance, honesty, and hygiene, but 54% thought that educators should be responsible for basic skills. There was wide agreement across all sectors, except almost a quarter (21%) of construction employers thought basic skills is a primary responsibility of employers. See Figure 15.

Figure 15: Responsibility for job preparedness skills.

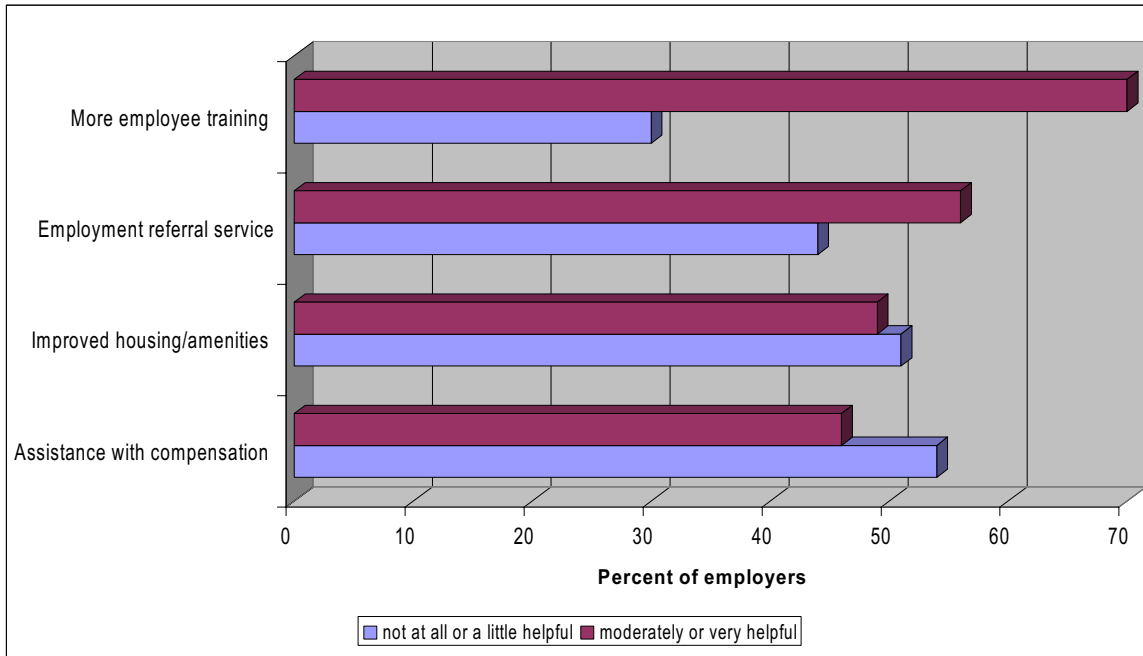


6.4. EMPLOYER RESPONSE TO PERCEIVED LABOUR SHORTAGE ISSUES

6.4.1. Helpfulness of strategies in dealing with challenges recruiting or retaining employees

As shown in Figure 16, more than 70% of employers said that more relevant training for prospective employees would be “moderately helpful” (29.6%) or “very helpful” (40.8%) in recruiting or retaining employees. However one employer pointed out that “relevant training is the individual employer’s responsibility and requires hands-on experience.”

Figure 16: Level of helpfulness of various recruitment and retention strategies.



Approximately 55% of employers said that employment referral services would be moderately (35.7 %) to very helpful (20%) as strategies in recruiting or retaining employees. Over half (54%) thought that assistance developing compensation and wages would be “a little helpful” or “not at all helpful.” Employers were mixed about the effect of strategies for improved quality-of-life factors (such as housing and amenities) on recruitment or retention, with 50% saying it would be moderately or very helpful, while 50% said it would be a little or not at all helpful.

Other comments included:

- Industry/government
- Transportation
- Work experience program at school
- Strong community for family
- Past employment history is all important
- Technical training

Over half of employers in 11 of 18 sectors said that employment referral services would be moderately or very helpful including 100% of transportation and warehousing, 88% of finance, insurance, real estate and leasing, 77% of agriculture, and 75% of public administration employers. Overall, fewer employers indicated that help with compensation would be helpful; more than half of employers in only four sectors (accommodation and food service; agriculture; forestry; and information, culture and recreation) said help with compensation would be moderately or very helpful.

The vast majority of employers favoured more relevant employee training; more than half of employers in all sectors, except business, building and other support services, said that more relevant training would be a moderate or very helpful strategy.

More than half of employers in the accommodation and food service; business, building and support services; forestry; health care and social assistance; and public administration sectors indicated that improved amenities and housing for employees would be helpful strategies. Eighty-eight percent of forestry employers indicated the same.

