

Fremont

HIRING AND TRAINING NEEDS REPORT

NEBRASKA

Good Life. Great Opportunity.

DEPARTMENTS OF
LABOR & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Executive **Summary**

The Northeast Nebraska Survey of Hiring and Training Needs gathered information from business owners, managers, supervisors, and human resource personnel about Fremont area labor issues and workforce needs. Responses received from employers in the Fremont area were most often from businesses with less than 50 employees in service-producing industries that have been operating for more than 10 years. Nearly all responding employers (93.4%) reported that they hired or tried to hire at least one new worker in the past two years. Over 49% of the responding businesses currently have at least one job opening at their location, and businesses that have at least one open position have an average of 5.5 positions available.

Employers indicated whether they anticipated labor availability being an issue if they were to expand. Over 86% of businesses reported labor availability issues either would be present or might be present if asked to consider a major expansion.

Businesses also reported the occupations they have hired or tried to hire, and the reasons it was difficult to find workers to fill those positions. More than 68% of Fremont area businesses stated it was difficult to find workers, and the most common reasons businesses gave were not receiving enough applicants, applicants lacked occupation-specific skills, and applicants lacked work experience.

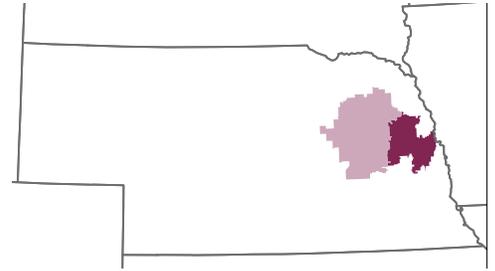
Over the course of the survey, employers were provided a list of skills and asked to rate the competency of their applicant pool (see "**Figure 15 Competency of Typical Applicant Pool**"). Employers also used the same list of skills to report whether there were deficiencies in their current workforce (see "**Figure 11 Percentage of Employers Reporting a Deficiency in the Majority of Their Workforce**"). This list included a variety of skills including "soft skills" (e.g., work ethic, attitude), basic education (e.g., basic math, verbal and written communication), and advanced skills (e.g., critical thinking, advanced computer skills). While 43.8% businesses did report that a majority of their current workforce was deficient in their work ethic, only 28.8% of businesses reported that applicants were less than adequate in their leadership skills. A majority of businesses rated their applicant pool as strong or adequate in 16 of the 18 prompted skills. Regarding perceptions of the current workforce, no more than 44% of businesses reported a deficiency in any listed skill.

In order to broaden and improve the candidate pool, businesses may need to explore a variety of strategies. Employers expressed that they are having difficulty when they try to find workers because they are not receiving enough applicants, applicants lacked occupation specific skills, and applicants lacked work experience. In some cases, businesses may consider relaxing skill and education requirements and increasing the amount of training provided to inexperienced workers to allow for business expansion in the Fremont area. Further recommendations are provided in the Fremont Skills Gap Report.

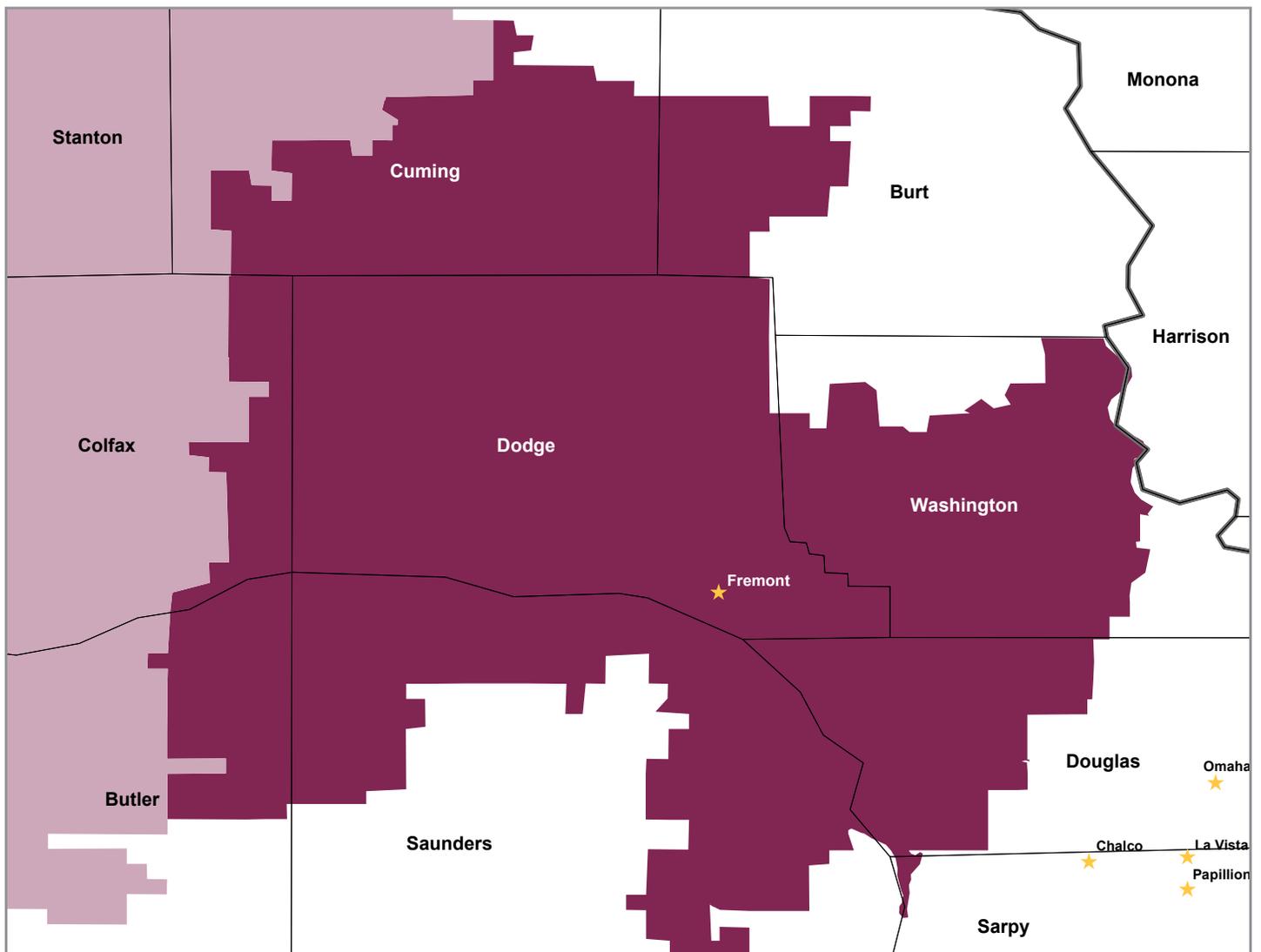
Introduction

This report discusses the results from a survey of employers in the Fremont area titled the Northeast Nebraska Survey of Hiring and Training Needs. This study was conducted by the Nebraska Department of Labor in collaboration with the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and the Bureau of Business Research at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The Northeast Nebraska Survey of Hiring and Training Needs was designed to gather detailed information on the hiring and training needs and priorities of Fremont area businesses. Specifically, information was gathered from employers about the types of occupations for which they are hiring; the types of degrees, certifications, and skills that occupations require; and the types of training they provide.

The Fremont survey area included all or parts of eight counties in the northeast region of Nebraska, including Dodge County. The survey was mailed to all privately-owned businesses with 10 or more employees in the Fremont survey area. The sample of Nebraska businesses was taken from the 3rd Quarter 2016 Nebraska Department of Labor Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. The final survey list included 432 establishment locations throughout the eight counties in the survey area.



Survey Area Map Northeast Nebraska



Introduction

Characteristics of Businesses

A total of 200 complete surveys were received as a result of the three mailings, for a 46.2% response rate. Table 1 displays the distribution of responding businesses according to their business size and industry groupings. Surveys were sent to all businesses in the survey area that had at least 10 employees in our records (some businesses reported less than 10 employees on the survey). A majority of responses came from smaller businesses (less than 50 employees) in service-producing industries. Specifically, 77.2% of respondents were businesses with fewer than 50 employees. These were designated as small businesses in the discussion of this survey. Another 13.2% of businesses had between 50 and 99 employees, and these were designated as mid-size businesses. The remaining 9.6% of respondents were large employers with 100 or more employees.

Goods-producing businesses accounted for 22.6% of Fremont respondents. The goods-producing category primarily includes responses from businesses in the construction industry (10.5% of Fremont respondents). Service-producing businesses accounted for 77.4% of respondents. Service-producing is a broad category which includes responses from businesses in the accommodation and food services industry (16.2% of Fremont respondents). The service-producing sector includes a large majority of the businesses in the economy employing four or more individuals, as well as a large majority of the respondents to the Northeast Nebraska Survey of Hiring and Training Needs.

Table 1 Profile of Responding Businesses

| Size of Business | |
|--|--------------|
| Small (4-49 employees) | 77.2% |
| Mid-size (50 - 99 employees) | 13.2% |
| Large (100 or more employees) | 9.6% |
| Industry | |
| Goods-Producing | 22.6% |
| Construction | 10.5% |
| Manufacturing | 9.2% |
| Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting | 2.5% |
| Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction | 0.4% |
| Service-Producing | 77.4% |
| Accommodation and Food Services | 16.2% |
| Retail Trade | 15.2% |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | 14.6% |
| Wholesale Trade | 9.0% |
| Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services | 3.9% |
| Finance and Insurance | 3.7% |
| Other Services (except Public Administration) | 3.5% |
| Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services | 3.5% |
| Transportation and Warehousing | 2.7% |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation | 2.3% |
| Information | 2.1% |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises | 0.8% |

Table 2 displays several key employment characteristics of the survey respondents. Given the focus on establishments with 10 or more employees, it was expected that the sample would primarily include older, established firms. It is notable that 80% of respondents had been in business for more than 10 years, while just 10.5% of respondents had been in business for six to 10 years and 9.5% had been in business for one to five years. No respondents had been in business for less than one year.

Table 2 Employment Characteristics of Responding Businesses

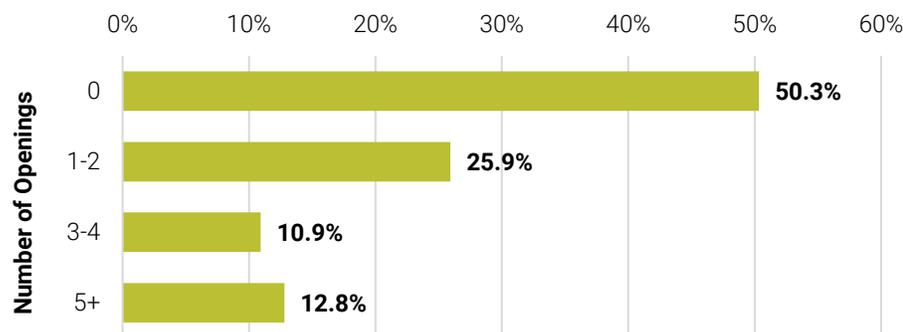
| Measure | |
|--|-------|
| Years in Operation | |
| <1 year | 0.0% |
| 1-5 years | 9.5% |
| 6-10 years | 10.5% |
| >10 years | 80.0% |
| Percentage of Employment | |
| Full-Time | 76.0% |
| Part-Time | 24.0% |
| Percentage of Workers by Type of Employment | |
| Permanent | 89.3% |
| Temporary | 1.6% |
| Seasonal | 9.2% |
| Hiring | |
| At Least One Job Opening | 49.7% |
| Average Current Job Openings | 2.8 |
| Hired or Tried to Hire Last Two Years | 93.4% |

Employers were asked to provide the number of full and part-time workers employed at their location. Nearly 76% of current employees' jobs were full-time positions compared to 24% part-time jobs. Employers also provided the number of permanent (89.3%), temporary (1.6%), and seasonal (9.2%) workers. Responding businesses also were very active in the labor market, with 93.4% of respondents reporting that their business hired or tried to hire employees during the last two years.

