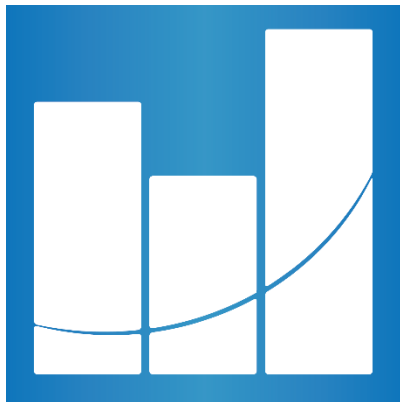


Youth in Niagara:
Supporting Youth Employment
and Aspirations



NIAGARA
WORKFORCE
PLANNING BOARD



Niagara Workforce Planning Board (NWPB) is one of 26 regional workforce planning boards in Ontario making up the Local Boards Network, and one of 9 boards making up the Workforce Planning West Network.

NWPB is Niagara's trusted community partner, providing data and insight in support of a diverse and talented workforce that contributes to a prosperous community. Our work prepares the Niagara community for the workforce challenges and opportunities of today and the future.

Our Vision

A diverse and talented regional workforce contributing to a prosperous community.

Our Mission

We support our local community organizations by:

Bringing objective, accurate, and future-focused workforce research to enhance planning and decision making;

Working in partnership across Niagara to address workforce development challenges and find solutions.

Our Values

We Listen

We are collaborative

We do the right thing

We are community focused

We are inclusive

We are future aware

This project is funded in part by the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario. The views expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Ontario.





Contents

Executive Summary	4
Section 1: Population and Employment Trends for Youth in Niagara	6
Population Trends.....	6
Employment Insights	9
Section 2: Characteristics of Successful Youth Employment	13
Available Jobs	13
Quality of Available Jobs	14
Job satisfaction	16
Section 3: Emerging trends and challenges for youth.....	17
Barriers to Employment	17
Pandemic-Specific Employment Impacts	19
Youth-Identified Challenges to Training and Skills Development.....	20
Future Aspirations	22
Section 4: Community-based recommendations for the future	24



Executive Summary

The pandemic has had employment impacts on Niagara's working population; some groups, such as **women** and **youth**, experienced larger impacts than others. Last year NWPB published a report on the [gendered employment impacts](#) seen throughout the pandemic.

This year we dove deeper into the impacts of the pandemic on youth employment in Niagara, which also follows up a [Youth Employment Strategy](#) we conducted in 2018/19. Our work this year has resulted in a series of [briefing notes](#) highlighting local trends, alongside this comprehensive report. This report outlines employment impacts and reflections from local youth on the pandemic's impact to both their employment experiences and expectations for future training and careers.

Comprehensive Report Summary

When we consider Niagara's demographics, youth aged 15 to 29 comprised 18.6% of Niagara's 2020 population. Migration patterns show that the number of youth moving to Niagara has generally increased over time. Looking to youth employment, monthly indicators show that youth employment was consistently lower in 2020 than what we saw throughout 2019. Over the course of 2021, employment counts increased and surpassed levels seen prior to the pandemic. For example, October 2019 saw 30,800 youth reporting employment while October 2021 saw 33,700 youth reporting employment.

When we examine where youth typically find employment, census data show that throughout 2015, almost 60% of youth reported being employed in sales and service occupations. Of youth that worked in these jobs, 72.6% reported working part time. This trend sheds some light on why youth employment was so heavily impacted throughout the pandemic – part-time work was more impacted than full-time work, and sales and service occupations were some of the more heavily [impacted occupations between 2019 and 2020](#).

Local job demand data allow us to examine jobs that were available for youth before and during the pandemic. Following the methods in our 2018-19 youth report, we focus on entry-level jobs that require 0-2 years of experience. Though



not specifically targeted at “youth” per se, this approach allows us a proxy measure for entry-level positions.

In 2019, entry-level jobs made up almost 30% of all available job posts. In both 2020 and 2021 these jobs represented just over one quarter of all posts, and many of these available jobs were advertised as full-time work opportunities¹. Throughout 2021, the top three entry-level jobs that were in-demand were for:

- Other customer and information service representatives
- Retail salespersons
- Administrative assistants

Though job opportunities were available, local and national-level data outline barriers to employment and training throughout the pandemic. Our survey and consultation work outline youth-identified barriers such as:

- Not enough opportunities in field/geography of desired work or at the desired level of compensation
- Offered compensation was lower than expected
- Physical health-related challenges
- Fear of contracting COVID-19 through work
- Difficulties finding appropriate work opportunities/co-op/internship options
- Limited hours and/or unpredictable schedules

These insights help set the stage for conversations on youth employment, but also provide a local lens to work on youth-focused post-pandemic recovery that is occurring at a national level (e.g., Canadian Heritage [Canada's First State of Youth Report](#); YWCA Canada and YMCA Canada [Preventing a Lockdown Generation: A Plan to Support Canada's Youth in Post-Pandemic Recovery](#)). Initiatives suggested by local youth, in addition to recommendations laid out by Canadian Heritage and YWCA Canada/YMCA Canada are outlined [at the end of this report](#).

¹ EMSI Analyst classifies full-time employment as more than 32 hours/week, and part-time employment as 32 or fewer hours/week. If a job post does not specify the type of work, EMSI classifies it as a full-time opportunity.

Section 1: Population and Employment Trends for Youth in Niagara

Population Trends

Before we examine employment-related insights for Niagara's youth population, it is important to understand the demographic profile of local youth. Between 2001 and 2020, youth aged 15-29 comprise between 18.0% and 19.1% of the total population living in Niagara (see Figure 1).