6.4.2. Conducting routine exit interviews

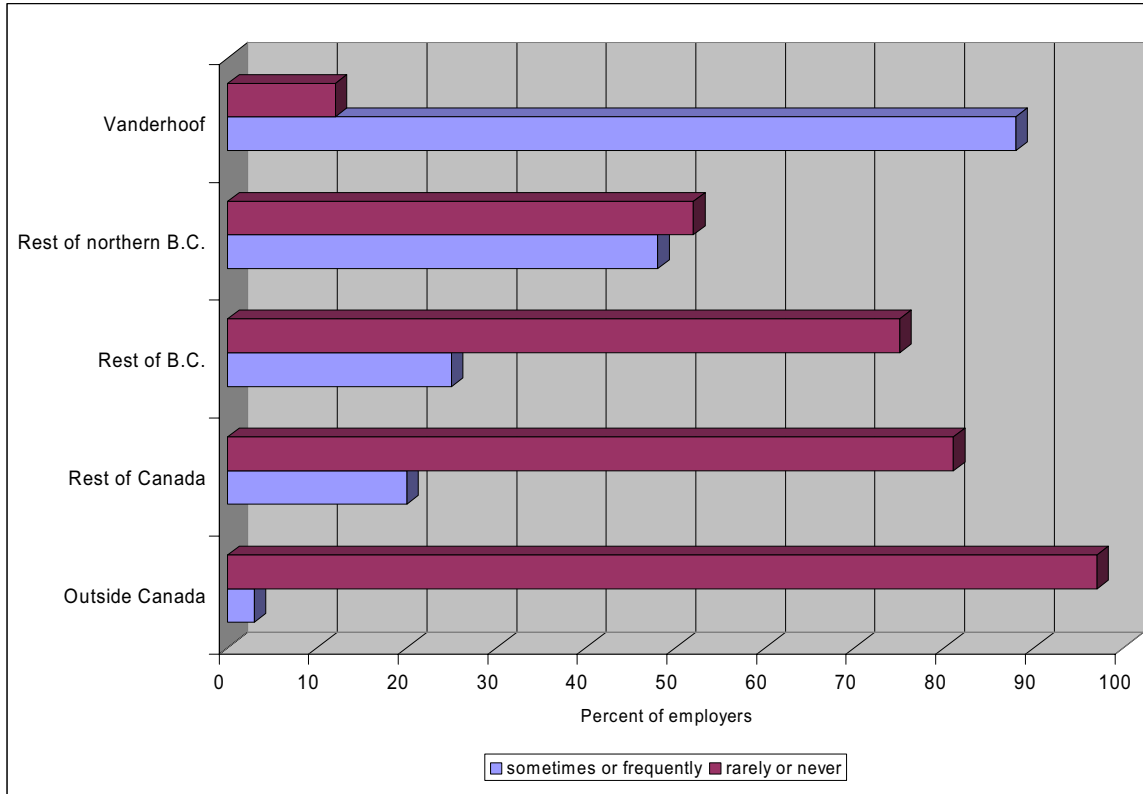
Employers were asked if they routinely conduct “exit interviews” with employees who leave their jobs to learn why they were leaving. A third of employers said that they conduct exit interviews, while two-thirds do not. All employers in the forestry, utilities, transportation and warehousing, and wholesale trade sectors reported routinely conducting exit interviews, but 50% or more of employers in other sectors said they do not conduct exit interviews.

Half of employers in larger organizations (10 or more employees) said that they routinely conduct exit interviews while only 23% of smaller companies use this strategy.

6.4.3. Geographic areas for recruitment

Two-thirds of employers “frequently” or “sometimes” recruit employees in the Vanderhoof area. A smaller percentage, 48% of employers, recruit from the rest of northern B.C. Numbers of employers decline considerably regarding recruitment from the rest of B.C., the rest of Canada, and internationally. More than three-quarters “rarely” or “never” recruit outside northern B.C., and 80% rarely or never recruit in the rest of Canada. Only a few (3%) sometimes or often recruit internationally. This is shown in Figure 17.

Figure 17: Geographic area employers use to recruit employees.



When the data is broken out by sectors, it shows that a quarter of forestry employers said they rarely recruit in Vanderhoof, 30% of professional, scientific and technical services sector employees said that they rarely or never recruit in Vanderhoof, a third of public administration and 100% of utilities (2 employers) said they also rarely recruit in the Vanderhoof area for employees. A smaller percentage (less than 11%) of business, building and support services; construction; education services; finance, insurance, real estate and leasing; manufacturing, retail trade and others said they never recruit in the Vanderhoof area.

