



# 2021

## York Region Employer Survey on Hiring Practices

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Workforce Planning  
Board of York Region

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OF YORK REGION

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# 2021 York Region Employer Survey on Hiring Practices

## By

### Workforce Planning Board of York Region

## Introduction

Through discussions with employer contacts and employment services partners in the late summer and fall of 2021, the Workforce Planning Board of York Region (WPBoard) identified that employers faced challenges in the hiring of new staff for entry-level, mid-level and senior-level positions. WPBoard developed and executed an employer survey in York Region in order to get a snapshot of current employer practices related to hiring, as well as to explore employer skill needs and to forecast the future reliance on remote work (working from home), all of which have been affected by the COVID pandemic. The survey was conducted between November 17 and November 30, 2021. In total, 621 employers started the survey. The survey was “cleaned” to eliminate those entries which did not provide answers to substantive questions (that is, other than general information about the size and industry of the employer), leaving 495 respondents. While the number of responses to a survey tends to drop as one progresses through the survey question, the average number of responses per substantive question was 468, which reflects a high response rate. In addition, 183 employers asked for a copy of the survey results, indicating a high level of interest in the survey topics.

## Profile of employers

There were two categories for classifying the employers, by industry and by size. Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents by industry and compares the figure to the actual distribution of employers in York Region.

There are quite a few sectors where the proportion of respondents by industry closely matches the actual proportion by industry in York Region. In other areas, there are some imbalances, which are shaded yellow to show where the proportion is lower than the actual, and purple where the proportion is greater. The large proportion of respondents who identified “Other” often represented hairdressers, nail and beauty salons, and auto repair shops, all of which fall into the category of ‘Other Services’.

**Table 1: Distribution of survey respondents by industry compared to actual distribution of establishments with employees in York Region**

Industry sector	SURVEY		ACTUAL
	#	%	
Accommodation and Food Services	37	7.5%	5.8%
Administrative & Support	2	0.4%	4.8%
Agriculture	5	1.0%	0.5%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	25	5.1%	1.0%
Construction	34	6.9%	12.7%
Educational Services	40	8.1%	1.6%
Finance and Insurance	21	4.2%	4.2%
Health Care and Social Assistance	56	11.3%	9.3%
Information and Cultural Industries	3	0.6%	1.3%
Manufacturing	65	13.1%	5.2%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	19	3.8%	7.4%
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	35	7.1%	19.6%
Public Administration	1	0.2%	0.0%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	12	2.4%	5.3%
Retail Trade	41	8.3%	9.7%
Transportation and Warehousing	9	1.8%	4.2%
Utilities	0	0.0%	0.1%
Wholesale Trade	20	4.0%	6.9%
Other	70	14.1%	---
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>495</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>99.6%</b>

The figure for actual number of employers by industry is derived from Statistics Canada's Canadian Business Counts, June 2021. The total percentage for the Actual establishments does not add up to 100% because two industries were not collected for the survey: Management of Companies (which make up 0.6% of employers) and Mining and Oil & Gas Extraction (0.1%). The 0.0% of firms in Public Administration in the Actual column represents the rounding off of the 19 establishments in this category, as it represents 0.04% of all establishments with employees.

Table 2 illustrates the distribution of all businesses with employees by number of employees. While the survey is over-represented among the larger employee size categories, even the smallest category of 1-4 employee firms has a very healthy representation in the sample. In most cases, the survey sample represents at least 1.6% of the universe of employers in that category and even in the category with the fewest employees (1-4 employees), the survey sample accounts for 0.5% of all employers. (For the sake of this calculation, firms with no employees were not included.)

**Table 2: Distribution of survey respondents by number of employees**

	Number of employees			
	1-4	5-19	20-99	100+
<b>Actual number in York Region</b>				
<b>Number</b>	30,783	12,665	4,216	857
<b>Percent</b>	63.4%	26.1%	8.7%	1.8%
<b>Survey respondents</b>				
<b>Number</b>	166	204	78	23
<b>Percent</b>	35.2%	43.3%	16.6%	4.9%
<b>Survey respondents as percent of actual number</b>				
<b>Percent</b>	0.5%	1.6%	1.9%	2.7%

The figure for actual number of employers by number of employees is derived from Statistics Canada’s Canadian Business Counts, June 2021

None of this is to suggest that this is a random sample, because it represents employers who chose to respond to a broad email distribution. But there is a good cross-section of employers by industry and by size of establishment, and where possible, the analysis will seek to highlight differences in the responses by categories of employers.

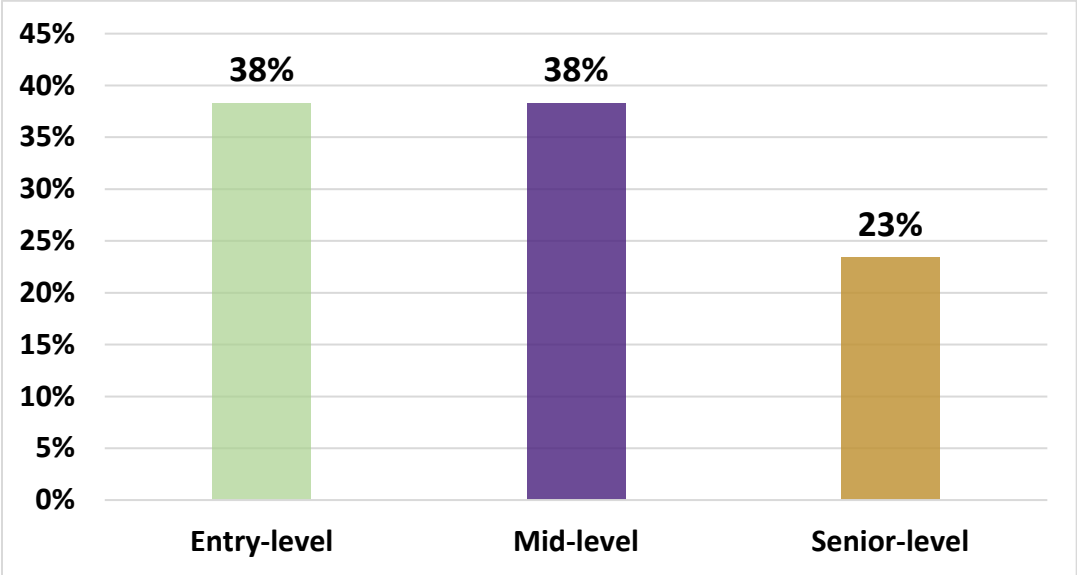
## Distribution of hiring needs over the last six months

Employers were asked to indicate the percentage distribution of their hiring needs over the previous six months by the skill-level of the occupation, using the following categories:

- Entry-level or low-skilled workers: Jobs usually requiring a high school diploma or less, such as cashiers, shelf stockers, retail salespersons, cleaners, production workers, labourers
- Mid-level or mid-skilled workers: Jobs usually requiring a trades certificate or a college diploma, such as skilled tradespersons, technicians, technologists, supervisors
- Senior and high skill skilled workers: Jobs usually requiring a university degree, such as managers, professionals, nurses, teachers

Chart 1 present the results for all employers, by weighting the averages of all responses across the three categories.