Figure 1-1. Youth as a percentage of the total population, Niagara 2001-2020²

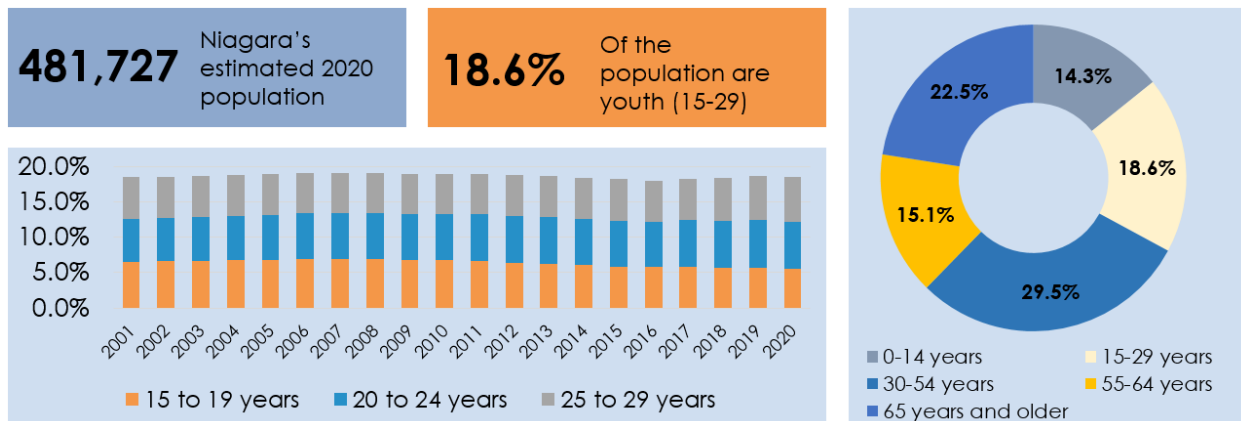


Table 1-2 outlines demographic insights for the youth population in 2016 and 2020. Here we see that the proportion of youth in Niagara increased from 18.0% to 18.6% between 2016 and 2020.

Table 1-2. Youth population in Niagara, 2016 and 2020³

Age Cohort	Gender	2016		2020	
		Count	% of total population	Count	% of total population
15 to 19 years	Total	26,509	5.8%	26,772	5.6%
	Men	13,566	3.0%	13,834	2.9%
	Women	12,943	2.8%	12,938	2.7%
20 to 24 years	Total	29,791	6.5%	31,962	6.6%
	Men	15,294	3.3%	16,784	3.5%

² Source: : Statistics Canada. Table 17-10-0139-01. Population estimates, July 1, by census division, 2016 boundaries. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/1710013901>

³ Source: ibid

	Women	14,497	3.2%	15,178	3.2%
25 to 29 years	Total	26,539	5.8%	30,951	6.4%
	Men	13,818	3.0%	16,037	3.3%
	Women	12,721	2.8%	14,914	3.1%
All youth	Total	82,839	18.0%	89,685	18.6%
	Men	42,678	9.3%	46,655	9.7%
	Women	40,161	8.7%	43,030	8.9%
Total population	Total	459,262	100.0%	481,727	100.0%
	Men	224,592	48.9%	237,333	49.3%
	Women	234,670	51.1%	244,394	50.7%

We can pair the above population data with migration data. Table 1-3 and Figure 1-4 show net-migration trends for Niagara. Over time, the net-number of youth aged 18 to 24 that move to Niagara has increased. For example, in 2014-15 we saw a net loss of 54 youth (i.e., more youth migrated out of Niagara than moved into Niagara). However, over time we have seen the number of youth migrating to Niagara increase. The only exception here is a decrease between 2018-19 and 2019-20. This could be due to pandemic-related migration impacts.

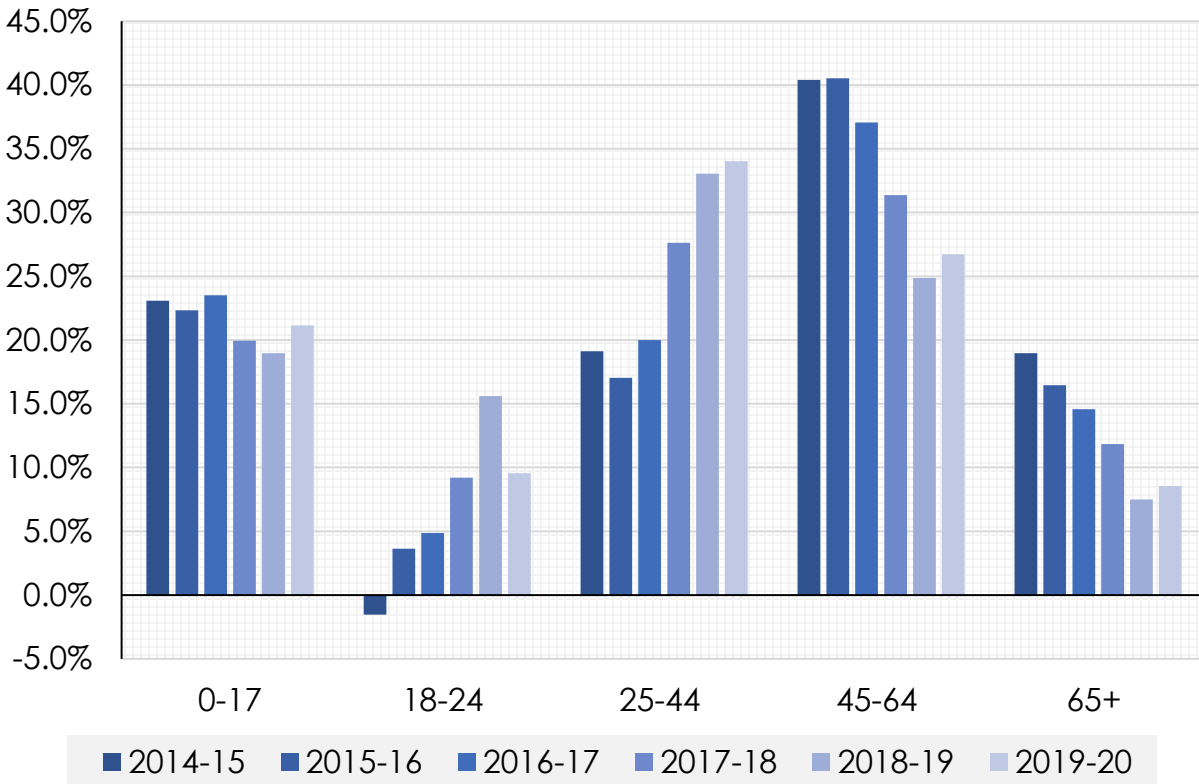
Table 1-3. Net-Migration, 2014-2020, Niagara⁴