As seen in Table 2, 49.7% of responding businesses had at least one job opening at their location. The average number of current open positions at these locations was 2.8 jobs, but when only considering businesses with at least one current job opening, the average increased to 5.5 jobs.

Survey respondents were typically small, established firms, which primarily provided full-time and year-round employment, and a vast majority of responding businesses had been active in hiring over the last two years. Therefore, the respondents were an appropriate group for study in order to provide insights about hiring and training needs in the Fremont area.

Figure 1 Job Openings at Business Location



For all of the Labor Availability Study reports, visit:

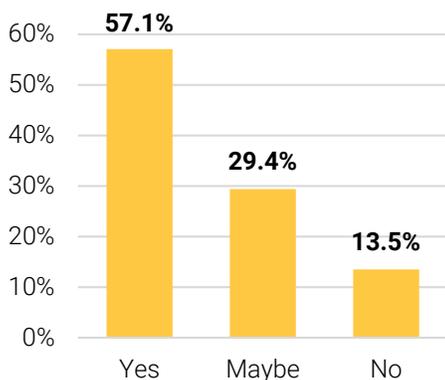
dol.nebraska.gov/las

Results

Labor Availability and Expansion

This section of results shows the importance of labor availability issues and the challenges presented to businesses facing expansion. Figure 2 shows the role of worker availability in economic development. Specifically, the Northeast Nebraska Survey of Hiring and Training Needs asked employers the following question: "If asked to consider expansion at this location, would issues with labor availability such as difficulty finding workers, be present?" A majority of businesses (57.1%) reported that issues with labor availability would be present in the Fremont area if they were asked to consider an expansion. More than 29% of businesses suggested that availability issues might be present, and 13.5% reported that they would not have labor availability issues. Responses from different industries and occupations were varied, and particularly challenged industries and occupations will be examined in this report.

Figure 2 Major Expansion: Issues with Labor Availability



Retiring Workers

This survey asked respondents several questions about retiring workers and plans to mitigate a potential skills gap. More specifically, employers were asked, "How concerned are you about the potential loss of skills and experience that may result from workers retiring from this location?" Each Fremont area respondent was then prompted to think about the question in terms of the next year and the next five years (see Figure 3).

When considering the next year, over 43% of businesses reported that they were not at all concerned, and 7.8% of respondents were very concerned about a loss of skills resulting from retiring workers. However, when considering concern for loss of skills from retiring workers in the next five years, 28.9% of respondents were not at all concerned and over 21% were very concerned. These results suggest that employers don't foresee as many skills gaps due to retiring workers in the next year as they do in the next five years.

Figure 3 Concern about Potential Loss of Skills and Experience

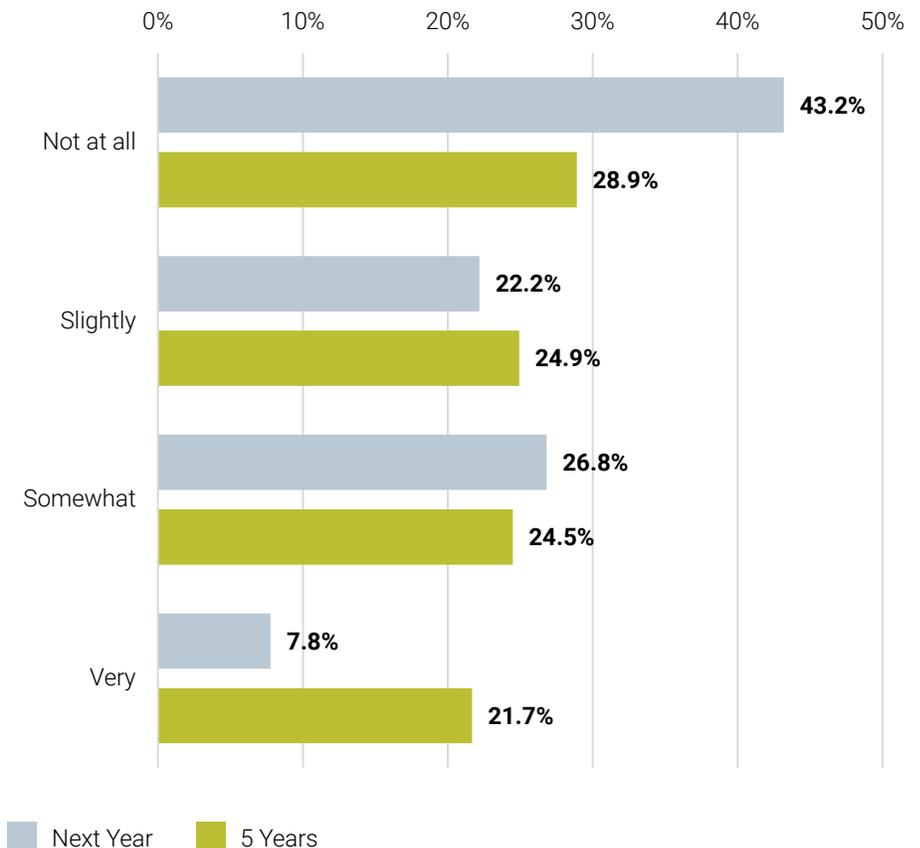
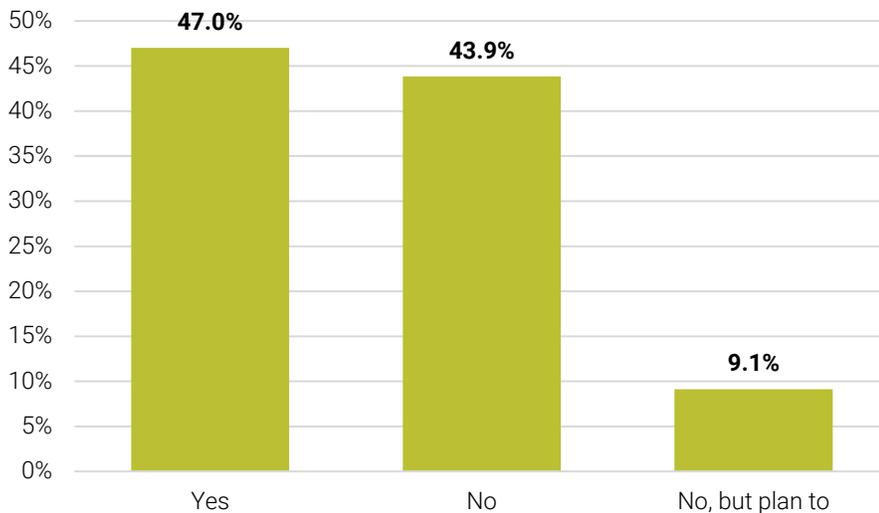


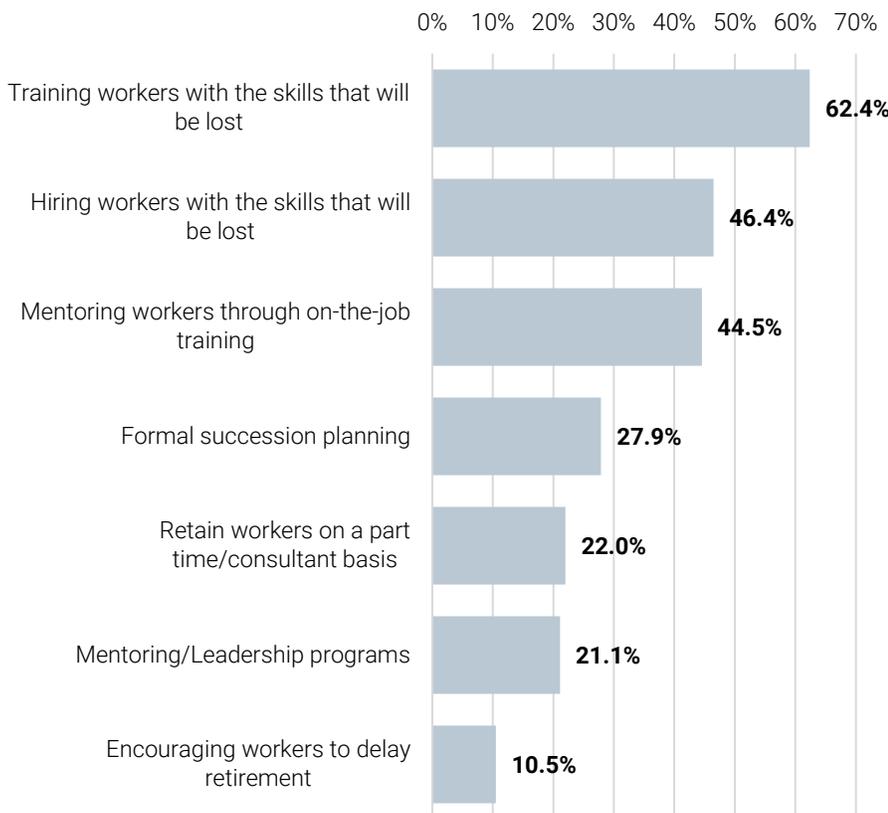
Figure 4 Have Taken Steps to Address Potential Skill Gaps



Businesses were then asked if they had taken steps to address the potential skill gaps that may occur due to the retirement of workers. As seen in Figure 4, 47% of Fremont area businesses answered that they had addressed the loss of skills due to retiring workers, and 9.1% responded that they had not yet taken action, but plan to take action to address skill gaps resulting from retiring workers.

A follow-up question asked, “How is management at this location addressing potential skill gaps that may result from workers retiring in the near future?” Of the employers responding “yes” to the previous question, the most common answer selected was to train current workers in the skills that will be lost (62.4%) when other workers retire (See Figure 5). Hiring workers in the skills that will be lost and mentoring workers through on-the-job training were the next most common means of replacing skills lost resulting from retiring workers.

Figure 5 Methods of Addressing Potential Skill Gaps



Results

Training

When describing occupations that employers have recently hired or tried to hire, respondents were asked, “Beyond basic employee orientation, what type of training is provided to workers?” As seen in Figure 6, the most common type of training was training that is provided by other workers or a supervisor (60.4%), and this type of training was most common regardless of occupation or industry (See Table 3 and Table 4).