**Chart 1: Percentage distribution of hiring needs over last six months by skill-level of occupation**

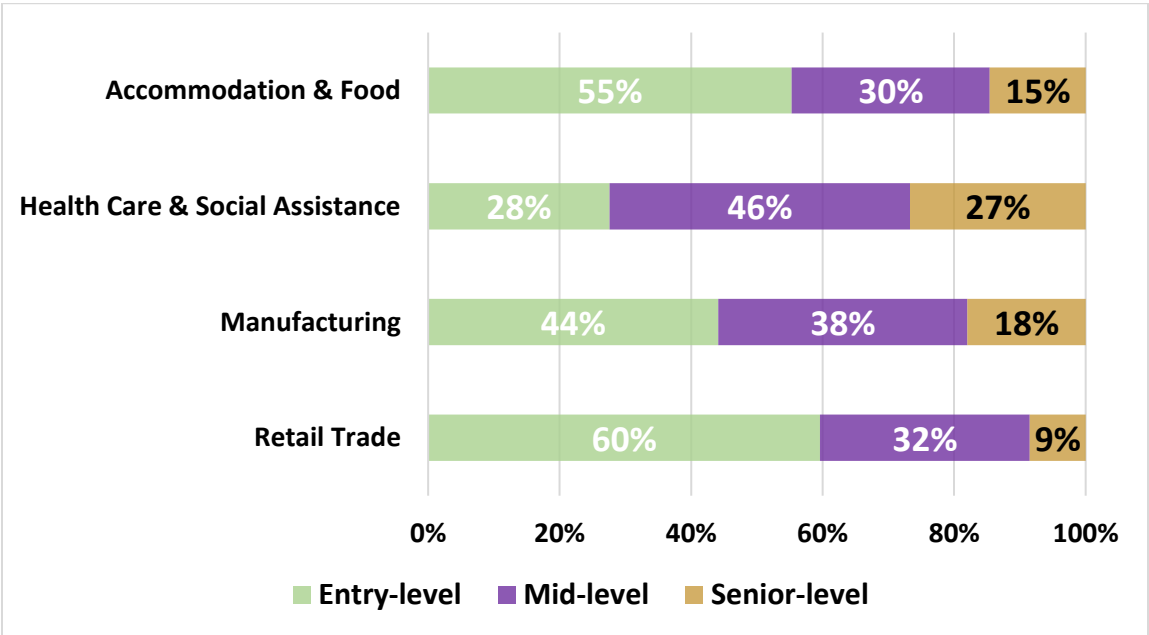


Figures do not add up to 100% because of rounding.

Across all employers, there was an even demand for entry-level and mid-skilled workers, and a lower demand for senior-level or high-skilled workers. Those percentages varied considerably by size of establishment and by industry. While firms with under 100 employees followed this pattern, firms with 100 or more employees were more likely to indicate a higher demand for entry-level workers (53%), compared to mid-skilled workers (30%) or senior-level workers (18%). In part, this has to do with the fact that with a larger workforce, oftentimes a higher proportion of workers are employed in entry-level occupations.

Chart 2 provides some comparisons between different industries, which show considerable variations. Sectors such as Accommodation & Food Services as well as Retail Trade show a much higher demand for entry-level workers, as this makes up a considerable proportion of their workforce. In the case of Health Care & Social Assistance, mid-level occupations were in higher demand (includes administrative positions, technicians, community service workers and early childhood educators), as well senior-level occupations (health care professionals, nurses and social workers). In the case of manufacturing, while entry-level workers were the largest category, mid-level occupations were a close second, representing skilled tradespersons and technicians.

**Chart 2: Percentage distribution of hiring needs over last six months by skill-level of occupation, by select industries**



**Recruitment methods**

Employers were asked what recruitment methods they had used in the last six months to hire new employees. They were presented with a set of options and were asked to check off all that applied, for each of the three skill-levels of occupations. Table 3 presents the results for all employers. For each skill-level column, the top three responses have been highlighted in green, purple and yellow. Thus, in the case of entry-level workers, recruiting through free employment services such as Employment Ontario is most often used (65%), followed by postings of the company website (62%) and then postings on on-line job boards (60%).

Overall, employers are more likely to use more methods for recruiting for mid-level occupations than entry-level occupations, while making far less reliance on a range of recruitment methods when seeking to hire for senior-level occupations. When hiring for senior-level occupations, the most likely recruitment method is recruiting through a fee-for-service recruitment agency.



**Table 3: Reliance on different recruitment methods by skill-level of occupation**

<b>RECRUITMENT METHOD</b>	<b>Entry-level</b>	<b>Mid-level</b>	<b>Senior-level</b>
Posting jobs on the career page of your website	<b>62%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>29%</b>
Posting jobs on your social media channels	<b>59%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>25%</b>
Posting jobs on mainstream job posting sites (Indeed, Workopolis, Job Bank etc.)	<b>60%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>29%</b>
Recruiting through free employment services such as Employment Ontario	<b>65%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>19%</b>
Recruiting through fee-for-service recruitment agencies	<b>53%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>34%</b>
Placing advertisements in media (newspaper/radio ads)	<b>51%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>21%</b>
Seeking referrals from current employees	<b>58%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>27%</b>

Companies with more employees are more likely to use multiple methods to recruit new employees than companies with fewer employees. That is especially the case when it comes to recruiting for entry-level workers. When it came to entry-level workers, over 80% of firms with 100 or more employees indicated that they used every one of these recruitment methods, except for fee-for-service agencies (73%) and social media (67%) -- and even these percentages are still higher than the average results for all employers reported in Table 3.

Larger firms also expend more effort recruiting senior-level employees; close to 50% or more of firms with 100 or more employees use each of the following methods:

- Company website (56%)
- On-line job boards (55%)
- Referrals (53%)
- Social media (53%)
- Fee-for-service agencies (47%)

Free-employment services are most likely to be used for entry-level workers by firms with 100 or more employees (92%) and firms with 20-99 employees (90%), but only around half of the time by smaller firms and around 60% of the time for mid-skilled workers. They are used less frequently for the recruitment of senior-level employees.

Free employment services are greatly relied upon for entry-level workers by Retail Trade (100%) and Manufacturing (91%), somewhat less so by Health Care & Social Assistance and by Accommodation & Food Services (both at 73%). Accommodation & Food Services are slightly more likely to use referrals (88%) and on-line job boards (80%). Retail Trade also relies on Social Media for entry-level recruitment (96%), the company website (95%) and Referrals (94%). Manufacturing has a high reliance on fee-for-service agencies when recruiting entry-level workers (92%).

When it comes to recruiting senior-level employees, the top recruitment method for each industry was as follows:

- Accommodation & Food Services: Fee-for-service agencies (21%)
- Health Care & Social Assistance: Media ads (55%)
- Manufacturing: Company website (47%)
- Retail Trade: Fee-for-service agencies (50%)

### Have employers increased wages to attract new employees?

Employers were asked if they had increased wages for new positions in their organization in the last six months to attract job candidates. The question was asked in relation to the three skill-level categories of occupations. The responses only reflect those employers who answered “Yes” or “No,” not those who replied “Not Applicable.” Slightly over two-thirds of employers have increased wages for entry-level and mid-level new hires in the last six months, and a slightly smaller proportion (62%) also increased wages for senior-level new hires (Chart 3).