Age cohort	Net-migration					
	2014-15 Count	2015-16 Count	2016-17 Count	2017-18 Count	2018-19 Count	2019-20 Count
0-17	809	1,013	1,024	934	1,060	1,285
18-24	-54	165	212	431	873	581
25-44	670	773	871	1,294	1,847	2,068
45-64	1,416	1,838	1,614	1,469	1,390	1,624
65+	665	746	635	555	420	520
Total	3,506	4,535	4,356	4,683	5,590	6,078

Figure 1-4 outlines the above age groups as a percentage of all net-migrants. These recent trends start to challenge the narrative that individuals typically move to Niagara to retire. Rather, we are seeing an increase in individuals of the “prime working age” population (25 to 44 years old) migrating to Niagara.

⁴ Source: Statistics Canada, Taxfiler data

Figure 1-4. Age cohort as a percentage of net-migrants, 2014-2020, Niagara⁵



⁵ Source: Statistics Canada, Taxfiler data

Employment Insights

Data from Statistics Canada's *Labour Force Survey* provide insights on the youth labour force (i.e., individuals aged 15-24) that live in the St. Catharines-Niagara CMA. Below we see three key indicators for the local youth labour force: unemployment, participation, and employment rates.

Throughout 2020, youth saw considerably higher unemployment rates and lower participation and employment rates than in 2019 (see Figure 1-5).

Figure 1-5. Key Labour Market Indicators, Niagara⁶

Key Labour Market Indicators, Niagara 2020

- The data outline key indicators for youth living in the St. Catharines-Niagara CMA throughout 2020.
- Note that these data exclude Grimsby and West Lincoln due to their commuting patterns.

	Total		Men		Women	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
Unemployment rate	12.3%	23.7%	13.6%	24.8%	10.8%	21.5%
Participation rate	68.0%	62.9%	67.7%	62.0%	68.7%	64.6%
Employment rate	59.6%	48.2%	58.2%	46.2%	61.3%	50.7%

⁶ Source: Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0385-01 Labour force characteristics, annual

Table 1-6 provides more detail on youth employment indicators for 2018, 2019, 2020, and the most recent three months of data available at the time of this report's production. For additional and historical reporting on youth employment trends, please see our monthly [Eye on Employment](#) reports, and our [dashboard](#) which provides monthly youth employment insights.

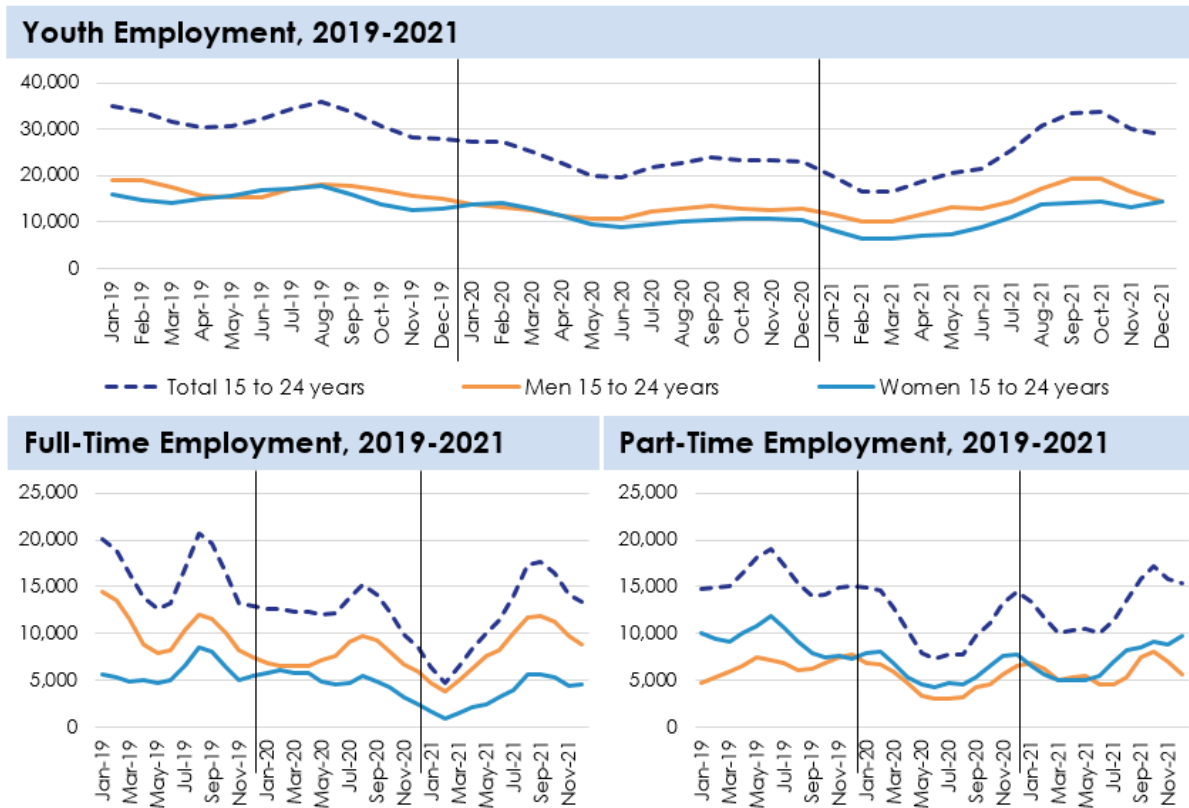
Table 1-6. Labour Force Characteristics, St. Catharines-Niagara Census Metropolitan Area, Youth Age 15-24⁷