No more than half of employees in any sector said that they recruit frequently in the rest of northern B.C., but a large percentage said they sometimes do. Only in the accommodation and food service; high tech; finance; insurance, real estate, and leasing; professional, scientific and technical sectors did fewer than half of employers say that they sometimes or frequently recruit in the rest of northern B.C.

At least 40% of employers in the agriculture, forestry, health care and social assistance, high-tech, public administration, and transportation and warehousing sectors said that they recruit employees in the rest of B.C. (other than northern B.C.). At least 60% of employers in other sectors said that they rarely or never do. At least 30% of employers in the agriculture, education services, high tech,

health care and social assistance, and forestry, sectors said that they frequently or sometimes recruit in Canada outside of B.C. No employer said that they frequently recruit outside Canada, but 11% of accommodation and food service, 25% of agriculture, and 9% of business, building and support services employers said that they sometimes recruit outside of Canada.

Table 16 shows a comparison between responses from employers from smaller and larger organizations. While about the same percentage of employers from large and small organizations recruit sometimes or frequently from the Vanderhoof area, a much smaller percentage of smaller organizations recruit from the rest of northern B.C., the rest of B.C. and the rest of Canada. The same percentage frequently or sometimes recruits outside of Canada.

Table 16: Percentage of employers from larger and smaller organizations that recruit from various geographic areas

	Larger Organizations		Smaller Organizations	
	Sometimes or frequently	Rarely or never	Sometimes or frequently	Rarely or never
Vanderhoof	91	9	87	13
Rest of northern B.C.	88	12	40	61
Rest of B.C.	41	59	22	78
Rest of Canada	28	72	18	82
Outside Canada	3	97	3	97

6.4.4. Methods to Advertise Vacancies

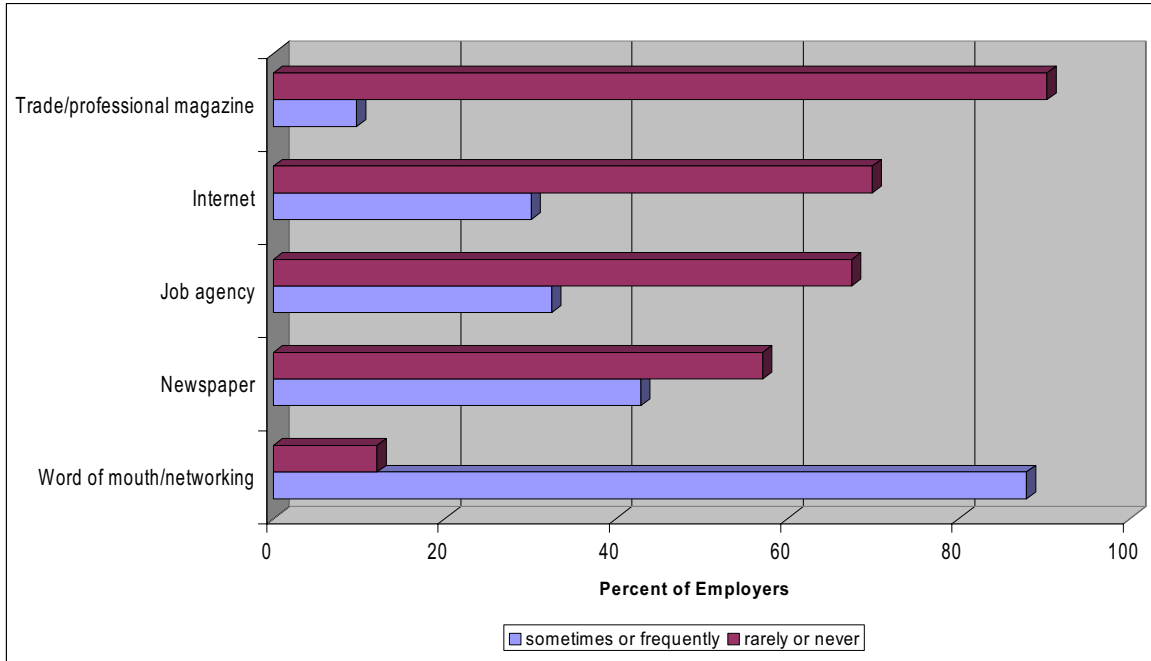
Word of mouth is by the far the most frequently mentioned method of advertising job vacancies, with 88% of employers saying that they frequently or sometimes use word of mouth as a recruitment strategy, as shown in Figure 18. Two-thirds of employers said that they rarely or never use the internet and job agencies, and 89% rarely or never use trade or professional magazines. About half of employers use newspapers.

By occupation group, the data shows that in 15 out of 40 occupation categories, 100% of employers also said that they advertise job vacancies sometimes or frequently through word of mouth. There was no job category where less than 67% of employers use this method and in most categories, between 80 and 100% of employers use the method.