**Chart 3: Wage increases for new hires as reported by employers, by skill level of occupation**

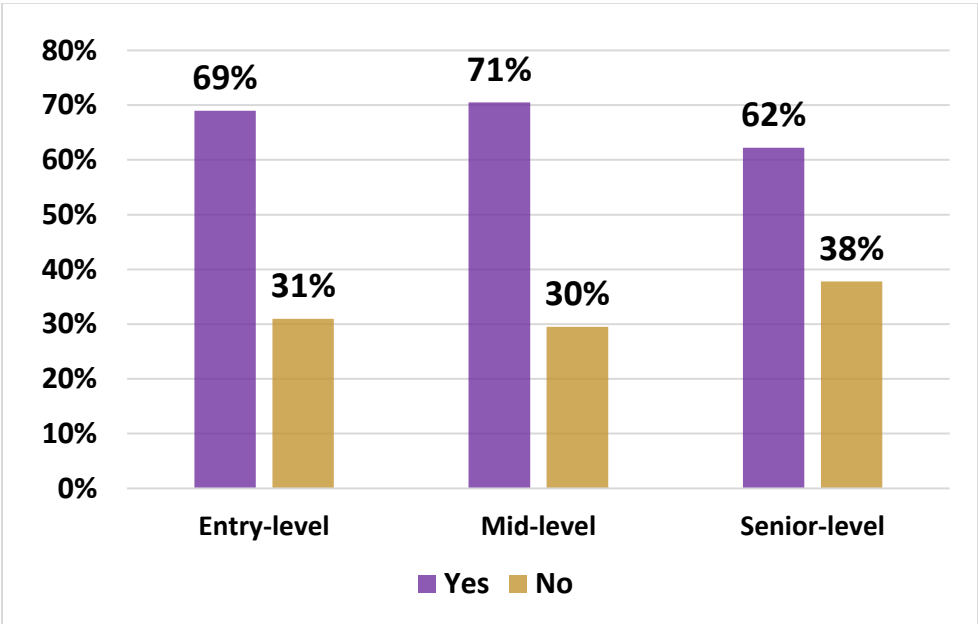




Table 4 shows the incidence of wage increases by size of establishment and by select industries (that is, those who answered “Yes”).

**Table 4: Wage increases for new hires as reported by employers, by skill level of occupation and by size of establishment or by select industry**

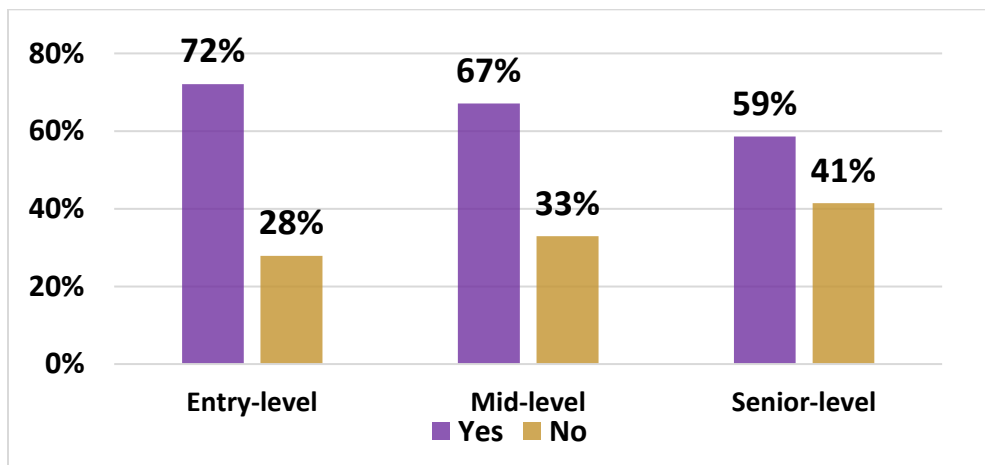
	ALL	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES				Accommodation & Food Services	Health Care & Social Assistance	Manufacturing	Retail Trade
		1-4	5-19	20-99	100+				
Entry-level	69%	63%	72%	77%	67%	81%	72%	74%	52%
Mid-level	71%	66%	74%	75%	67%	80%	76%	75%	71%
Senior-level	62%	53%	72%	69%	39%	83%	69%	52%	33%

Mid-sized firms, between 5-99 employees, were more likely to raise wages in all three skill-level categories. Large firms (100 or more employees) were especially less likely to increase wages for senior-level hires. Employers in Accommodation & Food Services were especially likely to have raised wages (over 80% in all three categories), whereas Retail Trade employers were somewhat less likely to raise wages for entry-level workers (52%) and especially less likely to do so for senior-level hires (33%).

### Have employers increased wages for current employees?

In a similar way, employers were asked if they had increased wages for current employees in the last six months. The responses were almost exactly the same as the response for increased wages for new hires, with the answers within 3%-4% of each other for each category.

**Chart 4: Wage increases for current employees as reported by employers, by skill level of occupation**



There was little difference between the responses relating to wages increases between new hires and current employees when analyzed by size of establishment. There were some differences when the responses were analyzed by industry:

- Employers in the Health Care & Social Assistance sector were more likely to indicate that they had increased wages for new hires among mid-level and senior-level workers than among current workers
- Employers in Retail Trade were more likely to report increases for current workers as opposed to new hires, particularly among entry-level works and senior-level employees

In the case of employers in Manufacturing and Accommodation & Food Services, there was not much difference in their responses on the wage question for new hires and current employees.

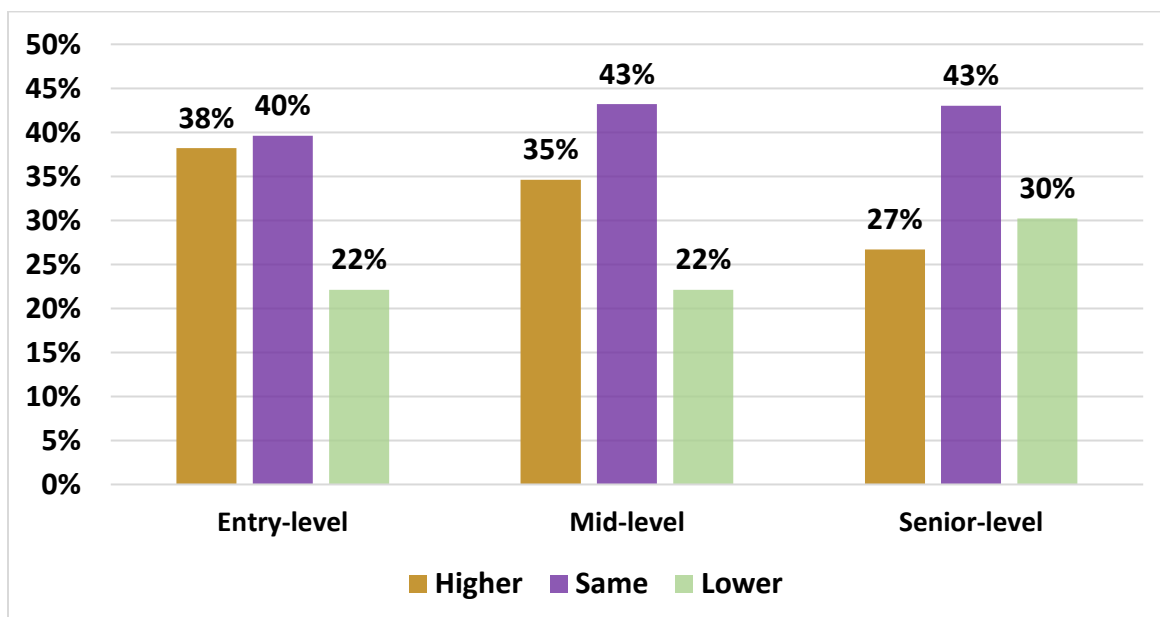
## Job turnover

The next question focused on the level of turnover. Employers were asked to rate the level of job turnover in their organization in the last six months, as follows:

- Higher than usual
- About the same as usual
- Lower than usual

The question applied to the three skill-level categories. Chart 5 illustrates the responses for all employers.