Labour force characteristics	2018	2019	2020	October 2021	November 2021	December 2021
Population	52,900	52,500	47,500	49,100	48,400	47,500
Labour force	36,600	35,700	29,900	35,700	32,500	31,700
Employment	32,000	31,300	22,900	33,700	29,900	28,700
<i>Full-time employment</i>	16,500	15,600	11,800	16,500	14,100	13,400
<i>Part-time employment</i>	15,500	15,800	11,100	17,200	15,900	15,300
Unemployment	4,600	4,400	7,100	2,000	2,500	3,000
Not in the labour force	16,300	16,800	17,600	13,400	15,900	15,800
Unemployment rate	12.6%	12.3%	23.7%	5.6%	7.7%	9.5%
Participation rate	69.2%	68.0%	62.9%	72.7%	67.1%	66.7%
Employment rate	60.5%	59.6%	48.2%	68.6%	61.8%	60.4%

⁷ Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0385-01 Labour force characteristics, annual; Table 14-10-0378-01 Labour force characteristics, three-month moving average, unadjusted for seasonality

Monthly employment trends show that youth employment was consistently lower in 2020 than in 2019 (see Figure 1-7). Over the course of 2021, employment counts increased and surpassed levels seen prior to the pandemic. For example, October 2019 saw 30,800 youth reporting employment whereas October 2021 saw 33,700 youth reporting employment.

Figure 1-7. Youth Employment Trends, Niagara⁸



⁸ Source: Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0385-01 Labour force characteristics, annual

In order to examine where local youth typically find employment, we look to 2016 census data (see Table 1-8). Throughout 2015, almost 60% of youth reported being employed in sales and service occupations. Of youth that worked in sales and service, 72.6% reported working part time.

Table 1-8. Youth Employment by Occupation, Niagara, 2016 Census⁹ and Type of Employment, Ontario 2019¹⁰

Occupation	Niagara, 2016 Census			
	Total Labour Force	15 to 24 years	15-24 employed FT %	15-24 employed PT%
Management occupations	11.1%	2.2%	38.2%	55.4%
Business, finance & administration occupations	13.3%	6.0%	77.5%	22.5%
Natural & applied sciences & related occupations	4.6%	2.6%	47.5%	45.5%
Health occupations	7.4%	3.3%	70.3%	26.5%
Occupations in education, law & social, community & government services	10.9%	4.5%	48.0%	49.0%
Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport	2.4%	3.7%	44.4%	50.2%
Sales & service occupations	28.7%	59.2%	24.0%	72.6%
Trades, transport & equipment operators & related occupations	14.7%	9.6%	25.0%	67.7%
Natural resources, agriculture & related production occupations	2.5%	5.6%	76.0%	17.7%
Occupations in manufacturing & utilities	4.4%	3.3%	53.8%	39.1%

The above noted characteristics of work start to shed light on why youth employment was so heavily impacted throughout the pandemic. We saw that employment in part-time work was more impacted than full-time work, and **sales and services-related jobs** were some of the more heavily [impacted occupations between 2019 and 2020](#).

⁹ Source: 2016 Census, custom data tabulation

¹⁰ Source: Statistics Canada. Table 14-10-0335-01 Labour force characteristics by occupation, annual

Section 2: Characteristics of Successful Youth Employment

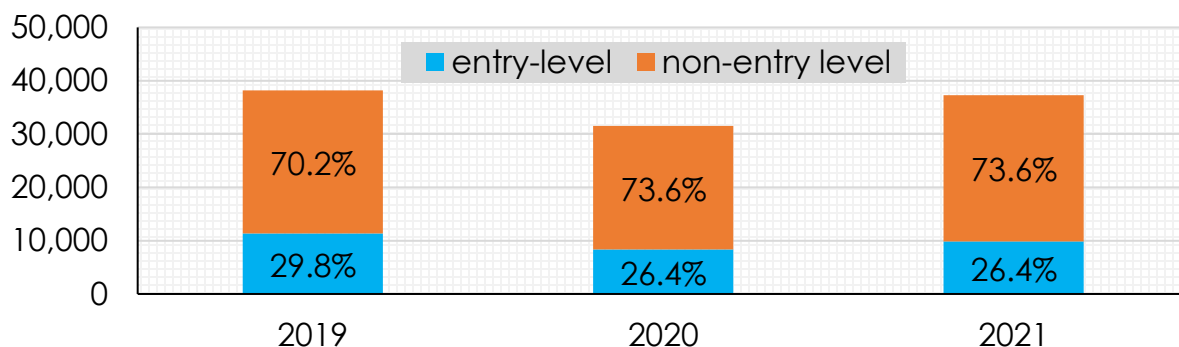
According to the [OECD](#)¹¹, successful youth employment encompasses access to jobs, quality of jobs, and job satisfaction. In our [2018-19 Youth Employment Strategy](#), we focused on the first two indicators: access to jobs/job availability and quality of jobs. In this report we focus on updates to these indicators, while also including a measure of youth job satisfaction.