A third of employers who hire employees in management and technical agriculture occupation groups use trade magazines, and 50% of employers who hire technical business positions sometimes or frequently use trade magazines. In contrast, newspaper was used by more than 50% of employers sometimes or frequently for all occupation groups except technical health (33%), forest industry

equipment operators (39%), plumbing and heating trades (38%), retail management (44%), and professional health (45%).

Figure 18: Strategies for advertising job vacancies.



The use of the Internet was variable among employers. Fewer employers of labour, trades, and equipment operators tended to use the Internet than employers of professional and management (less than 50% across all labour, trade and equipment operators, with the exception of agriculture equipment operators (67%). Eighty-six percent of employers of technical agriculture employees used the Internet to advertise job vacancies. Seventy-five percent of employers of government and other clerical employees use the internet. No more than 50% of employers of any job category said that they used job agencies to advertise vacancies.

Table 17 shows the comparison between employers of larger (more than 25 employees) and smaller organizations (25 or fewer employees) in terms of method of advertising vacancies. Employers of large and small organizations use word of mouth at about the same frequency, however larger organizations use newspapers, internet, job agencies, and trade/professional magazines at greater frequencies than small organizations. Small organizations clearly use word of mouth at twice the frequency as any other method.

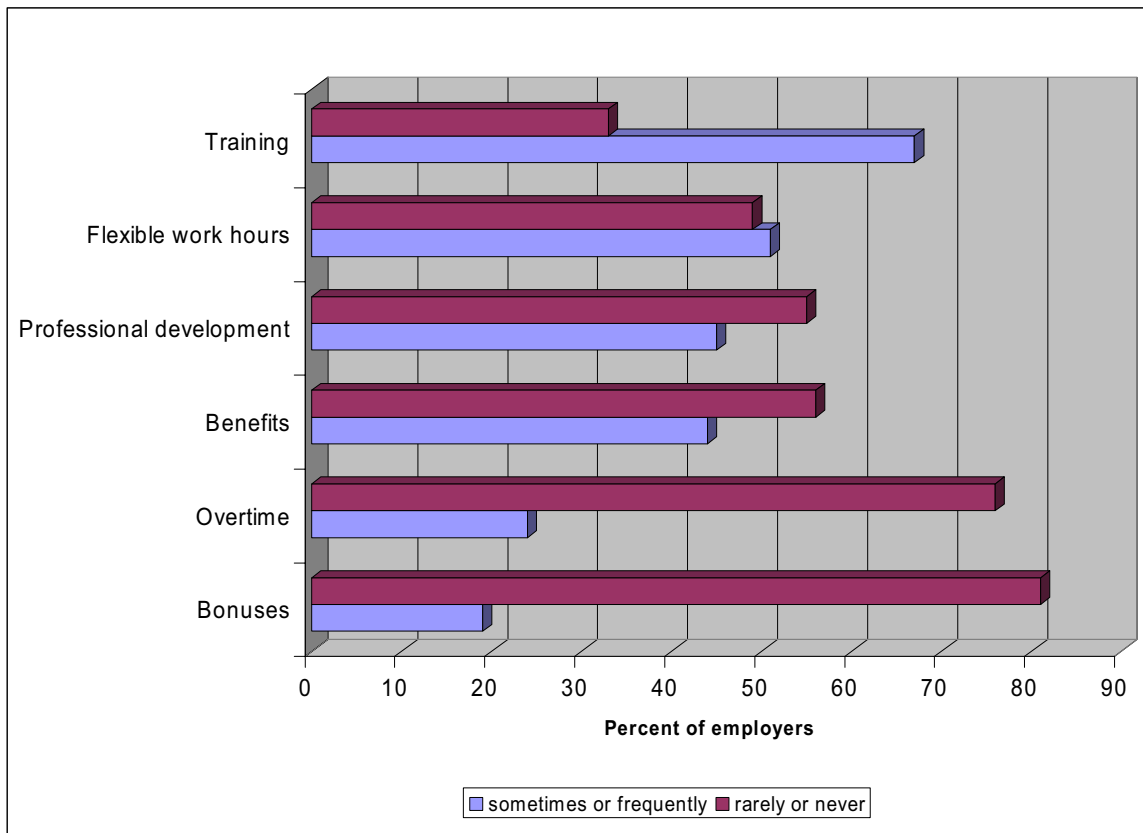
Table 17: Percentage of employers from larger and smaller organizations that use various methods to advertise vacancies

	Larger organizations (>25)		Smaller organizations (< or =25)	
	sometimes or frequently	rarely or never	sometimes or frequently	rarely or never
Word of mouth/networking	87	13	88	12
Newspaper	84	16	43	57
Internet	50	50	30	70
Job agency	46	54	33	68
Trade/professional magazine	26	74	10	90

6.4.5. Incentives used for recruitment

A strong majority of employers frequently or sometimes use training as a recruitment incentive (67%). Flexible work hours are used sometimes or frequently by about half of employers. Two-thirds said that bonuses are never used. Professional development, overtime, and benefits are frequently or sometimes used only by a small percentage of employers (See Figure 19).