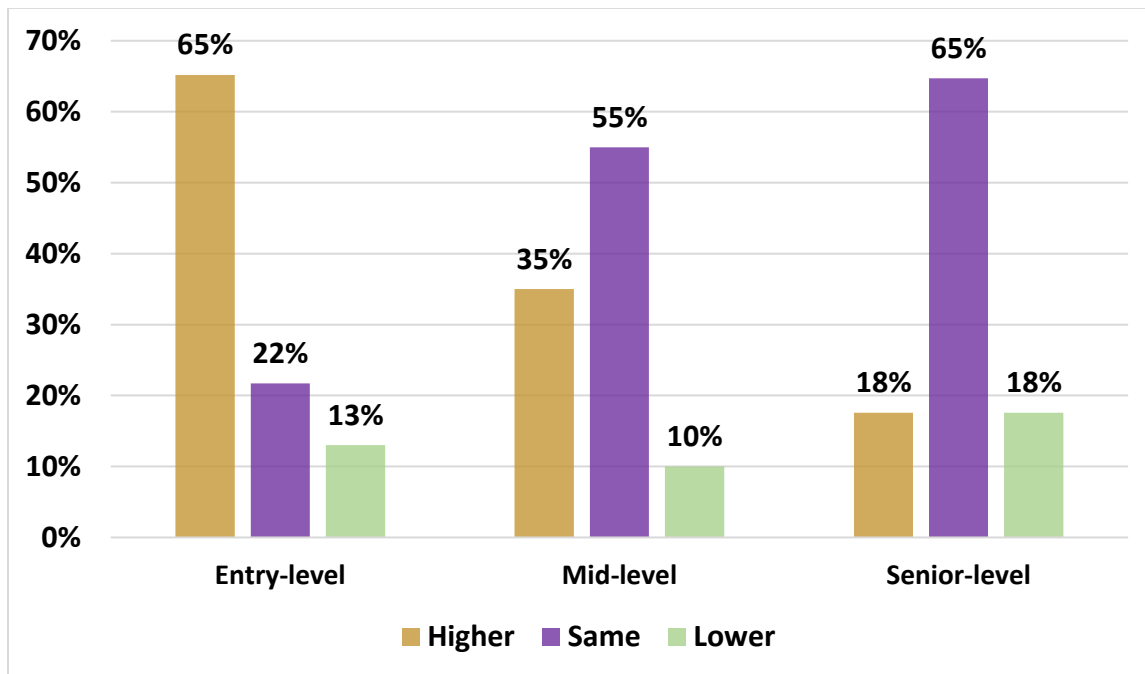
**Chart 5: Change in rate of turnover in last six months, by skill-level of occupation**



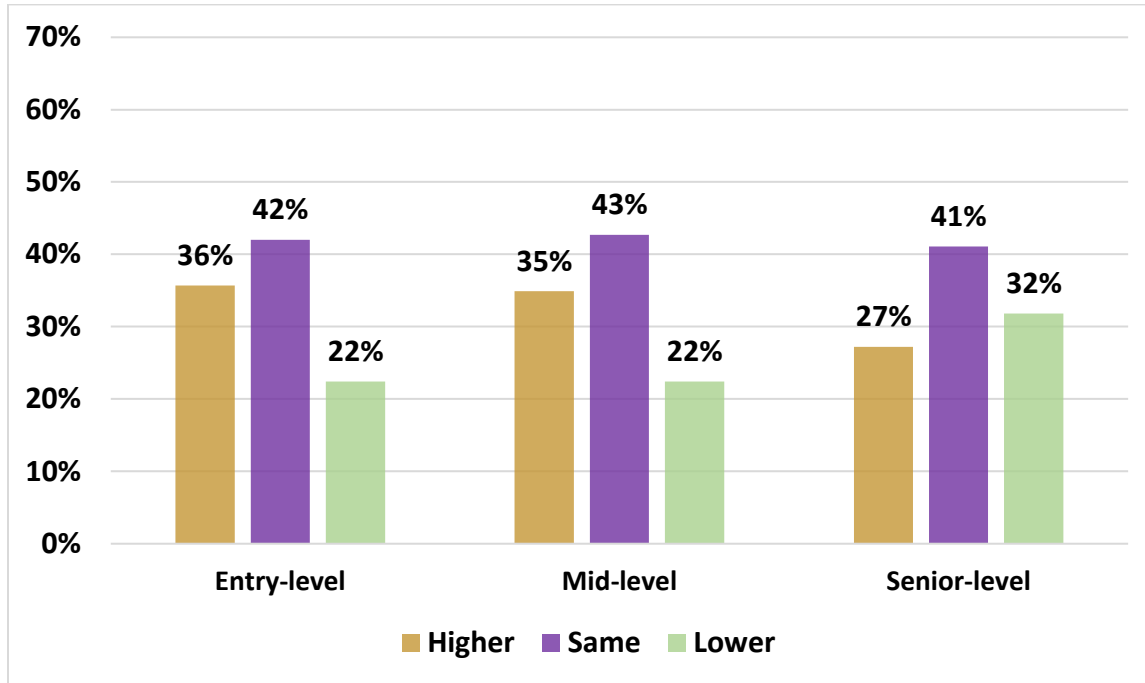
Over one-third of employers report an increase in the rate of turnover for entry-level and mid-level jobs, which is only partly balanced out by around one-fifth saying there has been a decrease. While the percentage saying that the turnover rate for senior-level positions is almost as high (27%), slightly more say that turnover in this category is lower (30%).

There are significant variations when comparisons are made by the size of the establishment. Employers with 100 or more employees are much more likely to report an increase in turnover among entry-level workers (65%) (Chart 6) as compared to employers with less than 100 employees (36%) (Chart 7). The change in the level of turnover among mid-level workers was more similar, with more 100+ employees reporting that turnover had stayed much the same, while employers with less than 100 employees were somewhat more likely to say that it had declined. Among senior-level staff, large employers were much more likely to say that the rate of turnover had not changed, whereas employers with less than 100 employees expressed both high percentages of those who said it had increased as well as of those who said that it had decreased.

**Chart 6: Change in rate of turnover in last six months, by skill-level of occupation, employers with 100 or more employees**



**Chart 7: Change in rate of turnover in last six months, by skill-level of occupation, employers with less than 100 employees**



The differences in responses by industry have more nuance:

- For Accommodation & Food Services employers, there has been an increase in the rate of turnover, around 40% across all three skill-levels; another 30%-35% say there has been a decrease, with only around 25%-30% saying the level of turnover has stayed the same
- In Health Care & Social Assistance, 40%-50% of employers said that the turnover rate has stayed the same; around 40% also say that turnover has increased among entry-level and mid-level jobs, but only around 25% say so about senior-level jobs
- That pattern is roughly similar among Manufacturers, except that a high proportion of employers (58%) say that there has been no change in the rate of turnover among senior-level employees
- Among Retail Trade employers, an increase in turnover is largely limited to entry-level workers (37%), and it declines for both mid-level workers (26%) and senior-level workers (13%); indeed, in relation to senior-level workers, half of employers (50%) say the turnover rate has declined

## Impact of removal of government subsidies on responses to job postings

During the lockdown periods, many employers expressed the view that the amounts provided through the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) acted as a disincentive for employees to return to work. The survey sought to explore the consequences of this program (and its more restricted successor, the Canada Recovery Benefit) ending, by asking whether there had been more responses to job opening postings. Overall, only 8% of employers said “Yes,” and only 27% said “Somewhat.” Two-thirds (65%) of employers said that the end of these programs had still not made a difference in terms of responses from job candidates to job postings (Table 5).