Available Jobs

Following methods in our 2018-19 youth employment report, we focus on examining job demand for entry-level jobs (i.e., those job posts requiring 0-2 years of experience). Though not specifically targeted at “youth” per se, this approach allows for a proxy measure for entry-level positions. It is important to note that these data reflect only those job postings that are public and do not include those jobs that are available through more informal (e.g., word of mouth) or private (e.g., private job boards) methods.

These data are sourced through EMSI Analyst¹² and outline trends for 2019, 2020, and January-October 2021. Figure 2-1 shows that in 2019, entry-level jobs (0-2 years experience required) made up almost 30% of all posts. In both 2020 and 2021 these jobs represented just over one quarter of all posts. Thus, these data show that – at least in terms of availability – there are potential employment opportunities for youth.

Figure 2-1. Total job posts, Niagara, Jan 2019-Oct 2021



¹¹ OECD (2017). Evidence-based policy making for youth well-being: A toolkit. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/education/evidence-based-policy-making-for-youth-well-being-9789264283923-en.htm>

¹² EMSI Analyst, 2021.3 run. Access to EMSI Analyst is supported through the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA). The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of OMAFRA.

Quality of Available Jobs

Next we can examine the type of employment available for youth. In 2019, 2020, and 2021, many of the available job posts indicated the opportunity was for full-time employment (see Figure 2-2).

EMSI Analyst classifies full-time employment as more than 32 hours/week, and part-time employment as 32 or fewer hours/week. If a job post does not specify the type of work, EMSI classifies it as a full-time opportunity. In addition, jobs posts classified as “other” reflect work that has flexible hours (i.e., the post mentions both full- and part-time work, offers hours that span both employment categories), or is an internship.

While the total number of available jobs changes annually, the percentage of full-time, part-time, and “other” work remains fairly consistent.

Figure 2-2. Type of Work, Entry-level Jobs, Niagara, Jan 2019-Oct 2021¹³

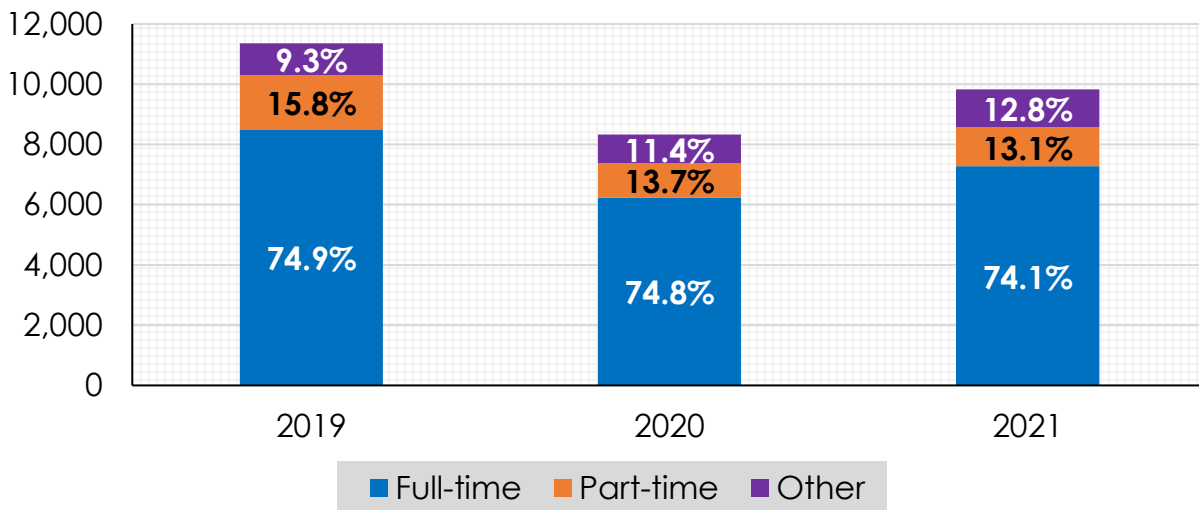


Table 2-3 outlines the top 10 entry-level jobs posted between January and October 2021. It also includes:

- The percentage of posts that included wage information
- Median advertised salaries
- The percentage of posts that indicated either full-time, part-time, or other type of employment

¹³ EMSI Analyst, 2021.3 run

A number of the top in-demand jobs fall within sales and service occupations. It is also important to note that some of the below in-demand occupations likely require some form of certification or post-secondary education (e.g., registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses, chefs).