Figure 6 Type of Training Provided to Workers

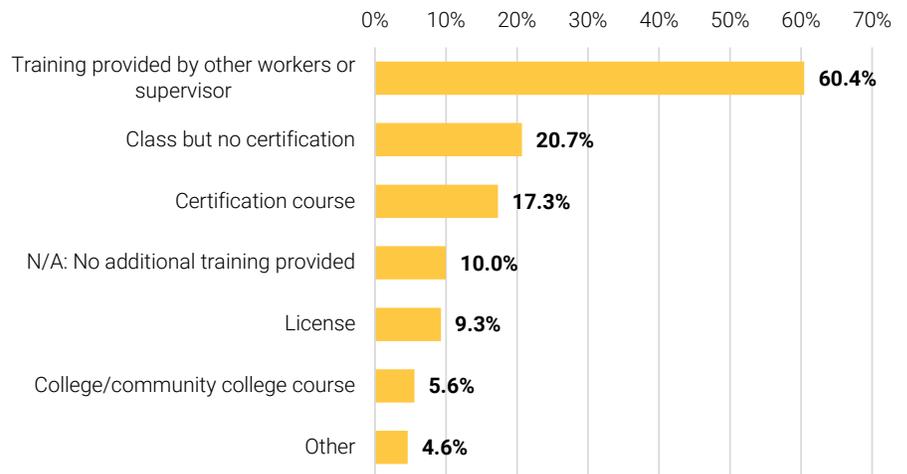


Table 3 Type of Training by Industry

| Type of Training | Accommodation and Food Services | Construction | Health Care and Social Assistance | Retail Trade | Wholesale Trade |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Training provided by other workers or supervisor | 66.7% | 59.6% | 60.7% | 57.6% | 59.1% |
| N/A: No additional training provided | 11.4% | 15.9% | 7.1% | 12.5% | 0.0% |
| License | 10.3% | 23.1% | 17.9% | 5.9% | 13.6% |
| Certification course | 8.3% | 15.4% | 32.1% | 22.0% | 22.7% |
| Class but no certification | 6.3% | 15.9% | 32.1% | 28.8% | 25.0% |
| College/community college course | 0.0% | 0.0% | 10.7% | 9.1% | 5.6% |
| Other | 10.5% | 7.7% | 8.0% | 0.0% | 5.6% |

Table 4 Type of Training by Occupation

| Type of Training | Construction and Extraction | Food Preparation and Serving Related | Office and Administrative Support | Sales and Related | Transportation and Material Moving |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| Training provided by other workers or supervisor | 58.1% | 65.0% | 58.2% | 72.7% | 49.3% |
| Class but no certification | 35.0% | 8.1% | 23.2% | 20.8% | 10.6% |
| License | 21.6% | 5.6% | 4.0% | 4.6% | 22.6% |
| College/community college course | 18.7% | 0.0% | 6.8% | 3.3% | 7.1% |
| Certification course | 16.0% | 5.8% | 11.7% | 17.1% | 7.5% |
| N/A: No additional training provided | 15.6% | 10.2% | 7.9% | 8.4% | 34.5% |
| Other | 9.3% | 6.0% | 26.9% | 2.5% | 8.3% |

Only the top five responding industries are displayed in Table 3, and shown in Table 4 are the top five occupations that employers most often hired or tried to hire in the last two years. Results showed that no additional training beyond basic employee orientation was provided by employers most often in the construction industry (15.9%) and for workers in transportation and material moving occupations (34.5%). Nearly 26% of employers in the health care and social assistance industry provided a certification course and 15.2% provided a class but no certification. In the wholesale trade industry, 30.4% of employers provided a class but no certification.

Benefits Offered

Detailed information was also gathered about the benefits offered to workers. Respondents were asked, “About how many workers at this location are offered the following benefits?” Figure 7.1 and 7.2 display the percent of respondents who offered specific benefits to full-time and part-time workers. Over 86.6% of employers responded that they offered all or some of their full-time workers paid vacation, and 79.7% of respondents offered all or some of their full-time workers paid holidays. However, 89.1% of respondents offered telecommuting to none of their full-time workers. Furthermore, over 51% of respondents reported that vision insurance was offered to none of the full-time workers at their firms.

As would be expected, the percent of firms that offered benefits to part-time workers was substantially less than for full-time workers. Only 28.4% of Fremont area businesses reported offering paid vacation and 36.2% of employers offered paid holiday benefits to all or some of their part-time workers. Furthermore, 24.7% of firms offered retirement benefits to all or some of their part-time employees. However, over 63.6% of respondents offered all or some part-time workers a flexible work schedule.

Figure 7.1 Benefit Offerings for Full-Time Workers

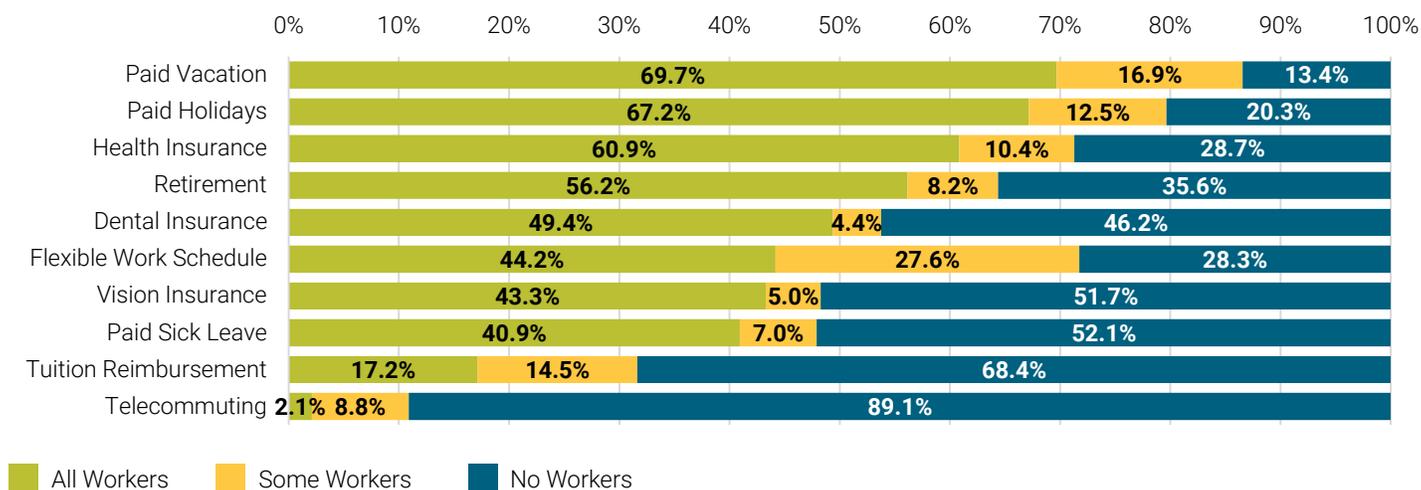
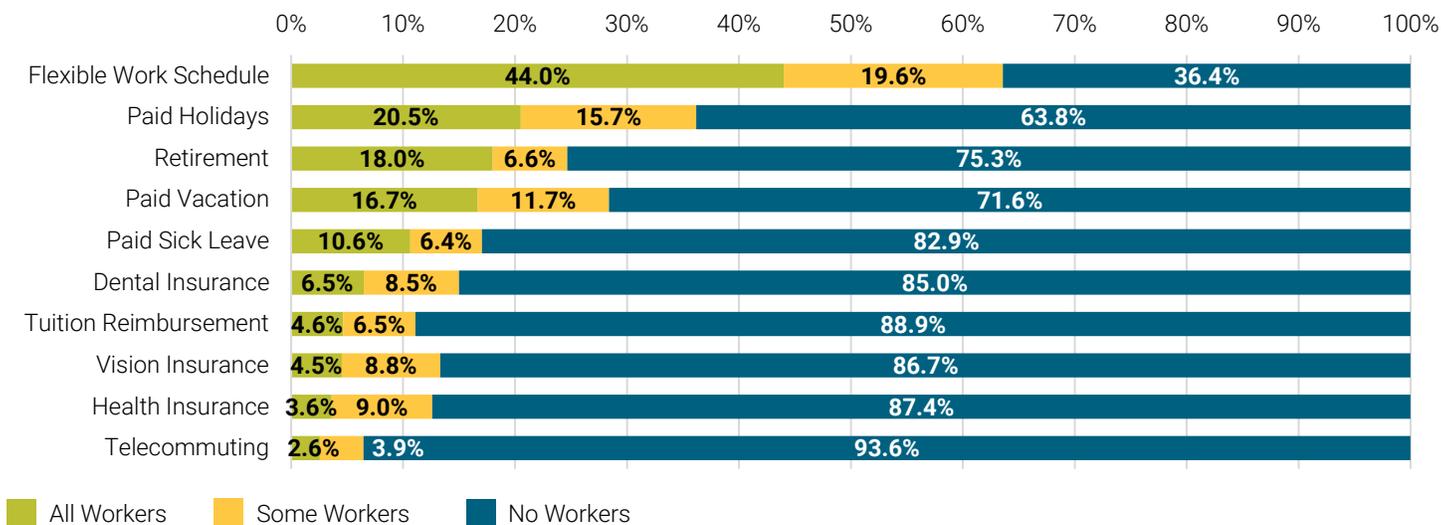


Figure 7.2 Benefit Offerings for Part-Time Workers



Results

Current Workers

Minimum Work Requirements

Employers responded to questions about the minimum educational attainment and work experience that was required of applicants and the overall skill level required of most workers at their location.

As seen in Figure 8, a majority of Fremont area businesses (78.3%) either had no minimum education requirement for applicants or required a high school diploma or equivalent.

Similarly, the data in Figure 9 shows that the majority of businesses responding to the survey have no prior work experience requirement (50.4%). However, over 23.8% of employers do require up to a year of related work experience, and 25.8% of businesses require a year or more experience to qualify for the position.