Figure 19: Incentives used by employers for recruiting employees.

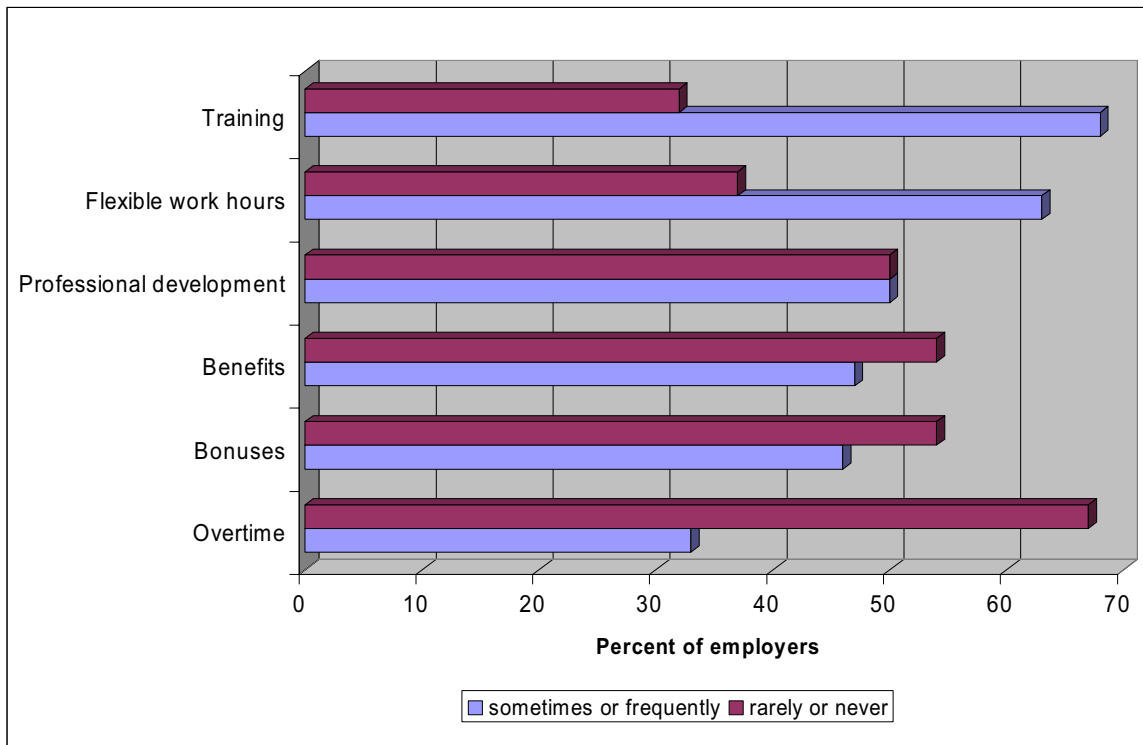


Other incentives used frequently or sometimes included good wages, wage increases, work-life factors, awards dinners, conventions, pensions, profit sharing, and existence of a union.

6.4.6. Incentives used for retention

Employers mentioned using bonuses and flexible work hours more frequently as an incentive to retain employees rather than as an incentive for recruitment. Overtime was used by slightly more employers for retention than recruitment. The number of employers who said that training and professional development is used was about the same for recruitment and retention purposes. See Figure 20.

Figure 20: Incentives used by employers for retaining employees.



6.4.7. Formal strategies for dealing with vacancies and retiring or selling the business

Fifty-eight percent of employers said they don't have a formal strategy for dealing with vacancies as a result of employees leaving their jobs. Of the 129 employers who said they are business owners, 62% don't have a strategy to address their own retirement or selling of the business.