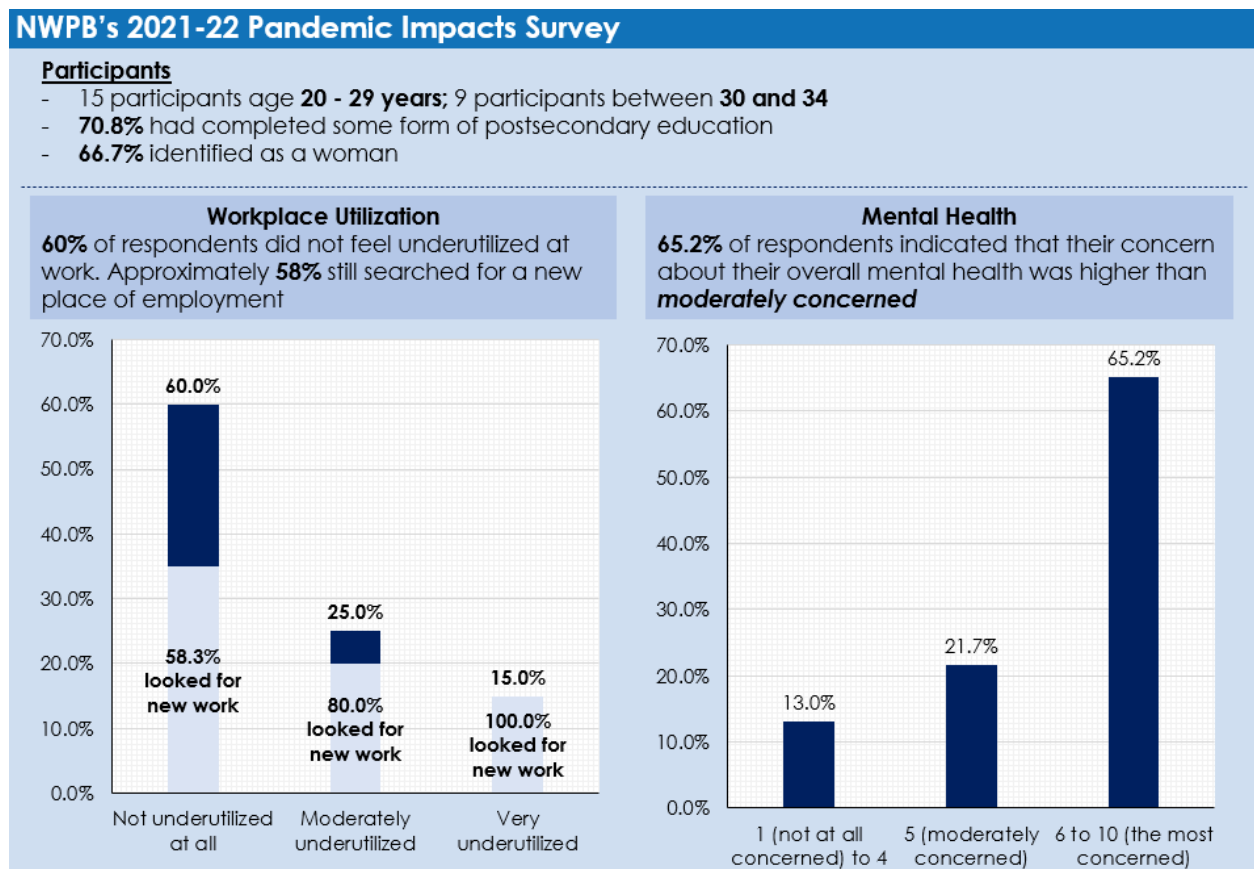
Table 2-3. Top 10 Entry-level Occupations, Niagara, Jan-Oct 2021

Occupation	Job Posts	% Posts with Wages	Median Advertised Salary	% FT posts	% PT posts	% Other posts
Other customer & information services representatives	609	53.9%	\$35,456	74.9%	14.0%	11.2%
Retail salespersons	531	45.6%	\$32,128	52.2%	29.8%	18.1%
Administrative assistants	411	57.4%	\$38,528	68.1%	17.5%	14.4%
Retail & wholesale trade managers	252	32.1%	\$39,552	88.9%	3.6%	7.5%
Home support workers, housekeepers & related occupations	239	58.6%	\$39,552	41.4%	23.8%	34.7%
Other administrative services managers	238	29.4%	\$38,016	89.5%	5.0%	5.5%
Registered nurses & registered psychiatric nurses	235	41.7%	\$80,128	56.2%	28.1%	15.7%
Administrative officers	216	47.7%	\$47,488	86.6%	6.9%	6.5%
Transport truck drivers	181	53.6%	\$54,144	91.7%	2.2%	6.1%
Chefs	170	60.0%	\$35,456	50.6%	8.8%	40.6%

Job satisfaction

Throughout May and June of 2021, NWPB conducted a workforce-facing survey examining pandemic employment impacts. While we did not directly assess levels of job satisfaction, we did ask participants to indicate whether they felt utilized/underutilized in the workplace, whether they had looked for new employment since January 2020, and their concern about their mental health (see Figure 2-4). Note that these data are not reflective of Niagara's workforce as a whole.

Figure 2-4. Pandemic Employment Impacts Survey, May-June 2021¹⁴



¹⁴ NWPB's Pandemic Impacts Survey, Summer 2021

Section 3: Emerging trends and challenges for youth

In addition to the above data on employment trends and factors that contribute to “successful” youth employment, it is still important to consider the employment barriers youth experience. Together, these insights start to shape the path forward for initiatives that may be beneficial in supporting youth through employment and training.

Barriers to Employment

Barriers to employment can span multiple factors. The following figure highlights several significant barriers to employment youth experienced over the past year. It is important to note that these barriers were likely exacerbated by the pandemic, and tend to be felt more acutely by some youth cohorts (e.g., low-income youth, marginalized youth, etc.)

Over the past year, a number of reports have been published outlining pandemic impacts to youth, and what a youth-focused pandemic recovery could look like.

Nationally, we have seen reports to this effect published by Canadian Heritage, *Canada's First State of Youth Report*; and YMCA Canada and YWCA Canada, *Preventing A Lockdown Generation: A Plan To Support Canada's Youth In Post-Pandemic Recovery*.

Locally, Civiconnect published a report on youth impacts called, *Impacts of COVID-19 on Youth in Niagara: A Community Needs Assessment*. In addition to these reports, NWPB conducted a variety of consultations and a survey assessing pandemic impacts and barriers to employment for local youth.