Figure 8 Education Requirements

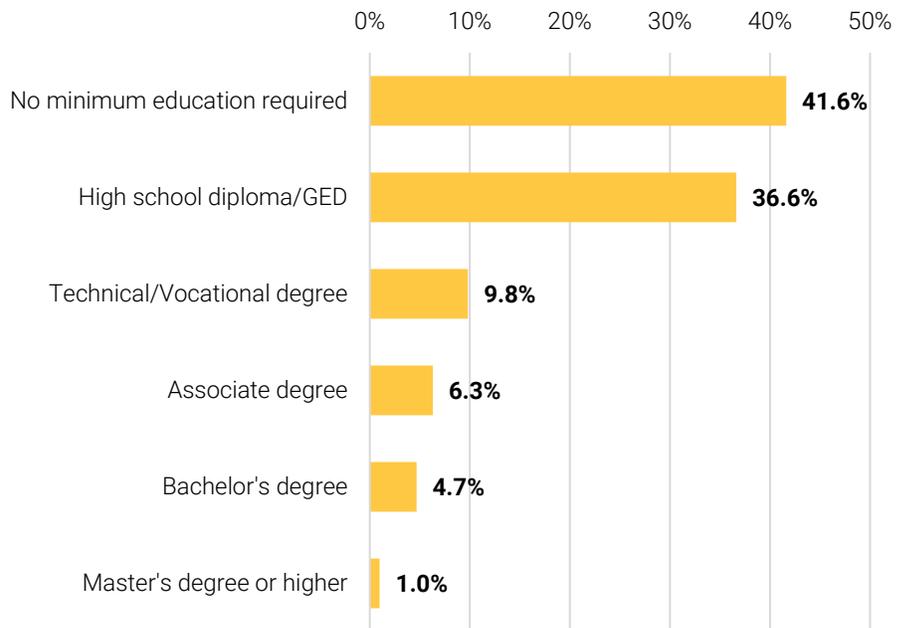


Figure 9 Work Experience Requirements

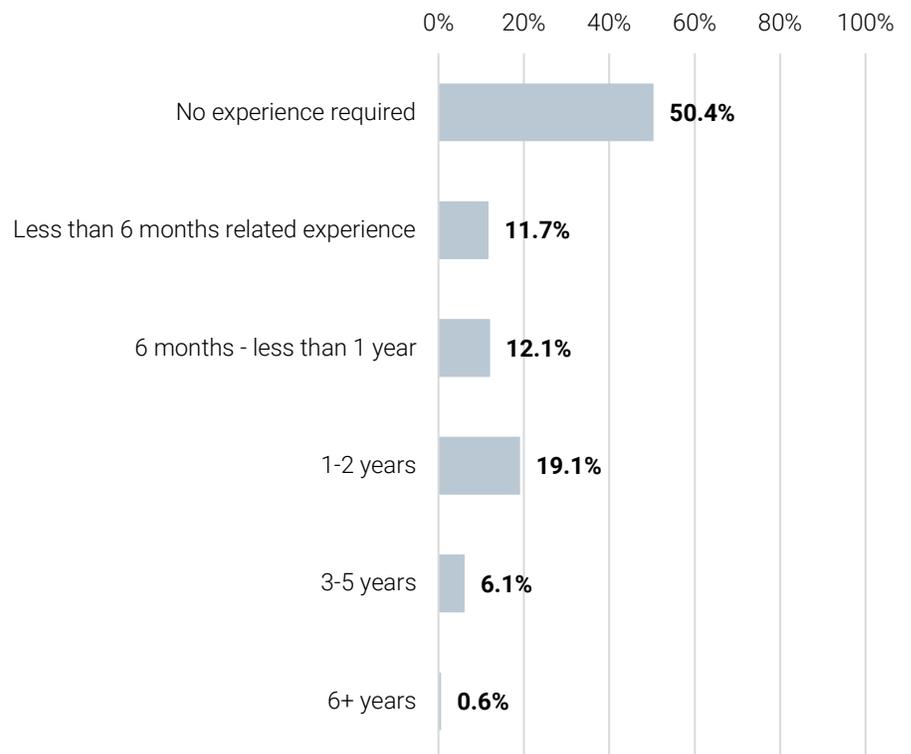
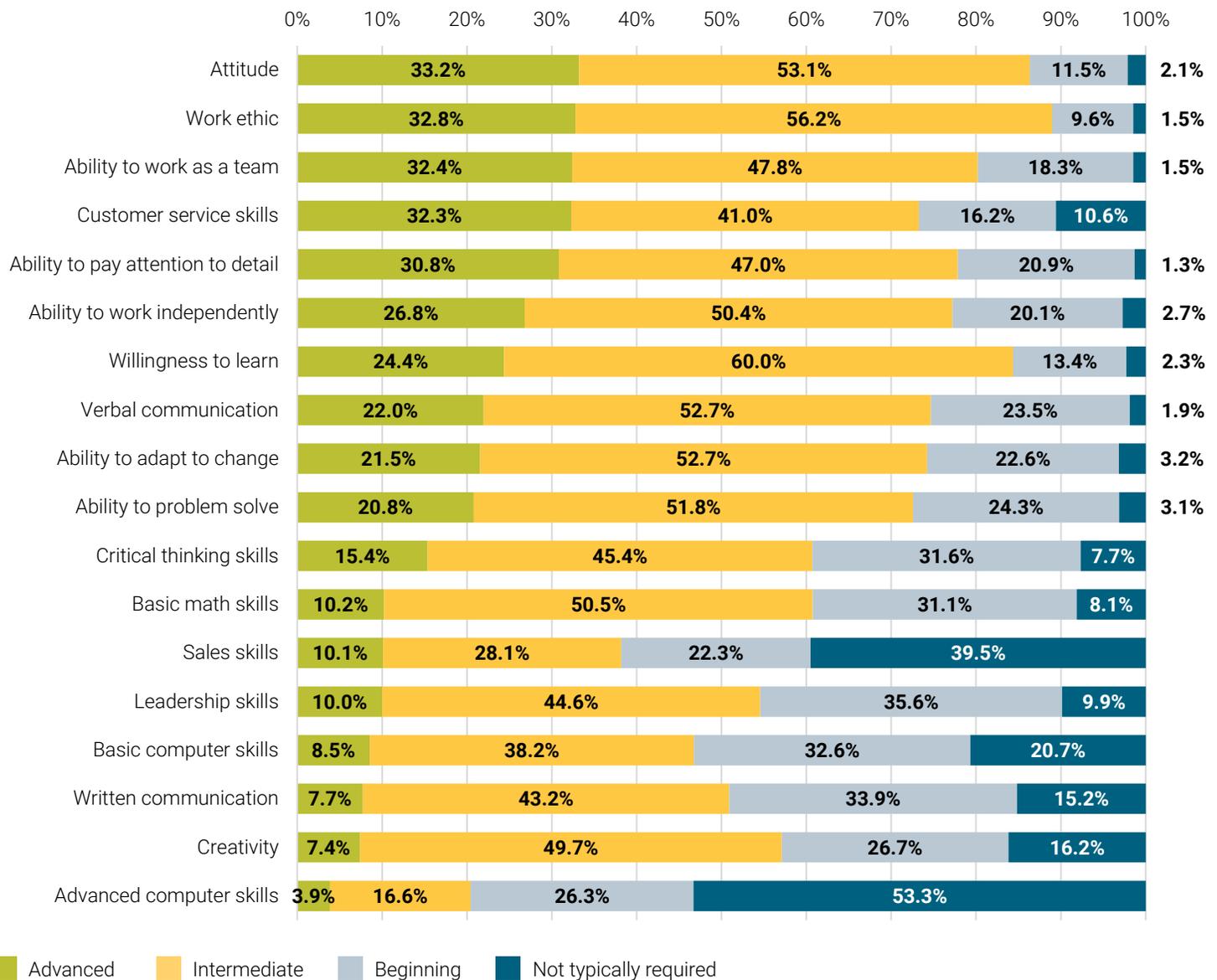


Figure 10 Skill Level Requirements



As seen in Figure 10, a list of 18 skills was provided to employers in order to rate the overall skill level required of most workers at their locations. This list included a variety of skills including “soft skills” (e.g., work ethic, attitude), basic education (e.g., basic math, verbal and written communication), and advanced skills (e.g., critical thinking, advanced computer skills).

Businesses were prompted to indicate the required skill level as either beginning, intermediate, advanced, or “Not typically required.” The skills that businesses most often indicated as not typically required were advanced computer skills (53.3%), sales (39.5%), and basic computer skills (20.7%). A majority of businesses reported that for 8 of the 18 skills listed, most workers were required to have an intermediate skill level. Businesses most often reported that an advanced level of skill was required for attitude (33.2%) and work ethic (32.8%).

Results

Deficiencies

Employers were asked to indicate whether or not there were deficiencies in the majority of their workforce based on the provided list of skills. As displayed in Figure 11, work ethic (43.8%) was most often reported as being deficient in the workforce. However, a majority of businesses indicated they did not have deficiencies in their workforce in any of the listed skills. The least often reported deficient skills were basic computer skills (15.4%), creativity (18.1%), and willingness to learn (18.7%).

Figure 11 Percentage of Employers Reporting a Deficiency in the Majority of Their Workforce

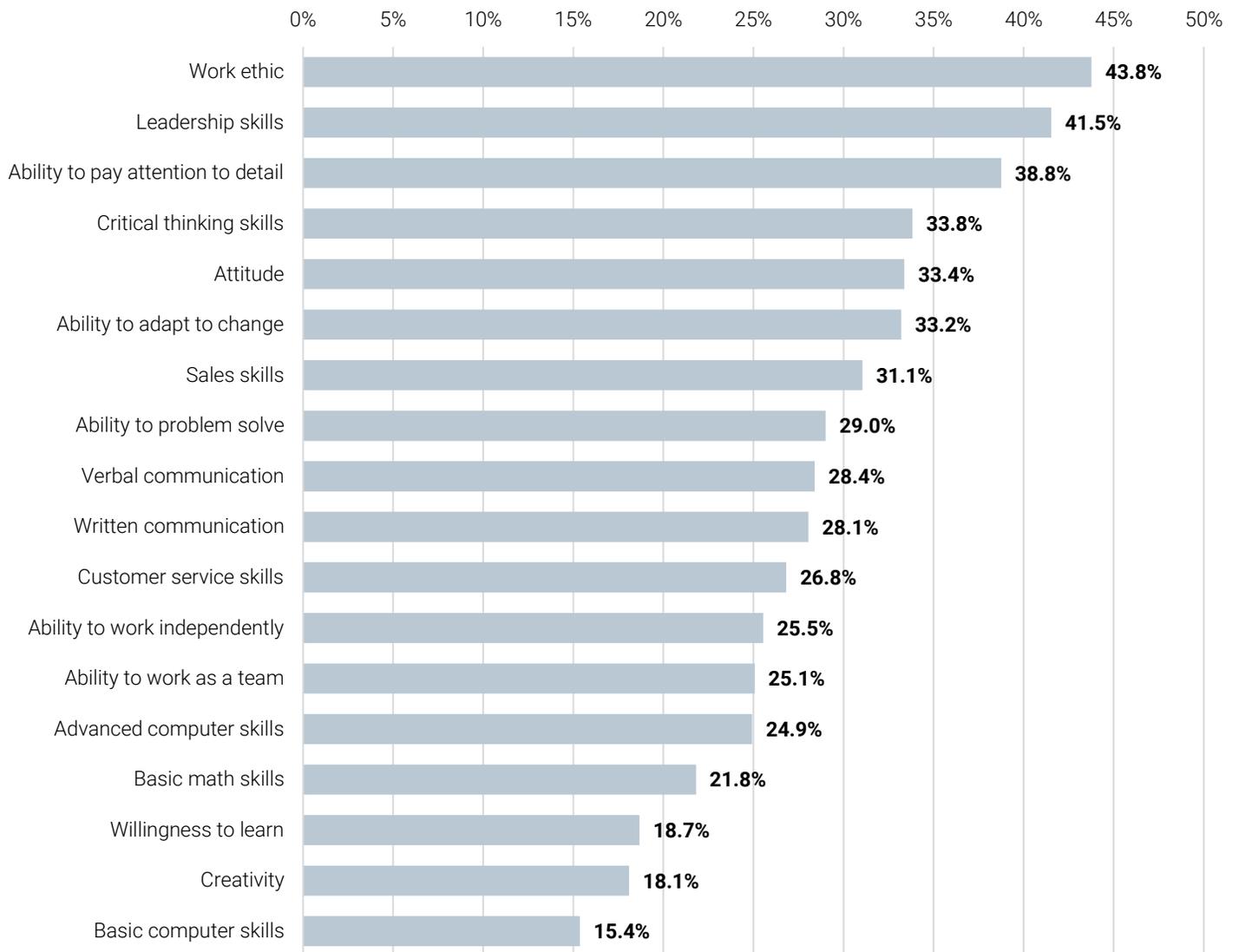


Figure 12 Applicants' Current Employment Situation

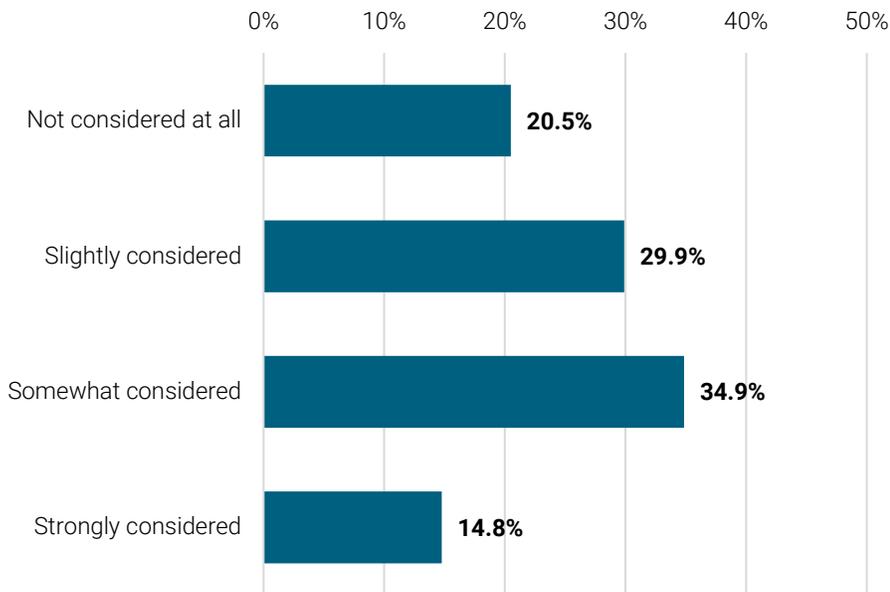
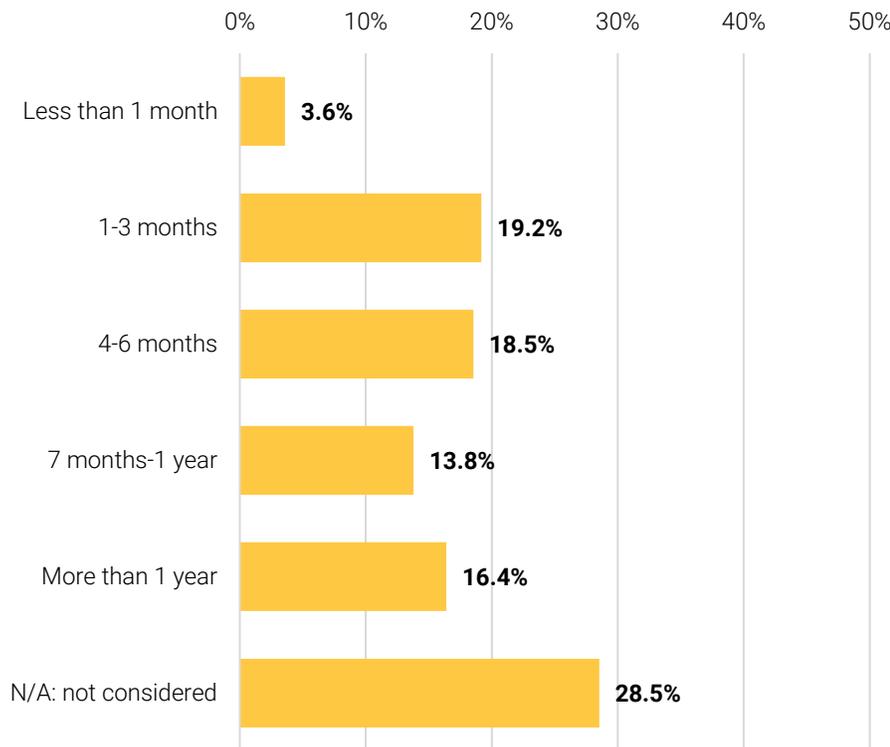