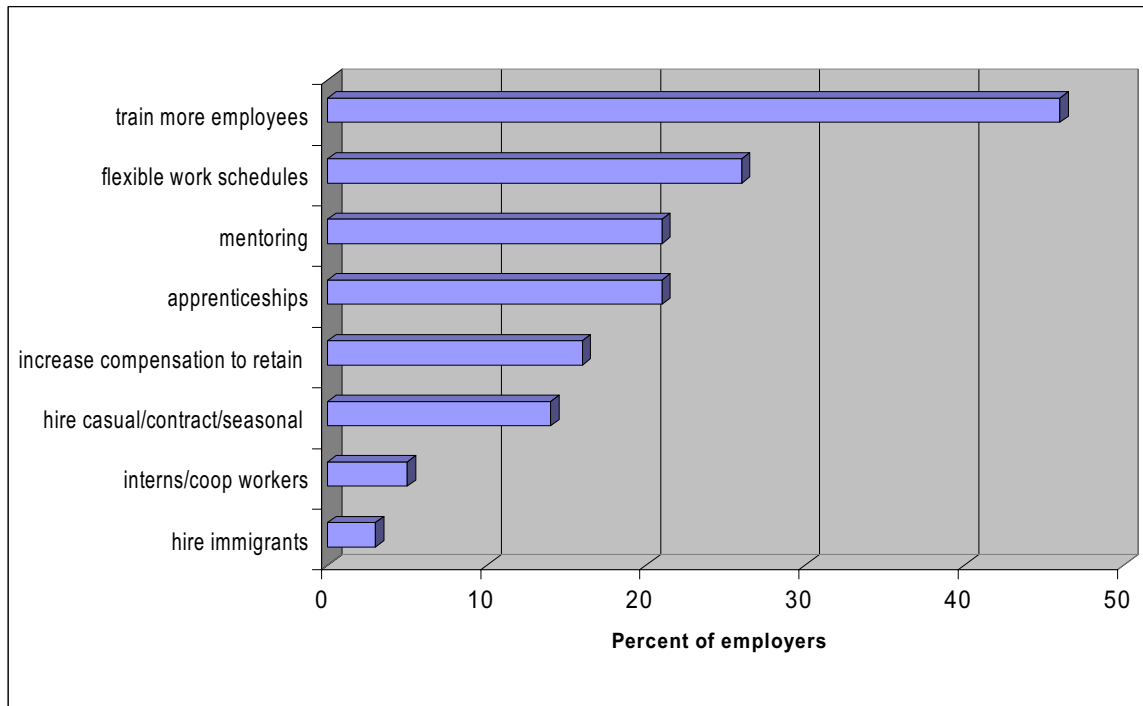
The following are sectors where less than half of employers have formal strategies to deal with vacancies and retiring or selling the business:

- Accommodation and Food Service
- Agriculture
- Business, Building and other Support Services
- Construction
- High Tech
- Logging
- Manufacturing
- Professional, Scientific and Technical Services

6.4.8. Strategies to replace exiting employees

Employers were asked to select from a list of possible strategies they use for replacing exiting employees. The greatest number of employers said they train or develop more employees as a way of replacing exiting employees (102 or 46% of employers said this). A quarter uses flexible work schedules, and 21% use apprenticeships and mentoring as a strategy. Only 5% indicated they use interns or co-op work as a strategy, and only 3% hire immigrants as a strategy for replacing exiting employees. This is shown in Figure 21.

Figure 21: Percent of employers who use various strategies to replace exiting employees.



Half of employers' organizations with 10 or more employees have formal strategies for replacing exiting employees, as do a third of smaller companies. Forty percent of employers in large organizations (10 or more employees) said that hiring casual/contract/seasonal employees is a strategy, while 25% of smaller organizations use this. There were no major differences between smaller and larger companies in terms of other strategies used.

There were many other strategies listed by employers:

- Hire mostly students and retirees
- Hire replacement workers
- Job postings through Northern Health Authority
- Lateral transfer process and recruitment
- Hire from the hair dressing school
- Word of mouth
- Advertising/offering internships
- Contact seminaries
- Wage increase for years worked
- "Always know why employees are leaving"

6.5. EMPLOYER SURVEY SUMMARY

CFDC-SN conducted a survey of employers in the Vanderhoof area to develop employer and labour profiles for the community, and to describe issues surrounding the labour market from the employer's perspective. The survey also assessed how employers are responding to labour issues, what strategies they are using to fill vacancies, and how they feel about strategies to help them. The survey was delivered to employers and then picked up by CFDC-SN staff during May and June 2006. The research team obtained a 76% response rate from area employers, representing 3,125 employees— a strong majority of workers in the Vanderhoof area.

Employers

The majority of organizations (65%) who responded to the survey employ fewer than 10 employees. Employers represented over 20 different sectors and hired a wide variety of occupations. Many organizations in the logging and construction sector are considered home-based. The employers represented in the survey reported a total of 2,459 full-time employees, 651 part-time and 536 casual/contract/seasonal employees, for a total of 3,696 employees working in the last 12 months. The retail/trade sector included the most employers (39). The manufacturing sector has the most full-time employees (508).

Employees

Labourers represented the highest number of employees, by far, compared with other occupations. Employers predict that the number of labour positions is expected to drop significantly after five years while the number of employees in many other occupations is predicted to slightly increase. The most casual/contract/seasonal workers are hired in the summer months, with an average of 5.3 months of employment per year.