Figure 3-1 outlines barriers to employment for youth as identified through the work listed above.

Figure 3-1. National and local work on barriers to employment for youth^{15,16,17,18}

State of Youth Report

- Limited professional networks
- Limited career development opportunities
- Difficulty finding entry-level work
- Limited access to technology
- Limited technological skills

YMCA & YWCA Report

- Limited access to technology
- Difficulties with reliable internet
- Limited technological skills
- Difficulties with digital platforms

Civiconnect Survey

- Limited professional networks
- Not enough work opportunities
- Not enough work experience
- Mental health challenges

NWPB Workforce Survey

- Not enough opportunities in field or geography of desired work
- Not enough opportunity at desired level of compensation
- Compensation offered was lower than expected
- Physical health-related challenges
- Fear of contracting COVID-19 through employment

¹⁵ Canadian Heritage (2021). Canada's first state of youth report. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/state-youth.html>

¹⁶ YMCA Canada and YWCA Canada (August 2021). Preventing a lockdown generation: A plan to support Canada's youth in post-pandemic recovery. Retrieved from <https://www.preventingalockdowngeneration.ca/>

¹⁷ Civiconnect (October 2021). Impacts of COVID-19 on youth in Niagara: A community needs assessment. Retrieved from <https://www.civiconnect.ca/impacts-of-covid-19-on-youth-in-niagara/>

¹⁸ NWPB Pandemic Impacts Survey, Summer 2021

Pandemic-Specific Employment Impacts

NWPB engaged in consultation activities with a number of youth-focused committees and groups in Niagara. Two of the employment-related questions included:

- Were you hoping to work over the last year? If so, did the pandemic affect that?
- What kind of workforce challenges have you experienced or heard others experience over the past year?

It is important to note here that concerns and impacts differed depending on the youth age cohort. For example, the concerns of students in high school differed from those that had just finished post-secondary education. Thus, we outline themes that emerged based on age cohorts.

High school. Youth in this cohort were fairly evenly split across their responses to workforce impacts. Table 3-2 outlines employment impacts for 21 youth. We see that 1/3 of youth were able to find work and were successfully able to do so. Just over 1/3 of youth wanted work but were not able to secure employment.

Table 3-2. Employment impacts for youth¹⁹.

Response	Percentage
I was hoping to work and was able to find work.	33.3%
I was hoping to work but couldn't because of the pandemic.	38.1%
I was not interested in working.	28.6%

Some of the employment challenges youth noted were:

- Finding an appropriate work opportunity
- Finding co-op/internship options
- Limited opportunities for students
- Limited hours/unpredictable schedules/workplace layoffs

Post-secondary/Recent graduates. We also consulted with youth representing post-secondary students and recent graduates/young professionals. All

¹⁹ NWPB youth consultations

individuals were currently employed, with 86% indicating they were satisfied with their work, and 71% reporting they were satisfied with their rate of pay.

National-level Insights

In the Canadian Heritage's State of Youth report²⁰, youth indicated that shifts to remote work limited social interactions. In addition, given the limited work opportunities throughout the pandemic – paired with youth employment opportunities which are generally lower paying – education was noted as a factor that was difficult to afford, particularly when work experience opportunities are unpaid. Further, YWCA Canada and YMCA Canada's report indicates that interruptions to education impacts whether youth are ready for employment²¹.

Youth-Identified Challenges to Training and Skills Development

Through out consultations, we asked youth whether expectations related to their professional career had changed due to the pandemic. **High school students** tended to note that one challenge was the affordability of education. Youth that had attended **post-secondary education** noted that some of the skills they learnt in school were valuable for their career outlook, while also noting other skills that would have been beneficial to have learned throughout their education:

Table 3-3. Youth-identified skills²²

Top identified skills from education that are valuable to a career	Top identified skills to incorporate in education that relate to careers
Communication	Technological or practical training (e.g., social media for work purposes, excel, managing projects, presentations,
Field-specific technical skills	
Time management	
Critical thinking	Interpersonal skills (e.g., conflict resolution, networking, leadership, negotiating)
Problem solving	
Teamwork	
Organization	

²⁰ Canadian Heritage (2021). Canada's first state of youth report. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/state-youth.html>

²¹ YMCA Canada and YWCA Canada (August 2021). Preventing a lockdown generation: A plan to support Canada's youth in post-pandemic recovery. Retrieved from <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60e72580e2125f3929162e29/t/611404a60b7d9d624d63b62f/1628701867181/Preventing+a+Lockdown+Generation+-+Final+Report+-+English.pdf>

²² NWPB youth consultations

In addition to our insights from local youth, work by Civiconnect (based in the municipality of Lincoln) noted the following challenges to training and skills development as assessed through their youth survey²³:

- Difficulties with online learning
- Social isolation
- Mental health challenges
- Financial insecurity
- Forced moves/relocation
- Limited technology/internet access

National-level Insights

The Canadian Heritage's State of Youth report²⁴, notes the following challenges to training:

- Technology accessibility/internet speed and price
- The cost of education is high; factors that prolong education make schooling more expensive
- Unequal access to training and education for Indigenous youth and youth with disabilities
- Mental health challenges, particularly with shifts to virtual learning, and heavier workloads with little support on how to cope and adjust to this change

On a positive note, the State of Youth report notes that skills development has been easier for some youth given the extra time and opportunities to participate in these activities outside of school.

Further, YWCA Canada and YMCA Canada²⁵ indicate that given the many barriers to training that exist and were made worse throughout the pandemic, supports are needed (e.g., assistance with finances) to ensure youth face fewer barriers to training moving forward.

