



Niagara Workforce Planning Board:
Labour Market Insight Survey Report



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Executive Summary

The Niagara Workforce Planning Board (NWPB) developed the pilot Labour Market Insights survey based on a similar survey created by the Four County Labour Market Planning Board. We gratefully acknowledge their support on this project.

NWPB's decision to develop a data product aimed at the local labour force recognized a need for data that complemented our Employer One survey. We believe that the results of this survey, as well as our Employer One survey, can help job seekers position themselves to employers, while providing employers with additional insights to attracting and retaining staff.

A total of 184 Niagara residents completed this survey. While this level of completion cannot be responsibly extrapolated to represent the labour force in Niagara region as a whole, it remains a valuable first step on shaping priorities and informing future research questions.

In general, this survey found that while only 15% of employed respondents were actively looking for a new job, 55% reported they would consider a new opportunity if it were presented to them. Among unemployed respondents, 81% were looking for work, and slightly more than half of those individuals reported being unemployed for less than six months. In terms of why these people could not find employment, 70% of unemployed respondents indicated they believed there was a lack of job postings/demand in their field.

This survey also allowed us to explore workforce motivations that are not captured through Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey. For example, respondents – both employed and unemployed – noted that monetary considerations were foremost among their priorities when looking for a new job. However, cultural considerations, such as feeling valued in the workplace, were what kept them in current or previous positions.

NWPB anticipates delivering this survey again in the Summer of 2020. Our goal is to increase participation in this survey through deeper collaboration with local education and training partners. The long-term goal of this project is to expand our responses to a level where we can responsibly extrapolate the results to reflect the Niagara region.



Survey Results

Niagara Workforce Planning Board conducted the inaugural *Labour Market Insight Survey* between August 12 and November 3, 2019. This survey was conducted in partnership with Niagara Region Public Health, and was designed to collect feedback from Niagara's labour force on topics such as:

- Job satisfaction
- Job search strategies
- What employees find valuable in a workplace
- Mental health resources in the workplace

This survey saw a total of 184 responses from individuals across Niagara. Just under half of respondents indicated living in St. Catharines (41.8%). This was followed by respondents living in either Welland (13.6%) or Niagara Falls (12.5%). Almost two-thirds (63.0%) of respondents identified as women and approximately 1 out of every 5 respondents (19.0%) were between 35 and 39 years old. The majority of respondents had completed some level of post-secondary education. Over 60% of respondents had completed either a college diploma (32.1%) or a university degree (30.4%).

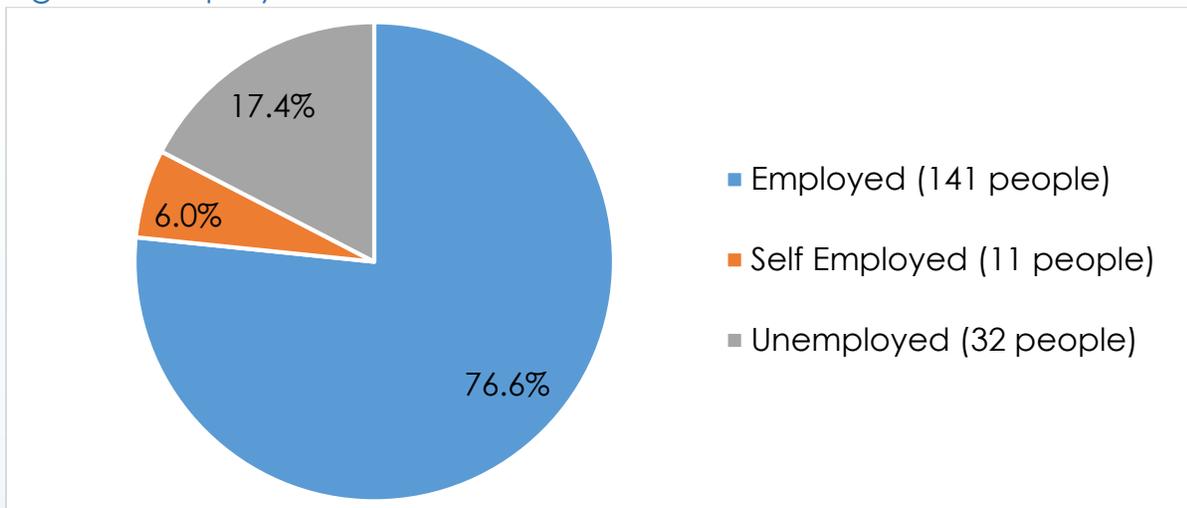
Despite undertaking extensive promotion of the survey through digital and radio channels, the 184 responses NWPB received on this survey do not constitute a representative sample for the Niagara region. NWPB is developing communications and partnership strategies to expand the response rate of the survey for its summer 2020 delivery.