**Table 5: “Now that government subsidies have ended, are you seeing more responses to your job opening postings?”**

	ALL	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES				Accommodation & Food Services	Health Care & Social Assistance	Manufacturing	Retail Trade
		1-4	5-19	20-99	100+				
Yes	8%	7%	9%	11%	17%	0%	13%	5%	16%
Somewhat	27%	22%	27%	30%	57%	42%	20%	28%	26%
No	65%	71%	65%	59%	26%	58%	67%	67%	58%

When the responses are analyzed by size of establishment, it is clear that the larger the firm, the more likely it is that they have perceived a change in responses to job openings. Only 26% of firms with 100 or more employees say there has not been a change. There are major variations by industry, more so in relation to where there has been a change or whether there has been somewhat of a change. A relative consistent percentage (58%-67%) across the four industries profiled say there has been no change.

## Skill deficits

Employers were asked:

“What skill sets are missing from the resumes that you are receiving for your job openings?”

The question presented a set of skill sets and employers were asked to indicate whether the skill set was:

- A concern
- Not a concern
- Not applicable

For the sake of presenting the results, the skill sets as described in the survey and the abbreviations in the chart are provided in the table below.

DESCRIPTION IN SURVEY	ABBREVIATION
Basic digital skills (familiarity with a keyboard and office software)	Basic digital skills
Employability skills (punctuality, taking direction, reliability)	Employability skills
Essential or foundational skills (math/numeracy, written communications, creating and completing documents)	Essential skills
Customer service skills	Customer service skills
Technical/vocational skills that are specific to the occupation they are being hired for	Technical/vocational skills
Working in a group (communications skills, teamwork, managing conflict)	Working in a group
Working independently (problem-solving, taking the initiative, self-directed)	Working independently
Ability to work remotely (being well-suited to work remotely and/or having the resources and/or space to work remotely)	Ability to work remotely
Strong health and safety awareness and practices	Health and safety awareness
Adaptability (being flexible, responding well to change)	Adaptability
Leadership skills (the ability to supervise, manage and motivate workers in the post-pandemic environment)	Leadership skills

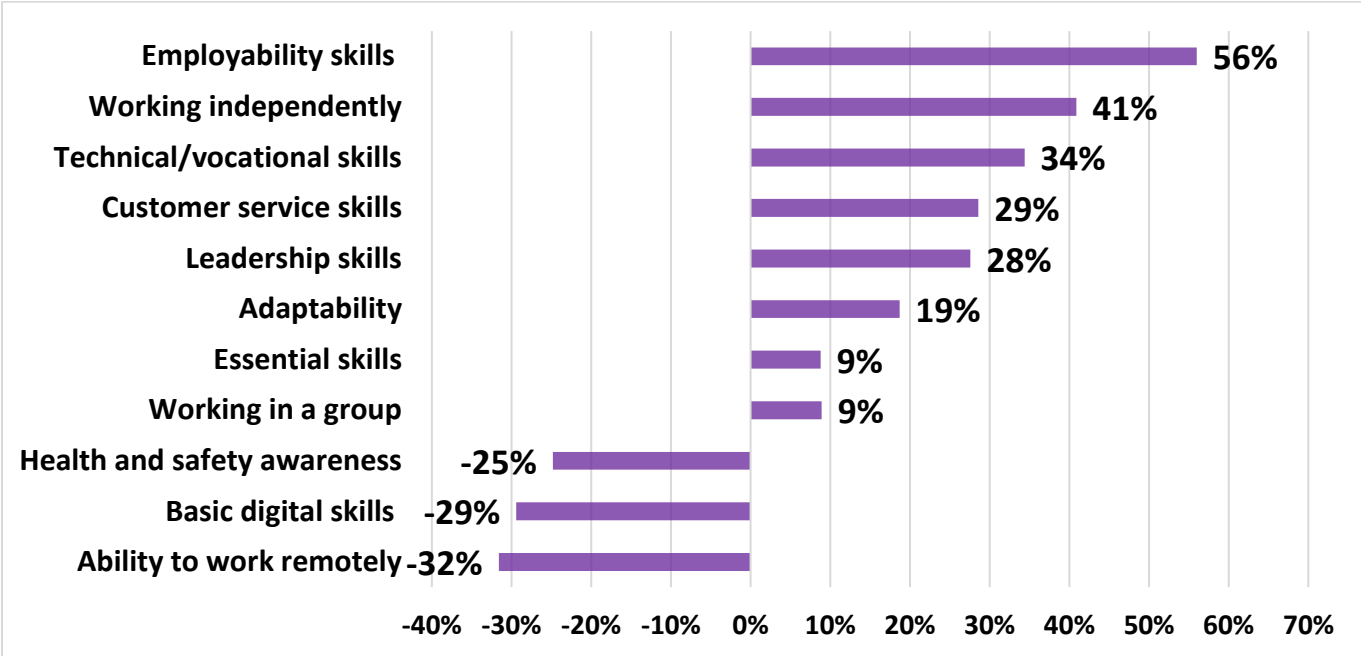
In replying “Not applicable,” employers were also providing us with some insights. As is shown in Table 6, few employers felt that skills such as adaptability, working independently or employability skills were not applicable to their situation, as only 16% to 18% chose that response in relation to those skills. Yet at the other end of the scale, there were high numbers who indicated that a certain skill was not applicable, most notably, “the ability to work remotely,” with 61% saying this was not applicable. Surprisingly, 40% said that basic digital skills were not applicable to working in their organization.

**Table 6: Percent of employers who replies “Not applicable” to question about skill sets**

Skill set	Not applicable	Skill set	Not applicable
Ability to work remotely	61%	Customer service skills	21%
Basic digital skills	40%	Working in a group	20%
Essential skills	27%	Employability skills	18%
Leadership skills	27%	Working independently	16%
Technical/vocational skills	23%	Adaptability	16%
Health and safety awareness	22%		

To analyze the actual assessment of skills, for each skill we took the number who said that it was a concern and subtracted the number who said that it was not a concern, then divided it by the total number of “concern” and “not a concern” answers, creating a percentage that represented the net score. A positive score means that when the numbers are balanced out, the skill set is a concern, while a negative score indicates that overall it is not a concern. Chart 8 presents the results.

**Chart 8: Net score regarding concerns about skill sets**



By far, the biggest concern was in relation to employability skills (punctuality, taking direction, reliability). Working independently also ranked high as a concern, followed by a cluster of three skill sets: technical/vocational skills, customer service skills and leadership skills. Notably, certain skills did not appear to be missing to the degree that it posed a concern for employers: ability to work remotely; basic digital skills; and health and safety awareness.