Vacancies

Many employers are having a hard time filling vacancies. Over a third of employers overall said that they needed to adjust job requirements in the past year to fill their positions. More than half of employers in many sectors needed to do this. Almost a third of all employers said that they have had job vacancies remain unfilled for more than three months. Half of employers thought it was a moderately or hugely difficult to attract workers to the types of careers being offered workers.

There were differences in opinion regarding the biggest reason for problems related to filling vacancies. Overall, the most frequently cited problem is a lack of qualified applicants. Over a third of all employers surveyed said this is a huge problem. The only sector where a very small number of employers said a lack of qualified applicants is a problem was in public administration. Only in the public administration and professional, scientific and technical services sectors did 50% or more report that lack of qualified applicants is a little problem or not at all a problem.

About a quarter of employers overall viewed the ability to attract workers to the careers being offered as a huge problem.

A high percentage of logging employers said that competition from other employers is a major problem. Logging is the sector that tends most frequently to attract employees from other jobs. All other sectors were mixed on the question of competition from other sectors as a major problem. Quality-of-life issues (housing, amenities) are not considered a huge problem for filling vacancies by most employers, with the exception of forestry employers who cited quality-of-life issues as a major problem in filling job vacancies.

The health care and social assistance, forestry, and construction sectors had the largest percentage of employers who said that they had to adjust job requirements to fill positions, but several other sectors are not far behind: 66% of health care and social assistance employers said that they had to adjust job requirements in the past year to fill positions while 63% of forestry and 54% of construction employers reported the same. Up to 50% of accommodation and food service, high tech, transportation and warehousing, agriculture, and logging employers indicated this was true for them as well. Almost 90% of forestry, 50%

of utility, and just over 40% of finance, insurance, real estate and leasing employers have had job vacancies unfilled for more than three months.

Recruitment

While employers in all sectors mentioned a variety of occupations they are having difficulty filling, overall, a third of employers said that they are having difficulty recruiting trades/technical positions. A fifth (20%) said they are having difficulty recruiting minimal skilled labour. Some employers specified job types: truck drivers were mentioned by nine individuals, equipment operators were mentioned by seven.

Two-thirds of employers recruit locally for vacancies but a much smaller percentage recruit in the rest of northern B.C. The farther from Vanderhoof, the less that employers recruit there for employees. The exception is in forestry, where 25% of employers say they rarely or never recruit locally, public administration, where 30% say they rarely or never recruit locally. Both utility companies also reported rarely or never recruiting locally.

Almost all (97%) of employers rarely or never recruit internationally. Those that do are in the accommodation and food service; agriculture; and business, building and other support services sectors. More than half of employers rely on training, benefits, and flexible work hours as recruitment incentives. Bonuses and overtime are used by fewer employers as a recruitment incentive; they are considered by more employers as retention strategies than recruitment strategies.

By far the most frequently mentioned recruitment method is word of mouth. The use of Internet is used extensively by some sectors, and hardly at all by others. Most employers rarely, if ever, use job agencies to advertise job vacancies.

Retention

Retention does not appear to be as serious an issue as recruiting. The number of employers who said they are having difficulty retaining workers is smaller than those who have difficulty recruiting workers. Of those who said they are having challenges retaining employees, minimally skilled labour and trades/technical are the highest (17% and 16% of employers in those sectors said these were a challenge, respectively).

Adequacy of Job Applicant Skills

Employers were given 12 skill areas and asked to rate the adequacy of job applicants in meeting the skill requirements. Across all sectors, supervisory and project management skills were mentioned most frequently as inadequate. Many employers also said that technical and computer skills are lacking. The majority of employers thought, however, that life skills are, adequately, met by job applicants.

Adequacy of Current Training

Employers were also asked to rate the adequacy of current training programs to meet job requirements. Project management and supervisory training are considered inadequate by a high percentage of employers. Almost all forestry and manufacturing employers felt that supervisory training is inadequate. Problem solving and technical skills were also frequently mentioned as inadequate. Employers were evenly split on perspectives of the adequacy of computer training; about half thought computer training is adequate while half thought it is not. The high tech sector employers said that current training, in math and computers, is not adequate.

Why Employees Leave their Jobs

Employers cited community issues such as quality of life, community infrastructure, or retirement as reasons why people leave their jobs much less frequently than reasons such as workers recruited by other employers, wages, and career change. The exception was in the forestry sector where 60% of employers said that employees frequently leave the job for quality-of-life reasons. Many employers offered other reasons employees frequently or sometimes leave: returning to school, maternity, spousal relocation, inability to work with other staff, and dissatisfaction with job and job environment are among them.