While the results of this survey only represent the individuals who completed the survey, NWPB believes these findings to be relevant to framing questions and emerging discussions on workforce retention. Data such as these will only grow more valuable as employers seek to leverage workforce opportunities amid a highly competitive local labour market.



Just over three quarters of respondents indicated they were employed. This was followed by individuals who reported being either unemployed or engaged in self-employment (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Employment Status





The LMI asked respondents to indicate their job searching status, recognizing that people who are both employed (Table 1) and unemployed (Table 3) may actively look for work, or may be receptive to offers for work. Table 1 shows that over half of employed respondents were not actively looking for a new job, but would be interested in other job offers if the opportunity arose. Just over a quarter of respondents were not actively looking for work and were not interested in taking on new employment.

Table 1. Job searching status, Employed

Job Search Activities	Count	%
I am actively looking for a new job.	22	15.6%
I am not actively looking for a new job but would be interested in other job opportunities (e.g., if an opportunity came up, I may apply for and/or take it).	78	55.3%
I am not actively looking for a new job and am not interested in taking on new employment.	38	27.0%
Missing	3	2.1%
Grand Total	141	100.0%

For employed respondents that were actively looking for work, over half (54.5%) of respondents had been searching for less than 6 months.

Table 2. Job searching duration, Employed

Duration	Count	%
Less than 3 months	6	27.3%
3-6 months	6	27.3%
6-9 months	4	18.2%
9-12 months	3	13.6%
Longer than 1 year	3	13.6%
Total people actively looking for work	22	100.0%



When we turn to job search activities for unemployed individuals, we see in Table 3 that over 80% of respondents were actively looking for a new job. The remaining respondents were not actively looking for work but would be interested in job opportunities should they arise.

Table 3. Job searching status, Unemployed

Job Search Activities	Count	%
I am actively looking for a new job.	26	81.3%
I am not actively looking for a new job but would be interested in other job opportunities (e.g., if an opportunity came up, I may apply for and/or take it).	6	18.8%
I am not actively looking for a new job and am not interested in taking on new employment.	0	0.0%
Grand Total	32	100.0%

Approximately 30% of unemployed individuals had been searching for work for less than 3 months. Slightly more than a quarter of respondents (26.9%) had been looking for work for more than 1 year. Individuals who have been looking for work for more than one year are typically considered to be experiencing *long-term unemployment*. For comparison, aggregated client data from Niagara's Employment Ontario (EO) service providers shows that from exactly 20% of Niagara's 7,271 assisted clients reported *long-term unemployment*.¹ Statistics Canada notes that Ontario's share of individuals facing *long-term unemployed* in 2019 was 4.9%.²

Table 4. Job searching duration, Unemployed

Duration	Count	%
Less than 3 months	8	30.8%
3-6 months	5	19.2%
6-9 months	4	15.4%
9-12 months	2	7.7%
Longer than 1 year	7	26.9%
Total people actively looking for work	26	100.0%

¹ Employment Ontario Case Management System, 2018-19 April-March fiscal year, Niagara region

² Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, Table 14-10-0057-01



Table 5 outlines the factors that contribute to an individual's inability to find work. These data include responses from job seekers that are either employed or unemployed. Respondents could indicate the top 3 factors that contribute to job searching difficulties, which is why column 4 (*% people*) adds up to over 100.0%. The top factors that contributed to individuals' inability to find work were:

- A lack of job posts or opportunities in desired field of employment
- A lack of job posts or opportunities in desired work location
- A lack of job posts or opportunities in desired level of compensation

Table 5. Factors that contribute to an inability to find work

Factors inhibiting employment	Count	% responses	% people
Lack of job postings/opportunity in field of desired employment	34	26.8%	70.8%
Lack of job postings/opportunity in geography of desired employment	32	25.2%	66.7%
Lack of job postings/opportunities at desired level of compensation	23	18.1%	47.9%
Lack of training/education for available jobs	11	8.7%	22.9%
Lack of transportation	11	8.7%	22.9%
Childcare/family responsibilities	7	5.5%	14.6%
<i>Other (please specify)</i>	9	7.1%	18.8%
Total responses	127	100.0%	
Total people looking for work	48		264.6%

The relatively few number of responses for “lack of transportation” and “child care/family responsibilities” is unexpected. Consider that approximately 12.6% of Ontario’s part-time workers would seek or be engaged in full-time employment were it not for the burdens of child care or family responsibilities.³ Increasing the number of responses to this survey in 2020 may allow for better resolution on this particular question.

³ Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, Table 14-10-0029-01



To better understand how Niagara's residents look for work, the LMI survey asked all respondents – regardless of whether they were actively looking for work – how they would go about finding a new job. Table 6 shows that the top job search methods were *online job posts* and *word of mouth*.

Table 6. Job searching methods⁴

Job search methods	Count	% responses	% people
Online job boards/postings (e.g., Monster, Indeed, Glassdoor, etc.)	130	23.7%	70.7%
Word of mouth/personal networks	86	15.7%	46.7%
Government employment centres or website (e.g., Service Canada, JobBank.ca)	70	12.8%	38.0%
Social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter)	64	11.7%	34.8%
Corporate/employer job boards	43	7.8%	23.4%
Non-government or community employment services centres or website (e.g., Employment Services providers and their web pages)	40	7.3%	21.7%
Job fairs	24	4.4%	13.0%
Trade or professional association publications and websites	18	3.3%	9.8%
Recruitment through post-secondary institutions	17	3.1%	9.2%
On-site job signs/posters	16	2.9%	8.7%
Recruiting/temporary employment agencies	15	2.7%	8.2%
Newspaper ads	13	2.4%	7.1%
Unsolicited outreach to employers/cold calling	7	1.3%	3.8%
Other (please specify)	5	0.9%	2.7%
Total responses	548	100.0%	
Total people	184		297.8%

⁴ Note: individuals could indicate their top 3 searching methods, which is why column 4 (% people) adds up to over 100.0%.



Table 6's data are very closely aligned to the findings of our Employer One survey. Those data routinely identify online job postings and word of mouth/personal networks as the preferred method of recruitment for employers. These data are seen in Table 7.

Table 7. Hiring methods, Employer One 2019

Job search methods	Count	% responses	% employers
Online job boards/postings	126	22.3%	62.4%
Word of mouth/personal contacts/referrals/informal networks	122	21.6%	60.4%
Social media	68	12.1%	33.7%
Company's own internet site	51	9.0%	25.2%
Government employment centres or websites	51	9.0%	25.2%
Unsolicited resumes	36	6.4%	17.8%
Non-government or community employment service centres or websites	31	5.5%	15.3%
Trade or professional association publications/sites	19	3.4%	9.4%
Job fairs	17	3.0%	8.4%
On-site job signs or posters	16	2.8%	7.9%
Executive search companies or temporary help agencies	16	2.8%	7.9%
Newspaper ads	7	1.2%	3.5%
Other (please specify)	4	0.7%	2.0%
Total responses	564	100.0%	
Total employers	202		279.2%

While the data from the Labour Market Insight survey are not yet representative of the Niagara region, this high level of alignment between Employer One and the LMI encourage next steps that should seek to explore how employers and job seekers would connect through informal channels.⁵ More specifically, is there a way that NWPB, service providers, and the business community can work collectively to expand referral networks and leverage existing practices?