There were notable differences by categories of employers:

- Employability skills were ranked high by every category, but especially by the Accommodation & Food Services sector, whose net score was 80%
- Working independently generally received a high score, except about employers with 100 or more employees, whose net score was 8% (compared to the average of 41%)
- Concern regarding adaptability increased with the size of the firm
- Not surprisingly, customer service skills were not a concern for Manufacturers (-15%)
- Technical/vocational skills were particularly a concern among employers in Health Care & Social Assistance (46%) and Manufacturing (42%)



- Sometimes there were odd discrepancies: when it came to leadership skills, the net score for Accommodation & Food Services was 58% (a very high rating), while in the Retail Trade sector, it scored -15%, not a concern

## Remote work before, during and after the pandemic/lockdown

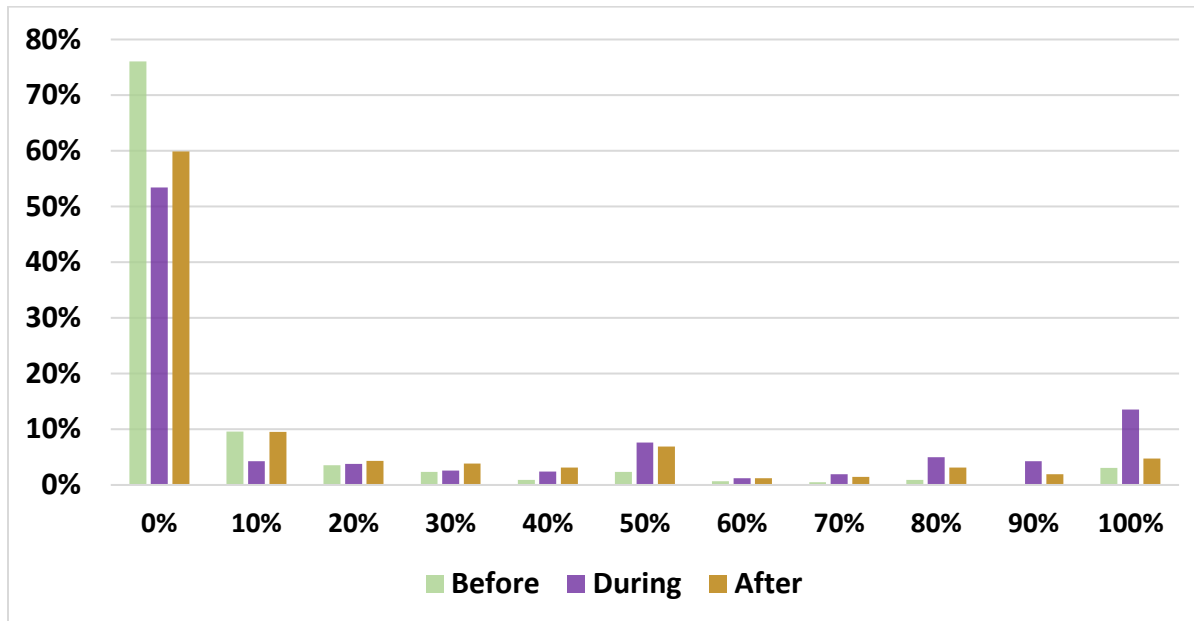
The most common workforce strategy that employers relied upon in response to the lockdown was to have employees work from home (also known as remote work). Prior to the pandemic, the incidence of remote work was low, the general view being that working from home was not as productive as when one is in the office. With the impact of the pandemic, most employers and employees were surprised at how effective working from home could be. As an increasing number of workplaces re-open, the topic has turned to finding a better balance between the benefit of engaging face-to-face in one workplace location and the convenience of working from home.

Employers were asked to estimate the percentage of time a typical non-essential worker spent working from home, both before the pandemic and during the pandemic, as well as to estimate what the percentage will be some time after the pandemic has receded. Chart 9 shows the distribution of responses for each of these three periods.

Prior to the pandemic, over 75% of employers said that their employees spent no time (0%) working from home (blue bar). Close to 10% of employers said that employees worked from home 10% of the time. During the pandemic, slightly over half said that employees spent no time working from home (orange bar). Around 8% of employers said that their employees spent 50% of their time working from home and almost 14% said that their employees spent 100% of their time working from home.

Looking in a future without the pandemic, around 60% of employers said that their employees will spend no time working from home (green bar), around 15% fewer than was the case before the pandemic. Around 7% predict that their employees will work from home 50% of the time and 5% predict their employees will work from home 100% of the time.

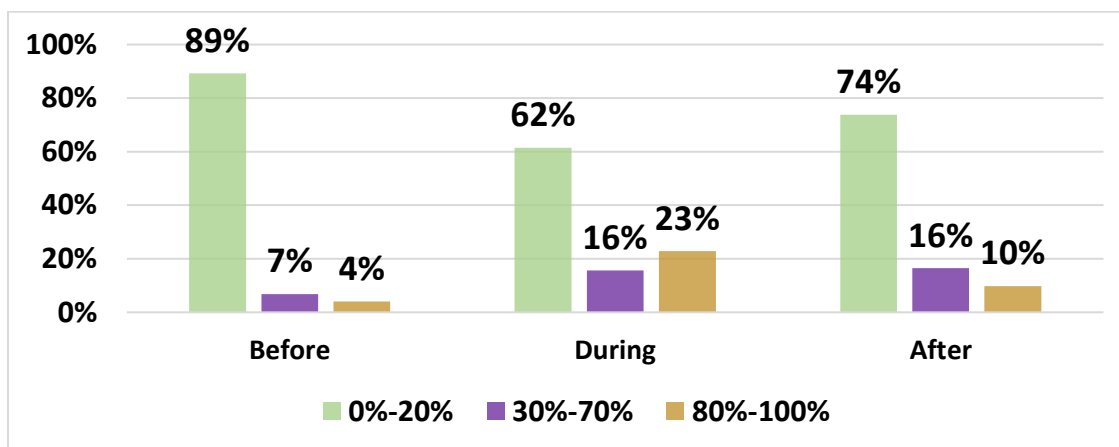
**Chart 9: Percent of time working from home – before, during and after the pandemic**



These impacts are far better to visualize when we collapse the responses into three choices: (1) Working from home 0% to 20% of the time; (2) Working from home 30% to 70% of the time; and (3) Working from home 80% to 100% of the time.

Chart 10 shows the same results from Chart 9 within these new ranges.

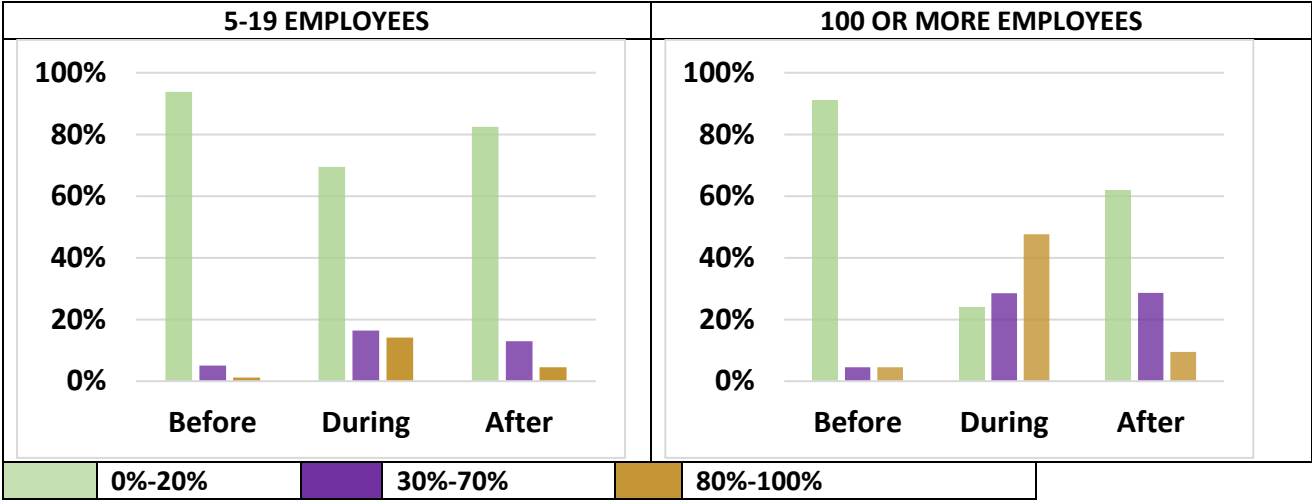
**Chart 10: Percent of time working from home – before, during and after the pandemic, three ranges**



Clearly, the pandemic is having an impact on the decision regarding where employees will work, even once the pandemic has passed. Whereas before the pandemic, 89% of employers said that their employees worked from home 0%-20% of the time, a smaller percentage (74%) envisage that will be the case in the future.