Figure 13 Hesitation Regarding Unemployed Applicant by Time Spent Not Employed



Applicants

Employment History

Respondents were asked, “When hiring, how much does your business consider whether an applicant is currently working?” and were given four options (as seen in Figure 12).

Over 50% of Fremont area businesses responded that an applicant’s current employment status is either slightly considered or not considered at all. On the other hand, 14.8% of businesses responded that employment status is strongly considered when assessing an applicant.

Figure 13 displays the results of the question, “What length of time not employed would cause hesitation about a candidate or affect a hiring or interview decision in a negative way?” In the Fremont area, the greatest percentage of employers responded that the length of an applicants’ time not employed was not considered (28.5%).

Results

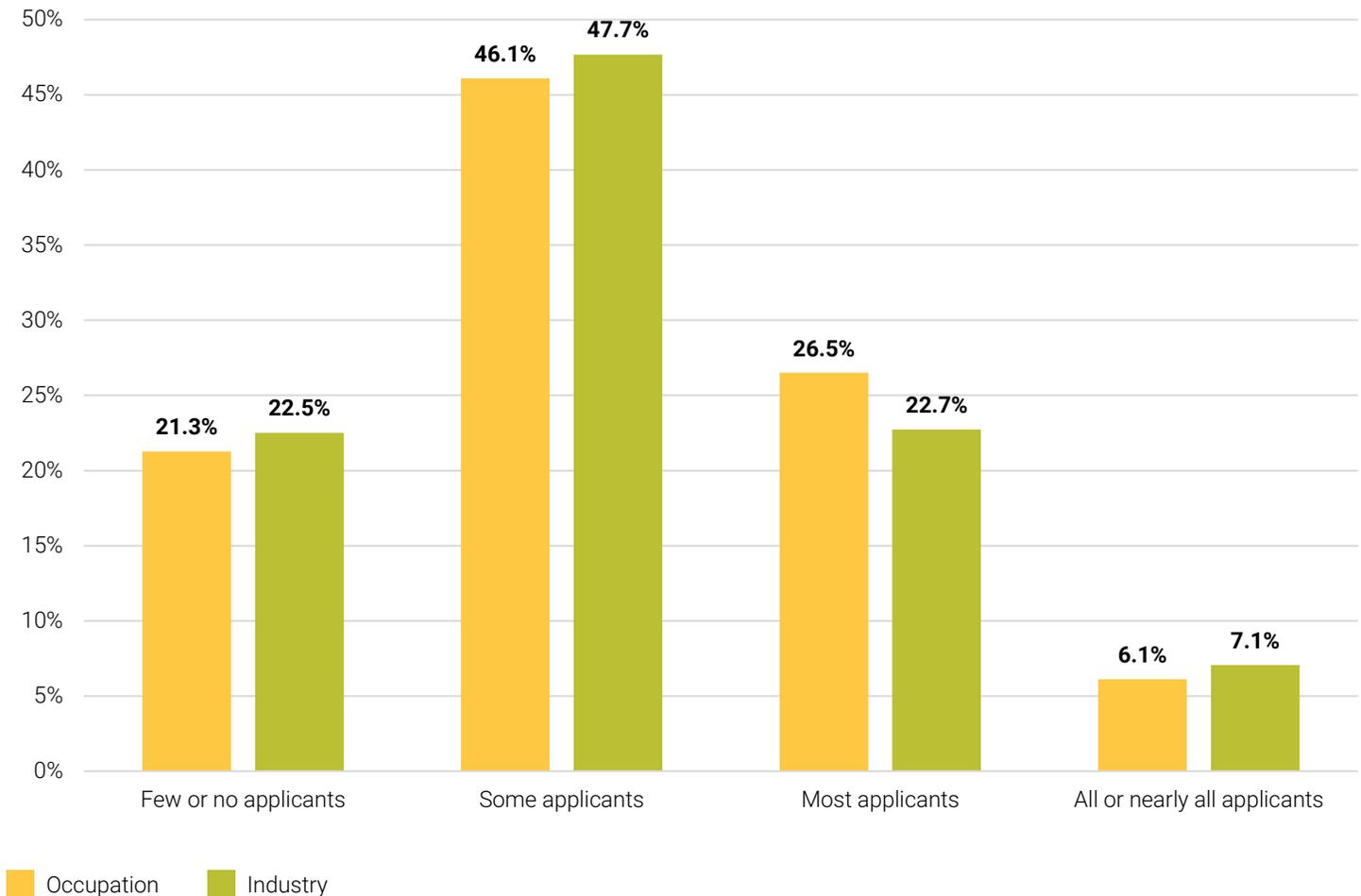
Respondents were asked the question, “Generally speaking, when hiring, how many applicants have experience in the same industry or a closely-related industry?” Respondents were also asked the same question about applicants’ experience in the same occupation or a closely-related occupation (see Figure 14).

Respondents were given four options to describe applicants, and 70.2% of Fremont area businesses indicated that some or a few to no applicants had experience in the same industry or a closely-related industry. Only 7.1% of respondents indicated that nearly all or all applicants had experience in a similar industry.

Considering occupational experience, more than 67% of employers responded that some, a few, or no applicants had experience in a similar occupation. Conversely, 6.1% of respondents indicated that nearly all or all applicants had experience in the same or a similar occupation as the one for which they applied.

Comparing results shown in Figure 14, similar results were observed for industry and occupational experience. However, a greater percentage of respondents stated most applicants had occupational experience (26.5%) compared to industry experience (22.7%), and fewer respondents said some applicants had occupational experience (46.1%) compared to some industry experience (47.7%).

Figure 14 Amount of Applicants with Experience in Related Industry or Occupation



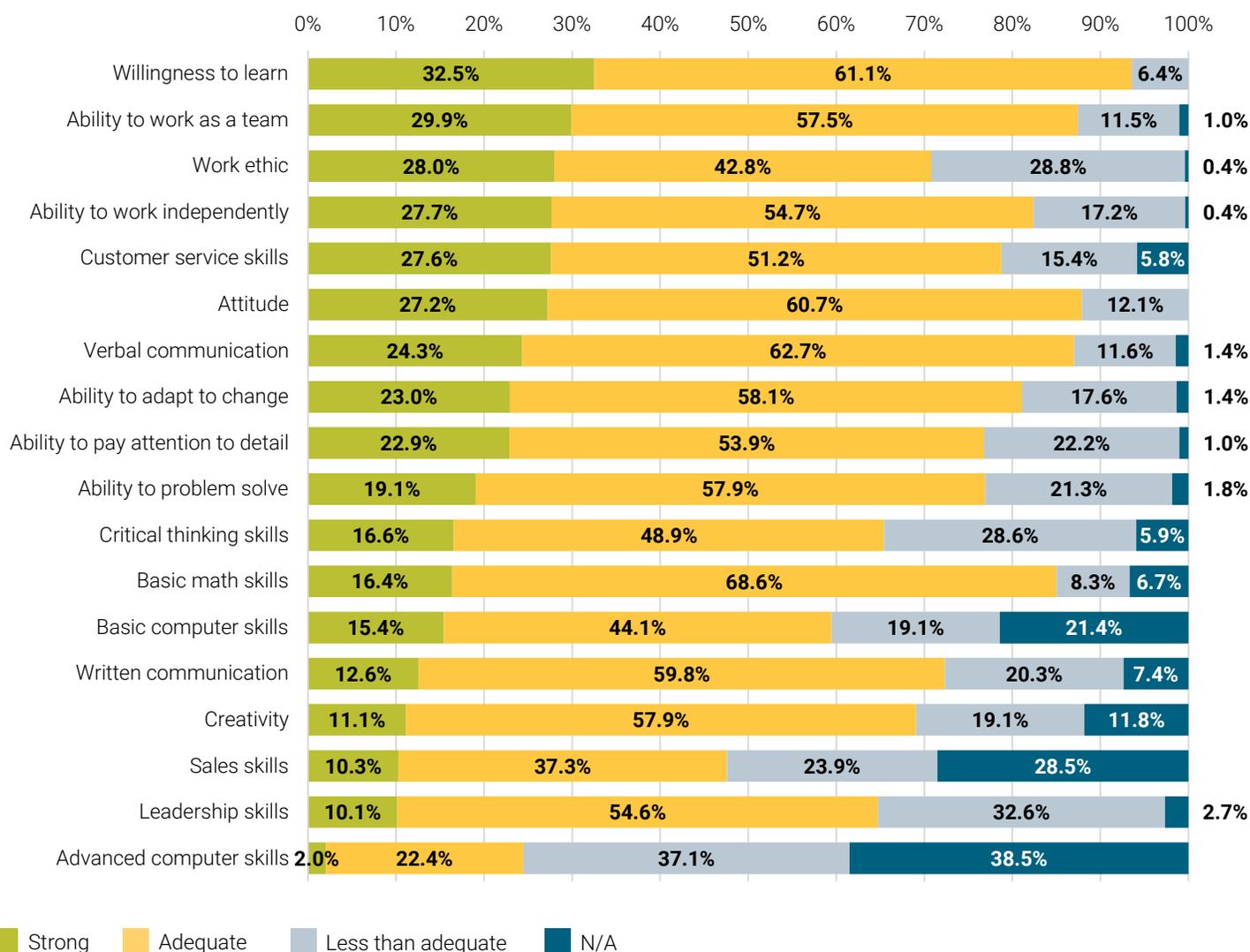
Competency

Businesses were asked to rate the overall competency level of their typical applicant pool. As seen in Figure 15, respondents were given a list of skills and four options to choose from to describe the competency level of applicants. Each of the skills listed are not always applicable to every occupation or industry so the option of 'N/A' was provided to respondents. The results displayed in Figure 15 are sorted by those skills with the greatest percentage of employers responding "strong."

More than 37% of employers gave applicants a "less than adequate" rating for advanced computer skills (which includes computer programming skills) which was less often than they reported that advanced computer skills were not applicable (38.5%). Over 32% of employers rated their applicant pool as less than adequate in leadership, but 93.6% rated willingness to learn as strong or adequate.