²³ Civiconnect (October 2021). Impacts of COVID-19 on youth in Niagara: A community needs assessment. Retrieved from <https://www.civiconnect.ca/impacts-of-covid-19-on-youth-in-niagara/>

²⁴ Canadian Heritage (2021). Canada's first state of youth report. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/state-youth.html>

²⁵ YMCA Canada and YWCA Canada (August 2021). Preventing a lockdown generation: A plan to support Canada's youth in post-pandemic recovery. Retrieved from <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60e72580e2125f3929162e29/t/611404a60b7d9d624d63b62f/1628701867181/Preventing+a+Lockdown+Generation+-+Final+Report+-+English.pdf>

Future Aspirations

We asked youth what their thoughts were on the future, particularly relating to education, training, and work.

High School. Student responses offered a wealth of insights on future goals related to education, training, and career aspirations.

- Some students felt hopeful about the future whereas others noted being very unsure of what was to come
- Regardless of whether students were hopeful or unsure, they noted that continuing their education was a priority, though their field of study may change given the differing impacts on jobs throughout the pandemic
- There was a greater consideration of job stability and workload given the impacts of the pandemic on fields like healthcare

Post-secondary/Recent graduates. We asked these youth whether the pandemic had changed their professional career aspirations. Table 3-4 shows that over half of the youth had changed their expectations.

Table 3-4. Has the pandemic changed your professional career aspirations?²⁶.

Response	Percentage
Yes	56.3%
No	37.5%
No response	6.3%

For youth that had changed their expectations, some noted that they had a greater sense of appreciation for their work either because it became more valuable throughout the pandemic or because their work was stable in an ever-changing context. Other expectations or realizations were the importance of work-life balance, mental health and self care, and flexibility in the workplace.

National-level Insights

In the State Of Youth report²⁷, youth wanted work that is stable, related to their prior experience, and provides a balance between work and life. Their interest was on searching for opportunities that would lead to a career rather than

²⁶ NWPB youth consultations

²⁷ Canadian Heritage (2021), Canada's first state of youth report. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/state-youth.html>



casual employment opportunities. Given the pandemic, this report noted that youth planned to continue to stay in school as finding a job was difficult.

Section 4: Community-based recommendations for the future

NWPB engaged in consultation activities with a number of youth-focused committees and groups in Niagara. While a summary of employment and training impacts are noted in Section 3, here we outline feedback on the following two questions:

- Reflecting on the responses to employment and training barriers/impacts, are there any community initiatives that would be beneficial (related to education/training/careers)?
- Are there any other supports that would be helpful to have (related to education/training/careers)?

High School. Youth had a number of recommendations for initiatives and supports that would be valuable:

- Community initiatives that help provide training/experience in targeted fields *outside* of where we typically see employment concentrated in Niagara (e.g., less focused on tourism-related job experiences)
- Youth-focused job searching services (e.g., assistance on how to write resumes, create applications, where to find job posts, how to search for jobs, etc.)
- Workshops on financial education (e.g., banking, budgeting, etc.)

Given that some of these resources are available (i.e., employment services) ensuring that they are promoted to youth – particularly those in high school - would be of value.

Post-secondary/Recent graduates. Individuals in this cohort indicated a number of initiatives that would be valuable:

- Funding for or free options for continuing education/adult education. Some examples focused specifically on leadership development and mentoring
- An increase in job opportunities outside of tourism-related work
- More working opportunities for young professionals
- Initiatives focused on work-life balance

National-level Insights

Both the YMCA Canada/YWCA Canada report and the Canadian Heritage State of Youth Report provide recommendations for initiatives that address employment and training. Here we outline some of the suggested actions from these reports:

Employment barriers

- State of Youth Report²⁸
 - o Support programs that teach skills for the current labour market
 - o Incentivize co-op and internships for education institutions
 - o Create regulations that eliminate precarious employment
 - o Invest in internet networks in rural and remote areas to ensure individuals can work from home
- YMCA Canada and YWCA Canada²⁹
 - o Adjust the Canada Summer Jobs program to provide employment opportunities throughout the entire year
 - o Ensure that employment programs have support for multi-barriered individuals
 - o Look to labour market insights (e.g., labour shortages) as a way to direct youth recruitment and training

Training barriers

- State of Youth Report³⁰
 - o Ensure programs exist that demonstrate to youth the various careers they could have
 - o Highlight the importance of transferrable skills
 - o Lower tuition and/or make more funding opportunities available
 - o Increase paid internships to ensure that multi-barriered youth can have access to these programs
 - o Provide more investments for work-integrated learning
 - o Create a “national skill-building strategy” which engages youth to see what skills and types of training they would like to see
- YMCA Canada and YWCA Canada³¹

²⁸ Canadian Heritage (2021). Canada's first state of youth report.

²⁹ YMCA Canada and YWCA Canada (August 2021). Preventing a lockdown generation: A plan to support Canada's youth in post-pandemic recovery

³⁰ Canadian Heritage (2021). Canada's first state of youth report.

³¹ YMCA Canada and YWCA Canada (August 2021). Preventing a lockdown generation: A plan to support Canada's youth in post-pandemic recovery



NIAGARA WORKFORCE PLANNING BOARD

- Have employment training as a piece of wrap-around services that youth can access, particularly for those with many barriers
- Investigate a national “Youth Guarantee” policy which means youth are offered sustainable employment/training opportunities after finishing school or leaving a job (i.e., within 16 weeks)
- More funding provided for Youth Employment and Skills Strategy, and ensure that individuals that have been traditionally marginalized and/or experience unique barriers are targeted in these support programs



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For additional information on the local labour market, and to review previous publications, please visit our website at www.nwpb.ca

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