Only five of 107 (5%) employers cited mining and oil and gas extraction as the sector that most often recruits/attracts their employees who leave the job. (Those who mentioned mining and oil and gas were from construction; health and social assistance; high tech, professional, scientific and technical services; and retail trade.)

Responsibility for Job Preparedness

By far, most employers said that parents are responsible for personal job preparedness attributes such as attitude, appearance, honesty, and hygiene. Over half of employers said that educators are responsible for basic skills. The exception was that a slightly higher percentage of construction employers indicated that basic skills are the responsibility of employers. Several employers wrote comments that reflect frustration about work ethic of younger workers.

Strategies for Recruitment and Retention

Two-thirds of employers do not conduct formal exit interviews to learn why their employees are leaving. Fifty-eight percent don't have a formal strategy for dealing with vacancies as a result of employees leaving their jobs. Employers from larger companies (10 or more employees) tend to do both of these more than smaller companies. Most employers train more employees as a strategy to replace exiting employees, followed by offering flexible work schedules and mentoring for new employees. Sixty-two percent of business owners don't have a strategy to address their own retirement or the selling of the business. A vast majority of employers said that offering more employee training would be a

beneficial strategy in helping them deal with their challenges in recruiting or retaining employees.

6.6. EMPLOYER SURVEY CONCLUSIONS

While findings of this survey showed that there was considerable variation in responses from employers across sectors on many issues, some generalizations can be made about the results across all employment sectors. Generally speaking the data showed that:

- Many employers have needed to lower job standards to fill positions.
- Supervisory and project management skills are in short supply compared with the need.
- Most employers don't believe that the mining and oil and gas sectors are attracting a large number of employees away from their jobs in Vanderhoof compared with other sectors that attract their employees.
- Retirement numbers don't show as serious a problem as expected in 6–10 years by many in Vanderhoof, or expected retirement numbers are being underestimated by employers.
- Many employers don't believe that lack of amenities in Vanderhoof impacts employee recruitment and retention as much as other factors.
- Many employers are relying on word of mouth advertising to fill positions more than other wider methods such as the Internet that could improve their ability to find qualified candidates.
- A third of employers who hire trades/technical employees said that they have difficulty recruiting trades/ technical employees, and 16% of them have difficulty retaining these employees.

Lowering Job Standards

Based on steering committee and other community input before the survey was conducted, the research team expected to find that employers in Vanderhoof are forced to lower job standards in order to recruit employees. It is indeed noteworthy that the data shows a third of employers said they needed to adjust job requirements to fill positions and a third said they have had job vacancies for more than three months. These appear to be solid indicators of either a labour shortage, a mismatch between training and available positions, a lack of broad enough recruitment (geographically speaking), or a combination of factors.

Competition from Oil and Gas Sector

Competition from the oil and gas sector was expected to be a significant problem, yet the data did not show that many employers believe that the oil and

gas sector attracted a large number of employees away from Vanderhoof jobs compared with other reasons employees leave their jobs.

Retirement

Retirement is expected to create a major drain on the labour force yet employers did not report a large number of expected retirees compared with numbers of jobs expected in the future.

Recruitment

The survey showed that employers don't take advantage of immigration and many don't look far outside the Vanderhoof area for qualified applicants. Many employers cited problems with attitude and work ethic issues in younger workers. Several employers cited the existence of other unskilled, high-wage jobs as a disincentive for young workers to seek training and education. Many employers don't seem to take advantage of a full range of recruitment methods available; word of mouth, which keeps recruitment local, is by far the most frequently mentioned method of recruitment across sectors in the Vanderhoof area.

Amenities

There was an assumption that many employees leave (or don't come) to the Vanderhoof area because of lack of amenities, but overall, many employers did not think quality-of-life issues are strongly related to recruitment or retention issues, compared with other barriers for employees. The exception is in the forestry and logging sectors, where quality of life issues were more closely related to recruitment and retention.

Supervisory and Project Management Skills

Many employers across all sectors cited lack of supervisory and project management skills as a considerable problem and said that current training programs for those skills are inadequate. A third of employers indicated that basic life skills are not well met by job applicants. Job retention is likely linked with work environment and work environment is often linked with an organization's supervisors and managers. The approaches used by supervisors and managers can make or break an employment work environment and also probably influence retention and possibly recruitment. Good supervisors serve multiple purposes—they serve as good mentors for work ethic, provide positive reinforcement for workers, engender team work, enhance independent work skills, and many other skills that employers thought were in short supply among job applicants. Since word of mouth is an important recruitment tool in Vanderhoof, the reputation of management and supervisory styles inside an organization can significantly influence recruitment efforts. This study shows that the need for supervisory and management mentoring, training, and education cannot be overemphasized.