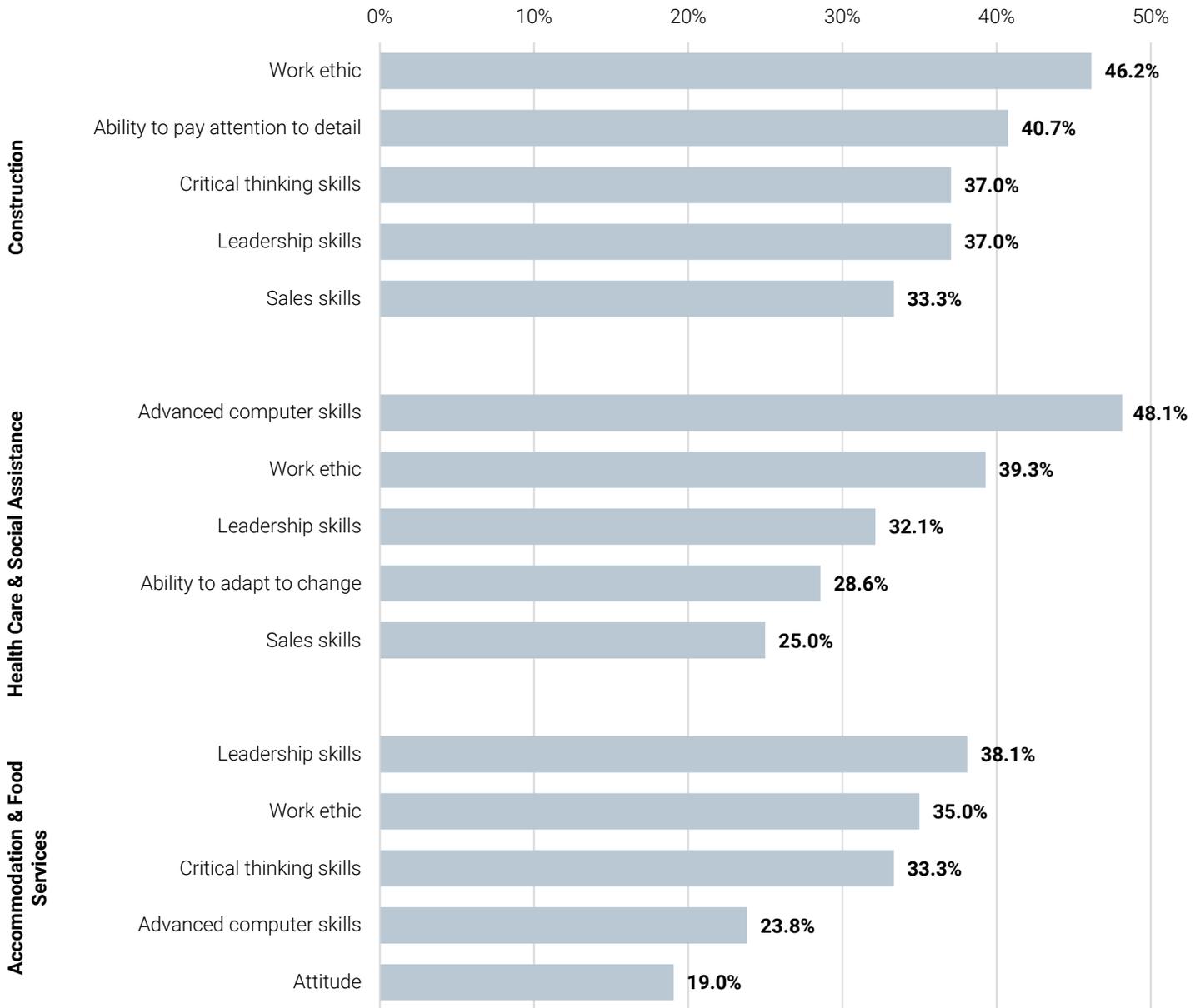
More than 87% rated ability to work as a team as strong or adequate, and 27.2% of respondents rated applicants' attitude as "strong." Furthermore, most employers reported that applicants' verbal communication (87%) and basic math skills (85%) were "adequate" or "strong."

Figure 15 Competency of Typical Applicant Pool



Results

Figure 16 Less Than Adequate Competency of Typical Applicant Pool for Top Responding Industries



As seen in Figure 16, respondents' competency rating of their applicant pools was analyzed for the top three responding industries in the Fremont area. The top five skills most often reported as less than adequate for each industry are displayed. In the construction trade industry, work ethic was most often reported as "less than adequate" (46.2%), followed by ability to pay attention to detail (40.7%) and critical thinking skills (37%).

Applicants' advanced computer skills were reported to be one of the highest "less than adequate" skills for the health care and accommodation industries. However, advanced computer skills were often rated as "not applicable" in the health care and social assistance (40.7%) and accommodation and food services (47.6%) industries.

Figure 17.1 Difficulty Finding Workers by Industry

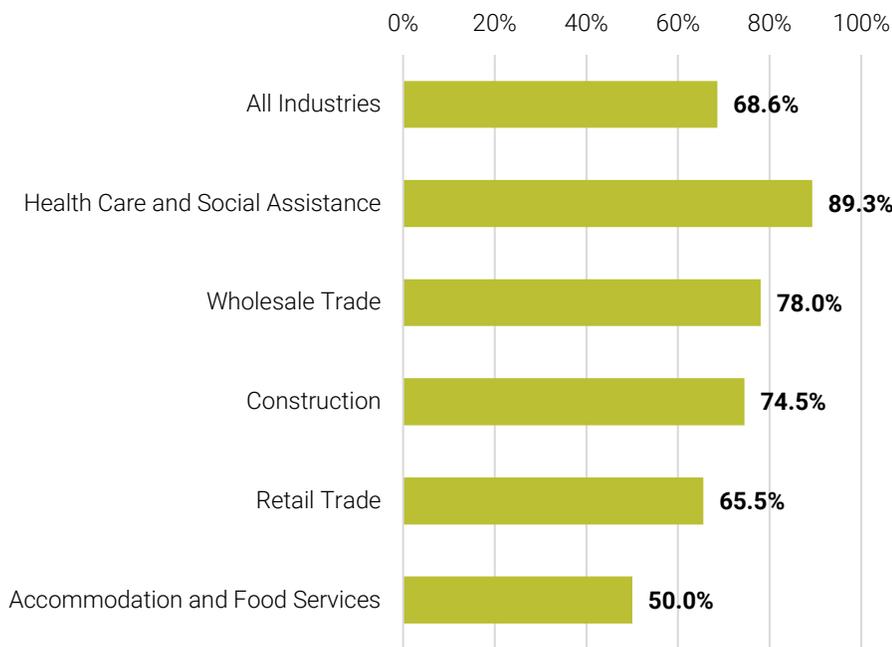
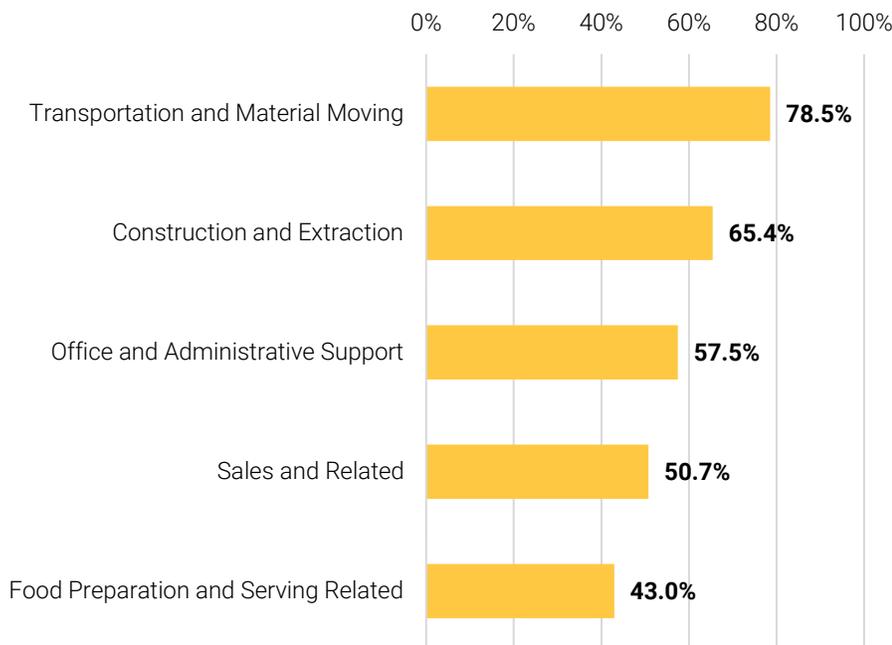


Figure 17.2 Difficulty Finding Workers by Occupation



Hiring Difficulty

Businesses named three occupations they have tried to hire or have recently hired, then indicated whether or not it was difficult to find workers for the listed occupations. Over 68% of Fremont area employers reported it was difficult to find workers for the occupations they have been trying to hire or recently hired.

Figure 17.1 displays the percent of employers, in the top five responding industries, who reported it was difficult to find workers. Businesses operating in the health care and social assistance industry most often had difficulty finding workers (89.3%). The wholesale trade (78%), construction (74.5%), and retail trade (65.5%) industries also more often reported difficulty finding workers than Fremont businesses overall (68.6%).

Fremont area businesses most often reported recently hiring or trying to hire for these occupation groups: transportation and material moving, construction and extraction, office and administrative support, sales and related, and food preparation and serving related occupations (see Figure 17.2). These occupation groups encompass many specific occupations, which can be viewed at www.onetonline.org.

Businesses that hire workers for transportation and material moving, and construction and extraction occupations more often reported having difficulty finding workers (78.5%) than Fremont area businesses overall (68.6%).

Results

Businesses were also asked why they faced challenges finding workers for the specific occupations they have recently hired or have tried to hire. This follow-up question was only asked when firms indicated that workers in an occupation were difficult to find. Figure 18 displays the percentage of respondents, for all occupations, who reported a reason for difficulty finding workers.

Many Fremont businesses (74%) reported having difficulty finding workers for a specific job due to not receiving enough applicants. Over 48% of businesses said workers' lack of occupation specific skills was a reason that they had difficulty hiring for that occupation, followed by a lack of work experience (44.3%). On the other hand, very few businesses reported that the difficulty in finding workers was due to the applicant being overqualified (4.3%) or a language barrier (3.5%), and only 2.9% of businesses reported citizenship or work authorization as being a challenge.

Respondents were given the opportunity to specify other reasons for hiring difficulties not listed. In the Fremont area, other reasons included issues with workers' desire to relocate, desire for a year-round position, and work ethic. Additional reasons for hiring difficulty included issues that were not related to problems with applicants, such as the location of the office.