⁵ For additional information on the findings of the Employer One survey, please access the following link: <https://www.niagaraworkforce.ca/files/EmployerOne2019summary-1.pdf>



Our analysis also explored factors relating to employee attraction and retention. For employee attraction, the LMI asked individuals to identify the top three elements of a job offer that would make them consider taking on a new position.

The most important aspects of a job offer were:

- compensation,
- meaningfulness of work, and
- non-compensation benefits (e.g., health benefits, vacation time, etc.)

Table 8. Most important aspects of a job offer⁶

Employee attraction	Count	% responses	% people
Compensation	103	18.8%	56.0%
Meaningfulness of work	91	16.6%	49.5%
Non-compensation benefits (health benefits, vacation time, flexibility)	88	16.0%	47.8%
Alignment of work to education, training, and/or experience	75	13.7%	40.8%
Location of employer	65	11.8%	35.3%
Flexibility in scheduling	47	8.6%	25.5%
Consistency in scheduling	31	5.6%	16.8%
Work environment (i.e. indoor vs outdoor, active vs sedentary)	20	3.6%	10.9%
Availability of childcare	10	1.8%	5.4%
Availability of transportation	9	1.6%	4.9%
Other (please specify)	10	1.8%	5.4%
Total responses	549	100.0%	
Total people	184		298.4%

⁶ Respondents could indicate multiple responses which is why column 4 adds up to over 100%.



The LMI's question on employee retention sought to understand what makes a person want to stay in their current position. Once again, respondents were asked to identify three elements that were most likely to make them stay with a current employer.

Job retention was largely based on the following four areas:

- Personal satisfaction in work
- A culture of dignity and respect in the workplace
- Feeling valued by co-workers and managers
- Regular increases to compensation and benefits

Table 9. Most important aspects of staying in a job⁷

Employee retention	Count	% responses	% people
Personal satisfaction in work	111	20.1%	60.3%
Culture of dignity and respect in workplace	87	15.7%	47.3%
Feeling valued by co-workers and managers	83	15.0%	45.1%
Regular increases to compensation and benefits	75	13.6%	40.8%
Potential for advancement and promotion	61	11.0%	33.2%
Level of autonomy in position	61	11.0%	33.2%
Access to tools and resources to succeed in position	38	6.9%	20.7%
Culture of compassion in managing personal emergencies	25	4.5%	13.6%
Ongoing feedback from management	8	1.4%	4.3%
Other (please specify)	4	0.7%	2.2%
Total responses	553	100.0%	
Total people	184		300.5%

⁷ Respondents could indicate multiple responses which is why column 4 adds up to over 100%.



An interesting contrast emerges when comparing Table 8 and Table 9. While 56.0% of respondents identified compensation as an element that would attract them to a new job, only 40.8% of respondents identified pay increases as something that would keep them in their current position. The retention factors of the most interest to this group of respondents are those which could readily be categorized as “workplace culture.” While a changing market space and external pressures might make compensation-based retention a long-term strategy to retaining staff, changes to work place culture generally have a much smaller impact on bottom lines.



Next Steps

Despite being a pilot project, the Labour Market Insights survey produced a wealth of new data. These data allow us to explore issues of labour market retention in a way that could not be done through existing Statistics Canada resources.

With this in mind, NWPB believes that the best course of action is to repeat this survey in 2020. A second delivery of the survey will create year-over-year comparison data, as well as allowing us to work toward a goal of increasing the number of survey completions. NWPB anticipates expanding our base of collaboration with employment and training service providers as a primary path to boosting the survey's participation.

There is also cause to consider a slight expansion to the content of the Labour Market Insights survey. Both the Labour Market Insights survey and our Employer One survey identified that employers and the workforce make extensive use of informal recruitment/job seeking methods. With the local labour market reflecting a very competitive hiring climate, we believe there is an opportunity to use this survey as a tool that will help support building connections between employers and job seekers.

NWPB has prepared additional data visualizations on this project. These can be accessed on our website: www.niagaraworkforce.ca