There are certainly differences when one compares categories of employers. By size, it would appear that large firms have higher expectations of more employees working from home more often after the pandemic has passed (Chart 11).

**Chart 11: Percent of time working from home – before, during and after the pandemic, comparison between firms with 5-19 employees and 100 or more employees**

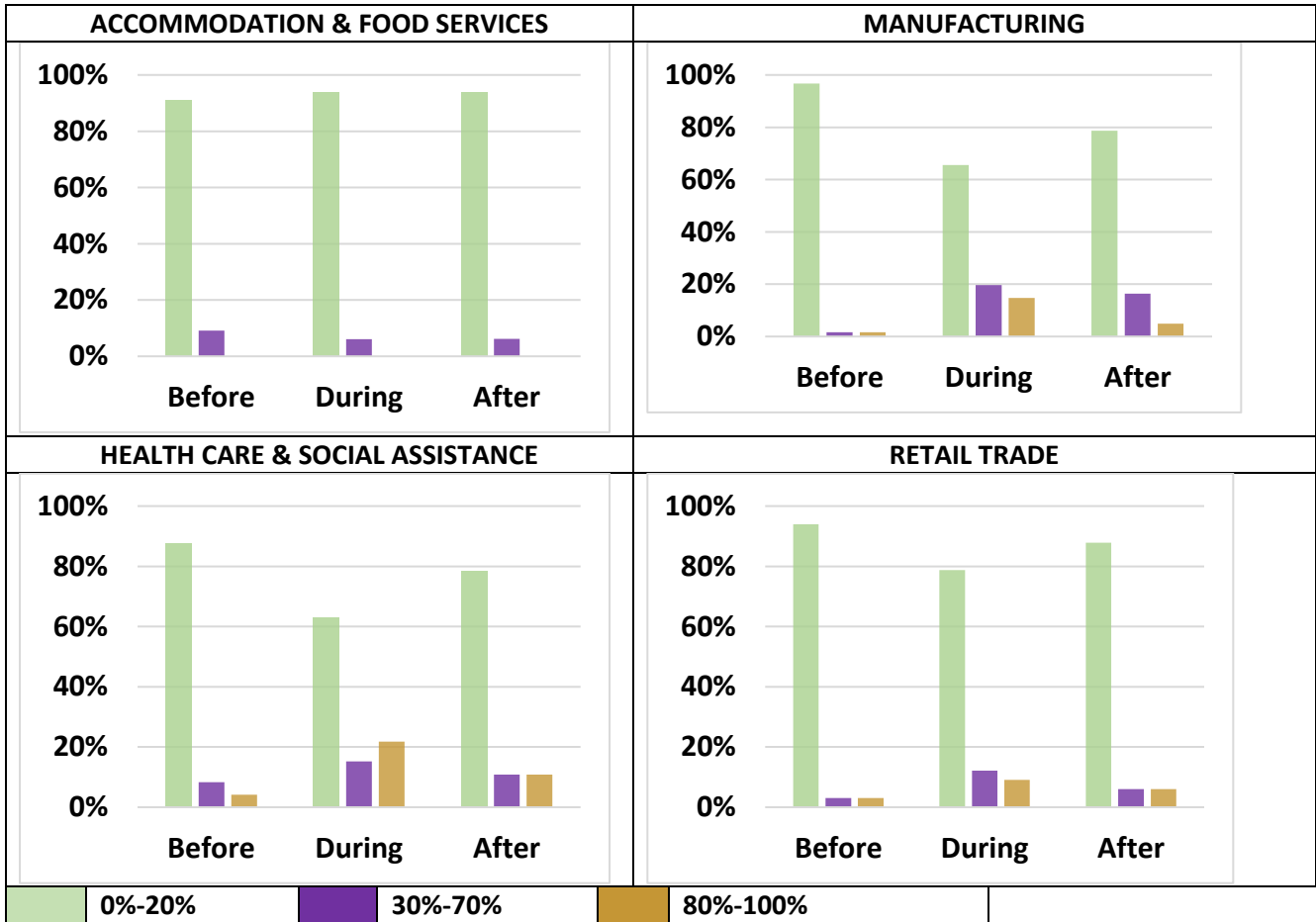


Employers with 100 or more employees forecast that around 62% of their employees would be working from home 0% to 20% of the time after the pandemic, compared to 82% of employers with 5-19 employees.

It is not surprising that these results vary considerably by industry. Chart 12 illustrates these differences among the four industries we have been profiling. Among employers in Accommodation & Food Services, no one had employees working from home 80% to 100% before or during the pandemic, and none expected that after the pandemic passed. Yet, among employers in Retail Trade, 3% of employers already had employees working from home 80% to 100% of the time before the pandemic, as did 9% of employers during the pandemic, and after the pandemic 6% still expected the major portion of employment to take place from home. It is not a large number, but it is different from the circumstance of the Accommodation & Food Services sector.

In the case of the Health Care & Social Assistance sector, in the post-pandemic future, 11% of employers expected that employees would work from home 30% to 70% of the time, and another 11% predicted they would work from home 80% to 100% of the time.

**Chart 12: Percent of time working from home – before, during and after the pandemic, comparison between four industries**



## Employer views regarding remote work

Employers were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements about remote work and its implications for the organization. The statements used in the survey are provided below, together with the abbreviated version for reporting purposes.