Figure 18 Reasons for Difficulty Finding Workers

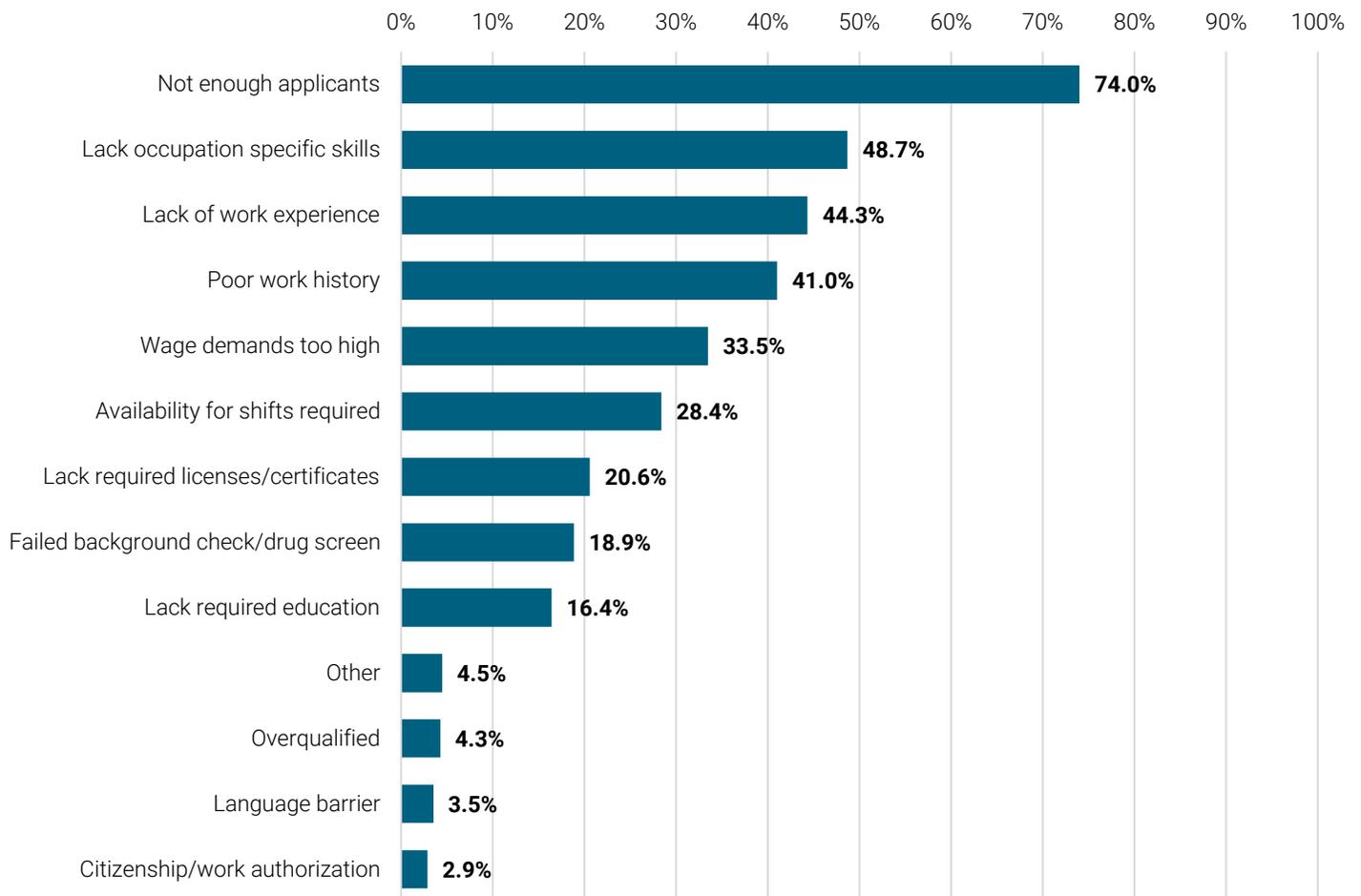


Table 5 Reasons for Difficulty Finding Workers - Top Responding Industries

| Reason for Difficulty | Accommodation and Food Services | Construction | Health Care and Social Assistance | Retail Trade | Wholesale Trade |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Availability for shifts required | 50.0% | 6.1% | 32.0% | 42.1% | 9.4% |
| Citizenship/work authorization | 8.3% | 2.6% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 6.3% |
| Failed background check/drug screen | 0.0% | 47.4% | 16.0% | 23.7% | 6.3% |
| Lack occupation specific skills | 45.8% | 57.9% | 50.0% | 55.3% | 43.8% |
| Lack of work experience | 29.2% | 47.4% | 36.0% | 52.6% | 46.9% |
| Lack required education | 0.0% | 13.2% | 26.0% | 26.3% | 9.4% |
| Lack required licenses/certificates | 0.0% | 23.7% | 32.0% | 21.1% | 31.3% |
| Language barrier | 8.3% | 0.0% | 4.0% | 0.0% | 3.1% |
| Not enough applicants | 62.5% | 73.7% | 82.0% | 73.7% | 65.6% |
| Overqualified | 0.0% | 0.0% | 4.0% | 2.6% | 0.0% |
| Poor work history | 50.0% | 57.9% | 24.0% | 44.7% | 37.5% |
| Wage demands too high | 29.2% | 18.4% | 48.0% | 23.7% | 40.6% |
| Other | 12.5% | 10.5% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |

Table 5 displays the percent of businesses, in the top responding industries, who gave reasons why they had difficulty finding workers. The top five responding industry groups were wholesale and retail trade, construction, health care and social assistance, and accommodation and food services. These industry groups contain many specific industries, which can be viewed on the Bureau of Labor Statistics North American Industry Classification System website located here: <https://www.bls.gov/bls/naics.htm>.

Firms doing business in the top industry groups most often reported that not receiving enough applicants was why they had difficulty hiring for a position. Being available for required shifts was more often reported as a hiring challenge for the accommodation and food services industry (50%) than wholesale trade (42.1%) and health care and social assistance industries (32%).

Respondents were given the option to specify if any other issues were the reasons why they had difficulty finding workers for a specific position. Firms hiring workers in the accommodation and food services industry indicated issues with work ethic and attendance, while businesses hiring in the construction industry identified work ethic and location.

Results

Table 6 Reasons for Difficulty Finding Workers - Most Often Hired Occupations

| Reason for Difficulty | Construction and Extraction | Food Preparation and Serving Related | Office and Administrative Support | Sales and Related | Transportation and Material Moving |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| Availability for shifts required | 8.9% | 63.6% | 27.9% | 32.3% | 22.3% |
| Citizenship/work authorization | 4.0% | 8.4% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 4.0% |
| Failed background check/drug screen | 44.5% | 5.7% | 5.7% | 30.5% | 38.2% |
| Lack occupation specific skills | 53.4% | 48.9% | 43.7% | 56.3% | 33.8% |
| Lack of work experience | 50.0% | 39.1% | 46.5% | 69.3% | 46.3% |
| Lack required education | 12.1% | 0.0% | 7.6% | 31.0% | 6.4% |
| Lack required licenses/certificates | 24.3% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 18.5% | 43.8% |
| Language barrier | 0.0% | 11.2% | 2.4% | 0.0% | 4.0% |
| Not enough applicants | 71.0% | 72.0% | 70.0% | 73.2% | 79.1% |
| Overqualified | 0.0% | 2.8% | 11.3% | 4.6% | 4.0% |
| Poor work history | 62.9% | 61.5% | 44.6% | 40.4% | 42.3% |
| Wage demands too high | 13.5% | 34.9% | 45.5% | 24.6% | 33.7% |
| Other | 8.1% | 13.3% | 6.0% | 0.0% | 5.5% |

Table 6 displays the reasons businesses had difficulty hiring workers for the five occupation groups that firms most often hired or tried to hire, sorted alphabetically. The top five occupation groups were construction and extraction, food preparation and serving related, office and administrative support, sales and related, and transportation and material moving. These occupation groups encompass many specific occupations, which can be viewed at oneline.org.

Businesses that hire the top five occupation groups most often reported that not receiving enough applicants was a reason why they had difficulty finding workers. Furthermore, a majority of firms hiring workers in the construction and extraction (62.9%) occupation group and the food preparation and serving related (61.5%) occupation group reported that having a poor work history was why it was difficult to find workers.

A lack of work experience was cited as being a hiring challenge more frequently for sales and related (69.3%) and construction and extraction occupations (50%) compared to food preparation and serving related occupations (39.1%).

Respondents were given the option to specify if any other issues were the reasons why they had difficulty finding workers for an occupation. Firms hiring workers in food preparation and serving-related occupations indicated issues with work ethic and location, while businesses hiring for construction and extraction occupations also identified issues with work ethic.

Profile of Selected Occupations

Table 7 displays information for the three H3 (high wage, high demand, and high skill) occupations that responding employers in the northeast survey area (including Columbus and Fremont) have most often recently hired or tried to hire. The top H3 occupations were heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers, bus and truck mechanics and diesel engine specialists, and registered nurses. These occupations represent a variety of education and work experience requirements and training needs. Information displayed also includes reported wages and the reasons employers have difficulty hiring for these specific occupations. Businesses were able to select all the answers that applied for questions regarding the reasons for hiring difficulty, location of training, and type of training provided.

Table 7.1 Wages Businesses are Willing to Pay

| Wages Businesses are Willing to Pay | Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers | Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists | Registered Nurses |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|-------------------|
| Average starting hourly wage* | \$15.50 | \$18.58 | \$22.52 |
| Average starting yearly wage* | \$45,622 | \$49,576 | \$56,133 |

*Hourly and yearly wages are calculated separately.

Table 7.2 Education Requirements

| Education Requirements | Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers | Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists | Registered Nurses |
|--|---|---|-------------------|
| No minimum education required | 58.9% | 20.1% | 0.0% |
| High school diploma/ GED | 31.7% | 6.7% | 0.0% |
| Technical/vocational degree | 9.4% | 73.2% | 9.3% |
| Associate degree | 0.0% | 0.0% | 44.4% |
| Bachelor's degree | 0.0% | 0.0% | 36.9% |
| Master's degree or higher | 0.0% | 0.0% | 9.3% |
| Additional requirements (% Yes) | | | |
| Special training | 81.6% | 72.3% | 70.7% |
| License | 100.0% | 40.4% | 100.0% |
| Certificate | 45.1% | 42.9% | 37.8% |

Businesses responded to the question about a specific occupation they hire, "What is the average starting wage or salary (as appropriate) you are willing to pay workers?" Hourly wage and yearly salary responses were analyzed separately. Survey respondents did not always provide both an hourly and annual figure, and it is possible that the nature of jobs is different for hourly versus salaried positions. In addition, wage responses were not standardized nor were respondents prompted with pay ranges, and other pay methods were not included (e.g. pay per mile).

Employers hiring heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers were willing to pay an average starting salary of \$45,622. Most employers hiring workers for this occupation have no minimum education requirement (58.9%). Most employers also require applicants to have special training (81.6%) and some require a certificate (45.1%). Requirements for heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers occupations often included obtaining a commercial driver's license and hazmat training.

Results

More than 87% of employers that recently hired or tried to hire heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers had difficulty when finding workers. The top reasons for hiring challenges reported by employers were not receiving enough applications (70.8%), a lack of work experience (55.7%), and applicants' lacking required licenses or certificates (45.1%).

Workers hired as bus and truck mechanics and diesel engine specialists in the northeast survey area were paid an average starting hourly wage of \$18.58 per hour or, if a salaried employee, \$49,576 annually. Most businesses required applicants hold, at minimum, a technical or vocational degree (73.2%) and most employers (72.3%) reported that special training is required to be qualified for this occupation. Almost 90% of employers that recently hired or tried to hire workers for this occupation had difficulty when finding workers. Employers most often responded that a lack of occupation specific skills (81.6%), and workers' lack of work experience (65.2%) were reasons for hiring difficulty.

The average starting hourly wage that employers were willing to pay registered nurses was \$22.52 per hour or \$56,133 annually for salaried workers. Most employers required workers in this occupation to hold an associate (44.4%) or bachelor's degree (36.9%). All employers responded that licensing is required and most require special training (70.7%). All responding employers, who have recently hired or tried to hire registered nurses, had difficulty when finding workers.

Table 7.3 Work Experience Requirements

| Work Experience Requirements | Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers | Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists | Registered Nurses |
|------------------------------|---|---|-------------------|
| No experience required | 16.6% | 28.3% | 43.1% |
| < 6 mon. related | 22.8% | 17.1% | 22.3% |
| 6 mon. - 1 year | 25.5% | 32.3% | 12.2% |
| 1-2 years | 26.3% | 12.5% | 17.3% |
| 3-5 years | 8.8% | 9.8% | 5.1% |
| 5+ years | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |

Table 7.4 Reasons for Hiring Difficulty

| Difficult to find workers | Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers | Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists | Registered Nurses |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|-------------------|
| Yes | 87.1% | 89.9% | 100.0% |
| Reason for difficulty | | | |
| Availability for shifts required | 7.4% | 12.9% | 57.3% |
| Citizenship/work authorization | 3.8% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Failed background check/drug screen | 18.4% | 0.0% | 6.6% |
| Lack occupation specific skills | 31.8% | 81.6% | 18.2% |
| Lack of work experience | 55.7% | 65.2% | 21.4% |
| Lack required education | 2.8% | 34.9% | 11.6% |
| Lack required licenses/certificates | 55.3% | 38.7% | 27.8% |
| Language barrier | 5.8% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Not enough applicants | 70.8% | 57.9% | 93.4% |
| Overqualified | 3.8% | 0.0% | 6.6% |
| Poor work history | 37.0% | 17.9% | 11.6% |
| Wage demands too high | 39.4% | 19.9% | 47.9% |

The top reasons for registered nurse hiring difficulty reported by employers were not receiving enough applicants (93.4%), availability for shifts required (57.3%), wage demands being too high (47.9%).

Table 7.5 Training Needs

| Training Needs | Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers | Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists | Registered Nurses |
|--|---|---|-------------------|
| Where training is provided | | | |
| In-House | 71.1% | 75.2% | 74.2% |
| Out-of-House | 37.8% | 35.7% | 53.8% |
| Type of training provided | | | |
| Certification course | 12.2% | 28.5% | 23.2% |
| Class but no certification | 14.0% | 26.3% | 18.2% |
| College/community college course | 3.3% | 40.1% | 21.4% |
| License | 37.6% | 7.9% | 49.2% |
| N/A: No additional training provided | 15.2% | 7.6% | 4.8% |
| Training provided by other workers or supervisor | 49.3% | 58.3% | 68.9% |
| Other | 1.8% | 6.8% | 4.8% |

Most employers hiring for these three occupations provided workers in-house training from colleagues or a supervisor. Additionally, over 37% of employers that hire heavy tractor trailer and truck drivers provided license training, and 49.2% of employers that hire registered nurses provided also provide license training.

The Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) program uses different methodology than the current report, but can provide additional insight into pay rates for specific industries and occupations. The OES program collects wage data for the entire state of Nebraska, in addition to wage data regarding more than one Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), multiple regions, and metro and non-metro areas. Based on the May 2016 Occupational Employment Survey, the hourly entry wage for heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers in the northeast Nebraska economic development region (which includes Fremont) was \$15.29, and the entry-level yearly salary was \$31,798. For bus and truck mechanics and diesel engine specialists, the entry-level hourly wage was \$12.96 and their estimated entry-level salary was \$26,957, per year. According to OES, registered nurses earned an hourly entry wage of \$20.94 and a yearly entry-level salary of \$43,543.

The average pay for heavy and tractor-trailer truck drivers in the northeast Nebraska economic development region was \$21.14 per hour and \$43,978 per year. According to OES, bus and truck mechanics and diesel engine specialists in the northeast Nebraska economic development region earned an average hourly wage of \$18.49 and a yearly salary of \$38,462. Registered nurses in this area earned an average hourly wage of \$27.72, and the average salary earned was \$57,646.

Conclusion

This report utilized the results of the Northeast Nebraska Survey of Hiring and Training Needs to evaluate employers' assessment of their workforce and applicant pool, characteristics of hiring and training practices, and hiring challenges faced by businesses in the area. The majority of responding businesses reported difficulty finding workers for the occupations they were hiring (68.6%). The most common reason businesses gave for difficulty hiring was not having enough applicants (74%).

Table 8.1 Key Results - Business Characteristics

| Business Characteristics | Percent |
|---|--------------|
| Openings | |
| Hired or Tried to Hire Last Two Years | 93.4% |
| At Least 1 Job Opening | 49.7% |
| Average Current Job Openings | 2.8 |
| If Asked to Consider Expansion | |
| Labor Availability Issues Either Would Be or Might Be Present | 86.5% |
| Percent of Businesses that have Difficulty Finding Workers for the Occupations they Hire | 68.6% |

The vast majority of businesses that responded to the survey (93.4%) indicated they hired or tried to hire at least one worker in the last two years. Nearly half of responding businesses had at least one current job opening at their location. The average current job openings for all responding businesses was 2.8, but when excluding businesses that had no current openings the average rose to 5.5 average open positions. Many businesses were hiring at their locations, but the survey also inquired about business expansion, which would require substantially more hiring.

Regardless of industry or the occupations they hire, if asked to consider a major expansion, 86.5% of businesses reported that labor availability issues either would be present or might be present. A follow-up posed to these businesses was, "Besides labor availability, please list what other issues would limit the ability of your business to expand." Issues with taxes and regulation, competition with large companies, and available investment, workers, and clients were most often reported as issues that limit expansion.

Respondents listed occupations that they have been trying to hire or have recently hired and indicated whether they had difficulty when finding workers for those occupations. Over 68% of all responding Columbus area businesses reported it was difficult to find workers and 89.3% of employers in the health care and social assistance industry reported difficulty. As seen in "Figure 17.2 Difficulty Finding Workers by Occupation," 78.5% of employers who were hiring for transportation and material moving occupations indicated it was difficult to find workers.

As displayed in "Figure 18 Reasons for Difficulty Finding Workers," the reasons that business gave for having difficulty finding workers were most often related to not receiving enough applicants (74%), applicants' lack of occupation-specific skills (48.7%), and applicants' lack of work experience (44.3%). This survey did not inquire about the recruiting or job posting practices of businesses, but employers did answer questions about required education, work experience, and skill level qualifications.

A majority of Fremont area businesses reported that either they have no minimum education requirement for applicants or they require a high school diploma or equivalent (78.2%). Some responding employers indicated they do require a technical or vocational degree (9.8%), or an associate (6.3%) or bachelor's degree (4.7%), but few businesses said they require an applicant to hold a master's degree or higher (1%).

Table 8.2 Key Results - Applicant Characteristics

| Applicant Experience | Percent |
|---|---------|
| Some to No Applicants with Experience in Similar Industry | 70.2% |
| Some to No Applicants with Experience in Similar Occupation | 67.4% |
| Businesses that Require No Prior Work Experience | 50.4% |

Similarly, a majority of businesses responding to the survey had no prior work experience requirement (50.4%). However, over 25% of employers did require no more than a year of related work experience, and 23.8% of businesses required a year or more experience to be qualified for the position they recently hired or tried to hire. A majority of businesses reported that some or few to no applicants had experience in either a similar industry (70.2%) or occupation (67.4%).

Businesses were prompted to rate the required skill level of workers as either beginning, intermediate, advanced or not typically required. The skills that businesses most often rated as not typically required were advanced computer skills (53.3%), sales (39.5%), and basic computer skills (20.7%). A majority of businesses reported that for eight of the 18 skills listed, most workers are required to have an intermediate skill level. Businesses most often reported that an advanced level of skill was required for attitude (33.2%), work ethic (32.8%), and ability to work as a team (32.4%).

Results were positive when businesses responded to questions about the competency of the applicant pool. No more than 38% of all businesses rated any single skills as less than adequate. Furthermore, advanced computer skills was the skill most often reported as less than adequate (37.1%), but was also the skill most often reported as not applicable (38.5%) (See "Figure 15 Competency of Typical Applicant Pool").

Table 8.3 Key Results - Characteristics of Current Workers

| Deficiencies of Current Workers | Percent of Businesses |
|---|-----------------------|
| Skills most often rated as deficient | |
| Work ethic | 43.8% |
| Leadership | 41.5% |
| Ability to pay attention to detail | 38.8% |

Regarding perceptions of the current workforce, no more than 44% of businesses reported a deficiency in any listed skill. Furthermore, some of those skills most often rated as deficient were skills not easily taught (e.g., work ethic and attitude) or skills that may have a misperceived deficiency (e.g., leadership and critical thinking). There may be a lack of opportunity for workers to grow into leadership roles or make decisions based on critical thinking, which may lead to a perception of deficiency. Regardless, the majority of businesses reported no major issues with the competency of the applicant pool or with skill deficiencies in their workforce.

Several general recommendations for Fremont area businesses emerged based on the results of the Northeast Nebraska Survey of Hiring and Training Needs. Employers expressed that they are not finding enough applicants, or the applicants lack the required amount of education or work experience. In some cases, businesses may consider relaxing skill and education requirements and increasing the amount of training provided to inexperienced workers. In order to broaden and improve the candidate pool, businesses may need to explore a variety of strategies.

In addition to the Fremont Hiring and Training Needs Report, a report based on data received from individuals in northeast Nebraska is also available. The Fremont Labor Availability Report details information about local potential job seekers and active job seekers. The Fremont Skills Gap report provides additional recommendations for local communities to improve the area workforce. These and other reports can be found in the Labor Availability Study publication page here: dol.nebraska.gov/las.

Number of Responses **by Zip Code**

| ZIP Codes | Number of Responses |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 68002 | <6 |
| 68007 | 6 |
| 68008 | 12 |
| 68015 | <6 |
| 68022 | 18 |
| 68025 (Fremont) | 90 |
| 68031 | 8 |
| 68041 | <6 |
| 68044 | <6 |
| 68045 | 6 |
| 68057 | <6 |
| 68064 | <6 |
| 68069 | <6 |
| 68073 | <6 |
| 68621 | <6 |
| 68633 | <6 |
| 68649 | <6 |
| 68659 | <6 |
| 68788 | 25 |
| Grand Total | 200 |

Methodology

The Northeast Nebraska Survey of Hiring and Training Needs was commissioned by the Nebraska Legislature. Data collection, survey processing, and assignment of data weights were conducted by NDOL. NDOL analyzed results and produced the final report. A full list of comparable reports for several other areas in Nebraska are available at: dol.nebraska.gov/las.

The goals of the Northeast Nebraska Survey of Hiring and Training Needs was to gather information about the characteristics of local businesses, labor issues in the area, and local workforce needs. Specifically, information was gathered from employers about the types of occupations for which they are hiring; the types of degrees, certifications, and skills that occupations require; and the types of training they provide.

Questionnaire

The survey questionnaire was adapted from previous survey projects conducted in other areas of Nebraska. The questionnaire was created and modified by NDOL, NDED, and BOSR. BOSR provided assistance with question development, formatting, and layout. Improvements were made to the questionnaire based on results of studies in other areas.

Survey Area and Sample

Commuting patterns were reviewed for the northeast Nebraska area. The ZIP codes with the highest number of commuters traveling to Fremont for work were identified. Additional ZIP codes were added after the city areas were defined to combine them into one large survey area that reflects the region from which businesses draw the majority of their workforce. All private businesses in the survey area with at least 10 employees were included in the sample.

Data Collection & Response Rates

NDOL mailed the surveys and collected responses. Surveys included directions indicating that the questionnaire be completed by an owner, senior manager, human resource personnel, or first-line supervisor who is knowledgeable about the hiring and training needs of this company. In order to fully understand the characteristics of area businesses, employers were asked to complete the questionnaire regardless of whether the company has not hired or is not planning to hire any new workers in the near future.

Data collection began on August 15, 2017 with the mailing of initial survey packets to all selected businesses. Each survey packet contained a cover letter, questionnaire and postage-paid return envelope.

The total northeast survey area sample included 1,356 businesses and a total of 646 complete responses were received (47.6% response rate). Two hundred businesses were included in the Fremont analysis.

Data Processing & Cleaning

Data entry was completed by NDOL staff using the Labor Availability Study page at dol.nebraska.gov/las. The data cleaning process was developed by NDOL staff to create consistency within data sets prior to analysis. Initial data cleaning was conducted by NDOL to review responses and verify that the skip patterns on the questionnaire were followed. Weights were assigned to responses by the NDOL to make the responses as representative of the survey areas as possible.

Additionally, several open-ended survey questions were consistently coded prior to starting the data analysis. Staff from the Occupational Employment Statistics unit in the NDOL assigned Standard Occupational Classification codes to occupations reported. NDOL staff assigned Classification of Instructional Programs codes to responses regarding educational attainment. All other open-ended questions were reviewed as well to create consistent codes to use in the survey analysis.

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