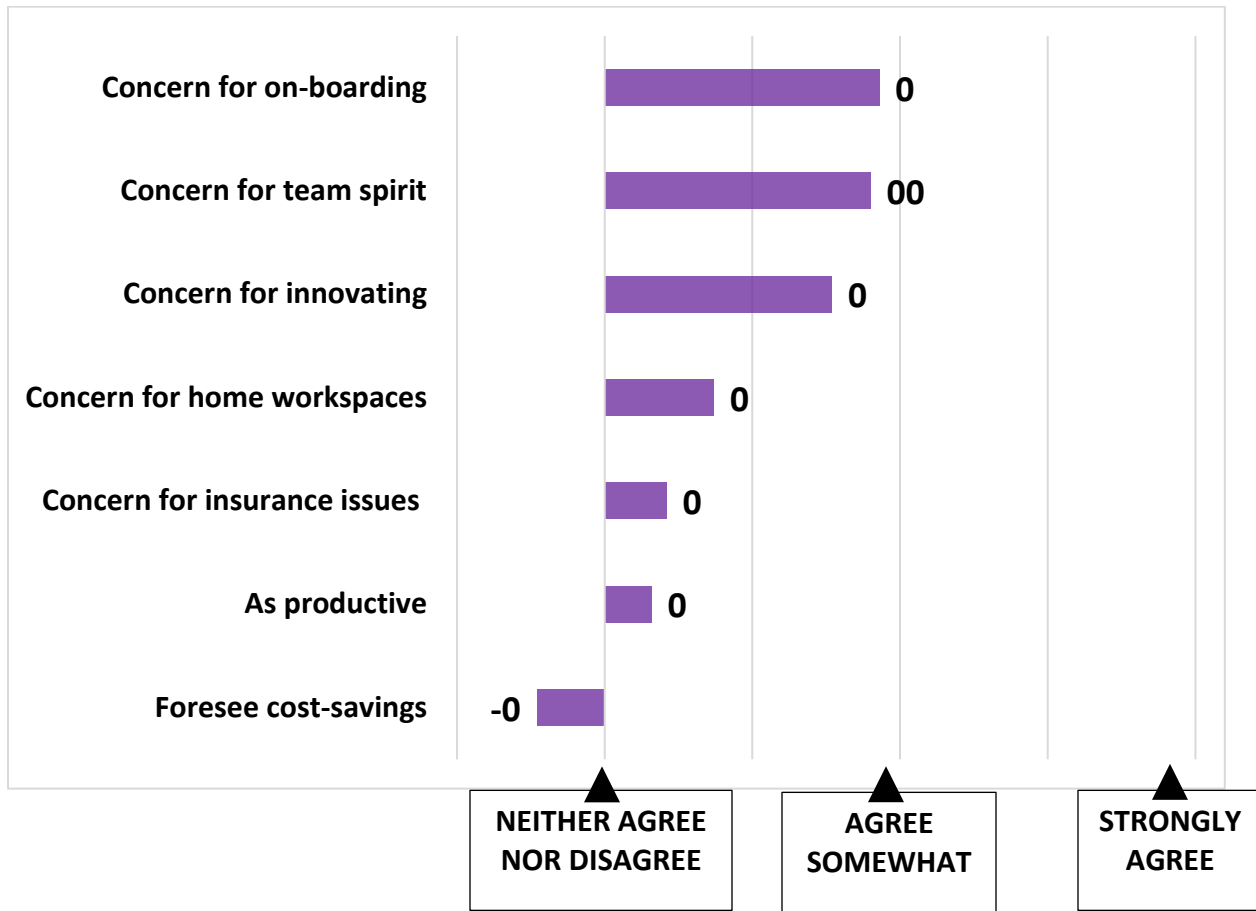
DESCRIPTION IN SURVEY	ABBREVIATION
In our experience, employees working remotely were as productive if not more productive compared to working on-site.	As productive
We foresee cost-savings to the company from having more employees work remotely more often.	Foresee cost-savings
We have concerns regarding maintaining a team spirit and/or our corporate culture if there is a high incidence of working remotely.	Concern for team spirit
We have concerns about properly on-boarding new hires if there is a high incidence of working remotely.	Concern for on-boarding
We have concerns regarding our ability as a team to innovate or problem-solve if there is a high incidence of working remotely.	Concern for innovating
We have concerns regarding the implications for health, safety, WSIB and other insurance consequences as a result of work done remotely.	Concern for insurance issues
While we were able to manage for a while, some of our employees have neither the proper working space and/or equipment to work remotely over the long-term.	Concern for home workspaces

Chart 13 illustrates the results, which represent a composite score for each item, where a value was ascribed to each response as follows:

- Strongly agree: +2
- Somewhat agree: +1
- Neither agree nor disagree: 0
- Somewhat disagree: -1
- Strongly disagree: -2

All the values for one item were added up and divided by the number of respondents who provided an answer (that is, excluding those who replied, “Do not know/Not applicable.”)

**Chart 13: Views on remote work**



Two issues were of greater concern for employers with respect to a higher incidence of remote work: the ability to on-board new employees and the ability to maintain a team spirit and/or corporate culture. Both received a composite score around 0.90, whereas a “1.0” would be “Agree Somewhat.” Another concern which received a slightly lower composite score was the ability to innovate or problem-solve as a team (0.77). All three of these issues speak to the importance to employers of their employees being able to collaborate and/or act as a cohesive team and the concern that working remotely undermines that ability.

Other issues did not attract as much concern. There was some concern about home workspaces (0.37) and less concern regarding the health, safety and insurance implications of employees working more often from home.

On the issue of productivity, the composite score of 0.16 was only slightly higher than a score of “0.0”, which represents “Neither agree nor disagreement” – thus, on average employers are saying working from home is perhaps as productive as working in the workplace, but they are not entirely sure on this.

And on average, employers may slightly disagree with the notion that working from home more often offers cost-savings to the company (-0.23).

When the results are analyzed by categories of employers, the larger the employer, the more likely the concern for those issues of the company team (on-boarding, corporate culture and team problem-solving and innovating). On the other hand, large firms were somewhat more likely to agree that employees working at home were as productive as in the workplace.

By industry, the results did not reflect an obvious pattern. For example, on the question of whether employees were as productive working from home as in the workplace, employers in the Accommodation & Food Services sector had a rather high level of agreement (0.67), whether employers in Retail Trade had the exact opposite view (-0.78).

## In Closing

This survey represented the experiences and viewpoints of a large number of York Region employers, whose responses provided insights into how our local labour market is changing and will continue to change. Some key findings include:

- Over the six months prior to the survey (second half of November 2021), almost four in ten employers indicated hiring needs for entry-level as well as for mid-level workers, compared to around two in ten who had a hiring need for senior-level employees; this was particularly the case for employers in the Accommodation & Food Services as well as Retail Trade sectors
- The top recruitment method varied by the skill-level of the occupation:
  - For entry-level workers, free employment services such as Employment Ontario were used by 65% of respondents
  - For mid-level workers, 69% of employers used mainstream job posting sites
  - For senior-level employees, 34% relied on fee-for-service recruitment agenciesThe second most frequently used recruitment method, for all three skill-level jobs, was reliance on the company's own career page of their website
- The larger the firm, the more recruitment methods they relied upon to attract job candidates
- Around two-thirds of employers indicated that they had increased wages for new hires in the last six months in order to attract job candidates, with slightly more increasing wages for entry-level or mid-level occupations as compared to senior-level occupations
- Similarly, around two-thirds of employers had increased wages for current employees over the last six months
- Over one-third of employers say that there has been an increase in the rate of turnover among entry-level and mid-level occupations in the last six months, compared to one out of five saying there has been a decrease; for senior-level occupations, employers are slightly more likely to say there has been a decrease in the turnover rate
- However, employers with over 100 employees are especially more likely to report higher turnover rates among entry-level workers



- Almost two-thirds of respondents say they do not see more responses to their job opening postings now that government subsidies have ended
- For most employers, the most pressing concern regarding available skills among job candidates is employability skills (punctuality, taking direction, reliability); coming in second is working independently and technical/vocational skills come in third; among skills that raise the least concern are the ability to work remotely and basic digital skills
- The pandemic is having an impact on the decision regarding where employees will work, even once the pandemic has passed; whereas before the pandemic, 89% of employers said that their employees worked from home 0%-20% of the time, a smaller percentage (74%) envisage that will be the case in the future
- Two issues were of greater concern for employers with respect to a higher incidence of remote work: the ability to on-board new employees and the ability to maintain a team spirit and/or corporate culture

The labour market will continue to be in flux so long as the pandemic continues to disrupt our lives and our economies. This survey illustrates how in the period when we were experiencing a relaxation of the lockdown rules, there was a growth in the demand for workers and that employers were increasing wages to attract job candidates and retain their current employees. At the same time, a considerable number of employers had a concern regarding the employability of the available job candidates. The pandemic has also resulted in a somewhat greater expectation that a larger number of non-essential workers will be working some of the time from home.

The Workforce Planning Board of York Region is a non-for-profit, community-based organization working to develop solutions to local labour market needs and issues.

Governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, the Workforce Planning Board is one of 26 independent, non-government corporations in Ontario mandated to engage our community and community partners in a local labour market research and planning process that leads to cooperative efforts among partners to find local solutions to local issues.

The Workforce Planning Board is funded by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

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